



# Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL  
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THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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October 2017

## Albert Woolson - the Last Civil War Soldier.

Albert Woolson was a former Union drummer boy and the last surviving Civil War veteran. Born in Antwerp, NY on February 11 in 1847, he died at the age of 109 on August 2 in 1956 in Duluth, Minnesota.

Woolson's father, Willard Woolson, also fought in the Civil War but died from wounds received in the **Battle of Shiloh**.

After his father died, Albert Woolson enlisted as a rifleman on October 10, 1864 but served as a drummer boy for Company C in the 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment. The company never saw combat and Woolson was honorably discharged in September of 1865.

After the war, Woolson returned to civilian life in Minnesota where he worked as a carpenter.

In the late 1800s, Woolson joined the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization made up of Civil War veterans. (**G.A.R. see page 2**)

According to the book *Minnesota in the Civil War*, Woolson was one of only six Civil War veterans to attend the group's last encampment in Indianapolis in 1949. Woolson also served as the organization's Senior Vice Commander in Chief in 1953. Since he was the last surviving member, the organization was dissolved after his death. Late in his life, Woolson was interviewed by a number of news organizations. During one interview, Woolson spoke about his experience firing a practice round of a cannon during the war:

*"One day the colonel handed me the end of a long rope. He said, 'When I yell, you stand on your toes, open your mouth, and pull.' First time the cannon went off, I was scared to death."*

Woolson also explained his personal feelings about the war, stating: *"We were fighting our brothers. In that there was no glory."*

Woolson also said that he voted for Abraham Lincoln in 1864, when he was 17 years old, under a special law that allowed soldiers to vote.



**A TEEN-AGER**, like a large part of Union army, Albert Woolson enlisted at 17 after father died of Shiloh wounds.



Camped in Tennessee, Woolson (arrow) served with Company C. First Minnesota Volunteer

The next CMHS meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 17th 2017 7:00 pm** At the Petty Officers' Mess HCMS Tecumseh

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The  
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is a non-profit registered society  
which fosters the study of the  
military and the police, and the heritage of  
Canada, the British Empire, and the world  
as well as the preservation of military  
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month  
at: Petty Officers' Mess  
HMCS Tecumseh  
1820 - 24th Street SW  
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

## Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on  
**Tuesday, October 16th, 2017**  
**19:00 (7:00 pm)**

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.  
Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:  
Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting Correspondence, Membership report Treasurer's report, Old business / New business Break, Show & Tell  
The President, **Allan Ross** would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.



On his 107th birthday, Woolson gave an interview with Life magazine in which he discussed what it was like being the last Civil War veteran:

*"It seems sad, all those friends gone. It's hard to realize, of all those two and a half million men I am the only one left...But don't you count me out yet, I'm going to be around for three of four of these birthdays."*

When Woolson died two years later, of a recurring lung condition, he was buried with full military honors at the Park Hill cemetery in Duluth.

Although other men, such as Walter Williams, John Salling and William Lundy, died after Woolson and also claimed to be Civil War soldiers, no evidence could be found to verify their claims. Lying about serving in the Civil War in order to get a Civil War pension was a common practice, especially during hard times like the Great Depression. Many actual veterans also lied about their age as well when enlisting in order to gain entry into the military, making the matter even more confusing.

Although most Civil War soldiers were between 18 and 39 years old, many young children also fought in the war. It is estimated that at least 100,000 Union soldiers were boys under 15 years old and about 20 percent of all Civil War soldiers were under 18. Since soldiers had to be at least 18 years old to enlist in the military, many of these boys lied about their age in order to join.

Other times, especially as the casualties climbed and more soldiers were needed, recruiters looked the other way when underage boys signed up.

### The Grand Army of the Republic.

For 90 years after the last shot of the American Civil War was fired, the men who had fought for the Union and the Confederacy, respectively, continued to meet. In doing so they wielded considerable political power in the nation that had divided the.

For one, the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) brought together Union Soldiers, referred to as "veterans of the late unpleasantness." Starting in 1866, only one year after the war's close, and ending with the death of 109-year-old Albert Woolson in 1956, the G.A.R. boasted 490,000 members at its peak in 1890.

A hugely influential body the G.A.R. was instrumental in electing a number of U.S. president in the late 1800s. This included the 18th president (Ulysses S. Grant) to the 25th president William McKinley. Orators for the G.A. R. were caricatured as "waving the bloody shirt."

## Minutes of the last meeting of The Calgary Military Historical Society

**Meeting held on September 19, 2017 at the Petty Officer's Mess, HMCS Tecumseh**

**1. Meeting called to order** By President Allan R. at 7:00 PM. 28 members in attendance.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.**

Correction. John E. show & tell, discussed his cousin, not uncle, service as pilot.

Member Barry E. moves that the Previous Meeting Minutes be accepted. Seconded by Mike C. Approved.

**3. Newsletter.** Herb did not receive new letter, Dave G. provides him a print copy.

**4. Treasures Report.**

Report by Floyd S. Lists of monies collected from book auctions, donations etc. Listing of expenditures. Floyd reports with last month expenses a slight increase. Member Mike C. moves that the Treasures report be accepted as reported. Seconded by John E. Approved.

**5. Membership Report.**

Report by Floyd S. Total 45 members (2 Life, 1 Hon, 42 Regular).

Member Barry E. moves that the Membership report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Member Bob M. Approved.

**6. Correspondence:** None

**7. Announcements:**

- MCC of C has a new Chapter in Calgary, The Calgary Chapter. Meets 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the Horton Legion. There are two meeting options with the Southern Alberta Chapter meeting 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month at 1:00 pm in the Military Museums.
- Calgary Military Show - October 7, 2017 event at Hillhurst Sunnyside. Tables still available, Contact Martin.
- AACCA Thorncliffe Gun Show - Sept. 14, 2017.
- Military Museum - Hill 70 presentation by Dr. John Scott-Kohn - Sept. 14, 2017.

**8. Old Business.**

- AACCA Thorncliffe show. Attendance down, militaria vendors mixed results.

**9. New Business:** None

**BREAK**

**10. Ticket book auction:** - Conducted by David G.

**11. Show and Tell:**

Robert D. - 2 CAMC cap badges

Darryl K. - Regina Collection purchased by Kevin, over 2,500 items. Eventually all will be listed on Canadian Soldier website.

Brad M. - Zimbabwe 1,000,000,000 (trillion) note; RCA WWII garrison flag.

James B. - 1944 Khaki Magazines.

Garrett L. - RCAF F.O. Air Gunner Wilfred Baldrey, 415 Squadron, uniform/personal items including, Indian made wedge cap, BD tunic, Medals including Burma Star, flight goggles, Squadron wing crew lists.

Rob - lapel pins, WWI 1915 service, Daughters of the British Empire.

Bob M. - Selection of medals, Order of Malta, US Campaigns, Black Star of Benin.

Mike C. - History of 410 Squadron manuscript copy, medal set WWI with DSO to Seaforth Highlanders, hand made model of the gun deck HMS Victory.

Gary M. - Discusses repo medals and book "Standard Catalogue Winchester Rifles".

Alan Mac. - Uzi bayonet, FN bayonet.

Kevin R. - Discusses collection purchased in Winnipeg, 2,474 items including 1,500 cap badges, 1810 - 1945, complete set of all UN medals issued, WWII British VC. Also purchase of a Bren gun carrier.

Dave S. - Socket bayonet, discusses archivist document paper repair kits.

Barry E. - 1982 pattern webbing users manual.

David G. - 20+ year old grave stone rubbing, researching individual; 66<sup>th</sup> Battalion insignia.

David G. - UK Ebay purchase, Southern Alberta Light Horse Regimental flag printed on liner paper. Lesson, "You get what you pay for".

Martin U. - US Military model 1842 Aston Percussion pistol, US dragoon issue in Mexican War, 1872 - 1881 US Cavalry Officer equipment including 1878 campaign hat, model 1872 45-70 prairie cartridge belt with 1876 pattern holster and 1876 pattern Mckeever cartridge box, German made sword.

**12. Adjournment:** President Allan R. calls for motion to adjourn. Member Susan E. moves to adjourn. Seconded by Kevin R. Approved. **Meeting Adjourned. 20:20**

## Attention All Members

October 17th will be our **Annual General Meeting**.  
Please attend to help elect our executive and directors.



### **Mary Virginia Wade.– the only civilian death at Gettysburg.**

*On July 3, 1863, the final day of the Battle of Gettysburg, Mary Virginia “Jennie” Wade stood in the kitchen of her sister’s home making biscuits for Union troops. With the home they were staying in caught between the two armies, the 20-year-old seamstress and her family had already survived a number of close calls, including an artillery shell that had crashed through the roof. Yet Wade had neither fled nor taken shelter in the cellar. An errant Confederate bullet struck her in the back just below the left shoulder blade, killing her instantly. At least 7,600 soldiers died during the battle, but, remarkably, she was the only civilian to suffer that fate.*

Born on May 21, 1843, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Mary Virginia Wade was called “Gin” or “Ginnie” . Her father, a tailor, had frequent brushes with the law and was eventually confined to the poorhouse as a lunatic. With him out of the picture, Wade made ends meet by working as a seamstress alongside her mother. When the Battle of Gettysburg broke out on July 1, 1863, Wade, along with her mother, her youngest brother and Isaac, took refuge at the home of her older sister, Georgia McClellan. The family wanted to help Georgia look after her 5-day-old son and also apparently believed it was safer there. But that afternoon, when Union troops retreated into the hills just south of town, the Wades found themselves directly in the line of fire.

Bullets continued flying the following day, shattering several of the windows and denting its brick facade. Meanwhile, an artillery shell crashed through the roof, knocked a hole in a wall and came to rest in the eaves, where it remained for the next 15 years. Luckily for the family, it never exploded. .The next morning, when Wade had nearly finished kneading the dough for biscuits when a bullet, having penetrated two doors, went into her back and through her heart. After hearing screams, Union soldiers entered the house and led the remaining family members out through the hole created by the unexploded shell and down to the cellar, where they were safe from Southern sharpshooters. Wade was wrapped in a quilt and temporarily buried in the yard. In January 1864 she was transferred to a cemetery next to the town’s German Reformed Church, and in November 1865 she was moved once again to nearby Evergreen Cemetery, where she has remained ever since. A monument was erected over her grave in 1900. Interred near her at Evergreen Cemetery is Johnston “Jack” Skelly, a Union corporal whose photo was found in Wade’s pocket at the time of her death. Historians believe they may have been engaged. Unbeknownst to Wade, Skelly had been seriously wounded a couple of weeks earlier at the Second Battle of Winchester in Virginia and had died in a Confederate Hospital.

