



Camp Curtin

In 1865, Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin gave a speech at the training camp named in his honor. "The field upon which we now stand," he told the troops assembled, "will be known as classic ground for here has been the great central point of the organization of our military forces." He added, "When my administration of public affairs will have been forgotten and the good and evil will be only known to the investigation of the antiquarian, Camp Curtin, with its memories and associations, will be immortal." Camp Curtin was opened on April 18, 1861, only three days after the fall of Fort Sumter and the opening of the Civil War. The 80-acre compound was situated north of the State Capitol building on what was formerly the County Agricultural Fairgrounds. Originally called "Camp Union," the officer in charge of launching the training facility enthusiastically renamed it after the governor. Military historians estimate that more than 300,000 troops passed through Camp Curtin during the four-year conflict. Soldiers generally regarded the camp as well maintained and comfortable. "The building is a modern one and keeps out rain and wind first-rate," wrote Sgt. Edward Boots in 1861, "and the boys have put a fine floor in it which makes it quite snug." "We have plenty to eat here in Camp," wrote Pvt. John Travis in 1864. Most of their time was spent drilling and preparing for combat, but there were long stretches of inactivity and boredom. To pass the time, many soldiers wrote frequent letters home. Currently, the Camp Curtin Historical Society is collecting and publishing those letters, creating a documentary record of what life was like for the new recruits.

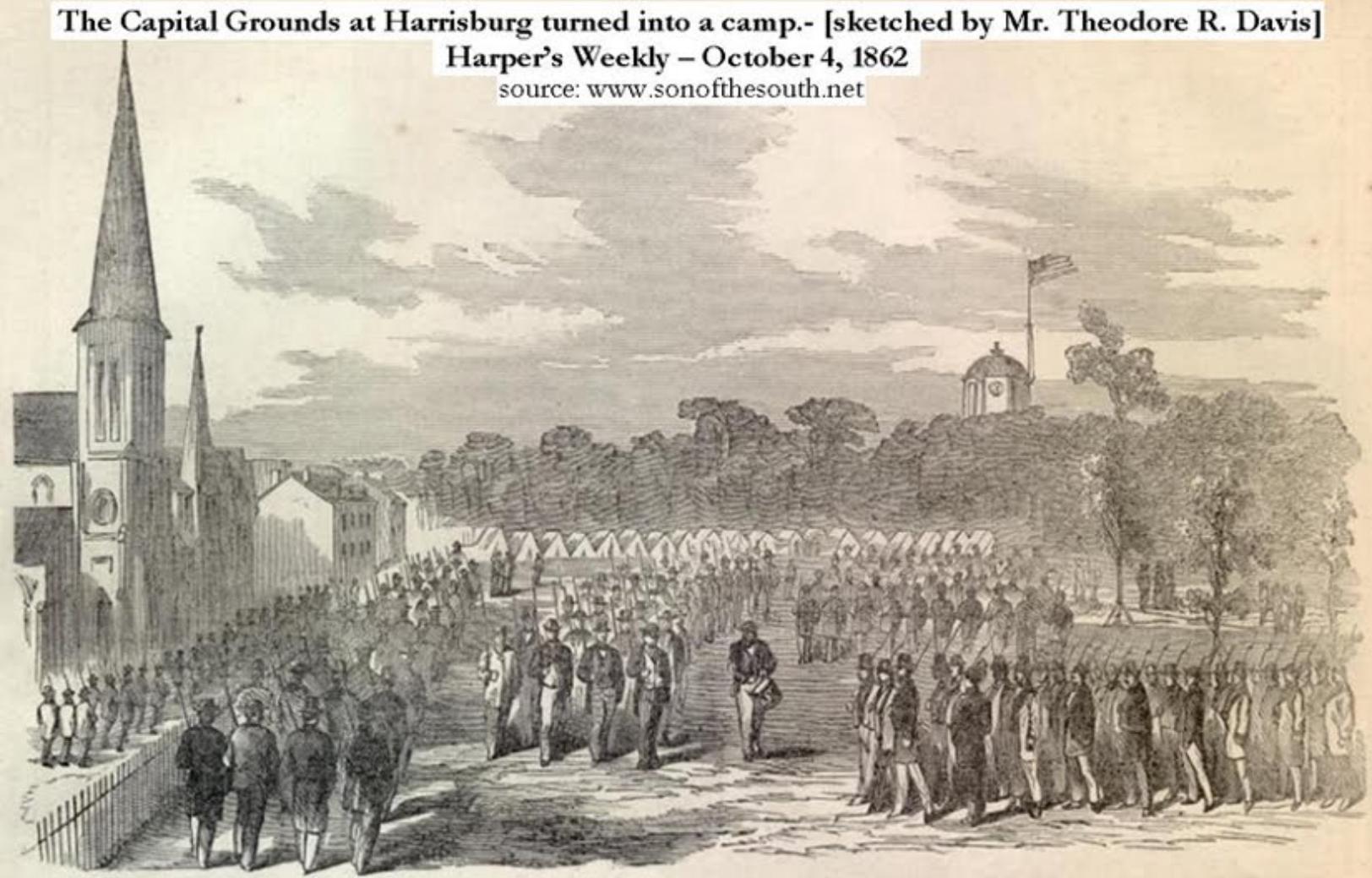
William J. Miller, *The Training of an Army: Camp Curtin and the North's Civil War* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing), 1990.

John B. B. Trussell, "The First Battle of Harrisburg.," *Pennsylvania Heritage*:17 ((1991)): 32-37.

The Capital Grounds at Harrisburg turned into a camp.- [sketched by Mr. Theodore R. Davis]

Harper's Weekly – October 4, 1862

source: www.sonofthesouth.net



As the war trudged on, Camp Curtin needed to accommodate more soldiers. This drawing shows the capitol building much closer than in the previous drawing. In fact, the capitol building and its grounds became part of Camp Curtin.