

BROTHERS,

HEROES,

MARTYRS



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BROTHERS, HEROES, MARTYRS

THE CIVIL WAR SERVICE OF

BROTHERS,

154TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEER INFANTRY

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HEROES,

DESCENDANTS OF THE

154TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS

MARTYRS

BY MARK H. DINKELMAN

PUBLISHED BY THE
ALLEGANY AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

1994

BROTHERS

The cuts of the United States flag in this booklet
are reproduced from Civil War issues of the
Cattaraugus Freeman, a staunch Union newspaper
published in Ellicottville, New York,
then the seat of Cattaraugus County.

MARTYRS

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BROTHERS, HEROES, MARTYRS

THE CIVIL WAR SERVICE OF

LEWIS AND GEORGE BISHOP,

COLOR BEARERS OF THE

154TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEER INFANTRY

WRITTEN FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF

HERITAGE DAYS

AND THE 9TH ANNUAL REUNION OF

DESCENDANTS OF THE

154TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS

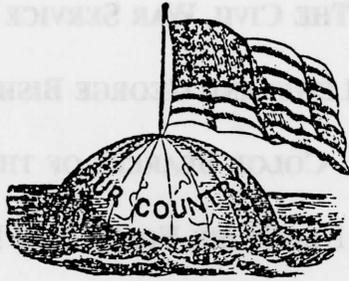
AUGUST 6, 1994

ALLEGANY, NEW YORK

BY MARK H. DUNKELMAN

**PUBLISHED BY THE
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Late in the afternoon of Monday, September 29, 1862, shortly before boarding the train that would carry them from their rendezvous at Jamestown to the front, the newly mustered soldiers of the 154th New York Volunteer Infantry witnessed a solemn scene. On behalf of Governor Edwin D. Morgan of New York State, Judge Richard P. Marvin of Jamestown presented the regiment with a beautiful, pristine stand of colors. As he delivered the flags, the judge made an oration the *Cattaraugus Freeman* described as "an eloquent and patriotic speech." In response, Colonel Addison G. Rice of Ellicottville, the organizer of the 154th, made a few brief but profound remarks. He expressed thanks for the gift, and promised, on behalf of the regiment, "that the colors should never be stained with dishonor, or sullied by defeat." Colonel Rice then ordered Corporal Lewis Bishop of Company C to receive the flag of the United States as the 154th New York's first color bearer.

The post entrusted to Lewis Bishop was one of great honor and great danger. The banner he held symbolized both the regiment itself and the cause the men had enlisted to fight for. It was the 154th's most precious possession. The Stars and Stripes would lead the regiment everywhere--on parades in camp, on dusty or muddy marches through the countryside--and when not in use would be tenderly furled and placed in a waterproof cover. On the battlefield, the flag would spearhead the regimental line as it surged to the attack, or mark a rallying point if it fell back in retreat. Over six by six feet square and brightly colored, the banner would also offer a conspicuous target to the enemy through the thick battle smoke, and would draw an inordinate amount of Confederate fire. Loss of its flag was the ultimate humiliation to a Civil War regiment. As color bearer, Lewis Bishop was charged with protecting the banner at all costs, come what may.

All this Bishop knew. He was one of a handful of members of the 154th New York who had seen previous service. No doubt Colonel Rice's choice of Bishop as color bearer was based on Lewis's status as a veteran, one who had been in combat. Bishop knew what the untried regiment was about to endure.

Among the hundreds of new soldiers watching the ceremony, one private in Company C observed Lewis with particular interest. We can only imagine what emotions George Bishop felt as he watched his younger brother grip the Star-Spangled Banner at the head of their new regiment.

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Little is known of the Bishop family in the years before the Civil War. George and Dorothea (Storms) Bishop were living in Germany when their son George

was born about 1830. The family emigrated to the United States later in the decade, and settled in Lancaster, Erie County, New York. Lewis Bishop was born in Lancaster on August 9, 1839, and a third son, Charles, was born there May 9, 1841. By 1860, Charles Bishop was living in Allegany, Cattaraugus County, New York, and working for James Freeland on his farm on the south shore of the Allegheny River. About that time, Lewis and George also gravitated to Allegany. George brought a family with him, and the few details known about them show they moved around a bit before settling in Allegany. George married Louisa Sahm in Batavia, Genesee County, on June 2, 1851. Their first child, George Jr., was born in Canada on June 28, 1854; a daughter, Sarah, was born in Erie County on May 15, 1859; and son Henry was born in Cattaraugus County on February 12, 1861. By then, George was working for Nathan P. Covell of Allegany, and the Bishop family was living at Covell's farm on the Five Mile Road (between the present-day intersections of the Back Olean and Smith Hollow Roads).

When the firing on Fort Sumter opened the war, bachelor Lewis was the first Bishop brother to volunteer. He enlisted at age 21 on May 15, 1861, in a company forming at Allegany, to serve two years. Allegany's "Chamberlain Guards" and Ellicottville's "Cattaraugus Guards" were the first organized volunteers to leave Cattaraugus County for the war. They were designated Companies H and I, respectively, of the 37th New York Volunteers, when that regiment was mustered in at New York City on June 7, 1861. The rest of the regiment consisted of Irish militiamen from the metropolis, and the western New Yorkers voiced dissatisfaction at being banded together with the big city immigrants. The

Cattaraugus boys were consequently pleased when Companies H and I were detached from the 37th after arriving at Washington to garrison a nearby fort in Maryland.

Private Lewis Bishop of Company H was present with his command during its early months of service, doing extra duty in the quartermaster department during the autumn of 1861. The two Cattaraugus companies were reunited with the rest of the 37th in time for the opening of the 1862 spring campaign by the Army of the Potomac. On May 5, 1862, near the old colonial capital of Williamsburg, Virginia, the 37th New York fought its first battle, slogging over muddy, crowded roads to reinforce a portion of the Union line, and making a daring charge to recover some lost ground. The regiment lost 95 men at Williamsburg, but casualties were few in Company H, which held the right of the 37th's line. Lewis Bishop was one of the company's losses. He was taken prisoner by the Confederates, one of only two men of the 37th to be captured during the battle--indicating he had been well to the front during the fighting.

During the next few weeks, Lewis was paroled, returned home to Allegany on a furlough, and was exchanged. On May 21, 1862, just sixteen days after his capture, Lewis Bishop's first term of service ended when he was mustered out with a detachment from the 37th and several other New York State regiments at Washington, D.C.

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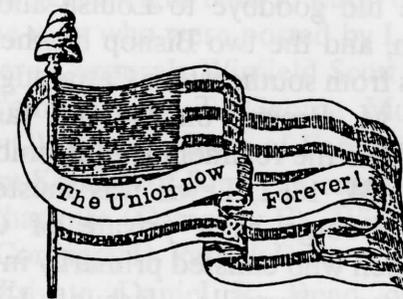
A few months after Lewis enrolled in the 37th New York, the youngest Bishop brother, Charles, enlisted in Allegany on August 28, 1861, as a private in Company I, 64th New York Volunteers. Charles Bishop

was present with his company until December 13, 1862, when he was wounded slightly in the hand at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia. For the next several months he was hospitalized, and by April, 1863, some scrape had landed him in arrest at his division headquarters. Reinstated to his company, Charles was present when the 64th fought at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, and on October 14, 1863, he was captured at the Battle of Bristoe Station, Virginia. On October 23 he entered the prison camp on Belle Isle, in the James River at Richmond, and was searched and robbed of \$25 in greenbacks. From hellish Belle Isle he was sent to the notorious prison in Andersonville, Georgia, in March, 1864, where he contracted scurvy. His subsequent life as a captive is uncertain, but on April 21, 1865, Charles was received at the Union post at Vicksburg, Mississippi, as a paroled prisoner of war. After a year and a half of wasting away in Confederate prisons, his long ordeal was over. Six days later he reported at Benton Barracks, near St. Louis, Missouri. In early May he traveled to Annapolis, Maryland, and to New York City, where he was mustered out on May 15, 1865.

The war was over, and Charles Bishop returned to Allegany. "He was anything but a well man then, was very much reduced and broken down in health" recalled an Allegany comrade of his company, Sergeant William Spraker, Jr. Charles was a living victim of the war that claimed the lives of his brothers Lewis and George. He began a troubled journey through postwar America, an odyssey apparently plagued by alcoholism. He labored as a woodworker in the car shops of the New York Central Railroad in Buffalo, and was injured in an accident on the job. He moved to Olean, to Fort Wayne, Indiana, to Corry, Pennsylvania, and back to

Fort Wayne. Drunk, he fell off a bridge in Fort Wayne into the St. Mary's River in the early 1880s, hurting his legs. About the same time, his wife died, leaving him with five children. He was granted a pension of \$4 a month for his wartime service, but it was stripped from him when testimony indicated he had obtained it using fraudulent affidavits. "Bishop is a habitual drunkard without any regards for the truth or morality," a Fort Wayne citizen swore. The pathetic old veteran was dropped from the pension rolls, and disappeared from the public record.

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When the campaign on the Virginia Peninsula ended in failure--the same campaign in which Lewis Bishop was captured at Williamsburg--President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 three-year volunteers. In response to that call, regiments that were to become the choicest of the Union army were raised, composed of men who knew the desperate straits their country was in, and who knew their role in suppressing the rebellion would be fraught with danger. In

Cattaraugus County, Lincoln's call led to the enlistment of eight companies of infantry, which, when combined with two companies from neighboring Chautauqua County, formed the 154th New York Volunteers.

On Wednesday, August 6, 1862, Lewis and George Bishop enlisted in Olean to serve three years in the new regiment. Lewis was three days shy of his twenty-third birthday. He stood five feet, nine and a half inches tall, and had a light complexion, blue eyes, and dark hair. He was a farmer. George was thirty-two years old, stood five feet, nine inches, and was dark-complected, with black eyes and dark hair. His occupation was listed as both farmer and laborer.

George bid goodbye to Louisa and their three young children, and the two Bishop brothers went with other enlistees from southeastern Cattaraugus County to Camp James M. Brown, on the old fairgrounds in Jamestown, where the regiment was assembling. There, on September 24, 1862, Lewis was mustered in as a corporal and George as a private of Company C, composed of men who enlisted primarily in the towns of Allegany, Olean, Portville, Ischua, Hinsdale and Humphrey. On September 28, Lewis was appointed regimental color sergeant by Colonel Rice, and the following day he received the United States flag from Judge Marvin during the presentation ceremony.

Off the 154th New York went to the war--by railroad to Washington, where it crossed the Potomac River into Virginia and joined the First Brigade of the Second Division of the Eleventh Corps of the Army of the Potomac at Fairfax Court House. There, Colonel Rice left the 154th by a prearranged plan. He had agreed to raise the regiment and deliver it to the front, after which he would be relieved by a veteran officer

from Cattaraugus County, and would return home to his law practice and politicking. Relieving Rice as commander of the 154th was Colonel Patrick Henry Jones of Ellicottville, late of the 37th New York, where he had served with Lewis Bishop in Company H, and had received successive promotions to major on the basis of meritorious service.

With a veteran officer in charge of the regiment, affairs in the 154th quickly assumed a strict, military air. Immediately after assuming command, Colonel Jones issued a series of orders to conform the regiment to army regulations and fit it for the trials to come. Regimental Order No. 9, issued at Fairfax on November 26, 1862, assigned eight men to daily duty as the color guard. The men who were posted by Lewis Bishop and the flag were Corporals Winfield Scott Kenyon of New Albion (Company B), T. George Morgan of Ischua (Company C), John A. Bush of Farmersville (Company D), William Kendall of Ripley (Company E), William J. Allen of Charlotte (Company F), William H. Traver of Portville (Company I), Patrick Foley of Persia (Company K), and Private Daniel R. Read of Great Valley (Company G).

Under the national banner, Lewis Bishop led the 154th New York on a series of uneventful marches to a series of routine camps in the fall and winter. Spring brought Lewis milestones, military and personal. On April 4, 1863, he was officially promoted to sergeant by regimental order. Two days later, he left the 154th's camp near Stafford Court House, Virginia, on a furlough of ten days. Back at home in Allegany, Sergeant Lewis Bishop married Miss Lucy Hall on April 12. Presumably, the couple had carried on a courtship by mail, sending letters between Allegany and the front.

The bride was an Allegany woman, and had attended Louisa Bishop during her confinement with baby Henry. Lewis and Lucy were wed by Justice of the Peace Cyrus G. McKay, in a ceremony witnessed by Luther W. Hall and Mary Rounds. Their honeymoon was brief. Eight days after the wedding, on April 20, a rainy day in Virginia, Captain Lewis D. Warner of Company C recorded in his diary, "Lewis Bishop returned to duty."

The Stafford camp was deserted. A week earlier, the 154th New York and the rest of its brigade had been ordered to march up the Rappahannock River. Bishop, Warner (who had also just returned from a furlough home), and other members of the regiment left behind when the move was made, marched to rejoin the 154th on April 26. They reached the regiment at Kelly's Ford the following afternoon, and were heartily welcomed by their comrades. It was a special reunion, no doubt, for newlywed Lewis and his brother George.

On the evening of April 28, Colonel Jones told Captain Warner and the other company officers that the 154th was to cross the river in pontoons and clear the opposite shore of Confederate pickets. The order was carried out without loss, a hasty volley from the Rebel videttes splashing harmlessly into the water, and the 154th looted the thriving farmstead it found on the southern shore. In its sunset crossing of the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford, the 154th New York initiated the movement of the Army of the Potomac into the forbidding region aptly named the Wilderness, which the troops carefully penetrated over the next several days to the vicinity of an isolated crossroads called Chancellorsville.

Posted near a wooden building known as Dowdall's Tavern, in one of the few clearings carved

from the forest thickets, the 154th New York was cooking dinner and preparing for a quiet night's sleep as afternoon waned on Saturday, May 2, 1863. Then came perhaps the most explosive shock of the war. Suddenly, surprisingly, with their famous piercing yell and a thunderclap of musketry, an overwhelming Confederate force under command of legendary General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson burst from the forest and smashed into the unprepared Union Eleventh Corps.

The 154th and the rest of the First Brigade were the farthest away from the initial point of attack, and so had time to assume a new position in a little, backward-facing rifle pit dug across the road at Dowdall's Tavern. Ahead, to the west, brigade after brigade of the Eleventh Corps was shattered by Jackson's attack and sent reeling down the road and through the fields, careening past the 154th's position in a wild jumble of men, mules, horses, cannons and wagons. Some rallied on the First Brigade line; most of the fugitives continued their routed flight into the woods to the rear, seeking the safety of the rest of the army.

Finally the First Brigade was all that stood between Jackson's victorious divisions and the remainder of the Union army. The 590 men of the 154th New York formed the left of the line. Colonel Jones gave the order to fire at will, and the tremendous crash of musketry momentarily stopped the oncoming Rebels. Clinging to the shallow rifle pit, the soldiers loaded and fired their Enfield rifled muskets as rapidly as they could. But up ahead, through the swirling smoke and lengthening shadows, lit by the sunset, the long gray lines of the enemy came nearer and nearer, and soon began to overlap the flank of the regiment.

As the brigade's newest regiment, and the only

one yet untested in battle, perhaps the 154th felt it had something to prove. (Years later, Captain Warner declared the regiment had not yet learned to run when it should have.) Men were falling from Rebel fire flying from front and flank. To the right, one regiment and then another fell back in retreat. Soon the 154th New York and a portion of the 73rd Pennsylvania on its right were all that was left on the battlefield of the Eleventh Corps. The situation was hopeless, and Colonel Jones, felled by a wound to the hip, gave the order to retreat. Fleeing the rifle pit, the regiment had a field of about eight hundred feet to cross before reaching the relative safety of the forest. Many of the men were shot down making the attempt.

Plunging into the darkened woods, the scattered soldiers of the 154th New York groped their way eastward toward the rest of the army, some of them stumbling into the hands of the pursuing Confederates. A core group, including Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. Loomis of Otto and Color Sergeant Bishop, made a brief halt at some vacant Union breastworks and rallied other members of the regiment to the flag, which Lewis had safely carried from the chaos and carnage at Dowdall's Tavern. Pressing on, the little band finally reached the Union lines and safety. Scattered in the nighttime Wilderness were other members of the 154th, who would eventually rejoin the regiment. Left behind at Dowdall's Tavern were 281 men killed, wounded and captured--almost half of the men the 154th took into the battle.

It had been a crushing defeat; yet the 154th New York took great pride in its vain but valorous stand. In his official report of the battle, Lieutenant Colonel Loomis wrote, "The command behaved with all the firmness and unflinching bravery practiced by the

American soldier. Many instances of personal and conspicuous gallantry came under my observation, but when all behaved so well, it might do injustice by singling out any individual...." But the heroism of the regimental color bearer soon was heralded by the survivors of the 154th, and quickly reached home. The *Cattaraugus Freeman* reported on May 28:

The officers and men all fought like veterans, and won the commendation of the entire army. There are some instances of bravery which deserve especial notice.--When the enemy appeared, Col. Jones ordered the colors to be raised. Lewis Bishop, of Company C, the color-bearer, stood up unprotected and waved the flag in the face of the enemy through the whole engagement, and brought it safely from the field; but that battle-flag tells the story of Lewis' heroism. Twenty bullets passed through its folds, and three more struck the flag-staff, one between his hands, and yet, strange to say, that man, more exposed than any other, was unhurt.

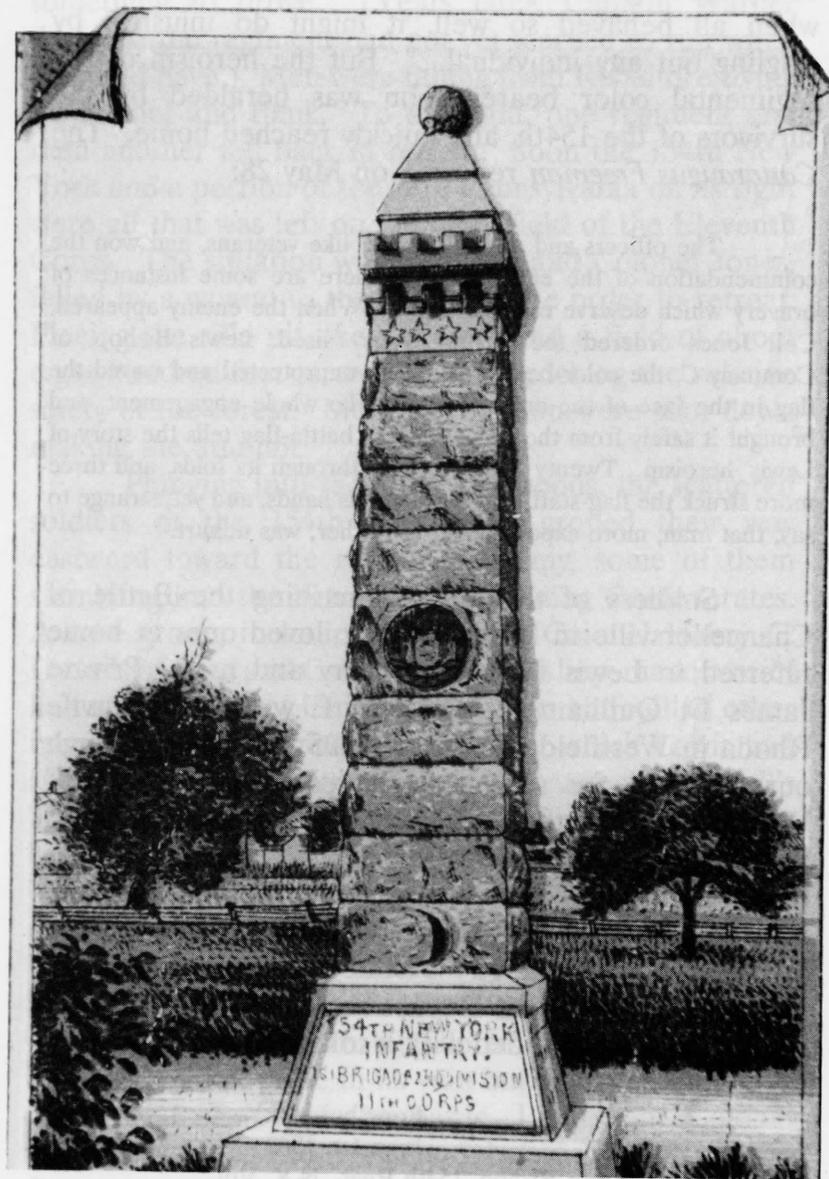
Soldiers of the 154th describing the Battle of Chancellorsville in letters to their loved ones at home referred to Lewis Bishop's bravery and luck. Private James D. Quilliam of Company E wrote to his wife Rhoda in Westfield, "There were 25 ball holes through our flag and the man that carried it was not hurt." Writing to his mother in Ellicottville, Sergeant Richard J. McCadden of Company G noted, "There was 24 holes through our flag and one between the flag and the fellow's hand that carried it, on the staff." When word of Bishop's deed reached his United States congressman, Reuben E. Fenton, the Republican and future governor of New York responded with a token of his respect.

Frewsburg, N.Y.

June 1st, 1863

Color Sergeant Louis Bishop, 154th Regt., N.Y. Vol.

154TH NEW YORK INFANTRY.
KUHNS MEADOW.



No photographer recorded the sites where Lewis and George Bishop fell until decades after the war. By 1890, the fences and kilns of Kuhn's brickyard in Gettysburg had disappeared, and a monument erected by the State of New York marked the battle line of the 154th New York. In northern Georgia, Rocky Face Ridge was as steep, scrubby and stony as ever, but traces of the battle had vanished. No memorial marked the spot where the 154th fought. Tranquility had returned to the scenes of bloodshed.

Photographs from the author's collection (Gettysburg), and the U. S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (Rocky Face Ridge).

We are accounted of the action by your Regiment in the Battle of Chancellorsville, May 2nd, 1863. I read with admiration of your brave conduct in bearing the Flag of our country proudly through the contest and from the field of carnage in honorable triumph. I offer you herewith the Silver Badge of your Corps, as a slight acknowledgment of your gallantry on that occasion.

Very truly yours
(signed) R. E. Fenton

A week after Fenton wrote his letter, as Sergeant Lewis Bishop stood under the riddled flag, gripping the splintered staff and wearing his new silver Eleventh Corps crescent badge, he was joined by three new members of the color guard: Corporal Albert Mericle of Randolph (Company H), and Privates Wallace Cole of Portville (Company C) and Allen L. Robbins of Perrysburg (Company K). (Color Corporal William Allen had been killed at Chancellorsville; Color Corporal William Traver had been wounded and captured there.) Mericle was given the honor of carrying the state or regimental flag of the 154th, and took his place under that blue banner emblazoned with the state seal (a rising sun) and motto ("Excelsior"), next to Bishop and the Stars and Stripes. (Who bore the state flag before Mericle did is, unfortunately, unknown.)

Bishop and the color guard led the 154th New York from its camp near Brook's Station, Virginia, on the afternoon of June 12. The ensuing march meandered across northern Virginia and Maryland, through choking dust and scorching heat, and by the end of the month the regiment was at Emmitsburg, Maryland, a mile or two from the Pennsylvania line. Early on the morning of Wednesday, July 1, 1863, Captain Warner and fifty lucky members of the 154th were detached from the regiment to make a

reconnaissance to the west. The rest of the regiment marched north, up the road running towards the crossroads college town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

When the 154th New York arrived at Cemetery Hill, overlooking the town, they heard the roar of battle and saw the contending lines of troops struggling on the fields and ridges north and west of the village. The soldiers had just enough time to fill their canteens, gobble a hasty, cold lunch, and clean and load their rifles, before an order came sending them into the fray. Sergeant Bishop and Corporal Mericle hoisted the flags and led the regiment through the streets of Gettysburg to the northeastern outskirts, where the 154th and two other regiments of its brigade filed through a carriage gateway into the brickyard of John Kuhn, and took shelter behind a post and rail fence.

At Gettysburg, as at Chancellorsville, the First Brigade was called on to cover a retreat of the Eleventh Corps, and faced overwhelming numbers of exultant Rebels, flushed with victory. Without the fifty men detached with Captain Warner, the 154th numbered only 224 soldiers. Two Confederate brigades, outnumbering the small Yankee force more than three to one, crested a slope and came storming down through a wheat field towards the brickyard. Union fire stopped the Rebel assault but momentarily. Soon the long Confederate lines passed both flanks of the blue line in the brickyard, and the First Brigade was in danger of being surrounded. By the time the 154th was ordered to retreat and reached the carriage gateway to exit the brickyard, the Confederates were swarming in the street. After a brief hand-to-hand fight, most of the regiment was captured. A mad dash through the streets of Gettysburg ensued for the handful who escaped, and when the tiny remnant

assembled late that afternoon on Cemetery Hill, only three officers and fifteen enlisted men were left.

Left behind, in addition to the many prisoners, were forty killed and wounded, scattered around Kuhn's brickyard and the streets, alleys and yards of Gettysburg. Every known member of the color guard present at the battle was a casualty. Scott Kenyon, Patrick Foley, Wallace Cole and Allen Robbins were captured; Robbins eventually died of pneumonia in Andersonville. John Bush, Albert Mericle, and Lewis Bishop were wounded.

The exact circumstances of the wounding of Lewis Bishop are unknown. He was shot through both legs, and it was rumored three or four other members of the 154th were shot in attempting to rescue the national flag after Bishop fell. Mericle was wounded near a small stream behind the brickyard, and the state flag was rescued by James W. Bird of Ellicottville, second lieutenant of Company B, who carried it safely from the field. During the chaotic retreat, a member of the 134th New York--the regiment that fought to the right of the 154th in the brickyard--picked up the national flag of the 154th and rescued it from capture. Captain Matthew B. Cheney of Company G, 154th, came across the national flag of the 134th and brought it to safety, although he was severely wounded while saving the standard.

After the battle, Warren Onan of Allegany, second lieutenant of Company C, who was on duty commanding the division ambulance corps, wrote of Bishop's fall at Gettysburg:

Lewis Bishop, while in the line of his duty and in the faithful performance of his duty as color bearer, was wounded by a musket ball passing through both legs....I took charge of Bishop and provided

for him as well as possible at the time, but it became necessary to amputate one of his legs, and he died in some two or three weeks after being so wounded.

The bones in Lewis Bishop's left knee were shattered by the gunshot wound, and the leg was removed in a "primary amputation of the thigh in the lower third," by an unidentified surgeon. When the battle ended, Lewis and the other wounded of the 154th were moved to the Eleventh Corps hospital, a few miles south of Gettysburg. Several witnesses visited Bishop there, and left descriptions of their encounters with the brave soldier. A New York State relief agent wrote:

I saw in one tent three soldiers of the 154th who were shot one after another while holding the colors of their Regiment. These were Albert Mericle, Lewis Bishop and Rickert [Gilbert M. Rykert of Hinsdale, a corporal of Company C, who was severely wounded in the arm], and I think the name of John A. Bush should be added.

A citizen of Cattaraugus County, Mr. J. W. Phelps of Great Valley, reported on a July visit to Gettysburg in a letter to the *Cattaraugus Freeman*.

While at Gettysburg, where I was from the 8th to the 13th inst., I learned *something* of the 154th Regiment....I found, at the 11th Army Corps Hospital, three miles from town...L. Bishop, Olean, right leg off, left leg shattered...A. Mericle of Randolph...died on the 12th. [Phelps was mistaken as to which of Bishop's legs was amputated, and official records date Mericle's death to July 10. During Mericle's last days, Lieutenant James Bird waited on and talked with him, and no doubt Bird also cared for Bishop and the other wounded of the 154th.]

Another visitor to the Eleventh Corps hospital in the weeks after the battle was the Reverend Franklin J. F. Schantz, a Lutheran pastor from Catasauqua,

Pennsylvania. He was in Gettysburg from July 22 to 27, bringing several large boxes of hospital stores donated by Lutheran congregations in the Catasauqua area. Early on the morning of July 24, he conveyed a large wagon load of supplies to the hospital, and went from tent to tent handing out food and clothing to the wounded, assisted by hospital workers and volunteers from the U. S. Christian Commission. The clean shirts and underwear, the homemade bread and zwieback, the butter, pickles, apple butter and fruit, were thankfully accepted by the men. Pastor Schantz preached to the wounded that night. "The poor sufferers seemed very grateful," he later wrote. He added:

I was for some time with Lewis Bishop....He was the bold soldier who would not give up his flag when one of his legs was shot off. He stuck to his flag until he was wounded in the other leg.

For the rest of his life, Pastor Schantz remembered and spoke about his experiences in Gettysburg after the battle. "Many incidents made varied impressions on my mind," he would recall. "Even now I remember...the case of Lewis Bishop, the brave soldier."

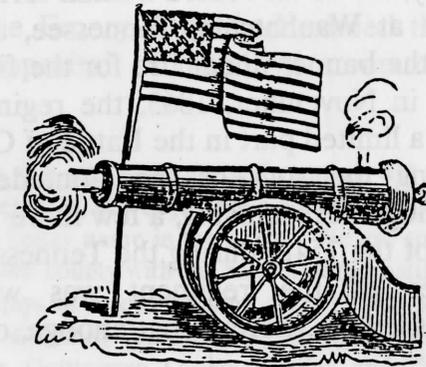
Two days after Reverend Schantz's visit, on July 26, Emory Sweetland of Little Valley, a private of Company B on duty nursing the wounded, wrote a letter to his wife. It was a very warm day, Sweetland noted, and the buzzing flies were thick around the wounded sufferers in the hospital. "Lewis Bishop, our color sergeant, is dying today," Sweetland wrote. "He is a noble, brave man. He went home before the Battle of Chancellorsville and was married."

Lewis Bishop fought death for a few more

agonizing days, and finally surrendered on July 31, 1863, thirty days after he was wounded. He left no effects. He was buried on the Spangler farm, but a few months later he was reinterred in the new Soldiers' National Cemetery, just before President Lincoln dedicated the hallowed ground with his immortal words. There, in New York Section A, Grave #109, Lewis Bishop rests.

In Allegany, after three months of marriage, Lucy Hall Bishop was a widow, left with memories and letters she had received from Lewis before and after he was wounded at Gettysburg. She applied to the federal government for a widow's pension, and was granted \$8 a month.

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George Bishop replaced his younger brother as color bearer of the 154th New York. Did he ask to take over the position? We do not know, but it seems likely. George had been present with Company C throughout its service, doing daily duty as company cook before and after Chancellorsville, surviving the battle there and the disaster at Gettysburg. After he became color bearer,

his rank was quickly raised to correspond to his new post. In Regimental Order No. 57, dated July 29, 1863, he was promoted to corporal, and two days later--the day Lewis died in Gettysburg--George was appointed color sergeant.

Sergeant Bishop carried the Stars and Stripes as the 154th New York returned to Virginia and did duty conveying recruits and draftees to the front. Then the Eleventh Corps was transferred to the western theater of the war, and the 154th New York made a long railroad journey to Bridgeport, Alabama. From there, the regiment led its corps on a march to the vicinity of Chattanooga, thereby opening the famous Cracker Line and breaking the siege of the Tennessee River town. Along the way, the 154th routed a small force of Rebels in a skirmish at Wauhatchie, Tennessee, and George Bishop bore the banner under fire for the first time. A month later, in November, 1863, the regiment fought again, taking a limited part in the Battle of Chattanooga and witnessing the rout of the Confederates from Missionary Ridge. Presumably, a few more bullet holes rent the flag of the 154th during the Tennessee fighting. One member of the regiment was wounded at Wauhatchie; six were shot at Chattanooga, one of them mortally.

The 154th spent the winter of 1863-64 in a comfortable camp of log huts at Lookout Valley, Tennessee. On January 27, 1864, Sergeant George Bishop left camp on a twenty-day furlough. A long railroad journey, via Nashville, Tennessee and Louisville, Kentucky, carried him home to western New York. In Allegany he was reunited for some happy days with Louisa and the children, and some sad times with his widowed sister-in-law Lucy.

Just before George Bishop left Lookout Valley for his Cattaraugus County home, news reached the regiment that the county was planning to replace its shot-torn flags with new banners. Henry VanAernam of Franklinville, the popular surgeon of the 154th, announced the news in a letter of January 16.

We have been informed that the Board of Supervisors of our County have raised funds to present our Regiment a stand of colors, and the chairman of the committee having the matter in charge...has written down the names of the battles we have been engaged in so to have their names inscribed on the banner. The matter was referred to General Howard [Eleventh Corps commander Oliver O. Howard], who says we participated gallantly in the battles of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Lookout Valley and Chattanooga.

Private Emory Sweetland echoed the news and added his appraisal of the 154th's reputation in the army.

I think that our regiment will number 400 men by spring. Tough, hardy veterans, our boys have a good name in the corps. No regiment has a better name in the corps. We are soon to receive a flag from our own county with the names of the battles in which (as Gen. Howard says in a letter telling what to put on the flag) the regiment has *Gallantly participated*, to be inscribed thereon: Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Lookout Valley, and Chattanooga, will be on the flag. Cattaraugus has never had occasion to blush for the 154th. It has always done its duty.

But the new colors did not arrive in time for the opening of the 1864 spring campaign. When General William Tecumseh Sherman put his army in motion that May, Color Sergeant George Bishop of the 154th New York still carried the old, tattered flag, ripped by bullets at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Chattanooga, and

stained with the blood of his brother Lewis.

*

Sunday, May 8, 1864. Four days after leaving Lookout Valley, the 154th New York will fight its first battle of the campaign. Orders have been received to assault Dug Gap, a road cut across the crest of Rocky Face Ridge, the northern Georgia mountain looming in front of the regiment. The ridge gets its name from the palisades of rock on its brow, a gray escarpment bristling above the steep, green wooded slope. The attack is to be a diversion, meant to hold the Rebels' attention while a flanking movement is made miles to the south. But after two of his brigades form battle lines in the fields at the foot of the mountain, division commander General John W. Geary rides in front of his men and makes a short speech, which he closes by saying, "If you take the hill, it will be a feather in your cap." Before the order to advance is given, soldiers fidget, joke, curse and silently pray. At the center of the line of the 154th New York, Color Sergeant George Bishop stands under the Star-Spangled Banner.

Finally Colonel Jones gives the order, and the regiment marches over fields, dismantles fences in its path, struggles through some heavy underbrush, and crosses a creek at the base of the mountain. Up the slope they start, and minie balls from the Confederates on the crest start to zip around and thud into trees and splatter on rocks. It's a hot day, and the men have to pause frequently to catch their breath. The slope is steep, tangled with trees and boulders, and it is tough climbing for the soldiers in their wool uniforms, carrying their heavy rifles and equipments. About half way up the mountain, the men stop briefly for another breather, and shed their knapsacks. Then Colonel Jones orders a

charge.

Up the slope the men go, and the fire from the enemy hidden behind the rocky crest increases rapidly. Then, crashing down the slope from the summit come huge rocks, pried from the palisade by the Rebels and sent tumbling down on the attacking Yankees. Bullets and boulders strike men and send them sprawling, but still the line climbs up, and finally reaches the shelter of the giant stone outcropping atop the mountain. Colonel Jones orders the 154th to storm the crest; he clammers atop a boulder and is knocked from it and injured. Lieutenant Colonel Dan B. Allen of Otto shouts to the men to fix bayonets and charge, and orders Color Sergeant Bishop to plant the colors on the mountaintop. Yelling, the men follow George Bishop up the escarpment. He jams the flag staff into the ground, and is instantly killed by a bullet through the head.

The flag waves from the ramparts, but it must be retrieved--the regiment cannot hold its perilous position. The color guard and other members of the 154th rush to rescue the banner. Color Corporal Philo A. Markham of Dayton (Company B) grabs it but immediately falls as a bullet smashes his right arm. Private Stuart Bailey of Great Valley (Company I) catches the falling flag but also drops, shot in his right arm. Nearby, First Sergeant Ambrose F. Arnold of Freedom (Company D), Sergeant Augustus A. Shippy of Otto (Company B), and Color Corporal Gilbert Diltz of Franklinville (Company D) are all shot dead. Corporal George W. Greek of Olean (Company C) is mortally wounded, shot through both thighs. Corporal Thomas R. Aldrich of Perrysburg and Private Orso C. Greeley of Leon (both of Company B) cannot escape and are captured. Finally, Corporal Allen Williams of Franklinville (Company D) reaches the flag,

and rescues it unscathed. Its cherished emblem secure at last, the regiment falls back down the mountain.

*

Ultimately, the history of Civil War regiments was written in the blood of their battles, and the fight at Rocky Face Ridge stands with those at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg as the most sanguinary milestones in the annals of the 154th New York. Like Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, it was also a defeat; but veterans of the 154th always pointed to all three engagements as evidence of their regiment's valor. And whenever they remembered those battles, they remembered the heroism of their brave color bearers, Lewis and George Bishop.

In the days after the fight at Dug Gap, survivors of the 154th New York described the battle in letters home. Private Henry F. Rice of Arkwright (Company F) wrote to friends two days after the battle.

The hill was very steep and covered with loose stones and scrub oaks, and our men were nearly tired out when they got there. Well, we started up the mountain....We advanced slowly, and kept concealed as much as possible, for every time a man showed himself, the Rebs were sure to shoot at him. At last a few of us got to the top ledge and lay there. Not a man dare show himself. Col. Allen, who was with us, ordered us to charge. He gave the word and up we went. When we rose up they fired a terrible volley into us. I succeeded in reaching the top and ran to a little tree a few feet in advance. The color bearer came up and was shot through the head. A corporal who lay by the side of me caught the colors and jumped back behind the ledge of rock. In a few moments I looked around and saw that the line had broken, and was retreating down the hill, the Rebs pouring down a shower of lead after them. I got down the hill as quick as I could.

In a letter to friends written on May 21, Corporal Marcellus W. Darling of Leon (Company K) sketched

the fight and eulogized both Bishop brothers.

As soon as the skirmishers were engaged we formed into two lines of battle and advanced up the mountain. It was very warm and we came very near melting before we got up the mountain, which was very steep and stony. As we advanced up the mountain the hotter was the fire, but we kept advancing until we reached a point about two rods from the top of the mountain....We were nearer to the top than any other regiment. Here we stood the fire of the Rebels from their rifle pits on top of the hill for about ten moments and kept advancing slowly. At one time our colors were within six feet of the Rebel pits. Here the color bearer and one of the guard was shot dead, and our men fell fast. The brave color bearer's name was George Bishop. His brother was killed at Gettysburg carrying the colors of the regiment. They were both brave and good soldiers as ever volunteered, and we all mourn their loss.

*

Back in Allegany, Louisa Bishop was granted a widow's pension. On October 2, 1865, she married an Allegany widower, a farmer and carpenter named Sebastian Hyde, and George Bishop's children became part of an extended family. Louisa Bishop Hyde remained in Allegany for the rest of her days. She died on March 5, 1882, and was buried in the town's Protestant Cemetery.

*

Years after the war ended, veterans of the 154th New York recalled the bravery of the Bishop brothers. At the first reunion of the regiment, on August 30, 1888, in Ellicottville, Captain Alfred W. Benson of Company D, a postwar resident of Kansas, delivered the main oration. The centerpiece of his speech was a reminiscence of Rocky Face Ridge:

On goes the line. The regimental flag still flutters up the mountain, and toward the fatal rocks....The men catch hold of jutting

rocks and projecting branches, as they grandly climb upwards. See!-- the flag darts forward as the brave color bearer seeks to plant it on the ledge in front. And now the crest is all alive with men in gray. Up go their colors as they leap from behind the rocks. Out blazes the flash of ten thousand muskets right above us....Men dropped like leaves. Our darling flag went to the dust, as its bearer received a fatal shot, a comrade seized it but only to fall, another clutches the precious staff and, thank God, it is safe. Oh, it was so close to those blazing muzzles hot with death!

Five years later, on the thirtieth anniversary of the Battle of Chancellorsville, First Lieutenant John F. Wellman of Company G, an Otto man moved to California, composed an epic poem describing the fight of the 154th New York at Dowdall's Tavern three decades before. He related how the regiment rallied around the flag after its retreat:

At last we reached the Third Corps line,
And found them standing all firm and fine.
We formed in their rear, 'round our colors there,
And gave three cheers for the Sergeant, who dare
To hold, and wave them, in Stonewall's face;
As we checked him there, in his rapid chase
Of the Eleventh Corps, in its headlong race....
But the price we paid was a terrible cost;
Of more than half our number in lost.
Our Sergeant had paced, with a firm free tread,
Back and forth, through the storm of lead
Which riddled the colors, in their silken strands;
And splintered the standard, between his hands.
All honor now, to that Sergeant so brave,
For his blood stained the banner he loved to wave.
On Gettysburg's field, he fell in his might;--
'Neath the folds of "Old Glory," he fought his last fight.

*

The true epilogue to the story of Lewis and George Bishop is the fate of the colors of the 154th New

York Volunteers.

Allen Williams was promoted to sergeant on the Rocky Face Ridge battlefield, the same day he rescued the flag. He carried it safely through all the other battles of the campaign in Georgia--Resaca, New Hope Church, Lost Mountain and Peachtree Creek--and marched under it in triumph as the regiment entered fallen Atlanta. Under the flag, he led the 154th on the March to the Sea, on parades in conquered Savannah, and through the Carolinas until the Confederate surrender. In Washington, Sergeant Williams proudly marched at the head of the regiment in the glorious Grand Review of the Union army, garlanded with flowers, his ears ringing with cheers and applause, thousands of spectators saluting as he passed with the flag.

Six days after the Grand Review, on May 30, 1865, Governor Reuben E. Fenton of New York visited the 154th's camp near Bladensburg, Maryland. The entire brigade drew up in formation to witness the governor present a new stand of colors to the regiment. Cattaraugus County's gift to the 154th, anticipated sixteen months before in Tennessee, had finally arrived. It was a beautiful pair of flags, made by Tiffany and Company of New York City at a cost of \$325. The 35-star United States banner had the regimental designation embroidered along the central red stripe. The state flag was hand painted on both sides, with the state seal and motto, an eagle with spread wings, and Revolutionary War scenes; and the 154th's battles and campaigns--Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Lookout Valley, Chattanooga, Knoxville, Atlanta, Savannah, Campaign of the Carolinas--were inscribed on the banner in gold leaf.

Sergeant Allen Williams, of course, received the

new national flag. Chosen to carry the state flag was a young man from Allegany, Sergeant Charles W. McKay of Company C. At the Battle of Rocky Face Ridge, McKay and a fellow Alleghanian, First Sergeant (later First Lieutenant) Stephen Welch of Company C, had rescued wounded Corporal George Greek from between the lines, under fire of the enemy--an act that would win for them in the postwar years the Medal of Honor. McKay never forgot the moment he was ordered to receive the 154th's new state flag. Years later he wrote, "I can say in all truth that the proudest moment of my life was when, by direction of Col. Warner, I stepped out before the regimental line and received the flag as the Sergeant who was to carry it."

The 154th New York's 1865 presentation stand of colors is preserved to this day in the state capitol at Albany. That safe haven notwithstanding, they have undergone some hardships. During the 1960s, the state flag was loaned for a display, and in a senseless and tragic act, a vandal ripped away its lower right corner. The mutilated banner cannot be restored.

What happened to the original colors of the 154th New York? Sad to say, at the time of our reunion honoring the Bishop brothers, they have not been located. Chances are they are part of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs collection in Albany, but unfortunately many of the tattered old flags there are unidentified. The banner that Lewis and George Bishop died for, pierced with bullet holes and stained with their blood--the most momentous and beloved relic of the 154th New York Volunteers--is unknown.

Mark H. Dunkelman
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