

## **BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

**MEETING – February 5, 2019**

**“WHO ARE YOU....REALLY”**

**SPEAKER – Lori Sanderlin**

Lori Sanderlin fell upon the name H.S. Leiby in the recently digitized archival records (1831-1973) of Sailor's Snug Harbor in New York and she wondered: Could this be the same Captain Henry Sterling Leiby who had led the U.S. Navy by the nose as a Confederate privateer and blockade runner? Leiby's Confederate exploits crowded of captured Union shipping, his successful sailings in the lucrative blockade runner trade. In 1864 he evaded capture in Charleston by sailing so close to Union monitors that their fire passed harmlessly. With the end of the war, less notoriety followed him. Sanderlin, nonetheless, found the trail led to Snug Harbor.

Unlike Confederates unable to reconcile with surrender, Captain Leiby swore allegiance to the Union. He resumed trading between South Carolina and New York, able to support his wife and children. Not given to quiet living *before* peace, newspaper articles regarding Leiby showed suits against shipowners shorting his pay, as well as legal claims disagreeing with the South Carolina government over his pilotage fees. Then came a killing of a Mr. Bulow, shot in a public house over a dalliance Bulow kept with a mysterious woman. A quieter New York residence awaited Captain Leiby.

Snug Harbor, a haven intended for “aged decrepit and worn out seaman,” sat on Long Island, far from Leiby's South Carolina home. His application for Snug Harbor showed he had “impaired eyesight,” and that his last residence was in Charleston. He further claimed that in the 1860s he was at sea for “foreign” service” (a dandy euphemism for blockade running), followed in the 1870s by “coasting Charleston to NY.” After more than fourteen years a merchantman, he was now a “widower.”

In spite of a colorful lifetime, Leiby's Snug Harbor records show no censure for carousing or drunkenness. His time passed without public comment until his passing on May 30, 1898. His brother, Dr. Robert Leiby, received the death telegraph. However, Snug Harbor was directed to send all the personal items on the original ten-year-old inmate's property list to Susan Ann Witter, the widow (a miraculous recovery with her brush with death as she had been listed as deceased

at his intake), and then to send the body to her at St. James Island, SC, where today his grave can be found beside his children.

Ms. Sanderlin concluded, “You may be able to outrun the South Atlantic blockade squadron, and you may be able to wrangle your way out of a murder case, but no matter where you go you will not be able to get away from a wife that means business.”

By Jim Medeiros