Annual Fall Meeting  
December 16, 2017

Departing from a tradition, the annual meeting was held as a supper rather than a luncheon.
Brothers,

I’d been a rough time for me this summer. The week leading up to Memorial Day, I had surgery for an irritated gall bladder. However, when they cut the gall bladder out, my cavity filled up with puss. The bile duct and liver were filled with puss. The bile duct had to be removed and a plastic tube was sewn in its place. Then 4 days later they did the surgery over. The tube must have been rubbing on the pancreas, irritating it. The doctor told me I should have been dead before he opened me up the first time. By the time the second surgery was done I felt like it. After 10 days in ICU and 2 days in general care I got to go home. Then I was put on a fat free diet. It made me lose 33 pounds very quickly. 5 weeks later I started coming around and I’m feeling better everyday.

As Commander I gave signed up for the National Congress in Gettysburg PA on the last weekend of October. I’ve been to several SUVCW Nationals but this was my first with MOLLUS. We held our meting on Saturday morning and went on a tour of the battlefield in the afternoon. I did get to meet up with Monique Upham, daughter of Bill Upham. She expressed the desire to help if we changed our minds on holding a Congress in the next few years.

After a week at home we took off for Gettysburg again. This time for the Remembrance Day parade. A bomb threat changed the route and added more security. But we got through the parade without incident. The only drawback was it rained steadily during the parade route. I had planned on wearing a new Captain uniform with new shoes and a new hat but the rain stopped that idea. I did get the chance to walk with the new Commandery in Chief, Col. Eric Rojo. He later asked me to pick a National Committee to be on. I haven’t picked one yet. After the parade we went to a brewery that had a restaurant so we got a chance to talk things over. It was a good time and I can scratch the parade off of my bucket list.

There had been a change in our usual meeting time for the December meeting. This change was so working people can make it our meeting/dinner. The turnout was worse that the Friday daytime meetings of the past. I’m going to plan on a Saturday 11 am meeting next April.

Please work on recruiting a new member or more.

Merry Christmas and I hope everyone has a good New Year.

Yours in Fraternity,

Kim J. Heltemes
Dept Commander Wisconsin
MOLLUS

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The Wisconsin Commandery newsletter will endeavor to present information of Commandery’s activities. It will also feature stories of events and facts not generally know, always relating back to Wisconsin men or units

The Journal will be published Quarterly on the first Friday of the Quarter, the deadline will be the Second last Friday of the month preceding

Members are encouraged to submit articles. We also want to have profiles of member’s ancestors. To start we present the profile of one of the charter members of the Wis. Commandery.

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<th>2017-18 Officers</th>
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MOLLUS-WI Minutes from December 15, 2017 Meeting

December 16, 2017


1. Meeting called to order by Commander Heltemes at 6 PM.
2. Invocation was provided by Companion Collins.
3. The Preamble and Principles of the Order were read by Companion Curtis.
5. Reading of the minutes was suspended.
6. Report of the Commander-Commander Heltemes reported several items he brought back from the national convention. (He reported that he has successfully survived two major surgeries. He reported he is feeling well and is not in the need for the use of a cane.) His attendance was the first for Wisconsin, for several years. One of the things he said we should have been voting on new members, before the forms are sent into the national for approval. We noted we would follow this with future applicants. On another subject, Bill Upham's daughter expressed her desire for the Wisconsin Commandery to host a national convention. Kim told her we did not have enough members to take on this responsibility.
7. The Treasurer's report was presented by Companion Reeve. We discussed resuming our past practice of making contributions to groups or projects. After some discussion it was voted to make two contributions: one to the Milwaukee County Historical Society in the amount of $100.00 and a second to Sons of Union Veterans project to erect a monument in Mt. Calvary cemetery in the amount of $300.00.
8. Old Business-We held a lively discussion on our loan to the Kenosha Civil War Museum of Gen. Grant's bust. The "pros and cons" of loan vs. gift was explored. The general feeling was to have the bust on display in Wisconsin and to have MOLLUS as the donor and more exposure of MOLLUS and its roll in Wisconsin and the country. Companion Beckford agreed to contact Dan Joyce, Director-Kenosha Public Museums. Chip will report back to the Commandery. We also had a short discussion on the possible loan of our several oil paintings of civil generals. We have one on loan at King Veteran's Home and the others are located at various Milwaukee locations. It was decided to have Chip explore possible loans with Kenosha Civil War Museum.
9. We talked about the need to have more members. One suggestion was to have a joint meeting with SUV group. Companions Petit and Heltemes will look into this. Also we talked about the availability of "tri-fold" information piece to aid with recruitment. No action was decided with this idea.
10. During the meal Companion Curtis led off with our "toast" to Abraham Lincoln. Toasts for others followed.
11. The meeting ended with closing prayer from Companion Collins.

Respectfully submitted,

James S. Reeve, Treasurer
Recently, Lt. Col. Thomas P. Curtis, Past Cmdr of the WI Commandery was honored to have his portrait of Justice Antonin Scalia accepted by the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. for its permanent collection.

Curtis painted the 48"x36" portrait in oils after meeting with and working on studies of Scalia in his chambers at the Supreme Court building in 1993.

Col. Curtis learned the skills of portraiture at an early age in the studio of his artist mother, the well-known Elizabeth Curtis. After receiving an AB degree from Harvard, he went on to round out his education in art, studying drawing at the Corcoran School of Art and painting at Cardinal Stritch College. After 14 years as an editorial cartoonist for the Milwaukee Sentinel, he began his painting career and has had his own studio since 1984. He is also well known in the Midwest for his popular classes in art and art history.

Many of his other works can be seen at http://www.curtisstudio.com/


A presidential directive dictates that a wreath be presented at the grave of deceased Presidents on the anniversary of their birth and it be done a General/Flag Office

Besides greeting from Pres. Trump, BG Barker commended of Pres. Harrison’s service in the Civil War as Colonel of the 70th Ind. Vol. Inf., his brevet promotion to Brig General, plus his membership in the GAR, MOLLUS (IN Commandery #02454)

Members of the local boy scouts, Caroline Harrison Chapter of the DAR and reenactors of the 19th U.S. Inf. also participated. Barker commands the 310 Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) located at Ft. Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis

Wreaths Across America

BG Vince Barker, Comdr Kim Heltemes plus members of Camp 8 SUVCW participate the the “Wreaths Across America” at the Wis Veterans Home in King, WI

Wis Commandery Commander Kim Heltemes with Mrs. Richard Beggs spouse of a SUVCW Camp 8 member place wreaths at the King Cemetery
Notable Wisconsin Officers
Lt Col. Joseph Bailey – Red River

Lt Col. Joseph Bailey

The army engineers laughed at this wide-browed, unassuming man when he suggested building a dam so as to release Admiral Porter’s fleet imprisoned by low water above the Falls at Alexandria at the close of the futile Red River expedition in 1864. Bailey had been a lumberman in Wisconsin and had there gained the practical experience which taught him that the plan was feasible. He was Acting Chief Engineer of the Nineteenth Army Corps at this time, and obtained permission to go ahead and build his dam. In the undertaking he had the approval and earnest support of Admiral Porter, who refused to consider for a moment the abandonment of any of his vessels even though the Red River expedition had been ordered to return and General Banks was chafing at delay and sending messages to Porter that his troops must be got in motion at once. Bailey pushed on with his work and in eleven days he succeeded in so raising the water in the channel that all the Federal vessels were able to pass down below the Falls. "Words are inadequate," said Admiral Porter, in his report, "to express the admiration I feel for the ability of Lieut. Colonel Bailey. This is without doubt the best engineering feat ever performed. . . . The highest honors the Government can bestow on Colonel Bailey can never repay him for the service he has rendered the country." For this achievement Bailey was promoted to colonel, brevetted brigadier general, voted the thanks of Congress, and presented with a sword and a purse of $3,000 by the officers of Porter’s fleet. He settled in Missouri after the war and was a formidable enemy of the "Bushwhackers" till he was shot by them on March 21, 1867. He was born at Salem, Ohio, April 28, 1827.

Bailey’s Dam

HOW TO FLOAT GUNBOATS IN 3 FEET OF WATER

Low water in May 1864 threatened to turn the Red River Campaign into a disaster for the Union. Three hundred miles lay between Admiral David Porter’s Red River flotilla and the comparative safety of the Mississippi River: one mile of those three hundred consisted of a waterfall, a series of rapids, and a second waterfall; serious concerns in the best of times. In early April the sailors had had to unload much of the cargo to lighten the boats before they could pass over these obstacles. The Red River had since fallen six feet, and in late April 1864 the water over the rapids was only three feet and four inches deep. Porter’s boats needed seven feet of water to float.

After five harrowing days steaming down the Red River as Confederate snipers and artillery along both sides of the river concentrated on doing as much damage as possible to his fleet - and doing a very good job of it - the remaining and badly battered ships arrived at Alexandria, Louisiana, where the army was. Porter found the navy had gone as far as it could go without a miracle.

The navy was fortunate the army had arrived at Alexandria or, stuck as it was above the falls, it would have been at the mercy of General Richard Taylor’s Confederate troops. As it was, the choices for Porter were unpleasant even with General Nathaniel Banks’ army now protecting his ships. His ships were in danger of being captured by the Confederates or he could scuttle them and ruin all the good work the United States Navy had accomplished in western waters over the past two years. Either way his reputation would be ruined and his navy career would be over.

Porter did not like his army counterpart; he believed Banks to be incompetent. And he had no faith that Banks would keep his army in Alexandria to protect the fleet until the river rose, especially as Banks had orders from General Ulysses S. Grant to conclude the Red River Campaign immediately whether it was successful or not. And he knew Banks was anxious to wrap up what had turned out to be a disastrous effort and get on with the next phase of the work of 1864.

But Banks wasn’t the sort of man who abandoned his own forces. And from a practical standpoint, his army still had to march 100 miles down the Red River before it was out of harm’s way; those large naval guns were excellent protection against the Rebels. He also hoped he could find a way to retrieve his own reputation ruined by the disastrous turn of events over the past month.

But Banks had to get his troops out of Alexandria quickly; his supplies were down to three weeks of half rations and forage for the animals was almost nonexistent. Whatever supplies had once existed downstream had long been destroyed by the Confederates who would not allow their own property to fall into Union hands.

A miracle wasn’t likely to occur. But a solution was suggested, although few in the beginning believed it would work. The chief engineer of the Nineteenth Corps, Lt. Col. Joseph Bailey, suggested that if a dam were built the water would deepen enough to float the fleet over the rapids.

Bailey had built dams before and knew they worked. As a lumberman in Wisconsin he built dams
on sluggish streams to float the logs to the market. And after the capture of Port Hudson he had built a dam to float two boats that the Confederates had abandoned in the mud of a creek.

Porter and Banks were skeptical. The Red River was not sluggish - in fact its current was, at nine miles an hour, very swift - and was much, much wider that a stream or a creek. But Bailey's commander, General Franklin, was an engineer himself and thought the dam could work. Most conclusively, there was no alternative - other than waiting for the water to rise when it gave every indication it would continue to fall. They agreed Bailey should make the attempt.

**HOW TO CONSTRUCT A DAM IN RECORD TIME**

Bailey designed two wing dams above the second, or lower, falls. The Red River was 758 feet wide at this point. The falls were six feet high.

One dam, on the north or left bank, was constructed of trees harvested from the timber along its shores. The logs were laid with the current. Their branches were locked and their trunks were tied together.

The south bank was farmland and had few trees, so its dam was constructed of huge cribs that were filled with stones and heavy objects, such as machinery from the local cotton gins, until they submerged. A gap of about 150 feet remained in the center of the river; this was plugged by barges also filled with rubble until they sank.

Three thousand soldiers built these dams. A Maine regiment of loggers built the northern dam. Three regiments of New Yorkers familiar with construction work built the southern dam and scuttled the barges. Porter wrote, Every man seemed to be working with a vigor I have seldom seen equaled, while perhaps not one in fifty believed in the success of the undertaking.

In eight days and nights, they worked on land and in the water while enduring the jeers and jokes of the soldiers who watched dry from the shore and the annoying attentions of General Richard Taylor's Confederate marksmen.

Skepticism gradually shifted to amazement and then to hope. A contraband, on seeing the dam for the first time, exclaimed, Before God, what won't the Yankees do next!

The sailors prepared their vessels for the tumultuous ride over the rapids. They stripped the side armor off and rid the boats of anything heavy. Anchors, chains, ammunition, and the guns were either carted below the falls for reloading after the boats rode through the chute or sunk in a five fathom hole in the river. And they also unloaded the cotton that they'd been so eager to capture as a prize of war and an easy fortune.

**WILL THE DAM HOLD?**

After eight days the water was almost deep enough to allow the lighter boats to pass through the chute. Four boats dropped over the upper falls and stationed themselves just above the dam until the water rose enough to make their run. Between sunset and midnight the river rose more than a foot. At midnight it was six feet deep. Only one more foot of water was needed for all of the vessels to make it across the falls.

But the strain on the dam was greater and greater. The current moved faster, and the water pressure was so great that the barges were trembling with the effort to remain in place. General Banks suspected the dam would break by dawn.

At 5:30 two of the barges shifted. They broke, swept downstream, and stuck on a ledge of rocks.

Porter, seeing the barges give way, leaped on a horse and galloped upstream. He ordered the four boats to shoot the chute before the water level became too low. Three of the boats were moored at the banks and had to start their engines. The oldest boat of the fleet, the Lexington, put on a full head of steam, passed over the remaining rocks of the channel, and headed for the 66-foot opening. On the banks 30,000 soldiers and sailors watched. Porter wrote in his report,

She steered directly for the opening in the dam, through which the water was rushing so furiously that it seemed as if nothing but destruction awaited her. Thousands of beating hearts looked on, anxious for the result. The silence was so great as the Lexington approached the dam, that a pin might almost be heard to fall. She entered the gap with a full head of steam on, pitched down the roaring torrent, made two or three spasmodic rolls, hung for a moment on the rocks below, was then swept into the deep water by the current, and rounded-to safely into the bank. Thirty thousand voices rose in one deafening cheer, and universal joy seemed to pervade the face of every man present.

The skipper of the monitor, the Neosho, at the last moment before heading into the chute ordered the engines cut off instead of following Porter's orders to keep them going full steam. The boat was in the current and so, without any control, dove into the fall, struck bottom - with an ominous metallic clang - and to everyone's considerable relief, emerged from the froth of the waterfalls with only a single hole.

The skippers of the other two vessels that had been moored by the dam had now seen the right way and the wrong way to make the plunge; they got their boats over the falls without incident. Several vessels remained above the upper falls, and the water was again too shallow.
The weight of the water was too heavy for the barges linking the center two dams. The two dams, however, were strong. The trick, then, engineer Bailey knew, was to take the bulk of the weight off the dams. Another dam had to be built.

This dam was constructed above the upper falls to slow the impact of the water current over the rapids. The soldiers, now familiar with their tasks and no doubt encouraged by the success of their first effort, worked with a will. Only three days later three more vessels passed through the dam at the upper falls, made the mile-long run over the rapids, and dropped over the second falls. The next day the last three boats steamed over the falls.

The navy and the army could quit Alexandria and resume their journey downstream. In gratitude Admiral Porter gave Bailey a $700 sword. The navy presented him with a silver vase. The U.S. Congress formally thanked him and promoted him two grades to the rank of brigadier general. In his report Porter wrote,

The highest honors that the Government can bestow on Colonel Bailey can never repay him for the service he has rendered the country. He has saved the Union a valuable fleet, worth nearly two million dollars, and he has deprived the enemy of a triumph which would have emboldened them to carry on this war a year or two longer.
Military Order of the Loyal Legion

WISCONSIN COMMANDERY

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Deadline - December 29
Winter - January 5, 2018

Deadline - September 28
Fall - October 6, 2017

Deadline - June 30
Summer - July 6, 2017

Deadline - March 31
Spring - April 7, 2017

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