

★★ **THE BUGLE** ★★

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Newsletter of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation

June 1997

Confederate Flag Stirs Unrest

by *Richard H. Zeitlin*

In October of 1862, Union and Confederate troops clashed near Perryville, Kentucky. Six Wisconsin regiments were present, and three became heavily engaged. By the end of the battle, more than six hundred Wisconsin soldiers had been killed or wounded. The First Wisconsin Infantry experienced the heaviest losses with 204 casualties, a loss probably exceeding 50 percent of the unit's strength. During the action, a private in Company H captured a Confederate flag from the lines of the First Tennessee Infantry.

The First Wisconsin and the First Tennessee had been engaged in hand to hand combat for hours, with each side carrying out frontal assaults against the other and neither side being able to retreat. A Confederate officer remarked that the battle of Perryville was "one of the bloodiest and fiercest contests of the war for the numbers engaged." A Wisconsin veteran recalled that "the nature of the fight was such as to require no military science, but simply brave men."

The First Wisconsin gave the Confederate flag to the Wisconsin Adjutant General, who then turned it over to the State Historical Society, where many years later museum curators cataloged the flag as an

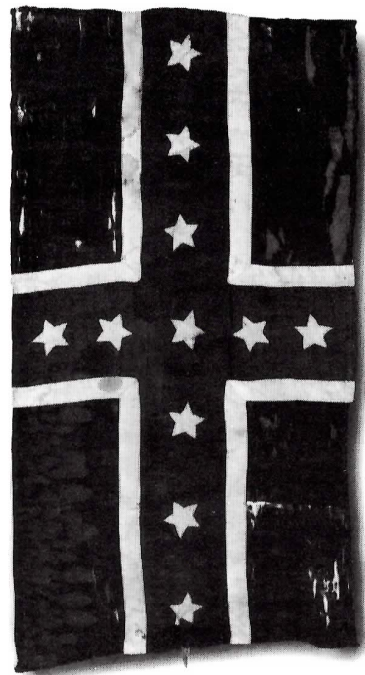
"unidentified banner" with "no record of capture." The flag's association with the battle of Perryville had been lost.

During the 1960s, Civil War historian and flag expert Howard M. Madaus of the Milwaukee Public Museum identified the Confederate flag as probably being that of the First Tennessee Infantry. Madaus based his opinion on the atypical

design of the flag, on comments about the flag from soldiers' accounts, and on the circumstances of its acquisition by the Historical Society. Madaus published his findings in the *Flags of the Confederate Army of Tennessee*.

However, it was a photograph of the Confederate flag in a *Time-Life* Civil War publication that set long dormant forces in motion. The Wisconsin Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, an hereditary organization of 32 members statewide, began pressuring for the "return" of the flag to Tennessee. They felt that the flag should be turned over as a gesture of good will because the flag symbolized the many Tennesseans who had died to defend the banner. And, they argued, Wisconsin and other northern states had returned some captured Confederate flags at the turn of the century and in the 1940s.

In 1992, the Governor of Tennessee wrote to Governor Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin to request the return of the Confederate flag. Working with the State Historical Society and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Governor Thompson rejected the Tennessee appeal. Thompson pointed out that since the Confederate flag's identification with the



Battle Flag of the First Tennessee Infantry Regiment.

Continued on Page 6

Curator's Chronicles

by William Brewster

Welcome to the Curator's Chronicles. In previous issues of the *Bugle*, we have learned that artifact donations to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum come from many different sources. Individuals, families, organizations, companies, and even other museums are potential donors. Recently, the museum benefited from a donation by the Racine County Historical Society.

Why would a museum choose to give away part of its collection? Usually it is because certain objects no longer meet the criteria established in the collections policy. The collections policy sets parameters for the material a museum collects and maintains. In the past, history museums built collections by accepting almost everything that was offered to them. Old or unusual objects were collected with the same enthusiasm as those with a local or regional association. This resulted in collections that were large yet showed little direction. It created redundancy between institutions and consumed storage space. Recently, museums have made an effort to place historical focus on what they preserve and collect. This is accomplished through the collections policy.

Historical focus helps a museum staff determine an object's relevance to the collection. With a new collections policy in hand, the Racine County Historical Society examined their holdings. They found objects that related to United States and Wisconsin military history, but did not relate to the developmental history of Racine County. These objects were offered to the Veterans Mu-

seum as a donation. Likewise, the Veterans Museum's collections policy eliminated from consideration a number of the objects offered by Racine County that did not fit its historical focus.

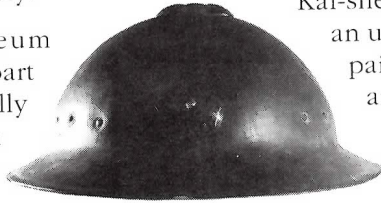
The museum selected a number of significant items. Among them is a helmet used by Nationalist Chinese troops who fought under Chiang Kai-shek. The helmet is of an unknown pattern. It is painted green and bears an enameled Nationalist emblem. On the inside is the handwritten legend, "Chinese war helmet brought to Racine by H. W. Klovekorn from Shanghai, China." Further research will be needed to determine when Mr. Klovekorn was in Shanghai and in what capacity he served.

The scaled armor is experimental set Model A-8, created in 1918 by the United States Army Ordnance De-

partment. It is made from individual steel sections that are riveted to a leather vest. In testing, it was found that the armor allowed good mobility, at a weight of eleven pounds, and provided reasonable ballistic protection but was vulnerable to bayonet thrusts. The armor was never approved for field use.

The last item is a Civil War veteran's medal that belonged to Hosea Rood of the Twelfth Wisconsin Volunteers. This medal is of particular significance because Rood served as superintendent of the G.A.R. Memorial Hall, the forerunner of the current Wisconsin Veterans Museum and was instrumental in organizing the collection.

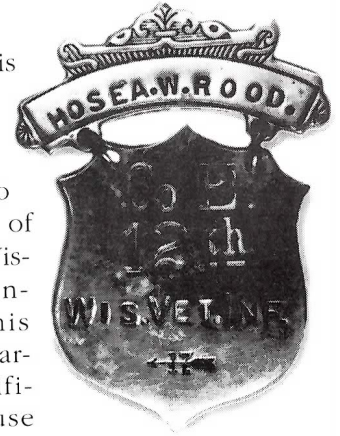
The Veterans Museum is deeply indebted to the Racine County Historical Society for making these objects available. Until next time....



Helmet used by Nationalist Chinese Troops under Chiang Kai-shek.



Experimental scaled armor, set Model A-8.



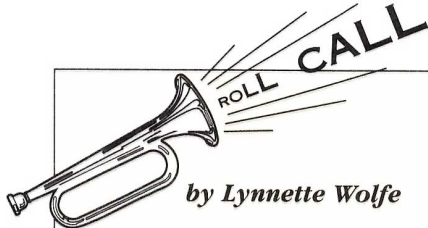
Medal of Hosea Rood, veteran of the Twelfth Wisconsin Infantry Regiment.

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Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation

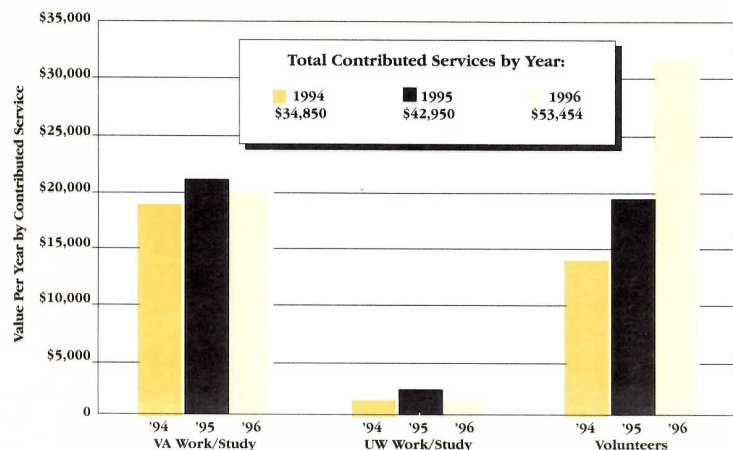
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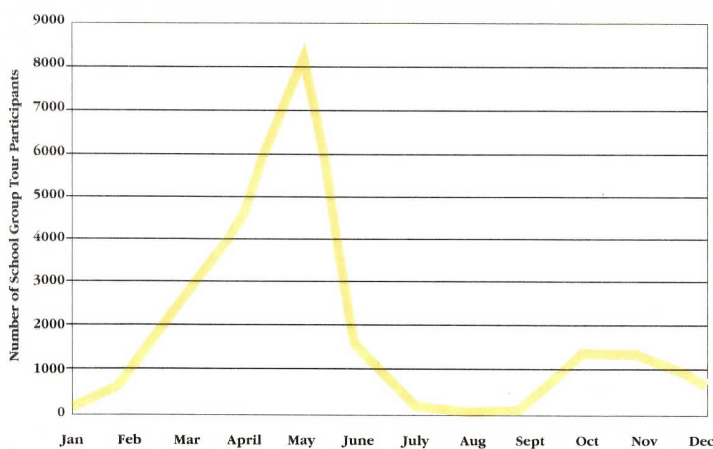
It is difficult to imagine what the daily operations of the museum would be like without the generous services provided by devoted volunteers and work/study student staff. They transform the museum's educational mission into reality for thousands of visitors and serve as a major link to our audiences. In 1996, volunteers and work/study students provided a total of 7,954 hours in contributed services to the museum. *A billion thanks to all for a job exceptionally well done!!!!*

Valuation of Contributed Services, FY 1994-1996



The Wisconsin Veterans Museum has increased its volunteer staff by 53 percent over the past three years. This chart shows the total value by year for each category of contributed services between 1994–1996. A major activity of the volunteer staff is interpreting the exhibits for tour groups. Work-study students assist in the daily operations of the museum store, visitor services, archives, and collections processing.

School Group Attendance by Month, 1996



I am very pleased to report that the total number of school groups touring the museum increased 24 percent in 1996. This trend chart shows that the greatest concentration of school tour participants visit the museum during the spring months. Extension of hours, school program marketing, and a highly qualified volunteer docent staff have contributed to this increase.

Museum Continues to Achieve National Honor

The American Association of Museums (AAM) has awarded accreditation to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum for the third time. Accreditation is the top honor conferred by the AAM, and of the 8,000 museums nationwide only 750 have earned AAM accreditation.

AAM accreditation certifies that a museum operates according to high standards set forth by the museum profession, manages its collections responsibly, and provides quality service to the public. "It is an honor to have earned this prestigious award," said museum Director Richard Zeitlin. "The accreditation process was rigorous and demanding. We examined virtually every aspect of the museum's operation including a year of self-study and an on-site review by a team of leading museum professionals."

Accreditation is one of several programs offered by the AAM to help museums achieve and maintain standards of quality and excellence in the museum profession. Museums must apply for this award every ten years. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum has earned accreditation since 1976.

AAM is a national organization, with its headquarters in Washington, D.C., that has served the museum profession since 1906.

ARCHIVIST'S CORNER

by Mark D. Van Ells

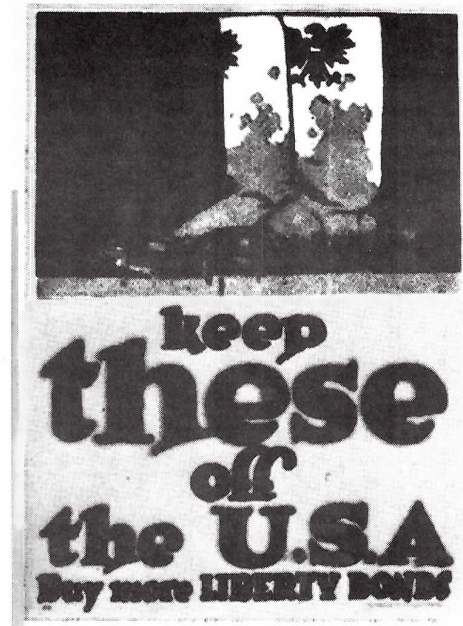
When I first came to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum as a work-study student in 1988, the archives were located in a closet in the Capitol building. The library fit in the director's office. Since then, the archives and library have grown immensely. This growth, combined with the expansion of museum office space, has paved the way for the creation of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Research Center. We expect construction of new worker cubicles and a reception desk to begin this summer. When construction is completed, we will then recruit workers and volunteers to staff the center. At this point, I anticipate

opening the new facility in January 1998. Plans are to have the research center open to the general public during established hours. All materials will remain non-circulating.

Some important manuscript collections have come into the museum during the past few months. Mary Pope of Edgerton donated the papers of her late husband Ralph, a former POW and veterans' activist (see the June 1996 issue of *The Bugle*). Tom Taber, the Grant County service officer, has long been a friend of the museum's archives program. Recently, Tom proved his value once again; he found the records of the Wisconsin G.A.R.'s

Tom Cox post in the basement of the Grant County courthouse and delivered them to the museum. Finally, Professor Stephen Ambrose provided us with an extraordinary collection. During the fall semester of 1996, Ambrose taught a course on World War II at the University of Wisconsin, in which he required some students to interview a person alive during the period. Professor Ambrose then arranged to have the students' transcripts and tape recordings deposited in our archives. I thank these three individuals and all others who have helped to build our collections.

World War I Poster Art



"Poster Art: Images and Uses during Wartime," a selection of World War I posters, is currently on display at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum through August 18, 1997. During the World War I era, posters represented an important means of mass communication. Well-known artists throughout the world produced artwork that promoted patriotism and self-sacrifice in the effort to mobilize the masses. The posters symbolize the war efforts of soldiers and civilians during the First World War.

Flag *from page 1*

First Tennessee was not certain, the State of Wisconsin would be acting inappropriately by transferring the historical object to another party's possession.

Thompson noted other reasons for refusing the Tennessee request, including: the flag was very fragile and needed conservation, the flag represents Wisconsin history as a symbol of the sacrifices made by the Wisconsin veterans who captured it, and transferring the flag represented a poor professional museum practice because no one knows how much Union and/or Wisconsin materials remains in Southern museums. Thompson could have also mentioned that Wisconsin museums are empowered to protect, care for, and safeguard their collections, and that collections of historical objects cannot be authorized for transfer to third parties without legislative action. Veterans groups and other constituents would likely object in a case of this type. The flag would remain the property of the State of Wisconsin.

Long held by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the collections agreement of 1992 between the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs included the transfer of the Confederate flag to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The flag's transfer to the Veterans Museum appeased the Wisconsin Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. In 1993, their Commander wrote that they "will stop all efforts seeking the return of the flag to Tennessee....After touring the Wisconsin Veterans Museum last week, I feel that it will make a fine home for a noble banner." The organization then worked to raise funds to support the flag's conservation. In 1996, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum displayed the conserved ban-

ner. It was then exhibited at the State Historical Museum, where it will remain until its official transfer to the Veterans Museum on October 31.

But the flag doesn't rest. In March 1997, the *Nashville Tennessean* featured an article entitled "Battle Flag Provokes Quiet Fight," giving a southern view of the events surrounding the Confederate flag. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and the *Stevens Point Journal* picked up the story from the wire service. Once again the battle flag issue drew a quiet fight. Several Wisconsin veterans' organizations, as well as legislators and Civil War history organizations expressed their opposition to returning the Confederate flag to Tennessee since so many Wisconsinites had died to capture it.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum adopted a policy favoring the retention of the Confederate flag because of its important historical association with Wisconsin veterans. The Department and the museum view the flag as a significant artifact, symbolizing the willingness of Wisconsin veterans to serve the nation in times of peril. Since the earliest times, state veterans have demonstrated their commitment to service. And transferring the flag to Tennessee would not only be historically inappropriate but professionally irresponsible as well.

In order to make the artifact available to the people of Tennessee, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum will loan the Confederate flag to the Tennessee State Museum, a nationally accredited professional institution, with the understanding that the flag is a loan from Wisconsin. Thus, the citizens of Tennessee can be reminded not only of the bravery of Wisconsin's veterans, but also of their magnanimity.



On May 17, Michael Telzrow presented the program "Civil War Photography: A Portrait of War," demonstrating the techniques and uses of photography during the Civil War. This image of an unidentified Civil War soldier is an example of a wet-plate photograph, the most popular type of Civil War photography.

Chinese Television Seeks U.S. Korean War Veterans

Chinese National Television (CCTV) in Beijing, China contacted the Wisconsin Veterans Museum recently regarding a documentary they are producing on the Korean War. They are seeking American veterans of that conflict to interview in their documentary program.

If you are a Korean War combat veteran and are interested in possibly speaking with the CCTV documentary staff, please contact Mark D. Van Ells in the archives. He can put you in touch with CCTV in Beijing.

Calendar of Events

March 1–August 18: *Poster Art: Images and Uses during Wartime*. An exhibition of World War I propaganda posters.

June 21: 2:00–3:30 p.m.: *The Men Stood Like Iron* by Lance Herdegen and *The Flags of the Iron Brigade*

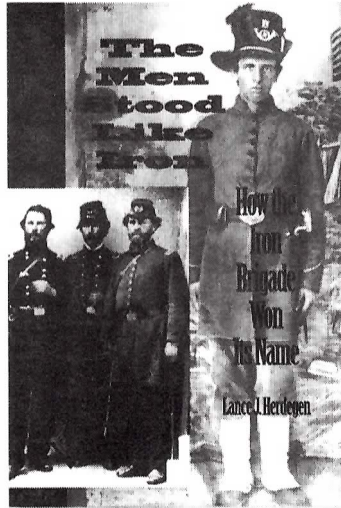
by Howard M. Madaus and Richard Zeitlin. Authors Lance Herdegen and Richard Zeitlin will sign copies of their newly released books. Herdegen will speak at 2:30 p.m.

July 19: 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.: *History of Soldiers' Clothing*. Curator of Collections William Brewster explores how clothing of the armed forces has changed over time.

August 18, 1997–January 1, 1998: *Road of the Ho-Chunk Warrior*. A photographic exhibition in honor of the Ho-Chunk Warrior.

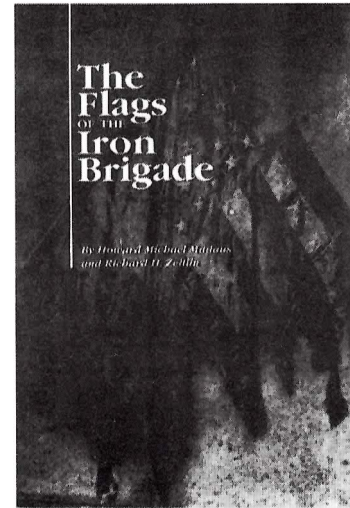


From the Gift Shop



The Men Stood Like Iron

\$24.95



Flags of the Iron Brigade

\$9.95

(Wisconsin residents add 5.5% sales tax)
plus \$2.00 shipping and handling

Wisconsin Veterans Museum Store
30 West Mifflin Street
Madison, WI 53703
608-267-1799



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