

# SWAMP ANGEL II

# NEWS

VO L. 30 NO. 3

BUCKS COUNTY CIVIL WAR MUSEUM AND ROUND TABLE

JULY/SEPT 2021

## NEWS AND NOTES

Summer has arrived and with it some great news. After a year of Zoom meetings, we are now able to hold our monthly meetings as a group at the Doylestown Borough Hall. This is exciting news for the Roundtable. This gives us a chance to get together and greet friends we have not seen in quite some time and to enjoy an evening and discussion about events that happened during the Civil War. We have some terrific speakers lined up for the next several months. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm. The Doylestown Borough Hall is currently relocating. Close to the meeting time we'll send out location information.

**July 6** -- MJ Henion, "Major Pauline Cushman ---One Woman's Amazing Spy Adventure." **Zoom**

**August 3**- Jay Jorgensen—"Fighting with Jackson"

**September 7 or 14**, —Three personages from the Civil War portrayed by members of our CWRT-Kitt Finch, John Benson and Marilyn Becker.

A special note to thank Craig Breneiser for his presentation of "Burnside's Other Blunder" at the May Zoom meeting. A very interesting subject about three individuals that played a part in the story of the Civil War. Mr. Breneiser was well organized and knowledgeable about his subjects and kept everyone's interest during the meeting.

The Library/Museum opened for visitors at the beginning of May. It is open from 10:30am to 2pm on Saturday. We have had a steady flow of visitors since the Library/Museum has re-opened and we expect this to be the case for the summer. If you have any interest in becoming a docent, please contact Jim Donovan or Mike Campbell. We could surely use some additional help on Saturdays.

Our membership renewal notices have been sent out. Please consider an extra donation. Year 2020 was difficult for everyone, including the Library/Museum. One year runs from June 30th to July 1st.

A BIG THANK YOU to our sponsors -- C&N Banking in Doylestown-- Millham Insurance, Doylestown and W.E. Boger & Associates, Doylestown. We appreciate their help and support throughout the year.

## Message from the President

Hello my fellow round table members.

Hope all is well with you and your family.

Now that Covid restrictions are being lifted, it looks like we can start to get life back to a little normal. We opened the Library and Museum on May 8th and the response from the public had been fantastic. Every Saturday since we reopened has been packed with visitors. So tell your family and friends and come on down for a visit.

The Daughters of Union Veterans presented the Museum with a lovely gift. A copy of the regimental flag of the 104th Pennsylvania. A ceremony was held at the grave of Colonel Davis in the Doylestown cemetery for the presentation.

We have received word that we can resume our meetings in person at the Doylestown Borough Hall. We are hoping to start in August. As soon as we can coordinate with the speakers we will notify the membership.

I would like to thank David and Susan Gray for their donation of a book that contains personal letters from the Butler family. The book also contains a history of the USS Mound City which was the sister ship of the USS Cairo.

The Bucks County Civil War Round Table was represented in the 153rd Doylestown Memorial Day Parade. I would like to thank the following for their participation in marching and keeping the museum open for visitors:

Kitt Finch  
Mike Campbell  
Jessy Campbell  
Lucella Campbell  
John Campbell  
Russell Campbell  
Josephine Campbell  
George Hoffman  
Marilyn Beckere . Be  
safe and stay well.

Replica of early 104th flag, complete with sewn battles the regiment participated in. On from loan from Dorothy Wright and Daughters of Union Veterans.



Jim Donovan

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# Ambrose Bierce

## SOLDIER, WRITER, POET, SATIRIST

by Marilyn Becker

Ambrose Bierce was born in June 1842 in Meigs County, Ohio. He was one of thirteen children whose names all started with the letter A. He attended Kentucky Military Institute for a short period of time. He left home at the age of fifteen to become a printer's associate. He served in the Union Army in the Civil War as a first lieutenant and later in the Ninth Indiana Infantry Regiment. He was a journalist, writer, satirist and poet.

Some of the settings Bierce had portrayed in his stories described the horrors of war. Bierce himself had knowledge of these areas as a participant in the Union actions. Bierce fought in many battles—Battle of Philippi, Laurel Mountain, Cheat's Mountain, Battle of Shiloh, Siege of Corinth, Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, Atlanta Campaign, Franklin and Nashville. In 1863, he served on the staff of General Babcock, where he made maps of likely battlefields. Considering all of the battles that he participated in, you would wonder if he did not suffer from PTSD, which would not have been recognized back in that time frame.

In 1864, at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain he received a traumatic brain injury and returned to active duty in September. In 1866, he went west to inspect military outposts and then across the Great Plains to San Francisco. He was raised to brevet major, after which he resigned from the army. He stayed in San Francisco where he contributed to many newspapers. He spent 1872-1875 in England, writing for a magazine there, then traveled back to San Francisco. He was a well-known writer for Randolph Hearst's newspaper The San Francisco Examiner. His witty style of writing often provoked comments and led to remarks about his manner and intolerance for humanity.

At seventy-one, he left Washington, D.C., for a tour of places where he had fought. Traveling to Mexico, he joined Pancho Villa's army as an observer. He was never seen again. The story of Bierce's disappearance is still a mystery to this day.

One of Bierce's most famous short stories is "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." The story's setting is the Civil War. Peyton Farquhar is a plantation owner who is going to be executed by hanging. He learns about the Owl Creek Bridge being repaired and he decides that he is going to burn it. Unbeknown to him, the man suggesting that to him is a Union scout and death by hanging is the fate for anyone doing so. He is dropped from the bridge and the rope breaks and Farquhar escapes down river. However, Farquhar never escaped at all; he had imagined the escape. The story shows how common loss of life is in war and the author has shown the duplicity of the scout and himself to the reader who thinks that Farquhar had escaped. Kurt Vonnegut thought this was the greatest American short story settings because Bierce writes such well-described settings and actions.

Another Ambrose Bierce's short story that makes the reader pause is The Horseman in the Sky. A young man named Carter Druse announced to his father that he was joining a Union regiment. His father, not happy since he was a Confederate, told him to do his duty. He left and later found himself tired and alone and fell asleep on duty. Awakening, he looked out and saw a rebel soldier on a horse poised with dignity and quietness. Druse placed his rifle in position, but at the time the Confederate soldier seemed to look at him. Druse fell back to take cover. He saw in the distance men creeping forward, he was hoping the horseman would not give the alert, Druse remembered what his father said, "Whatever may occur, do what you conceive to be your duty." Druse fired and the horseman seemed to fly through the sky. Later, a sergeant asked him if he fired. Druse announced yes and when the sergeant asked if anyone was on the horse, Druse answered, "Yes, my father."

The Devil's Dictionary, published in 1906, listed words with Bierce's definitions. Three such definitions were: Historian, noun, a broad gauge gossip, Self-evident, adjective, evident to one's self and to nobody else and Valor, noun, A soldierly compound of vanity, duty, and the gambler's hope.

Film's have been made of Bierce's stories and books written of his life He was a prolific writer having written 249 short stories, 846 fables and 300 Little Johnny Stories. The reader can picture his settings because Bierce writes such well-described settings and actions.

Bierce's influence has lent itself to adaptations from his stories, on television, movies and even music. At one time, people's favorite sitcom Newhart, which ended the season of the Bob Newhart Show with Dr. Robert Hartley waking up and realizing the former show had been a dream.

Sources: Civil War Times April 1996

Civil War Times October 2005



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## The Distinguished Tramp W.W.H. Davis on the Appalachian Trail

By Mike Campbell



Sometimes losing is better than winning, and every now and then, quitting is the only way to come out on top. By the summer of 1879, W.W.H. Davis was ready to quit, ready to walk away and tell the political world to “take this job and shove it.” An unnatural fit in Post-Reconstruction politics - he resented the reemergence of the spoils system and the double-dealing flimflammers it empowered. Preferring the comfort of his Doylestown office to the cock-strutting of retail campaigning - Davis had recently seen his party’s platform rejected by voters, and the guiding light of his political world pass on to the other side. During the Civil War, as senior Colonel of his IV Corps brigade, Davis had frequently assumed command of the unit in the absence of a commissioned Brigadier. Responsible for his own 104th PA, Harris Plaisted’s 11th Maine, Henry Hoyt’s 52nd PA, and Charles Van Wyck’s 56th NY, Davis ably led these fine regiments when called upon, establishing for himself and his subordinates a well earned record of competence and bravery. By 1879 this record had flowered into lush political careers for the other Colonels: Plaisted and Hoyt were both elected Governors of their respective states in 1878, and Van Wyck was well on his way to being elected Senator from Nebraska the following year. Perhaps Davis, as he sat in his office, listening to the magpies in the morning, the sunshine over State Street streaming in his windows, the noise of politics faint and distant, found humor in the fact that his three Republican subordinates had all achieved extraordinary success at the polls. He, the ranking Democrat, had become a political lightning rod, his name besmirched with Copperheadism and the Pittsburgh Railyard Riots. Perhaps the death of his father, John Davis, in April 1878, a personal and political orphaning - “he was one of the most remarkable men this county ever produced,” Harman Yerkes wrote of John Davis, “his constant mentor” - triggered a sense of wanderlust. Perhaps Davis, his children all coming of age, his work as a historian and conservationist sating his political ambition, simply grew tired of the rat race.

Whatever the reason, Davis walked. “Gen W.W.H. Davis and H.C. Michener of Doylestown, will start at an early day upon a footpad trip through the coal regions [of upstate Pennsylvania]... his companion, H.C. Michener, a leading member of the Bucks County bar,” and son of Jackson era politician and militiaman George Michener. Packing credentials, “vouched for by Senator Buckalew,” the two joked that, “they expect to escape the penalties of the new tramp law by wearing good clothes”; “two distinguished tramps,” living life out of a knapsack and getting by on Appalachian kindness, Doylestown fashionability, and monogrammed carte de visites.

“Their first day’s journey took them to Dushore,” via Towanda, where they stopped to play the part of “Jupiter’s messengers.” At

“one of the most beautiful weddings to ever take place here,” the marriage of Davis’ nephew, Rodney Mercur, son of PA State Supreme Court Justice Ulysses Mercur.

“Saturday afternoon found them crossing North Mountain, and after a few hours rest at Genoga Lake, they resumed their tramp, and halted for the night at the old Kaiser place at the base of North Mountain. They were enthusiastic as to the beauty and fertility of the country through which they passed, as well as the courtesy of our people.” June in full blossom, “blackbirds droused in the sun... robins were hopping about.” “With knapsacks on their backs and stout cudgels (Alpenstocks) in their hands... their walk was delightful, leading them through a great deal of romantic scenery.”

“On Monday morning they started for Shamokin via Catawissa and Elytown,” and from there by stage via Port Clinton Gap, to Reading and then home to Bucks County, “a distance of about 225 miles [approx. 150 miles].”

Davis would turn 60 the following year, in “fine form and handsome countenance,” and “acquiring a reputation as a pedestrian.” Free from the bitterness of the campaign trail, he took to hiking as a tonic; these were the years for a man to take his time in life, even if that meant taking the long road home. Upon returning to Doylestown: “W.W.H. Davis... had determined on a march, the following being the order thereof: From Doylestown to Newtown, fifteen miles, before breakfast, refreshment and rest at the latter place. From Newtown to Davisville, seven miles, in time for dinner, to be followed by a rest of several hours. From Davisville to Doylestown, eleven miles, in the cool of the evening.

True to the announcement at 9AM this morning.... The General appeared on State Street, Newtown. He was slightly flushed and looking remarkably well. His step was firm and rapid. The distance, fifteen miles, was accomplished in three hours and a half. Pausing for a moment he entered into conversation with Mr. Joseph Harvey in front of the latter's residence. Here a sudden dizziness seized him, and he found it difficult to keep his feet. Attempting to enter the house he fell on the piazza and was carried by some gentlemen passing and laid on the sofa. Here he quickly revived and announced his determination to finish the journey after resting. Friends remonstrated without effect, and at 10 A.M. the march was resumed. The General stated to a friend who called upon him that he was prostrated with the heat once before during the Mexican War. His present undertaking in the heat and dust is no small feat.”

Sources: BCHS Papers Vol IV; Reading Times; Wyoming Democrat (Tunkhannock); The Times (Philadelphia)

## DID YOU KNOW?

The 13th PA Reserve Regiment, also known as the 42nd PA Volunteer Infantry, the Pennsylvania Rifles, Kane's Rifles-- or the "Bucktails" were a solid infantry regiment that served with the Army of the Potomac. The Bucktails were involved in many significant battles in the Eastern Theater-- the Peninsula Campaign, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. The regiment was formed by Thomas Kane at the outbreak of the Civil War. He recruited men from western Pennsylvania counties. Most of the recruits were excellent outdoors men and could all shoot very well. Most soldiers carried breech loading 1859 Sharps Rifles. The soldiers came from Tioga, Perry, Cameron, Warren, Carbon, Elk, Chester, McKean and Clearfield counties. After assembling in northern Pennsylvania, the Bucktails constructed three large rafts and floated down the Susquehanna River to Harrisburg where they were mustered into service at Camp Curtin. During three years of engagements, the Bucktails had a total of 1165 officers and men. 162 soldiers died in combat, 90 from diseases or Confederate prisons and 442 were wounded but recovered. The bucktail that the soldiers wore was considered a "regimental badge of honor." Bucktail State Park and Natural Area in Renova, PA is named in honor of the legendary unit.



## READER CHALLENGE!

What were Confederate guerrilla forces called?

- A. Backwalkers
- B. Jayhawkers
- C. Bushwackers

2. Which disease had the highest death toll in military camps?

- A. Dysentery
- B. Typhus
- C. Pneumonia

3. Which battle had the highest death toll?

- A. Chickamauga
- B. Gettysburg
- C. Antietam

4. A North Carolinian and West Point graduate, he was a Confederate brigadier at age 25

and a major general at age 27. He was one of the South's youngest generals before dying at Cedar Creek. Name him.

- A. Thomas Ransom
- B. Stephen Dodson Ramseur
- C. William Paul Roberts

5. This West Pointer left the army to teach at Cumberland University. When the war began, he joined the Confederate army as an artillery officer. He rose to corps commander when Leonidas Polk was killed and fought through the Atlanta and Tennessee Campaigns, ending the war in North Carolina. His men called him "Old Straight."

- A. Joseph Anthony Mower
- B. Alexander Peter Stewart
- C. William Babcock Hazen

Good Luck!

*answers on page 6*

## READY FOR A ROAD TRIP?

By Bill Hamill

Summertime 2021 is here! We have fought our way thru the pandemic and everyone is grateful for a return to normal. Covid cases are decreasing, hopefully this will be a continuing trend. Mask restrictions are being lifted. The entire population continues to be going through a vaccination period. We urge all people to get vaccinated if they have not already.

It was certainly very difficult to travel anywhere in 2020. I think many people will be looking to do something, anything this year. The seashore is expecting a banner year, and if given a chance Americans will look to get out on the road or fly to an out of state destination.

You do not have to go far to get away and enjoy an interesting location. There are plenty of neat places to visit right here in Pennsylvania. If you have not done it yet, I would suggest a trip across Route 6. Route 6 runs east-west across the top part of Pennsylvania. It is a two lane highway that goes through a most beautiful part of our state. Take your time, do not hurry and enjoy the scenery and the small towns that you will drive through. The towns that you will go through --Smethport-Port Alleghany-Coudersport-Wellsboro-Towanda-Mansfield-Tunkhannock-- are like traveling in a different time. The towns are pretty, plenty of older buildings to notice, some nice shops and stores, usually a decent restaurant or two. If they have a coffee house and an ice cream store, then you can really enjoy yourself. Interestingly, quite a few towns will have memorials to those who have fought in the Civil War.

Did you know that US Route 6 was named the Grand Army of the Republic Highway by the same group that started Memorial Day? The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War are responsible for the legislation creating Memorial Day and for convincing 14 states to dedicate US Route 6 as the Grand Army of the Republic Highway. The Pennsylvania portion was dedicated in 1948.

One of the most interesting places to visit along Route 6 is Kinzua Bridge State Park. Located in McKean County, the main attraction is the bridge itself. The bridge was originally built in 1882. The reason it was built here is that the local railroad was faced with the challenge of building a branch line in Pennsylvania from Bradford south to coal mines in Elk County. The fastest way to build the bridge was across the Kinzua Valley ( From the Seneca Indians-- Kinzua-- "fish on a spear").

Now, what does this have to do with the Civil War? Well, the driving force to build the bridge was Thomas L. Kane, a colonel and general of Union volunteers during the Civil War. In 1882, Thomas Kane was President of the New York, Lake Erie And Western Railroad. It was his challenge to discover a way to move freight trains through this area. He decided that the most efficient way to move coal through the area would be to construct a trestle bridge over the Kinzua Valley.



With a crew of forty workers, the bridge would be constructed in 94 days during late spring and summer of 1882. The wrought iron steel that was used in construction was from the Phoenix Iron Works in Phoenixville. When complete the trestle bridge was the longest and tallest railroad bridge in the world. It was 301 feet high and 2053 feet long. It was called the "Eighth Wonder of the World." Twenty towers supported the bridge. Six of the towers were taller than the Brooklyn Bridge. There was a restriction on speed while crossing at 5mph, because of the stress of locomotives and wind which sometimes caused the bridge to vibrate.

The bridge lasted for close to 25 years. In the early 1900's, the bridge was completely rebuilt mainly because locomotives were almost 85% heavier and the bridge could no longer safely carry trains. During the building process, construction workers did not replace the anchor bolts from the original bridge. This would play a role in the bridge's later years.

The Kinzua Trestle Bridge would stay in service through 1959. In 1963, Governor William Scranton signed a law that created Kinzua State Park. It officially opened in 1970.

Let's turn our attention to Thomas Kane. He was born in Philadelphia in 1822. During his lifetime he was an attorney, abolitionist, philanthropist, a Civil War officer and very influential in the western migration of members of the Latter Day Saints. As a young man he had the chance to travel through England and France. Returning home, he expressed interest in a political career eventually studied law and was admitted to the Pennsylvania bar in 1846.

In 1846, he met members of the Latter Day Saints at a conference in Philadelphia. He became interested in the group and offered them help and advice with their conflicts with the US government and in their efforts to emigrate to western territories. He became a very popular figure with the Mormon Church. In the 1850's he would defend Brigham Young in eastern newspapers and would remain a staunch supporter of the church. In fact, there is a statue of Thomas Kane in the Utah state capitol, with the inscription, "Friend of the Mormons".

*Cont. on page 6*

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When the Civil War began, Kane raised a group of volunteers from western Pennsylvania. He looked for a group of hardy men, who were comfortable in the outdoors, that were experienced and were good riflemen. One of the recruits in the group, came across a deer tail at a butcher shop and attached it to his hat. Other men thought it was unique for the group and likewise, did the same thing. The regiment became known as the "Bucktails" and became a significant part of the Army of the Potomac.

Thomas Kane was described as a "visionary" of military tactics. He taught his soldiers "skirmisher tactics", where if they were in the front of the line, that they should get down, use the ground as cover and fire only when they could see their targets. He stressed individual responsibility which was a contradiction to military thinking of the time. He held regular target practice which was an innovative idea, as well as long range shooting. Many of his soldiers became very fine sharpshooters.

The Bucktails were assigned to the V Corps. Early action was on a patrol at Dranesville, Va. A bullet struck Kane in the face, knocking out some teeth and causing vision problems for the rest of his life. Later in a skirmish in Harrisonburg, VA in 1862, he suffered a bullet below his right knee. Afterward, as he lay on the battlefield, a Confederate soldier shattered his breast bone, with the butt of his musket. He was taken prisoner and later exchanged during the year.

In 1863, Kane was at Chancellorsville, and later Gettysburg. His brigade fought at Culp's Hill on the third day and managed to beat off a Confederate attack. Kane fell ill at the end of the day and was really in bad health. He never fully recovered from his facial wounds, chest problems of poor vision. He relinquished command the following day and would resign his commission in November 1863.

After the war he and his wife moved to western Pennsylvania and would eventually own over 100,000 acres, mostly timberland, and also where oil and gas would be later discovered. Kane was also responsible for laying out many of the railroad lines in this part of Pennsylvania.

What happened to the Kinzua Bridge? In 2003, a strong tornado came ripping through the Kinzua Valley and knocked down eleven of the twenty towers. One of the reasons for that were the rusted and corroded bolts that were at the base of the towers. Those towers remain where the fell all mangled up and lay across the valley floor. Restored in 2011, park visitors can once again walk a portion of the Kinzua Viaduct. Built on six of the towers, a pedestrian walkway leads to a 225 foot high observation deck that gives a commanding view of the Kinzua Valley.

Worth checking out if you decide to take a trip to the northern part of the state. If you get a chance, please ask me about many other things to see in this beautiful part of the state.

Wikipedia -- Kinzua Bridge State Park Information Center



## RECOMMENDED READING

### ★★★★★ *Lincoln's Last Trial*

by Dan Abrams and David Fisher

*The authors examine the last murder trial Abraham Lincoln participated in and concluded that he had a tremendous command of the English language and logic. Both helped propel him into the presidency. They also concluded that he was a brilliant lawyer who understood that a trial was a show production. Diane Sawyer once reviewed the book and said, "It makes you feel as if you are watching a live camera riveted on a court room more than 150 years ago."*

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**ANSWERS TO READER CHALLENGE**  
**1.C 2.A 3.B 4.B 5.B**

### SWAMP ANGEL II NEWS

Newsletter of the

BUCKS COUNTY CIVIL WAR MUSEUM/ROUND TABLE

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