As I acted as President and military commander for the 2021 season,

I will be combining both reports

We’ll start w/ the president’s report

2020 was a horrible year for the hobby and the world. Covid ended all of our living histories,

battle weekends, and fundraisers.

Best guess,

The Brigade lost nearly 3500.00 in paid events

More importantly,

we were prevented from doing the thing that we love for 2020

As we began the 2021 season

We could not have a General Meeting, but the Board held several virtual meetings

Because we had taken dues for 2020 and had the entire season cancel,

the Board agreed to not charge dues to the membership for the 2021.

In spite of that, 8 units volunteered to contribute 100.00 each to our coffers to try to mitigate some of our losses.

Thank you to the 1st Mass. Cav, 2nd CT Heavy Artillery, 6th NH, 15th MA, 28th MA, Co. H, 28th MA Co. K, the U.S. Signal Corps, and the New England Civilian League/What Remains

From an administrative view,

The NEB Board and Administration was very busy

Insurance

* Auggie and I spent nearly 3 months trying to get our old insurance agent to contact us and answer questions that we had about our policy.
* The company transferred us to a new agent who was very helpful. He answered some very basic questions that have been around for years but were never answered. (See Appendix A)

Legal projects

* I once again worked with our partners in CT’s Pro Bono Partnership to work on several projects concerning liability and contracts.
* Previously, they provided over $25,000 worth of legal help for $500.00. They helped us write our bylaws, policies, and procedures, and secured our status as a 501 C (3).
* This year, they crafted a reenactor waiver form for us that we used during the season. (see attached document)
* They provided contract language to be used between hosts and the NEB. (see attached document) The NEB Board reviewed the contract and decided to shelve the document. The feeling was that it could cause more problems than it would solve. For example, we might be required by hosts to provide an agreed upon number of troops. Given reenactor math, this could cause us trouble when the event arrives.
* They also provided language for signs that we may want to place at the entrance to our camps or at the entrance to events in which we warn tourists that the NEB is not responsible for their negligence. (see attached document)

As for executive Board actions

* The Board agreed that we would not officially support events in which only a few members were attending. By officially supporting and event, we are providing our insurance umbrella. The NEB would only agree to do so if we were sending significant numbers, members of the command staff, and several Board members. The logic was that if we are holding out our liability insurance, we needed real oversight of the event and our members.
* To encourage growth, the Board members reached out to units that had belonged to the NEB in the past but had left for personal reasons. We offered to grandfather any unit that had belonged from following the probationary process established in our Policies and Procedures. The program has proven successful thus far. The New England Civilian League and the 54th Massachusetts returned home as dues paying units. As of this January, the 3rd Maine appears to also be returning.
* Continuing with the theme of growth, we have had a request to join from a 5th NH unit based in Canada. They have heard great things about us and are interested in joining. The Board agrees to welcome them, but they must go through the probation process. The process requires a member unit to sponsor the probationary unit. As this unit is based outside of New England, the NEB Board will act as the sponsoring unit. Board member Matthew Cronin has agreed to act as liaison and help shepherd the Canadians.
* To make membership more feasible and affordable, the Board agreed that members who portrayed different units depending on the event could amalgamate their units and pay only one set of dues. Three groups have been accepted by the Board, 1. “the New England Civilian League/What Remains”, 2. "the Northeast Topographical Engineers/Corbin's Battery", and 3. “the U.S. Signal Corps and 2nd RI, Co. D”.
* With the departure of David Gus Gallagher, the NEB needed a safety officer. Matthew Cronin has agreed to step into this important role. Thank you, Matthew!
* Our longtime friend and event coordinator, Marc Bassos, has decided to retire. He is working with Auggie Martin to create a committee to oversee the work that Marc did for all of those years. In recognition of his work, the Board contributed individually to purchase a reproduction Army of the Potomac veteran medal (and one for his long-suffering wife, Jackie as well). The medal was presented to Marc at the Coordinator’s meeting in December. Marc was also inducted as the second member of the NEB’s own Veteran Reserve Corps, Camp Robert Graves, “the Walter Sy Rifles.” Marc’s certificate (see attached) is working its way through the War Department’s red tape and will arrive soon. What we owe Marc is unmeasurable. Thank you!
* The Board presented a motion to the member units to send an annual donation of $100.00 to the American Battlefield Preservation Trust in honor of those members who passed away during the season. Rather than mention specific names to the Trust, the Board decided it was best to make it a general memorial.

This concludes the Presidential part of my report.

As military commander,

I was thrilled to lead our Brigade once again into the field. We fielded respectable numbers at the events that we attended. More importantly, we not only brought in new units, but we see younger faces in the line. This gives me the very unusual feeling of optimism. Like every good Irish Catholic, I will find the dark cloud in every silver lining, but the enthusiasm I saw this year makes me very hopeful for our future,

June 12-13 – Island Grove, Abbington, MA

We had a great time with 2 companies camped in a very nice little park. Mike Reimer was our host. The battles were small given the number of rebs, but we gave as good a show as was possible given the amount of land. Primarily, we fought across the bridge that serves as an entrance to the park. Fredericksburg one day, Malvern Hill the next. Our civilians blew the doors off everyone. We had the sanitary commission, Rev. Preble, surgeons performing gruesome operations for a bloodthirsty crowd. It felt like we were back to normal. 😊 The hosts were very supportive and hope that we return. The land itself is challenging for larger numbers, but we will have to see what the future holds.

June 26th – American Heritage Museum, Stow, MA

A great day was had by one and all who attended the drill yesterday. We fielded 2 companies and started with 1st Sgt's drill (manual of arms), and EXTENSIVE stacking arms drill with 1st Sgt. Cronin and Sgt. Major Bierly. The 3 company officers present (Scott Sleeper, Mark McBride, and Thomas Connell) then each got a chance to lead the group. I had the honor of running the lads through slightly more complex maneuvers including deploying skirmishers from the flank and from files. Given that we haven't been drilling together in nearly 2 years, it was a grand success. Ted Urbanski and Wendy Benedict rounded out our happy little band. We even had 4 drummers!!!!

August 7-8 – American Heritage Museum, Stow, MA

This event was a very mixed bag. Most of what the hosts promised ended up not happening (the impetus for my contract project). It was supposed to be a Civil War weekend, but it became a timeline. We were supposed to have a great deal of land but were stuck in a corner. When they ran out of wood on Saturday, they told us to forage in the forests and grab deadwood. Despite all of that, the NEB put on a great show in front of large crowds. We fielded two companies and even had music. The infantry and artillery worked together incredibly well. You all made me very proud. The hosts were thrilled with our performance. We even made it to their yearly publication. This was their first foray into black powder reenactments, and they want us back in two years.

Sept. 11-12 – Phillipston, MA

As my mother passed away right before this event, I was not able to attend. I did not hear great things about it at all. It was another damn timeline event, and apparently the entire Civil War forces were stuck in a corner. You know things are bad when the rebs kept emphasizing, this was NOT a Mike Flye event. Please don’t blame Mike.” We’ll have to wait for Mike to bring us another Red Apple Farm event.

Oct. 2-3 – Eastleigh Farm Framingham, MA

This was another herculean event put on by Ken Sellers and the 1st Mass Cav. Those horse thieves gave us a great event as always. We fielded 2 small companies and got some great drill in. We saw lots of old friends like the 54th, the 28th MA, Co. H, and the 2nd RI. There were good battles with more cooperation between the branches, great drills, and even a small tactical for the younger, more nimble members of the NEB. There was even a whiskey ration! If you have never put on an event, you have no idea how tough it can be to get all of those boxes checked and cats corralled. All one had to do was look at Ken Sellers face on Sunday, and you knew exactly what is meant by thee “1000-yard stare.” Ken, you and your horse thieves have my eternal thanks. The event ended with our annual Hall of Fame ceremony. This year’s class included Capt. Kim Perlotto of the 8th CT, the late Kenn Boyer of the 12th MA, and the indomitable Sgt. Donald Dupuis of the 1st Mass Cav. All three represent the best traditions of the hobby.

Nov. 20 – Hometown Parade, Plymouth, MA

This was the makeup parade for the 400th Anniversary of the landing of the pilgrims. I was coming out of surgery, so I could not go, but I appreciate everyone who went. Mark McBride led a much smaller than expected contingency and soldiered on. To the 9 soldiers and 6 civilians who made it, you have my thanks. You certainly must have impressed the host as we received the check in record time.

Some incidents of note

* The infantry troops continued to do an AMAZING job at drill this year, even though every event brought different players, some who had not seen each other for years. We kept focused on the basics (and not so basics) and achieved great success. Our skirmish drill is improving constantly. The infantry now forms a skirmish by the flank and going forward without having to be harangued by their officers and nco’s. You advanced and retired by companies like veterans. I am so proud of how far you have come.
* Our use of combined arms continued to improve with all three branches working even closer together this year than before. We moved forward and back with Greg Webster’s 2 guns (yes, TWO guns), and the cavalry screening all of us like professionals. If only we had a navy. 😊
* Everyone attended morning and afternoon formations together as a Brigade.
* Authenticity was much improved this season but still has further to go. This is ALWAYS

a work in progress. Our camp layouts were great, the proliferation of flags stopped, weapons cleaning has become automatic, and we even saw the return of some campaigners.

For this season’s goals, I will simply plagiarism from my last report.

We need to all act as authenticity police. If you see something that isn’t period correct, say something, politely. People don’t need to be obnoxious or go crazy, nor do members need to reenact at a level at which they are not comfortable. All I am saying is, put the coolers in the tents or cover them or put them in a wooden box. Transfer food from plastic bags/containers to mess tins. These simple things make everyone’s experience richer.

As to gear, I would ask folks to not slip backwards with their personal kits. I once again saw way too many black modern shoes and modern glasses last season. There is so much used stuff out in the marketplace that there is no excuse to let your standards fall. If you have medical issues, please come and see me, and we can try to work it out.

This concludes my military commander’s report.

I would like to thank the hard work of the entire Brigade and my staff. Adjutant Lt. Chris Blodgett, Sgt. Major Thomas Bierly, and my adorable safety officer, Sgt. Matthew Cronin succeeded at their most important job, stopping me from screwing up too badly. These men are a wealth of information and made the show work. Thank you, Greg Webster and his growing gun crews for making the show even louder and more impressive. Thank you, Ken Sellers and the cavalry, for policing our camps when called upon, protecting our flanks when needed, and never getting caught stealing horses.

Thank you to my poor Board of Directors. Auggie, Thom Paige, Tom Bierly, Matthew Cronin, Steve Raff, Ken Sellers, Wendy Benedict, Marc Bassos, and Phil DiMAria are a Godsend. They never stop working for you. Worse, they must constantly deal with my mercurial temperament. There were times where I swear to God, I could actually see Steve Raff’s head shaking at me across the interweb and Ken Sellers looking for a tranquilizer gun.

Thank you to our growing civilian contingent. I tried to bring them more into the planning and execution of scenarios. They sent representatives to all of my staff meetings, and I think that we are on the right track. Wendy Benedict and all of the civilians provide an incredibly important side to the story of the Civil War that too often gets forgotten. Thank you!

Thank you all for making the events memorable, historically accurate, and God forbid fun.

“**all of the credit is due to God. Only the mistakes have been mine”**

Your humble servant,

Col. Todd M. Bryda

Commanding

The New England Brigade

**Appendix A**

**From conversation with agent Josh Bender on 8/3/2021. Statements in parentheses are Josh’s answers.**

- Do the companies/carriers know what we do? I’d hate to need to make a claim only to be told that we were not covered because they didn’t know what we did.

**Yes, they know what the NEB does.**

- Does the liability policy cover just the NEB as an organization or does it also cover the individual member units and individuals of the organization? Or more simply put, what does general liability do?

**Policy covers everyone [NEB organization, member units, and individual members] for injury and damage to a 3rd party, i.e tourists.**

- If a visitor or non-NEB member gets injured due to actions of a member, does our policy cover their medical bills if they make a claim? What if the injured party is an NEB member? Does the policy protect the organization? If so how? Does this also pertain to the D & O insurance? **Medical bills for tourists are covered. Non-NEB soldiers/civilians can be treated as a tourists, but if they sign waivers, they are considered a “willing participant” and cannot hold the NEB liable.**

- If we are sued by an injured person, does the general liability policy cover our legal fees? Do the D & O insurances also cover legal fees for board members? Members of the organization? **Legal fees for both are covered. According to Josh, “insurance pays for stupidity/mistakes not for intent.” If an individual has bad intentions or a blatant disregard for safety, that person is responsible, but not the NEB. We are safe as long as we are following our own written policies.**

- Does the policy cover member units and/or individuals who attend non-NEB supported events? **(No)**

- How do the carriers know who is a member of the NEB and who is not? Is it simply a case of us telling them after a claim that such-and-such person belonged to such-and-such member unit? **(NEB must send a list of member units to Josh.)**

- If a non-NEB member does something negligent at an event in which we are in charge of the military and civilian reenactors, does the policy protect the organization? If so, how? Does this also pertain to the D & O insurance? Here is a “for instance”, a non-NEB member or member is made aware of safety rules but ignores them during an event which results in an injury, does our policy protect us? If so, how? D & O as well?  **(Policy gives us a buffer from hurting NEB for this negligence. We are absolved – he/she isn’t a member and wasn’t following our safety rules. All participants must (should) have proof of insurance. If they are members of the NEB, they are covered. If non-NEB units come to an event, the hosts should ask for proof of insurance. The NEB should insist that this be added to all info sent out by hosts. If we do this, it mitigates our risk. Host must have proof of insurance. Again, as long as we are trying to enforce our safety rules, we are covered.**