



## THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

### Notes from the President 9/2017

BCWRT Community:

I had already started work on having an early 2018 meeting which would feature a panel debating the pros and cons of Baltimore's Confederate monuments when I awakened to the news that the monuments had been removed. Still, I'm certain the issue will remain; therefore, look for information about that debate in the future. We are hoping to schedule this in January.

On Tuesday, September 26, author Gene Schmiel will discuss his book "Citizen-General: Jacob Dolson Cox and the Civil War Era". This should be an exciting presentation about this Canadian born Ohioan who was a Civil War General, Ohio Governor, Secretary of the Interior and author.

Diocese of Maryland Archivist Mary Klein will introduce many of you to the Right Rev. William R. Whittingham-Civil War Bishop of Maryland. Her presentation occurs October 24. November 28 will feature retired NPS employee and re-enactor Mel Reid in a living history interpretation of becoming a soldier in the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts- from "Plantation to Battlefield". Our December 12 meeting (*note our usual date change for December*) will feature author and Frederick County Civil War Roundtable member Gary Dyson discussing his work "The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith, Family Ties and the Battle on the Stono, January 30, 1863".

Did you know there were female troopers fighting during the Civil War. Learn about a special on during our February 27, 2018 meeting. Author, historian Bob O'Connor will have a "first person" presentation on Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln's friend and self appointed bodyguard, on March 27, 2018.

We have committees working on future BCWRT trips and our Annual Banquet

(scheduled for April 24, 2018). Please contact Bill Rixham at [WFRIXHAM@msn.com](mailto:WFRIXHAM@msn.com). The banquet will be held at a new site since the Parkville Heritage Gardens have ceased operation.

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:**

*Remember, we are always looking for new members. Invite a friend to our meetings. The BCWRT has many good things happening. Please spread the word.*

Robert L. Ford,  
President

### **Civil War re-enactment event canceled in SC because of safety concerns in 'current political climate'**

BY ANDREW DYS AND JOHN MARKS, Charlotte Observer, Sep 19, 2017

BRATTONSVILLE, S.C. — An annual Civil War-era skirmish, presented for about three decades at York County's Historic Brattonsville, has been canceled because of concerns about safety and potential protests.

Officials with the Culture & Heritage Museums, which oversees Historic Brattonsville and the Museum of York County, discussed their concerns about "if something did happen" after protests in other parts of the country over Confederate monuments and symbols, said Dale Dove, vice-president of the Culture and Heritage Commission.

The event features a skirmish between Confederate and Union troops. However, the event is not a re-enactment of an actual York County battle, because no Civil War battles took place at Brattonsville, museum officials have said.

Commission officials contacted the York County Sheriff's Office about security, Dove said. They were told that if extra police were needed, the museums would have to pay for security, both before and during the event in late October, Dove said.

Dove said canceling the event for this year is the right thing, because of the climate of unrest concerning the history of the Civil War.

Carey Tilley, executive director of Culture and Heritage Museums, echoed that sentiment in a statement released Tuesday afternoon.

Tilley also said historic accuracy was a factor in the decision.

"We continue to believe that military re-enactments are an effective tool for teaching history to the public; however, in light of the fact that there were no Civil War battles at Historic Brattonsville, the historical and educational benefits are outweighed by the potential danger and risk to public safety of hosting the event in the current political climate," Tilley said in the statement.

Tilley continued: "We also believe that the current National discussion surrounding the Civil War creates a greater sense of urgency for us to step back and reflect on our Civil War programming to ensure that going forward, it aligns more closely with the site mission at Historic Brattonsville in linking the story of those tumultuous years to the actual Brattonsville community — including those who were enslaved there," the statement said.

Concerns over the event resurfaced in 2015, after the Charleston massacre of nine black people by white supremacist Dylann Roof. Museum officials as long as a decade ago voiced concerns over the event and how it is popular, but not historic.



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Plans were for the Sixth Regiment South Carolina Volunteers and Culture & Heritage Museums of York County to host the event Oct. 27-29 at Hightower Hall, on the restored Brattonsville plantation in western York County.

Dove conceded that the mission of the museum is to teach history. He said the event being presented is "not a York County historical issue."

Marie Cheek, spokesperson for the museums, confirmed by email to The Herald that the event was canceled.

Event organizers with the re-enactor group emailed supporters and members, notifying them the October event at Brattonsville won't be happening this year.

The message noted "this is not a permanent cancellation" and said that it's expected to continue in future years.

The decision, by the museum board, "came down to the inability to guarantee the safety of the re-enactors and the public at the event during these difficult times," organizers said in an email to supporters.

Fort Mill resident Mike Short, a former York County Council member, started re-enacting almost 25 years ago. He often portrays a chaplain. Short also is one of three main organizers who sent the message to would-be participants explaining why the event won't be held this year.

The national political atmosphere has groups like his looking at events, with Brattonsville being the closest one to cancel.

"It's the first time here, but there's been a few that have been canceled in other places," Short said. "There have been some that have been held in other places."

Short isn't aware of any specific threats to an event this year. In his

time with reenactments he's "never had any problems" he can recall. Despite the canons and rifles at events, Short said they aren't primarily about fighting.

"We're a history organization," he said. "That's what we do. It's not a celebration of war. It's a commemoration of what happened."

People who come to events don't do it to support one side of the battle or another, he said.

"They're people that are interested in history," Short said. "They want to get some feel for what life might have been like in that time. And that's what we try to provide."

Events typically include demonstrations on hobbies of the time, candle-making, cooking and the like. The October event was to have time set aside for local schools to come out and learn from re-enactors, along with other non-battle events.

"It's a great learning tool," Short said. "That's what we've always envisioned it would be, and should be."

### Canada unveils monument to US Civil War

BBC News, September 18, 2017

Canada has unveiled its first monument to the US Civil War, honouring the 40,000 Canadians who fought during America's bloodiest conflict.

The monument in Cornwall, Ontario, was championed by a Civil War re-enactment group who raised almost C\$44,000 (\$36,000, £27,000) to build it.

About 7,000 Canadians died in the war, which claimed almost 620,000 US lives.

Although Canada was part of Britain until 1867 and officially neutral, Canadians fought on both sides.

The pressures of the 1861-65 Civil War, and the threat of an American invasion, helped urge Canada to its own confederation and independence. "No one can fully understand Canada without appreciating that the war was an essential factor in the country's birth," wrote historian John Boyko in his 2013 book *Blood and Daring*. "We owe it to ourselves to understand the Civil War - to heed its whispering ghosts."

The US Civil War was fought when 11 Southern states revolted against the US government and formed their own Confederate States of America.

While some maintain the war was fought for "state's rights", most historians agree it was over slavery, which the South sought to preserve.

Although Confederate monuments in the US have been the subject of heated debate, supporters of the Ontario monument, which commemorates those who fought on both side, say they are only interested in history.



Reuters photo

The monument was the pet project of a Montreal Civil War re-enactment society called the Grays and Blues.

"We don't have any far-right maniacs, racists or anti-Semites, we're just town folks who are interested in history," Grays and Blues president Bob McLaughlin told Postmedia News.

When the war broke out in 1861, Canada was still a subject of Great Britain and had maintained an uneasy



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peace with its American neighbours since the War of 1812, when Canadian and British troops marched on Washington DC and burned down the White House.

Many in the US government were fervent supporters of Manifest Destiny, an ideology that stated America should conquer the whole continent, and Canadians were worried about the possibility of a US invasion.

Although most Canadians fought for the Union army, many were sympathetic to the Confederacy, with some Confederate fighters hiding out in Canadian cities to conduct border raids.

### Woman's remains were discovered in aftermath of the Battle of Antietam

by Mark Brugh, Herald Mail, Sep 17, 2017

Women during the Civil War era were often thought of as wives, sisters or daughters who stayed at home while the men went off to war. Even at the beginning of the Civil War, men, not women, were nurses.

But a June 14, 1865, clipping from The Herald and Torch Light newspaper reveals the body of a female in Union uniform was found while recovering bodies for burial at Antietam National Cemetery. For the first time, the newly discovered article answers the question whether any female soldiers were killed during the Battle of Antietam in September 1862. The article confirms two things not known before: First, that a female Union soldier died in battle at Antietam, and second: that she is buried as an unknown in the grounds of the Antietam National Cemetery.

Previously, other historical documentation reported that seven to

nine women fought for the Union disguised as males and were wounded at Antietam. Until now, no previous source has documented bodies of any women recovered from the battlefield.

Appearing on page 3 of The Herald and Torch is an article of about 2,000 words. It provides an update about progress and general business the Board of Trustees of the ANC has made since its first meeting in Hagerstown in May 1865.

At that first meeting, Aaron Good, a Sharpsburg citizen, presented the Trustees with a list of more than 1,500 field grave locations and names of the dead scattered around the battlefield. Good explained that the list was prepared from a survey he conducted with another town resident, Joseph Gill, in the days immediately after the battle. The Trustees gladly received Good's information and their official minutes of the meeting recorded praise for him. Good was acknowledged "for giving so freely of his time" and "for his truly humane and praiseworthy efforts." The Trustees then hired Good to continue his work by locating graves and identifying bodies.

In a much smaller article also on page 3 but separated from the ANC article, The Herald and Torch reported Good's discovery of the remains of a female Union soldier with these words:

"Mr. Good who is actively engaged collecting a list of the names of the dead on Antietam battle field, and other information for the use of the trustees, has discovered that a woman acting as a Union soldier in uniform was killed in that great battle. We have not learned her name or residence, but presume Mr. Good has all the information by which her

friends will be able to identify her remains."

Because Good was working for the ANC Trustees, it seems nearly certain that the body of the female Union soldier he identified was eventually collected and buried in the Antietam National Cemetery.

The National Park Service provides information about the work of Aaron Good in literature distributed at Antietam National Battlefield and on the park's website. Both the literature and the website characterize Good's contributions with the words of the ANC Trustees from May 1865, again suggesting that Good "gave freely of his time" and conducted "truly humane and praiseworthy efforts."

However, Good was probably more motivated toward personal financial gain for this work than either the ANC Trustees or the NPS has previously recognized. According to newspaper articles from Hagerstown and Chambersburg, Pa., publications in the spring of 1863, Good was reported to be selling — at exorbitant prices — information about the location of bodies of in the field to relatives who came to Sharpsburg to retrieve remains.

Keith Snyder, cultural resource officer with Antietam National Battlefield, reviewed the June 14, 1865, Herald and Torch article and notices about Good's sales of information about the locations of graves.

"We are always learning about the Battle of Antietam and its aftermath," he said. "New research continues to change our interpretation of the events before, during and after the battle."

Mark Brugh is a researcher and writer who focuses on the lives of Civil War era residents of Sharpsburg.



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### **Hunley Mystery NOT Solved Yet:**

Researchers Continue Investigation into What Really Happened  
**OFFICIAL HUNLEY PROJECT  
PRESS RELEASE, AUGUST 31,  
2017**

Recently, Duke University issued a press release claiming one of their student's discovered what caused the *Hunley's* crew to perish and the submarine to sink in 1864. In today's digital age, the story spread across the internet quickly due to the sensational headline. However, a spokesman for the *Hunley* Project said today, the story is not accurate. The pioneering submarine and her history have captured the imaginations of people across the globe. The *Hunley* Project regularly receives theories from the public about what led to the submarine's loss and other ideas related to their research. "The case of Duke University's press release is a bit different as it has created quite a stir," said Kellen Correia, Executive Director of Friends of the *Hunley*. Duke University is not part of the *Hunley* Project's investigative team. They don't have access to the detailed forensic and structural information related to the submarine, which would be essential to draw any sort of reliable or definitive conclusions.

The *Hunley* Project said they felt the need to issue a statement today to make sure the unsubstantiated theory claimed by the Duke University student does not continue to spread, in view of the comprehensive research conducted by the *Hunley* team on the submarine for more than 15 years. The idea of a concussive wave from the torpedo explosion killing the crew, as outlined in the

Duke University release, has been previously considered and is one of many scenarios the *Hunley* Project team has been investigating.

"The Duke study is interesting, they just unfortunately didn't have all the facts. If it were as easy as simple blast injuries, we would have been done a while ago. Though a shock wave can cause life-threatening injuries, this is something we discounted quite a while back based on the evidence," said Jamie Downs, former Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Alabama.

The *Hunley* became the world's first successful combat submarine in 1864 and then mysteriously vanished without a trace. She remained lost at sea for over a century and was raised in 2000. Since then, a collaborative research effort with the U.S. Navy, the Smithsonian Institution, Clemson University and others has been underway to uncover the reasons for the *Hunley's* loss and conserve the vessel for future generations.

Using detailed information about the composition and dimensions of the *Hunley's* iron structure, forensic analysis of the crew's remains, and other research and archaeological data, the *Hunley* Project and its partners have conducted comprehensive digital and physical simulations for the past several years. While the likely cause of the submarine's demise has not been concluded, the scenario of a concussive wave killing the *Hunley* crew has been deemed not likely by those working on the actual submarine and who have access to this key data.

Their most recent study was issued by the U.S. Navy this month and was conducted in collaboration with the *Hunley* Project. "Given the amount of uncertainty surrounding the vessel's

final mission, a bottom-up technical analysis was commissioned alongside ongoing archeological investigation of the *Hunley*. Calculations of *Hunley's* engagement with the *Housatonic* were successfully completed and it was observed that the engagement would have been devastating to the *Housatonic* while resulting in relatively low levels of loading on *Hunley*," according to their report. For the full report, go to: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/underwater-archaeology/sites-and-projects/ship-wrecksites/hl-hunley/hunley-incident-analysis.html> The *Hunley* Project remains committed to sharing the most accurate information about the submarine that is available and welcomes discussion and ideas from the public and other academic institutions about the *Hunley* and her history. Still, Correia cautions, "As tempting as it may be, we are careful not to jump to definitive conclusions until all the research has been evaluated."

### **About the Pry House**

National Museum of Civil War  
Medicine, September 17, 2017

Philip and Samuel Pry were brothers who inherited their father's farm near Keedysville, Maryland, in 1828. Philip built his house on a rise on the east bank of Antietam Creek in 1844, using bricks fired on the property. Samuel lived just north of Philip and operated a mill.

In September 1862, the Union Army took over Philip's property to use as a staging area in preparation for the upcoming battle. Philip, his wife Elizabeth, and their six children lives were abruptly disrupted by the war. During the Battle of Antietam on September 17, Philip remained at the



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house while his wife and children were taken by an army ambulance to nearby Keedysville, where they stayed on Jacob Keedy's farm.

The Pry house hosted the commander of the Union Army of the Potomac, General George B. McClellan, and his staff during the battle. The officers moved the Pry's best parlor furniture out onto the front lawn and set up tent stakes as telescope rests from which they watched the action in the central portion of the battlefield as it unfolded. "I saw near McClellan's headquarters at Pry's farm, on a bare hill beyond it, a group of dismounted officers. I climbed the hilltop, and the group resolved itself into Generals McClellan, Fitz-John Porter, and other officers unknown to me. Aides and couriers were coming and going with fidgety hurry, bringing reports and taking orders....Who, that stood upon the hilltop there, could ever forget the soul-racking suspense, the burning anxiety, the heart thumps of those history-making moments, all watching closely the advancing wall of battle and wondering what would be the outcome of the early dash upon the hidden enemy's stronghold in the gloom of the west wood?" –

Frank H. Schell, Special Artist, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.

Before the battle, the entire Second Corps of the Union Army was encamped on and near the Pry property, and the spring served as a welcome source of fresh water for the soldiers. Near the house was the central station for an elaborate Signal Corps observation system, connecting McClellan to the signal stations of other officers and to a station on the summit of Elk Ridge, which had a commanding view of the area.

The Pry property was also headquarters for the Medical Department under Dr. Jonathan Letterman, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac. Letterman remained at the house throughout the battle, relying on Assistant Surgeon Benjamin Howard for information on the conditions of other field hospitals and the evacuation of the wounded. Prior to the battle, the ambulances had been collected near the Pry House, where they were dispatched to transport the wounded from the battlefield.

Philip Pry's barn was used as a field hospital for enlisted men, mainly from Richardson's Division of the Second Corps. The Pry barn, the R. F. Kennedy, and Henry Neikirk farms on the west bank of Antietam Creek were all under the direction of Surgeon John Howard Taylor. At least 1,500 men were treated at these three locations and the overcrowding left many without adequate clothing and bedding. Philip's brother, Samuel Pry, was also affected. Samuel's house, barn and mill were used as field hospitals, as were most of the buildings in the Sharpsburg and Keedysville area.



Pry House, NPS Photo

Two Union officers were brought to the Pry house to be treated after being wounded during the battle. An injury to Major General Joseph Hooker's foot proved to be minor. He

was treated by Letterman and other staff surgeons at the house until he was transported to Washington, DC. Major General Israel Richardson's injury was more severe—the projectile had entered Richardson's side, injuring his internal organs. He was placed in the large upstairs bedroom of Philip and Elizabeth, and was attended to by Surgeon John Howard Taylor. In early October, President Abraham Lincoln visited Richardson at the Pry house. Later that month, Richardson's wife and sister came from Michigan to help with his nursing care. They felt that he was improving, but pneumonia set in and he died in the Pry house on November 3, 1862.

After the battle, the Pry family faced considerable losses. Their food stores had been depleted, their livestock slaughtered by the army, their fences burned for fuel, their hay and fodder used up, and their personal possessions damaged or missing. Twenty acres of ripe corn, still in the field, were consumed by the army's horses. The ability to plant the next year's crops was negatively impacted by the loss of plants for seed and animals for plowing. Although Philip filed damage claims with the government, he did not receive the compensation he thought he deserved.

"Before the war he was a prosperous man, owning one of the finest farms in the county lying in the vicinity of the battlefield of Antietam. He is now in serious circumstances. I have known him for thirty years, an upright, honest man and good citizen. His loyalty is unquestioned." – William T. Hamilton, commenting on Philip Pry's circumstances, February 1874.

In 1874, the family decided to move to Tennessee to start a new life. When Elizabeth died in 1886, her



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family honored her wish to be buried in Maryland near her family and friends. Philip lived until 1900, and he was buried next to his wife in the Fairview Cemetery in Keedysville.

### From Necessity to Honor: The Evolution of National Cemeteries in the United States

By Kelly Merrifield, NPS

Originally created to honor Union soldiers killed during the Civil War, national cemeteries have become national memorials to all United States veterans. About a dozen national cemeteries and numerous soldiers' lots were established in 1862, more than a year after the war began with Confederate troops firing on Fort Sumter. By 1870, almost 300,000 Union soldiers and sailors lay buried in 73 national cemeteries. These cemeteries were first set aside for burial of those who died during the conflict, but by 1873, any Union veteran of the Civil War could receive burial in a national cemetery. Today, the nation has more than 175 national cemeteries, soldiers' lots, government lots, and Confederate cemeteries. Three federal agencies manage them: the National Cemetery Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); the Department of the Army of the Department of Defense; and the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

The burial practices for soldiers and sailors in the United States evolved over time. Soldiers killed in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 were usually buried in churchyards or family cemeteries. The U.S. Army established many forts to protect the frontier, as people moved

westward. Post cemeteries, such as the one at Fort Sam Houston, in San Antonio, Texas, were established for soldiers and family members. At the same time, the growing urban population and concerns about sanitation caused many churches and cities to establish new cemeteries on the undeveloped outskirts of cities. The first of these rural cemeteries was Mount Auburn, created in 1831 outside of Boston, which was laid out like a park, so that families could spend their leisure time with their deceased relatives. At the beginning of 1861, neither the post cemeteries nor the rural cemeteries were prepared for the burial of ultimately more than 600,000 men who died during the Civil War. The nation needed new burial practices to deal with the changing realities of war. Weapon accuracy and fighting techniques led to more casualties than in previous wars; railroads and steamships carried soldiers to battles farther and farther from their homes; disease caused a high percentage of the deaths on battlefields, in prisoner-of-war camps, and in hospitals.

Prior to the Civil War, burial of the war dead was the responsibility of the Army's Office of the Quartermaster General, which also provided food, shelter, and supplies to the soldiers. This changed in September 1861, when the United States War Department issued *General Orders No. 75*, which designated Union commanding officers responsible for burial of the dead from their units. This order presented many challenges. Fighting often killed a large number of soldiers, including the commanding officer. Of the survivors, after a long and arduous battle, few were capable of moving bodies and digging graves due to

fatigue, hunger, and injury. In addition, materials and information for grave markers were often non-existent. Given that many battles occurred on farm fields, soldiers often received hasty burials in shallow graves where they fell. Commanding officers were also required to keep records of deceased soldiers and burial site locations. This proved difficult because few soldiers had any form of identification on them. Some soldiers pinned a piece of paper to their clothing with their name and address, but dog tags did not become standard issue until the 20th century. While some wealthy families paid to have their sons' bodies sent home by train, the long distances and high costs made this impossible for the majority of families. Stories of family members and friends searching for the body of a deceased soldier were common to the history of the Civil War.



Alexandria National Cemetery circa 1862-1865  
*Courtesy of Library of Congress,  
Prints and Photographs, Civil War Collection*

In 1861, the Board of Governors of the Soldiers' Home in Washington, D.C. permitted the Army to bury soldiers who died in and around the capital city in a section of its cemetery, but this land quickly filled up. Faced with the growing number of Union dead, the U.S. Congress passed legislation in July 1862, which among other actions, including pay, contracts, and rations, authorized the President



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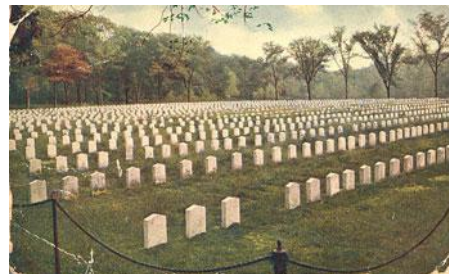
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to purchase land for the establishment of cemeteries for burial of those fighting on behalf of the United States, not the Confederate States. The first cemeteries were established near key locations: battlefields, including Mill Springs National Cemetery in Nancy, Kentucky; hospitals, including Keokuk, Iowa; and other troop concentration points such as Alexandria, Virginia. By the end of the Civil War in spring 1865, there were approximately 30 national cemeteries and seven soldiers' lots in private cemeteries. Despite this, many soldiers still were lying in farm fields due to hastily conducted wartime burials, often having their remains exposed over time. By 1867, the growing concern about the conditions of these wartime interments led to a new effort to provide a proper burial for every Union soldier and sailor who died during the war. The Office of the U.S. Quartermaster General established national cemeteries in central locations such as Memphis, Tennessee, where they assembled remains from around the region for burial. Among the re-interments were soldiers from the United States Colored Troops.

Also in 1867, the "Act to Establish and Protect National Cemeteries" required the Secretary of War to enclose every national cemetery with a stone or iron fence, to mark every gravesite with a headstone, appoint a superintendent to each cemetery, and construct a lodge for the superintendent to occupy. Despite these requirements, a permanent stone marker design was not adopted until 1873. Several years later, in 1879, Congress authorized the furnishing of headstones for the unmarked graves of veterans in

private cemeteries. In 1873, national cemetery interment eligibility expanded to include all Union veterans, as a final benefit of service to the country. Eligibility requirements for national cemeteries continued to expand in the 20th century to include most honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and dependent children.

Confederate soldiers could not be buried in national cemeteries, nor were they afforded any benefits from the United States Government for many decades after the end of the Civil War. When the reburial corps in the late 1860s found the remains of Confederate soldiers lying near those of Union soldiers, they removed the Confederates' bodies. Because identification of remains was difficult at best, some Confederate soldiers were reburied in national cemeteries, unintentionally as Union soldiers.



Rock Island Confederate Cemetery Postcard  
*Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs,  
National Cemetery Administration, History  
Program*

Confederate prisoners of war were often interred in "Confederate sections" within the national cemeteries. Generally, within national cemeteries and at other cemeteries under the care of the Federal Government, Confederate graves were marked first with wooden headboards (as had been Union graves) and later with marble markers

with just the name of the soldier engraved on the stone, so that they were indistinguishable from civilians buried in the national cemeteries. Private organizations, especially women's organizations established in former Confederate states after the war, assumed responsibility for Confederate reburials. One of the more prominent groups was the Hollywood Memorial Association, which raised funds to move the bodies of Confederate soldiers from the battlefields of Gettysburg and Drewry's Bluff to Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia. The appearance of grave markers varied in these Confederate cemeteries depending on the preferences of the supervising organization. The Federal Government first became involved in permanently marking Confederate graves in 1906. That year, Congress authorized the furnishing of headstones for Confederate soldiers who died in Federal prisons and military hospitals in the North, and were buried near their places of confinement. The act also established the Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead, whose job it was to ensure that the graves of Confederate soldiers in the North received markers. The design for these grave markers was to be more or less identical to that approved in 1901 for marking Confederate graves at Arlington National Cemetery. The headstone was the same size and material as those for Union soldiers, except the top was pointed instead of rounded, and the U.S. shield was omitted. Individual graves were marked at places such as Rock Island Confederate Cemetery, Illinois, and Camp Chase Confederate Cemetery, Ohio, both sites of large prisoner of war camps. Confederate graves



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within national cemeteries in the North, such as Woodlawn National Cemetery, New York, were also remarked with the new headstones at this time. In places where the Commission was unable to mark individual graves, such as Point Lookout Confederate Cemetery, Maryland, and Finn's Point National Cemetery, New Jersey, a single monument was erected that featured bronze plaques bearing the names of those who died at the associated prisoner of war camps. Finally, an Act of January 20, 1914, authorized the furnishing of headstones for the unmarked graves of both Union and Confederate soldiers, sailors, and marines in national, post, city, town, and village cemeteries. This provision allowed graves of Confederate soldiers buried in national cemeteries in the South, such as Fort Smith and Little Rock National Cemeteries in Arkansas, to be marked with the distinctive Confederate-style headstone.

Today, three Federal agencies manage 157 national cemeteries. The Veterans Administration, precursor to the Department of Veterans Affairs, originally had responsibility for 21 cemeteries, some of them associated with the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. To these were added 82 cemeteries and 33 related soldiers' lots transferred from the Department of the Army to the VA in 1973. Today, the Army retains control of two national cemeteries, Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, and Soldiers' Home National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. The National Park Service manages 14 national cemeteries, the majority of which the War Department transferred to the National Park Service in 1933 along

with the national military parks. The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to establish new cemeteries to provide burial benefits to veterans who served, as well as their families, as close to home as possible. All three agencies maintain the national cemeteries as memorials to honor those who served and sacrificed their lives for the United States.

### Old Soldiers' Homes, Left to Just Fade Away

The veterans agency has 430 vacant buildings, including 200 that are more than 90 years old. Now it is trying to get rid of many of them.

By Dave Phillips, NY Times,  
September 3, 2017

MILWAUKEE — When the towers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers began rising after the Civil War, they were seen as soaring monuments to the nation's benevolence. But after more than a century of use, they became more of an albatross.

The roof leaked. The wards were sheathed in lead paint and asbestos. The old wiring was a fire waiting to happen.

The home was too antiquated to use, too grand to demolish. So a new veterans hospital was built next door at a fraction of the cost of renovation. The Department of Veterans Affairs, seeing no reason to waste money on hiring a wrecking ball, simply locked the doors of the soldiers home, which veterans had fondly referred to as Old Main, letting it slowly crumble away through what one local preservationist called "demolition by neglect."

The home has been sealed for 28 years.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has 430 vacant buildings, including

200 that are more than 90 years old. Upkeep on this mothballed fleet costs at least \$7 million a year. The secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David J. Shulkin, bent on streamlining the massive health care system, recently announced a push to get rid of the buildings within two years, either by leasing, selling or demolition. But the story of Milwaukee's old soldiers' home, and the veterans theater next door, shows that it will be far from simple.

On a recent visit to the old hospital on a hill west of downtown, peeling paint hung like Spanish moss in the shadowy corridors, a snow of fallen ceiling plaster moldered on the floors, plastic netting swathed exterior walls to shield visitors from falling brickwork, and at the top of a trembling 19th Century ladder, the remnants of a nest suggested the highest tower had been occupied by a well-fed raccoon.

Despite its current state of dilapidation, though, Old Main is a success story. After years of failed attempts, the department recently leased it to a private developer who next year will begin clearing out the wreckage and transforming it into 80 apartments for homeless veterans.

The veterans health care system is an attic of the nation's good intentions, cluttered with Victorian surgeons quarters and tuberculosis wards, World War I shell shock asylums, New Deal libraries, Cold War bowling alleys and even a monkey house built to keep disillusioned Union veterans entertained.

For many buildings, there is no easy makeover, and few obvious buyers. Paying for upkeep is hard to justify at a time of soaring patient demand. So is paying for demolition. So hundreds of buildings stand preserved, at least for now, in a bureaucratic amber of indecision.





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"We believe in honoring the V.A.'s history, but the best way to do that is to provide the best care today," said Gary Kunich, a spokesman for the Milwaukee Veterans Affairs medical center. He was giving a tour of a new, state-of-the-art spinal injury clinic built near Old Main that cost \$27 million. Renovating the old soldiers home would have cost nearly twice that, he said, adding, that knocking it down would also cost millions. "We'd rather spend the money here."

Old Main was a model of modernity when it was authorized in 1865 by one of the last official acts of President Abraham Lincoln. It became home to about 1,000 former soldiers who rose at reveille each morning and dressed in blue uniforms, then filed into companies organized by disability. One visitor at the time praised the wards as "large and cheerful: well ventilated and well lighted."

As the building aged into obsolescence, though, it stubbornly resisted solutions. A proposed lease to the City of Milwaukee for offices and apartments, fell apart a decade ago amid protests from local veterans groups.

As Old Main and the theater next-door deteriorated, the department considered calling in the bulldozers. But that plan stopped in 2011 when local preservationists got Old Main protected as a national historic landmark.

Then, in recent years, preservationists working with local veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs, worked out a 75-year lease that will allow a developer who specializes in historic preservation, the Alexander Company, to renovate Old Main and five other historic buildings on the campus as apartments for homeless veterans.

"The bones of this building are great. You could never afford to build something like this today," said Joe Alexander, company's chief executive, as he toured the dark halls in a white hard hat.

Just behind him, the company's finance expert, Jonathan Beck, added, "The trick was putting together the money."

The \$33 million renovation will be paid for through a complex amalgam of low-income housing tax credits, federal housing vouchers, historical-preservation tax credits, grants and private donations, he said. Cost to the Department of Veterans Affairs: nothing.

Preservationists and veterans hailed the deal.

"This is a building of seminal importance to the story of the nation. It is where the story of caring for veterans starts," said Jim Draeger of the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is using similar funding models in Montana, Washington and several other states to convert historic buildings for homeless veterans.

Plenty of other buildings are stuck in a similar purgatory. In Tuskegee, Ala., a campus erected to serve African-American veterans from the Civil War and World War I has been closed for more than 30 years. The department said a rural location and poor repair have kept buyers away. The same is true of the campus in tiny Knoxville, Iowa, (population 7,200) which has 34 empty buildings including a dairy barn.

Mr. Beck, who worked for the National Trust for Historic Preservation before putting together the financing to save Old Main, said a number of other department properties have potential as housing

for the homeless, and Old Main could serve as a model.

"But people will have to act," he said. "If these places get too far gone, it's too expensive. Then there are no good options."