


Franklin Historical Society Newsletter

December 2014

Detroit Advertiser and Tribune.

THE CRISIS REACHED - THE REBELS ATTACK FORT SUMTER

These were the headlines in the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune. The War of Aprils had begun! How would the Union and Confederate forces prepare for it? The following questions needed an answer.

How would the home front get news about battles, casualties and progress of the war? (newspapers)

How would a soldier's day be regulated? (bugler)

How would troops stay with their regiment during battle? (regimental flag)

How would a soldier know when to charge or when to retreat? (drummer)

How would units receive orders and Washington stay informed? (telegraph and signal corps)

How would opposing armies track troop movements? (hot air balloon)

How would family and friends learn about their soldiers well being? (letter)

AND, how would the war be documented? (artists sketches and photography)

Communication would be the key in the daily life of the soldier. Newspaper stories, bugle calls, placement of regimental flags, drum calls, the telegraph, the signal corps, hot air balloons, letters to and from home, sketches of battles and photography were all means of communication to keep everyone informed.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers took news of the war back to the rest of the country and brought news from home to the soldiers. Reporters traveled by horse and wagon to cover the war. Stories were sent back to their newspaper to be published.

The Detroit Advertiser and the Detroit Tribune operated separately for a time and then merged into one publication. When the war broke out, they scrambled to make the transition from their daily stories to those stories centered on the conflict. Nearly every article discussed the "rebellion." There were updates on battles, excerpts of speeches made by President Lincoln, information on Jefferson Davis and movements of the troops.

War became THE event to follow in the public's daily lives. Citizens would scan the list of casualties in Michigan regiments looking for a loved one's name. Was he wounded, sick, missing in action? The newspaper chronicled the event and the home front absorbed the information like a sponge.

BUGLERS

Typically, buglers did not carry a weapon. They transmitted orders and regulated the soldier's day. There were 26 bugle calls that conveyed time for meals, church, sick call, stable and water call, and taps. Plus, there were other orders for skirmishes.

REGIMENTAL FLAG

Carrying the regimental flag into battle was dangerous. The color guard would stand in the middle of the regiment showing the soldiers the movement of the battle. When the flag fell, the battle fell into chaos! The soldiers would lose their sense of formation and direction.

The flag bearer was often an easy target. Comrades would scramble for the flag to assure that the unit was informed where to fight.

DRUMMER

A drummer could always be seen near a high ranking officer because at any time he might be needed to alert the soldiers. In the noise and confusion of conflict, it was impossible to hear officer's orders. Orders were given to the drummers to communicate to the troops.

The drummer would beat and every drummer within hearing distance would do the same until all that could be heard was an overwhelming thunder. Not only did a soldier need to fire a weapon, but he also needed to understand the drummer's orders.

TELEGRAPH

The series of dots and dashes of the telegraph was more efficient than relaying information by horse and rider.

In 1861, the union army established the U.S. Military Telegraph Corps led by a young railroad man named Andrew Carnegie. The Corps trained 1,200 operators, strung 4,000 miles of telegraph wire and sent more than a million messages to and from the battlefield!

The White House did not have telegraph wiring. Lincoln would go to the telegraph room in the Department of War building.

There were more than 300 casualties of telegraph operators. The United States did not give aid to their destitute families or to needy survivors for a government pension.

SIGNAL CORPS

The Signal Corps paired with the telegraph as another way to keep everyone informed. The signals were sent by means of a flag, torches or lights.

In every campaign, the Signal Corps sent orders to advance and convey warnings of danger. They were invaluable at Yorktown, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, Antietam and Gettysburg.

HOT AIR BALLOON

Hot air balloons could soar a thousand feet above the landscape. A tethered observation balloon helped the Union army make maps, spot artillery and observe the location and activities of the Confederates.

In the Seven Days Campaign in 1862, Union balloons stationed at Gaines Farms could observe movement within downtown Richmond which was about seven miles away!

LETTERS

Probably the most enjoyed form of communication for the soldiers was writing and receiving letters from home. Letters were an important tool to relieve loneliness and boredom.

Paper was a valuable commodity. Many letters have additional writings in the margins. There were letters that have been written on twice, once in a normal left to right horizontal pattern and again with the paper having been turned 90 degrees.

Many times letters were addressed to multiple people such as Dear Friends or Dear Children. Not only did this save paper, but to insure that those who were illiterate had a chance to "read" the correspondence.

For the most part, letters were the only source of information soldiers had about life outside the war.



Kite & Key is a publication of the Franklin Historical Society. The Franklin Historical Society seeks to preserve such material, structures and artifacts that help to establish the history of the Village of Franklin and to make it accessible to those who wish to study it. The Society maintains a museum and archival area at the Derwich House, 26165 13 Mile Road (at Kirk). Volunteers and donations are most welcome. *Kite & Key* and the society welcome mail at:

P.O. Box 250007
Franklin, MI 48025

Email: info@franklin-history.org
Contributors: Bill & Ann Lamott

SKETCHES

Prior to photography, artists would sketch battles taking place. They captured the ac-

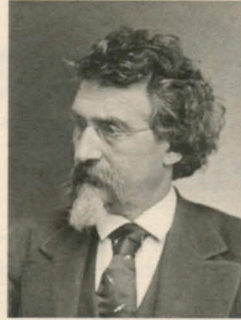
tion that photographs were not able to convey.

These artists were spectators. They would sit in an area a safe distance from combat and quickly sketch what was unfolding in front of them. Alfred Wood was an artist for Harper's Weekly.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography allowed people to see the war without being there. It was relatively new at the time of the Civil War. Photographers would follow armies into battle.

Mathew Brady was considered the Father of Journalism. He documented the Civil War. He employed a team of assistants to



capture the war in photos. Together they produced more than 10,000 images and brought gruesome realities of warfare home to the American public.

Brady said, "My greatest aim has been to advance the art of photography and to make it what I think I have a great and truthful medium of history."

He invested \$100,000 in this Civil War project confident that the government would buy his photos after the war ended. The government showed no interest. He declared bankruptcy. Brady would never know the impact he had made on documenting the Civil War.

No single form of communication during the war was the most important. It was a combination of each one that kept the soldiers and the American public informed and documented this period of history.



Getting the Word Out!

When the war broke out, John Allen Bigelow had a general store at the corner of Franklin and German Mill. He was eager to enlist and sold his store to Albert Rust.

Due to a childhood injury, Bigelow flunked the physical exam and was unable to join. Instead, he became a clerk for an enlistment office in Detroit. His duties enabled him to add his own name to the roster list of the 1st Michigan Cavalry.

Bigelow managed to get the roster signed off by an unobservant captain and became an official member of Company G as a bugler!

On 23 May 1862, he was captured near Winchester, Virginia and held by the Confederates for 10 days. He escaped. He made his way to Washington D.C. where he was assigned to building forts. Bigelow commented that he had signed up for the cavalry not for carpentry! He was discharged in June 1862.

Bigelow re-enlisted as John Allen three months later with the 5th Michigan Cavalry. He served as chief bugler.

Buglers did not normally carry a weapon which put them at risk in battle. As they were giving commands with their bugle calls, their life was in jeopardy. Bigelow was wounded five times!

1862 – Groveton, Va. – hit by buckshot in the back of the neck
July 1863 – Hagerstown, Md. – finger shot off on left hand

May 1864 – gunshot wound to the left arm
June 1864 – blow on the head with a revolver

September 1864 – struck in left elbow, shattered arm, amputated on the battlefield

Bigelow's efforts to regulate his unit's daily schedule as well as relay orders with his bugle were heroic.

Another Franklin villager, Warren Barber, was a bugler in the 10th Michigan Cavalry Company B. His duties, like that of Bigelow, were to make sure the troops had the correct orders to attack, stand ground or retreat.

He was 19 when he joined. His enlistment papers state that he was 5 feet 7 ½ inches with black eyes, hair and a dark complexion.

Prior to enlistment, he was a cooper by trade. Soon after he returned to Franklin, he married Helen Van Every. She was the granddaughter of Colonel Peter Van Every who ran a successful grist mill.

In his first battle, Otto Berger of the 5th Michigan Infantry, lost his hearing. At Williamsburg, Virginia in May 1862, a soldier standing behind him, fired his gun too close to his head causing deafness in his left ear.

After the incident, Berger was assigned to color guard duty. It was his responsibility "to get the word out" to his comrades and show them the movement of their regiment during battle. His location during a skirmish was a precarious one. He was in the middle of it all and his efforts were essential to keeping his unit working together.

Writing letters was a way to connect with home. Loved



ones could hear about their life as a soldier and they could write back about life at home.

In January 1863, Otto Berger received a letter from his sweetheart, Rachel Van Every. She wrote about attending an oyster supper in Franklin and mentioned friends she had visited including her Grandmammy. The snow was thawing at the time she was writing him, but it was still very cold. She hoped that he had been receiving her letters. It must have been a comfort to hear from her and briefly escape from the reality of war.

In September 1865, Rachel and Otto were married.

Joseph Ferguson served with the 1st New York Mounted Rifles. After the war, he settled in Franklin.

On October 6, 1863, he wrote a letter home. He was in Williamsburg, Virginia.

He said, "My dear children, I take this opportunity to let you know that I am in the land of the living although not enjoying very good health. I thought that I had got entirely over the fever. I was quite well when I wrote your mother yesterday, but last night I had a return of the fever again. I am confined to camp."

He ended with this personal note, "I am going to send you (referring to his eldest child Helen), Etty and the little boys money for yourselves. Your mother will get you such things as you need and she can afford." And, his letter arrived to his young children.

Bigelow, Barber, Berger and Ferguson all played a role in getting the word out! They relayed military orders, moved troops and communicated with their loved ones about their living conditions, health and life as a soldier. They probably didn't consider themselves heroes. They were doing their job and they did the best that they could for their fellow soldiers.

Two Down, One To Go

In September of this year, the Kreger House got an official certificate of occupancy so it is ready for community use. The house has been formally turned over to the Village of Franklin. The shed was converted to public rest rooms and opened in the spring of 2011. Many thanks to all who helped by contributing time and money to this project.

Several community groups hold their meetings here and it has been the site of a wedding, two graduation parties and several other private social gatherings. It can be rented for your private personal or business function. For rental information, please contact the Franklin Village Office at 248-626-9666.

The final step in relocating and restoring the three Kreger buildings is to decide exactly what should be done to the barn, determine the costs, raise the money and get the job done. One idea is to expand it and put in a kitchen so functions for about 60 people can be held there. The barn floor has been stabilized and an entrance ramp and porch have been constructed so it can be used for seasonal activities now.

Donations

Thanks to the following people for donation to the Franklin Historical Museum:

A great copy machine from Karl Leder

Two Franklin School desks from Amy Hiller

Documentation for Franklin historic buildings from Betty-lee Hepworth

Franklin Cider Mill painting from Colleen Barkham

Copies of Joseph Ferguson Civil Wars letters from Ada Kornmeyer

New Web Site

The Franklin Historical Society web site has recently been updated. The new site has a more historic look and is easier to navigate. More changes are coming. Also, the store has Franklin Historical Society merchandise for sale. Check it out at franklin-history.org.

Broughton House Refurbishment

The Village of Franklin is in the process of applying for a grant to make needed improvements to the Village Hall. The Franklin Historical Society is working with Village staff to help get this grant that will cover 60% of the cost.

In the late 1970's, a proposal to tear the building down and build commercial structures was not approved. FHS played a big role in restoring the Broughton House and converting it to government use. We are pleased to be part of efforts to keep it properly maintained.

When it Rains, It Pours (and the basement floods)

2014 has been an extraordinarily expensive year for the Franklin Historical Museum building. After last winter, the rear concrete patio shifted and rain that used to drain into the yard began to drain in the basement. It was necessary to spend about \$3,000 to tear out part of the patio and replace it with properly sloped concrete. A rotted wood window was also replaced and the exterior trim on the building was repainted at a cost of \$3,000. These expenses could not be covered by the normal annual budget so funds from the reserves had to be used. We're hopeful that members will help replenish that money.

A While Ago in Franklin

Almost any day, Silas Paddock, a doctor in Pontiac, had some good profession- al reason to drive to Franklin, Southfield or Farmington. After attending patients along the way, he would drive his rig into a farmer's barn, stay for a noon meal and leave with one or two runaway slaves hidden in the back seat. He would take them to his own barn and the following day he would drive them to the next Underground Railroad station.

www.franklin-history.org

FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 250007 Franklin, Michigan 48025

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 694
SOUTHFIELD, MI