

President's Desk

November 16, 2009

USCTLHA Membership and Friends

Recently in my local paper I turned the page and a column of news immediately caught my eye. The title, "Black Civil War Soldiers Honored", jumped from the page to my eye as the 13th USCT is only made up of a few of us and generally people think about us when the subject of black soldiers in the Civil War comes up. We have enjoyed rather wide media coverage locally and across the State since the founding of our reenacting group in 2003. The article went on to indicate that 18 black soldiers who fought for the Confederacy would be honored in Pulaski, Tennessee the following Sunday, and that all of the soldiers were from Giles County. Also records indicated that many of them received a military pension. The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans had raised money to purchase a foot stone markers for the honored veterans.

To truly understand my amazement, you need to know that Pulaski, Tennessee has the distinction of being the founding home of the KKK, under the watchful eye of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. I thought to myself, once again the name of a body servant or some other type laborer, is dishonored without a voice to tell others that they had no rights or privileges of a soldiers in the Confederate army. What is even more shameful is the fact that too often these soldiers' decedents present themselves at such activities.

I predict that we will witness more of this propaganda as this nation gears up to celebrate the sesquicentennial celebration of the Civil War. As individuals who are dedicated to the preservation of the truth, are we ready for this public onslaught of information?

2.

In my last communication to you I invited you to submit information to me or Mr. Bennie McRae to place on the newest addition to our website--Roll Call, which is intended to be the place for current news and information of interest regarding the USCT and associated activities across America. I can only hope that the small trickle of information coming to us is not indicative of what you are doing in your community to educate others about our passion. We have a very proud and honored history which deserves to be shared with others.

A continuing problem for us is that we really have no way of knowing the number of individuals across this great land who are reenactors, living history presenters, researchers, or others who have a drive within to proclaim, preserve and protect our history. Repeated calls for contact with some of you have fallen on deaf ears or the numbers interested in the USCT are far less than what we have imagined.

The USCTLHA has a great need to know of your existence and how to contact you for consultation as to how best to reach others who need to know about the legacy of the USCT and their nonmilitary supporters during the Civil War. Also we are in the process of developing a USCTLHA calender and desire to be as inclusive as possible in our desire to present a visual picture of our Association to major outlets across the country. If you are incline to help us in this effort please contact Ms. Patricia Tyson (patriciatysnnn@aol.com) at your earliest convenience as we desire to go to press for early distribution.

I trust that you are busy developing you calenders for the 2010 period. The importance of planning can not be overstated when one considers that most of us have limited time and resources to allocated to this important mission we have all personally undertaken to pursue. Adequate planning is essential in helping to consider where to direct precious time and effort to obtain the maximum desired effect with any given program. In the words of one of the members of the 13th USCT, "we may be small in number but let us be mighty in battle", as we try to educate the masses and dispel the myths which are being perpetrated upon the unsuspecting public.

During our last board of directors meeting in Lexington, Kentucky a strategic plan was adopted as a working guide for the Association for the next 12 months. Mr. Malcolm Beech the Association's, Chairperson for Planning and Development, has directed us in this endeavor. When this plan is shared with you I invite you to look over the suggestions as you develop your schedules and see how you might meet some of the objectives in your activities in 2010.

3.

As we look forward as a organization we must determine what methods and activities we will employ to educate the public and how to recruit others to our ranks. We are the, “discovery generation,” for the USCT history movement in this country. The movie, “Glory”, opened our eyes to a history that many of us did not learn about in school. Our zeal to learn more subsequently prompted us to take up the torch to tell the story through reenacting and other means.

I am inviting you to consider the fact that we may be doing those we desire to honor a great disservice in our current actions. Are we so mesmerized with what we are doing that we are not realizing that we have a obligation to proclaim, protect, and preserve the history of those we desire to honor? As this “discovery generation” advances in age, have we left large enough foot steps for others to follow to assure that this history we hold so dear will survive the attacks on our history as illustrated in the first paragraph of this communication?

When I view the recently placed video on the Roll Call page from Natchez, Mississippi , I am encouraged. The youth depicted in the video give hope that there are young people out there who are curious and are receptive to learning about the USCT. It is up to us to develop engaging activities to capture the attention of this great potential. I commend the Cadet Program in Washington, D.C. , the efforts of the 5th USCT, as they usually bring a group of young men and women to Camp Nelson each year and Paul LaRue and his students in the State of Ohio. If you are engaged in a youth USCT oriented program please share this information with us. We need to highlight these programs which may serve as a model for others in helping to utilize our limited resources for maximum effectiveness.

I truly believe that this organization has the potential to be a agent of change in America. My conversations with you indicate commitment and pride in your discovery of our history.

Are we willing to do what it takes to assure that we pass what we know to the next generation?

Your Obedient Servant
George Smith,
President
USCTLHA