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## "...never forget what they did here": Memorial Day 2011

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# "...never forget what they did here": Memorial Day 2011

## Abstract

One of my pleasures on this holiday is to buy and place a flag on the monument to the 14th U.S. Regulars in the valley of death. Along the banks of Plum Run, the Regulars held back an onslaught from a pell-mell group of charging Confederates in what would be the final phase of the fight in the Wheatfield and Devil's Den area on July 2nd, 1863. As they retreated back across the swampy lowlands, Confederates hot on their heels, their own gunners on the slopes of the hill had no choice but to fire into the mangled mess of friend and enemy. Canister whizzed through the blue and butternut uniforms alike. [*excerpt*]

## Keywords

CW150, Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Civil War Era Studies, Civil War Interpretation, 14th US Regulars, Memorial Day

## Disciplines

Cultural History | History | Military History | Public History | Social History | United States History

## Comments

*Interpreting the Civil War: Connecting the Civil War to the American Public* is written by alum and adjunct professor, John Rudy. Each post is his own opinions, musings, discussions, and questions about the Civil War era, public history, historical interpretation, and the future of history. In his own words, it is "a blog talking about how we talk about a war where over 600,000 died, 4 million were freed and a nation forever changed. Meditating on interpretation, both theory and practice, at no charge to you."

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# Interpreting the Civil War

Connecting the Civil War to the American Public

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**MONDAY, MAY 30, 2011**

## "...never forget what they did here": Memorial Day 2011

As I get ready to head out into town today, for a big parade and the typical festivities here in Gettysburg, I wanted to make sure we put up something special for Memorial Day here.



PD / [A Tipton cabinet card layout](#) depicting the National Cemetery in the collection of GNMP

One of my pleasures on this holiday is to buy and place a flag on the monument to the 14th U.S. Regulars in the valley of death. Along the banks of Plum Run, the Regulars held back an onslaught from a pell-mell group of charging Confederates in what would be the final phase of the fight in the Wheatfield and Devil's Den area on July 2nd, 1863. As they retreated back across the swampy lowlands, Confederates hot on their heels, their own gunners on the slopes of the hill had no choice but to fire into the mangled mess of friend and enemy. Canister whizzed through the blue and butternut uniforms alike.

At the end of the day, my Great-Great-Grand Uncle lay dead in that field. William Henry Francis, killed at Gettysburg. We have no photo of him. He has no marked grave in the cemetery. He has no marked grave at home. He most likely sleeps beneath the sod in plum run valley where he fell. That's the only tangible place I have that can connect me to him.

So today I'll be heading down to place a flag there to honor him. He was an average soldier. He had his doubts. Nonetheless, he died that they might be free. He died that we might be free. He died that we might be free.

I'd like to share his words with you today, as he wrote them. This is a letter he wrote home in November of 1862, as the army was changing and the war seemed so uncertain to the men in the field:

Camp near Warrington Nov 12th /62

Dear Father

Your letter received to day  
and glad to hear your were all  
well. but sorry to hear of cousin  
death. I feell verry well at  
present. I presume you see  
by the head of this that  
we have changed positions  
since I last wrote.

we started from Sharpsburg  
the 29th and came here via  
Harpers Ferry Snickers Gap  
and White plains arived  
here on the 9th where our next  
trip is for I do not know  
I hope it is for Washington  
our leader is gone you cannot  
immagine the disapointment  
of the men by the loss of Mc Clene

-----  
all of their trust was placed in  
him they wouled follow  
him through worse than fire  
and water. yes through the  
regions of lower blacknes.  
most of the small Officers  
in the 5th group, (ours) are  
resigning. what it will  
amount to I do not know.  
I am afraid I shall be tempted  
to shoot Baxter when I get  
home. with Martha Rixon I  
think she done well. Emma  
Gray I think is an equal  
mateh, as reopeets your neighbors  
I must say you have a splendid  
set I wish I was there.  
what ails old Stanton he must  
be in a bad way.  
By the way did you ever hear  
whether Aunt Pulia got  
that money three or four months  
ago I sent you some I never

-----  
heard from I will send

more and if that does not  
go I will stop sending enny  
more I have no more to write  
as I think of now  
hopeing you will write soon  
I remain you  
son  
W H Francis

PS I received a letter from  
John the same day I got  
yours  
I have seen the 157th NYSV  
Kenyon Gleason and the boys  
are well I believe they think  
Soldiering is rough.==  
send us a paper occationly I  
dont care what it is.

yours  
H F