

Banner

of the **Blue and Gray**

Newsletter of the Frederick County Civil War Roundtable
Frederick, Maryland
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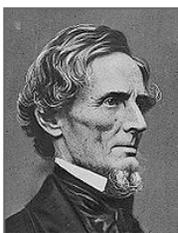
201st Meeting

February 2011

Vol. 37 Issue 6

Sesquicentennial Diary

Two presidents and the gathering storm



February 1861 — On the first day of the month, Texas seceded from the Union, joining South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana in forming the Confederate States of America.

On February 4, representatives from 14 Free States and seven Slave States convened in Washington for a Peace Convention — a final attempt to avoid war. None of the seceded states attended. After three weeks' work, the convention's proposals failed.



Jefferson Davis and cabinet Also on February 4, Confederate delegates met in Montgomery, AL, for a constitutional Convention. Within five days, they named Jefferson Davis, former Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce, as provisional president. At the time, Davis was a U.S. Senator from Mississippi. When his state seceded, he had immediately resigned his Senate seat and returned home.

Davis was inaugurated on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol on February 18 and set to work organizing the Confederate government. He appointed a seven-member cabinet including Vice President Alexander Stephens and secretaries of State, Treasury, War and the Navy. Within weeks, the government of the Confederate States of America was officially up and running.

(Continued on Page 4, See 1861 Diary)

February Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 2011

7:30 PM

at the

National Museum of Civil War Medicine

48 East Patrick Street

Frederick, Maryland 21701

Speaker: **Dr. Walter L. Powell**

Subject: *Gettysburg's Most Famous Address:
The David Wills House*

Our Speaker

This month's speaker, historian, author and history professor Dr. Walter Powell, will discuss one of Gettysburg's newest museums, the David Wills House, where Lincoln completed the final draft of his historic battlefield address.

Dr. Powell's program is based on a forthcoming book about the house, which explores the home's history, with special emphasis on the David Wills family and Lincoln's overnight stay in November 1863.

Preservation of the Wills House, from its construction in 1814 to the present day, has evolved from the years of the "Lincoln Room Museum" to become the first National Park Service museum dedicated to the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg. Dr. Powell played a significant role in that restoration, serving as the Borough of Gettysburg's principal liaison to the National Park Service Project Team that planned the exhibits and restoration of the David Wills House. The museum officially opened on Feb. 12, 2009, Lincoln's 200th Birthday.



At the time of the Battle of Gettysburg, David Wills was a prominent 32-year-old attorney living with his wife, Catherine, and their growing family in one of Gettysburg's largest homes situated on the town square. During the battle, Wills opened his home to frightened citizens who took refuge in his basement. In the aftermath, Wills worked diligently in his first floor office to coordinate the town's recovery and assist the wounded.

On July 10, 1863, Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin toured the battlefield with Wills and appointed him to oversee the proper burial of the fallen soldiers. A few days later, after a meeting of State agents at the Wills house, the governor asked the young lawyer to supervise construction of a



permanent national cemetery for all Union dead, and to coordinate Lincoln's participation in the dedication.

On the evening of Nov. 18, 1863, David Wills and his wife Catherine, who was expecting her fourth child, hosted 38 dignitaries for dinner at the Wills House and many overnight guests, including the President. Every bedroom in the house was occupied. Catherine's own bedroom was given to Lincoln for the night — it was there that he polished his "few appropriate remarks" for the following day. The



Lincoln Bedroom is recreated at the museum.

In addition to Dr. Powell's work with the Wills House, he served as Director of Planning and Historic Preservation for Gettysburg for 17 years, where, among many projects, he directed the restoration of the 1858 Gettysburg Railroad Station. He holds a Master's degree in History and a Ph.D. in English from Kent State University.

Currently, Dr. Powell is the Executive Director of the Conococheague Institute Museum and Library in Welsh Run, Franklin County, PA, and an Adjunct Professor of History at Mount Saint Mary's University, Emmitsburg, MD. He also serves as an Adjunct Professor in the Historic Preservation Program at Shepherd University in West Virginia.

Dr. Powell lives on a portion of the Gettysburg Battlefield with his wife, Susan, and children, Nat and Sally.

The Prez Sez



Members, I will not be present at February's meeting, as Dottie and I will be attending a graduation of Army National Guard Military Police at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. We are so proud of our grandson, Keith, who has joined the Army National Guard Reserves, and who is now graduating from basic training there.

We thank all the men and women of our U.S. Armed Forces for their service, and are proud to have a soldier in our family.

My capable Board will again be filling in for us this month. I hope you will enjoy the speaker we have invited, Dr. Walter Powell, and his lecture on the David Wills House in Gettysburg.

I look forward to seeing you all at our March meeting.

Donnie

At last month's meeting . . .

Our 200th meeting was a rousing success — and set a new attendance record!

Author and historian Gail Stephens gave us new insight into the character and military experiences of Major General Lew Wallace. Although Wallace is famous for writing *Ben-Hur*, in Maryland he is known as the "general who saved Washington" for his against-all-odds stand at the Battle of Monocacy.



Mrs. Stephens discussed her newly published book, *Shadow of Shiloh; Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*, which focuses on Wallace's career in the Army of the Potomac. She examined in depth the reasons why Wallace failed to arrive at the Shiloh battlefield until the end of the first day — a perceived failure that haunted him the rest of his life.

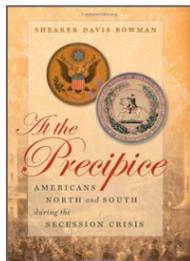
The evening ended on a particularly fitting note when Mrs. Stephens, who has been a longtime volunteer at the Monocacy National Battlefield, won a Monocacy Battle T-shirt in our raffle. Following the program, she signed copies of her book.

Next Month's Speaker

At our next meeting, Thurs., March 17, at 7:30 pm, at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Gary Miller will discuss "Insects and Their Effect on the Civil War."

The Bookshelf

At the Precipice: Americans North and South during the Secession Crisis, by Shearer Davis Bowman. Illustrated, maps, endnotes, bibliography, index, 392 pp., 2010, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC.



Author Shearer Davis Bowman's book offers a unique window on understanding the secessionist crisis of 1861 and how differing social, political and religious beliefs drove the events that led inevitably to Civil War. Instead of a traditional narrative format, the author delves into the feelings and values of key players such as Abraham Lincoln, James Buchanan, Jefferson Davis, and John Tyler, as well as ordinary citizens from both North and South.

Drawing upon many unexplored primary resources such as diary entries, Bowman uses direct statements and incidents involving the people he highlights to illustrate the conflicting attitudes of the time. For example, using Sojourner Truth, he juxtaposes the attitudes toward slavery in the North with the more moderate views of an upper-class Southern widow.

Bowman, a longtime history professor at the University of Texas and Kentucky University, displays his extensive scholarship by documenting his arguments and conclusions with 49 pages of endnotes and 18 pages of further reading.

This book challenges many long-accepted ideas about why the country erupted into a Civil War and provides substantial food for thought for anyone interested in the secession crisis of 1860-1861.

Professor Bowman died in December 2009. His manuscript was reviewed and prepared for publication by George C. Herring.

The Civil War Collector's Price Guide, 12th Edition,

Edited by Nancy Dearing Rossbacher. Softcover, illustrated, photographs, bibliography, index, 280 pp., 2010, Publisher's Press, Inc., Shepherdsville, KY.



There is much to recommend in this edition of the Guide. Its 280 pages are packed with valuable information about every Civil War collecting category imaginable, updated pricing, full color pages, 500 black & white photos, new listings and useful tips. The book also introduces new categories, such as lighting, with pertinent advice on how to identify period lamps.

Exceptionally thorough and well-organized, the Guide describes each category of collectible, why it's valued, tips on how to spot fakes, and anticipated price ranges. As the editor notes, prices are based on a compilation and average of "bona fide sales, not inflated asking prices" from list of reputable dealers and collectors across the country — a fact that enhances the book's value. This guide is a worthwhile investment for any Civil War collector.

Calendar of Events

Feb. 12, Lecture, Frederick, MD, 11AM-Noon

"African American Surgeons in the Civil War," by Dr. Robert Slawson. Monthly Civil War Talk lecture series, National Museum of Civil War Medicine. Fee included in admission. For further information, 301-695-1864, education@civilwarmed.org.

Feb. 18-19, 20th Annual Master Docent Series Workshops, Frederick, MD

Free Feb. 18, 7PM, Project-Run-A-Way "informance" program explores the history of enslaved and indentured servants and runaways in Maryland, at Frederick Community College Arts Center. Reception follows. Feb. 19: Daylong workshops on a variety of historic topics, including the 1861 Kemp Hall Legislative Session and Slave Village Discoveries at the Best Farm. For further information and reservations: www.fredericktourism.org/landing/MasterDocent2011.

Feb. 26, Cyclorama Program, Gettysburg, PA, 5-6:30PM

"An Evening with the Painting," Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center. History, conservation, and a private viewing of the Gettysburg Cyclorama with Sue Boardman. For information and tickets: 717-338-1243, www.gettysburgfoundation.org.

March 5, Reenactment & Parade, Washington, DC

Reenactment of Lincoln's swearing-in & parade from the Capitol to the Willard Hotel for conference luncheon. Reenactors, photographers, telegraph operators, medical corps, period civilians invited to participate. For information: Karen Needles, 240-462-9802, www.lincolningauguration2011.com.

March 5, Lecture & Walk, Gettysburg, PA

Morning lecture: "Rival Teams —The Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis Administrations in the Civil War." Lunch & outdoor walk with licensed guide at Gettysburg National Military Park. For information, fee and registration: 717-334-3460, Ext. 221, www.gettysburgfoundation.org.

March 5, 6, 12, 13, Lecture Series, Gettysburg, PA, 1:30PM

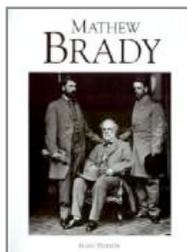
"Perspectives on the Battle" lecture series, Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center. Free. For information: 717-334-1124, Ext. 8023, www.nps.gov/gett.

March 12, Lecture, Frederick, MD, 11AM-Noon

"Patriots in Petticoats" lecture at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, part of the monthly lecture series. Free with Museum admission. For information: 301-695-1864, www.CivilWarMed.org.

Ramblings from the Raffle Table

Friends, the three lucky winners of our FCCWRT caps were Sheree Hess, Dylan Hyde, and Rich Jones. Congratulations all.



This month's Special Raffle is a handsome hardback, almost coffee-table size book, entitled *Mathew Brady*, by Barry Pritzker. The book contains 70 stirring photographs of the Civil War credited to Mr. Brady. Tickets for this Raffle are \$2 each (and worth every penny!).

To give members a second chance, the drawing for this book will be held in March.

I found the following quote from the *New York Times* printed 150 years ago: "The dead of the battlefield come up to us very rarely, even in dreams. We see the list in the morning paper at breakfast, but dismiss its recollection with the coffee. Mr. Mathew Brady has done something to bring us the terrible reality and earnestness of the war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along our streets, he has done something very like it."

Dottie

1861 Diary (continued from Page 1)

On February 11, Lincoln boarded a train in Springfield, IL, for an eastbound whistle-stop tour of 70 towns and cities en route to his inauguration in Washington. Cheering crowds greeted him at every stop. But the mood of the journey changed when Lincoln arrived in Philadelphia on February 22.

Between Philadelphia and Washington lay Baltimore, long a hotbed of pro-slavery secessionists. While Lincoln's security manager, Detective Allan Pinkerton, was known for his extreme caution, Lincoln himself was usually unfazed by death threats. However, this time, when Pinkerton verified a plot in Baltimore to assassinate the President-elect on his trip through the city, Lincoln heeded his advice.

On February 23, in the middle of the night, Lincoln traveled through Baltimore in disguise and was whisked into the Willard Hotel in Washington. Although criticized for the subterfuge, Lincoln was safe. He stayed at the Willard until his inauguration on March 4.

With hungry troops still isolated at Fort Sumter, a Confederate government in place in the South, and the failure of an 11th-hour peace effort, Northerners and Southerners alike were anxious and confused about the future. Many clung to the vanishing hope of a peaceful resolution; others were spoiling for a fight.

At the Willard, Lincoln prepared take the reins of a nation almost certainly on the brink of war.

MISSION

TO cultivate and preserve Frederick County's Civil War heritage and broaden the understanding of the Civil War Era and its impact on our nation.

TO explore the many facets of the Civil War from the battlefield to first-person narratives, including guest lectures by writers and historians.

TO support historical projects and activities aimed at increasing public interest and appreciation of our Civil War history, both locally and nationally.

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Communications, dues, questions or comments for the Roundtable should be directed to:

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In the news

Wilderness Battlefield spared Walmart invasion

The years-long battle to save the Wilderness battlefield in Orange County, VA, from a Walmart invasion ended quietly Jan. 26 on the eve of a trial, when the merchandiser unexpectedly dropped plans to build a Supercenter within the historic boundaries of the battlefield.

James Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Preservation Trust, applauded Walmart's decision, saying that Sam Walton would be proud. He further noted, "We stand ready to work with Walmart to put this controversy behind us and protect the battlefield from further encroachment."

Banner of the Blue and Gray Editor: Nancy Enright