

Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the American Civil War



**Cape May County Civil War Round Table
November 2011 Newsletter**

2011/2012 Meeting Schedule

17 November: *Civil War Medicine on the Home Front: the U.S. Sanitary Commission.* Pat Munson-Siter will be covering the efforts of those at home during the war to support the efforts of the Union soldiers, from sending care packages to the troops up to and including volunteering to help nurse the sick and wounded back to health.

Refreshments: Mike Houdart

?? December: Lou Bishop should have details as to our Christmas / End of the Year party at the November meeting. Expect it to cost about \$20 per person and be held at the Anglesea Pub in North Wildwood.

No Meetings in January or February 2012

The following are tentative dates, as the day we hold meetings on may change next year.

15 March: Refreshments: Mary Ann Donlin has donated money for refreshments in March, in honor of Clark Donlin, one of the founders of our group and researcher into the life of Col. Henry Sawyer, Cape May Civil War Hero.

REMINDER:

**Dues for 2012 are DUE!!! \$20 individual
\$25 Family**



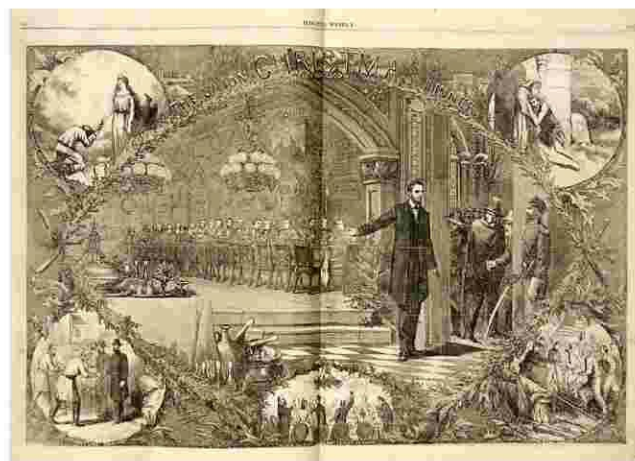
CMCCWRT Officers for 2010-2011

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**Minutes of the Business Meeting of the
Cape May County Civil War Round Table
20 October 2011**

John Burke, Acting President, brought the meeting to order. We saluted the flag and held a moment of silence for those in service to our country.

Jim Marshall, Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's report. Motion made, seconded and passed to accept the report and file for audit.

OLD BUSINESS

We are still looking into finding a new location for our meetings in the future. It currently costs the Round Table approximately \$600 a year to use the Senior Center – half as rent to the Senior Center, half to pay for liability insurance. The price is probably going to rise in the future. Hank Heacock has looked at several places so far. He talked to the Cape May County Main Library in Court House. The library does not charge any rent, nor do they require insurance. There is a fair amount of parking available, and we can bring in food. There is a large meeting room in the basement that will handle up to 30 people. However, it is unavailable on the 3rd Thursday of each month as it is already being used on that day by another group. Also, even if we are scheduled, we can be 'bumped' if the

library needs the room. We also have to be done by 8:45 pm as the library gets closed and locked up at 9 pm. We would need to set up a schedule with the library, and they will include our meeting in their schedule. Upper Township Library also has a meeting room available. We can leave later, there is lots of parking. We can't meet there on Thursdays, someone will have to pick up the key on the meeting day and return it the next day. It's in Petersburg on Tuckahoe Road.

Decision made to form a committee. Hank Heacock will head it, with Jim Underwood and Marty Runwer as committee members. Please contact Hank if you have any suggestions as to places we might be able to meet. His address is 105 S. Dennis Rd. in Cape May Court House, and his phone # is 609-465-4309. Insurance payment is due for 2012 in November, rent to the Senior Center due in January. We don't have any meetings in January or February, which will give us a bit more time to come up with a new meeting place.

Lou Bishop is making arrangements for our December Christmas / End of the Year dinner. We will be having it at the Anglesea Pub again, and will probably cost about \$20 per person for a buffet dinner. He is trying to get a date in the first or second week in December (hopefully the 1st or 8th) so the meeting won't interfere with the holiday plans of members. More information should be available at the November meeting.

David Check, chairman of the Nomination Committee, reported that all current officers have agreed to continue to serve next year. So far no one else has volunteered to become an officer. Final call for nominations will be in the November meeting. If no other nominations are made, the slate will be approved by acclamation and no vote will need to be made.

NEW BUSINESS

Lou Bishop was in the Shenandoah Valley for some Civil War re-enactments this summer. He said there is a very enthusiastic group of people there doing their best to save battlefields, put together historic trips for people, and so on. He distributed some of the material they have put together as part of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War commemoration that is currently underway in the country. Motion made by Hank Heacock for the Round Table to donate money to this effort. Mention made that helping with preservation efforts is one of the stated goals of our group, and we haven't donated to any preservation efforts yet this year. Motion amended to make the amount donated \$50. Motion seconded and passed.

Reminder that dues for 2012 are now due. There are no meetings in the first two months of 2012, so we'd like to see dues starting to be paid in the end of 2011 instead of everyone waiting until March, April or May to pay dues.

Thanks given to John and Judy for refreshments for this meeting.

Motion made to adjourn meeting. Seconded and passed. John Burke then led a discussion of how history might have gone if the South had won their independence from the Union.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Munson-Siter
Secretary, Cape May County Civil War Round Table

In Memory of: Loretta Hardin Thomas



Loretta at dedication of the Union Cemetery in Erma

My thanks to Howard Ruhl, who found this information and forwarded it to me. Loretta was a long-time member of the Cape May County Civil War Round Table, and for many years was our Secretary.

Loretta Hardin Thomas of Phoenixville Loretta Hardin Thomas, 81, of Phoenixville, passed away Tuesday, November 9, 2010, after an extended illness. She loved her children but went on to be with the Lord. Ms. Thomas was a longtime member of The First Baptist Church of Phoenixville. She was a member of the Phoenixville Historical Society and the Women's Club of Phoenixville. A driving passion was the Civil War Round Table and Ms. Thomas loved to be in re-enactments. She was also a member of numerous other civic and local organizations; often holding official supporting roles. She was very patriotic and gave lectures about patriotic themes. Ms. Thomas designed a successful bridge tally pad that was sold internationally. Loretta also owned a specialized antique business. Her love of books led her into the world of exclusive first and second edition collections. She became a guest author for diverse national magazines on several subjects. Ms. Thomas taught both cake decorating and flower arranging. Her artistic flare spilled over into gardening beds of unique flowers throughout her life. She won many awards in arranging. Loretta loved her children. She was extremely proud of them all. She valued continuing education and was excited that all her children graduated from college. She also continued advancing her own education all her life. Her survivors include: Paul A. Thomas, III, and his partner, Marilyn Scholze, of San Francisco, Calif., Dr. John H. Thomas and his wife, Anita, of Bridgewater, N.J. and Robert F. Thomas, of Louisville, Ky., Marian K. Thomas of Chantilly, Va., Laura Paynter of Shannon, Ga. and Shoshana Klieman and her husband, Dick, of Jerusalem, Israel; ten grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren; three remaining sisters: Christine Hannaford of Americus, Ga., Katie Ruth Kuntarich and her husband, Louis, of Crown Point, Ind. and Patsy Ann Frisby and her

husband, Ray, of Ft. Casper, Wyo. She has numerous nieces and nephews. Her family is living all around the world. Relatives and friends are invited to attend her funeral service at 10 a.m. Monday, November 15, at the Campbell-Ennis-Klotzbach Funeral Home, Inc., 610 Main Street, Phoenixville, PA, 19460. Officiating will be the Rev. Brent D. Miller. Burial will follow in the Limerick Garden of Memories. Friends will be received from 9 to 10 a.m. at the funeral home. Memorial contributions may be made to the First Baptist Church of Phoenixville, 248 Church Street, Phoenixville, PA, 19460. Condolences may be offered online at www.PhoenixvilleFuneralHome.com.

Published in Daily Local News on November 12, 2010 (found at website www.legacy.com/obituaries/dailylcal/)



Civil War Calendar for December

1860

December 20 South Carolina secedes

1861

No major events

1862

December 11 Union army crosses Rappahannock River into Fredericksburg
13 Battle of Fredericksburg
31-Jan 2 Battle of Stone's River (Murfreesboro) (TN)

1863

No major events

1864

December 15-16 Battle of Nashville
21 Savannah occupied by Union troops



Civil War Related Events December 2011

- 2 **PA** Holiday wreath laying at the Soldiers National Cemetery in Gettysburg. Details: 717-337-1728 or www.sgtmac.org.
- 2-3 **VA** Candlelight Tour and Open House, a Confederate Christmas at Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters Museum in Winchester. 7-9 pm Friday, 1-5 pm Saturday. winchesterhistory.org or 540-662-6550.
- 3 **VA**  Living history open house, "Christmas 1861 on the Plantation," at the Grant's Headquarters unit of the Petersburg National Battlefield in Hopewell. 804-732-3531 extension 222 or www.nps.gov/pete.
- 3 **VA** Holiday Homes Tour in Salem. Civil War-era homes in downtown Salem. More info: www.salemmuseum.org.
- 3 **VA** Living history, "Christmas on the Farm," 19th-century Shenandoah Valley traditions at the New Market State Historical Park in New Market. 10 am-4 pm. Free with admission. www.vmi.edu/newmarket or 866-515-1864.
- 3 **MD** Memorial Illumination on the Antietam National Battlefield. Popular annual display of 23,000 candles representing battle casualties. Driving tour begins at 6 pm on Route 34 east of Sharpsburg. Free. Living history 11 am-5 pm at the Pry House Field Hospital. Note: Visitor center and several park roads close at 3 pm. www.nps.gov/anti. (Rain, high-wind date Dec 10).
- 3 **PA** "An Evening with the Painting," a special program at the Gettysburg Cyclorama. 6-7:30 pm. \$30. www.gettysburgfoundation.org.
- 3-4 **VA** Living history, "Antebellum Santa Claus" visit at the Hillsman House on the Sailor's Creek Battlefield State Historical Park near Amelia. 10 am-4 pm Saturday, 1-4 pm Sunday. Details, directions: 804-561-7510.
- 3-4 **VA** Antebellum Christmas Open House at Mulberry Hill on the Staunton River Bridge Battlefield State Park near Randolph. 1-4 pm each day. \$5. 434-454-4312 or www.stauntonriverbattlefield.org.
- 4 **VA** Living history, "Christmas in Camp," holiday customs at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax.

- Noon-4 pm. Free. 703-591-0560.
- 7 **DC** Lecture, "Inside Civil War Washington," Smithsonian event at the S. Dillon Ripley Center, 1100 Jefferson Drive SW. Noon. \$25. www.residentassociates.org (click on lectures & seminars).
- 7 **VA** Gallery Walk, "The Civil War in Virginia: Did the War End at Appomattox?" at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. Noon. \$6/adult. www.vahistorical.org.
- 8 **MD** Lecture, "The Battle of Fredericksburg," at Carroll Community College in Westminster. 6:30 pm. \$35. More info, register: (click on Personal Enrichment, then History, Culture) or 410-386-8100.
- 8 **VA** Lecture, "Virginia's Confederate Monuments," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. Noon. \$6. www.vahistorical.org or 804-358-4901.
- 8-9 **VA** "St. Nick and Endview," an 1861 Christmas at Endview Plantation in Newport News. Annual Toys for Tots program. 5-7 pm. \$3. 757-887-1862 or www.endview.org.
- 9 **VA** "Victorian Christmas Traditions," with lecture and special tour of the White House of the Confederacy, at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. \$5. Noon. www.moc.org.
- 10 **MD** Open House, "Museums by Candlelight" in Frederick. Includes the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. Galleries free 2-7 pm. www.civilwarmed.org.
- 10 **VA** Living history, "Christmas in Camp," camps, demonstrations, decorations and Civil War Santa at Fort Ward in Alexandria. Noon-4 pm. \$2/donation. www.fortward.org or 703-746-4848.
- 10-11 **VA** Candlelight tour, Civil War-oriented tours of historic Alexandria museums (downtown). 6-9 pm Saturday, 3-6 pm Sunday. \$20/adult. Tickets: 703-746-4242.
- 10-11 **VA** Anniversary activities, Battle of Fredericksburg, special tours and ceremony at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (near main visitor center). Free. www.nps.gov/frsp.
- 10-11 **VA** Reenactment, "Christmas in the Field," at Heritage Park, 21311 Courthouse Highway, Windsor. Camps, demonstrations and battles each day. 10 am-4 pm. \$5. 757-357-0115.
- 10-11 **VA** Living history, "Civil War Santa Visits Ben Lomond," at the Ben Lomond Historic Site, 10321 Sudley Manor Road, Manassas. 11 am-4 pm. \$5. 703-367-7872.
- 11 **VA** Tour, "Slave Holidays," at the Ben Lomond Historic Site, 10321 Sudley Manor Drive, Manassas. 11 am-3 pm. \$7. 703-367-7872.
- 11 **VA** Open house, "Court End Christmas," free admission to most Richmond museums and landmarks during holiday event. Noon-5 pm. www.moc.org or 804-649-1861.
- 14 **VA** "Civil War Conversation: Christmas Traditions" at Baine's Books and Coffee, 205 Main St, Appomattox.

- 12:15 pm. Free. 804-649-1861 or www.moc.org.
- 14 **VA** "Victorian Christmas Traditions," with lecture and special tour of the White House of the Confederacy, at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. \$5. 2 pm. www.moc.org.
- 16 **VA** ★ 150 Talk, "Jackson's Dam Trip," Stonewall Jackson's little campaign to Williamsport, at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. Noon. Free. www.moc.org.
- 17 **MD** Living history, "The Legend of Civil War Santa," at the Surratt House Museum in Clinton. Noon-4 pm. Free with admission. www.surratt.org.
- 17 **VA** Living history, "Civil War Christmas at Brentsville," at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre, 12229 Bristow Road, Bristow. Camps, music and refreshments. 3-9 pm. \$5. 703-365-7895.
- 17-18 **VA** "A Civil War Christmas at Leesylvania State Park," in Woodbridge. Decorating, Santa Claus, refreshments. 11 am-3 pm. \$5 parking fee. 703-730-8205.
- 31 **PA** "General Meade Birthday Celebration," annual living history event at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia. Noon. Free. www.thelaurelhillcemetery.org.



Dispelling the myth of Robert E. Lee

By [Richard Cohen](#). Published: April 25, 2011
In the Washington Post

It has taken a while, but it's about time Robert E. Lee lost the [Civil War](#). The South, of course, was defeated on the battlefield in 1865, yet the Lee legend — swaddled in myth, kitsch and racism — has

endured even past the civil rights era when it became both urgent and right to finally tell the “Lost Cause” to get lost. Now it should be Lee’s turn. He was loyal to slavery and disloyal to his country — not worthy, even he might now admit, of the honors accorded him.

I confess to always being puzzled by the cult of Lee. Whatever his personal or military virtues, he offered himself and his sword to the cause of slavery. He owned slaves himself and fought tenaciously in the courts to keep them. He commanded a vast army that, had it won, would have secured the independence of a nation dedicated to the proposition that white people could own black people and sell them off, husband from wife, child from parent, as the owner saw fit. Such a man cannot be admired.

But he is. All over the South, particularly in his native Virginia, the cult of Lee is manifested in streets, highways and schools named for him. When I first moved to the Washington area, I used to marvel at these homages to the man. What was being honored? Slavery? Treason? Or maybe, for this is how I perceive him, no sense of humor? (Often, that is mistaken for wisdom.) I also wondered what a black person was supposed to think or, maybe more to the point, feel. Chagrin or rage would be perfectly appropriate.

Still, even I was not immune to the cult of Lee. I kept thinking I must be missing something. I imagined all sorts of virtues in his face. He is always dignified in all those photos of him, dour, a perfect pill of a man yet somehow adored by his men. They cheered him when he left [Appomattox Court House](#), having just surrendered to the far more admirable U.S. Grant. They shouted, Hooray for Lee! Hooray for what?

Now comes Elizabeth Brown Pryor, author of [“Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters”](#) who in an [essay for the New York Times](#) gives us a Lee who is at odds with the one of gauzy myth. He was not, as I once thought, the creature of crushing social and political pressure who had little choice but to pick his state over his country. In fact, various members of his own family stuck with the Union.

“When Lee consulted his brothers, sister and local clergymen, he found that most leaned toward the Union,” Pryor wrote. “At a grim dinner with two close cousins, Lee was told that they also intended to uphold their military oaths. ... Sister Anne Lee Marshall unhesitatingly chose the Northern side, and her son outfitted himself in blue uniform.” Pryor says that about 40 percent of Virginia officers “would remain with the Union forces.”

After the war, the South embraced a mythology of victimhood. An important feature was the assertion that the war had been not about slavery at all but about state’s rights. The secessionists themselves were not so shy. In their various declarations, they announced they were leaving the Union to preserve slavery. Lee not only accepted the Lost Cause myth, he propagated it and came to embody it.

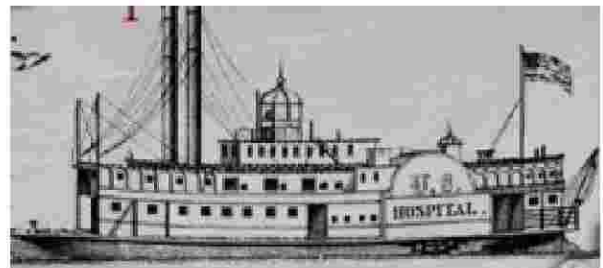
Lee was a brilliant field marshal whose genius was widely acknowledged — Lincoln wanted him to command the Union forces. In a way, that’s a pity. A commander of more modest talents might have been beaten sooner, might not have taken the war to the North (Gettysburg) and expended so many lives. Lee, in this regard, is an American Rommel, the German general who fought brilliantly, but for Hitler. Almost until Hitler compelled his suicide, Rommel, too, did his duty.

L.P. Hartley’s observation that “the past is a foreign country” cautions us all against facile judgments. But in that exotic place called the antebellum South, there were plenty of people who recognized the evil of slavery or, if nothing else, the folly of secession. Lee was not one of them. He deserves no honor — no college, no highway, no high school. In the awful war (620,000 dead) that began 150 years ago this month, he fought on the wrong side for the wrong cause. It’s time for Virginia and the South to honor the ones who were right.

cohenr@washpost.com

Georgeanna Woolsey : A Day in the Life of a Northern Nurse

From the Civil War Trust Website



Sunday, the first day [on the ship]...sewing upon a hospital flag... It is to be run up at once in case we encounter the Merrimac.” ~Georgeanna Woolsey

Georgeanna Woolsey was a young unmarried woman when the Civil War began. Shortly after the start of the war, the Woman’s Central Relief Association (a part of the U.S. Sanitary Commission) organized a volunteer nursing staff for the United States Army. In May 1861 she was one of one hundred women selected to become a volunteer nurse. With no prior medical training, she was sent to New York for, what she called in her diary, *a month’s seasoning in painful sights and sounds*.

We took off our bonnets and went to work. Such a month as we had of it, walking round from room to room, learning what we could—really learning something in the end, till finally, what with writing down everything we saw, and making elaborate sketches of all kinds of bandages and the ways of applying them, and what with bandaging everybody we met for practice, we at last made our ‘reverses’ without a wrinkle; and at the end of the month were competent to any very small emergency, or very simple fracture.



Dorothea L. Dix (Library of Congress)

She was assigned to Washington D.C. in July 1861 where, *she wrote, Miss [Dorothea] Dix received us kindly and gave us a good deal of information about the hospitals, and this morning we went to the Georgetown Hospital to see for ourselves. We were delighted with all the arrangements. Everything was clean and comfortable. We shall go again and take papers and magazines.*

Her pleasant early experiences were misleading, however. Later, looking back on her nursing career, she remarked, *No one knows who did not watch the thing from the beginning, how much opposition, how much ill-will, how much unfeeling want of thought, these women nurses endured. Hardly a surgeon whom I can think of received or treated them with even common courtesy. Government had decided that women should be employed, and the Army surgeons—unable, therefore to close the hospitals against them—determined to make their lives so unbearable that they should be forced in self-defense to leave.*

She did not leave. As fighting became more intense, a makeshift hospital was set up in the Washington, D.C. patent office (now the National Portrait Gallery) where she continued to work as a nurse. She described her experiences:



Patients in Ward K of Armory Square Hospital in Washington, DC (Library of Congress)

On the stacks of marble slabs...we spread mattresses, and put the sickest men. As the number increased, camp beds were set up between the glass cases in the outer room and we alternated—typhoid fever, cogwheels and patent churns, typhoid fever, balloons and mouse traps...Here for weeks, went on a sort of hospital pic-nic. We scrambled through with what we had to do...Here for weeks we worked among these men, cooking for them, feeding them, washing them, sliding them along on their tables, while we climbed up on something and made up their beds with brooms, putting the same powders down their throats with the same spoon, all up and down what seemed half a mile of uneven floor; coaxing back to life some of the most unpromising—watching the youngest and best die.

Georgeanna Woolsey lived with her married sister Eliza Woolsey Howland in Washington, D.C. while Eliza's husband, Joseph Howland, was serving in the Union Army of the Potomac. When the Army of the Potomac was ordered to leave the capital, Georgeanna and Eliza wanted to travel with it. They tried several times to get permission but were unsuccessful until the Sanitary Commission gave them positions on the hospital ship Daniel Webster. They sailed after the army in April 1862. She wrote, *Sunday, the first day [on the ship] was gone. As for*

us, we had spent it sitting on deck, sewing upon a hospital flag fifteen by eight, and singing hymns to take the edge off this secular occupation. It is to be run up at once in case we encounter the Merrimac.



Nurses and officers of the U.S. Sanitary Commission in Fredericksburg, Virginia. (Library of Congress)

Georgeanna's letters after 1862 were lost to a fire, but it is easy to see how the war had affected her over the course of one year. In May 1862, she wrote, *We are changed by all this contact with terror, else how could I deliberately turn my lantern on his [a wounded soldier's] face and say to the Doctor behind me, "Is that man dead?" and stand coolly, while he listened and examined and pronounced him dead. I could not have quietly said, a year ago, "That will make one more bed, Doctor."*

—Source *Letters of a Family During the War 1861-65, Privately published in 1899 by Georgeanna Woolsey Bacon and Eliza Woolsey Howland.*

Why They Fight: Civil War Re-enactors and the Battle over Historic Sites



Gregg Segal for TIME = **Locust Grove, Va.**

Confederate re-enactors pose at the Germanna Heights apartments. General Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee clashed for the first time in central Virginia on May 4, 1864, leaving nearly 100,000 casualties over the following 50 days.

To create these pictures, photographer Gregg Segal collaborated with Civil War re-enactors to construct scenes at historic battle sites that have been compromised by modern development.

"The past is never dead," wrote William Faulkner of Oxford, Mississippi. "It's not even past." In Europe, they know this. Modern apartment buildings in Rome are built on Renaissance foundations that in turn contain bits of ruins that are thousands of years old. In Germany it's not unusual for a work site to shut down suddenly, or for a neighborhood to be evacuated, after the discovery of an unexploded bomb from World War II.

Americans, though, have always focused more on making the history of tomorrow, rather than remembering the history of long ago. And so, 150 years after the Civil War, many of the fields on which soldiers bled and died are nearly forgotten, buried beneath parking lots and subdivisions and interstate highways. Yet, at the same time, the wounds of that terrible war have never fully gone away. They live on in the mental terrain even as they are wiped from the physical landscape.

Photographer Gregg Segal decided in 2009 to try to bring the ghosts of the war back to the places they once inhabited so fearsomely. Working with the renowned re-enactor Robert Hodge and his colleagues, Segal identified battlefields from Gettysburg to Nashville, Cedar Creek to Atlanta. Places where the mundane humdrum of today covers ground that was once, to borrow a phrase from historian Stephen W. Sears, "landscape turned red."

"State of the Union is a juxtaposition of two contrastive eras," Segal says of the finished project, "an idealized Civil War embodied by period re-enactors vs. the commercialism of contemporary life."

"I wanted locations where actual Civil War battles had taken place — and that were now part of the commercial world," Segal continues. "Rob was very familiar with just such locations as he's been fighting for years to preserve battlefield land from development."

The images, which are first of all very inviting with their bold color and dramatic lighting, pack a complex wallop. At first they are funny — proving the theory that humor arises from the unexpected collision of jarring frames of reference. But deeper lies a strong poignancy. These ancestors are all around us, if only we could see them. And what do they think of us, and of what we've done with the world they passed along?

These pictures ask us to remember that it happened right here — right where our car slowly drips transmission fluid onto the vast parking lot outside Staples, or where we stand and drink a beer with the neighbors while steaks sizzle on the shiny new gas grill and kids thumb their new Xbox controllers in the basement. And they tell us it could never happen again. We're too busy shopping.

Text by David Von Drehle

Read more: <http://lightbox.time.com/2011/04/12/why-they-fight-civil-war-re-enactors-and-the-battle-over-historic-sites/#ixzz1d7zrQhHT>

VIENNA, Va., April 4, 2011 — Turbo Tax got you down? Your CPA saying, "Better luck next year?" Thought you'd get a refund but it's the opposite? Who's to blame?

The Civil War.

That's right. Before the Civil War with its attendant large debts, the American people had no Federal income tax. Instead taxes were levied by the individual states (sort of a state's right) and that was it.



Harper's Bazaar (1864)

Then came four years of war, loss of lives, thousands of injuries, and resulting expensive devastation.

Back in 1861 when the war began, President Abraham Lincoln foresaw problems in raising money to finance the war effort; at that time the only Federal income was through customs duties. It was then that Congress got into the act by passing the Civil War Revenue Act of August 5, 1861, which became the nation's first income tax.

That didn't continue as long as originally designed, and on July 1, 1862, Lincoln signed the Revenue Act, creating the position of Commissioner of Revenue, and including a whole variety of new taxes to be imposed on the people, thus taking the important step of finding a way to obtain ongoing funds to run the country.

Obviously someone had to administer this new program and Lincoln created the Bureau of Internal Revenue, appointing a man named George A. Boutwell of Massachusetts to be the first Commissioner, assisted by three clerks. Some six months later, it should surprise no one that the number of employees had increased to 4,000, with the majority working in the field across the country, enforcing the new laws on prosecution of those who failed to pay, and seizure of their assets as well.

By 2009, 147 years after Lincoln signed the Revenue Act, the total number of employees has exponentially increased to 140,000! Lincoln made a wise choice in appointing Boutwell as Commissioner; he had been an attendee at the Washington D.C. Peace Conference of 1861 during which those present tried to find an amicable solution to the impending civil war. This obviously had little success and Boutwell changed parties to the Republican Party where he served on the military commission in the War Department, putting him easily in line as Lincoln's first Commissioner of Revenue. At that time, it was stipulated that the income tax would last for only ten years, and rates fluctuated between 3% and 7.5%, which would finance the country's post-war expenses.

In January of 1863, the U.S. had estimated the cost of the Civil War at \$2.5 million a day. At the end of the War, the total estimated cost was \$6,190,000,000; by 1906 still more had been expended for the Union veterans' illnesses, hospitalization and other expenses, totaling another \$3.3 billion dollars.

The losses suffered by the Confederacy were estimated at \$2,099,808,707 for their four years of conflict in a losing battle. All expenses for Southern soldiers were borne by the individual states – the north felt no obligation to help out their former enemy, even if he lived across the street.

Congress and the President allowed the income tax to lapse in 1872 after its ten-year period, though the position of Commissioner has continued ever since. The country faced a tremendous outgrowth following the war in the form of greater industrialization, rebuilding of roads and railroads, physically reconnecting the once divided country as well as improving its infrastructure.

In 1884, the costs of rebuilding had reached an untenable level, and Congress reinstituted the income tax. Again it was not to achieve permanency. A lawsuit, entitled *Pollock vs. Farmers' Loan & Trust Company*, led to the Supreme Court's 1895 ruling that the tax was unconstitutional.

Interestingly, the initial support for the tax came from the Southern and Western states, while the citizenry lining up to oppose it were from Northern states such as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey. Those states numbered the wealthiest citizens in their populations and those who could best afford the tax were also most vocal against it.

Cape May County Civil War Round Table

www.cmccwrt.com



From that point until today, the income tax as we know it has gone uphill and down, but we have never again been rid of it, and April 15 of each year remains a quasi "day of infamy" to most of the taxpaying public.

Along with other "firsts" that emanated during the civil war, such as hospital ships, the first machine gun, the first submarine and the like, we can add the income tax that continues to this day, courtesy of a war-weary Congress, and President Lincoln.

To end on a light note, it was the inimitable Will Rogers who said, "The difference between death and taxes is death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets."

Follow the blog on Face Book at Martha Boltz; my email is MBoltz2846@aol.com Read more of Martha's columns on [The Civil War](#) at the Communities at the Washington Times.

