



MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

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

President's Message, April 26, 2017

Dear Civil War Enthusiast,

Another year in the Round Table is coming to an end. The year has brought us many great speakers and terrific field trips. (Two trips subsidized by the South Carolina Humanities Council.) I was traveling in March and missed the trip to Fort Pulaski. Everyone I spoke to stated that it was a great day and that the stop on Tybee Island was very special. During this past season, we also had Hurricane Matthew that caused us to cancel our October meeting. While there was quite a bit of property damage, we survived and thrived. Our April speaker, Karen Abbott, received rave reviews. Thank you to the Programming Committee for finding these outstanding speakers.

Now, it is May again, our final speaker of our regular season is upon us. Phil Leigh has a great subject and, my understanding, is that he will be bringing several of his published books for purchase. (Phil was initially scheduled for October.) May is also the time that, as required by the bylaws, I present the annual state of the club report. As you are aware our membership slipped significantly this year, and that has consequences. Further, it is time for the election of new officers for 2017-2018. (Please note that we still require a VP, Program Chair, and Hospitality Chair.) Do not hesitate to offer yourself to this service. The entire Executive Committee will support you.

After an exhaustive process, Caroline Kennedy and Joe Roney are ready to announce our annual Scholarship winner, this will be our third recipient. Our first two winners were excellent representatives of our club, and I expect our new winner will be the same. I am very excited. I think that our past winners may be in attendance. It is always a highlight of our year.

Please attend this very important meeting. It isn't only the annual report, election (For which we must have a quorum) and announcement of our scholarship winner, but there are going to be some major announcements about the club. We have reviewed the survey that was taken in April; listened to your input and reviewed our club's finances. Taking all of these factors into account the board has made some significant changes for our future success. We think that the club's scholarship program, our mission to increase knowledge of the Civil War and preserve Civil War sites is important. Our objective is to re-position the club for success in the future. We know that you will be pleased with our changes but it does involve change. CHANGE- It is a word that makes many apprehensive. But don't be. The changes to our club to

be announced are going to make us a better club; a more vibrant club and a rejuvenated one with a great future.

On a personal note, this will be my last letter to the membership. It has been an honor to serve you. I want to personally thank all the members that give of their time without recognition. Without them, I could not have made it. What we are doing is important. It is amazing to me that every day I see aspects of this great conflict reflected in our culture, our government and in our politics.

Thank you again!

Respectfully, Bob Waite

President.

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Keller Family Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.

2017 Scholarship Winner

Our 2017 \$1,000 scholarship winner is Megan Reilly, a senior at John Paul II Catholic School in Ridgeland. Ms. Reilly is a biology major and has applied to seven universities. Her award-winning essay *"The Significance of the Historic Secession Oak in Downtown Bluffton"* was excellent and included a color photograph of the Secession Oak.

Ms. Reilly joins our past winners: Marrcel Smith from Bluffton High School who's 2015 winning entry was *"The True Confederate Flag,"* and Chase Saunders from Hilton Head Island High School who won with his 2016 *"Fascinating Civil War Heroes: General Robert Smalls."* Both young men attend Clemson University.

We are proud of our outstanding scholarship winners and welcome them to our fold, and thank their parents for raising such model citizens. - Caroline W. Kennedy, LCWRT Scholarship Chairman

The Significance of the Historic Secession Oak in Downtown Bluffton

By: Megan Reilly

The Secession Oak played a key role in the formation of the Bluffton Movement in the 1840s. The oak, which is located in Old Town Bluffton on

what was John Verdier's plantation, served as a meeting place for local activists. It was under this tree where Robert Rhett gave his speech demanding that action be taken against the tariff and where many were inspired to contribute to what would become the Confederate cause. It was here that the seed for secession was planted (Rowland, 1996). Throughout the war, the Secession Oak was an emblem for the soldiers and leaders of the Lowcountry.

"The Bluffton Movement" began as a political stance against the Federal Government, opposing the Tariff Bill of 1842. This bill significantly raised the average tariff rates and impacted the trading economy along the coast. Lowcountry plantation owners became agitated with tariff laws and disputes over states' rights. On July 31st, 1844, a group of local planters, including Squire William Pope, George Edward, James Kirk, and Heyward Hamilton, organized a dinner party to welcome home their representative in Congress and to discuss their growing conflicts with the Federal Government. Planters, led by Edmund Rhett, also came from Beaufort (Rowland, 1996). The event had been planned by a committee that included Pope and Kirk, along with Benjamin Scott, George Stoney, William Wigg, Thomas Drayton, and Burrell Wiggins (Cantrell, 1988).

Despite the previous days' rain, about 500 people attended, including US Congressman Robert Rhett. That evening, Rhett spoke fervently about the need to protect the state's "sovereignty" and introduced some of his more radical ideas. The implication of his speech was, "either nullification...or secession" (Bluffton Historical Preservation Society, 1983, p. 9). No imported food was served at the dinner in an effort to protest the high tariffs. During the meeting, men wore badges of palmetto leaves to signify their resistance (Davis, 2001). That night, Rhett toasted the idea of an 1845 state convention by drawing a parallel to the American Revolution saying "May it be as useful as the Convention of 1776" (Davis, 2001, pg 200).

Eventually the ideas of Rhett and other "fire-eaters" began to take off. This group of men, called the Bluffton Boys, were known for their more extreme views and their willingness to secede or even go to war. When this group was founded, they received much criticism. However, as the situation in Washington deteriorated and the debate over the annexation of Texas as a slave state continued, the ideas of the Bluffton Boys gained acceptance. The death of John C. Calhoun in 1850 also allowed the ideas of the Bluffton

Boys to spread. Without the opposition of Calhoun's more conservative views, the radical views of Rhett and other fire-eaters thrived and eventually influenced the secession of South Carolina. (Fulgham, 2012)

Those present at the Secession Oak dinner were joined by other supporters of the Bluffton Movement, including John McQueen, William Colcock, Whitemarsh Seabrook, and James Hammond (Fulgham, 2012). The Bluffton Boys played significant roles in South Carolina's politics and the road to secession, serving as governors and congressmen. Edmund Rhett, Robert's brother, served as mayor of Beaufort and, along with Colcock, was a director of the Charleston and Savannah Railroad. This railroad was essential to Confederate troops as it provided transportation of supplies and reinforcement troops (Fulgham, 2012). Many of the men at the Secession Oak meeting eventually lost their homes in the burning of Bluffton, including Pope, Drayton, and Wiggins (Bluffton Historic Preservation Society, 1983, map).

Thomas Drayton was an influential Bluffton Boy who went on to play an active role in the war. Drayton owned a plantation on Hilton Head and a summer home in Bluffton and served as president of the Charleston and Savannah Railroad during its construction. During the war, Drayton became a Brigadier General and was a commander during the Battle of Port Royal. Drayton's brother Percival also had a role in the war, but as a Union ship Commander. Percival was in charge of the USS Pocahontas and fired on Thomas's troops stationed at Fort Walker on Hilton Head (Wise, 2015). Robert Rhett was an essential figure in the Bluffton Movement and influenced the war in South Carolina. He became a politician and was elected attorney general for South Carolina. He was later elected to the 25th Congress in 1836 by a margin of 133 votes and went on to serve six terms. Fellow Bluffton Boy Governor Seabrook backed him in his successful bid as US Senator in 1850 after the death of his nemesis, John C. Calhoun (Davis, 2001). While in Washington, Rhett advocated for states' rights and strongly opposed the tariffs, which harmed the business of many of his Lowcountry constituents. He resigned from his duties in Congress in 1852 and returned to the Lowcountry. Rhett was a delegate for the South Carolina Secession Convention in 1860, as well as a delegate to the Confederate Provisional Congress. The fire-eater said South Carolina could be a "light upon a hill" and a beacon for lovers of the constitution and the rights of the people (Davis, 2001, pg 200). Rhett was also influential through his newspaper *The Charleston Mercury*, of which his son Robert Rhett, Jr. was the editor.

While many would assume the Civil War was based on the desire to continue slavery, this is not necessarily the case. To many in the Lowcountry, the war represented a movement against oppressive laws and tariffs and a fight to maintain states' rights. Although Rhett's ideas were seen as premature, they inspired many young fire-eaters and were instrumental in South Carolina's path to secession. As Janice Hunter Cantrell noted, "History tends to show that 'The Bluffton Movement' did not subside but was a strong catalyst among the forces which brought about the secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860" (Cantrell, 1988, pg 12). The Secession Oak witnessed the birth of the Bluffton Movement and the rise of influential leaders of South Carolina.

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Philip Leigh - *Trading With the Enemy*

Leigh is the author of *Trading With the Enemy; the Covert Economy During the American Civil War (2014)*, *The Confederacy at Flood Tide*, *Lee's Lost Dispatch* and *Other Civil War Controversies*.

Leigh is from Little Rock, Ark. A professional writer, he holds an electrical engineering degree from the Florida Institute of Technology and an MBA from the Kellogg School at Northwestern Univ. He contributed to the *New York Times Disunion Civil War* on-line journal during the Sesquicentennial.

"The year before Lincoln's election, the South accounted for 70 percent of American exports, the great majority of it cotton." - Philip Leigh

Before the Civil War, commercial and manufacturing interest governed the North. They were alarmed over the conflict the slavery question precipitated in Congress. The moneyed interests of the North demanded a cessation of the strife. It did not happen.

South Carolina sent cotton to England and France in exchange for war supplies. Confederate blockade runners carried the seaborne trade for the South during the early part of the Civil War. Southern cotton exported to Europe was only half of that shipped illegally to the North. (Remember Rhett Butler the young dashing blockade runner who was disowned by his family and expelled from Charleston for dishonorable behavior, in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the*

Wind?) A small group of sailors sailed goods in and out of Southern seaports with speed and cunning, with vessels of all sorts and sizes, under the guns of Northern ships-of-war. They needed fast ships, moonless nights, high tides and sharp lookouts.

The Federal Navy was blockading Southern ports to stop all shipments to and from Europe. They deprived the rebellious Confederate states of fabric, clothing, food, shoes, blankets, and medicine, at the expense of millions of dollars and many lives. Adm. Samuel F. DuPont stationed vessels into the inlets below Charleston, and into the sounds of North Carolina. The blockading force grew 300 ships! Some cotton went via the Bahamas, Cuba or Bermuda before sailing on to Liverpool, England. (Cotton. Harvest was in September, and shipments in winter and spring. The profits were considerable.)

Unbelievably, most cotton went to New England textile mills where business “was better than ever,” according to textile mogul Amos Lawrence. Lawrence invested in the Ipswich Mills in Mass., one of the earliest mills to manufacture cotton hosiery and other knitted goods. The owners made an enormous fortune. The mill eventually became the largest manufacturer of knit products in the U.S. (In the years leading up to the Civil War, Amos Adams Lawrence, was a key figure in the abolitionist movement.)

There were some rather unscrupulous individuals involved in trade such as U.S. Senator William Sprague, from Rhode Island. He was, a mill owner and son-in-law to Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, and in a partnership supplying weapons to the Confederacy in exchange for cotton. Sprague at the time was the richest man in the country obtaining most of his money from New England cotton mills. (The present J.P. Morgan Chase bank is a success to an earlier one name for Secretary Chase after he died.)

The trade in contraband was not confined to New England. Union Gen. William T. Sherman claimed Confederates received weapons from Cincinnati. Sen. John Sherman of Ohio importuned his brother, Gen. W. T. Sherman. He counseled his brother on political and military rumor, innuendo and protocol. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant captured Rebel cavalry armed with carbines purchased in Union-occupied Memphis.

Yankees began growing cotton on the captured Sea Islands of South Carolina because it was so important to the economy of the North. The federal government began to assist and employ the Sea Island blacks and several philanthropic and missionary organizations to prepare the “contraband” for emancipation led to the Port Royal Experiment. The government concentrated on employing the “contraband” to harvest and process the valuable Sea Island cotton, while the other organizations provided education. Government and the private charities provided food, clothing, and medical assistance. On Jan. 1, 1863, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation went into effect for the “contraband” of the Sea Islands. It was a day of jubilation for Sea Island blacks. For that day forward they were known as “freedman” entitled to the rights and responsibilities as citizens. (The Port Royal Experiment became a model of what Reconstruction could have been.)

The federal government was not the only ones who profited. Union officers Gen. Benjamin Butler and Adm. David Dixon Porter benefited from this scandalous black market. Butler began grabbing cotton after the Confiscation Act of 1862. The Act permitted confiscation of property owned by anyone “aiding the Confederacy.” Butler reversed his earlier policy of encouraging trade by refusing to seize cotton brought into New Orleans for sale. He sent expeditions into the countryside with no military purpose other than to confiscate cotton from residents assumed to be disloyal. Once brought into New Orleans, the cotton would be sold in rigged sales. To maintain proper appearances, auction proceeds were held for the benefit of “just claimants.” However, the Butler consortium ended up owning the cotton at bargain prices.

Generals Butler and Kirby Smith playing a game of issuing permits at a price, either for cash or a share of the Butler sequestered “properties” in all of Louisiana beyond parishes surrounding New Orleans. In the last months of the War, supplies entering the Union-controlled port of Norfolk, Va., enabled Gen. Robert E. Lee’s Confederate army to avoid starvation. Many of the supplies that passed through the Union blockade into the Confederacy originated in the North, not Europe as was commonly thought. Banks, Butler’s successor in New Orleans was apparently honest, but Butler simply moved on to Norfolk where he was too busy with the illicit trade to attack Richmond when Lee ill-advisedly invaded Pennsylvania.

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During the last months of the war, supplies entering the Union-controlled port of Norfolk, Va., helped Gen. Lee’s army avoid starvation. Indeed, many of the supplies that passed through the Union blockade into the Confederacy originated in Northern states, instead of Europe. Banks, Butler’s successor in New Orleans was apparently honest, but Butler simply moved on to Norfolk where he continued to seek new terminology to achieve his ends.

Leigh shows the connection on both sides with the South fighting for slavery and the North fighting for continued economic domination. Before the war, cotton was the South’s number one economic import. The North’s economy was based upon finished products (including cotton cloth) . . . And food. The Confederacy was strangling. They found themselves cut off from the cornfields of Ohio, and the wheat fields of ILL, the meat-packing plants of Chicago, etc. The Union became cut off from the raw cotton needed for its mills.

President Lincoln admitted that numerous military leaders and public officials were involved in illegal cotton traffic, but refused to stop the trade.

“Lincoln, Seward, and others believed that Europeans might intervene if their textile’s industries were overly deprived of the commodity. And so the decision was made to quietly allow inter-sectional trade in cotton.” - Philip Leigh

The cotton trade profits bought rifles and other contraband. (Slaves, as well as cotton, were considered contraband.) The Confederacy never outlawed trade

with the North but did attempt to regulate it for maximum gain in a purchase of weapons. Little of the profit found its way into either treasury. Blockade-running slowly declined, when the blockade was raised, though it did not cease altogether.

Admiral David Porter became known as the “The Thief of the Mississippi.” Money talked! Even Union VP Hannibal Hamlin thought to benefit.

On Feb. 17, 1864, the Confederate H. L. Hunley, was the first warship to break the blockade. At 8:45 p.m. near Sullivan’s Island outside of Charleston Harbor, Lt. George Dixon, spotted the USS Housatonic man-of-war waiting for blockade runners. The Hunley began closing in for the kill with a torpedo that contained 70 to 90 pounds of explosives. The Housatonic became the first vessel to fall victim to an attack by a submarine. The Union wondered if the South had more of these little boats.

At the end of the war, Chief Justice, Chase declared the trade illegal for the purpose of postwar prosecutions. New York Mayor Fernando Wood proposed that NYC withdraw from the Union, mostly because membership in the Union restricted profitability of the cotton trade. - cwk

Sources: CivilWarTalk.com, *Trading With the Enemy* (American Civil War Forums), Royal Experiment, The South Carolina Encyclopedia

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Civil War Timeline - May 1863

May 1 -2	Battle of Chalk Bluff	Ark.
	Raid on Rome, Georgia	Ga.
May 2	Gen. Stonewall Jackson is shot three times in a friendly fire incident	Va.
May 3	Nathan Bedford Forrest ends Abel Streight's Raid on Rome, GA. In heavy skirmishing at Cedar Bluffs. Ala.	Ala.
May 4	Battle of Banks Ford Frederick Steel returns to Little Rock, Ark.	Va.

	Marking the end of the Red River Campaign	Ark.
May 10	Stonewall Jackson dies at a field hospital near Guiney Station, Virginia	Va.
May 12	Battle of Raymond	Miss.
May 13	Two corps, under Wm. T. Sherman and James McPherson, advance on Jackson	Miss.
May 14	Battle of Jackson	Miss.
	The Gettysburg Campaign	Va.
May 15	Vicksburg	Miss.
May 16	Battle of Champion Hill	Miss.
May 17	Battle of Black River	Miss.
May 19	Second Vicksburg Campaign	Miss.
May 22	Battle of Vicksburg	Miss.
May 26	Siege of Vicksburg	Miss.
May 27	Siege of Port Hudson	La.
May 30	Second Vicksburg Campaign	Miss.

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Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Inc. (1)

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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.