

The 14th New York State Militia in the Civil War



Volume I: “Baptized by Fire”—
from Bull Run to Bull Run, April 1861-August 1862

James L. McLean Jr.

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California

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The 14th New York State Militia in the Civil War, Volume 1: "Baptized by Fire"—From Bull Run to Bull Run, April 1861-August 1862

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Library of Congress Control Number
2025937468

ISBN-13: 978-1-61121-763-6
ISBN-13: 978-1-954547-71-1 (eBook)



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Jacket image "Taking Griffin's Battery—First Battle of Bull Run," used courtesy of artist Mark Maritato. See more of his fine art at www.maritato.com.

Maps by Hal Jespersen, Jr. See his work at www.cwmaps.com

Dedicated to

My generation of heroes:

Horace Mewborn, Special Forces

John Fuller, Naval Aviation

Paul Meuse, Army Artillery

Don Hiner, Tank Corps

My father-in-law,

Harry Walters, Merchant Marines

and especially my family:

Judy, Drew, Courtney, Camden, Lincoln, and Weston



A 14th Brooklyn soldier. Mark Maritato

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Acknowledgments

My interest in the 14th New York State Militia (14th Brooklyn) started in the late 1970s. I had decided to give a speech to my local Civil War Round Table about the performance of a brigade at the Battle of Gettysburg. I settled on an outfit led by Brigadier General Lysander Cutler. The 14th N.Y.S.M. was one of the regiments in Cutler's brigade. My early research culminated in the 1987 publication of *Cutler's Brigade at Gettysburg*, which was revised and reprinted in 1994 and revised and reprinted yet again by Savas Beatie in 2023. After retiring in 2003, I decided to explore the history of the 14th N.Y.S.M. in greater detail.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, individuals and staffs at the following institutions assisted me in my hunt for primary sources: the War Library and Museum in Philadelphia; the Carlisle War College Library (especially the late Richard Sommers); the Gettysburg National Military Park Library (primarily Kathy Georg Harrison); and the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park Library (chiefly Robert K. Krick). John Heiser and Scott Hartwig at Gettysburg and Will Greene, Donald Pfanz, and John Hennessy at Fredericksburg offered later support at their respective institutions.¹

Staffs at the following institutions have willingly assisted me since my initial forays into manuscript collections: Antietam National Battlefield Library (the late Ted Alexander); Manassas National Battlefield Library (Jim Burgess); Museum of the Confederacy (Joe Coski); National Archives and Records Administration; New York State Archives (Dan Lorello and William Gorman); New York State Library; Maryland Historical Society; Brooklyn Historical Society; Brooklyn Public Library (Joy Holland); Massachusetts Historical Society; Special Collections, University of Notre Dame (Sara Weber and George Rugg); Brown University Library (Peter Harrington); and the Pearce Civil War Collection, Pearce Collections Museum, Navarro College.

1 The War Library and Museum no longer exists. The Carlisle War College Library eventually moved to a newly-constructed, off-campus site, changing its name to the United States Army Military History Institute (USAMHI). It now operates under the moniker United States Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC). I conducted my research when the institution was known as the USAMHI, so I have used that abbreviation in my footnotes and bibliography.

Several 14th N.Y.S.M. reenactors contributed to this project, including Jim Madden, Tony DellaRocca, Peter Meyer, Frank Ruiz, and Robert Duffy. Frank Blades shared with me his collection of notebooks loaded with copies of documents pertaining to the regiment.

A number of individuals offered assistance in a variety of ways. Ed Flanagan looked through *Brooklyn Evening Star* microfilm, copied articles pertaining to the regiment, then forwarded them to me. Also, he sent me two essays published in *The Brooklyn Advance*. Jack Krumwiede not only donated his 1st Corps files but also critiqued an early chapter of the manuscript. Jeffrey Kowalis trusted me with Henry Brown's scrapbook of postwar newspaper articles. Over the years, he has shared photographs related to the regiment. Robert Burns gave me an image of John Jenkins dressed in civilian clothes. Researcher Laura Congleton investigated a large number of files at the Brooklyn Historical Society; she forwarded the pertinent records that she found. Bradley Gernand and Ed Wenzel provided important insights about Fall's Church and the November 18, 1861, skirmish between Co. H, 14th N.Y.S.M. and the 1st Virginia Cavalry. Seward Osborne offered material about the 20th N.Y.S.M. Andrew German's 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry manuscript helped with my interpretation of the 14th N.Y.S.M.'s April 17-18, 1862, march from Catlett's Station to Falmouth. Tom Ebert shared information concerning the 147th New York that will be helpful in a subsequent volume. Keith Knolte provided valuable feedback on my 1st Bull Run questions and comments. Craig Johnson and John Fuller shared their expertise about Civil War photography, and, together with Kathy Steckelberg, accompanied me on battlefield excursions; these friends supported this project despite their obsessions with the Western Iron Brigade. In addition, Craig provided copies of important files from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Carolyn Kilgore cheered me on in hopes of seeing her name in print.

Over the last 50 years, a number of dealers have facilitated my research by publishing or reprinting hundreds of Civil War titles. Bob Younger, Tom Broadfoot, Dave Zullo, Ron Van Sickle, David Martin, Michael Owens, and Theodore P. Savas are some of the gentlemen whose publications aided my research.

I have been able to procure from memorabilia, carte de viste (CDV), document, and book dealers many important—and sometimes, rare—items connected to the 14th N.Y.S.M. Steve Meadow, Paul Brzozowski, Perry Frohne, Rick Carlile, Jim Quinlan, Henry Deeks, Mike McAfee, Marc Ramsey, Chris Herbert, Jim Schmick, and Seth Kallar were some of the merchants who sold me items.

I am fortunate to know many esteemed Civil War historians. They graciously responded to my questions and shared documents from their personal files. Robert K. Krick invited me into his home where I sifted through his Virginia troops' folders in search of material related to the 14th N.Y.S.M. He alerts me when he finds 14th N.Y.S.M. items for sale. One of his emails led to my acquisition of the regiment's day book. His son, R. E. L. Krick, sent me information about the Francis Bartow monument on Henry Hill and about the amputation of Confederate General Richard S. Ewell's leg after his wounding at Brawner's Farm.

John Hennessy shared copies from his vast accumulation of soldiers' letters printed in period newspapers or gathered from institutions. He showed me a portion of his preliminary draft of *Return to Bull Run* that contained some material excised from his final manuscript. John answered many questions about both Bull Run campaigns. He also read the manuscript, offering valuable feedback.

The August 21-23, 1862, engagement near Rappahannock Station and Beverly's Ford has received little attention from historians (except John Hennessy). In February 2020, I was fortunate to be part of a tour of this region conducted by Clark "Bud" Hall. Bud is the foremost authority on Culpeper County, Brandy Station, and the region surrounding the fords along the Rappahannock River. The visit allowed

me to visualize the areas occupied by the 14th N.Y.S.M. during the three-day battle. When it came time to map the fight, Bud provided important input concerning the location of Beverly's Ford and the road network leading to it.

Tom Clemens shared information about Walter Phelps. He also conducted a tour of South Mountain that will help with Volume 2. Historian Jeffry Wert read the manuscript; his critique improved it both factually and grammatically. Keith Bohannon sent me material on Georgia units that will be used in Volume 2. Scott Hartwig answered many email inquiries; his expertise will greatly enhance my later work on the Battle of South Mountain. Donald Pfanz provided material on Hartwood Church and Betty Maury.

Historical artist Mark Maritato graciously allowed the use of his painting that depicts the 14th New York State Militia at 1st Bull Run for the dust jacket.

Martha Baker copy-edited my manuscript. Her efforts improved my style, corrected my grammar, and eliminated redundant material, thereby improving the readability of this narrative.

Military books without ample, detailed maps are one of my pet peeves. I wanted this history to contain plenty of maps so the reader could "see" where the regiment marched, bivouacked, and fought its battles. Cartographer Hal Jespersen exceeded my expectations with his series of superb, color maps.

My publisher, Theodore Savas, of Savas Beatie LLC, appreciated my vision of a detailed, illustrated, full-color regimental history. I am grateful for his advice and support during the production stages of this project.

When I started my research at the National Archives and Records Administration, Mike Musick was on the verge of retirement. Still, in a short time, he provided a useful overview of the repository that helped me locate many valuable documents in numerous record groups. Since his retirement, Mike has continued to answer my Civil War inquiries.

Robert "the Irish Rogue" O'Neill, a good friend and an indefatigable researcher, frequently forwarded 14th N.Y.S.M. material he found in newspapers or at the National Archives. Together, we have toured much of the Virginia countryside traveled by the regiment. Bob read this manuscript, offering excellent suggestions to improve it. Mike Russert, another long-time pal, read parts of the manuscript to offer valuable feedback. He and his wife hosted me for a week in 2005 so I could conduct research at the New York State Archives. Later, Mike went through numerous record groups at the New York State Library and Archives, locating valuable information used in this book.

Susan Axtell Lowe graciously provided a transcript of Enos Axtell's 1862-1864 diaries, which provided excellent material about the 14th N.Y.S.M.

Paul Sopko's generosity played a large role in this project. After the war, his ancestor, Charles Teasdale, compiled a handwritten manuscript of his Civil War experiences. This fabulous document, based on Teasdale's diaries, provides daily insights about the 14th N.Y.S.M. Paul is a wonderful steward of this memoir; he has sent me copies of large portions of the document for my research. The Teasdale diary, the most important source on the regiment, deserves publication. I am deeply indebted to Paul for his kindness.

The late Horace Mewborn, a relentless researcher and good friend, greatly influenced this project. In his North Carolina vernacular, he "carried" me to the National Archives, insisting that the institution was the epicenter of Civil War research. Horace taught me how to conduct research there, so our more than 100 visits to the Archives paid fruitful dividends. Horace also introduced me to research at the Library of Virginia, the Library of Congress newspapers archives, and the Museum of the Confederacy. Even from his home, Horace assisted me. When I called him with a question or to see if he had a particular source, he would check his extensive library and usually came back with the answer. I will forever miss his expertise and friendship.

My family has graciously accepted my lifelong obsession with the Civil War. My father had no interest in history, but he still took his wide-eyed, 12-year-old son to his first Civil War Round Table meeting in November 1963. He continued this monthly routine until I passed my driver's exam. Likewise, my son, Drew, has no interest in the Civil War, but because of my limited computer expertise, he willingly provides me with technical support.

My greatest (and most indulgent) supporter has been my wife, Judy: she has persevered through countless battlefield trips; she has taken notes in research libraries; she has examined the compiled service records of every soldier in the 14th N.Y.S.M.; she has read and commented upon portions of my manuscript; and she has endured hundreds of hours of my absence while I struggled to transform our research into a readable narrative. For her love and assistance, I am forever grateful.

My research has spanned five decades. In that time, I may have forgotten some of the people who assisted me in this endeavor. To anyone whose contributions I have failed to recognize, please accept my humble and heartfelt apology.

I bear full responsibility for any mistakes on the pages that follow.

James L. McLean, Jr.

August 6, 2024

Notes and Abbreviations

I have incorporated numerous soldiers' quotes throughout the text. To maintain the "flavor" of the combatants' words, I have neither corrected their misspelled words nor identified those mistakes with [sic]. Occasional punctuation marks such as commas or periods have been added to support sentence structure. When words within a quotation are underlined or italicized (unless otherwise noted), they represent the emphasis of the soldier who wrote them.

Many paragraphs are not footnoted. When this occurs, sources for these paragraphs are located in the next footnote.

Many maps in the book do not include troop positions; generally, soldiers' travels through the areas depicted were fluid, rendering stationary markers ineffectual. Instead, the maps include all physical features—roads, railroads, towns, buildings, bridges, streams, rivers, fords, and terrain—mentioned in the text. This should facilitate the reader's ability to follow more easily the shifting movements of the armies.

I have placed quotation marks around camp names and nicknames, such as "Camp McDowell" or "Little Mac," only when first introduced.

When the individual responsible for a photograph or illustration is known, he is identified in the caption and the source of the image is listed. I took the modern photographs.

Below are abbreviations used in the book:

A. A. G.: Assistant Adjutant General

AC: Author's Collection

Adj. Gen.: Adjutant General

ANB: Antietam National Battlefield

AWOL: Absent without leave; the soldier left the regiment without permission,
but he returned on his own volition

BHS: Brooklyn Historical Society

Bty.: Battery

CDV: Carte de viste

Co.: Company

CSR: Compiled service record

FSNMP: Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

GSW: Gunshot wound

HQ: Headquarters

KIA: Killed in action

LOC: Library of Congress

MHS: Massachusetts Historical Society

MIA: Missing in action

MNBP: Manassas National Battlefield Park

MW: Mortally wounded

NARA: National Archives and Records Administration

NYSA: New York State Archives

NYSL: New York State Library

N.Y.S.M.: New York State Militia

NYSMM: New York State Military Museum

O.R.: *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*

POW: Prisoner of war

QM: Quartermaster

RG: Record Group

S.H.S.P.: Southern Historical Society Papers

SHSW: State Historical Society of Wisconsin

USAHEC: United States Army Heritage and Education Center

USAMHI: United States Army Military History Institute

U.S.S.S.: United States Sharpshooters

VRC: Veteran Reserve Corps

VSR: Volunteer Service Record

WIA: Wounded in action

Preface

“Thank

God my life is spared,” wrote 28-year-old Caleb Hadley Beal just two days after the Battle of Bull Run. Beal, a native of Hingham, Massachusetts, resided in Brooklyn when war erupted in April 1861. He promptly enlisted in a regiment comprised of men from the City of Brooklyn, New York. His unit, the 14th New York State Militia, also known as the 14th Brooklyn or Brooklyn Chasseurs, traced its roots to an outfit that served in the War of 1812. In May 1861, the regiment, aided by political shenanigans that enraged New York Governor Edwin Morgan, moved to the nation’s threatened capital.

That same month, the 14th N.Y.S.M. mustered into United States service “for the war.” Two months later, the militia group shed its blood on a northern Virginia plateau named Henry Hill. Caleb Beal proudly informed his parents that “We fought bravely and the 14th as hard as any other regiment.” He noted that his outfit had endured fire for five hours and that the 14th made “3 rallies up the hill,” but he lamented that “the enemy could not be got at.” The action on Henry Hill was the vortex of some of the most severe fighting that had yet been experienced on the North American continent.¹

In his missive to his parents, Caleb Beal made no attempt to magnify the record of the 14th N.Y.S.M. at Bull Run. His modest and honest report of the regiment’s participation in the battle typified the manner in which most Brooklyn lads not only approached but also chronicled the war. Members of the 14th N.Y.S.M. seldom embellished their exploits during or after the war. In fact, during the postwar era when hundreds of veterans penned regimental histories or personal memoirs that found a national audience, not one member of the unit published such an account. A regimental history of the outfit did not appear until 1911. Two newspaper writers who had never served in the 14th N.Y.S.M. prepared the publication. Veterans received a copy of the book at an

1 Caleb Beal to his Parents, July 23, 1861, Caleb Hadley Beal Papers, microfilm edition of Civil War Correspondence, Massachusetts Historical Society [Hereafter cited Beal Papers, MHS]. The 14th N.Y.S.M. wore a chasseur uniform: It consisted of scarlet, full-cut pants; a dark blue, waist-length jacket with two rows of bell buttons and a red breast piece or *faux* vest; and a crimson kepi with a blue crown. The chasseur uniform resembled, with some differences, a Zouave outfit. The members of the regiment cherished their numerical designation and their status as a militia outfit. Officers generally marked official documents with “14th N.Y.S.M.” As a tribute to the unit, the regiment will be referred to as the 14th N.Y.S.M. throughout the book.

evening banquet commemorating the regiment's 50th anniversary of mustering into United States service. After the ceremony, the deep blue book with a chasseur soldier illustrating the cover had a limited release.²

While members of the regiment tended to be unpretentious about their war records, other soldiers who witnessed the fighting prowess and ingenuity of the Brooklynites left glowing reports about the unit. During the retreat from Yorktown in May 1862, Federal troops captured Confederate Captain W. G. Conner of the Jeff Davis Legion. A pre-war acquaintance and current correspondent for the *New York Evening Post* interviewed Conner, an 1845 graduate of Yale College. The interview, widely reprinted in Empire State newspapers, focused on the Battle of Bull Run. The *Evening Post* correspondent inquired, "What regiment of our army fought the most gallantly at Manassas?" The Yale graduate responded, "The Fourteenth of Brooklyn and [Charles] Griffin's and [James] Ricketts's battery fought by far the most gallantly. This is the opinion of all of our officers."³

Alfred Wood, colonel of the Brooklyn regiment at Bull Run, later confirmed that the Confederates held the chasseur organization in high esteem. After the battle, Southern troops captured the wounded officer and held him for more than six months. During that time, he conversed with Confederates who had fought on that field. After his parole, Wood visited his regiment and told the group that "they had established at Manassas a reputation which they might well strive to maintain, 'for,' said he, 'you are the dread of the enemy.' Everywhere he had been assured by the Confederate officers that his regiment, the 'red legs,' had fought more desperately than any other at the field of Bull Run."⁴

Union comrades likewise respected the reputation of the 14th N.Y.S.M. George Collins enlisted in the 149th New York Volunteer Infantry in the fall of 1862; at the Battle of Gettysburg, he held the rank of lieutenant in the Twelfth Corps regiment. In May 1863, Collins and the 149th New York saw heavy action at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Collins received a slight gunshot wound to the right elbow during the fight but recovered in time to participate in the Gettysburg campaign.⁵

As part of Brigadier General George S. Greene's New York brigade, Collins fought on Culp's Hill on July 2 and 3, 1863. The eminence was inflamed in vicious musketry on July 3, and the 149th New York had just been relieved from the front line breastworks to rest, to clean their fouled muskets, and to replenish their depleted

2 After the banquet, the regimental history became available only through subscription. C. V. Tevis and D. R. Marquis, *The History of the Fighting Fourteenth* (Baltimore: Butternut and Blue, 1994), pp. i-ii; "History of the Fourteenth, Splendid Volume Tells of Deeds of Regiment in the War," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 18, 1911.

3 "From Yorktown," *New York Evening Express*, May 17, 1862. The article also appeared in the May 19, 1862, issue of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and the May 20, 1862, issue of the *Albany Evening Journal*. The articles misspelled the captain's last name as Connor. His full name was William Gustine Conner. He was captured at Williamsburg on May 4, 1862, and was incarcerated at Fort Delaware until his August 9, 1862, release. He was killed in action at Gettysburg. Nathaniel Hughes, *Yale's Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2008), pp. 44-45.

4 1890 newspaper clipping, Box 2, Folder 21, Cranston Family Papers, ArMs 1994.013, Brooklyn Historical Society. Hereafter, the Cranston Family Papers will be cited as Cranston Papers, BHS. The 14th N.Y.S.M., or the 14th Brooklyn, was also nicknamed "the Red Legged Devils."

5 George Collins, *Memoirs of the 149th Regt. N. Y. Vol. Inf.* (Hamilton: Edmonston Publishing, Inc., 1995), unpaginated forward, p. 415; George Collins Compiled Service Records [Hereafter cited CSR], National Archives and Records Administration [Hereafter cited NARA].

ammunition. While waiting in a hollow behind the Federal position, Collins observed an incident that “made an indelible impression upon the memory of the participants.” The lieutenant recalled seeing in a ravine “a Brooklyn regiment in Zouave uniform ... waiting to be ordered to the front. It was whispered around that they were reputed to be a ‘bully fighting regiment,’ and therefore attracted attention.” The youth of the men in the 14th N.Y.S.M. awed Collins. He noted that they “presented a tidy and smart appearance.” After describing how a musket ball had ricocheted off a tree and struck one of the Brooklyn boys in the breast, Collins watched as the 14th N.Y.S.M. prepared to enter the breastworks.

For the Union troops on Culp’s Hill, the killing zone was not behind the breastworks or in the sheltered hollow but in the exposed landscape between the two regions. Collins recalled with admiration how the 14th N.Y.S.M. Deployed:

Soon after, this same regiment was ordered to the front and it was interesting to watch the conduct of men said to be brave. They were nearly all young boys, and as they took their places in line and waited the directions of their commander, their pale faces and ashy lips told how great was the conflict within. Most of them trembled like an aspen leaf from head to foot, and as they looked at each other and tried to laugh the very smile they gave had impressed upon it the inward agony they endured. It was feared, so great was their trepidation, they would be unable to go forward, but when the word of command came the lips tightened, the eyes flashed, every nerve was strained, and they moved forward with almost mechanical ease and firmness. As they advanced, a thousand men, observing their heroic conduct in sympathy and admiration, rose in their places and cheered, while their prayers ascended to God that he would spare those young men possessed of so much courage and manliness.⁶

Harry Pfanz, in his forward written for the 1995 reprint of George Collins’s memoir, considered the lieutenant’s description of the 14th N.Y.S.M.’s advance to the breastworks as “hard to beat.” Neither Collins nor Pfanz mentioned that the Brooklyn contingent making the maneuver had lost more than half its strength in bitter fighting fewer than 48 hours earlier. This noteworthy description came from the pen of a man who had served outside the Brooklyn regiment. Collins had experienced a great deal of heavy fighting during the war. He had received two battle wounds, the second a gunshot wound to the right foot at Lookout Mountain. During the war, he undoubtedly observed many incidents that became seared into his memory. That one of these episodes involved the heroic actions of the 14th N.Y.S.M. on Culp’s Hill exemplified the regard fellow Union troops felt for the Red Legged Devils.⁷

Another Union veteran, Algernon S. Coe, a surgeon in the 147th New York Volunteers, also reminisced fondly about the 14th N.Y.S.M. In an 1885 *National Tribune* article, Coe discerned “among the numerous correspondences of the boys in blue,” no “mention of the gallant 14th Brooklyn (N.Y.) Zouaves.” Coe wrote: “No regiment in the war of the rebellion took a more conspicuous part, engaged in so many battles, and did so much to enliven the spirit of the boys and keep them from falling into despondency on the weary march” or “in bivouack or dreary monotony of winter quarters.” In his mind, “a true history of the regiment, with a little

6 Collins, *Memoirs of the 149th Regt. N. Y. Vol. Inf.* pp. 143-145. As was frequently the case, Collins misrepresented the 14th N.Y.S.M. as a Zouave unit.

7 Collins, *Memoirs of the 149th Regt. N. Y. Vol. Inf.*, unpaginated Foreword; George Collins, CSR, NARA.

coloring, would read like a romance, rivaling the fictions of the days of chivalry.” While noting their lax discipline, Coe reflected that their “enterprise and fertility of resources in supplying themselves and comrades with comforts and necessities in the most difficult situations” as well as their “reckless bravery in battle ... endeared them to all who knew them.” The surgeon finished the article with examples of the regiment’s exploits as stragglers on the march, as foragers, and as brave fighters in battle. Algernon Coe, who served in the same brigade as the chasseurs from June 1863 to May 1864, felt compelled to acknowledge the contributions of his Brooklyn comrades.⁸

Unlike many veteran regiments serving in the war, the 14th N.Y.S.M. did not participate in the national proliferation of postwar literature. Coe penned the only article about the regiment in *The National Tribune*, a publication loaded with veterans’ reminiscences and devoted to veterans’ affairs. *The Philadelphia Weekly Press* ran frequent columns devoted to the war. Soldiers of all ranks submitted material for publication. None of these authors came from the chasseurs. After the war, Union veterans established the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS). At meetings across the Northern states, old soldiers gave talks that editors later compiled and published in book form. No one from the 14th N.Y.S.M. tendered a paper for the project. In the 1880s, *Century Magazine* published articles by veterans that compilers consolidated to produce the classic four-volume *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*. Again, Brooklyn chasseurs made none of these submissions. Thus, during the explosion of veterans’ printed accounts produced in the last couple of decades of the 19th Century and in the beginning of the 20th Century—in the form of regimental histories, personal memoirs, articles in nationally distributed newspapers, and MOLLUS volumes—the 14th N.Y.S.M. remained strangely silent. It seemed that the men comprising the “Fighting Fourteenth” had left the war behind them. Justly proud of their accomplishments, they must have decided to get on with their post-bellum lives. However, on a local level, the old veterans held an annual reunion each May to swap stories commemorating their enrollment into Federal service. Occasionally, a chasseur veteran submitted an article about the regiment to a Brooklyn paper. On the national platform, however, their silence allowed the exploits of this revered regiment to fade into obscurity.

One more factor ensured that historians would overlook the fine record compiled by the 14th N.Y.S.M. In the 1880s, the United States government published a 128-volume collection of circulars, general orders, telegrams, and battle reports accumulated by the War Department during the Civil War. Arranged chronologically, this material, entitled *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, immediately became one of the most valuable sources for the study of the war. This series provides a wealth of data; unfortunately, the 14th N.Y.S.M. lacked representation within its pages. The regiment’s only battle reports contained in this massive work covered a small, fall 1861 picket outpost skirmish, the Gettysburg Campaign, and the Mine Run Campaign. Conspicuously absent are reports for 1st and 2nd Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania—all battles that the Red Legged Devils participated in with valor.⁹

8 “Fighting Them Over...The 14th N. Y. Zouaves,” *The National Tribune*, August 13, 1885. Coe’s name was incorrectly given as “Cox” in the article. Coe also mistakenly labeled the 14th Brooklyn as a Zouave regiment.

9 As will be mentioned later, two of these reports have surfaced. The leader of the regiment, Edward Brush Fowler, incurred a serious wound at 2nd Bull Run, which might explain the absence of reports for that battle as well as for the South Mountain and Antietam fights. The unit mustered out soon after Spotsylvania, which probably accounts for the lack of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania reports.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, a wealth of primary accounts deals with the chasseurs. The 1911 regimental, though not compiled by unit veterans, assembled a number of worthwhile anecdotes by chasseurs. “Colonel Fowler’s Recollections of Gettysburg” and “Colonel Fowler’s Own Story” provided especially useful material for reconstructing the outfit’s service.

Brooklyn-area newspapers provide a treasure trove of important information. Throughout the war, innumerable soldiers’ letters appeared in the hometown papers. Loaded with insights about camp life and depictions of combat, they yielded fine material about the chasseurs. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *The Brooklyn Daily Times*, the *Brooklyn Evening Star*, *The Sunday Mercury*, *The Newburgh Telegraph*, and others offered rich nuggets of data. A few soldiers made frequent contributions while other men issued sporadic submissions. Some of the regulars, such as John Jenkins and “Ed” provided particularly illuminating offerings. These men displayed a wonderful eye for detail. After the war, the local Brooklyn papers continued to monitor activities of the “Fighting Fourteenth’s” veterans’ association.¹⁰

The Brooklyn Historical Society maintains a number of collections vital to the history of the Red Legged Devils. The John Vliet correspondence represents one of the most important holdings in the institution. At age 26, Vliet enrolled in the militia group in April 1861 and stayed with the regiment until the end. During the war, he wrote frequent letters home to his former employer, Charles Collins. These wonderfully honest and observant missives furnished a common soldier’s take on the events from 1861-1864. At the time of the Civil War Centennial, David M. Cory edited and published the majority of the letters in four issues of *The Journal of Long Island History*. Cory labeled Vliet’s communications with Collins as “unusually objective, factual, [and] colorful with a salty humor.” The editor believed these epistles revealed “keen and critical observation without undue bias, prejudice or predilection.” Despite the boost in availability by their publication, Vliet’s dispatches have remained a sadly neglected resource in modern studies of the Army of the Potomac.¹¹

The Brooklyn Historical Society yields another critical collection in its Cranston Family Papers. After the 14th N.Y.S.M. reached Washington in May 1861, officers returned to Brooklyn in order to recruit two additional companies. Alfred Cranston became one of the new enlistees. Throughout the war, he exchanged letters with his fiancée, Elizabeth Hollington Petford. These writings add rich insight into the regiment’s activities. The grouping also contains Cranston’s 1864 diary with entries of varying length, particularly useful on the Spotsylvania campaign. After the war, Cranston and Petford, who married in 1864, actively participated in the 14th N.Y.S.M. Veterans’ Association. These papers also contain valuable newspaper clippings and reunion materials.¹²

Two other collections held at the Brooklyn Historical Society add to the depth of this study. Albert Harnickell served as an officer in the regiment; his papers encompass worthwhile gems. A single folder in the Frank J. Bramhall Collection holds an important document. After the conflict, the War Fund Committee of the City of Brooklyn and Kings County selected Frank Bramhall to write a history of Kings County in the Civil War.

10 “Ed” wrote a series of excellent letters for *The Newburgh Telegraph*. Letters by Jenkins can be found in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and *The Sunday Mercury*.

11 John Vliet Correspondence, 1974.109.A, Brooklyn Historical Society [Hereafter cited as Vliet Corr., BHS]. Most of Vliet’s letters appeared in the following issues of *The Journal of Long Island History*: Vol. II (Spring, 1962), No. 1; Vol. II (Fall, 1962), No. 2; Vol. III (Fall, 1963), No. 2; and Vol. IV (Summer, 1964), No. 3. Cory’s assessment of the value of Vliet’s letters appeared on page 30 of the Fall, 1962 issue.

12 Cranston Papers, BHS.

To this end, Bramhall collected newspaper clippings and mailed questionnaires to veterans. This collection reveals a single folder devoted to the 14th N.Y.S.M.; the folder houses a fragile, handwritten document of 94 pages entitled “Records of the Fourteenth Regiment New York State Militia” (a modern typescript of the frayed document accompanies the original). Evidently, the record represents a collection of important material kept at the regiment’s headquarters for official purposes. It reveals bits of prewar history, a rough chronology of unit activities, general orders received by 14th N.Y.S.M. commanders, and official reports written by Colonel Edward Brush Fowler. Two of these reports—for 1st Bull Run and for Chancellorsville—never appeared in the Official Records. This document offers vital material on the unit’s activities throughout the war.¹³

The New York State Archives houses an important grouping related to the 14th N.Y.S.M. In its National Guard Records, several cartons of war-dated papers pertain to the chasseurs. The unorganized documents include general orders, muster rolls, casualty lists, courts martial, circulars, invoices, inventories related to weapons and equipment, and letters directed to the regiment. These items provide invaluable insights and anecdotes about the regiment. As an example, Enos Axtell’s brief note, scratched on a scrap of paper, explains how he saved one of the flank guidons after being captured at Gettysburg. This collection offers an untapped source on the 14th N.Y.S.M.¹⁴

No attempt at researching and writing a history of a Civil War unit would be complete without consulting the bountiful resources located at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D. C. For this project, large portions of Record Groups 92, 94, 152, and 393 provided enriching results.

The backbone of the planned roster in the final volume of this history will be based on material found within the compiled service records of each member of the regiment. Every veteran’s pension file that could be located was searched. These files reveal extraordinary details about how the war affected the men who fought it. The pension files provide graphic details about wounds and illnesses, and they chronicle how those maladies lingered far into the postwar years. In some instances, the files enclosed letters that the chasseurs sent home to their loved ones. The 14th N.Y.S.M.’s miscellaneous regimental papers and muster rolls include additional details about the regiment. Monthly reports identify the number of men who were present, sick, under arrest, detailed for other duty, or who deserted, or other notable particulars that document how the size of the unit fluctuated throughout its enrollment.

Finally, the enormous collection of Volunteer Service Records includes a treasured packet of material on the regiment: it contains several petitions composed by the men of the 14th N.Y.S.M. Representatives from the regiment delivered at least one of those documents to President Abraham Lincoln. The National Archives stores a plethora of tantalizing material, which fleshes out the story of the regiment.

To this day, private citizens own an abundant amount of memorabilia pertaining to the Civil War. Descendants of soldiers and modern collectors maintain letters, diaries, photographs, documents, and other valuable war-related material. Several generous individuals cooperated on this project. Frank Blades, a long-time

13 Brooklyn, N. Y. Civil War History Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, Frank J. Bramhall, compiler, 1977.006, Brooklyn Historical Society [Hereafter cited as HQ Record]. Edward Fowler’s original 1st Bull Run Report, long considered lost, was rediscovered in 1901 and was published in the March 17, 1901, issue of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Albert Harnickell Papers, ArMs 1977.160, Brooklyn Historical Society [Hereafter cited as Harnickell Papers, BHS].

14 Details about this collection can be found in Harold Holzer, editor and Daniel Lorello, compiler, *The Union Preserved: A Guide to Civil War Records in the New York State Archives* (New York, 1999), p. 38.

14th N.Y.S.M. re-enactor and historian, graciously shared his notebooks loaded with data about the unit. Jeff Kowalis granted access to a wonderful postwar scrapbook of newspaper articles kept by veteran Henry Brown Jr., a line officer in the outfit. A descendant of George G. St. John permitted use of letters that the soldier wrote home during the war. Of unmatched importance is the contribution of Paul Sopko, whose ancestor, Charles Teasdale, served in Company E. After the war, Teasdale rendered a narrative history of his experiences. Obviously based upon diaries he had kept during the conflict, the work offers a daily account of his wartime experiences. Some entries were single lines while others extended several pages. Some of his passages, such as his chronicle of the skirmishing at Fitz Hugh Crossing in April 1863 and his observation of the carnage and detritus of the battle at the base of Culp's Hill in July 1863, count among the best pertaining to Civil War combat. His narrative history, produced for the family, gave a palpable sense of what it took to endure as a soldier in the Army of the Potomac. These individuals' generous assistance greatly enhances the story of the 14th N.Y.S.M.

Regiments did not shoulder arms in isolation during the war. All through the conflict, the chasseurs stood beside a large number of Union colleagues, including the famous Western Iron Brigade. Investigation into these allied outfits furnished additional anecdotes about the 14th N.Y.S.M. The other perspective necessary for a thorough examination of the regiment is that of the Confederate forces, which opposed the Red Legged Devils. Scrutinizing what these opponents said about the men they fought afforded another lens through which the 14th N.Y.S.M. can be examined. This study gained additional depth and perspective by prying into the records of regiments the Brooklynites fought with and against.

The ultimate purpose of this project is to examine the performance of the 14th N.Y.S.M. and to provide a vision of the war from the viewpoint of common soldiers. The result is an unvarnished account of the regiment, identifying both its accomplishments and its flaws. During and shortly after the war, contemporaries greatly lauded the regiment, but in modern times, the outfit has fallen into obscurity.

The actions of the chasseurs abounded in complex and seemingly incongruous behaviors. Despite pulling strings to get to Washington and then enlisting "for the war," many of the Brooklyn boys repeatedly attempted to reduce their term of service. Although they entered the Federal army, they insisted that they remained New York State militia. When New York's Governor Edwin Morgan tried to renumber them and force volunteer status upon them, the chasseurs fought to keep their cherished 14th militia designation. On some occasions, the regiment exhibited extraordinary marching prowess, such as their toilsome April 1862 tramp from Catlett's Station to Falmouth or their April 1863 expedition from White Oak Church to Port Royal and back. At other times, members of the unit took every opportunity to straggle.

Nonetheless, when it came time to fight, the regiment went into battle gallantly and performed its duty as effectively as the best troops in the Army of the Potomac. First Bull Run, South Mountain, and Gettysburg represented three battles in which the regiment excelled. In early May 1864, Colonel Fowler tried to shield the outfit from frontline action. Mere days of service time remained for the few remaining original enlistees of this band of soldiers, and Fowler did not want to subject them to danger before they could be mustered out. His efforts failed, and the 14th N.Y.S.M. made its share of spirited advances against entrenched Confederate forces during the Spotsylvania Campaign. As a result, some of those April 1861 recruits never saw Brooklyn again.

A detailed history of the 14th N.Y.S.M. allows the reader to view the war through the prism of a single regiment. A focused look at the unit provides details about why men enlisted, how they responded to all the nuances of soldier life, and how their feelings about combat evolved during their three years of service. The exuberant, patriotic communications sent home prior to their initial engagement were quickly tempered by the unimaginable fury and ghastly sights the soldiers experienced on the battlefield. For the chasseurs, the war

represented a three-year odyssey through which they endured enormous discomfort and pain. I hope this book provides an appreciation of what these patriots endured as they marched and fought to preserve the Union.

In a later volume, I intend to look at how the war became a unifying agent for the veterans, many of whom stayed in Brooklyn, their home. Although soldiers in the regiment did not project a national presence, Brooklyn newspapers kept the unit's war history alive through intermittent articles. Every May, the old members of the "Fighting Fourteenth" celebrated their muster into United States service with a banquet. These celebrations and other occasional events, attended by the veterans, perpetuated the memory of the regiment locally.

The postwar lives of veterans include how the war affected the men physically, and sometimes mentally. These citizens put their lives on hold for three years to protect the endangered Union. When they returned home, the illnesses and injuries incurred from 1861-1864 lingered, taking their tolls. The war, for these men, continued to their deaths as both celebratory and debilitating.

In 1886, the regiment invited General Christopher C. Augur, who had served as a brigade commander for the regiment early in the war, to one of the postwar events sponsored by the 14th Brooklyn Veterans' Association. At the last minute, Augur could not attend, but he sent his regrets in a brief note that summed up how most contemporaries felt about the 14th N.Y.S.M.: "I regret to say ... that I shall be unable to come. I cannot tell you what pain it gives me to return this answer. Another year if I am alive and well, I promise to join you. I have a very warm place in my heart for the old Fourteenth Brooklyn—light-hearted and troublesome when there was nothing to do, but when the time for work came, ever prompt, ready and prepared for anything required of them. No better regiment ever existed. God bless them all!"¹⁵

15 Undated newspaper clipping, Harnickell Papers, BHS. Augur's regrets, in nearly identical form, can be found in "War Veterans," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 19, 1886.

Chapter 1

“In Defense of the Union”

The 14th N.Y.S.M. Recruits to War Standard

 On April 12, 1861, Southern forces under General Pierre Gustave Toutant de Beauregard unleashed an artillery bombardment against Federal-occupied Fort Sumter. The barrage shattering the early morning calm in the Charleston, South Carolina, harbor also fragmented the uneasy compromises over slavery and states' rights that bound the nation's brooding sections together during its nascent years. Secession and the surrender of Fort Sumter threatened the very fabric of the Republic. To meet the impending crisis of disunion, newly elected president Abraham Lincoln had at his disposal approximately 16,000 officers and men. However, the army's diminutive size, scattered locations, and attrition—exacerbated by defections of men loyal to the seceded states—rendered the force woefully inadequate to deal with the crisis at hand. Lincoln decided to rely on the nation's long-standing state militia system and on public sympathy to support the wobbly federal government. In a proclamation whose legal basis lay in 1792 and 1795 acts of Congress, Lincoln enjoined the states to raise 75,000 militia troops. The President expected volunteers to “maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our National Union and the perpetuity of popular government, and to redress wrongs already long enough endured.” The attack on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's address sparked within the Northern population unprecedented and ardent support for the Union and the Constitution. Albert Harnickell, who had become an officer in the 14th New York State Militia, recalled that “the North rose en masse” in response to “this insult to the flag of the Union.”¹

Citizens in Brooklyn, New York, overwhelmingly supported the President. An April 16 editorial in *The Brooklyn Daily Times* noted that the chief executive's proclamation “caused great excitement throughout our city yesterday.... Everywhere the general feeling seemed to be that the President ought to be supported.” Militia

1 Fred Albert Shannon, *The Organization and Administration of the Union Army 1861-1865, Volume 1* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965), pp. 27-28, 32; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series III, Volume 1* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The National Historical Society, 1985), pp. 67-68; “The Law Under Which the Militia is Called Out,” *The Middleton (NY) Mercury*, May 10, 1861; *Reports and Documents of the Union Defense Committee of the Citizens of New York, Board of Alderman, September 9th, 1861, Document No. 18* (New York: Edmund Jones & Co., Printers to the Corporation, 1861), pp. 35-36. A copy of this pamphlet was located in RG 92, entry 225, NARA. Albert Harnickell, “The History of the Fourteenth Regiment New York State Militia ... in 1861,” MS2462, Boone-O'Brien-Harnickell Papers, Maryland Historical Society [Hereafter cited Harnickell, “History of the 14th Regt. 1861”].



companies paraded and engaged in recruiting. Throughout the city, the Stars and Stripes adorned firehouses, small shops, and larger businesses. “The military feeling” increased. An article in the *Brooklyn Evening Star* praised the shopkeepers for their patriotic spirit and urged private home owners to display small flags from their residences. To do so, the article continued, “would cause the hearts of all true patriots to beat with greater rapidity as they perambulate the streets.” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* observed that national bunting hung everywhere, even from “the heads of stately carriage horses,” and the Democrat paper sarcastically suggested “a clam peddler’s nag is not thought to be fully equipped until the stars and stripes waved over him.”²

War fever intensified daily throughout Brooklyn and neighboring New York City. Large crowds, stoked with fierce loyalty for the Union cause, threatened violence to anyone believed to sympathize with the South. On April 17, “a formidable and threatening mob” stalked New York City newspapers that failed to exhibit the

2 “The Military Ardor in Williamsburgh,” *The Brooklyn Daily Times*, April 16, 1861; “The War Feeling in This City,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 18, 1861; William James, “Out with Your Flags—A Suggestion,” *Brooklyn Evening Star*, April 20, 1861; “The War Excitement. The Feeling in the City,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 19, 1861.