

**TRANSCRIPTION  
FROM  
THE MAIL  
HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND  
SEPTEMBER 1885  
"REVISITING THE SCENE OF THE CONFLICT"  
BY  
CAPTAIN ARTHUR S. FITCH  
Owned by  
Mrs. Bessie Fisher, Sharpsburg, Md.**

**REVISITING THE SCENE OF THE CONFLICT**

An interesting account of the recent visit of the 107th Regiment, N. Y. Vols. to Antietam battlefield appeared in the Sunday Tidings, of Elmira, New York from which the following extracts are taken:

The 19th annual reunion of the 107th Regiment, N. Y. Vols. was ordered to be held on the battle field of Antietam on the twenty third anniversary of the regiment's first engagement. The comrades assembled at the Erie depot in Elmira, Sept. 16th, 1885, and took the cars of the N.C.R.R, which had been provided with every care for their comfort by the officials of that railroad. The following members were present: Gen. A. S. Diven, Gen. N. M. Crane, Lieut. Cols. G. L. Smith, W. F. Fox and A. N. Sill, Major C. J. Fox, Adjutant Hull Fanton, Surgeon P. H. Flood, Captains Bachman and Orr., Lieutenants Frost, Collson, Weller, Cronkrite, Gleason, Bronson, Clawson, Goodrich and Fitch, G. M. Sergt. Bray D. Hall and the following non-commissioned officers and men: L. W. Babcock, W. A. Bagley, E. H. Riggs and T. R. Osborne, of Co. A; Jas. W. Williams, of Co. B; Thos. Horner, F. Felie and T. R. Osborne of Co. C.; S. R. Reniff, D. B. Vosburgh, E. N. Malette, John Lovell, M. S. Harrington and J. M. Francis of Co. D.; Benj. J. Tracy of Co. E.; T. G. Smith, Robert Short and R. Stevens of Co. F.; H. Stevens, S. D. LeGro, Jerry Hall and F. Pooley of Co. G.; Sylvester Dunham and J. C. Wood of Co. H.; H. S. Goff and D. H. Brownell of Co. K. With these were several comrades of sister regiments, among whom were Lieut. Hetfield, of the 86th N. Y. ; Surgeon Joseph R. Robinson, Lieut. T. A. Hall and M. Sherwood, of the 141st N. Y.; M. M. Conklin of the 151st N. Y.; N. W. Simons of the 1st Vet. Cav.; M. B. Andrus of the 157th N. Y.; George Westfall of the 108th N. Y.; M. V. B. Turk, 2nd Vet. Cav.; A. Shauger of the 86th N. Y.; H. T. Smith and R. B. Van Gorder of the 23rd N. Y.; Hon. Francis Hall, Dr. S. F. MacFarland, J. R. Dudley, Samual White, Theo. Sawyer, Esq., and several other citizens made up a party of something less than 100, all told.

A delightful ride of eleven hours brought the excursionists to Sharpsburg Station, Md. Here they were met by the mayor of the town, and a multitude of citizens and comrades of the local Grand Army post, and an impromptu reception followed, pleasantly finishing the day's experiences.

The morning of the 17th dawned warm and cloudless, like that other morning twenty three years ago. The comrades and visitors were early astrir proceeding through the town to the National Cemetery, where the party was cordially received by Capt. W. A. Donaldson, the officer in charge. The cemetery occupied the ground which was the exact centre of Lee's army during the battle. From the tower above the keepers' lodge

every part of the field can be seen. The South Mountains, through which our forces debouched into the valley of the Antietam, the hillside where McClellan established his signal station, the house where he made headquarters, the woods to the east of the clearing where Hooker began the day's fighting, the field where the contending armies swept alternately back and forward, the Dunker church, around which surged the fiercest waves of the conflict, to the right, the Burnside bridge, and at ones very feet, the town itself, with Lee's headquarters in plain view. A fringe of vapor marked the courses of the Antietam and the Potomac, showing the boundaries of the scene of conflict. The National cemetery lay spread out, beautiful with foliage and well kept lawns, with the red, white and blue of the nation's flag floating gracefully in the morning breeze. It was a grand and beautiful panorama of a most interesting field. After all had taken this view, the comrades separated, proceeding in little groups, some afoot, others in vehicles, to visit the field in detail.

The old Dunker church was the objective point of many. This reached, a lane was discovered running back toward the position the 107th occupied. Along this lane the comrades hurried to a point that the right wing advanced to on the morning of the battle. The situation was at once recognized. The writer together with comrade Frank Frost and others were riding leisurely along the lane, when the location began to take on a familiar look. Climbing out we hurried down the lane to where, as we remembered it, out companies lay. At this moment up came Gen. Diven, who had followed us in a carriage. He, too, had recognized the place, and impatient at the slow progress of the carriage, he had come hurrying up. He speedily discovered a stump just protruding from the ground, and standing thereon said, "Here is the identical spot where I stood when the regiment advanced to this place." There could be no doubt about it.

It was while lying here that the regiment encountered a perfect storm of missiles from the enemy's guns, and the beautiful blue banner it carried was torn to pieces by a bursting shell. The exact spot where the color guard stood at that time was the subject of considerable good natured dispute and chaffing between Col. Fox, Lieut. Bronson, Sergt. Pooley, Gen. Diven and others, but they all agreed that the colors "were there" anyway, and thus ended the discussion. The next thing done was to locate the position where the regiment lay when ordered to support the batteries in the cleared field in front of the woods. The secretary remembered a big stone pile in front of company B, the right company, and thought he discovered the same as the party left the lane. He was informed by the keen-eyed "Frosty" that the object he took for a stone pile was a straw stack, and the laugh was on the secretary. However, a closer investigation disclosed the stone pile, with the clump of trees and bushes around it, and once there the position of the right of the regiment was clearly fixed.

Capt. Orr and Theo. Smith, of Company F., came up and at once coincided with the decision made, and the latter, circling about once or twice like a hound searching for a lost trail, at last fixed upon the spot near to which he flattened the ground as our batteries hurled shot and shell just above our heads during the four long hours the regiment occupied this trying position. Here it was that Theodore was struck by a shell and lost his leg. A comrade found a stump that he declared Capt. Miles, of Co. F., crept up to that he might obtain a better view of the enemy's position, and as the boys gathered about it, one of them discovered a bullet half imbedded in the wood. It was quickly dug out and preserved as a memento of the field. Comrade Frost picked up a rusty and battered canteen which had lain undisturbed since the battle. Pieces of bone and parts of a skull were also picked up. The whole view from this point was familiar. In front, the woods about the Dunker church, where the enemy were posted, behind, the woods from which the regiment emerged at the beginning of the battle, and to which they retired when relieved.

From this field the comrades passed to the rear, to the stone house where the spring was, and where many wounded were carried. The house and spring are still there and the house but little changed. Theo. Smith visited the house where his leg was amputated and found the very room wherein he lay for many days, the same family still occupying the house

A portion of the party now went back a mile to the Line farm, where the regiment bivouacked the night of the 16th, from thence advancing toward the field. The course of the advance on the morning of the 17th was easily traced. At the point where the regiment formed line of battle, just previous to going forward, a rest was taken. Here it was that Gen. Mansfield rode out and spoke these words: "Ah! boys, we shall do a fine thing today. We have got them where we want them; they cannot escape with the skin of their teeth". He then rode forward and within ten minutes was shot and mortally wounded.

His body was placed in a blanket and carried from the field by our men, passing directly through our line as we stood waiting the order to go forward. This incident made a lasting impression upon the minds of all.

It is not my purpose to describe the events of that battle day. The story has been told many times. The reports of Gen. Gordon who commanded the brigade to which the 107th was attached, and of Capt. Cothran whose battery (M. 1st. N. Y. Art.) it supported, speak in highest praise of the manner in which the regiment acquitted itself. No greater praise can be spoken than these official reports contain.

Having traversed the field pretty completely, the comrades returned to the town and rested from their somewhat fatiguing tramp. A portion of them visited Bloody Lane, where it is said that human blood actually filled the ditches. Some visited the Burnside bridge and some strolled back to the cemetery and laid down upon the grass in the shade of the overhanging trees and talked over again the scenes of the battle day. In this way the day wore pleasantly away and at 9:15 p.m., all were safely gathered again within the cars ready for the start towards Gettysburg's eventful field.

After they had assembled in the cars, a business meeting of the association was held. Officers for the ensuing year were chosen and the following resolution was adopted with hearty unanimity:

RESOLVED, That thanks of this association are due and are hereby sincerely given to the comrades of Antietam Post, No. 14, G.A.R. of Sharpsburg, Md., and to the citizens of that place for their cordial welcome; to Editor C. W. Adams of Hagerstown, Md., and to Dr. C. F. Russell of Sharpsburg, Md., and late Captain C. S. A., for favors and courtesies extended; and to Superintendent S. S. Meade, passenger agent, E. S. Harrar and other officials of the Northern Central Railroad, and to the officers of the Cumberland Valley and Shenandoah Valley Railroad Companies, for their untiring efforts to make the excursion a pleasant one.

A. S. Diven, Chairman.

A. S. Fitch, Secretary.

A telegram of greeting was sent during the day to the 27th Indiana Vols., who were also attached to Gordon's brigade, and who were holding a reunion that same day at Gosport, Ind. The 18th of September was spent by the excursionists at Gettysburg, but space will not permit a recital of the incidents of that visit.

In connection with this account of their visit to the battlefield, Capt. Fitch indulges in the following touching reverie in regard to three nights, which will always be memorable to the survivors of the Regiment:

The First Night --- The night of September 6th, 1862. The beginning of the first march of the first campaign of the 107th Regiment. What survivor of the regiment can forget it?

The welcome marching orders --- the hurried preparations --- the filling of the haversacks and canteens, the rolling and slinging of blankets (knapsacks and tents were left behind), the falling in, the standing in line ready for the "forward" that came just as night fell --- Off at last, one thousand men --- boys we would call them now --- fresh from home, marching in columns of four, guns at a right shoulder, the long column winding out and away up hill and down dale, with a steady tramp, tramp, tramp, the cadence broken only by "the laugh, the shout, the witticism arch." The night air grows cool and crisp --- the pace quickens --- the moon shines down upon the dark mass of men, horses, wagons and artillery. It glistens upon the bayonets and gun-barrels, and the line becomes a rippling, tossing stream of shimmering steel. Ah! who can forget it? As they cross the Potomac along the old aqueduct bridge, someone begins to chant the "Battle Hymn of the Republic;" One thousand marching men catch up as it passes from company to company, until seemingly, every voice joins in the grand old chorus, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah." What inspiration it brings. "The Rebel foot is on thy soil. Maryland, my Maryland", but "We are coming, we are coming, 300,000 strong." Alas! Alas! that night's march was the only march the 107th Regiment made with full ranks. Never again was there such an unbroken touch of elbows among its members, and so the memory of that first march will abide longest and best remembered among all of the surviving comrades.

The Second Night --- September 16th, 1862. Night again, dark, chilly and foreboding. There in the clover field wet with dew, facing the grim woods, wherein lie the enemy, the men are bivouacking the "night before battle." No shouts or songs now. The stillness of the night is broken by the hostile picket shots close in front. What are the thoughts that fill the minds of the men as they lie there, anxiously awaiting the morning? Who can describe them?

The Third Night --- September 16th, 1885. A handful of the veteran survivors are again approaching that historic field. The scene is changed, the youthful faces, the elastic step, the flush of youth no longer appear. They are men, bearded and thoughtful, gray-haired and grizzly, many of them. They come in luxurious cars, through the thriving and picturesque valleys of the Susquehanna and the Cumberland, where, as throughout the land, blessed peace reigns unchallenged.

As night falls, the train arrives at the station of Sharpsburg. A throng of friendly faces meet them. Brightly glowing camp fires illuminate the night. There are friendly cheers and cordial words of welcome. They disembark and stand once more on the border of their first battle field. Conflicting emotions of joy and sadness fill their minds. A comrade asks to have his face turned in the direction of the battle field, a resident complies with his request, and he stands in company with others silently gazing into the gloom that envelops the field. It is no time for words; a troop of thoughts come unbidden to the mind, and they are all of the far-distant past. The formal welcome ended, the comrades gather about the camp fires and recite again the experiences of that other night, twenty-three years ago. The murmur of their voices is heard far into the night. No "tatoo" or "taps" bid them be quiet. Far down the road leading to the town is heard the drum beats of the welcoming comrades, and at intervals comes echoing back the strains of the old army songs, high above all the rest, comrade Bruce Van Gorder's "Tidings of Comfort and Joy." at two o'clock a.m. quiet reigns, and the dreams are all of peace, and no dread of the morrow disturbs them.

S. Calvin Mumma

---

The above information was obtained from the official records of "**The Battle of Antietam**" located at the Visitor Center at the Battle of Antietam in Sharpsburg, Maryland.

[Back to Home Page](#)

---

Email questions or comments to [Webmaster](#)

Copyright © 1999, EGH Enterprises, Last Updated Wednesday, August 20, 2003 12:48:17 PM