

Charles Read (Yazoo)

Contents: The career of a Civil War Hero

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Civil War naval hero honored



Jack Bertram/The Clarion-Ledger

Charles W. Read was buried at Rose Hill in Meridian in 1890.

"On the morning of the 15th of July (1862) ... the first words I heard were 'the Rebel ram Arkansas is upon us.' ... two of our gunboats fired and the Arkansas answered, killing three men on one of the decks. Slowly, steadily, gallantly the Rebel ram kept on her way ... and all the gunboats below poured a perfect shower of balls upon her.



Then proudly she turned a point and disappeared from sight and anchored under the batteries of Vicksburg. I doubt whether such a feat was ever before accomplished and whoever commanded the Rebel ship should be known and honored."

—from the captured letter of a Union naval officer

By Jack Bertram
Clarion-Ledger Staff Writer

Let it be known that on the 15th day of July 1862, the stern-gun commander of the CSS *Arkansas* was Lt. Charles W. Read, born in Yazoo County, raised in Jackson.

Saturday, in ceremonies at his Meridian grave, Read will be honored for exploits that earned him the nickname "the John Paul Jones of the Confederacy."

Both the honor and the sobriquet are fitting, according to Read biographer Hewitt Clarke.

Read's Mississippi River run, past some 50 Yankee vessels that fired upon his ironclad from either side, Clarke says, has been hailed by military experts as one of the great events in the annals of naval warfare.

But Read had not yet begun to fight.

Throughout the duration of the war — and beyond — Read was so often involved in amazing adventures that his entry in the *Dictionary of American Biographies* terms his military record "brilliant ... unsurpassed by any other officer of his rank in either the Union or Confederate navies."



Charles W. Read

Saturday's ceremony at Rose Hill Cemetery, 8th Street and 40th Avenue., Meridian, starts at 9:30 a.m.

More than 30 of Read's ancestors, some coming from as far away as Australia, are expected to attend the formal dedication of a marble monument commissioned by the W.D. Cameron Camp No. 1221, Sons of Confederate Veterans of Meridian.

Read, who was said to have suffered from Bright's Disease, died in 1890 while in Meridian to consult with a physician friend.

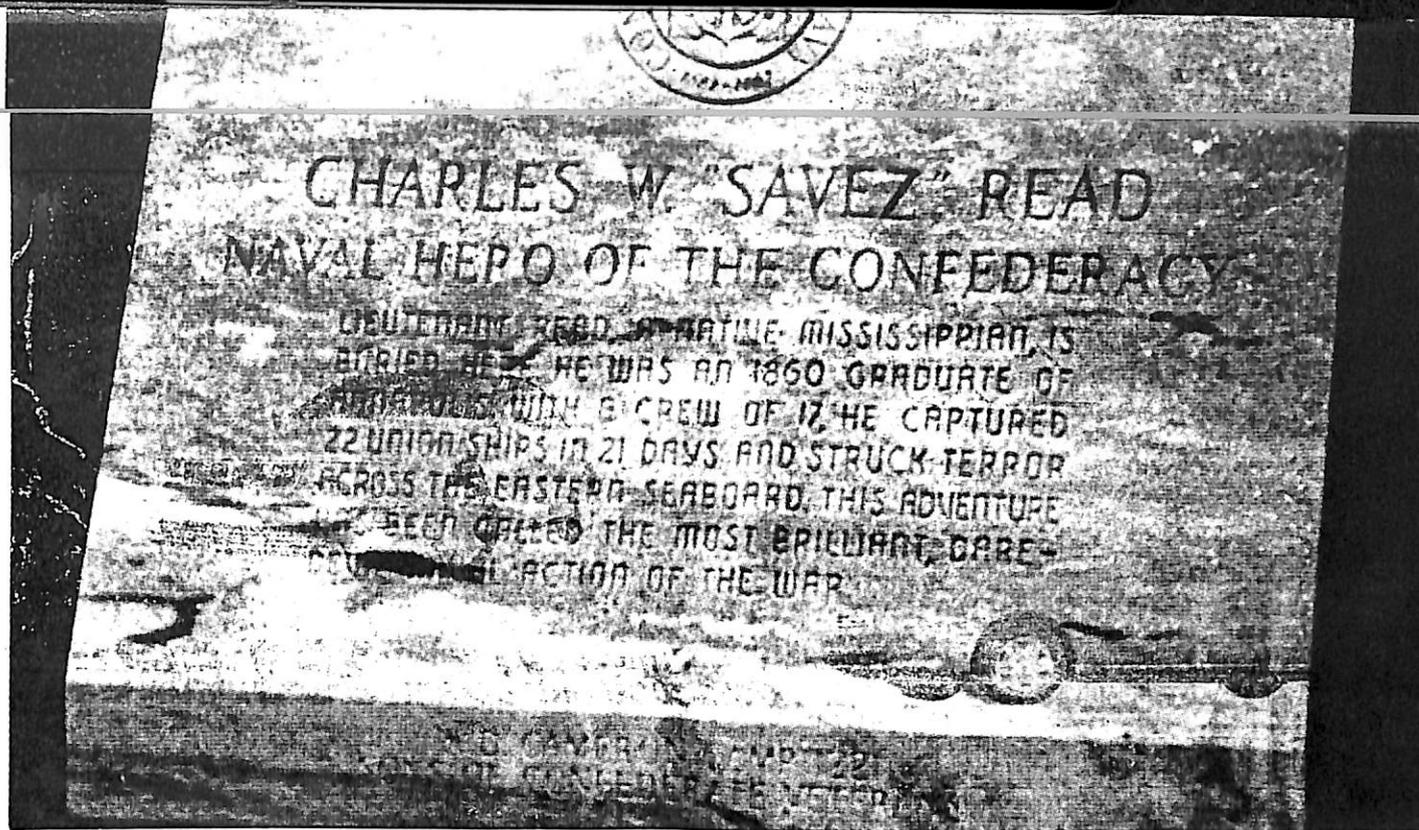
He requested that he be buried at Rose Hill when he

learned that a number of Confederate soldiers who had died at a local hospital during the war were interred there, according to Bill East, president of the Friends of Rose Hill Cemetery Inc.

The ceremony will include buglers, a bagpiper, live music and Civil War re-enactors.

At 11 a.m., the event will move to Meridian's Union Station for refreshments and entertainment hosted by biographer Clarke.

Clarke, a Meridian native who now lives in Houston,



A monument to Lt. Charles W. Read, the John Paul Jones of the Confederacy, will be dedicated Saturday in Meridian.

Jack Bertram/The Clarion-Ledger

"People write about admirals and generals — not about lieutenants and sergeants. Plus, a lot of people don't know the Confederacy even had a navy."

— Hewitt Clarke on why he believes Lt. Charles W. Read was largely forgotten by historians

Texas, says Read did some of the most dangerous things recorded in the war's naval campaigns.

During one 21-day period in 1863, according to Clarke, Read commandeered and commanded vessels that captured or destroyed more than 20 Union

ships along the east coast.

That action, according to the inscription on the monument, was considered "the most brilliant, daredevil naval action of the war."

And in the declining days of the conflict, at the helm of the

CSS *William Webb*, "Savvy" (or "Savez") Read again ran a Union naval blockade, this time sailing 300 miles, flying the U.S. flag, down the Mississippi to New Orleans.

There, finally identified as the enemy, Read raised the Confederate flag because he "wanted to go down with his colors flying," says Clarke.

Three times, Read was captured and imprisoned by the enemy, only to escape or be released and "go right back at (the Union's) throats again," says East, who with wife Mary authored and published *Lt. Charles Read and the Men in*

Grey Who Rest in Rose Hill Cemetery.

And Read's adventures did not end with the war, as he became a merchant seaman and engaged in smuggling in the Caribbean.

Read, a recipient of the Confederate Medal of Honor, "was a daredevil, adventurous and innovative. He would try anything," says East.

Read tales are legion and legend, and all is documented in Clarke's recently-published *He Saw the Elephant, Confederate Naval Saga of Lt. Charles "Savvy" Read*, CSN.

See NAVAL, 3E

Naval: Commander to be honored in ceremony

From 1E

The title comes from the expression "going to see the elephant," which originated during the 1849 California Gold Rush and "meant something really dangerous and adventurous," says Clarke.

Clarke says he came across Read's story while researching two previously-published books on regional history, *Bloody Kemper*, an account of early lawlessness in that east Mississippi county, and *Thunder Over Meridian*, a history of the city and area.

And the author says he believes Read was largely forgotten by historians due to his rank. "People write about admirals and generals," he says, "not about lieutenants and sergeants. Plus, a lot of people don't know the Confederacy even had a navy."

Read's connection to Jackson is strong, Clarke adds.

The naval hero, who also has family ties to Raymond and Edwards, lived here between the ages of 6 and 16, at which time he received an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Those "formative" Jackson years, says Clarke, included a stint, at age 15, as a printer's devil for the local *Mississippian*, then the largest newspaper in the state, which also printed the precocious Read's *The Scraps of Young America*, an often-irreverent social commentary.

The Clarke book is one of three recent titles to appear on Read.

The others are *Confederate Corsair: The Life of Lt. Charles W. "Savez" Read* by Robert A. Jones and *Sea Hawk of the Confederacy: Lt. Charles W. Read and the Confederate Navy* by R. Thomas Campbell.

John L. Read Jr. of Santa Fe, N.M., a great-nephew of the naval

hero, says there seems to have been a surge of interest in Charles Read's life and exploits over the past few years.

"We're very excited about the ceremony," he said, adding that the event will provide a number of the descendants the opportunity to meet distant relatives for the first time.

John Read's sister, Eleanor D'Antoni of Pass Christian, also is planning to attend.

She says that, among her ancestor's exploits, she found his massive capture of Union ships "up and down the east coast" in 1863 to be the most fascinating.

The Rebel naval hero "was considered a pirate" by the federal government for those actions, she says.

While in Mississippi and other compass points south, Charles Read would finally be known and honored.

The PAUL JONES of MISSISSIPPI

The Brilliant but Forgotten Exploits of Charles W. Read,
a Yazoo Boy, Whose Amazing Adventures Sound
Like Some Romance of the Sea.

By WALTER SCOTT MERIWETHER

In the last issue of The Sun we called attention to a forthcoming feature, the story of the amazing exploits of a young Mississippi Navy officer—one born in the Delta—whose brilliant deeds history had entirely overlooked. The career of this strippling, he was but a boy in years, are more thrilling than those of any dime novel dare devil or movie hero, a youthful sea captain, audacious as Paul Jones and more ingenious and resourceful. Here is his name, Charles W. Read. You will puzzle over it awhile, then shake your head and say you never heard tell of him.

Quoting from our foreword: "Admiral Dewey said of Read that he was of the highest type of navy officer this nation ever produced. Admiral Dewey ought to have known. He was classmate of the hero of this tale and this same classmate of his had sunk the ship on which Dewey was serving. But although this young Confederate navy officer subsequently captured and destroyed 23 ships of the enemy and in an unarmed fishing vessel, captured a man-of-war that was being specially fitted out to capture him, naval historians have made no mention of his exploits. The only reason the author has found for this curious oversight is that Read's spectacular raid took place during the Gettysburg campaign, was overshadowed by that and subsequently forgotten."

A word of explanation about the compilation of the facts that make up this thrilling story of Read's exploits

ran the blockade and resumed her raids against the shipping of the north. It was a few months later, on May 6, 1863, to be exact, that the Florida captured off the coast of South America, the Yankee brig Clarence, coffee laden and bound from Rio to Boston.

Beginning of the Adventure

From this point now begins the narrative of Read's raid against northern shipping, an account written by this author a short time ago for the Munsey Magazine, and which by courtesy of the editor of that publication is herewith reproduced. This is the one that had required so much research to piece together. It is as follows:

The captured brig was finely modeled and had such a wide spread of canvas that it was only the triumph of steam over the light breezes of that latitude which enabled the Florida to overhaul her.

Looking at her fine lines and ample display of canvas, Read went to his commander with a request that seemed an extravagant absurdity. It was that the brig should be fitted out as another raider and put under the young officer's command.

The captain hesitated. He thought of Read's youth and comparative inexperience. He thought, moreover, of the complications of marine international law, and how well one must be versed in that intricate code to distinguish the rights of neutrals and to know to what extent cargoes shipped by neutrals but carried in an enemy's ship must be respected. Moreover, the brig would need a crew and a battery, and he could ill spare

Mississippi River. In looking over her papers, Read found that she had been insured by the Federal government for \$14,800.

Set on his way in chase of another said that had been sighted to the northward. The breeze, which had fallen light, died to a calm, and it was not until the next day that he came up with the stranger. She proved to be the schooner Alfred H. Partridge, of New York, bound for Matamoras, Mexico. The schooner was laden with arms and clothing for the enemy, and the captain's bond for five thousand dollars was accepted as a guarantee for the safe delivery of the cargo to citizens of the Confederate States.

This capture was effected on June 7. The next prize was made two days later, when the brig Mary Alvina, bound from Boston to New Orleans, and laden with commissary stores for the Federal fleet, was captured after an exciting chase. Four days went by without bringing any new prizes, and then the average was restored by three made in one day.

The first of these was the schooner Schindler, of Philadelphia, captured on the morning of June 12. A few hours later the Kate Stewart, another Philadelphia tern, came idling down the wind and was made a prize. Their crews swelled the number of prisoners on board the Clarence to a dangerous proportion, and when the bark Tacony hove in sight and was captured after a short chase, Read realized that he must make a cartel of one of his prizes and transfer his prisoners to her.

He also realized that these would immediately spread the alarm of a brig marauding off the coast, and that a fleet of Federal cruisers would promptly be searching for the Clarence and holding up everything of a brig rig. To meet this danger, he decided on a plan as original as it was audacious.

(To be continued.)

THE MISSISSIPPI SUN, CHARLESTON

The PAUL JONES of MISSISSIPPI

The Brilliant but Forgotten Exploits of Charles W. Read,
a Yazoo Boy, Whose Amazing Adventures Sound
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By WALTER SCOTT MERIWETHER

In the preceding chapter of these memoirs of the youthful Mississippi-an whose exploits rival any of Paul Jones, Read's career on the Confederate ram Arkansas was sketched and it was told how after the destruction of that vessel he was ordered to the Confederate commerce destroyer Florida. Soon afterwards that celebrated raider captured the Clarence, a fast sailing Yankee brig. Although he was only 20 years of age, Read persuaded the gray-bearded commander to fit out the brig as a raider and give him command of the vessel. With 20 volunteers from the Florida and a small cannon, Read set out upon his adventure, setting his course from off Bahia, where the Clarence had been captured, for the Atlantic seaboard of the United States. By the time he reached the latitude of Cape Hatteras, he had captured and burned so many ships of the enemy that his little vessel was crowded with prisoners and it was necessary to get rid of them in some way. This was the predicament he was in when the capture of three more vessels made on the evening of June 12, 1863, added to the burden of the over-crowded brig. Two of the prizes were schooners, the other a black-hulled bark.

Now go on with the story.

Putting his prisoners on one of the schooners, he burned the other. Then, after the hurrying cartel was out of sight, he proceeded to the execution of his plan; this being to trans-

Frohoch could not catch the name. "What ship is that?"

The former master of the Alvina confessed his admiration at the audacity of the reply, which was:

"This is the American brig Mary Alvina, from Boston for New Orleans, with stores for the blockading fleet."

From the war-ship was roared an order to heave to and prepare to receive a boat. At this point Frohoch, who had been paroled as a prisoner at large, was ordered to join the other prisoners below, and a guard was placed over them. Within an hour or so he was released, and Read, who seems to have been a cheerful young humorist, told him what had happened.

It appears that the boarding officer and ten men of an armed boat's crew came on board the Clarence. Read, who had hurriedly drawn on a sou'wester and a suit of oilskins to conceal his naval uniform of Confederate gray, escorted the officer to his cabin and produced the papers of the Alvina, which he had taken from the brig at the time of her capture. While awaiting the coming of the boat he had detailed his first officer to post the Alvina's log to date—a work hurriedly done, but sufficient for the deception.

The Federal officer glanced over the manifest and log, noted the last entry, accepted a glass of sherry, and, tendering his apologies for delaying Admiral Faragut's stores, got into his boat and was rowed away.

This thrilling story of Read's exploits at sea. Some years ago the author of the narrative, now editor of this paper, was a guest on board the battleship Alabama. One of her officers, the late captain John Henderson, hearing that the guest was from Mississippi, told him of this other Mississippian, he having obtained the little he knew from one who had sailed with Read on his daring raid. Picking up the clew from that point, and getting into communications with others who had been active in the sea drama which Read had unrolled, the author was enabled to piece together the history of an adventure, one dramatic as any that ever sailed through the pages of fiction.

Born in Yazoo County and educated at Annapolis, Read was 19 years of age when the Civil War broke out. He was then a midshipman serving on the U. S. S. Powhatan. When the news of Mississippi's secession reached that vessel—he was then in Mexican waters—he resigned his commission, reported to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy and was assigned to duty in his native state, his first naval detail being to the ram Arkansas, then under construction on the banks of the Yazoo River near which Read had been born.

Two gallant navy officers who had been well known in this immediate section, were closely associated with Read during the early part of his Navy career. One of these was Captain Isaac N. Brown, born and reared near Grenada; the other was Dabney M. Scales who recently died in Memphis. At the outbreak of the war Captain Brown was wearing the blue uniform of a United States Navy officer, in which service he had won distinction as an officer of exceptional ability and great intrepidity. He promptly resigned his commission to join the Confederacy and in May, 1862, was ordered to assume command of the Arkansas, which was under construction at Greenwood, at the head of the Yazoo River.

As history has told how that famous vessel went down the Yazoo and single-handed gave battle to Farragut's entire fleet, we will not take up much space with her doings on that smoke-blown 15th of July, when Brown drove his ironclad straight through the Federal fleet, with storms of shot and shell smashing

men or guns. But the young Mississippian managed to meet all objections, undertaking to get along with few men and only one gun, if only one could be spared. Eventually Maffit gave consent. One of the Florida's engineers, Eugene H. Brown, volunteered to join the adventure, as did J. E. Billups, quartermaster; N. B. Price, quarter gunner; J. W. Matthewson, carpenter, and eighteen seamen—Joseph Mays, Charles Lawson, J. P. Murphy, Robert Miller, James McLeod, J. Robertson, A. L. Drayton, George Thomas, Robert Hunt, Alexander Stewart, M. Gorman, Robert Murray, C. W. Devlin, Hugh McDaniels, Fred Wilton, James McNary.

Six rifles, thirteen revolvers, ten pistols, and four cutlasses made up the small-arm equipment of the party. The only gun Maffit felt he could spare was a small boat-howitzer, a weapon not much larger than the tiny brass cannon which modern yachts carry for saluting purposes. To make up for this deficiency in guns the enterprising Read borrowed some spare spars from the Florida and out of these fashioned half a dozen "Quaker guns"—make-believe cannon which he mounted about the deck, and which gave his little brig the appearance of being heavily armed.

Read, with his scanty crew and his single gun, having been transferred to the brig, the Confederate flag was hoisted at her gaff; but as powder was too precious to waste in salutes, that formality was foregone. The Florida, to which the former crew of the brig had been transferred, signaled "Good Luck!" and stood on to the southward, the brig at the same time sheeting home her sails and setting her course to the north.

The Cruise of the Clarence

All the seaports of the Confederacy were then closely blockaded by the Northern fleets. It was Read's intention to make a raid upon the unsuspecting shipping which had been plying in safety outside that iron cordon.

Over the smooth waters of the Caribbean the brig glided, her look-outs on the topsail alert for any sail; but none was sighted until the Windward Passage was reached. There, anchored in a bight, was a sloop of war from whose gaff rippled the Stars and Stripes. Read

black hulled, bluff-bowed bark, to sink the nimble little Clarence, and thus to befog pursuers. With released prisoners spreading the alarm of a clean-lined, white-painted brig, what pursuer would think of investigating a lumbering, black-hulled bark?

It was with many regrets that Read quitted his little craft. He had found her the fleetest of her type float, but he did not know whether it was the wit of man or the finger of good fortune which had fashioned her on such lines as to enable her to outsail her betters. Whichever it was, she took the secret of it with her, Read scuttling the brig after making his transfer to the bark.

After watching the Schindler burn, Read sheeted home the dingy sails of the somber bark and set out in pursuit of a sail. Being overhauled, his next victim proved to be the bark Arabella, an enemy ship, but carrying no cargo shipped by neutrals. She was bonded for thirty thousand dollars and allowed to proceed.

Although Read had been lighting bonfires all the way from Cuba to Hatteras, no knowledge of his depredations had reached shore. The first news came when the cartel schooner landed the prisoners. Among them was Captain Munday, master of the Tacony. He lost no time in taking a train for Washington, and on arrival there made breathless report of a "pirate" who was capturing and burning right and left.

In the papers of the Southern Historical Society, published in Richmond in 1895, there is contained the only connected reference to Read's raid along the coast which I have been able to find. Describing the sensation which the unexpected news of his depredations had caused, the writer says:

"Nothing could better illustrate the power and splendid resources of the United States government at this time, and the magnificent discipline of the Navy Department, than the fact that notwithstanding they were blockading with an iron cordon a coast of three thousand miles, and occupying the inland rivers to the extent of five thousand miles, and had twenty-five cruisers in search of the Confederate steamers Alabama and Florida, in less than three days from the publication of the news of the an-

reminiscently added, "graduated fully twenty numbers ahead of me!"

This recalls a description of Read's Annapolis days, given to the writer by Colonel John M. Morgan, of Washington, who knew Read as a student.

"French was one of the studies then, as it is now," the colonel said: "but the only French word Read could master was 'savez,' and as a consequence he bore it as a nickname, being Savez Read to all his intimates. He so little distinguished himself in his other studies that after four years of tremendous effort, he triumphantly graduated at the foot of his class."

It may be noted, however, that even so Read did better than one of his classmates whose name has found an enduring place in American history; for William Barker Cushing, famous as destroyer of the Albatross, was "bilged" at Annapolis on account of his failure to pass his examination.

The Exploits of the Tacony

Although sluggish in looks, with her bluff bows and clumsy stern, the Tacony proved to be a fast sailer, and there was no enemy craft coming in sight that Read did not overhaul. Warned to look out for a white-hulled brig, skippers were unaware of the danger that lay hidden in a lumbering, black-hulled bark. The first intimation was the bang of the toy gun and the flag of the Confederate States at the gaff.

The brig Umpire, from Cardenas for Boston, made a fine bonfire with her cargo of rum, sugar, and molasses. The fine packet-ship Isaac Webb, from Liverpool for New York, thronged with seven hundred and fifty passengers, was cried halt off Sandy Hook and made a hostage. Read would have burned her, but was prevented by his scrupulous regard for the safety of her passengers. Having no way of disposing of them, he was reluctantly compelled to let the vessel go, in bond for forty thousand dollars.

He took occasion to transfer to the packet the prisoners who were encumbering his own ship, the crews of half a dozen prizes. No Confederate raider ever violated the law that forbids endangering the lives of sailors or passengers on a captured merchantman.

In its issue of June 23, 1862,

worked guns carrying death and destruction to the wooden ships, whose active batteries were making the ram look as though she was the center of a school of spouting whales. Read as a lieutenant and Scales as a midshipman, served under Capt. Brown in that action and in his report he highly commended their conduct.

Built within sight of the pleasant little city where the Mississippi Press Association recently held its annual convention, the Arkansas raised the siege of Vicksburg and dispersed the greatest naval force that had ever been assembled in the waters of America, the lower blockading fleet steaming for the gulf, the upper one to the northern reaches of the great river. Suffering from the wounds he had received in battle, Captain Brown then sought a few days' rest at his Grenada home. While there Van Dorn ordered that the Arkansas be sent to Baton Rouge to aid in a land attack on the Federal forces there, and to be there without fail at a certain hour. In her desperate run of 300 miles against time, her already crippled engines went all to pieces and the Arkansas went hopelessly aground. The ironclad Essex, which had been sent to attack the helpless vessel, appearing in sight, the crew was sent on shore, and the stranded warrior was set on fire "and with flying colors, the gallant Arkansas, whose decks had never been pressed by the foot of an enemy, was blown into the air."

It was in this baptism of fire and blood that young Read began his career as a Confederate navy officer. After the destruction of the Arkansas he was ordered to the Confederate commerce-destroyer Florida, then blockaded in Mobile and under the command of Captain J. Newland Maffitt. It was shortly after he had reported for duty that the Florida

those on the corvette never suspecting that the little brig slipping by with so meek an aspect carried an unimportant gun on her deck and an important secret in her heart.

Clearing the Passage, the brig found a strong north wind—one that held for several days. It was a wind good enough for sailing craft bound to the southward, but one that drove north-bound vessels scattering to east and west with yards braced stiff, tacks boarded, and sheets billowing aft. It sent the Clarence slanting alternately to the eastward and westward as she tacked up the coast.

It was while she was buffeting against this head wind that a sail was descried bowling along before it. Narrowly watching her approach, Read so laid his course as to bring the Clarence across the bow of the stranger. Then came the bang of the toy gun and the hoisting of the Confederate flag at the gaff.

The stranger, which was seen to be of the same rig as the Clarence, was so little impressed by the faint thud of the toy weapon and the little bulb of white smoke streaming away to leeward that she decided to try her heels against those of the challenger, and hurriedly sent studdingsails aloft. Meanwhile the Clarence had wheeled and was also running before the wind. With the fugitive on his port beam and but a short pistol-shot away, Read soon saw that his nimble racer had no need of extra canvas to outsail the chase.

When the little gun banged again, throwing a shot about as big as a baseball across the bow of the chase, the fugitive saw that there was no chance of running away, and reluctantly took in her studdingsails and hove to to await the pleasure of her captor. She proved to be the brig Whistling Wind, bound for New Orleans, and laden with coal for Farragut's fleet, then operating in the

vicinity of the Clarence there were thirty-two armed vessels out on the high seas in search of her. Four left Hampton Roads on the night of June 13, five left New York on the morning of the 14th, and the remaining twenty-three got out from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Hampton Roads on the 15th and 16th.

"In the next ten days—till June 25—there were fifteen more vessels sent out after her, in obedience to the urgent appeals, petitions, and clamors of the owners, underwriters, and chambers of commerce of the various seaboard cities along the Northern coast, whose commerce was being destroyed. To understand fully the almost panic effect in these cities, it might be well to say that they had been comparatively free from such a visitation so close at home."

Read Hoodwinks a Federal Captain

Another of those landed by the cartel schooner was Captain Frohoch, of the brig Mary Alvina, who recorded his experience while a prisoner on the Clarence. On the night after his capture a strange sail was sighted close aboard. Frohoch was expecting to see another capture and subsequent bonfire. He was leaning over the rail, gazing in the direction of the stranger, when one of Read's quartermasters came to him and warned him not to attempt to hail the vessel.

At the same time he noted that the Clarence was not making any effort to close with the strange ship, and that the crew of the privateer were suddenly very busy about decks. The Quaker guns were being dismantled and tumbled into the hold, and the howitzer was being disposed of in the same way. The night was so dark and the weather so thick that only the loom of the stranger could be seen, but Read's keen eye had detected her character. Frohoch understood what the commotion on deck had meant, and why a grim quartermaster was standing by his side, when out of the darkness roared a hail:

"This is the United States ship—"

Now go on with the story. Putting his prisoners on one of the schooners, he burned the other. Then, after the hurrying cartel was out of sight, he proceeded to the execution of his plan; this being to trans-

New York Herald. Webb in port, arrival of the Isaac Webb in port, editorially commented on the fact that the vessel had been captured only a short distance from New York, and urged that the Navy Department should furnish protection to the city. A news despatch of the following day, dated from Chatham, Massachusetts, furnished material for another editorial demand for action against the rover:

The fishing-schooner Juliette, of Beverly, Captain Mallows, arrived here this afternoon. She reports having spoken schooner Florence, of Gloucester, this morning. She had on board one hundred and fifty prisoners from the privateer bark Tacony, which took the Florence yesterday, bonded her, and ordered her to New York with the prisoners. The Tacony took and burned six schooners yesterday, belonging to Gloucester, and three ships—the Saratoga, the Paraguay, and one other, name unknown.

A Newport despatch of the following day told of the arrival there of the schooner Sarah E. Snow, with news that the Tacony had fallen in with a fleet of ten schooners off Hyannis, and had captured and burned them all. Of the ten, the captain of the Snow could identify only the Wanderer, the Ripple, the Rufus Choate, the Elizabeth, the Ann, and the Marengo. On the same day a Wellfleet schooner reported the burning of the clipper-ship Byzantium and the bark Goodspeed.

It was while this fleet was going up in smoke that excited citizens of Boston offered to charter private vessels at their own expense and send them in search of the "pirate," if the Navy Department would furnish guns. The department readily responded to the appeal, and offered to provide guns and officers for any vessels engaged by private charter. Commandants of navy-yards were also ordered to charter, arm and equip any available steamers and send them in pursuit of the raider.

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and, tendering his apologies for de-
laying Admiral Faragut's stores, got
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Even the practice-ships of the Naval Academy were requisitioned and sent out.

(To be continued.)

JONES

of MISSISSIPPI

The Brilliant but Forgotten Exploits of Charles W. Read, a Yazoo Boy, Whose Amazing Adventures Sound Like Some Romance of the Sea.

By WALTER SCOTT MERIWETHER

SYNOPSIS OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

In the preceding chapters of this memoir of Captain Charles W. Read, Confederate States Navy, it was told how this 19-year old Mississippian—then a midshipman—had resigned from the U. S. Navy at the outbreak of the Civil War, joined the Confederacy, fought with the late Dabney M. Scales on the ram Arkansas, commanded by Captain Isaac Brown, of Grenada, was next detailed to the Confederate raider Florida and then placed in command of the fast sailing brig Clarence, which the Florida had captured.

With a scanty crew borrowed from the Florida and one small cannon, Read began his raid against Northern shipping. His little vessel was soon so crowded with prisoners that he was forced to disclose his presence on the Atlantic by sending his prisoners on shore. As he had anticipated they gave the alarm and a full description of his brig. To be fog pursued he transferred himself and crew to the bark Tacony, a vessel of a totally different rig, which he had captured soon after getting rid of his prisoners, and while some 40-odd ships of war were searching for the vessel the prisoners had de-

ers would release the imprisoned men.

The Capture of the Caleb Cushing
Midnight came, and with muffled oars the two boats pulled for the cutter. Engineer Eugene H. Brown, who commanded one of them, sprang aboard the Cushing from the port side, Read at the same time boarding from the starboard side. Swift and silent, the two parties gained the deck of the cutter, and within a minute or so the watch had been disarmed and placed in irons.

Hearing the noise on deck, Lieutenant Davenport came running up the companionway, to be met by Read, who presented a revolver and told him that his vessel was a prize of the Confederate cruiser Archer. The lieutenant had been dreaming of capturing the Tacony, and here he was captured by an enemy vessel of which he had never heard!

The rest of the crew were quickly made prisoners and put below under an armed guard, and then the expeditionary Read began to get his prize under way. But for once his phenomenal luck failed him. The tide had turned earlier than he had expected, and as there was not a breath of wind, it became necessary to tow the cutter out if she was to be got out at all.

The cable was slipped, and the boats which had brought the attacking party began the long, heart-breaking pull against a rapidly flowing tide. There were sturdy hearts beneath the jackets of Read's seamen, and down saw the cutter

The PAUL JONES

of MISSISSIPPI

The Brilliant but Forgotten Exploits of Charles W. Read, a Yazoo Boy, Whose Amazing Adventures Sound Like Some Romance of the Sea.

By WALTER SCOTT MERIWETHER

SYNOPSIS OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

In the preceding chapters of this memoir of Captain Charles W. Read, Confederate States Navy, it was told how this 19-year old Mississippian—then a midshipman—had resigned from the U. S. Navy at the outbreak of the Civil War, joined the Confederacy, fought with the late Dabney M. Scales on the ram Arkansas, commanded by Captain Isaac Brown, of Grenada, was next detailed to the Confederate raider Florida and then placed in command of the fast sailing brig Clarence, which the Florida had captured.

With a scanty crew borrowed from the Florida and one small cannon, Read began his raid against Northern shipping. His little vessel was soon so crowded with prisoners that he was forced to disclose his presence on the Atlantic by sending his prisoners on shore. As he had anticipated they gave the alarm and a full description of his brig. To be fog pursued he transferred himself and crew to the bark Tacony, a vessel of a totally different rig, which he had captured soon after getting rid of his prisoners, and while some 40-odd ships of war were searching for the vessel the prisoners had described, Read continued his raid on board the bark Tacony. Then the capture of a packet ship laden with passengers, which he was compelled to release as he had no room for the passengers,

ter on fire in a dozen places and waited until the flames had gained headway before leaving her.

Fearing that the magazine would explode, the Federal flotilla lay off until the Cushing blew up, and then rowed in and took Read and his men prisoners. Thus ended the cruise of the Clarence-Tacony-Archer-Cushing.

So great was the excitement in Portland when Read was taken ashore that Major Andrews immediately recommended to the War Department "that the prisoners be sent from here as quietly and as expeditiously as possible. I do not think it safe," he added, "for them to be placed in the custody of citizens."

Read was accordingly transferred to Fort Warren, in Boston Harbor. He had as a fellow prisoner Lieutenant Alexander, a young Confederate infantry officer who had been captured in one of the battles in Virginia.

The Escape from Fort Warren
Read proposed a plan of escape; and after months of secret toil on the hard masonry of their cell, the two Southerners managed to make an opening sufficiently large for them to pass through. The following night found them crouched on the parapet, waiting for the sergeant of the guard to complete his midnight round, before making his midnight descent the wall by means of a rope which they had made out of their blankets. The tramp of the guard was heard, and the two dived under

way through the rear of a hard-fighting Federal army and then to make in a country occupied by the enemy and with nothing larger than light boats, an assault on an armored fleet which not only had the protection of its own guns but was covered by numerous and formidable shore batteries.

But it was just the kind of enterprise that appealed to the young sailor or from Mississippi. At the head of one hundred officers and men he sailed out from Drewry's Bluff on the morning of February 10, 1865. The boats had been placed on wagon wheels, four mules drawing each craft.

The weather, which had been bitterly cold at the start, turned into a blinding storm of sleet, which glazed the roads that their mules could make no progress. The party sought shelter in a deserted farmhouse, and on the next day resumed its march, fortune so far favoring the adventurers that the storm had kept the enemy's foraging parties close to their own camps.

The third night found Read and his men within a few hours' march of the point where the boats were to have been launched. Although foot sore and half frozen, the band was intact save for the absence of a sailor named Lewis, who had been sent ahead to reconnoiter. He was to have met the party at the rendezvous which it had reached, and to have piloted it on to the James.

The Treachery of Lewis
The hours wore on, and no Lewis appeared. The man had been making a Northern vessel which had been lying in Norfolk at the time of Virginia's secession, and had left his ship to join the Confederate service. There was no suspicion that he was a traitor until a sentry hailed a hurrying oncomer, who identified himself as an escaped Confederate prisoner. It appeared that he had already perfected his plans for escape when Lewis reached the Federal lines and betrayed the Confederates' plans to the officer in command there. An entire regiment of Northern infantry

board the bark Tacony. Then the capture of a packet ship laden with passengers, which he was compelled to release as he had no room for the passengers, sent the Federal cruisers in hot pursuit of the Tacony.

Now go on with the story.

Meanwhile the Tacony continued to parade the high seas in search of prizes. In those days news did not travel by wireless and comparatively little went by wire. Most of the vessels which Read captured had never heard of him or the Clarence or the Tacony until the peremptory bang of the little howitzer made demand for surrender.

On the day that New York was demanding ironclads for defense against the raider Read was engaged in burning two fishing-schooners which he had captured off Cape Cod. On the following day a large ship was sighted coming in from the eastward. The Tacony sauntered across her path, then hauled on the wind, fired a shot across the stranger's bow, and ran up the Confederate flag. The ship promptly laid her mainsail aback, and Read, with an armed boat's crew, went on board.

He found that he had captured another white elephant—the clipper-ship Shatemuc, from Liverpool for Boston, crowded with immigrants. Read placed his prisoners on board, bonded the vessel for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and permitted her to proceed.

Knowing that black-hulled barks would henceforth be resting under the suspicion which had attached to white-painted brigs, Read decided to make another change similar to his move from the Clarence to the Tacony. To make the new disguise effective, he barred from his calculations everything of brig or bark rig, no matter what color it might be painted. So when fortune sent him the Gloucester schooner Archer, he forthwith transferred to the schooner, scuttling the Tacony as he had scuttled the Clarence.

In a New Masquerade.

In his new masquerade he cheerfully misinformed two eager gun-boats which hailed to ask if he had seen anything of a white brig or a black bark. Assuring them that he had sighted neither, he proceeded on his way up the New England coast, and two days later was off Portland,

fair offing, and her sails being lowered to a little catspaw that was flurrying over the smooth water.

The Cushing was still beating, however, when the Boston carrying Captain Merriman came close by on its way to Portland. Merriman was on deck at the time and was puzzled to see the cutter, which he had been ordered to command, off the harbor entrance and under sail. As soon as the steamer reached its pier, the captain hastened ashore and began inquiries about the Cushing.

Meanwhile the Archer's signal of distress had been seen. Boatmen who hurried out to her heard the imprisoned crew banging on the battened hatches, and quickly released them. Their story, when they got ashore, speedily convinced Merriman that the vessel which had been selected to capture Read had itself been captured by that enterprising youngster.

The Pursuit of the Cushing

The news rapidly spread, and the wildest excitement thrilled through Portland. At Fort Preble, under the very guns of which Read had towed out his prize, there was quartered a detachment of regular infantry, under the command of Major Andrews. Word was hurried to that officer, and at the same time Colonel Mason, commanding the volunteers assembled at Camp Lincoln, was notified of Read's astonishing exploit, and a request was made for such men and artillery as he could furnish.

The collector of the port also requisitioned three steam-vessels which were in harbor at the time, these being the Forest City, which had but lately passed the captured cutter while on her way in from Boston; the steamer Chesapeake, and a tug. Eager to gain possession of the vessel which he had been ordered to command, Captain Merriman hurried on board the Forest City. With him went Lieutenant Richardson and fourteen men of the cutter, who had been on shore during the night of the capture. Two pieces of artillery and forty armed volunteers completed the war complement of the merchant steamer.

In tearing haste to make reprisal, the Forest City lost no time in casting off her lines; and with the tug valiantly leading the way, she

sum of the Tacony.

As the Federal cruisers would have been chasing everything of bark rig, Read decided to make quick work of her to a vessel of different rig—as soon as he could capture one. But his next prize was a big clipper ship, laden with passengers. He had no room for her passengers, so very regretfully he let her go—in bond. But that night he had the good luck to capture the schooner Archer. Transferring to her he sailed into the harbor of Portland, Me., and that night cut out the heavily armed revenue cutter Cushing which was being hurriedly fitted out to pursue the Tacony. He got safely out of harbor with his prize. Then the wind failed and the cutter—she was a sailing vessel—was becalmed, when two armed steam vessels, the Chesapeake and Forest City, put out from Portland to attack him.

Now go on with the story.

Read had found that the battery of the cutter comprised one thirty-two pounder and a twelve-pounder howitzer; but he had been unable to find any ammunition for either gun except two rounds which he had discovered in the quarter-gunner's chest alongside the heavy piece. The thirty-two pounder was charged with one of the two shots, and a desperate effort was made to find the rest of the ammunition. The prisoners were questioned, but they loyally refused to disclose the whereabouts of the magazine.

Read armed a squad with axes, and sent them to smash in the doors of every locked compartment and to rummage in all the holds for ammunition. The physical exhaustion and nervous strain under which he had been for so long a time would seem to account for his failure to undertake this vital search before.

Meanwhile the Forest City had come within range of the Cushing's long gun. Believing that his men would find the magazine, Read sighted the piece and pulled the lanyard himself. The thirty-two pound ball fell so close to the Forest City that the splash from it threw a shower of spray over her decks.

Read is Forced to Surrender

The nearness of the shot had no effect upon Captain Merriman and his men of the cutter's crew, but it so

misty night, and the sentry going off watch ran his hand along his bayonet, to find it wet with the dampness of the air. Saying to the sergeant that he would dry his bayonet, he plunged it into the dunnage. With the weight of the heavy Springfield rifle behind it, the weapon went clean through Read's thigh; but never a muscle did the young Mississippian move, and not the slightest cry escaped him. The sentry might have jabbed his gun into the dunnage again had not the sergeant interrupted.

"You are a blankety fool," he said. "That dunnage is wetter than the air."

The sentry felt of the bayonet and agreed. It was wet, dripping wet—with blood; but it was too dark for either soldier to see, and without more ado the two passed on.

The moment they were gone the prisoners struggled from under the dunnage, quickly put their blanket rope in place, and as quickly descended. Although bleeding profusely, Read never even mentioned to his companion that he was wounded until the two had made their way into a small sloop, and had cast off its lines and hoisted sail. Then with the little sailing craft adrift in an enemy harbor, Read, the only one of the two who knew how to handle the sloop, suddenly fainted from loss of blood.

Lieutenant Alexander, knowing little about the management of boats, had a hard time trying to navigate the sloop and to resuscitate his wounded comrade. Read finally came around, and none too soon; for the friendly night, which had been screening the erratic movements of the sloop, had given way to dawn. The little craft was near the harbor entrance, but all too close to a fleet of fishing-boats, whose keen-eyed sailormen would quickly have detected something wrong in the army man's handling of the sloop, and would probably have ranged near the suspicious vessel to investigate.

Although dazed and weak from loss of blood, Read managed to steer safely past the fishermen. The fugitives' plan was to stand up the coast until nightfall, then to run in somewhere and trust to fortune for a chance to get a supply of water and provisions, neither of which they had. This accomplished, there is no telling but that the resourceful Read might

James, and Lewis was with them.

Read took his men into an adjacent wood, and, leaving orders that no fires should be lit, started out alone to investigate the truth of the report. If no word was heard from him by daylight, the expedition was to conclude he was killed or captured and to make the best of its way back to Richmond.

Before the stipulated hour arrived the crouching band was made aware that enemies were all around them. Reconnoitering parties who stealthily stole from out the wood, reported that all the roads were being occupied by Federal cavalry, and that apparently every avenue of escape had been cut off.

Then the young leader of the expedition suddenly reappeared. In brief sentences he explained that the situation was as it had been reported. He had discovered a guide who knew of a horseshoe bend in the river, the expeditious fording of which offered the only chance of escape from the rapidly closing cordon.

There was no time to be lost. Without more ado the Confederates followed their leader to the ford, and plunged into the chilly waters, to emerge with their clothes freezing to their bodies. By dint of incredible endurance they all managed to reach Richmond, where seventy-five of the hundred who had started landed in hospital, and many of them succumbed to the hardships they had endured.

Read's Last Service for the South.

The next chapter of Read's adventurous history takes us to Louisiana. Here, moored in the Red River, was a stoutly built side-wheel steamer, the Webb, which before the war had been used in New York Harbor as an ice-breaker. She had been purchased by New Orleans merchants, and on the outbreak of the war had retreated before the advance of the Federal fleet to a point where the blockading vessels could not reach her.

Read heard of the craft, and forthwith proposed to load her with cotton, run the blockade of the Federal fleet, capture the guard-ship at the mouth of the Mississippi River, proceed to Havana, sell the cargo, and then run the blockade into Galveston. The suggestion was accepted, and the dash of that lone vessel through the fleets of the enemy and past the bat-

Here he picked up two fishermen who, mistaking the rover for an excursion party, consented to pilot the schooner into the harbor. From the fisherman Read learned that the revenue cutter Caleb Cushing was in port, being fitted out to capture the Tacony, and the notion immediately came to him to cut out this vessel and use her in his future depredateions. Hitherto his commands had been peaceful merchantmen with no architectural adaptation for warfare on high seas, but here was a vessel suitably armed and specially built for the purpose.

In broad daylight the schooner entered the harbor and anchored near the Caleb Cushing. The latter was awaiting the arrival of Captain Merriman, of the revenue-cutter service, who had been ordered from Boston to take charge of the search for Read and the Tacony. Little did the crew of the government vessel suspect that Read and his band were within half cable's length of the cutter at the time.

In the evening Read made all his arrangements. He could place implicit confidence in every one of his followers. After nightfall he summoned the men aft and told them of his intention of capturing the cutter. After assigning them to the two boats to be used in the cutting out expedition, he told all hands to pack up such belongings as they wished to take with them, as he meant to leave the schooner behind.

This intention of risking all on the hazard of the adventure is merely another illustration of Read's audacious spirit. The young commander's regard for the safety of non-combatants was shown when he took measures to provide for the release of the original crew of the Archer, whom he had put in the fore-castle underatches battened down. Before pushing off in the boats he had the schooner's flag run up at the gaff and hoisted union down, knowing that the signal would be seen as soon as daylight dawned, and that rescu-

erugged out of harbor in pursuit of Read and his sea-rovers. The Chesapeake, which had been delayed by the building of deck barricades, was not long in following.

The barricades on the Chesapeake consisted of fifty bales of cotton. Through the embrasures glowered the muzzles of two pieces of field-artillery, and behind them nodded the plumes and glittered the rifles of Colonel Mason's Seventh Regiment of Maine Volunteers. Supporting the Volunteers were fifty citizens heavily armed with shotguns, rifles, revolvers, swords, and other paraphernalia of slaughter.

Meanwhile Read and his crew, although on the verge of exhaustion after their long hours of toil at the oars, had managed to work the cutter well out of range of the guns of Fort Preble. Seeing the three steam vessels hurrying toward him, he cleared his becalmed sailing vessel for action and grimly awaited the onset of desperate odds.

(To be continued.)

moderated the enthusiasm of the volunteers who had volunteered for the cause, that they made immediate and clamorous protest against the folly, just then realized, of a frail merchant steamer making attack upon a band of deep-sea desperadoes ensconced on an armed vessel specially built for purposes of war. Captain Merriman insisted on closing with the Cushing; but moved by the clamor of the volunteers, and by thoughts of the risk to his own ship, the captain of the Forest City decided to haul off and wait for the cooperation of the Chesapeake.

Anon the Chesapeake, with her cotton bale armor, brass cannon, and bayonets, came lumbering to the scene. She ranged close to the Forest City, and there was a council of war. The military advice prevailed. It was decided to attack the Cushing again, and either to run her down or to capture her by sending the soldiers swarming over her decks.

Read's phenomenal luck had deserted him at last. The Cushing actually had on board more than a hundred rounds of ammunition for each of its two guns, but search as they might his men could not find the hidden storage-place. Had they discovered it, he would doubtless have beaten off his assailants, or even destroyed them, for the cutter's weapons were far heavier than those of the attacking vessels, and Read's men, trained to battery-work on the Florida, were skilled gunners.

All that he could do was to fire his one remaining shot. Its effect was to cause the pursuers to abandon the idea of running down the Cushing and to make the assault in a flotilla of small boats. Through his glasses Read could count the overwhelming number of his enemies, and, realizing that the game was up, he deliberately began his preparations for destroying the prize. Lowering a boat, he marshaled all his prisoners into it and flung them the keys of their irons, so that they could liberate themselves. Then, launching the two remaining boats, he set the cut-

CHARLESTON, MISS., FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 1921.

have converted the little sloop into a raider.

Before nightfall came, however, he was in the delirium of high fever, and his companion had all he could do to prevent him from plunging overboard. Outworn by hunger, thirst, and the long vigil, Lieutenant Alexander was aroused from a fitful sleep to find a man-of-war's cutter alongside. The slatting sail of the unguided sloop had attracted the attention of one of the Federal cruisers, and a boat had been sent to investigate. The two Confederates were put on board the cruiser and taken back to Boston, but not until arrival there did her officers know who the prisoners were.

To guard against any further efforts at escape, Read was put in close confinement, and was kept a prisoner under heavy guard until the last stages of the war. Jefferson Davis, from whom he had secured his appointment to the Naval Academy, managed to effect an exchange for his protegee.

A Forlorn Hope on the James River
Emaciated by his long captivity and with the prison pallor on his face, but with spirit still undaunted, Read reached Richmond at an hour when the war was stagegring to a finish. Lee's thin gray lines could no longer hold Grant in check; but there was a possible chance that the strangling hold of the encircling Federal forces blockade could be raised and that waterway opened from Richmond to Hampton Roads.

To Read was entrusted the execution of this forlorn hope. The plan was to carry small boats overland on wheels, making a detour around the batteries which guarded the heavily obstructed channel. Then the frail craft were to be launched for a night attack on the ironclads, which might by dint of luck and daring, be destroyed with spar torpedoes or taken by boarding.

One needs only to think for a moment to realize that this was an undertaking that called for exceptional qualities of leadership. A little band of Confederates was to cut its

MISSISSIPPI SUN, CHARLESTON

teries lining the shore is one of the most thrilling in all the literature of desperate chances.

Information of the intended dash had reached the Federal commander, and the force blockading the mouth of the Red River was increased by the monitor Manhattan and the ironclads Lafayette and Choctaw. Read knew of this addition to the cordon through which he would have to break; but, all undaunted, he set out on his desperate enterprise, starting down the river on the night of April 23, 1865, with all lights screened and the safety-valve lashed tight.

Knowing that the flutter of his paddlewheels would give the alarm, he stopped his engines as the Webb drew near the mouth of the Red River, and allowed her to drift with the current. He was just washing past the Manhattan when discovered. There was a quick alarm, and then came the blaze of guns, the shriek of fast-flying shells, and the rap of canister and grape-shot against the sides of the blockade-runner. Throttles had been thrown wide open at the moment of discovery, and the vessel was now tearing down the Mississippi with half a dozen gunboats at her heels. She managed to distance all of them.

A few miles above New Orleans Read slackened speed and sent a boat ashore to cut the telegraph wires. Unluckily for his venture, a despatch had already gone over them, and the Federal fleet anchored off the Crescent City was on the lookout for a Confederate ram, heading downstream and bent on mischief.

Although unaware that his approach had been heralded, the enterprising young commanded bethought himself of an expedient which very nearly availed to make his adventure had been cleared for action, and gunnondescrpt-looking craft came sauntering down the stream. Her union ensign was at half-mast, presumably on account of President Lincoln's death a few days before. Her crew had in Federal army. Her

by Colonel John M. Morgan, of Annapolis days, given to the writer. This recalls a description of Read's by twenty numbers ahead of me.

ink the nimble little Clarence, and by the number of prisoners spreading the alarm. With re-

paper, was a guest on board the battleship. One of her of- and only one gun.

VERTICAL FILE - Read, Charles (Yazoo)

~ Dictionary of ~

American Biography

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READ, CHARLES WILLIAM (May 12, 1840-Jan. 25, 1890), Confederate naval officer, was born in Yazoo County, Miss. Nothing is known of his parents or his childhood. He entered the United States Naval Academy in September 1856, and was graduated in June 1860. He served as midshipman aboard the *Pawnee* and the *Powhatan*. When he received news of the secession of Mississippi he forwarded his resignation from Vera Cruz, Mexico, and returned to the United States in March 1861. He reported to the Confederate secretary of the navy, who appointed him an acting midshipman on Apr. 13. He was assigned to duty as sailing master on the cruiser *McRae*, which was shortly converted into a river gunboat with Read as executive officer. In February 1862 he was promoted to be lieutenant-for-the-war. He participated in the Ship Island expedition in July, in the successful night attack on the blockading squadron at the Head of the Passes in October, in the unsuccessful defense of Island No. 10, Tenn.; and New Madrid, Mo., and in the unfortunate operations below New Orleans in March and April of the following year. Shortly after the attack began on Apr. 24, the captain was mortally wounded, and the command devolved on Read, who fought the *McRae* with gallantry. After the débâcle at New Orleans he was ordered to the squadron stationed below Fort Pillow, Tenn., being assigned first to a shore battery, then to the C.S.S. *Arkansas*. He commanded the stern gun division of this ram in her five brilliant engagements during July and August. He was next assigned to a shore battery at Port Hudson, La., and was promoted in October to the rank of second lieutenant in the Regular Navy.

On account of his reputation for "gunnery, coolness and determination," he was assigned to the cruiser *Florida*, then in Mobile harbor (E. M. Maffitt, *post*, p. 259). He remained with her from November 1862 until early the following May when Capt. John Newland Maffitt [*q.v.*] placed him in command of the prize brig *Clarence* (off Brazil), and ordered him to raid the coast of the United States. His crew consisted of one officer and twenty men, and his armament of one boat howitzer, which he supplemented by an imposing battery of dummy guns made from spars. He took twenty-one prizes in as many days be-

Read

tween the latitude of Charleston, S. C., and Portland, Me. Thirteen of them were burned, six bonded, and two recaptured. He transferred his flag, successively, to his fourth prize, the *Tacony*, and his twentieth, the schooner *Archer*. In the last he sailed boldly into Portland harbor and captured the revenue cutter, *Caleb Cushing*, which was retaken a few hours later. During his consequent imprisonment at Fort Warren, on Jan. 6, 1864, he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant of the Provisional Navy. He was exchanged in Virginia on Oct. 18, 1864, assigned to the command of Battery Wood below Richmond, and was detached to the command of the torpedo boat division of the James River Squadron in January 1865. Shortly before the evacuation of Richmond, he was ordered to Shreveport, La., to command the seagoing ram *William H. Webb*. Disguised as a Union cotton transport, he ran the gauntlet of the Federal fleet in the Mississippi River but just before gaining the sea he was blocked by the U.S.S. *Richmond*, Apr. 24, 1865. Read beached and fired his ship and escaped with his crew into the swamp where they were subsequently captured. He was again imprisoned at Fort Warren, being released the following July.

After the war he went into the merchant service as an owner-captain and in the rôle of ship broker supplied the Republic of Colombia with a gunboat. He later became a Mississippi River bar pilot and one of the harbor masters of the port of New Orleans. He died at Meridian, Miss., after a painful illness which he bore with an unflinching courage characteristic of the mild-mannered young naval officer whose brilliant record was unsurpassed by any other officer of his rank in either the Union or Confederate Navies.

[C. W. Read, "Reminiscences of the Confed. States Navy," *South. Hist. Soc. Papers*, May 1876; *Register of the Officers of the Confed. States Navy* (1931); *War of the Rebellion: Official Records (Navy)*, 1 ser., vols. I, II; J. T. Scharf, *Hist. of the Confed. States Navy* (1887); E. M. Maffitt, *The Life and Services of John Newland Maffitt* (1906); Clarence Hale, "The Capture of the 'Caleb Cushing,'" *Me. Hist. Soc. Colls.*, 3 ser., vol. I (1904); J. D. Hill, "Charles W. Read, Confederate von Lückner," *South Atlantic Quart.*, Oct. 1929; E. H. Browne, "The Cruise of the Clarence—Tacony—Archer," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, Mar. 1915.] W. M. R., Jr.

READ, DANIEL (Nov. 16, 1757-Dec. 4, 1836), musician, the son of Daniel and Mary (White) Read, was born in Rehoboth, later called Attleboro, Mass., and died in New Haven, Conn. He was a descendant in the fourth generation from John Read, who emigrated from Europe about 1630. During the Revolutionary War he served for short periods in Sullivan's expe-

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Charles Read (naval officer)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Charles William Read (May 12, 1840 – January 25, 1890), nicknamed "Savvy", was an officer in the antebellum United States Navy and then in the Confederate Navy during the American Civil War. He was nicknamed the "Seawolf of the Confederacy" for his exploits and daring.

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- 1 Early life and career
- 2 Civil War
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- 4 See also
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Early life and career

Charles Read was born in either Hinds or Yazoo County, Mississippi in 1840. He was appointed to the United States Naval Academy in 1856 and graduated in 1860. He served briefly aboard USS *Powhatan* after graduation.

Civil War

At the outbreak of the American Civil War Read resigned his commission with

Charles William Read

Nickname	"Savvy" or "Savez"
Born	May 12, 1840 Mississippi
Died	January 25, 1890 (aged 49–50) Meridan, Mississippi
Place of burial	Meridian, Mississippi
Allegiance	 United States of America Confederate States of America
Service/branch	 United States Navy Confederate States Navy
Years of service	1860 - 1861 (USN) 1861 - 1865 (CSN)
Rank	Midshipman (USN) Lieutenant (CSN)
Commands held	<i>CSS McRae</i> <i>CSS Arkansas</i> <i>CSS Florida</i> <i>CSS Clarence</i> <i>CSS Tacony</i> <i>CSS Archer</i> <i>CSS Scorpion</i>

... the United States Navy and accepted a position with the Confederate States Navy. Read was initially assigned to the CSS *McRae* at New Orleans, Louisiana as a midshipman and participated in the battle between batteries on Ship Island and the USS *Massachusetts* on July 9, 1861.^[1] On October 12, 1861, he participated in the attack on the Union blockading squadron at Head of the Passes on the Mississippi River.^[1] When the commander of the CSS *McRae* was wounded on April 24, 1862, Read took command of the ship.^[1]

Read then served as executive officer of the CSS *Arkansas* during its actions against a blockading fleet of over 30 ships on the Mississippi River near Vicksburg, Mississippi on 13 July 1862. Read served as acting commander of the *Arkansas* during her final battle supporting the Confederate Army assaulting Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 6 August 1862. After the sinking of the *Arkansas*, Read travelled by foot to Port Hudson, Louisiana and assisted with the emplacement of shore guns there.

Read was soon ordered to Mobile, Alabama and was assigned to the CSS *Florida* which set sail on 15 January 1863. He transferred to the CSS *Clarence*, a captured prize of the *Florida*, and set out on his own. During this raiding mission, which lasted from 6 June 1863 to 27 June 1863, Read transferred his command to prize vessels twice more, once to the CSS *Tacony* and finally to the CSS *Archer*.

At the end of the raid, Lieutenant Read had captured or destroyed twenty-two United States vessels. He and his crew were captured off Portland, Maine on June 27, 1863, while attempting to take the USRC *Caleb Cushing*. Read was held at Fort Warren, Massachusetts, until he was exchanged at Cox Wharf, Virginia, on October 18, 1864.^[1]

After his release, Read participated in naval and land operations on the James River,

CSS *Webb*

Battles/wars

American Civil War

- Battle of Ship Island
- Battle of the Head of Passes
- Battle of Baton Rouge
- Battle of Portland Harbor
- Battle of Trent's Reach

Awards

Confederate Medal of Honor

Read commanded the CSS *Scorpion* and two other torpedo boats at the Battle of Trent's Reach. In January 1865, he was assigned to the CSS *Webb* at Shreveport, Louisiana with the intention that she become a raider in the Pacific Ocean. Read did not reach the *Webb* until 22 April 1865. Read attempted to break out to the Gulf of Mexico but grounded in shallow waters near New Orleans on April 23, 1865. Read fired the ship to prevent its capture by Federal forces. Read surrendered to Federal naval authorities in New Orleans and was transported again to Fort Warren. He was released on July 24, 1865.^[1]

After the war

In 1867, Read was second officer aboard a ship involved in an effort to help Cuban rebels overthrow the Spanish government of the island. Read and others were arrested by the US government but quickly released.

Read earned the Confederate Medal of Honor for his service. Read earned his nickname "Savvy" or "Savez" due to his constant use of the term.

Charles Read died at Meridian, Mississippi, where he is buried.

See also

Notes

- [^] *abcde* *Register of Officers of the Confederate States Navy*. Office of Naval Records and Library United States Navy Department. Mattituck, NY: J.M. Carroll & Company. 1983. ISBN 0-8488-0011-7.

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Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org

/w/index.php?title=Charles_Read_(naval_officer)&oldid=552350717"

Categories: 1840 births 1890 deaths Confederate States Navy officers

United States Navy officers | American Civil War prisoners of war

People from Meridian, Mississippi | Recipients of the Southern Cross of Honor

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'Savez' Read displayed tenacity

Editor's note: An article in Wednesday's Herald began an account of the life and spectacular Civil War exploits of Charles W. "Savez" Read, heroic officer of the Confederate States Navy, who was born in Satartia in 1840.

That article brought him from his Annapolis days through the Battle of New Orleans and service aboard the CSS Arkansas at Vicksburg to his next assignment to the CSS Florida. She was a newly commissioned Confederate raider waiting in Mobile Bay for her chance to run the Union blockade and be out to sea.

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To keep the new Confederate raider bottled up at Mobile was also a high priority. Nevertheless, after several thwarted attempts to escape by night or in foggy weather, the CSS Florida with Savez aboard at last broke through and outran the Yankee warships on her tail.

Once in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic at the end of 1862, her attacks on merchant shipping began.

In the next five months the CSS Florida destroyed 14 Union ships and forced three others to pay ransom. As an example, in February 1863 she captured the *Jacob Bell*, which was registered in New York, on her return to China with a \$2 million cargo of tea and 10,000 boxes of firecrackers, among other things. Ship and freight were burned and the crew and passengers taken to the Bahamas and released.

By May, however, these exploits were apparently not enough for Savez. He asked the



Yazoo Historical Society

By SAM OLDEN, president

Florida's commander to allow him to take a small captured brig, the *Clarence*, with 13 volunteers to man her for raids on smaller ships off the New England coast. Permission was granted and, armed with only one cannon, a small six-pound howitzer, rifles, revolvers and pistols, Savez's own "man-of-war" set off northward. Her only power was sail, and to make her look more ferocious, Savez had the men carve fake cannons from small logs.

In the next few weeks the *Clarence* surprised and captured 21 Union merchant vessels and sank 15 of them.

What he really needed was a larger, faster craft and Savez heard of a fine one. She was the U.S. revenue cutter *Caleb Cushing*, also a sailing ship that was docked in the harbor of Portland, Maine. Savez boldly decided to hijack her.

In one of Savez's best theatrical performances, the *Clarence*, flying an American flag, sailed innocently into Portland harbor on June 26, 1863. In a scenario worthy of James Bond, she went right alongside the *Caleb Cushing*, whose sails were down. Part of the *Clarence* crew overpowered the unsuspecting few sailors on the Yankee ship while the other part tied onto her stern and prepared to tow her backward out to sea.

All this in broad daylight. And it almost worked.

But halfway out of the harbor, Savez's luck ran out and the wind died down. This time it was Savez's turn to be captured. He and his men were imprisoned in Fort Warren, Mass., for the next 16 months.

Of course, he made one almost successful attempt to escape before he was exchanged

for a northern war prisoner and returned to Virginia in October 1864.

At once Savez was actively back in the South's service. Several small Confederate gunboats in the James River were in danger of capture by Gen. Grant's army. Yet again Savez was assigned to help them try to run a Federal blockade in Chesapeake Bay and get out to sea. But the gunboats were doomed, and the war in Virginia was coming to an end.

Even before Gen. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in April 1865, however, Savez was ordered back down to Louisiana to undertake one final, daring, last-ditch escapade for the Confederate Navy.

The CSS *Webb* had eluded capture on the Red River throughout the war. But now out of service at Shreveport, she needed extensive repairs and more armament and crew before she could do any more fighting.

The bold plan was for Savez to take command and put her back into sufficient condition to become a sea raider. Then she would make a dash down the Red River and into the Mississippi and make for its mouth. This though the Mississippi was entirely in U.S. Navy hands.

Again, incredibly, Savez almost pulled it off.

Readying the *Webb* in record time, she was already steaming out of the Red River and nearing Baton Rouge when surprised Federal gunboats spotted her and gave the alarm ahead. Unlike Savez's earlier gunboat, the ill-fated *Arkansas* from Yazoo City whose engines failed near the same spot, the *Webb* was doing fine.

Baton Rouge and his pursuers were soon far behind. And even though New Orleans had been alerted, Savez raced safely past the city. But below it the big and powerful USS *Richmond* was waiting right in the middle of the river with all her guns trained on him.

The young officer, whom some called "the John Paul Jones of the Confederacy" ("I have not yet begun to fight!"), now realized the hopelessness of the *Webb's* situation. To spare his men, he ordered them to set fire to his last vessel and go overboard. All were captured and Savez was again sent back to a Massachusetts prison, this time in Boston.

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For the rest of his life, Charles Read was associated with the shipping business in and out of New Orleans. He had six children there, and in his latter years was president of the New Orleans Board of Harbor Masters.

When Rosa died, Savez married another Mississippi lady, Mrs. Nebraska Carter of Meridian. When his health began to fail in 1889, he thought leaving New Orleans for the hills of Mississippi he knew so well would do him good. They returned to his wife's hometown, and it was in Meridian that he died on Jan. 29, 1890. He is buried there in Rose Hill Cemetery.

Charles W. "Savez" Read, Confederate hero of Satartia and Yazoo County, should be far more recognized in history than he has been. Only one small book about him has ever been written. Entitled "Charles Read, Confederate Buccaneer" by Bob Weems, it was published by a small press in Jackson in 1982. A copy is in our Ricks Memorial Library. Most of the information in this article came from Weems' very well-written tribute to "Savez."

BIRTHS

Madison Avery Ables

Mr. and Mrs. Matt Ables of Yazoo City have announced the birth of their daughter, Madison Avery Ables, on Aug. 31, 1998, at Parkview Regional Medical Center in Vicksburg. She weighed 8 pounds, 7 ounces, and measured 21 inches.

The mother is the former Courtney Biggers of Yazoo City.

Maternal grandparents are Nancy Biggers of Yazoo City and Steve and Emily Biggers of Louise.

Paternal grandparents are Larry Ables of Yazoo City and Terry and Theresa Ward of Satartia.

Also welcoming the new arrival are four uncles, Steve Biggers, Daniel Biggers, Jon Ables and Tim Ables, and an aunt, Laura Kathryn Biggers, all of Yazoo City.

Kyle Luse Kellems

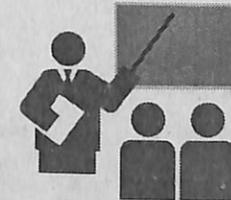
RIDGELAND — Mr. and Mrs. Skipper Kellems of Ridgeland have announced the birth of their son Kyle Luse Kellems on Sept. 11, 1998, at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson. He weighed 9 pounds, 6 ounces.

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Paternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Reggie Kellems of Greenville.

Great-grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. R.D. Hines of Carter, Mr. and Mrs. Chester Kellems of Madison and Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Grifom of Tallulah, La. Also welcoming the new arrival are his two brothers, Alexander Kellems and Reid Kellems, and his sister, Carlie Kellems.



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Explorer fulfills his dream in Yazoo City

By CLAY CHANDLER
Herald Reporter

Hewitt Clarke has backpacked the Grand Canyon, climbed a volcano in Guatemala and run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain.

His latest adventure brought him to the Mississippi Delta to retrace the aquatic steps of the Confederate gunboat the CSS Arkansas.

Clarke, who grew up in Meridian, graduated from Ole Miss and now lives in Houston, Texas, floated down the Yazoo River from Greenwood to Yazoo City last weekend, following the same path the Arkansas did when it was being built. The Arkansas started in Greenwood, but when materials ran low it was shipped down the river on a steamboat to Yazoo City for its completion.

Clarke has written a book, "He Saw the Elephant," about the Arkansas and a Confederate soldier from Meridian named Charles Read, who served on it.

The Arkansas, upon its completion, headed down the Yazoo River with its 10 guns and 200 crewmen. Upon its arrival in the Mississippi River, 50 Union gunboats were waiting for it.

"All hell broke loose," Clarke said.

The Arkansas survived, but incurred scores of casualties.

HE SAW THE ELEPHANT



CONFEDERATE NAVAL SAGA
OF
LT. CHARLES "SAVVY" READ, CSN

HEWITT CLARKE

Only 17 of the 200 crew made it through alive. Historians have called that battle one of the most important in United States Naval history.

Later, the Arkansas took the Mississippi to Baton Rouge to engage the Union. The boat's motor gave out, at which time the Confederacy's decision-makers decided to sink it rather than having it fall into the hands of the Union. It's still at the bottom of the Mississippi somewhere in the Baton Rouge area.

Last weekend's trip is one Clarke has always wanted to make, and one that was dangerous just like the rest of his adventures.

"It wasn't as easy as some of them," he said Tuesday

See DREAM, 3

YAZOO HERALD

APR. 15, 2006 p.1

Dream: *He began his journey last Saturday in Greenwood*

Benton Studen

afternoon as he pulled into a boat ramp on Piney Creek Levee. "They're all different. This one was a lot of fun. It was very peaceful, and every now and then some of the biggest fish I ever saw would jump out of the water. It was a pleasant trip - no TV, no radios."

Clarke began his journey last Saturday in Greenwood, but there was trouble with

the weather.

"The wind was blowing me all over the place," he said. Then there was the incident with the log in Belzoni that "took a half hour to correct. I just had a hell of a time with that one."

The trouble wasn't over. Monday, on his way from Belzoni to Yazoo City, both his batteries on the boat gave out two miles from the landing on

Piney Creek Levee.

Clarke wasn't exactly sure where he was, so when he saw a man on the side of the levee he stopped.

The Good Samaritan, who asked not to be identified, told him he was in Yazoo City.

"I thought he was just a local fisherman. I asked him if he had caught anything and he said, 'Where am I?'"

Clarke and his wife, Lois,

had planned to communicate during his trip via walkie-talkie but they malfunctioned, so an attorney friend from Tunica loaned her his cell phone so she could talk back and forth with Hewitt on his cell phone.

"We've had a lot of help," she said.

For more information about Clarke and his other books, visit www.rebelwriter.com.



A.L. Woods 1/49

A.L. Woods 30/500

Lt. Charles "Savoy" Reed
U.S.N. ⚓





VF - Read, Charles William (Yazoo)
1840-1890

THE YAZOO HERALD, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1998, 7A

'Savez' Read of Satartia assisted Confederate Navy's efforts

Without question, one of the most colorful and daring figures of the War Between the States was from Yazoo County — Charles William Read.

Born into a family of small farmers near Satartia in 1840, his wartime exploits were as a brash, 5-foot-5-inch officer in the Confederate States Navy, where he was affectionately known as "Savez," pronounced Savvy.

Read had acquired the nickname from his classmates at Annapolis, where he was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1856. A notoriously poor student, graduating 25th in a class of 25, he had a particularly hard time with French. His buddies teasingly claimed he could only remember and speak one word, "savez" — in English, "you know." And so he became "Savez" for the rest of his life.

Before he entered Annapolis, Read's family had moved from Satartia to another farm near Edwards. Then, in 1849, his father had joined the gold rush to California, leaving in a caravan with several other Yazoo County friends.

On graduation from the Naval Academy in 1860, newly com-



Yazoo Historical Society

By SAM OLDEN, president

had 51,500 by 1865.

To make up for this disparity, the Confederate government issued commissions to privately owned ships, called privateers, authorizing them to capture U.S. cargo vessels for the Confederacy on the high seas. A few large, heavily armed raiders, the most famous being the C.S.S. Alabama, which was launched in Europe, also prowled the Atlantic and Pacific, taking or sinking enemy vessels of any sort wherever they found them.

During his four years in Confederate service, Savez played valiant roles on both regular warship and privateer.

His baptism of fire came in late 1861 when the first small Yankee fleet tried to blockade the entrances of the Mississippi River to halt the export of Southern cotton. The C.S.S. McRea led the fight that drove the Northerners away, if only temporarily. Savez's ship then hastened up

McRea and every other Confederate ship in the area struggled in vain to block the Union fleet's passage northward, but though it was severely mauled and lost many lives, it got through.

From the beginning, Savez and the C.S.S. McRea were in the thick of the fight. His ship was severely damaged and Savez lost several comrades.

As the Yankees steamed on to demand the surrender of a now domed New Orleans, Savez, unhurt in the action, was transferred by his commanding officer to the C.S.S. Louisiana and given the responsibility of transporting all the Confederate wounded up to New Orleans under a flag of truce. Once there, he was instructed to request the commander of the victorious enemy fleet to allow his Southern sailors to be treated in the city's hospitals.

As luck would have it, the executive officer on the Yankee

Greenwood to Yazoo City, where a makeshift naval yard was being thrown together to turn her into a formidable iron-clad ram. Savez was ordered back to his native county to join the Arkansas crew.

The saga of the Arkansas is well-known to us here and need not be retold. What is not at all well-known is that Savez Read was in the thick of that spectacular and bloody encounter with an entire federal fleet and was in charge of the heroic warship's rear guns.

He was still aboard when the Arkansas, ill-prepared, without its commanding officer, its engines malfunctioning, was ordered by an injudicious Army general to leave Vicksburg for an ill-advised attack on Baton Rouge. But soon, Savez was one of the officers who saw no recourse but to burn and scuttle her and make for shore.

In what was already appearing to be a charmed life, Savez — again unscathed — not only got safely into the Louisiana woods but back to Jackson, where he spent a short time with his

fiancee, Rosa Hall.

Then he received his new assignment. It was to the recently commissioned Confederate raider C.S.S. Florida, at anchor in Mobile Bay and waiting for a

chance to run the Union blockade and be out to sea.

The story of Savez will continue in the next edition of the Herald.

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missioned Ensign Read was assigned his first sea duty aboard the U.S.S. Powhatan. His ship was at sea just off Vera Cruz, Mexico, when word came of the Secession Crisis at home. The Powhatan was ordered back to New York in March 1861, and there Savez requested and was given leave. He made straight for Montgomery, Ala., the first capital of the Confederacy, where he boldly called on both fellow Mississippian Jefferson Davis and Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory to offer his services. They told him to go on to Jackson to await developments.

These were not long in coming. Immediately after the firing on Fort Sumter a month later, Savez became a lieutenant in the new Confederate Navy and was assigned to the C.S.S. McRea in New Orleans. At the time, it was the best-armed warship the South had, even though it only carried eight guns. For at the outbreak of hostilities, most of the U.S. fleet remained in Union hands. Many officers from Southern states, like Savez, left the service to come home.

A ship-building program was frantically begun in New Orleans, Charleston, Mobile and elsewhere. Several important craft were commissioned to be built or fitted out in England. But lack of iron and machinery in the South, plus woeful planning and inefficiency, plus the early loss of New Orleans to the Yankees in 1862, caused the Confederate Navy never to significantly grow or to number more than 5,213 officers and men. By contrast the U.S. Navy

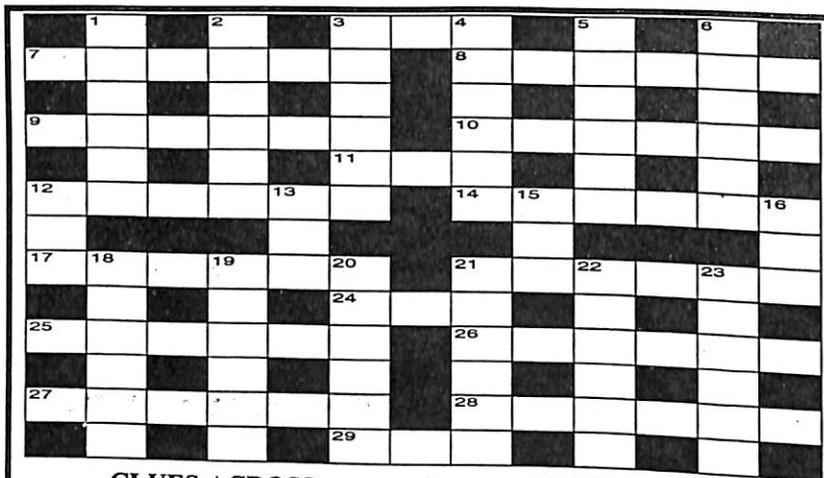
the river to assist other Confederate warships at New Madrid, Mo., and Island 10 nearer Memphis that were supporting land forces attempting to halt a major Union advance into West Tennessee.

Unsuccessful there, the McRea hurried back below New Orleans, where this time a larger enemy fleet had broken into the lower river and was threatening the two great forts protecting the approach to an otherwise unfortified Crescent City.

When the massive assault on the forts came in April 1862, the

flagship, the U.S.S. Mississippi, was Savez's old friend and Annapolis classmate George Dewey, who, 36 years later, became the famous Admiral Dewey, victor of Manila Bay in the Spanish-American War. Savez was courteously received and his request granted.

Now without a ship, Savez was first ordered to Memphis, where the last few units of the Confederate Navy left on the Mississippi were again vainly trying to save that city. But at just that time, the C.S.S. Arkansas was being towed from



CLUES ACROSS

3. Hawaiian association
7. Indistinct
8. Follicular growths
9. Blabber
10. Writer
11. No (Scottish)
12. Flowering trees
14. Algonquian chief
17. Type of car
21. Scarcity
24. Visual metaphor (computers)
25. Unbroken mustang
26. Investigation
27. Shackles
28. Weigh down emotionally
29. Woman, abbr. (French)

CLUES DOWN

1. Cloth
2. Caribbean dances
3. Mucosas
4. Wading birds
5. Cloth
6. Consumable
12. ___ humbug
13. Donkey
15. Expert
16. Speed
18. Natural
19. Stale
20. Selfishness
21. To discontinue practice of
22. ___ Blake, actress
23. Pinned up

VF - Read, Charles W. (4200)

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THE YAZOO HERALD, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 199

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Famous shipman, 'Savvy' Read is recalled

By JIM EWING

JACKSON DAILY NEWS Yazoo City Bureau

Last week, we ran a number of short items of historical interest dealing with Yazoo City and Yazoo County and the people who live and have lived here. Today, we have more.

The saga of the ironclad *Arkansas* was fondly remembered by many readers and some new information has been pointed out. Delia Dixon at the Yazoo County Chamber of Commerce office in Yazoo City, said she has for years been trying to interest people here in erecting some type of memorial to the "ramming bucket of bolts," the "floating junkyard," the "Pride of Yazoo City" that humiliated four Union fleets at Vicksburg July 13, 1862.

One idea was to construct a restaurant or tourism center on the banks of Lake Yazoo, the remnant of the old bend in the Yazoo River, just off Main Street. The building could be built in the shape and dimensions of the *Arkansas*. Since the ship was indeed a "monster," measuring 110 feet long, it would be more than adequate to house any number of patrons if built to scale. Even a smaller version would give an idea of what the valiant craft looked like.

It has since been pointed out that many Yazooans served on the vessel when it engaged the Union fleets. Not only is the story of the *Arkansas* uplifting in that the whole town chipped in to build and equip her, but that some of our famous forebears also served on her and later achieved fame in other areas.

CHARLES H. STEVENS, the lieutenant who took over command of the vessel after Lt. Isaac Newton Brown was wounded, was from Yazoo County, I am told. Eric Scales, another Mississippian, saved the battered battle ensign, after shot from opposing gunboats severed the flag staff. At great risk to himself, he braved the combined fire from four fleets whistling over the vessel to retrieve the ensign and restore it.

A copy of the type of ensign used, like that which flew over the *Arkansas* is reprinted on this page — far different from the "stars and bars" many associate with the Confederacy.

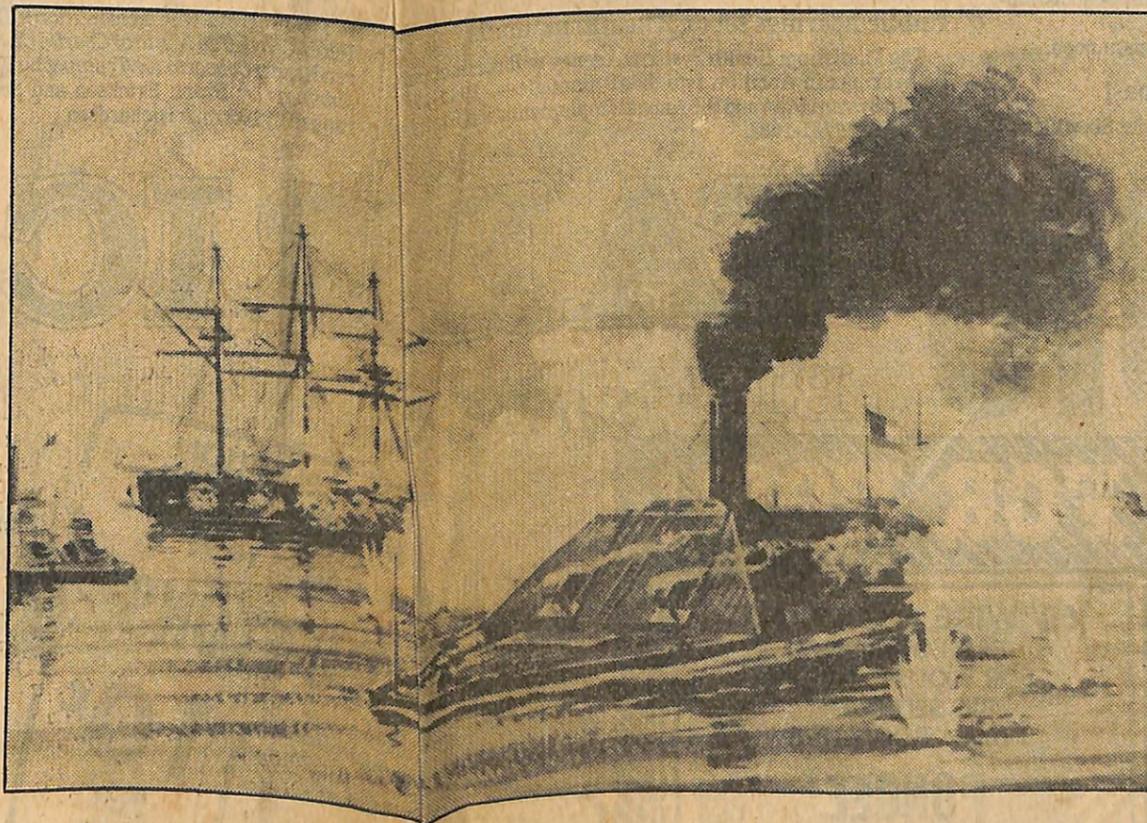
But perhaps the best known Yazooan to sail aboard the *Arkansas* was Charles William "Savvy" Read, who was born and raised in Satartia.

He was a natural for the seemingly-doomed venture of the *Arkansas*. He graduated at the bottom of his class at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1860. A lowly mid-shipman at the outbreak of hostilities, he resigned from the U.S. Navy when he heard the news that Mississippi had seceded from the Union in 1861, and struck out to offer his services to his native state.

Shortly thereafter, he saw action in the Battle of New Orleans and distinguished himself by taking over command of the *CSS McRae* after the commander was mortally wounded. Unfortunately, his first vessel sustained such damage in the fighting that it sank. He later found himself serving on the *Arkansas*.

Following the glorious lunacy that was the *Arkansas* story, Savvy Read went on to greater honors.

This would seem the end of the exciting career of Lt. Savvy Brown. But, no. Yazooans, it would seem, are imbued with a peculiar tenacity in the face of adversity, a rare courage and inducement not only to rise, but to rise again, not only to excel, but to



This painting of the *CSS Arkansas* was commissioned by the U.S. Navy more than 100 years after the battle occurred. It is entitled by the Navy's Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, "The Rebel Victory at Vicksburg." On board the *Arkansas* was a young mid-shipman, Charles W. "Savvy" Read, who later achieved fame in his own right. See Story, naval ensign photo outline.

tive, but at least they had the satisfaction of watching the *Caleb Cushing* explode with a tremendous roar.

Read and his men were imprisoned at Fort Warren but were later exchanged.

THIS WOULD SEEM the end of the exciting career of Lt. Savvy Brown. But, no. Yazooans, it would seem, are imbued with a peculiar tenacity in the face of adversity, a rare courage and inducement not only to rise, but to rise again, not only to excel, but to brilliantly, though at times hapazardly, rise to any occasion.

The war was winding down. A feeling of doom settled over the South as it appeared the cause was lost. One small ray of hope lay in the possible, but not probable, use of the *William H. Webb*, a New York icebreaker captured by the Confederates and docked above Alexandria, La.

The massive 200-foot paddlewheeler was 300 miles from the mouth of the Mississippi River, with Union fortifications, troops and boats cruising most of its length. But, if only...if only the converted *William H. Webb* could break through the blockades, pass the fortifications, seek open water and harass the Union advance, perhaps it could prove a rallying point.

Lt. Charles William "Savvy" Read was appointed this dangerous, truly impossible, mission — to take the *William H. Webb* to the Gulf of Mexico. If the assignment of a bizarre, unlikely mission were not enough, Read found the *Webb* without a single gun, no crew or fuel and only cutlasses for defense. But he found a willing ally in Gen. Kirby Smith, who provided three cannons and volunteers of 16 officers and a crew of 51 Army land-lubbers.

They had enough fuel for five days.

plots in Vicksburg, he immediately wired Lt. Isaac Brown and promoted him to the rank of commander.

In this, it is apparent, as our own Zig Ziegler is wont to point out, *nothing succeeds like success*. And that is a state of mind few achieve without striving.

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LAST WEEK, WE NOTED that several Yazooans have achieved honors of late by being the subjects of stories in national magazines. To this should be added the fact that the Casey Jones Museum will be the subject of an article in an upcoming issue of *Southern Living* magazine.

Museum director Massena Jones relates that Dianne Young, assistant travel editor at *Southern Living*, came out to the museum in Vaughan with a photographer and spent many hours re-viewing the Casey Jones saga and viewing the objects of interest there.



brilliantly, though at times hapazardly, rise to any occasion.

INCIDENTALLY, the *Arkansas* saga is called "The Rebel Victory at Vicksburg" in the Civil War Chronology of Naval Battles published by the Naval History Division of the office of the Chief of Naval Operations of the Navy Department in Washington, D.C. A copy of a painting that office commissioned in honor of the *Arkansas* is reprinted on this page.

In any event, in 1863, Savvy Read was commissioned the commanding officer aboard the *CSS Clarence*, a slow, hogwaller of a boat, more appropriately, perhaps, termed a "tub," with only 20 men, a small boat howitzer and some small arms, with which he was ordered to operate as a raider in the West Indies.

A lesser man might have put off to sea and found sanctuary on some lonely island amidst friendly natives for the duration. But not Savvy Read.

After determining that his boat was too slow to be of much use against the faster better equipped Union steamers, he headed for the heart of the enemy, the Eastern seaboard, and in a courageous series of plucky and lucky maneuvers rivaled only by the *Arkansas* saga, managed to capture 21 ships in 21 days!

One of his prizes, the Yankee vessel *Kate Stewart*, he captured with the use of a wooden gun painted to look like a cannon.

The Union forces were so alarmed by his success along the Eastern seaboard, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, issued orders to stop any boat and search her, lest it be the *Clarence*, commanded by Read.

WHAT THE UNION didn't know was that Read had run out of ammunition during his 21 days of fights and near-fights and had headed toward Portland, Maine, where he heard two prizes were lying at anchor — the revenue cutter *Caleb Cushing* and a New York passenger steamer. Read decided he wanted to capture the *Caleb Cushing* for he had heard the ship had eight big guns and would be a real power at sea.

In the un-assuming *Clarence*, Savvy and his crew sailed into the Portland, Maine, harbor, beneath the big guns and forts guarding it — the Yankees, no doubt, thinking the *Clarence* was no more than a small pleasure vessel, so far north.

Shortly before midnight, while at anchor, two boats of Confederates armed with cutlasses and revolvers rowed with muffled oars to the *Caleb Cushing*. Most of the Yankee crew were ashore, but the Rebels managed to subdue the two on deck and put the other ten in irons down below.

By the time the Rebels built up steam and got away, though, the sun was rising and they found the ship wasn't as well equipped as they had thought. The powder couldn't even be found. And the Yankee captives weren't talking.

Read and his men were spotted as they tried to leave the harbor and after a desperate battle, Savvy ordered his crew to abandon ship and set the vessel afire. They were picked up by a Union steamer and taken cap-

READ, A MASTER of ingenuity, knew he could not float this steam-boat, converted to a ram, down 300 miles of hostile beaches without some ruse. So, he lighted the ship brightly and loaded bales of cotton on her to make her appear to be yet another Carpetbag vessel stealing Southern cotton.

The accounts of the flight to the South are legion, and, no doubt, did no good for him. Although he escaped capture near Donaldsonville by raising a Union flag, rumors of his mission circulated among the troops on both sides and it was told that he was carrying President Jefferson Davis and the Confederate "treasure" in an effort to avoid capture by the Union in the waning days of the war.

These rumors caught up with him and only a scant distance from safety, with the stars and bars flying, as he approached Forts St. Philip and Jackson, he rounded a bend to find the *USS Richmond* confronting him.

Read and the crew had the satisfaction of scuddling the *William H. Webb* before it could fall into the hands of the enemy, but he and most of the crew were captured and imprisoned once again at Fort Warren. He was released in July, 1865.

IT WAS, once again, one of those last, futile, final, unwavering gestures of defiance and never-say-die derring do that lives on in the annals of Naval History. And it was a Yazooan, Lt. "Savvy" Read, who came away the hero.

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AN AFTERWORD. I am grateful to Gordon Cotton of the Old Court-house Museum in Vicksburg for the information about the famous Lt. Savvy Brown. I know the story has been told before. But a good tale is always worth retelling, to a new generation of readers, to a new crop of Yazooans, who may not know of the accomplishments and achievements of their forebears.

The main figures in these exploits told in recent weeks, like that of the Mississippi Rifles at the Battle of Buena Vista, the men and crew of the Confederate ram *Arkansas*, and Lt. "Savvy" Read of today, are not rare. We are blessed that we here in Yazoo have models of behavior to look to, figures in the past who have excelled in the face of all odds to achieve near impossible goals, or, if failing, figures we may take pride in take pride in for giving their all despite ultimate defeat.

It is of such persons as these that make history, that are admired and respected whether they "win" or "lose." For they have won the greatest challenge, to have "done" when it might have been easier to lay by and do nothing.

Courageous acts are called for in small ways in the everyday world we live in — to be good when it's easier not to be; to do the right thing, when the wrong is self-evident; to discern and appreciate and acknowledge, when it's easier to ignore; and in any of a thousand other ways that humankind, man are heir to fail, whether we appreciate those ways or simply, unthinkingly, fall into them.

AS A MEASURE of Lt. Savvy Read's achievement, it should be noted that the Sons of Confederacy camp here is named in honor of him. It should be noted, too, that when Jefferson Davis heard of the *Arkansas*' ex-

The Rebel naval ensign

The museum has also been the subject of two radio shows of late. This week, an organization called ATTSA of San Antonio, Texas, broadcast an interview with Massena about the Casey Jones legacy. In addition, several months ago, Massena did a radio interview with Neil Smith of Edmonton, Canada, for broadcast there.

A tape of the Casey Jones story will be but one of many exhibits to be featured at the April 25 Casey Jones Festival at Vaughan. The state of Mississippi parks and recreation bureau is planning to move a railroad steam engine to the site and exhibitors for the crafts fair have been mailing in their reservations.

Massena tells me that more than 5,000 visitors have passed through the museum since its opening last April, including railroad buffs from Japan, Australia, Brazil, England, France, Germany, Norway, and all parts of the United States.

YAZOOANS ARE encouraged not only to visit the museum, but to pass the word to their out-of-town friends and relations. The Casey Jones Museum and Yazoo Historical Museum at the Triangle are two worthy areas of pride and accomplishment that invite favorable comment about our town.

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MOST FOLKS ARE familiar with the story that a plank road extended to Benton from Yazoo City so stage coaches could travel back and forth. But did you know that the plank road went all the way to Vaughan?

On exhibit at the Casey Jones Museum is a map showing the plank road and the houses in Vaughan as they appeared when the fateful wreck occurred there April 30, 1900.

Massena Jones reports that occasionally when county road crews are doing work near the present paved highway to Vaughan, planks beneath the pavement have been unearthed. The distance from Vaughan to Yazoo City is better than 25 miles. That's quite a lot of timber.

Another interesting fact about Vaughan, brought out by the hand-drawn map at the museum, is that the entire town burned the same day Yazoo City did, May 25, 1904.

The infamous witch's curse extended a fair piece, one would have to conclude.

Another item Yazooans may find interesting:

How many people have not asked one of us in our various wanderings if the Yazoo mower — the big-wheeled lawn mower nationally advertised — was originally built here?

Massena tells me that a man named Renfro owned a blacksmith shop in Vaughan many years ago. Back then, there weren't any auto mechanics, since cars were so new-fangled and relatively rare. So blacksmiths often did the work.

Coming events

The World Catfish Festival will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday, April 4, at the Humphreys County Courthouse in Belzoni. Featured will be 130 crafts booths, a 10,000 meter run, 4,000 pounds of catfish filets for an 11 a.m. luncheon, musical entertainment all day, with the Humphreys Garden Club to present "Little Red Riding Hood" and the Southern Opera Theatre Company to present "Alladin and His Magic Lamp," a fiddling contest, a World Catfish Recipe Contest and a Catfish Eating Contest. For more information, write "World Catfish Capital," P.O. Box 239, Belzoni, Miss., 39038.

Girls interested in competing in the Miss Springtime beauty pageant, to be held 7 p.m. April 11 at the Yazoo Junior High School, are invited to call Mrs. Brenda Glenn, pageant organizer, at 746-6020. A \$25 entry fee will be charged for the five age categories of 2-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-15, and 16 and over, with an \$8.50 fee for each of the four special categories of Most Photogenic, Best Model, Most Stylish and Best Personality.

The Casey Jones Museum in Vaughan is open 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wed. — Sat. and 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. each Sunday. For more information, call 673-9864.

New exhibits are on display at the Yazoo Historical Museum. Admission is free to members of the Yazoo Historical Society. Museum hours: 9

The Rick's Potpourri series discussion at noon Wednesday at Rick's Library in Yazoo City will be "Art and American Values," featuring Dr. Sam Gore, head of the art department at Mississippi College, and Mrs. Gwyneth Webb, a well-known artist and portrait painter from Atlanta, Ga. The public is invited to attend and bring a brown bag lunch. Coffee will be provided. The program is part of the "Changing Lifestyles: Yazoo Looks at the Year 2000" series sponsored by the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities.

The Yazoo County Layman's Association will sponsor a musical program featuring Mrs. Dorothy Vaughan, The Trumpette, J.H. Smith Group and the Yazoo All Male Choir on Sunday, March 29, at the Old King Solomon Church on Calhoun Avenue. Arthur Claybon, president, is asking the community to support the Laymen by donating \$1 for a ticket and attending this concert.

The Miss Yazoo Contest will be held at the Yazoo Junior High School auditorium Saturday, April 4. Rev. Jim Yates will be the master of ceremonies. The event is sponsored by the Yazoo County Chamber of Commerce and is a regional pageant to select a contender for the Miss Mississippi Pageant.

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