

## Corporal Rihl

### First Union Soldier Killed North of Mason-Dixon Line

### June 22, 1863



This coming Saturday, June 22, will be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the killing of Corporal William H. Rihl, the first Union soldier killed north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Corp. Rihl was born in Philadelphia in 1843. On July 19, 1861, at the age of 18, he enlisted for three years in the cavalry company organized in Philadelphia by Capt. William H. Boyd. Boyd's company became Co. C in the 1st New York (Lincoln) Cavalry Regiment, the only company in the 1st New York that was from Pennsylvania. The 1st New York (Lincoln) was the first authorized regiment to be raised for the Civil War. Co. C was, also, the first Company in the regiment to be given a duty assignment – to protect President Abraham Lincoln and Washington City.

By June 1863, it was evident Pennsylvania was going to be invaded by Rebel forces. Union Gen. Darius Couch, in Harrisburg, Commander of the Department of the Susquehanna, ordered troops to go south toward the Mason-Dixon Line to stem the advance of Confederate troops. Among those troops headed south was Boyd's Co. C, with the young Corp. Rihl.

On June 22, a very hot day, Confederate Gen. [Albert Jenkins](#) and his men were in the Greencastle area. He ordered Co. I, 14th VA Cavalry, to cautiously make their way north toward Chambersburg, on what is now Route 11. If they saw any Union troops, they were to retreat in haste, as if in panic, thereby luring the Federals into an ambush of waiting Confederates. Gen. Jenkins' men were lying in wait in the wheat field of Archibald Fleming, just south, around the bend from his home, along the Chambersburg Pike.

Capt. Boyd used the Fleming farmhouse as a sheltered, gathering point for his company. A few men in Boyd's company, for reasons only known to them, rode, without being ordered, from the back of the house to the front. Their actions drew the fire of the Confederate snipers hidden in the wheat field. Two men fell from their horses, and as the firing continued Boyd's men retreated back toward Chambersburg.

Sgt. Milton Cafferty, wounded in the leg, had the bullet removed by Dr. George D. Carl. He was nursed back to health in the Illgenfritz home in Greencastle and eventually returned to his regiment. Corp. William H. Rihl died instantly of a gunshot wound to the head and became the first Union soldier killed north of the Mason-Dixon Line, on June 22, 1863. The Confederates buried Rihl on the spot where he fell. A few days later, Rihl's body was exhumed by a group of townspeople, who placed it in a coffin. His body was reburied in the Lutheran Church cemetery on North Washington Street. Twenty-three years later, on June 22, 1886, Rihl's body was re-interred at the site of his death. By June 22, 1887, the members of the GAR Corporal Rihl Post No. 438, along with a \$500 appropriation from the State Legislature, had raised enough [money](#) to have a granite monument erected and dedicated on the site of Corp. Rihl's death.



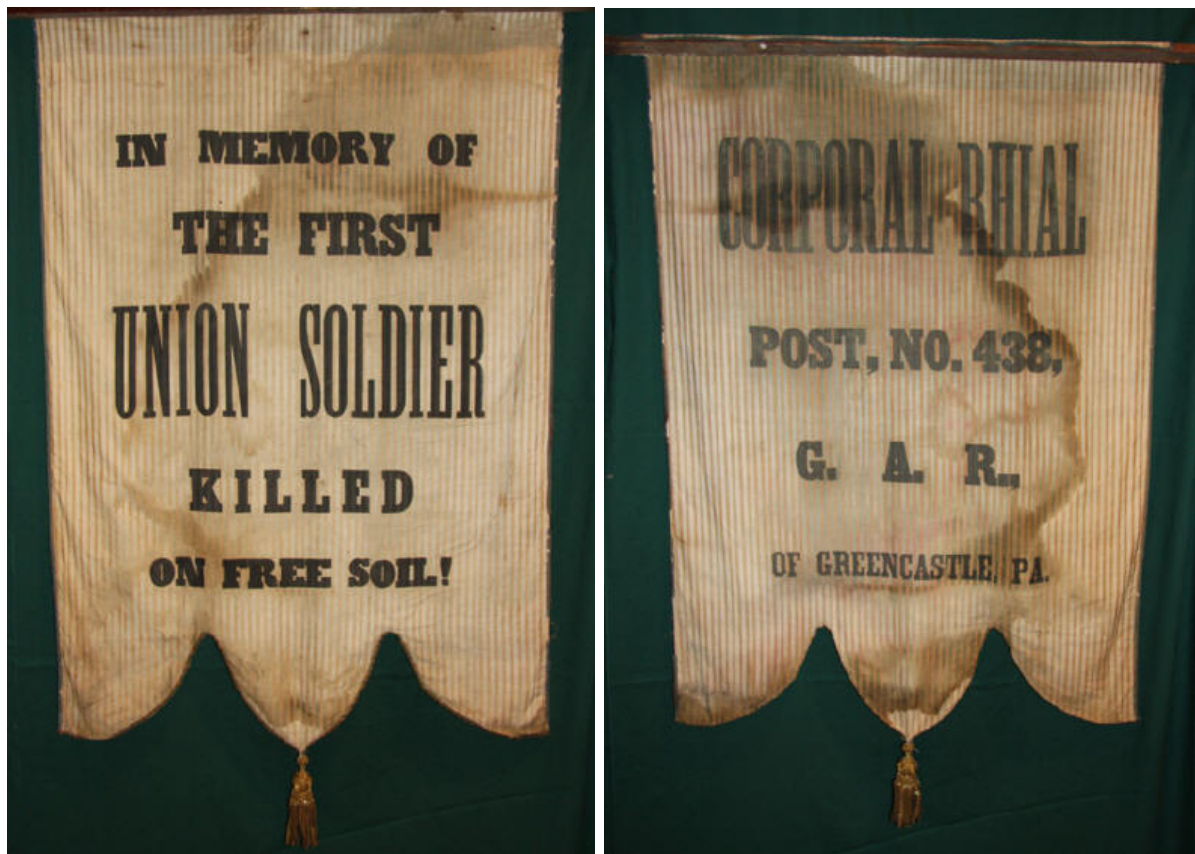
The Victorian style obelisk monument still stands on the Fleming farm, along the west side of Route 11 north, immediately outside the borough limits. The road surface has been widened considerably over the decades requiring that the east section of the cast iron fence be removed. It was replaced with a concrete, retaining wall with access steps on the left. A Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission sign also marks the historical site. Because of the danger to those who stop on the curve in the road, the state, through the Department of Tourism, installed a story stop in the northwest corner of the square, as part of the

state's Civil War Trails of History project. It tells the story of the Corp. Rihl incident.

The following is taken from the minute book of the Corp. Rihl GAR Post 438. On March 29, 1885, "The following committee was appointed to solicit funds for the Corporal Rhial Monument fund viz Commander J. R. Davison, Comrades B. F. Winger, William Snyder, Jasper Sheely, M. W. Kissecker, Dr. F. A. Bushey and C. H. Fulweiler." At the regular meeting of the Corp. Rihl GAR post on April 16, 1886, "Com(rade) Snyder made a motion that the remains of Corp Rhial be taken up and reinterred on the grounds selected for the purpose, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June, was carried." "A motion was made and carried that the Corp Rhial Mon(ument) Com(mittee) be commissioned to make all the necessary arrangements for the interment." At the regular June 4, 1886 meeting of the post, "A Program of the exercises on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June was read by Com. Eby. A draft for \$20.60 was issued to Com. Snyder to pay for the Post flag purchased by Com<sup>d</sup> Davison." On June 18, 1886, "Comrades Breinizer, Davis, Palmer, Poper, Jacob, Morehead, Wentling, Sylvester, Hellane, Kuntz, and Patton were named as guards of honor to escort the remains of Corp. Rhial to his final resting place on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The following comrades were appointed to act as pall bearers at the reinterment – Comrades Shirey, Eby, Snively, Showalter, Speck, Stickel, and Ruthrauff."



You may have noticed the incorrect spelling of Rihl’s last name throughout the preceding minutes of the post. As Rihl was from Philadelphia, the surname was not a familiar one in Franklin County. For more than two decades it was spelled Rhial, even on the post banner. At the May 6, 1887 regular meeting, “Com(rade) Snyder made a report on the condition of the Corp. Rihl Monument fund. Com. Bushey named a number of prominent speakers who would be present on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. Com. Snyder reported that Spielman Park had been procured for the exercises on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. Com.<sup>s</sup> Snively, Snyder and Carpenter was appointed a committee to remodal the spelling of the name Rihl on our Post Banner.” Hereafter Corp. Rihl’s surname was spelled correctly in the minute book. One of two original banners, with the misspelling, is in the Civil War collection of Allison-Antrim Museum. On June 17, 1887, “The Adj. appointed the following comrades to act as a Guard of Honor at the unveiling of the Corp. Rihl monument on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Com. Patton, Guards of Honor Unger, Davis Poper; Guards Kuntz, Singer.”



The badge committee for Old Home Week chose the Corp. Rihl monument to appear on the badge for the 2013 OHW, in honor of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

Bonnie A. Shockey, president  
Allison-Antrim Museum, Inc.