



Sons of Confederate Veterans
ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA
MARYLAND DIVISION
COLONEL WILLIAM NORRIS
CAMP #1398



December 2, 2008

Volume XXVII, Issue XI

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Next Meeting

*Tuesday, Dec. 2nd 1900
hours*

*Location: Gaithersburg
VFW Hall*

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CHRISTMAS PARTY ANNOUNCEMENT

Please come and join in the fun and great food as we have an annual Holiday Dinner meeting this coming Tuesday, December 2nd at 7:00 PM. This is a family event. The dinner meeting will be at the usual VFW meeting location in Gaithersburg. This is always one of our best meetings as nothing of substance is usually discussed except holiday cheer and how good the food is. Commander **Steve Gill** has promised to discuss little business except that which is urgent (if any) and that of a holiday and good news variety.

This year the Camp will provide the Holiday ham and turkey as the featured meat entrees (prepared by Katie Brewer). We need all good and attending Norris Camp compatriots to round out our Christmas Dinner by providing the following:

For Those Last Names Starting With the First Letter (Then Bring To The Dinner)

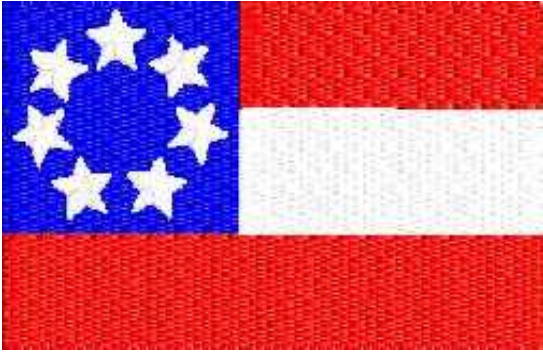
A - E Veggies & Salads (green beans, sweet potatoes-etc..)

F- Q Starch & Rolls (Rolls, Butter, rice and potatoes etc.)

R - Z Desserts & Drinks (non alcoholic)

Please plan on arriving right on time or a little earlier would be better, yet. Any questions -AND RSVP's: please contact Bob Brewer 301-977-0087 (before 8 pm please) or brewer000@comcast.net (anytime). - **Harold Ford**

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Factoid:

The famous Confederate blockade - runner, the C.S.S. Alabama, never entered a Confederate port during the length of her service.

Factoid:

Union and Confederate forces stationed at Fredericksburg during the winter of 1862 traded items by constructing small boats and floating them back and forth across the Rappahannock River.

"He was a man of few words, very loath to talk about himself, nor do I believe anyone ever knew what that great heart suffered. His idea of life was to do his duty, at whatever cost, and to try to help others to theirs."

-- Captain Robert E. Lee, describing his famous father.

Upcoming Events

12/6/08 Christmas Parade: Parade in Northeast Maryland. Color Guard formation is at 12:00 PM. A great parade that is a nice ending to our 2008. The parade will be followed by an Iron Cross dedication. Come one and all to the end of year event, which will be followed by an optional (\$10) dinner.

Important Names, Phone Numbers and Email Addresses

The newsletter of the Colonel William Norris Camp 1398 is published 12 times a year by the camp as a service to its membership and to the public. Officers of the camp are:

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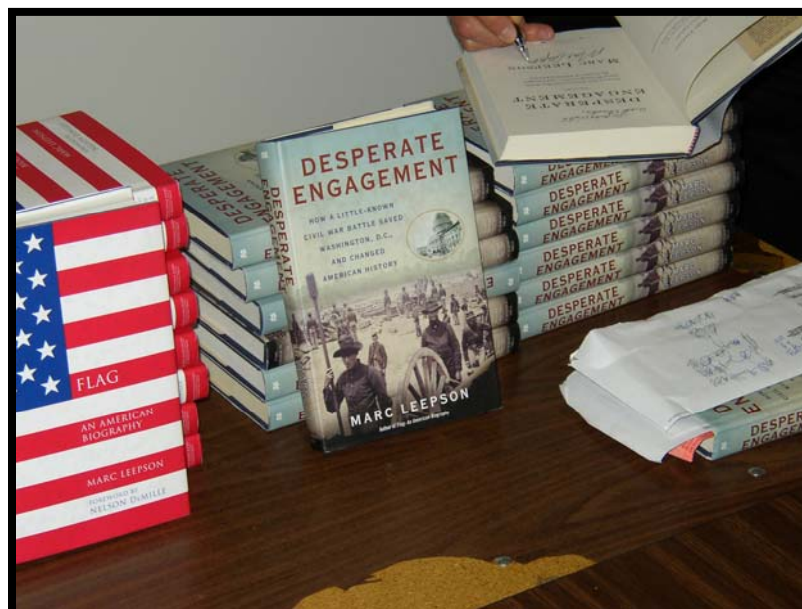
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Last Month's Speaker: Marc Leepson

For those who might like to order a book, autographed copies of Mr. Marc Leepson's books can be ordered by mail. The Book, "Flag, an American Biography" is priced at \$20.00. "Desperate Engagement, How a Little Known Battle Saved Washington, D. C., and Changed American History" sells for \$26.00. An additional \$2.00 or \$3.00 is required for the cost of mailing. Should be some good reading for the cold winter months.

For more information, Marc can be reached at home at 540-687-4131, or by e-mail at [can't read his writing, will phone and get e-mail address for y'all later this evening]. His mailing address is Mr. Marc Leepson, P.O. Box 1889, Middleburg, VA 20118. –Don Beck



Bob goes to Gettysburg

Our Compatriot, Bob Brewer, has photos to share. Bob went up to Gettysburg to do some research and check out the assortment of clothing articles the National Park Service has collected. Bob is doing research on the **6th North Carolina** Regiment, Company “**K**”, with the assistance of NPS/ Gettysburg curator Paul Shevchuck and Liz Oaks, master seamstress/ Highland Rose Sutlery. Also pictured are Bob and Katy Brewer.



Gen Pettigrews coat
found near
Fredericksburg in
1862



Adjutant's Report

Minutes of November 4th Camp Meeting at Gaithersburg VFW Hall.

The meeting was called to order by **First Lt. Commander Brewer** at about 7:15 PM. After the Pledge Allegiance to the American flag and the salute to the Confederate flag, There were 10 members and guests attending including compatriots; **Robert P. Jones, Dave J. King, Jr., Don Bean, Jon Olivarri, Rick Griffin, Dan Belvin, Bob Brewer, Maryland Division Commander Don Beck, and Adjutant/Treasurer Harold Ford.** Our special guests was **Katie Brewer,**

Desperate Engagement –

“How a little-known Civil War battle saved Washington, DC., and changed American History”

Speaker **Marc Leepson** a journalist and author of six books including "Flag: An American Biography and"Saving Monticello." Mr. Leepson has written for many magazines including "Smithsonian," "Vietnam" and "Military History." He has also written for The Washington Post, New York Times Book Review, Baltimore Sun, Chicago Tribune, Detroit News, Dallas Morning News, Christian Science Monitor, Newsday, The Arizona Republic, St. Petersburg Times, and USA Today.

How small can a Civil War battle be and still claim the mantle of war-changing decisiveness? That proposition is tested in this engaging account of the 1864 Battle of Monocacy Junction, in which some 16,000 Confederate troops trounced 5,800 bluecoats on a Maryland field. Not a surprising outcome, but Leepson (*Flag: An American Biography*) contends that Union Gen. Lew Wallace's doomed stand held up **Confederate Gen. Jubal Early's** surprise lunge at Washington, D.C.—which was held only by a hapless force of invalids, militia and government clerks—by one crucial day. The result was a photo finish, with Union reinforcements arriving in the nick of time to save the capital from capture (hence the decisiveness). Leepson lucidly narrates the campaign, adding color commentary about Early's “panoply of abhorrent personal traits” and the incompetence, apathy and possible drunkenness that prevailed among Union commanders, along with plenty of vignettes of the horror and pathos of war. He also debunks the campaign's premier anecdote, which has Lincoln coming under rebel fire while looking out from Washington's ramparts (true, he finds) and getting chewed out—“Get down, you fool”—by a young **Capt. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.** (false). Gettysburg it ain't, but it's still a hard-fought, dramatic episode that Leepson brings vividly to life.

Minutes

- The 19th Annual Sharpsburg Illumination will be Saturday, December 6, 2008. Each year, the Col. Norris Camp participates in this event.
- VFW packages to troops. The camp voted to donate \$50.00 to this endeavor
- Dinner Meeting. The December meeting will be our annual family event with Turkey and Ham provided by Bob & Kate Brewer and potluck for the rest. The assignments will be sorted out later.
- The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 PM.

Execution of Two Confederates

By J. L. Kirby, Nashville Tennessee

The sad fate of Col. **Lawrence Williams** (*alias Colonel Orton*), and Lieut. **W. G. Peter** (*alias Major Dunlap*), who were hanged as spies by the Federals at Franklin, Tennessee in June, 1863, aroused deep sympathy throughout the South. In the Confederate homes and army of our own State, however this tragic event – first of its kind, I believe, to occur in Tennessee – came with crushing force. There was something in the detection and swift doom of these brave men even more awesome than the tidings of slaughter in battle. The depressing influence alike upon friend and humane foe was second only to that produced five months later by the lamented but superbly heroic death of the young Tennessean, **Sam Davis**, within the same enemy's lines.

The Federal account of this grievous, written at the time from the headquarters of the post in Franklin, is evidently correct in every detail, and the story is told "more in sorrow than in anger." From this report – the only one extant, so far as I know – I take the facts here given. A restatement of them, after the lapse of so many eventful years, will doubtless be of mournful interest to those who at the time were cognizant of the tragedy, and will prove hardly less interesting to all that love and honor true sons of valor.

About sundown of June 9, 1863, two strangers rode into camp at Franklin and called at the headquarters of **Colonel Baird**, commander of the post. The men presented unusual appearances. They had on citizens' overcoats, Federal regulation trousers and caps, the caps covered with white flannel havelocks. They wore side arms and showed high intelligence. One claimed to be a colonel in the United States army and called himself **Colonel Austin**; and the other called himself **Major Dunlap**, and both represented themselves as inspectors general of the United States army. They stated that they were now out on an expedition in this department inspecting the outposts and defences, and that the day before they had been overhauled by the enemy and lost their coats and purses. They exhibited official papers from **General Rosecrans** and also from the War Department at Washington confirming their rank and business. These seemed all right to Colonel Baird, and at first satisfied him of the honesty of the men. They asked the Colonel to lend them fifty dollars, as they had no coats and no money with which to buy them. **Colonel Baird** lent them the money, and took Colonel Austin's note for it.

Just at dark the two officers took their departure, saying their horses' heads were turned the thought of their being spies struck **Colonel Baird**, he said, like a thunderbolt; and he ordered **Colonel Watkins** of the 6th Kentucky Cavalry who was standing by, to arrest them immediately. But they were going at lightning speed. **Colonel Watkins** had no time to call a guard, and only with his orderly he set out on the chase. He told the orderly to unslung his carbine, and if, when the men were halted, they showed any suspicious motions to fire on them without waiting for an order.

They were overtaken about one-third of a mile from Franklin. **Colonel Watkins** told them that **Colonel Baird** wanted to make some further inquiries of them and asked them to return. This they politely consented to do, after remonstrance on account of the lateness of the hour and the distance they had to travel; and **Colonel Watkins** led them to his tent, where he placed a strong guard over them. It was not until one of them attempted to pass the guard at the door that they even suspected they were prisoners.

Colonel Watkins promptly took them to **Colonel Baird**, and they feigned great indignation at being thus treated. The Colonel frankly told them that he had his suspicions of their true character and that they should, if loyal, object to no necessary caution. They were very hard to satisfy, and were in a great hurry to get off.

Colonel Baird told them they were under arrest, and he should hold them prisoners until he was fully satisfied that they were what they claimed to be. He telegraphed to **General Rosecrans**, and received the answer that he knew nothing of such men; that there were no such men in his service or had his pass.

After this dispatch came to hand, which it did about twelve o'clock (midnight), a search of the prisoners' persons was ordered. To this the Major consented without opposition, but the Colonel protested against it, and even put his hand threateningly to his sword. But resistance was useless and both submitted. When the Major's sword was drawn from the scabbard, there were, found etched upon it, these words: "Lt. **W. G. Peter**, C.S.A." At this discovery **Colonel Baird** remarked: "Gentlemen, you have played this very well." "Yes," said **Lieutenant Peter**, "and it came near being a perfect success." They then confessed the whole matter, and upon further search various papers showing them to be spies were found upon their persons. **Lieutenant Peter** had on a Confederate cap, secreted by the white flannel havelock.

Colonel Baird immediately telegraphed the facts to **General Rosecrans** and asked what he should do, and in a short time received an order "to try them by drumhead court-martial, and, if found guilty, hang them immediately." The court was convened, and before daylight the case was decided and the prisoners informed that they must prepare for immediate death by hanging. They did not want their punishment delayed; but, well knowing the consequences of their acts, even before the trial, asked to have the sentence, be it hanging or shooting, quickly decided and executed. But they deprecated the idea of death by hanging, and asked for a commutation of the sentence of shooting. This request could not be granted.

At daylight men were detailed to make a scaffold. The chaplain of the 78th Illinois Regiment visited the prisoners, and upon their request he administered the sacrament to them. They also wrote some letters to their friends and deposited their jewelry, silver cups, and other valuables for transmission to their homes.

The gallows was constructed near a wild cherry tree not far from the railroad depot, and in a very public place. Two ropes hung dangling from the beam within eight feet of the ground. A little after 9 AM the whole garrison was marshaled around the place of execution in solemn sadness. Two poplar coffins were lying a few feet away. At twenty minutes past nine the guards conducted the prisoners to the scaffold. They walked firmly and steadily, as if unmindful of the doom that awaited them. The guards did them the honor to march with arms reversed.

"*Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once*". Arrived at the place of execution, the condemned officers stepped upon the platform of the cart and took their respective places. The provost marshal, **Captain Alexander**, then tied a linen handkerchief over the face of each, and adjusted the ropes. They then asked the privilege of bidding a last farewell; and permission being given, they tenderly embraced each other. This over, the cart moved from under them and they hung in the air. In twenty minutes all signs of life had ceased. The bodies were cut down in thirty minutes and encoffined in full dress. **Colonel Orton** was buried with a gold locket and chain on his neck. The locket contained the portrait and a braid of hair of his intended wife; her portrait was also in his vest pocket. These were buried with him, at his request. Both men were interred in the same grave.

The elder and leader of these unfortunate men was **Lawrence Williams**, of Georgetown, DC. He was a fine-looking man about six feet high and perhaps thirty years old. He was a son of **Captain Williams**, who was

killed at the battle of Monterey, and a first cousin of **General Robert E. Lee**. He was a member of the regular army, with the rank of captain of cavalry when the Civil War broke out, and at the time was *aid-de-camp* and private secretary of **General Winfield Scott**. Soon after the war began he informed **General Scott** that all his sympathies were with the South, as his friends and interests were there, and that he could not fight against them. As he was privy to all of **General Scott's** plans for the campaign, it was not thought proper to turn him loose; hence he was sent to Governor's Island, where he remained for three months. After the first Bull Run Battle he

was allowed to go South where he joined the Confederate army. He was for a while on **General Bragg's** staff as Chief of Artillery, but at the time of his death was inspector general. When he joined the Confederate army, he altered his name, and signed it thus: **Lawrence W. Orton, Col. Cav. PACSA** (Provisional Army, Confederate States of America). Sometimes he wrote his name *Orton*, and sometimes *Austin*, according to the object he had in view. Thus was learned from the papers found on him. These facts in relation to the personal history of **Colonel Orton** were gathered from the Colonel himself and from Colonel Watkins, who knew him well, they having belonged to the same regiment of the regular army, the 2nd US Cavalry. However, Colonel Watkins did not recognize **Colonel Orton** until after he had made himself known, and sincerely mourned his tragic fate. **Colonel Orton**, who recognized **Colonel Watkins** as soon as he saw him, told him that he barely saved his life when the arrest was made; that he had his hand on his pistol to kill him and escape; and that had it been any one else there he would have done so. He delivered his sword and pistols to **Colonel Watkins**, and told him to keep and wear them. He also presented him his horse, valued at five thousand dollars, and asked him to treat it kindly for his sake.

The other victim of this daring exploit was **Walter G. Peter**, a lieutenant in the Confederate army and **Colonel Orton's** adjutant. He was a tall, handsome young man, of about twenty-five years, who gave many signs of education and refinement. He played but a secondary part. **Colonel Orton** was the leader and did all the talking and managing.

There is hardly a parallel to this side drama of the Great War in the character and standing of the actors, the boldness of their enterprise, and the swiftness of their detection and punishment. They went all through the Federal camp, and minutely inspected its position, works, and forces with a portion of their Confederate insignia upon them, and the boldness of their conduct made their hazardous mission almost successful. The Federal writer, whose facts I have used, inclosing his narrative, said: "We are all sad over this event. There is gloom upon every face. Although we are satisfied that the mission of these men was to plan our destruction, and that even they recognized their punishment as just, according to the accepted rules of war among all nations, still to see them suffer such a penalty has filled our garrison with sadness."

Confederate Veteran, August 1907

{Note: **Walter G. Peter**, was a native of Darnestown, MD}

Heritage Violations

Notify the Camp Heritage Officer compatriot **Jim Stargel** (jim.stargel@faa.gov) of any heritage violations.

Harold E. Ford
Adjutant/Treasurer
Col. William Norris Camp #1398

