

# Trans-Allegheny Dispatch

The newsletter of the West Virginia Reenactors Association  
October 2024 – Edition CLXX

## Next Meeting

**No meeting scheduled at this time**

## Upcoming Events

*Important note about the official calendar below. After some discussion at a recent meeting, it is the opinion of the group that liability insurance is more likely to cover events sanctioned by the WVRA. It is our opinion that to be sanctioned the event should at the minimum be listed on this calendar. Addendum, January 2022. I discussed this issue with the insurance expert of the USV and he agrees that this is a gray area. There is some question whether the liability insurance would cover WVRA members only at sanctioned WVRA events or all events. He further agreed that publishing events in the newsletter may help to make them "official."*

## Other Events recommended by WVRA members

All events are subject to change of date and cancellation.

### OCTOBER

11-13 **Droop Mountain Battlefield**, Re-enactment Droop Mountain Battlefield WV\*\*  
18– 20 **160th Cedar Creek**, Middletown Va\*\*

24 – **Moorefield Middle School** @@  
NOVEMBER

18-24 **Remembrance Week** with Saturday, Parade - Gettysburg Pa.@@

### DECEMBER

7 – 8 **Harper's Ferry WV Christmas**.\*\*

**\*\* events above were submitted by Rick Byrd. Rick advises that more information can be found at the following: <http://myplace.frontier.com/~thirdwvcav/>**

**@@ events submitted by David Judy – [ranger749@yahoo.com](mailto:ranger749@yahoo.com)**

## INSURANCE???

*Editor's Note: There is nothing new to report on this subject. However, I am reprinting my summary of the situation that was printed in the September issue of the Trans-Allegheny*

*Dispatch, so that members have the latest information.*

After a motion was made at the July 20 meeting to not renew the WVRA liability insurance for 2025, the Association members present voted to table that motion until a little research could be completed. The dozen or so members present did not feel that such an important question should be decided without getting input from other members of the WVRA. As a result, the newsletter editor was tasked with sending a brief questionnaire to the membership to get their opinions. THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WAS NOT A BINDING VOTE.

The questionnaire was emailed THREE times to members with email addresses in July and August. It was sent through US Mail to the two members without email addresses and to the one member who pays to have the newsletter mailed through US Mail.

As of September 7, only 19 of 45 members had replied. That is less than one-half. Of the 19 who replied, 9 stated they have insurance through another organization and 9 stated they did not have insurance through another reenacting organization. One member was unsure. Of the 19 who replied, 10 voted to CONTINUE purchasing liability insurance for the WVRA. Six members voted to discontinue the insurance and 3 replied neither yes or no.

The comments I received were reflective of what had already been expressed at the annual meeting this spring and the meeting at Beverly in July. A quick synopsis would include:

- This is the only insurance available to me
- I have insurance through other reenacting organizations
- I don't want the insurance, I believe I would be covered by my personal homeowners
- We can't afford the insurance

There is no meeting scheduled at this time to continue the discussion of this question. I will send a FOURTH email to the 26 members who have not responded.

Thanks to the members who have responded: Dodds(2), Phillips, Baxter (2), Kopshina (2), Starliper, Lesser, Glaser, Byrd, Barnes (1), Critchfield, Miller (2), Rush (2) and Thomas.

Note: After business was conducted at the July 20 meeting, there was an informal conversation among a few

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members as to whether the insurance question was subject to the Full Ballot Procedure. Although it does not fall under the issues listed in Article 5, Section 5 of the Bylaws, which lists specific issues that must be submitted for the Full Ballot Procedure, I would propose that it falls under the following section of Article 5.

**Section 4~** Important group decisions of the WVRA will be made in a way that lets every member participate in the decision, whether they are able to be present at General Meetings or not. This process is called Full Ballot Procedure in the WVRA, and operates as follows:

A...The issue is presented in full to all members present at any General Meeting. Discussion is permitted and encouraged, but no vote is taken.

B...A report of the issue presented, discussion heard at the meeting, and any written member comment for or against the issue is published in the next WVRA newsletter along with a blank absentee ballot.

C...Absentee ballots are returned to the Secretary by all who cannot be present at the next meeting. Absentee ballots may also be completed by the Secretary upon verbal/or email instructions from a member.

D...At the next meeting the issue is put to vote of all members present. Absentee ballots are counted in to yield the final result.

- C. L. Critchfield (reprinted from September issue)

## Secretary/Treasurers Report

For the period August 1-31, 2024

Balance	\$1,248.34
Deposits	
Newsletter	\$ 15.00
Donation	\$ 5.00
Debits	
None	\$ 0.00
Ending Balance	\$1,268.34

All questions should be directed to the Treasurer/ Secretary

As reported by Rick Byrd, Treasurer/Secretary WVRA

## Upcoming Events

For the complete list, see above. The following is any additional information submitted to the editor for the events listed above.

Nothing at this time

## Event Reviews

I am requesting that anyone who attended the following events to write a small summary of the event and send to me:

1. Droop Mountain
2. The event at Moorefield the last weekend in September
3. The event at Jackson's Mill in early September

OR ANY OTHER EVENT YOU HAVE ATTENDED.

## Clarksburg History Museum

I have participated in the past two Civil War tours conducted by the Clarksburg History Museum. I am stationed at the remains of the Civil War trenches atop Lowndes Hill overlooking downtown Clarksburg. The talks last 15 minutes, but the groups are interested and ask smart questions. Keith Kopshina has not been able to participate the last two because of his health.

- The Editor

## CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLES

Kevin Pawlak presented a good overview of the Second Manassas/Bull Run campaign to the joint meeting of the Stonewall Jackson and Mason-Dixon Civil War Roundtables. Anyone interested in either organization can contact the editor.

## Other Features

### Battle Anniversary Visits:

## The First Campaign Odyssey Continues

By Hunter Lesser

Buoyed by the experience of visits to the Civil War battlefields of Rich Mountain and Corricks Ford on the actual date and time of those events, I felt the urge to continue. My next stop was Cheat Mountain, in Randolph County. Ambrose Bierce, a 19<sup>th</sup> century writer who soldiered through this region as an Indiana volunteer, described the wilds of Cheat Mountain as "an enchanted land. How we reveled in its savage beauties!" I agreed, and this 2024 visit did not disappoint.

### Battle of Cheat Mountain (September 12, 1861)

Rising early on September 12, I headed south on U.S. Route 250, tracing the historic Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. Passing through Huttonsville (once headquarters for both armies),

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the agricultural valley soon narrows, the road makes a hard right and begins to climb Cheat Mountain. The modern roadway follows the old pike closely as it winds ever upward, until you finally gain the crest. Union soldiers called this one of the toughest marches of the war, but as one wrote, "like the man who carried the calf until it grew to be an ox, we have become accustomed to it."

Pulling off at the summit, I hiked into the dark forest. My destination was the scene of a skirmish during Robert E. Lee's assault on Cheat Mountain, September 12, 1861. In these dense woods, a brigade of Tennesseans had reached the turnpike after a difficult march through the wilderness. Cutting the telegraph wire, they awaited an assault on Cheat Summit Fort by another brigade, about two miles east.

The Tennesseans shivered in line of battle here on a cold, wet, foggy morning. At one point, a lone Union officer rode along their line, realizing too late that he was not among friends. A surprised Confederate finally grabbed the horse's reins and sputtered, "Why, you're a Yankee!" And thus Lt. William Merrill, U.S. Army Engineer, became a prisoner of war. So stealthy had been the brigade's advance, that Union forces had no clue of their presence.

Later that morning, a small Union scouting party came down the pike and stumbled upon the Confederates. A sharp skirmish ensued. Neither side knew the strength of the other as bullets hummed through the dense forest. By chance, another little party of Union scouts blundered into the rear of the Tennesseans, routing the entire brigade. General Lee's plan unraveled.

Sam Watkins of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee Infantry wrote of this skirmish in his memoir *Co. Aytch*, memorialized in Ken Burns' film *The Civil War*:

*"After the fighting was over, where, O where, was all the fine rigging heretofore on our officers? They could not be seen. Corporals, Sergeants, Lieutenants, Captains, all had torn all the fine lace off their clothing. I noticed that at the time and was surprised and hurt...You see this was our first battle, and the officers had not found out that Minnie as well as cannon balls were blind; that they had no eyes and could not see. They thought that the balls would hunt for them and not hurt the privates. I always shot at privates. It was they that did the shooting and killing, and if I could kill or wound a private, why my chances were so much the better."*



*Sam Watkins, 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee (CSA) Infantry, author of Company Aytch.*

On the morning of my visit, the weather was more favorable, cool (low 50's) and sunny. I surveyed the scene. The forest was still shrouded in darkness. A rising sun filtered through the spruce and hemlock forest. It was spooky, all right, but this place always has a strange and mysterious feel; it's easy to step back in time. On this anniversary, at this hour, it seemed even more so. I scanned the woods for signs of soldiers, or more likely, a black bear.

Suddenly, there it was. I'd spotted this slab of sandstone on earlier visits, standing bolt upright under the trees. Looking down at it that morning, I could not so easily dismiss it as an act of nature. Was it a grave marker? Soldiers fought and died in the skirmish here. The Confederates had carried their wounded off the mountain, but according to some accounts, two men were killed in action and left on the field. Perhaps Union soldiers, shocked at the violence wrought by their first fight of the war, buried them here? It only fueled the mystery of this eerie place.



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*A forgotten grave marker?*

## Cheat Summit Fort

Reluctantly leaving the skirmish site, I drove on to Cheat Summit Fort. Autumn was approaching; an early splash of fall colors crowned the mountaintop. Leaving the old pike, I hiked up a trail to view the Union earthworks. They reminded me of Ambrose Bierce's observation upon returning here in 1903: "the parapet of the fort is in so good condition that an hour's work by a regiment would make it serviceable."

I shook down some red apples (descendants of the Civil War era), and took in the scene. The wind blew briskly—no surprise, at more than 4,000 feet above sea level. I recalled that Union soldiers decried the mournful sound it made whistling through the spruces. I saw where a bear had recently left its "mark" on the wooden post of an interpretive marker in the fort.

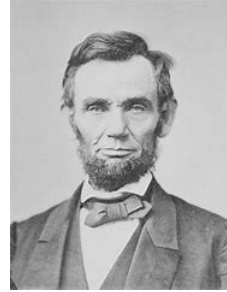
This remote site holds a particular fondness. A few decades ago, I wrote the justification for its acquisition by the U.S. Forest Service, and later helped create the interpretation (now needing replacement). Members of the West Virginia Reenactors Association held "school of the soldier" events here back in the 1990's. They camped, drilled and skirmished gamely for the public, even in frigid cold and several inches of snow—in May. Only fitting, as snow fell on the troops

stationed on Cheat Mountain as early as August 13, 1861!

The ghosts of Civil War soldiers who spent a punishing winter on this lonely mountaintop must be **nodding their heads and smiling**.

## They Said It (or didn't)

Quotes, misquotes and fabrications attributed to the famous, nearly famous, not famous and infamous.



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

- Abraham Lincoln, February 30, 1866  
Google shareholders meeting

## I Took the Bait

Yes, I clicked on one of those clickbait sites on the internet. This one was entitled something like the 24 best Civil War movies. Here is their list.

1. *Glory*
2. *Lincoln*
3. *The General* (silent Buster Keaton movie)
4. *Red Badge of Courage* (1951 edition)
5. *The Horse Soldiers* (one of my favorites)
6. *Gettysburg*
7. *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*
8. *Gangs of New York* (I think this is a stretch)
9. *CSA – The Confederate States of America* (2004)
10. *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (I think this is a stretch)
11. *Cold Mountain* (awful movie)
12. *Friendly Persuasion* (classic movie)
13. *Shenandoah* (I saw this in a theater in the 1960's. I am old.)
14. *Ride with the Devil*
15. *Andersonville*

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16. *Hateful 8*
17. *Band of Angels (don't know anything about this movie)*
18. *How the West Was Won (Civil War scenario at Shiloh was interesting)*
19. *Gone With the Wind*
20. *The Beguiled*
21. *Major Dundee (don't remember it having a Civil War theme)*
22. *Cavalry Charge*
23. *Gods & Generals (since I appear in this movie, it is the best!)*
24. *Birth of a Nation (Ugh!)*

February 2024

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: This was sent to me by a former WVRA member. I am printing it as it was sent to me. I do not know the seller.)**

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>

Battle of Gettysburg Podcast -

Addressing Gettysburg podcast -

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation -

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

## For Sale

From Bryan Cokeley

With regret, I am resigned to getting out of the hobby. 😞  
I just don't seem to have the impetus to get to events with Hampton having left the state. He was in Texas; he now lives in Richmond. (Apparently, he took to heart those calls of "On to Richmond!") He turns 30 in May. He was 10 when we went to our first School of the Soldier. The passage of time. Maybe we all added 5 years this past year.  
It seems wasteful for me to sit on all of this reenactment gear. I will keep my musket. I can make some young person a great deal on everything else – **a whole kit to get started in the hobby. If you know of someone interested, please let me know.**

Miss everyone! Best,  
Bryan (Cokeley formerly of the 1<sup>st</sup> West Virginia)

New Civil War History of Harrison County  
*A Civil War History Of Harrison County, West Virginia 1961-65; Harrison County, Virginia in the Civil War 1856-65. By Pete Taylor*

This new book focuses on the years just prior to and during the war between the states. Despite the rich history of the region, no book had ever been written solely focusing on this area for that time period. Therefore, I undertook the task of researching and creating this account. As a resident of Harrison County, I had access to local historians and resources.

The book is available through Amazon for \$28.00. The manuscript has been donated to the Harrison County Historical Society and all proceeds go to support that organization.  
July 2022

### Rifles

Here is the info on the rifles: Thanks so much for your help. If you need anything else - just let me know.. 03A3 Springfield \$975.00 Smith Corona Model 30-06

1903 30-06 \$1800.00 Double Heat Treated Receiver Serial # 822355 Excellent Condition.

For Further information, please contact: Steve Manos at 304-753-9306 or email at [dmanos@wvva.net](mailto:dmanos@wvva.net)

Thank you!

Dottie Manos

## 2024 WVRA Officers

**Art Dodds - President**

**John Arnold - Vice President**

**Rick Byrd - Secretary/Treasurer**

**Pam Dodds - (TASAS) Unit Representative**

**Chuck Critchfield - Unit Rep (1st W. Va. Infantry)**

**Bill Brisendine - Unit Rep (25th Va. Infantry)**

**Dave Judy - Unit Rep (artillery)**

**Webmaster - Tim Glaser**

**Editor - Chuck Critchfield**

**Note - Webmaster and Editor are non-voting members of the Executive Committee.**

### Unit Field Officers

**(Continue in effect until further notice. See minutes of January, 2022 meeting)**

**ATTENTION** - Please do not send any correspondence to the former 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. Karl Mulac is the administrator of 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.

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## Editor's Corner

*The Editor's chance to speak*

**THANKS** to Hunter Lesser for his excellent contributions to this issue of the *Trans-Allegheny Dispatch*. He continued his visits to various Civil War sites in West Virginia on the anniversary of the battles. He also reports the autumn colors arrived in the highlands in late September, which is about when they used to arrive here when I was a kid. On October 5, I stood next to the entrenchments in Clarksburg to talk with the latest version of the Clarksburg History Museum History Tour. It always is special to stand in the footprints of history.

**MY OPINION** – Those few who have attended the last few meetings have been wrestling with the question of renewing the liability insurance. We have tried to reach out to all members through their email address. As of October 7 only 42% have responded.

At this point, I give up on trying to get anymore responses. It becomes very discouraging to try and make decisions about the WVRA without some feedback from you.

Additionally, there were two changes to the by-laws proposed at the July 20 meeting at Beverly. Although, the more I think about it, the more I realize that the entire by-laws need to be re-written to reflect the current state of the Association.

**ADDRESS** – The WVRA has a new official address. The new address is WVRA, PO Box 227, Beverly, WV, 26253. However, any correspondence about dues, membership, newsletter, etc., should be sent to me. If any mail comes to the Beverly PO Box, the Beverly Heritage folks will contact me. My address has changed to 193 Eastgate Road, Morgantown, WV, 26508.

**IF YOU WANT TO KNOW** who is a member of the WVRA and who is not, please ask Rick Byrd or myself. I usually publish the membership list in the newsletter for a few months for all to see. But some members are uncomfortable with names, email addresses, phone numbers etc., being published. So I just list names.

**ANY UNIT REP** wishing to have the contact information about their individual unit, please let me know. Any Association officer wishing to have the WVRA contact list for the purpose of reaching out the members for Association business, please let me know.

**PERSONAL** – I have not received an update on Bill Donegan's progress. Last I heard, he was doing better. Keith Kopshina feels the doctors have finally put a finger on what is ailing him.

**HAVE AN OPINION** you would like to express? Send it to me.

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This newsletter is available free to members by email. It will be mailed by US Mail for \$15 per year fee. The views expressed here are not necessarily the views of the WVRA.

WVRA website - [wvra.org](http://wvra.org)  
Chuck Critchfield - Editor  
193 Eastgate Drive  
Morgantown, WV 26508  
[ccritch608@yahoo.com](mailto:ccritch608@yahoo.com)

*"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

*"History is dangerous. It goes after our myths and our identities."*

- Brig. Gen. (ret) Ty Seidule after receiving death threats for writing about history

*"The lack of a sense of history is the damnation of the modern world."*

- Robert Penn Warren

*All history is revisionist. By its very nature, the moment it is committed to memory it has been revised.*

- Paraphrased from several historians

*"The People made their recollection fit in with their suffering"*

-Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War

*"History and memory aren't the same thing."*

- Me