

## Civil War officially over

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Just because their ancestors were on opposing sides of the Civil War doesn't mean their descendants can't get along.

Several military re-enactors – both Union and Confederate – participated in the headstone dedication ceremony March 29 to honor Cpl. George Brown.

Brown, the father of 11 children, was a black farmer in Confederate-friendly Charles County who fought for the Union in the 19th United States Colored Troops Regiment. Wounded in action on July 30, 1864, near Petersburg, Va. – the day of the infamous “crater incident” in which a huge mine exploded beneath charging Union soldiers – Brown returned to Charles County, near Blossom Point, where he resumed farming.

Widowed with four children by his first wife, Emily, Brown married Sarah Queen and had six more children.

When Brown died in 1916 at the age of 83, he made sure that his widow, Sarah, would be buried with a headstone, but did not secure one for himself.

The Rev. Edward O'Connell of St. Ignatius Catholic Church in Port Tobacco began researching Brown's life in the late 1950s while putting



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Staff photo by GARY SMITH

A color guard of both Union and Confederate re-enactors took part in the headstone dedication ceremony March 29 for Cpl. George Brown, a black Union soldier from Charles County. Brown was without a headstone for almost 90 years.

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together a history of the church.

He noted that Brown's grave was not marked and embarked on a nearly 50-year crusade to get the Union soldier a headstone.

He happened to mention his quest during a meeting with the Sons of Confederate Veterans, who strive to make sure all Civil War veterans, regardless of what side they fought for, are marked or remembered.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans Pvt. Wallace Bowling Camp 1400 donated the stone in 2006, which was placed by Raymond Funeral Service in La Plata.

Once news leaked out about Brown's story and O'Connell's journey to get his grave marked, several organizations came forward to honor Brown, whose unit was present at the surrender of Gen. Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House on Sept. 1, 1865.



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Staff photo by GARY SMITH

Jay Moore, left, Terry Klima and Greg Hernandez rehearse fife and drum pieces at St. Catherine's Church and Cemetery in Port Tobacco before the dedication ceremony March 29 for Cpl. George Brown, a black Union soldier from Charles County. Brown was without a headstone for almost 90 years before a local priest, interested in history, found a group of descendants of Confederate soldiers willing to donate a stone to mark his grave at St. Catherine's Church in Port Tobacco. Both Confederate and Union re-enactors participated in the celebration.

In addition to several military re-enactment groups – including the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, B Company; the Baltimore Chapter 9th and 10th Horse Cavalry Association, the Buffalo Soldiers re-enactors; the Department of Maryland Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War, or SUVCW, from Crofton; General George G. Meade Camp 5 SUVCW of Odenton; Lincoln-Cushing Camp 2 SUVCW of Washington, D.C.; Maryland Division Sons of Confederate Veterans or SCV; Pvt. Wallace Bowling Camp 1400 SCV of La Plata; and Maryland Line CSA Camp 1741 of Upper Marlboro; the African-American Heritage Society of Charles County; African-American Ladies of the Civil War; Female Re-enactors of Distinction – some of Brown's descendants, attended the ceremony.

Brown's grandson William Thomas Bowman of Capitol Heights, great-granddaughters Almeta Bowman of Mount Vernon and Mary B. Toye of Waldorf, great-great-grandniece Conchita Walls of Waldorf and great-grandson John Wayne Dashiell Sr. of Seattle were on hand to pay their respects to their ancestor.

Walls said Dashiell and his wife were interested in developing a family history when they stumbled upon a Maryland Independent article about George Brown's headstone.

"We didn't know any of this information," Walls said about Brown's military service. "It was very interesting."

Now, with much of the extended family still living in Charles County, Brown's descendants are looking to find out more about their history.

"It's bringing the family closer together," Walls said. "We knew there was a lot of us here in the county – it was a real eye-opener for us."

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Guest speakers at the ceremony included Sen. Thomas “Mac” Middleton (D-Charles); Hammad S. Matin speaking on behalf of Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.) and Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.); and the Charles County commissioners, who presented the Brown family with a proclamation.

The Rev. Robert Kosty of Port Tobacco conducted the service and the ceremony included a bugler and a color guard comprised of members of both Sons of Confederate Veterans and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.