

The Williamsburg Line

Mark Your Calendars!

January 14, 2023:

Decorate the "Excelsior Evergreen" on the Ravine Tract to feed our wildlife friends



March 25, 2023:

Experience the amazing stories of Williamsburg's soldiers and contraband during Walk of Valor at the Ft. Magruder Hotel & Conference Center



April 15, 2023:



Participate in cleanup on the Williamsburg Battlefield during Park Day

More details to come!

A Pink Confederate Battle Flag ?

In May, the WBA hosted Walk of Valor, a special event on the Williamsburg Battlefield that recognized the courage of soldiers and contraband during the May 5, 1862 fight. Capt. Benjamin Robinson of the 5th NC Infantry was one of the Confederate soldiers recognized for his gallant effort to carry his regiment's battle flag in an ill-fated charge on the Custis Farm (present Egger Tract) after 3

mer boys with the 3rd VT Infantry, which arrived on the field as the fighting ended. He was an eyewitness to the aftermath of the battle and very possibly saw the 5th NC's battle flag, which was left on the field and recovered by a Union soldier. So, why did Scott paint the flag as pink?

During the first major land battle of the war at Manassas Junction, VA on July 21,

1861, Confederate forces carried their First National Flag into the fight. Called the Stars and Bars, it was similar in appearance to the Stars and Stripes. In the smoke from the battle and the haze of the humid day that provided no breeze to unfurl either army's flags, the banners were indistinguishable from each other. Troops on both sides were confused as to who was friend and who was foe.

To prevent future confusion, the Confederacy adopted a flag design to be used exclusively as a battle flag. (It did not replace the national flag.)



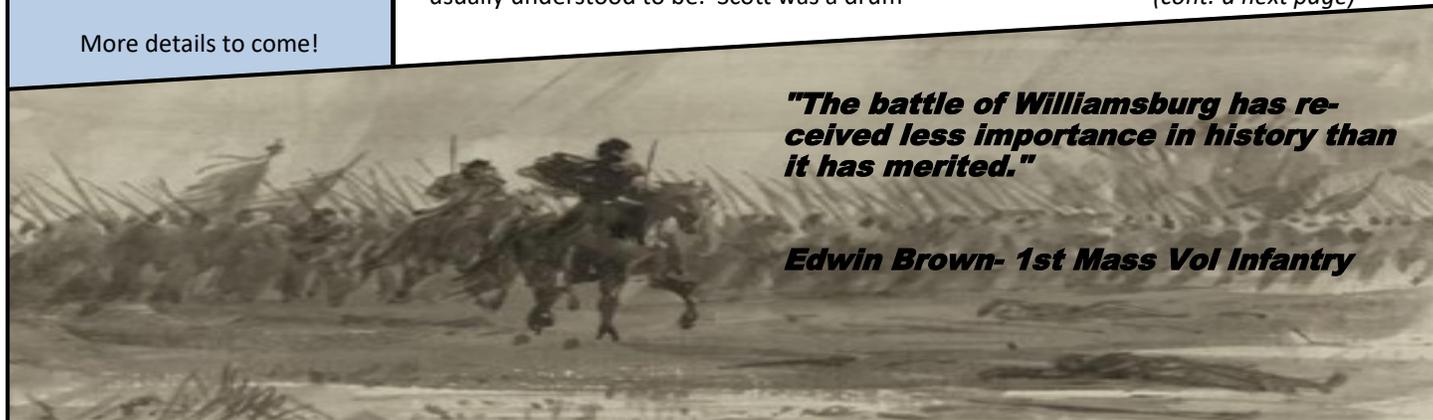
previous flag bearers had fallen.

Those who attended Walk of Valor saw a print of Julian Scott's ca. 1880 painting depicting the charge of the 5th NC and its battle flag (portion shown above with flag highlighted). More than one viewer noticed something unusual about the depiction of the flag. It appears pale pink instead of red as usually understood to be. Scott was a drum-

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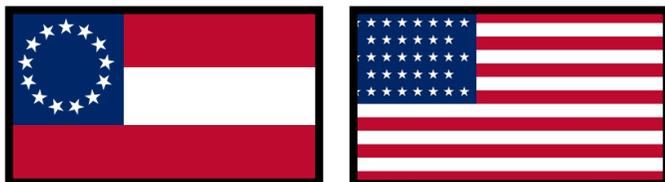
"The battle of Williamsburg has received less importance in history than it has merited."

Edwin Brown- 1st Mass Vol Infantry



Education & Preservation

A Pink Confederate Battle Flag ? (cont.'d)



Comparison of Stars & Bars to Stars & Stripes

This flag with St. Andrew's Cross of blue bordered in white and decorated with white stars on a field of red fringed in yellow is today the most recognized flag of the Confederacy. Ladies' sewing circles in Richmond made the first 120 Confederate battle flags, but acquiring enough red silk proved a challenge. The South constantly suffered from shortages of resources. As such, silks in various red tints, including magenta, rose, and pink, were employed to meet the order.

On November 28, 1861 at Centreville, VA, regimental commanders were presented with the new battle flags in a ceremony. Don Troiani's painting, *The First Battle Flags*, depicts the event and accurately shows the mix of red and pink silk flags. Col. Robert E. Withers of the 18th VA Infantry reportedly objected to his pink flag, believing it indicated fear and looked too much like a flag of truce. Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard then directed the colonel to dye it red in either the enemy's blood or his own if necessary. (It is worth noting that in 19th-century America, the color pink was not gender specific. It wasn't until the 20th-century that pink and blue became commercially associated with femininity and manliness, respectively.)



Recently, the WBA's Don Kline (left) and Marty Bank (photographer) met Matt George (right), Senior Manager of Land Stewardship for the American Battlefield Trust, on the Egger Tract to install a sturdy gate to prevent vehicular access on the property. Don and Marty then gave Matt a whirlwind tour of the Williamsburg Battlefield and presented him with an autographed book by the WBA's historian, Carson Hudson, Jr.

At least ten of the initial 120 battle flags sewn are known to have been pink, including the flag of the 5th NC, but few of these survive today. The captured flag of the 5th NC was loaned to the Chicago Sanitary Fair in October 1863 for an exhibition. When it was returned to the U.S. War Department, it was mislabeled as the flag of the 30th Arkansas Infantry Regiment. In 1905 as a sign of national reconciliation, captured flags were returned to their respective states. The 5th NC's flag was incorrectly sent to Arkansas. Thanks to intensive research by the WBA's own Thomas L. McMahon, the true identity of the flag was revealed in 2002 and the fragile banner, which still bears blood stains, presented to the N.C. State Museum where it is preserved today.

Flag bearing in the Civil War was necessary, honorable, and deadly. Bearers of the colorful banners were visible targets and suffered high casualty rates. Regardless of the flag color, bearers on both sides carried their banners with pride, backbones of steel, and hearts of courage.



The First Battle Flags, Centreville, VA by Don Troiani

(at right) Pink Battle Flag of the 5th NC Infantry carried by Capt. Benj Robinson at Williamsburg and preserved in the N.C. State Museum

