



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Public bids farewell to wax figures at former Gettysburg American Civil War Wax Museum

By Jennifer Wentz, Hanover Evening Sun, March 15, 2014

Abraham Lincoln: \$1,500.

John Wilkes Booth: \$350.

Bidding farewell to a piece of Gettysburg history: Priceless.

Crowds packed the former American Civil War Wax Museum in Gettysburg Saturday when it auctioned off more than 300 exhibit items.

Many of these items, including approximately 95 life-size Civil War figures dressed in period clothing, had stood guard over the museum's hallways and display booths for more than five decades.

Following a change in ownership, however, the museum — now called the Gettysburg Heritage Center — is undergoing renovations to create exhibits that focus on the experiences of Gettysburg's townspeople during the infamous battle.

These changes mean figures and displays many locals remember from their childhoods had to find new homes.

"I'm sort of sad to see this part of Gettysburg history depart," said Michael Birkner, president of the Gettysburg Borough Council. Birkner and his daughter, Joanna, browsed the exhibits Saturday, which were displayed throughout the auction. He had no plans to bid on anything, but he wanted to make a final visit to a place that holds nostalgic value for many Gettysburg residents.

One such resident is Michael Flaherty, of Gettysburg, who was considering purchasing one of the

display booths to turn into a play area for his children Saturday.

"I remember when I was a kid, this was one of the scariest places you could imagine," he said of the wax museum.

Linda Faul, who used to live in Gettysburg, drove from New Jersey to say goodbye to the exhibits. Like many people Saturday, she had no plans to buy anything.

"(The wax museum) is a part of history," she said. "It's just nice to see it one more time."

So, who would buy a life-size Civil War figure?

Philip Gallant, for one. He purchased a figure from the 54th Massachusetts display for \$440.

Gallant owns The Antique Circus near Baltimore. He believes the figure he bought is made out of real wax, even though the auction catalog did not list it as such.

Because most of the museum's figures consist of vinyl and plastic materials, this one is especially valuable, Gallant said. He expects to sell it for more than \$1,000.



Auctioneers bid off a period era hat during the American Civil War Wax Museum auction in Gettysburg on Saturday. As buyers clear out their auction purchases throughout the week, they will make way for new exhibits at the Gettysburg Heritage Center. (Ryan Blackwell — Public Opinion)

Some other notable museum figures sold Saturday include Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant from the Appomattox display, George Meade

from the Northern Military Leaders display and Jesus Christ from the Stonewall Jackson display. Each of these figures sold for close to \$1,000. Less significant players in the war, by contrast, generally cost bidders between \$100 and \$500.

As buyers clear out their auction purchases throughout the week, they will make way for new exhibits at the Gettysburg Heritage Center.

The center, which was acquired by Gettysburg-based FutureStake Inc. in August, hopes to create a more interactive experience for visitors with additions including two 3-D videos and two "smart tables," similar to oversized iPads, center President Tammy Myers said in February.

Work on the gallery is expected to be completed by Memorial Day weekend. Renovations to the center's gift shop and theater are expected to be finished by April 1.

Borough President Birkner said while he will miss the old exhibits, he is excited to watch the changes unfold.

"It's not the end," he said. "It's the beginning of a new chapter for the museum."

Civil War identity puzzle solved

By Michael E. Ruane, The Washington Post, March 8, 2014

WASHINGTON — The 26 Union soldiers were posed for the camera somewhere near Brandy Station, Va., in late 1863 or early 1864.

The front rank stood at parade rest, hands clasped around muskets. The rear ranks stood so their faces could be seen. They were serious young men approaching the final, bloody months of the Civil War.

The Library of Congress, which owns the rare tintype, had described it as an "unidentified company of soldiers"



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

— anonymous Yankees whose stories and fates seemed forgotten. But last month, a New York high school teacher spotted the photo on a Civil War Facebook page and recognized the image. Now the Library of Congress, which has a digital version on its website, has names and stories to go with the faces.

"Often, the pictures are powerful," said Helena Zinkham, chief of the library's prints and photographs division. "But having the biographical narrative so enriches the meaning of the moment.

"Who was just new to the company?" she asked. "Who was just leaving? Who might die later?"

The photograph depicts men of Company H, of the 124th New York infantry, nicknamed "the Orange Blossoms" because many were from Orange County. The outfit had already lost its colonel and many of its men in the war.

"Each individual person had a fate and a story," Zinkham said.

Two of the men in the photograph would later be killed in combat. Another man would be captured and die in the notorious Andersonville prison camp. And another would live to receive the Medal of Honor and become a member of Congress.

The picture, an unusual outdoor group photograph, is one of 1,200 Civil War images donated to the library in recent years by collector Tom Liljenquist, of McLean, Va.

Liljenquist bought it for \$3,500 four years ago at a collectors' show in Gettysburg, Pa. and gave it to the library in 2010, the library said.

"It's a magnificent photograph, a very rare half-plate tintype, in its beautiful original folding case," Liljenquist said Wednesday.

A tintype is a photograph printed on a

thin sheet of metal, and "half-plate" refers to the photo's relatively large size, he said.

When Liljenquist bought it, there was no accompanying identification. He said such cased original photographs, especially outdoor shots, rarely come down through history with detailed information.



Library of Congress photo

"Now it's just incredible that we have these guys identified," he said.

Last month, Garry Adelman, vice president of the Center for Civil War Photography, posted a copy of the photo on his Civil War Facebook page to see if anybody had any knowledge about it.

"I had no real hope of identifying the thing," he said Wednesday.

But when Ryan McIntyre, a high school social studies teacher in Ellenville, N.Y., visited Adelman's page, he recognized the picture.

"I looked at it and I said, 'I've seen this picture before,'" McIntyre said in a telephone interview Wednesday. He had seen a copy in the holdings of the Historical Society of Walden and the Wallkill Valley in Orange County. "It was like an 'Aha!' moment," he said.

McIntyre said the copy with the historical society includes a note written in 1910 by Lt. John Hays and identifies many of the men. Hays, who appears in the photo and was in

his 20s when it was taken, was probably about 70 in 1910.

McIntyre said the picture and the information about the men also appear in a 2012 history of the regiment by Charles LaRocca, who credits the historical society for the picture and the identities.

Adelman noted: "Having it in a book identified is one thing. Having it (identified) on the Library of Congress catalogue, where everybody can see the (high-resolution) version, is another."

The men of the company probably had been in the relative comfort of winter quarters, McIntyre said. They appear healthy and well fed, if a little rumpled.

"This is not a company that has been on the road," he said.

They are flanked on the right by their captain, David Crist, who was then about 47. He was killed May 30, 1864, in fighting at Totopotomoy Creek, outside of Richmond, Va., according to information gathered by Adelman and McIntyre.

Another officer later described Crist as "a kind friend, a noble soldier, and a man whose whole soul was wrapped up in his country's cause," according to an 1870s history of the regiment.

Standing near Crist is British-born Sgt. Thomas Bradley, who many years after the war would be awarded the Medal of Honor for fetching ammunition under heavy fire at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863.

Bradley went on to serve as a U.S. congressman for 10 years.

Near him stands James Crist, about 28, who was wounded and captured at Totopotomoy Creek and died Nov. 11, 1864, in the Andersonville prison camp. It isn't clear if or how the Crists were related.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Another doomed soldier in the photograph, standing near James Crist, is Chester Judson, about 18 years old. Judson would be killed by a rebel sniper Sept. 14, 1864, in the trench warfare around Petersburg, Va.

He was shot in the head during the day while at his picket post, but a comrade had to wait until dark to drag his body into Union territory.

"We buried him by moonlight, and it was a most solemn scene," an officer recounted. "We wrapped him in his blanket, and placed him in a cracker box coffin. A prayer was offered at his grave which was dug and filled in by the chief mourners, and I reported one less man for duty

Civil War flag uncovered in auditorium basement

Inscription helps trace history of Union soldier, battle

By GRANT WELKER, The (Lowell, Mass.) Sun, February 28, 2014
LOWELL, Mass. (AP) – Union troops were deep in enemy territory, outnumbered badly by Confederate forces on a battlefield in Clinton, La., near the Mississippi border. Among the Union troops in Louisiana were many from Lowell, who were recruited to fight in the far South by Gen. Benjamin Butler of Lowell, who had been appointed military governor of New Orleans in 1862.

Solon Perkins, a lieutenant in the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment, was caught on the wrong side of the Clinton battle on June 3, 1863. Shot once in the arm, Perkins initially fought on.

"Now boys, let us show these scoundrels that we can fight," Perkins implored his comrades, before being hit again only minutes later.

He died about two hours later, suffering little or no pain, according to a Lowell minister who passed on details of Perkins' death later that summer, based on information given to Perkins' mother.

Not until 151 years later has a piece of that battle been found – a tattered, faded and worn flag that Perkins had flying over him or maybe even worn at the time he was shot.

The flag was uncovered last month only when employees of Global Spectrum, which runs Lowell Memorial Auditorium, were in the basement of the building and saw it. They contacted their supervisor, who reached out to the Greater Lowell Veterans Council, which now is planning to have the flag preserved and displayed in the auditorium's Hall of Flags.

"The thing, when you see it, it's incredible," said Robert Page, a veterans council commander. "It's absolutely incredible."

The council has a duty to have the flag restored, said Page, adding that no one knows exactly why the flag was put in basement storage.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw it," he said.

Piecing together the flag's history came together pretty quickly, thanks to an inscription on the thick wood framing around the flag: "Under this flag at Clinton, La., on June 3, 1863, Solon A. Perkins was killed."

The council's historian, Richard Howe Jr., got to work, using his city politics and history blog to spread word of the finding, which also brought more information.

"I recognized the guy's name right away," said Howe, who leads tours of Lowell Cemetery. Howe's tour actually passes by Perkins' gravestone, which Howe said he now plans to add to the tour.

The speculation is that so much is known about Perkins because he was from a wealthy family. Perkins, who was born in Lancaster, N.H., in 1836, went into international business after graduating from Lowell High School, working in Buenos Aires and in Mexico, becoming fluent in French and Spanish, according to Howe's research.

At age 27, Perkins enlisted for the Civil War.

Eileen Loucraft, a board member at the Lowell Historical Society, said she thinks the guidon flag, which differs from a normal flag by the V-shape cut out of its right side, may actually have been worn like a sash by Perkins. That's because a trail of descriptions of the flag over the years make it clear it's the same item, with its elaborate and unique frame. In an 1894 story in the Lowell Daily Sun, the flag was described as a sash worn by Perkins when he was killed.

The flag, Loucraft found in her research, appears to have been donated to Lowell Memorial Auditorium in 1929 by Mary Sawyer Knapp, a woman known to have a large collection of war relics.

It was installed in the auditorium, then must have been removed at some point during renovations, Howe said. It was found in the basement behind a piano.

The flag and frame, which weigh an estimated 60 or 70 pounds, certainly aren't in great shape. The left side of the glass has separated from the frame, and streaks run through the dusty glass as if it's the result of humidity. One of three wood panels behind the flag is missing.

A few dozen names of what look like locations of battles – places like Yellow Bayou, Fisher's Hill and Georgia Landing – are etched in the side of one of the frames.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

A guidon flag had a more practical than ornamental purpose during the Civil War, experts said.

They often would be associated with cavalry, or those who fought on horseback, and typically were flown with a state and national flag, said Peter Drummey, head librarian at the Massachusetts Historical Society. The head of a regiment typically would carry the guidon flag atop a pole to identify the regiment, Breeze said.

The flags also were used to signal to soldiers during battle where they stood in relation to the rest of their regiment and to individual units, Drummey said.

After the Civil War ended, he said, many of the flags were returned to the Statehouse to hang in the building's Hall of Flags. According to the Statehouse, flags from the Civil War and subsequent wars now hang in protected storage, with replicas hanging in their place.

Despite the flag's rough condition, such flags are valued by collectors, according to the website for antique flag collector Jeff R. Bridgman Antiques Inc.

"Military issue, Union Civil War battle colors are one of the 'Holy Grails' of the flag-collecting world," the company says. "They rarely surface in the marketplace because so few survived in private hands."

The Toys of War

By SARAH BURNS and DANIEL GREENE, New York Times, February 27, 2014

Just in time for Christmas 1866, a 30-year-old game creator named Milton Bradley ran an advertisement in Colman's Rural World, a St. Louis-based publication for farmers. Bradley, a lithographer living in

Springfield, Mass., was already well known for inventing "The Checkered Game of Life" in 1860. His 1866 ad promoted his games and amusements as "moral, entertaining, wonderful, and instructive." Among these wonders was the Myriopticon, a toy panorama containing 22 scenes from the history of the "Rebellion" so recently concluded. The toy evidently caught on, at least for a time. The next year, another Bradley puff described the Myriopticon as "immensely popular with boys," especially those ages 7 to 12.

Given the subject – the bloody conflict that ended three-quarters of a million lives – the Myriopticon might seem an unusual choice for Christmas cheer. But Milton Bradley's picture story wrapped the grisly conflict in bright theatrical trappings fit for even the most refined middle-class parlor. In that colorful box were the tools and the script for a splendid game. It made the war dramatic, entertaining, and – above all – fun.



Milton Bradley's Myriopticon, a parlor game containing images from the history of the "Rebellion" or the American Civil War, came with directions, lecture, a poster and tickets.

Made of cardboard, the elaborately decorated box – roughly a foot square – mimicked a proscenium stage, with heavy, draped curtains and patriotic bunting as well as a medieval king and queen, a harpist and a tambourine player on the sidelines. On stage, the hand-colored pictures glided past on a long scroll

affixed to wooden dowels on either end that could be wound up with a crank or handle.

The complete kit included a broadside announcing the "Grand Artistic and Historical Exhibition," of the "Great Rebellion," a sheet of pretend tickets, and a script for the lucky little showman to follow as the pictures rolled by.

The instructions recommended that the "exhibition" take place in a darkened room, with parlor curtains drawn around the box and a candle light behind it to mimic the ambience of a real theater. The broadside played up the performance, too, "respectfully" requesting the audience to remain seated till the first scene rolled by.

The opening scene in the miniature epic represents Maj. Robert Anderson and his men entering Fort Sumter on Dec. 26, 1860, preparing to defend it against Confederate assault. The pictures move from combat to comic camp scenes, signal towers and mortars, and rebel prisoners under guard. (Bradley supposedly copied the lot from Harper's Weekly, though no one has yet done a systematic analysis.)

Among the crude but lively renditions, Winslow Homer's "Sharpshooter" (which ran in Harper's as "The Army of the Potomac" on Nov. 15, 1862) stands out, the original black and white enhanced by hand coloring in red and blue. Next is the Battle of Fredericksburg, which in turn shifts to a quieter scene (verifiably from a Harper's issue of Jan. 31, 1863) of contrabands just arriving at a Union camp.

The script is as lively as the drawings, mixing a sprightly tone, fast pace and broad humor appropriate for a target audience of prepubescent boys. A depiction of Union foragers



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

attempting to capture some rambunctious hogs is labeled a "very pig-chew-resque scene," and the script styles Homer's dead-serious sharpshooter as the putative relative of a celebrated poet, because he is evidently a "very long fellow." In other sections, the "you are there" address lends immediacy, as when viewers are warned to "proceed very carefully" in approaching a party of soldiers around a campfire.

The Myriopticon was a juvenile variant on other educational amusements made for the middle-class Northern parlor. Adults and children alike peered into stereoscopes for stunningly illusionistic three-dimensional views of Civil War camps, weapons and even dead bodies strewn on battlefields. They also could play and sing war songs around the piano. Soon after the end of hostilities, they could (if affluent) page through Alexander Gardner's hefty two-volume "Photographic Sketchbook of the War," which, like the Myriopticon, presented a tightly scripted history scattered with surprising elisions, notably the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. (Gardner's "Photographic Sketchbook," like Bradley's Myriopticon, dates from 1866.) The last scene in the "Photographic Sketchbook" shows the dedication of the monument at Bull Run; the last in the Myriopticon is the burning and evacuation of Richmond on the night of April 2, 1865.

Of course, no one would ever accuse Gardner or Bradley of engineering a cover-up by failing to include the assassination or glossing over the achievements of black soldiers in the Union Army. But such omissions clue us in to their shared agenda. Both Gardner and Bradley structured and shaped not just the story but also the

memory of the war, all scaled down to manageable size, packaged and marketed for home entertainment and instruction. Book and toy alike stand witness to the ways in which the far-off conflict infiltrated and changed daily life, even after the war had ended. A miniature theater of war designed to play and replay the war over and over again, the Myriopticon enshrined and preserved its remembrance. As the instructions put it: "It is much better to have the lecture committed to memory than to read it, as then the facts are impressed upon the memory, and any other remarks can be mixed in, or the description varied to any extent, as long as the facts and dates are retained."

But they were very particular facts. The Myriopticon told a thrilling saga of bravery, heroic sacrifice, Yankee ingenuity and inevitable triumph, with a few chuckles along the way. It recounted the war as an almost exclusively masculine field of action. And it was very modern in the way it mediated, commercialized and mass-produced the history and memory of the war for fun and profit.

Perhaps the Myriopticon's most modern quality is its proto-cinematic flow. Close-ups give way to distant views in seamless montage. There are lots of guns and explosions, and, just before the grand finale, the uplifting moment when "colored troops" enter Charleston, S.C., where it all began four years earlier. The final apocalyptic scene is a wide-angle view that shows the silhouettes of defeated troops fleeing Richmond as the city burns behind them. Put it in motion, and this scene could be the burning of Atlanta in the 1939 film "Gone With the Wind."

The Myriopticon still fascinates us today because it is *almost* a movie. In

1866, Bradley also advertised his model of the Zoetrope, a hollow drum which, when rapidly spun, gives the illusion of motion to pictures on the inner surface. It would be decades before storytelling technology finally caught up to create the motion picture as we know it. But the engagingly interactive Myriopticon deserves a place in the genealogy of the modern war movie, which, like its distant ancestor, brings the war home with gripping narrative, vivid imagery, and rousing action.

Rewriting the Gettysburg Address

By MARTIN P. JOHNSON, New York Times, February 21, 2014

Abraham Lincoln did not give the Gettysburg Address on Nov. 19, 1863 — at least, not the one engraved on the Lincoln Memorial, the one memorized by millions the world over. Lincoln actually wrote the words recognized today as the Gettysburg Address months after the cemetery dedication, during a full and complete revision of his speech that he finished in February 1864.

Lincoln's revisions added about 14 percent more words to his original delivery text, the so-called Nicolay Draft, adding several key passages. But no addition was more important than the words "under God": Lincoln had spoken those words, and others that were not in the delivery manuscript, in the inspiration of the moment, when he stood on the speaker's platform and dedicated the nation to "a new birth of freedom."

Influential observers, from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to the editors of Harper's Weekly, had immediately recognized the beauty and power of Lincoln's speech as it was reported in the press. Soon it was being recited at funerals and quoted in political



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

speeches, and the next year it began to appear in schoolbooks and handbooks of rhetoric. Even the featured speaker at the ceremony, Edward Everett, whose underappreciated speech was overshadowed by the president's short address, later praised Lincoln's words. Lincoln later told his old friend James Speed "that he had never received a compliment he prized more highly."

Yet, the attention given his speech created a problem for Lincoln. In late January 1864, Everett asked Lincoln for "the manuscript of your dedicatory remarks," so that it could be sold at a charity fair. Sending the delivery text would, however, publicize a text that differed markedly from the newspaper reports. According to Lincoln's secretary John Nicolay, who was directly involved, "Lincoln saw" that the newspaper accounts of his spoken words were "imperfect," but also that, when compared with those reports and with his own recollection of what he had said, the delivery manuscript "seemed incomplete."

Lincoln's difficulty is our fortune, however, because rather than choose one text or the other, Lincoln created a new, revised version to send to Everett. The great care Lincoln took in creating the revised "Everett" version reveals that he recognized that this speech, these words, had undeniable power and meaning at that crucial moment in the Civil War.

Lincoln's first step in creating this new version was to write out a copy, not of his delivery manuscript, but of one of the published accounts of the words he had reportedly spoken. This was a sign that, for Lincoln, the additions and changes that he made while speaking at the ceremony were vital elements of his evolving thought, building and enlarging upon the

foundation provided by the delivery text. The published version of his words that Lincoln chose as the foundation text of his revision was close at hand: it was the version in the "authorized" report on the Gettysburg ceremony published by Edward Everett, which was in turn essentially a reprinting of the version originally published in *The New York Tribune* the day after the dedication. Everett had sent the "authorized" edition to Lincoln within a day or two of his request for "the manuscript" of Lincoln's remarks, and Lincoln mentioned having it in his cover letter for the revised manuscript that he sent to Everett dated Feb. 4, 1864.

Lincoln's handwritten copy included a few changes and is known as the "Hay Draft" in honor of Lincoln's secretary John Hay. For over a century the "Hay" text puzzled and confused those seeking to understand how Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address, and over the years it has been held up as the first draft, the delivery text, or even a souvenir copy made for John Hay. But it seems certain now that Lincoln wrote and edited the "Hay" when he first set about reconciling the delivery manuscript and the reports of his spoken words.

In the second stage of revision, working from the basis of the edited "Hay" copy, Lincoln wrote a new, clean manuscript to send to Everett that included additional, mainly stylistic, changes. Expressing Lincoln's choice of his spoken words as the foundation for his revisions, the final "Everett" revised manuscript incorporated his spoken "under God" in the passage of his delivery text that had originally read, "that the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom."

Lincoln's revised manuscript also retained other spoken innovations,

like twice repeating, with slight variation, the phrase that in the delivery text read, "It is rather for us, the living." This allowed Lincoln to retain in the revised "Everett" text a wholly new phrase he had added while speaking – "... be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on" – in addition to the single phrase of his manuscript delivery text, "...be dedicated to the great task remaining before us." Five times, Lincoln's delivery manuscript used variations of the word "dedicated," and Lincoln made sure that his revised version incorporated his sixth, spoken use of the word, affirming and reaffirming his own commitment, and ours, to the "the great task" and to "the unfinished work" of preserving and extending the promise of a nation born in the struggle for freedom and equality.

But Lincoln's revised "Everett" manuscript also reverted to the wording of his original delivery manuscript at some points where it differed from the published accounts of what he had reportedly said. Most important, the revised version included the words "... and that government of the people, by the people, for the people" that are found in the delivery text, even though the reports of his spoken words all included "and" for the people.

Similarly, reports of his spoken words agree that Lincoln twice repeated the words "we are met," but in the revised manuscript Lincoln returned to the wording of the original "Nicolay" delivery text, which has instead "we are met" and "we have come." Lincoln's choices here and in other examples underscore the extent to which, throughout both the composition and the revision of his speech, he sought to combine both sound and sense, poetry and policy,



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

in words he knew were widely considered both meaningful and beautiful.

The extent of the changes to the original delivery manuscript, even months after the event, reveals that Lincoln himself was striving toward a clearer understanding of his vision of the Civil War, and of the American experiment that he had expressed on that brilliant November day. Abraham Lincoln did give a speech at the Gettysburg cemetery on Nov. 19, 1863, but it was Lincoln's revisions after returning to Washington, and our own national re-vision and renewal of the ideals he proclaimed, that continue to give us our Gettysburg Address.

Gettysburg book wins \$50,000 history prize

AP, March 18, 2014

NEW YORK (AP) — A book about the Civil War conflict in Gettysburg has won a \$50,000 prize.

Allen C. Guelzo's "Gettysburg: The Last Invasion" has received the inaugural Guggenheim-Lehrman Prize in Military History. The prize's sponsors made the announced Tuesday.

The award was established last year by the Harry F. Guggenheim Foundation and Lewis E. Lehrman, a businessman, former Republican candidate for governor and co-founder of the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History.

Fort Bliss to rename Robert E. Lee Road to honor Buffalo Soldiers

By David Burge, El Paso Times, February 19, 2014

Fort Bliss wants to give a lasting, fitting tribute to the Buffalo Soldiers, a group of African-American soldiers who were instrumental in protecting settlers as they moved West after the Civil War.

But to do so, the installation will remove the name of one of America's most famous generals from a major street that runs through part of the post.

On Thursday, Fort Bliss officials will hold a ceremony to change the name of Robert E. Lee Road, which provides access to the southern part of the post, to Buffalo Soldier Road. Last fall, the name of the gate on that same road was changed to Buffalo Soldier Gate and officials announced plans to change the name of the street as well.

It's a move that has stirred debate among people who love and study history.

Lee served as the top general for the Confederacy during the Civil War and has a reputation for being one of the finest soldiers the nation has ever produced.

But Lee has no historical connection to Fort Bliss, post officials said. Also, elements of four Buffalo Soldier regiments either called Fort Bliss home or served in the vicinity in the latter half of the 19th century, post officials added.

Robert E. Lee Road already contains a statue memorializing the Buffalo Soldiers.



The Buffalo Soldier memorial greets motorists

entering Fort Bliss on Thursday at the Buffalo Soldier Gate. (Rudy Gutierrez — El Paso Times)

"It's historically accurate and appropriate to honor them by renaming the street," said Lt. Col. Lee Peters, spokesman for Fort Bliss and the 1st Armored Division.

It's also fitting to honor the Buffalo Soldiers' "sacrifice, legacy and accomplishments" and to do so during February, which is Black History Month, Peters added.

Buffalo Soldiers were instrumental in securing the border with Mexico and protecting settlers from "outlaws and marauders," Peters said.

The tie to Fort Bliss extends into the 20th century. African-American anti-aircraft units trained at Fort Bliss during World War II and these units traced their history back to the Buffalo Soldiers, Peters said.

Still, the move has stirred some debate over removing Lee's name from the road.

Bernie Sargent, chairman of the El Paso County Historical Commission, said the move caught him by surprise.

In the past, Sargent worked with various groups to construct a Buffalo Soldier monument at historic Concordia Cemetery in Central El Paso and he fully acknowledges their impact on the history of the Southwest and the El Paso area.

"They were unsung heroes in the history of the Southwest," Sargent said.

But Sargent has mixed emotions about eliminating the reference to Lee.

"Although he was not stationed at Fort Bliss, his influence and impact as a military commander goes without saying," Sargent said. "He definitely has a place in history."

Sargent also noted that Lt. Col. William Wallace Smith Bliss, whom Fort Bliss was named after, was



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

never stationed here, either. His remains were moved here long after his death to make room for a highway in New Orleans, where he was originally buried, Sargent said.

Waite Rawls is chief executive officer of the Museum of the Confederacy and co-CEO of the American Civil War Museum, combined facilities that are based in Richmond, Va., the capital of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Rawls, who was stationed at Fort Bliss in 1971 when he attended Officers Basic School, said he also has "split emotions."

"The Buffalo Soldiers were a great outfit and are deserving of recognition," Rawls said.

But he questions the rationale of removing Lee's name from the road.

"There are a lot of place names named after people who were never there," Rawls said. "Here at my museum in Richmond, we have a statue of Abraham Lincoln, and he was never where that statue was."

Removing the name of a person who was thought to be very important "should be done sparingly and with good reason," Rawls said.

Rawls said he wouldn't call it a trend, but the names of Confederate generals have been removed from other places around the nation too.

"It's disturbing cause you are removing an important part of the American experience, our history," he said.

In August 2000, Fort Bliss changed the name of Forrest Road to Cassidy Road to pay tribute to the late Lt. Gen. Richard T. Cassidy, a former Fort Bliss commanding general who served from 1968-71. Forrest Road had been named after controversial Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, who is probably best known today for his brutal tactics during the

Civil War and for being an early leader in the Ku Klux Klan.

Equating Lee to Forrest is not fair, but not because of the controversy surrounding Forrest, Rawls said.

"It's about their relative importance in history," Rawls said. "It's like comparing John F. Kennedy to Millard Fillmore."

Maceo C. Dailey, director of the African-American Studies Program at UTEP, has a different take. Dailey called the renaming of the road a "welcome decision."

"The story of the Buffalo Soldiers in the West is so phenomenal," Dailey said. "To my knowledge, I don't know if Robert E. Lee ever visited this region. It makes much more sense to name it after part of the history, folklore and forging of this community."

Bob Snead is an El Paso artist who served in the Army for 30 years. The Buffalo Soldier statue that's already at Fort Bliss was modeled after his painting, "The Errand of Cpl. Ross."

Snead said this part of Fort Bliss was the area where African-American troops were quartered before the Army was integrated.

"I think it's about time," Snead said about the name change.

Search on for descendants of New Market VMI veterans

Progress-Index, March 13, 2014

NEW MARKET - With the 150th anniversary of the Civil War Battle of New Market just two months away, efforts are increasing to locate descendants of the Virginia Military Institute cadets who fought at what was one of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia's key battles on May 15, 1864.

Since 2012, the Virginia Museum of the Civil War, which is part of the VMI Museum System, has been tracking down descendants, with the goal of inviting as many of them as possible to the 150th anniversary re-enactment of the battle, to be held May 16-18 at New Market Battlefield State Historical Park, where the museum is located.

Any direct or collateral descendant of a New Market soldier, whether Union, Confederate, or VMI cadet, is invited to attend the re-enactment free of charge.

To obtain a pass for the event, descendants should contact Maj. Troy Marshall, park site director, at 540-333-3270

or marshalltd@vmi.edu.

Because of the historicity of this year's event, there has been a special emphasis on finding descendants of the VMI cadets, who were sent into the battle as a last resort to shore up the Confederate position. Ten cadets died either on the battlefield or as a result of wounds received during the battle.

Thanks to the efforts of Ken Dice, VMI Class of 1964, an amateur genealogist with a passion for research, nearly 1,000 descendants of the cadet soldiers have been identified. In February, invitation letters were sent out to all of them. As of mid-March, 177 descendants had signed up to attend the re-enactment. As registration responses have arrived, some noteworthy facts have emerged about those who intend to attend. Of the 177 planning to attend, approximately 20 are VMI alumni. At least three registrants have more than one New Market cadet as an ancestor, and at least two are current VMI cadets.