



WINTER 2016

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

THE VOLUNTEER

From the Commander

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

It has been a very busy time since the encampment of 2016 which was held in May in Suffern, N.Y. at the Crown Plaza Hotel. I wish to thank all of those brothers who were able to attend the annual event and thank my camp, Colonel Augustus Van Horne Ellis Camp #124, for serving as host for it. Congratulations go out to now Past Department Commander Ray LeMay and all the other officers, both appointed and elected, for a successful weekend.

Since my election as Commander in May, my personal life has undergone many positive changes. I retired from my teaching career in June after 36 years in the classroom. I packed up my house all summer and moved into a new home this September. It was quite unsettling but now appears to be worth the effort.

In my first order as your commander, I asked each one of you to attempt to bring in one new member into your camp. I believe that this is vital if we are to maintain the vitality and relevance of our national and statewide organization.

I have sensed from more than one camp commander the difficulty in seeking to grow the organization. Some of them were frustrated by a variety of factors: from changing societal values, a lack of focus

from the schools on American history, and the loss of brothers due to the increased age of camp members.

While these are things that can be beyond our control, we have one thing that other organizations do NOT have, the honor of knowing that our ancestors risked their lives for the future of the republic. They committed themselves to the survival of the Union. We, as their descendants, swore to carry on in their name! So please, lift up your spirits if they are low, and re-commit yourself "to the great task remaining before us . . . that these dead shall not have died in vain; . . ."

It was an honor and a privilege to attend the funeral of Brother and Past Department Commander Earl Allen in Bridgewater, N.Y. on November 5th. It was a pleasure to see the Department well represented at the emotional and moving service held on Earl's behalf.

Earl Allen was an outstanding example of what a Son of Union Veterans of the Civil War ought to be. He was Past Department Commander and, at the time of his death, served two camps as Secretary-Treasurer (Homer Searle Camp #114 and Stewart-Hope Camp #126)! He was also previous Town Historian for Bridgewater (see *Final Muster*).

While we all can't be Earl Allen, we certainly can take heart and learn by his example of service and brotherhood to the Sons. At the midyear meeting held

continued



133rd Department Encampment in Suffern, N.Y.
Top: Incoming Department Commander Paul Ellis-Graham, PCC, Counselor Danny Wheeler, PC-in-C, and immediate past Commander Ray LeMay III.
Bottom: Officers Elect and Staff Appointees take the oath to faithfully, honestly, and impartially perform the duties of their office.

in Ithaca in October, Department JVC Leo McGuire made some great suggestions of how we can increase our membership. They include: joining a local Civil War Roundtable to capture the interest of like-minded individuals, visiting local high school classes and Junior ROTC members to talk about the Civil War and our organization, making contact with Boy Scout troops within the areas serviced by our camps and telling them about our certificate program, and holding and publicizing our events in the local community so people will know who we are. If you have other ideas not previously mentioned or considered, please do not hesitate to forward them to either JVC McGuire or myself.

I have been pleased to receive many positive reports of various educationally oriented programs and ceremonies regarding camps across the state. I wish all of you a happy and healthy New Year.

2016-17 Orders of the Department Commander

Department Order #1 Establishes Commander Ellis-Graham's command of the Department of New York, reports financial status, announces mid-year meeting and 2017 Encampment, and other matters.

Department Order #2 Amends the Department address, issues a reminder about the Midyear meeting and offers news regarding the health of Earl Allen, PDC.

Department Order #3 Addresses publication schedule for *The Volunteer*.

Department Order #4 Sadly announces the passing of Brother Earl Allen, PDC.

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

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Headstone Dedicated

New headstone for George Gerry Thayer
Brian D. McManus, Abraham Lincoln Camp 6

On October 16th, 2016 I travelled from Wisconsin to Lyndonville, New York, home to my Paternal Grandmother's family. Buried in Lynhaven Cemetery are many Union Veterans including my Great-Great-Grandfather, John McLean of the 17th NY LA (Orleans Battery). McLean married Mary Jane Thayer, sister of veteran George Gerry Thayer. Thayer served with the 8th NY Heavy Artillery, and was wounded at Petersburg, Virginia on June 16, 1864.

Finding earlier that the headstone on George's grave had collapsed, I had contacted the Veterans' Administration, which agreed to place a new headstone. I enlisted the help of the Town officials to have the headstone set, and asked members of Abraham Lincoln Camp #6, to assist me with the dedication.

Also present at the dedication were members of other New York Camps, as well as Bob Pugsley, a past N.Y. Department Commander. We were joined by the



Brothers Brian D. McManus, PCC, Bruce Glaser, PCC; Bob Pugsley, PDC; Mick Cole, Chuck Smeltzer, PCC, and Stuart Smith, PCC, along with members of the Houseman-Tanner American Legion Post at the dedication in October.



Houseman-Tanner American Legion Post, and family cousins who are local to the area.

A moving ceremony was held, and a salute fired over the graves of Thayer and McLean. It was a long-time goal of mine to honor them, and I solemnly bid them a peaceful rest. I salute all those who assisted me in this endeavor.

[*Brother McManus, PCC, C.K. Pier Badger Camp #1, Dept of Wisc., Abraham Lincoln Camp #6 Dept. of N.Y., is Senior Vice Commander of the Dept. of Wisconsin*]

Grant Memorial Event

Including the GAR 150th Anniversary

George J. Weinmann, PDC

Observing the 150th Anniversary of the Grand Army of the Republic, Oliver Tilden Camp #26, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War once again held its annual ceremony for the 194th Birthday of President and General Ulysses S. Grant at the Grant National Memorial on West 122nd Street and Riverside Drive in Manhattan, N.Y. on Sunday, April 24, 2016. We thank Eugene G. Mortorff, Commander-in-Chief of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War; Raymond W. LaMay III, New York Department Commander; Virginia Twist, Past National President, SUVCW Aux.; Hope C. Parker, President, NY Department Auxiliary, SUVCW; Eileen Sleckman, President, New York Department; Caren Cleaveland, National Junior Vice President, DUVCW; Lynne Dolan, Past President, DUVCW; Janice Guy, Past President, DUVCW; Patrick McCullough, Commander, Archibald Gracie Camp #985, Sons of Confederate Veterans; Janice Lauletta-Weinmann, President of the Greenpoint Monitor Museum & Aux. member SUVCW; Peter Galasinao, President, Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Association;

William Finlayson, Past Presidents of The Civil War Round Table of New York; Members of the Moses Baldwin Camp #544, Admiral John Worden Camp #150, SUVCW and Kady Brownell Tent #36, DUVCW, Boy Scouts of America, and the Knickerbocker Grays were in attendance.

The keynote speaker was Bob Costello as Abraham Lincoln. He is a member of Major General George Armstrong Custer Camp #17, SUVCW. Special thanks goes to Bros. Robert Fries (bugler) and SVC Arthur P. Kirmss (Singer, guitar & Civil War flute) for providing the music for the event. To Rich Hill for portraying President U. S. Grant, Patrick Falci, Past President Civil War Round Table of New York In addition, special thanks to Sgt. George Rand, Co. I 83rd NYV (9th NYSM) SVR for leading the Color Guard and Bros. Marc Hermann, Mark Goret, James Bond, Bill Webb and Charles Lirio for their participation in the event.

Commander-in-Chief Eugene G. Mortorff initiated Tilden Camp's new members: Thomas Garret Cavanogh, Peter Joseph Cavanogh, Kalae S. Anthony, James Scott McInness and Adam Paige Hess. Congratulations to Bro. Philip Hathaway Koether for being the recipient of the Bob Wilder Lord *Patriot of the Year* award.



Eugene G. Mortorff, Commander-in-Chief of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, flanked by Commander George J. Weinmann, PDC and John Portanova, PCC.



Combined Color Guard



Attendees at the 194th birthday commemoration of General Ulysses S. Grant at the Grant Memorial (Photo: Tony Fronc)

The program was dedicated in memory of our deceased Tilden Camp members and our namesake Captain Oliver Tilden, Co. E, 38th New York Volunteer Infantry who was killed at Chantilly, Virginia on September 1, 1862.

Oliver Tilden Camp SVC Arthur P. Kirmss, John Portanova, PCC and Commander George J. Weinmann, PDC co-hosted of the event. The 2016 General Grant Memorial Committee thanks the National Park Service (Manhattan Sites) and everyone for making the event a success!

Final Muster



Brother Albert J. Goodwin, Jr.

Col. George L. Willard Camp 154 Albany

Life member Albert Goodwin died on July 29, 2016. He was 82. He joined Camp 154 in October 1976 and was granted life membership number 216 in April 1988. His right of membership was derived from his ancestor Stephen H. Card, 7th Vermont Vols. For several years he was N.Y. Department Treasurer.

Brother Goodwin was a proud veteran of the United States Air Force, having served from 1952-1958 attaining the rank of Lieutenant. Albert was a member of the American Legion for more than half a century. His home post was Hoosick Falls Post 40. Later, he simultaneously served other posts at the county and state level always holding an officer position. In addition to the SUVCW, he traced his genealogy to become a member of Sons of the American Revolution.

A resident of Stillwater, Saratoga County, he is survived by his wife, the former Carol A. Wheaton.



Brother Earl Edward Allen

Homer Searle Camp 114 Bridgewater

Brother Allen passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 2 at home. He was 87. His right of membership was derived from his great-grandfather Cornelius Hunt, Co. G, 100th NYSV, who enlisted in 1862 and died at an Army Hospital in January 1864.

Earl was N.Y. Department Commander from 2006 to 2007. He was a charter member of the Homer Searle Camp 114 of Bridgewater and served as the first Camp Commander.

Earl joined the United States Army and fought in the Korean War. After his service, he was a carpenter and worked for over 30 years at Rock City Box Company.

He was member of the Western Star Lodge #15 of Bridgewater, The NY State Route 20 Association, The VFW of West Winfield #2338, and The Utica Post / American Legion #221. He was a charter member of the Stewart - Hope Camp #126 of Oneida.

Earl had a passion for history. He was a charter member of the Bridgewater Historical Society. He volunteered at the Oneida County Historical Society and was recognized twice for his dedication and contributions.

The family designated the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War as one of the recipients of memorial contributions in his name.

Living History Event

French Camp 17 at Sackets Harbor, N.Y.

Jeffrey French, PDC

On July 23, 2016, Camp Commander Bill Bamann led the Walter H. French Camp 17 to conduct the first Civil War Living History event at Sackets Harbor, New York. Members participating were Brothers Jeffrey French and Scott French, reenactors Dan Sampson as Confederate soldier, Ervin Omerovic and Ted Schofield as Union soldiers.

Camp Commander Bill Bamann's goal was to inform the public on the role Madison Barracks had during the Civil War, beyond its role in the War of 1812. Madison Barracks was reopened in October 1862 as a major recruiting and training area as well as a rendezvous point; prior to this General Ulysses S. Grant



was stationed here. Col. Walter B. Camp was the officer in charge. Some of the units recruited and trained at Madison Barracks at Sackets Harbor were the 18 N.Y.V. known as Corning Light Cavalry, 80th N.Y.V. McClellan Cavalry under Col N. B. Lord, 35th Regiment, and 94th Regiment N.Y.V.

On public display were tents, weapons, and types of food that the soldiers ate during that time. The campfire made coffee to drink and later dumplings to eat.

The young and the old were very interested and asked many questions about the War of Rebellion. They were impressed with our collective knowledge. Reenactors Ted Schofield and Ervin Omerovic conducted drills with our young recruits, who received their rations of hardtack and a reproduction of the three-year Enlistment form. Confederate reenactor Dan Sampson and Brother Jeff French informed the public each side perspective of why the *War of Rebellion/War of Northern Aggression* came about. Commander Bill Bamann informed the public of the historical importance of Sackets Harbor in recruiting and forming units at Madison Barracks.

Time Warner Cable televised the program and the *Watertown Daily Times* published photographs of the with caption. It was a great event informing the public on the role their community had during the Civil War.

Monument Rededication

Weber Camp 44 leads rededication service

William Alan Christen II

Col. John Weber Camp 44 supported Chapter 268 of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) when their members rededicated the monument honoring the military service and sacrifices of Private George Harrison Whitcher and Corporal Orville Bailey Whitcher. The rededication ceremony was held in the Glenwood Cemetery on Veterans Day, Friday, November 11. It was with pride that the brothers of Weber Camp took the lead to co-ordinate the formal service in support of Chapter 268's rededication program. Their leadership



The Brothers' Inscriptions on the buried monument shaft (photo courtesy Bill Christen)

fulfilled our Camp's objective to honor the service and sacrifice of these Civil War veterans.

Brothers Ray B. Ball and Tom Schobert represented Weber Camp's Commander and Chaplain, respectively, during the formal service while Brother Ray L. Ball bugled TAPS to end the rededication. The formal service was based on a Grand Army of the Republic service for dedicating their comrade's grave and headstone. Brother Jim Pace played the fife with the Union Volunteers Fife and Drum Corps. Also attending were Brothers Clifford Anderson, Bill Christen, David Demmerley, Mike Erb, and Bob Gilbert.

The program included remarks by representatives of Chapter 268, the City of Lockport, and the Glenwood Cemetery. Mr. Philip Eaton spoke for the descendants of the Whitcher family who were present during the rededication. The flag and holder placed as part of the formal service were given to Mr. Eaton after the ceremony.

The accompanying photograph shows the assembled monument on the new foundation prior to the rededication. Chapter 268 launched a campaign to raise approximately \$2,100.00 to renovate the monument, which was in seven pieces. Their goal was easily attained through total community contribution. Although it was rededicated on Veterans Day, the monument still needs to be cleaned and sealed. This is planned for 2017 once the monument has "dried out" after the many decades of neglect.

Members of Company A, U.S. Engineer Battalion, the 140th New York Volunteer Infantry Living History Organization, the 155th New York Volunteer Infantry Re-enacting Regiment, and Reynold's Battery 1st New York Light Artillery also participated in the Vietnam Veterans of America's monument rededication.



Right side of the reset monument showing epitaph to Charles Hoag in the ellipse (photo courtesy Bill Christen)

Private George Whitcher perished during the battle of Picket's Charge defending Cemetery Hill. His body was never found. It is presumed that he was included in one of the mass burials in Gettysburg. George mustered into Company A, Michigan 7th Volunteer Infantry Regiment on August 6, 1861 and served continuously until he was killed in action on July 3, 1863.

Private Orville Whitcher mustered into Company M, New York 8th Heavy Artillery on January 4, 1864. Corporal Whitcher was wounded at the Battle of Cold

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Photo: Mike Niethé

Charles Nelson Hoag Epitaph (two photos on this page courtesy Mike Niethé, Find-a-Grave website)

Harbor on June 3, 1864. The seriousness of his wound resulted in the amputation of a leg. He died several days later on June 18, 1864. He is buried in Section A of the Alexandria National Cemetery in Alexandria, Virginia.

Initially, the epitaphs to George and Orville (inscribed Orville on the monument) were visible as the monument lay half buried over the decades. Other inscriptions became visible after the monument was placed and assembled on the new foundation. An inscription, on the right-side of the monument,

recognized the ultimate sacrifice of their brother-in-law, Charles Hoag, who was married to a sister, Maria. Charles Nelson Hoag enlisted on November 11, 1861 as a Quartermaster Sergeant in Green Bay, Wisconsin. On the same day, he was mustered into the Field and Staff of the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry. He was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in Company E, 1st Wisconsin Cavalry, on July 8, 1862. He was wounded on August 3, 1862 during a battle near L'Angeuille Ferry, Arkansas. Lieutenant Hoag died from his wounds on November 20, 1862 at Little Rock, Arkansas while in a Confederate prison camp. The same inscription states that Maria died February 22, 1854. On the left-side of the monument, an inscription names Albert T. Whitcher who died on December 10, 1836. There are also inscriptions for the parents of the Whitcher brothers, Baley H. Whitcher who died during July 1865, and Ordellia Whitcher (née Niles) who died May 23, 1888. The last inscription names Lucy Delozier (death date unknown), wife of Peter. An older brother of George and Orville, Daniel Raymond Whitcher, is not mentioned on the monument although he served in the Union Army during the Civil War and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery.



Doug Duel, PCC was the winner of a fundraiser to save the Historic Scythe Tree of Waterloo, N.Y. Blaine Ellie presents Doug with a pen from the tree's wood. Both Blaine and Doug are members of Catlin Camp. This was the first fundraiser of many more to come.

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The Scythe Tree in Waterloo, New York is a living monument to young men going off to war.

James Wyman Johnson attended a Union army recruitment meeting at the Vail country schoolhouse in October 1861, about five months after the start of the Civil War. The next morning, he decided to enlist. He hung his scythe in a small tree near the kitchen. He told his parents he was going to enlist and remarked that the scythe was to stay hanging on the tree until he returned from war. In October 1861, Johnson enlisted in Company G, 85th New York Volunteers. In April 1864, the now Sergeant Johnson was wounded and eventually taken to the Confederate Hospital at Raleigh, N.C. He died there on May 22, 1864, and was buried in an unknown grave.

At a height of about 100 feet today, the Scythe Tree remains a visual reminder of the sacrifice that many young men have made — to go off to war and in many cases not returning alive. (adapted from an article by Walt Gable originally in the *Finger Lakes Times*)

Mid-Year Meeting Report

Summary of the major points of the midyear meeting:

Commander Ellis-Graham: Acknowledged the role that Ellis Camp #124 played in hosting the Annual Encampment and thanked Ray LeMay and all other officers for their leadership this past year. He apologized for not being in constant contact with fellow officers of the Department over the summer as retirement and moving into a new home occupied most of his attention. He spoke of attending several terrific events sponsored by camps in the Hudson Valley such as Ellis Camp #124 Shohola Train Disaster ceremony held in Barryville, N.Y. in July. In August, Willard Camp #154 held a well-attended ceremony in Coeymans Hollow, N.Y. honoring improbable Medal of Honor recipient Peter Van Hoesen complete with cannon fire. Commander E-G reiterated his commitment to increasing membership across the state in order to sustain and grow the organization.

SVC Daryl Ver Streete: Excused. In his absence, officers spoke about keeping the raffle fundraiser as is, soliciting donations from Department members and offering three main items as prizes. Commander E-G said he would reach out to SVC Ver Streete when he got home.

JVC Leo McGuire: Received four applications for membership from outside New York State. He made several visits to camps outside of Albany and will make more soon. He spoke of ways to increase members: HS ROTC programs, joining Civil War Roundtables, Boy Scouts, Sea Cadets, and other veterans groups. He spoke of the need to resurrect the Camp at Elmira so that visitors would know what happened there. He also attended an event at Grant's Cottage (along with Brother Historian Jerry Orton) at the request of the commander.

Treasurer Jeff Albanese: Excused. Jeff noted that few transactions had been made since the Encampment and reported on the slight change in the balance in our accounts. A discussion ensued regarding a concern that as of the mid-year meeting, the Treasurer had not yet received a signature card for the account currently maintained by Archivist Lance Ingmire which is used when the sale of non-essential Department-owned property has occurred. Commander E-G said he would follow-up with Brother Ingmire upon his return.

Counselor Dan Wheeler: Noticed the breakdown in communication between the officers and the Department Commander over the summer. Commander E-G said that communications should reach the officers in two main ways (other than by phone): from the commander through the Department Secretary (via e-mail) and/or by posting on the Department website. Commander E-G promised better and more frequent communication using these two methods. It was also suggested that he appoint another person to serve as backup webmaster in case the webmaster is not available.

Secretary Bob Pugsley: He noted that he was working on the proceedings from the last Encampment held in May. Commander E-G offered to type up minutes from this mid-year meeting so that the Secretary can complete his task. Counselor Wheeler noted that he had recently located approved changes in the bylaws as done at the last Encampment and that he would forward them to the Department Secretary.

Volunteer Editor Don Zeilman: Absent (lives in Pittsburgh). Concerns were raised about getting out a new edition of *The Volunteer* as one had not appeared as yet. Commander E-G said that he would reach out to DZ and the plan going forward would be to get out two issues for this year, one for December and one for April. He also said that an order would be issued soon

in order to solicit articles for the upcoming newsletter.

Rally-Around-the-Flag Committee Chair

Richard Straight: Excused. Fellow Willard Camp Member and JVC Leo McGuire discussed the fact that there is a bill being sponsored in the state legislature to fund the restoration of Civil War battle flags. Commander E-G noted that such legislation would not be brought up again until the next session which begins in January. He will reach out to Brother Straight and Legislative Committee Tony Houston before the cycle begins to develop a plan of action.

New Business

- » Possible bylaw change – Making camp reports due in March so that they can be prepared in time for the Department Encampment.
- » The Encampment of 2017 will be held at the Ramada Inn in Ithaca, New York, May 5th & 6th, 2017.
- » D. Wheeler suggested that an events page be created on the Department website for all to see.
- » Commander E-G noted that at the Civil War Weekend taking place at Museum Village on Labor Day weekend, a table hosted by the Sons of Confederate Veterans was visible. He approached the Commander of Archibald Gracie Camp located in NYC and told him that both the SUVCW and the SCV should share information about their respective events out of mutual respect and interest in the Civil War and the men that fought on both sides. Officers at the mid-year meeting agreed in reaching out to them again.
- » JVC McGuire raised the question of geographic boundaries for camps. Counselor Wheeler said that there were none.
- » Secretary Pugsley: The 2018 Encampment site – looking at The Airport Inn in Rochester, or perhaps the Ramada Inn in Geneva instead.

Commander Ellis-Graham, Recording Secretary

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Paul F. Ellis-Graham PCC

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133rd Department Encampment in Suffern, New York