



the Maryland Line

October 2012

Volume 32, Issue 2

Your Brother in Arms A Union Soldier's Odyssey

By Robert C. Plumb

(Adapted from the Spring/Summer 2011, University of Missouri Press)

George P. McClelland, a member of the 155th Pennsylvania Infantry in the Civil War, witnessed some of the war's most pivotal battles during his two and a half years of Union service. Death and destruction surrounded this young soldier, who endured the challenges of front line combat in the conflict Lincoln called "the fiery trial through which we pass." Throughout his time at war, McClelland wrote to his family, keeping them abreast of his whereabouts and aware of the harrowing experiences he endured in battle. Never before published, McClelland's letters offer fresh insights into camp life, battlefield conditions, perceptions of key leaders, and the mindset of a young man who faced the prospect of death nearly every day of his service. Through this presentation, the detailed experiences of one soldier – examined amidst the larger account of the war in the eastern theater – offer a fresh, personal perspective on one of our nation's most brutal conflicts.

We will follow McClelland through his Civil War odyssey, from his enlistment in Pittsburgh in the summer of 1862 and his journey to Washington and march to

Antietam, followed by his encounters in a succession of critical battles: Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Spotsylvania Court House, the North Anna River, Petersburg, and Five Forks, Virginia, where he was gravely injured. McClelland's words, written from the battlefield and the infirmary, convey his connection to his siblings and his longing for home. But even more so, they reflect the social, cultural, and political currents of the war he was fighting. With extensive detail, I will expound on McClelland's words by placing the events described in context and illuminating the collective forces at play in each account, adding a historical outlook to the raw voice of a young soldier.

Beating the odds of Civil War treatment, McClelland recovered from his injury at Five Forks and was discharged as a brevet-major in 1865 – a rank bestowed on leaders who show bravery in the face of enemy fire. He was a common soldier who performed uncommon service, and the forty-two documents he and his family left behind now give readers the opportunity to know the war from his perspective.

Bob Plumb was born and raised in upstate New York where he received his education from grade school to graduate school. He holds a BA in history from the State University of New York at Buffalo and an MA degree in Journalism from the Newhouse School at Syracuse University. He served in the Navy as an officer in the Atlantic Fleet, and later commanded a patrol boat in Vietnam. Following military service, he held marketing executive positions in GE and Fannie Mae working in both U.S. and international markets.

In 2005, he began work on transcribing 42 letters that led to the writing of Your Brother in Arms: A Union Soldier's Odyssey. The letters (41 from Union soldier George McClelland and one from his sister Annie) were given to him by a relative of his wife. Preston Ewing, a member and longtime president of the Civil War Roundtable in New York City, purchased the letters in the 1960's from a Civil War ephemera dealer. After Preston's death in the early 1990's, his widow, Peggy, gave the letters to Bob.

Bob's ancestors were early residents of Connecticut, New York and Vermont. There is no record of any of his ancestors serving in the Civil War.

Plumb is a member of the Civil War Trust, the Montgomery County (Maryland) Civil War Round Table, the Montgomery County Historical Society (where he is a member of Society's Speakers Bureau), and the Society of Civil War Historians. He and his wife, Louise, live in Potomac, Maryland.

Soldiers' Letters

http://americancivilwar.com/kids_zone/soldiers_letters_civil_war.html



*Dear Mother
and Father,*

*I am still in the
land of the
living...*



(Collection of Gettysburg NMP)

Envelopes, also known as "covers", with elaborate printed patriotic scenes or political statements were some of the most popular to use. Some enterprising businessmen manufactured envelopes for specific regiments serving in the army, such as this one to the 99th Pennsylvania Infantry, which lists all of the battles in which the regiment had participated during its service to 1864.

Almost every soldier in service made an effort to write letters home to describe their experiences, give their opinions on local matters and politics, and to assure their families not to worry. But not all soldiers could write very well or spell words properly. Rural education in America was not like it is today and most Civil War soldiers only had an education up to the fourth grade level. Many young men from rural areas had never attended school and could neither read nor write so they asked comrades to write letters for them. Poor education led to many words being misspelled or sentences left incomplete. Soldiers sometimes spelled words as they heard them- "raison" for reason, "horspittle" for hospital, "rafel" for rifle. Here is a portion of a letter written by Francis Russell, a Union soldier from the 140th Pennsylvania Infantry, with some of these misspellings:

*Washington City, D. C.
Sunday, Dec. 14th 1862*

Dear Mother and family.

I will take the pensil to let you know we are all well. At present hoping this will find you in the same. we let White Hall Station on Thursday about 4 Clock in the afternoon and got into Washington about 4 oclock in the morning on Friday whitch maid about 12 hours on the way, we then stay ther untill yesterday when we had orders to march about 6.5 miles and when I heard this I went to the head doctor ast him what I would do for I know that I could not carry my knapsack, so he told me that I would have to stay hear and so all them that could not stand the march was sent to the hospittle. Ther was

Soldiers wrote many letters during the war and we are lucky that so many of them have been preserved. When a historian reads those letters, he can get an idea of what the soldiers were like and what they thought of while they were away from home. Letter writing was the main form of communication with loved ones at home and letter writing helped to relieve **boredom**. Almost all soldiers begged for their parents, friends, wives and sweethearts to write back right away as there were few pleasures greater than receiving mail from home. Civil War soldiers missed many of the special things they took for granted while at home, especially home cooked food. Families packed boxes with a soldier's favorite food like pies and cakes that he could not get while in the army and it was a special day when such a package from home arrived in camp.

To write their letters home, soldiers purchased paper, envelopes, ink and pens from sutlers. Stationary makers printed many styles of patriotic stationary and envelopes with engravings of camp scenes or political humor and these were quite popular among soldiers.

The Union Army had a post office near forts and camps, and a mail service that followed the armies for the men could purchase stamps and mail their letters. Later in the war, organizations such as the U.S. Christian Commission and U.S. Sanitary Commission gave out paper and envelopes to Union soldiers free of charge. In 1864, the U.S. Mail Service announced that Union soldiers could send their letters home for free as long as they wrote "**Soldier's Letter**" on the outside of the envelope. Confederate soldiers never had such a luxury. Shortages of paper, stamps, and even writing utensils in the South became acute as the war progressed and it was often left up to the soldiers to find writing paper, including stationary taken from Union prisoners.

10 out of our Company and that was myself and a nother young man, we did not hear the name of the place that they wer going to, but both James and Bob said that they would wright as soon as they wer sitted that is they would wright home to you, ther is abut 50 sick and wounded in the department that I am in, I think that I will not be in hear very long, for I will try and get eather home or get to my Regiment for I don't like this very well, it is not because I am not treated well for it is six times better than I expected but I cannot be contented a way from my companny, my arm is about the same, I wright this mearley to let you know something about myselve for I cannot say anything about the others now but I will have to stope so no more at present but reman your son and Brother.

Francis M. Russell

Address your letter to Stanton Hosepittle, Washington City. C.C.

I wish you would send me some postige stamps as we have not got paid yet, my money has run ashore and I want to wright some and so on.

Yours, F. M. R.

(Gregory A. Coco Collection, Gettysburg National Military Park)

Sometimes soldiers described battles, but more often they wrote about their **daily existence** and desire to be at home. Confederate soldier John Sweet of the 9th Tennessee Infantry wrote home to his parents in November 1863 from siege lines overlooking Union troops at Chattanooga, Tennessee:

Famous 'Lost Orders' on Display at Monocacy National Battlefield

The famous "Lost Orders" will be on display at the Monocacy National Battlefield Visitors Center from Wednesday, August 1, to Wednesday, October 31, as part of commemorations for the 150th Anniversary of the Maryland Campaign.

Civil War Book Group

For those of you interested in reading about the Civil War, the Civil War Book Group meets the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. The location is:

Barnes & Noble Bookseller
Montrose Crossing
12089 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

*We have just returned from a trip into East Tenn where we got big amounts of everything to eat and everything we eat is so good to me as I had been starved out so long on some bread & beef, all that we got while we were here besieging Chattanooga. up there we got sweet and Irish potatoes, chickens, molassas, wheat bread and everything that was good for a poor soldier. Oh, how I do wish that I could be at home now, for it is getting late in the evening and I have had nothing to eat since breakfast and no telling when we will get rations for our rations are out, since we left our ration wagons behind in coming here to this place, for I know you have all had a good & plentiful dinner. I know you will say poor John, but this is only a chapter in military service which we often read, but I am content and will be more so when we get rations. The independence of the bounty is what I want and I am I am willing to suffer for something to eat many, many days if it will only send me to my dear parents, a full and independent boy. The enemy still holds their position in Chattanooga and our lines drawn up close around the place. We are now on the top of Lookout Mountain overlooking the town. We have a fine view of our entire line and also of theirs. It is said that we can see into five different states from our position. It is very cold up here, as cold as it is where you are in mid-winter. You must excuse this exceedingly bad letter as I have written in great haste. My love to you and all. Write when you can and a long letter as I am very *anxious to hear from you.**

John H. Sweet

(Gregory A. Coco Collection, Gettysburg National Military Park)

This is the same shopping center as the Sports Authority, Giant, and Hudson Trail Outfitters. For more information, contact Bob Jones at 301-299-7053.

Speakers for 2012-2013 Season

October – Ron Anzalone: Balloons in the Civil War
November – Dr. Charles Neimeyer: The USMC from Bull Run thru 1862
December – George Wunderlich: Sex in the Civil War
January – Scott Patchan: 2nd Manassas
February – Don Hakenson: John Singleton Mosby
March – Peter Cozzens: Cahaba Prison
April – Ed Bearrs: Ball's Bluff
May – Steve Stanley: Mapping Civil War Battlefields.

Other News on the Home Front

Our New Website!

Well folks it has finally happened!!! We now have our very own website. You heard me right – I said website! I want to thank our fearless president, Paul

Weller, for making this possible. Our website can be found at www.mccivilwar.org. We are still have some work left to do, so please be patient.

Montgomery County Historical Society

At the Beall-Dawson House

111 W. Montgomery Ave

Rockville, MD 20850

Through January 6, 2013

“While We Were At Breakfast Three Rebels Rode Up”

Montgomery County Women During the Civil War

Using diaries, memories, letters, photographs and artifacts, this exhibit tells the story of the American Civil War as experienced by women in Montgomery County. Learn about the many different roles played by local women, white and black, Union and Confederate, and the ways in which they coped with the conflict happening around them.



The exhibit title comes from an entry in the diary of Carrie Miller (pictured left). On July 11, 1864, Miss Miller was staying at the Sandy Spring home of her brother Francis; the neighborhood was disturbed by the arrival of Confederate troops on their way to an (ultimately unsuccessful) invasion of Washington, DC.

Photo and diary donated by Roger Brooke Farquhar, Jr.

Hours and tours

Open Wednesday – Sunday, 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm for self-guided tours

Guided tours available Friday-Sunday at 12:15, 1:15, 2:15, and 3:15.

Closed major holidays.

Fees

Adults: \$5.00

Students and seniors: \$3.00

Children under 6: Free

Members: Free

Access

The main part of the Beall-Dawson House first floor is reached by several steps. Non-motorized wheelchairs can be conveyed into one of the first floor rooms, and the museum shop. The second floor is not handicapped accessible, but notebooks explaining the second floor tour and special exhibits are available to anyone who cannot make it up the stairs. The Stonestreet Museum of 19th Century Medicine has three steps leading up to the door; most of the one-room museum is visible from the entrance, however. Handicapped accessible restrooms are available in the research library.



October Civil War Traveler Events

For further events you can go to www.civilwartraveler.com

5-6 PA Symposium, “Religion and the Civil War,” sponsored by the Seminary Ridge Historic Preservation Foundation. www.seminaryridge.org

5-7 PA Seminar, “**Image of War: Antietam**,” annual Center for Civil War Photography conference. Includes battlefield tours and talks. Based in Shepherdstown, WV. Registration: www.imageofwar.org

5-7 MD “Photography at Antietam,” special ranger programs at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti

5-7 MD Conference, “Civil War Medicine, Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Antietam,” based in Hagerstown. Lectures and bus tour. www.civilwarmed.org

5-7 VA Conference, “The Chancellorsville Campaign,” annual event sponsored by the Mosby Heritage Area with talks, tours and more. Based in Middleburg. Full conference: \$425. www.mosbyheritagearea.org

6¹⁵⁰ VA Special program, “Robert E. Lee and the Manumission of the Enslaved at Arlington House,” at the site in Arlington National Cemetery. Living history, special tours and talks. 6-10 pm. Free. Reservations required: www.nps.gov/arho or 703-235-1530.

6 WV Living History, “Mr. Lincoln Returns to Harpers Ferry,” program at 1 and 3 pm at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/hafe

6-7 PA Living history at Pitzer Woods and the Pennsylvania Memorial in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett

7 VA Living history, infantry and artillery demonstrations at the Manassas National Battlefield Park. 10 am – 2 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/mana

11 MD Lecture, “Rare Images of Antietam and the Photographers Who Took Them,” at the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, 401 Museum Dr in City Park, Hagerstown 7 pm. \$5. www.wcmfa.org

11 MD Lecture, “JEB Stuart’s Second Ride Around McClellan,” at the Carroll Community College in Westminster. 6:30 – 8:30 pm. \$25. Details, registration: 410-386-8100.

13 MD Lecture, “Ohio at Antietam,” with special exhibit at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. 2 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti

13 MD Lecture, “Archeology of Lafayette Square’s Union Encampment and Military Hospital,” at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick. 2 pm. Free with museum admission. www.civilwarmed.org or 301-695-1864

13 VA Living history, “Scout Along the Turnpike,” first-person interpretation at Aldie Mill, Mount Zion Church and the Rector House along Route 50. Noon – 5 pm. www.mosbyheritagearea.org

13 VA Walking tours, in-depth anniversary tours of the 1863 Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park parking lot, Iron Brigade Road, in Bristow (near Manassas). 11 am – 3 pm, tours leave on the hour. Free, donations welcome. 703-366-3049

13-14¹⁵⁰ MD “Aftermath of the Battle,” special ranger and living history programs focusing on the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti

13-14 PA Living history at the Pennsylvania Memorial and Little Round Top in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett

14-18 DC/VA Ken Burns Civil War Event, includes exclusive guided visits to DC and area museums and sites including Arlington National Cemetery, the Manassas National Battlefield, Ford’s Theatre and many more with a keynote and visit with filmmaker Ken

Burns. From \$3,990 including hotel, some meals. Organized by Burns and Tauck Tours. www.tauck.com or 800-468-2825

19-20 VA Talk/tour, “Roads to Antietam,” with Dennis Frye. Talk Friday 6:30 pm at the Hill School in Middleburg. Tour departs Saturday morning from Leesburg. Talk, tour: \$110. www.mosbyheritagearea.org

20 DC/PA/VA Bus tour, “Lee’s Retreat from Gettysburg and the Battle of Falling Waters,” all-day tour leaves from 550 C St, SW in Washington DC at 7 am. \$166. A Smithsonian Associates program. www.smithsonianassociates.org (click Civil War).

20 PA “An Evening with the Painting,” a special look at the famous Cyclorama at the Gettysburg National Military Park. 6 pm. \$20. www.gettysburgfoundation.org

20 VA Living history, “Spirits, Suffering, and Society: Death in Civil War Alexandria,” at the Lee-Fendall House Museum, 614 Oronoco St, Alexandria. 6 – 9 pm. \$15. Reservations: www.leafendallhouse.org/?page_id=75

20 VA Living history, “Weston: Civil War Memories,” at Weston Farmstead, 19th-century farm near Warrenton. Civil War-era character impressions, exhibits and more. 10 am – 4 pm. \$5/adult. www.historicweston.org

20 VA Boat tour, “Potomac River Blockade,” includes surviving batteries that enforced the Confederate blockade (September 1861 – March 1862). 10 am – 1 pm. \$30 includes lunch. Reservations: 703-792-4754.

20 VA Bus tour, “In the Footsteps of the Gray Ghost, Col. John S. Mosby,” leaves from the Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park parking lot, Iron Brigade Road, in Bristow (near Manassas). 8 am – 5 pm. \$85 (includes lunch). Reservations: 703-366-3049.

20-21 PA Living history at Pitzer Woods in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett

20-21 VA Reenactment, “Battle of Cedar Creek” on the historic battlefield near Middletown. Annual event with living history demonstrations and battles each afternoon. Fee charged. www.cedarcreekbattlefield.org

23-24 VA Seminar, “Exploring Life During the Civil War,” at the Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Center, 600 4-H Center Drive, Front Royal. Topics include music and faith, the role of women, and an evening with General Lee. \$150-165 depending on registration date. More info, registration: www.nova4h.com/civil-war-academy

27 MD Walking tour, “Dunker Church,” at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. 2:30 pm. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti

27 PA Seminar, “‘Into My Pen is Heavy’: The Press Reports the Battle of Gettysburg,” lecture and field program in Gettysburg. Details, reservations: www.gettysburgfoundation.org

27 VA Living history tour, “Spirits of New Market,” spooky tours of the New Market Battlefield State Park. 7 – 9 pm. Free with park admission. 866-515-1864.

27-28 MD Lecture, “The Letterman Plan,” a revolution in wartime medical care at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. 11 am each day. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti

27-28 MD Living history, “Artillery at Antietam,” camps and demonstrations at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg. Free with park admission. www.nps.gov/anti

27-28 PA Living history at Pitzer Woods and the Pennsylvania Memorial in the Gettysburg National Military Park. Free. www.nps.gov/gett

28 VA Living history and talk, “Soldiers, Disease and medicine at Fairfax Court House,” at the Historic Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center. 2 pm. Free. 703-591-0506

Montgomery County Civil War Round Table
10510 Moxley Road
Damascus, MD 20872

Comments, Questions or Suggestions

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions
Contact Vivian Eicke at 301-681-6497

Next Month's Meeting

Speaker: Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Topic: The USMC from Bull Run thru 1862
Date: November 8, 2012

The Maryland Line

Vivian Eicke, Editor
10510 Moxley Road
Damascus, MD 20872

Layout and Production

Vivian Eicke

Substitute Meals

If you have dietary restrictions, and require something
other than what is on the menu, please let Bob know
when you make your reservations.

Second Regular Meeting of 2012 - 2013 Season

Date: October 11, 2012

Place: Hilton Hotel

Time: 7:00 p.m. – Dinner
8:00 p.m. – Speaker

Speaker: Robert C. Plumb

Topic: Your Brothers in Arms: A Union Soldier's
Odyssey

Dinner: \$25.00

Speaker only: \$5.00

Reservations: Bob Clark
301-253-3485
Email: bobclark3@aol.com

Reservation Deadline: 9:00 p.m., Monday, Oct 8th .
Please remember that if you have made a dinner
reservation and are a no show, then the Round Table
has to pick up the tab. So help us keep costs to a
minimum by honoring your reservation. Thank you.



Montgomery County Civil War Round Table
10510 Moxley Road
Damascus, MD 20872

Civil War Symposium

Saturday, October 27, 2012

"Antietam, the Bloodiest Single Day in American History"

Location: Carroll Community College
1601 Washington Road
Westminster, MD 21157

Time: 8:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Cost: \$45 for seniors

Cost: \$50 for non-Carroll Co.
residents. Cost includes
breakfast.



There will be a photography exhibit, a display of small arms, lectures, a panel discussion and a demonstration of fire-arms (so bring your ear-plugs).

For more information: Call 410-386-8100 or go to carrollcc.edu.