

Fifty Years After the Gettysburg Battle

A great reunion will take place on the field of Gettysburg during the early days of July. Referring to this reunion Lieutenant J. A. Watrous, writing in the Chicago Record-Herald, says:

Let me again speak of the Gettysburg anniversary and the great reunion that is to take place there July 1, 2, 3 and 4, the days upon which, fifty years ago, there was fought the high-tide battle, second to no battle ever fought on this continent, in men killed and wounded and in its importance. Nearly 50,000 American soldiers were killed or wounded. Then and there it was settled that the attempt to establish a southern confederacy would fail—that the union could not be shattered.

Fifty years after there will assemble a few thousands of the nearly 200,000 who met there half a century ago and hold a joint reunion—the enemies of that day now friends, all loyal to and proud of the nation whose life was assured as a result of the greatest war of modern times.

The hearts of the soldiers who were there in the long ago have been deeply touched by the interest state governments and the national government have taken and are taking in the reunion—and will continue to take until its end—to make it pleasant and profitable to the participants on their second visit to Gettysburg. The camp, in which accommodations will be made for 40,000, will be the most perfect for a large gathering of soldiers and ex-soldiers ever seen in this country. It will be supplied with water, kitchens, dining-rooms, sleeping accommodations, including a cot for each person, hospitals, surgeons, nurses and three ample, wholesome meals each day, all free of cost to the remnants of the two old fighting machines. Nothing in the way of accommodation and comfort will be omitted. Pennsylvania has contributed nearly a quarter of a million in the preparation; it supplies all of the rations for those entitled to them during the entire stay, which is evidence that the Keystone state appreciates what was done for her state and her people at the battle of Gettysburg.

Some of the northern states have appropriated a sufficient fund to pay the railroad fare from their homes to Gettysburg and return of all soldiers within their respective states who participated in the battle or belonged to regiments that were in the battle. It should not be forgotten that a great number of soldiers who were on the way to Gettysburg never reached there. They were "held up" in one of the battles on the peninsula, under McClellan, in 1862, or they were wounded at Gainesville, second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fitzhugh Crossing, Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. All of these splendid characters would have been at Gettysburg if they had not been "held up" by wounds.

Some of the southern states have appropriated money to send the confederates who were in the battle, but not all of them. However, many of them will be present. Many are abundantly able to pay their fare and are glad of an opportunity to do so, but the number of confederates who can not afford to make the trip, while strongly desiring to do so, is large. These will be provided for in every one of the states that attempted to secede. The Daughters of the Confederacy are raising money to send their fathers to the field that they helped to place on the world's map. The Daughters of the Confederacy have done some things that the people of the north have criticised. But the people of the north will be

united in thanking them for making it possible for a large number of worthy old confederates, whose worldly wealth would not permit them to enjoy one of the greatest treats of their lives—participation in a reunion unlike any other ever held in any portion of the world.

The infantry fighting of the battle of Gettysburg was begun the forenoon of July 1, 1863, by troops of the First Army Corps, then commanded by Major General John F. Reynolds, who was killed as the battle opened. They were troops belonging to the first division, commanded by General James S. Wadsworth, killed at the Wilderness the following May. Two brigades of that division began firing almost at the same time. Representatives of both have claimed that they were first, the Iron Brigade of the West and Cutler's Brigade made up of New York and Pennsylvania soldiers. To use a phrase by the immortal Lincoln, "It matters little" who first began to fire, but it matters much what their firing resulted in.

In the Twenty-fourth Michigan of the Iron Brigade a young printer soldier, a private, stood and shot from the beginning to the end of the day's awful work and fell back with the small remnant of his regiment that had escaped death, wounding and the prison. His regiment was faced and fought for hours by the Twenty-eighth North Carolina. This young soldier had varied experiences after the war. He made and lost a fortune or two and then made another. His love for his old brigade has led him, on several occasions, to expend large sums in looking out for their comfort and happiness. As soon as they began to talk about a great reunion at Gettysburg on the fiftieth anniversary he started to plan to make the most of the event for his old brigade comrades. He has been given permission to erect a tent in which 1,200 can be comfortably accommodated and where they can hold their public meetings. Every survivor of the Iron Brigade is invited to accept of his hospitality. He has done still more than to invite the comrades who fought with him on the union side. He has invited the officers and men of the Twenty-eighth North Carolina of the confederate army to join him and them in the big tent, where all of their public and semi-public exercises will be held, and the invitation has been accepted. I submit that that Gettysburg soldier has done his full share to make the coming reunion memorable in many ways. His name? The story would be incomplete without it, but were I to consult him he would prohibit its use. I have not consulted him. He is known as Major C. H. McConnell, for many years one of the prosperous, public spirited and patriotic business men of the next to the greatest city on the continent—Chicago.

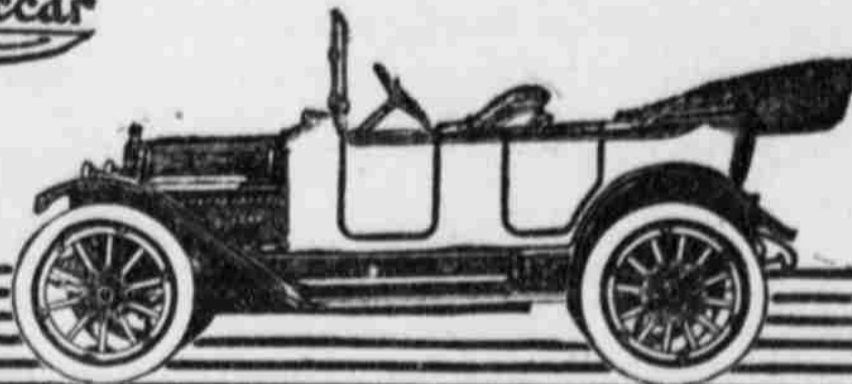
Major McConnell is particularly anxious that every survivor of his old brigade join him at Gettysburg. His invitation is as cordial as ever was an invitation.

It should be added that several officers of the quartermaster's department, United States army, have for months been busy at Gettysburg getting everything in readiness for the coming interesting event. They will remain on duty there until the camp is dismantled and the government's property is cared for.

How very little next month's meeting will resemble that of fifty years ago. Then there was seen two of the greatest fighting machines that ever made the earth tremble with war's weapons. Only a few thousand pieces of the long ago fight-

ing machines will reappear, and there will be no fight in them; there will be no committees among them.

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