



POSTHUMOUS REUNION OF THE 49TH NEW YORK INFANTRY VOLUNTEERS

ON THE

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLES OF THE WILDERNESS AND SPOTSYLVANIA COURTHOUSE

SPOTSYLVANIA, VIRGINIA

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A LABOR OF LOVE, BY:

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OVERVIEW

The 49th New York Infantry Volunteers, also known as Buffalo's Second Regiment was comprised of soldiers from three Counties in Western New York near Buffalo, New York, including: Company A, G, I and K from Chautauqua County; Company B, D, E and F from Erie County; Company H of Niagara County; and from downstate New York, north of New York City: Company C, the Fremont Rifles of Westchester County. The 49th was engaged in numerous major battles in the east from 1861 through 1865, appearing on battlefields that include but are not limited to: Seven Days Battle, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Rappahannock Station, Wilderness, Spotsylvania Courthouse, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Defense of Fort Stevens, Opequon, and Cedar Creek. The regiment had heavy casualties throughout the war:

During its service, the regiment lost by death, killed in action, 12 officers, 84 enlisted men; of wounds received in action, 4 officers, 42 enlisted men; of disease and other causes, 5 officers, 175 enlisted men; total, 21 officers, 301 enlisted men; aggregate, 322; of whom 23 enlisted men died in the hands of the enemy.

-From *New York in the War of the Rebellion*, 3rd ed. Frederick Phisterer. Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912, made available by the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center

Little did I know that almost 150 years later, would I, a Western New York native be living atop the Spotsylvania Courthouse Battlefield, or inspired enough by the 49th NY monument at the "bloody angle" erected by living veterans of the 49th Vols. in 1902, to learn more about the men from my native state and region to see if they were able to go home after setting out on their long journey. Growing up in the north, the American Civil War seemed to be a distant memory that only historians or teachers studied or talked about. The Civil War seemed to have little more impact than that upon daily life. Sure historic monuments were placed about city centers and town squares over a hundred years ago by those impacted by the war but there never seemed to be that deeper historical connection that I find much more prevalent here in Spotsylvania, Virginia on lands where generations of families have lived, experienced, and passed down their stories and emotions. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that many Western New York families had not immigrated to the United States until after the Civil War during the industrial revolution? Perhaps the memories faded away when new challenges of an industrializing and rapidly growing region at the time became the focus?

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I am hardly a scholar of American Civil war history and understanding but I did gain an interest in the war during my high school years at Sweet Home High School in Amherst, New York where I decided to take an elective course in the subject. If for nothing else, during that time I gained a lifelong interest that overtime has expanded my knowledge and inspired travels to places I may otherwise never visit. Such interests have expanded my geographic reach and as a result, expanded my world. The class helped diversify my life's interests and experiences and I am very thankful for that. My first exposure to a Civil War battlefield came with a class trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania that I will never forget. Fortunately my younger brothers had the opportunity years later to take that same trip and have a similar experience that brought me full circle when I travelled up from my current home in Spotsylvania, Virginia, to visit them.

A MONUMENT AND A LIST OF NAMES

A monument to the 49th New York Infantry Volunteers standing at the "Bloody Angle" on the Spotsylvania Courthouse Battlefield, and its engraved list of the fallen sent me on a search to discover their cemetery markers if I could; their posthumous whereabouts. I wanted to answer the question, "did they get to go back home as I do to see my family?" At first I had no idea where the 49th New York were from but after a subsequent visit to the battlefield and a brief web inquiry, I discovered a regional connection to myself and knew I had to do something to answer my questions and so my project was started. Oddly I have found that many of the results of my research, where I had to go to document and verify my findings, have connections to me in one way or another or are within a reasonable distance from me here in Central Virginia. Whether it be proximity to a visit to my sister in Georgia to co-locate a visit to Andersonville, or travels northward to Western New York a few times a year to visit family, allowing me to conveniently stop by Antietam, or Winchester, or to visit my brothers on their Civil War class tour of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, normal everyday life things have helped my travel efforts without adding much cost to what I would have spent otherwise anyway.

I found that my interest in many ways paralleled that of Ken Burns whose questions inspired great work in his 1990 documentary, *The Civil War* which aired on PBS. In an April, 2011 podcast interview with PBS travel guide Rick Steves, Burns stated, "I wanted to find out what happened?" Obviously the scope of Burns' work was far more reaching and recognized, but for me, a monument led me to want to know what happened to the 49th New York Volunteers, from high ranking officer to private, all risking life and limb in the defense of their country. Simple questions can lead to large quests. Did the 49th New York Volunteers avoid injury and sickness to fight another day? Did they survive the war and go on to live full lives, have families, and generations or relatives who live today? Or were young lives extinguished too young on the

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fields of the American Civil War? Have their identities been lost to time and distance? A very humbling dilemma. Once started, my project grew into a labor of love, and an exciting journey resulting in my posthumous reunion of the 49th New York Volunteers, to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the Battles of the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse. I have not seen a posthumous research project into the 49th New York volunteers to this scale and believe it to be a unique project.

As I continued on my project I found a timely PBS episode of the American Experience entitled *Death and the Civil War*, by Ric Burns that initially aired in 2012, to be a perfect complement and inspiration to continue on my efforts. In it, the documentary covered the challenges faced by communities and the nation in dealing with the un-romantic realities of war and how to deal with the dead during and years after the guns stopped. It was a great resource covering the establishment of National Cemeteries, started in 1862, and the work of the post war reburial program all of whose efforts have played a role in my research to locate the 49th.

Throughout this research project, perhaps there was some resource or method that I missed. At the end of the day though, for me I found a way that worked and am happy to bring my findings as they stand at this time forward. Timing with the 150th Anniversary of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse and the location of the monument that inspired it all makes the timing right. I continue to view this as an ongoing project so there is more work to be done. Many members of the 49th will never be found but those I can locate I will and will continue to compile my results.

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA: WHERE ARE THE 49th NEW YORK INFANTRY VOLUNTEERS?

And how far, at the best of it, thru the little remainder of our span of life would the recollection in which we shall keep them go toward the immortality of remembrance that is due to those who died, as this man died, in the defending of a great cause? Unless we have tremendously mistaken all the meaning and consequence of events, the heritage of freedom and free government which they redeemed at the price of their lives is the heritage of the whole future of the human race destined to pass from father to child with augmentation and accumulation, down to the last generation of mankind. Surely the succeeding heirs of so great an inheritance of the precious capitalization of patriotic blood will not forgive us if we fail to preserve and transmit to them the names and the memory of the men to whom they owe it. Nor could we forgive ourselves, or respect ourselves, if we failed to keep their memory green and their names monumentally inscribed. A pious duty alike to the dead, to the living and to the unborn millions who come hereafter a pious duty with which loving, reverent and grateful feelings coincide impel the building of such memorial shafts. It would be pitiful to leave it so that there could ever come a time, while marble will last or granite endure, when our children's children, or a child of

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theirs, could approach this spot and not be hushed by the silent admonition of an ever lifted finger of stone, and told to whisper reverently the name of one of those who shielded the Republic with their bodies and took upon themselves the mortal blows with which treason tried to strike it down. All around us in this place there is more than a score of such graves : Wilcox, the Wilkesons, the Burts, Bullymore, Budd, Faxon, Mulligan, Dewey, Ellis, Blatchford, Tuttle, Woltge, Hosmer, Farnham, Wallace, Herriman, Richardson, Fero, Xewell, Justin, and many more are here, and I trust that the chisel which has begun its work, in this will not rest until it has marked the burial place of every one- the General and the private soldier alike; for the equality of a common martyrdom obliterates every gradation of rank in that high peerage to which they have all been raised.

-From Life of General Daniel Davidson Bidwell, Chapter XV, Address Delivered at the Dedication of a Monument to Brigadier General Daniel Bidwell in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, New York, October 19, 1871, by Josephus Nelson Larned.

It's amazing what one can do when you put your mind and focus to it. Locating the graves of the 49th New York Infantry Volunteers was no quick task. There truly is no "one stop shop" when looking to locate cemetery records. Finding a comprehensive resource to identify who comprised the 49th New York Volunteers was the first part of the research effort. As mentioned above in the overview, the monument at the "bloody angle" on the Spotsylvania Courthouse Battlefield contained a list of engraved names of those who fell in battle there. A complete roster of the 49th New York Volunteers was located online, provided by the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center. The Museum has comprehensively linked unit rosters of New York Civil War Infantry Regiments, Engineers, Cavalry, and Artillery. They are available as pdf files that can be downloaded. According to the Museum, the historic rosters "were compiled by the New York State Adjutant General Office. They were published as a set of 43 volumes between 1893 and 1905. Their official titles are *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York for the Year .. : Registers of the [units numbers]*". The rosters truly made conducting the project possible and were a great complement of information to attach to gravesites I have located, visited, and have photo documented. They give a great snapshot of soldier life and service during the Civil War.

With the unit roster information available, the research shifted to the cemetery research phase. For this, I located six primary resources that include: (1) Find-a-grave.com; (2) Internment.net; (3) Ancestry.com; (4) National Park Service Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database; (5) United States Department of Veterans Affairs Nationwide Gravesite Locator; and (6) Local and Regional Cemetery databases compiled by volunteers and/ or geneology societies such as the Painted Hills Geneological Society in Chautauqua County, NY in service to their community.

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Unfortunately many of the resources do not share information so queries required duplication across a number of platforms such as those described above. Ancestry.com had the greatest reach into other resources including find-a-grave, admission records for US Homes for Disabled Volunteers, and Veterans Burial Cards among others.

Outside of New York State, in areas where battles were fought and soldiers of the 49th perished, I focused my search on National Military Cemeteries and had good success utilizing the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Nationwide Gravesite Locator. I also discovered a wide reaching number of gravesites located outside of battle regions at National Cemeteries associated with military prisons, civil war hospital sites, veterans homes and hospitals, and simply due to relocation further out west after the war. The graves of the 49th New York Volunteers can be found from sea to shining sea. National Cemeteries containing the graves of the 49th New York Volunteers include: Togus National Cemetery, Togus, Maine (Not yet photo documented); Wood National Cemetery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Not yet photo documented); Danville National Cemetery, Danville, Illinois (Not yet photo documented); Bath National Cemetery, Bath New York (Partially photo documented); Woodlawn National Cemetery, Elmira, New York (Not yet photo documented); Cypress Hills National Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York (Not yet photo documented); Ohio Veterans Home National Cemetery, Sandusky, Ohio (Not yet photo documented); Dayton National Cemetery, Dayton, Ohio (Not yet photo documented); Marion National Cemetery, Marion, Indiana (Not yet photo documented); Gettysburg National Cemetery, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Philadelphia National Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Not yet photo documented); Antietam National Cemetery, Sharpsburg, Maryland; Loudon National Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland; Annapolis National Cemetery, Annapolis, Maryland; US Soldiers and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, Washington, DC; Battleground National Cemetery, Washington, DC; Winchester National Cemetery, Winchester, Virginia; Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia; Alexandria National Cemetery, Alexandria, Virginia; Culpeper National Cemetery, Culpeper, Virginia; Fredericksburg National Cemetery, Fredericksburg, Virginia; Cold Harbor National Cemetery, Mechanicsville, Virginia; Richmond National Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia; Yorktown National Cemetery, Yorktown, Virginia; Hampton National Cemetery, Hampton, Virginia; Fort Scott National Cemetery, Fort Scott, Kansas (Not yet photo documented); Leavenworth National Cemetery, Leavenworth, Kansas (Not yet photo documented); Los Angeles National Cemetery, Los Angeles, California (Not yet photo documented); Beaufort National Cemetery, Beaufort, South Carolina (Not yet photo documented); Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville, Georgia.

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In national cemeteries, aside from the unfortunate reality that many soldiers of the Civil War were never identified and remain unknown, those that were are generally well documented including name, date of death (if known), cemetery section and location number, and state and regimental affiliation. Not all records searches precisely matched the unit rosters when searching for names. A number of soldiers from the 49th were located using “sounds like” spelling of last names. I've found that spelling errors, death date written or typed records and errors on stones are a reality. Additionally, unit rosters confirm that many soldiers appear to have gone by a number of different surname spellings and even had a few first names they went by. Without dog tags and given the fact that many soldiers were re-interred off battlefields to national cemeteries sometimes years after the war had ended, relying on crude markers and memories of surviving comrades, information accuracy was not always precise, adding complexity to the search.

The volunteer initiated and genealogical society provided records I found online were available as lists in pdf format or as web based tables of information. Since many of the resources are independently compiled with no set methodology, not all records are equal. Recorded information can vary from person to person, or, vary due to lack or abundance of available cemetery information. The conditions of grave markers being documented (whether readable or faded to be indecipherable) also influence available information very much. Some resources like find-a-grave rely on volunteers entering gravesite details on a case by case basis so not all cemeteries are completely documented and are only partially documented. Inevitably the search of such resources required scanning of tens of thousands of names ordered in list form, with an eye towards names, dates, and most notably Civil War regimental affiliation notes. If and when located, the information would then be checked against unit rosters as described above. These volunteer driven resources were the greatest tool I had for finding markers in town, village, and private cemeteries. Such information has been documented along with the National Cemetery information in the attached tables.

Ideally there will be a continued effort to further document cemeteries in every County throughout the Country by electronic means using a common searchable platform. There still appear to be an abundance of cemeteries with records that are not available. Research found many undocumented cemeteries or partially documented cemeteries scattered in many different locations in a number of different forms, not always search friendly.

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CAMERA IN HAND



Figure 1: Finding and photographing graves at Andersonville, Georgia in November, 2011.

There are over 1400 soldiers associated with the 49th New York Infantry Volunteers recorded in the historic unit roster, made available by the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center. The project was started in late 2011. As of April, 2014 efforts have identified the grave locations of approximately 35% of the

entire 49th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment who served anywhere from 1861 to 1865. As of April, 2014 I have been able to visit, and photo document nearly 200 of the grave sites, as well as document 49th New York related memorials and statues at the “Bloody Angle” at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Colonial Circle, Buffalo, New York. Figure 1 above shows the project in action.

Due to a number of mysteries and conundrums, not unlike those occasionally raised on the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania area Civil War Mysteries and Conundrums blog (hosted by National Park Service Staff), unfortunately I am unable at this time to definitively verify every grave linkage. In instances where questions still exist, I have noted the concern within the notes column of the attached tables. The vast majority of linkages have been verified and those that still have questions are generally based on finding materials definitively linking the interred to the 49th New York. In such instances I typically have exact name, date, age, geography similarities, even acknowledgement of military service, but may not yet have that “smoking gun” tie to the 49th. A great example of this is related to Sergeant John W. Palmiter. As per the 49th unit roster, Sergeant Palmiter enlisted August 22, 1861 at age 25 in Fredonia, New York to serve three years. He mustered in as



Figure 2: Verification mystery

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Sergeant, Co. A., on August 24, 1861 and was discharged for disability at Washington, DC on October 3, 1862. I was unable to locate any more information for him including the details of his disability pertaining to the 49th New York Vols. Through records research I was able to find a gravesite of John W. Palmeter at Arlington National Cemetery, in this case affiliated with the 112th New York Volunteer Infantry. Unit records for the 112th have John W. Palmeter (slight spelling variation on last name but not uncommon) enlisting at age 28 at Dunkirk, New York to serve three years, and mustered in as private, Co. B, February 15, 1864. Private Palmeter was wounded in action on June 2, 1864, at Cold Harbor, Virginia and died of wounds received on June 20, 1864, at hospital in Washington, DC. Is John W. Palmiter, who enlisted with the 49th at Fredonia, NY in 1861 at age 25, and was discharged for disability in 1862 the same John W. Palmeter who enlisted with the 112th at Dunkirk, NY at age 28, just three miles away from Fredonia, NY, in 1864? Interestingly, the grave stone at Arlington National Cemetery uses the spelling "Palmiter", unlike the 112th unit roster. There appear to be a number of similarities but more investigation would be needed to be certain if the Arlington National Cemetery grave, pictured in Figure 2, also had a past with the 49th NY Vols.

Travelling to a cemetery with a known address, and acres of well maintained grounds, with a system for locating markers by section, lot, site number, with corresponding signage made search efforts once onsite favorable. Order and organization of cemeteries for way finding purposed I found to be a very effective and efficient complement to the project search. Such ideal scenario's played out in National Cemeteries fairly consistently, as well as larger scale historic cemeteries that attract many visitors, such as Forest lawn Cemetery, in Buffalo, NY, and Rock Creek Cemetery, in Washington, DC. Admittedly, there were a few exceptions where recorded information led me to a grave that was clearly incorrect. This was the case in the search at the US Soldier's and Airmen's National Cemetery in Washington, DC where records research had incorrectly pointed to marker number 2112, requiring further research to find a record in

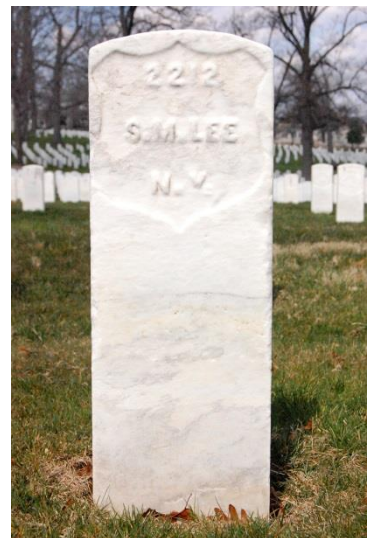


Figure 3: Private Lee "See" Marker 2212

conflict with the earlier one, and an additional visit to the cemetery at a later date to positively confirm the grave of Private Silas M. See at marker number 2212 as shown in Figure 3. This is also an example of some of the spelling consistency challenges noted earlier. The historic unit roster for the 49th New York has recorded Silas M. See, but cemetery records and the marker have S.M. Lee. Private See was 23 years old when enlisted on August 20, 1861, at Harmony, NY to serve three years. He mustered in as private, Co. G, August 30, 1861; died, November 18, 1862, in hospital at Washington, D.C.

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At the Gettysburg National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, locating the grave of Private Nicholas Baquet was challenging. Based on my research, Private Baquet is the only member of the 49th New York Vols. to be buried at the Gettysburg National Cemetery. As per the unit roster, Private Baquet enlisted at age 25 on September 6, 1861, at Buffalo, NY to serve three years. He mustered in as private, Co. E, September 7, 1861 and was killed in action, July 6, 1863, at Fairfield, Pennsylvania. For Gettysburg National Cemetery, my research had located Pvt Baquet but I had no reference as to the layout of the cemetery and the numbering system that was used there. It seemed simple enough based on the physical layout of the sections based on state but still I had difficulty finding the grave site. In my experience no two national cemeteries have been exactly the same and it takes a bit of time to figure the section, row, lot, numbering system out without a clear map.

After searching the New York section for a good deal of time and even looking into a few other sections of the cemetery while fighting allergies, I ended up travelling to the battlefield visitors center to inquire. Many national cemeteries have cemetery reference books available on site at the cemetery but this was not the case at Gettysburg. Examples I have found with paper copies of maps and internment rosters include, but are not limited to Alexandria National



Figure 4: Grave Locator book at Annapolis National Cemetery, Maryland

Cemetery, Annapolis National Cemetery, and Richmond National Cemetery. A picture of the Annapolis National Cemetery reference book is shown in Figure 4. The resource is simply always available on a walk up basis, typically kept on a shelf or in a cabinet under cover typically near the cemetery entrance or at a historic superintendent's lodge building. At Hampton National Cemetery as well as Arlington National Cemetery they have electronic kiosks to search records and print out maps that are also very helpful. A prior visit to Poplar Grove National Cemetery near Richmond, Virginia (where I have not located any members of the 49th), made me think about inquiring with the visitors center because they too have no onsite records available upon visit. In both cases I have confirmed that all cemetery records were at the centralized visitor center for the battlefield park system. The National Park Service (NPS) representative was very helpful and was able to provide me the organizational system of the cemetery and within a

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short drive I was back and successfully located the soldier I had sought. The grave of Private Baquet is pictured below in Figure 5. Like the Fredericksburg National Cemetery, the grave markers at Gettysburg National Cemetery I have found to also be unique compared to many of the other National Cemeteries visited that tend to have similar upright style white colored stones. The flat stones are arranged into long curved rows to establish a half circle around the Soldiers National Monument there. The bands of stones can be seen in Figure 6, below.



Figure 5: Private Nicholas Baquet, 49 NYVI, at Gettysburg National Cemetery

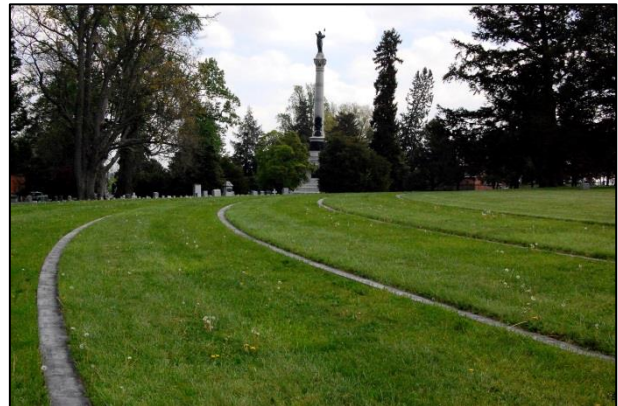


Figure 6: Gettysburg National Cemetery, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

The largest challenge has been the small and even mid-size private cemeteries that are not necessarily laid out in easy to recognize section, rows, and grave numbers like national cemeteries are. Some of those I have visited on my trips back to Western New York, including those in Erie, Niagara and Chautauqua Counties can be like finding “a needle in a haystack”, especially when the cemetery is large or there are many faded or toppled stones, immediately resulting in cautious optimism with the threat being a stone will not be located.

Initially when faced with the prospect of visiting a cemetery and realizing I had no reference to go by to look for a grave stone of interest, I felt overwhelmed and there are times, given time constraints or poor weather conditions, allergies to freshly cut grass, that the task of locating a grave can still be a challenge. However, with some experience I have discovered some strategies, at least for smaller cemeteries, that can expedite a search with camera in hand.

When I am visiting a small cemetery without reference information as to the whereabouts of a particular gravesite the first thing I do is scan the cemetery to see if there is a general chronological order to the way the cemetery has grown. If I visit a cemetery and am able to determine that the first half of it includes gravestones with death dates from the middle 1800's through the early 20th century and then newer graves tend to extend beyond that with death

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dates in the 40's through recent times, I know I can limit my search to the historic area of the cemetery only. This is not always the case but has been the case in a number of instances including Hartland Central Cemetery, in Niagara County, NY, as well as Wright's Corner Cemetery in Newfane, NY, also Niagara County. If I am able to limit my search area based on historic eras of the cemetery, often times clearly delineated by the type of, and condition of the grave stones, I start a methodical row by row scan of the area, typically scanning two or three rows at a time as I walk along. Its kind of like mowing a lawn, you don't want to miss anything so you go in rows, back and forth with eyes scanning, chiefly looking for names or military references engraved.

To further help in the process, there are some potential "tells" that can, and certainly not always, help find a stone of interest for Veterans and even Civil War Soldiers particularly. Many cemeteries adorn their veteran's stones with American Flags, especially around Veteran's Day and the Memorial Day holidays. Flags can help reduce a search down rapidly. For myself, this was the case at Concordia Cemetery in Buffalo, New York, looking for the grave of Private Henry Boehm. Additionally, for Revolutionary War, Civil War, and Spanish American War soldiers I have seen stones marked with grave markers. In the case of Civil War veterans you may see Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Markers specifically. They are typically bronze, or plastic if more recently placed. Some are fairly new and others appear to have been placed many years ago based on their aged look. In Niagara County for instance, the grave of Lieutenant Otis B. Hayes had both a flag and a GAR Marker as you can see in Figure 7. As per the historic unit roster, Lieutenant Hayes enrolled on September



Figure 7: American Flag and GAR Marker

2, 1861, at Somerset, NY to serve three years at age 26. He mustered in as sergeant, Co. H, September 13, 1861 and was promoted first sergeant on August 3, 1862. He was captured in action on May 4, 1863, at Fredericksburg, Virginia and eventually paroled. He re-enlisted as a veteran on December 26, 1863 and mustered in as second lieutenant, Co. G, September 9, 1864; transferred to. Co. A, September 17, 1864 and ultimately mustered out with company on June 27, 1865, at Washington, D.C.

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Lastly, within private cemeteries, occasionally you will see cemetery stones that have a similar look to those upright white stone markers I mentioned earlier and associated with the National Military Cemeteries. They simply like military stones like you would see at Arlington National Cemetery. Major William Ellis has such a grave marker at Forest Lawn Cemetery. It clearly stands out from the rest and has a uniquely military look to it. Figure 8 shows the stone. As per historic unit rosters, Major William Ellis enrolled, July 30, 1861, at age 21, at Buffalo, NY to serve three years. He mustered in as second lieutenant, Co. E, August 28, 1861 and was promoted captain, Co. C, January 25, 1862. Captain Ellis mustered in as major on December 11, 1862 and was wounded, May 12, 1864, near Spotsylvania, Va. and died of his wounds, August 3, 1864, in camp at Monocacy Creek, Md. According to a first hand description of the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse entitled *Hand to Hand Fighting at Spotsylvania*, by G. Norton Galloway, Congressional Medal of Honor winner from the 95th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, "William Ellis, of the 49th New York, who had excited our admiration, was shot through the arm and body with a ramrod during one of the several attempts to get the men to cross the works and drive off the enemy".



Figure 8: Major William Ellis

Congressional Medal of Honor winners will often times have special metal plaques at gravesites or their accomplishment will be noted in some other way with specialized marker, engraving, flag. Second lieutenant John P. McVeane of the 49th New York Volunteers won the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery in 1863, having "Shot a Confederate color bearer and seized the flag; also approached, alone, a barn between the lines and demanded and received the surrender of a number of the enemy therein." At age 18, the Canadian born John P. McVeane enrolled August 1, 1861, at Buffalo, NY to serve three years. He mustered in as sergeant, Co. D on September 7, 1861 and returned to ranks, November 18, 1862. He was promoted corporal on January 2, 1863,



Figure 9: Congressional Medal of Honor Winner John P. McVeane



and then sergeant on May 4, 1863. He re-enlisted as a veteran on December 25, 1863 and was promoted second lieutenant. In May, 1864, he was killed in action at the Wilderness. According to records, his body was never recovered. Lieutenant McVeane's Congressional Medal of Honor plaque is located at Forest Lawn Cemetery in front of his memorial stone as pictured in Figure 9.

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FADED GLORY

I briefly mentioned faded grave markers as a challenge to research such as this. Unfortunately unreadable 150 year old grave markers is a real threat that will only worsen as time moves on. Over time I have come to verify my suspicion when I started this project that cemeteries and grave markers after 150 years are not all truly created equally. At 150 years there exists the very real threat to the conditions of many markers. Some stones are simply fading away due to weathering, location, maintenance or lack thereof, and factors due to the type of stone used. In some instances already, and coming soon, markers have faded to a point where even the known and identified soldier of the 49th New York risks fading into unknown status. Unless documented elsewhere, indecipherable markers become unknown internments from a casual observer standpoint. Considering this threat and the observed condition of some markers, this projects timing, started in late 2011 and now in 2014, 150 years after the Battle of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse seems to be occurring at a crucial time. It seems good to ensure these markers are photo documented while they still convey information.

Even in National Cemeteries, there were some instances where markers were becoming difficult to read due to weathering. Such markers were equally difficult to photo document when visited. At Antietam National Cemetery for instance, the historic grave marker for Private John W. Campbell of Clymer, New York is becoming difficult to read and equally difficult to interpret in a photograph as well. Private Campbell died November 11, 1862 at a hospital in Hagerstown, Maryland. Equally the grave marker of Private Henry D. Harding of Warsaw, New York is fading away and becoming difficult to read without shadow to articulate what is left of lettering. Private Harding's grave is at Winchester National Cemetery, in Winchester, Virginia and seen pictured in Figure 10.



Figure 10: Fading Details

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Likewise, the gravestone of Colonel Erastus D. Holt, of the 49th New York, at Forest Hill Cemetery in Fredonia, New York suffers from the effects of many decades of weathering. Colonel Holt's marker has a good deal of detail engraved in the surface of the stone pertaining to the 49th New York. Unfortunately, I was unable to read all the information due to its present state. It may be possible with higher contrast or a better eye than mine to make out the details but given the current state, the question can be raised, for how much longer will it be readable? As per historic unit roster, Colonel Erastus D. Holt enrolled at age 29 on September 1, 1861, at Forestville, New York to serve three years; mustered in as captain, Co. I, September 6, 1861 and was wounded in action, May 12, 1864, near Spotsylvania Court House, Va. Having survived the wounding, he mustered in as lieutenant-colonel, July 27, 1864 and was promoted colonel, August 20, 1864. He was wounded in action on April 2, 1865, at Petersburg, Virginia and died of his wounds on April 7, 1865, at hospital located at City Point, Virginia. I snapped an up close image of the service information in question. The image can be found in Figure 11.



Figure 11: Colonel Erastus D. Holt

Beyond the condition of markers themselves, general cemetery maintenance and security are important factors in efforts to preserve the integrity of the markers. Many cemeteries have been well managed, maintained, and secured for many years and the condition of their markers tend to benefit from that. Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo, New York, Arlington National Cemetery, in Arlington Virginia (Figure 12), and the US Soldiers and Airman's National Cemetery in Washington, DC appeared to be very well taken care of.



Figure 12: Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia

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Others visited, such as Hemenger Cemetery, in Gerry, Chautauqua County, New York, though maintained today, appears to have gone through a period of great decay with most stones either broken or completely missing from view; perhaps sunken into the ground. Hemenger Cemetery contained the markers of Sergeant Adam Foley of Fredonia, New York, and Private Charles Lenox, also of Fredonia, New York. Sergeant Foley died on May 8, 1864 following wounds received at the



Figure 13: Hemenger Cemetery, Chautauqua County, New York

Wilderness in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, and Private Lenox died at 20 years old in 1862. In both cases, the locations of the stones are unknown and not able to be photo documented or visited due to the condition of the markers there. Only a general photograph of the cemetery in its current state was taken to document the site (Figure 13).

Fortunately the grave marker of Private Henry Boehm at Concordia Cemetery on Buffalo's east side, as pictured in Figure 14, was found in good condition and had been marked by an American Flag for service. His marker was photo documented for the project. Private Boehm survived the war and passed away on November 24, 1904. The history and past plight of Concordia Cemetery was noted in an October 29, 2012 report entitled *Making a Difference: Concordia Cemetery* by Buffalo, New York NBC network news channel WGRZ 2:



Figure 14: Concordia Cemetery, Buffalo, NY

Time and neglect took its toll on the east side cemetery and greed did even more damage. Concordia opened in 1859 and served three German parishes. It's the final resting place for nearly 20-thousand people, including immigrants who helped build the Queen City and 450 veterans, more than 100 of which were Civil War soldiers.

Around 2001, a former treasurer embezzled more than 150-thousand dollars, money that was meant for cemetery maintenance.

Concordia was abandoned, but in 2003, a small group of volunteers took over to fix things up.

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Thankfully, upon visitation, the cemetery does appear to be receiving the attention it deserves and the threat to fast track degradation due to abandonment have subsided there.

Another physical effect upon cemetery markers found along the journey included the effect of stones literally being enveloped by large tree trunks, or in other instances, sinking under their own weight into the ground. Though the challenge isn't unique to any one cemetery, good examples of the effect and need for periodic maintenance were on display at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Cemetery, Fredericksburg, Virginia, and at Richmond National Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia. The Fredericksburg National Cemetery contains the graves of over 15,000 Union soldiers, only 20% of which are known soldiers. Grave markers at the Fredericksburg National Cemetery are very unique compared to all other National Cemeteries visited thus far, they tend to be smaller stones fashioned out of hardy stone material with deeply engraved identification information. The threat to the many stones there is not weathering but rather sinking. Figure 3, above is an example of the sinking effect at Fredericksburg National Cemetery. The grave pictured in Figure 15 is that of Private Hugh A. Calderwood of the 49th New York Volunteers. Private Calderwood was killed in action on May 6, 1864 at the Wilderness.



Figure 15: 49 NYVI Private Hugh A. Calderwood's Sinking Marker at Fredericksburg National Cemetery

Ongoing maintenance efforts to address the sinking problem were found at the Richmond National Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia as pictured in Figure 16. Sunken stones are pulled up, the holes partially refilled to re-lift the markers, and the markers are replaced.



Figure 16: Raising markers at Richmond National Cemetery.

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Figure 17 shows the grave marker of Captain Charles H. Hickmott of the 49th New York Volunteers. In the picture, you can clearly see the soil line up to which the stone had sunken prior to being lifted by maintenance staff. Captain Hickmott, who enrolled in the regiment on August 1, 1861 at Buffalo, New York, mustered in as Second Lieutenant, Company F., was killed on May 6, 1864 at the Wilderness.



Figure 17: Evidence of stone sinking at Richmond National Cemetery.

Aside from cemeteries that are only partially documented or have not yet been documented at all, I also saw a technological based threat where detailed resources had been made available a number of years prior, posted by volunteers, and simply expired online. There are instances where valuable documentation lists expired and were no longer hosted online. They had in effect faded away. Cemetery documentation websites were tremendously valuable for me for the fact that I am only one person with limited time and in many cases, I live hundreds of miles away from the sites of interest. Therefore, the online resources represented additional feet on the ground for me and though their intent was to simply document a cemetery in a comprehensive way out of respect for the interred so their memories don't fade away, for history or genealogy, their work helped me locate the 49th New York Infantry in this particular project. When the documentation disappears online, I lose a tool and my feet on the ground, especially as it related to smaller and medium sized village, town and private cemeteries. Without such work, I could not have successfully located and travelled to photo document as many markers as I have at this time.



POSTHUMOUS REUNION OF THE 49TH NEW YORK INFANTRY VOLUNTEERS

The following tables document gravesites and memorials to soldiers of the 49th New York Infantry Volunteers. This has truly been a labor of love and I have enjoyed the journey!