

Gravely Award Given



James Alberston (left) and Dr. Brenda Mayo, Principal, Clover Hill High School, with Gravely Award.

James Alberston of Clover Hill High School in Midlothian, Virginia, is the first recipient of the Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., Award for excellence in teaching Civil War history.

The award was created to honor the Tredegar Foundation's first chairman, who is also the first African American admiral in U.S. history. The prize is an acrylic award bearing Admiral Gravely's image and a check for \$2,000. Mr. Alberston was selected for his demonstrated ability and success in teaching multiple perspectives on the war in a manner that promotes a sense of shared national heritage. Virginia Secretary of Education Belle S. Wheelan, an ex-officio director of the Foundation, and Foundation President Alex Wise presented the award at a ceremony at the school on May 3. □

In Memoriam Robert M. Freeman

On May 26 the Foundation lost one of its best friends and leaders, Robert M. Freeman. As a member of the Foundation's board of directors, he shouldered increasing responsibility for guiding us through the challenges of developing a project that is factually sound, compelling, and valuable to the community. As a former chairman of Richmond Renaissance, he saw the Tredegar National Civil War Center as another manifestation of his deep commitment to making Richmond a better place through cooperation between the



The late Robert M. Freeman in action at a congressional reception for the Tredegar Foundation, April 21, 2004.

paces on downtown economic development. He understood that while the Center is a historical project, it will have profound contemporary significance if it can provide a basis for civil discussion of what is after all a shared national heritage. All of us at the Tredegar Foundation offer our sincere condolences to his family. □

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President's Letter

H. Alexander Wise, Jr.

We are now settled in our office at Tredegar and are continually amazed by the beauty and history of the site. Spring and summer brought schoolchildren and day campers from around the commonwealth and other states to explore the site and take part in the Richmond Civil War Visitor Center's outstanding educational programs. The presence of these eager young people underscores the importance of creating a broad interpretation of the great event that formed the nation we know today and redefined the freedoms and values Americans cherish.

In the last year our planning team with the help of many experts and friends has brought the planning for the new exhibition facility almost to completion. While the public can't see physical progress yet, much is going on behind the scenes. It is rewarding to see the forward movement of the plans each and every day as I am privileged to do. And it won't be long before you can see physical progress.

Our exhibition will be highly educational and engaging, but our commitment to education won't end there. The Foundation is developing programs that will take the Tredegar approach beyond our walls to Richmond and the nation. We are working with the University of Virginia's Center for Digital History to design a Web-based program that reaches classrooms across the country.

We will also continue delivering solid historical information to our adult constituents and facilitating civil discussion about a topic that too often has created division. We hope you'll sign up for our fall offerings. On Wednesday evenings, October 6 to November 10, Emory Thomas, one of America's eminent Civil War historians, will teach a course entitled *Richmond at War: Shades of Gray, Black, and Blue, 1861-1865*. He and guest lecturers will provide a comprehensive look at the experience of

Richmonders at ground zero of America's greatest conflict.

On October 21 the public will be able to discuss *Why They Fought* with three distinguished historians: Bill Cooper of Louisiana State University, Roger Davidson of Coppin State College, and Joe Glatthaar of the University of Houston. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore the central question of what motivated Union, Confederate, and African American participants to act as they did in the war.

Our approach of braiding Confederate, Union, and African American stories into an American story is seen by many inside and outside Richmond as a refreshing departure for the country. As columnist DeWayne Wickham wrote in *USA Today*, "The museum doesn't intend to tell three different histories. Rather, it will try to show the interplay of the three groups most affected by the national fratricide and the ripple effects the actions of each had on the others.... That won't be easy, but think of the good that can come of this."

Good is already coming from an approach that acknowledges everyone's contributions to the formation of modern America. One good thing is that Tredegar has been selected as the site of the April 2005 Lincoln Prize Award Ceremony and Dinner. The coveted Lincoln Prize is given for the leading Civil War book of the year. It has never before been awarded in the South. The University of Virginia will join us in the Gun Foundry as the local cosponsor of next year's ceremony, which attracts a prestigious national audience and is typically covered by C-Span.

Tredegar is a place, but it is also an approach—a new and needed approach that is proving itself every day. It is the approach of the future. We thank you for your support as we work to make that approach accessible and meaningful to all Americans. □

Slavery and Secession



*William J. Cooper, Jr.,
Boyd Professor of
History at Louisiana
State University,
Trustee of the Museum
of the Confederacy,
and author of Jefferson
Davis, American.*

The Tredegar Center's Summer 2003 Newsletter contained an excellent Historian's Corner piece by my colleague Dr. James O. Horton of The George Washington University. Jim addressed an important issue confronting the Center: the role of slavery in bringing on the Civil War.

Without question, slavery generated the primary conflict between North and South. But the antebellum clash over slavery was fought out in political and constitutional arguments about the power of the national government versus the states. Thus, in a basic way the debate over state rights was not a separate debate; it and the debate over slavery merged.

Today we hear echoes of the debate about the proper balance between the national government and the states, but everyone accepts that slavery was wrong. It is hard for us to conceive of how nineteenth-century white Southerners could have defended slavery as a legitimate institution in a country dedicated to freedom. Helping us to understand this seeming contradiction poses another challenge for the Center. The Center needs to meet this challenge, not to justify Southern views, but to understand why the war occurred.

In the nineteenth century virtually all white Americans—North and South—viewed African Americans as inherently inferior to Europeans and white Americans. They believed in a racial hierarchy, and although whites and blacks did relate to each other as people, the law in the slave states defined black slaves as mere chattel, i.e., movable property. That picture of black Africans became fixed in America late in the 1600s. By the 1700s, slavery existed in

both South and North. By the 1800s, the Northern states had abolished slavery, but the racial attitudes that went with it were settled and nearly universal throughout the country. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Northerners, including Abraham Lincoln, believed that the Constitution protected slavery in the states where it existed.

In the years leading up to 1860, most white Southerners accepted slavery as an ancient American institution safeguarded by the Constitution, which included an enforcement provision guaranteeing their right to recover fugitive slaves from free states. The Republican Party rose in the North in those same years by focusing on the exclusion of slavery from the western territories. The party tapped into the prejudices of those who wanted to keep the territories a white man's preserve for economic and social reasons, as well as the fervor of the minority opposed to slavery on moral grounds. With the nation fast expanding westward, Republicans of both stripes saw the confinement of slavery to the South as a way of ending the South's traditional dominance of national institutions. The speeches and editorials of the 1850s harped on the issue of slavery in the territories, feeding the sense that two visions for the country were in a struggle for survival. While the conflict between North and South had economic, moral, and cultural dimensions, many Northerners and Southerners recognized it as essentially a political power struggle.

What caused secession? At root, Southerners who argued for leaving the Union believed that the Republicans had backed out of the Constitutional agreement to protect slavery. They saw no conflict between white liberty and black slavery, for they did not believe whites and blacks were created equal, and they did believe that the Constitution guaranteed them the right to slavery without outside interference, and with the support of the central government. They viewed the election of Abraham Lincoln as a sign that the national government would move to

harm the institution that was so integral to the economic and social life of the South. The Deep South, South Carolina westward to Texas, where slavery permeated the society, led the crusade for secession.

Not all white Southerners agreed. Before Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, only seven of the fifteen slave states seceded from the Union to form the Confederacy. In the other eight, the secessionists were thwarted. One of the states that declined to secede before Fort Sumter was Virginia, which had more slaves than any other state.

The whole dynamic changed after Confederates fired on Sumter and Lincoln called for volunteers to put down the "rebellion" and restore the Confederate states to what he later called "their proper relationship to the Union." Southerners now feared "invasion." While Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas would not leave the Union solely to defend slavery, they felt solidarity with their brethren to the South and wanted no part of a war against them. As a result, those four states left the Union and joined the Confederacy. It became a fight on the one side to preserve the Union and on the other to defend home and the right of self-government. In both North and South, the issue of slavery receded into the background until the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Why did Confederates fight? It is so easy for us today to oversimplify and slide over complexities, to glorify or demonize the people we study instead of looking at them as human beings. While the Confederacy came into existence to defend slavery, Confederates actually fought for many reasons. Psychologically speaking, to defend their homeland was the most important. Making the distinction between the political origins of the Confederacy and the fundamental motivation of its people helps us understand how many modern-day Southerners can honor their Confederate ancestors while regretting that slavery and notions of white supremacy ever blighted the South. □

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Emory Thomas to Teach Course

The Tredegar Center is delighted to announce that Dr. Emory M. Thomas, Professor of History Emeritus, University of Georgia, and one of our project historians, will team with guest lecturers to present a six-session course providing diverse perspectives on Richmond during the Civil War. Each session will be held on a Wednesday evening, 7–9 p.m., from October 6 through November 10, at the Tredegar Office Building, 490 Tredegar Street. Because of space, the class size is limited and the \$100 tuition must be paid in advance. Please mail a check to Tredegar National Civil War Center Foundation, 490 Tredegar Street, Richmond, VA 23219 to reserve your place.



In addition to his distinguished teaching career at Georgia, Professor Thomas has held a Senior Fulbright Lectureship at the University of Genoa, the Douglas Southall Freeman Chair at the University of Richmond, and the Mark W. Clark Distinguished Visiting Professorship of History at The Citadel. His critically acclaimed books include *Robert E. Lee: An Album* (2000), *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (1995), *Travels to Hallowed Ground: A Historian's Journey to the American Civil War* (1987), *Bold Dragoon: The Life of J. E. B. Stuart* (1986), *The Confederate Nation, 1861–1865* (1979), and *The Confederate State of Richmond* (1971). □

New Members Join Foundation Board

The Foundation Board recently elected four new members. On February 20, David C. Johnson, Jr., of New York City, co-owner of Preservation Group, an investment and asset management firm, joined the board. Mr. Johnson earned his B.S. degree at the University of North Carolina and his M.B.A. from the Darden School at the University of Virginia. James L. Sanderlin, of Richmond, also was elected then. Formerly of McGuireWoods, he is now Senior Vice President-Law for Dominion. He holds an undergraduate degree from Randolph-Macon College and a J.D. degree from the University of Virginia. On June 25, the board elected Joe N. Ballard (Lt. Gen., U.S. Army, Retd.), of Washington, D.C., who is President and CEO

of The Ravens Group LLC, a marketing, business development, and consulting firm. He was formerly Chief of Engineers and Commander, Army Corps of Engineers. John M. McCardell, former President, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, also joined the board. He earned degrees at Washington and Lee University and Johns Hopkins University, as well as a Ph.D. at Harvard University. Also at the June meeting, the Board elected J. Alfred Broaddus, Jr., of Richmond, vice chairman. Mr. Broaddus recently retired after 11 years as President, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. He holds a degree from Washington and Lee University and a Ph.D. from Indiana University. □

Jepson School Program Well Attended

On February 19, 2004, an audience of 325 packed the lecture hall at the University of Richmond's Jepson Alumni Center for the Foundation program *Lincoln, Douglass, and Davis: Three Studies of Leadership in a Time of National Crisis*. The Jepson School of Leadership Studies and Leadership Metro Richmond cosponsored the event, which was included in the Jepson School's 2004 lecture series, "Leadership and Crisis." In organizing the program, the Foundation brought together noted historians to speak on the three leaders' records, particularly with respect to the pivotal issue of slavery. Dr. Michael F. Holt of the University of Virginia discussed Abraham Lincoln, Dr. David W. Blight of Yale University spoke about Frederick Douglass, and Dr. William J. Cooper, Jr., of Louisiana State University discussed Jefferson Davis. Audience members, who had mingled with the historians at a reception before the program, had an opportunity to engage them in conversation at its end. □

Design Progress Report



During the past spring and summer, the Tredegar Foundation board, aided by its staff and consultants, continued to distill and refine options for realizing the vision for the Tredegar National Civil War Center. Major considerations in the planning were how to bring the exhibition on line soon, with the greatest possible impact and with financial sustainability. These imperatives dovetailed with the board's desire to optimize the use of Tredegar's existing historic buildings.

On August 26 the board unanimously decided to launch the Center's first phase, its main exhibition, in the vintage-1861 Gun Foundry. This is a wonderful development. The Gun Foundry is a spectacular historic building, and by adding a mezzanine we can include a 10,000-square-foot exhibit that delivers a quality experience to the visiting public, students, and the community.

With input from historians, educators, the board, the Community Advisory Board, and others, the Foundation's design team has continued to hone and distill the exhibition plan. Of course, the Gun Foundry itself is a unique Civil War artifact, and our design concept calls for keeping much of the building open to enable visitors to appreciate its volume and its historic qualities. This will add much to the aesthetics of the experience and to the "sizzle" of the exhibition.

Our presentation will place the causes, course, and legacies of the war in the context of American history. Visitors will be able to see how Union, Confederate, and African American participants had different motivations, experiences and memories of the war. Some fought for preservation of the Union, others for independence from it, and others for freedom within it. Our exhibit will show that modern America grew from the interaction among the three stories. Unless we understand all three perspectives, we cannot really understand how the conflict transformed America.

The exhibition will be part of a modern learning center, with media programs, interactive components, and an open visitor flow. It will contain three mini-theaters as well as a diverse mixture of artifacts, graphics, touch screens, and places where visitors can interact with the subject matter and leave their personal comments. The exhibition team is now fleshing out the details, negotiating for artifact loans, and developing media programs for what promises to be an innovative and exciting presentation that helps Americans look on a familiar subject in a fresh way. □

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Mark Your Calendar

October 6–November 10 (Wednesdays), 7–9 p.m., Tredegar Office Building, 490 Tredegar Street: Tredegar Center presents Dr. Emory M. Thomas, Professor of History Emeritus, University of Georgia. Dr. Thomas and guest lecturers will present a six-session course on Richmond during the Civil War, with a Saturday field trip. Limited seating is available. Tuition of \$100 per person must be paid in advance. Mail check to Tredegar National Civil War Center Foundation, 490 Tredegar Street, Richmond, VA 23219 to reserve your place.

October 21, 7:30–9 p.m., Tredegar Gun Foundry, 500 Tredegar Street: Tredegar Center presents *Why They Fought*, a history forum featuring Dr. Roger A. Davidson, Jr., Lecturer, Coppin State University, Dr. William J. Cooper, Jr., Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University, and Dr. Joseph T. Glatthaar, Professor of History, University of Houston. The program will be open to the public and the audience will take part in the discussion. Learn what was in the hearts and minds of Confederate, Unionist, and African American participants in the war. Admission is free, but reservations are required due to limited seating. Please call (804) 788-6483 no later than Friday, October 15. □