



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Hunley legend altered by new discovery

By Brian Hicks, Charleston Post and Courier, January 28, 2013

For nearly 150 years, the story of the Hunley's attack on the USS Housatonic has been Civil War legend.

And it has been wrong.

Scientists have discovered a piece of the Confederate submarine's torpedo still attached to its spar, debunking eyewitness accounts that the Hunley was nearly 100 feet away from the explosion that sent a Union blockade ship to the bottom of the sea off Charleston in 1864.

Instead, the Hunley and its eight-man crew were less than 20 feet from the blast. And that changes everything about the story — and possibly even provides a clue as to why it sank.

"I would say this is the single-most important piece of evidence we have found from the attack," said Maria Jacobsen, senior archaeologist on the Hunley project.

Basically, Hunley conservators found a piece of the torpedo's copper shell, peeled back from the blast, when they removed a century of hardened sand and shell from the submarine's 20-foot spar. The torpedo was bolted to the spar, contradicting the conventional wisdom that the torpedo was planted in the side of the Housatonic with a barb like a fishing hook, slipped off the spar and then detonated by rope trigger when the sub was a safe distance away.

Instead, the Feb. 17, 1864, attack off Charleston was a dangerous, close-quarters assault that risked the sub and crew.

"This changes some things," said Lt. Gov. Glenn McConnell, longtime chairman of the state Hunley Commission. "They were much closer to the explosion than we believed, but

I don't believe this was a suicide mission."

History lesson

When the Hunley was built in 1863, it was originally intended to attack ships using a contact mine towed from the end of a long rope.

The idea was that the submarine would dive under a ship and drag the mine into its flank, by which time the Hunley would be safely on the other side of the ship.

After the towline got fouled in the Hunley's rudder and propeller during a test run in Charleston Harbor, engineers decided to refit the sub with a spar similar to the ones used by ironclads, picket boats and Davids, which were low-profile stealth boats.

The engineering quickly evolved through trial and error. In October 1863, a David attacked the USS New Ironsides outside Charleston Harbor, ramming a torpedo into its flank. The blast didn't sink the ship, but did serious damage.

The explosion also threw a plume of water into the air, some of which extinguished the fire powering the David's steam engine. Jacobsen said that attack prompted Confederate engineers to refine their method of attack. If the main thrust of the blast was up, the mines would have limited success hitting the side of a ship. They would do more damage if they were planted under the ships.



The Hunley's Spar - Photo by Brad Nettles

The Hunley was equipped with an adjustable spar that could be raised

or lowered. The torpedo was fixed on the spar at an angle, so that when the spar was lowered for an attack, the torpedo was sitting dead horizontal.

Jacobsen knows this because of a detailed drawing of the "torpedo used to sink the Housatonic" that survives in the papers of Confederate officials in Charleston during the war. But until Hunley scientists found the remains of that exact torpedo, they couldn't be sure those drawings were accurate.

The torpedo, like the Hunley, had been upgraded through trial and error. Because triggers and detonators on these torpedoes were woefully unreliable, the Hunley's torpedo had three triggers, any one of which would blow the charge.

And, because the David's 65-pound torpedo did not sink the Ironsides, the Hunley's torpedo was packed with more than double the gunpowder — 135 pounds.

Shock waves?

The Hunley left Sullivan's Island shortly after 6 p.m. on Feb. 17, 1864. Two hours later, it was spotted off the port bow of the Housatonic when it was several hundred yards out.

Instead of directly ramming the sloop-of-war, Jacobsen said, Hunley commander Lt. George E. Dixon maneuvered the Hunley around the Housatonic's bow and aimed for the starboard rear flank.

On the Housatonic, the ship's hull curved upward and inward toward the stern. The Hunley planted its charge on the side of the ship beneath the bilge line, ensuring that an upward blast would go through the ship. And it did.

The blast left a hole in the Housatonic so large that accounts say a couch floated out of the breach sideways.

But what did that blast do to the Hunley and its crew, which were also



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above the blast and less than two dozen feet away?

"This is a riveted iron structure. How well would it hold up against shock waves?" Jacobsen said.

That is a question that may not be answered soon. The Hunley's hull is still covered with a shell of hardened sand — concretion — that scientists are leaving in place to protect the metal until the conservation process begins. When that concrete-like casing is removed (current plans are to do so next year), scientists at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center should get a better idea of what, if any, damage the blast caused the sub.

It could have buckled hull plates, allowing enough water into the sub to sink it. But the crew, under enormous pressure to break the blockade, had no way to test the effects of shock waves from the blast on the sub.

"They were pressed for time, they were pressed for resources, but nothing indicates this was a suicide mission," Jacobsen said. "They just had to get the job done."

In other words, the crew had to take a risk.

McConnell said that there is one tantalizing clue that suggests a shock wave hit the Hunley hard. Dixon's pocket watch is stopped at almost the exact moment the Housatonic crew said the Hunley attacked. Did the blast actually stop a clock?

"I think we are now narrowing our focus some to look at what effect the concussion of that blast might have had," McConnell said.

Until the sub itself is examined more closely, scientists will use this new information and data to simulate the blast. Jacobsen said that will offer a better idea of what impact the blast had on the Hunley. She said that will be a time-consuming and costly

project, one that will require the lab to partner with an outside source.

They will begin with computer simulations and may eventually move to scale models of the attack. And that ultimately may shed further light on one of the most mysterious legends of the Civil War.

USS Monitor remains to be buried next month at Arlington Cemetery

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post, February 12, 2013

For 140 years the two Yankee sailors lay entombed in the turret of the USS Monitor, doomed shipmates aboard the sunken Civil War vessel 40 fathoms down and 16 miles off Cape Hatteras.

Their remains were recovered when the turret was brought to the surface in an amazing feat of marine archaeology and engineering in 2002. Next month, after a decade of trying to learn their identities, the Navy plans to bury the comrades as unidentified in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

The funeral, scheduled for March 8, will mark 40 years of research into the Monitor by the Navy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va., and many other organizations.

And it will lay to rest perhaps the last of over 600,000 soldiers, sailors and Marines who perished in the long ago war for the Union. The nation is currently commemorating the sesquicentennial of the war, which ran from 1861 to 1865.

"These may very well be the last Navy personnel from the Civil War to be buried at Arlington," Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said in a statement Tuesday. "It's important we

honor these brave men and all they represent as we reflect upon the significant role Monitor and her crew had in setting the course for our modern Navy."

The Monitor is famous for battling the Confederate ship CSS Virginia, formerly the USS Merrimack, on March 9, 1862, at Hampton Roads, Va., in the first fight between ironclad warships.

Almost 10 months later, the two sailors were aboard the Monitor when it sank in a gale off the North Carolina coast on Dec. 31, 1862. The ship capsized and settled on the bottom upside down.

Most of the 63 crewmen escaped. Sixteen men perished; the bodies of the other 14 were never recovered.

The two unidentified men — an older sailor, about 35, who walked with a limp, wore a gold ring and often had a pipe clenched between his teeth, and a younger man, about 21, with a broken nose and mismatched shoes — were trapped in the turret.

More than a century later, their almost-complete skeletons were found, one on top of the other, amid a tangle of huge guns and debris. The turret resides at the Mariners' Museum today.

On March 7, representatives from the Navy and NOAA will escort the remains from the military's Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii, where the bones have undergone study, said a Navy spokeswoman, Lt. Lauryn Dempsey.

The next day the sailors will be borne to their graves in two caskets on a horse-drawn caisson during an interment ceremony at 4 p.m. The exact burial site was still being determined Tuesday.

"It's extraordinary on a number of levels," said David W. Alberg, superintendent of NOAA's Monitor



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National Marine Sanctuary. "There's something comforting to know that, no matter what you go through, what sacrifice you make, that the nation's promise to look after you, bring you home and honor you is as good 150 years later" as it was back then.

"Here we have two men who were lost in a storm, forgotten by even many of their descendants," he said. "But the nation's never forgotten."

The wreck of the Monitor was located in 1973 by a Duke University research ship in a stormy region called "the graveyard of the Atlantic."



A team of conservators and researchers raises the turret of the USS Monitor out of the ocean on Aug. 5, 2002. (NOAA)

The study of the sailors' bones yielded DNA but few other clues: the younger man's broken nose, and indications of a limp in the older man, the ring on a finger of his right hand and a groove in his front teeth where he bit down on his pipe.

The identities of all the lost Monitor sailors are known, and many crew members are depicted in old photographs — including a famous series taken on the ship by photographer James F. Gibson in July 1862.

But it was not known which identities might go with the recovered remains. Last year, at the Navy Memorial in Washington, experts from Louisiana State University displayed clay facial reconstructions of the two men, based on models of their skulls.

Experts hoped that the clay images might, through public exposure, provide leads to the sailors' identities. Officials noted a strong resemblance between the reconstructed face of the older sailor and that of the Monitor's Welsh-born first-class fireman, Robert Williams, 30.

In two of Gibson's pictures, Williams appears in a cap and a mustache, standing with his arms folded. He is surrounded by other members of the crew, who lounge on the deck, playing checkers and smoking pipes. But investigators could come up with nothing more definitive, and the sailors must now go to their graves unidentified.

Officials said the case will remain open, should further information be discovered.

Congressman Calls for Change to 'Lincoln' Before DVD Release

By: Chris Tribbey, Home Media Magazine, February 20, 2013

A historical error in the Oscar-nominated Steven Spielberg film *Lincoln* has a congressman and others calling for the filmmaker to make a fix before Disney releases the hit film on DVD and Blu-ray Disc.

Lincoln —\$235 million at the worldwide box office as of Feb. 20, and nominated for a dozen Academy Awards — sees Daniel Day-Lewis as Lincoln during the 16th president's final months in office, with the roll call vote to ratify the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery among the film's more tense moments. DreamWorks Pictures and 20th Century Fox co-produced the film, with Disney handling home entertainment distribution.

U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney (D-Conn.) praises the film, writing in an open

letter to Spielberg "that the rave reviews are justified." However, the congressman is also calling on the famed director to fix a factual error before the movie is released on DVD and Blu-ray Disc.

"As a member of Congress from Connecticut, I was on the edge of my seat during the roll call vote on the ratification of the 13th Amendment ... but when two of three members of the Nutmeg State's House delegation voted to uphold slavery, I could not believe my own eyes and ears," Courtney wrote. "How could congressmen from Connecticut — a state that supported President Lincoln and lost thousands of her sons fighting against slavery on the Union side of the Civil War — have been on the wrong side of history?"

Congressional records for the Jan. 31, 1865 vote show that members of Connecticut's delegation all voted to abolish slavery (the amendment passed 119-56). However, the film portrays two Connecticut House members voting against the amendment.

"I understand that artistic license will be taken and that some facts may be blurred to make a story more compelling on the big screen," Courtney said. "But placing the state of Connecticut on the wrong side of the historic and divisive fight over slavery is a distortion of easily verifiable facts and an inaccuracy that should be acknowledged, and if possible, corrected before *Lincoln* is released on DVD."

Films based on history regularly skew facts in favor of entertaining audiences, and Tony Kushner, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, and screenwriter of *Lincoln*, says the changes to *Lincoln* are no different. The four members of the Connecticut delegation voted for the 13th



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Amendment, he acknowledged, and two of the delegation's votes — and the names of the men casting those votes — were changed "to clarify to the audience the historical reality that the 13th Amendment passed by a very narrow margin that wasn't determined until the end of the vote," Kushner wrote in an open letter, responding to Courtney.

"The closeness of that vote and the means by which it came about was the story we wanted to tell," Kushner wrote. "In making changes to the voting sequence, we adhered to time-honored and completely legitimate standards for the creation of historical drama, which is what *Lincoln* is. I hope nobody is shocked to learn that I also made up dialogue and imagined encounters and invented characters."

A factual error in a history-based Hollywood drama would normally go largely unnoticed. However, Disney Educational Productions has announced it would distribute the DVD of *Lincoln* to public and private middle and high schools in the U.S., as part of a "Stand Tall: Live Like Lincoln" educational program. The *Lincoln* DVD package to schools includes lesson plans and a teacher's guide for discussions about Abraham Lincoln's leadership during the Civil War and battle over slavery.

"As more and more people began to see the film, we received letters from teachers asking if it could be available in their classrooms," Spielberg said in a press release. "We realized that the educational value that *Lincoln* could have was not only for the adult audiences — who have studied his life in history books — but for the young students in the classroom as well."

If the *Lincoln* DVD is to be used as a teaching tool for American students, it

should be historically accurate, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd wrote in an opinion piece Feb. 16.

Pointing out that fellow Best Picture nominees *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty* also dance around historical fact, it's *Lincoln* that's being held as a teaching tool for American students, she wrote.

"I think Spielberg should refilm [or redub] the scene ... before he sends out his DVDs and leaves students everywhere thinking the Nutmeg State is nutty," Dowd wrote.

DreamWorks Studios and Disney were contacted late Feb. 19 for comment on this story. A street date for *Lincoln* has not been announced.

The Horses of War

By C. KAY LARSON, *New York Times*, February 2, 2013

The Civil War is not normally called a horse's war, but it most certainly was: cavalry and artillery horses, draft and pack horses and mules, approximately one million on the Union side alone. The seat of war was also the lap of America's horse culture — or, rather, cultures, north and south.

As the historian David Hackett Fischer points out, the First Families of Virginia, the fountain of Southern culture, were descendants of aristocracy and gentry — Armisteads, Lees, Randolphs, Washingtons — who largely emigrated from southwest England. This rural, manorial region supported King Charles I during the English Civil War, and owned slaves until the early Middle Ages. At least among the officers and Southern gentry, horses were signs of elite power, a symbolism that translated onto the American battlefield and, after the war, the statuary pedestals of countless Southern town squares.

In contrast, the "First Families of the North" — Winthrops, Saltonstalls and Welleses — were most associated with Suffolk, Essex and Cambridge, a Puritan region of yeoman farmers and artisans. Horses were more utilitarian, bred to work, not to race or ride to oversee the plantation.

Nineteenth-century romanticism enhanced the "chivalry" image. Sir Walter Scott's novel "Ivanhoe," set in the age of crusading knights, was a blockbuster hit in the American South. Through it, Southern planters idealized themselves as models of medieval honor, manhood, classical learning — and equestrian skills.

When hostilities began, the Confederate military was led by this dashing upper class, foremost among them Robert E. Lee. Son of the Revolutionary War general "Light Horse Harry" Lee, Robert married Mary Custis, a great-granddaughter of Martha Washington. He graduated second in his class at West Point and excelled in horsemanship.

Indeed, the cavalry was a sure path to glory in the Confederate Army. J. E. B. Stuart and Jubal Early were the two most famous Confederate cavalry officers, though others gained solid reputations. The legendary mounted raiders Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Hunt Morgan disrupted drives across Tennessee by the Union generals Don Carlos Buell and William S. Rosecrans.

Steeds were more than status symbols, though: when fighting was fierce or retreats had turned into routs, generals might personally rally their troops. The visual symbolism and bravery of mounted officers created an aura of élan and command on the battlefield. During the 1864 campaigns in Virginia, General Lee rode along along the breastworks encouraging the men,



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turned retreating troops and chased down stragglers. Once, when Lee was exposed to cannon fire, an artilleryman remembered that "Old Mas' Bob rode out of the smoke on Traveller, amid the loud shouts of A. P. Hill's Corps."

The Southern cavalry was a rich man's undertaking: members had to provide their own horses. This resulted constant shortages of both trained horses and men to ride them. During Lee's advance to Gettysburg in the summer of 1863, his forces confiscated horses from Pennsylvania farmers. However, mounts must be trained for combat, to not react to guns and cannon, so likely they proved ineffective at first.

Despite an initial supply problem and lack of leadership and mission focus, by mid-1863 the Union cavalry was coming into its own. Union quartermasters smartly purchased many Morgans, a uniquely American breed known for endurance, versatility, heart and courage. The largest cavalry battle of the war, involving 17,000 horsemen, occurred on June 9, 1863, at Brandy Station, Va. Stuart's forces were preparing to advance in order to screen Lee's march north toward Gettysburg. Begun by a Union surprise attack, the Confederates finally fended off the enemy. Yet the Union soldiers' strong stand resulted from the fact that for the first time, they had trained and been commanded as a coherent corps. After the Battle of Gettysburg, Union cavalry fought 15 battles in 16 days and captured or destroyed half of Stuart's cavalry, as well as 4,000 or so horses and mules and 1,000 loaded wagons. The South's food crisis also gave Union cavalry operations an edge; by early 1865 well-fed Northern cavalry mounts were able to beat malnourished

Confederate horses to their own supply trains and depots in Virginia.

Union cavalry proved itself in the Western Theater, too. In General Rosecrans's Middle Tennessee campaign that year, cavalry under David Stanley made daring attacks on rifle pits and cannons north of Shelbyville. Perhaps the most successful raiding operation of the war was conducted by a former music teacher, Benjamin Grierson, who during the 1863 Vicksburg campaign cut a 600-mile swath of destruction through Mississippi to disrupt Confederate Gen. John Pemberton's supply lines.

But the real heroes were the horses themselves. Cavalrymen and scouts understood what their horses could do for them. Horses could sense enemy forces before they reached a rider's earshot. Take Nellie, a 6-year-old Union horse who was first ridden in service by a soldier pursuing the Confederate general Morgan during his three-state Ohio River Valley raid in 1862 and '63. During the Knoxville, Tenn., campaign, Nellie was ridden every day and active in every engagement from August 1863 through April 1864. In one fray, she fell and her rider was taken prisoner. Nellie, however, scrambled to her feet and escaped to swim the Tennessee River and regain Union lines. (After a few days the cavalryman tromped into camp.) Later Nellie was with Sherman's march into Georgia. Through it all, she was always sure-footed, regardless of rocky passes or the darkest night. She knew, one observer said, "The shriek of a shell and the direction of their flight, almost as well as her owners." Horses frequently took bullets for their masters. The Confederate general J. O. Shelby had 24 horses shot from under him. Forrest had

even more – 39. The highest Union toll goes to Gen. George A. Custer: 11.

Mounts of famous generals became almost as well-known as their riders: among others, Ulysses S. Grant's Cincinnati, Lee's Traveller, Custer's Custis Lee, Stonewall Jackson's Little Sorrell, Philip Sheridan's Rienzi and George G. Meade's Old Baldy (wounded five times in battle).

At the 1864 battle of Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley, en route from Washington, Sheridan rode Rienzi hard to meet and regroup his fleeing forces, after General Early's Confederates had broken their lines. As Sheridan rode among them, the men "threw up their hats, shouldered their muskets, and as I passed along turned to follow with enthusiasm and cheers." Sheridan directed: "We must face the other way; we will go back and recover our camp." They did.

Lincoln's Logs

By RICHARD WEST SELLARS, New York Times, February 14, 2013

By all accounts, Abraham Lincoln's birth on Feb. 12, 1809, occurred under unremarkable circumstances. Though never an official federal holiday, it falls close to George Washington's, the official occasion marked by Presidents' Day.

But the story of the cabin in which Lincoln was born has been anything but ordinary: it is a historical maze of profit-seeking and truth-seeking, cross-pollination with Confederate relics, uninformed commemoration and bureaucratic entrenchment.

Today, the log cabin that some identified as Lincoln's birthplace can be found at the crest of a low hill on land once farmed by his father, Thomas Lincoln, near present-day Hodgenville, Ky. It is enclosed in an imposing neo-Classical temple, built of granite and marble. In the early



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20th century, devoted admirers of the martyred president established the Lincoln Farm Association, which bought the farm and erected the temple to enshrine the cabin. This site was conveyed to the federal government — the War Department — in 1916, and then to the National Park Service by a 1933 executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It is now known as the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park.

But from the first, some local residents doubted that the cabin was the president's actual birthplace — as did some nationally prominent figures, including the president's only surviving son, Robert Todd Lincoln, who called the cabin a "fraud." When the National Park Service inherited the birthplace park, it rather quickly accepted the building as authentic.

The controversy didn't die, but the case for the cabin as Lincoln's birthplace gained a powerful new ally: driven by a bureaucratic imperative to possess the True Cross, the Park Service persisted for decades in supporting its authenticity, even after one of the service's own researchers, in 1949, strongly endorsed arguments against such claims.

The curious case of the birthplace cabin stems from its murky history, which fails to provide any hard evidence that the original cabin had survived, even up to the time of Lincoln's presidential election in 1860.

In 1811, when Lincoln was just over 2 years old, the family left the birthplace farm due to an uncertain title to the property. They settled about 10 miles away, along Knob Creek — the earliest home that Lincoln could remember later in life. No one paid any attention to the Lincoln birthplace

until he became a truly national figure, about a half-century later.

Some who visited the farm in 1860 — and again in 1865 following Lincoln's assassination — reported finding foundation stones but no old cabin, evidence that was buttressed by a number of local residents who doubted it was still standing. To them, Lincoln's birthplace cabin had ceased to exist. Case closed?

Hardly. In the mid-1890s, Alfred Dennett, an entrepreneur and promoter, purchased the former Lincoln farm, hoping to attract pilgrims and turn a profit from the mass adoration of the martyred president. To enhance his investment, he bought a log cabin off nearby land and exhibited it on the Lincoln farm as a historic relic.

However, in 1897, with the remoteness of the farm making Dennett's venture unprofitable, he moved the cabin to Nashville to show at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition. He also purchased a second log cabin to exhibit in Nashville, one purported to be the birth cabin of none other than Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. (Davis was born in Kentucky less than a year earlier than Lincoln and about 100 miles to the southwest).



Photo - Library of Congress - Logs from Lincoln's cabin being moved from Long Island to Kentucky.

Dennett then leased both cabins to other promoters, who exhibited them in New York City and Buffalo, in carnival settings of the kind that made P.T. Barnum famous. Between exhibits, the two cabins were dismantled so the logs could be stored before shipment to the next showing. In the process, the logs got mixed together. What is more, the owners soon combined the logs into one cabin, and briefly referred to it as the "Lincoln and Davis Cabin," which made little sense outside sheer sensationalism. At the turn of the century, the logs were placed in extended storage on Long Island.

In the early 20th century, and apparently unaware of the Davis logs, the newly created Lincoln Farm Association traced the cabin to its storage on Long Island. It purchased all of the (disassembled) logs and soon built the neo-Classical temple to house the cabin on the old Thomas Lincoln farm, which it also had purchased. But with the Davis logs having increased the cabin's size, it proved too large to install in the temple and leave adequate space for sightseers' ease of movement around the relic. Seeking a quick and easy solution, the architect removed enough logs to reduce both the width and length of the cabin by a few feet.

The association had made its own investigation of the cabin's history and accepted its authenticity. But the association failed to heed highly credible testimony from a local county judge who was born on the Lincoln farm in 1836, had later come into ownership of a portion of the farm, and had sold the land to Dennett in 1895. The judge flatly denied that the cabin Dennett moved from a neighboring farm and the association later purchased had ever belonged to the Lincoln family. Yet, installed in the



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temple, the cabin began its drift toward presumed authenticity.

When the National Park Service took over after Roosevelt's 1933 order, it soon made its decision not to tamper with the accepted story. Only in September 1948 did the cabin's authenticity finally come under serious public questioning when, in a front-page Washington Post article, the Lincoln scholar Roy Hays declared the cabin a "hoax." This negative publicity prompted the service's first in-depth look into the matter, undertaken by Benjamin Davis, the park's historian. Avoiding the word "hoax," Davis nevertheless concurred with the gist of the Washington Post article, stating that the evidence against the cabin's authenticity was "overwhelming."

In response the park changed course, but only slightly, when it began describing the cabin as the "traditional" birthplace. This imprecise modifier left things vague and open to the likelihood that a visitor still would accept the cabin as the True Cross. Yet it became the park's accepted solution.

In the mid-1980s, through the mere chance of misrouted Park Service mail, the Davis report reached the desk of another service historian (and previous Disunion contributor), Dwight Pitcaithley, in the Service's Boston office. Though the Boston office has no authority over parks in Kentucky, on his own time Pitcaithley began researching the case, and presented his findings in 1991 – though they were not published until 2001 (by which point Pitcaithley had become the National Park Service's chief historian, based in Washington). He had arrived at conclusions similar to those of Benjamin Davis in 1949: it was a virtual certainty that the cabin was not the original.

Still, the book remained open. In 2004 the park sponsored a tree-ring analysis of the logs by the University of Tennessee. Although the heavily weathered condition of the logs precluded good samples, a few provided data suggesting they dated only as far back as 1848 – when Lincoln was already representing Illinois in Congress.

Based on the overwhelming evidence, the park soon dropped reference to the "traditional birthplace cabin," and began referring to it as the "symbolic" cabin. It also prepared a new brochure and wayside exhibits for visitors, one of which states: "Because its early history is obscure, there is no documentation to support the authenticity of the cabin." A flyer given to visitors discusses the history of the cabin, including the findings of the recent tree-ring study.

With the National Park Service having responsibility for the nation's "First Cabin," its decision to present the home as "symbolic" may well have been the best choice — a gentle denial, far less blunt than Robert Todd Lincoln's opinion. Maybe, after all, the land itself, the hill where Father Abraham was born, is more important than the cabin anyway. And maybe the persistent existence of the myth is itself an endearing, unintended tribute to the kinds of yarns and tall tales that Abraham Lincoln loved to swap, propping his booted feet near the wood-fire's blaze and laughing with friends.

Gettysburg Collection Donated

CWNews, Feb. issue
Cleveland, Ohio, collector Craig Bashein gave a large collection of documents and artifacts to Gettysburg National Military Park on Dec. 27, saying he was "hopeful this gift will also encourage others to

donate their historic and treasured pieces from the Civil War to the Gettysburg National Military Park for the benefit of future generations."

The materials included many belongings of Gen. Alexander S. Webb, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for gallantry and bravery during Pickett's Charge. The Gettysburg-related objects include Webb's pistol, Hardee hat, field binoculars and an inscribed medal. Gen. George G. Meade presented to Webb.

What is believed to be one of the first Gettysburg battlefield maps was also donated. Capt. J.D. Briscoe, an aide to U.S. Gen. David B. Birney, drew troop positions on the map Birney inscribed and used for his testimony about the battle before the spring 1864 Committee on the Conduct of the War.

The donated archive of Gettysburg Chief Burgess David Kendlehart includes Confederate Gen. Jubal Early's note making demands of the town prior to the battle.

The Bashein donation includes 64 unpublished sketchbooks, notebooks other record books and documents created by Emmor Bradley Cope and other topographical engineers for the Army of the Potomac from 1862 through 1865.

A number of the 1863 sketchbooks contain hand-drawn topographical sketches of Gettysburg Battlefield ordered by General Meade from August to October 1863. Cope, who later became the park's first superintendent, created many of them himself from horseback.

Additional donated objects include Gen. Philip Sheridan's cavalry gauntlets and a presentation coin silver pocket watch given to Gen. Henry W. Halleck.



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In accepting the donation Supt. Bob Kirby noted that the park museum covers all war years. "These artifacts will be invaluable in helping us tell the full story of the war, as well as provide unpublished resource materials that will benefit all those who study Gettysburg and the Civil War," he said.

Some of the Webb Collection artifacts will be included in the "Treasures of the Civil War" exhibit which opens in the Museum and Visitor Center on June 16.

Other items will be available for researchers later this year. Spokesperson Katie Lawhon said the park hopes to scan the topographic sketchbooks and make them available electronically at some time.

Protest planned at old Cyclorama building

Architect's son launches last-ditch effort to save battlefield structure
By Amy Stansbury, Hanover Evening Sun, February 14, 2013

The National Park Service plans to tear down the old Cyclorama Building at Gettysburg this winter, and the architect's son is staging a last-ditch protest to save it. (File Photo)

When Richard Neutra was first told that he had received the commission to design Gettysburg's new Cyclorama building, he was nervous. It was the late 1950s and the idea of using taxpayer money to design a building to memorialize a painting depicting Pickett's Charge and the downfall of the Confederacy was controversial.

So in a stroke of genius Richard Neutra created a building designed to unite the country and not to divide it, said his son, Dion Neutra. Fifty years later Dion is fighting desperately to

preserve what he says is one of his father's most important buildings. The National Park Service made the decision last month to tear down the old Cyclorama building and true to his word, Dion is now planning a protest. He is asking supporters of the modernist building to show up in front of it on Sunday, Feb. 24, at 1 p.m. and demand that it be preserved. Dion wants to see the building repurposed into an Abraham Lincoln museum, dedicated to the Gettysburg Address and his father's original goal of reconciliation and peace.

The entire building is already built around the idea of the Gettysburg Address, Dion said. This is why the Cyclorama painting was housed on the second floor, he said, so that visitors wouldn't have to think about war and the battle if they didn't want to. Instead they could learn about Lincoln and his ability to free the slaves and then bring the country together again.

During the tumultuous time of the Civil Rights movement, Dion said, conveying this message was very important to his father.

So he constructed the entire building around his vision of an annual gathering to honor the Gettysburg Address, Dion said. He included a rostrum from which world leaders and thinkers could deliver speeches. He also added sliding glass doors that could open onto the outside and allow for large crowds to listen on the lawn.

"Now that the National Park Service has opened a new museum," Dion said, "we have the perfect opportunity to refocus this building to the Gettysburg Address."

The National Park Service however, does not feel the same way. It has had plans to tear down the old Cyclorama building for the past 13

years and aims to return the landscape to its 1863 aesthetic. Repurposing the building would also be expensive. An environmental assessment conducted for the site revealed that transforming the building into something new would cost more than \$21 million, compared to the as opposed to the \$3.3 million it will cost to demolish it. The Gettysburg Foundation, the non-profit fundraising arm of the Gettysburg National Military Park, has already raised the funds to finance the demolition.

But since the old Cyclorama building was a taxpayer-funded project, Dion believes that the original investment should be maintained.

"If they gave us \$4 million, we could do a lot to bring it back," Dion said.

It will be a tragedy if the building is torn down, Dion said and, "Gettysburg will go down in history as the place that supported that."