I hope everyone has a very Happy Thanksgiving. I want to thank Steve Bockmiller for an excellent presentation on the “Ransom of Hagerstown” at our November meeting. Our December meeting will feature our own Compatriot Ted Alexander, who will be presenting a talk on “The Confederate Army in Washington County: 1861-1864”. We’ll be meeting on Wednesday December 3rd, 2014, 7:00 P.M., Sharpsburg Town Hall, 2nd Floor, 106 East Main Street, Sharpsburg, MD.

We will also be having a Christmas Party in December at the home of our Adjutant Jan Hiett. I want to thank Jan and his wife Vickie for inviting us into their home. Jan will list the details of the party below.

For our meeting in January, we’ll be having a guest speaker from the “Save Historic Antietam Foundation. I’m still in need of speakers for next year. I know I have a lot of talent in the camp, so if you have a story to share about an ancestor or you “War Between The States” interest, please don’t be shy and share it with the group.

As always, I want to thank each and every one of you for being a member and if you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Yours in the cause,

Michael David Wasiljov
Commander
Battle of Sharpsburg Camp #1582
Sons of Confederate Veterans
301-992-3122-C
mike24745@aol.com
MINUTES: November 5, 2014 meeting for the Battle of Sharpsburg Camp #1582. The November meeting was held at the Sharpsburg Town Hall. There were 15 members and friends of the Camp, along with 5 guests in attendance. The opening ceremony included the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag and the Salute to the Confederate flag. The invocation was given by Adjutant Jan Hiett.

Old Business: Prior to the meeting the 2014-15 membership cards were distributed. At this time there are only a few members that have not paid their yearly dues. If you are delinquent please make sure that you take care of this matter. If you should have any questions regarding your status please contact the Adjutant. Maryland Division SCV belt buckles were on sale again and I am happy to report we have only one buckle remaining to sell. So here is your last chance to be a proud owner of one of these limited production and numbered belt buckles.

New Business: It was noted by several members that the Maryland Division Color Guard SCV which marched in the Alsatia Mummers Parade took second place in Senior Drill Team. Our unit’s picture was in the local paper and of course several uninformed individuals took this opportunity to vent their anger at the Herald Mail for publishing the picture. After all didn’t the paper realize the “suffering” their ancestors endured especially in a state (now get this) that was “loyal” to the Union. We all know the story of how it came to be that Maryland remained loyal to the Union. I did pass on these letters to our Color Sgt. Ray Rooks. He responded to the paper but as expected his reply was not printed. We were warned by our ancestors that history would be written by the victors. Deo Vindice!

On a happier note our Commander, after exploring several options for the Camp’s Christmas party, has announced that this event will be a simple affair at the Adjutant’s house at 921 Dewey Avenue in Hagerstown on Saturday, December 13th beginning at 6:00 p.m. There is a sign-up sheet for those that can attend and we ask that you bring a side-dish, snack, dessert or soda. Come celebrate the holidays and our victory at the Battle of Fredericksburg! Any questions can be directed to the Adjutant at bsc1582@aol.com or 301-797-1021.

Our guest speaker for the evening local historian and author Stephen Bockmiller who spoke about the 1864 Confederate ransom of Hagerstown. The information he share can be found in his most recent book entitled “Follow the Money”. By 1864, with the upcoming Presidential election, Lincoln and the War Department expanded their strategy to include destroying the Southern citizen’s ability and willingness to continue the fight. Major General Hunter following the orders from Grant employed this new tactic of living off the land in the Shenandoah Valley. Hundreds of homes and barns were burned. Outrages against persons were also committed by the Union army. In retribution Brigadier General John McCausland CSA, under the command of Jubal Early, entered the eastern panhandle of West Virginia with a force of 1,500 cavalrmen. As a part of this action they entered Hagerstown which was at this point in the war was a major supply center for the Union army. It was pointed out that upon hearing that the Confederate army was approaching Hagerstown some of the residents including shopkeepers packed up their inventory and headed north. Also, leaving town were the mayor and one city councilmen. After a small firefight with the remaining Union army the Confederate gained control of the city. It was at this point that a written demand was made for $20,000 and 1,500 complete sets of men’s clothing. The town was given four hours to meet these demands. The town of Hagerstown did not have within its’ own treasury enough money to pay the ransom. Community leaders including bankers and elected officials were able to raise the requested ransom. Prominent citizens were encouraged to guarantee the repayment to the bank for the ransom money. Residents and merchants who remained also gathered as much
clothing as possible but they were not able to raise the necessary amount. Government stores were forfeited including a much needed supply of saddles. Looting of some of the business did occur. General McCausland left Hagerstown after receiving the ransom payment and the collected clothing. The Confederate officers provided the necessary assurances that the town would not be burned. A receipt was given for the money and the clothing! Hagerstown was the first of six towns to be presented with ransom demands in July of 1864. None of these efforts were particularly successful as Maryland soldiers had little stomach for threatening fellow citizens. Later in the month, General McCausland demanded $100,000 from the town of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. That city was burned when they refused to give into the Confederate demands. As the war ended the Maryland legislature passed an act that allowed Hagerstown to issue bonds which eventually allowed taxes to be raised to pay off this debt to the three local banks that had produced the ransom money. This debt was fulfilled by 1881.

The closing prayer was offered by Adjutant Jan Hiett with the meeting ending at 8:30 p.m.

ADJUTANT COMMENTS

I had the opportunity to march in Gettysburg with the Maryland Division Color Guard on Remembrance Day, November, 15th. The Sons of Confederate Veterans were well represented and as usual did a tremendous job representing the Cause. After the parade we also participated in a historical marker dedication at Alumni Park in Gettysburg. This ceremony honored Dr. Rufus Benjamin Weaver. Dr. Weaver, a Pennsylvania resident played a very important role in the return of Southern remains to their “homeland”. When Lincoln arrived to dedicate the Soldier’s National Cemetery there were no Confederates buried at that cemetery. This cemetery had been set aside to be the final resting place for those who gave their last full measure to “preserve the Union”. Those men wearing butternut and gray would remain scattered in poorly marked graves for many years. In 1871 efforts in the South resulted in the hiring of Dr. Weaver by various Ladies Memorial Associations to recover the Confederate remains. With the help of Dr. J.W.C. O’Neal, a Virginia born physician, remains of 3,320 soldiers were sent home. Most were sent to the Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond. Dr. Weaver assumed much of the financial responsibility due to the poor economic conditions in the South. He was only partially reimbursed. Much of his total bill of $9,536 was for shipping cost rather than for his services. At times, he would have to pay the Yankee farmers money to dig up the Confederate remains. Dr. Rufus Weaver a true Southern hero now has been officially recognized at Gettysburg.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH: “Nothing fills me with deeper sadness than to see a Southern man apologizing for the defense we made of our inheritance. Our cause was so just, so sacred, that had I known all that has come to pass, had I known what was to be inflicted upon me, all that my country was to suffer, all that our posterity was to endure, I would do it all over again”. Jefferson Davis-President

LYRICS OF THE MONTH: “There’s a Southern accent, where I come from. The young’uns call it country, the Yankees call it dumb. I got my own way of talking, but everything is done, with a Southern accent where I come from...I got my own way of workin’ but everything is run, with a Southern accent where I come from...I got my own way of prayin’ but everyone’s begun with a Southern accent where I come from...I got my own way of livin’ and everything is done with a Southern accent where I come from. Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers-“Southern Accents”
A Civil War Christmas

Christmas carols, gift giving and tree decorations were already in place by the mid – 19th century. Charles Dickens had published “A Christmas Carol” in 1843 and people during the Civil war the first publications to the modern image of a jolly and portly Santa Claus through the drawings of Thomas Nest, a German-speaking immigrant. Without a doubt, Christmas was celebrated in both the United States and the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. However, celebrations for both troops and civilians saw significant change and in no way did Christmas hinder the war. For example, skirmishes occurred throughout the countryside, there were fewer presents, and southern children worried about the Union blockades. One important note, is that Christmas did not become an official holiday until after the Civil War and it was President Ulysses S. Grant that made it an official Federal holiday in 1870. It was an effort made by him to unite the north and south.

On Christmas Day during the Civil War a few significant events happened. For instance, in 1861 a blockade runner was caught by the Union navy, and there were two skirmishes in Virginia and Maryland. In 1862, there were several skirmishes, and Confederate General John Hunt Morgan engaged in his famous Christmas Raid in Kentucky. On that single day, Morgan's men destroyed everything he possibly could of the improvements that the Louisville and Nashville Railroad had made along 35 miles of track from Bacon Creek to Lebanon Junction. There was also a military execution for desertion that the soldiers were forced to witness. It was in 1863 that Union forces destroyed Confederate salt works at Bear Inlet, North Carolina. There were also several skirmishes between Confederate artillery and the Union navy on the Stono River and near Charleston in South Carolina. One important note, is the Stono River is where the first slave revolt took place in 1739. Furthermore in 1864, the Confederates fiercely resisted the Federal assault of sixty warships on Fort Fisher, while in the western theater of the war. Again, Christmas was not ignored but in no way did this special holiday stop the war.

Celebrating included eating special foods and the singing of carols, hymns, and seasonal songs. Some camps had special meals including oysters, ham, and desserts including pumpkin pie, but other camps did nothing to celebrate. Songs that were sung included "Deck the Halls", "Oh Come All Ye Faithful", "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing", and "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear". There was one incident on December 25, 1864, that 90 Union soldiers from Michigan, led by their captain, dispensed "food and supplies" to poor Georgians, with the mules pulling the carts decorated to resemble reindeer by having tree branches tied to their heads. In another amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: “A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid of …. DISAPPOINTMENT! The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water…and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended.”

In closing, Christmas was celebrated or at least recognized during the Civil War, but it did not stop the war in anyway. Following is a poem from the viewpoint of a Confederate soldier.
Christmas Night of '62

The following is a poem by Confederate soldier William Gordon McCabe giving his thoughts on Christmas Night 1862.

The wintry blast goes wailing by,  
the snow is falling overhead;  
I hear the lonely sentry's tread,  
and distant watch-fires light the sky.

Dim forms go flitting through the gloom;  
The soldiers cluster round the blaze  
To talk of other Christmas days,  
And softly speak of home and home**

My saber swinging overhead,  
gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,  
while fiercely drives the blinding snow,  
and memory leads me to the dead.

My thoughts go wandering to and fro,  
vibrating 'twixt the Now and Then;  
I see the low-browed home again,  
the old hall wreathed in mistletoe.

And sweetly from the far off years  
comes borne the laughter faint and low,  
the voices of the Long Ago!  
My eyes are wet with tender tears.

I feel again the mother kiss,  
I see again the glad surprise  
That lighted up the tranquil eyes  
And brimmed them o'er with tears of bliss

As, rushing from the old hall-door,  
She fondly clasped her wayward boy -  
Her face all radiant with the joy  
She felt to see him home once more.

My saber swinging on the bough  
Gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,  
while fiercely drives the blinding snow  
aslant upon my saddened brow.**

Those cherished faces are all gone!  
Asleep within the quiet graves  
where lies the snow in drifting waves, -  
And I am sitting here alone.

There's not a comrade here tonight  
but knows that loved ones far away  
on bended knees this night will pray:  
"God bring our darling from the fight."

But there are none to wish me back,  
for me no yearning prayers arise  
the lips are mute and closed the eyes -  
My home is in the bivouac.
LETTER TO SANTA FROM THREE SOUTHERN GIRLS:

Dear General Lee:

We think you are the goodest man that ever lived, and our auntie says you will go right straight to heaven when you die; so we want to ask you a question, for we want to know the truth about it, and we know that you always speak the truth.

Please tell us whether Santa Claus loves the little rebel children, for we think he don't; because he did not come to see us for four Christmas Eves. Auntie thinks you would not let him cross the lines, and we don't know how to find out unless we write and ask you. We all love you dearly, and we want to send you something; but we have not any thing nice enough; we lost all our toys in the war. Birdie wants to send you one of our white kittens--the one with black ears; but Auntie thinks maybe you don't like kittens. We say little prayers for you every night, dear General Lee, and ask God to make you ever so happy. Please let us know about Santa Claus as soon as you can; we want to know for something very, very, very particular; but we can't tell even you why until Christmas time, so please to excuse us.

Your little friends,

Lutie, Birdie, and Minnie

General Lee’s response will be published in the January newsletter!

Upcoming Events

December 3  Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.  Camp meeting at Sharpsburg Town Hall
December 13  Saturday, 6:00 p.m.  Camp Christmas Party at Hiett Plantation
2015
January 7  Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.  Camp meeting at Sharpsburg Town Hall
April 18  Saturday  Maryland Division Convention in Catonsville, MD

Further information about the above-noted events is available by contacting the Adjutant of the Battle of Sharpsburg Camp #1582 at the Camp meeting or by phoning 301-797-1021 or e-mail bcs1582@aol.com.

Thanks!