Part 6: Miscellaneous and Bibliography

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CSS *Alabama*: An Illustrated History

In Six Parts:

Part 1: Building of Ship 290
Part 2: Officers and Crew
Part 3: Cruise of the *Alabama*
Part 4: Battle with *USS Kearsarge*
Part 5: Wreck Exploration & Excavation

---> Part 6: Miscellaneous and Bibliography
     (the Alabama Claims, poems, music, sword of Raphael Semmes)

To read any of the other parts, return to the menu and select that part to be downloaded.

Designed and Assembled by
Jack L. Dickinson
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2017
The Alabama claims were a diplomatic dispute between the United States and Great Britain that arose out of the U.S. Civil War. The peaceful resolution of these claims 7 years after the war ended set an important precedent for solving serious international disputes through arbitration, and laid the foundation for greatly improved relations between Britain and the United States.

The controversy began when Confederate agents contracted for warships from British boatyards. Disguised as merchant vessels during their construction in order to circumvent British neutrality laws, the craft were actually intended as commerce raiders. The most successful of these cruisers was the Alabama, which was launched on July 29, 1862. It captured 58 Northern merchant ships before it was sunk in June 1864 by a U.S. warship off the coast of France. In addition to the Alabama, other British-built ships in the Confederacy Navy included the Florida, Georgia, Rappahannock, and Shenandoah. Together, they sank more than 150 Northern ships and impelled much of the U.S. merchant marine to adopt foreign registry. The damage to Northern shipping would have been even worse had not fervent protests from the U.S. Government persuaded British and French officials to seize additional ships intended for the Confederacy. Most famously, on September 3, 1863, the British Government impounded two ironclad, steam-driven “Laird rams” that Confederate agent James D. Bulloch had surreptitiously arranged to be built at a shipyard in Liverpool.

The United States demanded compensation from Britain for the damage wrought by the British-built, Southern-operated commerce raiders, based upon the argument that the British Government, by aiding the creation of a Confederate Navy, had inadequately followed its neutrality laws. The damages discussed were enormous. Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, argued that British aid to the Confederacy had prolonged the Civil War by 2 years, and indirectly cost the United States hundreds of millions, or even billions of dollars (the figure Sumner suggested was $2.125 billion). Some Americans adopted this argument and suggested that Britain should offer Canada to the United States in compensation. Such proposals were not taken seriously by British statesmen, but they convey the passion with which some Americans viewed the issue.

After years of unsuccessful U.S. diplomatic initiatives, a Joint High Commission meeting in Washington, D.C. during the early part of 1871 arrived at the basis for a settlement. The British Government expressed regret for its contribution to the success of Confederate commerce raiders. This agreement, dated May 8, 1871, and known as the Treaty of Washington, also established an arbitration commission to evaluate the merit of U.S. financial claims on Britain. In addition, the treaty addressed Anglo-American disputes over boundaries and fishing rights. The arbitration commission, which issued its decision in September 1872, rejected American claims for indirect damages, but did order Britain to pay the United States $15.5 million as compensation for the Alabama claims.
LIST OF CLAIMS
BEFORE THE
COURT OF COMMISSIONERS
OF
ALABAMA CLAIMS.

Re-established under the Act of Congress approved June 5, 1882.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
GIBSON BROTHERS, PRINTERS.
1888.

THE
TREATY OF WASHINGTON:
ITS
NEGOTIATION, EXECUTION,
AND THE DISCUSSIONS RELATING THERETO.

BY
CALEB CUSHING.

NEW YORK:
Harper & Brothers, Publishers,
Franklin Square.
1872.

Both from Rosanna Blake Collection, Marshall University Special Collections.
Exploration of the Wreckage of the CSS Alabama

The French Navy mine hunter La Circe discovered the wreck of the Confederate raider CSS Alabama in 1984. During June and July 2001, the American CSS Alabama Association and the French Association CSS Alabama carried out an archaeological investigation of the remains of the Confederate commerce raider CSS Alabama.

To see the complete illustrated report of these groups, please go to the main menu and download ”Part 5: Wreck Exploration & Excavation.” Or go to: http://mua.apps.uri.edu/alabama/reports/ala2k1.PDF.

The Museum of Underwater Archeology has a “findings gallery” for the Alabama at: http://mua.apps.uri.edu/alabama/alafind8.html

Right:
The CSS Alabama fired this shell from its 110-pound rifle early in the action against USS Kearsarge, landing a critical blow into Kearsarge’s stern post. But it didn’t explode, allowing Kearsarge to continue the battle, eventually defeating Alabama. Originally deposited in the Ordnance Museum, Navy Yard, Washington, DC. Naval History and Heritage Command, Communications and Outreach Division.

A shell recovered from the wreckage of CSS Alabama during a 2001-02 excavation shows it still in its wood case, held together with a rope. Image from: Naval History and Heritage Command, Communications and Outreach Division.
The Sword of Raphael Semmes

While in England, following the sinking of the Alabama, Captain Raphael Semmes was presented with a special presentation sword, bearing the inscription:

"Presented to Captain Raphael Semmes, CSN, by Officers of the Royal Navy and other friends in England as a testimonial of their admiration of the gallantry with which he maintained the honour of his country's flag and the fame of the ALABAMA in the engagement off Cherbourg with a chain-plated ship of superior power, armament, and crew, June 19th, 1864."

A poem was written about his sword by Dr. Frank O. Ticknor, first published in 1879, and published in the Confederate Veteran Magazine of August, 1915:

The Sword in the Sea.

The billows plunge like steeds that bear
The knights with snow-white crests;
The sea winds blare like bugles where
The Alabama rests.

Old glories from their splendor-mists
Salute with trump and hail
The sword that held the ocean lists
Against the world in mail.

For here was glory's tourney field,
The tilt-yard of the sea,
The battle path of kingly wrath
And kinglier courtesy.

And there they rest, the princeliest
Of earth's regalia gems,
The starlight of our Southern Cross,
The sword of Raphael Semmes.

Alabama Ship's motto: "Aide Toi, Et Dieu T'Aidera," (God helps those who help themselves, or Help yourself, and God will help)
Statue of Captain Raphael Semmes in Mobile, Alabama. The bronze statue of Semmes was dedicated in Mobile on June 27, 1900.

“The Alabama”
by C. P. Oliver

Sleep on beneath the waters, noble ship,
And take thy well-earned rest;
No longer o’er the billows,
On the wiled waves’ crest,
Shalt thou, the champion, though alone
Flying the flag of liberty, be borne.

From arctic oceans to the sunny south,
From eastern seas to islands of the west.
Thy sharp prow has cleft the waters into foam
Through years of superhuman toil,
No shelter but the open seas for rest,
Now, at rest forever, thou hast found a home.

Full many a fathom deep now art thou laid,
and on thy decks those men who nobly died
Sleep, resting from those toils of former days,
While their brave deeds remain their country’s pride,
And with the cannon’s breath engraved thy name
Upon the highest monument of fame!

Bibliography


---------. *Memoirs of Service Afloat, during the War Between the States*. Baltimore: Kelly, Piet & Co., 1869.


THE ALABAMA

By
E. King

Music #90; 1-2

Courtesy of
Historic American Sheet Music
Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library
Duke University
Nautical Song
with Piano Forte Accompaniment

THE ALABAMA.

Respectfully Dedicated

To the Gallant
Captain Semmes
And Crew,

And to the Officers and Seamen of the C.S. Navy.

By E. King,
Author of the Naval Songs of the South.

Entered... in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Confederate States of America, for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Richmond, Va. Lithographed and Published by Geo. Dunn & Compy.
THE ALABAMA.

Poetry by E. King  
Music by F. W. Rosier.

Pomposo.

The wind blows off your rocky shore, Boys! set your sails all free; And

soon our booming cannon's roar Shall ring out merri ly.

Run up your bunting taught a peak; And swear, lads, to defend her; 'Gainst
ev'ry foe, where'er we go, Our mot... to "No Sur... ren... der!"

Then sling the bowl, drink ev'ry soul, A toast to the Ala...

Then sling the bowl, drink ev'ry soul, A toast to the Ala...

Then sling the bowl, drink ev'ry soul, A toast to the Ala...

CHORUS.

...ha ma; What... e'er our lot, through storm or shot, Here's suc...

...ha ma; What... e'er our lot, through storm or shot, Here's suc...

...ha ma; What... e'er our lot, through storm or shot, Here's suc...
Our country calls all hands to arms,
    We hear but to obey;
Nor shall home's most endearing charms
    Steal one weak thought away.
Our saucy craft shall roam the deep,
    We've sworn, lads, to defend her;
Trim, taught and tight, we'll brave the fight,
    Our motto "No Surrender!"
Then sling the bowl, &c.

Our home is on the mountain wave,
    Our flag floats proudly free;
No boasting despot, tyrant, knave,
    Shall crush fair Liberty.
Firmly we'll aid her glorious cause,
    We'll die, boys, to defend her;
We'll brave the foe, where'er we go,
    Our motto "No Surrender!"
Then sling the bowl, &c.

Boys! if perchance it may befall,
    When storm of battle raves,
By shot or shell our noble hull
    Shall sink beneath the waves,
Yet while a plank to us is left
    To death we will defend her;
Facing the foe, down, down we'll go,
    But still cry "No Surrender!"
Then sling the bowl, &c.