

## **THE LAST WORD**

### **When Did the Civil War Become “Real” to You?**

By Mark Terry

You may be thinking “what do you mean by that?” Obviously, the Civil War really happened. We have the eyewitness accounts, the battlefields, the many national cemeteries. So what do I mean? What I mean is what took place in your own life- what you saw, felt or touched that brought home the reality of the Civil War to you?

One of those times was November, 2003 on the way to a Preservation March at Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. A friend of mine and I stopped at Franklin to pick up a couple of period blankets. With some time on our hands, we decided to go to the nearby Carter House, which during the Battle of Franklin became the epicenter when the Confederate assault briefly broke the Union line there. The wall facing the direction of the attack is literally covered with bullet holes. One could imagine a literal “storm of lead”. Soon thereafter, we took a short drive over to the Carnton Plantation, which (like most structures in Franklin) were used as hospitals for the wounded after the battle. During the tour, we were taken upstairs to a south facing room. We were told that it was the south facing rooms where the amputations took place, since the doctors could perform their grisly work by the light of the open windows. The tour guide pointed out the bloodstained floor near a wall where limbs were tossed. However, the reality didn’t hit home until she knelt down and placed her forearm on one of the stains- where it fit perfectly, including the curve of the little finger!

If it hasn’t already happened, on December 10<sup>th</sup>, you have a chance to make the Civil War real to you. On that day at the Tahoma National Cemetery, the remains of a Civil War veteran, Private James Powers, Jr. of Co. D, 12<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry will be buried. You probably know the story, but his remains, along with his wife Irene, were left on a shelf, forgotten, and ended up in a back room at Lake View Cemetery in Seattle, where the urns of others. Jim and Loretta Dimond, PSCWRT members found them and have been working on making their interment a reality. Ask yourself how often in your life will you be able to witness the funeral of a real Civil War veteran?

That should make the Civil War “real” to you!