

SWAMP ANGEL II NEWS

VOL 30, NO. 1

BUCKS COUNTY CIVIL WAR MUSEUM AND ROUND TABLE

JAN/MAR 2021

NEWS AND NOTES

In the lull we had between virus outbreaks, we had a few museum tours but have now discontinued them again in the interest of safety. Our meetings with speakers will be on Zoom. Jim Donovan will let us know about tuning in before the meetings. Please contact him at CSAJim@aol.com if you need help. Zoom meetings begin at 7 p.m.

December 1, 2020: Jim Lamason will be giving biographical sketches on McAllister and Schoonover of the 11th New Jersey

January 5, 2021: Mike Campbell will be continuing on Davis with "A Credit to Old Bucks—W. W. H. Davis and the Civil War"

February 2, 2021: Lt. Fretz (aka Dick Neddenriep) will lead a virtual tour of the Bucks County Civil War Library and Museum

March 2, 2021: George Hoffman will lead a discussion for a book review via Zoom on The Cornfield by David Welker.

When we open again, please stop by and see the beautiful circa 1820's black walnut table in our library. This treasure was donated to us by Jeffrey Lukens. It has the drop leaves that are used to expand or reduce the size of the table and uses wooden pegs rather than metal screws or nails. Thank you, Jeffrey!

In addition to forwarding online other CWRT newsletters, we are going to begin sending along a relatively new one called *The Calling Card*. This has articles that are of more interest to women.

If you stop in at C & N bank, please be sure and thank them for sponsoring us. Through their generosity we have the printing and mailing of *Swamp Angel II*.

Message From the President

Hello my fellow Round Table members.

Hope all is well with you and your family.

Not much has happened since our last newsletter due to the Covid restrictions. We have been able to resume our monthly meeting via zoom with large participation by our members. We also had our book review discussion which was very informative (thank you George and Bill).

We had our Fall Cleanup at the Museum on November 7th. I would like to thank the following for donating their time to make the Museum look beautiful:

Marilyn Becker
Dick Neddenriep
Sharon Zamos
Bill Hamill
Jean Bernstein
Tony Venuto
Luella Campbell
Nancy Hamill

James Grimes
Dee Ann Smith
Jim Damon
Pete Scott
Doreen Barton
Mike Campbell
John Campbell
Bill Hamill

I would also like to thank Jeff Lukens not only for his time at the clean up, but for his donation of a 19th century hand-made table to the Library.

In addition, he also rebuilt our falling apart wooden shutters on the Museum.

Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season
Jim Donovan



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1886: A PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTMAS

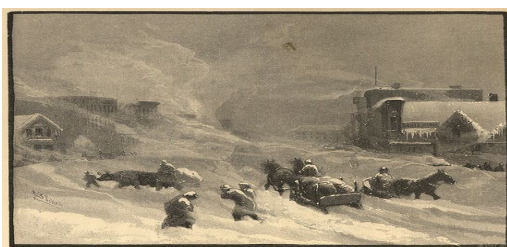
by Mike Campbell

When we think of Christmas we think of joy and tradition, charity and celebration - the Christmas spirit - but for many Pennsylvanians, Christmas of 1886 was no reason for cheer. Still recovering from the Panic of 1884, and the ensuing economic depression, a weary sadness had fallen over the American people. Mischievous youth still trampled about the toboggan tracks, wassailing widows out of their baked goods, as they always did, but the Philadelphia Commercial Exchange cancelled their annual dough throwing contest on account of the low supply of wheat, adjourning for the day to play dollar limit poker. The threat of an empty stocking on Christmas morning wasn't enough to make ends meet in those days. Hot cakes and hard cider flowed amidst the holly and laurel, and mummers and belznicks marauded, but the Christmas markets sent away many empty handed. One paper noted that buyers of "turkeys, ducks, geese, chickens, etc... had to pay the price, take the weight of the dealer, and move on to give others a chance." Recently John Wanamaker, a Philadelphia merchant and philanthropist, "had purchased a building where those of his female employees who are unable to live with friends in the city can find a comfortable home..." and "will not be required to sacrifice their independence or their self-respect." By January 1887 Anti-Tramp legislation will be making the rounds in Harrisburg, backed by influential bipartisan reformers including John Hartranft and W.W.H. Davis. Appointed by President Cleveland to the position of Pension Agent for Philadelphia in March 1886, W.W.H. Davis would spend the holiday in his office on Market Street. In between the rain and the wind he oversaw a \$650,000 quarterly register, representing the claims of 1,000's of PA and NJ veterans. In early December he paid out \$10,000, a record for the Philadelphia office, to settle the claim of Pvt. Josiah Brineard, a paralyzed veteran of the 88th PA. When not signing checks - sometimes as many as 20,000 a month - Davis spent time fundraising at the Academy of Music with Dan Sickles and Sherman, in "tribute to the memory of the first commander of the Army of the Potomac," raising money that would eventually pay for the McClellan monument outside City Hall in Philadelphia. Amidst the hard times, Davis maintained an unflinching, if less indulgent, sense of the Christmas spirit. One newspaper caught him downtown on Christmas Eve Eve: "Pension Agent W.W.H. Davis, who left the fingers of his right hand on a Southern battlefield, came out of a temperance lunch room wiping his close-cropped stiff moustache, which is getting whiter every year, and remarking:

"I like pie and milk for lunch, and I can get it in there without getting the odor of spilled whisky along with it."

"General Davis... expects to have a happy Christmas."

Sources: Christmas in Pennsylvania (Shoemaker), The Times (Philadelphia), The Central News (Perkasie), The Reading Times



- When did the Reconstruction take place?
 - 1860-1865
 - 1865-1877
 - 1877-1890
- Which of these white supremacist terrorist organizations is still active today?
 - The White League
 - The Red Shirts
 - The Ku Klux Klan
- What was the Panic of 1873?
 - An economic depression
 - A riot that led to the deaths of 327 free black men and women.
 - An incident in which psychoactive fungus poisoned the water supply of Richmond, Virginia, the former Confederate capital.
- What is sharecropping?
 - The practice of tenant farmers living on land owned by someone else and "paying" the owner with a portion of the farm profits.
 - The practice of dividing a town's total yield of crops evenly among households.
 - A popular hairstyle where hair is cropped around the ears.
- Approximately what percentage of black politically active men were literate during Reconstruction?
 - 20%
 - 50%
 - 80%

answers on page 6

fold3 

Military Records, Returns Documents & Photos

Finding military records about your **war hero** can provide valuable details you never knew before. Many records on Fold3 feature multiple pages about the same individual, providing priceless information.

FREE ACCESS AT THE MUSEUM LIBRARY!

THE CORNFIELD—PART 2

By George Hoffman

The third Federal attack started at 8:30 A.M. when General McClellan ordered up General Sumner's II Corps to help support Mansfield's divisions and it got off to a bad start right from the beginning.

At the time General Sumner started his advance, there were nearly 40,000 men battling in the woods north of Sharpsburg and more than half of them were Union soldiers. The advantage of superior numbers was clearly held by the Army of the Potomac. One big push from Sumner's fresh divisions was all that was needed and Lee's flank would collapse. Then, suddenly the balance shifted.

For some unknown reason (probably because it had been shot to pieces) General Hooker disengaged his entire Corps, or what remained of it and withdrew to the north to reorganize, leaving Mansfield's disorganized units to fight it out with the Rebels unassisted.

Then, as General Sumner's three divisions moved forward to aid Mansfield's Corps, two of them got lost in the East Woods and only General Sedgwick's division arrived at the much disputed Dunkard Church. Still, the advantage of superior numbers was held by the Union army. If McClellan were to shift just one more division to aid Sumner it would all be over for the Army of Northern Virginia.

This then was first critical moment of the battle. General Lee had already committed all of his reserves, except A.P. Hill's division and his troops were not yet on the field. If the battle was going to be lost, it would happen within the next few moments.

At this moment, as General Sumner's troops moved to the attack. Confederate lines suddenly broke contact and fell back into the West Woods and disappeared. General Sumner could hardly believe his eyes. The Rebel lines had actually broken and victory was suddenly within his reach. He immediately ordered his men forward into the woods to pursue and destroy Stonewall Jackson's obviously shattered command.

As Sumner's men moved forward into the West Woods, they became engrossed with the idea that they had just won a tremendous victory and didn't realize, until it was too late, that they had actually been drawn into a trap.

Jackson, who had just been reinforced by McLaw's division, had pulled it off perfectly. By using a heavy line of skirmishers as bait to draw the unsuspecting Yankees forward, while the bulk of his troops, including Longstreet's two fresh divisions were deployed in a semi-circle to envelope the advancing Union lines.

As unsuspecting Federals cleared the woods, they found themselves nearly surrounded and being fired upon from three sides at once, in what some of them later claimed was the most effective display of musketry they ever experienced.

Within twenty minutes, Stonewall Jackson's veterans turned 2,200 of General Sedgwick's Yankees into casualties and completely crushed the Union attack, forcing it back to its place of origin.

As the Union forces fell back, Jackson's men moved forward to re-occupy most of their former positions and the fighting died down on the left flank of the Confederate Army.

Thomas J. Jackson living up to the faith and trust placed in him by General Lee, had held his ground and skillfully driven back each and every attempt that McClellan's soldiers had made to turn Lee's flank. As a result of this heavy fighting, General Hooker was wounded and his I Corps, with no less than 2,470 casualties, was wrecked. Mansfield's XII Corps was leaderless completely disorganized and badly shot up, while Sedgwick's division of Sumner's Corps had been bled white and driven back, thoroughly routed.

However, the cost to the Confederate side to achieve the aforementioned successes had been just as heavy. Brigadier General William E. Starke, the man who had led Jackson's old division at the Second Manassas was dead and Generals John R. Jones and Lawton were both wounded.

The Union artillery, especially in the second phase of the fighting near the Dunkard Church, had been terribly effective and the divisions of both John Hood and General Lawton were badly mauled. So badly, in fact, that they had to be pulled out of the line and sent to the rear for complete reorganization. Still, all of this notwithstanding Jackson's soldiers had given out more punishment than they had taken and the Army of Northern Virginia's flank had not been turned.

Five Union regiments and seventeen Confederate regiments suffered more than 50% casualties in Miller's Cornfield. After the battle, General Hooker himself said that the corn in the cornfield had been cut down to within inches of the ground as if it had been cut by a knife. When, in fact, the cutting had been done by bullets and artillery fire.

Of the losses suffered by Lee's army, 7,000 out of a total of 9,298 occurred in the Cornfield. 9,913 Union casualties out of 12,401 were likewise suffered in the same locale. Farmer Miller's Cornfield was the bloodiest spot on the bloodiest battlefield in this nation's history to date!

By contesting the Cornfield and wrecking the Union army's attempt to turn his left flank, to be sure, General Lee didn't win the battle of Antietam/Sharpsburg, however he guaranteed that he wouldn't lose it either. It became a tactical Confederate victory and huge strategic set back and one of the most sanguinary battles in history.

Many historians believe that Antietam/Sharpsburg doomed the Confederacy long before Gettysburg. I agree!



CIVIL WAR HORSES

By Marilyn Becker

During the Civil War, one million two hundred thousand horses died in the conflict. This included horses, mules, and donkeys. The horse would be a perfect target for the enemy since the cavalymen could not operate without his horse and supplies could not be moved for the artillery branch without the horses.

Forrest had 39 horses shot out from under him and Custer had eleven. In the fight in Gettysburg approximately three thousand horses were killed. Not only were they a target, but the four miles per hour they needed to travel to meet their deadlines led to disease and exhaustion. Today's animal activists would have been very busy during this time period. General Sherman emphasized the welfare of the horse because he recognized their importance in their role in the war. General Grant also was concerned having been involved with horses from early in his life.

Horses were a big part of the budget spent in the war. Contracts were let to buy the horses required for the war effort. Horse dealers were used and often sold horses that were not in good shape. The investment in the horse also involved training, equipment and maintenance. Sometimes the military took horses from farm owners which led to families suffering due to not being able to farm since the horse that did the plowing was gone, in addition to the men who had joined the fight. Union quartermasters preferred the Morgan, an American horse. They were perceived as possessing heart, courage, enduring hardship and ability to handle any situation.

Another role that the horse played was to rally the troops. Officers would ride into the men getting ready to fight or already fighting and encourage the men to go onward. Also, if the battle was difficult and not successful, the officer could give them some reinforcement by riding through camp which led to cheers and high regard for their commanding officers and a rise in morale.

Many of the horses were very sensitive to their master's needs and became favorites of their riders. Some stayed with their owners after the war and even participated in their master's funerals.

One horse that became a favorite was called Old Sam of Coldwater, Michigan. Old Sam was trained at Fort Wayne and became part of the Loomis Battery. He was involved in twelve battles, Chickamauga, was one of them. Before his war efforts,

Old Sam pulled a streetcar, and when he returned home in 1865, he was turned loose and found his way back to his old stall. He lived out his life at the Fisk stables. When he died in 1876, his former battery mates wanted to bury him in Oak Grove Cemetery. This was not allowed, but the cemetery keeper let it be known that he would not be around, and Old Sam was buried with honors and taps played. There is a marker for the Loomis Battery downtown and Sam now has a marker in the cemetery.

Ulysses S. Grant grew up riding horses and training them. At West Point, he held the high jump record which remained for twenty-five years. At his graduation he presented a demonstration of his skill in this area. He had wished to join the cavalry at his graduation, but despite his skill, he received his second choice which was the infantry. While he was courting Julia, they spent time horseback riding together, so his life reflected his long association with the horse.

During the Civil War, Grant rode more than ten different horses, one was named Jeff Davis, but his favorite was Cincinnati. When Grant was president, he had three horses stabled at the White House—Cincinnati, Jeff Davis, and Egypt, named after Egypt, Illinois, given to him by the residents. At one time, Grant refused an offer of ten thousand dollars for Cincinnati. He rarely allowed anyone else to ride Cincinnati, but one person he did allow was President Lincoln when he visited Grant at City Point near the end of the war. Whenever Grant is pictured on horseback, the horse is usually Cincinnati as seen on the statue in Washington, D.C. There is a painting of Grant on Cincinnati inside on the walls of his tomb in New York City. There is a statue of Grant on a horse on Kelly Drive in Philadelphia. Cincinnati died in 1878.

General Lee's horse Traveller was his favorite ride. Lee purchased the grey colt in 1862 for two hundred dollars. It was said that Traveller was kind of quiet, but when the battle started, he sprang to life and wanted to be in the midst of the fight. This could be the result of Lee at times leading the charge. His men would urge Lee to go to the rear because they didn't like the idea that their leader could be shot. After the war, Lee rode the horse the rest of his life. Traveller participated in Lee's funeral and died in 1871 and was eventually buried at Washington College near the Lee family crypt.

Old Baldy, General Meade's horse survived fourteen injuries in the war. Meade died in 1882 and Old Baldy participated in his funeral. Old Baldy's mounted, stuffed head can be seen at the Civil War Museum and Library in Philadelphia where it is popular with visitors.

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continued from page 4

Stonewall” Jackson acquired his horse, Little Sorel, from his wife. The horse was brown and not visibility outstanding, but was good in battle. Little Sorel was carrying Jackson when he was shot in 1863. Mrs. Jackson took the horse back and then sent the horse to VMI. Soldiers stood and saluted the horse when his train passed by them on the way. Little Sorel lived at VMI until he was thirty-six.

General Sheridan was gifted his horse, Rienzi. Rienzi was named after Rienzi, Mississippi, which Sheridan had raided. The horse was black with white socks. After Sheridan reached Winchester and Rienzi’s speedy ride carrying Sheridan there, the horse was renamed Winchester. The horse died at twenty and is displayed in the National Museum of History.

There were many other horses that served in the war. Some other names are George H. Thomas horse, Billy, named for Sherman, Blackjack owned by Jefferson Davis, Duke, Sherman’s favorite, Albert Sidney Johnston’s Fire-Eater, and Fly-By-Night a gift to James Longstreet from General Lee. Of course these men had secondary horses that they used also.

Examining the history of the horse in the Civil War, it is readily apparent how important to the war the horse was, and although at the start of the war the southerners excelled in horsemanship, the Union grew increasingly better and after the Brandy Station battle demonstrated the Union’s growing skill, the Union cavalry went on with their horses to help create a Union victory and kept the nation together.



**“Old Baldy”
General Meade’s
Favorite horse.
Injured 14 times.
Philadelphia Oddities-
Ron Avery**

**“Victorian Blizzards-Nonstop
in the 1880’s”
by Kristin Holt**

“BEFORE THE ICY BREATH” The Blizzards of the 1880’s

By Mike Campbell

At first the air pressure drops, and a warm, pattering rain begins to fall. Drifting north from the Gulf of Mexico, these warm, wet storms spread out across the country like spilled ink, meeting the frigid air of the Canadian Rockies over the American Great Plains. The start of a blizzard. “A wizard could not have knocked a dozen apples out of a cocked hat quicker than the rain gave place to snow.” Beginning in October 1880, The U.S. suffered a decade of cruel winter after cruel winter; the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883, and resulting ash spill, accelerating the cycle. Made famous by Laura Ingalls Wilder’s book *The Long Winter*, the 1880’s was a time of furious and harrowing weather. “In some of the hotels there was not even room to lie down on the floor... Hundreds of people crouched in doorways to escape the beating of the wind.” Boston opened the world’s first underground subway in 1897, partially in response to the ravages of The Great Blizzard of 1888. Beginning in Philadelphia as a balmy, Sabbath rain, by nightfall of March 11, 1888, “the march rain storm had changed into a regular, howling Dakota blizzard... Shoveling the snow was about as practicable as pouring water into a sieve... the wind blew the snow back as fast as it was shovelled off.” “Insecure buildings rocked... telegraph wires swayed in the gale... Soon after midnight the reports came in... the wires were in trouble, and in a few minutes... the great city was cut off from the outside world.” “By daylight... the mercury had fallen nearly to zero. Philadelphians rubbed their sleepy eyes in the morning to a surprise... snow was piled up everywhere, while the hurricane was creating havoc all around them.” In Camden the force of the “northwesterly gale... made the river so low that the mouth of the suction pipe at the Camden Water Works is uncovered,” cutting off the water supply to the city. Despite the terror of starting a fire, “housewives... were compelled to melt snow for domestic uses.” “No milk can be had at any price... farmers who forced their way into the city with six and eight-horse-teams... very humanely resolved to sell only to families having small children.” “Yes we have been through it all... At last we know what a blizzard is - a genuine, biting, blinding, freezing blizzard. We have nothing left to learn from Dakota.”

Sources: The Times (Philadelphia), Restless Skies (Douglas)



Did You Know...?

From the start of the Civil War, Southern cavalry units dominated their Northern foes. The Union needed almost two years to catch up, get even and by the end of the war had the upper hand in battles.

Do you know how many companies made up a cavalry regiment? Set in 1862, the standard for regulars was twelve. However, many of the volunteer units were accepted with only ten companies. They were later expanded to twelve.

Do you know what weapon was called the wrist breaker? It was the Model 1850 Straight Blade Saber. It was so heavy and cumbersome that it required lots of muscle to wield it properly. The 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry had the most unusual weapon. Cavalry men would carry lances that later proved to be impractical on the battlefield. Carrying the lance was the brainchild of General McClellan.

According to the US census of 1860, there were over 4.5 million horses in the country, more than any other country in the world. And, what was considered to be the ideal age of a cavalry horse? The best age for a horse was six years old. They would look for horses to be about fifteen hands high and weigh approximately 950 lbs.



Alamy

Recollections

“To the Texans in the ranks the sound of battle was deafening; the boom of artillery, the loud reports of dozens of nearby rifles and the steady popping of thousands more distant; the explosion of shells and the whine and hiss of lead balls and steel fragments. Dead and dangerously wounded Texans lay among the living and unhurt. Walking wounded dribbled from the line. Like a funeral pall, thick clouds of smoke drifted over the corn and at times obscured the sun.”

Author of article describing the Cornfield in his own words was George Otott in First Texas in the Cornfield

RECOMMENDED READING

George Hoffman recommends a new book out, Lincoln Takes Command by Steve Norder. It details the campaign to seize Norfolk and destroy the *Virginia*. It is the only time in our history that an American president actually commanded troops in the field of battle. George hopes you enjoy it as much as he has.

If you have a book about the Civil War you would like to recommend, please let us know. We'll include it when there's room.



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ANSWERS TO THE READER CHALLENGE!

- | | | |
|------|------|------|
| 1) B | 3) A | 5) C |
| 2) C | 4) A | |

SWAMP ANGEL II NEWS

Newsletter of the

BUCKS COUNTY CIVIL WAR MUSEUM/ROUND TABLE

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