

Washington County, New York

On April 2, 1784, the New York State Legislature rechristened Charlotte County as Washington County. Twelve years earlier, in March 1772, while under British rule, this county had been separated from Albany County and christened Charlotte, in honor of “Our Gracious Queen.”

When first formed, Washington County did not include the present-day towns of Easton, Cambridge, Jackson, White Creek or the southwestern part of Greenwich; these remained part of Albany County until 1791. However, Washington County did include present-day Warren, Essex, Clinton and part of Franklin county, its boundary stretching from the Battenkill north to the Canadian border and east to the crest of Green Mountain range in what is now Vermont.

The location and geography of Washington County are responsible for much of its historical development. Being positioned on the major water and portage route between New York City and Canada, many invading and defending troops passed through it. Troops traveled the Hudson River to Fort Edward and portaged to present-day Whitehall, then traveled Lake Champlain to Canada. A veritable frontier, this area was at one time fortified, to protect against French incursions, at Fort Edward and Fort Ann. In 1776 Benedict Arnold was asked to build a fleet to defend Lake Champlain against the British. The result was the birth of the United States Navy at Skeneborough, or what is now Whitehall. During 1777 General John Burgoyne and his force of British, German and Native American troops invaded from Canada via Lake Champlain. They took Skeneborough and shortly thereafter won the Battle of Fort Ann, but their advance slowed southward from that point as Patriot forces cut timbers to block their overland route.

Washington County was born into war and when the Civil War began that fighting heritage was again on display as numerous county men volunteered to fight for the Union cause. The county population of 45,904 sent one complete regiment, the 123rd, and sixteen partial regiments ranging from half to only one, two or just a few men in mixed companies. Washington County’s economy was at that time still solidly grounded in agriculture but was not completely without industrial interests, including milling, iron mining and processing, and slate quarrying. The Champlain Canal and the beginnings of efficient regional railroad transportation encouraged the further development of regional industry and commerce. By the 1860s Washington County was enjoying the benefits of a widening economy.

These volunteers soldiers were used to fresh clean air, open countryside, clean food and sanitary conditions. Their service soon changed these accustomed

conditions. Washington County men faced cramped conditions, poor food, disease, unsanitary conditions and, in some instances, death. These men were tested and if they failed they would not go home again. Many had never traveled far from the Washington County countryside or even beyond the limits of their towns. Their service was important to them, their families, and towns as evidenced by the monuments later dedicated in town squares, and in local cemeteries, where the many headstones told of their experiences, achievements, gallantry and in some cases how they lost their lives. After the war these citizen soldiers celebrated their service within the county and state as well as traveling back to the battlefields in the South and where they fought.

Many men joined companies formed within the county, while others joined regiments in nearby counties such as Saratoga, Warren, and Rensselaer, in other parts of New York, in addition to states in New England and the Middle Atlantic region. Washington County sent seventeen regiments to serve the Union cause. The following is a list of volunteer regiments and their associated Washington County companies, along with the battles those regiments participated in.

Regiment	Companies from W.C.	Engagements
<u>22nd Regiment - 22nd New York infantry</u>	Co. B, Ft. Edward; Co. D, Cambridge; Co. G, Whitehall; Co. H, Sandy Hill	Fredericksburg 1861, Cedar Mountain, 2 nd Manassas, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville
<u>43rd Regiment</u>	Co. F, Sandy Hill	Peninsula Campaign, Crampton Gap, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Winchester
<u>44th Regiment - "Ellsworth Avengers"</u>	20 or 30 men from Washington County	Yorktown, Hanover Court House, Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg,

		Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Mine Run, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Weldon Railroad, Petersburg,
<u>87th Regiment – “Fighting Regiment”</u>	Company A, Dresden and Putnam	Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, White-Oak Swamp. Malvern Hill, Manassas Junction; regiment consolidated into the 40 th NYV, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Mine Run, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor and siege of Petersburg
<u>93rd Regiment – “Morgan’s Rifles”, Northern Sharpshooters, New York Riflemen</u>	Co. G, Cambridge and vicinity, Co. F, Ft. Edward and vicinity; Co. I, Granville, Argyle	Ft. Monroe, Williamsburg, Seven Days Campaign, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Deep Bottom, Popular Spring Church and Boydton Road and engaged in final actions of war.
<u>96th Regiment</u>	Co. E, Sandy Hill and Ft. Edward	Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, Seven Days Campaign, Malvern Hill, Cold Harbor, Petersburg and Richmond.
<u>D’Epineuil’s Zouaves (53rd) Regiment</u>	40 or 50 men from Whitehall	Mustered out due to low numbers in 1862.
<u>2nd Cavalry Regiment</u>	Principally from Salem, Argyle, Cambridge, Easton, Greenwich,	The men became the core of the 2 nd New York Volunteer Cavalry,

	Hartford, Hebron, Jackson, Kingsbury, Fort Ann, Fort Edward and White Creek	“Black Horse Calvary”
<u>The Harris Light Cavalry, 2nd Calvary Regiment</u>	Co. E. Ft. Edward, Kingsbury, Fort Ann, Whitehall and Argyle	Fredericksburg, Second Battle of Bull Run, Brandywine Station, Richmond, Gettysburg, Dahlgren Raid, Wilderness, Valley of Virginia, Five Forks
<u>123rd Regiment</u>	Co. A, Greenwich; Co. B, Kingsbury, Co. C, Whitehall; Co. D, Fort Ann, Putnam and Dresden; Co. E., Hartford and Hebron; Co. F, Argyle and Greenwich; Co. G, White Creek, Jackson, Greenwich and Salem; Co. H, Salem, Shushan, Greenwich, Hartford and Hebron; Co. I, Easton, Cambridge, Hartford and Hebron; Co. K, Granville and Hampton	Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Fair Play and Williamsport, Resaca, Cassville and Dallas, Kennesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek, Siege of Atlanta, March to the Sea, Chesterfield, Averasboro, Bentonville, Aiken, Smithfield, Raleigh and Bennett’s House
<u>125th Regiment</u>	Co. K, part of company from Easton	Gettysburg, Bristoe Station, Mitchell’s Ford, Mine Run Campaign, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Deep Bottom and Strawberry Plains, Reams Station, Hatcher’s Run, Petersburg, Deatonsville Road, High Bridge and Farmville

<u>169th Regiment</u>	Co. C, Easton; Co. D, Sandy Hill, Kingsbury and Fort Edward; Co. E, Fort Edward; Co. F Whitehall, Lisbon and Fort Ann	Suffolk Va, Fort Wagner, Port Walthall Junction, Chester Station Bermuda Hundred Fisher, Petersburg, Dutch Gap Chafflin's Farm, Fort Fisher, Carrsville, Blackwater, Zuni, Nansemond, South Anna Drewry's Bluff, Darbytown Road, Willimington
<u>First Mounted Rifles</u>	Co. E, Fort Edward, Salem	
<u>2nd Veteran's Calvary</u>	Co. C, Salem, Shushan and Whitehall; Co L Granville, Fort Ann	
<u>16th Heavy Artillery</u>	Co. Fort Edward, Argyle and Kingsbury; Co. I, Kingsbury, Granville, White Creek, Fort Ann, Fort Edward, Greenwich, Hampton, Hebron, Easton, Co. K, Salem, White Creek Cambridge, Easton, Greenwich, Troy	Served several forts and fortifications, worked on Dutch Gap Canal

Johnson, History of Washington County; New York State Military Museum website:
<https://dmna.ny.gov/historic/mil-hist.htm>

COVER: left photo, GAR emblem, Greenwich Civil War monument; middle photo, Salem 123rd monument; right photo, Clio on top of statue in the Mettowee Cemetery, Granville, NY. The GAR emblem was off the Greenwich Civil War monument which was erected in 1916 by the Grand Army of the Republic Post 326. The Salem 123rd monument, located in Evergreen Cemetery, was erected in 1869 and was sculpted by Martin Milmore to honor the civil war veterans. The Clio on top of the Braymer/Durham monument emulates the 123rd Monument in Gettysburg.

January: Left picture, Washington County, New York map; right chart, listing of Washington County regiments during the Civil War. The statistics are from the New York State Military Museum website. Washington County sent one complete infantry regiment, 123rd NYS; they also sent the 22nd NYSV and 93rd NYSV, half of which were from Washington County.

February: April 15, 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 troops through raising state militias to fight the Rebellion. On June 6th, 1861 the four companies from Washington County were marched to Troy, New York where they were organized into the 22nd NYSV. In 1861, Washington County men sent several companies which would join other counties to form the 43rd, 44th, 87th, 93rd, 96th, D'Epineuil's Zouves (53rd NYV), 2nd Calvary NYCV, and Harris Light Calvary. The 123rd NYVI was formed as a result of President Lincoln's July 1862 call for another 300,000 men. The first Washington County war-meeting was held in Argyle, July 22nd and was followed by several other similar meetings throughout the county. One large war committee was formed on the county level and each town had a war committee.

March: In September 1861 the Second Cavalry was formed in Salem by Solomon W. Russell Jr. The regiment was stationed outside of Washington for the rest of 1861 and due to an over-abundance of cavalry units was mustered out in the spring 1862. On August 7, 1861, a company of cavalry for the newly formed Harris Light Cavalry was recruited in Fort Edward. The men in the company came from Fort Edward, Kingsbury, Fort Ann, Whitehall and Argyle. The Second Veterans Cavalry was mustered into service in the summer and autumn of 1863 from men whose two-year enlistments were up and wanted to join a cavalry unit.

April: The first regiment from the area was the 22nd NYVI of which four companies came from Washington County, one from Rensselaer County, two from Warren County, and three from Essex County. The Washington County companies came from the following towns: Co. B, Fort Edward; Co. D, Cambridge; Co. G, Whitehall; Co. H, Sandy Hill. The drummer boy was essential to the communication of the regiment. It is hard to believe these young boys were on a battlefield but each town, village, hamlet and city sent them to be the communication between the command and the troops. The regimental bands were one way that induce recruits to a regiment. The regimental bands were regulated in by general orders and the bands proliferated throughout the war.

May: The 93rd NYVI was organized by Cambridge lawyer John S. Crocker. The Washington County companies met and mustered in in Albany. The Co. G,

Cambridge and vicinity; Co. F, Fort Edward and vicinity; Co. I, Granville, Argyle and vicinity.

June: The 16th Heavy Artillery was formed by Thomas J. Strong of Sandy Hill after returning from his service with the 22 NYVI. There were no companies being formed at that time but Strong was able to get permission to raise twelve companies of one-hundred and fifty men each. Washington County Co. I, Sandy Hill and Co. K, from the Cambridge/Salem area. The regiment eventually had over 4,000 men many of whom were transferred to other companies. Colonel Strong and 1,200 men, Co. K being one of them, were sent in the spring of 1864 to Bermuda Hundred. These troops under Col. Strong were involved in a siege which lead them to several actions including Dutch Gap Canal, Deep Bottom, Signal Hill and other heavy action involved in the siege.

July: Photo of the ironclad "Monitor" from the Library of Congress; the first two iron clads were the Union ship, the "Monitor," and the "Merrimack," a Confederate ship. Iron ore from Mount Hope Iron Company, located in West Fort Ann, was hauled by ox teams to Fort Ann to be shipped by canal to Fort Edward. The ore was there made into pig iron, at the Harris Blast Furnace, and then shipped to the Burden Iron Works in Troy, where the iron was casted into plates for the "Monitor."

August: David Crowley was an Irish immigrant who fought for the Confederacy. In 1866, he married Katherine McNamara and raised a family in Whitehall, where he lived for 45 years. In Crowley's obituary it was noted that he worked for the Rensselaer & Saratoga Railroad and that he served the Southern cause with "conspicuous courage." In February 1864, Warren Goodrich enlisted Co. D; 5th NY Cavalry. Goodrich was taken prisoner at Hanover Court House June 1, 1864. He arrived by train to Andersonville Prison on June 25. Due to overcrowding, lack of food, unsanitary conditions and polluted water, 100 Union prisoners died there daily. By February 1865, as Sherman's army was closing in on Atlanta, Goodrich was transferred to prisons deeper in the South but the Confederate command decided to parole prisoners, among them Goodrich. He returned to Whitehall and lived there until his death in 1925 at the age of 79.

September: Top left you can see the Ondawa House and bottom right is where the current Bancroft Library is located. The flag in upper right is the 123rd NYVI flag and is housed in the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs and the accompanying guide-on flag is located in the Skenesborough Museum in Whitehall.

October: One of the most interesting monuments at Gettysburg is the 123rd monument, which is surmounted by Clio, the Muse of History. Clio inscribes the names of Gettysburg's fallen soldiers into history. The monument was dedicated on

September 4, 1888. The Durham/Braymer monument emulated the 123rd Gettysburg Monument. The inscription on Durham/Braymer monument describes Durham's service in the 123rd including action at the battles of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Resaca, Cassville, New Hope Church, and Culps Farm. Durham was a prisoner at Andersonville Prison from June 1864 until June 1865 and lived until 1901.

November: The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was organized after the war and largely served a social function. The GAR was also a political organization that fought for the rights of veterans and their family. The care promised by President Lincoln was not being fulfilled and the GAR was formed to care for the wounded, find jobs for unemployed veterans and to fight for pensions. The organizations had posts set up throughout the country and was very strong in Washington County. The bottom left photo, of the 1909 GAR McKie Post celebration, has an additional story captured within the image. As pointed out by Ken Perry in his article in the 2011 Washington County Historical Society Journal, Warren W. Chase, a black veteran, stands to the right of the flag. Several African Americans served in the Union army during the Civil War, as noted by Perry published in the Washington County Historical Society Journal, 2011 and 2012.

December: Photo of Medal of Honor. Robert Stoddard Robertson, born in Argyle, New York. Robertson was an aide-to-camp to a general officer, he observed that the line was breaking and he took up the company colors and led the troops back to face the enemy. Charles Franklin Cleveland, born in Hartford, New York. Cleveland took the colors after the standard bearer was shot and led the troops into battle. Henry Sartwell, born in Ticonderoga, New York. He joined the 123rd NYV at Fort Ann; he was wounded in action and taken back to an aid station. Sartwell returned to his regiment and continued to fight until he became too exhausted from the loss of blood and was forced to retire. John Wilson Sprague, born in White Creek, New York. Sprague, Colonel of 63rd Ohio Infantry, saved a Union supply train from over capture by overwhelming enemy force. William H. Walling, born in Hartford, New York. He was a captain in Co. C, 142 NYVI. At the battle of Fort Fisher, during the bombardment, Walling captured and bought back the Confederate flag from the fort. Harris Hawthorne, born in Salem, New York. He was a corporal for Co. F, 121st NYVI. At Sailor Creek, Virginia., Hawthorne captured the Confederate General G.W. Custis and returned him to Union Lines. Charles Read, born in Cambridge, New York. He was an ordinary seaman during the attack on St. Marks while serving on the U.S.S. Magnolia on March 6, 1865, and performed in an extemporary manner while manning his gun under heavy fire from the enemy. Lester Archer, born in Fort Ann,

New York. He was a sergeant in the 96 NYVI and won the award for his actions at the Battle of Fair Oaks and Dabytown Road. He placed his regimental flag on Fort Harrison, Virginia on October 27, 1864. He was killed during the action of that day.

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Paul McCarty, Fort Edward Town Historian

William Krattinger, WCHS Publication Chairperson

Nancy Jo Davidson, WCHS Trustee