

2. Private James Enyeart, Civil War Hero

James Enriken Enyeart was born on Apr. 17, 1843. He was the sixth of ten children and the second son born to Thomas and Mary Wilson Glasgow Enyeart. The Enyearts lived in the Penn Township area of Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. Thomas was a farmer. James's great-grandfather, William Enyeart, served in the Revolutionary War.

Thomas died when James was only eleven years old, leaving Mary with eight children ranging in age from seven months to twenty-one years old. Two infant girls had died, one before James was born and the other when James was nine years old. In 1860 the family was still living in Penn Township, with all the children still living at home. James's occupation was listed as "laborer" in the 1860 census, as it also was for his older brother, Davis, and younger brother, Morris. The census also records that James had attended school in the last year. Davis attended the Cassville Seminary in the 1850s but no record of where James attended school has been located.

At 4:30 am on April 12, 1861, confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter on Charleston Harbor in South Carolina and continued the assault for 34 hours. The Union Army surrendered the next day and Major Robert Anderson and his force of 85 soldiers were allowed to leave the fort. Incredibly, no soldier was killed in this battle but the Civil War had begun.

Three days later, on April 15, 1861, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers – the maximum number allowed by law. On the same day, Secretary of War, Simon Cameron issued a communique to the state governors with a quota for the expected number of troops to be supplied by each state. The southern states refused but Governor Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania made a plea to its citizens to volunteer to help preserve the union. Lincoln gave a second call in early May for 42,000 additional volunteers and increased the regular army by 22,714. In July 1861 the U. S. Congress authorized 500,000 additional volunteers.

At the age of 18, James, along with his older brother, Davis, and many other young men from Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, answered the call on September 16, 1861. They enlisted in the Union Army at Huntingdon for three years of service.

The Fifty-third Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry (53rd PVI) was formed August 21, 1861. Twenty-three-year-old, John Rutter Brooke, of Pottstown, Montgomery County, was commissioned Colonel and began recruiting. Ten companies were formed and assigned to Brooke's command. Company "A" was recruited in Pottstown, Montgomery County, "B" in Chester and Montgomery, "C" in Blair and Huntingdon, "D" in Centre and Clearfield, "E" in Carbon and Union, "F" in Luzerne, "G" in Potter, "H" in Northumberland, "I" in Juniata and "K" in Westmoreland. In addition to Brooke, Richard McMichael of Reading, was appointed lieutenant colonel; Thomas Yeager of Allentown, to the position of major, and Charles P. Hatch of Philadelphia was appointed Adjutant.

Company C was recruited primarily from Penn Township and the adjacent portion of Hopewell Township (now Lincoln Township) in Huntingdon County. Lytle, in his "History of Huntingdon County" records the following:

"The company was composed of the 'bravest and best' of her population, hardy, robust and stalwart young men. The company left Marklesburg, for Camp Curtin, at Harrisburg on Monday, September 23, 1861. Several hundred persons, the relatives and friends of the soldiers, were assembled at the depot to bid good-bye to loved ones. It was probably the most memorable as well as the most sorrowful day in the annals of this community."



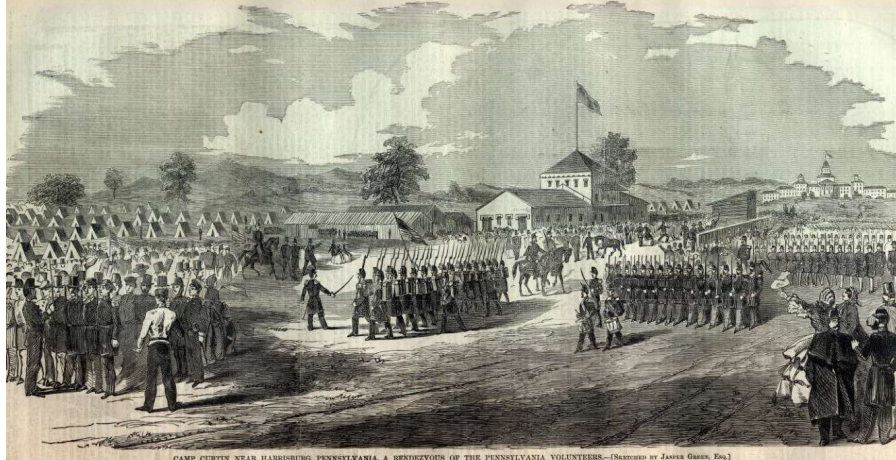
Marklesburg Train Station in 1909

James and his comrades were mustered into service in the Fifty-third Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, Company C at Camp Curtin in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on October 17, 1861.

Camp Curtin was opened on April 18, 1861. The 80-acre compound was situated north of the State Capitol building on what was formerly the County Agricultural Fairgrounds. The camp was opened as "Camp

Union" but the commanding officer, Maj. Joseph Knipe, renamed it to Camp Curtin, in honor of the Governor. It was the largest training camp in the North. It is estimated that more than 80% of the Pennsylvania volunteers and more than 300,000 troops from Pennsylvania and surrounded states passed through Camp Curtin. At the end of the war it was used as a mustering out point. The camp remained open until November 15, 1865.

Soldiers generally regarded the camp as well maintained and comfortable. The 53rd PVI spent their time at Camp Curtin drilling and preparing for combat. The regiment also performed provost guard duty in the city of Harrisburg. One of the soldiers from Company F writes that he had a sore throat and cold from guard duty in the rain.



"Camp Curtin," *Harpers Weekly*, September, 1862.



Harrisburg Railroad Station during the time of the Civil War. (Philadelphia Chapter of the PRRT&HS)

Company C was at Camp Curtin for only two weeks; the 53rd PVI left for Washington, by train, by way of Baltimore, on November 7. A soldier from Company E wrote that they spent the night in Baltimore "in the cars." Baltimore had three different railroad stations. Trains travelling from Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Washington were each served by a different station. Passengers traveling between these cities had to walk or ride in horse-drawn carriages in order to change trains. As the soldiers marched between the two stations the city's citizens cheered and waved flags and handkerchiefs. They then fed the troops breakfast before their departure to Washington.



Passenger and Freight Station, President Street, Baltimore – Service to Harrisburg, PA (Library of Congress)



The Camden Station in Baltimore of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad – Service to Washington (Civil War Blog, Gratz Historical Society, Gratz, PA)

They travelled from Baltimore to Washington and arrived at the B&O Railroad Station at the intersection of New Jersey Avenue and C Street NW. The station was two blocks north of the U. S. Capital building and about the same distance southwest of where Union Station would be built in later years.



B&O Railroad Station in Washington
(Library of Congress)

Some of the soldiers took the time to visit the U. S. Capital when they arrived in Washington. The dome of the capital building was still under construction at this time as the result of an expansion project that began ten years earlier. Construction activity was temporarily suspended during the war.

They camped about a mile north of the capital at a place the soldiers – at least those in the 53rd PVI – called “Camp Brooke.”



The U.S. Capitol under construction, May 1861 (Library of Congress)

On the 27th of November, the 53rd PVI left Washington, crossed the Potomac, and went into camp at Camp California near Alexandria. The infantry was assigned to a brigade commanded by General William H. French in the Army of the Potomac. The various infantries located at Camp California were in the Division commanded by General Edwin V. Sumner. The conditions on November 27th are unknown but a soldier from one of the New York infantry units that made the same trek on November 28th talked about how it rained all day. The mud made it difficult to march and the troops were thoroughly soaked when they reached their destination late that night.

Thanksgiving was not yet a national holiday but several states, including Pennsylvania, had set aside November 28, 1861 for the Thanksgiving observance. On November 27, President Lincoln issued a proclamation that Thanksgiving would be observed in Washington and surrounding areas – the first such proclamation issued since President Monroe. Most businesses and government offices were closed for the observance. It is reported that Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Army camps on both sides of the Potomac. A private from the 2nd Vermont wrote *"in most companies enough extra rations had been disposed of to buy potatoes, fresh pork, chickens, turkeys, and other such luxuries as could be got, and all ate their fill."* This gave the soldiers a break from their usual diet of hardtack and salt pork as well as from the rigors of military training. It is likely that the new arrivals at Camp California, the 53rd PVI, were able to participate in this Thanksgiving observance.



"Thanksgiving-Day in the Army. After Dinner: The Wish-Bone," by Winslow Homer (courtesy of sonofthesouth.net)

Camp California was located in the shelter of Fort Worth and was located about two and a half miles west of Alexandria. The division, including the 53rd PVI would spend the 1861-62 winter here. It was a virtual canvas city located on a gently sloping hill. Although some officers wrote glowing reports of the ideal location for the camp with its grand view and abundance of firewood, one soldier described it as "damp, dull, disagreeable, the rain is pouring, the sky is overcast and gloomy, the earth beneath your feet is a vast, treacherous, terrible sea of muddy matter."

The 53rd PVI and their comrades learned military discipline and fell into a routine of daily regimental and brigade drills – regardless of the weather – and other soldier duties. General French imposed rigorous training on his army. As one man put it, he *"seemed to have a passion for brigade drills and would march the boys all over creation until they were completely exhausted and then, by way of resting them, would order an extra movement or two."*



Camp California From Seminary Hill History, Alexandria VA,
<http://www.dacavalx.com/2009/09/camp-california.html>

On December 13, 1861, Private William H. Johnson of the 1st New York Cavalry was executed in a field outside Alexandria. Johnson was court-martialed and sentenced to death for desertion. While this didn't happen in Camp California, the soldiers of the 53rd PVI and others in the camp must certainly have heard about it. News of the execution was widely circulated as a warning of the potential fate for deserters. This event, along with the harsh camp conditions, the rigorous military training and the onset of winter, must have been a sobering lesson in the realities of military life for the new soldiers not yet two months separated from home.

James may not have experienced much of the Army life in Camp California as he was soon afflicted with typhoid fever. If James was not already exhibiting symptoms when he arrived at Camp California, it probably was not long before he did. Typhoid and many other diseases were common in the civil war camps with so many men packed together in the camps lacking in sanitation and personal hygiene. Twice as many men died of disease than of gunshot wounds in the Civil War. Dysentery, measles, small pox,



Mansion House Hospital, Alexandria, VA,
Andrew J. Russell, photographer, (Library of
Congress)

pneumonia, typhus, typhoid and malaria were the soldier's greatest enemy. During the course of the war almost 30,000 Union soldiers died from typhoid fever.

James was taken to Mansion House Hospital. The hospital consisted of the Carlyle House, a mansion built by John Carlyle in the mid-eighteenth century, and the large building in front of it, known as the Mansion Hotel. James Green, a successful furniture manufacturer, lived in the Carlyle House. His father, also James Green, operated the hotel. In early

November 1861, James Green received a letter from the government saying he had three days to vacate the buildings. By late November, Mansion House Hospital was a 700 bed facility ready to accept James and others into its care. There were 26 Union hospitals in Alexandria during the war.

Conditions in the Civil War hospitals were difficult. They were often over-crowded and, with little knowledge of infections and germs, they were unsafe places. Female nurses were a new concept, especially early in the war, and not readily accepted. The nurses at Mansion Hospital had to overcome prejudice and verbal abuse to provide treatment to the patients.

U. S. Army Surgeon, Dr. J. B. Porter, was accused of mistreatment of the inmates at Mansion House hospital, which was reported in the press. A court of inquiry, led by General French, was convened on February 6, 1862 to investigate the charges. The court ruled that it could find no basis for the charges against Dr. Porter and concluded no further action in the matter was necessary. The opinion strongly criticized the accusers for their actions in bringing the charges forward and condemned the press for "giving currency to such odious charges" and damaging the reputation of Dr. Porter.

How long James suffered in Mansion Hospital is unknown. The incubation period for typhoid fever is one to two weeks. When symptoms begin to develop, there is a headache, cough and rising fever for the first week. The second week has a very high fever with delirium and loss of strength, the patient would be bedridden by this time. More serious complications, which are sometimes fatal, occur in the third week. Diarrhea or constipation develops due to hardening of the intestines; the suffering is severe. If the victim survives to that point, the fever starts to subside in the fourth week. During the civil war, typhoid fever was treated with purgative calomel, quinine, and opium pills for pain

and diarrhea, cold compresses for fever and blistering, whiskey – if the patient collapsed – and oral turpentine.

On Christmas Eve 1861, Private James Enyeart lost the only major battle of his military career when Typhoid Fever took his life. Dr. J. B. Porter was the attending physician.

James was buried the same day in Penny Hill Cemetery, Alexandria. Penny Hill Cemetery is located in the Wilkes Street cemetery complex near the Old Town section of Alexandria. It was established in 1795 as a burial ground for indigent paupers and the poor. Early in the Civil War, freedmen were buried here along with soldiers who died in and near Alexandria.



Military Burial Alexandria National Cemetery
Western Reserve Historical Society photo

Alexandria National Cemetery, also in the Wilkes Street cemetery complex was established by Congressional legislation in 1862. The Alexandria cemetery was established in response to the need for a military cemetery for the many soldiers who died in battle near Alexandria and the thousands who died in the Union hospitals. It is one of the oldest national cemeteries in the nation and one of fourteen established in 1862. There are 3,533 Civil War veterans buried here, including 103 unknown soldiers. By 1864, the cemetery was nearly filled to capacity, which eventually led to the planning, development and construction of Arlington National Cemetery just a few miles away.

The remains of James Enyeart were moved to Alexandria National Cemetery. This may have occurred on December 11, 1863, a date that has been mistakenly reported as the date of his death in some sources. The date is also listed in the national cemetery interment records, but it is crossed out and replaced with the correct date of his death. The current grave marker was placed in 1945 as a replacement for the original.



Alexandria National Cemetery

So why is James Enyeart a Civil War hero? Did he distinguish himself in battle? No, he likely never engaged in a conflict or even fired a shot, except to shoot at a target in training. Was he an inspiration to his fellow soldiers? It's possible, but unlikely. He was just one of thousands like him and was younger than most; they were all just trying to get by in circumstances what were probably worse than they had envisioned just a few weeks earlier. Was he treated like a hero? Except for the gathering of friends and family at the station in Marklesburg and a few moments of cheering in the streets of Baltimore, probably not. Did he receive a hero's reward? No, in fact it is likely he never received any pay for his service. The Union army was notoriously slow in paying its troops. Some of the soldiers who enlisted in 1861 received no pay until January 1862. Did he die a noble death? No,



Civil War Infantry Uniform

there is no glory, honor or dignity in dying of typhoid – out of your head with fever, lying in your own filth.

Was his death special in some way? No, the 53rd PVI had already lost a man to disease by the time they had reached Baltimore and they lost so many over the course of the war, James is but a statistic. Did he consider himself a hero or aspire to become one? We have no record of his thoughts, his personality or his motivations, but it is doubtful that he or others like him joined because they fancied themselves as heroic.

What compelled James to join the fight to preserve the Union? Was it peer pressure from others in the Woodcock Valley of Huntingdon County who were signing on? Was it family pressure or his own desire to follow the example of his older brother, Davis? Was it patriotism, a hatred for slavery, a deep sense of duty or a call from God? Or was it a combination of all these things that even James, himself, could not sort out?

We will never know the answers to these questions. We do know that James answered the call. Not knowing what lay ahead or what hardships he might face, James said, “Count me in.” In less than three months, this man – just barely old enough to serve in the Union army – made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of his country.

Yes, James Enyeart was a hero! He was not unique; there were thousands like him. The story of his life and death are, at best, a footnote in the history of the War Between the States, eclipsed by legends of brave exploits in more dramatic events. Nevertheless, his sacrifice is no less significant than that of any other. He deserves to be considered a hero because when his nation needed him, he answered the call.

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