



## Episode 2, 2006: Confederate Eyeglass, Terre Haute, Indiana

Wes Cowan: Our next story takes a unique look at the secret history of southern sympathizers in the North during the Civil War. February 1862 the Confederate South has seized the upper hand in the War Between the States. In the North, opposition to President Lincoln grows as fears spread his armies will be defeated. Secret societies form in the Union states bordering the South, united in opposition to both Lincoln and the war. Those southern sympathizers operating north of the Mason Dixon line are surprisingly powerful and dangerous. More than 140 years later, a Terre Haute, Indiana, couple owns a mysterious artifact which they believe may shed light on this little-known chapter of the Civil War.

Larry Liggit: We think that it probably was an item that someone with southern inclinations or southern tendencies would wear. We had this wonderful story about where this piece came from and who owned it, and we've always been very curious about is the story true?

Wes: I'm Wes Cowan. I've come to Indiana to meet with Larry and Cindy Liggit to find about more about their family heirloom. The civil war and American photography are my specialties. So I'm intrigued to see what they have. Oh, okay. Little, tiny spyglass. This is called a stanhope. It's a little optical toy. Oh, my heavens! That's Jefferson Davis! I've never seen one with a picture of him inside. Right off the bat, I'm intrigued. As president of the confederacy, Jefferson Davis was a powerful symbol of southern secession. So, what do you know about it? Cindy explains that the stanhope was once owned by Mary and Henry Wagstaff, who lived in Lafayette, Indiana, during the Civil War. Sadly, no photograph of Henry survives. But Cindy believes the stanhope identifies the Wagstaffs as secret supporters of the confederacy. If he wore this, he would let others know that he was a southern sympathizer. It's certainly an interesting item for someone in a northern state to have owned. So...what do you want me to find out?

Cindy Liggit: Is it truly an item that southern sympathizers would wear to identify each other?

Wes: We know it belonged to this guy Wagstaff, and I've got some interesting question to answer for you guys, and I'm ready to get started.

Larry: Hope you can help us out.

Wes: I've auctioned thousands of items related to the Civil War. But I've never seen a Jefferson Davis stanhope. I've also never heard of stanhopes being used as a covert way to communicate, like a secret handshake. But what's interesting about this is the picture inside. It contains probably the most famous portrait of Jefferson Davis that was ever taken. It was taken in 1861 by Matthew Brady, probably in his Washington studio. So the image is certainly from the right time period, right at the start of the Civil War, but is it the kind of thing that someone would wear on their clothes as a form of identification? Looking a little more closely, I'm not so sure. It's got this little brass suspension ring, and it probably was originally meant to be a watch fob, but you know what? There's no evidence of any wear whatsoever on the rings of the suspension pieces here. I doubt that this was ever worn at all. If I'm going to answer Cindy and Larry's question, I've got to find out more about the extent of opposition to Lincoln in Indiana. During the war, northerners who opposed the conflict were nicknamed "copperheads." they got their name, supposedly, from southern sympathizers who sent copperhead snakes to president Lincoln in an attempt to assassinate him. The press got a hold of this. There are even political cartoons that show copperhead snakes attacking Lady Liberty. By 1863, as opposition to Lincoln and the war grows in the North, the copperhead movement takes hold in Indiana, where many residents have southern ancestors. Indiana was a hotbed of southern sympathizers. The copperheads were everywhere here, and in order to show their support for the South, folks in Indiana wore little pins made out of butternuts, as butternuts were used in the South to dye the confederate uniform. But I found no information that stanhopes were used by copperheads during the war. I wonder if Henry and Mary Wagstaff were even southern sympathizers. You know, they were from Lafayette, Indiana. I wonder what the town was like during the Civil War. Mary? Yes! Wes Cowan. Mary Immel Immel. Mary Immel is a Lafayette historian. She relates an event that took place here during the war that may be a clue to solving our mystery. Her story begins in February 1862, following the Union victory at the battle of Fort Donaldson in Tennessee.

Mary Immel: thousands of confederate prisoners of war dispatched to Indiana, 800 to Lafayette. Many of these confederate prisoners died right here in Lafayette and are buried in the local cemetery.

Get more on History Detectives at: [www.pbs.org/historydetectives](http://www.pbs.org/historydetectives)



## Episode 2, 2006: Confederate Eyeglass, Terre Haute, Indiana

Wes: Mary explains how the captured Confederates' arrival in Lafayette almost 150 years ago inflamed an already divided town.

Mary: We know that there were a lot of divisions here within Lafayette of people who were on both sides of the issue.

Wes: She tells me she did some digging of her own and found a fascinating letter written by Mary Wagstaff, Henry's wife. And in the letter, she describes how her family took in this little confederate prisoner who was at death's doorstep, how she and members of her family nursed the boy around the clock until he seemed to be on the mend. The experience of nursing a sick 14-year-old soldier boy inspires Mary to write passionately of her family's support for the rebel cause.

Wes [reading]: "we are known in this community as loyal to the state and national government and friends to the prosecution of the war for a restoration of the union as it was."

Mary: one could interpret that phrase "restoration of the union as it was" as evidence of maybe some Wagstaff family -- or maybe Mary in particular -- southern sympathies. I would think that would be a reasonable assumption.

Wes: So the Liggits may be right. Mary and Henry Wagstaff probably were sympathetic to the southern cause. But was this stanhope really used to communicate with other copperheads?

I want to find out when this spyglass was made. I've asked my colleague Elyse Luray to help me out. She's off to the George Eastman house international museum of photography and film in Rochester, New York.

Mark Osterman: Hi Elyse.

Elyse: Wes sent the stanhope ahead to Mark Osterman, an historian here. Okay, tell me the history first of the stanhope in general. Mark explains how in 1859, a Frenchman, Rene Dagron, had invented a camera with multiple lenses that could take many tiny images simultaneously.

Mark: you end up with this, and this is an original Dagron sheet of uncut, positive images. The next step was to take a diamond and cut out all the good ones. Dagron then fixed the tiny images on top of a small magnifying lens known as a stanhope.

Elyse: Rene Dagron realizes that if he takes the old technology of the stanhope lens, he now has his own viewing unit.

Mark: These images from the book stanhopes, a closer view by Jean Scott illustrate how in showcasing everything from scantily clad women to famous vistas, the stanhopes were a modern marvel of the day.

Elyse: Mark also tells me that stanhopes have become a hot item among collectors, and replicas are sometimes sold to unsuspecting buyers. I want him to make sure ours is the real thing.

Mark: It's the stanhope in the base. And this -- we're going to use standard micrography to look at this. we're going to use transmitted light.

Elyse: Uh-huh.

Mark: And let me bring up the light. There we go. there is the actual image on the small piece of glass glued to the lens.

Elyse: It's tiny.

Mark: It's very, very tiny. All right, ready for this?

Elyse: Yep. Oh, that's wild.

Mark: Yeah, there you go.



## Episode 2, 2006: Confederate Eyeglass, Terre Haute, Indiana

Elyse: Very, very good.

Mark: What we're seeing is just -- just amazing. The resolution is -- is very good by any standards: the -- the depth of tone, the look of the hair.

Elyse: Mark tells me the clarity is a signature of authentic stanhopes.

Mark: You can't get this kind of resolution with modern films.

Elyse: And there's something else, the telltale evidence of a long-ago craftsman

Mark: The cut on the edge of the glass, all of this area here, this jagged edge -- looks like cliffs. This is where the original plate was cut with a diamond.

Elyse: That's incredible.

Mark: It's not cut by machine. It's cut by hand.

Elyse: Our stanhope is the real thing, but Mark doesn't think it dates from the Civil War. Stanhopes came from Europe, and in 1860, the South needed guns and supplies, not tiny photo viewers. It would have had to have been made in France and imported, and during the Civil War, the confederates were not worried about stanhopes. They were looking for munitions.

Mark: My sense is that it's probably from the 1880s.

Elyse [on phone]: Wes? Hi, it's Elyse.

Wes [on phone]: Hey, Elyse.

Elyse [on phone]: I have good news and bad news.

Wes: So Elyse confirms my suspicions that stanhopes didn't become popular in the U.S. until after the Civil War. But why would someone place Jeff Davis' image inside a stanhope in 1880, some 15 years after the war was over? I'm visiting the Atlanta history center, where Gordon Jones is the chief curator. He says that a Jeff Davis stanhope dating from the 1880s makes perfect sense. Well, 1880s was a time when Jefferson Davis was becoming, really, a very popular fellow in the south. Gordon tells me that immediately after the war, Jeff Davis was a reviled figure in the South, blamed by many for the confederacy's defeat.

Gordon Jones: Many confederate soldiers returned home resentful of the new social order imposed by reconstruction. The old way of life was gone forever. Freed slaves had been made citizens and won the right to vote. But beginning in the 1870s, as the south started to recover, so did Jeff Davis' reputation. He became a potent symbol for many whites that wanted to rewrite history and turn back the clock. What happens in the 1880s is a struggle to explain defeat. So you have various southern writers, activists, veterans' organizations, all of which are trying to explain why they lost. And the series of beliefs that they came up with to explain that is generally called today the lost cause.

Wes: Gordon tells me that many Confederate veterans were on the front lines of this lost cause movement.

Gordon: For decades, the United Confederate Veterans continued to meet. This rare footage is of a reunion in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1912. Vets' magazines advertised such gatherings. They also sold memorabilia and trinkets celebrating men such as Stonewall Jackson... and Jeff Davis. Here's one of my favorite items, Wes, right here. 15th annual reunion of the Georgia Division, United Confederate Veterans, Jeff Davis and Bobby Lee. The only one we're missing, of course, is Stonewall Jackson. We have one of those. It's a really beautiful ribbon right here with Stonewall Jackson's image.

Get more on History Detectives at: [www.pbs.org/historydetectives](http://www.pbs.org/historydetectives)



## Episode 2, 2006: Confederate Eyeglass, Terre Haute, Indiana

Wes: Oh, yeah, that's terrific. So Gordon's pretty certain our stanhope was once marketed to groups of southern veterans. So, they're advertising a charm here, which would certainly include the stanhope, right?

Gordon: Absolutely right.

Wes: One thing's still not clear to me. How would Henry and Mary Wagstaff in Lafayette, Indiana, have gotten a hold of this stanhope? Gordon says one of his genealogy researchers made a discovery about the Wagstaff family that he thinks will interest Cindy and Larry Liggit.

Wes: I tell the Liggits that Henry and Mary Wagstaff had probably been Confederate supporters during the war but that their stanhope dated from the 1880s. Then I explained how Gordon Jones in Atlanta had made a key discovery, which may account for how the Wagstaffs had gotten hold of the stanhope.

Gordon: This is the city directory of Atlanta, and this shows everyone who was living here.  
Who do you suppose we find but Henry C. Wagstaff, a stenographer at the Atlanta evening journal.

Wes: So this must be the grandson that -- of the Wagstaff in West Lafayette.

Gordon: Absolutely...

Wes: Gordon tells me that it's entirely possible that Henry and Mary's grandson had picked up the stanhope in Atlanta during a period when Jeff Davis was being lionized as never before.

Gordon: While he was living here, there were several confederate veteran reunions, plus in 1893 when Jefferson Davis' body was being moved to Richmond, it came through Atlanta,  
And that was a huge occasion. So it could have been almost any time during the period.

Wes: I tell Larry and Cindy they have a genuine piece of history on their hands. It gives a view, quite literally, of an important period after the war, when the way the conflict was remembered became more important than the facts of the war itself.

Larry Liggit: Thank you, that's great.

Wes: It's a great story. I had a blast working on it, and I really appreciate the opportunity that you gave me.

Cindy: Thank you so much.

Wes: Both Union and Confederate veterans continued gathering well into the 20th century. In 1913, an estimated 100,000 Union and Confederate soldiers gathered peacefully for the 50th anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg. Historians believe that the last surviving rebel veteran was Pleasant Crump of the 10th Alabama. He died on December 31, 1951, at the age of 104.

ENDS