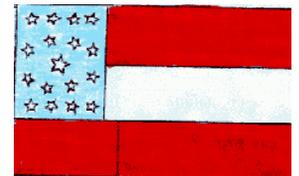




# The Vidette

## CALIFORNIA DIVISION

### Sons of Confederate Veterans



The J. P. Gillis Flag



26 May 2003 Issue 18 Published by Division Adjutant Vernon R. Padgett [vp09@earthlink.net](mailto:vp09@earthlink.net)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WAS CONFEDERATE!

# California Confederates

By Dr. Rowland "Ro" King, Historian,  
California Division SCV

When looks in the local library, or even in historical journals, one will find very little concerning the War Between the States in California. The main exception is *California in the War For Southern Independence* (1998), by Dr. Larry Talbott. There are many gaps and untold tales, or half-truths, about action in California on the behalf of the Confederate States of America.

Where were the California Confederates, and are there marking, plaques, et cetera? How many of you knew that there is a mountain peak up in the gold country, east of Jackson, called Jefferson Davis Peak?

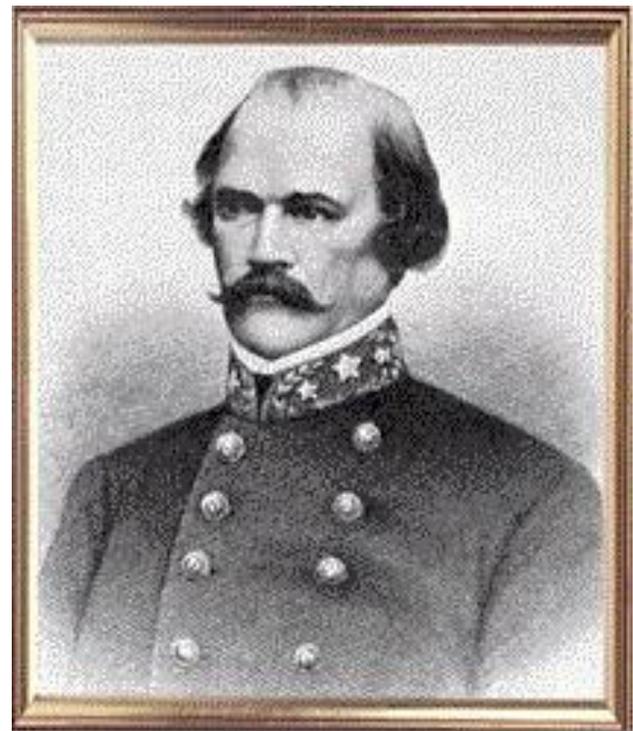
## An Untold Story

Unfortunately, there few plaques other than those in cemeteries that even mention Confederates. The ones on the historic spots on California's roads and towns are almost entirely Yankee, and refer to our men as thieves, raiders, gang members, but never as Southern Partisan Rangers, Confederate Troops, or

were furnished with copies, and encouraged to go forth and put up plaques, nothing has come about.

## Confederate Activity in the South

The primary Confederate support groups were in



Albert Sidney Johnston (1803-1862)

the Southern part of the State. They spilled up the coast to San Luis Obispo, and further up into the San Joaquin, as far north as Fresno. They were in the gold mining areas area up along Highway 49 and to the east.

## Where are the Plaques to California Confederates?

Confederate Navy personnel. This is certainly the fault of all of us SCV and UDC members in the state, as a few years ago lists were put together of CSA Historical Sites. Even though every camp and chapter

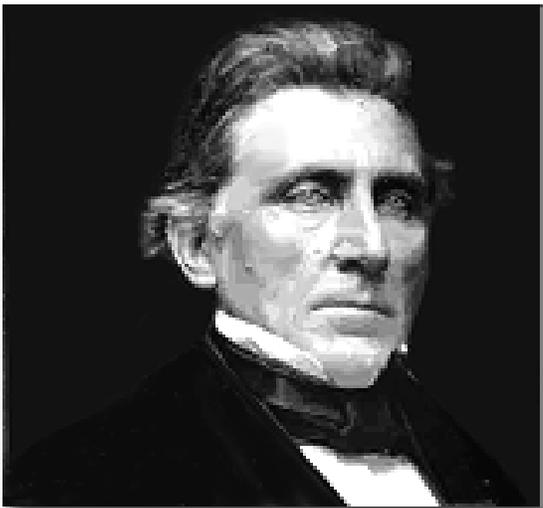


From Jo Mora's *Californios'* dust jacket

More Confederate support was in San Jose, and a hard core, very wealthy group in San Francisco were called the "Band of Thirty." In the Northern part of California they were more in the rural areas and towns. There was also a lot of positive contact with the Hispanic population, also known as *Californios*.

### A Different Attitude

There was a different attitude overall in California and this included those who came from the Southern States. Let us go back to the California Constitutional Convention at Monterey in 1849: 20 delegates from Northern California; 17 from Southern California, 8 Native Californians and 3 of foreign birth who represented California from various parts of the



*Senator Gwin*

United States. With this background, it was a surprise to many that the delegates voted unanimously for

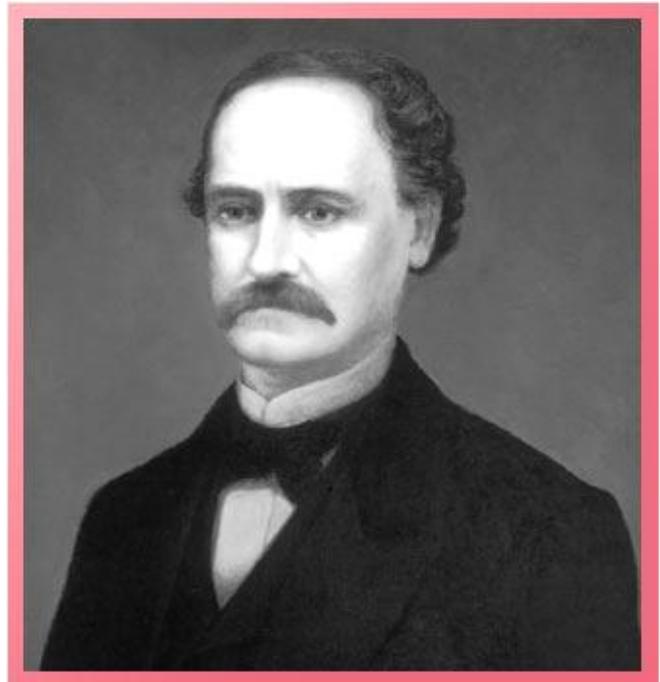
California to apply to the Union as a free state. You had a large block of delegates from the South, and an avid spokesman for the South in William Gwin. Slavery was not an issue in California, and since the vast majority of Southerners did not own slaves (contrary to modern mis-history), slavery was not an issue. Also they were anti-tariff.

From the State Census in 1852 to that of 1860, the population of California grew 69%, mainly males. A different attitude is reflected by their song "What Was your Name in the States?" Besides the inference that many were fugitives from the law there is another message, an unspoken acknowledgment that those in California were not in the United States-- they were expatriates.

### A Pacific Republic

By 1860, control of the state was in the hands of Democrats. There was at the time talk about creating a Pacific Republic from Canada to Mexico. We had a group of California governors and senators that did interesting things politically.

John Weller, Democrat, served as governor in 1858. He held strong conviction about the sectional conflict and believed that Californian should take no side, either with North or South, but ought to set herself up as an independent republic.



**Governor John Weller**

Weller had support for this view in both the legislature and in Congress. However, when Lincoln ran on the Republican ticket, Weller stated that if Lincoln were elected and the Southern States seceded,

he would consider Californians less than men if they did not. Sharing his view were two United States Senators. William M. Gwin from California, and Joseph Lane from Oregon.



### Early California

#### New Governors and a Duel

To add to the confusion, on January 9, 1860 Milton S. Latham, a Lecompton Democrat, was sworn in as governor of California. But his interest was in the United States Senate, and after serving as governor for less than a week, he resigned and accepted an appointment to the Senate.

This vacancy came about because of a stupid duel between the then Senator Broderick and Judge David Terry-- State Supreme Court Justice, in which the lesser-skilled marksman Terry killed Broderick.

So: Latham went to the U.S. Senate, and John Downey, another Lecompton Democrat and lieutenant governor, was sworn in as governor, but the Democrats split up nationally-- and that split Californians.

#### A Split Vote and Lincoln Wins California

We had Democrats in California going all different directions for all the different presidential candidates except for Lincoln. Henry Hamilton of the *LA Star* warned Californians of the folly of this split and warned them what the results might be.

Henry Hamilton was right. Lincoln got only 32% of California's vote, in spite of only seven of the 53 newspapers in California supporting him. But he won the election, with Douglas, Breckenridge and others splitting the vote.

### Southern Resolutions Defeated

What followed was a series of resolutions in the California Assembly in early 1861 that put the blame for the nation's woes squarely on the Black Republicans. These resolutions were introduced by representatives from Southern California counties. They were defeated on a consistent vote of 28 to 41 by Northern California representatives.

Finally, on May 17, 1861, a resolution was proposed that backed the Constitution and the Union against foreign and domestic foes. This was 'cached' under very awkward rules—no debate and no explanation of your vote, which really bothered the pro-Southern assemblymen, as it sanctioned the Republican administration's aggression against the Southern States.



### Californios at work

#### Another Duel Dashes Southern Hopes

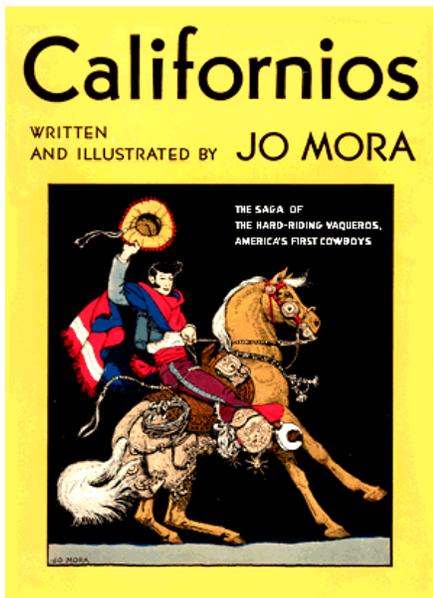
This led to an uproar and bitter words between normally congenial members. Daniel Showalter, a pro-Southern, Douglas Democrat from Mariposa, was challenged by Charles Piercy, another Douglas Democrat. The result was an insult to his gentleman's honor and a duel (not unusual) was called for.

Showalter killed Piercy who had never thought he would become an instant martyr for the Union! Warrants were issued for Showalter's arrest even though Piercy had brought it on himself. However, this destroyed the fair legislative debate and one was now a 'traitor' if he wasn't pro-Union.

#### Asbury Harpending

Let us switch the scene to San Francisco, where early in 1861 one of the South's best hopes for an outstanding General was still in charge of the U.S. Department of the Pacific.

At that time there was also in San Francisco a strong, very well financed group of Southern Patriots-- enter-- Asbury Harpending, a young self-made Kentuckian who was wealthy from a Mexican gold



mine, and other Mexican and Central American enterprises. He came into San Francisco just as Lincoln was squeezing out his narrow victory in 1860.

Asbury was a strong state's rights advocate and with his exaggerated wealth he soon fell in with a strong group of Southern patriots in San Francisco. One afternoon he was asked to come to a house of a well known Southern sympathizer where he found most of the "Band of 30" leading men of San Francisco gathered around a large table. He took an oath to take part in an affair of "Great Peril" upon which the future of the South might depend. He was eager to help and contributed \$100,000 to the Cause.

### The Uprising Planned

The plan was to take over California for the South. Each member was responsible for the organization of a fighting force of say a hundred men under a selected Southern captain. This was not difficult, as California abounded with ex-veterans of the Mexican War, ex-Indian fighters, etc. The plan was to scatter these groups around the Bay Area and to make a simultaneous attack on all organized resistance in the area. The Federal Army was little more than a shadow with 200 men at Fort Point; fewer than 100 at Alcatraz; and a handful at Mare Island and Benicia where 30,000 stands of arms were stored. A night attack was planned. Following it was proposed to organize an army of Southerners sufficient to beat

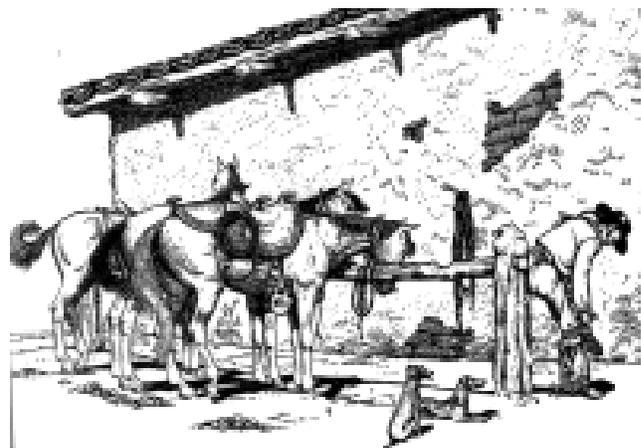
down any unarmed resistance. We intended to organize as a preliminary "Republic of the Pacific," which already had much backing. By the middle of January 1861, everything was in readiness. It only remained to strike the blow!

What happened? The gentleman's code of the Southern (U.S. General at the time) Albert S. Johnston, whom the "Band of 30" had counted on, now told a group of those including Asbury Harpending that he had heard a foolish rumor that there would be an attempt to seize strongholds under his charge and that he would defend them to his last drop of blood. This was a deathblow, as the group knew one of their own was ethically against them at this time. A bad mistake as their research was correct. A short time later the band or committee voted to disband.

### Fort Alcatraz

Let us take a brief look at Fort Alcatraz in the middle of San Francisco Bay, and the role it played. Also Fort Point with notation about guns pointed inwardly.

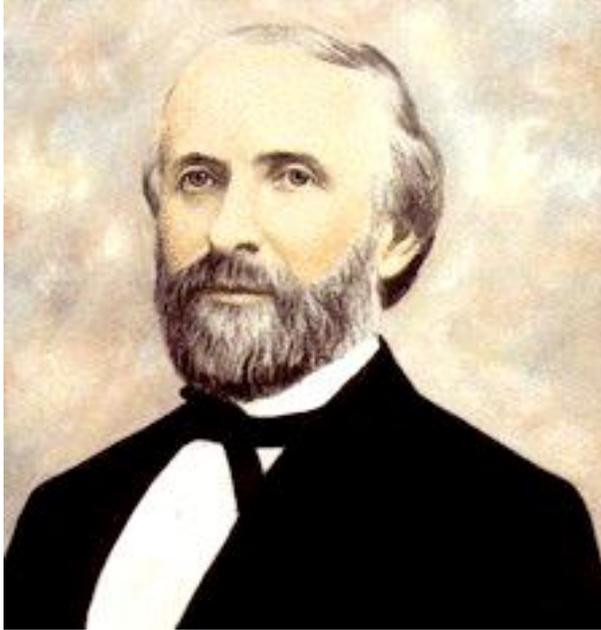
Texas secedes from the Union and General A.S. Johnston puts in his resignation even though Lincoln has already replaced him secretly. Even though he did the "right," ethical from his code of honor, he has cost the South, Northern California, and he heads south for Los Angeles and for his father-in-law's place, Dr. Griffin.



### Californios: 1830s-1850s

The Los Angeles area was in a growth mode at the time, but not like San Francisco. It was still an adobe town, but southward along Main and Los Angeles streets is the business district with many brick buildings being built. Northwest is Sonora-town the main residential section. A short block southeast is the infamous Calle de Los Negros-- "Nigger Alley"--

- a real-life den of iniquity made up of cheap saloons, gambling den and bawdy houses. . A short distance away we have El Monte--A Southern Town and a hotbed of Southern Support, which finally had Yankee troops from Drum barracks (camping-out)



**John Gately Downey**

### **The Los Angeles Mounted Rifles**

Enter California's Confederate Militia--The Los Angeles Mounted Rifles. California Governor John Downey issued a call for the formation of militia units and in mid-February 1861, seven prominent Angelinos petitioned LA County Judge Dryden to "open a book" to enroll militia members.

Among those men were J. Lancaster Brent, an attorney and former state legislator; Jose Sanchez a baker and leader of the City's Mexican community; and Alonzo Ridley, Under Sheriff for LA County. Some interesting things about the muster roll of some 70+ names:

1) There were a lot of people from the L.A. County Sheriff's Office, including A.J. King, a leader in El Monte's pro Confederate stance;

2) Ten percent were Spanish surnames, and had been born citizens of Mexico.

### **Alonzo Ridley**

Captain Ridley was appointed commander, and immediately did a splendid job of acquiring weapons from the state. The unit was pro-Confederate from the start and represented a cross section of the community. In April with the forced firing on Ft. Sumter, the L.A. Rifles knew that they would have to head east to help the Confederacy and planned

accordingly to go overland to Texas rather than by sea at the end of June. This timetable changed when Capt. Ridley ran into Dr. Griffin and offered their assistance in getting General Johnston to the Confederacy. Randolph Hughes, a Negro, Johnston's servant and bodyguard made most of the arrangements and went with them.

### **The L.A. Rifles Depart**

Upon hearing that Johnston and he were about to be arrested for treason, Captain Ridley moved up the date of departure to June 16th and he, Johnston and Hughes left for Chino Rancho. Captain Ridley then turned back himself to put out the call for the rest of the Rifles to meet at Warner Ranch.

Some men including Brent could not make it in time. The Rifles then proceeded southeast to Yuma, camped in view of Fort Yuma for three days--strange. This resulted in Lew Armistead being approached while on picket duty by a U.S. Sergeant and some men from the Fort. They proposed that a group from the Fort would desert; join the Rifles and then would burn the Fort (all the Fort's officers were ill at the time). Most of the Rifles wanted to do it, but Johnston (again on ethics--they had not been sworn into the Confederate Army yet, and it would be akin to piracy) talked them out of it.

Through Tucson and 800 miles later they reached the Confederate Arizona Territory Capitol of Mesilla, where they were warmly received by John Baylor and his Texas Troops.

### **Pro-Confederate El Monte**

Next we switch to the pro-Southern town of El Monte just east of Los Angeles. California legislator Daniel Showalter contacted CSA General Sibley in July 1861. Sibley had recently captured Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

### **General Sibley Orders Californians to Train**

Sibley instructed him to raise a force of cavalry; train them; and join him in New Mexico. The California Volunteers, El Monte Battalion, Confederate States Army, was formed in El Monte and trained there from July to November 1861. They left well trained and heavily armed--each man had a high-powered rifle, 2 revolvers and a large knife, plus an excellent mount.

However, they were ambushed by Major Rigg near Warner's Ranch, and surrendered much to the dismay of Showalter without a fight, because they believed they would be released. Instead, they were

taken to Camp Wright, but when Rigg learned that a part of 75 men were forming in El Monte to force



**General Henry Hopkins Sibley, 1816-1886**

their release they were quickly taken to Fort Yuma (which unfortunately had not been burned by the Rifles). They were held there until April of 1862 and then paroled. Showalter vanished and made it to the Confederacy where he later fought in the Battle of Sabine Pass. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel, in command of a cavalry regiment in Arkansas.



**Fort Yuma on the Colorado. Circa 1860**

### **Joseph Lancaster Brent**

Joseph Lancaster Brent, first President of the L.A. School Board, known as "Don Jose" to the Californios whom he served as a land title expert and

lawyer, missed the urgent departure of the L.A. Rifles. He had to wait until he and two others, U.S. Senator Gwin and U.S. Attorney Calhoun Beham, were able to leave on the steamship Orazaba in October 1861. Unfortunately this was the same ship that U.S. General Summer took, and who made them prisoners illegally, being freed by Lincoln as I earlier mentioned. Brent served as an artillery and ordnance officer in the Peninsular Campaign; captured the U.S.S. Indianola in the Vicksburg Campaign, and commanded the artillery at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill in the Red River Campaign. He was promoted to brigadier general for his sterling efforts at Mansfield.

### **California Gold Country**

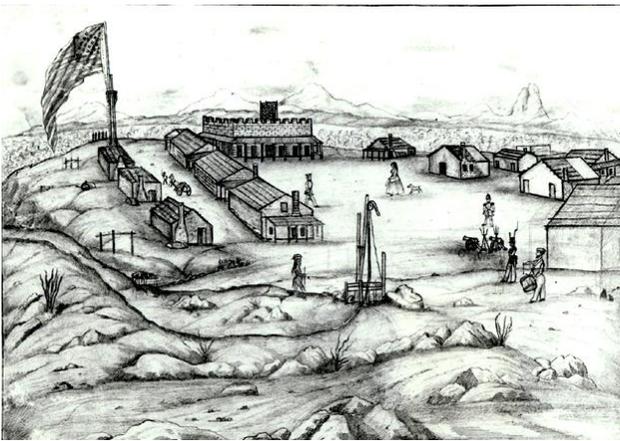
Now let us go up to the 'Gold Country' along and about Highway 49. Volcano is up in the gold country east of Jackson a few miles. More than 90 million dollars in gold was taken from there during its heyday. Gold was important to both sides during the War Between the States, and both sides were represented in this town. The Southerners were in an



**Fort Yuma Area**

organization called the Knights of the Golden Circle, a secret society of statewide significance. The Union men formed a group called the Volcano Blues. Both sides were well armed with small arms. The Blues decided they needed an "edge," and secretly purchased a six-pound shot cannon, which weighted 800 pounds. They got it in San Francisco, and it made its final journey to Volcano in a hearse.

The Southerners (Knights) decided to challenge the Blues and formed a skirmish line outside of the armory. The Blues packed the cannon with black powder and small stones and ran "Old Abe" out to meet the Southerners. Upon seeing the cannon the Knights retreated, and that was that. However, the Blues had overloaded "Old Abe," and if they had fired it, they would have blown themselves to bits.



**This hand drawing of Fort Yuma during its busiest period shows it as a neat, orderly military installation.**

As time progressed fear of the cannon subsided and doubt spread as to if it could even be fired. The Blues knew that most of the big stores on main street belonged to Southerners, and a secret firing was arranged by which all the Union shopkeepers would close the iron doors on their windows at a signal. This was done, and the cannon was fired. All windows not covered were broken by the blast.

**Captain Rufus Henry Ingram’s Partisan Rangers**

Next: Partisan Ranger military groups operating behind enemy lines. The Confederate Congress authorized these in 1862. Captain Rufus Henry Ingram formed one such unit in San Jose in early 1864. Ingram met with the Knights of the Golden Circle and presented his commission and stated his desire to organize such a group. They approved, and a Group of Confederate Partisan Rangers that would leave their mark was organized. They trained at the Hodges ranch, and then in June went northeast to the Somerton and its Inn. On June 30th they hit the Pioneer Stage line about 2 1/2 miles above Sportsman's Hill to gain a Wells Fargo's treasure box.



Captain Ingram gave the driver the following receipt: "This is to certify that I have received from Wells Fargo Co. the sum of \$ cash for the purpose of outfitting recruits enlisted in California for the Confederate States Army. Signed R. Henry Ingram, Capt. Commanding Co., CSA, June 1864.

They came back to the Inn, where a posse attacked them. They made their escape, killing one officer of the posse.

**The Most Western Confederate Combat**

Another raid was attempted on July 15th, one mile from San Jose near the New Almaden mines for the mine payroll. A loose remark to a rancher brought authorities and a minor battle occurred with forty shots exchanged. The Union military recognized them as soldiers and pursued them. Ingram was one who escaped. Again it was a trial for “treason” for those caught. Thus ended the saga of the most western combat involving a Confederate military unit.

Unfortunately, all these sites (if they are labeled at all) are labeled favoring the Union and call our men nothing but gang members, or outlaws! We need to get some sites labeled as C.S.A. Historical sites!

**NEW BOOKS**

**Day-by-Day Account of Confederate Action by State by Commander F. C. Sligh, Camp 246**

Commander Sligh offers a series of books that present the events of the War for Southern Independence in day-by-day chronology for each of 25 areas. California and Oregon is one such area (9 pages).

For information contact Commander Sligh at [fcsligh@hotmail.com](mailto:fcsligh@hotmail.com); Freddie C. Sligh, Commander, SCV Camp 246, Post Office Box 10062, El Dorado, Arkansas 71730; phone 870.862.3198

**TimeLight, a Journey into the Past**

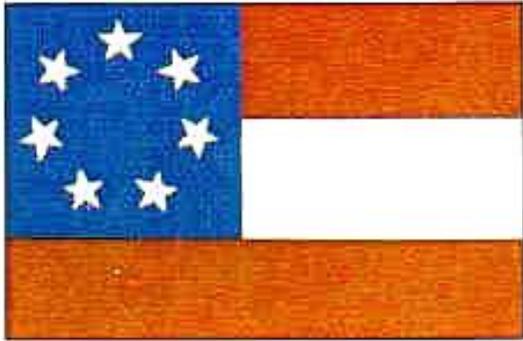
by Stan Clardy

From the man who brought you the educational one man play and music "Soldiers in Gray, A Musical Journey", plus the music of "Southern Stars" and "God Save The South", now Stan Clardy has written an exciting and moving book of that period in history.

*TimeLight, a journey into the past* is a fictional historical account about the Confederate submarine H.

L. Hunley, the War Between the States and the Siege of Charleston during 1863 - 1864. Though the five main characters are fictional, they are involved with real historical figures, such as; General Beauregard, Horace Hunley, George Dixon and others involved in the historic submarine.

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**POETRY BY H. L. TURNER**  
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**The Confederate Flag Bearer**

**Bodies writhe in pain  
along the grassy plain,  
some mortally wounded and others fading away.**

**Such an atrocity for any man to bear,  
as voices announce their dying end.**

**The battle has reached its final conclusion,  
a morbid victory for the enemy which approaches.**

**One lone soldier lies face down,  
face buried deep into the sodden ground.**

**He suffers numerous hits,  
afflicted by the adversary's rifle fire.  
Unlike his fallen comrades though,  
his injuries are not terminal.**

**He is merely dazed and knocked off his feet,  
as he glares with hatred at the dusty blue coats  
which continue to advance upon his fellow men.**

**His rounds long since spent  
and his rifle now useless,**

**he acknowledges the futility of his predicament.**

**The closest brother to his side,  
a young Southern flag bearer shot dead  
while expressing his pride.**

**With one final fleeting burst of energy,  
brought forth from the courage which flows  
within,  
he picks up the fallen flag by his side  
and charges the onslaught before him.**

**His determination driven by the burning fuel of  
thought,  
that they can only murder their physical form,  
but they can never take away the spirit which  
thrives within.**

**A spirit I am proud to say,  
is as apparent in the South today,  
as it was during that sad and fateful day.**

**Those who sacrificed it all for a cause they held  
dear,  
will never be forgotten,  
but remembered  
as God is today.**

~~~~~  
*Note from the Author:* My father, J. R. Turner, is a member of A.P. HILL Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp in Virginia. I have been very busy completing a novel, which I hope to soon publish. I have had quite a few poems published already, but I hope to start publishing novels as well.

The poem I sent to you titled "The Confederate Flag Bearer", I wrote in dedication to my father who has been a proud Southerner all his life and a magnificent father to me. I may write a few more in the future in honor of the South. Although I put my heart into my writings, I still sometimes feel that I cannot do sufficient justice to so sacred topic.

**An aspiring writer and proud Southerner,  
Heath Lee Turner**

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**California SCV Web Site**  
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Check [www.scvcalifornia.net](http://www.scvcalifornia.net) for the California SCV website. Gary Waltrip, Commander Camp 1440, The Stainless Banner, San Jose, continues to expand and add to the web site. See Gary's own site at [www.RebelGray.com](http://www.RebelGray.com)

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## FILM REVIEW BY ED MANN

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**I saw *The Gangs of New York* last night.** Interestingly, the previews prior to the movie included one for *Gods and Generals*. I have noticed that previews for certain movies are frequently matched with movies that are being shown because the subject matter of the upcoming movie is believed to match the interests and taste of those who paid for admission for the current one.

Because almost all of "Gangs of New York" takes place in 1862-63, the subject matter will probably be interesting, or at least informative, for those interested in the Civil War. I am quite sure that the film moves certain historical events around, and, like most, uses artistic license ("Braveheart" was among the worst at doing this), yet it probably captures the nitty gritty day-to-day life of the Irish immigrants in New York.

Be forewarned. The movie is not for the faint-hearted. The violence is extreme and there are more than a few bare female anatomies in the movie.

Nevertheless, for those trying to understand the mental processes and attitudes of a great portion of Federal soldiers, in particular, who were immigrants or who came from the least desirable areas of the large urban areas during the war, the movie will probably provide an insight into the milieu from which they came.

Irish immigrants are depicted being signed up on the docks as they disembark from ships from Ireland, and they are immediately placed in uniforms within a few yards of coffins of dead Union soldiers that have been shipped back to New York for burial. (I am well aware that most soldiers were buried near where they fell.) There might be some basis for believing that those who joined the army got the better deal than those who wound up in Five Points.

The draft riots are shown in violent detail. Union soldiers (some fresh from Gettysburg's battlefield, although this isn't mentioned) fire into the mobs hell bent on destroying much of the city.

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**The movie is not for the faint-hearted.**

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I have heard it said that the Old West was not nearly as violent as many places in Eastern cities at the time. This movie depicts such a situation.

I missed the "History vs. Hollywood" program, which discussed the movie on the History Channel. It should be helpful in identifying particular historical

shortcomings or inaccuracies in the film.

Ed Mann

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## SCV Life Membership

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Apply for Life Membership by completing application at [www.SCV.org](http://www.SCV.org). Fee is \$300 if you are 59 or younger; \$200 for those aged 60 to 69, and \$100 for those aged 70 and older. Mail check and form to HQ. Life Members are assigned to Camp 2 and are also listed on local Camp rosters with "LM" instead of an expiration date.

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## California Division Staff

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**Lt Cmdr** Jeffrey Towery 661.288.2156. No e-mail

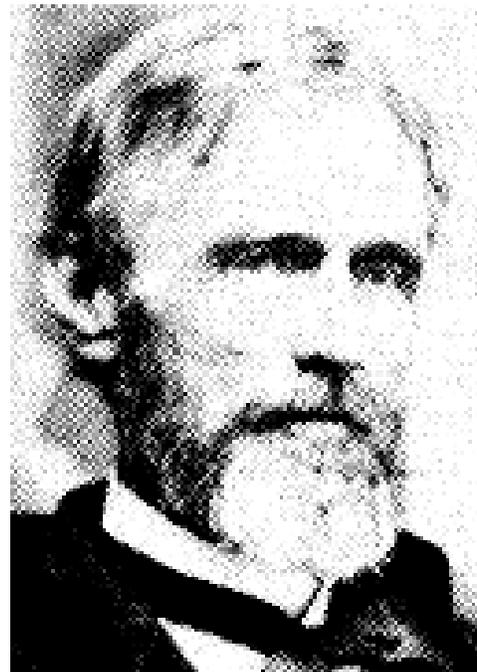
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## WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



**"When time shall have softened passion and prejudice, when reason shall have stripped the mask from representation, then justice, holding evenly her scales, will require much of the past censure and praise to change places." --President Jefferson Davis**