





Editor's Note:

As was mentioned in these pages a few months ago, Craig Rixham, the son of long-time BCWRT member Bill Rixham, was the Senior Level Fourth Place winner in the 2004 National APCWS Essay Contest. At long last we are happy to present Craig's award winning essay in these pages.

Honor the Past, Preserve the Future

By Craig Rixham

The horrors and losses of the great Civil War of America were some of the worst in human history. The people of our time may never fully comprehend the pain and loss of those brave men, but it is our duty as Americans to do our best to remember and appreciate their sacrifice.

The South and North believed in their own view of rights and freedoms. They both wished for a good life for their home and family. The men in both armies knew that there was a possibility that they might not return. The battlefields in America mark the places where men died for this noble sacrifice.

Today we have our own differences in values. Industry and commerce are the focus of our lives. Men still want a good life for their children, but in doing so, they are destroying the symbols of the sacrifices of our ancestors. Development is taking away the land that these soldiers fought on, and all for a profit. Lands that should be honored are lost. Destroying these lands is taking for granted the freedoms that those armies fought to give us.

Preserving the battlefields such as the Spotsylvania Courthouse and others is a tribute to the memory of the Blue and Grey. The battlefields are the only way for the people of today to stand and visualize what it was like during the fighting. We will never truly understand what it was like there, but it is our duty to try as well as we possibly can. By destroying the battlefields we are taking the gift of understanding the past away from future generations. Preserving them is only one way of making sure we do not.

DNA Positively Identifies One Hunley Crewman

Sept. 27, 2004 –Courtesy Civil War Interactive- There was only one man who carried an identification tag, not unlike a modern soldier would bear, when he set out on the final, fatal voyage of the Confederate submarine H. L. Hunley. The only problem was that scientists were almost certain from the time they found the medallion that the name on that tag was not the name of the man who bore it.

The ID tag found in the Confederate boat was that of a Union soldier, Ezra Chamberlin, of Connecticut.

According to records, Chamberlin was killed in a battle on Morris Island in the summer of 1863. What was his dog tag doing in the Hunley, which sank on Feb. 17 of the next year? After much excited discussion of the possibility that he might have survived the battle, been captured, changed sides or sent on a suicide mission, calmer heads prevailed. Taking souvenirs from the dead is hardly rare in wartime, and there was a suspected Hunley crewman who was in a position to do just that, J. F. Carlsen, who had been artilleryman at the Morris Island battle.

Unfortunately what records survived of Carlsen, such as age, size and appearance, did not match the evidence carried in the bones recovered from the Hunley by forensic archaeologists. The search began again.

The scientists sent samples of the remains to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii. There, DNA samples were selected for analysis and sent to the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution noted.

DNA is easy enough to analyze, but no use for identification unless it can be matched with that of a relative. Finding the relative was breakthrough made by forensic genealogist Linda Abrams, wielded the high-tech instrument known as a magnifying glass. On a paper signed by a suspected crewman believed to be named **Abrams** Joseph Ridgeway. discovered a mistake had been made. His name was actually spelled "Ridgaway" and once she had that, she tracked Joseph Ridgaway to Talbot County, Md., on the eastern shore Chesapeake of After Ridgaway was lost on the Hunley, a friend and former shipmate, James Joyner, took his belongings back to his family in Maryland. Joyner married Ridgaway's sister Elizabeth: Abrams located her grave in Drexel Hill. Pa.

Elizabeth's great-granddaughter gave permission for a sample to be taken, and it matched the DNA of the Hunley crewman.

The confirmation of Ridgaway's DNA testing brings the total number of identified Hunley crewmen to two. Commander George Dixon's remains were found in the front of the boat where the captain would logically stand. In addition, he was carrying two items in his pockets, a coin and a watch, engraved with his name. That leaves only two other American-







born men on the sub, James A. Wicks and Frank Collins, and there is little doubt which is which. Wicks was in his 40s, Collins his 20s. The other four men were born in Europe, the Charleston Post & Courier's Brian Hicks reports.

Scientists hope to use DNA to identify all eight men. So far, that has proven difficult. Abrams is searching for living descendants of the remaining seven crewmen, or at least the graves of direct maternal descendants, the only family members who would have matching DNA.

With Ridgaway's identity wrapped up, Abrams, a Massachusetts genealogist who works with the U.S. military, has turned her focus to Dixon and Arnold Becker, the youngest member of the crew. Becker, born in Europe, most likely entered the country in New Orleans, and Abrams wants to travel there for more research.

NPS Retirees Call for Park Funds, New CCC Program

Sept. 24, 2004 -Courtesy CWi- The Coalition of Concerned National Park Service Retirees (CCNPSR) is calling on Congress this week to immediately pump \$600 million of additional funds into America's national parks and, in a separate proposal, to create a "National Parks Restoration and Conservation Corps" (NPRCC).

According to a press release the group issued through the website of Protect Americas Lands, the program would be a large public works project patterned on the Great Depression's Civilian Conservation Corps. The NPRCC focus would be on erasing the national park's chronic maintenance backlog crisis that is now estimated at over \$6 billion. The Coalition's detailed and

ambitious "call to action" blueprint is based on a several-month review of challenges confronting the park service in the past decade and shows a clear consensus among former NPS management that there need to be major changes in the leadership and management of National Park Service resources in order to maintain and preserve parks for future generations.

Former NPS Regional Director Rob Arnberger explained: "Our commitment is to address long-standing problems through honesty and candor with the American public so that they have a better understanding of the deplorable state of their national park system and the impossible task the National Park Service faces in managing our nation's national parks.

"If we are to continue to protect these most valuable heritage areas more financial support must be brought to address the problems," Arnberger continued. "Our focus is on what steps need to be taken to fix what ails America's national parks. believes Coalition that the implementation of these actions would restore much of the bipartisan cooperation that formerly existed in relation to the nation's national park system."

The press release linked to a lengthy document establishing the nature and extent of the problems in the NPS and proposals for reversing the damage. The paper, released on Tuesday since Sept. 21 is the 88th anniversary of the creation of the NPS, can be found at <u>A Call to Action</u>.

Excerpts from the paper note the following:

--One of the most devastating trends in national park conservation is the trend toward privatizing national

parks. Amona advocates. argument goes that private sector involvement is in the 'public interest' because the cash-strapped National Park Service lacks the necessary funds to manage park resources and visitor facilities to accommodate growing public demand. The Bush Administration's budget decisions regarding domestic programs such as the management of the national park system have paved the way for policy initiatives that claim to offer relief to the National Park Service from its operational deficits and from its enormous backlog of maintenance projects, now projected to be somewhere between 4 and 6 billion dollars. Every one of these initiatives threatens to place more power in the hands of non-government entities and favors commercial or local interests over those of the general public. --Secretary Norton and Director Mainella have aggressively pursued Administration's "competitive sourcing" initiative. despite widespread opposition in Congress and repeated warnings from park officials that additional competitive NPS sourcing—the already outsources concessions, with annual revenues of \$800 million, public health, and some visitor information operations would seriously compromise the Service's ability to perform its three core functions: protect resources, provide for quality visitor services. and maintain productive relations with surrounding communities. -- These studies are expensive, coming in at astounding \$3,000 per position, or more. The NPS has plans to study approximately 1,500 positions. This expenditure does nothing to further the mission of the National Park Service. Instead, it creates employee anxiety and saps morale. Moreover,







the Administration's continuing push to implement the competitive sourcing initiative is targeting not just maintenance but resources, management and research employees as well.

--It is increasingly rare for a park visitor to enter a national park visitor center and find a uniformed national park ranger. The use of volunteers and "friends" of parks has, for years, been extraordinarily helpful to the national parks. It is clear, however, that volunteers now are no longer supplementing the work of uniformed, full-time employees; they are replacing them through programs such as Take Pride in America and Volunteers in Parks.

--There is one interesting corollary in relation to volunteers and the competitive sourcing initiative. Many volunteers are now reacting to the prospects of private enterprises assuming the role previously played by NPS employees by stating that they do not intend to continue to volunteer their time and energy to help a contractor make a profit. -- The Coalition conducted a survey of selected parks late in May, 2004. The intent of the survey was to verify what NPS Director Mainella had told the House Appropriations Committee: that "our parks will be open, which they will be; resources are protected, which they will be; and outstanding visitor's services will be provided, which they will be. And, we will get that job done." The survey reveals an entirely different picture. The NPS's own budget data show that the amount of money actually reaching nearly 85% of the parks in 2004 is less than what they got in 2003. And the "discretionary budget" in parksthat which is available after all the fixed costs are provided for-is shrinking at an even greater rate. This is because of increasing costs of employee salaries and benefits and such things as utilities; and because the Congress doesn't appropriate the full amount to cover pay increases approved for all federal civilian employees.

To cite two examples:

--At Gettysburg National Military Park (PA), which eliminated six permanent positions last year, park management will eliminate or leave vacant three more and eliminate five seasonal positions for visitor information and historical interpretation. Twenty-five percent of school groups' requests for ranger-let tours are rejected for lack of staff.

--At Shenandoah National Park (VA), interpretive programs have been reduced from 90 per week to 50 per week and visitor center hours have been trimmed. Despite being one of the most polluted parks in the national park system, it cannot afford to fill the staff Air Quality Specialist position.

-- The continuing decline in annual operating dollars at the park level also is having long-term effects on facilities. "Today's operating deficit is tomorrow's maintenance backlog," says John Latschar, Superintendent of Gettysburg National Military Park despite the current (PA). So. Administration's emphasis reducing the maintenance backlog, its top Interior and NPS officials are contributing to it by starving the parks' operational budgets.

The membership of the Coalition of Concerned NPS Retirees includes: Five former Directors or Deputy Directors of the National Park Service; Nineteen former Regional Directors or Deputy Regional Directors; Thirty-eight former Associate or Assistant Directors at the national or regional level;

Fifty-three former Division Chiefs at the national or regional level and Ninety-five former Park Superintendents or Assistant Superintendents.

Wartime Railroad Station May Be Transferred to Maryland City

Sept. 16, 2004 - Courtesy CWi- The Department of Recreation and Parks of Howard County, Maryland, may soon be the new owner of a very old property, the historic Ellicott City B&O Railroad Station. The station is believed to be the oldest railroad location America. terminal in The station is currently owned and operated by Historic Ellicott City Inc. known as HEC. That group's executive director is leaving shortly for another job, and county officials decided this was a good time to raise the question of a transfer of responsibility for the The Recreation Department already owns and operates a number of historic sites in the area, director Gary Arthur told the Ellicott City (MD) View, including a firehouse and an educational building known as the Old Colored School.

"We'd like to increase the programming at the B&O," Arthur said. That would mean increasing the number of hours and days it is open to the public.

Under the umbrella of the Heritage Consortium for Ellicott City, the county would like to establish a regular schedule for all and publish that schedule so Ellicott City merchants and others could help the county promote its historic attractions. "We'd like to work in partnership with Historic Ellicott City," Arthur said. Built in 1831, the B&O Railroad Station was a hub for commercial trade. lt also was featured







prominently during the Civil War. Located southwest of Baltimore, the station saw hordes of Union troops pass through on their way to guard the nation's capital at Washington.



During its early years, the paper noted, there was some question as to whether the building being preserved was the original station, said Bounds. But preservationists found much to conclude that it is indeed the original building. including "smokejacks," large funnels in the ceiling to let out the smoke from the big train engines. The county purchased the building from the railroad company and Historic Ellicott City has a contract with the county to operate it as a museum.

"It is one of the gems of the historic properties in Howard County," said attorney Roland Bounds, who sits on the board of Historic Ellicott City, Inc., (HEC) the non profit group that currently operates the museum. "We have to consider what it most beneficial for the museum," said Bounds about the transfer of operations, noting that nothing has been decided as of yet.

Reno Takes a Bet on Civil War Documents

Sept. 8, 2004 –Courtesy CWI Premium- When you think of Reno, Nevada you most likely think of slot machines, poker tables and shows featuring ladies unencumbered by excessive clothing. What the city fathers would like you to think of, at least from time to time, is the Reno the town was named after, the Civil War general.

In furtherance of this goal, the Reno City Council agreed last week to buy an assortment of historic papers including the document signed by President Abraham Lincoln which promoted Jesse Lee Reno to the rank of brigadier general. It was a considerable promotion given that Reno held only the rank of captain at the time.

The late philanthropist Moya Lear bought the collection in 1998 and displayed it in Heritage Bank on South Virginia Street for the past few years, the Reno Gazette-Journal reported.

Jack Bacon, an appraiser and retailer of historical documents, said the collection is special because it traces a major Civil War figure throughout the course of his military career. "It's very unusual to find a series of documents like this still intact as a group," he said. "Usually they get split up when they're auctioned." One of the most interesting documents, Bacon said, is Reno's appointment as 1st Lieutenant of Ordnance. signed by President Pierce and future Confederate President Jefferson Davis, secretary of war at the time. His diploma from West Point is one of the documents in the collection.

Bacon said the history of the documents is unknown because the auctioneer Lear bought them from

had a policy of not disclosing the name of the seller. Still, they were well taken care of, he assumes by family members or a collector. In addition to the two papers of commission, the collection includes eight other documents relating to Reno's career. Signatures on the papers include those of Presidents James Polk and James Buchanan in addition to Lincoln and Pierce. A permanent home for the collection is a relief to Jesse Reno biographer William McConnell. If the city hadn't bought the documents, they likely would have been split up and purchased by someone who only about presidents' cared the autographs.



Photo Courtesy Appleton's Encyclopedia

"They're probably all of the significant documents pertaining to his military life. I don't know how else to put it but that way. They're wonderful," McConnell said.

The city will spend \$20,900 for the 10 documents, which also contain the signatures of presidents The city will make replicas of the documents, frame the replicas and display them at City Hall.







The originals will be stored at the Nevada Historical Society in a low-humidity, acid-free environment. Bacon said the casual observer won't be able to tell the difference between the replicas and the originals and would protect the originals from fading and theft.

The city will pay the historical society about \$1,000 to store the collection and \$1,500 for the reproduction. Born in what is now West Virginia, Reno graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1846, ranking eighth in a class that also featured prominent historical figures George McClellan, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and George Pickett.

The paper promoting Reno to major general is not one of those in the collection purchased by his namesake town, but he would probably just as soon not have it there anyway if he were available for consultation. Shortly after receiving the promotion, Reno was killed in the Battle of South Mountain.

Producers Finish Filming Around Hagerstown

Sept. 30, 2004 – Courtesy CWi- Some very suspicious-looking people were seen sneaking around Hagerstown, Maryland recently. And the people they were filming were a pretty shifty lot as well, which is understandable considering that they were playing Civil War spies.

The cast and crew were from Greystone Television and Film, best known for their work on the Civil War for the History Channel, has a new production in progress. This one is on the subject of "Secret Missions of the Civil War," the Hagerstown Herald Mail reported.

The particular episode in progress relates to a Confederate plot to burn

down New York City, Greystone officials said. The incident, which took place on Nov. 25, 1864, is one of the great "what-ifs" of the Civil War for the few people who have ever heard of it.

Some of the filming was scheduled to take place at the Miller House, a downtown structure built in the early 1800s containing furnishings from the 1850s. Along with The Alsatia Club right next door, the structures are serving as backdrops for the tale of Confederate conspirators.

Vintage buildings and miles of as yet unspoiled scenery have given Hagerstown and Washington County what Convention and Visitors Bureau President Tom Riford calls "positive notoriety" in the entertainment industry.

Greystone producer Rannveigh Krokdal said she relished the chance to work outside Los Angeles. Krokdal, along with director Darryl Rehr, a Baltimore native, wrote the script for the two-hour show.

"People here are so helpful and friendly," she told the Herald-Mail. For Russell Richards Jr., chief executive officer of Historical Entertainment, it was just another day of shooting as he walked around in 19th century garb and grumbled about the discomforts of artificial moustaches.

Richards and his Cascade-based company are responsible for bringing a number of productions like this one to the area, providing sites, casting, props and costumes.

"We found a niche in the market that nobody was filling," he said. In its third year, Historical Entertainment already has a long list of credits ranging from feature films such as "Cold Mountain" and "Gods and Generals" to documentaries for

PBS, The Discovery Channel and the National Park Service.

No air date has been scheduled for the program at the present time, although Greystone officials said it would likely be sometime next spring.

Two Additional Properties Protected Near South Mountain Battlefield

Sept. 9, 2004 —Courtesy CWI Premium- A parcel of farmland and a historic black church near the South Mountain battlefield will now be preserved thanks to a Maryland state grant, Gov. Robert Ehrlich's office announced earlier this week. Funding for the grant came from the state's Transportation Enhancement Program, which is federal money administered by the Maryland State Highway Administration.

"As part of the ongoing effort to preserve Civil War sites in Maryland, more than 6,000 acres of South Mountain and the Rural Legacy land have been permanently protected," the governor's office said in a press release, the Hagerstown Herald-Mail reported.

The larger site, at 31 acres, is known as the Robertson property. The other is the Ceres Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Both parcels will now be included in the South Mountain State Park land inventory, Ehrlich said.

The state's Rural Legacy Program was set up to help fund the preservation of farms, forests and open spaces, according to the Department of Natural Resources' Web site. Coordination with Civil War preservation groups has led to much of the saved property also having historic importance, making the same funding go twice as far. The Ceres Bethel AME church was







built in 1870 by freed slaves, historians note. It is a part of the area's black culture long ignored by mainstream historians, preservation advocates say.

Vandals and nearly 20 years of neglect had nearly destroyed the tworoom, wood-frame church just outside the Frederick County hamlet of Burkittsville when an even worse fate overtook it. The church was used as a setting in the movie "The Blair Witch Project," and it became an instant lure for late-night lurkers. "Every six months, I put up new plywood, and every six months they come back again," said Rev. Richard Dyson of the Mount Zion AME Church in nearby Knoxville. "We've been worried that someone will set fire to the place."

First Civil War Memorial Site Established Abroad

Sept. 24, 2004 - Courtesy CWi- Just because we think of it as the "American Civil War" doesn't mean that all of the conflict took place within the bounds of the continental US. One which took place overseas is now marked as an official Civil War site, which is going to puzzle the heck out tourists in France. Officials of the Civil War Preservation Trust dedicated a plague Thursday in the Cite de la Mer -- "City of the Sea" --Museum in Cherbourg noting the battle between the USS Kearsarge and the Confederate commerce raider CSS Alabama which took place offshore of the English Channel town. The museum holds a cannon recovered from the Alabama, which sank after the battle in 198 feet of water about seven nautical miles offshore. The commanders of the two ships took their fight outside French territorial waters in deference to French law.

"This was one of the most notable naval battles of the Civil War, and one of the most unique in that it happened so far away from American shores," said Robert Neyland, head of underwater archaeology at the U.S. Naval Historical Center, who addressed dedication the telephone from Washington. The Alabama was built for the Confederacy by a company in Liverpool, England, and under her captain Raphael Semes was one of the most successful raiders ever. In 22 months, her crew boarded 447 vessels, including 65 Union merchant ships, and took 2,000 prisoners, according to the CSS Alabama Association.

"This ship caused a lot of panic in the United States," Neyland said, adding that its exploits made it known - and at times celebrated - in many parts of the world.

The commerce raider campaign, historians note, was aimed not as much at individual vessels but the American shipping industry as a whole. The business had been on track, before the outbreak of the war, to surpass that of Great Britain, traditional ruler of the commercial seas.

Instead, the campaign devastated the shipping business not by the quantity of ships taken but by increasing the insurance rates companies had to carry to cover potential losses. Those who could re-registered their ships under the flags of other countries, a trend which continues to this day. Battered by years of continual sailing and constant battles, the Alabama was by 1864 in desperate need of repairs and refitting. The ship stopped for repairs in Cherbourg, where the Kearsarge tracked the ship after a long hunt. Semmes, who commanded the three-masted Confederate sloop, then challenged Kearsarge Capt. John Winslow to a one-on-one battle. French witness accounts and Semmes's journal described gruesome battle between the steamand sail-powered ships lasting more than an hour. The Kearsarge used a tactic the Confederates considered unfair, draping the wooden ship's chains over the outside to deflect shots from the Alabama's guns. The primitive form of plating, combined defective deteriorated with or Confederate gunpowder, gave the Federal ship a decided advantage. The historical center said 10 of the Alabama's 155 crew members were killed in the battle, four drowned and another 15 went missing in action and were presumed dead.

Semmes' great-great grandson, Oliver Semmes, attended Thursday's ceremony. Semmes and several other crewmen were picked up by a private British yacht named the Deerhound, and he survived both the battle and the war.

Raphael Semmes made much of his living after the war on what would today be known as the lecture circuit, discussing the war and his part in it. He often offered a toast at banquets which went "Here's to the ships of our navy, here's to the ladies of our land: may the former be well-rigged, and well-manned." latter be the The Battle of Cherbourg Harbor has received more attention than usual lately, having been one of the few Civil War actions to be depicted by a classical European artist. Edouard Manet, although arriving several days after the battle was over, used the setting and witness accounts of the action to create several paintings. which have been on tour in a number American cities this year.