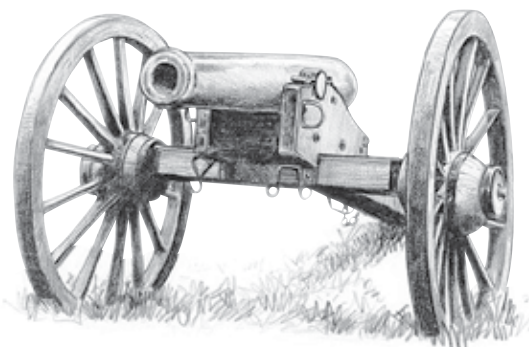


SAVE HISTORIC

June 2011



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Hello Friends!

It has been a busy time since I last wrote. We had a very successful Spring Work Day, see the separate note about that, we said a sad farewell to Supt. John Howard, and we have some exciting plans that came out of our March Board Meeting.

The Board hosted a dinner at South Mountain Inn to express our gratitude to Supt. John Howard for his 37 years of service in the National Park Service, the last 15 at Antietam. Under his administration the NPS acquired nearly 60% of the land inside the boundary, either by purchase, donation or under scenic easement. That is an incredible accomplishment, and he deserves our profound thanks for preserving this holy ground. One of the phrases he used for this battlefield, and applies to so many, is that Antietam battlefield is a cemetery without headstone. As the discovery of human remains near the Cornfield a couple years ago demonstrates, there may be bones of soldiers anywhere on the field. John also oversaw the continued restoration of the field, re-planting the North and East Woods, miles of new historic fencing, and the still continuing re-paving of the tour road. Because John may be reading this column, I won't go on about his many merits, but suffice it say, he will be missed! I should mention, however, that John's service has also been honored by Civil War Trust and the Washington County Commissioners. Our best wishes to you in your retirement John.

One of the ideas from our board meeting was to fund a walking trail branching off the Final Attack Trail that will lead up the hill across the Ninth Corps assault field. The purpose is to connect with the paved path leading to the seldom visited Hawkins' 9th New York Zouaves and the 8th Connecticut monuments. The view from that location is great, and the access to it will be improved with this trail. This new trail, along with the completion of the Piper Lane trail, will let walkers access the entire battlefield from North Woods to the last shots along Harpers Ferry Road.

Not only will SHAF, through your generous contributions, fund this new trail, Acting Sup't. Ed Wenschhof has agreed that he will allow SHAF to perform much of the work of cutting back the tree lines, and clearing the brush to create this trail. We plan to hold our Fall Work Day on Saturday October 29, and we'd love to have your help creating this new trail.

Last, but certainly not least, we have been working with the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association, Civil War Trust, and the Jefferson County Commissioners to purchase the 17 acres including the historic Boteler Cement Mill. If this purchase can be arranged the land may soon be included in the National Park Service. A study of the potential boundary and the historic aspects of the battle are under way by the Denver Service Center of the NPS. If a favorable judgment is reached, the land can be donated to the NPS and they will decide to add it to either Harpers Ferry or Antietam. It is possible that we will again be called on for financial help in this purchase, and you'll hear from us if that happens.

As always, we remain grateful for your support and good wishes, and we look forward to seeing you on the battlefield.

Tom Clemens
President, SHAF

NEW LOGO MERCHANDISE IS HERE!

Merchandise
(hats, shirts, etc)
featuring
our new logo are
available visit
www.shaf.org for
more information.

Our Mission

The mission of SHAF is the preservation and protection of historic sites within the Antietam valley that are related to the Battle of Antietam, the Maryland Campaign, or other Civil War activity in the region. We will accomplish our mission through public education, solicitation of funds, promotion of protective easements and advocacy.

SHAF was incorporated in 1986. It is chartered in Maryland as a non-profit corporation and is exempt from federal tax by Section 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible.

Help Restore the 50th Pennsylvania Monument at Antietam

by John D. Hoptak



Colonel Christ atop the 50th PA Antietam Monument, courtesy Barbara Shafer

After enduring a terrific artillery bombardment for nearly half an hour, the soldiers of Colonel Benjamin Christ's Ninth Corps brigade at last received orders to advance. It was 3:15 that Wednesday afternoon, September 17, 1862, and the Battle of Antietam had already been raging since daybreak. The fighting began that morning to the north, against the Confederate left flank, in desperate combat that swirled in and around farmer David Miller's twenty-four acre field of corn. It then shifted south, toward the center of the Confederate line, in waves of Federal assaults against the Sunken Road. But all this action having subsided by mid-afternoon, all attention now shifted to the southern part of the field, where Ambrose Burnside's Ninth Corps stood poised to strike Lee's critical right. At 3:15, the blue tide swept forward, its line of soldiers stretching for nearly one mile, flank-to-flank.

Christ's brigade, on the far right of the Ninth Corps line, led the advance, sweeping westward toward

Confederates positioned on the high ground where five years later the United States would establish a National Cemetery. Charles Brumm of the 50th Pennsylvania remembered that when the orders to advance arrived, Colonel Christ, "with more bravery than prudence," galloped along the length of the line bearing a flag aloft, and "called out in his stentorian voice, 'Attention Brigade; Forward!'" The three regiments on Christ's main line—the 28th Massachusetts, 50th Pennsylvania, and 17th Michigan—stepped off; out in front was a heavy skirmish line, the Highlanders of the 79th New York sparring with South Carolinians from Micah Jenkins' Brigade. Lieutenant Samuel Schwenk, the nineteen-year-old commander of Company A, 50th Pennsylvania, remembered that "every man marched up that hill amidst the whistling of bullets and howling shells, with unflinching bravery." The fighting became severe when the Federals approached to within a few hundred yards of the Confederate line. Christ's Federals traded volley for volley and



Veterans of 50th PA at unveiling of regimental monument at Antietam, courtesy of Barbara Shafer

shot for shot with Jenkins's South Carolinians and some of Garnett's Virginians for nearly forty-five minutes of sustained combat. By 4:00 p.m., the Confederate line was in full retreat. Christ now turned his attention toward a Confederate battery, directing the 17th Michigan to charge the now unsupported cannons. The Confederate gunners were able, however, to limber up and gallop away before being overrun. Now within 200 yards of cemetery hill, Christ halted his command, allowing his exhausted and bloodied soldiers to catch their breaths while awaiting a resupply of ammunition. The hope was to continue with the advance but at this same time, disaster struck the opposite end of Burnside's line. General A.P. Hill's Confederate division, after covering fifteen miles from Harpers Ferry, arrived in time to turn back the Ninth Corps' assault, striking its exposed left flank. One by one, Burnside's units were ordered to fall back, including Christ's brigade. The men, having fought so hard to gain their position, were dismayed with the orders but obeyed.

When night fell, Christ lost a total of 244 men. The 50th Pennsylvania, in the center of Christ's line, lost eight men killed, forty-six wounded, and three missing

near the Joseph Sherrick farmstead. Among the dead was sixteen-year-old Jeremiah Helms, a drummer in Company C who, during the heat of battle, set down his drum to pick up a musket and join his comrades on the front line. Struck in the back of the head, Helms lingered for a week before succumbing on September 24, one of the youngest soldiers to lose his life at Antietam.

On September 17, 1904, several dozen surviving veterans of the 50th Pennsylvania gathered at Antietam Battlefield to attend the dedication and witness the unveiling of their regimental monument, paying tribute to Helms and the others who there gave their lives forty-two years earlier. The aging veterans also paid tribute to the man who organized and first led the regiment, and who led their brigade at Antietam: Colonel Benjamin Christ, a slightly larger-than-life likeness of whom was now cast in bronze, standing atop the monument.

Benjamin Caspar Christ, whom division commander Orlando Willcox once dubbed "that brave old Roman," was born on September 12, 1822. He served as sheriff of Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, was active in the local county militia, and at the outbreak of war was a

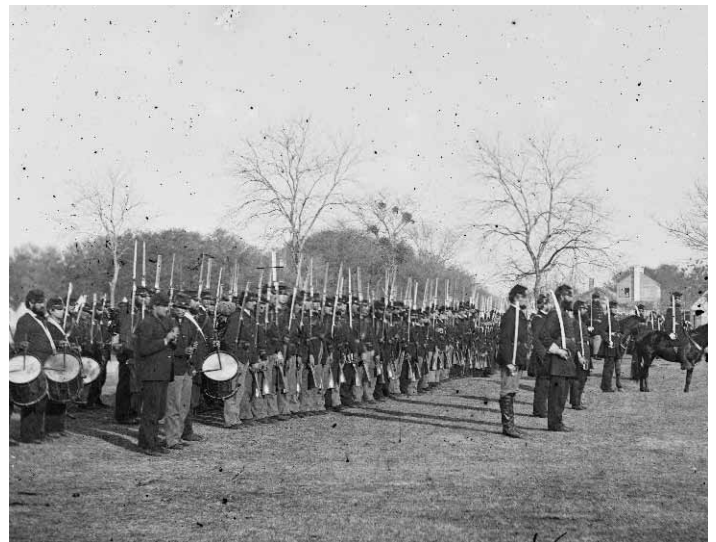
hotel proprietor in Minersville. With the April 15, 1861, call-to-arms, Christ volunteered, entering the three-month 5th Pennsylvania Volunteers as a private on April 20.

Such was his standing in the community, and such was his reputation, that just two days later, the 5th elected him their lieutenant-colonel. With the expiration of the 5th's term of service in late July, Christ was authorized by Pennsylvania governor Andrew Curtin to raise a regiment of infantry, to serve for three years, or the course of the war. Drawing recruits from seven counties—including two companies from Christ's native Schuylkill County—this regiment was designated the 50th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, entering service that fall of 1861. Christ commanded the regiment until the spring of 1862 when he was elevated to brigade command, a position he would hold for the next two and a half years, earning the praise of his superiors and the respect of all those who served under him. His brigade witnessed heavy combat at Antietam, during the siege of Vicksburg, Knoxville, and throughout the brutal battles of the Overland Campaign in the spring of 1864. Despite commanding a brigade during most of his time in union, Christ never advanced above the rank of colonel. On June 17, 1864, while leading his men at Petersburg, Christ fell with a severe wound, struck by a bullet in the back of his head. He would recover, but on September 30, perhaps because of the wound or maybe due to his lack of promotion, Christ tendered his resignation. He died less than five years later, on March 27, 1869, at the age of forty-six.

Christ's regiment served for the duration of the war, covering no less than 12,000 miles by foot, by rail, and by water. They saw action in six states—from the sandy beaches of South Carolina to the gently rolling plains of Virginia and Maryland, and from the mountains of eastern Tennessee to the marshy bayous of Mississippi—suffering a total fatality loss of nearly 400 men. On August 2, 1865, the war over, the 50th was mustered out of service. Samuel Schwenk, who had risen to the rank of brigadier general by brevet and held regimental command by war's end, penned General Orders No. 25, his farewell address. "Officers and soldiers of the Fiftieth Regiment: The great work is finished. By your gallantry in action and steadfast devotion in the service of your country, you have won a glorious victory, and honorable peace and an illustrious name," said Schwenk. He promised further that "Future ages will bless you as the defenders of American liberty; nations will honor and respect you, and posterity will praise your names for the invaluable heritage you have so well preserved."



Officers of 50th PA with John Burns, Gettysburg, PA, LOC



50th PA at Beaufort, SC, LOC



50th PA monument, Antietam

Now we have an opportunity to prove these words.

Although the veterans of the 50th Pennsylvania are long since gone, their monument remains; Colonel Christ still grasping his binoculars, as if caught in a moment of battle, maintaining a careful eye on his advancing line of battle while watching the movements of the enemy. Yet the monument is in need of some repair. When first unveiled, Christ's sheathed sword was complete with a handle, or hilt. Today that hilt is missing. Fortunately, there is an effort currently underway to replace it, one in which we can all chip in.

Lizzy Bianchi is a student at Honesdale High School in northeastern Pennsylvania. Last summer, she and her family toured the Antietam Battlefield with Licensed Guide Bill Sagle. At one point during the tour, Lizzy mentioned something about wanting to work in some area of battlefield preservation as part of her senior project. Bill directed her to me, and it just so happened that we had a project for her. As it turned out, just a few days earlier, my colleague, Ranger Brian Baracz, showed me photographs of the September 17, 1904, unveiling of the 50th Pennsylvania Monument. As Brian pointed out, it was clear there was a hilt on the sheathed sword. Colonel Christ and the 50th Pennsylvania are of particular interest to me, as he and two of the companies were native of Schuylkill County, my home area, in Pennsylvania. Having restored the 48th Pennsylvania Monument—another regiment recruited from Schuylkill County—the

previous summer, I endeavored to get the 50th Monument fixed as well, one or another. So when approached by Lizzy, I thought this a perfect project for her and she quickly hit the ground running.

Civil War historian and artist Mike Kraus, who did such superb work sculpting the sword for the General James Nagle statue last year, has agreed to sculpt the missing hilt for the Christ statue standing atop the 50th's monument. He has estimated that it will take \$3,000 to complete this project. Having already begun fundraising efforts in earnest, Lizzy, I am certain, will have little trouble in raising this amount.

You can contribute to Lizzy's noble effort by sending a donation in any amount. It is so very refreshing to see someone so young so dedicated not only to the study of history but also historic preservation. Reward her determination by donating today. Checks or money orders are to be written out to her, but please include "50th PA Monument Restoration" in the subject line. Please mail your donation to:

Lizzy Bianchi
32 Middle Creek Road
Lake Ariel, PA 18436

Your donation will help honor the memory of Colonel Benjamin Christ and the soldiers of the 50th Pennsylvania, and will confirm our commitment to battlefield preservation.

SHAF Workday—



SHAF Workday—



SHAF Profile: GEORGE F. FRANKS, III

This newsletter's profile focuses on George Franks, who currently resides in Hagerstown, Maryland. Born in Pittsburgh in 1956, George (at age six) moved with his family to Mount Lebanon, Pennsylvania, where he attended local public schools. When asked what stands out for him about his education, he responds: "From my earliest memories, I was always interested in the past. Perhaps it was from watching a lot of television—or perhaps the magazines filled with articles about the Civil War Centennial and World War II. I took drum lessons so I could be a drummer boy with a local Civil War unit that was part of the North-South Skirmish Association. Additionally, I attended art classes every Saturday from fifth grade through high school at Carnegie Institute and later at Carnegie-Mellon University. My favorite subjects were social studies (later AP History), English and, in elementary school, "library" period."

For a year after high school, George attended a junior college in Delaware on a scholarship offered by the Naval Academy Foundation. As a midshipman at the Naval Academy, which he attended for two years, he pursued a history major. Found non-physically qualified (NPQ) at the Academy because of defective color vision, he finished his undergraduate degree in history at the University of Pittsburgh, from which he graduated magna cum laude.

Over the course of his professional life, George has held management and senior management positions in operations, marketing, finance, and international channels with such telecommunications and technology concerns as AT&T, Lucent Technologies, and Avaya. (He points out, incidentally, that Avaya is a spin-off of Lucent Technologies, which itself was a spin-off of the old AT&T.) Finally, six years ago, he left Avaya and started Franks Consulting Group, a management consulting and leadership mentoring firm. At the same time, his interest in history also has drawn him into another business venture as George Franks, Hatter—the founder and proprietor of CockedHats.com; under this name, George makes and sells historical headgear to living historians (of which he is one), museums, and others.

In addition to his membership in SHAF, George is involved with a number of history-based organizations,

including the Company of Military Historians (of which he is a governor and vice president for membership), Capitol Hill Civil War Round Table (of which he is president), Hagerstown Civil War Round Table, Civil War Trust, Piedmont Philosophical Society, Brigade of the American Revolution, and Washington County Historical Society. His engagement with the American past also extends to writing—he has been working for eight years on a book about a little-known, post-Gettysburg skirmish—and collecting such artifacts as military photographs (Civil War to World War I), antique typewriters, and memorabilia from the Civil War Centennial.

The fact that George Franks searches out items from the Centennial is not surprising, because that commemorative period sparked his lifelong fascination with history generally and Civil War history specifically. As he puts it: "In 1960 there were a number of television shows and magazine articles related to the Civil War Centennial. Also stores began carrying toy caps (kepis), muskets, and swords. I was very much caught up in it all at age four. The summer following first grade my parents took my brother and me to Gettysburg for vacation. It was July 1963, only days after the centennial of the battle. To this day, my mother says that I 'wanted to stop at every monument and climb on every cannon.' I was hooked."

When asked what generated his interest in Antietam and concern about its preservation, George responds that among the many battlefield vacations enjoyed by his family, one was a trip to Antietam in 1964: "I had seen photos of it so I knew what to look for. But I fell in love with the untainted landscape. Compared to Gettysburg, it seemed much more pristine to me and even at a young age I found that compelling. I first joined SHAF nearly a decade ago after seeing an ad for it in a Civil War publication. I knew the battlefield and the surrounding (land) were endangered by both time and development and had to be saved....Having moved from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to Virginia to Connecticut then back to New Jersey and then to Montgomery County, Maryland, I now live in Hagerstown. Living near the battlefield, I plan to get much more involved in SHAF."