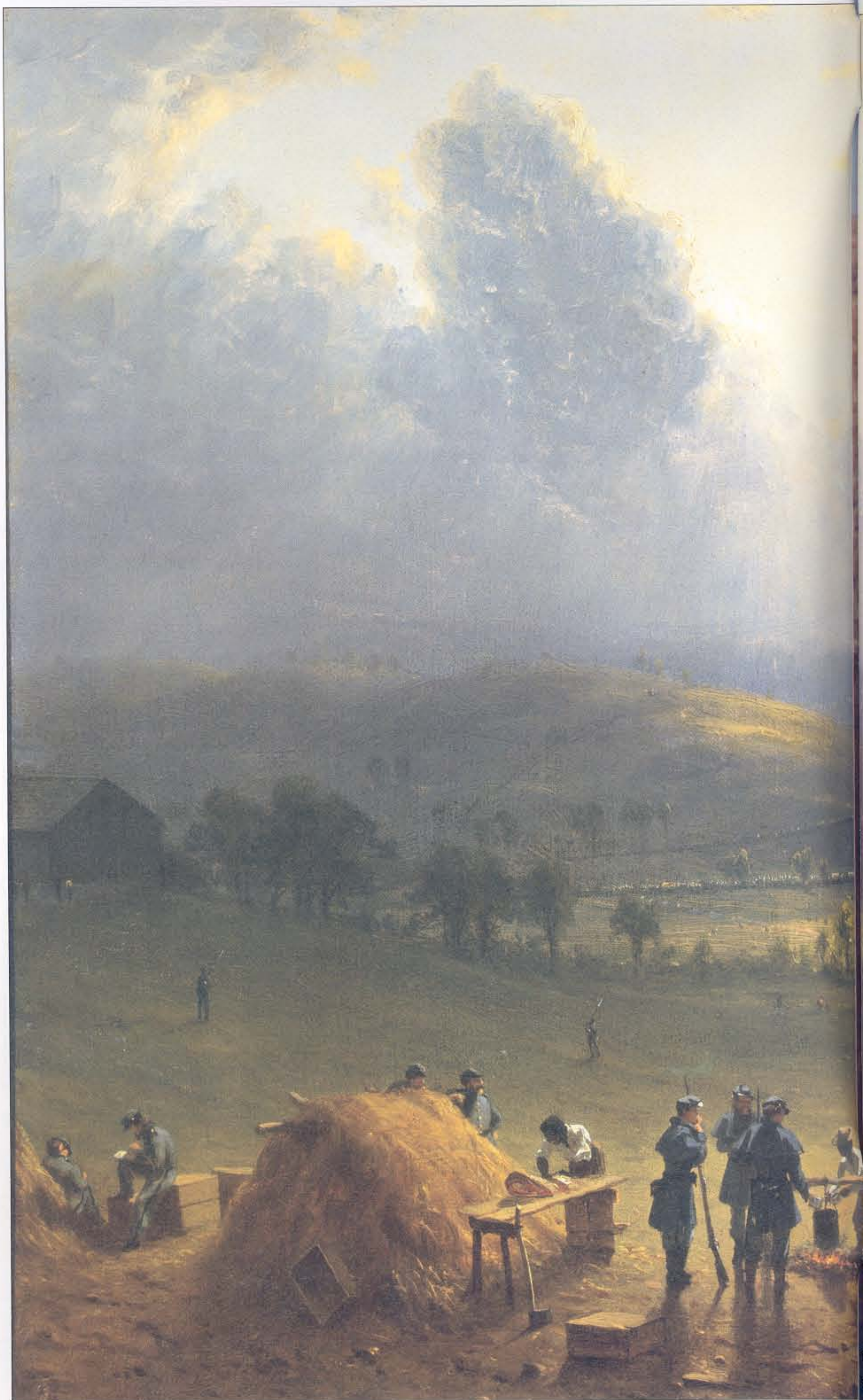


After the Storm

The farmland around Frederick, Maryland, provided the soldiers of the Seventh Regiment, New York State National Guard, with an inspiring view when they encamped along the Harper's Ferry Turnpike in July of 1863. "We are in beautiful country. The fields where not too near the camp are covered with a rich harvest. The line of the South Mountain runs about three miles west of us," wrote one of the soldiers, Sanford R. Gifford, to his family.¹ Gifford was a particularly keen observer of the landscape, as he was an accomplished artist from the Hudson River valley in New York. Gifford recorded the daily life of his regiment in letters to his friends and family and in several paintings depicting scenes from his three tours of duty during the Civil War. When his third season of military action brought Gifford to this pastoral valley outside Frederick, he made sketches of life at the encampment that he later used to create the painting shown here, completed in 1864 and entitled "Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Frederick, Maryland, 1863."

Gifford's military career began in April 1861, after the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter. Gifford, thirty-eight years old, promptly joined the New York State National Guard, and his regiment moved south to defend Washington, D.C. He and his comrades were quartered in the Hall of Representatives of the U.S. Capitol and then at Camp Cameron and Arlington Heights for a little over a month. Because Gifford was a member of the National Guard, his regiment did not serve full-time duty, and he was free to return home between summer campaigns. The next summer Gifford returned south to Baltimore for three months and served as first corporal at Fort Federal Hill, where he lamented the drudgery of stationary duty, and at Mount Clare Station of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.²



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Angela R. Commito



▲ "Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Frederick, Maryland, 1863,"
by Sanford R. Gifford, 1864.

By the time Gifford joined the National Guard, he was already a recognized landscape painter at the forefront of the second generation of artists within the Hudson River school community, launched by Thomas Cole and Asher B. Durand in the mid-nineteenth century. He began showing his work in New York City in his mid-twenties and was elected to the National Academy of Design in 1854. He toured Europe to visit the continent's most famous museums and landscapes, and worked in New York City and the surrounding northeastern countryside sketching and creating some of his most famous paintings. During his three years of duty in the National Guard, Gifford returned home after every summer campaign and continued to paint the natural world around him.³

The Seventh Regiment's path to Frederick began on June 17, 1863, when Colonel Marshall Lefferts and 583 men traveled from New York City to Philadelphia and then on to Baltimore.⁴ Like the year before, they were stationed at Fort Federal Hill for two and a half weeks, during which time some of the men stayed at the fort and others traveled on outpost and other duties. The pivotal battle of Gettysburg occurred July 1-3, and Union troops were needed to staunch the flow of the retreating Confederates and to guard important military depots in Maryland. On July 5 Gifford's regiment was ordered to Frederick and moved out early the next morning through the pouring rain "in light marching order, leaving tents, knapsacks, and baggage behind" in Baltimore.⁵ On the way they were detained at Monocacy Junction, where the Georgetown Turnpike crossed the Monocacy River and the Frederick Branch of the B&O Railroad split from the main line. Because the junction had recently become the grand depot for the Army of the Potomac, Lefferts received orders to leave two detachments there to guard the area and move the rest of the regiment to Frederick City. The regiment went into camp on the Harper's Ferry Turnpike (now Jefferson Street) just south of the city and was there assigned to the Third Army Corps, Army of the Potomac. Lefferts and his regiment assumed command of Frederick on July 8 under the following order:

Colonel Lefferts, Seventh New York Regiment, is detailed on special duty in Freder-

ick City. Colonel Lefferts will make such arrangements for guarding the depots, and for the police required for the city, as he may deem necessary.⁶

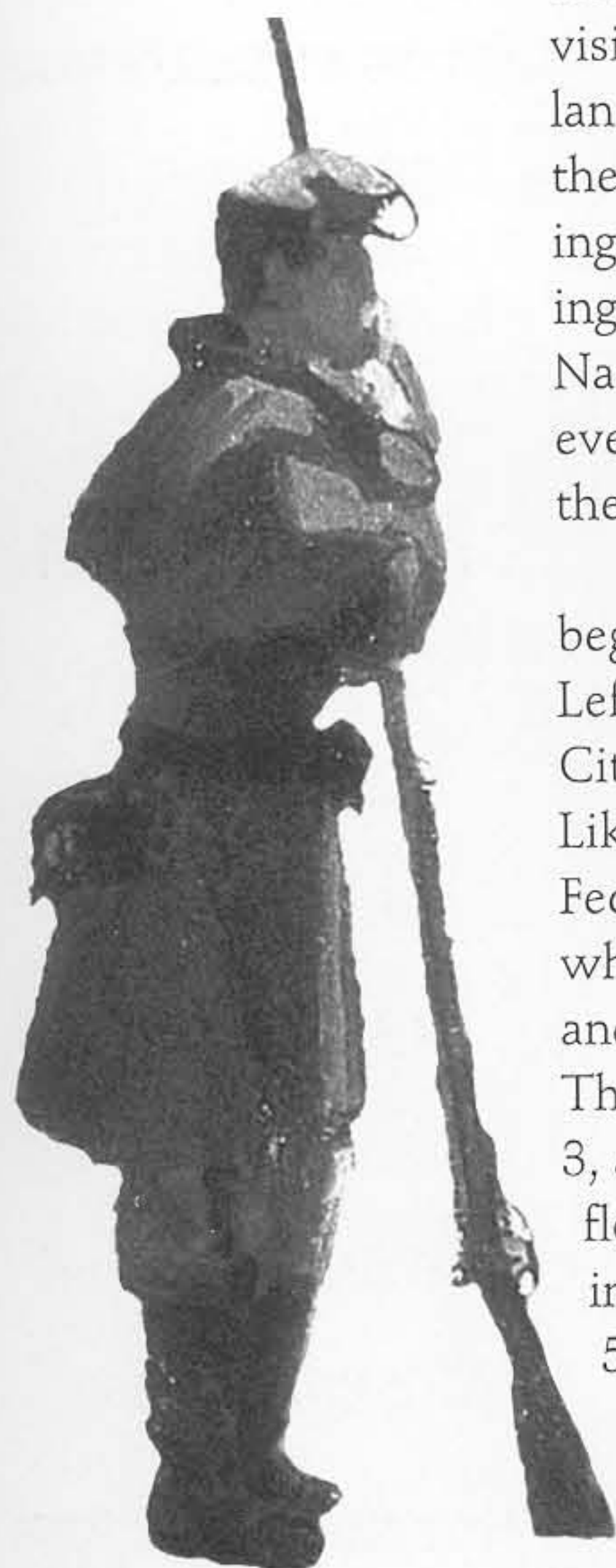
The regiment's duties regarding the protection of both Frederick and Monocacy Junction were important ones, which Lefferts reported as "active, and, I trust, faithfully performed."⁷

These duties did not include active fighting. In Frederick City Jacob Engelbrecht hosted the leader of the New York Seventh Regiment Band, a Mr. Claudio Simon Grafulla, and his adopted son, both of whom Engelbrecht described as donning "Gray mixed dress."⁸ The regiment wore gray and buff uniforms that made them potential targets of friendly fire. In fact, the first and only time Gifford fired his gun in action was during the New York City Draft Riots, which the regiment was called in to quell later that July.⁹

During its command of Frederick City, the regiment remained encamped outside the city on the Harper's Ferry Turnpike on a low plain with a view of the Catocin Mountains. Gifford sketched the mountains and fields, observed the activities and expressions of the other militiamen, and wrote to his father about the conditions of the campsite:

We came into this field ... in the rain and bivouacked in the mud. It did not take long to strip the neighboring fences of their remaining rails, and thatch them with sheaves of wheat from the next field. It seemed a pity to waste the rich grain, but after all it was not wasted, for it made very comfortable beds and pretty good thatches. Many of our men, who were not in an enterprising "Mess" rolled themselves in their blankets and soaked all night in the mud in a drenching rain. Our men ... got ourselves up a very secure shelter with a five-barred gate, some wheat sheaves and some rails. The next afternoon it cleared and the ground is now fast drying up.¹⁰

In the painting only two tents are visible. Most of the men are eating and conversing around the kind of make-shift huts Gifford describes to his father. With their tents and supplies abandoned in Baltimore, the guardsmen had to think of creative ways to stay out of the pour-



▲ Detail from "Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Frederick, Maryland, 1863," by Sanford R. Gifford, 1864.

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ing rain. Even Engelbrecht commented on the weather of July 7 and 8 in Frederick: "...it was raining nearly all day yesterday & night – & this morning, it has been Raining & is now raining – most too bad for the poor Soldiers and yet they all appear to be lively. Singing & Cracking Jokes."¹¹ When the regiment arrived back in New York City on July 16, their appearance disclosed these uncomfortable living conditions. Lefferts explained that "my men were entirely destitute of extra clothing, and had not, at the time of their arrival in New York, changed their under-clothing for a period of eleven days, during which time they had also been without even the shelter of tents."¹²

The painting itself provides a detailed and intimate view of camp life, a view that is further enhanced by our knowledge of the particular circumstances of the guardsmen. The drenching rain that lasted from the beginning of their journey to Frederick until they made camp several days later has finally departed, and in its wake sun pours through the passing rain clouds. The soldiers have stretched out their wet clothes and blankets on top of the huts to dry in the first sunlight they have seen in days. They are relaxing, writing letters, cleaning their guns, eating, and chatting. While the guardsmen enjoy the change in weather, two black workers prepare food at makeshift wooden tables. The lines of the Union Army stream by in the background, giving a sense of security and anticipation to the calm scene and foreshadowing future action to the south.

In the same letter to his father, Gifford describes the long files of Union troops and artillery he can see traveling south after the fighting at Gettysburg:

We are in the midst of the Army of the Potomac, which is now passing and has been on all sides of us since we have been here, in the direction of Harper's Ferry, South Mountain, and Antietam ... We have a fine opportunity of seeing almost the entire Army of the Potomac. The apparently endless lines of infantry and artillery and supply trains of the different corps are constantly filing past in full sight on the different roads leading to the river. The troops here suffered heavily in the late battle and many of the

regiments are thin in numbers but they are all in splendid spirits, exulting in their success and confident of putting off Lee.¹³

These wagons and lines of men can be seen in Gifford's painting stretching along at least two roads. The Hagerstown Turnpike extends to the west, and the other, perhaps the Harper's Ferry Turnpike, stretches to the southwest. In addition to the Union Army, pieces of the Confederate forces were retreating south from Gettysburg directly through Frederick and the surrounding area, and many Rebels were captured as prisoners. In his diary, Engelbrecht repeatedly noted his amazement at the number of Union troops and Confederate prisoners he saw pass through Frederick City during this period. On the morning of July 6 he wrote:

Since last Saturday July 4 our town has been Swarming with U.S. Cavalry & Infantry passing from Gettysburg. – through our town up towards Hagerstown & Harpersferry to intercept the Rebel army under Gen. Lee. who are making their way back to Virginia. Supposed through Washington County – the number that have passed I Suppose must have numbered 10 or 15 thousand even now while I am writing 6 or 8 hundred Cavalry are passing the Shop door – the whole town is in Commotion nothing but Soldiers & Soldiers – posterity Could hardly Conceive what a vast Number of Soldiers have passed our town ...¹⁴

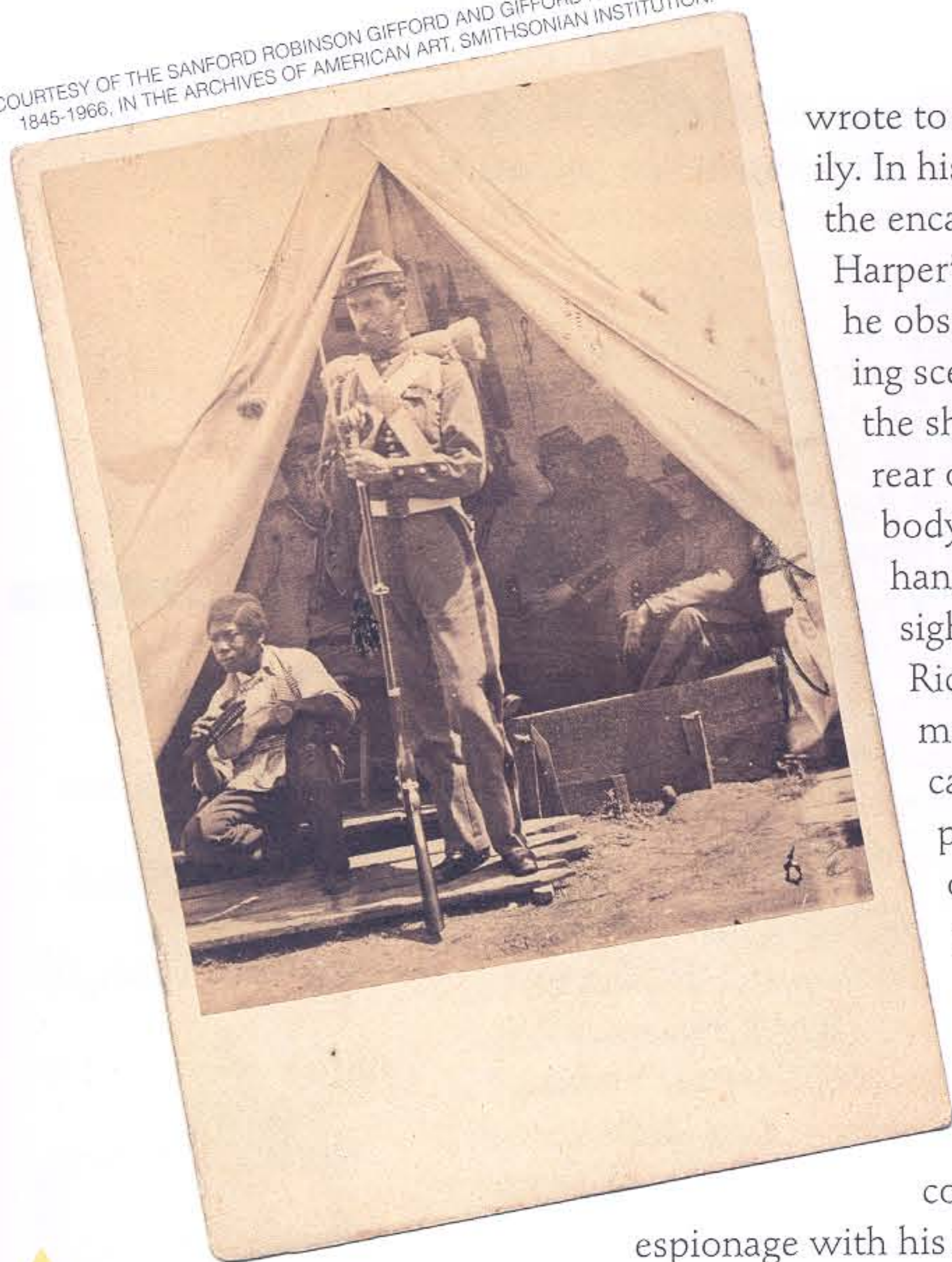
Two days later Engelbrecht watched 700 Rebel prisoners march down Market Street and more than 20,000 Union troops move through Frederick by 2:30 in the afternoon. He complained that the masses of troops, who were passing through the city day and night, created "Such an incessant Racket that you can hardly Carry on a conversation in the Shop."¹⁵

At the same time, Gifford and his regiment were capturing Confederate prisoners in their flight from Gettysburg. On both July 7 and 8 around 1,000 prisoners passed through the camp on the Harper's Ferry Turnpike. In Gifford's eyes these soldiers were "a good looking set of men, but very dirty and worn from long marching."¹⁶

Gifford witnessed other unsettling outcomes of war and commented on them in the letters he

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COURTESY OF THE SANFORD ROBINSON GIFFORD AND GIFFORD FAMILY PAPERS, 1845-1966, IN THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.



Sanford R. Gifford in uniform during the Civil War, c. 1861.

Detail from "Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Frederick, Maryland, 1863," by Sanford R. Gifford, 1864.

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wrote to friends and family. In his description of the encampment on the Harper's Ferry Turnpike, he observed the following scene: "Just across the shallow valley in the rear of the camp, the body of a Rebel spy hangs to a tree in plain sight."¹⁷ William Richardson of Baltimore had been caught on July 5 in possession of plans of the positions of the Union Army and, under the order of Brigadier General John Buford, paid the consequences of

espionage with his life.¹⁸ Engelbrecht, who visited the body, described how it remained hanging from the tree for four days and five nights from July 5 to 9, while hundreds of people visited the site and took bits of clothing, threads of the rope, and finally bark from the tree as mementos of the occurrence.¹⁹ On the night of July 9 the frayed rope could no longer support its burden, and the body was cut down and buried under the tree.²⁰

According to Engelbrecht, the body of the spy was hung on a tree at Rizer's field, located one mile outside Frederick City on the Harper's Ferry Turnpike. He reports that he visited the body, however, as it was hanging in the field of John Hagen near William Smith's house on the Hagerstown Turnpike.²¹ Since Gifford could see the body "in plain sight" from the camp, his regiment must have been in the area Engelbrecht describes, perhaps somewhere between the Harper's Ferry and Hagerstown Turnpikes. Rizer's field, surrounded by meadows and fields of corn and grain, was located along the Harper's Ferry Turnpike between Prospect Hill and downtown Frederick.²² John Hagen owned property on the Hagerstown Turnpike, including an area of land south of the road by Prospect Hill, and several Smiths show up as property owners in the same

general area.²³ The bucolic valley that Gifford painted, encompassed by the Hagerstown and Harper's Ferry Turnpikes, is now split by modern highways and crowded with houses, parking lots, and shopping centers.

Gifford and his regiment remained in camp outside Frederick City for only a week. On July 14 the guardsmen were called back to New York City to suppress the Draft Riots that had erupted the day before when the city's first draftees were announced. The regiment arrived in the city two days later, marched to its appointed position, and engaged in light gunfire with armed rioters hiding in houses and buildings along the street. Gifford fired his gun for the first and only time during his involvement in the war.²⁴ A few weeks later Gifford learned that his brother Edward, a major in the 128th New York Regiment, had died after escaping from a Confederate prison and making the treacherous swim across the Mississippi River. This news, in combination with Gifford's own fatigue and the trauma of the Draft Riots, seems to have convinced Gifford to end his voluntary service with the New York National Guard.

After the war, Gifford left in 1868 for his second tour abroad. This time he traveled through Europe and the Near East and captured the brilliance of the Mediterranean sun as magically as he did the softer light of the Catskills and the Catskills. In 1870 Gifford was among the founders of New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, which honored the artist upon his death in 1880 with the museum's first monographic exhibition and a memorial catalogue of his work.²⁵ In October 2003 the Metropolitan hosted a new retrospective of Gifford's work, only the second since the original exhibition at the same museum over a century earlier.

The painting shown here is the last of four that Gifford created based on the sketches and observations he made during three summers of duty. Though he claimed to have entered the service "without any artistic purpose," Gifford spent his free time drawing portraits of soldiers and sketching scenes of the military life around him.²⁶ During his first campaign he made sketches that resulted in two paintings. "Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C." shows a wide, sunny view of Sunday services held in an open field

overlooking the city on the Potomac River, and "Bivouac of the Seventh Regiment – Arlington Heights, Virginia" reveals a night-time scene in which the soldiers are illuminated by the light of their campfires. His time in Baltimore gave him material for "Baltimore, 1862 – Twilight," in which a single figure stands sentry and scans the city skyline at dusk.

His last painting, however, benefits from a composition that is less restricted than that of the other works. The style and the atmosphere it produces are more relaxed, allowing the artist to reveal to his audience the daily activities of his compatriots as well as their personalities. The tranquility of the scene and the men within it may result from the guardsmen's optimistic out-

look after the Union victory at Gettysburg, which took place only days before this scene was documented. Like the fleeing Confederate forces, the rain clouds that plagued the men during their journey to Frederick are finally retreating.

Although Gifford never described his vision, perhaps the painting symbolizes how the victorious advance of the Union Army gave hope and confidence to the North in the same way that the sun, streaming out from behind the dispersing clouds, brought long-awaited warmth and comfort to the camp.

Angela R. Commito is a Research Assistant at the Catocin Center for Regional Studies.

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- 1 Letter from Sanford Robinson Gifford to his father, Elihu Gifford, "In camp near Frederick, Md.," July 9, 1863, in Robert Wilkinson, Edith Wilkinson, and Eleanor Peckham, eds., "Gifford Family Records and Letters," vol. 1 (Collection Sanford Gifford, M.D., Cambridge, MA), quoted in Kevin J. Avery and Franklin Kelly, eds., *Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), 158.
- 2 Ila Weiss, *Poetic Landscape: The Art and Experience of Sanford R. Gifford* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 91-95; Kevin J. Avery and Franklin Kelly, eds., *Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), 248-49.
- 3 "The Metropolitan Museum of Art: News From the Met: Press Releases. Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford," http://www.metmuseum.org/news/news_pr.asp.
- 4 The following information on the duties and activities of the Seventh Regiment during the 1863 campaign comes from "Report of Col. Marshall Lefferts, Seventh Regiment New York State National Guard, of operations June 16 – July 18, including the Draft Riots" in U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. I, vol. 27, 248-251. Hereafter abbreviated as *OR*.
- 5 *OR*, ser. I, vol. 27, 249.
- 6 Ibid. "Special Orders No. 24" was sent to the Headquarters at Frederick City on July 8, 1863, from Major-General French.
- 7 *OR*, ser. I, vol. 27, 250.
- 8 Jacob Engelbrecht, *The Diary of Jacob Engelbrecht*, ed. William R. Quynn, vol. 3 (Frederick, MD: Historical Society of Frederick County, 1976), 232 (July 10, 1863).
- 9 Weiss, *Poetic Landscape*, 95-97; letter from Sanford Robinson Gifford to "Phoebe," July 18, 1863, in Wilkinson et al., eds., "Gifford Family Records and Letters," vol. 1, quoted in Avery and Kelly, eds., *Hudson River*, 41.
- 10 Letter from Gifford to Elihu Gifford, "In camp near Frederick, Md.," July 9, 1863, in Wilkinson et al., eds., "Gifford Family Records and Letters," vol. 1, quoted in Avery and Kelly, eds., *Hudson River*, 158.
- 11 Engelbrecht, *Diary*, 231 (July 8, 1863).
- 12 *OR*, ser. I, vol. 27, 250.
- 13 Letter from Gifford to Elihu Gifford, "In camp near Frederick, Md.," July 9, 1863, quoted in Ila Weiss, *Poetic Landscape: The Art and Experience of Sanford R. Gifford* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 98.
- 14 Engelbrecht, *Diary*, 229 (July 6, 1863).
- 15 Ibid., 231-32 (July 8, 1863).
- 16 Letter from Gifford to Elihu Gifford, "In camp near Frederick, Md.," July 9, 1863, quoted in Weiss, *Poetic Landscape*, 98.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 "Spy Hung," *Frederick Examiner*, July 8, 1863; "Hanging of a Spy," *The Valley Register* (Middletown, MD), July 10, 1863; "Richardson Hanged At Frederick City. July 1863," *Valley News Echo: Monthly Civil War Newspaper* (Hagerstown, MD: Potomac Edison Co., 1959-65).
- 19 Engelbrecht, *Diary*, 232-33 (July 11, 1863).
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Engelbrecht, *Diary*, 228-29 (July 6, 1863).
- 22 George B. Davis, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891-95), Plate 94, 3.
- 23 *Atlas of Frederick County, Maryland* (Philadelphia: C. O. Titus & Co., 1873), 11; Davies et al., *Atlas*, Plate 94, 3.
- 24 *OR*, ser. I, vol. 27, 250.
- 25 "The Metropolitan Museum of Art: News From the Met: Press Releases. Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford," http://www.metmuseum.org/news/news_pr.asp.
- 26 Letter from Sanford Robinson Gifford to O. B. Frothingham, November 6, 1874, microfilm, reel D10, Sanford Robinson Gifford and Gifford Family Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.