

DRUM & BUGLE

Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table



Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table Newsletter August 2010, Volume 7, Issue

Speaker: Beth Parnicza

Topic: Nearly forgotten actions along McLaw's Drive during the battle of Chancellorsville

When: Monday, August 9, 2010

Where: Brock's Riverside Grill

Times: Social begins: 6:00 p.m., Dinner served: 6:45 p.m., Meeting begins: 7:30 p.m.

Abstract On The August Dinner Program Speaker

By Greg Mertz

Our speaker for the August Dinner Program will be Ms. Beth Parnicza, a rising senior, majoring in History at West Virginia University. She is a student trainee at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, completing her third season working at the park. The park staff frequently visits different portions of the park during their days off or in the evenings, and if the area they will be examining is a bit obscure, one of them will take the lead in studying the actions there and conduct the tour for the others. This is how Beth became interested in the southeastern quadrant of the Chancellorsville intersection. She had been leading a staff tour of that practically unnoticed portion of the Chancellorsville battlefield. Her program is titled: Nearly forgotten actions along McLaw's Drive during the battle of Chancellorsville...

Are They Still Iron? The Transformation of a Famous Union Brigade

Presented by Jake Struhelka

A Review of our July Program by Greg Mertz

The Iron Brigade was one of the most famous units of any army on either side during the Civil War. In an army full of Pennsylvania and New York units, the Army of the Potomac had one brigade made up exclusively of western regiments: the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin regiments, the 19th Indiana, and the 24th Michigan. Alan T. Nolan wrote *The Iron Brigade: A Military History*, the classic history of this unit. Nolan proclaims that the Iron Brigade ceased to exist after the Battle of Gettysburg. That assertion along with other similar claims sparked our speaker, Jake Struhelka to take a closer examination of the brigade. What criteria might be used to determine when the Iron Brigade existed? As Struhelka looked at the final fifteen months of the war and the battles not covered by Nolan, he asked the question, "Are They Still Iron?"

He began by sharing brief sketches of two men: Charles Crawford and Emerson Richmond. Both men served in the 6th Wisconsin. Both saw the war to its conclusion and both were mustered out in the summer of 1865. But Crawford enlisted in June of 1861, serving nearly the entire war, while Richmond enlisted in January of 1864, six months after Gettysburg and at the end of the brigade's

history, as defined by Nolan. “Could they both,” asked Jake, “be considered members of the Iron Brigade?”

Struhelka outlined the prominent history of the Iron Brigade. Reporting that the unit saw its first action in the opening engagement of the Battle of Second Manassas at Brawner’s Farm and acquitted itself very well against another famous unit – the Stonewall Brigade. Then at South Mountain the brigade achieved its nickname as a resilient unit that despite suffering 25% casualties could stand like iron. Not only did they stand out by being Midwesterners in an eastern army with a great sobriquet, but they were also noticeable in appearance, wearing the army’s 1858 Black Hat while the rest of the army donned either kepis or bumper caps. Then at Gettysburg the brigade added to its reputation by suffering severe losses on the first day of the battle – the percentage of losses ranged from 49% in the 6th and 7th Wisconsin regiments to a startling 77% in the 2nd Wisconsin. That first day of July in 1863, is the date that one could argue that the Iron Brigade ceased to exist. The brigade “loses its character when it loses its men” is how Jake characterized this debate.

July 16, 1863, is another date when something occurred affecting the organization of the Iron Brigade. A new regiment was added to it. They were not Midwesterners but Pennsylvanians – 800 men of the 163rd Pennsylvania. In addition, they were not volunteers but draftees. They were not of the Army of the Potomac, but from the VII corps. They were not battle-hardened veterans with long service but nine-month troops who hadn’t seen action. The men who had survived Gettysburg were disgusted when the Pennsylvanians refused to advance after they felt that their short terms of enlistment had expired.

August 31, 1863, is still another date of note. The troublesome Pennsylvanians were gone, but the 1st New York Sharpshooters were now added to the brigade. This experienced, battle-tested regiment was welcomed by the Midwesterners.

Over the winter, the driving issue throughout the army was whether the scores of men with three year terms would re-enlist or would they return home the next spring. In the three Wisconsin regiments, 533 men re-enlisted and were joined by 594 new troops, including some who had been drafted. Jake felt that the number of veterans provided “enough synergy to keep them viable.”

Then on March 23, 1864, the Army of the Potomac abolished the first and third army corps. The Iron Brigade had had the distinction of being the 1st Brigade, of the 1st Division, of the 1st Corps. They lost their corps badges and lost their identity as they were moved into the 5th. Also in March, the 7th Indiana joined the brigade. Not only were these men fellow Midwesterners, but they had been in their same former division, belonging to the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, 1st Corps.

The first engagement after these organizational changes, i.e., new regiments added, many new recruits added, and being transferred to a new corps – was the Battle of The Wilderness and the start of the 1864, Overland Campaign. Losses among the men of the 2nd Wisconsin were so severe – they were worn down to only about 100 men. They were reassigned to the provost guard and lost to the Iron Brigade. The 2nd Wisconsin was the first of the five constituent regiments to leave the brigade. As the only member of the brigade to be upon the plains of First Manassas, it had the honor of being the longest serving regiment of the Iron Brigade components.

On August 25, 1864, while at Petersburg, the brigade was moved from the division that had been commanded by Lysander Cutler (a former colonel of the 6th Wisconsin) to another Fifth Corps division commanded by Samuel Crawford. Then on October 13, 1864, the second of the principal regiments, the 19th Indiana was sent out of the brigade to merge with the 20th Indiana. In February of 1865 the third of the constituent units, the 24th Michigan was delegated to Baltimore. The war ended with only the 6th and 7th Wisconsin regiments brigaded together.

Given all of these changes, when did the Iron Brigade cease to exist? As Jake reflected upon the opinions of historians who have tried to determine when the Iron Brigade had changed so much that it could no longer be called the Iron Brigade. He asked us to ponder something that historians had not really considered – what did the men who served in the brigade think? When did they feel the brigade came to an end? Which soldiers did they consider to be the legitimate members of the Iron Brigade?

Jake intends to devote research to answering these types of questions, but he provided one example that he has found so far. At a reunion of the Iron Brigade held in Milwaukee in 1880, who was permitted to attend? Were soldiers asked to prove that they were at South Mountain when the brigade received its sobriquet to be considered to be a member? Jake found that anyone who served

in the brigade, from any regiment and in any time period was considered to be a member. The members showed no discrimination and had no other criteria.

Jake concluded by showing us a photograph of one of the “men of the Iron Brigade” taken from Alan Nolan’s book. As noted, Nolan contends that the Iron Brigade no longer existed after Gettysburg. Interestingly the caption Jake shared from the book stated that the photograph was of Nathan Williams who was recruited into the 19th Indiana in early 1864 – a point some six months or more after the author proclaimed that the brigade no longer existed, and a man who would not be in the Iron Brigade by his own definition. Jake ended with a good point that other criteria ought to be considered and we look forward to what his research supports.

2010 RVCWRT Scholarship Winner

By Jim Smithfield

As most of you may already know, our 2010, RVCWRT Scholarship Winner, Ms. Danielle Weber was unable to present her essay “The Compromise of 1877: Setting the stage for future North/South Relations” to the membership at our July Dinner Meeting. She will, however, be present with her family at our August meeting to deliver her essay in it’s entirety to the membership...

EVENT RESCHEDULED!!!

By Bob Jones

The RVCWRT 2010 Fall Picnic and Fundraiser

SAVE THESE DATES

Saturday, October 2nd and Sunday, October 3rd

The RVCWRT will hold our 2010 fall picnic in October. It will be combined with a fundraiser for the scholarship fund, at *Bloomsbury*, in Orange County the 1722 home of Colonel James Taylor and his wife Martha Thompson Taylor (the great grandparents of two American presidents, James Madison, Jr. and Zachary Taylor).

We will have personal guided tours of the house and its collection of spectacular antiques, and a guided tour of the site of General Robert E. Lee’s winter encampment of 1863 – 1864, Bring Your Own refreshments for on the lawn,. In the house we will see the bedroom where Jefferson Davis stayed when visiting General Lee before his review the Army of Northern Virginia. We’ll divide into three separate tour groups each day, rotating between sites.

After completing our tours, we will have our picnic supper provided by Gentry’s Catering (just like the 2009 picnic at *Farley*).

Schedule: 1:30 p.m.	Arrive at Bloomsbury (directions sent with confirmation).
2:00 p.m.	15 will tour the house. 15 will tour the basement and wine/dine on your snacks. 15 will drive one half mile to the site of General Lee’s Winter Encampment for a tour and presentation.
3:00 p.m.	Rotate the above schedule.
4:00 p.m.	Rotate the above schedule.

Due to the tour size limitations within the house, we will reserve 45 places on each day (Saturday and Sunday). Please note: this will be on a first come, first served basis. Reservations may be made now by calling 540-399-1702 or by e-mailing Bob Jones at:

3dognight@bigplanet.com

The cost is \$50.00 per person, (\$55.00 after September 24th.), which includes the house fee, picnic, and a \$25.00 tax deductible donation to the RVCWRT Scholarship Fund. Please send your payments to RVCWRT, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404 by NLT September 24th.

More information will be provided on our web site.

Remember: Contact Bob Jones to Order Your Dinner in Advance and Save a Buck!
Note: Brocks meal cost has gone up! The cost is now \$25.00 for scheduled Dinners.
Telephone 540-399-1702 or e-mail 3dognight@bigplanet.com

Did You Know...

By Jim Smithfield

...that, Stonewall Jackson's sister, Laura, was a staunch Union supporter, who in her devotion to the "Old Republic" worked as a nurse? She once sent a letter through the lines to Jackson, stating that she could..."take care of any wounded Federals as fast as brother Thomas could wound them."

...that, J.E.B. Stuart's chief of staff, Major H.B. McClellan, had four brothers who all fought for the Union? In fact, his first cousin is also known to have fought for the Union...Major General George B. McClellan...

...that, during the battle of Bull Run, i.e., Manassass, Private Frederick Hubbard of the Washington Artillery, C.S.A., when wounded, was, by chance, placed next to his brother Private Henry Hubbard of the 1st Minnesota Infantry, U.S.A., who had also been wounded? The two brothers had not seen or spoken to each other in over seven years...

RVCWRT Ball Caps

By Conway Richardson

Reminder: There are still a few RVCWRT ball caps for sale. Cost remains only \$15.00 each. To reserve your ball cap, call Conway Richardson @ (540) 548-2112

Getting To Know Your RVCWRT Board Members

By Jim Smithfield

Jim Smithfield: Newsletter Editor

Nearly seventy years ago, I was born in my grandmother's home on the outskirts of the then small town of Waynesboro, PA. My father never made it back from WW II, so I have no memories of him. During my youth and school years, I lived in a half dozen towns in southern Pennsylvania and then attended College and Technical School in Williamsport, PA. To be honest, I left home for good at sixteen, one year after my mother married my stepfather! After that, I worked nights and weekends to support myself, i.e., to live and to put myself through school. I'm a graduate of Williamsport Technical Institute (Graphic Design) and Williamsport Community College (Business Administration). While living, working and going to school in Williamsport, I met my late wife, Judy...

While in Williamsport, I accepted an invitation, arranged by a friend, to try out for the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team. This resulted in a contract offer through the Williamsport Grays, their local farm club. However, I choked on pursuing a baseball career! You see, I was good friends with several of the Grays players and their lives seemed to be more of a horror story than a career...

My working career was as a Graphics Designer and it encompassed thirty-nine years and one month for, in essence, the same company! You see, the company was sold twenty-six times over that same thirty-nine year span. When hired, I was employee 713, yet when I retired at sixty, I was one of one hundred and thirty thousand plus employees worldwide! When I began my career, it was with Vitro Laboratories and when I retired it was from BAE Systems! My graphics groups provided direct contract support to primarily Navy (Sea Systems Command and Aegis), NATO Seasparrow and select Marine Corp (E-6) customers, with a minimal amount of civilian contracts thrown in...

After my wife passed away, my Secretary suggested, that if I just wanted to date, why not go "on line" to Love AOL and see what happens! So, I did just that and among the early responses to my bio was Arlene, my marvelous wife of nine years! Arlene and I were married one year after our initial "on line" meeting and combined we have six children and nine grandchildren...

When I was nine; myself, several friends and our dogs went on a summer bike outing into the country! We got lost and stopped along a dirt road at a cabin with a "Well" in the front yard to get water for our dogs and to ask directions. An old (and I do mean old) man came out to help us. Over time, this old man, became a good friend that I would ride out to see many times, just to listen to his stories. Although, I knew him for barely more than a year, his stories, true or not, affect me to this day. He always had me call him "Corporal" and told me that he had been a *Drummer Boy* in the Civil

War! He once stated that he was in his ninety's, but to a nine year old, he looked a lot older! Today my only visual memory of him is that of a stooped over, very old man. Listening to "Corporal's" stories implanted an undying passion for the Civil War in me. That love of anything about the Civil War has lasted my entire life and as stated earlier, I'll very soon be seventy years old...

Arlene and I enjoy travel, camping in our RV and going on cruises! We both feel, that life is for the living and neither of us dwell on our past lives! I am a Charter Member of the Lions Club, a former Club Secretary and Club Vice President. I have managed the Lion's Sight & Hearing Van for five years and I am the Club Historian! My love of the Civil War has been a constant joy in my life for sixty years and it breaks my heart to see today's young people with so little interest in our country's Civil War. However, each year when the RVCWRT Scholarship is awarded, I feel that, here is a new building block in place towards preserving our nation's great national heritage...

The Virginia Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission

Signature Conferences will be held annually through 2015. Plan to attend the next Conference in the Series.

**Final Reminder for the September 24, 2010, Signature Conference,
Race, Slavery and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History and Memory**

I Take My Pen In Hand – A Family's Civil War Legacy

By Jim Smithfield

This month's letter is written to 'Hats' father and is as usual filled with significant spelling errors and forgotten words. However, it appears to me, that 'Hat' writes his letters in a rush and as often in past letters that he'd misspell a word, he'll turn around later and spell it correctly! It seems then, that if he can get his thoughts somewhat on paper, he is more than satisfied? This is just my opinion from having read and deciphered so many of his letters. It is somewhat noteworthy that 'Hat' is so direct with his father, even as to scolding him...

The 6th Michigan Regiment was stationed at Port Hudson, LA, until March 11, 1864, where 247 members re-enlisted. This was considered a sufficient number of veterans to preserve the organizational capability of the regiment! Our next letter from 'Hat' finds him in a hospital in St. Louis, MO, and nearly one year has passed...

Port Hudson

Aug the 17 1863

Well father as it has been along time since (I) wrote to you I thought I would write to let you (know) how I am getting along thare is not much news to writ only that our Rejiment has been transferred in to heavy artilery the detachment that I belong to works the gun that I belong to weighs seven tons thare(s) 9 men out of our Rej going home to bring on the Conscrips for the Rej our Orderly seargeant is going and Charles Aldrich they are goin to start rite off Miles started for home the 9th of this month the Rej is going to be divided up three Companays are going to stay here and three are going (to) New Orleans one to Manchach pass two (going to) fort Banks and two (going to) Donaleonville Henry Dow is well hes been prety hard up I am prety well at present and hope this will find you the same we have got a year from the 20(th) of this month to stay yet I got a leter from Eliza yestory she said she was going home the last of this month you must not send word down here that you do (not) (hear) any thin from me when you do not write your self we like heavy Artilery beter than we did infantry they have the blunt of the service thar (is) not much news to writ so nomore this time this from (your) son

W.H Hat Bosworth

To Father write soon Good by

Who we are?

The Drum and Bugle Newsletter is published monthly by the **Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table**, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. Yearly dues are \$30.00 for individuals, \$40.00 for families, and \$7.50 for students. Membership is open to anyone interested in the study of the Civil War and the ongoing preservation of Civil War sites.

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