

Fighting Joe Wheeler
Camp 1372

The Fighting Joe Wheeler Dispatch

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The Next Camp Meeting will be at 7:00 pm, Tuesday, July 8, 2008
at the New Merkel House

This Month: Alabama Division Commander (elect) Robert Reames will speak on
"The Forrest-Streight Raid."

Words of Wisdom and Warning

"If you bring these leaders to trial, it will condemn the North, for by the Constitution, secession is not rebellion...[Jefferson Davis's] capture was a mistake. His trial will be a greater one...We cannot convict him of treason."

Salmon P. Chase speaking to Edwin Stanton

"I abominate and detest the idea of a government, where there is a standing army,"
George Mason, during the Virginia constitutional ratifying convention of 1788.

"In general, the art of government consists in taking as much money as possible from one party of the citizens to give to the other." **Voltaire**

"We have rights, as individuals, to give as much of our own money as we please to charity; but as members of Congress we have no right so to appropriate a dollar of public money."- **Senator David (Davey) Crockett**

"There is no worse tyranny than to force a man to pay for what he does not want merely because you think it would be good for him."-**Robert Heinlein**

"Each State, in ratifying the Constitution, is considered as a sovereign body, independent of all others, and only to be bound by its own voluntary act. In this relation, then, the new Constitution will, if established, be a FEDERAL, and not a NATIONAL constitution. ... The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite. **James Madison**, Federalist Papers

**Sign up for the Wheeler Camp Message Board and receive
"The Dispatch" in it's entirety by e-mail.**

Contact Compatriot Mike Little at cdr_mike_little@bellsouth.net

Alabama: We Dare Defend Our Rights

"The principal for which we contended is bound to reassert itself, though it may be at another time and in another form."
Jefferson Davis, May 1865

Commander's Report

During a near perfect family vacation scuba diving in the Cayman Islands I had some time to reflect on our current state of affairs. I discovered an optimism about the Confederacy that I haven't felt since I joined the SCV 6 years ago.

We have endured bigotry about our flag and our cause. We have endured the split in the SCV of several years ago. We are surviving a near split in the Alabama Division. We rallied when Presidential candidates, football coaches, and NASCAR attacked our beloved colors. As often happens, we responded when fired upon by local poison pen individuals disguised as newspaper reporters seeking to stir up controversy simply to create sensational headlines and try to make a name for themselves - at our expense.

Here is a random list I made of other things that I have found personally encouraging this year: Several parents approached me on a D.C. field trip after my infamous "Lincoln income tax" remark and I was able to educate them about the cause.

- The attendance at this year's Division Reunion fueled by some hotly contested elections. The rabble rousing trouble makers were SOUNDLY defeated and have hopefully been silenced, at least for a while.
- The overwhelming elections of Robert Reames, Tom Strain, and Alan Koester within the division promises to heal some old wounds, bring everyone together and move forward.
- While in the islands I was having my picture taken holding a Battle Flag on our dive boat. Not only did I not receive any moans or negative remarks from others nearby, but I looked over at the boat next to ours and say about a half dozen compatriots smiling and giving me the "thumbs up"!
- Our colors are proudly flying! We now have huge Battle Flags displayed on I-65 and I-10 in Alabama, near Tampa Florida, on the Florida - Georgia state line, and several other places throughout the South. Even more are in the works.
- Bonnie Blues, First National, and Battle Flags flying in front yards and businesses on Valleydale Rd., in Bessemer, and in Pelham.
- Much of the restoration of Beauvoir has been completed and Jefferson Davis' 200th birthday celebration continues.

We had a pretty good turnout for our June meeting where Dr. Charles Baker helped us celebrate with a pot luck dinner. Thanks to everyone that helped set up and clean up. And thanks to Jerri at Publix for making an awesome Battle Flag birthday cake!!

Don't forget - September is Joe Wheeler's birthday and Ross Moore is coming back again to entertain us.

See you next week,

Steve Johnson
Commander



**One lucky Wheeler Camp member will win
this knife in September!**

Recruit a new member for a chance to win!

June 16th, 2008 6:30 PM Eastern

Controversial Confederate Flag Raising Ceremony

By Orlando Salinas

I thought I'd only see Caucasians attending a controversial Confederate flag raising ceremony, early on Saturday morning in Tampa, Florida. That's what I get for thinking.

But there they were- a smattering of African Americans, mixing it up with Caucasian bikers wearing Confederate flag jean jackets and caps. But what really caught my eye was seeing some of those same African American folks also sporting the controversial symbol on their bodies too. Right smack dab at the politically powerful junction of Interstate 4 and I-75... hoisted 139 feet up in the in the air, was what most Americans call the flag of the Confederacy, but what is more correctly referred to by historians as "a soldiers flag."

And that flag is huge, 50 feet by 30 feet, about the same size as the U.S. flag, flown over over mega-sized car lots across the country. Car dealers fly the stars and stripes partly out of patriotism, and partly for publicity. And the sons of Confederate veterans, Florida division, is no different.

Marion Lambert, who owns the sliver-size piece of property where the flag has been displayed, calls himself a proud member of the sons of Confederate veterans, who says his local organization would never defend the painful issue of slavery. And, as I watched Caucasian and some African Americans, hoist that heavy flag 139 feet in the air, there was a collective but "Out of tune" rendition of "I wish I was in Dixie," and yep, African Americans folks were singing it too, and off key as well.

The local chapter of the NAACP has condemned this event. Calling it racist, and an abomination to millions of Americans, both African American and Caucasian . I was told it would not talk anymore to the media about this issue, saying it would only bring more publicity to the sons of confederate veterans. I pushed a little more, and was told the national NAACP, had given orders to the local chapter, to no longer talk to the press, saying it would only hurt Senator Barack Obama, the presumed Democrat presidential nominee, "Who needs the votes of those kinds of people in Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Ohio." I asked "What do you mean those kinds of people?" His response- "You know what i mean."

Throughout the morning, motorcycles rumbled in and out of the parking lot, making it hard to hear, and these folks wanted to be heard. Marion Lambert told me he wants people to notice the flag, wants people to ask, "Why is that huge flag being flown here in Tampa."

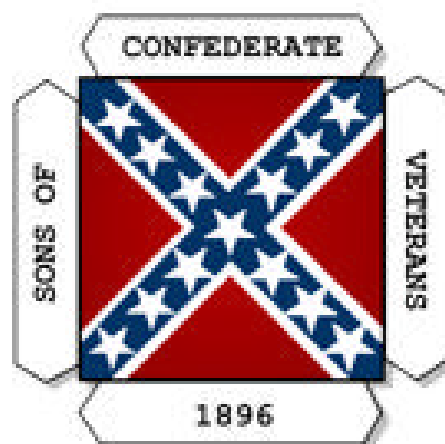
Lamberts answer was simple enough:

"I want people to talk to us, let us tell 'em we're not for slavery, we're not for racism, we don't hate minorities. We just want to show pride and reverence to our ancestors. We don't agree with the slavery part, it was wrong, but we can't ignore this flag. It represents our southern heritage, the good that we want to remember, and the bad part we should never forget."

So there it was, white and black folks, some sitting on cinder blocks, smoking pipes. One elderly African American man wearing a suit and a Confederate tie, back-slapping and joking with a younger Caucasian man wearing so many Confederate symbols, he looked like the poster child for the event. The local NAACP has called these Confederate flag-supporting blacks "out of touch," saying they don't represent black America.

I asked the older black man in the Confederate tie, what he thought about the NAACP's comment, he said "I'm about as black as it gets, I'm the grandson of slaves, I'm a U.S. war veteran, and I'm just as proud of this (Confederate) flag, because it represents my heritage too. And the NAACP doesn't represent all of black America either."

Sure wasn't what I expected to hear.



An unspent shell gives new life to fort's history

Monday, June 30, 2008

OUR HISTORY comes to us in bits and pieces, as illustrated by the 90-pound unspent Union naval shell that was uncovered recently at Fort Morgan.

The unearthing of the rare shell — which was from a 100-pound Parrott rifle installed on a U.S. Navy gunship and fired at the fort in the summer of 1864 — brings the historic battle to life like little else could.

Look at the heft of the missile, and know what Confederate defenders of the fort faced when the Union ships approached Mobile Bay.

Think of the intensity of destruction and death that one of the heavy shells could cause.

Remarkably, the shell didn't explode. Instead, it lay hidden for nearly a century and a half, buried within the sand in the fort's walls.

Repeated renovations to the fort so it could serve during the Spanish-American War and World Wars I and II failed to expose the shell.

The discovery came June 13 during excavations that are part of a half-million-dollar project meant to repair cracks in the walls that are undermining the fort's foundation.

Water seeping through the bricks is eroding the fort's walls. Preservation of the fort means an important physical artifact of Mobile's history will be protected for future generations. The fort, which sits at the eastern entrance to Mobile Bay outside of Gulf Shores, not only represents history, but also attracts tourists to south Baldwin County.

Fort Morgan, which was named after Revolutionary War hero Daniel Morgan, was built between 1819 and 1834, largely with the labor of local black slaves.

When sectional hostilities led to secession, Confederate forces took control of the structure.

The concrete artillery batteries date to 1895. Construction on the existing historic buildings began in 1899.

During the last months of the Civil War, the fort fell to Union forces on Aug. 23, 1864, after a two-week siege. The entrance to the bay remained blocked until the following spring, when Union troops attacked Confederate forts at Spanish Fort and Blakeley.

Not long afterward, in April 1865, Mobile fell to Union forces.

In 2007, the Civil War Preservation Trust listed Fort Morgan as one of the top 10 most endangered Civil War battle sites — a distinction for which Alabama cannot be proud.

To its credit, the Alabama Historical Commission, using a federal grant that was part of funds available for repairing damages wrought by Hurricane Katrina, accepted its duty to the public to protect the fort from further deterioration.

The discovery of the Civil War shell, which gives physical weight to our understanding of the fort's role in the Battle of Mobile Bay, is a wonderful bonus from the repair project.

Preserve jewels of history

Friday, June 06, 2008

IT HAS been said that each new moment comprises everything that has happened before it. In that sense, Mobile County's moment encompasses gritty, determined French explorers and gallant Civil War soldiers huddled behind the walls of Fort Gaines.

That's why Mobilians owe it to history and to the future to ensure the preservation of Old Mobile-Fort Louis de la Louisiane Site as well as the Confederate fort on Dauphin Island.

Unfortunately, both historic sites face extinction because of neglect. They have been placed on the list of 11 Alabama "Places in Peril."

Other sites on the list, which was prepared by the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation and the Alabama Historical Commission, are priceless relics from the state's past. One is the small farm house in rural Coffee County where the colorful Gov. James E. "Big Jim" Folsom grew up.

All the sites deserve to be protected for posterity. But the two Mobile County sites are particularly integral to understanding south Alabama's history.

Old Mobile was founded in the early 1700s near what today is the town of Axis, and became the capital of French Louisiane. Fort Louis de la Louisiane sat nearby, becoming the center of trade for the area.

Mobile was moved to its current site in 1711. Historic Fort Gaines was built on Dauphin Island in 1861. Taken into Confederate hands at the start of the Civil War, the fort — along with Fort Morgan across the mouth of the bay — provided protection for Mobile Bay and the city. On Aug. 5, 1864, Fort Gaines rained a devastating barrage of cannonball onto the advancing fleet of Union Adm. David Farragut (of "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" fame).

Adm. Farragut's ships bested the Confederate defenses in the Battle of Mobile Bay and pushed northward into the bay, ultimately forcing the city of Mobile to surrender. The fort was refitted to provide coastal defense during the later Spanish-American War.

Preservation of Fort Gaines and Old Mobile will require coordinated local efforts.

Granted, some praiseworthy exploratory work has been done under direction of the University of South Alabama Center for Archeological Studies. But more needs to be done, and soon, to preserve and display the history that helped make the Mobile area what it is today.

News From the Front



Commander Steve Johnson conquers a reef in the Cayman Islands for the Confederacy and plants our flag. Although heavily garrisoned by Yankees, the guards were asleep, and word has it that not a shot was fired in the assault.



"To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans, we submit the vindication of the Cause for which we fought: to your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles he loved and which made him glorious and which you also cherish. Remember, it is your duty to see that the true history of the South is presented to future generations."