

Who Were the Men of the 97th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry?

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The original nine hundred fifty members of the **97th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment** were volunteers who enlisted in West Chester, Chester County between August and September 1861. We will never know what motivated each of these men to volunteer. It is likely that many volunteered as a patriotic act, for others it was a chance for a grand adventure, some may have felt a moral obligation to fight a social wrong, and for some it was a job that paid as well or better than their civilian jobs. What we do know is the age, occupation, and place of residence of the volunteers as all of this information was recorded when they enlisted. This information was not recorded for the later substitutes and draftees that rounded out the regiment or were assigned as replacements. Based on the information recorded about the original volunteers we can get a glimpse of the type of individuals that joined the regiment.

The average age of the soldiers of the 97th was slightly older than the recruits of our modern army. The average age of the 97th volunteers was 22. The youngest volunteer was 12, a drummer boy. The oldest volunteer was 44. Some of the younger volunteers, 18 years and younger, were released from service by court order after they enlisted.

While the majority of the volunteers were from Chester County, Pennsylvania, some of the volunteers came from much further afield. Of the recruits, more were from West

Chester, 143 (15%) than other location. Coatesville provide the next highest number of volunteers, 45 (5%). (See Table 1 for the complete listing of localities of the volunteers.) A number of volunteers came from surrounding counties and bordering states. Men came from Berks, Blair, Carbon, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Montgomery, Schuylkill, and York Counties and Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Volunteers also came from Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. Immigrants also joined the Regiment. Men from Ireland, Germany, and Switzerland were among the volunteers to join the regiment. Several volunteers are listed as coming from England but it is not clear if some or all of those men are from Great Britain or the settlement of England in New Britain Township. It is not known why the recruits from outside Chester County joined the regiment. The 97th might have been the closest unit recruiting at the time. Some might have been itinerant laborers working in the county or recent immigrants. They may have been moving through the area when the calls for enlistment went out and were caught up in the patriotic excitement and zeal of the moment. Some may have had relatives in the county.

The volunteers came from diverse backgrounds. A total of one hundred occupations are listed in the recruiting rolls (Table 2). While some of the occupations are still practiced today, many are only dim memories that reflect the level of technology of the mid-nineteenth century. Most Americans in the nineteenth century lived and worked on farms so it is not surprising that the most common occupation listed was that of farmer, 304 (32%). The second most common occupations, though both far less common than farmer were carpenters and blacksmiths. Most of the occupations were skilled or specialized

crafts. Other occupations such as factory man or laborer were relatively unskilled jobs. Some of the occupations cluster around the industries that were common in the area such as iron casting and cloth manufacture.

TABLE 1
Residences of the Original Volunteers

CHESTER CO.

Avondale
Bancroft Mills
Barren Hill
Bethel
Birmingham
Booth's Corner
Brandywine Manor
Bridgeton
Cedar Hollow
Chadsford
Chandlerville
Charlestown Twp.
Chatham
Chester
Chester Springs
Chester Valley
Coatesville
Cochranville
Concord
Concordville
Crozierville
Darby
Dillworthtown
Doe Run
Downingtown
East Bradford
East Goshen
East Nanmeal
East Nottingham
East Vincent
East Whiteland
Eastown
Edgemont
Elk Dale
Elkview
Embreeville
Ercidoun
Fisherville
Goshen
Guthrieville
Gum Tree
Guthrieville
Hayesville

Hickory Hill
Honeybrook
Howellville
Jennerville
Kellyville
Kennett Square
Kimbeton
Kimbleville
Kirks's Mills
Lazaretto
Leiperville
Lenni
Lewisville
Linwood
Lionville
Loag's Corner
London Brittain
London Grove
Londonderry
Lower Oxford
Marple
Marcus Hook
Marsh
Marshalton
Marticville
McWilliamstown
Media
Milltown
Mortonville
New Centerville
New London
Newtown
Newtown Square
Nether Providence
Norristown
Oakdale
Oak Hill
Octorarville
Oxford
Paoli
Parkersville
Penn Twp
Pennsbury

Pughtown
Parkesburg
Penningtonville
Phoenixville
Pleasant Grove
Pocopson
Radnor
Red Lion
Reeseville
Ridley
Rockdale
Rockville
Russelville
Sadsburyville
St. Mary's
St. Peters
Schuylkill Twp.
Spread Eagle
Springfield
Steelville
Strasburg
Stricklersville
Sugartown
Thorndale
Tredtffrin Twp.
Unionville
Upland
Upper Providence
Upper Oxford
Upper Uwchland
Uwchland
Valley Creek
Valley Forge
Valley Store
Village Green
Warren Tavern
Waynesburg
West Bradford
West Brandywine
West Chester
West Vincent
West Whiteland
Willistown

BERKS CO.

Caernarvon

BLAIR CO.

Altoona

CARBON CO.
Mauch Chuck

DELAWARE CO.

Concordville
Chelsea
Edgemount
Glen Mills

Ivy Mills
Kellyville
Knowlton
Radnor

Ridley
Thornbury

LANCASTER CO.

Bart
Cains
Christiana
Colerain
Churchtown

Gap
Georgetown
Intercourse
Lyles
Manheim

Oak Hill
Octorara
Pequea

LEBANON CO.

Union Forge

MONTGOMERY CO.

Lower Merion

Perkiomen Bridge

White Marsh

SCHUYLKILL CO.

Minersville

YORK CO.

PHILADELPHIA

Manayunk
West Philadelphia

OTHER STATES

DELAWARE

Brandywine Banks
Brandywine Village

Centerville
Christiana Hd.

Wilmington
Stanton

MARYLAND

Charlestown

Fremount, Cecil Co.

MASSACHUSETTS

Lexington

NEW JERSEY

Gloucester

Mullica Hill

NEW YORK

Wayne Co.

Leroy

RHODE ISLAND

Providence

TABLE 2
Occupations of the Original Volunteers

Ambrotypist (early form of photography)	Engineer
Artist	Factory Man
Auger Maker	Farmer
Baker	Fence Maker
Barber	Fisherman
Blacksmith	Forgeman (one who works at an iron forge)
Boatman	Gas Fitter (one who installs gas lines for lights and stoves)
Book Binder	Harness Maker
Brewer	Hatter (maker of hats)
Brick Maker	House Painter
Brick Layer	Iron Founder (one who works at an iron furnace)
Butcher	Iron Molder (one who makes sand molds for cast iron)
Cabinet Maker	Jeweler
Carpenter	Joiner (one who assembles wood using mortis and tenons)
Clerk	Laborer
Cutler (maker of knives and forks)	Law Student
Cooper (barrel maker)	Lawyer
Cedar Cooper	Lime Burner (one who cooked limestone to turn it into lime for plaster and mortar)
Calico Printer (one printed decorations on cotton cloth)	Livery Keeper (one who ran a stable)
Coach Maker	Lumber Merchant
Coachsmith	Lumberman
Coach Painter	Machinist
Cordwainer (made shoes by sewing)	Mason (one who builds with stone)
Coal Miner	Marble Mason (one who builds with marble)
Confectioner (candy maker)	Marble Manufacturer (one who makes things out of marble)
Coppersmith	Merchant
Carder	Miller
Cotton Manufacturer	Millwright (one who builds or repairs mills)
Cotton Spinner	Miner
Cotton Twister	Morocco Finisher (one who made fine goat leather)
Cotton Picker	Musician
Cotton Dyer	News Agent (reporter)
Cradle Maker	
Dentist	
Doctor	
Drover (one who herded sheep, pigs, and cows to market)	
Druggist	

Nurseryman
Painter
Paper Maker
Paper Hanger (one who hangs wallpaper)
Photographer
Printer
Printer's Apprentice
Potter
Plasterer
Plumber
Produce Dealer
Puddler (one who works with molten iron)
Pump Maker
Railroader (one who works for the railroad)
Rope Maker
Saddler (one who makes saddles)
Sailor
Sawyer (one who saws logs into planks)
School Teacher

Shoemaker
Spinner
Stage Driver
Stone Cutter
Soldier
Tailor
Tallow Candler (one who makes candle from fat)
Tanner (one who makes leather)
Teamster
Tinsmith
Tobacconist
Waiter
Wheelwright (one who makes wheels)
Weaver
Wood Chopper
Wood Turner (one who makes wooden objects on a lathe)