

Tampa Bay's Links to Famous People During the Civil War

Perhaps only a few people know who James McKay was. After all he was a local hero. Although the sparsely populated area know as "Tampa Bay" did not have any major military personalities during the war, there are a number of people that had connections to others, or perhaps saw major action in other areas.

Florida's sons fought in many campaigns around the country, including Gettysburg. The intent here is to disclose some rather unusual or little know contacts between this area and the rest of the war.

Robert E. Lee

In February, 1849 the schooner *Phoenix* carrying U.S. Army Engineers arrived at Mullet Key (across the main channel from Egmont Key). The schooner anchored offshore to land the engineers who were surveying the coastline for possible defense of the area. One of the four engineers studying the islands at the entrance of Tampa Bay was a young Brevet Lieutenant Colonel named Robert Edward Lee. They studied Passage, Egmont, and Mullet Keys. Later, in March 1849, the engineers recommended Egmont and Mullet Keys be used for military defense thus prohibiting any private use.



Alexander A. Semmes

In October 1863, two ships bombarded Tampa and subsequently landed over 100 men to attack and burn two blockade runners on the Hillsborough River. Lieutenant Commander Semmes of the U.S.S. *Tahoma* was the cousin of Captain Raphael Semmes (in photo) of the Confederate raider *Alabama*. Another instance of family members on either side of the war.

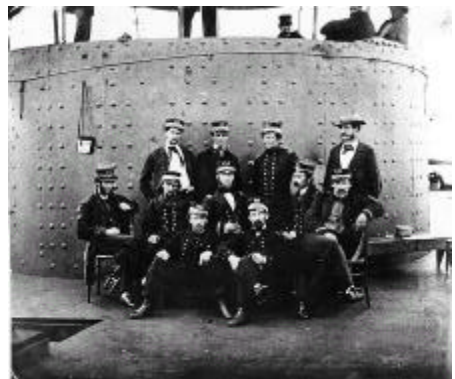


Louis N. Stodder

The other ship that raided Tampa in October 1863 was the U.S.S. *Adela*. In command was Acting Volunteer Lieutenant Stodder. Stodder (sitting on the extreme left of the famous "Turret" photo) was assigned to the ironclad U.S.S. *Monitor* and served from cradle to grave. He was the *Monitor's* turret officer during the historic engagement with the Confederate ironclad C. S. S. *Merrimac*. Stodder was seriously injured by a shell from the *Merrimac*

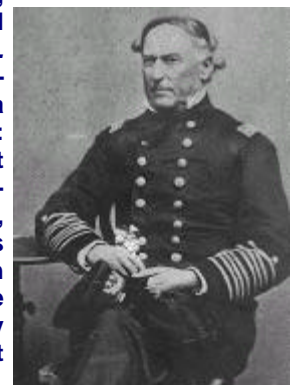
striking the *Monitor's* turret while he was at the wheel used to revolve the turret.

The battle between the *Monitor* and the *Virginia* (ex-*Merrimac*) occurred on March 9, 1862. One year later, the Tiffany *Monitor* sword was presented to Stodder. Two weeks later, Stodder was presented with his second *Monitor* sword manufactured by Ames (both in photo).



Admiral David G. Farragut

Although there is no record of Farragut being in Tampa Bay, especially during the war, there is a letter dated January 29, 1863, from the Admiral aboard the flagship U.S.S. *Hartford* to Acting Rear-Admiral Bailey, regarding a suspected steamer: "SIR: On the 16th instant [January 16, 1863] a two-masted iron steamer, walking beam engine, was seen about 15 miles from Tampa Bay, running in. She hoisted rebel colors. Very respectfully, your obedient servant, D. G. FARRAGUT, Rear-Admiral."



This was likely a result of Farragut's flagship being enroute to New Orleans and passing Tampa Bay when the blockade runner was spotted.

If you are aware of any other persons that meet the criteria explained above, please contact the webmaster of this site.