169th New York Infantry Newsletter

August 2013

The Time Traveler.

Part VI.

The march north of Richmond and down the Virginia Peninsula in July of 1863 sent many of the men of the 169th N.Y. to the hospital for sunstroke and exhaustion. Regrouping at the new Federal line outside of Portsmouth, the regiment would take to the sea on August 2d under sealed orders. As Fort Sumter hove in sight on the evening of the 5th, the men knew they would be fighting the enemy at Charleston, where the war began over two years before, setting up camp at Folly Island on the Atlantic.

Evening Gun, Fort Sumter (ca. 1863-'64)
John Gadsby Chapman (1808-1889)
Collection of the Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia

The 169th N.Y. left Norfolk, Va., by transports on June 27, 1863, for White House on the Pamunkey River, arriving the following day. An expedition under the command of Brig.-Gen. George W. Getty had orders to reconnoitre in the direction of the South Anna River in Hanover County, north of Richmond, as a diversion for Union forces attacking the eastern approach to Richmond during the Gettysburg campaign. The forces under Getty's command consisted of his own division (the 3d Division of the IX Army Corps), excepting a regiment retained for provost duty at the White House; Gen. Foster's brigade, (including the 169th

Major-General John A. Dix
Commanding Department. of the East

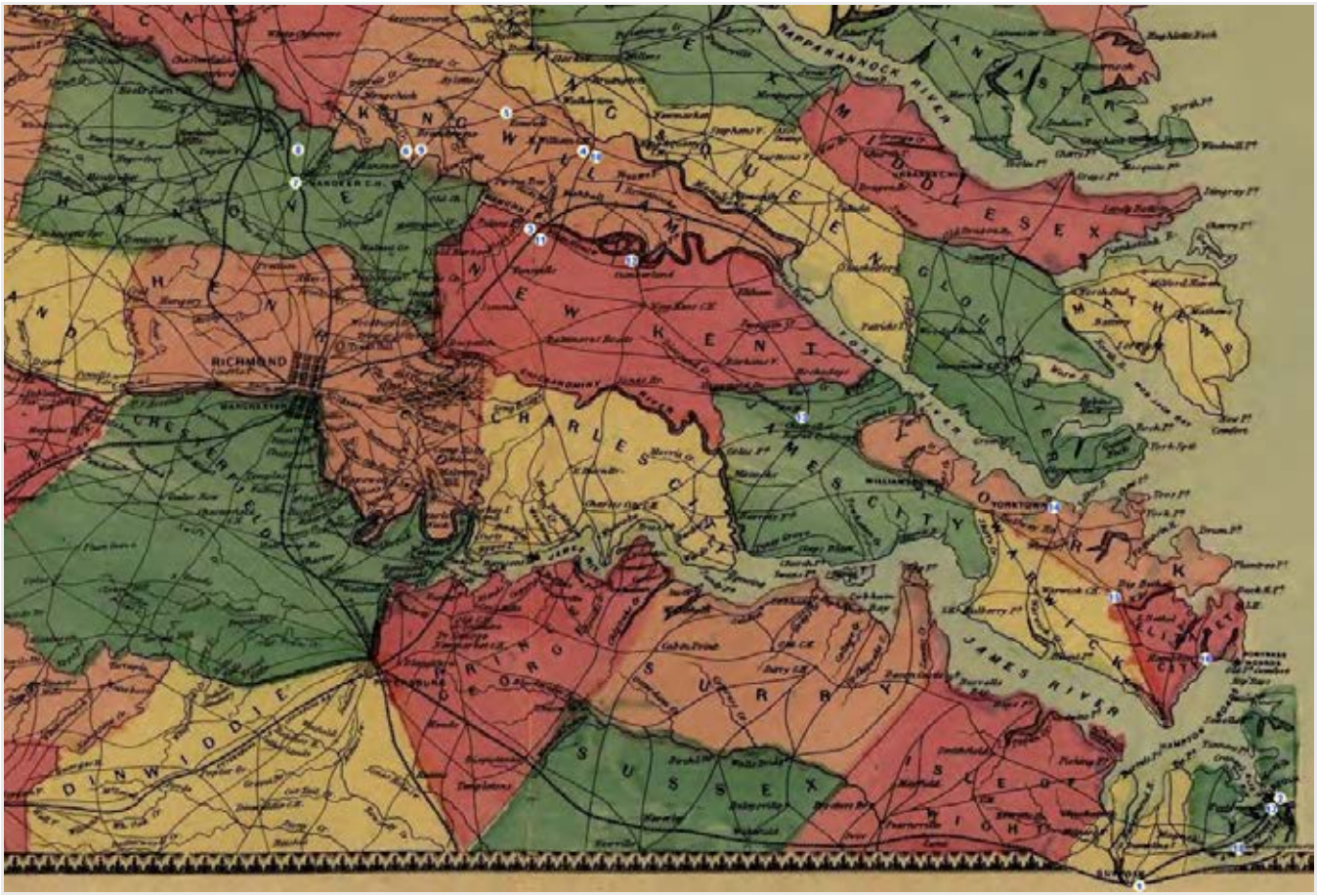
Brigadier-General George W. Getty
Commanding Expedition from White House to the South Anna River

N.Y.); a provisional brigade (part of Wistar's), under Col. Wardrop of the 99th N.Y.; and the cavalry under Colonel Spear; in all, about 10,000 men.

In his historical sketch of the 169th, Col. James A. Colvin recounted the "Blackberry Raid," as the expedition came to be known by the troops:

Horseman at the head of a column of infantry (ca. 1861-'65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

> "The enemy having retired from Suffolk, it became necessary to send the troops to some other point, and accordingly the 169th with other regiments was transferred to a command where it was supposed it would do the most good. Gen. Lee at this time was making his memorable march into Pennsylvania, which culminated with the battle of Gettysburg. The troops available from Suffolk and other points within easy reach of Fortress Monroe were gathered under Gen. Dix, then commanding that department, and sent to operate on Lee's communications with Richmond.



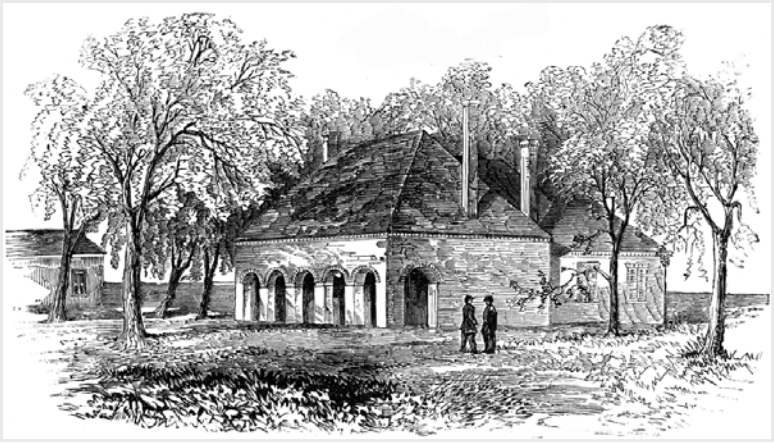
Detail from "The Battlefields and Military Positions in the Virginian Peninsula, from Surveys Supplied by Officers of the Army"
Daniel A. Heald (1818-1900)
Published by the Home Insurance Company of New York (1862)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The expedition to the South Anna River left Norfolk and sailed up the York and Pamunkey Rivers to White House; upon its conclusion the troops took transports at Hampton for Portsmouth.

Expedition from White House to the South Anna River
in Hanover County, Va., July 1-14, 1863

1. June 25th: Took the cars at Suffolk for Norfolk.
2. June 27th: Boarded the transports at Norfolk, sailing up the York and Pamunkey Rivers, arriving at White House on the 28th.
3. Encamped for three days at White House on the south side of the Pamunkey River in a 700-acre clover field, the property of Confederate Brig.-Gen. William H. Fitzhugh Lee.
4. July 1st, 3 A.M.: The expedition left White House and by daylight had crossed the Pamunkey. The day was warm as the Union forces marched north to King William Court House, traveling about 14 miles, where it camped for the night.
5. July 2d, 4 A.M.: Marched eight miles west to Brandywine Road, stopping for dinner. Moved back three miles and camped for the night. The heat was intense.
6. July 3d, 9 A.M.: Marched 17 miles to Taylor's Estate on Hanover Road, reaching camp at 11:50 P.M. Heat intense.

7. July 4th: Marched to Hanover Court House, from which point as the column was marching along in the dark, at 9 P.M., the Rebels shelled the road with explosive shells and solid shot.
8. Evening of July 4th: Halted, skirmishing with a few companies. The troops hurried on to the South Anna River and attempted to destroy the Fredericksburg R.R. bridge at that point, but the force was too small and the enemy were too strongly intrenched to permit of anything more than a demonstration and no assault was made. Two companies of the 169th helped destroy the railroad track and two small bridges, returning to the regiment at 11 P.M.
9. July 5th: Remained in road until 3 A.M., when the column took up a quick march for Taylor's. No dinner, supper, or breakfast, the column moved rapidly back over the parched road with a melting July sun above, and reached camp exhausted.
10. July 6th: Returned to within a mile of King William Court House, marching eight miles through a drenching rain, the creeks becoming waist-deep rivers and the dust thick, pasty mud, about knee-deep. As a consequence, the men were all soaked, and most of them took off their shoes and marched barefooted.
11. Morning of July 7th: Left King William Court House for White House, arriving a little after 12 noon.
12. Morning of July 8th: The expedition received heavy marching orders for Yorktown, starting their march down the Peninsula a little while after dinner, traveling nine miles.
13. July 9th: Marched 20 miles.
14. July 10th: Marched 19 miles to Yorktown. The men expected to take the transports back to Hampton Roads but were ordered to march on to Hampton.
15. July 11th: Marched to Big Bethel, camping on the battleground.
16. July 12th: Arrived at Hampton.
17. July 13th: Took the transports to Portsmouth.
18. July 14th: Marched seven miles to Bower's Hill, where the 169th ser up its new camp.



Hanover Court House, Hanover County, Virginia

"On June 27, 1863, an expedition was started under command of Gen. Getty towards Hanover Junction. This force, including the 169th regiment, went on transports to Whitehouse Landing, on the Pamunkey River, and marching thence by way of King William Court-House, reached Hanover Court-House on the afternoon of July 4th. The march was rapid, and under a glowing sun, told severely upon the men. The

troops hurried on to the South Anna River and attempted to the destruction of the bridge at that point. The force was too small and the enemy were too strongly intrenched to permit of anything more than a

Old smokehouse in Virginia (ca. 1910)

demonstration, and no assault was made except on the smoke-houses along the road. The most memorable incidents on the night of July 4th, within the recollection of the writer, were the capture of a ham and a sleep of brief duration in a mud-puddle, – the night being rainy, – with slumbers disturbed by the occasional explosion of shells, with which the enemy were trying the position as well as tempers of the tired and hungry soldiers, who, as it appeared, had only marched up there to march down again. The regiment withdrew that night, falling back to Taylor's Farm, where it rested. The march was finally taken up down the Peninsula, the regiment leaving Whitehouse, wither it had returned to await transportation, to 'hoof it' down towards Fortress Monroe, in

View in the Chickahominy Swamp (1862)
William McIlvaine (1813-1867)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

the midst of a storm which swelled the streams, and compelled the men to wade at some points up to their hips in water, carrying their arms and ammunition above their heads. This march was very severe. It took the regiment through the Chickahominy swamps, over corduroy-roads built by Gen. McClellan the year previous, and through all sorts of

fatiguing discomforts. But this expedition had a crowing glory from which it derived a name. The Peninsula, and indeed the whole country through which the troops passed, was grown up with blackberry vines, on which the luscious fruit hung in such profusion that it more than taxed the powers of the soldiers to gather it. It levied its tribute also,

Blackberries in the Sun, by Frances Tanner

and put an injunction upon the bowels of the men, so that the medical staff was spared an immense quantity of opium and other saving medicaments, the event causing general remark. The concurrent voice gave to this expedition, therefore, the name of the 'Blackberry Raid,' and well it deserved its name. We came, we saw, we conquered, and were overcome in turn by one of the simplest dispensations of nature. The conclusion of this expedition brought the 169th Regiment to Bower's Hill, near Portsmouth, Va., on July 14, 1863."

In his report to Gen. Halleck, Maj.-Gen. Dix explained that the Fredericksburg Railroad Bridge was too strongly defended to be captured and destroyed:

FORT MONROE, VA., July 7, 1863, 8 A.M.,
Via WHITE HOUSE, July 7.

SIR: Brigadier-General Getty has returned. He found the Fredericksburg Railroad bridge over the South Anna guarded by about 8,000 men, with fourteen pieces of artillery, under Brigadier-General Cooke.

Deeming an attack too hazardous, he proceeded to destroy the railroad track between the bridge and Richmond. About 3 miles of track near the bridge were torn up and the rails burned and twisted. The track was also destroyed at intervals of 3 miles. At Ashland, the depot burned, telegraph instrument brought off, and the trestle bridge destroyed.

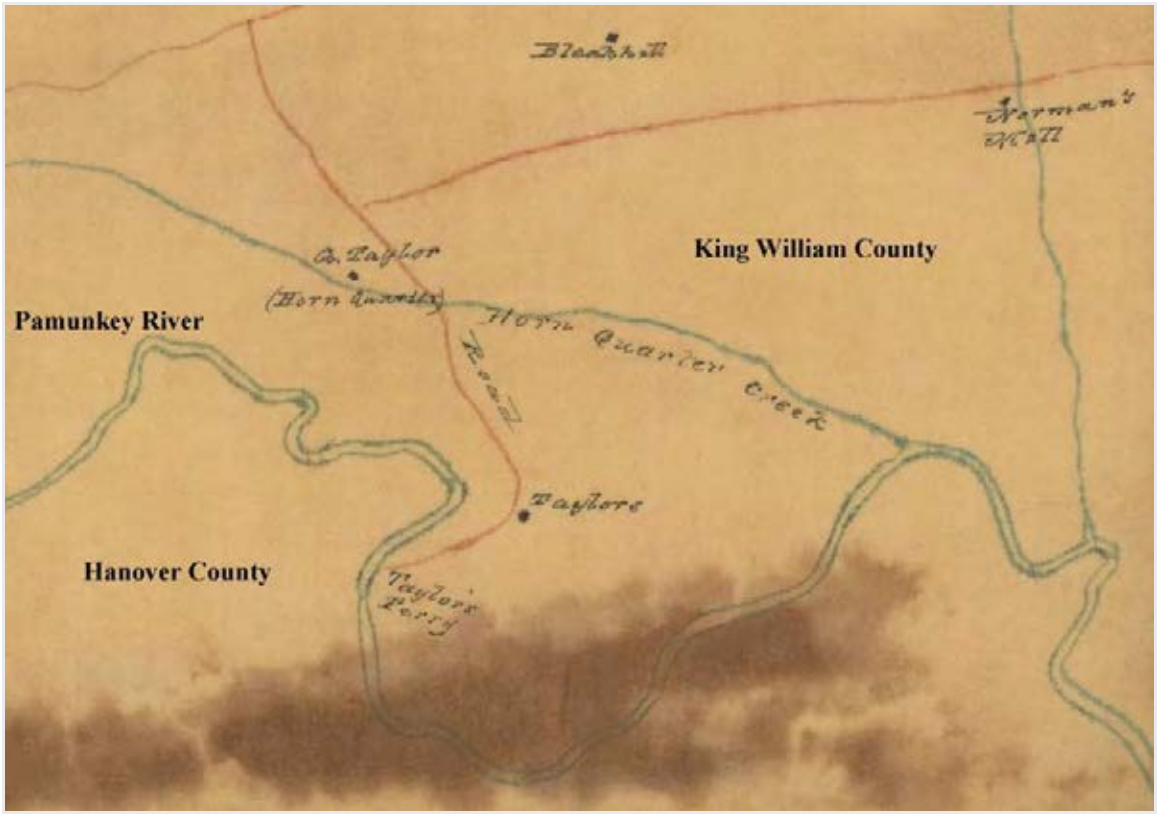
The communication with Richmond by way of the South Anna over both railroads is effectually destroyed, and the enemy is driven to the Danville, Lynchburg and Charlottesville Railroads to reach the Shenandoah Valley. The force at the bridge is believed, after General Getty left, to have marched back to Richmond.

I am sending off three Pennsylvania regiments to Washington. Shall send more troops to-morrow, unless you have other orders.

Please reply.

JOHN A. DIX, *Major-General.*

H. W. HALLECK, *General-in-Chief.*



Detail from "A sketch map of King William County, drawn by Captain John Grant, P. A. C. S." (ca. 1861-'65)
Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection, Southern Historical Collection in the Louis Round Wilson
Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

George Taylor, owner of the Taylor estate, invested much of his considerable fortune in the Confederate cause, outfitting a regiment from the county and providing grain to the army. One of his daughters married Robert E. Lee's brother. Robert E. L. Krick, historian for the National Park Service at the Richmond National Battlefield Park, provides additional details:

> "George Taylor's farm was located just across the Pamunkey River from Hanover Court House, in King William County, probably at Horn Quarter, although Dot Atkinson's book on King William County says that he owned Bleak Hill then, too. But I believe he was living at Horn Quarter during the war. The 1865 Jeremy Gilmer map of King William County shows Horn Quarter very clearly.
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> "The Federal column started at White House Landing, on the south side of the river. It crossed the Pamunkey there to the north side and then marched northwest through King William County. It camped on the northern bank of the Pamunkey on Taylor's farm and then crossed the Pamunkey into the village of Hanover Court House. Colonel Wardrop's report in the *Official Records* makes it clear that his portion of the expedition, at least, camped at Taylor's on the night of the 3rd and then marched across the Pamunkey bridge into Hanover Court House on July 4."

In the official program celebrating the 250th anniversary of the founding of King William County, published in April, 1952, we read:

> "The Ferry Farm was long associated with the Taylor family – from the Rev. Daniel Taylor and his son, Richard Squire Taylor, down through

Horn Quarter, King William County, Virginia (ca. late 19th century)

Horn Quarter, built ca. 1820, is located near Manquin in King William County. It is a two-story, three bay by three bay, rectangular brick dwelling in the Federal style. It has a double-pile, central hall plan and is set on a brick foundation. The front facade features its original tetra-style Roman Doric order pedimented portico with paired stuccoed columns and pilasters. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

> several generations. The ferry across the Pamunkey here was an important one, connecting King William and Hanover. The old house was burned many years ago. Horn Quarter was long operated as a quarter by Jones and Nelson and the fine mansion which stands was erected by George Taylor about 1820. It has been an outstanding place for many years."

Brig.-Gen. Alonzo Alden would write in his memoir an account of the trials of the Blackberry Raid in a chapter entitled, "A Sweltering March":

> "July 3rd, 1863, during the afternoon of an oppressively warm day, our column moved out about five miles on the King William Road and halted for the night. In the early morning of the 4th, one of our batteries, agreeably to the orders of General Getty, fired an Independence Day

salute. We thus did honor to the Declaration of Independence which our forefathers in a seven-years' war successfully fought to maintain and which we, with equal persistence, were striving to preserve inviolate against the traitorous designs of Rebel hordes.

"We then resumed our march, but found the heat so fervid as almost to consume our patriotic enthusiasm. From a letter written to my brother on the 7th of July, I quote my description of the march of July 4th:

'The weather was extremely hot and sultry. Many men while on the march fell in the roadway, apparently sun-struck. Hundreds sank by the roadside, utterly exhausted and unable to pronounce their own identity. Many mounted

Played Out
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
Published in "Life Studies of the Great Army, A Historical Work of Art in Copper-Plate Etching" (1876)

Sunstroke is a condition caused by excessive exposure to the sun, marked by high skin temperature, convulsions, and coma.

officers were unable to cling to their saddles; and it seemed that there were not ten percent of the men that were marching whose bodies were not badly chafed and feet blistered, and whose shoes were not cast away or tied to their knap-sacks. Many had lost or cast away their guns and equipment and many had succumbed to the heat and fatigue, or fainted, and they were picked up by their comrades and cared for in ambulances. Personal belongings and government property left along the highway were gathered together by the teamsters and by means of the army wagons and were taken to the next encampment.

'Just as the shadows of the evening began to mitigate the intensity of the heat, and the sufferers had been in a measure relieved by prolonged and repeated rests and the march resumed, cannonading a short distance in front of our column greeted our approach. We marched steadily forward at route-step; and as we drew near the South Anna Bridge, which was one of the objects of our quest, two or three shells were seen climbing heavenward above the treetops; the sight of the burning fuse, describing their parabolic curves, indicated their destination to be somewhere in our locality. We had learned from experience that nothing was gained in an attempt to dodge a shell. We moved steadily forward, regardless of the enemy's missiles. We had been annoyed beyond measure by excessive straggling, which seemed inevitable because of extreme heat and consequent exhaustion; but the booming of the enemy's heavy guns and the noise of bursting shells closed up the ranks, emptied the ambulances, rendered the march of the troops nimble and buoyant, and magnified the soldiers' conception of responsibility and duty.

Detail from "Map of parts of Hanover and Henrico Counties, drawn from surveys by B. L. Blackford, C. E. Cassell, and A. M. Smith, under the direction of A. H. Campbell" (1862)
Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection, Southern Historical Collection in the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Gen. Getty's expedition proceeded north from Hanover Court House towards Wickham's Station on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad (Fredericksburg R.R.). Blue dots show the locations of two railroad bridges destroyed by Union detachments. The Fredericksburg Railroad Bridge on the South Anna River is just to the north.

'The mortar firing was wild and random – only one of the three or four shells striking in the vicinity of our troops, within about twenty-five yards in front of the vanguard, bursting and wounding one man. Near-proximity of the exploding shell, its unearthly scream and the rattling of hundreds of metallic fragments of grape and canister, – clattering loud with iron clank, were more than my horse in his brief military record had ever experienced. He reared loftily upon his hind legs, pitching backwards, and would have fallen heavily upon his rider if he had not dexterously slipped from his saddle and escaped both shell and falling horse and an unseemly crushing.

'Our column halted until a brief reconnoitering satisfied our commanding officer that an attempt to destroy the bridge with our vastly inferior force and against their largely superior facilities for defence would be useless and hazardous.

'While the enemy were shelling our position near the South Anna Bridge, our general sent a detachment from our division to reconnoitre and report; and learning that the Richmond & Potomac R.R. in front and to the left of us was unguarded, he also sent another detachment, whereby a mile of track and two railroad bridges were destroyed. The reconnoitering party returned in the meantime and reported that nothing further could be accomplished.

'Under the cover of darkness, therefore, our expedition returned as far as Taylor's Farm, where we bivouacked for the balance of the night. The next day, July 5th, we reached Whitehouse, where we expected transportation down the

Illustration by Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
in a letter to Mrs. Reed, June 20, 1863
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Pamunkey and York Rivers to Portsmouth. Finding no boats and being jealous of our reputation as soldiers, we cultivated the sentiment that it was unbecoming veterans like ourselves to ride when it was practicable to march. And to be consistent with our profession, after resting a day or two and writing to our friends, we decided to advance the intervening 100 miles down the Peninsula.

'If this expedition was remarkable for any one thing more than another, it was on account of the harvest of blackberries gained by the troops from the fields bordering the highway. There seemed to be thousands of acres crowded with an abundant growth of these large, luscious berries. When our column, covering a distance of more than half a mile of the highway, had reached the midst of this generous growth of nature's bounty, the order to break ranks was given and for a half hour every soldier, from the general down to the private, luxuriated in this new species of manna. We were satisfied and rested.

'The marches were very severe. Through the Chickahominy swamps, over corduroy roads built by General McClellan the year before, now completely overflowed with water, and again over sand hills and through narrow defiles, we marched or trudged along with great difficulty. Wagons were wrecked and left in muddy sloughs and the bones of horses were bleaching along the roadway, but many are the bloodcurdling stories connected with McClellan's cam-

paigns through the section of country over which we were marching, and we will not rehearse them.'

"Lieut.-Colonel John McConihe had command of the regiment until he drew near the South Anna Bridge and the mortar shelling commenced, when he was taken very sick and was placed in an ambulance at the suggestion of Surgeon John Knowlson. The doctor, after a careful diagnosis, declared that the colonel's trouble was a species of mental hallucination, whereby he became delirious. Surgeon Knowlson said that the colonel's condition was the combined result of heat, fatigue, and loss of sleep for several consecutive days and nights, proceeding from a general physical and nervous disorder aggravated by the effects of a painful wound received at the Battle of Shiloh. He had never entirely recovered from this wound, and it frequently broke out afresh. Therefore, *ex necessitate,* I became the recognized responsible commandant of the regiment, temporarily."

While a captain with the 1st Nebraska earlier in the war, Col. McConihe had a reputation as an excellent marcher in the Missouri campaign of 1861. But the effects of his wound and the heat would tell on him in Virginia, as it would with countless other men in the expedition. John described his experience in a letter written from Nelson Hospital in Yorktown to his friends in Cincinnati:

"The Nelson House," Yorktown, Virginia. Rebel Officers' Head Quarters and Hospital (1862)
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. 3, 1862 June 29 - October 25
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

"There are days when the most willing spirit succumbs to an exhausted body, and you need not be surprised to learn that I am taking a day of rest…

"July 3d: Marched to Taylor's Estate on Hanover Road – 17 miles – reaching camp at 11:50 P.M., having had a most terrible march. The heat was intense, and at one time just after noon, everything suddenly became dark to my vision, and my head reeled. I was in fact almost a victim of sunstroke, but bathing my head, I rode on… July 5th: Remained in road until 3 A.M. of the 5th, when we took up a quick march

Yorktown, Virginia (1862)
William McIlvaine (1813-1867)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

for Taylor's. No dinner, supper, or breakfast, we moved rapidly back over the parched road with a melting July sun above, and reached our camp exhausted. I was too tired to sleep, had been up all the previous night, and arose the next morning at 2 A.M., not at all refreshed… July 6th: I slept none during the night, and the next morning, under the in-

fluence of opium, I dozed in the ambulance to the White House. Arriving there, we were ordered to move the next morning at daylight for Yorktown and Fort Monroe. I could stand it no longer, and was sent aboard a transport for Yorktown.

"A fragment of the regiment, not over 200 men, marched in here yesterday, and this morning a portion of that fragment marched off for Fort Monroe. The regiment will go on a transport; that is, the sick and disabled, and so it is of all the other regiments.

"From this brief narrative, you can gather and imagine our suffering and fatigue. I was almost *crazy*, and although I knew I was overheated, used up, exhausted and nervous, yet my mind would become possessed of strange fancies and I heard strange noises, much to my annoyance.

"I am much better to-day, and shall try and write you at the first opportunity after we arrive at our destination, which will probably be Portsmouth or Norfolk."

Sergt. George M. Whitcomb, Co. D, related a fascinating yet amusing tale about some of his comrades in the 13th Indiana in a letter to his parents on the 13th:

"Just two weeks ago to-day we left Suffolk and came to Norfolk on the cars, and then we got aboard of a steamboat and went to a place called the White House landing, and arrived there on Sunday about seven o'clock in the evening and encamped in a very nice clover field. And on Wednesday, about five in the morning, the regiment started, as I supposed, for Richmond, but you see that I was disappointed. But we accomplished our purposes and a little more besides. It appears that our object was to draw the Rebels' attention and we not only done that, but we captured about one hundred prisoners, and 100 or 200 mules and horses, and any quantity of beef cattle, and one general, Fitzhugh Lee, the nephew of that General Lee that has been around through Pennsylvania.

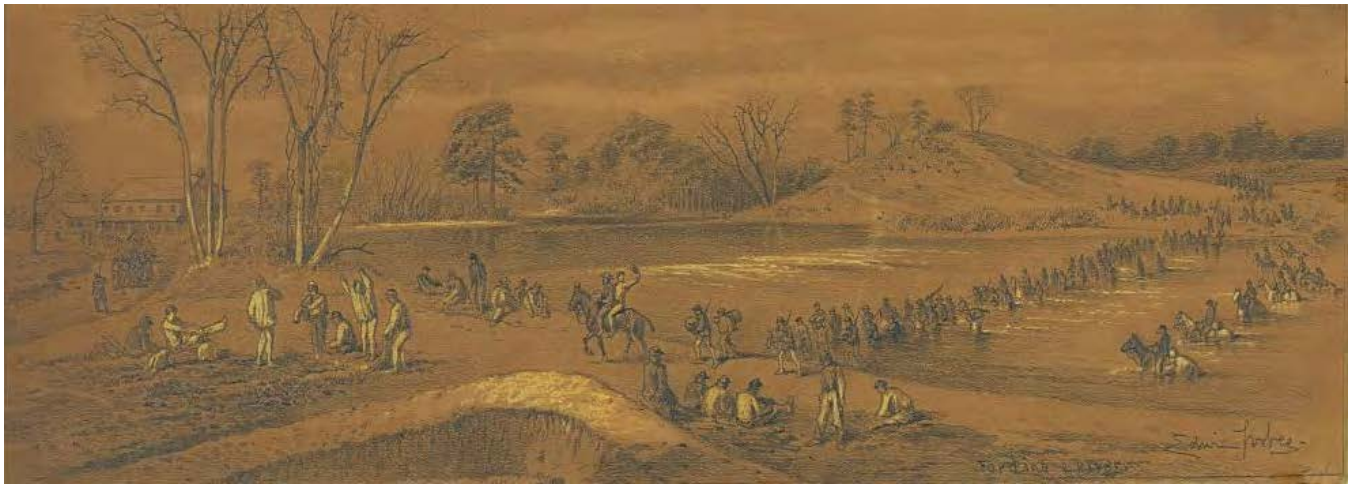
"And there was one little thing that happened that I must tell you, for it is good, and that was this: there were five men of the 13th Indiana out picking black running berries, and they got their eyes on seven or eight Rebel cavalry, and what to do? They didn't know, but they made up their minds that they must do something, and so they all grabbed a corn-

stalk and started after them at a charge-bayonet, and yelled like a lot of Indians, and the Rebs put spur to their horses, but as it happened it was a swampy place and considerable underbrush, and so they dismounted and took to their heels and left their horses for the 13th to bring into our camp, and they got a pair of the prettiest, bright bay mares that ever you laid your eyes on. And so you can see how gritty the Rebs are, seven or eight of them, and they armed with swords and pistols, run from five Yankee soldiers with no arms at all, only a piece of an old cornstalk. Those bay mares and one other of the horses would fetch 500 dollars apiece in ordinary times in a moment."

In a letter to his sister on the 17th, Priv. Alfred Carmon, Co. H, didn't think that the Union would be able to starve out the Rebels anytime soon, judging by the immensity of the crops at Taylor's farm:

"We have been on the go ever since we left Suffolk, which was on the 27th of June. We have been up on the Peninsula and was within about fifteen miles of Richmond. It is a splendid country up that way. It is the greatest place for raising grain that I ever saw! We camped one night in a field of wheat of over one hundred acres. Taylor was the man's name that owned the field. He has got a farm of over nine thousand acres. He had about two hundred acres of corn. Talking about starving the Rebels out – that is played-out with the soldiers.

"When we left Suffolk, we took the cars and went down to Norfolk. There we took the transports and went up the Pamunkey River as far as the White House Landing, where we stopped. We laid there the next day and then started up the Peninsula. We went within about fifteen miles of Richmond [at Hanover Court House] and then turned off and went up towards Hanover Junction. There we met a force of the Rebels. We met them on the night of the 4th of July. They had most too large a force for us, so we turned around and started back. When we got to the junction it was eleven o'clock, and we started back at two o'clock the next morning. This was the fourth day of our marching



Fording a river (ca. 1876)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

after leaving the White House Landing. We marched back as far as old Taylor's farm and stayed there all night.

"The next morning, we started for the White House. How it did rain the afternoon of the 5th! And our rubber blankets were all in the wagon, and didn't we get a gay old soaking! We marched about nine miles through the rain and mud. The mud was about knee-deep. We had to go through creeks where the water would come up around our waists. That night, we got to King William's Court House. We stayed there all night, and the next morning, we started for the White House. We got there a little after noon, having been gone seven days.

Big Bethel and Church, Virginia, after evacuation by the Rebels (April 4, 1862)
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. I, 1861 April 12 - 1862 May 5
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

"The next morning we got heavy marching orders. We started a little while after dinner for Yorktown, which was forty-eight miles. The first day, we marched nine miles and the next, we marched about twenty miles. The next day, we got to Yorktown. We expected to have transports there, but we got sucked in. They told us that we would have to march to Hampton. We camped one night on the Big Bethel battle-

Arrival and Debarkment of U. S. Forces at Hampton Ruins, Near Ft. Monroe, Va., on the 31st of March 1862
Lithograph by E. Sachse & Co., Baltimore, Md., after Charles Worret, 20th N.Y. (1862)
Peters Collection, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

> ground. Yorktown is the strongest fortified place that I ever saw. It has got a fort built all the way around it. We was two days' marching from Yorktown to Hampton, where we took the transports and went to Portsmouth. Then we marched back in the country seven miles, where we are in camp now. We are not more than fifteen miles from Suffolk now."

The 169th was ordered to the new defenses of Portsmouth and Norfolk, Va., making its camp at Bower's Hill, 7-8 miles southwest of Portsmouth. Priv. Theodore Schutt, Co. A, provides the particulars in a letter on the 28th published in the Troy *Daily Whig:*

> "The material construction of the lines of this Department, and the diversion of several thousand of the veteran troops, – who distinguished themselves during the 'Siege of Suffolk,' and signally defeated the objects of the rebel investment of that antiquated city, – to other and more important points, where military operations are now being vigorously prosecuted, while the efficiency of this force for the defence of Norfolk and Portsmouth is not in the least affected thereby, their services in other quarters must have no inconsiderable effect in rendering irresistible and overwhelming a combined *coup* of our land and naval forces for the extinguishment of the rebellion, during the Summer and Fall campaigns.
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> "Bower's Hill is one of the characteristic misnomers etched from the fertile brains of Southern imagery upon local geographical charts, but the topography of this country, from Norfolk to the Blackwater, refutes unequivocally the assumption of a *hill,* and nowhere, perhaps, is this refutation more palpably illustrated than in this immediate vicinity. This country is decidedly level, and were it not for the dense forests and swamps that flourish on its surface, would present a view as unbroken, almost, as the sea in a perfect calm.
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> "Bower's Hill is located eight miles from Portsmouth, eleven from Suffolk, and is flanked on the south-east by the Dismal Swamp, and on the west and north-west by Goose Creek. Thus, Bower's Hill is very easily

Detail from "Military map of South-Eastern Virginia (November 18, 1864)
Compiled at the U. S. Coast Survey Office
Gilmer Civil War Maps Collection, Southern Historical Collection in the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The location of the 169th N.Y.'s camp at Bower's Hill is indicated by the blue dot.

fortified, and hence, in a strategic point of view, of great importance, commanding as it does, the main avenue of approach to Portsmouth.

"It always has been, and still remains, a great object of mystification to your correspondent, why Suffolk, of itself a place of no importance, commercially or otherwise, and a point of no military account to the Rebels, should have been so strongly fortified, – while long chains of forts, earthworks and stockades, upon which our soldiers labored so many months, thro' Summer's heat and Winter's rain, should have been erected, incurring as it did, immense expense, when the line of Deep Creek and Bower's Hill could have been so readily fortified, at little cost, and more effectually held with one-fifth of the imposing force required to hold the dirty, dilapidated borough of Suffolk. I can account for it only on this hypothesis – that there was a large plethora of soldiers, whom the Government found it difficult to employ elsewhere, and wishing to school both officers and men in the art of erecting field fortifications, the soil here being singularly susceptible to the spade, in

Five men digging (1861-65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

the absence of all geological substances of a hard nature, this was considered a most desirable field for the prosecution of that work. The moment finally arrived when a vacuum occurred somewhere in the ranks of our mighty armies, which this large gang of 'ditchers' could advantageously fill, and having turned over all the available earth in the vicinity of Suffolk, it was decided to fall back upon the line of Deep Creek and Bower's Hill, and with a small but all-sufficient force, to protect the great Southern commercial city of Norfolk, and the lesser one of Portsmouth, from that point, where it could be so easily done, with only about one-fifth the expenditure of troops and money adequate to hold the large area of unimportant territory about Suffolk.

"Suffolk is now said to be a howling waste of burnt camp *débris*, tenantless houses, mourning *quasi* widows, – some of whom really loved our soldiers, notwithstanding their secession proclivities, – Richmond prices, dismantled fortifications, general gloom and despondency. An occasional rebel cavalryman, who has friends in town, may be seen upon the now almost deserted streets. The Rebs do not want Suffolk. It is of no use to them without Norfolk, and Portsmouth, and they will make no effort to retain it in their possession.

"Gen. Dix having been called to New York, Gen. Foster, of North Carolina, has been placed in command at Fortress Monroe, and the two Departments of Southern Virginia and North Carolina have been consolidated. Gen. Foster paid us a flying visit last week, and evidences are not wanting to demonstrate that he is a man of business and intends to infuse new vigor within the enlarged sphere assigned to him for military operations, in this quarter. Already a force of cavalry and artillery, tried on many a sanguinary field, have been dispatched to North Carolina, to bring the citizens of that wavering state to a sense of their danger, if they longer persist in paying homage to the wooden image at Richmond. I am confident, however, that if the people of North Carolina were allowed the privilege of voting upon the subject, she would not only relieve the army now required to hold the ground acquired in the territory, but drive from her borders every sympathizer with the Rebel Government who dared to show his hand…

"The general *morale* and discipline of this regiment continues to furnish a theme for universal congratulation on all hands, and its friends at

home have every reason to feel proud of an organization which reflects so much unqualified honor upon the city and county which furnished the men so promptly to save the cause of an imperiled country. The health of the regiment continues good."

Col. McConihe's physical condition improved considerably since the expedition, as he related to his friends in Cincinnati in a letter on the 23d:

"Within nine miles of Suffolk, and resting in camp! How long we shall remain here is uncertain, and already the rumor gains credence that we shall soon again go on another expedition. Thus uncertain is a military life. But I will not anticipate, and will rest while there is an opportunity. I met the regiment at Fortress Monroe and came hither with it, and I am happy to inform you that I have entirely recovered from my Yorktown exhaustion and feel like myself again.

"Our camp here is being made quite comfortable. I ordered the streets and avenues of the camp to be planted with cedar and pine trees, and this evening the plain looked like a young and beautiful pine forest. My quarters, three wall tents, are surrounded by 19 thrifty cedars, from 3 to 5 inches through at the bottom, and put up thus:

Sketch of the Headquarters of the 169th N.Y. (July 23, 1863)
Correspondence of Lieut.-Col. John McConihe, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York

I am not much of a sketcher, but you must guess from the above what my quarters are. I occupy the center tent, the major the left one, and the extra tent has saddles, &c., in it and is arranged for occupancy (by removing our saddles).

"I have just, as I finished 'saddles,' been unofficially informed that we shall start on a three days' raid on Saturday, towards Suffolk…"

The aforementioned raid never took place. General Alden would write in his memoir, "After we evacuated Suffolk, a body of Confederates that had occupied the south bank of the Blackwater succeeded to our old campgrounds. They were harmless neighbors and we permitted them to remain unmolested so long as they held their peace. We had other fish to fry, as you may notice." The other fish, it seems, would soon be found in Charleston Harbor. Priv. Carmon wrote about his duties at the regiment's new camp in a letter to his sister:

The weather is very warm here now. I don't know how we would stand it if it was not for the rain we have. It rains here two or three times a day… We have got a very pleasant camp here. We have got trees set out on both sides of the street, so we have shade all day. But we have so much duty to do, that we don't have much of a chance to enjoy it. We don't have any duty to do but camp guard and picket. We have a considerable picket to do, as we are the 'advance brigade' here. We have not got but three regiments in our brigade now. There were two Pennsylvania regiments went home a short time ago that belonged

The Picket Guard
N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945)
Published in "Poems of American Patriotism" by Matthew Brander (1922)

> to our brigade, so we have not got but a small brigade left. When our regiment gets filled up, I expect that we will have a very nice time of it, for they think that we will lay here some time."

Corporal James B. Randall, Co. F, took advantage of the lull to do some sight-seeing at the Norfolk Navy Yard:

> "Yes, we have a great chance to see a great many things here. I was down at the Navy Yard the other day and came very near never getting ready to come home, on the account of the great numbers of vessels and guns of all size, from the smallest to the largest. You ask if I have got the box. Yes, it came after a while, everything alright excepting the pickles. The bottle was broken and the vinegar ran into the cheese and spoiled that, but the butter was alright, and the rest of the things."

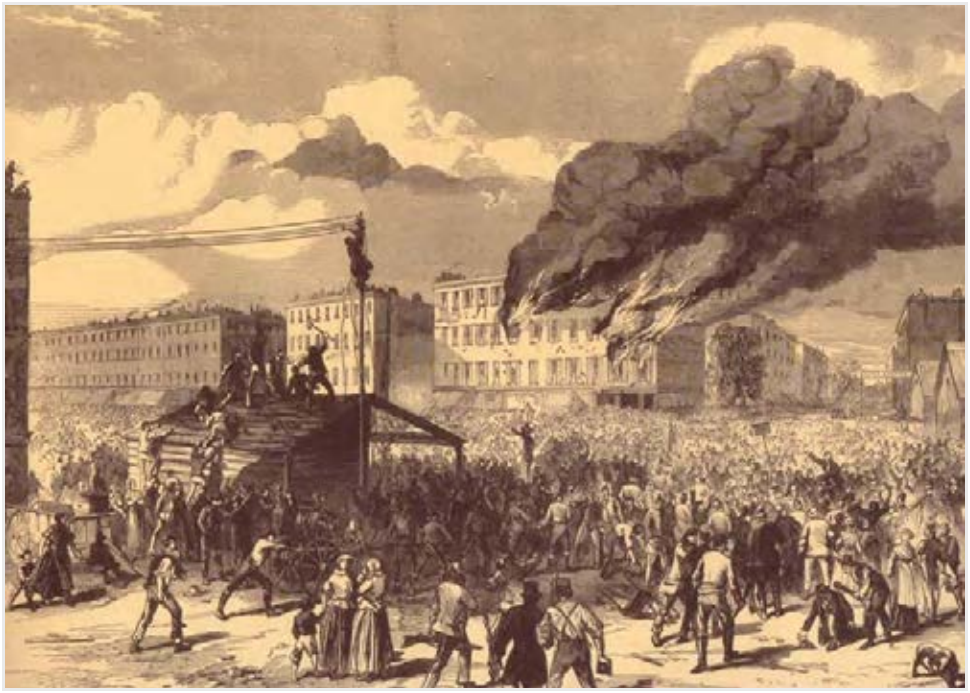
Soaring temperatures were not limited to Virginia that summer, and tempers began to flare in the North as the new draft law passed by Congress on March 3, 1863, came into effect. Designed to fill the depleted ranks of the army, the brunt of the draft would fall on poor Irish and German immigrants in New York and elsewhere, who learned they were expected to register for the draft to fight for their new country. Blacks were excluded from the draft, as they were not consid-

"Don't You See the Point?"
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (August 29th, 1863)

ered citizens, and wealthier Whites could pay for substitutes. On top of that, the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863 alarmed much of the working class in New York, who feared that freed slaves would migrate to the city and add further competition to the labor market.

Civil War Draft Wheel
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, New York

It was a miserably hot, muggy morning in New York on Monday, July 13, 1863. Inside the Provost Marshal's Office at Third Avenue and 47th Street, military officers were moving ahead with the nation's first draft. It was the second day of pulling names at random from a draft wheel. Over 50,000 people, particularly impoverished Irish immigrants, began to riot, smashing store windows and attacking people, mainly Blacks, on the street. Telegraph offices and wires were attacked to disrupt communications, indicating organized leadership.



The Riots in New York – The Mob Burning the Provost Marshal's Office
Published in "The Illustrated London News" (1863)

The riot began with the burning of a draft office. Members of the fire department stood by and watched, angry that they had lost their exemption to the draft. Targets of the rioters were initially draft offices and police stations, but soon spread to Black property and organizations, and White sympathizers. An orphanage for Black children was burned but the children were rescued. The office of New York *Tribune* newspaper editor Horace Greeley was destroyed.

The Riots in New York – Attack by the Mob on the Tribune Newspaper Office
Published in "The Illustrated London News" (1863)

A company of the 7th N.Y. guarding a Manhattan intersection at the conclusion of the draft riots

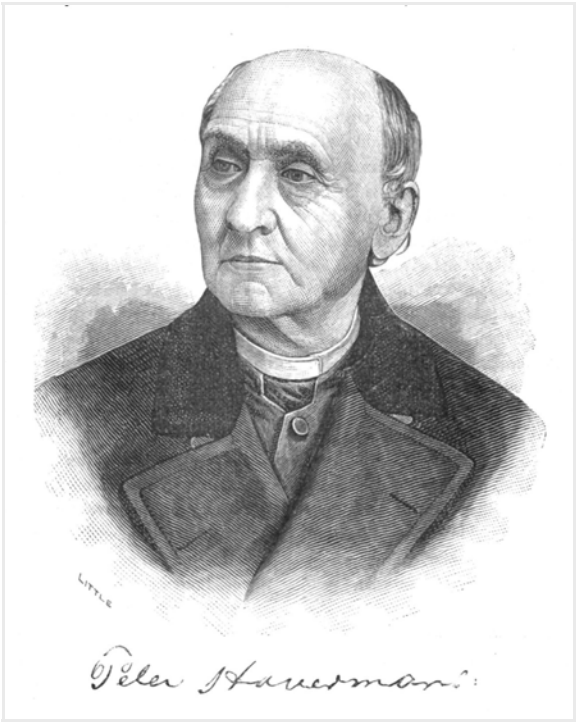
The New York police were badly outnumbered and control of the city was not reestablished until the arrival, after a forced march from Pennsylvania, of the 7th N.Y. Infantry. By the morning of the 16th there were nearly 4,000 Federal troops in the city and the riot subsided. Approximately 1,200 lives were lost, making the riot the bloodiest in American history.

The New York conflagration led to a rash of riots that broke out simultaneously in many parts of the country. Within hours of the outbreak in Manhattan, serious riots broke out in Boston, Troy, and Portsmouth, N.H., with lesser confrontations occurring in Buffalo, Elmira, Newark, Philadelphia, and Jersey City.

Troy, New York, looking southwest from Troy University (ca. 1860-'70)

In Troy crowds began to gather on the 14th as draft officials were carrying on their duties in the city. Asst. Provost Marshal Charles Hughes called out his local guard, twelve men of the Invalid Corps under the command of a U.S. army captain. In the absence of the mayor, the county sheriff summoned six companies of the 24th N.Y. National Guard, but only two, (about 100 men), appeared at the rendezvous, demonstrating the strong local sympathy for the rioters.

There was no violence that day, but the next morning tensions increased as 300 to 400 laborers from the local mills, factories and iron works began marching through the streets demanding an end to the draft. That number quickly grew to over 2,000, which became increasingly vocal in its calls for violence. Shadowing the mob were prominent Trojans such as Congressman John A. Griswold and John McConihe's brother, Col. Isaac McConihe, Jr., in command of the 24th. They were joined by Fr. Peter Havermans of St. Mary's Church in Troy.

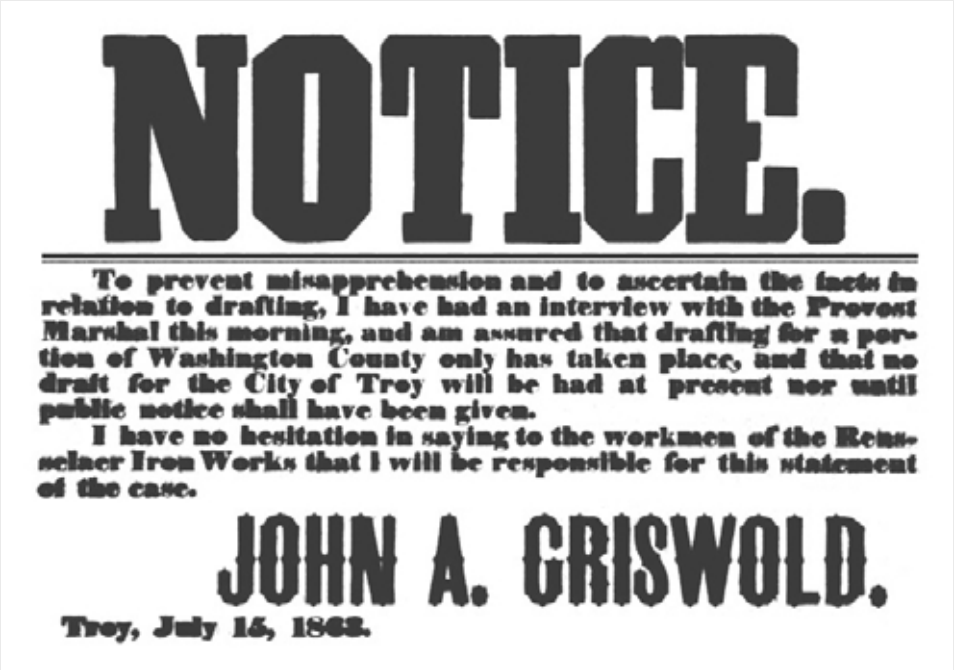


Fr. Peter Havermans
Published in "History of Rensselaer County, New York"
by Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester (1880)

Your correspondent's great-great-grandparents, Patrick J. Aylmer and Margaret Cleary, were married by Fr. Havermans at St. Mary's Church on February 8, 1860, and belonged to its parish until their deaths. Fr. Havermans demonstrated his support for President Lincoln's war policies by flying the American flag from the steeple of St. Mary's. He also held services every Sunday for the army recruits at Camp Corcoran on River Street in North Troy and celebrated high Mass after every major battle.

The rioters demonstrated their intent with construction of a hangman's scaffold on Congress Street, calling for the names of draft officials and heading for the Arsenal and Provost Marshal's office. Havermans bravely tried to reason with the crowd and calm them down. He said that many of them might be killed or wounded if they continued and he urged them to work to halt the draft in lawful ways. He was only partially successful, as some of the rioters turned back, but others broke off from the main group and headed for the offices of the Troy *Daily Times,* a Republican and pro-war newspaper, which published the dispatches from 1st Lieut. and Adj't. William E. Kisselburgh, an editor with the newspaper before the war. Havermans tried to intervene again but was unsuccessful. The mob stoned and sacked the building.

As the rioters swarmed through the city streets they stoned and beat any Blacks they could find. The rioters decided to burn down the Liberty Street Presbyterian



NOTICE.

To prevent misapprehension and to ascertain the facts in relation to drafting, I have had an interview with the Provost Marshal this morning, and am assured that drafting for a portion of Washington County only has taken place, and that no draft for the City of Troy will be had at present nor until public notice shall have been given.

I have no hesitation in saying to the workmen of the Rensselaer Iron Works that I will be responsible for this statement of the case.

JOHN A. GRISWOLD.

Troy, July 15, 1863.

Public Notice from U.S. Congressman John A. Griswold of New York (July 15, 1863)

Church, the first Black church in Troy and a meeting place for Underground Railroad committees. Havermans and his assistant, Fr. McDonough, met the rioters at the door to the church and bravely ordered them to turn around and go home. One rioter ignored the plea and rushed the church door, only to be knocked to the ground by McDonough. After additional discussion between Havermans and the leaders of the mob, the rioters withdrew and the church was spared.

On the evening of the 15th, William L. Van Alstyne, mayor of Troy, who had just returned to town, ordered in a detachment of militia with a six-pound howitzer. This force dispersed a mob that had collected again, but not before several houses were sacked, including those of Martin I. Townsend, (a Lincoln supporter, outspoken opponent of slavery, and mentor of John McConihe), Deputy Provost Marshal Robert W. Laithe, and several houses of ill fame. Mayor Van Alstyne's barn was set on fire and destroyed, burning several horses to death.

With the nearby city of Albany in turmoil as well, Acting Assistant Provost Marshal General Frederick Townsend ordered the draft suspended in Troy and its commencement delayed in Albany. No further disturbances occurred and by the time the draft was resumed on September 1st, Gen. Dix had sent enough Federal troops to Troy to protect the local officials. The Troy *Weekly Times* proclaimed on the 25th: "Mobs cannot triumph; the draft will be enforced, and traitors, both North and South, will be crushed out."

On August 22d the newspaper provided further details concerning the sacking of the Townsend residence:

> "The Mob of July Fifteenth – The necessary suspension of our paper after its visitation by the mob, prevented our giving a full narration of their subsequent progress through the city. Nor shall we now undertake to furnish a general narration of the events then transpiring. But the attack on the residence of M. I. Townsend seems marked by peculiar and characteristic features. Mr. Townsend, as was well known, had left the city on the 13th for Iowa, placing his residence in the sole care of his

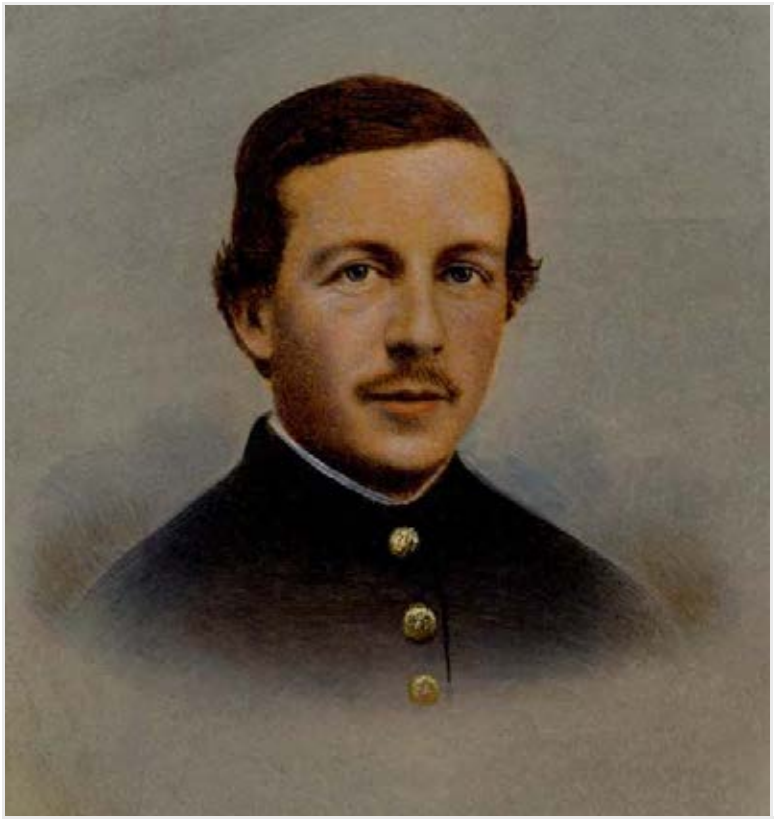
Martin Ingham Townsend

lady. Mr. Townsend was in no way connected with the business of the draft or with any person engaged in it. His only connection with the war had been in contributing and in urging others to contribute to the funds raised to compensate volunteers and provide for the wants of their families in their absence, and in persuading men to volunteer. Yet, with full knowledge of all these facts, the mob, almost immediately after the onslaught upon the *Times* office, gathered in force before his house with the avowed intention of destroying it. A personal friend of Mr. T's had the address to buy off the crowd by the promise of a barrel of beer, which was handed over at a well-known stand in Fourth street. At about 4 o'clock, the mob again returned, maddened by drink and blind with rage, and there was a long and vigorous struggle between such good citizens as, from their known connection with the Democratic party, dared to be seen abroad, upon the one hand, and the mob upon the other. The friends of order succeeded at last, and the mob left for work elsewhere. But Mr. Townsend was absent, and his premises were known to be in charge of a woman. His friends soon came to fear another return of the mob, and in the shades of the early evening the more portable articles of his property were removed. A kinsman of Mr. Townsend's, not far from half-past ten o'clock, called upon the Mayor and requested him to detail a force of the ordinary or special police to guard the premises from the rage of the mob then actively at work upon the business of devastation about the city. At about 12 o'clock the mob came, and although the Mayor and many private citizens exerted their powers of *persuasion* to the utmost to prevent the catastrophe, the windows of the house were beaten in on every side, the mob rushed in with axes, hatchets and clubs in their hands, and the house and contents,

from cellar to garret, were submitted to every indignity that the malice of a brutish rabble could invent. Not content with injuring the house and those articles in it which could not be easily removed, they set themselves to destroy the beautiful shrubbery and fruit trees which years of labor and care had raised. To what extent this vandalism would have proceeded, if left unchecked, no man can tell. But the arrival of a squad of armed men, with a howitzer, caused a panic amongst the robbers, and the premises were vacated. A sadder picture of brutish lawlessness is seldom seen."

Col. McConihe expressed his anger with the "mob-ites" in New York and Troy in a letter to Mr. Townsend on July 19th:

"I have for the first time of my life been ashamed of my native state. I look upon the disgraceful scenes of the past week as a dream, a fancy of my excited brain. But alas! I am compelled to acknowledge and accept the facts. Oh! that the earth had yawned and swallowed up the miscreants, the incarnate devils, the cowards, the murderers of helpless, feeble old men, destroyers of orphan asylums and God's temples. Men void of courage and destitute even of the lowest instincts usually pertaining to debased humanity who have been ruling and ruining the proud and noble Empire State the past week. What language is there to express my indignation when I think of the indignities offered by these fiends to you, an old and honored citizen, one who has for over thirty years unceasingly labored for them, for the city, and for the republic with a zeal and ability scarcely equaled; one who has grown gray in their service, and has passed from youth to middle age in their midst; a just, upright, honest citizen, and so acknowledged by all, even by those with whom he politically differs. Yet such a man's house is beset in open day and ruthlessly entered and despoiled in a law-abiding city by the vermin of a mob. And for what! Because you have given your time and talents to uphold and sustain yours and their imperiled country. Because you have proclaimed the rights of man, of civilization, of the



Captain John McConihe, Co. G, 1st Nebraska (ca. summer of 1862)
Collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York

cause of liberty. It makes one blush for humanity, civilization and liberty, and its recital will be a foul blot on our nation's history.

"Marginal notes must be made to these records, and the historian must write that these thieves, housebreakers, and church burners were followed by the laws and terribly punished for their dastardly acts. A firm stand must be taken by the law-abiding citizens, whose numbers are legion in comparison with the worthless knaves, and make them feel now, without pity or delay, that there is a God, that we have a government, and that there are men and rulers in this land of freedom. I know that the people generally scorn the base acts of these rioters, and that soon all of them will be heartily ashamed that they in any way gave countenance to the few debased creatures who incited them for the purposes of robbery under the plea of 'conscription.' Conscription of such banditti, to defend the cause we are fighting for! Conscription of such ruffians, to stand beneath a flag, wet with the hallowed blood of noble patriots? Conscription of such cowardly mob-ites to preserve law and order and to withstand the bullets of our country's foes? It is nonsense to think of it, for even if their polluted forms should accidentally pass the surgeon, the rules of an honorable and brave service would banish them to Sing Sing or the Rip Raps. John Morgan's guerrillas even would not associate with them as comrades. Why did not some influential citizen tell them that they need not be afraid of being hindered by the draft from pursuing their usual avocations of arson, murder, theft and pocket-picking! That the people and authorities did not desire such things to arraign themselves alongside of the defenders of the republic! It is true, I know, they don't wish it. Jeff Davis would not have them in his army.

"But, Mr. Townsend, it is gratifying to hear the patriotic sentiments of officers and men concerning these outrages. There is but one expressed opinion of these soldiers and that is of contempt and disgust. The army is proud of its recent achievements, and the action of a few at home cannot make them swerve from their patriotism or palsy their arms. They say they have endured and suffered for those they left at home, and they feel assured that the people will rise and enforce obedience to the law and respect for our country. That they will not submit to the draft being suspended by the violence of a few but will enforce it themselves.

"You have my hearty sympathy at your recent annoyance and I hope your family were absent with you from the city at the time of the disturbance. It is some consolation for me to believe – knowing your desire to administer justice – that the perpetrators of the outrage will wish they had never entered Martin I. Townsend's house without his permission.

"The 169th has recovered from the fatigue and hardships of the Peninsula Campaign and is in excellent spirits. I have detailed three officers and six men to go to Troy to receive the drafted men for this regiment. We will welcome the drafted and extend to them a cordial hand, provided they are not thieving mob-ites. If any such come here, better they had never been born unless they have expiated their crimes at home and mend their ways here."

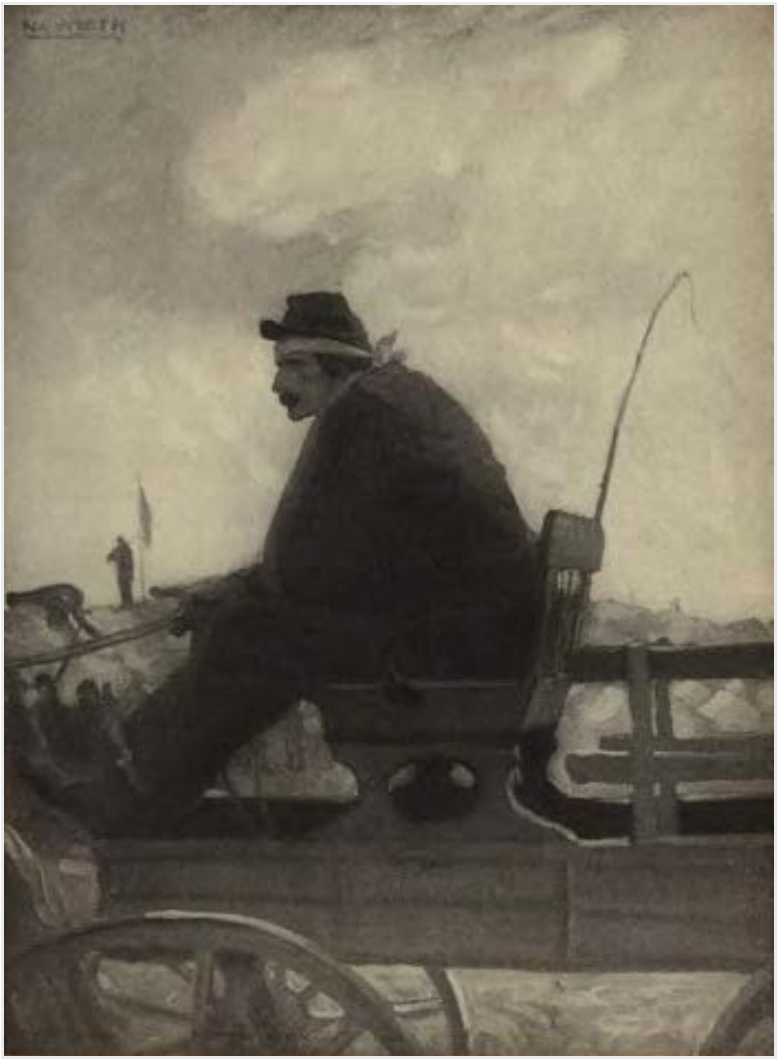
Wagonmaster Robert Whitcomb of Co. D was one of the men of the 169th who shared his lieutenant-colonel's outrage, as recorded in his letter of the 23d:

"We enjoy ourselves as well as we can out here and are in hopes of seeing you all again, for we don't think that the war is a going to last a great while longer, for the Rebs are a catching hell at every point and they can't raise any more men, for they han't got them in Virginia. We have traveled some in Virginia and we don't see anything but soldiers and [Negroes].

"Father, I suppose that they have had a great time in my native state about the draft and I would as soon see them rioters shot down as to see a Rebel shot, for if they freely respond to the call, the Rebellion is gone up. We don't need any more men to whip them, but we want them to understand that we have got some left, where they are nearly all gone. And I hope that such men as refuse to come after they have been drafted will be hung or shot, and if they had my position there would be no danger of either.

"Father, I do think that in less than three months the fighting will all be done and I think that we will be in the city of Richmond in less than one month, or get whipped trying to get in there. I read the New York *Herald* and *Times* and *Tribune* every day, and I know something about what is going on.

"There have been a lot of soldiers sent from this department to New York to take care of the drafted men. There were three captains and six sergeants started this morning from the regiment. We are a going to have some of them in this regiment and if they don't fight well, we will shoot them, for the 169th has got a good name and they mean to keep it up. They are called the New York Tigers, and when on a march where we expect every minute to meet the enemy, General Foster puts the 169th in front, for he says that if they see a Reb, they won't turn and run away from them. And I am proud to belong to such a regiment as this, and I would be ashamed to be called a conscript. We had two regiments of Pennsylvania conscripts in this brigade but their time is out and they have gone home.



Union army wagoner (1912)
N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945)
Published in "Everybody's Magazine" (September 1912)

"I have got so that I am very well contented here as long as you are all well, but still I would like to come home and see my young soldiers and all of the folks, but I have got to wait until I can get a furlough.

"I don't know but you will think me too patriotic. But father, I would rather lay down here and die on the ground where many have been slain than to be called a deserter. That name shall never be mine. My children shall never be told that their father was a coward or a traitor, and since I have sworn to serve my country for three years, I shall do it if needed, if I live.

"Father, you may feel sorry for some that are drafted, but I don't, for it han't any worse for them than it is for me. But I know that I should feel very bad if I was to home now and got drafted and had to take a place in the ranks, but I am better off than a captain, only I don't get as much pay. And while he is marching two or three hundred miles on foot, I am riding my horse. I have had lots of them offer to change positions with me.

"And if we should lay here two months, I shan't have two days' work to do, but that don't grieve me, for the weather is pretty warm down

here at present, and I can sit here in my tent and nothing to do, only read and write. Father, you will never have to come down here to fight, but don't hinder anybody else from coming."

Priv. Carmon had no sympathy for the plight of the conscript and agreed with Wagonmaster Whitcomb, contending in a letter to his sister on the 28th that in the aftermath of the victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, having more Union soldiers in the field would help end the war within a very short time:

South Street, West Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, New York

"How are they getting along with the draft in Sand Lake, or haven't they began to draft there yet? The soldiers don't like the 'three hundred dollars business.' They say that it throws all of the fighting on the poor men, for if a man is not able to raise the money, he has got to come anyway, while the rich man would not miss it. But I should think that they would rather enlist than be drafted, for if they would only come, we could bring this war to an end in a very short time.

"But those deadbeats will set around the taverns and read the papers, and if one of our generals gets whipped, then they will say that he had ought to be removed from his command, that he is not able to command an army, when if they would come down and help a little, our armies never would get whipped. But they are afraid that they will get hurt. Are they any better than anybody else because they are a going to be drafted?

"They must go and raise a riot. I would not like any better fun than to go up there and learn them their place! If they would take a few old regiments up there, they would soon learn them how to 'mob it.' But they have got to come down here. If they won't come willingly, then we will force them down, because there is men enough in the army that are laying still to do it!

"There has three or four captains from our regiment gone off after conscripts to fill up our regiment. I will be glad to see them come, for after they get here we will have less duty to do. Our regiment has got so small, that there is not over three hundred and fifty men fit for duty. There is about six hundred men in the regiment, but about half of them play off sick, and the rest of them has to do the duty. There is some of them that is sick, but not a great many of them."

The 169th participated in a military review on the 20th by Gen. Foster, now commanding the Dept. of Virginia, as reported by the New-York *Times*. In his historical sketch of the regiment, Gen. Alden would write, "Then, as was and is always expected after a special review, something 'turned up.'"

A general and his staff reviewing troops in the field (1861-'65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"Yesterday afternoon a military review took place at this post, in honor of the new Commanding General of the Department of Virginia, Major-Gen. FOSTER. It was expected to have occurred on Sunday, on which day the troops were drawn up in line, waiting to receive the commander, but he failed to appear. On Monday, a second order from brigade headquarters, directing the troops to fall in at once, gave token of the certain appearance of the General. The General, accompanied by his numerous Staff and his very numerous body guard, reached Bower's Hill about 4 o'clock, and the review immediately commenced on the line of the Deep Creek Road, along which the troops were drawn up.

"The troops reviewed composed Gen. ROBERT S. FOSTER'S Brigade, and consisted of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry, Maj. STRATTON, com-

manding; the war-worn Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers, Col. CYRUS J. DOBBS, commanding; the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New-York Volunteers, Col. JOHN MCCONIHE, commanding; and the One Hundred and Twelfth New-York Volunteers, Col. J. C. DRAKE, commanding. A leading feature of the review was the magnificent drum corps of the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers, under the command of Private THOMAS HALPINE. They were dressed in a special uniform, and presented a most manly and handsome appearance… No untoward incident occurred to mar the exercises of the day, and everything passed off to the unqualified satisfaction of all participating."

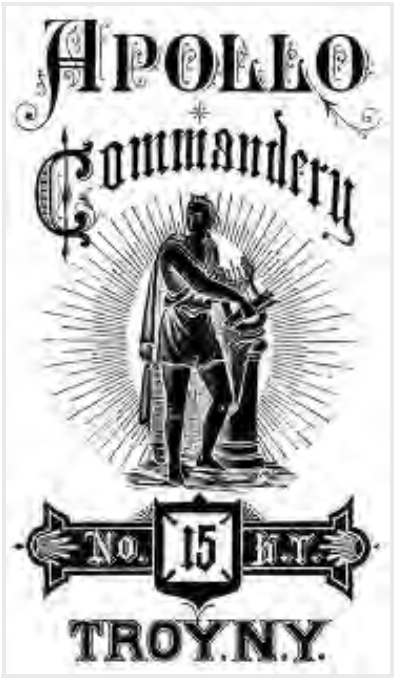
The *Whig* reported on the 28th that a delegation of officers and enlisted men from the 169th were sent to the city to take charge of the drafted men of the district, but in fact no replacements would join the regiment that summer:

Captain John C. McCoun, Co. G, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Capt. McCoun was the commanding officer of your correspondent's great-great-grandfather, 1st Serg't. Patrick J. Aylmer, Co. G, for most of the war.

"OFFICERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH ON SPECIAL DUTY. – Yesterday morning, quite a delegation of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth arrived in the city on special duty. It consisted of Captain McCoun of this city, Captain Allen of Brunswick, Captain Ferguson of Lansingburgh, five sergeants and Private Merriam. They are to report at Riker's Island – their special duty is to take charge of the drafted men of this district. Captains Ferguson and Allen have both visited home before, but Captain McCoun had not visited the city until this time

since the regiment left. All, so far as we have seen them, look well – Captain McCoun, remarkably so. His presence affords gratification to a large circle of acquaintances, who know the circumstances of his leaving a position of ease and affluence, and a luxurious home, to endure the privations and encounter the perils of service in the field. Private Merriam – the unique, comique, rotund Merriam – an original 'institution' of himself without a parallel anywhere, whether at home or in the camp, – the Merriam of old, only 'more so,' amplified in brain and physique from the congenialities, which 'where'er he roams,' he always brings about him. A pleasant visit and a successful mission to the detachment. But why go to Virginia for men to perform this duty, when there are at least fifty shoulder-strapped loafers hanging around the city, to whom the slightest service would be a novelty – if not a benefit?"



Apollo Commandery, No. 15, Knights Templar, Troy, New York

Accompanying the delegation were Serg'ts. Charles Dumary, Jacob Cook, Horace P. Beckwith, and Mason S. Chambers. The *Daily Whig* jocularly reported on the social activities of William Merriam at the Apollo Commandery's Huddleston Hall, (aka St. John's Hall), at Nos. 264 and 268 River Street in Troy: "Private Merriam, attended by a numerous staff, held a succession of military soirées at Huddleston Hall yesterday. He fights his battles o'er again with all the vigor of youth, though fresh from the hardships and perils of a hundred stricken (corn) fields."

Something did indeed turn up after the military review when the 169th received its marching orders. Gen. Alden would write in his memoir, "On the 27th of July, the 169th, in common with other troops, received orders to proceed to Portsmouth, Virginia, and there embark for a sea voyage under sealed orders. Our destination was unknown. When we should arrive out at sea the sealed orders were to be opened and published." The *Daily Times* published the news on August 3d, as reported in a letter from an unnamed officer of the regiment:

> "At one o'clock this morning Gen. R. S. Foster's Brigade, composed of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, One Hundred and Twelfth New York

and Thirteenth Indiana Regiments, and the First Brigade, Second Division, Seventh Army Corps, composed of the Third, One Hundred and Third, One Hundred and Seventeenth and Eighty-ninth New York Regiments, commanded by Col. Alford, Third New York, very unexpectedly received orders to march with all possible dispatch to Portsmouth, there to embark on transports – taking three days' rations, and all baggage, camp and garrison equipage. Our probable destination is Charleston, South Carolina, and both officers and men are in high glee in anticipation of a brush with the rebels of Charleston – on their own threshold.

"First Lieutenant Charles H. Palmer, Co. E, of our regiment, died very suddenly last night of typhoid fever. Lieut. Palmer was a native of Washington county, and came into our regiment with the Fort Edward

Monument at the grave of 1st Lieut. Charles H. Palmer, Co. E, 169th N.Y.
Lynwood Church Cemetery, Hadley, Saratoga County, New York

Typhoid fever is caused by salmonella bacteria in contaminated water. Symptoms include high fever, malaise, headache, generalized aches and pains, constipation or diarrhea, rose-colored spots on the chest, and enlarged spleen and liver. During the war the disease was often carried by flies from latrines to the food soldiers ingested.

company. He was an able and efficient officer – loved and respected by all the officers and men of the regiment. His remains are now lying in

the hospital at Portsmouth, Va., awaiting the action of the officers who desire to have the body embalmed and forwarded to his friends, if time is allowed."

View of Norfolk and Portsmouth
Published by Edward Sachse & Co., Baltimore (1862)
Collection of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, Norfolk, Virginia

The park at Hospital Point, where the 169th N.Y. bivouacked from July 30 - August 2, 1863, is seen in the foreground, in front of Portsmouth Naval Hospital. The pier from which the regiment likely departed for the siege of Charleston, S.C., is to the left.

The regiment arrived at Portsmouth on July 30th but the men were obliged to wait a few more days before boarding their transport vessel. Gen. Alden wrote in his memoir that the regiment was quartered in the courthouse and city park, and it is probable that the field and staff officers were quartered in the courthouse, whereas the line officers and enlisted men were bivouacked in the city park.

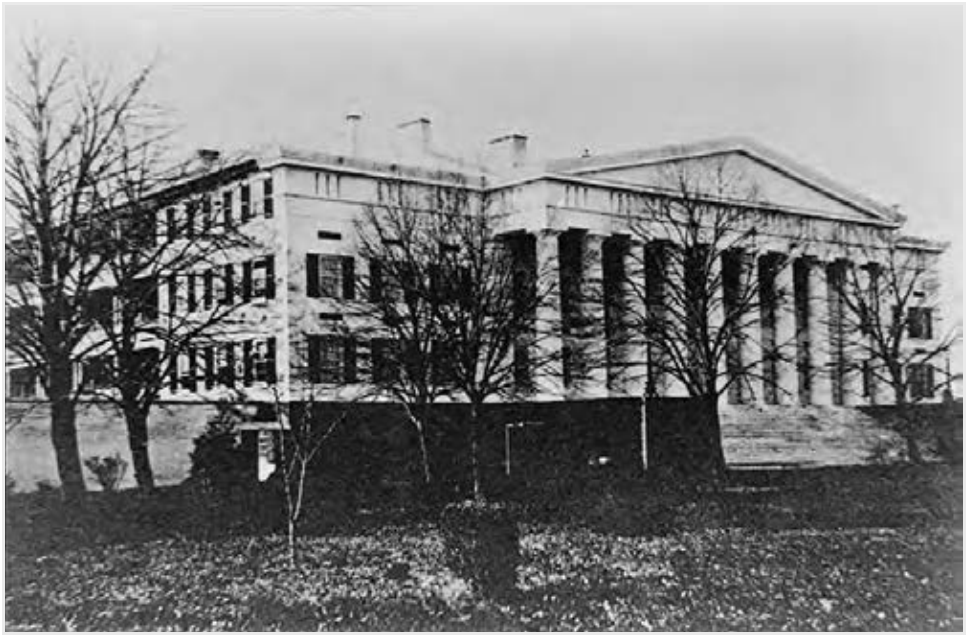
Portsmouth Courthouse, now the Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center

Detail from "Bird's-eye view of Norfolk & Portsmouth, Virginia"
Drawn and Published by C. N. Drie (1873)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The location of the Portsmouth Courthouse, at the corner of High Street and Court Street, is indicated by the blue dot (lower left of the image). Hospital Point and the Portsmouth Naval Hospital can be seen at top-center.

Earl Cheatham, Portsmouth City Surveyor, and Kay Ziegler, Norfolk County Historical Society, believe that the "city park" mentioned by Gen. Alden was the park in front of Portsmouth Naval Hospital at Hospital Point, which is not far from the old courthouse. "The pier at the end of the park would have served as a convenient embarkation point for the troops," Earl added. A letter on August 1st by Corp. Randall confirms their suspicions:

> "I have a very unpleasant place to write, but I will do the best I can. Perhaps you would like to know where I am sitting. I am in the street of Portsmouth, opposite to a very large hospital. It is very hard work to put myself to work with a pen on account of the busy hum of the city, but I now have a chance to think for myself. The reason, a very solemn one here, is a soldier being carried to his last resting place by a few comrades. He may have a sister, a mother, or a father; all or one are anxious to hear from him, but he has passed through the trials of this world and is now in the place of eternal rest, may God bless his soul. But Mary, I hope you may never hear of my death while I am in the army, for I think the sorrow would be double.
>
> "I got your kind letter of the 20th (very unexpected) with much pleasure, for I wanted to hear from home again before I left for parts unknown, for we have been here for three days in the city, between the high brick walls, and nothing to cover up but a rubber blanket and the blue heavens, and a brick pavement to sleep on. You must judge how



U.S. Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia (ca. 1875-'76)

> we must rest on the square 'feathers.' The report is that we are to leave at 6 P.M. on a large vessel for Charleston… If we go on to Charleston I will try to drive the Rebs from that cursed hole."

Gen. Alden continued in his memoir: "After getting well-underway, the sealed orders were opened and we learned that our destination was Morris Island, South Carolina, as we had already surmised. Our boat, the *Nellie Pentz*, was a screw steamer, commanded by Captain Phillips, whom we found to be a genial and competent officer, eminently social, yet a martinet in discipline. The captain and his lovely wife and two beautiful daughters, for such we had found them, were at home dispensing the hospitalities of the steamer." Gen. Alden's description of the voyage differed markedly in tone from his historical sketch of the regiment, written just a few years earlier:

> "The regiment remained in Portsmouth, quartered in the court house until August 2^{d}, 1863, when it embarked on the propeller *Nellie Pentz.* This was the first sea voyage of the 169th regiment, and the boat being small – and a propeller at that – a small sea even made it roll in an uncomfortable manner, and a large proportion of officers and men were industriously employed in 'heaving up Jonah' or 'casting bread upon the waters.' On the evening of the 5th the *Nellie Pentz* arrived at Charleston harbor, S. C., and early on the morning of the 6th she arrived at Pawnee Landing on Folly river."

Col. Colvin would write in his own historical sketch of the regiment of even greater terror, (somewhat exaggerated, it would seem), during the voyage:

> "This was the first experience of the regiment at sea, and it was discomforting in every sense. The vessel was destined for Stono Inlet, by which it was to proceed up the Folly River, as the narrow strip of water intervening between the island and the adjacent country was called. The weather became unpropitious, a storm arising in time to make serious trouble in reaching the destination. Darkness came on and the entrance to the river had not been found. The captain of the vessel became excited and seemed to have lost his head. The situation

Sunset After A Storm (1901)
Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
Private Collection

> was serious enough, and the uncertainty was not relieved when the captain of the boat rushed along the deck saying, 'I would not give a penny for our lives!' Some of the passengers began to make ready to swim, while others prepared to drown; but all suggestions of this character were lost sight of when the vessel reached Stono Inlet, and, guided by the light of a flaming bonfire on the shore, rounded the point of Folly Island and passed safely into the river."

Priv. Carmon wrote to his sister in a letter on the 7th of the excitement of seeing Fort Sumter for the first time:

> "I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know where we were. We had just got our camp fixed up nice there at Bower's Hill, when we got marching orders. We laid in Portsmouth four days, waiting for a transport Sunday morning. We went onboard the vessel, not knowing where we were a going to. We were four days out, and the first thing we knew, Fort Sumter hove in sight! The next thing we saw were Forts Moultrie and Wagner. We expected to get off on Morris Island, but they went on a little farther and landed us here. We are fifteen or twenty miles from Charleston."

Adj't. Kisselburgh, traveling from Fortress Monroe, nearly met his maker when the *City of Albany* was struck by a rogue wave in the treacherous waters off Cape Hatteras, N.C., as told in his dispatch published in the *Daily Times* on the 12th:

> "PERILOUS VOYAGE BY A TROY OFFICER. – We have received an interesting letter from our former associate, Adjutant W. E. Kisselburgh, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment, describing his attempted voyage from Fort Monroe to Charleston, which resulted in a return to port. Although the letter was written in pencil, hastily, without any view to publication, it will be read with interest by the numerous friends of the

Charleston, S.C., November 1864. Showing Union and Rebel Defences, 1863-4.
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. 5, 1863 November 9 - 1864 August 10
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

Adjutant and the regiment in Troy. It is dated on the steamer 'City of Albany,' and is begun 'off Roanoke Island' – ending at Fort Norfolk. He says:

'Now that we have struck comparatively smooth water again, and as the vessel's jar does not entirely preclude the possibility of writing, I sit down to give you the particulars of my fruitless attempt thus far to reach my regiment. I landed at Fortress Monroe Aug. 6, and on the same day got transportation to Charleston on board the steamer *City of Albany*, a very light and pretty boat, built for passenger service on the Hudson, but very poorly adapted to 'roughing it' along our Atlantic coast. There were few other officers and a few privates on board as passengers. The Captain had told me the vessel was not sea-worthy, but I supposed she would be entirely safe, and went on board of her feeling jubilant over the idea of going to Charleston in so pretty a craft. You must have known some people very particular as to the shrouds and coffins that were to contain them after death. The accommodations were elegant; my state-room spacious, and everything about the boat had such an air of comfort, so like our North River palaces, and so unlike other Government vessels, that I was really willing to risk a little something in order to be entirely comfortable. We made Cape Hatteras in good style; but there the sea got on his elevated shoulder-straps, and disputed the question of rank with our poor little craft. "What right," he appeared to say by his actions, "has that pesky river-boat to tread so lightly and yet so proudly and defiantly over my imperial back? I'll stir her up." And he did. A great rough wave struck her mid-ships, and the fragile thing trembled in every part. Others followed in quick succession, and at last being unable to sleep, I got out of bed, and went below. I saw the sea was tur-bulent, and it was with difficulty I could keep my feet. First, I was thrown against the engine room, and then banged against the wheel house. But I sup-

"A great rough wave struck her mid-ships, and the fragile thing trembled in every part."

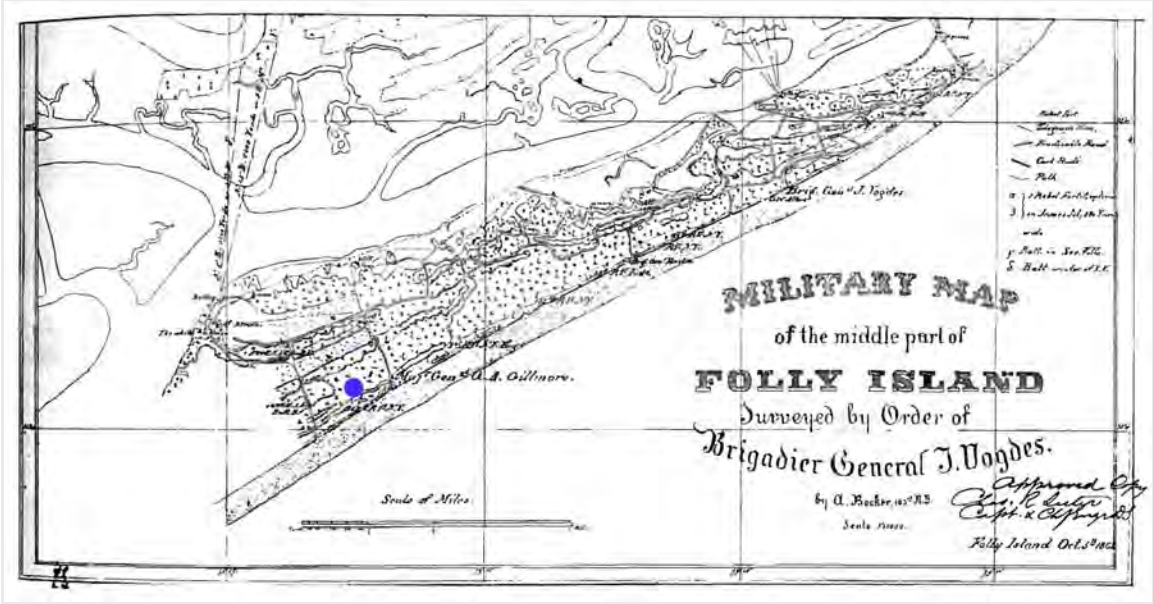
posed it was all right. I had never been to sea before, and as all the nautical knowledge I possessed had been derived from books and pictures, I supposed it was necessary for a landsman to be "well shaken" on the ocean and for a vessel to shiver and quake, to roll and pitch, to spring a leak, and do other curious things. – Therefore, I was not frightened at the rolling of the ocean or the pitching of the vessel; still I must confess it was not quite so pleasant as a trip across the Hudson on the Troy ferry line. I walked or tried to walk among the hands of the boat, to see how "they took it." Much to my surprise, I found them greatly alarmed. Some had already provided themselves with life-preservers, and one fellow had actually ensconced himself in the life-boat, and no amount of persuasion could induce him to get out of it. This rather alarmed me, and I began to think of the chances of being lost, with no record on shore or on the vessel to give my friends a knowledge of my fate. I began to feel queer. This was 2 A.M., August 7th, off Cape Hatteras, the wind blowing a gale, the sea running mountains high, the vessel a leak, dreadfully strained, the deck planks working up, and the water going over her almost every moment. I stood, a second Christopher Columbus, quite anxious on the subject of land. I would have given anything in the world then just to have been an agriculturalist. Land was my great hobby. I would have taken stock in any description of the article known as *terra firma.* – But after awhile we rounded the cape, the sea partially subsided, and we kept on our course until 9 o'clock in the morning, when we made Beaufort, N.C., leaking badly and generally disabled. To go on to Charleston was an impossibility, and after remaining at Beaufort until 5 A.M., August 8, we proceeded on our return to Fortress Monroe.

'This last is being written at Norfolk, August 9. We arrived last night in good order, safe and sound. Three days wasted, and I am no nearer my regiment than when I started. As a boat leaves the Fortress to-day; however, I expect to get off in her, and shall probably soon be at or near Charleston.

'At Beaufort, when we arrived on the 7th, they had no papers since July 31, and you can imagine how utterly benighted everybody was. The papers we gave them were like mines of gold. Charleston, I am fearful, will be even worse, though I hope not.'"

Capt. Nathaniel Wood, Co. B, had his hands full en route to his rendezvous with the regiment, reported the *Daily Whig* on the 19th:

"WE GAVE notice a morning or two since that Capt. Nat. Wood would carry letters to his regiment. Before night he received numerous letters,



Military Map of the middle part of Folly Island, Surveyed by Order of Brig.-Gen. Israel Vogdes, Folly Island, October 5, 1863
Corp. August Becker, 103d N.Y.
Collection of the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

The blue dot indicates the location of the camp of the 169th N.Y. on Folly Island.

> and not only letters, but packages enough to fill an express wagon. There are many wives of the soldiers of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth here, and if Capt. Wood could carry letters, why not packages and boxes? One lady brought a satchel of sixty pounds, and many others were equally liberal. Capt. Nat. Wood had his hands full as well as his pockets, and when he gets to the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, there will doubtless be a general rejoicing."

Gen. Alden continued in his memoir: "Upon debarkation, the 169th, Lieut.-Col. McConihe commanding, reported to General Israel Vogdes, who commanded the north-half of Folly Island, and who was subordinate to General Gillmore. General Vogdes directed our regiment to encamp about [two miles] down the island near the ocean beach. We pitched our camp in a grove of scrub oaks, pine and palmetto, separated by an irregular line of sand bluffs from the beach and ocean." In his historical sketch Alonzo provided further details:

> "The regiment disembarked and marched across the narrow island to the sea, and by direction of Brigadier-General Israel Vogdes, commanding the post, marched down the beach about two miles and found the balance of Foster's brigade, and encamped on the sand bluff near the beach. Palmettos, magnolias and pines, which were very common, were about the only shade trees visible. The heat of the sun was intense, but much mitigated by a brisk and cool sea-breeze, with which we were favored every hour of the day, excepting in the morning. Before 9 o'clock A.M. and after 5 o'clock P.M., the only hours when granted by general orders, officers and men very generally indulged in the luxury of sea bathing."

In a letter to his father on the 7th, an edited version of which was published anonymously in the *Daily Press* on the 14th, Col. McConihe wrote that it would be some time before Fort Sumter fell to the Union:

Sea Shore – Folly Island, S.C. (May 1863)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"The regiment's camp was laid out just in rear of a sand-bluff, against which the waters of the Atlantic beat at their highest tide." – Colonel James A. Colvin

> "Here we are, a long way from home, at the very cradle of the Rebellion and within cannon sound of Fort Sumter. We left Portsmouth on Sunday and had a very pleasant sail to this point. No rough weather and no accidents. We are encamped on the upper end of this island and shall nightly send fatigue parties over on Morris Island to work on the fortifications. We are encamped on the beach and the roar of the ocean is constant and unceasing. The sun is very hot but there is a cool breeze. Three palmettos front my tent, growing out of the white sand, and back of us is a grove of the same trees, mingled with pines. The island is narrow and it is a hot place for troops, but the bathing is fine and we all enjoy our summer's retreat.
>
> "The seige of Wagner progresses, but no more assaults will be made. Heavy guns are being mounted and much work is laid out. Morris Island is also very narrow, not averaging half a mile, and the troops that can work do so at a great disadvantage. In coming in, we laid off Fort Sumter some four hours, day before yesterday, among the monitors, and enjoyed the firing, being at safe distance.
>
> "In my judgment it will be some time before Sumter will fall, as the disadvantages under which we operate seem almost insurmountable. If we had land room, we might get along faster, but working on a narrow island in the white sand, with shot and shell falling constantly around you, is both difficult and warm work."

Col. John notified his friends in Cincinnati of the change in venue in a second letter written on the 7th: "We arrived here last evening, and I have no time to write you or John by this mail. We shall move every night over to Morris Island, and assist in throwing up intrenchments and mounting guns. We left Portsmouth suddenly, and I am in good health and spirits. We are at the 'sea shore' and enjoy all its benefits. There is no chance of an action here for some time, as we shall approach Sumter by a seige." John followed-up with a more informative communiqué on the 14th:

> "I wrote you a few lines, announcing the safe voyage of the 169th N.Y. Regiment from Portsmouth to this point, on my arrival here, and I now undertake, in my poor way, to answer your interesting letter of the 28th of July. I received your letter just as we were embarking for Charleston and it sounded 'phunny' to receive your congratulations on our

The Bombardment of Fort Sumter (ca. 1863)
Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)
Collection of the Union League of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

being once again *in quarters*, out of reach of hostile bullets, when we were, as I read it, being tossed on the ocean in an old freight boat.

"As I had supreme command of the craft and all onboard of her, I imagined her to be the *ironclad* which we had talked about in days pleasantly remembered, and thought we were steering for a landing to receive Mr. and Mrs. Newton aboard, before we launched on the deep blue sea. Then the piles of soldiers, occupying every square inch, with no accommodations for a pleasant party, reminded me I was yet a soldier, though on the green waters of the ocean. Three days at sea and no accidents, though the *Nellie Pentz*, our steamer, groaned with her live freight.

Bombardment of Fort Wagner, Charleston, South Carolina
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (August 29th, 1863)

"We lay off Sumter some five hours, saw the monitors exchanging their iron missiles with Sumter and Johnson, gazed at Moultrie, Castle Pinckney, Wagner, and our own sand works, and at night sailed on to our landing place, surfeited with the grand views which some of us would soon dissolve in.

Folly Island after capture by Union forces on April 10, 1863

"Landing, we marched along the sandy beach of Folly Island and encamped near the upper, and listening to the novel sound of the constant roaring ocean, and looking upon that historical tree, the Palmetto, the emblem of a hated and despised State.

"Within 30 hours the regiment was sent into the advanced trenches on Morris Island, within six hundred yards of Wagner, and for 28 hours we lay there as picket, subject to a continuous shelling from Forts Sumter, Johnson, and Gregg. At first it seemed quite dangerous, as the huge shells, like a shooting star, rolled up the heavens in a beautiful curve, and then descended on our devoted heads with a rush like the mighty rushing of waters bursting with a terrific crash, and, as it seemed, right on us. Into our sand holes and shelters we tumble, heedless of clothes or position, and wondering whether the next bomb won't come right down where we are hiding, and bury us in the white sand forever.

"'Cover, Johnson!' the lookout calls at headquarters, and we crowd into our cavern (a hole 6 by 12), and wait until the infernal thing has, with a spiteful tearing, fearful billowing, scattered itself in the loose sand. Out we crawl, have time to get a fresh breath, and be fanned by the passing breeze of heaven, when the lookout cries, 'Cover, Sumter!' and again we crowd in, out of the air, remaining until the iron fiend has bursted or passed on. So it was all night and all day, a shell tearing down from either Johnson or Sumter, at intervals not to exceed eight minutes, from one or the other, and in the daytime, to add to these terrifying noises, the sharpshooters of Fort Wagner greeted us constantly with a leaden messenger, which with an ugly whiz sped by.

"But, Mrs. Newton, it is a grand sight to see one of those large shells, more steadily, in a graceful curve, high up among the silvery stars, a red star itself to all appearances, watch it turn when it has reached its altitude, hear its terrific noise, know it was sent for you, find yourself unharmed, and laugh at their futile, noisy endeavors. I got so that I rather enjoyed dodging and watching them without running into my close, narrow, 'splinter-proof.'

Fort Johnson (October 10, 1863)
Conrad Wise Chapman (1842-1910)
Collection of the Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia

"During the night, my duties called me out around the works. I walked leisurely among the traverses when no flash was seen or boom heard, but quickened my pace to reach a splinter-proof when the ominous 'red star' was moving aloft. As I neared the shelter of the most distant company, I heard the discharge of a mortar from Johnson, turned, saw the shell coming, and calculated it was bearing far to the left, so I stood gazing at it, like a boy at a rocket. But I soon discovered my mistake, for its rushing, unpleasant sound soon convinced me to dive into a cover. A few steps, and I was sprawling in the dirt among silent and crouching soldiers, when the shell burst nearby, doing no damage. But I verily believe I had rather be struck on the head with the school-marm's ruler than endure that noise in such close proximity to my feet (for my head was in the sand) again. Fort Wagner did not open that night or day.

"I was only in command of the 169th but Tuesday last. I was detailed as 'Field Officer of the Trenches' and had command of four regiments and all the artillery, with only the General Officer of the Day to help me. He was a brave and active colonel, and we got along nicely.

"Nothing of note occurred until 3:15 A.M. of Wednesday, when Fort Wagner opened on us with grape and canister in a furious manner; Sumter, Johnson, and Gregg chiming in with their mortar shells. Just as Wagner opened, I was returning from my tour of duty, on the left of the line, with no cover within 150 yards, and the first intimation I had of her spiteful mood was a sort of feeling that somebody was throwing dirt at me. I then saw the flash and heard the roar, and fully appreciated their favors. They of Wagner were but 600 yards distant, and their shot reached us before we heard the discharge. I traveled along the open space to the traverse, with about as rapid a walk as John goes down to the bank when Baker is away and Ellen is late with her dinner. Safely,

Map of Charleston Harbor showing Union and Rebel Batteries, &c. (Sept 1863)
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Volume 4, 1862 October 26 - 1863 November 7
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

I returned to my headquarters, and soon our batteries were replying with a vigor, and I hope more damage than was inflicted on us by them.

"At night we were relieved, beat a hasty retreat from our covers down the beach, reaching camp about 2 A.M. of Thursday, somewhat wearied, but feeling a great relief in moving about, without having a locomotive plunging at me through the air every five minutes.

"We lost one killed and four wounded while I was in command. A small loss, considering the amount of iron the Rebels threw at us.

"I, as all of us here are, am forbidden to impart any account of our doings or progress, on the penalty of being sent home. Such being the case, I cannot describe as much as I would. I cannot tell you how famously the Yankees are getting along, or how soon Charleston will fall. My opinion that she is a doomed city, it would even be improper to

advance, so you must be confident and believe the latest reports published. We all have great confidence in General Gillmore and willingly trust in him.

"I will not sketch my present quarters on the first bluff of the beach, as I should be tempted to draw the roar of the ocean and the white-crested waves which roll constantly and incessantly up to within 50 yards of my tent, but here is a palmetto tree, one of three growing in front of my quarters in the white sand. I tremble at my audacity in sketching for you, but gain courage when I tell you it is a tree, not a man (¡).

Sketch of a palmetto tree and a man at the headquarters of the 169th N.Y. (August 14, 1863)
Correspondence of Lieut.-Col. John McConihe, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York

The thing this side of the tree is an exclamation point. How do I sketch those? John will enjoy that tree and admit that I am a natural artist laboring under disadvantages.

"The express agent on Morris Island made a good sketch of Fort Wagner and our works, and I tried hard to obtain it for you but did not succeed, so you must guess what those sand forts look like from this,

Sketch of Union army works in front of Fort Wagner (August 14, 1863)
Correspondence of Lieut.-Col. John McConihe, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York

a mere jumble of sand hills opposite one another, with an abatis from the beach which almost touch each other…

"I am in good health and spirits, and enjoy this delicious sea bathing very much. I think I have selected quite a fashionable resort this season, but withal I would much prefer McFarland Street of last summer.

"There is constant music at the forts and innumerable fatigue parties which commence just after dark and last until about 3 A.M. Saratoga it-

self cannot equal us in the number of our 'hops' or the grand display at our parties."

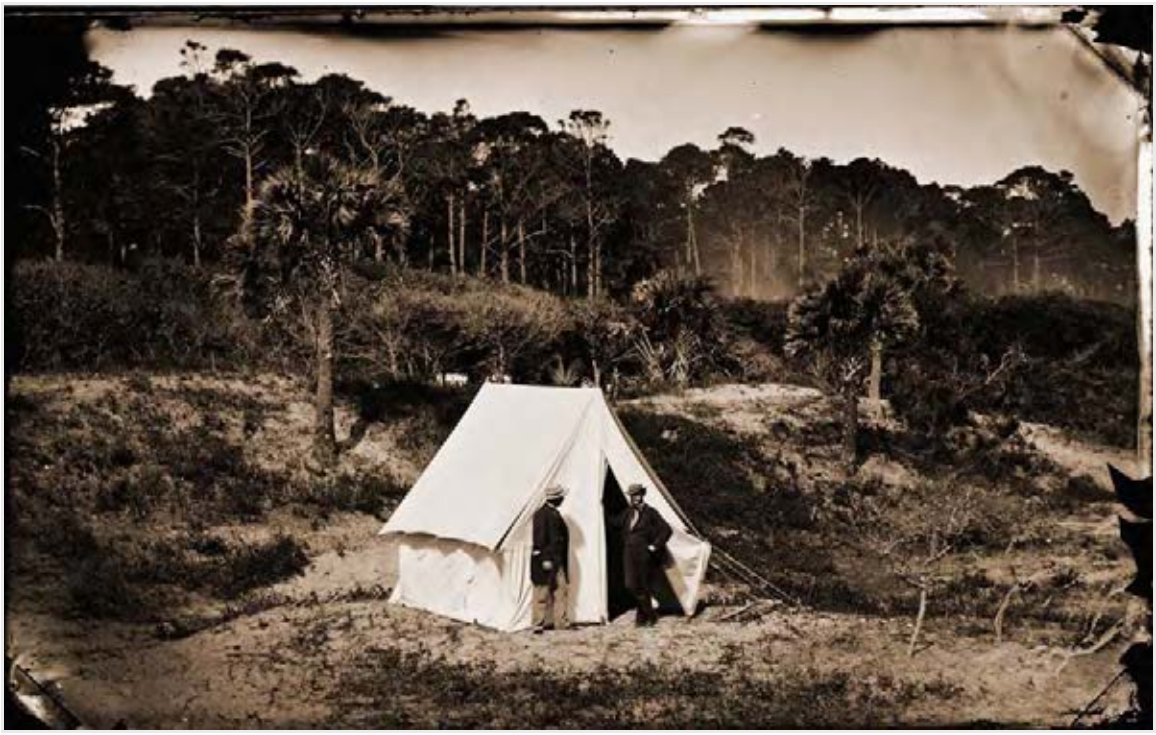
In yet another evocative letter, this one written on the 16th to his mother, Col. McConihe describes his adventures before Fort Wagner, his exploration of the wreck of the monitor *Keokuk,* and his discovery of a new delicacy called heart of palm, also known as "swamp cabbage":

"We had quite a pleasant voyage from Portsmouth, although our steamer was very much crowded. The major and myself were the only officers that had a room, and that was so hot after the sun was up that we could not stay in it. We slept on the floor at night and remained on deck during the day. The boat was an old lake steamer built for carrying freight and had no accommodations for passengers and very limited ones for the crew. But the weather was fine and the sea smooth, which added to the novelty of a sea voyage and made the trip interesting and pleasant. A great many of the officers and men were seasick, but I was well the whole voyage.

Model of the navy's experimental armored gunboat, the U.S.S. "Keokuk"

"We landed and are now encamped on the upper end of Folly Island, with only a small inlet separating us from Morris Island. The steamer *Planter,* brought by the Negro Robert Small out of the harbor of Charleston, constantly plies between the two islands. A short distance above our camp, the beach is strewn with the pieces of the famous stone fleet sunk in the channel as an obstruction, the same having been cast up by the old ocean. The monitor *Keokuk,* sank in the first attack on Charleston, lies a short distance above, well out from the land – her turret rusted and visible at low tide looks like a bale of hay. As we lay off the harbor awaiting orders, I took a small boat and visited the iron monarch. I stepped on top of the turret, just to say I had been there, but nothing was to be seen – all beneath was hidden in the green seas. While off Sumter, we witnessed the monitors and that citadel exchanging shots. To us there, this was a rare sight, but a familiar one to us now, and eclipsed by grander sights while doing picket duty in the advanced trenches in front of Fort Wagner.

"Our camp is on the first ridge of the eastern beach, and the white-crested waves roll up and roar incessantly at our feet. The water at high



Two men in front of tent, Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

tide is within fifty yards of my tent, and the white sand surrounds us. This ridge is quite narrow, being only wide enough for one tent and in some places too narrow for even one; and directly back of it is low ground covered with thickly interwoven vines and the palmettos, mingled with tall, slender pines. There is a pith or heart near the top of the palmetto which when cooked is very nice and delicate, resembling asparagus. I will send you a bottle of it pickled the very first opportunity. It is a luxury even here, as very little is obtained from the tallest tree which dies when its top is cut off. When pickled, it tastes very much like pickled oysters.

Atlantic Seascape (1870)
William Trost Richards (1833-1904)
Private Collection

"We enjoy the sea bathing very much, and the beach is very beautiful; I bathe morning and evening. It is very warm; in fact, there is a 'large warm' during the day, but the nights are cool and refreshing.

"The water we drink is not very good, and in color resembles Bourbon whiskey, but tastes very differently. At first it was very unpalatable,

Full Sap, Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

but now I do not wait to taste it before drinking. It looks like beer in a pail, and I would give several pails full of this fluid for one glass of lager. Each officer is allowed to purchase one gallon of whiskey of the government per month, paying therefore $2.00.

"The regiment has been worked quite hard since its arrival, and we have been over on Morris Island twice doing picket duty in the advanced trenches in front of Wagner, thirty hours each time. It is very tedious to march through the sand, seven miles to the trenches, and then endure a constant shelling from four forts, day and night, and during the daytime not to be able to move from your sand cave without some Rebel sharpshooter from Wagner throwing a rifle ball at you. The hot sun pours down on the white sand, and little air circulates through the narrow parallels and trenches.

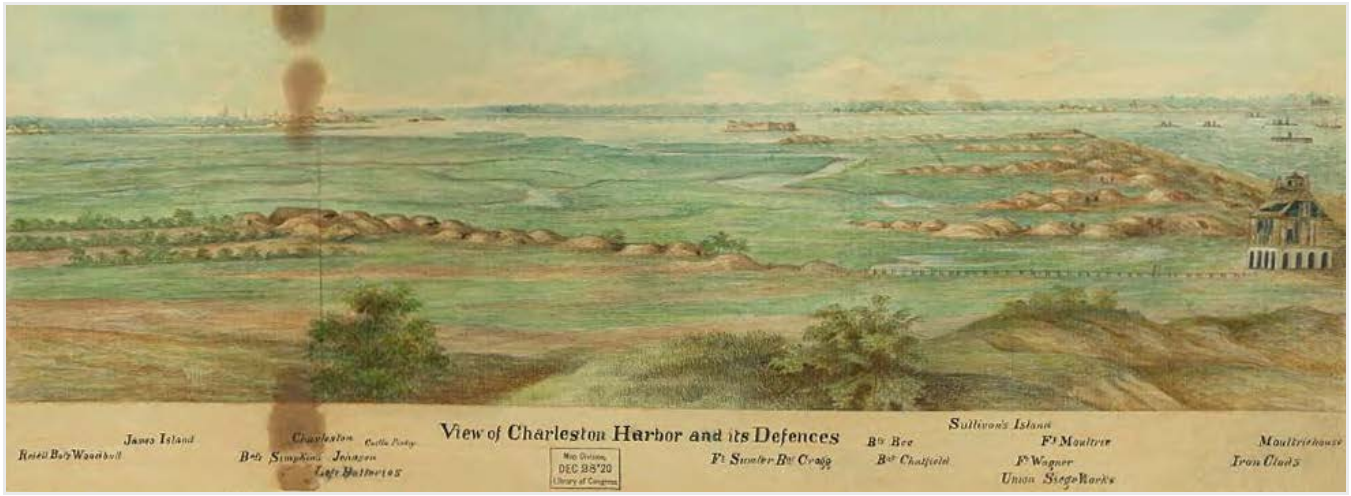
"Tuesday last, I was field officer of the trenches and had command of the infantry and artillery. Colonel Guss of the 97th Pennsylvania Regiment was general field officer and ably assisted me in properly placing my command in the trenches and splinter-proofs. The troops under me consisted of the 169th N.Y., the 112th N.Y., the 13th Indiana, 100 men from the 103d N.Y., and a fatigue party of 800 blacks from the 1st and 2d North Carolina Negro regiments. If I had not been up there before, I am afraid, I should have lost myself wandering around the works. While we were going up the beach, Sumter and Johnson occasionally threw a shell in close proximity to us; and when we arrived within the works, every few minutes a huge bomb would come roaring at us through the air, sounding like the express train on the Hudson River R.R. when at full speed, and would burst with a terrific noise, the pieces burying themselves in the sand without damage to us.

"After the pickets were all stationed, I returned to headquarters, a place about six feet by ten, made of sandbags, where there is a lookout and a sentinel stationed to announce the shot, in order that we may cover from it. 'Cover, Sumter!' the lookout cries, and I tumble into

Headquarters of the Field Officer of the Trenches, Second Parallel, Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

headquarters. The shell explodes and we come out to get a breath and be fanned by the night breeze. In about seven minutes, 'Cover, Johnson!' rings out, and in again we go. So all night and all day, the firing being more or less rapid; but they were certain to throw a shell every fifteen minutes at least. Soon I learned to tell whether the shell would come near us, or go to the right or left, or over us. I would watch the red star, the burning fuse, as it ascended the heavens among the silvery stars, and when in a graceful curve it commenced its downward flight, could judge whether it was coming near or going far, and I was thus relieved from dodging every five minutes. During the day, these shells cannot be seen, but their tearing, crashing, whiffing noise gives one sufficient time to cover if near a shelter. They burst with a tremendous noise, but seldom do any damage. The Forts Johnson, Sumter and Gregg throw the largest made. One can't help but dodge, so awful do they seem, and no one is allowed to leave his shelter, except on duty.

"Fort Wagner opened on us at 3:15 o'clock Wednesday morning with grape and canister. Our second parallel is but 600 yards distant from the fort, and our third not 250. Her shot whizzes around you before you hear the discharge, and there is little use dodging if you are exposed. I was not aware of her spiteful intentions and was making the rounds as required. In returning from the extreme left, crossing an open space of 150 yards, three discharges greeted me in quick succession. I was alone and you can imagine I felt quite solitary. It seemed as if someone, hidden by the darkness, was playing a joke upon me by stoning me with pebbles. But no harm was done and I returned to headquarters, the rounds being made; and you may rest-assured I kept in my place until after daylight, when Fort Wagner ceased firing. She does not fire in daylight, as she has learned that we have guns which are too much for hers when she exposes them to sight. Our works only return Fort Wagner's fire.



View of Charleston Harbor and its Defences (ca. 1863)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

> "I omitted to mention that none but the line officers accompany their regiments into the trenches, and that one field officer is detailed to superintend and command all, being called field officer of the trenches. While I was in command, but one man was killed and five wounded."

In a letter written on the 17th, John McConihe jokingly invited his friends John B. Kellogg and Timothy S. Banker, one a banker and the other a lawyer in Troy, to come visit him at his "elegant and fashionable summer resort":

Fort Sumter (ca. August 23, 1863)

> "As you have probably learned the '169th' is actively participating in the seige of Charleston, and witnessing the reduction of the Rebel forts in this vicinity. The work goes bravely on, and I feel confidant of the result. Sumter is already badly riddled and rumor says evacuated. The Rebel rag flaunts over her walls, but she has not fired a gun since noon Monday. We opened from Monitors, gunboats and land batteries in earnest on Monday, and have, since then, kept up a continuous fire; our brigade acted as a reserve to our approaches to Wagner on Morris

Bomb and splinter-proof, Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

Island on Monday, and consequently I was present at the 'opening.' It was a grand sight and the power of the Government fell heavily on the Rebels. Monday night we returned to Folly Island, but our turn will soon come to go over to Morris again.

"I am confident that the days of Rebel rule in Charleston are numbered. But don't look for its speedy downfall. It is a great work and the Rebels have prepared for it for two years. Although we may batter Sumter down, still there are other works, particularly the sand batteries, more difficult to demolish. Most of our work is done at night, and all work with a zeal and a heart to make our undertaking successful. Whether we shall make any more assaults, I cannot say, but the 169th is ready to join forces and go on when ordered. The regiment has acted as picket in the advanced trenches in front of Wagner, over sixty hours within 250 feet of the fort, and although constantly shelled by Sumter, Johnson, and Gregg, has not lost a man. That is our 'luck,' (we are called a *lucky* regiment and the men all think a great deal about our *good* luck, which has been ours since we left Staten Island), for other regiments on the same day had accidents. The 'splinter-proof ' that I made my headquarters in was knocked into 'Pie' the next night by a shell landing in it, and Colonel Howell and others badly injured. I left my spurs in there, having forgotten them, but feel thankful now that nothing else was left there of mine for that shell to scatter around. But, John, without joking, that is a warm place, in front of Fort Wagner.

"It is very warm down here, but there is a breeze from the ocean which is quite refreshing. The bathing is splendid, and I think if you and Tim would come down here, you would enjoy it much better than to go to Fire Island. You can, at this summer resort, attend a fatigue party every night, be surrounded with the music of the various forts, (their guns play day and night), pick up *shells* on the beach and enjoy a bath of white sand by rambling over our approaches to Wagner. Other inducements are here, such as water which looks like Bourbon whisk-

U.S. Navy's South Atlantic Blockading Squadron off Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

> ey, (but tastes like something else), and a table spread with government rations, but I cannot mention them all. Suffice it to say this is an elegant and fashionable summer resort, and you and Tim would appreciate the novel sights and more of life."

The *Daily Times* published a story on the 29th, based upon information from an officer's letter, which appeared to agree with Col. John's description of the regiment's "summer resort" in the South:

> "A private letter from an officer in the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment, says that our soldiers have been in the trenches within fifty yards of Fort Wagner, but that they 'still live.' The writer speaks of the firing between the forts and batteries as being one of the most splendid spectacles he ever witnessed. He is quite hopeful as to the final result, but is very guarded in his language – although one or two 'guesses' in reference to battering down Fort Sumter and firing Charleston have since been realized. Our regiment is encamped on Folly Island, on the sea-shore, and, when not on picket or in the trenches, the boys have jolly times, taking salt water baths. There is said to be no finer beach in the world than the one in front of the camp. The weather was by no means uncomfortable, and our correspondent slept in the open air the previous night, in a state of nudity, but paid the penalty by taking a severe cold. 'The only draw-back to the place' (says the writer) 'is the want of women to do washing. I have a perfect stack of soiled linen.'"

Priv. Carmon continued in his letter of the 7th about the bad drinking water on Folly Island, stating that it "hain't fit for the hogs to wallow in." At the end of the letter Alfred mentioned an ailment which caused his hand to tremble as he wrote:

> "Last night the guns of Sumter kept playing pretty lively all night. Fort Wagner is about played-out. Our sharpshooters have got up so close to the fort that as soon as a man shows his head, they will pick him off. They cannot use their large guns but when our troops charge

Union Sharpshooters in Front of Fort Wagner, Charleston, South Carolina
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (August 29th, 1863)

on them. Then they give us fits. But I suppose that we will have possession of it before a great while, and when that is down, then Sumter will have to come, too.

"We have a very pleasant place for a camp here. It is in a thick grove of palmetto and banana trees, and only about ten rods [50 meters] from the seashore. I tell you, it is fun to go in bathing in the surf! The waves, when they break, will toss us as much as a rod up towards the shore.

"I don't know what they intend to do with us down here, nor do I care much. If they would only let us do it and get away from here, for we have such miserable water. It hain't fit for the hogs to wallow in. But there is no way to help it, as I know of. It is awful hot down here. If it was not for the sea breeze, I believe we would roast! But there is plenty of fans here. All we have to do is to go down in the grove and cut one, for there is plenty of palm leaves here.

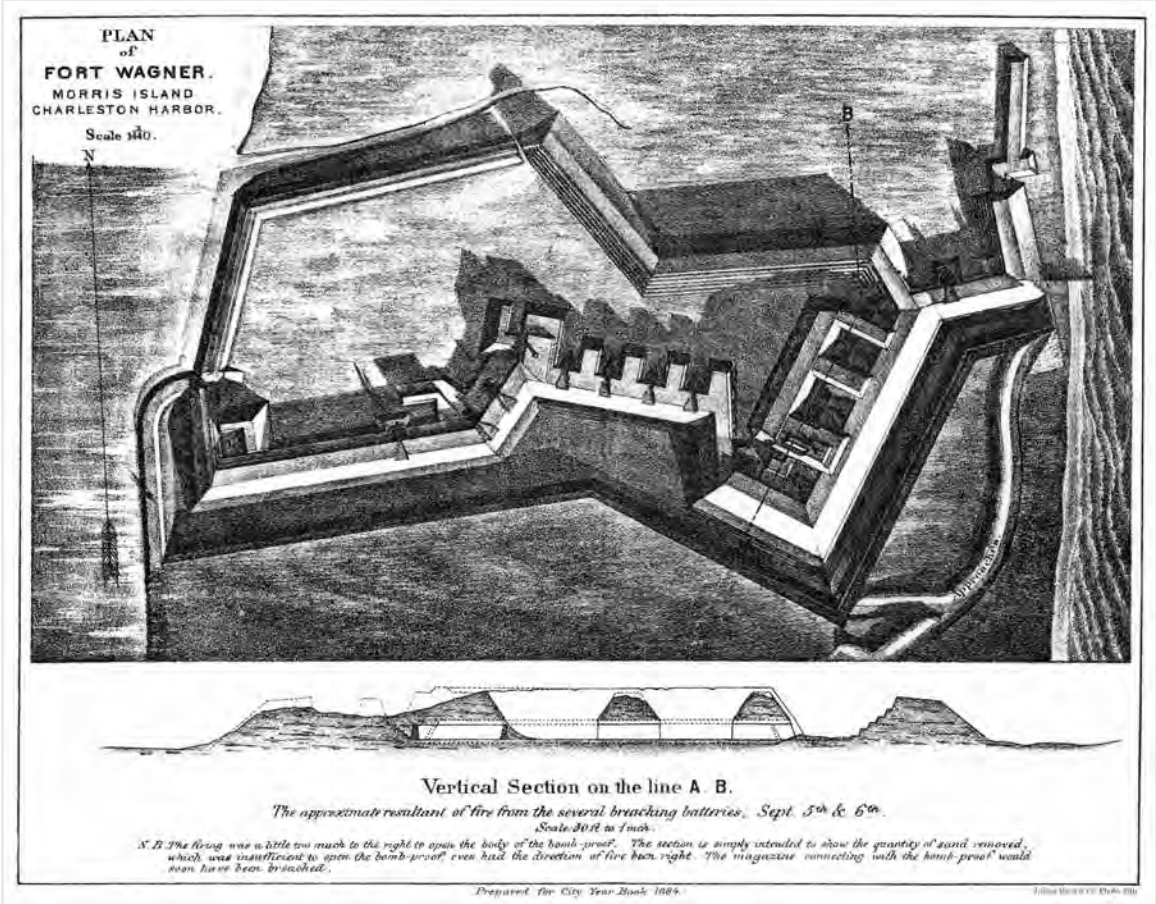
"I am well at present, nor was I seasick. Some of the boys was sick most all of the way down.

"Have they drafted any in Sand Lake yet? I wish that they would take some of those nice young men that is running around the streets. If they only would take every able-bodied man and send him down here, we could all go home in six months. Some think that it will be over in that time anyway, but it is rather doubtful. But I hope so. If we succeed in taking Charleston, then we will have them pretty well cornered.

"My hand trembles, so I don't know whether you can read my letter or not."

In a letter on the 21st, Priv. Carmon informed his sister about a close call the 169th had when it was ordered to leave the protection of the trenches in front of Fort Wagner the previous week, noting that the regiment "came off lucky," as none of the men were hurt before the order was countermanded:

"They commenced to bombard the forts here last Monday, that is, in good earnest, and have kept it up pretty lively ever since. We were up there that Monday, and have not been there since. We were up there on



Plan of Fort Wagner, Morris Island, Charleston Harbor
Published in the Charleston, S.C., Yearbook (1884) from a Lithograph by
Julius Bien & Co., Lithographers, New York

picket last week and came very near going into Fort Wagner, before we knew where we were a going to, but we soon found out our mistake. We had to go out beyond all of the breastworks and had no protection at all, and the Rebs kept throwing shells and grapeshot at us all night. The grape would fall all around us, but we came off lucky. Not one of us got hurt. There was one of the boys who got stunned by a shell passing over his head as he was laying down. He is a little Dutchman from West Sand Lake. He said that was a pretty close call for him, but he was not ready to go yet.

"It looks gay to see those shells come sailing over through the air, but it don't seem quite so gay when they burst over a fellow's head! As much firing as there is going on, there is but very few that gets hurt. It is impossible for a man to get hit when he is behind the breastworks, unless a shell from a mortar falls down in amongst them, which very seldom happens to us. We have been up there four or five times, and have not had a man hurt yet. But that is no sign but that some of us will, for the Rebs throw their shells pretty careless. They look like a great big kettle – they come, but just as they get over a fellow, the bottom falls out.

"We get no news here at all and don't know what is going in any other place besides here. The mails don't come here but only once a week, and sometimes not so often.

Fort Sumter, Charleston Harbor (August 23, 1863)
Frank Vizetelly (1830-1883)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"It is reported that the walls of Fort Sumter is pretty well battered up, but I don't know how true it is. But I know that no fort could stand the fire that Sumter has been under a great while.

"This paper is so poor that I cannot write anyway. I have to scribble it off. I don't believe that you can read this. The bugle has blowed to put out the lights, so I will have to stop writing for the present, so goodbye."

Your correspondent was able to decipher Alfred's writing. A letter written on the 21st by Adj't. Kisselburgh was published by the *Daily Times* on September 1st:

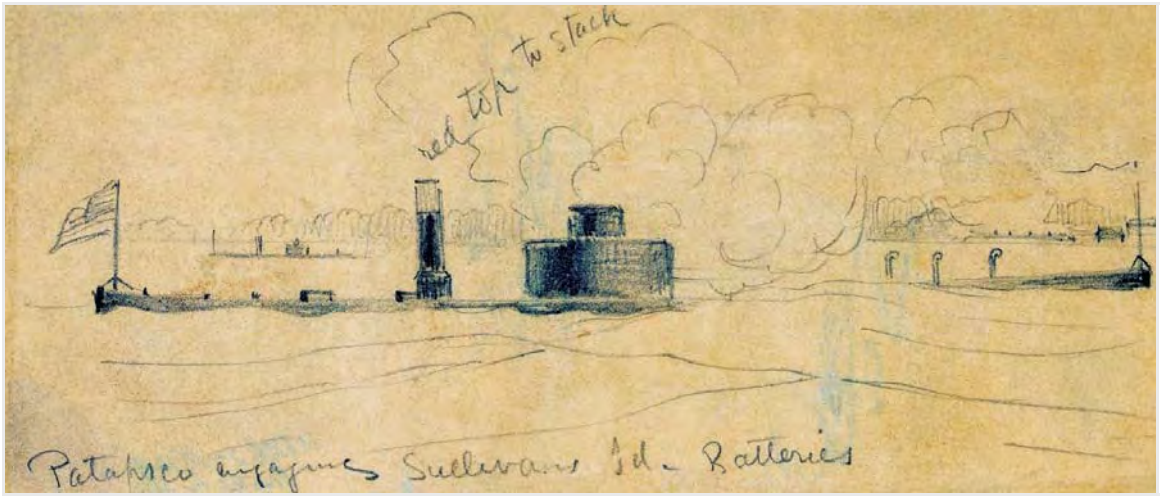
"As the mail leaves this point for Hilton Head and the North to-morrow, I cannot resist the inclination to offer you a few notes on the progress of the siege of Charleston, although I must confess, that to a person of my indolence, the enervating and dispiriting atmosphere of this hot morning is little-conducive to free writing or happy thought. The weather is terribly hot. Scarcely a breath of air is stirring; and the sun pours his sweltering rays upon a sandy beach that reflects them back with double force. – Everything is sluggish and enervated. The siege goes on slowly, and at my present 'base of operations' only the reports of occasional guns are heard. They do not this morning appall the ear or frighten the sense, by their frequency. But this partial suspension of the cannonading is not due to the weather. Hot or cold, in rain or in sunshine, the siege is destined to go on until Charleston falls and the fangs of the serpent are destroyed. Yet I hardly know how the poor gunners have the ability to work the guns in this sweltering heat. Even the ocean undulates lazily this morning, and with difficulty seems to roll its waves of foaming surf upon the beach. But an hour hence all this will be changed. Then the breeze that will be wafted to

Major-General Quincy A. Gillmore
Commanding X Army Corps and Department of the South
Published in "Engineer and artillery operations against the defences of Charleston Harbor" by Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore (1865)

the shore from the ocean will give to every animate object new life and strength, and revive to a marvelous degree the wasted energies of humanity. It is so every day. The mornings are the 'heated term;' the noon-day cooling, and the evenings as witching and delightful as a dark-eyed Peri. I suppose Peris are delightful – I never saw one.*

"Gen. Gillmore has issued a very stringent order on the subject of correspondence relating to the siege, and has strictly enjoined all officers, soldiers and correspondents not to divulge to anxious friends the particulars of operations now going on. But I suppose it will not be contraband to state that the bombardment of Sumter commenced on Tuesday, the 18th, and with some slight intermission, has continued ever since. Yesterday the flag-staff was shot away twice, and was each time replaced by the rebels. This morning it was again shot down, but has not been reërected. The south front of the fort is terribly riddled,

[*From a Persian myth, Peris are imaginary beings, male or female, like an elf or fairy, represented as a descendant of fallen angels, excluded from paradise till penance is accomplished.]



U.S.S. "Patapsco" engaging Sullivan's Island Batteries, Charleston, South Carolina
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

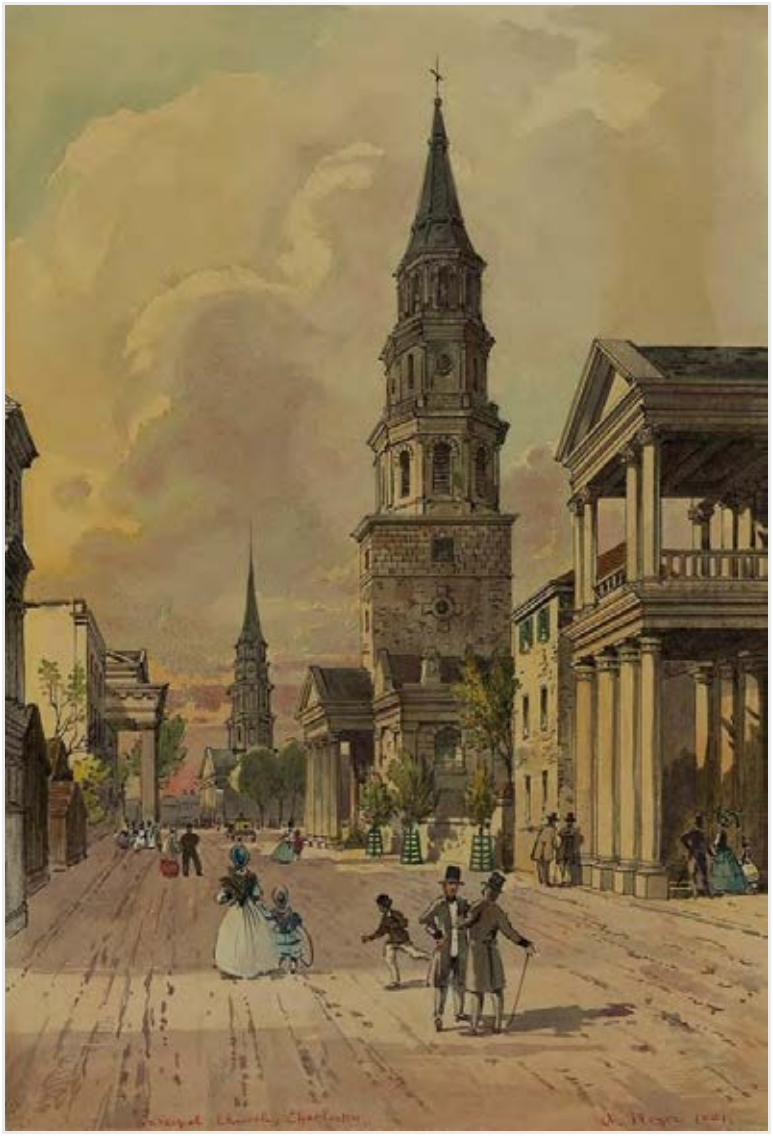
The Passaic-class monitors Montauk, Nahant, Passaic, Patapsco, and Weehawken bombarded Fort Sumter on August 23^{d} and September 1st - 2^{d}, pounding it to rubble.

and several embrasures, not dreamt of by the engineers in the construction of the fort, have been added to it by our shots. No doubt exists that the rebels have vacated the fort, or have only a very small force left within it. Scarcely a gun has been fired from Sumter since the bombardment commenced; and the fact that the rebels closed up the port-holes or embrasures several days since, and removed the guns therefrom, leaving only those mounted *en barbette* for the benefit of the monitors, gives more than the color of probability to the suspicion of evacuation. Only enough men were left to man the *barbette* guns, whose plunging shots would soon have disposed of our iron-clads, had they been foolish enough to get within their range. But thanks to science and heavy guns, the monitors are able to lay out of harm's way, and with their ponderous weapons send in their affectionate remembrances to the rebels without opposition. This morning the appearances denote the complete evacuation of Sumter, and if so, the monitors will doubtless soon run up farther into the harbor, and with the land batteries, give Wagner its *coup de grace.* Sumter ours, Wagner must soon succumb, for our iron-clads can entirely cut off its communications with James Island and the mainland. Fort Johnson, on James Island, appears to be a very formidable work, mounting the heaviest kind of guns. It is so situated as to send in an enfilading fire, and as its guns are well-served, far better than those of any of the other rebel works, it annoys us considerably. Its two hundred-pound shells are dreadful things, and the roar of one passing through the air is very much like the clatter of a railway train at full speed. One feels very much like 'getting off the track' when he hears one of them coming along with a velocity of three or four miles a minute. Yet, after all, it is very exciting to be in the advanced trenches during a vigorous cannonade. The look-out, standing behind a little aperture in the works, takes in at a glance the whole range of rebel works, and his quick eye detects the first flash of a gun from any of their forts. Sumter opens; 'Sumter,' he cries; 'cover.' And down into hundreds of splinter-proofs, rush the soldiers, officers and men, huddled together promis-cuously. Shoulder-straps give the wearer little consideration now. The shell explodes –

Bomb-proof for telegraph operator in trenches, Morris Island, South Carolina (ca. 1863)

perhaps in the air, or perhaps in the very midst of our works; but so well are our men protected by the splinter-proofs that it seldom happens anyone is hurt. On Tuesday, however, a shell struck directly on the top of one of the proofs, and of course sent the roof flying. The inmates, a Colonel, a telegraph operator, and another, were all seriously injured, though none of them were killed. So, when Wagner or any of the other rebel works fire, the look-out indicates the one, and the principal business on hand just then is to seek a cover from the flying fragments of the exploding missile. No one is hurt; everybody laughs, looks at it as a good joke, and until the next shot, everything goes 'merry as a marriage bell.' Speaking of the look-out, reminds me that the rebels have on duty in Wagner a company of splendid sharpshooters, one of whom, a negro, has gained an enviable reputation as a crack shot. Woe to the person, who exposes even the tip of his nose to this sable son of Africa, for if he has not made his peace with Heaven he has forever lost the opportunity of doing so. The other day the look-out approached the aperture, but had no sooner put his face to the opening than he was shot through the head by this negro. It is needless to say a new aperture was soon made, a range of which the rebs have not as yet been able to find.

"Whilst I cannot even indicate in a general way what is going on here to render success certain, I can at least assure the readers of the *Times* that everything is being done, both by the Government and Gen. Gillmore, to accomplish the results aimed at and so anxiously awaited by the people of the North. The task is a stupendous one, and the work will require days and weeks of toil and hardships. You can form no idea of the amount of work already done, nor of that which is to follow before Charleston falls. But success is certain. No one doubts here, for no one can look around and witness the evidences of military science as applied to the reduction of an enemy's stronghold, without feeling that perseverance under such leadership must surely give us the victory.



Principal Church, Charleston (1861) by A. Meyer
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"The day the bombardment opened, our brigade was sent up as a support to the artillery. – It lay along the beach, under cover of a sandy bluff washed up by the ocean at high tide, quite secure from the main fire of the enemy and exposed only to chance shots, but the men would persist in crowding upon the high ground for the purpose of obtaining a better view of the interesting scene around them. Gen. Foster and other officers took to a high knoll that afforded a splendid view of the field of operations. Gen. Gillmore observed this needless but almost pardonable exposure of life, (most anyone would risk a stray shot to witness a bombardment,) and despatched an orderly with instructions to restrain the sight-seeing propensities of the troops. Gen. F. smiled as the orders were given him, and naively remarking to the subordinates around him that 'after all, it was not as cool on the hill as he thought it might be,' proceeded with the others to beat a hasty retreat. Gen. Gillmore does not intend to waste a single life needlessly in the attack on Charleston.

"Our casualties are less than a dozen a day, and so long as the fighting is confined to artillery, this number will not be very largely increased.

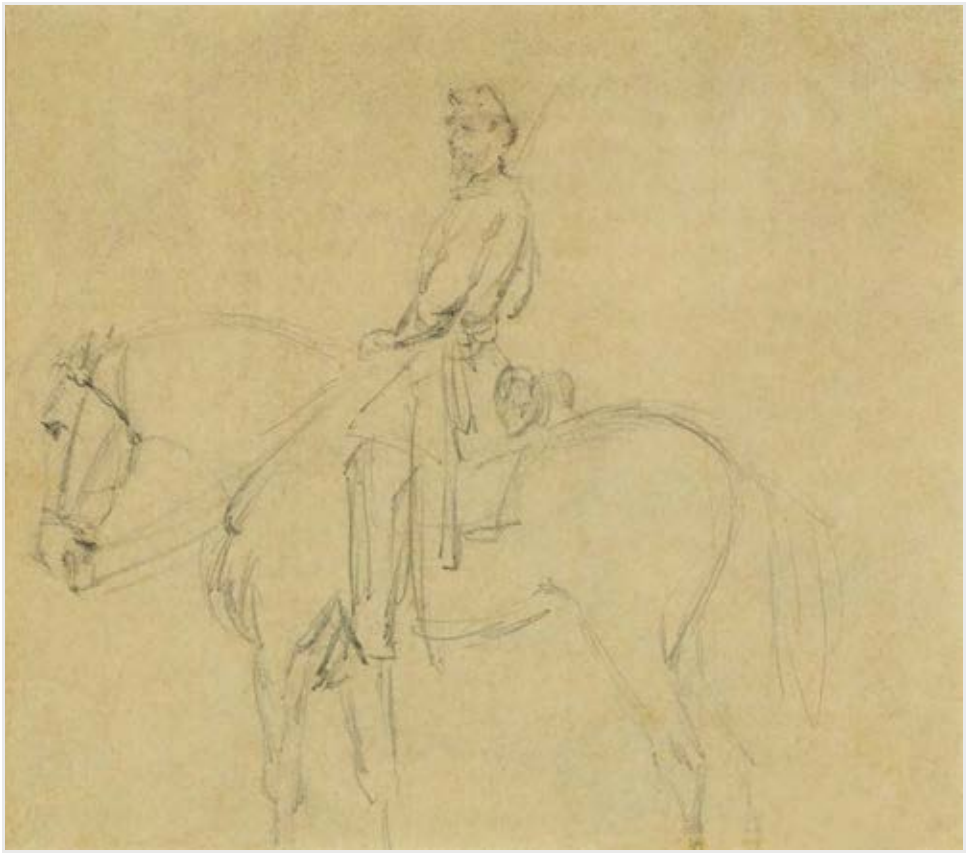
From the upper end of Morris Island one can look into the streets of Charleston, and observe men and women very leisurely strolling along the walks of the pestilent city. I hope soon to have a nearer view of the 'lads and lassies, oh,' of Charleston."

In a letter to his father on the 31st, Col. McConihe relates, among other things, the following incident showing the character of an American soldier who was shot during one of the times when he was commanding in the trenches. Priv. Charles D. Frisbie, Co. A, was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter on the 28th:

"During the day and night's operations, four soldiers were killed and eleven wounded. Our regiment lost but one man, Charles D. Frisbie, killed, shot through the head by a sharpshooter. We brought his body back with us to camp, and he now rests in a soldier's grave but a short distance from my tent, the palmetto waving in the breeze over his remains. We buried him with honors, and all that is left of Frisbie, a good man of good habits, cheerful disposition, and refined feelings, is his name on the muster rolls of Company A, and even that will disappear on succeeding rolls. Father and son were both in the same company and both are dead; the son lays in the cemetery at Suffolk, the father beneath the palmetto of Folly Island, both victims of this wicked rebellion. At Suffolk, the father, when not on duty, roamed over to his son's grave and embellished it with shrubbery and flowers. On several such visits he returned to camp bringing bouquets of wild flowers. Such a man was Frisbie.

"The siege of Charleston progresses slowly, but satisfactorily, and the city is destined to return to the Union. The tying of two colored soldiers to torpedoes by the Rebels, and then telling us they would allow us to remove them is a fact, and transpired while I was in command of the trenches. One body we removed unsuspectingly, and the torpedo burst, wounding two soldiers of the detail. The other lay in the hot sun within six yards of the trenches all day Friday, and the engineers removed it Friday night, without exploding the infernal machine of the high-toned chivalry. When the first torpedo burst, the Rebels opened furiously on our advanced trench, killing two men and wounding three. I picked up five or six Rebel bullets filled with sulphur. I was anxious to cut one of them open, but at the suggestion of an engineer I desisted, it being feared the thing might explode. These were fired at us by sharpshooters. Thus they are devils incarnate and up to devilish tricks, but they will avail them nothing, as God and justice are on our side."

Col. Clarence Buel returned to his regiment on August 29th, having recuperated over the summer as a guest of Union College president Eliphalet Nott. Clarence was a member of the college's class of 1849, other alumni including William H.



Full length portrait of soldier on horse (ca. 1861-'65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Merriam (1852) and John McConihe (1853). John wrote of the colonel's return in a letter to John Kellogg on the 31st:

> "The Colonel has arrived and I am glad to see him, both on account of himself and for the great relief and assistance which he will be to me. I have been in command of the regiment six months, deducting about 16 days, the time when we left Washington up to the 24th of April, when the Colonel was wounded, and I can, without vanity on my part, assure you the 169th has held its own through all the trying scenes of an active and severe summer campaign. As to numbers and health, we are better off than larger regiments which came out at the same time and have been with us this summer. We turn out as many men for the trenches as the 112th N. Y., which came out the 1st of September 1,040-strong, and have been in our brigade since April. But I have worked hard and unceasingly, determined as I told you to do my best and go through all right, and to the credit of my friends who placed me in my position, you, Mose, Tim, Martin I., and others. While in Washington, the Colonel and Major were detached since we have been down here; up to yesterday the Colonel has been absent and the Major detailed on General Court Martial. So much of the time I have 'reigned' alone."

Another letter from the adjutant, published in the *Daily Times* on the 31st, reported the second fatality from the regiment at Folly Island, Priv. Thomas Cunningham, Co. D, a victim of disease. Mention was also made of some "old friends"

Surgeon Reed B. Bontecue of Troy, N.Y., Chief of U.S. Hospital Ship "Cosmopolitan" and future Surgeon in-Charge of Harewood U.S. Army General Hospital, Washington, D.C.

of Lieut. Kisselburgh's from the vicinity of Troy, including Reed B. Bontecou, M.D., of Troy, (who also happened to be Serg't. Aylmer's family physician before and after the war):

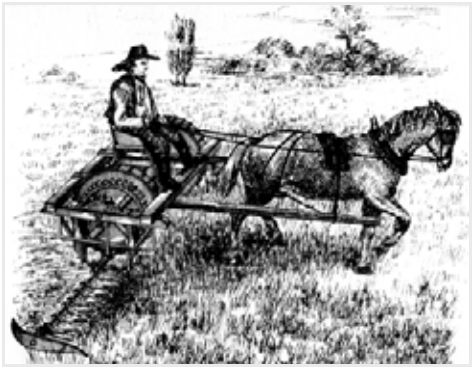
> "Regimentally, there is not much news of interest. We are encamped on Folly Island – the men lying in a palmetto grove or chaparral, in rather an unhealthy position. The effect of the climate upon our unacclimated men, the bad water, and unhealthy camping ground combined, have increased the sick list considerably; but there appears to be no cause for alarm. Only one man has died of disease since the arrival of the regiment here – Private Thomas Cunningham, of Co. D, Capt. Snyder. He enlisted from Washington county. Chaplain Eaton and Assistant Surgeon Clark Smith have resigned – the former from ill-health and the latter from dissatisfaction. They left for the North this morning. Lieut. Merrill, of Co. G, has also tendered his resignation, but it has not yet been accepted.
>
> "One meets old friends everywhere. Dr. Bontecou is here in charge of a hospital ship running between this point and Hilton Head. His amiable lady is domiciled with him on the vessel, and from her state-room windows has a fine view of the bombardment. Few ladies are so fortunate in their life-time as to be present during such a drama as that now being performed here. Capt. Chadwick, of Cohoes, is a member of Gen. Gillmore's staff, and Harry Pease, of Albany, well-known to Trojans, is Regimental Quartermaster of the "*Les Enfants Perdu*, or Lost Children."

While the men of the 169th were risking life and limb to preserve the Union, the citizens of Troy continued to do their best to help the wounded and sick in army hospitals. The *Daily Times* published a list of items donated by the Troy Soldiers' Aid Society that month:

A basket of red and white currants and plums
Alfred Arthur Brunel de Neuville (1851-1941)
Private Collection

> "TROY SOLDIERS' AID SOCIETY. This organization forwarded to-day, to the United States Sanitary Commission, a box containing the following articles, prepared in the Society, *viz:* 61 cotton shirts, 33 pairs cotton drawers, 10 cotton sheets, 21 flannel shirts, 50 pillow cases, 92 handkerchiefs, 85 arm slings, 18 calico dressing gowns, 7 pairs carpet slippers, 8 pairs woolen socks, 59 yards bandages; also, 14 fans from Mrs. P. M. Corbin, 1 bundle old linen from Mrs. Witbeck, 1 jar currant jelly from Mrs. Mary Harder, 1 pair woolen socks and 1 shirt from Mrs. Thayer, 1 linen coat from C. H. Law, 1 bundle lint and old linen, 1 shirt and 1 bottle currant pre-serves from Mrs. E. R. Barber. – B. H. HALL, Secretary, Troy, August 7, 1863."

An interesting story was reported by the Troy *Weekly Times* on the 22d about the farmers of Sand Lake bringing in the hay crop at the farm of Priv. Alonzo Horton, Co. H, stationed at Folly Island, 900 miles away from home:



Using a horse-drawn mower to cut hay

Driving a horse rake to gather cut hay

"About thirty farmers of Sandlake turned out one day last week and did the whole of Mr. Alonzo Horton's haying. Mr. Horton is a soldier in the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth regiment, Capt. Wickes' company. He has also a son in the army. The citizens of Sandlake have not spared men nor money in maintaining the war, and those who are left are not disposed to spare muscle."

Soldier correspondence is one of the keys to bringing to life the story of the Civil War. Two such collections from soldiers of the 169th N.Y. have been located recently, one of which was only discovered and verified a few weeks ago. Research of the regiment would benefit tremendously from the secrets held in these archives, and if anyone is interested in helping by making photocopies, (or preparing transcriptions, if required by the institution), please contact your correspondent. Below are the collections:

- Correspondence of Private Lyman Ostrom, Co. A, 169th N.Y., held by the History Center in Tompkins County, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Correspondence of Captain Eugene Van Santvoord, Co. G, 169th N.Y., held by the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.

Work continues with the graves register, which is now in the editing cycle. And for your review and contemplation are several more photographs of the gravestones of veterans of the 169th N.Y.

Private Peter J. Myers, Co. A

South Onondaga Cemetery, South Onondaga,
Onondaga County, N.Y.

Musician Charles A. Dean, Co. D

Corinth Rural Cemetery, Corinth,
Saratoga County, N.Y.

Sergeant Cornelius M. Sitser, Co. K

Hillside Cemetery, Middletown,
Orange County, N.Y.

Private Charles H. Beckstein, Co. H

Evergreen Cemetery, Wynantskill, (North Greenbush),
Rensselaer County, N.Y.

Corporal William W. Bontecou, Co. G

Spring Valley Cemetery, Spring Valley,
Fillmore County, Minn.

Private Azel R. Buckley, Co. K

Borden-Elk Creek Cemetery, Borden, (Woodhull),
Steuben County, N.Y.

Cheers,

- Steve Wiezbicki

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http://dmna.ny.gov/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/169thInf/169thInfMain.htm
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nyrensse/169ny2.htm