



## THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

### Feds to repair Point Lookout monument \$250,000 to refurbish memorial to Confederate dead near Point Lookout

By JASON BABCOCK, Southern Maryland News, April 22, 2009

Federal funds will be used to make repairs to the federal monument for Confederates who died at Point Lookout during the Civil War.

There are two monuments on a 1-acre site in Scotland, just north of Point Lookout State Park to commemorate the thousands who died while prisoners of war, but the \$250,000 will only go to repair the federal obelisk.

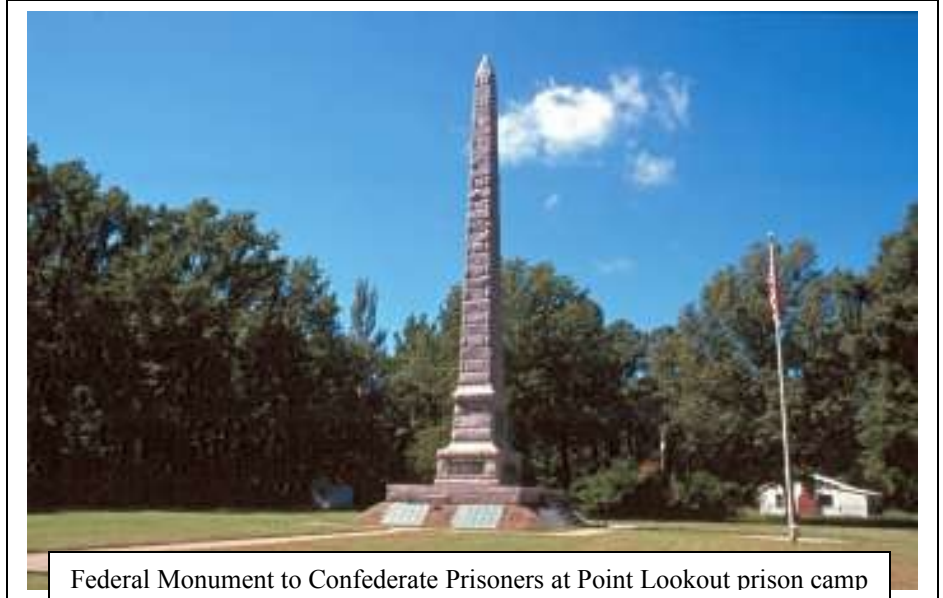
The work will go toward removing and replacing failing mortar, called repointing, and filling in the seams, said Sarah Leach, senior historian for the National Cemetery Administration with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

She said she does not know when the last time, if ever, the federal obelisk was repaired. The monument was donated in 1911, a year after land was ceded to the federal government.

The monument is 80 feet tall and some of the \$250,000 cost is to reach the top by scaffolding, she said.

In addition to the mortar work, the 12 bronze plaques bearing the known names of Confederates who died at the Point Lookout prisoner depot will be cleaned, waxed and buffed. An assessment will be made in May or June before that work begins to determine if any other work will be needed, Leach said.

The Confederate monument was not singled out for repair. "We have a number of obelisks, several of those through our systems," Leach said. "We're giving them all a check-up."



Federal Monument to Confederate Prisoners at Point Lookout prison camp

Of the wear and tear in Scotland, she said, "It's just the environment. It's usually human or organic activity that takes out our historical structures."

The state marker was first erected in a different location next to Tanner Creek on July 4, 1876. It is 25 feet high and its carving said it was in memory of the prisoners of war who died between March 1, 1864, and June 30, 1865.

Point Lookout's use as a prison camp began after the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, Pa., in July 1863. Between 1863 and 1865, more than 50,000 prisoners passed through the prison camp, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The federal monument contains the names of 3,382 Confederate soldiers and sailors and 44 civilians who died there, Leach said.

"We know there are probably people whose names did not make the tablets here," she said. "It's hard for us today to say those names are complete, but there's not much we can do to correct that."

The bodies of those buried at Point Lookout were moved three times because of shoreline erosion to the current resting spot.

Nine percent of Civil War deaths occurred in the prison camps, Leach said.

The late St. Mary's historian Edwin Beitzell, author of "Point Lookout Prison Camp for Confederates," said the number who died there was at least closer to 4,000.

The only documented record of President Abraham Lincoln visiting St. Mary's County, which strongly supported the Confederacy and fed supplies across the Potomac River to Virginia, was at Point Lookout. Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton visited the encampment briefly on Dec. 28, 1863, to learn if Confederates held there were willing to join the Union. "It is understood that they satisfied themselves that not less than a thousand, or about a tenth of the whole number are ready to enter the service of the United States," through a loyalty oath,



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reported the New York Tribune on Dec. 29, 1863.

Maryland has three Confederate monuments and Virginia has two, Leach said.

### **Philadelphia Civil War museum won a battle, lost the war**

*A court fight kept it in Philadelphia, and Gov. Rendell promised aid for a new home. Now the state is reneging.*

By Stephan Salisbury,  
Philadelphia Inquirer, April 19,  
2009

The Civil War Museum of Philadelphia - which state officials once believed was so critical to the city's cultural fabric that they waged a court fight to keep it here - has been refused promised capital funding by Gov. Rendell and has lost access to its planned new home in the heart of Independence National Historical Park.

The museum, a reconfigured version of the Civil War Library and Museum in the 1800 block of Pine Street for more than 80 years, has sold its old quarters and put its unparalleled collection of artifacts and documents in storage.

Now, officials said, the entire cache may be lost to the city - just a few years before a major, long-planned regional commemoration of the Civil War sesquicentennial is set to begin.

"We are back in a place where there's a big question mark whether a big part of Philadelphia's heritage is going to remain here," said Sharon A. Smith, president and chief executive of the museum. "That's an unpleasant place to be."

Rendell could not be reached directly for comment, but Charles Ardo, a spokesman, wrote in an e-mail Friday that the governor "has limited funds

available to release, has already committed to numerous projects statewide and in the Philadelphia area, and, unfortunately, he cannot fund every project."

Former Union officers established the museum in 1888, and it possesses what many scholars believe is one of the nation's finest collections of Civil War materials - 3,000 artifacts including Jefferson Davis' smoking jacket; plaster casts of Abraham Lincoln's hands and face; the first John Wilkes Booth wanted poster; weaponry of all kinds; the stuffed head of Old Baldy, Gen. George Meade's trusty warhorse (on long-term loan from the Grand Army of the Republic Museum in Frankford); and an array of battle flags.

The museum ignited a furor in 2001 when it announced that it intended to move much of its collection to a museum planned for Richmond, Va., capital of the Confederacy.

Descendants of the Union officers who had donated virtually all of the holdings were particularly upset. Then-Attorney General Mike Fisher authorized a state suit in Orphans' Court to block the transfer, and several powerful politicians, including State Rep. James R. Roebuck and former State Sen. Vincent J. Fumo, both Philadelphia Democrats, crafted a plan to reconstitute the museum in the city of its birth.

The leadership of the old library and museum relented, and Fumo and Roebuck shepherded a \$15 million capital bill through the legislature. Then-Gov. Richard Schweiker agreed to release the money, which would be used for conserving the collection and housing the museum in more-visible quarters.

In 2007, the museum reached an agreement with the National Park Service to move into the stately,

neoclassical First Bank of the United States; restore the interior; and open up shop at Third and Chestnut Streets in time for the sesquicentennial in 2011.

The park service, which had been using the building for offices and storage, agreed to lease the space to the museum if funding was in hand by late 2008. According to E. Harris Baum, museum board chairman, and Smith, the chief executive, Rendell told museum officials in the spring of 2007 that money would be released when the legislature raised the debt ceiling - which it did last year.

Now Rendell has declined to release the money.

Ardo, his spokesman, said that "we've met with representatives of this project several times and have explained" that money is not available. He said Rendell had suggested that museum officials work through legislative caucuses to gain access to the money.

State Sen. Lawrence M. Farnese Jr., the Democrat who succeeded Fumo, could not be reached for comment Friday.

Dennis M. Reidenbach, director of the park service's Northeast Region, expressed disappointment that the museum would not be moving into the First Bank building, a National Historic Landmark. He said the park had extended its expired agreement with the museum in the hope that state funding would be released. When that did not happen, park officials agreed they needed to move forward with their own plans for the facility.

"This was something we hated to walk away from," Reidenbach said.

Roebuck, the state representative, said he was "very disappointed" that Rendell had declined to fund the building.



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"I don't understand the governor's logic in this," Roebuck said. "Perhaps we should have let the collection go to Richmond. This is the question: Should we let a vital historical collection remain in the city, or should we let this unique collection go someplace else? Now we're back at square one, and we never should have been there in the beginning."

Kim Sajet, head of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, said that while more than 67 organizations would participate in the sesquicentennial commemoration, only one would have both high visibility and a total focus on the conflict - the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia.

That is now threatened.

The museum's Baum and Smith said they were scrambling to find another home in the historic district.

"We are in a serious bind," Smith said. "We closed our building in '08. Our collection is in storage. All of the architectural work on the First Bank, all of the planning, all of our business plan - those no longer have meaning."

She wrote in an e-mail late Friday: "We never would have invested about 3/4 million on all of the plans for the new museum if we didn't think we had the Gov's commitment."

### Alabama Councilman removes Confederate flags from graves

KATIE STALLCUP, OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS, APRIL 24, 2009 Mary Norman was shocked Thursday afternoon when Auburn Councilman Arthur L. Dowdell pulled up a Confederate flag placed on her great-grandfather's grave and snapped it in half, she said.

Dowdell, who denies snapping the flag, said Thursday he was picking up his daughter from Auburn Junior High School near the cemetery when several people told him they "had a problem" with the flags.

He drove to the cemetery and started pulling up flags, he said.

"It's offensive to me," he said. "To me, it represents the Ku Klux Klan and racism."



Auburn Councilman Arthur L. Dowdell poses with Confederate flags that he removed from graves at Pine Hill Cemetery in Auburn. - Opelika-Auburn News photo

The United Daughters of the Confederacy placed the flags earlier this week, as they have done for 50 years, in preparation for a celebration Sunday of Confederate Memorial Day, Norman said.

Confederate Memorial Day will be celebrated as a state holiday in Alabama Monday.

"I really didn't know exactly how to respond to him," she said. "I happen to be a member of the Daughters of the Confederacy. I was very surprised, especially (as he is) a city councilman. I was amazed."

Norman was not personally involved in placing the flags.

"I'm a historian," she said. "We're not about hate, we're not about anything like that. We just want to honor our state's rights, and I've got Confederate ancestors, and I feel we should have the ability to do that."

Norman and a friend were taking inventory of graves at Pine Hill

Cemetery in Auburn when Dowdell drove up and asked who put up the flags, she said.

"One of the flags had been placed on my great-grandfather's grave, who was a Confederate soldier," Norman said. "He just got very upset, and he went over to my great-grandfather's grave, picked up the flag and broke it in two."

She said Dowdell did not know the plot she stood on was her family's. The flags were placed on soldiers' graves as a mark of respect, she said.

He pulled up Confederate flags from other soldiers' graves, too, she said.

Dowdell said in his years as councilman, he had never seen so many Confederate flags in one place.

"I'm going on the record that this will never happen again," Dowdell said. "This will never happen again as long as I'm on the city council."

Dowdell denied intentionally snapping the flag.

"It might have snapped itself," he said. "If it did, so what? If I had my way, I would have broke them all up and stomped on them and burned them. That flag represents another country, another nation."

Auburn Mayor Bill Ham said he was unaware of any incidents at the cemetery but said he talked with Dowdell Thursday afternoon. Ham said his understanding was that all city cemeteries have covenants governing how and what types of decorations can be placed on graves, except for Pine Hill because it is so old. Ham said he believed Dowdell asked an assistant city manager to look into making policies equal for cemeteries across the city.

"The bottom line is those grave plots are deeded property," Ham said. "We sell those. So they are sold to the family of the individuals, and I think



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(plot owners) have a right to do exactly what they did, according to the city attorney."

Ham said in his conversation with Dowdell, the councilman suggested the flags be placed on the graves for a shorter period of time, perhaps for 24 hours before the event.

For now, the remaining flags will stay on the graves because of the lack of covenant governing Pine Hill, Ham said. But that could change in coming years.

"I certainly think we need to be consistent in all the cemeteries with whatever the policy is, not only with this, but with everything," Ham said. "The council has got to make that decision."

### **Editor's Note: The following Press Release was received from The Alabama Division, SCV**

Press Release - April 28, 2009  
The Alabama Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans, repudiates the lawless behavior of Auburn City Councilman Arthur L. Dowdell in removing Confederate Memorial Flags from veteran's graves at Pine Hill Cemetery in Auburn, AL. Confederate veteran graves are to be lawfully respected as any other American veteran graves, according to United States Congressional Law. Councilman Dowdell stated the flags were offensive to him. He then broke Alabama state law when he trespassed on private property, and desecrated sacred burial sites, and that is offensive to us. By stealing and destroying the flag that was placed on a veteran's grave, in the very presence of his descendant, Councilman Dowdell violates every tenet of decent human behavior. He showed a dangerous propensity for taking the law into his own hands, an action that will not be tolerated or otherwise encouraged in

others.

We believe this crime was motivated by hate, and want to see justice done. We are requesting that the local District Attorney prosecute Councilman Dowdell to the fullest extent of the law, and if need be, we are counting on the Alabama Attorney General to see that the laws of Alabama are upheld. Further, we would like to see Federal Prosecuting Attorneys convict Dowdell for violating United States hate crime laws.

Robert C. Reames  
Alabama Division Commander  
Sons of Confederate Veterans  
rcreames@aol.com

### **Two Remarkable Artifacts Come Together for Chancellorsville 146<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

BY CLINT SCHEMMER,  
Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star, May 4, 2009

The great-grandson of the Union soldier considered the most wounded man to survive the Civil War came to Chancellorsville to pass along his family's most cherished possession. Steve Chase traveled from his Texas home yesterday to give Pvt. John F. Chase's Medal of Honor to the National Park Service just as he'd promised months ago.

That was special enough, as all four dozen onlookers at the Park Service's Chancellorsville Visitor Center appeared to appreciate. But then came a last-minute surprise.

John Hennessy, chief historian of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, revealed that another artifact relating to Pvt. Chase had just surfaced: an old wooden cane.

The cane is finely etched--like a piece of scrimshaw--with a portrait of Chase, an image of the monument to the 5th Maine Battery on the Gettysburg battlefield, and the inscription "Cannonier, J.F. Chase, 5th Maine Batt." At one end, near the handle, are the words "Culp's Hill." Curator Janice Frye, wearing white gloves, brought the artifact to the front of the visitor center's auditorium for Steve Chase and his wife, Nancy Kay, to see for the first time. They clearly were intrigued.

"This is like the cherry on top of the sundae," Chase said.

Hennessy said the cane may have been made for John Chase, given his considerable postwar fame. Souvenir canes were popular with Civil War veterans.



NPS Photo

Chase said he figures that his great-grandfather probably acquired the keepsake at a veterans reunion at Gettysburg long after the war.

Hennessy learned of the artifact's existence late Friday and immediately called its owner, Spotsylvania resident Jan VanLandingham. She told him, "Why, I have a cane "

That morning, when VanLandingham had read a Free Lance-Star article about Pvt. Chase, she realized the



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19th-century walking stick, mingled with others in her foyer's umbrella jar, probably had some link to the Medal of Honor recipient.

She and her sister had come upon the cane in the early 1970s while helping clear out her uncle's moving-and-storage warehouse in St. Petersburg, Fla.--where Chase moved from Maine long after the war and lived until his death in 1914.

In the mid-1990s, after visiting her sister in St. Petersburg, VanLandingham brought the cane back home to Virginia with her. A friend turned up an account of Chase's near-mortal wounding in the Battle of Gettysburg, his painful recovery and his colorful life after the war.

"But until I read the newspaper article, I hadn't made the Chancellorsville connection," said VanLandingham, a retired teacher.

### HANDFUL OF HEROES

Chase, a native of Chelsea, Maine, said to be one of the state's first residents to enlist, received the U.S. military's highest honor "for conspicuous gallantry" in the Battle of Chancellorsville.

"In war, most men do their duty," Hennessy told those attending yesterday's ceremony. "Duty, by itself, often requires immense courage, determination and devotion. A few men ascend beyond duty to perform nobly. And then, a handful become heroes.

"John Chase was a private in the 5th Maine Battery. And at Chancellorsville 146 years ago today, on May 3rd, 1863, he became a hero."

On that day, as Confederate attackers overwhelmed the Union army's position at the Chancellorsville crossroads (today's Elys Ford Road and State Route 3), Chase and Cpl.

J.H. Lebroke kept firing the last of their battery's cannons despite intense enemy fire. The other guns' caissons had been blown up. Nearly all of the unit's officers and horses had been killed or wounded or had fled.

To prevent their cannon's capture, Lebroke and Chase dragged it toward the rear, eventually aided by reinforcements from the 116th Pennsylvania Volunteers, part of the Irish Brigade.

Lebroke received the Medal of Honor shortly after the battle. Chase was awarded his medal in late 1888.



John Chase's Medal of Honor -NPS photo

Hennessy called what the two men did that morning "a phenomenal story."

Out of the tens of millions of men and women who have served their country over 200-plus years, he noted, a mere 3,446 have been

awarded the nation's highest military decoration.

### WOUNDED AT GETTYSBURG

Chase's fame, however, came from what happened to him two months later at Gettysburg, as his battery was helping defend Culp's Hill against Confederate artillery. On July 2, a shell prematurely burst as it exited his cannon's muzzle.

Chase suffered at least 48 shrapnel wounds. Left for dead, he lay on the field for days until someone chanced to realize that he was still alive.

Chase lost his right arm and left eye, and one of his lungs was severely damaged. But he went on to live another 51 years, marry and raise a family, patent 47 inventions and help develop Gulfport, Fla., on St. Petersburg's southwest side.

### NOW, FOR ALL TO SEE

Park Superintendent Russ Smith gratefully accepted the Chase medal for the park's collection of historic artifacts.

"Because of your generous gift," Smith told the family, "we know that our visitors will get a more personal view of the battle and have a better understanding of not just lines and tactics, but of personal sacrifice and courage."

The medal, together with the cane and portraits of Pvt. Chase, immediately went on display yesterday in a special case at the entrance to the visitor center's museum.

## Conn. family mired in Gideon Welles artifacts battle

UPI.com, April 26, 2009

ROCKVILLE, Conn, Artifacts being fought over by descendants of former U.S. Secretary of the Navy Gideon



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Welles have strong historical value, an expert says.

John A. Lupton, associate editor of The Papers of Abraham Lincoln project in Illinois, said Welles' connection to the late U.S. president has intensified the historical importance of the items being fought over by the Welles and Brainard branches of his family, The Hartford (Conn.) Courant said Sunday.

"Gideon Welles was one of Lincoln's closest confidants during the Civil War period, and I would presume that there would be pretty interesting new items there," Lupton said.

"The fact that they would be associated with a member of Lincoln's Cabinet makes them even more valuable, and that's probably why there is such a family fight going on."

Among the artifacts are 713 notes or letters written to Welles from Lincoln that were discovered in a home in Coventry, Conn.

The Courant said the two family branches are currently mired in a probate case in Mansfield, Conn., as well as a Superior Court lawsuit in Rockville, Conn.

### Hit-and-run Damages Historic Gettysburg Cemetery Gate

National Park Service Press Release, April 29, 2009

Park Rangers at Gettysburg National Military Park are asking the public for information about a hit-and-run accident that damaged the gate to the Soldiers' National Cemetery on Baltimore Street late on the night of April 25 - 26, 2009.

Law Enforcement Rangers believe a car - possibly yellow in color - drove into the gate, damaging it and then drove away from the scene. They

recovered part of a license plate holder at the scene that says "I'd rather be shopping." The vehicle may show damage to the front end.

The damaged gate was on the left side of the Baltimore Street entrance to the Cemetery and has been temporarily removed for repairs. The historic iron fence gate is from the late 1930s. Repair costs are estimated at \$2500.

Anyone with information is asked to call 717/ 334-0909.

The Soldiers' National Cemetery is the burial site for more than 3,500 Union soldiers killed at Gettysburg in July 1863. President Abraham Lincoln dedicated the cemetery on November 19, 1863, with his immortal Gettysburg Address. The cemetery is the final resting place for veterans from the Civil War to the Vietnam War and is maintained by Gettysburg National Military Park.

### Spotsylvania to Dedicate South Carolina Monument

NPS Press Release, May 5, 2009  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park announces the dedication of the McGowan's South Carolina Brigade Monument at Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield. This event will take place on May 9, 2009.

The monument is being placed on the battlefield to honor the memory of the brave men from Brigadier General Samuel McGowan's South Carolina Brigade who fought and died during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House in May 1864. The State of South Carolina and the Brigadier General Samuel McGowan Camp #40, Sons of Confederate Veterans are donating the granite memorial to the National Park Service.

On Saturday May 9th at 10:30 a.m. a dedication ceremony for the new monument will take place at the "Bloody Angle" on Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield. The ceremony, which will include the unveiling of the monument, is open to the public. Gordon C. Rhea, author of numerous books about the Civil War in Virginia, will present the keynote address. Following the ceremony there will be a guided walking tour offered by Mac Wyckoff, a retired park historian and author of books on South Carolina troops in the Civil War. The tour will trace the actions of McGowan's Brigade at Spotsylvania. Activities will take place at the McGowan's Brigade Monument site located at the "Bloody Angle"—Tour Stop #3—on the Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield. Parking will be available along Grant Drive, the park tour road located off Brock Road. Visitors are encouraged to arrive by 10:15 a.m.

The McGowan's Brigade Monument dedication ceremony will take place rain or shine. A tent will be provided at the monument, but cover will be limited.



Workers install the McGowan's Brigade Monument at Spotsylvania NMP – NPS photo



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### Restoring Civil War's Missing History

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post (DC), April 9, 2009  
On Sept. 29, 1864, Union Sgt. Maj. Christian A. Fleetwood of the 4th U.S. Colored Infantry made a regular entry in his pocket diary: "Moved out & . . . charged with the 6th at daylight . . . got used up. Saved colors."

Fleetwood, 24, later a leading resident of the District, couldn't go into detail about the battle at New Market Heights, outside Richmond. There wasn't room to describe how the exhausted black soldiers charged in the face of heavy Confederate infantry fire or how they were cut down ("used up") in droves.

And there was no place to describe how, of the 12 men in the regiment's color guard, all but one were felled, or how Fleetwood bore the flag to safety, an action that earned him the Medal of Honor.

Although New Market Heights was not one of the grand battles of the Civil War, it was a place of death and valor for the soldiers who fought there. Fleetwood's medal was one of 14 Medals of Honor earned by black troops in the battle that day.

The scene of their heroism has been listed by the Civil War Preservation Trust as one of the 10 most-endangered battlefields in the country.

The site has one roadside marker describing the battle. Little of the land on which the fighting occurred is protected from development, officials from the trust said at a news conference last month.

"There is no land at New Market Heights that is owned or controlled by a preservation organization," said

Mary Koik, a spokeswoman for the trust. Henrico County owns some of the land, she said, but of the property in private hands, "anything could happen to it at any time," she said.

She said some housing has been built on the site, and more development has been proposed.

Little attention was paid to the battle until the 1970s, said Mike Andrus, National Park Service supervisory ranger of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. He said the overall battlefield is about 1,000 acres.

"It's sad but true that what it comes down to is for a long time, [the work of black regiments] wasn't given the credence and credit it deserves," Koik said.

Now, she said, there is a push to recognize their deeds and preserve the sites where the black soldiers fought.

The Battle of New Market Heights, or Chaffin's Farm, as it also known, was a part of the Union Army's long-term strategy in 1864 to stretch and probe the Confederate forces around Richmond for a breakthrough in the closing months of the war.

About dawn on the day of the attack, Fleetwood and about 300 other men in his regiment assaulted the well-entrenched rebels who were also protected by palisades and lines of makeshift obstructions called abatis.

"It was a deadly hailstorm of bullets sweeping men down as hail-stones sweep the leaves from trees," Fleetwood wrote after the war.

"It was very evident that there was too much work cut out for our two regiments," he wrote. "Strong earthworks, protected in front by two lines of palisades, and in the rear by a lot of men who evidently knew how to shoot, and largely outnumbered us.

"We struggled through the two lines of abatis, a few got through the palisades, but it was sheer madness, and those of us who were able, had to get out as best we could," he wrote.

"When the charge was started, our Color guard was full; two sergeants (carrying the Colors,) and ten corporals. Only one of the twelve came off that field on his own feet. Most of them are there still."

Fleetwood recounted that after the battle, he was able to gather only about 115 comrades from his regiment. Andrus said that of the roughly 700 men in the two black regiments, 387 were casualties.

During the Civil War, Fleetwood's rank of sergeant major was the highest rank a black soldier could attain in the U.S. Army, the National Park Service said.



Sgt Major Christian Fleetwood – Photo National Archives

After the war, Fleetwood, a native of Baltimore, moved to the District and worked in the War Department and



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Freedmen's Bank. He helped organize and lead local high school cadet corps and African American elements of the D.C. National Guard. "After each war," he wrote in a speech in 1895, "history repeats itself in the absolute effacement of remembrance of the gallant deeds done for the country by its brave black defenders. . . .

"History further repeats itself in the fact that in every war so far known to this country, the first blood, and, in some cases, the last also, has been shed" by black soldiers. "And this in spite of all the years of bondage and oppression, and of wrongs unspcakable."

Fleetwood died Sept. 28, 1914, the day before the 50th anniversary of the Battle of New Market Heights.

In 1948, his daughter Edith donated his Medal of Honor to the Smithsonian Institution.

### **Museum puts off DNA testing of Lincoln artifact for now**

By Edward Colimore,  
Philadelphia Inquirer, May 4,  
2009

The strip of a pillowcase stained with the blood of Abraham Lincoln is usually locked away in a display case or safe at the Grand Army of the Republic Museum and Library in the city's Frankford section.

But last night it was brought out as Exhibit A during a debate among members of the museum's board over whether to allow DNA testing of the relic to solve a medical mystery.

Was the 16th president dying of cancer, with less than a year to live, when he was shot by assassin John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre?

John Sotos, cardiologist and consultant for the television series

*House*, asked to test the artifact to prove Lincoln had a rare genetic cancer syndrome called multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2B (MEN2B).

The museum board last night turned down Sotos' request while leaving open the possibility of future testing that may be overseen by the National Museum of Health and Medicine, part of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington.

"We decided to continue our investigations to their logical conclusion," said Andy Waskie, a board member, Philadelphia historian, and assistant professor of language and history at Temple University. "We are going to pursue this in the best interest of the museum, of the legacy of Abraham Lincoln, and of the integrity of the artifact."

The vote by the board was unanimous, said Eric Schmincke, president of the board of directors. "We're going to follow through [on testing] based on conditions which haven't been specified," he said. "We want the experts to tell us how we can go further down the road if we proceed, and how much damage there will be."

Helping guide the board on the complicated scientific and ethical issues involved in the DNA work was biologist and Civil War buff Gary Grove. He conducted months of research and ultimately held discussions with officials at the National Museum of Health and Medicine about creating a bio-research review board to plan testing. "It's better to place [the artifact] in the hands of government officials who don't have a dog in this fight," said Grove, a Middletown resident who is vice president of research and development at cyberDERM, a

Broomall firm that tests skin-care products.

"I want to make sure this is done right so no one can question the results," he said last night. "We wanted to consult with the proper authorities."

Sotos, a rare-disease hobbyist, declined to be interviewed yesterday and has consistently opposed publicity about the testing. He said he believes that DNA testing not only can answer questions about Lincoln's condition but potentially can expand "clinical knowledge of a rare and most serious medical condition."

In his book *The Physical Lincoln*, Sotos, of Palo Alto, Calif., shows how a diagnostician analyzes hands, feet, lips, neck, heart, and other parts of the body to conclude that Lincoln had MEN2B.

Lincoln "suffered from a very rare genetic disorder that affected him, literally, from toe to skull," Sotos wrote. "The physical Lincoln was just as rare as the mental Lincoln."

Sotos and other researchers have long examined images and life masks showing the president's traits, including his arm span to height ratio, thin build, abnormally shaped chest, skin color, hair texture, and gray eyes. They also have studied accounts of Lincoln's unsteady gait and other movements.

In the 1960s, some speculated that the president had Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder of the connective tissue, said Grove. People with Marfan are usually tall, with long limbs and long, thin fingers.

The "diagnosis" was, in part, based on a 7-year-old Marfan patient who was an eighth-generation descendant of Mordecai Lincoln, the great-great-grandfather of the president, added Grove.

In the 1990s, attention turned to DNA testing as a way of confirming



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Marfan. But the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington turned down a request for testing on its own bloodstained artifacts, saying DNA science was not sufficiently advanced, Grove said.

Other researchers studied 11 generations descended from the grandparents of Lincoln and found that a third of the descendants had some form of a genetic defect called spinocerebellar ataxia, Grove said, which is characterized by progressive incoordination of gait.

The president's genetic makeup has also been of interest to the Enloe family, which believes Lincoln was the illegitimate son of Abraham Enloe of North Carolina - and not the son of Thomas Lincoln. The family has not been asked to provide DNA.

Genetic analysis of Lincoln's DNA "is the best and maybe the only way to provide indisputable proof to settle these arguments," said Grove. Last night, as the board meeting was wrapping up, Waskie emphasized the museum "will exercise caution and prudence in the investigation and will not do anything that will seriously damage the artifact."