

# The Bugle



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

Summer 2010  
Volume 20, Number 2

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*Artillery Night Firing at Civil War Days*

*"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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**The Bugle • Summer 2010, Volume 20, Number 2**

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## Making Change



During the Civil War, the economies of the North and South were strained to the breaking point. Lack of confidence in paper money and a shortage of coinage caused numerous problems in the every-day conduct of business. To alleviate the problem of the lack of coins to make change, the North devised several schemes. People started using postage stamps as a medium of exchange and various brass holders containing a stamp, with a mica window to see the value of the stamp, circulated as coins. Merchants began issuing their own coins that not only helped to make change but also advertised their business. This type of trade token is quite common. Somewhat rarer is merchant-issued script or paper currency. Pictured above is a rare example of a Harrisburg business – Eby and Kunkel, wholesale grocers – that used its own fractional currency paper notes issued through the State Capital Bank. The bank would pay the bearer in cash but only when the total of the script was over one dollar. The design is unusual in that it features a portrait of a little girl in a fancy bonnet.

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**Cover:** *Cooper's Battery presented their traditional night firing at our Civil War Days in Negley Park on June 19. This photograph captures the flame coming out of the muzzle and smoke and sparks coming out of the vent at the breech of the gun.*

## Camp Curtin Historical Society and Civil War Round Table

Post Office Box 5601  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
Telephone: 717-732-5330

Home Page:  
<http://www.campcurtin.org>

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Send articles and photographs to:

Editor  
Camp Curtin Historical Society  
P. O. Box 5601  
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Telephone: 717-732-5330

Email:  
[CampCurtin@verizon.net](mailto:CampCurtin@verizon.net)

# CIVIL WAR DAYS

The Camp Curtin Historical Society held its annual Civil War Days on June 19 and 20 at Lemoyne's Negley Park, located next to the area that was Fort Washington, the main defense of Harrisburg during the June 1863 invasion of Cumberland County.

Each year, the Society introduces a few more people to our neglected local Civil War history. One of the most frequently heard comments was, "I had no idea so much happened right here on the West Shore." Free maps to local Civil War sites were quickly picked up and sales of our *Civil War Harrisburg* booklet were brisk.

Throughout the weekend, visitors toured the encampment of Cooper's Battery (*top right*), examined their Ten Pounder Parrott Rifle, talked to the gun crew and asked questions about the life of the soldiers, and watched the firing demonstrations.

On Saturday evening, the Victorian Dance Ensemble conducted a Civil War Dance in the park pavilion (*middle right*). On a very warm evening, the VDE dancers in proper period attire whirled around the dance floor with guests mostly in t-shirts and shorts. Despite the heat, everyone had a good time and several initially reluctant guests were surprised by how much fun they had learning the old dances.

As darkness set in, everyone moved up the hill for the traditional evening cannon firing by Cooper's Battery. As seems to have become a tradition at this event, dozens of people already lined the embankment awaiting the spectacular demonstration (*cover photo*).

Over the two days, several Camp Curtin members also presented displays of artifacts related to the Harrisburg area in the Civil War (*bottom right*), and gave talks on flags, weapons, and local history.

Next year, as we enter the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the Society plans to expand its programs. In 2011, Civil War Days will be held on June 18-19. Mark your calendar now and plan to attend.



# Civil War Era Photography

Photography was a relatively new science and art during the Civil War. Building upon the work of others, Louis Daguerre, a French inventor, perfected a practical photographic process in 1839.

The first photographers were professionals who learned by trial and error and each developed his own technique. Cameras were big, heavy and expensive. They were made of wood, with leather bellows for focusing, and brass mounted lenses. Metal plates and later glass plates had to be coated with light sensitive chemicals just before a picture was taken and the plate had to be processed within minutes or the image would be lost. Thus, it was known as a wet plate process. Exposures took several seconds, even in bright sunlight, so there was little ability to stop action. The cameras did not have shutters so the exposure was made by removing the lens cap.



**Daguerreotypes**, the original form of photography, used a silver-coated copper plate. Because a lens flips an image, left and right were reversed in the final product. Daguerreotypes had to be viewed at an angle because the silver coating is much like a mirror; if you look directly into it, you will see yourself reflected. This reflection is one way to distinguish a daguerreotype from the later ferrotype and ambrotype photographs. By the time of the Civil War, this silver-based photography was being replaced by cheaper forms of photography.

**Ferrotypes** were wet plate photographs on an iron plate. “Ferro” is the Latin root for iron. They are erroneously called a “tintype” because many metals at the time were simply described as tin. The resulting picture was a one-of-a-

kind; there was no negative, so if you wanted a second picture you had to have another photo taken. Ferrotypes tended to be somewhat dark and lacked contrast and like the daguerreotype, the image was reversed. This reversing of left and right often leads to confusion in interpreting photographs. It is often necessary to look at weapons, tools and how clothing is worn to determine the correct alignment. When published in modern books, the images are often flipped so that everything is on the “correct” side.

**Ambrotypes** were also wet plate photographs but on plain glass. The resulting image was a negative (*below left*) that becomes a positive when displayed against a black background (*below right*). Initially, the glass plate was displayed in a special case or frame as the photograph but ultimately these negatives were used to make paper prints.



The sizes of the photographic plates were relatively standard and had specific names depending on the size of the plate:

Full Plate	6-1/2 X 8-1/2 inches
1/2 Plate	4-1/2 X 5-1/2 inches
1/4 Plate	3-1/4 X 4-1/4 Inches
1/6 Plate	2-3/4 X 3-1/4 inches
1/9 Plat	2 X 2-1/2 inches
1/16 Plate	1-3/8 X 1-5/8 inches

Photographers sometimes had multiple lenses on their cameras to produce several pictures at the same time. The plate could then be cut and

placed in cases. With such a glass plate, several images could be printed at one time.

Daguerreotypes, ferrotypes and ambrotypes were usually placed in brass or copper frames and mounted in decorative velvet-lined cases. Thus, they are often referred to as “**cased images.**” A common misconception is that all



cased images are daguerreotypes. The cases (*above*) were made from a variety of materials, including wood, paper mâché, and thermoplastic (a patented compound of varnish and sawdust). Occasionally, paper photographs are also found in cases. Often it is difficult to tell what type of photo is in a case without taking it apart. This can be done by carefully inserting a straight pin between the metal frame and the edge of the case and prying it up.

**Cartes de Visite** ("CDV" or Visiting Card) are made from a glass negative, printed on paper and mounted on a card about 2½X4 inches, usually with the photographer's name on the back. This was the most common form of photography during the Civil War and they are similar to modern photographs. With the negative, it was possible to make multiple copies and to collect pictures of family, friends and celebrities.



Many families displayed their collections in small albums on a table in their parlor.



In 1864, the U.S. Government imposed a new tax on various items to pay for the war effort. To prove the tax had been paid, photographers were required to affix a tax stamp to the back of each photograph (*left*). The presence of this stamp indicates a photo was taken late in the war.

CDVs would be replaced in the 1870s by **Cabinet Cards**, larger photos mounted on cardboard, about 4¼X6½ inches, usually with the photographer's information on the front as a form of advertising. Some Civil War images were reprinted in this format. They were called cabinet cards because they were often displayed in parlor display cabinet with other family curios and knickknacks.

**Stereoviews** were taken with a twin lens camera that created two slightly different photographs of the same subject. The two pictures were mounted side-by-side on a card. When the card was viewed through a stereoscope, a 3-D effect is created. The stereoview survives today in the ViewMaster and its round picture cards.



Dating photographs can be relative simple by looking at the military and civilian fashions that are pictured. If the photo is identified to a photographer, several books have been published that list photographers and their dates of operations. For Pennsylvania, consult *Directory of Pennsylvania Photographers, 1839–1900* by Linda A. Ries and Jay W. Rudy, (Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pa., 1999).

# Remembering the Centennial



As we go through the 150th anniversary, we will recall memories of the Civil War Centennial since many of us had our interest sparked at that time.

In April 1959, as the centennial of the Civil War approached, Robert Fowler of Mechanicsburg launched a new publication – *Civil War Times*. It would go through several evolutions over the years and change its name to *Civil War Times Illustrated* in 1962. The first nine issues were in a tabloid newspaper style, 11X17 inches on glossy paper. It was the forerunner of all of the popular Civil War magazines we have today. When he was alive, Bob was a member of the Camp Curtin Historical Society and we can all thank him for his foresight in founding the publication.

At the time, not everyone, however, was pleased with the idea of commemorating the Civil War. In some of the first issues, Bob printed some opposing ideas, some of which may sound like current comments.

*I saw your ad in the New York Times Book Review Section saying you were starting a magazine “devoted to the Nation’s most exciting period” or some such claptrap. For one, I am fed up with reading and hearing about the Civil War. For my money, the so-called Civil War “buffs” ought to spend their time living in the present and letting the past bury its own dead. This country needs a magazine about the Civil War like it needs a hole in the head. – John L. Schmidt, New York City (CWT, April 1959).*

Civil War Times often printed editorials and news from around the country. A surprising anti-Civil War commemoration editorial came from a New England newspaper.

**CELEBRATION? NO THANKS!** *One of the most asinine projects on which the Federal Government is currently spending money is the project of a centennial celebration of the Civil War. This is about equal to a man deciding to celebrate, many years later, the fact that his wife once wanted to divorce him but that he beat her into insensibility so she gave up the idea. He might properly celebrate the happy years that developed thereafter but not the painful one of their near separation. After all, the*

*Civil War represented the saddest day in American history. It was the time when fellow citizens of this great country took up arms against each other and shot each other down. Battle deaths, on both sides, reached 214,938, and deaths from other causes totaled 233,394. The Civil War was the greatest tragedy in our national history. Why celebrate it? Why rub salt in the wounds of the defeated South? Or is this just another plan to insult and degrade the feelings of the citizens of the Southern States? The Supreme Court has already crushed down on the head of the South its crown of thorns in the form of the desegregation order. Now, on top of desegregation, the plan apparently is to revive and celebrate the hour of the South’s greatest defeat and misery. This prize blunder is to be financed by tax money coming from all of us, including Southerners. The celebration of the Civil War Centennial ought to be stopped right now before it goes any further. – Editorial from the Manchester, N. H., Union-Leader (CWT, June 1959).*

In its second year, Civil War Times had to raise its subscription from \$3.50 to \$4.95 per year. One reader reacted negatively to this increase and expressed her views about covering the Civil War.

*I subscribed to your magazine mainly out of curiosity to see just what kind of good things anyone could say about a conflict that tore this country asunder. In its appeal to the bloodthirsty instincts that lie just beneath the human surface, your publication is lively and I suppose accurate as it claims. My curiosity is now satisfied. Now that you are raising your rates so outlandishly, you can let my subscription lapse. For all its variety and liveliness, I can’t understand why anyone would pay \$4.95 a year to read about a war that is best forgotten. – Mrs. Ethel B. Dorsher, Baltimore, Md. (CWT, February 1960).*

Fortunately, the new magazine prospered and thanks to *Civil War Times’* pioneering work, we all have more access to material on the Civil War through magazines, newspapers, television programs, and movies.

## Artifact Display at GNMP



Three members of Camp Curtin presented “**The Guns of Gettysburg**” program at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center on July 17 and August 14. Pvt. Tyrone Cornbower, Capt. Larry Keener-Farley and Pvt. Jeff Trace (*left to right*) displayed original weapons and other artifacts from the Civil War, explained their workings and how they were used in battle. Hundreds of visitors stopped by to hear the talks, ask questions, handle the weapons and pose for pictures with these pieces of American history. One of the most popular weapons was the seven shot repeating Spencer Rifle, held by Jeff, used by Custer’s troops on July 3, while fighting Stuart’s troopers. Several times during the day, our volunteers had to correct the widely held myth that Buford’s cavalymen had Spencers on the first day of the battle.

## Camp Curtin Picnic

Camp Curtin Historical Society held its annual picnic at Negley Park in Lemoyne on August 5. About fifty of our members turned out to enjoy a pleasant evening along the Susquehanna River. Good food and Civil War talk abounded! Jim Schmick served as our head chef and cooked up the chicken, hamburgers and hot dogs provided by the Society. Our guests brought side dishes, drinks and desserts; everyone probably overate a little but it was hard to say “no” to all of the delicacies. Special thanks to Glenda Blair for donating door prizes and to all of those who helped.



## Harrisburg Speakers

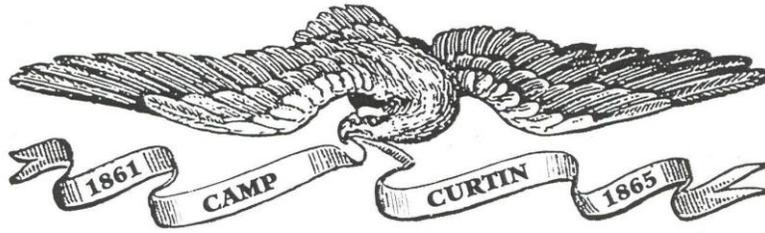
The Harrisburg Civil War Round Table will begin its 52nd season this September. Dinner meetings are held on Fridays at the Radisson Penn Harris Hotel in Camp Hill. Presentations are free. Contact Gloria Hoffmeier for details and dinner reservations (\$20.00) at 717-938-3706 or email [gloho@comcast.net](mailto:gloho@comcast.net).

September 10 - Charles "Ted" Alexander, Chief Historian, Antietam Battlefield - "*When War Passed This Way: The Civil War in Franklin County, Pennsylvania*"

October 22 - Capt. Steven W. Knott, USN, U.S. Army War College - "*Lee at Antietam: Strategic Imperatives, The Tyranny of Arithmetic, & The Trap Not Sprung*"

November 19 - A. Wilson Greene, Director of Pamplin Historical Park - "*Beauregard at Petersburg*"

December 10 - John Feldhausen, HCWRT Member - "*The 4th Wisconsin Infantry/Cavalry Regiment: A Personal Journey into History*"



*History comes alive at the*  
*Camp Curtin Historical Society's*  
**Harrisburg Cemetery Tours**  
**Sunday, September 12**



**Tours will leave from the Caretaker's House at 12:30PM, 1:15PM, 2:30PM and 3:00PM.  
Tours will be conducted by local historians James Schmick, George Nagle, and Bruce Horner.**

*Visit the graves and hear the stories of numerous personalities who influenced local, state and national events in the 19th century. Visitors will learn about Lincoln's first Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, and Brig. Gen. Joseph Knipe, the man who named Camp Curtin. They will hear the story of the Confederates buried in Harrisburg, admire Maj. Gen. John Geary's beautifully restored monument, and see Mary Todd Lincoln's great grandfather's grave. The tours will visit more than two dozen "residents" of the cemetery.*

**Display of Civil War artifacts and presentations by living historians, including the odd Victorian custom of picnicking at a grave.**

**Adults - \$5.00 (CCHS Members - \$4.00) All children under 16 - \$1.00**

**The Harrisburg Cemetery is at the eastern end of the State Street Bridge.**

**For information call 717-732-5115 or email [genjenkins@aol.com](mailto:genjenkins@aol.com).**