

The Bugle



Quarterly Journal of the
Camp Curtin Historical Society
and Civil War Round Table, Inc.

Fall 2009
Volume 19, Number 3



The Colors of the Blue
Union Battle Flags in the Civil War

"The field upon which we now stand will be known as classic ground, for here has been the great central point of the organization of our military forces. When my administration of public affairs will have been forgotten and the good and evil will be only known to the investigation of the antiquarian, Camp Curtin, with its memories and associations, will be immortal."

- Governor Andrew Curtin, 1865

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In Memory of Ed Hill

Edward C. Hill passed away on September 8. Ed was a long time supporter of the Camp Curtin Historical Society and we could always count on him for our living history events and the Civil War Exposition.



Ed worked for Tyco Corporation but spent much of his time recreating the 1860s. Last year he celebrated his 50th anniversary in re-enacting. He was a founding member of the 42nd Pennsylvania Bucktails, Company B, and later formed the 42nd Mississippi Infantry, Company F, and served as its captain until his death. He also portrayed Confederate General Harry Heth (above).

Ed enjoyed sharing his knowledge with people and especially loved the annual Civil War weekend with the York Catholic High School students. Ed taught himself to sew and made military and civilian clothing for his family and friends, always taking great care to get the small details just right. Beyond the Civil War, Ed liked working on cars and playing video games. He was a life-long fan of the Phillies, Eagles and Penn State.

Ed was married to his wife, Nancy, for 15 years before her passing in 1991. Ed is survived by his daughter Mindy and husband Michael J. Maneri, his son Nathan and wife Amy Hill, a grandson, and two brothers.

Ed was scheduled to participate in our Harrisburg Cemetery Tours in September as he had for many years. He will definitely be missed by all of us who had the pleasure of knowing and working with him to preserve our heritage.

Cover: *Flags were extremely important on Civil War battlefields. Our feature article looks at the different designs used by the Union Army and the unique flags issued to Pennsylvania troops.*

Camp Curtin Historical Society and Civil War Round Table

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Colors of the Blue by Lawrence E. Keener-Farley

On February 13, 1862, the 130th Pennsylvania Volunteers, men from Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Montgomery and York counties, formed their battle line just outside Fredericksburg, Virginia. Like so many other regiments that day, they were directed to charge Marye's Heights.

As they approached the Confederates, a volley dropped most of the color guard. Colonel Henry Zinn rushed forward, seized the flag and rallied his troops, exclaiming, "Stick to your standard, boys!" The men briefly held their ground but the enemy fire was intense and Col. Zinn fell amid a storm of bullets. His men carried him off the field along with the flag.

Zinn died a short time later but the flag was saved, riddled with more than thirty bullet holes and the pole almost broken by gun shots. Zinn's body would be returned home and buried in Carlisle. After the war, the Mechanicsburg Grand Army of the Republic Post would be named in his honor.

Heroism involving flags was not unusual. Flags were an important part of Civil War battles. They not only represented everything for which the men were fighting but they were also important communication tools.

In the noise and smoke of battle, the flag told the men what to do, without hearing an order from their officers. If the flag stood still, they held their ground. If the flag moved forward, they attacked. If the flag moved backwards, they had permission to retreat. Generals also watched the movement of flags to monitor the course of the battle. Were the regiments holding their ground or attacking, or were they being routed? Flags also served as the "post office" of the battlefield. Messengers looked for flags as delivery points for orders because the commander of a regiment was to be right behind the flag. Generals also had flags that indicated their position so that messengers could find them easily. (*The Bugle*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring, 2007, for an explanation of headquarters' flags.)

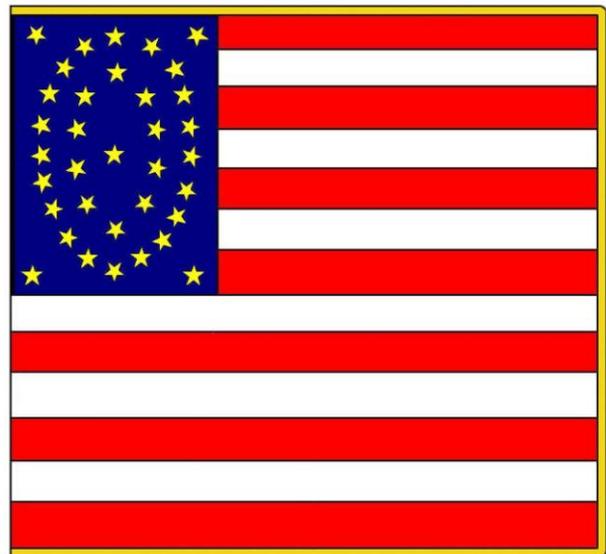
U.S. Army Regulations specified flags for regiments and companies. "Colors" were large flags carried by infantry and artillery regiments. "Standards" were smaller flags carried by cavalry regiments. "Guidons"

were small flags, with swallowtails, carried by artillery batteries and cavalry troops.

National Color

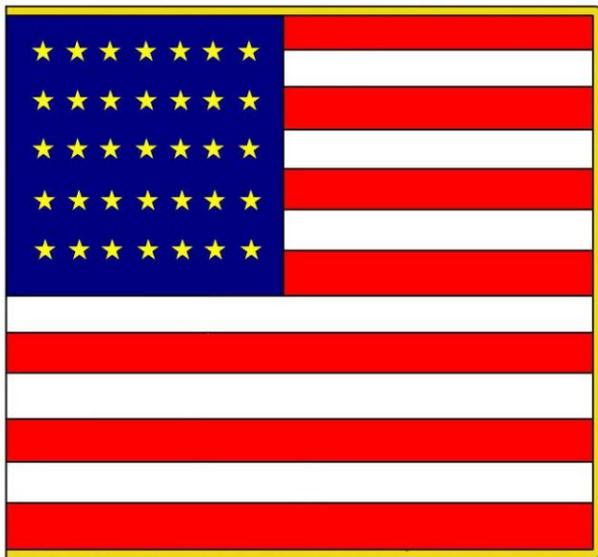
U.S. Army Regulations specified that Infantry and Artillery regiments were to carry a National Color. Cavalry regiments were not authorized to carry a National Color although some state regiments did have such flags.

For Infantry and Artillery, the size was the same - 6 feet on the hoist (pole) and 6-1/2 feet on the fly. Flags were made of silk and edged with gold fringe. Infantry flags had blue and white cords & tassels while artillery had red & yellow. No size was specified for the canton and no pattern was specified for the pattern of stars. Cantons varied from about one-third to one-half of the fly length of the flag. Regimental designation was to be placed on the middle red stripe (for example: 1st Regt. U.S. Inf.) but not all regiments did so, especially volunteer units.

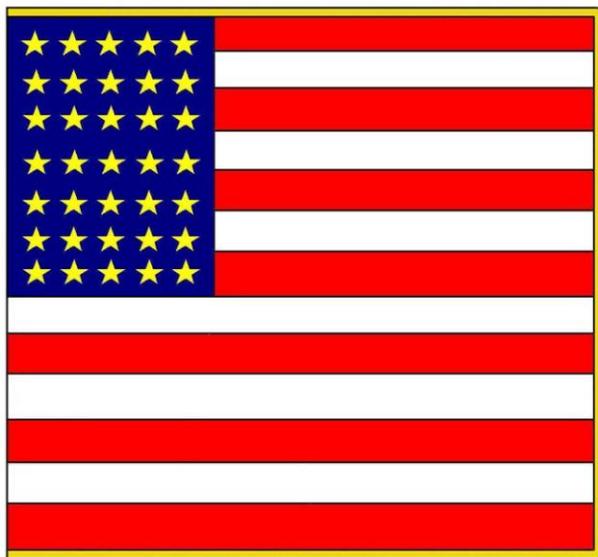


*National Color
Philadelphia QM Depot Design*

Regulations specified that both the regimental designation and the stars were to be embroidered but because of the large number of flags needed in a short period of time, the Army allowed gold paint to be substituted.



*National Color
New York QM Depot Design*



*National Color
Cincinnati QM Depot Design*

The Flag Law of 1818 provided that there be one star for each state. New stars were to be added to the flag on the 4th of July following the admission of each new state.

As the Civil War approached, there were 33 stars in the flag. Even as states were seceding in the winter of 1860-61, Kansas was admitted to the Union on January 29, 1861. Officially, its star would not be added until July 4 but some flag makers “jumped the gun” and added the new star early, making 34 stars. Later in the war, West Virginia would make 35 stars (June

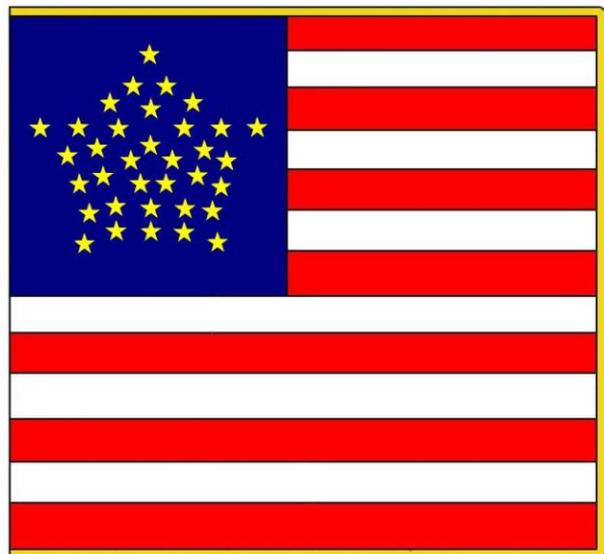
20, 1863) and Nevada would bring the total to 36 stars (October 31, 1864).

As states left the Union, some people suggested that their stars be removed from the flag but Lincoln refused. It was his view that secession was illegal and the states were still in the Union.

Some Southerners wanted to keep the Stars and Stripes since they believed they were the real Americans and the true inheritors of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Ultimately, the South adopted its own national flags, the first (the Stars and Bars) resembling the Star and Stripes.

Each of the three main Army Quartermaster (QM) Depots that contracted for the manufacture of flags had a different design for the size of the canton and pattern of the stars. The Philadelphia Depot used a double oval star pattern, with a thin canton. The New York Depot used small stars in lines, with a wide canton, while the Cincinnati Depot used large stars, with a thin canton.

Other manufacturers that made flags for states or for special presentation to units had other star patterns of lines or circles or the stars themselves formed a larger star.



*National Color
Private Contractor Design*

During the 19th century, the United States flag was treated differently than today. The National Color often dragged on the ground because of the size of flag and the length of the pole. Also, the flag was dipped in salute to government officials and military officers.

Infantry Regimental Color

Infantry regiments were authorized to carry a second flag with a blue background and the American eagle in full color. Below the eagle was a red scroll for the regimental designation. Again, U.S. Army regulations specified that the flags be embroidered but almost all were painted during the Civil War. Many volunteer units did not have the regimental designation added to the flag. Cords & tassels were blue and white. The size was the same as the National Color (6X6½ feet).



*Infantry Regimental Color
Philadelphia & Cincinnati QM Depots*



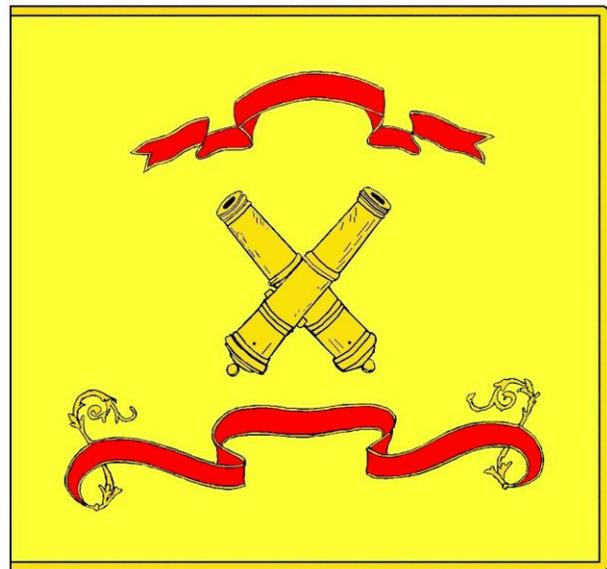
*Infantry Regimental Color
New York QM Depot*

The Philadelphia and Cincinnati Quartermaster Depots used a relatively small and simple eagle while the New York Depot used a larger and more ornate eagle. On top of the eagle were two arcs of stars equal to the number in the national color. Companies of an infantry regiment did not carry flags.

Artillery Regimental Color

Artillery regiments were authorized to carry a second flag with a yellow background and the crossed cannon insignia of the artillery in gold. Above and below the cannons were red scrolls where the regimental designation was painted. Many volunteer units did not have the regimental designation added to the flag. Cords & tassels were red and yellow.

The size was the same as the National Color (6X6½ feet). The primary variation between depot designs for this type of flag was the size and angle of the crossed cannons.



Artillery Regimental Color

As a practical matter, very few of these flags were used during the Civil War. Field artillery regiments were usually broken up and the individual batteries operated independently so they carried battery guidons. Heavy artillery units did stay together and manned fixed fortification around cities. In 1864, as Grant moved south to Petersburg and Richmond and the threat to Washington lessened, he pulled the heavy artillery units out of the forts and used them as infantry. The "heavies" carried their regimental flag with them next to the National Color. This was about the only time this type of flag was seen on the battlefield.

Cavalry Regimental Standard

Cavalry regiments were authorized to carry a 27X29 inch blue standard with the American eagle in full color. These flags have gold fringe but no cords & tassels. Like the infantry color, this flag had a red scroll for the regimental designation. Because of its smaller size, it only had 13 stars above the eagle.



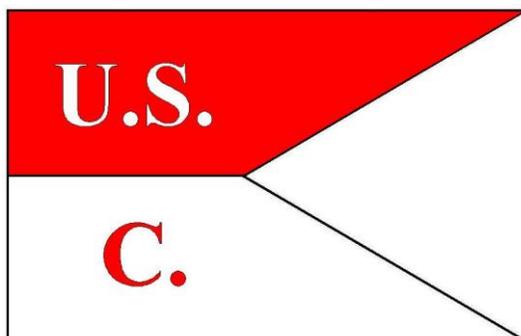
Cavalry Regimental Standard

There was little variation between depot designs for this type of flag. By U.S. Army Regulations, cavalry units did not carry a national color but some states did issue such flags to their cavalry regiments.

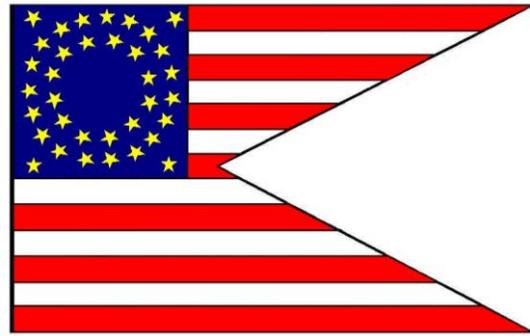
Cavalry and Artillery Guidons

Company level flags were authorized for cavalry troops and artillery batteries but not for infantry companies. The early war guidon was 27X41 inches, with a swallow-tail. It was red on the top and white on the bottom, with a white U.S. and a red company letter.

In 1862, the U.S. Army changed the guidon design to a stars and stripes, with gold painted stars usually in a double circle. Often with the company letter was painted in the middle of the circle of stars.



Red & White Guidon



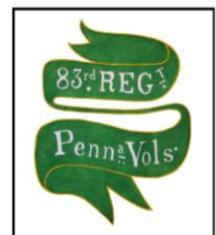
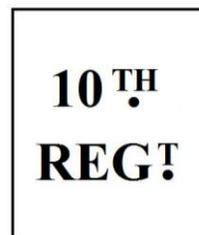
Stars & Stripes Guidon

Fort and Camp Flags

Army Regulations also specified flags to be used at permanent forts and temporary camps.

The Garrison Flag was to be the national flag 20X36 feet. The regulations did state that the canton should be one-third of the width of the flag, 12 feet, but like the regimental colors, did not specify the star pattern. Most were made with lines of stars but some were made with concentric circles or other designs. A Storm Flag, measuring 10X20 feet, was to be flown in inclement weather and high winds.

Camp Colors were 18X18 inch flags, placed at the four corners of a camp to designate boundaries. A soldier needed a pass to go beyond that boundary if not on duty. Artillery camp colors were to be red, infantry were to be white (below left and center), and none were mentioned for cavalry. The regimental number was to be in the center of the flag. Like the guidon, the design was changed to a stars and stripes design in 1862. They look like smaller versions of the National Color but without fringe. Surviving examples show that some volunteer units had presentation camp colors in a variety of other colors and designs (below right).



Camp Colors and Guidons were often also used as "Flank Markers," small flags that marked the left and right flanks of an infantry regiment in line of battle. Although not mentioned in the Army Regulations, they were described in various drill manuals.

Pennsylvania Flags

When the Civil War began, President Lincoln called for troops to put down the rebellion. The Pennsylvania Legislature authorized Gov. Andrew Curtin to procure flags for regiments, “. . . upon which shall be inscribed the number of the regiment, and painted the arms of this Commonwealth; and that all these standards, after the present unhappy rebellion is ended, shall be returned to the adjutant general of the state . . . and that they be carefully preserved.” The “arms” meant the state coat of arms (below), a version of which now appears on the state flag except that the horses are black and in harness.



The Society of the Cincinnati, the descendants of Revolutionary War officers, donated \$500 to help equip Pennsylvania's troops and this money was used to purchase the first flags. The flags were made by two Philadelphia military supply houses, Horstmann Brothers and Evans & Hassall. The original idea was that regiments would receive the two flags specified in the Army Regulations, with the National Color having the state coat of arms in among the stars. As it turned out, Pennsylvania only issued the “State Color” to its infantry regiments (right).

Cavalry regiments received standards but with the state coat of arms instead of the American eagle. The early version (next page) was similar to the coat of arms on state documents. A later version of the standard used the more symmetrical design (above) surrounded by a circle of 35 stars. Some artillery regiments also received the state color but some were given standards with the state coat of arms.

The state issued red and white guidons to artillery batteries and cavalry troops that had either the state coat of arms or P.V. (Pennsylvania Volunteers) on the top half and the company letter on the lower half (next page).

Some Pennsylvania regiments received other flags by special presentation or by requisitioning flags from the Army Quartermaster Department.

After the Civil War, the Pennsylvania flags and some of the other flags were returned to the state in a huge ceremony on July 4, 1866, at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Gov. Curtin and Gen. Meade received the flags after they had been paraded through the city.

The flags were then displayed in a flag room of the old Capitol Building and later, fortunately, moved to the Executive Office Building, avoiding destruction in the fire of 1897 that destroyed the Capitol.

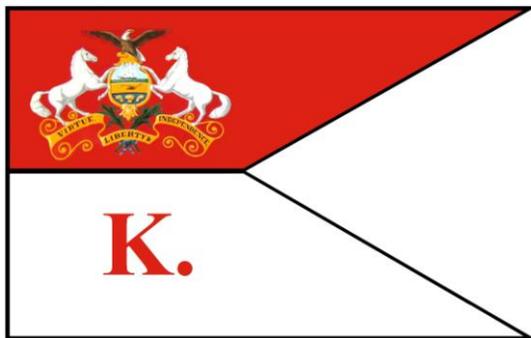
In 1914, the flags were moved back into the new Capitol Building in a great parade through the streets of Harrisburg. The flags were carried by surviving members of the regiments, many of them the original color bearers, and placed in glass display cases in the rotunda.

By the 1980's the condition of the flags was deteriorating in the glass cases. They were removed, conserved and stored in a temperature and humidity controlled facility by the Pennsylvania Capitol Preservation Committee. Camp Curtin has cooperated with the committee several times to open the facility and offer tours. Dr. Richard Sauers' two-volume work, *Advance the Colors*, documents the history of the Pennsylvania flags. The Committee's website has pictures of all of the flags in the collection (www.cpc.state.pa.us). Anyone who would like to see the flags can call 717-783-6484 for an appointment.

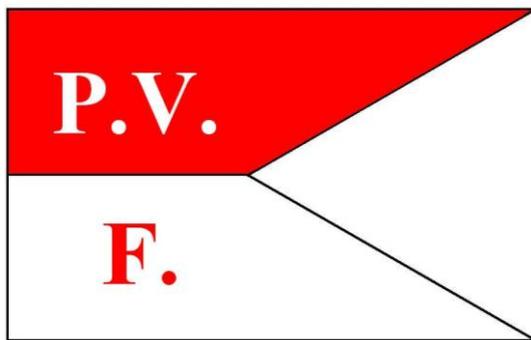




Pennsylvania State Cavalry Standard



Pennsylvania State Guidon Type I



Pennsylvania State Guidon Type II

Flag Terms

Field - The largest portion of the flag, essentially the background color.

Canton - The upper left of the flag (the blue part on the U.S. flag).

Finial - The decoration (eagle, spear point, ball, etc.) at the top of the pole. During the Civil War, most Union flags used a design known as the "Army Spear." It resembles the spade symbol in a deck of cards.

Ferrule - The metal tip at the bottom of the pole.

Fringe - Primarily decorative but it also keeps the edges of the flag from fraying.

Cords & Tassels - Primarily decorative but also used to tie the flag when it is furled.

Battle Honors - Names of battles inscribed on the flag in which the unit participated. Today, streamers with campaign names are used.

Staff - A fixed pole at a military installation. Flags are flown at "half staff" not "half mast" (except on ships that have masts).

Pike - The pole for infantry or artillery colors. U.S. Army Regulations specified 9 feet 10 inches from tip of spear point to end of ferrule.

Lance - The pole for cavalry standards and guidons, and artillery guidons. U.S. Army Regulations specified 9 feet from tip of spear point to end of ferrule.

Presentation Flag - A flag given to a unit by an individual or group. Often they were quite elaborate and sometimes did not follow Army Regulations.

This article is one of a continuing series designed to explain some of the basics of the Civil War. Our next issue of *The Bugle* will cover "The Colors of the Gray – The Flags of the Confederacy." A PowerPoint presentation on Union and Confederate Flags is available for schools and organizations. Questions may be directed to campcurtin1861@aol.com.

Return of the Colors

When the Pennsylvania troops officially returned their colors to the Commonwealth on July 4, 1866, many of the spectators and the war orphans in the parade carried souvenir flags. The little 10X10 inch flag has a representation of the state coat of arms in the canton and the date on the sixth stripe somewhat like the regimental designation on the battle flags.



Keener-Farley Collection

Gettysburg Flags

To see examples of Civil War flags, visit the Gettysburg National Military Park's Museum and Visitor Center. On display, you will find several Union and Confederate flags.

Most notable among the flags is the 150th Pennsylvania Infantry State Color on loan from the Capitol Preservation Committee. The flag was captured during the first day's fighting at Gettysburg and sent to Confederate President Jefferson Davis as a trophy of war. When Davis fled Richmond in April of 1865, he took the flag with him. When he was captured by Union cavalry, the flag was in his baggage and ultimately returned to the state.

Confederate flags in the museum include examples of the First National Flag ("Stars and Bars") and the Army of Northern Virginia Battle Flag. Other Union flags include a stars and stripes guidon, a camp color and headquarters flags.

The Gettysburg Museum and Visitor Center is open 8AM to 5PM, November through March. For more information about the Museum, its website is www.gettysburgfoundation.org.

Upcoming Activities

October 25 – Monument Clean-Up

Camp Curtin will conduct its semi-annual clean-up of the 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry Monument site at the Gettysburg National Military Park on October 25. To volunteer, call Jack Thomas at 717-766-1899.

December 4 – Dinner & Gettysburg Talk

Camp Curtin will hold a joint event with the Hershey Civil War Round Table on Friday, December 4, at the Linglestown American Legion. Wayne Motts, director of the Adams County Historical Society, will present a program on Schmucker Hall at the Lutheran Seminary during the Battle of Gettysburg.

Dinner reservations must be received by November 20; cost is \$25.00 per person. Guests may also come after the dinner just for the program. For information contact Richard Burton at 717-545-2336 or email sylvan7216@verizon.net.

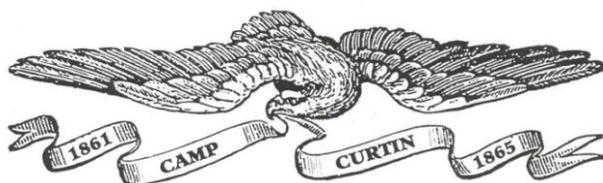
Descendant Brigade

Membership in the Camp Curtin Descendant Brigade is open to men, women and children (12 years of age or older) who are direct or collateral descendants of a soldier who passed through Camp Curtin from April 18, 1861 to November 11, 1865.

Descendants of civilians who worked or volunteered at Camp Curtin are also eligible. The Ladies Union Relief Association of Harrisburg is one of the civilian organizations that worked at Camp Curtin.

The application fee is \$25.00. Accepted members will receive a membership medal, membership certificate, and a one year membership in the Society. We plan to present the first medals and certificates at our November 8 meeting. Subsequent dues will be \$15.00 per year.

For more information or to receive an application form, email campcurtin1861@aol.com or telephone 717-732-5330.



The Camp Curtin Historical Society

proudly presents

James Hessler

speaking on his new book

Sickles at Gettysburg

2:00PM, Sunday, November 8, 2009

at the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg

James Hessler, a Gettysburg licensed battlefield guide, will discuss his new book, *Sickles at Gettysburg: The Controversial Civil War General Who Committed Murder, Abandoned Little Round Top, and Declared Himself the Hero of Gettysburg*. No individual who fought at Gettysburg was more controversial, both personally and professionally, than Major General Daniel E. Sickles.



By 1863, Sickles was notorious as a disgraced former Congressman who murdered his wife's lover on the streets of Washington and used America's first temporary insanity defense to escape justice. At Gettysburg, he openly disobeyed orders in one of the most controversial decisions in military history. No single action dictated the battlefield strategies of George Meade and Robert E. Lee more than Sickles' unauthorized advance to the Peach Orchard, and the mythic defense of Little Round Top might have occurred quite differently were it not for General Sickles. Fighting heroically, Sickles lost his leg on the field and later worked to remove General Meade from command of the army.

Although he nearly lost the battle, Sickles was one of the earliest guardians of the battlefield when he returned to Congress, created Gettysburg National Military Park, and helped preserve the field for future generations. Mark your calendar and join us for this fascinating story and a special display of Sickles' artifacts.

This presentation is free. Bring a friend.

**We will also present our first membership badges and certificates for the
Camp Curtin Descendant Brigade.**

Admission to the museum galleries requires the purchase of a ticket.

For information call 717-732-5115 or email genjenkins@aol.com.