

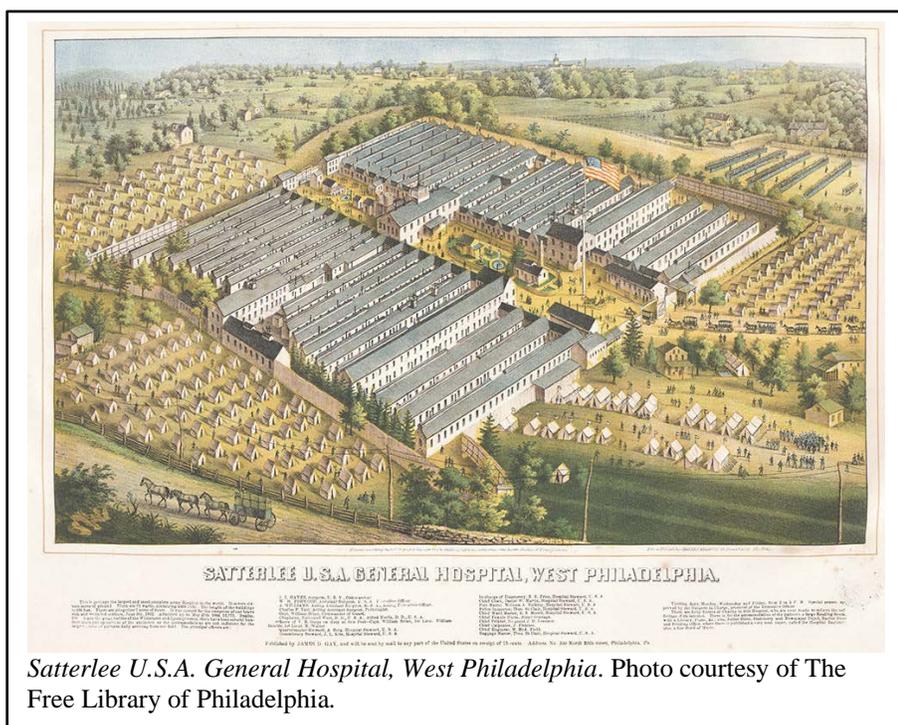
## MORE THAN A STATISTIC

Mike Bell

When the war clouds gathered in the spring of 1861, the Trelease family of Parsippany, New Jersey offered up three of their sons in service to the nation. Elijah, born in 1838, joined in the fall of 1861, and both Walter and George William (Bill) joined the following spring. Elijah was to serve in the 2nd N.J.; Bill would enlist in the 15th N.J., and Walter found himself in the 27th New Jersey. All of the boys would see combat in the coming years. In May of 1864, Bill, who would have turned 20 the next month, died in the opening salvos of the Battle of Spotsylvania. Walter, the oldest brother, somehow survived the Battle of Fredericksburg, and the war, dying in 1917.

Elijah was with the 2nd New Jersey as it took part in the Army of the Potomac's campaign along the Virginia Peninsula in the spring and summer of 1862. The Second saw combat during many of the battles, including Gaines Mill and Malvern Hill. Letters between the brothers survive. They speak of the boredom of camp life and are full of worry about the family and friends back home in Parsippany. There are even questions about McClellan's leadership and plans!

After getting its collective nose bruised, the Union army withdrew back to Northern Virginia. Elijah Trelease however, was not with his comrades. He had taken sick and was on his way to the hospital to recover.



He arrived at Satterlee Hospital outside of Philadelphia shortly after it had officially opened. Named after a well-known surgeon, General Richard Satterlee, it would become the largest military hospital in the north. But it was still a bit ramshackle in August of 1862. In addition to the doctors and orderlies, the primary nursing staff were the Sisters of Charity, an order of Catholic nuns. Thousands of Union soldiers would enter the hospital for care, but many would never return to family. In the days before more sterilized medical practice, hospitals could often be a death trap for these men.

It was the dreaded Typhoid fever that sidelined Elijah Trelease. Word of his being sick was slow to reach his brothers. In one letter, Bill wrote that he had not heard from "Lije" in sometime and hoped he was all right.

On August 10, 1862, Elijah Trelease slipped away. He became one of the nearly 224,000 men in blue who died of disease in the war. He was buried near the hospital. In 1870, those

bodies were exhumed and the remains returned to families if possible. He rests now beneath a simple marker in Vail Memorial Cemetery in his hometown of Parsippany.

Today, the site of Satterlee Hospital is part of Clark Park in West Philadelphia.

Editor's note: Mike Bell is a frequent contributor to our website who enjoys researching many family connections to the Civil War. Elijah Trelease was the 5X maternal great uncle of Mike's son.