

# THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 12TH UNITED STATES INFANTRY, COMPANY A

**Volume 3 Issue 2**

**Winter 2012**

*Special points of interest:*

- Watch the web page and yahoo group for updates
- If you are planning on attending the 150th Anniversary Reenact of Antietam see Annual Meeting section on registration

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## Commanders Column

As we finish out the year, I want to thank each and every one of you for making the 12th US Infantry the best living history unit in New York! Looking forward to the 2012 season, I know that we will continue to polish our impressions and drill. I will be getting more information about the year's events when I attend the USV meeting in January. Antietam and 2nd Bull Run are possibilities and there may be other national venues that we can attend. Check the website regularly for event information. Don't forget the Facebook page and yahoo group also to stay in touch and keep updated.

The drill dates are already posted on the website, with the first one being at the Oneida Presbyterian Church on Friday, February 10th, which is the day before our annual business meeting. If you know of anyone that is interested the Civil War then please be sure to

invite them to join us for drill. That is the best way to get them involved and firm up their participation as we move forward.

There has been some interest in learning some period dance. We may be able to do some of that after our drill session or at the business meeting if there is interest in doing so. Let me know if that is something that we want to do.

I encourage everyone to attend the Annual Business meeting at the Legion hall in Chittenango on Saturday, February 11. All officers and NCO positions are up for election so it is important that we all be there. If you have not done so, please be sure to complete the exam that is posted on the website if you are interested in running for military office.

I want to extend a special thanks to those who really make this unit function. Carol Mayers has been wonderfully dedicated to this unit is often the binding force that holds us together. Neil MacMillan is the best 1st Sergeant in the country. Peggy and my wife, Linda, have devoted untold hours to making sure that we eat well at events. Linda, Carol and Bill have been instrumental in the success of our premier local events at Peterboro and Erie Canal Village. Peggy keeps our financial house in order. There are others who have also been dedicated behind the scenes or at events and it is important that we recognize their contributions. Please say, "Thanks!" when you see them.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Captain Jim Hurd  
12th US

**Good eats**

Regulars or volunteers, troops in the field seldom enjoyed the blessings of good food, even in hospital. A visitor from the 69th New York, of the Irish Brigade, noticing how meager the meal on a sick man's plate, might wax nostalgic for the blessed spud of old Eire by quoting the following: "There was an old woman/who lived in a lamp. She had no room/to beetle her champ. She came with her beetle/and broke the lamp. And then she had room/to beetle her champ."

Ah, the spud. Often spurned by the high and mighty as "starvation food", dishes such as champ - basically mashed potatoes with a few herbs tossed in - it was remarkably nutritious. A medium

potato, unpeeled, has almost as much vitamin C as a comparably-sized orange, and is packed with essential minerals. It turns out that potatoes are as effective a treatment for scurvy as citrus fruit. Generations of Irish peasants survived on little more than potatoes, and a feisty, hale and hearty bunch they were - and are.

There are a variety of seasonings that can be used, such as parsley, chives, dulse, young nettles, leeks - even cooked, mashed peas. Most appear to require the seasoning to be boiled in milk to best extract the flavor.

The surgeon would welcome fresh potatoes in the hospital tent or wherever he found room for his

patients. Typically, they were often absent in the field due to the overwhelming demand on quartermasters and teamsters - and not infrequently due to - shall we say, war profiteering on the part of railroad and wagon train magnates. And then there's colcannon.

"Did you ever eat colcannon/when t'was made with yellow cream? And the kale and praties blended/like a picture in a dream? Did you ever scoop a hole on top/to hold the melting lake/of the clover-flavored butter/Which your mother used to make?"

Capt. Surgeon Will Nickel  
aka Bill Mayers

- 6 to 8 unpeeled baking potatoes
- 1 bunch scallions
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 4—8 tablespoons butter
- Salt & fresh-ground pepper

Scrub potatoes, boil 'em in their jackets. Finely chop scallions, cover with milk & bring slowly to a boil. Simmer 3—4 minutes then turn off heat. Peel & mash the hot potatoes and beat in the milk and scallions. Mix in a little of the butter. Season with salt and pepper and serve in one big mound or four individual bowls, with a large glob of butter in a hollow on top. Eat from the side, dipping each bite into the melted butter.

**Annual Meeting**

The annual meeting for the 12th US Company A will be held on Saturday, February 11, 2012 3:00—5:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the American Legion, 707 Mohawk Street, Chittenango, NY.

Elections for corporate officers, military officers and NCO positions will be held. Anyone interested in the military officers or NCO positions please take the exam

posted on the unit web site and bring it to the meeting.

We will also be planning our unit calendar for the upcoming season. As we are in the 150th Civil War Anniversary season there are several National Events. Two of them for the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Shiloh and the 150th Anniversary of the battle on Antietam which will be September 14—16, 2012. The early deadline

for registration for Antietam is January 31, 2012—\$10.00 per person, Feb 1—June 30th is \$15.00 per person. July 1—Aug 15th is \$25.00 per person.

We also have our hosted events of - 20th Annual Peterboro Civil War Weekend—June 9—10, with an education day on Friday, June 8th and Erie Canal Civil War Weekend—date to be announced

**Products and Patents**

<b>Year Introduced</b>	<b>Product</b>
1752	Tinted eyeglasses
1796	First patent for medicine
1820	Thomas Hancock patented elastic fasteners for gloves, suspenders, shoes and stockings
1829	Graham Crackers
1835	Solyman Merrick—Wrench
1835	Samuel Colt first revolver
1836	Samuel Morse—Telegraph
1837	Samuel Morse—Morse Code
1837	Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce
1839	Charles Goodyear—Rubber Vulcanization
1839	Kirkpatrick MacMillan - Bicycle
1840	John Herschel—Blueprint
1840	Square bottom grocery bags
1841	Samuel Slocum—Stapler
1844	John Mercer—Mercerized Cotton
1845	Elias Howe—Sewing Machine
1846	Dr. William Morton—first to use anesthesia for tooth extraction
1849	Walter Hunt—Safety Pin
1851	Bottled Gingerale—Ireland
1851	Isaac Singer—Sewing Machine
1853	Potato Chips—Saratoga Springs, NY
1853	Gail Borden—Condensed Milk patent
1854	First packed box of Whitman’s chocolate
1854	Folding chair patent
1855	Isaac Singer—patents the sewing machine motor
1856	Louis Pasteur—Invents Pasteurization
1856	Commercially product Catsup
1856	Hamilton Smith patents Rotary Wash Machine
1857	First packed Toilet Paper
1859	Patent for Paper Bag Machine
1863	Butterick tissue paper dress pattern

## **Riding the Chines: A look at Civil War Punishments**

Punishment is something we deal with on a daily basis either as parents, employees or kids. We expect if we get caught speeding that the punishment will be a ticket and some long green going to your local court. Life wasn't different in that respect during the Civil War.

For the ordinary soldier during the Civil War, punishment could come in a myriad of forms none pleasant although if you weren't on the receiving end, they could be amusing. Some are considered barbaric by today's standards. Indeed after the battle of Bull Run the United States congress outlawed flogging in the Union army after they got complaints from volunteers about the harsh treatment they received.

Chines are the rims of barrels. Riding the chines was a punishment where the offender stood in bare or stocking clad feet in the rim of a barrel. Riding the chines was usually assigned at the company level for minor infractions such as talking in ranks while at attention.

A slovenly soldier who failed to maintain proper hygiene might be taken to the nearest river and forcibly scrubbed with strong soap and a stiff bristled brush. First sergeants, such as I portray, or an officer who had been in the army awhile could be devilishly imaginative in devising punishments for miscreant soldiers. Something as mundane as digging a sink, the Civil War term for a latrine, could be a brutally effective punishment in terrain where the soil was rocky or punctured by tree roots.

Generally punishments came in two styles at the company level humiliation or physical punishment. A common humiliation punishment would be to make the offender parade all day under full pack wearing a large sign that told all of his offence. Bucking and gagging while humiliating, is more of a physical punishment. The offender's arms and legs are tied together with a stick behind the knees in a fetal position while a gag is put in the mouth to stifle any noise the culprit might make. Other offenders might ride an over sized saw horse for hours at end, perform extra duty while in manacles and leg irons or wear a barrel shirt.

For more serious offenses soldiers were taken into custody and remanded for court-martial. A court martial could send a soldier to prison in some garden spot like Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas, dishonorably discharge the soldier after making him forfeit all pay and allowances or in the most severe cases sentence the offender to death usually by firing squad. There were several cases of soldiers shot for desertion during the Civil War. Another execution for desertion would not occur again until 1945 when Private Eddie Slovik was executed for desertion in the face of the enemy.

Punishment is an aspect of the Civil War that is rarely discussed. It is also an aspect the soldiers lived with on a daily basis just as we do today. The methods have changed but in some ways we are not so different from our Victorian predecessors.

Neil K. MacMillan

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## **United States Sanitary Commission—Mrs. Mayers**

American women have a long history of taking care of soldiers, veterans and our communities. One of the most organized efforts of this was the United States Sanitary Commission during the American Civil War. The Sanitary Commission was an agency authorized, but not paid by the Government. It was an agency to promote the health, comfort and efficiency of the vast armies called into the field to subdue the rebellion. It was patterned after the British Sanitary Commission, which had been formed to clean up the filth of the Crimean War. The call up for volunteers was so fast that the government had problems procuring and issuing the basic necessities like uniforms. They were items that they could not supply in anything like adequate quantity like bandages, food for the sick or nurses to name a few. The Sanitary Commission was established to:

- Organize relief items that the American public was sending to the soldiers—I.e. care packages
- Apply preventive measures of the hygienic kind to preserve the health of the armies. These included but were not limited to improved drainage systems in the camps, improved cooking, hiring competent cooks and providing a liberal supply of fresh vegetables.
- Organize the various volunteers and train nurses.
- Raise money to procure needed items
- Aid soldiers and their families to obtain pensions
- Establish and staff transport for wounded soldiers by train, overland, and steam ships,
- Provide information to medical personnel

I found the following information on some of the contributions Madison County women sent to the Sanitary Commission.

From the Madison Observer

- - - January 23, 1862

For the Soldiers

The Oneida community have sent to the Sanitary Commission a box containing 24 quarts of preserved fruit, consisting of strawberries and cherries, also five gallons of wine.

The Ladies Relief Association of Madison have recently forwarded to Washington a fourth box of considerable dimensions filled with socks, mittens, comfortables\*, blankets, pillows and pillow-cases, a large quantity of delicacies for the sick, reading matter, stationary, &c.

A Festival in aid of the Soldier's Relief Fund held on Wednesday evening 7th last, was a decided success, the amount contributed to the fund was over \$60.00.

- - February 13, 1862

Aid for the Soldiers—the “Ladies Volunteer Association” of this village have filled and forwarded two boxes of articles for the benefit of the soldiers serving in the Union Army. Among the contents of these boxes are the following: 20 woolen blankets, 11 comfortables, 3 bed quilts, 37 pillow-cases, feather pillows, 1 feather cushion, 14 sheets, 26 towels, 6 fine shirts, 3 flannel shirts, 3 pair woolen drawers, 7 dressing wrappers, 17 pr. Woolen socks, 6 pr. Woolen mittens, 1 pr. Woolen gloves, 1 sack lint, 1 sack of fine linen, 30 lbs dried fruit, 1 bottle of current wine, 1 bottle of elderberry wine, 1 can raspberries, books, magazines, papers, &c.

\*Comfortables—a tied quilt

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## THE REGIMENTAL DISPATCH:

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### Upcoming Events



- January 21, 2012— USV Annual meeting and Banquet, Harrisburg, PA
- Friday February 10, 2012 Drill & Civilian meeting, Presbyterian Church, 304 Broad Street, Oneida, NY— 7:00 pm
- February 11, 2012— 12th US Annual meeting Date and place to be announced
- Friday March 9, 2012 Drill & Civilian meeting, Presbyterian Church, 304 Broad Street, Oneida, NY— 7:00 pm
- Friday April 13, 2012 Drill & Civilian meeting, Presbyterian Church, 304 Broad Street, Oneida, NY— 7:00 pm
- Friday May 11, 2012 Drill & Civilian meeting, Presbyterian Church, 304 Broad Street, Oneida, NY— 7:00 pm
- Monday, May 28, 2012 – Camillus, NY— Memorial Day Parade
- June 9—10, 2012—20th Annual Peterboro Civil War Reenactment

Please check the website, yahoo group for updates and information.