



The Signal Flag

BRANDYWINE VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Campaign # 20

Skirmish # 5

January 2006

From the Rear Ranks:

Who was the Common Soldier of the Civil War?

- How many fought? 2 million North, 750,000 South.
- The average soldier: white, native-born, farmer, protestant, single, between the ages of 18 and 29; 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighed 143 pounds; average age 26.
- Making a living: farmers before the war; 300 different careers.
- Composition: North – 80% infantry, 14% cavalry, 6% artillery; South – 75% infantry, 20% cavalry, 5% artillery.
- Odds: of every 1,000 Federals, 112 wounded, 1,000 Confederates, 150; a Yankee stood 1 in 8 chance of dying due to illness, and 1 in 18 chance of dying in battle. A Rebel faced 1 in 5 chance of dying from disease and 1 in 8 chance of dying in combat.
- Totals: 360,000 Yankees died – 110,000 in battle and 225,000 from disease; the South – 258,000 died, 94,000 in battle and 164,000 from disease.
- Prisoners: 211,000 Union soldiers were captured and imprisoned in the South, 30,000 died; 214,000 Confederates imprisoned in the North, 26,000 died.
- Melting pot: one quarter of Union soldiers were immigrants, including 200,000 Germans, 150,000 Irish, 45,000 English, 15,000 Canadians, and lesser numbers of French, Norwegians, Italians, Mexicans and Poles. The South – Irish, Germans, British, French, Canadians, Dutch and Austrians.
- Music – both sides loved to sing, on the march, in camp, and sometimes even in battle. Blue favored – “Battle Cry of Freedom”, “Just Before the Battle Mother”, and “The Star Spangled Banner”; Gray favored – “Dixie”, “Bonnie Blue Flag”, and “Yellow Rose of Texas”. Both loved “Home Sweet Home”.
- Mess Time: Union daily ration consisted of 22 ounces of bread and either 12 ounces of pork or a pound of salted beef. Confederates were to be supplied with 12 ounces of bacon or 20 ounces of beef along with 18 ounces of flour or 20 ounces of corn meal or hard bread. Vegetables such as beans and peas often proved hard to come by; by either side. Yanks banked on hardtack and coffee and Rebs on corn bread and coffee. Neither side ever got what was officially ordered.
- Dirt and Disease: Sanitary conditions worsened whenever in camp; until later in the war, latrines were often built upwind leading to unhealthy and unpleasant conditions; refuse from cooking and slaughtered animals began to cover the ground, and the local water source was often became fouled; disease spread rapidly.
- Religion: Both armies claimed to be fighting with God’s blessing, and religion played a big part in the lives of many soldiers; religious revivals swept through both armies, claiming thousands of converts; most of the men were Christian, though 7,000 Jews fought for the North and 3,000 for the South; 600 Jewish soldiers died in the war.
- Passing the Time: wrote letters home; bouts of drinking and gambling broke out; soldiers played chess, checkers, baseball, whittled and carved, and put on plays; thousands got involved with snowball battles; both sides read: Yankees favored *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, *Harper’s Weekly*, *American Review* and *The Atlantic*. Confederates read *Southern Illustrated News*, *Southern Literary Messenger*, and *Field and Fireside*. Both sides loved dime novels and the Bible.

Source: Eric Ethier, “Civil War Times”, Vol. XLII, Number 5, December 2003.



*I remain your most obedient servant,
Robert Sprague, President, BVCWRT*



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Unsolicited articles from our members are welcome.
Please contact Lynne!

* Our meetings are handicap accessible *



What is the BVCWRT all about???

We were founded in 1987. According to our by-laws, "the purpose of the Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table shall be to provide a congenial medium through which persons having a common interest in the events of the American Civil War - its causes and effects, engagements, personages, units, armaments and other things pertaining thereto - may satisfy their interest and broaden individual knowledge through discussion, lectures, field trips and the exchange of books, paper and other data. The purposed is also to consider the preservation and protection of the battlefields, sites, landmarks, relics and collection of the period."

In plain English, we are an organization of diverse people brought together by our common interest in the American Civil War. This interest can range from the casual to the obsessive. We intend to tailor our activities and presentations to appeal to all our members, novice or expert.

Welcome New Members & Reenlistments

The Round Table welcomes our new members since our last meeting. Please welcome them and share your Civil War enthusiasm.

New Members:





Editor's Note

Happy New Year 2007!! Ok, so you ate too much turkey, ham, or roast beef and remember all those cookies your favorite aunt made and don't forget that spiked punch. Now you step on the scale and say "WHAT" 10 lbs heavier. Well, my friends this is a new year and we can start life anew. We are very lucky for the opportunity to have a fresh start each year. I am sure many of you have already started to consider your "Resolution" list, we all do one each year in the hopes to make changes in our lives and the world around us. I hope that one of your items on your list will be to help preserve our country's history. Our "freedom" has been based on what those Americans that came before us created, managed, and fought so hard for, so when John Walls says how many raffle tickets would you like, please be generous and help our round table continue their preservation support efforts. It really does make a difference. *Christmas Social:* I want to thank all those members who helped again this year with our Christmas party everything was just wonderful, as always.

Dues: People, People, if you have not paid your dues please, please be prepared to pay Dave at the January meeting. Please make sure you fill out the membership form at the end of the newsletter so we have all your current information on record. Make out your membership checks to **BVCWRT** and give to Dave Walter, our Treasurer at the next meeting.

Website: Please make sure that you begin checking the website at the end of the fourth week of each month for the publication of the Signal Flag online. If you have problems with downloading the newsletter, please let us know and we will see if we can help.

Book Review: "*While in the Hands of the Enemy*", submitted by Dave Walter. Dave, again you have come through with a very interesting review. I do have a questions, the "Westtown Township" that you refer to in the review is that the one here in Chester County? If so, that makes it even more interesting because I was not aware we had a parole camp that close.

Casino in Gettysburg: Great news!!! The gaming board rejects slot parlors near historic Gettysburg Battlefields. Article from Jim Campi, from the Civil War Preservation Trust.

Articles: "*The Crater*", our topic this month will be Henry Pleasants and construction of the Petersburg mine. I found these pictures on the internet and thought that you might like to sstudy them before our talk. "*Emilie Todd Helm*" and "*1863 Pardon of Lincoln's sister-in-law*", stumbled on these two articles and after reading thought you might like to also read. "*The American Question Aboard in the Civil War*" will be a four part series that will end in our last issue in May and "*Boys in the Civil War*" were articles found on a site called civilwarhome.com. "*Little Giffen*" found on civilwarhome.com/poemssongs.

Banquets: Our banquet this year will be on May 8th, West Chester Elks, speaker will be Gobor Boritt, who will talk about the Lincoln speech no one knew about.

Lynne Fulton, Editor



Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table
Come to our next meeting
6 December 2006

Speaker: CAPT David R. Kohler U.S. Navy (Retired)
Topic: “Henry Pleasants and Construction of the Petersburg’s mine”
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: West Chester Borough Hall, Gay Street

We are excited to announce that another member of our Roundtable, CAPT David R. Kohler, U. S. Navy (Retired), has volunteered to speak with us. David was raised in Chester County and attended Owen J. Roberts High School. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1973 and served throughout the world for 26 years in Special Operations as a Navy SEAL. He served as Commanding Officer of SEAL Team FOUR, and his final tour in the Navy was as Commodore, Special Boat Squadron ONE in San Diego, CA. He holds several Master’s Degrees in: Strategic Planning/International Relations; Far Eastern, Southeast Asian & Pacific Affairs; and Latin American Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, and the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He has published several articles and appeared on the “History Channel.” Dave retired from the Navy in 1999, and returned to Pennsylvania where he lives in a restored 180 year-old stone bank barn and is in the process of writing several books.

His interest in Henry Pleasants is personal – as LTCOL Pleasants was Commander of the 48th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment from Schuylkill County in which several of Dave’s ancestors had served. Everyone knows the subsequent Battle of the Crater on 30 July 1864 was an abysmal failure for the Union forces due to exceptionally flawed leadership. However, the concept and the execution of the mine tunnel devised by Henry Pleasants and the anthracite coal miners of his Regiment were carried out flawlessly and clandestinely – accomplishing a combat engineering feat hitherto considered impossible. CAPT Kohler will concentrate on the interesting life of mining engineer and citizen soldier, Henry Pleasants, and the significant obstacles he overcame to construct this amazing mine tunnel. Had Union higher headquarters more wholeheartedly supported his ingenious plan to breach the Confederate lines -- the Battle of the Crater would likely have been a resounding Union victory instead of a devastating defeat -- and the advance to Richmond and the end of the Civil War might have occurred much sooner.



*Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants, Commanding Officer
of the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment
which dug the Union tunnel under the Confederate line.
From Battles and Leaders of the Civil War.*



**Maj . Gen. William Malone, Confederate Leader at the Battle
of the Crater.** Courtesy, National Archive. →



Meeting Minutes - From December 6, 2006

Submitted by Lynne Fulton

The President's Report/Announcements: Bob first introduced our guests from Camp Olden Civil War Round Table; Bruce Sirak, who is President and Gary DeSiver who holds the office of Parliamentarian at Camp Olden and is the webmaster for AMART website. ***Newsletter:*** Bob discussed the importance of everyone trying to obtain the newsletter online due to the high cost of printing and mailing. He suggested that perhaps some of us could print off copies for others that live close to you, like a buddy system. If you can do something like that, it would certainly help. ***Preservation:*** Bob talked about the great job our round table has been doing for Preservation. In the past 6 years we have donated \$13,800 toward land acquisition which had matching funds from the Civil War Trust. He also talked about Jim Campi from the Civil War Trust and read an article on "The Slaughter Pen" from the Civil War Trust magazine concerning the importance of preservation. Through preservations we can prevent 7-Elevens, shopping center and housing development from being built on hallow ground. ***Round Table 20th Anniversary:*** Bob mentioned that this is the Round Table's 20th year and that we should try and do something special to celebrate at the banquet this year.

Treasurer's Report: Dave Walter reported the following: The General Fund as of 11/30 was \$2,241.60. We have taken in \$264.00 in the book raffle. We still have some members that have not paid their dues. We are asking that those members that have not paid please pay your dues at the next meeting.

Book Raffle: John Walls had a selection of 5 books this month for our raffle. If you have books that you would like to donate please bring them in and give to John. We need to really focus on our preservation donations from now until our banquet so we can donate a \$1000.00 again this year towards preservation.

Website: Jim Lawler, our webmaster, continues to do a wonderful job at maintaining our webpage. You should see the Signal Flag out online for downloading. If you have problems with downloading or have not gotten on our website please let us know.

Trips: The trip this spring will be to Spotsylvania on Saturday, May 19, 2007. Susan Mahoney is again planning this trip. More information will be coming as we get closer to the time.

Special Events: It was mentioned that our Banquet speaker, Gabor Boritt's new book "Gettysburg Gospel", was featured in the following magazines and newspapers; Dec 4, 2006 US News and World Report, North and South Magazine, Sunday Philadelphia Inquirer and The Wall Street Journal. Dave Cashin announced that in April Fort Delaware will be opening its new Library and Museum.

Speaker: Old Fashioned Round Table and Christmas Social

Book Review: *WHILE IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY*

MILITARY PRISONS OF THE CIVIL WAR

by Prof. Charles W. Sanders, Jr.

2005 Louisiana State University Press

reviewed by Dave Walter

Fifty six thousand one hundred ninety four (56,194) Civil War soldiers perished while in the hands of their captors, according to the author, a history professor at Kansas State University. 15.5% of Union prisoners died and 12.1% of Confederate. North and South, prison conditions were brutal, made more so by desire for revenge as the War dragged on. The usual cant is for partisans of one side to rationalize the conditions found in the prison camps they provided and to demonize those who ran the enemy's camps. Capt. Henry Wirz, former commander of the notorious Andersonville, GA prison camp, was the only one brought to trial and executed for "destroying the lives of soldiers in the military service of the United States."

Every manner of excuse (many familiar to Civil War buffs) has been trotted out. Even admissions of shortcomings usually include the caveat that such shortcomings were not official policy from on high and beyond the control of the local commanders. Prof. Sanders destroys this myth, showing plausible and undeniable evidence that Presidents Davis and Lincoln were not only passively aware of the horrible conditions faced by captives in their prisons, but actively promoted the conditions. That Yankees would think this of Davis is hardly new, but for the sainted Honest Abe to be implicated in such conspiracy is heresy. Perhaps the author doesn't cut Richmond and Washington enough slack – after all, it was a War – but the nature of the abuses and the length of time over which they were allowed to prevail brings to mind the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps.

This book presents fascinating information about the parole and exchange system and its roots in the American Revolution and subsequent conflicts. Prof. Sanders delves into how early parole policies, developed by field commanders, led to intentional straggling, and what the Union did to stop it. He explores the whole issue of Confederate treatment of black Union captives and threats to enslave them and hang the white officers who led them. He shows how prison officers on both sides were permitted to enrich themselves by trimming the goods, medicines and food allocated to prisoners. He shows how Grant was instrumental in halting exchanges in order to avoid replenishing Southern ranks and how this policy condemned many Union boys to death. And the North's ready made excuse for stopping exchanges was that the South refused to exchange black troops. He details how the Union invalidated paroles when it served their interests to do so. [The several thousand Union prisoners taken by Lee at Gettysburg and paroled instead of marched back to Virginia, were held in a parole camp in Westtown Township until their paroles were judged defective and they were sent back to their units.] He destroys the myths perpetrated by Lost Causers that the Confederate Commissary Dept. did not have the means to provide ample rations for prisoners.

Prisoners became pawns in the hands of their government. After Lincoln approved the execution of two Confederate captains found recruiting behind the lines in Kentucky, Richmond ordered two Union officers at Libby prison be selected for execution "in retaliation for this gross barbarity." Fortunately for the two selectees, Brig. General W. H. Lee, the son of Robert E. Lee, was captured during the battle of Brandy Station. "Rooney" was held in close confinement at Fort Monroe, under threat of execution, should the Confederate government hang the two officers at Libby.

Because so many civilians, official investigators, and reporters left records – which obviously were read in the national capitals, Sanders lets no one off the hook in this book about the dark side of American inhumanity to fellow Americans. He concludes, "(The prisoners) lives ended in a tightly controlled, closely guarded environment. They died from the effects of overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate medical care, starvation, and needless exposure to the elements and contagious diseases, and the causes of their deaths were manifestly clear to those who confined them. It is impossible to know the number of deaths that could have been prevented. What is clear, however, is that tens of thousands of captives would not have suffered and died as they did if the men who directed the prison systems of the North and South had cared for them as their own regulations and basic humanity required. Yet this is something that they very deliberately chose not to do."

Gary W. Gallagher says, "Provocative and vigorously argued, Sander's book spares neither Union nor Confederate leaders and will spark renewed debate about a topic that already has inspired a contentious literature." And about time, too.

GAMING CONTROL BOARD REJECTS SLOTS PARLOR NEAR HISTORIC GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD

After 20 months of debate, the Control Board concludes that Gettysburg and gambling don't mix.

(Harrisburg, Pa., 12/20/2006) – During a public hearing today, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board rejected a proposal to build a 3,000-machine slots parlor one mile from the Gettysburg Battlefield. James Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), issued the following statement in the wake of the vote:

“This is a great day for Gettysburg and for preservationists throughout the nation. By not allowing gambling to encroach on this famous town and battlefield, Pennsylvania has sent a clear message that it cares deeply for its historic treasures. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the most significant battlefield preservation victory since the defeat of Disney’s proposed theme park at Manassas in the early 1990s.

“Together with the many thousands of Americans who have anxiously awaited this decision for some 20 months, I applaud the members of the Gaming Control Board and thank them for recognizing that Gettysburg and gambling don't mix.

“I also want to thank the tireless volunteers of No Casino Gettysburg and recognize the work of our other partners in the Stop the Slots Coalition. There is no question that this victory was a team effort.

“I sincerely hope this vote will serve to motivate preservationists to redouble their efforts to save the remainder of the Gettysburg Battlefield before it is lost forever. The casino proposal itself was merely a symptom of a larger development problem plaguing Gettysburg and many other Civil War battlefield communities. The Civil War Preservation Trust is committed to working with other preservation groups to protect the Gettysburg battleground.”

Since the Gettysburg slots parlor was first proposed in April 2005, CWPT has been one of the leading voices against the casino. Earlier this year, the organization identified Gettysburg as one of the most endangered battlefields in the nation because of the slots proposal. CWPT members collected more than 34,000 signatures in opposition to the casino. Together with the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, No Casino Gettysburg and Preservation Pennsylvania, CWPT is proud to be a member of the Stop the Slots Coalition.

The Civil War Preservation Trust is a 70,000-member nonprofit battlefield preservation organization. Its mission is to preserve our nation’s endangered Civil War sites. Since 1987, the organization has saved more than 23,000 acres of hallowed ground throughout the United State, including 697 acres in and around Gettysburg. CWPT’s website is located at www.civilwar.org.

Jim Campi, Policy and Communications Director
Civil War Preservation Trust
<http://www.civilwar.org>

The Crater

July 30, 1864



After Cold Harbor, Grant moved his army south of the James and assaulted the weakly held Petersburg defenses from June 15th to 18th. Despite repeated opportunities and overwhelming numbers, Union troops failed to take the city. On June 22nd, the first of many attempts to flank the Confederate defenses failed. As the troops settled down in siege lines, Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants, commanding pre-war miners of the 48th Pa., proposed digging a mine underneath Confederate lines and blowing a hole through enemy lines. Gen. Burnside of the IX Corps

choose the black troops of Ferrero's division to be the first wave in an attack through the gap.

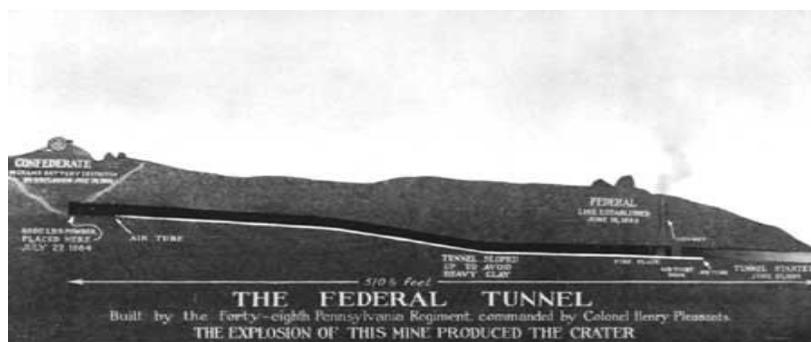
Confederates suspected a Union mining operation and dug countermines but were unable to locate the Yankees. This picture is the opening of the countermines.



The Pennsylvanians tunneled over 500 feet to Rebel lines, the longest mine in military history to that point. This is the entrance, and at the top you can see where the tunnel has caved in. As the mine neared completion, Grant sent Hancock's II Corps and Sheridan's cavalry north of the James to divert Lee's attention.

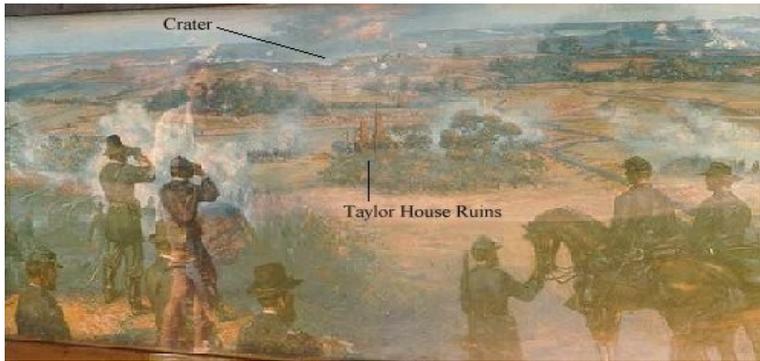
These troops were then brought back to Petersburg with Ord's XVIII Corps from Bermuda Hundred. Sheridan would encircle the Confederates while the infantry would exploit any success.

Mine Entrance



The Crater

July 30, 1864



Mine is Exploded

Just twelve hours from the planned attack, Meade ordered that the black troops who had trained for the first wave of the attack be replaced by a white division under Ledlie.

At 4:40 A.M. on July 30th, the mine was exploded, killing and wounding 278 men and creating a crater 170 feet wide, 60 feet across, and 30 feet deep. The terrified Confederates then endured a barrage from 164 artillery pieces at the Taylor House.



Attack Federals

This is a view from the rear of the crater. The crater is visible as the fenced-in area on the left-center of the picture. Union artillery had bombarded the area from the distant hill on the right of the picture. Since ladders were not provided and obstacles were not cleared, men of Ledlie's division were disorganized as they attacked.

These men advanced across the field on the right of the picture. Most of the men simply piled into the crater instead of advancing into the Confederate position. Potter's and Ferrero's divisions then followed, bringing the Federal strength up to 15,000 men, but many of them were either in the crater or stuck in no-mans land. When leadership was needed to get the men out of the crater to clear the Rebel lines and take Petersburg, Ledlie and Ferrero were in a bombproof consuming alcohol.



Approach to the Crater

This photo shows the area Union troops charged over toward the Crater. Off the picture to the right is the tunnel entrance. Union troops massed near here, climbed the hill, and advanced on the Crater. As further waves of Union troops advanced, many men went to ground in this area in front of the Crater and were subjected to fire from both flanks.

I found these pictures on the internet but I forgot to notice the source and I could not find them again, sorry

Emilie (Emily) Todd Helm



husband,

Half-sister of Mary Todd Lincoln, she first came to the White House in December 1863, accompanied by her daughter Katherine. In March 1861, President Lincoln had offered her Ben Hardin Helm, the job of army paymaster, which he declined. He instead became a confederate general. (Most of the children of the second marriage of Mary's father sided with the Confederacy.) Emilie stayed at the White House after her husband's death in the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863. Judge David Davis recalled: "I never saw Mr. Lincoln more moved," said Senator David Davis, 'than when he heard of the death of his young brother-in-law Ben Hardin Helm, only thirty-two years old, at Chickamauga. I called to see him about four o'clock on the 22nd of September; I found him in the greatest grief. 'Davis,' said he, 'I feel as David of old did when he was told of the death of Absalom.' I saw how grief stricken he was so I closed the door and left him alone."¹

She visited again in the summer of 1864. Emilie was brought to the White House under the President's direct orders after she declined to attest to her loyalty to the Union when detained at Fort Monroe in Virginia. She recalled in her diary: "Mr. Lincoln and my sister met me with the warmest affection, we were all too grief-stricken at first for speech. I have lost my husband, they have lost their fine little son Willie and Mary and I have lost three brothers in the Confederate service. We could only embrace each other in silence and tears. Sister and I dined intimately, alone. Our tears gathered silently and feel unheeded as with choking voices we tried to talk of immaterial things."²

The Lincolns had long had a special fondness for her. Mary found in her sister someone in whom she could confide her torments. "She and Brother Lincoln pet me as if I were a child, and without words, try to comfort me," Emilie wrote. "Kiss me, Emilie, and tell me that you love me," Mrs. Lincoln told her half-sister one morning. "I seem to be the scape-goat for both North and South."³ At that point, President Lincoln entered the room and said: "I hope you two are planning some mischief.' Mr. Lincoln told Emilie later that day: "Little Sister, I hope you can come up and spend the summer with us at the Soldiers' Home; you and Mary love each other - it is good for her to have you with her - I feel worried about Mary, her nerves have gone to pieces; she cannot hide from me that the strain she had been under has been too much for her mental as well as her physical health." Both Lincolns expressed separate concerns to Emilie about the other's mental and physical health.

President Lincoln was very solicitous of Emilie and defended her presence at the White House against political attacks. Emilie later recalled: "Mr. Lincoln in the intimate talks we had was very much affected over the misfortunes of our family; and of my husband he said, 'You know, Little Sister, I tried to have Ben come with me. I hope you do not feel any bitterness or that I am in any way to blame for all this sorrow.' I answered it as 'the fortune of war' and that while my husband loved him and had been deeply grateful to him for his generous offer to make him an officer in the Federal Army, he had to follow his conscience and that for weal or woe he felt he must side with his own people. Mr. Lincoln put his arms around me and we both wept."⁴

Although the sisters shared their sorrows, Emilie was very uncomfortable at the White House and the sisters' children quarreled over who was the President of the country—Jefferson Davis or Abraham Lincoln. Emilie's presence drew criticism to herself and the President; she remained an unregenerate rebel. When she was confronted by a U.S. Senator who said that "We have whipped the rebels at Chattanooga, and I hear the scoundrels ran like scared rabbits," Mrs. Helm responded: "It was the example you set them at Bull Run and Manassas." Her pass through Union lines was later revoked by the President, but on December 8, 1863 she took the following oath of allegiance: I, Emily T. Helm, do solemnly swear in presence of Almighty God that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the States thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by, and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress, or by decision of the Supreme Court; and that I will, in like manner, abide by, and faithfully support all proclamations of the President, made during the existing rebellion, having reference to slaves so long and so far as not modified, or declared void by the Supreme Court. So help me God.⁵

After she returned to Lexington, she wrote the President, asking to send clothing to Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas outside Chicago. She concluded the letter: "I hope I am not intruding too much upon your kindness and will try not to overstep the limits that I should keep."⁶ In August 1864, Mr. Lincoln wrote Gen. Stephen G. Burbridge that his sister-in-law had no protection against prosecution for disloyal actions: "If the paper given her by me can be construed to give her protection for such words so, it is hereby revoked pro tanto. Deal with her for current conduct, just as you would any other."⁷ That didn't stop Emilie from requesting another pass in November 1864 to sell her cotton. "I have been a quiet citizen and request only the right which humanity and justice always gives to widows and orphans. I also would remind you that your minié bullets have made us what we are," she wrote President Lincoln.⁸

The impertinent request was not granted, but it was not the only one that came from Mary's relatives. Emilie's sister, Martha Todd White, also got a presidential pass to come North. However, she received no invitation to the White House despite repeated requests in early 1864. When her Confederate sympathies threatened to become a scandal in Washington, the President let her know that either she left the capital immediately or she would be confined in Old Capitol Prison. Martha returned later, this time unsuccessfully seeking a permit to export cotton from the South. Gideon Welles recorded in his April 29, 1864 diary how President Lincoln reacted: The President to-day related to two or three of us the circumstances connected with his giving a pass to the half-sister of his wife, Mrs. White. He gave the details with frankness, and without disguise. I will not go into them all, though they do him credit on a subject of scandal and abuse. The papers have assailed him for giving a pass to Mrs. White to carry merchandise. Briefly, Mrs. W. called at the White House and sent in her card to Mrs. Lincoln, her sister, who declined to receive or see her. Mrs. W. two or three times repeated these applications to Mrs. L. and the President,

with the same result. The President sent a pass, such as in some cases he has given, for her to proceed South. She sent it back with a request that she might take trunks without being examined. The President refused. She then showed her pass and talked 'secesh' at the hotel, and made application through Mallory first and then Brutus Clay. The President refused the former and told Brutus that if Mrs. W. did not leave forthwith she might expect to find herself within twenty-four hours in the Old Capitol Prison.⁹

Elizabeth Grimsley remembered later: "The sister, a wonderfully bright and prepossessing woman from Alabama, won hearts and confidence, and went through the lines, carrying her weight, almost, in quinine, a veritable bonanza to the Southern Army. Moreover, 'adding insult to injury' by telling with great vim the story of her outwitting her to credulous 'brother Lincoln'."¹⁰

Martha's niece, Katherine Helm, later maintained: "Mrs. White was accused of smuggling quinine through the lines for sick Southern soldiers, but except for a small one-ounce package for her own use she was guiltless of this charge. The true story is this: 'Mattie' Todd was a brilliant young woman, more than usually attractive, and in appearance, mind and manner more like Mary Lincoln than any of her sisters. She was a great favorite with her brother-in-law. Her visits to Washington were frequent and as President Lincoln did not wish the war to interrupt them he gave her a pass which would admit her through the lines at any point she chose." During one Washington visit, friends smuggled a new uniform for Robert E. Lee into her luggage. She later discovered it and despite her chagrin, it was delivered to the Confederate general.¹¹

Mrs. Helm caused another embarrassment to the Lincolns in early 1865 when she arranged to have an Illinois General, John Singleton, help get 500 bales of cotton through Union lines for sale. Singleton, according to Edwin Stanton biographer Fletcher Pratt, "said he would have to have a trading permit to do so. This was the background of the January blank check permit. But when the trader came back from a first visit to Richmond on January 30, he already had the \$7,000,000 option, and was intending to get financial backing to make use of it. How Lincoln found this out is uncertain; but he did find it out and was so started that he wrote the letter making any arrangement subject to [Ulysses S. Grant's] approval. Grant also was apparently deceived as to the extent of the operation and did give a qualified approval." Stanton found out about the arrangement from former Senator Orville Browning. "It is not certain who made the final arrangement, and Stanton may have had no more part in it than hushing the whole business up, but the way it was worked out was for Mrs. Helm herself to come through the lines, while Grant gave orders that her property was not to be harmed."¹²

Footnotes

1. Katherine Helm, *Mary, Wife of Lincoln*, p. 216-217.
2. Helm, p. 221-222.
3. Helm, p. 225.
4. Helm, p. 233.
5. Harold Holzer, editor, *The Lincoln Mailbag*, p. 117.
6. Holzer, p. 118.
7. Roy P. Basler, editor, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume VII, p. 485.
8. Ruth Painter Randall, *Mary Todd Lincoln, Biography of a Marriage*, p.309-310.
9. *Gideon Welles Diary* Volume II, p. 21.
10. Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, "Six Months in the White House," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 19 (Oct.-Jan., 1926-27): p. 57.
11. Helm, p. 181.
12. Fletcher Pratt, *Stanton: Lincoln's Secretary of War*, p.407.



Mary Lincoln

1863 : Lincoln pardons his sister-in-law

From: Temple website 12/18/2006

Here is additional information that I saw on the Temple website that I wanted to also include in this article about Mary Lincoln's sisters Emilie and Martha. I thought that the story about Mary Lincoln's family coming to Washington was rather interesting.

President Lincoln announces a grant of amnesty for Mrs. Emilie Todd Helm, Mary Lincoln's half sister and the widow of a Confederate general. The pardon was one of the first under Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, which he had announced less than a week before. The plan was the president's blueprint for the reintegration of the South into the Union. Part of the plan allowed for former Confederates to be granted amnesty, if they took an oath to the United States. The option was open to all but the highest officials of the Confederacy.

Emilie Todd Helm was the wife of Benjamin Helm, who, like the Lincolns, was a Kentucky native. Lincoln was said to be a great admirer of Helm, a West Point and Harvard graduate. Lincoln had offered Helm a position in the U.S. Army, but Helm opted to join the Confederates instead. Helm led a group of Kentuckians known as the "Orphan Brigade," since they could not return to their Union-held native state during the war. Helm was killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863.

After her husband's death, Helm made her way through Union lines to Washington. She stayed in the White House and the Lincolns tried to keep her visit a secret. General Daniel Sickles, who had been wounded at Gettysburg five months prior, told Lincoln that he should not have a rebel in his house. Lincoln replied, "General Sickles, my wife and I are in the habit of choosing our own guests. We do not need from our friends either advice or assistance in the matter." After Lincoln granted her pardon, Emilie Helm returned to Kentucky.

The American Question Abroad in the Civil War

Introduction In European chancelleries the quarrel across the Atlantic was designated as "the American question." When the full story of the European view of this question is told it will be realized that in the 1860's the Atlantic was, as to ideas, no less a separating gulf than in the 1770's or the Napoleonic years, and yet, as to international complications, not so much an ocean of isolation as a sea highway in which international interests jostled and clashed. Such were the controversies and intrigues affecting North and South that a summary of European mores and stereotypes might be built around the story of diplomatic developments touching America. To an unstable Europe, steeped in aristocracy and fearful of revolution, there came the necessity of making adjustments in a conflict where statesmen saw differently just how democracy, revolution, and economic self-interest were involved. Sensitive to revolt, torn by feuds and predatory conquest, unhappy on its own borders, beading toward serious wars, Europe in the sixties was just emerging from the Metternichian period in which the concept of legitimate monarchy, resistance to new political ideas, and joint intervention for the suppression of popular movements were cardinal principles. It was a time when the word "intervention" came readily to the lips of European statesmen, a period when the countries of most concern to America—England and France—were under leaders (Palmerston and Napoleon III) to whom the affairs of remote and unrelated portions of the globe had become somewhat of a specialty.

The American question could not be evaded. Between neutrality and intervention a choice had to be made; yet either choice would involve a whole series of further choices. To grapple with the question was partly a problem of reading the true situation amid the demands and threats of enraged belligerents, partly of guessing the future, partly of balancing one interest against another at home. In the outcome, while neutrality was the course adopted all round, yet, as a commentary on the proverbially unhappy situation of a neutral in any quarrel, it is significant that the war drew to its close with both belligerents nursing major grievances against England and France, neither side being satisfied with the conduct of those powers.

Source: "The Civil War and Reconstruction" (Chapter 20) by Randall and Donald

Part 1 of this article will be in the February's issue

Boys in the Civil War!

It might have been called The Boys' War.

Authorities differ, and statistics bristle in the controversy, but this is the offering of the *Photographic History of the Civil War*:

More than 2,000,000 Federal soldiers were twenty-one or under (of a total of some 2,700,000)-

More than 1,000,000 were eighteen or under.

About 800,000 were seventeen or under.

About 200,000 were sixteen or under.

About 100,000 were fifteen or under.

Three hundred were thirteen or under-most of these fifers or drummers, but regularly enrolled, and sometimes fighters.

Twenty-five were ten or under.



A study of a million Federal enlistments turned up only 16,000 as old as forty-four, and only 46,000 of twenty-five or more.

Yet by other authorities, the Union armies were made up like this: 30 per cent of men under twenty-one; 30 per cent from twenty-one to twenty-four; 30 per cent from twenty-five to thirty; 10 per cent over thirty.

Confederate figures are skimpier, but one sample of 11,000 men produced about 8,000, the great majority, between eighteen and twenty-nine. There was one of thirteen, and three were fourteen; 31 were fifteen; 200 were sixteen; 366 were seventeen; and about a thousand were eighteen. Almost 1,800 were in their thirties, about 400 in their forties, and 86 in their fifties. One man was seventy, and another, seventy-three.

Most of the youths of tender age slipped in as musicians, for there were places for 40,000 in the Union armies alone. There are numerous tales of buglers too small to climb into saddles unaided, who rode into pistol-and-saber battles with their regiments. Most famous of these on the Union side was Johnny Clem, who became drummer to the 22nd Michigan at eleven, and was soon a mounted orderly on the staff of General George H. Thomas, with the "rank" of lance sergeant.

No one knows the identity of the war's youngest soldier, but on the Confederate side, in particular, there was a rush of claimants. Some of their tales belong with the war's epic literature:

George S. Lamkin of Winona, Mississippi, joined Stanford's Mississippi Battery when he was eleven, and before his twelfth birthday was severely wounded at Shiloh.

T.D. Claiborne, who left Virginia Military Institute at thirteen, in 1861 reportedly became captain of the 18th Virginia that year, and was killed in 1864, at seventeen. (This likely belongs with the war's apochrypha.)

E.G. Baxter, of Clark County, Kentucky, is recorded as enlisting in Company A, 7th Kentucky Cavalry in June, 1862, when he was not quite thirteen (birth date: September 10, 1849), and a year later was a second lieutenant.

John Bailey Tyler, of D Troop, 1st Maryland Cavalry, born in Frederick, Maryland, in 1849, was twelve when war came. He fought with his regiment until the end, without a wound.

T.G. Bean, of Pickensville, Alabama, was probably the war's most youthful recruiter. He organized two companies at the University of Alabama in 1861, when he was thirteen, though he did not get into service until two years later, when he served as adjutant of the cadet corps taken into the Confederate armies.

M.W. Jewett, of Ivanhoe, Virginia, is said to have been a private in the 59th Virginia at thirteen, serving at Charleston, South Carolina, in Florida, and at the siege of Petersburg.

W.D. Peak, of Oliver Springs, Tennessee, was fourteen when he joined Company A, 26th Tennessee, and Matthew J. McDonald, of Company I, 1st Georgia Cavalry, began service at the same age.

John T. Mason of Fairfax County, Virginia, went through the first battle of Manassas as a "marker" for the files of the 17th Virginia at age fourteen, was soon trained as a midshipman in the tiny Confederate Navy, and was aboard the famed cruiser *Shenandoah*.

One of Francis Scott Key's grandsons, Billings Steele, who lived near Annapolis, Maryland, crossed the Potomac to join the rangers of Colonel John S. Mosby, at the age of sixteen.

Source: "The Civil War, Strange and Fascinating Facts" by Burke Davis

Little Giffen

This poem is true in every detail. The facts, often misstated, are set forth in a letter which the poet's granddaughter, Miss Michelle Cutliffe Ticknor, courteously furnished for these pages. During the war, the wife of the poet daily visited the improvised hospitals of Columbus, Georgia. "In one of these, the old Bank's building, Mrs. Ticknor first saw the boy, Isaac Newton Giffen, and was so haunted by his pitiful condition that when the doctors declared his case hopeless, she carried him in her own carriage to 'Torch Hill,' the country home of the Ticknors. There under the personal care of Dr. and Mrs. Ticknor he won his fight against death. Brought to 'Torch Hill' in October, 1864, he left only in March, 1865, on receiving news of Johnston's position. During his convalescence Mrs. Ticknor taught Giffen to read and write, and his deep gratitude toward the Ticknors leaves only one solution to his fate. How he met it, however, remains as obscure as his family history. That his father was a blacksmith in the mountains of East Tennessee is the only positive fact of his ancestry. He was sixteen years of age when taken by Mrs. Ticknor and had been engaged in eighteen battles and skirmishes." It will thus be seen that the boy was wounded in one of the battles about Atlanta when Johnston and Hood were opposing Sherman. We may suppose that the Captain's reply, given in the poem, was written after the battle of Nashville, December 15-16, 1864. In March, 1865, Johnston was again opposing Sherman, this time in the Carolinas, and it must have been in one of the closing battles of the war that "Little Giffen" lost his life.

Source: [The Photographic History of the Civil War, Volume V](#)

Little Giffen

By

Francis Orray Ticknor (1822 - 1874)

Out of the focal and foremost fire,
Out of the hospital walls as dire,
Smitten of grape-shot and grangrene,
(Eighteenth battle, and he sixteen!)
Spectre! Such as you seldom see,
Little Giffen, of Tennessee.

"Take him- and welcome!" the surgeons said;
"Little the doctor can help the dead!"
So we took him and brought him where
The balm was sweet in the summer air;
And we laid him down on a wholesome bed-
Utter Lazarus, heel to head!

And we watched the war with abated breath-
Skeleton boy against skeleton death.
Months of torture, how many such!
Weary weeks of the stick and crutch;
And still a glint of the steel-blue eye
Told of a spirit that wouldn't die.

And didn't. Nay, more! In death's despite
The crippled skeleton learned to write.
"Dear Mother," at first, of course; and then
"Dear Captain," inquiring about the men.
Captain's answer: "Of eighty-and-five,
Giffen and I are left alive."

Word of gloom from the war, one day;
"Johnston pressed at the front, they say."
Little Giffen was up and away;
A tear-his first-as he bade good-by,
Dimmed the glint of his steel-blue eye.
"I'll write, if spared!" There was news of the fight;
But none of Giffen. He did not write.

I sometimes fancy that, were I king
Of the princely knights of the Golden Ring,
With the song of the minstrel in mine ear,
And the tender legend that trembles here,
I'd give the best on his bended knee,
The whitest soul of my chivalry,
For Little Giffen, of Tennessee

This is not a picture of Little Giffen just a Confederate soldier. Found on [American Civil War.com](#)





Scheduled Speakers for 2006 - 2007:

- Sep 6, 2006: Sid Copel - "Civil War Humor"
Oct 4, 2006: Michael Kaufman - "American Brutus"
Nov 1, 2006: Michael Werner - "Jewish Contribution to the War"
Dec 6, 2006: Group Discussions of Selected Topics and Christmas Social
Jan 3, 2007: Dave Kohler - "Henry Pleasants & Construction of the Petersburg Mine"
Feb 7, 2007: Prof. James Hedtke - "Eli Parker, Grant's Secretary"
Mar 7, 2007: Dennis Kelly - "Fort Pillow Controversy"
Apr 4, 2007: BVCWRT Members - "Show and Tell"
May 2, 2007: Roger Arthur - "The 97th PVI"
May 8, 2007: (Annual Banquet): Gabor Boritt - "The Gettysburg Gospel"

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Bring the completed form and a check payable to BVCWRT to a meeting or mail it to:

Dave Walter, Treasurer, 937 Thorne Drive, West Chester, PA 19382