

Trans Allegheny Dispatch

The Newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2014 Edition 2 – July 2014

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **McConnellsville, Ohio July 11-13.** Contact Ralph McCready (irishman1020@hotmail.com)

- **151st Anniversary of Gettysburg, July 4-6.**

Don't know of anyone attending.

- **Beverly Heritage Days, July 19-20, Beverly W. Va.** Several members plan to attend. I have no communication from any officers or Unit Reps on who is attending yet. We had hoped to have enough for a small skirmish.

From Phyllis Baxter:

WVRA and reenacting friends are invited to participate in *Beverly Heritage Days*, July 19 and

20, in Historic Beverly. Come for the day Saturday, or come for the weekend! Camping will be available in town, with use of Beverly

Heritage Center facilities. As always, we encourage you to develop your own interesting living history activities, or just to make yourselves at home in the town. In addition to Civil War living history, the event will include History Hitting the Road - interactive heritage activities from Jackson's Mill, as well as crafts and craft demonstrations and heritage music. A special showing of the film "Averill's Raiders and the 35th Star" will be offered on Sat. evening.

Schedule:

Saturday July 19

10 - 4 pm Living History in town

4 pm WVRA meeting

8ish Film at Beverly Heritage Center

Sunday July 20

Living History encouraged, 10 - 4 or any portion of that time.

No fee for reenactors, but there is a vending fee for sutlers. We appreciate advance word of who is coming, especially if you are camping overnight, so we can make you welcome.

Email info@beverlyheritagecenter.org or call 304-637-7424 to preregister or with any questions.

- **Dry Creek, White Sulphur Springs, Aug. 15-17**

- **Fort Mulligan Days, Aug. 16** – contact Mark Tennant

- **Jackson's Mill** - ????

- **Carnifex Ferry, Sept. 12-14**

- **Bulltown and Civil War Ball** October 10-12.

The exact status of this reenactment is

UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME. I have heard from one source that Bulltown will take place.

- **150th Anniversary of Cedar Creek, October 17-19.** 1st W. Va. plans to attend.

Pierpont Statue Ceremonies Report

Did go up to Wheeling, but was disappointed and a little surprised {sic}. The unveiling of statue has been postponed until August or later because the DOH is going to widen the lanes in front of Independence Hall and they are waiting to see where they can place statue after their work is done. I was disappointed {sic} because no one told me the event was cancelled. I apologized to Kevin, Ross and Ralph who showed up. - *Mark Tennant*

Thank You Note

John Webb, Treasurer of the Friends of Bulltown, responded to our \$100 donation to his organization with a nice thank you note. Mr. Webb stated the "Friends" are working with the Corps of Engineers personnel at Burnsville Lake in hopes of "having some good living history events."

Membership Dues

A membership form is available at WVRA.org. It can be returned to me (address on the form) or Tim Glaser, 41 Union Street, Huttonsville, WV, 26273

Book Review

1861 The Civil War Awakening

I picked up a paperback copy of this book up on a trip expecting a narrative of the first year of

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1861. Instead Adam Goodheart picks events and personalities from the early war and weaves their stories into the greater story of 1861 and tells them from a perspective that maybe has not been used before.

For instance, he starts with Fort Sumter. He discusses Major Robert Anderson and his staff as a backdrop for the move that many say actually started the Civil War and forced the South Carolinians into a hostile situation. That is Anderson's decision to move his garrison from Moultrie to Sumter. Next he discusses the Wide Awakes and that organization's effect on the election and country.

Chapters follow on the aging generation of politicians that bridged the gap between the revolutionary generation and the mid-19th century. Next is James Garfield's chapter, a surprising discussion of the new generation of leaders typified by Garfield and how they wrestled with the impending crisis. Elmer Ellsworth, Lincoln's protégé cut down at the beginning of the war warranted an interesting chapter. Jesse Fremont (wife of the pathfinder) and St. Louis in the early war. Ben Butler's monumental decision to allow slaves to come into Fortress Monroe and not be returned to their owners as they were contraband of war. And finally a chapter on how Independence Day of 1861 was celebrated North and South.

This was a surprisingly interesting book, one which dealt with issues not normally contained in a standard narrative. I would recommend this anyone interested in the period. C. L. Critchfield

150 Years Ago

The Battle of Piedmont

This month, 150 years past, the 1st W. Va. infantry fought in the battle of Piedmont, a battle often overlooked in the Shenandoah that

produced more casualties than any Jackson's famous battles in the Valley or at New Market. It is a fight that "lacked a star attraction such as Stonewall Jackson, Phil Sheridan or the VMI Corps of Cadets" as Scott Patchan, author of a history of the battle put it. However, the depleted 1st W. Va. suffered 7 dead, 36 wounded and 17 missing, similar in numbers to the fight at New Market. Unlike New Market, Piedmont was a resounding Union victory in which the 1st remained standing on the field as the Confederates fled

The Federal Army of the Shenandoah under Franz Sigel which had been run out of the Valley after the battle of New Market, returned just three weeks later under the command of "Black Dave" Hunter. The Confederate army which had opposed Sigel had been dispersed and now Grumble Jones had to reassemble a force to oppose the Federals. Both groups clashed at the hamlet of Piedmont just south of Port Republic and Cross Keys and a dozen miles below Harrison burg.

While the Confederates initially held off the larger Federal army, eventually the Northern troops flanked the main Southern position and the route was on. The 1st was opposite in line from the 36th Virginia, a Confederate unit from Southern West Virginia. Towards the end of the battle the 1st charged the 36th and after hand-to-hand combat the 36th was forced from the field and into Middle River. The 1st captured the colors of the 36th during the fight.

Another Sad Cemetery Story

Several Civil War headstones in Clarksburg's Elk View Cemetery are sinking out of sight and in need of restoration. I have attached the story that was recently shown in the Exponent-Telegram which leads me to believe once again, it's an impossible fight to correct, repair or fix gravestones.

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WVRA Officers

President – Mark Tennant (304-363-0935)

Vice President – Bill Brisendine

Treasurer (interim) – Tim Glaser

Secretary – vacant (Need a volunteer)

Newsletter editor (interim) – Chuck Critchfield
(ccritch608@yahoo.com)

Website – Peter Baxter

25th Va. Rep – Chris Johnson

1st Va. Cavalry – John Brasuk

Artillery – Connie & Sam Kraft

TASAS – Tonya Daft

Editor's Corner

This is my chance to say a few things. First this publication will rely on submissions from you the members. All stories and pictures will be considered. I got very little for this edition. If somebody has pictures or reviews of past events, send them to me.

This newsletter is being emailed to current members with an email address and will be placed on wvra.org.

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

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The views expressed here are not necessarily the views of the WVRA

Chuck Critchfield – interim editor

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Elk View Masonic Cemetery doesn't own area where headstones are sinking

by Jeremiah Shelor
STAFF WRITER

CLARKSBURG — Representatives with the Elk View Masonic Cemetery said the section next to the mausoleum — where *The Exponent Telegram* recently reported many veterans' headstones are sinking — does not legally belong to the cemetery.

The lot — which sits in the middle of the Elk View Masonic Cemetery in Clarksburg — was excluded from the original land transfer dated 1888, in which Burton Despard deeded the land to the Clarksburg Masonic Cemetery Association, according to records obtained from the Harrison County Clerk's office.

As such, the section of the

cemetery in question is legally the Despard Cemetery and not part of the Elk View Masonic Cemetery, according to Denver Atkinson, the cemetery's treasurer.

Further complicating the issue is that certain plots within the Despard Cemetery have been deeded to individual families for use as burial sites.

George Jackson, one of the Elk View Cemetery's trustees, said with older headstones — like those belonging to the many Civil War, Spanish-American War and World War I veterans buried in the Despard lot — it can be difficult to track down those who hold legal ownership of the individual plots.

See CEMETERY, A9



Staff photo by Jeremiah Shelor

Veterans' headstones are sinking in an area that legally belongs to the Despard Cemetery.

CEMETERY

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"The owners may be dead, you know. It may be great-grandkids that are the only ones left and they don't even know what's going on," Jackson said. "I'm not sure how to handle that. Someone from the state maybe could tell you."

But Jackson said he is sure that Elk View Masonic Cemetery does not have any legal right or obligation to finance a restoration project at the Despard Cemetery. Even if the

headstones were part of the Elk View Masonic Cemetery, Jackson suggested it would still be up to the trustees of the individual plots to initiate such a project.

"It would be their cost if it's actually sinking," Jackson said. "Once they pay for the lot, it's theirs."

Atkinson agreed, saying a group couldn't legally go in to reset the headstones unless the families who own the headstones asked them to.

A 1924 deed obtained from the County Clerk's office shows that six plots in the Despard Cemetery Lot were

transferred to trustee G.A. Williams for use as burial sites. This suggests that the plots in the Despard Cemetery likely belong to individual families, according to Jackson.

Even if the sinking headstones were legally part of Elk View Cemetery, Jackson said the organization isn't financially set up for anything outside of basic maintenance of the cemetery. What they charge to individual families to be buried there they put into an escrow account "for what we need to keep the cemetery operating," Jackson said.

This primarily involves

grass cutting, cleaning up litter and protecting the graveyard from vandalism, according to Jackson.

Should any entities come forward with the resources and permission to reset the headstones in the Despard Cemetery Lot, Jackson said they should consult with him to make sure there's no damage to the Elk View Masonic Cemetery.

"Other than that," he said, "we'd be glad to see it done."

Staff writer Jeremiah Shelor can be reached at (304) 626-1409 or by email at jshelor@theet.com

'A slap in the face to all veterans'

Local man decries headstone neglect

by Jeremiah Shelor
STAFF WRITER

CLARKSBURG — Next to the mausoleum at Elk View Masonic Cemetery in Clarksburg, there sits a patch of headstones, most of them belonging to veterans of wars fought long ago.

Local Vietnam veteran Barry Hogue said he estimates that 79 Civil War veterans, five Spanish-American War veterans and six World War I veterans are buried there.

The problem, Hogue said, is that their headstones are sinking. Hogue said at least 56 of these headstones have disappeared completely. Many others are leaning over or are only partly visible.

"It's been several years of neglect. This didn't just start happening," Hogue said.

"These have been allowed to slowly sink, and nobody has done anything about it."

As many West Virginians prepare to celebrate Memorial Day, Hogue said it's disgraceful to see these headstones — paying honor to those who sacrificed for their country — slowly disappear into the earth.

"It sends an extremely negative message to veterans," Hogue said. "That's a slap in the face to all veterans. If they're going to let it go there,

what else are they going to let go?"

A great deal is lost when these headstones sink away, according to Hogue. The physical marker in the graveyard provides an "important connection to people," he said.

"You have lost all connection with that time period. If you don't see it, you don't read it, you don't know anything about it," Hogue said.

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VETERANS

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"You may not understand the history, but when you look at that stone, you realize somebody from some unit was in that war," Hogue said.

One of the issues, Hogue said, is that the cemetery is privately owned. Even if he wanted to do something, it's up to the cemetery's owner to take the initiative.

Carolyn Kender and Michael Kyne work with the state Division of Culture and History. Kender is an archaeologist who has experience with cemetery preservation. Kyne is a structural historian who helped put together a cemetery conservation plan for the Old Norbourne Cemetery Project in Martinsburg.

Kender and Kyne agreed that cemetery preservation has become an issue in the state.

"It's definitely a problem that we've seen with privately owned cemeteries," Kyne said. "Upkeep kind of goes by the wayside."

"It goes on across the whole state," Kender added.

Sometimes it's not clear who's ultimately responsible for the upkeep at a cemetery, Kyne said, and sometimes it comes down to a lack of resources.

Kyne said volunteers can easily clean the headstones, assuming they have the proper materials and a little instruction. Lifting the stones out of the ground and resetting them is far more difficult and generally requires the equipment and expertise of a professional, he said.

"They're much heavier than they actually look," Kyne said.

Kender said the Division of Culture and History has been approached by veterans groups

and Boy Scouts in the state willing to volunteer to help preserve veterans' cemeteries. There's also been discussion of a cemetery preservation grant in the Legislature, she said.

"But it has never been funded," Kender said.

Though the Division of Culture and History has no direct oversight when it comes to cemetery preservation, Caryn Gresham, the division's deputy commissioner, was quick to point out all the work the state's archivists and curators are doing to preserve the memories of veterans in other ways.

"We have historic preservation; we have art; we have the museum; and we have archives," Gresham said. "And every day, in every one of those sections, there are people who come and talk to us about finding out more about their families, finding out more about their history."

Preserving the history of veterans is especially important in West Virginia, Gresham said, "because we know that West Virginia has a special and significant history as a state that really supports its country."

Joe Geiger, the division's director of archives, said the division has "a ton of materials relating to military service."

Geiger listed numerous projects to document and preserve records of military rosters, write biographies of individual soldiers and transcribe military letters. Many of these materials are available online, he said.

Gresham also said there's a West Virginia Military Discovery Room in the Division of Culture and History's museum that allows patrons to search for veterans by name and see where they served on a map.

"We're very aware of the

importance of keeping those materials, preserving them for future generations, and we have quite a few collections that are of value," Geiger said. "When these materials come to the state archives, they're preserved permanently. They're going to be here for folks yet unborn."

But even with all the museum exhibits and online archives, Hogue suggested there's no replacement for the significance of a headstone, the marker for a soldier's final resting place.

"That's their last mark on this planet Earth, so to speak, and it's something their family can visit and say, 'Uncle Harry is right here,'" Hogue said.

Many people in the community would be willing to help reset the headstones, Hogue said, making it particularly baffling that nothing's been done.

"We can only put pressure on them," he said. "It's a private cemetery."

For Hogue, ensuring these headstones aren't lost to time is an issue of respect — respect for the veterans, respect for their sacrifices, for all they went through. All veterans deserve that respect, he said.

"That's why us veterans go out with flags and put these flags on those guys' graves, because they earned it," Hogue said. "They earned it hard."

Hogue said he really hopes something is done about the sinking headstones at Elk View Masonic Cemetery before it's too late.

"I would like to see these stones back up," he said. "These guys deserve more respect than what they've got."

Staff writer Jeremiah Shelor can be reached at (304) 626-1409 or by email at jshelor@theet.com