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MEDIA RELEASE

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State Library seeks help to secure unique diary revealing Australia's link to the American Civil War

State Library Victoria is asking for the public's help to purchase an extraordinary document that chronicles Australia's involvement in the last year of the American Civil War – the ship diary of Lieutenant Dabney M Scales of the Confederate Steam Ship *Shenandoah*.

This newly discovered diary records the moment the CSS *Shenandoah* steamed into Port Phillip Bay on 25 January 1865, and the surprising events that followed. From a tense stand-off between the crew and the Victorian police to grand balls and social gatherings organised in their honour in Melbourne and Ballarat, the diary paints a fascinating picture of this extraordinary collision of Australian and American history.

The CSS *Shenandoah* was a commerce raider of the Confederate Army, deployed to seek out and destroy ships supplying the Union forces. That mission brought them to Australian waters as they hunted down whaling ships that supplied oil to the Union. The *Shenandoah's* mission saw it circumnavigate the globe, dropping anchor in port only once – in Melbourne - where the ship and its young crew caused both sensation and scandal.

The ship berthed in Melbourne for repairs and resupply of coal and provisions. A surprise exchange of crew also took place as eight Confederate sailors deserted ship while another 42 Melburnians stowed away to join the voyage.

The diary, which includes photographs and a pamphlet, teems with first-hand observations, sketches and candid accounts of officers and crew mixing with the people of Victoria. It also tells the riveting story of the *Shenandoah's* journey after leaving Melbourne.

The diary powerfully illustrates one of the greatest tales in naval history. It is a remarkable document written aboard the vessel that fired the last shot of the war – fired, quite possibly, by an Australian.

State Library CEO Kate Torney said this diary belongs in an Australia collection.

"The *Shenandoah* diary is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to acquire a collection for Victoria that directly connects us with one of the major historical events of the 19th century – the American Civil War.

"Civil War documents like this very rarely come onto the market and would usually be snapped up by an American institution or private collector. If secured it will be the only original material from the vessel in an Australian collection. Given its historical importance both here and in America, we do not want to lose our chance to add it to Victoria's collections."

State Library Victoria seeks to raise \$100,000 to secure and preserve this unique piece of Australian history, and to collect and preserve works that all Victorians can enjoy through our Manuscripts, Pictures and History of the Book collections.

More information about the diary and how to support the Library appeal is available at: slv.vic.gov.au/donate

Images and interviews available upon request.

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