There are a host of interesting things happening at the Sabine Pass Battleground this year. The 150th anniversary of the Battle of Sabine Pass is September 8, 2013, and we are lucky enough that the battle anniversary falls on a weekend this year. This enables the Battleground to host what will certainly be one of the most impressive Dick Dowling Weekend events that has ever been held at the park. As explained by Micheal McGreevy in this issue, reenactors and history enthusiasts from all around the country are planning to come to Texas and make the 150th event something really special. This is going to be the largest and most significant Civil War Sesquicentennial event in Texas and you will want to be a part of it.

The other exciting news about the park is that THE CLIFTON’s WALKING BEAM HAS ARRIVED! This makes the Sabine Pass Battleground truly unique. Not only does the park contain the site of the Confederate fort that Dick Dowling and his men defended but it now contains a huge and important piece from the Union ship that attacked that fort. It is now possible for a visitor to experience the complete story of the Battle of Sabine Pass in a comprehensive way never before possible. The Texas Historical Commission has done an outstanding job of installing new signs and Efrem Hill and other THC staff members have done a fantastic job of getting the park in condition to host the big event this year. Truly, 2013 is shaping up to be a great year at the Sabine Pass Battleground.

The Friends group is undergoing some organizational changes this year and for the time being is not charging dues for 2013.

See you at the Battleground!

Ed Cotham
Greetings, Friends:

As the various commemorations of the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War occur across the country, 2013 marks our big year! September 8th of this year is the sesquicentennial of the Battle of Sabine Pass.

On September 7th and 8th, the Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site will host the largest commemoration, living history event, and battle reenactment ever held there; the Dick Dowling Days Sesquicentennial! Things will be very different this year. The Union and Confederate encampments will be separate, and placed on opposite ends of a greatly enlarged battlefield area. Over 300 living historians will be recreating aspects of 19th century life during the trying times of war on the Texas coast.

Also new this year, world acclaimed Celtic and folk recording artist Jed Marum will perform a concert each day, playing songs of the Civil War period and Celtic heritage. Also of interest will be the presence of a number of sutlers. Historically, these were civilian merchants who followed the armies and sold goods to the soldiers. Our sutlers will be setting up their “tent-stores” on site and selling period items like uniforms, ladies dresses, books, ephemera, military supplies, and other reproduction items to the reenactors and the public. There will be plenty of food and drink vendors as well.

Saturday, a memorial ceremony will be conducted in honor of those men who fought bravely and those who lost their lives here, featuring a period color guard, rifle and artillery salutes, invocation, keynote speaker, and the Lone Star Pipe Band.

Saturday afternoon’s battle reenactment will be loosely based on the 1862 Union attack on the old Fort Sabine and the subsequent occupation of Sabine City by Union troops.

Sunday’s battle will be the repulse of the Union occupiers and subsequent Confederate victory. Both battles will involve the movement of the largest armies we’ve ever fielded as well as thunder and smoke from sixteen artillery pieces!

It’s still early, and some other great features are being planned for the weekend. There will be more details and a full schedule of events in the next issue of the Beacon. As always, admission and parking are free.

Friends members and friends of Friends who would like to take part or help out can shoot me an email at dickdowling@rocketmail.com

We will need lots of people for parking attendants, docents, crowd safety, and things like that. All staff members will get a reproduction of the very rare “Sabine” hat insignia that was authorized for the Davis Guard to wear in recognition of their victory. The ONLY way to get one of these is to be a participant.

Micheal McGreevy

Dick Dowling Days Sesquicentennial
The Walking Beam of USS Clifton, a U.S. gunboat that was captured by the Confederate forces at the Battle of Sabine Pass, September 8, 1863, is now installed at the Sabine Pass Battleground park. These photos taken by the Texas Historical Commission document the historic installation of this important artifact near the water. Thanks to THC for their hard work on this project. Thanks also to the Conservation Research Laboratory at College Station for the conservation of this priceless artifact. Finally, thanks to the donors who helped make this project a reality.
Jim Jobling, Lab Manager at the Conservation Research Laboratory, at Texas A&M University, stands behind the specially designed conservation tank containing the Walking Beam of USS Clifton.

The Walking Beam after conservation and installation at Sabine Pass Battleground.

The Disabling and Capture of the Federal Gunboats Sachem [Right] and Clifton [Left] in the Attack on Sabine Pass, Texas, September 8, 1863. From The Soldier in Our Civil War (1884)
This is a special word of thanks to all who were involved in the walking beam retrieval, conservation, and installation project. In addition to the Texas Historical Commission and the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, we would like to thank the following groups who provided financial support for the project:

Friends of Sabine Pass Battleground;
The Houston Civil War Round Table;
The Austin Civil War Round Table; and the
Lt Commander Edward Lea Camp of the Sons of Union Veterans.

Thanks is certainly due to the City of Beaumont, who readily agreed to the transfer of the walking beam to the Sabine Pass Battleground, where it could be displayed in its historical context.

Since we are thanking people for their hard work to preserve and interpret the battlefield we also want to thank the Jefferson County Historical Commission and Dick Dowling Camp No. 1295 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, Beaumont, Texas, without whom the Dick Dowling Days event would not be possible. Linda McMahan of the JCHC is also the Friends secretary and has been of tremendous help to me and the Friends organization.

Finally, I can not resist paying a special tribute to the vision of William D. “Bill” Quick, who was the Founder of this Friends group. One day in 2007, Bill and I were talking on the phone and I made the comment that I wished the Clifton’s Walking Beam was actually at the Battleground, instead of in a Beaumont park. Bill said something like “Let’s go get it!” and before we had even hung up the phone Bill was dictating a letter to send to the City of Beaumont asking for the beam to be relocated. I have taken the liberty of including a copy of Bill’s original letter below that was provided to me by Friends Director and co-Founder Ryle Adamson. I just know that somewhere, somehow Bill is looking down with pride at the walking beam finally residing in the park where he knew it needed to be.

Ed Cotham
Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site, located in Jefferson County, opened in 1974. Friends of Sabine Pass Battleground was formed in November 2008 by members of many historic preservation and heritage groups who came together to create an organization dedicated to preserving and interpreting the Sabine Pass Battleground and the historic sites in the area that are an important part of its story. The members of FSPB include descendants of Confederate and Union Veterans, as well as members of the general public who are interested in military history. The IRS has approved FSPB as a tax exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Sabine Pass Battleground is located 1.5 miles south of Sabine Pass on Dick Dowling Rd., 15 miles south of Port Arthur via State Highway 87.

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Friends of Sabine Pass Battleground
3416 Tangley Rd
Houston, Texas
77005-2248