



News Release

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New Civil War Exhibit
Presents Soldiers' Lives

Columbia, S.C. --- The second phase of a four-year expansion of the South Carolina State Museum's Civil War exhibit opens July 23 with a depiction of the everyday lives of the Confederate soldiers from South Carolina.

Soldiers of the Palmetto State, 1861-1865: "We Left in a Storm of Cheers" will tell the story of life after the "glow" of secession and early victory at the first Battle of Manassas had faded, and the hardships endured - from disease to homesickness to boredom - by Southern troops.

"The exhibit focuses on the military side of the war and the lives of average soldiers," said Curator of History Fritz Hamer. "We want to portray their experiences both in battle and in camp. We'll show details about their daily lives, such as how they entertained themselves with cards and a cribbage board carried by some of the troops, and fed their spiritual lives with a soldier's Bible. We'll discuss what they ate and other aspects of a soldier's life."

A range of other intriguing artifacts can be seen in the exhibit, including a medicine chest used by a Dr. Klugh, a surgeon who served briefly in Holcombe's Legion of the Confederate army in 1862, said Hamer. "The chest features the original containers of medicines such as calomel. It was a mercury compound used to open up the bowels, among other purposes. Unbeknownst to the primitive medical profession of the 19th century, it was actually poisonous, but during the Civil War it was considered by many doctors to be a valuable remedy.

"The kit also contains quinine, which was good for malaria, a huge problem at the time because of the malaria-carrying mosquitoes that infested the South. Quinine could alleviate or prevent malaria if taken in sufficient quantity."

Another chest featured in the exhibit is a wooden mess chest, believed to belong to a Confederate junior officer, with his name, R.A. Kendall, printed on the side. It was used for holding cooking utensils.

A lesser-thought-of aspect of the war was the problem of maintaining Southern railroads, as illustrated by a map showing the railroad system in the South. The railroads themselves are well known for their importance in transporting soldiers and supplies (the Civil War was the first strategic use of railroads in warfare), but most people don't realize the problems experienced because the South ran out of parts to maintain its railroads.

Early in the war, the railroads were used heavily and successfully, but as time went by, the Confederates wore out the tracks, cars and locomotives, and they lacked the skilled labor to manufacture replacement parts, the curator said. The dilemma was exacerbated by the fact that it was almost impossible to get machinery and parts through the Union blockade of Charleston.

“Plus, though Southern states tried to exempt railroad workers from military service, the army kept trying to conscript them, which was another problem.”

Yet another obstacle few people know of is the fact that the gauges of the rails changed from state to state. The situation was created before the war because there were no standards for rail width or gauge, and once war began there was not time to standardize them.

Museum guests also will see letters written home by soldiers describing their lives in the army and the problems they faced, including homesickness. These include the letters written between 1861 and 1864 by Thomas Nance from Union district, plus letters between his wife and sister about his death in the Battle of the Wilderness and how they were coping after their loss.

In addition, the exhibit will feature a uniform believed to be from Hampton's Legion, as well as a late-war frock coat from a Columbia native who served in the war; a flag of the McCalla Rifles, a company from Abbeville that became Company I of the 14th South Carolina Infantry; and weapons such as pistols and swords.

A video will demonstrate the steps to loading and firing the standard weapons of the infantry, which were the Lee Enfield rifled musket and the Springfield rifled musket, Hamer said.

“We want folks to understand that after the euphoria of the war's opening, there was nothing glorious about the long service these people endured,” the curator said. “They had to find a lot of resolve to continue to serve, because as the casualties mounted and problems at

home such as inflation and food shortages became more acute, the needs of family became harder to ignore and it became harder to continue to serve.”

The exhibit, which is the second part of a series of six exhibits, can be seen until May, 2012, when the next phase in the series will be added to it.

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CUTLINE #1 FOR CIVIL WAR EXHIBIT

In the South Carolina State Museum’s new exhibit *Soldiers of the Palmetto State, 1861-1865: “We Left in a Storm of Cheers,”* museum guests will see artifacts illustrating the everyday lives of South Carolina soldiers. When not fighting, soldiers relieved the boredom with games such as cards or backgammon. These games were carried by soldiers around 1862.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo by Susan Dugan/courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #2 FOR CIVIL WAR EXHIBIT

Weapons such as this c. 1860 British-made Kerr service revolver were commonly carried by Confederate soldiers from the Palmetto State. In the South Carolina State Museum’s new exhibit *Soldiers of the Palmetto State, 1861-1865: “We Left in a Storm of Cheers,”* museum guests will see artifacts used in the everyday lives of South Carolina soldiers, for purposes ranging from combating Union armies to combating disease and boredom.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo by Susan Dugan/courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #3 FOR CIVIL WAR EXHIBIT

This flag was presented to the Williamsburg Light Dragoons, a unit from Clarendon, Georgetown and Williamsburg Districts, in 1862. It is one of many fascinating artifacts to be seen in the South Carolina State Museum's new Civil War exhibit *Soldiers of the Palmetto State, 1861-1865: "We Left in a Storm of Cheers,"* which opens July 23 in Columbia.

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Photo by Susan Dugan/courtesy S.C. State Museum

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