



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

'Living history' is making a comeback at some Maryland museums

Historical Society, Jewish Museum among the institutions using actors to enhance exhibits

By Tim Smith, The Baltimore Sun, July 10, 2011

In the shadow of Abraham Lincoln memorabilia, John Wilkes Booth will tell anyone who'll listen just why that tyrant had to be assassinated. Supporting himself on a wooden crutch, a decidedly agitated Booth, his voice rising to match the fierceness in his eyes, rants about the war and how it ended. "My genteel South, gone," he says, seemingly on the verge of a sob.

He goes on to relate the events of that night at Ford's Theatre, the leap from the presidential box and the escape through Maryland that eventually led him to a barn in Virginia, surrounded by Union troops. When he's finished his story, he bows to acknowledge the applause. Yes, they're clapping for John Wilkes Booth these days at the Maryland Historical Society.

Actually, that's Christopher Kinslow, who is pretty close to a spitting image of Booth. He's one of the Maryland Historical Society Players, a new project created as part of its latest exhibit, "Divided Voices: Maryland in the Civil War."

It has been years since the museum featured live actors interpreting history.

"Living history used to be very popular here," says Harriet Lynn, founder of Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium, who produced a museum theater piece about quilts at the Maryland Historical Society in 1994. "It's wonderful to see it back." This Civil War venture, co-directed by

Lynn, presents visitors with actors portraying Harriet Tubman, who recounts the story of the Underground Railroad; a couple of fictional Baltimoreans who witness the Pratt Street Riots from a telegraph office; and Christian Fleetwood, a free black man in the Union army who was awarded the Medal of Honor.

"It's about helping people make a connection to the material," says Lucretia M. Anderson, who has the role of Tubman.

Termed "museum theater" or "living history," the practice of enhancing displays of art and artifacts with live performance is perhaps most readily identified with Colonial Williamsburg, where costumed interpreters of history inhabit nearly every nook and cranny.

Theatrical presentations are now found at museums throughout the country.

"We think of it as one of the tools to get visitors really talking about history, talking to us and to each other while they are at the museum and when they go home," says Christopher Wilson, director of daily programs at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. "It's inspiring a dialogue about the past and its relevance to the present."

At that museum, visitors can take part in the re-creation of a workshop on nonviolence in conjunction with the exhibit of the Woolworth's lunch counter where the civil rights sit-in took place in 1960. There are also periodic "Time Trials," in which controversial figures of the past, such as Benedict Arnold and John Brown, present their cases before the audience.

"We think theater is very good at dealing with issues like that," Wilson

says. "People are comfortable with getting at emotions through theater." In Baltimore, performances were a mainstay at the 1840 House, a part of the Baltimore City Life Museums that was sold off in 1999. Over the years, several other venues, including the Walters Art Museum and the Flag House & Star-Spangled Banner Museum, have offered theatrical presentations.

They have also been done for about a decade at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, where performances flesh out stories of Jewish immigrants who came to Baltimore.

"It's a wonderful education tool," says program director Ilene Dackman-Alon. "I've seen it work at the museum, as outreach to schools and at a senior center. To see seniors watching it with tears in their eyes is amazing. The value of living theater is huge. It helps the audience feel connected."

Dale Jones, wrote and co-directed the short plays being performed at the Maryland Historical Society, founded the Maryland-based Making History Connections to help promote museum theater.

"It has a reputation for being expensive," he says, "but it doesn't have to be. Script production can cost from \$500 to \$10,000, for example. You can do a six-month run of performances on weekends for about \$5,000."

Jones produced numerous programs for the Baltimore City Life Museums and has written scripts and directed productions for such places as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts.

"The professionalism of museum theater has increased over the past 20 years," Wilson says. "There is more training in it, more workshops.



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And there is much more thinking about its value."

Adds Jones: "There has to be an advocate at a museum who wants it to happen and thinks it's valuable for the institution."

That person at the 167-year-old Maryland Historical Society is its president, Burt Kummerow. He has a long association with museum theater,

"As a kid, I got interested in Civil War re-enactments," he says. "Some people look at that as a joke, but there is so much you can learn from something like that."

Having a major Civil War exhibit at the Maryland Historical Society provided Kummerow with an opportunity to present museum theater, which has been offered there only intermittently over the years. "For me, it's always about telling stories," he says. "One way is to have docents, and many are superb. But actors can interpret the information. They're perfect for museums. Having them as tour guides, as well as performing, is a great thing." The idea of combining actor and docent roles came from Jones. "I have never done that before," he says. "I have worked with actors who, when you take away a script, will walk into a wall. But I've learned to look for actors who can also interact with people."

Anderson, an actress whose day job is elementary program coordinator for Washington's Folger Shakespeare Library, finds her dual role as Harriet Tubman and tour guide invigorating. "It helps your improvisational skills," she says. "It can get very interactive after your performance." Britt Olsen-Ecker, a Peabody Institute alum who works as a photographer when she isn't acting in local community theater, portrays a young

lady caught up in the Pratt Street Riot. "Giving a tour is a performance in itself," she says. "I became a Civil War nerd doing this. Every single day I learn something new." Jonathan Scott Fuqua, a teacher of writing and illustration at Maryland Institute College of Art and the author of books for young adults, shared writing duties with Jones for this project.

Another play, about Clara Barton, is in rehearsals. As for the long-range future of theatrical presentations at the Maryland Historical Society, "there is no guarantee it will continue," Kummerow says. "We need to find a sponsor or raise more money to make it a regular part of the budget."

Meanwhile, the four current museum theater pieces, each lasting 10 to 15 minutes, appear to be successful. "When you get someone moved to tears in 15 minutes, which I've seen here," Lynn says, "you know you're doing something right."

James River expedition targets Civil War shipwrecks

By Mark Erickson, Daily Press, June 27, 2011

Researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Navy have embarked on a two-day expedition to survey the wrecks of two famous Civil War vessels that have rested on the bottom of the lower James River for nearly 150 years.

Using sonar technology, the scientists hope to retrieve data that will enable them to create 3-dimensional maps of the USS Cumberland, which was sunk off Newport News Point by the ironclad warship CSS Virginia — also known as the Merrimack — during

the March 8-9, 1862 Battle of Hampton Roads.

Their second target is the CSS Florida, a captured Confederate commerce raider that was lost nearby on Nov. 19, 1864, following a collision with a Navy troop ferry.

"The remains of the USS Cumberland and CSS Florida, preserved in the waters of Hampton Roads, remind us of the sacrifices made during the Civil War and give us a unique and rare opportunity to explore a pivotal chapter in our nation's history," said David Alberg, superintendent of NOAA's Newport News-based Monitor National Marine Sanctuary.

A Civil War hero with 4 legs

By Joey Chandler, Bucyrus Telegraph Forum, July 5, 2011

OCEOLA -- Tucked away in the woods on the McLaughlin's family farm in Ocala lays a tombstone. The grave, worn with age, overlooks the running water below from the top of a small hill. Words etched into the red granite marker have faded over time, making them difficult to read:

FRANK
THE WAR HORSE
CO. A 12 REG. O.C.
DIED: 1888 A. 28
FROM ATL. TO THE SEA

"In the books it says Ohio wasn't part of (Atlanta to the Sea), but it really was. The soldiers that were there with Frank put that on the stone," Bill Stanley said, pointing to the grave.

It was in 1917 when Jess McLaughlin, the grandfather of Stanley's wife, Carol, bought the farm off of Capt. John Harter, who took care of Frank for years following the Civil War.

Frank has since become an integral part of the farm, and the Stanleys are used to visitors stopping by to see his grave.



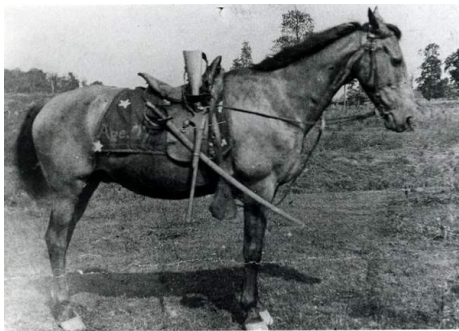
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Over the past decade, two authors have visited Frank, as well as many others.

Stories and newspaper articles collected throughout the years show how important Frank was not only to the veterans he fought with, but to the at-large community as well.

"From the Harter family, they say that Frank was in every bar in Bucyrus," Stanley said.

An article from the "Nevada Enterprise" which ran the week after Frank's death gives plenty of details about the horse's role in the Civil War and his life as a veteran.



Frank, who was part of Company A, 12th Ohio Cavalry during the Civil War, is buried on a farm in Ocoola. / Submitted photo

Frank was drawn with a number of horses from the government by Company A at Lexington, Ky., in February 1865. He was ridden by Abe Conger, a saddler, in Company A of the 12th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteer Cavalry during Conger's third enlistment.

The newspaper article, written by Wesley Grubb, said Frank was part of one of the longest cavalry raids of the war, "destroying railroads, burning bridges, capturing forts, prisoners, horses, cows, hogs, chickens and geese, chasing old Jeff Davis in the arms of Wilson, and helping to

capture Jeff's rear guard, at two different times."

Conger was discharged in November 1865, along with Grubb, and brought Frank home with him. When Conger could no longer take care of Frank, Harter kept the horse.

"They were all friends, and Abe lived in Little Mexico, a tiny crossroads about 10 miles away," Stanley said.

"I don't know if (Harter) bought Frank when Abe moved to Lewis Center, but that's when he took him."

It wasn't just stories of their journey during the Civil War which made Frank so beloved by his unit, but his actions after, as Grubb described in his article.

"Comrade R. Pool, told at a Post meeting a few evenings ago that at a reunion of the 55th, at his house, he raised the Stars and Stripes and the horse was turned loose in the road; when he saw the flag he came trotting up and stood under the flag all day. Every comrade wept to see how well he remembered and how well he loved the dear old flag."

To this day, service memorial flag markers are placed at Frank's grave. People continue to visit Frank at his tranquil resting place on the McLaughlin farm, and during the 150th anniversary of the Civil War his story lives on.

Lightning injures Gettysburg Civil War re-enactors

By Yvonne P Mazzulo,
Examiner.com, July 4, 2011
Sunday, July 2nd in Gettysburg, five Civil War re-enactors were injured at a live re-enactment camp. At approximately 2:45am, Sunday morning, lightning struck a tent pole in the Confederate artillery re-enactment camp injuring five people who were participating in the

celebration of the 148th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

A statement released by the Gettysburg Anniversary Committee said that all five re-enactors were taken to the hospital with minor to moderate injuries.

Initially all five re-enactors were taken to Gettysburg Hospital. Three of the re-enactors suffered moderate injuries and two others re-enactors sustained minor injuries.

The five were taken to Gettysburg Hospital. One re-enactor was admitted and is in stable condition. Two others were initially treated at Gettysburg Hospital and then transferred to York Hospital. The two re-enactors transferred to York Hospital are reported to be in stable condition. The other two re-enactors were treated and released from Gettysburg Hospital.

Reenactment officials said that staff and local fire departments conducted a tent-by-tent search of the campsite seeking others that may have been injured. Although several tents were damaged, no other persons turned up with injuries from the lightning strike.

The U.S. Capitol at War

By GUY GUGLIOTTA, New York Times, July 11, 2011

When Thomas U. Walter returned to Washington at the beginning of July 1861, he found an appalling mess. For 10 years he had served as the architect in charge of building the new Senate and House wings of the United States Capitol and the cast iron dome that would crown the rotunda. When war broke out, Congress was not in session and the building was empty. The Union Army took it over.

What followed had not been pretty. Virtually overnight the Capitol became a barracks. Before long, the troops were baking bread in the



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basement, dumping greasy sides of bacon in the committee rooms, busting up furniture and turning the dark hallways into latrines. "The smell is awful," Walter wrote in a letter to his wife, Amanda. "The building is like one grand water closet — every hole and corner is defiled."

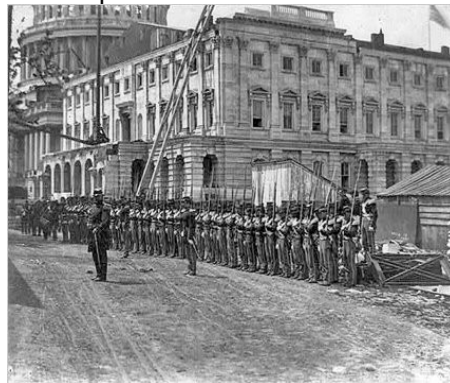
By July 4, 1861, when Congress arrived in town for a 33-day extraordinary session, the building had taken a terrible beating. Walter wanted desperately to resume construction, suspended since May 15, but "things do not look very promising," he wrote a friend in Philadelphia. Congress was financing the war and expanding President Lincoln's war powers. There was no time to talk about the Capitol.

This would all change in the coming months, but in July, the Capitol, like the nation it served, was still a work in progress. The old order was gone. Congress was finished trying to hold the several states together and was getting ready to build a nation, but in the meantime there was chaos. The expanded Capitol, conceived in 1850, was designed to provide space for lawmakers from states to be carved from the vast territories won in the Mexican War. At first the project was not particularly popular — seen as pretentious and unnecessary for provincial folk who prided themselves on homespun virtue and simplicity.

By the time the war began, however, many in official Washington had come to understand that people needed something to remind them that the whole of the United States ought to be greater than the sum of its feuding parts. The new Capitol — imposing and immense — was that symbol.

Library of Congress Union soldiers at attention in front of the Capitol.

But the building was not there yet. Some pieces were finished. The House, since 1857, and the Senate, since 1859, had been meeting in new, elegantly furnished chambers flanked by dazzling ceremonial rooms decorated with chandeliers, wall paintings and floors tiled in intricate mosaic patterns.



Union troops stationed at the U.S. Capitol, Photo courtesy National Archives

But the outside porticoes for the new wings remained unfinished, as did the dome, and the rotunda had a temporary wooden roof covered with canvas. The new dome peristyle was built, but the columns poked into the air with nothing on top. It was beneath this skeleton that Lincoln had taken the oath of office, yet another reminder that the national emblem, like the nation itself, was unfinished business.

Walter was 56 when the war began, a tall, strongly built man with a thick shock of gray hair and a long beard. He was one of the most successful architects in the country when he came to the capital in 1851, and had toiled there for four different U.S. presidents. He had designed both the new wings and the dome, and for the last several years had forsworn all outside work so he could concentrate on the Capitol.

But in July he did not know where to turn. Before the war, the new Capitol's biggest political patron had been Jefferson Davis, who, as a Mississippi senator and as secretary of war during the Pierce administration, had espoused both national greatness and sectional primacy without seeing any contradiction. He was gone, along with others of the building's boosters, from both north and south. Those who remained had other things on their minds.

Walter had been settling his family in Philadelphia, his hometown, when Fort Sumter surrendered. He returned to the Capitol three days later to find a company of soldiers "quartered in our office, much to my annoyance." The "noise and tumult and the music and the pipe smoke daily interfere with my personal comfort."

Local militia soon were bivouacking in Senate committee rooms. Two companies of Pennsylvania volunteers were put in the new House chamber, and on April 19, the Sixth Massachusetts, bloodied and covered with dust after fighting its way through angry crowds in Baltimore, reached the Capitol. Doorkeeper Isaac Bassett put them in the new Senate chamber. Troopers camped in the galleries while their colonel converted the vice president's room into his headquarters.

The Capitol became a halfway house. As each regiment received orders and departed, it was replaced by another. Very soon the soldiers wore out their welcome. Bassett, happy to welcome the Sixth Massachusetts, was appalled when he caught the New York Zouaves, a gang of hard-bitten Manhattan firefighters, ripping up a desk on the Democratic side of the Senate chamber with bayonets, thinking it had been used by Davis.



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The New Yorkers also rigged ropes from the cornice of the unfinished dome and amused themselves by swinging back and forth above the rotunda. Troops in both chambers spent their days conducting mock debates and shouting obscenities at one another from the galleries.

"There are 4,000 [soldiers] in the Capitol, with all their provisions, ammunition and baggage," Walter wrote in a letter to his wife. Bassett reported soldiers arriving with armloads of ham and bacon, finding a vacant room, and dropping the meat on the floor. Kitchens were set up in the basement, along with a string of bakeries, and the odors of cooking food, yeast and baking bread eddied through the corridors.

Smoke from the bakeries invaded the Library of Congress — located on the Capitol's West Front — spreading soot through the stacks: "I am pained to see a treasure ... that money cannot replace — receiving great damage," wrote Librarian of Congress John G. Stephenson later in the year. "There is no remedy except in the removal of the circle of bakeries that hems us in."

By the first week in May, it was clear that work on the Capitol could not continue. All the stone cutters and marble finishers had either volunteered or disappeared. "Most of the passages in the building are filled up to the ceilings with barrels of flour, pork, beef, fish, crackers et al.," Walter wrote to Amanda.

Temporary doors had been erected everywhere, with guards posted. Getting up and down stairs was almost impossible. One hundred drummers were drilling on the grounds below Walter's office window. The Senate chamber was contaminated with lice, and "every street, lane and alley is filled with

soldiers," Walter told Amanda on May 8. The Army asked him for a plan of the grounds so breastworks could be set up on the Capitol's beautifully landscaped western terraces overlooking the Mall.

When work was officially suspended a week later, Walter almost welcomed the news. "I am so tired of war and so disgusted with this place, and so vexed at the defilement of my works that I don't think I will make any further resistance," he told Amanda. On May 30, he left for Philadelphia.

He fidgeted for a month, then returned to Washington July 1, a changed man. He was no longer either a southern apologist or a complainer. He had talked with his building contractors and his political contacts and was determined to wrest control of the Capitol from the Army and finish what he started.

The catalytic event in his conversion may have been the decision by his son Thomas, a businessman living in Virginia, to repudiate his debts in the North and join the Confederacy. This was "outrageous," Walter told a close friend. "He is now a traitor to his country and to his family."

Despite his initial enthusiasm, his cause did not appear to prosper during his July trip. Washington was in an uproar — the population would grow from 60,000 in 1860 to more than 200,000 three years later — and there was nothing he could do but introduce himself to the congressional leadership and attempt to make his case. Somewhat disappointed, he left town on July 11.

Yet the seeds apparently had been planted. In early August Walter told a friend that the chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Public Buildings and Grounds had extracted a promise from Secretary of War

Simon Cameron to order the work resumed.

It did not happen immediately, but Congress was increasingly infuriated by the continued presence of the basement bakery, which by June was operating around the clock with a 170-member staff producing 58,000 loaves of bread from 20 ovens.

Efforts to get the Army out of the building would prove fruitless for several months until Sen. Solomon Foot, chair of the Senate committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, in December introduced a resolution demanding that the army's Commissary General explain why the ovens were still in the basement.

The Commissary acknowledged that he had no specific permission to build the bakeries but asserted that the authority "belonged to the officers commanding the troops who were placed in the building." He did not know what he would need to move the bakeries, but he had no plans to do so because it would be expensive and "inconvenient."

Knee-jerk military obfuscation may be a commonplace in wartime, but arrogance by unelected bureaucrats, even in uniform, never plays well in Congress. And besides his committee chairmanship, Foot was also president pro Tempore of the Senate — not a good person to ignore. The bakeries were gone within weeks, and Walter was back in Washington almost immediately. He would stay for the next three years. And when he left the new Capitol would be all but finished.

Women re-enact Civil War as men, quite accurately

By DAVID DISHNEAU, Associated Press, July 6, 2011



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BALTIMORE -- Hoop skirts and washboards don't appeal much to Joyce Henry, so she found another way to relive the Civil War - as a man. With her breasts tightly bound, shoulder-length red hair tucked under a shaggy auburn wig and upper lip hidden by a drooping mustache, Henry impersonates Lt. Harry T. Buford, a real-life Confederate soldier.

The impression could hardly be more accurate since Buford, too, was a woman. He was invented by Loreta Janeta Velazquez, a Cuban-born woman from New Orleans who fought as a man in a series of Civil War battles including the First Battle of Bull Run, according to her autobiography.

Researchers have documented more than 200 such cases. And today, a small number of women follow suit by donning blue and gray uniforms as Civil War re-enactors.

A century and a half ago, women weren't allowed into military service; masquerading as men was the only way in for those who weren't satisfied with supporting the war effort from home or following their husbands' military units around. As the country marks the 150th anniversary of the War Between the States, some female re-enactors still cling to secrecy - not just for historical accuracy but because uniformed women aren't always welcome in the male-dominated hobby.

Some of these women are easily spotted by their lack of attention to detail. Others go to great lengths and expense to avoid detection. Henry, of Williamsburg, Va., said she even got an FBI expert to teach her to apply facial hair.

"My goal has always been to be as authentic as possible," said Henry, a former Petersburg National Battlefield

ranger who is now head coachman at Colonial Williamsburg. She said she has spent nearly \$3,500 on her Civil War outfit and gear, including an \$850, custom-tailored, gray wool frock coat.

But just having the right accouterments isn't enough. To pass muster as a man, the normally exuberant Henry says she "flatlines" herself: "You have to alter your mannerisms, the way you speak, the way you use your hands, the way you walk, the way you use your facial expressions."

Even then, getting in may not be easy.

Audrey Scanlan-Teller, a re-enactor in the Washington area, was initially denied a role in this year's 150th anniversary commemoration of the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter, S.C., because of her gender. She successfully appealed to the National Park Service, citing a 1993 federal court ruling barring gender discrimination at park service events.

The Fort Sumter re-enactors were screened by a private-sector committee. Chairman Jeff Antley, of Mount Pleasant, S.C., said his Union troop commander initially rejected Scanlan-Teller because historical records prove there were no women, whether in uniform or civilian clothes, at the fort during the 1861 engagement - and organizers wanted to recreate those conditions.

Antley said he knew nothing of the dispute until the park service told him to let Scanlan-Teller in. He recognized her right to join the nearly 1,000 other re-enactors at the April event and said he has no argument with women who portray male soldiers convincingly.

"If you want to do this, do it the best you can and you'll gain respect - and she did," he said. "She did as good a

job as she could have done. I didn't see her in the ranks. I didn't notice her."

Susan Kinne of Woodsville, N.H., had a more frustrating experience when she was barred in 2008 from sharing sleeping quarters with her Civil War band mates during a weekend field-music camp at Fort Delaware State Park in Delaware City, Del.

"I had to sleep with women I didn't know and it bugged me," said Kinne, 52, a tenor horn player in the 12th New Hampshire Serenade Band and the Baltimore-based Federal City Brass Band.

Event organizer Ronald Palese of Gettysburg, Pa., said the rule against cross-gender sleeping arrangements protects female students, some as young as 10.

"When you deal with children, you cannot step over a line," he said.

But Kinne said the dictum violates a sacred principle among serious re-enactors: They're not in costume - they're in character.

"When you are in character, it's 'Private Kinne.' It's never 'Sue,'" she said. "We are all men."

At other events, "I've slept in the tents with the guys, I eat with the guys, I go in the woods and go to the bathroom with the guys," she said. "I do everything they do, and it's expected, and it should be expected."

Female re-enactors can turn to Wendy King Ramsburg of Hedgesville, W.Va. She runs an invitation-only website for women military re-enactors.

Ramsburg suggests wearing vests, jackets and trousers one size too big to hide telltale curves. She also provides instructions for making an authentic chest binder she says flattens and protects one's breasts better than the sports bras some female re-enactors wear.



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The discrimination is often covert, Ramsburg wrote in an e-mail.

"For example, insisting that a female send in a picture to prove that she meets a specific set of requirements when males registering for the same event are not burdened with this requirement."

Ramsburg said some privately run events have rules stating, "Women discovered in uniform will be dismissed from the field." And some enforce a 5-foot height requirement, ostensibly for safety, that limits female participation.

Lauren Wike literally wrote the book on Civil War female fighters. She and DeAnne Blanton documented 240 of these women in their 2002 volume, "They Fought Like Demons." The book is treasured by many of today's female re-enactors.

Wike, of Fayetteville, N.C., started the project after a ranger ejected her from a 1989 living-history event at Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg, Md. She said the ranger told her, "We don't allow women in uniform here."

She sued the National Park Service and won a federal court victory in 1993. Now the agency incorporates into its biennial training for living-history staffers a reminder that excluding women who portray male soldiers isn't just unconstitutional - it's historically inaccurate.

"In view of the fact that at least one woman (and possibly six women) did participate in the battle of Antietam, the presence of female volunteers appearing as male soldiers should be treated as an interpretive opportunity rather than as a liability," reads a memo used in the training.

Mike Litterst, spokesman for the park service's Civil War sesquicentennial events, said four parks - Antietam, Appomattox Court House, Gettysburg

and Shiloh - have information about women fighters in their programs, brochures or websites.

Elizabeth Charlton of Lawrence, Mass., wore bright red trousers and a navy coat and cap as she carried the colors of the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia 6th Regiment Company I down Pratt Street in Baltimore last spring. The parade commemorated the four Massachusetts soldiers and 12 civilians who died April 19, 1861, when Southern sympathizers attacked federal troops passing through the city en route to Washington.

Charlton, a married mother of three, said she started re-enacting more than 10 years ago, portraying the wife of a soldier killed in Baltimore. When her local military re-enactor unit had an opening in the color guard, she volunteered and found pants preferable to a hoop skirt.

"It's much easier to get dressed," she said.

UD professor finds Civil War relic in Massachusetts

By Tracy Bryant, UD Daily, July 6, 2011

Ritchie Garrison was helping to clean out his late uncle's attic in Massachusetts when he came upon an intriguing department store bag.

"When I saw what was inside, I almost fell over," the University of Delaware history professor says. It was his great-grandfather George T. Garrison's folded-up shelter tent from the Civil War, or more correctly, half of a shelter tent.

"Each man carried a half, and when you buttoned the two halves together and suspended it over a sapling or a rope, you had a two-man tent," explains Garrison, director of the

Winterthur Program in American Material Culture at UD. "They looked a little like pup tents and were an idea borrowed from the French military."

Only about 30 shelter tents are known to exist from the Civil War, according to Garrison, and this one is even more rare because of its regiment of origin.

George T. Garrison served as a lieutenant and acting quartermaster in the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. With the exception of the officers, it was one of the first units of the U.S. Army to be made up entirely of African American men. The regiment was stationed on Folly Island near Charleston, S.C., in 1863 until the war's end. The island was a major staging ground for Union troops operating in the vicinity of Charleston. The creamy white tent is made of cotton canvas and stamped "Company I, 55th" to identify the regiment and "H. S. McComb, Wilmington" for its maker and place of manufacture. Primarily machine sewn, the tent has hand-stitched buttonholes and buttons made of bone.

McComb, of Wilmington, Del., was the largest contractor for shelter tents in 1863, with contracts for 219,000 out of 585,700 tents made that year.

"Since this was the year my great-grandfather mustered into the service, it seems likely that his tent was issued in 1863, but McComb also had a contract in 1864 for 50,000 tents, so it could have been made and issued then," Garrison says.

The prices for shelter tents rose during the war due to inflation and materials shortages. The tents in 1863 cost between \$3.25 and \$4.10 each, the price seemingly shaped by the cost of the cotton cloth used in their manufacture, Garrison notes. In



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1864, McComb charged the government \$5.48 for each tent.

Garrison has read about the tent's use during maneuvers on Folly Island in his great-grandfather's detailed diaries. He is working on transcribing those diaries for a future book, along with the diaries of his other great-grandfather, John Ritchie, who was quartermaster of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the black regiment memorialized in the movie *Glory*.

"The two visited each other and sometimes served together in the war," Garrison says, noting that John Ritchie was based on Morris Island and George Garrison on Folly Island with only an inlet separating them.

When he touches the tent, Garrison says he feels the strong pulse of family, from his great-great-grandfather abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who sought an end to slavery through non-violent means, and the son George who chafed at such nonviolent beliefs and jumped at the chance to serve in one of the first black regiments of the Civil War.

"We're the custodians of the nation's history with items like these," Garrison says.

Ironically, Garrison had just sent an article about Civil War tents off for publication when he made the attic discovery.