



SCV Europe Camp #1612

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Commander's Letter

Dear Members and Friends of the Europe Camp,

in our new edition you will find once again interesting articles from the time of the "war of northern aggression"!

It's with great pleasure that I can announce a special contribution by Nancy Hitt in our December issue about one of the Immortal 600, Confederate Capt. William A. Ferring, a Swiss/Italian volunteer who was a medical doctor, a wounded soldier, a prisoner of war and served post-war as the county clerk of Mississippi County, Arkansas. This article will include the news about a service at the Maple Grove Cemetery in Blytheville, Arkansas, to take place on Sunday, October 12, 2014 at 3 p.m. This event is of course open to everyone and perhaps our many American readers would like to attend. For additional information call (in the US): 870-563-6161 or 870-622-4641. Some of Captain Ferring's descendants will be there.

Have a nice time reading this brand new issue of the ISE newsletter.



In the service of the South,
Achim "Archy" Bänsch
Commander

August Valentin Albert Reinhold (Robert) von Massow A Confederate Hero

By Valerie Protopapas, The Stuart-Mosby Historical Society. Editor *Southern Cavalry Review*.

In the fall of 1863, Confederate cavalry leader, General James Ewell Brown (JEB) Stuart stood face to face with his *second* Prussian warrior. By that time, Stuart was a friend of and comrade-in-arms with Prussian giant Heros von Borcke who had come to him earlier in the War for Southern Independence (erroneously known as the “civil war”). Stuart had found in the large and good-natured German soldier, a convivial friend and fellow warrior. In this new “recruit”—sent to him by his friend—Stuart saw a very different man, six years younger than himself, tall, slender, dark and somewhat reticent, indeed, everything—other than in courage—that the large, outgoing, boisterous von Borcke was not.



Von Massow was born in Gumbin, Germany, in 1839 with an aristocratic family line dating back to 1259. In 1857, after attending officers’ school, he was appointed second lieutenant in the Prussian First Garde-Ulanen Regiment in Potsdam. Later he was transferred to the Twelfth Infantry Regiment stationed in Posen. Because of the relative peace in Europe at the time, young von Massow—as did so many other European soldiers—came to North America to practice his craft in the war raging on that continent. As did von Borcke, young Robert chose to fight with the South.

Von Massow made it clear to Stuart that he had come to fight. He wanted to serve; he wanted to learn the art of war in practical situations and not from books. But as with all large armies, Stuart was preparing to go into winter quarters and it was probable that von Massow would see little action unless he happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Given the earnest young man's desire to whet his saber—von Massow as von Borcke carried a *very* large saber—Stuart determined to send him where he *would* see action. Indeed, he would see a great *deal* of action. Thus, with Stuart's recommendation, the young soldier made his way behind the enemy's lines to present himself to perhaps the most active command in the Army of Northern Virginia, the 43rd Battalion of Partisan Rangers led by Col. John Singleton Mosby. According to historians Horace Mewborn and Hugh Keen who wrote extensively on Mosby's command, von Massow joined the Forty-third Battalion [company unknown], in early to mid-November of 1863. This would have allowed von Massow to be present in the scouting party in Frying Pan on October 9 and 10, 1863 and on the sutler raid between Vienna and Fairfax Court House on November 14, 1863.

Mosby's brand of warfare was hardly the type von Massow had studied in Germany. Indeed, it was a type of warfare that *no* regular military forces studied at that time although it was as old as war itself. Indeed, partisan or "guerrilla warfare" was held in contempt by the regular military not only by those against whom it was waged, but even by those *for* whom it was waged. But Stuart knew that in serving with Mosby, young von Massow would get his wish for action—and *then some*. In an article published in 1914, William Chapman remembered von Massow: "I always called him Baron. He came to me in Colonel Mosby's absence with a letter from General Stuart, the letter stating the German officer was here for observation and that he wanted to see some real service. I first met him at Oak Hill in Fauquier County, and learned that he was an officer in the Prussian army on leave of absence. He wore a steel gray uniform with green trimmings and carried a huge saber. He was a striking handsome man. He was a brave as a lion and he saw service all right, and he seemed to enjoy it."

Indeed, von Massow relished Mosby's hit and run variety of attack. Of one attack on a wagon train at Bealton Station, von Massow proclaimed that the skirmish was more enjoyable than an English fox hunt. However, other brands of Mosby's particular warfare—acts of stealth rather than battle—were less satisfactory to the chivalrous young Prussian. During a raid near Vienna at which Mosby's men kept sneaking into a stable and returning with several horses at a time for some hours, von Massow was heard to complain, "Ah, this is not fighting; it's horse stealing." Of course, he could not know that from the beginning of his dealings with the Yankees, odd as it may sound given John Mosby's reputation for lethality, the leader of the 43rd more enjoyed outwitting than killing his foe. At the beginning of his partisan career, Mosby drove the invaders into paroxysms of rage by his hit-and-run victories to the point at which Colonel Percy Wyndham threatened to burn the town of Middleburgh to the ground for harboring his nemesis. In response to these threats, Mosby wrote to his wife Pauline and told her that he was "...having a gay old time with the Yankees." The raid on the stable was just one of the many strategies Mosby and his men used to baffle and defeat their foes but to the more classically-trained von Massow it seemed to be mere "horse stealing."

After about three months with the command, however, von Massow finally had the chance to become involved in a real battle. Usually Mosby did not attack with large numbers, but in this case, an opportunity had presented itself of which he was determined to take advantage. Two days earlier, the command had been victorious in a sharp skirmish with Col. Cole's cavalry and, frankly, the 43rd was looking for trouble, something that was not hard to find in northern Virginia. On February 22nd, 1864, Mosby led 160 men to the vicinity of Dranesville where, he had learned, was a force of equal size made up of the Second Massachusetts Cavalry under Capt. James Sewell Reed. Mosby divided his force in two as a means of enticing Reed and his men into an ambush. When the both sides finally came together, von Massow rode forward to engage the enemy. Attired in his cape lined in scarlet over his gray uniform and with two large ostrich plumes extending from his slouch hat, von Massow drew his massive saber.

At that point, Second Lt. William B. Palmer told him, "Baron, unless you are ready to die this morning, use your pistols and put back that sabre." But von Massow demurred, saying, "Palmer, a soldier should always be ready to die."

In the midst of the rush of battle and waving his sword, von Massow rode down on Captain Reed who had apparently expended his pistols and had not been able to draw his own saber in his defense. Seeing his death coming upon him, Reed made a gesture that the Prussian understood as a sign of surrender.

Von Massow accepted his foe's submission and motioned for him to go to the rear with the other prisoners who had been taken in the clash. Not bothering to disarm his assumed captive whom he believed to have been rendered a "non-combatant," von Massow rode by Reed seeking further targets. It was at this point, Captain Reed shot von Massow in the back.

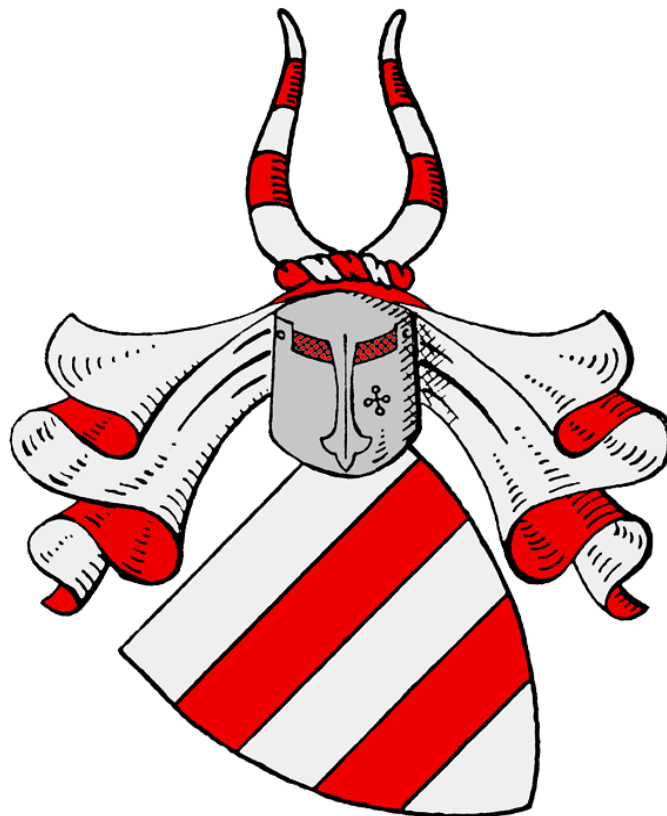
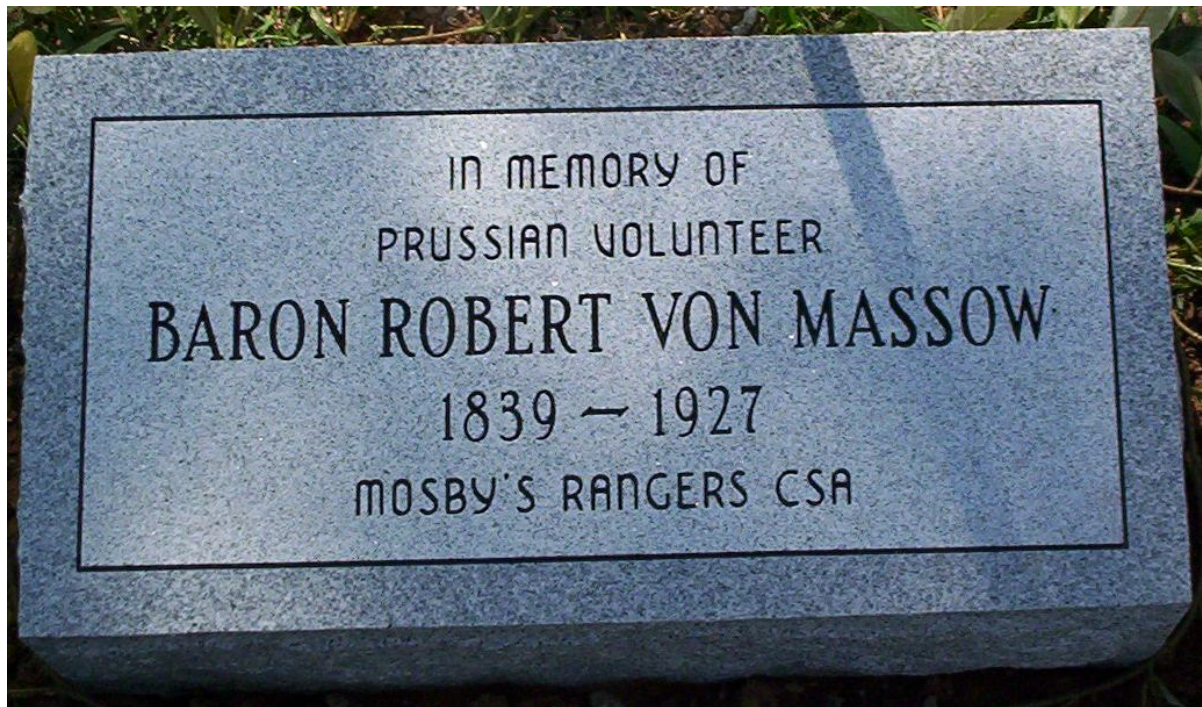
Captain William Chapman, seeing what had transpired, shot Reed out of his saddle, killing him instantly. Reed was the first officer of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry to be slain in combat and later he was much lauded as a hero but the facts show otherwise. Alas, it would seem that the young aristocrat paid dearly for his faith in the word of his foe—who, as was witnessed so *many* times during the War, was without honor. As the wounded man was taken from the field of victory very seriously but not fatally injured, he personally thanked Captain Chapman for delivering justice to his cowardly assailant. Von Massow eventually recovered from the serious wound at "Glen Welby," but his Ranger career was finished and he returned to Germany.

Six years junior to his young commander, von Massow was only 24 when he joined Mosby who—unlike his aristocratic recruit—was without military background or training. Yet, both men throughout their lives had nothing but respect, admiration and affection for the other and years later, after the turn of the 20th century, each continued to speak of the other in the highest terms. In a newspaper interview, Mosby said of von Massow, "He was a dashing soldier (who) came to me well recommended and I accepted him. He had been a member of the Prussian General Staff and was a man of fine appearance and unquestioned personal bravery...He was not averse to battles; I believed that he enjoyed them. In turn, von Massow said of Mosby, "He lives in my memory as the ideal of the Confederate soldier and commander, and I will ever be proud that I could follow him for a few months."

Baron Robert von Massow later became the chief cavalry officer in the Imperial German Army, commander of the Ninth Army Corps, presiding officer of the German Military Court, and chief of the general staff of the First Army Corps during the First World War. He attained the rank of lieutenant general and died in 1927, sixty-three years after he had fought with Mosby. Parenthetically, concerning von Massow's time as a "partisan," during the First World War, John Mosby read a letter sent to the London times regarding the treatment of Belgium civilians who were shooting German soldiers. The letter suggested that Virginia farmers who served with Mosby had sniped at Federal soldiers. Mosby was indignant at what he considered an offense against him and his command and wrote to the Times in response, "If you were to ask (von) Massow if he ever was a sniper in the Shenandoah Valley, he would answer you from the mouth of a Krupp gun."

Epilogue

Fast forward to the 21st Century. Efforts to acknowledge the service rendered by foreign nationals who fought for Southern independence and the rights of man have been successful in many instances. Heros von Borcke has been rightly recognized and his family as well as individuals from the South participated in those ceremonies. But, sad to say, no such recognition has been forthcoming for Baron Robert von Massow. Yet, the great Prussian soldier has not been forgotten by those who honor the cause of the South and his service to her. A marker has been placed in his honor on the soil on which he suffered and bled. This memorial may cover his earthly remains, but the spirits of such men as Robert von Massow are not found in the earth. Rather, their glory ascends to the heavens as the eagles. It is hoped that he is reunited once more with those spirits with whom he fought for those few months in his glorious youth.



Coat of arms of the family von Massow



A GENTLEMAN'S HONOR: DUELLIST CULTURE IN AMERICA



Dueling is associated with stereotypical views regarding the "Gentleman's South". The first recorded gentleman's duel was in 1777, just a year after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Army Officer Jackland McIntosh and Congressman Button Gwinnett (who actually signed the Declaration of Independence for Georgia) squared off and Gwinnett lost his life by a bullet. The dispute was of a personal nature and the *New York Times* made it clear it did not grow out of any act of either party connected with politics.

At the time, such an "honor lance" (Spanish: "lance de honor"; French: "lance d'honneur"; German: "Ehrenhandel") was commonplace in both Europe and America. But unlike their European counterparts, even lower-class Americans liked to engage in "gentlemen warfare". It is told that two servants of the same master, Edward Doty and Edward Lester of the Massachusetts colony, fought the very first recorded American duel in 1621, just a year after the Yankee Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth. In America, unlike in Europe, dueling was a practice used all the way to the top of the society (brutal knife dueling affairs with no rules, like Jim Bowie's sandbar fight are not included here.)

Politician Andrew Jackson earned quite the name for himself as a skilled duelist, until an unfortunate encounter with Tennessee horse breeder Charles Dickinson. At the time of the duel, Jackson had already served as a Tennessee senator and was practicing law.

What began as a bet on a horse race ended in Jackson and Dickinson crossing the border into Kentucky in 1806 and exchanging gun fire under the rules of an honor lance. As the duel began, Jackson took a bullet in the chest next to his heart, but put pressure on the wound long enough to shoot back. His pistol misfired, and in a breach of the rules, Jackson cocked his pistol a second time and shot Dickinson dead. Jackson's breaking of the codex while shooting was a slight to his honor, but not enough to prevent him from later being elected seventh President of the United States.



Dueling Pistols

Not all politicians were so lucky. In 1804, a duel shook the nation. Over a series of campaigns, Vice President Aaron Burr and former Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton engaged in a series of personal attacks. To settle the matter once and for all, Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. They set the location outside of Washington (dueling there was already illegal) and met in the early morning hours near Weehawken, New Jersey. What happened next isn't entirely clear. Some say Hamilton declared the duel immoral and merely fired into the air. Others say he took a shot at Burr and missed. What then ensued is irrefutable: Burr fired back, the bullet going through Hamilton's stomach and lodging itself next to his spine. Hamilton

fought death for the next 24 hours when the first federalist ceased to breathe forever. The country was outraged to lose a man as notable as Hamilton, one of America's Founding Fathers. Even though Burr was charged with murder in New York and New Jersey, his immunity as vice president prevented legal action.

Many upper-class gentlemen, especially in the South (but not only there), were engaged in affairs of honor during antebellum times in America. To kill under strict rules someone who has offended your honor, your bride, your wife, your family, was considered normal for centuries. Duels were first forbidden by the Christian Churches, then positive law followed – but the sense of honor made them continue until the second half of the 19th century. Thus, we see that the portrait of two gentlemen shooting one another under strict rules is not only associated with the Old South, but to the entire Western Civilization.



To shoot (under strict rules) a combatant who has offended you was commonly accepted in both Europe and America by every gentleman. If in America this scene is usually associated with the South, it may be because there were more gentlemen with a sense of honor than in the North. . .
Dueling scene from "Jezebel", © WarnerBros. 1937



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