



**Volume 49, No 8
August, 2009
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Wed. of the month 2 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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President's Message:

I regret missing Larry Tagg,s Lincoln talk, but from all reports he covered the subject and was well received. Larry has been in the news recently as the Bee recently reported on his musical career, *Hallowed Ground* published an extensive article on his most recent book, and book reports are popping up all over the place. We are fortunate to have such a celebrity in our midst and appreciate his relationship with us.

A group of us headed by Paul Ruud have been planning the 2011 West Coast Civil War Conference. We surveyed and investigated several possible venues and are currently negotiating costs. Paul has arranged that Craig Symonds will speak and soon we will be formulating a tentative schedule. The intended subject is Civil War 1861 and the plan is to include events which got the country into it. Ideas and suggestions are welcome and feel free to contribute. One of our motivations to hold the meeting here in river city is to provide reasonable access to these splendid events to our own members. Every effort will be made to hold costs down to keep this event affordable. For many years our roundtable has achieved the highest turnout of any in the state and the numbers of attendees from our club is significantly more when it's held locally.

On the subject of conferences please consider the October meeting in Clovis in October. The cost has dropped to \$199 and reservations are encouraged prior to Sept. 5th. The subject is Chickamauga and Chattanooga. The program is packed with information from a large faculty of experts and full information is available at www.chattanooga09.com. For those with no internet access contact me and I'll make copies and send them. We hope to continue our excellent turnout.

Be sure to attend the August 12th monthly meeting as our speaker is Jim Stanbery, who will discuss the Shenandoah Valley Campaign. Jim is well known to most of us as a dynamic speaker on any Civil War subject. He is a professor at Harbor in Los Angeles and has been a participant on West Coast Conference faculties for twenty-five years. We always welcome a visit from him and he deserves the red carpet treatment. Come early for dinner and social hour. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Don Hayden, President

MINUTES
Sacramento Civil War Round Table
Wednesday, July 8, 2009
Hof Brau Restaurant, Watt Avenue, Sacramento

Attendance-38

Members-31

Silver Williams, Vice President
George Foxworth, Treasurer
Eddie Keister, Secretary
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Joan Beitzel
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Maurice Mitchell
Bruce Nothmann
Paul Ruud, IPP
Brad Schall
Richard Sickert, MAL
Dick Thompson
Drew Van Winkle
Bob Williams
Susan Williams
John Zasso

Guest-7

Nina Henley
Steve Mitchell
John Moyle
Ted Savas
Demetri Savas
Larry Tagg
Harry Valentine

1. Meeting started at 7:00. Vice President Silver Williams welcomed members and guest. The Clovis conference once again discussed. Our committee is working on a site for our 2011 conference- "The Year 1861."
2. Publisher and guest, Ted Savas, had copies of "The New Civil War Handbook" to help raise interest in the war. Books were passed around and offered for sale. Or call (916) 941-6896.
3. Our guest speaker was teacher and author Larry Tagg. He spoke on "The Unpopular Mr. Lincoln", which also happens to be the title of his new book. His presentation was humorous as well as informative. He brought copies of his book to sell and autograph. Thank you Larry for an entertaining evening.
4. The raffle was held. Thank you Ted, for your donation of books. Meeting ended at 8:25.

Welcome new member Dick Thompson!

Eddie Keister
Secretary

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the July 8, 2009 meeting was \$2,840.48. Thanks to John Zasso, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$72.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

Coming Programs 2009		
Aug. 12 th	Jim Stanberry	The Shenandoah Valley
Sept. 9 th	Tim Karlberg	"The South was Right"
Oct. 14 th	Fred Bohmfalk	William Hardee
Nov. 11 th	Dennis Kohlmann	U. S. Grant
Dec. 9 th	Brad Schall	TBA

Book Review by M. Wolf

Wolf of the Deep By Stephen Fox

I admit it: I bought this book because of its title. It's subtitled, "Raphael Semmes and the Notorious Confederate Raider CSS *Alabama*." A wise purchase; I learned a lot about an unfamiliar subject, and enjoyed a good sea story. Stephen Fox is an independent historian; this is his seventh book, published in 2007. He weaves different aspects of this complex tale -- Anglo-American relations, public opinion in both North and South -- into a seamless narrative, using many primary sources, especially personal diaries. (He even quotes the Bombay Times and the Cochin Chronicle.)

Semmes was born in Maryland and lived much of his adult life in Alabama. He joined the Navy in 1826 at age 17, and resigned his commission in April, 1861, when the provisional Confederate government came a-calling. The CSS *Alabama* was built to specifications by the best British shipwrights of the day, the Laird shipyard on the Mersey, across from Liverpool. James Bulloch (Theodore Roosevelt's uncle) was the Confederate agent who arranged the ship's clandestine departure from England, in blatant violation of British neutrality, with the connivance of Prime Minister Palmerston and Foreign Secretary Russell. The tale of British duplicity and American diplomatic perseverance in proving it is necessarily condensed by Mr. Fox. (There's an excellent little book, "Lincoln's Spymaster," by Daniel H. Milton [Stackpole Books, 2003] about the U.S. Consul in Liverpool, Thomas Dudley, who led U.S. efforts to establish a spy network that eventually frustrated Britain's unscrupulous machinations.)

The *Alabama* was commissioned as a Confederate privateer in August, 1862. She was "designed not as a blockade-runner, for sneaking cargoes in and out of Confederate ports, but as a well-armed commerce raider, able to stay at sea indefinitely, picking off defenseless Union merchant ships." Mr. Fox explains the murky ethics of this activity: "Privateers were a traditional weapon of a weaker nation against a stronger; the United States had used them effectively in two wars against Great Britain...and had made heroes of dashing privateer captains like John Paul Jones. But they veered close to piracy as freelancers operating outside normal naval chains of command, seizing spoils and selling prizes for money." Semmes, who was well-read and had practiced law, had written a decade earlier, "They are little better than licensed pirates." Mr. Fox notes that the major European powers had outlawed the practice in 1856.

In her 20-month existence, ending with her sinking by the USS *Kearsarge* in Cherbourg harbor on June 19, 1864, the *Alabama* captured 64 Union merchant ships, burned 52 of them, and sank one Union warship off Galveston, Texas. Because of its fearsome reputation, nine (continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

hundred American ships were sold to foreigners, mostly British. (The *Alabama* would not prey on ships of foreign registry.) "The U.S. merchant fleet, sold away to avoid Semmes, was dealt blows from which it wouldn't recover until well into the twentieth century."

When Semmes captured a ship, the officers and crew were taken aboard the *Alabama* and quickly deposited in a neutral port. Obviously, the men had quite a story to tell when they returned home. "Semmes and the *Alabama* made their historical reputations during the first five months of the cruise...Semmes seemed like a heroic Stonewall Jackson of the sea, launching swift strikes now here, now there, and then disappearing again...a Flying Dutchman of the oceans; a phantom ship from nowhere that could abruptly show up anywhere..." The book has an illustration from The Illustrated London News of Dec. 6, 1862, with handsome engravings of Semmes and Jackson.

The Union pursuit of the *Alabama*, over several oceans and continents, was inept. Mr. Fox' narrative traces these voyages, with Capt. John Wilkes, USN, one of the prime culprits. Mr. Fox calls Wilkes (who precipitated the Trent affair) a "doofus." He most certainly was.

By 1864, "the pickings were sparse; Yankee ships were either hiding in port or sold into foreign ownership. Semmes and his men had succeeded all too well." The *Alabama* was literally slowing down, and so was Semmes. He was mentally and physically exhausted; at 53, he was neither old nor sick, but just tired. The ship could no longer pursue and pounce as it used to. "Many of the ship's beams were splitting and failing. The copper sheathing continued to strip off below the waterline, and the decks were leaking copiously...The *Alabama*, still months from her second anniversary at sea, was coming apart." Semmes needed the repair facilities of a modern port, and headed for Cherbourg.

"The fame of the *Alabama* meant that her presence in Cherbourg could not remain a secret...Within hours of her arrival at Cherbourg, the U.S. minister in Paris, sent a telegram to the USS *Kearsarge*, patrolling off the Dutch port of Flushing." The rest, thanks to Union Captain John Winslow and Edouard Manet (his famous painting of the battle isn't in the book, but engravings from newspapers are), is history. In seventy minutes, the *Kearsarge's* guns sank the *Alabama*. Semmes, 21 officers, and 19 men, escaped to Southampton in a British private yacht, in a highly suspicious and controversial episode which seems to have been arranged in advance.

Semmes enjoyed a brief furlough with his family in Mobile, and served the Confederacy to the end in April, 1865. He returned home, was imprisoned between December, 1865 and March, 1866, and then lived quietly, lecturing, writing, and practicing law, until his death in 1877.

In 1984, a French navy minesweeper located the wreck of the *Alabama*. No attempt was made to raise the ship, but many artifacts were retrieved. Some are now in the Museum of Mobile, including the elaborate jeweled sword presented to Semmes by his many admirers in England.

During the war, Charles Francis Adams, U.S. Minister to England (assisted by Consul Thomas Dudley), completed a "detailed legal case" for compensation by the British government for the depredations of the *Alabama* and other Confederate raiders. The Treaty of Washington in May, 1871 provided for "the first major international tribunal" to arbitrate the "*Alabama* claims," as they are known today. Great Britain paid \$15.5 million to the United States.

Sic semper piraticus!

In the Footprints of General George Wright

As Civil War era Generals go George NMI Wright was an old timer. He was born in Vermont in 1803. After attending prep school at Norwich Academy, he entered West Point at the age of 15 and graduated in 1822. Some of his classmates and other contemporaries who became Civil War notables were David Hunter, Joseph Mansfield, Richard Delafield, Lorenzo Thomas and Samuel Cooper. At the time of his death in July 1865, Wright was commanding general of the Military Department of Columbia. In a few words Wright's career might be summed up as "Indian Fighter" and "Frontier Protector".

Things were not moving rapidly for the army in the 1820's. It consisted of seven infantry regiments and four artillery batteries. Lt. Wright was assigned to the 3rd regiment with first duty station at Fort Howard, Wisconsin; but with considerable time away on recruiting duty. In 1826 his unit moved to Jefferson Barracks*, a larger base near St. Louis, Mo. with more diverse activities and social life. The permanent stone buildings still intact were under construction in 1827. In 1828 Wright became regimental adjutant, although still a 2nd Lt. Some companies of the 3rd Regt. had relocated to Cantonment (later Fort) Leavenworth*, Kansas. Leavenworth was to become one of a system of Forts marking the then "Frontier" from Fort Snelling*, Minn. to Fort Jessup* La. In 1829 Wright was promoted to 1st Lt. and given his first independent command, an expedition up the Missouri River, thence to the Platte and returning via the Kansas River.

In 1831, a battalion of the 3rd was assigned duty into the Red River area from Fort Jessup*. Promotions were slow, but Wright managed one to Captain in late 1836. After recruiting duty in Buffalo, NY, he was ordered to reestablish Fort Niagara*, regarding a border dispute with the British, thence was sent to Madison Barracks at Sackets Harbor, NY in 1840. He was transferred to the new 8th Inf. Regt. which was to be the "International Peace Keepers", but later that year moved back to Jefferson Barracks*.

In the meantime things were not going well in Florida with the Seminole Indians, due to relocation policies. Almost all army units had fought in Florida during periods over the past 7 years, since the 1832 Treaty for the Indians relocation. The 8th Infantry was ordered to Florida to be garrisoned at Fort Brooke, Tampa Bay in late 1840. The Indians were defeated, but it was a costly win for the army which lost 1460 men, and the total number of Indian warriors probably never exceeded 1400. Wright was breveted Major and his regiment continued garrison duty in Key West until

1844. Bvt. Major Wright spent 1844-46 at Carlisle Barracks* at his old job of recruiting, a welcomed change after four years in Florida

By the time he was ordered to rejoin his unit the Mexican War was in progress. In February 1846, Wright, commanding a battalion of six companies of the 8th Infantry, sailed from Brazos Santiago (at the mouth of the Rio Grand) to join Winfield Scott's forces. George Wright proved to be an outstanding combat commander. He was breveted LTC for his performance at Churubusco and three weeks later as Colonel for Molino del Rey action, where he was wounded. Lieutenant of Engineers Isaac Stevens (with whom he would be associated later in the Pacific Northwest) carried him from the field. His wound was not serious, and most of the time he continued in command.

In January 1848, George Wright was promoted to major and transferred to the 4th Infantry. After a 6-month sick leave and 3-month duty as mustering out officer of volunteer Mexican War soldiers, he joined his new regiment, which was then deployed along the Northern Frontier; from Fort Niagara, NY to Fort Mackinac, Mich. This was because of unrest across the border in Montreal. It was here that he learned that his son Tom had been expelled from West Point for mischief, later reinstated, but resigned when his prospects for graduation seemed minimal.

With the advent of the year 1852, rapid growth in California and the Pacific Coast North was occurring. California had become a State, gold had been discovered, emigrant trails were having traffic jams, law and order was uncertain, and there were Indian problems. Only 350 regular army troops were stationed between Mexico and Puget Sound. In May 1852, 4th Regiment was ordered to move from Fort Ontario to Fort Columbus on Governor's Island in New York Harbor to ship to the West Coast. Some Companies went via Cape Horn, others via the Isthmus. Wright opted for the latter, arriving at Benicia Barracks* in late August. LTC Booneville, commanding 4th Regt. went on to Fort Vancouver* on the Columbia River near Portland to establish Regimental Headquarters. Company units of one or two were established at various locations in Northern California and the then Oregon and Washington Territories. These were Benicia Barracks* -2; Fort Reading-2; Fort Humboldt*-2; Fort Jones-1; Fort Dalles*-1; Fort Steilacoom-1, and Fort Orford-1.

Major Wright commanded the Northern District of California and was stationed at Fort Reading on Cow Creek near the present town of Redding. This was a pleasant setting; good gardens for fresh vegetables, clear cool water and supplies brought

up the Sacramento River from Sacramento to Red Bluff landing, the head of river navigation. For protection the fort had two mountain howitzers, in addition to the soldier's side arms and rifled muskets. The most troublesome Indians at the time were those in Northern California and extending into Oregon. Conflicts of sufficient magnitude to be called wars were: The Shasta War of 1851, Klamath War of 1852, Rogue River War of 1853, Campaign against the Lower Klamath Indians in 1855, and the more southern Kern River War of 1856.

In late 1854, Colonel Joe Mansfield, Army Inspector General visited Wright's Command giving him good marks. Mansfield was an 1822 West Point class mate of Wright, and highly thought of in Washington, D.C. by General Scott and others. He wrote a strong recommendation for Wright's promotion (at the latter's request!), and it worked, miraculously! In February 1855 Wright was promoted to LTC of the 4th Infantry and one month later to full Colonel to command the new 9th Infantry Regiment to be stationed at Fort Monroe*, VA. This was great news to Wright, the bad news was that son Tom had become a soldier of fortune, a mercenary in Central America. Tom survived and in 1860 was a quartermaster clerk at Fort Walla Walla*.

After seven months training the new 9th Infantry left Fort Monroe* for Fort Vancouver*, arriving late January 1856. The unit moved upriver to Fort Dalles* which became Wright's headquarters. Fort Walla Walla* was established later that year. Colonel Wright reported to BG John Wool, the then commander of the Military Dept. of the Pacific. The area civil leader at the time was Isaac Stevens, Governor of the Washington Territory. Stevens was also a professional soldier and West Point graduate (1-1839). He had formed a volunteer militia for the territory, but cooperation with the federal forces was frequently lacking. (Stevens became an outstanding Division Commander early in the Civil War, but was killed at Second Bull Run. Had he survived, it is speculated that he would have become CG, Army of the Potomac.)

For the next two years Colonel Wright and the 9th Infantry plus other forces were involved in numerous expeditions and campaigns to secure the eastern portion of the Washington Territory. Collectively these actions were known as the Indian Wars of 1858. Nearly every tribe in the region was participants to varying degrees. They included the Cayuses, Coeur d'Alene, Nez Perces, Palouse, Pend d'Oreilles, Spokanes, Walla Walla and Yakimas. Colonel George Wright and units of the U. S. Army had successfully resolved the Indian "problems" in the region for the time being.

In July 1860 George Wright assumed command of the Military District of Oregon. His first business was to resolve the San Juan Islands Border dispute with the British and to develop better relations with the Hudson's Bay Company. In addition problems arose with the Snake River Indians. Some of the worst massacres in the history of the Oregon Trail had occurred. A vigorous spring 1861 campaign was planned with new forts established at Fort Hall near Pocatello and at Fort Boise. By that time the first guns of the Civil War had been fired and interest in the Northwest was waning.

The chief problems initially confronting the Army in the Department of the Pacific, in addition to hostile Indians was the activities of secessionist, and confusion over command. Wright was finally appointed Department Commander in November 1861 and he held that position until July 1864. Immediately prior Albert Sidney Johnston had served a short period, but was relieved when his disloyalty to the Union was uncovered. Joseph Mansfield and Edwin Sumner were next assigned in turn, but then promoted to major generals and reassigned to Virginia as Division Commanders. Wright's assignment carried with it a promotion to Brigadier General in the volunteers, but not in the regular army. This was a disappointment to him since he was the senior colonel in the U.S. Army at 58 years of age and 39 years of service. Before the war ended 17 of his former subalterns had become general officers. It was a young man's war. Average age of BG's was 37 and MG's 39. Wright was pleased, however, that both of his sons were on active duty. Tom had been commissioned 1st Lt. in the Cavalry. His younger son John, in his 3rd year at West Point, was placed on active duty with many others and commissioned Captain.

By March 1862 Wright had settled into his departmental command. He was working hard to cement good relations with governors, local officials and prominent citizens of the Pacific slope. He was totally dedicated to the preservation of the Union and the carrying out of the policies of the Lincoln administration. Two significant expeditions were undertaken from the Department in 1862. These were the "California Column" led by Colonel J. H. Carleton to force Sibley's Rebels out of New Mexico and secure the southern boundary; and the Utah Expedition under Colonel P. E. Connor to protect the central overland mail route and encourage more loyal behavior by Brigham Young. Connor established Fort Churchill* along the immigrant route and Fort Douglas* at Salt Lake City to provide continuing oversight in that area. Secessionist activities in California also had to be "managed". Hot spots continued to develop at several locations even

including Tulare, Merced and Visalia; and, Indian problems had not disappeared.

Indian uprisings occurred in Owens Valley, Pyramid Lake area, and again in the Snake River region. The Humboldt region continued to be the site of most Indian-White confrontations, and it should be noted that the Indians were by no means always the ones at fault! A reservation had been established at Round Valley in Mendocino County, but whites were encroaching on valley lands, forcing the Indians off.

General Wright maintained good relations with the Navy, including Captain Selfridge, commander at Mare Island. Both were concerned with further improving the defense system of San Francisco Bay.

In June 1864 Major General Irvin McDowell assumed command of the Department of the Pacific and Brigadier General George Wright was placed in command of the District of California, with headquarters in Sacramento. It is not clear why McDowell replaced Wright except that he needed a job. One of Wright's greatest concerns in 1864 was the French presence in western Mexico. Because the French were sympathetic to the Rebels, they were a peril to California. The various commanders along the coast were concerned as to their ability to repel foreign or rebel assaults. Harbor regulations were tightened and additional coastal artillery batteries installed. In December 1864, George Wright was finally promoted to Brigadier General in the Regular Army, but to his further disappoint, by brevet only. His younger son, Major John Wright had been badly wounded at Gettysburg and mustered out of service. John survived and later became a lawyer. Son Thomas had been promoted to colonel, breveted Brigadier, and was in command at the Presidio of San Francisco. The old man must have been proud!

By 1865 the Confederacy was sinking fast. Every one seemed to be aware of this except Jefferson Davis. On 9 April 65, Lee accepted Grant's surrender terms at Appomattox. On 14 April, Lincoln's assassination stunned the Nation. Troops were sent to southern California to suppress the jubilation of secessionists over Lincoln's death; and a mob in San Francisco, grieved and infuriated, destroyed the plants of four newspapers suspected for disloyal sentiments. General Wright took strong actions in both incidences. But the nation had a long way to go before healing.

In July 1865, as the volunteer armies were being mustered out the military made extensive changes in its organizational structure and assignments. Five new Divisions were to be formed nationwide. They would include a total of 18 new departments, replacing the existing ones. General Henry Halleck (formerly army chief of staff) would

command the new Division of the Pacific. The new Departments of California and Columbia were to be commanded by McDowell and Wright, respectively. The new Columbia Division included the State of Oregon and the Territories of Washington and Idaho, with headquarters at Fort Vancouver*. A post Wright was quite familiar with.

On 28 July, the General with his wife, Margaret, and two aids boarded the side wheeler steamship *Brother Jonathan* in San Francisco for the voyage up the coast to his new duty station. Just north of Crescent City on 30 July a storm was encountered and the ship was not making headway. The captain decided to return to Crescent Harbor to wait out the storm, but in making the turn the ship hit the rocks and sank in 45 minutes. Of the 120 ± passengers only 14 survived. None of the Wright party was among them. Over the next three months 75 bodies were recovered washed up on beaches from Shelter Cove to Gold Run. The Wrights were buried in Sacramento, a City that they had loved. The unidentified were buried in a special cemetery in Crescent City where a permanent memorial was built.

It was said of General Wright that "He was a thorough soldier who significantly advanced the profession for which he devoted the aims and energies of his life"; and, that "He was a wise man, a brave man, a just man, an honest man, a man of noble impulses, of refined culture, of generous affections, of indomitable energy, of cool judgment, of sound common sense, and of pure lofty heart-rooted patriotism". Some said that he would be remembered only as a general who had almost nothing to do with the Civil War. But that was not true and it is unfair; for he was one of the prime leaders who foiled the machinations of the Secessionists movements in the Pacific Coast and Southwest, and saved this vast region from the horrors of the Civil War. In other words he made life miserable for the Rebels and other disloyal elements wherever he found them. Perhaps we need more people like him today! It is quite appropriate that our Sacramento Post of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War is named in honor of General George Wright.

Note: * Indicates historic army posts that remain today, many in ruins, but all interesting to visit.

References: "General George Wright—Guardian of the Pacific Coast" by P. J. Schlicke, 1988; "Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the USMA" by G. W. Cullum, 1891.



Maj. Gen. John Wool



Brig. Gen. George Wright



Governor Isaac Stevens

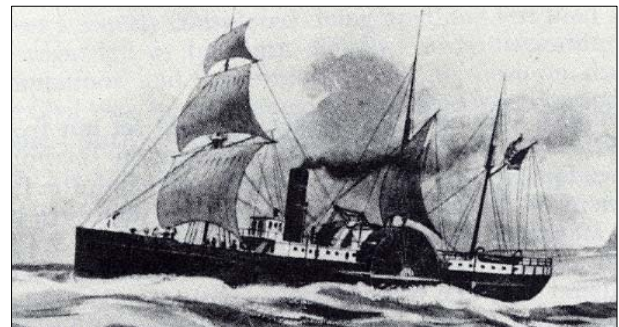
The S. S. Brother Jonathan

The *Brother Jonathan* was a wooden side-wheeler built about 1851 in Williamsburg, NY. It was 221 feet long, 36 feet wide, with a draft of 14 feet. Displacement was 1200 tons. Power was a 400-horsepower vertical beam single cylinder steam engine with coal fired boilers. Auxiliary power was wind. The vessel carried six officers and a crew of 48 men. There were accommodations for 350 cabin and steerage passengers. On its last sailing it was not known precisely how many passengers were on board?

Initially the ship made runs between New York and Panama, transferring to San Francisco to Central America runs, and beginning in 1858 providing coastal services between San Francisco and Victoria. Notwithstanding numerous repairs and rebuilding, it is believed that ship structurally and mechanically was not in the best of shape. Also, on its fatal voyage of 28 July 65, it was apparently severely overloaded with a dangerous freeboard encroachment and loss of maneuverability. It was said that the ship's captain had brought this to the attention of the ship's owner, but was overruled.

The ship carried a heavy load of mill and mining machinery, a deck load of railroad rails, and 300 hogsheads of whiskey. Also on board was a significant quantity of gold coins and bullion estimated at upwards to \$1,000,000 in 1865 dollars. This included \$200,000 army payroll funds, \$400,000 Wells Fargo money, and \$140,000 local bank and Fir Trader Association funds.

In the 1990's the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* was discovered, and after considerable argument over ownership, salvage operations were undertaken. Recovered 1865 gold coins from the San Francisco Mint in "mint" condition carried by the ship are now available. Suggest you budget about \$7500 minimum, if you want a twenty-dollar gold piece!



Bob Williams: 6-08-04, revised 7-18-09