

## 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Civil War



### Cape May Civil War Round Table August 2013 Newsletter

#### 2013 Meeting Schedule

**15 August:** Ed Bonekemper will be giving us a presentation on *The Myth of the Lost Cause: A Fantasy View of the Civil War*.

**Refreshments:** Mike & Barbara Golla

**19 September: Refreshments:** John Herr

**17 October: Refreshments:** Andy Lolli

**21 November: Refreshments:** John Burke

**?? December: Refreshments:**

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#### Minutes of the Business Meeting

**18 July 2013**

The meeting was called to order by President Burke. We saluted the flag and held a moment of silence for our troops and others who stand in harm's way to protect us.

Treasurers' Report held in abeyance until later in the meeting. Andy Lolli reported that it is time to pay the deposit on our safety deposit box. Motion made and passed to pay the \$26 needed to pay the rent on the box.

Report made that our meeting information on the Comcast Local Information channel has us meeting at the wrong place. This will be looked into to try and get it corrected.

Jim Marshall reports that our website will be down for a few days as we will be changing providers. Our old provider is going out of business.

Keep checking the MAC website as they are doing several Civil War related events this summer and need help from re-enactors. Most recent was for the 11<sup>th</sup> of August. Marty Runner helped with that event and will have more information about future events.

Please remember that we still need refreshment providers for some future meetings. Secretary has the sign up sheet. (The sheet has now been filled up, although only one of those months has two people bringing refreshments...)

Reminder to Treasurer Marshall that it is nearing time that we need to make sure our non-profit IRS filing is completed.

Treasurer Marshall gave his report. Motion made to accept the report and file for audit, seconded and approved.

Motion made that as soon as we have enough \$\$ in the donation jar to give \$50 to Brandy Station in honor of Clark Donlin. Motion seconded and passed.

President Burke adjourned the meeting so the presentation could begin.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat Munson-Siter, Secretary

#### REMINDER FROM THE SECRETARY:

If any of our members come across information about events that will be occurring after any upcoming meeting but before the next issue of the newsletter comes out, please let the secretary know about the event before the most current issue of the newsletter comes out. If you wait until the meeting on, say, the 20<sup>th</sup>, that there is an event taking place on the 25<sup>th</sup>, those members not at the meeting won't know about the event as the next newsletter won't be out until after the event. For the most part, I won't even include information given about such events at meetings in the minutes, as the information will be dated and no longer helpful when the next newsletter comes out.



**Civil War Milestones  
September**

**1861**

**6** – Union troops take Paducah (KY)

**1862**

**1** – Battle of Chantilly, VA

**5** – Lee crosses the Potomac into Maryland

**14** – Battles at South Mountain, MD

**15** – Harpers Ferry falls to Confederates

**17** – Battle of Antietam

**22** – Lincoln issues preliminary Emancipation Proclamation

**1863**

**7** – Ft. Wagner (SC) occupied by Union troops

**19 – 20** – Battle of Chicamauga (GA)

**1864**

**2** – Union troops occupy Atlanta

**19** – Third battle of Winchester

**22** – Battle of Fisher's Hill, VA

**29** – Battle of Ft. Harrison/Chaffin's Farm, VA



**Civil War Related Events  
September 2013  
Re-Enactments, Lectures, Etc.**

- 7 **VA** "The War Between the Tastes: Civil War Foodfest," with food, music and more at the Dabbs House Museum, 3812 Nine Mile Road, near Richmond. 11 am-4 pm. Free. 804-652-3409.
- 7 **MD** Bus tour, "John Wilkes Booth Escape Route,"

- VA** popular 12-hour tour explores the route of the assassin's escape. Leaves from the Surratt House Museum in Clinton at 7:30 am. \$85. Details, reservation info: [surratt.org](http://surratt.org)
- 7-8 **PA** Living history, infantry camps and demonstrations at the Pennsylvania Memorial and Pitzer Woods, Gettysburg battlefield. Free. [nps.gov/gett](http://nps.gov/gett)
- 7-8 **NJ** Living history, "Civil War Weekend," at the Cold Spring Village, 720 Route 9 South, in Cape May. [hcsv.org](http://hcsv.org)
- 11 **VA** Talk, "2nd Battle of Sabine Pass," at Baine's Books and Coffee, 205 Main St, Appomattox. 12:15 pm. Free. [moc.org](http://moc.org)
- 13-15 **MD** "Anniversary Weekend," tours and living history at the Antietam National Battlefield. Free with park admission. [nps.gov/anti](http://nps.gov/anti)
- 14 **VA** Lecture, "Who Freed the Slaves?" at the Chesterfield Public Library, 901 Lori Road, Chesterfield. 2:30 pm. Free. [library.chesterfield.gov](http://library.chesterfield.gov) Reservations suggested: 804-751-CCPL.
- 14 **VA** Bus tour, "Fall Mosby Tour," leaves Truro Parrish, 10520 Main St, Fairfax City at 8 am. Ends 5:30 pm. \$75. Reservations: 703-971-4984.
- 14 **VA** Walking tour, "The Second Battle of Kernstown and Its Impact on the Prichard Family," at the Kernstown Battlefield off Route 11 south of Winchester. 10:30 am and 2 pm. [kernstownbattle.org](http://kernstownbattle.org)
- 14 **VA** Special program, "Build Your Own Ironclad," at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News. 1 pm. Free with museum admission. [marinersmuseum.org](http://marinersmuseum.org)
- 14 **VA** Walking tour, "The Struggle for Survival: Richmond 1863" begins at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. 10:30 am. \$10. [moc.org](http://moc.org)
- 14 **MD** Bus tour, "John Wilkes Booth Escape Route," popular 12-hour tour explores the route of the assassin's escape. Leaves from the Surratt House Museum in Clinton at 7:30 am. \$85. Details, reservation info: [surratt.org](http://surratt.org)
- 14-15 **VA**  Symposium, "Bristoe Station Campaign," at the Four Points Sheridan Hotel in Manassas. Talks and bus tour. \$75. 703-792-4754.
- 14-15 **PA** Living history, infantry camps and demonstrations at the Pennsylvania Memorial and Pitzer Woods, Gettysburg battlefield. Free.

- nps.gov/gett**
- 14-15 **NJ** Living history, "Civil War Weekend," at the Cold Spring Village, 720 Route 9 South, Cape May. **hcsv.org**
- 17 **VA** Book talk, "Stuart's Finest Hour: The Ride Around McClellan, June 1862," at Hanover Tavern in Hanover. 7 pm. Free. **hanovertavern.org**
- 17 **VA** Special tours, evening talk, "Civil War Navy Day" at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Norfolk. Civil War-related tours and other activities 10 am-8 pm. Talk and book signing with Dr. James McPherson, 6-8 pm. **hrnm.navy.mil**
- 20 **VA** Talk, "Confederate Victory at Thermopylae," at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. Noon. Free with admission. **moc.org**
- 21 **PA** Activities commemorating the founding of Camp William Penn and the United States Colored Troops in La Mott. Includes walking tours, lectures, films and music. 10 am-4 pm. Details: **usct.org** or 215-885-2258.
- 21 **PA** "An Evening with the Painting," special two-hour, after-hours view of and talks about the Gettysburg Cyclorama. 6 pm. \$20/adult. Tickets: **gettysburgfoundation.org**
- 21 **DC** Living history walking tour, "Courage! The Civil War in Washington," hear the stories, see the downtown sites. Meets at 1001 Pennsylvania Ave NW. 11 am. \$12. **historicstrolls.com**
- 21 **VA** Walking tour, "Battles of Kernstown," at the Kernstown Battlefield off Route 11 south of Winchester. 11 am and 1 pm. **kernstownbattle.org**
- 21 **VA** Car caravan tour, "The Great Beefsteak Raid," meets at the Petersburg National Battlefield visitor center. 10 am-4 pm. Free with park admission. **nps.gov/pete**
- 21 **VA** Walking tour of Fort Huger, Confederate fort on the James River at 15080 Talcott Terrace near Smithfield. 10 am. Free. 757-357-0115.
- 21 **MD** Walking tour, "Civil War Annapolis," begins at the information booth at the City Dock. 10 am-noon. \$16/adult. **annapolistours.com**
- 21 **MD** Bus tour, "John Wilkes Booth Escape Route," popular 12-hour tour explores the route of the assassin's escape. Leaves from the Surratt House Museum in Clinton at 7:30 am. \$85. Details, reservation info: **surratt.org**
- 21-22 **PA** Living history, sharpshooter camp and demonstrations at Pitzer Woods, Gettysburg battlefield. Free. **nps.gov/gett**
- 21-22 **PA** Reenactment, "Civil War Remembered," annual train event at the Middletown & Hummelstown Railroad in Middletown. Train rides through a Civil War battle. Rides at 11 am and 2:30 pm Saturday, 11 am Sunday. **mmrailroad.com**
- 21-22 **PA** Reenactment, "Civil War Remembered," annual train event at the Middletown & Hummelstown Railroad in Middletown. Train rides through a Civil War battle. Rides at 11 am and 2:30 pm Saturday, 11 am Sunday. **mmrailroad.com**
- 22 **VA** Living history, "Eyewitness to War," tours of the Mt. Zion Church and cemetery in Aldie. 1-5 pm. Free, donations welcome. **nvrpa.org/park/mt\_zion**
- 25 **VA** Lecture, "Those Honored Dead: The Hollywood Memorial Association and the Re-interment of the Gettysburg Dead," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. 6 pm. Free. **hollywoodcemetery.org**
- 28 **VA** Ranger program, "The Forgotten Fourteen" USCT Medal of Honor winners, at the Petersburg National Battlefield visitor center. 10 am and 2 pm. Free with park admission. **nps.gov/pete**
- 28 **VA** Walking tours, "Hard Liquor and Women," in Petersburg. Begins at the Farmer's Market, 9 Old St. 10:30 am, 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm. Free. **nps.gov/pete**
- 28 **VA** Civil War Lantern Tours with living history at Meadow Farm Museum, 3400 Mountain Road in Glen Allen (near Richmond). Tours leave every 15 minutes 7-8:30 pm. Free. 804-501-2130.
- 28 **MD** Bus tour, "John Wilkes Booth Escape Route," popular 12-hour tour explores the route of the assassin's escape. Leaves from the Surratt House Museum in Clinton at 7:30 am. \$85. Details, reservation info: **surratt.org**
- 28-29 **PA** Living history, sharpshooter camp and demonstrations at Pitzer Woods, Gettysburg battlefield. Free. **nps.gov/gett**
- 28-29 **MD** Living history, camps and weapons firing demonstrations at the Antietam National Battlefield. Free with park admission. **nps.gov/anti**
- 28-29 **VA** Living history, talks and tours, "Warrenton-Fauquier Heritage Days," most events are in downtown Warrenton and are free. **fauquiercivilwar.com**

- 28-29 **VA** Anniversary living history, talks and tours at Fort Harrison, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. 10 am-4 pm each day. Free. [nps.gov/rich](http://nps.gov/rich)
- 29 **VA** Car caravan tour, "Anniversary of the Battle of Peeble's Farm," meets at Petersburg National Battlefield Western Front Tour Stop No. 1. 1 and 3 pm. Free. [nps.gov/pete](http://nps.gov/pete)
- 29 **VA** Living history, artillery demonstrations at the Petersburg National Battlefield. 1-4:30 pm. Free with park admission. [nps.gov/pete](http://nps.gov/pete)



### Marking the Graves of Patriots

While this information is primarily aimed at marking the graves of Civil War veterans, it also affects the graves of veterans of ALL wars the US has fought in. For more information, go to the website [www.marktheirgraves.org](http://www.marktheirgraves.org).

**“A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces—but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”**

- President John Fitzgerald Kennedy

That’s the hope – that America honors the service of all of its veterans who lie in unmarked graves by marking those graves.

This country has long honored our veterans by marking their unmarked graves. But this is the sad reality today: because of a recent and uncalled-for change in regulations by the Veterans Administration, veterans’ graves no longer are being marked.

**William Peter Strickland** (1809-1884) served as chaplain of the 48th New York Infantry for two years during the Civil War. Strickland, like many Northern Evangelicals, believed that serving the Union was “the most sacred duty of every liberty-loving American citizen.” He is interred in Brooklyn’s Green-Wood Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

An application was made to the Veterans Administration for a headstone for him. That application was rejected because the applicant, the cemetery where he is buried, was not next-of-kin. Chaplain Strickland lies today, 150 years after his service to his country, in an unmarked grave. We know who he was. We know that he served his country. Shouldn’t his grave be marked? Shouldn’t his service to his country be honored? We think so!



The yellow flag marks the spot where a Veterans Administration gravestone for Rev. William Peter Strickland would be placed, had the VA not rejected the application made on his behalf by the cemetery where he is buried.

**The Problem:** A year ago, the VA, in effect, shut down its program, which has been in existence for more than a century, to mark the graves of veterans whose graves were unmarked. It ended that program by redefining “applicant” for a marker so narrowly that only direct descendants, rather than historians, cemeteries, museums, veterans associations, and concerned researchers, may apply for a marker. This is wrong.

**The Solution:** Speak out now. Protest! Sign our petition. And spread the word. Call your members of Congress and tell them to support legislation to change this. Help us “Mark Their Graves!”



Here lie the remains of Brevet Brigadier General John Hann Bell—in an unmarked grave.

**John Hann Bell** (1836-1875). A native of Michigan, during the Civil War Bell worked his way up from first lieutenant to brevet brigadier general.

He saw action during the Peninsular Campaign, the Seven Days Battles, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, where he was wounded. Transferred to the Invalid Corps in 1863, he became lieutenant colonel of the 10th Veteran Reserve Corps.

In all, he served his country for four and one-half years in uniform. His brevet cited him for “gallant and meritorious services.” His unmarked grave is in Rosedale Cemetery, Orange, New Jersey. Shouldn’t it be marked?



The flag marks Louis Kentana's grave; he has no gravestone.

**“Every statue and marker in America has a biography.”**

- Leslie George Katz

**Louis Kentana** (1842-1927) served in the Civil War, from 1861 until 1865, as a private in the 65th and 67th New York Infantries. During his service, he was hospitalized for six months with “confirmed excitability and palpitation of the heart.”

According to his 1880 application for an invalid pension, he was wounded by a shell about four inches above the knee at the Battle of Malvern Hill, Virginia, on July 1, 1862, and was treated by the regimental surgeon. In addition, he stated that he suffered a gunshot wound in the right thumb at the Battle of The Wilderness, Virginia, in May 1864, and was confined to a hospital in Washington, D.C., for about two months. Years later, he was awarded an invalid pension. He lies in an unmarked grave. Louis Kentana served his country for four years and was wounded in battle twice. Shouldn't he get a gravestone from the VA, whether or not he has lineal descendants?

**Major James H. Remington** of the 7th Rhode Island Infantry and Corporal Philip Tavernier of the 4th New York Infantry were wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Alvah Schofield was a Navy man. Sergeant David Bell served with the 2nd U.S. Artillery. First Lieutenant James Entwistle served with the 6th New York Infantry from 1861 to 1863. Private Wales Jennings served for a year with the 15th Connecticut Infantry.

Applications, made in June, 2012, on their behalf to mark their unmarked graves all were rejected by the Veterans Administration because the applicant was not a lineal descendant. They served their country. Shouldn't their graves be marked? We think so.



## Civil War Trust Announces National Campaign to Save Brandy Station Battlefield

Preservation group announces national fundraising campaign to save 56 crucial acres of hallowed ground on historic Fleetwood Hill at Brandy Station

Brandy Station - Fleetwood Hill Sign (Brandy Station, Va.) – The Civil War Trust, America's largest nonprofit battlefield preservation group, today announced a \$3.6 million national fundraising campaign to preserve 56 acres of historic Fleetwood Hill on the Brandy Station Battlefield in Culpeper County, Va. Brandy Station is perhaps best known as the largest cavalry battle ever fought on the North American continent. The campaign announcement comes just weeks before the anniversary of the battle, fought June 9, 1863.

“This is a tremendous opportunity to preserve the critical heart of the Brandy Station battlefield,” remarked James Lighthizer, President of the Civil War Trust. “Even in historic Culpeper County, the unique history of Fleetwood Hill makes it exceptional. While the Trust is extremely proud of the work we have done at Brandy Station, securing Fleetwood Hill would be our crowning achievement.”

Historians agree with Lighthizer's assessment of extraordinary significance of Fleetwood Hill. Historian and preservation advocate Clark “Bud” Hall calls Fleetwood Hill “without question the most fought over, camped upon and marched over real estate in the entire United States. This unpretentious little ridge has seen more military activity than any other piece of ground in American history.”

Historian Dan Beattie, author of *Brandy Station 1863: First Step Towards Gettysburg*, describes Fleetwood Hill as “the jewel in the crown” at Brandy Station. To Beattie, Fleetwood is “the most important place in the largest cavalry battle in American history.”

The \$3.6 million price tag makes the campaign to protect Fleetwood Hill one of the five most ambitious private battlefield purchases in the Trust's history. However, thanks to the availability of matching grants from the American Battlefield Protection Program and Commonwealth of Virginia, the assistance of like-minded conservation groups and generous commitments from major donors, the Trust has lined up 95 percent of the purchase price before soliciting donations from its members. This means that each dollar contributed at this stage of the fundraising campaign will be multiplied more than 18-fold.

Joining the Trust on this ambitious national fundraising campaign are an assortment of historic preservation groups with deep commitments to Culpeper County and the region, including the Brandy Station Foundation, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground. Thanks to their pledges of support and gifts already received, just \$193,000 remains to be raised prior to the transaction's scheduled closing in early August.

Jerry Brent, Executive Director of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, a nonprofit group that has saved more than 1,000 acres in the region, noted: “Fleetwood Hill is the ‘missing link’ as far as the preservation of the Brandy Station Battlefield is concerned. It is particularly fitting that this crucial tract is being preserved during the sesquicentennial of the battle and

through such a dynamic partnership between conservation groups.”

Brandy Fleetwood Map Hub promoThe Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership, which is committed to conserving and promoting the swath of land from Gettysburg and Monticello, including Brandy Station, concurred. According to Journey President Cate Magennis Wyatt, “Fleetwood Hill is one of the most striking terrain features within the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. Its history and scenic beauty have long made it a site coveted by the preservation community. As we remember the events that occurred on these slopes 150 years ago, the Journey is honored to be part of this preservation effort and looks forward to a time in the near very near future when this area is restored to its historic appearance.”

Joe McKinney, President of the Brandy Station Foundation, also expressed his excitement about the preservation opportunity at Fleetwood Hill. Noting his organization’s work to preserve the battlefield and the Graffiti House, a nearby historic landmark, McKinney stated, “It would be impossible to tell the full story of Brandy Station without Fleetwood Hill. We are pleased to partner with the Civil War Trust to save this unparalleled piece of Culpeper history, knowing that it will be a valuable resource for generations who wish to study and understand this period in our history.”

The Battle of Brandy Station is considered by historians as the beginning of the momentous Gettysburg Campaign. Union cavalry, long considered inferior to their Confederate counter parts, launched a bold crossing of the Rappahannock River in the early hours of June 9, 1863. They initially surprised the Southern horsemen, with charge and countercharge raging across the landscape for much of the day before the Federals retired back across the river. All told, more than 20,000 cavalymen fought at Brandy Station. The epicenter of the fighting was Fleetwood Hill, which overlooked much of the battlefield and served as headquarters for Confederate chieftain, General James Ewell Brown “J.E.B.” Stuart.

Stuart’s great-grandson, J.E.B. Stuart IV, wrote in a letter to Trust members that his namesake always connected the struggle with the land the Trust and its partners are working to save, calling it “the Battle of Fleetwood Heights” in official reports and correspondence. He calls Fleetwood Hill “the most important remaining unprotected land at Brandy Station.”

The Civil War Trust has protected more than 1,800 acres at Brandy Station, and opened an interpretive trail of the battlefield in June 2003. Still, according to Lighthizer, despite these successes, “it was hard to feel satisfied as long as Fleetwood Hill remained unprotected. Development of this historic property would have diminished all that has been accomplished at Brandy up to now. Protection of Fleetwood Hill turns a success into a preservation triumph.”

The Civil War Trust is the largest nonprofit battlefield preservation organization in the United States. Its mission is to preserve our nation’s endangered Civil War battlefields and to promote appreciation of these hallowed grounds. To date, it has preserved more than 35,000 acres of battlefield land in 20 states, including nearly 18,400 in Virginia. Learn more at [www.civilwar.org](http://www.civilwar.org), the home of the Civil War sesquicentennial.

## Should Civil War re-enactments be abandoned?



(Donald Gilliland)

By Donald Gilliland | [dgilliland@pennlive.com](mailto:dgilliland@pennlive.com)

from *the Central PA Patriot News*

on July 06, 2013 at 7:30 AM, updated July 07, 2013 at 2:55 AM

### History and Re-enactment

Civil War commemorations and re-enactors are practically synonymous, but as the Gettysburg hoopla began last week, the Director of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College said very publicly the commemoration would be better without all the men in blue and gray pretending to be soldiers.

On June 29, the Wall Street Journal ran a story that said, “Peter Carmichael, a professor of history at Gettysburg College, calls re-enactments an ‘unfortunate distraction’ from a deeper understanding of the Civil War, including the motivations of those who fought and its legacy.”

Later that same night, Carmichael quoted himself to me at the media reception in Gettysburg sponsored by the college: “unfortunate distraction.”

Across town, in a field of canvas dog tents next to the Pennsylvania Monument, Tom Downes told me, “A lot of guys in this camp have probably done more research than a lot of academics - they just haven’t written a book: they wanted to know what kind of cartridge box was used in 1862 in Virginia.”

Downes, 63, has been re-enacting for 33 years. He’s the founder of the 8th Ohio re-enactment group and leader of the National Regiment, one of the two re-enactment organizations the National Park Service asked to do Living History demonstrations on the battlefield during the July 1-3 commemoration.

There’s a mutual simmering resentment between historians and re-enactors. It’s not a war or a battle - the hackneyed terms used for any controversy in Gettysburg - but it is a tension over who should tell the story of the war and how.

Call it the eggheads versus the interlopers.

Like any good American feud, it includes perceived differences in class, propriety, work ethic and honor.

The professional historians are clearly the establishment, and the re-enactors the literally unwashed masses.

But it’s not a black and white, blue and gray kind of spat. It gets complicated.

When I spoke with Carmichael, he was particularly interested, it seemed, after I mentioned that I was embedded with re-enactors camped on the battlefield and had participated in re-enactments during the preceding year in preparation for Gettysburg.

Carmichael told me he had once been a re-enactor himself.

I didn’t ask if he grew out of it or followed a 12-step program; his question to me - didn’t I find most of the re-enactors to be blue collar? - suggested other factors were at play.

I told him in my year of re-enacting the thing that has struck me most was the variety of people involved in the hobby: I have met architects, insurance adjusters, congressional staffers, delivery men, computer specialists, members of the military (both active and retired), professional artists, college librarians, retired coal miners, law clerks,

engineers, high school teachers, a state government cabinet secretary and the Policy Director for NASA.

I asked Downes. He told me that in the 8th Ohio, he has had "two multi-millionaires as members of the unit and five military officers in various branches. One today is a retired judge, and was an active judge when he joined. I've got truck drivers and loading dock supervisors. A rarity are teachers: I've got one. There are three PhDs in my company."

Two of the PhDs were there doing Living History: an economist and an historian.

The historian was Bradley Keefer, a tenured professor at Kent State, who said, "re-enactors are generally looked down on and not taken seriously" - except when it comes to battlefield preservation.

But Carmichael's condemnation was not universal: he told both the Wall Street Journal reporter and me that living history encampments, like the one Downes was leading on the battlefield, were preferable to re-enactments. "They do a good job," he said.

But better yet, the best thing people can do - "All you need to do," he said - is spend the day on the battlefield with a certified guide.

That's the hierarchy of respectability outside the lecture hall.

But the National Park Service invites re-enactors to the battlefield regularly to present Living History demonstrations; it's something of a badge of honor among re-enactment groups that they are "good enough" to be invited.

Re-enactors clearly have value of some sort. A Park Ranger told members of the National Regiment the 150th commemoration couldn't have been done without them.

After I participated in the National Regiment's appearance at the commemoration of Pickett's charge on Tuesday and as I was walking to my truck in full uniform with my musket, a gray-haired man came up to me and said "Thank You" in the earnest tone I've heard people use with active duty servicemen. It unsettled and embarrassed me because there's not even a remote equivalence. Perhaps - I hope - he didn't intend one. But the earnestness of that "Thank You" was more than the proof I needed that visitors to the battlefield like to see re-enactors.

And that's really the rub.

The spectator stands for the battle re-enactment that continues today and tomorrow came to Gettysburg straight from the U.S. Open. They're massive. They have to be. Roughly 40,000 people are expected to visit the re-enactment over its four-day schedule. That's as many people as visited the battlefield for the official commemoration of Pickett's charge on Tuesday.

From Carmichael's perspective, big battle re-enactments like this weekend's attract people who would be better served, he thinks, learning real history on the battlefield itself, spending the money they'd otherwise drop at the re-enactment on a licensed battlefield guide to be properly instructed in history.

I'm not sure the two are exclusive, but the historians sense there's a competition for people's time and minds.

If there were no re-enactments, people would have to go to the battlefield and do it the right way.



Tom Downes, right, has been re-enacting for 33 years and leads the National Regiment.

But even Downes is uneasy with at least one aspect of re-enactments: the media coverage which creates the image of re-enactors.

"The media always focuses on the yahoos and goons - the ones with crossed bandoleros and feathers in their hat," he said.

Or the many Robert E. Lees.

One doesn't join a re-enactment group and decide he's going to be a general. Those people - the impersonators - tend to operate alone, or soon find themselves alone.

Most serious re-enactors start as simple common soldiers, and many never do anything but.

Downes described his "meteoric 25 year rise" to the rank of colonel. "Our philosophy has always been: Are you a good private? That's what we judge you by."

It's not about glory and attention, but something much different.

Carmichael questions the propriety - when the country is in the midst of war - of turning war into "a spectator sport."

War as entertainment may be distasteful to many, but given the fact the "Call of Duty" video game - just one of many featuring explicit and realistic World War II shooting scenarios - sold 6 million units in one month after its release in 2009, Civil War re-enactment is a small drop in that bucket.

While battle re-enactments may be of limited value to the spectators, they are important to re-enactors and sustain the Living History demonstrations valued by the Park Service and its visitors.

Generally, those who are good enough to do Living History for the National Park Service got that way by going to lots of battle re-enactments.

One of the reasons Downes group was invited to do Living History is they are very good at Civil War military drill - how the groups of soldiers moved from point A to point B.

Downes likes drill; he learned it not only from books but from doing it with older re-enactors who had become really good at it. They practiced at re-enactments.

Downes said the experience of re-enacting colors and enlivens his reading of history and vice-versa. He has read letters and accounts written by men who served and sometimes could immediately relate to what they were describing, and at other times, he'd be on a re-enactment field and see something happen and realize that's what he'd read about.

Re-enactors generally have a deep interest in the history of the Civil War, read extensively about it, often do original research and enjoy re-enacting because it helps them better understand the reality of the common soldier.

Re-enactors don't pretend to be professional historians, and don't try to compete with them, but they do bridle at the condescension they sometimes receive from the Ivory Tower. Some of the professional historians, they suspect, wouldn't know Left Wheel from Shoulder-Arms.

In my experience, most enjoy sharing what they know with others, and they don't hesitate to acknowledge when they don't know.

And part of their appeal to the public, I think, is the fact they aren't professors and are both more accessible and approachable.

Downes said he believes there are three dimensions to popular history: reading a book, going to battlefields and museums; and re-enacting.

"What brings history into third dimension is re-enacting," he said: "wear the clothes, eat the food, experience the conditions."

I've experienced the conditions, and they are anything but comfortable. I've nearly frozen at Antietam in mid-September, laying on the cold, hard ground under the stars in nothing but my uniform and a wool blanket. I've marched in uncomfortable shoes until my feet were numb. I've mucked about through mud the color and consistency of pig excrement at Shiloh. I've drunk bad coffee, eaten hardtack and gone hungry.

As I lay in my tent on the battlefield at Gettysburg earlier this week, damp and back aching, I wondered why these men do it. Really.

I watched several of them crawl from their tents at Chancellorsville, gripping their backs and groaning in pain. I saw a guy whack his hand with an axe, and come back from the hospital and continue re-enacting with a bandaged hand. I saw a man who has to sleep with an air pump and mask for his sleep apnea bring it to camp camouflaged in a period-appropriate wooden ammunition crate.

And they aren't crazy, most of them.

Ask them why they do it, and most say it's for the fun.

Even Downes says, "I take the hobby seriously, but not too seriously."

There is a campfire camaraderie among men - and women - who share a deep interest in history, a sometimes silly hobby and an agreement not to discuss politics or religion. They share war stories - both real and re-enacted.

And yet they suffer doing it.

And that suffering was perhaps the key, I thought, as I lay there in the tent.

It reminded me of the hermit saints of the middle ages who deprived themselves to step closer to and honor God.

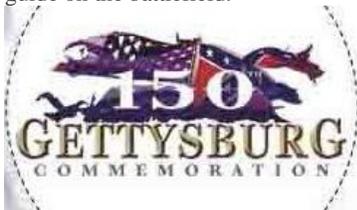
In some odd, unspoken way, it seemed like the re-enactors' suffering - though not religious - was an homage to the men who fought and died in the Civil War.

So I asked Downes if there was something to that or if I was just a nutter.

There's something to it, he agreed.

"It's the old boys we do this for, and it's the old boys who were here."

That kind of participatory history simply can't be found with a licensed guide on the battlefield.



Cape May County Civil War Round Table

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Statue of Admiral Farragut, Farragut Park, Washington, DC



**Washington Monument on Foggy Morning, 27 June 2013**



**Base of General Sherman's Statue, near the Ellipse, Washington, DC**



**General Sherman Statue – Near Ellipse, Washington, DC**



**The Willard Hotel, just off the Ellipse, Washington, DC**



General Sherman's Statue, near the Ellipse, Washington, DC



**Close-up of General Sherman's Statue**