

The crossing at Berry's Ferry: the evidence

Selected sources for the Our Clarke story [The crossing at Berry's Ferry](https://ourclarke.com/berrys-ferry/): April 15, 1862, on the Shenandoah River.

Story	https://ourclarke.com/berrys-ferry/
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These dates describe this packet. Each document inside it carries its own historical date. The research and this compilation happened on the same day.

What is in this packet

Seven sources: the five the story cites in its source notes, and two supporting references those notes name. Two are reproduced: two printed pages of Samuel P. Bates's 1869 regimental history, and an 1869 newspaper item that remembers the drowning. The other five are cited with a link, what was actually read, the place in the story where each is used, and the reason no image is included.

How the accounts differ

The vessel. Bates says rafts were built but puts the drowning on an old ferryboat, repaired and guided by a rope. The 1869 newspaper says the men drowned crossing on rafts. The 54th New York's sketch describes a raft made from an old barn. The story does not combine them into one vessel.

The number. Bates names three men "and fifty enlisted men"; the story's 53 is that sum, not a roster count. The 1869 newspaper's "some eighty-three" names no authority and is kept separate. Edmonds's "fifty more drowned" is a reaction, not a count.

The diary. The quotation's placement at the crossing is the 2016 article's. A search of the in-copyright 1988 edition finds the phrase on page 81, but the entry, its date and its surrounding words were not seen, and the manuscript was not examined.

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SEVENTY-FIFTH REGIMENT.

THIS regiment, at first known as the Fortieth, was composed, almost exclusively, of Germans from Philadelphia, many of whom had seen service in the armies of European States. Recruiting began in August, 1861, under authority of the Secretary of War, and the companies rendezvoused at a camp in West Philadelphia, called Camp Worth, in honor of General Worth, with whom Colonel Bohlen had served as aid-de-camp, in the campaign in Mexico. Henry Bohlen, of Philadelphia, was commissioned Colonel, August 7, 1861. He selected as his field officers, who were accordingly commissioned, the following gentlemen from Philadelphia: Francis Mahler, formerly an officer and participant in the Baden Revolution, Lieutenant Colonel; Alvin Von Matzdorff, Major.

The discipline and drill, while remaining at Camp Worth, were highly creditable. Seven companies were fully organized, equipped, and armed with the old, altered flint-lock musket, which were soon after exchanged for the Harper's Ferry musket. On the 26th of September, with about eight hundred men, the regiment proceeded to Washington. Others soon followed, until its ranks were filled to the maximum number.

Soon after its arrival at Washington the regiment was assigned to Blenker's Division, and crossing the Potomac, by the Long Bridge, encamped at Roach's Mills. Remaining here until the 12th of October, it was ordered to move to Hunter's Chapel, where it went into winter quarters. A well organized band from Philadelphia, under the leadership of Rudolph Wittig, joined the regiment on the 31st. It here became proficient in squad, company, regimental, and battalion drill, under the instruction of Colonel Bohlen and Lieutenant Colonel Mahler. Its arms were here exchanged for the new Springfield rifled musket. Frequent details were made during the winter to assist in the construction of fortifications. As a part of General Sumner's Corps, the brigade moved, on the 10th, in the general advance of the army, reaching a point near Annandale the same night, and on the following day Burkes' Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, where it remained until the 15th. Moving thence to Fairfax Court House it remained until the 23d, when it proceeded to Centreville, and occupied the works just vacated by the enemy. Moving over the battle-field of Bull Run, on which traces of the sanguinary conflict of the 21st of July were distinctly visible, the command reached Warrenton Junction on the 26th. Here it suffered severely from scarcity of provisions.

Upon the departure of Sumner to the Peninsula, Blenker's Division was ordered to report to General Fremont, in command of the Mountain Department. On the 6th of April it moved through Warrenton to Salem, where it bivouacked four days, taking shelter in the woods during a heavy snow storm. It proceeded on the 11th, *via* Upperville to Paris, and from thence to Berry's

BF-01a. Samuel P. Bates, History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861–5, volume II (Harrisburg: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1869), "Seventy-Fifth Regiment," pages [915]–916.

The opening page of Bates's sketch of the Seventy-Fifth Regiment. It carries no printed page number; it falls between pages 914 and 916. It follows the regiment in Blenker's division from Warrenton to Salem, then "via Upperville to Paris, and from thence to Berry's," the page's last words.

Internet Archive scan of the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center copy (historyofpennsyl02bate), leaf 933: <https://archive.org/details/historyofpennsyl02bate/page/915/mode/1up>

Why it may be reproduced: The underlying work was published in the United States in 1869 and its copyright term has expired. The scan record has no rights or license field; that absence is not the basis for public-domain status.

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In the story: [Near midstream](#); [News across a divided valley](#); [The box below the ferry](#); [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

Ferry. On the 15th it was ordered to cross the Shenandoah, and move to Winchester, in pursuit of Stonewall Jackson's force then confronting Banks. Several rafts were constructed to cross the troops. The river was high, and the current rapid. Company D, the skirmish company, crossed in safety, when, to save time, an old ferry boat, which had been partly burned by the enemy, was repaired, and a rope stretched across the stream to guide it. Companies I and K embarked, and when near the middle of the stream, the boat swamped and suddenly began to sink. It was a moment of terror. A shriek of agony rent the air as they were suddenly engulfed. Scores of knapsacks covering the surface of the water were all that was visible of the unfortunate men as they floated, thus burdened, in the river. Captain Christian Wyck, of company K, Lieutenant Adolph Winter, of company I, First Sergeant Joseph Tiedemann, of company K, and fifty enlisted men were drowned. Sergeant Tiedemann, an expert swimmer, sacrificed his life in a vain attempt to save that of his Captain.

This unfortunate event cast a deep gloom over the remaining portion of the regiment. Finding that it was impracticable to cross, the command returned *via* Paris and Upperville, and marched to Snickerville. It here passed over by means of a rope ferry constructed by the troops of General Banks, and on the 18th arrived at Winchester. The division was temporarily placed under the command of General Rosecrans. The regiment remained in camp until the 6th of May to recruit, and during the interval it received new clothing, and a full supply of rations. On the 28th of April, Colonel Bohlen was promoted to Brigadier General.

Moving thence *via* Romney and Petersburg the command reached Franklin on the 14th, twice crossing the South Branch of the Potomac on its way. The men here endured much suffering from hunger, the supplies being brought from New Creek, a distance of seventy miles over a rough mountainous route. The defeat of Banks, and his retreat down the Shenandoah Valley, rendered it important for Fremont to hasten forward his forces to intercept the retreat of Stonewall Jackson. Returning to Petersburg, knapsacks were left, and the march immediately resumed to Moorefield, at several times fording deep and rapid streams. The regiment moved rapidly on through Moorefield and Wardenstown to Strasburg, where the rear of Jackson was encountered. Many of the most robust men of the command became exhausted and sank by the roadside. An exciting race up the valley now took place, the enemy leaving the road strewn with clothing and stores, indicating a hasty retreat, and a close pursuit by Fremont's troops. On the 4th of June, at Mount Jackson, the bridge was found totally destroyed by the retreating foe, and the march delayed. pontoons were with great difficulty laid, and on the 6th the column moved towards Harrisonburg, where the Bucktails and the cavalry of General Bayard encountered the enemy, and the rebel General Ashby was killed.

On the following day, in the battle of Cross Keyes, the brigade of General Bohlen, of which the Seventy-fifth formed part, supported the left. The line of battle was a mile and a half long, General Schenck on the right, General Milroy in the centre, and General Stahl on the left; Stahl occupying the right of the division, Bohlen the left, and Steinwehr in reserve. Thus formed, our army advanced steadily and successfully, under a storm of shot and shell, losing heavily in men, but constantly gaining ground, until after three o'clock, when Stahl's Brigade, having passed through the wood in its front to a clover-

BF-01b. Samuel P. Bates, History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861–5, volume II (Harrisburg: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1869), “Seventy-Fifth Regiment,” pages [915]–916.

The account behind the story's first section. Several rafts were built; the river was high and the current rapid; Company D crossed safely. Then “an old ferry boat,” partly burned by the enemy, was repaired and guided by a rope, and Companies I and K embarked. Near the middle of the stream it swamped. Bates names Captain Christian Wyck, Lieutenant Adolph Winter and First Sergeant Joseph Tiedemann “and fifty enlisted men” as drowned, and tells of Tiedemann's attempt to save his captain. The story's 53 is the sum of those words, not a roster count. The next paragraph gives the “deep gloom,” the turn back to “Snickerville,” the rope ferry and Winchester on the 18th.

Internet Archive scan of the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center copy (historyofpennsyl02bate), leaf 934: <https://archive.org/details/historyofpennsyl02bate/page/916/mode/1up>

Why it may be reproduced: The underlying work was published in the United States in 1869 and its copyright term has expired. The scan record has no rights or license field; that absence is not the basis for public-domain status.

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A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY AND RICH HAUL OF TREASURE.—On Friday last, two youths were engaged in searching for muscels in the falls of the Shenandoah, just below Berry's Ferry, Clarke county. One of the boys feeling a hard and sleek substance, brought it to the surface, when he found it to be, as he supposed a tin box, some six inches long, four inches broad and two inches deep. Its weight excited their curiosity, and observing a clasp to it, they made for the shore, and upon opening the box found within one elegant gold watch and twenty-six rings, nineteen of them solid gold, and seven diamond. They took their treasure and submitted it to competent judges, who put the value of the diamond rings at \$125 to \$150 a piece, and the gold rings, which are very heavy, at \$10 each. The watch is valued at \$200, and all were in a perfectly dry state of preservation. The boys made a second search about the shoals, and this time succeeded in finding a heavy silver table-spoon. The box containing the valuables upon examination, proved to be a beautifully chased and engraved silver one, and its value cannot be less than \$50. Our friend Mr. M. Harris, examined the box and one or more of the gold rings, and informs us there is no mistake about their purity and value. He did not see the diamond rings, but was assured by Mr. Sherer, Mr. T. S. Smith, and other citizens of Millwood, who had examined them, that they were of great brilliancy and value.

The supposition is that the box was lost by some of Blenker's Dutch during the war. It was found only a few hundred yards below where some eighty-three of Blenker's division were drowned, whilst attempting to cross the Shenandoah at Berry's Ferry, on rafts, during the high waters of 1862. The box, rings, watch, &c., were doubtless stolen property, as the thieving propensities of Blenker's men were manifested wherever the command was ordered. If this supposition in regard to this matter is incorrect, what hypothesis can be offered in regard to the matter? Of the *fact* of its finding, we entertain no doubt, as Mr. Harris and the other gentlemen quoted are perfectly reliable.—*Win. Times, Aug. 25.*

BF-02. South Branch Intelligencer (Romney, W. Va.), August 27, 1869, page 2, column 2: "A Wonderful Discovery and Rich Haul of Treasure," credited to the Winchester Times of August 25.

The account behind the story's last section. Two youths searching for mussels in the falls of the Shenandoah "just below Berry's Ferry" bring up a box holding a gold watch and rings. The paper supposes it "was lost by some of Blenker's Dutch" and calls its contents "doubtless stolen property." It places the find a few hundred yards below where "some eighty-three" of Blenker's division drowned crossing "on rafts" in 1862.

Its number and its rafts are the newspaper's, seven years on, with no authority named; they are not Bates's repaired ferryboat or his three named men and fifty enlisted men. The item's closing credit names the Winchester Times of August 25, 1869; that issue was not read, so this Romney reprint is the witness to the report.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84026826/1869-08-27/ed-1/?sp=2>

Credit: South Branch Intelligencer (Romney, W. Va.), August 27, 1869, page 2. Library of Congress, Chronicling America; digitized by West Virginia University.

Why it may be reproduced: Published in the United States in 1869. The Library of Congress rights statement on this item says it believes the newspapers in Chronicling America are in the public domain or have no known copyright restrictions, and that newspapers published in the United States more than 95 years ago are in the public domain in their entirety.

Image: an existing detail of the Library of Congress page scan, showing only this item, reproduced unaltered; no enhancement or annotation.

In the story: [The box below the ferry](#); [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

Cited sources

No image of these sources is included in this packet.

BF-03. Civil War in the East, “75th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment” (regimental chronology).

<https://civilwarintheeast.com/us-regiments-batteries/pennsylvania/75th-pennsylvania-infantry/>

What was read: web page read (Researcher A, September 25, 2026).

Why no image: A modern web page; cited, not reproduced. Reproduction rights have not been established. Gives April 15, 1862 at Berry’s Ferry, the day Bates also gives, and calls Winter a captain; the story follows Bates’s lieutenant. A modern retelling of the regimental account, not an independent witness.

In the story: [Near midstream](#); [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

BF-04. Small But Important Riots, “Maj. William Atwood and George Washington’s Portrait” (April 11, 2016), quoting the journal of Amanda Virginia Edmonds.

<https://smallbutimportantriots.com/2016/04/11/maj-william-atwood-and-george-washingtons-portrait/>

What was read: web page read (Researcher A, September 25, 2026).

Why no image: A modern web page; cited, not reproduced. Reproduction rights have not been established. The article places Edmonds’s words at the time the division was crossing the Shenandoah and lists Nancy C. Baird’s edition of her journals among its sources, without a page or date. That the words concern Berry’s Ferry is the article’s placement.

In the story: [News across a divided valley](#); [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

BF-05. New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center, “54th New York Infantry Regiment’s Civil War Historical Sketch,” web page reproducing the sketch from the New York Monuments Commission’s final report (1902).

<https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/unit-history/infantry-1/54th-infantry-regiment/historical-sketch>

What was read: web transcription read (Researcher A, September 25, 2026); the printed 1902 report was not inspected.

Why no image: A modern web page; the site’s own material is not reproduced. Describes high water and a raft made from an old barn, with one of the first companies of Bohlen’s Pennsylvania regiment drowned. Kept separate from Bates’s repaired ferryboat and the 1869 newspaper’s rafts.

In the story: [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

BF-06. Nancy Chappelle Baird, ed., Journals of Amanda Virginia Edmonds: Lass of the Mosby Confederacy, 1857–1867, 2nd ed. (Stephens City, Va.: Commercial Press, 1988), page 81. (supporting reference to BF-04)

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015029551176>

What was read: search only: a HathiTrust search of this in-copyright edition finds “fifty more drowned” once, on page 81; the entry, its date and its surrounding words were not seen, and the manuscript was not examined.

Why no image: In copyright; HathiTrust allows search only. No text, search screenshot or facsimile is reproduced. Identifies the page on which the quoted phrase is printed, nothing more. “Fifty more” is not used as a casualty count.

In the story: [News across a divided valley](#); [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

BF-07. PA-Roots, “75th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers Organization and Service” (web transcription of Bates’s sketch). (supporting reference to BF-01)

<https://www.pa-roots.com/pacw/infantry/75th/75thorg.html>

What was read: web page read and compared with the printed pages (Researcher A, September 25, 2026).

Why no image: A modern web transcription; cited, not reproduced. No separate rights determination is made here. Matches Bates’s printed text. A compared transcription of BF-01, not another independent witness.

In the story: [Near midstream](#); [News across a divided valley](#); [The box below the ferry](#); [Sources and the differing accounts](#)

Bibliography

Reproduced in this packet

Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861–5*, volume II (Harrisburg: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1869), “Seventy-Fifth Regiment,” pages [915]–916. <https://archive.org/details/historyofpennsyl02bate/page/916/mode/1up>

South Branch Intelligencer (Romney, W. Va.), August 27, 1869, page 2, column 2: “A Wonderful Discovery and Rich Haul of Treasure,” credited to the Winchester Times of August 25. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84026826/1869-08-27/ed-1/?sp=2>

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Civil War in the East, “75th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment” (regimental chronology). <https://civilwarintheeast.com/us-regiments-batteries/pennsylvania/75th-pennsylvania-infantry/>

Small But Important Riots, “Maj. William Atwood and George Washington’s Portrait” (April 11, 2016), quoting the journal of Amanda Virginia Edmonds. <https://smallbutimportantriots.com/2016/04/11/maj-william-atwood-and-george-washingtons-portrait/>

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