

The Gray Line News



High Bridge



High Bridge Camp #1581

December 2024

Sons of Confederate Veterans

Camp Commander: Whit Morris

1st LT. Commander: Chris Burks

2nd LT Commander: Don Reynolds

3rd LT. Commander: Zach Morris

Treasurer: Shane Newcombe

Adjutant: Dan Johnson

Chaplain: Ned May

Judge Advocate: Kenny Barnard

Quartermaster / Historian: Tom Haake

Sergeant at Arms: Trey Capps

Surgeon: Gene Kirkman

Camp Sutler: Greg Finn



"DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF OUR SOUTHERN HERITAGE"



Merry Christmas to Each & All!!!!!!

COMMANDERS CORNER:

Merry Christmas Compatriots,

I know it's a little early to wish you Merry Christmas, but since we don't have a meeting this month, I didn't want to miss the opportunity. It may seem that my comments this month have very little to do with the SCV, but since the world so often appears to be against us, it never hurts to count your blessings.

A family tradition for our Thanksgiving gathering is that every person has to say at least two things they are thankful for. The catch is, nobody can repeat a blessing that has already been said and with nearly

forty people there, you have to actually think about your blessings (thankfulness for family and health are always used early in the game).

The amazing thing is, everyone always seems to come up with more than two things they are thankful for, and we still only scratch the surface of how truly blessed we are. As you gather with friends and family this holiday season, I challenge each of you to think about what you have to be thankful for and how you can be a blessing to others.

Deo Vindice and Merry Christmas,

Whit Morris

Battles in December 1863

Dec 14th Tenn Battle of Bean's Station

Dec 29th Tenn Battle of Mossy Creek

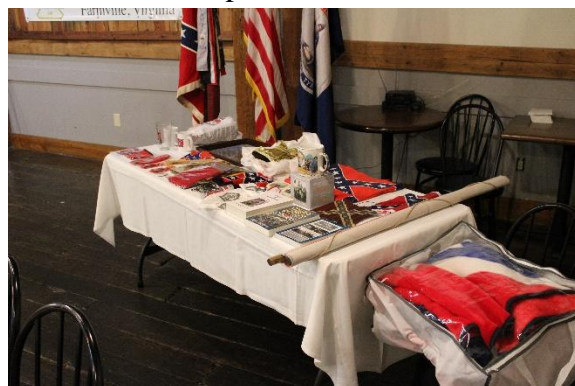
Southern Cross Set

In Late October, our camp set a Southern Cross at the grave of William Beckcom & other Unknown Confederate soldiers at the Cemetery in Amelia.

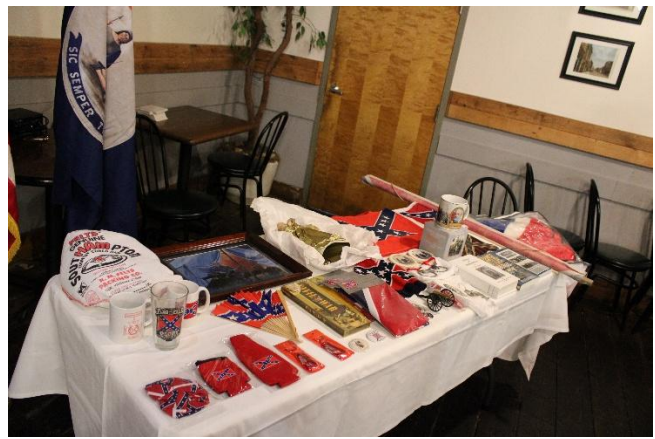


Holiday Banquet 2024

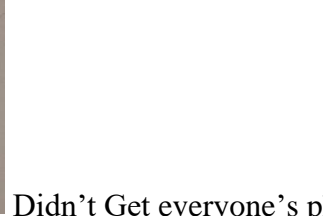
Our camp held its Holiday Banquet on November 21st at Charley's in Farmville, we had forty-two members and guests in attendance, and everyone enjoyed the conversations, fellowship, and interaction! We also had a GREAT presentation by Frank Powell! As we do each year, each Lady left with a door prize which was selected from the table below. Also presented to each in attendance was a copper memorial coin celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the battle of the CSS Virginia and The Monitor at Hampton Roads.



I think everyone had a GREAT time and enjoyed the banquet meal!



Frank Powell gave a GREAT Presentation, and we had a table full of goodies!!



Didn't Get everyone's photo,

due to camera, but got some!

Amelia County Christmas Parade

On December 7th, our camp again participated in the annual Amelia County Christmas Parade. The Parade started at 4:00pm on a chilly day that got colder as it went. It was a good day for our camp as we distributed a lot of candy to the attendees of the parade and received many positive comments and thank you's for being there. We had a much better turn out this year and it was much appreciated by all camp members and the people attending the parade.



The Last Confederate Christmas in Atlanta — 1863

Written by Ronald Franklin 2019

What Christmas in Atlanta was like just months before Sherman's army destroyed the city in the Civil War



times... We are in the midst of a revolution and the angel of death and desolation stalks abroad through the land. Brother is in arms against brother, a deadly and terrific strife...

But in another Georgia city, the story was very different. At least, that was the recollection decades later of a young man who had lived through those tumultuous times.

In 1897 journalist Wallace Putnam Reed published an article in the *Atlanta Journal* sharing his memories of the Christmas of 1863 in Atlanta. That was the last Christmas before a particularly unwelcome visitor by the name of General William Tecumseh Sherman, along with about 100,000 of his rowdy friends, came to town. Sherman and his army would capture Atlanta in September of 1864, burning much of the city and forcing all of its residents to leave. Although the Confederates would be back in charge by Christmas of that year, there was very little yuletide cheer in Atlanta in 1864. As Reed remembered it, “the ruins left by Sherman in November were still smoking, and this shattered and blasted wreck of a city was then the most desolate spot on the continent. Few of the exiled citizens had returned, and there were no Christmas shoppers, no Christmas shops, and no Christmas.”

So, for Wallace Putnam Reed and many other citizens of Atlanta, the Christmas of 1863 would be remembered as the last relatively care-free holiday season the city would experience for decades to come.

At Christmastime in 1863, Atlantans were hopeful for the future.

The residents of Atlanta were well aware in December of 1863 that a huge Union army under General Sherman was encamped in Chattanooga, Tennessee, little more than 100 miles to the north, just waiting for the right time to swoop down on them. But, according to Reed, during that Christmas season no worries about such a possibility disturbed Atlantans' holiday cheer.

The city was confident that Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston, keeping vigilant watch just south of the Tennessee line, would never allow a Yankee army to get anywhere near Atlanta. Most of the population was sure, as Reed says, that “the next Christmas (1864) would be a peaceful one under the flag of the triumphant Confederacy.”

Christmas was just as commercial then as it is now

At that time Atlanta was one of the Confederacy's thriving commercial hubs. Although its population as reported in the 1860 census was under 10,000, Reed says that by 1863 more than 30,000 people called the city

As the Christmas of 1863 drew near, the outlook of people in the American South was, for the most part, more somber than festive. The Civil War had been raging, primarily on their soil, for more than two years. Although the conflict would continue for almost another two, many Confederate sympathizers could already see the handwriting on the wall. Throughout much of the South the Christmas spirit that year was severely dampened.

In its Christmas Day 1863 edition one Georgia newspaper, the *Savannah Republican*, gave voice to what seemed to be the prevailing mood in that city: A Merry Christmas? Ah! no. We cannot find it in our heart to utter such a wish in these solemn

home. In addition, as an important military center, Atlanta hosted a large cadre of soldiers either stationed in the area, or constantly passing through.

All that bustle meant there was a lot of money to be made that Christmas season. Thousands of civilians were employed either by military facilities in the area, or by the many foundries and factories that were kept busy churning out the material of war. And though it took 20 Confederate dollars to buy one gold dollar, and four or five for a U. S. greenback dollar, there were plenty of those Confederate bills floating around.

Well before the holiday season arrived, Atlanta merchants had prepared themselves. They sent their buyers to cities throughout the Confederacy to procure the goods they knew would fly off their shelves when Christmas shopping began in earnest. In addition, customers who had the money had placed their orders for luxury goods with blockade runners (remember Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind*?) months before. As Reed recalled in his article,

All through that memorable December thousands of new shoppers ransacked the city every day until they had purchased everything worth having.

Shoppers could buy genuine coffee (very scarce in the Confederacy) for \$20 a pound. You could get a “decent” man’s suit for \$600 or spend hundreds of dollars on imported books such as Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* or *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. All in all, 1863 was a very vibrant Christmas shopping season in Atlanta.

Conscription was the one fly in Atlanta’s Christmas ointment.

There was only one way in which the reality of civil war seemed to intrude on Atlanta’s festive holiday atmosphere. With military manpower needs getting harder and harder to fulfill, the Confederate government had instituted a draft in April of 1862. Now there were stringent rules in place to ensure that men who should be in military service didn’t evade their responsibility.

In Atlanta that Christmas season it sometimes seemed that guards were stationed on every street corner to demand that any man walking the streets of the city show a pass, a furlough, or exemption papers to prove his right to be there rather than in an army camp. For men who came to Atlanta to do their Christmas shopping, having to produce papers over and over again became, to understate the case, quite annoying.

As they usually do, the rich were able to evade military service by getting a doctor to declare them physically unfit, or by obtaining some nominal government position in which, as Reed put it, “there was no work to do.”

Even some slaves had reason to celebrate the Christmas of 1863

One group that seems to have slipped Reed’s memory when he wrote his 1897 article were the enslaved people of Atlanta. He makes no mention of how or if they celebrated the Christmas of 1863. But I was able to uncover one historical reference that shows that slaves were not entirely forgotten during that last Confederate Christmas in Atlanta.

Lemuel P. Grant, chief engineer of the Department of Georgia, had been ordered to build a ring of military fortifications around the city. He got the laborers he needed for the job by “hiring” slaves at \$25 per month. Of course, that money was not paid to the slaves themselves, but to their “owners.”

Unsurprisingly these enslaved men, who were not only required to work to defend the Confederacy, but who could be forced to do so under fire, if necessary, were prone to run away whenever they could. Lemuel Grant decided that one way to minimize the number of runaways was to give at least some of them permission to leave and spend Christmas with their families. He carried out his plan with a group of slaves from Troup County southwest of Atlanta.

The Christmas of 1863 was special.

All in all, Atlanta’s Christmas of 1863 was a memorable one. It even snowed on Christmas Day!

Atlanta would see one more holiday season with the Confederate government still reigning in its capital, Richmond, Virginia. But given what conditions surrounding the Christmases of coming years would be like — Sherman in 1864, Confederate surrender in 1865, and Reconstruction thereafter — Atlantans would for decades remember the Christmas of 1863, some with fondness, others with relief, as the last Confederate Christmas their city ever experienced.

Robert E. Lee Quote of the Month

“You say rightly, the more you learn the more you are conscious of your ignorance. Because the more you know, the more you find there is to know in this grand and beautiful world. It is only the ignorant who suppose themselves omniscient. You will find all the days of your life that there is much to learn and much to do.”

— Robert E. Lee, September 10th, 1863, in a letter to his wife Mary Custis Lee



**Our Camp is proud to support The
United Daughters of The
Confederacy and The Virginia
Flaggers.**



Upcoming Meetings and Events:

December 14th Noon: Wreaths Across America Trinity Memorial Cemetery Rice, VA
We are a sponsor of this event, and they present a nice short service and they have volunteers lined up to place the wreaths.

January 18th, 2025, Lee Jackson Day: Lexington, VA Details to follow via e-mail

January 23rd 2025 7:00 PM @ Charley's Café: Camp Meeting, Election of Officers

February 27th 2025 7:00 PM @ Charley's Café: Camp Meeting,

March 27th 7:00 PM @ Charley's Café: Camp Meeting

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