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The "Graffiti" on the walls of  
Ben Lomond

H. Mounday      Co-A      7<sup>th</sup> Regt PRC  
Penn<sup>a</sup>      2 L  
Hem Cvlry      E C NC<sup>a</sup> Com      W Mehter  
5<sup>th</sup> Co      J<sup>s</sup> French Phila  
Co-A 12 R<sup>tg</sup>      USA

Wallace Cranston

Company G      JOHN M SLATER      Hoe  
16 V F S A      A Sargt 4 Rgt  
Paul      Char K C      T. A. Lee  
Jean USA      Compa G 4<sup>th</sup> In Rgt      Aaron  
3<sup>d</sup> Lt.           12<sup>th</sup> Regt  
Henry A Corneil      N York      C N White  
5 11<sup>th</sup> Co

Jeremy  
Ponto

Report prepared by  
Joan W. Peters  
Archivist and Historian

David W  
Martin

Company - K

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**Statement of Objectives**

I was contracted by the Prince William Park Authority to spend 10 hours to interpret the "graffiti" found on the walls of the Ben Lomond House in Manassas. The work was accomplished under a \$250.00 grant from the Civil War Roundtable.

Four on-site visits to the house have been made for the examination of the writings on the staircase wall and of the writing on the walls of the first floor parlor.

I have asked Karen Kitsis, the Prince William County Parks Authority intern working on the research aspect connected with these names to assist me in the preparation of this report.

**Description of the Problem**

Three of the four walls in the parlor on the first floor contain names and regiments of men believed to have fought at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas. The stair case wall itself also contains names and regiments. Along with the names and regiments of wounded 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas veterans on the stair case wall, there appears to be a letter, written in 1889 concerning an unnamed soldier killed in Puerto Rico.

Many of these names have faded or have deteriorated due to flaking plaster, ambient and incandescent light as well as sunlight from nearby windows. These conditions have given rise to differing interpretations of the writing and indeed, sometimes intense discussions concerning what a faded name or word *might* be. At the same time, there are other names, ranks and regiments that are quite easily read and afford no problems whatsoever with interpretation.

**Discussion of the Problem**

**1. The Stair case wall**

I began with the stair case wall since it appeared at the time to be the most interesting from an historical point of view. To that end, I made a grid of this wall to make it easier to locate the writing there.

**Figure 1. The Stair Case Wall: Grid 1A-4G An Overview**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1				Writing in 1 D			
2		Writing in 2 B	Writing in 2C	Writing in 2 D			
3		Writing in 3 B	Writing in 3C	Writing in 3 D	Writing in 3 E	Writing in 3 F	
4							Writing in 4G

Figure 2. Grid 2B-3B.  
Grid 2B

Cox [possibly Knox] [R?]g<sup>t</sup> Ken [Kentucky?]

H C

W[g?] us [-] ll

Co. A 12 R<sup>t</sup>g

Company = K

Company

G

Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line  
Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line

Grid 3B

Paul

[J?]ean

[U] S A.

3<sup>d</sup> Lt

Grid 2C

[G ?] 2 L  
W Mehter

wal[-]nt

J<sup>s</sup> P French Phila

USA

John M Slater

16 V F S [A or possibly U?]

Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line  
Grid Line Grid Line Grid Line

Figure 3. Grid 1D-2D The "Letter".  
Grid 1D -2D

1889

146

MARIAS

PUERTO RICO

CAPTAIN

I fancy [short word - illegible] fought  
at the Puerto Rico Spanish  
Real where [who?] was kil<sup>d</sup>  
crossing the River.

I [account?]  
that was w[h]ere he made his  
last stand.

His [ol?]d<sup>r</sup> bro<sup>r</sup> [brother] and daughter  
is Elssi [short word is illegible] and lives in  
Phidia [Philadelphia?]

Tell Moneho that I will bring  
[word is illegible - possibly a rank?] Douglass to him  
in Purlings [or Perlargs or Perlungs] uniform

Tell Thom F R[i]chard that I'll get  
in [next 3 words are illegible - possibly a time?] + then other side  
of [word is illegible]

From

T. Heath J<sup>r</sup>

Figure 4. The Stair Case Wall: Grid 3C-3F.

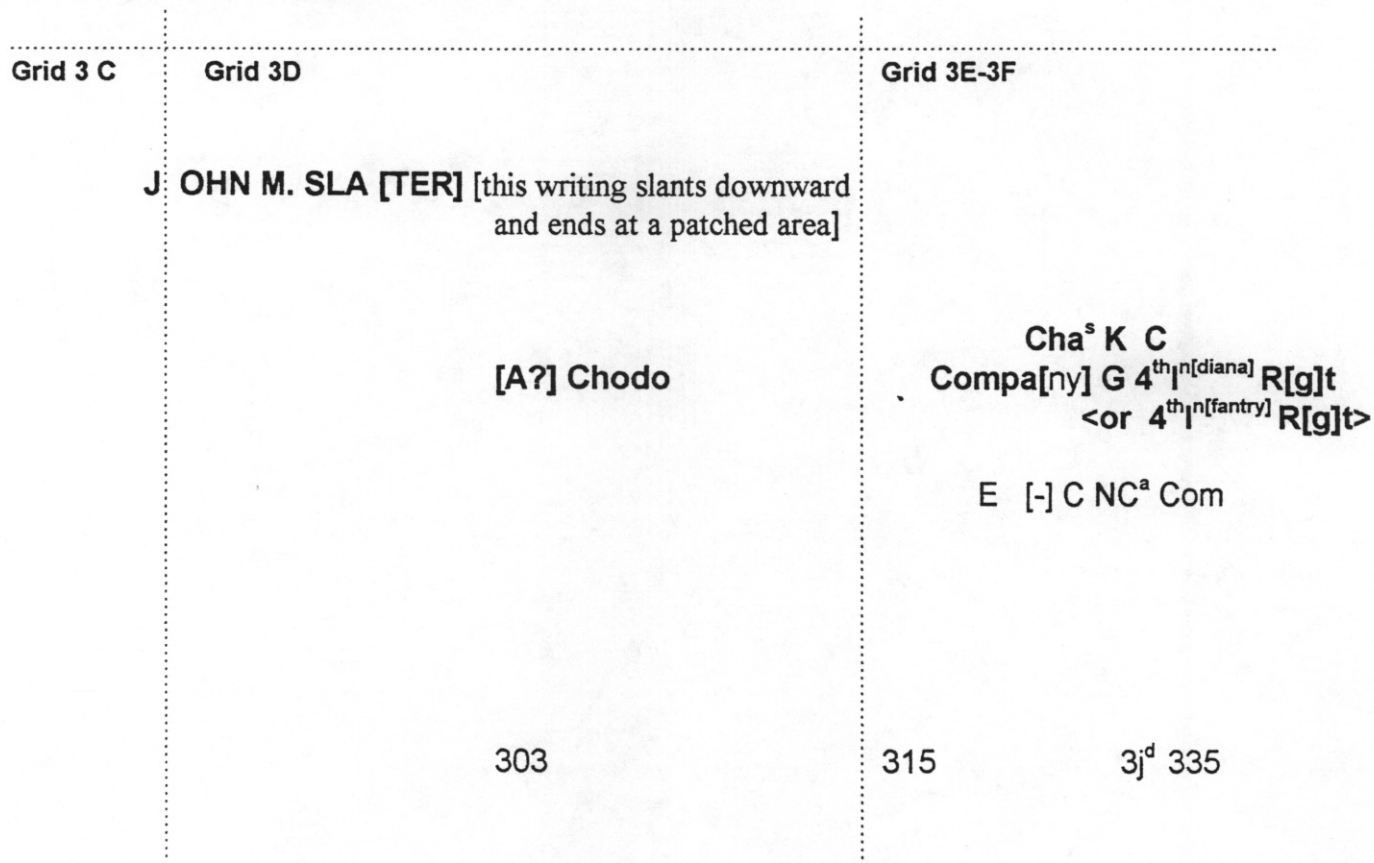
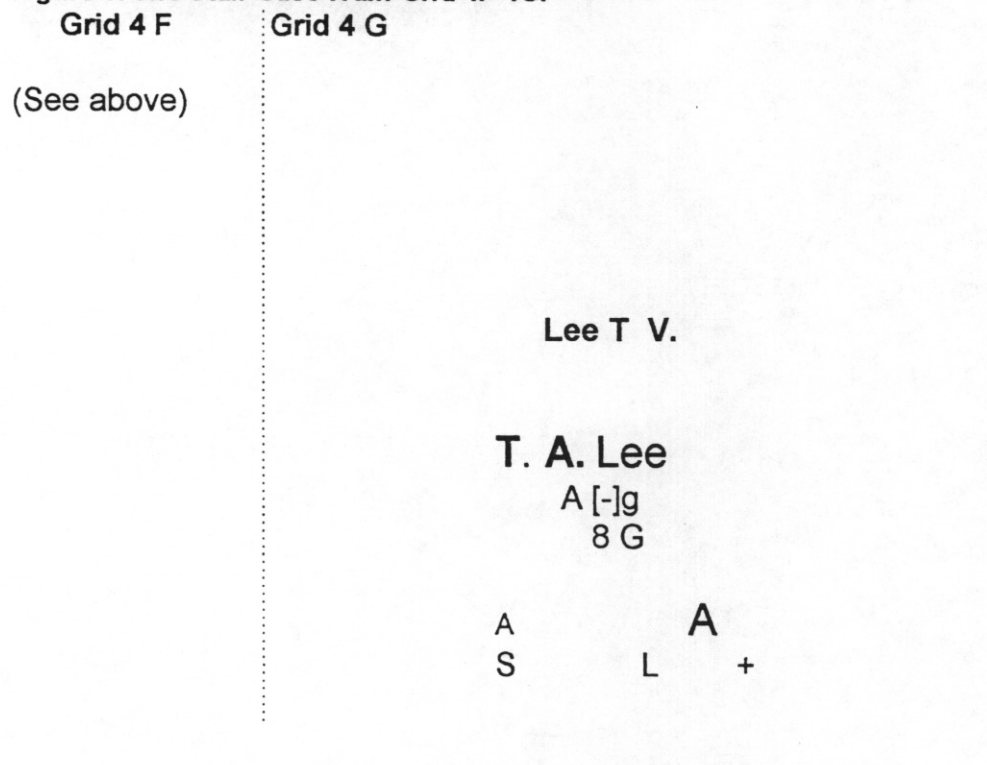


Figure 5. The Stair Case Wall: Grid 4F-4G.



There is an additional puzzle regarding the names on the staircase wall which relates to the position of the stair case. On a visit to the house with architectural historian Cheryl Shepherd on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1998, there were clear signs that, when the house was built, the stair case was not in its present location. The staircase now blocks one window and obscures another entirely. In its current position, it cuts off part of the door way into the formal dining area.

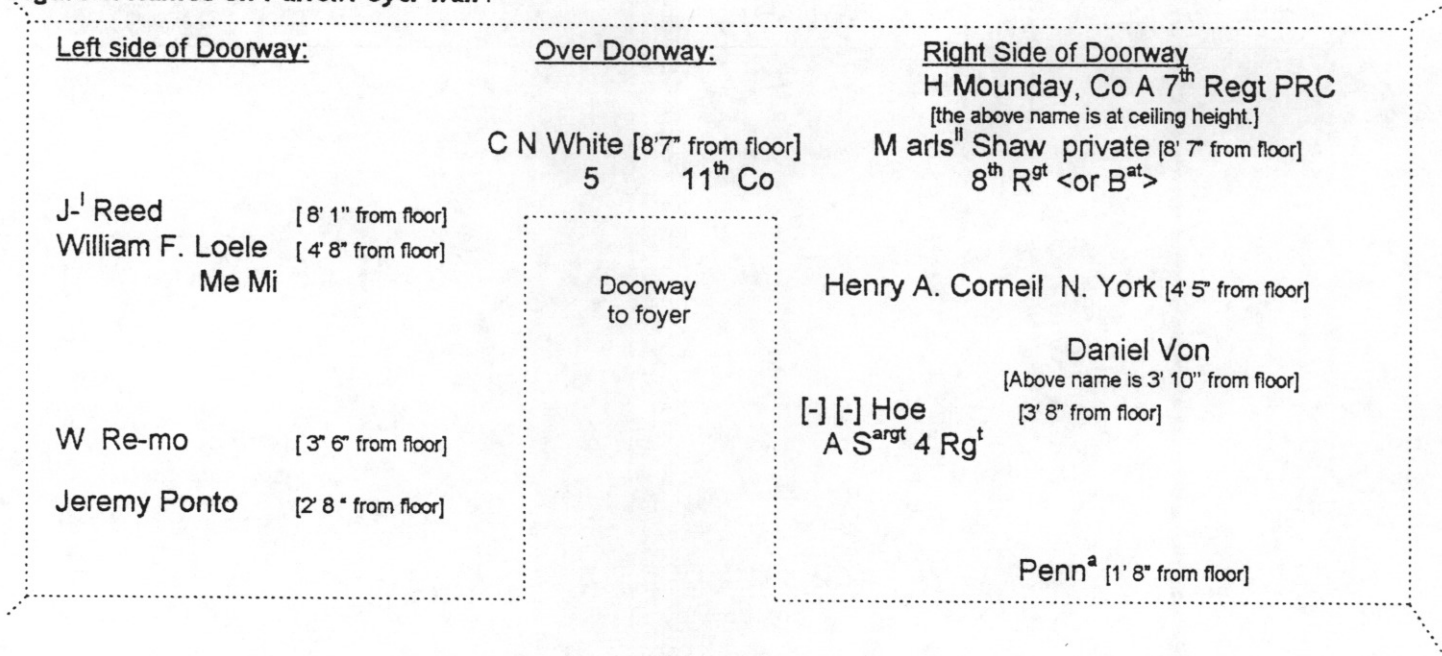
We also found signs that the second floor may have extended all the way to the wall. This strengthens the hypothesis that the stair case was not at its present site. If indeed the floor extended to the wall, then the names on what is now the staircase wall may have been on the wall of an open room. This may mean that there is a ward upstairs as well as downstairs. Further examination of the other upstairs rooms may reveal more names which would further strengthen the theory that there were upstairs wards. It may also become necessary to measure the names from the floor to see if beds were stacked in a vertical fashion in this open spaced room.

## 2. Names in the Parlor on the first floor

There are names on three of the four walls in the parlor. Most of these names are on the wall facing the foyer, on both sides of the doorway in the parlor. Some are very close to the ceiling and others are very close to the floor. I took measurements in this room of the distance of names from the floor.

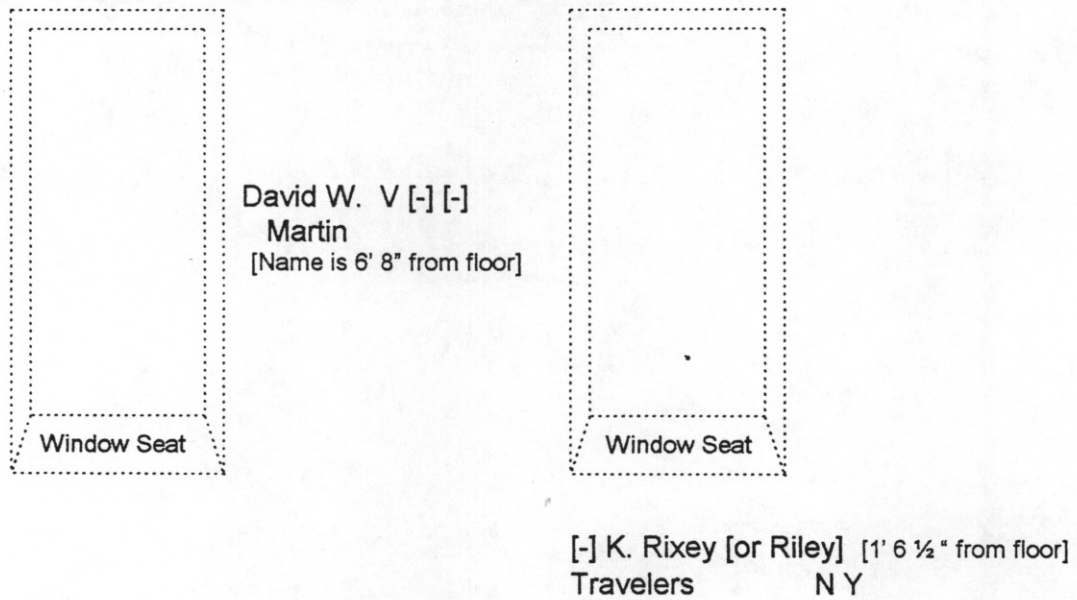
These names and/or Companies and Regiments were found on the common wall of the foyer and parlor, looking into the foyer. In addition there are other marks on the wall that are too faded to read that may be additional names and/or companies and regiments.

Figure 6. Names on Parlor/Foyer wall .



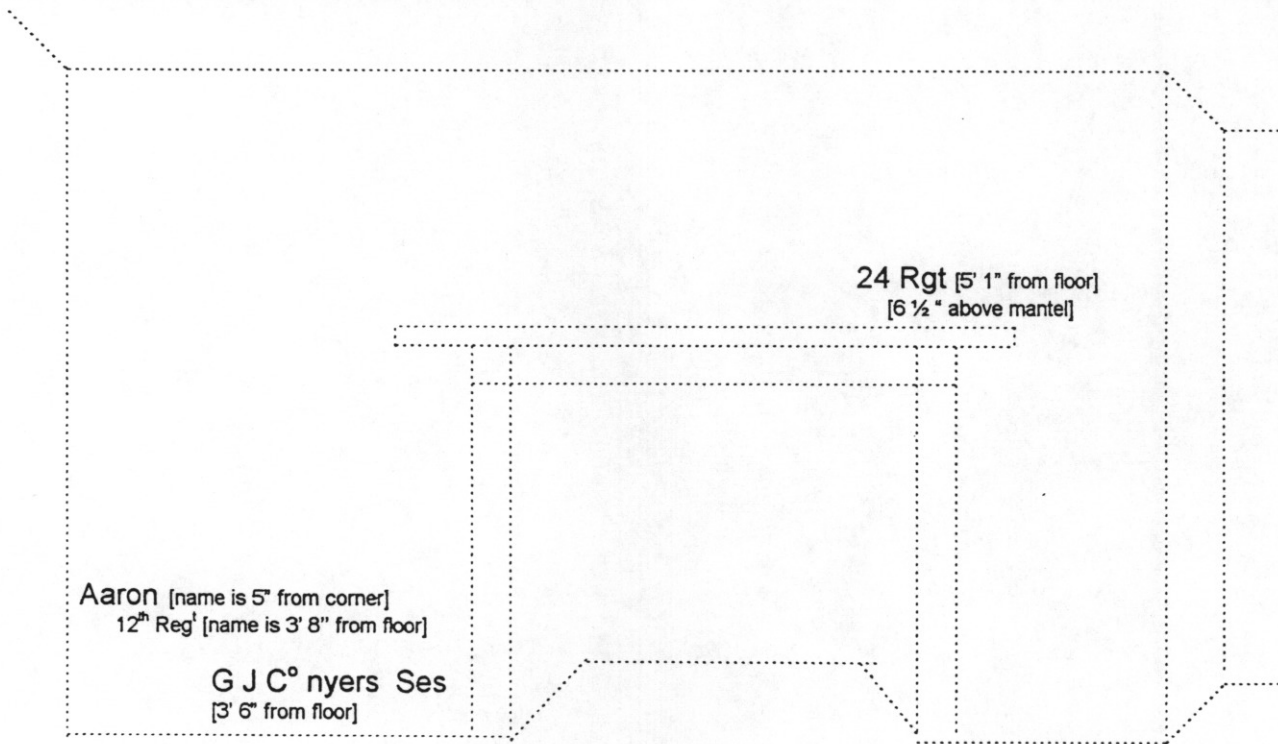
On the exterior wall between the windows (looking towards the tree outside), one name is found. Another is found under a window.

**Figure 7. The Parlor: Between the windows.**



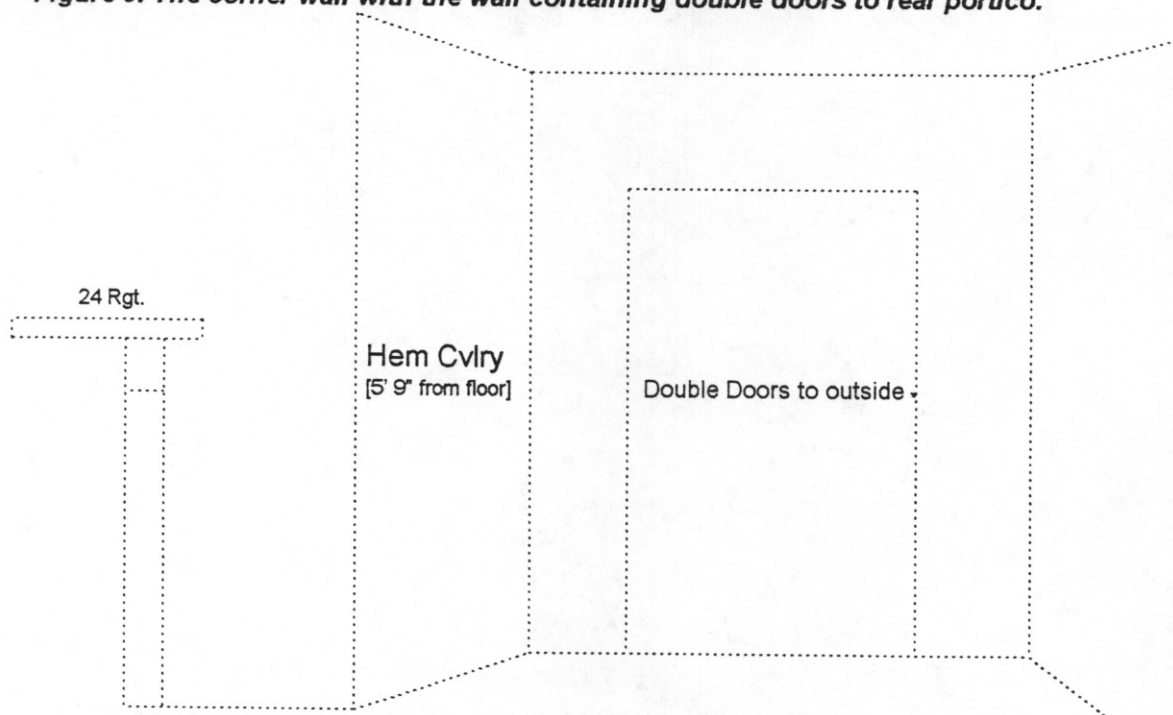
On the rear wall of the parlor there are several names.

**Figure 8. The parlor wall: the fireplace.**



On the corner wall, next to the doorway outside to the rear portico, there is part of a name and Company

**Figure 9. The corner wall with the wall containing double doors to rear portico.**



There are no visible names on the last wall in the parlor whose windows face the road.

### 3. Summary of the Names and/or Companies and Regiments found at Ben Lomond

• On the wall above the present stair case:

- 1) "Cox" or "Knox"
- 2) Company A, 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- 3) Company K
- 4) 2 L[t] W. Mehter
- 5) J<sup>s</sup>. P. French, Phila. USA
- 6) John M. Slater, 16<sup>th</sup> V.F.S.A.
- 7) T. Heath Jr. (who signed the 1889 note to an unknown Captain.)
- 8) Ellsi [Elsie] (a daughter to unnamed soldier who died in Puerto Rico, named in note from Heath to an unnamed Captain in 1889.
- 9) an unnamed older brother to the soldier who died in Puerto Rico, mentioned in note from Heath to an unnamed Captain in 1889. The brother and daughter lived in Philadelphia when the note on the wall was written in 1889.
- 10) Monehoe – a surname found in the note; possibly a soldier Heath was going to meet.
- 11) Douglass – a surname found in the 1889 note on the wall
- 12) Thom F Richard - possibly another soldier Heath was going to meet.
- 13) Purling [or Purlong] - a surname in the note. Heath was bringing Purlong's uniform with him.
- 14) A. Chodo
- 15) Charles K C Company G, 4<sup>th</sup> In[diana? Infantry?] Regiment
- 16) E [-] C NC
- 17) T. A. Lee



- 18) T. Lee
- 19) Paul Jean 3<sup>d</sup> Lt. USA
- **Other names found upstairs**  
Wallace Cranston
- **Names on the parlor walls**

H Mounday, Co. A. 7 <sup>th</sup> Regt. PRC C. N. White, 5 11 <sup>th</sup> Co. M [arls <sup>h</sup> ?] Shaw private 8 <sup>th</sup> R <sup>gt</sup> [or B <sup>at</sup> ] J [-] <sup>l</sup> Reed William F. Loele Henry A. Corneil N York Daniel Von [last name too faded to read] W Re-mo [-] [-] Hoe A S <sup>argt</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup> R <sup>gt</sup> Jeremy Ponto Penn <sup>a</sup>	David W. Martin [-] K. Rixey [or Riley] Travelers NY  Aaron 12 <sup>th</sup> Regt G. J. C <sup>onyers</sup> Ses  24 Regt  Hem Cvlry, 5 <sup>th</sup> Co.
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**Conclusions**

There are names of people, companies and regiments through out the house at Ben Lomond. Karen Kitsis, the intern who worked on researching the names, will present a report attached to this one regarding her findings.

Having taken our measurements in the parlor, Karen and I came to see that the ward could have contained as many as 25 beds, stacked one on top of the other. Names were at different heights on the wall looking into the foyer and were found on both sides of the parlor's doorway.

*Figure 10. Diagram of the parlor ward as it may have looked with stacked beds.*

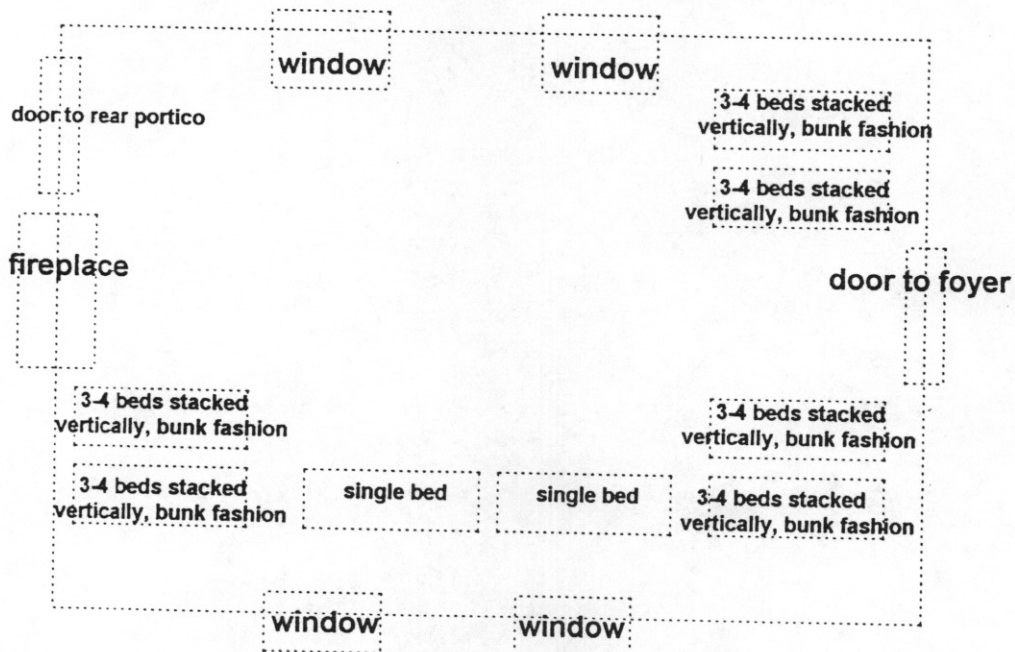
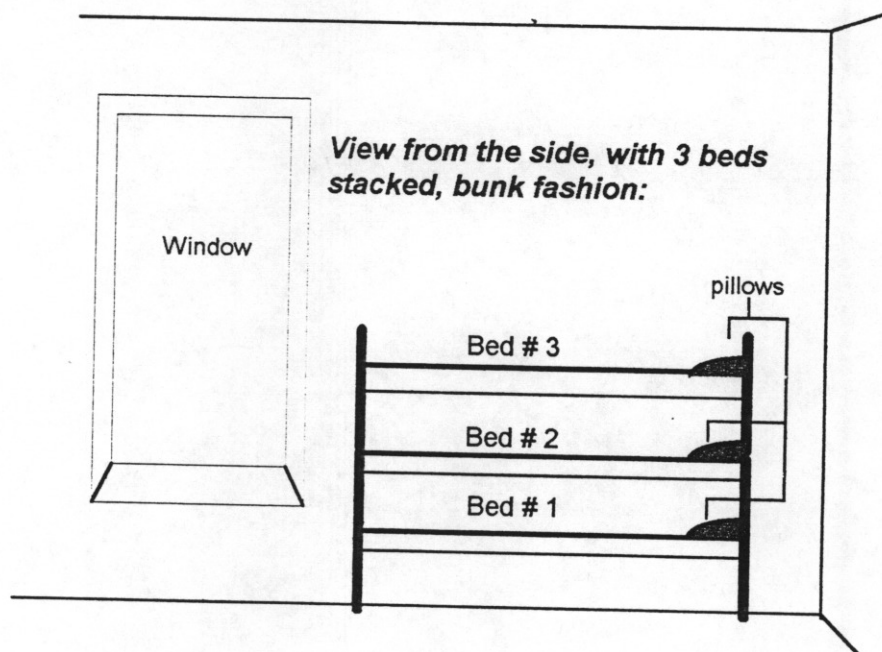


Figure 11 below shows three beds stacked on one another rather than four, for the sake of clarity. There may have been ladders to get to the top bunk. The hospital staff may have left the top bunks for those who could easily manage the ladders or conversely, left the top bunks to those who would not be moving around a great deal. I think it more probable that the top bunks were left to the less seriously wounded and the bottom bunks were kept for the amputees or more critically wounded men. These veterans would be more easily nursed from the bottom bunks.

**Figure 11. The parlor ward as it may have looked with stacked beds (NOT TO SCALE)**



At the present time, I believe that it is very likely that the parlor was used as a hospital ward. The formal dining area on the other side of the foyer may have been a surgery. A cursory examination of the upstairs "partitioned" room indicates there are soldier's names there. Unfortunately the rooms upstairs have not yet been examined as those names were outside the scope of the present contract.

This house and the names contained therein has *enormous* income potential as a momento of the Civil War. The parlor could be easily made over into a Civil War hospital ward. Artifacts such as period medical instruments could be acquired. Further research would uncover the names of regimental surgeons on both sides who may have served here as well as names of Prince William County women who may have nursed here.

If you decide that each room should reflect a different historical period of this early 19<sup>th</sup> century home, then the parlor would form an extremely effective contrast to the rest of the home and remind tourists of the unremitting dismay and consternation which resulted from this tragic conflict.

### Recommendations for Preservation

1. The names found in the Ben Lomond House are as much a part of the house as the walls on which they are written. Under no circumstances would I recommend painting over or covering the names, companies and regiments with wall paper. If you cover these names, you are effectively erasing an important part of the history of this home. The "graffiti" is what makes this house unique.
2. The staircase wall and the wall of the parlor that enters into the foyer, can be left "as is", with no further cosmetic treatment, such as paint, to its surfaces. Above all, don't wash the stair case or parlor walls! Do not brush dirt off or clean flaking areas on the walls. Consult a professional historical conservator who understands Civil War and architectural history and who has the skills to be able to look at the house as an historical "artifact" left from the Civil War.
3. Place blinds on the windows to eliminate sunlight onto this wall. Names that were apparent in June 1998 have shown evidence of extensive deterioration in August 1998 due to prolonged exposure to sun light.
4. Place inexpensive heat and humidity gages in *all* rooms and hallways of the house. These gages can be purchased for under \$15.00.
5. It is absolutely essential to achieve a stable climate control and environment for the interior of this house. Extreme temperature changes assist in the further deterioration of the names. The house should be kept between 65-70 degrees with a relative humidity in the 45-55% range.
6. Place safe heating devices in the house during the winter and early spring months. The house should be heated, with relative humidity found in the ranges recommended in recommendation # 5. The house should be kept cooled during the summer to reflect the temperature and humidity ranges in recommendation # 5.
7. Cover the staircase wall with an acid-free, buffered and element-free clear covering that does not touch the wall. It should be impervious to natural and incandescent light and should be water tight and sun light resistant. The covering should be encased with a non-wooden or plastic material which would act as a frame for the covering and the wall.
8. You can place a transcription of the name, companies and/or regiments onto acid free paper, covered with mylar or plexiglass in a steel or non-plastic or wood frame. Attach this to the wall near the name so that it can be read in context with the handwritten names on the wall. Place the large covering for the wall over these smaller transcripts. That way the covering will protect your transcription as well as your original.
9. Apply the same procedures for the names on the parlor wall whose doorway leads into the foyer. That is, follow recommendations 3-5 and 7-8 for this parlor wall.
10. Implement a minimum cosmetic make over for the rest of the parlor. If the parlor is to be painted, then I suggest painting *around* the two names, on the wall between the windows, the two names and the Regiment and Cavalry Company on the fireplace wall. I do *not* recommend wall paper at this time. Then place an acid free buffered clear covering over the unpainted area so that it does not touch the wall. Follow the steps outlined above in recommendations 7 and 8.

**Recommendation concerning the use of the house as a Civil War "artifact."**

1. Turn the parlor into a hospital ward as a reflection of the part it played in the history of the house.
2. Use Civil War re-enactors on the grounds to illustrate hospital techniques. If medical operations are performed by the re-enactors they should be done *outside* rather than inside the house. That way, the historical integrity of the interior is not compromised.
3. Have a Halloween Tour of the House as a Civil War Hospital. Use re-enactors to make the drama more realistic (and, in the Halloween tradition, more frightening!)
4. Use local volunteers to create models of the house in its stages of development. (Railroad clubs or other interested volunteers may make individual in-kind donations of their talents in the construction of these models.) Design the models so that the roofs come off and the first and second story come apart. This way you can show the stages of development of the house from 1837 until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Find a prominent spot in the Foyer, for example, to display the models of the home so that tourist can relate to the house more readily.
5. Give tours of the house with a guide who has an exhaustive knowledge of the construction of the house and a history of the owners and families who lived here. Tourists will flock to this house to hear about its history. Don't forget the ghost and the cellar of the house when giving tours.
6. Give special tours on the monthly anniversary of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas and on the monthly anniversaries of any monument commemoration of these battles.
7. Work with the rangers at the Manassas Battlefield to develop some interactive displays that could go on the grounds. For example, did you know that there was a Confederate Artillery Battery commanded by Lieutenant R. F. Beckham of Culpeper on the grounds, very near the House? A Confederate and Union exercise in shooting rifles and the steps you go through to load and shoot the weapon would be enlightening to both children and adults. Especially as it relates to the two battles fought so near to this home.
8. Open a gift shop in the home for the purchase of books on the Chinn family and other occupants of the house, the history of the home, books regarding the Battle of Manassas and other Northern Virginia battlefields and souvenir pins, patches and key rings commemorating the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas. Other Civil War memorabilia, such as soldier coloring books, small scale replica cannons, caps and officer's hats, accurate toy weapons, flags, mugs and models of soldiers, each representing both the Union and the Confederacy, could be available for purchase.
9. The cost of a gift shop at the very beginning could be kept to a minimum. Books can be purchased at 40% discounts and pins and mugs, if ordered in minimum quantities, could be very cost effective.
10. You will find that your best advertisement for this house will come from making this house a memorable and educational, fun-filled meeting place for tourists and Civil War "buffs" who visit Prince William County. It could prove to be one of the most popular tourist sites in the County!