



MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.

President's Message, March 30, 2017

Dear Civil War Enthusiasts,

I am writing this letter from a ship in the Mediterranean Sea. I will make this message shorter than usual. Obviously, no matter where I go, the LCWRT is in my thoughts.

Thanks to Joe Roney for performing admirably in my absence. From reports, there was a slight SNAFU that was overcome. In any case, I am jealous that you all got the opportunity to listen to and see a national treasure – Ed Bearrs.

Please take time to review the balance of our 2017 Spring schedule. Ms. Abbott will be outstanding and we are planning a special tribute to Fort Sumter in July.

We have had some members come forward to offer their expertise in managing our club. Thanks to them. We can certainly use more assistance. Please offer to help.

When I return, the Executive Committee will be deconstructing everything that we do currently to see whether there are better ways to operate our club. Please call, email or otherwise contact any board member and let them know your thinking and desires for the club. Our only focus is to improve the club.

See you in May.

Respectfully, Bob Waite
President

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Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy

by Karen Abbot

“Women on both sides fueled their States’ war efforts. Some chafed at the limitations society set for them and determined to change the course of the war.”

Karen Abbot is the pen name of Abbott Kahler. A native of Philadelphia, she is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Sin in the Second City*, the progressive era and the world of the Everleigh Sisters, *American Rose*, the Roaring 20s, the Great Depression, and the world of Gypsy Rose Lee. And, now *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy*, about four women who risked everything to become spies during the Civil War.

Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy was named one of the best books of 2014 by Library Journal, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and Amazon. Sony Pictures has optioned the book for a miniseries.

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The role of women on both sides of the Civil War has received minimal attention in modern histories of the dissension, but a few women did much more than make bandaging supplies and keep the home fires burning.”War like politics, was men’s work,” Abbot writes, “and women were supposed to be among its victims, not its perpetrators. Women’s loyalty was assumed, regarded as a prime attribute of femininity itself, but now there was a question — one that would persist throughout the war — of what to do what one Lincoln official called ‘fashionable women spies.’

Their gender provided them with both a psychological and a physical disguise; while hiding behind social mores about women’s proper roles, they could hide evidence of their treason on their very person, tucked beneath loop skirts or tied up in their hair. Women, it seemed, were capable not only of important acts of treason but of executing them more deftly than men.” some patriotic women capitalized on their cumbersome garments, using them to hide all types of goods as they passed through enemy lines. Once, a Southern woman using her hoop skirt hid a roll of army cloth, boots, crimson flannel, golden braid, and a roll of silk, preserved meats in cans, and coffee.

Abbott tells the spellbinding true stories of four women (and not entirely scrupulous) Civil War spies who risked everything for their cause. The four courageous women including — a socialite, a farm-girl, an abolitionist and a widow — who were spies. Abbott claims that “as many as four hundred women, in both North and South, were posing and fighting as men.”

The wartime granted Southern women to revolt against their identifies as genteel ladies — a change that was evident in both actions in speech. “I confess myself a rebel, body and soul,” declared a Louisiana girl, adding, “Confess? I glory in it!” Union

soldiers occupying southern towns complained of “she rebels” who spat at them. Southern belles had nothing but hatred for the Yankees that occupied their cities. Some even went so far as to hurl buckets of waste at the invaders — not very ladylike.

Maria “Belle” Boyd was born in Bunker Hill, Virginia (now West Virginia), the oldest of eight children and the daughter of a shopkeeper, Benjamin Boyd. Her father enlisted in the Second Virginia Infantry, part of the Stonewall Brigade. The family moved to Martinsburg when Belle was ten along with their six slaves, one of whom, Eliza Corsey, became Belle's close friend and helped in her espionage adventures. By candlelight, Belle defied the law and taught Eliza to read and write. “Slavery, like all other imperfect forms of society, will have its day,” Belle wrote, “but the time for its final extinction in the Confederate States of America has not yet arrived.”

After shooting a Union soldier in her front hallway, Boyd became a courier and spy for the Confederate army. Belle Boyd; women secessionist was so admired that they called her the “Secesh Cleopatra.” (Secesh is slang for secessionist.) At seventeen-years-old when the war began, she wasn't considered pretty but had high self-confidence. “My form is beautiful,” she told a cousin. “My eyes are of a dark blue and so expressive. My hair of a rich brown and I think I tie it up nicely. My neck and arms are beautiful, and my foot is perfect.” She had a mad crush on Stonewall Jackson. (It was not reciprocated) Once she managed to get him information on how Union generals planned to lure him into a trap in the Shenandoah Valley. She was downright impetuous, and even when she was captured and imprisoned in the Yankee's prison she “filled her days with flirting and spying, the two being interdependent in her mind.”

Belle led a network of rebel women, who crept about Union camps, stealing thousands of sabers and pistols and tying them to the steel coils of their hoop skirts. One day the 28th Pennsylvania Regiment, encamped near Harpers Ferry, discovered a cache of two hundred sabers, four hundred pistols, cavalry equipment for two hundred men, and one thousand four hundred muskets, all stashed inside barns and outhouses and buried underground, awaiting transfer to Southern lines. Women even enlisted their daughters in their smuggling efforts, packing quinine in sacks of oiled silk and tucking them inside the hollowed paper-mâché heads of dolls.

Sarah Emma Edmonds cut off her hair and assumed the identity of a man to enlist as a Union private, witnessing the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. Edmonds, put on a soldier's uniform, changed her name to Frank Thompson and enlisted in Company F, Second Michigan Infantry. Of the four women whose stories Abbott tells, she was the only one who managed to pass as a man and to join a fighting unit, through she served primarily on the medical staff or as a mail carrier before doing a stint as a spy. She had had a difficult childhood that included “the ‘severity’ of the father” and an “impending arranged marriage to a vulgar old neighbor”: putting on a uniform and disappearing into the vast ranks of the Union army seemed preferable to anything else the future seemed

to hold for her.

Rose O’Neale Greenhow, a beautiful widow, engaged in affairs with powerful Northern politicians to gather intelligence for the Confederacy, and used her young daughter to send information to southern generals. As a Confederate agent, Rose O’Neal Greenhow led a spy ring in Washington D.C. from her home near Lafayette Square — “within easy rifle range” of Lincoln’s White House. She seduced many Northern politicians and found out information concerning the war, including future vice-president Henry Wilson, and abolitionist Republican senator and Lincoln’s chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs.

Greenhow was in her late 40s as the war began, and had a young daughter. She was still attractive enough to lure men into the tender trap she employed on behalf of the Confederacy. Living in Washington, she was “a greedy prospector of the powerful.” She courted John C. Calhoun, former vice president and ardent defender of slavery; she called him “the best and wisest man of this country.” His politics shaped hers. She learned to encode messages in cipher and sent useful information to Richmond. She was situated in just the right place: “She understood that the Confederate espionage system had certain advantages, circumstances she could exploit to gather intelligence. Washington, D.C., was a Southern city in both character and origin; a third of its residents had been born in the slave-holding states of Virginia or Maryland Nearly every member of the Confederate government had once been a Federal official and, as such, possessed intimate knowledge of government operations. Jefferson Davis himself had served as secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce. Even the city’s mayor, James G. Berret, was said to ‘smack of sympathy with secession.’”

Elizabeth Van Lew, a wealthy Richmond abolitionist, hid behind her proper southern manners as she orchestrated a far-reaching espionage ring, right under the noses of suspicious rebel detectives. “Richmond society had always tolerated her, partly because of her father’s legacy as a prominent businessman and slave owner and partly because she was perceived as a benign oddity, an eccentric old spinster destined to die alone in her house on the hill. Elizabeth Van Lew formed her espionage ring in the Confederate capital of Richmond, even placing a former slave as a spy in the Confederate White House. No one there suspected that Mary Jane Bowser was a highly educated and skilled secret agent with an extraordinarily accurate and vivid recall (eidetic memory). She was capable of memorizing images in a glance and could recall entire conversations word for word.

Col. D. B. Parker, a member of Gen. Ulysses Grant’s staff, later explained in the *New York Tribune*, “Shoes were pretty scarce in those days, but Miss Van Lew’s servants had two pairs each and changed them every day. They never wore out of Richmond in the afternoon the same shoes they wore into the city in the morning. The soles of these shoes were double and hollow, and in them were carried through the lines letters, maps, plans, etc., which were regularly delivered to Gen. Grant at City Point the next

morning.” False bottom trays, special soled shoes, and messages in books were not Van Lew's only methods of getting messages to the Federals. Sometimes, the farmhand might insert a thinly rolled message into a tiny hole in the shell of a hollow egg hidden in a basket of eggs to be delivered to the next station. Or a seamstress with needles and threads might stitch up a secret message inside a pattern. A store clerk might write a message in invisible ink or tear it into tiny strips to be pieced together later.

Van Lew had Yankee roots, a pedigree that prevented her from achieving the standing that came with birth into the right families.” She had been educated in Philadelphia “under the care of an abolitionist governess” who seems to have been the most influential person in her life. The abolitionism she learned from became the driving force in Van Lew's adult life, and when Richmond went to war she went undercover, helping captured Northern soldiers escape. She became such a skilled spy that Ulysses Grant sent her a personal note: “*You have sent me the information received from Richmond during the war.*” When he became President of the United States, he made her Postmaster of Richmond, a position she kept for his two terms as President.

Using a wealth of primary source material and interviews with the spies’ descendants, Abbott seamlessly weaves the adventures of these four heroines throughout the tumultuous years of the war. The book has a cast of real-life characters including Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, General Stonewall Jackson, detective Allan Pinkerton, Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, and including Emperor Napoleon III*.

*The French government certainly had sympathies for the Confederacy because both regimes were aristocratic, while the North had a more democratic social and economic system that wasn't as rigidly hierarchical. France's trade prospects were also hurt because of Northern blockades of Southern ports. France wanted to intervene to ensure the trade of cotton, wine, brandy, and silk.

Sources: www.amazon.com, www.militaryhistorynow.com, www.wondersandmarvels.com, www.libertyletters.com

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The 2017 Program Season

The LCWRT meets in the Bluffton High School auditorium unless otherwise announced.

April 12 – 6:45 p.m. Karen Abbott, author - “Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy

- May 10 - 6:45 p.m. Phil Leigh, author - "Trading With the Enemy"
Presentation of 2017 Keller Family Scholarship Winner
- July 12 – 6:45 p.m. Magnolia Hall – Sun City
Dr. Kyle Sinisi – Fort Sumter
(Dr. Kyle Sinisi, professor at The Citadel, educator,
author and historian - "Seeds of Seccession")
- Sept. 13 – 6:45 p.m. Jack Rabbitt "Battle of Chickamauga"
Place to be announced!
- Oct. 11 - 6:45 p.m. Dr. Larry Rowland, author & historian - "Reconstruction"
Place to be announced!
- Nov. 08 - 6:45 p.m. Jack Waugh, Civil War historian & Lincoln biographer
- "Lincoln at War's End"
Place to be announced!

NOTE: There is a \$10 Guest/Nonmember fee for any individual lecture. Students and teachers with ID are free.

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Civil War Timeline – April 1863

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| April 2 | Bread Riot - Richmond | Va. |
| April 5 | Lincoln meets with Maj. Joe Joe Hooker (US) to discuss strategy in | Va. |
| April 7 | Nine Union ironclads sail into Charleston Harbor and attack Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter, under the command of Adm. DuPont. | S.C. |
| April 11 | Col. A. Streight leaves Nashville on a raid of Rome, Ga. | Ga. |
| April 12 | Siege of Suffolk | Va. |
| April 13 | Federal forces engage Fort Bisland in Bayou Teche | La. |

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| April 14 | Battle of Centreville | La. |
| | Union gunners destroy the USS <i>Queen of the West</i> | La. |
| April 16 | Rear Adm. David Porter sent 12 vessels south on the Mississippi past Vicksburg. | Miss. |
| April 17 | Col. Benjamin Grierson (US) leaves La Grange, Tenn. With 1,700 man cavalry headed towards Mississippi to raid the state. | Miss. |
| | Brig. Gen. John Marmaduke (CS) leaves Arkansas and enters Missouri on a raid. | Mo. |
| April 19 | The Nebraska Territory enabling act – the first step to statehood is signed into law. | D.C. |
| April 20 | Lincoln proclaims that West Vir. would join the Union on June 20, 1863 | D.C. |
| April 20 | Brig. Gen. Robert Hoke (CS) captures Plymouth and the 2,800 man Union garrison stationed there. | N.C. |
| April 22 | Grant's forces south of Vicksburg are resupplied by Porter's fleet, which suffered heavy losses when transports and barges steamed by Confederate batteries. | Miss. |
| | Second Vicksburg Campaign | |
| | Confederate Senate passes tax – 10 percent of everything produced or grown be given to the Confederate government. | Ala. |
| April 27 | Col. Abel Streight leaves Tuscumbia | Ala. |
| | Raid on Rome, Georgia | |
| | Maj. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner assumes command of the Dept. of East Tennessee. | Tenn. |

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| April 30 | Army of the Potomac forces set up camp in the Wilderness surrounding the Chancellor family home after crossing the Rappahannock River | Va. |
| | Abel Streight (US) fights a pitched battle at Day's Gap. | Ala. |
| | Gen. Grant begins crossing the Mississippi and landing U.S. Troops south of Vicksburg. | Miss. |

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***NOTE: The website address for the Lowcountry Civil War Round Table (LCWRT) is:
www.lcwrt.squarespace.com and it
can be used to get current and historical LCWRT information***