



In Fraternity,
Charity and
Loyalty

Lest We Forget

*A publication of the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp, #443, and dedicated
to the memory of those who fought to preserve the Union, 1861-1865*

Volume 3, Issue 3
December 2023



Special
Holiday
Issue



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Trivia #1

How many board games based on the civil war were developed between 1961 and 2010?

- a. 4
- b. 20
- c. 60
- d. 25

Want the answer? Find the second trivia question.



From the Editor

If you ever watched "Game of Thrones," you probably heard the phrase, "winter is coming." Well, it's here now. We in southern Illinois have not seen a lot of cold weather yet, but I'm sure that's coming too. We will begin 2024 with new leadership. You can learn more on page 3. You can also read about the recent loss of another brother on page 4.

As a reminder, we have our new website at <https://heckercamp443.org/>. I also signed us up for an updated general information email, info@heckercamp443.org. For anyone who may be new to our camp and this newsletter, this camp was first chartered in 1884 as a camp of the Grand Army of the Republic. The Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp, #443 is one of 10 camps in the Department of Illinois. However, it is the only representation for the SUVCW in southern Illinois. The camp was chartered as part of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) in 1996. The SUVCW is a fraternal organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought and worked to save the Union. In 1881 the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) formed the SUVCW as the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (SV) to carry on its traditions and memory long after the GAR ceased to exist. It became the SUVCW in name in 1925 and is the legal successor to the GAR, first founded in 1866.

This newsletter is used to help educate readers, as well as continue the tradition of providing camp members, and others interested in maintaining our history, news about the SUVCW, our treasured American history, and what we can all do to help preserve and honor the memories of the Americans who sacrificed to preserve our Union so many years ago. The Hecker Camp history is [here](#).

We hope you share this newsletter with anyone you feel may have an interest. It is also free to subscribe. Just email lestweforget1861@outlook.com. Article submissions are also accepted at this email address. Thank you for your readership of this newsletter and/or your participation in Hecker Camp, and the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW).

Our readership includes non-members of the SUVCW. If you are not a member and have an interest and/or a direct connection to the civil war, or know of someone else who may, please consider applying for membership and passing the word along to others. [Click here to learn more](#).

As usual, I try to provide a variety of topics and stories in *Lest We Forget*, as well as highlight camp activities and members. This time of year, I also include special holiday content. Merry Christmas and blessings in the new year.



Lest We Forget is a publication of the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). It is the only SUVCW Camp south of Springfield, Illinois, covering the "Little Egypt" part of the state.

For more information about the camp and how to become a member, visit our Website: <http://www.heckercamp443.org/> Our Facebook page is [here](#).

For more information or interest in joining, you may also send a message to info@heckercamp443.org.

More about the SUVCW is here: www.suvcw.org.

Camp Commander: Brother Russel Schleicher
Sr. Vice Commander: Brother John Stanton
Jr. Vice Commander: Brother Donn Cooks
Secretary, Editor, Webmaster:
Brother Gerald Sonnenberg
Treasurer: Brother Richard Piper
Camp Guide: Brother Justin Ottolini

For submissions or to subscribe to the newsletter, email: lestweforget1861@outlook.com.

On the cover: A snowy view on Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga, Tennessee. (Photo by Michael Warren)



The Corner

By Gerald Sonnenberg
Hecker Camp secretary, editor

Hello Brothers,
Camp in Review

November—Camp meeting was held. The main purpose of this meeting was to elect new leadership for the upcoming year.

Nominations were asked for from the floor. Brother Donn Cooks submitted his name previously via email for junior vice commander. No other new nominations were received.

Results: Brother Piper made a motion for elections to be held through acclamation. Seconded by PCC Garry Ladd.

The Nominees are also the elected officers for 2024:

- Camp Commander:
Russell Schleicher
- Senior Vice Commander:
John Stanton
- Junior Vice Commander:
Donn Cooks
- Treasurer: Richard Piper
- Secretary: Gerald Sonnenberg



We decided to participate in the O'Fallon, Illinois Veterans Day Parade, and several in attendance at the meeting volunteered.

We also discussed the final details about the installation dinner/Christmas party that was held at Crehans Irish pub on Nov. 18. The social hour began at 3 p.m. with dinner at 4 p.m.

This was the final meeting for 2023.
Our next meeting is Jan. 3, 2024.

Camp Project Status

*Dedication of the sign and markers in Summerfield, Illinois will come up in

2024.

*Highland Project — On hold.

*Walnut Hill Restoration — On hold.

Please keep the newsletter in mind if you have an article or idea to share and if you have attended or participated in any event as a reenactor or representative of the Camp. Contact me at lestweforget1861@outlook.com.

We encourage our members that are not able to attend our meetings in person to join us on the Zoom call. We need six attendees for a quorum.



Camp Officers for 2024



Camp Commander:
Russell Schleicher



Senior Vice Commander:
John Stanton



Junior Vice Commander:
Donn Cooks

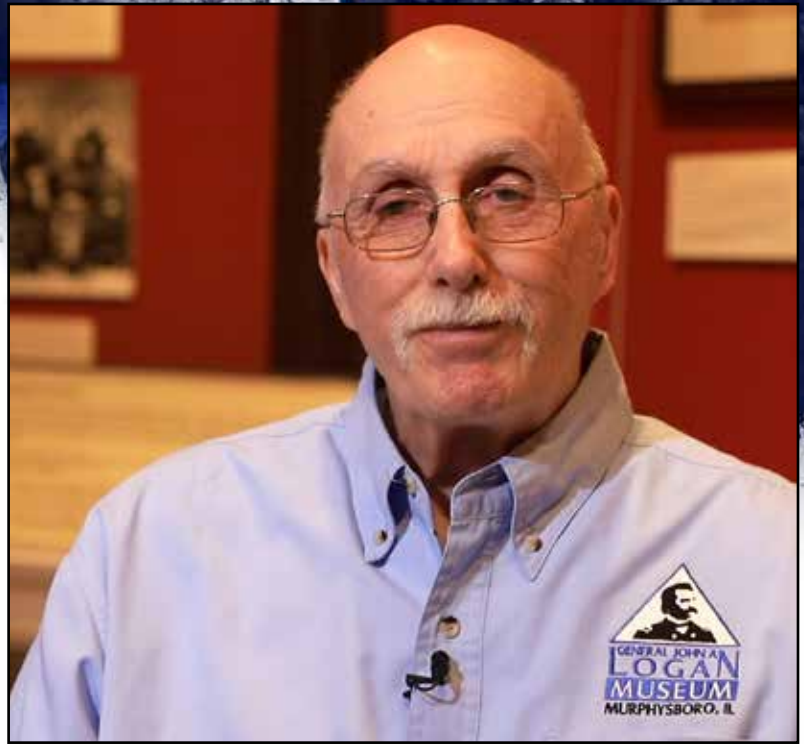


Treasurer:
Richard Piper



Secretary:
Gerald Sonnenberg





A tribute to Brother Preston Michael Jones

Editor's Note: *On Oct. 15, we lost Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp Brother Preston Michael Jones after a short battle with cancer. He was 78 and lived in Murphysboro, Illinois. The following is from his obituary in the local Murphysboro newspaper.*

Mike was born to Preston F. and Henrietta V. Jones in Murphysboro on Jan. 9, 1945, and resided in his beloved hometown all his life.

He graduated from Murphysboro Township High School in 1963 and from Southern Illinois University in 1967 with a B.S. degree in History Education.

In 1968, he married Sharon Ward, and they shared 55 wonderful years of marriage.

In 1968 he began teaching sixth grade for Murphysboro Unit District 186 and remained in that position for 33 years. He influenced hundreds of students and instilled in them a love of history. He really

enjoyed this age group because in a way, he was a big 12 year-old kid.

Due to Mike's deep love and knowledge of history, over the years he became known as the "go-to-guy" in Murphysboro for any question one might need answered about local history. He became immersed in the history of General John A. Logan, and with the help of many good friends, Mike founded the General John A. Logan Museum in 1989. Due to his hard work and diligence, the museum continues to expand and is becoming an exemplary regional Civil War museum.

His greatest achievements and love came with the birth of his two daughters, Robin and Holly. They have been a source of great pride. This love was magnified with the birth of his grandchildren, Preston, Fiona and Samuel, whom he doted on.

Mike was involved in and supported many civic organizations. He served on the Murphysboro Planning and Zoning board, the Murphysboro Park District board for over 20 years, Historic Preservation board, the Chamber of Commerce board, and the Murphysboro Tourism Commission.

He was a life-long member of the United Methodist Church and served as

the church historian. He was a man of faith and tried every day to follow the three tenets of Methodism: Do no harm, do good and stay in love with God.

Mike received numerous awards throughout his life. To name a few: the Lifetime Achievement award from the Illinois State Historical Society, Studs Terkel Humanities award for the Illinois Humanities Council, the Delta Award from the Friends of Morris Library, The Founders Medal from the DAR, Outstanding History Teacher in Southern Illinois from the SIUC History Department, the Distinguished Achievement Award from Epsilon Sigma Alpha International, Historian of the Year from the Jackson County Historical Society, the Southern Illinoisan Leaders Among Us Award, and served as Grand Marshall of the Apple Festival Parade.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister Jamie. He is survived by his wife Sharon, daughters Robin Sievert (Todd) of St. Louis and Holly Fletcher (Chad) of Herrin; three grandchildren Preston and Fiona of Herrin and Samuel of St. Louis. He also leaves behind his best friend of 61 years Richard Green of Murphysboro. Burial was at Murphysboro City Cemetery.



Memorial Day recognizes

**Remembering Dr. Stephenson**

(Left) A cannon was fired in salute during the Dr. Benjamin Stephenson Gravesite Memorial Plaza Ceremony April 15 in Petersburg, Illinois. Dr. Stephenson was the founding father of the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) on April 6, 1866 in Decatur, Illinois. The Department of Illinois SUVCW is leading the restoration work on this plaza and hosts this event on Saturday around Lincoln's Death Day Remembrance. Our late Hecker Camp Commander (CC) Dave Wildermuth was also a committee member of restoration work for the Stephenson Plaza, and received a plaque from the Department of Illinois commander for his work on the restorations. Hecker Treasurer Brother Richard Piper participated as well. (Courtesy photo)



2023 Year in Review in Pictures

**Remembering Gen. Sherman**

In March, CC Dave Wildermuth and Brother Richard Piper (pictured above, second from the right in the firing team) participated in Gen. Sherman's Remembrance Day service at his gravesite at Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri. The event was hosted by U.S. Grant Camp #68 SUVCW in St. Louis. (Courtesy photo)

**Lincoln Death Day Remembrance**

Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 Commander David Wildermuth and Brother Richard Piper participated at Lincoln's Tomb on April 15. This was the annual Remembrance Day Ceremony on the death of President Abraham Lincoln. It is held by the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic and the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States or often known as the Loyal Legion, or today as [MOLLUS](#). (Courtesy photo)



See REVIEW, next page...



Abe and Mary

Hecker Camp Brother John McKee and his wife Jane (above) are pictured as the President and First Lady outside the "White House" inside the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. They are part of the [Association of Lincoln Presenters \(ALP\)](#) which meets annually. Springfield was the site for the 2023 conference on April 13-16. Activities include nightly speakers, presenting topics on Lincoln's relatives in Springfield, Lincoln as an appellate attorney, and frauds and unknown facts about Lincoln. A variety of activities and travel to historic sites take place during the conference. (Courtesy photo)



Memorial Day

As many U.S. citizens across the Nation gathered Memorial Day weekend for barbecues, parades and family get togethers, members of Hecker Camp did their part to help remember the service and sacrifice of America's fallen Union Soldiers and other Veterans.

Camp members first placed hundreds of flags at the graves of Union Civil War Veterans in Walnut Hill Cemetery in Belleville, Illinois May 27. Some members then participated in the Belleville Memorial Day parade, as well as other events in the area on May 29. Finally, the flags were retrieved from the cemetery May 30. In addition, past Hecker camp commander and prior commander of Company G, 17th Missouri Infantry, Greg Zelinske, participated in a firing team with members of U.S. Grant Camp 68, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, at a ceremony in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis. (Courtesy photos)



Pike County, Illinois history

Then Senior Vice Commander Russell Schleicher participated in Abe Lincoln Project's [Lincoln Days](#) Civil War Reenactment June 2-4 in Pittsfield, Illinois. The event first started in 2001. (Photos by Donna Rees)



See REVIEW, next page...



Hundreds pay tribute to fallen Hecker Camp commander

Nearly 400 family members, friends, former coworkers and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) brothers attended a Celebration of Life event July 29 for Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp Commander David Wildermuth. The event was held at and hosted by the Fairview Heights, Illinois Fire Department where CC Wildermuth previously worked.

Born Nov. 20, 1959, CC Wildermuth was a life-long resident of the Fairview Heights, Illinois area. He passed away July 20, surrounded by family, after a battle with cancer.



Hecker Camp Treasurer Richard Piper spoke brilliantly at the event on behalf of the Camp. (Photo by Gerald Sonnenberg)

REVIEW continued...



End of year

In the fall, we wrapped up the year with two events. First, we marched on a beautiful day in the O'Fallon, Illinois Veterans Day parade Nov. 11. Pictured left to right, PCC Garry Ladd, Donna Rees, Brother Richard Piper, Brother Gerald Sonnenberg, newly elected SVC John Stanton, Brother Justin Ottolini, newly elected Camp Commander Russell Schleicher, Diane Zelinske and PCC Greg Zelinske.

On Nov. 18, we held our annual Installation/Christmas Dinner. During that event we recognized two awards: The Dedication to Duty Award went to Brother Gerald Sonnenberg, and the Member of the Year Award went to Brother Greg Zelinske, PCC (pictured below). In addition, we were named Camp of the Year for 2022 for the Department of Illinois. Congratulations to the entire camp! Thank you to the Department for this recognition and to all of Hecker Camp that contributed toward this achievement. It is definitely something to be proud. Here is looking forward to a new year.



Camp Commander Russell Schleicher presented the Dedication to Duty Award to Brother Gerald Sonnenberg (left), and the Member of the Year went to Brother Greg Zelinske, PCC. (Photos by Denise Sonnenberg)





A proclamation by the President of the United States of America (as published Oct. 17, 1863 in *Harper's Weekly*)

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequaled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to invite and provoke the aggressions of foreign states, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has

prevailed everywhere, except in the theatre of military conflict, while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

The needful diversions of wealth and strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship. The axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people; I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea, and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and

blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and union.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

By the President Abraham Lincoln
William H. Seward, Secretary of State



Preston, Illinois soldier receives mail

By Brother Albert G. Gross
Hecker Camp

Mail calls are an important part of every soldier's life, so they can receive news from friends and relatives from home. The image (right) is an envelope containing a letter to Preston, Illinois native Fountain Pollack while he was a member of Company F of the 14th Illinois Infantry Regiment during the Civil War.

The 14th was organized in Jacksonville, Illinois on May 25, 1861, and participated in several battles including Fort Donelson and Shiloh in Tennessee and the Battle of Corinth in Mississippi. It took part in the Atlanta Campaign and was consolidated with the 15th Illinois on July 1, 1864.

Fountain Pollack was born in Preston in 1834 and enlisted as a private when the 14th was organized. He was promoted to second lieutenant on April 30, 1863, and was mustered out when the 14th and 15th consolidated.

Pollack owned a farm outside of Preston in 1876, but he



eventually moved to Carbondale. He died on Nov. 13, 1912 and was buried in Oakland Cemetery in Carbondale. He left a wife, Margaret, and two sons, Fred and Harry.

Sources: *Dyers History of the 14th Illinois Infantry; 1876 Randolph County Atlas; and Find-a-Grave.*



A Christmas letter home

Christmas Eve 1862 found Union Brigadier General John Geary in Fairfax Station, Virginia, nearing the end of his convalescence from a wound he had received at Cedar Mountain in August. He took some time to offer holiday and fatherly advice to his daughter at home in Pennsylvania:

"My Dear Little Pet:

On this Christmas Eve I have no doubt you have been enjoying yourself, perhaps with the toys of the season, eaten your nuts and cakes, hung up your stockings in the chimney corner for old Kris Kinkle, when he comes along with his tiny horses, 'Dunder and Blixen' and his little wagon to fill in Lots and Gobs of sweet things, sugar, candy sugar plums, and if you please, sugar everything. Well, when I was a little boy, a good many years ago, I was fond of such things myself. And when I look back, they were indeed the

happiest days of my life. Enjoy them my little 'Pet'--they come but once. The boys, I mean the two Willies, are getting too old for the enjoyment you can have.

When ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise. I wish you a Merry Christmas and many of them. I must close. There is a lot of soldiers at my door giving me a serenade, and I must give it some attention.

Your affectionate papa"



A silk Christmas card about 1861.



The answer to Trivia #1
is b. 20.

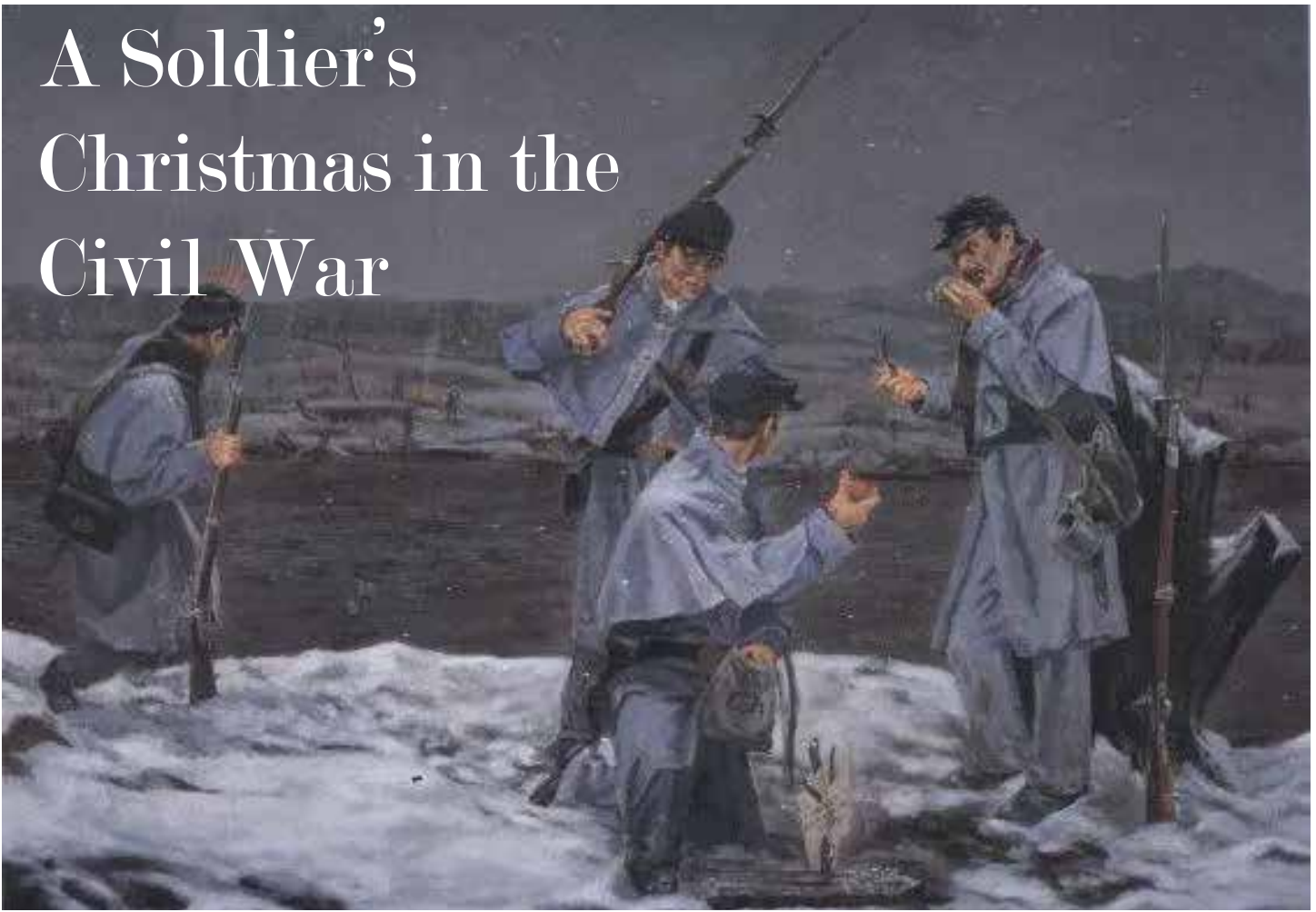
Next question: In 1861, the cost of mailing a half-ounce letter up to 3,000 miles by the U.S. Post Office Department was how much?"

- a. 1 cent
- b. 3 cents
- c. 10 cents
- d. \$1

Want the answer? Find the third trivia question.



A Soldier's Christmas in the Civil War



The following is published with the permission of author Tara McClellan McAndrew of the Illinois Times. Minus a dated lead, it is published as originally printed.

We begin with the accounts of two men in the 84th Illinois Volunteer Infantry who wrote about their experiences in the fall and winter of 1863. It had been a tough time for the group. They had spent September through November in battles.

First they had fought at Chickamauga, Tennessee, which was the war's second deadliest battle. The Union was trying to repel Confederates, but lost and retreated to Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Confederates attacked them there and battled for two months. The south nearly

encircled the Union troops and shut off their supply lines, so the Union's leader halved his soldiers' rations.

Then the 84th fought the Confederates up Tennessee's Lookout Mountain, only to lose again.

James P. Suiter, a private with the 84th from Eldorado, Illinois recounts the rest of the story, which is chronicled in his diaries that are now in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (ALPL).

On Nov. 30, with just a few days' rest after the Lookout Mountain loss, Suiter's brigade started marching 10 miles back to Chickamauga, "to bury the dead who had lain there for more than two months without burial ... The battlefield was a sad spectacle and burying the remains of our dead was the most melancholly [sic] duty

I ever performed."

On Dec. 2, Suiter's group marched to camp at Whiteside Station, Tennessee, where they remained until May. There his days became a monotonous blur of "going on picket," regimental inspection, reading, letter writing and "usual duties." Christmas Day was no different.

"December 25 – Cloudy day – Dull. Christmas – Dined on bean soup, pork and 'Hard Crackers' at noon." ("Hard crackers" were likely the ubiquitous "hardtack" crackers that were a staple of soldiers' diets. Unfortunately, the crackers were often months old and as a result were hard as a – yes, tack.)

Three days after Christmas, Suiter received what might have been holiday gifts from home: one pair of socks and 13 postage stamps.

See CHRISTMAS, next page...

Trivia #3

The answer to trivia question #2 is b. 3 cents.

Last question. What did Mark Twain blame the Civil War on?

- a. Slavery
- b. A debate over state's rights
- c. Sir Walter Scott's hyper-romantic ideas about class and rank.

The answer to trivia question #3 is c.



Mrs. Jefferson Davis' Gingersnap recipe

This was a favorite of the Davis family, especially at Christmas.

2 1/4 cups shortening

3 cups sugar

3 eggs

3/4 cup molasses

6 cups flour

1 1/2 teaspoons soda

1 1/2 teaspoons ginger

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs and molasses. Add flour which has been sifted with soda and ginger. Form into 1/4 inch balls and roll in sugar. Place 2 inches apart on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees 10 to 20 minutes.

Store in airtight container. It lasts a long time in refrigerator. This recipe makes 16 dozen cookies. Great for large event or to give as gifts. You can 1/2 the amounts and make smaller batches for your own family.



A sweet Civil War era treat



Here is an old time mountain recipe for Molasses Candy that was loved at Christmas time.

Take two quarts of molasses, and put it in a large vessel (it boils over easily). Boil and stir it constantly to keep it from scorching using medium heat. Cook it until it forms a soft boil.

Now, remove it from the heat. Let it cool enough so you can handle it with your hands. Have a dish of butter or margarine handy.

Grease your hands until the candy won't stick to them. Now take enough of the candy in your hands to make 2 or 3 sticks. Now pull the candy, double back and pull again. Keep pulling and working the candy. In about 5 minutes the candy will turn light yellow in color. Then it is ready to cut in stick lengths. Make it out to about the size of an ordinary stick of candy. Cut in stick lengths with a sharp knife. Wrap in waxed paper. Store in a cool place.

From: "Mountain Makin's in the Smokies."



CHRISTMAS, continued ...

Hiram P. Roberts was a chaplain for Company E of the 84th. Six days before Christmas he wrote his daughter, Nellie, back in Quincy, Illinois for her birthday. He told her that he was looking at photographs of her and her mother as he wrote.

On Christmas Day, he wrote again: "Darling Nellie...Did Kris Kringle bring you anything last night? I don't believe he comes down this way at all for I haven't heard anything about him. I haven't anything to send you for a Christmas present, so I will put in 25 cents and you may get what you want or what mama thinks is best ... A Merry Christmas to you from Papa."

He wrote a separate letter to his wife:

"A Merry Christmas to you dear wife. Since I cannot wish it to you by word of mouth, I will by word of pen and paper. No doubt you are enjoying yourself finely today with the abundance of good things which are so plenty and so cheap in the peaceful north.

"A few extras would not go badly in this region today but as they are not comestible, we content ourselves with what we have and by tomorrow no doubt we shall feel, as well as though we had stuffed ourselves full of roast turkey and plum pudding.

"I'll tell you what we – that is Capt. Gasternicht and myself,

propose to have today for dinner. First the universal 'sowbelly' (bacon) and coffee, then boiled beans with bread and butter. This last is an extra, the result of the captain's foraging expedition outside of the picket lines yesterday. He succeeded in getting about 3/4ths of a pound of white stuff they called butter and a canteen of milk all for the small sum of 50 cents and had to go three miles for that ..."

A year later, Albert J. Blackford from Clinton, Illinois was arrested in camp near Columbia, Tennessee. He was a captain with Company F of the 107th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, which mustered out of Camp Butler near Springfield. His regiment had been battling the Confederates throughout Tennessee. On Christmas he wrote to his wife. His letter is also at the ALPL.

"When I look back over the last year and think of the danger I have passed through, the many hardships and privations I have endured, I wonder that I am living today, for I have seen so many good men shot down, so many die of sickness. I have seen so many, very many fresh covered graves, that I feel I have indeed been fortunate."

All three men were fortunate; each survived the war.



I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1863

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
and mild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.



"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" is a Christmas carol based on the 1863 poem "Christmas Bells," which was written on Christmas Day by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The song tells of the narrator hearing Christmas bells during the American Civil War, but despairing that "hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men." After much anguish and despondency the carol concludes with the bells ringing out with resolution that "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep" and that there will ultimately be "...peace on earth, good will to men."

The origin is from 1861 when Longfellow's second wife of 18 years was fatally burned in an accidental fire. Then in 1863, during the American Civil War, Longfellow's oldest son, Charles Appleton Longfellow, joined the Union Army without his father's blessing. Longfellow was informed by a letter dated March 14, 1863, after Charles had left. "I have tried hard to resist the temptation of going without your leave but I cannot any longer", he wrote. "I feel it to be my first duty to do what I can for my country and I would willingly lay down my life for it if it would be of any good." Charles was soon appointed as a lieutenant but, in November, he was severely wounded in the Battle of Mine Run. Charles eventually recovered, but his time as a soldier was finished.

The refrain "peace on Earth, goodwill to men" is a reference to the King James Version of Luke 2:14." [Source is Wikipedia](#)

