

2. April M. Beisaw, "Osteoarchaeology of the Engelbert Site: Evaluating Occupational Continuity through the Taphonomy of Human and Animal Remains" (Ph.D. diss., Binghamton University, 2007).
3. Barry C. Kent, *Susquehanna's Indians, Anthropological Series No. 6*. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2001, Original edition, 1984).
4. Witthoft, John, "Ancestry of Susquehannocks," in *Susquehannock Miscellany*, ed. John Witthoft and W. Fred Kinsey (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1959), 19–60.
5. Burial FB-1 notes, page 3.

## FOLLOWING ULYSSES: THE SEARCH FOR KEYSTONE UNION VETERANS AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES

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Nearly a month before marching with his comrades of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry into the American Civil War's bloody Overland Campaign in the spring of 1864, Private Daniel B. Foote wrote to his parents Daniel and Jane in Erie County of the post-war future. The men, he explained while encamped near Brandy's Station Virginia, still acted "as so many old farmers in-stead of fiery soldiers of a dozen battles. I think it shows how quietly we can live when this war is out; how well we will be satisfied with excitement and [be] settled and be wonderful examples of grave, steady, moderate men."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, despite the continued public and academic interest that produces hundreds of titles annually on the nation's bloodiest conflict, modern historians have tended to remain reticent on the accuracy of Foote's or the myriad of other such postbellum prognostications that swirled throughout the Keystone state—and the North in general—during the final year of the Civil War. Indeed within the past twenty years no less than three separate surveys of Civil War literature have lamented the "underdevelopment" of the field of veteran studies—especially when compared to the continued attention and subsequent fruitful analysis of the men's lives while they were soldiers. The most recent, Larry Logue and Michael Barton's *The Civil War Veteran*, even (correctly) proclaimed that the best comprehensive study of the Republic's old warriors still remained Dixon Wecter's sixty-five year old study, *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*.<sup>2</sup>

Instead, this next chapter in the American Civil War frequently has become a victim of periodization—lost among the dynamic forces of late nineteenth-century southern Reconstruction, westward expansion, and burgeoning northern industrialism—or simply relegated to a brief wartime epilogue. And while a few scholars have begun to struggle against the tide by examining specific individual components of veteran life, all too many historians of the period continue to offer familiar, but often ahistorical, portrayals of the Union Cincinnati returning to their family homesteads to, as one northern veteran described, “just take up the farm work where I had left off.”<sup>3</sup> As a result, the old soldiers’ voices and what they might bring to our understanding of the Civil War have gone largely unheard and undocumented. However, amidst the historical haze, the Union veteran experience still presents a unique opportunity to examine and analyze the individual and local effects of the war. Indeed historian Larry Logue reminds us that “analysts of Postbellum America would do well to pay more attention to the behavior of ex-soldiers.”<sup>4</sup> The returned boys in blue were living monuments to the North’s sacrifices and served as daily reminders that the war’s impact did not end in 1865 but reverberated throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

In the search to reconstruct elements of the Union veteran odyssey, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s State Archives in Harrisburg represents for historians an unparalleled and invaluable resource containing a host of tantalizing clues and evidence of the long journey back to citizenry for thousands of Keystone soldiers. Tales of veteran readjustment successes and failures abound throughout the Archive’s late nineteenth and early twentieth-century holdings, occasionally appearing in folders and collections hitherto unexamined with a veteran’s lens. Indeed during this author’s time there as a Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission Scholar-in-Residence, and with the intrepid assistance of Jonathan Stayer and all of the Archives’ staff, a number of unique details and intricacies of the veterans’ experience emerged often from the most unlikely and unexpected sources. This brief article thus hopes to serve as an initial guidepost through the labyrinthine stacks of the Pennsylvania State Archives for historians and the general public seeking their own answers to veteran readjustment. In addition it presents a reminder to all scholars that occasionally some of the most enlightening and interesting gems exist not within the obvious, and frequently examined, folders, boxes, or texts, but among the seemingly inconsequential or even mundane paperwork and correspondence.

Undoubtedly when exploring the world of Keystone veterans at the State Archives, visitors initially will be drawn, or often guided, to the sizeable collection of Grand Army of the Republic documents held in Manuscript Group (MG)-60. Nor should researchers overlook the potentially valuable information contained in the various membership books, payment vouchers, organizational charters, and other materials surrendered to the Commonwealth by forty-five different local Posts from across the state. Data involving veteran occupations, possible troubled finances, and potential community and political participation and activism all help shed light upon the old soldiers' lives and attitudes towards the war.<sup>5</sup> Indeed veterans' organizations—most notably the Grand Army of the Republic—served important functions for the returned boys in blue especially in their twilight years, providing a sense of continued camaraderie with fellow brothers in arms, monetary assistance for those in need, and even celebration and care over their final places of rest.

However at its height in 1890, the GAR still only claimed approximately half of all remaining Union veterans as members. Many instead simply chose to find their fellow camaraderie elsewhere, and others, especially those with more Democratic leanings, shied away from the organization's proclivity for Republican politics. Nor did the GAR maintain any particularly special persistence or permanence within its own ranks. A brief examination of several Pennsylvania post membership rolls indicate that, like other contemporary and modern social clubs, the GAR often struggled to simply ensure that warm bodies filled the seats. Posts ranging from Erie County's John W. McClean Post #102 to Gowen Post #23 in Schuylkill County usually hosted sizeable floating populations of veterans, in which old soldiers frequently joined or pledged to join the post; attended a few meeting and events; but soon disappeared from the attendance books or were dropped from the rolls altogether before reappearing months or years later.<sup>6</sup> Occasionally only a small dedicated cadre of veterans even allowed some Posts to continue to operate. In the face of such problems, any veteran study which focuses predominantly upon Grand Army sources thus risks overlooking or even ignoring the majority of the ex-soldiers' experience and processes of readjustment.

Alternatively, interested chroniclers of the Keystone boys in blue after the war might turn to the State Archive's extensive Civil War holdings within the Military Manuscripts Collection (MG-7) and subsequent family collections. The vast array of letters, journals, diaries, and official state reports beginning in the latter half of the war occasionally offer unique insight into the expectations and minds of returning soldiers. Private Daniel Schaffner

of the 87<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry for example began repeatedly lamenting in his diary soon after Lee's surrender at Appomattox that the government had little need or design for his continued service and expressed his fervent desire to return home until his eventual discharge at Harrisburg on July 3, 1865. However, Schaffer's correspondence additionally demonstrates the limitations of the materials within MG-7. On the day of his mustering out, the Dauphin County soldier tantalizingly wrote, "I am now a citizen again," but with these words his diary concludes, leaving scholars of postbellum era with only hints as to the new veteran's future.<sup>7</sup> Indeed Schaffer was not alone in his pattern and persistence of writing. All too often after arriving home Pennsylvania's soldiers ceased their diaries, slowed their personal letters, and provided future historians few first hand accounts of their early postwar struggles and experiences.

Another potential and perhaps obvious resource within the State Archives are the holdings of the Pennsylvania State Soldiers' and Sailor's Home in Record Group 19.<sup>8</sup> Established by the Commonwealth in 1886 on the site of a former Marine hospital in Erie, the Home served as a place of refuge, rehabilitation, and, all too often, the final resting grounds for the state's chronically ill and destitute veterans, of whom nearly three thousand passed through its gates alone from its opening to 1900. These sources provide historians a window through which to explore the lives of thousands of disabled or troubled, and often homeless, Keystone veterans. Individuals' medical records, family history—the majority of the soldiers unsurprisingly were either widowed or divorced—and pension information all offer pertinent demographic data, but the ex-soldiers' own words frequently depict the most colorful and, at times, dismaying portrait of reintegration. The veteran applicant files in particular reveal a darker side of postwar readjustment that only recently has begun to garner attention from modern scholars.<sup>9</sup> Tales of pain, despondency, and even occasional abandonment flowed from the old soldiers' pens and indeed help construct an alternate vision of the Keystone Cincinnatus—one who returned from the war not to take up the plow, awl, or pen, but broken, scared, and dependant upon the generosity of family, friends, and eventually the state and federal governments. Additionally, materials such as the Home's Discharge and Offense Book (Series 19.204) demonstrate that the veterans' difficulties continued even after achieving admittance. Problems with alcohol abuse and subsequent drunken behavior resulted in scores of discharges from the Home, and veterans frequently challenged the residential policy demanding that they surrender nearly 80 percent of their federal pensions to the Home.

This collection undeniably adds to our modern understanding of the Union veteran's crucible; but, like the GAR records, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home reports portray only a fraction of the story. Fewer than five percent of the Commonwealth's wartime heroes passed through the Erie Home's gates seeking governmental assistance. The great majority of veterans suffering from the war's ill effects relied instead, as they always had, on support from family, friends, and the local community. Indeed if historian Phillip Paludan is correct that the Civil War was truly a "people's contest," experienced not on a national scale but from the perspective of local communities, the homecoming and its proceeding trials and tribulations were certainly a local event.<sup>10</sup>

Thus in order to help address the resulting gaps within our knowledge and understanding of the old soldiers' civilian readjustment, astute scholars would do well to also turn to the trove of local resources which lie outside of the familiar military context or apparent veteran governmental and organizational interactions. The State Archives' assemblage of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania county wills, deeds, and even court records offer the opportunity to recreate important individual components and events within the veterans' lives. Armed with time and a dutiful spreadsheet, researchers can begin peeling back the mysteries and challenge dominant conceptions of Civil War readjustment. Indeed even a summary examination of the Erie and Schuylkill County court dockets evidences a marked departure from both national contemporary fears as well as later academic proclamations that retuning Union veterans carried a wave of crime and anti-social behavior from the battlefield to the homefront.<sup>11</sup> While each region respectively experienced an increase in criminal arrests commensurate with the soldiers' arrival during the summer of 1865, the swelling court reports served to exonerate the old soldiers and shed light upon the counties' true malefactors.

Indeed rather than playing the part of war-corrupted perpetrators, the recently discharged men, who often disembarked with hundreds of dollars in back pay and bounty money to his name, more likely became the victims of unscrupulous dealers attempting to separate the soldier from his hard fought earnings. Both counties recorded an explosion of civilian arrests and citations for a host of activities ranging from operating unlawful gambling establishments and houses of prostitution to illegally selling alcohol without a permit or on Sundays—all of which catered to the commonly associated appetites of returning veterans.<sup>12</sup> Thus the returning soldiers at least in Erie and Schuylkill Counties did prove as many feared to contribute to their region's crime problems, but not in the predicted manner. Instead of carrying the intemperate

habits of camp life back home to, as Nathaniel Hawthorne reportedly predicted, “spoil and coarsen” northern society, their arrival revealed and encouraged the community thievery and malfeasance that had been present all along.<sup>13</sup>

Other avenues which have yielded fruitful veteran research at the State Archives include the varied gubernatorial papers of Samuel W. Pennypacker. Among the reams of governmental correspondence that passed through the Executive Office during his tenure between 1903 and 1907, Pennypacker received numerous communiqués from the old Keystone soldiers, which encompassed an assortment of issues ranging from requests for civil service employment to the construction of regimental monuments upon the Gettysburg battlefield.<sup>14</sup> However one of the most fascinating and enlightening series of communications sent by the boys in blue began arriving only days after his January 20 inauguration as the Commonwealth’s twenty-third governor.<sup>15</sup> For almost two weeks dozens of petitions and angry letters from individual veterans and GAR posts across the state filled Governor Pennypacker’s files expressing outrage over the recent introduction of a “Lee Monument” bill for consideration by the Pennsylvania State Assembly. The proposal, which was the brainchild of wartime Republican politician now turned Philadelphia newspaper editor Alexander K. McClure, called for the construction of an equestrian statue of General Robert E. Lee on the Gettysburg battlefield and the summary state expenditure of \$20,000 to help Pennsylvania’s fellow Commonwealth to the South, Virginia, defray the cost of the monument.<sup>16</sup> The resulting brief conflagration exposed a deep lingering animosity that many Keystone veterans retained toward their former Confederate foes at the dawn of the new century, and indeed casts doubt on more recent historical interpretations that stress the importance of national healing and reconciliation.<sup>17</sup>

Far from burying the hatchet, the veterans’ words signaled that thousands appeared prepared to wield it in defense of their wartime legacy. Only hours after the bill’s publication, the old soldiers of GAR Post No. 58—the largest and most influential in Harrisburg—organized to draft brief resolutions decrying the “desecration of the hallowed ground of our honored dead” and called upon local assemblymen to oppose the appropriation.<sup>18</sup> Indeed the bill’s greatest opposition stemmed from the veterans’ fear that their memory might be tarnished by Pennsylvania’s participation in the construction of such a monument. Letters to the Governor, such as those from several old Uniontown Pennsylvania soldiers, warned that any northern compliance and assistance in the creation of the Lee statue “could be logically and intelligently

interpreted by the coming generations in one way only, namely as meaning that the American people of today are willing to approve . . . or condone General Lee's efforts to destroy the Union."<sup>19</sup> Likewise the local veterans of Harrisburg's Seneca G Simmons GAR Post No. 119 expressed incredulosity at attempts to rewrite the history of the rebellion, and drew the line at reunion sentiment if it did not avow the illegitimacy of southern secession. "We never shall be willing to stultify ourselves," the veterans resolved:

and mislead our children, by admitting that such a leader as Lee, engaged in such a cause, is entitled to a memorial statue on that historic field, betokening not only forgiveness but forgetfulness and obliteration of the plain and vitally important moral distinctions between those who fought "that the nation might live" and the leader, like Lee, who tried to stab it to the heart.<sup>20</sup>

Such sentiments and declarations contained within the Pennsypacker papers help reveal a final element of the veterans' experience—their role in national reunion. By the beginning of the twentieth century Americans had grown increasingly familiar with depictions of old blue and gray soldiers reconciling old hatreds, sharing war stories, and shaking hands across stone walls. Indeed the Pennsylvania Archives maintains an expansive photographic collection of the most poignant symbol of reconciliation—the Golden Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. Over 450 images capture the national spirit in 1913 as two previously divided regions embrace through the arms of former enemies.<sup>21</sup> However, the disparate evidence within sources such the Penneypacker works presents a more complex reality and identifies the limitations of Keystone veteran reconciliation. The men recognized themselves as the sentinels of memory and fully embraced the concepts of reunion only so long as future generations would be sure to understand and learn about the war and their heroism the correct way—the Union way.

The resulting attempts to enshrine their deeds for posterity and educate later Americans represented for many of the Commonwealth's ex-soldiers a final important act of readjustment, and the Pennsylvania State Archives too offers an unparalleled opportunity for veteran scholars to explore and analyze this closing act of the nation's fratricidal drama. Among the Archive's collection of Pennsylvania Special Commissions (RG-25) reside the holdings of Board of Commissioners on Gettysburg Monuments, which beginning in 1887 approved and oversaw the designs of all regimental monuments

proposed for the battlefield.<sup>22</sup> Its pages help detail both the pride that Keystone veterans came to embrace in their twilight years but also the frequent animosity and stubbornness many expressed when encountering the Board's monument restrictions. The old boys in blue often complained in their letters of the unfair practices or treatment received in their dealings with the Monument Association and insisted that their service entitled them to design and place their respective memorials where they saw fit. Indeed the survivors of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania even filed suit in 1888 against the Board in order to achieve the placement they desired.<sup>23</sup> The various letters, correspondences and even proposed monument designs additionally speak to the veterans' memory of and what they believed to be of greatest importance about the war. What were often the veterans' final public acts to secure their place in American history has only recently begun to be examined and Pennsylvania's State Archives hold a vital component in our understanding of the Civil War and its ramifications.

Certainly the resources presented here are by no means the only avenues obtainable within the tower of the State Archives. However, the above sources do demonstrate that nearly every aspect of the Keystone veteran experience, ranging from the expectations of their homecoming, through their initial struggles in finding a place in society, to their eventual protection of their legacy, resides in the varied documents, manuscripts, and even photographs of the Commonwealth. Hopefully they and the suggested findings may further encourage and spark interest in the old soldiers' postwar lives, and give impetus to our quest for understanding the American Civil War. Undoubtedly future dedicated and intrepid historians and researchers will continue to uncover veteran sources nestled among the Archives vast holdings and this former Scholar-in-Residence will be anxious to see their results.

## NOTES

1. Daniel B. Foote to Daniel E and Jane Foote, April 10, 1865, Daniel B. Foote Collection. Erie County Historical Society, Erie, Pennsylvania. Foote at least appeared to fulfill his own prophecy. According to the 1870 U.S. Census, Foote returned to Erie County, got married, had two children, and ran a profitable dry goods store within the five years since his return.
2. Maris Vinovskis, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?: Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations," *Journal of American History* 76: (June 1989): 34–58; Reid Mitchell "Not the General but the Soldier: The Study of Civil War Soldiers," *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*. James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper Jr. eds. (Columbia: University of South Carolina



- Press, 1998), 81–95; Larry Logue and Michael Barton, eds. *Civil War Veterans: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 2. The extension of “New Social” history into the field of Civil War military studies indeed opened the floodgates for examinations of the common soldier’s experience. See for example Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the Civil War*, (New York: Free Press, 1987); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking Press, 1988); James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997); and Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee’s Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008).
3. Stillwell, Leander, *The Story of a Common Soldier of Army Life in the Civil War, 1861–1865* (Franklin Hudson Publishing co., 1920). For a good look at some of the recent specific work on Union veterans see Eric T. Dean, *Shook over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Russell Johnson, *Warriors into Workers: The Civil War and the Formation of Urban-Industrial Society in a Northern City* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003); Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans’ Welfare State, 1860–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).
  4. Larry Logue, “Union Veterans and their Government: The Effects of Public Policies on Private Lives,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 22 (Winter 1992), 411–34.
  5. Items surrendered from Harrisburg’s J. F. Hartranft Post No. 58, for example, include a fascinating descriptive book of all the wartime artifacts donated to the post, ranging from dirt taken from the battlefields of Spotsylvania to human bones, and a questionnaire of 68 of the post’s members describing their wartime experiences.
  6. Col. John W. McClean Post #102, Union City, Pennsylvania and Gowen Post #23, Pottsville, Pennsylvania Membership Books. Grand Army of the Republic Collection, 1865–1936, MG-60, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited at PSA).
  7. Daniel Shaffner Diary, May 14–July 3. Shaffner Family Collection, MG 232, PSA. See also related items of the 87<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry, MG-7.
  8. Any researchers seeking to examine the records of the Pennsylvania Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Home; however, would be well advised to contact both the State Archives and the Home before arriving. As the Home still operates as a residential facility for American veterans, the majority of its personnel and medical files are restricted in their use by the general public. Indeed only the General Record of Members, which chronicles those members admitted to the Home between 1886 and 1907, is immediately available without prior approval from the medical records assistant at the Home.
  9. Applicant Files, 1886–1949. Series 19.247, RG 19, PSA. Eric Dean’s *Shook over Hell* offers the most recent and comprehensive examination of mental disorders including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Union Veterans within the National Soldiers Home in Indiana, and concludes that it was likely far more prevalent than most modern scholars have recognized.

## ROUNDTABLE ASSESSMENT

10. Phillip Shaw Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and the Civil War, 1861–1865*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 317.
11. For examples of northern anticipation and preparation, see. Joel Best. "Keeping the Peace in St. Paul: Crime, Vice, and Police Work, 1869–1874," in *Crime & Justice in American History: Historical Articles on the Origins and Evolution of American Criminal Justice*, 11 vols. ed. Eric H. Monkkenen. (Munich: K. G. Saur), 1992, 5:60–79, and for a more modern historical view see, Edith Abbott. "Crime and the War." *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 9 (May 1918), 34–45; and "The Civil War and the Crime Wave of 1865–1870," *Social Service Review*, vol. 11 (1927), 212–34; and Betty Rosenbaum, "The Relationship Between War and Crime in the United States," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 30 (February 1940), 722–35.
12. Quarter Court Sessions Docket for Erie County, 1860–1870, Microfilm roll No. 2231; and Quarter Court Sessions Docket for Schuylkill County, 1860–1870, Microfilm roll No. 2244, PSA.
13. T. Wemyss Reid, *The Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes* (London: Cassell and Co., 1891), I:242.
14. Executive Correspondence, Samuel W. Pennypacker Papers. Manuscript Group 171 PSA.
15. The petitions sent to Governor Pennypacker formed the basis for a paper delivered before the Society of Military History's annual conference in April 2009 entitled "A Would-be Destroyer:" Pennsylvania Veteran Recollections of Robert E. Lee and the Limits of Reunion.
16. Lee Monument Bill Presented, *The Patriot*. January 21, 1903; and n.a. "Bill No. 28," *Legislative Record for the Secession of 1903, Pennsylvania House of Representatives*, (n.p.), 218. PSA.
17. See for example David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 171–210; Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 159–96; and Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and his Image in American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 99–122.
18. "Soldiers Oppose Lee Monument," and "Veterans against Cooper bill," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 24, 1903.
19. Resolutions of William F. Stewart Post No. 180. February 5, 1903. Executive Correspondence, Samuel W. Pennypacker Papers. PSA.
20. Resolutions of Col. Seneca G. Simmons Post No. 116 GAR unanimously Adopted at its regular meeting, Thursday Jan. 29, 1903. Executive Correspondence, Samuel W. Pennypacker Papers. PSA.
21. General Correspondence #25.24. Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg Commission. Records of the Special Commissions, RG-25. PSA.
22. Correspondence and Contracts, 1887–1903, Board of Commissioners on Gettysburg Monuments, Special Commissions, RG-25.
23. Records of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry Survivors Association, Correspondence and Contracts, 1887–1903, Board of Commissioners on Gettysburg Monuments, Special Commissions, RG-25. The resulting case proceeded all the way to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court who ruled that the Board in this instance had overstepped its boundaries and permitted the 72nd Pennsylvania's monument to be erected the Gettysburg Battlefield's "Bloody Angle" as per the veterans' wishes.