The Camp Olden Gazette

News from the Camp Olden Civil War Round Table

Fall, 2011

President's Gavel.

Summer is pretty much done - finishing with a hurricane barreling down at us. I hope everyone was safe and fared well! Please pencil in September 24, 2011 on your calendars as we are attempting to make plans to commemorate Camp Olden's 150th anniversary at Camp Olden Park, Hamilton & Liberty, with a luncheon to follow at American Legion Post 31. Thanks to Dave Potts & Bruce Smith for the arrangements at the Legion. All are invited!

Our next meeting is **Thursday**, **September 1**^{st.} **This is our semi-annual covered dish meeting beginning at 6:00 PM.** Our speaker that evening will be Dr. Andy Waskie who will discuss his book; *Philadelphia and the Civil War: Arsenal of the Union (PA)*.

In Dr. Waskie's own words: "I am an historian. specializing in the role of Philadelphia in the Civil War. I have researched the era, written articles and books on various themes of the subject, spoken at dozens of historical societies, Civil War Round Tables, conferences and seminars, as well as at schools, colleges and universities. I served as a Pennsylvania Commonwealth Speaker/Scholar for several years and am currently the Founder and President of the General Meade Society of Philadelphia. I also serve on the Board of the Grand Army of the Republic Civil War Museum & Library, and as museum historian. I have also served as the Program Chair for presentations at Open House programs. I am a member of the Union League of Philadelphia, and historian for its Armed Forces Council. I am a professor at Temple University, and a co-founder and codirector of the Civil War and Emancipation Studies at Temple (CWEST). I have recently published a new book on Philadelphia and the Civil War - Arsenal of the Union, and thought

perhaps you and/or friends would be interested in hearing about it. This is a modern update of a work that was first published 100 years ago: Frank Taylor's *Philadelphia in the Civil War* but benefits from much new and fresh information and detail. The book includes details on manufacturing, transportation, recruiting, training camps, military units, hospitals, Lincoln in Philadelphia, civic benevolence for the volunteers, prominent commanders and civilians, among others. There is a foreword by noted historian and friend, Edwin C. Bearss. Other features of the book include a detailed look at the political and social side of Philadelphia during the war, a synopsis of military units from the city, and a complete index and bibliography. The book is illustrated with many period photos and lithographs. I have received many calls and emails from enthusiasts and historians expressing how much they enjoy the book."

For our October 6th meeting we will have a presentation by Allan "Mr. History" Messinger Native American Heritage presenter for Programs and The Pennsylvania Humanities Council (PHA) discussing Native Americans in the civil war. Civil War buffs, family audiences, and students of Native American history of all ages will be fascinated by the surprising, almost unknown story of the Native American warriors who fought on both sides in the War Between the States. An estimated 20.000 Native Americans of various backgrounds participated in the conflict. Participants in this program will learn why, where, and how they took part as they explore the divided loyalties and complex political realities that pitted Native American tribes --even family members-- against each other in battles that raged across America. The presentation also will trace the astonishing biographies and impressive exploits of important Native American leaders in the War. One of them was a full-blooded Seneca chief who was a Brigadier General and Aide to General Grant and drafted the terms of surrender signed at Appomattox! Offering a new perspective on the Civil War that explores its impact on the fate of Native Americans, this program begins with a lecture. It goes on to offer the opportunity for a lively Q and A session and for in-depth post-presentation conversation that well-informed audiences often enjoy. Exhibit material available for browsing will focus on individual Civil Warriors and Native battle sites in the West.

At our November 3rd meeting Camp Olden Civil War Round Table will feature Peter T. Lubrecht. author of New Jersey Butterfly Boys in the Civil War: The Hussars of the Union Army. In the last vear of the Civil War, the Union formed a traditional European cavalry unit known as the New Jersey Butterflies. They enticed men to join a galloping, dashing, romantic cavalry unit that would charge its enemy armed only with sabers. Officially named the Third New Jersey Cavalry and also called the First American Hussars, the unit fought in decisive battles with General George Armstrong Custer and General Philip Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley, forcing and following Lee's retreat. Many of them German and Irish immigrants, these "Jersey" men lie buried in their native soil from one end of the state to the other. Author Peter T. Lubrecht will their histories, providing detailed trace information on their lives before, during and after the war. ♦

See everyone at the meetings!

Your obedient Servant,

Bruce

Reminder --- Bring A Dish!

Remember hospitality for the **September 1**st **meeting** is a covered dish. Bring your favorite last taste of summer or first taste of fall food to share. **Special start time is 6:00 PM.** •

Junior Camp Olden Day

Hello all JR. Camp olden Volunteers! I know I said it at the end of the day but it's worth another HIP HIP HAZZA!

With instructors not being able to make it for the day due to circumstances beyond there control, all of us stepped up big time. Special thanks to Kim Daley, and Bob Dunphy, for filling in the extra station from 11:15-11:45. Not sure what we would have done to fill the time. Pete Andreco a stellar job on the drilling with Bob, Conrad Brennfleck helping out (and the kids always like his stuff) with his artifacts, Connie Davis doing her part with helping me during registration and mustering out. And last but certainly not least, The "Bruce Boys" - Sirak, with his stations and dress (kids seemed to like your artifacts as well), and Smith, for manning the museum, breakfast, clean up etc. Just an all out effort by all that helped the 15 kids that showed up. Not a great showing this year but added some worthwhile funds for our coffers. GREAT JOB and MANY THANKS!

John Maleski

Camp Olden Officers Help Dedicate Cranbury, NJ, Civil War Monument.

Submitted by Tony Travaglione

On June 11, 2011 Camp Olden CWRT President Bruce Sirak and Museum Curator Bruce Smith participated in the dedication of a new Civil War monument donated to the people of Cranbury by the New Jersey Civil War History Association. The dedication was attended by many distinguished guests, descendants of Civil War soldiers, and the people of Cranbury. Music was provided by Beck's Band, a Civil War reenactment brass band. Bruce and Bruce arrived in period attire as Governor Charles Olden and his aide.



Bruce Smith and Bruce Sirak.

Speakers included the mayors of Hightstown,

East Windsor, and Plainsboro, several other local leaders, author and historian Dr. David Martin who gave a history of New Jersey troops and the 14th New Jersey Volunteers, and Bruce Sirak who made appropriate remarks for the occasion.



Bruce Sirak delivering remarks.

The new monument was then unveiled for the first time. It is apparently constructed of marble, stands about four feet high, and is located on Main St. in Cranbury across from Brainerd Lake. The inscription on the front of the monument states: "Civil War 1861-1865 In memory of those who gave their last full measure of devotion".



Front of Monument

The rear of the monument gives the following dedication: "This monument is dedicated to all who served their Country during the Civil War. We especially remember those who served in Company H of the 14th Regiment, NJ Volunteers, many of whom were from Cranbury."



Rear of Monument

To close the ceremony, all descendants of Civil War soldiers were invited to come forward as a group and place their hands on the monument to symbolize their connection with their Civil War ancestor. Bruce Smith was among the descendants, and can be seen in the photo directly above the top center point of the monument. •



Symbolizing Connection with Civil War Ancestor

Coming Events -

Friday, Sept. 16 - Sunday, Sept. 18.

Civil War Weekend at Historic Cold Spring Village, Cape May. Friday morning school program. Living history, medical scenarios, 2 p.m. battles with street fighting, Sunday memorial service. Hosted by Co. E, 17th Virginia; 5th Bn, ANV; 5th NJ Volunteers, USV. For information, mjsnyder68@yahoo.com.

Friday, Sept. 23 - Saturday, Sept. 24

Monument dedication for 10 Milltown citizens who served during the Civil War and encampment at American Legion Property, Milltown. Friday school day, living history, Saturday ceremony. For information, Don Petry, petry.don@gmail.com.

Saturday, Oct. 8 - Sunday, Oct. 9

Annual Civil War weekend at historic Mullica Hill. Skirmishes, weapon displays, drill, camp life, ladies auxiliary demonstrations, Saturday evening guided lantern tour of camps & cemetery, Sunday morning fashion show, period church service. Hosted by 28th Pennsylvania Historical Assn. & Co. C. For information, registration, Tony Matijasick, (215) 499-2649, amjm28@verizon.net.

Saturday, Oct. 8 - Sunday, Oct. 9

Annual Civil War Reenactment at Allentown during Fall Festival. Battles both days. Sponsored by Allentown & 2nd New Jersey Brigade. For information, R. Bowell, (570) 588-6400, bbowell@ptd.net.

Saturday, Oct. 29

Living History Day at Dey Farm, Monroe. 2nd New Jersey Brigade units presenting daily life of Union soldier. Civilian & military presenters invited. Free. Sponsored by 2nd New Jersey & Township of Monroe. Free. For information, R. Bowell, , (570) 588-6400, bbowell@ptd.net.

Saturday, Nov. 5

2nd Annual Historical Exhibition honoring veterans past & present & Civil War 150th at the Veterans Center, Kenilworth, 10-4. Weapons & memorabilia from French & Indian War through Viet Nam war. Free. Sponsored by New Jersey Arms Collectors Club. For information, John Rountree, rountreeptr@comcast.net. ◆

Who Am I?



I was born in Greenfield, Massachusetts on September 30, 1824 and graduated 7th in the West Point Class of 1845. In Mexico, I served as an ordnance officer under Winfield Scott, earning brevets for gallantry at Molino del Rey and Chapultepec in September, 1847.

Following the Mexican War, I spent 18 months in Europe studying the military systems of France, Prussia, and Sweden, then returned to the U.S. to become Chief of Ordnance for the new Department of the Pacific as of August, 1851. In July, 1853 I married Maria Louisa Clary, daughter of Capt. Robert Clary, later General McClellan's quartermaster. With a daughter, Esther, born in October, 1854 and a son, Charles, Jr., born in November, 1856, I decided to leave the army so as to better provide for his family. I resigned shortly after the birth of my son who, sadly, died only five months later.

Working briefly as a banker and gold broker, I eventually took a job directing an extensive mineral survey of the Mexican state of Sonora. In December, 1860, while in Washington, DC working on my survey report, I was asked by Gen. Scott to return to the army and organize the DC militia for the defense of the capital in the war which Scott felt was inevitable. I organized some 30 companies of militia and also oversaw the security arrangements for President-elect Lincoln's inauguration.

I was named brigadier general of volunteers in August, 1861 and given command of the right flank division of the Army of the Potomac along the line of that river opposite Leesburg, Virginia. On October 21 came the disastrous battle of Ball's Bluff which resulted in my eventual arrest and the end of my promising army career. I was arrested in February, 1862 (in fact more because of political rivalries in Congress than because of the defeat at Ball's Bluff) and spent six months in prison at Forts Lafayette and Hamilton in New York harbor. No

charges ever were filed against me despite my frequent attempts to be granted a court-martial, and I was released the following August with no explanation from the War Department. Assigned to Gen. Nathaniel Banks in New Orleans in May 1863, I arranged the surrender of Port Hudson, and then served as Banks' Chief of Staff until April 16, 1864, when Banks relieved him after a falling out.

In August, 1863 General Grant brought me back east and gave me a brigade in the V Corps. Typhoid and an impending nervous breakdown resulted in my decision to resign from the army, effective September 13, 1864.

After the war, I worked as a mining engineer in Virginia until accepting a job as Chief of Staff to the Khedive of Egypt in early 1870. I spent over 12 years in Egypt building up an Egyptian army on western lines and overseeing a dozen major explorations and surveys of the Nile River and surrounding area. With the British takeover of Egypt in late 1882, I resigned this position and returned to the United States where I was hired as chief engineer for the construction of the Statue of Liberty. I served as Grand Marshal of the statue's dedication parade on October 28, 1886. Three months later, I contracted pneumonia and died in New York City on January 24, 1887. I was buried with full military honors at West Point. ♦

Answer to "Who Am I" is on page 7

Civil War Sesquicentennial -

Below are some of the major events which occurred 150 years ago from September to November of 1861:

Sept. 2 - Dry Wood Creek / Battle of the Mules

Sept. 10 - Carnifex Ferry

Sept. 12-15 - Cheat Mountain Summit

Sept. 13-20 - Lexington / Hemp Bales

Sept. 17 - Liberty / Blue Mills Landing

Sept. 19 - Barbourville

Oct. 3 - Greenbrier River / Camp Bartow

Oct. 9 - Santa Rosa Island

Oct. 21 - Camp Wildcat / Wildcat Mountain

Oct. 21 - Fredericktown

Oct. 21 - Ball's Bluff / Leesburg

Oct. 25 - Springfield / Zagonyi's Charge

Oct. 29 -- Sherman Moves. The Sherman Expedition sails from Hampton Roads Virginia

Nov. 7 - Belmont

Nov. 8, 9 - Ivy

Nov. 19 - Round Mountain. ◆

Civil War Exhibition.

The Monmouth County Historical Association will offer a unique opportunity for local residents to explore the county's role in the Civil War with a special exhibition to open in Freehold next month.

The exhibition, Marching Away: Monmouth County in the Civil War, which will focus on Monmouth County soldiers who fought for the Union Army, is slated to open on Sunday, Sept. 18, and run through July 2012 in the Washington Gallery at the historical society's museum and library building. The museum is located at 70 Court St. in Freehold and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

As this year marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War, the exhibition is a timely one to explore how the conflict impacted the Monmouth County men who volunteered to join the Union Army.

The exhibition will include a full selection of letters, photographs, diaries, uniforms, flags, personal items and military weaponry to evoke the experiences of the men who left home to fight, some for up to four years. Their lives prior to the war, their wartime experiences and their struggles as they returned home will be the focus of the display, and it will provide a very personal viewpoint of the Civil War era.

The photographs, documents and artifacts in the exhibition have all been donated over the years to the Monmouth County Historical Association, many from direct descendants of Monmouth County's Civil War veterans. With the rich histories of their ownership, they represent a link to the past and an opportunity to explore the lives of their original owners.

In conjunction with the exhibition's opening, there will be an encampment of Civil War reenactors held on the grounds of the historical association's museum and library. The 2nd Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry Company D will be encamped for the weekend of Sept. 17 and 18, providing demonstrations of military drills and maneuvers as well as aspects of everyday camp life.

The Monmouth County Historical Association's library, also located in Freehold, is open from Wednesday through Saturday. For more information about the exhibition and related programming, log on to monmouthhistory.org or call 732-462-1466. ◆

The General in His Study

By Elizabeth Brown Pryor

The writing is blurred and the paper nearly translucent, but the scene it portrays is vivid. In a recently discovered letter, Mary Custis Lee, the eldest daughter of Robert E. Lee, describes how her father wrestled with the decision to resign his commission in the United States Army and side with the South. The letter, found in a folder of fragments at the Virginia Historical Society, was written in 1871 to Charles Marshall, Lee's former aide-to-camp, as he prepared to write a biography of the great general.

It provides the most reliable information currently available to historians, overshadowing the questionable second-hand accounts that scholars once had to rely on. Not only was Mary Custis Lee an eyewitness to the scene, but her letter was written just a few years after the war, whereas the traditional depictions did not appear until decades later.

And her words fundamentally alter the story of Lee's fateful choice. Lee biographers have long claimed that his decision to leave the Army was an inevitable one, driven by the pull of relatives, state and tradition. However, as his daughter shows us, in the end the decision was highly personal, made in spite of family differences and the military conventions he revered.

Lee's decision to give up his 35-year Army career came after a week of cataclysmic events: the southern capture of Fort Sumter, Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops to protect federal property and, on April 17, the secession of Virginia.

The days had been personally traumatic as well. Like many border-state families, the Lees and

their friends were sharply divided on the issues. When Lee consulted his brothers, sister and local clergymen, he found that most leaned toward the Union. At a grim dinner with two close cousins, Lee was told that they also intended to uphold their military oaths. (Samuel Phillips Lee would become an important admiral in the Union navy; John Fitzgerald Lee retained his position as judge advocate of the Army.) Sister Anne Lee Marshall unhesitatingly chose the northern side, and her son outfitted himself in blue uniform. Robert's favorite brother, Smith Lee, a naval officer, resisted leaving his much-loved berth, and Smith's wife spurned her relatives to support the Union cause. At the same time, many of the clan's young men, such as nephew Fitzhugh Lee, were anxious to make their mark for the South in the coming conflict, creating a distinct generational fault line.

Matters became more complicated when, on April 18, presidential adviser Francis P. Blair unofficially offered Lee the command of the thousands of soldiers being called up to protect Washington. Fearing that such a post might require him to invade the South, Lee immediately turned down the job. Agitated, he went to tell his mentor, Gen. Winfield Scott, the Army's commander-in-chief. Another dramatic scene followed. Scott, though a proud Virginian, had dismissed as an insult any hint that he himself would turn from the United States. When Lee offered to sit out the troubles at his home, Arlington, the general told him bluntly: "I have no place in my army for equivocal men." Greatly distressed, Lee returned to Arlington contemplate his options.

Although his wife called it "the severest struggle of his life," historians have long trivialized Lee's decision. It was "the answer he was born to make," biographer Douglas Southall Freeman put it. "A no-brainer," said another. But daughter Mary's letter, along with other previously unknown documents written by his close family and associates, belies such easy assessments. These newly found sources underscore just how complex and painful a choice it was to make.

The conventional wisdom holds, for example, that Lee disdained secession, but once his state took that step he was duty bound to follow. But these documents show that he was not actually

opposed to disunion in principle. He simply wanted to exhaust all peaceful means of redress first, remarking in January 1861 that then "we can with a clear conscience separate."

Nor was he against the pro-slavery policies of the secessionists, despite postwar portraits of the general as something of an abolitionist. He complained to a son in December 1860 about new territories being closed to slaveholders, and supported the Crittenden Compromise, which would have forbidden the abolition of slavery. "That deserves the support of every patriot," he noted in a Jan. 29, 1861 letter to his daughter Agnes. Even at the moment he reportedly told Francis Blair that if "he owned all the negroes in the South, he would be willing to give them up...to save the Union," he was actually fighting a court case to keep the slaves under his control in bondage "indefinitely," though they had been promised freedom in his father-in-law's will.

The decision was made yet more difficult by Lee's pacifism. Haunted by the prospect of prolonged and bloody warfare, he warned of it repeatedly at a time when few others were anticipating a lengthy conflict. He destruction and possible ignominy in the future, not the glory anticipated by the Southern masses. He was "worn and harassed," Mary Custis Lee tells us, yet she recalls that he remained calm, and counseled others to do so. This is at odds with conventional stories which portray Lee melodramatically pacing and praying as he weighed his future. Instead, her father made the fateful choice alone in his office, without fanfare. Before breakfast on April 20, he quietly entrusted his resignation letter to a slave, for delivery at the War Department.

"I have been unable to make up my mind to raise my hand against my native state, my relations, my children and my home," Lee wrote to a kinsman, only minutes after he penned his resignation. With minor variations, this was his lifelong mantra, elegantly extricating him from the more uncomfortable aspects of decision. Yet even as he wrote it he must have known that no matter what he decided he would be in conflict with some relation. Moreover, the Army, which another daughter called Lee's "home and country," was also divided: forty percent of

Virginian officers would remain with the Union forces.

But what is most astonishing about Mary Custis Lee's letter is that it shows how Lee made his decision despite the feelings of his own wife and children. Lee at first did not tell his immediate circle that he had resigned, and when the announcement finally came, he apologized. "I suppose you will all think I have done very wrong," he lamented. Noting that she was the sole secessionist in the group, and that her mother's allegiance to the Union was particularly strong, Mary described how the words left them stunned and speechless. Lee then remarked that he did not believe Virginia had reason to secede — at least not yet. But after refusing command there was no military role for him, and now, he acknowledged, "it had come to this and after my last interview with Gen. Scott I thought I ought to wait no longer."

The turmoil Lee's resignation caused at home was mirrored within the Army. Mary Custis Lee describes how a cousin on Scott's staff rode over to Arlington, informing the family of the disarray at the War Department. Several other officers had quickly followed Lee's example, and Scott had taken the news hard: "He laid on his sofa, refusing to see anyone and mourning, as if for the loss of a son. To some one ... who rather lightly alluded to the fact, he said with great emotion, 'don't mention Robert Lee's name to me again, I cannot bear it.""

These are riveting details. But what is most striking about this description is the loneliness of Lee's decision. For the stunning message of Mary Custis Lee's account is that that there was no pressure from kin or colleagues for Lee to give up the allegiances of a lifetime. Some would later become dedicated Confederates, but in April 1861 their feelings were with the Union. If even his wife, and most of his children, did not support his stand, Robert E. Lee must personally have wanted very much to take this path. This was not an answer he was compelled by home and heritage to make. It was a choice — and it was his alone. •

Elizabeth Brown Pryor is the author of "Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee through His Private Letters."

A Prediction:

"They do not know what they say. If it came to a conflict of arms, the war will last at least four years. Northern politicians will not appreciate the determination and pluck of the South, and Southern politicians do not appreciate the numbers, resources, and patient perseverance of the North. Both sides forget that we are all Americans. I foresee that our country will pass through a terrible ordeal, a necessary expiation, perhaps, for our national sins." •

Attributed to Robert E. Lee

Be a Gazette Contributor!

Explore a battlefield? See an interesting museum exhibit? Read a new Civil War book or reread a favorite one? Share your experiences with round table members.

Jot down a couple of lines and send your photos and your thoughts to the Gazette email address: *oldennewsletter@optonline.net*. The mailing address is C&M Mazzocchi, 1430 18th Ave. Wall, NJ 07719.

For meeting and other information visit us on the Web: *www.campolden.org*. ♦

Answer to "Who Am I?":
Brigadier General Charles P. Stone. ♦

Reminder --- Bring A Dish!

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