

Draft

**Captain Leo Vogel**

Well-regarded Clyde Line captain and coastal skipper Leopold (Leo) Vogel died on July 13, 1907 in St. Augustine. His exploits during the War Between the States in the service of the Confederacy were little known and not well documented, and his subsequent excellent maritime career had been over for several years at the time of his passing, and most had not remembered it.

Leopold Ramie Vogel was born in Charleston, South Carolina on September 4, 1842. He was the only child of Hungarian-born John George Vogel and Hortense Emma Riviere, a native of St. Domingo, now known as the Dominican Republic.

Orphaned at age nine, Vogel was taken to Amsterdam, Holland by his aunt and guardian and completed his studies there. He returned to Charleston on the eve of the Civil War and was one of the first persons to take up arms in behalf of the young state by enlisting in the Lafayette Artillery, a South Carolina state military unit, which, a few days after the secession of South Carolina, and after the local Federal Commander, Robert Anderson, had moved his forces from Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island to the isolated Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, occupied the now-abandoned Fort Moultrie.

Vogel later indicated that he had become involved in Confederate privateering as early as June, 1861, but records of what his involvement in this activity might have been have not been found. After a few months at the outset of the war, privateering had greatly diminished and in the fall of 1861, the young Vogel embarked as a gunner on the blockade runner *Gordon*. This vessel had been commissioned as a Confederate privateer on July 15, 1861 and had taken two prizes. She was a fast vessel of low draft and initially carried three rifled cannon.

Confederate Commissioners (Ambassadors) James Murray Mason and John Slidell had the task of getting to their posts in Great Britain and France, respectively, from Charleston, South Carolina. They thought that the *Gordon*, which, after her privateering career was over, was being used in coastal patrol work in the Charleston area, would be ideal for getting them out of Charleston and to Havana, from whence they could get steamships to Europe to fulfill their duties as representatives of the young Confederacy. Both had been former U. S. Senators, both were along in years.

The sidewheeled *Gordon* had been built in Greenpoint, New York (on the East River) by Lawrence and Sneed, being completed in 1851. Of 517 tons, she was 177 feet long and 27.5 feet wide. In pre-war commercial packet service she was initially on a Savannah-Charleston route and later ran from Savannah to the St. Johns River in Florida.

The Confederate government arranged for the charter of the *Gordon* for a fee of \$10,000. Confederate financier George Trenholm offered to pay half of this charter fee, provided he could use the vessel to import cargo back into the Confederacy after her passage had been completed. This offer was accepted and the *Gordon*, now renamed *Theodora*, departed Charleston on October 12, 1861 with the two commissioners, their secretaries and families, bound for Nassau in the Bahamas. The Union blockaders were easily passed and the vessel, Captain Thomas Lockwood in command, got safely to Nassau. There it was found that further passage to Europe was easier obtained from Cuba so the *Theodora* headed for Havana. Running short of coal, she stopped at Cardenas and there the Commissioners departed the vessel and took a train for Havana. From there, they embarked upon the British Royal Mail steamship, *Trent*, to take passage to St. Thomas and eventually from there to Great Britain.

On November 6, the *Trent* departed and was only a few miles from port when the Federal armed warship *San Jacinto* stopped her and fired warning shots across the *Trent's* bow. A small boat from the Federal vessel then took off the Confederate Commissioners and their two secretaries. They were taken first to Fortress Monroe and then to Boston and placed in Fort Warren, a prison in the harbor.

The incident came close to provoking war between the United States and Great Britain, but the Union acknowledged the 'error' and freed the commissioners. They and their families finally arrived in Southampton, England on January 30, 1862. Slidell then journeyed to France and Mason remained as the representative to Great Britain.

The *Gordon*, now renamed *Theodora* continued her blockade running, perhaps Vogel was still a member of the crew.

Several months later in May, 1862, Vogel, then at the age of 19 and a half, joined the complement of the soon-to-be Confederate cruiser *CSS Florida*, which was lying at anchor in Nassau in the Bahamas. Interestingly, for his service with the Confederacy he used the first name of 'Lionel' instead of Leopold or Leo. He was appointed as a "Captain's Clerk."

This wooden British-built propeller craft had been built by William C. Miller and Sons of Liverpool. Known initially as the *Manassas* and later as *Oreto*, she was 191 feet long, 27 feet 3 inches wide and drew 13 feet of water. She was of about 700 tons. She was provided with two direct-acting engines that had 42-inch diameter horizontal cylinders that made for a speed of about 9.5 knots. Her steam was provided by two horizontal boilers fed by three furnaces. Schooner rigged, she carried two square sails on her fore and main masts. Under both steam and sail she sped along at 12 knots. Her propeller could be disconnected and raised, thus enabling her to proceed under canvas alone with reduced drag. Her cost was \$225,000.

The *Oreto* had been in Nassau since April 28, arriving there after a 37 day voyage from the Mersey. She then became the subject of law suits and British red tape concerning her status as a warship. After sailing from Liverpool without any arms or ammunition aboard she was joined in the Nassau harbor on May 4 by the British ship, *Bahama*, which had the *Oreto's* armament aboard. The *Bahama's* cargo was placed in a dock-side warehouse for fear that the increasing number of Federal warships now gathering in the harbor might seize the needed armament.

Shortly after the *Bahama's* arrival, the newly-assigned commander of the *Oreto* arrived in the blockade runner *Nassau*. He was John Newland Maffitt, master of the *Nassau*, (as the *Gordon* later renamed *Theodora* was now known). However, he immediately gave up the command of the blockade runner and assumed his duties as a Lieutenant in the Confederate Navy and master of the *Oreto*.

It was known that Vogel was on the *Gordon* and Maffitt, as skipper of that ship, knew him. Perhaps this is why Vogel chose, or was chosen, to continue to be with Maffitt, this time in official Confederate service.

While the *Oreto* was in Nassau, she was the subject of many law suits and British and American red tape concerning her status as a warship. Since no arms were ever aboard her, she was finally declared not to be a warship and was free to leave, providing, of course, she could elude the many Federal warships then hovering around Nassau.

On August 8, 1862, on the first day she was available, Maffitt took the *Oreto* out of Nassau harbor. A small schooner the *Prince Albert*, commanded by Lieutenant John Stribling, Maffitt's second-in-command, also left and was to meet the *Oreto* at sea. This vessel had the needed arms aboard her, having taken them aboard from the shoreside warehouse where they had been stored.

Proceeding at night along the shoreline so as not to reveal her presence, and thus eluding her possible captors, the *Oreto* proceeded to uninhabited Green Cay, about 60 miles away, meeting the *Prince Albert* en route and taking her in tow. Once anchored at Green Cay, the arms and ammunition would be transferred to the *Oreto*. The *Oreto* had only a minimum number of officers and crew aboard to accomplish this laborious transfer task.

On August 9 as the two vessels lay at anchor, Maffitt stated, "now commenced one of the most physically exhausting jobs ever undertaken by naval officers. All hands undressed to the buff, and with the few men we had commenced taking in one 6 and 7.25 inch guns, powder, circles, shell and shot, etc. An August sun in the tropics is no small matter to work in."

Yellow fever had broken out among the crew before this and continued during the time of the transfer, one crew member died and most were ill from the dread disease. By the end of a week, however, despite the difficulties, the task of arming the *Oreto* was completed. Maffitt had the anchor raised on August 16<sup>th</sup> and bade goodbye to the *Prince Albert*. Moving the *Oreto* to Blossom Channel, on the next day, August 17<sup>th</sup>, the English ensign she was traveling under was lowered and the Stars and Bars raised. Maffitt then commissioned the vessel as '*CSS Florida*', reading his orders to the small assemblage.

In starting to train the crew it was soon discovered that in the haste of the hurried departure, many items needed to load and fire the cannon had not been placed aboard the *Prince Albert*. Thus, in addition to an extremely small crew and the sickness, no method to take prizes was available. Faced with these problems, Maffitt resolved to take the *CSS Florida* to Cardenas, Cuba, where proper items could be obtained and a crew recruited.

In the early morning of August 19, the *CSS Florida* limped into Cardenas, with only four deck hands able to man the rigging and one fireman on duty. Every person of the crew except Maffitt and Stribling was stricken with yellow fever! Stribling was sent to Havana to find a physician and recruit some men for the crew. Maffitt assumed duties as physician, but after a few days contracted the dread illness. Sending for his clerk, presumably Vogel, he dictated instructions concerning the ship and care of the sick men, to be used in case he succumbed. After this action, Maffitt lapsed into a severe fever, and at times his life was despaired of.

Stribling returned with only eight men, but also brought a doctor, originally coming from Georgia with him. Six crew members had died, and somewhat at the urging of Cuban authorities, on August 31, Maffitt took the *Florida* to Havana, leaving Cardenas at night and arriving the next morning.

Additional crew members and the equipment needed to make the guns useful were not immediately available at Havana, so Maffitt decided to leave on the night of the same day that he had arrived, this time to go into Mobile, calculating that this port would be easier to get into than an Atlantic Ocean coastal port.

Departing Havana at 9 p.m. and hugging the coastline so as to hide his ship, Maffitt was able to make his way past the blockaders using only his engines. After three days steaming, the entrance to the

harbor approaches to Mobile was sighted. Since all channel navigation aids had been removed, Maffitt did not want to chance an approach at night, as he might ground, so, flying the British flag, he boldly made for the harbor entrance, guarded by Confederate Fort Morgan and steered directly at the Federal *USS Oneida*, trusting that the similar lines of his ship to a British gunboat would put off the onset of any cannon fire or at least reduce the amount of fire he would receive.

The *CSS Florida* was successful in getting into the harbor but suffered considerable damage from cannon fire from three Federal ships in making the dangerous passage. One man was killed and nine were wounded. But at the end of the afternoon on September 4, 1862, the vessel anchored off Fort Morgan. Maffitt accurately wrote, "We were torn to pieces."

The needed major repair work on the *CSS Florida* was carried forward and sufficient officers and crew were provided. Finally on January 15, 1863, taking advantage of an early morning storm, the *CSS Florida* departed, using her engines at first and then later setting sail - some 12 Federal blockading vessels were on watch. Continuing to elude the Union ships, in the heavy weather, the *CSS Florida* all through the next day ran away and by night changed course to elude the final dogged pursuer.

*CSS Florida* then commenced a formidable commerce-destroying career, burning one vessel in mid-January and then coaling in Havana. A few days later Nassau was reached and Maffitt coaled again, the coal taken on at Havana had proved to be useless. On February 12, the largest and most valuable prize ever taken by a Confederate cruiser, the clipper *Jacob Bell*, was captured. Worth between 1.5 and 2 million dollars she was burned.

During the next several months, the *CSS Florida* captured many merchantmen and also commissioned a few of the vessels taken to be Confederate cruisers so as to make captures on their own, which turned out to be successful venture. Finally on August 23, 1863, the *Florida* completed her successful first cruise by coming to rest in Brest, France. Some 46 vessels had been captured and otherwise disposed of by the *Florida* and her "offspring".

In October, while the *Florida* was still being overhauled in Brest, Maffitt was afflicted with a possible heart condition and requested relief, which was granted. He would eventually go on to command other vessels, primarily blockade runners. Vogel would follow two months later, resigning from his post of "Acting Master's Mate" on December, 10, 1863. He had been appointed to this latter rank in September, 1863.

After Maffitt had resigned, he recuperated by traveling in Scandinavia. His health, having improved, he returned to the Confederate States aboard the blockade runner, *Florie*. This vessel was presumably named after his daughter. *Florie*. Her near sister, *Lilian*, had been built in 1863 by the Govan, Scotland firm of J. and G. Thomson. Sidewheelers, they were about 225 feet in length and 26 feet wide.

The first known runs of the *Florie* and *Lilian* were from Bermuda to Wilmington, both ships left Bermuda in early June, 1864 and arrived a few days later at Wilmington. By now, Maffitt was master of the *Lilian*, although only for this one voyage. *Lilian* (often spelled as *Lillian*) was to make a total of six attempts to run the blockade between Bermuda and Wilmington and on her sixth run, which was an attempt to leave Wilmington, was captured by the Union warships, *Keystone State* and *Gettysburg* on August 24, 1864.

*Florie* attempted eight runs through the blockade, going between Bermuda and Wilmington, and was successful on six of them. In October, 1864 she was lost by grounding in the Cape Fear River. Vogel's service took place on both of these vessels, but particulars are not known.

*Owl* was another vessel associated with both Maffitt and Vogel. She was owned by the Confederate government and Maffitt was designated as her master in September, 1864. This vessel had been built in Liverpool, England in 1864 by Jones, Quiggin and Company. She was 230 feet long and 26 feet wide and was a sidewheeler. Her hull was of steel, however, and she was of 466 gross and 330 net tons.

*Owl* made seven attempts to run the blockade, being successful in four of them. The second of these saw Maffitt guiding her out of Wilmington on September 31, 1864, bound for Bermuda. Next, the *Owl* entered Wilmington on December 1, 1864 and departed on December 21, 1864 for Bermuda. Her last trip, in March, 1865 ended in Galveston, Texas, although Maffitt had first tried to enter the Cape Fear River - finding that Fort Fisher had fallen, he next tried for Charleston. Unable to enter there, she went to Galveton, Texas and discharged her cargo. Maffitt then took the *Owl* to Nassau and since the war was then over, delivered her in England. Vogel was on this vessel but it is not known which of the voyages he made.

Some idea of Vogel's role can be seen in a testimonial delivered by the *CSS Florida*'s master, John Newland Maffitt, in a communication dated December 15, 1864. "This is to certify that Mr. Leopold Vogel served under my command, first on board the steamer *Gordon* next in the *Florida* and then in the steamers *Florie* and *Lillian*. As an officer on board of those different vessels he developed ability and exhibited courage, zeal and devotion to duty.

"I can recommend Mr. Vogel as competent for a command, feeling well assured he will give satisfaction to an employer."

The close of the conflict saw Vogel in Charleston and shortly after the conclusion of the conflict, he married Marie Catherine Reeve in St. Joseph's church. Four children resulted from the marriage, two boys and two girls.

Steamship service between Charleston and the St. Johns River was re-instituted after the war in 1866 by the use of two substantial war-time-built steamboats, the *Dictator* and *City Point*. Vogel was employed on these vessels. Undoubtedly he was a protégé of Louis Mitchell Coxetter, who was a partner in the firm that operated these steamboats and also often served as commander of either of these vessels, each of which ran round trips on a once-a-week basis. Vogel became an officer on these vessels and later on, after Coxetter had died in 1873, was often listed as being the skipper of either of these steamboats for the next several years.

In 1878 the magnificent iron-hulled sidewheeled steamboat, *St. Johns* was placed on the route - a speedy vessel - during the winter months she made two round trips per week! Vogel brought her to Jacksonville on her initial run and was often in command on many of her voyages. After the winter season of 1882 the vessel was taken off the route and transferred to northern waters.

The Jacksonville *Times Union* in its April 29, 1882 issue eulogized the steamship and Vogel. "As to the commander, Captain Leo Vogel, who has been with us for the last sixteen years, who has been praised by everyone, and who is recognized by all as a thorough navigator and a perfect gentleman, the magnificent condition of his ship and the way she has been handled speaks for itself. He served his

apprenticeship at sea with such men as Maffitt, Stribling ...and to whose excellence as an officer, seaman and navigator all testify. His experience as an officer, both in the navy and merchant service, has been cosmopolitan. ... There are few men in the merchant service with such experience, ability and talent as Captain Vogel and we again unhesitatingly say that he has won for himself, not only the confidence and admiration of our citizens but a name that will be remembered for many years to come. May success attend him and his gallant craft wherever they go.”

Vogel, who by this time, was certainly the premier skipper on the route, next took command of the twin-screw iron-hulled *City of Palatka* and operated her for a few years from Charleston to the St. Johns. When this vessel was withdrawn in the mid 1880s, Vogel had the honor of opening up the long-lived Clyde Line service between Charleston and Florida by bringing the Clyde Line's iron-hulled coastal steamship *Cherokee* from Charleston to Jacksonville, arriving at the latter place for the first time on Thanksgiving Day, 1886. Vogel would go on to serve many years with the Clyde Line, usually being found on the Charleston-St. Johns circuit.

In 1892, Vogel, then at the age of 50, was appointed by the Clyde Line to be their Jacksonville wharf superintendent. In addition to their coastal service, the Line had taken over the remnants of the DeBary Merchants Line and operated steamboats on the St. Johns River between Jacksonville and Sanford.

Three years later, on June 22, 1895, Captain Vogel was appointed to be the United States Inspector of Hulls for the U. S. Steamboat Inspection Service. This prestigious position was only bestowed upon proven veteran captains, who combined integrity and judgment. A parallel officer to Vogel was appointed as Inspector of Engines. In this position, Vogel and his associate were responsible to make annual inspections of all steamboats running to or in Florida easterly of the Apalachicola River.

Some six years later, due to failing health, Captain Vogel resigned from this fine position on February 10, 1901. He had suffered a severe stroke, which left him partially paralyzed. During the last few years of his life he was bedridden and confined to his Charlotte Street home in St. Augustine.

Upon his death, the *St. Augustine Evening Record* stated in its July 16, 1907 issue, “Capt. Vogel was a great favorite with passengers; they admired him for his uniform courtesy, dignified deportment and strict attention to duty. In time of peril he was cool and determined and those on board had implicit confidence in his judgment, courage and skill.”

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