



FOUNDED 2000

MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

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

April 2009

ATTENTION

Next meeting: April 8, 2009

Dinner: 5:45 PM
Menu & Form on Page 4

Dinner reservations due Apr 6th

Program: 6:45 PM

Bluffton High School
Off Buckwalter Rd

Members free; Guests \$5

Morning After

NOTE VENUE CHANGE

10 am, April 9, 2009
At

Honey Horn Plantation
Hilton Head Island
Directions on page 3.

Annual Meeting – May 13, 2009

Please visit our Web Site

<http://www.lowcountrycwrtr.com>

VITAL RAILS-the CHARLESTON & SAVANNAH RAILROAD STORY

Most of our presentations have focused on Civil War battles, generals and politicians and for April you may have thought that we shifted gears as we discuss the Charleston & Savannah Railroad. *Vital Rails*, the history of this railroad, however, links many of the key battles, generals and politicians, including prominent South Carolinians, that we have come to know over the past several years. It is both the title of H. David Stone's book as well as the subject of his presentation. The C&S ran through the nearby towns of Hardeeville and Ridgeland where the CSX railroad can now be seen transporting freight and passengers. It was in fact the reason for Gopher Hill's (now Ridgeland) emergence and Grahamville's decline. Two prominent *Bluffton Boys*, William Colcock and Edmund Rhett, were directors. Battery Wagner on Morris Island was named after another director, Thomas M. Wagner. The line's President, Thomas F. Drayton was also a Brigadier General who commanded the Third Military District defending Port Royal at Ft. Walker. This is the same Drayton whose brother Percival commanded the USS *Pocahontas* as part of Captain Du Pont's Union squadron in the battle for Port Royal. The idea for *Vital Rails* began as a search for two of Dr. Stone's great-great-grandfathers who spent a significant portion of their Confederate military service in camps along the C&S line. *Vital Rails* provides the first detailed recounting of the line's history and of the railroad's valuable role in the Civil War.

In November 1860, just as news of Lincoln's election arrived in Charleston, a perfect storm was brewing, the nexus being the celebration of the railroad's opening (John Strohecker was the conductor on the inaugural trip). This became a defining event in the Southern secession movement because it brought together at a most opportune time key political figures from both states, "strengthen(ing) the bonds of union between Georgia and South Carolina" as Robert Barnwell Rhett, Jr., editor of the *Charleston Mercury*, put it. Rhett believed that had the railroad not been completed when it was, there may not have been a Southern Confederacy. Leading members of the 1860 Association, being also leading members of Charleston society, were in charge of planning both the celebration as well as political rallies promoting secession. They took advantage of this serendipitous visit by prominent Georgians at the time of secessionist rallies in Charleston by obtaining their public support which eventually lead to the South Carolina legislature's unanimously passing the Ordinance of Secession on December 20th. Around the same time, C&S President Thomas Drayton was behind the scene busily brokering an arms deal for South Carolina with the US War Department; arms intended for the secessionist movement. And, as in explosive situations such as this, secession rumors were rampant, especially one in which Georgia Governor Brown was thought to encourage secession. There could not be a more thrilling, eventful opening scene than this!

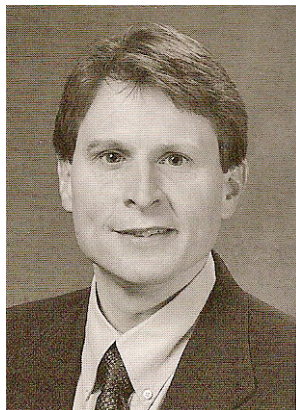
The C&S was chartered by a coalition of lowcountry planters, merchants, and politicians and completed in 1860. Construction was aided by state government funding and completed by crews of slaves just prior to the onset of war. Spanning more than one hundred miles across rice fields, salt marshes, and seven rivers and creeks, it was a major engineering achievement designed to revolutionize the economy of South Carolina's lowcountry by connecting the two key port cities as part of an overall plan to link the Northeast to the Gulf Coast via rail. In 1860, Charleston was the second largest city in what would become the Confederacy with a population of 40,522; Savannah was sixth with a population of 22,292. For an 1864 map of the railroad, please go to: <http://railga.com/charlsav1864.html>

Following the Union capture of Port Royal in November 1861, the railroad's importance became not only economic but also military. From November 1861 to March 1862, while commanding coastal forces, General Robert E. Lee supervised construction of the line's fortifications and situated his headquarters near it at Coosawhatchie in Beaufort District, not far from here. The railroad was so essential in containing Union attacks on Charleston that it was the objective of eight battles and skirmishes with Union forces—including the Battles of Pocotaligo in May and October of 1862 and the Battle of Honey Hill in November 1864. It was not until General William T. Sherman's army took Savannah in December 1864 that the Union forces had the strength to mount a successful campaign against the railroad.

Left in financial ruin after the war, the C&S faced a series of bankruptcies before its eventual incorporation into one of the most important commercial transportation arteries on the eastern seaboard, the CSX, thus completing its original intent of 1860. In mapping this first full history of the railroad, Stone has arduously sifted through company records, annual reports, and other public and private documents to record fully the story of the C&S and of the men who managed it during wartime with resourcefulness and a strong sense of their role in defending South Carolina.

Dr. Stephen Wise, curator of our local Parris Island Museum, author of *Gate of Hell: Campaign for Charleston Harbor, 1863* and LCWRT's May 2008 presenter, describes Dr. Stone's book as follows: "Rich with detailed information, maps, and images, Stone's book is a must-read for all those interested in truly understanding the crucial logistical and military operations in the South Carolina lowcountry during the Civil War."

H. David Stone, Jr. is a physician in Florence, South Carolina. He is a graduate of Furman University and the University of South Carolina School of Medicine.



H. David Stone

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Minié Ball Gazette

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Dedicated to Civil War history, education, and battlefield preservation

A Not-for-Profit, Charitable Organization

As qualified under section
501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code

**We thank Palmetto Electric and Honey Horn Plantation
for use of their facilities for our Morning After.**

President's Message

Your Nominating Committee is in the process of identifying viable candidates and filling positions on the Executive Committee for the 2009-2010 program year. In order to help them accomplish their goal and expedite the process, a survey form will be available at the April Meeting. We are seeking your cooperation in participating in this most important survey. Specifically, the survey will detail the areas in which one can help on the Membership, Communications, Hospitality and Program Committees. In addition, an identical survey will appear in the May issue of the newsletter for those who are unable to share in the April survey.

We have heard it said that it takes a village to raise a child. Similarly, it takes a village to run this fine organization. Consider the words of Abraham Lincoln: "I hold that if the Almighty had ever made a set of men that should do all the eating and none of the work, He would have made them with mouths only and no hands; and if He had made another class that He intended should do all the work and no eating, He would have made them with hand only and no mouths." The message is clear. We have all enjoyed the fine programs and the continued success of the LCWRT in being able to bring these programs to the membership. That's the eating part of Lincoln's message. Come share in the duties of your Round Table. That's the work part of Lincoln's message!

"Since brevity is the soul of wit, And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes, I will be brief." Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, 2.

Johanna Verwer

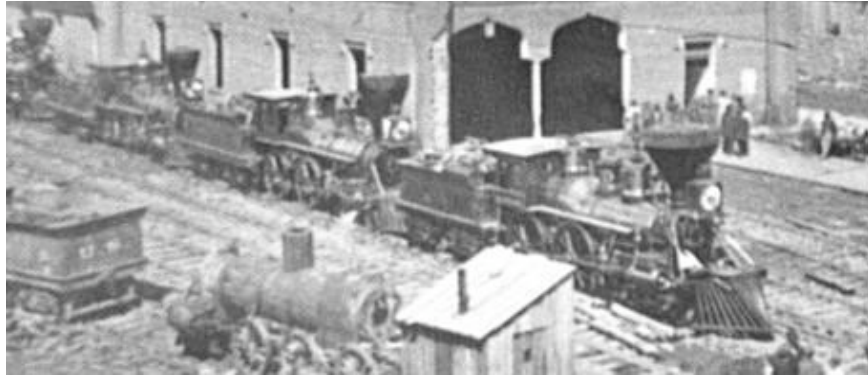
jbm@hargray.com

We need your help.....

The Nominating Committee is looking for individuals to fill the positions being vacated by members of the Executive Committee. To this end, they need your help in two ways: (1) Please complete their survey at the April meeting; (2) We need to fill the positions of secretary, treasurer, and member-at-large, so if you wish to be considered for one of these positions or if you know of someone who might be willing to serve, please contact our chairperson, Anne Hamilton, at 705-7575 at your earliest convenience.

Railroads and Military Strategy in the Civil War

Since the dawn of history, logistics (distance, time, transport capacity, and consumption) has dominated military strategy. Until 1830, every soldier that ever went into battle got there on his own two feet or by the efforts of an animal, if he were lucky. Every weapon, every round of ammunition, every pound of food, every tent peg, and every bandage reached the battlefield by muscle power. The only exceptions were those resources transported by water or extracted from the countryside. However, food for animals constituted more than half of an army's supply requirement. Under the best of circumstances, an army relying exclusively on muscle-powered transport could only carry a maximum of about ten days' worth of supplies. America was just too big a battleground for armies moving by muscle power. In addition to the vast distances involved, roads were generally poor, and much of the countryside was undeveloped, offering little to a foraging army. During the various conflicts fought in North America up to and including the War Of 1812, the biggest challenge in planning a campaign was simply getting to the battlefield without starving en route. Fighting the enemy was almost incidental! Thus, in colonial days a log fort containing a few dozen soldiers and some barrels of wormy flour could dominate thousands of square miles of wilderness; no one could get there in any condition to dispute ownership.



Typical Civil War locomotive and rail facility

This situation changed dramatically by 1861 with the advent of steam-powered transportation, both on land and sea. But the sea is another story! A railroad train could carry more tons of cargo than a mule-drawn wagon, but this alone did not confer any logistical advantage, for one could make up the difference in tonnage simply by adding more mules and wagons. The steam locomotive's advantage resided in the fact that it could haul more supplies and troops farther on a given amount of fuel. A team of six mules drawing a wagon carrying 1.5 tons of supplies could travel approximately 333 miles on one ton of fodder. Multiplying 1.5 tons by 333 miles yields 500 ton-miles of transport capacity generated by a ton of forage. In contrast, Civil War-era freight locomotive could travel only thirty-five miles or so on a ton of fuel (wood), but its payload could be as high as 150 tons, yielding 5,250 ton-miles per ton of fuel consumed. (Steamboats, incidentally, did even better.)

Trains, moreover, traveled about five times faster than mule-drawn wagons, which not only expedited the delivery of supplies but also actually reduced the number of supply vehicles required. Faster travel meant more round trips in a given time, which meant that fewer cars were needed to maintain the required flow of supplies. Faster travel also meant that cargoes, be they men or supplies, arrived at the front in better condition. Troops traveling by train rather than on foot experienced less fatigue and fewer instances of straggling and desertion, even though the freight cars used for most troop movements were anything but comfortable. The wounded had special boxcars to thank for reasonably comfortable transportation from the front lines. Supplies hauled by rail were more likely to reach the troops in useable condition, owing both to the speed of delivery and to the shelter afforded by enclosed railroad cars. The Civil War-era steam locomotive boosted logistical output by at least a factor of ten, having a major impact on military strategy in the Civil War.

The railroad increased enormously the geographical scale of military operations. An army supplied by railroad could operate effectively even when hundreds of miles from its main base of supply, provided that it was appropriately guarded from enemy attack. Such a capability allowed the waging of war for the first time on a truly continental scale, enabling armies to conduct campaigns that would have been unthinkable with wagon-haul logistics. Railroads also permitted armies to become larger. In previous North American wars, armies of 30,000 taxed the limits of wagon-haul logistics and local requisition. But in 1864, Major General William T. Sherman waged an offensive campaign with an army of 100,000 men and 35,000 animals. His supply line consisted of a single-track railroad extending 473 miles from Atlanta to his main supply base at Louisville. Sherman estimated that this rail line did the work of 36,800 wagons and 220,800 mules!

The railroad did more than just expand the scale of warfare. It may also have contributed to prolonging the Civil War by making it more difficult to wage decisive campaigns. One of the foremost techniques of Napoleonic warfare, which many Civil War generals emulated, involved the use of "interior lines" to mass against and annihilate the enemy's field armies one at a time. "Interior lines" simply means that a group of cooperating armies on the inside of a curved front can mass more quickly than their opponents on the outside, because they have a shorter distance to travel. Railroads negated such advantages. Effective use of railroads by the force on exterior lines allows it to move as fast or faster, depending on the road's efficiency, than the force on the inside. In September 1863 Lieutenant General James Longstreet's corps of 12,000 men traveled by rail, on interior lines, from Virginia to northern Georgia where it reinforced General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee at the Battle of Chickamauga. Longstreet's corps traveled roughly 800 miles in about twelve days. Two weeks after the Confederate victory at Chickamauga, two Union corps (the XI and XII), totaling 25,000 men, traveled 1,200 miles from Virginia to the Chattanooga front, where they reinforced the defeated Army of the Cumberland. This movement on exterior lines also took about twelve days, even though the distance was greater and the number of troops larger. Thus, the more efficient Union railroads demonstrated the potential to nullify Confederate interior lines.

This article was abstracted from <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/gabel4/gabel4.asp#rail>, *Railroad Generalship: Foundations of Civil War Strategy* by Dr. Christopher R. Gabel. Original Civil War locomotive photo by W. Hartung.

UPCOMING PROGRAM & ANNUAL MEETING

May 13, 2009 *Confederate Navel Hero, Raphael Semmes.* Our concluding program for the 2008-2009 season will be a talk by **Dr. Jeffery Seymour**, interim curator of the National Civil War Naval Museum in Columbus, GA, on the Confederate navel hero Raphael Semmes and his vital role in the war. We will learn about the epic voyage of the CSS *Alabama* and its battle with the USS *Kearsarge* off the coast of France in June 1864. How did this dramatically impact our modern day merchant marine?

This will also be the **Annual Meeting for LCWRT, Inc.** members at which time **elections** will be held for a new slate of officers for next year.

Golden Corral's Dinner Menu for WEDNESDAY, April 8, 2009

Salisbury Steak, Fried Chicken, Tilapia, Spinach, Green Beans, Rice Pilaf,
Bread Pudding, Carrot Cake, Brownies, Fruit
Garden Salad & Dressings, Sweet & Unsweetened Tea, Lemonade, Decaf Coffee

Cost is \$14, which includes taxes and gratuities

A guest charge of \$5 per person is due and payable at the door

Reservations are required ONLY for Dinner
And MUST be Received BY
MONDAY April 6, 2009

Clip & Submit with your check.

DINNER RESERVATIONS FOR WEDNESDAY, April 8, 2009 **Meal served promptly beginning at 5:45 PM**

Total Number of Dinners Ordered: _____ @ \$14 each = _____ Member Phone #: _____

Member # 1 Name _____

Member # 2 Name _____

Guest: _____ [Please pay guest charge at the door]

Guest: _____ [Please pay guest charge at the door]

List Guests on additional paper if necessary.

Make Check for dinner only payable to: **LCWRT Inc.** and deliver together with this form to:

Anne Gilliam
605 Argent Way, Bluffton, SC 29909

Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.

Johanna Verwer, President
16 Trescot Lane
Bluffton, SC 29909

**MEMBER NAME
& ADDRESS**