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NEWS - LOCAL

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Artifact, Coastians greet Yankee friends

By KAT BERGERON - kbergeron@sunherald.com

Descendants of Mississippi and Connecticut Civil War soldiers who fought in Pass Christian continued 123 years of friendship Tuesday when they gathered for dedication of a new Civil War monument at Vicksburg National Military Park.

They honored a tradition begun in 1885 when Connecticut 9th Infantry veterans, going against national sentiment, returned a 3rd Mississippi flag captured in an April 4, 1862, skirmish that forced outnumbered Rebels into retreat.

Billy Bourdin, who in the 1980s asked Pass leaders to adopt the flag now known as the Friendship Flag, was there, as was Russell Lott of Gulfport, who had an ancestor in the skirmish.

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COURTESY CHARLES L. SULLIVAN / Tom Callinan of Connecticut is among those holding the 9th Connecticut Infantry sword brought to the dedication of a new monument at Vicksburg National Military Park on Tuesday. He shakes hands with Grady Howell of Jackson, symbolic because both have ancestors on opposite sides of an 1862 skirmish in Pass Christian.

Grady Howell, Biloxi native and author of "To Live and Die in Dixie: A History of the Third Mississippi Infantry, C.S.A.," traveled from Jackson.

"In 1885, the 'boys' from both sides joined hands when the flag was returned," said Howell, "so it's only right that we repaid the compliment by joining hands again."

The monument does not concern the skirmish but rather involves the Vicksburg deaths of 153 Connecticut 9th soldiers several months later. They were Irishmen, and Tuesday's opening prayer was offered by an Irishman, the Rev. Michael Kelleher of Pascagoula's Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

The behind-the-scenes star was the sword of Sgt. William Doyle, one of the 9th's soldiers in the skirmish. The rare sword was salvaged from the Katrina-damaged collection at the Beauvoir museum in Biloxi. Amazingly, both it and the Friendship Flag, now in state archives, survived.

The sword was brought to Vicksburg by historian and Beauvoir board member Charles L. Sullivan, who also brought a Mississippi Magnolia Flag, upon which the captured flag was patterned.

"A great many people from Connecticut handled that sword and flag, as we thought they would want to," said Sullivan.

- STORY: [SUNHERALD TV: Friendship Sword](#)
- STORY: [Captured 146 years ago, the Friendship Flag has linked two states together since the Civil War](#)
- STORY: [Flag recipient's grave crushed](#)
- STORY: [Sword's new role](#)