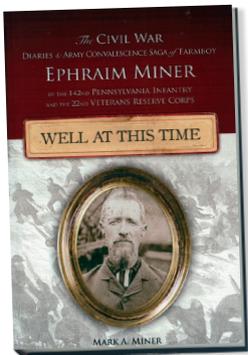


# BOOK REVIEWS



## Well at This Time: The Civil War: Diaries & Army Convalescence Saga of Farmboy Ephraim Miner of the 142nd Pennsylvania Infantry Troops and the 22nd Veterans Reserve Corps

By Mark A. Miner

(Beaver, PA: MinerD.com Publishing, 2011)

128 pp., softcover \$24.95

Reviewed by David Neville

The events of December 13, 1862, would forever remain in the memory of Ephraim Miner. A private in Company C, 142nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, Miner would taste combat for the first and only time that day at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia: his eardrums were shattered by cannon blasts as his regiment withdrew from the battlefield. Safely back in camp after the fighting ended, Miner found he had difficulty hearing; his health further eroded when in the inclement weather following the battle his feet became frozen. Unfit for duty, Miner spent the next 30 months convalescing

in various army hospitals and serving in the 22nd Regiment of the Veteran Reserve Corps, where he performed various tasks, including guarding enemy POWs.

In *The Civil War Diaries & Army Convalescence Saga of Farmboy Ephraim Miner*, Miner's life is recounted by author and great-great grandnephew Mark A. Miner, who employs a variety of primary and secondary source material, including Private Miner's diary, which commences on January 1, 1864. The first 50 pages of the book provide an overview of Miner's pre-war life in Somerset County, where he was a farmer, and his service in the 142nd Pennsylvania Infantry. The balance of the book consists of a transcription of Ephraim's diary, and a chapter on his post-war life, which ended at age 83 in 1921.

The diary entries, written from hospitals where Miner was a patient, and from duty stations while serving in the 22nd Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps, consist primarily of short descriptions of his efforts to regain his health, of guard duty, and of army friends he encounters from time to time, especially men from his old regiment, the 142nd Pennsylvania. Given that the diary was kept by Miner while away from the front, one will not find stirring accounts of battle, but entries that describe the day-to-day life of a young man who continued to serve his country despite being hobbled by illness and a battle injury.

This book will definitely appeal to readers interested in Pennsylvania Infantry troops and of the role Somerset County residents played in the American Civil War.

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**David Neville** is a military historian and publisher of *Military Images* magazine and co-author of the forthcoming *The Civil War in Pennsylvania: A Photographic History*.

## Whirlwind Walk: Architecture and Urban Spaces in Downtown Pittsburgh



By Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, second edition 2011

94 pp., color photos, map

Reviewed by Lauren Uhl

This lightweight, handy guidebook is a great introduction to downtown Pittsburgh. Drawing on their more comprehensive architectural survey books, PHLF put together a walking tour that takes you from Grant Street, through the heart of downtown, to Point State Park. Each stop is given basic information—address, date of construction, architect—followed by a brief history and building description.

While some architectural descriptions can be deadly to read, these mercifully are light-handed and light-hearted. The book directs your attention to interesting or unusual building details, highlights careers of national and local architects, and covers recent historic preservation projects. Also included are fascinating tidbits of information. Did you know that the Oakmont Country Club was formed in the Granite Building where H.C. Fownes had his office? Or that McCreery's Department Store had a special "Craftsman's Room" to display Stickley furniture, textiles, and accessories?

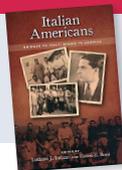
The appendix has lists of Green buildings, a bibliography for those who want to read more on Pittsburgh's architectural history, and don't-miss museums and tourist attractions near downtown. PHLF packed a lot of interesting, easy-to-read information in a small package. It's a perfect little introduction for natives and newcomers alike.

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**Lauren Uhl** is Museum Project Manager and co-author of *Pittsburgh's Strip District* (Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 2003).

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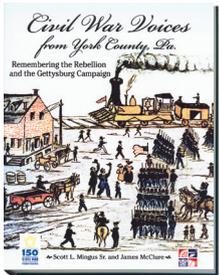
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**Civil War Voices from York County, Pa.:  
Remembering the Rebellion and the  
Gettysburg Campaign**



By Scott L. Mingus, Sr.,  
and James McClure.  
Orrtanna, PA: Colecraft  
Industries, 2011.  
191 pages. Softcover,  
\$14.95.  
Reviewed by Dr. Robert  
Sandow

*Civil War Voices from York County, Pa.* commemorates the experiences and anguish of York County people during the war. Citizens and institutions collaborated in presenting the events and impact of the war through personal and communal “voices.” It demonstrates interest in the local history of the Civil War at its sesquicentennial anniversary.

The introduction contextualizes York as a prosperous agricultural “border county” of considerable Pennsylvania-German population. Roads, railroads, and canals linked York’s farmers, merchants, and small-scale manufacturers with larger markets in eastern Pennsylvania and southward into Maryland. Politically, the county leaned Democratic and contained “a fair number of Southern sympathizers” attributed to the region’s southern ties. (10). Despite this, the authors stress the county’s “strong” military contributions, including more than 13,000 soldiers.

The narrative is chronological (antebellum period to postwar years). The greatest portion is the Gettysburg Campaign, highlighting York’s victimization as an invaded territory. Brief personal vignettes are interwoven into larger national events. Quotations gleaned from letters, diaries, newspapers, memoirs, records, and even oral history questionnaires enliven the narrative. Readers glimpse both life at home and “in the field.”

Though arranged chronologically, the focus shifts back and forth from home front to battlefield. A reader unfamiliar with county geography will likely consult the provided map frequently. A concluding chapter, “In Their

Own Words,” contains longer excerpts of primary source material not used elsewhere. Thematic organization may have been more effective, addressing enlistment and patriotic spirit, women, African-Americans and emancipation, politics and opposition, conscription, the invasion of York County, and experiences of York soldiers.

The text portrays the personal exertions, divisions, and pathos of wartime – stories of families divided by war, the grief of loved ones over the dead, and unvarnished descriptions of glassy eyed corpses on battlefields. Readers will be fascinated to learn that Union soldiers as well as their enemy caused numerous depredations of civilian food, property, and livestock during the Gettysburg campaign. A suggestion would be to indicate areas raided by soldiers upon the map.

Several themes are well developed. The most extensive section covers the Gettysburg campaign where we see its devastation and dislocations on local people. Interactions between civilians and the enemy are highlighted. Many families later filed damage claims for losses, attesting to the widespread impact of the invasion. These files captured details that would otherwise have gone unrecorded. Abundant soldiers’ letters and reports suggest the authors’ primary interest with military events and war support.

Some historical themes are weaker, including the attitudes of Pennsylvania Germans and York women toward the war, racial attitudes, and politics and opposition. In fairness, these were not the authors’ concerns. The goal was to explain to general readers how “the war left an indelible impression in the hearts and minds and bodies of York countians” (153). The authors present the “voices” of the Civil War generation in their own words, preserved by their descendants. ☀

**Robert M. Sandow**, Associate Professor of history at Lock Haven University, is the author of *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* (Fordham University Press, 2009).