

# Local digital artist's efforts honor Civil War soldiers

By Chuck Corley  
Special to the Town Times

Having just resigned from her 19-year career as a registered nurse, Durham artist Kerry Sheldon's photo restoration business was only a few months old when she came to the attention of Cheshire resident Bob Larkin, who sought her assistance in restoring a few Civil War photographs. Three years, numerous restorations and countless hours later, her work will go on display at the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi this coming Oct. 14.

The project began as a photo restoration effort for the construction of a granite monument commemorating the sacrifices of over 150 members of the 9th Connecticut Volunteer Regiment during their time at Vicksburg. Larkin presented her with a few photographs meant to serve as images which the sculptor, Stacy Mathieu of Southington, would use as a basis for her etchings on the stone.

However, as the project began, it gradually became apparent that the photos required more than just a restoration. Many of the men were photographed after their service at Vicksburg, with different insignia and uniforms than they would have worn at the time. Others were shot in their civil-

ian clothes, with no existing photos of the men in uniform. What began as a photo restoration project soon turned into an exercise in photo manipulation, as Sheldon attempted to digitally alter the pictures through Photoshop.

Sheldon's efforts not only required her to digitally alter the photos to put the men into uniform and with insignia appropriate to their time at Vicksburg, but also to blend some of the original photographs with modern pictures. Some of the shots Sheldon worked with originated as one-inch high thumbnails that were later enlarged to a full foot. To do this, she found pictures of men with similar features and overlaid them with the original photo in order to give the proper depth and detail Mathieu required for the monument.

Even the regimental seal was digitally repainted, as the flag bearing it was too fragile for use. Sheldon spent weeks trying to make sure it was replicated as accurately as possible, due to the damage and faded detail in the seal's main reference image.

Her final image work for the monument itself involved two montages for the front and back. These images were created from hundreds of different pictures, both modern and old blended together, to form the

two scenes on the memorial.

Though her work on the monument itself may be done, Sheldon's involvement with the memorial has yet to finish. During the time she spent on the restorations, she also learned how to use InDesign to design the booklets and brochures for the Aug. 20 unveiling in Hartford as well as for the upcoming ceremony in Vicksburg.

While Sheldon was familiar with Photoshop before her retirement from nursing, her knowledge of Photoshop and InDesign were both self-taught. At times she felt "completely out of my league" during the Vicksburg restoration, but decided to keep at it with the encouragement of Larkin and everyone else involved with the memorial.

Perhaps more incredibly, all of Sheldon's time was volunteered despite having no connection to the 9th Connecticut Regiment. "I just get more gratification from giving away than getting paid for it," she said.

She has since stopped doing photo restoration as a business, though she has helped with Operation Photo Rescue for Katrina victims. Her business interests have instead shifted towards photo manipulation, websites and booklets, though she's still uncertain where exactly that path will lead.

For now, a more detailed chronicle of her involvement with the Vicksburg memorial can be found at <http://www.casualclicks.com>.



Kerry Sheldon of Durham, left, and Stacy Mathieu.

## DAR meeting

Please join the members of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Wadsworth Chapter, at noon on Oct. 14, at Covenant Village in Cromwell. Lunch will be served with a program to follow. Please RSVP to Betty Pearson (635-5294) by Oct. 7. The cost for lunch will be \$12. Send payment to Cynthia Pasternak, 106 Prospect St, Willimantic, CT 06226-2717.

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