



WESTERN RESERVE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

***** Volume 52 April 2018 Number 8 *****

Meeting:	Wednesday	April 11, 2018	Place:	Colony Room in the Student Union at Baldwin Wallace University, Corner of East Grand & Tressel, Berea OH (440-570-0009)
	6:15 PM	Assemble		
	6:30 PM	Buffet Dinner		
	7:30 PM	Business Meeting		
	7:45 PM	Presentation		

Presenter: Norm Schmidt "The Humor of Abraham Lincoln"

With tax day coming in a few days' time we are all in most need of something to cheer us, as our wallets will be feeling a little lighter than we all wish. And, so for this month we'll going to bring some much needed entertainment to our group. Our speaker, Mr. Norm Schmidt, is returning after a way too long of an absence from our CWRT. Norm last visited us when the younger George Bush was in his first term of his Presidency. Norm will entertain us with great stories of Lincoln's wit and use of humor in his political life. And for sure, President Lincoln had such a way with words whether in his speeches or in his conversations with others. So, as an incentive for you face up with what is owed Uncle Sam, finish those taxes, make sure you update your dues with the CWRT, and then sit back and enjoy listening to Norm provide both laughter and wit as you polish off that piece of wonderful Colony Room warm apple pie. And, to get you to start thinking of all of this, here is a story that the late Jim Getty gave to our group many years ago:

This was one from when Old Abe was on the circuit in Illinois. One day while on horseback travelling to the next town to give a case, as he was plodding along a narrow horse path he encountered coming the other way, a woman traveler also on horseback. As there was not room for both horses to pass at the same moment, he pulled back and allowed the woman to pass by. In doing so he complimented the lady on her feminine being, to which in return, she said back to Old Abe that she wish she could say the same of him, but it would be most difficult for her to do so in kind a most suitable complement to him, given his roughen appearance. To this, Old Abe was quick to retort as she passed: "Oh madam, in making such a compliment as I have extended to you it is so easy to do, when one is telling a lie!" As I recalled in Jim's telling of this story to us, we all gave out such a loud, cheerful response in loving not only the story, but of Jim's delivery of the story to us.

Talk, for Years, of Hidden Gold, Then One Day

By CHRISTINE MAUSER

the F.B.I. Comes

For decades, treasure hunters in Pennsylvania have suspected that there is a trove of Civil War gold lost in a rural forest in the northwestern part of the state.

But the mystery about where it is hidden, or if it even exists, has recently deepened.

Last week, F.B.I. representatives showed up at a site in Dents Run, Elk County, an area known for its seasonal elk viewing activities that feed the economy of nearby Benetette Township.

The agency, in a statement on Monday, said very little about the mission aside from describing its work as a "court-authorized excavation" at Dents Run that ended on March 14. Its conclusion: "Nothing was found."

An F.B.I. spokeswoman, Carrie Adamowski, declined to comment further.

The sudden and apparently secretive appearance of federal investigators at the site has deepened the mystery over the fate of the gold bars that has persisted for more than a century, despite the efforts and hopes of treasure hunters, the study of historians and the years of scrutiny by local news media.

"There has been numerous people over the past 20 or 30 years traveling up and down the mountains looking for the gold," said James Burke, executive director of the local Mt. Zion Historical Society. His group has sent teams into the area looking for the gold, and hired a private investigator at one point.

"There had to be some credible evidence to convince them that there might have been gold there," he said, referring to the F.B.I. "The fact that they got a court order to go in there and do a dig — that might have been based on some evidence that they had."

"That is just creating a mystery in itself," he said.

"The locals are just — 'Did you see that? Wow,'" he added.

In 1863, according to historical accounts, just before the outbreak of the Battle of Gettysburg in July, the Union army wanted to move dozens of gold bars from Wheeling, W.Va., northeast through Pennsylvania, to pay soldiers. The wagon train caravan went to Ridgeway and then on to St. Mary's, where the idea was to pick up a local guide and then swing over the mountains and onward to Philadelphia, Mr. Burke said.

The story of the gold bars was pieced together from old documents, a map and even a mysterious note found decades ago in a hiding place on the back of a bedpost in Caledonia, Pa., he said.

"The gold got lost," he said. "It was pretty much a wilderness area, and they got wrapped around in the mountains over in Dents Run or Hicks Run."

Some reports say there were 52 bars, but Mr. Burke said he thought there were 26, with each 14-carat bar weighing 50 pounds, making the trove potentially worth millions of dollars.

"We have very, very little credible or documented evidence of the gold," he said. "A lot of it is hearsay."

Over the years, the speculation has turned into action, inspiring treasure hunters. Finders Keepers USA, a Pennsylvania group that describes itself as a treasury-recovery service, has documented its efforts to locate the gold. The owners of Finders Keepers, Dennis and

Kem Parada, were at the site when the F.B.I. visited last week, according to a report by WJAC, a television station in Johnstown.

On their website, the Finders Keepers founders, who did not reply to an email on Tuesday, said that they believed they had found the location of the gold but that federal law had prevented them from excavating it. The group, which describes itself as a "locate and recovery service for under ground metal artifacts," also posted a copy of a 2008 letter from the Bureau of Forestry to the district overseeing Elk State Forest.

It said Dennis Parada had excavated materials from Dents Run that he believed were related to the Civil War, but on examination they were found to be camp debris, from the 1880s at the earliest, and of no cultural or historical significance. Mr. Parada was banned from further excavations there, but he was permitted to use metal detectors, the letter said.

"I told D.C.N.R. I'm not going to quit until it's dug up," Mr. Parada told The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in 2008, referring to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. "And if I die, my kid's going to be around and make sure it's dug up. There's something in there and I'm not giving up."

On Tuesday, Terrence Brady, a spokesman for the conservation department, which also sent representatives to the site when the F.B.I. was there, said he had been told not to say anything about the F.B.I.'s excavation.

The story of the lost gold "has always been on the back burner," he said.

"What prompted this resurgence of interest with a federal agency?" he added. "It is a rumor, a story if you will, that refuses to die."

Western Reserve CWRT - 2017-2018 Volunteers — Our 52nd Year



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Western Reserve CWRT - Membership Dues

Annual Dues: **\$30.00 Individual**
 \$40.00 Couple

Dues are to be paid each year on the anniversary month of each person's membership. For example, if a person joins the CWRT in March, then March is the anniversary month for future dues memberships. A member can see their dues status and anniversary month at check-in.

The Buffet Dinner Fee is \$20.00 plus a \$5.00 Speaker Fee for a total of \$25.00 per meeting. If a person chooses not to attend dinner, then the Speaker Fee of \$5.00 is requested to help defray the cost of our speakers.

Civil War Trivia

Last Month's Question: Amongst the many "first" kinds of questions there is this: Who was the first Union prisoner taken in the Civil War?

Answer: John Lorimer Worden. He was sent by Secretary "Neptune" Welles to Fort Pickens to instruct its commander to dispatch 115 Marines. General Braxton Bragg in charge of the Confederate troops in the Pensacola area intercepted Worden two days after Fort Sumter. He was later released in a prisoner exchange.

Source: Iron Dawn by Richard Snow

This month's Question: Virtually everyone knows of the famous Wisconsin regiments from the Iron Brigade that was partially made up of the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin regiments. But, what of the 8th Wisconsin and what did this unit bring that is known of one of today's most recognized of military units?

Next Month: At the Front

May 9, 2018

James Pula – Purdue University

"Under the Crescent Moon"



A Forger's Confession: 'I Lied. I Cheated. I Stole.'

By JOHN BANKS

The Civil War memorial secretary desk was widely embraced as a folk art treasure. Fashioned from walnut, maple and oak, it was said to have been created around 1876 to honor John Bingham, a Union infantryman who had fallen at Antietam.

Profusely adorned, it featured a music box that played "Yankee Doodle" and it was accompanied by a letter from a Bingham descendant, describing the significance of the piece to the family.

"I was astonished by it," said Wes Cowan, an auctioneer and dealer who examined the secretary at the Winter Antiques Show in New York in 2015.

The owner, Allan Katz, had bought it months earlier from a Massachusetts dealer for an undisclosed price, and was trying to sell it for \$375,000.

"Clearly," Mr. Katz, a Connecticut antiques dealer, said in a video filmed at the show, "we are hoping that it might go to an institution, because it really would be wonderful to share this with the public on a day-to-day basis."

So it was gratifying, Mr. Katz said in an interview, when the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford purchased the piece and gave it prominent display.

In recent weeks, though, the museum has had to acknowledge that the carefully crafted secretary with the compelling story is actually an exquisite fake. And the forger has now come forward, not only to acknowledge and apologize for his sin but also to bask a bit in how artful his deception has been.

"It's the apotheosis of my own making," the forger, Harold Gordon, said in a recent interview. Mr. Gordon sold the piece to Mr. Katz, and in the process fooled many experts in the antiques world.

"I lied," said Mr. Gordon, 69. "I cheated. I stole."

Fake antiques are far from rare, but few match the sort of ambition and artistry as that created by Mr. Gordon, experts said. Robert Cheney, director of the Willard House & Clock Museum in North Grafton, Mass., likened this caper to that of the "great Brewster chair," created in 1969 by a former police officer who passed it off as a rare, 350-year-old piece. It ended up in the Henry Ford Museum in Michigan.

Occasionally, museums display fakes intentionally. One of the most popular recent exhibitions at the Winterthur in Delaware was devoted to forgeries, according to Linda Eaton, co-curator of that display. It opened, appropriately, last April Fools' Day.

Mr. Gordon said that he had no grand plan for trickery when he set out around 2010 to create his phony memorial in the workshop at his home in Templeton, about an hour outside Boston. A self-taught woodworker, he labored off and on for months as he turned a plain-looking, if old, secretary into a detailed piece rich with the patina of history.

Mr. Gordon, a stickler for details, said he tried to imagine how a simple, rural country

A woodworker who fooled experts with a forged Civil War piece reveals amid remorse.



He elaborately detailed Civil War memorial secretary desk, above, was initially said to have been created around 1876 to honor John Bingham, who had fallen at Antietam. The desk had been widely embraced as a folk art treasure.

'It has been a humbling and difficult experience, but at least I was able to play a key role in helping to expose this masterpiece of deception.'

**ALLAN KATZ
ANTIQUES DEALER**

craftsman in the mid-19th century would have approached such a project. "What standards of excellence did they have?" he asked himself.

Among his additions: a clock crowned by an eagle and the words "The Union Preserved" near the base.

But to make it work, he said he knew it would need a story. So Mr. Gordon, a student of history, imagined the piece as an heirloom of the Bingham's, a real family with Civil War ancestors.

John Bingham and his brother Wells, both from East Haddam, were privates in the 16th Connecticut Infantry, who, as teenagers, saw their first action on Sept. 17, 1862, at the Battle of Antietam.

John, 17, was killed there; Wells, 16, survived.

Mr. Gordon said that he decided to describe his handwork as a gift that had been presented on July 4, 1876, by Civil War veterans to Wells in honor of John, and then handed down to Wells's son, Edgar. He had appraised the estate of a Bingham family member, giving him insight into their ancestry.

He taped a typewritten note inside the secretary that he had dated Sept. 22, 1972. It, too, was forged, embellished with aged, yellowed tape, artful tears and typing errors. He signed it by mimicking what he imagined to be the shaky hand of an elderly Edgar M. Bingham.

"This desk made for my father Wells Anderson Bingham," the note read, in part. "A tribute to his brother John killed September 17, 1862, at the battle of Antietam."

In handcrafted "barnyard bone" — from a cow or horse — Mr. Gordon spelled out "Antietam" and "Sept. 17, 1862," the bloodiest day in American history, and mounted them on a front drawer.

In a crowning touch, Mr. Gordon attached a canister to the front of the secretary, and in it he placed a small scrap of a flag bearing a star. He had found a piece of period fabric, which he presented as a remnant of a flag carried by the 16th during the battle.

"I was never at a point where I was doing it to show off, to show how great I was," Mr. Gordon said. "It simply became a creative process."

At first, Mr. Gordon said, he left the secretary in his living room where he occasionally entertained offers from visitors who wanted to buy it. He always declined. But then he ran into some money problems, he said, and decided to unload it to Mr. Katz in an act of desperation.

The Wadsworth, which has not disclosed what it paid for the secretary, displayed it as a powerful artifact, beautiful in its creation and meaningful in its significance to the history of Connecticut. But in late 2016, it received an anonymous tip that the piece was fake, investigated and late last year quietly removed it from public view.

cont'd
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'I Lied. I Cheated. I Stole.'

S. Clayton Pennington, editor of *Antique Digest*, was also tipped off to the problem with the secretary. He soon found a photograph that had been taken in the Gordon living room of an unadorned secretary that looked suspiciously like an image he had found online of the fully realized Bingham memorial secretary in the same spot.

But when he first spoke with the museum, a curator told him, he said, that the institution was still studying the issue of authenticity. He also called Mr. Katz and told him about his finding. Mr. Katz said that he then confronted Mr. Gordon, who confessed and apologized.

"It has been a humbling and difficult experience," Mr. Katz said last week, "but at least I was able to play a key role in helping to expose this masterpiece of deception."

In late February, Mr. Pennington published a lengthy report that declared the secretary a forgery. After the article appeared, the Wadsworth issued a statement, promising to "review our accession process and make every effort to ensure that art we acquire is what it purports to be."

Mr. Katz, a dealer in American folk art since 1985, gave the museum a full refund. He said that he was not ready to decide yet whether he would try to recover any losses from Mr. Gordon.

Mr. Gordon, an antiques dealer since the 1970s, said he figured he was a "pariah" in the business now because of the forgery. "It has ruined my life," he said, but he said no legal action had been taken against him.

Still, he exhibits a creator's pride toward the craftsmanship he displayed. "That thing," he said, "should be in a museum."

One Bingham descendant said that he found the hoax amusing, even if Mr. Gordon had falsified a portion of his family's history.

Michael Cone, a 64-year-old retired physician from Maryland, who has an interest in the Civil War, said he has ancestors on both sides, including the Bingham brothers. Mr. Cone, who was born in Louisiana, said he did not mind that the brothers' history had been misappropriated.

"They deserved it," he said, jokingly, "since they were my Yankee cousins."



Top, John Bingham, left, and his brother Wells, Union soldiers from East Haddam, Conn. 7



The Civil War secretary desk, on display at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, was outfitted by Harold Gordon with a clock, a patriotic slogan and a flag scrap with a star.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2018

ELECTION OF 1876 IN SOUTH CAROLINA

And You Thought 2016 Was a Strange Year

By Gould Hagler

Two competing bodies of men occupied the chamber of the House of Representatives. Each group claimed to be the majority with the right to organize the House and conduct the state's business. Two speakers and two clerks. And two sergeants-at-arms, each ordered to expel certain men present whose elections were not recognized by the other party. Neither side would relent or depart. Each group sent out for food and blankets. As daylight faded the vast room fell into darkness, as the accumulation of unpaid bills had caused the gas company to cut off service. And many of the men were armed.

Would this powder keg explode?

Two men claimed victory in the gubernatorial race. The incumbent was re-elected, he said. The challenger's count made him the winner. Federal troops backed the incumbent but limited their role to keeping order. Huge crowds of armed men supported the challenger, who was declared the winner by the legislators of his party and sworn in. The incumbent was named the victor by his party's legislators and he too took the oath of office for another term. Each man issued orders and acted on behalf of the state.

Whom would the state's employees obey? And where would the money come from? The state was dead broke. The light bill for the State House was not the only unmet obligation.

Most *Civil War News* readers have a greater interest in military history than political history. However, the story of the Civil War did not end in the spring of 1865. Many people with detailed knowledge of the events of the war years have only a cursory knowledge of the fighting's aftermath. Freedmen, carpetbaggers and scalawags ruled for a dozen years and Reconstruction ended in 1877. Right?

Well, not exactly. The story is far more complicated and is interesting in its own right -- as is indicated by the disputed 1876

election in South Carolina which produced the drama outlined above. Fall turned into winter, Christmas came, then the New Year. Still, there was no resolution. Would the Palmetto State's Reconstruction government remain in power? Would the state's electoral votes go to Rutherford Hayes and combine with the votes from Florida and Louisiana -- where Reconstruction governments were still in charge -- to keep the Republicans in the White House? Would there be a peaceful conclusion, or would the state where war had begun 17 years earlier erupt in bloodshed?

By the time the January 2017 issue of *Civil War News* is distributed, our strange election of 2016 will be over. Whatever the outcome, we can be confident that the campaign and the results will be far less bizarre than what happened in the Palmetto State 140 years ago.

By 1876 home rule had been established in all Southern states save three -- Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina.

As the election season neared, South Carolina Democrats were divided between the Fusionists, whose strategy was to achieve improvements via cooperation with the Republicans, and the Straight-outs, who wanted to make a maximum effort to win total victory. The Straight-outs' course was chosen. The Democratic candidate for governor, Wade Hampton, led an all-out campaign to win the governor's office and a majority in the legislature.

Wade Hampton, Red Shirts and rifle clubs on one side. Daniel Chamberlain, the apparatus of the Reconstruction government, and Hunkidories on the other. Huge Democratic rallies, especially in the Piedmont and the Upcountry. Disruption of Republican rallies by Democrats insisting on "dividing the time" so they too could make their appeal and demonstrate their strength. Republican appeals to black voters fearing domination by former

Confederates. Violence and chicanery aplenty. And a close, hotly-disputed election which settled nothing.

After the voting Wade Hampton and the Democrats skillfully maintained pressure while avoiding a violent confrontation they could not win. The Democratic House members prudently withdrew from the State House and conducted their business elsewhere. They welcomed a few Republican defectors and became an undisputed majority. While Hampton's surrogates met in Washington with President Grant and others, the Democratic claimant began to act as governor in a way that Chamberlain could not.

The government was bankrupt. Hampton appealed to South Carolina's taxpayers to starve out the Chamberlain government by refusing to pay taxes. To fund his modest operation, he asked taxpayers to send his government a mere 10% of their tax bill from the previous year. This was not much money, but if used judiciously it was enough.

The state's agency heads, Republicans all, had to go to Hampton for funds. The superintendent of the lunatic asylum addressed a letter to "Governor Hampton" requesting the money necessary to keep his doors open. The officials who ran the orphan asylum and the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute had to care for their charges as well. The salaries of judges were also paid. A U.S. Army officer needed the state to grant title to land so he could construct a lighthouse. He addressed a letter to the unnamed "Governor of South Carolina" -- mailed to Hampton's address, not Chamberlain's. To assert his authority, Hampton issued pardons to two prisoners -- and they were turned loose.

Chamberlain's office was in the State House, but he did not have much to do.

Federal troops occupied the building but served only a peacekeeping role. President Grant refused to use the troops to enforce Chamberlain's authority

and prevent Hampton from exercising his. As the electoral votes of Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina ultimately were cast for the Republican candidate, Rutherford Hayes was sworn in at the 19th president. Like Grant, Hayes chose not to use troops to force a reversal of what had become a compelling fact on the ground. Hampton and the Democrats were in charge *de facto*. Any attempt to remove Hampton would have met widespread resistance. After a four-year war and twelve years of Reconstruction, few Northerners cared to enforce Republican rule in the South. Reconstruction had already ended in eight former states of the Confederacy. The last three dominoes were about to fall. What was the point?

President Hayes ordered the troops to leave South Carolina's State House, and Reconstruction was over. With their departure, Chamberlain lost his last vestige of power. He relinquished his office, and his secretary turned over the keys to Hampton.

Sources: The principal sources for this account are: *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman* by Walter Brian Cisco, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, by Eric Foner, and *The Story of Reconstruction* by Robert Selph Henry. There are other books on Reconstruction, of course, including a few specific to South Carolina.

Gould Hagler is past President of The Civil War Round Table of Atlanta and is the author of *George's Confederate Monuments: In Honor of a Fallen Nation* (Mercer University Press, 2014). This book is available from Mercer University Press, retail outlets, online sellers, and directly from the author (gould.hagler@gmail.com).

Civil War News

January 2017

Restored Grant Hall Courtroom Recalls Conspiracy Trial

By Nancy Jennis Olds

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Ulysses S. Grant Hall at Fort Lesley J. McNair has a unique history. Previously known as Building 20, it is the only survivor of a federal penitentiary. It is the site where the Lincoln assassination conspirators were tried and Mary Surratt was convicted and became the first woman executed by the federal government.

In 1826 Charles Bulfinch, architect of the Capitol, designed the prison, initially a large three-story building to which two wings were later added. Grant Hall, built in 1832 to accommodate women prisoners, was part of the eastern wing.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln ordered prisoners moved and the penitentiary turned over to the War Department, which was short of space. Its arsenal was on the same peninsula where the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers join.

A year after the 1864 Washington Arsenal explosion that killed 21 women workers, the third floor of Building 20, the largest available space, became a courtroom. The 12-foot gallows from which Mary Surratt and three of the seven men were hanged on July 7, 1865, was right outside in the penitentiary yard, now tennis courts.

The main penitentiary building was demolished after the war. Despite threats of demolition Grant Hall survived, while the rest of the facility were lost over time.

Today Grant Hall houses offices of the Department of Defense's National Defense University Africa Center for Strategic Studies. It is managed by Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Fort Myer, Va.

The building needed major restoration before its new service could begin. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers undertook the \$4 million project which was completed in May 2012.

Maintaining the building's historical integrity was of paramount concern as electrical, plumbing, and safety upgrades were made. The courtroom restoration was based on historical documents and consultations. Exhibits related to the conspiracy and trial are displayed in two adjoining rooms.

The restored building reopened in April 2013. Historians and docents in

period dress from the Surratt House Museum in Clinton, Md., showed off the restored third floor rooms.

The Lincoln assassination prisoners were transferred there on April 29, 1865.

Prisoner Mary Surratt, who suffered from severe menstrual cramps, was given a rocking chair in a sparsely furnished room. It is said she could hear the gallows being built but, because the original windows were so high, she could not see what was going on.

In the courtroom, where the trial lasted seven weeks, the accused men sat in chairs in the prisoners' dock on a raised platform against the west wall with a wooden railing separating them from the rest of the courtroom.

Surratt's chair was apart from them, on the floor to the left of the west wall.

The nine judges sat at a large table facing the witness stand. Another large table accommodated select members of the press corps and court reporters.

The courtroom was replicated in the 2011 Robert Redford movie "The Conspirator," about Mary Surratt, her defense attorney and the trial. The Grant Hall room was undergoing restoration, but its measurements were taken for the movie courtroom recreated at Fort Pulaski in Savannah, Ga.

Redford and the cast donated some clothing and items, including a bowler hat and judge's gavel on exhibit, in appreciation for being allowed to research the courtroom.

The dress actress Robin Wright wore, Redford's director's chair and a mannequin wearing the canvas hood and clothes of prisoner Lewis Powell are display in one room.

Another exhibit features Alexander Gardner who photographed the prisoners and sites involved with the assassination. He and assistant Timothy O'Sullivan photographed the hangings from the window of another building.

Then and now photos, a exposed section of original brick wall, a piece of mourning bunting from Lincoln's box at Ford's Theatre, a hand-held Lincoln memorial fan, and a copy of President Andrew Johnson's letter approving Mary Surratt's hanging are among exhibit items.



Grant Hall was earlier known as Building 20 of the federal penitentiary which became the Washington Arsenal during the Civil War. It was the deputy warden's quarters with a third-floor laundry room that became the courtroom for the Lincoln assassination conspirators.



The restored courtroom is where the original military trial was convened. The chair at back left is where Mary Surratt would have sat apart from the other conspirators who were in the dock at the far end.

The courtroom and adjacent exhibit rooms was recently open to the public for the first of four annual open houses and 120 visitors came. The next open houses will be Aug. 4, Nov. 1 and Feb. 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Civil War News

June 2014

Reveal Secrets During Restoration Hoffbauer's Confederate Murals

By Scott C. Boyd

RICHMOND, Va. — New details not seen for decades have been uncovered during the three-year, \$870,000 project to clean the huge Virginia Historical Society (VHS) murals by Charles Hoffbauer depicting the rise and fall of the Confederacy.

June 1 will mark the second year of the three-year project.

In the spring of 2011, the VHS received a \$375,000 Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service, National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities.

The VHS must raise \$381,000 to match funds, and is still working on that, according to VHS Senior Officer for Public Relations and Marketing, Jennifer M. Guild.

Hoffbauer (1875-1957) began work on the murals in 1913, then returned to his native France in 1914 to fight in World War I. He completed them in 1920 after returning to America following the war. They have been on display since 1921.

The murals were commissioned by the Richmond-based Confederate Memorial Association (CMA), which merged with the VHS in 1946.

Four large murals depict the four seasons as an analogy of the rise and fall of the Confederacy. Two are 26 x 14 feet (Spring and Autumn); the other two are even larger at 36 x 14 feet (Summer and Winter).

Four flanking panels with special themes are each 3.5 x 14 feet. They are titled: "C.S.S. Virginia"; "Hospital Train"; "Colonel John S. Mosby on a Midnight Raid"; and "The Coast Artillery, Confederate Marines".

Hoffbauer painted on canvas which is tacked to plaster walls behind it.

In some places, the paint has separated from the canvas and only the skin of the paint holds it together, according to Cleo Mullins of Richmond Conservation Studio, who is chief conservator of the project.

Mullins says they are able to inject heat-sensitive adhesive under the loose paint to fix this.

To clean the murals, multiple layers of varnish that were applied over time to be removed. After the varnish is applied.

Confederate Murals



Above: Chief conservator Cleo Mullins points to a dead Union soldier lying face-down in the lower left corner of the "Spring" mural. Given the commemorative nature of the murals and when they were commissioned, this was the preferred look for an enemy soldier.



"Spring" mural shows Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, right, reviewing his troops in the Shenandoah Valley. The upbeat mood reflects the Confederacy's early military successes. (Virginia Historical Society)

The acrylics should last over 100 years without yellowing," Mullins says.

The cleaning is revealing elements of the murals that accumulated dirt and dust have hidden for years.

Guild calls the details that are popping out, such as how purple A.P. Hill's sash is in the Summer mural, "phenomenal."

That mural faces the visitor upon entering the room. It features a magnificent gathering of Confederate generals, even though no such meeting of these men, as depicted, ever took place.

The 13 readily identifiable generals are, from left to right, John Bell Hood, Wade Hampton, Richard S. Ewell, John B. Gordon, Thomas J. Jackson, Fitzhugh Lee, A.P. Hill, Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, Joseph E. Johnston, George E. Pickett, P.G.T. Beauregard and J.E.B. Stuart.

Other details uncovered include previously unseen people, such as two wounded Confederate soldiers in

the Spring mural and a dead Union soldier in the Autumn mural.

One thing that sets apart the "Hospital Train" flank panel is that it is the only mural to include women and African-Americans.

Local Richmonders served as models for some of the people portrayed, Mullins says.

The elderly white man with a goatee, who looks like KFC's Colonel Sanders, was famous sculptor Edward Valentine, a former president of the VHS.

The gray-haired white woman in the foreground was a secretary and librarian from the nearby United Daughters of the Confederacy national headquarters. She is leaning over a sick young man in a bed, who was her nephew.

The African-American in a red shirt was a porter at the Jefferson Hotel downtown.

Guild relates that when she first started working at the VHS, she was taken to the murals display and asked to spot the one historical inac-

curacy.

The answer is found in the "Hospital Train" mural: the telegraph pole has five sets of wires, just right for 1920s telephones but too many for 1860s telegraph lines.

"We don't know why that mistake was made," she says.

Modern visitors who aren't used to seeing public art memorializing the Confederacy need to keep in mind when these murals were painted, Guild says. "There were people still alive who lived through the Civil War."

The Lost Cause sensibility of the murals reflects the mission of their sponsor, the CMA, Guild notes.

E. Lee Shepard, VHS Vice President for Collections and Sallie and William B. Thalhimer III Senior Archivist, says the mural collection celebrates the Southern soldier and sailor. "The emphasis is on the valor of the Southern soldier," he notes.

Hoffbauer's murals are one of only three such large public Civil War memorial artworks on display, according to Guild. The other two are the cycloramas in Gettysburg and Atlanta.

Rather than being closed from public view during the conservation process, the ongoing work is open for all to see.

"We have made a very conscious effort to make sure everyone can watch this work because you can see the dramatic changes," Guild says.

The VHS is open Monday through Saturday from 10 to 5 and 1 to 5 on Sunday. Admission is free. For information call (804) 358-4901 or visit www.vahistorical.org/hoffbauer

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