

Drum Barracks Civil War Museum

Winter 2020

Reveille

Director's Chair

Tara Fansler

Happy New Year! We are looking forward to a wonderful year of activity and learning at Drum Barracks, with a focus on California's role in the Civil War. Our popular Living History School Program, which we hold every Friday in April and May, is already booked solid and will allow us to share Civil War history with more than 800 middle school students.

Our events calendar is also filling up, as we prepare for our March Volunteer Training Class, and our April Park Day, a national day of service at Civil War sites sponsored by the American Battlefield Trust. We are also busy planning our third annual Civil War Technology Fair, to take place in June. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, or check our website www.drumbarracks.org, for more details as these events draw near.

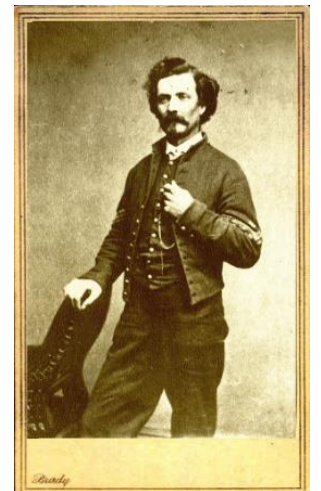


Illustration of Camp Meigs, Massachusetts training ground of the Cal 100

There are many exciting new exhibitions in the works. The Drum Barracks Garrison and Society has purchased artifacts belonging to Charles Roberts, Wesley C. Howe and Robert Williams, members of the legendary California Battalion, who enlisted with Massachusetts in 1863 to fight for the Union. These artifacts will form the backbone of, **"Give California a Chance to Strike a Blow for the Union: The California 100 and Battalion,"** a new exhibition which will be on permanent display at the museum.

are to use the sabre. May the flash of your blades, if you are called into battle, be part of the dawn of a better age for our country." The men of the California 100 and Battalion sacrificed home and family, they endured battle, injury and prison, and less than half the men of the California Battalion were still standing and able to muster out at the end of the war. We are excited to share their story of courage and sacrifice with our visitors. "Give California a Chance to Strike a Blow for the Union," is currently in the design phase, and I look forward to sharing more with you as we finalize this important permanent exhibition.

In a sermon he delivered to the Cal Hundred in December 1862, as they prepared to leave for the east, famous orator Thomas Starr King said, "You



Carte de visite of Wesley C. Howe, member of Company M of the California Battalion

Before I go I want to thank our volunteers for their help with our events in November and December, our busiest time of year. It was wonderful to see so many of you at Drum Barracks over the holidays. The staff and volunteers at Drum Barracks are like a family, and I am excited (and a little sad) to tell you that two members of our family are moving on to bigger and better things. I am talking about Guadalupe Pena and Brian Chavez, and their new career opportunities. Guadalupe and Brian are larger than life, and what they have meant to Drum Barracks cannot be expressed in a few short lines, so please read my following article and join me as we celebrate Guadalupe and Brian and send them on their way to outstanding careers in the field of history.

We are Not Saying Goodbye, We are Saying Congratulations!

Tara Fansler

I am so proud to inform you that two of our brightest young employees took their next step towards successful careers as history professionals. In January, we received the wonderful news that Guadalupe Pena and Brian Chavez (both Drum Barracks part-time employees) would be advancing their careers and moving into full-time positions at other local historical institutions.

After seven years at Drum Barracks, Guadalupe Pena promoted from part-time museum guide to full-time Curator with the City of Los Angeles. She is currently working at the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro. We are thrilled that this new assignment keeps Ms. Pena in our department within the City of Los Angeles, which will give us many opportunities to continue working and collaborating with her.



Drum Barracks Museum Guide, Brian Chavez, has accepted a position as Manager of Gallery and Collections at the Historical Society of Long Beach.

After more than 10 years with Drum Barracks, five years as a volunteer and five years as a part-time museum guide, Brian Chavez informed us in January that he was joining the full-time staff of the Historical Society of Long Beach as Manager of Gallery and Collections. We are excited for the new opportunities this will bring Mr. Chavez, and even more excited that he elected to stay on with us as a part-time employee so he can still work with us for special programs and events.

We will honor Ms. Pena and Mr. Chavez at our Volunteer Party and Awards Ceremony at the end of March. Until then, please join me in congratulating Guadalupe and Brian. We know that they will go far and have bright futures as leaders in the history community. It has been a pleasure to work closely with them, and I am glad that they will continue to be involved with Drum Barracks in a variety of ways.



Drum Barracks Museum Guide, Guadalupe Pena, is now a full-time curator at the Los Angeles Maritime Museum.

Arlington Cemetery – Freedman's Village

<http://arlingtoncemetery.net/freedman-100104.htm>

Editor's Note: After reading the brief mention of the Freedman's Village in the last Reveille, I decided this topic needed further information, so I decided to expand on the topic in this issue of the Reveille.



Freedman's Village as it appeared in Harper's Weekly, May 1864

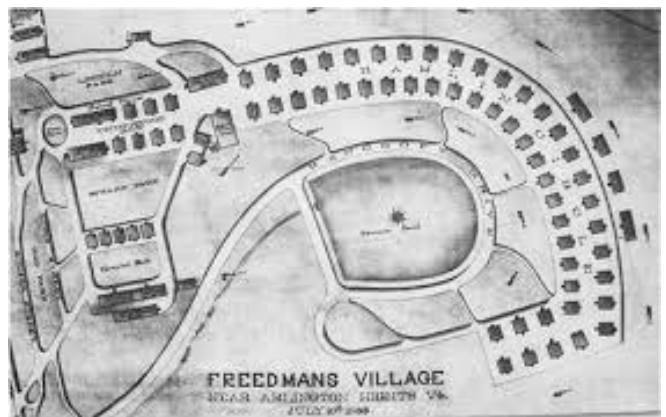
To many black families in Arlington, Freedman's Village is a legend, a story handed down by great-grandparents of a place that no longer exists. Yet it was in Freedman's Village — a camp of former slaves established by the government during the Civil War era — that much of Arlington's modern black community began. As urban development changes neighborhoods like Nauck and Halls Hills, neighborhoods with predominately black populations, historians and preservationists are now looking closer at Freedman's Village as a lost chapter of the African American community's history.

Freedman's Village was established by the federal government in 1863 on the grounds of the Custis and Lee estates, what is today Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon and the Navy Annex building. The village was a collection of 50 one-and-a-half story houses.

Each house was divided in half to accommodate two families. The freed men and women — often referred to as contrabands by the government — had all traveled north from parts of Virginia, the Carolinas and other regions of the south in the hopes of finding work and opportunity. Under the direction of the government and the American Missionary Association, the Freedman's Village was intended to house these refugees, train them in skilled labor and to educate freed children. The camp's grounds included an industrial school, several schools for children, a hospital, a home for the aged and churches. But Michael Leventhal, Arlington County's historic preservation coordinator, said Freedman's Village's creation had less to do with helping blacks integrate into free society and more to do with segregation.

"Although slavery was abolished, the North was not really interested in having blacks coming into northern cities," Leventhal said. "It isn't as if the country had made the full leap to integration."

The able-bodied residents of Freedman's Village had to work, often put to difficult labor on construction projects and farming. They were paid \$10 each week but half of their salary was turned over to the camp's authorities to pay for overhead costs. According to the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, although the village operated several farms, their produce was sold by the government to consumers in Washington D.C. As a report from the New England Society of Friends, a Quaker group, noted in 1864, residents of the village lived "entirely under military discipline", discipline doled out by soldiers from Fort Myer, and were "obliged to live solely on military rations". The report describes many in the village wandering nearby roads to beg for food. After a brief period of employment in the village, residents had to leave in order to seek jobs elsewhere and make room for new arrivals. "We found that they were glad to leave," the report said.



The village had only one source of water, a well. It was also constructed on what was then a swamp, which caused several outbreaks of smallpox. Yet despite hardships, the village was always seeing new residents and refugees.

Genealogically, many families in Arlington can trace their roots back to residents of Freedman's Village. Names common in modern Arlington, are found on the village's registry, names like Gray, Tippet, Parke, Pollard and Syphax.



Craig Syphax, researcher and coordinator for the soon-to-come Arlington Black Heritage Museum, said the legacy of Freedman's Village endures as a part of the local black community's social consciousness. "It's something that's has guided the black community, something it has followed by trying to be a self-sufficient community," he said. "It was a place where freed slaves has a chance to create their own community."

SYPHAX'S ANCESTOR, William Syphax, a former slave on the Custis estate, left Freedman's Village and was later elected to the Alexandria County Board. He only served for six months before winning a seat as a delegate in the Virginia General Assembly. In

1870, Syphax petitioned Congress to obtain a 17-acre plot of land near the village. "We have a claim on this estate," he wrote.

Other notable residents of the village include Jesse Pollard, the first black judge in Arlington's history. Sojourner Truth, who worked to smuggle slaves out of the south on the Underground Railroad, also lived in the village for one year in 1864, serving as a teacher and helping to find jobs for villagers. According to Talmadge Williams, president of Arlington's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), many laborers in Freedman's Village worked on the construction of the capitol building. In 1866, the Army recruited the 107th regiment of U.S. Color Troops from the village. No one has ever undertaken an organized excavation of the Freedman's Village site but Williams said that when construction crews were laying a foundation for the nearby Sheraton Hotel, part of the village cemetery was uncovered.



Sojourner Truth

The residents of Freedman's Village often found themselves at odds with the society outside its limits. As Washington D.C. expanded, land speculators pressured the government to close the camp. Tensions heightened after the superintendent of Arlington Cemetery, J.A. Commerford, accused village residents in 1887 of cutting down trees on cemetery property. Leventhal said the large in-flux of blacks in the area was also a problem for some racially charged whites.

"As the black population became more and more prominent, the camp started getting overcrowded," he said. "Many spilled out into other parts of Arlington."

Freedman's village was closed down in 1900. At its height, it housed more than 1,100 residents yet it was only constructed to contain about 600. One unnamed reporter from the New York Herald noted days before it was shut down that the closing was mostly due to encroaching development, local plans for the expansion of Mount Vernon Avenue and the coming bridge over the Potomac. *"There is also a political element to the case," the reporter added. "The votes cast by the colored citizens on the Arlington reservation have several times controlled elections in the county."*



After Freedman's Village was shut down, local farmers, many of them black, others sympathetic to the plight of the freed slaves, offered land to village residents. These plots became neighborhoods like Halls Hills and Nauck.

As Arlington's black community plans the creation of a museum devoted to its history, Leventhal said the importance of Freedman's Village cannot be underestimated.

"The truth always falls between the cracks," he said. "While things are changing in Arlington in terms of development, we're starting to lose some of the history and the people that made Arlington what it is. It's important that these folktales and myths become reality."



An exhibit on Freedman's Village, including a scale model, is on display at Arlington House, the former estate of Robert E. Lee in Arlington Cemetery. The Black Heritage Museum's web site, www.arlingtonblackheritage.org, is also expected to carry an exhibit on Freedman's Village in the coming months.

Queen City - Building in East Arlington

<https://library.arlingtonva.us/2018/01/31/from-freedmans-village-to-queen-city-one-communitys-evolution/>



As Freedman's Village began to decline – and especially after it was closed in 1900, residents of the Village had to find new places to live. One such area was the nearby community known as East Arlington. Within East Arlington, two acres of land were purchased by the Mount Olive Baptist Church and this subdivision soon became known as Queen City. Located in the northern corner of East Arlington, the homes in the first wave of residency were built by African American owners.

Residents of Queen City created a close-knit community, with men usually working at the nearby brickyards (they could use the Queen City trolley stop to get to work), and women bringing in work such as sewing. Children went to school locally at the Jefferson School on Columbia Pike, and families would attend Mt. Olive or one of the other nearby churches, St. John's Baptist or Mt. Zion. The local Odd Fellows had annual "Entertainments"

at Christmas and the Fourth of July, supported community members in distress, and even made loans.

Queen City was a strong community built on proximity, hard work, social ties, and the realities of Jim Crow. The 1940 census records show 903 people living in 218 residences in the whole of East Arlington.

World War II and Eminent Domain

With the US's entry in to World War II, the War Department needed to expand. There was no room in Washington, DC, for a building big enough to hold the department, so a new site was selected across the river in Arlington. The building, now known as the Pentagon, was on the land of the outdated Hoover Airport and the federal experimental farm, but additional space would be needed for parking and roads serving the complex. The East Arlington neighborhood – and Queen City within it – was in the way.

The federal government exercised eminent domain to take over the land in February of 1942. Homeowners were compensated, but unlike the nearby African-American neighborhood of Johnson's Hill, Queen City did not have paved streets or running water, so property values were lower.

Casualty of Change

Residents were given four to six weeks to leave their homes in an already tight housing market, and African Americans had even fewer housing options than whites. With intervention from Eleanor Roosevelt and the House Military Affairs Committee, temporary trailer park housing was finally set up for residents in nearby Green Valley and Johnson's Hill – but not before many families lost all their possessions because they had no safe place to store them.



Queen City

Not all East Arlington residents moved into the trailers. Some moved away, a few had the money to build a new house in Arlington, and some lived with relatives. The biggest casualty was the community as a whole. Interviews with residents who lived through this time talk about the pain and uncertainty the entire community felt. Those strong community ties were diminished, and were mourned by residents for decades afterwards.

Freedman's Bureau

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/freedmens-bureau>



The Freedmen's Bureau, formally known as the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, was established in 1865 by Congress to help millions of former black slaves and poor whites in the South in the aftermath of the Civil War. The Freedmen's Bureau provided food, housing and medical aid, established schools and offered legal assistance. It also attempted to settle former slaves on land confiscated or abandoned during the war. However, the bureau was prevented from fully carrying out its programs due to a shortage of funds and personnel, along with the politics of race and Reconstruction.

Creation of the Freedmen's Bureau

The Freedmen's Bureau was established by an act of Congress on March 3, 1865, two months before Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to the Union's Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, effectively ending the Civil War.

Intended as a temporary agency to last the duration of the war and one year afterward, the bureau was placed under the authority of the War Department and the majority of its original employees were Civil War soldiers. Did you know? Howard University, a historically all-black school in Washington, D.C., was established in 1867 and named for Oliver Howard, one of its founders and the head of the Freedmen's Bureau. He served as the university's president from 1869 to 1874.

Oliver Otis Howard, a Union general, was appointed commissioner of the bureau in May 1865. Howard, a Maine native who attended Bowdoin College and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, reportedly had been planning to become a minister when the Civil War broke out.

During the war, Howard, nicknamed the "Christian General," fought in major battles including Antietam and Gettysburg and lost an arm in the Battle of Fair Oaks in 1862.

Reconstruction

America's Reconstruction era was a turbulent time, as the nation struggled with how to rebuild the South and transition the 4 million newly freed blacks from slavery to a free-labor society. "There was no tradition of government responsibility for a huge refugee population and no bureaucracy to administer a large welfare, employment and land reform program," according to *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, edited by Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller. "Congress and the army and the Freedmen's Bureau were groping in the dark. They created the precedents."

From the start, the Bureau faced resistance from a variety of sources, including many white Southerners. Another leading opponent was President Andrew Johnson, who assumed office in April 1865 following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

When Congress introduced a bill in February 1866 to extend the bureau's tenure and give it new legal powers, Johnson vetoed the proposed legislation on the grounds that it interfered with states' rights, gave preference to one group of citizens over another and would impose a huge financial burden on the federal government, among other issues.

In July of that same year, Congress overrode the president's veto and passed a revised version of the bill. However, Johnson became embroiled in a bitter fight with the Radical Republicans in Congress, who viewed the president's Reconstruction policies as too lenient, and the Freedmen's Bureau suffered as a result. Johnson's actions, which included pardoning many former Confederates and restoring their land, as well as removing bureau employees he thought were too sympathetic to blacks, served to undermine the bureau's authority.

The bureau's mission was further muddled by the fact that even among the agency's supporters in Congress and its own personnel, there was disagreement over what type of assistance the government should provide and for how long.

Freedmen's Bureau's Successes and Failures

The Freedmen's Bureau was organized into districts covering the 11 former rebel states, the border states of Maryland, Kentucky and West Virginia and Washington, D.C. Each district was headed by an assistant commissioner.

The bureau's achievements varied from one location to another and from one agent to the next. Over its course of existence, the bureau was underfunded and understaffed, with just 900 agents at its peak.

Bureau agents, who acted essentially as social workers and were frequently the only federal representatives in Southern communities, were subjected to ridicule and violence from whites (including terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan), who viewed the agents as interfering in local affairs by trying to assist blacks. While some agents were corrupt or incompetent, others were hardworking and brave people who made significant contributions.

During its years of operation, the Freedmen's Bureau fed millions of people, built hospitals and provided medical aid, negotiated labor contracts for ex-slaves and settled labor disputes. It also helped former slaves legalize marriages and locate lost relatives, and assisted black veterans.

The bureau also was instrumental in building thousands of schools for blacks, and helped to found such colleges as Howard University in Washington, D.C., Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. The bureau frequently worked in conjunction with the American Missionary Association and other private charity organizations.

Additionally, the bureau tried, with little success, to promote land redistribution. However, most of the confiscated or abandoned Confederate land was eventually restored to the original owners, so there was little opportunity for black land ownership, which was seen as a means to success in society.

Freedmen's Bureau's Demise.

In the summer of 1872, Congress, responding in part to pressure from white Southerners, dismantled the Freedmen's Bureau. Since that time, historians have debated the agency's effectiveness. A lack of funding, coupled with the politics of race and Reconstruction, meant that the bureau was not able to carry out all of its initiatives, and it failed to provide long-term protection for blacks or ensure any real measure of racial equality.

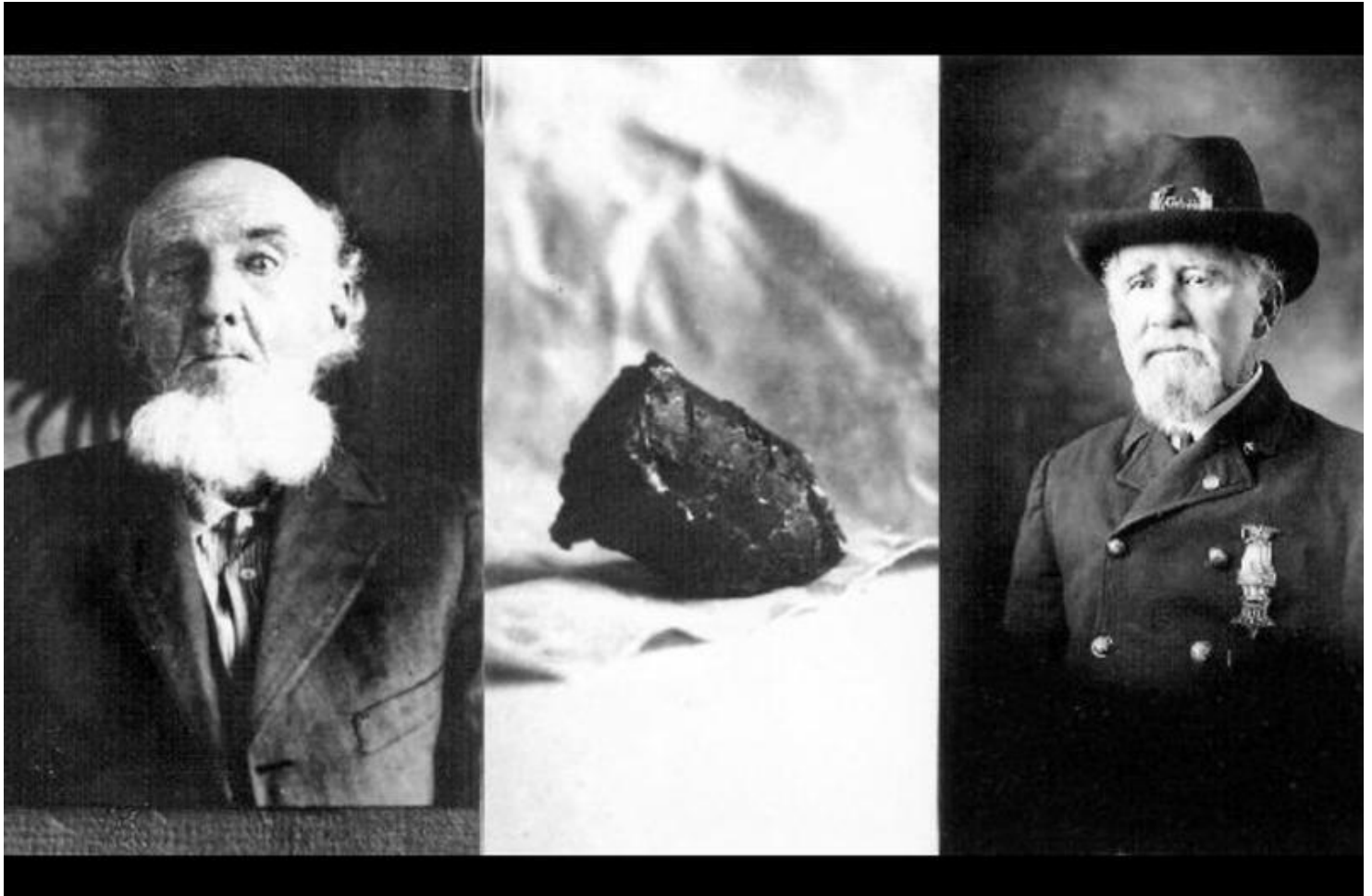
However, the bureau's efforts did signal the introduction of the federal government into issues of social welfare and labor relations. As noted in *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*, "The Bureau helped awaken Americans to the promise of freedom, and for a time, the Bureau's physical presence in the South made palpable to many citizens the abstract principles of equal access to the law and free labor."

Old Veteran Coughs Up Bullet

<https://historydaily.org/willis-meadows-coughs-up-bullet>

Willis Meadows, a 78-year-old veteran, clutched his throat and was gasping for air. Whatever was choking him wouldn't come out and was causing a violent coughing spasm. Just when he thought he was about to take his last breathe, something flew from his mouth...

It was a 1-ounce Civil War bullet, trapped in Meadows' head for almost 58 years. This slug took out the Confederate veteran's right eye when he was still young. And then months later, the old man actually came across the Union soldier who shot him.



In 1921, "Coughs Up Bullet" was a national newspaper story. The perpetrator, Peter Knapp, read the story and realized it was he who shot that bullet that was embedded near Meadows' brain. Subsequently, he reached out to Meadows and after comparing notes, they found out it was true.

When he joined his brothers and cousins, Meadows was 19. During springtime in 1862, he enlisted alongside them in Company G of the 37th Alabama Volunteer Infantry.

He was appointed to the western front by the Mississippi River, where his company endured heavy casualties in one battle after another. By the summer of 1863, they were guarding the city of Vicksburg from the attack of the Union army. On July 1, the ultimate push was on. Through a peephole in an iron boiler plate, sharpshooter Willis Meadows was shooting his rifle at the Yanks.

Three Union soldiers from Company H of the Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry, including Peter Knapp who was 21 years old, were advancing from the east. They were told to kill Confederate snipers.

Knapp caught sight of Meadows. He aimed his rifle at the boiler plate peephole and fired. Meadows fell, blood rushing from his right eye. He was supposedly dead and the men moved on.

Meadows was discovered and was seen by Union surgeons who tried to locate the bullet, but were unable to find it. They didn't deem it safe to perform an operation.

On board a POW ship, he was transported to a Union hospital. Afterwards, he was released and transferred to a Confederate hospital, where he lingered as a patient for the rest of the war and sometime nurse's aide.

After the war, he got married and returned to his farm in Lanett, Alabama, just east of the Georgia state line. He had no children and would have probably died in obscurity had he not coughed up the bullet.

A few months after Vicksburg, Knapp was captured and was held in various Confederate prisons, including Andersonville. When the war was over, he farmed in Michigan, got married and moved to Kelso in 1887.

Mortal enemies when they were still young, they tried to kill each other. But now, as veterans, they would allocate their last few years as friends, exchanging photographs and bidding one another a good health.

Come March to the Beat of the Drum

Join the Drum Barracks Garrison & Society and help preserve this unique piece of California's History

Private (Individual)	\$20	Colonel	\$200	Please make checks payable to: Drum Barracks Garrison & Society 1052 Banning Boulevard Wilmington, CA 90744
Corporal (Family)	\$30	Brigadier General	\$300	
First Lieutenant	\$50	Major General	\$400	
Captain	\$75	Lt. General	\$500	
Major	\$100	General	\$1000	
Lt. Colonel	\$150			

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Are you interested in becoming a volunteer in one of these areas? Docent _____ School Program _____

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The *Reveille* is the newsletter of the Drum Barracks Garrison & Society, 501 c 3 support group of the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum. The *Reveille* is a free publication for members and volunteers of the Drum Barracks Garrison & Society. Visitors to Drum Barracks Civil War Museum may receive free issues of the *Reveille* by emailing drumbarracks@gmail.com.

Newsletter Editor, Kathy Ralston