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# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
P.O. BOX 254702  
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## President's Message

Greetings one and all. March Madness is upon us and I have many announcements to make. Our Board met last month with Ms. Stephanie La Fazia concerning the Gibson Ranch Civil War Days and our participation in it. She was enthusiastic and quite optimistic about the number of students attending this year's reenactment. Thus far, she has 1,620 students signed up. Ms. La Fazia is requesting 15 docents. My husband and I have joined in the past few years and we have enjoyed it immensely. Please mark your calendars for May 2, 3, and 4, 2014 for the reenactment. We will be sending around a sign-up sheet at the next few meetings for May 2, the day of student involvement. She also mentioned that this year, they will feature an information booth, and she is looking for volunteers to man that as well.

Our Board also discussed hosting the 2014 West Coast Civil War Conference, and we voted to indeed go ahead with that plan. To that end, Paul Ruud, Don Hayden, and George W. Foxworth have moved virtual mountains in arranging for accommodations, booking speakers, and even evaluating a new format. Here are the details from Paul Ruud's message:

**West Coast Civil War Conference; November 7, 8, and 9, 2014;** Theme is **1864**; Location: **Crowne Plaza Hotel**, 5321 Date Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95841-2512. Hotel rooms, including a hot breakfast buffet, will cost \$99. "...the fun and learning will start on November 7<sup>th</sup> (Friday) with a late afternoon social hour, dinner, and speech. As usual, the activities will continue on Saturday with lectures, another social hour, dinner, and speech at night. The Conference will continue until Sunday noon."

**Craig Symonds** and **Harold Holzer** are our featured historians. There will be other speakers and activities throughout the Conference. This one promises to be one of the best ones yet, so let's begin planning to attend. A detailed agenda will be released in the near future.

This month, our speakers are our very own Wayne and Nina Henley. The son of an US Army Colonel, Wayne was an "army brat," living in many states and Germany as he grew up. Nina is a native of eastern Missouri, the daughter of a School Superintendent/Farmer and a Reading Teacher. Her mother told her of Civil War turmoil in Missouri that brought conflicts of brother vs. brother in her own family.

Wayne and Nina met at a Sacramento State University Ski Club meeting. He earned degrees in Civil Engineering and Business Administration while she majored in English and History.

Always interested in biography, Nina was fascinated by the character of Abraham Lincoln after reading Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*. In July 2008, they visited several of the Civil War National Battlefield Parks on the east coast. They listened to Park Ranger talks, hearing praise of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain at Gettysburg and Appomattox. These talks stimulated their interest in learning more about this hero. Their interest in the Civil War generally has increased in the last few years under the influence of the Sacramento CWRT.

It looks like we will have a wonderful program on March 12. Hope to see you all there.

**Anne Peasley, President**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**Wednesday, February 12, 2014**  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, 2500 WATT AVENUE, SACRAMENTO**

**ATTENDANCE – 40**

**MEMBERS – 27:** Anne M. Peasley, President; Donald J. Hayden, Vice President; George W. Foxworth, Treasurer; Paul Ruud, Secretary; Silver Williams, Program Director; James M. Armstrong, Roy Bishop, Harvey D. Cain, Marsha J. Cain, Alice Corley, Monica Foxworth, Alan Geiken, Robert E. Hanley, IPP; Scottie Hayden, Nina Henley, MAL; James Juanitas, Dennis Kohlmann, Vivian Miller, Rick A. Peasley, Horst Penning, John Rice, Nancy Samuelson, Brad Schall, Patty Schall, Richard Sickert, Roxanne E. Spizzirri, John V. Zasso

**GUESTS – 13:** Esther Boeck, Wade Chandler, Martha Hanley, Don Hansen, Chris Highsmith, Bob Hubbs, Chris Osborn, Mark Penning, Larry Spizzirri, Richard Spizzirri, Ken Stinson, Ray Valdez, Don A. Zajic

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Anne Peasley.
2. President Peasley led the Pledge of Allegiance and introduced the guests.
3. President Peasley polled the audience regarding possible “show and tell” or “Civil War trivia” programs. Positive response was sprinkled in both cases.
4. Dennis Kohlmann announced a four-day Civil War tour starting in Franklin, TN, on March 26<sup>th</sup>. One of the guides will be SCWRT friend Thomas Cartwright. Franklin is not part of the tour.
5. President Peasley then introduced the speaker, Bob Hubbs, who informed and entertained us with his presentation “Grant at Shiloh.” Bob’s research has led him to challenge some of the commonly held beliefs as to who did what and where during the battle.
  - A. There were 110,053 Union and Confederate soldiers at Shiloh with 23,746 estimated casualties.
  - B. Some of the standard lore about Grant and Shiloh that give Bob pause are Grant’s drunkenness, the battle time existence of the Hornet’s Nest, the Sunken Road or the Bloody Pond. He has walked the battlefield and the terrain suggests that some battles had to have happened differently from what was reported. The fact that the Tennessee River flows south to north also casts doubt on some popular battlefield reports.
  - C. Grant was not surprised at Shiloh – for one reason he wasn’t in command. At the onset of the battle, Halleck, Buell, and CF Smith had larger areas of responsibility than Grant. Grant’s action during the battle was sufficient for Lincoln to “find a general.” Lincoln is credited with comments such as “What kind of whiskey does he drink?” and “I can’t spare that man – he fights!”
  - D. Contrary to many popular myths, Lew Wallace was not lost, he was defending Crump’s Landing which was north of Pittsburg Landing.
  - E. There are 150 monuments, 200 cannons, and 550 markers commemorating the battle at the current Shiloh National Park.
  - F. Union soldiers who died were buried in individual graves – the Confederate dead were placed in burial trenches.
  - G. Grant requested to be relieved following the battle. Four days later, Gen Halleck took over command.
6. President Peasley thanked Bob Hubbs for his excellent presentation and presented him with a bottle of wine.
7. John Zasso sold additional raffle tickets and read the numbers.
8. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 PM.
9. The March Board Meeting will be Wednesday, March 12, 2014, 10:00 AM, at Brookfield’s Restaurant.

**Paul Ruud, Secretary**

**Treasurer’s Report**

The cash balance following the February 12, 2014 meeting was \$4,023.01. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$68.00.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

### **Coming Programs for 2014 and 2015**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Wayne and Nina Henley	“General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain”
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	George Beitzel	“General Robert Edward Lee”
May 14 <sup>th</sup>	John Greer	“150 <sup>th</sup> Gettysburg Re-Enactment”
June 11 <sup>th</sup>	Don Hayden	“Battlefield Medicine”
July 9 <sup>th</sup>	Ted Savas	To Be Determined
August 13 <sup>th</sup>	Nicholas Scivoletto	“General Joseph E. Johnston”
September 10 <sup>th</sup>	Dennis Kohlmann	To Be Determined
October 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tad Smith	“The Coins and Currency of the Confederacy”
November 12 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Lubas	“Chicago, That Toddlin Civil War Town”
December 10 <sup>th</sup>	Tim & Ginny Karlberg	“Captain John Groetsch”
January 14 <sup>th</sup>	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
February 11 <sup>th</sup>	To Be Determined	To Be Determined

### **2014 Membership**

The 2014 membership renewal is due as of January 1, 2014. The dues are \$20.00 and you can renew at a monthly meeting or send to the Treasurer through the mail. For all checks, make them payable to Sacramento Civil War Round Table and send them to

George W. Foxworth  
 9463 Salishan Court  
 Sacramento, CA 95826-5233

Remember, you can also pay at a monthly meeting.

### **NEWSLETTER CIVIL WAR ARTICLES**

Civil War articles/book reviews are welcome. The submission deadline is the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month for that month's Battle Cry. Submit your items in Microsoft Word or regular email to:

[gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gwfoxworth@sbcglobal.net)

The Battle Cry is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Submissions are subject to availability of space and size limitations. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization or the Editor. The official address of this organization is: Sacramento Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 254702, Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check the web for past newsletter editions and information about the group.

## Lieutenant Peter S. Michie and the Dutch Gap Canal



After repulse at  
Drewry's Bluff on 16 May 64,  
the Union Army of the James  
(AOJ), MG Ben Butler

commanding, retreated to strong defensive positions at Bermuda Hundred. Problem was that the Confederates occupied equally strong positions with powerful batteries (Dantzler, et. al.) just upstream on the James River. The AOJ was, in effect, bottled up.

Butler, always the idea man and occasionally having a good one, conceived the idea of cutting a canal through Dutch Gap, a narrow neck of land 520 feet across that would permit Ironclads to by-pass nearly 5 river miles (around Farrar's Island) and the powerful rebel forts. He directed 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Peter Michie, Chief Engineer of the AOJ to report on a canal's feasibility and, if favorable, to begin work. Ground was broken 10 Aug 64.

Peter Smith Michie (1839-1901) was one of the most outstanding West Point graduates during the Civil War era (another one was Ranald Mackenzie). Graduating 2 of 25 in the Class of 1863, he was assigned to the Corps of Engineers. After initial service as assistant engineer for the Charleston siege works and Florida fortifications, Michie was transferred to the AOJ. He became that army's Chief Engineer in July 64.

In his duties as an engineer officer, Lt. Michie had provided the full range of military engineering services: laying floating bridges, constructing defensive works, planning offensive operations, preparing surveys and topographical maps, constructing roads, and in this instance, canal construction. Michie also assisted Major James C. Duane, Chief Engineer for the Army of the Potomac, in planning and location work for the 2,100-foot long James River Bridge built 15 June 64. (That crossing is said to have been the longest continuous pontoon bridge ever used during war.) For services performed while a Lieutenant, Peter Michie received regular army brevets of Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Brigadier General. A very good record for one whom did not enter wartime service until it was half over.

Work on the 500-foot long canal continued without significant construction problems until near the very end. It was designed to be 15 feet deep, 80 feet wide at waterline with 15-foot wide berms on each side, and a bottom width of 40 feet. Cut slopes were 1 to 1. Cuts to waterline were approximately 90 feet at the NW end and 36 feet at the SE end. Total excavation was estimated to have been 67,000 yards<sup>3</sup>. Equipment consisted of a steam dredge, steam pump and several hundred folks with picks, shovels, carts, and wagons.

A major problem was that the troops employed were subjected to severe rifled artillery and mortar fire.

Casualties were significant and continuous; on one occasion 12 were killed and 40 wounded. In addition, there were large losses in horses, mules, and wagons. The dredge (after being sunk once) and the steam pump were bomb-proofed for protection. Notwithstanding, the soldiers showed tremendous courage and fortitude. Changing priorities for the AOJ, as assigned by General Grant also slowed the work.

On 30 Dec 64 after 144 days work on the canal was complete, except for the removal of a 6,000 yard<sup>3</sup> earthen bulkhead that had been left in place to maintain a dry area for that portion of the canal that had been excavated by hand. This was to be done by exploding an underwater mine designed by the Navy and charged with 6 tons of powder (see profile drawing). The explosion did not occur sequentially proper and most of the debris fell back into the newly excavated canal. Although the canal partially opened itself by erosion for use by small boats, it was not completed until April 65, too late for military use. In the 1870's and again in the 1930's, the Dutch Gap Canal was enlarged and extended by the US Corps of Engineers (who else?), and is now the main navigational channel of the James River.

Very late in the War and immediately after the Confederate evacuation of Petersburg, Major Michie led a Pontonier Detachment for quick response bridge building along the Appomattox River. After the Surrender, he was assigned to occupational duties on MG Godfrey Weitzel's staff in Richmond with principal responsibility for surveying and mapping the battlefields of the area; and in the supervision of other engineer related activities.

In 1867 Michie was appointed Assistant Professor of Engineering at his Alma Mater; and on 14 Feb 71 he became Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy (now called "Physics"). In a sense Peter Smith Michie had stepped into the big shoes of the legendary West Point Professor Dennis Hart Mahan, whose illustrious teaching career at the military academy spanned the period 1832-71. Professor Michie continued on the academy staff for the next 30 years, until his death 16 Feb 01. His writings included: *The Life and Letters of Emory Upton* (1885), *Elements of Analytical Mechanics* (1886), *Hydrodynamics* (1887), *Elements of Practical Astronomy* (1891), and *General McClelland* (1900). He is buried in the West Point cemetery.

Peter Michie's son Dennis Mahan Michie, West Point Class of 1892, was killed in action on 1 July 98 at San Juan Ridge. Dennis had been captain of his school's first football team. West Point's *Michie Stadium* is his memorial.

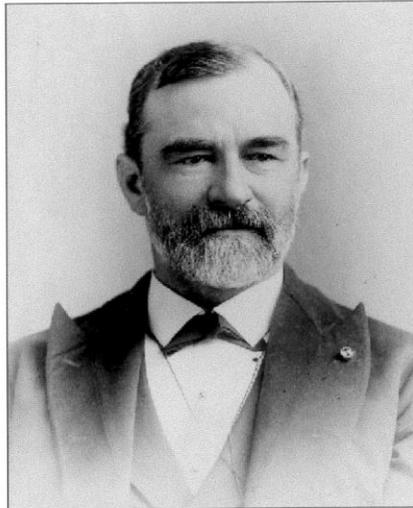
References: OR's, v42 pt1 serial 87: Battles and Leaders, v4; WD&MC, v13n11 10-77

**Bob Williams: 7-8-03**

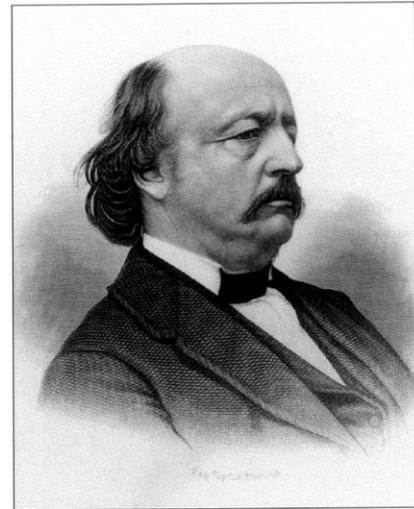
# Lieutenant Peter S. Michie and the Dutch Gap Canal



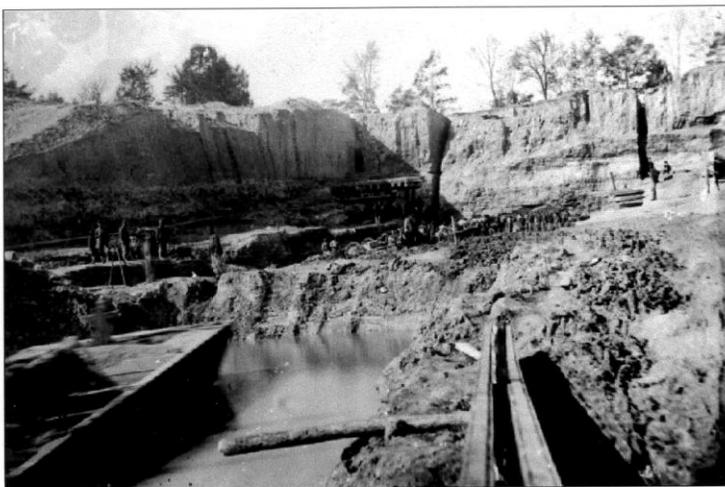
1<sup>st</sup> LT Peter S. Michie, 1863



BG Peter S. Michie, 1895



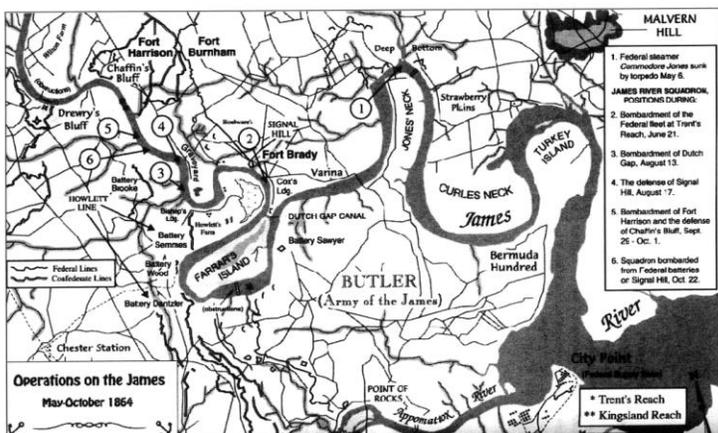
MG Benjamin F. Butler



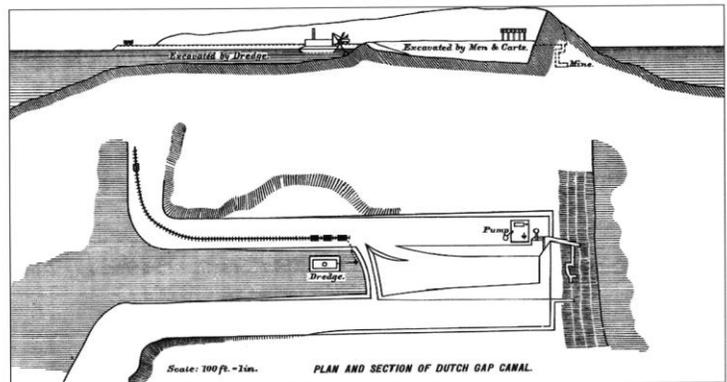
Canal Under Construction, 10-1864



Canal Completed, 4-1865



James River Area Location Map



Plan - Profile Drawing

## Near Disaster on the Red River A Civil War Engineer Rescued Ten Warships Trapped by low water behind Enemy Lines



MG William T. Sherman characterized the Red River Campaign of Spring 1864 as “One damned blunder after another from start to finish.”\* This is the story about just one of those “blunders,” and of its happy resolution insofar as the Union Inland Navy was concerned.

In mid-March 1864, a Union force of 42,000 troops and 21 warships began ascending Louisiana’s Red River with the goal of capturing Shreveport, 212 miles upstream. Under the command of Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, the Red River expedition soon ran into difficulties. Banks hoped to transport his supplies and many of his troops by water, but the anticipated spring freshets failed to occur and the water level in the Red River was the lowest in a decade. Moreover, he thought there were few roads in the heavily wooded land adjacent to the River, making the movement of men and materiel difficult, so he headed *away* from the River.†

**After a series of sharp engagements, notably the Battle of Mansfield on 8 April and at Pleasant Hill the following day, Banks decided that he could not capture Shreveport within the allotted time, and he ordered his troops to withdraw downriver. However, when the general arrived in Alexandria, he found that**

**10 warships of Rear Admiral David Porter’s Mississippi Squadron, along with 12 transports, were stranded—the River had dropped 6 feet during the previous month, and as a result the ships could not pass over the two sets of rapids above the City. With his ships bottled up deep in Confederate territory, Porter was in danger of losing much of his fleet. Recognizing the Admiral’s plight, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Bailey, the XIX Corps chief engineer, proposed a daring solution—dam the River to raise the water level, while at the same time concentrating the River’s flow through a narrow sluiceway, thus creating a torrent of water which the warships could ride over the rapids. A former lumberman, Bailey had used a similar tactic for floating logs downstream during periods of low water.**

Although Porter said that Bailey’s plan was a “proposition that looked like madness,” the Admiral really had no other viable alternative. At Porter’s request, on 30 April 1864, General Banks ordered the soldiers to work. Working in water that often came up to their necks, over the next week, 3,000 weary soldiers built the dam. In a later report, Bailey described construction of the dam by the lower rapids: “At the point where the dam was built, the River is 758 feet wide, with from four to six feet of water running at 10± mph.”

Two coal barges, 24 X 170 feet were sunk in the channel, having been filled with stone, brick, and iron taken from foundries, sugar mills, and other buildings\* in the vicinity. Between them was a chute of 66 feet in breadth. From the barges to the right hand bank, the dam was built of cribs of stone; that to the left bank was constructed of trees with their branches entire. (*See dam section drawings and USS Carondelet running the chute.*)

**The increase of water caused by the main dam was 5 feet 4 inches. By 8 May, the dam had raised the water level enough to send four of the relatively shallow draft gunboats over the rapids. All four made it down, but two scraped hard on the rocks. From that experience, it was clear that the water level had to be increased before the deeper draft vessels could pass over the rapids. Bailey sent the troops to work again, first raising the wings of the original dam, and when that failed to raise the water sufficiently, he ordered the construction of a second dam, a mile upstream, just above the upper rapids.**

The construction of the second dam was as difficult as the first, but when it was completed it increased the River level by 6.5 feet—enough for all of the warships and transports to navigate the rapids and continue on to the relative safety of the Mississippi River. For Union forces, the Red River campaign was a costly failure. The Army suffered 5,200 casualties and the Navy lost three warships and two auxiliary vessels. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War quickly dubbed the campaign the “Red River Disaster.”

**Despite its criticism of the campaign, Congress singled out Engineer Joseph Bailey for special praise.**

**The engineer officer received “the Thanks of Congress” for his actions, one of only 15 officers so honored during the War. In June 1864, Bailey was given a brevet promotion to Brigadier General, and the following April he received another brevet promotion, to Major General.**

\*It is not known if Sherman’s comment was made before or after he discovered that his beloved Louisiana Military Institute (which he had established just prior to the War) had been dismantled to obtain stone and brick to build the dam.

†Another serious blunder! Maybe a good subject for subsequent discussion?

References: U.S. Corps of Engineers’ Historical Vignette No 27; Battles and Leaders v4; OR’s, v34; and ORN’s, v26

**Bob Williams: 6-4-03**

# Near Disaster on the Red River Graphics Page

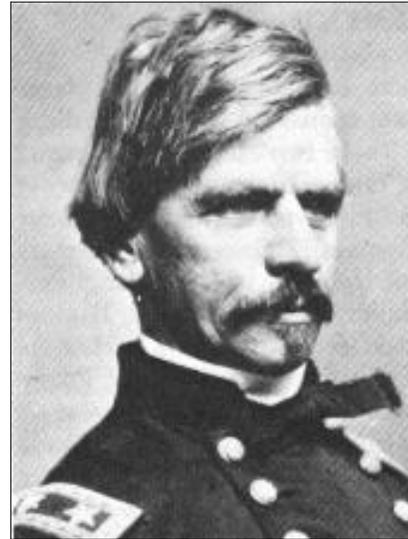
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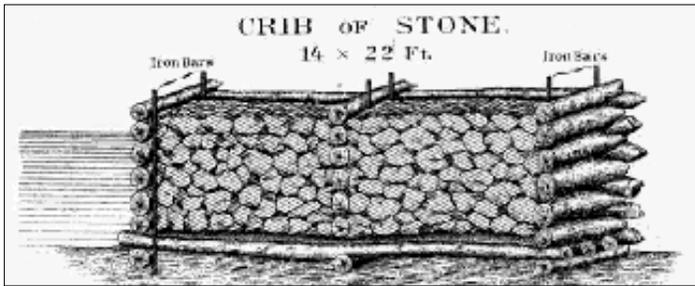
LTC Joseph Bailey



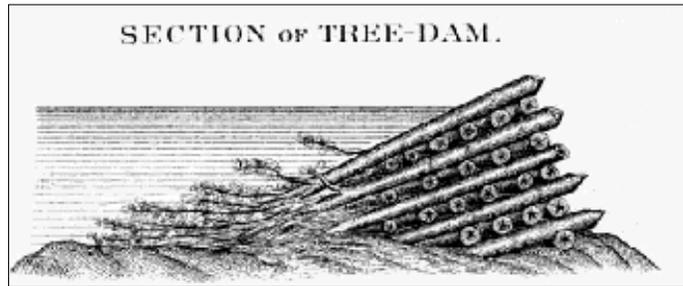
RAdm David D. Porter



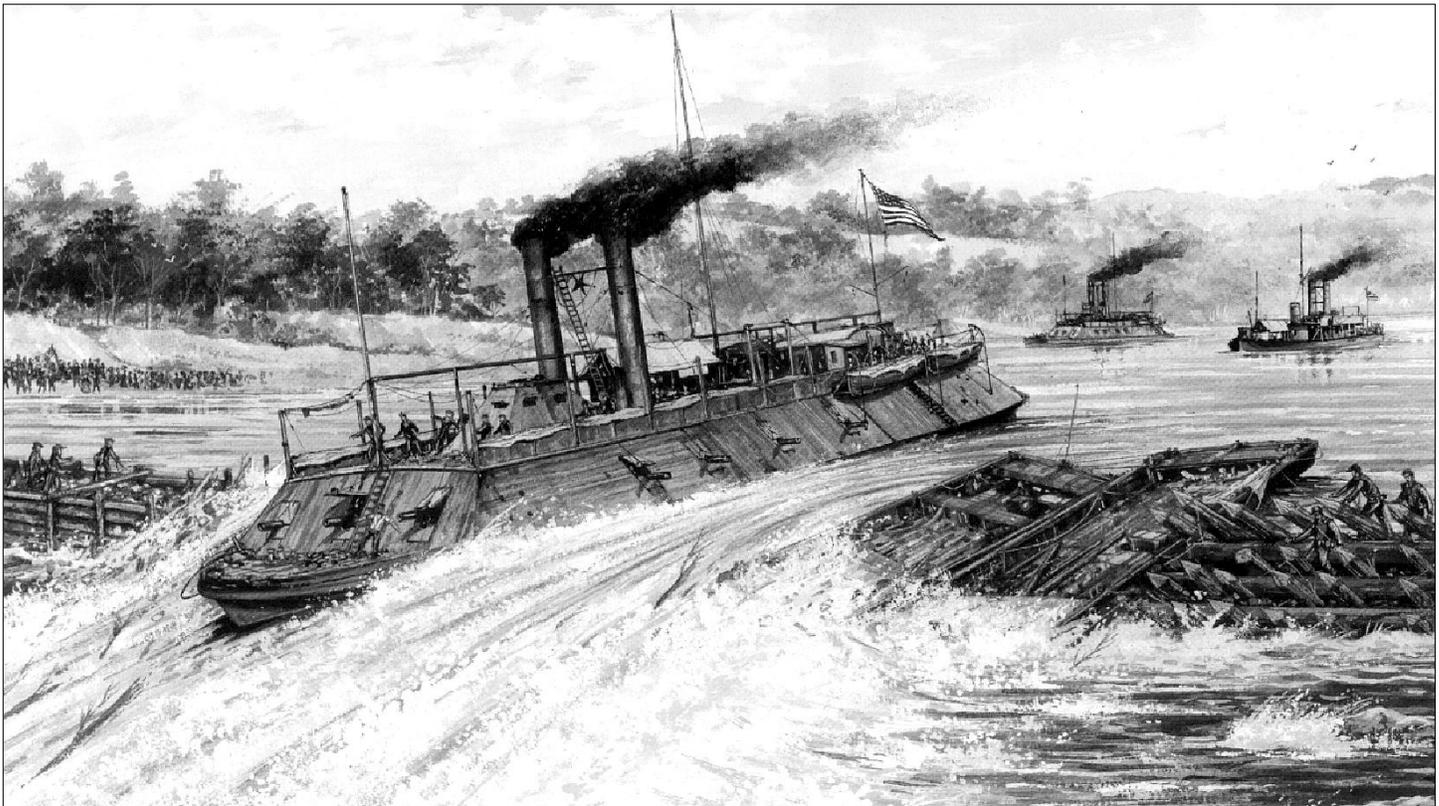
MG Nathaniel P. Banks



Right Wing Dam Section



Left Wing Dam Section



*USS Carondelet* passing through Red River Dam Sluiceway



President Anne "Abraham Lincoln" Peasley, February 12, 2014, at the Hof Brau in Sacramento, CA.