

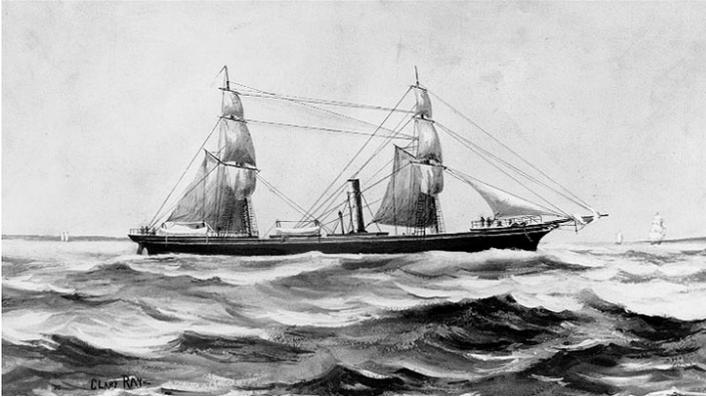


# Confederate War Journal

November 2013

Military Order of the Stars & Bars

Volume 5



*A Special Tribute to the  
Confederate Navy and  
Blockade Runners to the War  
Between the States*

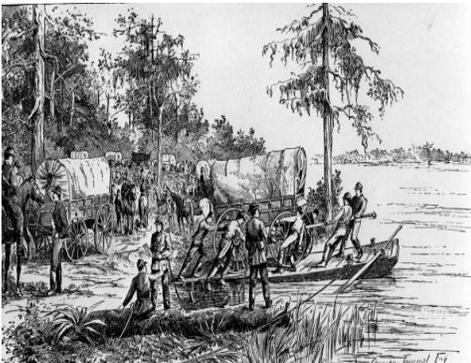


Photo # NH 52793 Confederate officers held prisoner at Fort Warren, Boston



Photo # NH 57256 Capt. Semmes & Lt. Kell aboard CSS Alabama, 1863



# Battlefields of the Civil War

We have in stock a selection of Civil War battle maps issued by the US War Department within a decade of the War's conclusion. Our beautiful gallery and knowledgeable staff await your visit. Or, contact us via telephone or email for more information.



HOUSTON'S LARGEST REPOSITORY OF FINE ORIGINAL ANTIQUE PRINTS, MAPS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DOCUMENTS, GLOBES, AND MANY OTHER ITEMS OF SCIENTIFIC, HISTORICAL AND AESTHETIC INTEREST

## THE ANTIQUARIUM ANTIQUARY PRINT & MAP GALLERY

3021 Kirby Drive, Houston - 713.622.7531 - [theantiquarium.com](http://theantiquarium.com)  
Monday thru Saturday 10 to 5:30, Sundays 11 to 4

2012-2014

## General Executive Council

Commander General	Toni Turk
Lt. Commander General	Howard Jones
Adjutant General	Sig Reckline
Acting Chief of Staff	Sig Reckline
Judge Advocate General	Tom Boardman
Treasurer General	Conway Moncure
ANV Commander	Henry Knauf
ANV Executive Councilor	M. Cain Griffin
ANV Executive Councilor	John Williams
AOT Commander	O. David Denard
AOT Executive Councilor	Bert Blackmon
AOT Executive Councilor	David Floyd
ATM Commander	Gary L. Loudermilk
ATM Executive Councilor	David Holcombe
ATM Executive Councilor	Philip Isset
Past Commander General	Max L. Waldrop, Jr.
Past Commander General	Dr. C. Anthony Hodges
Past Commander General	Philip H. Law
Past Commander General	Jeffery W. Massey
Past Commander General	Albert D. Jones, Jr.
Past Commander General	James Troy Massey
Past Commander-in-Chief	Perry J. Outlaw
Past Commander-in-Chief	Charles H. Smith
Past Commander-in-Chief	Robert L. Hawkins, III
Past Commander-in-Chief	Edward O. Cailleateau
Past Commander-in-Chief	John L. Echols, Sr.
Past Commander-in-Chief	Mark L. (Beau) Cantrell

The MOS&B *Officer's Call*, a leader among heritage magazines, is published monthly, except for the month of November by the Military Order of the Stars and Bars. The MOS&B *Confederate War Journal* is published yearly and distributed during the month of November by the Military Order of the Stars and Bars.

The members of the MOS&B are descendants of the Confederate Officer Corps and elected government officials. We are dedicated to the preservation and education of the memory of our ancestors and the traditional values of our Southern Heritage.

Address all general business or advertising correspondence to MOS&B IHQ, P O Box 1700, White House, TN 37188-1700

# Features

- 4 Commander General's Report by Toni Turk
- 4 Chaplain General's Report by Raymond Holder
- 5 Announcement for Candidacy for the Position of Commander General by Howard Jones
- 6 Announcement for Candidacy for the Position of Lt. Commander General by Harold Davis, III
- 7 Lt. Charles "Savez" Read, CSN by Gary Loudermilk
- 9 Mississippi River in the Civil War by Karen Esberger
- 10 The Battle for the Mississippi by Karen Esberger
- 12 The Battle of Sabine Pass by David Whitaker
- 13 The USS Mapleleaf by Ben Willingham
- 14 The Confederate Submarine by David Hudgins
- 15 New Evidence for the Hunley
- 16 The Turtle (CSS Manassas) by Gary Loudermilk
- 18 The Confederate Navy - Part 1 by David Hudgins
- 19 The Confederate Navy - Part 2 CSS Virginia by David Hudgins
- 20 The Confederate Navy - Part 3 Battle of Hampton Road by David Hudgins
- 20 The Confederate Navy - Part 4 CSA Ships by David Hudgins
- 22 The Blockade Runner by James R Soiley
- 25 Captain Holland Middleton Bell - A Life of Honor by Frank Kebelman
- 29 The Sinking of the Sultana by David Whitaker
- 30 An Amazing Escape by Bob Hurst



## *Commander General's Report*

### *Thank a Veteran*

One hundred and fifty-one years ago on September 4, 1862, President Jefferson Davis issued the Nation's first Thanksgiving Day Proclamation. We now celebrate Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday in November; a month which is also host to another very special day and that is Veterans Day. In this month's Commander General Message, I offer a special remembrance for those who serve and those who have served. I would like to pay special homage to those who have died, been wounded, or gone missing while in the service. That combined number is nearly three million since the inception of our nation. There are over twenty-two million American veterans living today; of these, nearly seventeen million are war veterans. Since the inception of our nation over forty-three million men and women have served our nation in time of war. This is approximately ten percent of the cumulative number of our citizens.



I would like to repeat the well know sentiment captured in the following words:

It is the Veteran, not the preacher, who gave us freedom of religion.  
 It is the Veteran, not the reporter, who gave us freedom of the press.  
 It is the Veteran, not the poet, who gave us freedom of speech.  
 It is the Veteran, not the lawyer, who gave us the right to a fair trial.  
 It is the Veteran, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.  
 ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL

During this season of thanksgiving, remember to pray for our veterans and to pray for peace. God bless our troops!

### **Toni Turk**

Commander General  
 Military Order of the Stars and Bars

## *Chaplain General's Message*

### *The Lost Cause*

The historian Edward A. Pollard 's book, *The lost Cause, A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*, published in 1866, produced the term, *The Lost Cause*. We tend to believe that our fight for southern independence was a noble effort by our ancestors. My purpose here in a few words is to say our cause is not lost, but the opposite. We have not lost our cause. Let me explain.



Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3, one must be born again to see the Kingdom of God. God's kingdom is not a place, but in the hearts of those of us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:16. The revivals which occurred in the camps of the Confederate armies came home with our soldiers. Our churches across the southland began to flourish and grow.

The officer corps who was our ancestors of the MOS&B led us to where we are now, undefeated in our spirit and nobility. Micah 7:8 says "Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall, I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me." This is what we have been doing through our faith by ways of growth in our churches, our families and our communities. People traveling to the south from other parts of our country all have one common reflection on their experience and that is our southern hospitality. In my opinion, a major part of this stems from our faith and hope in a loving God. The Christian faith has at its core the good news of salvation which is shown to others by way of our southern hospitality.

I mentioned earlier John 3:3 where Jesus said to Nicodemus that to see and experience the kingdom of God and Heaven, one must be born again. We are being born again in our beloved southland as each of us go about our daily lives. I am speaking of the nobility of spirit as exemplified what I believe all of us see in the life of Robert E. Lee. His nobility of spirit in the example of the last five years of his life gives us the pattern of how we are being regenerated each of us in the nobility of our cause and in our faith in God.

In summary, I believe our cause is far from lost, but found in the hearts of each of us who belong to the MOS&B. This cause of ours is found in our churches, our museums of southern history, and all we revere that is dear to us in our southern heritage. Micah 6:8 says "He has told you O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God". God be with us till we meet again in Charleston.

## **Raymond Holder**

Chaplain General  
Military Order of the Stars & Bars

### *Announcement of Candidacy For the Position of Commander General*



Gentlemen of the Order:

I am pleased to announce my candidacy for the position of Commander General. These past few years I have devoted much of my time and energy to the furthering of our cause. I am asking for your faith and confidence to continue my pursuit of this goal.

I joined the Order in 2004 as a member of Gen. John Bell Hood, Chapter 89, in Los Angeles. At that time, there were no regular Chapter meetings. As a result, I began to attend our National Conventions in order to participate as a member. In 2008, I was appointed the Provisional Commander of the California Society. My job was to create a permanent California Society. That task was accomplished in just 60 days. Thereafter, I helped form a second Chapter in San Francisco. Today, the California Society has 30 members and is still growing.

In 2010, I was elected to the position of Executive Councilor for the ATM. As a member of the GEC I served as Chairman of the Grants and Endowments Committee. In that capacity I was able to revitalize the Confederate Legacy Fund. Since that time, our members have donated nearly \$25,000 to the fund. Today, the fund has over \$50,000 in assets and is growing. I also initiated a motion to restructure our Life Membership dues schedule. This action was a necessary action because the previous dues schedule was far too low and not financially sustainable.

As the current Lt. Commander General I serve in a number of capacities. But the principle position is that of Membership Chairman. In that capacity, I initiated a massive membership drive that is still in progress. It is targeted to nearly 2,000 individuals from other heritage groups who would qualify for MOS&B membership. I am expecting up to 200 new members as a result of our mailings.

My objective is to preserve the Order as it is today. I simply don't want any major changes in the way we do business as a fraternal or heritage organization. However, we do need to do some things better. First, we need to hire an *Executive Officer* to help us with our administrative work load. This person should be an independent contractor. He would assist us in the collection of dues, the preparation of reports, and other similar administrative duties. Our all-volunteer staff has worked up until now but it's not sustainable. Secondly, we need work even harder on membership. The demographics of today's society are not favorable to heritage organizations. We have a growing population of older people and far fewer younger people who tend to join organizations such as ours. We need to be aggressive in order to offset these trends.

I am very proud of my Southern heritage. My ancestors first came to Virginia in 1618 and would live there for nearly 200 years. Thereafter, they began a migration that would take them to Abbeville South Carolina, Lincoln County Georgia, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and finally to Izard County Arkansas. My great grand uncle was Captain Henry Hill Harris, Company G, 8<sup>th</sup> Arkansas Infantry Regiment. He fought in nearly all of the major battles with the Army of Tennessee. He was wounded at both Shiloh and Franklin and was named to the Confederate Honor Roll for valor at Chickamauga. I am also distantly related to Robert E. Lee, JEB Stuart, Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Mosby.

I am a Marine Corps veteran and a graduate of the University of Oregon. My wife, Cathy, and I have been married for over 50 years. We have two daughters and three grandchildren. During my 49 years in the business world I started two successful businesses from scratch and eventually sold both of them. One of these businesses is currently owned and operated by my youngest daughter. My work history and my history of service to the Order have all helped to prepare me for the job of Commander General.

Today, many organizations are threatened by falling membership and a lack of relevancy in a changing world. We have a unique opportunity to do the right things today that will preserve and enhance our cause for future generations. These are the challenges as we move forward. If elected I pledge to work tirelessly in pursuit of our goals. I would appreciate your support. *Deo Vindice.*

Sincerely,

**Wm. Howard Jones, DCS**

## *Announcement of Candidacy For the Position of Lt. Commander General*



Gentlemen of the Military Order of the Stars and Bars,

I am both honored and humbled to announce my candidacy for the position of Lt. Commander General of the MOS&B. Over the past two years, I have served as Commander of the South Carolina Society and have been involved in getting the Time and Place Committee approval for the 2014 National Convention to be held in Charleston, South Carolina. I am currently working with the officers and chapter commanders of the South Carolina Society to ensure we offer a high quality convention in Charleston for the enjoyment of the members of the order. Please see the announcement for the 2014 Convention on the national website.

I joined the SCV and MOS&B in 1985. I have served as Commander of the Gen. Maxcy Gregg Chapter in Columbia. I moved to Charleston in 1993 and we had no chapter in Charleston. In 2007 I organized and chartered the Capt. Stephen D. Lee Chapter with 20 members in Charleston. I served as its commander for two years and then was elected Lt. Commander of the SC Society. I served in that position for 2 years before being elected to my current position as Commander of the SC Society.

I believe that increasing our membership is essential to our longevity and I wish to continue the work that our current Lt. Commander General, Howard Jones, has begun. We need to work diligently with every society and chapter to revamp our recruitment efforts.

I am very proud of my southern heritage. My father's family is from southwestern Virginia and my mother's from the upstate of South Carolina. Both sides of my family fought at King's Mountain in the first American Revolution and in the Army of Northern Virginia in the second American Revolution. They believed their duty in the War Between the States was to defend the rights won by their grandfathers in the first American Revolution. I am a member of the South Carolina Society of the Sons of the American Revolution having served as president of both the Col. Thomas Taylor Chapter in Columbia and the MGEN William Moultrie Chapter in Charleston.

I am a graduate of the College of Charleston and of the Pharmacy School at the Medical University of South Carolina. For the past 25 years I have been involved in sales and sales management at Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company. I have also been very involved with my church, First Scots Presbyterian, serving as Sunday school teacher, medical missionary, deacon and ruling elder. Jane, my wife, and I meet in pharmacy school and have been married for 29 years. She currently practices pharmaceutical law as a partner with the Nelson Mullins law firm in Charleston. We have two children, Frank who is a MOS&B member and recent graduate of Clemson University and Molly who is a senior at Ashley Hall School in Charleston.

In this day and time when so much of our southern heritage and history is being attacked from all sides, we must be true to forefathers many of whom gave the ultimate sacrifice in the War of Northern Aggression as we refer to it in Charleston. We must stress education that is based on scholarly research not on political correctness. We must increase our membership by inviting family members and friends to join us in this cause. After all we are the descendants of the military and government leaders of the Confederate States of America. I ask for your support and if elected will give you my best effort to make the MOS&B a viable order for many generations to come.

Sincerely,

***Harold F. Davis, JJJ***

### *JOIN THE MOS&B Color Guard*

**To join:** All members will need a Confederate Officer uniform to wear in the Color Guard. There will be no specific Officer uniform as members can wear any Officer uniform of their own choosing, including that of their own ancestor. All members shall also wear white dress gloves (they can be purchased at any formal wear store). I will have flags and flag carriers for members to use. I will also as Commander of the Color Guard train each member the Hardee's tactics that will be used. Together we will form the MOS&B Color Guard to provide historic presentation of the Confederate Officer Corps. Please contact Commander Ray Rooks to join by email at [mrgnaphill@aol.com](mailto:mrgnaphill@aol.com) or by phone at 410-258-2223. Forward with the Colors!



## *Lt. Charles "Savez" Read, CSN*

By Gary Loudermilk

Charles William Read (1840-1890) was born either in Hinds County or Yazoo County, Mississippi. He was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1856 and was graduated in 1860. Upon hearing that Mississippi had seceded from the Union, Read resigned his commission and returned to the South to join the Confederate Navy. Lieutenant Read's distinguished accomplishments included the capture of twenty-two vessels during the period between June 6 and June 27, 1863. He was captured in Portland, Maine, in June, 1863, following his taking of the revenue cutter *CALEB CUSHING*. He was exchanged in 1864 and subsequently participated in naval operations on the James River.

Read's Civil War career is so fascinating that it reads like a novel. It certainly is the kind of story that should attract some movie producer. Although considered by some to be a Pirate or Buccaneer, in reality he was a naval officer whose activities were well within the bounds of legitimate warfare, namely the destruction of an enemy's sea-going commerce. A good bit of his brief career had nothing to do with the destruction of the Union's oceanic commerce, but riverine operations (both on land and water) defending the Confederacy.

His early life gave no indication of the most capable naval officer that he would become. Nine years after he was born his father departed for the California gold fields where he subsequently died, leaving a 10-year-old Read virtually on his own. Historians write that Read was "impulsive," and his shifting career interests seem to support this characterization. At first attracted to journalism, he became bored with it and took up acting. He portrayed a sailor in a play before running away from home, intending to really ship before the masts on a sailing vessel out of New Orleans.

Young Read clearly was interested in a nautical career, which led his mother to seek successfully congressional assistance to get her son admitted to the United States Naval Academy. He was one of 52 who made up the class of 1860, of whom only 25 would graduate. His academic career at the Academy, however, was mediocre at best, ranking last in his class. Last he was, but there were classmates who even then recognized his potential. George Dewey and Winfield Scott Schley, both of whom served in the Union navy during the Civil War and became heroes in the Spanish-American War, were well acquainted with Read at the Academy. Admiral Schley later wrote that Read's class ranking "was in no sense the measure of his intellectual worth, but arose from his lack of application to study. He possessed in high degree common sense - or ought I to say uncommon sense, as everyone does not possess it - that underlies success in every calling. . . . He had sublime courage, he had conspicuous dash, he had great originality, and was aggressive in all that he did."

His career in the United States Navy was short-lived. When Mississippi seceded, he resigned his commission. At that time he was attached to the steam frigate *Powhatan* deployed off the coast of Mexico. He waited until the frigate returned to New York in the middle of March before departing for the South. The Confederate Navy Department ordered him to the *McRae*, then fitting out as a warship in New Orleans. It was on the *McRae* that he first acquired his reputation as a cool but aggressive officer. The *McRae* was involved in a number of engagements from the Head of the Passes at the mouth of the Mississippi River to New Madrid, Missouri.

But it was the Battle of New Orleans in April 1862, when Flag Officer David Farragut bypassed the forts guarding the city, that Read first distinguished himself. As executive officer, and later commanding officer when his captain was mortally wounded, Read fought Farragut's fleet until the *McRae* was disabled. He then joined the crew of the ironclad ram *Arkansas*, fitting out at Yazoo City, Mississippi. In charge of the ship's stern battery, he participated in various actions as the ironclad fought powerful Union naval forces on her way down the Yazoo. Once on the Mississippi, the *Arkansas* moored at Vicksburg and near Baton Rouge, where she eventually had to be destroyed because of engine failure.

Read then spent several weeks directing a battery of heavy guns at Port Hudson on the Mississippi before being assigned to the Confederate raider *Florida*, which at that time was in Mobile. Serving as a lieutenant and boarding officer he persuaded the ship's captain, John Maffitt, to allow him to convert and command one of the prizes, the Union brig *Clarence*, into a raider.

This inaugurated the exploit that made Read famous or infamous depending on one's allegiance. Sailing up the Atlantic seaboard to Maine, Read and his handpicked crew successfully captured and armed the *Tacony*, *Archer*, and revenue cutter *Caleb Cushing*. All told, he seized 22 vessels before finally being captured himself and incarcerated at Fort Warren, Massachusetts.

Although a closely guarded prisoner in a massive granite prison, "Savez" managed to continue his escapades at Fort Warren. All prisoners of war were housed on the north side of the fort, while political prisoners roomed to the south. When new prisoners entered the casemates they were invariably drawn to the outer wall where they gazed wistfully thorough the firing slits at the world outside. The slits were generous, eight feet high, nearly two feet wide on the outside, and angled to seven inches in width inside, giving defenders both protection and a wide field of fire. They looked out on a dry moat, a seawall patrolled by guards, the beach and the cold, choppy waters of Boston Harbor.

In Fort Warren a comradely little group developed around Read; Reid Saunders, a political prisoner from Baltimore (and a close friend of Captain Isaac Sterett's son); the *Atlanta's* Marine Lieutenant James Thurston; and her first luff, Joseph Alexander. All four were young, adventurous, and slender. That last characteristic would become important in a breakout plan. Escape was on the prisoners' minds from the start. While bathing one day, Alexander realized that he might be able to squeeze through one of the firing slits. Nude, he tried it. Turning sideways, he could just squeeze through. But he couldn't do it with his clothes on. Alexander was the largest of the four conspirators, and when Thurston, Read, and Saunders tried, they found it comparatively easy to slip through; although, like Alexander, they couldn't do it clothed.

Read had been collecting bits of cordage and canvas and splicing them together into a knotted rope. It was fifteen feet from the bottom of one of the firing slits to the dry moat, and he had seven or eight feet of rope-enough to allow a safe drop to the ground. The moat was littered with refuse-pieces of plank and logs that might be lashed together to make a small raft, tin cans that could be tied into a cluster to make a float, and two beautiful two-gallon demijohns, complete with corks.

A half-mile across the water lay Lovell's Island, the last barrier island before the open Atlantic. If the four could make the island, they might steal a boat and break for freedom. Not one of the group was a strong swimmer, but with floats made from the litter, some luck and a favorable tide, they might make it.

Late summer could be cold on Boston Harbor. The nip of approaching fall was already in the air. The night of August 16 was cold and wet, with a misting rain driven by a northeast wind. It was not a good time for a long swim, but it was perfect for slipping past cold, inattentive guards. The band of escapees stripped, tossed their clothing out the firing slit, then squeezed one by one through the opening and slipped down the knotted rope. On the ground they collected their clothes and what they could of lumber, cans, and demijohns, then tried to move quietly to the shelter of the seawall. The wind covering their noise, they boosted each other over the seawall just sixty feet from a guard huddled in his rubber pon-cho, dropped to the beach on the other side, and dragged their building materials to the lee of a large wooden target that served pilots as a mark to guide them into the harbor. Here they lashed their lumber, cans, and demijohns into a small raft-too small to float a man, but large enough to hold their clothes, and some-thing to hang onto while they swam.

Across the water a few lights marked Lovell's Island. But once they pushed the raft into the water and began to swim, they lost sight of the lights. Read tried to set a course for the island, but the overcast blocked the stars. Wind and tide were both running against them. Rain and spray lashed their faces, the raft swung around with the tide, and they lost their bearings. Within half an hour they were ex-hausted. Finally, they gave up and let the raft drift back to George's Island. There they disassembled their float, slipped back over the seawall and across the moat, put a long plank against the fort's outside wall and scrambled up it to reach their dangling rope. They hauled themselves hand over hand upward and squeezed through the embrasure and back into prison.

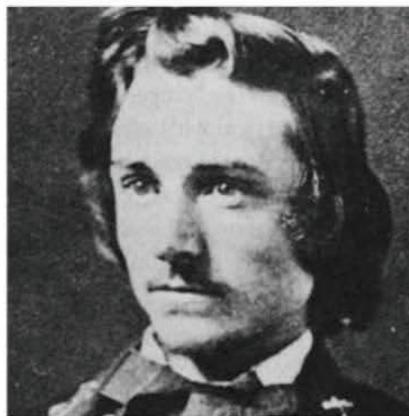
"Only a few of the prisoners knew we had been out," said Alexander. And most who heard about it didn't believe it, ridiculing the idea of anyone slipping through the small embrasures. "A smart little midshipman, seeing our wet clothes, *tasted*," said the first lieutenant, "and finding them salt, was convinced."

The next morning they watched, apprehensive, as a sentry looked at the scat-tered pile of cans, lumber, and demijohns. He called the corporal of the guard. They appeared to discuss the curiosity and dismissed it without reporting it to superiors.

The escape artists needed a better plan. They needed a couple of strong swimmers; strong enough to make it to Lovell's Island, steal a boat, and come back for them. Read approached his old quarter gunner, Acting Master's Mate N. B. Pryde, and Pryde agreed to try it. Read also recruited an Irish immigrant, Thomas Sherman, a U.S. sailor imprisoned for making treasonable statements.

Two nights later, the weather still cold and rainy, they prepared to go out. Alexander went first and kicked over a bottle someone had left sitting in the embrasure. It crashed on the rocks below. Fearing they'd alerted the guards, they waited with baited breath and, sure enough, along the seawall came a bobbing lantern and three men. The detail approached the guards, then two followed the man with the lantern back the way they had come, and two took up the guard posts along the wall. It was nothing more than a routine changing of the guard.

After waiting long enough to let the new guards get settled into the tedium of the night, the six prisoners slipped one



*Charles "Savez" Read  
One of the MOS&B Awards for  
Outstanding Service to the Order  
Is named the "Lt. Charles W. Read  
Legion of Merit"*

by one through the embrasure, down the rope, and over the seawall to the beach. Pryde and Sherman eased into the cold water and struck off through the chop, disappearing in the dark toward Lovell's Island. Just as on the earlier attempt, the tide was wrong, running in against the swimmers.

The four Rebels waited for hours in the cold and wet, once risking a furtive scuttle up and down the beach to see if the two had returned, landed, and missed them. With no more than two or three hours left until dawn, the group decided that two more would have to try to make Lovell's Island and find a boat. Perhaps they could uproot the wooden target from the sand and use it as a raft. By lot, Alexander and Thurston were chosen to go. Read and Saunders would stay and wait for the other two to come back with a boat and pick them up.

Thurston and Alexander slipped out onto the open beach and rocked the target back and forth until it came loose. They pulled it out and slipped into the water with it. They put their pants and boots on the raft, pushed it into deeper water and climbed aboard. Immediately, most of their clothing went overboard. They stretched out to stabilize the raft and began paddling by hand. Just off the point of George's Island was a small outcropping on which sat a lighthouse. The two kept the light to their right and behind as a reference, and thus kept on course toward Lovell's Island.

It was cold and the water was rough, with the tide still running against them. Lack of exercise had weakened them, and probably neither Alexander nor Thurston thought much of their chances. But they were committed, and they paddled on into the night, fighting the water.

Behind them on the beach, Read and Saunders took refuge near the seawall and pulled a large clump of seaweed over themselves for camouflage. One of the sentries noticed through the darkness that the target had disappeared. He called to another sentry, and the two came down on the beach, searching for the target. One of them stumbled in its hole. Searching the beach, they saw the clump of seaweed in the dark. One Yank picked up a few rocks and threw them at the sea-weed, then walked over and stirred it with his bayonet. Underneath, the Rebels dared not breathe. But the sentry's bayonet never touched them, and he turned and walked away.

After the sentries returned to their posts, the Confederates slipped along the seawall trying to put some distance between themselves and the guards. They felt by now that Pryde and Sherman had not made it, and Alexander and Thurston probably wouldn't either.

They were correct about Pryde and Sherman. They had drifted back, exhausted, and were captured. But Alexander and Thurston did make it. Numb and almost frozen, clad only in their shirts and drawers, they waded ashore on Lovell's Island then set out up the beach, looking for a boat.

Back on George's Island, Read and Saunders knew dawn was almost upon them, and the escape plan had again broken down. They took a last scout up and down the beach, and their luck ran out. A sentry saw them in the darkness. His challenge and leveled musket brought them to a halt. They stood stock still on the beach, while he called for the corporal of the

guard. The cry was repeated from sentry post to sentry post, and the two Rebels stood for an eternity, it seemed, until the corporal came running. He began questioning the sentry. And as the latter looked away, the two Rebels made a break, sprinting down the seawall, roll-ing over it, and dashing across the moat to their dangling rope. But it was too high! A few nights before, they had reached its end by scrambling up a long plank propped against the fort's wall. Now, as they searched frantically for a plank, the area erupted with guards. They swarmed down the seawall, across the moat, and toward the two Confederates. Saunders ran around the corner of the fortress, straight into the arms of several oncoming guards. Read was captured under the rope blowing in the breeze above his head.

Meanwhile on Lovell's Island Thurston and Alexander found a boat and although they were too late to save their fellow prisoners they made it to the open sea and headed toward Cape Ann and Canada. A kind Yankee near the little town of Beverly provided them some food and dry clothing but on the morning of the second day they were captured and returned to Fort Warren. The escape attempt was over.

Read was eventually exchanged and was assigned to the James River Squadron. He directed a river battery and commanded the squadron's torpedo boats. In February 1865, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory assigned him to command the side-wheeler *William H. Webb*, then at Shreveport, Louisiana. Read's audacious and desperate plan was to run the gauntlet of Federal ships and sortie into the Gulf of Mexico where the *William H. Webb* would become another one of the cruisers. By the time that he reached Shreveport and readied the ship, the War was virtually over. Nevertheless, he headed downstream and was able to pass New Orleans before his way was blocked, forcing him to destroy his vessel. The War was over for him. Read would live until 1890, working an assortment of maritime jobs, his last being a New Orleans pilot.

## *Mississippi River In the Civil War*

By Karen Esberger

The Mississippi River was extremely important during the War Between the States. There were political, economic, and military factors at stake. Whichever side controlled the river would have a great advantage in transporting items of commerce among states and all the way to the Gulf of Mexico for shipping. From the Gulf of Mexico to St. Louis, Missouri, possession of the river would be contested.

Taking control of such a large area, over 800 miles of flowing water, involved many battles over a two year period. In May, 1861, the U.S. seized control of Camp Jackson at St. Louis. At that point, the Federals were fighting St. Louis citizens, not a Confederate army. General Fremont had to instigate martial law over the city to quell the unrest.

Belmont, Missouri, just across the river from Columbus, Kentucky, was taken by Grant in November, 1861. Columbus itself fell to the Yankees in January, 1862. Two months later, the Confederates evacuated New Madrid, Missouri, contrary to the orders of commanding Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston who did not want Confederate forces concentrated on Island #10.

However, 130 Confederate soldiers were moved to Island #10 which stood about 10 feet above low water in the Mississippi River near New Madrid, Missouri. Now the island occupied a very isolated location. Union gunboats cut off every means of escape for the men of Island #10, and they surrendered on April 7, 1862, the day Shiloh fell.

The island was about three miles long and a quarter of a mile wide, heavily timbered, and lay near the Kentucky shore. Island Number Ten has since disappeared as a result of erosion from the Mississippi River.

Also in April 1862, the Yankees were trying to take control of the Mississippi by approaching it from the south and instituting a build-up on Ship Island at the mouth of the Mississippi delta. On April 25, Union Admiral Farragut arrived in New Orleans. The 4000 Confederate troops which had been garrisoned there had withdrawn when the imminent arrival of the Yankees became known. Considering itself defenseless, New Orleans surrendered.

As the war moved northward from New Orleans in May, 1862, citizens of Natchez, Mississippi, stood on the bluffs watching the warships go by. One of the naval commanders sent a message to the Natchez mayor saying that he must surrender his town. So he did! The citizens were outraged at his behavior.

The main scene of river battles moved upriver north of Mississippi in June, 1862. The Confederates evacuated Ft. Pillow, Missouri. Ft. Randolph, Tennessee, was high on a bluff and commanded a six mile view of the river in each direction. However, it, too, was abandoned by the Confederates due to the reach of the Federal gunboats. The next Yankee goal, Memphis, was guarded by a Confederate flotilla of eight vessels, mounting a total of 28 guns. The Federal force numbered five gunboats, two river rams, and 68 guns. The town fell after only an hour and a half of naval bombardment.

Battle escalated again in December, 1862, when Friar's Point, Mississippi, was plundered and burned. However the Confederates successfully defended Chickasaw Bayou, Mississippi, that month and slowed the Yankee progress toward Vicksburg.

The year 1863 began with the fall of Arkansas Post on January 11, 1863. At the same time, the battle for Bayou Teche, Louisiana, was occurring, in order to secure the west bank of the Mississippi across from Port Hudson. The Confederates withdrew to Ft. Bisland, Louisiana, but were forced to abandon many supplies. Thus, Confederate troops and supplies could not be transferred across the river at that point.

Cape Girardeau, Missouri, was considered a strategic U.S. victory in April, 1863, and the Confederates retreated to Arkansas. Several of the above-mentioned battles could be considered a part of the battle for Vicksburg, the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." Even if many other cities along the river were in Union hands, supplies could still be transferred across the river there. Much-needed food, clothing, medication, and ammunition moved from west to east across the river here.

Vicksburg had been unprotected until June, 1862. Then Confederate General Bragg sent General Van Dorn with 15,000 troops to occupy and fortify the heights. Van Dorn immediately put the men to work planting batteries, parapets, digging rifle-pits, mounting heavy guns, and building bomb-proof magazines. Before winter, the town was strongly fortified, and Van Dorn had been replaced by Pemberton. An eight-mile long enclosure had been built around Vicksburg. The guns of Vicksburg were trained on a strategic bend of the Mississippi River. Located on precipitous, fortified bluffs, the city was, on the inland side, surrounded by many bogs, swamps, and quicksand which caused a difficult approach from the land side of town. A major battle was yet to come.

## *The Battle for the Mississippi*

By Karen Esberger

The Mississippi River was extremely important during the War Between the States. There were political, economic, and military factors at stake for both the Confederacy and the federals.

While varied battles took place along the Mississippi, mostly on the east bank, other Confederate units monitored the activity and raided Union positions along the west bank. Those groups included the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Parsons' Brigade.

One of the Union goals was the capture of Port Gibson, Mississippi, just south of Vicksburg. The Yankee commander, General Grant, landed troops near Bruinsburg, Mississippi, and marched toward Port Gibson where Confederate General John Bowen was undermanned and forced to retreat to Grand Gulf where the Big Black River meets the Mississippi. About a week later, General Bowen withdrew from Grand Gulf. His only option was to take refuge within Vicksburg because Grant's troops were approaching the Big Black from its east side.

In the meantime, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, had been captured. Like New Orleans, it considered itself defenseless and surrendered. The Yankees were especially glad to control the arsenal there.

In October, 1862, when General Grant was first ordered to reduce Vicksburg, he considered three approaches. First, he might move south from his headquarters at Holly Springs, Mississippi, along the railroad to Grenada, Mississippi. Then General Sherman would lead an attack west from Grenada to reach the river and Vicksburg. Confederate cavalry raids destroyed his supplies at Holly Springs, so that idea became unfeasible.

Secondly, he might reach Vicksburg through the network of lakes, other rivers, and bayous connecting to the Mississippi. Those waterways, however, were too narrow and shallow to handle Grant's needed boats.

Finally, he moved his troops down the Louisiana side of the river and had a convoy transfer the army across the river south of Vicksburg. There he destroyed piecemeal the scattered Confederate forces in the state before concentrating the attack on Vicksburg.

Grant moved northeast from Port Gibson across the Big Black River to take Jackson, but encountered Confederate troops at Raymond. After a two hour battle on May 12, 1863, the Confederates retreated to join their comrades in Jackson. The battle to take Jackson occurred on May 14. The army which Confederate General Joseph Johnston had commanded became scattered.

While the U. S. forces were pushing westward toward Vicksburg, there was other action. A Confederate battalion, mostly Texans, attacked at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. Only the timely appearance of a Union gunboat saved the Yankees. DeSoto, Louisiana, was greatly involved in the battle for Vicksburg. Located directly across the river, it was the terminus for Louisiana railroads where supplies were off-loaded to be ferried across the river. Then they were loaded onto other trains at Vicksburg to proceed on to their destinations.

Grant sent Generals McPherson, Sherman, and McClelland to get Confederate General Pemberton. The battle on May 16, 1863 centered around Champion's Hill, Mississippi, AKA Baker's Creek. The 18,000 Confederates were routed.

Most of them retreated to cross the Big Black toward Vicksburg. However, General Loring's division was cut off from the main body and spent the night traversing the swamps toward Jackson. Federals surrounded Vicksburg on May 18. Forts Hill and Beauregard were part of the defense works and housed powerful batteries. The federal assault on May 22 was a failure with the loss of 3000 men. So the siege began. Citizens burrowed into caves for safety. By the end of June, there was nothing to eat except mule meat and a sort of bread made of corn meal and beans. On July 3, a white flag appeared above the Vicksburg parapet. The firing ceased, and Pemberton surrendered about 30,000 soldiers on July 4, 1863.

Now Port Hudson was the only Confederate stronghold on the entire Mississippi River. Confederate positions on its 80-foot bluff formed a natural fortress. Its defenders learned on July 7 that Vicksburg had surrendered, and they, knowing that they could not stand alone, surrendered, in turn, on July 9, 1863. Thus, the Mississippi River was under control of the Federals. They had successfully cut the Confederacy in two, preventing movement of troops, arms, food, and other supplies among the Confederate States.

*Karen Kay Esberger, Ph.D., R.N., is a retired nurse who is now President of Daffan-Latimer 37, the Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Ellis County. For further information, see [www.txudc.org](http://www.txudc.org)*



## **THE STAINLESS BANNER**

**A FREE E-zine Dedicated to the  
Armies of the Confederacy**

- ★ **Battle Analyses**
- ★ **Original Reports**
- ★ **Regimental Histories**
- ★ **Letters Home**
- ★ **Biographies**
- ★ **Eyewitness Accounts**

**SUBSCRIPTION IS FREE**  
**[www.thestainlessbanner.com](http://www.thestainlessbanner.com)**

## ROBERT E. LEE AND TRAVELLER

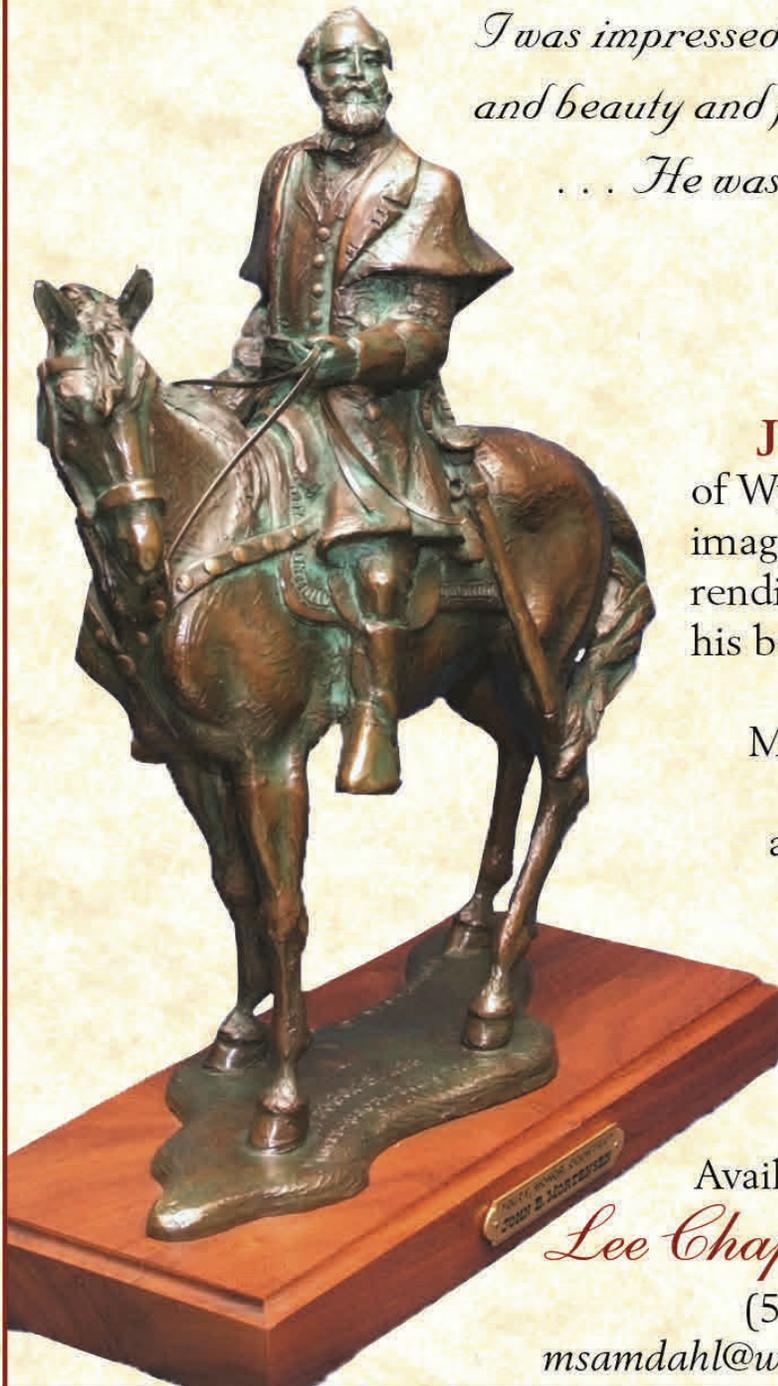
*“Traveller moved as if proud of the burden he bore . . .*

*The horse was beautiful and majestic . . .*

*I was impressed with the greatness  
and beauty and power . . . of the man*

*. . . He was every inch a king.”*

Written by a student at  
General Lee’s College in 1869.



**JOHN B. MORTENSEN**  
of Wyoming has captured this  
image in his beautiful bronze  
rendition of Robert E. Lee and  
his beloved war horse Traveller.

Measuring 18” x 14”, this  
impressive work is  
a limited edition of 30.

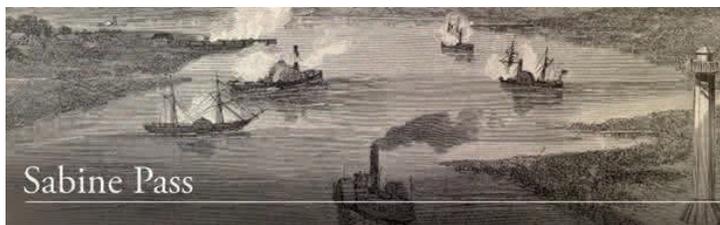
**\$3,800.<sup>00</sup>**

Available through the

*Lee Chapel Museum Shop*

(540) 458-8095

[msamdahl@wlu.edu](mailto:msamdahl@wlu.edu) or [ggorlin@wlu.edu](mailto:ggorlin@wlu.edu)



## *The Battle of Sabine Pass*

By David Whitaker, DCS

The Battle of Galveston to recapture the island by the Confederates occurred Jan. 1, 1863, and thereafter the Federals hoped for revenge by capturing Sabine Pass, Beaumont, and Orange. They hoped to capture all the cotton, steamboats and schooners in port, as well as to burn railroad bridges and ferries on the rivers. Then they planned to attack Houston along the railroad to the west of Beaumont, and then starve Galveston Island into submission.

The principal Confederate defense force at Sabine Pass during the early months of the war had been Spaight's Texas Battalion. Another unit, Capt. F. H. Odlum's Co. F, of the 1st Texas Heavy Artillery, was sent to Sabine Pass in Dec., 1862. And the two units manned artillery aboard two old cottonclad gunboats, the Uncle Ben and Josiah Belle, which Confederates used to break the blockade on Jan. 21, 1863, by chasing two Union sail ships, the Morning Light and Velocity, for 30 miles at sea and capturing them during a battle. After that embarrassment to the Federal forces, Union Gen. Benjamin Butler of New Orleans was determined to capture Sabine Pass by sea, but he had to await the capture of Vicksburg before enough shallow draft gunboats were available. About Aug. 1, 1863, Gen. Butler began massing four gunboats and 19 troop transports at New Orleans in preparation for the battle.

Between March and August, 1863, Confederate engineers built the new Fort Griffin on this site. Co. B, the artillery company of Spaight's Battalion, was still assigned as gunners on the cottonclad Uncle Ben, whereas Capt. Odlum, Lt. Dick Dowling and their Davis Guards were transferred to the new Fort Griffin to man the four 32-pound, 6" guns and two 24-pound, 5" guns in the fort. Co. F was made up almost entirely of Irish immigrant longshoremen, or "dockwallopers," of Houston and Galveston. Confederate engineers drove marker posts in the oyster reefs 1,200 yards distant from the fort to mark the guns' maximum range, and during the month of August, Lt. Dowling used a sunken schooner as a target as he honed his artillerymen's gunnery prowess to the peak of perfection.

Beginning in May, 1863, Gen. "Prince John" Magruder of Houston began a systematic reduction of Confederate forces at Sabine Pass, and that at a time that he knew an attack at Sabine Pass was perhaps imminent. Several companies of Spaight's Bn. were transferred to Opelousas, La., where Gens. Nathaniel Banks and W. B. Franklin led an invasion up the Bayou Teche. Then Magruder sent Col. Griffin and his battalion from Galveston to Sabine Pass. When Comanche Indians began attacking the homes west of Fort Worth of Griffin's soldiers, the battalion threatened to desert or mutiny unless they were sent back to Tarrant County to subdue the Indians. Magruder foolishly sent 5 companies of Griffin's Bn. back to Fort Worth, and only Lt. Chasteen's Co. F was still in Beaumont awaiting a train. And when the sound of cannon fire at daylight on Sept. 8 was heard from the direction of Sabine Pass, Lt. Chasteen put his company aboard the steamer Roebuck and started for Sabine Pass.

By Sept. 7, Gen. Ben Butler's armada had arrived offshore from Sabine, and the steering lights of the vessels could be seen that night by the Confederates ashore. Lt. Frederick Crocker, who had successfully captured Sabine Pass a year earlier, commanded the gunboats Clifton, Sachem, Arizona, and Granite City, and altogether there were about 5,000 men aboard the 4 gunboats and the 19 troop transports that accompanied them. On the morning of Sept. 8, Capt. Odlum has gone aboard the gunboat Uncle Ben, after telling Lt. Dowling that he could spike the guns and retreat if he so chose. Lt. Dowling remained the only officer in the fort, so he asked Confederate Surgeon George H. Bailey and Confederate engineer Lt. Nicholas H. Smith each to take charge of a battery of two guns at the fort, although neither man had had any artillery experience.

At daylight on Sept. 8, the 4 Union gunboats entered the Pass and fired about 20 shells at the fort without receiving any return fire. Many of the rifled cannons on the Union gunboats had 9-inch bores and fired 135-pound shells to a distance of 3 miles. Because no return fire was forthcoming, Lt. Crocker became halfway assured that the fort was deserted. About mid-morning, the Uncle Ben steamed down past the fort. Crocker fired three more shells, all of which passed overhead of the Uncle Ben. The Uncle Ben then retreated into Sabine Lake, since its tiny popguns were only 4", 12-pound guns.

During most of the day, Lt. Dowling kept all of his men out of sight in the "bomb proofs" under the fort, although each gun had been primed and loaded, and a good supply of powder, sewed up in flannel pockets, and cannon balls lay stashed beside each battery. During that time, only Dowling remained above ground with his spy glass, or small telescope, and about 2:30 PM, he saw black smoke pour out of the invaders' smokestacks as the Union gunboats steamed forward toward the fort. Dowling then ordered each of his men above ground, and the aim of each of the six Confederate guns was pinpointed on the 1,200-yard markers in the oyster reefs.

For some reason, the Sachem led the advance up the Louisiana channel on the east side of the oyster reefs, and the Clinton was a little behind in the Texas channel. The lead gunboats continued to fire at the fort, but Dowling allowed no return fire as long as the boats were out of range. As soon as the Sachem passed the 1,200-yard marker, the fire of all six guns were concentrated on the Louisiana channel until a cannon ball pierced the Sachem's steam drum. Immediately the Sachem was shrouded in a cloud of steam as many crewmen and soldiers, some of them burned to the bone, jumped overboard, and the Sachem, a hopeless wreck, soon ran aground on the Louisiana shore.

After that, all Confederate guns were aimed at the Clifton in the Texas channel, which very soon suffered a similar experience and went aground on the Texas shore, its steam drum also billowing clouds of steam under pressure. Again many crewmen and soldiers were cooked to the bone. One Rebel cannon ball went bouncing down the Clifton's deck and cut off the head of the Clifton's starboard gunner. The gunner's head was later found floating in the Pass. As soon as the two gunboats blew up and went aground, the rest of the Union fleet suddenly became very homesick for New Orleans. In their haste to turn around and gallop home, the gunboats Arizona and Granite City ran aground and had to be pulled off the mud flat. The transports Suffolk and Continental collided while fleeing, but sustained very little damage. To lighten their loads, the feet of 200 horses and mules were tied together before they were thrown overboard. Altogether, 200,000 rations, 50 wagons, artillery pieces, many kegs of gunpowder, and barrels of corn meal and flour were thrown overboard during the fleet's mad scramble for New Orleans.

As soon as Lt. Crocker raised a white flag on the Clifton, Lt. Dowling had another terrible dilemma. He had only 47 Confederates in the fort, who luckily had not sustained a single scratch, but were worn out from the reloading and firing of 135 cannon balls during the 40 minute battle, always without the minimal precaution of scrubbing out the cannon barrels. Two Confederate guns were hit and knocked out during the battle. Dowling had to run down to the Clifton and accept Lt. Crocker's sword and surrender. But he dared not expose the fact that there were only 47 men to accept the surrender of 350 prisoners, who might easily have overpowered their captors. Luckily, though, the Uncle Ben soon steamed back into the Pass and towed the disabled SACHEM back to the Texas shore. In command on the Uncle Ben was Lt. Niles H. Smith, thus meaning that two different men named Lt. N. H. Smith played a part in the victory. About 4 PM, the steamboat Roebuck arrived from Beaumont, carrying Lt. Joe Chasteen and the Confederates of Co. F, Griffin's Bn., and the additional Confederates on hand made it possible to secure the capture of so many prisoners.

The next day, about 50 or more dead soldiers and sailors, which included 22 liberated slaves, whose names are unknown, were buried at Mesquite Point on Sabine Lake. During the battle, the Confederate "heroines of Sabine Pass," Kate Dorman and Sarah Vosburg, drove a buggy down to the fort and delivered coffee, doughnuts and a gallon of whiskey to the weary and grimy soldiers.

The Confederates at Sabine Pass had hardly had time to savor and appreciate their victory, but others quickly did, as the story of the "Alamo in reverse" battle was carried back to Houston and Galveston, and eventually back to the Confederate Congress in Richmond, Va., who quickly ordered that a special Davis Guard medal be cast for each of the men in the fort. The battle had saved Upper Texas from Union occupation until the end of the war and allowed East Texas to continue shipping cotton through the blockade and to act as the bread basket for all the Confederates fighting in Louisiana.

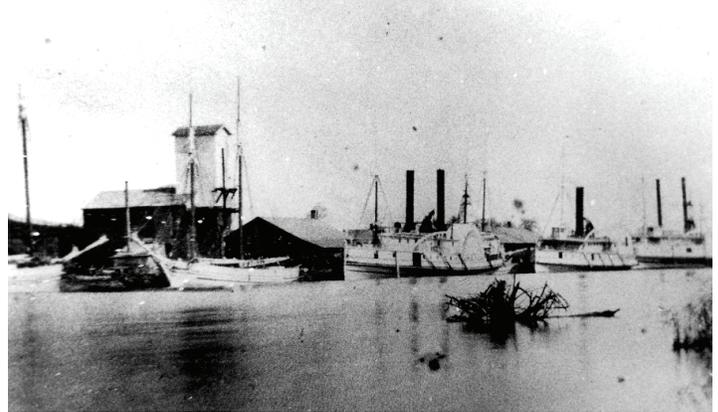
Within a short time, Lt. Dick Dowling was promoted to major in command of all Houston recruitment. But despite his great victory at Sabine Pass, the outcome of the great war had to be decided on the fields of Virginia. Each of the Davis Guards could only watch in horror and disgust as General Lee surrendered all Confederate forces at Appomattox Court House. But there was still another disaster which soon faced the Davis Guard soldiers. During the great yellow fever epidemic of 1867, which killed 3,000 people in Harris and Galveston counties, the beloved Dick Dowling and about half of his Sabine Pass veterans fell victim to the "yellowjack," after having survived the agonies of gunpowder and exploding shells at the battle at Sabine Pass.

## *The USS Maple Leaf*

By Ben Willingham, DCS

Today the *USS Maple Leaf* is a historic shipwreck in the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, FL. The ship was first launched as a combination passenger and freight vessel in 1851 in a Canadian shipyard in Kingston, Ontario. It was a 181-foot side wheeler which measured 24.7 feet at the beam. The ship was sunk by Confederate torpedoes (today we would call them mines) on 1 April 1864.

When the *Maple Leaf* was originally put into service during the War Between the States, it was used to transport Federal troops and equipment along the east coast and at times, to transport Confederate POW's north to Federal prisons. In 1863



the ship's planned route was halted by Confederate POW's who overthrew their guards and took command of the ship. They then maneuvered the ship to Richmond, VA where they escaped. The original ship's company regained control of the ship



and returned to their original activities relocating Federal troops along the east coast for the next year. In April 1864, the *Maple Leaf* was traveling south on the St. Johns River trying to locate and bring blacks back north with it in the hope they would join the Federal army and fight against

their masters. As the *Maple Leaf* was completing one of these trips up the St. Johns, just as she was nearing Jacksonville, a tremendous explosion erupted in the forward areas of the ship. The explosion also caused the ship's boiler to explode causing further damage. In a short time, the ship sank into the soft mud as much of the superstructure burned to the waterline. Today the ship is visible from Mandarin, an area of Jacksonville on the east side of the river and just south of the Buckman Bridge (I-295). Excavation of the ship was started some years ago but disputes as to the actual ownership caused all attempts at restoring the ship to come to an abrupt halt. The wreck was moved from the channel to remove it as a hazard to navigation on the river. It now rests under about 20 feet of water as a National Landmark collecting mud.

Since the beginning of the war, the Confederates had developed several types of torpedoes (mines) including the spar torpedo which could be sent into the side of a ship. As time progressed, the skill in using mines developed as well as the technology in making them. There were areas of the St. Johns River that were heavily mined. One such area was off of Yellow Bluff, the fort on the north side of the river between Jacksonville and Mayport. Other areas were at the mouth of the Ortega River where it joins the St. Johns and at Mandarin Point where the *Maple Leaf* was sunk. Every effort was made to make the St. Johns River inhospitable and a treacherous river to navigate. The *Maple Leaf* was one of five ships sunk in 1864 by mines in the St. Johns. In addition to the mines, in May 1864 the *USS Columbine* was attacked by the Confederate cavalry near Horse Landing on the St. Johns and sunk. It too burned to the waterline and was a total loss.

## *The Confederate Submarine*

By David Hudgins

The concept of a submarine was not a new idea. It had its inception in America during the Revolutionary War when men in barrels tried to sink British ships by drilling holes in the bottoms of the ships. The effort failed to sink any ship, but the idea of a submersible was established.

By summer 1861, it was obvious to both the North and South that this war would not be a quick victory. Secretary of the Confederate Navy Stephen R. Mallory was busy trying to build his new ironclad battleships. If there was going to be a submarine, it would have to come from private investors. H. L. Hunley put together a group in New Orleans to build a three-man submarine named *Pioneer*. By February 1862 *Pioneer* was ready to be tested. The test runs were successful. Only a few things had to be worked out before it was ready. However, in April 1862, New Orleans was captured by Union forces. As they fled the city, the builders and investors ordered the *Pioneer* to be sunk to keep it out of enemy hands.

In late summer 1862 Mr. Hunley arrived in Mobile, Alabama and was the main investor in a new submarine called *Pioneer II*. He contracted with the machine shop of Park & Lyons to build his new weapon of war. In February 1863 *Pioneer II* was completed, but on one of its test runs something went wrong when it was being towed back. It sank in deep water and could not be recovered. No one was killed in this mishap.

A young ex-soldier, Lt. George Dixon, worked at the machine shop where he took a special interest in every detail of the *Pioneer II* project. Lieutenant Dixon had been injured at the battle of Shiloh in April 1862. It was rumored that his girlfriend, Queenie Bennett, had given him a \$20 gold coin to remember her love and to bring him good luck. It was often repeated that he had been shot in the left thigh and the bullet hit the gold coin and saved his life. He walked with a limp and had been discharged from active duty. It was also rumored that he always kept the engraved coin in his pocket, but the story could not be verified.

Mr. Hunley went to work finding new investors for another submarine. This time the vessel would be built to accommodate eight men, seven on a hand-cranked propeller and one to steer the boat. By July 1863 the new submarine was ready to be tested. The name given to this boat was *The H. L. Hunley*. The Confederate Navy sent Admiral Franklin Buchanan to witness the demonstration. *The H. L. Hunley* successfully destroyed a coal barge by submerging and dragging a floating torpedo under the barge. General P. G. T. Beauregard, who was then in charge of defending the Charleston, South Carolina harbor, ordered that the submarine become part of the Confederacy and be shipped by rail to Charleston. The Union blockade had shut down the Charleston harbor. Only very small ships could run the blockade there and carry limited supplies and cotton.

Confederate Navy Lieutenant John Payne volunteered to be the skipper and recruited seven more volunteers. *The H.L. Hunley* had two watertight hatches, one forward and one aft with short conning towers with small portholes. A design flaw was that the hatches were only 14 by 15 ¾ inches and hard to enter and exit. On August 29, 1863, while training, the inexperienced crew made a mistake and the *Hunley* started to sink. Only three of the eight man crew made it out alive. By October the submarine had been raised and was ready for a new crew. H.L. Hunley himself volunteered to be the captain. On October 15, 1863, Captain Hunley took the crew out for training. Once again a mistake caused the submarine to sink with no survivors. The *Hunley* was recovered, but a new crew was not assigned.

In Mobile, Lt. Dixon heard about the accident with the *H. L. Hunley*, and because he knew every system and its purpose, he was convinced that he was the man to guide the boat. He traveled to Charleston to convince General Beauregard to let him be the new skipper of the *H. L. Hunley*. He was given permission to get a volunteer crew and started training in November. After 2 ½ months of training Lt. Dixon felt the crew was ready and started to watch for a calm night.

On February 17, 1864 at 7 p.m. the crew climbed into the *Hunley*. It was cold and dark inside. Candles were used for light, and the men cranking on the propeller warmed up the boat. The *Hunley* skipper decided to attack the 200 foot long Union ship, the *USS Housatonic*. A wooden spar containing 90 pounds of black powder in a copper cylinder was attached to the front of the *Hunley*. The spar had a barbed point to ram into a ship and the torpedo explosive could be activated from inside the submarine as it pulled away.

The watchman on the *USS Housatonic* did not notice the submarine until it was ready to ram the ship. The *Hunley* successfully embedded the barbed spar into the ship, backed away and exploded the torpedo. The *USS Housatonic* sank in five minutes. On land men set a bonfire to help guide the submarine back to shore. The bonfire burned all night long. However, the *Hunley* did not return.

In 1980 Clive Cussler started a search for the *Hunley*. On May 3, 1995 divers located the submarine four miles from Charleston Harbor in 28 feet of water and covered with sand. On August 8, 2000 at 8:39 a.m. the *Hunley* was raised again to the surface after 136 years. Over 20,000 people gathered to greet the first submarine to sink a ship in war time. Remains of the eight crew members still located at their normal positions were found in the submarine. But no gold coin was found. The burials for Lt. Dixon and the other seven crew members were conducted on April 17, 2004 in Charleston by Confederate re-enactors and members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

The *Hunley* is now in a cold water storage tank at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center and is available for viewing. All the men died at their posts and the crew's bench, canteens and other personal items were located. The excavation of the submarine was almost complete when Maria Jacobsen, chief archaeologist, explored some mud underneath where Lt. Dixon sat. With the tip of her fingers she felt something. Maria washed away the silt and a \$20 gold piece was found. On the coin is inscribed "Shiloh, April 6, 1862 – My Life Preserver – GED." Queenie's lucky gold coin rumor was laid to rest. It was true and the coin is now on display at the Conservation Center. With his lucky coin in his pocket and Queenie Bennett's love in his heart, Lt. George Dixon was willing to lay down his life for the cause.

*David Hudgins is a member of the Ellis County Museum Board of Directors and co-founder of the Ellis County Veterans Appreciation Committee. He also serves as Chaplain of the O. M. Roberts Camp #178, Sons of Confederate Veterans. For more information, visit [www.omroberts.com](http://www.omroberts.com).*



### *New Evidence for the Hunley*

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) - Researchers say they may have the final clues needed to solve the mystery of the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley, which never resurfaced after it became the first sub in history to sink an enemy warship, taking its eight-man crew to a watery grave.

Scientists said Monday that the Hunley apparently was less than 20 feet away from the Housatonic when the crew ignited a torpedo that sank the Union blockade ship off South Carolina in 1864. That means it may have been close enough for the crew to be knocked unconscious by the explosion, long enough that they may have died before awakening.

For years, historians thought the Hunley was much farther away and had speculated the crew ran out of air before they were able to return to shore. The discovery was based on a recent examination of the spar - the iron pole in front of the hand-cranked sub that held the torpedo.

The Hunley, built in Mobile, Ala., and deployed off Charleston in an attempt to break the Union blockade during the Civil War, was finally found in 1995. It was raised five years later and brought to a lab in North Charleston, where it is being conserved.

Conservator Paul Mardikian had to remove material crusted onto one end of the spar after 150 years at the bottom of the ocean. Beneath the muck he found evidence of a copper sleeve. The sleeve is in keeping with a diagram of the purported design of a Hunley torpedo

that a Union general acquired after the war and is in the National Archives in Washington.

"The sleeve is an indication the torpedo was attached to the end of the spar," Mardikian said. He said the rest of the 16-foot spar shows deformities in keeping with it being bent during an explosion.

Now it may be that the crew, found at their seats when the sub was raised with no evidence of an attempt to abandon ship, may have been knocked out by the concussion of an explosion so close by, said Lt. Gov. Glenn McConnell, a member of the South Carolina Hunley Commission.

"I think the focus now goes down to the seconds and minutes around the attack on the Housatonic," he said. "Did the crew get knocked out? Did some of them get knocked out? Did it cause rivets to come loose and the water rush into the hull?"

The final answers will come when scientists begin to remove encrustations from the outer hull, a process that will begin later this year. McConnell said scientists will also arrange to have a computer simulation of the attack created based on the new information. The simulation might be able to tell what effect the explosion would have on the nearby sub. Maria Jacobsen, the senior archaeologist on the project, said small models might also be used to recreate the attack.

Ironically, the crucial information was literally at the feet of scientists for years. The spar has long been on display to the public in a case at Clemson University's Warren Lasch Conservation Lab where the Hunley is being conserved. With other priorities on the sub itself, it wasn't until last fall that Mardikian began the slow work of removing encrustations from the spar.

Scientists X-rayed the spar early on and found the denser material that proved to be the cooper sleeve. But Jacobsen said it had long been thought it was some sort of device to release the torpedo itself. Finding evidence of the attached torpedo is "not only extremely unexpected, it's extremely critical," she said. "What we know now is the weapons system exploded at the end of the spar. That is very, very significant."

Photo # NH 42247 "Capture of New Orleans. Farragut passing the Forts by Night", by J.O. Davidson



The Turtle, at far right, Attacks a Union Ship

## *The "Turtle"* *(CSS Manassas)*

By Gary Loudermilk

When the WBTS began one of the initial Union Strategies was to blockade southern ports. New Orleans was the largest port in the Confederacy so it ranked high on the Union navy's list of blockade targets. By October 1861, five U.S. Navy vessels had taken up position at the Head of Passes where the Mississippi River splits into several channels to the Gulf and were a definite threat to the City. In New Orleans, CSN Commodore George N. Hollins was determined to drive the invaders away. Hollins commanded a small number of armed vessels that were affectionately known as the Mosquito Fleet. None of the boats carried more than a few guns, and Hollins knew he had to have something with more punch to lift the Yankee blockade.

Downstream from New Orleans at Fort St. Philip there was an ironclad ram christened the *Manassas* in honor of the Confederates' great victory that summer in Virginia. Nearly 150 feet in length, the *Manassas* was a formidable weapon. The ship was constructed from a tug by covering it with heavy oak timbers, which were then overlaid with 1.5 inches of iron. The vessel carried one gun but the ship's most dangerous weapon was a heavy ram that could cave in the side of most ships. The iron superstructure gave the *Manassas* a humped back appearance so people naturally nicknamed it the "Turtle."

Commodore Hollins coveted the ironclad, but it was a privately owned vessel that had been constructed to serve as a privateer. However, Hollins ordered his subordinate, Lt. Alexander F. Warley, to seize it for the Confederate navy. Hollin's terse order read, "To Lt Comr. A.F. Warley-Sir, You will proceed and take charge of the steamer *Manassas*."

Alexander Warley (1823-1895) was a truly interesting individual in his own right. He was an exceptional naval officer who served in both the U. S. and Confederate navies and enjoyed a robust life of far-flung adventures at sea during several dramatic periods in American maritime history. Warley's career began in the 1840s, when he served as a midshipman on Old Ironsides and later took part in the Mexican War. His military exploits reached their zenith when he commanded the *Manassas*. If you would like more details of Warley's life and exploits, there is a great book available about him and his career. It is written by John Stickney and is titled, "*Promotion or the Bottom of the River, the Blue and Gray Naval Careers of Alexander F. Warley, South Carolinian.*"

On October 11, Lt. Warley carried out Hollin's order. In a narrative written much later, a young Midshipman gave this account of how the *Manassas* was seized, beginning aboard Warley's ship the *McRae*:

*"To a polite request that the Manassas be turned over to us came the reply that we "did not have men enough to take her." The McRae was ranged up alongside of her [the Manassas] and a boat was lowered. Lieutenant Warley ordered me to accompany him. On arriving alongside of the ram we found her crew lined up on the turtleback, swearing that they would kill the first man who attempted to board her. There was a ladder reaching to the water from the top of her armor to the waterline. Lieutenant Warley, pistol in hand, ordered me to keep the men in the boat until he gave the order for them to join him. Running up the ladder, his face set in grim determination, he caused a sudden panic among the heroic (?) crew of longshoremen who incontinently took to their heels and like so many prairie dogs disappeared down their hole of a hatchway with Mr. Warley after them. He drove them back on deck and then drove them ashore, some of them jumping overboard and swimming for it."*

Warley informed those who remained on board that the *Manassas* was now a Confederate naval vessel, and as simple as that Commodore Hollins had his ram.

In the pre-dawn hours of October 12, Hollins headed downriver with his Mosquito Fleet to engage the Yankee ships at the Head of Passes. Warley led the way in the powerful but slow moving *Manassas* with orders to ram the Union flagship USS *Richmond*. Behind him tugs towed three fire rafts chained together in a line across the river channel. These rafts were piled high with pine knots and other combustibles soaked in turpentine. When released, it was hoped the chain holding them together would snag an enemy vessel and the current would swing the fire rafts together to envelope the boat in flames. Following the fire rafts were the rest of Hollins's ships.

Captain John Polk's unsuspecting Union fleet lay at anchor on both sides of the river at the Head of Passes. The moonless night and heavy river mist made conditions perfect for a surprise attack, but, incredibly, Polk had not established a picket line of boats upstream from his position to warn him of an enemy approach. He had also failed to order the lights extinguished, so each one of his ships was visible in the dark night.

When the *Manassas* reached the *USS Preble*, the first Union ship in line, Warley yelled down to the engineer, "Let her out, Hardy! Let her out now!" The engine crew poured buckets of tar, tallow, and sulfur into the fires to supercharge the steam engine, and the *Manassas* quickly reached its maximum speed of ten knots.

Onboard the *Preble*, Commander Henry French had just retired when an excited midshipman burst into his room exclaiming, "Captain, there is a steamer right alongside of us." Jumping out of his berth, French glanced out a porthole and saw the dark hulk of the *Manassas* rush by barely twenty yards away.

By the time French got up on deck, his crew had already hoisted a red lantern to warn the *Richmond* of the ram's approach, and they fired a few shots at the *Manassas* as it steamed out of sight into the blackness.

*Richmond's* gunners, alerted by the *Preble's* cannons and warning lantern, also opened fire but could not stop the *Manassas*. Warley's ram glanced off a coal barge tied alongside the ship and then drove into the *Richmond's* forward port side cracking the timbers below the water line.

Warley managed to back out of the *Richmond* but he found the collision had knocked loose one of his engines, leaving the heavy vessel unable to attain ramming speed to go after any other enemy ships. He then ordered rockets be fired to signal the rest of the *Mosquito Fleet* to engage. A young midshipman stood in the top hatchway and lit the first rocket but burned himself in the process and dropped the sizzling missile. It went screaming down into the ship's bowels ricocheting around the interior. Crewmen thought a Yankee shell had penetrated the armor and ran in every direction seeking cover. When the rocket finally sputtered out and they realized what had happened a roar of laughter echoed through the iron vessel. Eventually the embarrassed midshipman managed to fire off the rockets successfully.

When the *Mosquito Fleet* saw the signal rockets arch through the dark sky the fire rafts were lit and set loose. Commander French on the *Preble* looked upstream to see three lights growing steadily brighter. "Fire rafts!" he yelled to the men and ordered them to raise the anchor and get under way. By that time Captain Pope had the *Richmond* moving. He steamed past the *Preble* banging away with his guns in pursuit of the retreating *Manassas* but then beat a hasty retreat when he saw the fire rafts heading his way. The fire rafts caused great consternation among the Yankees but none ever actually hit a ship and they eventually burned themselves out.

On the *Manassas*, Warley found that the enemy's shells had sheared off one smoke stack and knocked the other one into the missing stack's open vent. With no draft, smoke quickly filled the ship and began choking the crew. Engineer William Hardy grabbed an axe and rushed up on deck. While shells screamed around them, one crewman held Hardy by his belt while he leaned over the smoking vent and chopped away the clogging debris. This brave act helped clear the ship of smoke but Warley still had little power so he ran the *Manassas* aground and prepared to blow it up, if necessary, to keep the vessel out of enemy hands.

The Union fleet quickly retreated down Southwest Pass toward the Gulf, routed largely by the one Rebel ram. The *USS Vincennes* ran aground on a mud flat so Pope beached the leaking *Richmond*, as well, to provide protective covering fire if needed. Hollins cautiously approached the enemy and exchanged some long range cannon fire but no damage was inflicted on either side and he soon retreated, as well.



**Turtle Ramming  
USS Brooklyn, April 1862**

At about 8:00 a.m., Captain Pope hoisted signal flags ordering his ships "to get under way," but Capt. Robert Handy onboard the *Vincennes* read it to say "abandon ship." As a result, he ordered the crew to the long boats and a fuse be lit to his powder magazine to destroy the vessel.

Captain Pope must have been astonished when Handy arrived at the *Richmond* with the *Vincennes'* flag wrapped around his waist. He was absolutely mortified when Handy told him he was blowing up his own vessel. When the expected explosion never occurred (the sailor who was ordered to light the fuse cut off the end and threw it overboard), Pope ordered Handy back to the *Vincennes*. By the next day, all of the ships had crossed the bar into the Gulf of Mexico although numerous cannons and quantities of ordnance had to be heaved over the side to lighten the vessels enough to reach the safety of deep water.

The U.S. Navy was humiliated. Even though Pope greatly outgunned the Rebels he had been run out of the Mississippi River by the little *Mosquito Fleet*. Someone had to answer for the fiasco, and Pope probably would have been court-martialed had he not saved the navy the trouble by requesting to be relieved for "health" reasons. Robert Handy was sent back North to face a court of inquiry. Three of his crewmen swore that they also had seen the "abandon ship" signal from the *Richmond* but claimed that it was then changed to "get under way." Nonetheless, Handy's career was ruined and he was never given another command.

On the Confederate side, Commodore Hollins was at first widely praised for driving away the Yankees, even though it was Warley who bore the brunt of the fight. But then questions were raised as to why Hollins broke off the action instead of pressing home the attack against the grounded *Richmond* and *Vincennes*. Newspaper editors in New Orleans could not help but wonder if more aggressive action might have resulted in the destruction or capture of the two vessels.

The fight at the Head of Passes lifted spirits in New Orleans, and some people naively believed the blockade was broken for good. As it turned out, the only real result of the battle was to embarrass the Yankees and end two officers' careers. The U.S. Navy quickly reestablished its blockade of the Mississippi River, and prices steadily rose in the Crescent City as shortages grew. Before long soap cost one dollar a bar and coffee \$1.25 per pound.

While the minor clash at the Head of Passes gets little notice in Civil War literature, it is important for one thing. The *Manassas* was the first modern ironclad in history to attack an enemy vessel, although the *CSS Virginia* (aka *Merrimac*) is usually given that credit for its attack on the Union fleet at Hampton Roads, Virginia, five months later.

Unfortunately, the "Turtle" did not survive the war. It exploded and sank in April 1862 after fighting a losing battle with David Farragut's fleet when Farragut ran past Forts Jackson and St. Philip on his way to New Orleans.

## *The Confederate Navy – Part 1*

By David Hudgins

The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 along with the secession of South Carolina in December was the rumblings for the start of the American Civil War. By February 1861 seven more deep South states including Texas had seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. Four more states would leave the Union by spring.

The newly formed Confederate States of America was not prepared to defend its vast coastline and mighty rivers. The new government had thousands of miles of coastline, but not one navy ship or officer. The Mississippi River ran right down the middle of the Confederacy, but there were no boats to protect it. The South did have some forts on the coastline and rivers and this helped buy time to organize a navy. Confederate President Jefferson Davis, a graduate of West Point who had fought in the Mexican War and later served as Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce, knew the importance of a strong navy and went to work on building one. He appointed Stephen R. Mallory of Key West, Florida to establish a Navy Department. Mallory immediately formed four sections of this new navy. The Ordnance Section was to oversee ship building and the outfitting of other boats for military service and the Medical Section to oversee care for sailors. The Orders and Details Section would oversee the chain of command and how the navy was to run. The last section was Provision which would oversee uniforms and standard items for the crew.

John L. Porter was put in charge of the Ordnance Section. He knew the U.S. Navy already had 80 steam ships and 60 sailing ships. He would never be able to match the Union Navy strength, so a new war ship had to be developed to counter the Northern advantage. President Lincoln had already started a blockade of Confederate ports called the “Anaconda Plan”, which like a large anaconda snake would strangle the South. The South would not be able to ship its cotton out or get supplies from Europe.

When war broke out the South did not have a navy ship or officer. The U.S. Navy had 1,550 officers, but as states from the South seceded from the Union those officers from the South resigned their commissions and followed their hearts back to their native state. Not all Southern officers went home, but the South was able to outfit its navy with almost 400 experienced navy officers.

President Lincoln deemed any officer from the South who resigned his commission to be a deserter facing arrest unless he went home. An officer could not resign his commission because he did not want to fight against his home state. The South now had Navy officers. Now all they needed were ships.

The first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter in the Charleston, South Carolina harbor. The Union refused to surrender the fort and the Confederacy did not have a navy to attack the fort, but they did build a floating battery. The battery consisted of a floating raft with a wooden front wall at a forty five degree angle for protection and small holes cut out for cannons. This idea of how to protect the crew spearheaded the design that produced the first ironclad war ship. It would sit low in the water. This deep draft was designed to make sure the wooden hull of the ship was not exposed to enemy fire. These new ironclad ships would provide protection for the crew and the propulsion system with the same design as the floating battery did at Fort Sumter, except these ships would use armor plates on the wooden casement frame at a thirty five degree angle.

In April of 1861, the Confederacy captured the Norfolk Virginia Navy Yard and secured 1,198 heavy guns to be used on ships and coastal or river forts. It also provided the South with a first class shipyard to construct the new ironclads. Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans were other ports used to build ships. Shipyards for river boats were found in Baton Rouge, Selma, Columbus and Memphis. Some river boats were built in open fields next to a river. Work started on the first ironclad on June 11, 1861, and was commissioned into service in February of 1862. The name of this new Confederate ironclad battleship was the *CSS Virginia*. The ship did suffer from a lack of speed and was hard to maneuver due to its deep draft (23 feet) but was the beginning of the Confederate Navy.

## *Staff and Committee Chairmen*

Archivist General	Philip Isset
Chaplain General	Raymond Holder
Communications General	Gary M. Loudermilk
Deputy Communications General (Editor)	Jeffrey L. Sizemore
Historian General	Ben Willingham
Quartermaster General	Robert Turk
Deputy Quartermaster General (Webmaster)	Stephen McGehee
Registered Agent	Dick Knight
Chief ADC	JEB Stuart
ADC International	Roger Thornton
Awards Chair	Ed Stack
Education Chair	Tony Sinclair
Finance Chair	Conway Moncure
Grants Chair	Howard Jones
Literary Chair	Charles Smith
Membership Chair	Howard Jones
Real Sons Chair	J. Troy Massey
Scholarship Chair	Gary M. Loudermilk
Time & Place Chair	Harold Davis
War & Military Service Chair	Charles Smith

## *Submittal Entries*

MOS&B Officer's Call Magazine welcomes submittals via e-mail to [editor@mosbfl.org](mailto:editor@mosbfl.org) or [swampeditor@yahoo.com](mailto:swampeditor@yahoo.com) on or before the 5th day of the month. Pictures are welcome. Please submit articles in Microsoft Word format or as plain text in your e-mail.

CIVIL WAR HISTORY  
**JAMES COUNTRY MERCANTILE**  
 111 N. Main Liberty, MO 64068  
 816-781-9473 FAX 816-781-1470  
 jamescntry@aol.com [www.jamescountry.com](http://www.jamescountry.com)

*Everything Needed For The Living Historian!*  
*Ladies - Gentlemen - Civilian - Military*  
 Uniforms – Ladies Clothing - Accoutrements—Weapons - Accessories  
**YOUR PATRONAGE IS APPRECIATED!**

### *The Confederate Navy – Part 2*

#### *CSS Virginia*

By David Hudgins

The year was 1861 and the American Civil War had begun. The Confederate States of America, under new President Jefferson Davis, was trying to put a new government together along with an army and navy. An army was formed without haste, but a navy was not as easy. President Davis appointed Stephen R. Mallory of Key West, Florida, to establish a navy. Mallory knew he would never be able to match the number of ships that the Union had at its disposal. He and his team designed a new type of ship that the world had never seen. This new ironclad battleship would be known as the *CSS Virginia*.

When the state of Virginia voted to secede from the Union in 1861, the Federal government ordered the navy ship yard in Portsmouth, Virginia to be destroyed. There was a delay in execution of these orders and the Confederate forces were now close by. So the total destruction of the ship yard never happened. Confederate forces moved into the ship yard and found 1,198 heavy guns unharmed and only slight damage to the building and docks. The Confederates also found a ship in the harbor that the Union Army had tried to destroy by setting it on fire. The ship was the 1856 *USS Merrimack* which had been in the navy yard for repairs. The fire destroyed the top deck but the hull and the steam engine were not destroyed. Work started on May 18, 1861, to salvage the ship and by May 30<sup>th</sup> the *Merrimack* was in the shipyard dock. When the Secretary of the Confederate Navy learned of this he put his team together to design the first ironclad. Work started on June 11, 1861, to remove the burned sections from the hull and to lower the waterline to give it extra protection. The ship was given a large twin bladed screw propeller, powered by the salvaged steam engine. The name of the ship was changed to the *CSS Virginia*.

Specifications on the *CSS Virginia* type, which was called a casement ironclad include:

Length	275 feet
Beam	51 feet 2 inches
Draft	21 to 23 feet
Propulsion	4 boiler steam engines
Speed	5 to 6 knots
Crew	full crew was 320 men
Guns	2- 7 inch, two 6.4 inch Brooke rifles cannons six 9 inch Dahlgren smoothbore cannons nons, and two 12 pound Howitzers
Side Armor	25 inches of oak and/or pine side casements at a 35 degree angle with two 2 inch iron plating over the wood

The ship's low draft gave it protection from other ships firing at its hull. However, due to this low draft it took 45 minutes to an hour to turn the ship around. The 35 degree angle on the side casement caused cannon balls to deflect off due to the angle. European ships had started to use iron plating to give some protection, but the degree of angle and total enclosure protecting the crew and propulsion system was a new improvement. The ship had two enclosed decks. The lower deck was used for the steam engine, its coal supply, and storage for other supplies. The upper deck was used for the crew and the cannon placements. At the front of the ship there was also an enclosed pilot house, rounded like a funnel, used to steer the ship. The rudder was operated by an iron steering chain covered with an iron chain cover to protect it from cannon shots. All openings in the front, rear and sides for cannons also had a gun port shutter operated by a chain pulley. This innovation allowed the ship to be sealed tight when cannons were not in use. The ship was outfitted with a bolt-on ram device to ram wooden hull ships. This new ironclad battleship would fly the Confederate thirteen stars and bars flag, not the battle flag.

The North had spies in the South and knew the South was building this new ironclad battleship and started to work on an ironclad of its own, to be named the *USS Monitor*. The South also had spies and was aware of the *Monitor's* construction. Information had leaked out to Northern newspapers about the construction of the *Virginia*, but many Northern newspapers still referred to it as the *Merrimack* or as "the rebel monster." It was just a matter of time before the two ironclad ships met in battle.

## *Confederate Navy - Part 3* *Battle of Hampton Road*

By David Hudgins

On March 8, 1862, the Secretary of the Confederate Navy, Stephen R. Mallory, unleashed his new ironclad battleship to the world. The name of the ship was the *CSS Virginia*. At the Portsmouth, Virginia ship yard, the Confederate Navy had converted the 1856 U. S. Navy *USS Merrimack* into an enclosed, iron plated, coal powered steam ship with fourteen cannon gun ports. The new ironclad battleship would sail under the Confederate thirteen stars and bars flag, not the Confederate battle flag. In 1861 President Abraham Lincoln implemented the "Anaconda Plan", a blockade of all Southern ports. The blockade was planned to stop the Confederate States of America from selling its cotton to Europe and the purchasing of foreign weapons. The plan's name was derived from the large anaconda snake that strangles its victim. This is what President Lincoln was planning for the South.

In the early morning of March 8, 1862, the *CSS Virginia* steamed out of port with its flotilla of five support ships into Hampton Roads Bay. The five support vessels, the *Raleigh*, *Teaser*, *Patrick Henry*, *Jamestown* and *Beaufort* were not enclosed ironclad ships. The *CSS Virginia* was to engage the Union blockade ships in order to open the harbor. The first ship the *Virginia* encountered was the all wood, sail powered *USS Cumberland*. The *Virginia* opened fire on the wooden ship causing great damage. The *Cumberland* returned cannon fire but could not harm the *Virginia* due to its ironclad protection and the angle of the iron plates which caused cannon balls to bounce off the sides. The *Virginia* steamed forward toward the crippled *Cumberland* and rammed her in the starboard bow with its iron ram. As the *Cumberland* started to sink it broke off the iron ram from the *Virginia* which caused a leak in the *Virginia's* bow.

The *Virginia* now turned to the next Union ship, the *USS Congress*, who had just witnessed the fate of the *Cumberland*, then proceeded to sail into shallower water. The *Virginia* with its low draft of 23 feet could not follow the *Congress* into the shallow water. It appeared like the *Congress* was going to escape, but the ship ran onto a sandbar and was grounded. The *Virginia* opened fire on the *Congress* and after about an hour the commanding officer of the *Congress* surrendered. The *Virginia* acknowledged the surrender and stopped firing on the ship so the crew could ferry to shore and safety. A short time later a Union shore cannon opened up on the *Virginia* causing an outrage from the crew. This was a breach of war protocol by the Union. To retaliate for this action, the *Virginia* opened fire again on the *Congress*, but this time with heated cannon balls known as "hot shot". The heated cannon balls ignited the ship and it burned into the night.

The *CSS Virginia* steamed toward the *USS Minnesota*, which like the *Congress* had done, sailed for shallower water and protection. The *Minnesota* did make it closer to shore before

also grounding on a sandbar. However, this time the *Virginia* could not get close enough to do any real damage to the ship. With it being late in the day the *Virginia* retired, knowing it would come back the next day to finish its work.

The next morning the *CSS Virginia* and the support ships steamed out to Hampton Roads Bay to complete the destruction of the Union blockade. However this time there was a new type of ship defending the blockade ships. It was the Union ironclad, *USS Monitor*. This ironclad was different from the *CSS Virginia* in that it only had a small round pilot house with a gun port that could be moved around the pilothouse. The ship had a low draft in the water like the *Virginia*, but with only a single pilothouse and moveable gun port that would be much harder to hit. The *Monitor* had arrived that night from the Brooklyn Navy Yard with workmen on board trying to finish the ship. It had started its journey the day before and while in tow she was almost lost twice in heavy storms.

The two ironclads headed straight for each other. This would be the world's first battle between ironclads. Each ship opened fire on the other as they passed, some at point blank range. After hours of shelling each other, the *Monitor* retreated when a cannon shot hit the iron pilothouse's horizontal viewing slit while the commanding officer was looking out. The officer was blinded and had some burns on his face. The *Virginia* wanted to go after the *Monitor*, but it was now late in the day. The tide would be falling soon which could cause a problem in returning to the *Virginia's* home port. The battle between the two ironclads had ended in a draw without a clear victor, but both ships were damaged in the battle. The *CSS Virginia* remained in Portsmouth for repairs until April 4, 1862. The *Monitor* was under strict orders not to engage the *Virginia* again. The two ironclads would never again meet in battle.

In May of 1862 advancing Union land troops were close to Portsmouth, the *Virginia's* home port. The ship could not go up the James River because of its low draft. The ship could not be moved to another port because it was not an ocean-going vessel. On the morning of May 11, 1862, the crew took her out and set fire to powder trails. When they reached the ironclad's magazine room, the powder caused the ship to explode and sink. The *Monitor's* fate was not much better as she was lost at sea in a storm on December 31, 1862.

The year 1862 ushered in a new class of navy ship that would change the world and would be a wake-up call for all wooden navy ships. Ironically, these ironclads that made such an impact on all of the navies in the world would have such short lives.

## *The Confederate Navy – Part 4* *CSA Ships*

By David Hudgins

In 1861 Confederate President Jefferson Davis appointed Stephen R. Mallory of Key West, Florida as Secretary of the new Confederate Navy. Mallory did not have one ship or a single naval officer. However he had remarkable success, given the lack of industrial resources and ship yards in the South, building a very respectful navy in such a short time. Many Union Naval officers resigned their commissions and followed their hearts back to their native Southern states as states seceded from the Union. This gave the South the naval officers it needed.

Listed below are the accomplishments of Mallory's new enclosed ironclad battleships.

*CSS Virginia* - Converted from *USS Merrimack* in June 1861. Provided protection for the James River and to break up the blockade near Norfolk, Virginia. Destroyed May 11, 1862 to avoid capture. Crew 320.

*CSS Atlanta* - Converted in spring 1861 from a Scottish built blockade runner. Provided protection for the bay around Savannah. Surrendered June 1863 after a battle with two Union monitors. Crew 145.

*CSS Baltic* - Converted from a Philadelphia built river towboat. Provided protection for Mobile Bay and the Mobile, Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers areas. Crew 150.

*CSS Arkansas* - Laid down (construction began) in Memphis, Tennessee in October 1861. Provided protection on the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers from Baton Rouge to Vicksburg. After several battles destroyed by crew. Crew 200.

*CSS Huntsville* and *CSS Tuscaloosa* - Launched at Selma, Alabama in February 1862. Provided protection of Mobile Bay. Crew 140 each.

*CSS Georgia* - Laid down March 1862. Commissioned July 1863. Provided protection for Savannah. Destroyed when the city fell in 1864. Crew 200.

*CSS Fredericksburg* - Constructed in Richmond, Virginia in 1862. Provided protection for the James River and the city of Richmond. Destroyed by crew at the fall of Richmond in 1865. Crew 125.

*CSS Richmond* - Laid down at the Norfolk, Virginia Navy Yard in 1862. Provided protection for the James River and city of Richmond. Destroyed April 1865. Crew 180.

*CSS Chicora* - Built at Charleston, South Carolina in 1862. Provided protection for Charleston, South Carolina. Destroyed to prevent capture in 1865. Crew 180.

*CSS Palmetto State* - Laid down January 1862 at Charleston. Provided protection for Charleston. Burned by Confederates upon evacuation in 1865. Crew 180.

*CSS North Carolina* - Constructed in Wilmington in 1862. Provided protection for Wilmington. Developed leak and sank from destruction by teredos, a wood eating worm. Crew 180.

*CSS Raleigh* - Laid down 1863. Provided protection for Wilmington. Crew 180.

*CSS Savannah* - Built at Savannah, Georgia in 1862. Provided protection for Savannah until the fall of the city in 1864. Destroyed by crew. Crew 180.

*CSS Missouri* - Launched at Shreveport, Louisiana in 1863. Provided protection for Shreveport and helped Confederate troops and supplies cross the Red River from Texas to Louisiana. Crew 145. Surrendered to U. S. naval forces in June 1865.

*CSS Manassas* - Converted from the Massachusetts built *Enoch Train* in summer 1861. Provided protection for New Orleans and lower Mississippi River. Destroyed during battle in 1862. Crew 104.

*CSS Nashville* - Laid down in February 1863 at Montgomery, Alabama. Provided protection for Mobile Bay. Crew 130. Surrendered to Federal forces in May 1865.

*CSS Virginia II* - Completed in 1864 in Richmond, Virginia. Provided protection for the James River and city of Richmond. Destroyed by crew at the fall of Richmond in 1865. Crew 160.

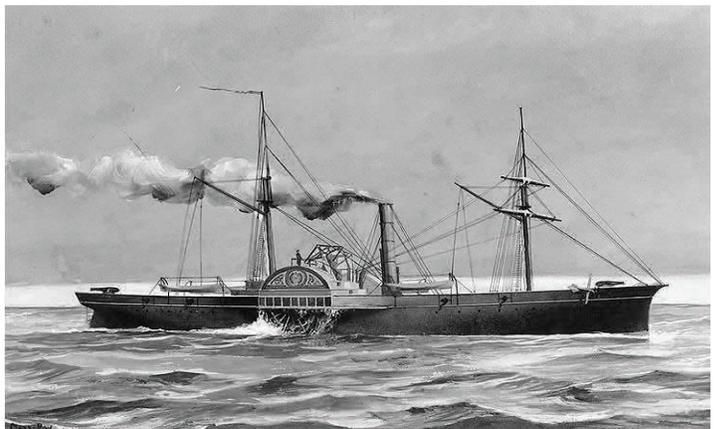
*CSS Albermarle* - Built at Edwards Ferry, North Carolina in 1864. Provided protection on the Roanoke River. Crew 50. Sunk by a Union spar torpedo in October 1864.

*CSS Neuse* - Laid down in April 1863 on the Neuse River in North Carolina. Guarded the inland waters of North Carolina. Crew 50. Destroyed by Confederates in 1865 to avoid capture by General Sherman.

*CSS Charleston* - Laid down December 1862 in Charleston, South Carolina. Commission delayed until July 1864. Provided protection for Charleston. Set on fire and abandoned in 1865 when the city fell. Crew 150.

*CSS Tennessee* - Laid down October 1862 at Selma, Alabama. Commissioned February 1864. Provided protection for Mobile Bay. Crew 133. Surrendered to Admiral David Farragut, USN in August 1864 after severely damaged in battle.

Secretary of the Confederate Navy, Stephen Mallory, had laid out a plan to build 50 ironclad battleships, but only 22 were completed. All 50 were laid down, but were delayed waiting on steam engines, which was a problem for the South. Other ships were started late into 1864 and were never finished, such as the *CSS Texas*. Mallory was able to purchase only one ironclad from Europe due to pressure exerted by the Union, causing them to refuse to sell to the Confederacy. The *CSS Stonewall* was built by France, sold to the Danish Navy who in turn sold it to the Confederacy. It was the only ocean-going ironclad in the fleet. However the war ended before its journey home. Mallory also converted other boats using cotton bales and land cannons to help provide protection to river and sea ports. Some would say Stephen Mallory performed a miracle building a Navy from nothing to a force that protected Confederate ports for almost five years.



## *The Blockade Runners*

FROM "THE NAVY IN THE CIVIL WAR, VOL. I"  
BY JAMES RUSSELL SOLEY, USN

The Confederate war effort relied on the bravery of the "blockade runners," a small group of sailors who sailed goods in and out of Southern seaports under the guns of Northern ships. James Russell Soley, (1850-1911) former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, tells a story of speed, cunning, and wild fortune.

During the early part of the war blockade-running was carried on from the Capes of the Chesapeake to the mouth of the Rio Grande. It was done by vessels of all sorts and sizes. The most successful were the steamers that had been active along the Southern coasting lines, which found themselves thrown out of employment when the war broke out. The rest were small craft, which brought cargoes of more or less value from the Bahamas or Cuba, and carried back cotton. They answered the purpose sufficiently well, for the blockade was not yet rigorous, speed was not an essential, and the familiarity of the skippers with the coast enabled them to elude the ships-of-war, which were neither numerous nor experienced in the business. By April, 1861, the greater part of the last year's cotton crop had been disposed of, and it was estimated that only about one-seventh remained unexported when the blockade was established. Cotton is gathered in September, and shipments are generally made in the winter and spring, and considerable time must consequently elapse before a new supply could come into the market. The proclamation of the blockade caused for a time a cessation of regular commerce; and it was only after a considerable interval that a new commerce, with appliances specially adapted to the altered state of things, began to develop. Meantime illicit trade in a small way flourished. The profits were considerable, though not comparable to those of later years; and the work required neither skill nor capital.

This guerilla form of contraband traffic gradually decreased after the first year, though there was always a little going on from the Bahamas, and on the coast of Texas. By the end of the second year it was only to be found in out-of-the-way nooks and corners. Little by little the lines were drawn more tightly, as Rear Admiral DuPont threw vessels into the inlets below Charleston, and Goldsborough into the Sounds of North Carolina, while the blockading force grew from a dozen vessels to three hundred. In all the squadrons the burning and cutting out of schooners gave frequent occupation to the blockading forces, and the smaller fry were driven from their haunts. As these vessels were captured or destroyed one by one, there was nothing to replace them, and they gradually disappeared.

Meantime the blockade was beginning to tell both upon friends--or, to speak with exactness, upon neutrals--and upon enemies. The price of cotton decreased at the South, and advanced abroad. The supply was short, the crop of 1861 being about half that of the previous year; East India cotton had not yet come into the market, and the demand was great. The price of manufactured goods at the South advanced enormously. The time was ripe for judicious action; and the Liverpool cotton-merchants, who in the winter of 1861-62 had found ruin staring them in the face, suddenly awoke to the fact that the ports of the South were an Eldorado of wealth to the man who could go in and come out again in safety.

With cotton at four pence a pound in Wilmington and two shillings a pound in England, the Liverpool merchant was not a man to hesitate long. Blockade-running from Europe had already been attempted, but the profits had not been sufficient to

outweigh the risk of capture during the transatlantic voyage. Now, however, when half-crowns could be turned into sovereigns at a single venture, capitalists could afford to run almost any risk; and as it happened, at the very time when the profits increased, a plan was devised to lessen the danger. Attempts had already been made to obviate the risk by a fictitious destination to Nassau or Bermuda; but the capture and condemnation of one or two vessels proved this device to be a failure. The plan of transshipment was then adopted, and two vessels were employed, each specially fitted for its peculiar service, one for the long and innocent passage across the ocean, the other for the short but illegal run to the blockaded port; and liability to confiscation was thus reduced to a minimum. Capital was invested in large amounts in the new industry; shrewd north-countrymen embarked in it, and companies were formed to carry on operations on a large scale. Officers of rank in the English navy, on leave of absence, offered their services, under assumed names, and for large compensation, to the owners of vessels in the contraband trade, and met with distinguished success in their enterprises. Doubtless there were few of these last; but the incognito which they preserved has been respected, and neither their names nor their number have been generally made known.

The Confederate Government did not hesitate to enter the field and take a share in the business. Vessels adapted to the purpose were bought by agents in England, and loaded with munitions of war, and Confederate naval officers under orders from the Navy Department were placed in command. These vessels cleared under the English flag, taking out a sailing captain to comply with the requirements of law. Later they were transferred to the Confederate flag, and caused on a regular trade between Nassau or Bermuda and Wilmington or some other blockaded port. The Confederate Government owned three or four such vessels, and was part-owner in several others. These last were required to carry out cotton on Government account, as part of their cargo, and to bring in supplies. Among the vessels wholly owned by the Confederate Government was the *Giraffe*, a Clyde-built iron side-wheel steamer, of light draft and considerable speed, which had been used as a packet [a small ship that provides a regular service carrying passengers, freight and mail over a fixed short route] between Glasgow and Belfast. She became famous under a new name, as the *CSS R. E. Lee*; and under the efficient command of Captain Wilkinson, who had formerly been an officer of the Federal navy, and who was now in the Confederate service, she ran the blockade twenty-one times in ten months, between December, 1862, and November, 1863, and carried abroad six thousand bales of cotton. The cotton was landed at Nassau, the Government not appearing in the transaction as shipper or owner. Here it was entrusted to a mercantile firm, which received a large "commission" for assuming ownership, and by shipping it to Europe under neutral flags. The firms employed for this purpose are reported to have obtained a handsome return from their transactions.

The trade was now reduced to a system, whose working showed it to be nearly perfect. The short-voyage blockade-runners, destined for the passage between the neutral islands and the blockaded coast, began to make their appearance. In these every device was brought into use that could increase their efficiency. Speed, invisibility, and handiness, with a certain space for stowage, were the essentials; to these all other qualities were sacrificed. The typical blockade-runner of 1863-4 was a long, low side-wheel steamer of from four to six hundred tons, with a slight frame, sharp and narrow, its length perhaps nine times its beam. It had feathering paddles, and one or two raking telescopic funnels, which might be lowered close to the

deck. The hull rose only a few feet out of the water, and was painted a dull gray or lead color, so that it could hardly be seen by daylight at two hundred yards. Its spars wore two short lower-masts, with no yards, and only a small crow's-nest in the foremast. The deck forward was constructed in the form known as "turtle-back," to enable the vessel to go through a heavy sea. Anthracite coal, which made no smoke, was burned in the furnaces. This coal came from the United States, and when, in consequence of the prohibition upon its exportation enforced by the Federal Government, it could not be obtained, the semi-bituminous Welsh coal was used as a substitute. When running in, all lights were put out, the binnacle and fire-room hatch were carefully covered, and steam was blown off under water. In the latest vessels of this class speed was created too much at the expense of strength, and some of them were disabled before they reached their cruising-ground.

The start from Nassau or Bermuda was usually made at such a time that a moonless night and a high tide could be secured for running in. A sharp lookout was kept for cruisers on the outside blockade, and the blockade-runner, by keeping at a distance, could generally pass them unobserved. If by accident or carelessness she came very close, she took to her heels, and her speed enabled her to get away. She never hove to when ordered; it was as hard to hit her as to overtake her; a stray shot or two she cared nothing for. Even if her pursuer had the advantage of speed, which was rarely the case, she still kept on, and, by protracting the chase for a few hours, she could be sure that a squall, or a fog, or the approach of night would enable her to escape. Wilkinson describes a device which was commonly employed under these circumstances. In running from Wilmington to Nassau, on one occasion, she found herself hard pressed by a sloop-of-war. Her coal was bad, but by using cotton saturated with turpentine, she succeeded in keeping ahead. The chase had lasted all day, and at sunset the sloop was within four miles, and still gaining. The engineer was then directed to make a black smoke, and a lookout was stationed with a glass, to give notice as soon as he lost sight of the pursuer in the deepening twilight. The moment the word came, orders were given to close the dampers, and the volumes of smoke ceased to pour out; the helm was put hard-a-starboard, changing the course eight points; and the blockade-runner disappeared in the darkness, while the cruiser continued her course in pursuit of a shadow.

Having passed the outside blockade successfully, and arrived in the neighborhood of her destination, the blockade-runner would either be off at a distance, or run in close to the land to the northward or southward of the port, and wait for the darkness. Sometimes vessels would remain in this way unobserved for a whole day. If they found the place too hot and the cruisers too active, one of the inlets at a little distance from the port of destination would give the needful shelter. Masonboro Inlet, to the north of Wilmington, was a favorite resort for this purpose. At night the steamers would come out of hiding and make a dash for the entrance.

The difficulty of running the blockade was increased by the absence of lights on the coast. In approaching or skirting the shore, the salt-works in operation at various points served as a partial substitute. Temporary lights were used at some of the ports to aid the blockade-runners. At Charleston, there was a light on Fort Sumter. At Wilmington, in the first year, the *Frying Pan* light-ship was taken inside the entrance, and anchored under Fort Caswell, where she was burnt in December, 1861, by two boat's crews from the *USS Mount Vernon*. At New Inlet, a light was placed on "the Mound," a small battery that flanked the works on Federal Point. In the earlier blockade, the lights of the

squadron served as a guide to blockade-runners. After the general practice was discontinued, the plan was adopted of carrying a light on the senior officer's vessel, which was anchored in the centre of the fleet, near the entrance. This fact soon became known to the blockade-runners; indeed, there was little about the squadron that was not known and immediately disseminated at Nassau, that central-office of blockade-running intelligence. Thenceforth it served as a useful guide in making the channel. After a time the blockading officer discovered his error, and turned it to account by changing his position every night, thereby confusing many calculations.

The run past the inshore squadron was always a critical moment, though by no means so dangerous as it looked. It was no easy matter on a dark night to hit, much less to stop, a small and obscure vessel, going at the rate of fifteen knots, whose only object was to pass by. But the service nevertheless called into action all the faculties of the blockade-runner. It required a cool head, strong nerve, and ready resource. It was a combat of skill and pluck against force and vigilance. The excitement of fighting was wanting, as the blockade-runner must make no resistance; nor, as a rule, was he prepared to make any. But the chances, both outside and inshore, were all in his favor. He had only to make a port and run in, and he could choose time, and weather, and circumstances. He could even choose his destination. He always had steam up when it was wanted. He knew the critical moment, and was prepared for it; and his moments of action were followed by intervals of repose and relaxation. The blockader on the other hand, was in every way at a disadvantage. He had no objective point except the blockade-runner, and he never knew when the blockade-runner was coming. He could choose nothing, but must take the circumstances as they happened to come; and they were pretty sure to be unfavorable. He was compelled to remain in that worst of all situations, incessant watchfulness combined with prolonged inaction. There would be days and nights of anxious waiting, with expectation strained to the tensest point, for an emergency which lasted only as many minutes, and which came when it was least expected. There was no telling when or where the blow would need to be struck; and a solitary moment of napping might be fatal, in spite of months of ceaseless vigilance.

At New Inlet, which was a favorite entrance, the blockade-runners would frequently get in by hugging the shore, slipping by the endmost vessel of the blockading line. Even on a clear night a properly prepared craft was invisible against the land, and the roar of the surf drowned the noise of her screw or paddles. Having a good pilot and little depth, she could generally run well inside of the blockaders. After passing the line, she would show a light on her inshore side; this was answered from the beach by a dim light, followed by another, above and beyond the first. These were the range-lights for the channel. By getting them in line, the blockade-runner could ascertain her position, and in a few moments, she would be raider the guns of the fort. When the practice of blockade-framing was reduced to a system, a signal-service was organized on shore, and signal officers and pilots were regularly detailed for each vessel. After the fall of Fort Fisher, and before the fact was known, the duties of the signal-service were assumed by the officers of the Monticello, under the direction of Cushing; and two well known blockade-runners, the *Stag* and the *Charlotte*, were helped in by range-lights from the shore, only to find themselves prizes when they were comfortably anchored in the river.

Vessels passed so often between the squadron and the shore that special inclosures were taken to stop it. The endmost vessel was so placed as to leave a narrow passage. When the blockade-runner had passed, the blockader moved nearer and closed the entrance, at the same time sending up signal rockets. Two or three of her consorts were in waiting and closed up, and the adventurous vessel suddenly found herself hemmed in on all sides, and without a chance of escape.

Whenever a blockade-runner was hard pressed in a chase, it was a common practice for the captain to run her ashore, trusting to favorable circumstances to save a fragment of his cargo. Communicating with the forces in the neighborhood, he would obtain the co-operation of a detachment of infantry, often accompanied by one or two pieces of artillery, which would harass the parties sent from the blockading vessels to get the steamer off. At Wilmington, lunettes were thrown up along the shore, large enough for two guns, and a field-battery of Whitworth 12-pounders was kept in constant readiness to run down and occupy them. Sometimes the blockaders were aide to command the land approaches, and so prevent the people on shore from doing mischief; but at other times the latter had it all their own way. It was no easy matter in any case to float off a steamer which had been beached intentionally under a full head of steam, especially if the tide was running club; and the fire of one or two rifled guns placed close by on the beach made the operation hazardous. The only course left was to burn the wreck; and even then, if the work was not done thoroughly, the chances were that the fire would be extinguished, and the damaged vessel ultimately recovered. In July, 1863, the *Kate*, one of the new English-built craft, after running to Charleston and being chased off, put into Wilmington. She attempted to pass the fleet off New Inlet, but choosing her time badly, she was sighted about five in the morning, and, after a chase, she was run ashore on Smith's Island, and abandoned. The troops came down, but did nothing. A party was sent in from the *Penobscot* to get her off; but this failing, she was set on fire, and the officer in charge of the boat-party reported that he had disabled her so effectually that she would be of no further use. Three weeks later, however, she was floated off by the Confederates, and anchored under the batteries; a position from which she was cut out with some difficulty.

The *Hebe*, a Bermuda steamer, was run ashore a fortnight later on Federal Point, under circumstances generally similar, except that it was blowing a gale from the northeast. A boat sent in from the *Nippon* was swamped, but the crew succeeded in getting on board the *Hebe*. A second boat was driven ashore, and the crew were taken prisoners by the cavalry on the beach. The *Hebe* was covered by a two-gun Whitworth battery and fifty or more riflemen. Other boats put off, and rescued a few of the men on board the steamer. The last boat capsized; and the remaining men of the first party fired the ship, and making for the shore were captured. This time the vessel was destroyed. A few days later the large vessels of the squadron came in, silenced the battery, and finally sent in a landing-party, and brought off the guns.

One night in October of the same year the *Venus*, one of the finest and fastest of the vessels in the Nassau-Wilmington trade, made the blockading fleet off New Inlet. She was first discovered by the *Nansemond*, commanded by Lieutenant Lamson. Lamson was always on the alert, and his work was always done quickly and thoroughly. After a short chase, he overhauled the *Venus*. When abeam he opened fire on her. Four well-directed shells played havoc with the blockade-runner. The first struck her foremast; the second exploded in the cabin; the third passed through forward, killing a man on the way; and the fourth, striking near the water-line, knocked in an iron plate, causing the

vessel to make water fast. This was good practice, at night, with both vessels making nearly fourteen knots. The blockade-runner headed straight for the shore, and she was no sooner lard and fast, than the boarders had taken possession, and captured her officers and crew. As it was impossible to move her, she was riddled with shells and finally burnt where she lay.

One of the prettiest captures made off Wilmington was that of the *Ella and Anna*, by Acting Master J. B. Breck of the *Nippon*, in the following November. Breck was an officer of pluck and resource, and he won a name for himself by his dashing successes on the Wilmington blockade. About five o'clock on the morning of the 9th of November, as he was returning along the shore from a chase near Masonboro Inlet, he discovered a side-wheel steamer to the northward, stealing along toward the entrance of the river. Outside of her lay a blockader, which opened on her with grape, and the blockade-runner, finding herself intercepted, steered directly for the *Nippon* with the intention of running her down. Breck saw the intention, and fixed on his plan in an instant. Heading for the steamer, he formed his boarders on the bow. The blockade-runner dashed on at full speed under a shower of canister, and struck her a blow that carried away her bowsprit and stem. In a moment boarders were over the rail and on the deck of the blockade-runner and in a few seconds made her a prize. She had on board three hundred cases of Austrian rifles and a quantity of saltpeter; and the prize-sale netted \$180,000. The *Ella and Anna* was taken into the service, and in the next year, under her new name of the *Malvern*, became famous as the flagship of Admiral Porter.

The warfare on both sides was accompanied by a variety of ruses and stratagems, more or less ingenious and successful, but usually turning out to the benefit of the blockade-runner. When a steamer was sighted, the blockading vessel that made the discovery fired signals in the direction she had taken. This was at best an uncertain guide, as the blockaders could only make a rough guess at the stranger's position. The practice was no sooner understood than the enterprising captains at Nassau sent for a supply of signal rockets, and thereafter they were carried as a part of the regular equipment. Running through the fleet, and finding himself discovered, the captain immediately fired his rockets in a direction at right angles to his course; and the blockaders were sent on a wild-goose chase into the darkness. If there were many of them, they were apt to get in each other's way; and more than once serious damage was done by a friendly vessel. The *Howquah*, off Wilmington, on a dark night, in September, 1864, had nearly succeeded in making a prize, when the concentrated fire of the batteries, the blockading squadron, and, according to the belief of the commander, of the blockade-runner, proved to be too much for him, and caused him to draw off.

One of the blockade-running captains relates that, on a certain night, when he found himself alongside a vessel of the fleet and under her guns, he was told to heave to. Accordingly, steam was shut off, and he replied that he had stopped. There was a moderate sea, and the boat from the cruiser was delayed. As it reached the side of the blockade-runner, the captain of the latter gave the order, "Full speed ahead," and his vessel shot away toward the channel. A deception of this kind, whatever may be thought of it abstractly, was one that would be likely to recoil on the blockade-runners. A vessel or two might avoid being sunk by pretending to surrender, but a blockader would hardly be caught twice by such a trick. The next time, instead of hailing before he fired, he would fire before he hailed; and he would be perfectly justified in so doing. Indeed, it is a question

whether in a blockade so persistently broken as that of Wilmington, the ordinary rules of action for belligerent cruisers should not be modified, and vessels found in *flagrante delicto*, whether neutrals or not, be destroyed instead of being captured. Certainly, if destruction and not capture had always been the object, fewer blockade-runners would have escaped, and possibly fewer would have undertaken the business. There is always a possibility that a vessel met at sea, however suspicious the circumstances, may be innocent; but when found running through the blockading fleet, her guilt is established, and if there is any question about bringing her to--and at Wilmington there was always rather more than a question--the blockader is not far wrong whose first thought is to inflict a vital injury.

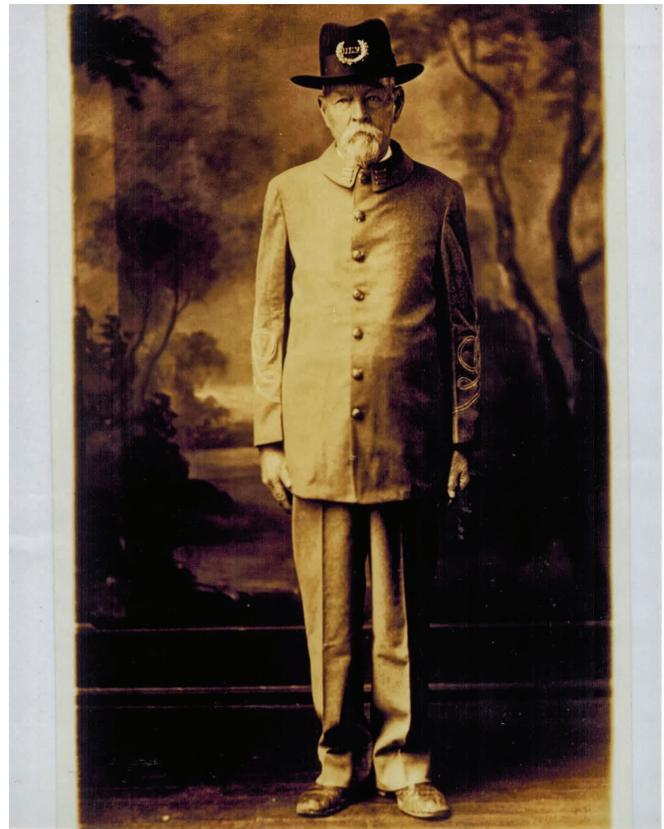
As it was, blockade-running was not an occupation involving much personal danger and little apprehension was felt about running through the fleet. Calcium lights were burned, and shot and shell flew thickly over and around the entering vessel, but they did not often hit the mark. At Wilmington it was perhaps not so much the inshore blockade that killed the trade as the practice of keeping fast cruisers outside. Until near the end of 1864, when the severity of the blockade became extreme, the captures were not numerous enough to take up more than a slight margin of the enormous profits that it netted. These profits were made both on the outward and the inward voyages, and it is hard to say which were the more extraordinary. The inward cargoes consisted of all kinds of manufactured goods, and especially of "hardware," the innocent name under which arms and ammunition were invoiced. The sale of these brought in from five hundred to one thousand per cent of their cost. The return cargo was always cotton, and the steam-presses at Wilmington, reducing it to the smallest possible bulk, enabled the long, narrow blockade-runners to carry six hundred, eight hundred, or even twelve hundred bales, of five or six hundred pounds each. Even the upper deck was piled up with two or three tiers of bales. As a clear profit of £30,000 each way was no uncommon result, it is easy to believe that owners could afford to lose a vessel after two successful trips. It was the current opinion in the squadron off Wilmington, in the early part of the last year, that two-thirds of the vessels attempting to enter were successful; and it has been estimated that out of the sixty-six blockade-runners making regular trips during the war, forty were captured or destroyed, but only after a successful career for a shorter or longer period. Gradually, in the last few months, too many vessels were caught to make the trade profitable; and it was slowly declining, though it did not cease altogether until the blockade was raised.

### *Captain Holland Middleton Bell – A Life of Honor*

By Frank Keelman, Esq.  
USMC Retired - MOSB # 8193

One day in April of 1943 in the quiet farming community of Fayette, Alabama, an elderly military veteran died at McNease-Robertson Hospital. With World War II ragging across the globe, that one death was barely noted beyond the county line, and even though he was over 100 years old, Holland ("Holly") Middleton Bell's passing was something of a surprise to all who knew and loved him. This is his story.

Holland Bell was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on 25 June 1839. Fifth of ten children, he was the son of Anthony Fortad Bell and Elizabeth (Middleton) Bell. The elder Bell was a tanner and prosperous member of the local gentry. Educated in



both public and private schools, at age twenty-one Holland Bell received a state scholarship to attend LaGrange Military Academy, an excellent institution that was sometimes referred to as the West Point of the South. He entered that institution as a cadet on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1860. He remained at LaGrange until February 1862 when the school closed its doors and the entire Corps of Cadets (minus three boys who were underage), faculty and nearly every member of the staff resigned to join the army of the Confederate States of America. His eighteen plus months at LaGrange might be considered something of an extended military boot camp for Bell and the training he received there was to prove of great value in the coming years.

While at LaGrange, Holly Bell was an excellent student, standing first in his class in July of 1861. He was also remembered as having the most brightly polished brass buttons and cleanest rifle in the entire Corps. He was a sober, conscientious student and one who excelled in the climate of strict discipline that LaGrange was noted for. When the school closed in February of 1862, Bell returned home to Fayette County and immediately enlisted in a volunteer regiment then being raised from the men of Green, Fayette, Perry, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties. His name first appeared on a muster roster on 14 April 1862. The unit he joined was eventually designated the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Alabama Infantry and Bell would be a proud member and veteran of it longer than anyone else.

Private Bell soon proved his worth as the officers struggled to turn their 1,200 volunteer farmers into a regiment of soldiers. Bell was assigned to Company H, primarily made up of men from Fayette County. His ability to drill, issue commands, his proficiency in the manual of arms and overall military bearing must have been evident for in May he was elected Sergeant Major of Company H. As any military veteran will

acknowledge, a unit's senior non-commissioned officer is critical to successful mission accomplishment. Sergeant Major Bell obviously performed well because when First Lieutenant Willis Whitley, one of the original Company H officers, was forced to resign due to a disability in August of 1862, the soldiers of Company H elected Holland Bell to take his place. Thus, before the regiment had even heard a shot fired in anger, former Private, now Sergeant Major Bell had been transformed into 1stLt. Bell, executive officer of a 133 man infantry rifle company.

The 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment received orders to leave its Alabama training camp and report for active duty in July 1862. As it began its march to war, the regimental strength was recorded as 1,215 officers and men. It was composed of ten companies (lettered A through I, and K) and a regimental staff including two surgeons. As befits an infantry unit, the regiment departed Fayette County on foot, moved by steamboat and finally railroad through Selma and Montgomery to its destination at Chattanooga, Tennessee, arriving there in August. Now part of General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee, the regiment was still in the midst of equipping itself and lacked several hundred rifles and many other items a military unit requires to operate effectively. While these supplies were being procured, the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment was assigned noncombatant duties. The men served as pickets, stood guard duty, helped round up stragglers and generally performed the myriad of essential, but unglamorous, duties so essential military life.

Finally, in mid September, the 41<sup>st</sup> was directed to advance further into Tennessee to help protect that state from Federal forces moving toward Nashville. Their Division commander was General John Breckenridge, former United States Vice President and an 1860 presidential opponent of Abraham Lincoln. Breckenridge had been chosen to lead the effort to hold middle Tennessee for the Confederacy. After initially being selected to reinforce Knoxville, the 41<sup>st</sup> eventually joined Breckenridge's Division near Murfreesboro where it was added to the strength of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Brigade. This brigade, cut off from their homes and families in Kentucky, was called "The Orphan Brigade" and had already been tested in battle at Shiloh, Vicksburg and Baton Rouge. Their commander was the legendary Colonel (later Brigadier General) Roger Hanson.

The men of the 41<sup>st</sup> soon found themselves undergoing hours of brigade drill, something they had not been able to practice in training. Not being from Kentucky and having never been in combat, the Alabamans were quickly subjected to the usual harassment and ridicule veteran soldiers have historically dispensed to green troops, but they did receive their missing arms and equipment. By the closing months of 1862, the soldiers of the 41<sup>st</sup> began to feel that they were finally ready to face the Yankees on the battlefield. Sadly, by this time, disease, accidents and desertions had reduced the regiment's effective strength to only about 600 men fit for duty.

If Holly Bell's war began slowly, it quickly accelerated into a long series of fierce battles and meaningless skirmishes, of endless marches and rail movements to and from varying localities in both daylight and darkness through some of the harshest weather the South had ever experienced, all the while enduring the slow but relentless loss of comrades due to disease, enemy action and desertion. Indeed, in the subsequent months and years, Holland Bell and the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment endured a near quintessential litany of wartime infantry events. Meeting those challenges became the hallmark of Holland Bell's life and helped prepare him for his future career as a leader of Fayette County.

General Bragg and the rest of the Army of Tennessee arrived in the area in late November and he assumed overall command. Although the 41<sup>st</sup> took part in the planned raid against Hartsville, its first real action came at the Battle of Stone's River in late December of 1862. While it is seldom mentioned among the major battles of the Civil War, Stone's River should be remembered for the ferocity of the fighting as well as its many casualties. On 29 December, Holland Bell and the 41<sup>st</sup> were central participants in the assault on Wayne's Hill and the desperate fighting that centered near its crest. They endured a near continuous artillery barrage in cold wet weather with no rations and fought hand-to-hand when the Federals counter-attacked. The battle continued night and day for nearly 72 hours. By the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, Bragg thought he had won and hesitated, but the Federals regrouped and on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Kentucky Brigade was ordered to attack a position some 1,000 yards to its front. Breckenridge pleaded with Bragg to cancel the order, knowing how much Federal artillery had been concentrated against them. Bragg refused.

So Bell and the other men of the Orphan Brigade marched unflinchingly through heavy artillery fire and, when barely 150 yards from the Federal lines, fired a volley, then charged headlong into the mass of blue-suited opponents. The Yankees countered with their own return fire, but the Southerners desperate rage carried them forward. The Federals broke and ran. The battle ended in something of a bloody draw as each side had about 4,500 casualties, exceptional for the numbers of soldiers who fought there, but because Confederate forces retreated first it is considered a Federal victory. For the 41<sup>st</sup>, it was simply their baptism of fire, although a bloody one at that. Yet, when Bell and his fellow Alabamans left Murfreesboro they did so as battle-proven veterans. The regiment reported losing 190 men either killed, wounded, missing or captured.

The Army of Tennessee retreated south toward Tullahoma to regroup and establish a defensive line. The 41<sup>st</sup> regimental strength now stood at about 521 men fit for duty. What followed can best be described as a period of intermittent action, but further lowering of morale, most likely due to the after effects of that vicious fight, the harsh winter weather, homesickness and the diseases that continued to stalk the Alabamans. Here, even Bell's strength faltered and he was ordered to Fayette, Alabama for a brief rest and to help recruit new soldiers to replace those lost over the previous seven months. He was back in time to join his regiment when it received orders in May to reinforce the rapidly deteriorating situation at Vicksburg.

Those orders resulted in little more than a series of train rides as that gallant city finally fell to General Grant on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. But when the Federals moved eastward, Major General Joe Johnston's force to which the Orphan Brigade had been attached, helped give the Yankees a bloody nose at the Second Battle of Jackson. In August, Breckenridge's Division was ordered to western Georgia. Federal forces were on the move. On the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1863, the 41<sup>st</sup> and their comrades crossed a little river called Chickamauga.

The 41<sup>st</sup> was directly involved in that terrible fight. The men from Kentucky and Alabama twice charged into the Federal lines, both times inflicting heavy casualties on their opponents. Although Bell came through unscathed, the 41<sup>st</sup> paid a high price. With the regiment's strength now down to about one-third of its original authorization, it lost nearly fifty percent of its effective strength in the fight. One of its officers subsequently faced a Board of Inquiry for incompetence, a

charge the Board later confirmed. Over 18,000 Southern men became casualties. When the Federal forces retreated, Bragg claimed victory, but the Battle of Chickamauga essentially decided nothing. The campaign in Georgia continued.

Federal forces still held Chattanooga and had recently captured Knoxville, thus fracturing the critical rail link between Tennessee and Virginia. Supplies headed for Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia now had to be routed through Atlanta and up into the Carolinas. Fall arrived and with it came the rains and cold weather. While Braxton Bragg and his generals feuded, Bell and his men sat slowly starving in the heights above Chattanooga. Supplies were low and generally of poor quality. As morale plummeted and boredom set in, it must have been a particularly difficult time to be an officer. Concealing their own doubts, Bell and the other 41<sup>st</sup> leaders surely struggled to hold the regiment together. I believe Holly Bell's faith in God helped him here. Although he was always considered a "genial" individual, the conditions they faced must have taxed even his sunny disposition. Writing about the war many years later, he said he was "confidant a great wrong had been done to the people of the Southland." As he watched his men suffer, I have no doubt Bell called upon the power of prayer to help sustain him.

With the coming of winter, exciting changes were in store for the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment. In early November, it was reassigned to General Archibald Gracie's Brigade, joining other regiments comprised solely of Alabamans. The homecoming must have been a sweet one. The Brigade then moved away from Chattanooga toward Knoxville and the Cumberland Gap and fought in the Battle of Bean's Station, a short but classic fight, where both armies formed their lines across an open valley, then did their best to obliterate each other with shot and shell. When the army entered winter quarters near Morristown, Tennessee, 1stLt. Bell had another unique opportunity to display his talents.

Someone must have remembered that Holly Bell was the son of a tanner for he was directed to take charge of three tanning yards near Greenville and ordered to produce shoes for the command. His crew succeeded in making 2,000 pairs of shoes and the Quartermaster was so pleased that he had a custom pair of knee-high boots made especially for Bell. It takes an infantryman to truly appreciate the joy that comes with a new pair of footwear, especially in winter and I have often wondered what happened to those boots. Unfortunately, Holland Bell left no record of their ultimate whereabouts.

Then, on 24 March 1864 1stLt. Bell became Captain Bell when the original Company H Commander resigned. An interesting but seldom noticed footnote to Holly Bell's promotion was that the man who took his place as 1stLt. of Company H was his own younger brother, James Bell. Although he would eventually be severely wounded and spend several years in hospitals, 1stLt. James Bell survived the war to become a well-known Baptist minister.

As spring arrived, larger events were unfolding in Virginia. General Longstreet and his army including Gracie's Brigade were ordered to join the Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Another long journey by rail ensued, but when the regiment marched through Richmond, Virginia, the effects of years of fighting were apparent to everyone. The war was entering a critical phase and it would be north of Petersburg that Bell and the 41<sup>st</sup> would shine as never before. It happened at the Battle of Drewry's Bluff.

After enduring a desperate forced march in the rain, the Southerners were resupplied with food and ammunition and on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> of May moved forward to a position on the far left of the Confederate line. At last they were allowed to

lie down, most falling asleep still holding their weapons at the ready. The men were awakened at 2:00 am and were ordered forward just before 5:00 am. The morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> was very foggy. Facing the 41<sup>st</sup> was the 9<sup>th</sup> New Jersey Regiment. Its men could hear movement, but the fog blanketed the Southerners approach. When the Federal pickets raced back into their lines, the New Jersey regiment fired a volley. The men of the 41<sup>st</sup> let out a Rebel yell and charged headlong into the mist. Overwhelmed, the Federals fell back. The men of the 41<sup>st</sup> had turned the Union flank. Their actions allowed other regiments to pour into the Union rear. Fog continued to cover the battlefield. The Union commander, General Benjamin Butler, more politician than military tactician, yielded to his fears and withdrew. By sundown the Battle of Drewry's Bluff was over. It was an important Southern victory and helped keep Richmond in Confederate hands. Thanks to providence or luck, the 41<sup>st</sup> had only light casualties and once again Holly Bell had come through without injury.

The 41<sup>st</sup> remained in the field for three days and then redeployed into a position along Chaffin's Bluff. After Grant's victory at Cold Harbor, the command was ordered to Petersburg. Guarding Swift Creek on 16 June, the Regiment fought a brief action before arriving at Petersburg on the 17<sup>th</sup> where it soon experienced the hell that became known as trench warfare. The men quickly became proficient combat engineers as they developed and constructed obstacles to help reinforce their defenses. They suffered from snipers, mortar and artillery barrages, disease, filth and hunger, all the while trusting that General Lee would somehow find a way to turn the tide. There is not space in this article to recount the struggles attached to Petersburg and for those interested in this, the longest campaign of the war, especially its final stages, I highly recommend A. Wilson Greene's excellent book, "*Breaking the Backbone of the Rebellion: The Final Battles of the Petersburg Campaign.*"

It was here in the trenches that Bell's luck turned, perhaps for the better. Wounded in the right elbow during a mortar attack, he was sent home to recuperate. He was gone for 75 days and this respite from the grinding attrition of trench warfare may have ultimately saved his life. Moreover, he could have remained in Alabama. Officers were allowed to resign, something enlisted men only wished they could do. Holly Bell had come too far to abandon his comrades and returned to resume command of Company H. But now his precious company had been reduced to a mere handful of survivors. Bell and his men carried on as Grant and the Federal forces continued their relentless series of attacks and movements, constantly probing for a way to flank Lee's exhausted army.

Fall carried into winter and by the arrival of the spring of 1865, there could be little doubt about which side would prevail. In December, the Brigade's beloved commander, General Gracie, had been killed in action. Desertions mounted as men surrendered to the inevitable. Now only the hardened combat veterans remained. As Lee kept moving his forces to counter Grant, the 41<sup>st</sup> participated in numerous skirmishes and fights. Then, on 29 March 1865, not long after a battle along a creek called Hatcher's Run, Captain Holland Bell was captured. I have found no detailed account surrounding this event and, to my knowledge, Bell never explained it, but the agony of being separated from his men might have been tempered just a bit by the relief he must have experienced for having survived, knowing his war was finally over.

A few days later it was over for everyone else. Lee surrendered and the men of the North and the South went home. At Appomattox there were only 97 men left in the regiment that had started out with 1,200 and just eight in Captain Bell's Company H. He had missed the surrender by less than two weeks. Bell was carried to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington, D.C. and was there the morning Lincoln was killed. He was then transported further north and became a Prisoner of War at Johnson's Island in Lake Erie where he found several old friends including some from his hometown. He remained on the island until paroled on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. He came home by way of Columbus, Ohio, then by boat down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to Memphis. A train carried him to Columbus, Mississippi and Holly ended his war just as he had started it in 1862, walking along a dusty Alabama road with some fellow soldiers.

Although he had been defeated in war, former Captain Bell prospered in the peace that followed. In January of 1866, he married Miss Margarette (Maggie) Miles, sister of his local friend former 8<sup>th</sup> Alabama Cavalry Sergeant Robert Miles, and on 19 December of that same year stood watching when Robert Miles returned the favor by marrying Bell's younger sister, Serena Monica Bell, my maternal great grandmother. Life began again and Bell turned his hand to the business of putting food on the table. He worked as a tanner and farmer and finally as a clerk in a local store. Shortly thereafter, he was elected Justice of the Peace and by 1874 had become Clerk of the Circuit Court of Fayette County and concurrently Treasurer. Three years later he was elected Judge of Probate Court, a position he held through two consecutive six-year terms. He and Maggie raised a family of seven children, three of whom survived to adulthood.

When his tenure as Probate Judge ended, he was asked by his successors to serve as Clerk of the Probate Court, a position he held for twenty-four years. By his own reckoning, he served the people of Fayette County for "forty-five years." Along the way he became active in veterans affairs and used his position and influence to help secure pensions for other Alabama CSA veterans. A pious man, he was a faithful Baptist and served in church leadership positions for many years. He joined the United Confederate Veterans and was elevated to the honorary grade of Colonel. Very popular, Holly Bell participated in many reunions including, as I have recently learned, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg to which all living Civil War veterans, North or South, were invited. Although he had not fought there, what veteran could possibly resist the temptation to gather for one last hurrah. In 1938, he journeyed to Columbia, South Carolina to help found what we now call the Military Order of the Stars and Bars. He was also known to travel south to visit his sister Serena's family in Florida where he eventually met my mother, Jean Lilly, and her sisters who always reverently called him "Uncle Holly."

The years passed. Maggie had died in 1917. By the 1920's most of his comrades were also gone. In 1939 he celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Finally, only Captain (UCV Colonel) Holland Middleton Bell, CSA, the last surviving member of the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment and one of the few remaining Civil War veterans from Alabama, was left. World War II began and still Holly Bell soldiered on until one day in March of 1943 when he fell and broke his hip. Complications set in and he died on Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> of April. He had lived for 103 years, nine months and seventeen days. According to the obituary that appeared on the front page of the Fayette County Times, a very large crowd attended his service. Businesses and schools were closed, the UDC came in mass and several preachers praised him for his life of honorable service and faith in God. He was buried in the Fayette City

Cemetery and can be found there today still resting beside his beloved Maggie.

While it is always dangerous to compare the wartime service of one man against another, I must say that, with the exception of a naval battle, for a Civil War era infantryman Captain Bell experienced it all: major battles, sharp meaningless skirmishes, victory, defeat, privation, the joys and disappointments of commanding troops, pain at losing close friends, recruiting duty, trench warfare, promotion, being wounded, even becoming a POW. Remarkably, he survived it all both in spirit as well as body. He was truly an exceptional individual and one in whose service all Americans should take pride. We are indeed fortunate to have him as a founding member of the MOS&B. So, if you are ever passing through Fayette, Alabama, I hope you will take time to stop and visit his grave. I know Holly Bell would appreciate it.

Space herein did not permit a truly detailed explanation of the battles the 41<sup>st</sup> participated in, but for those who would like to know more about Captain Bell and the 41<sup>st</sup> Alabama Regiment, I highly recommend the late USAF Colonel William Morales' monumental work, "*The 41<sup>st</sup> Alabama Infantry Regiment, Confederate States of America: A Narrative History of a Civil War Regiment from West Central Alabama*," from which I have culled many of the specific details and events of its service. I treasure my copy and consider it a family heirloom. I would also like to thank former Marine Corps officer, author and MOS&B compatriot Mr. Gene Armistead for sharing the notes he used last summer when he gave a presentation about Captain Bell to the San Diego Civil War Round Table.

Finally, this article is but a brief overview of one man's war, not a military history; however, should someone desire to write a more scholarly study about Captain Bell there is a wealth of information available. I would also like to point out that Holly Bell was just one of fifteen Civil War veterans who became founding members of the Military Order of the Stars and Bars. Have any of their stories been told? Now, during this the sesquicentennial of that terrible conflict, perhaps it is finally time to do so.

#### Bibliography:

- James A. Anderson; *Biography of Holland M. Bell*; circa 1940; one page summary of Holland Bell's life; William Stanley Hoole Special Collections Library; University of Alabama
- Holland Middleton Bell; *Autobiography*; unpublished personal memoir written for family members; dated circa May 1930
- Holland Middleton Bell; *CSA Pension Application dated 11 November 1919*; as signed by Alex Smith; Judge of Probate, Fayette County, Alabama
- Fayette County Times, Fayette, Alabama; *Obituary - Holland Middleton Bell*; dated 15 April 1943
- A. Wilson Greene; *Breaking the Back of the Rebellion - The Final Battles of the Petersburg Campaign*; University Tennessee Press; new edition 2008
- Jay S. Hoar; *The South's Last Boys in Gray: An Epic Prose Elegy: a Substudy of Sunset and Dusk of the Blue and the Gray*; Bowling Green University Popular Press; Bowling Green, Ohio; 1986
- Military Order of the Stars and Bars; *Military Order of the Stars and Bars - Sixty-fifth Anniversary Edition*; Daniel Jones editor; Turner Publishing Co.; Paducah, KY; 2003
- William R. Morales, Colonel, USAF (Ret.); *The 41<sup>st</sup> Alabama Infantry Regiment Confederate States of America - A Narrative History of a Civil War Regiment from West Central Alabama*; Gregath Publishing Co.; Wyandotte, OK; 2001

Herbert and Jeanie Newell Jr.; *History of Fayette County, Alabama*; Southern Historical Press, Greenville SC; 1960

Hannis Taylor & Joseph Wheeler, et al; *Memorial Record of Alabama – A Concise History of the State's Political, Military, Professional and Industrial Progress, Together with the Personal Memoirs of Many of its People*; Brant & Fuller Publishers; Madison, WS, 1893

John Allen Wyeth; *History of La Grange Military Academy and the Cadet Corps 1857 – 1862, La Grange College, 1830 – 1857*; Kessinger Publishing Co.; Whitefish MT; 2012



## FARMERS<sup>®</sup> Yeatman Insurance

Insurance and Financial Services  
Larry Yeatman, Agent  
Serving Missouri and Kansas  
5606 NE Antioch Rd  
Gladstone, Missouri 64119  
1-800-467-1514  
lyeatman@farmersagent.com

Offering:  
Auto, Home, Life,

Mutual Funds\*, Variable Universal Life\*,  
Variable Annuities\*, IRAs\*, & 401(k)s\*

\*Securities offered through Farmers Financial Solutions,  
LLC Member FINRA & SIPC

### *The Sinking of the Sultana*

By David G. Whitaker DCS

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Confederate troops to Union General U. S. Grant. The North won the war. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by the actor John Wilkes Booth in Washington D.C. On April 26<sup>th</sup>, John Wilkes Booth was captured and killed. The newspapers were going wild with things to report like the capture of the John Wilkes Booth conspirators. It was a time of great excitement.

Practically ignored in the northern newspapers was a tragedy that occurred the same night that John Wilkes Booth was shot and killed, April 26<sup>th</sup>. By the end of the WBTS it was not great news to read about a great number of soldiers dying. It had been happening for four long years. The sinking of the river steamboat, Sultana, became almost a footnote in our history even though it was our greatest maritime disaster to ever occur; even greater than the Titanic. At least 300 more people died the night the Sultana blew up than died on the Titanic some 50 years later.



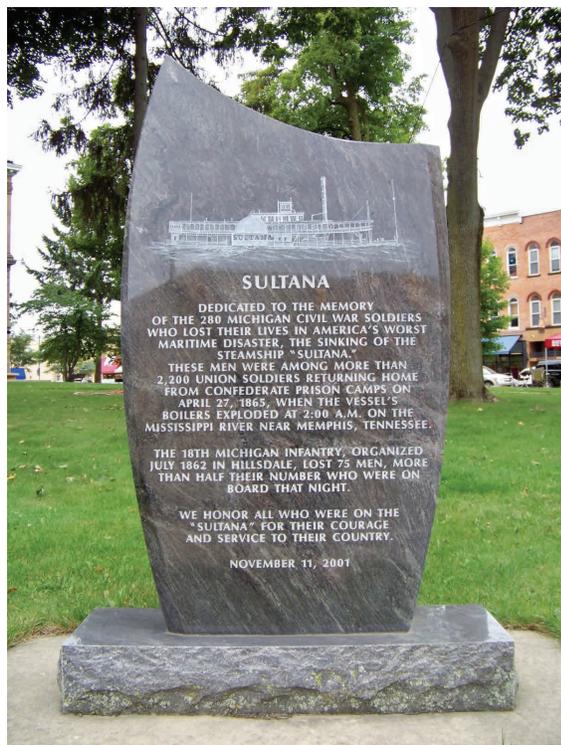
The Sultana was built in Cincinnati in 1863 for the lower Mississippi River cotton trade. She was 260 feet long and was designed for 376 passengers which included her crew of 85. She was a typical side-wheeler. She had been in service for two years on a regular run between New Orleans and St. Louis and she often carried Army personnel up and down the Mississippi River .

The Sultana left New Orleans on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1865, with regular cargo and about 85 passengers. Her Captain was an experienced riverboat pilot named J. C. Mason who, incidentally, died the night the Sultana exploded. On April 24<sup>th</sup> she stopped at Vicksburg to take on repatriated Union prisoners of war, many from Andersonville prison in Georgia . During this stop one of the boats engineers discovered the boilers were badly leaking so a repair crew was called to repair the boilers and machinery before going up river with stops scheduled at Memphis, Cairo, Evansville, Louisville and Cincinnati. During this repair time, the Sultana was taking on these soldiers who were impatient to go home to their families and get this war behind them. Many were little better than semi-invalids but as weak as they were they were singing and laughing as they came aboard. It is estimated that between 1800 and 2000 crowded the decks. There wasn't room for one more person. Altogether probably 2,300 people were on the Sultana when she left the Vicksburg dock. Next stop – Memphis - on a severely overloaded steamboat.

The river was in flood stage because of the melting snows up north and the current was strong and running fast and the water was ice cold. The steamer was barely making headway but after 48 hours she finally made a landing at Memphis the evening of April 26<sup>th</sup>. A leaking boiler was again discovered and the repair crews were called in to repair the leak. After repairs were made the Sultana crossed the river to take on coal and about midnight she finally was on her way to Cairo . The current was strong and the steam engines were working hard. All the Union soldiers were asleep out on the various decks. After a few hours the Sultana was just a few miles north of Memphis when the boiler exploded. The explosion was heard all the way back in Memphis .

The explosion was the beginning of the horror.

It was heard all the way back to Memphis . The explosion sent flames up in to the sky. This could also be seen from Memphis . The U.S.S. Grosbeak, a river gunboat, immediately cast off and headed up river against the strong current. Other steamer did the same. Saving lives was their mission.



## An Amazing Escape

By Bob Hurst

Generally, when any discussion is held of remarkable deeds of great valor or exceptional cunning by Confederates, the subjects involved in these exploits are almost always the magnificent leaders and troops of the land forces - be they infantry, cavalry or artillery. This is only logical since the Confederate Navy was quite small and with the exception of just a few vessels ( the C.S.S. Alabama, C.S.S. Shenandoah, and C.S.S. Florida, primarily ) the exploits of most Confederate ships are not well known.

Undoubtedly, though, one of the most noteworthy exploits of the war (on land or water) involved a lesser-known Confederate ship, the C.S.S. Tallahassee, and its daring escape from a blocked harbor by a route which was considered impassable. The amazing escape of the TALLAHASSEE occurred on the evening of August 19, 1864, from the harbor at Halifax, Nova Scotia, under the command of a not-well-known , but highly interesting, individual named John Taylor Wood.

John Taylor Wood was likely the first white child born in what is now Minnesota. His grandfather was Zachary Taylor who would become the 12th president of the United States. His mother's sister, Sarah Knox Taylor, was the first wife of Jefferson Davis. (Sadly, she died of malaria just three months after the wedding.) John Taylor Wood, thus, had the distinction of having a grandfather who was a U.S. president and an uncle who was a Confederate president. He was also a nephew of Confederate general Richard Taylor and a distant relative of Robert E. Lee. That is some interesting family!

Even though he was born in the Midwest, he yearned to be a seaman and joined the U.S. Navy as an acting midshipman when he was only 16 years old. By the time that war broke out in 1861, he was a professor of seamanship and gunnery at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Despite this , he resigned his commission and joined the newly formed Confederate Navy as a second lieutenant. Interestingly, one of his first assignments was aboard the C.S.S. Virginia which was involved in the famous battle of the ironclads (against the U.S.S. Monitor) at Hampton Roads, Virginia, in March of 1862.

In early 1863, Wood was appointed aide-de-camp to President Jefferson Davis and promoted to the rank of colonel of cavalry. Despite the title, he had the primary duty of inspecting naval defenses and vessels at key Southern ports. Later that year he went back to sea and commanded expeditions which resulted in the capture of a substantial number of Union ships. This led the Confederate Congress to recognize him with a joint resolution of thanks. He was also promoted to the rank of commander in the Confederate Navy.

John Taylor Wood's true ambition was to command a Confederate commerce raider and wreak havoc on Northern shipping in the same manner as Raphael Semmes and the C.S.S. Alabama, James Waddell and the C.S.S. Shenandoah and John Newland Maffitt and the C.S.S. Florida. To achieve this end, he went to Wilmington, North Carolina, one of the few Southern ports not subject to a Union blockade, and began looking for a vessel that could be converted into a cruiser for use as a commerce raider.

He finally settled on the ATLANTA which was a 200 foot long iron-hulled steamer of 500 tons which was fore-and-aft rigged and capable of 14 to 15 knots. He armed the ship with

The Sultana had been blown apart by the tremendous explosion. Hundreds of men had been blown into the ice-cold river. Some were alive but many were killed by the explosion. Red hot coals followed and this set the boat on fire. Few of the men were lucky enough to find something that would float and they were swiftly taken down river by the current and were picked up by rescue boats. Others were not so lucky and died in the water either by injuries or they were just too weak from months in the prison camp to save themselves. Few of the returning prisoners lived through this horror because they had been half starved for months and were in no physical shape to even swim, if they knew how.

The fire that followed the explosion was caused by the coals landing on the wooden decks. Within moments the whole boat was ablaze. Many men could not swim but they choose to take their chance in the water rather than be burned alive. They didn't last long in the ice cold water. The river was black with men both dead and alive. Other men had no choice because they had been pinned down by various parts of the wreckage and were burned alive. Shrieks, screams and cries for mercy were all that could be heard. Hundreds of horribly burned and scalded men were floating in the water. When the first morning light came hundreds of men, both alive and dead were scattered all the way to Memphis on both banks of the river.

For many days after the explosion a barge was sent out to pick up dead bodies. Between 500 and 600 men were hospitalized and about 1/3 of those soon died. Estimates of the number killed are about 1700 which make it one of the most devastating steamship disasters in American history.

The investigation started. One theory was that the Confederates planted a bomb in with the coal. What did happen is this: The Sultana, fearfully overloaded, was struggling against an abnormally strong current when defective boilers exploded. It may have been a defective repair job to the boilers. Regardless, about 1700 people died a most horrible death and this was barely mentioned in the east coast newspapers.

three guns and it was officially christened the C.S.S. Tallahassee and commissioned on June 20, 1864. Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory then issued orders for the TALLAHASSEE to be used to find and destroy Northern merchant Ships.

John Taylor Wood was now ready to do some serious damage. On August 6, Wood and his crew of 20 officers and 110 men headed north. By the time the TALLAHASSEE reached Maine on August 17, 25 Union vessels had already been taken out of commission. The ship badly needed refueling, though, and also some much needed repairs. To achieve this, Wood sailed to the nearest neutral port, Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he dropped anchor on August 18.

In the meantime, U.S. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles had been notified of the damage done by the TALLAHASSEE and he was fit to be tied. He kept ordering Union warships to go after the TALLAHASSEE and eventually there were a dozen on search missions up and down the Atlantic coast.

Shortly after reaching port at Halifax, John Taylor Wood went to British authorities to discuss his need. He was told that in compliance with the British position of neutrality he could use the port for only 24 hours except in cases of distress. Wood then went to the Confederate agent in Halifax, Benjamin Weir, to obtain his assistance.

During this time, U.S. Navy Secretary Gideon Welles had been notified that the TALLAHASSEE was in port in Halifax. Shortly afterwards, two Union warships dropped anchor just outside the three-mile limit off a neutral coast and several more headed toward Halifax. The Union plan was simply to wait until the TALLAHASSEE had run out of its allotted time and then attack the ship as it attempted to leave Halifax by way of the main channel that connected the harbor with the ocean.

The situation seemed hopeless for the TALLAHASSEE as there were only two channels that flowed from the harbor to the ocean. The west channel, called "the main channel", was straight, deep and broad. This channel was used by all large, heavy ships like the TALLAHASSEE. The east channel was narrow, crooked and shallow and used only by small boats. It was considered impassable for any ship the size of the TALLAHASSEE.

Realizing the difficulty of the situation, Wood contacted Benjamin Weir, the Confederate agent, to inquire about the name of the best harbor pilot in Halifax. Weir recommended an experienced pilot named Jock Fleming.

Wood and Fleming then began working on an escape plan. Wood asked if it would be possible to reach the ocean through the east channel as the Union warships were all waiting just outside the main west channel. Fleming advised Wood that the east channel was "narrow and crooked" and with a long ship like the TALLAHASSEE he wouldn't advise it. Fleming then mentioned that with the right tides he might be able to find fourteen feet of water and this would be sufficient to float the ship but the channel would still be narrow and crooked. This was all John Taylor Wood had to hear and he told Jock Fleming that if he could find the water, Wood would keep the ship in the channel no matter how narrow or crooked it might be.

Fleming said they would have to leave by 9 o'clock that night to take advantage of the tides. At 9 o'clock the TALLAHASSEE started out with all lights extinguished on a night that was very dark and overcast. In an amazing feat of seamanship, Fleming and Wood kept the ship in the channel that was considered impassable for all but small fishing boats. For hour after hour the large ship slowly made its way through the narrow, crooked, shallow channel in the darkness of night until finally

reaching open waters. The Union ships waiting at the mouth of the main channel to the west never had a clue.

The Halifax newspaper later reported on this feat of daring in a sense of disbelief. I can only imagine that the five Union warships that were waiting at the end of the western channel for an anticipated easy target were also in a state of disbelief when they realized what had happened. I would also imagine that quite a number of people tried to stay as far away as they possibly could from Gideon Welles until some time had passed after this amazing feat.

John Taylor Wood and the crew of the TALLAHASSEE returned to Wilmington to be met with cheers and hero worship. There was also another promotion for Wood but the adventures were not yet over for this daring man.

As the War was coming to a close, Wood joined his uncle, Jefferson Davis, and members of the Confederate Cabinet as they made their way south from Richmond hoping to eventually reach Mexico and other destinations. The group was captured near Irwinville, Georgia, but the ever resourceful John Taylor Wood was able to escape by bribing one of his Union captors. This guy was good! He worked his way through Florida and eventually sailed to Cuba where he joined other Confederates including the great John C. Breckenridge.

Wood eventually worked his way back to Halifax and joined a community of about 30 other unreconstructed Confederates who had settled in Nova Scotia. He started a business in partnership with Wilkinson Wood and they became highly successful. They also proudly flew the Confederate Flag above their offices for many years. He also maintained his friendship with Jock Fleming until the death of the latter.

John Taylor Wood, the man who had done the impossible by making it through the impassable, died in 1904 and is buried in Halifax near the grave of his friend, Benjamin Weir. The heading for his obituary in the newspaper read, "Brave and Noted Man has Gone to His Rest". How very true; but he was, after all, a Confederate!

## *New MOS&B Email System*

We have switched over to a new system for sending out email to the MOS&B email list. There are several features that make this a major improvement over our previous system - the main one being that the system is self-maintaining. Each email you receive will include two links at the bottom of the page that let you control your email settings. You can unsubscribe or you can change your email address at any time.

If you did not receive the email of **August 10** that announced the new system, then we do not have your current email address. If you would like to be added to the email list, you can add yourself to the list by going to the web site and clicking the "Subscribe" menu item or going directly to the subscribe page at <http://www.militaryorderofthestarsandbars.org/subscribe>



**MOS&B International**  
P O Box 1700  
White House, TN 37188-1700

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
AUGUSTA, GA  
PERMIT NO. 310

## The Place To Go When You Want To Know About the War Between the States

- Current Events • Our Southern Heritage • Preservation
- Calendar of Events • Book Reviews • Reenactments
- Feature Articles • Firearms • Display & Classified Ads

**-----We don't just talk preservation – We Do It!-----**

We saved the historic house General James Longstreet used as his headquarters during the winter of 1863–64 from demolition and are developing it into a museum, (See [www.longstreetmuseum.com](http://www.longstreetmuseum.com)), and historic Bethesda Church which was used as a hospital by both armies, and battlefield preservation.

*Free Sample Copy: 800-624-0281 ext. 326 • email: [cweditor@lcs.net](mailto:cweditor@lcs.net)*

**GRAND OLD FASHIONED**  
**GAZETTE**  
ISSUES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE SOUTHERN STATES  
[www.campchase.com](http://www.campchase.com)

  
**CIVIL WAR**  
**COURIER**  
[www.civilwarcourier.com](http://www.civilwarcourier.com)

The **Citizens'**  
**Companion**  
The Value of History Revisited  
[www.citizenscompanion.com](http://www.citizenscompanion.com)