

# Remember The U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman

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In the early morning of February 24, 1863, the United States Ship Colonel Kinsman under the command of Lieutenant George Wiggin sank in Berwick Bay with the loss of five lives. Whatever remains of this vessel lies on the bottom of Berwick Bay below Morgan City, Louisiana, between the southern point of the city and Bateman Island. 1 At the time of her sinking, this 275-ton side-wheeler steamer was 177 feet in length by 27 feet 4 inches wide, with a depth hold of 6 feet. The Kinsman had only one deck, no mast, pink stern, plain head, and upper cabin.2 Armament consisted of two 32-pounder cannons.3

The original name of this vessel was the Gray Cloud. She was built in 1854 in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania with her first ship enrollment, No. 28, dated 7 March 1854 for the port of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.4 The first measurement given for the vessel was 170 feet long with a square stern. Her first Master of Record was Pliney A. Alford of St. Louis, Missouri. Alford was one of five people who had a financial interest in the Gray Cloud.5 The vessel was later altered, in 1857, in New Orleans, to 177 feet long with a pink stern.6

The Gray Cloud as a private financial endeavor ended in 1855 with the acquisition of the vessel by the United States Army Quartermaster Office in St. Louis, Missouri. The Gray Cloud, along with a sternwheeler called Wm. Baird, were both purchased to be used on the upper Missouri, but not without opposition. Major D. H. Vinton, Quartermaster Office at St. Louis, in a letter to his superiors stated: "The Wm. Baird is an excellent boat for her class, and so is the Gray Cloud; but both are too large for our service on the upper Missouri at all seasons of the year. - I am aware that it is bad policy to condemn and sell as useless property which has been so recently purchased; and can therefore appreciate the embarrassment you feel with regard to your recommendations to the Secretary of War concerning these boats."7 The Gray Cloud embarked on another phase of her maritime journey as the U. S. Steamer Gray Cloud in the Sioux expedition from the time of her purchase by the U. S. government in 1855. [The Sioux expedition in the years 1855-56 was an encounter between the United States and the Lakota, or western Sioux due to the increased harassment of travelers in the region of the Platte River.]

On August 18, 1854, a Latter-Day Saint immigrant traveling west on the overland trail had his cow killed and butchered by a young Miniconjou man. The immigrant reported this incident to the military commander at Fort Laramie and demanded restitution. A United States Army officer named John L. Grattan and his command were sent from Fort Laramie to arrest the young Sioux at Conquering Bears Bruli Camp near Fort Laramie the day after the event occurred. Grattan and every man in his command were massacred. No action was taken against the Bruli. It was determined by government leaders that Grattan and his superior officer were in error.<sup>8</sup>

In November of 1854, the Sioux attacked the stage from Salt Lake City killing three men and taking ten-thousand dollars in gold from the stage.<sup>9</sup>

These two events of harassments by the Sioux upon American citizens caused the United States War Department to order a military expedition to take the field, locate and punish the Sioux. The command of the Sioux expedition was given to Colonel William S. Harney under the brevet rank of brigadier general. Thus began the Sioux expedition by the United States to punish the Lakota, or western Sioux.<sup>10</sup>

On November 1, 1855 Captain P. T. Turnley, Assistant Quartermaster Office at Fort Pierre, Northern Territory, sent orders to the Master of the Steamer Gray Cloud, Captain J. D. Radford, when upon arrival at White River, "if possible put on to your boat the Saw Mill and Grist Mill with all the fixtures and drop down the river to a favorable landing about 10 or 12 miles by land say 20 or 23 by water above L'eau qui Court River and there wait the orders of Major Howe, 2nd Dragoons." The L'eau qui Court river was located some 90 miles above Sioux City, Iowa. Major Howe was to select a point for a Post in the area of 12 miles above L'eau qui Court River and the White River. The Gray Cloud was afterwards to proceed to Council Bluffs for a cargo of corn.<sup>11</sup>

The following day, November 2, 1855, Captain P. T. Turnley sent another order to the Master of the Gray Cloud with further instructions; "in case you go to Council Bluffs for cargo of corn you will report to Dr. George L. Miller in Omaha City who has charge of corn in that neighborhood intended for this Post. Dr. Miller has about 8,000 bushels in store waiting shipment to this place."<sup>12</sup> Further orders were given by the commanding general of the Sioux Expedition on the 5th of November when Captain Turnley ordered the Gray Cloud to return to St. Louis after the delivery of her cargo to Major Howe on the L'eau qui Court River.<sup>13</sup>

By November 23, the Gray Cloud had not been heard from. She should have returned to St. Louis by now as ordered for further assignment. Major Vinton wrote Doctor Cook in Sioux City inquiring about the Gray Cloud; "has she passed Sioux City?" He asked

Doctor Cook to send out Indian runners to procure intelligence concerning the boat.<sup>14</sup> Dr. Cook later replied on December 14, 1855, "The Gray Cloud is frozen up near the mouth of the L'eau qui Court River some 90 miles above." A tremendous storm had overtaken the area.<sup>15</sup>

While the Gray Cloud was still frozen in the L'eau qui Court River, her future missions were still being planned by commanding general Harney of the Sioux expedition. Special order #77 dated December 17, 1855 ordered the immediate establishment by Captain Radford of "a semi-monthly express between Fort Pierre and Council Bluffs for the purpose of conveying all mail matter between the two places."<sup>16</sup> Due to the Gray Cloud being frozen in the L'eau qui Court River, all of the employees upon her were to be discharged, except the Master, and a sufficient number of men not to exceed five, to take charge of the boat and help her clear the ice during the winter.<sup>17</sup> Such was the type of activities of the U. S. Steamer Gray Cloud while serving in the Sioux expedition in the northern territories.

The Gray Cloud's future took a different direction towards the end of 1856. On December 5, 1856, she was ordered to New Orleans "to be there altered and prepared for service on the coast of Florida."<sup>18</sup> It is speculated the alteration was done to adapt the vessel from a northern western river steamer to a coastal steamer. This would have been accomplished by the conversion of the vessel's rudder system which also resulted in the change from a square stern to a pink stern. It would explain the increase in the length of the vessel by seven feet.<sup>19</sup> The Gray Cloud under her new master, Captain James Duke, was now being utilized as a coastal steamer involved in the Third Seminole War.

The beginning of the Third Seminole War was attributed to an attack on an American survey party under the command of Second Lieutenant George Lucas Hartsuff on December 7, 1855 in the center of southwestern Florida.<sup>20</sup>

The Seminole Indians were concerned about several government surveying and scouting parties moving through their temporary reserve.<sup>21</sup> In the fall of 1855 Seminole leaders had met and decided to take an offensive position and attack the survey parties when the opportunity would arise.<sup>22</sup> The third Seminole War began in December of 1855 and continued to the spring of 1858.<sup>23</sup>

Captain Montgomery of the New Orleans of Quartermaster, in his letter of May 25, 1858 shows considerable concern about the Master of the Gray Cloud and his neglect for repairs of the vessel.<sup>24</sup> Even though Captain Montgomery does not state the name of the Master in his letter, it was learned from a pension application in 1889 that the Captain of the Gray Cloud in 1857 was Captain James Duke.

On August 25, 1889, a letter addressed to the Secretary of War from a Mr. Wm. E. Loper on behalf of a Mr. Rofune Farlis, pleads the case of Mr. Farlis who applied for a pension and had been denied. Mr. Farlis was the pilot for the Steamer Gray Cloud in 1857 under the command of Captain Duke. Mr. Farlis claimed he was accidentally wounded by the discharge of a piece of ordnance during an inspection of the post along the coast under the command of Captain Duke with Colonel Loomis aboard for the trip. 25

Ships enrollment No. 44, dated April 5, 1859, for New Orleans, Louisiana, shows the owner of the Gray Cloud as Henry Spearing of New Orleans and W.C. Flanders as Master. Register No. 62, dated June 2, 1859, indicates the same owner with John J. Woodfine as the Master of the vessel. The Gray Cloud was sold to Henry Spearing by the United States Government. 26.

The Steamer Gray Cloud was taken into requisition by the Confederate States Navy in 1861 and later captured by the Federals off the coast of Biloxi, Mississippi in July of 1862.27

While under the command of the Confederate States Navy, the CSS Gray Cloud accompanied by the CSS Oregon brought men and guns and other supplies to Ship Island off the coast of Biloxi, Mississippi on July 9, 1861.28 In September of 1861, the Confederates concluded that holding Ship Island was not possible under the increasing Union Naval strength in the area and ordered the island evacuated. On September 14, 1861, the steamers Oregon, Gray Cloud, Creole, and A.G. Brown began the removal of all troops, guns, and other supplies. No further records of her service in the Confederate navy has surfaced until her capture by Federal forces in Biloxi, Mississippi in July 1862.29

The United States Quartermaster Department renamed the Gray Cloud the U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman September 30, 1862, and turned her over to the U.S. Navy.30

Under the command of Lieutenant Buchanan of the United States Navy, the Gray Cloud served with Major Frank H. Peck in an expedition to Lake Ponchatrain, Pass Manchac, and up the Tchefuncta and Pearl Rivers on July 25 thru August 2, 1862. Major Peck reported the Gray Cloud had armament consisting of two 32-pounders on board. Major Peck's report is given as follows:

Joint expedition in vicinity of Pass Manchac, July 25–28, 1862 Report of Major Frank H. Peck, Twelfth Connecticut Infantry, commanding expedition.

Camp Parapet  
Carrollton, LA, August 4, 1862

Sir: The expedition directed by orders of July 25, 1862, from headquarters of this department returned on the 2nd of August. I have to submit the following report of operations:

On the evening of July 25, with five companies of the Twelfth Regt. Connecticut Volunteers and a section of Capt. P.E. Holcomb's Second Vermont Battery, I embarked on board the boat Gray Cloud, commanded by Lieut. Buchanan, U.S. Navy. We left the wharf about midnight and arrived at Pass Manchac soon after daylight on the morning of the 26th. As we approached the bridge Capt. Holcomb sent forward a shell from his Sawyer gun, which had the effect to draw from one of the houses a rebel scout, who immediately ran up the railroad in the direction of Camp Moore. He was fired after, and, as soon as a squad of men could be landed, was pursued across the island to the North Pass, where he plunged into the stream and escaped. We examined the buildings, and found the musket and equipments of the soldier, bunks, parts of uniforms, and other evidence of recent military occupation. As the place was evidently used as a rendezvous for spies and scouts, I directed it all to be burned. The part of the bridge north of the draw had been previously destroyed. We burned the remainder. I am aware of nothing remaining at Pass Manchac more combustible than railroad iron and water-soaked piles.

On the 27th we sailed up the Tchefuncta (Chefuncte) River. When opposite Madisonville we were fired upon by the guerrilla picket stationed there. We responded with a shot from one of the 32-pounders of the boat, sent through the street from which the firing came. Fortunately none of our party was struck, though a bullet passed disagreeably near to a group of officers standing on the forward deck.

At a point about 3 miles below Covington our further progress was obstructed by three sunken gunboats, from which the guns have been recently removed. At this point we heard the shots of the guerrillas' pickets, and the long roll was sounded in two different directions not far from us. We landed here and marched to Covington. On our way we learned that several bands, of from 6 to 50 each, had passed near us after our landing, with the intention of concentrating at some point to meet us.

We carried the national flag through the principal street of the city. White flags were hung from many of the houses, and citizens waited upon us to request that license might not be given for the commission of any outrage such as their previous experience led them to expect. Of course no liberties were taken by our troops. Owing to the intense heat we shortly returned to our boat.

On our way back we were informed by friendly persons that guerrillas were gathering on the banks of the river below to oppose our passage to the take. I regret to report that during this march two men fell from sunstroke and died before night.

As the boat was about leaving we were surprised with a volley of musketry from the thick bushes which cover the river banks. Our men immediately sprang to their arms and returned the fire with steadiness and spirit. Captain Holcomb almost instantly sent a charge of canister after them, and Lieutenant Buchanan brought his 32 pounders to bear with terrible effect. Of course their fire was soon silenced. The scars upon the boat are evidence of its severity.

Our casualties were marvelously few, considering our exposed position. Only 3 men were wounded, and none of them seriously - 1 soldier and 2 sailors. We cleared a passage for ourselves out of the river, at each turn firing shell and canister into the thick bushes upon the shore and sending an occasional shell back into the woods from captain Holcomb's 20-pounder Parrott. We were not fired on again, but could frequently see armed men retreating into the woods.

On August 1, we visited Lewisburg. All the docks and landings at this place, and at Mandeville, 2 miles distant, were burned by a party of guerrillas some two weeks since.

We then revisited the Tchefuncta as far as Madisonville. The picket which has been stationed there has been removed. The town was deserted, and nearly every public and private building closed.

Despairing of finding an enemy who would stand fire within the circuit designated for our expedition we thence returned to camp.

I am indebted to Captain Holcomb, whose large experience in service of this character has been of great assistance to me. Lieutenant Buchanan was untiring in his efforts to promote the comfort of the men while on board his boat. Any comment upon his bearing in action would be superfluous.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Frank H. Peck,  
Major Twelfth Regt. Connecticut Vols, Comdg. Expedition.

Captain R.S. Davis  
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, Department of the Gulf.31

After being ordered by General Butler to the Teche region to cut off the escape of General Alfred Mouton's army in the later part of 1862, the Kinsman was one of a four vessel flotilla under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Thomas McKean Buchanan, commanding the United States Naval forces at Brashear City.<sup>32</sup> Buchanan had only been in the area for less than three months when he was killed by a minnie ball to his head while standing on the deck of his Flag Ship the U.S.S. Calhoun on January 14, 1863 at the Battle of Cornay's Bridge on Bayou Teche. Commander A.P. Cooke was placed in command of the U.S.S. Calhoun after the death of Buchanan.<sup>33</sup> Fort Buchanan located about one mile north of Brashear City was named in honor of Commander Buchanan. (Please note that the name Brashear City was changed to Morgan City after the war.)

After surviving in the Teche region the Kinsman served in several altercations, but none more violent than the two different encounters with the C.S.S. Cotton, both on the Bayou Teche near Cornay's Bridge. In the first encounter, on November 4, 1862, the Kinsman took some 54 direct hits that day and three through its flag.<sup>34</sup> The following report of Lieutenant Thomas McKean Buchanan gives his account of his command entering the Atchafalaya Bay area, and his first encounter with the C.S.S. Cotton.

Operations in Atchafalaya River and Bayou Teche, October 31–November 1862.

Report of Lieutenant Commander Buchanan, United States Navy,  
commanding  
U.S.S. Calhoun

U.S.S. Calhoun  
Off Brashear City, Atchafalaya River, November 9, 1862.

Sir: I have the honor to report that I left Lake Ponchatrain on the afternoon of the 25th of October, to proceed to the South West Pass, where I was to be met by the steamers Estrella and St. Mary's, and to proceed from there to this place, in order to cooperate with General Weitzel, who was coming along the railroad, and I also hoped to catch some Confederate gunboats.

I had expected to bring the steamers Kinsman and Diana with me, but the Kinsman broke down at Fort Pike, and the Diana not having her officers or crew I left without them. I arrived at the South West Pass on the evening of the 27th, having run aground in coming through Pass a' L'Outre, and left in company with the Estrella, Lieutenant Commander Cooke, and the U.S. Transport St. Mary's, having on board the Twenty-first Indiana Regiment, on the morning of the 28th.

We arrived in the bay the morning of the 29th and immediately commenced staking out the channel, which is very intricate and narrow. The rebels had removed all the buoys and stakes, but we by hard work managed to work our way up to the obstructions in the channel by the evening of the 30th. The Kinsman arrived the same evening and kept the pilot busy all night putting down stakes to get around the obstructions, and as there was not water enough for me to steer in I hauled the Kinsman alongside and put all my guns and ammunition on board of her. The same morning a rebel steamer came down to take a look at us and fired three guns at us, which I returned with two from my 30 pounder Parrott, when she turned and ran back. The next day I tried to get the Calhoun over, but she grounded. I put three of her guns back and started with the Estrella for the Atchafalaya River, but the Estrella also ran aground, and finding it impossible to get her off until high tide I went with the Kinsman alone to the mouth of the river; but finding nothing I ran out into the bay and anchored and sent my pilot down to the other vessels. He brought the Estrella and St. Mary's up safely the next morning, and Mr. Jordan, the executive officer succeeded in getting around the obstructions and about halfway up the bay, when the Calhoun grounded again. We tried to get her off [in] the Kinsman, but not succeeding, and as we had already lost much time, I took part of my crew and two guns on board and started for this place, where we arrived about 7 o'clock p.m. of the 1st. Upon getting off the town I saw a steamer's smoke, which I immediately made for, although I could not fire upon her, as my Parrott gun was spiked, how or by whom I can not discover. I ordered the Estrella to open fire, however, and we, a short time afterwards getting our gun clear, opened also; the steamer then rang her bell very loudly, and we heard persons singing out, "Don't fire," which has been corroborated by persons from shore, when I ordered the Estrella to cease firing and also the Kinsman, thinking she had surrendered, and for the Estrella to run alongside of her and board her, she then being about 1,500 yards distant, but Captain Cooke, misunderstanding the order, fell back, and about the same time the steamer fired a gun, striking the Kinsman under the port bow. I immediately opened on her again, and still going full speed made for her, but she put up the Atchafalaya River; and although we followed her for nearly an hour she succeeded in escaping from us by her superior speed. She proved to be the rebel gunboat Cotton, ironclad, with, I think, the guns casemated and very fast. The same night I captured the rebel steamboat A.B. Seger. She belonged to the C.S. Navy and was used as a dispatch boat, and was commanded by Lieutenant [Acting Master] I.C. Coons, C.S. Navy. The crew ran her on shore and deserted her. She is a small side-wheel boat of about 30 tons and not fit to go outside. I brought up the St. Mary's the same night and anchored off Brashear City. We landed the next morning and found that we had arrived too late by forty-eight hours to prevent the rebels from crossing. The Diana arrived the same day, and shortly afterwards Mr. Jordan arrived with the Calhoun. As soon as I had coaled I started with all four boats up the Atchafalaya River, to go to Bayou Teche to Franklin. About five miles above Pattersonville, and three from the mouth of the Teche, I found the enemy



posted. They had thrown up some earthworks about 2 miles up, which they deserted on our approach, and retreated above a bridge called the Cornay Bridge. I opened on them with my Parrott gun, but carrying away the chocks to which the breeching was secured I was obliged to stop to repair. I sent Captain Cooke ahead with the other two boats, when he soon came in range of the Cotton, who was posted above the bridge, and, as we soon found out, they had also the river obstructed. The second or third shot struck the Estrella on her port rail, killing 2 soldiers who were working a 24-pounder howitzer and wounding another man and also carrying away the Estrella's wheel ropes. The Estrella was obliged to run on shore to allow the other boats to pass, the Teche being here very narrow. The Diana and Kinsman kept on, but the Diana having her Parrott guns mounted on an iron carriage got it foul and was obliged to stop. The Kinsman, however, kept on up to the bridge; and I would respectfully bring to your notice the conduct of Acting Master George Wiggin, commanding her. He put his ship right up to the battery on shore, which I have since learned consisted of eleven fieldpieces, and within 1,000 yards of the Cotton, which was as close as he could get. He drove off the fieldpieces and kept up fire with his rifled gun on the Cotton. He received 54 shots through his hull and upper works and had three through his flag. He had one round shot through his shell room and magazine, but fortunately it did no more damage than to destroy eleven shell boxes and to knock the sabots off of the shells. He had 1 man killed and 5 wounded, one of which (his lake pilot) died next day from the effects of amputation. I hurried up as soon as I heard the firing and ran my stern up to the bridge, and finding the Kinsman was leaking badly ordered Captain Wiggin to back out of range. By running my bow into the bank I brought my port broadside to bear on the Cotton. She stood for about twenty minutes, when she backed up around a turn in the Teche and soon got out of our range. The Estrella and Diana also by this time were up, and after shelling the woods we landed. I tried to haul the obstructions away, and also tried to force the Diana over, but could not succeed. As night was coming on I did not think it prudent to lay in the Teche, where the enemy could come all around us at night and fire upon us with musketry and artillery without our being able to see them, so I returned to Brashear City to repair damages and bury the dead.

The Cotton made some excellent firing. I received eight shots, three of which were in the hull, on the port side, two in my port wheelhouse, one in my starboard wheelhouse, and two in my port round house. None of them did any material damage or hurt a person on board. The Estrella was touched three times, as was the Diana. None of us had our machinery touched. The obstructions consists of a steamer called the Flycatcher and a schooner loaded with bricks sunk across the channel, and then live oak thrown in all around. With a land force to protect us on the banks I could remove the obstructions, I think; but as it is now, with the Cotton firing upon us and a large force on shore, I think it is exposing my men unnecessarily. The whole rebel force was there, we learned, under General Mouton, numbering from three to four thousand men. We cut them up pretty

badly, and they have since moved their camp up to Centreville, which is 3 miles above the obstructions, only keeping their cavalry and artillery below. We were busy all the next day repairing damages. The morning of the 5th I started up again with the Estrella, leaving the other boats to continue their repairs. We drove them off as before, but I did not escape as luckily, a shot from the Cotton striking the port, forward, struck off my Parrott gun, killing two men almost instantly. Their names are William Cameron and William Hislop. My officers and crew have all behaved excellently. The crews of all the vessels, with the exception of the Diana's, who are volunteers from the frigate Mississippi, and ten men on board the Estrella from the Pensacola, have been shipped in New Orleans, and all have behaved well.

On the 6th, Acting Master Weeks, in command of the Diana, while cruising in Grand Lake, heard of some cotton, which he went after and brought to this place. It was taken at the request of the agent, a Mr. Todd, who represents himself as a Union man, to prevent the rebels from burning it. I would respectfully wish to know what disposition is to be made of it. There are 255 bales. The owners are represented as Union men also, and live in Franklin. The next day I started Acting Master Wiggin in the Kinsman, taking along with him the Seger, to capture two steamers which I had heard of. After some trouble, he succeeded in finding them, stored away in a small bayou called Bayou Cheval, about 9 miles from Grand Lake. The steamers he found to be almost useless, one of them, the Osprey, having no wheel, and part of her machinery gone, and the other one, the J.P. Smith, all rotten. He found it impossible to get them out, they having been run hard ashore, and upon consulting with my chief engineer, who I had sent along, as to the possibility of their being repaired, he concluded to burn them. He was also induced to burn them from the fact that he found a gang on board making bowie knives, and molding buckshot and bullets, and also found an order to the captain to burn them if the Yankees came up. He took the captain of the Smith and a Captain Caldwell, who commanded a company about there, with his gang, prisoners, all of which I have turned over to Colonel McMillan.

The Cotton is in such a position that she can not escape. She can not go much farther up the Teche, and she can not get out. I keep boats running up and down there every day, but I have given orders not to engage her unless there is some prospect of success, as we are all rather short of ammunition, particularly Parrott, as we have to use our bow guns most all the time. From the best information I have been able to gain, we have so far struck her various times, but our shot glanced off her iron casing. I saw this myself the other day. We have had her on fire three times, once by the Kinsman and twice by this ship. So far as we have been able to learn we have killed 4 men on board and wounded several, and also killed and wounded a number on shore the first day, and killed 1 two days afterwards. I intend to try her again by sending the two light-draft vessels

around into Grand Lake to get in her rear, while I go up and engage her in front. I think they can get within a mile of her, but they will have to fire over the woods. We received a small supply of ammunition today, but not enough, as the rebels are beginning to be troublesome on the banks of the river and the Teche. There was a large lot sent out, but through some carelessness the train was blown up. The rebels on leaving this place destroyed a great deal of sugar, and burned up over 100 cars. The planters here have almost all deserted their plantations, and taken their negroes with them. I forgot to mention that I also had a man, Frank Bien, ordinary seamen, killed on the 5th by the premature explosion of a Dahlgren shell from a 24-pounder howitzer on board the Estrella. The Estrella was little astern of me, and the Teche being very narrow, she was obliged to fire very near over my quarter deck, a piece of shell struck him in the back and killed him nearly instantly. As the channel is very narrow and intricate in coming through the bay, I would respectfully request to know if I could have authority to have it staked out and the buoys placed, most of which are here. The pilots are the only persons I would have to employ. Vessels of 7 feet draft could then enter.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
Thos. McKean Buchanan  
Lieutenant Commander

Rear Admiral David G. Farragut  
Commanding West Gulf Blockading Squadron  
Flagship Hartford, New Orleans<sup>35</sup>

On Wednesday, January 14, 1863 the U.S. Colonel Kinsman was involved in her second encounter on Bayou Teche, the battle at Cornay's Bridge commonly referred to as the Battle of the Cotton, on the Bayou Teche above Pattersonville, Louisiana. The Calhoun, Estrella, Diana and the Kinsman confronted the C.S.S. Cotton in battle. At 8:43 a.m. an artillery duel commenced between the federal gunboats and the Cotton with support from the rebel batteries on shore. An eye witness account by a reporter for the New York Times stated – "Suddenly the Kinsman felt something explode under her; it was a torpedo, and her stern was violently lifted in the air, but fortunately with no damage, as was afterward found." Due to not knowing the extent of damages to the Kinsman, and one of her guns being disabled, the Kinsman cautiously dropped back out of the battle.<sup>36</sup> Lieutenant A.S. Wiggin, brother to Commander George Wiggin of the Kinsman, sustained a severe wound from a minnie ball in his right shoulder.<sup>37</sup> After a considerable duration of intense fire from both armies the battle ended with the rebels burning their own gunboat, the CSS Cotton, to block the Bayou Teche. The Kinsman escaped this battle with limited damage.<sup>38</sup>

The following account of the second battle at Cornay's Bridge or the Battle of the Cotton on January 14, 1863, is given by Lieutenant Commander A.P. Cooke of the U.S.S. Estrella:

U.S. Gunboat Estrella  
Berwick Bay, January 16, 1863.

Sir: I have to report that Tuesday morning the gunboats here crossed General Weitzel's artillery and cavalry and embarked his infantry, six regiments, carrying the latter to Pattersonville, while the former marched to the same place.

We arrived there at 3 o'clock p.m., when the brigade was formed in line of battle and marched to the mouth of Bayou Teche, covered by the gunboats anchoring in line ahead.

At 7 o'clock next morning the Diana crossed the Eighth Vermont Regiment to cover the gunboats on the northern bank of the bayou. About 8 o'clock we commenced moving on the enemy's position, the Kinsman leading, the Estrella next, then the Calhoun and Diana. Firing began about 9, the Kinsman and Estrella engaging the Cotton, and artillery attacking at the same time. When near the obstructions the Kinsman was fired into by riflemen from pits on the northern bank. Captain Wiggin engaged them with small arms, his men lying flat on deck, and the vessel receiving the Cotton's fire at the same time. Here his executive officer, Mr. A.S. Wiggin, [brother of Captain George Wiggin] was wounded by a minnie ball, and his vessel struck five times by the Cotton. The Estrella now enfiladed the rifle pits with grape and canister, engaging the Cotton also with forward pivot gun. Lieutenant McKay worked the battery with good effect. While maneuvering his vessel near the obstructions and endeavoring to get out of range of the rifle pits, Captain Wiggin had a torpedo explode under his stern, which however, did no serious damage. After this the Kinsman had retired from range of the rifle pits and Captain Buchanan advanced to the same position. At this time, about noon, the Cotton was repulsed by our combined attack, but the riflemen continued to fire with great effect upon the Calhoun. Her men behaved very finely. As one would fall another promptly took his place at the guns. Captain Buchanan was here killed; also 2 of his men and 6 wounded. Both quartermasters at the wheel were severely wounded, when the pilot, Mr. Doten, took the helm and remained at his post. The Eighth Vermont Regiment was now coming up, and soon drove the riflemen from their pits, capturing some 20 or 30 of

them. It would have been impossible for the boats to have dislodged them. We now moved up to the obstructions and discovered another torpedo with a wire attached leading on shore. It was carefully removed.

In sounding the channel we found it pretty effectually blocked up, and that it would take some time to clear the obstructions. Firing was kept up at intervals until dark by our artillery and skirmishers above. The Cotton must have suffered a great deal from our artillery and sharpshooters. We remained near the obstruction all night. Next morning (Thursday), at 5 o'clock, a large fire was seen above the point and soon afterwards one of General Weitzel's staff reported to me that the Cotton was destroyed, and the General intended returning with his forces that morning. His column was in motion at 10 o'clock and we followed down slowly in his rear. The Diana was the last vessel coming down and the Kinsman next. They were followed by the enemy's artillery and cavalry and fired upon us occasionally on the way down. We arrived at the bay about 5 o'clock p.m., and succeeded in crossing the whole force safely before midnight.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A.P. Cooke  
Lieutenant Commander

Rear Admiral D.G. Farragut,  
Flagship Hartford, New Orleans<sup>39</sup>

The following written report taken from The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navy of the sinking of the U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman was given by her commanding officer, Lieutenant George Wiggin:

Report of Acting Volunteer Lieutenant Wiggin, U.S. Navy,  
commanding U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman.

Berwick Bay, February 24, 1863.

Sir: I herewith submit to you my report about the loss of the U.S.S. Kinsman, under my command.

I received last night a detachment of the One hundred and fourteenth New York Volunteers on board, to accompany me on picket duty, and started for the fort [Fort Buchanan] about 9:30 p.m. When within 100 yards of the fort, about 60 feet from shore,

the engines being stopped, the steamer struck a snag, apparently floating, on her starboard bow, about 15 feet from the stem. The snag then passed on and struck the starboard wheel very heavily. We went ahead as usual, and made fast to shore, when it was reported to me by the watch below that the vessel was filling. I went below immediately and examined the leak; found the water rushing in very rapidly, the floor being covered some 6 inches in depth. I then ordered the engineer to start the bilge pumps and get up the greatest amount of steam that could be carried with safety. I had the line cut, backed out, and steamed down the bay for the flat below the wharf, in order to save my men and battery, if the water should rise too fast. When opposite the wharf the water was reported to be rising very fast, and I hailed the steamers Diana, Estrella, and Calhoun, requesting boats and men to be sent to our assistance.

In the meantime I had organized my crew into pumping and bailing parties, and they were all steadily at work. Heading inshore, we ran aground with a full head of steam, thereby raising her bow about 2 feet out of water. The carpenter and his gang tried in vain to stop the lead, I ordered the powder kegs and magazine to be brought on deck in order to keep them dry. Then I let go my anchor and ran a line from her quarter to the shore, at the same time sending troops on shore. In a few minutes afterwards her stern began to settle, causing her to slide down the steep bank, where she finally sank, and at twenty minutes past midnight every vestige of her disappeared.

The officers and crew were picked up by the boats of the Estrella, Calhoun, and Diana, neither officers nor men having the least chance to save any of their effects. I am sorry that I have to report the following of men missing:

John Berry, ship's cook ; Patk. McGoun, fireman; John Kirby, fireman; Isaac Deer, coal heaver, colored; William Parker, coal heaver, colored.

I also enclosed the surgeon's report to me. Early this morning I went in a small boat to examine the bayou and recover what property I might, and succeeded in picking up 6 barrels of powder, with a few pieces of sailor's clothing and bedding.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

George Wiggin  
Acting Volunteer Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

Lieutenant Commander A.P. Cooke,  
U.S.S. Estrella40

In the report of Assistant J.G. Olmanns, U.S. Coast Survey to Lieutenant Commander A.P. Cooke, U.S.S. Estrella, he states "Captain Wiggin then turned the steamer, and we started back down the river, under the greatest possible pressure of steam, in order to reach the flat below the wharves here, run the steamer ashore, and thus save the lives of all our crew, and also the heavy guns on board."<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately all lives were indeed not saved and it appears the heavy guns went down with the Kinsman.

On February 26, 1863, Rear Admiral D.G. Farragut reported the sinking of the U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman to Gideon Welles, Secretary of the U.S. Navy. In his report he states "The Colonel Kinsman was one of the boats fitted out by General Butler for river service, with her boilers and machinery protected by iron."<sup>42</sup>

The U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman / Gray Cloud was a northern western rivers steam vessel which was converted to a period gunboat. There are no physical examples of a vessel from this period in American history to study. Should substantial remains of the Kinsman be located, it would be a valuable source to study ship construction methods of the period. The steam engines, boilers, cannons, and many artifacts might be preserved to some degree due to the protection of one hundred and thirty-six years of siltation build-up.

A War Between the States ironclad named the U.S.S. Cairo was salvaged in the summer of 1956 from her watery grave in the Yazoo River, Mississippi where she struck two torpedoes and sunk on December 12, 1863. The Cairo yielded enormous amounts of military and personal artifacts of the crew, enough to create a very large museum within the Vicksburg National Military Park, in Vicksburg, Mississippi.<sup>43</sup>

One hundred and thirty six years after the sinking of the U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman, the Kinsman Project under the direction of the Young-Sanders Center for the Study of the War Between the States in Louisiana, Mr. Allen Saltus, Jr., of the Archaeological Research, Inc. and Roland R. Stansbury, Kinsman Project Director, are organizing an expedition to locate and certify the remains of the Kinsman in Berwick Bay. Several anomalies have been discovered in the area the Kinsman sank in Berwick Bay by the work of two different surveys conducted by Mr. Allen Saltus, Jr. and Mr. Dan McDonald of G & N Services. The surveys conducted used magnetometers and side-scan sonars. Furgo West of California has also assisted with a third survey using an advanced multi-beam sonar by request of Oceaneering International of Morgan City, La.

The planned expedition by Mr. Allen Saltus, Jr. and the Young-Sanders Center will be placed on a temporary hold due to the recent decision of the United States Corps of Engineers to review the area we believe the Kinsman's remains may rest. The Corps has

dredging operations very near the area we have located anomalies we believe could be the Kinsman. Due to the awareness of the possibility of the anomalies being in an impacted area, and Federal laws which protect historical sites, the Corps has decided to investigate the site. The Corps has contracted an archaeological firm called Earth Search, located in New Orleans, La., to evaluate all surveys completed to date, which includes survey done by the Corps, and report their findings to the Corps.

The interest in the research and the expedition of the U.S.S. Colonel Kinsman by the Young-Sanders Center is being monitored by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the State of Louisiana's Division of Archaeology, the United States Naval Archives, the Office of Regional Archaeologist for the State of Louisiana, USL, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for the University of Southwestern Louisiana, and the United States Coast Guard.

The supervisors and staff of the Young-Sanders Center sincerely hope we will have something of a positive nature to report to the public concerning the Kinsman Project in the very near future.

Roland R. Stansbury  
August 21, 1999

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Naval and Maritime Historian  
Kailua-Kona, HI

#### Footnotes

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