

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Olustee Battlefield Citizens Support Organization (CSO) was held at the Family Service Center in MacClenny, Florida on April 8, 1998. President Alice Williams chaired the meeting.

Board of Directors Election

A election of members to serve a two-year term from 1998 to 2000 on the CSO Board of Directors was held. Elected were Bill Danforth, Eric Hague, Wilahmena Lauramore, Bob Maloney, Bob McLendon, Mitzi Nelson and John Thrush.

Current Board members serving for 1997-1999 are David Coles, Gene Ingram, Brian Kepner, Larry Skinner, Andy Smith and Alice Williams. Jeff Grzelak (1997-1999) resigned his position as a member of the Board of Directors. The new Board, following provisions in the By-Laws, elected Jem Golden, a former history professor at Jacksonville University and a reenactor with Company A, 3rd Florida, to serve out Jeff's term.

The new Board also elected Alice Williams as President, Brian Kepner as Vice-President, Mitzi Nelson as Secretary, and John Thrush as Treasurer. Ex-Officio members of the Board are Valinda Subic of the Florida State Park Service and Mike Null of the Blue-Gray Army.

Olustee Exposition

Alice Williams reported that over 500 spectators were at the Olustee Exposition last September.

This is the largest number yet as this event continues to grow. It also serves as a meeting place for Florida and Georgia reenactors to visit with pards after a summer of relative inactivity and allows them to plan the upcoming season's events. **The next Exposition is scheduled for September 19-20, 1998.** Contact Brian Kepner

(kepner@ncfrpc.org, 352 374-8848) for information.

Olustee Reenactment - The Numbers

On Friday, February 13, 1998, **2,000** school children descended upon the Battlefield to visit the Civil War camps and talk to the **1,900** reenactors who were present at this year's event.

Our thanks to those reenactors who took the time to present living histories to the school children. While the CSO appreciates all the reenactors who give up weekends and travel far to attend the Olustee Reenactment, many reenactors give even more of themselves by reaching out and spending time educating the spectators in the history of the Civil War. There were at least **77** cavalry at this year's event. There were also **35** medical reenactors, of which 18 were surgeons.

John Thrush, CSO Treasurer, stated that while it was impossible to estimate the total number of spectators who attended the event, **6,077** adults and **4,092** children paid admission on the Saturday and Sunday of the reenactment. These numbers were almost evenly divided over the two days. In 1997 the CSO decided to provide a full-scale battle on Saturday and this has helped to even out the attendance on the weekend.

Eighty-five sutlers attended the Olustee Reenactment. While this number is down from previous years, it is approximately the same as last year. The early and mid-90s saw a number of non-authentic sutlers attending the event. The CSO now has a "by invitation only" policy for sutlers and even though this has reduced the number of sutlers, the sutlers and the goods they sell have a much greater degree of authenticity. The CSO is committed to increasing the level of authenticity of the sutlers, as well as the entire event. It is important to note that even though

the number of sutlers has dropped from a high of 127 to 85, the lower number still makes the Olustee event one of the biggest, if not the biggest, sutler turnout in the United States.

Dollar Figures

Site fees from the sutlers totaled **\$1,945.10**. Admission fees from spectators totaled **\$24,379**. This resulted in a "profit" of **\$13,403.63** for the weekend. However, when added to other revenues and then reduced by the operating expenses of the CSO for the year, including postage, printing & publications, taxes, supplies, etc. total "profit" for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998 was **\$8,367.64**. This amount will help the CSO increase the services it offers all who attend next year's event, as well as provide a buffer if we encounter bad weather (rains, cold temperatures) and poor attendance in a future event. Monies are also spent on improving the permanent facilities of the park that are reenactment related.

Future Plans and Cost

The CSO has \$25,000 in certificates of deposit and it hopes to increase this amount. Not only do these funds serve as a emergency fund if an event is rained out, but it also allows the CSO to plan for the future. This year the CSO will begin the procedures to plan for a large Civil War museum at the Olustee Battlefield Historic Site. It is hoped that this facility will be the major Civil War museum for the State of Florida. Directors Gene Ingram (ltgene@aug.com) and Andy Smith are heading the museum committee and anyone interested in participating can contact them. A flowchart of the planning cycle will be finished September 1, 1998 and the CSO hopes to approve a business plan by October, 1998.

The museum will cost between **\$1 million and \$1.5 million**. Early plans are for it to have

approximately **3,000** square feet. Even the planning period is expensive as it is estimated that planning costs will be \$100,000. If the CSO can increase the amount of its savings (certificates of deposit, etc) to \$60,000, a Florida Park Service program will match that amount with **\$40,000**.

At the current time, artifacts related to the Battle of Olustee are kept at the Stephen Foster Cultural Center, which has a climate controlled archival room. Once the Olustee Museum is completed these artifacts will be moved on site as the Olustee Museum would also have such archival facilities .

There are currently **691** acres comprising the Olustee Historical Site. Only **three** of these acres are controlled by the state, the rest belong to the National Forest Service. Since the battle also took place south of the railroad tracks, Andy Smith is leading an effort to obtain a donation of land from the corporation that owns the property south of the tracks. This would be the site for the museum, and it would allow parking lots, picnic sites and other needs of museum visitors to exist without detracting from the natural setting on the battlefield site north of the railroad tracks.

Receiving sizable donations is now a distinct possibility for the CSO as it achieved tax exempt corporate status this past year. If CSO members know of any business or individual interested in donating to the Olustee Historical Site, please contact Alice Williams (904 259-3965).

"One reason the South lost the Civil War was because it kept making Confederate money, not knowing it was worthless." - from The World According To Kids by Harold Dunn

Members Wanted

There are currently only **74** members of the Olustee Battlefield Citizens Support

Organization. The Board of Directors voted to keep membership fees at the same rate as last year. These fees are: Individuals - \$10; Family - \$15; Patron - \$32; Organizational - \$50, Individual Life - \$100; Corporate Friend - \$500; and Corporate Sponsor - \$1,000. The complete fee is now eligible for a tax exempt donation. Members who need to renew membership (see your mailing label - if it says 1997 you need to send in your fee for 1998) can send a check payable to "Olostee Battlefield CSO" to: CSO, P.O. Box 382, Glen St Mary, FL 32040. Please encourage others to join the CSO as this widens support for our activities.

Other Activities

The Olostee Battle Video (\$20) is selling well as more school teachers learn of its existence. The video provides a review of the Civil War in North Florida and not just on the battle. As such, it can be an important resource for schools. The CSO is working on developing open-captioning for the video, and has obtained a grant from the Florida Department of State Heritage Service to create a teacher's handbook to accompany the video. This will enable teachers to make effective use of the video in their classes. The handbook is being written for the 4th grade level. Members interested in helping with the handbook should contact Elaine McGraph (904 397-2733) of the Florida Park Service.

The CSO obtained a grant to partially fund an audio kiosk at the beginning of the marked trail. The grant will also help to improve, and increase the number of, the markers along the trail.

John Thrush is continuing work on ideas for interpretative tours of the Olostee Battlefield site. Brian Kepner is working on a new CSO membership brochure. David Coles is researching campaign markers. Susan Kett is continuing work on a "Kids Day."

Brian Kepner is continuing work on updating the uniforms for the Civil War mannequins in the Interpretative Center.

The CSO renewed its **Friends of the Florida State Parks** membership.

It turned out that a weapon reported stolen at the 1998 reenactment was actually borrowed and eventually returned to its owner.

Artillery Salute

If you noticed the extra cannonade at the end of Saturday's battle this year, you may have wondered why it occurred after most of the spectators had left. Ed Mercer, a long time artillery reenactor passed away. He requested this final salute and the artillery reenactors generously stayed behind to participate in the ceremony that fulfilled his last request.

Newsletter Editors

After serving as editor for many years, Jeff Grzelak felt it was time to let someone else experience the joys of editing the CSO newsletter. The CSO wishes to thank Jeff for all his help in this effort. The new editor is Thomas R. Fasulo. Tom is a reenactor with the 15th U.S. Infantry in Gainesville, Florida, but for his day job he is an entomologist with the University of Florida. If you have items you wish to contribute to the CSO newsletter, you can reach Tom at: 5128 SW 86th Terrace, Gainesville, FL 32608; by e-mail at fasulo@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu; or by fax at (352) 392-0190. If you send a fax be sure to indicate that it is for Tom as this number serves the UF Entomology and Nematology Department.

World Wide Web Site

Tom Fasulo is the Webmaster for the Battle of Olostee WWW site. Since Tom develops

software on insects for the University of Florida, including numerous WWW sites, he is in a perfect position to develop and maintain a WWW site for the battle and its reenactment. The site is currently housed on a server in Tom's laboratory. Last year the Olustee site was selected as one of the **Top 5%** of all sites on the WWW. Tom says that this is due more to the information provided by others than to his design efforts. The site was originally based on the first two Olustee booklets authored by David Coles, another CSO member, plus extensive reenactment information.

However, numerous visitors to the site have since contributed extensive information on the battle and the individuals involved. Many of

these visitors are not reenactors, but people searching for links to their family history. Their contributions include letters, diaries, newspaper articles and photographs.

There have been at least **35,000** visitors to the Olustee WWW site. A survey of over **200** other WWW sites that link to the Olustee site, some as far away as Germany and Australia, show that many of the links from these sites are to pages "inside" the Olustee site. By this we mean that the links are directly to unit and individual biographies, letters, and newspaper articles, etc and do not pass through the main menu and do not increment the counter. As a result the number of visitors to our site are many more than are indicated by the counter on the main menu.

Visit the Battle of Olustee WWW site at:
<http://battleofolustee.org/>

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Olustee Exposition
Sept. 19-20, 1998
Olustee Reenactment
Feb. 12-13-14, 1998