

OUR CAMP JOURNAL

Volume 30, Issue 1

"We are but few in number but formidable." -Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B

August 2026

A Civil War Letter by Charles Engle 137th New York Volunteers

By Bill Hart

This passage from a letter sent by a soldier is well worth sharing. It was written by 25-year-old Charles Engle, a private in the 137th New York Volunteer Infantry. A prolific writer, he sent letters home to his wife in Vestel, New York more than weekly for nearly three years.

He wrote the letter this excerpt is taken from on Sunday, July 12th, 1863 from camp near the Antietam Battlefield reflecting on the Gettysburg campaign. Engle's thoughts about how the war must end are the inspiring words of an ordinary but uncommon man.

"I want to see you all so bad I can hardly stand it but I want to have this trouble settled first. We are having very hard times but I am willing to endure most anything if I only come out alive so I can return home with you once more but I might as well die here as to have the south couter. If it is my lot to fall here perhaps you and the children can live in a free country. I don't want them to come out victorious. We better die fighting but I hope the hardest fighting is over."

This letter was composed in the af-



Charles and Charlotte Engle

termath of the Battle of Gettysburg where the 137th played a key role in defending the right of the Union line on July 2nd.

Although the following words weren't actually spoken, they may sound familiar. Brigade commander General George Greene did not tell the 137th regiment's colonel:

The 137th is the end of the line . . . The extreme right of the Union army . . . The line runs all the way from here to Little Round Top, but it ends here . . . You must defend this place to the last.

137th regiment's Colonel David Ireland did not tell his men:

The 119th, 140th, and 60th New York are on our left but if you look to our right, you will see there is no one there. Because we're the end of the line. The Union Army stops here. We are the flank . . . we cannot retreat, we cannot withdraw. We are going to have to be stubborn today.

The 137th's position on the right of the Union line is comparable to the position of the regiment on the left end. The 137th *did* defend their position to the last. They *were* stubborn.

The 137th faced not two regiments, but a brigade of six. They were outnumbered not 2 to 1, but 5 to 1.

They refused their line not once, but twice, being attacked from the front, from the right, and from the rear. They made a bayonet charge. They fought in the dark. And, the next day they did not man a static position but fought again for another two hours.

While taking nothing from the incredible fight of the 20th Maine, the action on the right of the Union Line, although not as celebrated as that on the left, was fought at

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Upcoming Campaigns

AUGUST

August 29-30: Carroll County Farm Museum- Col. Monzi; Commanding
(Individual Event)

SEPTEMBER

September 12-13: Frederick County Parks & Recreation Civil War

Days-Crampton's Gap

(7th MD COMPANY Event)

September 26-27: Soldering Through the Ages – at [Maryland Veterans Museum](#)

11000 Crain Highway, Newburg, MD 20664 (Individual Event)

OCTOBER

October 3: Fort Ward Civil War Camp Day, October 16-18: 161st Battle of Cedar Creek, Middletown, VA - Register www.ccbf.us *(FVB Event) (7th MD COMPANY Event)



Maryland General Assembly awards \$100,000 for Queen Anne's County Colored Troops Memorial

CENTREVILLE, MD — A public art monument honoring the military service and sacrifice of local Black heroes of the Civil War is one step closer to realization, thanks to the support of the Maryland General Assembly, according to the Queen Anne's County Veterans Committee.

The United States Colored Troops Memorial, a project of the Centreville Veterans Information Center and its Queen Anne's County Veterans Committee, has secured \$100,000 in state funding through the 2026 Maryland Legislative Bond Initiative.

These state funds, coupled with a \$50,000 pledge from Queen Anne's County, a \$25,000 grant from the Mid-Shore Community Foundation, an in-kind gift from InCrete of Maryland for site work, a donation from the Town of Centreville, and the generous sup-



A clay rendering by Maryland artist Tilghman Hemsley of a planned six foot bronze Queen Anne's County United States Colored Troops Memorial. Honoring over 480 Black men from Queen Anne's County who served in the Civil War, the memorial is slated to be installed at the Kennard African American Cultural Heritage Center in Centreville.

port of local veterans groups, businesses, and private donors, brings the total in gifts and pledges to \$328,000, just shy of the \$340,000 goal.

The veterans group first learned about the experiences of Queen Anne's County's Black soldiers fighting for the cause of liberty from local historian Chris Pupke. The former president of the Queen Anne's County Historical Society has devoted the last 10 years to examining primary sources related to the United States Colored Troops (USCT of Maryland), including newspaper accounts and military service records, and documenting the stories of those freed and enslaved Black men from Queen Anne's County who fought for their personal freedom while helping to preserve the Union and bring an end to slavery. Many of the surviving veter-

ans of the Civil War returned home to build vibrant Black communities. Through their military service, members of the USCT had shattered the myth of Black inferiority and demonstrated tremendous courage on the battlefield, including the notorious Battle of the Crater, where they suffered massive casualties and brutality at the hands of the enemy.

"These heroes deserve to be part of the Queen Anne's County story," said Pupke, "For too long, these veterans have been ignored. They made tremendous contributions to our nation and our community. They helped win the Civil War, save the nation, and end slavery. This remarkable legacy merits a memorial to honor their great sacrifices."

Pupke's work inspired local veterans of the 21st century to honor their fellow veterans whose bravery altered the trajectory of the war and earned them their right to citizenship. Abraham Lincoln noted the strategic importance of Black soldiers to the Federal war effort, "Without the military help of black freedmen, the war against the South could not have been won."

Pupke has identified more than 480 Black soldiers who willingly fought for a freedom they had never fully experienced. Upon learning how these United States Colored

Troops bravely bled and died to secure liberty for themselves and future gen-

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Historical human remains discovered in Frederick, close to Revolutionary War barracks

Remains were found at the start of restoration work on the 18th century building; now comes the task of puzzling out whose remains they are...



Lithograph of a John Johnston Markell painting showing various Maryland militia units encamped at the Hessian Barracks, circa 1843. (Courtesy of Heritage Frederick)

Little is known about the two sets of skeletal remains uncovered during an excavation in downtown Frederick earlier this year— only that police are convinced they're "historic in nature."

The bones were discovered by archaeological crews excavating land near the Hessian Barracks, an 18th century building on the grounds of the Maryland School for the Deaf. The excavation was part of the beginning stages of historical restoration work.

The remains were left in place and reburied to protect them, a state official said. If they are eventually exhumed, examinations could reveal more about the remains, including their approximate age.

But in the meantime, local historians have their guesses.

Could they be from the American Revolution, when the barracks held British and German, or Hessian, prisoners of war?

Could they be from the Civil War, when the barracks became a hospital for injured Union and Confederate soldiers, including from the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest single-day battle on American soil?

"When you look at the history of this site and the various uses that it has had, whether as a military barracks, as a place where prisoners of war were kept, or as a hospital — I mean, it really doesn't surprise me," said Jody Brumage, archivist and museum manager for the Heritage Frederick historical society.

During times of peace, the barracks have served a diverse array of functions: The barracks were a supply depot for the Lewis and Clark expe-

dition west after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803; in the late 1800s, a pair of merchants raised silkworms there.

But the discovery has directed attention to wartimes, when on-site burials would have been more likely.

Chad Baker, a former teacher and later deputy superintendent at the Maryland School for the Deaf, said he once read a diary entry from a Hessian soldier imprisoned there that said a fellow prisoner died and was buried outside the barracks.

"I would hope, I like, I wish — whatever — that they find out they can date it to the Revolutionary War period," said Baker, who focused on preservation of the barracks during his decades at the school, before his 2014 retirement.

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Human Remains Found in Frederick

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"That would verify the document that referenced the possibility — and especially if there are any artifacts that they buried with them. You never know."

Brumage, for his part, believes the remains may be more likely to be from the Civil War era, when wounded from both sides inundated the site.

temporary morgue, if you will — those soldiers, Civil War, who died while being cared for in the barracks," Baker said.

The barracks were commissioned by the state legislature in the late 1770s — one of three funded by the state at that time, Baker said. Back then, they were on the southern outskirts of town, atop a hill that gained the nickname "Cannon Hill," because townspeople fired cannons from the barracks for special occasions, such as Marquis de Lafayette's 1824 visit, or the Baltimore &

said, though it was later nicknamed for the Hessian prisoners held there who later became part of the community. After the Revolution, many Hessian prisoners were freed and settled in Frederick, which already had a sizable German population, Baker said.

"When repatriation to Germany was offered, most of them said no and they just stayed locally," Baker said. "And some, in fact, married the proverbial farmer's daughter, and we have descendants in Frederick that have that lineage."

That the discovery of aged remains happened in 2026, the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence, is no accident: The School for the Deaf got a \$750,000 National Park Service grant in July 2023 to support the preservation of the barracks site, including "critical stabilization and foundation work," said Amy Mowl, a spokesperson for the school, in a statement.

It was during "pre-restoration archaeological work" for this project that the buried human remains were found, said Brandon Stoneburg, a spokesman for the Maryland Department of General Services. The department is working alongside the Maryland Historical Trust on the project, Stoneburg said.

"The discovery, while unexpected, is being handled with appropriate care and historical consideration," said Maryland School for the Deaf Superintendent John A. Serrano, in a video message delivered in American Sign Language.

"At this time, authorities are working to determine the next steps for the respectful and compliant handling of the remains. Work in the affected area will remain paused until this process is complete," Serrano said.

*By Christine Condon
- Maryland Matters*



The Hessian Barracks, built in the 1700s, have had many uses, including as a prison in the Revolutionary War and a hospital during the Civil War.. (Photo courtesy the Maryland School for the Deaf)

"We know that in different instances with Civil War hospitals, that burials were done in almost any available place," Brumage said, "particularly in those periods like after Antietam, where just the sheer numbers of wounded soldiers that are being dealt with in these places is really astronomical."

But Baker said there was a temporary morgue in the Civil War era — at that time called a "dead house" — just to the east of the barracks, making him question the idea that burials could have occurred there.

"They had a place to put — in a

Ohio railroad's arrival to the city.

Today, though, the barracks are tucked into the School for the Deaf's 68-acre, 14-building campus, which is surrounded by a residential area full of historic homes in Frederick.

"Today, Frederick completely surrounds the site where the barracks stand, and the remaining structure really sits right in the heart of the Maryland School for the Deaf campus," Brumage said.

The barracks were originally the Frederick Town Barracks, Baker

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*Civil War Re-enactors;
America's Living Historians.*

QAC USCT

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erations, local veterans pledged to honor their sacrifice with a permanent monument.

The veterans engaged local artist Tilghman Hemsley to create a life-sized bronze statue of a Black Civil War soldier, which will stand atop a monument of black granite engraved with the names of each of the 488 USCT soldiers from Queen Anne's County identified thus far. With full funding in place, the USCT Memorial will be installed at Kennard African American Cultural Heritage Center in Centreville, in the green space behind the museum, later this year.

John C. Wright, a U.S. Army veteran and long-time educator

who spent his formative years at Kennard High School and was later instrumental in raising state and county funds for the renovation of the old Kennard High School, now serves as chair of the veterans group raising money for the USCT Memorial. He recognizes the contributions of the USCT as an important chapter in Queen Anne's County history with which too few people are familiar.

"I think this project will have a great impact on the community — for people to see that statue and understand what it means, that our fellow veterans fought for their freedom and the freedom of their country," Wright says. "That was the hope. That when the war was over, they would have a better life."

--*Bay Times & Record Observer*

Chas. Engle, 137th NYSV

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least as valiantly, was at least as vital to victory.

Charles Engle lived to survive the



Col. David Ireland, 137th NYSV

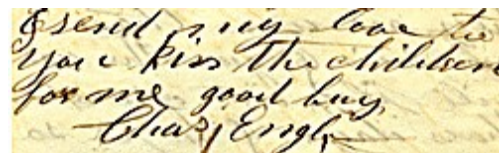


Above, Charles and Charlotte Engle's grave marker.

war. He was promoted first to corporal and then to sergeant before leaving the army. He returned home to his wife Charlotte, children, family and friends in Broome County,

New York in 1865 where he resumed to his life as a farmer. He died on December 24th, 1918.

Charles' family saved his letters to Charlotte through four generations and had 159 of them transcribed and placed on-line where anyone may access them.



"I send my love to you ...kiss the children for me. Good buy, (sp)
Chas Engle"