

Hotchkiss Family Association

137th Reunion

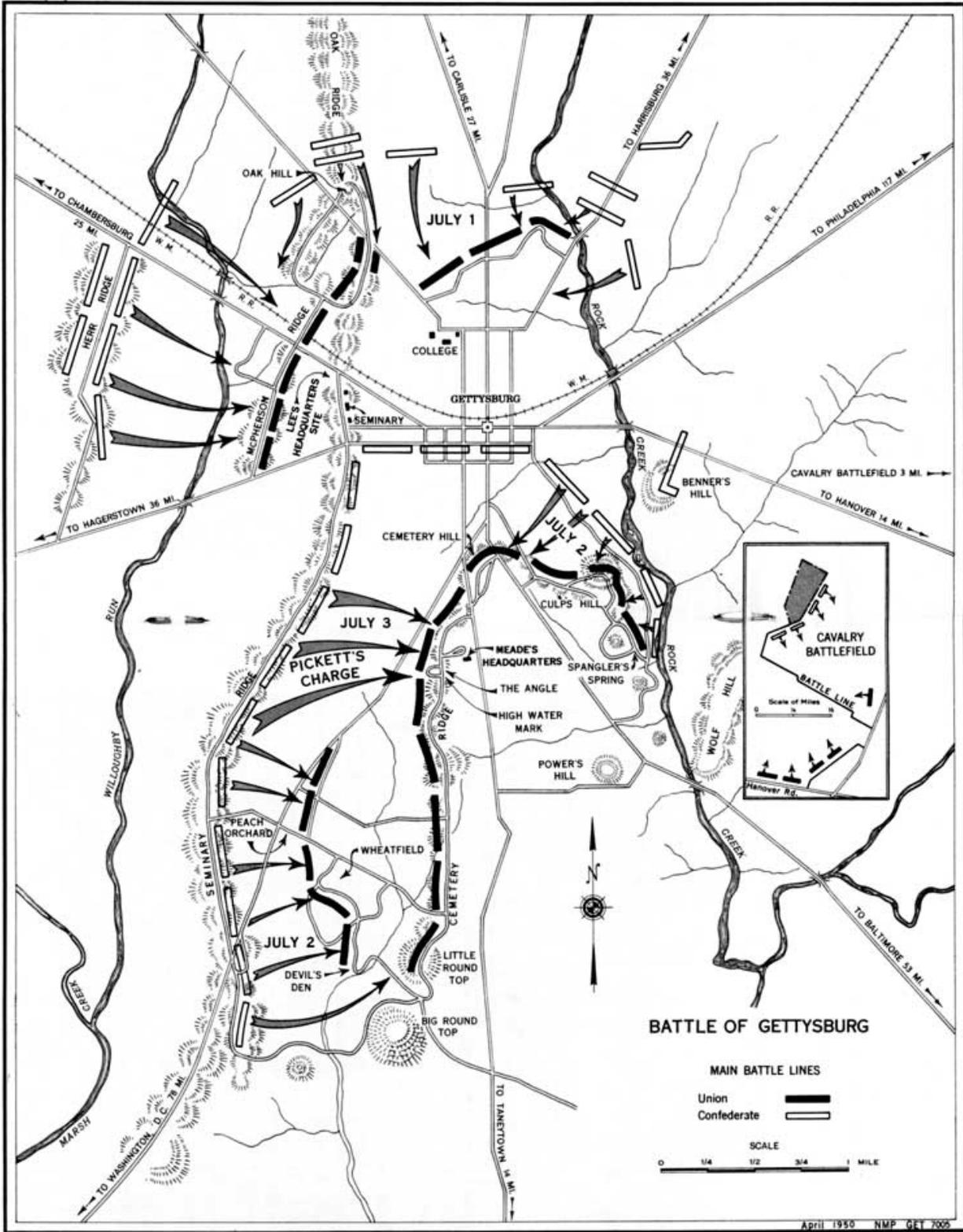
August 6 - 8, 2021

The Backstory of The Hotchkiss Family at Gettysburg

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Revised July 2021





Map of Gettysburg showing the three major areas where fighting occurred on July 1-3, 1863.

137th HFA Reunion at Gettysburg, PA

The Hotchkiss Family Association (HFA) gathered at Gettysburg, PA in August 2021 for the 137th HFA Reunion and for what turned out to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, a Civil War themed Reunion weekend!

Headquarters for this operation was the historic Inn at Herr Ridge*. We had the place entirely to ourselves so we could take all our meals together as a group and have time to relax and enjoy the company of family and friends around the fireplace, the bar and in the lecture spaces, all against the backdrop of this historic Inn.

The plan for the weekend centered around family, good food, a great bar, the charming relaxing atmosphere of this historic country inn, a museum visit, a guided bus tour and a couple of interesting dinner presentations! The Friday Dinner program was on the Hotchkiss Men at Gettysburg in preparation for the Saturday bus tour of the battlefield. The Saturday dinner program concentrated on the broader topic of the Hotchkiss family in the Civil War. We had over 66 of our relatives fighting at Gettysburg (on both sides) during the battle and over 600 members of the family were eventually involved in the Civil War that took the lives of at least 55 of them.

After our Saturday breakfast, we all met at the Gettysburg National Cemetery for a wreath laying ceremony at the graves of Pvt O.W. Hotchkiss and Sgt Humiston. Our cousin Rev. Sue Ward led a prayer service for our departed veterans. After the memorial service, we all met at the Visitor Center where we toured the Museum and the Cyclorama. After lunch we took a guided bus tour of the battlefield under the tutelage of Joel Busenitz, a licensed guide who has studied the battle in extreme detail. Supplemental commentary was provided by Don Hotchkiss who layered in the Hotchkiss component to the Gettysburg story. After the dinner program on Saturday evening, some 20 cousins went out to participate in a Gettysburg ghost tour.

The Sunday breakfast featured our guest speaker, Mark Dunkelman, who spoke on the topic of Cpt Arthur Hotchkiss and his brother Corp Ephraim Holbrook Hotchkiss. Ephraim was taken as a POW at Gettysburg and died a few months later in Richmond, VA. For those who love American History or Hotchkiss family history (which is really the same thing), it proved to be a rather informative weekend for all involved.

**The Inn and Tavern was established in 1815 and used as a confederate hospital in July 1863 as the battle raged all around the buildings there. It was definitely seen by our ancestors fighting there on the first day.*

The Backstory

The story of how the HFA ended up at Gettysburg for the 2021 reunion is an odd one. If you like a good “Who Done It” or just a strange story bordering on the paranormal, then this may be one for the books. I can tell you that as an engineer and one who has been trained in math and science, that I can’t explain away all the incidents that have happened to me on this journey of discovery that led me full circle back here to Gettysburg.

This story starts with a hastily planned visit to this place in 1998 and the accidental discovery of a headstone. It then branches out in a number of directions. In a journey lasting some 23 years that winds thru dusty archives, old book stores and graveyards, fragments of our family history were slowly uncovered like flakes of gold buried by the sands of time that had to be painstakingly gathered together and catalogued. These discoveries, once viewed together, now reveal our family’s connection to this place.

So as all good stories go, we start out like this, “Once upon a time there were two brothers, Don and Gary Hotchkiss. Raised as Army Brats against the backdrop of the Cold War, one became an engineer

and the other a Cop. One was studious and the other knew how to have a good time. They shared a love of military history which led them to get involved in Civil War reenacting. Reenacting led them across country to participate in the 135th anniversary reenactment of the Gettysburg battle in 1997 where they portrayed mounted cavalry soldiers. It was a chance encounter at that event that eventually brought the HFA to Gettysburg in 2021.“

We Had a Plan

In late June of 1998, my brother Gary and I come east to Gettysburg with a contingent of wide eyed, newly minted western Civil War cavalry reenactors from Arizona. We were here to participate in the 135th anniversary reenactment of that battle. As new guys in the hobby of historical reenacting, we had no idea of what we were about to ride into, and maybe that was a good thing. On some level I think we were all hoping that we would just make it back home in one piece. It was our first ever national reenactment. On top of that, this was not just any event, it was the granddaddy of them all, it was Gettysburg. We would be on stage for all the world to see as the cavalry was center stage in the opening and closing scenes of this national tragedy. An infantry soldier, standing shoulder to shoulder with a hundred other men can get lost in the crowd should he do something that is not quite “period correct”. However, riding a horse at full tilt with a 36 inch saber in your hand, stirrup to stirrup with other riders causes one to stand out a bit in the crowd. Besides the embarrassment of being unhorsed at a gallop, there is the unplanned landing, usually sudden and painful. So for a number of reasons we needed to bring our “A” game.

The plan was to fly out a few days early with our uniforms and equipment, check in, then link up with the horses we had rented for the week we were to be in the field. We also wanted to make some time to play tourist and to enjoy the historic sites between drills. After drilling for 6 months in the soft sandy soil of the Hassayampa River near Wickenburg, Arizona, we felt we were adequately trained for this event and by that, I mean we were finally able to spend more time on top of the horse than we spent getting up and back on. We were at a point where we could correctly react to commands, link horses, and properly use the many weapons a period cavalry soldier had use of in both mounted and dismounted scenarios. We were starting to enjoy a level of confidence brought on by our training that was sadly comparable to some of the actual Cavalry regiments that were newly fielded in 1863.

Setting Up

We landed in Baltimore, rented a van, claimed our checked baggage to include the locked weapons cases, loaded up and drove the 60 miles to Gettysburg. As soon as we arrived, we checked in to our hotel room that we had rented so we would have a place to shower and hide our modern day items. We changed into our blue wool uniforms, pulled on our boots, ditched anything belonging to the modern world and drove out to the registration building. It turned out to be an old historic barn on a farm that was near the battlefield that had been used, like many buildings in the area, as a temporary field hospital during the fighting. Now registered and insured, dog tags around our necks, map in hand, we drove out to find our designated bivouac area which was in a tree line on the edge of the Union camp. You don't put horses in the middle of a military camp given the “exhaust” issues, smells and flies that are always associated with horses. Elements that are made even more interesting with high heat and humidity. We unloaded the van and stretched our company's picket line between two sturdy trees, and as soon as we could, drove the van out to the reenactor parking area some distance away in an effort to erase any trace of modernity. With the van gone, the only way to get in and out of camp was by a “time machine” cleverly disguised as a horse drawn wagon shuttle which was operating between 1998 and 1863. It featured a number of stops in the Union and Confederate camps, Suttler's Row and was on a 30 minute loop.

Soon Wayne Scublick and his horse trailer arrived, the gate opened and we were introduced to our mounts. Angel was to be mine. She was an older Gray and quite used to gun fire. Slow and steady. Just what I needed. One by one they were unloaded, examined, watered and tied to the picket line. We

put on new period correct black leather army regulation halters and lead straps which replaced the modern civilian models they had on when they arrived. When Wayne drove off, we knew there was no going back now and that things were about to get very real. So we busied ourselves tending to the needs of those beautiful beasts that would soon either carry us safely to glory or just as quickly to perdition with one well-placed kick or a stumble at a full gallop.

Tent halves were buttoned together then pitched in straight lines forming a company street. Weapons were cleaned, saddles made ready and black powder cartridges were rolled. Drill schedules were planned then pinned to the 1Sgt's bulletin board at the end of the company street. Soon we would train to operate as part of a full mounted Regiment of 10 companies. We were no longer a small independent company and out of sheer necessity, bugle calls would now take the place of voice commands, something we had not trained on. It was a good thing that we arrived early. We needed the time to train with the other units and time to get to know the horses. In the midst of this hurried preparation we started to feel something changing. But what was it, us, this place, both?

A Dose of Un-Reality

Later in the day, we posted a picket and then drove into town to take in some of the sites. We watched Gettysburg come alive with activity and transform as if it was going back in time. With each passing hour, more and more horses, cannons and troops poured into the small town of some 7,200 inhabitants. Farmers' fields were jammed with neat rows of parked cars and trailers abandoned as soon as their contents could be unloaded in the camps.

Most reenactors arrived singly by car or truck, registered then moved to their unit bivouac areas to set up camp and change cloths. Some groups met and assembled at distant locations to march into town as a unit, along its historically correct route. I saw a group of Confederates headed towards town and noticed some walking without shoes, so I stopped and asked them why they would take a hobby to such an extreme. I was immediately humbled by their response and was surprised at my lack of knowledge about some of the realities of that terrible time when we drew up sides and made war upon ourselves. For some this reenactment was a sacred pilgrimage, literally walking in the footsteps of their ancestors. Gettysburg was more than a place where a reenactment was to be held, it is a place that has a palpable sacredness about it.

For a few days in July, 1998 gave way to 1863. Vehicles pulled over to let wagons and cannons pass. The reenactor population swelled to over 27,000 and by sheer force of numbers, we took over shops and restaurants. Our period clothing painted scenes along the streets and sidewalks that had not been visible for more than a century. A group rode into town and tied their horses to a picket line that they stretched out behind a restaurant. They set a guard then walked in, stacked arms in a corner, sat down and ordered a meal. For some reason this activity seemed almost... normal. Ladies in hoop skirts hurried from store to store and gentlemen stepped aside to let them pass while touching their hats in a gesture of respect as was common in that age.

Then and Now

On the streets and in the field, officers were now regularly saluted as we immersed ourselves deeper into our new roles as period correct soldiers. Sergeants saw to the needs of the men and conducted drill for the new recruits. Officers were busy filling out forms and attending various required meetings. Except for the weight of the wool uniforms, this all felt like old hat for a couple of Army vets like us. Gary and I hitched a ride on the time machine that took us from our 1860s camp out to the vehicle parking area where we recovered the van and drove to the visitor center some 135 years distant. We were wearing our dusty cavalry uniforms having just come from camp where we just completed our turn at stable duty.

As we walked towards the Visitor Center we observed a modern-day active duty US Army Colonel in Class A uniform, complete with shined shoes, come out of the building and walk out towards the parking lot. He would have appeared to be a bit out of place had it not been for the fact that we had

observed some National Guard soldiers helping at the 1st Aid Tent and others delivering water to the storage tanks scattered around the camps. Logistically this event was so massive that it required the help of local Guard units. So seeing a Colonel there was not a total surprise. As the Colonel walked towards us, we both stepped off the narrow sidewalk to let him pass, more as a gesture of good manners than one of military courtesy. It wasn't much of a sacrifice as our boots had just come from stable duty not more than an hour previous. We stood there silently waiting for him pass, when he suddenly stopped, faced us, came to attention and saluted (palm down)! Surprised by this gesture, we instinctively came to attention and returned his salute (palm up). Apparently, there are some aspects of Army training that run so deep that they are still an automatic response years after any need for them has passed. Standing there I noticed he was wearing Cavalry brass on his collar. The Colonel exclaimed "Garry Owen" to which we replied "Garry Owen, Sir!" Another conditioned response. If you have ever served in uniform, you will understand the exchange. He smiled and walked to his car and Gary and I had to take a minute to process what had just happened.

Here we stood, at an exact measurable unique and specific moment in time, in a place called Gettysburg, when for a couple of seconds, the Old Guard Horse Cavalry representing the proud traditions of America's Cavalry past, was acknowledged by the New Guard Mechanized Air Cavalry, representing everything the Cavalry had become. That profound moment was memorialized by a simple and timeless military gesture, the exchanging of salutes. We were from different times, wore different color uniforms and had different salutes, yet we were firmly connected by an unbroken historical thread. A thread that was first anchored on Lexington Green in April 1775 and has extended through time to this day. It can be seen in all the places where Americans have served in uniform. The personal courage and the devotion to a cause greater than self that was demonstrated here at Gettysburg, are still fundamental core values inculcated in our modern military. Modern day pilots belonging to the Army's Air Cavalry still carry a black Stetson Cavalry hat with them on board the aircraft.

Later we would learn that the Colonel was sent by the Governor of Maine to personally deliver the worn and ragged Regimental Flag of the 20th Maine Infantry to the Visitor Center so that it could be put on display for all to see. A tangible remembrance of a pivotal moment in time when that flag and the men who held it, stood together to defend an ideal. The 20th was the end of the line on the Union left on July second. They had been ordered to hold their position to the last. When they ran out of ammunition, they did the only thing they could do, they fixed bayonets and charged headlong into the Confederate line. They were tested that day and in the balance stood the question of whether their nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated could long endure. As we know, they carried the day, and for the record, there were two Hotchkiss cousins on Little Round Top doing their part to hold that line. Their dedication to duty in the face of overwhelming odds prevented the Confederates from rolling up the union left flank and perhaps writing a very different page in history.

Sights and Sounds

Looking back on those days now I can still vividly recall a number of events that occurred that week. They are like individual scenes from a play that somehow got woven together to create a larger work that changed my life's direction.

At all hours of the day, fifes and drums could be heard at the head of marching columns of men passing from place to place as if lost in time. Regimental flags held on high led the way providing a visible guide for the columns of dust covered men to follow. Unfurled, intact and dancing in the air, these proud representations stood in sharp contrast to their predecessors that are now reverently stored, blood stained, bullet riddled and in tatters in silent museums and State Houses across this country.

I noticed that some of the musicians leading the way were just boys. Knowing my history, the sight of those young faces filled me with a sense of sadness, but at the same time a deep sense of pride at seeing this representation of American courage and character that was to transcend the carnage of war and go on to forge a mighty nation out of its own ashes. These boys built the railroads that pulled this nation

together, opened the west and raised a generation of men that were to stand up against the Kaiser. Their grandsons formed what was to be called “The Greatest Generation” and they would stand up against the cruelty of fascism and transform their nation into a super power. The cost has been heavy. Two of our number died on D-Day, another two in the Battle of the Bulge. Another in Korea, three in Vietnam and a number are serving in harm’s way today. Freedom has never been free, certainly not for this family.

Our Day is Done

Back in camp, the evening air was thick with smoke from a thousand cooking fires that flickered like stars in a dark sky. This scene was one that had been memorialized in song, a song that was now running thru my mind, painting a picture and giving a deeper understanding of those times and for some reason taking on a new importance. We fed brushed and watered our mounts and set the evening picket. Exhausted we laid down on the straw we had spread out in our small regulation dog tents that were all neatly erected in a straight line called a company street. We wrapped ourselves in our blue sleeping blanket and laid down on our poncho in hopes we could get a few hours rest. Dishes were washed, pants were mended and weapons were cleaned, pistols loaded then stacked at the ready. Canteens were filled and hung on the tent next to the haversack. Three paces from the front of the tent, and in a direct line to our horse that was tied on the picket line, was the weapons stack. A tripod shaped stack made up of the saber, its scabbard and carbine all intertwined in the basket of the saber. The carbine sling and pistol belt with revolver and carbine cartridges were hung from the stack to keep them off the damp ground and topped with the bridle and reins. The poncho we were laying on, at the ready to cover the stack in case of rain. Three paces in front of the weapons stack and again in a direct line to our horse, was the saddle with its blanket resting on top to dry. The blanket was folded so as to provide 6 thicknesses of fabric between the horse and the saddle and each day folded so that a clean face of fabric was against the horse. In the dark a cavalry soldier could leave his tent, recover his weaponry, grab his saddle and blanket then saddle his mount just by walking forward in a straight line. The crupper, previously adjusted, was fitted under the horse’s tail and when the saddle was pulled forward, would ensure that the rig rested properly on the horse’s back. Everything in camp was now very regulation.

Our day was done, we were now living a cavalry soldier’s life, no more were we thinking as teachers, cops or engineers. We were changed. Gary and I stretched out our 6 foot plus frames and laid there in our 5’6” dog tent trying to get comfortable as we were feeling the effects of the hours of mounted drill. I looked up and saw the same stars my ancestors had gazed upon laying on this very same ground, and I couldn’t help but feel a connection. A couple of drops of rain hit me in the face and my engineer mind started to puzzle over why the tent wasn’t just a bit bigger (turns out there’s a technical answer to that question). In the distance I could hear the Irish troops singing songs and playing instruments that were popular in another day. All these scenes were being played out once again as if we were somehow caught up in a loop in time. Fatigue soon won out over my thoughts and at some point I fell asleep.

Bugle Calls



Reveille: All too soon we were roughly roused by our bugler sounding “Reveille”. I reached for my pants that I had rolled up into a pillow and wondered to myself how many thousands of soldiers have shared this exact same feeling of being awakened too soon and too early and wishing the bugler would just go away. I think that experience is one that has been shared in all armies over the centuries. I was up, or at least my eyes were open. I pulled my boots on, pulled my white cotton shirt on over my head and then reached for my tin cup that was hanging on my haversack and followed my nose as it led me to a boiling pot of coffee hanging by an S hook suspended over a smoking fire. Grabbing a rag (I’m a quick learner), I padded my blistered hand and poured out some of the dark hot brew into my regulation

cup. I wrapped it in my hands and carefully raised it to my lips as I felt its warmth. I lifted it close to my face, closed my eyes and breathed in the scent that has comforted untold generations of soldiers. Coffee was an important staple in the Civil War. It was purchased in Brazil and issued green to the troops to roast and grind themselves. Many enemy pickets called a truce at night to swap coffee for tobacco or a newspaper. The south had the tobacco, the north (because of the blockade) the coffee. One of our future presidents dodged shot and shell to retrieve a hot pot of coffee and then went down the battle line dispensing its contents to his fellow soldiers. His commander noted that this act was equivalent to putting a fresh regiment into the line. There were even rifles issued with coffee grinders imbedded in the butt stocks. The smell of that coffee made me think about a young engineer lieutenant standing his post in a cold snow-covered forest on the East/West German border. The coffee in the canteen cup warming hands while conjuring thoughts of better times and places. The border is now erased by changing political winds, but coffee ... endures.

Assembly: There was just time to finish my coffee when the bugler interrupted us by sounding "Assembly". We fell in line in as neat of a formation as we could manage at that hour, and after a few remarks from the 1Sgt, we learned who was on what detail and how the events of our day were to be structured. Standing there I couldn't help but notice that some of us were in serious need of a shower. We were then dismissed to start our day.

Stable Call: The bugler sounded "Stable Call" and we all turned out to brush horses, check and clean hooves, rake up the picket line, and feed the mounts. Each horse to receive two coffee cups of sweet feed poured into a nose bag and when that was consumed, the bags were removed and a 4 inch thick flake of hay placed on the ground in front of each mount. All the horses were fed at the same time so as to prevent fighting (Lesson Learned).

Watering Call: "Watering Call" was sounded. We untied the horses and led them to the watering point by the lead straps. After they had drank their fill, we returned them to their spot on the picket line and secured them again by the lead strap. It was now time for "Breakfast Call" to be sounded.

Breakfast Call: There is something about the taste of a breakfast of bacon, eggs, biscuits and gravy, and coffee, all cooked over an open fire that you can't get in any restaurant. The rations were all period correct but I must admit the quantity and quality exceeded those found in the field in 1863. But just in case, I had my secret weapon with me. A bottle of Tabasco Sauce. That red elixir can make even C rations taste good and it is now issued in miniature bottles with the new MREs. We had just finished eating and had washed our plates when the bugler sounded "Boots and Saddles".

Boots and Saddles: This is a simple two part command that is to be executed in a specific sequence. First **the Boots part**. We put on our 4 button sack coats over our white cotton shirts followed by our saber belts. The belt went around our waist, was buckled in the front and then we passed a strap that was attached to the left rear of the belt over our right shoulders and then hooked it to the front left side of the belt just above the saber that was then hooked high on the belt so as to keep it from under our feet as we walked (lesson learned). This placed the weight of the saber on our right shoulder. The saber belt carried the saber on the left side, the pistol and holster on the right, the pistol ammunition pouch on the left, the spare cylinder pouch on the right and the carbine ammunition pouch with 20 rounds on the center back. Batman's utility belt had nothing on us. We then slung our carbines over our right shoulders. The carbine was hooked to the carbine sling by a huge swivel hook and the sling was worn diagonally over the left shoulder to the right hip. This placed the weight of the carbine, when it was hanging down lose on our right side, on our left shoulder. With the carbines on our backs, it was out of the way and our hands were free to saddle the horse. It was very uncomfortable because the 3' wide leather sling was temporarily up against our throats. The **last thing** we added was a canteen slung over our right shoulder and hanging off our left hip. It is on top for easy access. (Lesson Learned).



Period McClellan Saddle (stirrups are on backwards, oops!)

The Saddle part. We picked up the saddle and blanket and carried them to the picket line. The saber banging against our left leg as we walked and the carbine bouncing against our backs. Blankets were carefully placed on the back of the horse without a wrinkle, then the saddle was gently lowered on to the blanket and pulled forward while at the same time the crupper was placed under the tail. The crupper prevents the saddle from moving forward.

Next, the breast strap was passed around the horse's neck from right to left and fastened on the left of the saddle. Once fastened across the horse's chest, a center section of the breast strap with a loop in it, was passed between the front legs to the belly area. The breast strap prevents the saddle from moving to the rear.

Next the cinch was lowered on the right side of the saddle and passed under the horse then run thru the loop on the breast strap that is between the front legs, then the cinch strap is lowered from the left side and passed thru the cinch and pulled thru a buckle on the left of the saddle then tightened and buckled. The cinch under the belly holds the saddle on the back of the horse.

The surcingle was next. It was placed over the top of the saddle, down the right side, around under the horse, thru the breast strap loop next to the cinch then buckled to itself on the left. All buckling and tightening is done on the left side. The surcingle is there in case the cinch breaks to act as a last means of holding the saddle on to the horse.

The cinch was then rechecked and tightened again as most horses will bloat to keep from having the cinch tightened too tight. Mounting a horse with a loose cinch will cause the saddle to rotate and will unhorse a rider (Lesson learned). Having a cinch or a surcingle slide to the rear while riding creates a bucking strap, so it is placed in the loop of the breast strap to prevent it drifting to the rear (Lesson Learned).

Now we lowered the hooded stirrups. The hoods prevent the boot from going thru the stirrup and dragging an unhorsed rider. We secured our second canteen to the right rear of the saddle and nose bag to the front right using the rings on the saddle. The nose bag holds the metal curry comb and wood brush. The hoof pick was placed in the saddle bags along with two spare shoes and nails. The picket pin was wound with the picket line and secured to a ring on the front left of the saddle.

We rolled then secured our sleeping blanket and poncho to the pommel of the saddle using three coat straps that passed thru slots in the pommel. The poncho on top of the blanket for easy access while mounted. The shelter half roll and great coat were secured to the saddle with three more coat straps that passed thru three slots in the cantle (rear of the saddle). Haversacks with a few hardtack and our coffee cup were tied to the right side of the saddle.

The last thing we did was to place the bit in the horse's mouth and secured the bridle in place by pulling it over the ears and securing it with a buckle on the left side of the face. Lastly the reins were placed

over the horses head and laid on the seat of the saddle.

Forget a step, put a wrinkle against the horses back, fail to remove a rock from a hoof, fail to water a horse, forget to double check the tightness of a strap and you are in for a bad ride or a very bad day. (Lessons learned).

Stand to Horse: Then we heard the bugler sound the call “To Horse”. We untied the mounts, led them out to open ground where we held our formations and formed up in a long single line. We stood in line side by side facing forward with our mounts to our right. We held the horses under the chin by the lead strap where it attaches to the headstall. The majority of the length of the lead strap was tied to the saddle on the left side using a quick release knot. We formed up now completely dressed for battle. Sabers hooked high and carbines on our backs (slings pressing on our throats).

Count Fours: Then we heard the command “In Each Rank, Count Fours” whereby each man in turn sounded off loudly by voicing a number from 1 thru 4 in sequence then repeating that process until each man in line had sounded off with a number. The infantry only count off by 2’s, so it’s harder to be in the cavalry because there are more numbers to remember. This command was followed by “Prepare to Mount”.

Prepare to Mount: This command caused the number 1 and 3 men to move their mounts forward 2 paces while the number 2 and 4 men stayed put. This movement created space so the riders could swing up and get on the saddle. At the same time, all soldiers unhooked their sabers and let them drop down to their left sides. We also all quickly turned to the right, placed the left foot into a stirrup and grasped the pommel of the saddle with our left hand, the cantle (rear of the saddle) with our right hand and got ready for the next command of “Mount”.

Mount: At this command all of us raised up, rotated front while swinging our right legs high over the horse to clear the tent roll and crupper and settled down gently into the saddle placing the right foot into the hooded stirrup. Then we took the carbine from our right shoulder and dropped it down on our right side while placing the muzzle into the carbine ring on the right side of the saddle. We now held the reins in our left hand and waited. This next command was “Form Ranks”.

Form Ranks: The number 2 and number 4 men ride forward 2 paces and squeezed into the spaces between the number 1 and number 3 men who were standing still. Now we were mounted in a single straight line, facing forward, side by side and stirrup to stirrup and in proper 1, 2, 3, 4 order with the number 1 man being on the right. Then the command was “By Twos, From the Right, Column Forward... (Wait for it) March!

March: And with all that, we were off to drill riding forward two at a time forming a long column of riders. Number 1 and number 2 followed by number 3 and number 4 then repeating the sequence down to the end of the column. We had just changed from a line to a column formation. The company commander leading off followed by the guidon carrier and the bugler at his side. The number 1 man was a corporal or a sergeant and was in charge of the group of 4. The number 4 man was to be the horse holder when 1, 2 and 3 dismounted and fought on foot. The number 2 and 3 men were generally the new guys.

Mounted Drill

We practiced everything we had learned riding in the Arizona sand except the commands were given by bugle. We rode forward in a column by files, by twos and by fours then back again. We went in to a line of battle with the commands of “Front in To Line” or “Left in To Line” or “ON Right in To Line” (so as not to invert the column). The change of direction being decided by which side of the column the enemy was located. We did our turning movements of “Right (left) Wheel”, “Column Left (Right)...March” and the Right (Left) Oblique as well as “Counter Column, By the Left (Right)... March”. Then it came time to practice fighting on foot with the carbines. Remember your gauntlets.

Carbine barrels get very hot after firing several rounds. (Lesson Learned)

The command for this is simple, **“Prepare to Fight on Foot”**. This command is how the cavalry dismounts and fights as infantry and we practiced this command a lot. We executed it until we did it quickly and smoothly. This command required the number 1, 2 and 3 men to dismount in sequence, link horses and take up a kneeling position about 10’ apart with their carbines and to start shooting. Remember when you kneel to fire your carbine you are wearing spurs (Lesson Learned). Number 1 gets off first and links his horse to number 2 using the link strap, shouts “One Away” then number 2 gets off and links to number 3, Shouts “Two Away” then number 3 gets off and hands his lead strap to number 4 who remains mounted and rides away with the string of mounts to the rear of the battlefield and safety. Number 4 waits until he hears the command or the bugle call **“Rally the Mounts”** before he returns with the horses.

At this command, the number 4 man would bring the linked horses forward to the rear of the firing line to remount the dismounted soldiers (they were not called troopers at this time in history). The dismounted soldiers peel off the firing line one at a time and remount starting with number 1 who slings his carbine and unlinks his horse from the number 2 horse and mounts then shouts “One Away” at which time number 2 withdraws from the firing line, slings carbine and unlinks his horse from the number 3 horse, then mounts and shouts “Two Away”. Then number three slings his carbine, takes his lead strap from number 4 and mounts. While number 3 is mounting number 4 rides forward and fires at the enemy with his pistol. Once 3 is mounted we form our line with each of us in proper order and number 1 leads us off to the next fighting position.

NOTE: Before you get back on your horse, quickly check the tightness of the cinch. Horses lose a lot of water and “shrink” during the day. A loose cinch will cause a saddle to rotate. When a saddle rotates under the horse’s belly and you end up on the ground where a panicked horse can step on you. Horses are heavy. (Lesson Learned)

We would quickly move out to a new position where we were needed to plug a hole in the infantry line or to attack an exposed enemy flank. Remember we started off by counting to 4 in each rank? Now you know why. We practiced drawing sabers and moving forward stirrup to stirrup as we changed gates from a **“Walk”**, then to a **“Trot”**, then to a **“Gallop”** and finally putting it in high gear when the bugler sounded the **“Charge”**.

The Charge required us to take the sabers from our shoulders (previously placed there by the commands of **“Sabers,...Draw Sabers!”**) and point them out in front of us, wrist and tips turned down, saber knots secure on our wrists and make a final high speed rush designed to break up an enemy formation by the sheer weight of a speeding horse. This drill was repeated until we could do it without thinking. And we were doing it in the heat and humidity of July. Turning the wrist over points the curved blade down and when it is run thru an infantry soldier as the horse passes him, the rider’s arm rotates without breaking the wrist and pulls the saber out of the soldier as he drops to the ground.

We practiced making pistol attacks by placing our sabers back into the scabbards (using the command **“Return....Sabers”**) and taking off the saber knot from our wrists then drawing our revolvers (using the command **“Pistols,...Draw Pistols”**). We fired off to the side of the horses so as to not fire the pistols into the horse’s ears. There is nothing like having a horse turn his head around and look at you directly in the eye as if to say “Hay are you stupid or what”? “Wait till you walk behind me next time”. (Lesson Learned, sorry!)

Now you probably know more about riding a horse in the cavalry than any average American would ever want to know. I have saved my story about why a lot of cavalry soldiers did not wear spurs and will share it with you if you ask. Suffice it to say here that if you are trying to get off a horse and you throw your right leg over the rear of the horse while wearing a spur, there is a danger of getting it tangled in the crupper if you do not raise your leg high enough. (Lesson Learned)

A Joy Ride

After we completed drill and had returned to camp, I decided to take Angel out for a ride thru the Union camp to cool her off and to see how far back in time I had gone. These were the scenes I can still picture in my mind's eye. I saw a burley bare chested German butcher working on a whole beef hoisted up in a tree by its hindquarters. He was carving it out for distribution to a group of waiting quartermaster sergeants. There were lines of soldiers wound down the edge of a dusty road holding their tin cups and plates as they waited for their rations to be dipped out from the company cooking pots. Rations that had been cooked or baked in the field over wood fires. Soldiers walked by, carrying firewood and barrels of water while others unloaded wagons filled with fresh produce. Everywhere there were formations of men receiving instructions from their sergeants. Artillery gun crews filled sponge buckets and greased wheels.

A Regiment consists of 10 companies. Each Company was made up of 100 men when they started out in 1861 and now, by 1863, was whittled down to 40 to 60 men per company. A Company Street was a clear space 10' wide between two rows of inward facing dog tents. So in a Regiment bivouacked in the field, there would be 10 Company streets, each street with a walking guard. At the head of each company street was a large wall tent set up for the Captain and First Sergeant. I saw the officers sitting on folding wood chairs and working on a folding wood table filling out morning reports with pens dipped in ink and then passing them to couriers who hurried them along to higher headquarters. I remembered filling out my engineer reports seated on a folding stool at a folding camp desk out in some cold woods in Germany. Apparently some things don't change. The smell of coffee and bacon was in the air and in every direction tents, horses and cannon could be seen. The Christian Commission was in the camp passing out their bibles looking for a soul to save, and I remembered that our Reverend Hotchkiss served in this Commission at the time of Lee's surrender. He maintained an excellent diary of his experiences which can now be found on line. He even witnessed an execution.

I rode past a tent close to the edge of camp and observed a number of ladies earning their living by scrubbing soldier's shirts on wash boards in tin tubs of soapy water then hanging them from lines to dry. Just beyond them and set back off the road a bit, I saw another tent with some ladies standing about. To my surprise, these ladies were in various stages of undress and waiving at the passing soldiers. They too appeared to be filled with an entrepreneurial spirit. I watched as an officer appeared and told the men to move along, as he was taking charge and would soon have things well in hand. Somehow this display of leadership, soldierly discipline and concern for the moral welfare of the men appeared to ring a bit hollow. This was taking reenacting to a whole new level, but no time to think more on that subject. It was time to head back to camp and rest Angel after our morning adventure so we would be ready for another mounted drill in the afternoon. Besides, lunch was ready, and the fresh baked bread, homemade butter, apple preserves, watermelon and hot coffee held more sway than the sight of a well-turned ankle or a bath in a tin tub of water of questionable purity.

A Glimpse of Another Time

Later that day we left camp and had occasion to drive past the Gettysburg municipal hospital located on a side street on our way to some historic place. Apparently the heat and humidity had produced a couple hundred heat casualties amongst the reenactors and they had to be transported (by every conveyance imaginable) to the hospital for care. The aid station in the field that was supposed to be there for the event was still being set up. This is not a surprising outcome when you figure these 27,000 newly arrived reenactors were from areas with lower heat and humidity, and were used to working a less physical job seated behind an air-conditioned desk. These men were now wearing wool, marching in the heat, carrying a heavy knapsack and performing duties usually performed by men half their age. The hospital was quickly overwhelmed, so the overflow was laid on blankets in a parking lot where a number of men were connected to an I.V. in an attempt to rehydrate them as busy nurses passed between the rows of blue and gray clad casualties. As I passed this very real event painted before me in full

color, my mind recalled black and white photos taken at one of the hospitals that was set up here to deal with the aftermath of the battle. These two images, juxtaposed as they were in my mind, left me feeling that this place called Gettysburg is more than a National Military Park. It is in fact, hallowed ground where time matters not.

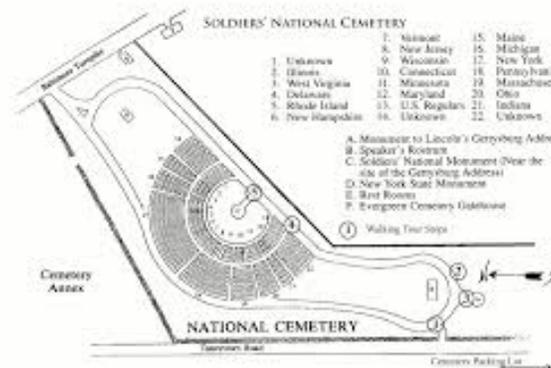
Many of our cousins laid on this ground bleeding, in pain and calling for help. Some died here. I was starting to see that Gettysburg was a place where a person who observes and carefully listens, can still feel those events that transpired there in July of 1863 when the fates of two nations would be decided as two mighty armies collided head-on in a fight to the finish. These events set the stage and served as a backdrop for what was about to play out for me personally the next day.

The Gettysburg Military Cemetery

It was the day before the event was to begin when three of us found we had a couple of hours to play tourist between mounted drill and stable duty. The city boys turned cavalry soldiers were still learning the hard lesson that horses take a lot of tending, so this outing would be a welcome break, our last before we were to “See the Elephant” as they say. After all, the opening scenes of this play featured the Cavalry center stage in a desperate fight to buy time for the infantry, the Black Hats of MG Reynold’s First Corps, to get up and be formed into their battle lines. We were to ride to the west side of town, dismount and fight on foot behind a split rail fence on Herr Ridge. We were to buy time and delay the confederate advance and we did this by firing from the tops of a series of ridges. Always remounting and riding off just as the infantry got close. But that was tomorrow, and we had other things to do today.

The evening was warm and we decided to visit the National Military Cemetery along with our school teacher buddy Brubaker (the bugler). So how does the old joke go? A Cop, an Engineer and a School Teacher walk into a cemetery and....their lives are changed forever?

There were no other visitors in the cemetery that evening and the temperatures had thankfully dropped off a bit so our wool uniforms were not feeling quite so heavy. With temperature goes humidity, and the humidity was definitely taking a toll on our western contingent of wool clad equestrians. The three dismounted riders walked to the center of the Cemetery where stands a monument to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address given on that spot (or close to it) on November 19, 1863 some four months after the battle. After reading the plaque commemorating the Address (Four score and seven....), we wandered off in different directions to reflect in the quiet of the evening on those violent events that played out during those three terrible days in 1863, now some 135 years distant. I was there because I was trying out a new hobby, a hobby my brother introduced me to a few months previous. I thought it was something that the two of us could do together. I knew little of the War Between the States (its official title) other than what I had learned (and forgotten) in high school and very little about my family history, but all that was about to change. Wandering out across the quiet graveyard, I was mindful of the irony of its peacefulness and wondered how hard the battle was that raged on that very same soil I was now walking on, and now, where some 3000 Americans were resting, forever young.



From the center of the cemetery, where the Lincoln monument is, I walked off in a random direction across the flat grassy field. I noticed the cemetery had no upright headstones and instead the names of the dead are imprinted in flat concrete bands. These bands are one foot wide arches of flat concrete that are nested like the semicircles of color that form a rainbow. The center point of this arch where the radius started, was the Lincoln monument. Each arch is spaced 10 foot apart from the next arch and they form a semicircle of arches across the entire expanse of the cemetery. These bands of concrete are the grave markers. About every eighteen inches along the concrete arch is inscribed the name of a man or the word "Unknown". If you cut a line thru all those arches you would have a wedge shaped piece of pie. All the men buried in that wedge would be from the same state. The bigger the wedge the more men who died from that state. The New York wedge is biggest followed by the Pennsylvania wedge.

A Strange Encounter

At some point I stopped walking. I stopped for no apparent reason and when I looked down at my feet, my heart stopped. There in front of me was the grave of Pvt O. W. Hotchkiss, Co F, 120th Rgt. Of all the places I could have walked, of all the 3000 graves I could have stopped at, why did I stop there? My engineer mind calculated the odds. I called for my brother to come join me.

Gary was as surprised as I was at the chance discovery of the only Hotchkiss grave amongst the 3000. We crossed the street to the Visitor's Center and asked a Ranger for any information he had that would give us a clue as to who O.W. was. He suggested we contact the National Archives and request his Military File (fill out a NATF Form 80 and mail it with a check and wait 6 weeks). He said if we were lucky, there would also be a Pension File to explore (separate form required). The answers we were looking for were in the National Archives some 85 miles away in DC.

The Adventure Begins

Standing in that cemetery and looking at that grave, I made a statement to my brother that "I was going to obtain all 13 or 14 of the Hotchkiss files pertaining to the Hotchkiss men that served in the War" to see if we were related to any of them.

Little did I realize what that simple statement would entail or its far-reaching consequences. I wanted to know who this O. W. was and if we had a great grandfather that might have served. I realized that I did not know very much about my family history or about Civil War history at that point in time. As I tried to figure out how to solve this two sided problem, I remembered receiving a newsletter from a group called the Hotchkiss Family Association. I formulated a plan. I would do research at the National Archives and then work with the HFA to place those men into the family tree. That plan was the first step on a journey back into history that would lead us back to Gettysburg in 2003 for the 140th anniversary reenactment, again in 2004 for the 121st HFA reunion and grave dedication for Pvt O.W. Hotchkiss. Back again in 2008 for the 145th anniversary battle, back again in 2013 for the 150th anniversary battle and here again in 2021 for the 137th HFA reunion. Apparently, many roads lead to Gettysburg.

As an aside, I would learn that our Great Grandfather Charles Fowler Brown (on my mother's side) was there in Gettysburg on July 1, 1863 with the 9th NY Vol Cav. He was in the first days fighting under General Buford's 1st Div. (Buford), 2nd Bde (Devin) on the Chambersburg Pike, not far from the Inn at Herr Ridge and where **Lt. Marcellus Ephraim Jones** of Company C, 8th Ill Cav, 1st Div. (Buford), 1st Bde (Gamble), fired the first shot in the battle. Jones was within sight of our GG Grandfather. Charles Brown would be shooting at our confederate cousin Seth Augustus Hotchkiss (9th NC Inf) in Willoughby Run where MG Reynolds (I Corps) was killed. Brown would be at Appomattox Courthouse in April 1865 as an escort for General Grant when it all came to an end. He would go on to be a judge and live in Nebraska and finally in Ventura, California where he was buried. I located his unmarked grave out in California and he now has a headstone provided by the VA. His grave sits back some 80 feet from a cliff that overlooks the Pacific Ocean. It is also 10 feet from a rock wall that separates the

cemetery from an old mansion owned by Senator William Clark of Montana. So corrupt was he that the 17th Amendment to the US Constitution was passed ending the appointment of Senators by the States. **NOTE:** Clark County Nevada, where I live, is named after him and Las Vegas exists because he auctioned off the land he purchased for the water rights to run his railroad from California to Salt Lake City.

Be Careful of Statements Made in a Cemetery

From this one event has come a number of things that continue to impact and shape my life and hopefully the lives of others. The branching out part of my story.

Research: Fast forward several years from my statement made in 1998, I now have two each 4-drawer legal size file cabinets filled with over 600 Union Army files, 16 US Navy, 1 Confederate Navy and 60 Confederate Army files. The files show our ancestors served in the Regular Army, US Colored Troops, Mississippi Marine Brigade, Veterans Reserve Corps, Invalid Corps, Engineers, US Sharp Shooters (Berdans) and the State Volunteers. In addition, there are State files and files on the Militia, the Military Telegraph Corps, the US Burial Corps, Quartermaster Corps, the Christian Commission, the AMA and the list keeps on growing. I discovered books on Hotchkiss engineers, map makers and peace makers. There were even 5 Courts Martial files (4 acquittals) and too many hospital records. With some digging, the obituaries have been discovered showing many lives well lived. Research turned up the Hotchkiss connection to the man who started the Civil War (Pizort Zeroy Hotchkiss), the woman who wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin (Harriet Beecher-Stowe), the Man who fired the opening shots of the Civil War at Harper's Ferry (John Brown), men who changed naval history at Hampton Roads, a man who witnessed the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and a man who voted to end slavery (Rep Giles Waldo Hotchkiss).

Book: The information in these files is remarkable. It has led me to start writing a book(s) on their exploits. I can tell you a hundred stories from the California Gold Rush, battles in swamps, fighting in the clouds, disease, boredom, letters from home, political fights amongst officers, charity, incompetence, politics, tragedy, cream pitchers, births and deaths, and even cousins murdered and buried in Mexico. My books on the Hotchkiss Men in the Civil War will be the logical culmination of my years of research on the subject and will be the one thing that I will leave behind that will mean more to me than all the churches, schools, roads, hospitals, bridges, government facilities and buildings I built during my professional career as Military and Civil Engineer. In the cemetery that day, standing at the grave of O.W., I felt like these men had reached out across time and sent me a message. I had been chosen to uncover their story and tell it to the world. True to this calling, at various times during my research, there have been a lot of odd little "happenings" that have occurred that can't be explained away as coincidence. I have felt an unseen guiding hand on a number of occasions leading me to some little discovery or affording me a glimpse of some long-ago event.

Graves Registration: The research led me to the locations of their graves, some unmarked. I obtained VA gravestones for unmarked Hotchkiss and other civil war era soldiers' graves that I have discovered. I became the Graves Registration Officer for the Department of California and Pacific Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and I am currently working on restoring a GAR cemetery I think we have located in Goldfield, Nevada which has almost been completely consumed by the desert sands and neglect.



HFA VP & Military Historian: Another unexpected consequence has been my VP posting by the Hotchkiss Family Association (HFA) in recognition of my research on our family involvement in the early wars of the 18th and 19th centuries. I have met and been contacted by cousins and strangers who have provided unexpected information, letters, diaries and pictures. The information in the CW files that I amassed has caused many of the unplaced Hotchkiss's to be placed on the family tree by the HFA. I met an unplaced cousin that lived down the street from me in Las Vegas who knew her grandfather as a child of 7 years. He told her of his experiences in the civil war and why he would never kill a spider after he returned home. This chance meeting added a large branch to our tree by placing a number of "Unplaced" files. Ask me to tell you the story sometime.

Reenacting: My experiences at Gettysburg caused me to take up reenacting in mounted cavalry units for the past 20 years. Reenacting gave me just a tiny taste of what it was like to suffer under the heat, cold and rain that our ancestors had to endure without relief for the years of their enlistment. Wearing the wool, sleeping on the ground, standing guard and doing the daily chores performed by all soldiers gave me an insight into life in the 19th century and has made me a number of close friends. As a reenactor you have to master the technical details of the job you are portraying, just the same as our ancestors did.

Teaching and Lecturing: Reenacting led me to teaching. Teaching caused me to put together a traveling museum and a small band of enthusiasts to teach CW history in schools. Today I lecture on the topic of the CW at various Round Tables, libraries and whenever I can find an interested (or captive) audience.

Fraternal Organizations: I joined The Sons of the American Revolution, the Sons of Union Veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans organizations where I have served over the years as their President or Commander. I have held the position of President of the Las Vegas Civil War Round Table where we study and discuss civil war topics and we raise money to preserve Civil War buildings and battlefields thru the Preservation Trust. We don't want to have any more Walmarts built over the trenches of our war dead (Camp Letterman Hospital at Gettysburg) or a McDonalds (over the ground of Picket's Charge) as has happened here in Gettysburg. The medals I have presented from these fraternal organizations to the various JROTC programs, has allowed me to coordinate cadet public service hours and focus them on the cleanup and maintenance of the Old Las Vegas Fort State Historic Park and our historic Woodlawn Cemetery where we have 8 civil war soldiers buried, 5 Union and 3 Confederate.

HFA Reunion 2004: At age 50 I learned to sound the bugle for the first HFA reunion in Gettysburg. We met at the military cemetery to take care of unfinished family business. We gathered and prayed over the grave of our Cousin O. W. Known to us now as Private Oren Washington Hotchkiss, 21 year old tobacconist from New York who had enlisted in company F of the 120th NY Vol Infantry Regiment and who was killed near the Peach Orchard on Emmetsburg Road on July 2, 1863 as part of MG Sickles' ill-advised advance. Oren had never been properly laid to rest or prayed for by his family until 2004. Taps was sounded for the first time over his grave by the HFA. Ask me to tell you about the story of a white butterfly that landed on his headstone during the service and another about the rain from a hurricane that chased a ceramic cream pitcher from southern Florida all the way up the coast to Gettysburg.

150th Gettysburg Reenactment, 2013: In July 2013 I participated in the 150th anniversary reenactment

in Gettysburg as my swan song to a 20-year reenacting career. I resurrected Company K of the 154th NY Vol Inf Regiment from Cattaraugus County, NY. There were 7 Hotchkiss cousins serving in that unit during the war. The 154th was decimated at both Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. I portrayed Cpt Arthur Hotchkiss commander of Company K who had enlisted Sgt Humiston (the unknown soldier of Gettysburg) into the ranks along with his brother Corp Ephraim Holbrook Hotchkiss who would die as a POW in Richmond, VA and rests in an unmarked (but commemorated) grave. All 37 members of this new Company K of the 154th that were intrepid enough to try reenacting at the 150th anniversary, were direct descendants of men who served in that regiment in 1863. The 154th has several books written about it by a man named Dunkelman. He and I have met and exchanged some research. He maintains a list of regimental descendants and it was from that list that the intrepid 37 came. On day one of the reenactment, the 154th formed up to march out to secure our section of the line. Cousin Bob Wells offered up a prayer before we moved. At that instant, I felt, just for a second, what our cousins must have felt when they moved out to Costner Avenue. They knew that they would not come back the same person they were when they woke up that morning. They would be forever changed. The unit would be forever changed. I glimpsed a piece of that reality as we stepped off. All the planning, all the training and it comes down to fate. Lives changed in an instant. Big events change us. We have all experienced it.

Sense of Family Pride: I have been privileged to glimpse into our family history, and have discovered ordinary men called upon to do extra ordinary things. Examples are many: a Hotchkiss doctor from Louisiana who built a dam and blew it up in order to strand a whole Yankee fleet in the Red River (along with our navy cousin serving on the monitor named the Osage which fired the first cannon directed by use of a periscope); a map maker that stopped thousands of Union troops in the Shenandoah Valley; a General that led his troops out of a trap called Shiloh and who later fed the homeless from the Great Chicago fire; a telegrapher that handed President Lincoln the telegram informing him that he had been elected President in November 1860, an event that ignited the Civil War. An inventor who made a new type of artillery shell and went on to arm the Great White Fleet. An engineer who helped construct an orgasmometer (seriously?) for Dr. Grant the “Great Light Man” which was used to illuminate Fort Sumter so it could be shelled at night by navy ships. I’ll tell you how it worked at the reunion.

More than 55 relatives died in the war and several hundred suffered its effects for the rest of their lives. We had a few deserters and shirkers, but mostly they were good honest men on both sides fighting as volunteers for something they deeply believed in. Several were prisoners. Almost all had a deep sense of Honor and Duty. Ephraim died as a result of his sense of duty. One received the distinction at Gettysburg of being listed on the Confederate Roll of Honor, not for taking lives but for saving lives. Many returned to fight after being wounded several times. Many gave all they had to a cause they believed in. Confederate Ltc Thomas R. Hotchkiss rose through the ranks, escaped after capture, was wounded 4 times, purchased and equipped a Battalion of Artillery and defend Atlanta from Sherman and many of our Hotchkiss cousins who accompanied him. One escaped three times, once from Andersonville, and he would have made it all the way home if his foot had not been crushed between two train cars! One of our shirkers who kept falling out of ranks while on the march just laid down and died of cholera and several of our deserters were later found in enemy POW camps. So much for accurate records, but the families still had to fight to get their pensions.

Personal Connection: We live in different times, but our ancestors had hopes and dreams, financial and family challenges and triumphs just like us. I discovered personal letters, diaries and photographs. All give me a glimpse into their lives and into a time when a man could own another man, when a women could not vote and the courts appointed guardians for her children. Many of the problems they faced and documented in letters home, are faced by us today. They shaped and tamed this country. They changed this country. They made a difference.

Sense of Military History: I laughed when I read about how disorganized the Army was in 1863 because my service experience was not so different some 125 years later. Hurry up and wait. “If you

don't like something just relax, it will change" as my father 1Sgt Don Hotchkiss Sr. would say. Supply still doesn't work, the pay isn't that great and the food ...well the stories are legion and vehicles still get stuck in the mud. What we still shared was that we complained, we served, we endured, but we did our duty, matter not the heat, rain, mud, discomfort or cost. And when it was all over, we would stand quietly with our mates knowing that we, all of us, would gladly share the last of our canteens with the men we served with and who we would remember for the rest of our lives. While I was in the Army serving in Germany as a company commander in 1980 someone snapped a picture of me in a green fatigue uniform sitting at my desk signing some paperwork with a ballpoint pen. The photo was tossed into a scrap book and forgotten. At the 150th anniversary reenactment at Gettysburg, someone snapped a picture of me in a blue uniform sitting under a canvas awning sitting at a table signing paperwork as the company commander with a quill pen. Apparently some things never change. Both pictures now reside side by side.

My research has led me to discoveries of Hotchkiss family in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Seminole Indian War, War with Mexico, The Indian Wars, Spanish American War, The Philippine War (did not know about that one) both World Wars and all the other wars in the 20th Century. We had a Cousin from Oregon fighting in Iraq. My nephew is serving today in the Air Force in Colorado. There have been Hotchkiss men and women doing their duty, standing watch and in combat from 1775 to 2021. Generations have served, and some have died, but all helped shape this magnificent country that we enjoy today with all its freedoms, opportunities and a few faults. We live as free men in a free nation because that freedom was purchased with the blood of our forefathers.

The journey is not over. There are many discoveries yet to be made. More lives to peer into, relations to meet and in the end, books to write. In August 2021 we met at Gettysburg and held the 137th HFA reunion. We walked on the battlefield where our family fought and where some died 157 years ago. We talked about their exploits and contributions to that War. In 15 short years most of us, God willing, will celebrate 400 years of Hotchkiss contributions made on this continent and the many generations of lives well lived. The Hotchkiss family made American History. We are the warp and the woof woven into every major event on this continent since 1635.

**“And gentlemen in England now a-bed, shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhood's cheap whiles any speaks, That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's
day.”**

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Gettysburg July 2013