

**Olustee Observer - April 2002**  
**P.O. Box 382**  
**Glen St. Mary, Florida 32040**



**Olustee Historical Exposition**  
**September 21, 2002**  
**Battle of Olustee Reenactment**  
**February 14-15-16, 2003**

<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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## State of the CSO

**John Thrush** submitted the following report at the annual meeting of the CSO on April 10th.

I would like to start by thanking everyone who has helped this organization during the last year. I could not have done anything without your great support. We had a good year last year. With the great help of **Gene Ingram** we have moved forward with the planning of the new museum. The final draft of the interpretive plan will be in our hands next month and then we can move on towards more tangible progress and into fund raising. Our **September Expo** last year was also a success. It was decided due to participation by some units and the lack of public attendance to make it just a one day event on Saturday. However, people are invited to stay over to Sunday just for practice or drills or whatever the units would like to do. Our annual reenactment was a great success this year. We had a lot of reenactors, sutlers and visitors. We even made a little money. There has been some small changes and there will be more small changes but it is for the improvement of the event. The newsletter as always, is top notch. Just remember **Tom Fasulo** needs your articles to put into the newsletter, so please send him material. Speaking of Tom, he is still doing an award winning job with the Web site. It just keeps getting bigger and better. We are lucky to have someone who is willing to do so much work for so little pay. We talked about doubling his salary (2 x 0 = 0), but haven't decided yet. On April 6th we had a cleanup day at the park. A Brownie troop out of Baldwin sent five girls, and we had five adults that also helped. A reenacting group known as the Southeast Federals came in and gave a living history presentation, which was great. Summer is coming so the temperature will be rising and

not much will be going on. We all need to start thinking and planning for the Expo which will be held September 21. Thanks again to my great board of directors for their guidance and support. I also need to thank both **Susan Kett** (USDA Forest Service) and **Valinda Subic** (Florida State Parks) for their support and cooperation which makes our job easier. Thanks again to all.

## Other CSO News

We are trying to get an order for **CSO shirts**. They are \$25 each and we need at least six to order. The next board of director meetings are September 21, 2002 at the Expo, and on January 11, 2003 at the work day. The next annual Statewide CSO convention will be in Orlando on October 11-12, 2002. This convention is very informative and entertaining. I recommend this meeting to anyone who can attend. - John Thrush

## Thank You to the Boys in Blue

On April 6th, during **Civil War Day** and Cleanup - a national event organized in conjunction with the Civil War Preservation Trust, the CSO received a donation of \$200 from the Southeast Federals. The funds were presented to John Thrush by **Ken Giddens**. The Southeast Federals consist of the **48th New York**, commanded by Ken Giddens; the **7th Connecticut**, commanded by Jose Suarez; the **Salt River Rifles**, commanded by Jim Butler; and the **21st Ohio**, commanded by Dick Ramsen. The money was left over from a fee collected for rations for a march the Southeast Federals held at the annual reenactment. Thank you folks for the money, it will put to good use. - John Thrush

## Event Attendees

At the Annual Reenactment of the Battle of Olustee, we had 2500 school kids on Friday, 2310 Reenactors registered, 1149 people camping and **total attendance for the three day event was 28,069.** - Valinda Subic

## Misunderstood Praise

One member suggested that my comment in the last issue stating, "If you notice a few more spectators at the reenactment this year, it will be **Martha Nelson's** fault. She placed a free notice about the event in **Going Places**, the monthly magazine of the national AAA travel club's southern branch. This magazine goes out to 2.1 million members in the southeastern United States," might be misinterpreted as a negative comment about Martha. Rereading it I can see where this might happen. Of course, I didn't mean it since it is my personal opinion that it is high time we used some of the free announcement services provided by magazines and newspapers with large distribution. As such, my comment was meant to praise Martha's work in promoting the event.

## Volunteer Hours

Volunteer's are our most valuable asset! During the Olustee Reenactment we had a total of 3713 volunteers donate **89,502.5 hours of volunteer service!** That equates to 43 full time positions working all year for the Florida Park Service. We appreciate all of our CSO members, CSO board members, park volunteers, reenactors, sutlers, pyrotechnicians and exhibitors. We could never produce such an exceptional event without your devotion and commitment. Remember to turn in the volunteer hours you work each month to **Mitzi Nelson** at

Margaret.A.Nelson@dep.state.fl.us I know it takes the fun out of volunteering, but in the end it helps the park to document what it really takes to do the things we do at Olustee.

Park Ranger **Frank Loughran** coordinated Park Day at Olustee on April 6th in conjunction with the Civil War Preservation Trust. Volunteers, CSO Members and **Brownie Troop #760**, out of Baldwin FL, adopted park improvement projects for the day including repainting the park flag poles and cleaning the interpretive trail and trail signs. Living history reenactors from **Southeast Federals** provided interpretation to volunteers about civilian and military life during the Civil War. Refreshments for the volunteers were provided by local businesses and the Olustee Battlefield CSO and the Civil War Preservation Trust provided free t-shirts for volunteers. Park Day was organized to help local communities preserve and maintain the nation's Civil War Battlefields.

The CSO will have a booth at the 50<sup>th</sup> annual **Florida Folk Festival** held at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, White Springs, on May 24-26, 2002. Olustee Merchandise Sales, Interpretation and a Membership Drive will be conducted during the event.

The U.S Forest Service will be doing a survey of the state park property and working with Florida Park Service Planners to look at a site location for the New Museum. An interpretive Plan is in the final stages of Development by Hughes Bowman of St. Augustine and should be ready for review in May.

Park Ranger Frank Loughran is coordinating restoration of the cannons at the Battlefield. He is working with **Billy Taylor**, the

volunteer blacksmith from Fort Clinch, to make trunion caps and elevation screws. A new coat of paint also was recommended. - Mitzi Nelson

## Olustee Web Site News

Since the last issue there have been a number of additions to our Web site. We now have a photograph of **Lt. Robert Dempsey**, who commanded two combined companies in the 7th Connecticut Infantry. Dempsey was killed during the battle. This photograph was the Olustee Photograph of the month for April and is this issue's cover photograph. Its use was generously provided by **Ron Coddington**, of Arlington, VA, who owns the original. Mr. Coddington collects Civil War cartes de visite and write a regular column for **The Civil War News** about them. He is writing a 300-word biography of Lt. Dempsey for his column and has offered to share it with us for the site.

Other additions include letters from Daniel Emory Stringer and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Stinson Asbury Freeman, both of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Georgia Infantry; and photographs of John Perry, 2<sup>nd</sup> Florida Cavalry, Colonel Loomis L. Langdon, 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Artillery and a new one of General Truman Seymour, commander of the U.S. forces. **Glen Peddy** provided us with information on James Peddy and Jackson Harrison, both of whom are mentioned in the letters of Edmund Jones, of the 64<sup>th</sup> Georgia, to his wife. These men also served in the 64<sup>th</sup>. Finally I added a link to "Carnival of Death," an article on the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts by Brian C. Pohanka, from **America's Civil War Magazine**.

The Hartcourt Textbook Company, of Orlando, FL, requested the free use of some text (about 150 words) from the Olustee Web site. The text is to be used in a fifth

grade electronic textbook demonstration project funded by the states of Florida and Georgia. I granted permission. - Tom Fasulo

## Student Day at Olustee

**Shorty Merritt**, who organized the student day historical presentations on Friday before the reenactment in February, was one surprised lady. She anticipated only about 400 to 500 students showing up as that was all the schools had registered. However, numerous schools that did not register showed up anyway and Shorty says over 2,000 students went through the series of presentations. As a result, Shorty organized all the groups as her three helpers were the ones who didn't show up. Those of us doing the presentations were also surprised. I remember looking up frequently, seeing the crowds of students by the gate in the stone fence getting ready to pass through the stations and thinking, "If this is only 400 students, thank God for school travel budget cuts."



John Perry, 2<sup>nd</sup> Florida Cavalry

## Discounts to Park Volunteers

Wendy Spencer, Director of Florida's State Parks, announced that holders of current 500 hour Annual Special Volunteer Passes will receive a 20% discount at all gift shops at Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park. Present the pass at the time of purchase and the shop staff will verify the pass holder by requesting a picture ID. Only holders of current passes are eligible. No other 500 volunteers are eligible. All future passes and letters will have information about the discount. Encourage those who have passed the 500 hour threshold to request their pass from my office. This new benefit was suggested by Larry Shearin, President, Friends of Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park.

## Reminiscences

Imagine for three mornings being awakened at 6:00 AM to the sounds of Confederate bugles and drums and within an hour hearing the sounds of thousands of marching feet passing in front of your tent and seeing the awesome sight of several regiments of Confederate soldiers in all their colorful gray regalia with rifles pointed upwards, haversacks and swords swinging by their sides. Later in the day, ladies are seen in an array of long bouffant dresses in a rainbow of colors, held out with hooped skirts, heads covered with veiled-feathered-flowered-tiny hats, umbrellas, gloves and purses, strolling about gracefully or entering sutler tents to purchase jewelry, other accessories or perhaps another outfit. The question, "Why are you dressed like that?" directed to a man, may receive the reply: "I'm dressed as a country gentleman," or "a Confederate or Union military officer" or "an undertaker."

A person browsing around in any one of the scores of sutler tents, which are exact

replicas of the Civil War era, can find on display for purchase, every item used during the Civil War. There were copies of the Yankee New Testament Bible, The Confederate New Testament Bible, also every item both the Union soldiers in blue and the Confederate soldiers in gray used to wear, from their boots and hats to their mess kits and fighting pieces.

At the 26<sup>th</sup> Reenactment of the Battle of Olustee, the entire Civil War U.S. population was represented. The Central Florida Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) and the reenactors of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Colored Regiment. The First North Carolina Colored and the Eight U.S. Colored Infantry participated representing "people of color" who lived at the time of the Civil War. The three regiments named fought bravely and courageously during the Battle of Olustee.

Students and adults from Shiloh Baptist Church and the AAHGS were reenactors dressed in slave attire and as "free people of color." Television and newspaper reporters gave extensive coverage to their participation and the informative display on the "Secret Symbols sewn into Quilt Blocks." **K.O. Mitchell, Joel V. Fears** and **Mary J. Fears** informed audiences throughout the weekend of February 15-17, of the true facts about the participation of the three black regiments and three women of color who served in the Civil War. Three persons costumed as the subject of stories told by Mrs. Fears were: Mrs. Sarah Rone as Elizabeth Keckley, Ms. Ernestine Johnson as Harriet Tubman, and student Sameasha Johnson as Susie King Taylor. Kevin, a student from Shiloh, proudly expressed to the audience who the group represented.

The climax of the weekend for all the visitors was the sight of 2500 reenactors of Confederate and Union troops on the battle grounds shooting at each others in the same area where the Battle of Olustee took place on February 20, 1864.

Mrs. Fears states, "To experience a weekend at Olustee as a reenactor dressed in slave attire, imparting information to folks from all over the country, factgs that they did not know about Afro-Americans in the Civil War, was an experience that I shall never forget. Our presence was welcomed by the planners of the program, especially Mr. **Eric Hague** and Mrs. **Martha Nelson**. So often have we heard, "I am so happy to see you here. Be sure to come back next year," and "Your program was very enjoyable. I learned much that I did not know."

It is my fervent hope that parents, pastors and youth leaders of churches would become very active in helping youth to learn African American history by providing the opportunity for many to attend next year's reenactment. It is truly worth the effort to help people learn African American history.

Mrs. Fears and members of the Central Chapter of the AAHGS plan to continue as a part of the Battle of Olustee Reenactment in the future. She will be in continuous contact with ministers and church youth groups urging attendance. - Mary Fears

## **District Meeting**

District CSO Meetings are a great way to enhance your management expertise. **The Friends of Fort Clinch** will be hosting the next District CSO Meeting on August 10, 2002, providing lunch for the attendees. The guest speaker is Crystal Adkins of Holland & Knight, who will speak on State Law Fund Raising issues. CSO members from

District 2 should RSVP for the August meeting. - Jennifer Paul

## **That Took Gall II**

I reported in the last issue that **Valinda Subic**, manager for the Olustee Battlefield Historic Site, went into the hospital to have her gall bladder removed. But it didn't quite happen that way. Apparently, the medical quacks [obviously nothing has changed since the Civil War :-)] decided on the operating table to leave her gall bladder intact. As reported in the last issue the doctors were more concerned with the viral infection in Valinda's liver and pancreas. Valinda is recovering and, although visibly tired, was back on the job during the reenactment.

## **Next Issue**

Please send your Olustee and other Civil War news and activities by CSO members to me at [fasulo@ufl.edu](mailto:fasulo@ufl.edu). The next issue is scheduled for late July. I want to thank Mary Fears, Mitzi Nelson, Jennifer Paul, Valinda Subic, and John Thrush for contributing to this issue.

Please remember to send me your newsletter information by e-mail or on diskette so I don't have to retype it. If you do send an article on printed paper, then I reserve the right to ignore it for one or more issues. Please understand that I am at a computer all day at work and the last thing I want to do when I get home is retype your article. - Tom Fasulo