



Spring 2026

The Railsplitter

Newsletter of the Department of Illinois
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



In Fraternity,
Charity and Loyalty

Appomattox and its meaning:
Guidance for public interpretation

Illinois' own Irish Brigade

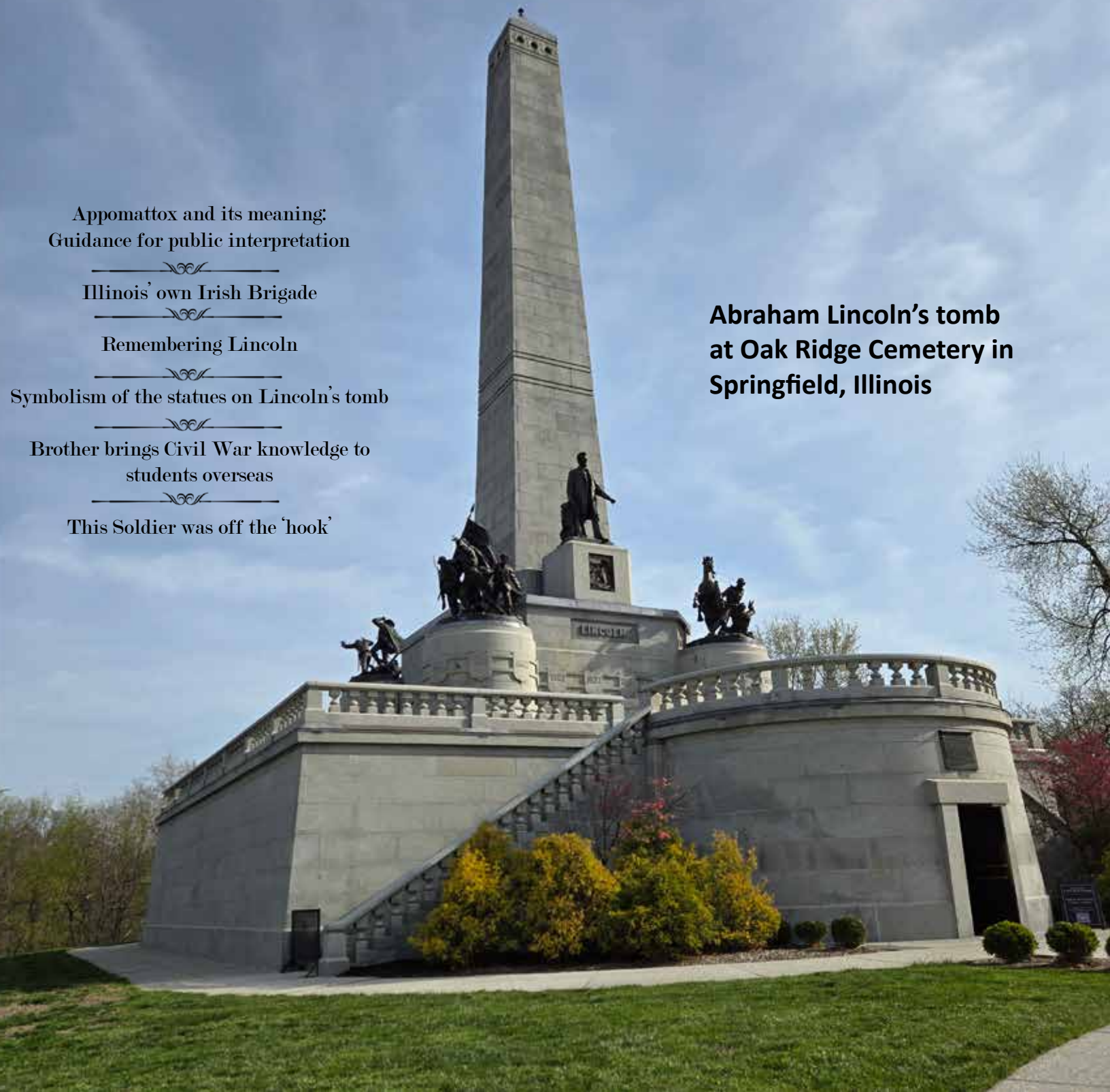
Remembering Lincoln

Symbolism of the statues on Lincoln's tomb

Brother brings Civil War knowledge to
students overseas

This Soldier was off the 'hook'

Abraham Lincoln's tomb
at Oak Ridge Cemetery in
Springfield, Illinois





The Railsplitter is a publication of the Department of Illinois, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW).

For more information about the Department, visit our Website:
<https://www.suvcwil.org/>.

Our Facebook page is [here](#).

More information about the SUVCW and becoming a member is here:
www.suvcw.org.

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Cover photo by Gerald Sonnenberg

For submissions, email *The Railsplitter* editor, Gerald Sonnenberg at gsonnenberg@hotmail.com or lestweforget1861@outlook.com.



Chaplain's Corner

By Jerome Kowalski
Chaplain

You may recall from my last entry that on the flight from the Texas National Encampment last year I sat next to a seven-year-old and her ten-year-old sister. They coughed nonstop from Austin to O'Hare, and there were no other seats available.

Doctors at Loyola University Hospital, Northwestern University and the University of Chicago could not figure out what was going on.

Finally, my personal physician tested me, and now I am being treated for Sepsis.

The message here is simple - don't sit next to coughing children. I am grateful for any prayers for my recovery.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.
Chaplain Jerry



About the SUVCW Department of Illinois

The Department of Illinois, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) is comprised of 11 camps. To learn more about our camps, [click here](#).

The SUVCW is a fraternal organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought to save the Union.

In 1881, the [Grand Army of the Republic \(GAR\)](#) formed the SUVCW as the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (SV) to carry on its traditions and memory long after the GAR ceased to exist. Membership was open to any man who could prove ancestry to a member of the GAR or to a Veteran eligible for membership in the GAR. In later years, men who did not have the ancestry to qualify for hereditary membership, but who demonstrated a genuine interest in the Civil War and could subscribe to the purpose and objectives of the SUVCW, were admitted as Associates. This practice continues today.

Many GAR Posts sponsored Camps of the SV. In 1925, the SV name was changed to SUVCW, under which its federal charter was issued in 1954. The SUVCW is legally recognized as the heir to, and representative of, the GAR. It became the SUVCW in name in 1925 and is the legal successor to the GAR, first founded in 1866. Today, the National Organization of the SUVCW, headed by an annually elected Commander-in-Chief, oversees the operation of 32 Departments, each consisting of one or more states, a Department-at-Large, a National Membership-at-Large, and over 200 community based camps.

The SUVCW is one of five Allied Orders of the GAR. The other four Orders are: Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic, Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

If you are not a member and have an interest and/or a direct connection to the civil war or interest in an associate membership, or know of someone else who may, please consider applying for membership and passing the word along to others. [Click here to learn more](#).



Appomattox and its meaning: Guidance for public interpretation



By Kevin P. Tucker

Commander-in-chief

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

In this, the 250th year of our nation, as we commemorate the anniversary of General Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, it is incumbent upon us, as Brothers of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War to further our mission of remembrance by clearly and faithfully conveying to the public the true significance of that event.

Lee's surrender was not merely the conclusion of a major military campaign—it was the effective end of organized armed rebellion against the United States. The surrender marked the beginning of the Confederacy's collapse. But not in a single, simultaneous cessation of all fighting, as further battles, skirmishes and naval engagements continued in various theaters for weeks thereafter.

However, looking back, the surrender at Appomattox did mean a death knell for the Rebellion. The surrender at Appomattox Court House secured the preservation of the Union, the triumph of constitutional government over insurrection, and was the beginning of a difficult but necessary process of national reconciliation. It

affirmed that our republic, founded in liberty, could endure even the gravest internal trial.

Equally important, Appomattox must be understood in the broader context of what the war had come to represent by 1865.

The Union victory ensured the destruction of slavery as an institution and validated the service and sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of soldiers who fought to uphold the nation. It signaled that the United States would remain one nation, indivisible, committed—however imperfectly—to the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

When engaging with the public, I urge you to emphasize several key points:

- 1. The preservation of the Union** — The central outcome of Appomattox was the survival of the United States as a single nation. This was the core objective for which Union soldiers fought and died.
- 2. The rule of law over rebellion** — The surrender demonstrated that constitutional government cannot be set aside by force. The war settled, decisively, that disputes within our republic must be resolved through lawful means.
- 3. The end of slavery as a war aim realized** — By 1865, Union victory and

emancipation were inseparable. Appomattox represents the culmination of that transformation.

4. Honor without distortion — Reconciliation must never come at the expense of historical truth. While General Grant's terms were generous and intended to promote peace, we must avoid narratives that romanticize or obscure the cause of the rebellion. Slavery—especially its expansion and protection—was the fundamental cause, with political, economic and constitutional conflicts flowing from that central issue.

5. The beginning, not the end, of responsibility — Appomattox opened the door to Reconstruction and the ongoing work of fulfilling the nation's founding ideals. That work continues today.

As heirs to the Grand Army of the Republic, we bear a solemn obligation to ensure that the meaning of the Union victory is neither forgotten nor misrepresented. Our role is not only commemorative but educational. We must speak with clarity, grounded in historical fact, and with a steady commitment to the principles for which our forebears fought. Let us approach this anniversary with both reverence and purpose.



Commander's Corner

By Michael Zafran

Department Commander

Brothers,
The Department of Illinois is doing the work of the Order. My quarterly report to the National Commander in Chief has been favorably received.

Presentations have been made at elementary and high school levels, and additional presentations are scheduled in response to requests we have received.

The Department of Illinois was well represented at the Lincoln Tomb Ceremony and at the Petersburg Ceremony

on April 11th. It was an honor to have National Commander in Chief Kevin Tucker attend and speak at both ceremonies. We also enjoyed a wonderful luncheon at the VFW Hall in Springfield, where I had the privilege of serving as Master of Ceremonies. A great time of fellowship was had by all who attended.



Memorial Day ceremonies are quickly approaching. Please make every effort to incorporate the America 250 guidelines

into your remembrances.

With the return of spring temperatures, it is time to get out and clean, raise and replace those markers that need servicing.

Our 143rd Annual Department of Illinois Encampment will be held May 2 from noon until 2:30 p.m. at the GAR Hall and Military Museum, as previously reported. A flyer has been posted. The National Junior Vice Commander in Chief, Robert Payne, will be in attendance.

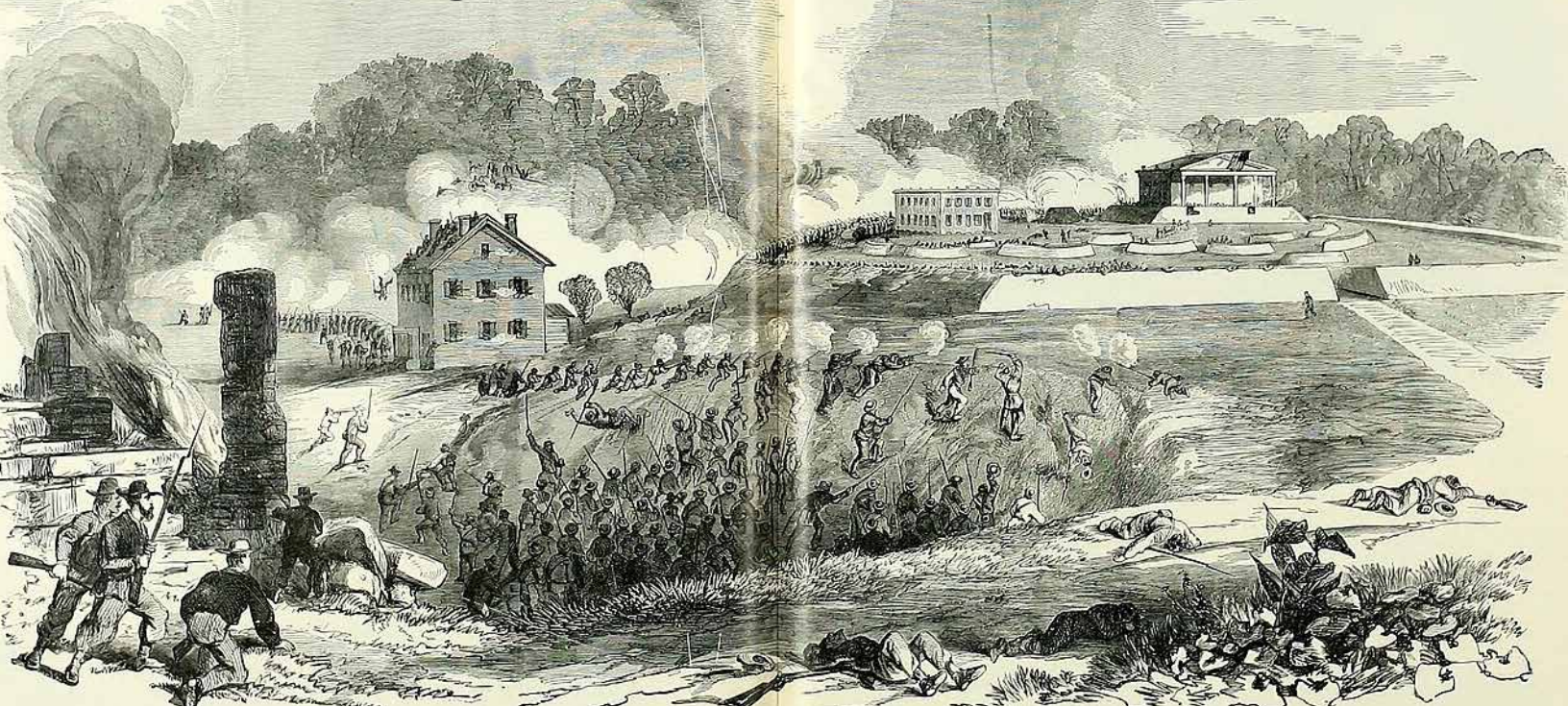
Respectfully submitted in F.C.L.,

Michael Zafran
Department Commander



Illinois' own Irish Brigade

*An engraving of the Siege of
Lexington. (Courtesy image)*



*By Gerald Sonnenberg, Hecker Camp #443
Dept. of Illinois Patriotic Instructor, editor*

While the fame of Irish units like the 69th New York is well known in Civil War circles, other states had their own "Irish Brigades." In Illinois, it was the 23rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment; the "First Irish," whose first battle is probably their most well known.

The 23rd Illinois Infantry was raised by attorney James Adelbert Mulligan and organized at Chicago, Illinois. It was mustered into Federal service on June 15, 1861. They were moved to Quincy, Illinois, July 14, then to St. Louis, Missouri, and finally, to Jefferson City, Missouri July 21 until Sept. 8.

Led by, now, Col. Mulligan, the regiment was then marched to Lexington, Missouri in the northwest of the state to counter the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard under Sterling Price fresh off his victory over Union forces under Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon in August at Wilson's Creek.

The 23rd was then joined by a detachment of the 27th Missouri Mounted Infantry under Lt. Col. Benjamin W. Grover. On Sept. 11, the 13th Missouri Infantry

and Maj. Robert T. Van Horn's battalion returned to Lexington. Mulligan now commanded 3,500 men. However, the 23rd and the rest of the defenders were besieged and attacked by Price's army, which was five times their size.

After a week, the siege of Lexington, also known as the first battle of Lexington or the Battle of the Hemp Bales ended with Mulligan's surrender.

After being paroled, General John C. Fremont (commanding the Department of Missouri) had the 23rd Illinois mustered out of service, but in December, General George McClellan (then supreme commander in chief of all Union armies) had it restored.

After being reconstituted, the regiment left camp in the spring of 1862 for western Virginia, where it spent most of the rest of the war. However, just like at Lexington, the 23rd fought courageously in more than a dozen battles and other actions.

In May 1864, the unit joined Gen. Philip Sheridan's army in the Valley Campaign. Several battles occurred during this campaign, and one of them, the Second Battle of Kernstown, happened on July 24.

This fight claimed the life of Col. Mulligan when he was shot by a Confederate sniper as he stood up in his saddle to spur his men on. Mulligan's soldiers endeavored to carry him to safety, but the unyielding Confederate fire made this an impossible task.

Mulligan was well aware of his situation, and the danger his men were in, and so he famously ordered, "Lay me down and save the flag." Mulligan's men reluctantly complied. Confederate soldiers captured Mulligan and carried the mortally wounded colonel into a nearby home, where he died two days later, July 26, 1864. He was later buried at Calvary Cemetery in Evanston, Illinois.

At the end of 1864, the 23rd headed to the Richmond area, led by Lt. Col. Samuel Simison, for the Siege of Petersburg and was present at Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

In all, the regiment suffered four officers and fifty enlisted men who were killed in action or who died of their wounds and two officers and ninety-three enlisted men who died of disease, for a total of 149 fatalities.



Around the Department: Camp activities throughout Illinois

Marker rededication

On April 18, the Department of Illinois assisted Camp 67 and Brother Rick Stephens, commander, General U. S. Grant Camp No. 3 in Arizona, and also the Junior Vice Commander, Department of the Southwest, with the rededication of the tombstone of his great, great grandfather William F. Smith. Smith served with the 112th



Illinois Volunteer Infantry Reg-

iment, Company C. The event took place at Red Oak Cemetery in Cambridge, Illinois. Pictured above (left to right) are Brian Conroy, Camp #2 commander; Owen Doak, Camp 1863 secretary; Michael Zafran, department commander; Gary Gunderson, Camp #2 and past department commander (PDC); Nick Sauer, Camp 1863 commander; Rick Stephens; Bill Doubet, Camp 67; Steven Westlake, PDC, Camp #2; Wayne Werheim, department senior vice commander, Camp 67; Steve Ashby, Camp 67 Chaplain. (courtesy photos)



'Hard' situation

For the past three years each spring, the E.F. Dutton Camp #49 has visited local schools with the primary goal of bringing some aspects of the Civil War into the classroom. This is an important responsibility of the S.U.V.C.W. We focus each lesson on camp life and bring in artifacts that the students can see and touch.

This year we visited several classes at Hampshire Elementary and Gary Wright Elementary in Hampshire, Illinois. Brothers Harlan Hawkins, Stephen Haight and Wayne Mansfield participated. In this photo (right) Brothers Wayne Mansfield and Stephen Haight describe the consumption of hard-tack! (Courtesy photo)



Upcoming events

***SUVCW Department of Illinois 143rd Annual Encampment, May 2, at noon at the GAR Hall and Museum 23 E. Downer Pl. Aurora, Illinois.**

***[A Grand Celebration](#)** in recognition of the 250th birthday of the Nation and the 200th birthday of Gen. John A. Logan will be held in Murphysboro, Illinois June 5-7 with a parade as a highlight on June 6 at 1 p.m. **Click the link above for more information and an entry form for the parade if interested.**

***The city of Glen Carbon, Illinois will [celebrate its 100th anniversary](#)**, as well as the 250th anniversary of the nation in the city June 19-20.

***[The 145th National Encampment](#)** of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and the Allied Orders will be held in Gettysburg, PA, July 30-Aug. 2, 2026.

***[Remembrance Day](#)** is Observed each November on the Weekend closest to the Anniversary of President Lincoln giving The Gettysburg Address.





Brother of the Year

Camp #2 Commander Brian Conroy (right) presents the Richard A. Haussman Distinguished Service Award to Department and Camp Treasurer Lee Lasseigne as Brother of the year. (Courtesy photo) ★



SUVCW ROTC award presented

On April 23, Hecker Camp #443 Brother Richard Piper presented the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Reserve Officer Training Corps award and medal to Haden Lucas. Lucas is a student at the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and this took place at their Army awards ceremony at the American Legion Hall in Edwardsville, Illinois. (Courtesy photo) ★

Citizenship award

Department Commander Michael Zafran read Civil War letters and answered multiple questions from 32 fifth grade students at St. Isaac Jogues Catholic School in Hinsdale, Illinois. This was his 3rd year doing this. (Courtesy photo) ★



Camp 67 activities

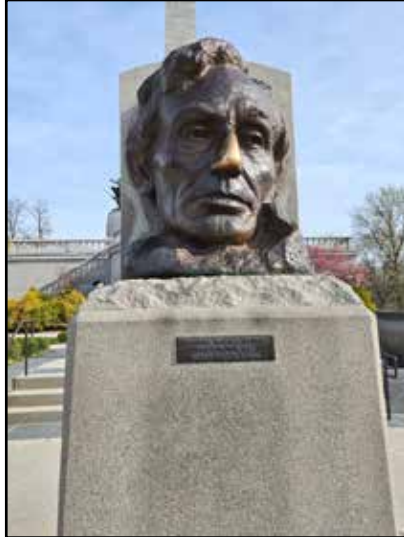
Col. Bryner Camp #67 initiated a new Brother at the February meeting, (photo left) Douglas E. Bohm (standing right), of Tremont, Illinois derives membership from his 3rd Great Grandfather, John Phillip Bortel, who was in Company L of the 11th Illinois Cavalry. Br. Doug is also a Veteran. He is pictured with Camp Commander Ron Kirchgessner.

In addition, the Camp welcomed back to the order, Br. Tim Pletkovich, who had been away for over 10 years. When first a member of the camp he was a member of the National Real Sons committee and had been instrumental in finding and enlisting many of the Real Sons during the years he was on the committee. He continues to be in contact with Br. Bill Pool of the last real Sons and a member of our camp. (Photo right) On Feb. 21, CC Kirchgessner gave a presentation on Civil War medicine at the Williamsfield American Legion Post 371 at 2 p.m., in Williamsfield, Illinois. It was well attended. (Courtesy photos) ★



Cousins

Department Commander Michael Zafran (left), presents a 1884 GAR charter from Chicago to PDC Bobby Welch at the Veterans Memorial Campus in Addison, Illinois. PDC Welch has established a Veterans museum at the campus. (Courtesy photo) See page 11 for more. ★



Remembering Lincoln

SUVCW, patriotic groups come together to honor the President

Story and photos By Gerald Sonnenberg, Hecker Camp #443
Dept. of Illinois Patriotic Instructor, editor

More than 100 people attended the 70th Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony in Springfield, Illinois April 11. It's been 161 years since our 16th president died by the hand of an assassin at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C.

The ceremony in front of his tomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery is conducted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), as well as with participation by other patriotic, Veteran and historical organizations. These include the National Women's Relief Corps and Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic.

SUVCW Commander in Chief Kevin Tucker addressed the crowd that represented camps and organizations from at least Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas, Louisiana and Kansas. In addition, the 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regimental Band provided musical entertainment and accompaniment for the ceremony.

The event included the presentation of colors, the laying of wreaths and the playing of taps. Later that day, a ceremony was also held at the Dr. Benjamin Stephenson Gravesite Memorial Plaza in Rose Hill Cemetery in Petersburg, Illinois.

The annual events are conducted by the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and MOLLUS, or often known as the Loyal Legion. Dr. Stephenson was the founding father of the GAR on April 6, 1866 in Decatur, Illinois.



(Photo, top left) A color guard representing the Allied Orders.

(Top center) Lincoln's statue

(Top right) CinC Kevin Tucker addresses the audience.

(Above) Brother Jim Achenbach of the 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regimental Band plays taps.



(Photo, above left) The main color guard stands ready.

(Above) The 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regimental Band.

(Right) Brother Richard Piper presents the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 wreath.



Symbolism of the statues on Lincoln's tomb

Photos by Gerald Sonnenberg

The bronze statues and sculpted groups at the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois, are not random decorations — they are carefully chosen to represent the two great achievements of Abraham Lincoln's presidency: the abolition of slavery and the preservation of the Union.

Central Lincoln statue

At the base of the obelisk stands a bronze statue of Lincoln holding the Emancipation Proclamation, symbolizing his role in ending human slavery in the United States.

Broken chain and eagle plaque

Below the Lincoln statue is a plaque with an eagle holding a broken chain, representing the end of slavery and the freedom it brought.

State shields and chain

Around the base, shields representing each U.S. state are arranged in a solid chain, symbolizing the undivided nation and the unity Lincoln preserved during the Civil War.

Military statue groups

At the corners of the base are four groups of bronze figures representing the major armed services Lincoln commanded during the Civil War: Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Marine (Navy).

These groups were cast in part from metal taken from sixty-five cannons donated by the U.S. government, linking the monument to the weapons of war and the sacrifices of Union soldiers. The tomb's first custodian described them as seeming to depict "defeat" — but in truth, they were scenes from the many battles that ultimately secured Union victory.

Brother brings Civil War knowledge to students overseas

Story and photos by John Laker
P.H. Sheridan Camp #2

ALMATY, Kazakhstan - In Almaty, Kazakhstan, eleventh grade students from around the world studied the Civil War for five weeks in their U.S. History and American Literature classes. Their teacher, Brother John Laker, a member of General P.H. Sheridan Camp #2, has been teaching in overseas American schools for twelve years having worked previously in South America and now at his present location in Central Asia.

His students hail from the United States, Kazakhstan, Israel, Malta, South Korea, China, Poland, Czech Republic, Turkey, India, Russia, Canada and Burundi.

The students enjoyed reading a number of Civil War texts that included Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Second Inaugural Address and the Bixby Letter. They also contrasted famous speeches from North and South by Alexander Stephens and William Lloyd Garrison, Civil War letters from Sullivan Ballou and Robert E. Lee, and the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs.

Brother Laker also shared his own

Civil War heritage--his third great grandfathers Nicholas Almire and Peter Wurtz, who served in the 42nd and 120th Indiana respectively.

Each student selected a research topic to dive deeper into the history. One student's interest in firearms led him to the Burnside Carbine. Another studied the Union Army Balloon Corp, and a third student focused on the famous photographs by Matthew Brady.

In another unit activity, students worked in pairs to research an influential battle and deliver a presentation to the class. One pair shared a detailed map and order of battle between the ironclads the U.S.S. Monitor and C.S.S. Virginia (the Monitor and Merrimack). Another contrasted the famous charges at the Battle of Gettysburg; Pickett's and at the Little Roundtop. The most eloquent presentation was delivered on the Siege of Vicksburg by a Kazakhstani student of German and Russian heritage.

Finally, students showed their mastery



John Laker in his classroom.

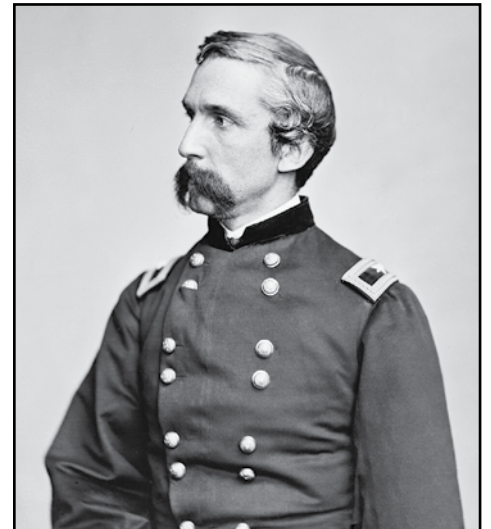
of the content by passing a unit exam.

For many of them who come from various parts of the world, this was their first study of the Civil War. For the American students, this was an excellent opportunity to remember our heritage and the sacrifices made by those who fought to preserve the Union.

For foreign students, these lessons are filled with stories of courage that may serve to inspire them.



A student makes a presentation about the famous charge led by Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain of the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment at the Battle of Gettysburg.



(Above) Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain by Matthew Brady. (Courtesy National Archives)

This Soldier was off the 'hook'

By Craig Heberton, IV
Center for Civil War Photography

Frances Hook was a woman. But, it appears that she didn't let her gender prevent her from serving in Company G of the 90th Illinois Infantry Regiment; the 33rd Illinois Infantry Regiment; and the 11th Illinois Infantry Regiment. She kept her gender hidden, at a time when women were prohibited from serving in the Union Army, including by using the aliases "Frank Miller" and possibly "Frank Henderson" and "Frank Fuller."

Born in Illinois in 1847, Frances was three-years-old when both of her parents died, leaving her to be raised by her older brother.

Only 14-years-old when her brother decided to join the Union Army, she is said to have disguised herself as a man to follow him into service so as to not be left alone. After cutting her hair short and lying to a recruiting officer that she was aged 22, Frances purportedly enlisted as a private on April 30, 1861 in the 11th Illinois Infantry Regiment under the name "Frank Miller." She and her brother served their 90-day enlistment without her gender being discovered. After they both re-enlisted for 3 years on July 30, 1861, the 11th Illinois fought at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February 1862. When her brother was killed during the Battle of Shiloh two months later, Frances was devastated and left the 11th Illinois.

Assuming the alias Frank Henderson, she later enlisted in the 33rd Illinois Infantry. After only a few months, she was wounded in the shoulder at the Battle of Frederickstown, Missouri. While she was being cared for in the regimental hospital, the doctor discovered that she was a teenage woman, resulting in her discharge.

By this point, Army life was all that Frances knew, as she had no home to which to return. So she is said to have enlisted in the 90th Illinois Infantry, a new regiment that had not yet seen battle. In the summer of 1863, while marching through Alabama, she was taken prisoner and imprisoned in Atlanta, Georgia. She was wounded in the thigh by a gunshot

(Right) A photograph of Frances Hook, aka Frank Henderson, Co. G 90th Illinois Infantry Regiment by the T.J. Merritt National Portrait Gallery in Nashville, Tennessee in 1864. (Courtesy photo)

fired by a guard during an attempted escape. At the prison hospital, a doctor discovered her gender. She then was assigned a separate room at the prison and exchanged on Feb. 17, 1864, with 26 other Union prisoners who were transferred at Graysville, Georgia.

For a time she was at Hospital No. 2 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She was then transported to a Nashville hospital, where the photograph (right) was taken. She remained there until she recovered from her wound. A hospital record shows the admission of "Private Frank Miller (A FEMALE SOLDIER)" of Company G of the 90th Illinois Reg. of Vols. to General Hospital No. 17 (the former Planter's Hotel) in Nashville, Tenn., on May 5, 1864 for a "simple flesh wound of the thigh." The record reflects that she was transferred "North" on June 10, 1864. Otherwise, there are no service records of a "Frank Hook," perhaps as part of a concerted effort to expunge her military records.

Frances Hook was discharged and sent home to Illinois, but speculation remains that with nowhere else to go she re-enlisted and continued to serve until the end of the war. She ultimately married in 1908, and her daughter later applied for a military pension based on her mother's Civil War military service.

"Contemporary authors of social history and those focusing on women's studies have put the number of female soldiers serving in Northern and Southern armies as high as several thousand, but the true identities of only a handful are actually known."

Shelby Harriel's book, *Behind the Rifle: Women Soldiers in Civil War Mississippi* (2019), includes research uncovering new information about Frances Hook and contradicting some of what has been written about her, including her real name.

According to Harrell, "she was not



Frances Hook [and] her pre-war life was quite sad," prompting her to enlist. Her real name was Elizabeth Quinn, and she fled La Moille, Illinois to enlist in the 90th Illinois Reg. of Infantry as "Frank Miller."

Says Shelby Harriel, "It is interesting that her brother, Thomas, appears to have dedicated a panel of his grave marker to her, which includes a relief of a Civil War soldier." <https://forbiddenhiddenforgotten.blogspot.com/.../a-monum...>

OTHER SOURCES:

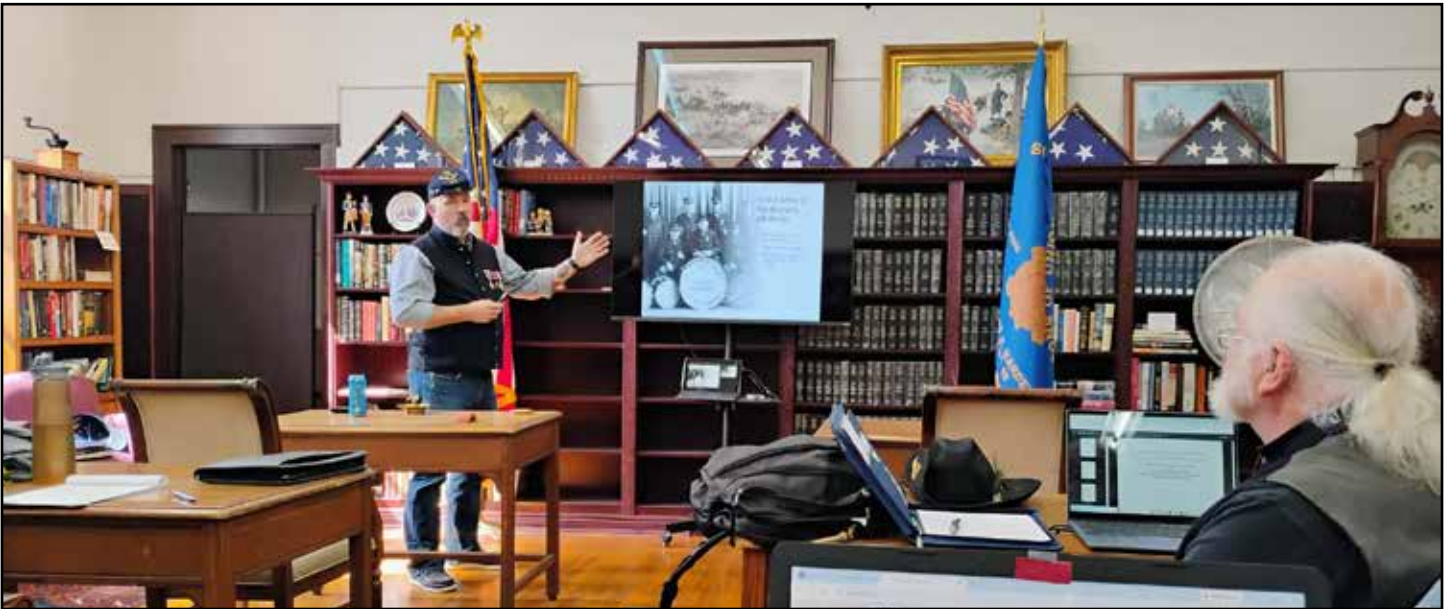
*<https://www.womenhistoryblog.com/2007/01/frances-hook.html>

*<https://forbiddenhiddenforgotten.blogspot.com/.../frances...>

*<https://www.facebook.com/ForbiddenHiddenForgotten>

*Images from Library of Congress DIG-ppmsca-49587, representing a carte de visite of Frances Hook (Elizabeth Quinn) taken at Thomas J. Merritt's Galleries, 42 & 44 Union Street, Nashville, Tennessee.





(Above) PDC Bobby Welch conducts a new member orientation. (Courtesy photo)

New facility honors past, helps build future

Brotherhood and history took center stage in Addison, Illinois as Past Department Commander (PDC) Bobby Welch, in coordination with the Private Henry M. Hardenbergh Camp No. 39, hosted a successful “New Member Orientation” and introduction to the Memorial University Seminar.

It was a fantastic day of fraternal camaraderie with brothers from Camps 2, 39 and 6165 in attendance.

This training will hopefully become an annual tradition, ensuring our new brothers gain a deeper understanding of SUVCW history, our charter’s purposes, and the legacy we have sworn to protect.

During a break, they toured the incredible Chicagoland Veterans Campus. They are currently breathing new life into a 100-year-old Lutheran Elementary School,

transforming it into a “Veterans Campus” featuring:

- Six Unique Military/Veteran Museums
- A Comprehensive Library
- A Veterans Resource Center

One of these highlights is the Museum of American Fraternal Military Societies, led by PDC Welch. The museum already houses an impressive collection of SUVCW memorabilia.

To top off the day, Department Commander Michael Zafran presented Brother Welch with a historic GAR Charter. This incredible piece of Union Veteran history will be officially displayed in the museum for all to see.

A huge thank you to everyone who traveled to participate. We look forward to seeing even more of you at this location next year.



(Above) One of the museum displays. (Center, far right) The 1864 Charter. (Far right) The Museum of American Fraternal Military Societies. (Courtesy photos)



Editorial

A symbol of forgiveness

By Gerald Sonnenberg, Hecker Camp #443
Dept. of Illinois Patriotic Instructor, editor

This is just a thought, but ever since I first saw this image of Union and Confederate Veterans shaking hands across the stone wall at the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913, I can't help but think about one of the most important aspects of being a human being - learning to forgive. This rings true for me, especially at this time of year having just celebrated Easter.

Forgetting about significant, as well as trivial events in your life is not so easy sometimes, but forgetting them also defeats the purpose of learning from them. Depending on the circumstance, forgiveness can be even more difficult.

Our lives will be full of unpleasant things and events, big and small, that we will need to adjust to, reflect on and absorb into memory. We will need to decide how to react or not to react. That saying



of picking your battles comes to mind.

However, regardless of what I'm going through personally, what I witness, hear in the news, a lot of it trivial, it's hard to imagine staring across a stonewall at someone who did their best to kill you, yet raises their hand in friendship. It takes a level of forgiveness most of us cannot fathom.

If you think about it, holding a grudge is a burden and physically demanding. Forgiveness can be a powerful tool for mental well-being. It can reduce anxiety and ease stress.

"Forgiveness is defined as replacing ill will toward an offender with good-

will, and it does not condone the harm but acknowledges it and helps you be free from it." It can benefit both the forgiver and the person being forgiven.

So, I figure if those soldiers can forgive at that level, I should be able to forgive that person for cutting me off in traffic, or being rude about something, or hurting my feelings. I hope that if you are in a situation that requires forgiveness of someone, that you consider doing so by remembering these men.

