

THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 12TH UNITED STATES INFANTRY, COMPANY A

Commanders Corner

Volume 4 Issue 1

Spring 2013

Special points of interest:

- Please submit any unpaid dues and insurance.
- Please submit mess fess for any events you are planning on attending. If you plan on attending an event and not participating in unit mess please notify Mrs. Mayers and First Sgt MacMillan so came layout and duty rosters can be updated.

Well, the 2013 reenacting season is just about upon us. Our monthly drill sessions have been productive and the camaraderie with good friends has been wonderful. Remember that the off-season drills are great opportunities to introduce prospective members to the hobby.

The main event this year is the 150th Gettysburg. While it is the BGA event that has been made the Maximum Effort event, there will be a 12th US presence also at the GAC event and I am sure that both events will be worthwhile. I am sure that you all will represent the 12th US with excellence. Peterboro and Erie Canal Village are out own Max Effort events and I hope to see all of you at both. Other events throughout the season will be great fun. Please keep us informed through the Facebook page and Yahoo group if you are going to attend a particular event so that we can plan accordingly. If you personally register for an event then please let us know that as

well. New and old members alike should always remember that we portray the Regular Army. That means polish and accuracy. There are uniform standards that we should all be working to obtain and that includes dark blue trousers, frock coat, Hardee Hat and scales. I know that these things cost money and it can take some time to acquire them. We are now doing late war in the national events so sacks and kersey blues are fine, but please keep the goal in mind and work toward that image. We especially want that image for parades and local events when possible. It is one of the things that make us stand out and above the rest. Brass should be kept polished in all cases.

Please remember that there are chores to be done at our events that include cooking, getting water and fire wood, washing dishes and guard

duty. Don't wait to be asked. Please volunteer and always check the status of the chores anytime you want to leave camp so that scheduled duties don't get missed. Sgt MacMillan should be preparing duty lists that are fair to everyone. He should be using the Corporals to enforce the duty list and if someone skips out on their duty, whether intentional or not, they should receive extra duty. This is the only way to be fair to everyone.

Civilians should not tend the fire in dresses. In practice, this is difficult when military personnel are not performing that duty as needed. This is a safety concern that requires us all to do our part.

I am looking forward to the coming season and spending time with my friends. See you all soon!!

Respectfully Submitted,
Captain Jim Hurd
12th US

Peterboro—21st Annual Civil War Weekend

Plans are well under way for the 21st Annual Peterboro Civil War weekend. There will be programs on the Emancipation Proclamation and the United States Colored Troops.

The music for Saturday will be the 77th New York Regimental Balladeers at 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm on green and 800 pm in the Smithfield Community Center

The 8:00 pm is a concert and play "Dear Friend Amelia".

Sunday music will be provided by the USCT Musicians.

There are some USCT troops buried in the Peterboro Cemetery. There is a graveside ceremony

scheduled for Sunday, June 9, 2013 at 8:00 am.

On Friday, June 7, 2013 will be an Education day for 5th graders from 4 local schools and some home-schoolers. There is approximately 170 students coming. Stations will be 20 minutes long.

Mrs. Mayers

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Peterboro, Massena and Erie Canal Mess—Mrs. Hurd

We wanted to give you a menu for the summer. Don't worry if you look at something and say "yuck". We can always find something for you to eat. (Peggy, did you see that we are having biscuits and gravy when you aren't going to be there? We know how you hate them.) Don't worry if you don't like mushrooms, we can leave them out of some of the sauce once we know how many of you won't eat them.

Peterboro \$15.00 per person—due June 1, 2013

Friday	dinner	chili dogs, coleslaw, chips
Saturday	breakfast	breakfast burritos, oatmeal, fruit
	lunch	chicken salad in pita, pickles, fruit
	dinner	potato soup, cornbread, beer bread, bread pudding
Sunday	breakfast	pancake breakfast at the Community Center. We will have oatmeal and fruit in camp if you don't want to.
	lunch	sandwiches, fruit salad

Massena \$10.00 per person, \$5.00 registration - July 6

Friday	dinner	eat out
Saturday	breakfast	ham, home fries, scalloped apples
	lunch	BLT's on potato bread
	dinner	beef & vegetable rations from the 2 nd Michigan
Sunday	breakfast	French toast, bacon or sausage

Erie Canal - \$15.00 per person , \$5.00 registration - August 10

Friday	dinner	eat out
Saturday	breakfast	sausage gravy and biscuits, fruit
	lunch	sandwiches, pickles, fruit
	dinner	chicken schnitzel, spatzel in mushroom cream sauce, green beans
Sunday	breakfast	blueberry and apple pancakes, bacon
	lunch	feeding the troops in the field – ham and cheese sandwiches, apples, cookies

Which brings me to some other questions.

1. First, let me know if you don't like mushrooms.
2. Second, we haven't updated allergies in a while. Let me know if you allergic to any foods, whatever it is. Also, let me know if you can't eat certain foods (sugar, wheat, salt, milk, etc.) for dietary reasons.
3. Let us know if you have any good ideas for meals. As you can see, we are doing a German meal this year. That was someone's suggestion.
4. Let me know if you are going to eat Friday dinner at Peterboro. I know a lot of you don't get in on time.
5. Please pay for mess ahead of time if you are going to eat. It's where we get our head count. It is very difficult to shop without a head count. If you decide to eat at the last minute, call or email me. I don't go shopping until Friday morning, and it's better to find out at the last minute than to be short on food.
6. My email is: lhurd@twcny.rr.com, or you can leave me a message on Facebook.

Three other important things:

1. Don't go near the fire in a hoop.
2. Eat, even if you're not hungry. We don't want you to pass out in the middle of the battle.
3. DRINK LOTS OF WATER!

Linda Hurd

AS THE EXCITEMENT BUILDS—Private Camp

We've all experienced it in one way or another... Waking up as children on Christmas morning, on our birthdays, the first day of school, the first date with a new guy/girl (I don't judge), the first day of college, job interviews, first day on of a new job and our wedding day/s (yes I know some think the walk down the aisle is so nice, they do it twice). You know that feeling I speak of, you may have a different name for it, but it's all the same, the rush of adrenaline, the feeling of butterflies in our stomachs, the nervousness...the ANTICIPATION of what's to come!

As the 2013 re-enacting season begins, I find myself starting to get these feelings. Last year I received just a small taste of what re-enacting is about, but I could not make any of the large national events. As the days tick by in 2013 I find myself becoming more and more excited at the prospects of the events I can hopefully make this spring and summer. The only National event I know that I will not miss this year is Gettysburg, The anticipation is growing within me at a fevered rate (I think my wife is feeling the same thing also). As I add new items to my uniform (that some take for granted) I can see that excited child opening that long awaited gift and seeing it is exactly what was wished for. I realized just how excited I am when I received via UPS my chest plate medallion, my cartridge box medallion and bayonet for the musket. Yep...all smiles and couldn't wait to add them to the mix I'm quickly accumulating.

This excitement is fueled by the stories and pictures that others in the re-enacting community tell and post. Every month when we drill I not only realize that we are that much closer to burning powder, but I find myself actually trying to visualize thousands of troops standing with me and thousands more standing across from me. As I write this, I'm thinking to myself "it's only about 3 months away."

I'm hoping to make other national or just Large scale events this spring, only time will tell if that will come to be or not. I am certainly looking forward to taking the field with you all this spring, summer, and fall. Also I look forward to my continued learning from my experienced comrades and hope I can teach something to someone who is new to the hobby or just a fan/spectator.

Respectfully;
Shane Camp

Gettysburg: A Convergence of History and Place—Neil K. MacMillan

On a brisk November day while the trees were stripped of their leaves and the temperatures hovered in the forties, I toured the town and battlefields of Gettysburg Pennsylvania. Much has been written about the battle and the town. It is perhaps the most written about subject in the history of the American Civil War and yet, though I am an ardent student of the period and a re-enactor, I never visited the town or battlefield. My experiences with Gettysburg were been limited to three day re-enactments held on outlying farms. When I opted to take this course I asked; "What do I know about place in history and what do I really know about Gettysburg?"

The battle was pivotal in the Civil War and in American history. So does place make history or does history make the place? I lead two lives, my sometimes-hectic 21st century life of work, family and school and my mid-19th century life as a Union soldier.

I have read a sizeable amount about the battle of Gettysburg and yet, with reams of pages extant I didn't understand Gettysburg until I was there and maybe, I still don't. For me Place is an ongoing learning evolution. Gettysburg is more than the battle and President Lincoln's subsequent speech. It is a thriving community that happens to be surrounded by one of America's most famous battlefields. The town itself is a hamlet of narrow streets and 19th century architecture. It is also a town where you are never far from the past. Gettysburg, perhaps because of its fame has been spared the wrecking ball of progress for the most part. Cars and pedestrians vie with the ghosts and shadows of the past but it is a friendly contest for the most part. Gone is the observation tower known with no affection by history buffs and re-enactors as "That Eyesore" There are many shops selling the usual tourist kitsch and several shops specializing in reproduction Civil War uniforms, arms and equipment. Antique shops and bed and breakfast inns flourish. In short, Gettysburg is a tourist trap. This is 21st century Gettysburg and yet there is another Gettysburg one steeped in history cele-

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brating the mystic bonds of duty, sacrifice, courage, loyalty and comradeship. This is my Gettysburg. This is the Gettysburg that speaks to the combat veteran in me and also to the historian. This is the Gettysburg of history and also myth. This is the sleepy Adams County town that transformed from a quiet farming and college town to legend. This is where John Buford rallied his two cavalry brigades and fought Harry Heth to almost a standstill giving Reynolds I Corps time to get in line and give credible battle to Lee's seemingly invincible Army of Northern Virginia. This is where the famed 1st Minnesota Infantry suffered casualties of over 80% of their regiment. Gettysburg is where Sykes' Regulars fought and died to blunt a Confederate attack that would have been fatal to the Army of the Potomac and this is where Pickett's division evaporated in a maelstrom of shot and shell in one last glorious, courageous attempt to destroy Meade's army. This is the Gettysburg that with a few different decisions could have been Lee's crowning achievement and ended George Meade's career.

How fleeting luck is and how mighty it's affect on place. And yet, place affects luck and history as well. The town of Gettysburg sits in a basin surrounded by rocky hills most of which were instrumental in the battle. Gettysburg became famous in three days and gave us names that echo in tribute to bravery and sacrifice to this day. Culp's Hill where Ewell's indecision allowed the Union army to entrench and fight off attempts to gain the high ground, Plum Run re-named at least informally to "The Valley of Death" where the Regular infantry, in George Sykes words, "taught the army how to die", Little Round Top Where Patrick O'Rourke's 140th NY Infantry plugged a gap in the nick of time and where Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain gained fame with a desperate bayonet charge and Cemetery Ridge where George Pickett's division was slaughtered in the charge that forever bears his name. As I said, this is the Gettysburg of history.

Wednesday July 1st, 1863: Jockeying for Position.

Major General Harry Heth moved his division along the Chambersburg Pike (Debelius, *Maggie Illustrated Atlas of the Civil War* Pages 114-115 Time-Life Books New York, NY 1991). In search of shoes for his poorly shod troops, he expected little trouble in Gettysburg. After all, any soldiers there would be local untrained militia. The orders from General Lee were to avoid a fight until the rest of the army was up but he assumed he could easily brush past the militia. The "militia" in fact was two brigades of John Buford's First Cavalry Division. Buford was arguably one of the best cavalry officers in the army. He honed his skills on the plains of the American west fighting Indians and was a sound tactician. He also knew the value of McPherson's Ridge and the high ground surrounding the town of Gettysburg. He had to stall Heth's division long enough for John Reynolds and I Corps to arrive. Buford had two advantages: they were armed with Sharps carbines and the Chambersburg Pike acted as a natural channel to bottleneck Heth's troops. It was a given that Buford could not hold against the force moving against him. Eventually he would be forced to retire or would be overrun. What did his stand accomplish? Simply put it bought the Union Army time to establish themselves on the hills surrounding the town. The Confederate army would occupy Gettysburg itself, but to gain victory they had to force the Union army off those hills. Why are the hills important? "Some very basic rules in using terrain that apply today were well known then. If you can gain the high ground you have a decided advantage in defending your position as the attacker has to come to you." (MacMillan, Neil K. *Applied Infantry Tactics of the American Civil War* pages 7 & 8 Syracuse, NY 2007). The high ground is also advantageous to attack from. In addition to being rocky the hills around Gettysburg were wooded. This made them easily defended and extremely difficult to assault against a well dug in and determined foe. Buford in short, ensured that the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia would have to make an assault similar to the one made by the Army of the Potomac eight months previously at Fredericksburg, Virginia.^[1]

As the day progressed, Confederate troops pressed into the town and the Union army fell back to the hills south of town. Indeed, most of Meade's army was not at Gettysburg as the events of July 1st unfolded. Elements of Reynolds I corps arrived piecemeal to the battlefield to help. John Reynolds knew he would have to give ground, but he planned to

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fight a delaying action to ensure the Confederates would not gain the heights south of town (Trudeau, Noah Andre *Gettysburg: a Testing of Courage* pages 172 & 173 Perennial New York, NY 2003).

I walked the hills that Reynolds was determined to hold for the Union Army. Today they are dotted with monuments to the regiments who fought and died there. On the cover page of this paper is a photo of the Lutheran Theological Seminary. John Buford utilized the cupola as an observation post and thus knew exactly what he faced. I state above why the hills were important, but I didn't realize just how the battle hinged on holding or taking those hills. On the same cold November day I mention above I toured the battlefield and got the perspective of both sides. Though there is less tree cover than in 1863 the rocks endure.

These are the same rocks that Union soldiers used as cover all three days of the battle. As I clambered over the crest of Cemetery Ridge, Culp's Hill and the Round Tops I could imagine the effect a forced march and then fighting to gain the heights would have on the attacker. Wednesday July 1st, 1863 was a warm day. Temperatures hovered in the mid to upper eighties. Both sides wore uniforms made of wool and carried approximately fifty to sixty pounds of gear. I did the climb in forty-degree weather with no extraneous accouterments in jeans and wearing a leather jacket. The hike was good exercise for me. For the soldiers it was brutal work. In July 1998 I tramped these hills in the uniform carrying a full knapsack and weaponry. The temperature was about 90° and it was a humid day. I drained three canteens and still suffered from the heat^[iii]. I have a better understanding now why there were 6,000 casualties because of heat exhaustion. Through the day confederate numbers made themselves felt and the Union army grudgingly gave way through the village and took positions on the same hills we're discussing. Casualties piled up even as Union troops evacuated the town. Artillery shells knocked bricks from buildings and ripped limbs from soldiers of both sides. Forming a workable battle line in the narrow, confined streets of Gettysburg was impossibility and both sides knew it. The fight was and continued to be for the heights south of town.

General Richard Ewell was a brave man. No one doubted that fact. Successor to the hard-fighting Thomas Jackson who died at Chancellorsville, he was renowned as a fighter. He had an opportunity at Gettysburg to solidify that reputation. With a determined, resolute push, his corps could have Culp's hill and neighboring Cemetery Hill. Ewell didn't have that one push left. It is undeniable that Robert E. Lee wanted him to take the hills. It is also undeniable that Lee's orders to Ewell were ambiguous.^[iiii] Ewell erred on the side of caution and a stellar opportunity was lost to him and the Army of Northern Virginia. Throughout the night under a full moon Union forces dug in and strengthened the hills. The battle, of necessity would continue the next day.

Thursday July 2nd, 1863: Death of the Regulars and the Left Holds.

On the morning of July 2nd, the Union line resembled a large fishhook (Debelius, Maggie Pages 118 & 119 1991). Meade continued to get troops up from Maryland as the day progressed. Among those he placed was Daniels Sickles^[iv] III Corps. Meade ordered Sickles to maintain contact with Hancock's II Corp now ably commanded by John Gibbon. As he ordered this, George Sykes was nearing the battlefield with V Corps. Sickles extended his line approximately a quarter of a mile in front of the rest of the line. The result was a salient that could easily be cut off from the rest of the army and cause a breach in the line. The breach would allow the Confederates to roll up the line in detail and hand the Union army yet another defeat. James Longstreet was no man to ignore such a plum. Longstreet's Corps slammed into the salient and while Sickles' III corps fought bravely, they were in a tenuous position. As they had been called on before, the Regular infantry^[v] was called on again for a hard fight. In parade ground formation Ayres Regulars marched into Plum Run to confront Longstreet's Confederates. In a brutal slugfest Longstreet's troops got on three sides of the Regulars and poured murderous volleys into them. The regular's division commander summed up the fight, "As we advanced down the slope of Little Round Top, our officers and men began to fall rapidly, and as we crossed a marsh called Plum Run, the enemy opened a most destructive fire on my regiment, the 17th Infantry..." He began. Ayres concluded, "Within fifteen minutes, 150 officers and men of our 260 in the regiment were killed or wounded" (Reese, Timothy J. *Sykes' Regu-*

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lar Infantry Division, 1861-1864: A History of Regular United States Infantry Operations in the Civil War's Eastern Theater page 243 McFarland & Company, Inc. Jefferson, NC 1990). From the view of an enlisted man, Sgt. Charles Bowen, 12th Infantry, the battle for the Wheatfield and Plum Run is summed up as follows, "We charged and drove them (the Rebs) back about a mile where we held them for an hour or more when they put in a fresh force and drove us back. As soon as we reached our first ground we rallied & were going in on another charge when the 6th Corps came up at the double quick and charged... it was now dark & the conflict ceased Our loss is heavy in officers and men" Cassedy, Edward *Dear Friends at Home: The Civil War Letters and Diaries of Sergeant Charles Bowen, Twelfth United States Infantry 1861-1864* page 289 Butternut and Blue Baltimore, MD 2001). Meanwhile Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Colonel of the 20th Maine Infantry of Vincent's brigade, placed his men at the extreme left of the Union line. One company was bent back. Chamberlain, a professor of rhetoric by profession, rose to the occasion. As Longstreet's men tried to flank the Union army and gain the heights of Little Round top, Chamberlain extended his line to meet the threat. After several attacks were repulsed, the 20th Maine was out of ammunition. In a move born of desperation, The 20th Maine made a bayonet charge down the hill swinging like a barn door into the Confederate flank. Longstreet's attack was repulsed and the round tops remained in Union hands. The high ground belonged to George Meade.

There had been desultory attacks on the right by Ewell but the main push was Longstreet's this day.

Thursday July 3rd, 1863: "Sir, I have no Division!" Pickett's Charge Fails.

Robert E. Lee was nothing if not a fighter. He pushed the Union flanks and he knew "those people^[vi]" would break. Both armies had been hard used and he gambled that Meade had stripped the center of his line to defend against the attacks the previous two days. Longstreet argued against fighting at Gettysburg and against the previous day's attack and the attack now assigned to General George Pickett. Pickett's division augmented by elements from A.P. Hill's corps would assault the Union center in echelon. Eleven thousand infantry soldiers would batter through the Union center like a wedge splitting a log and roll up the Union line. At least, that was the plan (Trudeau, Noah Andre Page 481 2003). Again terrain played a major part. From Pickett's starting point to the union line was over a mile and it was uphill over open ground. From the minute the Confederates steeped off they were under fire from Union artillery. They also had to cross the Emmitsburg Road and tear down split-rail fences to do so (Debelius, Maggie Pages 130 & 131 1991). Guns from every artillery position for the Union rained shot and shell on the advancing Confederate infantry. Though Rebel artillerist E. Alexander Porter expended copious amounts of ammunition from 165 guns, it wasn't enough to beat down the Union artillery and his Union counterpart; General Henry Hunt anticipated the tactic. Unlike the battle of Fredericksburg, the Union had the high ground and they made deadly efficient use of it (MacMillan Neil K. pages 7 & 8 2007). Armistead's brigade would breach the Union line, but did not have the manpower to exploit their modest gain. All the Confederates that breached the Union line were killed or captured. Harper's Weekly noted, "All that mortal men could do to win victory was done by Pickett's veterans in the five or ten immortal minutes which followed the instant when their battle flags flaunted above the stone wall" (Guernsey, Alfred H. and Alden, Henry M. *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War* Page 513 Fairfax Press New York, NY 1868).^[vii] As Robert E. Lee watched Pickett's shattered command sullenly return he uttered, "All this has been my fault" (Catton, Bruce *Picture History of the Civil War* page 344 American Heritage / Wings Books Avenel, NJ 1960). The Confederate army would never again launch an invasion of the north.^[viii]

If Gettysburg wasn't strategically decisive as Vicksburg was^[ix] it was the defining battle for the public Over 53,000 men were casualties and unknown remains were found on the battle field as recently as 1999.

Gettysburg today.

Gettysburg is a tourist town. But it is also a college town when people like me aren't ensconced on an outlying farm reliving those three fateful days in July 1863; it is home to approximately 8,000 people (The Gettysburg Welcome Center www.Gettysbg.com 2009). That number dramatically increases the first weekend of July and the weekend before

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Thanksgiving when the town commemorates President Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*. I have climbed the hills of the battlefield, walked the streets of Gettysburg and while I know a lot more than I did when Gettysburg first captured my imagination I find that I have much more to learn^[x]. You see place is ongoing and evolving. The echoes of history compel me and stir my imagination. The quiet small town speaks to the writer in me. This is Gettysburg and she beckons. Answer that whisper. You'll be glad you did.^[xi]

[i] The Union army assaulted a well-entrenched Confederate force holding the high ground and suffered devastating casualties as a result.

[ii] The standard issue canteen for the U S Army (and the confederates) was a two-quart round canteen known as a bulls-eye canteen for the ribbing that strengthened the sides.

[iii] Lee was basically a hands-off commander who issued orders and left it in the hands of his corps commander. By inserting the words "if possible" in his orders to Ewell he was keeping in character but also gave Ewell an excuse not to move. It is probable that had "Stonewall Jackson been alive he would have taken those hills.

[iv] In a bit of irony, Daniel Sickles, a New York Congressman holds the rather dubious distinction of being the first person in the United States to be acquitted of murder by reason of temporary insanity. He murdered his wife's lover as the lover, Francis Barton Key, the son of Francis Scott Key, emerged from the Sickles house. His lawyer was Edwin Stanton, who in 1863 was Secretary of War.

[v] In this context, regular means the standing army United States regiments such as the 4th Infantry and Volunteer means those regiments raised by the individual states such as the 20th Maine Infantry.

[vi] General Lee referred to the union as "those people". He never mustered up the hatred for the Yankees that some of his comrades did.

[vii] Harper's Weekly was possibly the best-known news magazine through the late 19th century. It was the Civil War equivalent of Time or Newsweek.

[viii] However, in 1864 Confederate raiders would cross the border from Canada into St. Albans, Vermont where they would rob two banks in town in an effort to raise gold for the financially strapped Confederacy. Jefferson Davis' government never saw the money.

[ix] Vicksburg Mississippi fell July 4th, 1863 effectively splitting the Confederate States in two. The City of Vicksburg did not celebrate the 4th of July again until 1944.

[x] I have re-enacted the American Civil War for 13 years. I have also published several articles. The article quoted here was an abstract written for a CBE in military history.

[xi] All photos are courtesy of Peggy Reilly.

12th US Infantry
PO Box 5384
Syracuse, NY 13220-5384

THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH:

Volume 4 Issue 1

Upcoming Events



Please check the website, yahoo group and face book page for updates and information.

- May 4—5, Chancellorsville
- May 25—North Syracuse Family Day—Living History—Max Effort
- May 27—North Syracuse Memorial Day parade—Max Effort
- June 2—Coast Guard Auxiliary Base Commissioning Day
- June 7 –9, 21st Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend—Max Effort
- June 28—30 Gettysburg
- July 5—7 Gettysburg
- July 25—28 Massena, NY
- Aug 24—25—Erie Canal, Max Effort
- Oct 13—Wolfe Mountain—Max Effort
- Nov 9—Veterans Expo and Parade, NY State Fair Grounds
- Nov 23—Remembrance Day—Gettysburg, PA