

# Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association  
2020 - May - Edition V

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

*"Fellow members of the WVRA. Let us all keep in our thoughts and prayers the men and women who are on the front lines of our fight to contain the Covid-19 virus. Particularly our fellow reenactors, including those in the WVRA like Ron Wenig and Barry Miller, whose work through emergency services or law enforcement put them in harm's way every day. Once this is over and we are able to resume reenacting, don't forget the sacrifices that they, or any other member of this organization made to keep us safe. - Jim Barnes*

## Upcoming Events

### A note from the Editor

I have noted on this schedule the events that have notified me, that their event is canceled. If you are interested in any event on this schedule, I suggest **you contact the event** or the contact person listed to determine if the event is canceled or not canceled.

**Civil War  
Sponsored  
Beverly Heritage Days** -- SEE BELOW

## Sanctioned

None at this time

## Other Events recommended by WVRA members

**Barboursville** -- tentatively May 8-10  
Contact Roger House for more information

**Quantrill's Raid on Lawrence** -- June 19-21 at Cronwells Turkeyville Resort  
Marshall Michigan, Contact Roger House for more information

**McConnellsville** - McConnellsville, Ohio, July 10-12 - contact Ralph McCready (all time periods welcome) - **CANCELED**

**Fort Mulligan** - August 14-15 at Petersburg.  
Contact Dave Judy 304-749-7957

**Battle of Dry Creek** - August 14 - 16 at White Sulphur Springs W.Va

<https://battleofdroopmountain.com/2019-battle-of-dry-creek>

**Burlington (Apple Harvest Festival)** - October 3-4. Contact Dave Judy for more information 304-749-7957

**Droop Mountain** --October -11

<https://battleofdroopmountain.com/2019-battle-of-dry-creek>

**Guyandotte** -- Nov 5-8, 2020 (tentative)  
contact Roger House for more information

## Other Events

**New Market** - May 15-17, 2020 - New Market, Va. - CANCELED

**Gettysburg - July 4 and 5, 2020** -  
Gettysburg at the Daniel Lady Farm,  
info@GBPA.org (see below)

**Cedar Mountain** (Slaughter on the Mountain) - August 8 and 9. A Chris Anders event.

**Cedar Creek, Oct. 17 and 18, 2020** -  
Middletown, Va.

**Fredericksburg, Dec. 11-13, 2020**,  
Fredericksburg, Va.

**Chancellorsville May 1-2, 2021** - NPS  
Event

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## Other Time Periods

**18th Century**, May 16, Siege of Fort Randolph, Point Pleasant, WV. [www.facebook.com/fortrandolph](http://www.facebook.com/fortrandolph), Contact Craig Hesson, 304-675-7933, [chesson1774@suddenlink.net](mailto:chesson1774@suddenlink.net), or Deb Cassady, [ftrandolph@yahoo.com](mailto:ftrandolph@yahoo.com), [fortrandolph.weebly.com](http://fortrandolph.weebly.com)

**18th Century**– July 3-5, [French and Indian War Encampment](#), Old Fort Niagara's annual recreation of the historic Siege of 1759. Old Fort Niagara, Youngstown, NY.

**18th Century** – July 9-12, Whiskey Rebellion Festival, Washington, PA. <http://www.whiskeyrebellionfestival.com/>

**Misc.** – May 2, Machine Gun Shoot. Sponsored by DNA Guns. Many historic weapons available for rent. Admission \$10.00. Trickett Hill Road, Morgantown, WV 26508. GPS 39.5137999, -79.947000 (Sponsored by WVRA members.)

**Timeline** – November 7-8, Troops and Trains. RR Museum of Pennsylvania, Strasburg, PA. <https://rrmuseumpa.org/events/>

**WWII** – June 5,6,7, Reading Air Show, Reading Airport, Reading, - **CANCELED**

PA. <http://www.maam.org/maamwwii.html>

**WWII** – June 12-14, Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival, Butler, - **CANCELED**

PA. <http://www.bantamjeepfestival.com/>

**WWII** – July 31-August 2, Bridge at Remagen 75th Anniversary Reenactment, Tidioute,

PA. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bridgeatremagentidioutepa/>

**WWII** – August 20-22, D-Day Reenactment, Conneaut, Ohio. <http://www.ddayohio.us>

## Next Meeting

The next meeting has been scheduled for the Beverly event. Exact time and location will be announced at a later date.

## Liability Certificate

A PDF copy of the WVRA's liability or insurance certificate was emailed to members with an email address on April 6. That email also contained the April newsletter. If you have any questions, please contact me at [ccritch608@yahoo.com](mailto:ccritch608@yahoo.com)

## Treasurer's Report

April 1-30, 2020

Beginning balance	\$2,897.34
Credits	
Debits	
Ending Balance	\$2,897.34

Submitted by Jack Rush

## Upcoming Events

### Beverly Heritage Days

Beverly Heritage Days as a single large event is cancelled.

Beverly Heritage Center hopes to reopen at least part time for the summer, with safety measures in place.

We are planning a series of smaller living history activities and programs, through this summer. We invite reenactors to schedule with us to participate individually or in small groups. We hope for some in person attendance, but in smaller groups and families keeping distance, rather than large crowds. We plan to livestream and/or record these activities, to make them available to more people.

This may all be adapted pending public health situation and guidance.

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- Phyllis Baxter

threats" against the Cedar Creek reenactment that led to the 2018 cancellation of the event.

## McConnelsville Is CANCELED

From **Ralph McCready**, himself

### Gettysburg

Apparently there is now only one event scheduled to replace the annual Gettysburg reenactment. The remaining event is being organized by the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association at the Historic Daniel Lady Farm east of town.

This is not a site that has been utilized before and the farm is actually part of the edge of battlefield. The GBPA has 148 acres to stage the event and has already staged a "fall skirmish" as a dry run. The 157th event is scheduled for July 4 and 5 in 2020. Early registration is being accepted now.

The representatives from the GBPA put on quite an impressive presentation at the USV annual meeting. It sounds like they have their stuff together. For more information see [www.GBPA.org](http://www.GBPA.org).

***Statement on GBPA website: As of this time, all remaining events including the 157th Battle of Gettysburg to be held on July 4th and 5 th, remain as scheduled. Please address any questions to [info@gbpa.org](mailto:info@gbpa.org). They will be answered as quickly as possible. Phone calls will be difficult to respond to in a timely manner. (A quick check on April 25 revealed no further announcements,)***

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## Other Features

### New Evidence Connects Reenactor To Cedar Creek Threats

According to Justin Rohrlich of Quartz (an on-line news site), a "newly-unsealed FBI filing reveals further evidence that a Civil War reenactor in Virginia made violent

Cedar Creek was canceled in 2017 after an unexploded pipe was found on sutler's row. But in 2018 a series of anonymous threats were received by Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation. Nine letters promising to disrupt the reenactment with guns, explosives, poison, dog poop and human urine were sent to CCBF on Antifa letterhead. Authorities were suspicious as Antifa is a loose decentralized group which has nothing like letterhead.

The suspect, Gerald Leonard Drake, former volunteer at CCBF was upset about being kicked out of his Civil War reenactment group in 2014. In order to get revenge, law enforcement believes he "tried to inflame existing tensions between Antifa and members of the right-wing, which had repeatedly faced off, sometimes violently at protests....most notably in nearby Charlottesville just a few months before the threats were sent."

Authorities were able to determine from which mailboxes the letters were mailed and using data from Drake's cell phone and credit card purchases, that the suspect was in the vicinity of each of the mailboxes at the time the letters were sent.

Additionally, using Google location data, law enforcement discovered Drake "was mere yards away from where the pipe bomb at the 2017 reenactment was discovered, at the precise time it was found."

*(Editor's note: Two pictures accompanying this article show with startling clarity how well our cell phones can track our movements. If the data is accurate, Drake was tracked minute by minute around sutlers' row at Cedar Creek at the time the bomb was found and minute by minute*

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*around one of the mailboxes from which one of the threatening letters was sent.)*

- from the Quartz article

## The Bushwhacker's War

(Ramblings from a Covid-19 Cancelled Symposium)

By Hunter Lesser

So who were the bushwhackers of West Virginia? You might picture them as uncouth, uneducated mountaineers, the lowest dregs of society—19<sup>th</sup> century “deplorables.” And you would often be right! But in reality, the bushwhackers came from every socio-economic class. A few were men of prominence: county sheriffs, doctors, postmasters and politicians.

Some bushwhackers earned legendary status. Of the former class, “Devil Bill” Parsons is noteworthy. Known for murder and mayhem, Parsons was said to be “ferocious as a hyena.” He was described as a man of very “low instincts” who had eleven wives—one of whom was his own daughter. Exaggerated? Perhaps, but anyone who follows the news will admit that descendants of “Devil Bill” still lurk in our neighborhoods!

Of the latter class, Peregrine Hays stands out. Using the proceeds from ginseng sales to purchase thousands of acres of timberland, he became the largest landholder in Calhoun County. Hays served as sheriff of Calhoun and Gilmer Counties, was elected to the 1850 Virginia Constitutional Convention and the Virginia State Legislature. He is credited as the founder of Calhoun County.



But the Civil War sparked a change in the man. Linked to creation of the “Moccasin Rangers,” Hays gained the reputation of a “desperate character,” a ruthless fellow who waged war by “marauding, plundering and murdering.” His name turned up later on a roster of the 19<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, likely as protective cover for some sordid bushwhacking deeds.

Postwar, Peregrine Hays was a bank president and represented Gilmer County in the West Virginia House of Delegates. Which might do much to explain the behavior of some current members in our state legislature?

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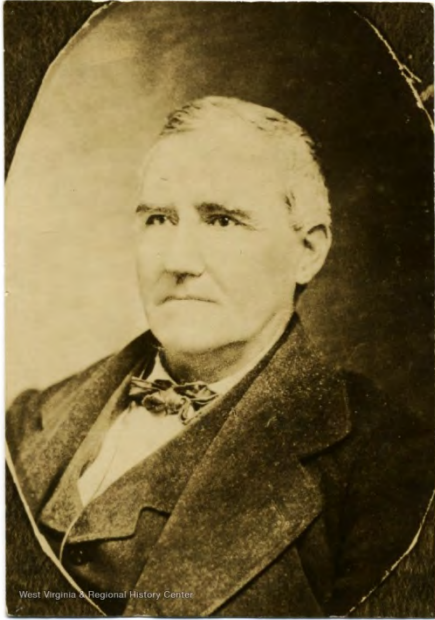


Figure 1 Peregrine Hays

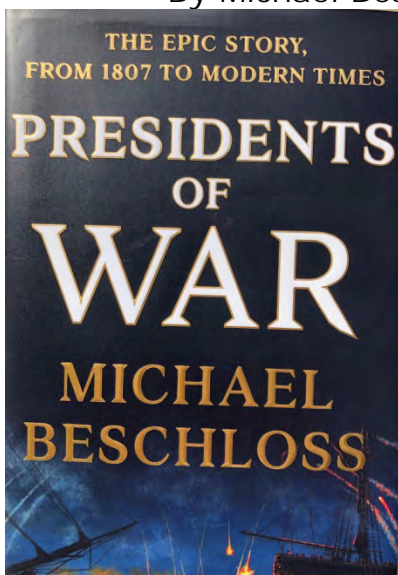
And don't even get me started on the women!

## Book Review

### Presidents at War

The Epic Story, From 1807 to  
Modern Times

By Michael Beschloss



When I got this book for Christmas in 2018 it went to the bottom of my pile of books to read. I guessed that it would be a dense

academic discussion of past presidents' wrestling with the question of going to war. But to my surprise, this book is a very interesting discussion of several presidents and their decision to go or not go to war and their relationship with Congress - which has the Constitutional responsibility to declare war.

The book begins with Jefferson's decision not to ask Congress to declare war. From there it is a procession of presidents and their wars: Madison and the War 1812; Polk and the Mexican War; Lincoln and the Civil War; McKinley and the Spanish/American War; Wilson and World War I; Roosevelt and World War II; Truman and Korea, and finally Johnson and Nixon and Vietnam. He adds a quick epilogue about Bush after 9/11.

World War II was thrust upon Roosevelt, thanks to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The remaining wars according to Beschloss' narrative are wars that have to be sold to the American public. Although in each case there is some incident that the president will use to sell his case about starting a shooting war.

The author also discusses the Constitutional issues involved in each decision. Only the Congress can declare war so in cases like the War of 1812, Mexican War and Spanish/American War, when the president is pushing for a declaration of war, he describes how the president builds his case. As power of all types has moved from Congress to the president, he talks about how modern presidents no longer ask for a declaration of war, but in fact Congress will pass a resolution of support (Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars).

Inherent in his narrative is the dishonesty of some presidents and the reluctance of all presidents to share information at these times of conflict. James Polk just plain lied to Congress about his reasons for going to war and the ultimate goal of the Mexican

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War. LBJ shared little information as he escalated the Vietnam War. Truman likewise did not share much information with the public.

The health of each president seemed to suffer under the stress of war. Wilson suffered a stroke; Roosevelt died in office; Lincoln and Johnson were worn out by the stress.

As much as the current President likes to complain about how the press treats him, it is clear from this book that each of the presidents presented in this study, suffer to some extent, virulent dissent from the opposition press. Remember newspapers traditionally reflected the views of one party or the other. The 19th century newspapers showed little restraint in criticizing the war decisions of the chief executives, nor how the war (including FDR in WW II) was being conducted. Likewise, politicians from the opposite side of the aisle were not shy about criticizing the occupants of the Oval Office. Lincoln, who had blistering rhetoric and press directed at him for his entire term in the presidency, was not above lowering the boom on James Polk in 1848 calling Polk's justification for "his" war as "like the half insane mumbling of a fever dream."

And of course the party and press supporting the presidents discussed here always responded, as they do now, with charges of treason towards anyone who would question war declarations or the conduct of those wars. After all, dissent was disloyal to the boys fighting the war and gave aid and comfort to enemy. Things didn't change in the 200 year narrative of this book.

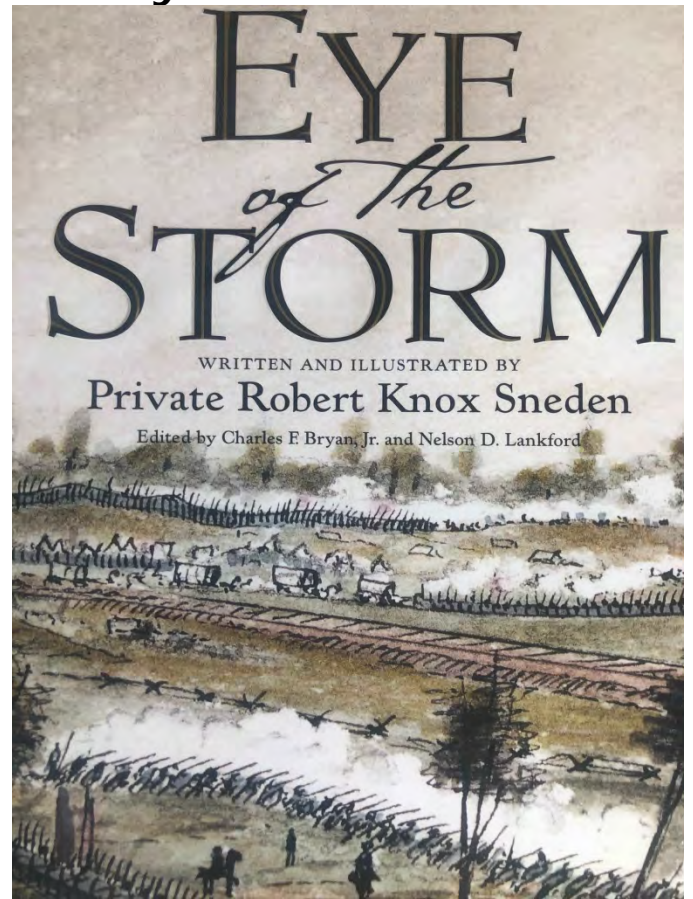
Particularly painful reading were the chapters on Nixon and Johnson and the Vietnam conflict. I guess since it happened in my lifetime I was so interested. Reading about Johnson's journey into a deeper war and Nixon's efforts to undermine him later

when he campaigned for the presidency in 1968 are not pleasant to consider.

I'd recommend this book to any student of history.

-- Chuck Critchfield

## Book Review: Eye of the Storm



As part of my quarantine routine, I read Eye of the Storm, the memoirs of Pvt. Robert Knox Sneden. Sneden was from Nova Scotia, but settled in New York City in 1850 when he was 18 years of age. After he arrived he decided to become an architect and engineer and apparently worked as an apprentice with experienced practitioners of these crafts. He also dabbled in art in his spare time. Not a lot is known about his life in the 1850s, but like many others, he became swept up in the events of 1860-61. When Fort Sumter fell, he decided to help by getting a job as a

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civilian assistant to the quartermaster for the 40<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Infantry. He served in this capacity until after the first Battle of Manassas whereupon he enlisted in the same regiment as a private soldier.

Sneden worked as a mapmaker on the staff of several generals. Apparently his work was well-received, and he was allowed a great deal of freedom of movement and spared a lot of the routine drill of soldier life because of his position. He spent most of his time around officers and in fact, did the work of a staff officer. Curiously, even though generals Heintzelman, Birney, and French would contend with one another for his services, he was never given a promotion.

Sneden's mapmaking duties at this point (the Mine Run Campaign) required a fair amount of field work. It was during this period that Sneden was captured by Mosby's Rangers. The rest of his memoirs detail his travel to Richmond's Pemberton Prison and later to Andersonville and beyond.

Sneden's narrative is taken from his own diaries which he kept during the war and managed to hide as a POW. The text is accompanied by numerous well-done drawings illustrating events and places in the memoir. Sneden was not only a talented mapmaker. His artwork is clear and well-done and his writing is exceptionally readable.

His observations about life in the Army of the Potomac, wartime Washington City, and life as a prisoner of war are fascinating. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the Civil War from the perspective of an ordinary soldier.

- Jim Barnes

## Other Time Periods

Nothing submitted or to report.

## For Sale

Tim Koch (or Cook?) a reenactor in the Morgantown area is selling a large group of Civil War reenacting equipment from weapons to clothing. As of October, he still had items remaining. For more information call Tim at 304-906-552.

## FREE!!!

Two children's camp dresses, two teenage camp dresses, one adult camp dress (size 14). Contact Porter Stiles through Instant Messenger or Facebook for pictures and further information. FREE!!!!

#####

"They Said It (or didn't)"

**"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a photo with a quote next to it."**

-- Abraham Lincoln, February 31, 1866

*"There is a hopeless desperation chilling one when engaged in a contest with disease."*

- Brig. General Wilder Dwight, Harpers Ferry, Dec. 1861

***"Malo periculosam, libertatem quam quietam seritatem."***

-- Thomas Jefferson

This quote popped up on Facebook again this month. There is no exact translation from Latin for this quote. I have seen this translation on bumper stickers (usually with a rifle of some sort): "I prefer dangerous freedom over peaceful slavery." The other version is: "I prefer the tumult of liberty to the quiet of servitude." So take your pick as others have done. If you are really interested in this quote, also read it IN CONTEXT of where it was written - in a discussion that starts "Societies exist under three forms sufficiently distinguishable." I do however, object to those who portray their preferred translation as what TJ actually said.

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*"If there was any doubt about my desire to do battle for my country from purely patriotic motives, there was certainly none*

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*about my readiness to go to the wars, or to engage in any other affair of the knight-errantry order that might win smiles of approval from the girl I loved."*

Melvin Grigsby, The Smoked Yank quoted in Washburn's Own, by Pete Taylor of Clarksburg, Wv.

*"We are moving now, as swiftly yet cautiously as we can. Any time you are in motion your senses are on swivel. You use all of them in the bush. The senses of hearing and smell are as important as vision."*

- Nick Brokhausen, Whispers in the Tall Grass.

*"Yankee Doodle came to town  
For to buy a firelock;  
We will tar and feather him  
And so we will John Hancock."*

- British lyrics to Yankee Doodle

*"Boston we shall in ashes lay,  
It is a nest of knaves,  
We'll make the soon for mercy pray,  
Or send them to their graves."*

- British drinking song, 1775

"History is never simple."

- Members of my family

## Other Sites

American Battlefield Trust - [www.battlefields.org](http://www.battlefields.org)

Beverly Heritage Center -

[www.beverlyheritagecenter.org](http://www.beverlyheritagecenter.org)

Mason Dixon Civil War Roundtable -

[www.wvmasondixoncwr.org/](http://www.wvmasondixoncwr.org/)

Link to Clarksburg History Museum -

<https://clarksburgmuseum.wixsite.com/history>

## WVRA Officers 2020

Jim Barnes - President

Ken Connell - Vice President

Jack Rush - Secretary/Treasurer

Diane Tennant - Unit Rep (TASAS)

Mark Tennant - Unit Rep (1st W. Va. Infantry)

Bill Brisendine - Unit Rep (25th Virginia Infantry)

Dave Judy (artillery)

Webmaster - Peter Baxter

Editor - Chuck Critchfield

ATTENTION - Please do not send any correspondence to the PO Box in Buckhannon. Membership information can be sent to me. Remember you must be a member of record to qualify for membership benefits. To be covered under the liability insurance policy purchased by the WVRA, you must be a member of the WVRA. The other group is labeled simply West Virginia Reenactors Association. Tonya Daft is the administrator on the West Virginia Reenactors Association page. Please address all questions to her about that page. I am not sure who is administrator to the WVRA-TASAS page. I continue to use the WVRA-TASAS page to post announcements as it has been the page getting the most use.

As newsletter editor, I encourage submissions from members or readers, that are related to American history. I retain the right as editor to make a final decision on the content of this publication. Abusive or political submissions will not be published.

## Editor's Corner

### The Editor's chance to speak

**THANK YOU** to Peter Baxter, Jim Barnes, Hunter Lesser and Jack Rush. All three have faithfully assisted the editor or made contributions to the Dispatch.

**SORRY** about the confusion over the April issue. The "insurance certificate" was emailed with the April issue. The second email...not the first.

**CEDAR CREEK** - Further revelations about the "Cedar Creek bomber" just serve to add to the impression that some people outside the hobby have of reenactors and especially Civil War reenactors. Every hobby and every activity has participants that run the full gamut of humanity. Or the full range of interests. I can name a couple reenactors that over the years shouldn't have been in the hobby and fortunately drifted away.

The rest of us are in for different reasons. Some have told me they just like the black powder weapons experience. Some are in it for the camaraderie with fellow history buffs. I won't try to



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list all the reasons I have heard over the years. Suffice it to say, they are varied. But vast majority have a deep and abiding interest and fondness for American history..and would like to share it with others.

One bad apple should not spoil.....you know the saying. One bad apple with a pipe bomb however could have, however, ended it for all of us. Fortunately it didn't. Many of us went back in 2019 to Cedar Creek to show support for CCBF and the hobby in general. I had some memorable experiences that weekend.

Keep the faith.

**BEVERLY HERITAGE DAYS** - Planning for next year's event is underway. If you have any ideas, please let me know or pass them on to WVRA member Phyllis Baxter. Beverly Heritage Center has kicked off its 2020 capital campaign to raise money for several projects including, replacement of HVAC systems, bank roof replacement, exhibit development, protection of Civil War graffiti, signage at Rich Mountain, and other related needs.

**BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG PODCAST** - I have been listening to this podcast, presented by two licensed Gettysburg guides, Jim Hessler and Eric Lindblade. Great stuff for listening during the quarantine ....and beyond. Their episode on Gettysburg the movie was great. They had an episode on Jackson at Gettysburg that was very interesting – although it was really about Ewell.

**PERSONALS** - Keep Jennifer Smith in your prayers. Thank you to those WVRA members who have sent get well wishes or asked about my son. He is now walking without crutches.

**I WILL MAKE MY REGULAR** plea to the membership (or non-member readers) to contribute to the Trans-Allegheny Dispatch. Especially those members from other periods than the American Civil War.

The views expressed here are not necessarily The views of the WVRA.

WVRA website - [wvra.org](http://wvra.org)  
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Thanks to the Donegans for posting this picture on Facebook. After being analyzed by experts, our best guess is this picture is about 12 years old and is taken at Rich Mountain. Here is my best guess (with help from other members of the 1st West Virginia) about who is in this picture. Standing from left to right: Cindy Trail, unknown, Chuck Critchfield. Seated: back to camera unkown, Andy Rush, Bill Donegan, barely visible hat unkown, Corporal Jusin Eubank, Sgt. Ross Wetherell, Garth Lindley, Jim Barnes (head only), Corporal Dave Eubank, Mike Phillips, Steve Allen??, Sgt. Mark Tennant, Corporal John Foudray. Our best guess on the unknowns were Mark Trail, Neil Randolph, Luke (last name?) or Jack Rush.

"We tend to create stories that appeal to us. Then we impose those stories on the past."  
- A Wallace Collection video produced on the 500th anniversary of the battle of Agincourt ,found on You Tube

"The lack of a sense of history is the damnation of the modern world."  
- Robert Penn Warren

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This newsletter is available free to members by email. It will be mailed by US Mail for \$10 per year fee.