

fis2013_10_08_Matthias at Chancellorsville_v4
 from fis2013_10_08_Matthias at Chancellorsville_v3
 from fis00d07-Matthias-at-Chancellorsville.doc
 from fis00n27-Matthias-at-Chancellorsville.doc (distributed Dec. 1, 2000 to sibs & cousins)
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Note: This version adds information from the handwritten notes of Bernard L. DuPlessis (1904-1992) used in his 1972 family history and from a transcript of a conversation with him in June 1985 at his home in Fort Myers, Florida. Those sources help distinguish between the family legend of his recollection, what he learned from published sources and what he surmised. — Jim DuPlessis. I wrote this piece, but was mostly a matter of assembling many parts picked up from other sources.

Matthias Fisselbrand, Syracuse, N.Y. (1840-1863)

The Battle of Chancellorsville was the costliest battle of the Civil War for the Army of the Potomac. "That cost, when finally toted up came to 1,694 dead, 9,672 wounded and 5,938 missing," according to Stephen W. Sears' 1996 book, "Chancellorsville." (p. 440).

Matthias Fisselbrand belonged in each of those categories in quick succession. He was wounded "severely in the arm" and taken prisoner at Chancellorsville Sunday, May 3, 1863. He was later paroled and returned to his regiment May 14, according to the Memoirs of the 149th N.Y. Volunteer Infantry, written by Capt. George K. Collins in 1891.



Fisselbrand died in a military hospital in Washington, D.C., sometime during the week of May 31 to June 6. On Tuesday, June 9, the Syracuse Journal carried a short notice under the heading, "A Soldier's Funeral:"

"The body of Mathias Fiselbrant, of the 149th, who died in hospital at Washington last week, reached this city at one O'clock today. The funeral will take place tomorrow at two o'clock P.M." He was buried in the city's First Ward Cemetery, according to Mary E. DuPlessis of Syracuse.

Fisselbrand was born about 1840, probably around Minoa, N.Y. in the Syracuse area. His parents were Peter and Elizabeth Conrad Fisselbrand, who emigrated from Metz, France, to the United States around the 1830s.

Peter Fisselbrand "for awhile had a farm near Minoa and a city home on what is now Catherine Street in Syracuse. He seemed to be both a farmer and a stonecutter" and was living in a brick house at 75 Lodi just before the Civil War, according to letters written in 1972 and 1996 by Mary E. DuPlessis, a cousin of my grandfather.

Matthias was one of four surviving siblings when he went to war. A diphtheria outbreak killed five of his siblings in the 1830s when they were living in Minoa. He had two sisters living, Elizabeth and Catherine, but I believe both remained single.

Of the at least nine children born to Peter and Elizabeth Conrad Fisselbrand, it is likely their only descendants come from Matthias's older brother, John Joseph Fisselbrand, my great-great grandfather. He was born March 4, 1834 in Metz, France, and died May 12, 1915 in Syracuse. His daughter, Anna Fisselbrand, married James C. DuPlessis and their son, Bernard Louis DuPlessis, was my grandfather.

Fisselbrand's military career had been brief, and Chancellorsville was his unit's first real battle.

He was 22 years old when he enlisted in Syracuse Sunday, August 31, 1862. He was enrolled by Capt. Nicholas Grumbach for three years and received a \$25 bounty and a \$2 premium. He joined for duty and was mustered as a private Sept. 1, according to the New York State Volunteer Muster Rolls in the Syracuse Public Library.

The 149th was organized at Syracuse, N.Y., mustered in September 18, 1862 and left New York state for Washington, D.C., September 23, 1862 on rail cars after a "patriotic" celebration, recalled by Capt. Collins.



"The memory of that embarkation is of having very sad hearts, marching after awkward men in new uniforms, with the shelf creases in them, weighed down with knapsacks, blankets and canteens; great anxiety about getting certain drunken men safely on the cars; excessive fatigue, and much disgust at the unmannerly conduct of certain citizen friends. It was a positive relief when the train got under motion and space was put between the men and their well-meaning but indiscreet friends. It seemed to take the form of a patriotic duty, on the part of some, to tone up the hearts of men departing, perhaps forever from family and friends, by generous gifts of poor

whiskey. If any one reading these lines shall have any doubt on the subject, he may be assured that no patriotic duty of this kind was neglected on that occasion."

The rail cars took the men to Geneva, N.Y., where they were transferred to three steamboats that took them to Elmira, where they boarded a train again, winding up in Washington, D.C. in Casey's Division until Sept. 30, 1862.

The regiment was then made part of the 3d Brigade, 2d Division, 12th Corps and moved to Bolivar Heights, Va., where it camped until December 10. It made a reconnaissance to Rippon, W. Va., November 9 and an expedition to Winchester, Va., December 2-6. The men saw their first Confederates, but no action.

Life in the regiment has been well recorded in Collins' "Memoirs of the 149th." Accounts also survive from some letter writers, including a series of very descriptive accounts by Oliver Ormsby, who ended the war as a corporal. His letters can be found at the web site for the regiment (<http://www.149th-nysv.org/>).



From left, Pvt. Edward R. Keith, Company H; Pvt. Franklin Van Atten, Company K, and Pvt. Peter Kappesses, Company B, 149th NY Infantry Regiment



View of Harpers Ferry - ID_1150157 - NYPL Digital Gallery

The following are parts of letters by Ormsby, then a 23- or 24-year-old private in Company E, before Chancellorsville:

Harper's Ferry
Oct. 10, 1862

We have been furnished with tents since we arrived here. Each man has a piece about 6 ft. square. Each piece is fixed so they can be buttoned together. Three men make a tent by buttoning two pieces together and stretching them over a stick about 6 feet long which is placed in two crotches about four and one half feet high. The sides are fastened down by wooden pegs. The third piece is fastened at one end of the tent which leaves one end open. We get coffee, hard crackers, and smoked bacon for breakfast, salt beef, crackers and boiled beans for dinner, coffee, meat and crackers for supper. We also get boiled rice and molasses every third day for dinner. The meat is generally very good but this morning we got bacon that was full of maggots so we did not eat any bacon this morning. There are plenty of settlers around here so if you have any money you can get fresh bread, apple pies, etc. Enough to keep one full.

The 149th marched to Fredericksburg, Va., December 10-15 and camped at Falmouth, Va., until April 27, 1863. Ormsby:

Near Fairfax Station
January 4, 1863
Dear Parents

We have traveled around considerable since I have last wrote to you. On the 2nd of December our division went on a reconnaissance mission to Winchester which is about 32 miles from Bolivar Heights. We started Tuesday and got back Saturday at noon and didn't find anything of the Rebs except for scouting parties of calvary which didn't want to fight.

Next week Tuesday the whole corps consisting of about 20,000 men received orders to march on Fredericksburg to reinforce General Burnside. We started the next morning at daylight. Each man carried a piece of shelter tent about 5 feet square and were fixed so they could be buttoned together and after a long days march we would build a fire in front of them and then crawl inside to sleep for the night. Thats if we didn't lay awake for the night.

The men all stood the march first rate. As for myself I don't think I ever felt better or enjoyed better health since we left Bolivar Heights. I don't know how long we are to stay here but I would guess not for long because this morning we had our gun inspected and our cartridges boxes filled with cartridges. I think this means march.

I don't care how soon we go as long as we can do some good somewhere for I think that what fighting is to be done must be done this winter. A good many men are discouraged because of Burnside's defeat [at Fredericksburg, Va., Dec. 10-16, 1862], but I for one am not. I think that the next three months will see this rebellion wiped out. In the first place our forces at the West under Grant and Banks will soon whip them good. Then the grand Rebel Army of Virginia will stand a poor chance I reckon.

The 149th also had the dubious privilege of joining Major General Ambrose Burnside's futile "Mud March" of January 20-24, 1863, which many in the Army of the Potomac would single out as "the nadir of their military experience." Burnside had planned to attack Fredericksburg from the west by crossing the Rappahannock at Bank's Ford. However, it began raining heavily on the first night, miring the guns, wagons and pontoon trains. Burnside ordered the army to turn back (Sears, 19-20).

Brooks Station, Va.

March 14, 1863

Dear Friend;

I received your most welcome letter this afternoon and now sit down to answer it. When I last wrote you we were at Fairfax Station but since then we have done considerable tramping. We left our camp on the 19th of January and after marching about 20 miles we encamped for the night one mile from Dumfries, a small village about 25 miles from Fredericksburg. The road was first rate but that night it commenced to rain and kept it up for 2 1/2 days. We got up in the morning and started on again. Our artillery and baggage wagons went about 3 miles and got stuck in the mud. We were obliged to stay with the baggage trains so when they got stuck we had to stop and wait for them. We were 5 days going from Dumfries to Aquia Landing, about 18 miles. Aquia Landing is on the Potomac at the mouth of Aquia Creek. There is a railroad running from Fredericksburg to the landing which supplies our army with provisions etc.. Our regiment stayed about a month, working on the docks, unloading vessels, and loading cars. Half the men worked daytimes and the other half at night, so they made us earn our money for that month at least. ... "

While they were camped at Brooks Station, Va., Fisselbrand would have seen President Abraham Lincoln during his April 5-10 visit to the Army of the Potomac. Ormsby noted the visit in the following letter:

Brooks Station Va.

April 11, 1863

Dear Parents;

...

President Lincoln has been with the army since last Sunday. Our whole corps was reviewed by him yesterday. The review took place near Stafford Court House. We started from here at 7 in the morning and got there at 9. We stood around until about 4 in the afternoon when UNCLE ABE hove into sight. He rode with his hat off and looked real natural. I should think there was about 15,000 men there. At any rate it was quite a show.

...
Oliver



Pontoon bridges at Fredericksburg, Va - ID_ 1150138 - NYPL Digital Gallery

Sixteen days after Ormsby wrote that letter, the 149th was on the march towards Chancellorsville.

The following information is from "Chancellorsville" by Sears.

Fisselbrand's 149th New York regiment was headed by Major Abel G. Cook. The 149th was one of five New York regiments that made up the Third Brigade, headed by Brig. Gen. George Sears Greene, a hardy Rhode Islander who was nearly 62 years old at Chancellorsville. He had graduated from West Point in 1823, served in the artillery and taught at West Point before resigning in 1836. He was nearly 98 when he died.

The Third Brigade was one of three brigades that formed the Second Division, headed by Brig. Gen. John W. Geary, "who at six feet six inches was the tallest general in the Army of the Potomac" (Sears, 142). Geary was 43 at the time of the battle. He had served as an officer in the Mexican war, but there is evidence he later exaggerated his role there, according to William Alan Blair, who edited "A Politician Goes to War: The Civil War Letters of John White Geary," 1995. Geary was appointed governor of the strife-ridden Kansas territory in 1856, but resigned six months later with bitter feelings toward slave owners and a low regard for Southerners generally. Blair believes Geary was an able administrator, but not a brilliant leader. He served as governor of Pennsylvania from 1867 to 1873, dying two weeks after leaving office. His letters, by the way, contain no mention of Chancellorsville.

Geary's Second Division was one of two divisions that made up the Twelfth Corps, one of seven corps that formed the Army of the Potomac, which in this season was headed by Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker. The 12th Corps was led at Chancellorsville by Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum. The 35-year-old West Point graduate tried to resign when he was ordered to serve under Hooker in Tennessee later that year.



View of the Rappahannock, showing pontoons and the enemy's lines - ID_11501_v2

Hooker, known in the newspapers as "Fighting Joe" Hooker, had been appointed by Lincoln to take over the Army of the Potomac in January 1863 from Gen. Burnside. He commanded 130,000 troops; Lee had only 60,000 available.

The Eleventh Corps and the Twelfth Corps "were the stepchildren of the Army of the Potomac. Formed in the murky confusion of warfare in the Shenandoah Valley and far western Virginia, they came to the Potomac army from John Pope's much-maligned Army of Virginia in the reorganization following Pope's defeat at Second Manassas in August 1862. Even as the Chancellorsville offensive began in April 1863, "neither corps felt a sense of belonging.

"Slocum's Twelfth was the smallest corps in the army, with just 13,450 men counted in its two divisions on the April 30 return. Slocum and his generals of division, Alpheus Williams and John Geary, were competent enough, but their troops had faced the roughest kind of fighting against Stonewall Jackson in the Valley, at Cedar Mountain in the Second Manassas campaign, and at Antietam. During the army's winter crisis (low morale at the bottom ranks; loss of confidence in Gen. Burnside among senior officers) the Twelfth Corps had the highest percentage of deserters of any corps. Had he been able to, Hooker would likely have found a less demanding role for the Twelfth."



Evacuation of Aquia Creek [steamboats on river] - ID_ 1150122 - NYPL

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Provost Marshal's office _ Aquia Creek - ID_ 1150123 - NYPL Digital Gallery

During the winter of 1862-63, Geary's Second Division had been guarding Aquia Landing, a supply depot that sat on the banks of the Potomac River. Supplies were shipped south from Washington to Aquia Landing and loaded onto trains at a railhead there to be carried south to Union troops encamped along the north bank of the Rappahannock. Confederate General Robert E. Lee, whose troops were encamped along the south bank of the Rappahannock, considered Aquia Landing 10 miles to the northeast a tempting target, but Geary's troops spent a quiet winter there.

Both the Twelfth and the Eleventh corps were posted far from Confederate eyes on the Rappahannock, and because of this they led the vanguard of troops in Hooker's spring offensive. Hooker was obsessed with secrecy and believed these two corps had the best chance of crossing the Rappahannock upstream to the west before Lee could respond. The deception would be aided by having the other corps remain longer in their

camps under watchful Confederate eyes before they slipped out later to join the flanking movement.

Because of their position in the offensive, the 11th and 12th Corps would be among those receiving the brunt of Confederate attacks May 2 and 3.

The Twelfth Corps had a 36-mile march to Kelly's Ford, the planned crossing point on the Rappahannock. The march was to begin Monday, April 27.

"The Twelfth Corps faced the longest march April 27, especially [Geary's] Second Division that had wintered near Aquia Landing on the Potomac (Sears, 142).

"The landscape desolated by the wintering army was softened by the greening grass and the emerging wildflowers and the blossoming peach and cherry trees of April, but hour by hour the marching grew wearying. The country east of Falmouth was rough and broken, and in low places there were still sloughs from the recent rains. In a letter home General Williams of the Twelfth Corps described the roads as "terrible .. my pioneer corps was busily at work cutting new roads all through the pines... " For the marchers, however, the greatest burden that day was the burden they carried - their knapsacks and haversacks laden with eight days' rations."

"In the winter's flying column experiments in packing for eight days, the high command had concluded that only the strictest discipline would limit the infantryman's load - rifle, sixty cartridges, rations, clothing, shelter - to 45 pounds, matching the former march standard for carrying only three days' rations. Room for additional rations was found by eliminating the overcoat, carrying only one half a shelter tent, limiting clothing to one shirt, one pair of drawers, and one pair of socks and no personal gear at all."

Of course, this didn't happen. Most took more stuff, either from inexperience or fear that it would be stolen if left behind. "It was not uncommon that day for men to start out carrying 60-pound loads." Such loads didn't last long and the way was soon littered with overcoats, blankets and tents. (Sears, 142-3).

They marched west to Stafford Courthouse, south to Falmouth and then northwest, paralleling the Rappahannock but remaining a couple miles from the river and out of sight. Their first day's march ended at the Hartwood Church along the Ridge Road.

"That evening around Hartwood Church only small cooking fires were permitted. Footsore stragglers came in until well after dark. Most men were too tired to bother pitching their shelter tents, and those who still had

blankets immediately rolled up in them and went to sleep. Before he slept a Fifth Corps surgeon climbed a small rise and was struck by the sight of an army at rest: 'The many fires came up like the lights of a city and then in the fog and smoke the fires looked singular, fading away in the near distance.' (Sears, 143)

"In their bivouacs around Hartwood Church the men of the flanking column were roused well before dawn by their officers without resort to reveille. At 4:00 a.m. the Eleventh Corps, again designated to lead, took up its march. .. By sunrise the road was open for Alpheus Williams and John Geary to follow with their Twelfth Corps divisions. Finally came George Meade's Fifth Corps. The day began mild but cloudy, with the threat of rain." (Sears, 145)

"The march from Hartwood Church to Kelly's Ford was fourteen miles, and unlike the day before the entire flanking column was crowded onto a single road. For nearly the half the distance its track was westward along the Warrenton Post Road. Turning from that into a country road past Crittenden's Mill, the column was scheduled to reach Mt. Holly by late afternoon. Joe Hooker, who came up with the marchers at midday, was soon swearing and 'full of dire anger' over their pace." (Sears, 146)

The hold-up was caused by Howard's Eleventh Corps, which against orders had taken along far more wagons than had been designated. His 125 wagons were five times the number taken by the larger Twelfth Corps and stretched a mile along the road. "General Williams, whose division was marching immediately behind, complained of repeatedly running up against Howard's trains. That Tuesday Williams's men spent an hour standing and waiting for every two hours they marched. In late morning it began to rain, not hard enough to turn the road to mud but steadily enough to soak every man's load and make it that much heavier. By nightfall, wrote Private Aughinbaugh, they were 'a sore, worn-out body of men,' who thought they had marched at least five miles too far that day for the loads they had to carry. (Sears, 146-7)

A unit of the Eleventh Corps had been at Kelly's Ford for two weeks and on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 28, they crossed the Rappahannock and drove off a smaller and complacent Confederate unit. A pontoon bridge was completed across the river that night.

The Eleventh Corps performance on the march led Hooker to put Slocum's Twelfth in the lead the following day. Hooker returned east to his headquarters to oversee planned crossings on the left of his front [at Fredericksburg] and put Slocum in charge of the three corps in the flanking movement.

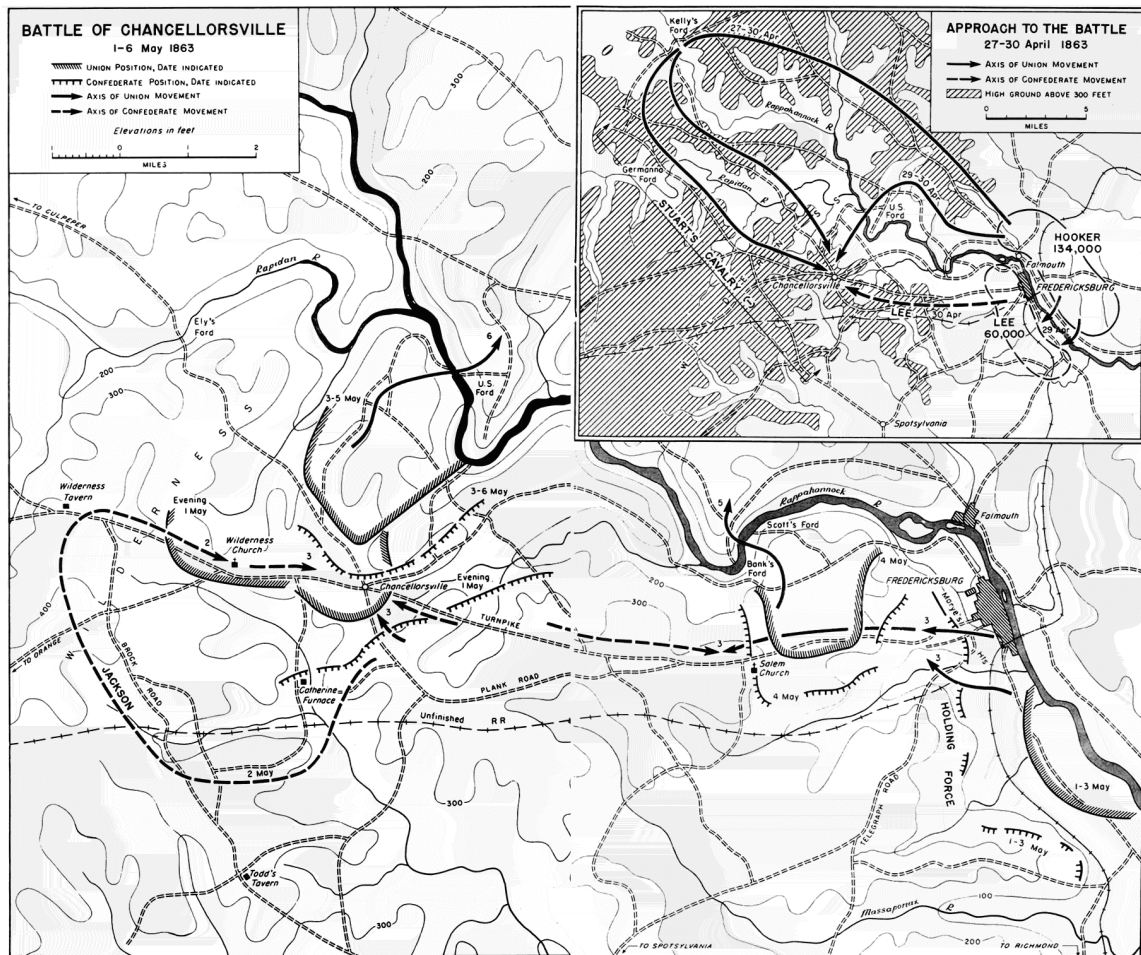
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The following account is taken from pp. 104-110 of "Memoirs of the 149th Regiment New York Volunteer Infantry" by Capt. George K. Collins, 1891, reprinted 1995 by Edmonston Publishing Inc.:

"Between four and five in the afternoon [Thursday, April 30] the command arrived at Chancellorsville, consisting of a dwelling house and outbuildings, and leaving the highway passed through an open field to the right, over a little stream of water and into a piece of woods where it bivouacked for the night. The country from Germania Ford to Chancellorsville was first open, fertile and cultivated, but afterwards densely wooded, swampy and to a greater or less extent covered with short scrubby evergreens. The road was generally good, but the country in and about Chancellorsville was justly called "The Wilderness."

The place of encampment was near the center of what was afterwards known as the battlefield of May 2d and 3d, 1863. Early next morning the command received Hooker's memorable order congratulating the 5th, 11th and 12th A.C.'s [Army Corps] on their brilliant achievement. Either from presentiment of what was to follow, or the boastful character of the order, the reading of it did not produce the effect intended. The general impression was unpleasant and distasteful.

Friday, May 1



Between ten and eleven in the forenoon of the 1st day of May the 12th Corps was put in motion on the plank road leading to the right from Chancellorsville southeasterly towards Fredericksburg. After proceeding a short distance the column came to a road leading to the right; here the 149th was deployed on the south side of the plank road and advanced through swamps, woods and thick evergreens in line of battle. The density of the evergreens made it impossible to keep in line and difficult to keep the general direction and prevent being lost in the thicket.

After advancing a mile or two the line emerged into a piece of open woods, near cleared land, and halted to reform. After a few moments it moved forward again, while the enemy shelled the woods from the distance."

The shelling was coming from E.P. Alexander's battery, which the 149th would meet again two days later. In front of them were Anderson's Division, including Carnot Posey's Brigade of Mississippi regiments, which was also to revist the 149th. This is drawing from a series of maps sold by the U.S. Park Service and produced in 1998 by researchers Frank O'Reilly

and Eric J. Mink, and mapmaker John Dove (Reilly map, 1 of 12). Unlike other maps, these show detail down to the regimental level, allowing me to see the position of the 149th at various hours of the battle.

Collins: "Limbs of trees were broken off and fell among the men, and shells bursted rapidly over their heads. The position was uncomfortable, although very few, if any, were seriously injured. The men behaved in a cool and collected manner and appeared eager to move forward, uncover the enemy, and have the matter over. Just as the line approached a clearing an aid from the brigade or division staff rode up and directed the regiment to return to the plank road and retire to the rear, saying if it did not do so at once it would be cut to pieces. After the regiment joined the column in the road it retired back to the place whence it started in the morning."

The 149th and Hooker's other forces were moving into perhaps their best position of the battle against Lee -- the open fields to the east. It was at this point that Hooker overestimated the strength of Lee's forces and assumed a defensive position back in the woods, where the Union troops' superior numbers mattered less. Hooker lost his nerve and let Lee take the initiative. Lee complied.

Collins: "On the way back part of the regiment, detailed as skirmishers and pickets, entered the thick wood and undergrowth southwest of the highway, and after marching a little less than a mile took position a few rods northwest of a road leading from the plank, and few rods in front of the breastworks afterwards built by the 2d Division of the 12th A.C. on the battlefield of Chancellorsville. The skirmishers were not disturbed during their stay, which continued until the next day, yet the position was particularly unpleasant on account of the dense character of the woods and the uncertainty existing the minds of the men as to the position and purpose of the enemy in front. The men well knew if an attack was made in force, they were to be sacrificed, as they could never regain their command safely. The night was dark and dismal, and the pickets could not be visited on account of the difficulty of finding them in the undergrowth and evergreens. They were nervous on account of the delicacy of the situation, and had occasion to feel so.

Saturday, May 2



1863_05_02_in the trenches before Fredricksburg_05-0232a

Soon after daylight the enemy was heard marching to the right along the road in front, and the commands of the officers and voices of the men could be distinctly heard as they moved along. One of the skirmishers got up in a tree so he could see the moving forces, while others advanced from tree to tree towards the road until the enemy was distinctly seen. A messenger was dispatched to headquarters with the information obtained, and afterwards a second one was sent on the same mission, but no response was received from either message."

[Collins seems to be telegraphing his readers that the fault of Stonewall Jackson's surprise attack on the Union's right, or western, flank that Saturday evening was not the fault of front line troops. Sears in his book, "Chancellorsville," discusses this issue at length. He says that reports did reach Hooker of a westward movement of Confederate troops and Hooker issued orders to commanders to extend their pickets and build up defenses on their right. Hooker had placed the 11th Army Corps on the far right of the Union lines because the troops were not considered reliable and were likely to do the least damage there. But they were the first Union troops Stonewall encountered and they were routed, thereafter taking much of the blame for Hooker's defeat at Chancellorsville. Notice in the accounts how the writers describe their retreats as tactical, planned actions in an apparent effort to distinguish the actions of the 149th and the 12th Army Corps from those of the woe-be-gotten 11th.]

Collins: "A little after noon the skirmishers, having been relieved by others, retired to their respective regiments directly in rear. After a few rods a formidable abatis was reached, constructed of fallen trees with their tops towards the front, which was passed with difficulty. In rear of this was a long line of rifle pits extending a mile or more from the plank road on the left down to an open field on the right.

The position of the regiment extended from near the open field on the right forty or fifty rods up a gradually ascending slope to the left. On its right was the 78th, and on its left the other regiments of the brigade. In rear of the breastworks was an open cleared space two or three rods in width extending along the whole line of works. The rifle-pits were built of trunks of trees, taken from off this cleared space, partially covered with earth from a shallow trench along the inside. Owing to a scarcity of entrenching tools, part of the earth from the trenches was loosened by bayonets and placed on the breastworks by tin plates taken from the men's haversacks.

When the men from the skirmish line saw the immense amount of work which had been done since the day before, they were grateful they had been away, notwithstanding the anxieties and exposures they had experienced.

Early in the afternoon all the troops along the line in question were removed, except those belonging to the 3d Brigade [i.e, the 149th's brigade], and these were put to marching up and down the vacant rifle pits to mystify the enemy as to their numbers and the disposition of the Union forces. Towards evening they were relieved from marching and laid down behind the works in their old position on the right of the line. From their location on the hillside could be seen all that transpired on the open field to the right, and in the grove on its further side, which appeared like an orchard gathered around a farm-house. This was half a mile from the regiment and now known as Hazel Grove."

Jackson's surprise attack on the western flank would now begin. Some argue it would have had greater effect had it begun before nightfall. His delay getting underway that morning also contributed to his own death: It was in darkness that he was mortally wounded by fire from his own troops as he tried to inspect the battlefield. He was shot twice in his left arm, which had to be amputated. He died May 10 of pneumonia.

Collins: "About dark a fierce cannonading commenced near this grove and was continued diagonally to the rear. Afterwards troops formed in line in the open field and charged toward the rear in double lines. Soon these were met by lines coming in an opposite direction, and then the two

contending lines swayed backward and forward as a temporary or permanent advantage was obtained. Above the rattle of musketry, the booming of artillery, and screeching and explosion of shells, could be heard the cries of the men and commands and oaths of the officers. The course of the circling shells could be traced by their burning fuses, and as they burst in mid air, a momentary light was cast upon the contestants in the field below. Notwithstanding the grandeur and sublimity of the scene, it was hellish and filled the minds of the men with anxiety. It reminded one of the horrid visions portrayed in Dante's "Inferno." About eleven o'clock the battle was over and all became quiet, except the cries and groans of dying and wounded which were heard afterwards."

The 11th Corps to the 149th's west had been routed and now it was the 149th that was part of the new western edge of the Union lines.

Collins: "About twelve o'clock a detail of men was made from the brigade and moved off to the right and rear to build breastworks along the edge of the woods in that direction. The men then laid down, notwithstanding the great excitement which had just taken place, soon found rest in sleep. While the men were composing themselves for the night, the plaintive tones of a whip-poor-will were heard as he piped his evening song. The mingling of the tones of the bird with the cries of the dying and the wounded produced a strange sensation, like the voice of conscience to the wicked."

Sunday, May 3

Sunday's actions were described in the Commanders Report for the 149th written Monday, May 4, by Koert S. Van Voorhis, Lieut. Col. 137th N. Y. Volunteers, commanding the 149th N. Y. Volunteer Infantry (see fis005f-chancellorsville.doc).

Voorhis said the 149th went into action Sunday, May 3 with 24 commissioned officers and 479 enlisted men. It was placed behind the breastworks early in the morning with the 78th New York was on its right and the 137th New York on its left -- both regiments of Greene's Third Brigade.

"About 7 a.m. the enemy got a battery in position on our right, and opened fire on our line, completely enfilading it," Voorhis reported.

This was Alexander's batteries, which had taken possession of Hazel Grove and were instrumental in the victory won that morning, the bloodiest hours of the battle.

Collins: "When the men awoke at dawn of day all was still and quiet; it was Sunday morning. After the light was sufficient to see, a line of Union men was observed along the edge of the grove on the further side of the field; these soon commenced retiring in line of battle to the rear, closely followed by a yelping line of Confederates firing as they came [This would have been McGowan's Brigade, consisting of the 1st S.C. (Orr's) Rifles and the 1st, 12th, 13th and 14th S.C. regiments]

"The Union men did not return the fire, but fell back in good order until they disappeared behind the woods from view. The enemy advanced pursuing until he too passed from sight. The men in the 3d Brigade were nervous and began to feel a solicitude for their personal safety, when suddenly a roll of musketry was heard proceeding from the woods in rear, followed by the well known cheers of the men in the Union lines. Soon the "Johnnies" came in view running across the open field dropping here and there before the well-directed fire of the Union men, as they tried to make their escape. In a few moments the open field was strewn with bodies of the enemy and the articles thrown away by him in his effort to escape.

About half an hour after this charge was over the enemy brought forward several pieces of artillery and planted them in the edge of the grove and commenced a rapid fire upon the 3d Brigade on the hillside above, within easy range of his guns. [Alexander's batteries at Hazel Grove]. As his battery was on the flank of the brigade line, the situation was uncomfortable. The men were not relieved, and as the battery was out of range of their rifles, they could do nothing except hold the position, lying on the ground subject to fire, which they did for the space of two hours. There were not as many injured, however, as one would naturally suppose from the terrific character of the shelling, owing to the fact that the men closely hugged the ground. Occasionally a man was hit by a shell or flying fragment, and when that occurred, it was generally to some purpose. The men will remember one poor fellow who was nearly cut in two by a shell and was still living as two of this companions bore him away; one holding his head and shoulders and the other his heels."

My hunch is that Fisselbrand was one of those hit by a fragment one of Alexander's shells "to some purpose" during this barrage. "It would be said, upon reflection, that the volume of fire delivered from Hazel Grove that morning as never exceeded by the Confederate artillery. The best crews

were getting off three rounds a minute, a firing pace the equal of the best-trained infantry." (Sears, 333).

Collins: "Several shells exploded within a few feet of the writer, and one within a foot of the head of a man lying near him on the ground. A man lying spoon-fashion in line next to the writer in the trenches was struck in the side by a piece of flying shell, which tore his coat, scratched his waist belt, and nearly knocked the breath out of his body, but strange to say the writer escaped unharmed, although reclining on his elbow with his breast in the direction of the flying fragment. The man yelled lustily and was greatly frightened, but sustained no serious injury. The firing was very rapid, and at the close a man could easily have filled his pockets with fragments of shells lying in reach of his hands from where he lay."

Voorhis: "We lay under a fire of shot, shell, and grape until about 9.30 a.m., when we were attacked by a heavy body of infantry on our right flank. After firing a few volleys, the regiment retired along the breastworks toward the cross-roads. We formed line several times while falling back perpendicular to the trench, and drove the enemy back each time. The enemy still kept advancing on our right and rear, and we fell back to the edge of the woods near the road. Here we lay until the batteries began to leave, when we were ordered by General Hooker to join our brigade.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Cook was wounded when we first began to fall back. Captain May then took command. Colonel Cook was almost immediately taken prisoner by some of the Mississippi Volunteers, but we rallied and got him again, taking his captors prisoners. We took about 20 prisoners of the Fifteenth [?] Mississippi Volunteers We joined the brigade near the cross-roads, and marched with it to near the corps hospital. We have been with the brigade since."

The reference Voorhis makes here to the 15th[?] Mississippi Volunteers is a good clue to what unit ran over Fisselbrand and his fellow unfortunates. Sears has a list of the regiments in the battle. It shows two brigades of Mississippians: Carnot Posey's in Anderson's Division, which was in position in front of the 149th and Barkdale's in McLaw's Division, which was in reserve on the southeast -- away from the 149th. (O'Reilly maps 10 & 11 of 12). These maps also indicate that the 149th and the rest of Greene's Third Brigade were routed between 8 a.m and 9 a.m. -- earlier than Collins and Voorhis say -- and leaving troops from Sickles' 3rd Corps to defend their position at a heavy cost. All the troops had retreated by 10:30 a.m. to the Chancellorsville house.

Posey's Brigade consisted of the 12th, 16th, 19th and 48th Mississippi infantry regiments (Sears, 492). Brig. Gen. Carnot Posey commanded the Mississippi regiments that probably overran the 149th and captured Fisselbrand. The following is from his May 12 report on the battle (from <http://www.civilwarhome.com/posechancellorsville.htm>):

"On the morning of the 3d, the enemy having disappeared from my front, I advanced my command by the furnace, capturing many prisoners and arms, until I reached a point in a field in rear of our batteries on the extreme right of the enemy's lines. Here I formed my command in column of regiments, and after a short time was ordered to advance by flank to the right and attack the enemy, who were in strong force on a hill in front. I deployed first the Nineteenth [Mississippi], then the Twelfth, Forty-eighth, and Sixteenth [Mississippi], directing the commanders to move by the left flank (which would bring them in line of battle fronting the enemy), as soon as they attained sufficient room in the woods, and push forward their skirmishers vigorously against the enemy's. The movement was made in fine order, under heavy fire of shell and grape as each regiment attained its position. The commanders pushed forward gallantly and irresistibly through a dense wood and over a wide abatis and into the trenches of the enemy, driving him off with much slaughter and capturing many prisoners."

Collins describes the Confederate attack and the 149th's retreat:

"After the shelling had ceased, the enemy [Dole's Brigade of Georgians?] was discovered in occupation of the woods in rear of the brigade, which had become isolated from the rest of the command, and in considerable force advancing on its right flank [Posey's Brigade of Mississippians]. The men on the right, taken at an advantage, were rolled up and rapidly melted away. About this time Maj. Cook, the only field officer present, was severely wounded and removed from the field. The appearance of the enemy suddenly in an unexpected quarter, and close at hand, caused some confusion, yet the line officers, in the absence of field and general officers, not having full knowledge of the situation and believing it necessary for the safety of the command, made a gallant effort to hold the position. The effort was heroic and the men showed courage worthy of veterans, but it was no use, and with the experience of later years they would have promptly retired to the more tenable position. While one line of the enemy was moving up the flank, another was advancing through the woods in rear gradually enclosing the position.

"The situation at length becoming known, under the lead of older regiments of the brigade, the 149th retired from the position, fighting its way through encircling lines. Some of the wounded, able to walk, by active use of their legs escaped before the enemy had completed the investment, and a few isolated squads of men fought their way single-handed through a portion of the enemy's lines, bringing prisoners with them, but nevertheless many were captured, and many were killed or wounded. The men would have been justified in retiring earlier, as an order had been sent for their withdrawal and

miscarried, and no good was accomplished by their stay. All those who got away had reason to congratulate themselves on their escape. Nearly every man on the skirmish line was either killed or captured."

Hooker had ordered Geary to hold his position at all hazards, but as he was being attacked on two flanks he asked General Couch to his left, "My division can't hold its place; what shall I do?" Couch replied, "I don't know, but do as we are doing; fight it out." Geary soon after lost his voice trying to shout over the din and handed over command to Greene. Slocum finally ordered Geary to retreat. (Sears, 341, 482).

By 9 a.m., the place of the 149th and the rest Greene's 3rd Brigade was taken by Bowman's Brigade, which had been held in reserve. (O'Reilly map 11 of 12, 8-9 a.m).

Lt. Col. Milton Opp, commanding the 84th Pennsylvania in Bowman's Brigade watched the attack on the section held by the 149th and its fellow regiments. "The attack of the enemy had continued but a short time, when one line to the front of us gave way." Bowman ordered the 84th and 110th Pennsylvania into the breach. "The old lines were re-gained, and held for about an hour and until all the regiments on the right and left of the Eighty-fourth had retired, leaving us in an isolated and exposed position." (Opp official report, from chx00n30-bowman.doc, from <http://w3.one.net/~wburkey/84thpa/>)

Bowman's Brigade was mauled. Two of its regiments, the 12th New Hampshire and the 84th New York suffered casualties of about 55 percent, many of them captured. The 12th New Hampshire had the highest number of casualties of any regiment in the battle, North or South - 317 men. (Sears, 341, 482).

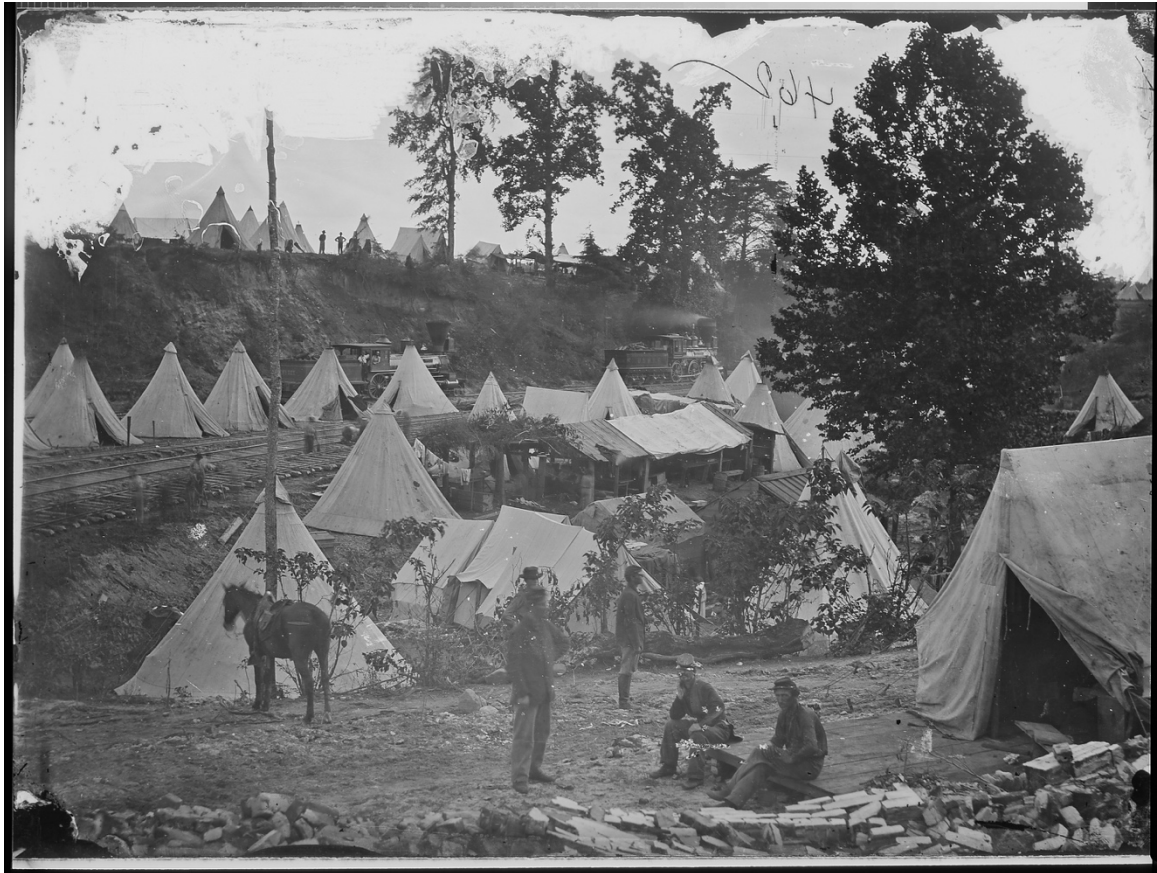
Sickles reported after the battle that Bowman's Brigade "behaved with the utmost gallantry, and were boldly led, maintaining their ground to the last under the most adverse circumstances. Their loss was necessarily severe." (Sickles official report, from chx00n30-sickle.doc, from <http://www.civilwarhome.com/sickleschancellorsville.htm>).

The 124th New York was also nearby at Chancellorsville, and it was that regiment in that battle that Stephen Crane used as a model for his novel, "The Red Badge of Courage." (Sears, 511).

Hooker retreated Tuesday night, May 5, across the Rappahannock River. Chancellorsville was considered by many as Lee's greatest victory, but it cost him casualties that were nearly as high as those of the Union troops and cost him the life of Stonewall Jackson.

The 149th would fight on through the rest of the war: It helped in the famous defense of Culp's Hill at the battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania; it was in Tennessee for the storming of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and took part in the siege and capture of Atlanta. Yet Chancellorsville, where the unit's first blood was shed, was its bloodiest engagement. Of the regiment's 133 men killed or mortally wounded in battle during the war, 38 deaths resulted from Chancellorsville -- 29 percent of the total. Part of the reason for the high casualties may have been the greenness of the troops -- allowing themselves to be enveloped, which Collins says they would not have done later. They most certainly were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Ormsby, the prolific letter-writing private, was a picket and was captured Sunday, May 3. He was soon paroled, that is, exchanged for Confederate prisoners, and wrote interesting letters about his experiences, which took him within sight of Libby prison in Richmond. Ormsby's path may have followed that of Fisselbrand, depending on how severely Fisselbrand was wounded. He may have had a wound that became infected, or he may have died of pneumonia or some other secondary cause, like Jackson. It's highly unlikely Fisselbrand marched beside Ormsby, and not much more likely that he was carried in wagons with that group. However, Ormsby's release occurred at the same time as Fisselbrand's, lending the slenderest hair of evidence tying him to that path.



1860_1865_NARA_field hospital_City Point_Va_2_524881a

I'm still trying to understand the rules that applied for the parole and exchange of prisoners. Apparently, they had to sit out the war for a spell in friendly hands. Whether or not Fisselbrand was anywhere near Ormsby in his travels, his account is interesting and worth relating.

Ormsby:

Paroled Camp Annapolis, Md.

May 16, 1863

Dear Parents;

we arrived at Annapolis early in the morning. I wrote yesterday that we were going to Alexandria but it seems that I was mistaken. There is a large paroled camp here where they intend to keep us until we are exchanged.

...

I wrote in my letter yesterday how we came to be taken. I don't think we would have been taken if the Major who commanded our pickets tended to his business. He told us to stay at our posts until we were attacked from the front. This was Saturday afternoon [May 2] just before the night. He went back to camp and that was the last we see of him. If we had fell back to the reserves early Sunday morning [May 3] we wouldn't have been taken.

After we were taken they took us back through their lines to the plank road. Here we found about 600 of our men including all of the pickets of our brigade. They kept us there until noon when they started us for a place called Guineys Station on the railroad to Richmond. The distance was only about 14 miles but they took a road that went 30 miles to the same destination. I suppose the reason was that General Stoneman [the Union cavalry officer] was some where on the road and they didn't want to run across him.

We got to the station about 9 in the evening and we were all tired out. Two of the men died on the road. They kept us here until Thursday [May 7]. They didn't give us anything to eat until tuesday [May 5] when they gave us a pint of flour and a small piece of salt beef to each man for a days rations. We had to cook the flour the best way we could. You think we didn't make some awful messes. I think they have all of the prisoners here. I think there were about 5000 of them in all.

Thursday [May 7] at noon they started about 2000 of us for Richmond. We expected to go in the cars but we were mistaken. We marched the first day to Hanover Junction. The next day [Friday, May 8] we marched to Milford Station. Th following day [Saturday, May 9] we marched about 30 miles to Richmond. We were marched about 3 miles through the city to Libby Prison. By the time we got there we were about used up. The streets were crowded with people to see the Yankees.

We stayed at Libby Prison or warehouse from Saturday night [May 9] until Wednesday morning [May 13]. We were paroled on Monday [May 11, or May 18??] with ever man signing his name to papers. While we were in Richmond they gave every man a half loaf of bread and a small piece of bacon for a days rations.

Wednesday afternoon at 2 pm [May 13] they started us for City Point about 35 miles from Richmond. I suppose they intend to march us clear through without stopping. We marched until about 10 o'clock when there came up an awful thunder shower. We kept on marching for about a 1/2 hour when it got so dark we couldn't see where we were marching so we had to stop until morning. The next morning [Thursday, May 14] they started us at daylight again. We got to City Point at noon where we found our steam boats ready to take us off. This ended our marching and I think we had had enough. Since we left camp we have marched over 200 miles. We were glad to see our old flag again and to get some of UNCLE SAMS rations.

As soon as I got on the steamer I wrote to you, and left the letter at Fortress Monroe. I suppose you will get it. I havn't heard anything from our regiment. As soon as you get this letter I wish you would answer it and give me all the news with a list of the killed and wounded of our regiment. I wish you would send a paper giving an account of the battle as I havn't see one yet. I think the reason for us getting beat was that General Hooker was out Generaled. I think the battle would have turned out different if the 11th corps which is most all Dutchmen hadn't broke and run like a pack of cowards.

Direct your letter to Co E 149th vol. Colledge Green Barracks, Annapolis Md. Care of Maj. D. J. Everts. I will write again in a few days. Our Regiment hadn't been paid off yet so I am out of money. Please send me two dollars in your next letter and if it comes safe I will send for more should I need it.

Oliver

It's very likely Fisselbrand was so severely wounded that he was left on the field, captured by the advancing Confederates and taken with other wounded to Salem Church, the Talley house or some other field hospital. The oral history in our family was that Fisselbrand's arm was amputated after the battle (see note below).



Straw huts erected on Smith's farm, and used as a hospital after the battle of Antietam_v2



US Sanitary Commission_NYPL_Removing the Wounded

The best description I've read of field hospitals after Chancellorsville was by a surgeon with another New York regiment, who was taken prisoner and helped treat the soldiers of both sides at Salem Church. I don't have that at hand. In its absence, the following description from Ernest B. Furgurson's 1992 book, "Chancellorsville," paints the picture vividly enough:

"Civil War field surgeons knew nothing of sepsis and other fundamentals of modern medicine, and except for amputation, any active treatment by them was likely to make things worse instead of better. They used the same bloody swabs from patient to patient. Field hospitals swarmed with flies. In their clenched-jawed fatigue, doctors routinely sawed off seriously wounded arms and legs with little thought of whether they might be saved. For body wounds, the most effective remedy was hope.

"Federal surgeons left behind when the Confederates retook the Tally house, west of Chancellorsville, joined in trying to care for wounded of both armies scattered on the ground. 'The operating tables were like butchers' blocks,' said an Ohio captain. 'The dying and dead lay among the living, and burial parties were very slow in removing the dead. Finally food gave out and many must have starved but for the supply of whiskey and condensed milk which had been sent for our relief by permission of General Lee, it being our only resource....'

Salem Church, so recently a fortress, became a hospital. Col. Robert McMillen of the 25th Georgia wrote that 'The scenes of death and carnage witnessed here, no human tongue or pen can adequately describe' -- but he tried: 'After the house was filled, the spacious church yard was literally covered with wounded and dying. The sight inside the building, for horror, was perhaps never equaled within so limited a space. Every available foot of

space was crowded with wounded and bleeding soldiers. The floor, the benches, even the chancel and pulpit, were all packed almost to suffocation with them. The amputated limbs were piled up in every corner almost as high as a man could reach; blood flowed in streams along the aisles and out at the doors; screams and groans were heard on all sides, while the surgeons, with their assistants, worked with knives, saws, sutures and bandages to relieve or save all they could from bleeding to death.' " (Furgurson, 310)



Collins said there were 94 men of the 149th reported as prisoners or missing. "Owing to the fact that many of the killed and wounded fell into the hands of the enemy, and many prisoners were taken by him, a painful uncertainty rested over the fate of a number of persons in the regiment until long after the engagement; in fact a few names were carried on the muster rolls as missing until the end of the war." (Collins, 113-114)

"On the 11th William H. Ketchum and Christian Schwartz, two of the wounded, returned from the enemy bringing news of prisoners of war. On the 12th the ambulances in charge of Sergt. Barriger crossed the Rappahannock under a flag of truce for wounded. On the 14th ... Lieut. Philip Eckel returned from the enemy suffering from a gun-shot wound in

the arm, and accompanied by Mathias Frieslebrand [sic], also wounded in the arm. (Collins, 117).

The above paragraph provides only a few clues. The reference to Barriger "crossing the Rappahannock" River suggests to me that the wounded he picked up were just on the other side. That may mean Fisselbrand remained at Salem Church with many of the wounded from the battle.



Ambulance train - ID_ 1150216 - NYPL Digital Gallery_v2

That Ketchum and Schwartz came May 11, and Eckel and Fisselbrand came back three days later might suggest the first two were in notably better or worse shape than the latter pair. However, the regimental history is inconclusive. Collins states that Ketchum, a private with Co. H, was "badly wounded in the arm," but he was back with the regiment sometime before

May 1864. Schwartz, a corporal with Co. F, was "wounded in the arm ... sent to hospital and transferred to V.R.C. Oct. 18, 1863." From other references I believe being sent to "V.R.C." meant you were taken out of combat service. Fisselbrand was "severely wounded" in the arm and died; Eckel, spelled "Echel" in Collins' roster appendix, was "wounded in the arm," sent to a hospital "from whence he was discharged on a surgeon's certificate of disability Dec. 21, 1863." By the way, there is a monument in Syracuse for a Philip Echel "dedicated in 1900 to the Syracuse Fire Chief who lost his life at a fire on June 1st, 1886." The regimental roster shows its Philip Echel as dead at the time of its publication in 1891.



**1860_1865_Wounded
soldiers in hospital_05-
0360a**

Collins said Fisselbrand died "in a field hospital," but provides no date or location. The Syracuse Journal article says he died in a military hospital in

Washington, D.C., May 31 to June 6. Given the 17-23 days that elapsed between his return to the regiment and his death, it's likely the Syracuse Journal account was correct.



US Sanitary Commission _Lodge 4 at 389 H Street_Washington DC

Exactly what happened to Fisselbrand may remain buried forever in the First Ward cemetery in Syracuse. However, it's possible that other accounts survive -- perhaps from accounts of others in his unit, perhaps even through other relatives.

The 149th participated in Sherman's "March to the Sea" and from Savannah marched north through South Carolina and into North Carolina, where they were with the troops that accepted Gen. Johnston's surrender April 15. From there they marched north to Richmond and then to Chancellorsville, where they spent about two or three hours on the battlefield.

Collins: "The Union dead were found unburied, except a slight covering of earth thrown over the bodies where they fell, and which had been washed off by rain leaving the bones badly exposed. Everywhere were scattered the remains of canteens, knapsacks, abandoned clothing, and the debris of the battlefield. The bones of some of the dead were identified, carefully taken up and interred in marked graves by the comrades. Among these were the bones of Lieut. Davis of Co. K, which were buried in a cracker box."

Ormsby and most of the others captured at Chancellorsville rejoined the 149th on Nov. 17, 1863 at Wauhatchie, near Lookout Mountain, on the Tennessee-Georgia line. Ormsby was wounded slightly in the hip at Pine Mountain, Ga., June 15, 1864, was promoted to corporal Dec. 31, 1864 and remained with the unit throughout the rest of the war.

Ormsby and the rest of the 149th's survivors returned to Syracuse June 17th to a parade. Eleven days later he wrote a friend:

I think all the boys are glad to be home, and glad to think that their job is done, and very well done. The rebellion is so smashed there isn't even a grease spot left. It is a bitter pill for the copperheads to swallow. They will have to take them straight down even though they may make an awful face.

He married, raised three children and died Aug. 20, 1913 near Syracuse at age 75.

[END]

An overview of the battle of Chancellorsville

Chancellorsville

Other Names: None

Location: Spotsylvania County

Campaign: Chancellorsville Campaign (April-May 1863)

Date(s): April 30-May 6, 1863

Principal Commanders: Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker [US]; Gen. Robert E. Lee and Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson [CS]

Forces Engaged: 154,734 total (US 97,382; CS 57,352)

Estimated Casualties: 24,000 total (US 14,000; CS 10,000)

Description: On April 27, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker led the V, XI, and XII Corps on a campaign to turn the Confederate left flank by crossing the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers above Fredericksburg. Passing the Rapidan via Germanna and Ely's Fords, the Federals concentrated near Chancellorsville on April 30 and May 1. The III Corps was ordered to join the army via United States Ford. Sedgwick's VI Corps and Gibbon's division remained to demonstrate against the Confederates at Fredericksburg.

In the meantime, Lee left a covering force under Maj. Gen. Jubal Early in Fredericksburg and marched with the rest of the army to confront the Federals. As Hooker's army moved toward Fredericksburg on the Orange Turnpike, they encountered increasing Confederate resistance. Hearing reports of overwhelming Confederate force, Hooker ordered his army to suspend the advance and to concentrate again at Chancellorsville.

Pressed closely by Lee's advance, Hooker adopted a defensive posture, thus giving Lee the initiative. On the morning of May 2, Lt. Gen. T.J. Jackson directed his corps on a march against the Federal left flank, which was reported to be "hanging in the air." Fighting was sporadic on other portions of the field throughout the day, as Jackson's column reached its jump-off point. At 5:20 pm, Jackson's line surged forward in an overwhelming attack that crushed the Union XI Corps. Federal troops rallied, resisted the advance, and counterattacked.

Disorganization on both sides and darkness ended the fighting. While making a night reconnaissance, Jackson was mortally wounded by his own men and carried from the field. J.E.B. Stuart took temporary command of Jackson's Corps.

On May 3, the Confederates attacked with both wings of the army and massed their artillery at Hazel Grove. This finally broke the Federal line at Chancellorsville. Hooker withdrew a mile and entrenched in a defensive "U" with his back to the river at United States Ford. Union generals Berry and Whipple and Confederate general Paxton were killed; Stonewall Jackson was mortally wounded. On the night of May 5-6, after Union reverses at Salem Church, Hooker recrossed to the north bank of the Rappahannock. This battle was considered by many historians to be Lee's greatest victory.

Result(s): Confederate victory

CWSAC Reference #: VA032

Preservation Priority: I.2 (Class A)

Ferguson, ... draws from Capt. Hartwell Osborn, 55th Ohio, "On the Right at Chancellorsville," Military essays and recollections, Vo. 4, Chicago: Mollus, Illinois, 1907, pp. 190-191 and

Col. Robert McMillen, 24th Ga., memoir, CW Miscellany, Personal Papers, GDAH

Sears' account on p. 341 of Geary's retreat draws from:

- * Doles, Geary, Lane reports, OR 25:1, pp. 968, 731, 765;
- * Thomas M. Hightower to fiancée, May 8, 1863, George dept of Archies and Hlstory;
- * James T. Miller to brother, May 12, William Aughinbaugh diary, May 7, Schoff Collection, Clements Librery, University of Michigan;
- * Couch in "Battles and Leaders," 3, p. 168;
- * Nathaniel Parmeter diary, May 3, Ohio Historical Society;
- * G.H. Tarr letter, May 4, Virginia Polytechnical Institute and State University Libraries;
- * George S. Greene, RG 94, U.S. Generals' Reports, National Archives;
- * Moore, Frank, ed., The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events," 7, Incidents, pp. 7-8. (Putnams, 1863)

Other sources I might check:

from http://www.collphyphil.org/FIND_AID/hist/histcvwr.htm

Resources in Civil War Medicine:

At the Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia

Compiled By:

Jeffrey S. Anderson &

Eric G. Linderman

Dr. William Fisher Norris (top center) and his medical staff at Douglas Hospital in Washington, D.C. (1864). Dr. Norris was a Philadelphia doctor and a fellow of the College.

Author: Medical Society of the District of Columbia.

Title: Report on the sanitary condition of the cities of Washington
and Georgetown : presented to the Society, March, 1864.

Published: Washington, D.C. : [s.n.], 1864 (Washington : Gibson Brothers)

Subject: Washington (D.C.) --Hospitals.

United States --History --Civil War, 1861-1865 --Health aspects.

Smallpox --Washington (D.C.)

CPP Pamphlet Boxes - 2nd floor

CALL NUMBER: Pam 364 -- PAMPHLET

Author: Strait, N. A. (Newton Allen), d. 1922.

Title: Roster of all regimental surgeons and assistant surgeons
in the late war, with their service, and last-known
post-office address. Comp. from official records
by N.A. Strait ... for use of United States Pension Office.

Published: [Washington?] 1882.

Subject: Military Medicine --history of, in campaigns, etc.

--United States --war of the rebellion, 1861-1865.

United States --History --Civil War, 1861-1865 --Registers.

United States. Army --Surgeons --Registers.

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Author: United States. Surgeon General's Office.

Title: The medical and surgical history of the war of the
rebellion (1861-65. Prepared, in accordance with

the acts of Congress, under the direction of Surgeon

General Joseph K. Barnes, Unites States Army.

Published: Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1875-83

Subject: United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Medical

and sanitary affairs

Medicine, Military

Surgery, Military

Military Medicine--history--United States.

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Navarro College

77. Grumbach, Nicholas

This Union army officer describes how his men are the first to enter Savannah, posting flags throughout the city so that the remainder of the Union forces could see them as they entered the city. Grumbach, a colonel of the 149th New York Volunteer Infantry, writes a four page letter, quarto, dated December 25th, 1864 from *A Corner west road and Zulbey, Savannah, Ga.* He writes the letter to Colonel Gustavus Sniper of the 185th New York Infantry.

Note, Dec. 7, 2000 (this has also been copied into the June 1985 BLD transcript)

Oral history often gets distorted as it's passed from generation to generation, but it's almost always interesting and contains clues to the truth.

That's the case with our understanding of Matthias Fisselbrand. Granddad, Bernard L. DuPlessis (1904-1992), had a fascination with Civil War history from an early age. He recalls as a boy talking with a Union veteran in his Newark neighborhood about the war and the veteran showing him the scar on his arm from a wound at Antietam in 1862. He also heard about his great uncle, Matthias Fisselbrand, from John Joseph Fisselbrand of Syracuse, Matthias' brother and Bernard's grandfather. John Joseph Fisselbrand would have been intimately familiar with Matthias' fate. He was Matthias' older brother and about 29 years old at the time of his death.

It would be important to know how old Bernard was when he listened to his grandfather. One visit to Syracuse was in February 1910, when Bernard was 6 years old. He was there for the burial of his grandmother, Johanna Lane Fisselbrand. He probably visited again before his grandfather died in December 1915, when Bernard was almost 12. His young age probably accounts for the distortions in his account.

Sometimes it's hard to distinguish what someone recalls from the family's oral history and what that person has learned from published sources. In granddad's case, he left handwritten notes used for his 1972 family history that give the history of his history. These notes are with the "grandparent papers" that were copied and distributed in 1998.

Here's what he wrote on Matthias Fisselbrand:

"I had always hear that Grandfather had a younger brother "Peter" who was severely wounded in the arm at First Bull Run -- that he was subsequently captured -- his arm was amputated -- he was paroled -- that my grandfather went to New York to bring him home and when he got there, the boy had already passed away.

"I was unable to find any reference to "Peter" Fisselbrand at the historical society. However, the attendant there was able to produce instantly a copy of a funeral notice from the local paper dated 6-9-1863 (the day of the funeral) covering a Mathias Fiselbrand "Soldier." (Mary DuPlessis [a cousin of Bernard's in Syracuse] recalls that her mother always referred to him as Uncle Matt) and from this and the facts below, I feel certain that this is grandfather's brother who was killed in the Civil War."

He notes that his sources from the visit the Syracuse historical society were primarily the funeral notice and Capt. Collins' history of the regiment published in 1891.

"I have not looked up any detailed records on Chancellorsville -- however it was on the morning of the 2nd that Jackson smashed Howard's 11th Corps. Much of the day of May 3rd was occupied by a heavy artillery battle, and apparently it was an artillery shell -- or grape shot -- that wounded great-uncle Mathias."

From these sources, it's apparent that granddad confirmed from Collins' regimental history that his great uncle was "severely wounded in the arm" at Chancellorsville. It's also apparent that granddad knew from oral history that his arm had been amputated, and has guessed -- as I have -- that the wound came from an artillery shell.

One other confusing issue is granddad's account of Matthias Fisselbrand in my June 1985 interview with him in Fort Myers. He said then that Fisselbrand was in the artillery. This may also be from childhood confusion, or just poor memory of his own research.

Another intriguing point that I want to get into these notes:

In granddad's papers, there is family information about the Fisselbrands typed onto stationery under a letterhead of Leo A. Fisselbrand, a cousin in Syracuse. It's titled "Information received from Virginia Fisselbrand" and also has some handwritten notes in handwriting that I believe belongs to granddad.

In any case, there is a typed sentence: "Virginia destroyed a letter from President Lincoln as per instructions from Aunt Liz." There are no handwritten notes directed to that sentence.

I can only imagine that Lincoln would have written the family about the death of Matthias Fisselbrand. I wonder if a copy of that letter would have been made.