

Merry Christmas to All, and to All a Good Night!

# OUR CAMP JOURNAL



Volume 14, Issue 3

"We are but few in number but formidable." - Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B

December 2008



**January 11th, 2009  
Annual Meeting!  
Mason-Dixon  
Visitor's Center  
Rt. 15  
(Southbound side)  
Emmitsburg, MD  
(Snow date Jan. 18th)  
(Company)  
From 10:00 A.M.  
til 3:00 P.M.**

**UNIFORMS  
ARE  
REQUIRED  
AT THE  
MEETING!**

**Membership  
Renewals\*  
Due by  
Jan. 31st.  
Payable at the Annual  
Meeting  
(\*Exempt are  
members who are  
pending or have been accepted**

## Civil War Christmas

The most beloved symbol of the American family Christmas—the Christmas tree—came into its own during the Civil War. The decorations were homemade: strings of sugared fruit, ribbon, popcorn, pine cones, colored paper, silver foil, and spun-glass ornaments.

Greenery, holly, and mistletoe were used to decorate mantels windows, and tables.

Thomas Nast was a German immigrant working as a writer and artist at Harper's Weekly. His first illustration of Santa Claus appeared in 1863. When Nast was asked to provide a drawing to accompany Clement Clark Moore's 1821 poem, "Twas the Night Before Christmas, he called upon his Bavarian childhood to create our modern image of Santa Claus. Santa brought gifts to the children, such as carved toys, cakes or fruit.

A pre-war Southern Christmas menu might consist of baked ham, turkey, oysters, winter vegetables from the root cellar: squash, cabbage, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, and apples. Preserves, pickles, relishes, breads, pies, puddings would also be added to the table. Over the years some foods had become synonymous with the Christmas season: mince pie, eggnog, and plum pudding.

Christmas carols were sung both at home and in the

camps by homesick soldiers during the Civil War. Some of the most popular were "Silent Night," "Away in the Manger," "Oh Come All Ye Faithful," and "Deck the Halls." But Christmas also made the heart ache for home and loved ones.

In Virginia, Lucy Rebecca Buck wrote in her diary on December 25, 1861:

"I cannot but feel a little sad this morning for my thoughts continually revert to those dear absent brothers who were wont to share our Christmas cheer and gladden the hours of this festive season for us. Poor boys! I wonder if they think of the blazing hearthstone at old Bel Air (the family home) and wish for a place in the home-circle. I think of it all and sicken when I think."

In Richmond, Sallie Brock Putnam spent her Christmas of 1861 sewing caps, stockings, and scarves for the soldiers. She and her fellow citizens found the comfort of the soldiers during the coming winter to be foremost in their minds.

By 1863, the Union blockade of the Southern coasts had made it nearly impossible for Santa Claus to visit homes in the South. Quite a few mothers explained to their children that even Santa Claus would not be able to run the blockade.

In Georgia, Confederate nurse, Kate Cumming, was up

before daylight making eggnog for the patients in the hospital where she worked. She couldn't find enough eggs to serve everyone so the holiday treat was given to the wounded, the cooks, and the nurses. One of the doctors had provided turkeys, chickens, vegetables, and pies—a wonderful meal, but Kate's enjoyment was dampened by the thought that the men on the battlefield had not fared so well.

In South Carolina, Emma Holmes described her holiday dinner as consisting of a ham—a gift from a friend—a turkey she had raised, and bread pudding sweetened with sorghum, a delicious meal for the times. But she couldn't enjoy it for worrying about her family members in the army, who probably had little or nothing to eat.

As the Civil War dragged on, deprivation replaced the well-set table, and familiar faces were missing from the dinner table. Instead of "bringing in the tree" and caroling in church, the soldier in winter camp was scavenging for firewood. The holiday most associated with family and home was a contradiction. It was joyful and sad, boisterous and subdued.

In Georgia, Julia Johnson Fisher wrote of the Christmas of 1864:

"On Christmas day, we fared sumptuously. Mrs. Lynn dined with us and furnished the turkey. We had some chickens and a piece of

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Civil War Christmas

(Continued from page 1)

fresh pork. Gussie had been off ten miles and brought oysters— so we had an oyster stew and chicken salad, minus the greens, potatoes and rice. The turkey was dressed with corn bread. Our dessert was a corn meal pudding...how we did relish it! We are always hungry— hungry the year round, but do not grow fat."

Near Atlanta, Dolly Lunt Burge, a widow living on a plantation with her daughter and her slaves, wrote on December 24, 1864: "This has usually been a very busy day with me, preparing for Christmas not only for my own tables,

but for gifts for my servants. Now how changed! No confectionery, cakes, or pies can I have. We are all sad; no loud, jovial laugh from our boys (her slaves) is heard. Christmas Eve, which has ever been gaily celebrated here, which has witnessed the popping of fire-crackers (a Southern Christmas custom) and the hanging up of stockings, is an occasion now of sadness and gloom. I have nothing even to put in Sadai's (her daughter) stocking, which hangs so invitingly for Santa Claus. How disappointed she will be in the morning, though I have explained to her why he cannot come. Poor children! Why must the innocent suffer with the guilty?"

And on December 25, 1864:

"Sadai jumped out of bed very early this

morning to feel in her stocking. She could not believe but that there would be something in it. Finding nothing, she crept back into bed, pulled the cover over her face, and I soon heard her sobbing. The little negroes all came in: "Christmas gift, mist'ess! Christmas gift, mist'ess!" I pulled the cover over my face and was soon mingling my tears with Sadai's."

Christmas decorations were hit or miss in the South as the war continued. Children cut out colored pictures and hung them on the Christmas tree, along with strings of popcorn and red berries.

In Richmond, Mrs. Judith McGuire wrote in her diary that her family had received a box sent to them by a young officer who had captured it from the

(Continued on page 3)

The start of another great year in reenacting! But, some of you are saying that this is the end of the year. I am not confused because I think of this as the first event of the year when we pay tribute to those soldiers that fought and died for what they believed in. I think about how I can better honor their memories and why they died. It always makes me look at my impression and asked myself if I am giving an accurate portrayal of their lives. So, take a look at your kit and decide if you need to make any changes or upgrades as this is a personal choice. This is also a great time to get those holes patched and equipment cleaned.

The parade was a cold one this year. I was impressed how as we walked down the street you all sound like one marching step. I would peek over my shoulders and see that everyone was in step and looking good. You all looked great and like a well oiled drilled unit. The dinner

## Captains Report

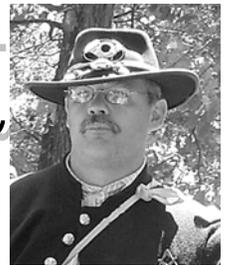
went well and I would like to thank Ron for that wonderful DVD he provided to everyone. He did a lot of work and it turned out great. Thanks.

I am looking forward to the upcoming year with our new brigade. I did like the flags that General Palese unveiled. When I walked up behind the school it was very easy to tell were the Federal Volunteer Brigade was located. I am hoping to take a peek at the *Echos of Glory* and learning more about the flags.

The annual meeting in January we will be talking about leadership positions and events for the 2009 season. So, start to look around at

the different events and bring the information to the meeting. Mark you calendars now for the meeting and start to make arrangements now so that you can attend.

I hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday and did not eat too much turkey and had a wonderful time with their families. I look forward to the next time that the 7<sup>th</sup> Maryland family comes together in January. Make sure you get out those drill manuals and practice at home so that everyone is not too rusty by our first drill in February.



Capt. Rick Boyle

## Notes from the Field

Another year in the books, another season ready to start!

A very special thank you to Pvt. Ron Riotta, who has created for us, a wonderful Year in Review. I have shown this video to many of my friends, and will continue to do so, with the highest of pride and praise.

The year 2008 was a momentous one for us in reenacting. At the 145th Gettysburg event, we became our own entity. As a new brigade, we must strive to be the very best on the field, and set the highest example when in camp. The bar is set, and set high, but I know as a com-

pany, we will rise to the standard, and encourage all of our brigade-mates to do likewise.

At the January meeting, I will be taking a back seat to the proceedings. Due to my position in the new brigade, I may have to relinquish some, most or all of my duties with the 7th. The company is able now to field members who are capable of filling the positions. Be thinking now about who will lead the company as president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, newsletter editor and civilian coordinator. Think too, about who you would like to



Col. Jay Henson

have holding the flanks of the company. The most important positions within the company, is that of the NCO's. These are positions of honor, but more so, posi-

tions of duty that require dedication and leadership to all of the members within the company. Who would you have in those positions? The current existing NCO's have done a fine job when pressed into duty. Hopefully the open positions will be filled by those who are equally dedicated to the task.

# A Field Musician in the 7th Md. Joshua Morfoot, Drummer, Co. D. and his father, Cpl. Robert Morfoot, Co. D.

By Holly Oler and Pvt. Chris Oler

The town of Warren was flooded when the Loch Raven Reservoir (North of Baltimore) was created in the 1920s. The outskirts and elevated parts of the town remain as foundations of buildings in the Gun Powder Park or as homes absorbed into the surrounding communities. The Morfoot home is a 1 ½ acre property on Warren Road, Cockeysville and is still in use.

The Morfoot family consisted of Father Robert, mother Elizabeth, 2 years younger brother William, and 6 years younger sister Millie.

Robert Morfoot, a stone mason, enlisted in the 7<sup>th</sup> MD August 20, 1862 at the age of 42. His service and pension records do not detail much until a little less than a year after enlistment when his health took a downturn.

On the march between Williamsport, MD and Warrenton, VA., July of 1863, while carrying a cartridge box without shoulder straps he "contracted a rupture in the groin". He was treated for this in a convalescent camp on the Virginia side of Washington DC. Then came Rappahannock Station, VA. (There is recurring correlation in the service records of the musicians between this location and Typhoid Fever or its symptoms). In October, 1863 Robert was sick in Division Hospital;

November 1863 to February, 1864 he was moved to another hospital and listed as sick in Washington (this may be the Madison Mansion he referred to in his pension testimony); March, 1864 until his discharge in July of 1865 he was at Finley Hospital. (Finley Hospital was located in Northeast East Washington on Bladensburg Rd.) He was treated for chronic diarrhea, as well as for the hernia. His service record shows a "stop" for transportation to Cockeysville in the Sept/Oct 1864 record. He was also granted a short furlough home in February, 1865. In the spring of 1865, he was transferred to the Veteran Reserve (INVALID) Corps at Finley Hospital. He was discharged July 26 1865

Robert returned to his trade as stone mason after his discharge. He had not recovered from his hernia or chronic diarrhea. His work remained light (i.e. small chimneys, cultivating potatoes in his home garden). With his son, William, as witness, he applied for an INVALID, pension on the grounds that his condition was contracted while in the service of this country and that since his discharge he was not able to work more than on third of the time. This pension was granted. Robert died July 24, 1903 and is buried in Jessops Cemetery on York Road, Hunt Valley. Also in Jessops are his wife Elizabeth, son William and daughter-in-law

Mary.

Joshua enlisted in June of 1863 at the age of 16. He was discharged in July of 1865.

Joshua is the only musician to have received a "special notice for gallantry in sounding the assembly, at the battle of Dabney's Mill, Va.," Joshua's service record does make a note of him sick on the May/June and July/August, 1864 reports. His service record shows him transferred to Co. C, 1<sup>st</sup> MD in Feb of 1865. There are no muster out roll or discharge papers in his copy of the service record. An investigation was made into service record during his pension hearings. It also notes a lack of discharge papers and muster out rolls and his lack of service records in the 1<sup>st</sup> MD.

After his discharge, Joshua worked as a stone mason for a short time. He then went West, mostly around Nebraska, to work as a ranch hand for 15 years. When he returned home, he resumed work as a farm laborer. He remained unmarried.

In the Act of June 27, 1890, the declaration for INVALID pension changed. It required: 1) an honorable discharge, 2) a minimum of 90 days of service, and 3) a permanent disability "not due to vicious habits". Pensions under prior laws had to show that the claimant was

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

Yankees. The McGuires had to flee their home in Alexandria early in the war, and Judith insisted on sharing the contents of the box with friends who were also refugees.

In Winchester, Virginia, Cornelia Peake McDonald had worked tirelessly preparing rusks (light, sweetened biscuits) and cakes for her children for the holiday, when Union soldiers filled her yard. When a soldier tried to run off with the Christmas turkey, she ran into the yard and demanded that he give it back to her. She retrieved the

turkey, but discovered that her kitchen had filled with soldiers who were eating her baked goods.

For the Southern slaves, the Christmas season usually meant a break from their duties for a day or two, and they celebrated with singing, dancing, and possibly a brief reunion with separated family members. Some received small gifts from their masters and their semi-annual clothing allotment.

The most famous Christmas gift of the war was sent by telegram from William Tecumseh Sherman to Abraham Lincoln on December 22, 1864. "I beg to

present you as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 100 and 50 guns and plenty of ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton."

But General Sherman's soldiers didn't forget about the impoverished Southerners. On Christmas Day, they loaded several wagons full of food and supplies. Using tree branches as antlers, they turned their mules into "reindeer," and delivered their gifts in the ravaged Georgia countryside.

The final Christmas of the war saw Lee's starving army lurking behind

*(Continued on page 4)*

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126 Rosewood Dr., Greenbelt, MD 20770



*Civil War Re-enactors; Americas Living Historians.*

## Joshua Morfoot, musician

*(Continued from page 3)*

disabled at the time he left service and that it continued to disable him. This new act allowed for compensation even if the disability was not war related.

Joshua's pension record shows him applying in 1892 and every year after until his death in 1899. Joshua's claim was that he contracted measles while in the service (noted as "sick" in his service record). This disease had affected his eyes. His was also claiming rheumatism, heart disease, Piles, disease of the liver, kidneys, and digestion. These various ailments were "such as to incapacitate him to normal labor about one third of the time". His claims were continuously denied on the examiners grounds "resubmitted for rejection, subject to the opinion of the medical referee on the grounds of not being disabled in a *reasonable* degree". (The italic words are a guess on the translation of cursive writing)

Joshua's testimony in the Pension

record had many contradictions with the rest of his record. He did not have a copy of his discharge records, but swears he was never transferred out of the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup>. He states he was discharged as part of the 7<sup>th</sup> MD at Camp Bradford, near Baltimore in June of 1865. Sometimes, his pension claim records name him as Josiah Morfoot, or Joshua Morfeit or Morfeet. This name changing caused a problem with the pension filings. In 1894 he made a testimony that states he only made one claim, in 1892, that he did not know of the subsequent claims nor did he know the people shown as his witnesses; however the signatures looked like his. Then he had to say "I sometimes drink a little too much, I get among friends and I may have signed ----- sworn to that paper sometime." The claims continued until his death - never granted.

Joshua retired to the Soldier's Home in Elizabeth City, VA in 1898 and died June 16, 1899. He is buried in Hampton National Cemetery.

*Sources: Service and Pension Records, Census records, Baltimore Co. Historical Maps, Jessops Cemetery and National Cemetery listings.*

## Civil War Christmas

*(Continued from page 3)*

entrenchments around the city of Petersburg. Confederate General John B. Gordon wrote from his headquarters near Petersburg: "The one worn-out railroad running to the far South could not bring us half enough necessary supplies: and even if it could have transported Christmas boxes of good things, the people at home were too depleted to send them."

His wife presented him with a special treat for Christmas— real coffee brought from home "to celebrate our victories in the first years and to sustain us in defeat at the last."

The events of 1865 once again influenced Christmas holiday celebrations. The nation was still reeling from the assassination of President Lincoln, but the conspirators had been hung or imprisoned. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution became law on December 18, 1865, abolishing slavery in the United States forever. What better reason to celebrate?

*By Maggie MacLean*

[www.civilwarwomen.blogspot](http://www.civilwarwomen.blogspot)