

THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER

Vol. XII, #1 Bulletin of the Puget Sound Civil War Round Table September 1997



President - Dr. William Trier * Vice- President Sue Crichton * Vice President Programming - Pat Brady * Vice President Bulletin - Jeff Rombauer * Treasurer - Harley Crain * Vice-Treasurer George Hood * Secretary - Marc Duval * Circulation Chairman: Carole Murray * Board of Directors * Jim Dimond * Jeff Dygert * Don Larson * Don Murray * Rachael Roberts * Lin Russell * Rick Solomon * Past President Clyde Cherberg

President's Message

It is a significant honor for me to have been elected your President for this year and I thank you for your trust and good will. It is particularly gratifying to

serve in an organization where there are so many willing and energetic officers, directors and members. We have an outstanding schedule of speakers recruited by Pat Brady starting off with another Pulitzer Prize winning author for our first meeting. Jeff Rombauer's monthly publication is a work of art, fun to read and clearly reflects its editor's depth of knowledge of the Civil War. I did want to notify members that the Yankee Diner will increase its' dinner prices starting effective January 1998 and that in order to continue our own regular donations to the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites we are forced to raise the dinner price in 1998 to \$17.

And finally, if you have ideas for improving our Round Table, suggestions, complaints, complements, etc. please feel free myself or any officer or director of this organization. Or buttonhole us during any meeting.

Bill Trier

Next Meeting

Thursday, **September 18, 1997** at the Yankee Diner. 6 PM Social Hour with dinner at 7 PM. Choice of . The main entree is London Broil or Dijon Chicken served with Caesar Salad, Biscuits, fresh vegetables, potatoes or rice with the chicken along with coffee or tea. Price is \$16.00 a person. **Please write your menu choice, name and the name of any guests on the enclosed card and mail it ASAP.** If you choose not to mail the card in be sure to call Dio Richardson if you plan to attend. The staff at the Yankee Diner can accommodate our needs if we can provide them with an accurate count of the number of dinners that they can expect to serve.

Program

Our first speaker of the year will be William S. McFeely, Pulitzer prize winning author [1982] of **Grant: A Biography**, as well as **Yankee Stepfather: General O.O. Howard and the Freedmen** [Yale 1968], **Frederick Douglass** [New York 1991] and **Sapelo's People: A Long Walk into Freedom** [New York 1994] Professor McFeely has had a long distinguish career teaching at Amherst College, University College in London, Yale University, Mount Holyoke College and as the Richard B. Russell Professor of American History at the University of Georgia. Mr. McFeely's topic for the evening will be on Writing about War. Professor McFeely will focus on the Civil War and recommends that members may want to read the following: Grant's Memoirs, Chapter 28 "To Write a Book, To Be a Man" as well as pages 66-78 in his won biography of Grant; **Unto This Hour** by Tom Wicker; The **Red**

FROM THE EDITOR'S DRAWER

We were lying near Brandy Station last winter, and the officers of our staff endeavored to relieve the *ennui* of camp-life by frequent visits to the fair secesh maidens of the surrounding country. One of our staff became quite enamored with a young lady in Culpepper, more noted for her secession ideas than for her beauty.

On one of his visits she requested the loan of some books, and the next day he sent over a parcel containing, among other books, Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables." To his surprise the orderly returned with the books, and a message from the fair one that she "didn't want any of his nasty Yankee Trash."

Not exactly understanding it, he rode over in the evening to inquire what was wrong. The young lady's eyes flashed as she demanded to know how he dared to insult her by sending her a book about "Lee's Miserables." She knew that General Lee's men weren't as well dressed as the Yankees, but they weren't miserable one bit, and it was all a Yankee falsehood to say that they were.

Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Dec. 1864

TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

First Call for Seventy-Five Thousand Volunteers
April 15th, '61

"To ARMS!--to arms!"--the call resounds,
In startling tones throughout the land
In grief, sweet Peace lays down the scythe,
Where once our Flag in glory waved,
Dark battle-clouds bedim the sky;
Oh! ye, who would have freedom live,
For her, must now prepare to die!

"To arms!--to arms!"--the sound prolong,
Till it resounds from shore to shore;
Haste all who would have freedom live,
And grasp the sword, till strife in o'er!

"To arms!--to arms!"--oh! gentle Peace,
Shall we no more thy pleasures know
When still'd shall be all sounds of strife,
And brothers' blood no longer flow?
No! not till we the rebels crush,
And, "Union as it was," restore
Shall we invoke thy smile sweet Peace,
Or lay aside the blade of war!

"To arms!--to arms!"--the sound prolong,
Till it resounds from shore to shore;
Haste all, who would have freedom live,
And grasp the sword till strife is o'er!

J. Henry Hayward

Dues now Payable

Members are once again reminded that dues for the 1997-98 year are now payable. A single membership is \$15 and \$20 for a couple. If you need a new name tag, then it is an additional \$5. Checks are to be made out to PSCWRT and can be mailed to H. E. Crain, 17126 68th Ave. W, Edmonds, WA 98026-5206 or paid at the door at our first meeting.

Document Exhibition

The Karpeles Manuscript Library at 407 South G. Street in Tacoma is having an exhibition of documents from the first two years of the Civil War through September. The Library is open 10 am to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and admission is free. Starting in October documents from the last two years of the war will be on display. For additional information call 253-383-2575.

New Books

Two new books on Abraham Lincoln have just been published. Lincoln collectors will find that they will have to have **Collecting Lincoln** by Stuart Schneider [Schiffer Publishing, Ltd, 1997. \$69.95] This a beautifully illustrated book covering a wide range of Lincoln collectibles with values given. Lincoln busts, prints, documents, medals, postcards, books and photos, campaign items and even ash trays are covered in this work. Dover Press has published **Abraham Lincoln in Print and Photograph: A Picture History from the Lilly Library** [New York, 1997. \$13.95] The work contains 240 illustrations of prints, photos, broadsides and other paper ephemera from the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana.

On the Net

Civil War sites on the internet continue to proliferate as fast as jack rabbits. One of the newest is Civil War Reader, which bills itself as "a home for those with a passion for Civil War Literature." This new, free, non-commercial site can be found at <http://civilwar-reader.com>. Civil War Reader offers brief reviews of recently published books [both fiction and nonfiction] on the Civil War. A second page offers a guide to magazine and journals relating to the Civil War while a third page features news papers devoted to the "brother's war." An archives section provides access to recently reviewed books as well as forthcoming studies on Gettysburg. A final section of this site offers a calendar of events, book signings and shows [unfortunately for us here in the Northwest most refer to events in the Mid-Atlantic states]

Volunteer Needed

We need a volunteer to run the silent auction which will be held in January this year. If you would like to help please contact Bill Tri-er at our first meeting.

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of long time member Diane L. Murray on July 16, after a long struggle with illness. Anyone who met Diane could not help be touched by her enthusiasm and passion for history. Even during her final illness she regretted that she could not attend our meetings. Diane was the daughter of our Past President Don Murray and served for over twenty years as a nurse.

Notices to be placed into the bulletin should be sent to Jeff Rombauer, 22306 255th Ave SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or by E-mail at jeff.rombauer@foxinternet.net

LETTERS HOME: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Despite the thousands of books, articles and pamphlets published on the American Civil War in the past 136 years, it is surprising how little we know about certain areas of that conflict. For example almost 2000 regiments served in the Union army but for hundreds of them there is little published information aside from a brief unit history in a state Adjutant-Generals report. Such is the case with the 50th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Organized at Camp Dennison and mustered into service August 27, 1862, the 50th Ohio saw action under Buell at the Battle of Perryville in October 1862, and spent most of 1863 building fortifications in Tennessee. In 1864 the regiment joined Sherman's army for the Atlanta campaign where it participated in all the principle battles of that campaign. After the fall of Atlanta the 50th took part in the Battles of Franklin and Nashville. In the spring of 1865 the regiment was transported as part of the 23rd Corps to North Carolina where it was mustered out at Salisbury, North Carolina June 26, 1865.

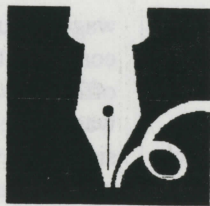
There are only two published accounts on the history of the 50th Ohio, one a very rare, booklet on the history of Co. K published in 1905, the other a limited edition of the letters of Captain James G. Theaker, Co. F published in 1974. Here published for the first time is a letter written in 1916 by a member of Co. C., Adam Coblentz¹ to his nephew relating some of his war time experiences. Even after the passage of 50 years what Coblentz remembers as being most important comes through in this letter. For the sake of clarity some misspellings have been correct and the letter broken up into paragraphs.

New Paris, Ohio

February 1916

Our Dear nephew and family

Your very welcome letter received and must say that I am at a loss to know what to write, but will give the battle of Franklin, Tennessee. Perhaps your Grand Ma is taking the National Tribune. There has been some disputing by some officers about that fight. Well to begin will go back to Columbia, Tennessee November 14, 1864 camping on the banks [of the] Duck River. It had been raining now for two weeks and very muddy and bad marching.



21st In the evening the wind began to raise from the northwest and blowing very hard getting colder and snowing some making it very disagreeable camping out on the hill; with our clothes and blankets all wet in our little pup tents which was made of common muslin about one yard wide and one and 1/4 long. Two of them buttoned together made a tent for two men with the ends

open; We lay here a day or two, then moving in the front. (by this time the rebels were driving us as they thought they were skirmishing with our men on the right of us; We were relieved at the front about midnight by another regiment and crossed Duck River and stacked arms for the night as we were not sleepy now we tore round the rest of the night.

25th. This evening we as a regiment was placed on guard or picket, the next morning we were relieved and came to camp. Close to where we lay was a round log cabin that the family had left as the shells came whistling by there once in a while. I wanted some of the boys to go with me and find something to eat. We went up and found some flour and a tray we took them to camp. Then went back and got a big Dutch oven and two chickens. Now you bet that our mess had a good dinner about one p.m. we ate like of a pack of hungry wolves the chicken and bread was all eaten up: than as a rule the men divided the stuff to carry, one carry coffee, another something else until all had a little to carry (I had a few onions and Carr had some meat)

27th - Philip Carr² and I were detailed as picket in the evening out of our company. Were ordered to keep up firing our guns all night and took no rations with us expecting to be relieved in the morning but instead were not until in the afternoon say about 3, 3:30 PM and to our surprise the camp was deserted. A major³ was officer of the guard. We started on the march about 40 of us after the army. About 6 P.M. we halted for supper but as Philip nor I had any thing we ate raw meat and onions. Then starting on the march until nigh midnight when we thought we're up to the army the Major said that we would go over in the graveyard where there were nice grass and stay until morning. (this is at Spring Hill⁴) but them onions and meat was a little too rich and I got sick and began to heave up Jonah and had to go way back and sit down. But soon our Major came and aroused us all up quietly and said that we were in the Confederate lines and not our own. We got out in the pike and marched close to their campfires and was not molested thinking perhaps some of there own men coming up. We marched all night and all the next day until about 3 p.m. we came up to the army.

30th - Quite a busy time building works and fixing for a fight at Franklin. By this Time I had a coming appetite and began to look around for something to eat finding a frying pan and an ear

If you have letters or diaries from soldiers who fought or served in the Civil War and would like to share it with the round table please submit a transcript to Jeff Rombauer, 22306 255th Ave SE, Maple Valley WA 98038

LETTERS HOME: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE CIVIL WAR

of corn. Shelled it and began to parch when the first Sergeant⁵ came along and said no time now Adam for that, get to work. I said Tom I am hungry, had nothing now for nigh two days. He said D. . . M the difference and at the same time give the pan a kick and said get to work. But did not have to work very long until all was finished, now getting ready to receive the enemy the 4th corps sent one division under General Opedike⁶ with strict orders if the enemy came in one line to fight them but they came in five lines and there orders were then to move by the left-flank, file left, double quick to get away from our artillery and musketry but there they stood until the enemy was up to them then here they came all together Johnny and Yank and never was a gun fired until we were driven out of our works. There were a regiment that had no experience in fighting, they broke and ran leaving a gap to the left of our regiment and the enemy came through and getting behind us. The orders were to evacuate the first line of works. I repeated the command and started. We made a stand by the Carter house to save our artillery, but in that little run 7 men fell by my side, of course the enemy followed us then we had a hand to hand fight for some minutes (but in that time there was a confederate soldier that was shot standing by me could not tell who's gun it was but as he went down my eye followed him. He beckoned with his hand for me to come but at that time everyone had to look out for his self as they were handling there guns very reckless as I though I shook my head expecting to get there later but I never forgot that look that he gave me.

Presently the enemy fell back to the works that we left and there we fought until nigh eleven p.m. when the signal gun was fired for our retreat. Our line of battle was 1 1/4 miles long each wing resting on the Harpeth river. Now the river in our rear and the enemy in our front so it was fight or be taken prisoners. The enemy had nearly 3 to our one⁷ as the 4th corps had crossed the river save one brigade with only 2 divisions of the 23rd Corps did the fighting. We went in the battle as a regiment with 225 men, came out with 112 left. Company B at one time was nearly all captured as they were the line was broken but as darkness came on they would role over and over until they came across to us. After the battle our regiment was so scattered that we could not get together. There were 8 of us with the flag wandering around trying to find the rest, when an officer came and inquired what regiment that flag belonged to. He was told the 50th O.V.I. We were told to cross the river and we would find them. After we had went over we divided out for every thing was in confusion, trying to find different regiments and start on the march again. While I was wandering round a voice "Adam is that you" I said yes but who are you. He said Hes Hetzler⁸. Have you anything to eat. I said no not for nigh 3 days. He said he had army crackers that he gave me. That gave me strength to march back to Nashville. It took us all that night until about 2 p.m. the next day before we got inside of the picket line then we lay down anyway and any place as we had lost all of our blankets at the battle. We' now in General Thomas army. The intention was to fall back to Nashville but the long wagon train could not get there. When Sherman went to the south he took pack mules and sent the

wagon train some 35 miles long back with the 4th and 23rd army corps and took after General Hood. Colonel Carter a confederate officer who had been wounded was home on a furlow. The house was on the battle line. Said several years after that of all the hard sights he ever seen was the next morning, dead horses and dead men. He said he could walk all over the ground on dead men. The losses in the battle Union killed 189, wounded 1033, missing 702: Confederate killed 1750, wounded 3800, missing 702. Major General Stanley and Bradley U.S.A. wounded: C.S.A. Major General Cleburne and Brigadier General Adams, John Williams, Strahl, Gerst and Granberry killed. Major General J. Bowen, Brigadier General's F. Carter, Maingault, generals Cockrell and Scott wounded.

Well I must quite or I will weary you trying to read this. This was our hardest fought battle that we had although lots others almost equal to it. We as a regiment were under fire 178 days calling 24 hours a day.

Now there are more to follow if wanted.

¹ Adam Coblentz was 22 years old when he enlisted on August 11, 1862 as a private in Company C. He was mustered out with the company June 26, 1865. At the time he wrote this letter he was living in New Paris, Ohio.

² Philip Carr was 18 years old when he enlisted Aug. 9, 1862, he also was mustered out with the company June 26, 1865.

³ The major may have been Hamilton S. Gillespie of the 99th O.V.I.

⁴ The notorious affair at Spring Hill occurred November 29, 1864 where after skirmishing all day, Union General John M. Schofield was able to march his men past units of John B. Hood's army that night to Franklin Tennessee. Furious at the escape of his opponent, Hood ordered the disastrous attack at Franklin.

⁵ This may have been Thomas M. Gray, who was 1st Sergeant of Co. C at this time.

⁶ Emerson Opydycke started off the war as a lieutenant in the 41st Ohio. After gallant service at Shiloh, he resigned to become Liet.-Col of the newly formed 125th Ohio V.I. After meritorious service at Chickamauga, Missionary and during he Atlanta campaign. For his actions at Franklin, where his regiment held off parts of 2 enemy division Opydycke was given a brevet of Major General of Volunteers.

⁷ Actually according to the Encyclopedia of the Confederacy the two armies were of equal strength during this engagement, about 28,000 each. Union losses were 2,326 compared to almost 5000 for Hood's army. [Another source gives 6200 casualties, more than Pickett's Charge] More serious was the loss of 12 general officers[six dead, 5 wounded and 1 captured] and 55 regimental commanders from Hood's army which decimated the leadership of his army.

⁸ Unable to locate this name on the roster of the 50th Ohio.