



NATIONAL CIVIL WAR NAVAL MUSEUM

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Bruce Smith, Executive Director
(706) 327-9798
director@portcolumbus.org

Historic ship's lamp to come to Naval Museum

Columbus, GA – A piece of one of the most famous ships in Civil War history is coming to the National Civil War Naval Museum at Port Columbus. A gas lantern from the mainmast above the Crow's Nest survived the sinking of the CSS Alabama and has made its way from England to the Old Guard of the Gate City Guard of Atlanta. This historic military company will present the lantern to the National Civil War Naval Museum on Wednesday, June 29, at 11 a.m.

During the Civil War, the Confederate Navy was charged with trying to pull US Navy warships off the coastline by using "commerce raiders" to harass and sink northern merchant ships. Most famous of these ships is the CSS Alabama, skippered by Captain Raphael Semmes. More than 60 ships were captured and sunk by the Alabama before it was finally discovered in June of 1864 in Cherbourg Harbor, France by the USS Kearsarge. The Kearsarge had been pursuing the raider around the globe.

A challenge was offered to the Confederate ship and Semmes agreed to meet the US frigate outside the territorial waters for a final duel. One of the most famous Civil War naval battles occurred off the coast of France in 1864. The Kearsarge prevailed that day but Semmes and other officers were picked up by British civilians and were celebrated in Europe before returning to the south where they again were in service to the Confederate Navy.

The lantern, found floating in the English Channel, was recovered by Boatswain Scharmond of the Kearsarge. This lamp was passed on to Scharmond's grandson who then passed it on to John Milton Oxford, a retired United State Navy officer. In 1968 the lamp was donated to "The Old Guard" by Oxford in honor of the late Lt. Col. J.Z. Oxford of "The Old Guard of the Gate City Guard."

Museum executive director Bruce Smith said the addition of the lamp is a highlight to the museum's exhibit. "There is no more famous ship for this period than the Alabama and to have this original piece from its famous battle is sensational."

The lamp will be on exhibit with other artifacts from the CSS Alabama within a week of the presentation on Wednesday.

Port Columbus is open daily from 9 to 5. For more information, call the museum at 707-327-9798, www.portcolumbus.org.