



ISSUE 6

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Tinsmiths and their Wares

By: Katlin McCreery

From the Bronze Age into modern life, tin has been a consistently used resource mined from the Earth. Primarily used to create the alloy bronze, tin would be mined for its mixing abilities, helping to create stronger materials. That is until the 14th or 16th centuries, at which point we see what we now know as tin-plate begin to appear. Starting in Bavaria, iron sheets would be hammered out into thin sheets and then coated in tin to act as a rust deterrent. Here is where the trade of being a “tinner” would appear as they took the sheets of iron and dipped them into the molten tin. With the tinner came the tin smith as well as whitesmiths. Though commonly seen as one in the same today, whitesmiths and tin smiths would have been seen as two separate trades. Whitesmiths and tinnery would likely have been found in the same spaces, at least until closer to the 16th and 17th centuries as the trades began to specialize more. A tin smith working with the tin plates created by tinnery, and whitesmiths either taking their forged iron work and dipping it into molten tin to make the object rust resistant or heavily polishing their iron work until it shined.



A whitesmith from primarily the medieval period, might sell tinned stirrups or spurs alongside a variety of other iron objects, while from a tinsmith one may find different types of cups, boxes, and lanterns. In the making of tin wares, tinsmiths would often use similar tools to a blacksmith for items that needed heavy folding, such as creasing and riveting hammers, but would also find themselves using wooden mallets and much smaller anvils known as stakes. For a couple hundred years the trade worked in this fashion, with very few changes as the centuries passed. That is until the seventeenth century. Starting in the seventeenth century, tin wares began to be found in varied colors rather than just the shiny metal. A technique based on East Asian Lacquer work called Japanning added to the color variety as well a new layer of durability to tin ware. This precursor to enamelware would often be saved for items like chocolate pots that would never be put into a hearth fire, or knitting needle cases, thus often being associated with more expensive items. From that point on, a tinsmith's trade would only become more varied and even more colorful. As the ages progressed, items like candle molds, bathtubs, and baking tins would become more and more common. Being advertised as both cheap and durable, despite the metal's rareness and low melting point. Especially by the mid to late

Continued on page 2



1st Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line

The First Virginia Regiment is a Revolutionary War living history and reenactment group that was formed in 1975 and is a founding member of the Continental Line. We portray Continental Army troops from the State of Virginia from 1775 through 1783. The group consists of soldiers who portray the Musket Company, the Artillery Crew, Musick, or the civilians who followed and supported the Army. The key goals of the Regiment are: To further the education of the members and the public about American history by way of following as closely as possible the actual conditions prevailing at the time of the American Revolution and immediately thereafter. To rekindle the flames of patriotism and otherwise seek to inspire the involvement and appreciation of all Virginians and Americans in the celebration of America's independence. To better understand the conditions, attitudes, and experiences of those soldiers and civilians of that period who so wholly dedicated themselves to the causes of freedom.

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**What Does A Museum Curator Do?**

A museum curator is the professional responsible for shaping the intellectual and cultural heart of a museum. They research, acquire, and interpret objects or artworks, ensuring each piece contributes meaningfully to the institution's mission and public understanding. Much of their work involves evaluating potential additions to the collection, determining authenticity, historical significance, and long-term preservation needs. Curators also design exhibitions, selecting objects, crafting interpretive narratives, and collaborating with designers, educators, and conservators to create experiences that resonate with visitors. Beyond public-facing work, they manage the behind-the-scenes care of collections, overseeing documentation, conservation planning, and proper storage conditions. Curators often conduct original research, publish scholarly work, and represent the museum in professional circles. They may engage with donors, negotiate loans, and build partnerships with other institutions. At their core, curators serve as storytellers and stewards, connecting the public with history, culture, science, or art through thoughtful interpretation and responsible preservation. Most museum curators hold at a degree in a relevant field, such as art history, archaeology, anthropology, museum studies, or history, and many pursue advanced degrees or certificates to deepen their expertise and strengthen their qualifications for competitive positions. Museum curators remain a vital profession, instrumental in safeguarding our past and ensuring that future generations can learn from and appreciate the stories preserved within museum collections.

Continued from page 1

late eighteenth century, tin would be common to find in every household, and due to Japanning it didn't always have to look like tin. As new and varied wares were requested by consumers, new tools and equipment became more accessible in the eighteenth century as well. Differing shapes and styles of tinning stakes became cheaper to buy by small shops, making it quicker and easier to make different tin items. The increase in the number of tin shops on top of the increase in making ability led to more tin sales. In Connecticut, Blacksmiths without work due to how many blacksmiths lived within the state, rose to the challenges of making tinning equipment that would help the tinsmith's productivity. By creating rolling, folding, and beading machines that sped up production for all who could afford to buy the machines, the effects of speed and quality would be felt throughout the east coast of the United States.



By the 1820s small scale shops were making and selling at full capacity and yet demand rose even higher. To fill these gaps, the beginnings of factories appeared. These factories held jobs for 50+ men per factory and could make closer to a thousand plus items a day instead of the hundreds small shops could produce. Two such factories in Winchester and Petersburg, Virginia produced enough tinware to supply all of Virginia (including West Virginia),

Continued on page 6

**A Living Historian's Prayer**

By: Harry Sonntag

Gracious and Almighty God,
We come before You with humble hearts, grateful for the calling You have placed upon us as living historians. You have entrusted us with the stories of men and women who walked this earth before us, ordinary people who labored, struggled, hoped, and believed. As we interpret their lives, grant that we may do so with honesty, dignity, and compassion. Lord, bless the work of all who step into the garments of another time. Whether we portray farmers or soldiers, artisans or mothers, leaders or laborers, let our efforts honor the humanity of those who lived these stories first. Guard us from pride or vanity, and instead fill us with a spirit of service remembering that our purpose is not performance, but remembrance. Give us wisdom to teach with accuracy, humility, and grace. Help us to speak truthfully about the past, even when it is difficult, and to illuminate the lessons that still shape our present. May our demonstrations, our words, and our interactions reflect Your love and Your truth, showing respect for every soul created in Your image.

Strengthen the fellowship among all who labor in this work, men and women, young and old, volunteers and professionals. Knit us together in patience, kindness, and mutual encouragement. Protect us as we travel, interpret, and engage with the public, and let our conduct always reflect the character of Christ.

Above all, Lord, let our efforts remind others that history is not distant or forgotten, but alive in the choices we make today. May the stories we preserve inspire virtue, gratitude, and understanding in all who hear them.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

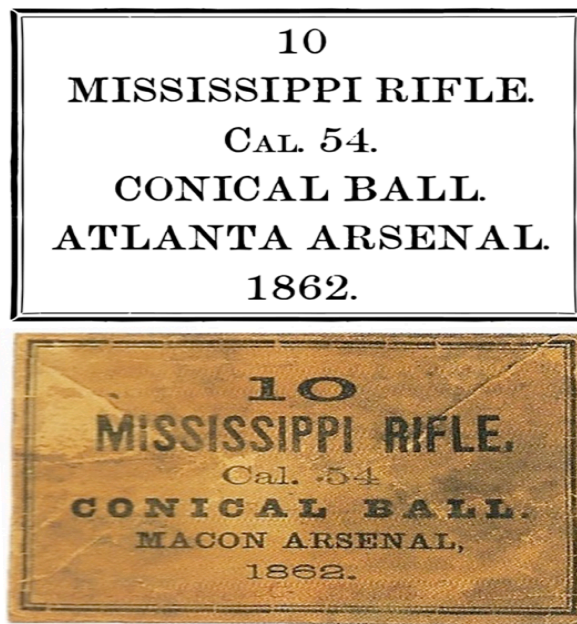
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Every historic site has a tremendous need for volunteers. If you have a site near your home, contact that site and volunteer. Even the simplest of skills make a difference.

A Living Historian's Primer on Confederate Arsenal Packs

By: Austin Williams

In an earlier edition of the Gazette, I provided a general overview of the various small arms cartridge patterns used by the Confederate Ordnance Department. For the living historian committed to the authenticity of his impression, correctly manufactured cartridges are only half complete if not packaged in bundles of ten as the originals were. The practice of bundling small arms cartridges in paper-wrapped packs of ten was first adopted in French service in 1819. Due to the significant stockpile of ammunition remaining at the conclusion of the War of 1812, the U.S. Army did not resume manufacture of new cartridges until 1834. By at least 1837 this new ammunition was being put up in paper bundles, labeled to identify the caliber and arsenal of origin.¹ Small printing presses were made at the Frankfurt Arsenal in 1857 and distributed to the principal arsenals. Once war commenced, however, Federal ordnance officials began to omit the label, relying instead on the shipping box to identify the type and origin of ammunition. At least some of the Confederate arsenals appear to have initially followed this wartime expedient, simply wrapping their ammunition in unlabeled paper bundles. Recounting an inspection of Charleston Arsenal, however, Confederate Superintendent of Laboratories John W. Mallet noted on 18 June 1862; “The bundles of (10) small arms cartridges, here as at Richmond, are not marked in any way. I have suggested to Capt. [Frederick] Childs [Superintendent of Charleston Arsenal], and he has promised to act upon the suggestion, that in future each bundle shall be marked with at least the caliber of the arm for which it is intended. Would it not be well, in view of the great risk, which our medley assortment of arms in the same regiment and even company entails, to introduce this same rule at Richmond?... The marking might be done very quickly by a stamp or stencil.”



Label exemplar included in 27 Aug 1862 'Rules for Laboratories' (top) and Macon Arsenal label closely matching (bottom) (Courtesy of 'Percussion Ammunition Packets')

Adopting Mallet's proposal, a 24 June circular required arsenals to label each bundle of cartridges with the “kind and caliber of ammunition, and number of rounds in the package.” Mallet's subsequent 27 August Rules for Laboratories required; “All bundles (of 10 cartridges) and packing boxes of small arms ammunition will be legibly marked with:

- The number of rounds.
- The character of arm for which the cartridges are intended.
- The caliber.
- The character of projectile.
- The arsenal at which the ammunition has been made.
- The year of manufacture.”

The following April, Mallet sent a notice to all arsenal commanders to reinforce this directive and enclosed an exemplar label. “Of course,” he noted, “it is not supposed that printed labels already on hand will be thrown away, but in having others printed in future it will be desirable to follow the form now sent.” That July, Mallet added the additional requirement that the month as well as the year was to be marked, but it took at least through October before Fayetteville, Macon, and Columbus were in compliance with this new rule. Despite Mallet's original suggestion of a stamp or stencil, printed paper labels appear to have

been more common. Richmond mostly used a stamp and failed to include the month of manufacture. Selma also printed their label directly on the bundle paper with a separate stamp to mark the month. Most arsenals that did include the month handwrote it in ink, likely so that the printed labels would not need to be changed monthly. Unsurprisingly, the only example the author could find of an extent label exactly matching Mallet's exemplar was from Macon, the laboratory directly overseen by Mallet. In most instances, bundles appear to have been from the same paper used to make cartridges (the medium weight paper used for old U.S. style cartridge, not the fine, thin paper preferred for English-style cartridges), although invoices of Richmond Arsenal purchases from the Franklin Paper Mill include “bundling paper” separate from “cartridge paper.” Extant arsenal packs show most of them tied with light cord, but a few have heavier twine or are tied twice if a lighter cord is used.



Arsenal packs (left to right starting with top) from Selma, Columbus, Atlanta, Macon, Augusta, Fayetteville, Richmond and Lynchburg. (Courtesy of Horse Soldier, 'Percussion Ammunition Packets,' and Old South Antiques)

Macon packs utilized a unique folding closure that produced four triangles on the front of the bundle, held shut with a glued label. Most surviving packs have the label underneath the cord, but there are examples of Charleston and Columbus packs with the label glued over the cord. U.S. practice was to include a bundle of 12 percussion caps in each package of ten cartridges. In his post-war analysis of the Confederate Ordnance Department, Mallet recalled that at one time “the supply of nitric acid for making

Continued on page 7

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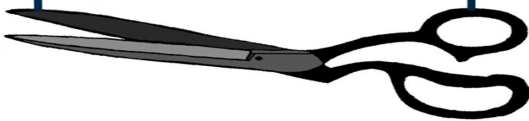
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Continued from page 2

Tennessee, Kentucky, and most of North Carolina in the mid nineteenth century. As the speed of production continued to increase, the quality of the wares began to decrease by the mid-nineteenth century, however. Seen especially in the uptick in lead-sickness at this time, tinsmiths began to have to choose between speed and quality. Would they continue to be sure that all of the solder (primarily made of lead) would sit to the outside of the vessel, or would they turn a blind eye to how much solder could be found within? In the grand scheme of it they chose the latter. This was unfortunately at a time when aluminum would begin to appear and take the place of tin. That doesn't mean that tin and tin smithing would die out as a product and trade all together though. By the 20th century, despite the arrival and cheapening of aluminum, tanners and all kinds of sheet metal workers continued to work. Switching to similar metals was an option for some as they worked alongside roofers and put flashing on slate or wood shingled roofs or began to place what we would call a tin roof on a house. For many more, they began working the new aluminum that replaced their familiar coppers and tins. And for others, they moved to factory towns like Lowell, Massachusetts and began work in textile factories, making sure that all weaving heddles were in good condition and making new heddles if others broke.

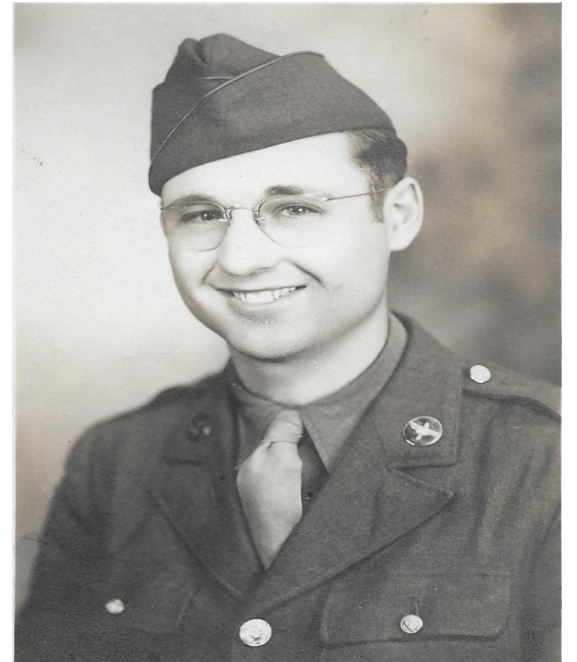


Even today we can still find tanners. In non-historical contexts we call them sheet metal workers, with everything that that entails. In other areas of life, the trade can be found in the work of hobbyists. And for even fewer, it is a trade kept alive for the living historian and reenactor of any and all time periods.

The Herb Walker Story: The War Years 1942-1945 The Pacific Theater

By: David Walker

My father was not a famous man, but he was part of the Greatest Generation. He was born November 25, 1918, in Mishawaka, Indiana, to Raleigh and Mary Walker as the 11th of thirteen children. His parents were Raleigh Clinton Walker (1865-1946) and Mary Idessia (Moore) (1882—1948). He was a divorced 34-year man when he married my 17-year-old grandmother who was 17 years old on August 6, 1899. His brothers and sisters were Henry Ray (May 29, 1900) Bertha Ellen (January 12, 1902) Carl William (October 3, 1903) Martha Jane (March 29, 1905) Violet Donnell (January 11, 1908) Lewis Calvin (December 23, 1909) Mary Alice (August 20, 1911) Raleigh Clinton, Jr. (August 29, 1912) Doris Margaret (February 7, 1916) Robert Eugene March 21, 1917) Herbert Kenneth (November 25, 1918) Glen Leroy (November 4, 1920) Don Richard (May 11, 1922). Ray served in World War I and did not meet my father until he was a year old. My uncle Robert served in World War II along with my father. Uncle Don got polio as a child and could not serve. Two of the grandchildren also served in World War II. My father graduated in 1937 from Mishawaka High School. With the Great Depression in 1929, the family had financial difficulty. He eventually joined the Civilian Conservation Corp and ended up in California. His older brother, Robert, had joined the CCC earlier. This was a way for the family to get money from the worker. When he returned from the CCC he moved to Van Wert, Ohio to live with Raleigh, who was a preacher at a small country church. He worked at a hotel doing odd jobs. There he met my mother, Fern Lichtenberger, the oldest of eight children, born on December 4, 1920. My mother had four brothers and three sisters. Her brother, Lloyd, served in World War II and the younger brothers also served in the military. Her sister Mary's husband served in World War II and spent time in a German POW camp. Two of her sisters had husbands who also served in World War II. My parents were married by Raleigh on January 11, 1942, in Markle, Indiana, outside the church, it cost extra money to be married inside the church. Only their mothers were there for the wedding.



The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7th, and my father was drafted in January. After less than two weeks of marriage he was off to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for his four weeks of basic training. He was then sent to Keesler Army Air Field in Biloxi, Mississippi, for air mechanic school. He did not pass muster and eventually was trained in communications.



Continued on page 8

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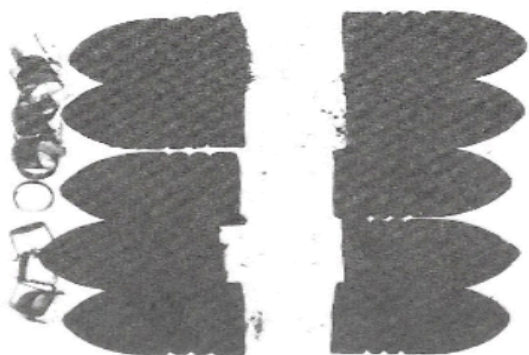
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DID YOU KNOW?**2025 marked the start of the 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War.****Watch the schedule for updated events!****Continued from page 3**

fulminate for caps had been exhausted, and two or three million caps had to be issued which were charged with a mixture of potassium chlorate and sulphur. These... became untrustworthy in damp air, so that an extra number was issued with each packet of cartridges until the use of fulminate could be resumed.” Despite Mallet’s recollection suggesting this was a temporary change, his own August 1862 Rules for Laboratories set the number of caps at 13. Because Richmond and Atlanta (and before it, Nashville) produced most Confederate percussion caps, arsenals were from time to time forced to issue packs without caps and were required to add “without caps” to the labels of such bundles. Imported packs of British cartridges nearly never included caps, prompting Mallet to request in August 1863 that future shipment include caps. “As the foreign caps which would be so used would probably be of good quality,” he noted, “12 caps (instead of 13) would be enough to each bundle of 10 cartridges.” At least Richmond is known to have repackaged British cartridges to add a bundle of caps.



Charleston arsenal pack (top) and X-ray of the same pack (bottom), showing the alternating direction of the bullets and the tube of percussion caps. (Courtesy of ‘Percussion Ammunition Packets’ and ‘An Introduction to Civil War Small Arms’ by Earl Coates and Dean Thomas)



The Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia is one of the Commonwealth’s most compelling gateways into the lived experience of early American settlement. Spread across more than two hundred acres in the Shenandoah Valley, the museum is an expansive outdoor history complex that reconstructs the diverse cultures, landscapes, and lifeways that shaped the American frontier from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Rather than presenting history behind glass, the museum immerses visitors in working farms, artisan shops, and transplanted homesteads that have been meticulously relocated or recreated from their countries of origin.

The museum’s narrative begins in the Old World, where English, Irish, German, and West African exhibits explore the societies from which many early Virginians emerged. Each site is staffed by costumed interpreters who demonstrate daily tasks—blacksmithing, weaving, farming, cooking—while explaining the economic pressures, cultural traditions, and historical forces that drove migration to the New World. These Old World farms provide essential context, grounding the American frontier not as an isolated phenomenon but as the culmination of global movements and personal upheavals. Crossing into the American exhibits, visitors encounter frontier cabins, 19th-century farmsteads, and a recreated early American schoolhouse. These sites trace the evolution of settlement in the Shenandoah Valley, illustrating how European, African, and

Indigenous influences converged to shape Virginia’s frontier society. Livestock roam the fields, crops are cultivated using period techniques, and interpreters bring to life the challenges of subsistence, community-building, and cultural adaptation. What distinguishes the Frontier Culture Museum is its commitment to authenticity and its ability to make history tactile, immediate, and human. It is not simply a museum but a living landscape of memory—one that honors the resilience, diversity, and ingenuity of the people who forged early American life in the Valley.

Frontier Culture Museum — Contact Information

Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia
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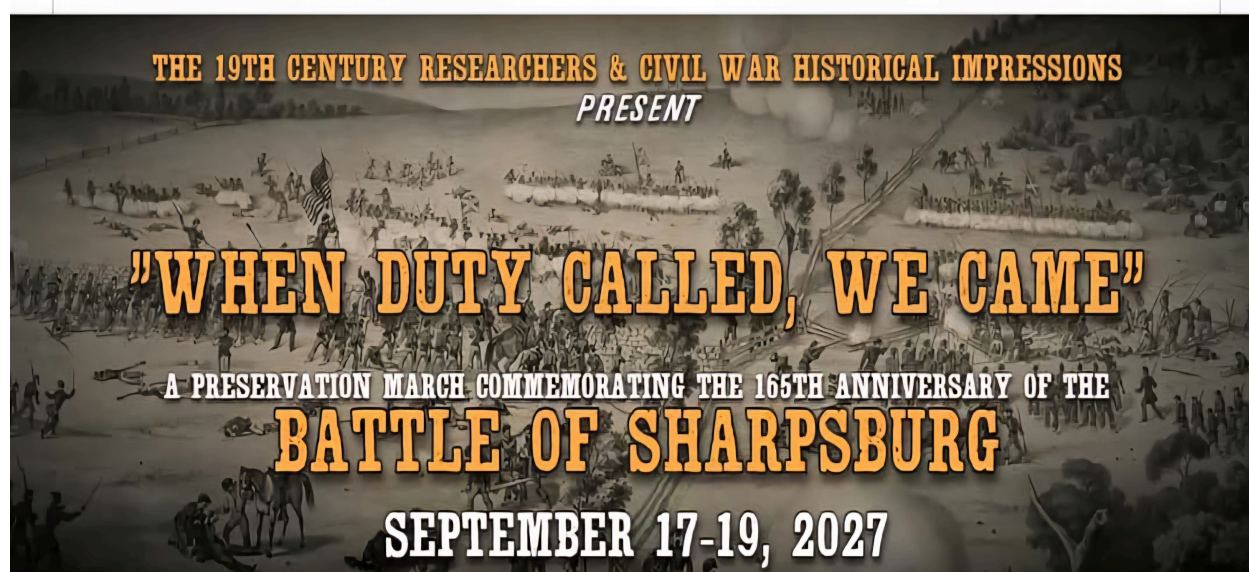
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Why Teaching the Public About Our Past Truly Matters

By: Harry Sonntag

Teaching the public about our past is essential because it anchors a community in a shared sense of identity, purpose, and continuity. When people understand where they come from, they gain a clearer sense of who they are and how their society came to be. History provides the narrative threads that bind individuals into a people, offering context for traditions, values, and institutions that might otherwise feel abstract or arbitrary. It also strengthens citizenship by helping people grasp the origins of their rights, the struggles that secured them, and the responsibilities that accompany them. A public that knows its history is far less vulnerable to simplistic explanations or manipulative rhetoric, because it can recognize patterns, precedents, and the consequences of past choices. Preserving and teaching the past also honors those who lived it. Battlefields, letters, artifacts, and stories are the last remaining voices of people who can no longer speak for themselves.

When we teach their experiences, we restore their humanity and ensure they are remembered not as distant symbols but as real individuals who faced fear, sacrifice, and hope. This understanding fosters empathy, which in turn inspires stewardship. People protect what they understand, and they care for places where they can feel the weight of what happened there.

Just as importantly, history teaches complexity. It resists the temptation to flatten events into myths or slogans, instead revealing the contradictions and difficult choices that shaped the world we inherit. That nuance helps communities navigate present challenges with clearer eyes. And finally, learning the past reminds us that extraordinary events are often shaped by ordinary people. Their stories encourage us to believe that our own actions matter, and that we, too, are part of a larger, ongoing story worth preserving.

Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's 34th Annual
World War 2 Weekend 6/6/26 - 6/8/26
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WWII Weekend is in its 34th year of existence, and has become the main fundraising event for the Mid Atlantic Air Museum. Your attendance allows us to continue in our mission to enhance the public's appreciation and understanding of the Mid Atlantic region's vast aviation history.

Continued from page 6



My father served in the Pacific Theater during World War II as was assigned to the 345th Bombardment Group, known as the "Air Apaches." They were a highly decorated Army Air Corp unit during the time he served. The medium bomber B-25 was the plane that was assigned to the unit. He lost a number of friends during that time. His MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) was communications and achieved the rank was Corporal. He was stationed in New Guinea, the Philippines, and the South China Sea from early 1942 until he returned home in October of 1945. My parents had five children born between 1946-1959. I am the fourth of the five. Until his death in January of 1990, I never heard him talk about the war. When he met up with friends or relatives and talked about the war, I was told to leave the room. With my mother's help he made a photo album of his time in the military, and I recently used them in my presentation at our local World War II Roundtable.