Battery Hooper and the Confederate Invasion of 1862: Jim Ramage remarks, August 20, 2005

Thank you. Mayor Gene Weaver, City Council Members, President Jim Votruba and Rachel, City Administrator Larry Klein, Museum Board President Jeannine Kreinbrink, board members, and friends,

About six months ago, my daughter Andrea asked for a copy of my one-page resume that I send to Civil War Round Tables and others who invite me to speak. I sensed that I was not to ask why she wanted it, and so I did not ask. I came to assume that she must want it for my obituary.

I looked in the mirror, and that confirmed it.

A few months later, Larry Klein called and said he wanted to meet with me in my office. He didn't say what it was about, and I didn't ask, assuming that we must have a major problem with our Battery Hooper grant project.

He came and sat down, and said, "Mayor Gene Weaver and the City Council want to name the museum in your honor." I was overwhelmed.

First I told Ann, and then we told Andrea and her husband Steven and daughter Rachel. Andrea smiled, and said: "Dad, we already knew that months ago, that's why I asked for your resume."

My friend and faculty colleague Bonnie May suggested the idea to our Chair Jeff Williams and he contacted Andrea.

Thank you for coming today.

One hundred and forty three years ago this hill was occupied by Union soldiers prepared to give their lives in the greatest crisis of homeland security in the history of Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati.

People have asked, was there really a threat? They asked the same question then, and the *Cincinnati Commercial* replied: "Yes, remember that your firesides, your wives, and little ones, your honor are in danger."

The Confederate Army had invaded Kentucky and totally defeated the Union army defending the state. There was no significant force to prevent the Confederate army coming up today's Dixie Highway and capturing Covington, Newport, and Cincinnati.

Rumor held that Kentucky's Unionism had been a sham; that Kentuckians were rising en masse to join the invaders, and an army of 100,000 would soon be looting Covington.

Fear and panic prevailed.

Ann and I were on vacation in St. Petersburg, Russia last month when the four terrorists bombed the London Underground, killing themselves and

fifty-two others. Our guide, Karl De Bruin, from the Netherlands, broke the news to our tour group, and said:

"Thank you for having the courage to travel. The terrorists are attempting to create fear and cause you to be afraid to leave home. By being here in Russia today, you are defying the terrorists."

When the Civil War began, there was considerable uncertainty about whether Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati would support the Union. This area had strong family and commercial ties with the South, and while Union sentiment predominated, pro-Southern feeling was strong.

Ulysses S. Grant warned his father and mother that they should move from Covington back into Ohio where they would be safe.

The *Cincinnati Enquirer* was pro-southern, and its editorials declared that the Union army would never conquer the south; that men were dying needlessly, and the only answer was to remove the troops from the South and allow slave owners to keep their slaves.

Several of Confederate General John Hunt Morgan's raiders were from Northern Kentucky, and in Pendleton County in the 1950s, the Morgan High School basketball team played as "The Morgan Raiders."

In the crisis, Union General Lew Wallace was assigned to command the defense of the area, and he told his staff: "Cincinnati has two hundred thousand inhabitants, and they ought to be able to defend themselves."

He declared martial law in Newport, Covington, and Cincinnati, ordered every business house closed, and under the watchword, "Citizens for Labor, Soldiers for battle," required every adult male to fight or work. "Those who say fight we will organize into companies and regiments; to the others we will give spades and picks and set them to digging on the hills in front of Covington and Newport. Think of the earth ten thousand men can move in one day! Then, if the Confederates give us a week, we can get half of Indiana and half of Ohio behind the breastworks."

Those who refused to fight or work; he arrested and placed in jail.

"To Arms! To Arms!" exclaimed the *Cincinnati Gazette*. "The time for playing war has passed. Let us prepare to resist an army of 100,000 men bent on our destruction."

The eight-mile defensive line had been surveyed at the beginning of the war and Fort Mitchel was partly constructed and Battery Hooper and six other batteries. A great deal of work was required.

Cincinnati had 3,731 free African Americans in 1860, and they assumed the order included them. But the order was to enroll at your voting place, they could not vote. When they asked the police how they could volunteer, the police told them they were not included. But a short while

later the police began arresting every African American adult male. Their homes were searched and they were seized at work in hotels and barbershops and on the levee. Without an opportunity to grab a hat or say goodbye, they were herded to a mule pen on Plum Street and brought over the river to work.

General Wallace heard of this treatment and appointed Judge William Dickson to organize the men into the "Black Brigade." Dickson said, "Since the services of our black men are required, let them be treated like men and not as if they were being . . . driven from the city."

Dickson took them back home and dismissed them for the night. The next morning they voluntarily enrolled as employees of the army.

This was nearly three weeks before Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, but in presenting them their unit flag, Captain James Lupton said: "Men of the Black Brigade, rally around it! Assert your manhood, be loyal to duty, be obedient, hopeful, patient. Slavery will soon die . . . . there will then be . . . a land of the free--one country, one flag, one destiny."

The Black Brigade worked for three weeks for the same pay as white laborers, and this was one of the first organized uses of African Americans for military purposes in the war.

Under Wallace's leadership, the sense of panic and fear disappeared and the community united in one of those super-human responses that characterize Americans in crisis.

Men drilled and dug rifle pits and cut the trees for a field of fire, in a 2,000-yard swath, for eight miles, from Ludlow to Fort Thomas.

Grocers donated canned peaches, fresh fruit, and other items.

Women cooked meals, and the streetcar company gave free passage to boys and girls delivering food baskets.

Men had fresh baked bread, meat, potatoes, and coffee. "Boys," said one of the Squirrel Hunters, "This is better than we have been used to at home."

Wallace said in the beginning that he would be ready in one week, and he was. He had finished the fortifications and had 72,000 men in the works.

On the eighth day, when no enemy appeared, the newspapers accused him of creating a "Big Scare," of crying wolf!

Then at daylight on September 10, the ninth day, he looked out over the Fort Mitchell parapet and saw on the horizon to the South, 8,000 Confederate veterans. He was ecstatic: no commander in the Civil War was more thrilled to see the enemy advancing on his position.

The Confederate division, under General Henry Heth, studied the defenses that day and the next. Pickets shot at each other and four Union men were killed and three wounded. Two Confederate soldiers were wounded and sixteen captured.

On the night of the second day, Heth withdrew without attacking.

At dawn on the morning of September 12, after two days of tension, on the hills of northern Kentucky, word passed by camp grapevine that the Rebels were gone.

Then one of those unique events occurred that makes the Civil War more dramatic in reality than fiction. It was something that the men who experienced it said they would never forget.

A man in the trenches began singing "John Brown's Body;" others joined him, and it spread from regiment to regiment, hearts united in victory, voices reverberating along the hills and through the valleys to our right and left: "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on."

The community united in 1862, and in our time, the community rallied to save Battery Hooper.

It's a model of University-Community Relations and a model of historic preservation.

NKU was special to Fern and Sheldon Storer, and we thank Fern for bequeathing this beautiful 17 acres to the NKU Foundation.

When word came of Fern's donation, my friend Tom Fugate of the state historic preservation office invited me to a meeting on July 11, 2002--three years ago-- in the Fort Wright City Building. Larry Klein, Jeannine Kreinbrink, and Kathy Romero were present, and we formed a steering committee to save the battery.

We asked the Foundation to sell the site to the City of Fort Wright for a park, with the understanding that the battery would be excavated and preserved. Thank you President Jim Votruba, Foundation President Mike Baker, and Mayor Gene Weaver and City Council.

Thank you, President Votruba, for the vision of partnership between the University and the Community.

Mayor Weaver, I think it's wonderful that the Fort Wright vision statement says: "Fort Wright is a community that recognizes its history and tradition and works to cultivate and promote it regionally."

On campus we applied for and won a Scripps Howard University-Community Partnership grant. The partnership was between NKU and Fort Wright, and included Behringer-Crawford Museum, and Jeannine Kreinbrink as Archaeology Project Manager.

The community rallied in support.

Jeannine invited NKU students and public volunteers to our archaeological excavations and last September over 140 citizens, ages ten and up, participated in two hour shifts.

Kathy Romero researched William Hooper, the Cincinnati banker who gave money for the defensive effort and for whom the battery is named. As a close friend of the Storers, she worked with their family to create the museum exhibit that honors Fern and Sheldon in Fern's kitchen.

Bethany Sterling, Program Director at Behringer Crawford Museum, coordinated the visit of students to "Battery Hooper Day," and fifth graders from St. Agnes School and Fort Wright Elementary, and high school students from Bishop Brossert High School enjoyed the day.

Bob Clements of Edgewood joined us, generously offering to share his printing expertise and his great collection of Civil War art and artifacts and introducing us to his friends in re-enacting.

When Bob's father was eight years old, he was playing trucks and digging tunnels in his yard on DeCoursey Pike and found a Civil War sword. You can see it over the fireplace in the museum.

Lou Simon volunteered to build exhibit cases, but what luck when Dillard's rebuilt their store and Larry Klein asked them to donate their jewelry cases. Dillard's donated more cases than we can use.

Dr. Judy Voelker, NKU Archaeology professor, joined the committee and a group of talented students from her museum methods class created one of the exhibits.

Northern Kentucky Heritage magazine published the research paper on the battery written by my Undergraduate research assistant, Ken Crawford.

Alvin Bartlett, my student intern-curator, told his neighbor in Florence, Jon Domec, about our project, and Jon loaned the museum a real Civil War canteen. You don't get any closer to a Civil War soldier than his canteen. Drinking water was his number one constant priority.

This canteen belonged to Confederate Captain Charles McLellan. He was a brave young man--commended for "conspicuous and gallant conduct" at First Manassas by Stonewall Jackson. A Union sharpshooter killed him in 1864.

Floyd Hastings is Chair of Fort Wright Parks and Recreation and he and Eileen are leaders in Community of Faith Presbyterian Church. The church generously provides parking for the museum, and is a partner in our celebration today and tomorrow. Floyd has been interested in the Civil War for years and is researching one of his Civil War forebears.

Retired Air Force Major Dan Diorio from Erlanger joined us. He became interested in the Civil War when he saw the John Wayne film, *The Horse Soldiers*, and he has helped me with his valuable collection of Civil War books.

Thank you Cinergy Foundation for donating $3,000, National City Bank for donating $5,000, and Cincinnati Civil War Round Table for a donation of $1,000.

We are a new museum, but we have a story that might make Antique Road Show someday.

About ten years ago, Stace Keeney of Fort Wright, bought a box of books at a yard sale, and when he got it home, and went through them, he found the real Civil War diary of David Hopkins.

Stace read about the museum and loaned the diary to us, and its on display. When I first held it, I turned to September 1862, and to my surprise learned that Hopkins was here on the defenses during the crisis, as a soldier in the 79th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Beginning at 2:00 AM on September 10 and 11, Hopkins and his regiment were in battle line all day, expecting an attack. During those two days, David Hopkins was prepared to give his life for his country. Thank you, Stace.

Thank you Jeannine Kreinbrink for your enthusiasm, professionalism, and friendship and for serving as President of the new museum board. Thank you Larry Klein. You are the best administrator I have ever known, super efficient and sensitive to individual feelings and needs.

Thank you Public Works Director Tim Maloney and Nick Zumdick for your great work in restoring the house.

Thank you Ann, Andrea, Steven, and Rachel; Don and Beth Ramage, and Jordan.

I'm honored that my brother, Dr. Don Ramage and his wife Rosalyn are here from Nashville,

And from Paducah, my sister-in-law Martha Ramage and my cousin Leon Story.

Thank you Bonnie and Jim May, Jan Rachford, Lisa Davis-Roberts, Laurie DiPadova-Stocks, Joan Ferante, Miles Wilson, Jeff Williams, my faculty colleagues, Phil Schmidt, Gail Wells, Charlie Bowen, Bernie O'Brien, Jacob Clabes, Robert Reineke, Dean Russell, and Christopher Zerhusen.

Thank you volunteer museum board members and volunteer docents, city employees and volunteers, Phi Alpha Theta, Anthropology Student Association, Central Ohio Valley Archaeological Society, Sons of Union Veterans, Northern Kentucky Living History Association, Mid States Living

History Association, Ladies Living History Society of Greater Cincinnati, Camp Chase Fife and Drum Corps, Hills of Kentucky Dulcimer Group, and Roving Barbershop Quartet.

My former student Chris Burns is here. He is helping me research my book on U.S. Grant.

I am honored that two fellow Civil War authors are with us today: My friends Les Horwitz and Ron Wolford Blair.

And I'm honored that my mentor, Dr. Frank Steely, NKU's first president and his wife Martha are here, and my friend, former NKU President Leon Boothe.

In General Lew Wallace's victory proclamation, he said: "In coming time strangers, viewing the works on the hills of Newport and Covington, will ask, "Who built these entrenchments?"

You can answer: "We built them."

If they ask, "Who guarded them," you can reply, "We helped in thousands."

If they inquire the result, your answer will be, "The enemy came and looked at them, and stole away in the night."

The members of the Black Brigade gave Colonel Dickson the highest honor the men of a unit could give their commander--they presented him a ceremonial sword.

He responded by commending them for willingly and cheerfully building miles of military roads, clearing hundreds of acres of forest, and building powder magazines and fortifications.

I'll close with his statement that summarizes why we saved Battery Hooper and created the museum.

Dickson said: "The hills across yonder river will be a perpetual monument of your labors."