



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

National Civil War Medicine Museum exec director resigns

Associated Press March 16, 2015

FREDERICK, Md. — He's been a long time leader at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, and now George Wunderlich is stepping down as Executive Director. He says his resignation is effective August 1st.

"We're obviously very sorry to see him leave. He's been great, great asset to the Museum. And change is never what you look forward to, but I think we're going to moving on from this point," says Betsy Estilow, the President of the Museum's board.

Under Wunderlich's leadership, Estilow points out that the Museum expanded from its downtown Frederick location to the Pry House Field Hospital at the Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, and the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office in Washington DC. "All of these moves have helped, I think, in spreading the story of Civil War medicine and its impact on medicine today, and George has instrumental in that," Estilow says.

WFMD News left a message for Wunderlich at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine seeking comment, but he has not returned our call. In a statement, he calls it a "bittersweet announcement. Over the years, I have seen the Museum grow into an internationally respected institution and a major economic engine in Frederick County. The Museum is in the strongest position it has been since its founding. Now is the perfect time for a new director to come on board and bring a new set of talents for the Museum's next phase of its life."

The statement does not say what he plans to do after leaving as Executive Director, but Estilow says "it's just retirement. I think he's interested in moving his interest in a different direction."

The Museum's board held a work session on Saturday to discuss the search for a new director. "Obviously, we're going to be looking for a forward thinking leader," says Estilow. "We're probably going to be looking for someone with some museum experience."

She says the Museum has four months to look for a new Executive Director as Wunderlich will stay on the job until August 1st.

"I wish to thank George for all he has accomplished for the National Museum of Civil War Medicine," said Dr. Gordon Dammann, the founder of the Museum, in a statement. "During his tenure, we have opened the Pry House Field Hospital on the Antietam National Battlefield, and now we're in the process of putting the finishing touches on the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum in Washington DC. He has worked tirelessly for the Letterman Institute and has been essential in telling the true story of Civil War Medicine. I wish him well in all of his future endeavors."

Wunderlich is also a well-known maker of Civil-war era banjo replicas.

Maryland Heart of Civil War Heritage Area offers grants

Carroll County Times, March 17, 2015

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a certified heritage area encompassing parts of Carroll, Frederick and Washington counties, is offering competitive mini-grants

between \$500 and \$2,500 to heritage sites, nonprofit organizations, and government units within the heritage area to develop new and innovative programs, partnerships, exhibits, tours, events and other heritage tourism-related initiatives. Grant-funded projects must take place within the geographic boundaries of the heritage area and be consistent with goals and priorities of the HCWHA management plan. The deadline for this round of mini-grants is April 1, with award notifications by the end of May.

To receive the guidelines and application form for this grant opportunity, contact Auni Gelles at agelles@fredco-md.net or 301-600-4031.

The Mystery of Civil War Arlington, Va's Camp Casey

By Chelsea Gilmour,
Consortiumnews.com, February 26,
2015

As much as Virginia loves its Civil War history — chronicling and commemorating almost every detail — Camp Casey isn't one of the places that gets glorified or even remembered. Located somewhere in what's now Arlington County, just miles from the White House and U.S. Capitol, Camp Casey was where regiments of African-American troops were trained to fight the Confederacy to end slavery.

While not the largest Union base for training U.S. Colored Troops (USCT), Camp Casey was one of the few located within the boundaries of a Confederate state. Yet, despite its historical significance, or perhaps because of it, Camp Casey has been largely lost to history.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Throughout Arlington itself, there are markers designating where Union forts and battlements were located. But there are no markers remembering Camp Casey, where the 23rd USCT regiment was trained and outfitted to go south to fight for African-American freedom – and where other USCT units bivouacked and drilled on their marches south. Even Camp Casey's precise location has become something of a mystery with county historians offering conflicting accounts.

That haziness itself raises troubling questions, since Camp Casey arguably was the most historically significant Civil War site in Arlington. It was not just some static fort that never was attacked but an active training ground for hundreds of African-Americans to take up arms against the historic crime of black enslavement.

Camp Casey's Role

Named after Major General Silas Casey, who oversaw the training of new recruits near Washington, Camp Casey was in operation from 1862-1865 and served as an important rendezvous point for Union troops, accommodating some 1,800 soldiers. It also housed prisoners of war and included a hospital.

General Casey wrote the *Infantry Tactics for Colored Troops* in 1863, differentiating the training procedures for colored troops based on the racist notion that black soldiers were not as well equipped for combat or to follow orders, and would need to be spurred in order to fight as valiantly as whites. To give an idea of Camp Casey's significance as a USCT base, a letter from the camp dated Aug. 2, 1864, directs Colonel Bowman of the 84th Pennsylvania volunteers to forward all recruits for the colored

regiments in the Army of the Potomac to the recruiting rendezvous at Camp Casey instead of Camp Distribution as previously directed.

There were 138 African-American units serving in the Union Army during the Civil War – making up about one-tenth of the federal forces by the war's end in April 1865 – and at least 16 of those USCT regiments spent time at Camp Casey from 1864-1865, including the 6th, the 29th, and the 31st.

Camp Casey was the recruiting and training camp for the 23rd Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry with many recruits coming from Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania, Virginia, slave country about halfway between Washington and Richmond. In line with the standards of the time, USCT soldiers were not as well trained as white troops, were not given the best equipment, and were not paid as well. USCT soldiers also faced hostility and mistrust from some white Northern troops, meaning that they often were not placed on the front lines but got assigned to "fatigue duty," such as accompanying wagons and moving supplies. Nevertheless, USCT regiments battled heroically in several major clashes near the war's end and faced special dangers not shared by their white Northern comrades.

When blacks were admitted into the Union Army, Confederate President Jefferson Davis instituted a policy that refused to treat them as soldiers but rather as slaves in a state of insurrection, so they could be murdered upon capture or sold into slavery. The USCT soldiers were trained to expect no mercy and no quarter if wounded or captured.

Bravery Under Fire

When the 23rd USCT was dispatched to join the battle against General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, one of Union General George Meade's staff officers wrote in a demeaning letter about them: "As I looked at them my soul was troubled and I would gladly have seen them marched back to Washington. ... We do not dare trust them in battle. Ah, you may make speeches at home, but here, where it is life or death, we dare not risk it."

However, on May 15, 1864, the 23rd USCT engaged in what may have been the first clash between Lee's army and black troops. A chronology of the 23rd's history cites Noel Harrison at *Mysteries & Conundrums* describing how the 23rd came to the support of an Ohio cavalry unit confronting a Confederate force southeast of Chancellorsville.

According to an account uncovered by historian Gordon C. Rhea, one of the Ohio cavalymen wrote, "It did us good to see the long line of glittering bayonets approach, although those who bore them were Blacks, and as they came nearer they were greeted by loud cheers." The 23rd charged toward the Confederate position causing the Southern troops to withdraw, suffering several dead.

But the lack of faith in the African-American soldiers' commitment and skill would play a decisive role in the disastrous Battle of the Crater. The 23rd and 29th USCT regiments, both of which spent time at Camp Casey, were part of Union General Ambrose Burnside's Fourth Division, which was comprised of nine USCT regiments.

These regiments (the 23rd, the 29th, the 31st, the 43rd, the 30th, the 39th, the 28th, the 27th, and the 19th) were to lead the charge against



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Confederate defenses after a Union-crafted mine explosion blew an enormous crater under Confederate lines. Plans were changed, however, at the last minute when General Meade refused to allow the USCT to lead the advance.

Instead, the war-weary white troops commanded by General James Ledlie (a notorious drunk, whose lack of presence, much less leadership, during the battle was notable) led the way. Instead of charging around the crater, as the U.S. Colored Troops had been trained to do, the unprepared white replacements surged into the crater and were unable to get out. Union troops piled in on top of each other and were completely stuck, serving as easy targets for the Confederate soldiers above.

Finally, the USCT were called forth and served as a last stand against Confederate troops. Since they had initially been trained for the operation, they knew to avoid the crater and search for higher ground. But by that point, the botched attempt to take Petersburg had deteriorated into a massacre.

Lt. Robert K. Beecham, who had helped organize the USCT 23rd regiment, wrote about the soldiers' bravery: "The black boys formed up promptly. There was no flinching on their part. They came to the shoulder ... like true soldiers, as ready to face the enemy and meet death on the field as the bravest and best soldiers that ever lived."

According to the National Park Service, 209 USCT soldiers were killed in the battle with 697 wounded and 421 missing. The 23rd USCT from Camp Casey suffered the heaviest losses, with 74 killed, 115 wounded, and 121 missing.

Confederate troops murdered a number of the USCT soldiers as they sought to surrender.

After the Battle of the Crater, soldiers from the 23rd were among the Union troops to enter the Confederate capital of Richmond after it fell and were present for General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

The Mystery of Camp Casey

Arlington historians have various takes on why the history of Camp Casey has been so neglected with even its precise location a mystery. The Arlington Historical Society's stance is that it is not unusual to have lost a camp's location, since Arlington and Alexandria were both heavily fortified during the Civil War and there were many camps located throughout the area.

Further, unlike a fort, which would consist of a large physical construction, most training camps had tents pitched in a field with only a few solid wood-framed buildings.

But Franco Brown, a historian with the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, had a different take on why its location has been mostly lost to history. Calling Camp Casey "one of the biggest mysteries of the Civil War," he has spent the past eight years researching Camp Casey and had encountered many of the same difficulties that I did in finding definitive information.

While acknowledging that Camp Casey was not the biggest USCT base – Camp Penn in Pennsylvania and Camp Nelson in Kentucky were more important training locations – Brown said Camp Casey was largely lost to history because it wasn't significant to the state's dominant historians.

Brown said a key factor to consider when questioning how Camp Casey could have been ignored is to look at the attitudes of Virginians and the South after the war. At the war's conclusion, resentments ran high, and it would have been particularly galling to Southerners loyal to the Confederacy to acknowledge that there were African-American soldiers actively training on Virginian soil to fight for the North.

Where Was It?

There even remains the question: where was Camp Casey? When I set out recently to try to solve that mystery, I found remarkably little information and some of it was conflicting. The National Archives in Washington had little about the camp, mostly letters and muster rolls, and it wasn't until I asked the Arlington Historical Society's official historians that they seemed to give the matter much thought.

As far as the exact location of Camp Casey, there are a couple of conclusions. One thing seems certain, that it was located on or near Columbia Pike, then the main thoroughfare from Northern Virginia to Washington D.C.

Some letters from the time suggest that the camp was within sight of the Custis-Lee Mansion overlooking the Potomac River (now known as Arlington House above Arlington National Cemetery). That and other references to landmarks, including its supposed proximity to Freedman's Village, led some historical investigators to place Camp Casey on the south side of Columbia Pike, not far from the Long Bridge which crossed into Washington.

An advertisement on Sept. 5, 1865, from the *Daily National Republican*, a Washington, D.C. newspaper in



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

circulation from 1862-1866, announced the sale of government buildings at Camp Casey situated "about one and one-half miles from Long Bridge."

Jim Murphy of the Historical Society explained, "We think it [Camp Casey] would have been between the Long Bridge and Fort Albany, in a field in what is currently the [south] parking lot of the Pentagon. ... We concluded it was located there after going through letters and dispatches from the camp that discuss the colored troops training next to a field." (Long Bridge was located near today's I-395's 14th St. Bridge across the Potomac, and Fort Albany was just south of the current Air Force Memorial on Columbia Pike.)

The Pentagon-parking-lot location would likely have put it within sight of the Custis-Lee mansion and would place it close to Freedman's Village, a semi-permanent community for African-Americans freed by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation who escaped the Confederacy and were settled on a portion of Lee's plantation on the north side of Columbia Pike.

But Franco Brown cites other evidence in letters from the soldiers placing Camp Casey in the vicinity of Hunter's Chapel, which no longer exists but was then located at the intersection of Glebe Road and Columbia Pike, about two miles further southwest from the location cited in the newspaper ad.

Brown also has a contemporaneous lithographic depiction that puts Camp Casey on a bluff near an area that looks to be around the intersection of what is now Glebe Road and Walter Reed Drive. "This area is at the highest apex of the surrounding land," Brown said.

Brown also noted that the lithograph shows a tall tower in the distant left-hand background, the Fairfax Seminary, which still stands today as the Virginia Theological Seminary, about four miles further south in Alexandria.

Thus, he concluded that "the general vicinity [of Camp Casey] is likely between the present day locations of Glebe Road, Walter Reed Drive, Columbia Pike, and Route 50 [Arlington Boulevard]." Brown said he is confident in this conclusion saying, "I've got it within 500 yards of the original location."

Brown's location would place Camp Casey about three miles from the Long Bridge, among Fort Albany, Fort Berry and Fort Craig. There is also the possibility that Camp Casey involved several military way stations stretching along Columbia Pike, all known collectively as Camp Casey, which might explain the disparate descriptions of its location.

Though Arlington County has no plans to honor Camp Casey (or even work to ascertain its exact location), county officials have responded to public pressure to acknowledge Freedman's Village, where Sojourner Truth lived and worked for a time.

Confederate Civil War subs: Lost no more?

By John Andrew Prime, thenewsstar.com, January 25, 2015

A local historian and urban archaeologist thinks he's solved a mystery: What happened to four Confederate submersibles known to be in Shreveport the last two years of the Civil War, but missing in action since then.

Marty Loschen, director of the Spring Street Museum in downtown Shreveport, thinks he's found

remnants of the hand-propelled craft in the banks of a branch of Cross Bayou about a half-mile west of where the Confederate Navy had a shipyard. At Cross Bayou's mouth on Red River it was home to the leaky ironclad CSS Missouri and a fast packet, the Webb, whose presence overshadowed the humbler underwater vessels.

Several months ago, before recent rains raised water levels on Cross Bayou and its feeder streams, Loschen and his brother found decades-old rusted metal and some oddly formed tree roots whose shape suggested they had grown over something curved that had long rotted or rusted away. The site was on a bank revealed by low water on Bowman's chute, near Bowman and Dowling Streets in Allendale north of the Canaan Village apartments.

"It's breathtakingly beautiful out there," says Loschen, who spends much of his time exploring the more remote, forgotten and forbidding parts of old Shreveport. He points to the 1864 Venable Map of the defenses of Shreveport which shows several small buildings near where he found the artifacts.

"There's your sub base," he said. "On the Venable map there's an island out there. My theory is if you're going to have a clandestine sub base, you're going to put it out there. Look, there are structures out there, near what I found out beached — it has to be."

He's waiting for another period of low water.

"It's under at least 10 feet of water now," he said. "I'm trying to wait for the water to go down to go see those subs."

Famed diver Ralph Wilbanks, who found the wreck of the submarine CSS Hunley off Charleston Harbor in



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

1995, visited Shreveport twice in the last 15 years to search for the local submarines at the behest of best-selling author Clive Cussler, who also drove the search for the Hunley.

Wilbanks and a team of well-known fellow diver-researchers performed sonar and magnetometer searches of Red River and parts of Cross Bayou and Cross Lake, finding traces of old trucks from the flapper era, a dock that once served as a ferry link between Shreveport and Bossier City before bridges were built across the Red, and the remains of a Civil War gunboat, the Iron Duke.

But Wilbanks never went as far back into the murkier and shallower waters of Cross Bayou near where it traces its way through Ledbetter Heights and Allendale on its way to Cross Lake. Loschen's sub site is just west of where Wilbanks' surveys stopped.

Loschen is a former student and protégé of LSU Shreveport history professor and author Gary Joiner, who worked with Wilbanks and whose research over the last three decades revealed official records of the submarines' existence. Joiner thinks while Loschen might have stumbled onto something, it isn't the lost subs.

"He's wrong," Joiner says, noting that metal straps aren't stiffening ribs. He pointed to the Hunley, predecessor to the Shreveport subs, built by the same engineers but incorporating improvements.

"(The local subs) had the same everything except they had one hatch instead of two on the Hunley," Joiner said. "They didn't have ribs. They were done in the fashion of a boiler."

There's evidence the Shreveport subs existed. Reports of Union spies in Shreveport, as well as Confederate reports, detail the appearance and

dimensions of the submarines as well as operations to put mines in Red River for a Union invasion that never came. Five submarines were built, with one sent to the Houston/Galveston area in Texas, and lost in transit. The late historians and authors Eric Brock and Katherine Brash Jeter did considerable research on the subs and the Confederate Navy Yard and found documentation a number of machinists and engineers who had built the Hunley and other submarines for the South were in Shreveport the last year of the conflict. There have been similar significant archaeological discoveries in area waters.

Several decades ago, a fisherman on Red River in north Caddo Parish noticed something sticking out of a crumbling bluff. It turned out to be a wooden dugout canoe many centuries old, and one of the area's richest historical finds.

Known wrecks of Civil War-era vessels include the transport Kentucky, just south of the LSU-Shreveport campus, and the Union ironclad USS Eastport, sunk during the Red River Campaign of early 1864 near Montgomery, in Grant Parish.

That Civil War artifacts wound up in Cross Bayou also is a matter of historical record. Just over a century ago a newsletter of the predecessor of SWEPCO related a first-hand account from an older retiree at the time who had been a youth at the close of the conflict and had been part of a human chain of people tossing rifles, saddles, swords and other war contraband into the bayou prior to the occupation of the city by victorious Union units. That was based on an edict that any private

property used for war purposes would be subject to confiscation. The trove of artifacts has never been found.

Joiner thinks the lost subs are still under land or mud, probably in good condition, much like a Union ironclad that was in the Yazoo River for eight decades only to be salvaged in pretty good condition.

"If the subs are still around they'll be closer to J.S. Clark (School) or they're under Margaritaville, take your pick," he said. "And they would be in perfect condition if they have not been interfered with. Sandy mud is one of the best preservatives. Go over to Vicksburg and look at the USS Cairo."

The Birth of Civil War Reenacting

By SUE EISENFELD, New York Times, January 8, 2015

On the morning of Feb. 22, 1864 in Hillsborough, Ohio, a crowd gathered for a celebration of Washington's Birthday. "The usual monotony of our peaceful and quiet town was agreeably broken," wrote the local newspaper, the Highland Weekly News, when three cavalry companies forming the 24th Battalion of the Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, armed and equipped with sabers and carbines, paraded in front of the public square. No one but the officers knew what would happen. In short time, "the 4-pounder known as 'Old Red' was brought out, and a gun-squad formed of a number of veteran volunteers." Then the cavalry galloped off to the outskirts of town, the artillery took position and the infantry began building breastworks.

Finally, "the secret was out," the paper reported. There was to be a sham battle, and once the crowd realized what was coming, the



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

"excitement rose to fever heat," and "expectation stood on tip-toe." With the crack of pistols and carbines, hand-to-hand combat and "the sulphurous smoke of powder" — not to mention women screaming, boys yelling in delight and men and horses mingled in an inextricable mess, the scene is reported to have portrayed "a vivid imitation of the stern realities of war."

We tend to think of Civil War reenactment as a modern phenomenon, a way for people in the 20th and 21st centuries to experience a taste of what the conflict was like. But in fact, staged battles began while the war was still underway. Known as "sham battles," "mock battles" or "mimic battles," these battles were enacted for a variety of reasons: entertainment, practice and to demonstrate to civilians back home what happened during the war.

According to R. Lee Hadden, author of "Reliving the Civil War: A Reenactor's Handbook," people have been reenacting great events since the beginning of human society, including hunting experiences, religious events, and earlier wars. "Like today's reenactments," he writes, "there is noise, confusion, heat, and lack of shade." On July 4, 1861, in Findlay, Ohio, a company of foot and mounted soldiers engaged in a sham battle, followed by fireworks, with great hopes that by the next July 4th the government and army "will be enabled to quell the rebellion in the South, hang all the traitors, and restore our beloved Union to its once happy condition." On July 4, 1862, a sham battle in Bloomsburg, Penn., was "the feature of the day," according to *The Star of the North*, and won "the great admiration of the

large crowd convened to witness the fight."

Independence Day wasn't the only occasion for reenactments. To generate the "Christmas feeling" in Alexandria, Va., in 1861, "the fun became 'fast and furious,'" according to *The Local News*, "fire crackers sparkled and cracked" and "there was a mimic battle between opposing crowds," mostly in uniform. "The whole vicinity was thronged with eager combatants," according to the newspaper.

"The Yankees are great on shams," the *Daily Nashville Patriot* noted on Dec. 5, 1861, and, indeed, shams seem mostly a Union phenomenon. A report from *The Richmond Dispatch*, published by *The National Republican* in Washington, on Feb. 5, 1862, bemoans "the negligence on the part of [Confederate] officers in accustoming their men to the details of actual battle ... This is in strong contrast with the Yankees, who try, but vainly, by such expedients as grand reviews, sham battles, &c., to accustom their men to danger."

"They stand up to each other in mock battle like heroes, fight desperately with blank cartridges, and charge on their own lines with ... impetuosity," *The New Orleans Daily Crescent* sneered about the Yanks on July 4, 1861, after determining that the "great firing of guns" and smoke observed near Hampton Roads, Va., came from forces under Gen. Benjamin Butler, "merely exercising his men in a sham battle."

The report goes on: "Probably he means ... to frighten the Confederates ..., just as Chinese warriors sometimes attempt to scare the enemy by ringing bells and beating gongs." Others saw Butler's battle differently. According to Maj.

Troy D. Marshall, the site director of the Virginia Museum of the Civil War, the Yankees' need for shams, like the one fought in Winchester, Va., — "in enemy territory" — 10 days before the Battle of New Market in May 1864 "showed the trust they didn't have in their troops; they needed the drilling." Whether the men were sufficiently trained or not, such practice battles were used as ways "to get the men used to the excitement in the field," "to familiarize themselves with rapid movements of all kind of ground," noted one news account, "to accustom the Federals to the action that will early take place" and to teach the men how to get the feeling for war. Some places, like Fort Monroe, a Union outpost in Virginia, conducted sham battles daily. "I could not but think how easy a matter it was to stir up the passions of men as to produce strife and deadly carnage between them," one soldier reported on a sham near Culpeper, Va.

Occasional reports of Confederate sham battles surfaced as well. In Dalton, Ga., for example, the Confederates held a dress drill and sham battle on March 16, 1864, at which "there were a large attendance, especially of general officers" who witnessed musketry and artillery firing. According to *The Macon Beacon*, the day was "splendid — the whole affair was very imposing and drew forth the warmest praise of all who witnessed it."

A month later in Dalton, Confederate Gen. William J. Hardee's sham battle "was witnessed by a large number of ladies, soldiers, and citizens," according to *The Memphis Daily Appeal*. "It proved to be a very agreeable affair." Even though it was several years into the war, according to the paper, visitors to the area "had



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

a gay and unusual time for the past few days. Sham-battles are taking place, army theatricals have sprung up, dancing has been instituted, and mirth reinstated, almost beyond measure."

Although generally shams were "a luxury the Confederates could not afford," according to David Slay, the acting park historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, in late winter 1864 at Dalton, "a snowfall shut down operations and provided the Confederates with all the ammunition they could hurl at one another. What began as horseplay developed into a full-scale battle as the snowballing went from disorganized tribal melee to full Napoleonic battle array complete with regiments, flags, and officers."

In fact, many spontaneous skirmishes were of the "snowball battle" variety, according to John Hennessey, the chief historian and chief of interpretation at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. Snowball battles often used the same tactics as sham battles but were "raucously — sometimes ultra violent — fun."

Maryland's Emancipation and the Homecoming of Frederick Douglass

By Paul Kendrick, Huffpost.com,
November, 20, 2015

November 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of Frederick Douglass' return to Baltimore. Douglass had escaped slavery 26 years before, but when Maryland ended slavery near the close of the Civil War, it took him only 16 days to come home. What he said to those who welcomed him back speaks through the years.

Since Maryland never left the Union, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had not applied. Still, Lincoln and antislavery advocates in the state pushed to end the institution. Enslaved black people were not waiting. They left plantations to join the Union army, demonstrating what Douglass envisioned at the start of the war: black men fighting in this conflict so freedom could not be taken from them at the end of it.

Maryland voters faced a referendum in October 1864 on a new Constitution that banned slavery. After it passed (by less than a thousand votes), November 1st brought more than 200 hundred years of legal bondage in Maryland to a close. Whether the whole country would follow suit was very much in doubt. The most immediate threat was the presidential election happening a week later. If Lincoln lost, his opponent George McClellan planned to negotiate a peace with the South, which would allow slavery to survive.

Due to a timely Union victory in Atlanta, Lincoln won the election, preserving the progress towards Douglass' life mission of ending slavery. To mark these momentous changes, Douglass made his way home to a state he could at last safely return to. He had fled as an obscure and harassed 20-year old, and returned now as one of the most famous speakers in the country.

Douglass walked around Fells Point, where he had been sent at age 8 from the Eastern Shore. Despite the pain of his enslaved years, Douglass still felt a strong nostalgia for this place. When his master, Hugh Auld, discovered his wife Sophia was teaching the slave child the alphabet, he forbade it. Even then, Douglass

realized there must be power in reading. He was sent back to the Eastern Shore for three years of torment, yet the things he had learned in Baltimore enabled him to survive, to keep struggling for freedom. More than two decades later, Douglass tried to see Mrs. Auld, but her son told him to leave their property.

Word that Douglass was returning to Baltimore reached as far as Talbot County on the Eastern Shore, and Douglass' sister Eliza began a 60-mile trip to see a brother she had not seen for more than a quarter century. In fact, Douglass did not know if she was alive. Of their reunion, he wrote simply, "Our meeting can be better imagined than described."

After the emotion, Douglass took in that his sister of 52 years possessed a spirit that slavery had not broken. She had monitored his career as best she could even giving her daughter the middle name Douglass, though it was Frederick Baily she had known her brother as. Douglass asked her about one family member after another, and she replied the same way: sold down south, she knew nothing more.

Bethel AME Church in Strawberry Alley had a tradition of radicalism that had helped shape Douglass when he attended as a child. On the arm of his sister, Douglass walked down the aisle of the packed church. The choir sang "Home, Sweet Home!" Upon reaching the dais, Douglass was overwhelmed by the lengthy applause. Looking out to familiar faces, he imaged ones that were missing. He said, "No speaker, I think, ever appeared before a public assembly, in circumstances more unusual and striking than I do this evening."



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Douglass spoke at five more events before traveling on to Washington. Upon arriving, there was a note from President Lincoln asking Douglass to take tea with him at the Soldier's Home, Lincoln's retreat north of the White House. This was the second meeting in a row that Lincoln had initiated, but Douglass declined because he would not disappoint an audience by canceling.

Douglass would visit Maryland many times in the decades that followed. Another 25 years later, a 73-year old Douglass learned that the Bethel Church of his childhood and his triumphant return had been abandoned. He bought the land and constructed five row houses for people to live in on that spot. What Douglass built, and the ideals he claimed, still stand today.