



PHOTOS BY TIM ISBELL/SUN HERALD

An inscription on the 9th Connecticut sword shows it belonged to Sgt. William Doyle of the 9th Connecticut Infantry, the group that captured the flag of the 3rd Mississippi at a skirmish in Pass Christian.

Sword's new role

Artifact represents friendship's reach

By KAT BERGERON

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A sharp edge comes to the tale of the Friendship Flag, captured by Connecticut Yankees in Pass Christian and returned to Mississippi Rebels two decades after the Civil War as a rare show of North-South goodwill.

The flag, thought lost in Katrina, is now found. And a South Mississippi archivist who spent unsuccessful months searching the Beauvoir museum grounds for scraps of the banner raises a sword in double victory.

But it's not any old Civil War sword Charles L. Sullivan brandishes. This one belonged to the Connecticut 9th Infantry, and to one of

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the men who shot up the Pass and sent the outnumbered 3rd Mississippi into retreat. The regimental flag, a variant of a Magnolia State flag presented to the 3rd's Dahlgren Guard by the women of Pass Christian, was lost the next day.

Fast-forward to the 21st century. Sullivan, of Perkinston, is a noted local historian, professor emeritus and on the board of Beauvoir, the museum estate of Jefferson Davis in Biloxi.

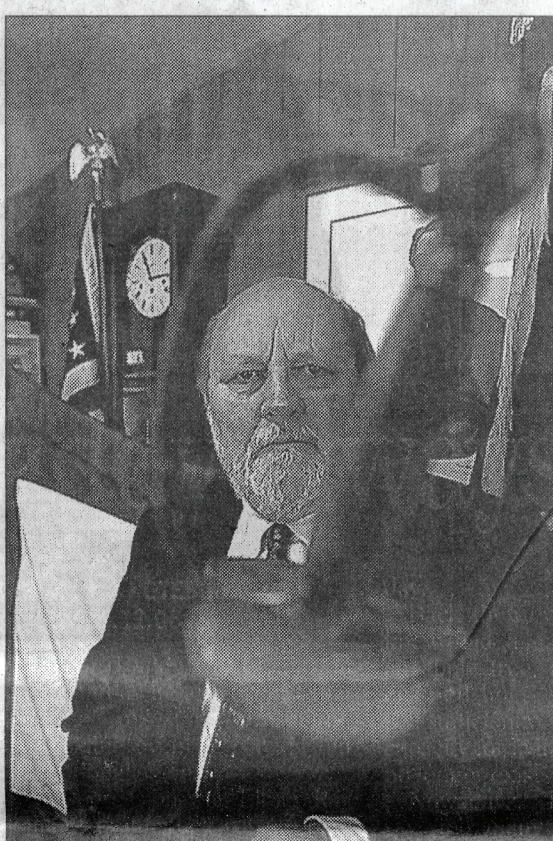
In addition to searching Beauvoir's grounds, Sullivan volunteered to salvage what he could of battered guns and swords retrieved from muck and fallen walls. To stop the rusting he soaked them in diesel grease, then began straightening the curled blades.

He remembers well pulling a perfect sword out of the diesel vat. He went to work with his brushes and up popped the engraved words, "Sgt. Wm. Doyle Co. A 9th Ct. Inf."

"That was a heart-stopper," said Sullivan. "I yelled, 'Does anybody know what this means?' No one did so I told them this is the unit that attacked Pass Christian on April 14, 1862, and I told them about the flag that went out the back door with Katrina."

"I said I guess Katrina took their flag and left us their sword."

Sullivan doesn't say that anymore; he learned this week the flag was moved to a higher floor as Katrina approached and is



Charles Sullivan will take the sword to Vicksburg for the unveiling of a 9th Connecticut monument at the Vicksburg National Military Park.

now in safe keeping at Mississippi Department of Archives & History.

"The Friendship Flag and the Connecticut sword were at Beauvoir together and no one made the connection," he said. "This sword somehow found its way through the greatest natural disaster in American history while other swords were smashed."

Doyle's presentation sword is rare because it is inscribed and did not belong to an officer. Beauvoir acquired it and numerous other artifacts from the famous Francis Lord Collection in 1990.

When descendants of the Connecticut 9th come to Vicksburg on Tuesday to dedicate a new Civil War monument at National Military Park, Sullivan will be there.

"You know how archivists are about touching artifacts, but I'm going to let those Connecticut boys hold this," he said. "After what Katrina did, a few finger prints won't hurt the sword."

About 40 descendants will be in Vicksburg to dedicate a monument to the men of the 9th who died in Vicksburg two months after the Pass Christian battle.

"To think that two groups of opposing soldiers met one day at the battlefield in Pass Christian 146 years ago," said Tom Callinan of Norwich, Conn., "and that, in turn, has evolved into an ongoing exchange of mutual respect between and among their descendants, is truly amazing."

If you go

What: Dedication of Civil War monument dedicated to 9th Connecticut Volunteers at the National Military Park in Vicksburg. Forty descendants of the regiment will attend; they welcome any history buffs and descendants of the 3rd Mississippi Regiment.

Time and date: 10:30 a.m. Oct. 14.

The history: The monument is dedicated to 150 Connecticut men from this mostly Irish regiment, who died of disease and heat stroke while ordered to dig, in full gear, a canal that would allow the Union to bypass Vicksburg artillery. Called Williams' Canal and later Grant's canal, the project was never completed.

Why a monument? States involved in the Siege of Vicksburg were permitted to erect monuments at the park, but because the Connecticut men had died before the actual siege they were ineligible. The U.S. Senate in the 1990s redefined the Vicksburg Campaign; the park acquired new land near the canal.

About the monument: Located on the Louisiana side of the park across the Mississippi River, it is designed by Mathieu Memorials and Granite Works of Southington, Conn., also responsible for the recent Korean War Memorial.

Details: The Vicksburg park, 601-636-0583; The 9th Connecticut, Bob Larkin, 203-272-6301.

Flag recipient's grave crushed

By KAT BERGERON

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As history mysteries unravel, interesting sidebars pop up like welcomed daisies. The Friendship Flag is no exception.

The flag was made in 1862 by the ladies of Pass Christian and presented to the Coast-based Dahlgren Guard of the 3rd Mississippi Infantry. It was captured within days.

The victors were the 9th

Connecticut Infantry. In 1885, the 9th tucked national sentiment and returned the captured flag to Mississippi. That happened on Connecticut Day during the Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans.

After the goodwill ceremony it was renamed the Friendship Flag. The man accepting it for the 3rd Mississippi was Capt. Daniel A. Curran, who was present at the Pass Christian skirmish at which the flag was lost.

Curran died three years after the New Orleans event and was buried in Pass Christian's St. Paul Cemetery. He was 51 and had suffered from war injuries after he was "shot through the body" at the Battle of Peace Tree Creek near Atlanta.

After Katrina, Coast historian Charles L. Sullivan headed to the cemetery to see how Curran's grave had fared. It had been crushed. Because he had taken earlier photographs, Sullivan has photos to prove this thread in the history of the Friendship Flag.