



Camp Website: www.humphreys1625.com



The Delta General

Richard Dillon, Camp Commander

*Don't Forget the Reason for the Season and the
Christmas' Sacrificed by Our Ancestors!*



*This Month's Issue Is Dedicated
to the Confederate States Navy*

December 2016, Volume 19, Issue 12

Dedicated to the memory of Brig. General Benjamin G. Humphreys

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Camp Meeting – Thursday, December 1, 2016, 7:00 PM at 1st Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall in Indianola**

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Brig. General Benjamin G. Humphreys
Camp #1625, SCV
website: www.humphreys1625.com

Camp News:

Commander's Report – Richard Dillon

Compatriots,

I hope that you have recovered from your Thanksgiving feast and fighting the Black Friday crowds.

As always, our December meeting will be devoted to our Lee-Jackson Banquet planning. Also, we will learn from Adjutant McCluney the date of the banquet and the name of our guest speaker. We will also decide on the meal.

We need your input, so please, attend the meeting and put in your "2 cents worth" of ideas and preferences. I assure you that your input is worth much more than 2 cents, though.

During the November meeting, we decided to hold the banquet at The Church. Hopefully, this will increase attendance.

The OCR ladies are planning Red Beans & Rice for the meal at our December meeting, so come on out and enjoy the meal and some great comradery.

I look forward to seeing you on December 1st.

Camp Meeting, November, 2016

Adjutant's Report – Larry McCluney

There was a crowd for the November meeting as Brother James Taylor, Army of Tennessee Chaplain was the guest speaker. Brother Taylor brought with him three guests from the Calhoun Avengers Camp. A great program was given as always by brother Taylor. Commander Dillon asked for reports on Carrollton, the trip to Helena, Ark, and to Columbia, TN. As we moved into the business session, the Lee/Jackson Banquet became the main topic as plans are being made for the Banquet. Plans are to be finalized at the December meeting.

Ella Palmer Chapter, #9, OCR; President Sandra Stillman

Ladies of the OCR,

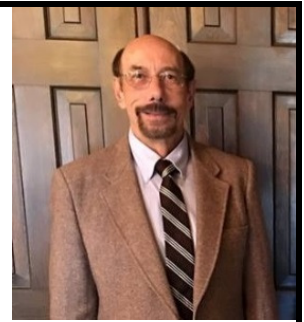
Now is the time that we should be planning for the Lee/Jackson Banquet. We need to be collecting gifts for our raffle and planning our decorations for the night. Please forward to me all gifts and decoration ideas.

Mechanized Cavalry Report

1G STATE MEETING 5 NOV 2016 AT LAKE TIAK O'KHATA LOUISVILLE, MS WAS A SUCCESS



Continued on page 3 . . .



Lt. Commander's Report – Brent Mitchell

At the time of this publication, no report was made.

Honor Your Ancestor

Many of us enjoy talking about our ancestors and the pride we have in doing it. A lot of the times when we are amongst friends we jump at the opportunity to tell our ancestor's stories. Therefore, I challenge everyone to prepare a short presentation about your ancestor to present at a camp meeting. Keep it about 5 minutes in length. I will ask the commander to give a spot on the agenda every month for a short presentation. If your presentation is longer, contact Brent Mitchell so we can make it a Camp program. Also, if you have a picture of your ancestor, bring a copy for everyone to see. Volunteers to start speaking at our September meeting. At our October Camp meeting, Joe Nokes gave an excellent program on his ancestor. December will highlight Larry McCluney's Ancestor. Who will volunteer for February, 2017?

March in Monroe, LA for Mardi Gras

This use to be an annual thing for our Camp members to participate in and have fun. Lets make plans now to participate next year, February 18, 2017 at 6:00 PM. Mark your as the Camp voted to participate.

Mississippi Division News

1G Meeting, MS SCV Mech Cav (Continued from page 2)

Gentlemen of the 1G,

We had a great Annual meeting this year and my hats off to all of you who attended. Also again I would like to thank Patrick and Heather Charlton along with Hunter and Virginia Charlton for all the work they did in setting this up and feeding all of us.

Now I'm working on next year and hope to keep the cost down and give back to all of our members once again. More on this later.

As of now the 2017 meeting will be 4 Nov 2017 so mark that date and plan to be there! We had a great turnout of 1G and we should double that next year.

Since this meeting as always will be in the Central squad area we need to be looking now for a place to meet. Our annual meeting is for all members and families, those who are interested in the SCVMC and children. We need someplace indoors, bathrooms, tables, chairs, and kitchen area. Many of us agreed that Pleasant Hill UMC was a perfect place and it was this year. I will be working with Lt. Bryant and will need the help of the Central squad to set it up. I would like for the place to be reserved as soon as possible after we agree on where to have it. The Pleasant Hill UMC in Louisville can be used again if we want to do it there which I highly recommend and they have it reserved for us already for next year. Lets look ahead to 2018 and where we will be.

Next year I am looking at having BBQ catered in from a local company. Also I will check with Bert King and see if he may want to do it. If we go this route each of us may need to pay \$5 -\$10 each which isn't bad and I will do what I can to keep the cost down as we do not make money on this. Children 12 and under no charge.

As most of you know I have one picture left and it is a beauty! What I would like to do is to sell chances on it. I plan to have 500 chances printed up at \$5 a chance. These will be put into books of 10. Each member of the 1G that wants a book will get one. If you sell one book, 10 chances, your meal at next years annual will be free! If after all members get a book and we have extras we will let you sell another book for a free meal for your spouse or girlfriend. If we go this route we will get these out late spring and we will draw the winner at our 2017 annual meeting.

I think the door prizes were a hit and would like to do it again next year. It helped offset our cost of the meeting, which is why you got to eat free this year, and we had some cool prizes. Start looking through your stuff now for donations for door prizes next year, I cleaned out some room in my office this year!

Again I look forward to another great year and it is a privilege and honor to serve as your Captain for two more years!

Steven Gunner Rutherford

Captain SCVMC1G Mississippi

2nd Lt. Commander Tippah Tigers Camp 868

Lt. Commander MOSB Nathan Bedford Forrest Chapter 100

National SC News:

National SCV Museum

The Groundbreaking Ceremony for the National Confederate Museum was conducted at Elm Springs October 15, 2016. Attendance was great, and included your entire General Executive Council, Tennessee UDC President, political dignitaries (State Rep., Senator, and Mayor of Columbia), as well as many UDC and other SCV members. The Mechanized Cavalry made a good showing. There were over 100 in attendance.

The Museum fund raising campaign continues, and there is a competition among Camps. The new Museum construction at Elm Springs will allow the SCV to better communicate and educate the public and members as to the true history of the Confederate Soldier, without pandering and without skewing or shading the truth.

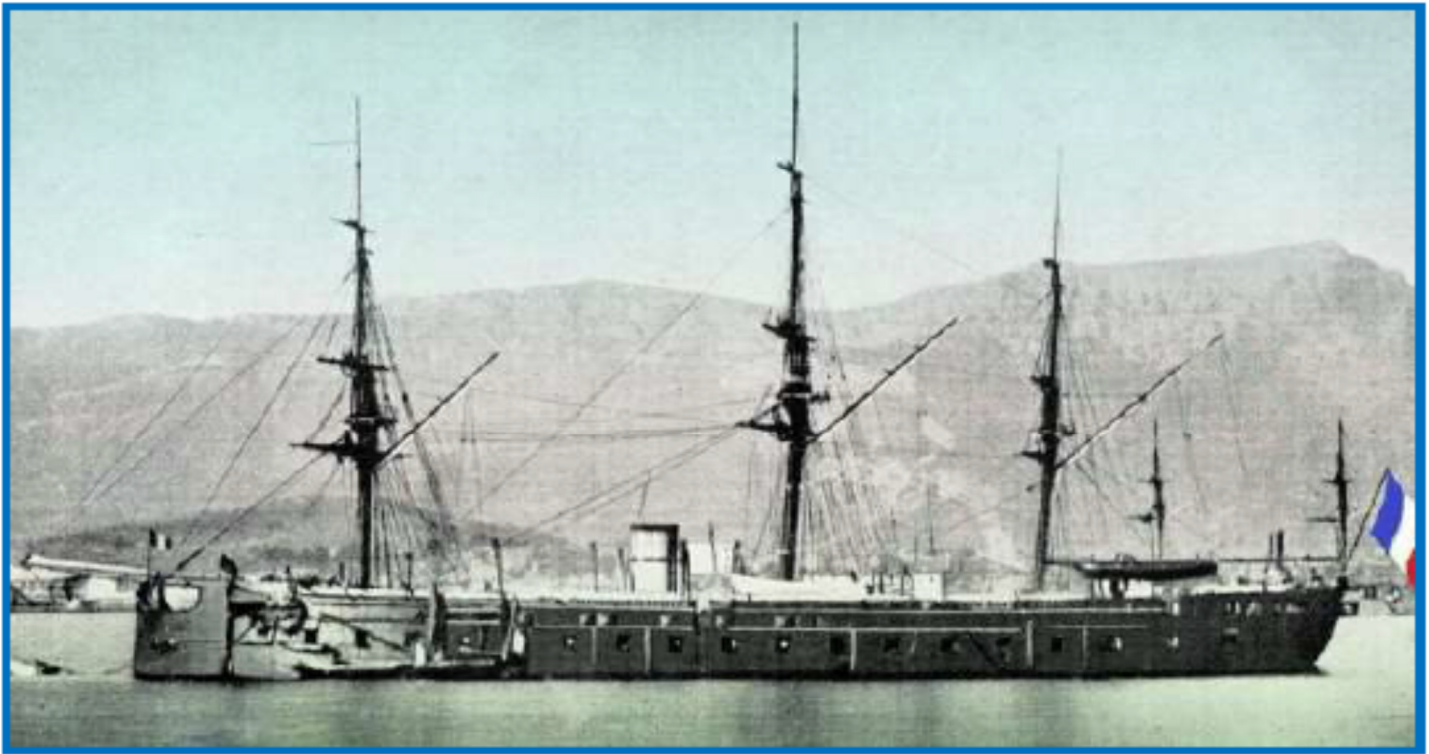
Heritage Operations

Two "Mega Flag" sites and a potential lawsuit were considered for funding and/or approval. A Mega Flag project on Interstate 22 in Alabama was approved. A funding request for in W. Va. was denied due to lack of specificity. National is requiring details and longevity with regard to the sites to be funded. SCV ownership of the land and/or a 99 year lease seems to be the standard.



FRENCH REPORT OF BATTLE BETWEEN ALABAMA AND KEARSARGE

Translated by Charles Priestley (UK)



French Ironclad "Couronne" escorted CSS Alabama into International waters- (Restoration by Editor.)



Some months ago, I discovered by chance, through the internet, that Volume XXIII (1917-1918) of 'The American Historical Review' contained a report of the battle between "Alabama" and "Kearsarge" by Captain Jérôme Penhoat of the French ironclad "Couronne". It was the "Couronne" that was given the task of escorting CSS Alabama out of French territorial waters on the morning of the battle. While unable to download the report separately, I did eventually manage to download the whole volume, which turned out to contain two other pieces of Civil War interest as well. Penhoat's report appears in the volume in the original French. Whoever transcribed it from the manuscript (perhaps the Waldo G. Leland referred to in the introduction) clearly had a good knowledge of French; there are a few small spelling mistakes, one word (as he makes clear in the text) defeated him completely, one word he simply misunderstood and one word, "musoir" ("pier-head" or "jetty"), he was clearly unfamiliar with and transcribed as "mensoir", but otherwise he has done a pretty competent job.

Captain Jérôme Penhoat of the Ironclad Couronne-Restoration Editor.

Although it is clear that Penhoat's report isn't unknown to writers in English (it's cited, for example, by William Marvel in 'The Alabama and the Kearsarge') it doesn't appear ever to have been translated – at least, as far as I can establish. I therefore attempted to translate it myself, hoping that the interest of the document will compensate for any errors or infelicities resulting from my limited knowledge of naval terminology in general and 19th-century French naval terminology in particular. In order to retain the flavour of the original, I have kept as closely as I can to the format, layout and font of 'The American Historical Review' and have not corrected Penhoat's consistent misspelling of "Kearsarge", "Winslow" and "Dahlgren". I have made no changes to the English text of the introduction and footnotes, and to avoid confusion have not made any additional corrections of my own to Penhoat's text, even where they might be merited. All explanatory or correctional footnotes in English are therefore from the original article-Charles Priestley."

Kearsarge and Alabama: French Official Report, 1864:

The following papers, for which we are indebted to Mr. Waldo G. Leland, were found by him in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris (*Manuscrits Français, Nouvelles Acquisitions*, 9466, ff. 95-98). They are addressed to the préfet maritime of Cherbourg, Vice-Admiral Dupouy, by the captain of the *Couronne*, a French ironclad then stationed there and present at the fight between the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama* on June 19, 1864. The report has a value, as adding, to the original sources already known, Union, Confederate, and British, a professional account by an eyewitness who was an experienced naval officer of a neutral nation, and whose function it was to escort the *Alabama* outside the three-mile limit and in a sense to supervise the combat.

ACCOUNT OF THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE *Kearsarge* AND THE *Alabama*,
Ironclad Frigate *Couronne* CHERBOURG, 19 June, 1864.

"Admiral,

In accordance with your orders I lit my fires at the same time as the Confederate vessel *Alabama*. At 7.50 a.m. we had pressure. The Federal vessel *Kearsarge* remained a considerable distance away to the N. E. At 9.45 the *Alabama* got under way and the *Couronne* cast off and followed her at the prescribed distance. As soon as she was out of territorial waters, I made my way immediately to the roadstead and took up the position where I had previously been anchored.

We followed the movements of the two vessels from the masthead. They were a long way off shore, and we were having difficulty in making out their movements, when suddenly I was advised that one of the vessels was thought to have been seen to sink; a large number of ships and harbour boats could be seen gathering around the site of the disaster. I made haste to forward this information to you, but because of the distance the combatants were from us and the hazy conditions it was difficult to be sure of what exactly had happened. The steamer *Var* was also making her way to the site.

I am with respect

Admiral
Your most obedient servant
Captain Commanding the *Couronne*
PENHOAT

P. S. We have learnt that it was definitely the *Alabama* which succumbed in this heroic battle."

"MOVEMENTS OF THE *COURONNE* AND THE TWO AMERICAN VESSELS.



- 3.30. The *Kearsarge* sighted to the N. E.
- 5.45. *Alabama* starts to heave in.
- 6.10. *Alabama* lights her fires.
- 6.10. *Couronne* lights her fires.
- 6.55. *Couronne* communicates with *Alabama*.
- 7.25. *Kearsarge* to the N. E. running W.
- 7.50. *Alabama* has pressure.
- 7.55. *Couronne* has pressure.
- 8.00. *Kearsarge* some distance away to the E. N. E.
- 8.30. *Couronne* ready to move.
- 9.30. *Alabama* heaves short.
- 9.30. *Couronne* in position to cast off.
- 9.35. *Kearsarge* to the E. $\frac{1}{4}$ N.E.
- 9.45. *Alabama* gets under way.
- 9.50. *Kearsarge* no longer in sight.
- 9.54. *Alabama* passes in front of *Couronne*.
- 9.55. *Couronne* gets under way.
- 10.00. *Alabama* rounds the end of the pier-head.
- 10.07. *Kearsarge* to the N. E.
- 10.10. *Alabama* drops the pilot.
- 10.18. *Couronne* rounds the pier-head.
- 10.20. *Kearsarge* to the N. 80° E.
- 10.22. *Couronne* steers to the E. N. E.
- 10.23. *Alabama* to the N. E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N.
- 10.30. *Kearsarge* changes course (turns to starboard).
- 10.50. *Couronne* turns to port, returns.
- 10.50. *Kearsarge* hoists her jack.
- 11.03. The battle begins.
- 11.50. *Couronne* anchors."



On board *Couronne*, this rare deck scene in later years, shows crew awaiting meal time. The officer is tasting the crews' food.

"The Confederate vessel Alabama, commanded by Capt. Semmes, anchored in the harbour of Cherbourg on 11 June 1864, coming from the Cape of Good Hope. She had reported a crew of 122; we learned afterwards that she had on board 21 Confederate officers. The Alabama was a pretty screw vessel of 13 to 1400 tons, well masted, of light wooden construction, armed with six guns. Two of these guns were on pivots. The first, between the foremast and the mainmast, was a 9-inch rifled piece, carrying a cylindro-spherical hollow ball. The second, positioned between the mainmast and the mizzen, was a smooth-bore of 48 to 50 calibre, solid shot (there may be some doubt as to the calibres, since we relied on the officers' statements which, for reasons of fact, we did not check). The other pieces were of 30 lbs., similar in appearance to our 30-lb. naval howitzers. The Captain said that his copper was in very poor state: he had received permission to coal at Cherbourg [word illegible], but not to make repairs, for he did not enter the port.

The Kerseage, commanded by Captain Vinslow, appeared in front of the breakwater on the 14th, coming from Dover. She reported a crew of 140. She is a screw sloop of 14 to 1500, armed with 6 guns of which two are 11-inch (27 cm.) Dahlgrens weighing 7700 kg. on pivots on the deck, one between the mainmast and the foremast, the other between the mainmast and the mizzenmast. These two guns threw shells and grapeshot composed of biscayens and 4lb balls; there was no solid shot on board for them. The other 4 guns were pieces of 32 corresponding to our 30-pounders, nos. 3 or 4.

The Kerseage is a wooden vessel of fairly strong construction, armoured on the side with chain-ends consisting of iron links of 36 to 40 mm. positioned vertically from the rail to 1 metre below the waterline. These chain-ends are pressed tightly against each other in such a way that the flat links mesh with the projecting ones. The whole thing is tied together with rope. I do not know how this sort of coat of mail is attached to the vessel (probably by clamps). The whole thing is covered by a light wooden extension.

This armour is positioned along the vessel's sides so as to protect her machinery.

The Kerseage arrived in front of the East Pass without entering the harbour and came to ask permission to communicate with her consul, which was granted her after a few medical formalities. She then began to cruise off the breakwater, outside our territorial waters, so discreetly that most of the time she was out of sight.

It has been said that the two captains had challenged each other. Captain Vinslow rejects this. He never sent any challenge, but he had received a letter from Capt. Semmes announcing that he would come out to fight him. Capt. Semmes had announced his intention officially and had given notice that he would come out on Sunday 19th between 9 and 10 o'clock in the morning. On their arrival in the port, both vessels had been given an extract of the rules with which belligerents are expected to comply during their stay in French roadsteads.

On the Sunday morning the Alabama lit her fires at about 6 o'clock and the whole population gathered on the quays, the jetties, the towers, the Roule and the breakwater to view the naval battle. There was an influx of Parisians, who had come on a special excursion train that morning.

The Alabama got under way at about 9.30 and when she was level with the Couronne the latter cast off and followed her at a sufficient distance not to impede her. She had orders to prevent any engagement in territorial waters and to return to her anchorage as soon as she was confident that the fight would take place outside French waters.

At the time that the vessels doubled the eastern pier-head, the Kerseage was still to E.N.E. heading N. E., distant 12 miles. Having reached the limit of territorial waters, the Couronne signalled her position to the breakwater, which signalled her to regain her mooring, which she did immediately. There were a number of boats from the port in the open sea, including three English yachts, one of which was a steamer. The Var had her pressure up ready to offer help if needed.

As soon as the Alabama was free to move, she made towards the Kerseage, which continued her course to the N. E. Shortly afterwards, however, she changed course and headed for the Alabama. The two vessels were both steaming at full speed and the distance separating them was soon reduced to cannon-range. Now the Alabama changed course and seemed to make a half-turn to port in order to present her starboard quarter to her opponent. She then opened fire with her aft pivot. The vessels were perhaps 8 or 9 cables from each other and 9 or 10 miles from land. The Kerseage did not respond, and started firing only after the third shot."



USS Kearsarge sinking CSS Alabama 19 June 1864. (Coloured Lithograph Public Domain)

"This oblique defensive position taken by the Alabama was certainly the safest for a lightly-built vessel like her to adopt; she was presenting her enemy with a limited target, she was protecting her engines as much as possible and, believing that she had superior speed, she was able to control the distance. She was attacking the enemy with her most powerful gun where he was not armoured. Whether Capt. Semmes let himself be carried away by his ardour, however, or whether he did not know, as we are assured, that the Kerseage was armoured, he remained a very short time in this position and, making a half-turn to starboard, went to cross his opponent's bows broadside on while bombarding him vigorously from his starboard side. From this moment on the two opponents turned around each other in circles varying between 4 and two cables in radius, cannonading each other broadside on from starboard. We counted up to 7 turns. But at this game the Kerseage, with her armoured sides, had all the advantage. Moreover, she could use her two huge guns. Struck on the side by three shots, two of which were near the waterline, the chain armour stopped the projectiles, which would have disabled her engine, if they had penetrated. Without the armour, the result of the fight could have been different. Be that as it may, the Alabama received some shells which weakened her planking to the point that she speedily took on water. An exploding shell or a shot probably hit a boiler, for a cloud of steam could suddenly be seen issuing from her sides. Some people have asserted that she was struck aft by a shell which, on exploding, disabled her screw and her steering. The fact remains that her engines stopped and she set sail in an attempt to reach land; but from this moment on she was at the mercy of her adversary, who took full advantage of it, for a moment later the Alabama surrendered and very quickly went to the bottom, sinking stern first.

All those on the surface were rescued by the pilot Mauger's boat, the boats of the Kerseage, and the English steam yacht which rescued Capt. Semmes and the officers and made for the coast of England, to the consternation of Capt. Winslow. Considering this disastrous outcome, the loss of men was not enormous. The total was 2 drowned, 6 killed and 16 or 17 killed [wounded].

The Kerseage received three shot on her armour in the area below her funnel which had only a minor effect. One shot went through her funnel, two projectiles passed just over the deck. One of the latter on exploding wounded three men; these were the only casualties the Kerseage suffered. One shell lodged in the head of the stempost, where it remained without exploding. The sternpost has some vertical cracks here, but the structure is sound.

Both sides fought well, the Confederate dashing, the Yankee doggedly. The Alabama's firing was very heavy. The Kerseage fired 130 shots, 52 of them from her Dahlgreens."

"The dimensions of the Kerseage's guns are as follows:"

**"Dahlgreen Guns
English Measurements**

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Diameter of bore | 27c.94 | 11 inches. |
| Total length | 4.12 [m.] | 13 ft. 6 inch. |
| Weight of solid shot | 86.97 [kilos.] | 192 pounds English |
| " of shell | 62.96 | 139 " " |
| Weight of gun | 7701.00 | 17000 " " |
| Charge for shell | 6.800 | 15 " " |
| " for ball | 9.07 | 20 " " |
| Initial velocity (unconfirmed) | 4267. | |

The Kerseage did not have on board any solid shot for these guns, but I am assured that experience has recently led to the adoption of solid shot for this particular piece."

Editor Notes and Sources:

This excellent report and translation from Charles Priestley comes with extensive footnotes that add considerably to the interpretation of this story. Unfortunately the layout for this journal does not permit footnotes but these are reproduced exactly as submitted by Charles in the Dropbox site.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/93geeg6qz9scvzc/AACLqnbpTERpPEEd28FgMOMUa>



Alabama's Bell discovered on a 2002 dive on the wreck compete with original mounting. It was discovered near the ship's stove.

Please refer to the **Dropbox** site as it contains very much more detail that is significant to this battle and its eye witness account. (It should be noted that there are Internet sites falsely depicting Alabama crew members when they are clearly Kearsarge members. The owner of this site refuses to correct his posting.) For further reading see **"Battle of Cherbourg"** issue **49 of The Bugle International** in the Dropbox-Editor.

Illustration sources:

Charles Priestley (seen below) and website: <http://jose.chapalain.free.fr/pageprin136.htm>

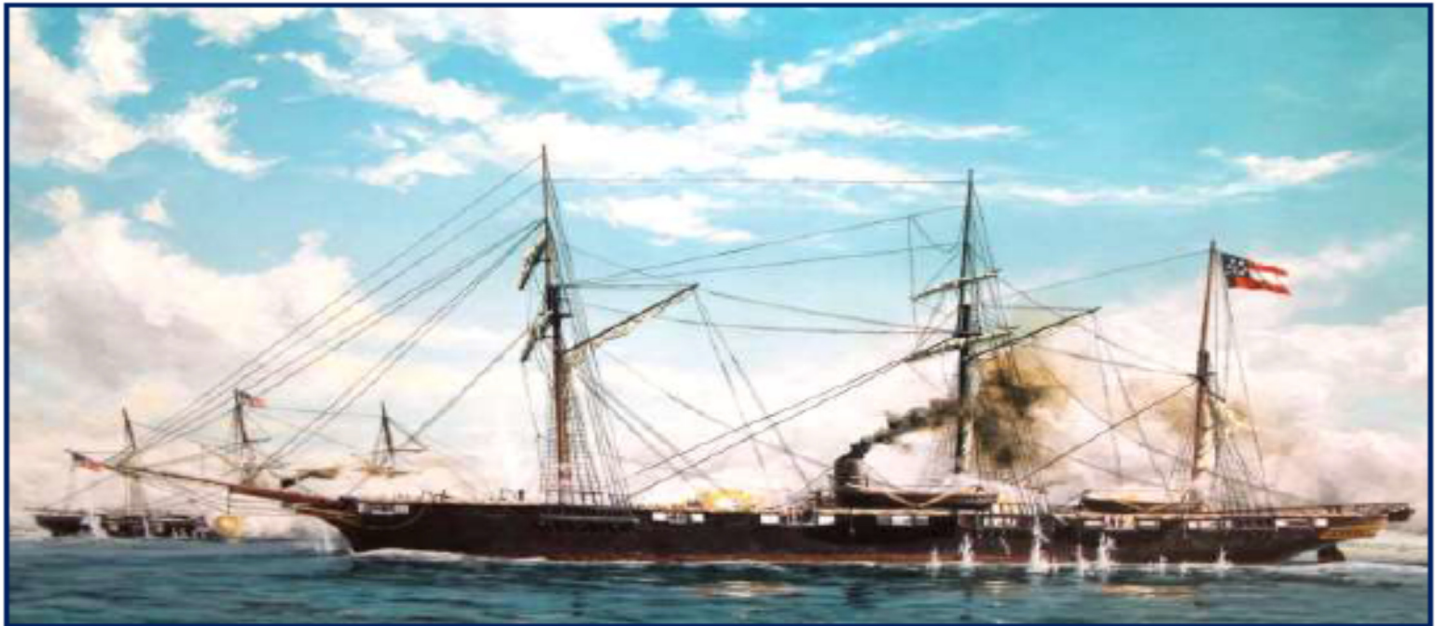


THE ART OF WAR



Keith Rocco is a painter of considerable renown who has had an interest in military subjects from an early age. One Christmas, while only ten, he was given a book that stirred his all consuming passion, *The Golden Book of the Civil War* and so he began collecting *Civil War* and *Napoleonic* artefacts. Today his collection includes original uniforms and various paraphernalia, as well as modern replicas which are used as prop's for his paintings; indeed as we all do in our studies of the war so long ago. As Editor of this journal I often have to refer to my collection of replicas of pistols and some original bayonets. Keith's home and studio is in the *Shenandoah Valley, Virginia*. He's known for highly detailed paintings of the War Between the States with individual soldier studies figuring prominently in his work. He's also been commissioned to paint murals, including three large highly detailed murals for the *Wisconsin Veterans' Museum in Madison, Wisconsin*. Another commission was for the *Pamplin Historical Park* and was on a massive scale; over 4,000 square feet (370 m²). In 2003, he designed the centrepiece mural "Gettysburg," for the famed *Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois*. Other great publications latched onto his highly detailed works, the *University of Illinois Press*, *University of Georgia Press*, *Chapel Hill*, *Military History*, *American History Illustrated*, *Napoleon Journal*, *Soldats Napoleonien*, *Le Livre Chez Vous* and many other publishing houses, all have

featured Keith's numerous works on their covers and dust jackets. He has had his art displayed in such illustrious collections as the *National Park Service*, to *U.S Army War College*. *The United States Army*, the *Andrew Mellon Foundation*, *The Pentagon*, the *Atlanta Historical Society*, the *United States House of Representatives*, *Gettysburg National Park*, the *City of Fredericksburg, Virginia*, the *National Guard Heritage Collection*, and the *U.S. Army War College*.



CSS Alabama Under fire from Kearsarge off Cherbourg by Keith Rocco. Unfortunately the flag, "The Stars and Bars" at the aft mast is incorrect. She actually flew the "Unstained banner" of the Confederacy on her final engagement, although in the earlier story, Semmes is shown leaning on this same earlier CSA flag. The "Unstained" was seen as a true naval ensign by various Confederate Raiders. It was when Alabama met up with CSS Georgia that Semmes learnt the flag had been changed.

In "Reflections of a Rebel Reefer" Midshipman Morgan relates the meeting between the two Confederate raiders on the night of May 13-14 1863 at the great bay of *Todos os Santos, (All Saints Bay) Bahia*. As they entered the bay they worried that there were two dark shapes moored ahead that were obviously ships of war and in the gloom it was impossible to identify them, plus the flag is not raised until a set time in the morning, so they spent an anxious night and close watch on both vessels. Midshipman Morgan continues the story, "It seemed an age before the hour for colours arrived but when it

did, to our delight, the most rakish looking of the two warships broke out the Stars and Bars. 'It's the Alabama' we gasped and commenced to dance with delight.

The Confederate Government had changed its flag since we had left home and the 'Stars and Bars' had given way to the white field with a 'St Andrew's Cross' which we fondly believed represented the Southern Cross. The Alabama had not yet heard of the change and we furnished the anomalous with the embarrassing spectacle of two warships belonging to the same Government and flying flags which bore no resemblance to each other. Fortunately the new flag was not a difficult one to make and the Alabama's sailors soon had the new colors proudly fluttering from her peak-Midshipman James Morris Morgan, CSS Alabama."

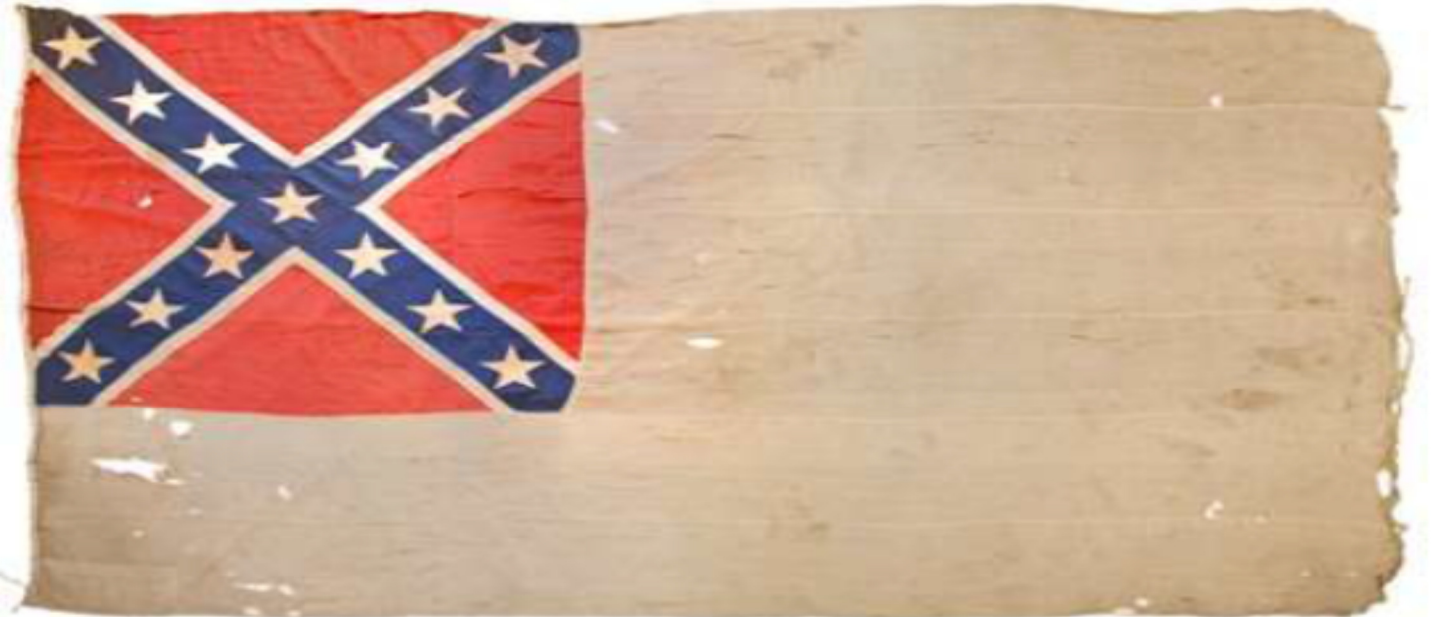
Midshipman Morgan leaning on pillar draped with curtain. Many of the Georgia officers, including Commander Maury took part in this photo shoot in Cherbourg. Each officer appears to have borrowed Maury's sword for the event. Uniforms are crinkled from storage.

(The Editor is grateful to Dr Curt Fields who, knowing the value I place on the flag, sent me a cotton version of the Unstained Banner, it hangs on a standard in my lounge to remind me of my task as Editor of this journal and spurs me on. Thank you General)

Australian members of ACWRTQ will remember that Richard William Curtis, our illustrious veteran buried in Toowong Cemetery and part of the ACWRTQ Heritage Trail, was Paymaster aboard CSS Georgia at the time of this meeting between the two vessels, he walked the decks of CSS Alabama. Curtis was to become Paymaster to the entire Confederate Raider Fleet. Serving on board CSS Stonewall when war ended, it was Curtis who paid compensation to the families of those lost in the Battle of Cherbourg. (See story on Richard William Curtis CSN in the Dropbox.)



Keith Rocco's historical paintings are careful representations of the past, immortalized on canvas. I do not wish to criticise Keith with this topic; as Editor and a broadcast journalist I know you can spend an enormous amount of time and effort to ensure your story is accurate, only to be let down by some small detail. "Publish and be damned" we called it. Without doubt Keith Rocco's paintings are carefully planned and meticulously executed, the portrayal of Alabama is extremely accurate but for this minor detail. He works with historians and depending on the location of the event, always reaches out to local historians and museums for detailed analysis. Keith Rocco does as much research as is possible before taking brush to canvas and takes great lengths to ensure what he's painting is accurate. He researches and gathers information months in advance of a painting and has been known to think about ideas for years before taking brush to canvas. Keith is a perfectionist and his website bio hints at the historical perfection he strives to obtain. A small cup of earth on his studio shelf for instance was sent to confirm the colour of soil at Jamestown Colonial site.



CSS Alabama's battle scarred Second National "Unstained" Ensign.

All authorities consulted concur that this is a genuine Confederate Naval flag and was very probably the property of *CSS Alabama*, given its provenance. The flag came to "The Mariners Museum" in 1985 as part of a collection of artefacts. *Alabama* was purpose-built in Liverpool, England to wreak havoc on "Yankee" commerce, it was two years later that she met her end in the waters off Cherbourg. One of the most famous ships of the Confederate navy and in those two years she steamed and sailed the waters of the world, carrying two different ensigns, both identifying her as a Confederate navy vessel, not a "Privateer." The Mariners Museum Curator of Heavy Metal, Anna Holloway says, "In the collection at The Mariners' are two flags attributed to the *Alabama*. The First National Ensign and a Second National Ensign. We were pleased that the Virginia Association of Museums chose to highlight the conservation needs of the Second National Ensign as part of its 2012 Top Ten Endangered Artefacts initiative."

Image Confederate Navy sailor by Philip Haythornthwaite.
<https://nz.pinterest.com/pin/508906826622106126/>



Sources:

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Christmas in the Confederate White House HOW THE DAVIS FAMILY SPENT THE CHRISTMAS OF 1864

BY VARINA DAVIS

The wife of Confederate President Jefferson Davis wrote this article describing how the Davis family spent the Christmas of 1864 in the Confederate White House. It was published in The New York World, December 13, 1896 and has since been reprinted often. This excerpt was obtained via the website "The American Civil War, 1861-1865."

...Rice, flour, molasses and tiny pieces of meat, most of them sent to the President's wife anonymously to be distributed to the poor, had all be weighed and issued, and the playtime of the family began, but like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky came the information that the orphans at the Episcopalian home had been promised a Christmas tree and the toys, candy and cakes must be provided, as well as one pretty prize for the most orderly girl among the orphans. The kind-hearted confectioner was interviewed by our committee of managers, and he promised a certain amount of his simpler kinds of candy, which he sold easily a dollar and a half a pound, but he drew the line at cornucopias to hold it, or sugared fruits to hang on the tree, and all the other vestiges of Christmas creations which had lain on his hands for years. The ladies dispersed in anxious squads of toy-hunters, and each one turned over the store of her children's treasures for a contribution to the orphans' tree, my little ones rushed over the great house looking up their treasure: eyeless dolls, three-legged horses, tops with the upper peg broken off, rubber tops, monkeys with all the squeak gone silent and all the ruck of children's toys that gather in a nursery closet.

Makeshift Toys for the Orphans

Some small feathered chickens and parrots which nodded their heads in obedience to a weight beneath them were furnished with new tail feathers, lambs minus much of their wool were supplied with a cotton wool substitute, rag dolls were plumped out and recovered with clean cloth, and the young ladies painted their fat faces in bright colors and furnished them with beads for eyes.

But the tug of war was how to get something with which to decorate the orphans' tree. Our man servant, Robert Brown, was much interested and offered to make the prize toy. He contemplated a "sure enough house, with four rooms." His part in the domestic service was delegated to another and he gave himself over in silence and solitude to the labors of the architect.

My sister painted mantel shelves, door panels, pictures and frames for the walls, and finished with black grates in which there blazed a roaring fire, which was pronounced marvelously realistic. We all made furniture of twigs and pasteboard, and my mother made pillows, mattresses, sheets and pillow cases for the two little bedrooms.

Christmas Eve a number of young people were invited to come and string apples and popcorn for the trees; a neighbor very deft in domestic arts had tiny candle moulds made and furnished all the candles for the tree. However the puzzle and triumph of all was the construction of a large number of cornucopias. At last someone suggested a conical block of wood, about which the drawing paper could be wound and pasted. In a little book shop a number of small, highly colored pictures cut out and ready to apply were unearthed, and our old confectioner friend, Mr. Piazza, consented, with a broad smile, to give "all the love verses the young people wanted to roll with the candy."



Mrs. Varina Davis (Library of Congress)

A Christmas Eve Party

About twenty young men and girls gathered around small tables in one of the drawing rooms of the mansion and the cornucopias were begun. The men wrapped the squares of candy, first reading the "sentiments" printed upon them, such as "Roses are red, violets blue, sugar's sweet and so are you," "If you love me as I love you no knife can cut our love in two." The fresh young faces, wreathed in smiles, nodded attention to the reading, while with their small deft hands they gined [?] the cornucopias and pasted on the pictures. Where were the silk tops to come from? Trunks of old things were turned out and snippings of silk and even woolen of bright colors were found to close the tops, and some of the young people twisted sewing silk into cords with which to draw the bags up. The beauty of those home-made things astonished us all, for they looked quite "custom-made," but when the "sure enough house" was revealed to our longing gaze the young people clapped their approbation, while Robert, whose sense of dignity did not permit him to smile, stood the impersonation of successful artist and bowed his thanks for our approval. Then the coveted eggnog was passed around in tiny glass cups and pronounced good. Crisp home-made ginger snaps and snowy lady cake completed the refreshments of Christmas Eve. The children allowed to sit up and be noisy in their way as an indulgence took a sip of eggnog out of my cup, and the eldest boy confided to his father: "Now I just know this is Christmas." In most of the houses in Richmond these same scenes were enacted, certainly in every one of the homes of the managers of the Episcopalian Orphanage. A bowl of eggnog was sent to the servants, and a part of everything they coveted of the dainties.

At last quiet settled on the household and the older members of the family began to stuff stockings with molasses candy, red apples, an orange, small whips plaited by the family with high-colored crackers, worsted reins knitted at home, paper dolls, teetotums made of large horn bottoms and a match which could spin indefinitely, balls of worsted rags wound hard and covered with old kid gloves, a pair of pretty woolen gloves for each, either cut of cloth and embroidered on the back or knitted by some deft hand out of home-spun wool. For the President there were a pair of chamois-skin riding gauntlets exquisitely embroidered on the back with his monogram in red and white silk, made, as the giver wrote, under the guns of Fortress Monroe late at night for fear of discovery. There was a hemstitched linen handkerchief, with a little sketch in indelible ink in one corner; the children had written him little letters, their grandmother having held their hands, the burthen of which compositions was how they loved their dear father. For one of the inmates of the home, who was greatly loved but whose irritable temper was his prominent failing, there was a pretty cravat, the ends of which were embroidered, as was the fashion of the day. The pattern chosen was simple and on it was pinned a card with the word "amiable" to complete the sentence. One of the [missing] received a present of an illuminated copy of Solomon's proverbs found in the same old store from which the pictures came. He studied it for some time and announced: "I have changed my opinion of Solomon, he uttered such unnecessary platitudes -- now why should he have said 'The foolishness of a fool is his folly'?"

On Christmas morning the children awoke early and came in to see their toys. They were followed by the negro women, who one after another "caught" us by wishing us a merry Christmas before we could say it to them, which gave them a right to a gift. Of course, there was a present for every one, small though it might be, and one who had been born and brought up at our plantation was vocal in her admiration of a gay handkerchief. As she left the room she ejaculated: "Lord knows mistress knows our insides; she jest got the very thing I wanted."

Mrs. Davis's Strange Presents

For me there were six cakes of delicious soap, made from the grease of ham boiled for a family at Farmville, a skein of exquisitely fine gray linen thread spun at home, a pincushion of some plain brown cotton material made by some poor woman and stuffed with wool from her pet sheep, and a little baby hat plaited by the orphans and presented by the industrious little pair who sewed the straw together. They pushed each other silently to speak, and at last mutely offered the hat, and considered the kiss they gave the sleeping little one ample reward for the industry and far above the fruit with which they were laden. Another present was a fine, delicate little baby frock without an inch of lace or embroidery upon it, but the delicate fabric was set with fairy stitches by the dear invalid neighbor who made it, and it was very precious in my eyes. There were also a few of Swinburne's best songs bound in wall-paper and a chamois needlebook left for me by young Mr. P., now succeeded to his title in England. In it was a Brobdingnagian thimble "for my own finger, you know," said the handsome, cheerful young fellow. After breakfast, at which all the family, great and small, were present, came the walk to St. Paul's Church. We did not use our carriage on Christmas or, if possible to avoid it, on Sunday. The saintly Dr. Minnegerode preached a sermon on Christian love, the introit was sung by a beautiful young society woman and the angels might have joyfully listened. Our chef did wonders with the turkey and roast beef, and drove the children quite out of their propriety by a spun sugar hen, life-size, on a nest full of blanc mange eggs. The mince pie and plum pudding made them feel, as one of the gentlemen laughingly remarked, "like their jackets were buttoned," a strong description of repletion which I have never forgotten. They waited with great impatience and evident dyspeptic symptoms for the crowning amusement of the day, "the children's tree." My eldest boy, a chubby little fellow of seven, came to me several times to whisper: "Do you think I ought to give the orphans my I.D. studs?" When told no, he beamed with the delight of an approving conscience. All throughout the afternoon first one little head and then another popped in at the door to ask: "Isn't it 8 o'clock yet?," burning with impatience to see the "children's tree."

David Helped Santa Claus

When at last we reached the basement of St. Paul's Church the tree burst upon their view like the realization of Aladdin's subterranean orchard, and they were awed by its grandeur.

The orphans sat mute with astonishment until the opening hymn and prayer and the last amen had been said, and then they at a signal warily and slowly gathered around the tree to receive from a lovely young girl their allotted present. The different gradations from joy to ecstasy which illuminated their faces was "worth two years of peaceful life" to see. The President became so enthusiastic that he undertook to help in the distribution, but worked such wild confusion giving everything asked for into their outstretched hands, that we called a halt, so he contented himself with unwinding one or two tots from a network of strung popcorn in which they had become entangled and taking off all apples he could when unobserved, and presenting them to the smaller children. When at last the house was given to the "honor girl" she moved her lips without emitting a sound, but held it close to her breast and went off in a corner to look and be glad without witnesses.

"When the lights were fled, the garlands dead, and all but we departed" we also went home to find that Gen. Lee had called in our absence, and many other people. Gen. Lee had left word that he had received a barrel of sweet potatoes for us, which had been sent to him by mistake. He did not discover the mistake until he had taken his share (a dishful) and given the rest to the soldiers! We wished it had been much more for them and him.

Officers in a Starvation Dance

The night closed with a "starvation" party, where there were no refreshments, at a neighboring house. The rooms lighted as well as practicable, some one willing to play dance music on the piano and plenty of young men and girls comprised the entertainment. Sam Weller's soirey [sic, soiree refers to a party or reception held in the evening], consisting of boiled mutton and capers, would have been a royal feast in the Confederacy. The officers, who rode into town with their long cavalry boots pulled well up over their knees, but splashed up their waists, put up their horses and rushed to the places where their dress uniform suits had been left for safekeeping. They very soon emerged, however, in full toggerly and entered into the pleasures of their dance with the bright-eyed girls, who many of them were fragile as fairies, but worked like peasants for their home and country. These young people are gray-haired now, but the lessons of self-denial, industry and frugality in which they became past mistresses then, have made of them the most dignified, self-reliant and tender women I have ever known -- all honor to them.

So, in the interchange of the courtesies and charities of life, to which we could not add its comforts and pleasures, passed the last Christmas in the Confederate mansion.

Christmas in the Confederacy

Excerpts below were written by Varina Davis, the wife of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, describing Christmas of 1864 in the Confederate White House in Richmond, Virginia.

"For as Christmas season was ushered in under the darkest clouds, everyone felt the cataclysm which impended but the rosy, expectant faces of our little children were a constant reminder that self-sacrifice must be the personal offering of each member of the family."

Due to the blockades around Confederate states, families could not find certain types of food and merchandise for their holiday celebrations, and available items were outrageously priced. The Southerners had to substitute many of the ingredients in the favorite Christmas recipes, and they had to make most of their gifts and tree decorations.

In Richmond, where Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his family lived, it was discovered that the orphans at the Episcopalian home had been previously promised a Christmas tree, toys, and candy. The excerpt below shows how the people of Richmond creatively worked together to bring Christmas to the orphans in spite of the war's shortages.

"The kind-hearted confectioner was interviewed by our committee of managers, and he promised a certain amount of his simpler kinds of candy, which he sold easily a dollar and a half a pound, but he drew the line at cornucopias to hold it, or sugared fruits to hang on the tree, and all the other vestiges of Christmas creations which had lain on his hands for years. The ladies dispersed in anxious squads of toy-hunters, and each one turned over the store of her children's treasures for a contribution to the orphan's tree, my little ones rushed over the great house looking up their treasure eyeless dolls, three-legged horses, tops with the upper peg broken off, rubber tops, monkeys with all the squeak gone silent and all the ruck of children's toys that gather in a nursery closet. Some small feathered chickens and parrots which nodded their heads in obedience to a weight beneath them were furnished with new tail feathers, lambs minus much of their wool were supplied with a cotton wool substitute, rag dolls were plumped out and recovered with clean cloth, and the young ladies painted their fat faces in bright colors and furnished them with beads for eyes."

When the orphans received their gifts, "the different gradations from joy to ecstasy which illuminated their faces was 'worth two years of peaceful life' to see."

General Robert E. Lee and Santa Claus

Dear General Lee:



We think you are the goodest man that ever lived, and our auntie says you will go right straight to heaven when you die; so we want to ask you a question, for we want to know the truth about it, and we know that you always speak the truth.

Please tell us whether Santa Claus loves the little rebel children, for we think he don't; because he did not come to see us for four Christmas Eves. Auntie thinks you would not let him cross the lines, and we don't know how to find out unless we write and ask you. We all love you dearly, and we want to send you something; but we have not any thing nice enough; we lost all our toys in the war. Birdie wants to send you one of our white kittens--the one with black ears; but Auntie thinks maybe you don't like kittens. We say little prayers for you every night, dear General Lee, and ask God to make you ever so happy. Please let us know about Santa Claus as soon as you can; we want to know for something very, very, very particular; but we can't tell even you why until Christmas time, so please to excuse us.

Your little friends,
Lutie, Birdie, and Minnie

The above letter was sent the following day, and in about a week the answer was received:

My dear little friends:

I was very glad to receive your kind letter, and to know by it that I have the good wishes and prayers of three innocent little girls, named Lutie, Birdie, and Minnie.

I am very glad that you wrote about Santa Claus for I am able to tell you all about him. I can assure you he is one of the best friends that the little Southern girls have. You will understand this when I explain to you the reason of his not coming to see you for four years.

The first Christmas Eve of the war I was walking up and down in the camp ground, when I thought I heard a singular noise above my head; and on looking to find out from whence it came, I saw the queerest, funniest-looking little old fellow riding along in a sleigh through the air. On closer inspection, he proved to be Santa Claus.

Halt! Halt!, I said; but at this the funny fellow laughed, and did not seem inclined to obey, so again I cried Halt!. And he drove down to my side with a sleigh full of toys. I was very sorry for him when I saw the disappointed expression of his face when I told him he could go no further South; and when he exclaimed, Oh, what will my little Southern children do! I felt more sorry, for I love little children to be happy, and especially at Christmas. But of one thing I was certain--I knew my little friends would prefer me to do my duty, rather than have all the toys in the world; so I said: Santa Claus, take every one of the toys you have back as far as Baltimore, sell them, and with the money you get buy medicines, bandages, ointments, and delicacies for our sick and wounded men; do it and do it quickly--it will be all right with the children.

Then Santa Claus sprang into his sleigh, and putting his hand to his hat in true military style, said: I obey orders, General, and away he went. Long before morning he came sweeping down into camp again, with not only every thing I had ordered, but with many other things that our poor soldiers needed. And every Christmas he took the toy money and did the same thing; and the soldiers and I blessed him, for he clothed and fed many a poor soul who otherwise would have been cold and hungry. Now, do you not consider him a good friend. I hold him in high respect, and trust you will always do the same. I should be pleased to hear from you again, my dear little girls, and I want you ever to consider me,

Your true friend,
General Robert E. Lee



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“Lest We Forget”

Merry Christmas!