

# TRAVELLER

Award Winning Publication of the General Robert E. Lee  
Camp, #1640

Sons of Confederate Veterans, Germantown, TN  
Duty, Honor, Integrity, Chivalry  
DEO VINDICE!

**September 2018**



**CAMP MEETING**  
**September 10, 2018**

**Speaker: Randy Bishop**

**Topic: "Tennessee and Mississippi Generals  
of the War"**

**7:00 p.m. at the at the Germantown  
Regional History and Genealogy Center**

**Don't miss our next meeting!**

## **Admiral Semmes Emancipation Proclamation**

**Truth in History: Raphael Semmes enforced in  
October 1862 the first successful Emancipation and  
segregation abolition measure of the War.**



**Admiral Semmes statue, Mobile, Alabama**

Abraham Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation" reached the Union Navy as General Order Nr. 4 on January 14, 1863. A document signed by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles which had, of course, no effect.

Four months earlier, in the afternoon of October 9, 1862 the raiding cruiser CSS Alabama had captured the Yankee schooner Tonawanda.<sup>1</sup> Aboard the prize were 75 civilian passengers. Among them was the slave David Herbert White, bodyservant to a Delaware businessman on his way to Europe. The Alabama crew was in need of men and Captain Raphael Semmes maintained that if the Union Army was taking Southern Negroes along, he could well decide to do the same and took the 17 year old boy along "under the laws of war" as he stated in his post-war memories.<sup>2</sup> But the Laws of War ruled in that case: "Every person connected with the Army or Navy of the Confederate States, arresting or coming into possession of any slave, by capture from the enemy, or otherwise than by lawful authority, shall immediately report the same to the commanding officer of the post, or brigade, or station to which he may be attached. The said commanding officer shall, with as little delay as practicable, send the slaves so reported to the nearest depot described in the next section, with a register of the place and date of their arrest: Provided, however, That the said slaves, or any of them, may at once be delivered to their respective owners, if claim is made and established on satisfactory evidence."<sup>3</sup> It is to be supposed that the Delaware owner protested and made immediate claim to have his slave restored to him. That meant Captain Semmes was taking the slave along on a point of de facto force upon his authority as commanding officer of a Confederate Navy warship, but not according to Naval Laws. And this created a delicate legal situation: as a commerce raider he could seize and destroy enemy merchant ships, but not take personal property of Union civilians. In 1862 there were no legal dispositions in the South permitting the seizure of a slave, "private property" of a Union citizen, and to press him into Confederate service. However, the Yankees were treating Southern runaways as "contrabands" and keeping them. In addition, rumours existed of a certain "Emancipation Proclamation" drafted by Lincoln to declare every slave of a State "in rebellion" against the Federal government to become free on January 1, 1863. Thus, Semmes stood by his decision.

The Alabama's cruise continued and in the course a few days the slave felt like at home, he even congratulated himself of the exchange he had made.<sup>4</sup> He rendered excellent service and won the affection of everyone aboard.<sup>5</sup> And Semmes took his decision a step further. He proclaimed White, who was a legal slave in a Union State, to be free in the South, thus giving him the right to enlist on a Confederate warship as a volunteer. The legal circumstances were still questionable, but unlike Lincoln's farce, which freed not a single slave because it became "legal" where the Federal Government had no executive power to enforce it; Semmes disposition was a real emancipation measure with an immediate benefit to the subject. David H. White became a Black crewman of CSS Alabama, the exact date is not known, because he was retroactive registered on the day of Tonawanda's capture, October 9.<sup>6</sup> As a well-trained body-servant, he was not mustered as a seaman or as a gunner. Semmes appointed him a wardroom mess steward (in the muster roll he appears as "wardroom boy"). This was not because of his race or former condition, but because it was the only useful job he could do. And for the very first time in his life he received the "full payment of his grade and no difference was made between him and the white waiters of the mess".<sup>7</sup> David White was cajoled by Yankee consular agents to desert while being ashore in Martinique, Jamaica, South Africa and Singapore, but "unlike others in the ship's company he never sought to leave the Confederate States Navy".<sup>8</sup> Semmes stated, full of satisfaction of his Black crewman: "He seemed to have the instinct of deciding between his friends and his enemies."<sup>9</sup> Due to those facts, we may presume that White had become a truly devoted Confederate, full aware of the cause he was fighting for. The Alabama's executive officer, John McKintosh Kell, wrote on Christmas Day 1862 a note of sarcasm in a letter home: "We hear that Mr. Lincoln's fiat has gone for liberating four million slaves on the first day of January. Truly he is a mighty man!".<sup>10</sup>

During the final battle with the USS Kearsarge off Cherbourg in 1864, White carried out his duty till the bitter end: he went down with the Alabama and drowned. The proud man had never told anyone that he could not swim! And like so many other Blacks who gave their lives for the Southern Cause, he is forgotten today. In the words of Ervin L. Jordan Jr.: "...their bones rest in unhonored glory [...], shrouded by falsehoods, indifference and historian's censorship."<sup>11</sup> The bones of David H. White rest today in the British Channel, inside or beneath the sacred shrine of the most legendary vessel of the South.

## DOCUMENTARY NOTES

<sup>1</sup>G. T. Fullam, (edited by Charles G. Summersell), "The Journal of George Tawney Fullam, Boarding Officer of the Confederate Sea Raider Alabama", University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 1972, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Raphael Semmes, "Memoirs of Service Afloat during the War between the States", Richard Bentley, London, 1869, p. 465.

<sup>3</sup>From "A Digest of the Military and Naval Laws of the Confederate States", Evans and Cogswell, Columbia, Ed. 1864. See: Disposition of slaves when arrested or captured, §1, Oct. 13, 1862, page 173.

<sup>4</sup>Semmes, op. cit. p. 465.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur Sinclair, "Two Years on the Alabama", reed. Tantalum Press, 2004, pp. 35-36.

<sup>6</sup>Alabama muster roll is included as annex in Sinclair's Two Years on the Alabama.

<sup>7</sup>Semmes, op. cit. p. 465. This is the proof that aboard the Alabama there was no racial separation for the crew.

<sup>8</sup>See Charles G. Summersell comments in the 1972 edition of the Fullam Diaries, op. cit. p. 35.

<sup>9</sup>Semmes, op. cit. p. 466.

<sup>10</sup>Letter from Arcas Cayes, Mexico, 25th December 1862 to a relative, as quoted by John McKintosh Kell, "Recollections of a Naval Life", The Neale Company, Washington, 1900, p. 206.

<sup>11</sup>Ervin L. Jordan, essay "Different Drummers" in "Black Southerners in Gray", Richard Rollins (editor), Rank and File Pub., Redondo Beach, CA, 1994, p. 69. On page 20 there is a short reference to a Negro photographed aboard CSS Alabama standing in the background of two officers, but there is no proven evidence that it might have been David White. The same reference and description, is given in the book "Black Confederates", edited by C.K. Barrow, J.H. Segars and R.B. Rosenberg, Pelican Publishing, Gretna, 2001, p. 47. The mentioned photograph is in the US Naval Historical Center collection and shows Lt. Sinclair and Lt. Armstrong lounging against a 32 pounder naval gun. The man in their background is more probably a sailor with the skin darkened by sun and winds or just a graphic effect of the blurred photograph, but not a Black man.



**CSS Alabama**

## The Typical Confederate Soldier

By G.H. Baskette, Nashville, Tennessee (as published in The Confederate Veteran, Volume 1, Dec 1893)

Nearly 33 years have passed since the alarm of war called from their peaceful pursuits the citizens who were to make name and fame as Confederate soldiers. The stirring scenes and the dreadful carnage of a memorable conflict have been removed by the lapse of time into the hazy past, and a new generation, however ready it may be to honor those who fought the battles of the South, is likely to form its idea of their appearance from the conventional military type. The Confederate soldier was not an ordinary soldier, either in appearance or character. With your permission I will undertake to draw a portrait of him as he really appeared in the hard service of privation and danger. A face browned by exposure and heavily bearded, or for some weeks unshaven, begrimed with dust and sweat, and marked here and there with the darker stains of powder – a face whose stolid and even melancholy composure is easily broken into ripples of good humor or quickly flushed in the fervor and abandon of the charge; a frame tough and sinewy and trained by hardship to surprising powers of endurance; a form, the shapeliness of which is hidden by its encumberments, suggesting in its careless and unaffected pose a languorous indisposition to exertion, yet a latent, lion-like strength and a terrible energy of action when aroused.

Around the upper part of the face is a fringe of unkempt hair, and above this an old wool hat, worn and weather-beaten, the flaccid brim of which falls limp upon the shoulders behind and is folded back in front against the elongated and crumpled crown. Over a soiled shirt, which is unbuttoned and buttonless at the collar, is a ragged gray jacket that does not reach to the hips, the sleeves some inches too short. Below this trousers of a non-descript color, without form and almost void, are held in place by a leather belt, to which is attached the cartridge box that rests behind the right hip, and the bayonet scabbard which dangles on the left. Just above the ankles each trouser leg is tied closely to the limb- a la Zouave – and beneath reaches of dirty socks disappear in a pair of badly used and curiously contorted shoes. Between the jacket and the waistband of the trousers, or the supporting belt, there appears a puffy display of cotton shirt which works out

further with each hitch made by Johnny in his effort to keep his pantaloons in place. Across his body from his left shoulder there is a roll of threadbare blanket, the ends tied together resting on or falling below the right hip. This blanket is Johnny's bed. Whenever he arises he takes up his bed and walks. Within this roll is a shirt, his only extra article of clothing. In action the blanket roll is thrown further back and the cartridge belt is drawn forward, frequently in front of the body. From the right shoulder, across the body past two straps, one cloth, the other leather, making a cross with blanket roll on breast and back. These straps support respectively a greasy cloth haversack and a flannel covered canteen, captured from the Yankees. Attached to the haversack strap is a tin cup, while in addition to some other odds and ends of camp trumpery, there hangs over his back a frying pan, an invaluable utensil with which the soldier would be loth (sic) to part. With his trusty gun in hand - an Enfield rifle, also captured from the enemy and substituted for an old flintlock musket or the shotgun with which he was originally armed - Johnny Reb, thus imperfectly sketched, stands in his shreds and patches a marvelous ensemble - picturesque, grotesque, unique - a model citizen soldier, the military hero of the 19th century. There is none of the tinsel or the trappings of the professional about him. From an aesthetic military point of view he must appear a sorry looking soldier.

But Johnny is not one of your dress parade soldiers. He doesn't care a copper whether anybody likes his looks or not. He is the most independent soldier that ever belonged to an organized army. He has respect for authority, and he cheerfully submits to discipline, because he sees the necessity of organization to effect the best results, but he maintains his individual autonomy, as it were, and never surrenders his sense of personal pride and responsibility. He is thoroughly tractable if properly officered, and is always ready to obey necessary orders, but he is quick to resent any official incivility, and is a high private who feels, and is, every inch as good as a general. He may appear ludicrous enough on a display occasion of the holiday pomp and splendor of war, but place him where duty calls, in the imminent deadly breach or the perilous charge, and none in all the armies of the earth can claim a higher rank or prouder record. He may be outre and ill-fashioned in dress, but he has sublimated his poverty and rags. The





worn and faded gray jacket, glorified by valor and stained with the lifeblood of its wearer, becomes, in its immortality of association, a more splendid vestment than mail of medieval knight or the rarest robe of royalty. That old, weather-beaten slouched hat, seen as the ages will see it, with its halo of fire through the smoke of battle, is a kinglier covering than a crown. Half-clad, half-armed, often half-fed, without money and without price, the Confederate soldier fought against the resources of the world. When at last his flag was furled and his arms were grounded in defeat, the cause for which he had struggled was lost, but he had won the fadeless victory of soldiership.

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## The General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640 Sons of Confederate Veterans

Go to our website:

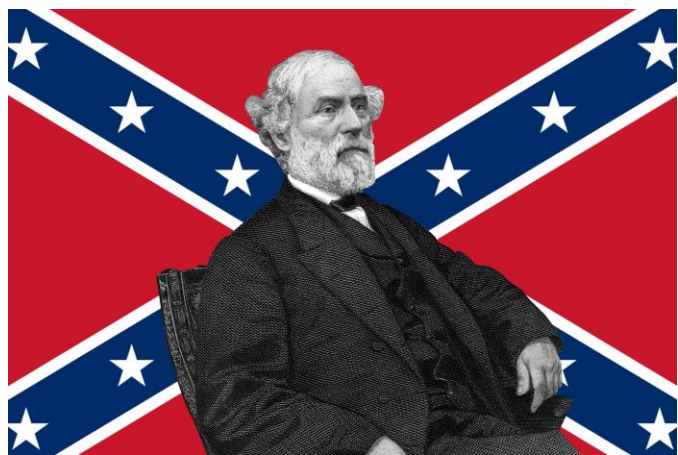
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Or visit our Facebook pages at:

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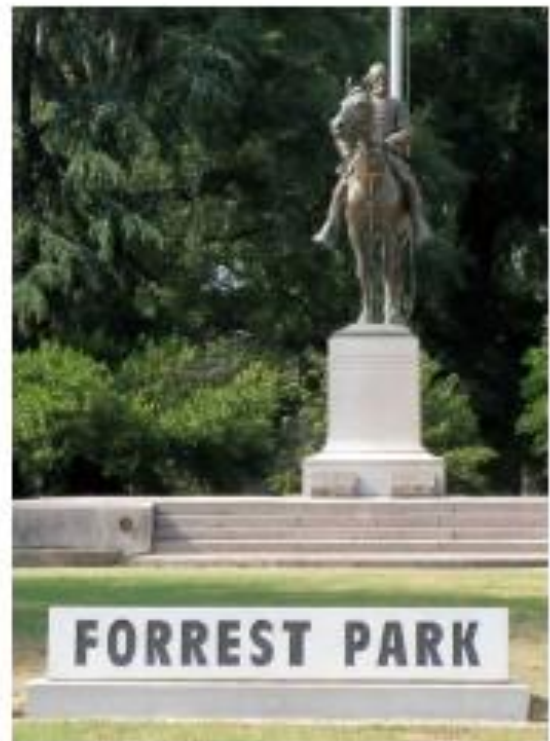


### SCV LIFE MEMBERS ROSTER

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T Tarry Beasley IV	Winston Blackley
Eugene Callaway	W. Kent Daniel Jr.
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Robert Freeman	Eugene Forrester
Donald Harrison	Frederick Harrison
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Osborn Turner, IV	Charles L Vernon
William C. Wilson	

**SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS**

# Help Save General Forrest



The Memphis City Council has passed a resolution to remove the Forrest Equestrian Statue from Forrest Park and to dig up the graves of General Forrest and his wife MaryAnn from beneath the statue.

The SCV and the Forrest family descendants must raise money to fight the city in this second attack on General Forrest. We need your help.

## Help us to save the graves and monument of General Forrest

Can you, or your camp or Division donate \$100, \$500 or \$1000 to the defense ?

Please sign me up as a supporter.      No membership fee.

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### Forrest Park Defense Fund

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Sons of Confederate Veterans  
and

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Steve M. McIntyre, Editor

**Next Camp Meeting \*\* September 10, 2018**  
Germantown Regional History and Genealogy Center, 7779 Old Poplar Pike, Germantown, TN