



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

At Charleston's Secession Ball, divided opinions on the spirit of S.C.

By Manuel Roig-Franzia, Washington Post, December 22, 2010

CHARLESTON, S.C.- "Dixie," that emotionally freighted and much-debated anthem of the old Confederacy, starts soft when it's done right, barely above a whisper. But each sotto voce syllable of the opening verse, each feather-light scrape of the fiddle strings, could be heard without straining when the ladies in the hoop skirts and the men in the frock coats rose in reverence to celebrate the 150th anniversary of South Carolina's secession.

"We are very proud of who we are," said Chip Limehouse, a South Carolina legislator who rented a historically accurate suit and vest for the formal ball celebrating the anniversary. "This is in our DNA."

Great-great-great-granddad fought the Yankees, lost his plantation, was bathed in glory, the men and women at the ball like to say. They're proud of their ancestors, they declare, and that's why they paid \$100 apiece to take part in an event touted as a "joyous night of music, dancing, food and drink."

Outside Charleston's bulky concrete municipal auditorium, on an unseasonably chilly Southern night, some of the men and women in a crowd of about 100 were thinking about their own ancestors: slaves who picked the cotton for the forebears and allies of the men and women inside. "Disgusting," the Rev. Joseph A. Darby, vice president of the local NAACP chapter, said of the event inside.

On the street, they lifted protest signs; inside, they lifted drinks with

names like "Rebel Yell." The stubborn inside-outside faceoff that throttled this jewel of a Southern city on Monday night hints at dramas to come, an unending series of Civil War anniversaries stretching from secession and the firing on Fort Sumter to the laying down of arms at Appomattox. For the next 41/2 years - the span of the bloodiest conflict in U.S. history - Americans black and white will have ample opportunities to wrestle with delicate, almost-impossible-to-resolve questions of legacy and history, of what to commemorate and what to condemn. South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union, but the commemoration will be followed by similar events in other states - parades and balls and speeches and plaques. The anniversaries will press current politicians to tiptoe through minefields of nuance. Charleston Mayor Joe Riley called the Secession Ball "unfortunate" and "the opposite of unifying," but several big-name lawmakers not only attended, but donned costumes to do so.

The emotions of the day were on display at a ceremony dedicating a historical marker about the secession. Someone in the audience yelled "You're a liar" when Riley told the crowd that South Carolinians were motivated to secede, in part, by a desire to preserve slavery. Riley has invited President Obama to narrate portions of Abraham Lincoln's greatest speeches in an observance of the firing on Fort Sumter; it's unclear whether he will accept.

When Lincoln's name was mentioned at the Secession Ball's theatrical performance, a reenactment of South Carolina's secession convention that drew from historical documents, the actors hissed. "Impeach," one of the actors called out. Lincoln and the

North were responsible for "vulgar tyranny," the actors said. A narrator intoned that the 169 South Carolina men who voted unanimously to secede were "compelled by the same sublime courage" as the men who fought against Britain in the Revolutionary War the century before. Slavery was mentioned, but the main reasons for secession were portrayed as high tariffs and Northern states using Southern tax money to build their own infrastructure.

The star of the show, playing the convention president, is one of South Carolina's most powerful present-day politicians, state Senate President Pro Tempore Glenn McConnell, a Confederate heritage defender who has owned a Civil War memorabilia business. McConnell gets a kick out of reenacting battles and is known for firing his personal cannon, dubbed "Big Ray."

The guests, enthusiasts in tuxedos, flouncy skirts or militia uniforms, sashayed from the cavernous theater into a party room where images of huge Confederate battle flags were projected on the wall. Two African American police officers leaned glumly against a wall in the hallway as the predominantly white crowd filed past. Guests picked at ham and biscuits while a string band with a defiant name - Un-Reconstructed - played waltzes and the Virginia reel. A receiving line formed; women curtsied and men dramatically doffed their top hats. At times, it seemed like a dress-up party for grown-ups.

Many in the crowd are members of "secession camps," small groups of Civil War history buffs collected under the banner of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. And there were the battle reenactors - men whom Civil War tour guide Jack Thomson, a guest at the ball, calls



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"the bang-bang, shoot-'em-up types." Their intricate uniforms, with brass buttons and braid-draped epaulets, can cost upward of \$1,000 each. On any given weekend in the South, someone slips into gray or blue to relive bygone battles, plotting counterattacks and flanking maneuvers. Limehouse's family once offered their plantation - Airy Hall - for a battle reenactment. "They were out there getting eaten up by no-see-ums," his wife, Sue, said of the true believers. "Torture. Pure torture."

Chip, a parking company owner who represents Berkeley and Charleston counties in the South Carolina House of Representatives, grinned when the subject of the protests came up. "They actually helped ticket sales," Limehouse said of the protestors. "We'd like to thank them. Without them, we wouldn't have made budget."

John B. Hines, a wealthy Texas oilman and cattle rancher, helped, too. He sent a \$5,000 sponsorship for the affair because he loves the Old South: "They created a society far and above anything else on Earth." As for the NAACP demonstrators outside, Hines said, their arguments are "nonsense. The NAACP's just hard up for a reason to bitch at people."

The central argument both inside and outside the auditorium is the same one that enlivened the Charleston mayor's news conference earlier in the day: the role of slavery in the decision to secede. A favorite citation of the crowd at the ball comes from Charles Dickens. "He said, 'The Northern onslaught upon slavery was no more than a piece of specious humbug designed to conceal its desire for economic control of the Southern states,' " said John Zebelean, a retired U.S. Air Force

lieutenant colonel from Baltimore who attended the ball. "It's all there! You can look it up."

Darby, the NAACP vice president, spent much of the day talking about documents drafted during the secession commission that mention slavery repeatedly and cite it as a prime motivating factor. But the point, he said, is not merely a matter of historical contention. Celebrating secession, he says, contributes to an atmosphere of inequality in present-day South Carolina, where fights over the quality of education and job opportunities for African Americans still simmer. Reminders of secession are everywhere. In Charleston, there's a Secessionville Road; in Beaufort, there's a Secession Golf Club.

Darby said that the day before the ball, he ran into a white man whose ancestor was one of the signers of the secession ordinance; the man was "distressed" about the ball and had no plans to attend. They got to talking about their bloodlines, and the man mentioned the name of the signer: Artemus Darby. In those days it was common for slaves to take the names of their masters. "I looked at him and said, 'Hello, cousin,' " Darby said.

Another ancestor of a secession ordinance signer was among the guests inside the Secession Ball. As he was leaving, David J. Rutledge - whose great-great-great-grandfather was the secession convention president played by McConnell - turned to a woman in a fur shawl and said: "You're going to be mad at me. . . I believe it was about slavery."

Thomson, the tour guide, chimed in, parsing the debate. "Forgive me, I would say it's more about antislavery," he said. "People in the

North who didn't own slaves getting involved."

Rutledge wasn't budging, despite the disapproving glances.

Hoop skirts and frock coats funneled past him toward the exits, disappearing from view as they summited the staircase. When Rutledge's great-great-great-grandfather signed the secession ordinance, there was an overflow crowd of more than 3,000 on hand to watch. When it came time to celebrate the signing's sesquicentennial, about 300 people came. Most of the seats in an auditorium that holds more than 2,700 were empty.

Gettysburg train station to stay open

Visitors Bureau negotiating move to Lincoln Train Station.

By TIM PRUDENTE, The Hanover Evening Sun, December 10, 2010

The 151-year-old Gettysburg train station where President Abraham Lincoln arrived to dedicate the national cemetery will not be closing to visitors, borough officials say.

Concerns were raised last month after it was announced the funding source that kept the station open for the last three years will run out after Dec. 23.

But the Gettysburg Convention & Visitors Bureau recently entered into negotiations to occupy the borough-owned building as early as January.

Bureau President Norris Flowers said the station will become the new "orientation center" for borough visitors.

"We will have staff there to answer questions and provide materials and, eventually, kiosks and electronic-information centers," Flowers said.

Currently, the bureau is located at the David Wills House, where Lincoln slept in 1863. That house is located in



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Lincoln Square, owned by the National Park Service and primarily operated by Main Street Gettysburg. Although the bureau is moving operations to the train station, administrative offices will remain at the David Wills House, according to Flowers.

"There's certainly the historic value to the train station and that location, being in the downtown hub, makes it ideal for visitors and easily accessible to the public," added Flowers, noting the borough's parking garage is nearby.

But this won't be the first time the bureau is headquartered at the station.

Flowers said the bureau previously operated out of the building for 46 years.

The organization moved out about 10 years ago when the children of the late George Olinger, a Gettysburg businessman, donated the building on the condition that it be restored and reopened as a museum.

Flowers said the bureau is currently negotiating a rental agreement with the borough and is hoping to occupy the building sometime in January.

But the bureau might not be paying rent on the building for long.

A bill on the U.S. Senate floor would grant ownership of the building to the Park Service, which has agreed to let the bureau maintain and operate the site indefinitely, according to Flowers.

The bill -- which was introduced in the House by U.S. Rep. Todd Platts, R-Spring Garden Township, in December 2009 -- would expand the boundaries of Gettysburg National Military Park to include the train station and 45 acres of donated land in Cumberland Township.

Since the Park Service is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior,

such land-acquisition projects require federal approval.

The bill passed the House in March and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on Sept. 27.

But the process will be delayed if the bill isn't approved before new senators take office in 2011.

If it isn't passed by the end of the session, the bill will return to the U.S. House, which could add months to the process.

Even if the bill is passed in time, Park Service officials have said it will take several more months to purchase the land.

That's because the Park Service must go through a land-acquisition process that includes procedures such as checking the title and performing an appraisal.

Still, with the visitors bureau preparing to move, the station no longer appears in jeopardy of closing. Borough Councilman Graham Weaver said this arrangement will be best for all involved.

"It only makes sense to them to get in there early and get situated and, at the same time, help pay for the operation and maintenance of the building," he said.

Did Abe Lincoln's Assassin Escape? DNA May Solve Mystery

By David Lohr, Aol News, December 23, 2010

Descendants of John Wilkes Booth have agreed to exhume his brother's body for DNA testing in an attempt to determine whether the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln escaped capture and eluded justice, as the family has been told. "I'm absolutely in favor of exhuming Edwin," Joanne Hulme, a Booth family historian, told The Philadelphia

Inquirer. "Let's have the truth and put this thing to rest."

The descendants of John Wilkes Booth hope to answer the question of whether he escaped after assassinating President Abraham Lincoln in 1865.

Booth, an actor from Maryland, shot and killed Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., on April 14, 1865. Most believe he was tracked down 10 days later and shot inside a tobacco barn in rural Virginia by Union soldiers and buried in an unmarked grave in Baltimore's Green Mount Cemetery.

That, however, is not the story that has been passed down in the Booth family. According to family members, Booth escaped capture and lived for 38 more years.

That story was also made popular in the 1907 book "The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth," written by Finis L. Bates. In the book, Bates suggested a Booth look-alike was mistakenly killed at the farm. Booth then assumed the name John St. Helen and committed suicide in 1903 in Enid, Okla.

In an effort to end the speculation, Hulme and her family want to compare DNA from Booth's brother, Edwin, to that of a bone specimen at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington. The bone is from the man who was gunned down inside the barn.

Before an exhumation of Edwin Booth in a cemetery in Cambridge, Mass., the family wants to get permission from the museum to obtain the DNA sample from the bone specimen. A panel of judges will make the final decision.

The museum's public relations department did not immediately return a message today to AOL News.



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Historian Nate Orlowek is also eager to get to the bottom of the story. He's spent decades investigating the case. "If the man who killed our greatest president got away, and a giant hoax was perpetrated on the American people, then we should know about it," he told the Inquirer.

A 'beloved son' of the Civil War possibly identified

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post, December 12, 2010

The lock of blond hair was probably clipped when the soldier was a child, tied in a knot and placed with the photo of him as a little boy, along with a note written years later by his stricken parent.

"My beloved son Carl," the note read, "taken from me on April 1, 1865 at age 18 killed at Dinwiddie" during the Civil War. "Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

But who was this mysterious boy, pictured in a Library of Congress acquisition? Where was his home? And what of the grieving mother or father who cherished his memory?

A Virginia researcher has come forward with a possible identification of the boy in the photograph, which is among the most intriguing in a huge collection of Civil War portraits just donated to the library.

The soldier may have been Carlos E. Rogers, a Union infantryman from the Syracuse area. He was killed in battle in Dinwiddie County, Va., fighting with the 185th New York infantry regiment in the closing days of the war.

So theorizes Nancy Dearing Rossbacher, managing editor of North South Trader's Civil War magazine, who researched the photo when the library announced the donation in October.

"I'm relatively sure it's him," she said.

The photograph, encased with the hair and note, was one of about 700 in the collection donated by Tom Liljenquist of McLean, who operates a chain of Washington area jewelry stores. He and his sons have been buying Civil War photographs for 15 years.

The bulk of the images, most of which depict young, unidentified Union soldiers, are posted on the Library of Congress Web site and have been added to the photo sharing Web site flickr.

The library, which also reports Rossbacher's findings, said that more than 200,000 online views of the collection were recorded, just on Monday.

Rossbacher, of Orange, Va., who is also a genealogist, said she became mesmerized by the "Carl" picture when her magazine reproduced some of the photographs with an essay by Liljenquist's son, Brandon.



A grief-laden note accompanies a lock of hair and photo in a Library of Congress collection. (Courtesy Of Library Of Congress)

"That young man called me," she said of the boy in the photograph. "He cried out for some kind of identification."

Rossbacher pored over Civil War records to find people killed in or near Dinwiddie in late March or early April 1865.

"I tracked down every Yankee and rebel who would have been in the vicinity at that time," she said in a phone interview.

"After trawling through numerous Civil War-related databases, the only 'Carl' I could locate with any unit, North or South, who lost his life in the conflict in the geographic area and time period mentioned in the note" is Rogers, she said in an e-mail.

Rogers, she found, was killed March 29 at a place called Quaker Road in a battle that occurred as the Union army was prying Confederates from their entrenchments outside Petersburg, Va.

A series of chaotic battles took place as the desperate and outnumbered Confederates fled toward Appomattox, eventually surrendering April 9.

Records show that Rogers was 20, Rossbacher found, and enlisted at Lafayette, N.Y., south of Syracuse, on Sept. 5, 1864.

He served in Co. K., and his regiment lost more than 50 men at Quaker Run.

Rossbacher, who specializes in Civil War research, acknowledged that "Carl" and "Carlos" don't match perfectly, nor do the April 1 date of death in the note and the March 29 date of the battle. And she cannot account for the age discrepancy.

She said that Civil War record-keeping was notoriously uneven as to dates, ages and spellings of names, but her examination, for now, points to Rogers.



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"He remains the only Carl . . . or Karl or any other permutation who I could verify was a casualty there at the time," she said in an e-mail. And the identity of the parents remained uncertain.

Rossbacher said that Rogers was first buried near the battlefield and later in Poplar Grove National Cemetery near Petersburg.

Tom Liljenquist, the donor, said that Rossbacher's theory was exciting, although "I can't speak for the veracity of her conclusions. . . . We just collect the photographs."

"She's pretty savvy" though, he said. "There's an excellent chance that's who it is."

Restoration efforts on Monitor steam engine progressing

The warship Monitor was rescued from the Atlantic in 2001 after spending nearly 139 years underwater. Only now is the vessel regaining some of its original character.

By Mark St. John Erickson, Newport News Daily Press, December 18, 2010

Reporting from Newport News, Va. — When archaeologists and Navy divers recovered the warship Monitor's steam engine from the Atlantic in 2001, the pioneering Civil War propulsion unit was enshrouded in a thick layer of marine concretion.

Sand, mud and corrosion combined with minerals in the deep waters off Cape Hatteras, N.C., to cloak every feature of Swedish American inventor John Ericsson's ingenious machine, and they continued to envelop the 30-ton artifact after nine years of desalination treatment.

This month, however, conservators at the Mariners' Museum here and its USS Monitor Center drained the

35,000-gallon solution in which the massive engine was submerged and began removing the 2- to 3-inch-thick layer of concretion with hammers, chisels and other hand tools.

Working slowly and carefully to avoid harming the engine's original surface, they stripped off more than two tons of encrustation in their first week of work.

"This is a technological marvel. It was cutting-edge in its day. But what's really neat is revealing all the wheels, oil cups, valves and other parts that the Monitor's crew used to operate the engine," said conservation project manager Dave Krop.

"If you consider that it spent nearly 139 years underwater, it's in outstanding shape — though some of the wrought iron has seen better days. And there are some copper alloy parts that look brand-new when they're first uncovered — like they just came off the shelf."

Smaller, more compact, yet just as capable as other steam engines of its day, the Monitor's vibrating side-lever engine was the ideal match for Ericsson's revolutionary warship.

Its long, low, horizontal cylinder enabled the engineer to place it below the vessel's waterline as well as behind a thick armor belt — and that well-protected position virtually eliminated the vulnerability associated with the much larger and more easily targeted engines of the day, most of which towered above the deck of a ship.

Ericsson was so confident in his engine's capabilities that he ignored orders to equip the vessel with masts and rigging.

And it astounded Union and Confederate observers with the way it performed in its historic clash with the rebel warship Virginia — also known

as the Merrimac — in the March 8, 1862, Battle of Hampton Roads.

"If the turret and the guns were the Monitor's muscle, this steam engine was its heart," said historian Jeff Johnston of the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary.

"And it was the heart of the first naval vessel to be 100% machine," he added.

Once the concretion is gone, the engine will be submerged in a new solution of purified water and sodium hydroxide. It also will be exposed to a low-level electrical current that speeds up the release of potentially damaging chlorides through a process called electrolytic reduction.

Sometime in the spring, conservators hope to begin a lengthy disassembly process involving thousands of parts. Each element will then be individually treated and documented — and the most seriously corroded ones replaced with carefully crafted replicas — before the giant artifact is reassembled and put on exhibit in the museum.

"The reason this disassembly is so important is that you have to gain access to each interior space and each part in order to conserve them and make them stable," Krop said.

"Realistically, we're talking about another 15 years of work before all is said and done."

Confederate leader's oath to be recreated in Alabama

By PHILLIP RAWLS, AP, December 23, 2010

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Hundreds of Civil War re-enactors will parade up Montgomery's main street to the state Capitol on Feb. 19 to recreate the swearing-in of Confederate President Jefferson Davis 150 years ago.



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African-American leaders might protest nearby with a message that the Confederacy should be remembered with shame for trying to keep blacks enslaved rather than with celebration.

Organizers say they are not trying to create controversy.

"We are trying to present a historical account of what happened 150 years ago," said Thomas Strain Jr. of Tanner, a member of the national board of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

The national SCV is organizing the event, with more than 700 people already signed up to participate in the parade. Strain said it will look like the militia units and private citizens who marched up Dexter Avenue on Feb. 18, 1861, to see Davis take the oath of office at the top of the state Capitol steps. Several thousand people, including descendants of Davis, are expected to watch the parade and swearing-in ceremony.

Organizers will then fast-forward a month to recreate the raising of the first Confederate flag at the Capitol. But it will be done on a flagpole near the Capitol rather than using the main pole on the dome. In 1993, black legislators won a lawsuit that ended Alabama's practice of flying the Confederate battle flag from the Capitol dome, and the SCV isn't trying to buck that court ruling.

"I'd love to see it up there, but that's not going to happen," Strain said.

Alabama's longest-serving black legislator, Democrat Alvin Holmes of Montgomery, was one of the lawmakers who won that lawsuit. Holmes said he plans to work with civil rights groups to organize a protest, much like occurred Monday night when a "Secession Ball" was held in Charleston, S.C. Members of the NAACP marched and held a vigil

and one leader called that celebration "disgusting."

"The Confederacy was to maintain the institution of slavery," he said. "People can argue it was about states' rights, but the states' rights was to maintain slavery. They wanted slaves and they didn't want the federal government to get involved."

Various events are being planned to mark the Civil War Sesquicentennial, from those under the auspices of the National Park Service and states to privately organized events such as the swearing-in recreation in Alabama. Nearly 2 percent of the nation's population, more than 600,000 people, died in the Civil War. Robert Reames of Birmingham, state commander for the SCV, prefers to call the Civil War "the War Between the States." He said the re-enactment Feb. 19 will have a simple message: "That our ancestors did what they did in a honorable fashion and we're here to remember that honor."

Holmes, a retired college history teacher, said groups such as the SCV present a glamorous view of the war and don't talk about how it left the South economically depressed for decades.

"It wasn't great. It was shameful," he said.

Civil War exhibit in Md. features black doctors

Boston.com, December 13, 2010

FREDERICK, Md.—The National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick is highlighting African-Americans who served as doctors and nurses during the war.

The exhibit developed by the National Library of Medicine opens Monday and runs through Jan. 28.

It features the achievements of medical workers including John

DeGrasse of Massachusetts, the only black surgeon to serve in the field with his regiment.

Most black surgeons were assigned to military hospitals or recruiting stations because many white surgeons refused to serve alongside or beneath them on the battlefield.

The exhibit also features Georgia native Susie King Taylor, who wrote the only known published memoirs of an African-American Civil War nurse.

Library of Congress Posts 700 Civil War Photos to Flickr

The Atlantic, December 6, 2010

The Library of Congress has released 700 portraits of Americans taken during the Civil War. They were a gift of the Liljenquist Family Collection and most of the people who appear in them are unidentified. In fact, through Flickr commons, the Library is hoping to tap the collective knowledge of the crowd to find out more about the people in these images.

While the photos themselves are beautiful, they also highlight a structural change at some of our nation's biggest institutions. The digital age continues to refashion what we want and expect from our cultural preservationists. The vaults at places like the Library of Congress and Smithsonian have long contained far more than could be displayed or appreciated in physical space. Cultural preservation institutions now have to enable a much broader group of individuals to use their collections, not just professionals and dedicated researchers. And I love that the Library of Congress and other repositories of knowledge are beginning to open their archives to us digital travelers.