



SGT. ROBERT FINCH  
1<sup>st</sup> MICH SS

# The Sharpshooter

The Official Newsletter of  
Robert Finch Camp No. 14 – Traverse City  
Est. 1914 – The Oldest Active Camp in the Department of Michigan  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

## 2020-2021 Camp Officers Elected and Appointed

On 07 November, Robert Finch Camp No. 14 held Camp Officer elections, as well as the Installation of Officers. The Installation was performed by Department Commander McKinch. Also in attendance as another welcome guest on this date was PCC Lloyd D. Lamphere, Sr. of Camp 145.

The Elected Officers of Robert Finch Camp No. 14 for the 2020-2021 administrative term are:

Commander:	Paul Davis, LM, PDC
Sr. Vice Commander:	David Smith, LM, PDC
Jr. Vice Commander:	Joseph Conger
Secretary-Treasurer:	Dale Aurand, LM, PDC
Council (Chair):	Jan White, PCC
Council:	Ted Mattis, PCC
Council:	John Milks, LM

The Appointed Officers per Commander Davis for the 2020-2021 administrative term are:

Chaplain:	Ted Mattis, PCC
Patriotic Instructor:	H.G. Smith
Graves Registration Officer:	John Sawyer
CW Memorials Officer:	Scott Schwander
Historian:	George Goodrich, PCC
Color Bearer:	Jim Ribby
Guides:	Calvin Murphy & Richard Schafer
Guards:	Kenny Jones & Walker Schwander
Welfare Committee:	Ted Mattis, PCC (Chair); Calvin Murphy; David Smith, PDC; Dale Aurand, PDC; George Goodrich, PCC
Eagle Scout Coordinator:	Joseph Conger
Signals Officer:	Jan White, PCC
Facebook Manager:	Scott Schwander
Veteran Affairs Officer:	Calvin Murphy
Asst. Veteran Affairs Officer:	Richard Schafer
Community Relations Officer:	Scott Schwander
Assistant Secretary:	Rodney Welliver
Assistant Chaplain:	John Lantzer, PCC
Assistant GRO:	Kenny Jones
Quartermaster:	Dale Aurand, PDC
Newsletter Editor:	David Smith, PDC

A formal presentation of the PCC badge for PCC John E. Lantzer will take place at the January 2021 Camp meeting.

## Matt Van Acker Receives Sgt. Robert Finch Award & Abraham Lincoln Certificate of Appreciation

On 15 October 2020, PDC Aurand and PDC Smith traveled to Lansing to present Matt Van Acker with the Sgt. Robert Finch Award & Abraham Lincoln Certificate of Appreciation Award (Department of Michigan). The two Brothers represented Camp 14 and the Department of Michigan for presenting the awards to Mr. Van Acker. The presentation of the awards was conducted outside in front of the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Sharpshooters monument on the Capitol grounds. Our namesake Robert Finch if you recall was a guiding force in getting the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Sharpshooters monument erected, including fundraising. Many thanks to Matt Van Acker for the wonderful insider personal tour of the Capitol building.

*continued p. 3*



# Commander's Message



Brothers of Robert Finch Camp 14:

Thank you for your confidence in selecting me to be your Camp Commander.

I am a strong proponent of Servant Leadership...in short that means I am here to serve you, the Brothers of Robert Finch Camp. We are, as a nation and a Camp, struggling with a number of issues, many of which are beyond our immediate control. Face-To-Face meetings and many Memorial Services have been impacted and are likely to continue into the foreseeable future. In the meantime, let us stay the course with what we can do. Our GRO and Memorials Officers and their helpers continue to do the work of the Camp and the Order. We thank them for their good work and ongoing efforts to identify the last Civil War Soldier in each of the counties for which we have responsibility and also to identify unmarked grave sites as we continue to Keep Green Their Memory.

In closing, I would like to ask each member of the Camp to assist me in the following way so I may serve the Camp to the best of my ability. I would like you to communicate to me either via Email or snail mail and tell me the following:

1. What is it that you like about Finch Camp?
2. What is it that you do not like about Finch Camp?
3. How can we make the Camp a better experience for you?
4. Is there anything missing that you would like to see revived?

If something is "broken", I can't fix it unless you tell me what it is. I firmly believe we have the Brothers and the resources in Finch Camp to accomplish any goals the Camp desires. We have already created some new Committees such as the Committee to plan and execute memorial and similar services. We have also resurrected the Welfare Committee to help serve in taking care of the interests, concerns, and needs of all Brothers of the Camp.

If you wish to remain anonymous in your reply I will respect your wishes.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty

Paul

Commander Davis can be reached at:

[pdmarmcomm@aol.com](mailto:pdmarmcomm@aol.com)

Paul Davis, PDC

4490 Buteo Drive

Traverse City, MI 49684



## Nominations for Sharpshooter Award

For the 2020-2021 administrative term, if anyone would like to nominate a Brother(s) of the Camp that has provided sustained and high performance should contact Commander Paul Davis, PDC. The Sharpshooter Award is for the Most Outstanding Brother of the Camp during the period specified. See the Camp Bylaws for full details of the award.

## 2020 National Encampment

PDC David Smith attended the 2020 National Encampment, which was held virtually due to the current pandemic. The Encampment began at 12PM (1200) and went until after 7PM (1900).

## Last Veteran of the County Donations

If you would like to donate to the Last Veteran of the County project, or to sponsor a particular county, you can send a donation to the Camp Treasurer, Dale Aurand, PDC. Please send a check or money order made out to "Robert Finch Camp 14" to the Camp Treasurer along with a note indicating what county or counties you would like to sponsor if that is an interest. The Camp Treasurer's address is:

Dale Aurand, PDC  
321 W. 9<sup>th</sup> St.  
Traverse City, MI 49684

## Finch Banquet Postponed Until 2021

Due to the ongoing public health situation, the Frances Finch Aux. No. 9 and Robert Finch Camp No. 14 "Finch" Banquet is postponed until 2021. The event is still anticipated to be held at the Elks Lodge No. 323 in Traverse City. Stay tuned for more information regarding the rescheduling of the event.

## Last Veteran Buried in Wexford County Honored

On 10 October, Camp 14 performed the Last Veteran Buried in the County ceremony and ritual for John Mayberry, the Last Veteran Buried in Wexford County. Mr. Mayberry was buried in Yuma Cemetery outside of the small community of Yuma. With the ever-present constraints of the current situation, a smaller ceremony was held with participation from Frances Finch Auxiliary No. 9, AMVETS Post 120, and the greater Yuma and Mesick communities. 9&10 News was in attendance, and reported on the event. JVC Jim Ribby was in command of the ceremony, with GRO John Sawyer serving as acting Memorial Officer for the event, Asst. Secretary Rodney Welliver served as the Guard, and Brother Joseph Conger serving as acting Chaplain. Brother Kenny Jones volunteered as the Camp photographer for the ceremony. A special treat for all was the attendance of the Great-Great Grandson of Mr. Mayberry with his wife for the ceremony - driving in from southern Mississippi to attend.

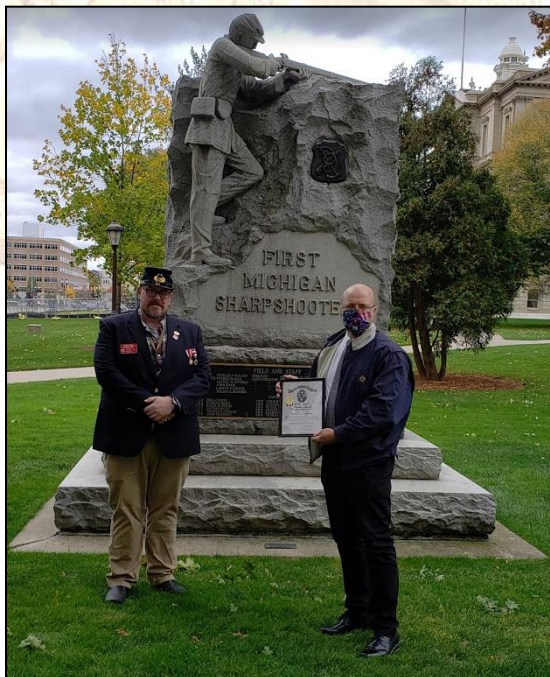


Above: Camp 14 and AMVETS Post 120 Members (photo courtesy of Br. Kenny Jones)

## Last Veteran Buried in Alcona County Honored

On 24 October, a small contingent of Brothers led by Commander John Lantzer made the journey to our eastern Camp Geographical Area to place the flag marker for the Last Veteran Buried in the County for Josiah Donaldson, buried in Twin Lakes Cemetery in Lincoln. Mr. Donaldson served in Company G, 4th PA Cavalry, and was the Last Veteran Buried in Alcona County. A larger ceremony was not conducted as a previous celebration was conducted by the surrounding community in 2011, including placement of memorial signage at the cemetery. Brothers Jones and Sawyer were in attendance, and aided Commander Lantzer in placing the Last Veteran Buried in the County flag marker at Josiah Donaldson's gravesite.

## Van Acker Presented Awards *cont'd*



Far Left: PDC Aurand presenting Matt Van Acker with the Sgt. Robert Finch Award along with the "Rhode Island Style" GAR flag marker gift from the Camp. The Sgt. Robert Finch Award is the highest award given by Robert Finch Camp No. 14. Mr. Van Acker is the third recipient of it since its inception in 2014, and the first person to receive it that is not a member of the Allied Orders.

Near Left: PDC Smith presenting the Abraham Lincoln Award from the Department of Michigan. The Abraham Lincoln Award is the highest award given by the Department of Michigan.

# Northern Michigan Military Installations – Past & Present

## Special Edition – 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CGAS Traverse City

Submitted by Captain Chuck Webb, Commander – USCG Air Station Traverse City, MI



Above: 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Logo  
Graphics Artist: OS2 Jennifer Waynick

### 75 Years of Cherry Wings

Author: LTJG Alyssia LaMonaca

Traverse City, Michigan is a designated Coast Guard City, and the town has been home to Coast Guard aviators who have maintained and flown everything from the PB5Y-5A Catalina to the modern MH-60T Jayhawk at the Air Station. Our unit was busy preparing to celebrate its 75th Anniversary of being the “Guardians of the Great Lakes” next year in 2021. There was only one problem: we discovered late last year that the Air Station was actually commissioned in 1945, not 1946 as previously believed. Our patches say “Est. 1946” at the bottom, the hangar is proudly painted with a large “1946,” and even our entrance sign proclaims, “Coast Guard Air Station Traverse City, Established 1946.” So we have had some work to do! In addition to correcting patches and signs around base, we have spent time delving into unit scrapbooks filled with newspaper articles dating back to the 1940s to better understand our history (and hopefully provide a more complete record for the next group of aviators who plan the 100th anniversary celebration!).

Here’s what we have discovered:

In 1938, a single, amphibian plane was assigned to begin the Great Lakes Air Patrol Detachment in Traverse City to test the feasibility of having a permanent air station in the northern Great Lakes. This crew recommended that an Air Station only be operated during the summer shipping season. A new crew was sent to Traverse City, from June-October 1940, with a Grumman JRF-2 to observe the operating area and determine the best location for an Air Station. In addition to conducting an aerial survey, the crew – made up of LT A.E. Harned, RM1c S.J. Brodnan, AMM2c William Rettig, and AMM3c Ovie Tillis – responded to several distress calls. Together they saved three lives, conducted two MEDEVACs, and located 11 disabled vessels. These were the first Coast Guard aviation rescues on the Great Lakes! Those cases also proved the need for a permanent Air Station on the Great Lakes, and recommendations were made to station an aircraft in Traverse City during the winter to collect more data about cold weather operations.

In March of 1941, an Air Patrol Detachment commanded by LT R.R. Johnson arrived in Traverse City, intending to stay an entire year. He, along with copilot ACMM James L. Riggs, ACMM Felix J. MacNeil, AMM1c William Rettig, and RM1c Carroll W. Meeks, flew a Grumman V-192 amphibian aircraft on 18 reconnaissance missions covering over 79,000 square miles during the first two weeks of April. Europe’s involvement in World War II necessitated early opening of navigation on the Great Lakes. Their ice floe surveys enabled the shipment of over 6.9 million tons of ore to other areas of the country and to our Allies abroad, compared to 3.7 million tons the previous year. This crew also conducted humanitarian missions as far north as Isle Royale in Lake Superior, in one case flying 500 NM round-trip to conduct a MEDEVAC of a pneumonia patient. Traverse City’s location was shown to be ideal because it granted access to the farthest reaches of the Great Lakes, and plans were set to commission a permanent Air Station here.

However, after the attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s subsequent entry into WWII in December of 1941, the Coastguardsmen in Traverse City left for other assignments on the east and west coasts. By July of 1942, the facility was transferred over to the U.S. Navy. The Navy continued operating a base at the Traverse City airport for the next three years, conducting secret research on drones in the West Arm of Grand Traverse Bay. They constructed four runways at the Cherry Capital Airport, improved the airport infrastructure, and even positioned an aircraft carrier in the bay where they could practice drone takeoffs and landings. It wasn’t until WWII drew to a close that the Navy turned the base back over to the Coast Guard, and U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Traverse City was officially commissioned on November 15, 1945. LCDR J.W. Kincaid took the reins as the Commanding Officer of the new Air Station, and the rest is history!

So, why did we all believe that Air Station Traverse City was established in 1946? Despite our best efforts, that remains a mystery. Our current Commanding Officer first noticed the date discrepancy when looking at our list of former COs. The dates LCDR J.W. Kincaid served as the Commanding Officer from the Air Station’s commissioning in 1945 until October of 1946 didn’t match up with the “Est. 1946” slogan seen everywhere around the base. Multiple old newspaper articles cite commissionings throughout 1946 and also write about CDR W.J. Smith as the “first” skipper, but he was our second CO (who incidentally became our 13th Commandant). Also, none of the articles listed an exact day that the Air Station was theoretically founded. They only listed different months like January 1946. We obviously determined CDR Smith could not have been the first Commanding Officer since LCDR J.W. Kincaid was documented before him, and our unit could only have one commissioning date, not many. To get to the truth, we began extensive research, and the official notice of the unit’s commissioning was discovered in the December 1945 issue of the Coast Guard Bulletin. Confirmation and certification was then provided by Coast Guard historians. After 75 years, we finally learned of our correct birthday!



USCG AIR STATION  
TRAVERSE CITY

Above: 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Logo  
Graphics Artist: OS2 Jennifer Waynick

Continued p. 5

## 75 Years of Cherry Wings cont'd

A major event happened in January of 1946 that may explain some of the inconsistency: the Coast Guard was officially transferred back to the Department of the Treasury and assumed full responsibility for civilian search and rescue on America's waterways. The Coast Guard had fallen under the Department of the Navy during wartime, so, technically, the base at Traverse City still fell under Navy control until January 1946. This could explain the confusion about the January dates, but again, this is only conjecture.

Since 1945, Air Station Traverse City has been home to many fixed- and rotary-wing airframes, and though the technology has changed over the years, the mission has not. If there is one thing we have learned from looking through unit scrapbooks, it is that Coast Guardsmen on the Great Lakes have remained busy over the past 75 years. This summer was no exception. Between the months of May and September, the unit launched on 90 cases, saving 24 lives and assisting eight others. We also conducted PWCS patrols, deployed for hurricanes, hoisted Aids to Navigation teams to service lighthouses around the Great Lakes, and helped out our local, state, and federal partners with lots of additional support to the U.S. Secret Service this campaign year.

The COVID-19 pandemic postponed many of our 75th Anniversary festivities, but it gave us a better opportunity to research the unit's history. Ironically, in the newspaper article about the 1941 MEDEVAC off of Isle Royale, there is a photo of the aircrewman wearing an "anti-germ face mask" in accordance with "Headquarters' instructions." Things have come full-circle...unfortunately! In light of all of the confusion surrounding the date Air Station Traverse City was actually commissioned (November 15, 1945, for the record), it seems only fitting that we continue our celebration into next year, our 76th anniversary of being the "Guardians of the Great Lakes."

*Many thanks to CAPT Webb, LTJG LaMonaca, and OS2 Waynick for this article and associated graphics.*

### **"A Desperate Snow Battle"** **A Confederate Snowball Fight, Winter 1862-1863**

Story source: American Battlefield Trust (<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/desperate-snow-battle>)

This excerpt from A History of Kershaw's Brigade, a memoir written by an officer in the 3rd South Carolina, describes a large-scale snowball fight which took place between Confederate soldiers in the winter of 1862-1863.

The troops delight in "snow balling," and reveled in the sport for days at a time. Many hard battles were fought, won, and lost; sometimes company against company, then regiment against regiment, and sometimes brigades would be pitted against rival brigades.

When the South Carolinians were against the Georgians, or the two Georgia brigades against Kershaw's and the Mississippi brigades, then the blows would fall fast and furious. The fiercest fight and the hardest run of my life was when Kershaw's Brigade, under Colonel Rutherford, of the Third, challenged and fought Cobb's Georgians.

Colonel Rutherford was a great lover of the sport, and wherever a contest was going on he would be sure to take a hand. On the day alluded to Colonel Rutherford martialed his men by the beating of drums and the bugle's blast; officers headed their companies, regiments formed, with flags flying, then when all was ready the troops were marched to the brow of a hill, or rather half way down the hill, and formed line of battle, there to await the coming of the Georgians. They were at that moment advancing across the plain that separated the two camps. The men built great pyramids of snow balls in their rear, and awaited the assault of the fast approaching enemy. Officers cheered the men and urged them to stand fast and uphold the "honor of their State," while the officers on the other side besought their men to sweep all before them off the field.

The men stood trembling with cold and emotion, and the officers with fear, for the officer who was luckless enough as to fall into the hands of a set of "snow revelers," found to his sorrow that his bed was not one of roses.

When the Georgians were within one hundred feet the order was given to "fire." Then shower after shower of the fleecy balls filled the air. Cheer after cheer went up from the assaulters and the assaultant—now pressed back by the flying balls, then to the assault again. Officers shouted to the men, and they answered with a "yell."

When some, more bold than the rest, ventured too near, he was caught and dragged through the lines, while his comrades made frantic efforts to rescue him. The poor prisoner, now safely behind the lines, his fate problematical, as down in the snow he was pulled, now on his face, next on his back, then swung round and round by his heels—all the while snow being pushed down his back or in his bosom, his eyes, ears, and hair thoroughly filled with the "beautiful snow."

*Continued p. 6*

## Desperate Snow Battle, cont'd

After a fifteen minutes' struggle, our lines gave way. The fierce looks of a tall, muscular, wild-eyed Georgian, who stood directly in my front, seemed to have singled me out for sacrifice. The stampede began. I tried to lead the command in the rout by placing myself in the front of the boldest and stoutest squad in the ranks, all the while shouting to the men to "turn boys turn." But they continued to charge to the rear, and in the nearest cut to our camp, then a mile off, I saw the only chance to save myself from the clutches of that wild-eyed Georgian was in continual and rapid flight.

The idea of a boy seventeen years old, and never yet tipped the beam at one hundred, in the grasp of that monster, as he now began to look to me, gave me the horrors. One by one the men began to pass me, and while the distance between us and the camp grew less at each step, yet the distance between me and my pursuer grew less as we proceeded in our mad race. The broad expanse that lay between the men and camp was one flying, surging mass, while the earth, or rather the snow, all around was filled with men who had fallen or been overtaken, and now in the last throes of a desperate snow battle. I dared not look behind, but kept bravely on. My breath grew fast and thick, and the camp seemed a perfect mirage, now near at hand then far in the distance.

The men who had not yet fallen in the hands of the reckless Georgians had distanced me, and the only energy that kept me to the race was the hope that some mishap might befall the wild-eyed man in my rear, otherwise I was gone. No one would have the temerity to tackle the giant in his rage. But all things must come to an end, and my race ended by falling in my tent, more dead than alive, just as I felt the warm breath of my pursuer blowing on my neck. I heard, as I lay panting, the wild-eyed man say, "I would rather have caught that d—n little Captain than to have killed the biggest man in the Yankee Army."

## Christmas on the Rappahannock

By Reverend John R. Paxton, D.D.

"Gentlemen, the chair of the Professor of Mathematics is vacant in this college; permit me to introduce to you Captain Fraser." Rah! Rah! Rah! and away we went and enlisted - to go to Richmond. It took us three years to get there. No wonder; there were so many Longstreets to make our way through; so many Hills to climb; so many Stonewalls to batter down; so many Picketts to clear out of the way. It was as hard a road to travel as the steep and stony one to Heaven.

No preaching, sir! Can't you forget the shop? Don't you know that you have squeezed yourself into that faded jacket, and are squirming, with a flushed face and short breaths, behind that sword belt, which had caused a rebellion in medias res?

I started for Richmond in July, 1862, a lad eighteen years old, a junior in college, and chafing to be at it, - to double quick it after John Brown's soul, which since it did not require a knapsack or three days' rations or a canteen or a halt during the night for sleep, was always marching on. On the night before Christmas, 1862, I was a dejected young patriot, wishing I hadn't done it, shivering in the open weather a mile back of the Rappahannock, on the reserve picket and exposed to a wet snowstorm. There was not a stick of wood within five miles of us; all cut down, down, even the roots of trees, and burned up. We lay down on our rubber blankets, pulled our woolen blankets over us, spooned it as close as we could get to steal warmth from our comrades and tried not to cry.

Next morning the snow lay heavy and deep, and the men, when I wakened and looked about me, reminded me of a church graveyard in winter. "Fall in for picket duty. There, come, Moore, McMeaus, Paxton, Perrine, Pollock, fall in." We fell in, of course. No breakfast; chilled to the marrow; snow a foot deep. We tightened our belts on our empty stomachs, seized our rifles and marched to the river to take our six hours on duty.

*continued p. 8*

## Camp No. 14 2020 Meeting Schedule

09 January 2021	Cherryland VFW Post 2780, Traverse City
13 March 2021	Cherryland VFW Post 2780, Traverse City
08 May 2021	Cherryland VFW Post 2780, Traverse City
10 July 2021	Cherryland VFW Post 2780, Traverse City
11 September 2021	Cherryland VFW Post 2780, Traverse City
06/13 November 2021	Cherryland VFW Post 2780, Traverse City

All meetings begin at 11:30AM (1130)





## Frances Finch Auxiliary No. 9

### Frances Finch Aux. No. 9 Latest News

The Sisters of Frances Finch Auxiliary No. 9 will complete their election and installation of Officers at the January 2021 meeting. The Sisters are still working on plans for the "Finch Banquet" for 2021, but with the current public health situation plans are still in flux. More information on the banquet will be provided as they are completed.

On 10 October 2020, Sisters of the Auxiliary No. 9 attended and participated in the Last Veteran Buried in Wexford County ceremony for John Mayberry in Yuma. Sisters Lisa Smith, Valerie Jones, and Lorraine Aurand represented Frances Finch Auxiliary No. 9 well.



#### 2019-2020 Frances Finch Auxiliary No. 9 Officers

President:	Dorothy Rongey, PAP
Vice President:	Mary Rose, PAP
Secretary:	Lisa Smith, PAP
Treasurer:	Lisa Smith, PAP
Pat. Instructor:	Debra Downey
Council #1:	Karen Goodrich, PAP
Council #2:	Debra Downey
Council #3:	Lorraine Jones
Chaplain:	Mary Rose, PAP
Historian:	All Sisters of Aux. No. 9
Press Corrs.:	Mary Rose, PAP & Lisa Smith, PAP
Girl Scout Comm.:	Lorraine Jones, Chair
Girl Scout Comm.:	Emily Breaugh, PAP
Counselor:	Mary Rose, PAP



Left (L-R): Sister Lorraine Aurand, PAP Lisa Smith, and Sister Valerie Jones at the gravesite of GAR Comrade John Mayberry, Last Union Veteran buried in Wexford County, Michigan. Photo courtesy of Brother Kenny Jones.



**Merry Christmas from the Sisters of Frances Finch**

## A Combined Event for Leelanau County GAR Posts 168 and 399

CWMO Scott Schwander provided the picture at right of the Comrades of Murray GAR Post No. 168 and Woolsey GAR Post No. 399 at a combined event or meeting with the two GAR Posts.

Both GAR Posts were located in Leelanau County, with the Murray Post headquartered in Maple City, and the Woolsey Post headquartered in Northport.

The Woolsey Post was named after Chauncey Woolsey, Co. A, 26<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry. For more information on Mr. Woolsey, turn to page 10 of this newsletter.



## Christmas on the Rappahannock *cont'd.*

It was Christmas Day, 1862. "And so this is war," my old me said to himself while he paced in the snow his tow hours on the river's brink. "And I am out here to shoot that lean, lank, coughing, cadaverous=looking butternut fellow over the river. So this is war; this is being a soldier; this is the genuine article; this is H. Greeley's 'On to Richmond.' Well, I wish he were here in my place, running to keep warm, pounding his arms and breast to make the chilled blood circulate. So this is war, tramping up and down this river my fifty yards with wet feet, empty stomach, swollen nose."

Alas, when lying under the trees in the college campus last June, war meant to me martial music, gorgeous brigadiers in blue and gold, tall young men in line, shining in brass. War meant to me tumultuous memories of Bunker Hill, Caesar's Tenth Legion, the charge of the Six Hundred, - anything but this. Pshaw, I wish I were home. Let me see. Home? God's country. A tear? Yes, it is a tear. What are they doing at home? This is Christmas Day. Home? Well, stockings on the wall, candy, turkey, fun, merry Christmas, and the face of the girl I left behind. Another tear? Yes, I couldn't help it. I was only eighteen, and there was such a contrast between Christmas, 1862, on the Rappahannock and other Christmases. Yes, there was a girl too, - such sweet eyes, such long lashes, such a low tender voice.

"Come, move quicker. Who goes there?" Shift the rifle from one aching shoulder to the other.

"Hello, Johnny, what are you up to?" The river was narrow, but deep and swift. It was a wet cold, not a freezing cold. There was no ice, too swift for that.

"Hello Johnny, what you coughing so for?"

"Yank, with no overcoat, shoes full of holes, nothing to eat but parched corn and tobacco, and with this derved Yankee snow a foot deep, there's nothin' left, nothin' but to get up a cough by way of protestin' against this infernal ill treatment of the body. We uns, Yank, all have a cough over here, and there's no sayin' which will run us to hole first, the cough or your bullets."

The snow still fell, the keen wind, raw and fierce, cut to the bone. It was God's worst weather, in God's forlornest, bleakest spot of ground, that Christmas Day of '62 on the Rappahannock, a half-mile below the town of Fredericksburg. But come, pick up your prostrate pluck, you shivering private. Surely there is enough dampness around without your adding to it your tears.

"Let's laugh, boys."

"Hello, Johnny."

"Hello, yourself, Yank."

"Merry Christmas, Johnny."

"Same to you, Yank."

"Say, Johnny, got anything to trade?"

"Parched corn and tobacco, - the size of our Christmas, Yank."

"All right; you shall have some of our coffee and sugar and pork. Boys, find the boats."

Such boats! I see the children sailing them on the small lakes in our Central Park. Some Yankee, desperately hungry for tobacco, invented them for trading with the Johnnies. They were hid away under the banks of the river for successive relays of pickets.

We got out the boats. An old handkerchief answered for a sail. We loaded them with coffee, sugar, pork, and set the sail and watched them slowly creep to the other shore. And the Johnnies? To see them crowd the bank and push and scramble to be first to seize the boats, going into the water and stretching out their long arms. Then, when they pulled the boats ashore, and stood in a group over the cargo, and to hear their exclamations, "Hurrah for hog." "Say, that's not roasted rye, but genuine coffee. Smell it, you'uns." "And sugar, too!"

Then they divided the consignment. They laughed and shouted, "Reckon you'uns been good to we'uns this Christmas Day, Yanks." Then they put parched corn, tobacco, ripe persimmons, into the boats and sent them back to us. And we chewed he parched corn, smoked real Virginia leaf, ate persimmons, which if they weren't very filling at least contracted our stomachs to the size of our Christmas dinner. And so the day passed. We shouted, "Merry Christmas Johnny." They shouted, "Same to you, Yank." And we forgot the biting wind, the chilling cold; we forgot those me over there were our enemies, whom it might be our duty to shoot before evening.

We had bridged the river, spanned the bloody chasm. We were brothers, not foes, waving salutations of good-will in the name of the Babe of Bethlehem, on Christmas Day in '62. At the very front of the opposing armies, the Christ Child struck a truce for us, broke down the wall of partition, became our peace. We exchanged gifts. We shouted greetings back and forth. We kept Christmas and our hearts were lighter for it, and our shivering bodies were not quite so cold.



# I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
and wild 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" was a poem written on Christmas Day 1863 by famed poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and was later transformed into a processional song in 1872 by English organist John Baptiste Calkin, set to the tune of "Waltham". A very personal poem that has become a Christmas carol for the ages.

The background of Longfellow's poem is one that is tied intimately with the Civil War, and this is especially seen in verses four and five. On Christmas Day 1863 Longfellow wrote the poem to capture the perceived world around him, and his internal personal conflict during those dark days.

In 1863, Longfellow was still recovering from the loss of his wife Fannie. On 09 July 1861, Fannie's dress caught on fire, and Henry tried to put out the fire with a rug, and then used his own body to extinguish the flames. She passed away the next day 10 July 1861 from her severe burns. Henry was also badly burned, and could not attend her funeral. Those burns

made Longfellow stop shaving and he grew the facial hair that he was famously known to have. His grief was extreme, and he feared he would be sent away to an asylum.

Moving ahead to March of 1863, Longfellow's oldest son Charles had decided to serve his country in the great national conflict. Charles left his family home unbeknownst to his kin, and boarded a train for Washington D.C. with the intention of enlisting as a Private in the 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Artillery. Captain W.H. McCarthy of Battery A wrote Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to seek his permission to allow Charles to enlist. Longfellow granted his son permission.

Longfellow later wrote his influential political friends to gain Charles a commission as an Officer in the Army. It turned out that Charles didn't need his father's help, as he impressed his fellow soldiers and Officers with his skills and

leadership. On 27 March 1863, Charles Appleton Longfellow was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in Company G, 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry.

Young Charles did not see action at the Battle of Chancellorsville, instead he was assigned to guard wagons. He also missed action at the Battle of Gettysburg due to contracting "camp fever", and was sent home to convalesce. He rejoined his Company in mid-August of 1863.

On 01 December 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow received a telegram while he was eating dinner alone. The telegram informed him that his son Charles had been grievously wounded by a shot to the face on 27 November 1863 while skirmishing during the Battle of New Hope Church during the Mine Run Campaign. However, this was incorrect, as he was shot through the left shoulder with the round traveling through his body nicking his spine and exiting out the right shoulder. He narrowly missed being paralyzed by less than an inch.

Henry along with younger son Ernest, traveled to Washington D.C. to meet his son after he arrived via train from New Hope on 05 December. Henry received initial startling news that Charley may become paralyzed from his wound. Later that evening, three other surgeons gave him good news, that Charles would heal with at least a six month recovery.

Thus, on Christmas Day 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow began writing this famous poem, just days after hearing the worst in news of his son's battle injuries being nearly paralyzed, and days later learning that he would recover. His internal turmoil of the times, his still grieving heart for his wife, a nation torn apart, and the fear of his son losing life or abilities, left him to write a Christmas poem of dichotomy: disorder and hope.



Above: 2nd Lt. Charles Appleton Longfellow, Company G, 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry



Above: The Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Family Home on Brattle Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts - the family home that Charles left for the Army.

## ...Bells on Christmas Day, cont'd

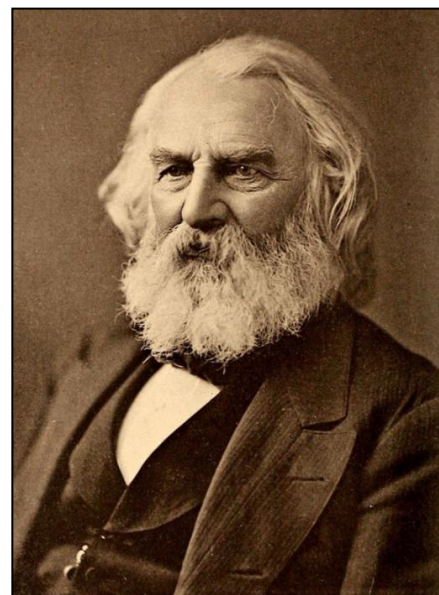
It is said that Longfellow heard the church bells ringing for Christmas throughout Cambridge, along with the singing of "Peace on Earth". Adding this to his own current situation, and the situation of a nation at war with itself truly left him with the irony of the conflicting message of peace and hope versus grief, injury, death, and battle. This can be clearly witnessed in the verses that Longfellow wrote so eloquently in "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

Sources (photos, background information, etc.):

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-story-of-pain-and-hope-behind-i-heard-the-bells-on-christmas-day/>

<https://www.jocelyngreen.com/2016/12/14/civil-war-christmas-song-i-heard-the-bells-on-christmas-day#:~:text=The%20Christmas%20song%20%22I%20Heard,seems%20especially%20fitting%20this%20year.>

Britannica.com



Above: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

### Interesting Longfellow Fact

The house as seen in a photograph on page 9 of this newsletter, was the family home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his wife Fannie Elizabeth Appleton Longfellow. This house located on Brattle Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts served as the headquarters for General George Washington from 1775 to 1776.

## Veteran Spotlight

### Northport's own

#### Pvt. Chauncey Woolsey

Co. A, 26<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry

Enlisted on 1/23/1864 at Grand Rapids, MI

Mustered into "A" Co. MI 26th Infantry-1/23/1864

Killed at Totopotomoy Creek, VA, 31 May 1864

As the Civil War battles raged on, his son, 19 year old Corporal N.H. (Wallace) Woolsey of Northport, Michigan, serving nearby in the 9th Corps, Co. I of the 1st Michigan Sharpshooters would get word that his father, 45 year old Chauncey Woolsey, who was fighting in the Lake Shore Tiger's Co. A of the 26th Michigan just to their right, was killed in action at Totopotomoy May 31, 1864, during the skirmish at Shelton (Sheldon) Farm. At the age of 18, young Wallace Woolsey, along with another friend from Northport, Doug Hazel, left their homes in Leelanau County near the end of July, 1863, aboard Woolsey's boat leaving word that they were sailing for "salt water," as they did not want their parents to follow. In a few weeks the folks at home learned that the boys enlisted in Co. I. of the 1st Michigan Sharpshooters.

Chauncey followed his son into the war later that winter, joining the 26th Michigan "Lake Shore Tigers" Co. A. Chauncey Woolsey of Leelanau County, the son of a veteran of the War of 1812, was a Maritime Captain on the Great Lakes. Just prior to the war, in the late fall of 1860, storm conditions caused the winter supply of food for the Northport community to be landed on Manitou Island instead of at the Bight in Northport, Michigan. An experienced seaman, Chauncey Woolsey volunteered to make the trip to the island in his 18 foot sloop-rigged open boat.



Chauncey Woolsey  
26<sup>th</sup> MI Infantry. Killed in action.  
(Courtesy Leelanau Historical Museum)

## Veteran Spotlight cont'd

Moses Dexter was his ship mate, (whose son Judson Dexter was killed in the siege of Knoxville in November of 1863 while serving in the 2nd Michigan Infantry). On the return from the island after loading the cargo, they were set upon by a winter blizzard and high seas. Moses despaired of ever reaching the Bight, and began to pray. Captain Woolsey told him to "stop praying, and bail the water and ice out of the boat!" The boat was washed up on the beach of Cat Head Bay, fortunately near where Chauncey's brother, Francis Woolsey, had a cabin. The boat and provisions were later salvaged, and with the game and vegetables they had, the community managed to hold out until navigation opened in the spring.

Chauncey was listed with 5 children in the pre-war 1860 Census of Leelanau Twp. He was a popular member of the community back home and among the ranks of the 26th Michigan. At the time of Chauncey Woolsey's death, his good friend John Kehl was with him that day. "The company was lying prone, firing on the enemy line, when the order came to retire. As Kehl got up he saw that Woolsey was dead from a bullet to the head." Woolsey was buried in the National Cemetery at Yorktown, Virginia Grave # 69.

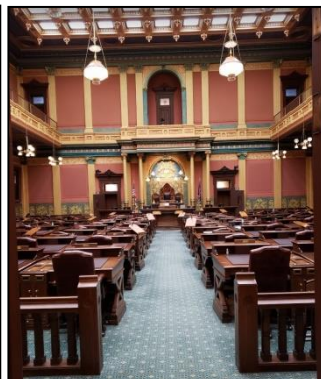
Northport's Joshua Middleton of Co. A. 26th Michigan later wrote to his sister from the Jarvis U.S. Hospital: "Our friend Chancy Woolsey is gone. He was shot, on the 31st of May and Charley Waltz, a young fellow who went with us was wounded at the same time, shot through both thighs."

The Northport, Michigan G.A.R. Post No. 399 was named in his honor, where many veterans of the 26th Michigan and 1st Michigan Sharpshooters joined together to serve their communities for the remainder of their lives. Before Captain Woolsey had departed for the Civil War, he had been presented with a Bible from Reverend George N. Smith. Captain Woolsey had been elected one of the first deacons of the Congregation Church. After his death the Bible was presented to his son Byron, who was then fifteen years of age. His older brother, Wallace Woolsey of the 1st Michigan Sharpshooters, was said to have died of Tuberculosis as a result of his service in the Civil War and is buried in the Northport Cemetery.

When Byron Woolsey's son, Clinton, left for service in World War I, this same Bible was presented to him. Later, after Clinton Woolsey's tragic death as a pilot in the Army on a good will mission to Buenos Aires in 1927, this same Bible was again represented to his father Byron, then about 78 years old. In 1935 the Clinton F. Woolsey Memorial Airport was built near Northport, dedicated to his memory.

Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11654356/chauncey-woolsey>

## A Few Pictures from the Capitol Tour with Matt Van Acker



Many many thanks to Matt Van Acker for taking time out of his busy day to give PDC Aurand and PDC Smith a tour of the Capitol along with many historical anecdotes and facts, many pertaining to Civil War Veterans in relation to the Capitol.



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