

The Bugle



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

Winter 2018
Volume 28, Number 4



The Civil War in Winter

"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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Membership Challenge

Recently, we sent a letter to all of our members requesting that as you pay your 2019 dues that you consider inviting a friend to join or giving them a gift membership. For each new membership sponsored, your name will be included in a special raffle to be drawn at our annual meeting in March. Help us continue our mission of preservation, education, and commemoration. If you need more membership forms, email campcurtin@verizon.net.

Civil War Preservation Ball

The 16th Annual Civil War Preservation Ball will be held 7-10PM, Saturday, March 30, 2019 in the rotunda of the Pennsylvania Capitol Building to support the Gettysburg Monuments Project Endowment Trust Fund. This ball has raised \$100,000 for preservation. Music by the Philadelphia Brigade Band and dance instruction by the Victorian Dance Ensemble, the performing troupe of the Civil War Dance Foundation. Cost: \$20 per student (18 and younger), \$35 per person or \$65 per couple. Tickets limited; no sales at the door. For an information packet and reservation form, telephone 717-732-5330 or email PreservationBall@CivilWarDance.org.

COVER – Our lead article in this issue looks at the Civil War in wintertime and our cover illustration shows a Union guard on picket duty in the snow, not the typical scene most people think of when they think of the Civil War.

The Camp Curtin Historical Society and Civil War Round Table, Inc., is a non-profit corporation chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Contributions are tax deductible under IRC Section 501(c)(3). The Society is properly registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State as a charitable organization. A copy of the registration and financial information may be obtained by telephoning toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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Civil War in Winter



When most people think of the Civil War, they imagine great armies fighting over vast open fields under bright summer sunshine. With a few exceptions, battles were usually fought from April through October. During the winter months, the Union and Confederate armies ceased campaigning and went into winter camp. The soldiers were confined to these fixed camps in tents and cabins with little to occupy their time. It was the most boring time of the war.

The first problem both armies faced was how to house the men over the winter. The Union's industrial base and better transportation system gave them a distinct advantage in supplying tents and materials for building cabins.

The most common tent used by the U.S. Army was invented by Henry Sibley in 1856 while he was a young officer serving on the plains. He modeled it after Indian Teepees. The Sibley Tent (top of page) was twelve feet high, eighteen feet in diameter, and could sleep up to a dozen men. Sibley also invented a wood burning stove for the tent. Sometimes, the soldiers would add to the height by building a log base for the tent and even adding a wooden door. When the Civil

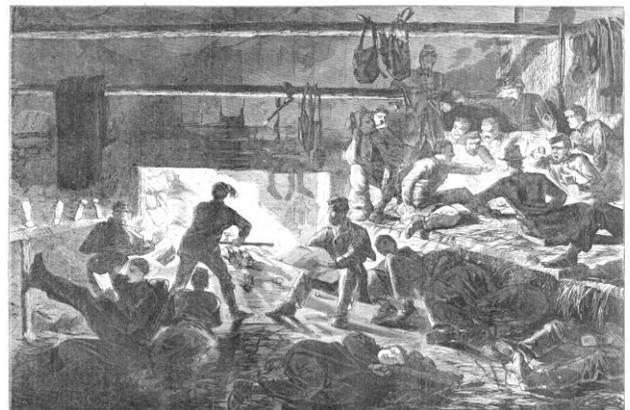


War came, Sibley resigned his commission and became a general in the Confederate Army.

As the war went on, winter camps became more substantial. Both armies built wooden shacks and cabins to house the men. Often they had fire places for warmth and cooking.



The artist Winslow Homer depicted the interior of one of these cabins for the January 23, 1863, issue of *Harper's Weekly*. Somewhat fancifully, the text describes the interior:



“. . . in which a glowing fire is blazing, shedding light and warmth around. Stretched on the floor, bunks, and seats, are soldiers in every imaginable position - smoking, chatting, reading, card-playing, and sleeping. Almost in every company there is one sharp-witted fellow who can tell a good story. The soldiers' great delight is to get this man into a tent or hut, and start him on a good long old-fashioned yarn, which lasts from dark until far on in the night. The scene—while the narrator is harrowing the imaginations of his rapt hearers, and the red glare of the fire lights up odd spots in the darkness—is very striking.”

In camp, there was little for the soldiers to do, so officers often had the men assemble to practice maneuvers. Oliver Norton of the 83rd Pennsylvania Infantry wrote, "The first thing in the morning is drill, then drill, then drill again. Then drill, drill, a little more drill. Then drill, and lastly drill. Between drills, we drill, and sometimes stop to eat a little and have roll-call." Such drills, however, were limited by cold temperatures, snow or muddy fields.



In winter camp, one of the most awaited events was the arrival of a “Soldier Box” from the folks at home. During the Civil War, family

and friends at home often sent boxes to their “boys” in the field. It was most common during the winter months when the soldiers were in fixed camps and could use “luxury” items, such as extra shirts and socks, canned goods, dried fruit, nuts, books, candles, stationery, and cookies. Soldiers often wrote home with their “want list,” somewhat like writing to Santa Claus. In an illustration from Harpers Weekly newspaper (bottom left), Union soldiers are shown gleefully opening a box from home at Christmas. Although liquor and wine were banned in camps, some was smuggled in with the boxes. One common form was to send patent medicines that had a high alcoholic content. Once the spring campaigning season came, however, most of these items would be left behind and a soldier would take on the march with him only the fond memory of a loved-one’s thoughtfulness.



Soldiers found all sorts of ways to occupy their time. Fortunately for historians, one of the most common activities was writing letters home, reading letters received from home, and writing diaries (above). The Civil War was one of the first wars that had a high number of literate participants, and all of this writing has given researchers a wealth of information from all levels of the military and civilian society.

With so many men crowded into close quarters and the lack of modern sanitation, the spread of

disease was a real problem. Colds, influenza, pneumonia, dysentery, and other maladies were common. Unfortunately, many men spent a lot of time recovering in hospitals. Hospitals were built in most camps to treat the men. In the camps around large cities like Washington and Richmond, local women often served as nurses. Northern hospitals' interiors were usually painted white and rather spacious because it was thought to be healthier for the patients (below).



Not all wintertime activities were so serious. Harper's Weekly reported in its February 20, 1864, issue on a ball held by the Third Army Corps: "Our Army of the Potomac, taking advantage of the cessation of hostilities during the winter, indulges now and then in a festive entertainment. The presence of soldiers' wives with their husbands in camp gives, of course, the crowning charm to these gatherings. We present our readers this week, a sketch of a ball lately given by the Third Army Corps (top right). The upper compartment of the picture will give our readers some idea of the difficulties which failed to prevent the arrival of visitors. Below this is the dancing-hall, made up of tents, and decorated with flags and evergreens. Another portion of the sketch gives a view of the supper-room. While the fortunate soldiers who have partners are at supper with their ladies, those not so successful are engaged in what is called the "gander" dance, which our artist has faithfully represented on the same page. This ball was quite a success; a score of Generals attended; and it was altogether an event to break up the monotony of every-day dreariness in camp. It was the first opportunity that gave the ladies staying with their husbands in camp a chance to come together."



There are also several reports of the men dancing with each other when there were no women around. Sometimes the men even wrote home asking their ladies to send them old dresses so that they could dress up and appear more ladylike for the dances.



When it snowed, the men would have snowball fights between units, some carrying their regimental colors and the officers leading them into "battle." Winter was a boring time for Civil War soldiers and they would do almost anything to relieve the monotony.

GNMP Winter Lecture Series

The Gettysburg National Military Park Winter Lecture Series will be held at 1:30PM on weekends in the Museum and Visitor Center, 1195 Baltimore Street, Gettysburg, Pa., from January 5 through March 31, 2019. These programs are free and are about one hour long. Some programs are repeated. For more information, visit the Park website at www.nps.gov/gett/.



Saturday, January 5

The Unfinished Work: The World Wars at Gettysburg
by Jared Frederick

Sunday, January 6

Roger B. Taney and His Changing Place in American History by Karlton Smith

Saturday, January 12

The Battle of Bristoe Station - Lee Renews the Offensive
by Matt Atkinson

Sunday, January 13

"I have never seen so much damage" - The George Rose Farm at Gettysburg by John Heiser

Saturday, January 19

If These Things Could Talk: Artifacts in the Collection of Gettysburg National Military Park by Tom Holbrook

Sunday, January 20

Five Men on a Slow Boat Going Nowhere: The Hampton Roads Conference of February 3, 1865
by Bert Barnett

Saturday, January 26

The Wills Family & Lincoln's Visit: Life in a Northern Town by Troy Harman

Sunday, January 27

Specimens of Morbid Anatomy: Gettysburg Anatomy in the Army Medical Museum by Savannah Rose

Saturday, February 2

The War for the Common Soldier by
Dr. Peter Carmichael

Sunday, February 3

On the Tenuous Edge of Freedom: Gettysburg's African-American Community Before, During, and After the Battle by John Hoptak

Saturday, February 9

Scapegoat or Scandal?: JEB Stuart during the Gettysburg Campaign by Matt Atkinson

Sunday, February 10

Twilight at Gettysburg: The 1938 Reunion of the Blue and the Gray by Christopher Gwinn

Saturday, February 16

Eisenhower and the American Civil War
by Daniel Vermilya

Sunday, February 17

From Albuquerque to Richmond: Longstreet's Long Journey from New Mexico to the Seat of War
by Karlton Smith

Saturday, February 23

Unprecedented Discovery at Manassas National Battlefield by Brandon Bies

Sunday, February 24

Lincoln Mythed: Memorial Biographies and the Damage Done to History – A Discussion
by Bert Barnett

Saturday, March 2

College Students in the Battle of Gettysburg: A Different Kind of Soldier by Troy Harman

Sunday, March 3

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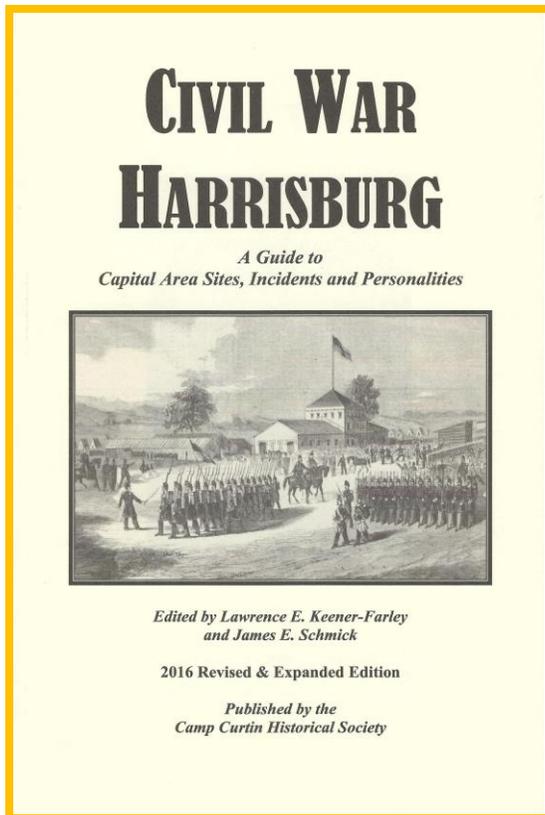
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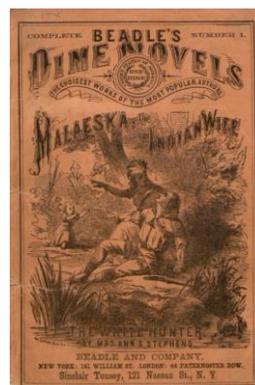
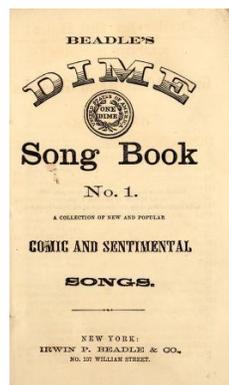
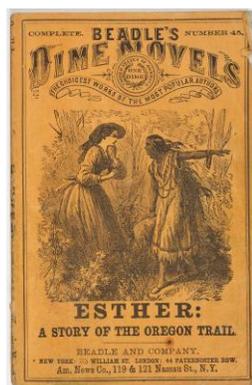
Bob Sullivan

speaking on

Dime Novels in the Civil War

2:00PM, Sunday, March 3rd

**Camp Curtin Memorial-Mitchell United Methodist Church
2221 North 6th Street, Harrisburg, Pa. 17110**



During the Civil War, publishers produced hundreds of inexpensive paperback books of not only fictional stories but also manuals on cooking, etiquette, dancing, letter writing, health and other topics. They were read by soldiers and civilians as a form of entertainment, education and to pass time. Bob Sullivan has been researching paperwork since the late 1970s. He worked for the National Park Service and was a Gettysburg Licensed Battlefield Guide and is now an instructor with Springhouse Education and Consulting. He also conducts a small side business of reproducing books, forms and stationery items for reenactors, museums and media productions.

This presentation is free. Bring a friend.

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