

From the Home Front



Dear *Civil War Historian*,
I just loved the layout you had for the Battle of Perryville 2006 that appeared in the March/April 2007 issue. I felt as though I was a part of the action.



Keep up the good work. I am the proud owner of every issue thus far.

Rufus Wallace
Millbury, OH 43447

Dear Mr. Hughes,
My name is Roy Stillman, Jr., and I would like to compliment you on the publication that you and so many others work on. It fills my heart with joy each month when a new *Civil War Historian* comes out; you are a Godsend.



Yet my friend and I have a slight problem.

We have reenacted Union infantry for 13 years or so, and we thought it would be good to try our hand at the Union Corps of Engineers. We need help finding out what the Corps of Engineers used to carry their tools.

Also, are there any groups close to the Ravenna, Ohio area that my friend and I can join? Or is there a way we can start a group ourselves?

Sincerely,
Roy Stillman, Jr.
P.O. Box 1111
Andover, OH 44003

Dear Nicky Hughes,
Upon reading my first issue of *Civil War Historian*, I was slightly disappointed that I found no New England recruitment notices. Are there any units up here?



I have been interested in Civil War history for 30 years and have always wanted to partake in living history after one of my sixth-grade teachers was involved. It is rumored that he played a dead Confederate soldier in *Glory*.

I have nine years in service to our country and was on tanks. Unfortunately, I have no horsemanship skills, so I feel an artillery unit would be for me.

Please advise me in the direction of enlistment.

Thank you,
Jeff M. Keilen
Wrentham, MA 02093

Dear Messrs. Hughes and Smith,
Thank you so much for your article on the Vernon Sassafras Tea Festival. Vernon was my very first reenactment, having learned about the event while doing genealogical work in the area. As such, I have a great fondness for it, and have attended as much as possible for over a decade. Unfortunately (or fortunately, as the case may be), more than likely I will not be in attendance in 2008, as my husband and I are expecting our first child, and my due date is right in the middle of the festival. Please buy lots of pies, and tell Mrs. Marsh at the antique shop that I said hello.



Sincerely,
LeslieAnderson
historygal2@aol.com
via e-mail

Greetings Folks,
Just wanted to drop a note about how much we enjoyed the article on Vernon. The picture of the 5th VA was great! We are so proud to be in a magazine like this. Keep up the excellent work and let the 5th know if we can help you all in any way!



Thanks,
KimPiazza
President 5th VA Co. D Southern Guard
via e-mail

Dear *Civil War Historian* staff,
You guys and gals did a wonderful job with my baseball article ("Battlefield Baseball: The Birth of a National Pastime") in the September/October issue. I've been in other magazines and newspapers before, but my words have never looked as good as they do in yours. Excellent job on the layout too. The photos jump off the page. In fact, the whole issue looks great. I'm looking forward to submitting additional articles, and reading future issues of your excellent publication. By the way: I never got so many emails in my life as I did after that story ran. You have a real history-savvy audience!



Thanks again,
Michael Aubrecht
Fredericksburg, VA
www.pinstripepress.net
via e-mail

Dear Mr. Hughes,



Just to let your readers know, the reproduction baseball shown in the article “Battlefield Baseball: The Birth of a National Pastime” by Michael Aubrecht can be purchased at www.eparks.com for \$10. We have been using two of them in camp baseball games this past year and have found them to be well-made. The addition of baseball games to our encampments has been a great source of enjoyment for all involved.

Bob Bartlett
10th Massachusetts V. I.
Florence, Massachusetts
www.10thmass.org
via e-mail

Dear *Civil War Historian*,



I just read the most recent issue of *Civil War Historian* magazine. I have always enjoyed the magazine, and one of the things I like most about it is that I feel I can trust the historical accuracy of the articles. But I couldn't help but question at least one “fact” stated in the September/October baseball article. On page 18, in the “QuikFacts” column, the writer suggests that a game between the 165th New York and a New York regiment in 1862 was witnessed by “40,000” soldiers. This may seem like a dumb question, but how was that physically possible in 1862? Baseball was played on improvised fields, right? There were no baseball stadiums, were there? It would seem to me that the ability of 40,000 people to witness *anything* at the same time would have been impossible without having tiered stadium seating. Stadiums that seat up to 40,000 people are just now being built—even twenty years ago, a 20,000 seat arena was a big deal. Perhaps the author of the article can respond with his documentation of this item?

Thanks,
Elizabeth Cheatham
via e-mail

First off, I would like to thank Ms. Cheatham for her question. My source—Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War, by George B. Kirsch—states that: “Mills [Abraham Gilbert, future president of the National League] remembered that on Christmas Day 1862, before a crowd of 40,000 soldiers at Hilton Head, South Carolina, a team from the 165th New York Volunteer Infantry Duryea's Zouaves played a match against a picked nine from other Union regiments.”

Additionally, a bio on Mills by historian James Mallison states that: “Mills had enlisted as a private with the 5th New York Volunteers in 1862 . . . Surprisingly, the war did not curtail his baseball playing

opportunities. In fact, he played in a famous Christmas Day 1862 baseball game at Hilton Head, South Carolina, between the 165th New York Volunteer Infantry Duryea's Zouaves and a handpicked nine from other Union army regiments. According to reports, 40,000 soldiers witnessed the game.”

Therefore, I am fully confident with the proposed number of “40,000,” as various sources have reinforced it. However, in regards to Ms. Cheatham's query as to the “how,” I am not exactly sure. Therefore, I strived to research how thousands of spectators could realistically attend and witness such an event. Here is what I was able to find:

The Sands Of Time, A History of Hilton Head Island, by Hilton Head resident and historian Margaret Greer, states: “In November, 1861, after surviving a hurricane off Cape Hatteras, the U.S. armada circled Port Royal Sound, firing at all settlements in the area. By noon of that day, on November 7th, the Confederates knew the battle for the area was lost, and fled before the invading forces of the Union. Eventually, Union Forces alone reached over 50,000 on the Island.”

Therefore, during Federal occupation, the population at Hilton Head swelled to well beyond its normal capacity. As was customary, Christmas would have been celebrated and acknowledged by the military forces; and baseball would have provided suitable entertainment for a large mass of people. I would assume that anyone who could have attended the festivities would have. A crowd of 40,000 would have still left 10,000 troops ‘on duty.’

When examining the Hilton Head area—including Fort Howell, Fort Walker, and Fort Mitchell—one quickly realizes that the open beach or inland area would have been the best space on which to play baseball, and the surrounding dunes may have provided the best ‘seats’ to observe it. Certainly none of the forts could have supported 40,000 spectators, so it is logical to assume that the game took place outside the walls of these strongholds, preferably in an area with an overlooking bluff. However, it is also quite possible that the crowd simply sat or stood around the flat area designated as the playing field. In early professional baseball, spectators often took a ‘standing room only’ approach, and even lined the outfield in some of the sport's earliest ballparks.

The bottom line is that there is no definitive source that I've been able to locate which specifically outlines the exact crowd's seating or standing arrangements, but I think that it is fair to say that the exhibition took place in a vast open area that enabled a documented crowd of 40,000 to look on. Whether or not they all had a good view of the action is another story!

Michael Aubrecht