



The Dispatch



Newsletter of the

Capital District Civil War Round Table

P.O. Box 8874, Albany, NY 12208

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Braxton Bragg: Misunderstood or Incompetent?

by
Judith Lee Hallock

Our first speaker of the year comes to us from Long Island. She completed the two volume biography of Braxton Bragg entitled *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat, volume 2*. In her talk on September 16, Judith Lee Hallock will discuss the role of Braxton Bragg as Jefferson Davis's military advisor after the disaster at Missionary Ridge and will evaluate Bragg's tenure in Richmond. This should be a very informative presentation about one of the Civil War's most controversial characters.

Judith holds a doctorate from the State University of NY at Stony Brook and is a member of the Civil War Round Table of New York (City).

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Friday, September 16, 1994
Bethlehem Public Library
Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY

Doors Open: 7:00 PM
Program Begins: 7:30 PM

CDCWRT CALENDAR

- ⇒ **September 16** -- *Braxton Bragg: Misunderstood or Incompetent?* Author Judith Lee Hallock.
- ⇒ **September 24** -- 125th NY Regimental Association encampment at Lindenwald, Kinderhook, NY.
- ⇒ **October 7-10** -- Gettysburg battlefield tour with guides Jim Clouse, Dave Richard, Dr. Charles Fennel, and Wayne Motts.
- ⇒ **October 14** -- *A Regiment of Heroes: The Orange Blossoms*. Charles J. LaRocca speaks about the 124th NY Infantry Regiment from Orange County.
- ⇒ **October 15** -- Family History Day. State Archives, Cultural Education Center, Madison Ave., Albany.



Dues, Dues, Dues!!!!

Don't forget to renew your membership. Your membership expiration date is on the mailing label of each month's *Dispatch*. Membership is still a bargain at \$15. Send check to CDCWRT, PO Box 8874, Albany, NY 12208.

O UTRAGE IN OAKWOOD CEMETERY

by Michael Barrett

On Sunday morning, July 24, 1994, an off duty Troy Police officer taking his dog for a walk in the Oakwood Cemetery discovered that the Kavanaugh family mausoleum had been broken into and extensively vandalized. The crypts had been smashed open with a sledge hammer, the coffins removed and opened, and the bodies desecrated. Two of the skulls were determined to be missing, although one was found later that morning in a patch of woods nearby.

Subsequent investigation revealed that three other mausoleums had also been entered and ransacked, including that of the John Griswold family. (As many of you will know, Griswold was an iron maker in Troy; nephew of Major General John E. Wool; former Mayor; Congressman from 1861-67; losing candidate for Governor in 1868; persuader of Lincoln to hear out Erikson's plan for a "floating battery" and the man who largely bankrolled the project and rolled the iron plates for the iron clad Monitor.) Additionally, the bronze bas relief plaques that decorated the monument to Major General Joseph B. Carr had been pried off with a crow bar and stolen. Several other graves also had their bronzes removed, and the bronze memorial plaque which was installed only two years ago in front of the sarcophagus of Major General George Henry Thomas showed signs of an attempt to pry it from the concrete pad, although this proved too thick to allow success.

The following morning, I happened to be passing through the cemetery when I encountered the lead investigator, Sgt. Robert Paul, and several members of the local media. They requested that I lead them through the cemetery, and discuss the various families whose gravesites were damaged. This is a task which I normally do with

great joy, but on this day did with very great sorrow, especially after personally witnessing the unspeakable depravity displayed by the thieves. However, on a bright note, while we were at Carr's grave, one of the accompanying officers discovered his plaques hidden in a nearby weed patch, and recovered them for fingerprinting. The damage to these bronzes is relatively minor, considering how they were removed.

After several hours of touring the sites, and with my children demanding lunch, I left the police to their work and started back out, passing by Carr's monument once again. As I came over the lip of the hill, three teenagers in an old Mercury sedan cruised slowly by, and on down the hill. Following them, they came to the intersection where they could turn left toward the Griswold plot. The front passenger pointed in that direction, and the car began to turn until they spotted the backhoe and vehicles of the crew which was securing that mausoleum. The vehicle abruptly veered to the right and rapidly fled the cemetery. I called the license number into Sgt. Paul's voice mail with an appropriate message, and before the afternoon was done, he reported back that on the basis of the extremely lame story given by the driver he was convinced that the culprits were done in. To make a long story short, after leaning on the driver for two more days, he gave a statement regarding his involvement and the identity of his compatriots, and they in turn "ratted out" the other perpetrators. The motive behind the crime was an effort to obtain \$500.00 with which to purchase LSD, which would be resold at a \$2000.00 profit. In actuality, after causing an estimated \$10,000- \$15,000 worth of damage, the thieves netted less than \$200.00 from their two nights labor.

On August 4, 1994 the Troy Police Department announced the arrests of nine individuals, ranging in age from 16 to 21. One juvenile was also party to the episode, but he wisely chose to be a witness rather than a defendant, so he was not charged. Six of the nine were charged with four counts each of the felonies of burglary, larceny and body stealing. All six were remanded to

the county jail without bail, although they have now been transferred to other county lock-ups due to death threats from the other local prisoners. Five of the six had a preliminary hearing on August 9, and all cases have been bound over to the Grand Jury, which will need to act by September 19.

At the press conference announcing the arrests, the police were gracious enough to give me the credit for providing the information that broke the case. As a result, it is their position that I am due the reward money which was put up by a Saratoga County citizen who had seen the evening news, and was outraged by the senselessness of the act. I have been in contact with that individual and have discussed with him my distaste for personally profiting from the misdeeds of a group of mental midgets damaging "my" cemetery. I am now proposing that the Roundtable establish a Trust Fund, with the intent of using the proceeds to repair or restore either the Carr or Griswold plots. (Unfortunately, none of the other plots seem to qualify, as I can not ascertain any nexus to the Civil War, which is part of our non-profit educational/ preservation mandate.) I have discussed this with the cemetery administration, and while they are certainly grateful, there are details which would need to be worked out, including the possibility of remaining family involvement. The reward donor says he will send the money anywhere I direct.

Therefore, I would like to field an open invitation to the members to advance options for the use of this money in case we are precluded from my original desire. I would prefer to use it for an Oakwood related project, but will certainly be willing to consider any other worthy project. If you have thoughts on the matter, please feel free to call or speak with me, or any of the officers, at your convenience.



125th New York Regimental Association Wins Reenactor's Award

The 125th New York Regimental Association was awarded the 'REENACTOR'S AWARD' for "going the extra mile" in their efforts to authentically portray a New York unit and for "bringing the Civil War era to life." The award was given to the 125th by the New York Department of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

A plaque will be presented to the association during a ceremony September 24, 1994 during an encampment at Lindenwald, Kinderhook, NY. George A Shadman, NY State Dept. Commander of the Sons of Union Veterans will make the presentation.

Second Annual Conference on Civil War Medicine -- A Review

by Ray Smith and Barbara Quackenbush

The newly established National Museum of Civil War Medicine sponsored its Second Annual Conference on Civil War Medicine at Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, August 5-7, 1994. This meeting brought together a group of 150 physicians, medical practitioners, historians and those with a general interest in learning about the medical care provided (or not provided) to the Civil War soldier. The event featured speakers, a medical re-enactment and tours of Frederick that focused on the city's role as a major hospital site during the conflict.

The program's speakers addressed a broad range of themes related to diseases, treatments and equipment known to the medical profession of the mid-nineteenth century. Dr. Gordon

Dammann, a practicing dentist whose personal Civil War medical collection will form the core of the new museum, gave an informative presentation on the dentistry of the period (complete with illustrations of implements whose precedent appeared to be medieval torture devices!). Dr. Jack Welsh of the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine delivered a fascinating talk on Union generals as patients. Welsh highlighted several general officers (including Samuel Wiley Crawford and Joshua Chamberlain) wounded in action and tracked their subsequent medical history in the postwar era (many lived long and productive lives, but ultimately died of complications associated with their wounds of long ago). The Friday program concluded with a large-scale, outdoor medical reenactment depicting a brigade field hospital. The interpretive program depicted a very convincing leg amputation accompanied by a highly informative narration of the hospital procedures by the medical re-enactors (who were themselves physicians). This was one of the finest Civil War re-enactments we have ever witnessed. Surgeon T. A. Wheat of the modern U.S. Army Medical Corps re-enacted the role of a Union Army surgeon. Wheat's personal experience with field operating conditions in Operation Desert Storm gave perspective and enhanced credibility to his interpretation of the surgery practiced during the Civil War. Wheat and his colleagues noted that the instruments and procedures of the Civil War surgeon did not differ radically from modern surgical practice. They also emphasized a point underscored throughout the conference: Anesthetics (chloroform) were much more generally available for operations (even in the Confederacy) than is commonly supposed. The Hollywood version of the "sawbones" operating on scores of screaming, thrashing wounded was more the exception than the rule throughout the war.

Saturday's program featured a wide range of topics and several excellent presentations. Among the highlights was Dr. Terry Hambrecht speaking on Confederate mobile hospitals during Sherman's Atlanta campaign of July--August, 1864. Hambrecht described the complex

coordination of medical, commissary and quartermaster commands needed to provide highly mobile medical service to Hood's Army of Tennessee, noting that the system worked with relative success until the fall of Atlanta. Dr. Murray Rosenberg of New Jersey Medical School presented a penetrating portrait of "Surgeon General William A. Hammond -- Victim or Culprit?" Young, brilliant and dynamic, Hammond reformed the Union Army medical service. In so doing, however, he ran afoul of Secretary of War Stanton for ignoring "established procedures." Court martialled and found guilty, Hammond was dismissed from the service in 1864, though his reforms remained. Among the day's most interesting presentation was "Victory Over Pain" by Dr. Peter Jacobsohn. A professor of oral surgery and president of the Milwaukee Civil War Round Table, Jacobsohn provided a fascinating and entertaining account of the discovery and development of anesthesia in the mid-nineteenth century. Though nitrous oxide ("laughing gas"), ether and chloroform were all known and available since the mid-1840s, chloroform was the anesthetic of choice among Civil War army field surgeons because it was stable, easily contained, transported and applied.

Dr. Alfred J. Bollet of Yale University School of Medicine demonstrated that statistical analysis need not be dry and dismal in his excellent presentation, "It takes Good Guts to be a Soldier: The Medical Problems of Civil War Troops." Using the statistical summaries contained in the Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion for various diseases, wounds and related mortality, Bollet presented a comprehensive health profile of the Union and Confederate armies. For most common camp diseases (measles, smallpox, diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid), Bollet noted the highest number of cases occurring during the first 2 1/2 years of the war. After mid-1863, the relative number of cases declined as the weak died or left service and the stronger soldiers became acclimated to field conditions. However, the mortality rate among those contracting these diseases increased in the final years of the war. Dr. Bollet discussed diseases and their symptoms as they

were understood by doctors of the period, thereby providing an excellent framework for understanding how the statistics were compiled.

The conference on Civil War medicine concluded with a Sunday morning bus and walking tour of downtown Frederick. Civil War enthusiasts who simply pass around Frederick on adjacent high-speed highways en route to Gettysburg, Harpers Ferry or Antietam are missing one of the area's best kept secrets! Frederick retains a high percentage of its historic pre-Civil War building stock, and the downtown area appears much as it did when the armies of North and South marched through the city. Our walking tour consisted of small groups led by knowledgeable volunteer guides who highlighted buildings used as general hospitals following the battles at Antietam, Monocacy and the surrounding area (in the wake of the Sharpsburg campaign, for example, Frederick housed over 4000 wounded at a time when the city's normal population was only 6000!). Our tour concluded at the newly-acquired building on Patrick Street that will soon be home to the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. The museum will provide the ideal location to interpret the medical history of the War of the Rebellion, including the impact upon Frederick as an important hospital and command center throughout the war. Further information about the museum and its programs is available by writing The National Museum of Civil War medicine, P.O. Box 470, Frederick, MD 21705-0470.

We thoroughly enjoyed this conference, and would enthusiastically recommend next year's event to CDCWRT members. Accommodations and meals at Hood College (including a Saturday night Maryland crab feast!) were superb, and an outdoor evening concert of Civil War music performed by the 2nd South Carolina String Band provide perfect informal entertainment.

P *rimary Sources On 124th N.Y. Are Published*

That Regiment of Heroes edited by Charles LaRocca. Illustrated, 255 pp., 1991. Charles LaRocca, 209 Goodwill Rd., Montgomery, NY 12550

[Note: Charles LaRocca is scheduled to speak at our October meeting.]

Charles LaRocca, a teacher at Pine Bush High School, Pine Bush, N.Y., was awarded the Christa McAuliffe Grant through the United States Department of Education to assemble letters and diaries written by members of the 124th New York Infantry Regiment.

The complete title of this work is self-explanatory as to the purpose of this collection, *That Regiment of Heroes: A compilation of primary materials pertaining to the 124th New York State Volunteers in the American Civil War*. The book provides an excellent collection of primary letters and diaries by men who served in the famed "Orange Blossoms" of the Third Corps, Army of the Potomac.

The main goal of compiler LaRocca was to assemble unpublished primary documents from numerous sources for use with fourth, seventh and eighth grade students taking local New York State history. Also included are letters written by members of the regiment published during the war in local newspapers.

A detailed list of equipage, plus firearms issued is included. An important addition to the volume is the inclusion of 67 photographs of regimental members. A series of pen and ink sketches wrought by art teachers Dianne Drewes and Wayne Merrick effectively highlight the book.

The 124th New York was one of Fox's Fighting Three Hundred, serving with distinction on

Houck's Ridge, July 2, 1863, at Gettysburg. Chancellorsville was an important battle in the regiment's life as reflected in the great number of letters concerning that engagement. The central core of letters are from two brothers, William and Henry Howell.

That Regiment of Heroes serves as a worthwhile supplement to the 1877 regimental study, *History of the 124th New York Volunteers* written by Charles H. Weygant. The Orange Blossoms, so nicknamed since they were recruited in Orange County, New York, were also the subject of two novels, *Gettysburg* by John Brick and the more notable *The Red Badge of Courage*.

This is an outstanding collection of primary documents concerning one of the Army of the Potomac's better fighting units. Unfortunately the book, limited to 500 copies, is not available for general distribution. It is obtainable for research purposes at the New York State Library in Albany and at the Gettysburg, Spotsylvania, Chancellorsville, Petersburg and Fredericksburg National Military Park Libraries. It has also been distributed to schools and historical societies throughout Orange County. It is unfortunate that *That Regiment of Heroes* will not receive a wider distribution.

Michael Russert

Civil War History Rots Away in New York

I am writing in regard to the article in your May 1994 issue (of the Civil War News) entitled "New York State Museum Houses War Treasures From North and South" by Deborah Fitts. On a trip to the Albany Museum over a year ago I went to view the battle flags of five different Union regiments on display in their collection there.

I too met Mr. Duclos [curator] who told us the shocking story that many of the flags were in sad need of preservation. We walked the four blocks from the armory to the state capital building and

entered into the lower floors of the building. In the darkened marble walkways we passed the offices of busy state employees doing their jobs heedless of the history that was all round them.

Eventually we entered into a large open room which contained 1-to-15 huge oaken cabinets. Inside one could see the battle flags crammed into narrow spaces. Duclos told me that most of the flags were not preserved and that of the 15 flags of the five regiments I had requested to see, only one was preserved.

He opened the oaken door with a sharp pull and a rifle-like crack echoed through the halls. "Humidity," he said, "happens about this time every year." He then carefully pulled the national color of the 38th N.Y.S.V. from its place in the front row of flags.

The first thing I noticed was that the ornamental spear tips to the flag pole was missing. "Yeah, a damn shame," said Duclos, "a previous curator in the 1880s had to fit these flags in the cabinets. He couldn't get them to fit the right way, so he..." and with that Duclos made a breaking sound. "He just broke off the tops. I've got a whole box of them back in my office," Duclos said.

We continued on with the color that was out and unrolled it. The 6-by-6-1/2 foot flag had been sewn into 6-by-5 foot preservation nylon webbing. The end of the flag showing the battle damage suffered at Williamsburg, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville was rolled behind the flag. Holes that had been small bullet holes in action were now stretched to the size of a man's arm. "This one's in good condition, I'll show you one later that is turning to dust as we speak." he said.

After taking some photos and drawings of the flag we carefully rolled up the faded banner and placed it back in its place. As he placed the national color in its place, Duclos pointed to another flag directly behind it. "You wanted to see the other flag of the 38th New York, well that's its state color in its original flag cover," said Duclos. When asked if I could see it he said that the next

time that one sees the sunlight it will be preserved. Ominously he added if it ever was preserved.

The next flag I asked to see was that of the 9th New York Volunteer Infantry, "Hawkins Zouaves." Duclos was especially interested in showing this flag. "I can let you see it, but there isn't much left I'm afraid," he said. There encased in a bag of mylar sheeting was the remnants of the red battle flag of the Hawkins Zouaves. The very same flag that waved defiantly in the face of A.P. Hill's crushing counterattack at Antietam.

Duclos picked a piece of a flag from the cabinet's base, "This is a piece of history that may survive your children, but when your grandchildren come of age most of these flags will be gone and only their poles will be left."

"But what can we do to save them?" I asked. "Anything is better than letting this go to dust." Duclos said citizens of New York State can pressure their assembly and senators. If one of their special bills pass that's at least money for one or two flags to be saved.

Those who are concerned but outside of New York State can help by bake sales, marches, anything to help these flags. It's a part of all of our history and we should do something about it together. I thanked Tom Duclos and attempted to convince some of my reenactor friends to begin to lay the groundwork for an organization to help, but thanks to the Capital District Civil War Round Table we now have this organization in place. Now is the time to help.

Those of us from New York or still living there know that support for these flags will never come from the state government unless we pressure and embarrass the government itself. Citizens of New York, if you care for your state's history, write your state government and demand action. I cannot speak too strongly, you know what I'm talking about. It is a crying shame that a state governed by a so-called Civil War historian could let its rich Civil War history rot away.

Those of you outside of New York State, don't feel that it is not your problem. Other states follow New York's lead in many areas, if no one cares in New York then maybe they don't care in your state either. Also New York State still owns several Confederate colors in its collection and while they will never go back to their native states Duclos has told me that once they are preserved they too will be open to private viewing. Now is your chance and I encourage you all to support saving the Excelsior flags while you still have the chance.

Michael Zatarra
Greensboro, N.C.

G *ettysburg Update*

On October 8 and 9, the CDCWRT will be touring the Gettysburg Battlefield as part of our annual field trip. It should be a great trip, with four different guides helping to interpret various parts of the battle.

A severe storm this past July damaged the monument to Vermont's Co. F, 1st U.S. Sharpshooters. Part of a large tree fell on the monument breaking the 20-foot marble column and the eagle which topped it. Gettysburg National Military Park officials estimate damage at \$150,000. Fortunately, no other park property was damaged during the storm.

In other news about Gettysburg, the public will help decide the fate of a partially-destroyed railroad cut that was a part of the first day's fighting. The cut was excavated by Gettysburg College in 1991. A summary of the repair options, with cost estimates for each, should already be completed. A public meeting was planned for early September.

Agreements have been reached to remove the overhead wires and utility poles that currently mar the battlefield.

Created in 1984, the Capital District Civil War Round Table is an incorporated non-profit educational organization. Meetings are held monthly at the Bethlehem Public Library in Delmar, New York. This newsletter is published ten times per year. Annual dues are \$15. The purpose of the organization is to promote, educate, and further stimulate interest in, and discussion of, all aspects of the Civil War period.



To join or renew membership, send \$15 to the CDCWRT address below.

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