

The Camp Olden Gazette

News from the Camp Olden Civil War Round Table

Winter 2015

President's Gavel.

First and foremost I would like to thank our members and especially our volunteers for making the past year another successful and enjoyable year and extend best wishes to all for the holiday season.

Elections were held on Nov. 5th and the new board for 2016 will consist of: President: Bruce Sirak, Vice President: Bill Moore, Secretary: Kim Daly, Treasurer: Connie Davis, Event Coordinators: Al Barbano and Brian Sirak and Museum Representative: Bruce Smith.

The Camp Olden Civil War Round Table of Hamilton will meet at the Hamilton Township Library on December 3rd when Ed Bonekemper will discuss his book, *The Myth of the Lost Cause: Why the South Fought the Civil War and Why the North Won*.

The January 7th meeting will bring Herb Kaufman with a presentation – “*Frankly my Dear*” - *Hollywood & the Civil War*.

Join us for the **Camp Olden Winter Soiree** on January 9th! (See details below.) This annual event was a great success last year and promises to be even better this year. Your personal invitation is included in this newsletter.

Happy Holidays!

Your obedient servant,

Bruce. ♦

Camp Olden Winter Soiree

Our Camp Olden Winter Soiree is fast approaching – **January 9th, 2016** (rain /snow date of January 16th) from 4-8 pm (see enclosed invitation on page 12). It will again be held at the American Legion Post #31, 1490 South Olden Avenue, Trenton, NJ. We will be enjoying a selection of dinner treats from Fred and Pete's as well as Mike Plunkett playing Civil War music.

This year the theme is “*What Happened to Santa*”. We will have games, so come prepared. The price is still \$18 per person and this really only offsets the cost. RSVP's are essential so we can order the correct amount of food. Send payment to Connie Davis, 109 Endsleigh Ct, Robbinsville, NJ 08691. Make checks payable to COCWRT.

We are asking for donations to be used as prizes for the game. Can you donate a prize or two? Any contributions can be brought to the December General Meeting and given to Al or Kim. Last year we had great prize donation support. It does not have to be Civil War related. Holiday, re-gift, edibles, Civil War, books, etc. We do need them by the December 3rd meeting so we know how many more we need to find and Al needs time to wrap them. LOL.

We had a great time last year and hope everyone returns and more join us. Yes, it is fine to bring a date, friend, family etc.

Soiree committee - Al Barbano, Kim Daly and Brian Sirak. ♦



Hospitality:

Thanks to all members who help with Hospitality! Following is the list of volunteers for the future.

December – The Board

January – John Maleski

February – Need Volunteer ♦

Civil War Visits.

Our members did some traveling over the past few months. Following are “field reports”.

Overland Campaign - Part I

Contributed by John Allen

Departing Manhattan at 7 AM on an October Friday, the Civil War Round Table of New York City began their 58th Annual Battlefield Tour - *Grant's Overland Campaign - Part 1*. Arriving early afternoon at the Chancellorsville NMP Visitor's Center to pick up our guide, Frank O'Reilly, National Park Historian, the tour started at Elwood, where Major General Governor K. Warren made his V Corps headquarters. Frank began with an overview of the initial movements of the campaign. Union troops left their winter 1863/64 camp on the north bank of the Rapidan River, crossing it at two fords on May 4th, 1864. The east wing comprised of the II Corps crossed at Ely's Ford and bivouacked that night around the ruins of the Chancellor House on the Chancellorsville battlefield. The western wing, composed of the V and VI Corps crossed at Germanna Ford and headed south into the Wilderness. Following initial contact with Lt. General Richard Ewell's Confederate II Corps forces along the Orange Turnpike, the Union V Corps troops were ordered to assault without awaiting a concentration of all V and VI Corps forces. The confusion of the May 5th fight in Saunders Field was described as the tour participants crossed the field, heading uphill towards Confederate lines, as the Zouaves of the 140th NYVI advanced. The confusion of the fight - in which “friendly fire” incidents were common - was well described at the top of the hill where Rebels entrenched just inside the tree line.



Northern Saunders Field

The tour continued with a hike following John B. Gordon's flank march of late May 6th in which Gordon's troops rolled up the Union right flank. Darkness and stiffening resistance foiled this effort to sever Union troops from their supply line back to Germanna Ford.

Meanwhile, Hancock's II Corps had left their Chancellorsville bivouac and marched south and southwestward to the Todd's Tavern where the Brock and Catharpin Roads meet. Grant, realizing the risk of the II Corps being cut-off from the rest of the Union troops, ordered Hancock to march back up the Brock Road to its intersection with the Orange Plank Road. Arriving in the nick of time - a common occurrence for BOTH sides in this and the Spotsylvania Court House battle - a combination of VI and II Corps troops secured the vital crossroad, repelling Confederate attacks across Widow Tapp's field. This same field saw the near-collapse of the Confederate position on May 6th when Hancock and Wadsworth converged on confused Rebel lines from the east and northeast, respectively. Lt. General James Longstreet's I Corps arrived in time to blunt the now intermingled Union lines and, following severe fighting, repelled the Union assault and entrenched in the field. It was during the Confederate counterattack that the first “Lee to the rear!” incident was documented, communicated by tour guide O'Reilly in excellent fashion.



Widow Tapp's Field

The tour hiked a part of Longstreet's flank attack, discussing the Vermont Brigade's horrific losses taken southwest of the Brock Road/Orange Plank Road intersection while stopping Longstreet's

attack. Longstreet's wounding - another "friendly fire incident" - is described by a marker and comprised part of O'Reilly's narrative.

Tour guide O'Reilly is no fan of Phil Sheridan and part of the reason was explained when the tour departed the Wilderness and stopped at the site of Todd's Tavern, site of one of many poor Union cavalry performances. Their failure to clear the road to Spotsylvania Court House led to the infantry charnel house in the trench warfare of Spotsylvania. The first of these was a poorly coordinated May 8th assault on Laurel Hill by Warren's V Corps. (The photo is taken some 5 yards in front of the memorial dedicated to John Sedgwick, killed by sharpshooter fire at this place).



Laurel Hill

Initial engineering assessment resulted in Confederate entrenchments following the high ground, creating the salient later known as the "Mule Shoe". The tour walked the ground over which Emory Upton's May 10th assault was launched and, except for the lack of reinforcement, would have succeeded. O'Reilly pointed out the topographic benefits accruing to Upton's approach, demonstrating the benefit of being accompanied by someone who has walked the field many times.

Despite this failure, Grant was enamored of the concept and, on May 12th, launched a massive assault on the exposed salient of the Mule Shoe. After 27 hours of continuous fighting Lee stabilized his line and withdrew his exhausted troops to a new line across the base of what was once the Mule Shoe salient.

The third day of the tour began with what I feel was the most moving spot visited. Behind a hill (in defilade) in the Union lines is a quiet area not on Park Service maps. Discovered in 2014, the area

(which didn't photograph well, so I apologize) is interpreted by O'Reilly as the II Corps forward aid post. Characterized by 6'x3' depressions and a larger 10'x10' one, the area is interpreted as interments of fatalities and the ditch into which amputated limbs were placed! These depressions reflect the recovery of Union bodies by locals paid by the Government to recover remains for interment in the Fredericksburg National Military Cemetery.



II Corps Forward Aid Station

Following a rather moving moment at this site, the tour continued with a visit to a reconstruction of the final Confederate line across the base of the Mule Shoe. O'Reilly described the process by which such strongpoints were made, discussing headlogs, traverses, etc... This was followed by a walk along Heth's line with Frank pointing out not just infantry trenches but artillery emplacements and likely headquarters dugouts as well.



Frank O'Reilly Discussing Reconstructed Earthworks

The tour finished with a short walk to the 1st MA Heavy Artillery monument on the former site of the Harris Farm. This action was fought on May 19th, 1864, as Grant prepared to move southward towards the North Anna River. With Ewell's Confederates facing the sun and backed by forest, the untried "Heavies" stood in ranks on a hilltop with the sun at their backs: perfect targets silhouetted as they were. This cost this large, green regiment 394 casualties; a tough lesson in the use of the "military crest". Despite staggering losses, the "Heavies" had proven they could fight. They repelled Ewell, preventing them from reaching their objective; Union supply wagons.

This ended the major fighting at Spotsylvania and was the final stop on a very educational tour. The CWRTNY is hoping to be able to arrange an "Overland Campaign - Part 2" tour, covering the North Anna River and Cold Harbor fighting. ♦

A Visit to Winchester and the Shenandoah Valley

Contributed by Keith Tomlinson

In mid-September I decided to visit the Shenandoah Valley as I have not been there since I was a teenager. I stayed in Winchester for my visit. My first museum was the Old Court House Civil War Museum in downtown Winchester. The building was constructed in 1840 and saw heavy use during the war. It served as a temporary holding place for prisoners of war and then as a hospital for soldiers from both sides. The troops wrote much graffiti on the original walls which were covered over. They now have Plexiglas windows revealing several collections of graffiti. The writings are being studied and scanned to preserve them. The museum has a very large collection artifacts dug up or picked up on battlefields. This includes bullets, buttons, buckles and many other items. They also have a large collection of artillery shells from the 6 pdr. to the 15 inch Rodman which weighs 428 pounds.

Next I visited George Washington's Office, which is a small log building with three rooms. The middle room dates to 1754 and was used by Washington as a surveying office during his land surveys. While in Winchester, he was appointed commander of the militia. He then built Fort

Loudoun a few blocks away. No trace of the fort exists today.

The next day, I visited Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters. The house is on Braddock Street in Winchester and is a gothic style cottage built in the 1850's. Jackson lived there from November 1861 to March 1862. The museum has many personal items owned by the General, including his saddle, his sword, a lock of his hair, and several portraits of him. There are also other personal items from other Confederate officers.



Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters

On the east side of town I went into Mt. Hebron Cemetery. Within that cemetery is the Stonewall Cemetery for Confederate Soldiers. More than 3,000 Confederate Soldiers are buried there including General Turner Ashby and his brother. Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina have monuments to their soldiers buried in the cemetery.



Monument for Unknown Soldiers

I drove south to the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation Headquarters. They have a good visitor center and gift shop. They also have replica clothing and equipment for sale in their store. The next stop was Belle Grove Plantation House only a short distance down the road. The house is a large stone mansion built in 1797 by the Hite family. They once owned 7,500 acres and more than 100 slaves. Union troops camped around the mansion and were hit by a confederate surprise attack at dawn on October 19, 1864. There are marks on the exterior walls where bullets struck the stone blocks. The house is furnished with rare furniture pieces from the Shenandoah Valley and family heirlooms. The property includes the original icehouse, smokehouse, and slave cemetery.



Belle Grove Plantation

My next stop was Hupp's Hill Civil War Park and museum. The park has walking trails through Civil War earthworks from 1864. The museum has a very large diorama of the Battle of Cedar Creek. Other exhibits include a supply wagon, an 1841 Model Pack Howitzer, and a collection of small arms.

The next day I drove down a section of Skyline Drive and then drove to New Market to see the Virginia Museum of the Civil War and New Market Battlefield. The VMCW features an award winning film "Field of Lost Shoes" and the Virginia Room which chronicles the war in Virginia. Exhibits include a diorama of the battlefield, a collection of small arms, an Ager Coffee Mill gun, and a Williams Repeating cannon. A visitor may walk or drive to the Bushong Farm about a hundred yards north of the VMCW. The farm has the original farm house built in 1825 and a number of out buildings including a summer kitchen, hen house, ice house, blacksmith shop, wheelwright shop, and bank

barn. During the battle the family had to hide in the cellar under the house as the battle raged around the farm. After the battle the house and barn were used as hospitals for the wounded.



Virginia Civil War Museum



Bushong Farm

Winchester and the northern Shenandoah Valley are only about a six hour ride from Central New Jersey. All the museums and battlefields are certainly worth seeing. ♦

A Visit to Laurel Hill Cemetery

By Sue DeSiver

On a crisp, clear and sunny October day, eight members and guests of Sons of Union Veterans Lincoln Camp 100 (7 of whom also happened to be Camp Olden members) took a "Civil War tour" of Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia. During our 2 hour tour, volunteer docent Russ Dodge covered the geographic north section of the cemetery, regaling us with tales of inhabitants who had served in the Civil War or had a war connection. The following are just a sample those.

Among our first stops was the grave of Albert Gesner Bunn, Jr., 71st Pa., killed at Gettysburg. Later we visited John A. Dahlgren's resting place, a rear admiral for the Union, famous for inventing the smooth-bore cannon "the Dahlgren gun", who also commanded naval forces in Charleston, South Carolina.



Grave of Rear Adm. John A. Dahlgren

For a grave with a civil war "connection", we visited the resting place of Dr. Charles D. Meigs. He was the father of Montgomery Meigs who was famous for a career in the Army Corps of Engineers and, as quartermaster general appointed by Lincoln, was in charge of building the Capital's extension and dome (he is buried there).

We finished our tour with a stop at the grave of George Gordon Meade, whose headstone simply stated "He did his work and is now at rest". On the way to his grave we had a spectacular view of the river.



Grave of Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade

Russ Dodge informed us that there are more civil war participants to see in the second half of Laurel Hill, so another tour may be in order. ♦

Cemetery Corner

Introducing a new monthly feature suggested by member John Allen. Readers can submit a one paragraph, one photo feature of a Civil War veteran's headstone. It's an easy way to get your work in print and give tribute to a CW veteran. Following is John's opening contribution.

John J. Wyckoff

Contributed by John F. Allen, Jr.



The most poignant headstone I have seen in my graveyard ramblings is John J. Wyckoff's in the Wertsville Baptist Church Cemetery on Wertsville Road in East Amwell Township, Hunterdon County. John, a carpenter by trade, enlisted at age 34 in the 15th NJ Volunteer Infantry in September, 1864, after the regiment suffered substantial casualties in Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant's Overland Campaign. John fell wounded during Major General Horatio Wright's Sixth Corps' final assault on Confederate Lt. General A. P. Hill's Third Corps lines south at Petersburg, VA, on April 2nd, 1865, and died of his wounds on April 13th, 1865, at City Point, VA... *after* the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. He left family members (based on the 1850 Federal Census): wife Sarah Jane, 13 year old daughter Sarah Maria, parents James and Margaret; brother William, sisters Catharine, Mary Ann and Emeline. It's difficult to imagine their reaction when, upon receiving the news of John's death, they went from elation that the Civil War was over after four years of struggle, to mourning the loss of their husband, father, son and brother. ♦

References: ancestry.com - Kuhl, John "Hunterdon County In The Civil War": Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission (2014).

It's Membership Renewal Time!

Below is your renewal form for 2016 membership in the *Camp Olden Civil War Round Table*.
New members can use this form also with, of course, the same discount.

Camp Olden Civil War Round Table and Museum Renewal & New Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Birthday(s): _____

Telephone #: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Membership: Single (\$30*) ☐ Senior Single (\$25*) ☐ Student (\$15*) ☐

Family (\$40*) ☐ Senior Husband & Wife (\$30*) ☐

* Includes a \$5.00 discount for dues paid before or at the February meeting.

Mail Completed Application with payment to:

Camp Olden Civil War Round Table
P. O. Box 10565
Hamilton NJ 08650

OR

Ms. Connie Davis
1090 Endsleigh Court
Robbinsville NJ 08691

A Gem Among the Jewels.

By Mike Mazzocchi

You never know when or where you will find a civil war related item. While browsing through a display of the Danish crown jewels in the Rosenborg Palace in Copenhagen, Denmark, I noticed a pair of revolvers in a display case as seen on the right. It turns out they were made by Samuel Colt and presented as a gift from President Abraham Lincoln to King Fredrick of Denmark in 1861. American history and the civil war can be found anywhere! ♦



We Searched But Did Not Find

Contributed by Kim Daly



The Jersey Devil. It was a beautiful day for this fearless group of 15 intrepid searchers to set out on their cross-state search for this elusive NJ icon. We met Bill and Carole Moore at the Oneida Boat Club where Bill reviewed the agenda and gave a little incentive talk on the 13th child of Mother Leeds. This child, depending on the version of the story, was either born as the creature or turned into one as he was cursed by his stressed-out mother. He then, again according to versions, either killed everyone in the room and flew up the chimney or just scratched a few and flew out the window into the woods. He has been spotted here and there in South Jersey, especially the Pine Barrens (oh yeah, once in Bristol), since 1735 right up until modern day. Oh there was a 100-year hiatus when a clergymen exorcised the demon, but who's counting. He is said to stand on two feet, have the body of a kangaroo, head of a goat with horns and cloven hooves, bat-like wings to fly and tiny arms with claws and, yes, a forked tail.

Armed with this info, we paid Carole our \$10, jumped in our cars and the caravan of six vehicles followed the Moores out of Burlington into the Jersey Pines. An hour later, following through this small town and that hamlet, we ended up in Chatsworth (Cranberry ground zero) for a "Jersey Devil" hot dog at Hot Diggity Dogs, the town's teen entrepreneur's hot dog stand. Started by a young lady as a way to earn money for college, it has become a stop by many when trekking through the Pine Barrens. A few of us had to buy a jar of the Dietz and Watson cranberry horseradish sauce they use on the dogs. Across the street was the 150-year-old Buzby's General Store that recently has been rejuvenated by a very sweet, retired lady. It now contains cranberry, Chatsworth, Pine Barrens and Jersey Devil items.



Hot Diggity Dogs



Buzby's & Proprietress

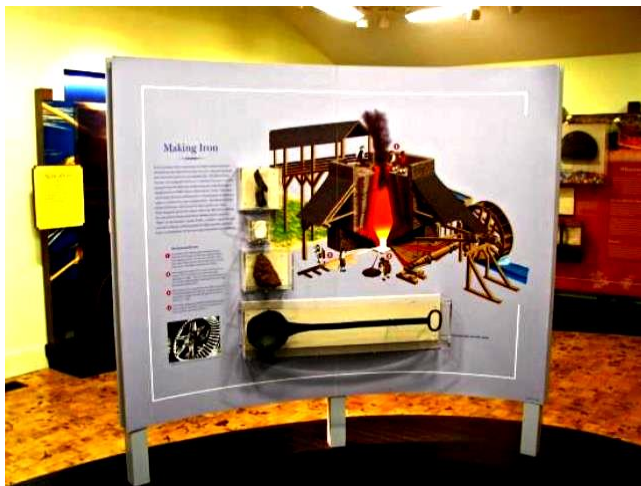


Wagons Ho! As we regrouped to continue our journey Carole gave us each a piece of delicious, homemade cake to fortify us in our search. Next stop: The Emilio Carranza memorial in the heart of the Pines. Who knew? I grew up in NJ and this was in none of our history books. The monument is dedicated to the 23-year-old aviator who was on a good-will mission to USA in 1928. He was called to return to Mexico immediately and, obeying orders, took off in bad weather. Then while looking for a place to land, crashed in the Pines. His body and plane were found the next day by a family picking berries. His body was taken to Buzby's General Store to await pick up by the Feds. This young man flew from Mexico City to New York and was known as the "Lindberg of Mexico". He flew solo across the country, dined with the US president and the man who would be the next president, but obeying orders from his country, his life was cut short. Mexico still sends a representative to his memorial each year to say a prayer and lay a wreath. The memorial was paid for by children in Mexico in honor of his goodwill mission for all. As always, there were many trinkets left at the site from those who visited, including a fresh cupcake.

The Eagle symbol on the Carranza Memorial symbolizes his descending flight and the footprints below it – his last walk on earth. Stuffed between the eagles feathers were many coins of

remembrance. Still no Devil sightings. No foot prints. No screeching in the woods. Nothing. But we watch and listen.

Back out to Route 206 and south to Batsto. It has been YEARS since I have been there and what a change. Great Visitor's Center and museum. Hiking trails and the town itself. We soooooo wanted to visit the town but we only had 45-minutes and the museum was right there. Great info on the Pine Barrens and the Batsto Village and families that ran the Iron Works. We learned how to make charcoal from the bog iron (that had to be searched for by hand in the bogs and streams) then the charcoal was melted down to make "pig" iron. It was called "pig" iron by the workers as the channel the molten iron ran through and the four or five side channels it flowed into looked like a mother sow and her nursing piggies. Good imaginations. Another tidbit of info picked up here is that the cranberry was named "cranesberry" by the early English settlers because the Blue Herons, that they thought were cranes, dined mostly on the wild red berries in the bogs. Over time the name has morphed into cranberry. We're having "cranesberry" jelly this Thanksgiving.



Batsto Iron

Back in the cars and out to the Atlantic ... well a tributary of Barnegat Bay – Oyster Creek. On the way Kim, Connie and Renee and the white truck behind us with Bonnie and Mike got caught at a traffic light and off went the rest. Kim continued down the road with the white truck following us blindly. We gave the Moores a call and due to the great cell reception in NJ (or the Jersey Devil) got

cut off, but managed to hear "just keep going", so we did. Finally, miles down the road we came to a "T" intersection and spotted the caravan pulled over to the left just above the GSPW. We were found! (Never told white truck we were roaming. Hee-hee.) We passed by very-crowded Smithville and out Moss Mill Road to Oyster Creek Inn. Just before we got to the end of the road on a hard bend is a very old, but well-preserved stone house. Signs out front are posted "private property, no stopping, no trespassing", etc. So we cruise by at a slow speed. This is the house that Bill feels was the birth house of the Jersey Devil.

Anyway, out to the restaurant for some yummy crab sandwiches, flounder sandwiches, crab chowder, Jersey Devil Shrimp and more. After dinner, while we struggled to get our stuffed bodies off the picnic table benches, Bill & Carole did a little "Moore" history on JD explaining that the Leeds were well-off, owned lots of land in the area, were faithful to the King when many in the area were not and Mr. Leeds was just not a nice guy. It is suggested that his nickname was the "devil" and that this is where the story actually was birthed. No fun! Anyway, we got markers for each correct answer to Carole's "test" questions and prizes were awarded. Sue, Don Cooper's daughter, mangled all the rest of us with 12 points and she got top prize, a stay at the Moore's B&B. There was dinner at the Moore's café and lunch at the café, etc. Carole also gave everyone some homemade onion soup and homemade croutons.

As we all took one more potty break, those waiting on the deck watched boats come in and out, Blue Herons fly over the marshlands and fish jump in the waterway. You could have looked forever, but it was back in the car, one last pass of the Leeds house and we pointed our cars west and north and back home again.



Oyster Creek From Restaurant



Inn's Jersey Devil



Leeds House on the Bend in the Road – hmmm.

So, no, we never spotted hide nor hair or the Jersey Devil but had a nice day with friends and new acquaintances and ate our way through new and old bits of NJ history. ♦

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jersey_Devil.

<https://www.facebook.com/89diggidy>

<http://www.e90post.com/forums/showthread.php?t=1109136>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emilio_Carranza

www.batstovillage.org/

www.oystercreekinnnj.com/

Coming Events –

Gen. George Meade's Birthday Celebration at Laurel Hill Cemetery, 3822 Ridge Ave, Phil., PA 215-228-8200 on 12/31/15 New Year's Eve Morning, 11:00 AM parade begins. Attire: Dress for 12/31/15 + sensible walking shoes. Donation is asked for at the gate. Period dressed folks, color guard, band, and officers from other CWRT's will present wreaths on Gen. Meade's grave. Champagne toast at Gen. Meade's grave site. Nice walk, to take in scenery, architecture, and many artistically, sculptured, grave stones. Brunch will be served upon return to the gate house after grave site ceremony – liquid refreshments, lite fare, and sweets. For much "Moore" detailed info, please call Bill/Carole Moore at 609-871-0955.



Gettysburg - Save the Date!

The **Camp Olden Gettysburg trip** is scheduled for **Saturday 4/30/2016** and **Sunday 5/1/2016**. The cost is anticipated to be \$25 per person (or less). The anticipated schedule includes two walking tours led by a Licensed Battlefield guide on Saturday (at 10 AM and 2 PM) and one on Sunday (at 10 AM). The tours will involve a lot of walking to really experience the terrain of the battlefield. There will also be an optional group dinner (at additional cost) on Saturday night. It's recommended to arrive on Friday to avoid having to leave New Jersey really early on Saturday morning. There are many good hotels in Gettysburg. Feel free to book your favorite. The tours will leave from the visitors' center so you can stay at whatever hotel you prefer. It's best to reserve a room soon because, as you know, hotels book up and prices go up as we get closer to the trip. Most hotels offer refundable reservations. Looking forward to having many Camp Olden members on the trip.

Arsenic and Old Graves:

Civil War-Era Cemeteries May Be Leaking Toxins
By Mollie Bloudoff-Indelicato, smithsonian.com

If you live near a Civil War-era cemetery, rotting corpses may be on the attack. While there's no need to fear the walking dead, homeowners should watch out for toxins leaking out of old graves that could be contaminating drinking water and causing serious health problems.

When someone died at the turn of the century, it was common practice to bring a photographer in to take death photos. Also, the people who fought and died in the Civil War came from all over the United States, and families who wanted to bury their kin would pay to have them shipped home.

At the time, ice was the only option to preserve a body, but that didn't work very well—and no one wants to see a deceased relative partially decomposed.

"We're talking about the 1800s, so how do you freeze [the bodies] and keep them frozen if they take weeks to transport?" says Jana Olivier, an environmental scientist and professor-emeritus at the University of South Africa.

Thus, embalming in the U.S. became a booming industry during the Civil War era. People willing to try their hand at embalming spent their time following the military from combat zone to combat zone.

“Embalmers flocked to battlefields to embalm whoever could afford it and send them home,” said Mike Mathews, a mortuary scientist at the University of Minnesota.

Embalming fluid is effective, but it’s also nasty stuff. Many early recipes for embalming fluid were jealously guarded by morticians because some worked so much better than others, but most commonly contained arsenic, Mathews adds.

One popular formula “contained about four ounces of arsenious acid per gallon of water, and up to 12 pounds of non-degradable arsenic was sometimes used per body,” according to the 5th Street Cemetery Necrogeological Study.

Arsenic kills the bacteria that make corpses stinky—if you’ve ever smelled bad meat, you can imagine how important it is for embalming fluid to do its thing and do it well. But the poisonous element doesn’t degrade, so when embalmed bodies rot in the ground, arsenic gets deposited into the soil.

“A Civil War-era cemetery filled with plenty of graves—things seldom stay where you want them to,” says Benjamin Bostick, a geochemist at Columbia University. “As the body is becoming soil, the arsenic is being added to the soil.” From there, rainwater and flooding can wash arsenic into the water table.

That means old cemeteries full of deceased soldiers and civilians present a real problem for today’s homeowners. The federal government says it’s only safe for us to drink water with 10 parts per billion of arsenic or less. But in 2002, a USGS-sponsored survey in Iowa City found arsenic levels at three times the federal limit near an old cemetery.

“When you have this big mass of arsenic, there’s enough to affect literally millions of liters of water at least a little bit,” Bostick says.

If humans ingest the contaminated water, it can cause significant health problems over time. Arsenic is a carcinogen that’s associated with skin,

lung, bladder and liver cancers, says Joseph Graziano, an environmental health scientist at Columbia University. Drinking arsenic-contaminated water has also been linked to cardiovascular disease, lung disease and cognitive deficits in children.

The good news is that arsenic was banned from embalming fluid in the early 1900s. It was causing health problems for medical students who were operating on embalmed cadavers. Also, the presence of so much arsenic made murder investigations almost impossible. Police couldn’t distinguish between embalming fluid arsenic and cases of murder by arsenic poisoning.

“The state stepped in and said [morticians] couldn’t use arsenic anymore. Boy, they outlawed it real quick,” Mathews says. Now, morticians use a combination of glutaraldehyde and formaldehyde—both chemicals that sterilize—to embalm bodies for open caskets, he adds. These chemicals evaporate away before they pose a risk to the water table.

But if you live near an old cemetery, you should get your well water checked for arsenic and other contaminants every few years, Mathews advises.

“Sadly, much of the population today isn’t aware of the hazard that arsenic poses,” Graziano says. “Any homeowner should be testing their well water frequently. We need to be vigilant about hazards from drinking water.” ♦

Submitted by John Allen

Be a Gazette Contributor!

We hope you have enjoyed the many member contributions in this issue. Please submit some yourself. Get your experiences in print! Explored a battlefield? Seen 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. ♦

You are cordially invited to the
❧Camp Olden Civil War Round Table Winter Camp Soíree❧
to be held on

Saturday, January 9th, 2016

(Snow/Ice date -Saturday, January 16th)

from 4 pm -8 pm

at the

American Legion Post # 31

1490 South Olden Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08610

Menu

*Buffet Style Dinner featuring food from Fred & Pete's -- including
Roast beef, ham, vodka rigatoni, green salad and veggie.
Dessert & assorted beverages by Camp Olden. Cash Bar.*

Musical entertainment by Mike Plunkett

Price \$18.00 per person.

RSVP with payment by December 19th.

Make checks payable to COCWRT and mail to:

Connie Davis, 109 Endsleigh Ct, Robbinsville, NJ 08691

Dress - Casual but Period Dress welcome.

Fun, games and prizes.

Directions:

From 295 south-take exit 62 onto South Olden Ave. Address will be on your right at first traffic light - turn right onto Graffam Ave. for parking. From 295 north exit 61B - Arena Drive west. At 3rd traffic light American Legion will be straight ahead but pull into Graffam Ave. and building is left corner.

If lost, call Kim - (609) 439-8897

*In case of snow or rain if decision is made to postpone,
President Sirak will email out the announcement.*