



The Railsplitter

The Newsletter of the Department of Illinois

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



Winter

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COMMANDER'S CORNER



Greetings Brothers,

Hopefully this finds you well and I hope you and your loved ones had a wonderful holiday season. Since the last edition of the Railsplitter crossed your desk, I represented the Department of Illinois in Gettysburg, PA for Remembrance Day and at the Woolson Monument. Soon, on the 12th of April, we will gather in Springfield to commemorate the 160th anniversary of President Lincoln's death. I encourage each Camp to attend and place a wreath in honor of President Lincoln. The form to register can be found on the national website under major events. Immediately after Lincoln's Tomb we'll converge on the town of Petersburg, IL to pay our respects to the founder of the GAR, Dr. Benjamin Stephenson. Our next event will be the Department Encampment on Saturday May 3rd. I am hoping to have it in

Galena this year, but this will depend on the availability of the venue. I will work with the committee and hope to have flyers out soon. Unfortunately, a change in employment (a change for the better) has thwarted my plans to seek re-election for a second term as your Department Commander. I truly regret that I will not be serving a second term, but I'm not going anywhere so you'll be seeing me around. Thank you for all that you do for this organization and your dedication to preserve the memory of the Boys in Blue.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty

Bro. Bobby Welch, PCC

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



The Boys in Blue who fought to Preserve the Union with Abraham Lincoln as their Commander in Chief - were all SINNERS. I know this because I am a Sinner and everyone I have ever met is a Sinner. We all make mistakes. We all do and say things that hurt others. It's easy to say "Think before you speak," but often (too often) we fire words that hurt others. Our forefathers were Sinners too; they said and did things that were wrong, and whether they knew it or not, JESUS CHRIST died on the cross for all of our sins. Praise Be HIS name forever. If you agree with me please say Amen.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty

Chaplain Emeritus Jerry

PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTION



BR GERALD HAS BEEN UNDER THE WEATHER AND UNABLE TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR OUR WINTER 2025 NEWSLETTER. LET'S LET HIM RELAX AND CONCENTRATE ON FEELING BETTER.

As an alternative, the patriotic instruction for this issue will focus on the Columbia GAR Post 706, which DC Welch exposed us to at our fall encampment back on October 14, 2024. In the story below, Br Bobby explains how Post 706 artifacts were brought to his attention and how he acquired them.

"On the 1st of June, Brother Brett Nila (Camp 2) and myself met at American Legion Post 414, Forest Park, IL to recover the property of Columbia Post #706, Grand Army of the Republic. Columbia Post 706 was chartered on the 16th of October 1890 in Chicago. They were unique in the fact that they capped their membership at 150. Originally, this post met in Chicago, but sometime after 1920 they started meeting at the American Legion Post in Forest Park where they would hold an annual Memorial Day Service in Forest Home Cemetery. They held their last ceremony in 1935 and in 1936, there were only two Comrades left. American Legion Post 414 built their post home in 1921 and maintained the building for over 100 years, but declining membership and growing maintenance costs forced the membership to make the hard, but necessary decision to sell. I was contacted by Brother Lorenzo Fiorentino (Camp 6165 and President of the Chicagoland Combined Veterans Museum) to let me know that there was GAR property there that needed to be recovered. The GAR property was stored in a large custom built wall cabinet behind the Commanders station for approximately the past 90 years. Although it had not been disturbed in that time, the years had taken their toll. The silk flags were falling apart, the Post Bible had been standing on its edge and its own weight destroyed the spine, and everything had 90 years of dust.

Brother Brett and I took every precaution when handling the flags as they are silk and had been exposed to daylight for all that time. Most of the material had already disintegrated. At a future date the flags will be unrolled, photographed, and cataloged prior to being stored in archival flag boxes and turned over to a museum with the remainder of the Post property."

Brother Bobby Welch, PCC
Department Commander

Fraternity Charity Loyalty

Are certainly terms that apply to Br Bobby and Br Brett's initiative, dedication, and follow through relative to the Post 706 artifacts. Their efforts are indeed noteworthy and inspirational.

Courtesy Br Chuck

No doubt, Post 706 artifacts were interesting to look over and read at our last encampment. In an effort to determine what more may be learned about Post 706, we surveyed Post 706 records available in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. We share what was learned in the pop-up boxes below. Courtesy Br Chuck

Adjutant and Quartermaster Reports for Columbia GAR Post 706 available in the ALPLM in Springfield date from 1891 to 1934.

Of the 30 charter members of Post 706, 11 joined the war in 1861. 8 volunteered in 1862. 10 joined in 1864, and 1 joined in 1865.

Of the 30 charter members, during the war 24 Post 706 members served as Privates, and one each served as Corporal, Sergeant, Drummer, 1st Lieutenant, 2nd Lieutenant, and Captain.

Meeting Sites from 1891 to 1934

602 Chamber of Commerce Building
 #6 McVickers Theater
 77 Jackson Street
 Masonic Temple Club Rooms
 Memorial Hall Public Library at
 Randolph & Michigan

In 1898
 Post 706
 achieved
 the high
 water mark
 of 141
 members.

Listed in the
 columns to the
 right are the
 regiments that
 the charter
 members of
 Post 706
 served in.

ILLINOIS

Chicago Mercantile Battery
 Sturgis Rifles
 1 Illinois Light Artillery
 9 Illinois Cav
 13 Illinois
 19 Illinois
 29 Illinois
 57 Illinois
 67 Illinois
 74 Illinois
 95 Illinois
 113 Illinois
 134 Illinois

IOWA

133 Iowa

MAINE

29 Maine

MASSACHUSETTS

6 Massachusetts

MICHIGAN

6 Michigan Cavalry
 24 Michigan

NEW YORK

1 New York Artillery
 2 New York
 144 New York

OHIO

20 Ohio

PENNSYLVANIA

12 Pennsylvania
 23 Pennsylvania
 114 Pennsylvania

VERMONT

16 Vermont
 10 Vermont

WEST VIRGINIA

6 West Virginia

WISCONSIN

4 Wisconsin
 38 Wisconsin



The photo above courtesy of
 Br Brian Conroy, SVC, Sheridan Camp #2 Aurora.

Beginning in 1914, Post 706 reduced meeting frequency to once a month on Tuesday evenings at 8:00pm and in 1929, meetings were changed to second Tuesday afternoons at 2:00pm.



CUSTER CAMP #1 WILMETTE

Thank you for those troop members and parents able to make it to the Veteran's Day service opportunity on Saturday. And thank you to JD for organizing. The Scouts replaced worn out flags on veteran's graves and could attend an event in the cemetery's chapel. Thank you also to Nick Kaup. Mr. Kaup is a member of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. He generously spoke with us on the history of Veterans Day and uniforms worn in the Civil War (you can see him in an Artillery uniform in the middle of the photo). He is also writing a book on the civil war if any Scouts are interesting in diving deeper into the history. (APPRECIATION IS EXTENDED TO PDC NICK KAUP FOR SUBMITTING THIS PHOTO AND THE NOTE ABOVE THAT HE RECEIVED ABOUT AN EVENT HE WAS INVOLVED WITH AS A MEMBER OF CUSTER CAMP #1 IN ROSEHILL CEMETERY.)

SHERIDAN CAMP #2 AURORA

Pictured on the right, DSVC Michael Zafran sang the National Anthem and presented Eagle Scout Alexander Hernandez with a certificate and merit badge for his cemetery work at Bluff City, Elgin, IL





DSVR Michael Zafran volunteered as Santa at the food and gift giving event for the underprivileged at St. John Township, Schererville, IL on December 14, 2024. 167 children received presents from Santa and a goodie bag, and each family received a food basket for their Christmas dinner.



Among the participants in the Veterans DaObservance at Union Ridge Cemetery in the above left photo are DJVC Jeff Kaup, DSVR Michael Zafran, and PDC Nick Kaup. In the photo on the right above is the cannon salute which always provokes a stirring sense of patriotism.

In the photo on the right is DSVC Michael Zafran serving as MC at the December 7th Christmas Fun event at Moraine Valley community college.

In Fraternity, Charity, & Loyalty
Br Michael Zafran, DSVC and
Sheridan Camp #2 Commander



BRYNER CAMP #67 PEORIA

Brothers,

It is with heavy hearts that Bryner Camp 67 reports the passing of PDC Jon E. Lickey, on January 4, 2025. He was a charter member of Bryner Camp (2001) and a past member of the former Peoria Thrush Camp 25. Br Jon was Department Commander for two non-consecutive terms around 2005. He was Camp commander twice, Jan 2003 to Dec. 2004, and Jun 2015 to Dec. 2020. He served on the Camp Council from 2021 until his passing.

He was born on March 24, 1947, in Victoria, VA, the son of Bruce and Lillian Stephens Lickey. He was raised in Richmond, VA, by William "Billy" and Elaine Lickey and graduated from Hermitage High School. Jon married Janet Hoerle on August 3, 1969, in Rock Falls, IL and she survives. Also surviving are daughter Virginia (Scott) Greer of Georgetown, IN, and son Jon Nathan (Jessica) Lickey of Anderson, IN, along with grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. Jon derived his Sons membership from two ancestors, his Great-great grandfather, George Lickey who was a PVT in Co. D of the 13th IA INF and was KIA at Shiloh, and Great grandfather Lewis Lickey, who was a PVT in Co. D of the 44th MO INF.

Br. Jon enlisted in the Navy in April 1967 and served aboard the USS Coral Sea where he completed two tours of duty in Vietnam. Upon completing Active Duty Service, he joined the Naval Reserves, where he reached the rank of Petty Officer First Class. He was Honorably Discharged in February 1992.



Jon enjoyed a long and fulfilling career with the U.S. Postal Service in Peoria, retiring in 2009.

His commitment to serving others extended beyond his professional life. Throughout his life, Jon has enjoyed sailing, history, being a brigade leader, and being a father figure to many.

In addition to his military service, Jon was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Legion, USS Coral Sea Association, and the Naval Fleet Reserves Association. Jon was honored and grateful to be able to participate with his son, Nathan, in a Greater Peoria Honor Flight trip in 2019 to Washington, D.C.

Jon was a longtime and active member of Grace Presbyterian Church, in Peoria. He enjoyed working and leading the Christian Service Brigade, driving the bus for the Special Needs groups, working in the television studio, and being a part of his Man to Man Bible Study Group and the Christ First Bible Class. Jon loved his church family, but most of all, he loved his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Cremation has been accorded. A memorial service was held at 11:00 am on Monday, January 13, 2025, at Grace Presbyterian Church in Peoria with visitation prior.

In lieu of flowers, the family encourages those wishing to honor Jon's memory to consider donating to the Kennedy's Disease Association <https://kennedysdisease.org/who-we-are/ways-to-help/ways-to-donate.html>, The Greater Peoria Honor Flight, <https://www.greaterpeoriahonorflight.org/>, or Grace Presbyterian Church. A private family burial will take place at a later date. Affordable Funeral & Cremation Services, Peoria, has been entrusted with arrangements.

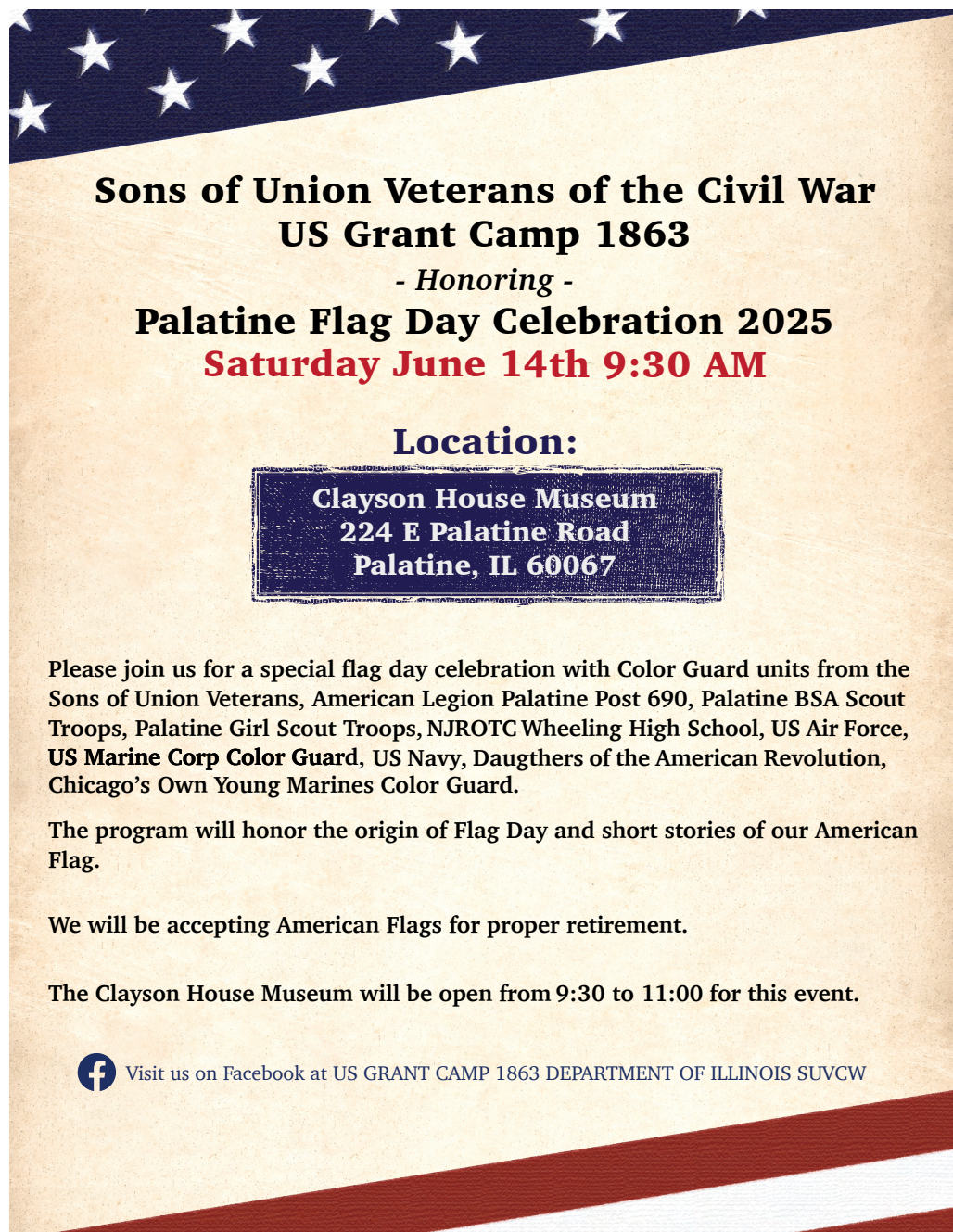
In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty
PCC Joe Hutchison

U. S. GRANT CAMP #1863 SCHAUMBURG

Greetings Brothers.

Please join us for our 4th annual Flag Day celebration June 14th 2025 at the Clayson house Museum . This event runs about one hour. We have brothers from many camps that attend this one-of-a kind event. The proceedings are hosted by US Grant Camp 1863 along with many civic organizations. Our attendance has grown from 32 people the first year to 122 last year. This outstanding ceremony features many groups of color guards. If your camp would like to present a color guard or you have an organization that you think might like to post a color guard at this event, please e-mail me at rmikegregory@gmail.com or call 847-322-2655. Please see the flier below.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,
Brother Mike Gregory
Flag Day Chairman



**Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
US Grant Camp 1863**
- Honoring -
Palatine Flag Day Celebration 2025
Saturday June 14th 9:30 AM

Location:


**Clayson House Museum
224 E Palatine Road
Palatine, IL 60067**

Please join us for a special flag day celebration with Color Guard units from the Sons of Union Veterans, American Legion Palatine Post 690, Palatine BSA Scout Troops, Palatine Girl Scout Troops, NJROTC Wheeling High School, US Air Force, **US Marine Corp Color Guard**, US Navy, Daughters of the American Revolution, Chicago's Own Young Marines Color Guard.

The program will honor the origin of Flag Day and short stories of our American Flag.

We will be accepting American Flags for proper retirement.

The Clayson House Museum will be open from 9:30 to 11:00 for this event.

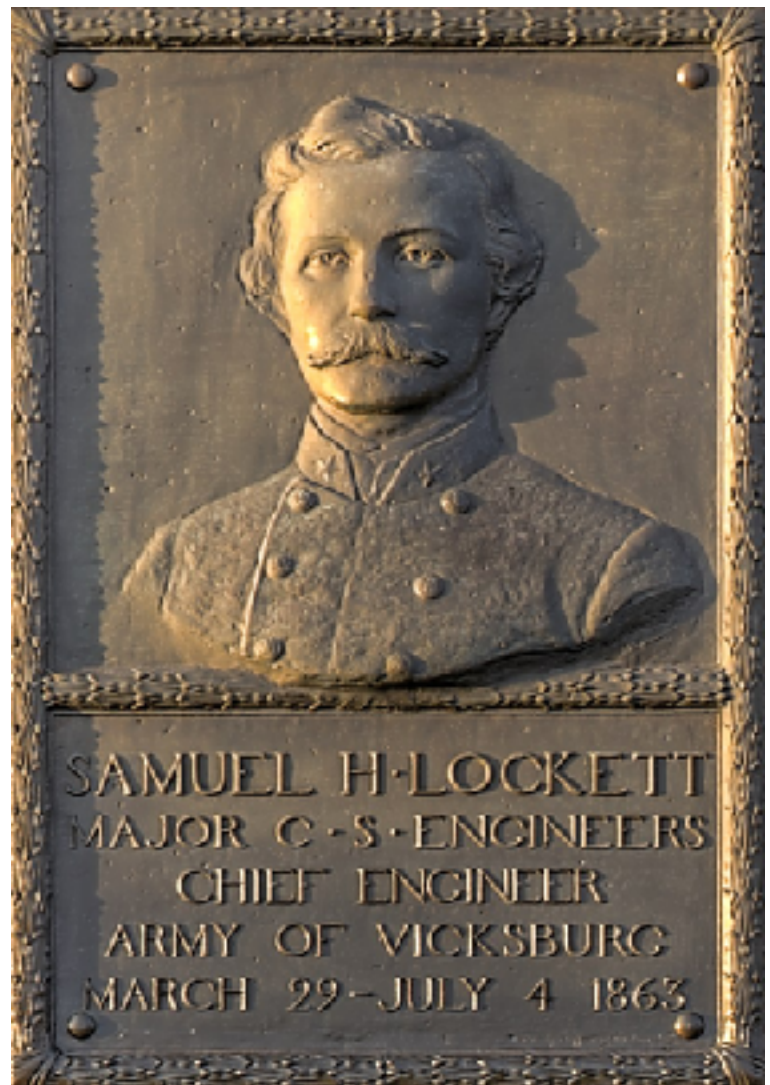
 Visit us on Facebook at US GRANT CAMP 1863 DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS SUVCW

FROM VICKSBURG TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY (Courtesy Br Chuck Murphy)

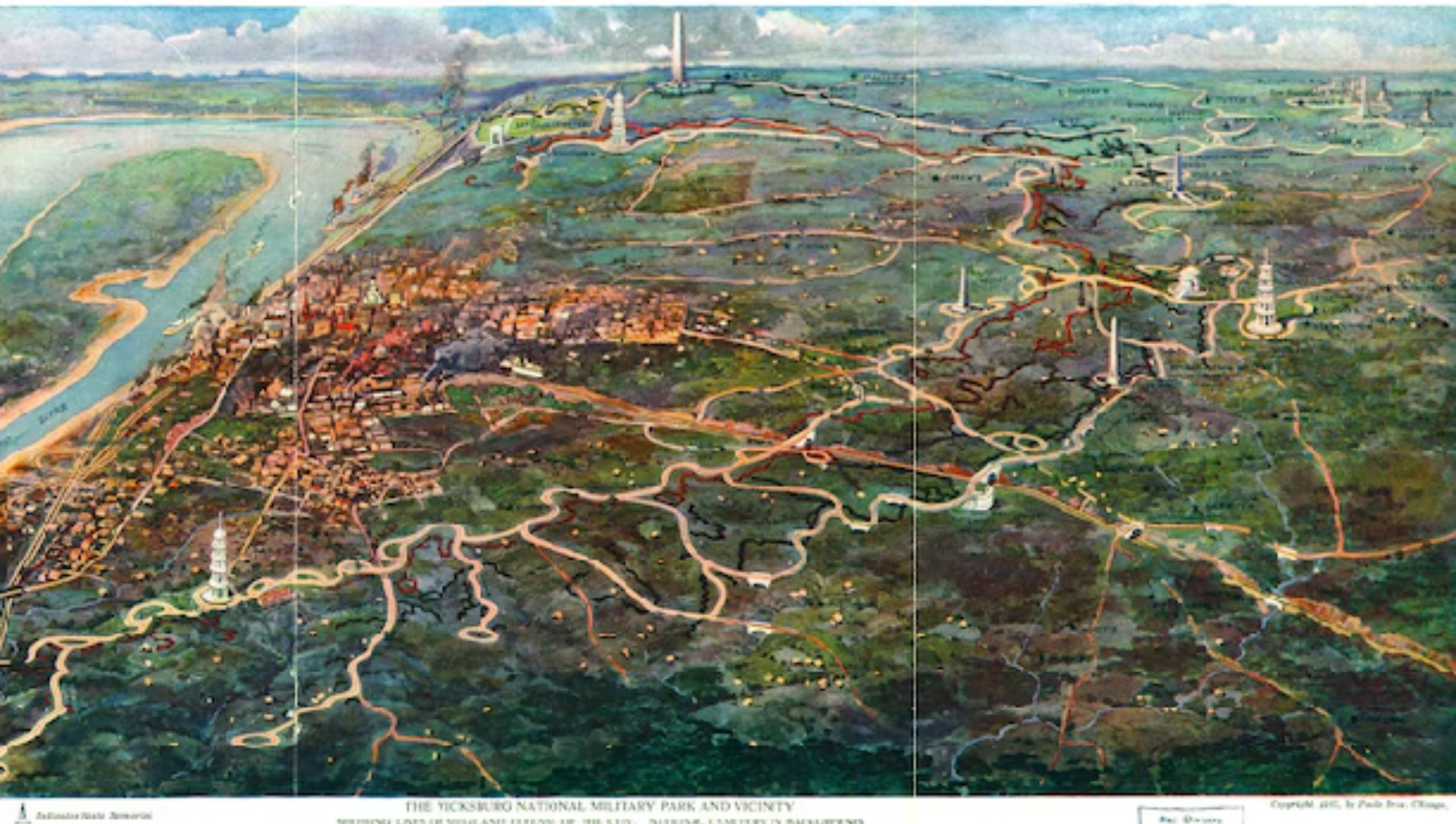
IT IS NOT UNUSUAL TO RECEIVE FEW SUBMISSIONS FOR THE ANNUAL WINTER NEWSLETTER. IF NOT FOR THIS FACT, THIS ARTICLE WOULD HAVE NEVER SEEN THE LIGHT OF DAY IN THE RAILSPLITTER. MY INTEREST IN MAJOR LOCKETT DATES BACK TO THE 1990S. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A NARRATIVE ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF NOT JUST THE DEFENSES OF VICKSBURG, BUT OF THE ELABORATE PEDESTAL OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY. THOUGH NOT UNCOMMON, IT IS SOMEWHAT UNCANNY HOW A DEDICATED, CONFEDERATE ENGINEER WHO WENT FROM THE CITADEL OF VICKSBURG, WHERE HE SHAPED DEFENSES TO HELP PROTECT AND PERPETRATE THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY, TO HELPING CONSTRUCT THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WHICH SYMBOLIZES FREEDOM, EQUALITY, AND HOPE FOR ALL.

Samuel H. Lockett was born in Mecklenburg, Virginia in 1837 and he was just an infant when his family moved to Marion, Alabama. He graduated 2nd in his class at West Point in 1859 and for a short time, he was assigned as an assistant professor at the Academy. In short order, he was transferred to the South to design and build forts (Pulaski and Jackson), and when war came he resigned his commission and joined the Confederate engineering corps. A full year before the battle, Major Lockett and three subordinate engineers were assigned to design and construct the defenses of Vicksburg. Upon his arrival in Vicksburg in May, 1862, he had available 26 miners and sappers, 8 mechanics, 4 overseers, and 72 slaves. He went to work constructing 13 artillery pits on the river's bluff side of Vicksburg, and 9 forts spread out over 9 miles from north to south on the east side of town connected by a series of rifle pits and trenches.

Anyone could tell that Vicksburg was a natural fortress. The area's rugged topography, with its series of narrow ridges fronted and backed by deep, steep, ravines, made the young engineer set about his task simply by reconnoitering the hills and hollows around Vicksburg. He recalled "No greater topographical puzzle was ever presented to any engineer". Lockett later wrote that "The difficulty of the situation was greatly enhanced by the fact that a large part of the hills and hollows had never been cleared of their virgin forest of magnificent magnolia trees and dense undergrowth of cane," An extremely capable engineer, despite the challenge, by constructing a series of connected field fortifications Lockett proceeded to make the Gibraltar-like Vicksburg even more impregnable, as Union General Grant and his army quickly learned the hard way on May 19, and again on May 22, 1863.



The photo of Major Samuel Lockett on the left was found on line and is associated with his contributions at Champion Hill. Placed on the Vicksburg battlefield in 1910, the above plaque was also found on line.



The aerial map of Vicksburg above and its Civil War defenses was downloaded from an article entitled "The Engineers at Vicksburg, Part 5: The Line of Defense, by Terry Winschel (2016) that was found on line. Perhaps there are other photos that are just as graphic, but this one enables one to clearly see the 9 mile long perimeter extending from north to south along the east side of town.

Responding to an invitation from a fellow West Point graduate, in 1883 and 1884, Samuel Lockett was the principal engineer on construction of the elaborate pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. On the right is a photo of the pedestal, downloaded from an on line picture.

On the following page is a tribute to the Vicksburg campaign, which was produced back in the 1990s.

Certainly If I were to design it today, it would be somewhat different, but at least it speaks to the Battle of Vicksburg which is pertinent to any story about Samuel H. Lockett.





Ulysses S. Grant

UNION COMMANDERS

M.D. John A. McClernand
13th Army Corps
M.G. William B. Sherman
15th Army Corps
M.G. Stephen A. Hurlbut
16th Army Corps
M.G. James B. McPherson
17th Army Corps

**GRANT'S BAYOU PROJECTS
JANUARY - APRIL 1863**

William's Canal
Duckport Canal
Lake Providence Expedition
Yazoo Pass Expedition
Steele's Bayou Expedition

**DIVERSIONS FOR PORTER'S
BATTERY RISE**

Sherman's Point
at Haines' Bluff
Grimes's Raid
April 17 - May 2, 1863

GRANT'S FIVE VICTORIES

Port Gibson
May 1, 1863
Raymond
May 12, 1863
Jackson
May 14, 1863
Champion's Hill
May 16, 1863
Big Black River
May 17, 1863

Vicksburg



Vicksburg

Limited Edition
COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE
the 135th Anniversary of
"The Vicksburg Campaign"
1863-1998



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLARK GRACE HISTORICAL LIBRARY



John C. Pemberton

CONFEDERATE COMMANDERS

M.G. Carter L. Chestnut's
Division
M.G. John B. Fossy's
Division
M.G. Martin L. Smith's
Division
M.G. John C. Bowen's
Division

CONFEDERATE VICTORIES

Holly Springs
December 20, 1862
Chickasaw Bluffs
December 29, 1862
Fort Pemberton
March 11, 1863
Grant's First Assault
May 19, 1863
Grant's Second Assault
May 22, 1863
Wine Expedition
May 29, 1863

VICKSBURG BATTERIES

Water Battery
Hymans' Hill Battery
Warner Hospital Battery
Staff Batteries

REBEL DEFENSES

Fort Hill - Sunken Road
3rd Louisiana Battery
Great Redoubt
Fort James Institute
Hillside Redoubt
Square Fort (Fort Seneca)
Calcutt Works - East's Fort

Command problems stifled both sides at Vicksburg. Many were surprised when Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton of Pennsylvania was appointed commander of the Confederate forces. While he enjoyed the total confidence of his general officers and President Jefferson B. Davis, like troops were suspect of his true allegiance. General McClernand of Illinois proved to be Major General Ulysses S. Grant's nemesis. A former Congressman and friend of President Lincoln's, McClernand hated West Pointers and was insubordinate, undisciplined and forever advancing his own rather embellished accomplishments. Despite his victory at Arkansas Post (Ft. Hindman) on January 11, Grant and his other corps commanders had little confidence in McClernand and ultimately, his insubordination led to his removal on June 16, 1863.

Grant's initial offensive met with disaster. General Nathan Bedford Forrest disrupted his communications and supply lines and General Earl Van Dorn's raid on Grant's supply base at Holly Springs forced him to alter his plans. Sherman's defeat at Chickasaw Bluffs was also a setback. The winter of 1862-1863 was too wet for marching and so Grant attempted several bayou expeditions in order to gain the advantage. Although he was convinced that none of them would be successful, Grant needed to maintain the offensive to appease officials in Washington and maintain morale of his forces. One of the most important achievements was Admiral Porter's running of the 28 guns of the Vicksburg batteries during the night of April 16, 1863 which led to Grant's forces crossing the river below Vicksburg at Bruinsburg on April 30, 1863.

By May 18, 1863 Grant had pushed the rebels back into their Vicksburg defenses comprised of nine miles of forts, redoubts, redans, a lunette and rifle pits. Pemberton received mixed messages from his superiors. President Davis urged him to hold Vicksburg at all costs while General Joseph E. Johnston advised that it was more important to save his army. After his two assaults on the Vicksburg defenses failed, Grant settled in to siege Vicksburg and "outcamp" the enemy. The constant shelling, a lack of food and Johnston's failure to arrive in time with reinforcements forced Pemberton to capitulate which, in order to get the best possible terms, he did on July 4th, 1863.



State Civil War battlefield memorials are wondrous exhibits, and none are more iconic than the Illinois Memorial at Vicksburg pictured at the top of the previous page. It is pure happenstance. While working on the Lockett story above, I received the latest issue of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, and in it is an article (pages 33-53) entitled *Remembering the Fallen: The Creation of Civil War Monuments in Illinois, 1865-1929*, by Jeremy Knoll, a Senior at Northern Illinois University majoring in history and economics. Before reading the article to learn what Mr. Knoll had to say, I breezed through the article and found two photos of particular interest. One was the Illinois Memorial at Vicksburg (not the one shown on the previous page, which was found on line and downloaded), and one of the Grand Army of the Republic Hall in Aurora, pictured on the bottom half of the previous page. While I read the entire article, I was most eager to read what he had to say about the Vicksburg Monument and Aurora's GAR Hall.

On page 35, Knolls submits that "...the sources of funding there and themes involved in commemoration changed over time and can be divided into three historical periods".

They include "...the Reconstruction Era, from 1865-to 1877, when commemoration was focused on such concerns for memorializing the 'unknown dead', consoling grieving families and assigning blame for the war's deaths". Funding came from local governments and charitable organizations.

The next period ran from, 1877 to 1898, when local organizations "...were replaced by chapters of national veterans' or women's organizations such as the Grand Army of the Republic and the Women's Relief Corps". While still condemning slavery, this phase emphasized reunion with the former enemy and downplaying the antagonism. During this time monuments were erected to inspire allegiance, promote patriotism, and highlight the obligations associated with citizenship.

The third and last period ran from 1898 to 1929, when the emphasis was on avoiding the condemnation of slavery and moving on from continuing to Civil War monuments in favor of rekindling kinship with our former adversaries, and treating them as brave adversaries and fellow Americans.

Jeremy Knolls' article is very, very good and fits in nicely within the purview of the Order. His posting of the photos of the Vicksburg Memorial and Aurora's GAR Hall nicely compliment how he explains the categorical distinctions between the two monuments. On page 40 Mr. Knolls talks about how in the late 1870s and beyond, the GAR became heavily involved funding and dedicating memorial monuments. He makes the point that GAR members were held in high esteem in their local communities and were respected by "...Northern civilians". The first GAR Post in Aurora dates back to 1875 and by 1878, with the financial help of other organizations, the memorial building dedicated in 1878 was commonly referred to as "...the Grand Army of the Republic Hall". This monument is an example of Mr. Knolls' category number two cited above. In contrast, the Illinois Memorial at Vicksburg is symbolic of Knolls' third category. On page 33 he narrates how festive the occasion was when in 1906, Illinois Governor John Deneen and a regiment from the Illinois National Guard were treated by the former enemy as "...honored visitors, transported on special trains and delayed only by a Grand reception and parade held for them in the state capitol of Jackson". "...Veterans from both sides of the Civil War met in the newly constructed Pavilion to reminisce about their war experiences".