

"To The Bitter End I Shall Stand By The Old Flag"

by Lynne Belluscio

By September 1862, news of the LeRoy boys filled the 2nd page of the *LeRoy Gazette*. On September 15, the Union arsenal at Harper's Ferry was captured by Stonewall Jackson. His troops seized huge amounts of munitions and captured 12,500 union soldiers. Then, two days later, Lee invaded the north in western Maryland at the Battle of Antietam Creek near Sharpsville.

It was the bloodiest one-day battle of the Civil War. Each side lost over 2,000 killed and 9,000 wounded, but Gen. McClellan's troops held back the invasion and

LeRoy's regiment, the 105th was in the thick of the battle. It was later reported that there were 500 cannons on the battlefield and over 50,000 rounds had been exploded into the ranks of soldiers.

The 105th New York Infantry was organized in special camps in LeRoy and Rochester. It was often called the Irish Brigade. Recruitment began in November 1861 and the men from LeRoy comprised Company D. Company A were men from Wyoming; Company B came from Lockport; Holly comprised Company C; Company E were from Batavia and F was from Brockport.

Col. James Madison Fuller, a fifty-four year old Methodist minister had initiated the recruitment in LeRoy. His recruitment office was in Gray's Block, west of the creek. (Site of the present-day post office.) Fuller also had taken the former Upham railroad car factory building on Church Street and turned it into soldiers' barracks that were described in the Buffalo newspapers as "the best barracks in the state." (That limestone building still stands north of the railroad tracks on Church Street, and would qualify for National Landmark designation.)

Fuller also wrote that the recruits received excellent care



and were served meat, vegetables, fresh wheat bread, butter, milk, and applesauce. Of the cook he mentioned that "his cooking is done after the most approved style, imparting a relish that none can fail to appreciate!"

Recruits were enticed with a \$100 bonus from the Federal Government, \$50 from New York State and an additional \$100 from the Town of LeRoy. In addition, they would receive \$13 a month for their three year enlistment.

Camp Upham on Church Street was an active training site. The young recruits would march to the Ingham Campus on Wolcott Street and serenade the young ladies. On Sundays the soldiers would seat themselves in the balcony of the Presbyterian Church across from the Ingham girls. On February 22, "the immense central building of Camp Upham was filled to capacity, numbering at least 2,000 people" and the Reverend Samuel Cox, Chancellor of Ingham University presented the 105th with a banner to carry into battle. The flag had been sewn by the ladies of LeRoy. (The flag was sent to Albany and never returned to LeRoy.)

On March 15, the unit was officially mustered and ten days later they were called to active duty. On March 31, they left

LeRoy by train and arrived in New York "armed and equipped." Camp Upham was closed and in April the stoves were sold at auction. The regiment moved to Virginia and saw action. They lost 102 men, either killed, wounded or captured at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Fuller led the regiment into battle at Cedar Mountain near Culpepper, Virginia but a few days later he resigned.

Col. Carroll succeeded him in command and went on to lead the regiment at the Battle of Antietam, where he was fatally wounded. But what I discovered on the internet was even more perplexing. A letter in the *LeRoy Gazette* that had been written by Fuller mentions that he had submitted his resignation but it had been refused. He also mentions that he had "come to serve by the request of the authorities and by the unanimous request of the officers of the LeRoy regiment with the full knowledge on their part of all my circumstances and also of my personal feelings in regard to the position." What ever that referred to is unclear, but within a few days Fuller and his quartermaster from Lockport were brought up on charges that they had swindled the government out of money. Fuller posted \$4,000 bail – a sizable amount in 1862! But it

appears that he declined to really defend himself.

He was described as a very caring and dedicated person and when the *Gazette* reported that Rev. Fuller was returning home, they noted that "he looks vigorous as ever and his many friends will welcome his safe return with unmingled joy." From what I can find out, the officers that reported to Fuller questioned the number of men that were counted as present in the unit, citing that some men were on furlough. Fuller responded that it was his understanding that men who had been on furlough 10 or less days were counted as active soldiers.

Where the money went or who it came from and whom it went to is unclear. The quartermaster, also indicted, paid \$6,000. A trial was set in Utica, and then in Buffalo in October 1862, but I have not been able to trace what happened. Fuller moved to Michigan in 1867 and then to Detroit in 1870. He and his wife May English had five children and after her death he married Sophia Todd. James Madison Fuller, died in 1891.

In the letter that he wrote to the *LeRoy Gazette* in August, his final words were: "Please say to my former co-laborers for the salvation of our country, that to the bitter end I shall stand by the old flag."