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A soldier's love for his family has been retold down the years

Tale of Portville's Sgt. Humiston inspires new memorial

By KATE DAY

□ The Times Herald

PORTVILLE — Three years ago, residents of Portville thought they had finalized their memorial efforts to Civil War hero Sgt. Amos Humiston with a special day of recognition and music.

Portville historians recently learned that the memorial efforts will reach beyond their village into Gettysburg, Pa., where special celebrations honoring Sgt. Humiston have been scheduled for July 3, 1993. During the dedication ceremony, Gettysburg historians will unveil a bronzed, engraved monument in honor of Portville's Civil War hero, said Ronda Pollock, president of the Portville Historical and Preservation Society.

"I got a call from a woman in Gettysburg named Cindy Stouffer who said she had discovered the story of Amos Humiston. She wondered why more attention hadn't been paid to him," Mrs. Pollock said. Ms. Stouffer is spokesperson for the Gettysburg group.

The tale of Sgt. Humiston stretches back 129 years when the young man's body was found after the first day of fighting at the Battle of Gettysburg. His body was found without identification but clutched in his hand was a photo of his three children. A volunteer surgeon, touched by the incident, set out to find the soldier's identity.

THE SEARCH for Sgt. Humiston's identity was helped when thousands of copies of his children's photo were sent to the northern part of the United States. Eventually, his wife, Phylinda Humiston, recognized the photos and the mystery was solved. He was later buried in The National Cemetery which was dedicated by President Abraham Lincoln.

According to Mrs. Pollock, a formerly erected monument and mural to Sgt. Humiston's troop, Company C, 154th New York State Volunteers, can be found on Coster Avenue in Gettysburg.

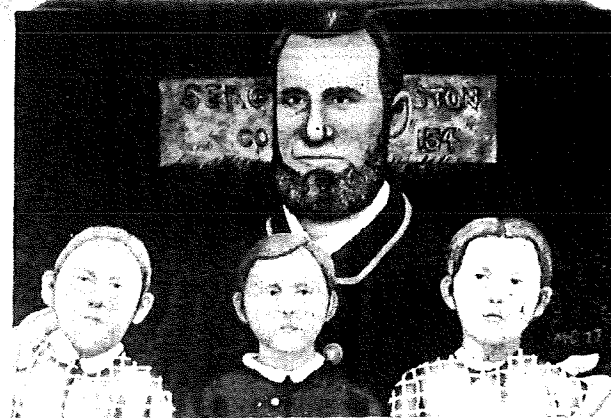
"A couple of years ago my husband and I went to Gettysburg to find the 154th monument and a man said 'You're the first people to ask to see that,'" Mrs. Pollock said. "I think this Amos Humiston event will draw more attention to the 154th."

THE GETTYSBURG committee had hoped to schedule the event for the summer of 1992, but Mrs. Pollock and other officials from Portville felt it did not allow enough time to organize the dedication.

"We think it will be better to have it next year because the 130th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg will be held then," she said.

In addition to the unveiling of the monument, the marching band from Portville Central School will perform. Also scheduled to attend the dedication ceremonies will be

the Gettysburg town historian and Civil War battlefield guide; Dr. Walter Powell and Rev. Kenneth Faust of the First Presbyterian Church of Portville; and Civil War author and historian Mark Dunkelman. The Portville band and vocal group will also perform a special arrangement of the song "The Children of the Battlefield."



This painting of Civil War Army Sgt. Amos Humiston and his children — Frank, Frederick and Alice — was done by Civil War author and historian Mark Dunkelman. In the background is Sgt. Humiston's Gettysburg grave. A new, bronzed engraved memorial to the four of them in Gettysburg, Pa., may look like this painting.