

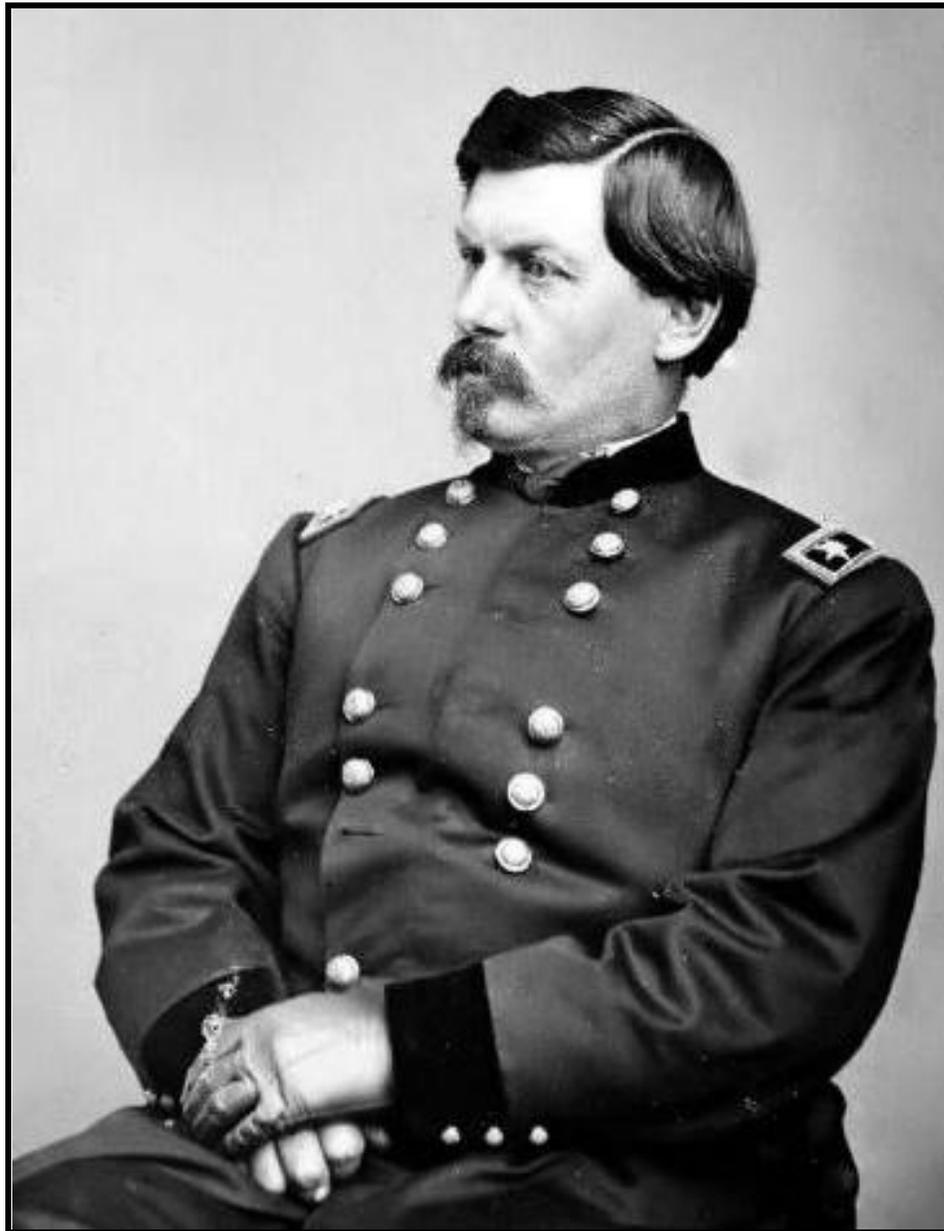
# The Bugle



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

Summer 2012  
Volume 22, Number 2

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*Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan*

*"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 2012, Volume 22, Number 3**

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## Civil War Days in Lemoyne

The Camp Curtin Historical Society held its annual Civil War Days on June 16 and 17 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 books on our local Civil War history were brisk.

Throughout the weekend, visitors toured the encampment of Cooper's Battery (above), 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.

Over the two days, several Camp Curtin members also presented displays of artifacts related to the Harrisburg area in the Civil War and gave talks on flags, weapons, and local history. On Saturday evening, the Victorian Dance Ensemble conducted a Civil War dance and afterwards Cooper's Battery had their traditional night cannon firing.

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**Cover:** *In the spring and early summer of 1862, the Union seemed on the verge of victory as its army moved to within a few miles of Richmond. Major General George B. McClellan had done an excellent job reorganizing and reenergizing the Army of the Potomac but, unfortunately, he lacked the confidence and fighting spirit to lead it into the Confederate capital and perhaps final victory.*

## 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)

# McClellan: Great Organizer, Lackluster Fighter

After the Union's disastrous defeat at First Bull Run in July 1861, the hopes for Northern victory rested on the shoulders of George Brinton McClellan. His intelligence, education and experience had brought him to the center stage in American history. Unfortunately, he lacked the aggressive fighting spirit required of a field general.

Born into a prominent Philadelphia family on December 3, 1826, McClellan received an excellent education. He entered the United States Military Academy at age 15 and graduated in 1846, second in his class that included Jesse Reno, Darius Couch, Thomas ("Stonewall") Jackson, and George Pickett. During the Mexican War, the newly-minted Second Lieutenant was an engineer in Gen. Winfield Scott's Army that captured Mexico City. McClellan served with fellow engineers, Robert E. Lee and George Meade, and received two brevet (honorary) promotions for his gallantry and distinguished service.

In the years after the Mexican War, McClellan added to his resume by teaching at West Point, translating a French bayonet drill manual, exploring the West and mapping routes for a proposed transcontinental railroad. He became frustrated by the slow pace of promotion in the Corps of Engineers and transferred to the newly created 1st Cavalry Regiment in 1855 with the rank of Captain. McClellan was sent to Europe to study military organization and operations and was an observer during the Crimean War. Among his recommendations for improving the U.S. Army was the design for a new saddle that would become known as the "McClellan Saddle" and which remained in service into the 20th century.

In 1857, McClellan resigned from the U.S. Army and became chief engineer and later vice president of the Illinois Central Railroad. During this time he met the railroad's attorney, Abraham Lincoln. McClellan moved to Cincinnati to become the president of the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad in 1860. For several years, McClellan had been courting Ellen "Nellie" Marcy (above right), the daughter of one of his former army commanders. His main competition for her hand was A. P. Hill, a West Point classmate who would become a Confederate General. George and Nellie were married and during the war shared a correspondence that provides a great source for McClellan's personal thoughts.

After the firing on Fort Sumter and the call for volunteers in April 1861, Governor William Dennison appointed McClellan commander of the Ohio State Militia. Shortly thereafter, he was commissioned a Major General in the U.S. Army and given command of the Ohio Valley. At the time, what is now the State of West Virginia was still part of Virginia – enemy territory that bordered



Pennsylvania and Ohio. McClellan moved troops into the area and fought a small battle near Philippi, Virginia, and secured the region for the North. This Union victory had two effects. It thrust McClellan into the limelight as a great Union hero and it emboldened pro-unionists in that section of Virginia to begin the process that would ultimately lead to the admission of West Virginia to the Union two years later.

After the Northern loss at the Battle of Bull Run, McClellan was called to Washington to take command of the Union Army defending the Capital. He wasted little time beginning the reorganization of the army and instilling it with a new sense of confidence. With his engineer and business background, McClellan instituted reforms that led to better training, food, camp sanitation, medical care and regular pay. Most of the soldiers and later historians credit McClellan with an excellent job training and equipping the army.

In writing to his wife, McClellan (perhaps jokingly) said:

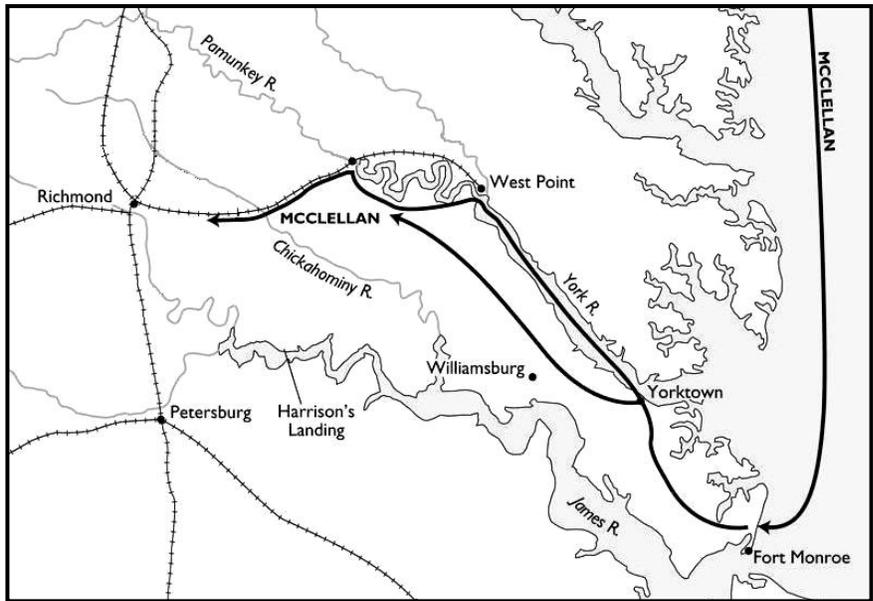
*I find myself in a new and strange position here – Presdt. Cabinet, Genl. Scott and all deferring to me – by some strange operation of magic I seem to have become the power of the land. I almost think that were I to win some small success now I could become Dictator or anything else that might please me – but nothing of that kind would please me – therefore, I won't be dictator. Admirable self denial!*

In November 1861, when the aging Gen. Winfield Scott retired as commanding general of the U.S. Army, McClellan was named as his replacement. To show off the army's progress, McClellan held a great review

of the army near Bailey's Crossroads in Virginia, on November 20, 1861. President Lincoln, Cabinet officers, members of Congress, foreign observers, and the national press corps, along with thousands of citizens came out to witness the spectacle. With the Pennsylvania Bucktails leading the parade, 70,000 infantry, cavalry and artillery units marched past the gathered spectators. The sight of so many well-drilled troops inspired Julia Ward Howe to write the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. This was not the army that had straggled back to Washington after the defeat at Bull Run. Everyone was impressed and McClellan seemed to be living up to the newspapers' references to "the Young Napoleon." The public expected easy victories and a quick end to the war.

McClellan had little respect for Lincoln or other civilian government officials when it came to military affairs. Several times he snubbed Lincoln but the President was willing to overlook McClellan's condescending attitude, saying he would hold McClellan's horse if he could deliver victories. Throughout the next few months, McClellan delayed and failed to move his army.

In January 1862, Lincoln virtually forced McClellan's hand by ordering an advance by all Union armies into the South to coincide with Washington's Birthday on February 22. McClellan finally presented a grand scheme that called for moving the Army of the Potomac by ship down the Chesapeake Bay to Fort



Monroe at tip of the peninsula southeast of Richmond. He would then march up the peninsula, capture the Confederate capital and end the war (see map). This movement of about 100,000 troops to the peninsula was unprecedented in American history but McClellan's planning and organization managed to successfully pull it off. By the end of March, his army was starting to move on Richmond.

Initially, the Confederates had only about 10,000 men to oppose the massive Union onslaught. Clever maneuvering by the Confederates and poor intelligence from Alan Pinkerton, supposed master spy, on the number of rebels unnerved McClellan. Remembering his observations at the siege of Sebastopol during the Crimean War, McClellan stopped and besieged Yorktown. His engineering background came into play and he ordered the digging of trenches and brought up 13 inch mortars (left). McClellan seemed to be a firm believer in the use of technology rather than blood to win battles. This delay, however, allowed Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston to move troops south of Richmond and prepare a defense. After weeks of preparations, just as McClellan was ready to begin the attack on Yorktown, the Confederates withdrew on May 4. The Union troops pursued the Confederates but were again delayed at Williamsburg. Rain and muddy roads, combined with McClellan's own hesitation, further slowed the advance on Richmond.



By May 20, the Union Army was within about eight miles of Richmond. McClellan insisted he needed more troops despite his overwhelming numerical superiority. On May 31, the Confederates launched an attack in the Seven Pines-Fair Oaks area that was

repulsed but it shook McClellan's confidence. On the Confederate side, Gen. Johnston was wounded during the fighting and Gen. Robert E. Lee was named to replace him. McClellan went into siege mode and made plans to batter Richmond into submission.

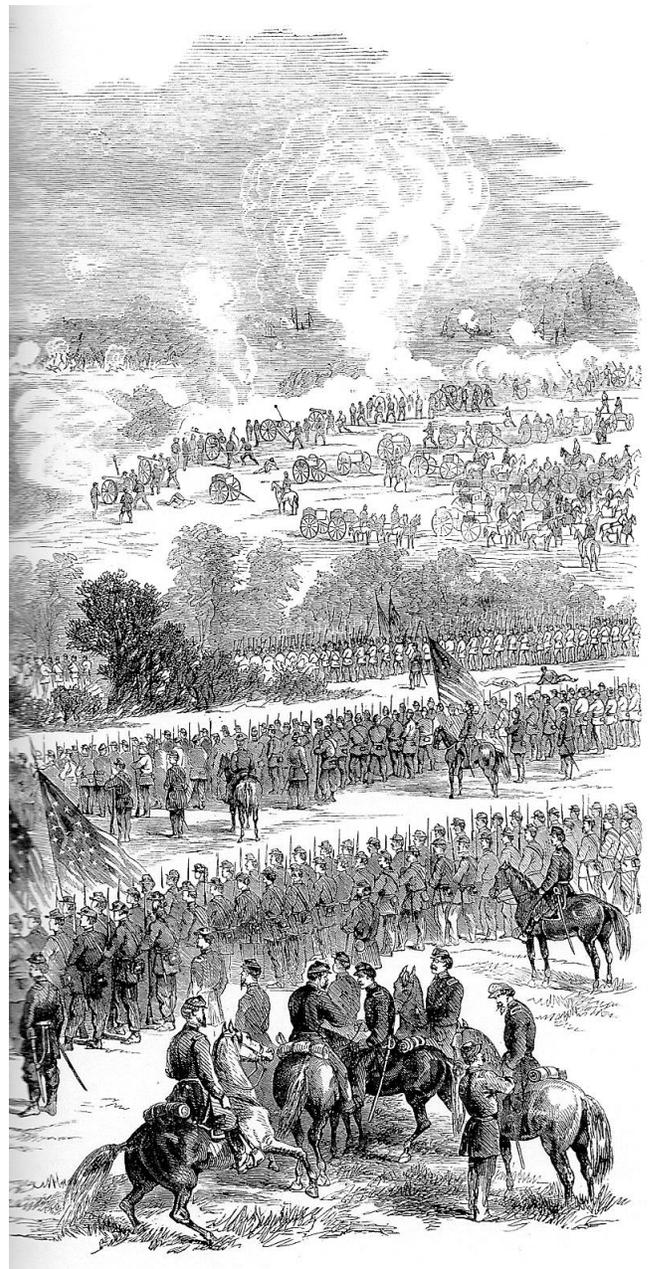
Meanwhile, Lee was thinking offensively. He left a small force to guard Richmond and with Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's troops, newly arrived from victories in the Shenandoah Valley, planned an attack on the Union right flank. The attack was not well-coordinated and failed to break the Union line but it did break McClellan's spirit. Most historians believe that he could have easily captured the lightly defended Richmond with a determined attack but instead he ordered a general retreat, believing he was outnumbered two to one.

The Seven Days Battles from June 25 to July 1 at Oak Grove, Mechanicsville, Gaines's Mill, Garnett's Farm, Savage's Station, Glendale and Malvern Hill (right) sealed the fate of the Peninsula Campaign. Except for Gaines's Mill, the Union held its lines and would be considered victories but McClellan saw only the loss of his own men and withdrew. He fell back to Harrison's Landing on the James River and the added protection of Union gunboats.

Ultimately, the Army of the Potomac would withdraw from the peninsula. McClellan's once shining star was in decline, and the high hopes of the Union had fallen into depression. Richmond was saved and Lee was in his ascendancy. Union troops would be transferred to Major General John Pope's command and he would lead them to defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862.

George McClellan still had two more acts to play in the drama of the Civil War after the summer of 1862. Lincoln would reluctantly return him to command of the Army of the Potomac and he led it to victory at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862 but again he failed to follow-up and crush Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Lincoln would relieve McClellan of command for the last time on November 9, 1862.

McClellan would return to the national scene in 1864 as the Democratic Party candidate for President. Although the party platform called for an end to the war, he denounced the plank and was for the continuing the war to ultimate victory. During the summer of 1864, it appeared he would defeat Lincoln but Union victories at Atlanta and Cedar Creek turned



the tide of the war-weary public and with the additional help of the soldier vote, Lincoln gained a second term.

McClellan worked as an engineer after the war and later entered state politics. In 1878, he was elected Governor of New Jersey. George B. McClellan died on October 29, 1885, and was buried in Trenton, New Jersey.

McClellan's legacy will always be the creation of the Army of the Potomac as an outstanding fighting machine. Unfortunately, he lacked confidence to use it effectively.

# McClellan Headquarters Flag System 1862-1863

In March 1862, Major General George B. McClellan issued General Order No. 102 for the Army of the Potomac establishing the first system of headquarters' designating flags in the U. S. Army. It was one of several innovations that he introduced to improve the operation of the army. The purpose of the flags was to mark the positions of commanders in camp, on march, and in battle so that they could be found by messengers.

The Army headquarters flag was the National Flag. Each of the four Army Corps then in the Army of the Potomac also used the National Flag but with a smaller flag underneath: 1st Army Corps - Red Flag, 2nd Army Corps - Blue Flag, 3rd Army Corps - Vertical Red and Blue Flag, 4th Army Corps - Horizontal Blue and Red, No size or star pattern was specified for the National Flags nor was a size specified for the smaller flag indicating the Army Corps so the illustrations are speculative as to size.

The same color scheme was used for the Division Flags in each Army Corps. The Brigade Flags used the division colors plus white in various combinations. The size of these flags was specified as five feet on the pole and six feet on the fly.

1st Division	Red Flag
1st Brigade	Vertical Red/White Flag
2nd Brigade	Vertical White/Red/White Flag
3rd Brigade	Vertical Red/White/Red Flag
2nd Division	Blue Flag
1st Brigade	Vertical Blue/White Flag
2nd Brigade	Vertical White/Blue/White Flag
3rd Brigade	Vertical Blue/White/Blue Flag
3rd Division	Vertical Red/Blue Flag
1st Brigade	Vertical Red/White/Blue Flag
2nd Brigade	Vertical Red/Blue/White Flag
3rd Brigade	Vertical White/Red/Blue Flag
4th Division	Horizontal Blue and Red Flag
1st Brigade	Horizontal Red/White/Blue Flag
2nd Brigade	Horizontal Red/Blue/White Flag
3rd Brigade	Horizontal White/Red/Blue Flag



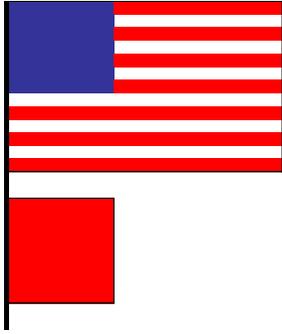
*Example of Regimental Flag for a  
4th Regiment, 3rd Brigade,  
2nd Division of an Army Corps*

An original of this flag, issued to the 11th Pennsylvania Volunteers, is in the collection of the Pennsylvania Capitol Preservation Committee

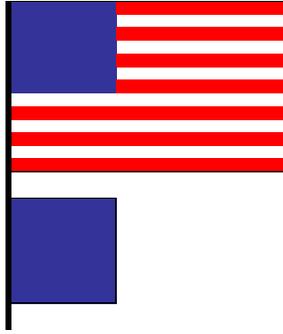
Each regiment in the brigade would carry a flag with the same pattern as the brigade flag but with a large number indicating the regiment's position within the brigade organization (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) rather than its state regimental number. This type of flag would be carried alongside the regiment's other colors. It is unclear how many of these regimental flags of this type were actually issued.

McClellan's flag system was a good idea but it was somewhat complicated and did not distinguish between the Army Corps. Thus, confusion could arise if a division of one corps was near a similarly numbered division of another corps. This system would be replaced in 1863 by the Army Corps insignia and flag system designed by Gen. Daniel Butterfield and approved by Gen. Joseph Hooker, then commanding the Army of the Potomac.

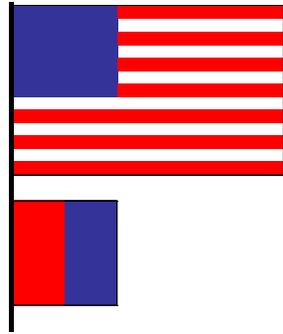
For more information on the Butterfield system see *The Bugle*, Volume 17, Number 1, Spring 2007, or visit our website's "Articles of Interest" page at [www.CampCurtin.org](http://www.CampCurtin.org) where we have other articles on some of the "basics" of the Civil War.



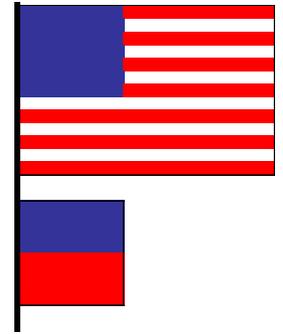
**1st Army Corps**



**2nd Army Corps**

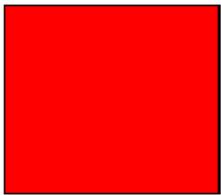


**3rd Army Corps**

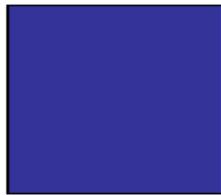


**4th Army Corps**

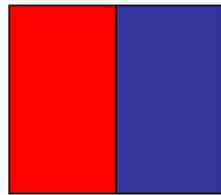
*Note: All Army Corps would use the same design for Division and Brigade flags*



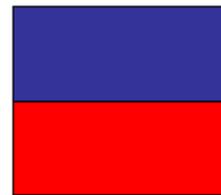
**1st Division**



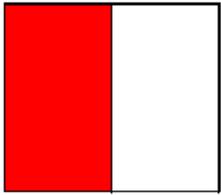
**2nd Division**



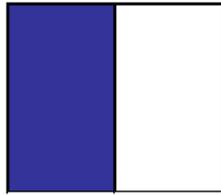
**3rd Division**



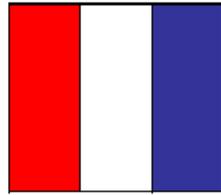
**4th Division**



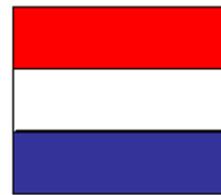
**1st Brigade**



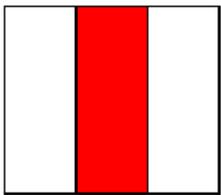
**1st Brigade**



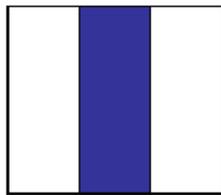
**1st Brigade**



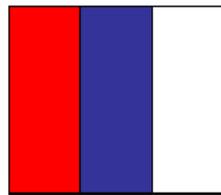
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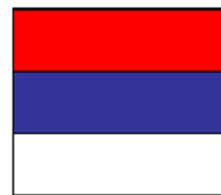
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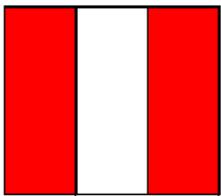
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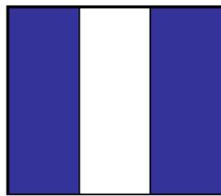
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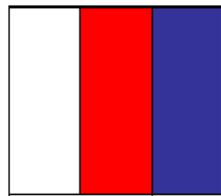
**2nd Brigade**



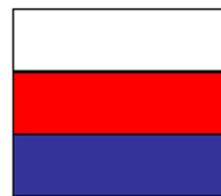
**3rd Brigade**



**3rd Brigade**



**3rd Brigade**



**3rd Brigade**



*History comes alive at the  
Camp Curtin Historical Society's*  
**Harrisburg Cemetery Tours**  
**Sunday, September 9th**



**All tours will leave from the Caretaker's House.  
Civil War History Tours by Jim Schmick at 12:15PM and 2:00PM.  
Harrisburg History Tours by Bruce Horner at 1:00PM and 2:30PM.**

*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).**