

Hartranft Herald The Newsletter of Maj. Gen. John F. Hartranft Camp 15

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

www.SuvcwHarrisburgPa.org

Celebrating our 144th Year serving Harrisburg Area



[@ Gen. John F. Hartranft Camp 15 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War](#)



Vol 28 No. 01



2026



Come to our general meetings and view central Pennsylvania from high atop Reservoir Park!

A newsletter for, about, and by the members of Camp 15!

2026 Hartranft Camp 15 Officers and your Staff	Commander ~~~~~ Senior Vice Commander ~~~~ Junior Vice Commander ~~~~ Secretary ~~~~ Treasurer ~~~~ Council 01 ~~~~ Council 02 ~~~~ Council 03 ~~~~ Patriotic Instructor ~~~~ Chaplain ~~~~ Graves Registration ~~~~ GAR Historian ~~~~ Counselor ~~~~ Eagle Scout Coordinator ~~~~ GAR Highway Officer ~~~~ Guide ~~~~ Color Bearer ~~~~ Guard ~~~~ Webmaster ~~~~ ROTC Coordinator ~~~~ Camp Historian ~~~~ Longevity Brother ~~~~ Praiseworthy Brother ~~~~ Praiseworthy Brother ~~~~ Praiseworthy Brother ~~~~ 	Kyle Purchase 2025-2026 Logan Swanger PCC 2021-2026 Scott Debo, PCC 2021-2026 Wayne Blattner, PCC 2025-2026 David W. Demmy, Sr. PCC 2007-2026 Jeffery Smith, PCC 2018-2026 Wayne Blattner PCC 2023-2026 Charles Brackbill Jr 2026 Jeffery Smith, PCC 2018-2026 Jeffery Smith, PCC 2026 Logan Swanger 2014-2026 Jeffery Smith, PCC 2018-2026 Charles Brackbill Jr 2026 Wayne Blattner PCC 2025-2026 Gregory E. Kline, PDC 2008-2026 Wayne Blattner PCC 2021-2026 Wayne Blattner PCC 2021-2026 Wayne Blattner PCC 2022-2026 Dave W. Demmy, Jr. 2011-2026 Gregory E. Kline, PDC 2011-2026 Wayne Blattner PCC 2020 - 2026 Late Dave J. Klinepeter PCC 1943-2023 Late Floyd J. Demmy WWII Veteran Late Joseph E. Long, Jr., PDC, Veteran Late Lee F. Walters, PDC, Past Exec Dir.
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Camp 15 routinely meets at the National Civil War Museum, at Reservoir Park, Harrisburg, PA, 2 pm, 3rd Sunday of most months. PA Dept: www.PASUVCW.org National: <http://www.suvcw.org/>

In accordance with General Order #7, March 7, 2022: "Individuals attending events hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, by virtue of their attendance, agree to the usage of their likeness in the *Banner*, any Camp or Department Newsletter, any SUVCW website and/or on any SUVCW Social Media outlet, promotional brochures, or any other SUVCW material."

Membership in our Order does not require a civil war ancestor nor is our Order a reenacting group!

January 2026 Hartranft Herald Camp 15 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
Award winning newsletter -- Marshall A. Hope Award presented to Hartranft Camp 2010-2011
Award winning website -- Horace Greeley Award presented to Hartranft Camp 2020-2022
SUVCW Legal heir of and representing the Grand Army of the Republic

Herald Vol 28 No. 01, Yes brothers we have completed another year. This newsletter is first issue of Volume 28.

Brothers and Sisters in distress

by camp chaplain:

Sister Helen Shireman, great granddaughter to our camp namesake, John F Hartranft, is recovering from an ailment.

The current list includes prayers for Brother David Demmy Sr. as he struggles with some health issues, [the VA is keeping him busy with appointments] Camp counselor Chuck Brackbill Jr, ailments; Brother Scott Debo's family, and Ann Ribblett, wife of Camp #15 member Terry Bibblett. Sister Ann McMillin recovering from recent surgery. Please keep all these Brothers and Sisters and their families in your prayers.

2026 Lincoln Luncheon data to date.

The event will be held on Saturday, February 7 with the doors opening at Noon and dinner served at 1:00. The speaker will follow the dinner. The event will be held at the historic Packer House in Sunbury located at 24 North 3rd St. The cost is \$30 and the meal includes the following:

**Choice of Herb Crusted Sirloin or Chicken
Scallopini, salad, mashed potatoes, a vegetable,
bread & butter and dessert. Coffee, tea and water
are included.**

RSVP will be due by Saturday, January 31 and I will have the complete details including mailing address for check, etc out in the next couple days., Greg.

Camp 15 Dues time – year 2026
2nd 'announced' notice

To save postage you may bring your New Year 2026 Camp 15 dues of **\$53** to an early camp Meeting!

Life Members' dues are \$10.00 for the Pennsylvania Department collection!

Presently Life Members are exempt from Camp 15 dues and National per capita!

All PA Department brothers including Life Members now must pay the PA dues amount – passed at 2025 PA encampment... the amount is \$10 for PA!

See text bottom of national form 9 for specifics!

Camp 15 treasurer prefers **\$53** check payable to 'Hartranft Camp 15, SUVCW'.

Camp 15 on the Road for 2026

Winter, Camp 15 begins dues collection for 2026, new amount is **\$53.00** payable to **Hartranft Camp 15 SUVCW.**

The increase is based upon Approval at June 2025 PA Dept encampment to keep up with inflation!

January welcome to 2026

First camp meeting in January will be held on Sunday January 18th

February 7th annual **Lincoln Luncheon**; More data TBA.

February 14th **recruiting table** at Community FREE Day at NCWM 10 a.m.

February camp meeting is scheduled for Sunday 15th. DST March 8th.

March camp meeting is scheduled for Sunday 15th.

April camp meeting is scheduled for 19th.

May camp meeting is scheduled for Sunday 17th.

May 23rd Camp 15 annual breakfast at 7:30 a.m. at PeachTree Restaurant, prior to attending Memorial Day tribute to veterans of historical Harrisburg Cemetery. Guests are welcome

Memorial Day Monday May 24th.

June 25 thru 27 annual encampment of the **PA Department at Carlisle.**

Dates subject to the call of our Camp Commander.

please update your social calendars now !

Be Proud - Wear the Badge



Come out to a meeting and engage with us!

- **The Allied Orders of the GAR:**
- -Woman's Relief Corps Auxiliary to GAR,
- -Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic,
- -Daughters of Union Veterans of Civil War,
- -Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and
- -The Auxiliary to Sons of Union Veterans Civil War.

Camp Officers & authors, the first Friday of each month is the Deadline for submission of stories, events, articles, and photos for *Hartranft Herald*.

Membership Bio Profiles will continue to appear as members submit them.

Complete an e-worksheet, please ask for one – send e-mail request to DoubleD@Demmy.cc

Bring a nephew, uncle, brother, father, grandfather, cousin, your neighbor and all your friends to a Camp meeting! Family and our sisters of the Allied Orders are always welcome!

Camp 15 Established February 11, 1882 in Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty!

God bless you and yours and God bless the USA.

Will the Real, Steven Kelly, Please Stand Up? The Strange Case of Pvt. Steven Kelly

By: Kyle Grant Purchase, Camp Commander

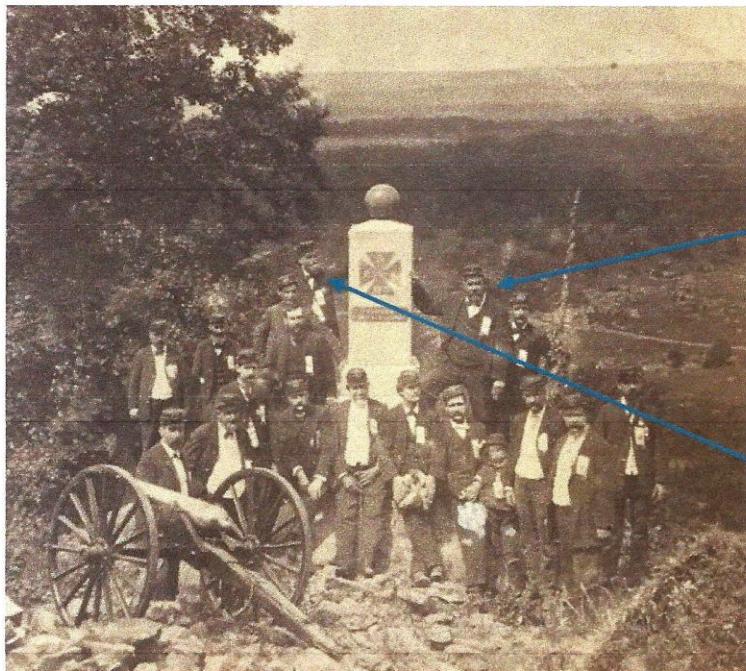
Twenty years after the Battle of Gettysburg, the memories of the battle were still fresh in the veterans' minds. Monuments, markers and tablets were placed all over the battlefield with assistance from the Gettysburg Park Commission, a precursor organization managing the park before it was operated by the National Park Service. The veterans of the 91st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry were no different. In the summer of 1883, the veterans returned to the hallowed ground at Gettysburg to dedicate their monument at the summit of Little Round Top. The regiment would also receive a much larger monument in 1889, with the availability of state funds, and the original placed near the Hazlett's Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery marker a few yards away.



Members of the 91st Pennsylvania dedicating their original monument on Little Round Top, August 1883. The veteran with his right hand on the monument is Joseph Hill Sinex, who was Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment at Gettysburg. Lt. Col. Sinex would serve in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1883-1884. He served on Philadelphia City Council prior to the war and is buried at Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Philadelphia.

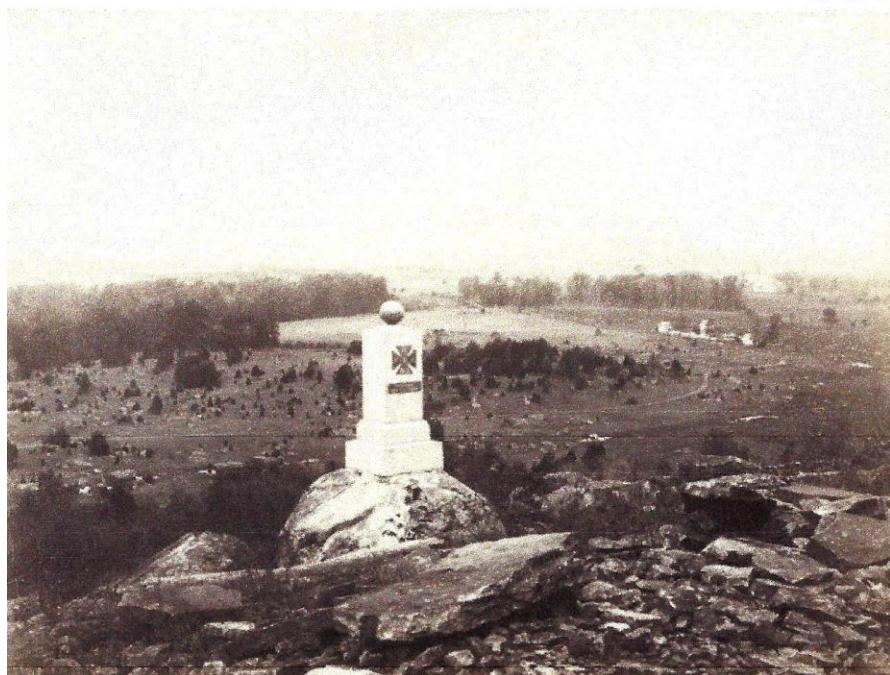
Joseph's brother, Sgt. Robert Sinex, also a veteran of the 91st, is to the left of the monument with his left hand on the monument. Robert is buried at Vine Street Cemetery in Hazleton.

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Joseph's brother, Sgt. Robert Sinex, also a veteran of the 91st, is to the left of the monument with his left hand on the monument. Robert is buried at Vine Street Cemetery in Hazleton.



The 91st Pennsylvania monument sitting alone with the backdrop of the battlefield. The much larger “castle tower” monument would take its’ place on this spot in 1889.

Continued

After the dedication in August 1883, the veterans then journeyed over to the Soldiers' National Cemetery to pay respects to their fallen comrades. One of those buried comrades was Pvt. Steven Kelly of Co. E, buried in Section A, Grave #88 of the Pennsylvania Plot. That was when something seemed a bit odd - Pvt. Steven Kelly was among the veterans of the 91st who returned to Gettysburg in 1883! So how could Pvt. Kelly be dead and have a headstone in the cemetery where he was alive and breathing, and putting flowers on it with his comrades?

There is an explanation. When the 91st Pennsylvania were making their way to Gettysburg in the summer of 1863 with the rest of the V Corps, Pvt. Kelly became ill and could not continue the march and was taken to a hospital. At some point and for some reason, he had lost his water canteen, which had his name scratched into it. Pvt. Kelly had done this to multiple articles of his equipment in case if he were to be killed in battle and there could be something of use to identify him for burial and recordkeeping purposes.

The 91st PA were part of Brigadier General Stephen Weed's brigade, 2nd Division, of the V Corps of the Army of the Potomac, brigaded together with the 140th and 146th New York Infantries, and the 155th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. On July 2nd, the 91st along with the rest of the brigade were ordered on the double quick to advance and assist the defense of the summit of Little Round Top.

During the battle, the brigade would lose Gen. Weed after he was shot in the chest while standing next to Lt. Charles E. Hazlett of Hazlett's Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery. Lt. Hazlett himself would be killed after being shot in the head and falling on top of Gen. Weed's body. Gen. Weed would die later in the day from his wounds. The 140th New York's Colonel Patrick Henry O'Rorke, 1861 West Point graduate and first in his class, would also be killed during the fight. In the end of the three days, the brigade lost about 200 casualties or 13.4% total strength.

While the Union dead were in the process of being collected after the fight, it was noticed that a canteen with Pvt. Kelly's inscription lay near a dead soldier, thus assuming the dead soldier was Pvt. Kelly himself.

Pvt. Steven Kelly served in the 91st PA, Co. E, enlisting as 'Stephen Kelly,' and would serve with the regiment, first mustering in on August 21, 1861, and mustering out on September 8, 1864. The regiment fought in major battles of the Eastern Theater including Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and the Overland Campaign of 1864. Pvt. Kelly's name does not appear on the 91st Pennsylvania's bronze roster tablet at the base of the Pennsylvania State Monument in Gettysburg.

After the war, Pvt. Kelly became a member of E.D. Baker Post #8, Pennsylvania Department, of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) in August 1874 and participated with fellow comrades in returning to Gettysburg with the survivors of the regiment where he discovered his "grave." According to a Gettysburg battlefield guide, Pvt. Kelly was quoted saying, "Each Decoration Day I go up there and strew some flowers on the tomb of the man who is substituting for me."

Pvt. Kelly had attempted to correct the mistake with the War Department and apply for a pension, but he was unable to convince the government he was alive and was unfortunately denied. In addition, when he eventually passed away in early 1889, his request being buried in the Soldiers National Cemetery with the rest of the 91st's dead of Gettysburg was also denied and was instead laid to rest at Philadelphia National Cemetery in Section F,

where he is today. Despite the bizarre story of Pvt. Kelly, his service and the rest of the 91st Pennsylvania will never be forgotten.

The fallen soldiers of the 91st Pennsylvania at Gettysburg were as follows:

- 1st Sgt. John. W. Molyneux, Co. B (B-83 Pennsylvania Plot); killed on July 2nd and initially buried opposite Little Round Top
- Pvt. Patrick J. O'Conner, Co. D (C-51 Pennsylvania Plot); wounded in the head and killed on July 3rd, and initially buried on the south side of Little Round Top
- Pvt. James Rae, Co. E (A-84 Pennsylvania Plot); wounded in the thigh on July 3rd, died on July 4th and initially buried east of Michael Fiscel's house
- Cpl. Samuel N. Selah, Co. G; shot in the intestines and died July 3rd, buried at Montgomery Cemetery in Norristown, Plot A-140

*“On Fame’s eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead.”*

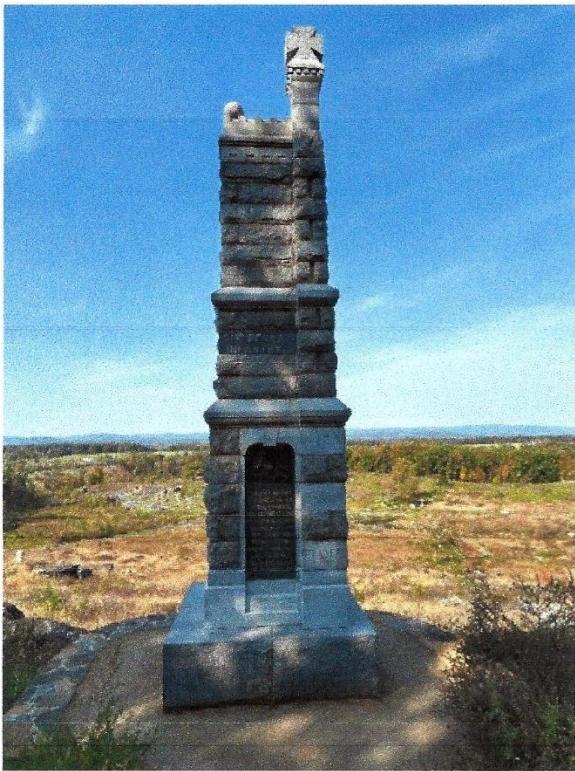
Sources:

- Bates, Samuel P. (1869) *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Vol. III)
- Busey, John W. (1996) *These Honored Dead: The Union Casualties at Gettysburg*
- Busey, John W. and David G. Martin. (2005) *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg* (4th ed.)
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (1988 reprint). *Report of the Select Committee Relative to the Soldiers National Cemetery*
- Civil War Talk. “Viewed His Own Grave at Shiloh.” <https://civilwartalk.com/threads/viewed-his-own-grave-at-shiloh.91790/>
- Gottfried, Bradley. (2012) *Brigades of Gettysburg: The Union and Confederate Brigades at the Battle of Gettysburg*
- Huntingdon, Tom. (2013) *Guide to Gettysburg Battlefield Monuments: Find Every Monument and Tablet in the Park*
- Michael Waricher’s ‘Gettysburg Perspectives’ Facebook page (uses photographs initially taken by William H. Tipton, a noted Gettysburg battlefield photographer, in his posts about a given topic) <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/195EQpeFKu/?mibextid=wwXIfr>
- Newspapers.com
- PACivil War. “91st PA Regiment Co. E.” <http://www.pacivilwar.com/cwpa91e.html>
- RootsWeb. “Stephen Kelly.” <https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~pa91/military/pkells1.html>
- RootsWeb. “Stephen Kelly’s Death.” <https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~pa91/military/pkells1a.html>

(Much special thanks to Walt Lafty of the G.A.R. Museum in Philadelphia for providing additional details of Pvt. Kelly’s involvement with E.D. Baker Post #8.)

Continued

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The “castle tower” monument today. The original foundation for the 1883 monument is just behind this monument.

Philadelphia Inquirer article from 1889 detailing Pvt. Kelly's story. He was temporarily held in a vault at Monument Cemetery (a now defunct cemetery and currently part of Temple University's campus) before being moved to Section F of Philadelphia National Cemetery. He is grave #29 in that section.

THE TWICE-BURIED SOLDIER.

The Remains of Stephen Kelly Temporarily Placed in a Vault at Monument Cemetery.

The remains of Stephen Kelly, an old Pennsylvania volunteer soldier, who, according to the official records of the War Department at Washington, has been dead and buried for twenty-five years, but who really died at his home, 949 South Ninth street, on Tuesday last, were yesterday temporarily deposited in a receiving vault at Monument Cemetery. The curious facts in connection with the deceased are that he will have two graves, one at the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, and the other at the Soldiers' Cemetery, Germantown. The late Mr. Kelly, who had served throughout the war in Company E Ninety-first Pennsylvania Volunteers, took up his residence in this city at its close and joined E. D. Baker Post, No. 8, G. A. R.

While at Gettysburg attending a summer encampment he came across an inscription on a grave stating that underneath lay the body of Stephen Kelly, Company E, Ninety-first Regiment, P. V. This was his first intimation of his own death and burial. Of course he took steps to have the mistake rectified, but nothing was done at headquarters, and the matter was suffered to lapse. The mistake had originated through a canteen with Kelly's name on it being found alongside of a dead soldier, and it was supposed the body was that of Kelly. Deceased, although a Roman Catholic, had requested that his obsequies should be conducted according to Grand Army rites, and accordingly Baker Post No. 8 took charge of the arrangements. The services at the rooms of the post, corner of Broad street and Columbia avenue, commencing shortly after 2 o'clock, Rev. John W. Sayers, department chaplain, officiating.

Floral offerings in many pretty designs were profusely strewn around the casket. At the conclusion of the services the funeral cortege formed on Broad street, headed by the Athletic Cornet Band, Commander J. LeSnow. About 250 old warriors were in line, consisting of Ninety-first Pennsylvania Union Veterans' Legion, Camp No. 2, under the command of William A. Witherup. Along the route of the procession crowds had gathered, and numbers followed all the way to the cemetery. Additional services were held on arrival at the vault by Rev. J. W. Ferguson. The remains will be interred to-day in the Soldiers' Cemetery at Germantown.

Continued



Pvt. Kelly's headstone at
Philadelphia National
Cemetery

~~~ End of this story ~~~

Brother Kyle, thank you Commander for sharing this and other stories!

Additional stories in future *Hartranft Heralds!*