

Williamson County

Sons of Union Veterans Camp to honor African American soldiers June 13 at Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery

BY JOSEPH APRILL
FOR THE WILLIAMSON HERALD

On Saturday, June 13, as part of Flag Day ceremonies across the nation, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Fort Donelson Camp 62 will hold a ceremony to honor three U.S. Colored Infantry veterans buried at Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery in Franklin.

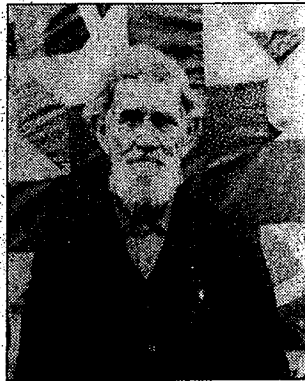
Those soldiers being honored are Privates John Dubuisson, Co. B, 110th U.S.C.I., Peter Ratchiff, Co. B, 15th U.S.C.I.; and Freeman Thomas, Co. B, 12th U.S.C.I. A separate ceremony will be held for Private Gabriel Capley, Co. E, 10th Inf. U.S., at the Capley Cemetery in Primm Springs.

"These soldiers have never been recognized before," said Sam Gant, camp commander of Fort Donelson Camp 62 and senior vice commander of the SUCVW department of Tennessee. "So I decided we should do it."

People when visiting Franklin's Civil War sites generally think of the Confederate soldiers who lost their lives, but Gant points out that quite a few Union soldiers died here as well. By the nature of the battle most of those killed on the battlefield were indeed Confederates, but the Union suffered close to 2,500 casualties including nearly 200 deaths.

"Many tourists from the North are interested in what Union soldiers did in the battle," said Gant. "I led a tour for members of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War looking for soldiers from Michigan. They were amazed at what they found here."

Last year an almost identical ceremony was held for Union soldiers Brig. Gen.



A separate ceremony will be held for Private Gabriel Capley, Co. E, 10th Inf. U.S., at the Capley Cemetery in Primm Springs.

Confederate veterans laid him to rest during his funeral in Rest Haven Cemetery.

Union soldiers are also a recent concern since last month when a body now believed to be that of a Union soldier was found in a trench being dug in the former Through the Green site on Columbia Avenue. This is the first Union soldier's remains in the area to have been recovered since the late 19th century. Gant notes that if the trench had been dug one foot in either direction from where it was, the remains never would have been found.

"I think there's bones all over the southern part of Franklin," said Gant. "So many soldiers were hastily buried from the battle."

At the Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery service, Tom Murdic of the African-American Heritage Society will speak, and the 13th United States Colored Troops re-enactors, commanded by 1st Sgt. Norm Hill,

James P. Brownlow, 1st TN Cavalry, and Lt. Col. George Grummond, 14th MI Infantry. Gant mentioned that Brownlow had been wounded in a skirmish outside Franklin but survived and after the war lived in Franklin.



Sgt. Norm Hill will be commanding troops in the ceremony.

and the 10th Tennessee Infantry Sons of Veterans Reserve will act as color guards.

The ceremony will begin at 10:30 a.m. and is free and open to the public. Union Army re-enactors are invited to participate. The Toussaint L'Ouverture Cemetery is located at Hillsboro Road and Del Rio Pike in Franklin.

At 2:30 p.m. the ceremony honoring Private Gabriel Capley, of Company E, 10th Tennessee Infantry U.S. will be held in Primm Springs. Williamson County historian Rick Warwick will speak.

The SUCVW is a volunteer, non-profit, patriotic and educational organization founded in 1881 by sons of Civil War veterans. For more information, please contact Sam Gant at gant92ovi@yahoo.com and visit www.tnsucvw.org.