

## Resaca - May 19, 2018

Good afternoon, my name is Debi Craig and I am President of the Washington County Historical Society located in Fort Edward, NY. The Society would like to thank Steve Toney and the members of the 28<sup>th</sup> George for inviting me to speak at this historic event today. I would also like to thank them for honoring the boys from the 123<sup>rd</sup> New York who traveled so far from home to defend the country that they loved even though most of them had never been out of Washington County before they boarded the train to head south. I decided I would share with you a bit about the time before and after the war as the 123<sup>rd</sup> prepared to head into battle and then as they prepared to return home after the war was over.

McClellan's campaign brought victory to the south and dismay to the north.

The north had been sure it would squelch the Rebellion in short order. Word reached every village and town in the north. It was being discussed at every dinner table. Patriotism began at home and was sweeping the northern countryside.

In the book "Reminiscences of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Regiment NYSV , Sgt. Henry Morhous said, "Everywhere resounded the cry "To arms"! and thousands were responding to the President's generous call for 300,000 troops on July 1, 1862." Washington County rose to the occasion in Argyle on July 22, 1862.

After a number of speeches, it was decided that a regiment would be raised and that the camp for this regiment would be in Salem. Committees were formed to enlist volunteers. The first towns to fill their quota were Greenwich and Easton.

The regiment came together at the Fair Grounds in Salem. It was known as Camp Washington and was mustered into service on Sept. 4, 1862. The men broke camp on Sept 5 and prepared to leave for Washington, D.C. They boarded the train cars, but their departure was delayed until 10 p.m. Shouting and cheering accompanied the troops as the train pulled out of the station. On they went to New York, then Camden, NJ and on to Philadelphia where they were treated to breakfast at the Cooper Shop Volunteer Refreshment Saloon. Morhous said that in one year the restaurant gave free meals to 87,513 soldiers on their way to battle.

Another home cooked meal met them when they reached Baltimore, prepared by local citizens. They next went on by train to Washington where began their life as a soldier.

Fast forward to the end of the war—The Long Road Home

Henry Morhous said, “A lovelier day never dawned than on April 30<sup>th</sup>, the day was to see the boys shoulder their knapsacks and with faces turned northward, commence their tramp, tramp, tramp for home. The boys really enjoyed the marching, but the only trouble was they did not march far enough each day. They wanted to march rapidly, for their great desire was to see home!

They continued to march for 16 more days when they reached the old Chancellorsville battlefield where they had fought their first battle more than 2 years earlier. They paused for 2 hours paying their respects to their fallen comrades from the battle. Little had changed. The brook bubbled along next to the field as it had on the day of the battle.

On they pressed toward Washington, D.C. passing in review past General Sherman and then the President. On My 25, they began the wait for the order to leave for home. On June 8 they were mustered out of service to their country. They cheered with delight when they received the order to get ready to return home.

At 6 a.m. on Friday, June 9, the 123<sup>rd</sup> boarded train cars headed to Baltimore and then on to Philadelphia where they returned to the Cooper Shop Volunteer Refreshment Saloon where the boys ate a delicious meal the likes of which they had eaten there 3 years before. They went on to New York City where they weren't treated as well. They were glad to leave that city where they boarded a steam ship for Albany. The regiment mustered out with 950 members and returned with but 525.

From the Morhous account: “They died that we might live. May it be a long, very long time ere the pulses of the old Washington County shall thrill at the brave deeds of another 123<sup>rd</sup> Regiment.

June 14<sup>th</sup> 1865 was the day when the boys of the 123<sup>rd</sup> were finally released from the military. Finally free to come and go as they pleased. They were home.