

June 2014



The Admiral's Log

Sons of Confederate Veterans

1211 Government St., Mobile, AL 36604

Raphael Semmes Camp 11



Dear Friends and Compatriots of Camp 11,

Greetings and salutations from Camp 11. I certainly hope and pray that this edition of the Log finds all of you doing well.

We have been busy again this month. On May 31st Compatriot Jessie Taylor and I attended the Presidential Birthday Party at Beauvoir. We got to see some old friends and made a few new ones.

On June 1st several of our Camp 11 members participated in a Confederate Memorial Service near Blacksher, Alabama. This event was hosted by the Blakeley Camp. The following camp members were present: Claude and Michelle Turberville, Shannon Fontaine, Jessie Taylor, and I. Shannon and Mr. Jessie performed the libation ceremony for the program.

On June 7th I made a trip to Chatom to visit with our UDC friends at the Pvt. Gibeon Sullivan Chapter. I shared The Simple Story of a Soldier with these dear ladies.

Compatriot Shannon Fontaine also represented the Semmes Camp at a memorial service for Commander John McIntosh Kell. This ceremony took place in Griffin, Georgia, on June 19th. We all appreciate Shannon for his dedication to our Confederate Naval Heritage.

On the weekend of the 21st Brian Clark was in Brandon, Mississippi, to participate in the Rankin Rough and Ready's SCV Camp's WBTS Relics show.

Finally on the 21st I went to Beauvoir for our monthly living history program. While there we had our first planning meeting for the 2014 Fall Muster at Beauvoir. After the meeting my alter ego, Samuel Hankins, entertained the visitors at the house while they were waiting on the tour to start. It is a lot of fun to interact with people while sharing the Heritage.

The hardest part of preparing for Fall Muster is getting up enough firewood for the event. So if any of you have some firewood you want to donate to the cause please contact me at 402-2653.

While on the subject of Beauvoir, I must again commend the Beauvoir folks for their effort to get the museum and library back up to par. Please take the time to visit Beauvoir.

We are two months away from the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Mobile Bay. There will be activities at Ft. Gaines and Ft. Morgan on August 1-3. This will be a wonderful opportunity to see a piece of our Gulf Coast history.

In closing we urge you to continue to pray for each other as well as our camp.

Terry W. "Beetle" Bailey
Editor, The Admiral's Log

Minutes of Admiral Semmes, Camp 11
Sons of Confederate Veterans
May 26th, 2014

The meeting was called to order by Commander Ringhoffer. Assistant Chaplain Sid [Young] Phillips said the opening prayer followed by the pledges to our flags.

The recent Alabama Division Meeting was discussed. The biggest change to affect our camp is that Commander Tommy Rhodes of the Blakeley Camp is now our brigade commander. Yours truly will serve as the 1st Lieutenant Brigade Commander. Commander Rhodes will do well and I look forward to continuing to serve as his Lt. Commander.

There was a brief discussion about the national SCV meeting in July. At our June meeting plans will be finalized about this affair.

Commander Bailey read a proclamation from President Davis [Bro. J. W. Binion] thanking our camp for our contribution towards his expenses for 2013 Fall Muster.

Boatswain Tom Root read an interesting passage from Service Afloat. It was a description of the officers on the CSS Sumter.

The rest of the meeting was our annual Show and Tell.

Commander Ringhoffer had A. C. Danner's copy of General S. G. French's autobiography. Danner served with French and Danner had made notations in the margins. Commander Ringhoffer also had an elementary reader printed in Mobile. The book was printed on wall paper.

John Rosales brought a stuffed carrier pigeon. He had an interesting story about the pigeon. It was wonderful to hold this specimen on a nearly extinct bird in our hands.

Compatriot Dupree had a letter from Father Ryan and some Confederate currency.

Compatriot Tom Root had a 1938 edition of the Official Courtesy and Customs from West Point.

Compatriot Howard Andrews showed us a copy of Caldwell Delaney's book, Confederate Mobile. In the book there was a section about Shockley's Alabama Escort Company of which Howard's ancestor served.

Dr. Sid Philips showed us his ancestor's UCV membership certificate. His ancestor is Jones Withers and the membership certificate was signed by John B. Gordon.

I am sure I have left something out but don't blame me. There was a lot of good stuff being passed around the room and I was certainly caught up in the excitement of the moment.

Truly our Show and Tell meeting is one of the most fun meetings of the year.

Assistant Chaplain Phillips closed the meeting with prayer and Commander Bailey read the Charge of Stephen D. Lee.

Talk Like a Sailor

Sea chanties were songs sung in the days of sail by crews as they worked at heaving lines or turning the capstan. The rhythms caused everyone to push or pull simultaneously. Some believe the term is a derivation of the French word "chanter" which means "to sing". Others maintain the spelling should be "shanties" claiming that the name refers to the shanties along the Mobile, Alabama, water front where many of the tunes were learned by sailors. One man, the chanty-man, stood high above the working crew and sang the main lines while the rest of the crew added their voices to the second line. On the last word a combined pull made the ropes "come home". A good chanty-man was prized by the officers and crew alike. Although he had no official tittle or rate, he was usually relieved of all duties to compose new lines for sea chanties.

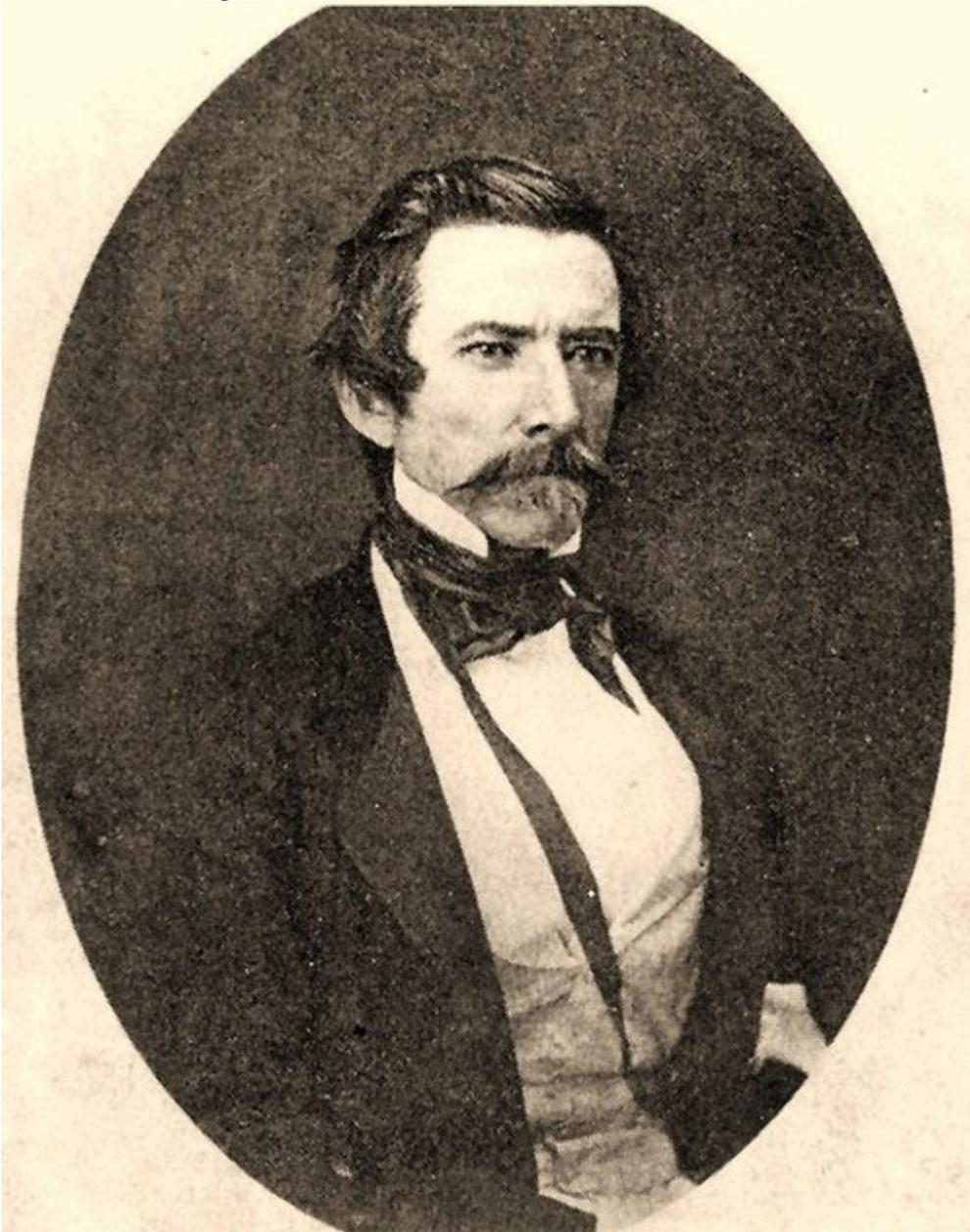
Source: The National Civil War Naval Museum

A Sesquicentennial Moment:

June 19th, 1864

"The day being Sunday and the weather fine, a large concourse of people - many having come all the way from Paris - collected on the heights above the town [Cherbourg], in the upper stories of such of the houses as commanded a view of the sea, and on the walls and fortifications of the harbor. Several French luggers employed as pilot-boats went out, and also an English steam-yacht, called the *Deerhound*. Everything being in readiness between nine and ten o'clock, we got underway, and proceeded to sea, through the western entrance of the harbor; the *Couronne* [French ironclad]

following us. As we emerged from behind the mole, we discovered the *Kearsarge* at a distance of between six and seven miles from the land. She had been apprised of our intention of coming out that morning, and was awaiting us." Thus Captain Raphael Semmes drew the scene as the historic *Kearsarge-Alabama* battle unfolded.

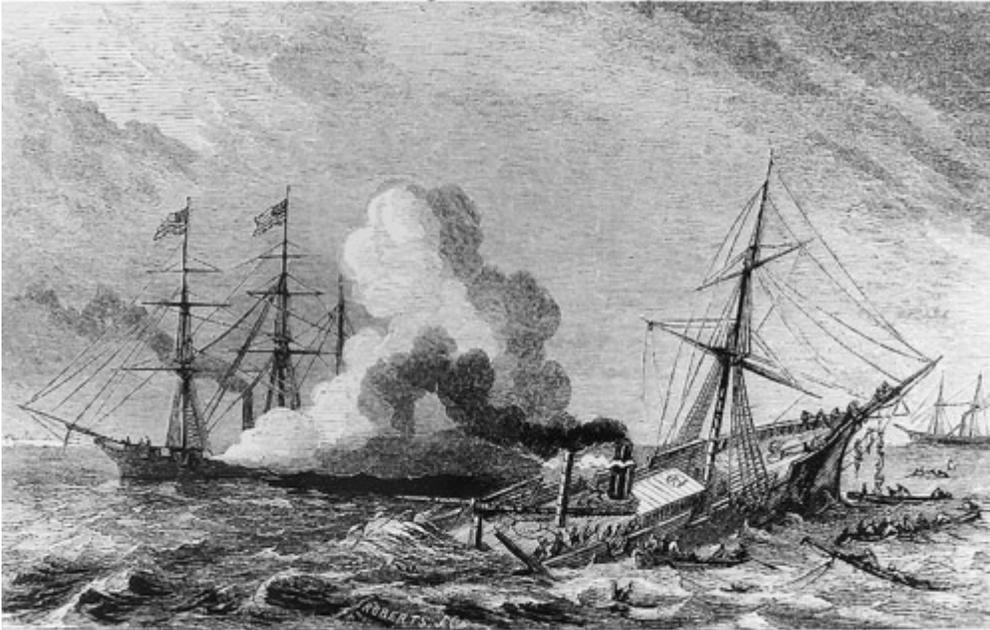


Alabama mounted 8 guns to *Kearsarge's* 7. Yet, Captain Winslow of *Kearsarge* enjoyed a superiority in weight of broadside including two heavy XI-inch Dahlgren guns while Semmes had but one heavy gun, an VIII-inch. Perhaps the greatest advantage was superior ammunition, since *Alabama's* had deteriorated during her long cruise. Furthermore, Winslow had protected the sides of his ship and the vulnerable machinery by hanging heavy chains over the sides from topside to below the waterline. *Kearsarge's* complement numbered 163; *Alabama's*, 149.



The antagonists closed to about one and a half miles, when Semmes opened the action with a starboard broadside. Within minutes the firing became fierce from both ships as they fought starboard to starboard on a circular course. Lieutenant Sinclair, CSN, wrote: "Semmes would have chosen to bring about yard-arm quarters, fouling, and boarding, relying upon the superior physique of his crew to overbalance the superiority of numbers; but this was frustrated." Shot and shell from the heavier guns of *Keersarge* crashed into *Alabama*'s hull, while the Union sloop of war, her sides protected by the chain armor, suffered only minor damage. One shell from *Alabama* lodged in the *Keersarge*'s stempost but failed to explode. "If it had exploded," wrote John M. McKenzie, who was only 16 years old at the time of the battle, "the *Keaersarge* would have gone to the bottom instead of the *Alabama*. But our ammunition was old and had lost its strength." Southern casualties were heavy as both sides fought valiantly. "After the lapse of about one hour and ten minutes," Semmes reported, "our ship was ascertained to be in a sinking condition, the enemy's shells having exploded in our side, and between decks, opening large apertures through which the water rushed with great rapidity. For some few minutes I had hopes of being able to reach the French coast, for which purpose I gave the ship all steam, and set such of the fore and aft sails as were available. The ship filled so rapidly, however, that before we had made much progress, the fires were extinguished in the furnaces, and we were evidently on the point of sinking. I now hauled down my colors to prevent the further destruction of life, and dispatched a boat to inform the enemy of our condition."

Photo # NH 65697 "Sinking of the Pirate Alabama by the Kearsarge"



SINKING OF THE PIRATE ALABAMA BY THE KEARSARGE.

Alabama settled stern first and her bow raised high in the air as the waters of the English Channel closed over her. Boats from *Kearsarge* and French boats rescued the survivors. The English yacht *Deerhound*, owned by Mr. John Lancaster, picked up Captain Semmes with 13 of his officers and 27 crew members and carried them to Southampton.

The spectacular career of the Confederacy's most famous raider was closed. Before her last battle, Semmes reminded his men: "You have destroyed, and driven for protection under neutral flags, one-half of the enemy's commerce, which, at the beginning of the war, covered every sea." *Alabama* had captured and burned at sea 55 Union merchantmen valued at over four and one-half million dollars, and had bonded 10 others to the value of 562 thousand dollars. Another prize, *Conrad*, was commissioned C.S.S. *Tuscaloosa*, and herself struck at Northern shipping. Flag Officer Barron lamented: "It is true that we have lost our ship; the ubiquitous gallant *Alabama* is no more, but we have lost no honor."

For Winslow and *Kearsarge* the victory was well deserved and rewarding. Throughout the North news of *Alabama's* end was greeted with jubilation and relief. Secretary Welles wrote the Captain: "I congratulate you for your good fortune in meeting the *Alabama*, which had so long avoided the fastest ships of the service... for the ability displayed in the contest you have the thanks of the Department... The battle was so brief, the victory so decisive, and the comparative results so striking that the country will be reminded of the brilliant actions of our infant Navy, which have been repeated and illustrated in this engagement... Our countrymen have reason to be satisfied that this, as in every naval action of this unhappy war, neither the ships, the guns, nor the crews have deteriorated, but that they maintain the ability and continue the renown which have ever adorned our naval annals." Winslow received a vote of thanks from Congress, and was promoted to Commodore with his commission dated 19 June 1864, his victory day.

[Source: National Civil War Naval Museum]

Captain Semmes' defense of John Lancaster, owner of the *Deerhound*

"The howl that went up against Mr. Lancaster, the owner of the *Deerhound*, for his humane exertions in saving my crew and myself from drowning, was almost as rabid as that which had been raised against myself. Statesman, or those who have should have been such, descended into the arena of course and vulgar abuse of a private English citizen, who had no connection with them or their war, and no sympathies that I know of, on the one side or the other. Mr. Welles, in one of those patriotic

effusions, by which he sought to recommend himself to the extreme party of the North, declared among other things, that he was "not a gentleman!" Poor Mr. Lancaster, to have thy gentility question by so competent a judge as Mr. Welles! If these gentlemen had confined themselves to mere abuse, the thing would not have been so bad, but they gave currency to malicious falsehoods concerning Mr. Lancaster, as truths." [From Service Afloat]

Quotes from the Heroes

On June 14th, 1864 General Leonidas Polk was killed on Pine Mountain, Georgia. The bishop of Georgia, Stephen Elliott, made these remarks at Polk's funeral.

"Bishop Elliott then gave a powerful sermon; at first admonishing Bishop Polk for taking up the sword, but later paying great tribute to Polk as a great soldier of Christ. At one point, Elliott left the pulpit and faced northward toward the altar and said:

And now, ye Christians of the North, and especially ye priests and bishops of the Church who have lent yourselves to the fanning of the fury of this unjust and cruel war, do I this day, in the presence of the body of this my murdered brother, summon you to meet us at the judgment-seat of Christ—that awful bar where your brute force shall avail you nothing; where the multitudes whom you have followed to do evil shall not shield you from an angry God; where the vain excuses with which you have varnished your sin shall be scattered before the bright beams of eternal truth and righteousness. I summon you to the bar in the name of that sacred liberty which you have trampled under foot; in the name of the glorious constitution which you have destroyed; in the name of our holy religion which you have profaned; in the name of the temples of God which have been desecrated; in the name of a thousand martyred saints whose blood you have wantonly spilled; in the name of our Christian women which you have violated; in the name of our slaves whom you have seduced and then consigned to misery; and there I leave justice and vengeance to God...May God have mercy upon you in that day of solemn justice and fearful retribution!"

Charge to the Sons of Confederate Veterans

To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans, we will commit the vindication of the Cause for which we fought. To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles which he loved and which you love also, and those ideals which made him glorious and which you also cherish. Remember, it is your duty to see that the true history of the South is presented to future generations.

**Lt. General Stephen Dill Lee
Commander-General
United Confederate Veterans
New Orleans, 25 April 1906**