Thanks!!

Thanks to Jim Dimond, Marc Duval and Rick Solomon for their program on the Blockade. A large part of the success of the program was the active participation of the attending members in asking questions of the presenters. We would also like to extend thanks to those who donated and purchased items at our latest Silent Auction.

Next Meeting

Thursday, February 12, 1998 at the Yankee Diner. 6 PM Social Hour with dinner at 7 PM. Choice of. The main entree is Beef Stroganoff or Baked Chicken Breast served with Caesar Salad, Biscuits, fresh vegetables, potatoes or rice with the chicken along with coffee or tea. Price is $17.00 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

Steve Nitch will talk about Edmund Rice, 19th Massachusetts, who won the Medal of Honor fighting the 26th North Carolina at Gettysburg. Edmund Rice was a Captain in the 14th Massachusetts from April 27, 1861 to June 1861. He served briefly as a Captain in the 20th Massachusetts, until he was appointed a Captain in the 19 Massachusetts in July 1861. He saw action in 18 battles of the Army of the Potomac and was severely wounded at Antietam. At Gettysburg during the repulse of Pickett's Charge Rice, was wounded twice but lead his regiment and the 42nd New York in a charge to close a gap in the Union line. During this charge the 19th Massachusetts captured four stands of colors despite losing over half of members. At the battle of Spotsylvania, now Lieutenant Colonel Rice was captured, but made a daring escape from a moving freight train and returned to Union lines after a harrowing trip of 400 miles. After the war Rice became a 1st Lieutenant of the 40th US. Infantry. Mr. Nitch is the great grandson of Edmund Rice.

Subscription Money Now Due

Marc Duval requests that those who promised to renew their subscriptions to Civil War History send their checks to him before February 18th, so he can send in the current renewal.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DRAWER

A young blood of the F. F.'s of Virginia was in the habit of daily standing on the sidewalk in front of one of the hotels in Richmond, and talking loudly and insultingly when any of the Union officers were passing. A favorite expression of his in a tone to be heard by all around was "Didn't we give the Yankees Jesse at Bull Run?" This he repeated so often that it was reported finally to the Provost Marshal, who sent for him, and told him that it would probably be necessary for him to leave Richmond, as his conversation was calculated to provoke disturbance. The young fellow begged hard to stay; he had no money to live on if sent away from home; he would take the oath, and never "say so again," if he could only stay.

The oath was administered to him, and he was about to leave the room, when, coming back, he said to the Marshal, "Didn't the rebels give us Yankees Jesse at Bull Run?"

Harper's New Monthly Magazine February 1866
REBELS

Yes, call them Rebels! 't is the name
Their patriot fathers bore;
And by such deeds they'll hallow it,
As they have done before.
At Lexington and Baltimore
Was poured the holy chrism,
For Freedom marks her sons with blood,
In sign of their baptism.

Rebels, in proud and bold protest,
Against a power unreal,...
A unity which every quest
Proves false as 't is ideal.
A brotherhood, whose ties are chains,
Which crushes what it holds,
Like the old marble Laocoon,
Beneath its serpent folds.

Rebels against the malice vast,...
Malice that naught disarms,...
Which fills the quiet of their homes
With vague and dread alarms.
Against the invader's daring feet,
Against the tide of wrong,
Which has been borne, ---in silence borne,...
But borne perchance too long.

They would be cowards, did they crouch
Beneath the lifted hand.
Whose very wave, ye seem to think,
Will chill them where they stand.
Yes, call them Rebels! 't is a name
Which speaks of other days,
Of gallant deeds and gallant men,
And wins them to their ways.

Fair was the edifice they raised,
Uplifting to the skies;
A mighty Samson 'neath its dome
In grand quiescence lies.
Dare not to touch his noble limb,
With thong or chain to bind,
Lest ruff crush both you and him
This Samson is not blind!

Poetry of the War 1866

NEW BOOKS

Three new books have been recently published on a long neglected area of Civil War research, East Tennessee and the Appalachia area of the upper South. War at Every Door: Partisan Politics & Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee 1860-1869 by Noel C. Fisher [Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997] examines the bitter partisan fighting between Union and Confederate supporters in the region and "demonstrates that generally guerrillas were neither the romantic daring figures of Civil War legend nor mere thieves and murderers, but rather were ordinary men and women who fought to live under a government of their choice and to drive out those who did not share their views."

The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays by Kenneth W. Noe & Shannon H. Wilson [Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997] offers the reader 11 fascinating essays on the war's impact in the mountain region of the upper South. Topics range from an examination of the social origins of Union and Confederate supporters in the region, to the nature of guerrilla warfare. Finally Benjamin Franklin Cooling in Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863 [Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997] describes a war that was fought not only for geography but for the "hearts and minds of the populace. Resistance to Union invaders prompted oppressive military occupation, subversion of civil liberties and confiscation of personal property in the name of allegiance to the United States--or to the Confederacy."

This Month in the Civil War

February 12, of course marks the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. While celebrations of his birthday started shortly after the end of the Civil War [the first being that of the Lincoln Association of Jersey City] efforts to mark this date as a legal holiday failed on a national level. As early as 1875 petitions were sent to Congress to have February 12th made a national holiday. But with Washington's Birthday being celebrated in the same month, these attempts to honor Lincoln by national holiday failed. Individual states, however legislated state holidays to celebrate Lincoln's birthday. At the turn of the century, Washington was one of 5 states with a Lincoln Holiday, while by the 1960's over 30 states recognized February 12th as a holiday. It was not until 1968 with the passage of the "Monday Holiday Law" and the creation of the third Monday in February as "President's Day" that the idea of honoring Lincoln's birthday as a national holiday became reality.

On the Net

The Museum of the Confederacy celebrated its centennial in 1996 and for those wishing to find out more information about this institution, visit their web site at www.moc.org. This well designed web site introduces visitors to the collections and exhibitions of the museum as well as the adjoining White House of the Confederacy. Information is provided on how to obtain copies from their 10,000 photographic collection as well as how to ask research questions. A selection of gifts from The Haversack store can be found on this site as well as feature articles from the museums newsletter. For those planning to visit the museum in Richmond, Virginia, a map is provided as well as hours of operation and ticket prices.

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
Civil War Book Notes

"to distinguish acts of bravery"

"The experience of the Mexican War, when the honor of a brevet was so often persistently sought for through political influence, sometimes without any special military merit to sustain it, early suggested to me the probability that the same evil in magnified form would arise during the civil war... Instead of tardy and sometimes indiscriminate recommendations for brevets why should not our generals... be clothed with the power of rewarding distinguished acts of bravery, on the instant, by issuing orders conferring a medal..."

Thus wrote Adjutant-General E. D. Townsend in 1884 on his idea to award medals for outstanding acts of bravery, an idea which eventually led to the creation of the Medal of Honor. Although Townsend's idea was at first rejected as being contrary to democratic institutions, Congress did pass a resolution in July 1862 to award medals of honor to army enlisted men, which was amended in 1863 to include officers. The navy received authorization to award a medal of honor to navy enlisted men and marines in December 1861. However, in the case of both army and navy personnel, medals of honor were not issued until the spring of 1863. The first army recipients being 6 surviving members of the Andrews Raiding party [better known as participants in the "Great Locomotive Chase" in the spring of 1862] being the only medal given by the US Government to its armed forces during the Civil War, some were dispersed to individuals who would not qualify for it under the tighter standards enacted in 1916. Many were issued to individuals who captured rebel battle flags, or saved their own units flags during a battle. As a consequence a review board just before World War I, rescinded over 900 names from the Medal of Honor Rolls, most being ones given to members of the 27th Maine for volunteering to serve past their date of discharge during the Gettysburg campaign. Unlike present day practice, applicants petitioned the War Department years after the Civil War, in some cases over 4 decades later, in the hopes of receiving the medal for their service. For example one of the most famous recipients Joshua Chamberlain was not actually awarded his Medal of Honor for his actions at Gettysburg until August 1893. So overwhelmed by these applications, was the War Department, the Secretary of War under Theodore Roosevelt complimented how much they were interfering with the normal conduct of business.

The Confederate government intended to issue medals and decorations but never got around to it. Instead it authorized the issuing of a "Roll of Honor" after major battles.

For more information of the Medal of Honor and those who received it during the Civil War the following books are recommended.


First hand accounts by Medal of Honor winners, written in the 1890's.

➤ The Medal of Honor. "My heart is beating like a tethered steed's To join the heroes in their noble deeds. A noise of armies gathers in my ears: The Southern Yells, the Northern battle-cheers: The endless volleys, ceaseless as the roar Of the vexed ocean, brawling with its shore: The groaning cannon, puffing at a breath Man's shreds and fragments through the jaws of death: The rush of horses, and the whirring sway Of the keen saber cleaving soul from clay; And over all, intelligible and clear As spoken language to a listening ear: The bugle orders the tumultous herds, And leads the flocks of battle with its words."


Volume one covers the period of the Civil War.


Pullen followed up his well regarded history of the 20th Maine with this investigation into the "mysterious" events surrounding the 27th Maine and their medals of honor.

One of the most bloody mistakes of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War was the action known as the Battle of the Crater July 30, 1864. Hoping to blow a hole in the Confederate defense lines at Petersburg which could be exploited as a breakthrough point to capture the city, members of the 48th Pennsylvania spent 5 weeks digging a 500 foot long mine shaft to a point underneath the Confederate trenches. On the morning of August 30 over 8,000 lb. of gunpowder were exploded, creating a hole 170 feet long and 60 to 80 feet wide. Troops from Gen. Ambrose Burnside's 9th Corps were sent in to exploit the newly created gap, but due to a switch in the troops spearheading the assault made only the day before [Meade substituted a division of white troops for a division of black troops who had specially trained for the assault] the attack was a "stupendous failure." Many of the black troops sent in the second wave of the assault were shot after they tried to surrender. Union casualties were 3,798 while the Confederates lost around 1500. Printed below is one eyewitness report by a member of the 29th Massachusetts.

Near Petersburg Va.
Tues. August 2, 1864

Dear Mother

Well we have had some pretty exciting times here, since I wrote last. We have had a battle and got repulsed with very heavy loss. I think it was the hardest fight I have seen in my experience although it lasted but a few hours. We opened the battle Sat A. M. soon after daybreak, first by blowing up a rebel fort, then all our artillery opened & the 9th corps "niggers" and all charged and took 2 lines of rebel works and a number of prisoners. The "niggers" went in first rate at first, but didn't hold out; they took the 2d line of rebel works & the rebs charged on them on the run; it was impossible to rally them; they retreated right through on white troops running over them in an awful manner, obliging the whites to fall back. Our men shot the "niggers" down, knocked them over the head with the butt of their muskets and did their best to rally the "niggers" but could do nothing with them. I believe if we had had white men instead of black, we would be in Petersburg today. The battle commenced well but we got the worst of it in the end. We had to give up all we had taken and fall back to our old position. The blowing up of the rebel fort was quite a sight to see; the men going up in to the air; some hundreds of rebels were buried alive; some dug themselves out with spoons. We captured about 1,000 prisoners I hear & lost nearer 2,000. The 57th & 58th Mass. lost their colors and about all their men. Hovey is among the missing, either killed or taken prisoner; only one of his company came out of the fight. Our corps is pretty well used up. My regiment number about 40 now; only 3 of my company left including myself; one was mortally wounded, and one other either killed or taken prisoner in this fight. So they go. I don't know what Grant will do next. The rebs are in Penn & he has got to do something soon. A great many say we are going to Maryland soon. I want to see every man North between 18 and 45 out here now. If they wont volunteer make them come and end this war. I am sorry for Hovey and his folks. I shall miss him much. I wrote to Mat yesterday. Gen. Bartlett of Mass. commanding our brigade was taken prisoner; he has a cork leg, he lost that I hear and was obliged to give himself up, he was a brave man and liked by all; he is only 23 years old. Everything has been uncommon quiet since the battle Sat. W have moved our headquarters a little further to the rear, out of range of the rebel shells; it has begun to be a dangerous place, most too warm for comfort. We have a good place now with a view of a number of miles of our line & the rebs. I hear that the 2d Corps is to relieve the 9th. That is the best Corps in the army. Our corps is about all new troops & niggers. The rebs seem to be getting the best of it lately, but it always looks darkest just before day. I hope the scales will turn soon.

yours Orrin

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