

### Publisher's Note:

The following document was originally published on a personal website ran by Frank S. Coleman (<http://home.sprynet.com/~nonfarby/oo1~1.htm>). That website had been taken offline some time in 2018. We searched through Google to find out if the site had been moved elsewhere, but it didn't appear that way.

We did manage to find this document through Archive.org, and put it into PDF format, and shared it on Interment.net to give Frank's writing a new home in hopes that genealogists and Civil War enthusiasts can still read it.

The only corrections we made to the text were spelling and grammatical errors based on suggestions through Microsoft Word. Otherwise his writing was left intact.

Coleman had also launched an initiative called, "Hillside Civil War Graves Project". It was an effort to raise funds to repair and restore damaged grave markers of Middletown Civil War soldiers. This was documented on the above-mentioned website, but no updates were published about its progress.

He had also published a listing of Middletown Civil War Soldiers, which we also republished on Interment.net, found here: <http://www.interment.net/data/us/ny/delaware/middletown-civil-war-soldiers/civil-war-veterans-hillside-cemetery-middletown-ny.pdf>

Steve Johnson, Publisher, February 28, 2020  
Interment.net

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## A SMALL COMMUNITY GOES TO WAR

The Civil War history of Middletown New York  
by Frank S. Coleman

During the turmoil and upheaval of the American Civil War, all communities in our growing nation, both North and South, were intensely involved, and many aspects of the political atmosphere and deep passions that existed for the nation as a whole also existed in communities such as Middletown and Wallkill. The history of these small communities during this period and their contribution to the Northern war effort is in a way a history of the war for the entire nation.

## A DISTANT THUNDER

The decade of the 1850's saw Middletown grow from a sleepy village into a prosperous town that mirrored the nation in its industrial and transportation expansion. In the early part of the decade, Middletown still had no water system, and relied chiefly on wood as its source of fuel, using about 5,000 cords annually, of which 2,000 cords was for the Erie Railroad. Despite this, civic improvements were achieved, with streets being graded and plank sidewalk laid. The population of Middletown was seen to expand along with this, with 1,500 residents in 1850 and 2,190 by 1857.

An important event in 1852 was the dedication of Gothic Hall, a meeting place erected by Wheeler, Madden, and Graham. This structure was for many years afterwards an important local institution, where public meetings, entertainment, political gatherings, and lodge sessions were held. The building was dedicated on June 9th, 1852 by Middletown Lodge of Odd Fellows, which used it as a lodge room. 1852 was also marked by the revival of the Middletown Lyceum. The village was also honored by a visit of the county fair for the first time.

The New York and Erie Insurance Company was organized in January 1853 and incorporated the following month. The company's capitalization of \$100,000 was later increased by half, but during the Civil War the company became insolvent, and soon went into receivership.

Middletown's assessed valuation had nearly doubled in five years, jumping from \$321,000 in 1848 to \$529,670 in 1853. N.R. Bates had started manufacturing a new type of parlor match, having sold his soap and candle factory to G. DeBaun and Company, who continued it on North street until 1857. The premier event for 1853 for village expansion was the establishment of the carpet bag factory by the firm of Matthews and Hunt. This company bought and remodeled the large brick building that stood on the corner of North and Roberts streets. The firm employed between 150 and 200 persons, mostly girls, who sewed and pieced together carpet bags. This firm took a responsible position in Middletown improvements, such as in 1853 erecting at North and Roberts streets the first street signs in the area. The improvements in the village enticed other enterprises to establish themselves in 1853, such as the Wilcox and Draper hat company, who built a factory at Railroad Ave. and Grove streets, and the Monhagen saw works on Railroad Ave.

The end of the decade saw civic improvements that matched the industrial growth. The Middletown Fire Department was organized in 1859. The organization of Middletown's first gas company occurred the same year, and the carpet bag factory, the first building to be illuminated, was lighted by gas in November. In 1860 Hillside Cemetery was formed.

Politics in Middletown matched the divisive nature of the rest of the country during this decade. The Republican Party made its first appearance in Middletown in 1855, and the democrats in the village split along the lines of the Southern and Northern democrats, which during the Civil war years labeled them "Copperheads" for southern sympathizers and "War Democrats" for Northern democrats who supported Lincoln. Things came to a boil in 1859, when local publications were either started or existing ones used by partisans promoting their cause. On October 1st, Gilbert J. Beebe issued the first Middletown Mercury, which was intensely Democratic. Countering this was another local publisher, John W. Hasbrouck, in his newspaper the Whig Press, which was established in Middletown on November 26, 1851, but by this time had become radically Republican. Within a few months a local publication called the Banner of Liberty came out in support of secessionists and hinted strongly at disunion.

The Republicans gained control of the Board of Supervisors in the spring of 1860. In August of that year there was organized the Wallkill Wide-Awakes, of Republican youths. Republicans and Democrats organized political rallies, with orations and parades with torch lights. One Republican rally, with 10,000 persons and 1200 uniformed Wide-Awakes, was held at Carpenter's Grove on South street on October 12th. The Mercury predicted war if Lincoln was elected. The Republicans carried Wallkill in the spring of 1861. "The War Begun," announced the Whig Press on April 17th. Union men jammed Gothic Hall that evening. Moses H. Corwin, veteran of the War of 1812, was chairman. War had indeed begun....



## A CALL TO ARMS

William H. Shaw holds the distinction of being the first person from Middletown to march off to war. Already in the service, he departed on April 20th, 1861 to join his company in New York. He did, however, return in a short time without seeing any fighting.

The community immediately answered Lincoln's call for volunteers after Fort Sumter by forming the Wallkill Guards at Gothic Hall on April 22, 1861. Within just a few days more than 60 young men had enlisted. Drills were held nightly at the hall. The following officers were elected: John C. McGinnis, Captain; George Barry and Roswell M. Sayer, Lieutenants; Thomas Alexander, Ensign; Alexander B. Leggett, Robert Malone, John Rotherham, R.A. Holly Jr., Sergeants; Isaac Hoyt, Samuel Barry, A.E. Hanford, Thomas Curry, Corporals. On May 2nd the Wallkill Guards were ordered to Albany. Early Friday morning the company marched to Franklin

Square, where a great crowd had gathered. James N. Pronk, on behalf of the ladies of the village, presented Captain McGinnis with a silk flag, which was carried through the war. The citizens also presented Captain McGinnis a sword. At the departure ceremony, the entire village came out to cheer the boys, and many buildings were decorated with flags and bunting.

Due to the overwhelming response to Lincoln's call, in addition to patriotic speeches by local civic leaders, another company of the Wallkill Guards was formed. This company was to meet with the 1st company at Albany, which in turn formed part of the 18th NY Regiment, NY Volunteers. The election of company leaders resulted in: Captain, Peter Hagan; Lieutenant, Theodore C. Rogers; Ensign, William E. Carmichael; Sergeants, Thomas S. Lane, Levi D. Vincent, George Blake, Peter B. Henyon; Corporals Horace McCune, E. L. Chatterdon, C.C. Shaw, John DeLancey. Women of the village sent the boys a quantity of table delicacies. Patriotic concerts were held at Gothic Hall. The Middletown companies soon went to Washington.

The Wallkill Guards were mustered into service on May 17, 1861, at Albany, as Company D, 18th Regiment, NY Volunteers. The company was so large, however, that 30 men were placed in Company H. These volunteers were mostly railroad workers. After two weeks at Washington, the regiment was present at the Battle of Bull Run, and spent the winter near Alexandria, Virginia. In the spring, under General McClellan, it took part in the peninsular campaign, spending the following winter at White Oak Church. The next spring the two-year regiment returned to Albany and was mustered out May 28, 1863. Many men reenlisted, and John C. McGinnis, who was commissioned as captain in 1861, was mustered out as lieutenant colonel. When Captain George Barry was killed in action at Haines Mill, Virginia, on June 27, 1862, flags were lowered to half-mast in Middletown, and his funeral at Grace Church was largely attended. Barry, formerly in the English army from which he obtained release through the generosity of his Middletown friends, had been in the United States but two or three years.

The second unit formed in Middletown was due to recruitment efforts to form part of the Tenth Legion, Orange-Sullivan regiment, so named for the senatorial district of this area. A mass meeting was held at Gothic Hall on August 7, 1861. The Middletown band left for camp on September 21st to join the Tenth Legion. The Middletown Cavalry was also recruited for this company. Officers were chosen; M.I. McCornal, Captain; Charles F. Allen and Arthur Hagen, Lieutenants; A.L. Robbins, Charles R. Smith, Frank Mills, Sergeants. The Company left Middletown October 8th for Camp VanWyck, named after the Legion's colonel. The Tenth Legion was mustered in for federal service as the 56th Regiment, NY Volunteers, and the Middletown Cavalry was detached and became Company C, First NY Mounted Rifles, with a strength of 95 men. The Tenth Legion left for the war from camp VanWyck on November 7, 1861, 1143 strong. Many Middletown men joined the other companies of the 56th. This regiment fought in many battles in the Virginia and Carolina campaigns. Although a three-year regiment, it was reenlisted, and continued for the duration of the war, being mustered out October 17, 1865.

The third unit formed at Middletown was in the summer of 1862, and these volunteers formed part of the famous Orange Blossoms, the 124th NY Volunteer Regiment. Middletown's members of the senatorial district military committee, who were Halstead Sweet, John G. Wilkin, C.C. McQuoid, and Captain John Commings, met at Goshen on July 22nd and decided to raise an Orange-Sullivan regiment in response to Lincoln's call on July 1st for 300,000 volunteers.

The following advertisement appeared on July 30 in Middletown:

"Middletown Volunteers! To arms, young men. You are wanted for the duty which your country requires of you. Come join the Middletown Volunteers, a company now being organized at Middletown, and to form part of the new regiment from Orange and Sullivan Counties, to be commanded by Colonel A. VanHorn Ellis, an officer whose courage is well known to the rebels. Come one, come all. Let the response of Orange and Sullivan be worthy of their past history. Let none falter now., The Government has made ample provision for you; \$50 bounty to be paid by the state of New York on enlistment; \$25 bounty to be paid Uncle Sam; one month's pay in advance; \$75 and a land warrant at the end of the war. Pay from \$13 to \$23 per month. Uniforms and subsistence furnished immediately on arriving in camp at Goshen. Pay to commence at once. Apply at C.B. Roosa's dry goods store, Middletown, N.Y., James F. Roosa, William A. Jackson, recruiting officers."

A patriotic mass meeting was held at Gothic Hall on August 2nd. Elisha P. Wheeler was the chairman. Music, speeches and resolutions made up the program. Within a few days Middletown citizens subscribed \$2525 to pay a bounty of \$10 to each man who should join the Middletown company. The Eagle engine company offered an extra \$20 bounty to any of its members who should enlist. Other mass meetings were held in Middletown. Shortly, 56 men were recruited, and the company was filled out by volunteers from Newburgh, but the majority were from Middletown/Wallkill. William Jackson, one of the recruiters, was made captain. On September 3rd at Goshen, Middletown citizens presented a sword to Captain Jackson. These volunteers were to become Company K of the 124th NY Volunteer Regiment. The regiment left Goshen on September 6, 1862, and after a brief training period joined the Army of the Potomac. This regiment's notable history includes it's heroic stand near Devil's Den at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 2nd, 1863, where its commanding officer, Colonel Ellis was killed and half its men were killed or wounded, and it's assault during the battle of Spottsylvania in 1864 of the "Mule Shoe." In this battle Middletown's own Archibald Freeman performed bravery which later earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor. The Orange Blossoms were active until the final Virginia campaign leading to Lee's surrender and arrived home in June 1865. Captain Jackson was not to survive the war. He fell while leading his men in a charge near Petersburg, Virginia on June 18, 1864.

The fourth unit recruited in Middletown was called the Union Guard, its chief recruiter being Colonel Isaac Wood. His motive was to relieve the necessity of drafting within Orange County, and his organization started late in September 1862. Headquarters were established on the outskirts of Middletown, and the barracks were named Camp Wheeler in honor of Elisha P. Wheeler. One company was styled the Wallkill Rangers. The town of Wallkill had offered a \$50 bounty to every volunteer, and \$10 extra to any volunteer that joined this particular company. In November Wallkill had overmanned its quota of 204 men by eight. The Union Guard left Middletown November 21 for Jamaica, L.I., where it was united with the Ironsides Regiment.

Outside of regular unit recruitments, others from Middletown and Wallkill entered individually every branch of the service, and for various reasons. It is noted that at least 13 blacks from Middletown joined the 20th U.S. Colored Infantry, which was stationed during the war in Louisiana; and others joined the 26th U.S. Colored Infantry. On October 7, 1863, drafting started in Orange County at Goshen, with 249 men drawn from Wallkill. A new draft was made in June 1864, with 41 Wallkill men selected. In November 1864, a number of Wallkill men were drafted to fill the ranks of the 91st NY Regiment. It is safe to assume that Middletown/Wallkill men were scattered throughout the war, and in every campaign. One study from the last century, by Ruttenger and Clark give the town credit for 1028 men. Another study from Headley's history says "As near as can be estimated, Wallkill and Middletown combined sent to the front some 787 soldiers.....When we take into consideration the fact that at the beginning of the war, the population of the town of Wallkill and the village of Middletown combined, was less than 7,000, it will be seen that more than ten percent of the entire population

proved its loyalty by going to the front." The town of Wallkill alone raised \$95,100 for bounties and other war expenses.



## THE HOME FRONT

During the war, many patriotic celebrations took place, in addition to gatherings meant to provide some enticement for the enlistment of volunteers. The Fourth of July of 1861 was celebrated by a parade and exercises at Carpenter's Grove. The Mercury newspaper, meanwhile, was anything but pro-Lincoln and administration. The Banner of Liberty was discontinued for a time. Some Northern war industrialization was having its effects on Middletown by this time. Wilcox and Draper, hat makers, made a quantity of hats under contract for the U.S. Navy.

Wednesday, June 3, 1863, was a gala day in Middletown. The Wallkill Guards, who mustered out after two years on May 28th at Albany, returned home to a hero's welcome. Upon their arrival during the evening, they were given a royal welcome at the station. The company, with the fire department and Middletown band, marched about the village and then to Franklin Square. Charles C. McQuoid gave the main address of welcome. Lt. Colonel McGinnis then returned the battle-scarred flag to the women of Middletown. M.D. Stivers gave the speech of acceptance.

On the fourth of July of the same year, while the battle of Gettysburg was being fought, the fact that not everyone was of unified political thought was shown in the manner of a large peace meeting held at the Middletown race track of the copperhead branch of Orange and Sullivan Democrats. On July 7th, a public celebration was organized in honor of the fall of Vicksburg. At this event, the animosity between the political factions in Middletown grew violent when the editor of the ultra-Republican paper Whig Press, John W. Hasbrouck, publicly denounced D.C. Dusenberry, who had been named by Governor Seymour to organize the militia of the district, and Dusenberry caned him. Hasbrouck retaliated by publishing further opinions against him.

March 1864 saw the return to Middletown of part of the 56th, with most men coming home on a furlough after mustering out when no less than 430 men had decided to stay on for the duration. Middletown's portion of the regiment reached home on the afternoon of March 15. After a parade, addresses were given by Village President Pronk and Colonel Van Wyck, followed by a lunch at Gothic Hall. In the evening a dinner was given in honor of the officers. Recruiting was opened to fill the ranks of the regiment. Bounties then totaled no less than \$852 for a reenlisting veteran, and \$677 for a new recruit. The regiment reorganized, met at Middletown on May 13, and left for the war.

On September 28, 1864, a new public hall was opened. It was called the Union Wigwam, which was nothing more than a portion of the old Erie woodshed remodeled. On opening night, 1,500 people were present. Mass meetings were held there weekly for the approaching national Presidential election and were noted to be quite lively. On election day in November 1864, Wallkill polled a record vote. District three gave a majority of nine for McClellan, but the other two districts piled up 293 for Lincoln. Middletown celebrated the victory on the night of November 16, with a parade, fireworks, torches, and public speeches. During this period, the Ladies' Aid Society occasionally held entertainments at the Wigwam for the benefit of the soldiers.

During the war, Middletown banks had sold more than \$300,000 in government bonds. The Middletown bank became the Middletown National Bank during the summer of 1864. At the same time, the Wallkill bank was nationalized. A number of men and firms in Middletown issued fractional currency. Some of these "private" notes were made and distributed by John Higham, Albert Bull and company, Dill and Swalm, and M.G. Decker.

As far as industrialization and contributions to the Northern war effort, The contract for hats for the navy has already been mentioned, but in addition to this a Middletown factory on John street manufactured powdered milk for the government. An experimental small cannon was made by the Orange County Furnace, but this prototype never earned a government contract. It was, however, used for many years after the war in the community for adding a little noise to public celebrations.



## THE COMMUNITY REMEMBERS

As in the case of most wars, veterans came home to reestablish their lives, and continue on by raising families and becoming part of the community. But it also does not take long for these same veterans to reflect back on the contribution and sacrifices that they made, and the community itself to have thoughts of honoring those heroes. Middletown and Wallkill are no exceptions to this, and some post-war remembrances and incidents show us today what those citizens felt about their Union veterans.

On March 7, 1868, Horace Greeley, the famous founder and editor of the NY newspaper, New York Tribune, came to Middletown and spoke at a public meeting for the benefit of Cornelius Crans, a disabled war veteran of Company K, 124th NY Volunteer Regiment.

Memorial Day was first observed in Middletown on May 30, 1868. There was not yet a G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic Union veteran's organization) post, but women decorated the thirteen graves of Civil War men in the village. Villagers paraded to St. Joseph's Cemetery, Middletown Cemetery on Academy avenue, and Hillside Cemetery.

Shortly after the Civil War, civic leaders and others started a movement to erect a monument to the memory of the town of Wallkill men who died during the war. Occasionally, efforts were made to raise funds, and money slowly accumulated. This ongoing project reached a high level of endorsement and cooperation by many citizens in 1878, and after a concentrated fund drive, an order for the monument was finally given in late 1878 by the monument committee. The monument, twenty-two feet high, with a seven-foot figure of a private soldier standing atop it, was manufactured by the St. Johnsbury Granite Company. The principal inscription: "Erected A.D. 1879, to the memory of the soldiers of the town of Wallkill. The War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865." The monument was dedicated on September 5, 1879 on an island in Orchard street, at North street. A huge parade preceded the dedication ceremony, which were attended by a large crowd. The program included a prayer by Rev. Augustus Seward, and guest orator was ex-Union Major General Judson Kilpatrick. Poems and songs were performed by talented personalities, and a reverent address was given by Rev. M. Osborn. The monument was removed to Thrall Park in 1894.

## TODAY

Today, Middletown and Wallkill are certainly much different places than what existed in the last century. The veterans of the Civil War are long gone, but some reminders of their service remain, and the community still recognizes their sacrifices, in addition to soldiers of later wars, on Memorial Day by the reading of General Logan's G.A.R. order of 1868 formalizing this remembrance, and Lincoln's Gettysburg address, at the foot of the Soldiers monument at Thrall park. Veteran groups today also honor their memory by placing U.S. flags on Union graves annually during this time, in addition to all veterans up to today.

After the Civil War, many veterans moved on to seek fortunes away from the area, but still many stayed on to live out their lives here and contribute to the life of the community. Many of the soldiers from local units that did stay are interred at places like Hillside Cemetery. A recent survey of graves at Hillside show that there are 192 Civil War veterans buried there. Some of the old markers in this cemetery are so worn over the years that it will be impossible to have an exact tally.

Examining the Hillside survey, some units and names stand out from the rest:

Of the members of the Wallkill Guards, 18th NY regiment, six are buried here, to include Robert Malone, who after serving as Sergeant mustered out in 1863 and afterwards became a Captain of Company K, 124th NY Volunteers; Thomas Curry, who was a corporal, and reenlisted after mustering out only to die in service on the Arkansas River Jan 18, 1866; and Joshua Hirst, who was in Company B.

Of the members of the Tenth Legion, 56th NY regiment, fourteen are buried here, to include Ira Bradner, Assistant Surgeon, Hugh Chambers, Company D; John A. Clark, Company F; James J. Cox, Sergeant Company D, Captain, Company E; Frank B. Davenport, Company A; Charles T. Forbes, Pvt, Company G; James Quinn, Company E; Jesse L. Stivers, 2nd Lt. Company B; Terwilliger, Company B; Amzi A. Turner, Company C; Isaac



Wallace, Company H; and John F. Wood, Company E. Of the members of the Middletown Cavalry, which became detached and formed Company C, 1st NY Mounted Rifles, two are buried here, Theodore W. Gibbs, Company C, and Abner S. Wells, Company C.

Of the Orange Blossoms, 124th NY Volunteers, forty are buried here, to include Daniel Baker, Company H; Adam Wilkin Beakes, Company E; Cornelius Crans, Company K; Moses Crist, Company E; David Curry, Company D; George W. Elliston, Company K; Alonso S. Frost, Company K; Lewis Gardner, Company E; Sylvanus Greer, Company K; Nathan M. Hallock, Corporal, Company K, and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient; John C. Holley, Company K; Henry M. Howell, Company E; Stephen B. Kerr, Company K; Hiram Ketchum, Corporal, Company E; Robert A. Malone, Captain, Company K; James M. Merritt, Company B; Wood T. Ogden, Lieutenant, Company K; Winfield W. Parsons, Sergeant, Company K; James Foster Roosa, 1st Lieutenant, Company K; John J. Scott, Sgt, Company E; John R. Skelton, Pvt., Company K; Daniel E. Webb, Company K; Lewis S. Wisner, Captain, Company K, and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient; and Joseph H. Wood, Company D.

Colonel Daniel C. Dusenberry, who caned John Hasbrouck during the July 7 1863 celebration of the fall of Vicksburg is buried here.

As identified from the roster of the 124th, Cornelius Crans, who was the disabled veteran that Horace Greeley made a speech for in 1868 is here.

Colonel and Brevet Brigadier General David Porter DeWitt, graduate of the West Point class of 1836 is buried at Hillside. He served in many capacities during the civil war, and his service includes being Major of the 2nd Maryland Volunteer regiment, Colonel of the 3rd Maryland Volunteer regiment, with hard fighting at Dunker Church at Antietam in 1862, and Colonel of the 143rd NY Volunteer regiment.

Eleven black soldiers of the USCT (United States Colored Troops) have been identified, to include Richard Abbott, Company E, 26th USCT; Edmund Colden, Company I, 14th R.I. Colored Troops; Charles H. Easterly, Company F, 26th USCT; Oliver Halsey, 26th USCT; William Hasbrouck, Company H, 26th USCT; John Hill, Company G, 14th R.I. Colored Troops; John Roberts, Company I, 14th R.I. Colored Troops.

Many other units and areas are represented at Hillside from all over the tri-state area, Ohio, and Maryland. This is the result of veterans from areas other than Middletown moving here after the war, or perhaps enlisting in units other than the ones mustered in locally. There is one more Medal of Honor recipient, Thomas D. Collins of Company H, 143rd NY Volunteers. In checking with various regimental histories and references, it is shown that these veterans participated in almost every major campaign in every theater of the war.