



# MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

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

May 2009

## ATTENTION

**Next meeting: May 13, 2009**

**Our Annual Meeting**

Dinner: 5:45 PM

**Menu & Form on Page 3**

Dinner reservations due May 11th

**Program & Annual Meeting:**  
**6:45 PM**

Bluffton High School  
Off Buckwalter Rd

**Members free; Guests \$5**

**Morning After**

10 am, May 14, 2009

At

Palmetto Electric

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**Nominations Page 6**

<http://www.lowcountrycwr.com>

## **Confederate Naval Hero, Raphael Semmes**

Raphael Semmes (1809-1877), American naval officer of the Confederacy, is best known as the commander of the "Alabama" during its raids on Union shipping during the Civil War and its climatic battle with the USS *Kearsarge*. He was born in Charles County, MD and appointed a midshipman in the U.S. Navy at 16, in 1837. During the Mexican War, Semmes commanded the brig *Somers* and then served with distinction in the campaign against Mexico City. Soon after Alabama seceded from the Union, Semmes resigned his commission and accepted an appointment as commander in the Confederate Navy. In April 1861 he was assigned to command the C.S.S. "Sumter" at New Orleans. The *Sumter* ran the Federal blockade in June and, during a long voyage that culminated at Gibraltar, took 18 prizes. Semmes left the worn-out *Sumter* at Gibraltar and started back to the Confederate States. At Nassau he was intercepted by orders to take command of the English-built steam bark *Enrica*, which he armed and on Aug. 24, 1862, commissioned off the Azores islands as the C.S.S. *Alabama*.

During its almost 2 years on the high seas, the *Alabama* burned, sank, or captured 55 Union vessels. After these years of highly successful cruising at the expense of the Union's commercial shipping, the CSS *Alabama* returned to European waters in early June 1864. Badly in need of a refit, she put into Cherbourg, France, on 11 June. News of her presence soon reached the USS *Kearsarge*, which promptly steamed to Cherbourg, arriving on the 14th.

Seeing that he was blockaded, with repairs delayed and with the probability that his ship would not be able to resume her raiding activities, Captain Semmes, in an ill-advised burst of chivalric resolve, challenged the *Kearsarge* Captain John Winslow to a ship-to-ship duel. That suited Winslow with his better-equipped *Kearsarge* very well, and he took station offshore and waited. After four days of coaling, drill and other preparations, the *Alabama* steamed out of Cherbourg harbor in the morning of 19 June 1864, escorted by the French ironclad *Couronne*, which remained in the area to ensure that the combat remained in international waters. As the Confederate approached, the USS *Kearsarge* steamed further to sea, to ensure that the *Alabama* could not easily return to port.

As Captain Winslow put his ship around and headed for the enemy, the *Alabama* opened fire. When the ships closed to about a half-mile, the *Kearsarge* then turned and began to shoot back. Both ships had their guns trained to starboard, and the engagement followed a circular course, with the ships steaming in opposite directions and turning to counter the other's attempts to gain an advantageous position. Superior Union gunnery, and the deteriorated condition of Alabama's powder and shells, soon began to tell. Though the *Alabama* hit her opponent several times, the projectiles caused little damage and few casualties; one of them failed to explode and survives today as a relic of the battle.

Continued on Page 4.

## **Jeffery Seymour**

Jeffery Seymour will be discussing Confederate Admiral Ralph Semmes and his heroic exploits at sea at our May meeting. Jeffery holds a BA and MA in history from Jacksonville State University. His major areas of research include the US Civil War, the US South, and US military history, particularly the role of the navies. His master's thesis is entitled William C. Oates: Quintessential Bourbon Democrat and Unreconstructed Confederate. (For your information, it was Colonel William C. Oates who led the 15th Alabama regiment in a series of desperate charges up the rough slopes of Little Round Top against Colonel Joshua L. Chamberlain. William Oates was an American original and his biography reads like a Hollywood script. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/gett/getttour/sidebar/genoates.htm>).

Currently, Mr. Seymour is a Ph.D. candidate at Auburn University, needing only to complete his dissertation about the Union Navy during the Civil War. He is also the interim curator at the National Civil War Naval Museum in Columbus, GA (<http://www.portcolumbus.org/contactus.php>).

Mr. Seymour has a wife Cheryl and two children, Alexa and Jack.



Jeffery Seymour

## CONTACTS

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is published by  
The Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc  
Located in the greater Hilton Head area of South Carolina.  
<http://www.lowcountrycwrt.com>  
Founded in 2000  
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

## President's Message

As I sit at my word processor planning my May message I find myself reflecting on the very first year of the Round Table in 2000. Who were these people who were responsible for resurrecting the Round Table from the ashes of one that once existed on HHI? You've probably heard that Mac McCoy was the one who got the ball rolling. But before Mac takes the credit, he credits Sam Sawyer for introducing him to the HHRT. Sam was the one who got Mac to attend their meetings.

Mac told me via a telephone conversation last year that his primary reason for organizing a new round table was his desire to raise money for historic preservation. Because he wanted women to attend he thought it a good idea to offer a dinner. Well, both those goals have stood the test of time.

Memories are rather hazy when it comes to naming the people gathered around the table during the planning sessions so I don't want to risk missing names. Rather, I can tell you who attended the executive meetings: Bob Eberly, our first president, his vice-president Tom Oliver who has since departed for FL, Bruce Claxton, treasurer, John Monkaitis, program, Ken Bruyere who has since passed away, membership, Kay Oliver, hospitality and Carol Cutrona, editor. According to Mac, Ken Bruyere found our venue at McCracken Middle School. By now he has probably founded his own round table up in Heaven. My guess is that George Stidworthy is they're helping out, as well. It should be noted that it was John Monkaitis' suggestion to have a "morning after". We're sure glad he did!

Oh, yes. There was one other person at those meetings. Yours truly was there as secretary. I had never met Mac but he recruited me based on a survey that I filled out. I have been there at that table ever since and will be for one more year. Who among you out there is waiting to come to the table as I leave one more vacancy to be filled?

One individual who did not attend the executive meetings but who was and is very instrumental in making the LCWRT what it is today is our mentor, Jack Keller. He is largely responsible for initially bringing the most noted historians to our round table. It is through his contacts that we have been able to secure the best and the brightest stars in Civil War history. Those stars and their reputations are the reason so many others are willing to come before us. We've come a long way in the last nine years! I am proud to have been associated with so many fine individuals.

*Johanna Verwer*

[jbm@hargray.com](mailto:jbm@hargray.com)

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

**Golden Corral's Dinner Menu for WEDNESDAY, May 13, 2009**

Meat Balls, Bourbon Chicken, Salmon, Cut Corn, Okra & Tomatoes, Rice Pilaf,  
Coconut Macaroon, Chocolate Pie, Lemon Bar, 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 May 11, 2009

Clip & Submit with your check.

DINNER RESERVATIONS FOR WEDNESDAY, May 13, 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:

**Michelle Maulden**  
**608 Argent Way**  
**Bluffton, SC 29909**

**Tel. # 705-3744**

**Fiscal Report**

The primary objective of the LCWRT is to provide quality programs to our members while contributing generously to historic preservation. We continue to meet these goals. The estimated cost\* of operating the Round Table by the close of this fiscal year (May 31, 2009) is expected to be close to \$21,800 with approximately \$11,420 being paid to the caterer. Unfortunately, our expenses are expected to exceed our income by approximately \$725.

Membership fees (\$7,880) generate the largest portion of our bankable income. 50/50 sales (\$730) and guest fees (\$910) contribute a lesser share.

Our biggest expenses are related to our extraordinary programs. Speaker expenses including travel, meals and lodging are estimated to be \$3,300. Add to that donations totaling \$3,300 and facility, custodial and tech charges of \$1,950. In addition, our required insurance is currently \$725.

The cost of supplying hard copies of the newsletter to our members is \$640 for publication and \$210 for stamps. Here's where you can help. Agreeing to accept an electronic copy of the newsletter would dramatically cut these costs and potentially come close to eliminating them. Keep in mind that postage stamp increases are just on the horizon.

The most logical way we have to increase revenue is to expand our membership. We need your help to accomplish this task, as well. Imagine if each current member were to invite one neighbor or family member to join the LCWRT. We would be able operate with a profit and have additional funds for preservation and education. This is a major, ongoing, necessary goal, one which you can help us achieve. Help us to make the Round Table better tomorrow than it is today.

Johanna Verwer

\*All figures are approximate and cannot be finalized until after the May meeting.

## Confederate Naval Hero, Raphael Semmes - continued

After about an hour's shooting, the *Alabama* was beginning to sink, with several men killed and many others wounded. Among the injured was Semmes who was attempting to steam back toward Cherbourg to safety. However, when the *Kearsarge* headed him off and the rising water stopped his engines, Semmes struck his flag. As the *Alabama* sank, some twenty minutes after firing ceased, most of her crew was rescued by the victor and by the British yacht *Deerhound*. Those saved by the latter, including Semmes and most of his officers, were taken to England and thus escaped capture and imprisonment. This ended one of the Civil War's most significant naval actions as well as the career of the Confederacy's most destructive ocean raider, but not that of its Captain.



Raphael Semmes



CSS ALABAMA vs. USS

Returning to the Confederacy, Semmes was promoted to rear admiral and assigned to command the James River squadron. When Richmond fell, he destroyed his gunboats and retreated south with his sailors. He and his men were included in the surrender of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army on April 26, 1865.

After the war Semmes (like many Confederates) spent several months in Federal prison. Afterward he was occupied variously as a teacher, editor, and lawyer. He also wrote his famous *Memoirs of Service Afloat (1869)*, a vivid account of the voyages of the *Sumter* and the *Alabama* in which he took literary revenge on the enemy. In 1877 he died at his home in Mobile after a brief illness.

### Further Reading

Semmes, Raphael, *Memoirs of service afloat during the War Between the States*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.

Taylor, John M., *Confederate raider: Raphael Semmes of the Alabama*, Washington: Brassey's, 1994.

Tucker, Spencer, *Raphael Semmes and the Alabama*, Fort Worth, TX: Ryan Place Publishers, 1996.

Amazon.com lists several books on Semmes, including those above.

### On the web

[http://americancivilwar.com/tcwn/civil\\_war/Navy\\_Ships/](http://americancivilwar.com/tcwn/civil_war/Navy_Ships/)

<http://www.history.navy.mil/index.html>

### ***The Fighting McCooks, award-winning history***

*The Fighting McCooks* is one of the most remarkable war stories to come out of the Civil War. It is the story of a family that gave 17 of its men to fight for the North. They fought on 46 battlefields in 11 states and one fought the war at sea. Six became generals and four gave their lives.

The co-authors, former Ohio Congressman Charles Whalen and his wife Barbara, devoted 20 years in researching and writing their narrative. Ken Hechler, author of the World War II classic, *The Bridge at Ramagen*, commends their "superb research". Bill Richardson, Governor of NM calls it a "must read."

The Fighting McCooks won the Silver Medal for Best Regional Non-Fiction in the Great Lakes in the Independent Publisher Magazine 2007 Book Awards and was a History Finalist in *ForeWord* magazine's Book of the Year Award.

This book should be on any Civil War buff's reading list. For more information visit their web site: <http://www.thefightingmccooks.com/>

Johanna Verwer

***It takes a village to run this fine organization!***

We are proud of all our volunteers and wish to recognize their assistance in helping to run the LCWRT. Without them there would be no round table.

John Monkaitis, Vice-President and Program Chairperson  
 Michelle Maulden, Secretary  
 Don Hubsch, Treasurer and Zonamarie Wessel, substitute treasurer  
 Anne Hamilton, Member-at-Large  
 Bob Ham, Immediate Past President  
 Bill Bodoh, Program Co-Chairperson and members: Dale Conrad, Bob Eberly, Paul Ricker, Robert Williams, Chris Clayton, Robert Drabik, Allan Schoenberger, Mike Vezeau, Bob Zabawa, and Elaine Monkaitis, assistant  
 Jack & Joyce Keller, mentors and hosts  
 Rickie Kluessendorf, Membership Chairperson and helpers: Todd Wilson, Paul Bucklin, Charlotte Cabaniss, Fred Kluessendorf, and Jim & Nancy Alt, Membership Records Keepers  
 Phyllis & Wendell Turner, Hospitality Co-Chairpersons  
 Anne & Raymond Gilliam, dinner reservationists and helpers: Terry & Margaret Hitchcock, Carol & Jim Mock, Ed & Edna Hobbins, Nancy Lancaster, Marv Pilgrim, Mike & Linda Stroud, Mike & Doris Lavelle, Bernie Covert, Jack & Claire Young, and Roger & Rene Ramm  
 Carl Bergman, Communications Chairperson  
 Walt Hartung, Editor & Web Master  
 Ray Verwer, Distribution and helpers: Don & Jan Smith, Jim & Helen Johannes, Rip Powell, Fred & Joyce Greene, and Bob & Mary Schmidt  
 Larry Layton, Historian

**As a token of our appreciation for their contributions, each will be entered into a raffle for *The Fighting McCooks*.**  
 This fascinating book, described above, is made possible by a donation from the authors.  
**To be eligible, you must be in attendance at the May meeting.**

Many of our volunteers helped in more than one area. In the interest of space, we have listed them only one time. If anyone gave our former editor and distributors Mitch and Marian Sackson any assistance at all, please excuse us if your name does not appear in the list.

Johanna Verwer, President

**New/Renewal Membership Form**

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP PERIOD September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010**

Please Print All Information Below

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Last Name First Name Badge Nickname

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Additional Member Last and first Name Badge Nickname

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-Mail is very important to us and we will keep it confidential.

Check YES & Help us save money! I want my monthly Newsletter **E-MAILED** to me rather than Delivered/Mailed YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

New Enlistment:

Single: \_\_\_\_\_ One Time Initiation Fee \$25.00 + Annual Membership \$30.00 = \$55.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Household: \_\_\_\_\_ One Time Initiation Fee \$35.00 + Annual Membership \$45.00 = \$80.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Re-enlistment – Current Members Only

Single: \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Membership: \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Household: \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Membership: \$45.00 \_\_\_\_\_

We are set to start a new program year and need volunteers to make it another success. **Please indicate the areas in which you'd like to volunteer:**

Program Committee: select topics & speakers  Maintain Membership (requires a computer)  Editor of the bulletin (requires a computer)

Treasurer  Secretary  President  Collect dinner reservations  Perform the 'check in' during dinner

Hospitality & Greeter (distribute name cards)  refreshments for the 'Morning After'  Historian  Help distribute the bulletin

Mail to or Leave in "lower" box:  
 Make Check Payable to [LCWRT Inc](http://www.lcwrtinc.com)

**Jim and Nancy Alt**  
**21 Trescot Lane**  
**Bluffton, SC 29909**

Any question, please call  
 Jim or Nancy Alt at 705-3974

## **Nominations**

The Nominating Committee is continuing to meet in order to finalize the slate of officers for the 2009 – 2010 program year. The list of nominees will be forwarded to you via E-mail and /or letter for your consideration prior to the May 13 General Membership Meeting. For questions or comments please contact Anne Hamilton, Nominating Committee Chairperson, at 705-7575 or via E-mail at [snamesanne@hotmail.com](mailto:snamesanne@hotmail.com).

### **Thank you, Johanna**

On behalf of the LCWRT membership, I would like to say a special *thank you* to our outgoing president. Johanna has dedicated the past ten years to our round table: 4 as secretary, 2 as VP, 2 as president, and one as immediate past president. Her contributions are a significant factor in making our round table the celebrated and recognized organization it is today. At our last meeting for this year on May 13<sup>th</sup>, let's all personally thank her for her dedicated service.

Walt Hartung, Editor.

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#### **Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.**

Johanna Verwer, President  
16 Trescot Lane  
Bluffton, SC 29909



**MEMBER NAME  
& ADDRESS**