



The Regimental Bulletin

Phil Kearny Civil War Round Table of Northern New Jersey

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*** NEXT MEETING ***

Wed, Jan 21, 2026 @ 7PM - Online Zoom Presentation

Volume 22 Issue 1
Jan 21, 2026

Resurrecting Lost Voices: The George Gould Story Adventures in Digital Archiving With Stan Prager

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In Memoriam

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Civil War history is often told through generals, campaigns, and statistics, yet the war was lived one life at a time. This presentation explores the remarkable recovery of one such life: Private George W. Gould of Company F, 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, killed at Cold Harbor on June 3, 1864. Through the lens of digital archiving, this talk demonstrates how modern technology can restore the voices of ordinary soldiers whose experiences might otherwise be lost to history.

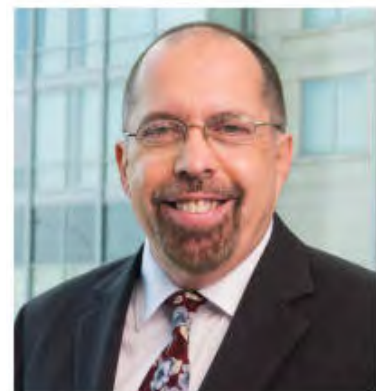


The Grave Site of Pvt Gould, Center Cemetery in Paxton, MA.

The story begins with the chance discovery of a small cache of previously unpublished letters written by Gould to his family during his service in North Carolina and Virginia. What followed was a multi-year effort to transcribe, digitize, and contextualize these documents, combining traditional historical research with modern tools such as high-resolution scanning, optical character recognition, and web-based publication. As the research unfolded, it revealed not only Gould's military service, but also his deep religious faith, devotion to family, grief over the death of his wife Almira, and concern for his three young children left behind in Massachusetts.

Beyond the letters themselves, the project expanded into on the ground research that uncovered artifacts of Gould's life, traced his family's postwar story, and ultimately led to the location of his grave in Paxton, Massachusetts. Today, his memory is honored through an online digital archive and the adoption of his grave, visited regularly and marked during Wreaths Across America. This presentation illustrates how digital tools can bridge the gap between archival fragments and human experience, transforming scattered records into a compelling, accessible narrative. <https://resurrectinglostvoices.com/>

Stan Prager is an independent public historian whose work focuses on the intersection of history and technology. He holds a Master of Arts in History with a concentration in Public History and has spent decades leading a computer services and technology firm. Prager has spearheaded multiple digital archiving projects, presented on digital history at History Camp, and serves as an on-air technology consultant for a regional television station. His work emphasizes preserving and sharing the stories of everyday people whose lives shaped history.



Stan Prager

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Across State Lines:

New Jersey Men in New York Blue

By Jim Madden

During the American Civil War, New Jersey played a critical role in raising regiments for the Union Army. But not all New Jersey men fought under their home state's flag. Thousands crossed into New York to join that state's regiments. Some were driven by timing, some by bounty money, others by the opportunity for fast commissions. Their contributions, ranging from the Excelsior Brigade to a Rahway Battery, highlight the fluidity of enlistment and the deep interconnection between these neighboring states.

Why New York Recruited in New Jersey

By mid, 1861, New Jersey had fulfilled its initial federal quotas and temporarily halted the creation of new regiments. Men still eager to serve began looking elsewhere. New York, with its enormous population and constant demand for soldiers, was an obvious destination. Recruiters set up offices in Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Rahway, and Hoboken. The state's rail and ferry connections made it easy to move back and forth between the two sides of the Hudson River. [1]

New York offered more attractive enlistment packages. Many cities added their own bounties to the federal and state bonuses. In some cases, a man could receive several hundred dollars more by enlisting in a New York regiment rather than waiting for New Jersey to raise new units. This created an incentive structure that pulled New Jersey men across state lines.

Paterson and the Excelsior Brigade

Daniel Sickles, a controversial New York politician, organized the Excelsior Brigade in 1861. He was granted special authority to raise regiments quickly and used his influence to attract men, and officers, from both New York and New Jersey. The brigade included the 70th through 74th New York Volunteer Infantry regiments. Entire companies of the 73rd New York (Second Fire Zouaves) came from Paterson and Newark.

These men often followed local leaders, particularly from prewar militia companies and fire brigades, many of whom saw better commission prospects with Sickles than they could get waiting for New Jersey assignments. The brigade fought in numerous key battles, including Yorktown, Williamsburg, and Antietam. [2]

At Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, the Excelsior Brigade formed part of the III Corps under Sickles. Positioned at the Peach Orchard, they bore the brunt of a major Confederate assault. Despite being overextended and suffering heavy casualties, their stand delayed the enemy's breakthrough and contributed to the Union's ability to regroup.

2026

Wed, Jan 21st

Stan Prager

*The George Gould Story
Resurrecting Lost Voices
Adventures in Digital Archiving*

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Fr Bob Miller

Catholic Chaplains

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Evan Portman

*A Civil War within a Civil War:
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Wed, Apr 15th

Kevin Levin

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Fri-Sat Nov 6th-7th

Gettysburg Trip, Gettysburg, PA

LBG Jim Hessler

Sat, Dec 5th - 1pm

Holiday Dinner

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Speaker TBA



Colonel Berdan, of the Berdan Sharp-Shooters, Practicing at a Target at Weehawken, New Jersey, Harper's Weekly, Oct 5, 1861, Volume V, No 244.

New Jersey was open country for New York. During the Civil War, New Jersey was the countryside for New York, just a short ferry or train ride away, yet filled with open fields, rifle ranges, and militia grounds unavailable in the crowded boroughs across the Hudson.

Recruiters and military organizers frequently used New Jersey as a convenient staging area, taking full advantage of its rural space and seamless access to New York City's manpower, ports, and political machinery.

The Rahway Battery: 6th New York Independent Battery

In Rahway, a local artillery militia unit came together under Captain Thomas B Bunting, a former officer of Company K, 7th New York State Militia, and later Walter M Bramhall. Remarkably, they possessed their own cannon, something rare among volunteer batteries. They offered their service to the State of New Jersey, but the unit was declined as the state had already met its quota. Undeterred, they approached New York, which welcomed them immediately.

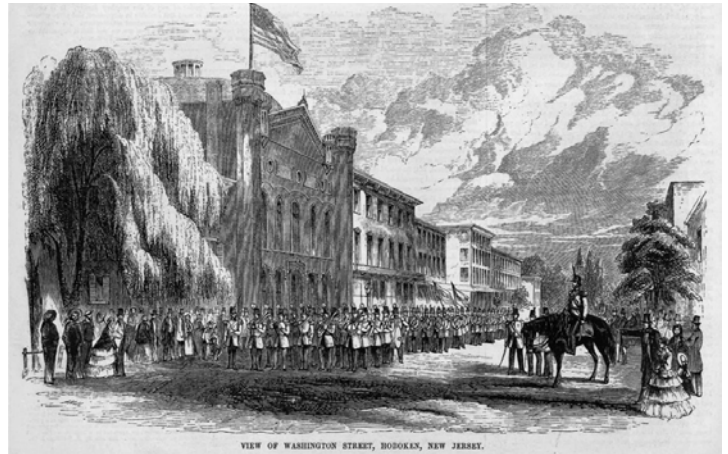
Mustered in as the 6th New York Independent Battery, they served with distinction throughout the war. At Gettysburg, they were also attached to the III Corps and took position near the Peach Orchard. Their fire helped delay the Confederate breakthrough and protect Union flanks during Sickles's controversial forward movement.

Crossing the Hudson: Men, Money, and Mobility

The border between New Jersey and New York was not a barrier; it was a conduit. Men crossed daily for work, commerce, and now, military service. New York recruiters moved freely into New Jersey cities. In return, New Jersey residents flowed into New York regiments. Some companies were even split between the two states.

For many working class men, enlistment bonuses were a key motivation. In some New York districts, total bounties exceeded \$600 by 1864 (*about \$12,400 today*). This was a small fortune for a laborer, when they were making an average of \$400 to \$600 a year. It's no surprise that men

would enlist under whichever flag paid more. Others joined New York regiments to follow their commanders or join friends. In a few cases, regiments in need of manpower gladly accepted out, of, state enlistees.



Hoboken NJ, In front of Odd Fellows Hall. A New York city company, on a target excursion, accompanied by Dodworth's band is halted before they head to Weehawken for target practice and battalion drill in December 1859. From Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion (Boston), Volume 17, 1859. P200.

The 54th New York Infantry and the Hudson City Riot

The 54th New York Infantry, a predominantly German regiment, was mustered in early in the war and stationed in Hudson City, New Jersey (now part of Jersey City). They camped at the old War of 1812 US Arsenal, using them as barracks, which is in the area now occupied by Dickinson High School.

Tensions grew quickly. Accusations surfaced that soldiers were harassing local women. When one woman's husband retaliated by attacking a soldier, members of the regiment sought revenge. Mistakenly believing the assailant was tied to the Newkirk Hotel, they stormed the building and began tearing it apart.



The Hudson City US Arsenal which were built for the War of 1812, it was still standing in this post Civil War photo taken around 1878. This arsenal was used by the 54th New York to recruit in Hudson City, NJ and men camp in and around this area.

Hudson City's mayor, Edward T. Carpenter, tried to intervene. In the chaos, he was stabbed multiple times with a bayonet by soldiers. He lingered for weeks before dying of his wounds and a fever. His death marked one of the earliest civilian casualties of the war, at the hands of Union troops.

No soldiers were prosecuted. The 54th was quickly deployed to the front, and no formal inquiry was ever held. [3]

Legacy and Recognition

Despite wearing New York uniforms and bearing New York regimental numbers, many of these soldiers were undeniably New Jersey men. Their names, etched on rosters, grave markers, and occasionally on battlefield monuments, tell a more local story. At Gettysburg and beyond, one often finds the Excelsior Brigade or the 54th New York proudly memorialized, but the hometowns of many who filled those ranks trace back across the river to Paterson, Rahway, Jersey City, and other New Jersey communities. For decades, the state of New Jersey struggled to fully account for or recognize the true extent of its sons' service under out-of-state colors, an oversight that has obscured the sacrifices of hundreds who answered the call in a neighboring state.

The phenomenon of New Jersey men serving in New York regiments during the Civil War offers a compelling testament to how patriotism and opportunity transcended artificial boundaries. Many men crossed the Hudson in search of enlistment bounties, quicker mustering, or simply because recruiters were present in their neighborhoods. Others followed respected militia captains who accepted commissions in New York commands. Still more found that service in a neighboring regiment was the path of least resistance when war came calling. Whether they joined out of duty, camaraderie, or incentive, these men formed the backbone of several notable New York units, including the Excelsior Brigade, Berdan's Sharpshooters, the 54th New York Infantry, and independent batteries like the Rahway 6th New York Independent Battery Artillery, which even possessed its own field piece.

Though they stood under New York banners, wore New York buttons, and received New York pay, their homes, families, and postwar lives were firmly rooted in New Jersey. Their loyalty to the Union was not defined by state lines but by conviction and circumstance. Their contributions were no less

valorous simply because they were never tallied in Trenton's official muster rolls. Many would return home to become civic leaders, business owners, and pillars of their communities. Others would go on to organize local chapters of the Grand Army of the Republic, their New York service insignia resting beside their New Jersey addresses.

And yet, not all stories are ones of heroism unmarred. The 54th New York Infantry, composed largely of German immigrants, sparked a tragic and largely forgotten incident in Hudson City, when drunken misconduct, civilian retaliation, and military vengeance led to the destruction of the Newkirk Hotel and the death of Hudson City's own mayor, Edward T. Carpenter, stabbed by Union soldiers while trying to restore order. Carpenter would become one of the first civilian casualties of the war, killed not by Confederate arms but by Northern troops. It was a sobering episode that revealed the complexities of military occupation, ethnic tension, and civil control in wartime cities.

Today, when Civil War scholarship focuses heavily on state designations and official enlistment totals, it can overlook the fluid, cross border reality of recruitment in places like New Jersey. The Civil War experience was not confined by state bureaucracies; it was forged in ferry rides across the Hudson, on bounty boards in waterfront taverns, and in open training fields from Hoboken to Weehawken. New Jersey was not simply a supplier of its own regiments, it was a proving ground, a recruitment magnet, and an indispensable partner in the Union's military infrastructure.

By revisiting these overlooked contributions and restoring them to the broader tapestry of Union service, we acknowledge that sacrifice often occurred outside the lines of official history. In doing so, we honor the memory of men who crossed the river in search of purpose, and left behind a shared legacy worth preserving.

Footnotes

1. John T. Cunningham, 'New Jersey and the Civil War' (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1966), 53.
2. Stevenson, James. History of the Excelsior or Sickles' Brigade. Paterson, NJ: Van Derhoven & Holms, Printers, 1863
3. Madden, James M. "An Unexpected Tragedy." In *New Jersey's Civil War Odyssey: An Anthology of Civil War Tales, from 1850 to 1961*, edited by Joseph G. Bilby, 20. New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association Sesquicentennial Committee. Cranbury, NJ: Longstreet House, 2011.



Phil Kearny Civil War Round Table

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REMINDER: New and returning members, Renew your membership in the Phil Kearny CWRT, which is \$25 annually.

Each Phil Kearny CWRT Bulletin Newsletter there is always a reminder, and we do accept renewals at any time. Our "membership year" has always been from April to March. So, if you have not yet paid your dues for 2025(*thank you to those who have already*), now is the perfect time to write that check! You can find my address on the front page of every PKCWRT newsletter as well as on this membership form.

Thank you,
Norm Dykstra
PKCWRT Treasurer

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