

Rebirth of the Civil War Regiment

As the 100th anniversary of the Civil War approached in 1961 the members of the Tryon County Muzzle Loaders from Fort Klock felt that some effort should be made in our area to pay tribute to our soldiers who served from 1861 to 1865. We decided to reactivate the 115th NY Volunteer infantry. Many local men served in this regiment. This was done not because we felt that the Civil War or any war is a glorious thing but because it was evident that some recognition should be given the events of 100 years ago. There doubtless could be no more striking way to portray our past to the younger generation than to give them an opportunity to see properly uniformed and equipped union troops once more join the line of the march in local parades. In many instances the result has been most gratifying and yet in others it becomes evident that many people do not know what these blue clad troops signify. We hope that the following statements and the short history of the 115th regiment will give a clearer picture of the significance of the squad.



One hundred years ago our country was locked in mortal combat. The struggle placed American against American for the only time in the history of our nation. Long lines of blue clad federal troops composed of men and boys from the farms, valleys and cities of the north met the grey clad troops from the

Confederacy. These boys in blue for the most part were far from world travelers. Few had ventured far from their farms or village homes. Now they found themselves in a strange territory where the rains turn the roads to mud and the wheels of wagons and cannon pulled by the indispensable army mule churned it to a pasty quagmire almost impossible for man or beast. When the mud dried, the sweltering heat became so intense that soldiers dropped by the wayside and died not from enemy bullets but from exhaustion and sun stroke. Why hadn't someone thought to issue clothing fitting for the hot weather to the boys in blue? For these men were dressed in woolen uniform that was all that was available. What is more, most of these men had been issued overcoats in addition to the other necessary equipment. The sides of the roads became littered with equipment which could be dispensed with and the boys in blue buckled down to a long hard fight.

Disease and death marched along with our army from 1861 to 1865. With no means of refrigeration the food spoiled and hardtack soaked in bacon grease with coffee had to suffice for many a meal. Since these were the days before our nation became the great manufacturing giant that it is today these problems of transportation and refrigeration were by no means our army's only problems. Lack of proper communications could account for an error in judgment which could take thousands of lives. Then there was the tremendous task of supplying the army with munitions. Standardization was impossibility. Arms were in short supply and many countries of Europe sold their worn-out arms to our government and to the Confederacy for the use of their troops. These arms were of a wide range of calibers and to supply the proper ammunition to the proper place must have been a great problem.

If it became the misfortune of a soldier to receive a wound in battle he could not be assured of speedy or proper treatment. Amputation seemed to be a specialty and just as many troops went onto the field without adequate training, the surgeons could not be considered an exception.

Despite the hardships endured by these men of both armies, many survived to return to their old homes. There are doubtless many who can well remember these veterans. Following the war they were an ever present part of Memorial Day parades. However as time took her toll one by one they dropped from the line of march. By the time the younger generation came along they were all part of history. The writer can remember but one veteran of the Civil War: John Klinkhart, 153rd NY Volunteer. A brief but yet firm handclasp of the old soldier can still be well remembered. After nearly a hundred summers had come and gone for the old soldier, he too answered the final role call and now no-one remained to remind the youngsters of the day gone by when lines of blue and grey struggled, each of the ideal in which they believed.

Should this be the final chapter? Some say such things are best forgotten and others equally sincere think it altogether fitting and proper to salute and remember these men of both armies. For from a tragic period emerged a nation which was to attain even a greater stature. It seems that no thinking individual could celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Civil War since there could be no victory as one might usually consider a victory. Certainly a celebration would not be in order and yet it is important to teach the younger generation about this period of history which was one of the great growing pains of the history of our nation.

From North and South have emerged teams of properly uniformed and equipped reactivated Civil War regiments. Although many of us do not approve of reenacting the battles, some do believe the competition shooting these squads do might well serve a purpose. There is no questions that a universal goodwill prevails between northern and southern teams and the competition into which they enter could be regarded much the same as any other competitive sport. Countless thousands have had an opportunity to view authentic equipment for the 1861-65 period in use and in this way gain an insight into the trials and tribulations of our blue clad troops of the Civil War.

As it became evident that this Civil War which had come across the land was no small rebellion the call for troops went out over the villages, farms and cities of the north. The call was answered and men and boys from all walks of life swelled the ranks of the regiments being raised.

Montgomery County was no exception and over 1,000 of the inhabitants came to the defense of the Union. These men belonged to numerous regiments t: the 32nd, 43rd, 153rd, 115th infantry, the 1st and 16th artillery, and small representations in other regiments. To the memory of these boys in blue we present our Civil War portion of the 1962 9th Annual Fort Klock pageant. Although we have chosen the 115th NY Volunteers to reactivate the scenes are representative of all Union regiments.

I wrote this in 1962 when the Tryon County Muzzle Loaders at Fort Klock re-activated the 115th New York Volunteers Regiment from Civil War days.

Willis Barshied