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In search of Julius Armbruster Rochester Civil War soldier

by Bob Marcotte





A field hospital at Antietam similar to the hospital Armbruster was carried to by his comrades. The field surgeon told the fellow soldiers not to bother moving him from the field because he would not live. Harper's Weekly, October 11, 1862.

Cover Photo: A soldier's life was difficult. Harper's Weekly January, 1863.

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In search of Julius Armbruster Rochester Civil War Soldier

Nearly 30 years later, a newspaper described how Julius Armbruster, Rochester Civil War soldier, was shot between the eyes. The bullet went through his head and out the back of his neck. He "lay between life and death for four months" - and miraculously survived.¹

When I stumbled upon this startling bit of information, I was skeptical - not that Armbruster was wounded and recovered, but that he could survive such a terrible wound. Especially given the primitive state of medical treatment during that bloody conflict. Was this one more example of a newspaper, long after the event, getting the facts wrong?

I wanted to learn more about Julius Armbruster - about his wound and about his wartime experiences - just as you, too, might be curious about a great- or great-great-grandfather who fought in the Civil War.

So, using Julius Armbruster as an example, let's take a journey of discovery. Let's see how much we can find out about his war service using a variety of resources at the Rochester Public Library downtown and through the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. Then you can follow the same steps to find out about your ancestor.

Let's pretend for a moment that the newspaper didn't mention our soldier's regiment. We're starting from scratch. All we know is that Julius Armbruster was from Rochester, and therefore probably enlisted in a New York unit.

So we should be able to find him somewhere in the annual reports of the New York state adjutant general, issued in 43 serials, or volumes, in the 1890s and early 1900s. These reports provide a complete roster of all the men who served in each Civil War regiment and battery from New York state, and a brief summary of each soldier's service with that unit.

Richard A. Wilt has compiled a useful index of the soldiers mentioned in these reports, [New York Soldiers in the Civil War : A Roster of Military Officers and Soldiers who Served in New York Regiments in the Civil War as Listed in the Annual Reports of the Adjutant General of the State of New York.](#)²

When consulting Wilt's index, keep in mind that a soldier's name may have been spelled more than one way. Smith, for example, may actually be listed as Smyth or Smithe. Fortunately, we quickly find a single Julius Armbruster listed, serving with the 151st New York Infantry.

We find the alphabetical roster of soldiers who served in the 151st New York in serial 39 of the adjutant general's annual reports, ³ and on page 701 find that a Julius Armbruster, age 21, enlisted Aug. 27, 1862, at Rochester. He was mustered in as a sergeant in Co. E on Oct. 22, 1862. He was eventually promoted to first sergeant, no date given, and discharged in December 1864. Curiously, there is no indication that he was wounded. This normally would be mentioned in a soldier's AG summary, but I've also discovered that these summaries sometimes omit such information. The fact that this is the only Julius Armbruster listed, and that he enlisted at Rochester, suggests this is our soldier.

I am now ready to request perhaps the most important documents available to us, Julius Armbruster's military service and pension application records from the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C.

There is a set of records on file for each Union soldier. The military service records tell you his regiment and company, when he was present for duty, any promotions, wounds, etc. The pension application files are usually even more productive. In addition to the basics of his military service, they contain family information. "Pension application files generally are most useful to those who are doing genealogical research and contain the most complete information regarding a man's military career," the NARA advises. "We suggest that you first request copies of a man's pension file."

I'm going to order both: Armbruster's military service records and pension application file. First, however, I must obtain the proper request forms - NATF Form 85 for pension files, NATF Form 86 for military service records. ⁴ When filling out these forms, I want to provide as much information as I can about the soldier -but only information I know is accurate.⁵ Otherwise - especially if we are dealing with a common name - I could steer NARA to the wrong man! I also want to be sure to fill out the billing information and return address at the bottom of each form.

The hardest part is waiting. NARA advises we should allow a minimum of 12 to 14 weeks for a reply.

In the meantime, we can check some other resources.
The library's Local History Division at the Rundel Memorial

Building has a card index file that lists every soldier mentioned in the Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser newspaper during the Civil War. The newspapers of that time (the Evening Express, and the Daily Democrat and American were the other two dailies in Rochester; several outlying villages had weeklies) often contained wildly inaccurate second-, third- and fourth-hand accounts. But they also provide a wealth of highly accurate first-hand letters from the soldiers themselves.

I look under Armbruster, J. Armbruster and Julius Armbruster, and find a single entry: a J. Armbruster was elected color bearer of Co. D, 54th Regiment (the local militia unit), according to the UA on Dec. 13, 1861. That's interesting. If this is indeed our man, it would perhaps explain why he was mustered in as a sergeant rather than a private: He had prior military training.

Eventually we will want to find this article on microfilm in the library's Department of Retrieval and Special Services in the Bausch and Lomb building across the street. We can also check a comparable range of dates in the other two Rochester dailies as well.

Back at Local History, W. H. McIntosh's History of Monroe County (1877) lists the county's Civil War soldiers by town on pages 269-294. Some of the lists are not in alphabetical order, and omit some soldiers or incorrectly identify their units. Armbruster, for instance, is not among the Rochester soldiers. ⁶

But he is among Civil War soldiers listed in the Rochester portion of the 1865 New York State census on microfilm in Local History. On every fourth page or so, the census has a special section indicating which of the residents listed on the preceding pages served in the Union army or navy. It identifies the soldiers' regiments (or ships) and sometimes has other useful details, such as when they were wounded. An index of the Civil War soldiers who are mentioned in this census, including the details, is on file at Retrieval and Special Services. (Because the index was compiled from handwritten census forms that are sometimes barely legible, names are frequently misspelled.) The entry for Julius Armbruster in this index indicates that he served 33 months in the 151st, eventually becoming first sergeant. But it, too, makes no mention of his wound.

Perhaps my skepticism was well founded.

It wasn't. Armbruster's pension application file finally arrives after five months, but it is worth the wait. It confirms, beyond any doubt, that our soldier was shot through the head at the battle of Winchester - and survived.

But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, let's take a closer look at what else the military and pension records from the National Archives and Records Administration tell us about Armbruster, and how we can use that information to understand the events leading up to his wounding.

The file we receive from Armbruster's military service records consists of 19 photocopied pages. They show, among other things, 25 indexed record cards of information about his service (see pp. 28-29), painstakingly copied by War Department clerks from his company's original descriptive book, and from company and hospital muster rolls. ⁷

Armbruster's pension application file contains 21 photocopied pages. They include pension applications that present Armbruster's military service and family information. They include affidavits from soldiers who served with Armbruster - even a statement from the regimental surgeon who examined his wound on the battlefield.

These records reveal, among other things, that Julius Armbruster was born in Diessen, Germany, on April 15, 1843. At the time of enlistment he was a carpenter, not yet married. He was five feet, 11 ½ inches tall, with black eyes and black hair. And the files confirm that the Julius Armbruster who was shot in the head served in Co. E, 151st New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment

We now have a solid foundation to expand our understanding of Armbruster's war service.

Let's start by seeing what we can find out about his regiment. Our first stop is Frederick Phisterer's New York In the War of the Rebellion, an invaluable, six-volume compendium that gives a detailed summary of each Civil War regiment and battery that served from New York state, showing when and where it was organized, where its companies recruited their men, the battles it fought and the casualties at each, and giving brief summaries about its commissioned officers (which basically duplicate the information in the adjutant general's annual reports). ⁸

Phisterer's section on the 151st New York shows that this regiment was organized at Lockport, and included companies from Rochester, Medina, Niagara Falls, Batavia, Albion, Lockport, and Somerset. ⁹ The regiment was officially mustered in October 1862. It was assigned to the defenses of Baltimore that winter, served in western Virginia the following spring and early summer, then joined the Army of the Potomac after the Battle of Gettysburg. It saw action late that fall during the Mine Run Campaign with III Corps, then was assigned to VI Corps in the reorganization of the army the following spring. It partici-

pated in the grinding campaign of attrition that began at the Wilderness in May and carried to the very doorsteps of Richmond and Petersburg by mid June.

It suffered its heaviest losses in July 1864. VI Corps was detached from the Army of the Potomac to defend Baltimore and Washington after Confederate Gen. Jubal Early broke out of the Shenandoah Valley and raided northern soil. The 151st, with the rest of Gen. James B. Rickett's division, helped Gen. Lew Wallace fight a desperate delaying action against Early's men at Monocacy, Md., on July 9, when the regiment suffered 118 casualties.¹⁰ That fall, the 151st served under Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley, participating in the stirring Union victories at Winchester (where Armbruster was wounded) and at Cedar Creek, before rejoining the Army of the Potomac for the final campaign that led to Lee's surrender at Appomattox the following spring.

By looking up each of these engagements in the 136-page chronology of battles in Volume I of Phisterer, we also learn the names of the brigade and division commanders that the regiment served under. (This can be helpful in pinpointing the regiment's location on battlefields when reading books that may not mention the 151st, but may mention its brigade or division.)

We have at least two other sources of information about this regiment: McIntosh's history provides brief summaries of regiments from the Rochester area; the 151st gets a long paragraph on page 61. Even better, Helena Adelaide Howell wrote Chronicles of the One hundred fifty-first Regiment New York State Volunteer Infantry 1862-1865, (A.M. Eddy, printer, 1911), which draws upon the reminiscences of the regiment's soldiers to recount its experiences on and off the battlefield.¹¹

Lo and behold, when we consult this book, we find a picture of young Julius Armbruster, in uniform, on page 206. We learn that Company E, recruited primarily in Rochester by Captain Peter Imo, was composed entirely of German recruits. "It was an honor to the regiment," Howell writes. "The loyalty of its members to their adopted country was unquestioned. They were manly, honest, and served with valor."¹²

The company muster rolls in Armbruster's military service file tell us he was present for duty throughout the period before he was wounded. So it is possible - but not certain - that he saw action in all of the regiment's battles up to and including Winchester. Any of his surviving letters or diaries would help confirm this.¹³

But even in their absence, we have other documentation. We know

that he participated in the Mine Run campaign, for example, because several of his comrades later provided affidavits saying so, in support of his application for a pension.

"I remember crossing the Rapperdan (Rapidan) River in a cold freezing time in about the last of November or first of December 1863," wrote Edward Heller, who eventually became a 2nd lieutenant in Armbruster's company. "... we had to lay with our wet clothes on all night and Armbruster took a bad cold and got stiff and lame with rheumatism and never seemed to get over it." ¹⁴

And, of course, the fact that Armbruster was wounded at Winchester ¹⁵ on Sept. 19, 1864, irrefutably places him on that battlefield.

Let's see if we can find out more about the events at Winchester that day, and Armbruster's place in them.

To fully understand a regiment's role in a battle, it is important to do some research at a couple of different levels. The accounts of individual soldiers - and of many of the early regimental histories like Howell's -- often focus exclusively on the part of the battle they were directly involved in. A book examining an entire battle or campaign, on the other hand, can provide the overall context in which individual units fought.

One such book is The Shenandoah in Flames: The Valley Campaign of 1864, by Thomas A. Lewis, in the highly readable Time-Life series on the war.¹⁶ Let's start with the big picture: Confederate Gen. Jubal Early broke out of the Shenandoah Valley twice during the summer of 1864, reaching the very defenses of Washington, D.C. in early July, then reducing Chambersburg, Pa., to ashes at the end of that month.

Gen. U.S. Grant, in overall command of the Union armies, could not tolerate this, and in early August sent Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, a feisty cavalry officer, to take command in the Shenandoah and eliminate Early once and for all.

For five weeks in August and early September Sheridan and Early sparred inconclusively in the north end of the valley, each side waiting for reinforcements and sizing each other up. Finally, when Early divided his army, and sent two divisions toward Martinsburg in mid September, Sheridan saw a chance to strike at Early's two other divisions near Winchester on Sept. 19.

To reach the town, Sheridan's 30,000 soldiers had to advance west along the Berryville Pike through a narrow gorge. VI Corps, leading the way, had all its wagons immediately behind it, clogging the road and delaying the deployment of XIX Corps behind it.

This gave Early, with 14,000 soldiers, just enough time to form a line of battle on the east side of town, including soldiers hastily recalled from Martinsburg.

When Sheridan's troops finally attacked, the leading two divisions of VI Corps veered to the left, away from XIX Corps attacking on the right.

One of Early's best subordinates, Maj. Gen. John Gordon, sent two Confederate divisions crashing toward the gap. Gordon's men were beaten back after fierce fighting. Finally, by late afternoon, Sheridan's army was realigned and pressuring Early's outnumbered men all along the line. When two Union cavalry divisions swept down on Early's left flank and rear, the Confederates broke and fled.

So where was Armbruster and the 151st in the midst of all this? From Phisterer's chronology in Volume I, we know the regiment fought in Emerson's brigade of Rickett's division that day.

Lewis tells us that Rickett's division formed on the right of the road when VI Corps first emerged from the gorge, and that the right of the division was then driven back when Gordon's men charged into the gap in the Union line.

But he doesn't specifically mention Emerson's brigade or the 151st New York.

We need to dig deeper. We need to visit the [The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies](#).

Generally referred to as simply the "Official Records," this remarkable 127-volume compendium contains, among other things, the battlefield reports of regimental, brigade, division, corps and army commanders for every major engagement of the war.

The double indexing is cumbersome to use in book form.¹⁷ Fortunately, I have access to the entire set on a single CD-Rom, indexed so that I can quickly access reports about any given regiment.

I start with a long shot: I search for any direct references to "Armbruster" but do not find any. Next I search for various combinations of "151st N.Y." and "One hundred and fifty-first New York."

In Volume XLIII, part 1, of series 1, we find the official reports on the battle of Winchester, including those written by Col. William Emerson, the brigade commander, and by two officers of the 151st - Lt. Col. Thomas M. Fay and Lt. John A. Wolcott.¹⁸

We learn that Emerson's brigade formed on the left side of Rickett's division when it first deployed along the Berryville Pike that morning. The 151st New York was "thrown forward immediately as

skirmishers for the purpose of driving the enemy's skirmishers back that a battery might be placed in our immediate front." ¹⁹ The regiment traded fire with the Rebel skirmishers until about noon, when the Union forces launched their first attack.

When the Union battle line rolled forward, the skirmishers of the 151st "lay down while it passed over them then formed in the rear," Howell tells us. ²⁰ They moved forward to join the main Union line about 2 p.m. and joined the final Union assault at the end of the day.

We also discover something even more exciting. Both Emerson and Fay single out a Sgt. Julius Ambruster of Co. E for particular praise! "First Sergt. Julius Ambruster... is also very highly spoken of by the commandant of his regiment as having handled his company (of which he was in command) splendidly on the skirmish line on the 19th...." Emerson wrote.

Added Fay: "First Sergt. Julius Ambruster was conspicuous for his daring and soldierly conduct during the battle of the Opequon, where he was severely wounded in the head."

This illustrates how persistence can pay off. By closely examining as many possible sources of information about the 151st, we find critical references to our soldier - references that we would have missed otherwise because of the misspelling of his last name.

In Ambruster's pension application file, we find an affidavit from John Cotes, the regiment's surgeon (see pp. 16-17), who says Ambruster was wounded "during a charge made upon the enemy." Presumably this was during the final assault in late afternoon, though it could have been during the fighting along the skirmish line that morning.

The bullet "entered the left side of nose just below the inner angle of eye, taking apparently an oblique direction, emerging in the neck about two inches below and to the left of right ear," Cotes wrote.

It appears the bullet traveled just below the base of the skull, then miraculously missed major arteries, veins and Ambruster's spinal column before it emerged.

In another affidavit, Patrick McCarrick, one of Ambruster's comrades, said he helped carry his wounded buddy off the battlefield. "The surgeon upon examining Ambruster at this time, ordered (McCarrick) to remain with (Ambruster) who was entirely helpless and needed constant attention, complaining of being blind and requiring the attention of the doctor during the entire night, in addition to being covered with blood. In the morning... (Ambruster) said he could see daylight again, but complained that his neck was becoming awful stiff;



Soldiers often had to endure difficult conditions on the march, including heat and cold, dampness and hunger. Armbruster complained of rheumatism in his pension application. Harper's Weekly November 21, 1863

(McCarrick) noticed at this time that patient's neck was swollen considerably, and stayed and helped to place him in ambulance, which brought him to Winchester, as he was entirely helpless." ²¹

Armbruster's military service records show he was a patient at the U.S. General Hospital in Frederick, Md., from Sept. 28 until the following March. ²²

Perhaps the most remarkable chapter in this story is what happened to Armbruster after the war - after escaping certain death by a fraction of an inch.

His pension application files tell us he returned to Rochester and married Josephine Maier in November 1866. She died 14 days after giving birth to their third child in October 1871. Two years later, Armbruster married Elizabeth Huck from Ashland, Jefferson County. They had eight more children.

Except for a few years when he lived in Livonia, Armbruster resided in Rochester, then Irondequoit, and listed grocer as one of his trades.

A check in Local History's newspaper index for 1851-1897 shows something even more significant: He was elected to the city's Executive Board in 1888, and became its chairman in 1890.

We scurry to various Rochester history books and quarterlies. W. Earl Weller, in Centennial History of Rochester, tells us the Executive Board was "one of the most interesting of the many experiments in municipal government ever conducted by the City of Rochester." ²³

Created in 1876 in an attempt to introduce bipartisan reform in city government, it had direct control over street maintenance and improvement, over the fire department, the water works and several minor matters, Blake McKelvey tells us in his detailed histories of the city. "The normal outlays for these functions approximated a third of the city's total expenditures, and their increases in these years outstripped all others." ²⁴

Initially, the board consisted of three elected and three appointed members, but in 1879 was reduced to three elected members.

It acted with "efficiency and dispatch," launching many pressing civic improvements, and "if the contracts went to friends of the board members, at least no startling misappropriations of funds were uncovered," McKelvey adds. ²⁵

This was at a time when Rochester's German-Americans were taking a prominent role in the city's politics. No fewer than 70 German-Americans served on the Common Council by 1900, and another 11, including Armbruster, on the Executive Board. ²⁶

By 1890, when Armbruster became its chairman, the board was under fire for "extravagance," and was eventually swept away by charter reforms in 1900.

Nonetheless, Armbruster had clearly achieved a prominent position in his community - despite suffering periodic dizzy spells and being "troubled from time to time with a re-opening" of his wound, "such eruption breaking and causing an incessant discharge through the nose."

Armbruster's prominence means there are even more references to him in the newspapers and in various biographical compendiums, from which we can glean additional details about his life.

A profile in the Union and Advertiser on Sept. 17, 1892, for example, tells us that Armbruster was orphaned at age 10, came to this country with an elder sister, and served two years in the National Guard (the 54th Militia, alluded to earlier) before enlisting in the 151st.

It provides additional details about his wound: "The surgeon claimed that he could not live and it was useless to remove him, but his comrades carried him to the hospital, and he lay outside under a piece of canvas until next morning, when the doctor dressed the wound, claiming then it was useless and recovery impossible."

From the City of Rochester Illustrated: Descriptive, Historical and Statistical Review, printed in 1890, we learn that Armbruster "showed his fitness" for election as "president" of the Executive Board "by

instituting several radical changes in rules of the board," - not specified, alas! - "which will be to the city's benefit and reflect credit to himself." ²⁷

Invariably, however, as the years pass, errors and discrepancies about a veteran's Civil War service appear with increasing frequency. We must be alert: Amid all the apparent nuggets of gold, we may uncover fool's gold as well! A UA article on March 3, 1888, for example, states that Armbruster's war wound offers "indelible proof that he was in the thickest of the fray even when Sheridan was twenty miles away." Unfortunately, that is a reference to the battle of Cedar Creek - fought a month after Armbruster was wounded! ²⁸

Julius Armbruster died on Feb. 28, 1929, at his Irondequoit home at 3625 St. Paul Blvd., according to his pension application file.

The date of death sends us back to the newspapers, on microfilm at Retrieval and Special Services. Both the Rochester Times-Union and Democrat and Chronicle published obituaries on March 1; both printed a wonderful photograph of Armbruster in his Grand Army of the Republic uniform. ²⁹

Additional details about his life emerge in these obituaries: He came to Rochester at age 11, one year after being orphaned. He ran a grocery on Central Avenue near Niagara Street after the war. He was a political associate of George W. Aldridge on the old Executive Board. ³⁰ He was a charter trustee of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

But again we must be cautious about accepting these assertions at face value. For example, the farther we advance in time beyond the Civil War, the greater the likelihood that we will encounter errors in the anecdotal recollections associated with it - as veterans' recollections become confused, as their families hand down erroneous lore from one generation to the next, as newspapers fail to doublecheck even the basic facts about that increasingly distant conflict.

Both obituaries, for example, are guilty of glaring errors and omissions. The D&C says Armbruster received his wound at Winchester in 1862, not 1864. The confusion is understandable; there were three other Civil War battles fought there, including one in May 1862 ³¹; nonetheless, the information is wrong.

Both obituaries say Armbruster enlisted in the "54th New York Regiment," but fail to mention the 151st. This implies he did his fighting with the 54th. Nothing could be further from the truth. ³²

And the TU's obituary doesn't even mention his incredible wound and equally incredible recovery!



Armbruster in uniform.

"The past, of course, is a foreign country," military historian Paddy Griffith has written, "and every historian is to some extent a tourist looking in from the outside upon the people and events he describes."³³

We have been extremely fortunate in this journey of discovery. A few hours at the library, a few dollars invested in NARA records, have uncovered a photo of Armbruster in uniform, established his courage as a soldier, placed him on a key battlefield, revealed the full extent of his wound and miraculous recovery, and shed light on a productive post-war life.

Not all searches prove this fruitful!

However, we are still left with many questions. How influential was Armbruster during his tenure on the Executive Board? What were his last years like?

Above all, what kind of a person was he? What gave him joy or sorrow? What were his thoughts on the battlefield? Did his near-fatal wound, and its lingering complications, affect his outlook on life? Letters or diaries might provide a window into the inner man, into Julius Armbruster's soul. Even without them, we can't help but admire

the tenacity of this German immigrant who served his adopted country with courage, survived a frightful wound, and returned home to raise a large family and rise to prominence in his community.

Bob Marcotte is a journalist who has written a book on Rochester area soldiers in the Civil War and writes a "Just Ask" column for the Democrat & Chronicle.

(Special thanks to Brian Bennett for reviewing this article and offering several helpful suggestions.)

End Notes:

- (1) Rochester Union and Advertiser, Sept. 17, 1892.
- (2) You can find Wilt's two-volume index in the Central Rochester Public Library's Local History Division in the Rundel Memorial Building downtown (Rrq973.7447 W755n).
- (3) The various volumes of the Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York (r973.7447 N532a) must be retrieved from the stacks in the library's general history section.
The adjutant general's reports are arranged as follows:
Serial 1: 1st (Lincoln) -4th Cavalry
(Volume missing at RPL)
2: 5th-8th Cavalry.
3: 9th-12th Cavalry
4: 13th-18th Cavalry
5: 20th-26th Cavalry
6: 1st-2nd Veteran Cavalry; 1st-2nd Mounted Rifles
7: 1st Dragoons, 1st-4th Provisional Cavalry
8: 1st Light, 2nd Heavy Artillery
9: 3rd Light, 4th Heavy Artillery
10: 5th-6th Heavy Artillery
11: 7th-8th Heavy Artillery
12: 9th-10th Heavy Artillery
13: 13th-14th Heavy Artillery

THIS BLANK MAY BE USED EITHER BY ANY OFFICER, OR SURGEON OR ASST. SURGEON.

Officer's Certificate of Disability

State of New York County of General S. S.
On this 29th day of Nov 1876 before me, personally appeared John R. Coto

to me well known, being respectable and entitled to credit, who being duly sworn, says: That he was
Surgeon of 51st Reg't New York Vols.

and was well acquainted with J. Ambruster who was a
of Co 151st Reg't New York Vols; that at the time of his enlistment, said
Ambruster was to the level of Ambruster
and belonged a Common man, both mentally
and physically.

That on or about the 19th day of September 1864 at or near Winchester

State of Virginia said Ambruster was disabled in the line of
his duty by a gun shot wound

The ball entered the left side of more just below
the inner angle of eye, taking apparently an oblique
oblique direction, damaging in the most active
two (2) inches below and to the left of eyelid

Here state condition of Soldier's health at time of enlistment and his habits, &c.

Here state as near as you can, the name, character, and extent of the disease, injury or wound.

This occurred under the following circumstances or causes, to wit:

I was a charge made upon the entry at the State of New York a Certificate of Disability.

State your source of information.

I know these facts from *the circumstances that examine the woman* and I have no interest whatever in the prosecution of this Claim for Pension. My Post Office address is

Watson county of *Genesee* State of *New York*

John H. Colton
Officer's Signature.

Late a *Sergeant* ~~in~~ *1812* Reg't *10th* Vols.

Sworn and subscribed to, before me, the date first above written. I have no interest whatever in the prosecution of this Claim.

Charles Lewis George
Magistrate Officer sign here. *and*

I certify that _____ before whom the above affidavit was made is a _____ (duly authorized to administer oaths, and that the above is his signature. Witness my hand and Official Seal this _____ day of _____ 187____.

Signature.

Official Character.

[SEAL]

READ!

If this evidence is sworn to before a Notary Public or Squire, it will be necessary to have the Clerk's certificate attached, unless said Notary or Squire already has such a certificate on file in the Pension Office, showing official capacity. If such a certificate is on file, the Notary or Squire must say *in his Jurat,*

- 14: 15th-16th Heavy Artillery
- 15: Marine Artillery, 1st-34th Independent Batteries
- 16: (1st, 15th and 50th Engineers)
(Volume missing at RPL)
- 17: 1st-5th Infantry, 5th Veteran Inf.
- 18: 6th-11th Inf.
- 19: 12th-18th Inf.
- 20: 20th-25th Inf.
- 21: 26th-32nd Inf.
- 22: 33rd-38th Inf.
- 23: 39th-43rd Inf.
- 24: 44th-49th Inf.
- 25: 51st-56th Inf.
- 26: 57th-62nd Inf.
- 27: 63rd-68th Inf.
- 28: 69th-74th Inf.
- 29: 75th-80th Inf.
- 30: 81st-87th Inf.
- 31: 88th-93rd Inf.
- 32: 94th-99th Inf.
- 33: 100th-106th Inf.
- 34: 107th-113th Inf.
- 35: 114th-120th Inf.
- 36: 121st-127th Inf.
- 37: 128th-139th Inf.
- 38: 140th-146th Inf.
- 39: 147th-155th Inf.
- 40: 156th-167th Inf.
- 41: 168th-177th Inf.
- 42: 178th-187th Inf.
- 43: 188th-194th Inf., Indep. Batt. Light Inf.

(4) These forms can be obtained by calling (202) 501-5642, by writing to National Archives and Records Administration, Attn. NWCTB, 700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20408-0001, or by e-mailing inquire@nara.gov. For more information on ordering forms, see www.nara.gov/research/ordering/ordrfrms.html Fees vary depending on the type of file, and whether you order a complete pension file, for example, or 10 key pages. (Note: New forms and fee schedules were implemented early in 2001. The author ordered Armbruster's files

using the previous NATF Form 80 which did not provide, for example, the option of ordering a complete pension application file at a higher fee.)

(5) At a bare minimum NARA needs only the name of the soldier, the state he enlisted in and whether he was in the Army or Navy. However, if you're searching for a soldier with a common name, like John Carter, you may need to provide additional details in order for NARA to come up with the right one. Wilt's index, for example, shows John Carters serving in 18 different New York regiments and batteries!

(6) McIntosh, W. H., History of Monroe County (Everts, Ensign & Everts, 1877) can be found in the oversized books section of Local History, Rfr 974.788 M152h.

(7) In 1890, the War Department's Record and Pension Office began a mammoth undertaking, painstakingly compiling information available on each volunteer soldier. Clerks copied information from company muster rolls (normally made out every two months, showing who was present for duty), company and regimental descriptive books (including a basic physical description of the soldier, his birthplace, his occupation and where he enlisted) and other deteriorating records, onto index record cards. Each entry for every soldier on every record was entered on a separate card; the cards were then arranged by regiment, then by the soldier's name, and finally in chronological order. "All the cards relating to a soldier would thus fall together and would show his history from 'muster in' to termination of service." Record Group 94 - the principal series of these carded Union records - comprises some 13, 268 feet of records, and is the primary source of material provided in a soldier's military service record. For a detailed discussion of the nature of these files - and the effort that went into creating them - plus a discussion of pension records, see pp. 382-384 and pp. 550-556 of The Union: A Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War, by Kenneth W. Munden and Henry Putney Beers (National Archives and Records Administration, 1986). It is in the history reference section of the central public library, r973.7 M965u.

(8) Phisterer's New York in the War of the Rebellion (J.B. Lyon Co., 1912) can be found on the shelves in Local History, Rqr 973.7447 P573n3, and is also available at the information desk, for the library's general history section. Phisterer's summary of the 151st is on pages

3756-3766 of Volume V. Another useful resource is Frederick H. Dyer's three-volume A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion (Thomas Yoseloff, 1959). Volume three provides a chronological summary of each regiment's battles and movements. The 151st is on page 1462. Dyer's compendium, q973.7 D996c, can be found among the circulating Civil War books.

(9) Civil War regiments often filled their ranks from a single city or county, but that was not always the case. When Lincoln issued his call for 300,000 volunteers in July 1862, for example, each state was assigned a quota. New York, in turn, assigned a proportionate share of that quota to each of its state senatorial districts. Regiments organized within a given senatorial district might include men from two or more counties.

(10) Joseph Judge describes this battle, and the 151st's role in it, on pages 171-211 in Season of Fire: The Confederate Strike on Washington (Rockbridge Publishing Co., 1994). It can be found among the circulating Civil War history books, 973.7378 J92s.

(11) Regimental histories - and living history groups that perpetuate the memory of a given regiment - can be invaluable resources.

Howell's history, Rr973.7447 H859c, is found on the shelves with other out-of-print regimental histories in Local History in the same section as Phisterer. Other, more recently written regimental histories are also available there and in the Civil War circulating collection. One of the very best of these contemporary histories is Brian Bennett's Sons of Old Monroe, A Regimental History of Patrick O'Rorke's 140th New York Volunteer Infantry (Morningside House Inc., 1992).

To discover which regimental histories are available, start with C. E. Dornbusch's Military Bibliography of the Civil War (The New York Public Library, 1971-72), which listed these histories about 30 years ago. The three volumes can be found at the Rochester Public Library history information desk.

However, new books are being written all the time. For current library holdings, type in various combinations of the regiment's name, such "25th New York" or "25th regiment," as a subject entry in the library's LibraWeb computerized list of holdings. You can expand your search to other area libraries, including Rush-Rhees and SUNY-Geneseo and SUNY-Brockport, by using the Rochester Regional Library Council's Roaring Cat computer base at <http://rrlc.library.net>

Members of living history organizations often had a relative who

served in the regiment, and may be able to steer you to letters, diaries and other sources of information about the soldier you are researching. Two such organizations in our area are:

The 140th New York Living History Organization, Co. B, best contacted through its website: <http://www.ggw.org/140th/>

Reynold's Battery L, 1st New York Light Artillery, Inc. can be reached c/o Sean McAdoo, 7037 Dryer Road, Victor, N.Y. 14564, or at cannon1@frontiernet.net

A good clearinghouse for such groups in Western New York is maintained by George Contant at: www.magpage.com/~33dny/

(12) Howell, p. 205. According to the state census, 10,113 Germans were living in Monroe County in 1855, and they rallied to the defense of their adopted homeland when war erupted six years later. One of the very first companies organized in Rochester after the fall of Fort Sumter was German-speaking, and served in the 13th New York. Company I of the 108th New York was also recruited from Rochester's German-American community. And Company B of the 140th New York from Monroe County was almost entirely German-born, enlisting 81 of the 183 German natives in that unit, according to Bennett's Sons of Old Monroe (see breakdown of nationalities, p. 620). All of these units saw heavy action and suffered many losses.

(13) Other than a letter or diary written by the soldier or by a comrade that places a particular soldier on the battlefield, there may be no absolute proof that he participated in a battle, even though he is listed as "present for duty" during the two-month time frame in which the battle occurred. The soldier might have been detailed that day as a cook, clerk or orderly; he might have been on a picket line or even left behind to guard the regiment's knapsacks in a rear area. The other proof, of course, would be if he was among the casualties of the fighting.

(14) The Mine Run campaign was notable more for the hardships it inflicted on the soldiers than for its military outcome. Gen. George Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac, attempting an offensive before the onset of winter, tried to outflank Lee's army. Lee, however, pulled back into a strong position on the west bank of Mine Run, a tributary of the Rapidan. When Meade attempted to flank this position, Lee's soldiers worked through the night to erect strong, well-protected breastworks. Meade called off a planned assault on Nov. 30, and both armies drew back into winter quarters. This campaign was

remembered by the soldiers as a period of long marches, cold bivouacs and short rations. For a particularly vivid description of these hardships see the diary entries of August Seiser, a German-American serving in the 140th N.Y., in "August Seiser's Civil War Diary," The Rochester Historical Society Publications, Vol. XXII, on file at the Local History desk, and among circulating history books, 974.789 R676hp.

(15) The North called this the Battle of the Opequon. Northerners tended to name battles after the nearest stream or geographical feature - Bull Run and Antietam, for example. Southerners tended to name the same battles after the nearest town - Manassas and Sharpsburg.

(16) The Shenandoah in Flames: The Valley Campaign of 1864 (Time-Life Books, 1987) can be found among the circulating Civil War books. Lewis' discussion of the battle of Winchester is on pages 109-122.

(17) For the 151st N.Y., for example, the general index to the Official Records simply shows: "151st -- I 21, 25, 27, 29, 33, 36..." indicating the volumes in series I in which the 151st is mentioned, but without any indication of the topic or page numbers. The researcher must then consult the indexes in volumes 21, 25, 27, 29, 33, 36.... etc. to find the specific pages where the 151st is mentioned. The general index is at the history information desk; individual volumes must be retrieved from the stacks. For other access to the Official Records, visit UR's Rush-Rhees or the libraries at SUNY-Geneseo and SUNY-Brockport, where volumes are out on the shelves.

(18) The 127 volumes, some in more than one part, are arranged in four series. Series 1 deals with reports and official correspondence concerning military operations; Series 2 with prisoners of war; Series 3 with other Union reports and correspondence, including the draft and other matters involving the states, and Series 4 with other Confederate reports and correspondence. Emerson's report is on pages 231-233, Fay's on pages 238-239 and Wolcott's on pages 239-240 of Volume 43, Part 1, Series 1.

(19) A skirmish line was a screen of soldiers thrown out in front and to the side of a military unit or position on a battlefield. They kept enemy marksmen far enough away so they could not harass the main position; skirmishers often preceded their own soldiers in an attack, pushing away enemy skirmishers, discovering enemy strongpoints and alerting



Scene from the Battle of First Bull Run shows a typical battle line. Illustrated London News, August 31, 1861.

the main line to any surprises.

20) Howell, p. 93.

(21) Exactly how much attention Armbruster received from the surgeon is debatable. Confronted with a head wound of this nature, most Civil War surgeons could do little besides cleanse and comfort. Ironically, that may help explain Armbruster's survival; the less probing he underwent from unsterilized surgical instruments, the better his chances of avoiding a fatal infection.

(22) Armbruster's military file indicates he was sent home in December, perhaps on furlough, and may have extended his stay beyond what was authorized. A charge of desertion is entered, but was later reduced to absent without leave.

(23) Weller, W. Earl, "The Expanding Charter Life of Rochester," Centennial History of Rochester, Vol. III: Expansion (The Rochester Historical Society Publications, 1933), pp. 87-89. This volume can be found among the circulating history books, and at the Local History information desk, 974.789 C397c.

(24) McKelvey, Rochester: The Quest for Quality, 1890-1925 (Harvard University Press, 1956), p.27. This book can be found at the information desk in Local History, and on the circulating shelves, 974.789 M154rq

(25) McKelvey, Rochester: The Flower City, 1855-1890 (Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 260, (pp. 260-265 for a full discussion of the Executive Board's projects). This book can also be found at the information desk in Local History, and on the circulating shelves, 974.789 M154rf

(26) McKelvey, "The Germans of Rochester: Their Traditions and Contributions," *Rochester History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 1958, pp. 14-15. *Rochester History* is a quarterly publication of the City Historian's Office, published by Rochester Public Library, which examines a variety of topics relating to Rochester history. The volumes, and an index, can be found at the Local History information desk, at branch libraries and at the library's web site.

27) City of Rochester Illustrated: Descriptive, Historical and Statistical Review (Post-Express Printing Co., 1890), p. XXXVI. This can be found in the oversized books section, Local History, Rfr 974.789 C581ci

(28) Sheridan was returning from a strategy conference in Washington when Early launched a surprise attack on Oct. 19, 1864. The Union army was camped along Cedar Creek between Middletown and Strasburg. Sheridan, hearing the gunfire 15 miles away, rode his black horse Rienzi toward the battlefield, rallying his fleeing soldiers along the way. Sheridan's arrival turned the tide of battle, and his ride became the stuff of legend. See Lewis, pp. 140-157.

(29) The Grand Army of the Republic was the foremost Civil War veterans organization. Several local posts were established in Rochester. Two of its national encampments were held in the city in 1911 and 1934.

(30) City directories, on the shelves in Local History, can help track an individual's addresses and occupations over the years. A sampling of listings for Armbruster: 1880: clerk, 142 Hudson, home same address (Armbruster & Co. grocers, Charles Armbruster, Frederick Armbruster

and Anthony Schilling, at same address as well); 1885: grocer, N. Union corner German, home same; 1890: member of Executive Board, 23 City Hall, and grocer, corner Alexander, German, home same; 1895: grocer, N. Alexander corner German, home same; 1899-1900: solicitor, 190 Lake Ave., home 11 Niagara; 1904-5: solicitor, home 214 Central Park; 1910: carpenter, 214 Central Park, home same; 1915: 200 Sibley Blk., home Irondequoit.

George Aldridge Jr. was active in the bipartisan reform movement of the mid 1870s, and used the Executive Board to establish a base of power. By 1890, McKelvey tells us, it was apparent that Aldridge "was the real leader of the city government." See Rochester: The Quest for Quality, pp. 24-25.

(31) Fox, William F., Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861-1865, (Albany Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 543-549. This study of Civil War casualties, with additional focus on the 300 Union regiments with heaviest losses, can be found in the history reference section, fr 973.741 F794r.

(32) For much of the war, the 54th Militia "stayed home," but was by no means inactive. It was dispatched to New York City during the draft riots in 1863 - and ended up staying a week in Albany instead when communications down the Hudson were disrupted. It also spent 100 days the following summer guarding Confederate prisoners at Elmira. In addition, many of its officers and men enlisted in the volunteer regiments that were sent to the front. See Ruth Marsh's fine overview, "A History of Rochester's Part in the Civil War," The Rochester Historical Society Publications, Vol. XXII, (Rochester Historical Society, 1944). This is the same volume that contains Seiser's diary, and highly informative letters and reminiscences of other Rochester Civil War soldiers.

(33) Griffith, Battle Tactics of the Civil War, (Yale University Press, 1989), p. 9. This study offers intriguing theories about why Civil War generals fought battles the way they did.

GENERAL AFFIDAVIT

:(o):

State of New York, County of Monroe, ss:

In the matter of Julius Armbruster of 158, 896
Co. "E" 15th Regt Inf Vols.

ON THIS 29 day of December A. D., 1892; personally appeared before me

James Davis, City of Rochester, N. Y. in and for the aforesaid County duly authorized to administer oaths,

Julius Armbruster aged 48 years, a resident of Rochester

in the County of Monroe and State of New York

whose Post Office address is Cor. Alexander & German Sts.

_____ further declare that _____ no interest in said case and _____ not concerned in its prosecution.

Julius Armbruster

[If Affiants sign by mark two persons who can write sign here.]

[Signature of Affiants.]

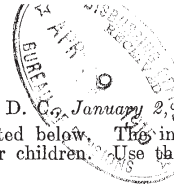
General Affidavit, 1892

Address changed in
Disbursing Office

3-389

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, D. C. January 2, 1915.



SIR: Please answer, at your earliest convenience, the questions enumerated below. This information is requested for future use, and it may be of great value to your widow or children. Use the inclosed envelope, which requires no stamp.

Very respectfully,

JULIUS ARMERUSTER,
~~ROCHESTER, N. Y.~~
158896 ACT MAY
~~214 CENTRAL PARK.~~

Jm Saetzger
PENSION OFFICE
Comm. 1915

St. Paul Blvd. Rochester N.Y.

FOLD HERE.

No. 8. Are you now living with your wife, or has there been a separation? Answer. *Always lived*

Together since marriage.

No. 9. State the names and dates of birth of all your children, living or dead. Answer.

Lisa, born October 20th 1867
Benjamin" Sept. 16th 1869, Died June 23rd 1872
Rosa born October 14th 1871 living
Elizabeth " January 18th 1874 "
Martha " June 19th 1875 "
Benjamin John born June 5th 1877 "
Josephina " June 22th 1879 "
Edward " Sept. 19th 1881. Flora born Sept. 9th 1884
Mary born June 14th 1886. Fred. C. born June 21st 1889

Date *March 19th 1915.*

(Signature) *Julius Armeruster.*

6-272

Julius Armeruster's pension application in 1915 yields information on children and shows a shaky signature.

A 151 N. Y.

Julius Ambruster
Company, Co. E, 151. Reg't N. Y. Infantry.

Appears on **Special Muster Roll**
for A. J. J. J. 186 3
Present or absent Present
Stoppage, \$ 100 for

Due Gov't, \$ 100 for

Remarks:

Book mark:

A. J. J. J.
(359) Copyist

A 151 N. Y.

Julius Ambruster
Company, Co. E, 151 Reg't N. Y. Infantry.

Appears on **Company Muster Roll**
for W. J. J. J. 186 3
Present or absent Present
Stoppage, \$ 100 for

Due Gov't, \$ 100 for

Remarks:
32 cents to be deducted
for losing two guns
Chicago

Book mark:

W. J. J. J.
(358) Copyist

A 151 N. Y.

Julius Ambruster
Company, Co. E, 151 Reg't N. Y. Infantry.

Appears on **Company Muster Roll**
for Julius Ambruster 186 3
Present or absent Present
Stoppage, \$ 100 for

Due Gov't, \$ 100 for

Remarks:

Book mark:

W. J. J. J.
(358) Copyist

151 N. Y.

A. Julius Ambruster
Capt. Co. E, 151 Reg't N. Y. Infantry.

Appears on

Company Muster Roll

for *Sept. and Oct.*, 1864

Present or absent *Absent*

Stoppage, \$ *100* for

Due Gov't, \$ *100* for

Remarks:

*Wounded in the
battle of Winchester
Sept. 19, 1864. Sent to
Hospital*

Book mark:

E. H. Hunter

(358)

Copyist

151 N. Y.

A. Julius Ambruster
Capt. Co. E, 151 Reg't N. Y. Infantry.

Appears on an

Individual Muster-out Roll

of the organization named above. Roll dated

in the field, Dec. 21, 1864.

Muster-out to date *Dec. 21, 1864.*

Last paid to *Oct. 31, 1864.*

Clothing account:

Last settled *186*; drawn since \$ *100*

Due soldier \$ *100*; due U. S. \$ *100*

Am't for cloth'g in kind or money adv'd \$ *100*

Due U. S. for arms, equipments, &c., \$ *100*

Bounty paid \$ *100*; due \$ *100*

Remarks: *Withms drawn since
Sept. 1, 1863. \$ 58.41
Stoppage for transportation
\$ 18.12*

Book mark:

J. S. White

(348)

Copyist

151 N. Y.

A. Julius Ambruster
Capt. Co. E, 151 Reg't N. Y. Infantry.

Appears on

Company Muster Roll

for *March 1864*

Present or absent *Present*

Stoppage, \$ *100* for

Due Gov't, \$ *100* for

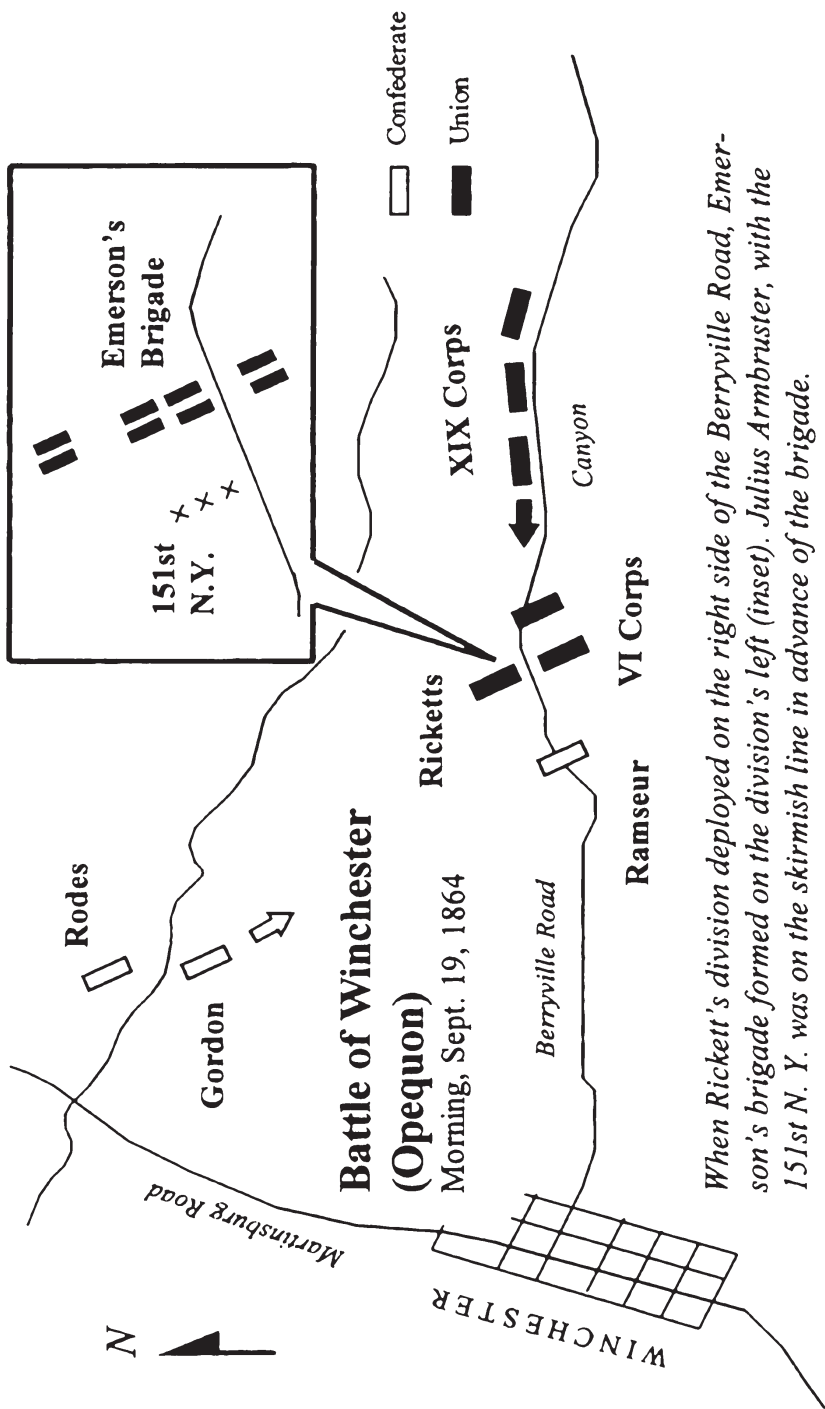
Remarks:

Book mark:

G. W. Wata

(355)

Copyist



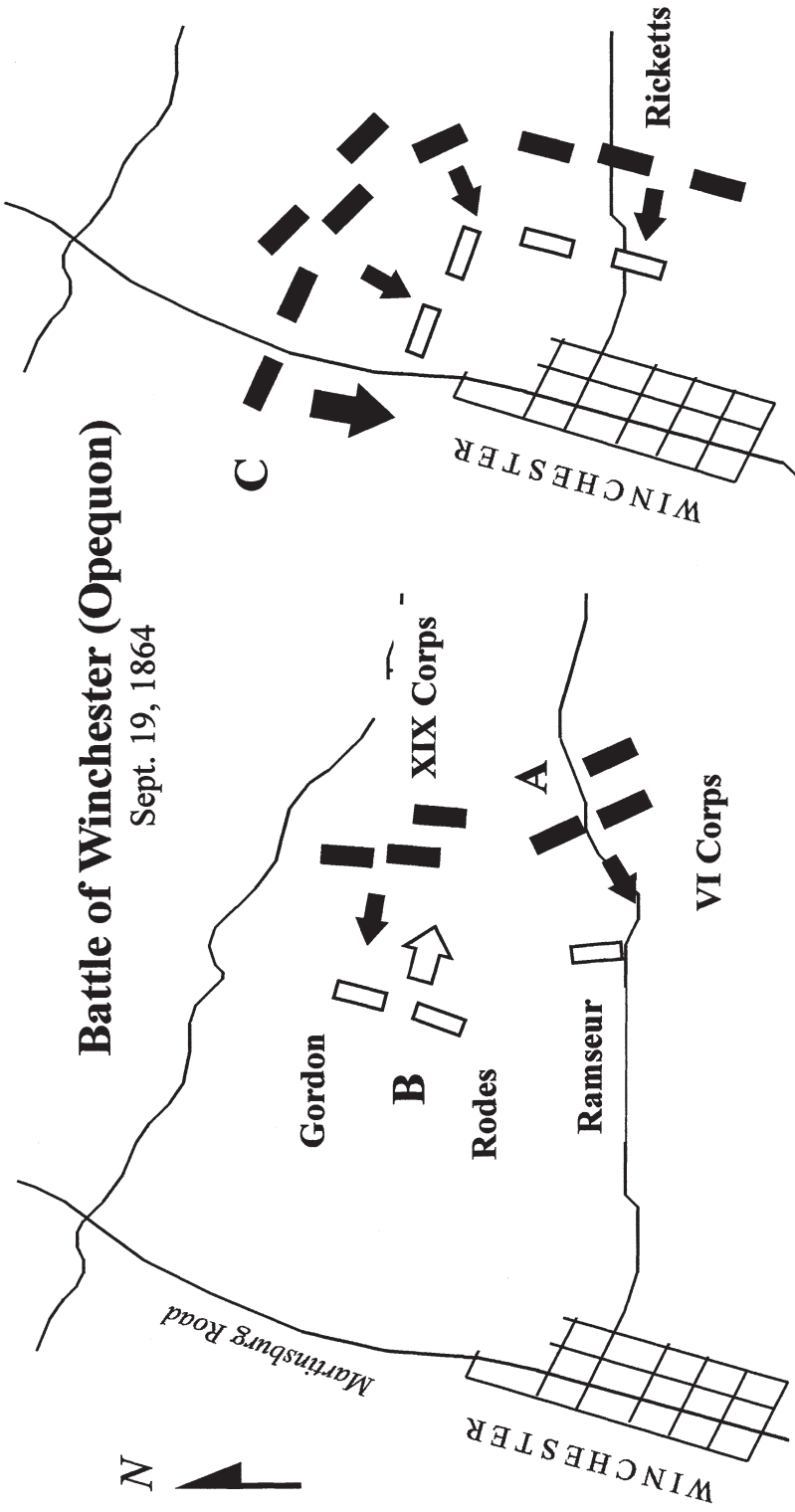
**Battle of Winchester
(Opequon)**

Morning, Sept. 19, 1864

When Rickett's division deployed on the right side of the Berryville Road, Emerson's brigade formed on the division's left (inset). Julius Armbruster, with the 151st N. Y. was on the skirmish line in advance of the brigade.

Battle of Winchester (Opequon)

Sept. 19, 1864



By late morning, Sheridan's men were ready to attack (map at left). As Emerson's brigade advanced with Rickett's division (A), the 151st lay prone as the battle lines moved over it, then reassembled in the rear. VI and XIX corps diverged, allowing Gordon to counterattack into the gap (B). By late afternoon, Sheridan had regrouped and pressed Early's outnumbered army into the position shown at right. When Union cavalry swept by Early's left flank (C), the Confederate line collapsed.



THE CONFEDERATE ARMY UNDER EARLY, SURPRISEING THE FEDERAL FORCES AT CEDAR CREEK, ON THE MORNING OF THE 19th OF OCTOBER, 1864.



Scenes of General Sheridan and General Early fighting in the Shenandoah Valley after Armbruster's injury offer a glimpse of the terrain, battle lines and struggles that the soldiers on both sides faced in October, 1864 (Frank Leslie's Illustrated Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War.)