

Conserving the Flag of the 26th NYV: Raising \$5,000

(Details courtesy of Christopher Morton of the New York State Military Museum)

The flag is a state-issued national flag of bunting, turned over to the New York state archives on Jan. 29, 1864. The colonel of the unit, R.H. Richardson, sent a follow-up letter February 2, 1865, with details.

To Gen. J.T. Sprague, Adjutant General, N.Y.:

Sir: I have the honor to return to the custody of the State of New York, the colors carried by this regiment since June, 1861. They have been borne through every battle of Eastern Virginia, and under their folds have fallen five good and true men. We return them to the State from which we received them, well knowing they will be cherished as mementoes of the living and the dead. They bear the marks of bullets, and of the blood of those who defended them, and, as such, will always be regarded with respect and veneration by those who are left to mourn the loss of their comrades on the field of battle.

*Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
R.H. Richardson,
Colonel Commanding 26th N.Y. Vol."*

We can conclude a few things with some relative certainty: A) The flag was received by the regiment from "the State" rather than presented by the community and B) the flag is most likely wool, not silk.

Beginning in the early 1960s the State of New York contracted with a seamstress in Fort Montgomery, NY, to "restore" flags in the collection. The seamstress disassembled the flag, sandwiched the flag between nylon net, zig-zag stitched the netting to the flag with a sewing machine and reassembled the flag. The national color of the 26th NYVI received this nylon netting treatment in 1972. The flag is described in 1972 as, "Bunting. Part of flag missing, no inscription on the flag."

State Parks textile conservators working with the NYS flags have successfully removed the netting from wool flags. This is good news for the national of the 26th NYVI - if it is wool then chances are very good that we'll remove the netting if the flag is Sponsored. The cost to sponsor a flag of this size, with this previous netting, is \$ 5,000.

Photos: No photos of this flag are available right now and the policy is not to unfurl a flag just for a photograph, only when it is time to conserve it. However, most of us have probably seen similar preservation attempts. Samples are available at the links below.

Link to the museum:

<http://dmna.state.ny.us/historic/btlflags/btlflagsindex.htm>

Link to the flags conserved by the museum:

<http://dmna.state.ny.us/historic/btlflags/electronindex.htm>

Time to ante up!

