

BENNETT PLACE COURIER

Editor: *Ryan Reed*

Official Newsletter of the Bennett Place Support Fund, Inc.

Summer 2015

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150th Anniversary

Have you ever been on a straight highway and way down the road you see a mountain in the distance that looks like you will never get to it? Well, that is the way we felt about the 150th commemoration of the largest surrender of the War Between the States. Back in 2011 when we first started thinking about the event it seemed like such a long time away. Then 2014 came and plans started to get pumped up and rolling along. In April, the museum was finished and last minute plans completed. Nerves taut and headaches abundant...suddenly it was all over.



We planned for so many people to come to Durham and the Bennett Place State Historic Site. The City of Durham, the Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, as well as Hillsborough Visitors Bureau helped advertise the event. On Tuesday and Wednesday of the commemoration week the history trailer from Virginia was parked at the site and school children from Durham and the surrounding area came to learn.

On Saturday and Sunday the Generals and their staff gave great performances in the Bennett House while volunteers were everywhere doing whatever needed to be done. Re-enactors camped in the woods, in the cold rain (it rained both Saturday and Sunday), and it made life miserable for all.



Authors gave wonderful talks about their books and events that happened 150 years ago, both the auditorium and a large tent outside the Visitors' Center were used. Heritage organizations were available with information about their groups. Cindy Bennett was busy collecting information about descendants of James and Nancy Bennett and there are plans to have a Bennett Family Reunion in October. Thanks to Cindy, many people were able to buy the "I am a Bennett" t-shirt.

The new museum was a huge success with new displays and lighting. There is still some small work to be done but the look is entirely different. The State artisans did a fine job.

As the event came to a close on Sunday there was a ceremony which Secretary Susan Kluttz, Dr. Kevin Cherry, Keith Hardison, Dale Coats, Senator Mike Woodard, and several members of the legislature attended. Speeches were made and thanks given to the re-enactors and volunteers, without whom the event could not have taken place.



Now we start renewed for the next big event. There was a sad note after the event. John Guss, the site manager of eight years, resigned from his position. We would like to thank John for all of his hard work in taking the Bennett Place State Historic Site out of the shadow of Appomattox. He was a friend to all of the organizations that held their meetings at the site and to Durham. We will miss him.

***Karen Edwards, President
Bennett Place Support Fund***



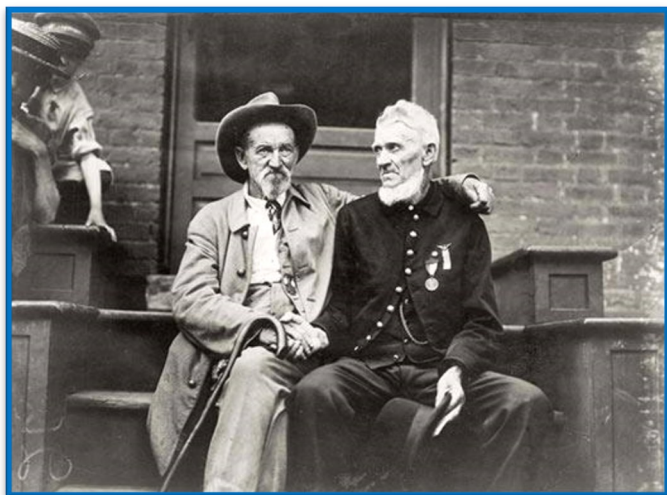


2015 Upcoming Events

October 10-11

A Soldier's Return Home

Join us as we remember and honor the soldiers of Blue & Grey. Living History activities will include a visit from a Union Soldier who will share his experience in service during the war.



December 12

Christmas in the Carolinas During the Civil War.





College Interns

Alexa Chickene

Our summer intern for 2015 is Alexa Chickene. She is a senior at Elon University and is participating in the NC State's Government Internship program. Alexa is an international studies major with a minor in history. Alexa has an avid passion for history and is thoroughly enjoying her internship. Alexa has studied abroad twice so far. The last time in Alicante, Spain for five months. The previous study abroad was a tour of the European Union in seven different countries. During that trip Alexa met with several E.U officials and learned about the structure and function of said organization. Alexa speaks English and Spanish fluently and a little bit of French. Alexa plans on continuing her career in government after her senior year by working at the Federal level. For now, she is more than content at Bennett Place Historic Site. Come by and take a personal tour by Alexa! She's the best gal around!



Revolver Raffle Winner

Congratulations to Ondrea Austin from Chapel Hill for winning the Remington Pistol Box during our 150th Anniversary.

Hope you enjoy this special keepsake!





Memorial Day Remembrance

By: Ryan Reed

This year's Memorial Day Remembrance was a tremendous success. It was held on May 23rd & 24th, and we could not have asked for better weather. Both days were in the Mid-70's and we had several hundred visitors for both days. This is the eighth year we have had this event and every year it has gotten larger and larger. This year we were fortunate to have several historic vehicles. David Stanley and his Living History group came out with his M3A1 Scout Car and a WWII Jeep. Stuart Brandt and his son Jeb came out with their WWII Pacific Theater impression, which included another WWII Jeep and an original Japanese flag, which was brought back by a G.I. as a trophy of war. This was a very welcomed addition to the event and drew a lot of attention. Along with the WWII impression, David Stanley also recruited his artillery group, The 5th U.S Artillery, Battery D, in which he is commander of. They demonstrated a Parrott Rifle, along with a 24-pound Coehorn mortar. We were very fortunate to have Living Historians portraying several time periods, all the way from The Revolutionary War to Iraqi Freedom. One of the more unique demonstrations that occurred this year came from our WWI Doughboys. They performed a gas attack response drill demo, using smoke bombs to represent poison gas. They even got some of the spectators to participate and see if they could get their gas masks on in time. It was very entertaining!



In addition to the soldiers, we also had our growing number of civilian groups participate. They did a wonderful job showing various skills and crafts from the 18th and 19th Century, such as wood-working, weaving, and open hearth cooking. This was a vital component to the event, because it represents the home-front and what the brave men and women were fighting, and in many cases, dying for.

We had several actual veterans on the back porch of our Visitor Center set up and talk to the public about their experiences. One of the WWII veterans brought his medals and photo album of his tour in Germany and France during the war. One of our volunteers shared the story of her father who died in the first wave of troops on D-Day. She even brought the Gold Star Pennant that was given to her mother by the military after her father's death. This simple piece of silk became a powerful symbol of what we were doing during the weekend.

Each day was concluded with a Salute to the Fallen, around the Unity Monument. We had all the Living Historians march in formation up the Historic Hillsboro Road and one by one, salute the fallen. The ceremony was made even more memorable by the placing of the Gold Star Pennant previously mentioned on the Unity Monument. With that simple act, and the playing of Taps, it was hard not to get choked up. We truly showed honor and respect for all of the brave men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

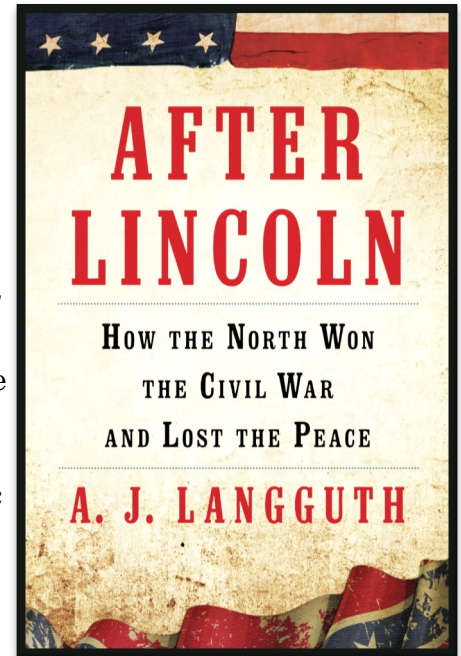


After Lincoln

As the year passes with one celebration of the 150th anniversary after another of the American Civil War, you can be assured that a similar celebration of Reconstruction will not take place.

And yet the late A.J. Langguth has written a simple 445-page narrative, **After Lincoln: How the North Won the Civil War and Lost the Peace**, to remind us that the Civil War meant something more than a general disagreement that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths. And its issues still have yet to be resolved.

Langguth, a former journalist, is well known for his historic works over the years including **Driven West: Andrew Jackson and the Trail of Tears to the Civil War** and **Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975**.



In **After Lincoln**, Langguth argues that the North simply abandons the moral fight that is so critical after the Civil War; a fight that would have made sure real constitutional protections were guaranteed to the recently freed African Americans. Southerners, for their part, demanded that the laws of the land be ignored in favor of a previous social order.

Once African Americans were thrown under the bus by the Northerners to appease Southern rebels, almost nothing in the South worked properly.

White Southerners kept raising the canard of corruption in the Republican Party to talk about how Scalawags and Carpetbaggers were unwanted intruders intent on taking the South for everything it was worth. And much of the mistreatment of African Americans was connected to that corruption by association.

Once the North Carolinian, Thomas Dixon, writes **The Clansman**, we, as a nation, have a fallacy ridden codified script for why African Americans are to be blamed for the failure of Reconstruction. D.W. Griffith's creation of **Birth of a Nation** spreads the libel and gives it the force of believability.

Langguth then connects those Southern beliefs to the long sad history of race in the 20th century in America, ending with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The first version was passed by Congress in 1875, a reminder that there were attempts to get all of this right in the years after the war.



That the history of Reconstruction is still relevant became apparent in mid-June when a neo-Confederate man, espousing the themes of **Birth of a Nation**, walked into historic Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., and killed nine people in a bible study class. The violence is identical to that visited upon thousands of African Americans during Reconstruction, as described by Langguth.

An easily readable primer on Reconstruction, the book is built around biographical sketches of the participants. Andrew Johnson, Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, and Nathan Bedford Forrest have chapters. The vacillating nature of the former abolitionists is striking as they are confronted with increasing efforts by Southerners to destroy the citizenship of African Americans.

After Lincoln doesn't just chart the post war years. Lincoln and the cast of characters are working diligently before the war ends to figure out what it should all mean. In a time where historians are trying to reinvigorate Ulysses Grant's reputation, books like **After Lincoln** remind us why he is central to the United States' win and how some of the less favorable rumors of his earlier reputation have done massive damage to his legacy. Grant's drinking and butchery were exaggerated for effect after the war as the Lost Cause mythology took hold. Grant's half effort to staunch the hemorrhaging of constitutional rights in the South gets mention here, but while his heart seems to be in the right place, he doesn't have the ability to solve the problems.



Grant's good intent is contrasted well with deceitful North Carolinian Andrew Johnson, who takes over for Lincoln in the wake of his assassination. Johnson is a petty man who seems to hate the Southern aristocracy one minute, then in the next minute turn on the other population he dislikes—newly freed African Americans. Much of the postwar confusion over Reconstruction comes with the bickering between the Radical Republican Congress and Johnson.

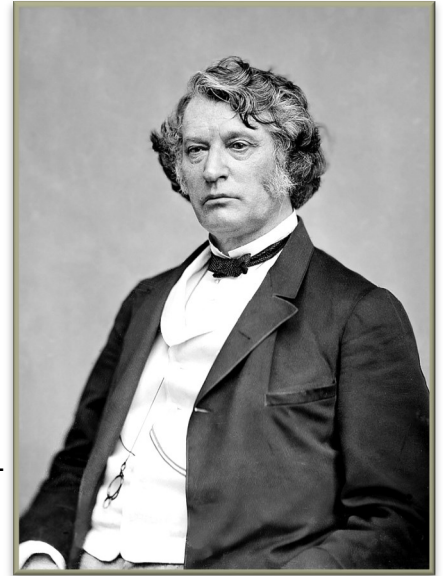
In the midst of that bickering, the Southern Democrats see the cracks by which they can retake political and social control of their society. In the first few years, Black Codes are created to diminish citizenship. In some states, blacks who desired to work in other fields besides farming and domestic work had to get expensive licenses to do so from Democratic authority.

Only a Republican effort to rescue the impending loss of constitutional protections will pull Congress back into the picture that Johnson is trying to exclude them from when it passes a series of Reconstruction Acts and Civil Rights Acts that restore the rights of blacks guaranteed by the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. Conservative Supreme Courts strike down such laws in the ensuing 20 years turning African Americans into a politically destitute class until the 1960s.



Langguth paints a picture of the South that is just ugly.

A group of Confederate veterans join in a social organization that will define terrorism in America for a century. The Ku Klux Klan starts as a group of pranksters who then find that having lost the war, they wish to regain the political power that allowed them to commit crimes against humanity. The battles in Tennessee, the Klan's home state, are repeated in many states across the South. As the assaults on people of color grew, we see the Northerners, weary of the brutality of the South, slowly turned its back upon recently freed victims.



Senator Charles Sumner, wrote the Civil Rights act of 1875.

And Langguth notes that the guilt for the failing South is passed from the unrepentant Southern Democrats onto the newly freed slaves with little rhyme nor reason.

Reconstruction unofficially ended with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes, a black rights advocate, in 1877 (the book dust jacket gives a date of 1887 erroneously) when the Democrats agreed to a political deal, which allowed the Republicans to take the presidency if they removed troops from the last two Southern states, Louisiana and South Carolina. Langguth makes the point that while a few Republicans were disappointed in the Party, they were not ready to see the occupation end.

While the book relates the creation and wrongs of Jim Crow, I do not think Langguth puts enough emphasis on the convict lease slavery system here -- which is a powerful creation of the South. This is part and parcel of the complete picture of Jim Crow and, once again, relates mightily to the nation's infatuation with incarceration today.

This is a good read, especially given all of the machinations of the period. Democracy is messy, Langguths makes clear. From the many discordant voices raised at the end of the Civil War, it is clear, we as a nation were not at our best.



Kevin E. Washington is a volunteer at Bennett Place. He is a retired journalist and Civil War reenactor and Living Historian. He marched with the 54th Massachusetts, made famous in the movie Glory. He now does living history as a Buffalo Soldier and as a member of the 761st Tank Battalion. He lives in Durham, N.C.



Museum/Visitor Center Renovation



Construction Begins!

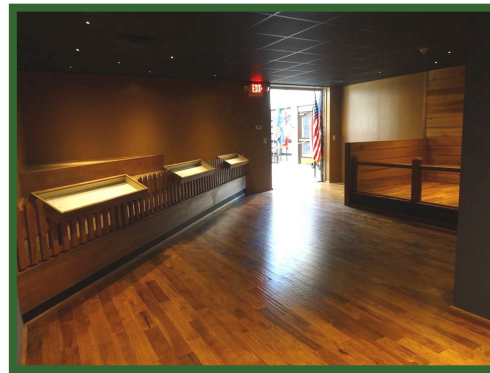


Exhibit Cases installed!



***New Museum completed
and opened April 17th,
2015.***

Thank you and GREAT JOB to all who were involved!!!



Site Manager's Corner

By: Diane Smith, Historic Site Manager



Well, we are back up and running again after closing down the visitor center and museum last October to begin our renovations as well as to plan and prepare for our 150th anniversary commemorative event. Our year began with our old museum gone and replaced with scaffolding, tools, paint cans, and other sorted construction materials strewn about. February brought snow, ice, and extremely cold temperatures which made for an uncomfortable working environment. As the weeks went by, the temperatures warmed up and the activities inside the museum began moving ahead with greater speed. The 150th anniversary event and museum grand opening fast approached.

The museum is complete now and what a tremendous difference from the original! New lighting, display cases, flooring and paint show off our artifacts. We retained some of the original artifacts and were very fortunate to acquire several new artifacts to help better tell the story of a country torn apart by war and its aftermath. Our new acquisitions include several cavalry weapons from a private donor.

Our 150th anniversary event kicked off on April 17th with special guided tours during the day and the museum opening that evening. The event finished over the weekend of April 25th and 26th. Many hours went into preparing for the event and I would be remiss if I didn't give recognition to our volunteers who played an important role in all of this. Many of our regular volunteers as well as new ones came out to help with the museum renovations and assist in all the activities of the 150th anniversary event. Over the course of the 10 days of activities, there were approximately 30 to 70 volunteers on site each day who helped out with everything that needed to be done, from the big projects to the small ones. Several volunteers were on site for the entire 10 days. It is a privilege to work with such dedicated people and I can't thank them enough!

Following our anniversary event, our site manager, John Guss, left to take another job in Alamance County. His dedication to Bennett Place helped bring it out from under the shadow of Appomattox Courthouse and into the light, where it belongs. He made tremendous improvements to the gift shop, helped to bring the museum renovations to fruition, and planned the 150th anniversary event. His departure has and will continue to be felt.

At this time, I am acting as the interim site manager and I want to thank everyone who has supported me these past few weeks since taking on this role. I look forward to continuing the great work that has been done here since first coming to Bennett Place five years ago and for many years to come.

Enjoy this edition of *The Bennett Place Courier*.

Thank you again for your continued support.



Volunteer Spotlight: 150th Volunteers

We just wanted to take a minute and say THANK YOU! To all the volunteers who helped make the 10 day long commemoration a total success. I know it is said time and time again, but we could not have done without you! Thank you for all your hard work and determination. Even through the rain, we pulled off one of the most memorable events at Bennett Place.



151st Anniversary Blue & Grey Ball April 23rd, 2016

Back by POPULAR demand!
Bennett Place will be holding a Blue & Grey Ball in commemoration of our 151st Anniversary of the Largest Surrender of the American Civil War. April 23rd, 2016, place and time are TBD. Keep a watch for further details! Now let the dancing BEGIN!!!





CONTRIBUTION LEVELS

All Levels:

- *Membership Card*
- *Newsletter (issued quarterly)*
- *Invitation to Special Events*
- *10% Discount at Gift Shop*

Major to President Level:

- *Certificate*
- *Permanent Recognition at Site*

President & Governor Level:

- *Framed Certificate*
- *Special Gift*

Help Support Bennett Place!

Please note our membership levels have expanded to include businesses and larger donors!



Bennett Place Support Fund, Inc.

4409 Bennett Memorial Road

Durham, North Carolina 27705

Contributions are Tax Deductible!

Name: (Individual, Family, Group, or Company)

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Signature:

Date:

Amount:\$_____



Thank you for your support!!!



Bennett Place Support Fund, Inc.

Bennett Place State Historic Site Mission Statement:

To preserve and interpret the history of the largest surrender of the Civil War and the lives of 19th century yeoman farmers such as the Bennetts.

Bennett Place Support Fund Mission Statement:

The Bennett Place Support Fund, Inc., is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing financial assistance to the Bennett Place State Historic Site. Monies from the Fund are to be used for educating the general public about the site's role in the Civil War, assisting staff in its research and interpretation of 19th century farm life, and encouraging volunteer participation and community involvement.

We wish to help in preserving and developing this North Carolina Historic Site and need your assistance. Please consider making a contribution to the Support Fund today!

President (\$5,000 and Above)

Lynn M. Everett

Governor (\$2,500)

Thomas S. Kenan, III

Rosalie Reynolds

Chevron Humankind c/o Dennis Buckley

General (\$1,865)

Mr. & Mrs. Rob Everett

Charles Thissen

Colonel (\$500)

William A. Kirkland, Jr.

Robinson Everett, Jr.

Charles Thissen

Major (\$300)

Eugenia Paine

Caroline Odom

Kevin Odom

Mr. & Mrs. Don Scott

JW Web Solutions c/o Rick Sheets

Captain (\$100)

Alexander & Janet Floyd

Gary H. Pendleton

Martha W. Dunnagan

Dr. Henry S. Zaytoun

NC Division Children of the Confederacy

Chuck Wilson

Peter J. Brock

Ken Strode

Lieutenant (\$50)

Sandra Wilson

Dominic Dal Bello

Bob Pfeiffer

Allen Tomlinson

Sergeant (\$35)

Alexander Stick

Capt. Granville H. Oury c/o Lynn Crawford

SCV Camp 1708

Josie Walker

Jason Holmes

Daniel Gaskell



150th Anniversary "Dawn of Peace"

Bennett Place State Historic Site

April 17-26, 2015

Highlights from the Event



Brothers once again!

James and Nancy Bennett



Trooping the Colors one last time