

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

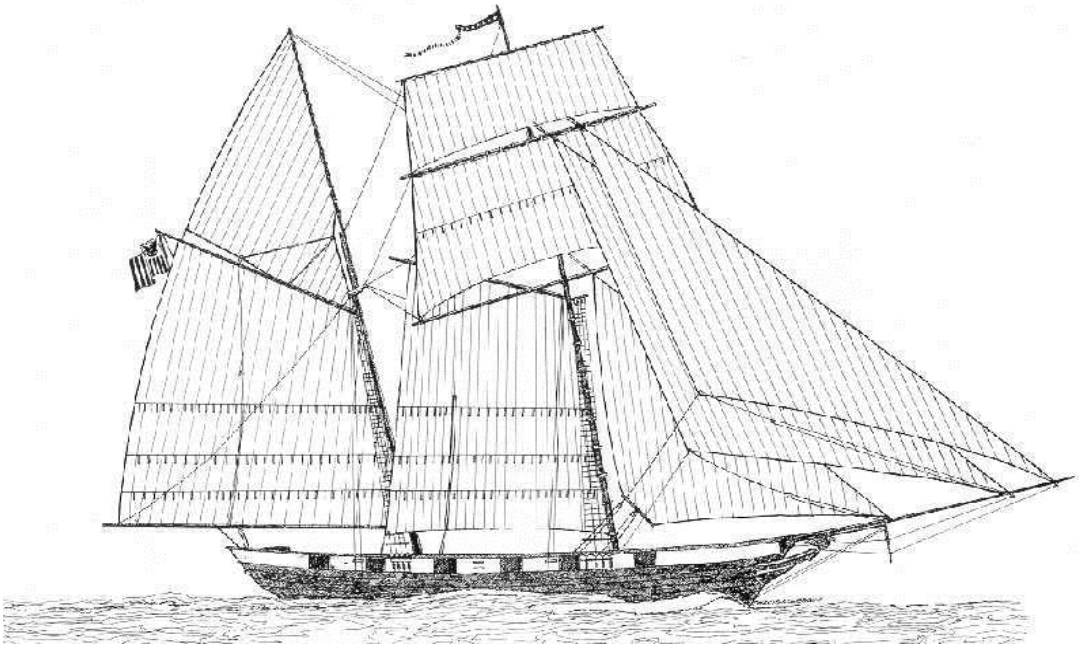
CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.cdcwrt.net



Volume 29, Number 7 April 2012

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS JEFFERSON DAVIS



Pictured above is the USS Jefferson Davis, a Revenue cutter launched in 1853. The ship was named in honor of the man who would become the first and only president of the Confederate States of America. In 1853 Davis was the Secretary of War for President Franklin Pierce. In fact all vessels of the class were named after members of Pierce's cabinet. She was a 90 foot top sail schooner that displaced about 150 tons. She was built in Bristol, Rhode Island, and survived a hurricane in 1853 with slight damage. She sailed around Cape Horn to San Francisco in 1854. She was converted to a "Marine Hospital Boat in 1862. She is NOT the topic of this month's presentation.

APRIL MEETING
FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2012
WATERVLIET SENIOR CENTER
1541 BROADWAY
WATERVLIET, NY

The Search for the *Jefferson Davis*: Trader, Slaver, Raider

Joseph W. Zarzynski

Social Hour	**6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Business Meeting	**7:00 – 7:30 p.m.**
Presentation	**7:30 – 8:30 p.m.**
Questions & Answers	**8:30 – 9:00 p.m.**
More Socializing	**9:00 – 10:00 p.m.**

CDCWRT MEETING

The April meeting of the Capital District Civil War Round Table will be held on Friday, April 13, 2012. This meeting will be held at the Watervliet Senior Center, 1541 Broadway in Watervliet. Our very special guest speaker will be Joseph W. Zarzynski, underwater archeologist and documentary film maker. His presentation is entitled **"The Search for the Jefferson Davis: Trader, Slaver, Raider."**

Buried in the ocean sands off St. Augustine, Florida, "the Nation's oldest port," is a lost shipwreck, one of the last great maritime mysteries from America's Civil War (1861-1865). Zarzynski, an underwater archaeologist and documentary filmmaker, will present the fascinating story of the underwater archaeological pursuit by the Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (St. Augustine, Florida) of one of the Civil War's greatest Confederate privateers, the brig Jefferson Davis.

The Jefferson Davis started life as a merchant vessel built in Baltimore, Maryland and was originally known as the Putnam. The vessel then slipped into a period as an illegal slave trader, named the Echo, and finally ended its career as the Union Navy's "most wanted," a Civil War privateer that seized nine prizes on its one and only cruise.

Early into the Civil War, the Confederate government issued letters of marque, creating privateers that preyed upon Union shipping. Confederate privateers acted in support of an almost nonexistent rebel navy. The most successful of those marauders was the brig Jefferson Davis. Lost on the St. Augustine Bar in northeastern Florida in August of 1861, underwater archaeologists from the Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP) as well as forensic scientists from other laboratories around the country are engaged in a search for this sunken vessel.

The privateer Jefferson Davis, whose homeport was Charleston, South Carolina, also has a strong association with the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley. J. F. Carlsen, one of the eight Confederate crew members that died on the Hunley in February 1864 following the submarine's sinking of the USS Housatonic outside Charleston harbor, was also the helmsman on the privateer Jefferson Davis during the summer of 1861.

Zarzynski will use still images and video clips from the 2011-released DVD documentary--"Search for the Jefferson Davis: Trader, Slaver, Raider" to tell the story of the historic vessel and the modern day quest to find the lost shipwreck.

Pepe Productions, the Glens Falls production team that did the documentary, spent two sessions in St. Augustine, Florida in June 2009 and April 2010, acquiring interviews and video footage with LAMP underwater archaeologists. The documentary team also interviewed team members with the Clemson Conservation Center in North Charleston, South Carolina, visited Baltimore, Maryland, and also interviewed the New York State Geologist at the State Museum in Albany, New York.

Zarzynski will have copies of the DVD for sale at the meeting and lecture. price--$19.95).

UP-COMING EVENTS

The following list of up-coming events is provided to help Round Table members plan their long term calendars. These are events that involve our Round Table, especially events that provide opportunities to raise funds for our preservation activities. Some events may change as the year progresses, so members should check the list monthly. Details of Sesquicentennial Civil War events can be found on the web-site: www.nycivilwar150.org.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 13-15, 2012 are the dates for the annual Underground Railroad Conference which will be held at Russell Sage College in Troy. Details will follow in future newsletters.

Saturday, April 28th marks Siena College's Living History Day. The CDCWRT will be represented. Hopefully the weather will be better this year than last year's event.

Sunday, May 6, 2012 marks the Ten Broeck Mansion's Annual Living History Day. The mansion will be open from noon to 4:00 p.m. Various organizations will have exhibits on the grounds. The event is free to the public and members are encouraged to attend. The CDCWRT will be represented.

Friday, May 11, 2012 will be the regular scheduled meeting of the CDCWRT. Our presenter will be Joe Collea and he will be speaking about the 5th New York Cavalry.

Saturday and Sunday, June 2-3, 2012 is the Troy Civil War Weekend at the Masonic Temple in Troy. This is an encampment and skirmish with artillery. There are a variety of exhibits and organizations represented. The CDCWRT participates. Volunteers are needed to help man our tent the two days. Contact Matt George.

On Thursday-Saturday, June 7-9, 2012 there will be a conference at the Albany Law School entitled "*Civil War on Trial.*" The conference will deal with legal issues that arose during the Civil War. The Archives Partnership Trust is a sponsor.

Friday, June 8, 2012 will be the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our speaker will be Dennis Gaffney and he will talk about his book, *Civil War Week by Week.*

Saturday, June 9, 2012 the CDCWRT will get culture! Albany Pro Musica, a highly respected choral group, will present a special Civil War music program. They have asked the CDCWRT to help promote this event. More details will follow, but mark it on your calendar now and tell your friends about it.

Friday-Sunday, July 6 – 8, 2012 is the 149th Anniversary Re-enactment in Gettysburg. This year the re-enactment is on the weekend after the actual anniversary date of the battle. The CDCWRT will have sites at the re-enactment and the visitor center for the sale of cachets. Any interested volunteers should contact Matt George.

Friday, August 17th is the CDCWRT picnic. Saturday and Sunday August 18-19,2012 is the Schuyler Flatts Civil War Weekend. Join us for the picnic and activities on the weekend.

Friday, September 14th will be the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our presenter will be Laurence Hauptman. The topic of his presentation will be *"General Wool and the New York City Draft Riots."*

Friday, October 12th will be the regular meeting of the CDCWRT. Our presenter will be Vicki Weiss, and her topic will be *"Civil War Monuments in New York State."*

Friday – Sunday, November 2-4, 2012 will be the second Sue Knost Memorial Conference entitled "*1862: And the War Came."* Most of our speakers have all confirmed and include Chris Kolakowski, Bruce Eelman, John Hennessy, Frank O'Reilly, Steve Muller and John Quarstein. The conference will occur at the facilities at Siena College.

Friday, December 14th will be the regular holiday meeting of the CDCWRT.

MARCH BOARD MEETING

The March Board Meeting was held on March 20, 2012. The treasurer reported $2087.77 in the regular checking account and $4417.14 in the preservation account. The membership committee reported that we have 150 members after 64 names were removed for non-payment of dues.

Proposed changes to the By-laws of the CDCWRT were discussed and approved. The changes are on the website and will be read at the April meeting. A final vote will occur at the May meeting.

Future meeting updates were discussed along with the purchase of cachets for the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Antietam. The CDCWRT hopes to have a table at the visitor center with support from SHAF, and a second table at the re-enactment. The weekend event will be September 14-16, 2012. Any members who want to attend the re-enactment and spend some time selling cachets should contact Matt Farina.

MARCH MEETING

With rapt attention the large crowd at our March 9th meeting followed John McTague's hour by hour chronicle of "… Abraham Lincoln's Visit to Gettysburg, November 18-19, 1863." A licensed town guide, who has had to meet the same stringent knowledge requirements about the town as battlefield guides do about the battle, McTague's power point presentation of historic Gettysburg photographs allowed us to briefly visualize the battle and its aftermath and then illustrated the detailed progression of Lincoln's visit.

The 1,700 people remaining in Gettysburg during the battle endured a terrifying ordeal: shelling, gunfire, the thousands of troops marching through, hand to hand fighting, damage and destruction of personal possessions, structures and livestock were all inflicted on that small community. Equally horrendous was the necessity off dealing with the thousands of dead and dying men left behind after the fighting ended.

Pennsylvania's governor appointed David Wills, a local attorney, to take charge of Pennsylvania's casualties, unrealistically expecting the other 17 states to remove their dead to their home states, a totally impractical and unworkable situation. To Wills fell the task of establishing a national cemetery separate from Evergreen Cemetery to inter the battle dead. An efficient administrator, Wills found a plot of land, burials began and an opening ceremony of October 23rd was projected. When the renowned orator Edward Everett, invited to be the keynote speaker, was unable to come that weekend, the date was moved to November 19th. Agreeing to give "a few appropriate remarks," President Lincoln also accepted Wills' invitation to participate that day.

The day preceding the dedication ceremony, Lincoln, accompanied by other government officials, traveled by rail through Baltimore, arriving around 6pm in Gettysburg where over 1,500 people were

waiting to greet the President. From the depot David Wills led Lincoln and the other officials on foot over to his home where dinner for 24 people was served. Lincoln's two after dinner appearances outside the house disappointed the crowd of people who had been hoping to hear a speech.

About nine o'clock he retired to his second floor bedroom to review tomorrow's tentative remarks with William H. Johnson, his valet. An hour later Lincoln, needing a bodyguard to open his way, walked through the crowd over to the house next door to consult with Secretary of State William H. Seward who was a guest there. Later, finally turning in for the night, Lincoln and Edward Everett were the only two in the crowded Wills' house to each have his own bedroom.

The day of the dedication arrived. Two girls later claimed they had witnessed Lincoln pacing back and forth in front of a window with a yellow paper in his hand. Certainly he finalized his speech by this time, folding the papers and placing them in his pocket as he was about to mount a horse and join the procession to the cemetery. It was 10 am. As the procession passed through the masses of onlookers, from Cemetery Hill a cannon was fired every minute. The line of officials, honored guests, bands and soldiers entered the national cemetery (familiar to us as the site of the old Visitors Center), moving to a platform and tent just over the Evergreen Cemetery line where a huge audience had gathered for the event. A band played, an invocation was given followed by Edward Everett who spoke for two hours.

Next Lincoln pulled out his papers, studied them quickly and then delivered his brief address. Spontaneously he added the words "under God," a phrase found in neither of his two original existing drafts. Nearby newspapermen wrote furiously, but the resulting printed speeches were for the most part inaccurate. Many in the huge crowd could not really hear his words and at the time neither Lincoln nor witnesses grasped that this was a momentous moment in American history. Following Lincoln's remarks a choir sang a dirge completing the dedication of the national cemetery. By mid-afternoon the procession had returned to the Wills House for an early dinner.

Lincoln's day was still not finished. He requested to meet that doughty warrior John Burns, and walked with him from David Wills' house to the Presbyterian Church where he spent a brief time. Finally after a very hectic and demanding two days, Lincoln and the other officials were back on the train for the return trip to Washington. When Lincoln had left Washington on November 18th he complained of feeling unwell and by the evening of the 19th he was really ill. His valet placed damp towels on his head and it is now thought that Lincoln very possibly had contracted a mild form of small pox. The unfortunate William Johnson died of a severe case of small pox six weeks later.

Within a day of the ceremony Edward Everett wrote to Lincoln complimenting him, telling Lincoln he had said more in 20 sentences than Everett had in two hours. Lincoln was pleased with Everett's letter, but still did not consider his words anything out of the ordinary. By the 1880s the power of the Gettysburg Address began to be appreciated and its greatness has been admired by generation after generation of Americans ever since.

Faces of the Monitor Crew

The skeletal remains of two crew members that were found in the turret of the U.S.S. *Monitor* after it was raised now have faces associated with them.



Forensic experts from the University of Louisiana used the men's to skulls to recreate their faces in an attempt to identify them, after comparing DNA samples with known descendants of the ironclad's crew failed to provide a match. Both of the men were Caucasian (three African-Americans served on the *Monitor*), with one determined to be between 17 and 24 years of age and the other in his 30s.

Sixteen members of the *Monitor's* crew died when the ironclad sank in a storm on Dec. 31, 1862, off of Cape Hatteras, N.C. Details on efforts to identify the men are available at http://monitor.noaa.gov/150th.

A Counterfeiting Conspiracy?

In March 1862, an unusual ad began appearing in Northern newspapers. It promised "perfect fac-similes" of Confederate currency. There were seven kinds of notes for sale, and testimonials from The New York Tribune and others praising the replicas for their high quality and low prices. Five cents bought you one. Two dollars bought a hundred. Fifteen dollars bought a thousand. The word "counterfeits" never appeared. These were "Mementos of the Rebellion," sold by a Philadelphia shopkeeper named Samuel Curtis Upham.

Upham didn't look like a counterfeiter. He was a respectable small-business owner and devoted Northern patriot. He ran a store that sold stationery, newspapers and cosmetics. But he was also an entrepreneur with an eye for easy profit, and the Civil War offered the business opportunity of a lifetime: the ability to forge money without breaking the law. Confederate currency, issued by a government that was emphatically not recognized by the Union, had no legal status in the North, which meant Upham could sell his "fac-similes" with impunity. Over the next 18 months he built the most notorious counterfeiting enterprise of the Civil War — one that also happened to be perfectly legal. His forgeries flooded the South, undermining the value of the Confederate dollar and provoking enraged responses from Southern leaders. He waged war on the enemy's currency, serving his pocketbook and his country at the same time.

Upham first got the idea the month before, on Feb. 24, 1862. That day, customers kept coming into his shop to buy The Philadelphia Inquirer. Puzzled, he asked one of them what made that particular edition so popular. The answer was on the front page: the Inquirer's editors had printed a copy of a five-dollar Confederate note. Philadelphians had never seen Rebel money before and were fascinated by it. Upham saw a chance to cash in. He raced to the Inquirer's offices, bought the plate of the note, and printed 3,000 copies on French letter paper. They sold extremely well. Along the bottom of each bill, he included a thin strip that read, in small print, "Fac-simile Confederate Note," with his name and address. The tags could easily be clipped off, transforming the "fac-simile" into an excellent counterfeit.

.

After his first print run, Upham rapidly expanded his inventory. He took out ads in newspapers, promising to pay in gold for more specimens of Southern money. At first, it seemed possible that he sincerely thought of his reproductions as souvenirs. In early 1862, most Northerners still expected the war to be brief and glorious. They wanted "mementos of the Rebellion" before the Union crushed it. By the time Upham launched his publicity campaign in March, however, his business had clearly evolved from a modest retail operation into a high-volume wholesaling enterprise. No one needed 1,000 souvenirs: people were clearly using his products for a less innocent purpose.

By April, Upham's fakes began appearing in Richmond, the Confederate capital. They caused a sensation at the Confederate Treasury Department, and a Treasury officer persuaded the editors of the Richmond Daily Dispatch to inform the public about the new threat. "This note is well calculated to deceive, and in nearly every particular is a fac-simile of the original." In May, the Dispatch discovered one of Upham's notes with the margin bearing his name and address still attached. "Who is this

man Upham?" they asked. "A knave swindler, and forger of the most depraved and despicable sort."

By then, Upham had grown his business considerably. In an advertisement published in late May, he claimed to have sold half a million notes in the past three months. He now offered 14 varieties of Confederate notes, postage stamps, and "shinplasters" — fractional bills worth anywhere from 5 to 15 cents — and printed his fakes on real banknote paper. Ingeniously, he even fulfilled orders through the mail. For 50 cents, plus 18 cents for postage, customers throughout the Union could have a hundred of Upham's notes delivered.

Southerners responded with outrage. They became convinced that Upham belonged to a covert Union plot to devalue the Confederate dollar. For the Philadelphia shopkeeper to be able to advertise his counterfeits openly and send them through the mail meant the authorities must have given him permission or, possibly, material support. Moreover, Union troops spent counterfeit Confederate cash in large quantities — evidence of "a deep laid scheme on the part of the thieving, counterfeiting North … to undermine the Confederate currency," in the eyes of the Daily Richmond Examiner.

In the summer of 1862, Upham's notes inundated northern Virginia, brought by Union forces marching south from Washington. A Southern journalist observed men "fortified with exhaustless quantities of Philadelphia Confederate notes," which they used to buy everything from horses to sugar to tobacco. When one of the soldiers ended up a prisoner in Richmond, the Confederates found one of Upham's advertisements on him. The shopkeeper's counterfeits appeared "wherever an execrable Yankee soldier polluted the soil with his cloven foot," fumed the Richmond Daily Dispatch.

By the summer of 1862, as fake cash flowed across the border in ever greater quantities, the Confederate leadership took notice. On Aug. 18, President Jefferson Davis discussed the threat in a message to the Confederate Congress. Counterfeit Confederate notes were "publicly advertised for sale" and furnished to "the soldiers of the invading army" with the full "complicity" of the Union government, Davis declared. Later that day, Confederate Treasury Secretary Christopher Memminger submitted a report to the House of Representatives that reiterated Davis's concerns and singled out Upham's role in the crisis: "[P]rinted advertisements have been found stating that the counterfeit notes, in any quantity, will be forwarded by mail from Chestnut Street, in Philadelphia." By then, forged bills had been found far from the Union border, in Atlanta, Savannah, Montgomery and other cities of the Deep South. There was "no means of knowing to what extent they have been circulated," the Richmond Daily Dispatch warned.

Hamstrung by a disorganized government and mounting logistical challenges, the Confederacy couldn't stanch the surge of counterfeit currency. Despite Southern claims, however, it's unlikely that the Union government ever actively promoted the forging of Confederate money. Federal authorities most likely found it easier to ignore the forging of Southern bills than to take a position either for or against it. They certainly never interfered with Upham, who freely continued forging Confederate cash until August 1863. By that time, the value of the Southern dollar had fallen so low that it was hardly worth counterfeiting. During the 18 months that Upham operated his venture, the purchasing power of the Confederate dollar disintegrated. Between February 1862 and August 1863, the value of Confederate paper money fell by ninety percent.

Upham wasn't the only reason behind this collapse. Fake cash plagued the Confederacy from the beginning, supplied by Northern and Southern counterfeiting gangs. Gross mismanagement of Southern finances led to runaway inflation, which posed an even greater danger to the Confederate dollar. But Upham's impact was significant. He later estimated that he had produced $15 million worth of Confederate bills. If all of that ended up in the South, it would have made up almost 3 percent of the total money supply — a large amount for a single counterfeiter. In March 1862, his business had only just begun. Over the next year and a half, he would become one of the strangest success stories of the Civil War: a legal counterfeiter, driven by patriotism and personal gain, who struck at the financial heart of the Confederacy from the safety of downtown Philadelphia.

Reprinted from the New York Times
On line Commentary by Ben Tarnoff
March 27, 2012