



# The Wheeler Dispatch



*The Official Newsletter of the General Joe Wheeler Camp #1245 in Aiken, South Carolina  
A Camp built upon Duty, Honor, God and Country December 2023*



## Commander's Column

### Greetings Fellow Compatriots,

As we enter the Christmas season, we need to remember the reason for the season, Jesus Christ that came to this earth to live a sinless life so we can have everlasting life in his Kingdom. Hope you have a very Merry Dixie Christmas!!

I appreciate all in attendance at the November meeting to hear the presentation the "Battle of the Wilderness". Ken Temples brought a very good meal of homemade chili and corn bread; most had a second helping because it was so good. It was our pleasure to have Aidan Ashworth and his mother Cheryl Smith visit with us again.

The next meeting will be held on December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Aiken County Historical Museum. We will have our Christmas party. Everyone should bring one of your favorite dishes to add to our potluck menu at 6:30PM. I will provide drinks, ice, plates, cups, utensils, and napkins. After the meal, we will discuss the Wreaths Across America Service at Bethany Cemetery scheduled for December 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00PM and the Western Carolina SC Division Prayer Breakfast scheduled for Saturday January 20, 2024 at 9:00AM. Lots of help will be needed with the service and putting out the wreaths on the Veterans' graves and providing food for the Prayer Breakfast. Let's plan on meeting in Bethany Cemetery at 10:00AM on Friday December 15<sup>th</sup> to clean and prepare for the Wreaths Across America Service.

Please remember our Division Lt. Commander, Henry Richardson in your prayers as he is going through difficult cancer treatments. Pray for a complete healing with minimum pain through all of his procedures.

Remember, it is your duty to see that the true history of the South is presented to future generations. May God bless you and may God bless Dixie. Blake

**"Remember, Confederate soldiers never die until they are forgotten."**



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## *1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Commander*

### **Register NOW for 2024 Division and National Reunions**

Registration for the 2024 SC Division Reunion to be hosted by the Litchfield Camp #132 at the Ocean Drive Beach Resort in North Myrtle Beach. The dates are April 12 & 13, 2024. Information on the reunion is listed on website [scscv.com](http://scscv.com) and enter the following:

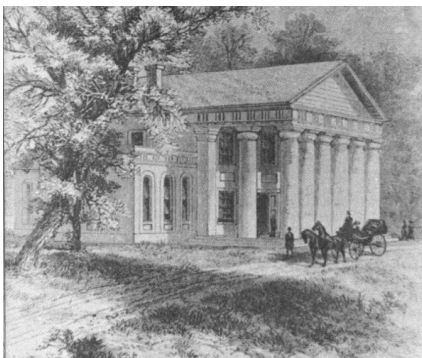
<https://scscv.com/calendar/#!event/2024/4/13/south-carolina-division-state-convention>

Registration for the 2024 SCV National Reunion to be hosted by the Secession Camp #4 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in North Charleston, SC. The dates are July 16 - 21, 2024. To register, please visit the Reunion website, <https://scv4.org/2024/>

The 2025 SCV National Reunion will be in Houston, TX.

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Commander*

# CHRISTMAS AT ARLINGTON HOUSE

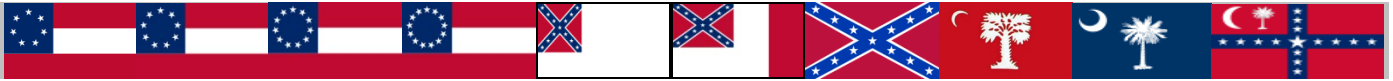


*(This article is courtesy of the National Park Service and is an excerpt from their longer article. The entire article can be read at <https://www.nps.gov/arho/learn/historyculture/christmas.htm>)*

For the Lees, “home for the holidays” meant Arlington at Christmas. Robert E. Lee felt this was a time when families should be together and, whenever possible, he and his family returned to Arlington to share the season with his wife, Mary Anna Custis Lee, and her parents at their Arlington estate.

Lee’s occupation as an Army Engineer favored winter vacations, when the work was shut down by weather. Frequently, hardships of travel and health had to be overcome to reach Arlington at Christmas. Despite these challenges, Robert was away from Mary at Christmas only during the war in Mexico from 1846-1849 and in 1860 when he was stationed in Texas. Starting in 1831, the first year of the Lees’ marriage, Robert was at Arlington 20 out of a possible 30 Christmases while the family lived there—a phenomenal record for a soldier on active duty for all those years.

Christmas at Arlington began on December 17, when Mary’s father, George Washington Parke Custis, had the greens brought in. The pine, ivy, holly and myrtle filled Arlington and were kept fresh through the twelve days of Christmas. Mistletoe was suspended from lanterns and arches. Any unsuspecting loiterer,



found beneath, was required to forfeit a kiss. On Christmas Eve, Mr. Custis supervised the placement of the yule log. A piece of the log from the previous Christmas was used to ignite the highly decorated log of the new season. This old Norse and Anglo-Saxon custom was an important part of the Arlington Christmas celebration.

Christmas day itself began with 'Christmas gifting' of family members, guests and servants followed by morning prayer and breakfast. Then, weather permitting, the family attended services at Christ Episcopal Church in Alexandria where Robert and Mary had worshiped since childhood. After exchanging season's greetings with town friends and family the carriage would return to Arlington in time for the feast. The celebration continued until Robert had to return to duty in January.

As the Lee family grew with the births of seven children between 1832 and 1846, Christmas at Arlington became very child oriented. Books, dolls, boots, skates, and a tool chest were among the gifts exchanged on this day.

Christmas 1846 found Robert E. Lee away from his family and Arlington at Christmas for the first time in 15 years. Robert wrote to 'My Dearest Mary' on Christmas Day and described his Christmas dinner. The table was decorated with pine and oranges and bottles of wine. The feast featured roasted turkey and chicken and, among other good things, eggnog. He continued to remember with Mary the Christmases they had shared.

*"We have had many happy Christmas' together, and this is the first time that we have been entirely separated at this holy time since our marriage, and though I have been absent on two or three other occasions on the day itself, yet have not been far distant and always arrived during the holy days. We have therefore nothing to complain of and I hope it has not interfered with your happiness, surrounded as you are by father, Mother, children and dear friends. I therefore trust you are well and happy and that this is the last time I shall be absent from you during my life. May God preserve and bless you till then and forever after is my constant prayer."*

This family, like many others, would not be reunited until the end of the war with Mexico. Their next Christmas together would be celebrated between assignments for Lee, in 1848, at Arlington.

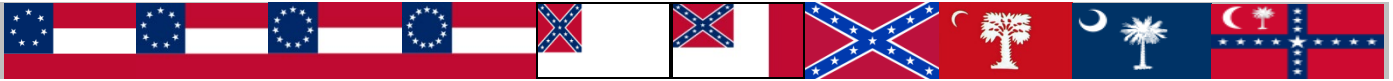
Christmas 1849 found the Lees living in Baltimore where **Robert** was working on the construction of Fort Carroll. They returned to Arlington for every Christmas until 1852. The celebrations were grand, as Lee described in a letter to his eldest son, Custis, who was absent in 1851.

*"We came on Wednesday morning. It was a bitter cold day, and we were kept waiting an hour in the depot at Baltimore for the cars, which were detained by the snow and ice on the rails. ... The snow impeded the carriage as well as us, and we reached here shortly after it. The children were delighted at getting back, and passed the evening in devising pleasure for the morrow. They were in upon us before day on Christmas morning, to overhaul their stockings. ...*

*[We] went into church, and [son] Rooney... skated back along the canal (Rooney having taken his skates along for the purpose).*

*I need not describe to you our amusements, you have witnessed them so often; nor the turkey, cold ham, plum pudding, mince-pies, etc. at dinner. I hope you will enjoy them again, or some equally as good..."*

From 1852-1854, Colonel Lee's position as Superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point



required the elder Lees' presence during the holidays, so they were away from Arlington for Christmas. In 1856, Lee was absent from the Arlington Christmas celebrations once again after he was transferred to Texas with the Second United States Cavalry. However, his thoughts were with his wife and children, as he wrote to them from afar:

*"The time is approaching when I trust many of you will be assembled around the family hearth at dear Arlington, to celebrate another Christmas. Though absent, my heart will be in the midst of you, and I shall enjoy in imagination and memory, all that is going on."*

Lee was back at Arlington for Christmas in 1857, on leave from the army to manage the affairs of the Arlington plantation, in the wake of his father-in-law's death. Duties connected with the estate would keep him at Arlington through Christmas the following year.

In the spring of 1860, Lee returned to Texas and stayed there through the following winter. As Christmas, 1860 approached, his wife's health and the unsettled state of national affairs precluded any thought of her going West. With the election of Abraham Lincoln in November, South Carolina seceded. Concern for the future of the Union was reflected in Colonel Lee's Christmas greeting:

*"Although you anticipated a quiet Christmas, I hope it was a happy one to you all, and that you were filled with gratitude for the many blessings that surrounded you. Although distant, my heart and thoughts were ever present with you and my prayers were offered for Heavens choicest benefits for you all.... Here we are far removed and get the essence of all disunion movements from the New Orleans papers.... I am particularly anxious that 'Virginia should keep right, and inauguration of the Constitution, so I would wish that she might be able to maintain it and save the union.'"*

Unfortunately this was not to be and, as it turned out, Christmas of 1860 would be the Lee family's last at Arlington. As Virginia was on the verge of secession in April 1861, Robert E. Lee resigned from the U.S. Army and the family left Arlington for good shortly before the estate was occupied by U.S. Army troops in May 1861.

*Text by Agnes Mullins, former Curator, Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial*

### ***Wheeler Coin Committee***

The Wheeler Coins are currently selling slowly. Since last month, the Camp members have increased the sale of the coins from 129 to 135 coins. Lee Duvall, Chairman

### ***Adjutant's Report***

Ken Temples provided an enjoyable meal of homemade chili and corn bread. Commander Moore gave a very educational talk about the "Battle of the Wilderness" which took place May 5-7, 1864 in Virginia. It was interesting hearing about the details of the battle. We had ten members and seven guests including one prospective member Aidan Ashworth and his mother Cheryl Smith returning a second time in attendance. Look forward to seeing you at the December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.





### *From the Chaplain's Desk*



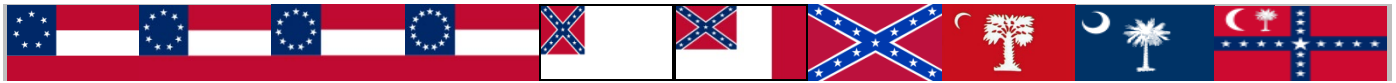
Well, Christmas is right around the corner. How are you planning on celebrating this Christmas season? Here in the Temples' home, like many others, we have our trees, our stockings, our manger scene and our plans for a family get-together and a hearty meal all ready. It's going to be a special time for family fellowship, traditional meals, and delicious desserts all the while surrounded by things that remind us of the birth of Christ. But back during the time of our ancestors' struggles for Independence in 1776 and 1861, times were far, far different. There was less joy, less fancy décor, less food, less togetherness and more loneliness, division, death, destruction, and constant struggle. But throughout it all there was always Hope. Hope comes from knowing Christ and relying on Him daily regardless of the situations we may find ourselves in. Hope was what kept our ancestors going in those trying days. So, if you have not yet excepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it this month. It will be the grandest Christmas gift you could ever present to your family and even Christ Himself. The Bible tells us that the Angels in Heaven rejoice when a lost one comes to Christ. And wrapped up in your heart will be a special gift when you become a Christian. Christ will present you with these special gifts, Salvation, Peace, Comfort, Blessings, Strength, and a Blessed Hope for tomorrow. Merry Christmas to my Wheeler Camp brothers. Blessed be His Name, Ken



**Chaplain's Prayer List:** Please remember our fellow compatriots and their family members who need prayers:

Michael Allen, Jacob Cook, Lee Duvall and his wife Lynn & daughters Madison & Melanie, Clair Henkes, Tom Huckabee, Ken Temples, Eddie Rodgers, Blake & Janice Moore & grandson Collin Umbarger & Joe and Brenda Willis, Henry Richardson, Mark LeGrand's parents, and Danny Brown's granddaughter Kealey





## War Between the States cannon balls, swords and unexploded munition discovered in a South Carolina river

NOVEMBER 14, 2023 / 6:42 AM EST / CBS/AP

Hundreds of Civil War relics were unearthed during the cleanup of a South Carolina river where Union troops dumped Confederate military equipment.

The artifacts were discovered while crews removed tar-like material from the Congaree River and bring new tangible evidence of Union Gen. William T. Sherman's ruthless Southern campaign toward the end of the War. The remains are expected to find a safer home at the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum in the state capital of Columbia.

Historical finds include bullets, cannon balls and even swords, [CBS affiliate WLTX reports](#).



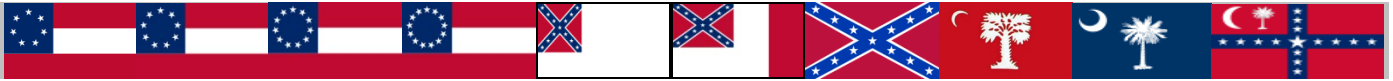
Two 10-inch shells are displayed at a press conference celebrating the early completion of the Congaree River cleanup on Monday, Nov. 13, 2023 in Columbia, S.C. Hundreds of relics were unearthed during the \$20 million project.

Also discovered was a wheel experts believe belonged to a wagon that blew up during the two days of supply dumps. The odds of finding the wagon wheel "are crazy," according to Sean Norris.

"It's an interesting story to tell," said Norris, the archaeological program manager at an environmental consulting firm called TRC. "It's a good one - that we were able to take a real piece of it rather than just the written record showing this is what happened."

One unexploded munition got "demilitarized" at Shaw Air Force Base. Norris said the remaining artifacts won't be displayed for a couple more years. Corroded metal relics must undergo an electrochemical process for their conservation, and they'll also need measurement and identification.





A Confederate sword blade is displayed at a press conference celebrating the early completion of the Congaree River cleanup on Monday, Nov. 13, 2023 in Columbia, S.C.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster said this preservation is necessary for current generations to learn from history.

"All those things are lost on us today. They seem like just stories from the past," McMaster said. "But when we read about those, and when we see artifacts, and see things that touched people's hands, it brings us right back to how fortunate we are in this state and in this country to be where we are."

## Previously found war relics

Relics from the War for Southern Independence have been discovered in South Carolina before. In 2016, Hurricane Matthew unearthed Civil War cannon balls from the sand on Folly Beach. A similar discovery was made by a couple on the same beach three years later after Hurricane Dorian.



# Happy Birthday!

**No Camp Compatriots Birthdays in December**

### 2023 – 2024 Camp Officers

Blake Moore – Commander  
Lee Duvall – 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Commander  
Mark LeGrand – 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Commander  
Danny Brown – Adjutant

Bob Ritter - Treasurer  
Ken Temples – Chaplain  
Nathan Oxner – Color Sergeant  
Nicholas Ward – Judge Advocate



## *6<sup>th</sup> Annual Wreaths Across America Service*



*Hosted jointly by The General Joe Wheeler Camp #1245 SCV*

*along with other Historical Organizations*

*honoring our Confederate Veterans*

*as well as all other Veterans*

*at the Bethany Cemetery (corner of Laurens St. and Hampton Ave.)*

*Confederate Dead Section Memorial*

*December 16, 2023 at 3:00PM*

**REMEMBER**

our fallen veterans.

**HONOR**

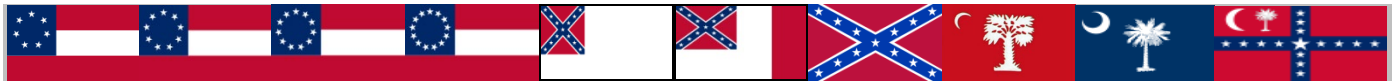
those who served.

**TEACH**

the true history.

**Period attire is encouraged and bring your own chair.**





# *17<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Carolina SC Division Prayer Breakfast*

***General Joe Wheeler Camp #1245 Aiken, SC***

***Dear SCV Compatriots, UDC, OCR and Friends,***

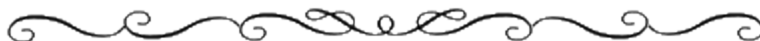
**The Wheeler Camp would like to extend to you, your family and friends an invitation to our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Carolina SC Division Prayer Breakfast.**

**Our Prayer Breakfast will be held in the Aiken County Historical Museum located at 433 Newberry St. SW in Aiken, SC**

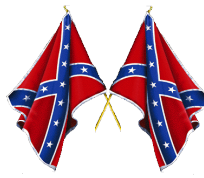
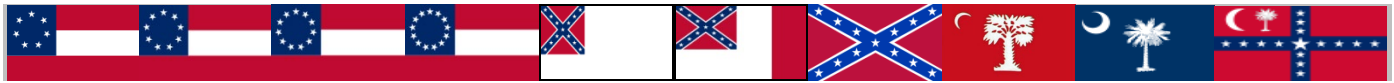
**On Saturday January 20, 2024**

**We will begin at 9:00AM for breakfast and Christian fellowship.**

**Our speaker will be Rev. Danny Blackwell,  
SC Division Chaplain**



**Everything is free, the food, the fellowship and the Blessing!  
The Wheeler Camp is looking forward to seeing you at the  
Prayer Breakfast.**



The General Joe Wheeler Camp is named after Major General Joseph Wheeler of Augusta, Ga. It was Wheeler's troops who turned back Sherman's Cavalry led by Gen. Kilpatrick in February of 1865. Wheeler is known as the Savior of Aiken.

### Remaining 2023 Camp Activities

- December 4 camp meetings will be held at the Aiken County Historical Museum at 6:30pm.
- Dec. 16 – The Wheeler Camp will host the Wreaths Across America Service at 3:00pm in Bethany Cemetery honoring all Veterans, especially Confederate Veterans.

The Camp has adopted and cares for 54 Confederate graves located in Bethany Cemetery, Aiken's largest cemetery where the only Unknown Confederate grave is located in the city.

### 2024 Camp Activities

- Jan. – The Western Carolina SC Division Prayer Breakfast scheduled on Saturday Jan. 20, 2024 at 9:00am at the Aiken County Historical Museum.
- March – Wheeler Camp meeting is scheduled on March 4<sup>th</sup> at Aiken County Historical Museum at 6:30pm.
- April – The Wheeler Camp Annual Ladies' Night is scheduled on Friday April 5, 2024 at 6:30pm at the Outing Club.
- May – May 6<sup>th</sup> camp meeting will be a picnic at J.W. Osteen's cabin at the Battle of Aiken site at 6:30pm.
- May – The Wheeler Camp will host the Aiken County Confederate Memorial Day Service on Sunday May 5, 2023 at 3:00pm in Bethany Cemetery.
- June 3<sup>rd</sup>, August 5<sup>th</sup>, September 9<sup>th</sup>, October 7<sup>th</sup>, November 4<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup> camp meetings will be held at the Aiken County Historical Museum at 6:30pm. No camp meeting will be held in February and July.
- Dec. – The Wheeler Camp will host the Wreaths Across America Service on Saturday Dec. 21, 2024 at 3:00pm in Bethany Cemetery honoring all Veterans, especially Confederate Veterans.

**MEETING TIME:** Normally, the camp meeting is the first Monday of the month at 6:30pm with no camp meeting in February or July. The camp meeting in September is on the second Monday due to Labor Day. The Prayer Breakfast is our regular meeting in January.

**MEETING PLACE:** Aiken County Historical Museum, 433 Newberry St. SW, Aiken, SC 29801

**For additional information contact: [scscv1245@gmail.com](mailto:scscv1245@gmail.com)**