



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

Next month is the BCWRT Annual Dinner meeting. Our speaker is Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania Supervisory Historian Greg Mertz. In the past few years the dinner has been a "break-even" proposition at best. While it is not imperative that the dinner show a profit, there is only so much loss we are able to absorb. Therefore, I encourage everyone to attend the BCWRT Annual Dinner in March. Also, if you have any ideas to make the dinner better, please let us know. Please see the flyer in this month's edition of the newsletter to order your tickets.

Former American Civil War Wax Museum to auction off wax figures

The Gettysburg Heritage Center is reinventing itself to become more interactive

By Christine Loman, Hanover Evening Sun, February 6, 2014

Need a life-sized Civil War wax figure? The former American Civil War Wax Museum is redesigning its exhibits and will auction off items, including wax figures, on March 15. Now the Gettysburg Heritage Center, the museum was acquired by FutureStake Inc., a Gettysburg-based corporation in August 2013.

The gallery portion of the center will get a makeover to make it more interactive and resonate better with women and children, said center President Tammy Myers.

"Instead of being so heavily battle focused, we're going to focus on the stories about the town. What was it like to live there before, during and after the battle," she said.

Items in the auction include approximately 95 Civil War life-sized figures dressed in period clothing, oil paintings, antique furniture, lighting, small antiques, wall hangings, props and store displays. Full murals, curtains, painted walls and other backdrops used to create scenes will also be for sale.

"We feel the auction will appeal to a diverse audience including theater groups, both community and professional: antique collectors: and those who would like to own a piece of Gettysburg history," Myers said in a posting on the center's website. Myers said the center hopes to make itself more of an interactive experience with two 3-D videos and two "smart tables," similar to oversized iPads, Myers said.

The gallery portion of the center currently holds five halls with wax figures, she said. While many of the figures will be sold at the auction, some will still be used in the exhibits.

"For the Underground Railroad exhibit, instead of having it be a static exhibit, we're going to open up the bottom and let the kids crawl through the Underground Railroad," Myers said.

Wax figures will be used in that exhibit and in others to help tell the stories of the wounded.

Work on the gallery is expected to be completed by Memorial Day weekend. Renovations to the center's gift shop and theater are expected to be finished by April 1.

"From a visual standpoint, in terms of construction, the theater is going to see the least amount of change," she said.

But the programming will change as the center partners with the Civil War Trust, Myers said.

Previews for the auction will be held from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. March 12, from

5 p.m. to 8 p.m. March 13 and from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. March 14.

The auction will be conducted by PA Onsite Auction Co. at 9 a.m. March 15 at the center, 297 Steinwehr Ave., Gettysburg,. A snow date will be held March 16.

The New Bern Raid

By JOHN GRADY, New York Times, February 2, 2014

By the end of 1863, Confederate soldiers in the Eastern Theater and Tennessee were surviving on a quarter pound of meat and a pound of cornmeal a day, if they were lucky. The Union Army could draw on food, clothing and livestock from untouched farms in nearby Maryland and Pennsylvania or shipped from the old Northwest. It was a crisis at the forefront of Gen. Robert E. Lee's mind. But, he wrote Jefferson Davis on Jan. 2, 1864, there was a chance — right then — to feed, clothe and shod their soldiers for a spring campaign.

The closest source of food and livestock, he knew, was along the sounds and rivers of eastern North Carolina, where a few thousand Union soldiers had a tenuous grip on cities like New Bern, Washington and Plymouth, as well as the Outer Banks. They could not quickly or easily be reinforced from Fortress Monroe, Va., about 150 miles away, or from the Union's largest army in the East, more than 200 miles away and entering winter quarters near Culpeper, Va. In contrast, rail links still connected Confederate territory with the Carolina coast.

If Lee could maneuver quickly and draw in enough naval support, he could strike at the region and draw enough supplies to last the rest of the winter and into the spring campaign season. His immediate target was a



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

former colonial capital, New Bern, at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers.

The 13,000 rebel troops designated to retake New Bern, lost to the Union almost two years before, were to come from George Pickett's division. The naval side of the attack was less secure: Lee wanted "a bold naval officer" to lead a raiding party to destroy or capture the Union gunboats on the Neuse River.

The Confederacy's James River Squadron, which operated south of Richmond, was replete with bold naval officers, men used to carrying out this sort of raid. Davis suggested John Taylor Wood, his military and naval aide-de-camp and nephew. After serving aboard the ironclad Virginia and commanding gun positions at Drury's Bluff, Wood had been deputized by Davis to inspect Confederate coastal defenses and had carried out "cut out" raids on shipping and installations in and around Chesapeake Bay. Also in Richmond was B.P. Loyall, commandant of the Confederate Naval Academy and a veteran of the ill-fated attempt to free thousands of prisoners of war being held on Johnson's Island in Lake Erie.

Within days of Lee's letter, naval commanders in Richmond, Wilmington and Charleston had orders in hand "to select a boat's crew of fifteen able and trusty seamen under the command of an experienced officer" each and report to Wood at Wilmington, N.C., which was still under Confederate control. Together, they amounted to 220 sailors and Marines and about two dozen officers, including midshipmen from the academy.

The men set their boats – 10 or 12 of them, accounts vary – about 60 miles up the Neuse River from New Bern

on Jan. 31. It would be a grueling trip: They were going to be rowing with muffled oars almost every mile of it. They saw ducks during the day, but no human life on the water or ashore. That night they could hear the screech of owls. Finally, they reached a small island where they rested, inspected arms and other equipment, agreed upon the password "Sumter" and added white badges on the left arms of their clothing to identify each other in the coming nighttime melee. As Donald Conrad, a surgeon with Wood's men, recalled, "It was a grand scheme and was received by the older men with looks of admiration and with rapture by the young midshipmen."

Early the next morning, Feb. 2, the Confederate sailors heard gunfire coming from Batchelor's Creek, on the north side of New Bern, and knew that at least one prong of the army's attack had begun.



Grandson of President Zachary Taylor and nephew of President Jefferson Davis, John Taylor Wood led the Confederate navy against the *Underwriter* in 1864. Image courtesy of the U.S. Naval Historical Center, Washington D. C.

The same firing alerted Union patrol vessels led by the *Underwriter*, a converted ocean-going side-wheel steamer and a behemoth in these shallow waters, measuring 186 feet long and armed with two eight-inch guns, a 12-pound howitzer and a 30-pounder rifle. The boats began moving into position, looking either for Confederate transports or troop movements along the banks of the Trent and Neuse Rivers.

Wood's mission was to prevent the *Underwriter* from engaging. He commanded one of the divisions of his boats and Loyall the other. Huddling once more, before the final attack, Wood stood in the stern of one boat and reminded the men that one group was to attack the forward end of the *Underwriter*, and the other the stern. The sailors anxiously awaited the peal of the Union ships' bells, whose sound would guide them through the night.

They began the attack at 2:30 a.m. But instead of splitting up, most of the Confederate boats rowed hurriedly to the front of *Underwriter*, anchored about 30 yards from two land fortifications, to board. Loyall was the first aboard and lost his glasses as he scrambled on the deck. Wood came on amidships. "The firing at this time became so hot that it did not seem possible that more than half the Confederates would escape with their lives," Conrad wrote later, but the officers kept their cool and the men their discipline.

The marines who had been distributed among the raiders proved especially lethal, keeping up their fire with Enfield rifles even when a shore-launched round crashed among them. "Rifles were snatched from the hands of the dead and dying and used as bludgeons," Conrad wrote.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Then, suddenly, a shout went out. "She's ours!"

Conrad jumped to the deck to tend to the wounded and slipped in the blood, "falling on my back and hands." He ordered the bodies of the dead and wounded collected on the deck.

By then, the shore batteries had opened up on the Underwriter, followed by close-in musket fire. "It has been evident to all of us we were in a trap," Conrad wrote. Although the Confederates had control of the ship and its guns, there was no steam up to get it under way and the retreating Union sailors had wrecked the machinery. The engineers in the raiding party estimated it would take an hour to get under way — provided the ship could also break loose from chains that had lashed it to a buoy.

There was little to do but strip the vessel ship of what the attackers could carry and move their dead and wounded to the boats. Wood ordered four lieutenants to go through the ship, set it on fire and "not to leave her until her decks were all ablaze." In about half an hour, Underwriter was "one mass of flames from stem to stern" lighting the night sky, Conrad recalled. Then it exploded.

Their mission over, the Confederates rowed all night until, near daylight, one of the pilots spotted an island where they could hide, treat the wounded and bury their dead. After eating breakfast, "all hands were called, a long pit was dug in the sand, funeral services were held, the men buried and each grave marked." Four nights of rowing later, they reached Kinston, where they had put in; a day later they were back in Petersburg, Va.

The Battle of New Bern was a failure, but not because of Wood. Pickett had hesitated in pressing the land attack,

allowing the Union to pick apart Confederate units piece by piece. It might have been different: Looking back at the attack, Union Adm. David Dixon Porter wrote in his history of the naval war that had the Confederates, led as they were by "clever officers," been able to attack the forts head on "the chances are that they would have been successful, as the garrison was unprepared for an attack from the river, their most vulnerable side." Instead, they were repulsed, and Lee's armies began the pivotal year of 1864 on an empty stomach.

John Grady, a former editor of [Navy Times](#) and a retired director of communications at the Association of the United States Army, is completing a biography of Matthew Fontaine Maury. He is also a contributor to the Navy's [Civil War Sesquicentennial blog](#).

The Confederate Washingtons

By JAMES H. JOHNSTON, New York Times, February 15, 2014

Abraham Lincoln must have been pained by the number of Washingtons on the other side during the Civil War. He idolized George Washington. One of the first books he read as a boy was Parson Weems's apocryphal biography of the first president, and it made a lasting impression. Later, as a congressman, Lincoln made a pilgrimage to Washington's Mount Vernon and regaled his friends afterward about the experience.

Lincoln might find solace in the fact that none of the Confederate Washingtons were direct descendants of the first president, who didn't have children. But his brothers and half brothers did. They

were Virginia aristocracy, marrying the likes of the Lees. Most prominent in Lincoln's day was the last owner of Mount Vernon, John Augustine Washington III, the great-grandson of George's brother John. When war came, he walked away from the Union.

John Augustine was not a military man, but he entered the Confederate Army as a lieutenant colonel and aide-de-camp to (and tent mate of) Robert E. Lee, a distant cousin. The pious, gentlemanly Washington quickly turned partisan, explaining in a letter from July 1861: "In fact the Yankees are for the most part a set of plundering fellows, who will steal and bully when they can and do as little fighting as possible." Two months later, he was shot and killed by such fellows at the Battle of Cheat Mountain, Va. In a condolence letter to Washington's family, Lee told of the circumstances:

He accompanied my son, Fitzhugh, on a reconnoitering expedition and I fear was carried too far by his zeal for the cause of the South which he had so much at heart. Before they were aware they were fired upon by a concealed party. ... He was the only person struck and fell dead from his horse.

Washington was buried in the graveyard of Zion Episcopal Church in Charles Town, in present-day West Virginia, the final resting place of more than 70 of his family members.

John Augustine's brother Dick was also in the Confederate Army, but he was discharged for health reasons soon after his brother's death. The following spring, though a civilian, he was taken prisoner by Union cavalry. A cousin, George Washington, interceded with a friendly Confederate congressman, and Dick was eventually exchanged. He did



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

not rejoin the fight, because Lee advised him to take care of his family responsibilities.

Several of the Southern-leaning Washingtons lived in and around Charles Town. Lewis William Washington was one. A great-grandson of George's older half-brother Augustine, he lived near Harpers Ferry and was renowned enough for John Brown to seize him as a hostage. After being freed, Lewis became the lead prosecution witness in Brown's trial. His son, James Barroll Washington, naturally joined the Confederate Army. A West Pointer, he served as aide-de-camp to Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. He was captured during the Battle of Seven Pines and posed for a picture with Union Capt. George Armstrong Custer before being released to rejoin the Confederate Army. He survived the war.

Charles Armistead Alexander, a nephew of Dick Washington, was a doctor for the Confederate Army. He was captured and imprisoned at Point Lookout, Md. Suffering from what was considered the "family curse" of tuberculosis, he died at home after his stepmother successfully petitioned the White House for his release.

Bushrod Corbin Washington II, also a descendant of George's brother John, grew up on the enormous Claymont estate outside Charles Town. He joined the Confederate Army, was captured, exchanged and later became an officer in the 12th Virginia Cavalry. He survived the war and moved to the state of Washington, where he died and was buried. Nonetheless, the family erected a memorial in the graveyard at Zion church. Bushrod's brother George Washington, who wrote the letter about a prisoner exchange for Dick,

was killed in action in 1863. He was also buried at Zion.

The Washington's first cousins, a branch of the Alexander family, also lived at Claymont and joined the Confederate Army. Thomas Blackburn Alexander died of wounds in a hospital in Staunton, Va.; a second brother, William Fontaine Alexander, served the Confederate Army as a physician.

Claymont, a mansion as big as a modern hotel, was a breeding ground for rebellion. James Washington of Claymont rode with his older brothers Bushrod and George in the 12th Virginia Cavalry and later joined Confederate Col. John Mosby's Rangers, who bedeviled Union Gen. Phil Sheridan and his subordinate, George Custer (now a general). James and his cousin Herbert Lee Alexander, who had grown up with him at Claymont, were captured trying to blow up a railroad bridge. Imprisoned at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, James died of typhoid fever in the waning days of the war. Alexander survived the war, only to die of tuberculosis a year later. Both are buried at Zion.

Washington in-laws also served. Tragedy involved descendants of President Washington's wife, Martha Custis Washington. Two cousins, William Orton Williams and Walter "Gip" Peter, both Confederates, rode into a Union Army camp in Tennessee wearing Union uniforms. Some claim it was on a dare. Once their true identities were discovered, they were given a drumhead court-martial and hanged as spies.

The Washingtons' sacrifices for the Confederacy were not just in blood. The Harewood estate outside Charles Town was built in the 18th century by another of George Washington's brothers, Samuel. James and Dolley

Madison were married there in a wedding hosted by Samuel's son, George Steptoe, who was married to Dolley's sister. A son of that marriage, Dr. Samuel Walter Washington, married Louisa Clemson, and she was still living there during the Civil War, when it was visited by Union soldiers. She described conditions in a November 1863 letter: "They have taken all of our turkeys & shot 4 of our sheep before our eyes. ... As to horses, they leave us none ... We have but 3 horses to work with, the Souths took one waggon & team - & the Federals others."

After James Washington and Herbert Alexander were caught trying to blow up the railroad bridge, a furious Sheridan ordered:

I want you to send to the home of Mrs. Alexander, where the guerilla James Washington and Hebert Alexander were captured, and drive off all the stock except one milch cow, and burn every rail on the Clay Mound [Claymont] farm as punishment for harboring guerillas.

Lincoln remained obsessed with Washington through the war, and he followed these developments closely. Mary Todd Lincoln visited Mount Vernon in late March 1861, shortly after Lincoln's inauguration and shortly before Fort Sumter was fired on. In April 1862, Lincoln himself went there, by boat. But security was a concern. One of those accompanying Lincoln wrote, "I advised the President not to land, and remained in the boat with him." A month later, Lincoln went to Fredericksburg, Va., to see Ferry Farm, Washington's boyhood home. This time he took precautions: The town and farm were occupied by Union troops, and a detachment of cavalry rode along.



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Lincoln's final encounter with a Washington was personal. John Augustine Washington IV, a son of Dick and nephew of John Augustine III, suffered from Pott's disease, a deformity of the spine caused by tuberculosis that causes a hunchback. Only 17 years old, John Augustine IV was – according to family lore – unable to serve in the Confederate Army but was nevertheless arrested for interfering with Union troops who were seizing cattle. The Union saw things differently. Prison records say the boy was a private in Mosby's cavalry and carried dispatches for him. He was taken to Washington and incarcerated in Old Capitol Prison, the usual place for suspected Confederate spies.

The boy's grandmother, Louisa Washington of Harewood, who had lost her turkeys and horses to Union troops a year before, went to the president for help. Lincoln wrote out the release by hand: "Let the boy, John A. Washington, remain in Washington, and attend school, so long as he does not misbehave. A. Lincoln, Nov. 30, 1864."

The Washington family paid dearly during the war. At least 12 served the Confederacy; eight died in battle, by hanging or of disease. Their estates became battlegrounds; their property was seized; and they were left impoverished. Some, like Dick Washington, had even invested in Confederate bonds. A bright spot for the family came in the 20th century when medical science exorcised the family curse of tuberculosis.

Had George Washington lived until the Civil War, he surely would have seen the issues differently from how succeeding generations did. He had put the United States together, and would not likely have approved its

being it torn asunder. He probably would have approved of Lincoln, his spiritual protégé.

James H. Johnston is a lawyer and writer in Washington. He would like to thank several Washington descendants for their assistance: Walter Washington, a descendant of Washington's brothers John Augustine and Samuel; Betsy Wells, a descendant of John Augustine; and John Augustine Washington, also a descendant of John Augustine.

Albert Cashier's Secret

By JEAN R. FREEDMAN, New York Times, January 28, 2014

In the spring of 1914, a Civil War veteran named Albert Cashier arrived at the Illinois state hospital for the insane with symptoms of advanced dementia. As a young private, Cashier had fought at the siege of Vicksburg, where he and his comrades broke the spine of the Confederacy, and his name was inscribed on the Illinois victory monument there. He had lived out the intervening years in modest circumstances, working as a farm hand, a laborer and, on occasion, a street lamplighter, one of the many former soldiers whose civilian lives never achieve the glory of their wartime service. He was destined for the same obscurity in death, had it not been for a secret that the state hospital made public: Albert Cashier was actually a woman named Jennie Hodgers.

Little is known of Hodgers's early life; she was born in Ireland and came to the United States while still a young girl. No one knows exactly when or

why she began to dress as a boy, but long before the first shots were fired on Fort Sumter, she had abandoned skirts for trousers. On Aug. 6, 1862, she joined the 95th Illinois Infantry after a cursory medical examination that required recruits only to show their hands and feet.

Though the shortest soldier in her company, she was also one of the bravest. At Vicksburg, she was captured while on a reconnaissance mission, but escaped by attacking a guard, seizing his gun and outrunning her captors till she reached her comrades. On another occasion, when her company's flag was taken down by enemy fire, she climbed a tree and attached the tattered flag to a high branch, while snipers' bullets soared past her.

Jennie – or Albert, as she was called most of her life – was not the only Civil War soldier who spent much of her time hiding her sex, finding ways to bathe and dress alone in that least private of environments, the military encampment. Indeed, historians have uncovered accounts of hundreds of women who passed as men to fight, some of whom, like Jennie/Albert, had been passing long before the fighting started.

Hodgers's fellow soldiers recalled her as a modest young man who kept his shirt buttoned to the chin, hiding the place where an Adam's apple should be. Her comrades teased her because she had no beard, but this was an army of boys as well as men, and she was not the only beardless recruit in her company. She resisted sharing a tent with anyone, but made close friends among her fellow soldiers; with one of them, she briefly owned a business after the war. Despite her diminutive size, she could "do as much work as anyone in the Company."



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

Hodgers served in Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks's Red River campaign in the spring of 1864, marching for miles in the Louisiana heat; by December of that year, she was in Nashville, fighting with the Army of the Cumberland in its hard-won victory over John Bell Hood's forces. Her final combat experience came during the siege of Mobile, Ala., a fight that did not end until after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. By all accounts, Rodgers never avoided danger – indeed, at times she seemed to court it – but despite her frequent participation in combat, she was never wounded severely enough to require medical treatment.



Jennie Rodgers, a.k.a. Albert Cashier, November 1864, Photo courtesy NPS

A combination of good luck, good health and skillful soldiering kept Rodgers from the attention of those who might penetrate her disguise. Indeed, Rodgers served an entire three-year enlistment without anyone guessing her sex.

"Albert Cashier" mustered out of the service with the rest of her regiment on Aug. 17, 1865, and went back to Illinois. Acting as a man was now an ingrained habit, and it eased the return to civilian life. Rodgers could not read or write, and the jobs available for an illiterate woman would have sunk her into poverty, or even prostitution. But as a man, she could get by as she had in the Army, working steadily and honestly, and she made an adequate – if hardly affluent – living as a handyman, a farm laborer and a janitor, supplementing her income with a veteran's pension.

People in the town of Saunemin, where Rodgers eventually settled, may have wondered why the shy young veteran never married, but no one thought it strange for a man to live alone and make a living at any job he could find.

It all came crashing down when Rodgers, elderly and enfeebled, entered the state hospital for the insane. There, once discovered, she was required to abandon the masquerade that had been her lifeline and live in the narrow hallway that early 20th-century America had designed for women.

Officials at the Illinois state hospital forced her to wear skirts for the first time in over 50 years; she found the garb restrictive and humiliating and perhaps more dangerous than the sniper fire she had outwitted so many years before. Unused to walking in the long, cumbersome garments deemed appropriate for her sex, she tripped and fell, breaking a hip that never properly healed. Bedridden and depressed, her health continued to decline, and she died on Oct. 11, 1915, less than two years before women gained the right to serve

openly – if minimally – in the Armed Forces.

By the time of Rodgers's death, the presence of female soldiers on both sides of the Civil War was well known and well documented. Their exact number is unknown, because their service had to be clandestine, but the ones whose stories we know offer a fascinating glimpse of women who pushed against the boundaries of their Victorian confinement at a time when American women could not vote, serve on juries, attend most colleges or practice most professions, and who, when they married, lost all property rights in most states. Some women were discovered when they were wounded, others when they gave birth, still others when they were taken prisoner. Some women soldiers were discovered only when their bodies were being dressed for burial, and some were discovered years after the fighting stopped.

The female Civil War soldiers were not the first American women to fight on the battlefield; Deborah Sampson of Massachusetts served for nearly two years during the Revolution before her sex was discovered in a military hospital. (After being honorably discharged, Sampson received a veteran's pension for her Revolutionary service, which went to her children upon her death.) Nor would they be the last. But their service came at a crucial time – when the foundation of the Republic had shifted to allow an expansion of individual rights, when the very nature of freedom was being questioned and the bonds of restricted servitude were being broken, and when the unfulfilled promise that "all men are created equal" was tentatively held out to an expectant generation of American women who, almost 20 years earlier at Seneca Falls, had



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

inscribed their gender onto Thomas Jefferson's ringing prose. *Freedman teaches history and women's studies at Montgomery College.*