



By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Governor Charles Clark Imprisoned for Threatening Insurrection

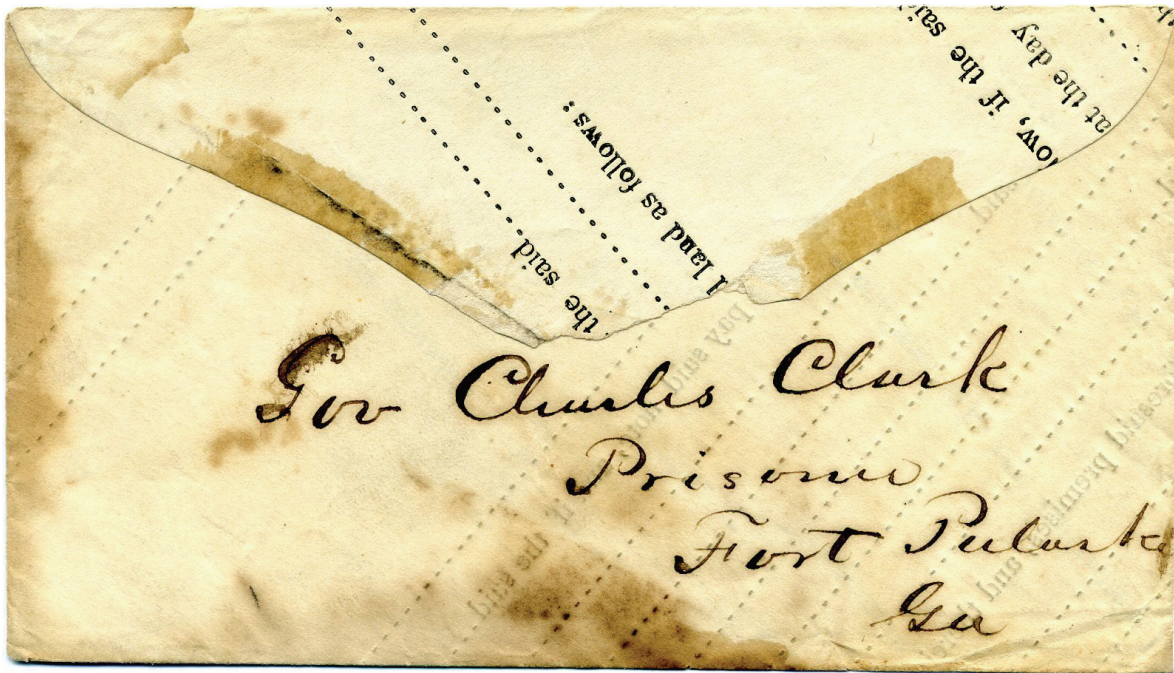


Figure 1. Adversity cover fashioned from a land deed and hand delivered to “Gov. Charles Clark, Prisoner, Fort Pulaski, Ga” in June 1865, after the war had ended.

The cover in Figure 1 is a simple adversity cover fashioned from a land deed and handcarried to “Gov. Charles Clark, Prisoner, Fort Pulaski, Ga.” Clark, a wounded veteran, was a Confederate Brigadier General as well as a Major General in the State Militia. He served as governor of Mississippi, elected in 1863 during the height of the war. But the more interesting tidbit is evidenced by the pictured cover. Well after the Confederate surrender, Clark was imprisoned on June 13, 1865, for two months, for threatening insurrection against the United States.

Charles Clark (1811–1877 – Figure 2) was born in Lebanon, Ohio, near Cincinnati, and subsequently moved to Mississippi. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, Clark, a lawyer, represented a settler in a dispute with some Choctaw Native Americans over land in the Mississippi Delta. The dispute led to a series of lawsuits before the Mississippi Supreme Court. The settler ultimately prevailed, and gave Clark a large tract of land between Beulah, Mississippi, and the Mississippi River as his legal fee.¹

In the late 1840s, Clark formed a plantation on the land, naming it Doe-Roe, pseudonyms commonly used in the legal profession to represent unnamed or unknown litigants (e.g., John Doe, Roe v. Wade). The state of literacy being what it was at the time, the plantation came to be known by its phonetic identification, Doro. According to archives at Delta State University, “The plantation grew to over 5,000 acres (20 km) and became the most prosperous in the region, operating until 1913. It was prominent in the social, political and economic affairs of Bolivar County.” He was a slave owner and one of the wealthiest planters in Mississippi. (Figure 3)

Following the secession of Mississippi in early 1861, Clark was appointed a brigadier general in the Mississippi 1st Corps, a state militia organization that later entered the Confederate Army. He was promoted to the rank of major general of Mississippi State Troops in 1863. He commanded the brigade at engagements in Kentucky and then a division under General Leonidas Polk at the Battle of Shiloh, where he was severely wounded in the shoul-

Figure 2. Portrait of Charles Clark, 24th Governor of Mississippi, 1863-1865.



Above: Modern day aerial and frontal photographs of Fort Pulaski, Georgia.

der and captured. He spent time as a prisoner of war before being released. Clark returned to command in time to participate in the Battle of Baton Rouge, where he led a division and was again severely wounded, his hip shattered by a Minié ball. He was captured on the field, and the federals thought the wound to be mortal, thus they allowed him to be taken to New Orleans to his personal physician. Clark would live, but was made a permanent invalid, having to use crutches or a cane for the rest of his life.² Figures 4 and 5 show his final resting place.

Clark first entered politics as a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, a position he held from 1838 to 1844 and 1856 to 1861. He also was a delegate to the 1851 Mississippi Constitutional Convention. Clark next secured the Democratic gubernatorial nomination and was elected governor by a popular vote on October 5, 1863.

On November 16, 1863, Clark was inaugurated as a wartime governor of Confederate Mississippi. He served in this capacity

until June 13, 1865, when he was forcibly removed from office by occupation forces of the United States Army and replaced by William L. Sharkey, a respected judge and staunch Unionist who had been in total opposition to secession.³

During Governor Clark's administration, the Union army occupied the state capital and forced Governor Clark to move the capital to Macon and to Columbus, and then back to Macon. After Confederate troops in Alabama and Mississippi surrendered May 6, 1865, Governor Clark issued a proclamation convening the state legislature for a special session and ordered all state officials to return to Jackson.

When Governor Clark arrived in Jackson, which was then occupied by federal troops, he was informed by the Union military commander that he and the legislature would be placed under arrest. Most of the lawmakers escaped arrest by fleeing the city.

Union authorities arrested Governor Clark on May 22, 1865, and he was incarcerated at Fort Pulaski (Figure 6) on Cockspar



Figure 4. Grave monument for Charles Clark at the Historic Clark Cemetery, Beulah, Bolivar County, Mississippi.

Figure 5. Inscription for Governor Clark on gravestone.

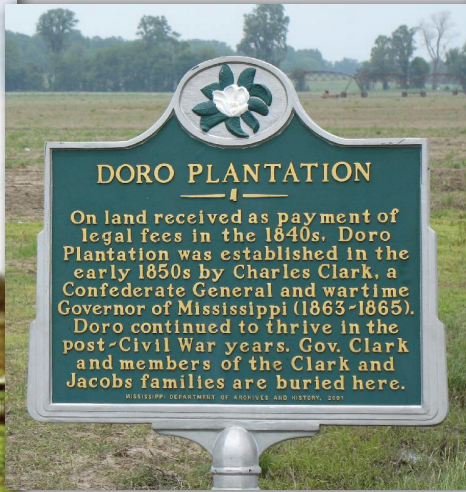
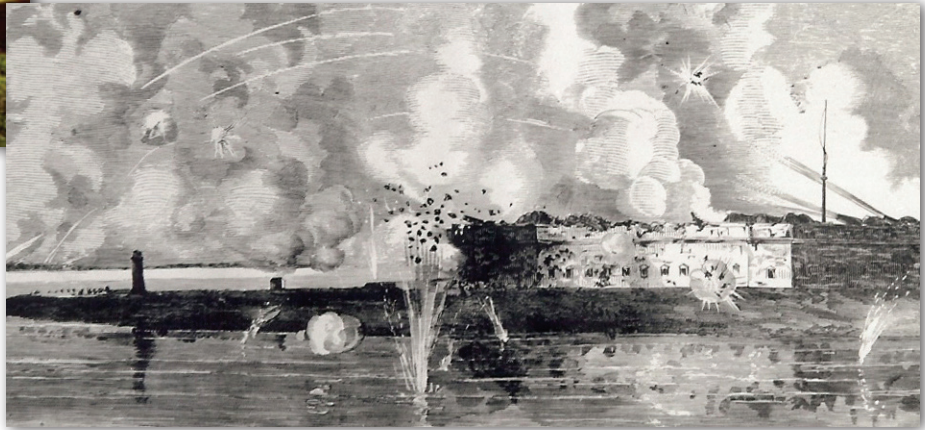


Figure 3. Historical plaque for Doro Plantation, established by Charles Clark.

Figure 6 (below). "Fort Pulaski Under Fire" by Leslie's Weekly Magazine, April 1862.



Island, at the mouth of the Savannah River, Savannah, Georgia. A witness described the arrest of the former Confederate general: "The old soldier, when informed of the purpose of the officers, straightened his mangled limbs as best he could, and with great difficulty said, 'I denounce before high heaven and the civilized world this unparalleled act of tyranny and usurpation. I only yield obedience because I have no power to resist.'"⁴

In another version of that event, Clark is quoted as saying, "I am the duly and constitutionally elected Governor of the State of Mississippi, and would resist, if in my power, to the last extremity..." Governor Charles Clark to Union General E.D. Osband, 1865.

On September 2, 1865, Clark signed an oath of allegiance to the United States. He was paroled and released from prison in late September or early October 1865. After his release from Fort Pulaski, Clark returned to his legal practice in Bolivar County. In 1876, he secured an appointment to the bench as chancellor of the Fourth District, a position he held until his death on December 18, 1877.⁵

Clark was one of six generals in the Confederate Army who were born in Ohio.⁶ He was one of the "Northern Confederates" who was highlighted in the interesting investigation by David Ross Zimring in his *To Live and Die in Dixie: Native Northerners Who Fought for the Confederacy* (University of Tennessee Press, 2014).

According to the U.S. census of 1860, approximately 350,000 individuals of northern birth resided in states that would form the new Confederacy. How these men and women integrated into southern society before, during, and after the Civil War is the fascinating focus of Zimring's study. While I have not personally read this book, it sounds well worth a look for the serious Civil War student. ✉

Endnotes:

¹Charles Clark, findagrave.com <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=10847> Accessed April 28, 2016.

²Brig. Gen. Benjamin G. Humphreys Camp #1625, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Charles Clark, Brigadier General and Governor of Mississippi 1811-1877. <http://www.humphreys1625.com/ClarkBio.html> Accessed April 28, 2016.

³Charles Clark (governor), Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Clark_\(governor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Clark_(governor)) Accessed April 28, 2016.

⁴David G. Sansing, Mississippi History Now, Charles Clark: Twenty-fourth Governor of Mississippi 1863-1865. <http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/index.php?s=extra&id=127> Accessed April 28, 2016.

⁵Robert Sobel and John Raimo, eds. Biographical Directory of the Governors of the United States, 1789-1978, Vol. 2, Westport, Conn.; Meckler Books, 1978. 4 vols.

⁶Ohio Central, Civil War, Charles Clark (May 24, 1811-December 18, 1877) <http://www.ohiocivilwarcentral.com/entry.php?rec=909> Accessed April 28, 2016.