
The Green Banner

Vol XXI, No. 1 Colonel James D. Brady Camp No. 63 Jan-Mar 2026

FROM THE COMMANDER'S TENT

Greetings! I hope that the holiday season went well for each of you, and that all had a wonderful time of family, friends, and fellowship. Once again, we find ourselves in a new year, and we have fresh opportunities to be an enthusiastic voice for our Union ancestors here in Virginia. As you will see below, we have a few events already planned, and most of all, we are privileged to honor our ancestors with ceremonies over their graves so that no one will forget the sacrifices of those who successfully kept this country together as one.

Faugh-a-Ballagh!

[*"Clear the Way!"—the Irish Brigade's rallying cry*]

Eric Kirk

Camp Commander

NEW CAMP OFFICERS

The following are our camp officers for 2026:

Camp Commander – Eric Kirk

Senior Vice Commander – Bill Butler

Junior Vice Commander – Phil Russell

Secretary/Treasurer – Ed Freyfogle

Camp Council – Lou Mosier, Tim Ahlgrim,
Lloyd Monroe

Patriotic Instructor/Signals – Phil Russell

Recruiter – Eric Kirk

Graves Registration – Tom Grund

Eagle Scout Coordinator – Mike Kiser

R.O.T.C. Coordinator – I. C. Smith

Camp Historian – Bill Butler

UPCOMING CAMP EVENTS

Saturday, 18 April – Tour of Totopotomy Creek Battlefield in Hanover County. Also tour of Shelton House where Patrick Henry married with luncheon to follow at Third Base Grill.

Saturday, 25 April – Battlefield Park Day

The camp is looking into participating in one or more of the annual projects that entail clean-up and other efforts to care for battlefield properties. More details to come. American Battlefield Trust site on this event at the following:

<https://www.battlefields.org/events/park-day-2026>

Monday, 25 May – Memorial Day at Cold Harbor

The camp will host this annual event at the National Cemetery. Time and details to follow, as we confirm it, with a luncheon to follow if there is interest. Any other suggestions for the day are greatly appreciated.

Events later in the year are being planned. If you have suggestions or want to host a meeting, please contact the camp officers.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Our annual dues remain at \$45 for 2026. Please submit your checks to Camp Secretary/Treasurer Ed Freyfogle by the end of February to remain active and in good standing with the camp and the national order.

SUVCW SPONSORED EVENTS

The following are upcoming events of note.

- 11 April 2026, Annual Lincoln Tomb Ceremony, Springfield, IL

- 24-25 April 2026, Department Encampment at Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City, MD

- 30 July-2 August 2025, National Encampment, Gettysburg, PA

R.O.T.C. AWARDS

Our patriotic order continues to seek opportunities to issue awards to deserving high school Junior R.O.T.C cadets and college-age Senior R.O.T.C. cadets. Over the past several years, our camp has presented numerous awards to students at high schools across our region. Spring is typically the time when R.O.T.C. units hold their annual awards

ceremonies, and the Brady Camp is eager to support them. The SUVCW R.O.T.C. award, which consists of a medal, ribbon, and certificate, comes at no cost to either the camp or the school. If you know of an opportunity for presenting this award, contact our R.O.T.C. Award Coordinator I. C. Smith.

EAGLE SCOUT AWARDS TOO!

Our patriotic order also seeks to recognize new Eagle Scouts throughout the year. If you know of a deserving scout in your area, please contact our Eagle Scout Coordinator Mike Kiser.

NEW WEBSITES

Both the National SUVCW and the Department of the Chesapeake have updated their sites, please check them out!

National

<https://suvchw.org/>

Department

<https://suvchwchesapeake.org/>



*Honoring Union Veterans in
Southeastern Virginia since 2003*



THIS QUARTER IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY

This year marks the 165th Anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War. Here are a few events of note in the camp's region of interest.

7-15 January 1861: The Federal Navy Department ordered the sloop-of-war *U.S.S. Brooklyn* to attempt to intercept the steamer *Star of the West* and redirect it back to Hampton Roads. The *Star of the West* had sailed several days earlier with a detachment of U.S. Army troops from Fort Monroe to reinforce the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Rebel forces fired on the *Star of the West* during its attempt to reach the fort. Both ships returned to the Chesapeake Bay shortly thereafter.

21 January-3 February 1861: The *U.S.S. Brooklyn* in Hampton Roads received orders for another resupply mission, this time to the besieged Federal garrison at Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida. The *Brooklyn* loaded a contingent of troops from Fort Monroe and sailed for the Gulf of Mexico. It reached the entrance to Pensacola Bay by mid-February and maintained station there ready to support the fort's garrison.

2-27 February 1861: A Peace Convention called by Virginia met in Washington D. C., while at the same time several states from the Deep South sent delegates to Montgomery, Alabama to form a secessionist government. After much bickering, the Peace Convention sent recommendations for six constitutional amendments along the lines of the Crittenden Compromise to Congress and adjourned. The U.S. Senate ultimately rejected the Peace Convention proposals on 2 March.

14 February 1861: The Virginia State Convention met in Richmond to consider the question of secession. Most of the delegates remained Unionist in sentiment at this point and rejected the proposed measures.

23 February 1861: President-Elect Abraham Lincoln arrived in Washington D.C. early in the morning and later met with delegates of the Peace Convention.

4 March 1861: With Federal infantry and artillery troops deployed across the capital city to quell any potential unrest or violence, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States, with Hannibal Hamlin of Maine serving as the new Vice President.



30-31 March 1861: Fearing that secessionists in tidewater Virginia might try to seize the naval yard and ships under repair at Norfolk and Portsmouth, the Federal Navy Department ordered 250 seamen and landsmen from the New York Navy Yard to the Chesapeake Bay. An initial group of 50 seamen were dispatched aboard the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Harriet Lane*, which was to stop at Norfolk before proceeding to Charleston as part of an effort to resupply the beleaguered Federal garrison at Fort Sumter.

**THIS QUARTER IN CAMP HISTORY***10 Years Ago*

On Saturday, 16 January 2016, the camp held its annual business meeting at Kelly's Tavern near the Great Bridge section of Chesapeake, Virginia. After the meeting, Camp Commander Mosier presented information on the Union Army's activities in Great Bridge, and then led a tour of the Battle of Great Bridge, a small but strategically significant Revolutionary War battle which occurred adjacent to the camp's meeting location.

On Saturday, 12 March 2016, Brothers of the Brady Camp and several guests traveled to the Petersburg Eastern Front for a tour led by Brother Doug Blake. Highlights included walking the grounds of the disastrous Battle of the Crater, as well as the site of the much more successful fighting at Fort Stedman. The Brothers then went to the nearby cemetery in Petersburg where the camp's namesake, Colonel James D. Brady, was buried. At his gravesite, the group discussed his honorable record of service and paid their humble respects.

**ANCESTOR CORNER**

Our series of stories continue with a submission by new Camp Brother Steve Harris about his ancestor, Sergeant John Kraft.

SALUTATION. Thank you for supporting the Brady Camp and continuing to give a voice and a presence to Union veterans.

Warmest regards in Fraternity, Charity, & Loyalty,

Bill Butler, PCC

Senior Vice Commander and Camp Historian

JOHN H. KRAFT, Sergeant, 68th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

By Steven D. Harris

John H. Kraft (1842-1931) is my paternal second great-grandfather. My father's side of the family has deep Ohio roots, with the first ancestor arriving in the state over 200 years ago. The Kraft line is one of my ancestral lines. But I knew very little about John Kraft and his Civil War service until I began researching for a family history document I was preparing for my dad's birthday in 1991.

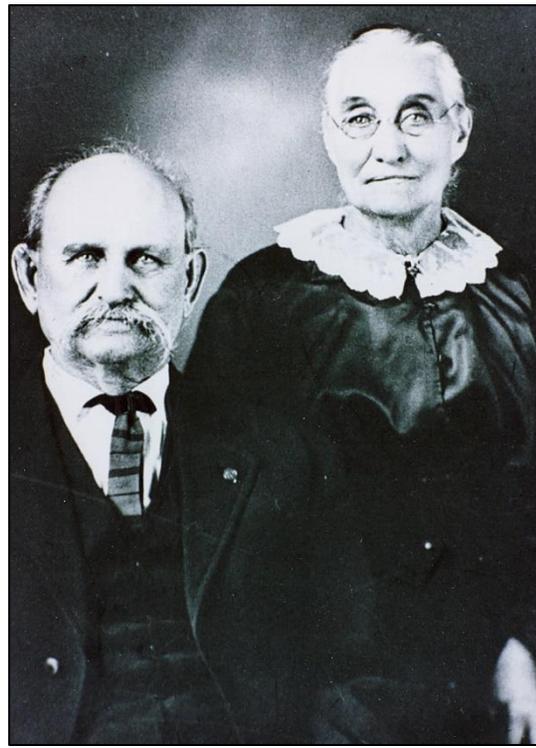
John Kraft's Civil War story began in the spring of 1861, when patriotic fervor swept through the North following President Lincoln's call for ninety-day volunteers. Nineteen years old and living in Defiance County, Ohio, he enlisted on April 24, 1861. John and his fellow recruits trained briefly at Camp Taylor in Cleveland before moving south to western Virginia, where they experienced the realities of soldiering—long marches, harsh conditions, and sudden combat. John's unit saw action in July 1861 at Scary Creek, (West) Virginia, where the regiment fought under confusing circumstances and suffered casualties before withdrawing. John escaped injury and completed his term of service when the regiment was mustered out August 12, 1861.

With the war intensifying, John enlisted again on October 8, 1861—this time for three years—in the 68th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Promoted quickly within the ranks, he became a corporal in December 1861. Following training at Camp Latty (Napoleon, Ohio) and later at Camp Chase (Columbus, Ohio), the 68th moved into the Western Theater as part of General Ulysses S. Grant's growing army.

The regiment's first major battle came at Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862. Having only recently arrived in Tennessee, John and his fellow soldiers were thrust into one of the war's bloodiest engagements. The 68th Ohio was drawn into heavy fighting that tested the discipline of every man. Kraft survived the battle unharmed.

After Shiloh, the 68th Ohio performed garrison and patrol duties, particularly around Bolivar, Tennessee. It was during this period that John's company commander, Captain Sidney Sprague, was court-martialed for intoxication and for threatening a private, an event that seriously disrupted the company's leadership. Even under these unsettling circumstances, John continued to gain the confidence of his superiors, earning promotion to sergeant on March 31, 1863.

John's greatest trials came during the Vicksburg Campaign. The 68th Ohio endured exhausting labor building roads, guarding supply transports, and cutting canals through swamps and bayous. As Grant maneuvered his army to isolate Vicksburg, the regiment fought in key engagements at Port Gibson, Raymond, and Jackson. These operations culminated in the pivotal Battle of Champion Hill on May 16, 1863, where John suffered an injury that would follow him the rest of his life. Years later, his invalid pension application states that he was injured "while constructing breast works in front of the enemy while chopping off a log some distance from the ground. The log fell from under him, which caused him to fall in a manner to injure his back or spine by striking on the log with great force, which rendered him insensible for a time." Lieutenant William H. Palmer, his immediate superior, confirmed in an affidavit that the injury left John crippled and permanently weakened.



John Kraft with his wife Eliza

While still recovering, John was dealt a second blow: during the siege of Vicksburg in June 1863, he contracted chronic diarrhea, a deadly illness that plagued Union armies. Hospitalized on June 22, he remained under care until August 21. His weakened condition led to a thirty-day furlough beginning September 15, during which he recuperated at home in Defiance County.

Despite his injuries and illness, John eventually rejoined the 68th Ohio in time for Sherman's Atlanta Campaign of 1864. This operation involved nearly continuous marching, skirmishing, entrenching, and exposure to enemy fire at Resaca, Dallas, Kennesaw Mountain, and Atlanta. The 68th contributed to Sherman's eventual capture of the city, a turning point for the Union war effort.

From the time of its organization in 1861 until its termination nearly four years later, the 68th lost 300 officers and men – 50 in battle and 250 to disease, a 30% mortality rate. Even though he would suffer through the rest of his life from injury and disease acquired during the war, John Kraft was one of the fortunate members of the regiment.

Sergeant John Kraft's journey from his first enlistment in 1861 through the trials of Champion Hill and Vicksburg to the final push toward Atlanta reflects both the endurance of an individual soldier and the broader struggle that preserved the Union.

John Kraft completed his service honorably and was mustered out on July 10, 1865.

Steven D. Harris is a member of Brady Camp 63, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. He is also a member of the Winthrop Society, Sons of the American Revolution, Society of the War of 1812, and the First Families of Ohio.



John and Eliza's grave marker at the Sherman Cemetery in Paulding, Ohio