

The Surgeon Of The 105th New York

by Lynne Belluscio

Last week I wrote a little bit about Colonel Fuller and the 105th New York Volunteers. I received a note from Doug Hill mentioning that Scott Skinner had been a recruiter for the 105th and Doug attached a copy of a recruiting poster.

The surgeon attached to the 105th New York was Dr. David Chamberlain. He was born in Quebec, of American parents, in 1815. At the age of 8 he was sent to Hubbardton, Vermont to live with his aunt. In 1833, he began to study medicine with Dr. Charles Horton and four years later graduated from the Vermont Academy of Medicine. In 1841, he headed to the Genesee country and undertook the practice of William Sheldon (the first Supervisor of LeRoy).

In 1861, he helped enlist men for the 105th and received a commission as surgeon at the age of 46. When the 105th was joined with the 94th he remained with his men and after the expiration of his commission in March

1865 he remained with the army as an independent volunteer until the fall of Richmond. He returned to LeRoy and remained in practice until 1878. He moved from LeRoy and later lived with his son where he died on June 5, 1896 at the age of 81. His body was returned to LeRoy and he was buried next to his wife and only daughter, Caro, who died at the age of 11 in 1859. Caro was the first person to be buried in Machpelah Cemetery and it was said that Dr. Chamberlain never fully recovered from the grief of losing his daughter.

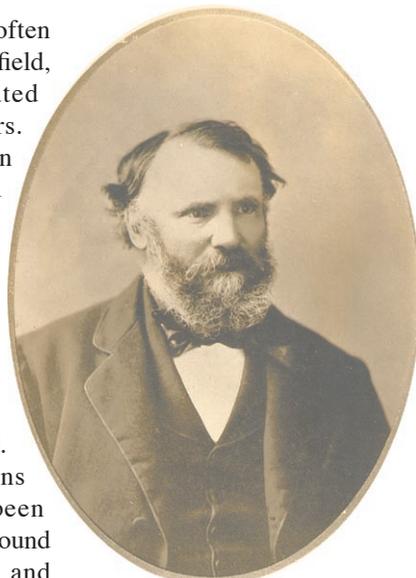
A surgeon's life during the Civil War was horrendous. The descriptions of the medical facilities that appeared in the *LeRoy Gazette*, were graphic and discouraging. First the surgeons had to deal with sickness. Every morning there was a surgeon's report of how many men were sick and confined to their tents and how many were in the hospital. Many men died of fever, dysentery and pneumonia.

After the battle, soldiers often had to be left on the battlefield, until they could be located and removed on stretchers. Some died waiting. Then they would be transferred to ambulance wagons and the jarring journey often made their injuries worse. Some men were brought to hospitals in railroad cars and they would be unloaded and placed on the ground until they could be attended.

One description mentions that bags of straw had been brought and spread on the ground to provide some comfort and protection from the cold and dampness. The surgeons like Chamberlain were equipped with unsterilized tools. They often had to rely on the work of the Sanitary Committees back home to provide bandages, sheets, towels and clean clothes.

Mr. Pratt who was a correspondent from LeRoy, traveled with the 105th and sent back letters keeping everyone on the home front informed of the needs of the LeRoy units. Fourteen barrels of dried fruit, prepared by the committee in Pavilion had arrived and was distributed to the soldiers. But it was noted that there was plenty of lint bandages "enough for one or two more wars." (I suspect that wasn't true, since the war had only begun!) Lint bandages were made by using a sharp edge and scraping cotton material, removing lint. This was wrapped in cotton or muslin sheeting and applied unsterilized to wounds.

Pratt noted that the men wanted jellies, pickles, dried fruit, good smoked meats, flannel drawers, fine tooth combs (for lice?) and books. It was mentioned that a couple of barrels had arrived and the bottles of jams and pickles had broken and spilled over the clothes



Dr. David C. Chamberlain

and bandages. It was suggested that the food stuffs not be packed with clothes and bandages.

In December 1862, it was noted that there were 25,000 men in the hospitals in Washington, D.C. and Frederick City alone. In the same newspaper, it was mentioned that a special hospital was set up in St. Elizabeth – opposite the naval yard, just for the treatment of soldiers who had lost legs and that the government was providing wooden legs for them. It was because of the Civil War that designs for articulated limbs became important.

If you remember last week's article I mentioned that it was curious about the resignation of Col. Fuller. Well, I discovered another bit of information about the 105th. It seems that when it first started in 1861, it was believed that all the recruits could be signed from Rochester and it would be the "Irish Brigade." They had even assigned a Catholic priest to attend to the men. But when they could not muster enough men, Col. Fuller, who was an ordained Methodist minister, began recruiting in LeRoy and Genesee County. At one of the first musters in Avon, it was noted that the men of the Irish 105th had a little tiff with the men from the Methodist 105th. After a few minutes, everyone settled down and shook hands, but it makes you wonder if there weren't hard feelings in this unit.

WAR MEETING!



THERE WILL BE A MEETING HELD

At _____

In _____

On _____ Eve., _____ 1862.

at _____ o'clock, for the purpose of raising Volunteers for Col. FULLER'S Regiment, located at Camp Upham, Le Roy.

GOOD PAY, COMFORTABLE QUARTERS,

Good Clothing and Good Rations,

with all the Extra Pay and Bounty paid to any Regiment in the State. **ALL ARE INVITED TO COME.**

GOOD SPEAKERS WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE.

SCOTT W. SKINNER,

Recruiting Officer.