



## COVID-19 Alone Together

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As we all are trying our best to protect one another and our families against the ressuragence of the COVID-19 virus, now is a good time as ever to read a good book, binge watch a television show, play a family board game or try a new recipe. When it pertains to our history, the same strategies can be applied. With so much social media available these days, one can take a virtual tour of their favorite park or historical site, research online. Organizations like The American Battlefield Trust provide a lot of information related to our nation’s history. As we continue to deal with this pandemic which has caused a lot of confusion, anxiousness, boredom and stress for many of us, we also have to remember that we are alone together and life as we know it, will resume. In the meantime, maybe it’s time to read Brett Spaulding’s ‘Last Chance for Victory,’ Franklin Cooling’s ‘The Battle That Saved Washington,’ Joseph Collins’ ‘Battle of West Frederick, July 7, 1864,’ or Ryan Quint’s ‘Determined to Stand and Fight.’ Be safe and remember we are all in this together.

*Brian Coblentz is an MNBF board member*

## MNBF welcomes Lynn Bristol and Angelo Orelli

Lynn Bristol and Angelo Orelli were recently added to the Board of Directors of the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation for 3-year terms. Lynn has a Doctorate in Microbiology and Immunology and a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree and is an attorney and Patent Examiner for the US Patent and Trademark Office. She was chair of the Board of the Journal of the Patent and Trademark Office Society for four years and remains a member of that board. She is the author of a number of articles and holds patents in the field of immunology. She is also an avid student of the Civil War and at MNB she has researched topics such as the B&O Railroad and the US Colored Troops recruiting station that existed at the RR junction and has participated at many events sponsored by the park. She is a member of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine as well as the Chicago and the Washington, D. C., Civil War Round Tables.

Angelo Orelli is a retired Montgomery County and Frederick County School Administrator, having served 42 years in education. He has been a volunteer at the Monocacy National Battlefield for over 3 years, working at the Visitor Center front desk and inspecting and maintaining way stations and walking trails. He has participated in many events at the park and has worked with the park archeologist at several sites in the park. He graduated from Montpelier VA archeological training in 2019 and is certified as a metal detectorist for the Park. He is also a member of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Trust and the African-American Resources, Cultural Heritage Society of Frederick County.

## **MNB's New Superintendent**

The National Park Service (NPS) announced that acting Area Director Lisa Mendelson-Ielmini has named current Monocacy National Battlefield (MNB) acting Superintendent Andrew Banasik as the official Superintendent of the MNB. Mr. Banasik began his NPS career as a seasonal employee at the MNB and has 23 years of experience with the NPS. The MNB looks forward to working with Mr. Banasik in his new role.

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## **Tell Our Stories - James Birney Van Ornum – 106<sup>th</sup> NY – Co. K**

*By Wayne Coblentz is a history teacher of 43 years and a former Vice President of the Frederick County Civil War Round Table*

Recently my son acquired for our military collection a letter written by James Van Ornum who served with Company K, 106<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer infantry during the Battle of Monocacy. According to the 'New York in the War of the Rebellion' written by Frederick Phisterer, during the Battle of Monocacy, the regiment was known as the St. Lawrence County Regiment served with the 6<sup>th</sup> Corp under the command of Captain Edward M. Pain. The Civil War in the East website shows that casualties for the regiment at Monocacy were 2 officers and 15 enlisted men killed; 1 officer and 12 enlisted men mortally wounded; 2 officers and 58 enlisted men wounded and 43 men missing, totaling roughly 133 casualties. Fellow members of Van Ornum's 106<sup>th</sup> New York, Company K would come from Canton, Colton and Edwards counties of New York state.

Three sons of James O. and Cynthia Van Ornum served in the Union army during the Civil War. William Van Ornum enlisted at age 21 with Company I, 14<sup>th</sup> New York volunteers on May 7, 1861. William served 2 years and mustered out on March 24, 1863 and became a harness maker in Washington D.C. Brother Nathan accepted a bounty as a substitute on August 18, 1863 and became a private in Company H of the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Infantry. Nathan died as a result of a gunshot wound on May 10, 1864 at the Mount Pleasant Hospital in Washington, D.C.

James Birney Van Ornum was born in 1844 and enlisted in the Company K of the 106<sup>th</sup> New York on August 27, 1862. He would serve three years as a private. He would eventually be wounded at Petersburg, Virginia on April 2, 1865, however, during the Battle of Monocacy, the letter that James wrote signified that he was in the hospital at Frederick, Maryland on August 5, 1864 recuperating from the long hard march he experienced as a member of the 106<sup>th</sup> NY during the spring and summer months of 1864. During his convalescence at Frederick, he worked as a hospital steward and found the hospital a "good and comfortable place for the sick" and "as room for seven or eight hundred patients." He relates in the letter how he was worn out from all the marching with the 6<sup>th</sup> Corp had done during the spring 1864 leaving Petersburg, Virginia and all the summer troop movements. James states in his letter that "only the strongest and best could keep up and he is worn out." He felt as though the "Frederick hospital is a good place to be" and "does not wish to return, but knows that he will return to his regiment at the first opportunity."

James provided a short description of the Battle of Monocacy where the 106<sup>th</sup> New York participated and stated that "we had a disastrous fight of July 9<sup>th</sup> and it turns out that the rebel's corps exceeded us very much but we were driven from our position; forced to fall back in haste and disorder." James goes on to state that the regiment "did not make permanent stand till we reached Ellicott Mills which we only held long enough for our stray guns to come up when we fell back to Baltimore." His description provides an insight to the hectic and chaotic situation faced by retreating units that participated in the Battle of Monocacy as many fellow men would be captured. James would eventually be wounded outside Petersburg, Virginia on April 2, 1865 and would spend the remaining duration of the war at Douglas hospital in Washington, D.C. where he would be mustered out on June 27, 1865. James eventually married and had one daughter. He died in 1918.

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# The Future Founder of The Georgia Institute of Technology at Monocacy

By Ken Plantz



When General McCausland's cavalry forded the Monocacy River and twice challenged Union Forces his all Virginia Regiment included side by side the regiments of the 16th and 17th Virginia Cavalry. During McCausland's second attack Pvt. Nathan Harris of the 16th Virginia was witness to a most unique casualty. The following is taken from his reminiscence of the event.

*The Lieutenant-Colonel of the 17th Virginia, which regiment was next in position with the 16th, stood up and called for a volunteer to climb on his shoulders and from that elevation look down on the enemy's line so as to find out what was going on, whether a new charge was being prepared or not. One of our Lieutenants promptly volunteered to climb up on the Colonel's body and stand erect so as to make the observation. The Colonel bent down and the Lieutenant climbed on his shoulders and then the Colonel slowly rose. He had scarcely straightened himself out, and the officer above him had likewise risen up, when there came a sharp sound from the direction of the enemy, and a volley was poured into the bodies of the two officers. They fell to the ground and instantly expired, making no report.*

The Lieutenant-Colonel was William Tavenner the Commander of the 17th Virginia Cavalry. He did not die immediately but was taken to the house of James Gambrill where he died two days later.

Pvt. Harris was 18 years old at the time and after the war he returned to his native home in Eastern Tennessee. As an ex-Confederate soldier in a very pro-Union area he and his family were under so great a persecution that his father moved them into Northern Georgia. After receiving a degree from the University of Georgia and attending law school he was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1882. While serving, he three times put forth a Bill to establish a Technical College for Georgia. The Bill finally passed in 1885 establishing the foundation for what is now The Georgia Institute of Technology. Harris went on to serve in the Georgia Senate (1894-95) and was sworn in as the 61st Governor of Georgia in 1915.



Harris was the second Confederate soldier at Monocacy to become Governor of Georgia. General John B. Gordon served from 1886-1890. Gordon's Infantry Division successfully attacked the same Union line that inflicted the casualty observed by Pvt. Harris.

John B. Gordon

## Sources

John B. Gordon, Georgia Encyclopedia, "<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/john-b-gordon-1832-1904>

Nathaniel E. Harris, Autobiography: The Story of an Old Man's With Reminiscences of Seventy-Five Years, (The J.W. Burke Company, 1925), 86,87

Brian Stuart Kesterson, Campaigning With the 17<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry Night Hawks at Monocacy, (Night Hawk Press,2005) ,97

## In Memoriam

The MNBF is sad to report that our friend James Enright passed away on February 12, 2020, at his home in Monrovia, MD. Jim was a member of the founding Board of Directors of the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation and was instrumental in getting the organization established. He was born on November 15, 1941, in Brooklyn, NY. He studied at Notre Dame and Loyola University in Chicago and worked for the Chicago Sun-Times becoming Vice President of Marketing and Advertising. In 1995 he became Marketing and Advertising Director for the Frederick News-Post and GS Communications Cable Co., retiring in 2002. He was a member and Secretary of the Frederick County Civil War Roundtable for seven years. He recently was instrumental in developing the process for the next MNBF strategic plan and his wisdom and contributions to this organization will be remembered.

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The MNBF is also sad to report that our friend and the one of the nation's most prolific Civil War Historians Edwin Bearss passed away on September 15, 2020. Mr. Bearss was born on June 26, 1923, in Billings, Montana. Edwin served in the United States Marine Corp during World War II. Mr. Bearss was seriously wounded during the War but it did not stop him. Edwin served as the Chief Historian for the National Park Service from 1981 to 1994. Mr. Bearss became a Chief Historian Emeritus. Edwin was at the Meet the Authors Event in 2019. Edwin was 97 years old.

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## Commanders Corner

*Commanders Corner is a continuing feature for the newsletter featuring information on the two commanders at the battle of Monocacy--Union Major General Lew Wallace and Confederate Lieutenant General Jubal Anderson Early.*

*By Gail Stephens is a historian and author of Shadow of Shiloh; Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War and numerous other articles and monographs.*

Colonel Lew Wallace of the 11<sup>th</sup> Indiana had no intention of remaining long on assignment controlling Ohio River boat traffic near Evansville, Indiana, no matter what Indiana Governor Morton wanted. He and his men wanted battle. So, he asked his politically prominent brother-in-law, Indiana Senator Henry Smith Lane for help. Lane and Interior Secretary Caleb Smith, another Hoosier, intervened with Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, Union general-in-chief, and Scott ordered the 11<sup>th</sup> to Cumberland, Maryland, to guard the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, a strategic communication and supply line for the Union. Though Indiana Governor Morton was not happy, Wallace was thrilled to be move to an area within a few miles of a part of Virginia where Confederates were operating. Wallace expected action and he would have it.

The 11<sup>th</sup> left Evansville on June 5 and arrived in Cumberland on the morning of June 10. While on his journey, Wallace was briefed by a Union commander in western Virginia about the situation in his new command. A Confederate force of 1300 to 2000 Confederates was believed to be in Romney, Virginia, a day's march from Cumberland. On the train to Cumberland, Wallace decided to go on the offense and attack the Confederate encampment. With the assent of his commanding officer in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, Wallace decided to make a night march, something not done at this point in the war. His regiment numbered only 800 men, so he hoped to gain the upper hand by surprising the Confederates. He left a small contingent in Cumberland tending large fires and marched his men along mountain roads toward Romney. This attack and the march are emblematic of Wallace's always aggressive posture and his willingness to take a chance. However, it also showcased his neophyte status. He was outnumbered and he knew next to nothing about his enemy. The attack could easily turn into a disaster.

His men marched 18 weary miles that night and their colonel walked with them. They lost the element of surprise when some locals saw them and sent a messenger posthaste to the Confederates. When Wallace and his men marched up to Romney, they spied a line of about five hundred armed Confederates with two pieces of artillery across a river in line on a hillside. Wallace had one more advantage; he had molded his men into a superb fighting unit and

the Confederates on the hill were new recruits. Wallace led a rush across the river bridge, then up a well-wooded hillside and across a ravine on the Confederate's left flank. By the time they reached the top of the hill, the Confederates had fled. Wallace had removed a threat to the crucial B&O. The appearance of a Union fighting force, seemingly headed toward Confederate-occupied Harpers Ferry prompted Brigadier General Joseph Johnston, the commander there, to evacuate the city and move south to Winchester, Virginia. Wallace and the 11<sup>th</sup> were hailed as heroes.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Indiana remained the only force in Cumberland area, so Wallace mounted some of his best men and used them as scouts. On June 28, the scouts of the 11th clashed with Confederate cavalry led by the soon-to-be famous Captain Turner Ashby. Wallace's men drove the Confederate back deep into Virginia and the 11<sup>th</sup> was yet again in the headlines. Fame came easily during the early days of the war.

Alas, they saw no more action. In early July, the regiment was ordered to join the Union force gathering to attack a Confederate army of about 20,000 deployed along a stream named Bull Run to protect the crucial railroad junction at Manassas, Virginia. Wallace and his men joined the army of Major General Robert Patterson moving south from central Pennsylvania but did not participate in the First Battle of Bull Run. Patterson was cautious and had information the Confederates were luring his army into the Shenandoah Valley for an attack, so his army stayed in the Charles Town, West Virginia area and missed the July 21 battle. Wallace was sorely disappointed. He had written his wife that he was about to "realize my life-long wish" and participate in a "great battle." Patterson's praise of his "gallant regiment" which had "earned a good name in action" did not make up for it.

The 11th Indiana went back to Indiana on July 23. Like much of the Union army, the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> had signed up to fight for only three months because of the widely-held belief the war would be over in that time. In that short time, the men and their commander had performed well. Wallace had shown himself to be an active, determined, resourceful and self-confident commander who had created a fighting regiment through drill and discipline. Lincoln remarked after the fight with Ashby's cavalry that "Indiana had won nearly all the glory so far and taken about all the scalps." However, Wallace had also shown himself to be disobedient, angering Governor Morton, by asking his contacts in Washington to a fighting command. This lack of respect for authority was a flaw that would cost Wallace in the future.

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