

SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

COL. HANS C. HEG CAMP #15

WIND LAKE, WIS.

FEBRUARY 2021

Winner of the Abraham Lincoln Commander-in-Chief Award – Best Camp in the Country

Colonel Hans C. Heg at Battle of Chickamauga

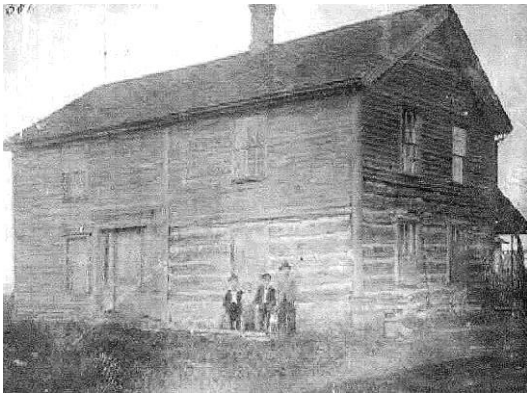


Painting by Herbjørn Nilson Gaustå

You're looking at a painting of Col. Hans C. Heg on horseback before the battle of Chickamauga, the 1863 fight in northern Georgia where Heg was killed. The painting is from Robert N. Halsted, a great-great-nephew of Heg who lives in Monroe, Wis.

Brother Jon Rupp, our Monroe camp member, obtained a copy of the painting from Halsted and forwarded a copy to us.

Heg was the highest ranking Wisconsin officer killed in the Civil War. On the eve of the battle of Chickamauga, Heg's commanding officer was ready to pin the single *(continued next page)*



The Heg house, partly log, where Col. Heg grew up, located across from what is now Kelly's Bleachers in Wind Lake, Wis.

The combination house and general store in Waterford, Wis., where Heg and his family lived in the late 1850s. The Waterford Library is now located where the house stood.



Painting and photos courtesy of Robert Halsted.

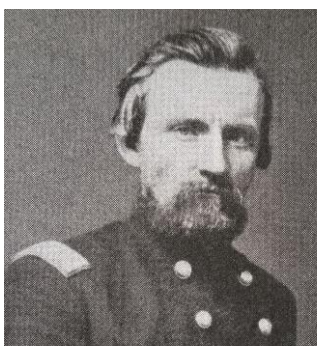
star of a brigadier general on him. But a Rebel bullet ended that - and Heg's life as well.

A rising political figure in the Muskego settlement in Norway Township in Racine County, Wis., Heg raised a regiment to fight for the Union when the Civil War broke out. That regiment, the 15th Wisconsin Infantry, became known as the "Norwegian Regiment" because so many of its volunteers were Norwegian immigrants from the Muskego area. Heg, who immigrated from Lier, Norway himself in 1840, was named colonel of the regiment.

By the battle of Chickamauga in northern Georgia in September 1863, Heg had been promoted to brigade commander and at that battle, led his brigade on horseback as the Union lines collided with the Rebels. Heg was everywhere in the thick of the fighting, waving his hat, urging his soldiers to follow him forward. Heg's men begged him to dismount - an officer on horseback was a big target. A bullet struck him in the abdomen and a day later, Heg died.

Heg's great-great nephew, Robert Halsted, is descended from Sophia Heg Halsted, Col. Heg's sister. Halsted says his great-grandmother Sophia lived with Heg's wife Gunild and the Heg family in the Heg's Waterford home when Heg went off to war. Halsted, who is now 93, said that over the years, he collected a copy of the painting of Heg on horseback and the pictures of the Heg homes. The painting is by the well-known Norwegian-American artist Herbjørn Nilson Gaustå, noted for recording Norwegian immigrant life in his paintings.

Col. Heg and Brother Jon Rupp - Camp #15 Says Thank You.



Col. Hans C. Heg

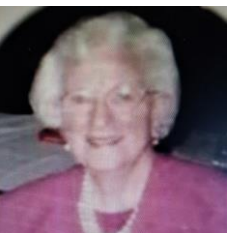
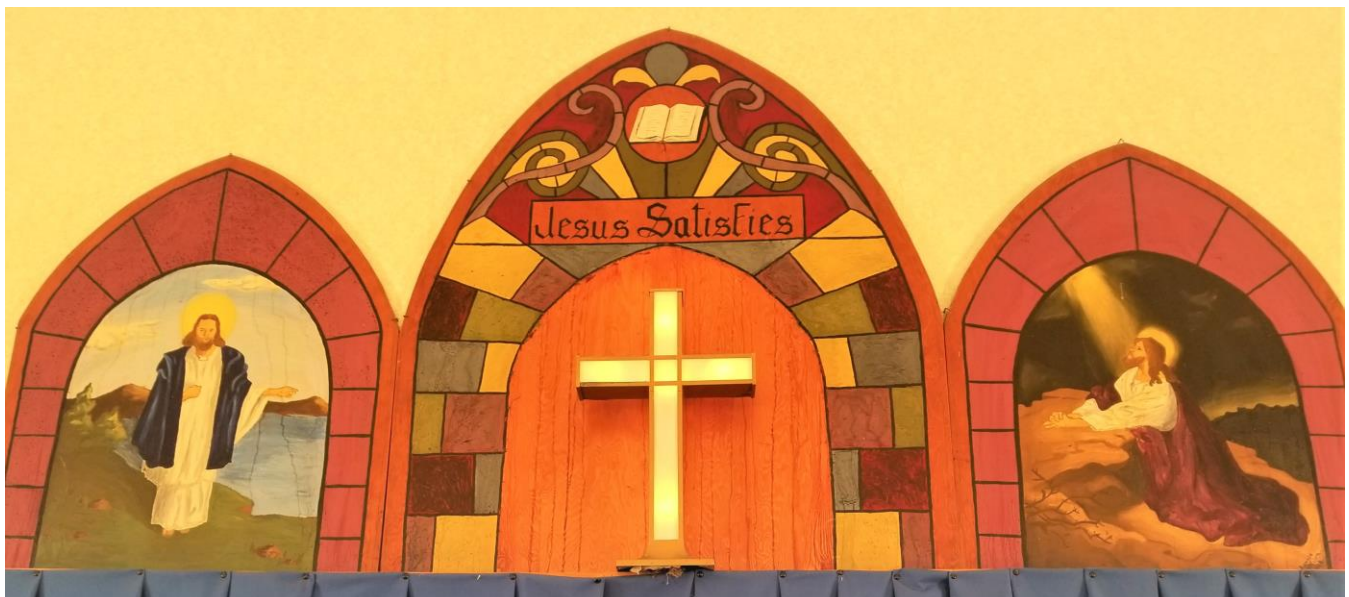
Brother Jon Rupp became acquainted with Heg descendant Robert Halsted when Halsted was doing Civil War research at the Monroe, Wis., library. Now 72, Jon still works as a sample coordinator at Colony Brands in Monroe and has done Civil War research since 2014. Jon's research helped finish the "Wall of Honor" veterans memorial in Green County, Wis., where he is known as "Mr. Civil War."



Brother Jon Rupp

Who Painted the Lafayette Church's Altarpiece?

**Bonnie Christison of Elkhorn, Wis.,
That's Who**



On the back wall of our Lafayette Church is an altarpiece depicting scenes from the life of Jesus. There is a simple, Grandma Moses quality to the three-part altarpiece. Painted in vibrant colors, one scene depicts Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion.

We now know that the artist who painted the altarpiece in 1949 was a young woman from Elkhorn, Bonnie Christison. Bonnie's name is signed in the lower right-hand corner of the altarpiece along with the year, 1949. Bonnie was accomplished in the creative arts and in 1945, at age 19, won a national wardrobe contest sponsored by the 4H Club.

In 2011 or thereabouts, Bonnie visited Lafayette Church when Brothers Bob Koenecke and Pat Kulas were completing restoration work on the church. Bonnie, then in her mid-80s, told them that she had painted the altarpiece and just wanted another look at what she had done so long ago.

In 1949, Bonnie married Charles David Smith at Lafayette Church. He ran a furniture store and in their final years, Bonnie and Charles lived in

Williams Bay, Wis. Bonnie died in 2015, at age 89. Charles died in 2018 at age 92. Both are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in East Troy, Wis., just five miles down the road from Lafayette Church.

(Top) The signature of Bonnie Christison and the year 1949 in the corner of the altarpiece.

(Middle) Bonnie in 1945 at age 19.

(Bottom) Bonnie Christison Smith in her 80's.

CAMP #15 NOTES

By Newsletter Editor Dave Daley



We met Brother Jon Rupp in August 2019 when Camp #15 dedicated a Last Soldier marker in Green County, Wisconsin. Jon, known as “Mr. Civil War” in Green County for his work identifying soldiers who served in the war, helped us with that dedication. Jon then joined our camp, even though his home in Monroe, Wisconsin is a four-hour drive from our meeting place in Wind Lake. In a little more than a year, Brother Jon has become an outstanding addition to our camp. His donations to help restore Lafayette Church now top \$600 and he has collected - from Nancy Statz, the widow of veteran Michael Statz, of Belleville, Wis. - hundreds of Civil War magazines for our library at the church.

And to top that off, Brother Jon has now introduced us to Robert N. Halsted, the great-great-nephew of our Col. Hans C. Heg. How Jon met Bob Halsted is interesting. Jon’s daughter works at the Monroe library and a fellow worker, knowing Jon’s passion for all things Civil War, passed on that there was another Civil War guy using the library for Civil War research. Voila! The introduction was made - an introduction that is helping the brothers in Camp #15 connect with one of the descendants of our Col. Heg.

Bob Halsted, age 93, lives in a retirement home in Monroe. The painting of Col. Heg on the front cover of this newsletter is courtesy of Bob, as are the black and white photos inside this issue of Col. Heg’s Waterford home and of Heg’s parent’s home in Wind Lake.

In his research, Brother Jon has identified around two-thousand men who served in the Civil War from Green County. Jon is justly proud of that work, and his contributions to Camp #15. “When you took me in, you didn’t get a slacker,” Jon noted in an e-mail this month. No - definitely not a slacker, Brother Jon Rupp. Your brothers in Camp #15 thank you much.

A Kyle Reed Update: the memorial service for Kyle Reed, scheduled for Feb. 14th, has been postponed until this summer because of covid. Kyle, along with her brother John Wuehrmann, gifted the camp with Lafayette Church which had been owned by their parents.



Photo courtesy Monroe Times

Jon Rupp viewing the grave of James Divan at the Last Soldier dedication in Green County, August 2019.

REST IN PEACE

Tod H. Kulas, 93, the brother of camp member Pat Kulas, died January 10 in Florida. Tod served in the U.S. Army, finishing his service overseas in WW II under General Patton, and spent 41 years in the military reserves, retiring as a colonel. Tod worked as a salesman at Stempers in Milwaukee and as a special education teacher in the Milwaukee Public Schools. Our deep condolences to you, Brother Pat.