

Olustee Observer - April 2001
P.O. Box 382
Glen St. Mary, Florida 32040



Olustee Historical Exposition -
September 22-23 2001
Battle of Olustee Reenactment -
February 15-16-17, 2002

<http://battleofolustee.org/>

Olustee Battlefield Citizens Support Organization Membership Application

I wish to become a member of the Olustee Battlefield Citizens Support Organization,
and to support its efforts in maintaining a part of Florida's, and our nation's, history.

Check one: new member renewing member

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: work _____ home _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

Please select your membership category:

Individual \$10 Family \$15 Patron \$30 Organizational \$50
 Individual Life \$100 Corporate Friend \$500 Corporate Sponsor \$1000

Make checks payable to: "Olustee Battlefield CSO," and mail to:
Olustee Battlefield CSO, P.O. Box 382, Glen St. Mary, Florida 32040

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President's Report 2000-2001

Last year I was voted in as president, which was an honor and a large challenge. The shoes left by **Alice Williams** for me to fill were quite large. In her tenure as president she accomplished quite a lot and was very untiring in all her efforts. We as an organization owe her a large debt. She has been missed by more than just me.

Now the present: This organization would not be successful without the hard working volunteers that donate their valuable time. Our board of directors has been very busy. I am very grateful for **Paul Duran** who took over the job as treasurer and **Jerry Herren** who supervised the CSO tent at all the different functions.

In September we held our Civil War Exposition. We had bad weather which made us cut it a day short. We had a good turnout on Saturday. In October, after a lot of work by **Gene Ingram**, we had a meeting with a company called Hughes-Bowman Group Inc. This company has since been hired to do our interpretive planning for the new museum. We hope to have a couple of meetings this year and get the interpretive planning confirmed by all the powers to be and get started on the next stage of trying to get a new Museum.

In November we were notified by our Webmaster, **Tom Fasulo**, that the CSO Web site was voted as one of the top 95 Civil War Web sites on the Internet. It is quite an honor for us and for Tom. He has put years and thousands of hours into the wonderful site we have. He deserves special recognition for his achievement. Also in November we helped host the state wide CSO convention. Some of us helped at registration, and helped the CSO of Fort Clinch put on a big meal and show the fort on Friday night, then hosted some

people out at Olustee for a field trip. The weekend was a great success and I have heard nothing but praise from many people that attended. We hope they will be talking about this convention for years. In February, as you all know, we held our reenactment. This year we were all concerned about the trouble in Lake City spilling over into our show, but it never really got off the ground and only had a positive effect. Our turnout for paying attendees was the largest ever. About 12,000 people paid to see our event. As always we need to thank all those who helped in any way to make this a premier event.

Now the best news. We were voted the **BEST CSO IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA FOR 2000!!!** Last month Arnold Osteen, his twin granddaughters, my wife, myself and Valinda Subic went down by Sarasota to a volunteer weekend and were presented the award. It was a nice ceremony and we were real proud.

Everything we do must be approved by both the State and Federal agencies. We are lucky to have such a great relationship with **Valinda Subic** and **Susan Kett**. I know they have supervisors but without their drive or push things could be real difficult for us.

In closing I feel I must thank everyone again for all their help and support, without which I could not do my job, THANKS!!!

- John Thrush, President

Best of the Best

The Olustee Citizen Support Organization was selected as the **top CSO** in the state by "The Friends of Florida State Parks Citizen Support Organization of the Department of Environmental Protection - Division of Recreation and Parks."

President **John Thrush**, park manager **Valinda Subic**, and CSO Board member **Arnold Osteen** went to Myaka state park on a volunteer weekend [March 24-25] to accept the award. Please understand what this means. With the Florida state park system receiving the award as the best state park system in the country for 2000, this means our CSO is the **best CSO** in the **best state park system**.

John, Valinda and Arnold are pictured on the cover receiving the award. For the complete color photograph, see the CSO page on our Web site. It is available from the main menu.

At the Board of Directors meeting in January, Valinda Subic reported that **Florida Living Magazine** had awarded the Olustee reenactment a certificate for "**The Best Reenactment in Florida**." Of course, this is no surprise to us, but it may be to the organizers of other reenactments, at least one of which had claimed on its Web site to be the largest reenactment in the state. While we wish others success in their endeavors, the Battle of Olustee reenactment sets the standard for the state, and perhaps even for the Southeast. This is only because of the countless hours of hard work generated by our members, as you will see later in this issue.

Unlike many other events, the Battle of Olustee is not staged to profit anyone or anything other than the Historic Site itself. In addition, the reenactment improves as the hobby matures. Standards in uniforms, weapons, tactics and other aspects of reenacting that were common, even just a few years ago, are now not welcome at Olustee as reenactors themselves seek to become more authentic. Sometimes this generates some hard feelings, but participants need to understand that the reenactment takes place on the actual battlefield which is on Federal and state lands. As a result, standards can be kept high so that the event doesn't turn into just

another craft show with a battle associated with it. Sometimes this means that there will be fewer reenactors and sutlers at next year's event. But those that do come will create an atmosphere of authenticity that other events will hopefully seek to emulate.

News About Olustee

Deborah Grays, of Washington, D.C., e-mailed me asking for more information on the battle of Olustee. She wrote that an article on the 54th Massachusetts and the Battle of Olustee appeared in the February 2001 issue of **American Visions Magazine**.

On February 4, 2001, **The Washington Times** carried an entire page on the battle. Probably the first time a major newspaper has ever devoted an entire page to the battle.

The Battle of Olustee World Wide Web site was reviewed in the April, 2001, issue of **The Civil War News**, the major national newspaper of Civil War reenacting.

And it should come as no surprise that the Battle and Reenactment was featured in the **Lake City Reporter** the weekend of the event. Two weeks previous to the event three reporters from that newspaper contacted me after hearing of the Web site. I spent about 30 to 45 minutes with each reporter, but asked them to review the Web site and to feel free to "cut and paste" from it. The result was that the **Reporter** presented a factual accounting of the events that took place on February 20, 1864. Meanwhile the **Gainesville Sun**, in an article written two weeks before the reenactment, still seems to think the battle took place in Columbia County, if not in downtown Lake City. As we know, the Historic Site is actually in Baker County. The **Sun** also reported that "several divisions of black troops were destroyed." This is

interesting as there was only the equivalent of one Federal division present, and only three black regiments (8th and 35th USCT and the 54th Massachusetts). This is an example of how the Web site can help the media report historical facts, instead of just inventing them.

The Web site has also helped in another endeavor. As mentioned in the January newsletter, **Brian Terrell** contributed letters from his great-great-grandfather to the site. James Terrell served with the 6th Florida Infantry Battalion and was killed at Olustee. It turns out that Brian is a professional in TV and video. With his interest heightened as a result of seeing his g-g-g-grandfather's letters on the site, he secured permission from Valinda Subic to wander the reenactment with a professional movie camera, and plans to attend next year's event also. Then he will prepare a short video on the battle, focusing on some of the people involved instead of the battle itself, and donate the video to the Historic Site and the CSO. Brian has met with **Jeff Grzelak** and **Mark Simmons** of the 17th Connecticut to further increase his knowledge of the battle and the events taking place in Florida at that time.

Numbers

The paid spectator attendance figures for the 2001 event were:

Saturday Adults: 4013, Children: 2702,

Total: 6715

Sunday Adults: 3233, Children: 1924,

Total: 5157

Both days Adults: 7246, Children: 4626,

Total: 11872

John Thrush says that this is an **increase of about 2000** from last year. And for the first time, the Saturday crowd surpassed the Sunday crowd in attendance.

I was not able to obtain reenactor attendance figures, but they were in excess of 2,000. However, a large number of reenactors still show up and participate without registering. This is a problem as registering allows us to obtain correct figures to show state administrators just how popular the event is and to plan for enough hay, firewood and rations for next year's event. Another problem is that reenactors who don't register (**and their registration is free**) are not covered by workman's compensation. Please encourage everyone to register.

Member Activities

CSO member **Bob McLendon** recently led a Civil War walking tour through Gainesville, FL, for the **Historical Society of Alachua County**. Bob discussed the Civil War in that area, especially the two skirmishes fought in Gainesville's street. For details on the first "Battle of Gainesville" see our WWW site at <http://battleofolustee.org/letters/mass-gnv.htm>

CSO members will be manning our tent during the **49th Annual Florida Folk Festival** at the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in White Springs, Florida. The event takes place May 25-26-27. This is a very popular celebration of the Sunshine State's folk traditions and musical roots which is held on the banks of the beautiful Suwannee River. If you would like to help out please contact John Thrush at **thrush@coj.net**. If you are interested in attending just for the show, then adult prices are \$15 (daily) and \$35 (weekend). There are also children and family daily fees and family weekend fees. Call (850) 488-1484 for tickets. The **Stephen Foster Culture Center** is the state park which has administrative control of the Olustee State Historic

Battlefield. Our own **Valinda Subic** is park manager for both sites.

Museum News

Gene Ingram, chair of the museum planning committee, reports that on February 18th, the CSO Board of Directors voted to engage **Hughes/Bowman Design Group, Inc.**, to perform the first phase of the Interpretive Planning and Exhibit Design process for the proposed Olustee Battlefield Museum. This firm specializes in interpretive and exhibit planning. The CSO is making a \$25,000 payment for the initial planning cycle.

Curt Bowman is scheduled to lead a workshop at the Olustee Ranger Station at 10 am on Saturday, June 23, 2001. This will be the first of several such workshops. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Olustee's Server and URL

When you read this the Battle of Olustee WWW site will be on a new server, but the URL will remain the same [see front cover]. The new server is a 1 GHz Pentium III, with 256 MB of RAM and 36 GB hard drive, using Windows 2000 server software. It replaces the old dual 133 MHz Pentium I server Tom Fasulo has in his lab at the University of Florida's Entomology and Nematology Department. Some of the RAM on the new system is specially designed to support server functions, such as WWW sites. If you wish to pass the WWW site on to friends, you don't need to tell them the URL - just tell them to use any search engine to find the term "Olustee." Hundreds of pages will be listed, with almost 99.9% of them being our Web site. The few others will be for hotel and restaurant reservations at Olustee, Florida. Apparently, some Florida-based Web site providing this service lists every town in

Florida. And you guess it... You needn't bother making reservations for hotels or restaurants in Olustee. There aren't any, which is probably how the folks who live there like it.

Great Battles of History?

While doing a search for Olustee to see what else might come up, I ran across a war gaming Web site that had the Battle of Olustee listed, with engagement rules and other information. It wasn't very complete, but I found it interesting that Olustee should be one of only about a dozen battles listed. If you are interested you can see the site at: <http://www.principlesofwar.com/scenarios/olustee.htm>

Volunteering

At the annual meeting, Valinda Subic reminded everyone to be sure and report their volunteer hours to **Mitzi Nelson**. Valinda estimates only about 1/4 of all such volunteer hours are turned in for reporting. She also reported that the CSO had donated about **60,000** such hours in the last year, or the equivalent of about 30 full time positions. These hours take in more time than just the hours spent at the park. They include Board of Director and committee meetings such as museum, sutler, reenactment, and coordination meetings with other groups. Valinda said that time spent traveling to meetings also counts.

Archives

The Olustee Archives are currently kept at the Stephen Foster Center, but will be moved to Olustee when the museum is a reality. At the annual meeting, Valinda Subic reported on some additions to the Archives, including a complete set of the **Soldiers of Florida**

which has a listing of all known Confederate and Federal soldiers. Thanks go to **Dickie Ferry** for obtaining a substantial discount for the CSO from the publisher.

New Official Park Site

The new Florida State Park Web address for the Olustee Battlefield Historic Site is <http://www8.myflorida.com/communities/learn/stateparks/district2/olusteebattlefield/>.

The Florida Park Service is publishing new brochures for the Olustee Battlefield Historic Site, and the URLs for both the Olustee Florida State Park site and the CSO site will be listed in the brochure. Plus each site now links to the other, although the State Park site has our URL wrong in one spot. Hopefully that will be fixed that soon.

Video

Valinda Subic reported that sales of the Battle of Olustee video are steady. More importantly she reported that a portion of the battle video is included in a longer video covering Florida that was presented to all members of the Legislature in the recent session and is shown at the state capital to visitors. This state video includes a credit listing for our CSO. At the Board of Director's meeting in January, it was decided that anyone who joins or renews as a life member of the CSO will receive a copy of the Battle of Olustee video, which is sold for \$20. A life membership now costs \$100, but with this token of appreciation, life membership really only costs you \$80.

If there is a star on your mailing label, your dues are due for 2001!

Officers

President **John Thrush**, vice-president **Brian Kepner**, treasurer **Paul Duran** and secretary **Mitzi Nelson** were all reelected to their positions at the annual meeting on April 18th.

Education Friday

Shorty Robb, of the 13th Indiana's auxiliary "The Society of the Golden Teacup," reported that over 2,000 students were treated to organized historical presentations on the Friday of the event. According to her, the school teachers who supervised the students were pleasantly surprised to find this program instituted for the first time at Olustee and encouraged her to make it a yearly event. Shorty and the CSO wish to extend a hearty thank you to all the people who supported Shorty's efforts that morning. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to obtain a complete listing of them, but here is what I have: artillery - the Ft. Clinch gun crew and one other unit; blanket demonstration of military gear and personal effects carried by the soldiers - Tom Fasulo of the 13th Indiana; uniforms - several unknown reenactors; ladies clothing - Sue Bonifay of the 13th Indiana; School of the Soldier - Jim Jean of the 13th Indiana; medical demonstration - surgeons obviously; saddles - another nice lady; and Civil War era music; a musician and his lady.

Train Station

Susan Kett of the US Forest Service reports that the **Olustee Railroad Depot** is now open. This station is just north of the tracks at the light at the intersection of US 90 and a state road in Olustee. The annual meeting was held there on April 18th and the Depot is well worth a visit if you are passing by.

Fare Ye Well

Valinda Subic reported that **Elaine McGrath** was hired as the new director of the Nature and Heritage Tourism Center in White Springs and will not be working the reenactment as a park ranger anymore.

HardCorps?

Video producer **Charles Thompson** of New York City received permission to film a 25 minute segment for the British TV series "The Other Side." His topic was not only the Battle of Olustee and reenacting as a hobby, but also those reenactors who make the extra effort to be more authentic. The title of the show was "Hardcorps in the Civil War. [Yes, I know it is spelled wrong.] The Federal 1st Battalion at Olustee, commanded by Bob Lyons, was featured in the film along with some Confederate skirmishers captured on the march..

Charles sent me a copy of the video that has already aired on British TV's channel 4. It was a very nice portrayal of the hobby, unlike some other recent documentaries. I thought that everyone on screen did a very nice job representing the hobby and, once on the battlefield and on the march preceding it, they all did an excellent job staying in first person as real Civil War soldiers.

Once again, it was the CSO Web site that led Thompson to our event. We exchanged numerous e-mail messages, and I spent hours on the telephone with him over several weeks discussing the battle and our hobby. My major accomplishment, since I wasn't in the video, was to convince him to do his filming at Olustee instead of another event he was considering. My reward was my personal, favorite portion of the video - being listed as Historical Consultant in the end credits.

Newsletter News

My thanks to the following for contributing to this issue: John Thrush, Valinda Subic, Gene Ingram, and Shorty Robb. The next issue will be in July. Please send newsletter items to Tom Fasulo at fasulo@ufl.edu .

Another Newsletter

If you wish to keep abreast of reenacting events and other items that interest Florida reenactors, then you should subscribe to an e-newsletter edited by **Bob Niepert**. His newsletter is free and you can subscribe by going to the Olustee site and selecting Florida Civil War Events from the main page. A mailto with Bob's e-mail address [majorbob@sprynet.com] is posted at the top of the event page. Just send Bob a message requesting that he add you to his mailing list.

Bob posts issues about once a month during the summer and more often during the Florida reenacting season. And, if you feel the urge, he gladly accepts contributions to the newsletter. Most of the unit leaders in Florida are subscribers, and just Bob's listing of reenactments and their associated details makes this newsletter a gem.

Olustee Exposition

Valinda Subic reports that the Olustee Exposition is now scheduled for **September 22-23**. Last year it was moved a week ahead to avoid conflicting with the reenactment of the Battle of the Wilderness, a national event in Virginia that attracted many Florida reenactors.