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**Evaluation and analysis of anomalies possibly associated with the USS Col. Kinsman,
Atchafalaya River, Louisiana**

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**The Sidewheel Steamboat Gray Cloud or USS Col. Kinsman, Pages 9-44
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The Gunboat known as *COL. KINSMAN* that sank in Berwick Bay on February 24, 1863, had originally been named *GRAY CLOUD* (or frequently, Grey Cloud). The *GRAY CLOUD* was built in 1854 as a sidewheel steamboat intended for commerce on the upper Mississippi River. The steamer saw a wide variety of duties in other settings and was rebuilt on a

number of occasions. The *GRAY CLOUD* served as a U. S. Army transport in the Missouri River Basin during the Sioux Expedition of 1855–1856. In 1858, the *GRAY CLOUD* was used in the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico during the Third Seminole War, and subsequently, was involved in private commerce in the Mobile to New Orleans coast wide trade. The *GRAY CLOUD* was employed as a Confederate military transport vessel early in the Civil War before its capture at Biloxi by Union forces in July 1862. The *GRAY CLOUD* was rebuilt as the armed steamer by the United States Army, later renamed Colonel Kinsman (or frequently, Kinsman). The *KINSMAN* saw service in the Atchafalaya Basin in southern Louisiana where it was involved in several important and perilous engagements before its loss in February 1863.

The following discussion traces the history of the steamer *GRAY CLOUD*/gunboat *COL. KINSMAN* over the nine-year-life of the vessel. This chapter has drawn from the 2000 Earth Search report (Saltus et. al. 2000), from a report prepared for the Young–Sanders Center by Roland Stansbury (Stansbury 1999) and from newly collected data.

The Steamer Gray Cloud Construction and Private Service, 1854–1855

The *GRAY CLOUD* was a sidewheel steamboat built at Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, in 1854. This information is derived from the first enrollment document issued to the steamboat at the Port of Pittsburgh on March 7, 1854 (Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation [hereinafter cited BMIN] 1854). This enrollment notes that a “certificate of admeasurements” and a “certificate of Hull and Boiler Inspection” were issued in Pittsburgh on the same day, suggesting that the steamer was brand new. This official document provides proof that the *GRAY CLOUD* was constructed in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, even though at least one source mistakenly reports that the boat was built in Elizabeth, Kentucky (Merrick 1909). The enrollment document reports that the *GRAY CLOUD* measured 170ft long; 28ft in breadth; and had a depth of hull of 6ft, 5in. The burden of the steamboat is given as 245 81/95 tons and it is described as having one deck, no mast, a “cabin on deck,” a “transom stern,” and a “plain head” (BMIN 1854). This first enrollment document does not indicate that the *GRAY CLOUD* was a sidewheeler, but later documentation and other sources reveal that it was (Mitchell 1975:89; Way 1994:197) This descriptive information indicates that, in most respects, the *GRAY CLOUD* resembled the typical, medium-sized, sidewheel river steamboat of the period. At 170 ft long, the *GRAY CLOUD* was characteristic of those that ran on the Ohio, Missouri and Red Rivers and the upper Mississippi. These steamboats were smaller than the very large and elaborate steamers that operated on the Mississippi River below St. Louis, which could be as much as 300 ft long. The listed burden of the *GRAY CLOUD* of 245 81/95 tons, also, was typical of the average-sized steamboats reportedly launched on America’s western

rivers in 1854 was 238 tons (Fishbaugh 1970:44), only slightly less than that of the *GRAY CLOUD*.

The “one deck” statement in the *GRAY CLOUD’S* enrollment is somewhat misleading, because it was a reference to decks attached directly to the hull of a vessel, a carry over from descriptions of larger ocean-going ships. On steamboats, the “one deck” refers to the main deck, the only deck attached to the hull itself. The main deck, supported by stanchions and bulkheads within the hull, housed the engines, boilers, and other machinery and served as the main storage area for cargo. This was necessary because the hulls of steamboats were too shallow to accommodate this machinery, although some cargo could be carried in the hold. On most sidewheelers, and on many sternwheelers, the main deck extended beyond the hull to encompass the paddlewheels. The area projecting beyond the hull, known as the guards, was supported by stanchions or hog chains (actually iron rods) running over the boiler deck. Guards greatly increased the deck space and, thus, the cargo carrying capacity of steamboats. The 28-ft-width-of-hull for the *GRAY CLOUD* given in the initial enrollment document referred only to the hull itself; it was not a measurement of the width of the main deck, which would have been considerably wider. How wide the main deck of the *GRAY CLOUD* actually was is unknown, but Hunter (1949:93) notes that on western river steamers the overall width of the main deck “exceeded the width of the hull by 50 to 75 percent.” Thus, the main deck of the *GRAY CLOUD* may have been as much as 49 ft across, meaning that each side paddlewheel would have been on the order of 11 to 12 ft wide.

It is very likely that the main deck of the *GRAY CLOUD* did not exceed 49 ft, because this was the maximum width that the three lock chambers on the Ohio River at Louisville could accommodate at the time. These locks, with their associated two-mile-long canal, were shallows at Louisville which were a serious impediment to steamboats except during high water. Known as the Louisville and Portland Canal and completed in 1830, the locks could admit boats up to 183 ft long and 49.5 ft in breadth (Hunter 1949:183–185). Within a few years, there were many steamboats on the Ohio River which were too big to pass through the locks and these steamers had to stay above or below the falls, or attempt to pass over them during high water, often a dangerous undertaking. It was not until 1872 that the locks were enlarged to accommodate bigger boats (Hunter 1949:186). Because of this situation, many of the steamboats built on the upper Ohio River after 1830 were constructed specifically to fit through the locks; i.e., they were less than 183 ft long and had a main deck width of less than 49.5 ft. It seems likely that the *GRAY CLOUD* was designed specifically to pass through the locks of the Louisville and Portland Canal.

Above the main deck on the typical western river steamboat was the boiler deck. Usually narrower and shorter than the main deck, the boiler deck supported a range of cabins consisting of the passenger staterooms and, commonly, the main passenger saloons. The *GRAY CLOUD* would certainly have had this range of cabins, although the reference to a “cabin on deck” in the steamer’s enrollment document indicates only that the cabins on the boat were located on or above the main deck, not inside of the hull. The roof of this main passenger cabin was known as the “hurricane deck” and on larger steamboats of the period another set of cabins, known as the “texas,” rested on top of the hurricane deck (Hunter 1949:91–93). The texas began to appear in the 1840s on larger steamboats to increase the passenger accommodations of these vessels and its use expanded in later years. Extant illustrations of medium and smaller steamers in the mid–nineteenth century, like the *GRAY CLOUD*, indicated that they commonly lacked a texas; all passengers were housed in the main cabin. No contemporary descriptions of the *GRAY CLOUD* have been located and it is unknown if the steamer was built with a texas. If the *GRAY CLOUD* did have a texas, it probably would have been fairly small, containing only a few cabins to house passengers or, more likely, the officers of the boat. The steamboat’s small pilot house would have been situated on top of the hurricane deck, or if it did have a texas, on top of that.

The reference to a “transom” stern in the initial enrollment indicates that the *GRAY CLOUD* was built with a square stern. Although the square stern became a hull design more closely associated with sternwheels, it was not uncommonly found on sidewheelers of the 1850s. One of the reasons for using a square stern on sidewheel steamers was to increase hull capacity. Hunter (1949:88) notes that the steamboats which had to pass through the locks at the fall of the Ohio, often, were built with bluff bows and sterns in order to increase hull capacity because they were restricted in terms of hull length and width. This could very well be the reason that the *GRAY CLOUD* was built with a transom stern.

As given in its initial enrollment document, the depth of hull of the *GRAY CLOUD* was 6ft, 5in. This depth was just slightly greater than that for steamboats of similar size built in the 1850s (Hunter 1949:652). It seems likely that the *GRAY CLOUD*’S builders used this slightly greater depth to increase the vessel’s hull capacity, just as they may have employed a transom stern to do the same thing.

Unfortunately, neither this initial enrollment nor later descriptions give details of the boiler(s) and engine(s) used on the *GRAY CLOUD*. The typical sidewheel steamboat of the period would have been powered by two, high pressure, non-condensing, single cylinder engines. The engine cylinders, or pistons, were mounted horizontally or at a slight incline on sturdy timbers known as “engine” or “cylinder” timbers. These were located on the main deck in the stern third of the vessel, between the sidewheels, and were securely bolted to the deck and hull. The pistons were connected to the shafts of the side paddlewheels by “pitmans,” long wooden arms strengthened by metal straps. The pitmans were attached to a crank on the inside end of each paddlewheel shaft.

The boilers on western river steamers were positioned on the main deck in the forward third of the vessel. The most common type of boiler used on western steamboats was the flue boiler, consisting of long cylindrical tank with internal tubular flues extending through the center. Boilers ranged from 2 to over 3 ft in diameter and from 20 ft long to as much as 40 ft long in the largest steamboats (Hunter 1949: 156). Prior to the 1850s, two internal flues, ranging from 8 to 12 inches in diameter, was the norm for steamboat boilers. Although the use of two internal flues remained popular after 1850, boilers began to be built which had as many as six internal flues (Hunter 1949:157). In 1858 when the *GRAY CLOUD* was in the service of the United States Quartermaster Department, Captain A. Montgomery, Assistant Quartermaster in New Orleans, wrote that the steamer’s “boilers had been leaking,” indicating that the boat had more than one boiler (Montgomery 1858). How many boilers may have been on the *GRAY CLOUD* is unknown, but boats its size normally would have had 3 or 4.

Typically, western river steamboats were fitted with two, tall chimneys, or smoke stacks, positioned at the rear of the boilers. A principal reason for using two stacks was to create the strong draft needed to feed the fire box. It is possible that the *GRAY CLOUD* was atypical in this respect, because a Civil War-period newspaper illustration shows a boat with a single chimney. However, this use of a single chimney might well have been a later modification made to the boat, because as Hunter (1949:156) notes, the use of two smoke stacks on western steamers was “the invariable practice after the early years.” As is discussed below, in 1856 the *GRAY CLOUD* was rebuilt to work in the Gulf of Mexico and it may have been at this time that the single smoke stack was installed. If the single stack on the *GRAY CLOUD* was original, it suggests that a single engine may have been installed in the boat when constructed. Boats with single engines, usually low-pressure engines, and single chimneys were built and used on the western rivers in the very early years of steam boating, but by the time the *GRAY CLOUD* was built this would have been a very unlikely occurrence (Hunter 1949).

Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, where the *GRAY CLOUD* was built, is located on the Monongahela River in the southwestern part of the state about 15 mi upstream of the city of Pittsburgh. The Monongahela joins the Allegheny River at Pittsburgh to form the Ohio. During the nineteenth century, Elizabeth was one of the important steamboat building centers in the upper Ohio River area. This region had the raw materials (specifically hardwood timber and iron) and the experienced builders and carpenters needed to build steamboats (Hunter 1949:67). The importance of Elizabeth as a boat building center, particularly during the earliest years of steam boating, is reflected in the fact that 78 steamboats were built in the town between 1826 and 1836 (Hunter 1949:107). Steamboats built at Elizabeth, normally, were enrolled at nearby Pittsburgh, the closest custom district.

The March 7, 1854, Pittsburgh enrollment document lists five owners of the *GRAY CLOUD*. These were: Pliney A. Alford, of St. Louis, who owned one-quarter of the steamer and, also, was the listed master; E. C. Haslett (?) and P. A. Mulford, both of whom owned a one-eighth interest and were residents of Pittsburgh; L. (or S.) Swarnes (?) of ?, Illinois, with a one-quarter interest; and J. B. and T. B. Rhoads, also, with a one-quarter interest and from Illinois (BMIN 1854). The J. B. and T. B. Rhoads entry seems to imply a firm of some sort, although it could be a reference to two individual owners.

The *GRAY CLOUD* seems to have been built expressly for use in the upper Mississippi River trade. The boat began its service in that trade (Merrick 1909), plus, several of its owners were involved with other steamboats that worked on the upper Mississippi. For example, an E. C. Hazlitt of Pittsburgh, a T. B. Rodes of Illinois and Pliney Alford of St. Louis, in conjunction with Mark Sterling of Pittsburgh, were joint owners of the steamboat *LACLEDE* in the mid-1850s (Way 1994:274). Despite the slight differences in spelling, it seems certain that Hazlitt, Rodes and Alford are the same individuals who were owners of the *GRAY CLOUD*. Built in 1855, the sternwheeler *LACLEDE* ran on the upper Mississippi River and on the Illinois River under the command of Captain Hazlitt. How long these individuals owned the *LACLEDE* is unknown, but it does show that the original owners of the *GRAY CLOUD* had more than a passing interest in the steamboat trade above St. Louis.

Pliney Alford, also, was captain of another Elizabeth-built boat, the *NORTHERNER*, launched at the Ekin Yard in 1858. Alford served on the *NORTHERNER* in the upper

Mississippi trade between St. Louis and St. Paul when the steamer was part of the Northern Line (Way 1994:350). In 1857, Pliney Alford was captain of the sidewheeler *WHITE CLOUD* in the St. Louis–St. Paul run (Way 1994:485). A Lewis Swarnes, possibly the “L. Swarnes” who was one of the original owners of the *GRAY CLOUD*, was captain and owner of the sternwheeler *BADGER STATE*, built in 1852 (Way 1994:36).

The *BADGER STATE* originally worked on the upper Mississippi River. Finally, a P. S. Mulford served as captain on two steamboats working on the Ohio River in the 1850s. He was on the *EMPIRE CITY* which ran between St. Louis and Pittsburgh in 1854 and the *FORT WAYNE* which worked on the Ohio River in the 1857 (Way 1994: 151,170). It is possible that this is the same individual listed as “P. A. Mulford” in the *GRAY CLOUD’S* enrollment, or a relative.

In addition to the fact that several of the owners of the *GRAY CLOUD* had connections with upper Mississippi River steamboats, the boat itself was similar in build to the steamers working in this trade. Most of the boats on the upper river were medium to small steamers because of often low water conditions that existed. Also, many of these steamboats periodically traveled on some of the tributaries of the Mississippi River, like the Missouri and Illinois, which were even less accommodating to large boats. Steamboat travel on the upper Mississippi River began in August 1817, when the small steamboat *ZEBULON M. PIKE* arrived at St. Louis (Peterson 1968:77). St. Louis was at the hub of a system of waterways which stretched to the north and west and soon it became a major Mississippi River port. In 1820, the steamboat *WESTERN ENGINEER* departed St. Louis and ascended the Missouri River as far as the steamboat present-day Council Bluffs, Iowa, and the same year this steamboat traveled up the Mississippi as far as Keokuk (Peterson 1968:80). The voyages of the *WESTERN ENGINEER* ushered in the steamboat trade above St. Louis. In 1823, the steamer *VIRGINIA* reached the fall of the St. Anthony, the future site of St. Paul, and established the practicality of navigation of the upper Mississippi River for 700 miles above St. Louis. Steamboats, soon, became the principal carriers of cargo into and out of the upper river region and, also, were responsible for carrying thousands of emigrants into these newly opened lands. In the early years, furs and hides were a principal cargo carried out of the region by steamboats, but with expanding settlement and the establishment of farms, agricultural crops of all sorts became cargoes for steamboats. Another of the important cargoes was lead, derived from the mines around Galena, Illinois (Peterson 1968:207). Lead had been mined around Galena since the 1690s, but the arrival of the steamboat made it very convenient to ship the lead down river to markets. By the 1840s, over one million dollars worth of lead were being mined annually, and most of it was carried out by steamboat. Peterson (1968:209) states that the shipment of lead was the most important single factor in stimulating steamboat trade on the upper Mississippi

between 1823 and 1848. Although it is known that the *GRAY CLOUD* participated in the upper Mississippi River trade, this service was fairly brief and no details of the steamer's activities are known. Slightly more than a year after its launching in Elizabeth, the *GRAY CLOUD* was acquired by the United States Quartermaster Department.

United States Quartermaster Steamer, 1855–1858

The Sioux Expedition of 1855–1856

The *GRAY CLOUD* and another steamer, the sternwheeler *WILLIAM BAIRD*, were acquired by the United States Quartermaster Department in the summer of 1855 for use on the Missouri River. These boats were purchased specifically as transport vessels for what was known as the Sioux Expedition of 1855–1856. The Sioux Expedition was a military undertaking by the United States Army against the Lakota or western Sioux, stemming from Indian harassment and depredation of travelers in the region of the Platte River (Stansbury 1999:1). 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 Sioux man. The immigrant reported this incident to the military commander at Fort Laramie, located on the upper North Fork of Platte River, and demanded restitution. A United States Army officer named John L. Grattan and his command leader, Conquering Bear. Grattan and every man in his command were massacred. However, no actions were taken against the Bruli because government leaders determined that Grattan and his superior officer were in error. A few months later, in November, the Sioux attacked the stage from Salt Lake City, killing three men and taking ten thousand dollars in gold from the state (Clow 1986:230).

These two events cause the War Department to order United States Dragoons into the field to locate and punish the Lakota. The command of the Sioux expedition was given to Colonel William Selby Harney under the brevet rank of brigadier general. General Harney was a seasoned army officer with considerable experience in dealing with Indians. Since his commission in the Army in 1818, he had swerved in the Creek and Seminole Wars and in the Mexican War as a member of the 2nd Dragoons. The activities of the Sioux Expedition took place far up the Missouri and Platte Rivers, at isolated posts such as Fort Laramie and Fort Pierre in what was then Nebraska Territory. The movement of supplies and troops into the area to support the expedition was heavily dependent upon steamboats, *GRAY CLOUD* and *WILLIAM BAIRD*, were assigned to the Quartermaster Headquarters in St. Louis, the source of almost all Great Plains. No records providing details on the acquisition of the

two steamers by the Quartermaster Department have been found, so it is not known exactly when the boats were purchased nor what was paid for them. Interestingly, the *WILLIAM BAIRD* was built in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, in 1855 (Way 1994:487), just one year after the *GRAY CLOUD* was completed in the same city. It is possible that some, or all, of the owners of the *GRAY CLOUD*, also, were involved in the ownership of the *WILLIAM BAIRD*.

Some information on the *GRAY CLOUD'S* service during the Sioux Expedition is found in what are known as the "Vessel Papers" in the records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, now in the National Archives. These records consist chiefly of correspondence between various individuals associated with the steamer, principally officers in the Quartermaster Department or in the United States Dragoons serving in the Sioux Expedition. None of these documents provide direct information on the acquisition of the *GRAY CLOUD*, but a November 3, 1855, letter from Captain P. T. Turnley, Assistant Quartermaster at Fort Pierre on the upper Missouri, to J. D. Radford, the master of the *GRAY CLOUD*, noted that a draft for \$250 was enclosed "being the amt. due you for Services from July 24 till Sept 1st 1855" (Turnley 1855b). This could mean that the Quartermaster Department obtained the *GRAY CLOUD* as early as July 24.

Supplying the posts and troops on the upper Missouri by steamboat was a difficult undertaking. First, the distances were great; it was over 1200 miles from St. Louis to Fort Pierre by river, a trip which could easily take two weeks, and then only when river conditions were advantageous (Pearson and Birchett 1999:3-29). Secondly, the Missouri River presented many hazards to steamboat navigation; it was shallow and rapid and contained numerous sandbars and snags. River levels fluctuated greatly over the year, and larger boats could navigate the lower river only for about 5 months of the year, generally from about March or May to August of September (Hunter 1949:224). Smaller steamers with shallower drafts could run for longer periods of time on the lower Missouri, but even these boats were prevented from traveling during the periods of lowest water.

Only small, shallow draft steamers could travel on the upper Missouri River, or above the area of Council Bluffs, Iowa, near the mouth of the Platte. Steamboat travel on the upper Missouri began with the arrival of the *YELLOW STONE* at Fort Union, Montana Territory, in 1833. But, steamboat activity on the upper river was minimal prior to the discovery of gold in Montana in 1862 and was limited, primarily, to hauling government supplies, carrying a few settlers, and serving the activities of the American Fur Company (Petsche 1974:117).

Further, shallow water, snags and ice essentially closed the upper Missouri to steamboat operations between late November and mid-March (Hunter 1949:224). The short navigation season and the very long trip to the upper river meant that steamboats from St. Louis could make only a few trips per year. Illustrative of the dangers of steamboat travel on the Missouri, is that the *WILLIAM BAIRD*, the sternwheeler serving with the *GRAY CLOUD*, was snagged and lost on the river on April 19, 1858 (Way 1994:487).

The *GRAY CLOUD* and *WILLIAM BAIRD* seem to have been sent up the Missouri very soon after their purchase, possible in late July, assuming that was the date J. D. Radford took command of the *GRAY CLOUD*. This would seem reasonable in light of the short navigation season on the upper river; a season that would end in October or November, and the Army's urgent need to supply the Expedition forces. There is no direct record of this trip, but in September 1855, John D. Daggett of the "Floating Dock Co." in St. Louis, inspected the steamer *WILLIAM BAIRD* at the request of Major D. H. Vinton, Quartermaster at St. Louis (Daggett 1855). Daggett was to examine the *BAIRD* "in reference to injuries to her hull on her late trip" (Daggett 1855). It seems likely that this is a reference to a trip up the Missouri, possibly to Fort Leavenworth or farther up to Fort Pierre, posts which served as headquarters presumably, the *GRAY CLOUD*, had made more than one trip up the river between July and September, but considering the travel time required for such a journey, it is unlikely that more than two trips could have been undertaken during this period.

John Daggett's inspection of the *WILLIAM BAIRD* revealed considerable damage, testament to the often hazardous travel conditions on the Missouri. He noted that the boat was considerably hogged "both bow and stern," meaning the hull sagged down at both ends. In addition, several floor timbers and bottom planks on the hull were broken and one of the rudder blades was gone and water was standing in the hull, suggesting leaks. He thought repairs to the hull would cost \$1200 (Daggett 1855). There is no mention of an inspection of the *GRAY CLOUD* and, assuming it had made the trip up the Missouri with the *BAIRD*, it seems to have returned undamaged. However, the performance of both boats was considered unsatisfactory by Major Vinton, who argued that neither was suitable for operations on the upper Missouri. Writing to an unnamed "Colonel" (probably Lieutenant Colonel Charles Thomas, Acting Quartermaster General in Washington) on September 13, 1855, Major Vinton noted that "Stern wheel boats" in general were unfit "for the navigation of the Upper Missouri" (Vinton 1855a). He was particularly worried about the high winds prevalent on the upper river because "Stern wheel boats become ungovernable when exposed to strong wind on account of the motive power being applied at one extremity."

He went on to state that “The ‘Wm Baird’ is an excellent boat of 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” (Vinton 1855a).

Major Vinton strongly urged that the sternwheeler *WILLIAM BAIRD* be sold and that a new boat be built specifically for use on the Missouri. The major recommended the sale of the sternwheeler even though he was “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” (Vinton 1855a). This seems to suggest that the original purchase of the two steamboats by the Quartermaster Department had been instigated by superiors in Washington.

Despite Major Vinton’s dissatisfaction with the two steamers, he recognized that it was impossible to build a new boat in time to supply the upriver posts before the river became unnavigable. He wrote Washington that as soon as repairs were completed he would send the *WILLIAM BAIRD* upriver to “Major Sibley” to be used to carry corn to Fort Leavenworth, where the 2nd Dragoons were headquartered. This was undoubtedly Major Henry Hopkins Sibley, an officer in the 2nd Dragoon who would rise to Brigadier General in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, serving as commander of Confederate forces in New Mexico. In regard to the *GRAY CLOUD*, the original plan seems to have been to send it upriver to Fort Pierre towing “scows” loaded with supplies. However, Vinton decided that this “would hardly be profitable” and argued that the *GRAY CLOUD* “should be spared from every pound of freight that is not more valuable than the corn so indispensably requisite for the cavalry horses” (Vinton 1855a). Despite his concern over the need for corn as horse fodder, Vinton eventually sent the *GRAY CLOUD* upriver loaded only with a cargo of potatoes and tarpaulins, the latter to be used in “case a new post be established as ordered” (Vinton 1855a). He reasoned that some corn for the horses at Fort Pierre could be obtained locally, plus the potatoes would serve as “anitiscorbutics” for the cavalry dragoons.

Not long after Major Vinton’s September 13 letter, the *GRAY CLOUD* left St. Louis and started up the Missouri. This trip, which turned out to be disastrous for the *GRAY CLOUD*, is documented in a number of records in the Quartermaster Department, Vessel File. The steamer may have departed by September 20, because on that day Vinton wrote Captain P. T. Turnley, Assistant Quartermaster at Fort Pierre, that the *GRAY CLOUD* was being sent with stores for the fort (Turnley 1855c). There would have been urgency in getting the steamer off because it was already late in the season and by November low water and ice

would begin to block the river above Council Bluffs. On October 23, Major Vinton telegraphed the Quartermaster Department in Washington that he had received unconfirmed reports that the *GRAY CLOUD* had been snagged above Council Bluffs (Vinton 1855b). However, two days later the sidewheeler *ST. MARY* arrived in St. Louis bringing word that the *GRAY CLOUD* was “300 miles above Council Bluffs [and] going on well” (Vinton 1855c). This placed the *GRAY CLOUD* between the mouths of the L’Eau Qui Court River (the present-day Niobrara River) and the White Earth River (also called White River), probably less than 200 miles or so below Fort Pierre, at least several days before October 25, the day the *ST. MARY* reported its location in St. Louis. Yet, the *GREY CLOUD* had not reached Fort Pierre by November 1. On that day, Assistant Quartermaster Turnley wrote a letter of instructions to J. D. Radford, “Master U. S. Steamer Gray Cloud between Leau Qui Court & White River” (Turnley 1855a). By this time the river level was probably dropping, plus ice may have begun to form, impeding the progress of Captain Radford and his steamer.

Captain Turnley instructed J. D. Radford to stop the *GRAY CLOUD* at the mouth of the White River (i.e., White Earth River) and take on board the “the Saw Mill and Grist Mill with all the fixtures” which were there and carry them down river to a point about 20 to 25 miles above the mouth of the L’Eau Qui Court River (Turnley 1855a). Radford was to hold his steamer at the point until Major Howe of the 2nd Dragoons arrived. Howe was to select a site for the new post and the sawmill, apparently, was to be used in its construction. After delivering the mills, Captain Radford was to take the *GRAY CLOUD* back down the Missouri to Council Bluffs, pick up a load of corn and return to Fort Pierre, if he (Captain Radford) thought this was possible (Turnley 1855a). Recognizing the types of problems that the *GRAY CLOUD* may be facing on the now-falling river, Assistant Quartermaster Turnley wrote that if it was impossible for the *GRAY CLOUD* to reach the White River or to travel to Council Bluff and return to Fort Pierre, then Radford was to deliver his cargo (apparently the potatoes and tarpaulins) to Major Howe and proceed with his steamer downstream to St. Louis (Turnley 1855a).

The situation changed rapidly, because just two days after issuing these instructions Captain Turnley wrote to the captain of the *GRAY CLOUD* that he was to ignore his previous directives and he was to deliver his cargo to Major Howe and then immediately proceed to St. Louis (Turnley 1855b). These orders came directly from the commander of the Sioux Expedition, General Harney, who no doubt was worried about the lateness of the season and the possibility that the boat would be trapped by ice or seriously damaged. On

November 5, Captain Turnley at Fort Pierre wrote Major Vincent at the Quartermaster Office in St. Louis that the steamer had not yet arrived, but that he had received a letter from Captain Radford of the *GRAY CLOUD* dated October 24 indicating that the boat was at "Tower Island," about 40 miles above the L'Eau Qui Court River (Turnley 1855c). The *GRAY CLOUD* never reached Fort Pierre and Quartermaster officers at the fort and St. Louis lost contact with the steamboat, as well as with Major Howe's unit of 2nd Dragoons which had gone to meet it.

Communications between St. Louis and the upper Missouri posts was slow and by late November Major Vincent still had no word on the *GRAY CLOUD*. Finally, on November 23, he wrote to a civilian in Sioux City, Iowa, a Doctor John K. Cook, asking if he had heard anything about the boat (Vinton 1855d). Major Vincent, obviously worried about the fate of the steamer, stated that he would reimburse the doctor if he thought "it necessary to send out Indian runners to procure intelligence concerning the boat" (Vinton 1855d). Vinton's letter did not reach Doctor Cook until December 13, a full 20 days after it was written. Cook's report confirmed what seem to have been everyone's fears. He reported that the *GRAY CLOUD* was "frozen up near the mouth of the L'Eau Qui Court river some 90 miles above" (Cook 1855). Dr. Cook went on to note that Major Howe and the dragoons had reached the boat and that several of the boat's crew had passed through Sioux City on their way home.

Word of the fate of the *GRAY CLOUD*, apparently, did not reach the Sioux Expedition headquarters at Fort Pierre until sometime in December. On December 17, Captain Turnley wrote St. Louis that the steamer had not been able to reach the fort and he had no word from the captain, but "from the Indians I learn the boat is in the ice near the mouth of Ponca Creek" about 9 miles above the L'Eau Qui Court River. Turnley had not heard from Major Howe, but he presumed he was at the steamer and had taken charge (Turnley 1855d). Recognizing that the *GRAY CLOUD* would be frozen in for some time, General Harney issued Special Order No. 78, directing Captain Turnley to discharge all of the boat's crew except for the captain and a small number of men to look after it (Harney 1855). Captain Turnley, subsequently, contacted Captain Radford on the *GRAY CLOUD* telling him to release all of the crew except for himself, and engineer, the carpenter, and three hands. Turnley sent \$740 to be distributed among the 37 men to be discharged which they would use to get to St. Louis (Turnley 1855d).

Presumably, the men discharged from the *GRAY CLOUD* reached St. Louis, although no record of their journey has been found. The *GRAY CLOUD* did return to St. Louis after the river cleared in the spring of 1856, but when the boat arrived there is unknown. The *GRAY CLOUD* definitely was in St. Louis by June 27, 1856, the day its captain, J. D. Radford, wrote to the Quartermaster Office in St. Louis that the standard daily food ration was not sufficient for men working on steamboats (Radford 1856). Captain Radford said that boat hands had to work hard all day and night during low water and men would not ship on a boat allowing a single ration per person. He said it required one and a half rations to get hands to work, "and they growl at that" (Radford 1856). Major George Hampton Crosman, having replaced Major Vincent as Quartermaster at St. Louis, forwarded Radford's letter to Washington, stating that he agreed with this request for additional rations. What became of Captain Radford's request is unknown, but in his letter to Washington, Major Crosman also noted that the "public Steamer, the *GRAY CLOUD*, [is] now here undergoing repairs" (Crossman 1856a).

Apparently, the *GRAY CLOUD* sustained damage by being frozen in, although the specific nature of these injuries is unknown. On July 1, 1856, Major Crosman reported from St. Louis that the repairs to the *GRAY CLOUD*, which included straightening the keel, were half completed. He went on to note that it was believed that the boat would now draw less water and be more suitable for Quartermaster purposes (Crosman 1856b). Apparently, there was some interest in building a new boat for use on the Missouri, but Major Crosman noted that it was too late in the season to do this and he supported completing the repairs to the *GRAY CLOUD* and sending it back to the upper river. Saltus et al. (2000:45) write that the repairs to the *GRAY CLOUD* cost \$8,000, relying on information contained in a December 5, 1856, report written by Lt. Colonel D. D. Tompkins in New Orleans (Tompkins 1856a). However, a careful reading of that report suggests that the \$8,000 figure may be a reference to the costs involved in making the vessel seaworthy for use in the Gulf of Mexico (see below). It is not known if the *GRAY CLOUD* did go back up the Missouri in the summer of 1856; by that time the military actions against the Sioux were over and this may have been necessary. That fall, however, the *GRAY CLOUD* did leave the Missouri River and steamed down the Mississippi to New Orleans on the way to its next assignment; as a transport off the coast of Florida in support of the Third Seminole War.

The Coast of Florida and the Third Seminole War, 1856–1859

The *GRAY CLOUD* was transferred to New Orleans by order of Major General Thomas S. Jesup, Quartermaster General, at the request of General Harney who was then commanding the forces of the Sioux Expedition (Crosman 1856c). The Third Seminole War was the last outbreak of overt hostilities in a conflict between the American government and the Seminole Indians of south Florida that had been going on for 40 years. The start of the Third Seminole War as attributed to an attack on an American survey party under the command of Lieutenant George Lucas Hartsuff of the Topographical Engineers on December 7, 1855, in southwestern Florida (Covington 1966). The Seminole had been concerned for some time about encroachment of survey and scouting parties into their assigned lands in southwestern Florida. In the fall of 1855, Seminole leaders decided to take an offensive position including the burning of several homesteads and army outposts located in the Big Cypress area. Lieutenant Hartsuff's party found the results of these depredations before they were attacked. Two of the survey party's men were killed and 4 wounded before the group made it back to safety at Fort Myers on the west Florida coast (Langford 2000).

Fort Myers became the base of operations for the military actions against the Seminoles. Having learned from previous wars with the Seminole, the American army adopted a strategy of constant patrols against the Indians, destroying homes and fields and capturing as many individuals as possible. In addition, they offered substantial bounties to Indians who were willing to surrender and be transported west to Seminole lands in what is present-day Oklahoma. The *GRAY CLOUD* was one of the steamers engaged in transporting troops and supplies to Fort Myers.

The *GRAY CLOUD*, apparently, left St. Louis in late November or early December because by December 5 the boat had arrived at New Orleans where it was to "be altered and prepared for service off [the] coast of Florida" (Tompkins 1856a). Having been built for operations on inland rivers, the *GRAY CLOUD* was not well suited for working on the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Lieutenant Colonel D. D. Tompkins, Deputy Quartermaster in New Orleans, telegraphed the following to Washington on the arrival of the steamer:

"The U. S. Steamer '*GRAY CLOUD*' has arrived. Major Crosman Q. M. writes that she is sent by your order to be altered and prepared for service off coast to Florida, and supposes I have received instructions on the subject. None have been received. Shall I have her put in condition for service off coast of Florida? Her master says the estimate made in St. Louis for her repairs was eight thousand dollars. Reply by telegraph [Tompkins 1856a]."

Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins, obviously, had received no instructions as to what to do with the steamer. In his reference to the estimate of \$8,000 for repairs, it is unclear if this refers to the repairs made to ice damage in St. Louis or if it is what the Quartermaster officers in St. Louis thought it would cost to prepare the boat for sea service off Florida. The former seems most likely; however, this was a substantial cost, suggesting that a considerable amount of damage had resulted from the steamer's icing in on the upper Missouri.

Even though Colonel Tompkins had not received any instructions concerning the *GRAY CLOUD* by early December, the military personnel in Florida knew the boat was coming there. On November 24, 1856, the same day that Assistant Quartermaster Crosman in St. Louis wrote to Colonel Tompkins, Francis N. Page, Assistant Adjutant General, at "Head Qtrs. Dept of Florida, Fort Brooke," also, wrote Tompkins about the *GRAY CLOUD*. Page noted that the Commanding General of the Department had changed his mind about having the guards removed from the *GRAY CLOUD*. He now wanted the steamer sent over "without cutting the guards off, and that spawnings be put on her" (Page 1856). The guards, as noted earlier, were the extensions of the main deck beyond the sides of the hull. The removal of these features would seem reasonable because they could be broken or damaged by the seas typically found in the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The word "spawnings" probably should be "spawnings" or, more correctly, "sponsings." The term sponson or sponsings on a steamboat is another word for guards, although, more specifically it refers to the timbers projecting beyond the hull that support the guards. In naval usage, the term refers to a platform extending beyond the hull of a ship designed specifically as a gun platform. It would seem that the request to put "spawnings" on the *GRAY CLOUD* was a request to strengthen the guards with additional sponson timbers, possibly, making them strong enough to support a gun or guns.

At New Orleans, Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins, apparently having received instructions on how to proceed, initiated the alterations to the *GRAY CLOUD*, but only after some delay. On December 17, 1856, he telegraphed Washington that:

"... The steamer *GRAY CLOUD* can not be put on dry dock for twenty days. Fifteen or eighteen days thereafter will be required to complete her alterations and repairs. Shall I under those circumstances have them done [Tompkins 1856b]?"

Exactly what changes were made to the *GRAY CLOUD* are unreported. Presumably, the guards or sponsons were strengthened as had been requested, but even more extensive alterations seem to have been undertaken. This is revealed in a "Surveyor's Certificate of Admeasurements" issued when the steamer was surveyed and remeasured in New Orleans on April 2, 1859, after the steamer's service in the Third Seminole War. The survey was conducted on April 2, and the admeasurements from states "said vessel... has one deck, no masts, pink stern, has upper cabin and plain head; that she is in length of one hundred and seventy seven ft, in breadth twenty seven feet four inches and in depth average six feet and that she measures two hundred seventy five and nineteen ninety-fifths parts of a ton" (BMIN 1859a). Also noted is "forwards hatch 6.6, main hatch 5.6," obviously a reference to the depth of hull at each (BMIN 1859a). A "pink" stern refers to a rounded or somewhat pointed stern, meaning that the square stern of the *GRAY CLOUD* had been significantly altered. Likely, a single rudder would have been installed at this time, removing the multiple rudders that so many inland steamers used. The pink stern and the single rudder both would have been adaptable for working in the Gulf of Mexico. The *GRAY CLOUD* was also lengthened from 170 ft at her first enrollment in 1854 to 177 ft. probably as a result of the conversion from a transom to a pink stern.

Alterations complete, the *GRAY CLOUD* departed for the west coast of Florida; however, neither the date of departure nor many details of the steamers service in the Third Seminole War are known. The *GRAY CLOUD* was operating off Florida in the summer and fall of 1857 as revealed in a disability claim made by a civilian pilot or steersman in 1889, over thirty years after the war (Farlis n. d.) In August 1889, James W. Bain, Clerk of Court of Lee County, Florida, wrote the Secretary of War on behalf of Rofuna Farlis, who claimed that he had served as pilot on the *GRAY CLOUD* in 1857 when he was "seriously wounded by the discharge of a piece of ordnance" and that he deserved a pension (Farlis n. d.). The various documents in the Rofuna Farlis file (in which he is referred to variously as Rufina Farlis, Ruffino Fales, Rofino Farlis, Raffino Felly and Rufins Fales) reveal that he did, in fact, serve as a "steersman" on the *GRAY CLOUD* from August 17, 1857, to his discharge on October 14, 1857, for which he was paid \$40 per month (Farlis n. d.). Quartermaster records indicated that Farlis was a civilian employee and there was no evidence that he had been injured while aboard the steamer. The Farlis file does provide the name of the *GRAY CLOUD'S* captain, James Duke, and the reference to the exploding ordnance reveals that the steamer was armed.

The *GRAY CLOUD* was likely in service off Florida in November 1857 when Captain John Parkhill and 110 men ascended the Turner River and attacked the last hiding place of the Seminole. Parkhill was killed, but this action represented the largest engagement in the entire war and, essentially, marked its end. Not long afterwards, the Seminole leader, Billy Bowlegs, surrendered, bringing most hostilities to a halt (Langford 2000).

By the end of 1857, attacks by American troops and the bounties paid to those Indians who would surrender had seriously reduced the Seminole population in Florida. The war was over, but the first few months of 1858 were spent in making preparations for sending captured and surrendered Seminoles west. For surrendering and agreeing to move west, Billie Bowlegs was paid \$5,000, plus he received \$2,500 for his cattle. Each of his warriors who surrendered received \$1,000 and each woman and child \$100 (Langford 2000). The departure of the steamer *GRAY CLOUD* from Egmont Key for New Orleans on May 7, 1858, in effect, brought the Third Seminole War to an end. On board the *GRAY CLOUD* were 38 Seminole warriors and 85 woman and children who had surrendered, plus an additional 41 Seminole who had refused to surrender and had been captured and an Indian guide named Polly (Langford 2000). This number represented almost one-half of the entire Seminole population that survived in Florida after two years of war.

The steamer *GRAY CLOUD*, with its cargo of surrendered and captured Seminoles, arrived in New Orleans by May 25, 1858, as revealed in a letter of that date from Captain A. Montgomery of the Quartermaster Office in that city to "Acting Major" J. McKinstry, Assistant Quartermaster at Fort Brooke, Florida. Captain Montgomery wrote that he had discovered that the boilers of the *GRAY CLOUD* were leaking and it was necessary to have them repaired "before sending her to sea again" (Montgomery 1858). Montgomery was extremely upset with the captain of the *GRAY CLOUD* for not knowing about the leaking boilers, even though the engineers on board reported the problem had been going on for six weeks. Further, the captain of the *GRAY CLOUD* refused to obey Captain Montgomery's instructions to remain aboard the vessel and oversee the repair of the boilers. Montgomery wrote that if he had charge of the *GRAY CLOUD*, he would have discharged the captain immediately (Montgomery 1858). It is not known if this captain was James Dike, who had been master of the *GRAY CLOUD* in 1857).

In his letter, Captain Montgomery noted that the *GRAY CLOUD* was leaving for Tampa on the west coast of Florida. Military action in the Third Seminole war had ended by this time and it is assumed the steamer was returning to Florida with supplies for troops still

stationed there or to remove troops and material no longer needed. The four-year career of the *GRAY CLOUD* as a United States Quartermaster steamer was coming to an end. The following year, the steamer was sold in New Orleans to private owners.

Private Service, Gulf Coast and Mobile to New Orleans Trade, 1859–1861

On April 5, 1859, Henry E. Spearing of New Orleans, as sole owner, enrolled the *GRAY CLOUD* in that city (BMIN 1859b). Spearing had purchased the steamer from the United States Government, probably at auction, although records of that sale have not been located. This enrollment incorporates the new dimensions of the steamer resulting from the survey and remeasurement that was conducted on April 2 (see above). These are: length= 177ft; breadth=27ft, 4 in; depth=6ft; burden=275 19/95 tons. The vessel is described as having a pink stern, plain head and upper cabin (Work Projects Administration [hereinafter cited WPA] 1942:5:108). Presumably, the Surveyors Certificate of Admeasurements was issued in response to Spearing's purchase of the Vessel. The April 5 enrollment lists a W. C. Flanders as the *GRAY CLOUD'S* master.

The new owner of the *GRAY CLOUD*, Henry Spearing, seems to have been heavily involved in what was known as the "coasting" trade, the trade carried out by steam and sailing vessels between the country's coastal ports. Vessel enrollment and registration documents for New Orleans show that Spearing held ownership in several vessels during the 1830s, 40s, and 50s; all of which appear to have been involved in coastal trading. A Henry Spearing is shown as sole owner of the 92-ft schooner *MARY & FRANCES* in a registration issued in New Orleans on acquired the *GRAY CLOUD* in 1859. The fact that the *MARY & FRANCIS* was issued a registration rather than an enrollment indicates that the schooner was involved in trade with foreign ports or with distant custom districts. Vessels received enrollment documents if they traded within a custom district or only with adjacent districts. It is most likely that Spearing used the *MARY & FRANCES* in the coast wide trade along the Gulf Coast and, possibly, to trade with ports on the Atlantic coast. The registration would have been necessary if the *MARY & FRANCIS* traveled to ports in Texas, at that time a foreign country.

The *MARY & FRANCIS* seems to have been the first vessel owned by Henry Spearing and, with the exception of the *GRAY CLOUD*, all of the vessels he was involved with after that date were sailing ships of similar size, presumably used in the coast wide trade. Spearing is

listed in an April 25, 1834. Registration as the sole owner of the 66-ft schooner *SABINE* which, considering the name, very well may have been used in the trade with Texas (WPA 1942:3:188). Later vessels include the 61-ft schooner *HOME* (sole owner, 1848), the 65-ft schooner *JANE ELIZABETH* (sole owner, 1849), the 76-ft brig *JOHN WILLIAMS* (sole owner, 1851), the 92-ft brig *CIMBRUS* (part owner, 1853), the 196-ft bark *FANNY EALER* (part owner, 1856), and the 110-ft schooner *H. E. SPEARING* (part owner, 1857) (WPA 1942). The brigs and bark, almost certainly, were used in long distance trade to Atlantic coast ports and, possibly, overseas foreign ports. The large schooner *H. E. SPEARING*, also, seems to have been engaged in long-distance coasting trade as indicated by the fact that among her owners were residents of Boston and Salem, Massachusetts (WPA 1942:5:115). An Edward Spearing is shown as owner of the 98-ft schooner *HENRY HOOTON* in a February 7, 1863, New Orleans enrollment. If this is Henry E. Spearing, this is the last time he appears in vessel documents for the city. Henry Spearing's shipping business would have been completely shut down by the Federal blockade during the Civil War and, as happened to many other Southern ship owners, he was probably unable to reestablish his business after the war.

The *GRAY CLOUD* seems to have been the only steamboat that Henry E. Spearing was involved with as an owner. Because the steamer had been previously altered to accommodate conditions in the Gulf of Mexico, it is likely that Spearing placed the steamer in the Gulf coasting trade; that he was already thoroughly familiar with. In this commerce, the *GRAY CLOUD* would have traveled between New Orleans and other principal ports like Mobile, Pensacola, and Galveston, as well the many smaller ports along the Gulf coast, carrying coastal produce, merchandise and passengers (see Pearson and Simmons 1995 for a discussion of the steamer coasting trade out of New Orleans).

The master of the *GRAY CLOUD*, W. C. Flanders, was one William C. Flanders who, like Henry Spearing, had been involved with ships and shipping out of New Orleans for many years. William Flanders' involvement was primarily as a boat captain, rather than as an owner, but, like Spearing, Flanders' experience was principally with vessels involved in the coasting trade. An individual named "W. Flanders" appears as the master of the small, 34-ft schooner *VAN BUREN* in a New Orleans enrollment document dated January 7, 1836 (WPA 1942:3:185). This is believed to be William C. Flanders and, because the *VAN BUREN* was enrolled, rather than registered, it probably confined its activities to Gulf coast ports east of New Orleans. Later, William Flanders (listed as William Flanders, William C. Flanders or W. C. Flanders) appears as master of the 59-ft schooner *PEARL* (1836), the 74-ft

schooner *GENEVA* (1838–1841) and the 68–ft schooner *GERTRUDE* (1846–1847), and master of the 98–ft Schooner *SEA* (1846–1847) (WPA 1942:4:112,115,260). After 1850, Flanders seems to have worked only on steamboats. In that year he served as captain of the *BELLE OF RED RIVER*, a typical inland river steamboat; in 1851 he was captain of the 112–ft steamer *LIBERTY* and in 1857 and 1858 the 144–ft steamer *JASPER* (WPA 1942:5:30,129,156). Descriptions of these two steamers indicate that both were designed for work in open water, coastal or marine environments, not on inland rivers. The *LIBERTY* had formerly been known as the *DE ROSSET* and, like the *GRAY CLOUD*, had been a Quartermaster Department vessel from 1847 to 1851, serving in the Mexican War (Pearson et al. n. d.) The *DE ROSSET* was one of the early iron–hulled steamboats to operate in the United States. Assembled in Baltimore in 1838–1839 of prefabricated iron plates manufactured by the famous John Laird Company of Birkenhead, England, the *DE ROSSET* served on the Savannah River and coast of Georgia before its purchase by the Quartermaster Department for use as a transport in the Mexican War (Pearson et al. n. d.). By the time William Flanders took over command of the *GRAY CLOUD* in 1859, he had over 20 years of experience on steam and sailing ships working in the coasting trade. His name does not appear in New Orleans vessel documents after 1859 and the *GRAY CLOUD* may have been his last command.

On June 2, 1859, just two months after he acquired the *GRAY CLOUD*, Henry Spearing, still as the only owner, received a registration document for his steamer at New Orleans (WPA 1942:5:108). The shift from an enrollment to a registration suggests that Spearing intended to place the *GRAY CLOUD* in foreign or long–distance coast wide trade. John J. Woodfine’s name appears in the records of vessels enrolled or registered in New Orleans for the period 1804–1870.

Henry Spearing sold the *GRAY CLOUD* early in the following year. On February 7, 1860, the *GRAY CLOUD* was enrolled at the Port of Mobile with F. James and M. Sternes (or Stevens) as the new owners, and G. A. Mapey (Malpey or Mypey ?) as master. James owned a 2/3 interest in the boat and Sternes a 1/3 interest (BMIN 1860). Nothing is known about these various individuals, but it is presumed that they employed the *GRAY*

CLOUD in the coasting trade, at least sometimes traveling between Mobil and New Orleans. This is evidenced in the New Orleans newspaper the *PRICE CURRENT* which lists the *GRAY CLOUD* arriving several times at the Lake Pontchartrain terminus of the Pontchartrain Railroad from Mobile in February 1860. However, the outbreak of the Civil War the following year ended the *GRAY CLOUD’S* commercial activities.

Confederate Service on the Gulf Coast, 1861–1862

On January 29, 1861 the secession convention sitting in Baton Rouge severed Louisiana's ties with the United States, declaring the state a "free" and "independent power" (Winters 1963:3). Secession did not have immediate effects on the *GRAY CLOUD* and other coasting steamers operating out of New Orleans, but, eventually, their activities would be curtailed and, ultimately, ended by the events of the Civil War. Subsequent to his state's secession from the Union, Governor Thomas Overton Moore began to take steps to insure Louisiana's military readiness. The United States mint in New Orleans was seized, with nearly \$500,000 in gold, and several Federal military installations in the state were taken over. In addition, Governor Moore seized several vessels in and around New Orleans during the spring and summer of 1861. Among these were coastal steamers such as the *ARROW*, *PAMLICO*, *CREOLE*, and *OREGON*, all of which seem to have been seized by the state in early July (Pearson and Saltus 1996:110–111). Almost immediately after their seizure by the state of Louisiana, most of these boats were turned over to Confederate military authorities in New Orleans and taken into the Confederate Navy. Several of these vessels were converted into gunboats, while others seem to have been used as transport ships in the Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne and Mississippi Sound area.

In March 1861, Major General David Twiggs, formerly a general in the United States Army, was assigned to New Orleans as Confederate commander for the District of Louisiana. His naval counterpart was former United States Navy Captain, George H. Hollins. Hollins was appointed to command Confederate naval forces on the Mississippi River and along the coast of Louisiana (Groene 1985:27). These men, and the newly organized Confederate government, recognized early on that a defensive naval force was going to be a necessity, particularly after the start of the Federal blockade off the Louisiana coast in May 1861. To achieve the necessary naval force, a number of steamers and sailing vessels were chartered, leased or seized and fitted out at shipyards in New Orleans and Algiers. Among these boats were the several turned over by the state of Louisiana. It is believed that the *GRAY CLOUD* (or "*GREY CLOUD*" as it is consistently referred to in Confederate Records) was among those steamers seized by the state and turned over to Confederate authorities in New Orleans, however, no specific documentation of the event has been found. Available records do reveal that the *GRAY CLOUD* served as Confederate transport carrying troops and supplies in the Lake Pontchartrain/Mississippi Sound area. For example, on June 21, 1861, the Baton Rouge newspaper, *THE DAILY ADVOCATE*, reported on the happenings in Mississippi Sound, noting that "The steamer Grey Cloud was at the Wharf at Mississippi

City, not having taken any troops from thence in any direction.” By late June, then, the *GRAY CLOUD* seems to have been moving troops, although it is not known if the steamer was under contract or had been acquired by the Confederate or State Government. There is no direct evidence that the *GRAY CLOUD* was ever armed by the Confederates, although the vessel is sometimes referred to as a “gunboat” in various records.

General Twiggs decided that Ship Island, located at the western end of Mississippi Sound near the eastern entrance to Lake Pontchartrain, was vital to maintaining communication along the coast and to protecting the rear of New Orleans. In the first week of July he ordered that the island be fortified and manned. This was accomplished on July 6 under the command of Captain Edward Higgins (Groene 1985:27). On July 9, the Union blockading ship, the 6-gun, USS *MASSACHUSETTS* was patrolling off of Ship Island and fired 15 rounds at the recently established Confederate fortifications on the island (ORA 1889:709). The *MASSACHUSETTS* received fire and withdrew in the afternoon, but later sighted two steamers approaching the island. These were the *GRAY CLOUD* and one of the recently armed lake steamers, the *OREGON*, with ordnance and supplies for the men on the island. Captain Melancton Smith of the *MASSACHUSETTS* returned close enough to fire one shot from his pivot gun, but this did no harm (ORN 1917:691).

This is the first mention of the *GRAY CLOUD* in Confederate service. Groene (1985:27) implies that the *GRAY CLOUD* had carried the first contingent of troops to Ship Island on July 6. However, this is not stated in the official report made by Captain Higgins, plus the New Orleans newspaper, the *NEW ORLEANS DELTA*, reported on July 17 that the initial force of troops (three companies of the Fourth Regiment, Louisiana Volunteers) and four heavy guns were taken to Ship Island aboard the armed and armored steamers *OREGON* and *SWAIN*. The newspaper goes on to state that Captain Higgins then left for New Orleans where he loaded the *OREGON* and *GRAY CLOUD* and returned to Ship Island, carrying “guns, ammunition, etc.” (New Orleans Delta, July 17, 1861).

The *GRAY CLOUD* disappears from official records until September 1861. It is presumed that the boat was involved in moving troops and material to various locations around Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi Sound as the Confederates made efforts to counter Union activity in the area. On September 15–16, 1861, the *GRAY CLOUD* was among those steamers used to evacuate Ship Island (ORA 1889:740–741). The Confederate authorities had found that holding the island was untenable in the face of increasing Union naval strength. Colonel J. K. Duncan was in charge of the evacuation. In his report to

Lieutenant J. G. Devereux, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General in New Orleans, Colonel Duncan, stated:

“On the afternoon of the 13th steamer Oregon was dispatched to Lake Borgne for the steamer Grey Cloud to assist in the operation. The Oregon only returned to the Pontchartrain railroad landing about 12 o’clock on the 14th, when Lieutenant Bridges, Louisiana regiment of artillery, and myself left on her for Ship Island, where we arrived about 1 o’clock that night. I had previously sent Captain Bond, Louisiana artillery, on the steamer Creole, with directions to seize her on her arrival at Ocean Springs, so as not to attract unnecessary attention here. The steamer A. G. Brown was seized under department authority about 11 o’clock on the 14th, and Lieutenant Cammack, Louisiana artillery, placed on board of her to conduct her to Ship Island. With these four boats and the force on the island, the operations were commenced and finally completed on the evening of the 16th about sundown... The Grey Cloud, with all of the guns and carriages on board, was directed to proceed with the same to New Orleans, excepting the 8-inch and 9-inch shell guns, which the captain was directed to leave at Port [Fort ?] Pike, it being left optional whether the boat should stop en route or return from the city for the purpose... After the performance of the foregoing duties the captains of the Oregon, Grey Cloud, and Arrow were ordered to report to the general commanding for further orders [ORA 1889:740].”

From Colonel Duncan’s report it appears that the *GRAY CLOUD* was operating somewhere on Lake Borgne when the decision to evacuate Ship Island was made. The steamer may have been at or in the vicinity of Fort Macomb, located on Chef Menteur Pass, the waterway connecting Lake Pontchartrain with Lake Borgne. Fort Pike, where the Gray Cloud was to leave the 8- and 9-inch shell guns, was located at the western end of the Rigolets, the pass leading into Lake Pontchartrain from Mississippi Sound and the Gulf of Mexico.

Late in 1861, the elderly General Twiggs was replaced in New Orleans by General Mansfield Lovell. How either one of these commanders used the *GRAY CLOUD* in the period after the evacuation of Ship Island is unknown. Federal forces occupied Ship Island as soon as the Confederates departed and the fortifications on the island, plus the blockading vessels, made the movement of southern military and commercial ships in Mississippi Sound increasingly difficult. On the afternoon of December 11, 1861, Captain Smith of the USS *MASSACHUSETTS* engaged several of the “Lake” gunboats near Ship Island. He reported:

“... The gunboats *OREGON* and *PAMLICO*, from the westward, and the *GRAY CLOUD* and *Florida*, from the eastward, attempted to make a connection, but all four were turned back by the *MASSACHUSETTS* and *NEW LONDON* without communicating. A few shots were exchanged, and one from the *NEW LONDON* was thought to have struck the stern of the *OREGON*... since the skirmish referred to, the Confederate gunboats have disappeared... [ORN 1903:28].”

Captain Smith’s report implies that the *GRAY CLOUD* was a “gunboat” even though there is no evidence that the boat was ever armed. The log of the *MASSACHUSETTS* noted that after the engagement the *FLORIDA* turned toward Mobile while the “*GREY CLOUD* ran into Biloxi” (ORN 1917:692).

During the early months of 1862, the Union Navy and Army were preparing for an assault on New Orleans, knowing that capture of the city would give them control of a major portion of the Mississippi River. Federal military activity in the Mississippi Sound area increased in advance of the planned move up the Mississippi. On January 2, 1862, Lieutenant Thomas McKean Buchanan, captain of the USS *HENRY LEWIS*, led a force that captured the gulf coast city of Biloxi (ORN 1903:33). The other two ships in the attacking force were the *WATER WITCH* and the *NEW LONDON*. In his report of the engagement, Captain Buchanan makes no mention of the *GRAY CLOUD*, suggesting that the steamer was not in Biloxi. However, Buchanan did note that his ship, the *HENRY LEWIS*, was piloted by Acting Master George Wiggin (ORN 1903:33). Buchanan and Wiggin would soon come to be closely associated with the *GRAY CLOUD*, both serving as its captain.

On March 25, 1862, Union transports began to arrive at Ship Island to discharge troops under the command of General Benjamin F. Butler. These forces were preparing for the advance against New Orleans. During this period, no mention of the *GRAY CLOUD* appears in official records. The movements of the steamer would have been restricted by the Union forces in the area and, possibly, the vessel was bottled up in one of the gulf ports or in Lake Pontchartrain. When troops in General Butler’s command landed at Biloxi and again occupied Union vessels involved in the landing at Biloxi, the *NEW LONDON* and *J. P. JACKSON*, engaged several Confederate gunboats near Pass Christian (Groene 1985:32). There are discrepancies in the reports as to the identity of the rebel boats reportedly involved. Various official accounts name the *OREGON*, *CARONDELET*,

PAMLICO, and *ARROW* and it is possible that all four were there, despite most accounts naming only three (Pearson and Saltus 1996:116). Interestingly, an individual named Tom Hall many years later provided an account of the action, stating that he had been an eyewitness (Hall 1896:208). Hall stated that four Confederate vessels were there, the *BIENVILLE*, *CARONDELET*, *WHITE CLOUD* and *ARROW*. No vessel named *WHITE CLOUD* was operating in the area and it seems likely that Hall has confused the name with *GRAY CLOUD*. This is somewhat supported by the fact that Tom Hall specifically states that the *WHITE CLOUD* was a western river steamer, while the other boats were fitted with low-pressure, walking beam engines. Tom Hall's description of the engagement and his identification of the Federal vessels involved are so inaccurate as to make his story questionable (Pearson and Saltus 1996:116). However, the *GRAY CLOUD* (i.e., possibly Hall's White Cloud) certainly was a western river steamer and Hall seems to have recognized that fact even if he misnamed the steamer and confused or twisted the facts about the boat's involvement in this particular affair. If Hall is correct, the *GRAY CLOUD* would have still been involved in Confederate activity in the area in early April.

New Orleans fell to Federal forces command by Admiral David Farragut on April 25, 1862. On the days prior to this, General Lovell, Confederate Commander in the city, used the "Lake" gunboats and transports to transfer men and material from New Orleans to various locations on the north Shore of Lake Pontchartrain. He, also, employed these vessels to evacuate several of the fortifications around the city, including Fort Macomb and Fort Pike. It is known that several of the gunboats, including the *PAMLICO*, *ARROW*, *BIENVILLE* and *OREGON*, were destroyed after they completed this transfer. No mention of the *GRAY CLOUD* appears in official records recording the evacuation of New Orleans and it is unknown where the boat was during this time, nor if it was still in Confederate Hands, although it is suspected that it was. It is known that by mid-July the *GRAY CLOUD* had been taken by the United States and was being used in actions against Confederate forces on the coast of Mississippi.

United States Army Gunboat Service, 1862

Information on the events surrounding the Federal capture or acquisition of the *GRAY CLOUD* has not been found. The first specific mention of the steamer as a Union vessel is contained in the log of the USS *POTOMAC*, which notes for July 17 and 18, 1862:

"July 17.-From 4 to 8 a.m.; Sent a boat expedition with steamer *GREY CLOUD* of 28

marines, 15 men, and 2 officers, with two days' provisions. The expedition destined to act with the *NEW LONDON* at Pascagoula and vicinity.

July 18.—The steamer *GREY CLOUD* returned from Pascagoula with our officers and men. Eight men wounded by the enemy [ORN 1917:703].”

Therefore, sometime between early April and mid-July 1862, the *GRAY CLOUD* was acquired by the Union. Groene (1985:36) states that the steamer was captured in July near Biloxi, but he provides no evidence for this information. Silverstone (1989:970) writes that the *GRAY CLOUD* was “commandeered for the Army at New Orleans, May 1862,” while the *DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN NAVAL FIGHTING SHIPS* reports that “After the capture of New Orleans in the spring of 1862, she [i.e., Gray Cloud] was commandeered by General B. F. Butler and fitted out for river service” (Naval History Division 1968:655). General Butler had been placed in command of Army forces in New Orleans after the city’s capture and he did assemble a group of steamers for operations on Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi Sound. Very little was recorded about General Butler’s “flotilla,” but it is likely that the *GRAY CLOUD* was one of these vessels. If so, it seems that Butler acquired the *GRAY CLOUD* before May 20, 1862, because on that date he wrote to Gideon Welles, United States Secretary of the Navy, the following:

“Acting master George Wiggin is now unattached. I have need of a competent and skillful seaman, acquainted with these waters, to take charge of my flotilla of boats on the lake and between this port and Mobile. I desire much that Mr. Wiggin should be ordered to report to me for that purpose if not inconsistent with the interests of public service... [ORN 1904:504].”

George Wiggin soon would become captain of the *GRAY CLOUD*, although there is no evidence as to when he joined the lake flotilla, nor which ship he was originally assigned to.

Not long after its mid-July sortie up the Pascagoula River on the coast of Mississippi, the *GRAY CLOUD* was back at New Orleans, preparing for an expedition against several locations on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. By this time the *GRAY CLOUD* was armed and can certainly be considered a true gunboat. The expedition was a joint undertaking of the army and Navy and detailed account of the event was provided by Major Frank H. Peck, Twelfth Connecticut Infantry, and commander of the force. Peck Notes:

“On the evening of July 25, with five companies of the Twelfth Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers and a section of Capt. P. E. Holcomb’s Second Vermont Battery, I embarked on board the boat Gray Cloud commanded by Lieutenant Buchanan, U. S. Navy. We left the wharf about midnight and arrived at Pass Manchac soon after daylight on the morning of the 26th [ORA 1886:124].”

The captain of the *GRAY CLOUD* was Lieutenant Thomas M. Buchanan, the same man who had captured Biloxi in early January. No report of the expedition by Lieutenant Buchanan appears in the *OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE NAVIES*, if he ever made one. At this time, the *GRAY CLOUD* and other boats in the lake flotilla were under the command of the Army and Buchanan may not have been required to write a report, leaving that task to Major Peck, commander of the expedition.

At the bridge at Pass Manchac, Captain Holcomb fired with his “Sawyer gun.” Troops from the *GRAY CLOUD* landed and burned the bridge there. Two days later, the *GRAY CLOUD* ascended the Tchefuncte River and on reaching Mandeville the boat was fired on by a “guerrilla picket.” Major Peck states that at this point “We responded with a shot from one of the 32-pounders of the boat” (ORA 1886:124). These are the first references to the types of armament on the *GRAY CLOUD*. Peck’s last statement seems to indicate that there were at least two 32-pounders on the gunboat and an illustration of the *GRAY CLOUD* made after it was renamed *KINSMAN* shows two guns; one at the bow and one at the stern. Saltus et al. (2000:47) suggest that the Sawyer gun referred to by Major Peck was part of the *GRAY CLOUD’S* armament. However, Peck specifically distinguishes between the “boat’s” guns and those belonging to Captain Holcomb’s second Vermont Battery here and elsewhere in his report shore and Major Peck notes that “Captain Holcomb almost instantly sent a charge of canister after them, and Lieutenant Buchanan brought his 32-pounders to bear with terrible effect” (ORA 1886:125). Captain Holcomb, also, fired some shells far back into the woods with his “20-pounder Parrott” (ORA 1886:125).

Major Peck’s various statements all suggest that the *GRAY CLOUD* was armed only with 32-pounders, at least two of them, while the Second Vermont Battery had placed on board at least a 20-pounder Parrott and a Sawyer gun, both of which were rifled artillery pieces designed to be mounted on wheeled carriages for field use. This last gun was a cast-steel rifled cannon developed by Sylvanus Sawyer in the 1850s. Firing a 3.75-in-diameter, lead-

coated shell, the Sawyers were among the first rifled cannon purchased by the U. S. Military, although few actually entered service (Coggins 1983:80). The 20-pounder Parrot was a popular rifled field artillery piece that fired a 3-in-diameter shell a distance of 1900 yards (Coggins 1983:77). The “32-pounders” presumed to constitute the armament of the *GRAY CLOUD* may have been smooth-bore naval cannon with a bore diameter of 6.4 in (Ripley 1984:367). These were 3600 to 7200 pounds. Thirty-two pounders were too heavy to be used as field pieces and were employed as siege, garrison and naval weapons.

Leaving the Tchefuncte River, the *GRAY CLOUD* proceeded eastward to the Pearl River and then on to Pass Christian and Bay St. Louis on the Mississippi gulf coast. The gunboat then returned to Lake Pontchartrain, revisiting the Tchefuncte River before returning to New Orleans (ORA 1886:125).

The *GRAY CLOUD* remained in service on Lake Pontchartrain and in Mississippi Sound during the summer of 1862, although its activities are minimally reported. The log of the USS *RICHMOND* noted that the “steamer Grey Cloud” arrived at Ship Island from New Orleans on August 14, 1862, carrying prisoners to be confined on the island (ORN 1905:753). The *GRAY CLOUD* is reported to have brought mail to Ship Island from New Orleans on August 20 and again on September 6 (ORN 1905:753–754).

The United States Gunboat USS Kinsman or
USS Colonel Kinsman, 1862–1863

The *GRAY CLOUD* largely disappears from official records until late October 1862. On October 25, Thomas McKean Buchanan, now a Lieutenant Commander and captain of the gunboat *CALHOUN*, was ordered to leave Lake Pontchartrain with a small flotilla of gunboats and take them to Brashear City (present-day Morgan City) on the lower Atchafalaya River at Berwick Bay. General Butler had ordered Buchanan’s gunboats to the Atchafalaya region principally to prevent the escape of Confederate General Alfred Mouton’s army. Buchanan’s fleet was supposed to consist of three vessels’ the *CALHOUN*, plus the gunboats *KINSMAN* and *DIANA*. Unfortunately, the *KINSMAN* broke down at Fort Pike and the *DIANA* had to be left behind because it had no crew (ORN 1905:326). The *KINSMAN* broke down at Fort Pike and the *DIANA* had to be left behind because it had no crew (ORN 1905:326). The *KINSMAN* was the former *GRAY CLOUD*.

No record has been found that specifies when the *GRAY CLOUD'S* name was changed, nor who it was named after. The official name originally seems to have been "Colonel Kinsman," but documents (including official Union reports and vessel rosters) use *COLONEL KINSMAN* and *KINSMAN* fairly indiscriminately. After January 1, 1863, when the vessel was transferred from Army to Navy command, the name may have officially been changed from *COLONEL KINSMAN* to just *KINSMAN* (ORN 1921:122), but in reporting its sinking in February 1863 Admiral Farragut referred to it as the U. S. S. *COLONEL KINSMAN*. The gunboat was certainly still called *GRAY CLOUD* in July when it carried Major Peck's forces to the north shore and still had that name as late as September 6, if the log of the *USS RICHMOND* is accurate. Frederick Way (1994:197) states that the steamer was renamed *KINSMAN* on September 30, when the United States Quartermaster Department turned the vessel over to the Navy. The date given by Way might be correct, but the *GRAY CLOUD* was attached to the United States Army, not the Quartermaster Department (Gibson and Gibson 1995). Also, the *KINSMAN* was not transferred to the Navy until January 1, 1863 (Naval History Division 1968:656); however the name changed may very well have occurred in late September or early October 1862 (Silverstone 1989:97). Even before its transfer to the Navy, the *KINSMAN* is listed as part of the West Gulf blockading Squadron.

While no records have been found that specifically state who the *KINSMAN* was named after, it is possible that the person was Lieutenant Colonel J. Burnham Kinsman. J. B. Kinsman seems to have been a favorite of Major General Benjamin Butler. In June 1862, General Butler wrote to Edward Stanton, the Secretary of War, stating that Kinsman had been serving on his staff as a "volunteer aide without pay" and praising him for helping in the capture of property worth over \$40,000 (ORA 1886:466-467). What this property was is unreported, but it is tantalizing to think that it may have been the *GRAY CLOUD*, a steamer worth about that much money. J. B. Kinsman seems to have held the rank of Lieutenant when Butler wrote in June, but by the end of the month he was a Major and before November he was a Lieutenant Colonel and Aide de Camp to General Butler in New Orleans. It appears that J. B. Kinsman was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel about the time the gunboat was renamed. Subsequently, when General Butler left New Orleans to become Commander of the 18th Army Corps at Fort Monroe, Virginia, he took Lieutenant Colonel Kinsman with him and appointed him "superintendent of negro affairs" for the entire Department of Virginia and North Carolina (ORA 1890: 1142).

Various records note that the *KINSMAN* was fitted out by General Butler for “river service with her boilers and machinery protected by iron” (ORN 1905:623). The general implication is that this was done when the vessel was renamed *KINSMAN* in September or October, but it is believed that this was done earlier, when the vessel was still known as *GRAY CLOUD*. In light of the sometimes heavy rifle fire the boat received during its reconnaissance up the Tchefuncte River in late July, armor would have been installed at the same time the guns were mounted. Details of this armor plating are not documented, but wartime illustrations discussed below indicate that the iron-plated “casemate” enclosed the engine and boiler areas and the paddlewheels, was sloped at the bow, and vertical (or close to it) on the sides.

Acting Master George Wiggin was commanding the *KINSMAN* when the gunboat was assigned to Lieutenant Commander Buchanan’s flotilla bound for Berwick Bay in late October 1862. How long Wiggin had been captain is unknown, but he probably would have been in command by October 4, by which time Buchanan was captain of the *CALHOUN* (ORN 1905:322). Records indicate that George Wiggin was very familiar with the waters of Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi Sound, suggesting he might have been a native of the region or had operated boats there prior to the war. In October 1861, the captain of the USS *POTOMAC* at Ship Island noted that Acting Master Wiggin was “well acquainted” with the waters and later he served as pilot on the USS *NEW LONDON* and USS *HENRY LEWIS* in actions along the Mississippi coast (ORN 1903:741, 773). Major General Butler, in his letter to Gideon Welles, praised Wiggin and requested that he be assigned to the lake flotilla. Sometime between August and October 1862, George Wiggin took over command of the *GRAY CLOUD/KINSMAN* and served as captain until the gunboat was lost in late February 1863. After this Wiggin, now promoted to Acting Volunteer Lieutenant, was put in command of the sidewheeler *TENNESSEE*, for a while the flagship used by Admiral Farragut on the Mississippi River (ORN 1906:250). For a short time in July 1863, Lieutenant Wiggin was sent back to the lower Atchafalaya area in command of the gunboat *ESTRELLA*. He was back in command of the *TENNESSEE* in the later summer of 1863, apparently, at the specific request of Admiral Farragut, and commanded the *TENNESSEE* on the Mississippi River and off the coast of Texas (ORN 1906:404,606). By May 1864, Lieutenant Wiggin was in command of the single gun, sidewheel tug *TRITONIA* on the James River in Virginia. He took the *TRITONIA* and several other steam tugs around Florida to the Gulf of Mexico where he and his vessels were involved in activities associated with the Battle of Mobile Bay. George Wiggin remained commander of the *TRITONIA* until the end of the war (ORN 1906:690).

Brashear City and the Lower Atchafalaya Basin during the Civil War

The destination of Lieutenant Commander Buchanan's gunboats in October 1862 was Brashear City, located in the southern part of Louisiana on the eastern side of a wide stretch of the lower Atchafalaya River known as Berwick Bay. Brashear City, now known as Morgan City after Charles Morgan who operated his Gulf coast steamship line out of the city, saw its share of military activity during the Civil War. Located at the junction of two important waterways, the Atchafalaya River and Bayou Teche, as well as the only railway line in southern Louisiana, the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Rail Road (N. O. O. & G. W. R. R.), the town was among the most strategically important military locations in St. Mary Parish. In 1861, the Confederates built three forts and several smaller works to protect Brashear City. The largest were Fort Berwick, Fort Chene, and Fort Bisland. Fort Berwick was located across the bay and about four miles from Brashear at the outlet of Wax Bayou onto the Atchafalaya. Fort Chene was located eight miles south of Brashear at the juncture of Bayous Chene and Shaffer, while Fort Bisland was placed several miles up Bayou Teche outside of the community Patterson. Five smaller Confederate battery emplacements were constructed on the Brashear side of Berwick Bay and one on the western side, at the community of Berwick. On the Brashear side, one battery position faced the mouth of the Atchafalaya where it enters the upper end of the Bay; one was located approximately at the intersection of present-day Front Street and Levee Road; one was near the foot of modern Greenwood Avenue; one faced the lower confluence of Berwick Bay and the Atchafalaya River (now inland, near the intersection of modern First and Barrow streets); and the last was west of the foot of modern First Street, facing Bayou Boeuf. It is uncertain that any guns were ever positioned in these emplacements. Other defensive measures taken by the Confederates included removing all navigational aids in the Atchafalaya channel and filling it with an abatis of live oak trees, except for an eighty-foot passage. Barges were prepared with additional trees to fill the gap when required. However, with the fall of New Orleans on April 25, 1862, the Confederates abandoned the fortifications in and around Brashear City. The works were dismantled and the heavy artillery reportedly dumped into the adjacent waters (Goodwin et al. 1985:61; Peltier and Lehmann 1960:19; Saltus et al. 2000).

On May 1, 1862, the N. O. O. & G. W. R. R. was taken over by Union troops. After a few attempts by Confederate units to retake the line, the Union Army gained complete control in November 1862 and, after repairs, the railroad was operated by Federal Authorities exclusively for military use (Peltier and Lehmann 1960:17).

On October 28 and 29, almost 1400 Confederate troops under General Alfred Mouton, pursued by Brigadier General Godfrey Weitzel's Union forces, passed through Brashear City retreating westward toward For Bisland. The first members of the small Federal gunboat flotilla commanded by Lieutenant Commander Buchanan reached Brashear City on October 30, too late to prevent the retreating Confederates from crossing Berwick Bay. Union forces under General Weitzel arrived at the town on November 2 (Saltus et al. 2000:27). Over the next few months, the Union gunboats, supported by the Army, fought several engagements with Mouton's troops and the Confederate gunboat J. A. Cotton on Berwick Bay, the lower Atchafalaya, and Bayou Teche (Saltus et al. 2000:47-48; Stansbury 1999:7-15). The *KINSMAN'S* involvement in these activities is detailed below.

Brashear City became a base for Federal troop movements throughout the Bayou Teche and Atchafalaya River region. Two sizable earthwork forts were constructed at Brashear City at the end of 1862. Fort Brashear (also referred to as Fort Star and Fort No. 1) was placed at the southern limits of the town to protect the railhead from the land side. Fort Brashear was a four-sided work with bastions at the corners, mounting 11 pieces of artillery and intended for a complement of 450 soldiers. The other earthwork put up by the Union was Fort Buchanan located a mile north of Fort Brashear, opposite the mouth of Bayou Teche. Smaller than Fort Brashear, Fort Buchanan was named in honor of Lieutenant Commander Tomas M. Buchanan, commander of the gunboats at Brashear City who was killed in January 1863 in action on Bayou Teche (Peltier and Lehmann 1960:19-20; Stansbury 1999:7). Several smaller outposts and fortified points were located in the area of Brashear City. Some of the former Confederate fortifications were probably occupied, and a large redoubt was apparently built at this time on the Berwick (west) side of the Bay. This earthwork was dubbed the *tote du Pont* or bridgehead, although there was no bridge at this time (Saltus et al. 2000).

Gunboat reconnaissance expeditions were regularly sent up the Teche and Atchafalaya from Brashear City throughout 1863. As a result of one of these expeditions, the Union gunboat *DIANA* was captured by the Confederates in an ambush on Bayou Teche in early 1863. In March of 1863, 4,500 Union troops were assembled at Brashear City by Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, then Commander of the Department of the Gulf in New Orleans, with plans to clear the Teche of Confederates, take Fort Burton and Butte La Rose on the Atchafalaya River, and cut Port Hudson on the Mississippi River off from supply from the west. The Federals clashed with Confederate forces at Bisland (or Bethel's Place) between Pattersonville and Centerville on April 13 and again on April 14 upstream at

Nerson's Woods (Irish Bend) near Franklin. The Confederate forces out of St. Mary Parish, past Jeanerette to New Iberia, and on to Vermilionville. Opelousas was captured by Banks' forces on April 20 after which they advanced on Alexandria, which was occupied by Admiral David Farragut's naval force on May 7 (Winters 1963:214, 221–233; Goins and Caldwell 1995:39).

In the summer of 1863, when Port Hudson was lost to the Confederates, General Richard Taylor decided to strike back at the Federals with what forces he had. At the time the Union base at Brashear was manned by a large number of convalescents and poorly disciplined troops and was felt to be an easy target. Confederate troops under Alfred Mouton moved back down the Teche, and on June 23 they were able to force the surrender of the small Federal garrison defending Brashear City. The Confederates held Brashear City for only a month. Learning that Union gunboats were enroute to Brashear City, General Mouton abandoned Brashear and pulled back to Franklin and Federal

troops transferred by General Weitzel from Donaldsonville reoccupied Brashear City in force on July 25 (Saltus et al. 2000:31).

In October 1863, another Union expedition moved up Bayou Teche from Brashear City, but was stopped near Opelousas by low water levels and forced to withdraw. In March of the following year, Union troops again began to move up the Teche from Brashear City toward Alexandria as part of General Bank's Red River Expedition. This combined Navy and Army venture was stopped by Confederate forces under General Richard Taylor north of Natchitoches, forcing gunboats and land troops back down the Red River. The movement of troops up Bayou Teche as part of the Red River Expedition was the last major military action in the lower Atchafalaya area. Expeditions of gunboats and troops transports into the Atchafalaya Basin continued until the early summer of 1865, partially in an effort to curb "jayhawker" depredations in the region (Maygarden et al. 1997:43–47).

The USS Kinsman at Brashear City, 1862–1863

Acting Master Wiggin seems to have quickly repaired his gunboat at Fort Pike, because he brought the *KINSMAN* into Atchafalaya Bay on the evening of October 30 (ORN 1905:326). There he joined the *CALHOUN* and two other steamers that had joined Captain Buchanan at the mouth of the Mississippi River, the gunboat *ESTRELLA* and the sidewheel transport *ST. MARY'S*. The USS *CALHOUN* was a 508-ton, walking beam sidewheeler that had been captured off the mouth of the Mississippi River as a Confederate gunboat in January 1862.

There is some confusion as to the identity of this vessel. Some records indicate that before the Civil War this steamer had been named *CUBA* and had been one of the vessels Charles Morgan operated along the Gulf Coast out of New Orleans and Brashear City (Gibbons 1989:122' Silverstone 1989:80). Others indicate that the intended name for the boat when launched in 1851 had been *CUBA*, but it had been changed to *CALHOUN* in New Orleans in the spring of 1861, but was taken into the Confederate Navy later in the year, becoming the flagship of the Confederate fleet on the lower Mississippi River. After its capture by the Union, the *CALHOUN* was armed with two 32-pounders and a single 30-pounder Parrott rifle (Silverstone 1989:81). The *ESTRELLA* was 438-ton steam propeller merchant steamer that had been captured the previous July attempting to run the blockade. Before leaving for the Atchafalaya, the *ESTRELLA* had been armed with two 32-pounders, two 24-pounders and one 30-pounder Parrott rifle (Silverstone 1989:90).

The Confederate defenders had pulled up all the navigation markers in Atchafalaya Bay and partially blocked the channel and Buchanan's boats had a difficult time getting across the bay to the entrance into the lower Atchafalaya River. Finally, after shifting guns between vessels, he got two of his boats, the *KINSMAN* and *ESTRELLA*, to Brashear City, situated on the deep waters of Berwick Bay several miles up the Atchafalaya River. With their arrival in Brashear City on November 1, Thomas Buchanan's gunboats almost immediately became involved in the first of several violent actions with Confederate naval and land forces on the Atchafalaya River and Bayou Teche.

Engagements with the Confederate Gunboat Cotton, November 1862

In report to Admiral Farragut, Lieutenant Commander Buchanan wrote that he arrived with the *ESTRELLA* and *KINSMAN* at Brashear City about 7 o'clock in the evening on November 1 and:

"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 the shore, when I ordered the *ESTRELLA* to run alongside of her and board her, she then being about 1,500 yards distant, but Captain Cooke, mis-understanding 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... 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 [ORN 1905:327–328].”

The *KINSMAN* seems not to have been seriously damaged by the shot to the bow because Buchanan makes no further mention of it, nor is there any further mention of the “spiked” Parrott gun, which appears to have been a deliberate act of sabotage.

The “rebel gunboat *COTTON*” was a Confederate gunboat made from the 229–ft, sidewheel steamer named J. A. Cotton. The *COTTON* was purchased by the Confederates in 1862 and clad, at least partially, with iron (Naval History Division 1971:VI–252). The *COTTON* was commanded by Lieutenant Edward W. Fuller and this meeting off Brashear City was only the first of several engagements this gunboat would fight with Thomas Buchanan and his small fleet. Captain Fuller’s account of this first action differs somewhat from that of the Union. In a report to General Mouton, Fuller stated that the shot which struck the *KINSMAN* broke many timbers, killing 3 and wounding 5 (ORN 1905:335).

On the night of the first encounter with the *COTTON*, November 1, Lieutenant Commander Buchanan’s troops transport *ST MARY’S* arrived at Brashear City from the bay. The gunboats *DIANA* and *CALHOUN* arrived the following day, November 2. Buchanan had hoped to arrive before Confederate troops of General Mouton could cross from Brashear City to Berwick on the western side of the Atchafalaya and make their escape up Bayou Teche, but he was too late. Buchanan decided to steam up Bayou Teche in pursuit of the fleeing Confederate troops and the gunboat *COTTON*. Taking on a load of coal, on November 3 he started his four gunboats up the Teche which enters the Atchafalaya River/Berwick Bay from the west just above Brashear City. Three miles up the Teche, Buchanan met the Confederates. He described the meeting in his report to Admiral Farragut:

“... Three miles 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 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 the next day from the effects of amputation [ORN 1905:328].”

Lieutenant Commander Buchanan was able to bring his gunboat, *CALHOUN*, up to Cornay's (or Corney's) Bridge to relieve the *KINSMAN*, which by then was leaking badly. The *KINSMAN* dropped back down the Teche, while the *CALHOUN* opened its broadside on the *COTTON* for about 20 minutes. Assistant Engineer Baird of the *CALHOUN* recorded the fighting in his diary, writing:

“It was beautiful to see Buchanan sight the pivot gun, he landed a percussion shell on the *COTTON'S* armor which exploded and cleared her deck. Two or three such shot served to drive the *COTTON* up the bayou... The land-batteries did most of the firing on the *KINSMAN*, but when Buchanan sighted a 32-pounder with canister at them they limbered up their guns and left like men in a hurry [ORN 1905:333].”

The captain of the *COTTON*, Lieutenant Edward Fuller, reported that he withdrew up the Teche because he had exhausted his supply of cartridges, leaving him no choice but to retreat. However, he noted that “as we slowly backed up we had some sacks made by cutting off the legs from the pantaloons of some of the men, which we filled and returned fire” (ORN 1905:336). Captain Buchanan intended to pursue, but obstructions in the channel prevented this. With night falling, he decided to move his gunboats back down to Brashear City (ORN 1905:328).

The Battle of Cornay's Bridge, as the engagement came to be called, was a ferocious, two hour fight which, in many ways, typified the military engagements of the gunboats on western waters. These gunboats commonly spent many weeks or months with little or no action, or patrol, in port, or being repaired. But, when they became involved in engagements they were commonly intense, violent and dangerous affairs. This was particularly true on small streams like the Teche, where there was little room for maneuvering and the fighting occurred at close quarters.

The Confederate force faced by the Union gunboats was considerable; Lieutenant Commander Buchanan reported to Major General Benjamin Butler on November 5 that the force consisted of between 3,000 and 4,000 men, with 70 field pieces, plus the gunboat *COTTON*. Buchanan reported that the *COTTON* was armed with "one long 32-pounder, four 24-pounders, and two 6-pounder rifle guns" (ORA 1885:184). The gunboats faced heavy artillery fire in addition to rifle fire from the Confederate troops along the banks of Bayou Teche. Buchanan reported that the *KINSMAN* bore the brunt of the battle but "the iron casing on the Kinsman and Diana turned the shot beautifully." However, on the *KINSMAN*, at least, this armor protected only the engines and boilers; the decks were open and the men at the guns exposed. Admiral Farragut recognized this shortcoming, reporting on November 14 that "These little vessels [Buchanan's gunboats] require a sheet of boiler iron around them as a protection against musketry" (Naval History Division 1971:II-109). It is not known if Farragut's recommendations were implemented.

Buchanan was anxious to return to battle. He reported to Major General Butler that "we can make all repairs here, and I will have the Kinsman ready for service to-morrow" (ORA 1885:184). While in Brashear City, those killed in action were buried. The one man killed on the *KINSMAN* during the fight was a soldier of the 21st Indiana and the pilot who had his shattered leg amputated, but died the following day, was identified as John Bellino (ORA 1885:187).

It is interesting to note that Lieutenant Commander Buchanan reports that the *KINSMAN* "kept up fire with his rifled gun" (ORA 1885:184-187). It is not known if this represented an addition to the two 32-pounder smooth bores thought to have been on the vessel earlier, or if one, or both, of the 32-pounders had been replaced by a rifled gun. If

the latter, the rifled gun was likely to have been a 30–pounder Parrott gun, a common weapon on western gunboats (Tucker 1989: Table 31).

The *KINSMAN* remained in Brashear City for several days, apparently, undergoing repairs. However, Commander Buchanan continued action against the *COTTON* with his other gunboats. Confederate accounts indicate that Federal gunboats came up the Teche and fired on the *COTTON* from a distance on November 5 and 6 (ORN 1905:336). On November 7, Buchanan sent Acting Master George Wiggin and the now–repaired *KINSMAN* up the Atchafalaya River, where they captured two steamers near Grand Lake. Wiggin considered the two steamers, the *OSPREY* and *J. P. SMITH*, too decrepit to keep and he burned them. On board the steamers George Wiggin found and captured a “gang” making “Bowie knives, and molding buckshot and bullets.” These prisoners were turned over to the roper authorities (ORN 1905:328).

Buchanan’s principal aim was to destroy the *COTTON* which was a threat to any Union movement to the west. He had the *COTTON* trapped; the Union fleet prevented the Rebel gunboat from coming down Bayou Teche and escaping and the bayou was too shallow for it to go farther up. But, after the several heavy engagements he was short of ammunition, particularly for his Parrott guns, and he was apprehensive of taking action until additional shot arrived. While he waited for ammunition, Buchanan sent boats up the Teche every day to observe.

Apparently, sufficient ammunition had arrived by November 12, because on that day the log of the *CALHOUN* recorded the “we” went up the Teche and fired on the *COTTON* (ORN 1905:342). No boats are named, so it is unknown if the *KINSMAN* was included. However, on the following day the *KINSMAN* did accompany the *CALHOUN* and the *ESTRELLA* as they steamed up Bayou Teche to engage the Confederate gunboat. The battle lasted for over two hours. The log of the *CALHOUN* recorded that “Her [the Cotton’s] tactics to–day were to back up the bayou and get us to follow, then rush at us and discharge her four guns (32–smooth) at us; we, on the contrary, tried to keep out of range and pepper her with our rifles” (ORN 1905:342).

The gunboats saw little action during the month of December and Lieutenant Commander Buchanan seems to have continued to have trouble with ammunition. On December 5 he wrote to Admiral Farragut aboard the flagship *HARTFORD* in the Mississippi River, that fuzes and the shells for the 24-pounder howitzers were defective and dangerous to use (ORN 1905:393). Buchanan did continue to send his gunboats on patrol in the Atchafalaya Basin where several steamers were captured.

On January 1, 1863, the gunboats at Berwick Bay were transferred from the United States Army to the Navy, specifically placing them in the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron. The list of vessels in the Squadron as of January 1, 1863, includes the "Steamer Kinsman" commanded by "Acting Volunteer Lieutenant Geo. Wiggin" and stationed at Brashear City (ORN 1905:478). Another list of the vessels in the Squadron, apparently made before the transfer, list the gunboat as the "Colonel Kinsman" and describes it as a "Fourth Rate, side-wheel steamer" (ORN 1905). Information on the numbers of crew and guns is provided for many vessels in this list, but not the *KINSMAN*. The listing is thought to have been made before January 1, because later Navy records note that the *KINSMAN* was "one of the boats fitted out by General Butler for river service with boilers and machinery protected by iron. Name changed from *COLONEL KINSMAN*" (ORN 1921:122).

This transfer did not seriously effect the operations if individual boats, because they were already commanded by Navy officers, although crewed by both Navy and Army personnel. This shift in command did, however, have some impact on the overall operations and deployment of the gunboats. Soon after the transfer, Admiral Farragut decided to move some of Buchanan's vessels from the lower Atchafalaya area. In early January he ordered the *ESTRELLA* to duty in Texas (ORN 1905:543). When Brigadier General Weitzel learned of the order to move the *ESTRELLA*, he wrote to Major General Nathaniel Banks in New Orleans protesting the action. He stated that Lieutenant Commander Buchanan needed all of the gunboats at Brashear City to protect and support the Army's activities in the region (ORN 1905:494). Weitzel's arguments worked and Farragut allowed the *ESTRELLA* to stay with Buchanan. However, by January 19 Admiral Farragut was trying to get the *KINSMAN* moved to Lake Pontchartrain for duty there (ORN 1905:537). By this time, the *COTTON* had been destroyed and it seemed more reasonable that one of the Atchafalaya gunboats could be spared.

The Second Battle of Cornay's Bridge, January 14, 1862

The *KINSMAN*, *CALHOUN*, *ESTRELLA*, and *DIANA* engaged the Confederate steamer *COTTON* for the last time on Wednesday, January 14, 1863. Lieutenant Commander A. P. Cooke, captain of the *ESTRELLA*, made a detailed report of the action (ORN 1905:518–519). This operation against the *COTTON* and the protecting Confederate land troops was a joint Army and Navy affair. On the morning of January 13, infantry, artillery and cavalry units commanded by General Weitzel were carried across the Atchafalaya River; some embarked on the west side at Berwick and others were carried some distance up Bayou Teche where they were embarked to move up that side of the bayou. Early on January 14, the gunboat *DIANA* carried the Eight Vermont Regiment to the northern bank of Bayou Teche where they were embarked to move up that side of the bayou. The other gunboats began to move up the Teche, the *KINSMAN* in the lead. The *COTTON* was still lying above the partially destroyed Cornay's Bridge, supported by Confederate land batteries and infantry. Lieutenant Commander Cooke wrote:

“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 rifleman 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 was wounded by a Minie ball, and his vessel struck five times but the *COTTON*. The *ESTRELLA* now enfiladed the rifle pits with grape and canister, engaging the *COTTON* also with forward pivot gun... 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 [ORN 1905:518].”

The wounded officer, A. S. Wiggin, was the brother of the captain of the *KINSMAN*, George Wiggin. Fleet Surgeon, J. M. Foltz, reported that the wound was to the right shoulder and severe (ORN 1905:517). The “torpedo” that exploded under the *KINSMAN'S* stern was what today would be called a mine. Reports of the damage caused by the torpedo varied. The *NEW YORK TIMES* agreed with Captain Cooke's statements, reporting that “the Kinsman felt sometime explode under her: but fortunately with no damage, as was afterward found” (New York Times, January 31, 1863). However, Third Engineer Baird, aboard the *CALHOUN*, wrote that “a torpedo exploded under the stern of the *KINSMAN*, unshipping her rudder” (ORN 1905:519).

The *CALHOUN*, now at the fore of the Union vessels, continued firing on the *COTTON*, ultimately damaging the Rebel gunboat and driving it back up Bayou Teche around noon. The *COTTON'S* captain, Edward Fuller, was seriously wounded, shot through both arms (ORN 1905:523). Confederate troops still lined the banks of the Teche and continued firing at the *CALHOUN*. Here the fleet commander, Lieutenant Commander Thomas Buchanan was killed; shot through the head with a Minie ball (ORN 1905:517). Two others on the *CALHOUN* were killed and 6 were wounded. Soon, the Federal troops on shore were able to drive the Confederate rifleman from their pits, forcing them to retreat up Bayou Teche with the *COTTON*. The Federal gunboats were unable to follow the retreating Confederates because of obstructions in the bayou, but they laid at Cornay's bridge throughout the night in the event the Rebels made another attack. The next morning (January 15) a large fire could be seen up Bayou Teche and Lieutenant Commander Cooke of the *ESTRELLA* soon learned it was the gunboat *COTTON* being burned by its men. Their mission accomplished, General Weitzel's troops and the gunboats began moving back down Bayou Teche, returning to Berwick Bay. By midnight, the boats had transferred all of the troops across the bay to Brashear City (ORN 1905:519).

Lieutenant Commander A. P. Cooke of the *ESTRELLA* assumed command of the Berwick Bay fleet on the death of Thomas Buchanan. Buchanan was considered an aggressive commander and his death was a serious blow to the Navy. Admiral Farragut wrote to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles that Buchanan was "one of our most gallant and preserving young officers" (ORN 1905:515). General Weitzel, also, lamented Buchanan's death, but stated that it resulted from a "rash act in advancing." A. P. Cooke sent Buchanan's body to New Orleans by railroad where, on January 16, 1863, Admiral Farragut issued General Order No. 1, announcing that the funeral of Thomas Buchanan would take place at "10:30 from the ferry wharf, foot of Canal Street" (ORN 1905:522).

On February 14, 1863, *HARPER'S WEEKLY* published an illustration of this gunboat engagement which seems to show the point in the battle immediately after the explosion of the torpedo, when the *KINSMAN* has dropped back and Lieutenant Commander Buchanan's vessel, *CALHOUN*, has moved to the front to take on the *COTTON*. Entitled "The fight at Cornay's Bridge, Bayou Teche Louisiana, and Destruction of the Rebel gunboat 'Cotton,' January 14, 1863," the illustration is a view up Bayou Teche and shows the Confederate gunboat Cotton and the three Federal gunboats *CALHOUN*, *ESTRELLA*, and

the *KINSMAN*. The short article accompanying the illustration does not specifically identify each vessel, but it does imply that these are the four vessels depicted. The *DIANA* was involved in transporting troops and, apparently, did not join the other gunboats until the engagement was nearing its end. The *COTTON* is in the upper portion of the sketch, in the background, apparently flying the “Stars and Bars” of the Confederacy at her stern. Closest to the *COTTON* is the two-decked, former merchant steamer and Privateer *CALHOUN*, followed by the iron-hulled *ESTRELLA*. Finally, in the foreground is what is believed to be the *KINSMAN* with its bow to the right. This represents the only illustration known that can be associated with the *KINSMAN* with any degree of reliability and, thus, provides our best source of information on the gunboat’s appearance. The *HARPER’S WEEKLY* sketch does lack detail, but seems to be relatively accurate in its portrayal of the *CALHOUN* and *ESTRELLA*, both of which are known from other illustrations or photographs (Gibbons 1989:122; Stern 1992:134). For example, the *CALHOUN* is missing its wooden hog bracing and walking beam, but its deck layout is reasonably accurate as is the sea-going shape of the iron hull of the *ESTRELLA* and its two masts and two, in line or fore-and-aft stacks.

The description of the *KINSMAN*, also, is short on detail but it is presumed to illustrate the vessel’s general appearance as an armored gunboat. Most of the original superstructure of the steamboat has been removed leaving only a central casemate. The casemate surrounds the area of the boilers and other machinery and the paddlewheels and appears to be covered with long, narrow iron plates. The casemate is slanted and, apparently, narrowed at the bow, an obvious effort to deflect shot, and is topped by a flat deck (i.e., the former hurricane deck) that extends a short distance forward and aft of the casemate may be slanted, but this is not apparent in the drawing. No Pilot house is shown on the *Kinsman*, suggesting that steering was from within the casemate, meaning that openings must have existed at the casemate’s forward end to give the steersman a view. The round stern of the *KINSMAN*, a product of the 1859 alterations at New Orleans, is obvious.

A single, central smokestack is shown rising from the extreme forward end of the casemate, forward of the paddlewheels. This description is presumed to be accurate, however, as discussed earlier the typical western river steamer built in the 1850s would have had two stacks and the presence of a single chimney on the *KINSMAN* would be very unusual. It seems most reasonable that the boat was originally built with two stacks, but that this was reduced to one when the then *GRAY CLOUD* was converted during the Third Seminole War for use in the Gulf of Mexico or later during the steamer’s alteration to a Union gunboat in New Orleans.

Two guns are shown on the *KINSMAN*, both on the open deck, one at the bow and one at the stern. The forward gun appears to be on a wheeled carriage with a stock extending from the rear while the mounting of the stern gun is difficult to discern. How accurate either portrayal might be is unknown and it is possible that both guns were mounted on naval barbette carriages that allowed them to be rotated through a wide field of fire, perhaps as much as 300 degrees (Gosnell 1949:12). Available records are not explicit as to the identity of the guns mounted on the *KINSMAN*. As noted earlier, in the summer of 1862 the guns aboard are described only as “32-pounders” while during earlier engagements with the *COTTON* the *KINSMAN* is reported as firing its “rifled gun.” The total lack of protection for the gun crews on the forward and aft decks is apparent and handling the guns in the face of fire from the *COTTON* and artillery pieces on land, as well as close rifle fire from Confederate troops on the banks of the bayou, must have been almost suicidal. Admiral Farragut’s earlier suggestion to install boiler iron on Buchanan’s gunboats to protect the crews “against musketry” seems not to have been heeded in the case of the *KINSMAN* (Naval History Division 1971: II-109).

Saltus et al. (2000:52–53) suggest that another image of what may be the *KINSMAN* is found in an illustration entitled “Brashear City, Berwick’s Bay, Louisiana, Base of General Bank’s Operations,” published by *HARPER’S WEEKLY* on May 9, 1863. The view in this illustration is looking east from the Berwick side of Berwick Bay toward Brashear City on the other side. In the background is the terminal of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad on the Brashear City waterfront. Three Federal gunboats are depicted and they are identified by the artist, F. H. Schell, in the short article accompanying the illustration (Harper’s Weekly, May 9, 1863:299). To the left is the large, walking beam steamer *CALHOUN*, the flagship of the fleet. Schell’s drawing contains much greater detail than the illustration presents a very accurate portrayal of the *CALHOUN* as it is known from contemporary drawings (Gibbons 1989:122). The accuracy of the rendition of the *CALHOUN*, as well as the Brashear City railroad terminal, would suggest that the illustrations of the two other vessels are equally precise. At the right of the Photo is a steamer identified by the artist as the iron-hulled *ESTRELLA*, appearing very similar to her depiction in the Cornay’s Bridge illustration. The sharp, peaked bow and bowsprit, the two masts and the two, fore-and aft smoke stacks are evident in both drawings. In the center of the illustration is a small, casemated sidewheel steamer that F. H. Schell specifically identifies as the gunboat *DIANA* (*HARPER’S WEEKLY*, May 9, 1863:299). Saltus et al. (2000:53) suggested that this vessel might actually be the *KINSMAN* because of its close resemblance to the identified image in the Cornay’s Bridge illustration. This vessel is very

similar to the *KINSMAN*, but there are some minor differences. For example, although the casemate is low and is slanted at the bow, it is certainly longer and extends much farther forward of the paddlewheels than does the casemate of the *KINSMAN* as it depicted in the illustration. Also, the gunboat shown seems to lack the extensions of the boiler deck that are so obvious on the *KINSMAN*. Additionally, the smoke stack (or smoke stacks) on the gunboat is positioned some distance aft of the front of the casemate. Also, the gunboat shown lacks the two deck guns shown on the illustration of Cornay's Bridge, and considering the detail shown elsewhere in the drawing, it seems these guns would have been depicted if they existed. Openings can be seen in the side of the casemate of the vessel, although it is unknown if these represent gunports. No such openings are shown on the *KINSMAN* on the Cornay's Bridge illustration.

Misidentification sometimes do occur in Civil War-era newspaper illustrations and, while this could be the case here, there are enough differences between the *KINSMAN* shown in the Cornay's bridge illustration, and the vessel identified as the *DIANA* in the Brashear City illustration to suggest that F. H. Schell was correct in his identification. The detail with which Schell depicted the other two gunboats, the *CALHOUN* and *ESTRELLA*, would imply that his drawing of the other vessel was equally precise. Unfortunately, few descriptions and no other contemporary illustrations of the *DIANA* have been found which could add detail to the vessel as it was drawn by Schell. It is known that the *DIANA* was a 165-ft long sidewheel packet steamer, about the same size as the 177-ft *KINSMAN*, which had been converted into an armored gunboat by General Benjamin Butler at New Orleans (Naval History Division 1972:VI220-227; Raphael 1993). The fact that both boats had been converted by General Butler could be reason for the similarity in the design of their casemates. Raphael (1993), in a study of the gunboat *DIANA*, presents a drawing of the vessel showing it to be very similar to the one depicted by Schell at Brashear City, but with two stacks. Raphael's rendition apparently relies on Schell's illustration, which is obviously unclear as to the number of smokestacks on the boat.

The *DIANA* was captured by Confederate forces on Grand Lake in the Atchafalya Basin in late March 1863. At the time of her capture, Confederate General Richard Taylor stated the gunboat "mounted five heavy guns" (ORN 1906:113). Relying on Schell's illustration, it is presumed that the guns were mounted within the *DIANA'S* casemate, suggesting the reason it was so much longer than the *KINSMAN'S* whose guns were mounted on the open deck outside of the casemate. After her capture, the *DIANA* was taken to Bayou Teche to

support Confederate troops and in April the boat was burned by the crew to prevent her from falling back into Union hands (Naval History Division 1972: VI-221).

The battle of January 14, 1862, referred to as the Second Battle of Cornay's Bridge or the battle of the *COTTON* to distinguish it from the earlier engagement at the bridge, removed the most serious threat the Confederacy had in the region, the gunboat *COTTON*. Admiral Farragut obviously believed that the gunboats on the lower Atchafalaya had accomplished their primary task because on January 17 he wrote Lieutenant Commander Cooke asking if the *ESTRELLA* could be transferred to Lake Pontchartrain and on the 27th he wrote "I hope the *Kinsman* is repaired and ready to proceed around to Lake Pontchartrain" where he wanted gunboats to stop illegal trade being conducted by Southern supporters and sympathizers (ORN 1905:537, 585). Apparently, either Cooke his superiors dissuaded Admiral Farragut, because neither gunboat was moved from Brashear City. The "steamer *Kinsman*" appears in a February 1, 1863, list of vessels in the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, stationed at "Brashear City" under the command of "Act. Vol. Lt. Geo. Wiggin" (ORN 1905:595).

In early February 1863, the *KINSMAN* was used in a reconnaissance-in-force to the Confederate stronghold at Butte-a-la-rose in the central Atchafalaya Basin. The gunboats *DIANA* and *KINSMAN* ascended the Atchafalaya River from Brashear City to within one mile of Fort Burton. The *DIANE* had too deep a draft to get closer to the fort, but the *KINSMAN*, only "drawing 4 feet" was able to proceed up the Little Atchafalaya River toward Fort Burton until Confederate sharpshooters forced it to turn around. Attempting to steam down Upper Grand River to Indian Village on Bayou Plaquemine, the *DIANA* and the *KINSMAN* were stopped by impenetrable rafts of driftwood, and were forced to return to Brashear City the way they came (ORA 1886:240-243, 244; ORN 1905:611-612, 618).

Loss of the USS *Kinsman*, February 23, 1863

The USS *KINSMAN* was lost on February 23, 1863, in Berwick Bay while transporting troops for picket duty. Details of the loss of the gunboat are provided in the report of the *KINSMAN'S* captain, Lieutenant George Wiggin, submitted to the gunboat fleet commander, Lieutenant Commander A. P. Cooke. Wiggin wrote:

“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 at 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 stern. 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 filing. I went below immediately and examined the leak; found the water rushing in very rapidly, the floor being covered some six 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 steamer *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 bows about 2 feet out of the water. The carpenter and his gang tried in vain to stop the leak. I ordered the powder kegs and magazine to be brought on deck in order to keep them dry. Then I let go my anchors and ran a line from her quarters 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 had disappeared.”

“The Officers and crew were picked up by the boats of the *ESTRELLA*, *CALHOUN*, and *DIANA*, neither officers nor men having the least change to save any of their effects. I am sorry to have to report the following of my 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 enclose 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 [ORN 1905:624–625].”

Another report of the loss was made by J. G. Oltmanns, identified as an “Assistant,” in the U. S. Coast Survey who was aboard the *KINSMAN*. Oltmanns reported:

“Between 7 and 8 o’clock p.m. a detail of the One hundred and fourteenth New York Volunteers came on board the steamers to accompany us on picket during the night. The soldiers were stationed on the quarter and hurricane decks. At about 9:30 p.m. the steamer started up the river under, as far as I could learn, about 50 pounds of steam. When nearly up to our station, 1 ½ miles from this place, just below the fort and about 20 yards from shore, while sitting in Captain Wiggins’s cabin, I felt a log or snag striking the steamer on her starboard side, forward of the wheelhouse, and immediately afterwards I heard and felt the wheel striking very hard against this log. Going forward, I heard it reported that the vessel was fast filling. Captain Wiggin gave his orders very coolly and deliberately, no idea of danger entering our minds. Upon his request I went forward, and found from 7 to 8 inches of water in the hold. The steam pumps had been started before this time, about fifteen minutes after the vessel struck, it was reported two or three times that we were gaining on the water. 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. The magazine was ordered to be opened and the powder to be put on deck, if the water should rise to it. When we passed the wharves the water was reported to gain fast and the vessel sinking. Captain Wiggin hailed the *CALHOUN* and the *ESTRELLA*, requesting boats to be sent to our assistance. In the meantime he ran the *KINSMAN*, with full steam head on shore till her bows grounded in three feet of water and no bottom with a 15-foot pole under her stern. A line was ordered to be brought out from her starboard quarter to haul her broadside to the bank, but before this could be accomplished, the steamer filled and slid backward from the bank and sunk in about 18 fathoms of water at twenty-five minutes past midnight. The steamer *CALHOUN*, as soon as she could get up steam, came up and rendered, with the boats of the *ESTRELLA*, *DIANA*, and *CALHOUN*, all the assistance possible in saving the crew and soldiers, who otherwise must have perished [ORN 1905:625–626].

When Admiral Farragut forwarded the two reports to Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, he noted that the gunboat “sank in 50 feet of water at or near Brashear City” (ORN 1905:625). Wiggin reported that the *KINSMAN* slid off a “steep Bank” and that “every vestige” of the gunboat disappeared, while J. G. Oltmanns noted that when the boat was nosed against the bank there was over 15 ft of water at the stern and, further, that the vessel sank in “about 18 fathoms” of water. Some have suggested that Oltmanns’ “18 fathoms” is a mistake or a later misprint for “8 fathoms,” but, as discussed later, this may not be so. Details on the presumed location and depth of the wreck of the *KINSMAN* are thoroughly discussed in the following chapter, but the reports of observers of the sinking all agree that the boat sank in deep water. This is supported by Lieutenant Wiggin’s report

that he was able to salvage only a few items, all apparently floating in the river, on the morning following the sinking, plus the fact that there are no reports that any attempts were ever made to raise or salvage the gunboat. The *KINSMAN* was extremely valuable and if there had been any hope of salvaging the boat, an effort would have been made.

The loss of the *KINSMAN* was considered a serious blow to Federal strength in the Atchafalaya Basin. General Nathaniel Banks had a few shallow-draft gunboats capable of operating in Basin waters, and he was anxiously awaiting the arrival of more. The importance of the *KINSMAN* is reflected in Banks' report to major-General H. W. Halleck in Washington on February 28, 1863, stating: "My dispatch... will have informed you of the embarrassing loss of the gunboat *KINSMAN*, equal in effect to the destruction of two battalions" (ORA 1887:1106).

With the sinking of their gunboat, the crew and officers of the *KINSMAN* were ordered to New Orleans. The crewman were reassigned among other vessels in the Squadron and Lieutenant George Wiggin was placed in command of the USS *TENNESSEE*, a large sidewheel steamer captured at New Orleans when the city fell in April 1862 (ORN 1905:626; vol. 20:250). The story of the USS *KINSMAN* was over. During its 9-year career, the vessel served as a commercial river packet, a United States Quartermaster steamer in military actions against the Sioux Indians in the west and the Seminole Indians in Florida, as a private coastal trader, as a Confederate transport, and as a United States Army and United States Navy armed gunboat during the Civil War. As the gunboat USS *KINSMAN* the vessel had fought bravely in several ferocious engagements against Confederate forces. The loss of the *GRAY CLOUD*/*KINSMAN* to a common river snag seems an ignoble end to a vessel with such a varied and distinguished career.

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