

Old Timer's Civil War Notes

By C. A. WINCHELL, Shokan, N. Y.

Few regiments bore a more conspicuous part in the Civil War, and very few suffered heavier losses than the 120th New York Volunteers, whose original roster of some 900 men was principally composed of Ulster County men supplemented by three companies recruited in Greene County. That such a splendid record of this grand old infantry regiment's personnel and valorous deeds has been preserved for posterity, is due to the time and effort expended by a few interested men who set down, at one time or another, the findings of memory and research pertinent to the subject. The History of the Regiment, written by the Rev. Cornelius Van Santvoord, D.D., of Kingston, is as inspiring a tale of self-sacrifice as can be found anywhere among histories of the units which fought for the preservation of the Union.

General George H. Sharpe, Kingston resident who organized the 120th and was its first commander, of course supplied a large part of Dr. Van Santvoord's material, and other veterans who furnished much valuable information included: Col. C. D. Westbrook, MacDonald Van Wagoner, Egbert Lewis, Maj. James H. Everett, Wilbur L. Hale and Edward B. Dumond. Veteran Lewis had kept a full and complete diary through nearly all the time the regiment was in active service. This last was indeed a remarkable feat, considering the large number of battles, engagements and skirmishes in which these 900 original members, and their subsequent more than 600 replacements due to casualties, were participants.

Comrade Dumond during the 1880's wrote a number of interesting stories to the Freeman in which he depicted the Yankee soldier's activities in camp, on the march and in the thick of furious fighting, and it is from such intimate glimpses of the war scene that we of another century are able to glean numerous details of the great conflict which today would probably come under the head of "human interest stories." Your Old Timer some years ago was given a yellowed copy of The Freeman, circa 1886, and this paper containing sidelights on our Ulster County boys' movements immediately following Gettysburg, comes in mighty handy in compiling a Centennial series on our part in the war effort. The 120th had suffered heart-rending losses during the hectic Gettysburg, Three Days, and now the regiment, or what was left of it, was on its way back to Virginia. Veteran Dumond's 'travelogue' takes up more than a column of the old hand-set, close spaced small type of 75 years ago; to quote it in full would require, say, three of today's columns, so I will attempt only part of it, skipping a little here and there but making like he's quoting the

old soldier pretty much verbatim. After the Battle of Gettysburg, the Confederate Army recrossed the Potomac and were soon followed by the Union forces. We crossed on a pontoon bridge at Harper's Ferry, passed near the engine house made famous by John Brown, and halted on the heights south of the river. We rested a while and then marched south, keeping to the east of the Blue Ridge. General Lee was hard pressed. It was necessary to keep the gaps in the mountains well guarded to keep him from breaking through. At Manassas Gap such an attempt was expected and our brigade of six regiments was sent to prevent it. Our column marched up the road, through a narrow defile until we reached an open section well up the mountain. At this point five regiments formed in line of battle behind a stone wall on one side of the road.

Our regiment was sent south, across the fields, deployed as a line of skirmishers, and advanced a mile or two in the direction from which the enemy was expected. As we passed the other regiments, to take up what was supposed to be the most dangerous position, many taunting remarks were made to us by the Veterans—for the first year or so we were not allowed to forget that a lot of us were only recruits. No Rebels appeared so we established a picket line and made ourselves comfortable. By and by a flock of sheep came along and we began to fill our haversacks with muton. The officer of the day that night reported the enemy had appeared from another direction, and that the seasoned troops who had laughed at us, supposing we were to bear the brunt of the fighting, had themselves been sent against them. There was a sharp skirmish, resulting in several wounded, before they drove the Southerners down into the Shenandoah Valley.

The owner of the flock of sheep appeared at headquarters and complained of his loss. As he seemed really needy, a small purse was made up for him. Our march south was in many respects, pleasant. There was a subdued feeling in the regiment because of the recent loss of so many of our comrades, yet we did not feel or realize it as we would have done at home. The infantry always marched in the fields, leaving the roads for the artillery and the wagons. One day we came to a field almost entirely covered with blackberries, ripe and delicious, so of course the men fell out of ranks to pick and eat the berries. Some of the officers considered this a serious breach of discipline and tried to stop it, but without avail. Finally, a formal halt was ordered and we all enjoyed a full ration of blackberries. We reached the Rappahannock, again, about the first of August.

Yes, just about a month since that grueling march to Gettysburg and the inferno that was The Three Days. It was good that our boys had the pleasant interlude. And that berry diet was good for them, too; army doctors opined that countless lives were saved by the preventative and remedial properties of the humble blackberry, during the season when the Old Dominion States was one big patch of them.—C.A.W.

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SWEETIE PIE

By Nadine Seltzer



"Let's check their panic potential! When I count three, let's holler 'sharks!' real loud!"

Leader of Civil Service Opposes Personnel Plan

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—The Newburgh city manager's plan to use "thought control" on welfare workers will produce "no-think public employe robots," the president of the State Civil Service Employees Association charged today.

President Joseph F. Feily said thought control was "alien and smacks of an ideology with which the American people always have been at odds."

Feily did not identify the ideology but his statement implied he meant communism. Feily attacked the recent statements of City Manager Joseph McD. Mitchell that he was introducing into Newburgh's welfare department a trend away from degree-holding caseworkers and also would use thought control in orienting new personnel. Mitchell, who has drawn national attention to the city for its challenge to existing state and federal welfare programs, said he wanted welfare personnel to emphasize the individual's duty to society, rather than society's duty to the individual. Newburgh has inaugurated a stringent, 13-point program of restrictions on welfare payments. The state is challenging 12 of the 13 points in court. As to the trend away from degree-holding caseworkers, Feily said that Newburgh's staff prob-

lems would not be resolved by lowering professional standards. Such a move, he said, would degrade rather than upgrade welfare workers.

Important part of Cleveland's Western Reserve University in 1876 was the sport of "beanbags."

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