IN CAMP ALONG THE MONOCACY

From Blue And Gray Education Society Field Headquarters in Frederick Maryland

Vol.2, Issue 3, July 2018 Editor: Gloria Swift

Executive Director Len Riedel

From the Desk of the Executive Director at HQ

In Chatham Virginia:

Working for You

As we enter the dog days of summer, BGES' 2018 projects plan is in full swing with progress on all fronts and a visionary view for the future. It is all worthy as our 25th year rounds second base and heads for third and eventually home of April 24, 2019. In every way it is representative of the manner in which we have operated since we hung out our shingle back in 1994.

Our first project was a popup during one of our early 2018 tours - the cast iron markers at Grand Gulf Military Park in Mississippi had deteriorated badly in the 50+ years since they were installed and needed restoration. We decided on the spot to take the job on. The cohort of participants led the way in the fundraising and in less than a week we soared past our $8500 goal. Funds came from the cohort, a Facebook appeal and an on-line appeal to our email list. Plans for a hard copy mailing to the members were scrapped when the on-line appeal fulfilled our coffers. The vendor starts work in the next two weeks and we anticipate the 32 newly painted signs will be shining brightly by the time of our fall Vicksburg program.

As a collateral project the fundraising appeal also funded our 20th scholarly monograph on the Grand Gulf Raymond Scenic Byway. This new publication authored by Parker Hills will be our first in more than 10 years and it is scheduled for publication in April 2019.

I just signed off on the fundraising letter for our second major project of 2018 which is the development, production and installation of at least 17 interpretive markers for Fort Branch near Hamilton, NC. Another popup project from one of our tours. We went there during our Civil War in Eastern North Carolina program and discovered a pristine earthen fortification overlooking the Roanoke River. Designed to provide ground cover for the Weldon Railroad and the CSS Albemarle, it was not tested in combat and its guns were dumped in the river when the war ended. Well the fort has been lovingly maintained and the cannon recovered. It is a jewel of a site and we look forward to helping tell its story. We are working with historian Larry Babbitts and expect the signs to be installed by the start of 2019.

Our partners at the Medford Historical Society have completed a 20-year project to digitize more than 3400 images from the General Samuel Lawrence Collection. We have worked and consulted with them closely over the entire period of the project and your $6,500 investment will now enter a new phase as we begin the task of helping them improve the provenance of the images many of which were just tossed in a trunk and forgotten for more than 100 years. We will announce more about that project shortly.

Finally, work is slowly advancing on the restoration and interpretation of the trial and execution of the Lincoln Conspirators at Fort Leslie McNair. The tall pole in the stick is the gift approval process which involves the paperwork proffering the artifacts, brochure and interpretative markers to the Department of the Army. Once it goes through the legal review and sign off at the base level it goes to the Facilities Command in San Antonio where a Lieutenant General signs off on the acceptance letter. We are then able to proceed with the acquisition of the required artifacts and development of the signs. This logical follow up to our Ford's Theater Project is most surely going into 2019 and fundraising may not start until later in the year or early in the new year.

The North Star on each of these efforts is the unwavering commitment of the members of this organization to stay the course on promises made and to fund and complete each on time and budget. From my perch it certainly appears we are smack on target. Thanks

Len Riedel
Executive Director

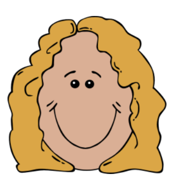
Welcome to Our New Members!

Sarah Ferguson, Loveland, Ohio

Chris Corner, Worthington, Ohio

Bernard Huston, Des Moines, Iowa

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



You are very much appreciated!

BRINGING LANGUAGE TO LIFE
POETRY OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

By Bert Barnett

Writings by participants and witnesses of the Civil War continue to speak to us about what took place during those times, separate and apart from the technical and military aspects of combat. In some cases during, but usually after the fighting had ended, many people involved attempted to record their experiences. Journals, diaries, letters and newspapers all provide excellent insights as to how the people of the time felt about the great events they had seen – and how strongly they communicated those sentiments. The shock and stress on all touched by the conflict was tremendous. Great and weak pens alike participated in these attempts at expression.

One form of articulation, less common now than then, was the poem. Produced and enjoyed by persons of all economic and educational backgrounds, poetry flourished during the era. Not merely filler for greeting-cards, poetry was employed in a number of diverse ways – some of them quite powerful. In an age when a "newspaper" was often a patchwork of serial dramatic stories, a few real news items and perhaps an editorial cartoon, the editor's most powerful tool was often his verse, frequently employed to highlight his views.

In the decades during the debates over Abolition, poets supporting emancipation crafted a multitude of partisan pieces to carry their message forward. Opponents did likewise. Once the conflict actually erupted, countless inspiring and nationalistic compositions were produced by poets of both sides, expressing the "war fever" that overtook many at the time. With the expansion of the war, poetry provided an outlet for many to deal with the losses that the war inflicted. In this sense, verse performed many of the same functions as it had during the pre-war era, with the additional responsibilities of patriotic nation-building at work in the South, and the endorsement of Righteous Might in the North, and gradually within the reconquered regions. At all points, sacrifices had to be justified, leaders had to be praised or mourned (and occasionally mocked); and at the end of it all, victory (and defeat) had to be encountered. And, ultimately, if we hoped to repair ourselves as a nation, reconciliation on many levels needed to take place.

In all of these activities, poetry played an important role. Robert E. Lee once stated, "*I don't believe we can have an army without music.*" He was aware of the emotional value of that enterprise to the success of his army in the field – it helped to keep his weary soldiers in the ranks, for it served to remind them who they were, and what they were fighting for. In North and South, both in the field and at the fireside, poetry likewise provided patriotic inspiration for "the cause." Just as importantly, it also served as a calming connection between the wartime stresses of the literal world and the lyrical sensibilities of Victorian America. It was both instruction and distraction.

In 1866, the Southern poet William Gilmore Simms published War Poetry of the South. In the Preface to his work he noted a basic truth regarding the value of historical poetry. Simms observed,

> *The emotional literature of a people is as necessary to the philosophical historian as the mere details of events in the progress of a nation… The mere facts in a history do not always, or often, indicate the true animus, of the action. But, in poetry…the emotional nature is apt to declare itself without reserve--speaking out with a passion which disdains subterfuge, and through media of imagination and fancy, which … glows or weeps with emotions that gush freely and freshly from the heart.*

The same truth might well have come from Oliver Wendell Holmes or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, men possessed of entirely different political temperaments. It was the essential truth of the statement itself that makes the study of this poetry so necessary to a richer and more complete understanding of this complex period.

Throughout history, celebrated moments in the life of tribes and nations has been captured in verse, destined to be repeated with pride by future generations as they recounted the past glories of their storied ancestors. *The Iliad*, Emerson's *The Concord Hymn* ("Here once the embattled farmers stood/And fired the shot heard round the world"), and Thompson's *The High Tide at Gettysburg* ("A thousand fell where Kemper led/A thousand died where Garnett bled") are iconic examples of this type.

Poetry breathes passion back into history. Gettysburg is recalled in history for two things – a three-day battle, and a two-minute speech. The battle has been retold endlessly in many forms; it is the source of numberless poems as well. The Gettysburg Address, crafted and delivered by a poet, reflects many poetic qualities. Creative description, repetition and alliteration are all powerful poetic techniques, used well by Lincoln. Many soldiers, who sleep within sight of the Soldier's National Monument, were likewise poets, and expressed themselves through this medium. We know of some of their works. The soldiers who rest there are guarded by plaques containing verses from Theodore O'Hara's *The Bivouac of the Dead*, which proclaimed the nation's eternal respect to its honored soldiers. Upon the hallowed fields, select monuments also employs poetry to connect the past with the future.

Unfortunately, poetry of this sort, and the inspirational imagery it invokes, no longer remains a portion of the popular landscape. Our once widely understood poetic culture has become a casualty of the computer chip, miniaturization, 'niche marketing', and is now nearly lost. To survive, it requires active institutional support. Once recaptured and shared, we may enhance our understanding of who we as a people have been, and yet may aspire to be. It is a part of our collective cultural heritage.

Ranger Bert Barnett at Gettysburg

Bert Barnett has, from his earliest days, held an interest in creative language alongside his interest in history. A 1984 graduate of Middle Tennessee State University, he holds a B.S. in History, with minors in English literature and psychology. He has served over 30 years as a ranger with the National Park Service at a number of Civil –War battlefields and related sites. Stationed at Gettysburg National Military Park since 1993, Bert has presented a variety of field programs and written a number of articles.

His interest in Civil War poetry was actively fostered in the mid – eighties, when his own writing efforts led to a growing awareness of the strength and vivacity of much original Civil War verse. Eventually, this interest crept into his work. By the spring of 2005, he launched a determined effort to share his perspective with others and did so by integrating some of it into his interpretive and camp-fire programs given on the Gettysburg battlefield. Bert has also created a number of Civil-War poetry-based programs for Civil War Round Tables.

In closing this issue of the BGES newsletter, I am presenting three poems for your reading enjoyment—take note that they each offer broad themes that were very much within the hearts of soldiers and on the mind of the public during the dark days of the Civil War. ***Ed. Gloria Swift***

The first poem was written by Charles Dawson Shanly who was born in Dublin in 1811, but who eventually made his way to New York in 1857 to make journalism his full-time occupation. He wrote for the *Albion*, *New York Leader*, and *Atlantic Monthly*, and assisted in founding *Vanity Fair*, a humorous weekly journal, admired for its wit and subtle cartoons. Shanly became its editor. His thoughtful poem, “Sword and plough,” published in the early days of the Civil War, was followed by a series of clever articles, including “Hardee made easy,” which satirized General William J. Hardee’s textbook on military tactics.

Civil War

By Charles Dawson Shanly
1811—1875

"Rifleman, shoot me a fancy shot
Straight at the heart of yon prowling vidette;
Ring me a ball in the glittering spot
That shines on his breast like an amulet!"

"Ah, captain! here goes for a fine-drawn bead,
There's music around when my barrel's in tune!"
Crack! went the rifle, the messenger sped,
And dead from his horse fell the ringing dragoon.

"Now, rifleman, steal through the bushes, and snatch
From your victim some trinket to handsel first blood;
A button, a loop, or that luminous patch
That gleams in the moon like a diamond stud!"

"O captain! I staggered, and sunk on my track,
When I gazed on the face of that fallen vidette,
For he looked so like you, as he lay on his back,
That my heart rose upon me, and masters me yet.

"But I snatched off the trinket--this locket of gold;
An inch from the centre my lead broke its way,
Scarce grazing the picture, so fair to behold,
Of a beautiful lady in bridal array."

"Ha! rifleman, fling me the locket!--'tis she,
My brother's young bride, and the fallen dragoon
Was her husband--Hush! soldier, 'twas Heaven's decree,
We must bury him there, by the light of the moon!

"But hark! the far bugles their warnings unite;
War is a virtue—weakness a sin;
There's a lurking and loping around us to-night;
Load again, rifleman, keep your hand in!"

Our next written word offers a bit about friendship. Written under the pseudonym “Private Miles O’Reilly” the author was Charles Graham Halpine. Like Shanly, Halpine was born in Ireland; but in 1851 emigrated to America where he began a profession in journalism. First working in Boston, and then later New York City, he became a successful writer with several newspapers and periodicals of the day.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Halpine joined up with the 69th New York Infantry and was soon elected lieutenant; a position he held for his term of enlistment—three months. Afterwards, he was transferred to the staff of General David Hunter as a major. Accompanying Hunter to Hilton Head South Carolina in 1862, Halpine created the Irish character Private Miles O’ Reilly, the name under which he would write a series of burlesque poems that contributed to the New York Herald. After the war, Halpine returned to a successful journalism career in New York City, but in 1868 died of an overdose of undiluted chloroform—something he had hoped would cure his insomnia.

THE SAME CANTEEN
by Private Miles O'Reilly

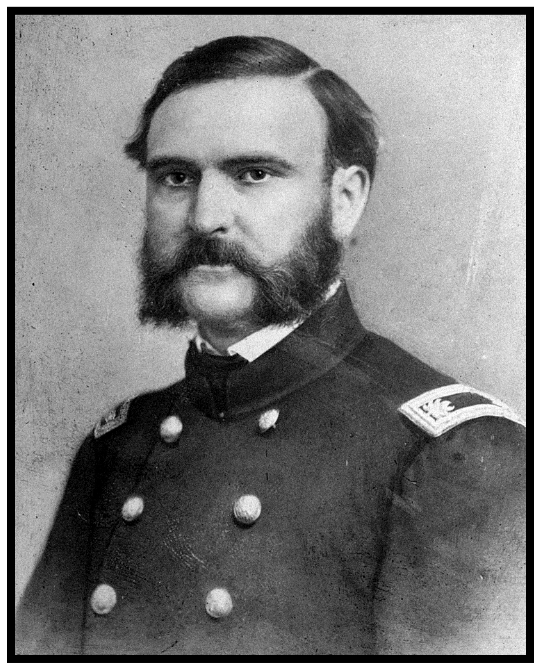
There are bonds of all sorts in this world of ours,
Fetters of friendship and ties of flowers,
And true lover's knots, I ween;
The girl and the boy are bound by a kiss,
But there's never a bond, old friend, like this,
We have drank from the same Canteen!

It was sometimes water, and sometimes milk,
And sometimes apple-jack "fine as silk;"
But whatever the tipple has been
We shared it together in bane or bliss,
And I warm to you, friend, when I think of this,
We drank from the same Canteen!

The rich and great sit down to dine,
They quaff to each other in sparkling wine,
From glasses of crystal and green;
But I guess in their golden potations they miss
The warmth of regard to be found in this,
We drank from the same Canteen!

We have shared our blankets and tents together,
And have marched and fought in all kinds of weather,
And hungry and full we have been;
Had days of battle and days of rest,
But this memory I cling to and love the best,
We drank from the same Canteen!

For when wounded I lay on the center slope,
With my blood flowing fast and so little hope
Upon which my faint spirit could lean;
Oh! then I remember you crawled to my side,
And bleeding so fast it seemed both must have died,
We drank from the same Canteen!



Brigadier General Charles Graham Halpine
1829—1868

Our last poem needs no explanation except to say that an anonymous, (and apparently southern), writer has taken witty liberties with a soliloquy from “Hamlet” by William Shakespeare.

TO GO OR NOT TO GO
By Exempt

[**Dedicated to the Exempts]**

To go or not to go, that is the question:
Whether it pays best to suffer pestering
By idle girls and garrulous old women
Or to take up arms against a host of Yankees
And by opposing get killed -- to die, to sleep --
(Get out!) and in this sleep to say we "sink
To rest by all our country's wishes blest,"
And to live forever (there's a consummation,
Just what I'm after). To march, to fight --
To fight! Perchance to die -- aye, there's the rub!
For while I'm asleep, who'd take care of Mary
And the babes -- when Bill is in the low ground --
Who'd feed 'em, eh? There's the respect
I have for them that makes life sweet;
For who would bear the bag to mill,
Plow Dobbin, cut the wheat, dig "taters,"
Kill hogs, and do all sorts of drudgery,
If I am fool enough to get a Yankee
Bullet in my brain! Who'd cry for me?
Would patriotism pay my debts, when dead?
But oh! the dread of something after death --
That undiscovered fellow who'd court Mary,
And do my hugging -- that's agony,
And makes me want to stay at home,
'Specially as I ain't mad with nobody.
Shells and bullets make cowards of us all;
And blamed my skin if snortin' steeds
And pomp and circumstance of war
Are to be compared with feather-bed
And Mary by my side.