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FROM CAPTURE

How Brilliant Exploit of Wisconsin Lumberman Prevented Union Vessels From Falling Into the Hands of the Confederates or Being Destroyed.

(By Frederic Merk, Research Assistant of the Wisconsin Historical Society) IFTY-FIVE years ago, in the spring of 1864, a Wisconsin lumberman, by a brilliant exploit, saved the Red river fleet

of the Mississippi squadron from destruction. He thereby incidentally afforded a capital illustration of that fertility of expedients and mechanical genius which chiefly distinguished the northern soidier in the Civil war from his southern opponent in arms.

To thwart the intrigues of Napoleon III., who had sent a French army into Mexico, the federal government desired to gain a strong military foothold in Texas. To this end it was planned to send a Union army and fleet into interior Texas by way of the Red river. Since the Red river was navigable only in the spring, as that season approached preparations were made for launching the cam-

The army under General Banks, supported by Admiral Porter's fleet of gunboats, began the ascent of the river. But matters went badly for the invading force almost from the beginning. The union leaders quarreled among themselves; the preparations made were inadequate: much delay was encountered in establishing a civil government in Louisiana: worst of all, the Red river suddenly began to fall, when by all precedents it should have risen. Admiral Porter. fearful that his fleet would be caught



Lieutenant Colonel Bailey.

in the shallows, hurriedly descended the stream, and the army, deprived of its support and already savagely handled by the opposing Confederate force, followed after.

this point the Red river is broken by a mile of rapids; the stream had fallen so quickly that the gunboats could no longer navigate this stretch of the channel. The stage of the water was but three feet four inches, whereas Porter's larger gunboats, with their heavy armament, drew at least seven

Here was indeed a desperate situation-the army far from its source of supplies, in the midst of a hostile country, the victorious enemy pressing in hot pursuit, and the \$2,000,000 fleet marooned by falling water. It seemed to almost every one that the only course open was to blow up the vessels to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy.

But not to every one, for a brave Wisconsin soldier had another idea of the matter. Lieut. Col. Joseph Bailey of the Fourth Wisconsin, who was serving at the time as acting engineer of the Nineteenth army corps, came forward with a plan for bringing the ironclads to safety. It was to raise the level of the water above the rapids by constructing a great dam across the river. When a sufficient depth of water had accumulated he proposed to break the dam in the center, thus forcing the vessels with the outrushing flood through the shallows and into the deep water below. Before the war Colonel Bailey had been a lumberman.

and had often seen this scheme employed in the Wisconsin pineries to "lift" stranded rafts of logs to safety. The project was at first received with ridicule by Colonel Bailey's superiors. It was declared impossible of achievement by the best engineers in the army. Only General Franklin, Bailey's immediate superior, offered any encouragement.

But there was nothing else to be done, and at length the Wisconsin lumberman was dublously granted permission to put his project to the proof. His first step was to requisition detachments of "pinery boys" from the 23d and 29th Wisconsin regiments, who understood what was to be done and how to go about it.

In all, 3,000 men were employed in the enterprise. Brawny lumberjacks from Maine vied with those from Wisconsin in prosecuting the work; catching the spirit of these instructors, soldiers who had never seen a log-raft also worked with a will. Hundreds of men were set to felling trees; other hundreds toiled in the quarries that were opened for the occasion; and 200 or 300 wagons were engaged in the essential work of transporting the materials for the dam. Up to their necks in the swift current, which swept over the rapids at the rate of nine miles an hour, under the blistering southern sun, the men toiled with utmost good humor and never a word of complaint.

At the end of eight days the river was sufficiently high to permit three of the lighter gunboats to pass the upper falls, where they had been held. and come down to a position immediately above the dam, ready to pass the lower rapids. One more day, and the dam would be high enough to permit all to come down in readiness for the final attempt.

With success thus about to be achieved, however, a discouraging disaster occurred. On the morning of the ninth day the steadily increasing pressure of the water caused two of the stone barges in the middle of the dam to swing aside, and through the opening thus created the accumulated torrent swirled. The three lighter vessels that were in position to make the passage, together with a fourth that had meanwhile come up, promptly took advantage of the break, and passing the remaining rapids on the flood tide, safely reached the deeper water below.

Somewhat encouraged by the escape of at least four of the vessels, the men bravely set about repairing the damage that had been done. Within three days the break had been closed, and in addition two wing-dams constructed on the upper falls. The remaining gunboats, somewhat lifted by the backwater of the wing dams, were now hauled over the upper falls, and on May 12, amid the tumultuous cheers of 30,000 soldiers lined up along the shore, made the perllous passage over the lower falls to the deep water below.

"Words are inadequate to express the admiration I feel for the ability of Lieutenant Colonel Bailey," wrote Admiral Porter in his official report to the Navy department. "This is without doubt the best engineering feat ever performed. Under the best circumstances, a private company would not have completed the work under one year, and to an ordinary mind the whole thing would have appeared At Alexandria, in central Louisiana, an impossibility. Leaving out his abilthe retreating federals found them- ity as an engineer-the credit he has selves face to face with a crisis. At | conferred upon the country-he has nearly \$2,000,000; more, he has deprived the enemy of a triumph which would have emboldened them to carry on the war a year of two longer, for the intended departure of the army was a fixed fact, and there was nothing left for me to do in case that event occurred but to destroy every part of the vessels so that the Confederates could make nothing of

On June 11, 1864, congress adopted a resolution of thanks to Lieutenant Colonel Bailey "for distinguished services in the recent campaign on the Red river, by which the gunboat flotilla under Rear Admiral David D. Porter was rescued from imminent A few months later the officers of Admiral Porter's fleet presented him with a beautiful sword and loving cup, and before the year was over he had been promoted, by order of the War department, to the rank of brevet brigadier general. Thus did one Wisconsin lumberjack win his spurs and at the same time valiantly serve his country, in the great civil conflict of half a century ago. The visitor to the museum of the Wisconsin State Historical society, at the foot of University hill at Madison. may still see the sword and loving cup which Colenel Bailey's admiring brother officers presented him.



HOW THE FLEET ESCAPED.

MOURNING DOVE



Length, twelve inches. The dark spot on the side of the neck distinguishes this bird from all other native doves and pigeons except the whitewinged dove. The latter has the up per third of wing white.

Range: Breeds throughout the United States and in Mexico, Guatemala, and southern Canada; winters from the central United States to Panama.

Habits and economic status: The food of the mourning dove is practically all vegetable matter (over 99 per cent), principally seeds of plants including grain. Wheat, oats, rye, corn, barley, and buckwheat were found in 150 out of 237 stomachs, and constituted 32 per cent of the food Three-fourths of this was waste grain picked up after harvest. The principal and almost constant diet is weed seeds, which are eaten throughout the year and constitute 54 per cent of the entire food. In one stomach were found 7,500 seeds of yellow wood sor rel, in another 6,400 seeds of barn grass or foxtail, and in a third 2,606 seeds of slender paspalum, 4,820 of orange hawk-weed, 950 of hoary vervain, 120 of Carolina cranesbill, 50 of yellow wood sorrel, 620 of panic grass, and 40 of various other weeds. None of these is useful, and most of them are troublesome weeds. The dove does not eat insects or other animal food. It should be protected in every possible way.

To Save Pencils.

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