

# The Railsplitter

The Newsletter of the Department of Illinois,  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



SPRING 2020

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## UPCOMING ENCAMPMENTS:

The schedule for future Encampments and their hosts are as follows:

May 2020, Camp #443, Belleville

Oct 2020, Camp #1, No. Cook County

Future scheduling T.B.D.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Chaplain's Corner

Patriotic Instruction

"Keyboard Klacking" from the DSVC

Camp News

*And MORE!*

**Annual Encampment  
Department of Illinois  
Sons Union Veterans of the Civil War  
Hosted by Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443**

**DATE CHANGE: Saturday, June 13, 2020**

Crehan's Irish Pub & Restaurant

5500 North Belt West, Belleville, IL.

Cost meal: \$15.00- please submit payment by June 1

Doors open at 11am, Luncheon at Noon

**MAKE CHECKS TO: Col. Hecker Camp #443**

Mail payment to Col. Hecker Camp #443

% David Wildermuth

621 Lenora Dr. Fairview Heights, IL. 62208

Any Questions CALL Dave: 618-447-1191

For those who are looking for hotels: O'Fallon & Fairview

\*\*Please plan your route: I-255 closed at I-55/70\*\*

Anybody who is staying overnight and wants to join for dinner Saturday night, Br. Dave will make reservations for 6pm at The Hop House in O'Fallon. Please let Dave know how many before the meeting starts.

**Editor's Note: Due to the Governor's Stay at Home Order, the Encampment date was moved from May 9. Should the order not be lifted in time for the June 13 date, an electronic meeting will be held. Details to be determined and sent to the Camps.**

**COMANDER'S CORNER:**

My dear Brothers,

This is my last letter to you as your Commander. Circumstances which can only be described as "Acts of God" have prevented me from visiting with you at the Lincoln and Stephenson Ceremonies in Springfield, and have also caused our Department Encampment to be postponed. The "moving target" of the SARS-COV 2/ COVID-19 pandemic threatens even now to extend the governor's "Stay at Home" order beyond the original May date, so June 13 has been selected with hope that we can meet in person. If we are unable to meet in person, electronic means will be provided.

Let me, in this my "farewell" column in the Railsplitter, express to each of you reading this just how much I have been humbled, honored, and joyed I have been to have been your Department Commander. My "career" in the Sons started in Illinois, and regardless of where the future might take me in the next 5, 10, or 20 years, Illinois will always be my home Department. I thank you each for your support in the last 2 years, and your hopes and prayers.

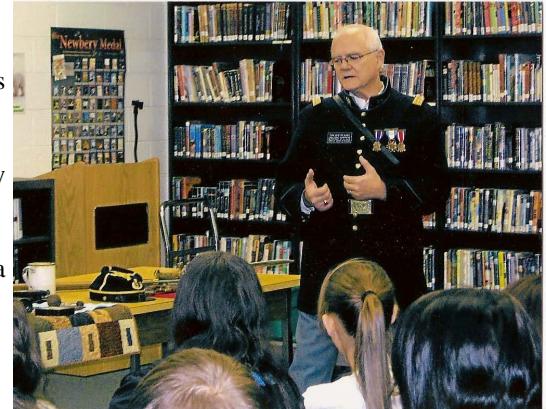
Let us now hope and pray that we will be released from our isolation in time to celebrate Memorial Day, and give the Boys in Blue a tribute fitting of their service.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Harry W. Reineke IV, PDC  
Department Commander

**Candidate for Department of Illinois Commander, Brother Tom Oestreicher:**

- ◊ Graduated from Aurora East High School in 1966.
- ◊ Graduated in 1970 from New Mexico Highlands University.
- ◊ Tom then earned his Masters Degree in History from the University of Wyoming.
- ◊ His doctoral work in History was done at Concordia University.
- ◊ Brother Tom was a reenactor from 1975 to 1982.
- ◊ Tom taught history and economics for 33 years at both high school and college levels. He and his wife, Marilyn, also owned and operated Tommy O's Family Restaurant in Sycamore for 15 years.



- ◊ Tom has lectured throughout the United States for over 40 years including a 10 day lecture tour in Hawaii in 2007.
- ◊ In 1995 Brother Tom was awarded the honorary rank of Colonel in the Illinois National Guard and served as the Governor's personal observer at the Midwest war games at Camp McCoy in Sparta, Wisconsin.
- ◊ Brother Tom has also served on numerous Social Study and Civil War discussion panels at the National level. He has also written and published four novels. His first novel, Present and Accounted For, was featured in New York City at Book Expo America and was a nationwide best seller at Barnes and Noble.
- ◊ Tom joined the Sons in 2007 as a member of the Logan Camp #26.
- ◊ Tom was co-founder and past Camp Commander of the General E. F. Dutton Camp #49 in Sycamore in 2011.
- ◊ Brother Tom served as the Department Eagle Scout Coordinator for 6 years distributing over 900 Eagle Scout certificates. He has served and currently serves as a Department Council member.

**WANTED!**

**THE DEPARTMENT NEEDS  
YOU!**

**STEP UP AND SERVE!  
WHEN THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE CALLS SAY, "YESSS!"  
URGENTLY NEEDED:  
EAGLESCOUT COORDINATOR**

**CHAPLAIN'S CORNER:**

Pandemic, What Pandemic?

Joseph led Israel into Egypt, and all went well in the beginning, but then Pharaohs enslaved the Israelites, and they felt the pain.

They began to pray for an end to their misery. Over 350 years later, their prayers were answered--over 350 years! Then

Moses led them out of Egypt to be in the Promised Land--but that took 40 years of wandering in the desert. Do you get the impression that The Almighty is not on speed dial, or instant response?

\*I HOPE that He gives us a strong and speedy cure

\*I have FAITH that all will be well, and that this too shall pass.

\*I have felt His LOVE from my family and friends, and know how asking for Him to Bless and Help others is a guaranteed way for that to happen.

Consider if you will, The Recent Unpleasantness. They originally believed that the conflict would be over in a matter of days or weeks. No one thought it would go on for four years. Everyone prayed that their family members would come home safe and sound - but there were over 1,200,000 casualties. Yet in God's own time it ended. Just as this pandemic will.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,

*Chaplain Jerry*

**PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTION:**

I thought that this April, the month of the assassination and death of Abraham Lincoln would be the appropriate time to reflect on the cost of the Civil War. First, the numbers. These are approximations. There were 10,455 military engagements on land or sea including accidents, suicides, sickness, murders, and executions. There were total 1,094,453 total casualties. The Federals lost 110,100 soldiers killed in action or mortally wounded with another 224,580 who succumbed to disease. The Confederates lost 94,000 troops in battle with another 164,000 wiped out by contagion. Another best estimate of Federal army troops wounded is 275,175, naval 2,226. Surviving Confederate records indicate that 194,026 were wounded. Many of the wounded who survived came home missing an arm or a leg or worse.

In 1863 the United States government estimated that the war was costing \$2.5 million per day. A final official estimate from 1879 puts the total cost was \$6,190,000,000. The Confederacy spent a total of \$2,099,808,707. By a 1906 accounting, an additional \$3.3 billion had been already spent on pensions and other federal benefits. Southern states and private philanthropy provided benefits to Confederate veterans. The total amount spent eventually exceeded the war's original costs.

The physical devastation, almost all of it in the South, was enormous. There were burned and plundered homes, pillaged countryside, untold losses in crops and livestock, ruined public buildings and bridges, devastated schools and colleges, and neglected roads. This destruction left the South in ruins.

The North had the advantage of raising funds with the Legal Tender Act of 1862 by allowing the printing of Greenbacks and selling \$500 million in bonds to raise money. Prior to this, the banks could not print paper money unless its value was backed by gold. The greenbacks were not backed by gold as the government did not have enough gold to support the paper money printed. The National Bank Act of 1863 created a national banking system that loaned money from the banks to the Government to pay for the war. It also established a national system of paper money and coins. By the end of the war, the national debt was \$2.6 billion compared to the \$65 million it was 5 years earlier.

A quote by Louis Hacker in his book The Triumph of American Capitalism reads:

"The American Civil War turned out to be a revolution indeed. But its striking achievement was the triumph of industrial capi-

talism. The industrial capitalist through their political spokesman, the Republicans, had succeeded in capturing the state and using it as an instrument to strengthen their economic position. ... The victory was made secure by the passage of tariff, banking, public-land, railroad, and contract labor legislation"

Slavery had been an uncomfortable fact of life in the United States since the founding of the Republic. The Constitution was carefully crafted to protect the right to own slaves. Most people of that time were willing to accept the fact that 700,000 enslaved Africans were property and not people. Almost all slaves were owned in the Southern states. They were the backbone of a plantation economy that produced tobacco, rice, sugar, and surprisingly, only a little bit of cotton. Northerners had a dislike of slavery. However, they thought that the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which prohibited slavery north of the Ohio River, would keep slavery in the South.

The United States in 1790 had a struggling economy and had difficulties surviving in a mercantile world. The need for labor was acute in order to compete. The economic problem of slavery was difficult for politicians to deal with because it proved to be compatible with the capitalistic marketplace in the United States. Most observers of slavery failed to appreciate that the return from an investment in slaves included not only the return from the slave's labor, but also the value of the children born to female slaves. The last slave ship allegedly arrived from Africa in July of 1860. No account or movie can, or will ever depict the true cost to these people taken from their country to work for people they did not know.

The Civil War was in reality two revolutions. Southerners launched their revolution, more accurately a counterrevolution, in an effort to break free from the political union with the North. Northerners fought to defend the revolutionary process that had transformed their society into a market industrial society. Senator William Seward of New York said in December 1858 that the collision between North and South was not "the work of interested or financial agitators." What it was, he explained, was "an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means the United States must and will sooner or later, become entirely a slaveholding nation or entirely a free-labor nation."

This brings us to Reconstruction. Lincoln put forth the Ten Percent Plan in December of 1863, where 10% of the voters of the Southern states would take an oath of loyalty and then the state could form a new government. *Continued Page 4*

(PI Instruction continued from page 3)

To Lincoln, the plan was an attempt to weaken the Confederacy rather than serve as a blueprint for the postwar South. In Lincoln's last speech on April 11, 1865, Lincoln referring to Reconstruction in Louisiana, expressed the view that some Blacks: the "very intelligent" and those who had served in the Union army ought to enjoy the right to vote.

Johnson, on his becoming president, inaugurated a period of Presidential Reconstruction (1865-1867). He offered a pardon to all Southern whites except Confederate leaders and wealthy planters, restoring their political rights and all property except slaves. Actually, most of these eventually received individual pardons.

He allowed the States a free hand in managing their affairs. The States responded by enacting the Black Codes, laws that required African Americans to sign yearly labor contracts and in other ways sought to limit the former slaves' economic options. This, in effect, reestablished plantation discipline. African Americans strongly resisted these measures.

They undermined Northern support for Johnson's policies. Congress in 1865 hoped to work with Johnson while modifying his program. So, in early 1866, Congress passed the Freedmen's Bureau and civil rights bills. They wanted to extend the life of legislation they had created in 1865 to oversee the transition from slavery to freedom. This law also defined persons born in the United States as national citizens, who were to enjoy equality before the law.

Johnson rejected the action of Congress. This led to a permanent rupture between himself and the legislative bodies. Shortly thereafter, Congress approved the 14th Amendment which put birthright citizenship into the Constitution and forbade states to deprive individual rights and provided for citizens' "equal protection" under the laws.

In the fall of the 1866 congressional elections, Northern voters repudiated Johnson's policies. Congress decided to begin Reconstruction anew. The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 divides the South into five military districts and outlined how new governments, based on manhood suffrage without regard to race, were to be established. Thus, began the period of Radical or Congressional Reconstruction, which lasted until the end of the last Southern Republican governments in 1877.

## Memorial:



It is with sadness I must report the passing of Brother Jeffrey E. Fiddler, Past Camp Commander of George A. Custer Camp #1 on February 16, 2020.

I spoke with Jeff Fiddler's niece, Marsha Hanneman. I had been

trying to call Jeff on his cell but it had been disconnected. I mailed a card to him just in case he had moved to another location.

Jeff had been living at a senior community along with his wife Sally in Wausau, Wisconsin since late last year. (His only family relative being Ms. Hanneman who lives nearby) Jeff and Sally had no children.

His niece told me that Jeff had passed away in his sleep of natural causes on February 16th and was sorry the Sons had not been contacted.

Serving an expanded citizenry, Reconstruction governments funded public school systems, sought to strengthen the bargaining power of plantation laborers, made taxation more equitable, and outlawed racial discrimination in public transportation and accommodations. They offered lavish aid to railroads and other enterprises in hope of creating a "New South" whose economic expansion would benefit African Americans and Whites alike. These policies spawned corruption and rising taxes, alienating the increasing number of white voters.

Nonetheless, the political revolution of Reconstruction spawned increasingly violent opposition from white Southerners. Supremacist organizations committed terrorist acts. African Americans who asserted their rights with white employers, teachers, or ministers became targets of violence. Additionally, white supporters of minority rights came under close watch and punishment.

The end of Reconstruction came in the 1870's. As Northern Republicans became more conservative, Reconstruction came to symbolize a misguided attempt to uplift the lower classes of society. Reflecting the shifting mood, a series of Supreme Court decisions, beginning with the Slaughterhouse Cases of 1873, severely limited the scope of Reconstruction laws and constitutional amendments.

Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President in 1876 and all Federal troops were removed from the South and the Federal Government accepted the responsibility of the rights of former slaves. Reconstruction came to an end. By 1900 a new racial system had been put on place. A rigid system of Segregation and the relegation of African Americans to low-wage agricultural and domestic employment reigned. Legal and extralegal violence prevailed to punish those who challenged the new order.

So, the cost of war to the people of the United States in the amount spent, the lives lost, the property in ruins, and the rights given and then restricted was high indeed.

Brothers, be safe and well. Soon we will meet again, as before, to enjoy each other's company and commemorate those who served along with those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Respectfully yours,

Michael Zafran, Patriotic Instructor

As our Ritual states, "As sinks the setting sun to rise again another morn, so fell asleep our brother to rise in the land of the endless day. His trials and toils are over and he entered into rest. May our spirits here, over their memory, be imbued anew with the spirit of loyalty."

May his family be comforted by His Word and His Promise. Amen.

I have sent his wife a sympathy card from all of us at Old Glory Camp.

In Fraternity, Charity, & Loyalty,  
Brother Nick Kaup

## KEYBOARD KLACKING

From DSVC Joe Hutchinson



May 30, 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the sentinel in historic Springdale Cemetery in Peoria.

Soldiers' Hill, or the Mound as it is sometimes called, is one of the most recognized landmarks within Springdale Cemetery.

As the Civil War raged and men fell in battle, or died as a result of injury or disease, many were returned home to Peoria for burial.

An article in the *Transcript* of March 15 1862, pondered the question of burial space for the honored dead. A suggestion was made that a large lot be purchased for those who lost their lives in the war without having a suitable burial place provided.

The Directors of Springdale Cemetery immediately donated one of the best locations within the cemetery grounds, Lot 274, with the condition that some person or organization be responsible for keeping it in good order and repair.

The Women's National League rose to the occasion. In fact, the ladies literally built up the hill into its familiar mound configuration by hauling dirt by any means possible, in a day when the fashion demanded that women wear full-length dresses! The group also arranged for burial markers to be placed on each of the graves. Now the task of the erection of a suitable monument to the soldiers was left to be addressed.

On July 5, 1866, the League voted to change its name to the Soldiers' Monument Society and donated the balance of its treasury (\$82.19) as seed money toward the monument. After several years the dream was realized.

The monument was dedicated on Decoration Day, May 30, 1870. It was designed by Mr. Robert Campbell. The statue was sculpted by J. J. Jewell. The cost was \$2,500.

The limestone base is five feet square. Above the base is a marble piece, four feet square and one foot three inches high. Upon this is a three-foot cube. On the sides of this die are inscribed the words, "Liberty," "Equality," "Justice," and "Pro Patria." A second die is two feet square and three feet high and on top of the second die is a cap. The cap is surmounted by a figure of a soldier standing at "parade rest." The Union soldier stands six feet, six inches in height and wears a standard issue frock coat and forage cap.

A crowd 600 strong attended the dedicatory services. Little girls dressed in white placed flowers and wreaths on the graves. Miss Annie Curtenius unveiled the monument, which had been draped by flags, and patriotic songs were sung.

For almost 107 years, the marble soldier stood atop the monument, guarding the final resting places of more than 200 who fought during the Civil War. But sometime between March

7 and the first week of April, 1977, the weathered soldier ended his watch. The symbolic figure lay in ruins around the base of the monument. Upon examination, it appeared that ropes had been used to topple the statue. All that remained atop were the crumbling boots of a once proud sentinel. (*Below*)

Thirty years passed. Although the Union soldier was replaced by an eagle, and the cemetery is now being well maintained, and the cannons (three originals placed in 1874 and one reproduction) are back on their mounts, one cannot help but feel that something important was still missing from the hill.

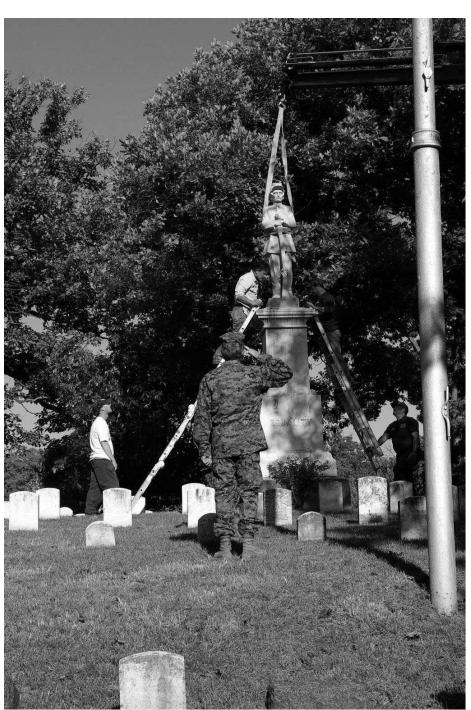


In October 2006, that feeling was inescapable as the Prairie Folklore Theatre took us back in time to reminisce about the effects of the Civil War on the lives of Peorians. Brian "Fox" Ellis stated, "Wouldn't it be grand to start a campaign to return a soldier to the monument on Soldiers' Hill."

A fund drive was begun to replace the statue. Included in the fundraising efforts were the Colonel John Bryner Camp 67 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the Soldiers Hill Volunteer Association, the Peoria Genealogical Society and others. Local businessman, Bruce Brown held a fundraising dinner at his restaurant, Paparazzi. The Springdale Historic Preservation Foundation acted as treasurer for the project. A total of \$10,000 was raised for the complete project.

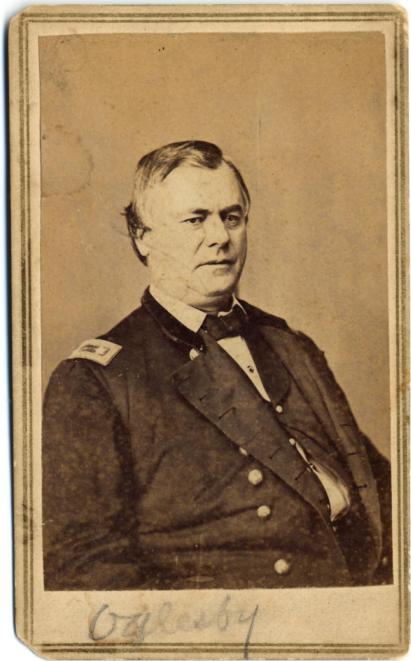
Abel Vault and Monument Company, a family owned business serving the Peoria area since 1933 acquired the replacement statue at cost. The statue was ordered in May of 2007 with delivery estimated at six months. The statue arrived in late September, much earlier than anticipated.

Rich Murray of Rich Murray Granite along with Cranes and Equipment Company providing the crane, set the soldier at no charge on October 4. Marine Corp. veteran Bruce Brown accepted the monument on behalf of all veterans (*Right*).



Rededication of the Soldiers' Hill monument took place on May 25, 2008 at 2:30 PM with Department of Illinois Commander Stuart Stefany giving the Invocation.

## ELKHART RENDEZVOUS



(Oglesby photo courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library)

On the morning of Friday, October 16, 1874 the headline in the Illinois State Journal read “Eloquent Oration by Senator Oglesby”. On the previous day, 20,000 people participated in the dedication of Lincoln’s Tomb. Headquartered in the Leland Hotel, The Society of the Army of the Tennessee scheduled their eighth annual reunion to coincide with the unveiling ceremony. Those in attendance included President and Mrs. Grant, Vice President Wilson, William T. Sherman, John Pope, Irvin McDowell and George Armstrong Custer. The reunion met in the Opera House on October 14 but other than deciding that next year’s reunion would be in Des Moines on September 29 & 30th, there was too much to do and too much excitement to linger.

The city went all out. Downtown buildings were decorated to the hilt and Chinese lanterns adorned the entire setting. Welcome signage to the society was all over the place and many reported up to 50,000 people in town to celebrate the dedication of Lincoln’s Tomb. All churches and government buildings were used for spillover from hotels and they guaranteed that each site would include lighting and be heated.

In other words, the veterans of Grant and Sherman’s famed army and other visitors would be looked after, tend-

ed to, cared for, and made to feel welcome. People came from all over the country and many from local towns throughout Central Illinois literally packed the Capital City, which also just happened to be Mr. Lincoln’s hometown. The frolicking included numerous bands and music was the backdrop of the two-day celebration. This was not an event to miss.

President and Mrs. Grant, as well as Commanding General of the Army Sherman and other dignitaries, stayed in the Executive Mansion and welcomed visitors during an overflowing reception. The society’s banquet was held Wednesday evening in the Leland Hotel and the price of a ticket was \$7.00. The “Official Programme” was sold for a quarter each and the copy housed in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is in very good condition. Among other things, the booklet includes Lincoln’s most iconic speeches, including of course the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural, and the last two pages reflect the order of exercises of “the unveiling of the statue upon the monument erected in memory of Abraham Lincoln”.

A sight to behold: At 10:00am on the morning of Thursday, October 15, 1874, the five divisions formed up on 6th Street overflowing both ways on Jefferson and eastward down Washington Street. And instead of facing north, towards the cemetery, they faced south. The line of march for the column’s two-mile procession would first take them by Abe’s home on 8th Street, which was beautifully adorned as you might imagine, before snaking its way toward Oak Ridge and the formal ceremonies. Riding behind Sherman was Jacksonville’s very own, General Ben Grierson. Not to be overlooked, David Davis and Robert Todd Lincoln were also in attendance.

The President had already indicated that he did not want to deliver the main address. He and Sherman and a few others spoke for a few minutes each following the main oration, but they left the job of delivering the keynote speech to another. Governor John M. Palmer, the master of ceremonies, introduced the main speaker of the day, but his job was easy, for Richard J. Oglesby, needed no introduction. He was affectionately known as “Uncle Dick” and was widely loved by all. Oglesby spoke for nearly two hours.

Senator Oglesby had always been

a gifted and entertaining stump speaker, much in the fashion of Lincoln. On page 118 of his book entitled “Lincoln’s Rail-Splitter: Governor Richard Oglesby”, author Mark Plummer wrote that Oglesby declared later that his 45-page address was the only speech that he ever wrote out. In the Illinois Daily Journal of October 17, 1874, an article reprinted from the Chicago Times reported that “...Senator Oglesby’s oration was much superior, in point of literary merit, to his ordinary efforts, if it does not rank as the best product of his life.”

The years have passed and the reunions of the Army of the Tennessee, the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), as well as all the others, have marched into history. So it falls to us, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, to form up, hoist the banners, and continue the march to pay tribute to Abraham Lincoln every year on or near April 15.

Perhaps this year, as we do our due diligence at Lincoln’s Tomb, we may think of Auld Lang Syne or of, “days gone by”, and recall that, 146 years ago come October, “Uncle Dick” had both the stature and the fortitude to give what might be called the speech of his life as he rose to the occasion at Oak Ridge, as called upon by his country, to pay official homage to the Rail-Splitter at his final resting place.

Oglesby’s Mausoleum is in Elkhart Cemetery, a small village twenty miles north of Springfield. It is only yards from St. John’s Chapel where the former Major General’s funeral was held following his death on April 24, 1899.

Along with the Elkhart Historical Society, on October 10th the Sons will be paying tribute to “Uncle Dick”. At 4:00pm we’ll hold solemn ceremonies at his Mausoleum and at 4:30, we’ll retire to the chapel for another hour of decorum. From the chapel we’ll head back downhill to the village for a 6:00pm dinner and the oration of a top-notch Oglesby caliber speaker in the person of noted historian, Dan Monroe. We invite our Commander and all of our brothers in the Department of Illinois to join us as we recall the memory of and adulat one of our state’s very finest sons, Richard J. Oglesby.

Respectfully submitted by  
Chuck Murphy, PI  
General John A. McClernand Camp 4  
Springfield, Illinois

## Richard J. Oglesby and the Rail Splitter Sobriquet

Until it was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic, on March 16 the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) planned to host its Department of Public Administration's 2020 Annual Spring Rail Splitter Banquet, Awards Ceremony, and Research Summit. The UIS notice was eye catching because typically, the Rail Splitter moniker references Abraham Lincoln's Presidential Campaign of 1860. One normally doesn't relate the academic credential of a Public Administration degree with that of a presidential campaign but, upon reflection, the concept has obvious merit.

The Railsplitter moniker also has other uses. In addition to the sobriquet being used in the name of a wind farm in northern Logan and southern Tazewell Counties in Illinois, Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee uses it rather fittingly as a nickname for its athletic teams, and the Abraham Lincoln National Railsplitter Festival in Lincoln, Illinois is planning to celebrate its 50th anniversary this year on September 19-20.

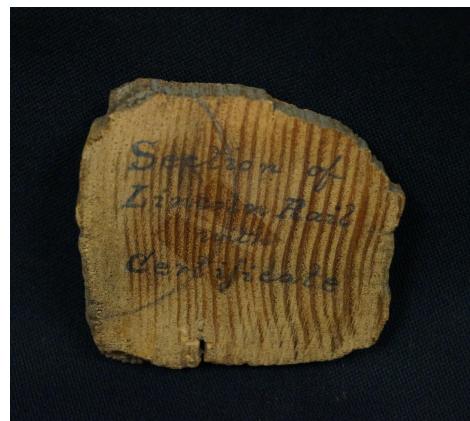
But for us Brothers, we relate to

associated with Abraham Lincoln's life in Central Illinois. In comparison, the Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial is not nearly as familiar. Located just ten miles west of Decatur near Harrisburg, IL on the banks of the Sangamon River, it is the place that gave birth to the caricature of Lincoln the Rail Splitter.

As is evidenced by him being elected of Governor of Illinois three times, in 1864, 1873 (for only ten days pending his appointment by the Illinois State Legislator to the U. S. Senate), and 1885, Dick Oglesby was politically astute and backed Lincoln all the way. The case that it may not be widely known doesn't in the least diminish the fact that in the 1860 campaign for President of the United States, Uncle Dick was the one responsible for labeling Abraham Lincoln the Rail Splitter candidate.

On page 21 of an article published in 1954 in Volume 47 of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, well-known Lincoln historian and author, Dr. Wayne C. Temple, PhD, writes that in the campaign for U. S. Senate in 1858, Abraham Lincoln was commonly "...

bution to the proceedings.



Above: Donated in 1838 to the Illinois State Historical Library, now the ALPL, this cross section, approximately 2 inches square, was purportedly cut from a Lincoln rail.

Temple continues that the old Democrat was Abraham Lincoln's older cousin, John Hanks, and that was Hanks' cue, with the help of Isaac Jennings, to bring forth two fence rails decorated with flags and streamers and bearing in part the inscription "Abraham Lincoln, The Rail Candidate For President in 1860. Two rails from a lot of 3,000 made in 1830...". In an article in the 1987 Illinois Historical Journal, Volume 80, Number 1, Dr. Mark Plummer wrote on pages 4-5 that a fifteen-minute demonstration ensued during which "the {canvas} roof was literally cheered off the building". On page 207 in his book, Abraham Lincoln, A Biography, noted author Dr. Benjamin P. Thomas, PhD, writes that "... part of the awning forming the roof of the hastily erected structure came down on their heads". Nevertheless, the frolicking continued.

Paraphrasing Plummer on page 5, after being called back to order, the assembly called for a speech and Lincoln claimed remembering that he built a log cabin and split some rails near Decatur, "but he couldn't swear that the two that were presented were the identical rails". And then after looking them over more carefully he added that, "he was sure he had split some better than the rough hewn ones presented". One can easily imagine another boisterous response from those assembled.

The rail theme carried over to the national convention in Chicago the following week.

*Continued Page 8*



the term as the name of our Department of Illinois Sons of Union Veterans newsletter. Abe Lincoln, the Railsplitter, was beloved by the boys-in-blue. Naming the newsletter after his nickname is an admiring salute to the Commander in Chief that led them to victory in the Civil War, and to whom Sons continue to revere as did our great-great grandfathers. That is demonstrated annually on or near April 15, when the National Sons of Union Veterans convene to memorialize the nation's 16th President at Lincoln's Tomb in Springfield. However, this year is an exception. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Lincoln's Tomb has been closed and the annual observance has been canceled.

Check off New Salem, the Old State Capitol, Edwards Place, the Lincoln and Herndon Law Office, and the Lincoln Home as commonly known local sights

referred to as 'Long Abe', 'Old Abe', 'Uncle Abe', and the 'Giant Killer'....". He didn't become known as the Rail Splitter until the 1860 Illinois State Republican Convention.

In advance of the 1860 Republican National Convention in Chicago, IL on May 16-18, the state convention met in Decatur, Illinois on Wednesday, May 9 and Thursday, May 10. In the afternoon on the first day, Lincoln was spotted sitting in the crowd and a motion was moved and quickly passed that he take a seat in front with the officers of the convention, and that he did. Paraphrasing Dr. Temple from page 26, as the proceeding continued and they prepared a formal ballot for the office of Governor of Illinois, Dick Oglesby interrupted by standing up and announcing to the delegates that an "old Democrat of Macon County" desired to make a contri-

*continued from page 7*

On page 28 Dr. Temple quotes from the May 19, 1860 issue of the Chicago Press and Tribune, when he wrote that, "On each side of the counting room door stood a rail - out of the three thousand split by 'honest Old Abe' thirty years ago on the Sangamon River bottoms. On the inside were two more, brilliantly hung with tapers...". The article continues that later "...crowds at the several hotels shouldering rails marched in joyous triumph thorough our streets".

Temple continues, "The rail symbol immediately spread throughout the North". One correspondent returning to Cincinnati after the convention reports that cheers for "old Abe" were ubiquitous and "at every station...there were...boys carrying rails...who were delighted with the idea of a candidate for the Presidency who thirty ago had split rails on the Sangamon River...".

They became a hot commodity. Following the convention, from all over the country requests for rails came in and they were ever-present at political rallies of all sorts. in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, Volume 54, 1961, author James T. Hickey wrote on page 12 that in his letter requesting that two rails be sent, William C. Prescott of Salem, Massachusetts, included instructions on how to ship "... so that the nature of the contents may not be discoverable, or we shall never see them here".

Hickey adds further credence to how popular they were when he writes on pages 9-10 that Oglesby "... had originally planned to give the rails away but was forced to charge for them, since Hanks had to buy them from the owner of the [Lincoln fence]". He continues by adding that Oglesby even set up a business record entitled "Rail acct with John Hanks" where Uncle Dick wrote "John has rec'd all the money" and "I have had all the trouble R J Oglesby".

It caught on like wildfire and seemingly overnight the entire country knew that Lincoln stood as the (Republican) Rail Splitter candidate for the office of President of the United States. The question is, how did it come about? How did Oglesby know to interrupt the proceedings at the state convention in Decatur, and how did Hanks know ahead of time that he was supposed to carry in the two rails? In his article al-

ready mentioned above, Wayne Temple writes on page 22 that shortly before he died in 1899, "...Oglesby related his version..." about how the rails came to the fore in a conversation with "...J. McCann Davis, clerk of the Supreme Court of Illinois". What follows is an abbreviated rendering of Oglesby's recollections.



*Above: Donated to the ALPLM in 2017, this oil painting entitled "The Youth of Lincoln" is on display in the library's atrium.*

While having a conversation one day with Lincoln's cousin, Hanks' revealed that back in 1830, twelve miles west of Decatur, he and Abe cleared a patch of ground 15 to 20 acres in size and they fell trees, built a cabin, maulled rails, and built a fence. (Offered simply as a point of clarification, when Thomas Lincoln and his extended family moved to Illinois from Indiana in March 1830, this was their first settlement. After only one year of illness and a disappointing crop, they packed up and moved to Coles County, which is when Abe struck out on his own.)

Oglesby asked John if he remembered where they were and if he could find any of the old rails. The following day they took a buggy ride west of Decatur to where the clearing had been but much of it was grown over with new trees. (This is the area is now known as the Lincoln Trail Homestead Park and Memorial.) John commented that he and Abe mostly cut honey-locust and black-walnut rails, and he took his knife to some of the rails laying about and sure enough, they were maulled from locust and walnut trees.

Dick asked John where all the stumps were and they proceeded about another hundred yards distant and came across a bunch of them. John chipped away with his knife again and just as he

suspected, they were of locust and walnut vintage. Then, at Oglesby's suggestion, they attached two of the rails onto the rear axle of the buggy and took them back to town, putting them in Oglesby's barn.

Oglesby indicated that leading up the state convention he had talked with several other Republicans about his plan for Hanks to enter the convention carrying the rails. The word obviously got out as in a letter to the editor pertaining to Abraham Lincoln as a Presidential nominee in the May 7, 1860 edition of the Illinois Journal, "Viator" writes "His rails, like his political record, are straight, sound and out of good timber".

On page 23 Dr. Temple continues, "Jane Martin Jones, the wife of a Decatur politician, confirms Oglesby's claim for suggesting the plan: He (Oglesby) had conceived the idea of presenting Lincoln as a representative candidate of free labor, the exponent of the possibilities of a poor man in a free state. Recalling the successful Log Cabin and Hard Cider campaign of 1840, he determined to find one thing in Mr. Lincoln's unsuccessful career as a worker that could be made the emblem of the idea, and a catch word which would make enthusiastic the working people."

On page 207 in his book referenced above, Dr. Ben Thomas couches it this way, "Thus Lincoln gained the cognomen of 'Rail-Splitter,' a good vote-getting nickname in that it symbolized his humble origin and kinship with the workingman."

Prior to initiating this year's Elkhart rendezvous project, Oglesby's merits were not widely known among the Camp and though there are always exceptions, it is likely that they remain largely unsung throughout the Department. When speaking of the contributions of those who served in command positions from Illinois during the Civil War, each Camp can claim at least one if not more who stood out and are more celebrated than Dick Oglesby, and rightfully so. That is why in the last two editions and in the coming July edition, Camp 4's contributions to the Railsplitter have and will continue to focus on Uncle Dick. While he was very capable as a battlefield commander, his near-fatal wounds at Corinth are what made him redirect his focus from military to political campaigns.

*Continued Page 9*

*Continued from page 8*

Though he was not Abe Lincoln's campaign director, as it were, Oglesby's simple idea of portraying him as the Rail Splitter - a common, working man of the people - proved to be genius. One or more of our senior Brothers may remember the story about how the Department came to settle on naming our newsletter the Railsplitter, but it is submitted that the analogy to Lincoln's 1860 Presidential campaign is unmistakable. Dick Oglesby's idea to portray Lincoln as the Rail Splitter was not only befitting but insightful, and will forever symbolize enthusiasm and victory.

**All our Brothers from throughout the Department are cordially invited to join us in paying tribute to Uncle Dick on Saturday, October 10, beginning at 4:00pm at Oglesby's Mausoleum in Elkhart Cemetery.**

Especially since it became necessary to cancel this month's annual observance at Lincoln's Tomb, the rendezvous at Elkhart offers another opportunity to assemble in honor of the Rail Splitter by observing the political astuteness of the Major General responsible for the sobriquet and, by extension, the Department's newsletter.

Given the ordeal we're currently experiencing, it is fortunate that the rendezvous is still six months down the road but, should the safety precautions associated with the coronavirus pandemic still be in effect come October, it will be postponed to a later date.

Respectfully submitted by  
Chuck Murphy, PI  
General John A. McClernand Camp 4  
Springfield, Illinois

(Right: Tomb photo from Pinterest)



## New Camp News:

Brothers,

To recap, we accomplished the following on our journey to charter **U. S. Grant Camp 1863**, located in Schaumburg: Election and appointments of temporary camp officers.

Future meeting date and meeting location to be determined after the pandemic quarantine is over.

In Fraternity, Charity, & Loyalty,  
Leigh Franklin, Acting Camp Commander

## Col. John C. Bryner Camp 67:

Brother Ron Kirchgessner is chairing an 18-19-20th century rendezvous to be held at the Wheels-O-Time Museum on June 13. The museum is located just off of IL Rt. 40 just north of Peoria at 1710 W Woodside Drive, Dunlap, IL 61525. The event will run from 10am to 5pm. There will be historical military displays encompassing all time periods of U.S. history. Leashed pets are welcome. Lunch will be provided by Little Caesar's Pizza to participants. Those wishing to participate must RSVP to Ron (309) 696-4286 by May 30. It is hoped that the restrictions on events due to COVID-19 will be eased by then.

May 30, 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the passing of the last member of Col Bryner G.A.R. Post 67, Comrade William Livingston, Private, Co. E, of the 139th Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry. He was also the last G.A.R. member for Peoria Count. Comrade Livingston is interred at Mt. Hawley Cemetery on IL Rt. 40 just north of Peoria. The Camp has recently pur-

chased a special grave flag holder to commemorate his being the last Peoria County Civil War veteran and was planning to invite descendants of the Livingston family to attend a dedication ceremony, but due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the ceremony will be postponed to a later date. The Camp held a 70th anniversary ceremony in 2015 with members of the Livingston family present.



(Photo from 2015 ceremony)

Respectfully Submitted by Joe Hutchinson, PCC

*In Fraternity, Charity, And Loyalty*

**COL. HECKER CAMP 443:**

St. Louis Veterans Parade 17th Missouri led by P.C.C. Greg Zelinski.



Gen. T. Sherman's Gravesite ceremony hosted by Grant Camp #68 in St. Louis.



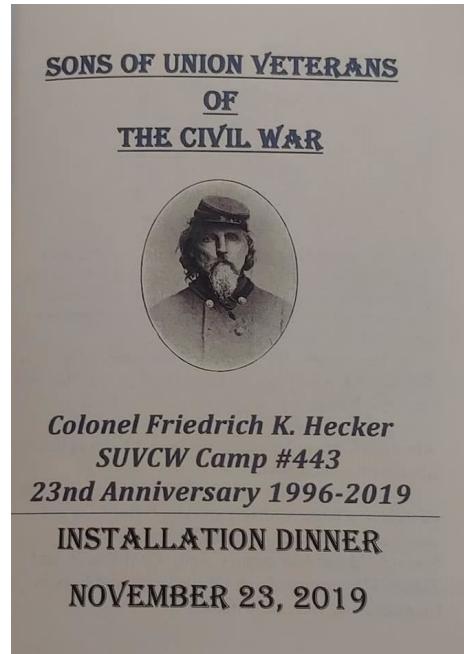
Hecker P.C.C. Zelinski participated leading Honor Guard. Hecker Commander David C. Wildermuth & Wife also attended Nov. 16.



2020 Hecker Camp Officers; Commander David Wildermuth, SVC Russell Schleicher, JVC Commander John Statton, Secretary Justin Ottolini, Guide Bob Korber, Treasurer Richard Piper



Hecker Camp members at our Annual Installation Dinner Nov. 23, 2019



*Right:* Hecker Camp #443 Stay at Home Orders Remembrance Day observance. This is set-up at Hecker Camp #443 Commanders home on April 18, 2020.



2019 Hecker Camp Member of the Year - Richard Piper.

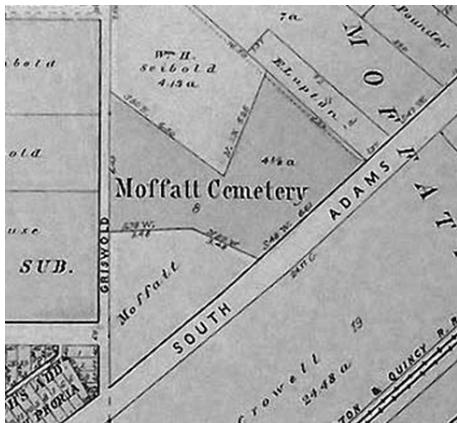


General Grant ( P.C.C. Larry Werline from Camp #4) honored Hecker Camp at our Annual Dinner Nov. 23rd. P.C.C. Werline presented a program on Gen. Grant: From Boyhood to Brigadier.



## MOFFATT CEMETERY: FORGOTTEN MYSTERY OF PEORIA HISTORY

Excerpted from the writing of Bob Hoffer, March 2017



How could a modest-sized early cemetery within the City of Peoria, Illinois, in which over two-thousand-five-hundred people were buried, including 50 Union Civil War Veterans, be abandoned then destroyed, sold then industrialized, paved over then forgotten?

Just four years after Illinois became a state, three years after the first white settlers came to what is now Peoria, and three years before Peoria County was even formed, members of the Moffatt family arrived in 1822.

About 1830, Aquilla Moffatt built his home at what was later 3917 South Adams Street. As early as 1836, he secured a tract of land adjacent to his residence property. He set a small portion of this land aside as a family burial place.

On March 18, 1874, he sold a portion. This "bow-tie" shaped parcel of about four and one-half acres had frontage on both S. Adams Street and Griswold Street. The plat of Moffatt Cemetery was developed with a total of 583 lots on the property. Public burials commenced.

Burials were ordered discontinued by the Peoria City Board of Health, August 18, 1905. According to records, only two and one-third acres were actually used for burials. Using the documented total of approximately 2,500 individuals buried there, it would work out to about 38 square feet per person. The place may well have been full, forcing closure.

Quotes from the W.P.A. and 1930's transcribed materials: "In this abandoned cemetery, there is a Memorial marker erected at the extreme eastern

point on Adams Street with a bronze plate listing the names of forty-five Civil War Veterans buried in the cemetery erected Bryner Womens Relief Corps No. 12."

"There are about a hundred grave stones left in the site, all of which are more or less damaged. The cemetery has been neglected for a good many years."

Available records in the office of Springdale Cemetery (1936) show that there were several orders for removal of remains buried in Moffatt cemetery. However, the remains of only 58 individuals are documented as having been relocated. Most were relocated in the late 1890s through the early 1900s.

Public record searches have not turned up any notices that the cemetery was to be destroyed or that any other efforts were made to locate and notify families of those buried there.

Moffatt Cemetery continued to decay through the 1930s, the 1940s and into the 1950s. There are no records of any efforts to maintain, save, or rehabilitate the property.

The portion of the cemetery never used for burials was sold. Peoria County Recorder of Deeds Office documents show that from March 30, 1953, through January 14, 1954, several heirs and descendants conveyed their rights to a developer. Deeds to nine other lots in Moffatt Cemetery documented in Peoria County Recorder of Deeds office have been found which are not known to have been transferred, so there may be some unresolved property rights from these heirs.

On April 27, 1954, Ordinance No. 6434 rezoning the entire prior active area of Moffatt Cemetery from Class 'B' Two-Family (residential) to Class 'J' Light Industrial was adopted by City Council of Peoria. This evidently cleared the way for commercial sale and use.

Over the nearly fifty years since Moffatt Cemetery was ordered closed in 1905, the property must have deteriorated to the point of almost total desolation. Several old "south-enders" who lived near Moffatt Cemetery or in that area in the 1950s were interviewed.

One individual recalled vividly watching the "bulldozing," as he called it, of the cemetery. He recalled seeing remains and bones being unearthed, and said it made him so sick to his stomach

that he had to leave. He also said that grave stones, some of which were very large, were removed and went to "collectors," as he called them.

Another individual, who has lived all his life in that area, had memories of playing in and near the cemetery as a boy and seeing the large memorial to the Union Civil War Veterans. He recalled the fact the site as a "real mess." More telling, however, was his account of several conversations he had with an elderly gentleman who said he had been a laborer on the destruction project. He said that the tombstones were hauled away and that many, many bones were unearthed and put into "gunny sacks" then hauled "up the hill," as he called it, to be "dumped in ravines."

It is safe to say that most remains, or what is left of them, are probably still in the ground on the site. They are now covered by concrete and buildings.

### Then and Now



Above: 1939 USDA GIS Aerial Photo of Moffatt Cemetery. Below: 2015 USDA GIS Aerial Photo of Moffatt Cemetery.



*Continued Page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

Below: Union Civil War Veteran Monument at Its Griswold Location.



Sometime after the destruction of the cemetery the Union monument was removed and stored before finding its current place of honor in the small garden alongside the GAR Hall on Hamilton Street.

We are reminded of the words of General John A. Logan, Commander-In-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, who in 1868, when establishing Decoration Day for the Nation, proclaimed:

“We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of free and undivided republic.

“If other eyes grow dull and other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain in us. Let us then, at the time appointed, gather

around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with choicest flowers of springtime; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor...”

How far we have strayed from the above ideals of honor for the veterans interred at Moffatt Cemetery that they are now buried under concrete and commerce, disrespected and forgotten for so long.

There would seem to be a caution here that a city which disrespects its past may not provide its current citizens and the general public much of a future either.

### Statutes Regarding Cemeteries

Federal and state statutes have developed and improved tremendously over the years regarding the protection and care of cemeteries and graves, particularly those of veterans. At the time Moffatt Cemetery was destroyed, the State of Illinois had just enacted the Revised Statutes of 1953; these included new rules, regulations, and expectations regarding Cemeteries. No effort has been made thus far to determine compliance, or lack thereof, with the 1953 in-force Illinois statutes relative to destruction and disposition of Moffatt Cemetery in 1954-56.

### Epilogue

The earthly remains of probably all of the individuals involved in the destruction at that time are themselves most likely, properly buried, clearly identified, and respectfully curated in other cemeteries. The irony is impossible to ignore. While we cannot undo the past, we can help

shape the future. Let us be found faithful when the history of our times is written.

“Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead, and I will measure ... the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high deeds.”

*William Gladstone, British Statesman*

**Post Script:** For Memorial Day 2017, a temporary banner was placed near the site of the old cemetery in preparation for a more permanent memorial.



Due to the “Shaft” project at Springdale Cemetery taking precedence, logistics and fundraising were put off for a time. Difficulties in getting an easement for placement of the monument and finding a 501c3 entity to act as treasurer also slowed the process, but it is hoped that in the next year or so, the soldiers and other Peorians interred at Moffatt’s will have proper recognition. It was discovered recently that a former slave, Nance Legins-Costley is one of the forgotten citizens and her discovery has increased interest in the project.

Respectfully submitted by  
Joe Hutchinson, Bryner Camp 67.

### FACEBOOK PAGES:

SUVCW Camp #1, Dept of IL

PH Sheridan Camp 2, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Dept of Illinois

SUVCW John A. Logan Camp #26

Gen. E. F. Dutton Camp #49 Sons of Union Veterans

Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 (SUVCW)

SUVCW Old Glory Camp 6165, Dept of IL

### DEPARTMENT FACEBOOK PAGE:

Illinois Department Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

### DEPARTMENT WEBSITE:

<http://www.suvcwil.org/>

### NATIONAL WEBSITE:

<http://www.suvcw.org/>

### RAILSPLITTER DEADLINES:

Fall: October 15 \* Winter: January 15 \* Spring: April 15 \* Summer: July 15

Please submit articles by the above deadlines. Articles may be edited for length and corrected for grammar and spelling. Not all photos may be used. New issues should come out about two weeks after the deadline.

Send to “[bryner\\_camp67@yahoo.com](mailto:bryner_camp67@yahoo.com)”. Text should be attached as MS-Word docs or contained in the body of the E-mail. Photos should be JPG attachments.