



THE BUGLE 28



Newsletter of the American Civil War Round Table Queensland Inc.
 Editor: Robert E Taylor QSM fwwfn. Email: bob-anne@aapt.net.au



Christmas in the Civil War

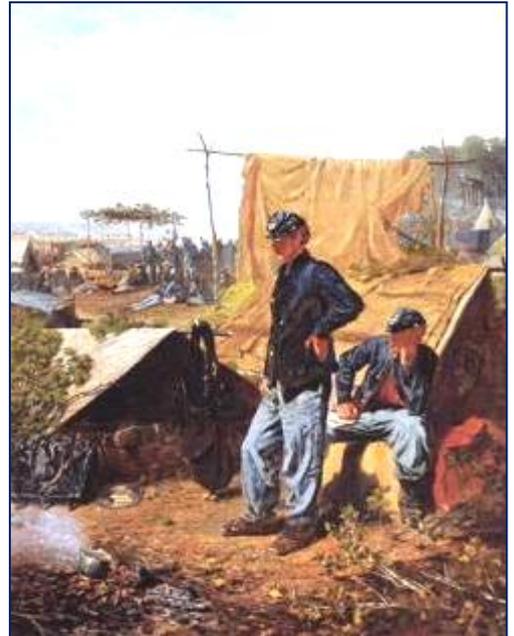


any traditional American Christmas customs that we take so much for granted world-wide today, spring from the early 19th century. Ironically the spirit of joy and goodwill to man came to maturity during The War Between the States, when violence, chaos, and staggering personal loss seemed likely to drown out choruses of "Peace on Earth."



Winslow Homer

Artists of the period, such as Winslow Homer, whose painting is seen here entitled "Home Sweet Home" (courtesy The National Gallery of Art, Washington) captures the very essence of Christmas in camp and brought it to the troops. The tent was a common home at Christmas for many but at such times became a sweet place to be, rather than on the all too bitter and gory battlefield.



Home Sweet Home

Homer's career as an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly* and other publications lasted nearly 20 years. In 1859 he opened a studio in New York City.

Within a year of self-training he was producing such excellent oil works that his mother, herself an accomplished water painter, wanted to send Homer to Europe to study but instead, *Harper's Weekly* sent him to the front lines of the American Civil War. Mother was not pleased.



Homer's Prisoners from the Front

Winslow Homer used his numerous sketches as subjects for later paintings and one of the most successful of his works was 'Prisoners from the Front,' painted in 1866. The picture captures the essence of a moment of truth, despair,

yet dignified pride. The artist has painted them in the poignant fading light of sunset. Christmas was to be a very unhappy time for prisoners of war on either side. Thoughts of home overwhelmed them with pain and grief.

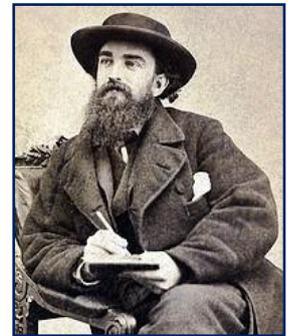


Another artist from the period, who contributed greatly to the Christmas legend but also captured the life of soldiers and remarkable images of home that no camera could, was Alfred Waud. His paintings were to become picture postcards of the times and in this scene we are allowed to see the busy docks of New Orleans as Confederate's would have known them.

Waud, along with photographer Mathew Brady, witnessed the debacle at **Bull Run** (*First Manassas*) where both came close to being captured by Confederates. Waud attended every battle of the Army of the Potomac, from **Bull Run** to the **Seige of Petersburg** in 1865 and was only one of two artists present at **Gettysburg**. His depiction of **Pickett's Charge** is the only visual account by an eye witness in existence.



The picture, reproduced here, (left) is of terrible quality. I have improved it as best as possible for use in this issue but can find no other image that betters this one.



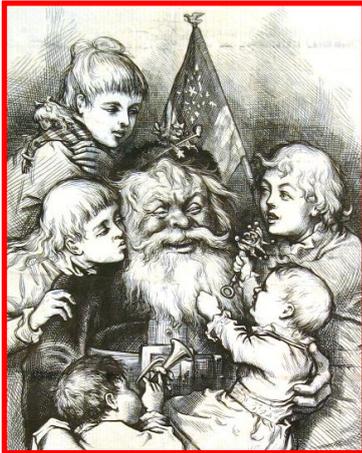
Pickett's second wave of Confederate's can be seen in the distance in ordered and packed ranks, charging towards a Union line stationed behind the stonewall, while Confederates have battled their way up to the wall itself.

Waud is pictured after the conflict (right above.) Below, he's captured, in what has become one of the most famous photographs of any *Civil War* artist; perched high on the rocks, he's actually photographed sketching the battle of Gettysburg. This image reveals a remarkable three dimensional effect, if you know how to focus your eyes without a 3D viewer. (*Instructions covered in an earlier issue.*) It is not likely that he's making the sketch shown above, as it is on the distant rocky outcrops, the position is well known and many pose for a picture on this rock today. Waud's position for Pickett's charge puts him in very dangerous country as the air there was thick with Minie balls.

Alfred Waud was born in London, 2nd October 1828 and emigrated to the US in 1850. There he found work as an illustrator with a Boston periodical known as **The Carpet Bag**. He also provided illustrations for **Hunter's Panoramic Guide from Niagara to Quebec** in 1857 and worked for the **New York Illustrated News** and **Harpers Weekly**.



The rocks can be lined up to this day, although the shrubs have long gone. Use your eyes to see this picture in 3 D.



Both Thomas Nast, and Alfred Waud specialised in creating visual chronicles of the spreading influence of many holiday traditions that we still enjoy today, including Santa Claus, Christmas trees, gift-giving, carolling, holiday feasting, and Christmas cards.

Nast and Homer drew scenes of the wartime practice of sending large Christmas boxes filled with homemade clothes and food items to soldiers at the front. The war made a huge impact on the nation, both North and South, in the way that Christmas was to be observed.



Christmas boxes, like the ones Homer and Nast illustrate brought to their recipients a much-needed mental and physical boost. In 1861, for the first *Harper's Weekly* Christmas cover of the war, Homer drew overjoyed soldiers revelling in the contents of the *Adam's Express* box from home, it was a melee of fun and discovery.

The most beloved symbol of the American family Christmas--the decorated Christmas tree--came into its own during the Civil War. Christmas trees had become popular in the decade before the war and in the early 1860s, many families were beginning to decorate them. Illustrators working for the national weeklies, helped popularize the practice by putting decorated table-top Christmas trees in their drawings.

On the home front, living rooms were mostly decorated with different kinds of pines, holly, ivy and mistletoe. While there were many families who suffered a lonely Christmas during the war, they still had a Christmas tree as centrepiece for the home. Most trees were small, a mere pine branch that was propped up on a table in a bucket.

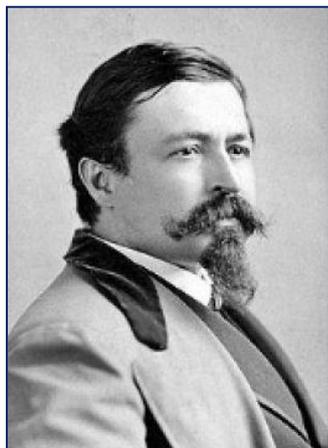
Christmas decorations were largely home made, as indeed they were until recently in Australia; they included such things as strings of dried fruit, popcorn and pine cones. Coloured crepe paper, silver foil, as well as spun glass, were popular choices for making decorations. Santa brought gifts to the children that were home made, such as carved toys, cakes or fruits. *(My own boyhood Christmas was like this with fresh fruit and nuts.)*



Civil War era tree

It was inevitable that the Christmas tree would make its way into military camps. Alfred Bellard, of the 5th New Jersey, remarks about the arrival of the newly popular Christmas icon to his camp along the lower Potomac River.

"In order to make it look as much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack an' pork, in lieu of cakes an' oranges, etc".



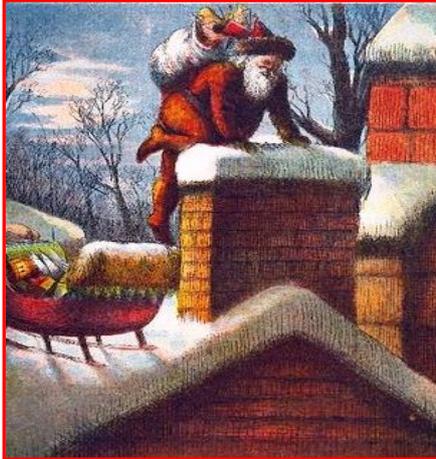
Christmas carols were sung, both at home and in camps. You can imagine how homesick soldiers would become singing these songs. Some of the most popular were *"Silent Night," "Away in the Manger," "Oh Come All Ye Faithful,"* and *"Deck the Halls"*.

Thomas Nast (left) was born in *Landau-in-der-Pfalz*, Germany, September 27th 1840. When he was six he arrived in New York with his mother. After art studies, Nast became an illustrator for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, he was then only 15 years old. By 19, Thomas Nast was working at the august publication *Harper's Weekly*. Today he is best known as the creator of *Santa Claus, Uncle Sam, The Republican Elephant and Democrat Donkey*. Nast borrowed his ideas for Santa from the

leaner pipe smoking German *Pelznickel* but he made him look quite different.



I have often wondered at Thomas Nast's creation of Santa Claus and his inspiration for the chubby, heavily bearded face and cannot help but see the likeness in another well known American figure of his time, who inspired both adults and children with his wit and wisdom, Henry Wordsworth Longfellow. He bares a remarkable resemblance to the rotund jolly fellow illustrated by Nast.



During the war, Santa has fairly basic features but after the war, Nast finally captures the imagined character in all his full glory and it has remained virtually unaltered to this day, the spitting image of Longfellow.

During the war, a year after his wife died terribly when her dress caught fire, the poet Henry Longfellow received a message that his oldest son Charles, a lieutenant in the Army of the Potomac, had been severely wounded with a bullet passing under his shoulder blade and damaging his spine. That Christmas of 1863 is silent in Longfellow's journal.

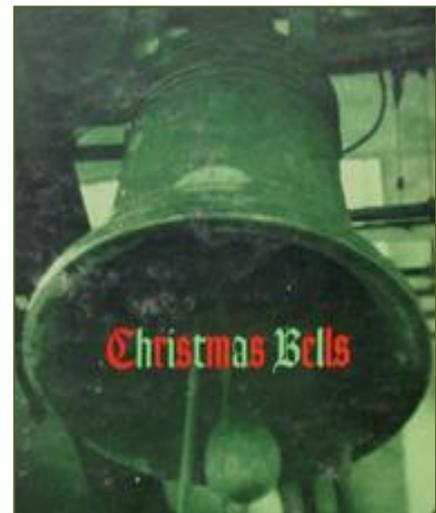
Finally, on Christmas Day 1864, he writes the words of a poem, "*Christmas Bells*." The re-election of Abraham Lincoln or the possible and foreseeable end of the terrible war, may have been the inspiration for his poem. Lt. Charles Longfellow survived. Contrary to popular belief, the occasion of writing that much loved Christmas poem was not due to Charles' death, if anything it was because of his survival that Longfellow came out of his grief and solitude and once again burst into poetry.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
 their old familiar carols play,
 and wild and sweet
 the words repeat
 of peace on earth, good-will to men!

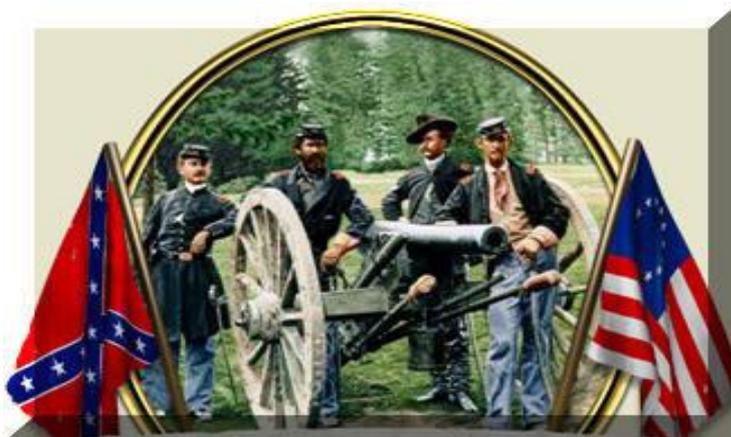
And thought how, as the day had come,
 the belfries of all Christendom
 had rolled along
 the unbroken song
 of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till; ringing, singing on its way,
 the world revolved from night to day.
 A voice, a chime a chant sublime
 Of peace on earth, good-will to men!



Then, from each black accursed mouth
 the cannon thundered in the South,
 and with the sound
 the carols drowned,
 of peace on earth, good-will to men!

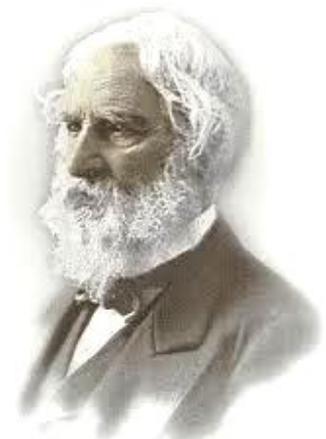
It was as if an earthquake rent
 the hearth-stones of a continent,
 and made forlorn
 the households born,
 of peace on earth, good-will to men!



And in despair I bowed my head;
 "There is no peace on earth," I said;
 "For hate is strong,
 and mocks the song
 of peace on earth, good-will to men!"



Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;
 "God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
 The Wrong shall fail,
 the Right prevail,
 with peace on earth, good-will to men!"



Thomas Nast had a knack for capturing important moments, the war is more vividly portrayed thanks to his pen, paint and artistic genius.



Departure of the 7th Regiment to war. April 19th 1861 by Thomas Nast.

One of the most fascinating events of the war came shortly after an extended winter season following the Christmas of 1862. It is depicted by an unknown Confederate artist.

Known as *'The Great Snowball fight of Rappahannock,'* over ten thousand Confederate soldiers of the 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas Infantry engaged in a spirited snowball battle near Fredericksburg, Virginia February 25th 1863.

Some 12 inches of snow blanketed the ground and combatants employed real battle tactics in the fight, including forming battlelines, charging *'the enemy,'* skirmishing, use of cavalry and the taking of prisoners.

One soldier remarked, *"It is one of the most remarkable combats of the war."* General 'Stonewall'

Jackson is reported as witnessing the spectacle and one of the soldiers, spying them on the ridge said, *"I wish that General Jackson and the staff had joined the fight, I wanted to throw snowballs at their old faded uniforms."*

Eventually the 3rd Arkansas was drawn into the fight as the Texas boys decided to join forces with their former 'opponents' and attack them. While there was a lot of laughter and in spite of being under the barking orders of officers,



the whole event was thoroughly enjoyed by all and while it no doubt proved a good morale boost it wasn't without injury. While most were unharmed, many sustained minor injuries, bruising and swollen eyes. In response to the upheaval and the disfigurement of his troops, General James Longstreet, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia reportedly banned snowball fighting.



Pitched battle as CS Texans attack CS Arkansas soldiers 1863.

The Longstreet order may have stood during the war but not the test of time and numerous such snowball fights have become part of American legend, including the Freshman-Sophomore Snowball Fight of 1892.

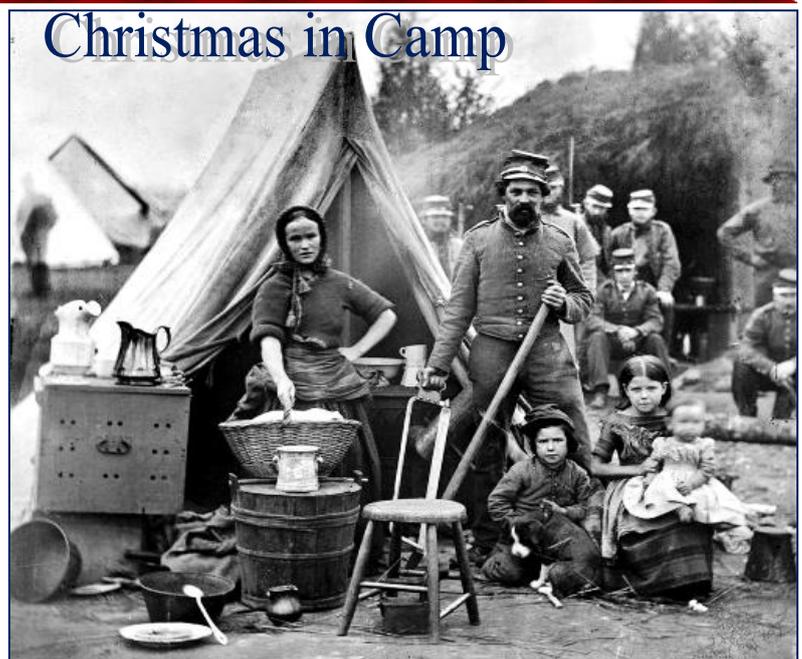
An indication of the injuries sustained is demonstrated by Darwin R. James, John P. Poe and Arthur L. Wheeler from the class of 1895. They have grim looks in this sombre picture that belies the fun they had receiving their wounds.



Courtesy Princeton Uni. Archives.

One of my favourite pictures of camp life, is taken in the colder months, evident by the mother's hand knitted woollen jumper and possibly in winter quarters. When soldiers were encamped for some time, it wasn't uncommon for them to bring their wives and children along, especially when not campaigning. The boy has his puppy dog and the girl cares for the baby. Father is ready to saw firewood and mother attends to the laundry. She is lean and hungry and a tear in her left sleeve reveals hard times but they are all healthy and wives could make a living doing jobs for other soldiers, such as sewing, washing and cooking. Others have grouped for the photo but to have a family in camp was an attraction in itself, as it reminded them of home, particularly at Christmas.

The family is well equipped and the huge trunk would hold all of their possessions and loaded on a wagon when the unit was on the move. The picture was badly damaged and



as often happens with these old glass plates, mould eats away the image. The editor has restored the picture to enable its full appreciation. Unfortunately we don't know who they are, nor who the good photographer is.



Richard William Curtis CS Navy

BY ROBERT TAYLOR QSM



ere is a man who stood above others of his time and yet succumbed to circumstances to become an ordinary citizen in his chosen homeland, Queensland, Australia.

Yet this humble servant of the Confederacy carried with him the dedication to duty, honesty and integrity that was to stand him well in both the Confederacy and in Brisbane's society where he rose to become a leading light in numerous government departments. Throughout his life Richard Curtis adhered to a deep respect for honesty and loyalty and proved this with his remarkable record.

I was deeply privileged to be requested to perform the eulogy for Richard William Curtis at a rededication of his formerly unmarked grave at Toowong on November 7th 2010. It was a date chosen to coincide with Remembrance Day, Grandparent's Day and the day he was buried in 1905. I include the eulogy and have updated it since as information comes to hand with further ongoing research. I have included relevant illustrations as they apply to the story.

It was a hot, humid day and for those who stood in the sun, was at times uncomfortable. Jack found it played havoc with his joints on the sloping ground and I had trouble standing for such a long period with my 'dicky' hip but we all endured our individual pain for the precious moment. It was well worth the effort to ensure that a war veteran is no longer forgotten and is given a service befitting his life and experiences. He may have been reluctant to talk about it in his Brisbane days, for it would have served him no purpose as he moved in government circles where such an allegiance may have been frowned upon. Nowhere in the many local reports of his life, is there mention of his role as a Paymaster in the Confederate navy.

Remarkably I was reading from speech notes without my glasses, something seemed to deem them unnecessary and an ever painful hip vanished to allow me to relax and deliver a eulogy revealing his many exploits.



Firing guard assembled, James Gray and Robert Taylor

When the salute was fired by replica muskets of the period, it was to the left of the grave away from the assembled crowd and towards Hamilton on the Brisbane River where Richard Curtis fell and drowned. Perhaps the echo of the volley was heard there.

THE CURTIS EULOGY

Distinguished guests, descendants of Richard William Curtis, Friends of Toowong Cemetery, ladies and gentlemen, welcome. I would first like to acknowledge the Indigenous people and custodians of this sacred land at Toowong Cemetery, where so many interesting people now rest in peace and the idyllic surroundings.

Our history is here in this cemetery more than any other; we are surrounded by the people who made Brisbane and indeed Queensland what it is today, we owe them all a great debt. When I acknowledge the Indigenous Custodians, I mean this with sincerity as a New Zealander, where respect for the Maori people is gaining prominence in our unique culture and enriches every day life. Like Australia, many of our famous landmarks and mountains have reverted to original Indigenous names and we can learn much from our Indigenous peoples.



The people buried here at Toowong, not only gave us Brisbane but also its roads, schools, hospitals and commerce, an entire city infrastructure. Just as we hand on the development of our time to future generations; the people who rest here at Toowong, gave us the ability to live and build our own lives and continue the process for future generations.

We who are not yet old but grow older (as *the saying goes*) are content to pass on our efforts to the next generation. It is a generation that needs to stop and take stock. We older members are not mere encumbrances. Today is the first day of **Grandparent's Day**, one that will in future always be held on the first Sunday of every November. So we have a Mother's day, a Father's day and at long last we have a Grandparent's day.

There comes a time when we should all take stock of our past, this is one such time; in this case it is a grave that was unmarked, unrecognised, covered in weeds and forgotten for too long. The grave of a scribe, an accountant, a man who had an incredible experience in life, an Englishman who fought under the Confederate naval ensign during the *American Civil War*.

For we members of the American Civil War Round Table Qld and the local chapter of Sons of Confederate Veterans Incorporated, Richard Curtis represents our first Confederate in Queensland but there are more, perhaps even in this cemetery. Terry Foenandar is a researcher in Victoria who's helped greatly with research and provided the only image we have of Curtis and is currently working on the grave of another veteran buried here.

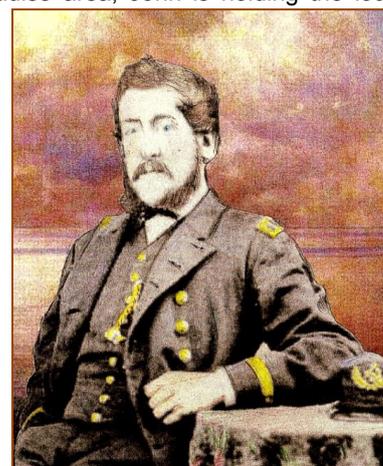


James Gray, of Sons of Confederate Veterans, is sitting here with me today and has given tremendous support and because of his efforts, this event is able to be held today. James Gray arranged delivery of the Confederate Cross and the clearing of the site for this ceremony and the gathering of Curtis descendants. James also located the gravesite of another veteran who rests nearby, Union navy man William Waters and helped prepare Waters' grave that was, like this one, gnarled with roots and weeds.

Jack Ford, of the **ACWRTQ** is also deserving of recognition for his tireless efforts in stitching together events of today, including the various permissions required to actually fire over the grave. Jack is ably assisted by **ACWRTQ** President John Duncan whose family were pioneers and his great Grandfather discovered the Gold Coast's Surfers paradise area, John is holding the loud speaker system today.

Incidentally this is only the second time that a salute will be fired over a grave since World War Two, thanks to the understanding and flexibility of our **Queensland Police Service**. The previous occasion was for William Waters, buried nearby. Both events were ably supported by The Friends of Toowong Cemetery. While the veteran we've come to honour was a mere accountant; in his way he contributed valiantly to the fortunes of Britain, America and Australia. He was part of history's most stirring and achieving moments. He is one of our unsung heroes, who actually took up a sword to wield with his pen.

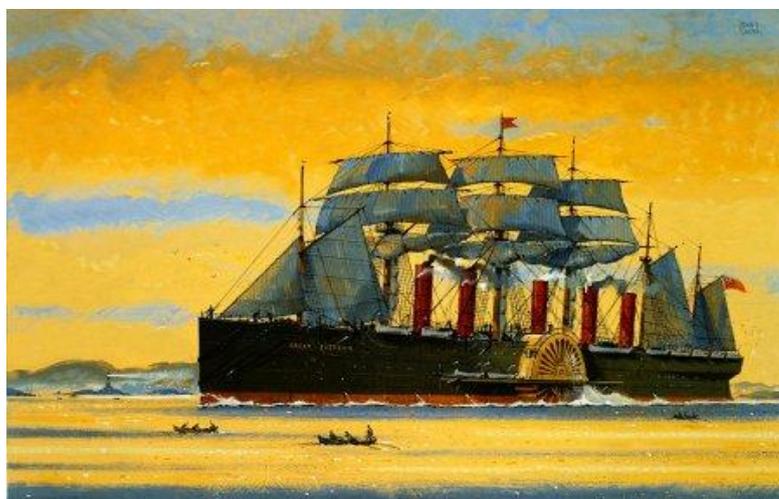
Often, when we undertake research, it's very difficult to bring together the loose threads of history but in this case there are many positive leads to the Richard William Curtis legend, thanks to the newspaper **Brisbane Courier**. There are numerous accounts of Curtis in **The Brisbane Courier** where we see the births of his children and his rise through various companies he worked for. We even uncover a classified advertisement attempting to sell a bone-mill in 1875 and letters he wrote to the editor explaining his role in importing **Kanaka** labour in the 1870's.



Richard William Curtis CSN
Courtesy T. Foenandar

Richard William Curtis was the son of an English brewer, born in Lincolnshire, January 2nd 1840. He didn't follow in father's footsteps but first worked in a shipping office in London, before joining the famous new giant paddle steamer **The Great Eastern** as Clerk and later Ship's Purser. At the time the vessel, built by **Isombard Brunel**, was said to be the largest ship of its kind ever constructed and required a crew of about four hundred. As Paymaster, Curtis had his work cut out for him.

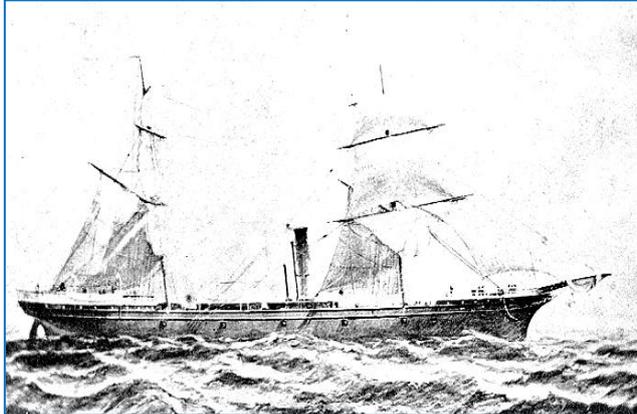
Serving as Purser for two years, from early 1860 to mid 1861, he visited New York aboard **The Great Eastern**, and was there just after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, resulting in the start of the War.



Isombard's 'Leviathan' The Great Eastern.
Five funnels and two side paddlewheels plus sails.

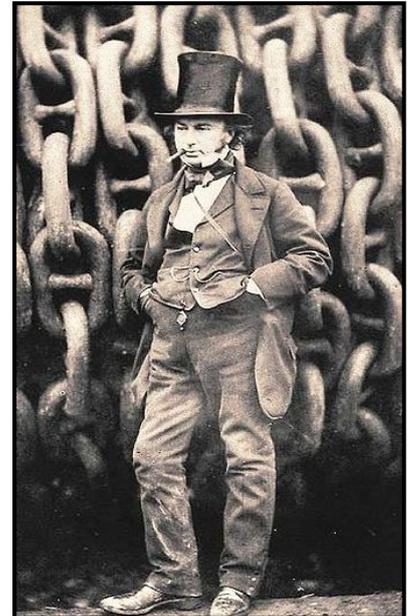
At the time of *The Great Eastern's* first arrival in New York, crowds gathered along the shore to waive and view this 'leviathan' and she was truly gigantic and originally '*Leviathan*' is what they wanted to call her but politics and economic backers demanded otherwise. Amongst the New York crowd was a regiment of volunteers who stood to attention and saluted the ship's passengers and crew almost as if homecoming heroes. The ship didn't receive such a warm welcome on her next visit, there were far more serious things to occupy the minds of Americans, there was the War Between the States, often referred to as *The Civil War*.

There's some confusion about when Curtis joined the South but In March of 1863 he was Assistant Paymaster in the Confederate States Navy, serving aboard the cruiser, **CSS Georgia**,



One of only three known images of CSS Georgia

a screw steamer built in the United Kingdom in 1862. Hand-written records kept at the time are fairly unreliable and dotted with numerous errors. Records for Curtis reveal mistakes concerning where and when he joined the Confederate States Navy.



The Great Eastern's Isombard Brunel with Eastern's massive launch chains

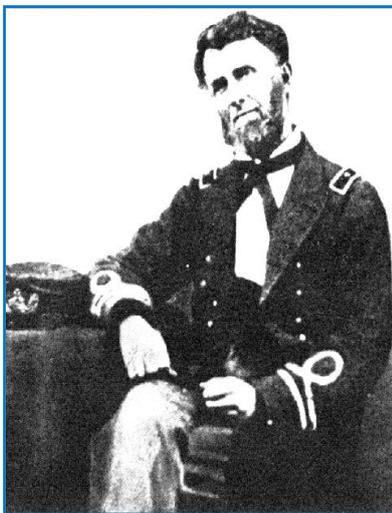
Isombard Brunel was a man of great influence in Liverpool at the time and it's likely that his recommendation may have smoothed the waters for Curtis. It would have required a big figure like Brunel to sway Confederate navy recruiter, Commander James Dunwoody Bulloch C.S.N. who was stationed in the '*Dixie*' port of Liverpool. There was such a web of intrigue at this time in Liverpool that the truth of events are so heavily veiled as to confuse historians and perhaps we'll never know; although Terry Foenander is currently working on this aspect.

Any researcher getting some account of this history wrong could be forgiven. Surely if we had the writings of Curtis himself, upon which to base our research, there would be fewer errors, as he proved himself very capable in this respect.

The whole naval saga connected with Britain during the war smacked of melodrama and a touch of Sherlock Holmes, indeed at times humorous if it were not connected to such deadly circumstances as war. Prior to going aboard **CSS Georgia**, Curtis and his fellow officers were involved in bizarre activities, even to the extent of using false names in an effort to counter United States Consular spies plaguing the waterfront.



Commander J. D. Bulloch



Georgia's Commander, W. L. Maury

One Confederate officer, in his account of these activities, mentions how they had to meet up in a secret rendezvous before heading off to board a ship taking them to their Confederate cruiser. In his book '*Recollections of a Rebel Reefer*,' Midshipman James Morris Morgan states, "*Returning to Little St. James's Street, I passed Midshipman Walker who then joined the party and about half-past nine that evening, we all proceeded to a railway station where we took a train for Whitehaven, a little seaport about an hour's ride from London. There we went to a small Inn, where we met Commander Maury, Dr. Wheeden, and Paymaster Curtis and were soon joined by others – all strangers. We waited at the Inn for about a couple of hours.... If Mr. Adams, the United States Minister, was going to get in his fine work and balk us, now was his last opportunity....*"

Georgia's armaments consisted of five Whitworth guns, two 100 pounders, two 24 pounders and one 32 pounder. The guns, ordnance and stores are secretly conveyed by the steamer *Alar* to **CSS Georgia** laying off the French coast at Ushant.



Also on board the *Alar* are officers and men Morgan mentioned as hiding in the Inn, Commander W. L. Maury, Paymaster Curtis, 1st Lt. Chapman, 2nd Lt. Evans, (*who later was to take over command of the ship*) 3rd Lt Smith, 4th Lt. Ingraham, Chief Engineer Pearce and Surgeon Wheedon.

Curtis remains aboard *CSS Georgia* for her entire cruise and handles accounts and musters of seamen who enlist from several vessels actually captured during the cruise. An example is shown in the Official Records of the Navies, a list of men from the captured prize vessel '*Dictator*;' dated April 27th 1863 and signed by Curtis, it provides the names and ratings of fourteen men who had shipped aboard *CSS Georgia* from the *Dictator*. After the end of the cruise, Curtis is given responsibility for making payments to families of deceased seamen from *CSS Alabama*; this was after the famed battle off Cherbourg, in June, 1864.

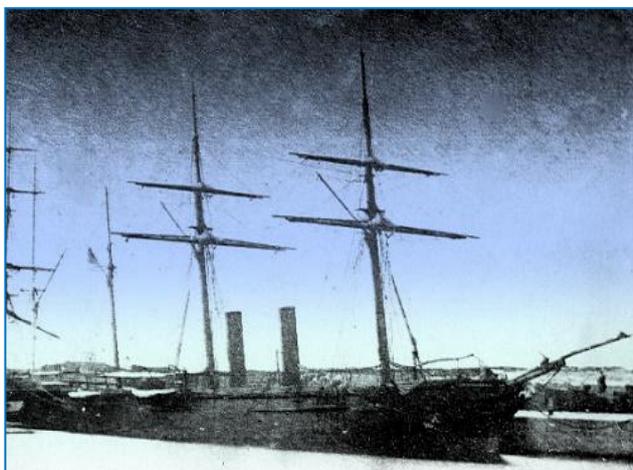


Rifled 32 pounder recovered from wreck of a river iron-clad named C.S.S. Georgia

A newspaper advertisement, in the Liverpool Courier of July 13th 1864, advises families of deceased Alabama Confederate sailors, to contact... "**Paymaster Curtis.**" A dispatch was sent by H. S. Wilding, Vice Consul in Great Britain, to the United States Secretary of State, William H. Seward, "**Within the last few days, circumstances have transpired to create distrust. On the 13th of July, and subsequently, an advertisement...appeared in the Liverpool Courier, intimating that communications respecting claims for pay, due to deceased seamen of the Alabama, were to be addressed to a Mr. R. W. Curtis. This Curtis as far as I can learn, is a Confederate agent...**"

By the 6th of January 1865, he was appointed Paymaster to serve aboard the mighty and much feared ironclad, *CSS Stonewall*. Both the Georgia and Stonewall recruited personnel from Britain and other European countries. This could account for confusion over enlistments as such activities were closely guarded secrets, shrouded with clandestine intrigue.

From 1864-65 Curtis was overseeing the pay of sailors of many other Confederate cruisers visiting London. Information gathered by the United States Consul and other agents during that period mentions that, "**Orders given to the men for 10 pounds each were drawn by Richard W. Curtis, understood to be a person in the 'rebel' naval service.**" An original payment slip, made out to William Young a Confederate sailor serving as fireman aboard the cruiser *CSS Florida*, was included as evidence in naming Curtis an officer of the Confederate Navy...the United States authorities were after him.



CSS Rappahannock trapped in Calais

He stepped straight into the role of Paymaster of the CS navy, indicating enormous faith and trust in his ability to perform the duties required of him.

A uniformed photograph of Curtis, taken about this time, reveals him with magnificent side boards, as was fashionable in the navy and a moustache, looking proud and determined (*see picture page 8.*) He is depicted with a Paymaster's stripe on his jacket sleeve and Lieutenant's badge on a kepi hat with a wreath, anchor and single star denoting First Lieutenant. Perhaps the hat is not his. It may be that another person is sitting at the same table but has been clipped from the picture. Obviously intelligent and well respected in his profession, Curtis was trusted enough to be in charge of the finances of one of Britain's most famous ships, as well as the accounts and pay of men he served with in the war Between the States.



In mid January 1864, after the end of the **CSS Georgia** cruise, Paymaster Curtis writes to fellow Paymaster aboard **CSS Rappahannock**, Douglas French Forrest, they had often corresponded and were obviously well acquainted.

By June, Curtis was in Calais in France, on his way to Paris and arranged to meet up with Forrest on June 23rd aboard **CSS Rappahannock** to look over the ship that had been stranded in the port by French authorities.

Forrest, in describing Curtis, states: *"A very pleasant fellow! I showed him the objects of interest here, gave him a lunch at the buffet and a good dinner in the cabin. In the evening, fellow officers Dornin, Herty, Miller, Curtis and I, had an invigorating game of quoits."*

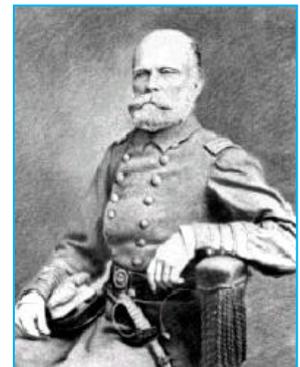
No doubt a welcome respite, Curtis then went on to Paris to await further orders. Previously on October 28th, Commander Maury took **Georgia** into Cherbourg and followed the same route to Paris as Curtis to report the ships condition and finances to Flag Officer Commander Samuel Barron. While there, due to ill health, Maury requested that he be stood down and Lt. Evans took command of **Georgia**.

By December 22, 1864 Curtis receives orders from Commander Samuel Barron to await orders from Commander James D. Bulloch, in Britain. This was obviously in preparation for him taking up the

Paymaster's job on the ironclad **CSS Stonewall**. In January, 1865, Curtis was instructed by Commander Bulloch to compile a list of men and form a crew for the ironclad and forward the list to him at his office in Liverpool, an extraordinary request of a Paymaster. Bulloch entrusted Curtis with a large sum of money (*most likely gold sovereigns*) and instructed him to report to Thomas Jefferson Page, who was to command the huge Confederate iron clad warship. That trust was well placed and Thomas page displays an interesting and characteristic look of naval commanders of the times.

At the end of the *American Civil War* a few months later, Curtis is still aboard **CSS Stonewall** on her way to the Confederacy but on learning of war's end, the vessel is surrendered to Spanish officials in Havana, Cuba. Confederate navy personnel are afraid of being hanged as pirates by the Union and generally choose neutral ports at which to surrender their ships. They weren't pirates but there was little appreciation of this in the punitive North of the time, one bent on avenging the death of Abraham Lincoln.

Curtis makes his way back to his home port in England aboard a former blockade runner the **Ptarmigan** and a few months later, November 1865, sails from London where things are getting a little too hot politically. He arrives at Moreton Bay aboard the **Legion of Honour** on February 27th 1866.



Commander T.J. Paige



Little more than slaves, one child is clearly undernourished

Originally Curtis owns a farm at Pimpama he calls *'Encliffe Vale Plantation,'* and lives coincidentally near another veteran now buried in the Pimpama cemetery, a Union militiaman James Latimer, who I researched in some detail. They had to know each other but were on opposite sides in the war.

Unlike Latimer, Curtis obviously isn't cut out for the rigours of plantation life and gives it up. It may be that the local Indigenous people and Kanakas working for him cause too much strife. In November 1868 there is some trouble on his plantation involving local tribes of Aborigines, including the murder of an aboriginal by other members of his tribe.

Strangely, Curtis shortly finds himself in service as the first Government Agent appointed to accompany vessels to the South Sea Islands; his appointment, dating from January 21st 1871.

Richard Curtis' responsibilities are to see that Pacific Islanders are recruited in an appropriate and humane manner.

The type of vessel Curtis is to oversee was engaged in carrying island labourers we now know as Kanakas from places like Vanuatu to Queensland, under the Polynesian Labourers Act of 1868. This is a dark, regretful and shameful side of Queensland's history and the Kanaka people are little more than slaves; there is evidence to prove they were treated as badly, if not worse than some slaves in America and like them, many are brought unwillingly to Australia. Curtis is appointed to see that justice is done, that people are lawfully recruited for work, not abducted.



The port of Brisbane in 1870 looking from Kangaroo Point across to Eagle Street.

On the appointment of Curtis we gain another insight into the man from a published description of him in the Brisbane Courier...

"Government agent, Mr. Curtis is a gentleman of experience in the management of Polynesians, having been, for a considerable time, in charge of large numbers of them on a plantation near Brisbane.

He is no 'new chum,' and we are informed that he got his appointment because he's believed capable of performing its duties with credit to himself and satisfaction to the Government.

Curtis is under strict instructions, and, although his power is discretionary in certain cases, he will be held personally responsible for recruiting being conducted in a strictly just and humane manner. His expenses will be paid by a fee of 10 shillings per head, exacted by the Government in advance from the owners of the vessel for each islander imported."

Richard Curtis is aboard the ship, "*Mystery*," when it sails from Rockhampton in January of 1871 to the New Hebrides, and while aboard this vessel an altercation with island people results in the death of a fellow passenger. An account of the tragic incident is provided by the *Brisbane Courier* and I have abbreviated it slightly.

"... Government Agent Curtis had considerable difficulty persuading islanders, who had not been here before, to venture on the voyage; owing to the ill impression produced by those who've abused the Act.

Mr. Curtis, the Government Agent was, we learn, indefatigable in his exertions to procure a good class of immigrants, having taken every precaution to acquaint the people, through their chiefs and interpreters, with the



Ships similar to the *Mystery* about the same business

exact nature of the contract, the description of the place they were coming to, the labour they would have to perform and rate of pay they would receive." The paper continues, *"During one of these trips, Curtis was accompanied by Captain Irving and a passenger, Mr. Majendie, who took the trip for the purpose of benefiting his health. The party was lured to shore by islanders but when the boat arrived within thirty yards of land, they were welcomed by a shower of arrows, which were said to 'Come as thick as rain.' Curtis had a very narrow escape, one of the arrows glanced along his chest, pierced his shirt beneath his left arm, and broke off short leaving the point embedded. We need hardly add he keeps it as a souvenir of his 'pleasant' trip. Poor Mr. Majendie was not so fortunate. An arrow struck him on the shin, midway between the knee and the foot.*

The interpreter informed them it was a poisoned arrow and instant action was taken by Mr. Curtis, who cut the wound and endeavoured to suck out poison and did everything in his power to arrest its fatal progress.

Captain Irving at once returned – not however, before Mr. Curtis had emptied the barrels of his revolver at the savages. Mr. Majendie was put back on board Mystery but grew worse day by day, his sufferings being terrible. On the sixth day he expired, his body committed to the deep, the funeral service being most impressively read by Mr. Curtis.”

In October 1872, Richard marries Coroline Amelia Bolden at Lutwyche Church, Kedron Brook, and over the years four children are born.

After return to the Port of Brisbane and late in 1873, Richard Curtis is appointed, ‘Port Guager.’ The position is as bonded warehouseman, similar to custom officers today and holds the job for about ten years. He is stationed at Petrie Bight until 1883 the same year that the Queensland government decides to build a grand Customs House edifice with Corinthian columns.

Work commences in 1886 and after 3 years and 38,346 pounds the city was graced with the fine building seen below.

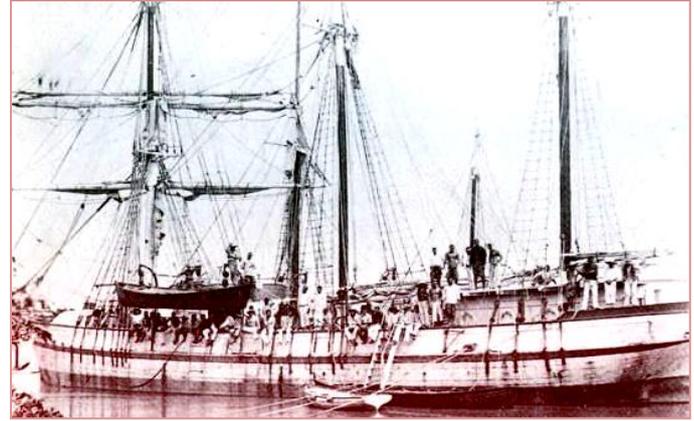


Customs Building on Eagle Street pier

By the time of writing the letter, Curtis has already taken another occupation in Brisbane. He is later appointed secretary of the Queensland Fire Insurance Company and after three years appointed Resident Secretary of the Mutual Assurance Society in Brisbane.

After a short period he is accountant to the Curator of Intestate Estates, and also holds the position of acting Deputy Curator. In February, 1888, thanks to his obvious abilities in these positions, the Queensland government appoints Curtis a Railway Arbitrator and he holds this position for many years, effectively resolving railway disputes. During this time he becomes involved with the Queensland Acclimatisation Society and Railway Club and is involved in a number of functions, befitting his status, even including jury duty at the Supreme Court in Brisbane. On one occasion, in 1894, he is stated to have attended a Railway Club and Library Concert, at which he performs *“When Night is Darkest.”* (Possibly a monologue.)

Then some terrible mishap befalls Curtis. At 4.30pm November 10, 1905, the body of Richard William Curtis, aged 65, is found floating in the Brisbane River, near the ‘Training Wall’ at Hamilton and close to the Hamilton Swimming Baths. At the time of his death, Curtis is said to be an accountant and resident of Brisbane’s Clayfield suburb and probably the night before, may have tripped, or in the poor lighting at the time, fallen into the river, hitting his head and subsequently drowning; a cut is found on his head. Some possessions, including an umbrella and basket are found further along the wall. He’s taken to a morgue where a post mortem is performed and as was the custom, buried on the same day; fittingly it was November 11th. We now mark this as Remembrance Day to honour the fallen of World War 1.



A ship loaded with Kanaka labour for Queensland

Curtis’ claim to have experience in dealing with Islanders of the Pacific region, is confirmed by a letter he writes to the editor of *The Brisbane Courier*, dated Tuesday, November 28th 1876. In the letter he gives some detail of how trade and exchanges with Polynesians and other Islanders were conducted. Curtis states that recruits for the Queensland fields were ‘often’ volunteers. Items of trade were exchanged for these recruits, with the items always handed directly to individuals and to chiefs on each island.



Ladies in mourning. ACWRTQ re-enactors. Wendy, Jann, Leela and Brenda

I could find no reference to the original ceremony, or who officiated but it is fitting that we have this ceremony for him today, as close to that date as possible. A subsequent magisterial inquiry, held at Brisbane on December 14th 1905, with results of his post mortem to hand, concludes his death is caused by oxygen deprivation, commonly termed asphyxia from drowning.



Confederate descendant James Levi



The last salute from ACWRTQ re-enactors.
Firing left oblique towards Hamilton

Earlier this year, Terry Foenander arranged for a Veterans' Administration grave marker to be installed on the previously unmarked grave. Today, we mark the death and memory of a hero, a legend and an ordinary man, an accountant thrust into extra-ordinary circumstances. The war was truly multicultural and drew in large numbers of Irish, German, Scottish, English, Chinese, French and Italians. New Zealand Maori were in the navy crews and Australians filled Confederate ships at Melbourne. Some left Australia to fight for the North or South and some came here to escape the awful memories of war.

Richard William Curtis was just one of the people who decided to cast their lot with the South in its war for Independence and proved the pen mightier than the sword. The South may have lost the war but the spirit of those warriors lives on to inspire new generations of Americans and indeed we Australians. Today is important because of the coincidence of Remembrance Day, the day Curtis was buried but also reveals yet another unsung hero, a 'Forgotten Veteran' and a Grandfather. We should not discriminate; we should not forget any of our history's proud players. But honour them for what they did and what they thought was right at the time.

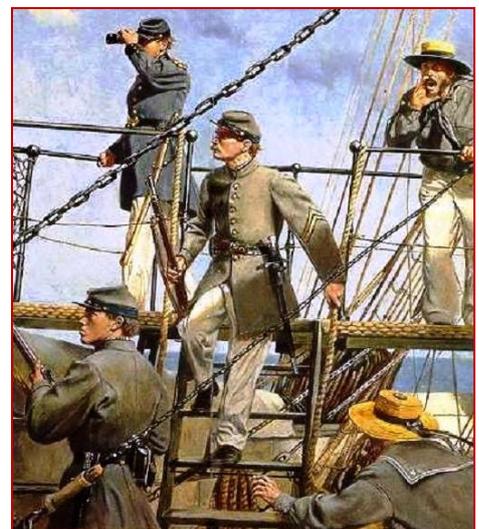
Lest We Forget Richard William Curtis, a true son of Queensland and a loyal son of the Confederacy.

Lt. Trace Scalf ordered his men to fire the three volley salute over the grave and James Levi a descendant of a Civil War veteran plays Taps.

Editor: And so ended an historic moment at Toowong Cemetery. The Friends of Toowong Cemetery, the guardians of the land invited guests to take refreshments in a nearby area and the day was rounded off with many questions and discussions. This story is still being researched and there will be updates of discoveries as they come to hand in The Bugle.

ABC Television attended the ceremony and put together an excellent package for screening that night. Richard William Curtis has reached down the years to extend a helping hand in making people aware of our organisation and the work we do with researchers in ensuring veterans of The War Between the States have an appropriate marker or headstone.

The navy brought the war to our Australian shores and ships like CSS Shenandoah found recruits in Melbourne eager and willing to join as crew. Australia has won a right to stand with the ancestors of veterans. From Irishmen who escaped from Tasmania and joined the Irish Brigade to sailors or individuals who sailed to America and those many veterans who came here after the war looking for peace and a chance for a new life. Richard William Curtis is just one of many.





Letters to the Editor

25/10/2010



Robert, thanks so much for the copy of "The Bugle". The photographs of Vicksburg Battlefield brought back memories of my visits to the park. And the U.S.S. Cairo is one of my favourite stops there. I also wanted to let you know about another event the Lincoln Archives Digital Project is currently working on. We hope to be having the Re-enactment of the Lincoln Inauguration on the steps of the Capitol on March 5, 2011. Following the ceremony, a parade will start at the Capitol and end at the Willard Hotel, where the Inauguration banquet will occur, with the same menu as President-Elect Lincoln had. Another exciting aspect of this day's events will be a Civil War encampment on the Mall. We hope, with cooperation of the National Park Service, to have Union encampments, 19th century photographers, telegraph operators, signal corps, medical corps, weaponry, and a section for music and dancing. This event will launch the Civil War sesquicentennial in grand fashion. The website for the event is at: www.lincolningauguration2011.com. Please keep checking the website for updates. Best regards, Karen Needles From: father_abraham@lincolnarchives.us

VIRGINIA'S BLACK CONFEDERATES

William E. Waters. (November 2nd 2010)

Editor: Thanks to James Gray for forwarding this enlightening article.



One of the tragedies of war is that victors get to write its history and often do so with bias and dishonesty, this is true about our war of 1861, erroneously called a civil war. Civil wars are when two or more parties attempt to take over the central government.

Jefferson Davis no more wanted to take over Washington, D.C., than George Washington, in 1776, wanted to take over London. Both wars were fought for independence. Kevin Sieff is staff writer for *The Washington Post* and penned an article "[Virginia-4th grade textbook criticised over claims on black Confederate soldiers.](#)" (Oct 20th 2010.) The text book states that blacks fought on the side of the Confederacy and Sieff claims, "[Scholars are nearly unanimous in calling these accounts of black Confederate soldiers a misrepresentation of history. It is disconcerting that the next generation is being taught history based on unfounded claims, instead of accepted scholarship.](#)"

Let's examine that accepted scholarship.

In April 1861, a Petersburg, Va., newspaper proposed, "[Three cheers for the patriotic free Negroes of Lynchburg](#)" after 70 blacks offered, "[To act in whatever capacity may be assigned to them,](#)" in defense of Virginia. Ex-slave, Frederick Douglass observed, "[There are at the present moment, many coloured men in the Confederate Army doing duty not only as cooks, servants and labourers, but as real soldiers, having muskets on their shoulders and bullets in their pockets, ready to shoot down ... and do all that soldiers may do... to destroy the Federal government.](#)"

In 1919 Charles H. Wesley, a distinguished black historian who lived from 1891 to 1987, wrote in the *Journal of Negro History*, "[The Employment of Negroes as Soldiers in the Confederate Army. Seventy free blacks enlisted in the Confederate Army in Lynchburg, Virginia. Sixteen companies \(1,600\) free men of colour marched through Augusta, Georgia on their way to fight in Virginia.](#)"

Wesley cites Horace Greeley's [American Conflict](#) (1866) saying, "[For more than two years, Negroes had been extensively employed in belligerent operations by the Confederacy. They had been embodied and drilled as rebel soldiers and had paraded with white troops at a time when this would not have been tolerated in the armies of the Union.](#)"

Wesley goes on to say, "[An observer in Charleston at the outbreak of the war noted the preparation for war, and called particular attention to the thousand Negroes who, so far from inclining to insurrections, were grinning from ear to ear at the prospect of shooting Yankees.](#)"

One would have to be stupid to think that blacks were fighting in order to preserve slavery. What's untaught, in most history classes, is that only recently (relatively speaking) did we Americans think of ourselves as citizens of the United States. For most of our history we thought of ourselves as citizens of Virginia, citizens of New York or citizens of whatever state we resided in. Wesley says, "[To the majority of the Negroes, as to all the South, the invading Union armies seemed to be ruthlessly attacking independent States, invading the beloved homeland and trampling upon all that these men held dear.](#)" Blacks have fought in all our wars both before and after slavery, in hopes of better treatment afterwards.

Denying the role, and thereby cheapening the memory of the Confederacy's slaves and freemen who fought in a failed war of independence, is part of the agenda to cover up Abraham Lincoln's unconstitutional acts to prevent Southern secession. Did states have a right to secede? At the 1787 Constitutional Convention James Madison rejected a proposal that would allow the federal government to suppress a seceding state. He said, "A Union of the States containing such an ingredient, seemed to provide for its own destruction. The use of force against a State would look more like a declaration of war than an infliction of punishment and would probably be considered by the party attacked, as a dissolution of all previous compacts by which it might be bound."

November 2, 2010

Editor: Walter E. Williams is the John M. Olin distinguished Professor of Economics at George Mason University, and a nationally syndicated columnist. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators columnists and cartoonists, visit the [Creators Syndicate web page](#).

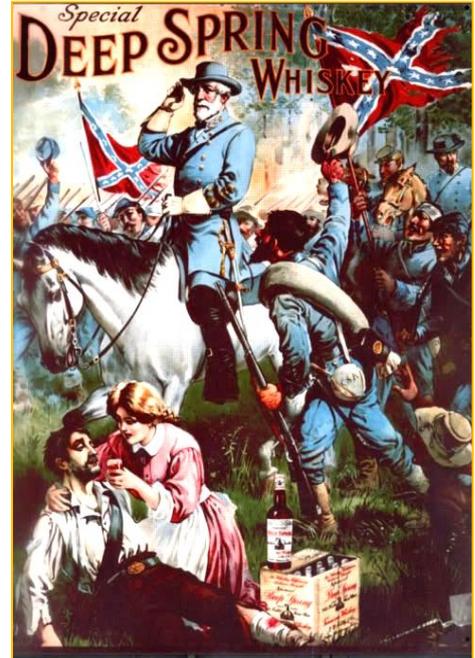


The ACWRTQ President John Duncan, including all committee members wish me to express their sincere thanks to members for their continued attendance at meetings and support of our various functions, both in terms of veterans' graves and public relations activities. They wish our members and readers, wherever you are, a Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous and adventurous New Year.

Take a moment during the festive season to remember our valiant soldiers who fought for Independence on both sides of the war and for all our servicemen who still follow the call of their country in places like Afghanistan and Iraq.



The spirit of all soldiers, past and present is welded to this festive event and we should offer a toast to all absent friends and family at this time of year.



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR 2011.
MAY ALL YOUR WISHES
COME TRUE
MAY YOUR FAMILY BE
WITH YOU
YOUR HEALTH
BE GOOD
YOUR FIREPLACE
HAVE WOOD
YOUR TABLE
HAVE FOOD AS
ALL TABLES SHOULD.



Editor: This newsletter- "The Bugle" is produced entirely for the purpose of study and the right to review. No part of the content is to be on-sold. No photographs, text or illustration may be reproduced for any other purpose. Ownership of all illustrations belongs with original copyright owners in all cases. Stories or letters in "The Bugle" are personal and presented for study only, they do not reflect opinions or policy of the ACWRTQ. You may forward this newsletter for the same purpose. All correspondence to The Editor: anne-bob@aapt.net.au

ACWRTQ Meetings: Coorparoo R.S.L. Third Thursday of the month. 7.30PM. All Welcome