

IN CAMP ALONG THE MONOCACY



From Blue And Gray Education Society Field Headquarters in Frederick Maryland

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Editor: Gloria Swift



Executive Director Len Riedel

From the Desk of the Executive Director at HQ In Chatham Virginia:

BGES Opens 25th Year with Robust Agenda

I write you on the eve of the anniversary of our incorporation in 1994. At dawn tomorrow, we will start our 25th year of service. **Of the many things I could say let me merely open by saying Thank You!** Without you the BGES does not exist. With you we will continue to exist—this year with five major educational projects.

We will continue to do two significant projects: Our Field University program—which is the largest in terms of time and revenue—17 programs go from coast to coast and run from the Revolutionary War through 400 Years of Virginia History. Surely there is a subject of interest to you—of the 17, nine are first time ever programs touching brand new themes. We continue multi-year series on the Atlanta Campaign, The Overland Campaign, The Vicksburg Campaign, The 1862 Maryland Campaign and the 1864 Tennessee Campaign. In 2019 we will add the Petersburg Campaign to that. For detailed, on the ground, battlefield study you can do no better. We are also starting our 13th year of Wounded Warrior programs—helping our heroes transition back to life in the USA. We have 6 tours on tap for them.

We are adding three projects which should all be completed by this time next year. The first project is to spruce up the interpretative display at Grand Gulf State Park in Mississippi. Here on April 29, 1863 naval forces under David Dixon Porter battled Confederate forts Wade and Cobun. Our work there will be to revitalize the 31 cast iron markers installed so many years ago. Our vendor will scrape the existing paint from the signs and will repaint them, any markers found to be damaged or needing repair will be replaced.



Sign in need of restoration at Grand Gulf

In addition, we will do a brochure that can be given to visitors detailing the fight for the forts and the use of the area during the Vicksburg Campaign. We anticipate this project will come in around \$8,500, assuming no markers need replacement.

The second project is at Fort McNair, which was the site of the Washington Penitentiary, here is more than 200 years of American history—few buildings remain. Grant Hall is the site of the courtroom where the Lincoln Conspirators were tried and executed in July 1865. A partial restoration has been done and the site is open one weekend a month. BGES will finish the restoration, acquiring various artifacts that have been documented to be there and developing and installing interpretative signage that will help you stand in the shadows of the gallows. This humbling story will be explained in a visitors brochure that we will develop and distribute through the army. We believe the project is going to be in the \$30,000 to \$35,000 range. Approval to go ahead rests at the Lieutenant General level and may involve the Secretary of the Army. It is a high visibility project involving a genuine artifact of the period.



Old Penitentiary building where Lincoln conspirators were held and tried. Today called Grant Hall on Fort McNair base Washington, DC.



Touring interior of partially restored courtroom.



150th anniversary of trial of conspirators with living history program in courtroom

The final project for our 25th Anniversary year is a straight interpretative project at a well maintained and silent sentinel of the war, Fort Branch in Hamilton, NC. This earthen fortification has been meticulously maintained on private property and has a marvelous small museum on site. Tours are conducted using a coded map with numbered signs around the fort. We see enormous interpretative potential there and believe we will place approximately 30 signs there and develop a site brochure that will assist people with understanding the fort, its role and the role of southern gunboats, such as the Neuse and Albemarle, on the North Carolina rivers. We expect this project to come in at around \$16,000.

Many of you laughingly know when I say, “Look out, I am coming for your wallets” that it is time to get things funded and done. I have a meeting at Fort Branch on May 5th, we are doing the paperwork for Fort McNair and we just got the estimate for Grand Gulf—I **am coming for your wallets...**and I know you will be there. Many thanks and happy 25th to the BGES!

Len Riedel
Executive Director
April 24, 2018

National Geographic Book Sales Report

We have received the royalties report for the semi-annual period ending December 31st. We received royalties of \$1,460.21 for The Civil War a Traveler's Guide and \$75.18 for Fields of Honor. We received no royalties for Receding Tide and do not have an arrangement with NG for royalties from the sale of Shiloh 1862.

The sales figures reported are as follows:

The Civil War, A Traveler's Guide has sold 11,063 copies. In the last reporting period they sold 1,526 of which 60 copies were returned to the publisher. They sold about 250 books a month over the past 6 months--NG is very pleased as this report covers just 21 months. I think it is slower than we expected still the numbers are good for a period in which half of the period is after the travel season. Monetarily we have earned back roughly 20% of our investment in less than two years. Please note the book is found in the travel section of Book Stores and in National Park Service and other history sections of park and battlefield bookstores.

Fields of Honor has now sold 61,875 books in 11 years. Of that number 31,209 are paper back copies. In the last six months 493 were sold with 31 being returned--the sales averaged about 38 per month. Ed has netted about \$65,000 in royalties and we have made just under \$12,000 in royalties.

Receding Tide has sold about 11,500 inclusive of approximately 1,000 to the History Book Club. The book is still published in hardback only, but it has been in print for right at 8 years. Last reporting period they sold 73 units or just at 12 per month but none of the books were returned. Overall BGES's earned royalty on this book is \$3,900 but since we were given a \$15,000 advance on the sales we will never see an earned royalty from NG sales.

While we do not have precise figures for Shiloh 1862 which came out in 2013, Lisa Thomas tells me that they have sold between 30,000 and 35,000 and are very happy with residual sales in paperback. Groom has subsequently done 3 other books for them so people who were unaware of Shiloh 1862 are picking it up after reading some of his WW II works.

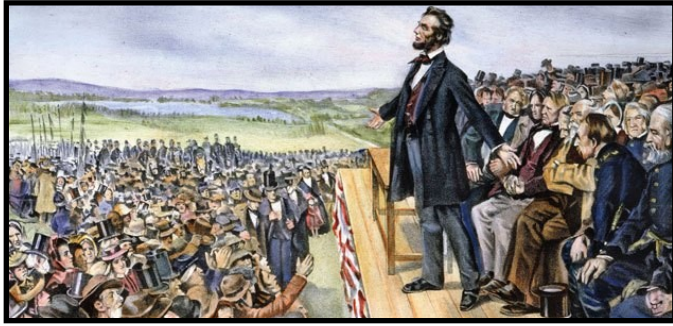
I think these programs reflect positively on BGES and will continue to do so for some time to come. Cumulatively we have some 120,000 books circulating around the world. On balance that is a very good thing.

Thank you for your support.

Respectfully

Len





**Witnesses to History:
The McAlister Family of Juniata County
and the Gettysburg Address**

By Nancy Crago

During the time I served on the Board of Directors of the Juniata County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society, two members learned that a collection of letters relating to the McAlister Family were being sold. Our board decided that these letters of the Civil War Era were a “must-have” for the society and we purchased them.

The McAlister Family was prominent in Juniata County since the early 19th century. While they did not create the village of McAlisterville, they ensured its growth as the family established a variety of businesses in the area. Mr. McAlister operated a store and a tannery. He served as the town’s postmaster until his death in 1843. During the years after his father’s death, Hugh T. McAlister continued as an influential leader of the small hamlet, as well as the first Justice of Peace of Juniata County. At the outbreak of the Civil War, his sons joined the Union effort: Oliver served in the 1st PA Cavalry; Stephen served in the 3rd PA Heavy Artillery; Theodore or “Dorie” served in the 14th and 53th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantries.

When the letters arrived at the archives, I was excited to see them. While the handwriting of the 19th century is beautiful it remains difficult to read. Also, paper was a precious commodity, so it wasn’t unusual for a letter to be written and then turned for other lines to be inserted between the original ones. While many of the letters spoke of the War, the McAlisters discussed a variety of subjects from the cost of horses to local and national politics.

The particular letter that I used for this article, dated November 26, 1863, was one about Mr. McAlister’s travels to Gettysburg to hear Everett’s Speech. Today we don’t talk about Edward Everett’s speech; there is no “Everett’s Gettysburg Address”, so why didn’t Hugh McAlister report on hearing Lincoln. I wanted to explore the other letters to answer that question.

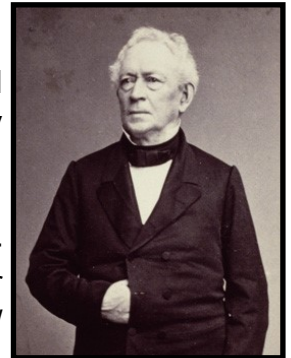
In 1862 the Pennsylvania Legislature established laws to provide for the care of the commonwealth’s wounded soldiers as well as burial of the dead. Soon after the Battle of Gettysburg ended, Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin appointed David Wills, a Gettysburg attorney, to carry out the requirements of this law. The Gettysburg dead were buried in shallow graves covering the battlefield and the community was overwhelmed. Wills explored several options, including interment in Evergreen Cemetery. There were simply too many Union dead. Wills finally recommended that a soldiers’ cemetery be established on Cemetery Hill, for interment of the Union dead. Although Curtin didn’t sign the articles of incorporation until March 1864, the Soldier’s National Cemetery was dedicated on November 19, 1863. (Reardon and Vossler, 2013)

On November 19, 1863, the War Between the States still raged. The military and political leaders did not see the Battle of Gettysburg as the turning point in the war. Large Union and Confederate armies were still in the field. Just two months prior to the dedication of the cemetery, at the

Battle of Chickamauga, 34,000 casualties, North and South, ensued fighting over the road to Chattanooga.

Great thought went into the planning of the dedication of the cemetery. Invitations went out to Northern state governors, members of Lincoln's cabinet, and military leaders. Lincoln's invitation was not an afterthought, but many on the Gettysburg Cemetery Commission did not feel he would attend—he did not leave Washington, except to visit the troops. He was invited to attend and “as Chief Executive of the nation, formally [to] set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks”. (Donald, 1995). Ward Hill Lamon, U.S. Federal Marshal of the District of Columbia, was asked to be the Marshall of the procession for the dedication ceremony. This was probably a political action to influence Lincoln's decision as Lamon was a good friend and personal bodyguard of the President.

The keynote speaker was Edward Everett, a famed orator. He had represented Massachusetts in the House of Representatives and Senate. He was Secretary of State for a brief period under Millard Fillmore. He was educated at Harvard, taught Greek Literature at Harvard and was later President of the University. Mr. Everett was a popular orator, keeping the audience spellbound as he compared the national struggle with those of antiquity. He was an ardent supporter of the Union and Lincoln. (Retrieved May 3, 2014, from <http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/HVDpresidents/everett.php>).



Edward Everett

After leaving Mr. Wills' house on the Gettysburg square, the procession advanced on Baltimore Street until it reached the Evergreen Cemetery and the new Soldiers' National Cemetery. Along with Lincoln, Everett, and Lamon, the procession included Secretary of State William Seward, Postmaster General Montgomery Blair and Secretary of Interior John Palmer Usher, Major General George Cadwalader, Commander of the Department of Philadelphia, General George Stoneman, Chief of the US Cavalry Bureau, Colonel Anson Stager, head of the Military Telegraph Department. (Donald). Along with Governor Curtin, other Northern governors attended as well as civilians and soldiers who had endured the bloody days and aftermath of July 1863. Reports of attendance reached to 150,000. A reasonable estimate was 15,000 attendees on a sunny, cloudless day.

After the invocation by the Chaplain of the House of Representative, Mr. Everett began his oration. Although he did allude to past great battles, his speech described clearly the action of the first three days of July 1863. He had conferred with the field commanders including General George Gordon Meade, to learn about the struggles of those days. After Everett acknowledged the crowd's applause, Mr. Lamon introduced Mr. Lincoln with a booming “the President of the United States”. The President stood, taking the manuscript of the address from his stovepipe hat. Mr. Lincoln delivered the 272-word dedication speech, now known as the Gettysburg Address, in about two minutes, insufficient time for the photographer to record the moment for posterity.

Mr. Lincoln sat down, turned to the Marshall and his body guard, saying “Lamon, that speech won't *scour!*” The reports of the reception of the speech vary greatly. There are those who say that there was wild applause at various times during the speech and at the end. Others say that the address was received without enthusiasm, reverent silence too deep for applause. (Lafantasia, 2013) Mr. Everett on the other hand told the President – I wish I had been able to say in two hours, what you have said in two minutes.

Fortunately for us 19th century Juniata County residents provide a first-hand account of the Dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in correspondence among Hugh, Stephen and Oliver McAlister. Oliver H. McAlister (Ollie) served in the 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry as a private until he was discharged on a Surgeon's Certificate in early 1863.

Ollie, in his November 13, 1863, letter tells Stephen of their brother's, Theodore's illness, but also says "I would like to go to Gettysburg next week". On November 23, 1863, Ollie shares more information about Theodore's condition, but also reports "Joe Longacre went with father to Gettysburg & seen & shook hands with 'Ole Abe'". In Hugh's November 26, 1863, letter to Stephen he briefly provides his personal account of the visit to Gettysburg. "I went to Gettysburg Tuesday 17th and was two or three days there over the battleground and at Everett's speech [sic]. I suppose that there were 40,000 people there. I then went to Philad [sic] via Harrisburg & Reading." Apparently, Joe returned to McAlisterville while Hugh traveled on to Philadelphia and shared his story with the family.

While Hugh McAlister does not tell us in any of the letters in the Society's collection, why he traveled to Gettysburg, he did have a close relationship with Lieutenant Colonel George McFarland and soldiers of the 151st Pennsylvania Volunteers. McFarland was the principal and proprietor of the McAlisterville Academy. Several of the McAlister children attended the school and Hugh was an original trustee of the Academy. He and Sam Strayer, another McAlisterville resident, visited with McFarland's regiment near Fredericksburg, VA, in February 1863 after a visit to Washington, DC. McFarland mentions correspondence with McAlister in his diary. (Dreese, 1997).

McFarland's regiment was decimated during the opening engagement with the Confederates on July 1, 1863, near the Lutheran Seminary. McFarland was badly injured and spent several months in the Union Hospital at the Seminary, until returning home to his family and school. Eight members of Company D were killed that day. At least four members of the regiment are in marked graves in the Soldiers' National Cemetery – Privates Nelson Reasor (Co. B), William S. Stamm (Co. G), William T. Strause (Co. H), and Jacob Zimmerman (Co. I). Samuel Leister (Co. D) is one of the unknowns in the Soldier's National Cemetery. (JCHS CW Index).

Hugh McAlister was a fervent Unionist and Lincoln supporter. It makes sense that he would travel to Gettysburg to honor his friends, both living and dead. Everett was a well-known, popular orator, a rock star of the mid-nineteenth century. The speech to dedicate the Cemetery would be something to share for many years. But why didn't Hugh comment on Lincoln's speech? Everett spoke for almost 2 hours; visitors were restless after spending these hours listening to Everett. Lincoln's speech was a mere two minutes, even contemporary observers say that the "speech was too short to hear or digest . . . and few people remained to hear the President after Everett". (LaFantasie)

The reports of that day in November 1863 tell us that Lincoln's speech was very short, and many didn't hear it. Perhaps Mr. McAlister took a couple of minutes after hearing Mr. Everett speak to look for the graves of the soldiers of the 151st Regiment. Perhaps he didn't hear the speech and was more impressed with shaking hands with 'Ole Abe' as Oliver reports. Perhaps, happenings in the McAlister family overwhelmed him ---beloved son and brother, Theodore, passed away at age 25.

End Notes:

- I. Everett's speech can be found at <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/everett-gettysburg-address-speech-text/>
- II. Lincoln was referring to plows that didn't turn back heavy sod.
- III. Author had identified these graves during visits to the Soldiers' National Cemetery.

Sources:

- Dreese, M. A. (1997). *An imperishable fame: the Civil War experience of George Fisher McFarland*. Mifflintown, PA: Juniata County Historical Society.
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Nancy Crago
Seated inside
the replica of
the Hunley
Charleston, SC



Nancy and her husband Ben joined BGES in 2015 and that same year celebrated their 26th wedding anniversary with their new BGES friends following Sherman's route through South Carolina with historian Steve Wise.

Nancy is a registered nurse and leads the medical care management department for Eastern Alliance Insurance Group. Though she works full time, she still finds a one weekend day a month to volunteer at Monterey Pass Battlefield Park, located west of Gettysburg along the Confederate retreat route. On a personal note from your membership coordinator, Nancy makes a great late, late night fellow shopper to resupply the BGES travel cache!

Welcome to Our New Members!

Peggy Yurczak — Beaver creek OH
Eugene Lackey — San Francisco, CA
Kathleen Winters — Lorton VA
Steven Jaren — Burke, VA

Paul Severance — Woodbridge, VA
June Gray — Bowie, MD
William MacPherson — Plymouth, MN

Also a big Thank You to all of our renewing members this quarter!



You are very much appreciated!