



News-Review photo by Barbaraellen Koch

**The newly formed reenactment group Company K 67th (circa 1861), First Regiment Long Island Volunteers, put up an encampment last weekend at Hallockville Museum Farm.**



# Taking to the trenches

*Civil War buffs form unit, play soldier and keep history alive*

By Phil Cardinale Jr.

NORTHVILLE—A band of blue-coated soldiers came to this hamlet last Saturday and pitched camp in the bitter cold outside Hallockville Museum Farm. After making a fire, the same way it would've been done 135 years ago, they stuck bayonets in the ground on opposite sides of the flames. Then, after one removed a ramrod from his musket and skewered a chicken on it, they suspended the rod on bayonets and roasted their own Thanksgiving dinner.

The Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865, but the troops of the Union Army's First Regiment Long Island Volunteers are being mustered again by Wading River resident Ty Magliola and other local history buffs. About 15 members, mostly from western Suffolk, have enlisted over the past three weeks in this re-creation of the regiment's Company K infantry division, many of the members veterans of other historical units who banded together.

"Most of the fellows have been into the Civil War for a long time, myself from 10 years old," said Mr. Magliola. "The reenactment is just to get an idea of what the soldiers went through." The First Regiment volunteers also do it "for the camaraderie" and "to educate ourselves and the public" by putting on living history programs, said Mr. Magliola.

Walking through the camp, the soldiers act out scenarios in which they play cards, line up to accept payment for their services, attend church services or huddle around a fire reading reprinted newspapers from the 1860s. "We live like the Union soldiers did to the point of grinding up our own coffee beans and using meats that don't have to be refrigerated," said Mr. Magliola. Some historical companies — there are dozens of such groups across New York, according to Mr. Magliola — slaughter their own chickens, but at last week's Hallockville program, the soldiers purchased them at a local store. "The thing you realize after doing this research is that *nobody* would really want to be a Civil War soldier," he said.

The men of the original First Regiment had to march through severe hot and cold weather, fending off insects like ticks and lice and suffering from a general lack of shelter and water, but the Union Army was "fairly well-fed," said Mr. Magliola. The reenactment soldiers try to live the same way on their camping trips, but "if it gets tough we can always go to the car and the cooler," he said, adding that the wives of many of the local soldiers also participate in the historical displays as inhabitants of nearby "civilian camps."

The men also exchange battle stories, like Mr. Magliola's account of "fighting" at the Battle of Antietam in Maryland last year. (About 13,000 historical troops gathered there for the 135th anniversary reenactment. Mr. Magliola had to "hit" a charging Confederate with his musket, pick him up by the belt and throw him behind the battle line after Mr. Magliola's single-shot weapon was spent.) The large-scale fighting reenactments are mostly done as fund-raisers for battlefield preservation, said the soldier, adding that the men "try to make it look good for the spectators."

While doing their presentations, the current First Regiment performs only mock gun drills, but the true Civil War era First Regiment (which was also known as the 67th New York State Volunteer Infantry) saw much action and sustained many losses. "They seem to be a very honored regiment," said group historian Anthony Scarpati of Manorville. "They always stood firm."

The First Regiment, which included seven 100-man companies from Suffolk County and three from upstate, were one of the first groups of volunteers in the Civil War, said Mr. Scarpati, adding that they signed up for three-year tours in June 1861 at Camp Plymouth on South Brother Island, N.Y. (located north of Riker's Island). They were "about 75 percent Irish," Mr. Scarpati said, and they formed the left flank of General George McClellan's army, fighting at times alongside the "Irish Brigade" of infantrymen. Their list of battles includes those at Fair Oaks, Antietam, Spotsylvania Courthouse and Gettysburg.

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## The First Regiment 'They never ran, even when they ran out of ammunition.'

—reenactor Anthony Scarpati

"They never ran, even when they ran out of ammunition," said Mr. Scarpati. "At one point [when they had no ammunition for their guns] they were about to make a bayonet charge, and they got relieved at the last minute." The historian hopes to eventually trace the membership of the regiment and write its story. "They signed up for three years of the war," Mr. Scarpati said of the volunteers. And after the three years were up, "a good half of the men who survived fought the rest of the war."

Anyone interested in more information may write to: Company K, 67th New York, P.O. Box 643, Manorville, N.Y. 11949.