



SPRING 2017

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

# THE VOLUNTEER

## The Shohola Train Wreck

Ellis Camp #124 co-sponsors commemoration

Bruce Crandall, PCC

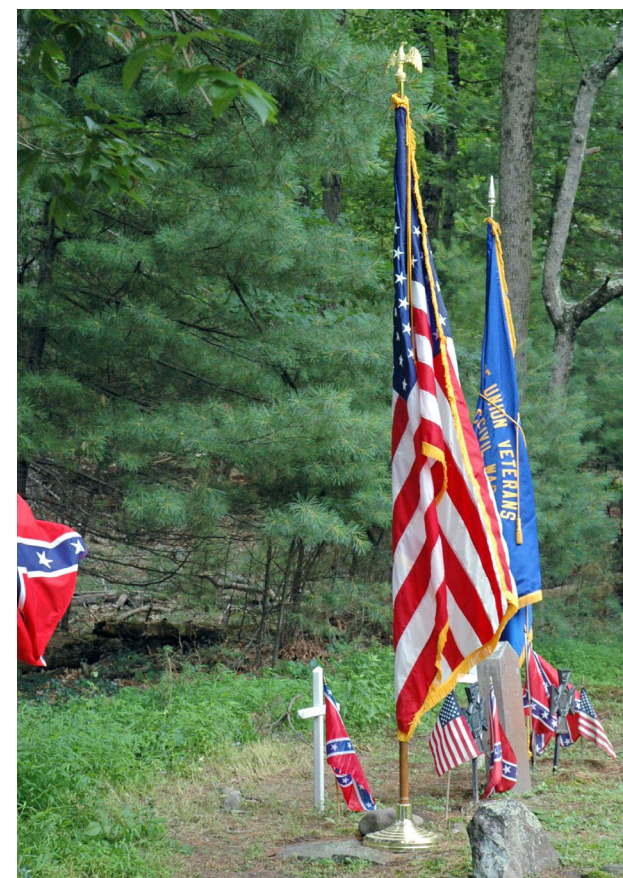
Every two years the Augustus van Horn Ellis Camp #124 co-sponsors, with the Shohola Railroad and Historical Society, a commemorative program at the grave site of two Confederate soldiers who died following a terrible train accident on July 15, 1864, just west of the small Pennsylvanian community of Shohola.

A north-bound Erie RR train carrying 833 Confederate prisoners and 128 Union guards, bound for the newly opened Elmira prison camp, was met head-on by a coal train, which had proceeded south-

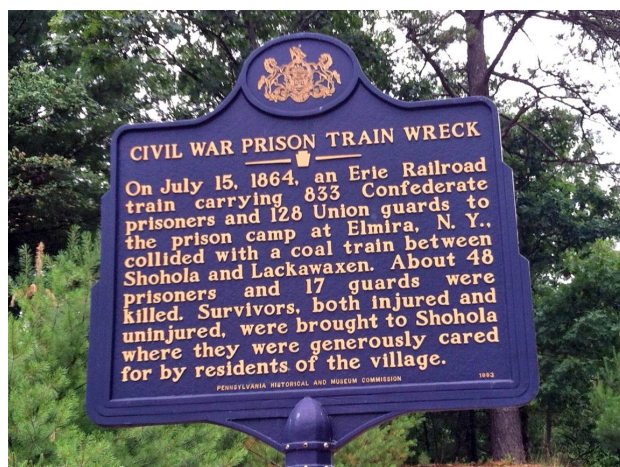
bound against railroad orders. The collision splintered the wooden freight cars holding the prisoners, killing nearly 50 prisoners and 17 guards. The dead prisoners were buried alongside the tracks until early in the 20th century, when a Delaware River flood exposed some of the remains. In 1911 the bodies were removed and reburied in Woodlawn National Cemetery, Elmira, N.Y.

The wounded from the accident were cared for by families in Shohola and in Barryville, on the New York side of the Delaware River. If the prisoners survived their injuries they were transferred to the prisoner of war camp in Elmira, if not, they were buried with their comrades at the wreck site. There were two exceptions. John D. Johnson, Co. B, 31 NC Infantry and Michael Johnson (not related), Co. I, 8 NC Infantry, died from their injuries and were buried in the Old Congregational Church graveyard in Barryville. Now a private residence, the church is the site of the commemorative service. Nearly fifty people attended the 150th commemoration on Sunday, July 13, 2014. Although attendance was lighter in 2016, we were honored to have present David Long from Greensboro, North Carolina. David is the great-great-grandson of Caleb Senter, Co. H, 62 NC Infantry, who was killed in the wreck and is buried in Elmira as C. O. Center.

The biannual ceremony is held on the Sunday closest to July 15th, at 1 p.m. We are usually honored by



having George Fluhr, Pike County Pennsylvania historian and author of *The Shohola Civil War Train Wreck* as a participant in the program.



# From the Commander

**Paul F. Ellis-Graham, PCC, Commander,  
Department of New York, SUVCW**

Dear Brothers:

As winter turns to spring, I hope that the weather is at least warmer wherever you are. As you may know, I retired from teaching last summer, bought a new home in Marlboro, N.Y., and then headed south for the winter. We have a condo in Savannah, Georgia, where we will now spend our winters. Savannah is a beautiful city and has plenty of history. When General William Sherman brought the Union Army into it in December of 1864, he chose to occupy it rather than destroy it, giving it to President Lincoln as a Christmas present. There are two historic sites in the Savannah area that were not only important to the Civil War but also involved our New York ancestors as well. They are Fort Pulaski, near the Atlantic Coast and east of Savannah, and Fort Mc Allister, also close to the Atlantic Coast and located south of Savannah along the Ogeechee River. In this edition of *The Volunteer*, I have written an article highlighting the importance of these two battles and describing the role of the New Yorkers who were there or directly involved in the campaign.

I hope that your winter was filled with many fine camp meetings and activities. I know that that will change even more as we begin to host more events outdoors, bringing out more of our members as well as the general public.

I look forward to the upcoming Department Encampment in May to be held at the Ramada Inn in



**The Volunteer** is the newsletter of The Department of New York Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

**Editor** Bro. Donald G. Zeilman, Col. George L. Willard Camp 154

© 2017

Ithaca, N.Y. It is important to register early so that we can get a sense of how many are coming. It is always the highlight of the season for us as SUVCW members and I look forward to seeing all of you there!

On a personal note, I wish to thank all of the department officers for their assistance in attending to the business of the Department this past year. I am truly grateful!

Yours in Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty

Paul F. Ellis-Graham, PCC

## Return of the Trail Marker

USS Monitor Trail Marker discovered at site

**George J. Weinmann, PDC**

On December 23, 2003 Motiva Enterprises donated land at the Bushwick Inlet to The Greenpoint Monitor Museum. December 23, 2016 marked not only the 13th Anniversary of this donation but also the first Anniversary of Boro President Eric Adams' and Deputy Boro President Diana Reyna's press release announcing an agreement with the City of New York to end the threat of eminent domain on the Museum's land, separating this land from the City's 2005 open space commitment for the Bushwick Inlet Park.

On Saturday December 3, 2016, The Greenpoint Monitor Museum held its Annual Road Show Award Ceremony at Public School 110, The Monitor School. This event has taken place annually since the 2001-2002 school year. The Award Ceremony honored students from PS 31, PS 110 and St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Academy who submitted beautiful projects as part of the 2015-2016 school year's Road Show Program.

Children, parents, relatives and teachers enjoyed refreshments, civil war music, a slide show providing

an update on the Museum's Greenpoint Community Environment Fund Project (which provides funding for the engineering design of a restored shoreline on the Museum's land) and photos from last year's road show classes including PS 31, PS 34, PS 110, PS 161M, and St Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Academy. Assemblyman Joseph Lentol honored the students by presenting the awards to the 41 award winners.

On Friday December 2, in preparation for the next day's Award Ceremony, Museum members went to the Museum's land at the Bushwick Inlet and East River to pick up some items from the Museum's container. To everyone's surprise laying on the ground, face down next to its stand, was the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's USS Monitor Trail Marker which had been previously stolen. The Marker was installed during an impressive unveiling ceremony on May 29, 2015 with several hundred school children, community and historic organizations in attendance. The marker was discovered stolen on September 15, 2016 the same day that the engineering firm AECOM commenced site investigations as part of the GCEF grant.

Unbelievable. Whoever took the sign returned it. The holiday spirit was with us. The marker was brought to PS 110 so that all could celebrate its return at the Award Ceremony.

## 2016-17 Orders of the Department Commander

**Department Order #5** Provides instructions to camp commanders on how to file IRS FORM 990N.

**Department Order #6** Addresses various items, including the Encampment, new Patriotic Instructor's Handbook and Report Form, and *THE VOLUNTEER*.



# Forts Pulaski and McAllister

The battle for coastal Georgia

Commander Paul F. Ellis-Graham, PCC

When the Civil War began in 1861, the Confederate States had already seized many Union forts located within its borders. Fort Pulaski was among that series of federal forts taken when the war began. Construction of this fort on Cockspur Island had begun in 1829, following orders given by then President James Madison so as to protect Savannah, Georgia from foreign invaders. The two men most responsible for the building of the fort were Major Samuel Babcock and First Lieutenant Robert E. Lee. Lee was a graduate of West Point who would, later on become its Superintendent.

Fort Pulaski was completed in 1847 and was made up of supporting timber and 25 million bricks. The walls were 11 feet thick and thought to be impenetrable – unless the largest cannon available at the time was used and at a range of one half mile or less away. Because the closest landmass to Cockspur Island was Tybee Island, along the Atlantic coast, which was five miles away, Robert E. Lee remarked at the time that “one might as well bombard the Rocky Mountains as Fort Pulaski.”



Now fast forward to April of 1862. As the Confederacy decided that Tybee Island was too “isolated and unprepared for conflict,” it abandoned that location, giving Union troops under the command of General Quincy Gilmore the chance to build batteries there so that it could advance on Fort Pulaski. Why attempt to challenge the viewpoint of then Lieutenant Lee about the impregnability of the fort? The answer has to do with advances made in the field of weapons technology. The Union brought in 36 new cannons, the James and Parrott rifled guns. The smoothbore models of cannon were much less accurate than these new advanced weapons. Like the rifled musket, the grooves

in its barrels enabled the projectiles to spin after firing making them more accurate and thus much more deadly. Captain Robert Parrott, inventor of the Parrott gun was himself a West Point graduate. He served as the Superintendent of the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, New York, which is across the Hudson River from West Point. He invented and patented both the gun and its shell in 1860–1861.

In command of Ft. Pulaski in April of 1862 was Colonel Charles Olmstead. Olmstead was asked by the Union commander if he wished to surrender his fort. His answer was “no.” The battle for Fort Pulaski had begun and lasted just over 30 hours. The strength

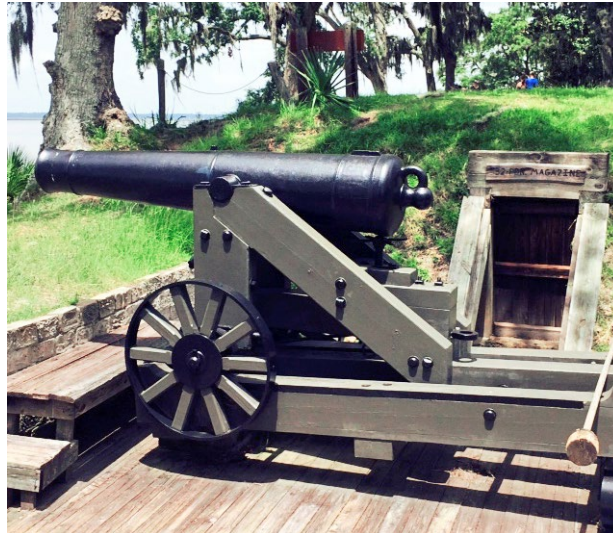
*continued*





and capability of the new cannons were too much for the walls of the fort. After several shells hit close to the powder magazine, Olmstead decided to surrender. When the fighting ended, only one soldier from each side was hurt. The success of the battle was due to the new technology of the James and Parrott rifled cannons. With the taking of Fort Pulaski by Union forces, Savannah was now cut off by water from the Atlantic Ocean. The fort, occupied by Union troops until the end of the war, also served as a prison for the remaining six hundred Confederate prisoners of war.

Fort McAllister, located 15 miles south of Savannah, Georgia, was built in 1861 and lies at the mouth of the Ogeechee River. Its purpose was to protect the city from Union naval attacks and defend rice plantations and rail transportation located along the river. Its earthworks were specifically designed to repel attacks by water rather than those on land. Fort McAllister was very successful in fending off repeated naval attacks from Union gunboats in 1862 and 1863. In attempting to take the fort, Union ships employed included monitors such as the USS Montauk and the USS Passaic. The Commander of the Montauk at the time was Robert L. Worden, the same man who commanded



the USS Monitor in its historic battle with the CSS Virginia off the coast of Hampton Roads, Virginia in 1862. Worden's Montauk fired on Fort McAllister for three hours on January 27, 1863. His ship was hit thirteen times but not seriously damaged. On February 1st, Worden resumed the assault getting within 700 yards of the fort. His ironclad was hit sixty-one times during the four hour engagement. Unable to damage the fort severely, Worden, on February 28th, turned his attention to a run-a-ground blockade runner the Rattlesnake which exploded after a twenty minute attack.

These Union naval assaults on Fort McAllister were unable to breach the earthworks of this strong Confederate fort. It wasn't until Sherman's March to the Sea that the fort fell into Union hands. General Sherman ordered Major General Oliver O. Howard to attack the fort from the west as his troops closed in on Savannah. Union forces attacked Fort McAllister on December 13, 1864. The fort's garrison was greatly outnumbered and the battle last only fifteen minutes despite a ferocious firefight for that amount of time. Fort McAllister, like Fort Pulaski, became a prisoner-of-

war camp for Confederate soldiers. The fort remained in disrepair until the 1930s when Henry Ford, who owned the property, restored it. Fort McAllister is now a Georgia State Park.

Both of these historic forts are easily accessible and open to the public. With names of people like Lee, Madison, McAllister, Pulaski, Worden, and Sherman, they remain a part of our Civil War history and the New York Department's Civil War history!

*All photos by author; photos on page 3 are Fort Pulaski and photos on page 4 are Fort McAllister.*





**COMMANDER**  
Paul F. Ellis-Graham PCC

**SR. VICE COMMANDER**  
Daryl Verstrete, Jr. CC

**JR. VICE COMMANDER**  
Leo McGuire

**SECRETARY**  
Robert L. Pugsley PDC

**TREASURER**  
Jeffrey Albanese PDC

**COUNSELOR**  
Danny Wheeler, PC-in-C

**COUNCIL**  
Jerome Orton, PDC  
Todd Shillington, PDC  
Raymond B Wheaton PDC

**ARCHIVIST**  
Lance Ingmire

**PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR**  
Richard E. Straight

**HISTORIAN**  
Jerome L. Orton PDC

**CHAPLAIN**  
Barry G. O'Neill

**GAR HIGHWAY OFFICER**  
Matthew J. Hereford PCC

**EAGLE SCOUT COORDINATOR**  
Christopher Hosford

**WEBMASTER**  
Robert M. Paul, Jr. PCC

## **134<sup>th</sup> Encampment**

**Department of New York  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
May 5-7, 2017 at Ithaca, N.Y.  
Ramada Hotel & Conference Center**



SPRING 2017

**THE VOLUNTEER**

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR