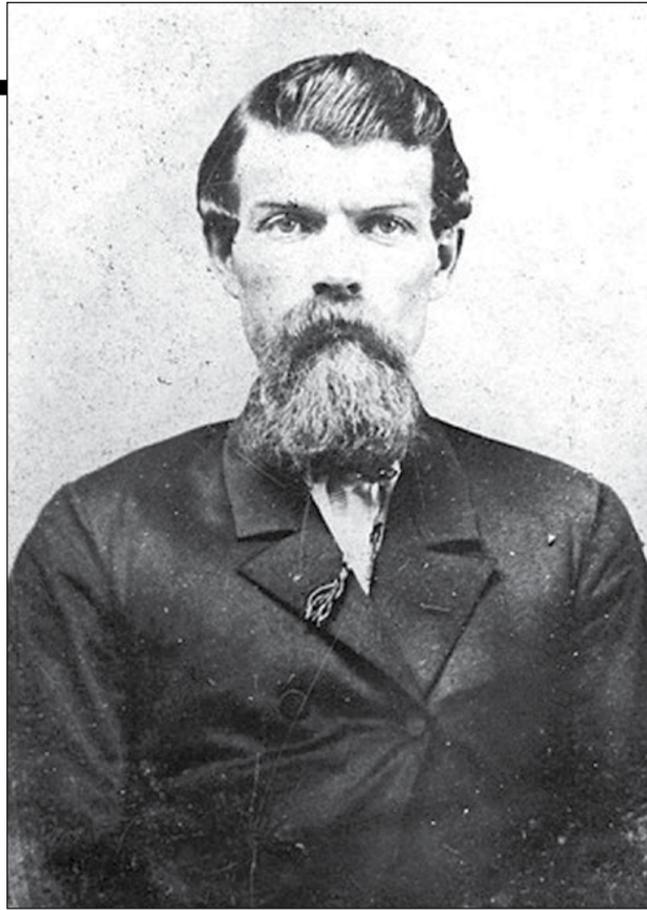


I was recently fortunate to acquire the last battle flag of the 9th Virginia Cavalry. It is a fifth pattern bunting Richmond Depot flag of the Army of Northern Virginia—one of six known fifth pattern flags. It was issued September-October, 1864, and carried through all of the subsequent battles of the 9th until the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered at Appomattox. As such, it was most likely carried during the last cavalry charge of the ANV on the morning of April 9th as the 9th Virginia Cavalry supported the 14th Virginia Cavalry.

It was carried by Walter Scott Callis, the last color



in the pickets. On advancing a little further we were met with such a continuous shower of bullets that we were compelled to seek cover and lay as flat down as possible. Just here occurred one of the coolest and bravest acts I ever witnessed between our line and that of the enemy. Five horses had been left tied to some trees by the Yankees. Walter Callis, a member of my company, advanced in the opening, and deliberately commenced unfastening the halters. One horse had been so frightened that the knot was so tight it



The Callis Flag of the 9th Virginia Cavalry

bearer of the 9th. Rather than surrender it, he smuggled the flag home to Port Royal, Virginia, at the end of the war.

Walter Scott Callis, born January 3, 1840, to Robert H. and Margaret J. (Toombs) of Essex County, Virginia, enlisted as a private on May 6, 1861 at Bowling Green, Virginia. With only two exceptions, he was present on every muster roll of the 9th Virginia Cavalry from July 1861 through September 1864. For a period during January-February 1864 he was absent without leave, and the May-June 1864 roll notes that he was “absent/wounded.”

On March 15, 1896, the *Richmond Dispatch* printed a piece written by Marshall A. Moncure, who had been a private in Co. B, 9th Virginia Cavalry. Moncure recalled Walter Scott Callis at the August 25, 1864, Battle of Ream’s Station:

Here we soon engaged the enemy’s cavalry, who were armed with sixteen-shooters, but we charged and drove

seemed impossible to untie it. Walter threw his whole weight against it several times, but did not succeed in unfastening it, when some of the boys called to him to cut it.

“You fool, I am not going to spoil the halter,” said he.

All this time the enemy were pouring the shot into us as fast as they could, but notwithstanding, Walter brought the horses and all safety [*sic*] to the rear.

Little wonder that Walter Scott Callis soon after became the color bearer of the 9th Virginia Cavalry—as it happens, its last one.

He was admitted to Chimborazo Hospital #4 in Richmond on October 2, 1864, for a gunshot wound to the back and was given a 60-day furlough until November 3, 1864. It is presumed that at that time he rejoined his regiment.

He was involved in nearly all of the engagements of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, but he was not one of the 24 men of the 9th to surrender and be paroled at Appomattox Court

House. Instead, like so many of the mounted men remaining with the regiment during the Appomattox Campaign, he slipped away before the official surrender and made his way back home. He signed an Oath of Allegiance on May 6, 1865, at Bowling Green.

On December 20, 1866, he married Angelina “Anne” Vespusious Powers in a service officiated by Rev. George W. Trice, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church. Anne Powers came from an old Virginia family, and her ancestral home came to play a role in the flag’s future.

In 1742, Anne’s forebears built a home five miles southwest of Port Royal and near what is today Rte. 301. But no one inhabited Fern Cliff, as it was dubbed, for longer than three years—purportedly it was haunted. Some-

Opposite, a photograph of veteran Walter Scott Callis from the family’s archives.

Above, the flag before full preservation.

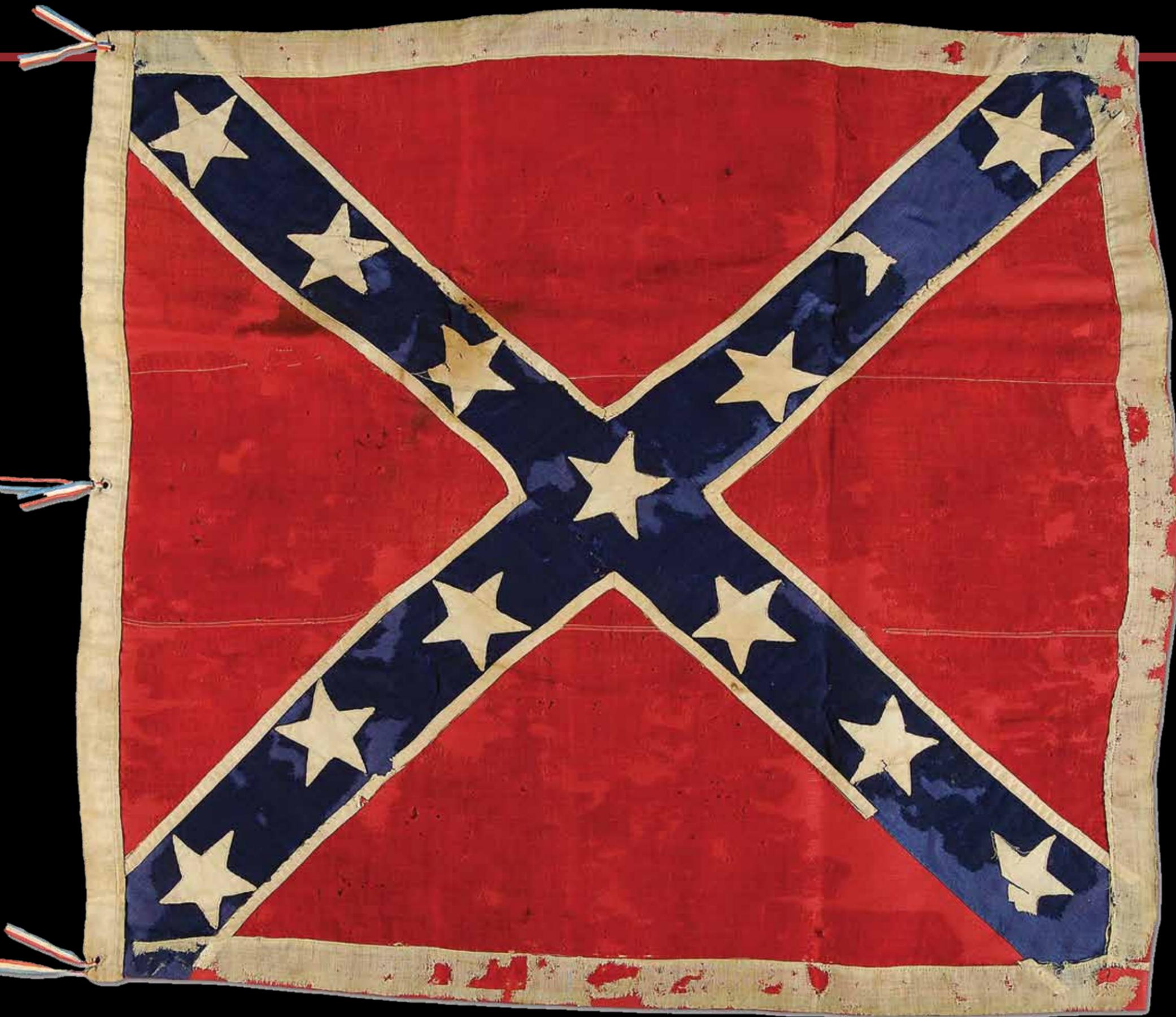
time around 1745 they built a house known as Sunnyside next door, and it is there that Anne, the youngest of ten children, was raised.

Seven of Anne’s brothers served with the Confederacy—three in Co. B of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, three in the 47th Virginia Infantry, and one in the Caroline Light Artillery. Only three survived the war.

Anne Powers died on March 23, 1883, ten months after the birth of her youngest daughter, Julia May Callis. Walter Scott Callis remarried almost immediately, taking Lucy Dickerson as his new bride on April 10, 1883, in Washington D.C. He relocated from Port Royal to Alexandria, Virginia, leaving behind his possessions and daughter Julia May, who was raised at Sunnyside by her mother’s sister,, Julia F. (Powers) Garrett.

Julia Garrett, wife of Richard Lunsford Garrett, had

by
John Peter Beckendorf



Left, the restored flag, which measures approximately 46" on the hoist and 49" on the fly.

Right, closeup of the missing section of a star, which research revealed was given to another veteran at a reunion in 1884.

inherited Sunnyside, and the four Powers brothers who died during the war were reinterred there. Rev. Trice performed these services as well. Interestingly, Sunnyside was about three miles from the farm of Richard's kinsman Richard Henry Garrett. The Garrett farm is today known as the site where John Wilkes Booth was shot and killed. Wilkes died on Richard Henry Garrett's front porch.

On February 10, 1908, Julia Callis married James William Phillips in Bowling Green, and they initially resided at Sunnyside but moved to Albermarle County, Virginia by 1920. They returned to Sunnyside when Julia inherited it in the early 1920s.

The family's oral tradition holds that Walter Scott Callis wrapped all his children in the flag of the 9th Virginia Cavalry. His granddaughter Lillian Pearl (Phillips) Mills said that her mother continued this tradition with her children. She also said that her mother put the flag into a picture frame with tobacco leaves in order to protect it from insects. This framing likely dates to 1940-'41 at the latest.

During World War II the government wanted to take Sunnyside from the family; it was one of several Caroline County properties that were wanted for a new military training facility. The citizens protested but lost the battle, and today Fort A.P. Hill stands where Sunnyside once did. Because of the dangers of unexploded ordnance, the Powers family cemetery is now inaccessible.

Julia May died on June 4, 1941—according to the family, she lost her will to live after the loss of Sunnyside.

The Phillips family moved to the Cobb House in Ruther Glen in Caroline County. Descendant JoAn (Phillips) Martin remembers the Callis flag hanging in its picture box over the bed in her grandfather's bedroom. J.W. Phillips, Jr., died in 1990, and J.W. Phillips III inherited the house. The flag hung in his bedroom as well. He died in 2007 following a car accident.

So often a family's oral history is entirely unconfirmable. Not so in this case.

On September 18, 1884, a Confederate veterans' reunion was held at Fredericksburg, Virginia. The following appeared in the *Richmond Dispatch* on the 19th:

But here and there was a tattered Confederate battle-flag which was greeted with an enthusiasm which showed that "the Conquered Banner" is still cher-

ished for the memories in the hearts of our people.

The flag of the old Ninth Virginia cavalry was carried by Color-Sergeant Walter S. Callis, who concealed it on his person and brought it from Appomattox.

Some of the old veterans proposed to cut up the flag and divide it out, to be kept as heirlooms in their families, but the gallant Sergeant replied: "No! I have been using it to wrap my babies in that they may catch the spirit which it breathes, and learn the lessons which it teaches. I have already wrapped seven of them in it."

He did, however, as a special favor, give a small piece of it to the wife of an old comrade of the Ninth (B.F. Curtis, of Kentucky), whose brother was a captain in Morgan's command, and who says that she will unite this memento of the boys who followed

Jeb. Stuart and the Lees with some that will tell of those who rode with John Morgan.

The newspaper article not only provides additional provenance for the flag but bolsters the truth of the family oral traditions. In addition, it provides information



Above, Walter Scott Callis's daughter Julia and her husband, J.W. Phillips. They and their descendants became the caretakers of the flag through the 20th century. Courtesy Callis descendant archives.

Left, the Cobb House in Caroline County, Virginia, where the flag hung in the master bedroom for at least two generations. As of press-time, the circa 1820 property is on the market. Courtesy Steve Williams, stevewilliamsrealestate.com.

Opposite, a newspaper depiction of the Garrett farm, where John Wilkes Booth died. From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, courtesy Library of Congress.

about the piece missing from the upper right quadrant of the St. Andrew's Cross—a perfect rectangular cut.

A national United Confederate Veterans reunion was held in Richmond from June 30th to July 2nd in 1896, and the *Richmond Dispatch* mentioned the Callis flag twice in an account that appeared on July 3, 1896:

The flag of the Ninth Virginia [Cavalry] was also in line. At Appomattox the color-sergeant, W. S. Kelly [sic], cut it from the staff and put it around his body. Since then each of his ten children were wrapped in it when babies. It was his desire to be buried in it but by some means this request was overlooked. ...

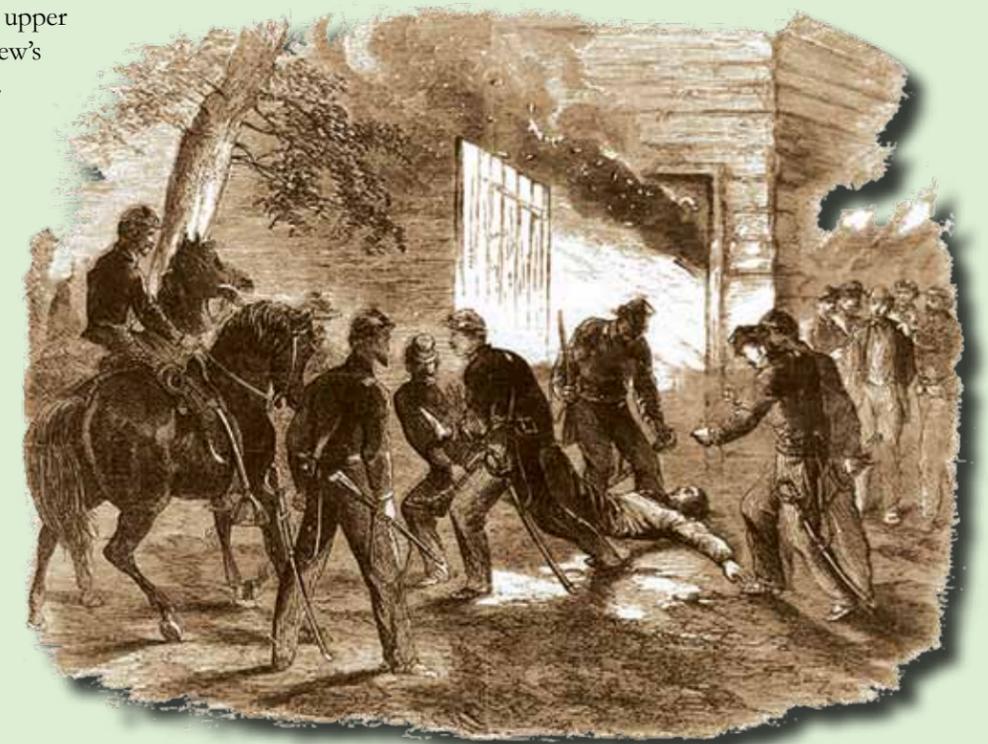
The Ninth Virginia Cavalry came next, carrying its battle-scarred banner. There were about fifty survivors of this command in the line. Captain T.J. Christian, of Mathews, commanded, and wore the sword carried by him during the war. One of its old members came from Kentucky, and another from Alabama, to join in the reunion. This regiment was recruited mostly from Tidewater Virginia.

Alexandria postmaster Walter Scott Callis had passed away on June 13, 1895, so it cannot have been he who carried the flag at that reunion. It is possible that his brother did. David Bernard Powers, a veteran of Co. B of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, was in the area and was a member of the Caroline County UCV Camp at Bowling Green.

On July 25, 1906, the Callis flag once again emerged and was displayed at the dedication of the Confederate monument in front of the court house at Bowling Green. Veteran David Sample Cash of Co. B, 9th Virginia Cavalry, had been selected to unveil the monument. Fredericksburg's *Daily Star* reported on the ceremonies the next day:

Then the Caroline Camp C.V. [Confederate Veterans] and other veterans, 200 strong, under Capt. C.T. Smith [9th Virginia Cavalry and commander of the Caroline Camp], and the two Chapters of Daughter made up the procession.

Two objects which attracted attention were the battleflags of the 9th Va. Cavalry and the 47th Va. Infantry. The flag of the 9th was torn from its staff at Ap-



omattox by Walter Callis, of Company B, who rolled it up and placed it in his bosom and brought it home. Callis was wounded at Ream's Station and has died since the war. His son, Richard E. Callis, of Washington, had been delegated the honor of carrying it in the procession and came down for the purpose.

By the 21st century, the flag was understandably in fragile condition and exhibited moth damage. It was sent to Jessica Hack of Jessica Hack Textile Restoration of New Orleans, who spent approximately 40 hours doing the initial cleaning and conservation getting the flag presentable for auction. At that time she noted that "there were numerous fragments and bits of loose tobacco leaves wrapped with the flag."

Following my acquisition of the flag, I sent it back to Jessica. Another 70 hours of conservation work was needed, along with mounting and proper framing with the highest grade of museum quality Plexiglas to ensure that this treasure will be preserved for posterity. NSTCW

The author extends thanks to flag historian Greg Biggs and JoAn (Phillips) Martin, great-great-granddaughter of Walter Scott Callis.

California resident John Beckendorf's previous contributions include "The Mystery of Maj. Wallace's Horse & Saddle: Following a Paper Trail" (Vol. 31 No. 4). He is a retired commercial insurance broker and is program chair for the Los Angeles Civil War Round Table. His west coast collectors' group website is www.westcoastcvc.com.