

Banner

of the **Blue and Gray**

Newsletter of the Frederick County Civil War Roundtable
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203rd Meeting

April 2011

Vol. 37 Issue 8

National Coordinator for NPS CW150: Monocacy's own Cathy Beeler



When Cathy Beeler began her career as an interpretive ranger for the National Park Service (NPS) 24 years ago, she had never traveled much beyond her hometown of Sharpsburg, or even flown in an airplane. Since then, she has traveled throughout the United States on behalf of the NPS and is now National Coordinator for CW150, the 5-year-long National Park Service commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

Cathy has a vivid memory of crawling through a cornfield near Antietam when she was about seven to catch a glimpse of the Civil War Centennial reenactment in 1961. "Now, 50 years later, here I am helping to coordinate the Sesquicentennial," she said.

The road to her national position began when Cathy was considering a full-time career after years as a stay-at-home wife, mother and occasional substitute teacher. With her education degree from Shepherd University (WV) in hand, she was applying for teaching positions when someone suggested the Park Service. Cathy had loved working as a seasonal park ranger during her college years, but never considered the Park Service for a full-time career.

A good toss of the coin

"I took a risk, a coin toss, and was surprised when they wanted to hire me. That took my life down a completely different road — a road I never dreamed existed. This has been the best opportunity for me. I always tell people to never be afraid to take a risk."

In 1991, Cathy arrived as the first — and only — full-time interpretive ranger at the newly opened Monocacy National Battlefield. "When I came here," she said, "there were no exhibits, no trails, no brochures — nothing. I learned by doing. I chose to grow as a supervisor because I thought it would give me new skills and professional opportunities." she said. "Again, it was a good coin toss."

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April Meeting

Thursday, April 21, 2011

7:30 pm

at the

National Museum of Civil War Medicine

**48 East Patrick Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701**

Speaker: Jim Dunbar

**Subject: *Civil War Prison Camp
at Point Lookout, MD***

Our Speaker

Jim Dunbar, life member and one of the leaders of the Descendants of Point Lookout, will discuss the Union prison camp, the evolution of the Confederate Memorial Park at the site, and issues with the Veterans Administration. Ancestors of the group's members were among the 52,300 Confederate soldiers imprisoned in one of the Civil War's largest and most infamous camps.

Although Maryland sits south of the Mason-Dixon line, the state voted to stay with the Union — during the historic Kemp Hall legislative session held in Frederick in April 1861. But Confederate sentiment ran high in the southern portion of the state, which remained loyal to the South, at least in spirit.

The camp was located at the tip of St. Mary's County in Southern Maryland, on a sandy spit of land between the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. The land was



leased to the government in 1862, and a large Union hospital was constructed at the southern end of the peninsula. As the need to house prisoners grew, the Point Lookout Camp was established in August 1863.

Located a half-mile from the Union hospital, the camp was enclosed with a 15-foot-high fence and a rail around the top for the prison guards. Although the prison capacity was 10,000, generally 12,000 to 20,000 military and civilian prisoners were captive at any given time. At War's end in April 1865, 22,000 prisoners were still being held in the camp.

Point Lookout Prison Camp became the largest Union prison, primarily because it was closest to the fighting.



Prisoners endured squalid and overcrowded conditions, including polluted water and little food. Thousands died of starvation and disease.

Jim Dunbar, a Navy veteran who is retired from the Maryland Department of the Environment, is Chairman of the Confederate Memorial Park at Camp Hoffman, the formal name of the Point Lookout Prison Camp. The memorial park was dedicated in 2008.

Active in Confederate and veterans organizations, Jim is 1st Lt. Cmdr. of the Maryland Division-Sons of Confederate Veterans, and a development committee member of the Maryland Veterans Museum. Jim is also a member of the SVC Maryland Color Guard, and 1st Lt. Cmdr. and Adjutant of Pvt. Wallace Bowling Camp 1400-Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Because the Descendants of Point Lookout have been excluded from participating in events at the cemetery for Confederate veterans that adjoins Point Lookout Park, Jim and his group have worked over the years to erect their own memorial — a stone obelisk with a statue. The monument is ringed with flags of the Confederate states.

Jim and his wife, Connie, live in La Plata in Southern Maryland.

Last month . . .



At last month's meeting, entomologist Gary Miller enlightened us about the deadly effects of the hordes of insects that plagued the soldiers and infested the camps during the War.

Next Month's Speaker

At our next meeting, Thurs., May 19, at 7:30 pm, at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Dr. Craig Symonds, Professor Emeritus, U.S. Naval Academy, will discuss Civil War Naval Engagements.

The Prez Sez



Members, I hope you all caught our longtime member, Frank Parsons, portraying Chief Justice Roger B. Taney in the reenactment of Lincoln's 1861 inauguration at the 150th Anniversary commemoration at the Congressional Auditorium in Washington, DC, last month on CPSAN3. Go, Frank!

A warm thank-you goes to our March speaker, Gary Miller. Never were bugs so interesting! Gary generously donated his lecture fee to our cause.

Also, in case you haven't heard, the Civil War Preservation Trust (to which our Roundtable has been donating for many years now) has modernized its name and logo. It is now simply Civil War Trust with a new logo showing one soldier from each army holding one of his respective flags. Civil War Trust's mission and management have remained the same, as have their 55,000 members who believe in their goals. For more information about this change, visit www.civilwar.org/logo.

To date, the Trust has preserved over 30,000 acres of hallowed ground in 20 States. Civil War Trust promises to continue to doggedly fight for our goal of preserving the Nation's irreplaceable Civil War battlefields.

Donnie

Cathy Beeler (continued from Page 1)

Cathy sees her primary mission as working to find the most efficient ways to use the resources of the seven NPS park regions. "I look at other agencies that are doing similar things and have resources we can combine," she said. "If parks in the Northeast and Southeast regions are both working on a brochure on African Americans in the Civil War, it makes no sense to spend regional funds on the same project. Let's pool that money and develop one brochure everybody can use."

Another key objective is to establish collaborative partnerships. For example, Cathy notes, "The American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association is interested in working with us, because so many Native Americans fought in the Civil War and we don't hear about them."

New NPS Handbook

Cathy also helped coordinate publication of the new NPS handbook, *The Civil War Remembered*, a major initiative of CW150. "We worked with Eastern National Association, which operates a large number of national park bookstores and is

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Cathy Beeler (continued from Page 2)

our largest cooperating association. Leading scholars from across the nation, including James McPherson, Ira Berlin, Ed Ayers and Nina Silber, donated articles for this publication. This is not a guide book," she noted. "It explores various aspects of the War and all



the different stories that surround it. We're letting the battlefields tell the battle stories. This is our opportunity to tell new stories that would bring new audiences to the Civil War battlefields and historic places." The handbook, entitled *The Civil War Remembered*, will debut at the weeklong Fort Sumter commemoration, April 9-17, and then be available in NPS bookstores and online.

The new handbook is just one of many ways in which the Park Service plans to honor the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Hundreds of commemorative programs and special events at the various parks, several national symposia, and a dozen large-scale events are planned. The large events scheduled for 2011 include four days of activities, July 21-24, at the Manassas National Battlefield Park, VA, marking the First Battle of Manassas, the first major land battle of the War. Events taking place in April include commemoration of the firing on Fort Sumter in South Carolina and a national symposium, "The Ordeal of the Border States," on April 15 in Baltimore. For further information, visit www.nps.gov/civilwar150, the new NPS website for the Sesquicentennial.

Cathy notes that one of toughest challenges facing the Park Service today is making the battlefields and historic sites special so people will want come in person. "We need to help everybody understand how different it feels actually standing in Devil's Den or at Appomatox than reading about it in a book or visiting the site online."

The best way for Roundtable members to support the NPS is to go to their local national parks and ask if they need help, she added.

the different stories that surround it. We're letting the battlefields tell the battle stories. This is our opportunity to tell new stories that would bring new audiences to the Civil War battlefields and historic places." The handbook, entitled *The Civil War*



Above, Cathy demonstrates weapons in the field. She is an expert in black powder weapons and was NPS regional historic weapons coordinator.

Cathy finds daily inspiration in a photograph on her computer screen. "It's very emotional for me," she said. The Civil War-era photo was recently discovered in a collection and shows a 5- or 6-year-old girl holding a picture of her father and mourning his death. "The look on her face is so haunting," she said. "My personal goal is to help everybody understand that look and feel it in their heart. I want people to recognize that we all have a responsibility to take the next step in achieving equality for all." That picture now appears on the back cover of the NPS handbook.

"I didn't take this job for the paycheck," she said, "and I think that's true for most people who work for the National Park Service. People do it because they want to make a difference. This is my opportunity to make a difference. I believe this is my fate — to be here at this time and place. It's a good feeling."

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Calendar of Events

April 9, Lecture, Frederick, MD, 11am-Noon

"Children of the Civil War lecture at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. For information: 301-695-1864, www.CivilWarMed.org.

April 12-13, Photo Exhibit, Washington, DC, 8:30am - 4:40pm

"The Last Full Measure: Civil War Photographs from the Liljenquist Family Collection," Library of Congress. Free. Nearly 400 photos of Union and Confederate soldiers. For information, visit: www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/633_lilj_measure.html.

April 15 – June 2015, Maryland Railroad Exhibit, Baltimore, MD

"The War Came by Train," Sesquicentennial exhibit at the B&O Railroad Museum. National Landmark Roadhouse exhibit of world's largest collection of Civil War railroad equipment and artifacts. The exhibit will change annually through June 2015. For further information: 410-752-2490, www.borail.org.

April 16, Lecture, Arlington, VA, 7-10pm

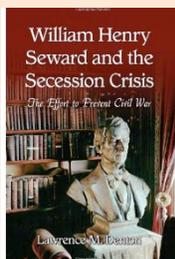
Lecture by award-winning historian Elizabeth Pryor, "The Secession of Virginia and Robert E. Lee's Great Decision," marking Lee's resignation from the Army in April 1861. New research will be revealed. At Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial. Reservations required. For information: 703-235-1530, www.nps.gov/arho.

(Continued next page, See **Calendar**)

Ramblings from the Raffle Table

Friends, the winner of March's Special Raffle drawing was John Machen. Congratulations to John.

This month's Special Raffle is a donation from Board Member Jeff Arey — a padded display box containing a collection of found Civil War artifacts.



To sweeten the pot, we've added a brand new book, *William Henry Seward and the Secession Crisis, The Effort to Prevent Civil War*, theorized and written by Lawrence M. Denton. Mr. Denton, who resides in Oxford, MD, spoke to our Roundtable last season. The combo Raffle price is \$3.00. Here again, in order to allow more of our members and friends to join in, this drawing will be held in May.

Our 3/\$1 Raffles are always "the deal of a lifetime!" Check out this month's selection. Come see me before the lecture. I'll be waiting for you!

Dottie

Calendar of Events (continued from Page 3)

April 16, Parade & Ceremony, Baltimore MD

Daylong event commemorating 150th anniversary of the Baltimore Riot. Parade, speakers, walking tour, music. Grand reopening of the President Street Station where troops arrived in 1861. For more information: www.baltimorecity.gov.

April 16-17, Living History, Baltimore, MD, Sat. 8am-5pm, Sun. 8am-3pm

Annual Civil War Encampment, Fort McHenry National Monument & Historic Shrine. Grand parade, flag ceremony both days. Cannon firing & candlelight tours on Saturday. Living history & concert on Sunday. For further information: www.nps.gov/fomc.

April 24, Lecture, Arlington, VA, 2 pm

"Southern Honor and Lincoln." Free lecture by acclaimed historian Peter Carmichael, part of the special programs series at Arlington House, commemorating the anniversary of Lee's resignation from the Army. Rare Lee artifacts will also be on display. For information: 703-235-1530, www.nps.gov/arho.

April 29-May 1, Anniversary Programs, Frederick, MD

"The Burning Question of Secession" — weekend-long event commemorating the Maryland Legislature's special session held in Frederick in April 1861. (See article this page.)

April 30-May 2, Museum Opening, Antietam, MD

Pry House Field Hospital Museum and Gen. McClellan's Headquarters at Antietam National Battlefield opens as a stop on the Washington County Historic Sites Ramble. Weekends through May and then daily. For information: 301-695-1864, www.civilwarmed.org.

MISSION

TO cultivate and preserve Frederick County's Civil War heritage and broaden the understanding of the Civil War Era and its impact on our nation.

TO explore the many facets of the Civil War from the battlefield to first-person narratives, including guest lectures by writers and historians.

TO support historical projects and activities aimed at increasing public interest and appreciation of our Civil War history, both locally and nationally.

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Frederick commemorates 1861 special session

"The Burning Question of Secession," a full slate of programs commemorating the April 1861 special session of the Maryland General Assembly at Kemp Hall, will be held Friday April 29 through Sunday May 1 in downtown Frederick's Historic District. The session was called to debate the hotly contested issue of whether the state would secede from the Union.

Activities will include tours, special exhibits, a showing of the 1961 film, "Highlights of the Civil War: Maryland Secession Legislature," and a 90-minute dramatic reading, "Meeting at Kemp Hall," featuring Frederick citizens' reaction to the tumultuous events of 1861. For more details on events and a full program guide, go to www.fredericktourism.org or call 301-660-4047.

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