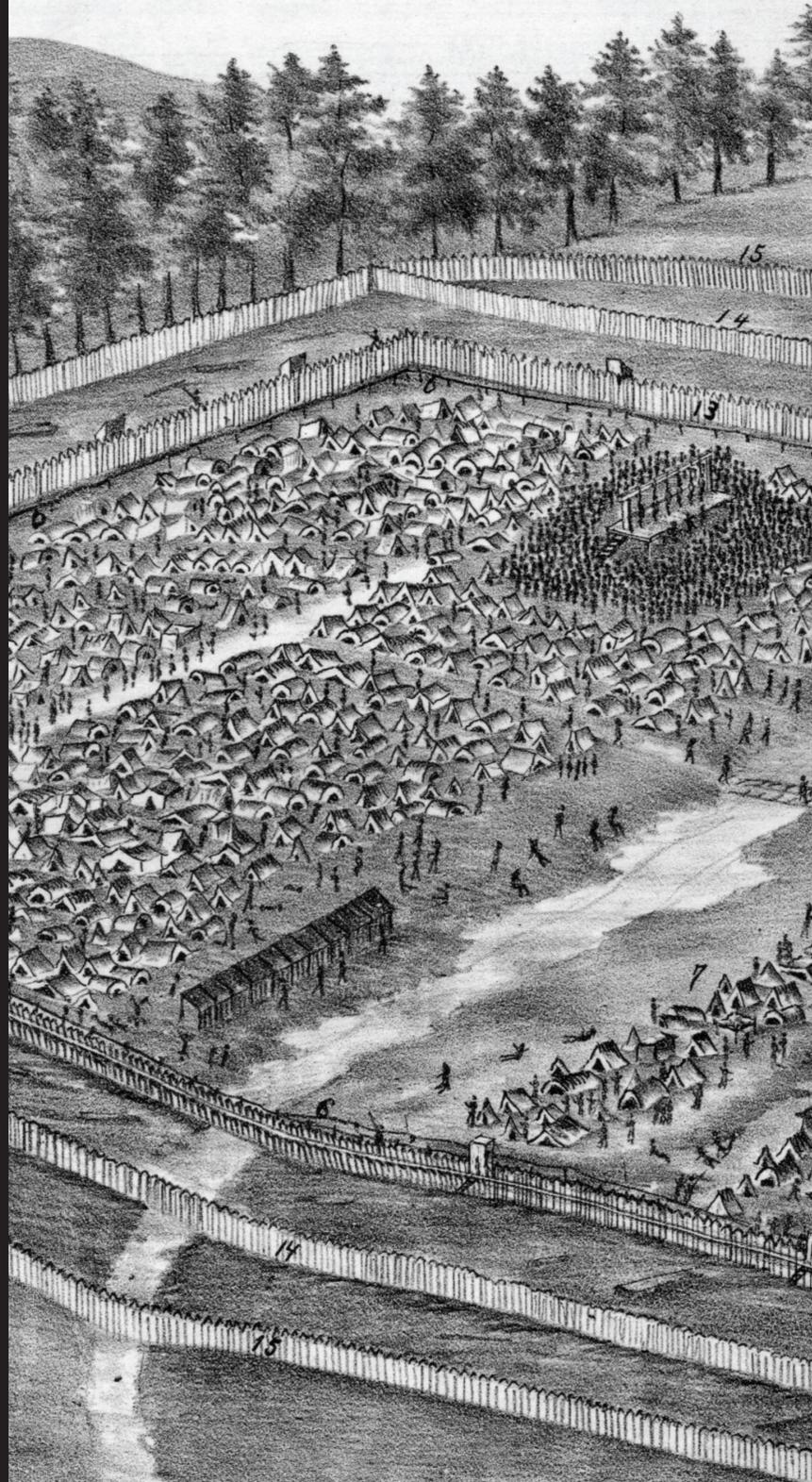


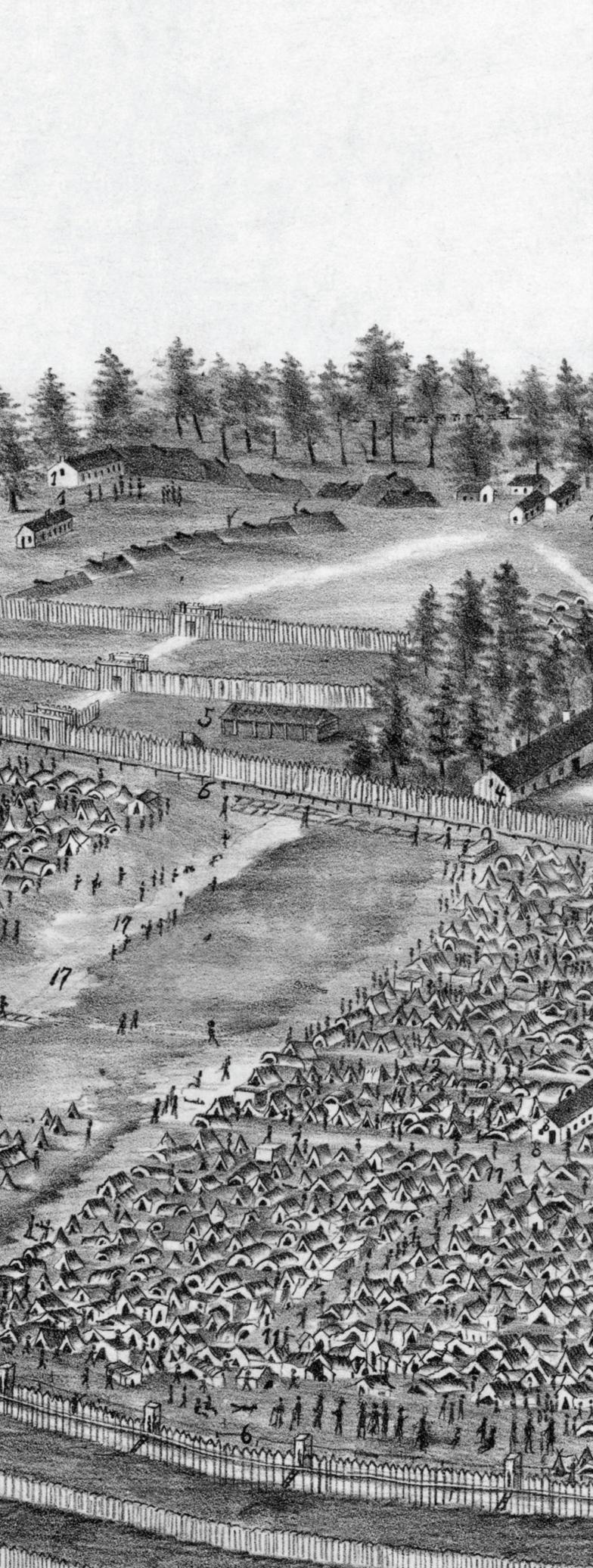


Re: James A. Penfield – 5th New York Cavalry, Company H

“The 5th NY Cavalry, commanded by Col. John Hammond, had already distinguished itself in numerous sanguinary struggles when on June 30, 1863, at Hanover, Pennsylvania, fourteen miles from Gettysburg, the regiment was the first to exchange shots and cross sabers with the daring invaders who fought under the celebrated Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart.

“Penfield records in his diary on June 30, 1863, that they were, *‘Attacked by rebs on our right flank—Ambulance is captured. Ch’d back thru town took abt 40 prisoners-Adj’t & 4 men killed-Wm Lively & Lamson wounded-McGown missing One horse left-Two horses missing, skirmishing all day-bivoac near Hanover.’*”





Prisoners-As-Shields and Other Horrors of War as Experienced by James A. Penfield

A SHAMEFUL CHAPTER

THE STORY OF THE “600”—WHETHER UNION OR CONFEDERATE—HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF INNUMERABLE CIVIL WAR ARTICLES AND BOOKS, ALTHOUGH SOME POSTAL HISTORIANS ARE UNAWARE OF THIS STAIN ON THE RECORDS OF BOTH THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE HIGH COMMANDS.

BY PATRICIA A. KAUFMANN

The tangible postal history souvenirs of this episode—the covers and letters—are highly prized by collectors. Although both sides of the “human shields” story will be presented here, it is mostly told from the vantage point of an officer from Company H of the 5th New York Cavalry, James A. Penfield, who was incarcerated in a series of Confederate prisons. Much of the story is told in his own words, as written in Penfield’s wartime diary.

The covers shown herein are new to the philatelic community. Most covers to or from Southern prisons are rarer than their Union prison counterparts. These are part of a correspondence that spans that family’s letters for over one hundred years, beginning in the early 1800s.

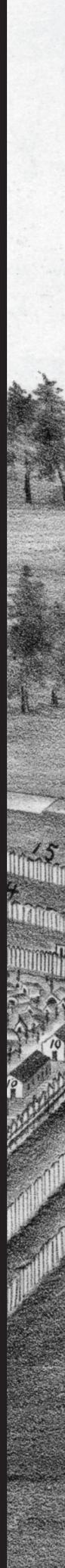




Figure 1. Captain James A. Penfield

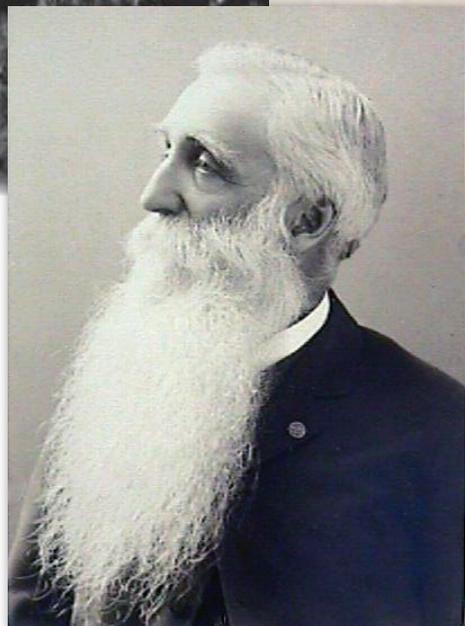
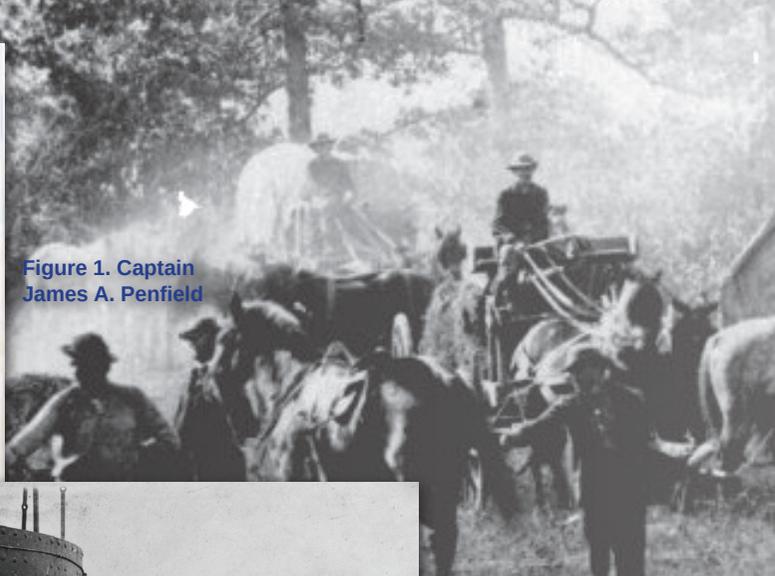


Figure 2. Captain James A. Penfield in later years, courtesy Penfield Museum

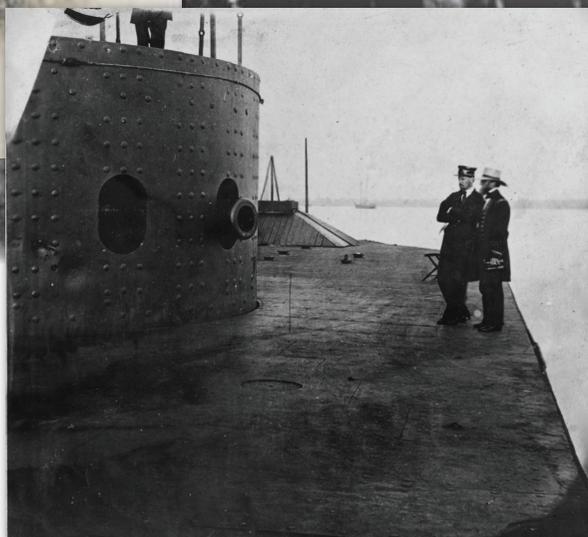


Figure 3. View on deck of the USS *Monitor* while in the James River, Virginia, 9 July 1862. The turret, with the muzzle of one of Monitor's two 11-inch Dahlgren smoothbore guns visible, is at left, with the armored pilothouse beyond. U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph



Figure 4. Brevet Brigadier General John Hammond, commander of the 5th NY Cavalry

James A. Penfield – 5th New York Cavalry, Company H

James Allen Penfield was born to Allen and Anna (Hammond) Penfield in Pittsfield, Vermont, on January 21, 1826, the seventh of ten children and the only son to survive. He grew up at the family homestead near Ironville, New York, where his father had moved the family to be closer to the iron mining business he owned. (Figures 1 and 2)

Members of the Hammond family owned and operated the Crown Point Iron Company, the Sugar Hill Company, and the Hammond Store in various configurations. The Crown Point Iron Company operated under various names, including Penfield and [Timothy] Taft, Penfield and [Eleazor] Harwood, Penfield & Hammond, and John and Thomas Hammond. Allen Penfield and Charles Franklin Hammond were brothers-in-law.

Two iron companies operated in Crown Point, New York, during the Civil War: Hammond's Crown Point Iron Company, with a mine and blast furnace at Hammondville, and the firm of Penfield & Harwood, with a mine at Hammondville and a bloomery forge and separator at Ironville. The USS *Monitor* was the first ironclad warship commissioned by the United States Navy during the American Civil War. It is most famous for its participation in the Battle of Hampton Roads in March 1862, where the *Monitor* fought the Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* (the former steam frigate USS *Merrimack*). This was the first battle fought between two ironclads and it changed the history of naval warfare worldwide. (Figure 3)

Jim Penfield attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and received a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Science in 1846. He was a respected businessman in his father's thriving business and held the office of supervisor for many years.

Several months after the Civil War began, Penfield volunteered to serve his country and signed on for a period of three years. After the panicked retreat of the Union army at the "Great Skedaddle" of First Manassas, known as Bull Run in the North, the federal government saw a need for many more cavalry units. The Crown Point, New York, men were so eager to enter the service that they did not even await official enlistment papers; they drew up a written contract agreeing to serve three-year terms.

The cavalry unit was organized by Jim Penfield's cousin, John Hammond (1827-1889), with the financial support of Hammond's father, Charles Franklin Hammond, who advanced money to purchase over one hundred Black Hawk Morgan horses. Approximately an equal number of volunteers from the Crown Point area were matched to the horses and, thus, Company H of the 5th New York Cavalry was born. The company eventually had just shy of 200 men on its roster, the number varying slightly according to the source consulted. Hammond was later promoted to Brevet Brigadier General, rising quickly from the lowest rank of private. He was twice wounded while commanding a company of the 5th New York. He was also a Polytechnic Engineer like his cousin, Jim. After the war, Hammond became president of the Crown Point



Figure 6. New York Cavalry

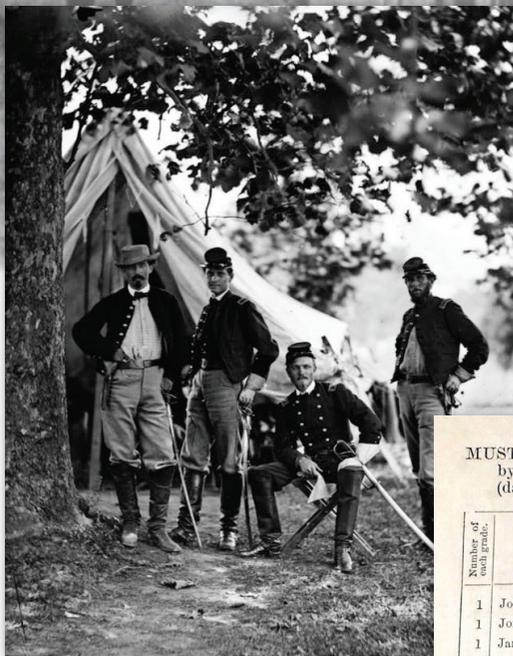


Figure 5. New York Cavalry



Figure 7. Blue silk presentation flag of the "N.Y. State Veteran Volunteers" as shown by "N.Y.S.V.V." in the upper ribbon. (Comprised of former members of the 5th NY Cavalry)

Figure 8. Official enlistment records showing both James Penfield and John Hammond.

MUSTER-IN ROLL of CAPTAIN JOHN HAMMOND'S Company, in the Ira Harris Guards of New York State Volunteers, commanded by COLONEL DE FOREST, called into the service of the United States by the President, from the _____ day of _____, 1861 (date of this muster), for the term of three years or war, unless sooner discharged.

Number of each grade.	NAMES. PRESENT AND ABSENT. (Privates in alphabetical order.)	RANK.	AGE.	JOINED FOR DUTY AND ENROLLED.				Period.	By whom enrolled.	Period.	Remarks.
				When.	Where.	When.	Where.				
1	John Hammond,	Captain, ..	34	Sept. 17	Crown Point, ...	Capt. Hammond,	3 years,	200	Mustered by Capt. Bankhead,	October 18, 1861.	
1	Jonas A. Benedict,	1st Lieut.,	45	do 24	do	do	do	200	do	Capt. Isaacs,	October 22, 1861.
1	James A. Penfield,	do	35	do 23	do	do	do	200	do	do	October 22, 1861.
1	B. F. Page,	Ord. Serg.,	27	do 17	do	do	do	200	do	do	October 22, 1861.
1	E. B. Hayward,	Q. M. Ser.,	19	Oct. 1	do	do	do	200	do	do	October 22, 1861.
1	Allen Lavery,	Sergeant,	26	Sept. 24	do	do	do	200	do	Capt. Bankhead,	October 18, 1861.
2	Elmer Barker,	3d do	19	do 17	do	do	do	200	do	do	October 18, 1861.

Iron Company and was elected as a Republican to the 46th and 47th U.S. Congresses from 1879-83. (Figure 4)

Authority to recruit this cavalry regiment was received by Col. Othneil De Forrest (also seen as De Forest) from the War Department on July 26, 1861. The regiment, originally known as the Ira Harris Guard, rendezvoused at Camp Scott, Staten island, New York, where it was mustered into the U.S. service from August 15 to October 31, 1861. It was named in honor of Senator Ira Harris of Albany, New York. The regiment was also known as the Ira Harris Cavalry or De Forrest Cavalry. The chief responsibility of Company H was to perform reconnaissance and provide escort protection for the infantry and its supply line. (Figures 5 and 6)

When the 5th NY Cavalry's three-year muster expired in late 1864, they continued in service as a "Veteran Volunteers." The blue silk presentation flag in Figure 7 dates to the unit's service as veteran volunteers as indicated by the "N.Y.S.V.V." in the upper ribbon. The flag includes the painted Arms of the State of New York on one side and the painted Arms of the City of New York on the other side. The lower ribbon includes the painted inscription, "Presented by the City of New York."

Penfield was mustered into the 5th New York Cavalry as a 2nd Lieutenant on October 22, 1861, promoted to 1st Lieutenant on Christmas Day 1861, and the following October in 1862, was promoted to Captain. Figure 8 shows his official enlistment on the same page as that of his cousin, John Hammond.

The regiment left the state, nearly 1,200 strong, on November 18,

1861; it was stationed at Annapolis until the spring of 1862. At Camp Harris, men were drilled and instructed by Gen. John P. Hatch. They were taught the fine art of warfare and fought principally on horseback armed with carbines, pistols and sabers. It is said that Penfield was especially gifted with a saber.

Figure 9 shows an express cover to Penfield from his cousin, C. F. Dike, in which \$100 was enclosed. In the letter, shown in Figures 10-12, Dike adds a P.S. that, "Without waiting to see your Father, Uncle Charles thinks best to enclose herein for you One Hundred Dollars – and will get it from Your Father when he sees him." The main part of the letter is a fascinating look into the early part of the war. It is headed "Crown Point, Dec. 7, 1861."

Dike states, in part, "The Lake navigation is closed and we now have only tri weekly mail & they arrive late at night so that we just this moment received your letters of the 1st & 2nd Dec giving the painful intelligence of mortification of the thumb & consequent amputation of the arm of our dear friend Lieut. Benedict, it being as yet doubtful with what result...from the fact that we have recd no telegraphic dispatches we are led to hope that it has not proved fatal...will by Tuesday Express you a Box of Tobaco (sic), Cigars & other things for your comfort, with our warmest wishes for your Welfare and the success of the good cause for which you have made such great sacrifices. Uncle Charles would have written you but has gone to see Mrs. Benedict."

Penfield's movements with his regiment and his change of rank are

Crown Point Dec 7. 1861

Dear Cousin,

The Lake navigation is closed, and we now have only the weekly mails, & they arrive late at night, so that we just this moment receive your letters of the 1st & 2^d Dec giving the painful intelligence of mortification of the thumb & consequent amputation of the arm of our dear friend Lieut. Benedict, it being as yet doubtful with what result, although you say that after the amputation he appears some better than before.

We await with much anxiety for later news, but from the fact that we have no telegraphic dispatch we are led to hope that it has not proved fatal, and that his leg may yet be spared. We scarcely know what to do, but as the

\$100.00 Enclosed
 Sent By Express to

Lieut James A Penfield
 Care of Capt John Hammond
 Company H 1st Regiment
 Ira Harris Guard
 Camp Harris
 Annapolis -
 Md

The stage for Whitehall is over, must expect we have concluded that Mrs Benedict had better take passage to Whitehall and there may find other letters from you which could not reach here before Monday night and will probably telegraph you for the latest information which will enable her to decide whether she had better go on to Annapolis or not. We are all well, and will by Thursday Express you a Box of Solonca. Refers to other things for your comfort, with our warmest wishes for you & yours and the success of the good cause for which you have made such great sacrifices. Hoping to hear good news from Lieut Benedict and for you all.

Truly Yours
 C. F. Dike

Uncle Charles would have written you but has gone to see Mrs Benedict.

Figure 9. Express cover containing \$100 and addressed to Penfield while stationed in Annapolis in early December 1861.

Without waiting to see you Father Uncle Charles thinks best to Enclose here in for you one Hundred Dollars - and will get it from Tom Patton when he goes home C. F. Dike

\$100.

Figures 10-12. Letter from Cousin C. F. Dike sending Penfield \$100 at the direction of his uncle Charles Hammond.



Figure 13. (Above) Cover franked with Scott U.S. #65 from Fair Haven, Vt. with violet postal markings to Lieut. Penfield on December 2 [1861], care of his cousin, Capt. Hammond, at Poolesville, Maryland, from where forwarded to Annapolis where he was reassigned.

easily tracked through his correspondence. Figure 13 shows a December 2, 1861, cover addressed to him as "Lieut. J. A. Penfield Care Capt. Hammond of Co. H, 1st Regt. Ira Harris Cavalry, Poolesville, Maryland" which has been crossed out and redirected to Annapolis, Maryland.

Poolesville was in the western portion of Montgomery County, Maryland, now considered a distant bedroom community for commuters to Washington, DC. Poolesville was important for the protection of Washington because of its strategic location on the banks of the Potomac River at a ferry crossing.

The town approved a resolution in 1859 pledging its allegiance to the South, according to historian Raymond L. Hoewing. Many Poolesville men crossed the river to join the Confederate Army. President Abraham Lincoln could not afford to lose Maryland, so 15,000 Union troops camped in Poolesville throughout the war. Union soldiers found the town to be inhospitable. "This town is one of the most treasonable towns in the South," a Union soldier wrote in his diary in 1861, "There is not one Unionist in all of Poolesville."

Figure 14 shows a similar cover with the same Fair Haven, Vermont, violet markings dated a week later on December 10 [1861] but this time sent directly to Annapolis.

By March of 1863, the lovely violet postal markings were gone and replaced by standard black ink. The cover in Figure 15 is addressed to Penfield with the rank of Captain and routed "Via Washington, DC." As Penfield was not promoted to this rank until October 1, 1862, this cover is necessarily 1863, not 1862. By 1864, Penfield was no longer in that vicinity.

In 1862, the Ira Harris Guard served in the 5th Corps, Department of the Shenandoah; 2nd Corps, Army of Virginia in Julius H. Stahl-Számwald's Division in the defenses of Washington. Stahl, as he was more commonly known, was a Hungarian soldier who emigrated to the United States and became a Union general. (Figure 16) He received the Medal of Honor for gallantry in action (Battle of Piedmont in 1864). In June, 1863, General Alfred Pleasanton reviewed Stahl's Division, after which the entire force was reorganized; it became the famous Third Division, Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac, with General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick in command.

Penfield's Civil War Diary – Story Told in His Own Words

Jim Penfield began to record brief remarks in a diary on the first day of January 1863 while in Chantilly, Virginia, and continued to do so for two full years, during which time he was wounded during the Gettysburg Campaign, taken prisoner, placed under fire of his own guns and endured an unwelcome tour of countless Confederate prisons throughout the South.

His wartime diary is the source of much of the information presented here. Quotations herein maintain the spelling errors as written, although some punctuation has been added for ease of reading and comprehension.

The diary was published by the Penfield Foundation in 1999. The actual diary is small, only about three by five inches, and thus easily fit in his coat pocket. It is on display at the Penfield Homestead Museum, now dedicated to preserving the history of the ironworking industry in the North Country during the 19th century. The museum, shown in Figure



Figure 14. Cover franked with Scott U.S. No. 65 from Fair Haven, Vt. with violet postal markings to Lieut. Penfield on December 10 [1861], while at Annapolis.



Figure 15. Cover from Fair Haven, Vt. to Penfield on March 9 [1863], now with the rank of Captain.



Figure 16. Hungarian-born Union General Julius H. Stahl, whose division defended Washington, D.C.

17, was once Penfield's home.

From January through June 1863, Penfield regularly wrote in his diary about his regiment sparring with the infamous Captain John Singleton Mosby's guerilla bands along the Rappahannock River and through the Bull Run Mountains of Virginia.

The raids of "Mosby's Men" helped to demoralize Union cavalry and rally Southern support for the war. Wounded seven times, the combative Mosby disbanded his troops, rather than surrender, on April 21, 1865. Mosby felt that guerrilla warfare could contribute to the defensive efforts of the Confederate army, but Generals Stuart (which name Penfield incorrectly spelled "Stewart") and Lee felt that partisan ranger units (authorized by the Confederate Congress in 1862) had, by their own actions, fallen into disrepute. What Mosby envisioned was a unit free to come and go, a unit based on knowledge of its territory, and a generous spoils system. (Figure 18)

As well as his entries, Penfield kept track of money expressed home for men in his regiment, e.g., "Rec'd of B.F. Washburn to wife \$17." He also listed the books that he read, as well as miscellaneous lists of stores and cash accounts—monies received and sent. There is evidence, borne out by his diary entries, that Penfield served as a "trustee," or agent between captives and sutlers who sold eggs, meat, fruit and more to the prisoners.

Gettysburg – Wounded, Captured and Imprisoned

The 5th NY Cavalry, commanded by Col. John Hammond, had already distinguished itself in numerous sanguinary struggles when on June 30, 1863, at Hanover, Pennsylvania, fourteen miles from Gettysburg, the regiment was the first to exchange shots and cross sabers with

the daring invaders who fought under the celebrated Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart (Figure 19).

Penfield records in his diary on June 30, 1863, that they were, "Attacked by rebs on our right flank—Ambulance is captured. Ch'd back thru town took abt 40 prisoners-Adj't & 4 men killed-Wm Lively & Lamson wounded-McGown missing One horse left-Two horses missing, skirmishing all day-bivoac near Hanover."

The 5th New York bore the brunt of the attack, and, after repelling the charge, charged the foe in turn and drove him from the field. The long list of casualties killed and wounded demonstrates the desperate character of that conflict. This was the real beginning of the legendary Battle of Gettysburg, famously fought July 1-3, 1863. (Figures 20 and 21)

A monument dedicated to the 5th New York Cavalry at Gettysburg is shown in Figure 22. It is located on the hill southwest of Round Top. The inscription on the back of the monument reads, "July 3, 1863, this regiment under command of Maj. John Hammond here supported Battery E, 4th U. S. Horse Artillery, Lieut. S. S. Elder, losing 6 men. This regiment, June 30, 1863, met and repulsed a portion of Lee's cavalry, under the personal command of Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, in the streets of Hanover, in a hand-to-hand fight, capturing Lieut. Col. Paine and 75 men, with a loss of 26 men killed and wounded. July 2, 1863 this regiment attacked Gen. Stuart's cavalry at Hunterstown and afterwards made a flank movement to this position."

(See images on next page—Article to be continued in our next issue...)

The command hung on and harassed the enemy in the vicinity of Get-



Figure 17. Penfield Homestead Museum, originally Penfield's home, is dedicated to preserving the history of the ironworking industry in the North Country during the 19th century.



Figure 18. Captain John Singleton Mosby, "The Gray Ghost." Brady-Handy photo, Library of Congress.



Figure 20. One of the iconic photos of the war, Confederate prisoners at Gettysburg.



Figure 22. Monument dedicated to the 5th New York Cavalry at Gettysburg.



Figure 21. Union dead from the first day of fighting at Gettysburg.

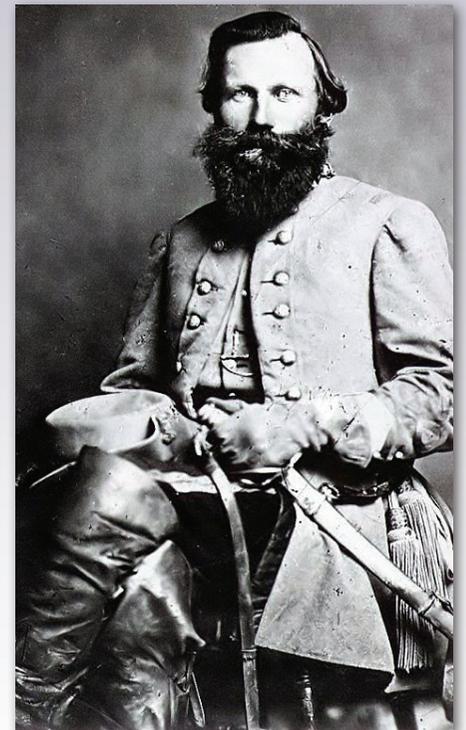


Figure 19. Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart.