

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2018– Edition I - January

Upcoming Civil War Events Sponsored Events

None at this time

Events Recommended by WVRA members

**Beverly (see below) - July 13-15
2018**

**Annual Meeting - January 13 Weston Steak
House.**

**University High School (tentative) - April
20-21**

New Market - May 19-20

Gettysburg 155 - July 5-8;

www.gettysburgreenactment.com/reenactors

Cedar Creek - October

Remembrance Day - November

Other Events

**Bulltown - October 12 -14, 2018 contact Sam
Krafft (cwarcapt@yahoo.com)**

Other Time Periods

**Beverly Centuries of History - Probably
July 13-15**

the Annual Meeting and will start that process at
the meeting again this year.

To date we have the following nominations:

WVRA Nominations for 2018

President - Jim Barnes

Vice president - NONE

Secretary/Treasurer - Jack Rush

Website - Peter Baxter

Newsletter - Chuck Critchfield

Unit Reps

1st Virginia Cavalry - John Brasuk

1st West Virginia Infantry - Chuck Critchfield

25th Virginia Infantry - Bill Brisendine

Artillery - Stormy Brasuk

TASAS - Diane Tennant

RENEW NOW

Also, it is time to renew your membership. I have
sent a membership renewal form with the past
couple newsletters and can be found with past
newsletters on WVRA.org. You can complete and
return to me at the address listed on the membership
form. The due structure is listed on the membership
form. Family dues do not include children over 21.

Remember, if you would like the newsletter sent to
you via US Mail instead of email, please let me know.
The subscription rate is \$10 to cover printing and
mailing.

Next Meeting

***The annual meeting is scheduled
for January 13 at 2 pm at the
normal location, the Weston Steak
House at Exit 99 of I-79. This will
be the meeting that we elect new
officers.***

Election

One of the first orders of business at the Annual
Meeting on January 13 will be to elect new
WVRA officers. The nominations made to date
are listed below. There will also be an
opportunity to make nominations from the floor
at the meeting.

I will include a ballot with this newsletter

We have no military officer nominations at this
time. Last year we made those nominations at

Renewals to date (January 3, 2018)

General

Elizabeth Swiger

TASAS

Bill Snyder

Jennifer Smith

Peter and Phyllis Baxter

Linda Barnes

Gary and Millie Goetze

Debbie Rush

Debbie Wenig

25th Virginia

Bill Brisendine

Ken Connell

Dirk Behana

Timothy Glaser

Thurman Shaver

1st West Virginia

Chuck Critchfield

Kevin Skaggs

Jim Barnes

John Ziolkowski

Jack Rush

Ron Wenig

Ed ChapdeLaine

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2018– Edition I - January

(RENEWALS CONTINUED)

1st Virginia

None

Artillery

Tony Shaffer

Newsletter

Tag Ireland

Colonel Kevin Skaggs

Congratulations to 1st West Virginia member Kevin Skaggs who was elected as colonel of the 1st Regiment of the United States Volunteers at the annual meeting this past weekend in Gettysburg!

I very much wanted to be there to see him be elected but had to cancel because of my father-in-law's death. Kevin did report that the following events have been designated as maximum effort events for the 1st Regiment, which includes us. New Market, Gettysburg, Cedar Creek and Remembrance Day.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Beverly Heritage Days

from Phyllis Baxter

Beverly Heritage Days - Centuries of History event is being planned for July 13, 14, 15, 2018 in Beverly. This increasingly popular event will feature living history from 1750 to 1950, with encampments, living history, music, displays, and period vendors welcome.

We hope this year to encourage lesser known periods and civilian impressions, in addition to continuing frontier, Civil War, and World War II camps. Details and registration should be available in January.

We welcome input and suggestions from WVRA or other participants, as we plan the activities for the event. If you have a suggestion or would like to participate on the planning committee, please contact event chair Phyllis Baxter, phyllisb@meer.net or call BHC at 304-637-7424.

Beverly Heritage Days - Centuries of History is presented by Beverly Heritage Center and Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation.

We would like to invite WVRA to host the event as a "sponsored event" for 2018.

Film Project

(Editor's note - this was posted by Tonya Daft on the WVRA Facebook page on Oct. 30. All questions can be directed to her. She requests contact by Facebook message.) This is an update to that posting (as first published in December newsletter.)

Update on Civil War era documentary film. Should have some dates after November 1 and location to do the trailer for the film. This so they can produce support for the documentary. I heard from some of you (WVRA members) with names phone email and addresses. Need someone from our WVRA group that has cannons. Need possible two. If you have not contacted (message me) with your info please do so ASAP so when everything is decided I can reach you quickly. Thanks a Million. Tonya Fluharty Daft.

University High School Civil War Days

Phil Caskey, history teacher at Morgantown's University High School, has provided us with advance intelligence concerning his Civil War history days.

He states that the 2018 event is scheduled for April 20-21 this year, pending approval from the Monongalia County Board of Education. The first day would be presented to the students (middle and high schools last year) and the second day open to the general public.

The WVRA participated in the 2017 event, which was set up in a field adjacent to UHS. Middle school students from Mountaineer Middle and Clay-Battelle Middle moved from station to station engaging with the reenactors and living historians. (This was originally published in Dec. No updates received.)

January Stonewall Jackson Civil War Roundtable Event

Lemeul Muniz, a member of the SJCWRT, will make a presentation on West Virginia battlefields, a photographic tour. These images are part of the material prepared by Muniz for a documentary on the War in West Virginia.

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2018– Edition I - January

His presentation is scheduled for Jan. 9, at 7 pm at the Eat'n'Park at the intersection of US Route 50 and I-79.

Treasurer's Report

December 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017

Beginning Balance	\$3,873.41
Credits (Membership)	\$135.00
Donation	\$50.00
Debits	
USV Dues	\$75.00
Stop payment fee	\$31.00
Ending Balance	\$3,952.41

Submitted by Jack Rush. January 1, 2018

AFTER ACTION REPORTS

I have no after action reports at this time.

Civil War Trust Survey

This fall I sent to members by electronic means, a Civil War Trust opinion questionnaire concerning saving Confederate monuments and a question on Robert E. Lee. This seemed to be a hot topic on Facebook and other forums and I thought that the membership might want to weigh in on the topic. But only 16 responded and some of those responses were from non-WVRA members as the survey was forwarded to at least one Civil War roundtable.

I published the first set of questions about war monuments in America in the previous, December, issue. Here is the second set of questions.

Issue 2: Our Nation's History

1. Interpretation of our nation's rich history changes over time. America seems to be experiencing shifts in interpretation of, particularly, the Civil War era, which concerns many people, especially as it relates to the Confederacy. What is your opinion toward the Confederacy and how it should be viewed in our society today?

31% answered The Confederacy rebelled against the Union, supported slavery, and its leaders committed treasons against the lawfully elected government. It is time to stop romanticizing the "Lost Cause" and set the record straight.

69% answered The Confederacy certainly seceded from the Union, and slavery was an evil institution, but people who lived during the Civil War were the product of the times in which they lived, and we should not rush to judge them based on the standards of today's society.

2. Statues of Robert E. Lee in particular have emerged as flashpoints in cities such as Charlottesville and New Orleans. What is your opinion of Lee?

6% answered Robert E. Lee turned his back on his country and his flag when he decided to fight for the Confederacy. He is not someone who should be held up as a person worthy of respect in society today.

88% answered R. E. Lee was a product of his time, a Mexican War hero, and a top Army officer of his day. Even though he fought for the Confederacy, he still exhibited many honorable traits, and sought to heal the wounds of division after the Civil War. He is still worthy of respect today.

6% answered none of the above

Other information. Of the people who responded to my request to complete the survey:

38% had Union ancestors

38% had ancestors on both sides

13% didn't know

6% had Confederate ancestors

6% had none

75% of the respondents were WVRA members

18% were friends of the WVRA

6% were roundtable members and neither of the above.

The third part of this survey was the opportunity to make further comments. I am still weighing the wisdom of placing these comments in the newsletter as they are controversial, critical and interesting. But then again nobody is really reading this newsletter in detail and it's not likely they will be seen by too many readers.

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2018– Edition I - January

OTHER FEATURES

FOR SALE

Former member Rob Freeman is selling some of his Civil War period clothing that was worn by himself and his father. He is selling shirts, a military vest and civilian vest, a almost new Union frock coat, a Confederate sack coat with Virginia buttons and two pairs of sky blue pants. Contact Pam Nicholson jmpnicholson@aol.com or Rob at rfreeman1373@gmail.com for more information.

Allegheny Arsenal Explosion

By Richard D. Orr

Printed originally in the Banner - The Journal of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

While the battle raged at Antietam another often overlooked and forgotten event was occurring in Pittsburgh.

The Allegheny Arsenal which was created in 1814 when Southwestern Pennsylvania because the iron forge of the Nation producing copious amounts of armaments for the United States Army and Navy. Nearly 70 percent of all Union artillery tubes were cast in Pittsburgh region foundries, other munitions were produced as well. Natural resources found were also the components of black powder. Leather goods were also produced in large numbers, from bridles to holsters to backpacks all came from Allegheny Arsenal.

On that fateful 17th of September 1862 tragedy of magnanimous proportions was unfolding in Pittsburgh. The 156 women and girls who worked packing powder cartridges arrived at work early in the morning for the 12-hour shift. All of them leery of the potential danger brought about by the new superintendent, Col. John Syminton, who had ordered the dirt roadway be covered in a mixture of tar and stones. Iron horse shoes and wagon wheel rims were feared to cause sparks and ignite the powder which had been spilled on the roadway from barrels with poorly fitting lids or fallen through the wooden floor of the cartridge laboratory.

Alexander McBride, supervisor of the laboratory, had wood chips spread over the road in an effort to decrease the risk of igniting the powder. However,

Col. Symington reprimanded him and ordered all the wood chips swept up.

At 11:30 pm, that fear became reality. Sparks from wagon wheels ignited black powder resulting in three massive explosions. Of the 156 girls, boys and women working in the cartridge laboratory 78 were killed. This was the largest loss of civilian life in the Civil War.

Most of the bodies were not identifiable because of how badly they were burned and/or torn apart....By far these were poor Irish Immigrants...trying to survive on 50 cents to \$1.10 they were paid a day. Pay was by the piece....

Their unidentifiable remains were buried in a common grave marked in 1863 with an Egyptian obelisk inscribed with the names of the victims....in 1928 the sixteen SUVCW camps in Allegheny County and their respective auxiliaries raised funds for a more appropriate and lasting monument. That monument stands today on the site of the mass grave of those who lost their lives in the explosion...

Col. Symington insisted he did nothing wrong and request a military inquiry. The court martial found Co. Symington not guilty. The best they could was concluded "the cause of the explosion could not be satisfactorily ascertained."

Submitted by Mark Tennant.

155 Years Ago

January, 1863

1st (Western) Virginia Infantry

January of 1863 was uneventful for the First Regiment of (Western) Virginia Infantry in camp at North Mountain along the B&O railroad.

Joshua Winters wrote on "Newyears" that "two big boxes com to our tent." He really didn't say anything about the contents, but these boxes from home often contained food and clothing hard to get at the front and were much appreciated. John Billings in "Hardtack and Coffee" wrote that "If there was a red-letter day to be found anywhere in the army life of a soldier, it occurred when he was the recipient of a box sent to him by the dear ones and friends he left to enter the service." Veteran soldiers when they realized that their regiment may pause in one place

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

*The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2018– Edition I - January*

for two or three weeks mailed a letter home to the family with a detailed list of mailed to them "at the earliest possible moment."

On New Years Eve, a "dutch Cavery" (probably German immigrant cavalry) celebrated a little too hard, deciding in their inebriated state to fire volleys. This lead to other regiments being fooled and expecting an attacking "got our things on and out before we node what was up." The "dutch" were put under guard at that point.

Joshua wrote that he had a good dinner on New Years and got a letter from home. "the boys is all in good hart." He goes on to describe in his diary the mundane events of the remainder of the month. It sounds from his diary entry that at mid-month he stockaded his tent, by building wooden walls (staves) and placing his tent on the top of the frame to create a low roof. He attended church at Hedgesville and did some "snoballing" after a big storm storm at the end of the month. Rumors of "Stuards" (Jeb Stuart) Cavalry headed towards North Mountain circulated at one point during the month. But Winters shrugged those rumors off writing "(I) gess it is onely talk. thair aint mutch danger."

From "History of the First Regiment West Virginia Infantry" by C. J. Rawling and "Civil War Letters and Diary of Joshua Winter - A Private in the Union Army Company G, First Western Virginia Volunteer Infantry" edited by WVRA member Elizabeth Davis Swiger.

12th (Western) Virginia Infantry

While the 1st (Western) Virginia wintered at North Mountain just above Hedgesville on the B&O, the 12th Infantry guarded the Shenandoah Valley at Winchester. Both detachments of the regiment reunited on New Years in Winchester. The next day Thomas Orr wrote to "Friends at home" to complain that he had nary a "scratch of a pen" from the home front.

Orr's diary, like that of Joshua Winters, is full of details about weather, visiting friends, and routine duty. He did report on January 10 that "In the afternoon the West Virginia troops had a grand parade through the streets of Winchester in honor of the new state of West Virginia in the midst of a heavy rain." (editor's note - President Lincoln had signed the West Virginia statehood bill on December 31.

Orr related that the 9th and 10th regiments were brigaded with the 12th under General Gustave Paul Cluseret.)

During the month the 12th began to demolish homes to use the lumber for flooring and bunks in their tents. Orr wrote that the regiment was very well clothed and updated the folks at home about a number of soldiers from Ohio, which should not be too surprising given the close proximity to Orr's home in the Northern Panhandle of Virginia.

"I was down in town the other morning to get some flour baked that we had drawed. I talked a while with an intelligent black woman. She said that she did not expect to stay there very long. Asked her what she was going to do. She said that she was going to leave for the land of freedom. I asked her what the feeling among the blacks was. She said it was that of intense hate to secession and its sympathizers. She said that they all intended to leave in the course of a week or two....There is a good many Union men in Winchester, but they are afraid to speak out their sentiments."

From "History of the 12th West Virginia Volunteer Infantry" by William Hewitt and A company of BOYS IN BLUE" by Mark E. Paul and Thomas Jefferson Orr. (Donated by Orr's descendant Mark E. Paul)

As always, I welcome any similar information on the 25th Virginia or 1st Virginia Cavalry.

They Said It

"They've got us surrounded again, the poor bastards." Creighton Abrams during his World War II service.

"I believe that to have interfered as I have done - as I have always freely admitted I have done - in behalf of His despised people, was not wrong but right. Now if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the futherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments - I submit; so let it be done" John Brown after conviction and before being hanged for treason.

"Should there be any soldier so lost to every feeling of honor, as to attempt to retreat one single foot or skulk in the face of danger, the officer next to him is

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association
2018 – Edition I - January

immediately to put him to death." General Anthony Wayne before the storming of Stony Point. One man was put to death with a spontoon when he refused to advance. (from *Washington's Immortals* by Patrick O'Donnell).

Sites of Interest

Beverlyheritagecenter.org – Beverly Heritage Center
WVRA.org – our website
<http://www.wvmasondixoncwr.org/> -- W. Va.
Mason Dixon Civil War Round Table (Morgantown)
Civil War Trust – civilwar.org

WVRA Officers 2017 (executive board)

President – Jim Barnes
Vice President – John Brasuk
Treasurer /Secretary – Jack Rush
Newsletter editor - Chuck Critchfield*
Website – Peter Baxter*
1st W. Va. Rep – Mark "Quiz Whiz" Tennant
25th Va. Rep – Tim Glaser
1st Va. Cavalry – John Brasuk
Artillery – Stormy Brasuk
TASAS – Diane Tennant

* Non-voting member of executive board

American Revolution

It has been interesting trying to pin down my Revolutionary War ancestors. I have over 10 who did some sort of service. But records are not good and like my forefather Nathaniel Critchfield, some just joined the military/militia at times of crisis. Often when Native Americans friendly to the British were on the prowl.

World War II

Nothing to report his issue.

Editor's Corner

The Editor's chance to speak

PERSONALS - John and Stormy's West Virginia house, located in Marion County in the community of Monumental, burned last month. I have had no update on their situation since the note that was published in the December *Trans-Allegheny Dispatch*.

THANK YOU to Peter Baxter, Jim Barnes and Mark 'Quiz Whiz' Tennant and Phyllis Baxter who have made contributions one sort or another to this issue.

MIKE PHILLIPS has been doing some very interesting research into World War I veterans from West Virginia.

MEMPHIS, TENNESEE was the latest city to remove Confederate memorials. Don't think it can't happen around here. I continue to hear chatter about Stonewall Jackson on the Harrison County Court House plaza. Nothing too serious yet.

BEVERLY HERITAGE CENTER - announced that rehabilitation work on the 1841 Randolph County jail sitting behind the Heritage Center in Beverly, will start in 2018. Beverly is also embarking on our their annual growth campaign to provide funding for improvement projects. Please donate.

Please do not send any correspondence to the PO Box in Buckhannon. Membership information can be sent to me. Remember you must be a member of record to qualify for membership benefits. To be covered under the respective insurance policies that the 1st West Virginia and the 25th Virginia infantry units participate in, you must be a member of record. TASAS members who are also spouses of 1st W. Va. members are covered under the USV insurance. Insurance questions about the 1st Virginia Cavalry should be directed to the Unit Representative.

There are two Facebook pages currently in use as avenues of communication by WVRA members. One is the WVRA-The Trans-Allegheny Soldiers Aid Society group page. The other group is labeled simply West Virginia Reenactors Association. Tonya Daft is the administrator on the West Virginia Reenactors Association page. Please address all questions to her about that page. I am not sure who is administrator to the WVRA-TASAS page. I continue to use the WVRA-TASAS page to post announcements as it has been the page getting the most use (by far) over the past 3 years.

Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

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This newsletter is available free to members by email. It will be mailed by US Mail for \$10 per year.

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

WVRA website - wvra.org

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