



THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

A Hero's Treasure Comes Home at Last

By Molly Knight
Sun Staff

Originally published January 13, 2004,
Baltimore Sun

Missing, 1931.

Scrawled in pencil on the worn corner of a 3-by-5-inch note card, the notation is the museum's only inventory record of the mysterious theft of the U.S. Naval Academy's Worden Sword. One word, one date - preserved in the depths of one of the academy's old filing cabinets labeled "personal swords."

It wasn't much. But it was all the evidence FBI agents needed when they phoned academy museum curator Jim Cheevers recently to inquire about the disappearance of the Civil War-era sword seven decades ago.

"They told me up front they thought they had found it," said Cheevers, curator for the past 36 years. "My first thought was, 'Is this for real?'"

Until that November phone call, Cheevers said he had assumed the worst: that the legendary sword named for Union naval hero John Lorimer Worden had been damaged irreparably or melted down and sold for a large sum.

What really happened, Cheevers never could have guessed.

Decades after it was lifted from its glass case on a wall in Bancroft Hall, the sword somehow fell prey to a trio of antiques dealers who staged phony appraisals for the PBS television series *Antiques Roadshow*. The dealers were convicted on various counts of fraud in 2001 and 2002, but it was not until last fall that the investigation led FBI officials to the academy's sword.

Because agents continue to search for a number of culturally valuable relics, the FBI declined to give the name of the sword's most recent owner or details about its original theft.

For Cheevers and others at the academy, however, all that mattered was its safe return.

In a formal ceremony held January 12th in the academy's museum, the FBI turned over the Tiffany & Co. sword - in perfect condition - to its rightful home.

Cheevers could not hide his enthusiasm for the relic, displayed for the event on a cloth-covered table flanked by its belt and scabbard.

"I've seen many other swords from Tiffany's but this one is the *creme de la creme*," said Cheevers, calling the return one of the most significant moments in the museum's history.

Wearing white gloves, Cheevers ran his fingers over the sword's elaborate design elements, which include miniature reliefs of the Roman god Neptune and a ship, decorative oak leaves and a black-and-gold embroidered belt.

Although the academy's museum boasts glass cases filled with presentation swords, Cheevers said the 37-inch Worden Sword is highly valued not only for its design, but because it's inspired by a real-life war hero.

Celebrated as the first naval officer in history to lead a steam-driven, ironclad ship into battle, Worden began his naval career as a midshipman in 1834. In 1861, en route from delivering secret orders to federal troops in Florida, Worden was captured by Confederates and held as a prisoner of war for seven months in Montgomery, Ala.

When he returned to New York, the lieutenant was appointed commander of the USS *Monitor*, which he led in a four-hour clash with the CSS *Virginia* (formerly called *Merrimack*). The battle ended in a stalemate, but Worden - who temporarily lost his sight in the fighting - was given the ornate sword by his home state of New York for his bravery during the encounter. After the war, Worden was appointed as the seventh superintendent



of the Naval Academy and promoted to rear admiral.

Worden died in 1897, and 15 years later, his family donated the sword to the Naval Academy. Legend has it that the relic was discovered missing when a master-at-arms found its glass case lying in a pile of wood.

Although he did not attend the ceremony, Annapolis resident Robert L. Worden - a distant relative of the admiral and researcher of his family's history - said he plans to visit the museum as soon as possible to see the sword for the first time.

"I don't even know what it looks like," said Worden. "I remember my father taking us to see the exhibit at the academy and telling us about the theft. Seeing it will be really exciting."

On January 12th, FBI Special Agent Jeffrey A. Lampinski spoke - albeit vaguely - about the sword's recovery to a rapt audience of more than three dozen people gathered there.

"These kinds of items belong to all of us and should be displayed here for us to enjoy," the Philadelphia-based agent said.



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Lampinski did little to end the mystery over exactly what had happened to the sword over the years, except to say that in 1989, a family that had had the sword since the 1930s contacted appraisers they had seen on television to offer it for sale.

He would not provide names of the family that sold the sword or the buyer, who he said returned it when told it was the property of the Navy.

He linked a trio of art dealers - George Juno, Russell Pritchard Jr. and Russell Pritchard III - to the buying and selling of the sword. Over several years, Lampinski said, the three dealers brazenly conned numerous owners of Civil War-era relics by convincing them that their antiques were worthless. Purchasing the treasures for a small sum, they would then sell them to museums and collectors for a fortune, the agent said.

For Cheevers, of course, the sword is priceless. Soon to be safely encased near an oil painting of a bearded Worden dressed in uniform, it will be the highlight of the veteran curator's museum tours.

As for his file on the sword, Cheevers said it's grown considerably beyond the original note card to include a stack of news clippings about its safe return.

"I never thought anyone would see it again," he said. "I'm now telling my friends that if they lose things, they should never give up hope."

Sun staff writer Laura Loh and researcher Jean Packard, and the Associated Press contributed to this article.

Gettysburg Rangers Win Award for Park Watch Program

Jan. 15, 2004 –Courtesy CWI Premium-The National Park Service (NPS) Northeast Region has recognized Park Rangers Rick Pearce and Randy Phiel for creating and managing Gettysburg National Military Park's Park Watch

Patrol volunteer program. Pearce and Phiel organized the Park Watch Patrol in 1996 to address increasing vandalism on the 6,000-acre civil war battlefield. NPS Regional Director Marie Rust presented Rangers Pearce and Phiel with the region's Protection Volunteer Award at the Chief Ranger's conference last month.

The Gettysburg battlefield hosts nearly two million visitors a year and includes 35 miles of paved roads, more than 1300 monuments, 400 artillery pieces, and 70 historic buildings. A dramatic upswing in vandalism and other incidents in 1996 created concerns for park staff charged with protecting resources.

Incidents included random destruction of civil war monuments such as when the head of the sculpture on the 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters monument was broken off, a saber handle was broken off and stolen from the 4th New York Cavalry monument, and the statue on the 4th NY artillery monument was toppled from its pedestal.

At the time, incidents of artifact looting were also on the rise. On one occasion Park Rangers arrested two New York state residents who traveled to Gettysburg to metal detect for artifacts, and on another a Park Ranger discovered 45 holes dug by two men looking for artifacts.

In response, Rangers Pearce and Phiel recruited and trained twelve volunteers to form Gettysburg's Park Watch Patrol, to serve as additional "eyes and ears" for park protection staff. The program has grown into an extremely successful and effective model for protecting park resources and enhancing visitor services. Currently 120 volunteers participate; some who routinely travel from as far away as California, Kentucky, Ohio, and New Jersey to participate. Volunteers patrol the park on foot, by bicycle, horseback, and their personal vehicles during all hours of the day and

night, logging more than 8,300 hours of patrol time and services in 2003. In 2002 there were only six incidents involving vandalism to monuments and the estimated damage was about \$900. This represents a 73% decrease in the number of incidents when compared with 1996, the year Park Watch began. In addition to the decrease in vandalism and looting, Park Watch Patrol has enhanced protection at Gettysburg NMP in a variety of other ways. Volunteers patrol the park after hours and frequently alert Rangers to the presence of people in closed areas. Drug and alcohol related incidents have understandably increased due to increased observation and reporting of these incidents by the volunteers.

As one example, in 2002 volunteers reported a car speeding through the Devil's Den area and heard the occupants shouting obscenities out of the windows. A Ranger stopped the car and found all three of the occupants were under the influence of alcohol and all were underage. The driver was arrested for DUI.

Although the focus of Park Watch remains for the volunteers to be the "eyes and ears" of the park's protection staff, it has expanded to include low-risk surveillance operations, assistance with parking and crowd control at special events, and campground host duties. Park Watch volunteers routinely assist on-duty Park Rangers during motor vehicle accidents, searches, park closures, weather emergencies and medical emergencies.

Gettysburg Park Watch volunteers have received the Pennsylvania Governor's annual Crime Prevention Award five times since 1996.



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Editor's Note:

With this issue we begin a serialization of an article written about Mrs. Bradley Johnson by Mr. Gary Baker. Mr. Baker has written many articles on Maryland Civil War History and has an excellent web site at:

<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Orion/3464/>

Many thanks to Gary Baker for granting BCWRT permission to reprint the following:

Heroine of the 1st Maryland Volunteer Infantry, CSA

By Gary Baker

The end of America's Ante-bellum era came with a resounding crash on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces in Charleston, South Carolina, opened fire on Fort Sumter. For many Americans, Northerners and Southerners alike, whose loyalties were torn between their state and their country, economics and morality, family ties and political beliefs, the bombardment brought an abrupt end to their indecision. It also brought to an end Virginia's fence sitting concerning the issue of secession. Up until the South Carolina militia under the command of General Pierre G.T. Beauregard shelled Fort Sumter, Virginia had been unable to decide which path she should follow. Many Virginians, such as Robert E. Lee, who had openly declared that secession was nothing more than treason, had hoped that war would be avoided. Most Virginians actually opposed secession in 1860. In January of 1861 the state legislature had called for a convention on the issue, and secessionists suffered a stiff setback in the election of representatives to the convention. Roughly seventy-five percent of Virginia's delegates were moderates. In February the Virginia legislature called for a "Peace Convention" which was held in Washington, D.C., where

representatives from all over the upper South debated various proposals concerning the issue of slavery and how the Union might be reconstructed to insure that slavery and the Union continued to co-exist. But once the news of the bombardment reached Richmond, all hope of Virginia remaining in the Union came to an end. Over the next four years Virginia's landscape would be devastated because of the decision that her citizens had made in the midst of the frenzy and excitement that permeated Richmond and other communities throughout the state during the week that followed the bombardment. On April 17th Virginia left the Union, and ten days later joined the Confederate States of America.

Virginia's secession placed her sister state Maryland in a desperate and awkward situation. Washington, DC, the capital of the United States, was softly nestled along the Potomac River between Virginia and Maryland, placing Maryland, a slave state whose slave population had been steadily decreasing while it's free black population had been steadily increasing over the previous thirty years, directly between those states that had remained loyal to the Union, and those who were leaving it. Like Virginia, Maryland's loyalties were divided. Since the 1830's Maryland had seen a large influx of Irish and German immigrants who had fled tyranny in their homelands; and while these new comers were as prejudicial against black people as most white Americans were in the 1800's, they could not accept the idea of any man owning another. But many Marylanders owned slaves, and tobacco, grown and harvested by slaves, was the state's cash crop, as it had been since the early 1700's. A large number of Maryland's state legislatures were slave owners themselves, or supported the institution of slavery, and they had vowed to follow Virginia if she left the Union. Many other

Marylanders, who may or may not have supported slavery, did believe that the individual states had the right of self determination, and that the Federal government's role in their lives should be a limited one. But Maryland's Governor, Thomas Holliday Hicks, a staunch Unionist, tried to steer a course of neutrality between the two factions, declaring "we have violated no rights of either section. We have been loyal to the Union. The unhappy contest between the two sections has not been tormented or encouraged by us, although we have suffered from it in the past. We have done all we could to avert it." (1) Governor Hicks even offered to serve as an arbitrator for the two sides. Though Abraham Lincoln had hoped that some sort of compromise could be found to hold the Union together, the attack on Fort Sumter forced the new President's hand. Lincoln immediately called for 75,000 volunteers to squelch the rebellion. In response to the President's call, Massachusetts, which had been in the process of calling out it's militia, sent several regiments to Washington. In order to reach the capital, those troops, like any other troops drawn from the northern states, had to pass through the Maryland countryside, which was about to explode.

Though the city of Baltimore was the terminus for five major railroads by the mid 1800's, due to city ordinances, not one passed through the city limits. Consequently, passengers passing through Baltimore were forced to change rail lines once they arrived in the city. In order to do so, they had to disembark from their train once it arrived, and make their way across town to the terminus of their connecting line. In some instances passengers walked or caught a lift to their departure station. In others, the cars were disconnected from the arriving train and pulled across town by a team of horses. On April 19th, responding to President



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Lincoln's call to arms, the 6th Massachusetts arrived in Baltimore from Philadelphia on the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad. Once they left their train, the nervous volunteers, who had heard rumors in Philadelphia that they might be attacked when they arrived in Baltimore, loaded their rifles, and then proceeded down Pratt Street toward the Baltimore & Ohio station at Camden Yards. They soon encountered a mob blocking their path. A vicious riot ensued, leaving twelve civilians and four soldiers dead. Baltimore erupted. Local militias armed themselves, and para-military organizations from throughout the state poured into the city. To prevent additional Federal troops from passing through the state, riders rode into northern Baltimore County and burned bridges on every major artery leading into Baltimore. Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, with a contingent of militia and Baltimore Police, commandeered a train of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad and proceeded northeast toward the Susquehanna River. Along their route they burned railroad trestles and cut telegraph wires. Baltimore and Washington were virtually cut off from the North. Trimble's actions forced a second regiment of Massachusetts volunteers to commandeer the ferry boat "Maryland" and proceed down the Chesapeake Bay to Annapolis, the state capital. After securing Annapolis they moved on to relieve Washington. On April 22nd Governor Hicks wired President Lincoln, informing him, "I feel it my duty most respectfully to advise you that no more troops be ordered or allowed to pass through Maryland, and that the troops now off Annapolis be sent elsewhere; and I most respectfully urge that a truce be offered by you so that the effusion of blood may be prevented." (2) Prior to the Baltimore Riot, Governor

Hicks had been under intense pressure by both his constituents and his cabinet, who demanded to know what course Maryland would follow. Maryland's State Legislature met only once every two years and was out of session in 1861. For some time Hicks used this as an excuse not to call the legislature together, but the events of mid-April forced him into action. On the same day that he wired Lincoln to call for peace, Hicks called a special session of the legislature to resolve the issue of secession. Originally he called for the State Legislature to meet in Annapolis on April 26th. But like Baltimore, the state capital was a hot bed of Southern support. Hicks used the excuse that it would be unwise to meet in either city since they were occupied by Federal troops, to convene the legislature in Frederick City. Though there were numerous slave owners and Southern supporters in Frederick, the community was overwhelmingly pro-Union. After several days of deliberation the Maryland State Legislature concluded that the State Constitution placed the power of secession solely in the hands of the citizens of Maryland. To determine their fate, the citizens of Maryland would have to elect representatives to a state convention to vote on whether or not Maryland would secede. But Maryland's fate was already sealed. Thousands of men loyal to the Union were pouring into Maryland, making their way to Washington. Camps spilled out of the city into the Maryland countryside. Major cities found themselves home to small garrisons, and camps were quickly positioned all along the Potomac. Realizing that Maryland was not in a position to determine her own future, many Marylanders began slipping across the Potomac to offer their services to the Confederacy. Most of these men made their way to either Richmond or the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, which had been occupied by Colonel Thomas J.

Jackson, a relatively unknown professor of artillery from the Virginia Military Institute. Shortly after the legislature's announcement, Bradley Tyler Johnson, a prominent Frederick lawyer, and commander of a local militia unit, met with Jackson, and made arrangements to bring his company into Virginia. A descendant of Thomas Johnson, Jr., who in 1777 was Maryland's first non-Colonial Governor, Bradley Johnson was an up-and-coming member of Maryland's Democratic Party. He had held the position of Frederick County's State's Attorney for several terms. In 1857 he made an unsuccessful bid for Comptroller of the Treasury. Shortly afterwards the state Democratic Party appointed him chairman of the state central committee. By the late 1850's Johnson was representing Maryland's Democratic Party at a number of state and national conventions, and in 1860 he directed John C. Breckinridge's presidential campaign in Maryland. On May 7th, Johnson's wife, Jane Claudia, accompanied by her five year old son, left her comfortable home in Frederick in the care of friends S. Teakle Willis, John Hanson Thomas, Ross Winans and others, crossed into Virginia, and made her way to the home of family friends in Chestnut Hill. The following day Captain Johnson led his militia to Point of Rocks, where they were met by a Confederate escort and led to Harper's Ferry. (3)

Notes:

(1) Scharf, Thomas J., History of Maryland, Volume III, Tradition Press, Hatboro, Pa., 1967.

(2) Scharf, Col. Thomas J., Chronicles of Baltimore

(3) Johnson, Bradley T., Memoir of Jane Claudia Johnson, Southern Historical Society Papers. Vol. XXIX. Richmond, Va. January-December, 1901, referred to as SHSP-Johnson

Next month:

The 1st Maryland joins the Confederate Army.



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