

The following article was given to AAHA during Heritage Days by Edward Wheeler Havers of Olean. I hope you find it interesting.

There is no doubt that we, the citizens of the United States of America, are going through some very difficult, sad and scary times. However, we have come through other frightening challenges and succeeded in overcoming them. Now, we are challenged once again and we must be as determined to accomplish the task of overcoming the terrorist regime that has brought us to this state of affairs as we have in years before when we fought the Revolutionary War which made us a free nation, followed by the confrontation of the Civil War which pitted state against state and family against family. It was that war which brought us together as the United States of America. We have been engaged in many great battles which have called us together as a united people, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and others, and in each we have stories of brave young men and women who stood for what they felt was the right. Thousands of these brave veterans fought to keep this wonderful land of ours free, and so many gave the supreme gift, their lives.

> An example of such a young man is Devillo Wheeler, a fifteen year old lad who on September 24, 1862, left his home on the North Nine Mile in Allegany, N.Y. to join the 154th N.Y. Volunteers, one of the army regiments which many other young men had joined. He lied about his age to enter the confrontation, because he felt that it was his duty to enlist. Sixteen was the age for enlistment, and as stated, he was only 15.

Most of the Civil War enlistees were sent to Jamestown, N.Y., separated into regiments, and then moved to an active post. The following is a short excerpt from a letter written by Devillo while in Jamestown on September 27, 1862: "We have marching orders from here now and expect to leave on Monday. I send this check for I can't come home. We only get \$50.00, and I bought a watch. I am sending you all that I can. Spend it as you see fit. I probably shall never see you again unless I come through the war safely. I should like to see you all again but I can't. I'm leaving for Camp J. M. Brown."

Fighting a war is a difficult and frightening experience. Many decisions have to be made. The letters sent to family members and friends read as pages from a history book many years after they are written. One has the chance to look into the past and learn what the sender and his comrades had to endure. They not only had the war about which to think, but often they worried about the folks back home. This is another excerpt from a letter sent from a camp near Fredericksburg, Va., February 2, 1863: "We are going to have some more pay the last of this month then I will send you some. I only have \$5.00 for myself and need money a great many times. Things to buy are very dear. I have seen brandy sold for seven shillins a drink. I tell you when a man has been out on picket and comes in all wet and cold, seven shillins a drink is no object. I was on picket the other day on the Raphanock River and the Rebs come over and give me some tobacco but I didn't use it. I gave it to Capt. Mills. The Rebs said they was sick of the war and wanted to go home as bad as we did. The reb regiment was the 10th Alabama. Some of them threwed down their arms and gave themselves up. It is easy to cross the River by jumping from stone to stone. The Rebs want our hardtack bread and they trade tobacco for it. I shall see home by the next time if I am alive war or no war. It makes no difference to me how I must see it." (The rest of the letter is missing.)

Toward the end of the Civil War the Battle of Gettysburg was fought. It was shortly before that battle that Devillo wrote his parents another letter. However, only an undated fragment of the letter was found. It follows: "I am all right now don't worry and don't work yourself to deep for you will get along just well.

Courtesy of Marlynn Olson Roy, Penn Run, Pa.

Be cheerful and I will come out all right though if I was home I should like it better and would feel safer. Let it be ever so humble there is no place like home. When I hear the brass band play 'Home Sweet Home' in the evening it makes me think of home." Signed Devillo Wheeler to his father and mother and sisters and brothers, forever Devillo Wheeler. He adds: "You can't expect me to write on my knapsack as well as I could on the desk up there to Mother Warners."

Devilleo was taken prisoner at Gettysburg, Pa., and was transferred to Andersonville prison where he starved to death at the age of seventeen.

War is not a pleasant state of affairs, and as said before, it brings about much worry and sadness. It is a dreaded event and a terrible waste of young lives, lives such as Devillo's and others that have been lost in other battles if only the perpetrators could understand that. However, we must unite, just as our veterans did before us, and face the enemy and rid our nation (and the world, in this case) of the terrorists who are determined to bring us to our knees. Once again we will prove to the world, we are a united people who will stand up and protect our freedoms, freedoms that are a gift to us by the sacrifices of those brave individuals who fought for freedom and built us a strong nation under God.

Devilleo Wheeler was (and is) my uncle. I wish I had known him personally. I admire him and am proud of his part in helping to unite our country and its people. We are a great antion under God. Let's keep it that way.

OCTOBER MEETING

We will meet on Sunday, October 17 at 2 p.m. at the Heritage Center, 25 North Second Street, Allegany. Our speaker will be Fr. Dominic Monti, OFM, Ph.D., and a Professor of Theology at St. Bonaventure University, which will celebrate its sesquicentennial during the 2008-09 academic year. Fr. Dominic, a native of Bradford, PA., a noted church historian, and former interim president of the university, will relate the history of the Franciscan order in this part of America, and how the Franciscans came to found St. Bonaventure College on land donated by Nicholas Devereux of Utica. St. Bonaventure University is a vital part of our life here in Allegany, and Fr. Dominic will detail the rich history of the college as it has grown over the years. I hope you will be able to join us for this interesting talk.