

# The 115th New York in the Civil War

*A Regimental History*

MARK SILO

FOREWORD BY JOHN J. HENNESSY



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# Preface

Sometime during the night of August 31–September 1, 1862, the path of the 115th New York Volunteer Infantry veered away from that being followed by most new Union regiments from the northeastern states. At the railroad junction at Relay House south of Baltimore, the train carrying the regiment's thousand recruits to war turned westward toward Virginia's Shenandoah Valley rather than continuing on to Washington, D.C. From this moment onward the 115th was diverted from the mainstream of events. The railroad switch that moved them away from the mainline track during the middle of the night started the 115th on an odyssey that encompassed 34 months, 6,000 miles, 800 casualties, and a story that is unique among the fighting Union units of the Civil War.

Sixty-seven veterans of the 115th have told this story through their diaries, letters, memoirs, and recorded testimony. The wealth of material that these men left enables this history of their regiment to be more than a simple chronicle of events. The words, emotions, and sentiments of the volunteer soldiers who lived the events are the core of this work; without them it would be dry and unfinished.

These sixty-seven veterans can best be thanked by telling their story well. If I have accomplished this, it is only because of help provided by many people who I can thank more directly, including Kelly Farquhar and Violet Dake Fallone of the Montgomery County Department of History and Archives; Michael Pilgrim and Michael Musick of the National Archives and Records Administration; Richard Sommers of the U.S. Army Military History Institute; Barbara Gail Bulfin of the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*; Tom DuClos, Jim Gandy, and Michael Aikey of the New York State Military Museum; Michael Andrus and Robert K. Krick of the National Park Service; A. Wilson Greene of the Pamplin Historical Park; Hector Allen, Historian, Town of Oppenheim, New York; Richard Bellinger of St. Johnsville, New York; Roger D. Hunt of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Charles Mood of Pembroke Pines, Florida; Donald Oakley of Amsterdam, New York; Paul Quinn of Troy, New York, who kindly assisted with digital formatting; and many friends from the Capital District Civil War Round Table, including Bob Keating, Bruce Venter, Sue Knost, Bob Johnson, and Margaret and Richard Becker. Blake Magner of Collingswood, New Jersey, turned the author's rough sketches into maps.

Local historian Jim Morrison of Gloversville, New York, has spent years accumulating information about the roles of his town and county in America's colonial wars and in the Civil War. When Jim learned of my project with the 115th, he sent me all the source mate-

rial he had on the regiment and shared all of his new discoveries as my work continued, all without being asked. Material he gathered from local newspapers was of particular value. Jim's generosity is enormously appreciated.

Dan Lorello of the New York State Archives dealt patiently with my many inquiries and always passed along any 115th New York material he came across in his work at the Archives. He closely read the draft manuscript and provided many valuable insights. Most importantly, Dan was this amateur's sounding board on many issues relating to research, writing, and publication.

John Hennessy is the Chief Historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park in Virginia, but became a friend and associate during his service with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and the Capital District Civil War Round Table in Albany. John read many early chapter drafts and provided numerous invaluable suggestions; his long term loan of several volumes of the *Official Records* was a blessing; and I am very grateful for his excellent Foreword. But his most critical contribution was the whirlwind weekend he spent with me finding and tramping the 115th's obscure battle sites in the Richmond area—a weekend mission that jump-started the writing phase of this book.

This work owes much to the contributions of indefatigable researcher and collector Lance Ingmire of Saratoga, New York. While Lance's main interest is the 95th New York, he also had forebears in the 115th. Unfortunately for him but very luckily for this author, his uncounted hours on line and in moldy archives have invariably turned up ten 115th items for every one on the 95th, and Lance has generously shared his 115th finds while only occasionally venting over his frustration with the 95th.

My gratitude to my family—Kap, Dan, and Caitie—is boundless. Dan and Caitie changed from fun little kids into fine young adults as I worked my way through the story of the 115th New York, while somehow their mother remained ageless. They all supported the many winter evenings when I disappeared to my basement office to retreat into the 1860s, and they all enjoyed (or obligingly tolerated) several jaunts across campsites and battlefields in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. There are no words sufficient to express my love and appreciation for them.

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