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# THE SUNDAY SENTINEL

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## Returning history



MICHAEL MOORE / Sentinel Staff

Pam Russell-McClellan and Murray McClellan with the flag from Gundelfingen, Germany. The lettering on the flag, translated from German, reads, "Soldiers' Society Gundelfingen."

# 'Back where it belongs'

## Beaver dredged under

### Project reopens from flood

By KYLE JARVIS  
Sentinel Staff

A large-scale effort to dredge Keene's prone Beaver Brook derway, and a city says future dredging be much more frequent.

Earlier this year officials hatched a plan to dredge the brook. The city council, in a vote of removing decades of sediment and debris, some say has contributed to recent flooding.

## Inside State

### Emergence Warriors have

By JEREMY BLANK  
and ANN MARIETTA  
Concord Monitor



Pam Russell-McClellan and Murray McClellan with the flag from Gundelfingen, Germany. The lettering on the flag, translated from German, reads, "Soldiers' Society Gundelfingen."

# 'Back where it belongs'

Decades after a Keene native brought a flag home from war, his daughter and her husband return it to Germany

**P**amela Russell-McClellan has been intrigued by the one-of-a-kind flag since childhood.

She knew her father brought it home from Germany after World War II, that it represented a soldiers' organization in the small town of Gundelfingen,

Germany, near the Rhine River and the French border. She knew her father treasured the flag. She understood his reticence to talk about it.

The late Wallace Russell didn't tell many World War II stories, the battlefield scars too personal and painful. Once, though, when Russell-McClellan was in high school in her native Minneapolis, her father suggested the flag should someday be returned to its rightful place in Gundelfingen.

Russell-McClellan never forgot her father's wish.

She honored it on Thanksgiving Day.

The nearly life-sized flag is equal parts brilliant red, white and black on one side, with a diamond-shaped white and silver pattern on the other.

It's stamped regally with the German Imperial Eagle, and the Bavarian symbol delineating southwest Germany. It's decorated with a blue and white diamond pattern, along with oak and laurel leaves. It's in pristine condition.

"Ever since I was a child, I've been amazed at how gorgeous it is," says Russell-McClellan, who moved to Keene in 2001 and is head of education at the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College in Massachusetts.

Last month, in their first-ever visit to Gundelfingen, Russell-McClellan,



COURTESY PHOTO

Wallace Russell poses in 1942 in Keene.

58, and her husband Murray McClellan, 61, were told by the town's archivist that the flag was probably made by German troops in 1890.

See KEENE on Page A6



Steve Gilbert STAFF COLUMNIST

## Emergence Warriors

By JEREMY and ANN M. Conco

On the night two men clung guns approached van on a residential near Memorial Concord. On hood, the other mask. Reached hicle, according reports, they its doors and driver into the driver was p his seat, str

## Spy

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By DAVE The Gazer Spring

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MONDAY: 36

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## Keene residents return flag t

(Continued from Page A1)

But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

### A mysterious flag

The McClellans today live in Wallace Russell's childhood house, which just may be one of the smartest homes in Keene. At least six Keene High School valedictorians, including Russell (class of 1940) and his three siblings, have lived under its roof.

Russell attended the University of New Hampshire's officer candidate school and eventually was drawn into World War II as an Army lieutenant, later promoted to captain.

In the fall of 1944, just months after marrying Russell-McClellan's mother, Marjorie, Russell led a division through the Rhine River Valley as the Allies liberated France, acre by acre.

It was a dangerous mission, fraught with casualties. Russell suffered an arm injury in January 1945, returned to the field in February, and was wounded again in March. Eventually, in May 1945, he crossed the Rhine River into Germany by himself, rejoining his division, the war over.

Fighting ceased with Germany's official surrender May 8, 1945, so the unit became more of a police force. Russell was in Gundelfingen, today a town of 7,790, for about a month and even helped put up bars on the jail's windows. Somehow, he came across the flag.

Russell-McClellan says her father, who spoke German, was never clear on his motives for taking the flag. She wonders if they had orders to destroy all German war symbols that fostered militarism, and he decided to instead take it home for himself. Or, maybe, he secretly swiped it as an impetuous 23-year-old soldier seeking a souvenir.

"Dad never told me how he got it," Russell-McClellan says. "Once he said something like, 'When I left Gundelfingen, I felt as if I had earned it.' That's about it."

Wallace Russell never displayed the flag at home, always keeping it carefully covered and concealed.

### Life goes on



MICHAEL M

Pam Russell-McClellan and Murray McClellan display another view of the flag from Gundelfingen, translated from German, reads, "In true fidelity with God for King & Fatherland."

The years flew by as the flag remained in the safe custody of the McClellans.

Murray McClellan, a native of Champagne, Ill., is the son of a professor who moved frequently — he counts Keene as his 32nd mailing address.

McClellan, like his wife, made academia his profession, and today is an adjunct professor of humanities and English at River Valley Community College. He's also the director of religious education at the Keene Unitarian Universalist Church. He taught at Boston University for 12 years, and was a teacher in Hinsdale and Maryland for a number of years.

Russell-McClellan is an archaeologist who graduated from Yale University and earned a doctorate from the University of

Pennsylvania. She has won several awards and fellowships, and is vice president for outreach and education for the Archeological Institute of America.

She found the Amherst College job on the Internet. By then her childhood house in Keene had been passing through the family and the couple was interested in moving to the region from Brookline, Mass.

"We were ready for a change," she says.

They have one son who lives in Cambridge, Mass., and works in the high-tech field.

The flag never became an afterthought, but careers and family kept them busy. "We've been wanting to take the flag back for a long time because it belongs to the citizens of this town," Murray McClellan says.

"We always knew kind of in our

minds our next trip the flag," Russell-McClellan says.

They started planning the trip in May, picking the date of Thanksgiving. In with help from an archaeologist fluent in German, Russell-McClellan wrote to Mayor Franz Kuklinski about the flag's intentions. That started a series of emails with Gundelfingen.

The trip began with three days in meeting with the curator at the German History Museum, who gave them about flags and battle flags, 33ish, fluent, very engaging and interesting. Russell-McClellan says.

They drove into Keene again, crossing the border on ground they fought for. "We just

## Brotherhood of White Warriors rises behind

(Continued from Page A1)

the state's penitentiaries.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF WHITE

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# sidents return flag to Germany



MICHAEL MOORE / Sentinel Staff

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"We always knew kind of in our

minds our next trip was to return the flag," Russell-McClellan adds.

They started planning the trip in May, picking the week of Thanksgiving. In September, with help from an Amherst professor fluent in German, Russell-McClellan wrote to Gundelfingen Mayor Franz Kukla about their intentions. That started a series of emails with Gundelfingen officials.

The trip began two weeks ago with three days in Berlin and a meeting with the curator of flags at the German Historical Museum, who gave them a book about flags and banners. "He was young, 33ish, fluent in English, very engaging and delightful," Russell-McClellan says.

They drove into France and back again, crossing the Rhine, treading on ground her father once fought for. "We just wanted to feel

the surroundings. We crossed the Rhine easy as pie," Russell-McClellan says softly, the words drifting off. "It was a very emotional day."

As prearranged, on Thanksgiving Day they arrived at the Gundelfingen town hall at 3 p.m. and met with officials in a conference room lit by candles and featuring cake and coffee. In turn, the McClellans brought some New Hampshire maple syrup, maple syrup candy and sweatshirts. They also showed letters to home Wallace Russell wrote while in Germany.

"They were fascinated by that," Russell-McClellan says.

The McClellans were shown several town publications going back to 1910 that referenced the flag, including a 1979 article that questions its whereabouts.

Officials hypothesized that the Nazis must have hidden it in the homestead of a close friend of Hitler's so the Americans couldn't get it. It must have disappeared from there, the article suggests, lost in the vacuum of time.

The formal presentation of the flag, from the McClellans to Gundelfingen's mayor, took place in the town's council chambers, under a 15th-century painting that replicates the siege of Gundelfingen in 1462. That was a high point in the town's history, when it fought off the imperial forces of northern Germany.

"Everywhere you turned, you were surrounded by history," Murray McClellan says.

As for what becomes of the flag, the McClellans guess it will be displayed publicly at times, but also carefully stored. This week they were contacted by a reporter from the Gundelfingen area, who wants to get the story out.

"The best part is the flag is back where it belongs," Russell-McClellan says.

No doubt Wallace Russell would be pleased.

Steve Gilbert is a columnist for The Sentinel.

## of White Warriors rises behind NH prison walls