The Gray Line News

High Bridge

High Bridge Camp #1581 **November 2023** **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: Russell Easter**
Chaplain: Ned May	**Judge Advocate: Kenny Barnard**	**Quartermaster / Historian: Tom Haake**
Sargent at Arms: Trey Capps	**Surgeon: Gene Kirkman**	**Camp Sutler: Greg Finn**

"DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF OUR SOUTHERN HERITAGE"

COMMANDERS CORNER:

Dear Compatriots,

I can't believe it is November already, seems like it was springtime just yesterday. I know this is a busy time of year with the upcoming holidays, family events, hunting season and all the other year-end stuff, but please don't forget about our camp events. We have had an amazing year so far and I hope we can finish out strong.

On the 16th we have our holiday banquet, which is our final meeting of the year, and it starts at 6 pm at Charley's. Bring your wife and/or a guest and let's pack the house, enjoy some good food and fellowship while we reminisce about this past year and give thanks for our many blessings.

Then on December 2nd we have the Amelia County Christmas Parade at 4:00, with a special appearance by General Lee (the car – not the man). Come dressed to walk the parade route in your favorite period clothing. If you don't have period clothing, don't worry, just come with plenty of Christmas cheer. We will be giving out candy to the children along the parade route.

Above all, I hope everyone is able to spend some time with their families and give thanks for your many blessings!

Deo Vin dice

Whit Morris

Battles in November 1862

Nov. 7th	MO	Battle of Clark's Mill		Nov 28th	ARK	Battle of Cane Hill

Saylor's Creek Roadside Cleanup

On September 30th we gathered for our fall cleanup of Saylor's Creek Road from Route 307 to the Battlefield. We had nine members report for duty which made it go very quickly! The road was the cleanest we have found in the last few years, and we collected six bags shown in the photo. Thanks to all that came out to help us!

Camp Meeting 9/29

At our Meeting Pat Schroeder made a wonderful presentation on the forgotten Friday, The Battles in Cumberland Church which took place on April 7th, 1865.

Flag Replacement & Sale

A few weeks ago, the Heritage Flag flying on Route 360 was replaced due to wear & tear. At our Camp Meeting on October 26th the flag was auctioned off to our members. CONGRATULATIONS to Kenny Barnes who won the auction and plans on hanging the flag on the inside wall of his shop!

A Soldier's Story, Truth or Fiction???

This is the story about an artifact that is in the collection of the Confederate Memorial Literary Society, more commonly known as the Museum of the Confederacy and now the American Civil War Museum in Richmond.

I have learned over the years that Civil War buffs come in many stripes. Some love tromping around battlefields; others get their kicks from collecting artifacts; a few would rather spend their weekends reenacting and working to ensure that their personal appearance is more authentic than anyone else in their group.

Me? In my heart, I'm kind of a book guy. My personal collection is quite a few books on the war and a few other subjects, and I've actually read almost all of them. Some of them are first-edition tomes written in the 19th century—many by the participants themselves in blue and gray. A few novels and fiction, some period documentaries round out my collection. Many are memoirs, but there are also edited diaries and letters. I believed that what was written in all of them (or most of them) to be good history, as they were the records of the men and women who lived the experiences, not just studied the experiences of others.

As my reading experience grew, and especially after spending 16 years sharing space with the museum's great historian, John Coski, however, I began to realize that all those written words needed to be approached differently. Letters and diaries are closer to real history, because they were written by people who did not know what was going to happen tomorrow, or next month, or next year. And they certainly did not know how the whole "recent unpleasantness" would turn out. Memoirs, on the other hand, contain a whole lot of Monday morning quarterbacking.

The memoirs of leaders—politicians and generals—are usually packed with what we might call "spin." Those writers often had a wide view of events as they happened, but their memoirs are too often history as the writer wished it had been. (See, for example, Bill Clinton's memoir. Oops, wrong era. See, for example, Joe Johnston or John Gordon.) The generals often take credit for all the victories and blame somebody else for defeats, and the politicians rationalize away the mistakes

they previously made or speeches they formerly gave. On the other extreme, enlisted men had a very narrow field of view. In battle, the noise and confusion obscured their ability to see much. On the march, they mostly saw the backside of the guy in front of them more than anything else and didn't know where they were going until they got there. But the enlisted men's memoirs are filled with great anecdotes which I love. (See, for example, Carlton McCarthy or David Holt.) The best memoirs, to me, are those written by educated staff officers, who saw and heard a lot but whose personal responsibility was more limited. (See, of course, Porter Alexander or McHenry Howard.) But, what to believe? And this piece is supposed to be about an artifact!

One of the best memoirs of all is John O. Casler's *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade*, which was published in 1893. Casler had served in the 33rd Virginia, part of the Stonewall Brigade, and his personality as a soldier really comes out in his book. He was irreverent, humorous, and full of adventure. He claims to have been a solid fighter, but his respect for discipline and those who tried to impose it was—shall we say, "somewhat limited." So, the question is, do we believe all of the things that he said?

Finally, let's get to the artifact. In 1894, Casler donated something to the museum. It is a very nice blue leather snuff box.

When he donated it, he told the ladies of the museum (and they recorded it) that he was often appalled at the behavior of soldiers after a battle. Before they began the laborious duty of burying the fallen, many soldiers would steal their shoes or clothing. And some would go through the pockets to steal personal items. Casler related that he never succumbed to such behavior—except for once. He took this snuff box from a dead Yankee after the battle of Chancellorsville, which he duly recorded on its back.

Bottom of the snuff box | Courtesy of author

But he justified his behavior by telling the ladies that he only took it because, written in gold letters on the top, were the words “Help Yourself.” So, again, the question is, do we believe him?

Moses Ezekiel: Hidden In Plain Site

Despite being widely unknown among modern Americans, Civil War buffs, and even artists, Moses Ezekiel lived a life of firsts and participated in notable historical events. He was the first Jewish cadet enrolled at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), in 1862. As corporal of the guard, he took charge of the casket of former VMI instructor and Confederate icon Stonewall Jackson as the general’s body lay in his old classroom on May 14, 1863, the night before his burial. A year later, in May 1864, Ezekiel became the only Jewish cadet, out of 256 other teenagers, to fight in the Battle of New Market. Recalling that fight after many decades, he said it “seems to always bring tears to my eyes, none of us are sorry for what we did and under the same circumstances would repeat it.” And he was the one who read from the New Testament to fellow cadet, roommate, and friend Thomas Garland Jefferson—a great-nephew of Thomas Jefferson—as the young Jefferson lay dying after the battle.

Moses Ezekiel as a VMI cadet.

Robert E. Lee and his wife befriended Ezekiel after the war, and during a horseback ride together, the general said to Ezekiel, “I hope you will be an artist as it seems to me you are cut out for one.” Ezekiel did go on to become the only well-known American sculptor who had seen combat in the Civil War and the first renowned Jewish-American sculptor. He created numerous statues and monuments of religious, Southern, and Confederate themes throughout his life, including the Confederate monument “New South,” at Arlington National Cemetery; one of the first Confederate monuments on Northern soil, in Ohio; and the prominent statues at VMI of Stonewall Jackson and “Virginia Mourning Her Dead,” memorializing the 10 cadets who fell at New Market. The latter is still one of the most visited statues at VMI.

Despite these distinctions, Ezekiel’s renown faded after his death. In life, he achieved international fame and became friends with presidents, kings, and celebrities; his studio was the center of artistic and social activities in Rome, and he was knighted three times for his artwork—he received the Cavalier’s Cross of Merit for Art and Science from George, Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen in 1887; the Cavalier’s Golden Cross of the House of Hohenzollern from William II, Emperor of Germany in 1893; and the honorary title of Cavalier Ufficiale della corona d’Italia from King Victor Emmanuel III in 1906.

But in death, the art world ignored and forgot him because he never innovated; he emulated the classical style of the previous masters, focusing on the full human figure and historical and allegorical subjects, even when the time for that style had come and gone.

By his obscurity, he also achieved the recent distinction of being the only Virginian, Confederate, or Jewish sculptor whose work—a statue of young Thomas Jefferson outside the University of Virginia Rotunda—served as the focal point for a hostile protest against the pending removal of a Lee statue, in Charlottesville in 2017. Pro-Confederacy protesters shouted hate speech about Jews while ironically circling around the statue made by Ezekiel—a man unequivocal about his Jewish heritage and a die-hard Southerner and supporter of the Confederate cause, who had hung the Confederate battle flag in his art studio in Rome for 40 years.

In his anonymity, Ezekiel has shattered all stereotypes and assumptions. And despite his seeming invisibility, once you start looking for Ezekiel in bronze and stone, he is everywhere.

These are key moments in his life and art:

RICHMOND, Va. Born in Richmond in 1844, Ezekiel lived in the back of his grandparents' dry-goods shop on Old Market Street, on the west side of 17th Street between Main and Franklin, near the site of what is now the Richmond Farmer's Market. "I loved my native city as a child loves its mother," he once wrote of Richmond.

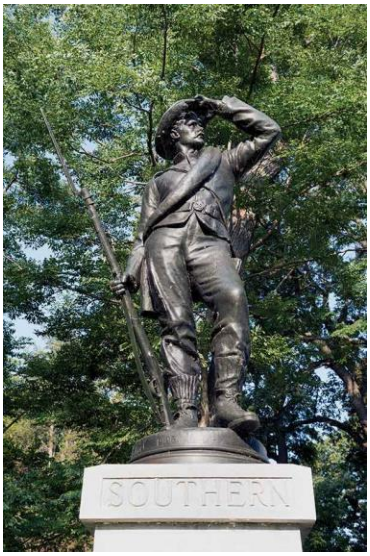
The store "was filled with ready-made dresses of all sizes to fit any Negro woman or girl…Every Negro who was brought to Richmond from the South to be sold at auction was, on the morning of the sale, brought to our house to be dressed," he wrote in his memoirs. Though he would come to fight for the South, Ezekiel says he didn't believe in slavery— "In reality no one in the South would have raised an arm to fight for slavery. It was an evil that we had inherited and that we wanted to get rid of," he said. "Our struggle…was simply a constitutional one based upon…state's rights and especially on free trade and no tariff."

LEXINGTON, Va. When the news broke of the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the secession of South Carolina, "bonfires were built on almost every corner of the town. Around them we little boys howled and jumped for joy," he recalled. He says he became so enthusiastic that "I begged and entreated my grandparents to let me go to the Virginia Military Institute as a cadet"—hoping it would be a "means of my getting into the war." He enrolled at VMI in September 1862 at age 18.

Later in life, during his art studies at the Berlin Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1869, he crafted "Virginia Mourning Her Dead," in plaster, a female figure representing Virginia, sitting on the remains of a fortress. Thirty-one years later, in 1900, VMI asked him to create it in metal. "It was…one of the most sacred duties of my life to remodel my bronze statue…to be placed on the parade grounds of the V.M.I. [in 1903], overlooking the graves of my dead comrades so that their memory may go on in imperishable bronze, sounding their heroism and Virginia's memory down through all ages and forever."

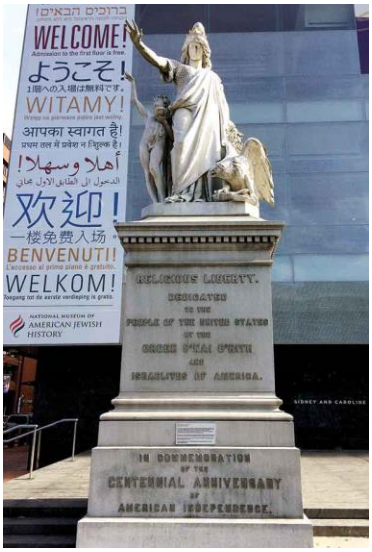
NEW MARKET, Va. Ezekiel had been at VMI a little more than a year when early on the morning of May 10, 1864, the cadets were awakened by the beating of a long roll. "I think we all knew, when we heard those drums, what was coming," he said. The Corps of Cadets was being sent down the Valley of Virginia to help General John Breckinridge "drive back the invaders…. A loud hurrah showed the willingness with which these boys between fifteen and eighteen years of age would leave their alma mater and go towards the battlefields." They marched for four days from Lexington to New Market.

In his memoirs, he remembered back to May 15, the day of the Battle in New Market: "It was raining, and…we marched through fields of mud, in which I lost my shoes…. Our battalion was beautifully in line when we crossed an open field. Halfway across this field, the Minnie balls began to whistle around our ears, and the artillery shells came howling toward us." They noticed a curve in their line and straightened out, then "we advanced in as perfect order as if on dress parade," charging the enemy's battery, "which had been firing its hellfire upon us," and engaged in close-quarter fighting with pistols and bayonets before eventually hoisting the VMI flag on top of a captured Union cannon in victory.



According to VMI, “Never before, nor since, has an entire student body been called from its classrooms into pitched battle.”

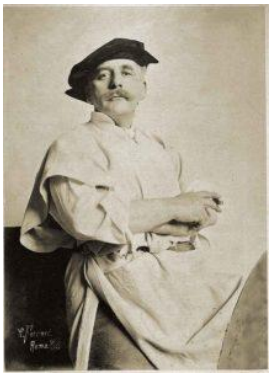
CINCINNATI, Ohio in 1867, Ezekiel moved in with his parents who had relocated to Cincinnati, where he began studying sculpture, and in 1869, he left for Europe to study in Berlin. Among many sculptures that ended up in Ohio, Ezekiel created “Southern” in 1910, a soldier standing guard. Commissioned by the Robert Patton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, it was erected at the former Union prisoner of war camp on Johnson’s Island, on Lake Erie. President Taft would tell Ezekiel he had heard that “veteran soldiers from the Northern army and the Southern army were fraternizing together there and had been photographed arm in arm with each other. ‘You have contributed a great deal towards the peaceful solution of our affairs.’”



PHILADELPHIA, Pa. In 1873, Ezekiel became the first non-German and first American to win the Berlin Royal Academy of Fine Arts’ prestigious Michel Beer Prix de Rome, allowing him to study art in Rome, where he spent the rest of his life. But he deferred his award for a year because he had just received his first commission (and the first commission from an American Jewish organization to an American Jewish sculptor) from the Independent Order of B’nai Brith: a marble group sculpture called “Religious Liberty,” the first commissioned sculpture to this cause. A woman wears a 13-star crown, representing the original colonies, and clutches the U.S. Constitution, and an eagle grasping a serpent represents democracy vanquishing tyranny. It was intended for the American Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 and now sits on the grounds of the National Museum of American Jewish History within steps of the Liberty Bell.

CHARLESTON, W. Va. Ezekiel created more than two hundred works of art, but a statue commissioned by the Charleston chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was perhaps the most exciting at this point in his life. It was placed in front of the state capitol in Jackson’s hometown in 1910, and Ezekiel said the figure of Stonewall Jackson (a replica of which he later made for VMI) was, “in reality after 40 years the …[first] commission I ever received from the South.” Having been plagued with poverty and depression for many years, getting this commission “was a rift in the clouds that had been gathering around me.” The governor of Virginia allowed Ezekiel’s beloved VMI Corps of Cadets to come to Charleston for the unveiling.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. The 1910 bronze Thomas Jefferson statue at UVA is a smaller replica of one originally commissioned by a Louisville businessman and placed in front of the Jefferson County, Ky., courthouse in 1901. Jefferson is 33 years old, presenting the Declaration of Independence to the First Congress, standing atop the Liberty Bell, which is draped with figures representing "Liberty, Equality, Justice, and the Brotherhood of Man." Continuing a theme throughout his and his family's life, Ezekiel has the figure of Equality holding a tablet that says "Religious Freedom" with the names of various deities beneath—"God, Jehovah, Brahma, Atma, Ra, Allah, Zeus."



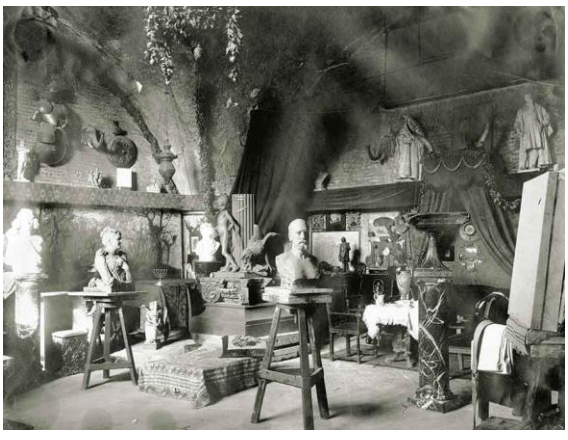
Moses Ezekiel c1903. (Virginia Military Institute Archives)

ARLINGTON, Va. "Religion is a term one might apply without too much exaggeration to Ezekiel's feeling for his native Virginia. He all but worshipped the state and had an unflagging devotion to memories of the Confederacy," according to a biographer. The year 1912 brought the most enthralling commission to Ezekiel: a request from the United Daughters of the Confederacy to make a statue in his own state, memorializing fallen Confederates: The Confederate Monument at Arlington National Cemetery, called "New South," intended to "permanently mark the union between North and South."

"It is my greatest pleasure to feel that in the declining years of my life—I have had the honour to place some of my work in my own state." In fact, he said, "I had been waiting for forty years to have my love for the South recognized."

Although he spent his life angling for commissions and entering at least four contests to make a public sculpture of Robert E. Lee, which never came to fruition—"It was the one work I would love to do about anything else in the world," Ezekiel said—his "New South" monument was erected in 1914 on the grounds of Lee's former home, Arlington House, which had been seized by the Union. Surrounded by 482 Confederate graves in Jackson Circle, the bronze group statue features a heroic figure of a woman representing the South, holding a laurel wreath, with an elaborate frieze depicting various types of people going off to war, such as a blacksmith saying goodbye to his wife, and a variety of symbols commemorating the war. As reported in The Washington Post in May 1914, "It means, primarily, peace."

President Woodrow Wilson, who presided over a ceremony to unveil the monument, said it was an "emblem of a reunited people," and told the crowd that "this chapter in the history of the United States is now closed."



Upon his death in Rome in 1917 and his body's return to America after World War I, Ezekiel was buried in 1921 beneath his Confederate monument, "the work he loved the most and which he labored at with the greatest satisfaction. [He wanted to lie] among the comrades of his youth, of the heroic period of his life which he always referred to with such pride," according to a friend. His was the first burial ceremony ever held in the amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery, built in 1920. His gravestone reflects the one thing of which he was most proud:

"Moses J. Ezekiel, Sergeant of Company C, Battalion of Cadets of the Virginia Military Institute."

Ezekiel's love for the South, for Virginia, for his fellow VMI cadets, and for the Confederacy never wavered throughout his life. His focus on the past, on history: dissecting it, reliving it, studying it, glorifying it, learning from it—his life's guiding principles—are reminiscent of the credo of many Civil War buffs and scholars: interested in times gone by, eras past, the way things were, full of melancholy or appreciation for life and times that are no longer. Like Ezekiel, those of us who spend our days looking backward feel richer for it, but we have decidedly not heeded Lee's post-Appomattox philosophy and recommendation to Ezekiel as a young man starting out in 1866: "I have buried the past with my sword, and I never expect to refer to it again."

Robert E. Lee Quote of the Month

Virginia has today I understand joined the Confederate States. Her policy will doubtless therefore be shaped by united Counsels. I cannot say what it will be. But trust that a merciful Providence will not turn his face from us & dash us from the height to which his smiles had raised us.

— Robert E. Lee, April 25th, 1861, in a letter to his cousin, Cassius Lee

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

November 16th 6:00pm HOLIDAY BANQUET @ Charley's Café: Camp Meeting, Camp Meeting, Presenter Greg Eanes will speak on Heritage of Honor, Holiday Banquet

December 2nd 4:00 pm: Amelia County Christmas Parade Setup @ 2:00 Parade starts at 4:00

December 16th @ Trinity Memorial Gardens Cemetery Noon, Wreaths Across America (We are a Sponsor)

January 13th Lee Jackson Day, Lexington, Va… Details to follow.

January 25th 7:00 pm @ Charley's Café: Camp Meeting & Election of Officers

February 22nd 7:00 pm @ Charley's Café: Camp Meeting