

CONFEDERATE GAZETTE



Confederate Gazette

*Is a monthly publication
of the*

Major Robert M. White
Camp #1250
Sons of Confederate
Veterans
Temple, Texas

Web Site:
www.rootsweb.com/~tx1250

Greg Manning
Commander
Rt. 1 Box 1737
Kempner, TX 76539

John C. Perry
Editor
P.O. Box 794
Salado, TX 76571

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WAR BETWEEN THE STATES SEMINAR IN SALADO

The Central Texas Area Museum in Salado is sponsoring a War Between the States Genealogy Seminar in Salado on Saturday, July 21st.

The event will be held at the Central Texas Area Museum, across from the Stagecoach Inn, beginning at 10:00 A.M. The cost is \$20.00 per person.

The event will feature a panel of speakers who will focus on researching individual's War Between the States ancestors.

Brad Johnson, honorary member of the Major Robert M. White

Camp #1250, will be the featured speaker. Compatriot Johnson will display and discuss war time uniforms, flags, and documents.

Dr. Tom Boyett, retired physician from Cleburne, will discuss the challenges that physicians faced in caring for soldiers during the war. Dr. Boyett has done extensive research in war time medical instruments, period medicines, and methods used by physicians.

Nancy Hengst, of Hamilton, will offer guidance on where to

research War Between the States veterans. Hengst has compiled over 1,000 folders on war veterans. She is a founding member of the Hamilton County Genealogical Society.

Bill Buckner, from Temple, will explain the resources available for War Between The States research at the Waco-McClennan County Library. Buckner is the Genealogy and Periodicals Manager at the library.

For further information call, 254-947-5232 or contact the museum at: Box 36, Salado, TX 76571.

Commander's Body Recovered From Sub

HUNLEY COMMANDER FOUND

The Confederate submarine's, C.S.S. *Hunley*, commander, Lt. George Dixon, was apparently the brave and dashing Confederate officer as pictured by many historians. Dixon's remains were recovered from the C.S.S. *Hunley* the week of May 14th. The C.S.S. *Hunley* sunk in Charleston Harbor on February 17, 1864, after sinking the Union ship, U.S.S. *Housatonic*. All nine members of the crew were lost, after ramming a spar with a black powder charge into the wooden hull U.S.S. *Housatonic*.

The C.S.S. *Hunley* was found almost intact in 1995. The C.S.S. *Hunley* was raised from Charleston Harbor from about 30 feet of water and 3 feet of sediment on August 8, 2000.

Details of the finding of Dixon's body were announced by Hunley archaeologists on May 21st. Dixon's coat is of the finest material, and his teeth were well kept, except for the one cavity he had filled with a piece of gold. Even how he died fits the image as he was found slumped forward at his battle sta-

tion, beneath the conning tower, at the very front of the sub.

Dixon's identification means the last nine of the 23 Confederates who died in three Charleston, S.C. sinkings of the submarine can be eventually united and buried together at Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston.

Archaeologists have found a jacket, plus an arm, spinal column, skull and ribs that they said were Dixon's. When combined, the evidence points to a tall man. Dixon was

(Continued on page 4)



CONFEDERATE PROFILE

GEORGE DIXON



Dixon's Life Saved By Fiancée's Gift

George E. Dixon was from Kentucky and quickly answered the call of the Confederacy for volunteers. He became a member of the 21st Alabama. One-time company commander John Cothran described him, "Dixon was very handsome, fair, nearly six feet tall and of most attractive presence. I never knew a better man; and there never was a braver man in any service of any army."

Dixon was promoted to lieutenant and saw action at The Battle of Pittsburgh Landing (Shiloh) in April of 1862. There fate perhaps saved Dixon's life. Queenie Bennett, Dixon's fiancée, from Mobile, Alabama, gave Dixon an 1860-dated \$20 gold piece. During the fighting at Pittsburgh Landing, a Union bullet penetrated his trouser pocket and struck the coin. The impact left the gold piece shaped like a bell, with the bullet embedded in it. Had it not been for the coin, Dixon would probably have died on the battlefield. He would carry that coin the rest of his life, and would be seen from time-to-time fingering the "good luck" piece and apparently remembering his love back in Alabama.

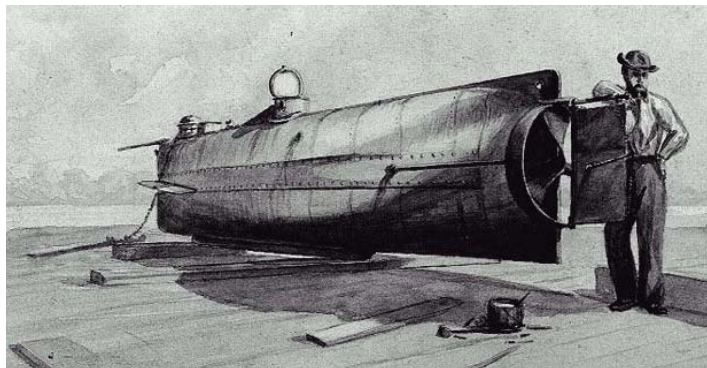
The impact of the bullet left Dixon with a limp and time needed to recover. An engineer by trade, Dixon worked through his convalescence in a Mobile, Alabama machine shop, Park & Lyons.



Photo of man thought to be George Dixon

After being successfully tested in the waters around Mobile, in August of 1863, the 40-foot *H.L. Hunley* was loaded on to two flat rail cars and transported to Charleston, S.C. There Dixon and his colleagues hoped to aid the Confederate effort by trying to end the choking Federal blockade of one of the largest ports in the South, however Dixon and his men did not make the trip.

General P.G.T. Beauregard commanded the Charleston defenses. Desperate to break the Union blockade of Charleston, Beauregard requisitioned the *H.L. Hunley* into the service of the Confederate Navy. Beauregard selected nine navy sailors from the Confederate ironclad, and assigned them to man the C.S.S. *Hunley*. Unfortunately on August 29, 1863, in a trial run the C.S.S. *Hunley* sank in about 42 feet of water, killing five of the crew.



Sketch of the C.S.S. Hunley by R G Skerrett.

There, Dixon met Horace Lawson Hunley and James McClintock, two New Orleans men who had grandiose plans to build a very unique naval vessel. Dixon helped them build and pilot two submarines, the latter one christened, *H.L. Hunley*.

Using civilian divers, the C.S.S. *Hunley* was raised, along with the bodies of the crewmen about ten days later. Dixon and his colleagues, who were experienced in operating the *Hunley*, were ordered to leave Mobile and come to Charleston. Dixon arrived

(Continued on page 3)

*Confederate Profile**(Continued from page 2)*

in Charleston in October of 1863.

Dixon and the other crew members wasted little time. The C.S.S. *Hunley* had been cleaned and repaired and Dixon and his men were back in the water with the sub. But, again tragedy struck. On the rainy morning of October 15, 1863, in one of a series of practice runs, the C.S.S. *Hunley* again had problems. In a mystery unsolved yet today, Dixon was not with the crew. One official report only described him as being "out of town." With Dixon not there the sub's namesake and chief financial backer, Horace Hunley took command. The sub sank and all aboard perished.

The same salvage team was called into action and the C.S.S. *Hunley* was found in 56 feet of water with the prow of the sub buried in the sand at a 35-degree angle. It looked as if the sub had dived straight to the bottom.

As the salvage crew again raised the sub, Dixon was sent back to Mobile, his assignment, raise another crew from the men that had originally built and tested the *Hunley*. Three men accepted the call and along with Dixon journeyed back to Charleston.

Dixon and others help convince Beauregard that the C.S.S. *Hunley* was worthy of another try. Five additional men joined Dixon and the three from Mobile as the crew of the sub.

On the evening of February 17, 1864 Dixon and

his men were ready for their first attack run. The target was the 1,240 ton, 207 foot U.S.S. *Housatonic* patrolling in the outside of the harbor. The sub was equipped with a torpedo, which was attached to an iron pipe. The plan was for the C.S.S.



Sketch of how the C.S.S. *Hunley* operated by its nine man crew

Hunley to ram the Union ship with the torpedo and then withdraw before the torpedo exploded.

By about 8:45 PM Dixon had maneuvered the sub to within several hundred yards of the U.S.S. *Housatonic*, spotters on board saw what they first describes as a porpoise rising out of the water to blow. Sailors on the U.S.S. *Housatonic* opened small arms fire on the C.S.S. *Hunley*, with the sound of bullets ricocheting off the sub's iron hull.

The sub struck the Union ship at an estimated speed of about six knots, and buried its deadly torpedo deep into the U.S.S. *Housatonic's* wooden hull. Slowly the sub backed out with a long lanyard attached to the triggering mechanism of the torpedo slowly unwinding as it backed away from the U.S.S. *Housatonic*.

With the C.S.S. *Hunley* only about 50 or 60 feet away, the 90 pounds of gunpowder in the torpedo exploded on the U.S.S. *Housatonic*. The damage on the Union ship was extensive, as sea water poured into the gapping hole left by the explosion. The Federal warship rolled violently to port and began

to sink. As the U.S.S. *Housatonic* was sinking to the bottom, the C.S.S. *Hunley* slipped away. It journeyed at least far enough for Dixon to signal the shore with a calcium light. What happened after that is not known, but the C.S.S. *Hunley* never re-

turned home.

Numerous efforts were made to find the C.S.S. *Hunley*, but none were successful until underwater

(Continued on page 4)

Camp Schedule

July 2001

July 14th: Camp Dinner Meeting, Inn at Scott & White, Temple, TX, 7:00 PM. Speaker: Jerry Nelson, Topic: "Confederate Soldier's Duty"

August 2001

August 14th: Camp Meeting, King's Daughters Hospital, Temple, TX 7:00 PM. Speaker: Larry Converse, Topic: "Port Hudson."

August 1st-4th: SCV International Convention, Hilton Hotel, Lafayette, La.

September 2001

September 11th: Camp Meeting, King's Daughters Hospital, Temple, TX 7:00 PM. Speaker: TBA

Dinner Meeting:

July 14th

Inn @ S&W

Speaker:

Jerry Nelson

"Confederate
Soldier's Duty"

Confederate Profile

(Continued from page 3)

explorer and best selling author, Clive Cussler, sponsored a team that found the sub, virtually intact, on May 3, 1995. It took a number of years for plans to be made to raise the vessel, which was filled with silt, from its resting place, approximately 30 feet down. On August 8, 2000 the vessel was brought to the sur-



Lt. Dixon's \$20 gold piece found on the C.S.S. Hunley

face, 136 years later.

In May of 2001, the remains of Dixon were found inside the sub. Dixon was found at his duty station in a sitting position, at the helm of the steering mechanism. The lamp that Dixon had used to signal the Confederate forces on shore that they were returning from their successful attack was found near his body.

The week after his body was found the \$20 gold coin from Queenie Bennett was also found.

The coin was bent from the bullet, and had been inscribed,

"Shiloh

April 6, 1862

My life Preserver, G.E.D."

Plans are to bury Dixon and the eight other C.S.S. *Hunley* members with Confederate Military Honors in Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston.

Commander Found

(Continued from page 1)

reportedly about 6 feet. His teeth are in good condition, unlike other crewmen who showed rotted teeth from decay and tobacco use. His skull does not appear damaged, according to archaeologists, which could put to rest theories that Dixon was wounded by small arms fire during the attack.

Historians suspect that Dixon worked the C.S.S. *Hunley's* dive planes and steering mechanism, but not the forward ballast pump. That duty apparently was reserved for the No. 2 man, who sat behind Dixon and also worked the airflow bellows. Also discovered was a lamp that Dixon presumably used to signal the

Confederates on shore after the attack.

One of the most popular finds was a \$20 gold coin, dated 1860, a gift from his sweetheart, Queenie Bennett of Mobile, Ala. When Dixon first joined the Confederate Army he served in the 21st Alabama, and he saw action at the Battle of Shiloh in April of 1862. His life was spared when a Union bullet hit the gold coin in his pocket, preventing serious injury. Dixon was one of the first Confederate soldiers shot in the battle, hit by a Yankee musket shot. But the bullet hit the gold coin in his pocket, wrapping it into the shape of a bell. The coin from Bennett saved Dixon's leg, if not his life.

Dixon's good luck charm was discovered late at night, on May 23, 2001, by archaeologists excavating the Confederate submarine. The gold coin, which is definitely bent, was engraved by Dixon "Shiloh, April 6, 1862, My life Preserver, G.E.D.." The coin was found where Dixon's left pants pocket would have been. Archaeologists described the coin as being nearly as shiny as the day it was minted.

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**Next Meeting:
July 14th
Inn @ S&W
7:00 PM**