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February 2006

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Battle Cry deadline is
1:00PM Wed. two weeks
before the regular meeting.
Items can be given the
editor by hand, mail or
e-mail.

Battle Cry

Founded 1961,
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
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<http://sacramentocwrt.com/>



President's Message:

Who would have thought our group harbored such talents that were on display at our last meeting. Fred Bohmfalk gave his usual excellent presentation, this time on Stephen Foster. He was joined by Ed Sims who brought his period banjos and enlightened us on the importance of Foster's music to the soldiers of the Civil War. I learned a lot from each of these gentlemen despite growing up with the Foster numbers which we sang in school. I was also in a generation exposed to the minstrel show as a result of a misspent youth in movie theaters. Many thanks to each for an enlightening, interesting and impressive program.

In February we'll meet on Monday the 6th at 7PM at the Studio Theater, 1028 R St. for what promises to be an outstanding talk on Nathan Bedford Forrest by Professor Brian Steel Wills. He spoke at our 2000 conference and is as entertaining as he is informative. Don't miss it! Hope to see you there. Don't hesitate to recommend this to friends and family.

Don Hayden, President

**NEXT MEETING NOTE CHANGE!!! February 6th
at 7:00PM at the Studio Theater 1028 R
Street Come early for dinner/conversation.
Meet at the Fox & Goose across the street
from the theater.
SEE UPCOMING PROGRAMS ON PAGE 3.**

MINUTES
SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
JANUARY 11, 2006
HOF BRAU RESTAURANT 2500 WATT AVE., SACRAMENTO

Attendance-29

Members-26

Don Hayden, President
George Foxworth, Treasurer
Edie Keister, Secretary
Ricki Adams
Fred Bohmfalk
Evan Cole
Irene Cole
Charles Collins
Kyle Glasson
Chuck Hubbard

Pam Hubbard
Shelley Jones
Dennis Kohlmann
Kim Long
Sharon McGaughey
Leslie Michaels
Jim Middleton
Betty Mitchell
Maurice Mitchell
John Nevins

Paul Rudd
Richard Siekert
Ed Sims
James Taft
Bob Williams
John Zasso
Guest-3
Arnold Baker
Robert Hanley
Horst Penning

1. Meeting started at 7:00. Guest and members were welcomed. President Hayden reminded all of the next meeting at the Studio Theater downtown, on Monday, February 6. The Jan 29th tour of Alcatraz was also announced by Fred Bohmfalk for those interested in attending. Jon Nevins spoke on the Winter Quarters meeting in Venicia on Feb 4 and 5, the subject- "Life during the Civil War."
2. Our first speaker of the evening was member Fred Bohmfalk who gave a very nice presentation of "Stephan Foster and his Music." He had visuals and music too, when we got the CD player to work. Member Ed Sims next shared his knowledge of Foster and played some of his tunes on the banjos he brought to share. He made them in the style of the 1860's. Both were fine lessons on someone I didn't know a lot about. Thanks Fred and Ed!
3. The raffle was held-our guest won a few (yea) Our meeting ended at 8:40.

Edie Keister
Secretary

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the January 11, 2006 meeting was \$1,480.87.

George Foxworth, Treasurer

COMING PROGRAMS in 2006		
Month	Speaker	Topic
February 6 th	Brian Wills	Life & Times of Nathan Bedford Forrest
March 8 th	Ever True	(A Couple's Civil War Letters)
April 17 th or 18 th	Scott Hartwig	Gettysburg
May 10 th	open	
June 14 th	George Beitzel	John Brown
July 12 th	open	
August 9 th	open	
September 13 th	Thomas Brown	2 nd Day at Chickamauga as Gen. Thomas
October 11 th	Paul Wagstaffe	
November	Conference	
December 13 th	Don Hayden	Winfield Scott Hancock

**SCWRT SPECIAL PROGRAM
FEBRUARY 6th 2006**

The Sacramento Civil War Round Table is pleased to announce a special February presentation in lieu of its regular monthly to be held February 6th, 2006 at 7 PM featuring

Professor Brian Steele Wills
Chair Department of History and Philosophy
University of Virginia at Wise

who will speak on

The Life and Times of Nathan Bedford Forrest
Confederate Major General of Cavalry

At
The Studio Theater
1028 R. Street
Sacramento, CA

Questions? Fred Bohmfalk (916)-965-4776 or Don Hayden (916)-485-1246



PRESS RELEASE

From: Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History
To: All Media
RE: Civil War Roundtable at the PGMNH
PR Date: January 3, 2006. For immediate release.
Event Date/Time: Saturday, February 11, 2006, 2:00 p.m.
Contact: Paul Finnegan, (831) 648-5716, ext 12 or pfinnegan@ci.pg.ca.us

Reassessing Gen. John Bell Hood & the Battle of Franklin at the PGMNH

On February 11th, The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History will host another free event in a series of Civil War roundtables. This month's topic is, "Reassessing General John Bell Hood and the Battle of Franklin: Extracting Truth from Entrenched Mythology." This event comes just in time for Lincoln's birthday (February 12th)!

The event will feature speaker Sam Hood, founder and president of the John Bell Hood Historical Society, and collateral descendent of General Hood (pictured at right). Reenactor Thomas Brown will facilitate the roundtable while representing General Hood and will discuss how he came to take that role.

Sam Hood is a retired construction company owner, and resident of Huntington West Virginia. He graduated from both the Kentucky Military Institute and Marshall University, and is a veteran of the USMC reserves. He is a member of the board of directors for the Confederate Hall Museum in New Orleans, and the Blue Grey Education Society of Danville, Virginia.

Thomas Brown is the great grand nephew of Civil War Union General George Thomas. He has entertained audiences in numerous presentations as General Thomas and Confederate General John B. Hood at private and public events throughout Northern California and Nevada, where he shares first-person recollections of the Civil War. He is an active participant of the American Civil War Association and the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and frequently appears at Civil War reenactments, parades, and other historical events. Brown is a successful painting contractor in Carmel. He is a graduate of Monterey Peninsula College and of Chapman University, with a BA in social science. Brown is currently a master's degree candidate in history at San Jose State.



For more information about this Civil War event, contact Museum Director Paul Finnegan at (831) 648-5716, ext. 12, or e-mail pfinnegan@ci.pg.ca.us

The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History is located at Forest & Central avenues, and is open free to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Call (831) 648-5716 for general Museum information, or pqgmuseum@mbay.net / www.pqgmuseum.org

The Laird Rams, 1863

Under the excellent leadership of Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, the Confederacy created a modern naval force from scratch. Indeed a marvelous accomplishment with the limited resources available. More than sixty armored vessels were begun at home; dozens of gunboats were built, and many more river and commercial craft were modified and armed. A vital component in this military buildup was the willingness of several European nations to sell arms, equipment, and ships to the South. Despite neutrality laws intended to prevent the outfitting of belligerent expeditions and warships, the South enjoyed considerable success in acquiring and arming vessels abroad. Southern efforts met with significant, but not universal success, however.

Many factors kept the South from acquiring all of the ships that it wanted or the vessels it most desired. But a major cause of the ultimate Confederate failure in England was the activity of the United States Department of State, particularly Thomas Haines Dudley, the U.S. Consul in Liverpool, and the brilliant Charles Francis Adams, U.S. Minister to Great Britain in London.

The rebel naval officer in charge of acquisition in Europe was Commander James Dunwoody Bulloch. He arrived in Liverpool, on 3 June 1861, under orders from Mallory to procure "six steam propellers" to act as commerce raiders. One million confederate dollars had been appropriated for

this activity, but little of this amount had arrived when Bulloch began his work. Despite financial handicaps he worked quickly. With the assistance of an Anglo-Confederate banking and shipping company, Fraser, Trenholm & Company of Liverpool, Bulloch contracted for the ships that would become CSS *Florida* and CSS *Alabama*. They were sailing vessels with auxiliary steam engines, which permitted them to cruise widely for Northern merchant ships. These ships and others to follow soon earned reputations as fearsome commerce destroyers, i.e. if one defines "fearsome" as the sinking of unarmed merchant vessels. (See "*Battle Cry*" articles of March 03 and June 05.)

Bulloch extended his ambitions when he contracted with shipbuilders, Laird and Sons, to construct two turreted ironclad rams. Bulloch based the Rams upon the ideas of Captain Cowper Coles of the Royal Navy, a British ironclad ship designer, using a revolving turret similar to the John Ericsson designed USS *Monitor*. They were to be impressive ships displacing 1,896 tons and were 235 feet long. Their ironclad hulls had ram bows, and they supported two turrets carrying 220-pounder Armstrong or Blakely guns; with lighter guns mounted on raised forecastles and quarterdecks. Bark sailing rigs gave them range; powerful twin-screw engines combined with ram bows would give them ability to fight the most imposing Union ships, it was then believed.

John Laird (1805-74) was the patriarch of the Laird and Sons

Shipyard, located in Birkenhead, across the Mersey River from Liverpool. The firm was founded by his father in 1821 and remained in business into the 1990's. It was not the largest shipbuilder in England, but perhaps one of the more progressive, pioneering the construction of all iron vessels, and building the first steamship to cross the Atlantic on steam power alone. Laird was a member of parliament; and, like most English aristocrats had "southern leanings", at least during the early years of the American Civil War. His firm had also built the *Alabama* and a number of blockade runners.

The British difficulty in maintaining strict neutrality had its roots in a conflict between two principles of law. Under the precepts of international law, neutral Great Britain had an obligation to prevent the building and outfitting of armed warships for any belligerent in its ports. In particular, the Foreign Enlistment Act forbade British subjects from "equipping, furnishing, fitting out, or arming, of any ship or vessel, with the intent or in order that such ship or vessel shall be employed in the service" of a belligerent. Penalties for violation included punishment of individuals and forfeiture of vessels. The critical point was that the wording of the law and accepted international practice to that time prohibited sales of *armed* vessels only. But there was no problem in purchasing the arms and the vessels separately.

The tenet of domestic law that held that a defendant is "innocent until proven guilty" allowed secretly

built confederate cruisers to be dispatched from British ports because positive proof of the cruiser's destination was nearly impossible to ascertain and arming took place outside British jurisdiction. Moreover, there was nothing in British law which prohibited English merchants from selling the arms (guns and ammunition) separately as long as they were not installed within British territories. (The logic here is rather difficult to understand?)

If an intended cruiser did not yet have its guns mounted, (no matter that it was built with gun portals, its decks reinforced for guns, a powder magazine, storage racks for projectiles, and etc.) under British law it was not considered a warship. Perhaps this is today analogous to saying that an aircraft carrier is not a warship when it does not have airplanes on it?

But the intended use of the Rams could not be hidden or misdirected. Due to their ram bows, the ships were dangerous weapons platforms even before guns were mounted. The persistent Liverpool Consul, Thomas Dudley, dogged Bulloch's every move; employing private detectives, sympathetic sea captains, knowledgeable attorneys, and rebel turncoats. He obtained copies of rebel correspondence and internal Laird documents to gain knowledge of Bulloch's every action. From Washington, Secretary Seward to some extent coordinated the measures by mail to stop the Rams delivery, but it was Ambassador Adams who bore the brunt of the

negotiations with the British Foreign Secretary, Earl John Russell.

It was conceived by the Union Navy that the Rams were a hundred times more dangerous than the commercial raiders could ever be. They were powerful warships, ocean going; could cross the Atlantic under their own power, and indeed had the potential to break up the blockade. The threat of an Anglo-American war was real. Thoughts in Washington were suggested for sending a US Navy squadron up the Mersey to destroy the rebel ships at anchor. On 4 Sept 1863, Adams wrote to Russell, "It is my painful duty to make known to your lordshipthe grave situation in which both countries must be placed in the event of an act of aggression against.... The United States by either of these formidable weapons". He continued with his most famous quote, "It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is war." On 8 September, Adams received a somewhat kindly worded note from Russell stating that the Rams had been detained. The crisis was over.

Ultimately, both Rams were seized before completion to prevent them from "slipping" out of the country. Even a last-minute sham sale, arranged by Bulloch ostensibly to a French company for delivery to Egypt, failed to free the two ships for the South. Caught in an awkward gap between domestic law and foreign policy, the British Navy subsequently bought the Laird Rams and commissioned them HMS *Scorpion* and HMS *Wivern*. (Actually, both the confederates and the

Lairds made money, £30,000, on the deal!)

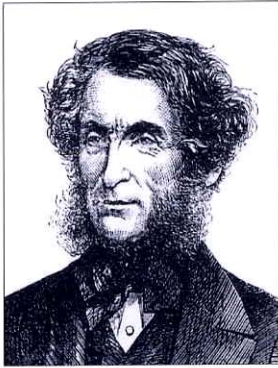
Subsequently, it was determined that these warships were not nearly what they had been envisioned to be. British officers reported that they performed poorly even in moderately high seas with difficult steering, excessive rolling, and decks constantly awash. They were also expensive to operate under steam due to high coal consumption, and they had poor operating characteristics under sail. Accordingly, their use was limited to harbor defense purposes. *Scorpion* spent 30 years as a harbor ship in Bermuda; and *Wivern* served as a coast guard vessel in British waters for 15 years, prior to being sent to Hong Kong for harbor defense in 1880. Both were scrapped about 1900.

Notwithstanding their faults, the Laird Rams were strong warships capable of readily destroying the typical Union wooden blockading fleet vessels. But how they would have performed against the USS *New Ironsides* and/or the third generation USS *Canonicus* class monitors remains an open question, never to be fully answered.

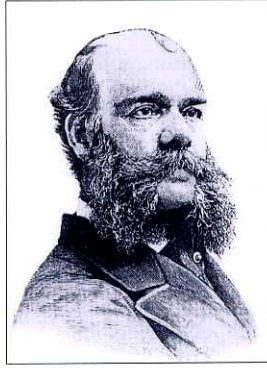
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"The Rebel Raiders" by J. T. deKay, 2002;
"The Confederate Navy" by P.D. Stern, 1972;
"Great Britain and the Confederate Navy" by F. J. Merli, 1970;
"The Secret Service of the CSA in Europe" by J. D. Bulloch, 1883
Bob Williams: 1-20-06

The Laird Rams, 1863



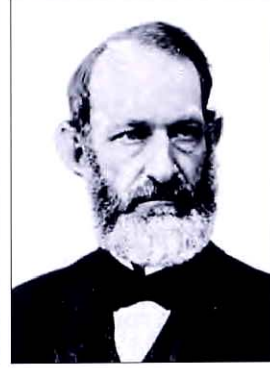
John Laird, M.P.



CSN Commander Bullock



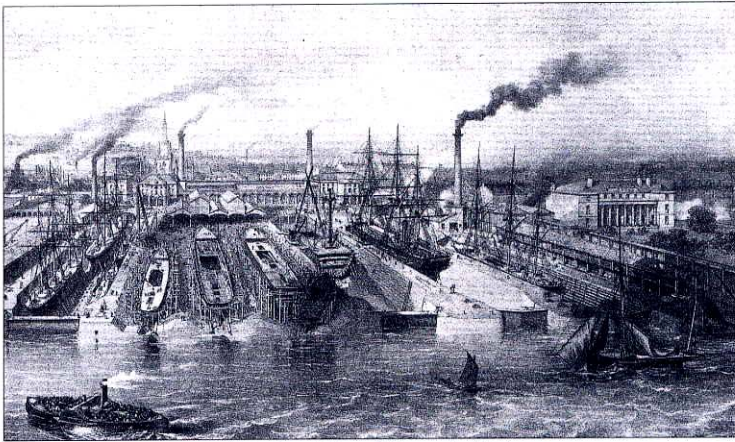
US Ambassador Adams



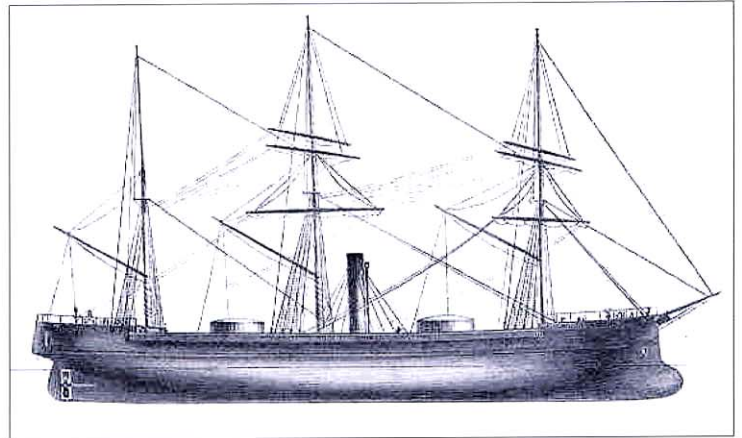
US Consul Dudley



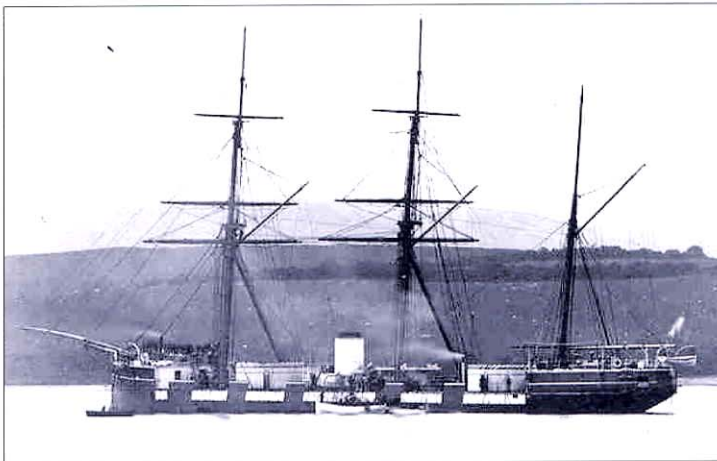
UK Foreign Minister Russell



Laird and Sons Shipyard, 1863



Drawing of Laird Ram No. 264, planned to become CSS *North Carolina*



HMS *Wivern* (with bulwarks lowered to operate turret guns)



HMS *Scorpion*, 1870

Specifications for the Laird Rams:

Displacement, 1896 tons; Length, 235 feet; Beam, 42 feet; Draft, 17.6 feet; Armor, 4.5 inches, backed by 9 inches of Teak; Engines, Two at 350 horsepower with twin screws; Max Speed, 15.5 knots; Armament, Two Coles-type Turrets with four guns 2 Blakely and 2 Whitworth rifles; Iron Ram, 7 feet long; Cost, £ 93,750