



The Hancock Rebel



Winner of the 2016-17 Small Camp Newsletter Award from the Mississippi Division SCV

THE SHIELDSBORO RIFLES CAMP #2263 NEWSLETTER

BAY ST. LOUIS, MS

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The Charge

"To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans, we will commit the vindication of the cause for which we fought. To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles which he loved and which you love also, and those ideals which made him glorious and which you also cherish.

Given at New Orleans, LA in a speech on April 25, 1906 to the SCV National Convention by Lt. Gen. Stephen D Lee.

From the Commander's Desk

By: Camp Commander Don Green
Greetings Compatriots,

I'd like to thank the Brown Family of Cowpen Creek near Poplarville, MS, for welcoming the Shieldsboro Rifles to their Open Range event at their farm. We had a great time in honoring the veterans who were there, as well as promoting our cause. The National Reunion in Mobile was a success as the Semmes Camp #11 is known for putting on a great Reunion. Compatriots from all over the country attended while representing their Camps. Looking forward, will be the fall calendar of events as the summer has been a hot one. This brings us to the part of the year where will need to start collecting dues. Our yearly dues are \$50 as set by our Camp Charter from 2015. If you have received a renewal statement with a different amount, this has been a plaguing problem and miscommunication which will be corrected this coming year. We apologize for any differing amount you may be sent to pay. The dues are DUE AUGUST 1, 2019 and you WILL BE a member NOT IN GOOD STANDING if we do not have your dues by August 31. So do not wait until the last meeting in August to pay your \$50; My number is above and I can give you my address to mail them to. Also, there was another snafu with the return letters in your renewal statements. Do not send your dues to the address to Leland, MS. We need the dues sent to us and I will facilitate that if you have any questions of which I can help with. This month's camp meeting will take place Tuesday July 30, 2019 at 6pm at the American Legion in Bay St. Louis. Owner of The Southern Magnolia Tours, Joshua McCraine will come talk to us about the Battles of Port Gibson and Grand Gulf. We hope to see you there!

Camp Photos



Camp 1st Lt. Commander Dorthy Necaize addressed the crowd at the Cuevas Memorial on June 22, 2019.



Camp Members marched in to post colors at the Cuevas Memorial at the Biloxi City Cemetery.



The Shieldsboro Rifles fired a salute at the Memorial in honor of Juan de Cuevas's Military Service..

More Camp Photos



The speaker for our June 25 Camp Meeting was Mr. Nic Clarke of Civil War Tours of New Orleans.



Camp Members looked on and enjoyed the presentation of the various tours of the Crescent City.



The Camp Members took a photo with the Camp Scrapbook and the Award after the monthly meeting.

More Camp Photos



The volunteers were given judging requirements before the Coastfest event at Beauvoir.



The classic cars were lined up in the West Field under the trees at Beauvoir on July 6, 2019.



Camp Commander Don Green took a photo with Daryl, Oran and Hilda after Coastfest.

More Camp Photos



The Shieldsboro Rifles set up an encampment and Living History at Cowpen Creek Farm.



The 3rd Mississippi Infantry formed up to honor the veterans on July 20, 2019 near Poplarville.



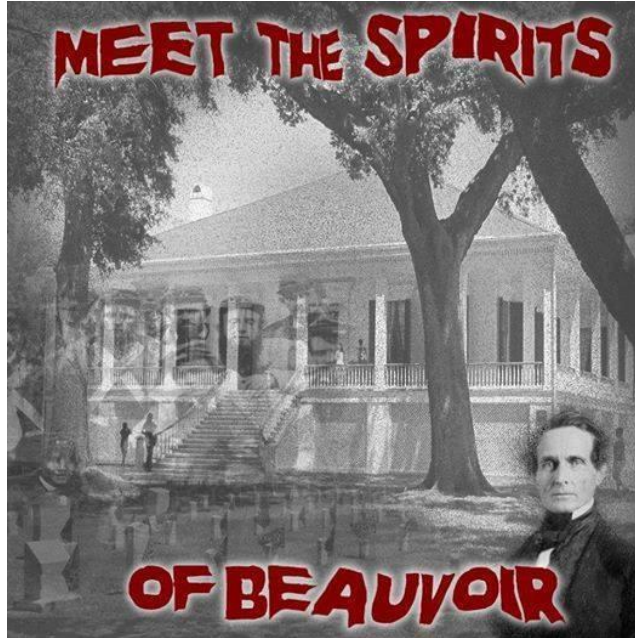
Camp Members and participants all took a photo around the cannon at the Cowpen Creek event .

More Camp Photos



Camp Comander Don Green presents 2nd Lt. Commander Steve Thoms the Beauvoir Award from the Mississippi Division while at the Cowpen Creek Farm Event on July 20, 2019 near Poplarville, MS.

Beauvoir Photos and Updates



The Meet the Spirits is held every month at Beauvoir.



Upcoming Events

**July 27, 2019 3rd Saturday Living History
Beauvoir; Biloxi, MS. 9am-3pm**

**August 3, 2019 Fort Morgan Living History & Garrison
Fort Morgan Site; Gulf Shores, AL.**

**August 17, 2019 3rd Saturday Living History
Beauvoir; Biloxi, MS. 9am-3pm**

**August 23-25, 2019 Fort Mims Massacre
Fort Mims Historic Site; Stockton, AL.**

**September 13-15, 2019 John Ford Home Reenactment
John Ford Home Site; Sandy Hook, MS.**

**September 20-22, 2019 Fury in the Felicianas Reenactment
Audobon State Historic Site; St. Francisville, LA.**

**October 18-20, 2019 Fall Muster
Beauvoir; Biloxi, MS.**

**October 26, 2019 Ocean Springs Veterans Parade
Ocean Springs, MS.**

**November 2, 2019 Camp Paraphet Day
New Orleans, LA.**

**November 8-10, 2019 Battles for the Armory
Tallahassee, AL.**

**November 22-24, 2019 Camp Moore Reenactment
Camp Moore Historic Site; Tangipahoa, LA.**

**November 30, 2019 Landrum's Christmas Open House
Landrum's Homestead; Laurel, MS.**

**December 13-15, 2019 McLeod's Mill Reenactment
Leakesville, MS.**

**December 14, 2019 Wreath's Across America
Rotten Bayou Cemetery; Diamondhead, MS.**

Media Pages Update

We are looking at creating a new website for a minimum fee, possibly free, for the Camp. Our original website was a bit costly and has not been renewed as of yet. Camp Members are looking at this for us and will report to us in the very near future with possible options .

Camp Website: In Progress

Brigade Website: www.dgreen1865.wix.com/5th-brig-ms-div-scv

Division Website: www.mississippiscv.org

Beauvoir Website: www.visitbeauvoir.org

National Website: www.scv.org

Upcoming Speakers List

Tuesday February 26, 2019 – Jim Hancock – Period Bugle

Tuesday March 26, 2019 – Terry “Beetle” Bailey –Stories on Stone:Beauvoir Memorial Cemetery

Tuesday April 30, 2019 - Joe Abbott – Div Commander Platform

Tuesday May 28, 2019 – Bridgett Smith – Where the Elephants Fought

Tuesday June 25, 2019 – Nic Clark – Civil War Tours of New Orleans

Tuesday July 30, 2019 – Josh McCraine – The Battle of Port Gibson/Southern Magnolia Tours

Tuesday August 27, 2019 – Brandi K. Gray - OCR

Tuesday September 25, 2019 – Jay Peterson – Collections of Beauvoir

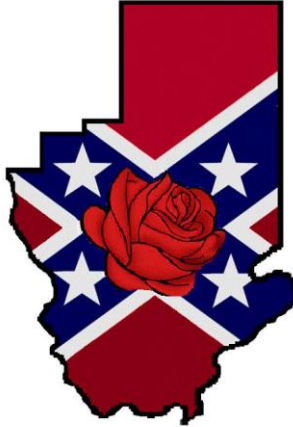
Tuesday October 30, 2019 – SPARS – Paranormal at Beauvoir

Tuesday November 19, 2019 – Shelby Harriell – Women that Fought in the CW

Tuesday December 17, 2019 – Michael Redmond – Confederate States Navy

Order of the Confederate Rose

ORDER OF THE CONFEDERATE ROSE



HANCOCK COUNTY CHAPTER,
HANCOCK COUNTY, MS

Camps #2263 and 373 will be helping to start an OCR Chapter in Hancock County. All ladies 12 years and older are eligible to join. We had a lot of interest this year and feel like 2019 will be the year to charter this wonderful organization. Contact Breezy Bice at blbice@live.com for more information.

Camp Charter



Division News

The Division has instilled a Challenge Coin to raise funds for New Monuments to be placed in and around the state. These coins will cost \$10 each and are available for purchase.



National News

Make Dixie Great Again

July 19 at 11:53 AM ·

!☐Attention!!!☐ August 1st, 2019 will begin the release on a weekly basis during the month of August a series of promotional videos about the SCV. We ask members to promote and share with everyone on social media. For us to control the narrative, I ask you to make your members aware of the release date and be watching for them.

Once you see them, LIKE them and SHARE them as much as possible. We want to flood all forms of social media with these videos so we can get our message out there and control the narrative. We also encourage you to use these videos as a recruiting tool at your events and to download them to your Camp, Division, and Army social media pages as well as your websites. This cannot work without your help. Once again, YOU MUST like and share them. We also ask you to share this announcement on a weekly basis on all social media. This will be a Social Media blitz. Thank you!

***Living the Charge!
Larry McCluney, Lt. CiC***

Sons of Confederate Veterans

Union Soldiers on Ship Island During the Civil War

By James G. Hollandsworth Jr.

Most Union soldiers fought the American Civil War close to home. Recruits from Pennsylvania in the Army of the Potomac, for example, spent the entire war within one or two hundred miles of home. Farther west, men from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio did not have far to travel to reach the battlefields of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Nevertheless, there were some Union soldiers during the Civil War who served in remote places that were very different from what they were used to at home. These men ended up on Ship Island, a desolate barrier island twelve miles off the coast of Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico.

Their story began September 10, 1861, just six weeks after the Union lost the battle to the Confederates at Bull Run, the first battle of the American Civil War. Major General Benjamin F. Butler had received authorization to “raise, organize, arm, uniform, and equip a volunteer force for the war in the New England States.”

General Butler

Initially, Butler intended to use these troops to clear Confederate forces from the eastern shore of Virginia but shifted his attention to the Gulf Coast when he learned that the Confederates had already abandoned the eastern shore. Butler’s new plan was either to attack Mobile, Alabama, or to establish a foothold in Texas. Eventually, he hoped to take New Orleans, Louisiana.

Butler selected two infantry regiments, the 9th Connecticut and the 26th Massachusetts, and a battery of light artillery, the 4th Massachusetts, and ordered them to Ship Island.

Butler had a good reason to occupy Ship Island in November 1861. The Confederates had evacuated the place in September, and a detachment of Yankee sailors and Union marines had been holding the island ever since. The strategic importance of Ship Island was obvious. “As the purposes of [Butler’s] expedition were not positively known to either the rebels [Confederates] or the people of the North,” a soldier in the expedition commented after the war, “and as Ship Island was quite as desirable a base for movement against Mobile or the Texas coast as New Orleans, its selection served the double purpose of affording ample accommodations as a Union

naval station and of keeping the rebel authorities in a constant state of uneasiness as to the point of attack."

The SS Constitution steamed out of Boston Harbor on November 21, 1861, with the vanguard of Butler's expedition on board. The Constitution reached Ship Island on December 2 and anchored off shore. Alfred Parmenter, a musician in the 26th Massachusetts, wrote about his arrival in a letter to his parents back home.

"Well I have just been on deck and taken another look of Ship Island. We have come to anchor within 1/8 of a mile from shore. You may perhaps gather an idea of the place from the remark of the Quartermaster. "What a h--l of a place to send 2000 men 3000 miles."

The 9th Connecticut and the 26th Massachusetts were the first of twenty-seven Union infantry regiments to see service on Ship Island during the Civil War. In addition to these regiments, six batteries of light artillery and a battalion of cavalry spent time on the sandy outpost. Each of these units stayed for varying lengths of time; some for only a few days, others for several weeks, and one, the African-American 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, for almost three years.

General Banks

Union troop strength on Ship Island peaked in April 1862 when more than 15,000 men assembled for the assault on New Orleans. As soon as New Orleans fell, the Union garrison on Ship island was reduced to one regiment of infantry, the 13th Maine. Three months later, eight companies of this regiment were transferred to the forts below New Orleans, leaving two companies to hold the island by themselves until December, when troops from a new expedition from New England, this one commanded by Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, began to arrive.

Only seven regiments from Banks's expedition disembarked on Ship Island because most of the ships carrying Banks's men continued on to New Orleans. Furthermore, that portion of Banks's expedition that landed on Ship Island stayed for only a few days, leaving the two companies of the 13th Maine on their own. Finally, on January 12, 1863, seven companies from a new regiment of African Americans, the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, arrived for garrison duty.

The mixture of black and white troops created an explosive atmosphere, and a racial dispute between the men from Maine and the black soldiers from Louisiana broke out within a week.

Banks quickly decided to withdraw the two companies of white soldiers, and the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards remained as the primary garrison for Ship Island.

Ship Island had been used as a prison and detention center almost as soon as Union troops landed there. Butler sent the first civilian detainees there from New Orleans in June 1862, a month after he took control of the city. Butler also used Ship Island as a prison for Union soldiers convicted of serious crimes. However, the first Confederate prisoners did not arrive until October 1864, when General E.R.S. Canby ordered more than 1,200 Confederate captives transferred from New Orleans. The number of Confederates on Ship Island peaked in April 1865 when 3,000 prisoners taken with the capture of Mobile arrived. Their stay was short, however, for all of the prisoners of war were sent to Vicksburg, Mississippi, to be exchanged for Union soldiers in late April and early May.

By June 8, 1865, there were no prisoners — Confederate, Union, or civilian — left on the island. On October 11, 1865, the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards, which by then had been redesignated as the 74th Infantry USCT (United States Colored Troops), was mustered out of the service and replaced by three companies of the 78th USCT, bringing the Civil War on Ship Island to a close.

Soldier life on Ship Island

Many Union soldiers who spent time on Ship Island during the Civil War wrote letters home or kept detailed diaries of their experiences. Captain John William DeForest, for example, described what happened in a letter when the 12th Connecticut arrived on March 8, 1862.

“Here we are, at seven in the morning, dropping anchor within a mile or two of Ship Island. The water is smooth, the sky grey and lowering, the air damp but not cold. Around us are three or four navy steamers and several sailing vessels, which are probably transports. The island is a low stretch of sand, almost as white as snow, with no discernible vegetation except something which looks like pine underwood. A few board shanties are visible, two or three encampments of white tents, and a ghostly lighthouse. Five or six miles away is what seems to be another island [Cat Island], scattered with trees which remind me of palmettos, though they may be tufted pines. Officers and men are joking over our new home. One wants to know where the best hotel is; another says he is going ashore to shake the orange trees; another counsels his friends not to eat too much fruit.”

Private James F. Stoddard described his first night on the island in a letter to his wife after the 7th Vermont disembarked in April.

“We got on the island last night and put up our tents[.] the land is white sand . . . there was 15 of us went up to the upper end of the island after grass to put into our tents to cover up the sand and we saw lots of prickley pears growing on the island and we saw one wild hog that some one had killed and one wild Cow and we killed one snake that was about 3 feet long[.] it is 6 miles up where we went and we did not get back until 10 o’clock at night and i was as tired as any one need to be[.] there is some lemon trees on the island but they [don’t] have any lemons on them. . . the Sand drifts like Snow it filled my eyes and ears full[.] it was very warm here yesterday but it is cool this morning[.] it seems like October[.] i got wet to the skin last night for there was a heavy shower before we got back[.]”

Once they got settled in, these accidental tourists explored their new home. Lieutenant George G. Smith recorded his first tour of Ship Island in his diary.

“We started from the west end of the island, where the troops are quartered, at 9 a.m. On reaching the center of the island we found the water breaching over for about a mile, and this we waded. After this our course lay along the south shore to the further extremity of the island. We found many curious shells, nuts, fruits and branches of trees washed from the surrounding islands. Many pieces of wrecks lay along the beach embedded in the sand, and some almost whole skeletons of vessels lay rotting on the shore. These told sad tales of anguish and death in ages past. From the extremity of the island the southern shore of Mississippi could be seen quite plain. Some porpoises were sporting in the water and many birds were seen. Some of the men caught a few fish. Ripe blackberries were found among the pines. An alligator had been imprudent enough to show himself in a small pond of fresh water, and several officers and soldiers were watching for him with guns, but he was too cunning for them and they did not get him. After wandering about the island until about 4 p. m. all hands collected as many fan palms as they could carry and bent their steps for camp. The water had receded from the island so that it was dry ground all the way.”

As would be true with many of the men who set foot on this barren shore, Captain DeForest was impressed by how sandy the island was.

“Ship Island is the sandiest region this side of the Great Sahara. . . Here the sand is of a dazzling white which glistens in the moonlight like snow, and by day dazzles and fatigues the eyes unless the weather is cloudy.”

Sand was a nuisance in other ways, as indicated in a letter from Andrew M. Sherman written in July 1863, when he stopped over at Ship Island as a parolee on his way to rejoin his regiment, the 23rd Connecticut.

“When I tell you that this island on which we have been encamped since the first part of the month, consists almost entirely of fine, white sand, with scarcely a tree for shade or ornament, and with only here and there a patch of grass, you cannot doubt the propriety of applying the word ‘barren’ to our present quarters. In this sand our tents are pitched, and on this sand, with a mere blanket for a bed, we lie, and sleep as best we can, with the various insects that minister to our discomfort. Our shoes are never free from the irritating presence of this sand. You may find it difficult to believe me when I say that from 10:30 A. M. till about 1:30 P. M. the sand is so hot from the sun’s rays that an attempt on our part to walk in it with bare feet, as some of the acclimated natives do, will prove so painful as to deter one from a second attempt.”

Hot weather was particularly bothersome to the soldiers from the North, who were accustomed to a much cooler climate. Assistant Surgeon Simeon Evans, who remained on Ship Island with the 13th Maine during the summer months after Butler transferred most of his men to New Orleans, wrote to his mother in June to complain about the heat.

“We have terrible weather here now. The sand reflects the heat so that we get about as much from below as we do from above. I tell you, we suffer greatly from the heat. No shady trees to intercept it from above, no grass to relieve us from beneath, nothing but scalding, scorching white sand. It is lucky I brought a pair of green glasses with me, or my eyes would have been burnt out of my head before this time.”

In addition to oppressive heat, Union troops on Ship Island had to weather severe thunderstorms in their flimsy tents. In April 1862, James C. Biddle, an aide-de-camp on General Thomas Williams’s staff, wrote home about a big storm the night before.

“I went to bed at about 11 o’clock & was just about going to sleep, when the whole side of our tent blew open & commenced flipping violently. We were obliged to get up, & after a good deal of trouble succeeded in securing it, everything being soaking wet. This is nothing for a soldier.

He must soon get used to such things. I found out this morning that the Guard Tent of the 31st Mass. Regt. Had been struck by lightening. It is only about 200 ft from our tent. Three men were killed & some 13 stunned."

Heat and bad weather were not the only trials, insects were the bane of almost every soldier who spent time on the island. Colonel Henry Rust Jr. recorded in his diary in July 1862 that

"Winged animals of all sizes, shapes and kind are flying in the candle, flying about my head, buzzing in my ears, crawling down my neck and even in my hair — so I must quit writing, close my door. Blow out my candle, get under the [mosquito] bar and try to forget them. Whew! What a plague they are!"

With so many men camped on this sandy station, obtaining a reliable supply of fresh water was crucial. Fortunately, the problem was easily solved. "By digging two feet into the sand and setting down a barrel," James Schneider, chaplain of the 2nd Infantry USCT, wrote in a letter home, "we have a well of sweet water. This white sand is an excellent filterer." Lieutenant Smith remarked on the same thing. " Good, cool, fresh water can be had in any part of the island by digging anywhere from eighteen inches to two feet in the sand. I never knew of any scientific reason for it, but I suppose the salt water of the ocean is made fresh by leaching through the sand."

Actually, water from these little wells was not salt water made fresh but rain water trapped in the sand. Within a few days, organic matter migrated from the sand and into the barrels, turning the water into a putrid soup as it was warmed by the sun. If new wells were not dug every few days, the water became unpalatable. Fortunately, a new source of palatable water could be easily obtained by digging another well close by.

Cooking rations was another priority, and the soldiers busied themselves setting up kitchens as soon as they arrived. In March 1862, Assistant Surgeon Evans wrote home to report on their standard bill of fare.

"For living we have bread[,] hard & soft, beef, hard & salt, bacon, hard, salt & fragrant, beans good when well cooked, rice for low diet, syrup, sugar, sand, sand & sand. You will see that by ingenious combinations of these, especially the last three, we are able to have a great variety. We get plenty of good water by sinking a barrel three feet into the sand. This steeped together with mahogany sawdust makes coffee of excellent quality & with colored raspberry leaves —

tea of a most delicate flavor. If we wish for luncheon — there is plenty of sand. When we sweeten our coffee with a tablespoonful of sugar, there remains a sediment of a teaspoonful of sand.”

As would be expected, the Union soldiers on Ship Island attempted to supplement their standard army rations in various ways. During the summer months, blackberries grew in profusion on the island, which were a welcome addition to the spartan army diet.

Enterprising Southerners along the Mississippi Gulf Coast also helped supplement the men’s meager rations when they crossed the sound in small boats to sell fresh vegetables. That lonely cow some of the first soldiers saw on their inspection of the island was killed and cooked, and hens and turkeys that were brought over by refugees also fell victim to the butcher’s knife. Some of the more industrious soldiers even made trips to Cat Island to dig oysters.

As the weeks passed, Ship Island began to take on the appearance of an active military post. Sergeant Charles Freeman Reed of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry Battalion recorded this entry in his diary on May 5, 1862.

“Ship Island looks very different now from what it did when we first came here. Buildings have been erected in quick succession. Some for machine shops with steam power. And other buildings are about every branch of business. Rail roads for little hand cars are running here and there and everything shows the works of industry and power.”

The Union soldiers soon settled into a daily routine. Although Ship Island saw no combat during the Civil War, death was no stranger to the soldiers stationed there. Initially, the island had been “considered the most healthy place on the Coast & would be a good place to establish a general hospital.” But the troops who stayed behind after the occupation of New Orleans did not fare well as the hot summer weather set in.

An officer with the Sanitary Commission who sailed with the expedition wrote a scathing report of the health conditions on the island and ended it with a remarkably understated conclusion.

“The wretched condition of Ship Island, a barren, desolate sand-spit, left free for the most part to alligators and such reptiles as abound in the swamps and lagoons of that region; the painful and variable climate; the sufferings of the men from diarrhea, influenza, and rheumatism; the badness of the food, which was of salt meat (no fresh meat being issued); the badness of the

water, and the wretched system of cooking, made the presence of the Sanitary Commission not undesirable.”

Given the rough living conditions, unhealthy climate, and boring routine, it is not surprising that most of the Union soldiers stationed on Ship Island counted the days until they would be able to leave. Except for those unfortunate black soldiers in the 74th USCT, most of the Union soldiers who spent time on Ship Island eventually got a chance to get away.

Life on Ship island for soldiers during the Civil War was a boring, uncomfortable, and often a deadly experience. Plaques mounted at the entrance to Fort Massachusetts bear mute testimony to that fact today. These plaques bear the names of 153 Confederate prisoners of war who died and were buried on Ship Island.

However, there are no plaques with the names of the 232 Union soldiers who died and were buried there as well. They were mainly from New England — Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, with a few boys from New York, Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin mixed in. A dozen or more black men from Louisiana who served for almost three years on that desolate stretch of sand complete the list.

Shortly after the war, Lieutenant George B. Oldham visited the army cemetery and found it in very poor condition “owing principally to the nature of the ground, which is composed entirely of sand.” Burials had been made haphazardly without any particular order or arrangement. Most of the graves no longer had headboards. Initially, it was thought that the bodies should be re-interred on Ship Island and protected. But it was obvious that the physical characteristics of the island made it unsuitable for a national cemetery.

As a result, 228 bodies were exhumed in December 1867 and sent to the mainland to be re-interred in the Chalmette National Cemetery outside of New Orleans. Because of the poor condition of the records and loss of headboards, only 60 of the 228 exhumations could be identified. The remainder were marked “unknown” when they were re-interred at Chalmette.

It might be thought that the occupation of Ship island by Union soldiers came to an end with the massive re-interrment. But that was not so, for twenty years later, in 1885, a correspondent for the New Orleans Times-Democrat visited Ship Island and discovered a number of rough coffins inside the remains of a picket fence about one mile east of the lighthouse. “Why their bodies

were not removed to the National Cemetery at New Orleans, when it was established," he wrote, "I know not."

The newspaper article resulted in a rash of angry letters, and the quartermaster general in Washington directed the superintendent of the Chalmette National Cemetery to go to Ship Island and make an inspection. The superintendent did as he was told and found the neglected grave site. After receiving the superintendent's report, the quartermaster general ordered the bones collected, boxed, and removed to Chalmette for reburial. It was only then that it can be said that the Union occupation of Ship island finally came to an end.

James G. Hollandsworth Jr. of Jackson, Mississippi, is the author of *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War* (1995), and *Pretense of Glory: The Life of General Nathaniel P. Banks* (2005), both published by Louisiana State University Press.

This article is condensed from Hollandsworth's "What a Hell of a Place to Send 2000 Men 3000 Miles: Union Soldiers on Ship Island During the Civil War," which originally appeared in the Summer 2000 edition of *The Journal of Mississippi History*, Volume LXII, No. 2

Posted January 2006

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