

The Charger



The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct/Nov 2021

vol. #45 # 2/3

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fellow Roundtable Members:

The Roundtable is off to a great start! In early September, we kicked off the new year with Dan Welch's presentation on Ohio units at the Battle of Antietam. At the end of the month, nineteen Roundtable members and guests went on the two-day field trip to the Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, and Lookout Mountain battlefields. Our guides, Robert Carter and Jim Ogden, gave exceptional, in-depth tours of the sites. Professor Andrew Bledsoe and Jim Ogden gave excellent presentations on various aspects of the Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge/Lookout Mountain battles. We all enjoyed the hospitality provided by the local restaurants and the staffs that served us. At the end of the trip, we left with a deeper understanding of the importance of these sites and the impact the struggles there had on the course of the Civil War. At our October meeting, Professor Craig Symonds' presentation provided a new perspective on naval leadership and its role in gaining and maintaining naval supremacy in both the Civil War and World War II

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Professor Mary DeCredico, a colleague of Professor Symonds while he served as the Chair of the History Department at the U.S. Naval Academy, will be presenting a talk on Jefferson Davis and his leadership role War as the Confederacy's first and only president at our November 10th meeting. We are looking forward to her presentation, and hope all members can attend in-person (preferably), or by Zoom. If you have not already made your reservation(s), please do so without delay.

On a financial note, we have 67 paid memberships to date. If you have not paid your \$60 per person annual dues, please do so at your earliest convenience.

I look forward to seeing you at our November 10th meeting!

Best, Mark Porter



The Dick Crews Annual Debate, January 12, 2022

Our topic this year is “**Fired But Not Forgotten**: Of all the Civil War generals and flag officers relieved of command, subjected to a court-martial or otherwise disciplined by superiors, which of them least deserved his fate?” William Vodrey will again be our moderator. Debaters will be able to pick their own top officer (first come, first served); possible candidates include Irwin McDowell, Joe Johnston, Samuel F. Du Pont, Braxton Bragg, William Franklin, Don Carlos Buell, Gouverneur K. Warren, Fitz John Porter and others (U.S. Grant and W.T. Sherman are excluded). Debaters should expect to speak for five minutes, then take questions from the membership for another five, and finally to take part in a general discussion/rebuttal opportunity with the other debaters. It's a lot of fun, and no particular expertise is either required or expected; younger and newer members of the Roundtable are warmly encouraged to take part. The debate winner, chosen by vote of the membership, will, as always, receive fabulous prizes.

If you'd like to be one of our debaters, please let William know (being sure to name the officer you'd like to speak about) by noon on Weds. Dec. 1 at wfbvodrey@aol.com.

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CIVIL WAR CANNONS AT CLEVELAND'S WOODLAND CEMETERY

By Kirk Stewart, Member Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

The monument of the 7th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in Woodland Cemetery is a popular and appealing attraction. A large part of the appeal can be ascribed to the four 30 pdr. Parrott rifles surrounding its base.

The Parrott Rifle was the invention of Robert Parker Parrott, a captain of ordnance in the U.S. Army who joined the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, NY in 1839. At the time, rifled cannon were difficult to produce. Cast iron cannon were brittle and frequently burst; rifled bronze tubes wore out quickly. Parrott developed a cast iron rifle wrapped at the breach with a reinforcing band of wrought iron. These cannon were not perfect, but they were cheap and Parrott produced them in quantity. Parrott rifles were produced in sizes from 10 to 300 pdr.

The 30 pdr. Parrott rifle was produced in larger numbers than other sizes; some 800 being produced for both the Army and Navy to 1865. The 30 pdr. was classified as a siege weapon but was frequently used in the field. First delivery was 6 guns on June 11, 1861.

The four guns at the 7th OVI monument are of particular historical interest. Registry numbers 4, 17, 19 and 21 were all delivered prior to October 24, 1861. They are early version Army rifles, with a slight flare at the muzzle and a round, undrilled elevating knob. The real gem is registry number 4. This is the oldest extant 30 pdr., one of the first 6 delivered June 11, 1861. It may have been used in the Manassas campaign; we know that registry number 2 was present and fired the first shot of the battle; it was subsequently captured by the Confederates and nicknamed "Long Tom". We also know that Abner Doubleday had a battery of 30 pdrs. with Patterson's forces to the West.

The markings on these guns are instructive. The right trunnion is marked "R.P.P. over W.P.F.". This is the initials of the inspector Robert Parker Parrott (yes, the Ordnance Dept. let Parrott inspect his own guns!) over the maker, West Point Foundry. The left trunnion is dated "1861". The muzzle usually has the registry number on the top and designation and bore size on the bottom. The weight is under the knob; foundry number and a repeat of the registry number on the rimbases. The top of the reinforcing band is "PATENTED 1861" – except on registry number 4. Parrott didn't get his patent granted until October 1861, so number 4 is stamped "CAV". This is short for "caveat", a warning that a patent is pending. The trunnion markings are shown below.

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All four guns are in excellent condition, which is very unusual on pieces that are mounted outdoors. This is a result of Woodland Cemetery's aggressive conservation efforts.



In 2001, volunteers from the International Painters Union removed the cannons and completely restored them, removing corrosion and old paint (including dead birds and beer cans from the bores). The work had to be done by hand and took over 6 months. The results are outstanding – the surfaces are smooth and finished as original. Best of all, the markings are clear and legible.

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Specification of Letters Patent No.
33,100, dated August 20, 1861



Witness:
C. W. Thompson
James H. Jones

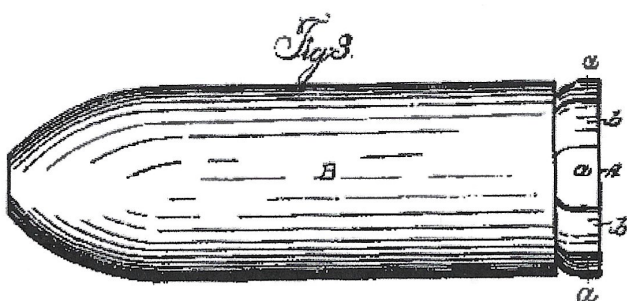


Fig. 1.

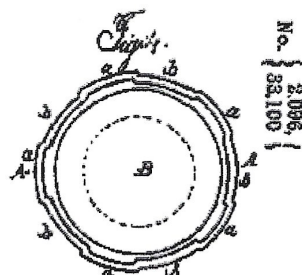


Fig. 2.



No. 2086,
33,100

R. P. PARROT.
Projectile.

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David vs Goliath at Hampton Roads:

The Squib vs. The Minnesota

By Brian D. Kowell

On March 8, 1862, the *CSS Virginia* (formerly the *USS Merrimack*) sank two Federal warships in Hampton Roads, Virginia. A third ship to be targeted was the *USS Minnesota* which had run aground while steaming toward the enemy. After unsuccessfully bombarding the *Minnesota*, the ebbing tide and falling darkness forced the *Virginia* to return to its dock in the Elizabeth River. On the 9th, when she steamed out to finish off the *Minnesota*, the *Virginia* was confronted by the *USS Monitor* and in their epic battle of ironclads, the *Minnesota* was saved.

When Norfolk Naval Yard was re-taken by the Federals, the crew of the *Virginia* blew up the ship as it was unable to travel up the James River due to its deep draft. This left the James River open for Union gunboats to ascend the James and threaten Richmond. Most of the officers from the *Virginia* marched to Drewry's Bluff to join the Confederate troops and sailors at Fort Darling set to repel the US Navy's attempt.

One of these officers was Lieutenant Hunter Davidson. Once the Federal attempt to reach Richmond failed at Drewry's Bluff, Lieutenant Davidson was assigned to command the *CSS Teaser*, a converted tug, to lay torpedoes (mines) in the James. The *Teaser* was also used to deploy the Confederate hot-air balloon, becoming the Confederate's first "aircraft carrier"!

On July 4, 1862, while laying torpedoes, the *Teaser* encountered the US ships *Monitor* and *Maratanza* near Turkey Point on the James River. Proving no match for the Union vessels, Davidson ordered the *Teaser* abandoned, saving most of her crew just before a shell struck her boiler. The ship, dead in the water, was soon captured. Davidson was not censured for the loss of the *Teaser* and continued his work in the Torpedo Bureau or Submarine Battery Service.

Born September 20, 1826 in Georgetown, Washington D.C., Davidson joined the US Navy as a teen and later entered US Naval Academy graduating in its second class. He had served for nearly twenty years before joining the Confederacy in April 1861. He was commissioned a Lieutenant and given command of the *CSS Patrick Henry* but was soon transferred as a gun battery commander on the *CSS Virginia*. After serving on the *Virginia* in its epic battles in Hampton Roads, Davidson worked under Captain Matthew Fontaine Maury in the construction and implementation of torpedoes. In June 1862, Maury was sent to Europe and Lieutenant Hunter Davidson was appointed his successor.

Davidson was an able successor as he began to develop and deploy torpedoes activated electrically rather than simply by contact with a vessel. He is credited with sinking by electrical torpedoes of the *USS Commodore Barney* on August 5, 1863 and the *U.S.S. Commodore Jones* on May 1864 in the James River.

Following the successful attack by a David-class ship against the powerful *USS New Ironsides* in Charleston, South Carolina, Davidson was assigned the David-class *CSS Squib* and given the assignment to single-handedly attack the Federal fleet at Hampton Roads.

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The *Squib* was a 40-foot-long cigar shaped steam launch covered with iron to make her invulnerable to small arms fire. She was six feet in beam and drew approximately three feet of water. The propeller shaft ran underneath the boiler to a two-blade screw which turned in a housing forward of the rudder. Her streamlined shape and powerful engine made her quite maneuverable and capable of speeds over 10 knots. First Lieutenant William H. Parker, commandant of the Confederate Naval School wrote:

“The engine was built in Richmond. I made several trips in this little boat and when she was running at about half or three-quarter speed the engine made absolutely no noise.”

Previously utilized as a flag-of-truce boat, *Squib* was outfitted with a winch that could raise or lower an 18-foot spar with a 53-pound torpedo attached. It was detonated by a chemical fuse on contact - called the Lee fuse after its inventor.

Besides Davidson, she carried a crew of six chosen by the Lieutenant. They were Acting Master's Mates John A. Curtis and George W. Smith. Smith was the senior of the two and was second in command. In charge of the engine was First Assistant Engineer Henry X. Wright and he was assisted by First Class Fireman Charles Blanchard. Boatswain Thomas Gauley and Master William B. Hines completed the crew. Hines would act as the pilot.

Davidson was now ready for his mission. But he lacked one essential item – a supply of smokeless anthracite coal. There was none available in Richmond. Someone suggested to him that a quantity of anthracite coal might be salvaged along the Richmond waterfront. When the coal was plentiful before the war, some might have spilled overboard from loading ships. Divers were sent down to the river bottom and enough coal was salvaged to fill the small bunker on the *Squib*.

In early April 1864, to conserve her coal supply, the *Squib* was towed (probably by the *CSS Torpedo*) 100 miles down the twisting James River toward Hampton Roads. She traveled by night, hiding in various creeks by day to maintain the element of surprise. Approximately 15 miles below City Point, Virginia, she cast off and under her own power arrived just above Newport News on April 8.

Davidson wasted little time surveying the Union fleet before he chose his target – an old adversary, the 265-foot frigate *USS Minnesota*. Captained by J.H. Upshur (who had been a classmate of Davidson at Annapolis), *Minnesota* was now the flag ship of Rear Admiral S. P. Lee. She weighed 3400 tons and carried 47 heavy guns and was anchored with the fleet surrounding her.

After darkness fell, Davidson's engineer and fireman built up steam and he checked the operation of the spar. All seemed well. It was shortly after midnight when *Squib* moved slowly out of the river using the shadows on the south bank of the James to conceal its approach from the Union shore batteries. It was a dark but starlit sky as Davidson softly ordered the throttle to be opened and he steamed *Squib* into Hampton Roads towards the outline of the fleet.

As he began to maneuver between the Union ships, he throttled back the engine. He was hailed a few times but never seriously challenged. The Union lookouts who did spot the craft paid little attention as it looked like the unarmed flag of truce boat they had seen before.

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It was 2:00am with an ebb tide when Davidson guided the *Squib* toward the looming man-of war. He had the throttles opened to full and the little craft sliced through the calm waters around the *Minnesota's* consort, the tug *Poppy*, and headed directly for the frigate's starboard side, 150 yards away. When she was spotted by the lookouts aboard the *Minnesota*, the officer of the deck, Ensign James Bartwistle, shouted out, demanding to know the name of the approaching boat and to have her come to.

"*Roanoke*", shouted Davidson trying to buy time. Bartwistle shouted to the *Poppy*, which was lying astern, ordering its captain to run the unknown craft down, but the *Poppy's* boiler was cold, and she could not move. The general call to battle stations brought the captain and crew of the *Minnesota* on deck. Marines and sailors armed with muskets opened fire on the *Squib* as artillery crews rushed to get their guns into action.

It was too late. The *Squib's* spar, lowered below the water, rammed the torpedo into the *Minnesota's* starboard side. In the next instant there was a deafening roar as the torpedo exploded. The *Minnesota* trembled from bow to stern as sailors went sprawling. Acting Master's Mate John A. Curtis wrote: "I never beheld such a sight before. The air was filled with port shutters and water from the explosion, and the heavy ship was rolling to starboard."

Sleeping aboard the *Minnesota* was medical officer John M. Bratton. He had recently joined the Navy, and this was his first night aboard the ship. Bratton recorded that he was rudely awakened by a loud noise: "I could not for the life of me tell from where it came or whither it had gone . . . it made the vessel tremble." Alarmed, he quickly dressed and dashed up on deck to find the admiral, the captain and other officers of the ship trying to assess the situation.

On *Squib*, Davidson ordered the engineer to reverse engine, but it caught on dead center and refused to budge. Thinking quickly, Assistant Engineer Wright grabbed an iron starting bar, thrust it into the flywheel and gave a mighty heave. With a burst of steam, the engine came to life and Davidson turned the boat away from the *Minnesota*. As the distance grew between the ships, one of the *Minnesota's* heavy guns roared but the shot missed - splashing nearby as the speeding *Squib* vanished into the night.

Union ships that had steam up set out to pursue but it was difficult to spot the *Squib* in the dark, and Davidson deceived his pursuers by heading toward the Nansmond River only to take a last minute to turn, disappearing up the James River instead. Davidson was again met by the *Torpedo* and towed upriver. At Turkey Island he found a telegraph station and relayed his news to Secretary Mallory:

"Passed through the Federal Fleet off Newport News and exploded 53 pounds of powder against the side of the flagship *Minnesota* at 2:00 a.m., 9th instant. She has not sunk, and I have no means yet of telling the injury done. My boat and party escaped without loss under the fire of her heavy guns and musketry and that of the gunboat lying to her stern."

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The *Minnesota* was seriously damaged but did not sink. She was quickly towed to a dry dock where it was found her bulkheads were sprung, beams shattered, and broken hull plates blown inward. Three 9-inch gun carriages were disabled, and several elevating screws were bent rendering them useless. Rear Admiral S.P. Lee was furious. The captain of the *Popsy* was soon relieved. Lee later sent word that if the *Squib* were ever used as a flag-of-truce boat again, she would be fired upon for he did not consider such a craft as “engaged in civilized or legitimate warfare.”

When Davidson returned to Richmond Secretary of Navy Stephen Mallory presented the Lieutenant to President Davis. He was shocked when Davis showed no enthusiasm and grumbled, “Why didn’t he blow her up?” (In Davis’ defense, he was suffering from one of his frequent headaches). Davis soon changed his tone and joined Secretary Stephen Mallory in proposing that Davidson and his engineer be promoted “for gallant and meritorious conduct.” Mallory reported to the Confederate Congress that the “cool, daring, professional skill and judgement by Lieutenant Davidson in this hazardous enterprise merit high commendation and confer honor upon the service of which he is a member.” Davidson was promoted to the rank of commander and Engineer Henry X. Wright was jumped two grades in rank.

Commander Hunter Davidson later captained the blockade runner *City of Richmond* which was sent to supply and escort the new rebel ironclad ram *CSS Stonewall* from France to the Confederate States to help break the blockade. Unfortunately for Davidson, the war ended before they could get back to the Confederacy. With no country to return to, Davidson was invited by Argentina to direct that country’s Department of Torpedo Defense and Naval Construction which he did for 12 years before retiring to Paraguay where he died on February 16, 1913.

SOURCES:

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[http: www.civilwarmonitor.com](http://www.civilwarmonitor.com) article by John Grady posted 6/9/2014

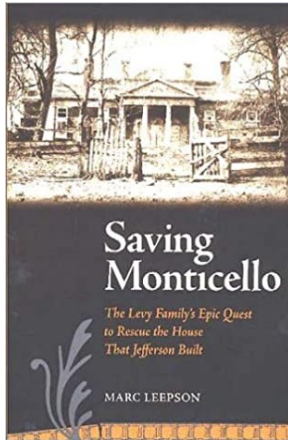
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Book Review by Paul Siedel

As one reads through the annals of American History they can't help but wonder how things came to be the way they are. What events tucked away in little "nooks and crannies" were responsible for creating the big picture that we see today. One such story encompasses the decline and saving of Jefferson's beautiful estate Monticello near Charlottesville, Virginia. Although this book does not have much to do with the Civil War itself, it encompasses the years after Thomas Jefferson's death in 1826 into the mid 1950s and is an account of the fate of Jefferson's beloved Monticello estate after his death. It describes the condition of the estate during the Civil War and what happened to it afterwards.

Let us go back to 1826 when Thomas Jefferson lay dying at his beloved home Monticello. The estate at that time was in terrible repair because although Jefferson was a genius in many ways he was by all accounts a terrible money manager. After his death his daughter Martha inherited the property but as the book states, "Plagued by large debts, failed farming and other business ventures... and by his own often profligate spending habits, Jefferson knew that

Martha would inherit only debts. He also knew that she would be forced to sell all of his property including Monticello—to satisfy his creditors." On June 24, 1826 Jefferson called for his physician Dr. Robles Dunglison from Charlottesville. He attended Jefferson during the last weeks of his life. Mr. Jefferson was also attended by his daughter Martha, his thirty three year old grandson Jeff and Nicholas Trist, Martha's son in law. Also in the room throughout his decline were several enslaved African-Americans among them was John Hemings, son of Sally Hemings Jefferson's long time companion. Thomas Jefferson died on July 4, 1826 exactly fifty years after the signing of The Declaration of Independence. John Adams also died on the same day.

Jefferson was correct in believing that his daughter Martha Randolph would inherit only debts. After stepping down from the presidency in 1809 he could not afford to maintain the property, so as a result the family was forced to put Monticello on the market to try to pay off what amounted to over \$100,000 in debts. The Randolphs soon discovered that no one wanted what is today an iconic structure revered by millions. According to Mr. Leepson, "In 1827 at Monticello the Randolphs auctioned off Thomas Jefferson's slaves, household furniture and furnishings, supplies, grain, and farm equipment. That left Monticello bereft of furniture and furnishings. Martha Randolph fled the decaying, almost empty mansion, which stood vacant and abandoned for several years.

Then in 1831 a druggist from Charlottesville, Virginia purchased the estate including house and 552 acres for \$7,000. This proprietorship lasted only three years and was then sold it to a U.S. Navy Lieutenant Uriah Phillips Levy, the first Jewish-American to carve out a career as a U.S. naval officer. He had acquired a fortune in real estate and immediately set about making the much needed repairs to the mansion. He was appalled to see that sacks of animal feed and hay were being stored in the famous rotunda. The Levy family lived at Monticello on and off for many years. During the Civil War the Confederate Government tried to seize the estate because it was owned by northern concerns. Uriah Levy died in 1862 and his nephew Jefferson Monroe Levy inherited the estate after a long and drawn out court battle which left much of the family alienated. Jefferson Monroe Levy was, according to Mr. Leepson, "a New York City lawyer, flamboyant stock speculator, real estate mogul and one term U.S. Congressman." Levy like his uncle was a New York City resident but spent many summers at Monticello. He was an extremely generous man allowing visitors to walk around the grounds and hosted among others such personages as Theodore Roosevelt, and many foreign ambassadors and dignitaries. According once again to Mr. Leepson, "Jefferson Levy's proud ownership of Monticello came under attack in 1911. A national movement to wrest control of the estate from him was initiated by Maud Littleton, a New York socialite.

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The goal of her effort was to turn the house over to the federal government to be used as a shrine to Jefferson. In 1912 Jefferson Levy had to defend his ownership of Monticello in the House of Representatives as Congress debated whether or not to take control of the estate by eminent domain. The effort failed; but this motivated Levy to offer the estate to the public for \$500,000. What happened after that is worthy of a book in itself. But as we all know the saga has a happy ending. The book is filled with mysteries and controversies. As Mr. Leepson states, "What happened to Monticello between 1826 and 1923 is one of the best kept secrets in American preservation."

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and couldn't help but wonder how fortunate this country has been with such success stories as the saving of Mount Vernon, Monticello and Lawnfield, to mention just a few of these historic preservation stories. If one has not been to Monticello itself I highly recommend a visit, as the home which depicts Jefferson's genius in both literature and architecture is surrounded by beautiful vistas of the countryside, which one can view from atop of Jefferson's "beautiful mountain"

Although probably out of print "Saving Monticello" can be purchased on Amazon or by going into websites such as American Book Exchange or others, and perhaps one can contact the shop at Monticello purchase information.

Was" Prince John" Only Acting?

By Brian D. Kowell

© April 19, 2021

Though a small engagement, the Battle of Big Bethel on June 10, 1861, made General John Bankhead Magruder a celebrity. Pompous, egotistical, and given to theatrical behavior, he thrived on the recognition. Nicknamed "Prince John" because of his penchant for lavish entertainment, courtliness toward ladies, and fashionably ornate military dress, he also was fond of strong drink.'

He was famous for keeping McClellan's army at bay on the Warwick River Line from April 4, 1862 until General Joseph Johnston arrived April 18, despite being grossly outnumbered. In his Memoirs, E.P. Alexander notes: "Magruder who was expecting reinforcements [sic] made the bravest possible display, exhibiting the same troops repeatedly at different points". As another scholar asserted, he delayed McClellan's advance by the trick of "marching troops around groves of trees and shuttling cannon from place to place to create an impression of enormous strength." Once Johnston assumed control on the Peninsula, Magruder was largely sidelined. He was incapacitated from overwork, anxiety, and renewed drinking. Later, his failure at Malvern Hill, also attributed to drunkenness, led to public disfavor and loss of command.

Magruder was the master of deception. Take for example his dealings with Captain Franklin Buchanan of the *CSS Virginia*. The Confederate Navy was short of men to crew the new ironclad. Lieutenant John Taylor Wood, grandson of President Zachary Taylor, nephew by marriage to President Jefferson Davis, and cousin to Brigadier General Richard Taylor, was sent to meet with General Magruder to obtain volunteers from his infantry. One would think with all that clout behind Wood, Magruder would be happy to oblige. Indeed, he made no objection and Wood selected 80 men "with some experience as seamen or gunners" from Magruder's ranks. However, when the men arrived at Gosport Naval Yard for training, Wood commented to Buchanan that they "are certainly a very different class of men from those I selected. I find that but two of the new men selected by myself were sent; the others are men I did not see, nor even visit their encampment."

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Lieutenant Robert D. Minor, another of the *Virginia's* officers, wrote: "Some of the 'so called' volunteers had bad characters from their commanding officers, who could not manage them, and were brought aboard in double irons." Seems like Magruder pulled a fast one and palmed off his riffraff on the Navy.

If Magruder was not in command, he seems not to be a team player. Buchanan sought to co-ordinate a joint attack by CSS *Virginia* and Magruder's Army of the Peninsula against the Union land and naval forces at Newport News Point, Virginia. Magruder had recognized that his flanks were vulnerable on the James and York Rivers and had been pestering Richmond for naval assistance. Magruder and Buchanan met in late February 1862 to discuss the combined operation. Buchanan proposed that the ships from the James River Squadron attack Newport News Point from the James while the *Virginia* and her consorts would attack the Union fleet directly. Simultaneously, Magruder would attack by land in the rear of the Point. Such a three-pronged assault could wrest Newport News Point from Union control, helping to secure Magruder's flanks.

Magruder initially agreed to Buchanan's plan and the two parted after notifying Richmond of the details. Buchanan went back to Gosport to prepare. He wrote to Magruder on March 2, 1862: "It is my intention to be off Newport News early on Friday morning next unless some accident occurs to the *Virginia* to prevent it, this I do not anticipate. You may therefore look out for me at the time named. My plan is to destroy the fleet first, if possible, and then turn my attention to the battery on shore. I sincerely hope that acting together we may be successful in destroying many of the enemy."

Right after meeting with Buchanan, Magruder wrote to Adjutant General Samuel Cooper on February 26, 1862: "I am also satisfied that no one ship can produce such an impression upon the troops at Newport News as to cause them to evacuate the fort." As the time for the attack approached, Magruder began to back out, writing to Richmond that "the roads are impassible . . . I do not think the movement advisable." He concluded that he was planning to pull his little army back to the Warwick River Line and "it is too late to co-operate" with the *Virginia* "even if the roads will admit it, which they will not, for the enemy is very re-enforced both at Newport News and Fortress Monroe . . . Any dependence upon me, so far as Newport News is concerned is at an end."

Buchanan got word of this change in plan from Magruder on March 3 to tell him "it is too late to co-operate" that the enemy had recently been re-enforced with infantry and 6 batteries of artillery and smugly concluded that it "would have been glorious if you could have run into these as they were being landed from a Baltimore boat and a commercial transport." Maybe Magruder was only acting at their initial meeting when he agreed to the plan and never intended to follow through with his part. How Magruder was able to march back to the Warwick River Line over the impassible roads instead of forward to support Buchanan is a mystery. Maybe it had something to do with Magruder's fear of Union re-enforcements, although McClellan's Army of the Potomac did not begin to arrive at Fortress Monroe until after March 17. Maybe Magruder needed some "liquid courage. Whatever the reason, Magruder was not part of the team.

Following the battle of the ironclads on March 9, 1862, Magruder wrote that he was not impressed by the "glorious achievement of the Confederate states war-steamer *Virginia*" and what he termed "Ericson's battery." He continued, "Finding as I anticipated, the naval attack produced no effect." However, Magruder did want to co-operate with the Navy after 389 Union vessels began disembarking the Army of the Potomac at Fortress Monroe. He wrote to General Lee: "It seems to me, therefore, that the *Virginia*, if she cannot get the *Monitor*, ought to . . . intercept all re-enforcements of troops, and to cut off further supplies" to McClellan's Army and that this should be "pursued at once." He asked that if that could not be done to have the *Virginia* pass up either the James or York Rivers to essentially become a floating battery to help secure one of his own flanks.

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His biographer wrote that Magruder was an officer of contradiction throughout the war. While some thought he was a steady soldier, others found him lacking at critical junctures. One of his privates wrote to his mother about Magruder later in the war: “Does he leave the whiskey alone now? That was a very serious failing with him on the Peninsula. He is not one of our great generals. In these parts he is considered a second rate general; not comparable to Lee, Jackson, Bragg and Longstreet.” We will never know if the proposed attack on Newport News would have succeeded

“He’s the hero for the times,
The furious fighting Johnny B. Magruder”
- Civil War Ballad

SOURCES:

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The Charger



The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

Oct/Nov 2021

vol. 45 # 2/3

While the majority of Civil War soldiers bravely stood their first experiences under fire, there were always those few looking for a quick retreat. A musical parody on the solemn tune “Just Before the Battle, Mother” poked threatening fun at the skedaddlers from a fight.

Just before the battle, mother,
I am drinking mountain dew.
When I see the “Yankees” marching,
To the rear I quickly flew.
Where the stragglers were flying,
Thinking of their homes and wives;
‘Twas not the “Yanks” we feared dear mother,
But our own dear precious lives.

Farewell, mother! For you’ll never
See my name among the slain.
For if I only can skedaddle,
Dear mother, I’ll come home again.

I hear the bugle sounding, mother,
My soul is eager for the fray.
I guess I’ll hide behind some cover ;
And then I shall be OK.
Discretion’s the better part of valor,
At least I’ve often heard you say ;
And he who loves his life, dear mother,
Won’t fight if he can run away.

Farewell, mother! For you’ll never
See my name among the slain.
For if I only can skedaddle,
Dear mother, I’ll come home again.

Contributed by Brian Kowall

From Emerging Civil War issue

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2021/10/20/under-fire-just-before-the-battle-mother/>

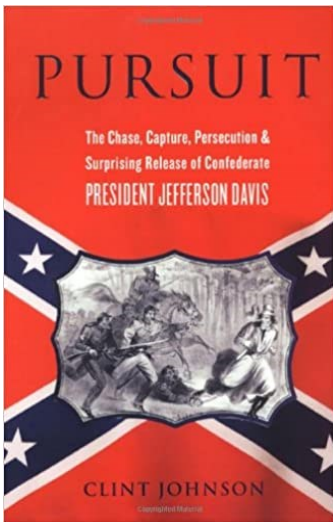
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Book Review by Paul Siedel

One fact that most people don't realize is that the Civil War did not end on April 9, 1865 with the surrender of General Lee, it continued on for several months in such places as Alabama, Louisiana, Texas and finally ending with the capture of the "Shenandoah" a Confederate commerce raider off Japan in November of 1865. But what happened to the members of the Confederate Government after they fled Richmond? "Pursuit" by Clint Johnson is the story of the chase, capture, trial and eventual release of the members of the Davis Cabinet. The book covers the story of their flight and capture as they moved down through the Carolinas into Georgia where Davis was finally captured. The book begins with Davis telling his wife Varina to take the children and head for a place of safety. He handed her a Colt revolver and told her to use it if she had to. She took the Davis children and left the Danville Railroad station at 9:00 P.M. on March 30, 1865. Davis and the rest of his cabinet would be in full flight by the night of April 2, 1865. The book covers the flight to Danville and the reaction of Davis and the other cabinet members when they heard of the surrender of Lee. After leaving Danville the cabinet made its way to Greensboro, North Carolina where John Breckenridge, Joseph Johnston and Davis came into conflict as to whether or not to surrender to Sherman. By all accounts, Johnston's army was melting away once it heard of Lee's surrender. The Cabinet continued onto Charlotte, North Carolina where it heard the news of Lincoln's death. One by one the members deserted the cabinet, Judah Benjamin left just after crossing the Savannah River in Georgia. He would eventually make his way down through Georgia and Florida and escape to Cuba and then on to England, where he became a barrister and in the process created a new life for himself refusing to discuss his role in the Confederate Government. Stephen Mallory left the party and made his way to Atlanta where he surrendered to U.S. forces. In Washington, Georgia, Davis held his last cabinet meeting. At this point Davis basically told everyone that the war was over and it was every man for himself. He was determined to make his way to Texas where he could possibly continue the struggle. The Confederate Secretary of War John Breckenridge was the only one besides Benjamin to escape to Cuba, everyone else including Davis was eventually captured. On May 10, 1865 Davis and his party were surrounded by U.S. troops and taken into custody near Irwinville, Georgia. The rumor that Davis was trying to escape dressed in a hoop skirt is completely unsubstantiated. John C. Breckenridge paid off the cabinet members and the military escort with the money the Davis party had with them, although there is some discrepancy relating to around \$80,000 that was never accounted for. After their capture near Irwinville, Georgia, the Davis family was taken to Macon and then to Augusta and then to Savannah before being taken to Fort Monroe where Davis was incarcerated.

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The final chapters of the book tell the story of the trial and eventual release of Davis. Davis was never charged, although Joseph Holt and Edwin Stanton tried to have him tried for treason. They were ultimately unsuccessful and in 1868 the general public demanded he either be charged or bailed. A bail of \$100,000 was set and covered. One of Davis' staunchest defenders was newspaper editor and adamant abolitionist Horace Greeley. On May 13, 1867 according to the book's author Clint Johnson, "After two years in prison, Jefferson Davis was still awaiting his speedy trial as promised by the U.S. Constitution, but he was now free on bail." He goes on further to say, "As Davis stepped into the streets of Richmond, a rebel yell erupted from the crowd of men who also removed their hats. Davis immediately returned to his hotel where he faced his wife as a free man for the first time in two years."

Davis was never tried but went to live first in Canada and then in Europe. He returned to the U.S., sold insurance and eventually went to live at Beauvoir his estate on the Mississippi gulf coast where he wrote his epic work "The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government"

The book itself is well written however it does contain several opinions of the author which are not fact. For instance he implies that there was some sort of conspiracy attached to the Lincoln assassination involving Stanton which cannot be substantiated.

The author does a good job of researching his topic and the book is well worth reading. One other book relating to the same topic is included here.

Johnson, Clint, "Pursuit" Citadel Books, New York, N.Y. 2008. ISBN # 13:978-0-8065-2890-8

Davis, William C , "An Honorable Defeat"

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2001 ISBN # 0-15-100564-8

ISBN # 0-15-600748-7

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Meeting Nov 10 , 2021

**Program : Jefferson Davis and his Leadership Role as the Confederacy's
First and Only President**

Speaker: Professor Mary DeCredico, History Department, U.S. Naval Academy

Location: The Holiday Inn Independence at Rockside Road just off I-77

Time: 6pm

The talk will be both in-person and streamed live so that as many Civil War enthusiasts can enjoy the presentation. For reservations go to: ccwrtreserve@gmail.com or call, 440-449-9311

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