



The Second NJ Brigade

New Jersey's Civil War Brigade

Winter, 2022
Volume 8, Issue 2

The Second NJ Brigade is a 501c non profit organization. The board meets once a month and is represented by members of all Impressions. The Executive Board: President Mike Milling, Vice President Matt Belcastro, Treasurer Steff Poli-Zilinski, Secretary Abby Belcastro.



THE ADVANCE

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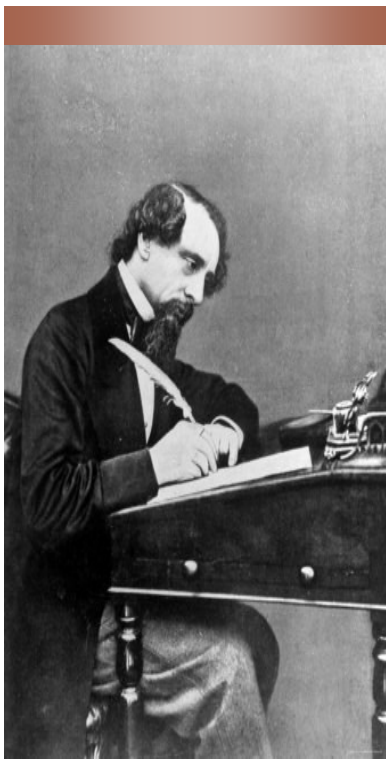
Lin Kaufer

Contributors:

Matt Belcastro
Charles Clayton
Matt "Digger" Dignam
Bruce Form
Ken Schwemmer, III
Ron Syme



Nick Trimmer
EVENTFOTOS



2022 BOARD INITIATIVES

- ◆ Revived the Fosterfields Reenactment
- ◆ Hosted a grave cleaning workshop with Ed Bubnick
- ◆ Donated \$850 to the new USCT names plaque at the Buffalo Soldiers Cemetery
- ◆ Revived the Brigade Christmas Party

Do you have something you'd like the Board to consider? Contact one of our members and let us know!

"Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves." - Abraham Lincoln

WELCOME NEW
MEMBERS!

Joe Caggiano
Justin Illes
Jake Levin
Bella Tejada

WE CAN'T WAIT TO
SEE YOU IN THE FIELD!

Honoring the Dead Grave Cleaning Workshop with Ed Bubnick

As we learned in a previous volume of *the Advance*, our own Ed Bubnick has a volunteer grave cleaning service called "Remembrance Gravestone Cleaning Volunteers" where he and his granddaughter, Lauren, professionally clean dirty headstones at no cost.

Several of our members were fascinated by Ed's work, and in August, Ed hosted a wonderful, hands-on workshop for our members at the Orchard Street Cemetery in Dover, NJ.

The cemetery staff gave us a tour of the site, with stories about several Civil War veterans, including a USCT member, and infantry vets.

Participants learned how to safely scrub and lighten stones and remove lichen and moss.





Ed explaining the processes

Ed demonstrated the proper use of D-2 solution, which is what Arlington National Cemetery and Andersonville National Cemetery use for their grave maintenance, as well as the correct kinds of brushes and wooden picks to clean the engravings.

The workshop also provided insights on how to determine the types of material graves can be made out of, and the ways to decide if cleaning a grave will be helpful or harmful based on the porousness of any particular stone.

Our workshop cleaned fourteen stones in the cemetery's oldest area, uncovering amazing genealogic information.



Before



Immediately After



1 week later



The cemetery staff were extremely thankful for our services, and invited us to come back at any time to clean graves or to use the site for a small living history event for the public. To learn more about the Orchard Street Cemetery, visit their facebook page at: [facebook.com/OSGHA](https://www.facebook.com/OSGHA).

We will be hosting a second workshop around Memorial Day, 2023, in South Jersey. Be on the lookout for upcoming dates!

What is an Immersion Event?

Unlike a regular reenactment that is an educational opportunity for the public, Immersion Events are only for reenactors.

There are no spectators or visitors.

The point of an Immersion Event is to follow as closely as possible to a particular battle and troop movements over a 36 hour period, utilizing only what those soldiers had, in a climate similar to what they would have experienced.

The hope of an immersion event is to most accurately capture what soldiers of the Civil War actually encountered, from the weather elements and the food (or lack thereof), to the sleeping conditions and battle movements.

First Experiences, Second Thoughts:

The 7th Goes Full Immersion

Members of the Infantry had a unique opportunity to experience an "immersion event" this past September in recognition of the 160th anniversary of the battle of Antietam.

What were their experiences at this fully historical event?



Ron Syme: The 160th Antietam event "Homespun Waterloo" was my first immersion event. We portrayed the 4th Rhode Island as they forded Antietam Creek and their battle in Otto's cornfield. I was a little worried beforehand that other reenactors at the event would pick apart my uniform and talk about what was wrong with it, but that didn't happen at all. Almost everyone was super nice and had the same mindset. I was also unsure if I was really up for the challenge of the event ; this was a lot more intense than anything I've done with the 7th. However, now that I've gone and completed my first immersion experience, I feel a lot more prepared for the next, and I'm looking forward to doing many more.

There were a number of things that really struck me about 'living like they did.' One simple thing was unless you had a watch, you had zero clue what time it was. I also felt a lot of uncertainty about stuff. Every time the regiment stopped marching, I wondered, 'should I take my blanket roll off? Or should I keep it on because I don't want to take it off and then we get the order to move.' When it came to food you had strictly what you could carry, and nothing else. The event had a no-knapsacks rule, only bedrolls, and we only had what we brought since that's how it was for the real soldiers of the 4th RI at Antietam. I was really surprised by the physical exhaustion. Friday night we did picket duty and my sleep was chopped up. Picket duty is something the 7th very rarely, if ever, does at our own events. By Saturday night I was beat, especially after doing the battle, and it made me really appreciate just how tiring being a soldier really is.

There were a few moments where the past met the present during the event. Waking up and doing picket duty in the pitch black in the middle of the night was an experience. Between battles there was a lot of downtime, and while we didn't do a huge 10 mile march, we did do some moving. Otherwise, we mostly spent time sitting and laying down. We spent 2 hours, I think, on the side of a road waiting to get the order to move after Saturday morning's skirmish before we crossed the creek. Most of the time we spent just chatting, eating rations, filling canteens and some men would make really small fires to make coffee. Looking back, those were some of the best points during the event. Another was when we crossed the creek under gun fire. It was surreal going through the water with all the noise. But the biggest moment was during the battle in the cornfield when we couldn't see the confederates but we could hear them. All I could see was the tip of their flag and large clouds of smoke from when they fired. It was definitely a learning experience and now that I've done my first event, I hope to do more in the future.

The event really brought to life, as best we can in 2022, the life of soldier for me and it furthered my appreciation and understanding of how difficult living like that for 4 years must have been.



Charles Clayton: As my first real immersive Civil War event, the experience at “Homespun Waterloo” is unmatched when compared to any other “mainstream” events I have attended. I have never encountered an event that issued rations or had picket duty or crossing water while under fire. While mainstream events are fun, they are more laid back and you don’t get to truly understand what Civil war soldiers went through.



This experience was lifechanging for me and the hobby. It has put a higher standard with how events should run, and I will be comparing this event to others I attend going forward.



Matt Belcastro: Nothing has made me realize I don’t need to bring an entire truckload of equipment to reenact like this program did for me.

For thirty-six hours, I lived off nothing but a blanket roll and a haversack, and it was not only survivable, but incredibly doable. Not to mention far more authentic. I’ll be working on downsizing my kit to just the essentials for our own future programs.

But the thing that hit me most about this event was that by the real battle of

Antietam’s end, the forces had lost forty percent of their men.

Due to the extreme cold Saturday into Sunday, a lot of the event’s participants got up and left in the middle of the night to go home. When roll was called on Sunday morning, forty percent of our numbers had left to go home.

It was eerie to stand there with the exact same amount of missing that the actual Antietam survivors would have faced during their roll call that next morning.



Is an Immersion Event for Me?

Immersion events do require a certain amount of physical stamina and personal resilience. The point of the event is to first-handedly experience the adversity and hardships real soldiers encountered so we can better describe their struggles to the public.

These events also tend to require a certain level of personal authenticity to your kit and uniform, so make sure you check out the standards before signing up for one!

If you think you want to try out an immersion event, contact Ron, Charles or Matt and get some pointers!

Reporting From Gettysburg: Whatever Happened to the Third General?



Wesley Merritt
in Uniform

Merritt's portrait, 1887
National Portrait Gallery



The third General? Of whom are we inquiring?

In late June of 1863, in one of the most unusual events, three Captains in the Union Cavalry were promoted from Captain to Brigadier General.

1. George Custer
2. Elon Farnsworth
3. Wesley Merritt



Artists' rendering of Gettysburg Cavalry Charge

All three were assigned to Cavalry Divisions of the Army of the Potomac: Farnsworth and Custer to the 3rd Division commanded by Judson "Kill Cavalry" Kilpatrick, and Wesley Merritt to the 1st Division commanded by John Buford.

It is easy to remember Custer during the Gettysburg Campaign. He was the adventuring commander who fought with the second division of cavalry on July 3 while he was "out patrolling" in what is now the East Cavalry Battlefield. He charged with his Michigan troopers into Jeb Stuart's Cavalry and later died after the war at the Little Bighorn.

Elon Farnsworth is also easily remembered for following orders that got him killed on Gettysburg's third day. In an alleged attempt to gain battle credit for himself, Judson Kilpatrick ordered Farnsworth to lead a cavalry charge into unsuitable terrain. Though Farnsworth protested, stating the poor choice of terrain for the charge, his courage was questioned by Kilpatrick, and he followed the order, led the charge, and was killed (he also has a restaurant named for him in Gettysburg).

But little is ever said about the third general, Wesley Merritt.

Merritt graduated from West Point in 1860 and was commissioned as a Lieutenant in Utah. At the start of the Civil War, he was called back to Washington and assigned as aide-de-camp of General George Cooke and then to General George Stoneman. In Stoneman's command, Wesley Merritt was in charge of the Cavalry reserve during Stoneman's Raid of Chancellorsville. Praise landed Merritt's way during the Battle of Brandy Station. As a young captain in the field he engaged in a one-on-one saber duel with Brigadier General Rooney Lee in which he wounded Lee and came away unscathed. Merritt's leadership and courage in battle continued in the skirmish at Upperville, in Loudon County, Virginia, two weeks later.

A few weeks after the Upperville, Merritt received an unusual promotion from captain all the way to brigadier general--a decision prompted by the recent reorganization of the cavalry wing into a more unified force.

Initially, Merritt was assigned to the 1st Division under General John Buford. He was guarding the supply lines leading to Gettysburg during the start of the battle on July 1, 1863. He was part of the cavalry troops order given by Judson Kilpatrick which led to the death of Elon Farnsworth. Wesley Merritt was fortunate to return un-wounded.

After the death of John Buford, Wesley Merritt was given command of the 1st Division of Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, and he held this assignment through The Overland Campaign and Yellow Tavern. After these, he was reassigned to the command of General Philip Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign against Jubal Early where he was quite successful in driving General Early from the field. At the 3rd Winchester, Merritt had such a distinction for himself that he was promoted to Major General and recognized as one of General Sheridan's trusted Lieutenants.

Following the end of the Civil War, Wesley Merritt remained in the U.S. Army. After the death of George Custer at the Little Bighorn, Merritt was involved in the Battle of Slim Buttes in 1876. In the Spanish American War, he was called back into more active service and appointed the Military Governor of the Philippines which he held for two years, retiring in 1900 from military service.



Jewish Welfare Building, Camp Merritt, N. J.

This article was inspired by the above postcard, from Bruce's personal collection.

However, combat was not Wesley Merritt's only achievement; from 1878-1887, he was superintendent at West Point.

Wesley Merritt died in 1910 and is buried at West Point, but his legacy lived on, as during World War One, *Camp Merritt* was set up as an embarkation camp where more than one million troops stopped and passed through when being shipped out to fight in Europe. It was located in Cresskill, New Jersey. There is a monument now located at the intersection of Knickerbocker Road and Madison Avenue in Cresskill that is reported to be located at the center of what was Camp Merritt.



Camp Merritt Monument, NJ

By Bruce M. Form, 2022
 Edited by Abby Belcastro, 2022

Love "Reporting from Gettysburg?" There's Merch!



Twenty-five years ago, I made an agreement with Mark Catona that I would always sell these shirts to the members of our brigade for \$10 each. That agreement still holds true (the only addition is the \$8 shipping/shirt because I am now living in Gettysburg).

Before we let loose with the close out sale information to the public on March 1, 2023, I wanted the members of our brigade to have a first shot at this since the only ones available are limited to the amount I have in inventory in various, but limited sizes.

For 2nd NJ Brigade members it's a total of \$18 per shirt (\$10 for the shirt plus \$8 shipping)

Any single order of 4 shirts or more I'll ship them for free.

If you are interested please email Bruce Form, bform4@gmail.com, before ordering to make sure on the availability and for the size(s) you need.

WHO'S WHO?

Showcasing Our Brigade Membership Matt "Digger" Dignam

Matt "Digger" Dignam is a staple around our events. He's always there to lend a hand, is the best fire starter in the unit, and enthusiastic about research and history. I sat down with Digger to find out more about his Civil War passion.

AB: How did you find the Brigade, and how long have you been a member?

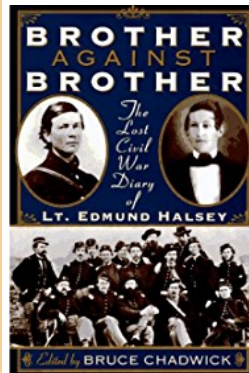
MD: I became interested in the Civil War from a class I had with my History teacher while in Middle School. My Mom had seen a local advertisement for the Winter Encampment at Historic Speedwell and we decided to go. I spoke with First Sergeant Greg Belcastro for a while and decided to join. That was about seven years ago now.

AB: What draws you to Civil War history? What do you find most interesting about it?

MD: What I found most interesting about the Civil War are photographs and accounts from the time. There are so many minute details in them that tell a story or have a purpose. I like to learn about the history behind them and try to figure out the story they are trying to tell, then taking what I have learned and trying to institute that into reenacting in whatever way possible.



Meet Digger!



When it comes to accounts, I like to go to a book, *Brother against Brother The Lost Civil War Diary of Lt. Edmund Halsey*. Halsey was an Officer of the 15th New Jersey Infantry and kept a detailed journal of his experiences, as well as his notes, letters, and newspapers he acquired from his time on campaign. I like how the book covers so many aspects of his time in the War and it's descriptive with what was happening. One thing that I took away from the book was that the Shenandoah Valley was a hotbed of activity for both armies. Especially towards the latter parts of the war, so much is going on in the valley alone. The troop movements, the battles, the encampments.... It has changed what I previously thought

about the Eastern Theatre and the other events happening in Virginia. Mainly because towards 1864, a majority of the focus is around Petersburg and the destruction of the South by General Sherman.

As for photographs from the time, I have two that I really like for their detail and content. The first is a picture of a Confederate column marching through Frederick, Maryland in 1862, right before Antietam (right). Even though it is just a quick snapshot of them passing through town, I think it is an interesting photo. You get to see the different uniforms and accoutrements that the Confederates were carrying in 1862. For us today, I think it is a useful photograph for impressions because we can see what they were wearing at the time.

Plus, you do not see many pictures of soldiers marching so that makes it more distinctive.





The next photo is one that I like for an interesting aspect: It is a picture of the 9th Mississippi in 1861, camped out near Pensacola, Florida. Camp life photos are interesting because we can see how they lived while they were campaigning. But, the one detail that I like to focus on in this photograph is hidden in the background. If you look at the first stack on the left and then look at the gentleman sitting to the left of it, you can see on his under-



shirt that he has a number on it. I do not know the significance of it, whether it is for company purposes or the like, but I think it is an interesting detail of the photo to focus on.



Making wreaths at his favorite program, *Christmas on the Homefront*

AB: What other hobbies do you have when you're not with the brigade?
MD: Outside of reenacting, I like to spend time outdoors. I like to Fish, Hike, and Camp. I also like to play video games and read when I have the time.

AB: What's something (or several things) about the Civil War you wish more people knew about?
MD: I wish that more people knew about the unique and obscure stories of the Civil War. One of my favorite stories was told to me by a friend who reenacts in the Trans-Mississippi area. It was about a Confederate Unit and their company mascot who happened to be a Camel by the name of Douglas. He was purchased by the CO of a Mississippi unit and Douglas followed them along multiple battles, including Shiloh and Corinth. When the Confederates were eventually pushed back to Vicksburg, Douglas followed them and was even noted to have chased a Union Corporal away. Unfortunately, Douglas was killed in Vicksburg by Union Sharpshooters. Apparently, the men of the company went after the Sharpshooters for shooting their beloved company mascot.

Rocking his best impression



AB: What has been your most memorable Civil War event so far, and why?
MD: My most memorable Civil War event probably has to be the most recent Remembrance Day Parade in Gettysburg. I always enjoy seeing the other impressions and the reenactors. Plus, you always get to

pick up some new accoutrements and impression ideas. I also greatly miss the Historic Speedwell events and really would like to get back to them soon.

AB: And most importantly, how did you end up with the nickname "Digger?"
MD: How I got my nickname is a simple story. I walked up to the First Sergeant at Historic Speedwell and he looked at me and said, "You are now Digger" and the rest is history!



Guest Scholar: Ken Schwemmer III

“Manufacturing in New Jersey
During the Civil War, Part I”

By Ken Schwemmer, III

First published in *Manufacturing Matters*, 2022

Meet Ken!



Ken is an Advocacy & Operations Specialist with New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJEMP).

He earned his Bachelors in History and Minor in Government & Law from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

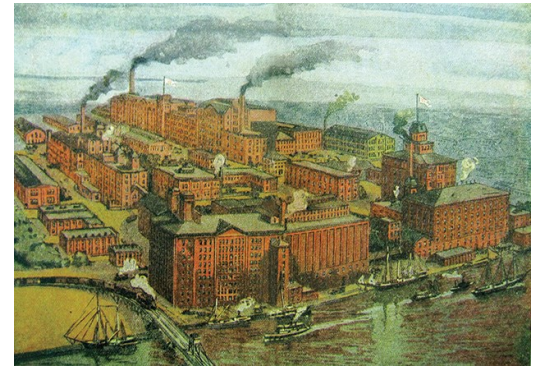
He is currently pursuing his Masters in History with Southern New Hampshire University.

Ken is very active in local politics, and is the elected County Committeeman for Roxbury NJ's Republican Ward 1, District 3.

He has also worked on several candidate campaigns including Anthony Bucco and Tom Kean.

When it comes to the masses studying or talking about the Civil War, the common refrain a person hears tends to be the battles fought across our nation and President Lincoln's efforts to end the heinous institution of slavery. Though these are some of the most important parts of the Civil War, there are other fascinating aspects that require some more examination. One of these aspects is the role of New Jersey's manufacturing sector played throughout the 1860s. New Jersey manufacturers played an important role by creating the supplies that were necessary for the war effort.

Prior to the Civil War, New Jersey was on the path to becoming one of the biggest manufacturing hubs for the country. New Jersey had already started manufacturing products as early as the first half of the eighteenth century; however, it was the 19th Century when New Jersey started manufacturing numerous products that were being consumed by the state and the rest of the nation. In 1830, the city of Paterson had seventeen cotton mills that were producing around 5,000,000 yards of cloth. By 1840, Newark had eighty percent of its workforce working in manufacturing, which included making shoes, harnesses, chairs, iron, etc. New Jersey was industrializing and producing manufactured goods on a large scale, which had the benefit of allowing New Jersey to have numerous industries in the manufacturing sector continue to grow during the first half of the 20th century. By 1860, New Jersey had become one of the biggest manufacturing states in the country.



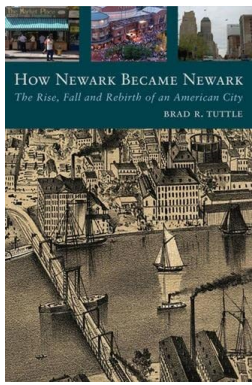
Newark, 1850s



Hemp dresser in a fabric factory

New Jersey in 1860 had a wide range of manufactured goods that were made across the state. According to the 1860 census, manufacturing had also become one of the biggest sectors of New Jersey's economy. New Jersey was manufacturing 254 separate items by 1860, which were valued at \$76,306,104 and produced by 56,027 workers, who were employed by 4,173 companies. Out of that \$76,306,104, over \$33,000,000 came from Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson. These numbers made New Jersey sixth in the nation for the annual value of manufacturing

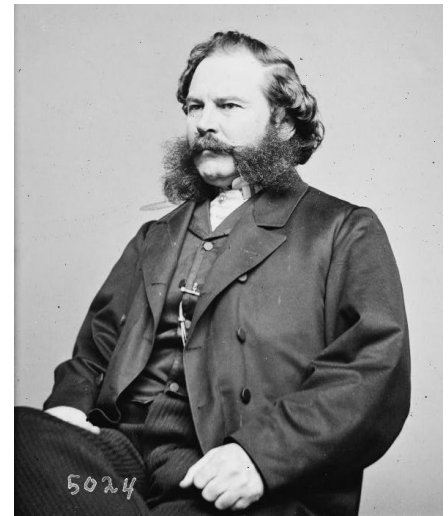
production. While these numbers show that manufacturing was flourishing in the state, they do not show where most of these manufactured goods were going outside of the state. One of the biggest markets these manufactured goods would be exported to for the first half of the nineteenth century was the American South, who would turn out to be one of the biggest markets for New Jersey's manufactured goods leading up to the Civil War. New Jersey companies would be sending manufactured goods in the thousands to the South and would make a great profit from doing so.



A prime example of this was Newark's manufactured exports, which were so popular that certain parts of the South would no longer manufacture certain products and instead they would just buy the goods that came from the city, dubbing Newark as a "Southern workshop." According to Brad Tuttle's book, *How Newark Became Newark*, somewhere between two-thirds and three-fourths of products that were made in Newark were being shipped to places south of the Mason-Dixon line. This was a very lucrative deal for New Jersey manufactures and explains, to a degree, why the 1860 census showed such high numbers and values for the manufacturing sector in New Jersey. New Jersey had become a economically intertwined with the South, which lead to some serious questions and issues with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

From the war's beginning, New Jersey was put into a tough position over whether to join the Confederacy or stay in the Union. The reasons for New Jersey's predicament lay in the strong economic ties it had with the South and the state's views on slavery and free African Americans. These issues produced a great debate within the state over whether or not to secede from the union. The debate brought in Former New Jersey Governor Rodman Price (1854-1857), who wrote a letter to the *Newark Journal* arguing that New Jersey should join the Confederacy because of how important the South's markets were for the state and that Europe would take these markets if New Jersey joined the Union. Despite the economic concerns and the prevalent questions about slavery, New Jersey stayed in the Union. The state supplied close to 80,000 men to fight in the war. However, despite the state's economic concerns, the Civil War would actually prove to be an economic boon for New Jersey and its manufacturing sector.

Throughout the Civil War, some of New Jersey's leaders cried about the possible dire economic consequences that the war would bring to the state. However, from 1861 to 1865, New Jersey's manufacturing sector profited from the demands of the Civil War. New Jersey's factories were able to pump out weapons, knapsacks, clothing, boots, and other war supplies needed for the Union war effort. One example of this was clothing manufacturer, and New Jersey Congressman, Nehemiah Perry, who made a massive fortune by selling army uniforms to the Union. Newark actually became such a great location for manufacturing during the Civil War that William and George Clark founded the Clark Thread Company in 1864. The company was so successful that they were able to build an \$800,000 new factory that was employing over a thousand workers by 1866. However, this growth in manufacturing and supporting the war effort was not exclusively located in places like Newark. Other towns and areas around New Jersey that had manufacturing companies saw growth, too.



Nehemiah Perry, 1855

One of these other places was in West Milford, Passaic County. In West Milford, there is a historic site called the Long Pond Iron Works. Founded in the eighteenth century, this location would grow and produce large quantities of iron and blooms during the Civil War. The operator of the Long Pond forges, Cooper & Hewitt, created new charcoal furnaces that by 1862 were operational and producing 1,500 tons of pig iron and the older forges were making around 300 tons of blooms which would contribute to the war effort. The success that Cooper & Hewitt had at the Long Pond site led the company to produce blooms that were good enough to be made into steel between 1864 and 1865. The success for this site continued into 1866 when the site was able to produce small quantities of steel that could be used in gun metal manufacturing. Just as Newark saw the growth of their numerous manufacturing companies during the Civil War, West Milford also experienced this ,too in the case of the Long Pond Iron Works site.

The Long Pond Iron Works in West Milford and the City of Newark are just some of the places in New Jersey that saw this boom in economic growth. This situation even proved just how wrong state leaders were about the Civil War's impact on New Jersey due to the economy being heavily linked with the American South. Manufacturing in New Jersey equally performed on high levels during the war years, which benefited the Union's war efforts by being a state where there could be manufacturers making the critical war material that was needed. The roll of New Jersey's manufacturing is but a small portion of New Jersey history during the Civil War era. However, it plays an important role within the larger Civil War canon as it further shows the complexities America faced when the war divided the nation.



RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

Books, Classes, Seminars, & Tours

A Review of

A Woman of Valor: Clara Barton & the Civil War

By Stephen B. Oates



Clara Barton, 1865, postwar

In one of our previous publications, I did a small article on the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum in Washington DC. It occurred to me after writing the article that Clara Barton is one of those historical figures that sits as a vaguely understood fact in my mind. I can't remember a time when I didn't know about her existence, but beyond being the founder of the American Red Cross, she never bore much significance to me.

Stephen B. Oates' biography of Barton is lauded as one of the best, and while I was unsure if a book written over 30 years ago would hold up, I was more than pleasantly surprised. Oates writes in a frank, humble style that is kind to Barton's humanity, but doesn't paint her into a saint. She was, above all things, a human woman living through a violent, tumultuous part of history, who's decisions and actions made massive ripples in both her own time, and beyond it. The biography specifically focuses on Barton's efforts during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and Oates spares no detail. His work is heavily referenced and an undeniably accurate view of who Clara was and what she did (the reference section is almost as long as the actual book). The book mostly consists of Clara's own words, taken from copious letters, correspondence, and diary entries Oates had the great fortune of gaining access to for this work. He contextualizes them, giving us a full picture of where Clara was when writing these things, and the environmental and societal pressures surrounding her at any point.

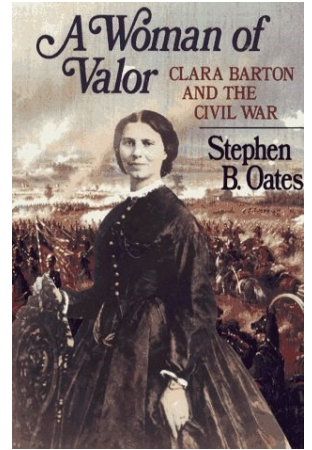


Photo attributed as Barton,
Antietam Field Hospital



One of the things I found most interesting about Barton's story was her persistence. Any time she met a roadblock (and she met many) it wasn't a 'no' to her, but simply an obstacle she needed to figure out a way around. As an upstanding woman in a tightly gendered society, she knew she couldn't just waltz out onto a battlefield and start doling out supplies without making herself into a pariah. But instead of seeing this as a brick wall, she saw it as a gate that needed a key, and a large part of the book chronicles her tireless tenacity in navigating the fraught, bureaucratic behemoth that was the American War Department. She also very much understood the importance in her society of being friends with people in power, specifically men, and she was not afraid to use her friendships to petition for what she wanted. Understanding the amount of letters she wrote and interviews she did just to *get permission to go* to the front with her medical supplies was exhausting, never mind finally achieving it, and *then* traveling through an active warzone to the battle-grounds to administer all the supplies. But not only did Barton beat the war department's politics, she went to battle three times, in three different zones, and then went back to the government a fourth time to petition a missing person's division to be headed up by herself. And she never received a cent for any of it.

While the Patent Office where she worked prior to the war did allow her to go on a sabbatical to help the war effort and paid her a portion of her original salary, it was meager, even for the 19th Century, and several times during the war, she was almost destitute after using her own funds to cover the costs of her assistance. There are a handful of extent letters of Clara asking for donations of clothes for herself, and food, as she could barely afford to pay her bills.

This was particularly true when she was given the task of the Rolls of Missing Men, as the government gave her scant funding for the project.

But the most interesting fact I found about Clara Barton was that her personality was almost a contradiction of itself. On one hand, she suffered from severe depression and suicidal thoughts for most of her life, and while she never acted upon them, her diaries are full of passages about wanting to die or not feeling like her life was worth anything. On the other, she felt an intense confidence and self-satisfaction in her nursing talents and her ability to help the sick and injured. Oates showcases many times during the war-years where Barton states that she only really feels alive when she's helping injured men on the battlefield. She was also a loud champion of women's rights, but seemed to dislike other women, particularly during her time in the field, and was very jealous and angry of any female coming into her circle of expertise. While she had several female confidants, none shared her love of nursing, and Barton had an intense cold-war with Dorothea Dix and any of the nurses who followed her. Only one time did Barton bring another woman to help her in the field, and she found the woman so useless that she sent her away. For someone who would later go on to give rousing speeches on women's suffrage, it was strange and fascinating to see a different side of Clara Barton.



Patent Office, where Clara worked prior to the Civil War

Oates does a fabulous job and juxtaposing these two sides of her, and allowing them to live fully on the page as the same person in all her complicated and layered ways. One of my favorite parts is when Oates describes the affair she had with a married officer while stationed at Hilton Head. Oates lays it out plainly. Clara was a devoutly Christian, Victorian woman who believed infidelity was wrong. But Clara was also human woman with desires and wants who met someone she really loved who loved her back. They had an affair, and then Clara fell out of love and moved on with her life, feeling zero remorse over any of it. It was almost jarring to read, but Oates' descriptions only made me respect Barton more.

The most poignant part of the book, at least for me, is the epilogue, which follows Barton's later career as a circuit speaker where she lectured to packed halls about women's rights and her experiences during the War. At almost every lecture, a veteran would come up to her afterwards and tell her how he remembered her when he was dying, and how he'd lived because of her. The name "Clara" became the most popular girl's name in the decade after the War, with Oates surmising that Barton's assistance to so many soldiers greatly impacted them emotionally well after the war's conclusion.



Clara Barton Monument, Antietam Battlefield

At its core, this book reveals the inexplicably tireless passion Clara Barton had for helping people, and being given societal permission to do so on such a large scale not only helped thousands of men who would have otherwise died of their wounds on the battlefield, but probably, Clara herself.

By Abby Belcastro, 2022

"I wish I could only work to some purpose. I have no right to these easy comfortable days and our poor men suffering and dying thirsty. ...My lot is too easy and I am sorry for it." - Clara Barton, in a letter to her friend, July 4, 1862

The 2D Board

Is there something you'd like to bring to the Board's attention? A new idea? A new impression? Something that can make the brigade better?

We'd love to hear what you have to say! Please contact your impression head and ask them to bring your idea to the Board's attention. Or, contact president Mike Milling, and ask if you can make a special presentation to the board at one of our meetings.

COMMITTEES

We have created three committees as part of our Board:

Advertising:

Abby Belcastro
Paul Egbert
Amery Vasso
Brian Zilinski

Recruiting:

Brian Zilinski
Rich Walker
Steff Poli-Zilinski

Safety:

Matt Belcastro
Hans Artz
Michelle Catona
Rich Walker

Have ideas for how we can advertise our programming better, recruit more members, or work on our safety? Please contact our committee members with your ideas!



Thank you for a great year!