



## THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

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### Alabama ceremony marks anniversary of Davis inauguration

By Matt Okarmus, Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser, February 20, 2011

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — It may be 2011, but it might well have been 1861 in Montgomery on Saturday as hundreds of people marched to the state Capitol to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the swearing-in of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Men, women and children dressed in Civil War-era attire flocked to the Capitol to celebrate the sesquicentennial of Davis' inauguration. The event included speeches, the firing of cannons and a re-enactment of the inauguration.

Davis was sworn in Feb. 18, 1861, as president of the Confederate States of America. He was elected to lead the Southern states after secession from the union.

As the people who portrayed Davis and his vice president walked up to the Capitol, a cry of "God bless you, Mr. President!" was heard from the crowd. It would set the tone for the afternoon, as several more loud cries could be heard from those in attendance.

The biggest cheers came after speakers noted that they were there to celebrate the birth of the Confederacy, which they said was based on a government for the people and by the people. One speaker also got the crowd going with a yell of "Long live Dixie!"

"We tried to recreate it as close as we could. We wanted to give people a glimpse into history," said Charles Rand, adjutant in chief of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Rand said his ancestors include Civil War and Revolutionary War veterans, and events like Saturday's are meant to praise them and what they stood for.

"For me, I celebrate the right of our ancestors to have a government of our own choosing," Rand said.

The reasons for the Civil War have been widely debated, and controversy surrounded Saturday's event because of the war's connection to slavery. Kelley Barrow, lieutenant commander in chief of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, seemed to address those who criticized the celebration in his speech.

Barrow mentioned civil rights hero Rosa Parks, stating that while she moved from the back of the bus to the front, the "people of the Confederacy have been forced to the back of the bus."

Chuck McMichael, a past commander in chief, said the celebration of the Confederacy is a personal issue to him. He compared it to the celebrations of Independence Day, Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

McMichael ended his speech by holding up one of the many flags of the Confederacy that were on display. "As long as there blows a Southern breeze, this flag will fly in it," McMichael said.

Lee Beasley was in town from Tuscaloosa with her husband and son when they saw the people in costume and wanted to know what was going on. After the celebration drew to a close, her son was asked to help fold a flag.

"He was careful not to let it touch the ground," Beasley said with a smile.

### The Willard Hotel: Where hope collapsed as slavery raged

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post, February 9, 2011

The delegates used separate hotel entrances: Pennsylvania Avenue for Northerners, F Street for Southerners.

They shouted, argued and one day almost came to blows before their chairman, a former U.S. president, yelled, "Order!"

Then, the day before Valentine's Day 1861, one of the aged attendees passed away in his hotel room, begging colleagues from his deathbed to save the Union so he could die content.

They failed.

Indeed, there wasn't much peace at all during the "Peace Convention" at Washington's Willard Hotel that winter. And despite the dying wish of sickly old Ohio Judge John C. Wright, his beloved Union was soon torn in half.

There, 150 years ago this month, 132 delegates from 21 states bickered, bargained and tried in vain to bridge the chasm that widened beneath them even as they met.

Six weeks after they adjourned, the war began. And the memory of the men and their meeting faded.

But for three weeks that February - the last winter of peace for four years - there was hope among the smoky parlors of the Willard that, as the Washington Evening Star wrote, "the threatening cloud is . . . rapidly passing off the horizon of the country's future."

The main focus was on the peace conference, whose originator, former president John Tyler, told delegates: "If you reach the height of this great



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occasion, your children's children will rise up and call you blessed."

It was an effort that, in light of events, seemed futile.

Seven states already had seceded from the Union when the convention opened Feb. 4. The small Union garrison at Fort Sumter had been under siege for weeks and was running out of food. President-elect Abraham Lincoln, wary of the convention, was coming to Washington for his inauguration a month later.

But at the time, the gathering had prospects and clout. Its illustrious delegation, headed by Tyler, included an array of elder statesmen and business leaders. And it assembled in what historians say was then the largest hotel in the nation.

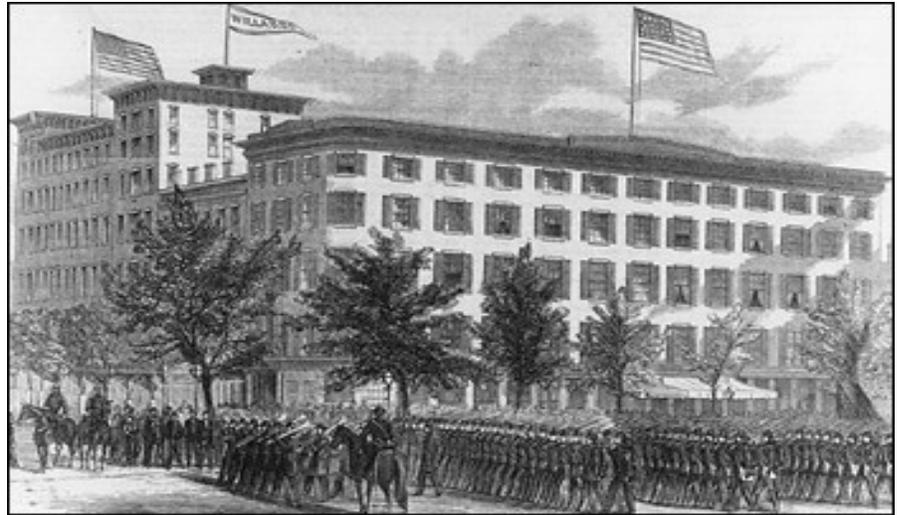
On the same spot as the current hotel, the old Willard was blocks from the White House, the Treasury and Newspaper Row, and just down muddy Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol.

It was also close to one of the city's red-light districts, where some of Washington's thousands of prostitutes operated, according to Washington historian Cindy Gueli.

"You've got the Willard here," she said. "You've got the red-light district there. You've got Newspaper Row on your left. And you've got all the [government] headquarters on Lafayette Square."

Despite the looming calamity, said Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer, it's a mistake to view the convention only in light of the war.

"That's looking backwards through the wrong end of the telescope," he said. "The people who met were only trying to reverse the secession of a



Willard Hotel

few Lower South states" and issues related to secession.

"You can't look at it and say, 'We've got to stop this because 600,000 young men are going to die,' " he said. "They didn't know what was going to happen. . . . In that way, they were deluded."

The convention hoped to offer a compromise - mainly about slavery - that would soothe the rebellious states and satisfy the militant northern abolitionists, scholars say.

It also aimed to keep states in the Upper South from seceding.

And the delegates "thought they had time," Gueli said.

The states that sent delegates chose prominent citizens experienced in public affairs.

In addition to Wright, 77, and Tyler, 70, delegates included War of 1812 veteran Gen. John E. Wool, 77; Ohio's former U.S. senator Thomas Ewing, 71; and a former New York Supreme Court chief justice, Greene C. Bronson, 71.

The group also included Felix K. Zollicoffer of Tennessee, a future Confederate general, and Pleasant A. Hackleman of Indiana, a future Union general, both of whom would be dead on the battlefield within 12 months.

Tennessee delegate Josiah M. Anderson would be killed after giving a secession speech the following November. And New York's James S. Wadsworth, the patrician landowner and future Union general, would be killed at the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864.

But all that was ahead.

Three days after the delegates assembled in secret, shielded by police, the Evening Star hoped that under the "happy influence" of the conference, "six months will find every seceded state restored to its allegiance to the Union."

For good luck, the mayor of Washington lent the meeting a portrait of George Washington, according to historian Robert Gray Gunderson's 1961 account of the conference.



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Alas, many delegates brought their sectional differences along with their baggage.

"There was a lot of fighting," Holzer said. "They just fought over every procedural issue. Clearly, one side wanted expansion of slavery. One side wanted curtailment of slavery. It was very much like the whole body politic."

Gunderson wrote: "Amendments were appended to amendments and substitutions substituted for substitutions."

The Star reported of the Feb. 25 session, "Today nothing has been done . . . because speech making has monopolized the precious hours." At one point, veiled insults flew. A brawl almost erupted. Tyler shouted: "Shame upon the delegate who would dishonor this conference with violence."

Wright, who had made the difficult journey from his home in Cincinnati despite chronic bronchitis and failing eyesight, died Feb. 13.

The next day, the delegates put aside their differences as his coffin was brought into the meeting hall for a funeral service.

A letter was read from Wright's son in which the old man pleaded for the preservation of the union so he "would die content."

The delegates then accompanied his body to the railroad station for its journey home.

The peace convention closed Feb. 27 to a volley fired by 100 cannons.

But its proposed 13th amendment to the Constitution was little more than "awkwardly phrased abstractions," according to Gunderson. It essentially perpetuated slavery in the South, barred it in the North and, under certain circumstances, permitted its extension.

It was widely and bitterly criticized. The House of Representatives refused to consider it. In the Senate, shortly before dawn March 4, it was voted down, 28 to 7.

About the same time, Abraham Lincoln, who had arrived in town about a week earlier, was just waking up at the Willard. In a few hours, he would go to his inauguration and himself appeal for peace.

### Williamsburg collector will fight for Civil War sword

By Tim McGlone, The Virginian-Pilot, February 11, 2011

NORFOLK - Civil War artifacts collector Donald Tharpe paid \$35,000 for a one-of-a-kind, Tiffany-made sword, and he's not about to give it up easily.

Brown University in Providence, R.I., is suing Tharpe in federal court, seeking the return of the Col. Rush C. Hawkins sword. The university considers the 1863 silver-and-steel saber priceless.

At a hearing Thursday, U.S. District Judge Robert G. Doumar set a Sept. 7 trial date to settle the matter but ordered both sides to try to work it out before then. He noted that "possession is 90 percent of good title."

"I think we're going to be able to resolve it," said Brown attorney Robert McFarland.

Doumar previously issued an injunction preventing any transfer of the sword. Tharpe, who lives in Williamsburg, had loaned the sword to a Newport News museum but retrieved it in December and had it placed in a secure art storage facility in Manhattan.

Tharpe's attorney, Alan Silber of New Jersey, told the judge that Tharpe is

the rightful owner because officials at Brown previously relinquished its rights and the statute of limitations has since expired. Brown, he said, found the sword with a Midwest dealer around 1991 but failed to sue for ownership then.

Tharpe bought the sword from an Illinois antiques dealer in 1992 for \$35,000, Silber said.

Tracing the sword back to Brown would be difficult, Silber said. The Illinois dealer bought it from a dealer in Pennsylvania, who bought it from another dealer in Massachusetts, who has since died.

Plus, there may not be enough evidence to prove that the sword is the actual 1863 Hawkins sword, he said. There may be multiple Hawkins swords.



Civil War Col. Rush C. Hawkins donated the sword to Brown University in Rhode Island

Silber and a Brown representative took the sword's case to the storage center in New York on Feb. 8 to see whether it would fit. The two sides dispute whether it did.



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"They believe it did, we believe it did not," Silber said.

Tharpe and his wife were in court Thursday morning but declined to comment.

Brown has said the sword was stolen from its collection in the mid-1970s and that it maintains ownership despite several transfers since then.

The sword was a gift to Union Col. Rush C. Hawkins for his battlefield successes during the Civil War.

Hawkins, who became a general, later donated the sword and most of his art, mementos and books to Brown and housed them in the Annmary Brown Memorial at the university, which he had built in honor of his wife, the daughter of one of Brown's founders.

### **Park Rangers serve search warrant, find Civil War shell**

By F.M. Wiggins, Petersburg Progress-Index, February 11, 2011

PETERSBURG - National Park Rangers asked for assistance from local and State Police Thursday after serving a search warrant on a home in the city and finding a potentially live, Civil War-era, unexploded artillery shell.

The shell was discovered Thursday at around 1 p.m. after Park Rangers executed a search warrant on the home in the 1800 block of Oakland Street as part of a criminal investigation.

"Due to the dangers involved, when the shell was discovered we called the Petersburg police for assistance," said Petersburg National Battlefield Chief Ranger Kevin Taylor.

Petersburg police spokeswoman Esther Hyatt said that the local police provided assistance with traffic control by blocking off the streets, but

that the State Police provided assistance with the artillery shell.

Taylor identified the shell as a Schenkl shell. The shell is a hollow piece of metal that gunpowder would have been packed into, he said. A percussion cap is placed in one end and designed to cause the shell to explode.

Taylor said it was not known whether or not the shell discovered in the home was live or not, but given the inherent dangers, investigators decided to ask for assistance from the Virginia State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Richmond Field Office, Bomb Unit.

Petersburg National Battlefield Cultural Resource Manager Julie Steele explained that the Schenkl shell was used by the Union Army during the Civil War. "It was really high tech for the time," Steele said. But the shells were also known for being unstable.

Taylor said that what many may not realize, especially relic hunters, is that the historical research value of such artifacts is destroyed when it is removed from the archeological resource it was found in.

The shell itself was found as part of the search warrant that was executed around 10 a.m. Thursday. Taylor said that the warrant was part of a criminal investigation into illegal relic hunting. "We were well into the search warrant when the shell was discovered," Taylor said. The call for assistance to Petersburg and the State Police was made immediately upon its discovery and the assistance arrived shortly thereafter around 1:30 p.m.

"We started this investigation a while back," Taylor said. The search warrant was part of an effort to provide more evidence against the suspect and the illegal relic hunting and to determine whether or not the

suspect has been selling the relics he has recovered. "We're going to be here a long time cataloging everything."

### **Residents preparing to mark 150th anniversary of Battle of Hancock, MD**

By DON AINES, Hagerstown Herald-mail, February 09, 2011

Confederate and Union forces clashed several times in Washington County during the Civil War, most notably at Antietam in 1862, but residents of Hancock are preparing for the 150th anniversary of another confrontation outside their town earlier that year.

The Battle of Hancock on Jan. 5-6, 1862, pitted one of the best known Confederate field commanders, Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, against Hancock garrison commander, Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Lander.

The Battle of Hancock Committee was recently formed to plan commemorative events and encourage an invasion of tourists for the 150th anniversary in 2012.

Dr. Ralph Salvagno and student Lily Wolford discussed the project with the mayor and town council in January. They said the events could include re-enactments, lectures and activities to involve children, such as art and essay contests.

"We're still looking for someone to write a little play" about the battle, Mayor Daniel Murphy said at Wednesday night at a town council meeting.

Re-enactment groups and guest lecturers have already been contacted about participating, he said.

The Battle of Hancock could best be described as a bombardment,



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according to [americancivilwar.com](http://americancivilwar.com). Jackson marched north into West Virginia on a mission to disrupt traffic on the B&O Railroad and C&O Canal, reaching the Potomac River on Jan. 5.

The Confederates skirmished with retreating Federals on what was then the Virginia side of the river, and Jackson's artillery fired on Hancock for two days, the website said. Lander refused to surrender the town, the Confederates failed to find a safe crossing, and Jackson withdrew to march on Romney.

Hancock received minor damage in the bombardment, casualties from the two-day encounter amounted to about two dozen, and the result was inconclusive, the website said.

### Ocmulgee National Monument fire ruled arson

By LIZ FABIAN, *Macon.com*,  
February 10, 2011

A 154-year-old house that survived a Civil War raid was nearly destroyed in an arson early Wednesday at the Ocmulgee National Monument.

Macon police arrested a man with cuts on his hands who was watching the commotion as crews battled the blaze.

Just before 3:40 a.m., a fire alarm alerted firefighters, who arrived to find the back side of the superintendent's house on fire near the entrance to the park.

The man who used to live there, current Ocmulgee National Monument Superintendent Jim David, moved his family off the property more than four years ago. The house had been vacant since the fall when a law enforcement ranger left, David said.

"Investigators have no question it was arson," David said. "The individual started a fire in one of the back rooms."

Dwight Donald Davis, 57, of Macon, is charged with arson, burglary and criminal trespass, according to the Bibb County Sheriff's Office. He is being held at the Bibb County jail without bond, said Sgt. Sean DeFoe, sheriff's office spokesman.

The sheriff's office, federal law enforcement rangers and the Macon-Bibb County Fire Department are investigating the fire, he said.

Flames heavily damaged two rooms, but firefighters were able to save the walls, roof and outside of the house, David said.

"You can see inside the house the heat was melting things and peeling paint, so it was just about ready to flash over," David said.

If the alarm hadn't sounded or if firefighters were delayed, David thinks the house would have been engulfed in flames. The cold night also kept temperatures down in the attic, which slowed progression of the fire, David said.

The house was built in 1857 as a wedding present from the bride's parents when Mary Burge married Capt. Sam Dunlap.

It's a fact that Macon Councilman Rick Hutto knows well.

He spent years researching the family for a book he wrote that detailed the sordid and murderous tale of Chester Burge.

Hutto said the family is credited with saving Macon from the flames during the Civil War. Union Gen. George Stoneman seized the house during his raid in the Battle of Macon in 1865.

When the Works Progress Administration excavated the park in the 1930s, the building housed the

on-site headquarters for the Smithsonian Institute during the project, David said.

Due to the historical significance of the building, David said an historic preservation crew from his regional office is expected Thursday to begin evaluating how to rebuild.

He said officials likely will consider restoring the house to include its original high ceilings that were lowered years ago.

"We are very, very lucky," David said. "We came close to losing it."

### Renovating the Birthplace of WV's Statehood

WHEELING, W.Va. (AP), February 8, 2011

The birthplace of West Virginia's statehood is getting a makeover.

Contractors have been renovating Independence Hall in Wheeling since last year. Travis Henline with the Division of Culture and History told *The Intelligencer* that restoration of damaged stone on the outside should be completed by mid-March.

Other improvements include plaster and painting repairs, updated windows, a new fire suppression system and conversion of the basement to a new theater and gallery space.

Built in 1859 as a customs house, Independence Hall served as the capitol of the Restored Government of Virginia after the western counties broke away from Virginia during the Civil War.

