



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

---

OCTOBER 1967

Vol. 11 No. 1

---

---

## 87th Meeting

---

DATE: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1967  
SUBJECT: THE CAMPAIGN OF CHANCELLORSVILLE  
SPEAKER: JUDGE MILTON D. HOLMES  
PLACE: HERMIT CLUB, DODGE COURT  
PRELIMINARIES: 6:00 PM DINNER 7:00 PM

---

### JUDGE MILTON D. HOLMES

Our lead-off speaker for the new season is a member of our Roundtable. The Judge joined us in 1965, but his interest in the Civil War goes much further back than just several years. Judge Holmes is a Clevelander, graduating from West High. He attended Ohio University and graduated from the Western Reserve Law School. A former Assistant Attorney General he has been Judge of the Rocky River Municipal Court for seven years. He and his wife, Mary and their four children, Mark 16, Thomas 15, Mary Alice 7 and Karin 6, live on Hillard Road in Rocky River. Son Mark is a junior member of the Roundtable and helped his father with this month's program. He also prepared the wall map the Judge will use in his talk. We are looking forward to another fine talk from Judge Holmes.

The Chancellorsville Battlefield, named for a family place rather than a town, is located along the Orange Turnpike some 10 miles west of Fredericksburg. The Chancellorsville Campaign comprised three different struggles: the main fight around Chancellorsville, the sacrifice play at Fredericksburg, and Sedgwick's breaking of Jubal Early's lines at Salem Church.

According to Judge Holmes, Chancellorsville was the real high tide of the Confederacy. Could he be thinking of the loss of Lee's right arm, Jackson. During his talk the Judge will speak of Hooker, the general; the charge of the 8th Penna.; the controversy of Hooker's order to the 11th and 12th corps; Sickles' recklessness; Jackson's flanking march; and the rear guard artillery defense by "Leather Breeches" Dilger. There is more, but come to the meeting and find out.

## THE CLEVELAND BULLETIN BOARD

### IN MEMORIAM

HAROLD T. AMMERMAN  
EFFLO A. PLAZER

JAMES R. CLARY  
GEORGE FARR JR.

It is with deep regret that we must report the deaths of four members of the roundtable. Each of the men named were stout advocates and regular attenders at our meetings. Two were charter members, James R. Clary and George Farr Jr. George was also a past president of our roundtable. We shall sadly miss them all.

### NEW MEMBERS

The roundtable wishes to announce the acceptance of the following men as regular and out of town members. Congratulations and welcome.

Dr. Abel L. Robertson Jr., 3517 Lynnfield Rd., Cleveland, Ohio 44122  
Captain James R. Clary, P.O. Box 582, State College, Pa., 16801

### DINNER RESERVATIONS

Our meetings will be again held the second Tuesday of each month, October through May at the Hermit Club. For our first meeting in October please call our Secretary, Guy Di Carlo Jr., 771-7900 if you plan to attend. You can call up to October 9th. If you can make an appearance but didn't call, please come anyway.

### OHIO FLAG PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

As you remember in our April newsletter we gave a brief sketch that the men of the Ohio National Guard are sponsoring a project to restore, preserve, and display the flags and colors carried by Ohio soldiers, sailors, and marines in four great wars. Of the 528 flags, a total of 419 were carried in the Civil War.

At the executive committee meeting your officers and directors voted that \$80 of the Club's treasury be sent to the Flag Committee. We could not conceive of a nobler project than this, to which we could give financial support. If you wish to donate, please send all donations made payable to THE FLAG PRESERVATION COMMITTEE and directed to Lt. Col. William B. Haines, Chairman, Room 11, State House Annex, Columbus, Ohio 43215. It's tax deductible.

### FUTURE ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS

October	Judge Milton D. Holmes	Chancellorsville
November	Col. Allen P. Julian	Atlanta
December	Mr. Fritz Lattin	Reconstruction
January	Dr. William Mahoney	Turner Ashby
February	Dr. Edwin C. Bearss	Vicksburg
March	Mr. John D. Drinko	West Virginia
April	Dr. J. Cutler Andrews	To be announced
May	Mr. James B. Chapman	A Naval topic

The above programs were due to the unstinting efforts of our now President, Frank Moran. We have a sensational year of programs lined up. Thanks Pat.

THE COURIER  
OF  
THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

PRESIDENT . . . . . FRANK A. MORAN  
VICE PRESIDENT . . . . . DONALD A. HECKAMAN  
SECRETARY . . . . . GUY DI CARLO JR.  
TREASURER . . . . . FRANK A. SCHUHLE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

TERMS EXPIRING 1968: JOHN W. CULLEN JR.  
FRANK SAXTON

1969: WILLIAM VICTORY  
PAUL E. GUENTHER

EDITOR, NEWSLETTER . . . . GUY DI CARLO JR.

---

REAR-ADMIRAL DAVID G. FARRAGUT

THIS IS A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH THAT APPEARED IN A NEWSPAPER CALLED "THE PICTORIAL WAR RECORD" PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK WEEKLY ON SATURDAY. THIS PARTICULAR SKETCH APPEARED IN THE SEPTEMBER 9, 1882 ISSUE.

Rear-Admiral David G. Farragut was born in Tennessee shortly before the beginning of the present century. He was appointed to the United States Navy from his native state, and graduated on the blue water instead of at a naval school. He was a mere child when he first went to sea, and his warrant as a mid-shipman bore date as early as December 17, 1810. He served on board the "Essex", under his patron, the noted Commodore David Porter, and doubled Cape Horn with him in 1813. Previous to this date, however, he had been engaged on the "Essex" in the famous privateering expedition against England during 1811 and 1812. Young Farragut was once named by Porter as fit to command as Acting Lieutenant one of his captured prizes, which he had turned into a privateer; but his appointment was opposed on the ground that he was 'but a mere boy.' In spite of this, he however, proved himself to be an apt sailor and a good naval officer. During 1814 and 1815 he was serving on board the line-of-battle ship "Independence," carrying 74 guns.

After serving over ten years as a midshipman, and having attained his twenty-first year, he passed his examination with great credit, and was ordered to the West Indian Station, where he acted as Master and Lieutenant. He, however, did not receive his commission as the latter until January 13, 1825, when he was transferred to the frigate "Brandywine," 44 guns, serving with the same squadron.

About the latter part of 1826 he was ordered to the receiving ship at Norfolk, Va., remaining there until 1828. He was then assigned to the sloop-of-war "Vandalia," 18 guns, stationed with the Brazilian squadron. After about two years' service on that coast, he again returned to the receiving ship at Norfolk, where he remained until 1833. During that year he was appointed executive officer of the sloop-of-war "Natchez", and returned to the coast of Brazil, where he remained about one year. He then was allowed several years' rest on shore, and with the exception of short cruises was unemployed until September 8, 1841, when he was commissioned a Commander of the navy, and ordered to the sloop-of-war "Decatur," 16 guns, on the Brazilian station. After about twelve months' service he again returned home, and was unemployed until 1845, when he was ordered to the Norfolk Navy Yard. He remained at that

station until 1847, when he commanded the sloop-of-war "Saratoga," 20 guns, engaged on the home squadron. This was during the Mexican War, in the naval part of which he doubtless participated.

At the end of the war he was again ordered to the Norfolk Navy Yard, where he was second in command to Commodore Sloat. He remained at the station until 1851, when he was appointed on a different service as Assistant Inspector of Ordnance under Commodore Skinner. He was second in command in this duty also, and held the position until 1854. During this year another field was opened for his talents by the establishment of a new navy yard at Mare's Island, California, of which post Commander Farragut was made commandant or chief officer. He held this position until 1858, and during the interval, viz., September 14th, 1855, he was promoted to be a Captain in the Navy.

During 1858 he was placed in command of the steam-sloop "Brooklyn," 25 guns, serving on the home squadron under Commodore McCluney. After holding this command for about two years, he was relieved in November, 1860, under very peculiar circumstances, which excited much comment at the time, and would require too much space to be entered upon in detail here. He was therefore kept without a ship until long after the breaking out of the rebellion.

When the Butler expedition was fitted out for the purpose of taking New Orleans, the Gulf Squadron was ordered to co-operate with the land forces under General Butler. The subject of our sketch had been appointed the Flag Officer or Commodore of the squadron, and it was under his direction that the fleet engaged and passed the two strong forts of the Mississippi River during April, 1862, and stood before and demanded the surrender of the chief city of the South on April 25th. The city of New Orleans and the forts surrendered to the Navy on April 28th, and the U.S. flag once more floated over its public buildings. On the 12th of May Natchez surrendered, and on the 7th of June Farragut's fleet arrived off Vicksburg, which he bombarded until the water began to fall in July. He then returned to the Gulf, where he remained until the waters of the Mississippi River again rose high enough to float his ships.

On the 16th of July, 1862, he was made First Admiral of the American Navy. His operations in the Gulf and on the waters of the Mississippi were not remarkably important until March, 1863, when on the 14th of that month he ran by the formidable batteries of Port Hudson with his flagship "Hartford" and consort, and on the 19th stood again before Vicksburg, thereby greatly assisting the movements of the military under General Grant.

At the beginning of 1863 he had been in the American Navy fifty-two years, out of which time he had been unemployed less than eleven years, a proportion of official active service only equalled by that of Admiral Shubrick. He had spent nearly twenty-three years at sea, the remainder of the time being engaged on shore and other duty.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### UNION'S FIRST NAVAL STRIKING FORCE

To cut the Confederacy off from the sea and provide facilities for Federal ships blockading the South Atlantic coast, the Union directed its first naval striking force against Forts Clark and Hatteras, which had been built to defend the Hatteras Inlet to the North Carolina sounds. The move was planned by a board of four experts which had studied the Confederacy's coasts and harbors at the request of the Federal Naval Dept. The inlet had come to the board's attention as a suitable initial striking point because the sounds provided a base for Confederate privateers attacking Northern shipping. So a Federal fleet of seven warships with 158 guns, two transports holding 900 troops, and a steam tug entered the inlet on August 27, 1861.

The fleet towed iron surfboats to land the troops under the command of Major General Ben Butler in an amphibious operation. On Aug. 28, the fleet attacked and some 300 troops were landed. A steady stream of shells drove the Confederate garrison at Fort Clark to Fort Hatteras. The Union troops took possession of the evacuated fort. Meanwhile, several hundred Confederate reinforcements were added to the already overcrowded Fort Hatteras. The showdown came at that fort. On Aug 29, the Federal fleet resumed its barrage and easily maneuvered away from the few shots fired from the fort in a one-sided battle. When a shell penetrated some supposedly bomb-proof protection, endangering the ammunition magazine, the Confederates ran up the white flag. Two Confederates were found dead and 13 were wounded among the 715 taken prisoner. The Union suffered only one casualty. Taken from "Civil War Album", Jamestown (N.Y.) Post-Journal, Monday, August 28, 1961.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FARRAGUT'S SHIPS RIDE LEVEL TOPS IN CAPTURE OF N.O.

By Cmdr. Casius M. Keller (USN-R and Member)  
Civil War Round Table of the District of  
Columbia

Rear Admiral John B. Heffernan, U.S.N., Ret., veteran of two World Wars and a former president of the CVRT of D.C., gave a graphic description of Flag-Officer David Glasgow Farragut's capture of New Orleans in April, 1862, at the February meeting.

Farragut, born in Tennessee, had spent 50 years at sea and he was 60 years old when in December 1861 he was assigned the job of attacking New Orleans. He was to cooperate with an Army expedition led by the Union General Ben Butler.

The naval commander arrived at Ship Island, 100 miles east of the Mississippi River, on February 20, 1862, aboard his flagship, USS Hartford. It took more than three weeks to assemble the 17 vessels of the command, which included seven screw sloops-of-war, the side-wheeler "Mississippi," and nine gunboats. These mounted 154 guns, most of them of heavy caliber. Farragut also had the frigate "Colorado," but she was too big to cross the mud-bars at the mouths of the Mississippi. In addition, there were 20 mortar schooners, five gunboats and the sailing sloop "Portsmouth," all under the command of Commander David Dixon Porter.

More than three weeks were needed to get the sloops and USS Mississippi across the mud-bars but on April 16 all of the fleet was in the river. Farragut then went 17 miles upstream, to a point three miles below the Confederate Fort Jackson, on the left bank ascending, and Fort St. Philip. The forts were located on a river bend and had a total of 147 guns, only 30 per cent of which were of caliber heavier than 32-pounders. The two forts had a garrison of 1100 men. Fort Jackson, with 95 guns, was a masonry work with casements. Fort St. Philip, with 52 guns, was of brick and stone, covered with sod, and her guns were mounted en barbette. At this point the Mississippi was between 700 and 800 yards wide, 130 feet deep in mid-channel, and had a 4-knot current. Below the forts was a river barrier of chains, logs, and hulks. Above the forts was the Confederate river fleet of 14 vessels, mounting 40 guns, which included the formidable cigar-shaped iron-clad "Manassas." Another iron-clad, the Louisiana, lacked engines and was moored above Fort St. Philip as a floating battery. The Confederate naval command also had a number of fire-rafts ready to loose against the Union fleet.

On April 18, Commander Porter opened fire on the forts with his 13-inch mortars, and the night and day bombardment continued until April 23. The forts were damaged, but not disabled. On the night of April 20, two Union gunboats opened a passage through the Confederate

river barrier. The Union fleet was divided into three divisions, with Captain Theodorus Bailey commanding the first, Farragut the second, and Commander Henry H. Bell the third.

Farragut gave the signal to advance at 1:55 a.m. on April 24, and the assault was underway. The Union ships had a top speed of eight knots, with the river current reducing the advance to four knots. The heavy and accurate naval fire prevented the forts from firing effectively, and their guns did little damage to the ships although "USS Hartford" and "USS Brooklyn" grounded under the forts during the passage. Hartford was set afire briefly by a Confederate fire-raft, and Brooklyn was rammed and damaged by "CSS Manassas," which then was run ashore.

At daylight on April 24, Farragut had 13 ships above the forts. The gunboat "Varuna" had been sunk, and three gunboats in the third division had to remain below the river barrier. The forts had been passed, and the Confederate river fleet destroyed during the night battle. The Confederate naval attack had been disorganized because there were three separate commands, under the Confederate Navy, the Louisiana State Navy, and the Army.

Moving upriver, a Union gunboat forced a Confederate regiment in garrison at Quarantine above Fort St. Philip to surrender. Farragut's fleet of 11 craft, with two left behind to cut off the forts, then silenced the Gray land batteries at Chalmette-Algiers, five miles below New Orleans.

At 11 a.m. on April 25, the Union ships appeared at the city's waterfront, blazing with burning cotton, merchant vessels, and the unfinished iron-clad "Mississippi." The river was very high and the ships rode at levee top, with their guns commanding the city.

After two days of dickering, Confederate General Mansfield Lovell withdrew his 3,000 green troops, and the Mayor surrendered New Orleans. On April 28, Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson surrendered to Commander Porter, after the Jackson garrison had mutinied. The Confederate iron-clad "Louisiana" was set afire and destroyed by her crew.

Farragut then steamed up the Mississippi and found the Confederate shore fortifications abandoned until he reached those on the high river bluffs, which could not be taken by navel gunfire. After spending some time upstream, and losing the side-wheeler Mississippi, Farragut withdrew to New Orleans.

Although the capture of New Orleans, 107 miles from the sea, was a major victory for the United States Navy, the losses on both sides were not heavy. Farragut's command had 44 men killed and 166 injured. The Confederates lost 11 killed and 37 injured in the forts, and an estimated 74 killed and 72 injured in the river fleet.

(Article taken from THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NEWSLETTER, Volume 9, No. 3, March 2, 1959)

\* \* \* \* \*

### BLOCKADE DUTY

A sailor on blockade duty off a southern port described life aboard an iron-clad in a letter to his mother,

"Go to the roof on a hot summer day, talk to a half dozen degenerates, descend to the basement, drink tepid water full of iron rust, climb to the roof again, and repeat the process at intervals until she was fagged out, then go to bed with everything shut tight."

from THE CIVIL WAR--A NARRATIVE FREDERICKSBURG TO MERIDIAN by Shelby Foote as reprinted in the Civil War Roundtable of St. Louis newsletter, THE BUSHWHACKER, November, 1964.

## THE UNION NAVY

On the morning of March 9, 1862, in the waters of Hampton Roads, Virginia, a savage sea battle took place which wrecked the highest hopes of the Confederacy and forever changed the course of naval warfare. It was a battle that revolutionized the naval armaments of the world.

When at the outbreak of the war the navy yard at Norfolk, Va., was abandoned, with an attempt at its destruction, the steam-frigate "Merrimac" was set on fire at the wharf. Her upper works were burned, and her hull sank. Within two months the Confederates were at work upon her. They raised the hull, repaired the machinery and covered it with a steep roof of wrought iron which was five inches thick, with a lining of oak seven inches thick. The sides were also plated with iron, and the bow was armed with an iron ram, something like a huge plough-share.

In March 1862 she was ready for action. The Confederates had renamed her the "Virginia". The command was given to Franklin Buchanan who had resigned a commission in the United States Navy. On the 8th of March, accompanied by two gunboats, she went out to raise the blockade of the James and Elizabeth rivers by destroying the wooden war-vessels in Hampton Roads. In forty-five minutes she had sunk the "Cumberland". She opened an attack on the "Congress", and set her on fire; the crew escaped in their boats. "The "Congress" burned for several hours, and in the night blew up. Of the other Union vessels in the Roads, one went aground in water too shallow for the "Merrimac" to approach her; the other vessels were not drawn into the fight.

The next day, Sunday March 9, 1862, the "Merrimac" came out to finish up the fleet, but found that a new antagonist had just arrived. When they first saw it, the men called it "Cheese box on a Raft". This strange vessel had been designed and built for the United States government by John Ericsson. She was built in about a hundred days, at Brooklyn, N.Y., was named "Monitor", and was placed under the command of Lt. John L. Worden.

Lt. Worden hurried the "Monitor" down to Hampton Roads, in stormy and dangerous passage, and, on the very morning after his arrival, met and fought the "Merrimac". After four hours of battle, the "Merrimac" withdrew from the fight never to fight again.

During the combat, the gallant Worden, whose record in the history of the navy is without blemish as a man and a sailor, suffered severely. He had stationed himself at the pilot-house, while Lt. Greene managed the guns, and Chief Engineer Alban Stimers, who was on board in the capacity of the government inspector, worked the turret. Nine times the turret was struck by the "Merrimac's" projectiles. One of these struck fairly in front of the peep-hole, at which Worden was watching his foe. It shattered some cement, and cast it so violently in his face that it blinded him for several days, and so shocked him that, for a time, he was insensible. In the turret Stimers and two others were knocked down by the concussion when it was struck. With the exception of Worden, no one, on board the "Monitor", was very seriously injured.

In the month of April the navy performed another great service by the capture of New Orleans. The fleet was in command of Captain Farragut, and successfully passed the fortifications which had been erected by the national government to prevent a foreign foe from entering the Mississippi. New Orleans made no resistance to the approach of the fleet, and General Benjamin F. Butler, in command of the Department of the Gulf, established his headquarters in the city. The importance of this conquest to the Union cause could hardly be estimated. It enabled the government to embarrass the trans-Mississippi states in their sup-



port of the Confederate army, and thus inflict a heavy blow upon the fortunes of the Confederacy. New Orleans, under the control of the National government, was easy to defend, and it afforded a base for offensive operations in so many directions that no amount of vigilance could anticipate the attacks that might be made by the Union forces.

Viewed in connection with the effective work of Flag-Officer Foote in supporting General Grant in the Henry and Donelson campaign, and the Gouldsbrough in supporting Burnside on the coast of North Carolina, these later and greater achievements of the navy served to raise that branch of the service in popular esteem. Besides the intrinsic merit which was attached to the victories, they had all the advantage of a genuine surprise to the public. Little had been expected from the navy in a contest where the field of operation seemed so restricted. But now the people saw that the most important post thus far wrenched from the Confederacy had been taken by the navy, and that it was effectively sustaining and strengthening the army at all points. It was no longer regarded as a mere blockading force, but was menacing the coast of the Confederate states, penetrating their rivers, and neutralizing the strength of thousands of Confederate soldiers who were withdrawn from armies in the field to man fortifications rendered necessary by this unexpected form of attack. These facts made a deep impression on the Congress.

Since the close of the second war with Great Britain the navy had enjoyed no opportunity for distinction. The war with Mexico was wholly a contest on land, and for a period of forty-five years the navy of the United States had not measured its strength with any foe. Meanwhile it had made great advance in the education and training of its officers and in the general tone of the service. Under the secretaryship of George Bancroft, in the cabinet of Mr. Polk, an academy had been established at Annapolis for the scientific training of naval officers. By this enlightened policy which was inaugurated, if not originally conceived, by Mr. Bancroft, naval officers had for the first time, been placed on an equal footing with the officers of the army. The army had long enjoyed the advantages of the well-organized school at West Point.

The academy had borne fruit, and at the outbreak of the war the navy was filled with young officers carefully trained in the duties of their profession, intelligent in affairs, and with "esprit de corps" not surpassed in the service of any other country. Their efficiency was supplemented by that of volunteer officers in large numbers who came from the American merchant marine, and who, in all the duties of seamanship, courage, capacity, and patriotism, were the peers of any men that were to ever tread a deck.

Congress realized that a re-organization of the naval service was necessary, the stimulus of promotion should be more liberally used, and the pride of rank more generously indulged. An act was, therefore, passed on the 16th of July, 1862 greatly enlarging the scope of the naval organization and advancing the rank of its officers. Farragut had won his magnificent triumph at New Orleans while holding the rank of captain, the highest then known rank in the service, and Worden while a lieutenant performed at Hampton Roads. David D. Porter, with no higher rank, had been exercising commands which, in any European government, would have been assigned to an admiral. Perhaps no navy in the world had, at that time, had abler officers. The navy had only the grades of passed-midshipman, lieutenant, commander, and captain. The law gave nine grades-midshipman, ensign, master, lieutenant, lieutenant commander, commander, captain, commodore, and rear-admiral. Two higher grades of vice-admiral and admiral were subsequently added. The navy had conquered its own place in the public regard, and had performed an inestimable service in the contest against the Confederacy.

---

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY JOSEPH O. FERGUSON, AND APPEARED IN THE WILMINGTON, DELAWARE CVRT NEWSLETTER "GRAPE & CANISTER"



## A LUMBER-JACK SAVED THE NAVY

by

Les Swift alias Harry Whiteside

Listen all ye engineers! How would you go about raising the water-level of a full sized river over six feet? Could you do it in twelve days, using unlimited man-power, but without benefit of steam, electricity, concrete or other modern devices? Would you be ready to "sell" others that you could complete such a project in record time and willing to risk your reputation and your future on the result?

In times of peace, even today, it would be an impossibility. But during the Civil War all of this actually happened. The result was a howling success and brought honor and wealth to the man who put it across.

In the early part of March, 1864, the Red River Campaign started. The Union Army under General Banks and the Mississippi Squadron under Admiral Porter were supposed to invade western Louisiana and capture the city of Shreveport. The Navy and several transports went along to support the troops in battle and also to carry supplies.

For those who do not have an atlas handy, it should be explained that the Red River empties into the Mississippi, but is a much different type of stream. Ugly rocks are plentiful, rearing their jagged fangs amid the foam and white-water ledges of long stretches of rapids. Flowing over ledges of solid soapstone, the Red River is a wide, shallow, brawling young giant of a river that is navigable only a part of each year.

Going up the Red River wasn't so bad. Nearly all of the gunboats made the ascent on the crest of the spring freshets. Then both the Army and the Navy began to lose battles. When the War Department in Washington heard about this, they ordered the expedition to be brought to an end.

In the meantime the water level dropped. Even Nature had conspired against the Northern hosts. Everyone knew that the Red River usually rose a second time during the latter part of April. But in 1864, for the first time in twenty years, the water fell instead of rising, although all of the rivers to the north in Arkansas were out of their banks.

The gunboats worked their way cautiously downstream until they reached the town of Alexandria. Here they were confronted by a long stretch of rapids. The river fell nine feet in a single mile. A current of ten miles an hour raced past rocks sharp enough to tear the bottom out of an unwary gunboat. And the water was only three feet deep! The Mississippi Squadron, pride of the Navy and veterans of the Vicksburg Campaign, found themselves trapped.

The Admiral and his officers were convinced that they would have to destroy or abandon the Squadron. Visions of blistered feet gave the Navy nightmares. This would be one of the few cases in history where the Navy was defeated and had to walk back.

But it takes many different kinds of men to make an army, and one man in this army had a solution. Up stepped Lt. Col. Joseph Bailey, former Wisconsin lumberman. Here was a man with brains, vision and true American ingenuity.

He proposed building wing dams across the river at the foot of the rapids. The wing dams were to extend out from each bank, and, as Col. Bailey explained, this would force all of the water through a narrow channel in midstream, which would in turn raise the water level. (The river was only 758 feet wide at this point!)

The generals undoubtedly scratched their shaggy heads and whistled through their beards. Some of them even told Col. Bailey what they thought of such a crack-brained idea. But Admiral Porter realized that it would be a grave error if Col. Bailey were not given an opportunity to try out his plan.

"The water," wrote Admiral Porter, "had fallen so low that I had no hope or expectation of getting the vessels out this season, and as the army had made arrangements to evacuate the country, I saw nothing before me but the destruction of the best part of the Mississippi Sqdn.

There seems to have been an especial Providence looking out for us in providing a man equal to the emergency. Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey, Acting Engineer of the Nineteenth Army Corps, proposed building a series of dams across the rocks at the falls, and raising the water high enough to let the vessels pass over. This proposition looked like madness and the best engineers ridiculed it; but Colonel Bailey was so sanguine of success, that I requested General Banks to have it done, and he entered heartily into the work. Provisions were short, and forage was almost out, and the dam was promised to be finished in ten days or the army would have to leave us."

On April thirtieth three thousand men and two hundred wagons were put to work. Luckily there were several regiments of Maine and Wisconsin volunteers present and many of them had worked in logging camps. The sound of axes echoed from the forests as trees were felled and trimmed. Stone was quarried and bricks, railroad iron and even machinery was "borrowed" from the town of Alexandria.

On the banks of the river loafed the rest of the Army and Navy, ready to offer suggestions on how it should be done, and making wagers on the success or failure of project. Watching others work always was more fun than marching and fighting.

First of all, four barges were sunk in the center of the river, two on one side and two on the other, with a channel sixty-six feet wide between them. A long trestle runway had to be built out to these barges, wide enough for the men to pass each other. According to all accounts, a sugar mill stood on the bank nearby. We can sympathize with the unfortunate owner. If present, he was forced to watch his mill dismantled before his eyes. The siding and beams were used to make the runway and the heavy machinery inside was used to help weight down the barges. It is also recorded that every wheelbarrow in the surrounding countryside was requisitioned to keep six hundred men busy filling the barges with stone and bricks. Here was toil that Paul Bunyan would have enjoyed! In the meantime the lumber-jacks were constructing log cribs formed like a log cabin with a floor of logs but no roof. Each crib was 32 feet long, 12 feet wide and 12 feet deep. They were built in the woods half a mile above the site of the dam, then pushed down skidways into the river and floated down stream. Like the barges, they were sunk in position by being filled with stone and other heavy material.

The log cribs extended from the south bank out to the barges. On the north bank a tree dam was being made. This consisted of whole trees foilage included, placed with their tops upstream and their butts resting on cross-logs and weighted down with stone.

It was hard, back-breaking labor. The Louisiana sun was plenty hot, even in May. The ten-mile current was always on hand and as the dam neared completion the water level began to rise, making it still more difficult to put the cribs and trees in position. Many of the men had to work in water up to their necks.

Both wing dams were completed by May eighth. The water had risen five and one-third feet and four of the light-draft gunboats prepared to plunge down the chute between the barges. The water was boiling through this channel like a mammoth millrace and many of the officers feared that the dam would not hold. That night two of the barges were torn loose by the force of the current and lodged just below the dam. This was sheer good luck, as in their new position the barges tended to lengthen the chute and also covered a dangerous ledge of rocks. It looked as though the gods were favoring Col. Bailey.

Orders were given at once to have the gunboat Lexington try the passage. On the banks of the river, thirty thousand men held their breaths as she plunged into the churning rapids. Completely at the mercy of the torrent, she darted forward, caroming lightly against the sunken barges. Then came the plunge into the calmer waters below, and for an instant the hull of the Lexington was completely submerged.

As she bobbed up and righted herself, a mighty cheer echoed from the banks of the river. The Army and the Navy wouldn't have to walk back after all! That same day the remaining three light-draft gunboats made the passage successfully. But there was more work to be done. Six heavy ironclads and two tugs were waiting at the head of the rapids, and the water was still too shallow for them. Col. Bailey suggested building more wing dams at the head of the rapids, a mile above the lower dams. Everyone was full of optimism now and the change in spirit was evident. In three days and three nights of hard labor, three new wing dams were finished. One dam was made of light cribs filled with stone and on the opposite bank was another tree dam, supported on the downstream side by a bracket dam made of logs raised at their lower ends on trestles and sheathed with planks. This added fourteen inches to the water level, making a total increase six and one-half feet.

While the second dams were being built, the gunboats were being prepared for their ordeal. The heavier naval guns were taken ashore or moved astern, to keep the boats from diving too deeply after passing the lower chute. Port holes were closed and calked, hatches battened down.

On the twelfth and thirteenth of May the remaining vessels shot the rapids successfully. Two of them were grounded temporarily between the rapids and had to be pulled off a ledge of rocks. One ironclad, the Essex, dove so deeply at the end of the chute that she actually dipped water with her smokestacks. But all were safe and sound and able to continue their voyage to the Mississippi.

Thus ended the Red River Expedition. From a Union standpoint, it is usually considered the most disastrous campaign of the War between the States. Later, the generals argued and condemned each other, the naval officers did the same. The Army accused the Navy of failing to co-operate and the Navy retaliated with similar charges. Then everyone concerned was condemned by the desk-officers in Washington.

The only redeeming feature in the whole affair was the Red River dam, which is also the only historical example of a lumber-jack saving a squadron of gunboats.

In his official report Admiral Porter said: "Words are inadequate to express the admiration I feel for the ability of Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey. This is without doubt the best engineering feat ever performed. Under the best circumstances, a private company would not have completed this work under one year, and to the ordinary mind the whole thing would have appeared an entire impossibility. Leaving out his ability as an engineer--the credit he has conferred upon the country--he has saved the Union a valuable fleet, worth nearly \$2,000,000; more, he has deprived the enemy of a triumph which would have emboldened them to carry on this war a year or two longer, for the intended departure of the army was a fixed fact, and there was nothing left for me to do in case that event occurred but to destroy every part of the vessels, so that the enemy could make nothing of them. The highest honors the Government can bestow on Colonel Bailey can never repay him for the service he has rendered the country. . . I do not believe there ever was a case where such a short space of time, and without any preparation."

And the honors were duly bestowed on Col. Bailey. Congress tendered a vote of thanks, his superior officers breveted him to the rank of brigadier general. His fellow-officers presented him with a sword and also a purse of three thousand dollars. Here, for once, is an instance of the right man being properly rewarded.

The above article was written for a magazine called "Opportunity" by Les Swift in 1938. Les has written many articles and other pieces under the alias of Harry Whiteside. My sincere thanks to Les for letting me use the article for this newsletter.

## THE FANNY: FIRST AIRCRAFT CARRIER (1861)

A sailor turned aeronaut. That was John LaMountain. He was a man of unusual courage and daring, endowed with energy and vigorous physical strength. LaMountain was born in Troy, New York, about 1830. He first won fame in July 1859 when, with John Wise, O.A. Gager and William Hyde (the latter a newspaper reporter), he made a balloon flight of 1,100 miles from St. Louis, Missouri, to Henderson, Jefferson County, New York. Several months later he made an experimental flight from Watertown, New York, with John A. Haddock, editor of the Watertown "REFORMER". The balloon was carried far out over the Canadian wilds. The two men wandered in the northern woods for almost a week before they were rescued by a party of lumberjacks. This brought additional fame to La Mountain and made him a national figure. He began to talk about crossing the Atlantic Ocean by air.

Then the Civil War broke out. LaMountain wrote to the War Department, offering his services as a balloonist. His letter was ignored. Military aeronautics was practically unknown in the United States, although the French had used balloons for military purposes in 1794, 1830 and 1859.

La Mountain's chance to serve his country came when Major General Benjamin F. Butler wrote him on June 5, 1861, offering him the position of aerial observer with his command in Southeastern Virginia. This consisted not only of Fort Monroe, but the Rip Raps (later called Fort Wool), Camp Hamilton (on the site of the present borough of Phoebus) and Camp Butler at Newport News. These were lone Union outposts in the heart of hostile territory. To the south were Confederate batteries on Sewell's Point (present-day Naval Base), on Craney Island at the mouth of the Elizabeth River, and on Pig Point at the mouth of the Nansemond River. There were Confederate troops around Norfolk. To the west were the vast reaches of the James River, which could give throughfare to forces coming from Richmond.

The territory to the north of Fort Monroe was ranged over by forces from Yorktown, elements of which had defeated the Union forces at Big Bethel on June 10. Disturbing rumors filtered into Fort Monroe of overwhelming numbers of troops in all these places. General Butler felt that an aerial reconnaissance would give him more certain knowledge of the strength and disposition of the Confederate forces.

Butler had a mind which was attracted by the spectacular and the untried. An aggressive, self-confident, and politically powerful citizen-soldier, he by-passed his superior officers more than once during his military career. Acting entirely on his own responsibility, Butler engaged LaMountain, hoping to get authorization of the balloonist's expenses later on.

LaMountain arrived at Fort Monroe on July 23, 1861, bringing his own two balloons. His first ascension, on July 25, was not effective because a strong wind kept him from gaining sufficient altitude. On July 31 he rose to 1,400 feet and made important observations over a radius of thirty miles. La Mountain found that the strength of the Confederate forces at Sewell's Point and Norfolk, to the south, and at Yorktown, to the north, was much less than had been rumored. He made repeated ascensions, during the course of which he discovered 4,000 or 5,000 Confederate troops at Young's Mill (Denbigh) and a camp of 150 to 200 tents on the bank of the James River north of Newport News at Watt's Creek (present site of the Mariners Museum). La Mountain also made some ascensions at night to calculate the enemy's strength from the lights in the tents.

On August 3, 1861, La Mountain made his first ascent from the deck of a ship in Hampton Roads. His balloon was inflated and placed on board of the gunboat FANNY and secured to the stern by mooring ropes

and a windlass. The vessel then steamed out into the channel opposite Sewell's Point, where La Mountain ascended to a height of 2,000 feet, making careful inspection of the Confederate positions. On the evening of August 10, he made another ascension from the deck of the tug ADRIATIC. At this point, La Mountain's ascensions at Fort Monroe ceased because he had exhausted his materials for making hydrogen gas, that is to say, sulfuric acid and iron fillings.

Before going back to the North for additional supplies and equipment, La Mountain submitted the following proposal to General Butler under date of August 13, 1861: "At an expense not to exceed eight or nine thousand dollars, I can build a balloon in a month's time and with it shell, burn or destroy Norfolk or any city near our camps. Ballooning can be made a very useful implement in warfare. All depends on the encouragement it receives." Butler was so impressed with La Mountain's proposal that he immediately wrote to the War Department, "The proposition is a novel one and daring, but with the explanation he has given me I think it may have an element of feasibility in it; at any rate, the cost is not large in comparison with the results thus far. Please advise me whether I shall go further with him."

No action was taken by the War Department on this suggestion for aerial warfare. Over fifty years later, during World War I, London and other large English cities were bombed from dirigible balloons designed by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin. Zeppelin (1838-1917) had been a German officer attached to the Union Army during the Civil War. He made his first balloon ascension in the United States.

When La Mountain returned to Fort Monroe in the middle of September with a larger balloon and a gas generator, he found that his patron, General Butler, had been replaced by Major General John E. Wool. This seventy-seven year old soldier, steeped in the traditions of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War of 1846-48, had no stomach for the aerial experiments inaugurated by the venturesome Butler. Wool sent La Mountain to Washington with a letter to the Secretary of War, who assigned the balloonist to duty with the Army of the Potomac in Northern Virginia. La Mountain was allowed to work independently of Thaddeus S. C. Lowe, Chief Aeronaut of the Army of the Potomac. This arrangement was made to prevent friction between these rival balloonists, who fiercely hated one another.

However, La Mountain and Lowe eventually became involved in a bitter wrangle over the use of a new balloon. Since both men were civilians, they could not be disciplined by the military authorities. The quarrel finally grew so hot and involved so many people, including military officers, that one or the other balloonist had to go. It was decided to let La Mountain go. He was, therefore, separated from the service on February 19, 1862. La Mountain returned to his occupation of civilian aeronaut, which he followed until his death from illness at South Bend, Indiana, on February 4, 1870.

John La Mountain was the first "official" aeronaut in the Union Army. He was employed by General Butler at Fort Monroe in July, 1861, whereas Lowe was not officially employed by the War Department until August 2, 1861. This distinction may not be very important. However, La Mountain enjoys one other priority over Lowe, which is of great importance. La Mountain's ascension from the deck of the gunboat FANNY was made on August 3, 1861. Lowe did not make his first ascension from the deck of his balloon-boat, the G.W.P. CUSTIS until November 12, 1861 (see Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, series III, volume 3, pages 265-266).

The FANNY was, therefore, the first aircraft carrier. She was the direct ancestor of the mighty aircraft carriers one sees today on the bosom of Hampton Roads. The FANNY was a steamer with an iron hull and propeller. The G.W.P. CUSTIS was not armed. The FANNY possessed all the basic attributes of a modern aircraft carrier. The G.W.P. CUSTIS did not.



After her brief moment of distinction as the first aircraft carrier, the FANNY reverted to her regular status of gunboat. As such she departed for North Carolina waters on August 26, 1861, with General Butler's amphibious expedition to Hatteras Inlet. The FANNY was over-whelmed and captured by three Confederate gunboats in Loggerhead Inlet on October 1, 1861. The Confederates put her in service against her former masters. When the Confederate fleet was defeated at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, on February 10, 1862, the commander of the FANNY ran her aground and set fire to her. So perished the gallant little FANNY, gunboat under two flags and first aircraft carrier.

For a more detailed account of the activities of John La Mountain, see F. Stansbury Haydon, AERONAUTICS IN THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), pages 82 to 153. The Fort Monroe Casemate Museum has an exhibit on the FANNY, the first aircraft carrier. The museum consists of the Jefferson Davis Casemate, the Monitor and Merrimack Casemate and the Old Fort Monroe Casemate (a casemate is a chamber in the wall of a fort). It is open every day of the year from 8 AM to 5 PM. Admission is free, the museum being commemorative and educational.

The above article is No. 11 in a series of the TALES OF OLD FORT MONROE. We are indebted to Dr. Chester D. Bradley, Co-Chairman & Curator of the Fort Monroe Casemate Museum for his cooperation in the use of this material. Future newsletters will carry more of these excellent articles.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### OUR ARMY AND NAVY.

Europe is laughing pretty heartily at our army and navy arrangements in this country. They say that the late Lord Ellesmere, who proclaimed that the United States was the most warlike nation in the world, must have been a wag. Of late, it must be admitted, these departments of our Government have not shone to advantage.

.....Again, as to our Navy. Whether any blame may legitimately be imposed to the venerable Mr. Toucey, whose sands of political life have so nearly run out, we can not say; but certain it is that about one half the vessels in the navy are unfit for service, and quite a number of others are airing their sails in a sublimed useless manner on the coast of China.

Other nations are availing themselves of the discoveries of modern science to improve their navy. England and France have both been building scores of gun-boats, propelled by steam, drawing six to eight feet of water, and carrying one, two, and three heavy guns. France has built a frigate, cased in iron, which no cannon-ball can damage, and has ordered ten more on the same model. England has built another iron-cased frigate, as invulnerable as LA GLOIRE, and a swifter ship; she, too, is about to build more such craft. Meanwhile the Government of the United States does not seem to conceive that naval science has made any progress in the past ten years. No one has even proposed the construction of an iron-cased ship here.

from HARPER'S WEEKLY  
February 23, 1861

#### CIVIL WAR HUMOR

After a very difficult battle in which shot and shell reigned supreme, on Union man was heard to say, "I got holes in my blouse and holes in my pants, but no holes in me, just them that's intended."