

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

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Special points of interest:

Dues \$20.00 per family and Insurance of \$10.00 each are due. Send to the Treasurer at 12th US Infantry, PO Box 5384, Syracuse, NY 13220-5384

Submissions for next newsletter send to caroljmayers

@yahoo.com by June 20, 2015

2	Peterboro Menu
2	Book Review
3	150 th Bentonville
4	BUSY HANDS Images of the Family in the Northern Civil War Effort
5	The Importance of Drill
5	Peterboro 23rd Annual Civil War Weekend
6	Upcoming Events

Commanders Column

Command Presence.

Neil K. MacMillan, Capt. 12th US, Co. A

As I type this, it really doesn't look like re-enacting season, but the first major event has come and gone. This is my first newsletter article in my new role. First, I want to say thank you for all the support I have been given by all of you over the years. Most of the time I was first sergeant. Suffice to say, I know you all will give 1st Sgt. Camp the same level of support you gave me. As officers and NCOs we are expected to put forth a bit more than the privates do. All of our NCOs and past commanders have done just that, so Corporal DeBlieck you have some sterling examples to guide you as you get your feet wet as a non-commissioned officer. I expect the NCOs to be given the respect they have earned. I also want to see all of you privates take the corporal's exam. When the unit grows there will be need for more corporals and sergeants. I have no intention of turning the 12th into a zebra farm! Let's leave that to certain other outfits, but all of you should know the job (rank) above you so you can step up if needed.

We talked about and agreed to lift the ban on pistols. That adds an element that we have not had at our events in the last couple of years. We all need to keep our heads on a swivel and stay safe out there. We currently do not have a safety officer we have not for some time. We all should be looking out for the untoward. If you see something unsafe let me know and let the first sergeant know!

If you want to register for an event, that is fine, however, please let myself or Mrs. Mayers know so you can be counted and included for mess. Also, if you register for an event and can't go, please let me or the senior person at the event know so we're not sending out search parties. Music! You people are missed when you are not with us! You have two stellar NCOs in Sgt Burgher and Cpl. Patnode and I hope to use you not just to play pretty tunes but possibly as litter bearers at some events, a job musicians were used for and also for punishment details so limber up your flogging arm Cpl. Patnode!

Please get me ideas for scenarios at Peterboro and Erie Canal Village so we can better engage the spectators! Finally, thank you all for the confidence you have shown in me. This will be a learning experience for all of us.

Union and Liberty, now and forever!

Peterboro Civil War Weekend Mess Menu—Mrs. Hurd

We wanted to give you a menu for Peterboro Civil War Weekend. Don't worry if you look at something and say "yuck". We can always find something for you to eat.

Friday supper - chili, hot dogs, bread, pickles, cookies

Saturday breakfast - breakfast casserole, muffins, fruit, oatmeal

Saturday lunch - sandwiches, pickles, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, cookies

Saturday dinner - beef stew with dumplings and/or mashed potatoes, peas or green beans, strawberry shortcake

Sunday breakfast - buy pancake breakfast – Peterboro Methodist Church at the Smithfield Community Center

Sunday lunch - sandwiches, pickles, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, cookies + any leftovers

Which brings me to some other questions.

1. 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.
2. Let us know if you have any good ideas for meals.
3. Let me know if you are going to eat Friday dinner at Peterboro and/or Erie Canal. I know a lot of you don't get in on time.
4. 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.
5. 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! I can not stress this enough.
2. Eat something, 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! If you are not going to the bathroom, you are dehydrating. Tell someone fast, you may not be thinking straight at this point. This is very dangerous!

Book Review—Mrs. Hurd

I just read a really good book, "Revolutionary Characters, What Made the Founders Different" by Gordon S. Wood. It's a series of 10 essays about George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, James Madison, Thomas Paine and Aaron Burr. This is mostly a study on 18th century character, ethics, morals, and politics (or in Aaron Burr's case, the lack thereof) which, to my surprise, were viewed totally different than we do today. They felt they were creating a natural meritorious aristocracy, and then watched what they considered the rabble taking over. And it was interesting to watch as each man became depressed as the republic and government they created began developing into what we have today. (The epilogue on the creation of modern public opinion is excellent.) This is a totally different take on the men you think you know. The chapter on George Washington will hook you right from the start. (This won the Pulitzer Prize.)

150th Bentonville: 40 Rounds! - Corporal Denis

Over the weekend of March 21st, I travelled to North Carolina to participate in the reenactment of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Bentonville. This historic battle was one of the last major engagements of the war, and was the last major offensive of the Confederate states. It was a rebel defeat, and contributed to Gen. Johnston's surrender to Gen. Sherman at Bennet Place, NC about a month later.

I chose to participate with a campaigner adjunct battalion that was created for the event. We represented the 10th Iowa of the XV Corps. Company F was formed of reenactors including members of the 28th NY, 136th NY, several other units from the northeast, and even 6 gentlemen from the United Kingdom. Our Company consisted of roughly 46 officers, NCOs, and privates, nearly the same as the actual 10th Iowa Co. F. On the whole, the reenactor battalion was only about 40 men short of the historic size of the unit. The company was also structured the same as the historic company had been at this point in the war: 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 5 Sergeants, and 6 Corporals. I was asked to participate as a Corporal. After registering and getting gear together, we loaded 25 men at a time on a flatbed trailer for transport to the location of our Friday evening camp, about 10 miles from the main event site. With nearly 300 people, and a 40 minute round trip, it took quite some time to get everyone on site. People arrived in camp well after midnight. The trailer journey itself made me think of accounts of soldiers being moved on top of railcars during the war. Friday camp was at the edge of a cotton field left a bit swampy from recent rains, but comfortable lodgings were found in the trees, and all passed the night in relative comfort, if a bit on the chilly side.

Musicians call was sounded promptly at 3:45am, with reveille and morning roll at 4. Hearing the regiment stir, and each company having its roll called with the light of a few candles was really a nice moment. Breakfast consisted of oatmeal for those who wished to cook it, but many went without, or had some "foraged" rations that had been brought. We fell back in at 6am, and began our march to the event site. Our initial pace was probably a bit too fast, but we settled into a good rhythm. I do wonder what people living in homes along the route thought of having a column of union infantry wake them as it passed by.

With two 10 minute rests, we neared the event site. Stopping in front of a local residence, we formed column of platoons, and marched the last mile in step with music leading. (As can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3366bcFQs18>) The last bit of marching was difficult, but seeing the reactions of spectators as we entered the event area made it worthwhile. It seemed like everyone dropped what they were doing to come and see. Fortunately, we had a several hour break upon entering the event. Many feet were in fairly rough shape, as the entire march had been over pavement, so the extended rest was appreciated.

The Saturday battle was not one of the more interesting one's I've participated, though digging trenches with cups, plates, hands, and a few shovels was fun. One of the other companies in the battalion had a confederate unit unexpectedly charge and attempt to engage in unauthorized close combat, and I had one private in my section who had never before fire his rifle attempt to draw his ramrod on the field. These factors, coupled with some other frustrating actions from some newer reenactors in the company left me a bit upset/angry at the close of the battle. However, this feeling was reduced greatly when it was mentioned during an after action NCO meeting, that the original company we were portraying was made up of only 17 re-enlisted veterans, several transfers from other regiments, and a bunch of brand new recruits, and that the original veterans had many of the same feelings about newer company members as some of us were having about ours. It made for a neat historical insight.

On Saturday evening, the regimental quartermaster provided us rations of fresh beef, potatoes, carrots, and onions. After we had fixed out dinners and evening's entertainment of a locally brewed barrel of beer (and root beer) and pies for each company were provided. A special musical performance was given, and a peep show was setup near camp. (Which I never managed to find) Several other companies of the battalion had quite a party underway, but Co. F was mostly quiet and generally asleep by 10. Waking back up at midnight to hear the Colonel berate Co. B (I think) for not obeying the bugle "Lights out" in a generally period manner was worth the rude awakening!

Sunday's battle was more successful. Our wing of the battalion was rushed around the field several times repelling attacks and covering holes. Works were rapidly thrown up several times, and most everyone acted appropriately, beyond the usual reenactor goofiness. Once the battle concluded, a few quick closing remarks were given, and the 10th Iowa was again no more.

On the whole, most of the activities of our recreated battalion were period appropriate, and with minimal modern intrusion. Paperwork was filled out and presented for roll, rations, ammunition, etc. Modern equipment was generally invisible (phones, etc.) It was a pleasure to work so well with such a large group of reenactors, many who had never stood in line together, let alone drill as a regiment. The whole event was well run, and was an excellent way to begin winding down the 150th cycle.

BUSY HANDS Images of the Family in the Northern Civil War

BUSY HANDS Images of the Family in the Northern Civil War Effort

Patricia L. Richard

Fordham University Press 2003

Most of us reenactors occasionally admit that women's contribution to the Civil War was important. Then, typical guys that most of us are, we quickly move on to the battles, the slogans, patriotic declarations. We give civilian – women's – efforts short shrift. 'Tis a mistake, me hearties! If we're to impart to the public – and to each other – the fuller impact of the war, we need to pay our respects to those who wore a skirt whilst serving. Professor Richard's book gives us a wealth of information, including much that many of us are now aware of.

We know how unprepared both sides were. We also know how inadequate the medical services were in camp and on the field of battle. It's safe to say that without the help of civilians, particularly women, tens of thousands more sick and wounded soldiers would have died...perhaps twice the number who did succumb. Lifting her data from preserved documents, including personal letters home from both the women and the men they served, Professor Richard gives us a much more detailed look at the triumphs and the oft-times unreasonable challenges in caring for the soldier.

We know of the Sanitary Commission and the Christian Commission, and that at times their efforts duplicated each other. That they sometimes were bitter rivals is not generally known. That the USSC had a serious image problem due to the haughty attitudes of the men in charge isn't often mentioned, and that women who desired to serve as nurses often had enormous challenges to overcome, not the least being the simple fact that they were women dealing with Victorian era attitudes toward gender. Problems with supply, even with the help of the USSC, were chronic. Shortages of items of care and comfort such as blankets, socks and under-things for the hospitals, bandages and beds compounded the lack of food, both in amount and in variety, were met head-on by the women, often despite deliberate interference on the part of the males supposedly in charge. Men during the Victorian era were not especially motivated towards gentleness and care towards the sick and injured. Women at times had to demand the removal of the soldiers assigned to nurse their comrades-in-arms due to callousness and incompetence.

Us guys and gals who've served more recently in uniform can relate to the emotional challenges of service. After but a few weeks, we knew we'd never be the same person who went off to basic or boot. Many of us came to realize that in a very real sense, we couldn't go home, we had changed so much. It was called "nostalgia" and now it's homesickness. It can be a brutal, depressing feeling that can seriously effect our entire beings, including our job performance. It can numb us to the gentler nature of our beings, and lead us to a coarseness that is unwelcome in civil society. The women knew that.

In order to try to keep their menfolk who were "at the front" grounded and whole, virtually every city, town and neighborhood in the north formed organizations which made efforts to compensate for the government's inability to properly provide for the soldiers. The women who went off to nurse realized the importance of home to the men, and made absolutely heroic efforts to bring home to the hospitalized. Examples abound of women nurses turning their living quarters into parlors, where men could see and touch items that reminded them of home which they were soldering to preserve. Intensely personal, yet devoid of untoward physical intimacy, these women raised the spirits of the men they aided, and many are the surviving letters from those men, admitting to profound gratitude – some even insisting that such personal touches saved not just their sanity but their very lives. This book is an eye-opener, and well worth a read. We can certainly use this material in our encampments when speaking with spectators about the most profound four years in the history of our nation!

Yr Humble Serv't
Surgeon, Cap't Will Nickel
Bill Mayers

The Importance of Drill

As we venture forth into 1865 the end of this bloody war is finally in sight! Yet President Lincoln urges us to not lose focus, not become sloppy. To achieve this we must stay vigilant, we must stay sharp, and Drill will keep the men in the frame of mind they will need to be in to see this war through to its end. Winter of 1864/65 has been brutally cold for both men and beast, and for the soldiers of the 12th US the winter has been a time of change.

As we head into this reenacting season it's a season of change. A new command structure within the unit has arisen. For those unaware... a new Captain (Neil MacMillan), A new 1st Sgt (Shane Camp) and a new Corporal (Garrett DeBlieck). Corporal Dennis returns with his vast knowledge and I'm sure will be a great asset to all 3 of us as we get used to our new ranks as will PVT. Hurd (feels a bit odd to say that).

Due to low attendance it was decided to cancel the remaining drill weekends. While we all have our day to day lives along with, distance, and weather play a huge part in the drill attendance. Drill though is more than just a social gathering. We all can use the practice to knock the rust off, refresh on those common maneuvers, and work on perfecting those more complex maneuvers. Above that, a unit that moves more as ONE looks better to the spectators who come to the events.

For years Jim and Neil led us from camp to the field of battle (and usually and untimely death); they were comfortable in their roles/ranks and knew them well. So now begins the new chapter and while it would have been beneficial to have a few drill sessions for the new Officers/NCO's and soldiers to become comfortable, we will persevere (and I'm sure have many laughs at our expense).

I for one am looking forward to a new season with all of you. The 12th has become a new family...dysfunctional as it is... for my wife and me.

I encourage all of you to come forward with any ideas or scenarios that you may have. We are always open to new ideas. See you all on the field (or in camp).

Yours;
1st Sgt. Shane Camp
12th US

23rd Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend

There is a lot planned for the 23rd Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend planned for June 12—14, 2015 in Peterboro, NY.

Friday is a Living History day for approximately 160 local Fifth Graders. There is still time to sign up for a station. The thank you letters from the kids say that they learn more from the people at the stations than reading a book.

Saturday morning there will be a processional to honor veterans of the American Civil War. It starts at 11:00 am. There is a horse drawn wagon coming to carry the coffin owned by the Reichard's. The 12th US as color guards, other reenactors and public wishing to honor their Civil War Veterans. People in the procession can bring and place a 35 star flag or real flowers at the Peterboro Civil War Monument. They will need to bring their own flag and or flowers.

Saturday evening there will be a lecture by Patrick Schroder, author and Historian at Appomattox Courthouse 7:00 pm at the Smithfield Community Center.

Mrs. Mayers

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THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH:

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Upcoming Events



Please check the website, yahoo group and the Facebook group for updates and information.

April 11—12—Appomattox

April 19—Syracuse Choral Concert—Hendricks Chapel, Syracuse, NY

May 1—3—Fire on the Genesee, Mt. Morris, NY—Letchworth State Park

May 17—Grand Review - Washington, DC

May 23—North Syracuse Family Day Lonigeran Park @ North Syracuse, NY

May 25 North Syracuse Memorial Day Parade

June 6—7—Troy, NY reenactment

June 12—15 Peterboro Civil War - Weekend—Max Effort

July 18—19 Genesee Country Village Civil War Weekend

July 24—26—Massena Civil War Weekend

Aug 21—23—Erie Canal Civil War Weekend—Max Effort

Sept - 11—13—Top of the Hill—157th, Rt 13, Vienna, NY

Sept 25—27—Angelica Civil War Weekend, Angelica, NY

Nov 7—Veterans Parade and Expo—State Fair Grounds, Syracuse, NY

Nov 21—22 Remembrance Day—Gettysburg, PA