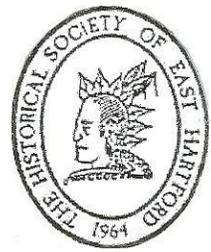


# *Historical Society of East Hartford*

*Newsletter, May 2013*



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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

May has finally arrived and the spring season is in full bloom. But allergies are at their height this time of year which I can personally attest to. On a serious note, the senseless and cowardly act of violence at the Boston Marathon was a wake-up call for us all. We extend our sincere condolences to the victims.

The Thursday, March 21st meeting at the Selden Brewer House (moved up from our usual Wednesday) featured one of the better programs the Historical Society ever presented. Our guest speaker was Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni, Connecticut's State Archaeologist, who gave an enlightening talk on Albert Afraid of Hawk, a Lakota Sioux Indian who died in Danbury while touring with Buffalo Bill Cody's "Wild West Show." The *Gazette* and *Reminder* newspapers had front page coverage about the program, but our attendance which I had thought would be at capacity, was disappointingly light.

At its last Executive Board meeting in April, the Historical Society voted to purchase two podcast sites at East Hartford's Center Cemetery. As mentioned in the March 2013 Newsletter article by Friends of Center Cemetery President Ray Tubbs, the 28 podcast sites will each have a short story on the interred narrated by different individuals. We are honored to sponsor the site for Private Alvin Flint Jr. and his family whose story was made famous in William Frassanito's book "Antietam." Private Flint was killed in action during that battle. We are also sponsoring the site for Captain Gideon Olmsted who achieved a long and colorful life during and for over sixty years after the American Revolution. This purchase is a gift from the bequest of Richard S. Olmsted who gave a very generous donation to the Historical Society.

Antiquarian / Historian Jeff Cummings had the Civil War letter written by Private Samuel A. Pratt of East Hartford framed in museum glass which can be viewed front and back. The letter, first mentioned in the November 2012 Newsletter, was a generous donation from Mr. and Mrs. John Simkewicz. Although very faded and difficult to read, we will include pictures and a translation of the letter's legible content in our next Newsletter in September.

Our museum buildings at Martin Park are also awakening from winter hibernation. The water has been turned back on in the Huguenot House and the first paranormal groups are ready and eager to start night time investigations this month. We plan to be open for Tours every Sunday between 1 & 4 in the afternoon during June, July and August. We will also be open on Saturday, June 8 which is Connecticut Open House Day so we can receive some added publicity from the State Department of Tourism. Spring cleaning first has to be done to remove the dust, cobwebs and clean the windows. A date for cleaning is tentatively set for Saturday May 25, so we need some volunteers to help. Most important, we need more guides who are willing to help us out Sunday afternoons during the summer months. Sign-up sheets will be made available at our May 15th meeting at the Selden Brewer House so we'll see you then.

*Craig Johnson, President*

## **"HINCK'S MESS – THE 'DOG ROBBER' "** **Wednesday Night, May 15, at the Selden Brewer House**

Contrary to popular thinking, the average soldier in the Civil War seldom went hungry. True, he did not always have fresh victuals but he didn't starve. Late in the war, the Confederates often did without many meals; the lack of adequate food a contribution to their eventual loss to the Union forces. The old saying that an army marches on its stomach is very true. Without food and water, an army soon disintegrates into nothing more than a lot of starving people with no energy or will to fight. No food: no army.

The concentration of Food Commissaries was in the North, so when the Civil War began the Union had a great advantage, as they already had an existing Commissary Department that was trained in how to acquire and transport food to soldiers in the field. But, both armies were forced at some point to live off the land.

At the outset of the war, the soldiers on both sides were relatively well-fed: with mandated daily rations that included fresh or salt beef, salt pork, flour, cornmeal, hardtack and a vegetable, usually beans. Coffee, salt, vinegar, and sugar were provided as well. Supplies became limited when armies were moving fast and supply trains could not reach them in the field.

As a rule, the daily rations were given to the soldiers uncooked. Of course, generals and other officers had the luxury of a cook, but the vast majority of Union soldiers gathered in small groups each evening to prepare their food. They called these groups "messes" and the soldiers took turns cooking the meals over an open campfire in a cast iron skillet, a kettle or on a spit, occasionally catching wild game or picking wild berries for variety.

Every Civil War mess was usually given a name by members of the mess. Hincks' Mess is named after an officer of the 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, William B. Hincks. Regimental Sergeant Major Hincks was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his valor at Gettysburg.

Our guest speaker at the May 15, 2013 membership meeting of the Historical Society of East Hartford is Bill Mellow, an honors graduate of the Connecticut Culinary Institute (currently Lincoln Culinary Institute). Bill cooks for Hincks' Mess, Co. F, 14th Connecticut Voluntary Infantry re-enactors and is the author of "Hincks Mess." His 'Dog Robber's' presentation covers the organization, responsibilities and resourcefulness (both legal and illegal) of the Union Army Cook and his experiences in the field cooking period dishes.



*Bill Mellow, an honors graduate of the Connecticut Culinary Institute (currently Lincoln Culinary Institute) cooks for Hincks' Mess, Co. F, 14th CVI and is the author of "Hincks Mess." "Dog Robber's" presentation covers the organization and responsibilities of the Union Army Cook and his experiences in the field cooking period dishes.*

Our meetings have relocated temporarily to the Selden Brewer House at 167 Main Street while the library expansion is underway. Parking is in the front lot and on Naubuc Avenue. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. and is open to the public. Refreshments are served. For information: 860-568-5188 or [bdaraskevich@comcast.net](mailto:bdaraskevich@comcast.net).

*Bette Daraskevich, Vice President/Program Chair*

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## CIVIL WAR LETTER OF JOHN F ALLEN OF EAST HARTFORD



Envelope of John Allen letter, MS87349, printed with permission of THE CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

On December 14, 1862 the 10th CVI was part of Gen Foster's raid to destroy the railroad bridge in Goldsborough, NC of the Wilmington & Weldon RR (important Wilmington, NC into VA supply route). During this raid Confederate Gen Evans delayed Gen Foster at Kinston. Gen Foster would continue on to Goldsborough and burn the bridge on December 17.

In September 1861 30 year old farm laborer John F Allen of East Hartford joined the 10<sup>th</sup> CVI. He fought at Kinston and in this letter (Jan 1863) he tells of the fight to his friend, Edwin Forbes. He seems proud to mention Gen Foster's praise. Pvt Allen would stay with the 10<sup>th</sup> CVI as it moved to Ft Wagner and Morris Island. He would become ill and die on October 3, 1863. Today he is remembered on East Hartford's Civil War Monument in Center Cemetery.

CIVIL WAR LETTER OF JOHN F ALLEN OF EAST HARTFORD (cont.)

you wanted to know if  
it would be safe to send a  
box it will send it you please  
and it will get it

Newburn Jan 15 1863

my  
Dear friend i now take my pen  
in hand to write you a few lines  
to let you know that i am well  
and i hope these few lines will  
find you the same. i received  
your kind letter dated Oct 31  
and i was glad to here from  
you but i was sorry to here  
the Death of Norman poor  
boy i hope he has gone to a  
better world. when he last  
red in space. i want you  
to write and let me know

Pg 4 (l), Pg 1 (r) above, Pg 2 (l), Pg 3 (r) below - John Allen letter, MS87349, printed with permission of THE CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT.

if you get that Order Brown  
in money for me if you did  
write and let me know in  
your nex. i want you to send  
me that picture of that young  
lady if you please. i will tell  
you what a hard Battle we  
had in Kington after we  
march through mud and water  
up to our necks. but we did  
not that. for you know  
what a hard life a Soldier life  
is. but when we got there  
we found them in a large  
force after fighting them for  
four days we drove them  
killing lots of them and  
taking some prisoners. we  
lost from our company  
4 privates and one Sergeant

and our Captain they was  
killed in the Battle. our  
lost in our Regiment was  
100.6 killed and wounded. i  
after the Battle was over  
our Regiment was far in  
line. when General Foster  
Rode up and sed boys you  
have won three Battle for  
me. and if god will open  
your lines we will mop  
out North Carolina in a  
few days. i cant think of  
much more to write this  
time so good by  
yours friend  
John Allen.

## CIVIL WAR SNAPSHOT, OCT 1862 - FEB 1863<sup>1</sup>

- Oct 1, 1862 Lincoln spends 3 days with Gen McClellan and the AOP at Antietam; notices army appears rested; urges McClellan to pursue Lee and the ANV
- Oct 1, 1862 Gen-in-Chief Halleck urges McClellan to pursue and fight Lee before the fall weather makes the VA rivers un-fordable, its roads muddy, and rapid movement impossible<sup>2</sup>
- Oct 3-4, 1862 Corinth, MS (Union victory): 22,000 men under Confed Gens Price & Van Dorn attack 23,000 men under Union Gen Rosecrans; fail to take Corinth as base of operations into TN
- Oct 6, 1862 Gen-in-Chief Halleck “peremptorily” orders McClellan to cross the Potomac, fight Lee, and drive him south; McClellan does not act; his excuse, need for supplies
- Oct 7, 1862 Gen McClellan discontented with Emancipation Proclamation, but issues order reminding his discontented officers the military is subordinate to civil authority, oppose political errors at the polls
- Oct 8, 1862 Heartland Campaign ends: Union Gen Buell forces Confed Gen Bragg to retreat from Perryville, KY to TN; Bragg will not return to KY; KY will remain in the Union
- Oct 10-12, 1862 Again (see June 2) Confed Gen Jeb Stuart rides around McClellan’s AOP, captures information, horses, prisoners; Union Sec’y of Navy Welles writes in his diary “The Country groans”
- Oct 11, 1862 Confed government adds to list of jobs for draft exemptions; includes owners & managers of 20 or more slaves; causes anger among poorer whites
- Oct 11, 1862 Confed commerce raider *Alabama*, Capt Semmes, sinks Union ship *Manchester* loaded with grain
- Oct 13, 1862 Lincoln writes Gen McClellan and again urges him to move; *Chicago Tribune* asks why the AOP does not fight? if McClellan’s the reason, can’t Lincoln see he is a traitor?
- Oct 14, 1862 4 northern states’ elections show Democratic Party gains: negotiate war’s end, reject emancipation; more gains in the fall; Republicans are uneasy: losing support for their goal of restoring the Union?
- Oct 20, 1862 NY photo exhibit of the Antietam battleground, “The Dead of Antietam” by Brady’s photographers Gardner & Gibson, brings “home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war”, *NY Times*<sup>3</sup>
- Oct 24, 1862 Baseball has become favorite pastime for soldiers; physicians recommend it; relieves monotony of camp life; eases stress of chores, drills; familiar to Union soldiers since 1850s; Confeds learning it
- Oct 26, 1862 McClellan starts to cross the Potomac River in pursuit of Lee; pace is slow; Lee will position the ANV between the AOP and Richmond
- Ongoing Lincoln is frustrated with McClellan’s leadership; Radical Republicans criticize McClellan’s actions; McClellan complains to Democratic supporters and newspaper editors about his civilian superiors
- Oct 29, 1862 Some members of 1<sup>st</sup> Kansas Volunteer Colored Infantry fight Confed guerillas at Island Mound, MO; first black regiment to fight Confed forces; regiment will be mustered in on Jan 13, 1863
- Nov 2, 1862 Vicksburg, MS: almost impregnable Confed fortification on the Mississippi River; with fortified Port Hudson, LA to its south limits Union access to the river, protects Confed’s Red River supply route
- Nov 2, 1862 Vicksburg, MS: Union Gen Grant starts Vicksburg Campaign; seeks to control the Mississippi River for northwest world commerce & to deny to the Confed the men and supplies from TX, AK, LA
- Nov 5, 1862 Northern fall elections end; Democratic gains; NY elects Gov Seymour who declares: let the South go if ending slavery is necessary to preserve the Union; McClellan continues to move slowly
- Nov 7, 1862 Lincoln removes Gen McClellan from command of the AOP; replaces him with Gen Burnside; Lincoln advises Burnside to act decisively
- Nov 10, 1862 *NY Times* complains<sup>4</sup>: delay has let Lee’s ANV evade AOP; fall rains have started, VA rivers are swelling, its roads are becoming difficult; inaction has prevented a decisive battle with Lee

<sup>1</sup> See The NY Times, The Opinion Pages, Opinionator, Disunion: The Civil War

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/10/29/opinion/20101029-civil-war.html>.

The Library of Congress Illustrated Timeline of the Civil War, Wagner, Margaret E., Little and Brown & Co., NY, NY; 2011.

The Civil War Chart, Contributing Writers Martha Graham, George Skoch; Consultant William C. Davis, Publications International Limited, Lincolnwood, IL., 60646.

Footnote, Shelby, The Civil War, a Narrative Fredericksburg to Meridian, Random House, NY, 1958.

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/kentucky.htm>, Bragg’s KY Campaign.

<sup>2</sup> Editorial “The Removal of Gen. McClellan”, The New York times, Nov 10, 1862.

<sup>3</sup> The Library of Congress Illustrated Timeline of the Civil War, Wagner, Margaret E., Little and Brown & Co., NY, NY; 2011, pg 98.

- Nov 10, 1862 Gen McClellan holds his final review of AOP; emotions run high; he has organized and trained the army well; soldiers weep, officers urge him to resist; McClellan quiets them; next day leaves for DC
- Nov 10, 1862 MN Sioux, not allowed to hunt & not given food, kill 100s of whites mid-Aug through Sept; Lincoln gets names of 300 to be hanged; asks lawyers to review all records; 38 leaders will be hanged Dec 26
- Nov 14, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: Burnside's plan: avoid Lee, move quickly to Fredericksburg, and then to the southern capital, Richmond; swift movements and secrecy are needed; Lincoln agrees to the plan
- Nov 15, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: Burnside starts AOP for the Rappahannock River across from Fredericksburg
- Nov 27, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: pontoon boats needed by the AOP for crossing the river arrive 10 days late; AOP has waited at the river; secrecy and speed are lost
- Early Dec, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: Lee assembles his army behind Fredericksburg; has 80,000 men, Burnside 137,000
- Dec 7, 1862 In the west at Prairie Grove, AK Union forces defeat Confed attempt to retake control of northwest AK and southwest MO
- Dec 11, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: under fire, Union engineers finish pontoon bridges; AOP starts crossing into Fredericksburg, drives out Mississippi marksmen; many from AOP pillage town against orders
- Dec 13, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: battle starts about 10am, ends about 4pm; at Prospect Hill, on Union left, Union Gen Meade penetrates a weak point in Lee's line; is driven back
- Dec 13, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: 10am – 5pm, Burnside sends 14 brigade size frontal assaults across open plain against Marye's Heights; enemy is well positioned; each assault fails; Union casualties are severe<sup>5</sup>
- Dec 13, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: Union disaster; north reels under 13,000 casualties; 66% of these in front of Marye's Heights; south suffers about 5,000 casualties; is jubilant with its victory
- Dec 14, 1862 Kinston, NC: Union Gen Foster on way to Goldsborough, NC to disrupt railroad bridge, part of vital Confed supply line north; defeats Gen Evans near Kinston; will destroy the bridge on Dec 17<sup>6</sup>
- Dec 15, 1862 Fredericksburg, VA: Union wounded lie untended 2 days on the battlefield; Burnside sends flag of truce, asks to be allowed to bury his dead and tend his wounded; AOP crosses the river to Falmouth
- Dec 19, 1862 Radical Republicans want change, among them: oust Seward: he opposes vigorous prosecution of the war, pursues emancipation slowly, unduly influences Lincoln; Lincoln calms them, keeps Seward
- Dec 21, 1862 Confed President Davis writes to Trans-Mississippi Commander Holmes: our enemy has 2 goals, control the Mississippi and capture Richmond; Holmes must hold Vicksburg, Port Hudson defenses
- Dec 29, 1862 Vicksburg, MS: Chickasaw Bluffs near Vicksburg: Union Gen Sherman's frontal assault on Chickasaw Bluffs (Chickasaw Bayou) is repulsed with heavy casualties
- Dec 31, 1862 USS Monitor, under tow near Cape Hatteras off NC goes down in a storm about 1am; 47 men are rescued; 4 officers and 12 men are lost; in 1975 site becomes nation's 1<sup>st</sup> marine sanctuary
- Dec 31, 1862 Lincoln desperate for military victory after Fredericksburg disaster & defeat at Chickasaw Bluffs; victory will build northern morale & support emancipation; Halleck orders Gen Rosecrans to act

<sup>4</sup> Editorial "The Removal of Gen. McClellan", The New York times, Nov 10, 1862.

<sup>5</sup> Hines, Blaikie, Civil War volunteer Sons of Connecticut, American Patriot Press, Thomaston, Maine, 2002, pg 211.

Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the Army and Navy of the United States During the War of the Rebellion, Compiled by Authority of the General Assembly Under Direction of the Adjutants-General, Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, Hartford, CT, 1889, pg 717.

On the night of Dec 13, after the day's 14, deadly, failed attacks on Marye's Heights, Gen Burnside planned a final frontal attack for 10am the next morning, Dec 14<sup>th</sup>. For the attack he chose 18 regiments from his old 9<sup>th</sup> Corps. One of these regiments was the 21<sup>st</sup> CT Volunteer Infantry, which held more men from East Hartford than any other. The men in these 18 regiments knew the chances of their being killed were good. As they waited, the men of the 21<sup>st</sup> and most likely the men from all these regiments spent their time writing "anxious and tender letters to the dear ones at home". Meanwhile, Burnside's commanders argued against another attack. The time for the attack, 10am on Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, "came and passed, and the council at headquarters was still in session; and after a long and painful period of suspense the news came that the attack had been abandoned". We can only imagine the relief these men must have felt.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to the letter from John Allen in this newsletter in which he writes of his experiences at Kinston. Private Allen was in the 10<sup>th</sup> CVI under Gen Foster in this battle. He mentions marching "through mud and water up to our knees". At Kinston Confederate Gen Evans had taken advantage of the terrain and built his earthworks wherever possible behind swampy ground or next to swamps, forcing men to wade through water or to find another way across. See <http://www.visitkinston.com/documents/battle-of-kinston-brochure.pdf>.

- Dec 31, 1862 – Jan 3, 1863 Battle of Stone’s River, TN (Murfreesborough): Union Gen Rosecrans wins hard-earned victory over Gen Bragg; takes rich farmland of Middle TN; 81,000 fight. 24,000 casualties
- Jan 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation will free slaves in states, in secession on Jan 1, 1863, with listed exceptions, when Union forces take control; see <http://www.nps.gov/ncro/anti/emancipation.html>
- Jan 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation will not free slaves in the Border States, these states have not seceded; slavery will finally end with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in Dec 1865
- Jan 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation is issued as military necessity: will allow blacks to serve in the military, perhaps 200,000 will fight for the Union; war aims will now include emancipation
- Jan 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation may have influenced England not to ally with the Confed; England had abolished slavery in the empire in 1833 and its accompanying 6 year apprenticeship system in 1838
- Jan 7, 1863 Northern sentiment is mixed on the Emancipation: “as unwarranted in military as in civil law”, Democratic Illinois Legislature; or “a great stride toward restoring the Union”, *NY Tribune*<sup>7</sup>
- Jan 9, 1863 In the west: Confed Fort Hindman in AK with its 5,000 men falls to Union Gen McClelland and navy squadron under Capt Porter; Grant is grateful as Confeds would cause trouble in his rear
- Jan 12, 1863 Confed President Davis’ annual message to Congress: commissioned Union officers, captured where the Emancipation is in effect, to be charged with “exciting servile insurrection”<sup>8</sup>, put to death<sup>9</sup>
- Jan 20, 1863 – Jan 24, 1863 “Mud March”: Gen Burnside seeks Lee at Fredericksburg; AOP to cross the Rappahannock; heavy rains start; AOP is mired in mud, can’t move; as AOP returns to camp Confeds ridicule it
- Jan 25, 1863 His men have no confidence in Burnside after Fredericksburg, “Mud March”; he offers to resign; Lincoln accepts
- Jan 26, 1863 Union Gen Hooker takes command of the AOP; Lincoln commends Hooker for his fine qualities, reprimands him for actively thwarting Burnside; tells him to act and bring the North successes
- Feb 2, 1863 Yazoo Pass Expedition: Union Lt Col of Engineers Wilson tries to open water route to Vicksburg out of range of city’s guns; thwarted by Confed defenses; ends in failure on March 20
- Feb 10, 1863 Confed nurse Kate Cumming, based in AL, writes in her diary of the surprisingly large number of women and children seeking new homes with relatives for economy and safety as husbands fight
- Feb 13, 1863 Act of Confed Congress giving President Davis power to suspend writ of habeas corpus expires; Congress debates extension, demands, is given list of those held on suspicion of disloyalty
- Feb 22, 1863 Near Falmouth Union guns fire 34 shots, Confeds fire 13 shots, one for each state each side claims; both sides honor Washington on his birthday
- Feb 25, 1863 Union’s National Currency Act becomes law: provides for greater investing in government bonds which is financing the war, lays basis for banking system that will last 50 years
- Feb 26, 1863 Cherokee National Council repeals secession, deprives of office in the Nation all those disloyal to the US Government, abolishes slavery

**CORRECTION:** In the March 2013 Newsletter of the HSEH the permission to print the December 6, 1862 discharge of Corporal William B. Bryant should have read “...MS Civil War Box II, Folder 12. It is printed with permission of THE CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT”.

## Historical Society of East Hartford

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**Membership** 860-528-0716 indiv \$15, 1 address \$20, student \$10

**Deadline Sept Newsletter – Aug 30, 2013**



## May Program

**Date:** Wednesday, May 15

**Time:** 7pm

**Where:** Brewer House

**Program:** Hinck’s Mess

<sup>7</sup> *The Library of Congress Illustrated Timeline of the Civil War*, Wagner, Margaret E., Little and Brown & Co., NY, NY; 2011, pg 108

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/1863/01/16/news/very-late-richmond-jeff-davis-annual-message-rebel-congress-war-for-independence.html?pagewanted=2>; Jan 13, 1863, NY Times, text of President Davis’ annual message to the Confederate Congress.

<sup>9</sup> *The Library of Congress Illustrated Timeline of the Civil War*, Wagner, Margaret E., Little and Brown & Co., NY, NY; 2011, pg 110.