

## *Colt's Manufacturing Company, L.L.C.*

### *Past Historians*

*Arthur Ulrich* 1903-1941  
*Harold Hart* 1942-1945

*Charles Coles* 1950-1965  
*Ben Wagner* 1957-1972

*Merlin Huber* 1972-1993  
*Kathleen Hoyt* 1988-2009

August 29, 2016

*James D. Julia*  
203 Skowhegan Road  
Fairfield, Maine 04937

*Dear Sir:*

*Colt, by means of this letter, is proud to authenticate the manufacture of the Colt firearm with the following serial number:*

### **COLT MODEL 1860 ARMY REVOLVER**

<i>Serial Number:</i>	923
<i>Caliber:</i>	.44/c
<i>Barrel Length:</i>	7 ½"
<i>Finish:</i>	Blue
<i>Type of Stocks:</i>	Wood
<i>Shipped To:</i>	<i>Peter Williams and Company</i>
<i>Address:</i>	<i>Richmond, Virginia</i>
<i>Date of Shipment:</i>	<i>April 15, 1861</i>
<i>Number of Same Type</i>	
<i>Guns in Shipment:</i>	500

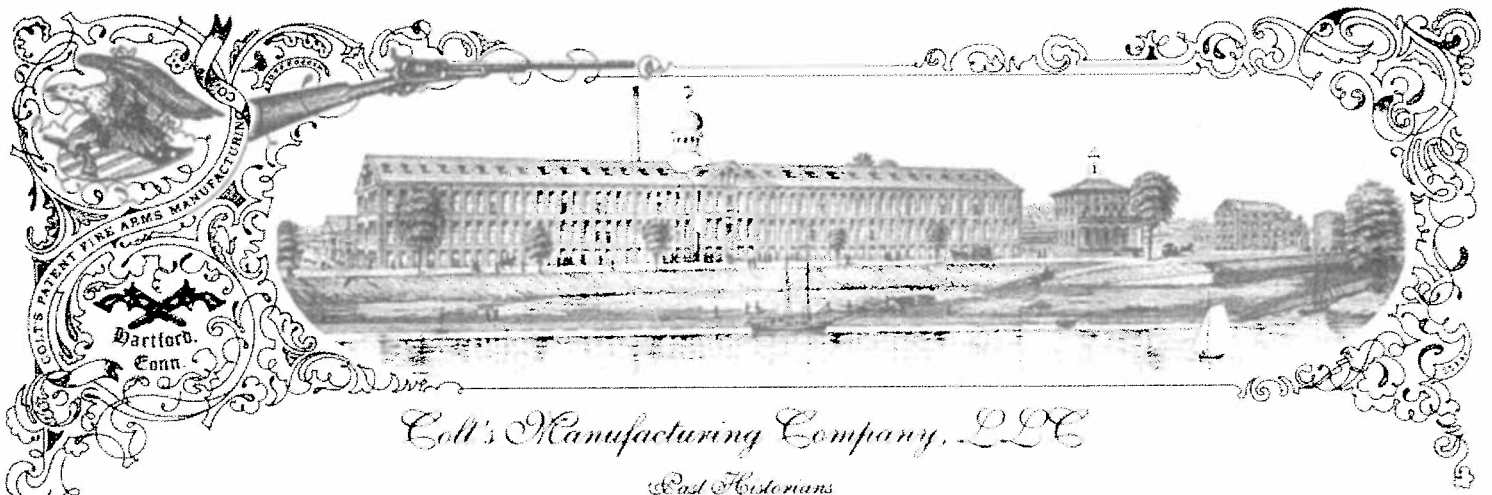
*We trust you will find the historical information, retrieved from the original Colt shipping records, to be of interest.*

*Sincerely,*

*Beverly Jean Haynes*  
Beverly Jean Haynes  
Historian

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## *Colt's Manufacturing Company, LLC*

### *Colt Historians*

*Arthur Ulrich* 1903-1941  
*Harold Hart* 1942-1945

*Charles Lees* 1950-1965  
*Don Wagner* 1957-1972

*Martin Huber* 1972-1993  
*Kathleen Hoyt* 1988-2009

August 29, 2016

James D. Julia  
203 Skowhegan Road  
Fairfield, Maine 04937

Dear Sir:

Colt, by means of this letter, is proud to authenticate the manufacture of the Colt firearm with the following serial number:

### **COLT MODEL 1860 ARMY REVOLVER**

Serial Number:	959
Caliber:	.44/c
Barrel Length:	7 1/2"
Finish:	Blue
Type of Stocks:	Wood
Shipped To:	Peter Williams and Company
Address:	Richmond, Virginia
Date of Shipment:	April 15, 1861
Number of Same Type Guns in Shipment:	500

We trust you will find the historical information, retrieved from the original Colt shipping records, to be of interest.

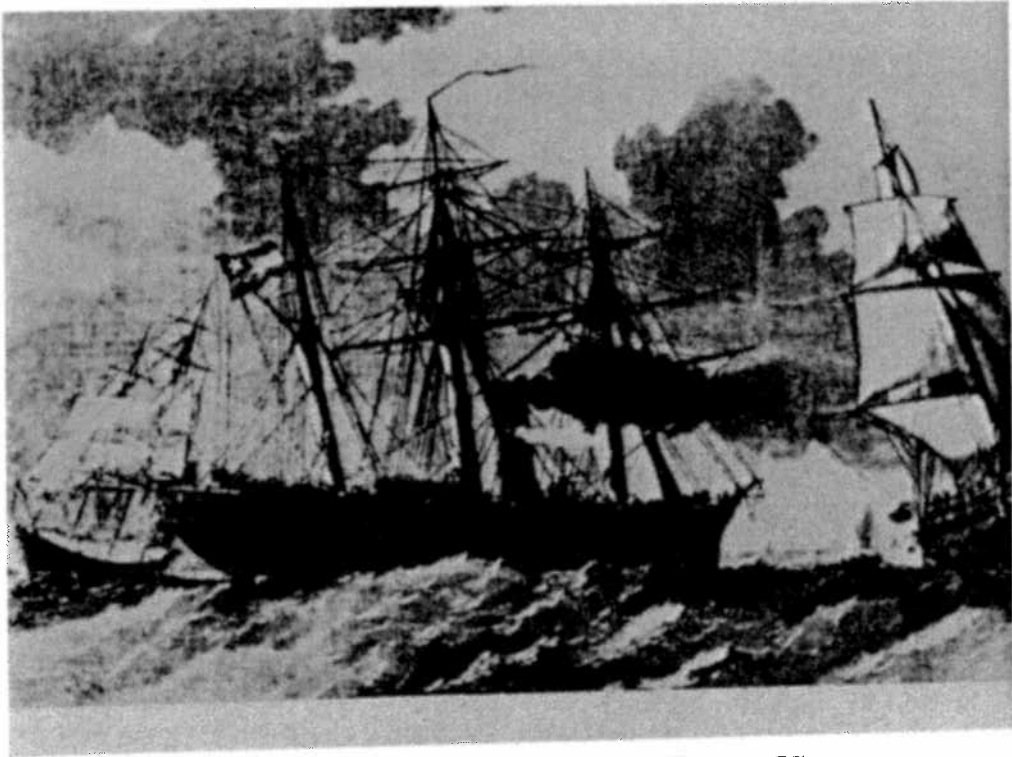
Sincerely,

*Beverly Jean Haynes*  
Beverly Jean Haynes  
Historian

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Office of the Historian, Colt Archive Properties LLC, P.O. Box 1868, Hartford, CT 06144



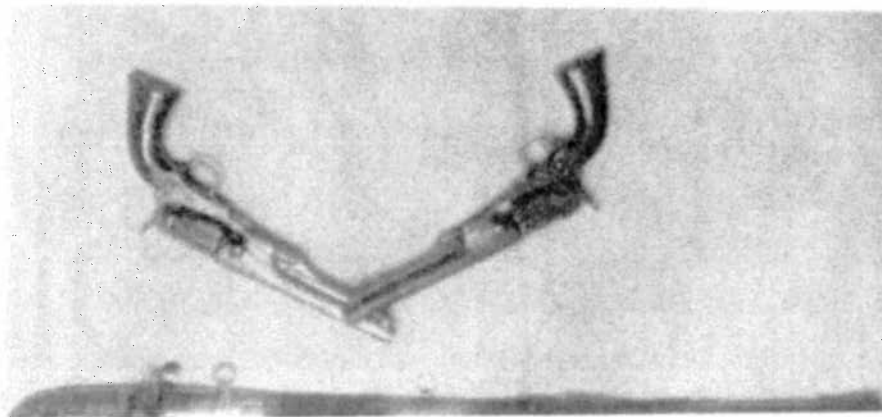
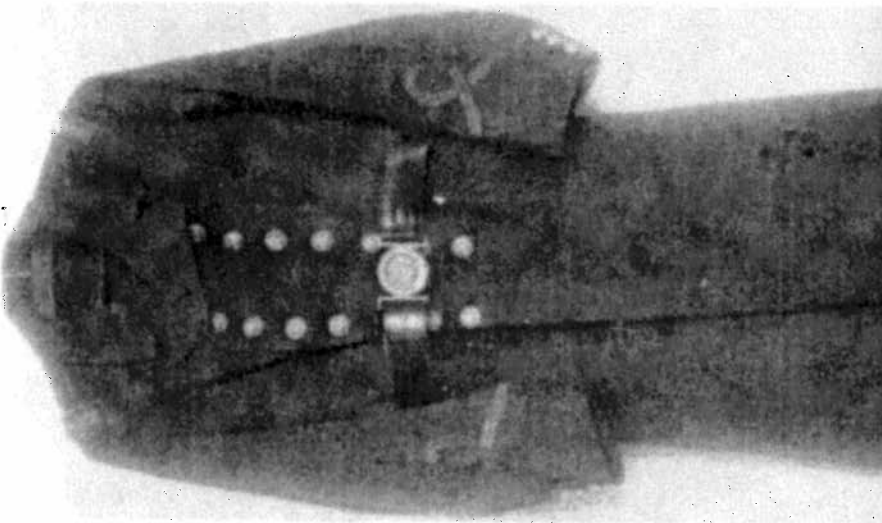


**FOUR YEARS  
IN THE  
CONFEDERATE  
NAVY**

THE CAREER OF CAPTAIN JOHN LOW  
on the

*C.S.S. Fingal, Florida, Alabama,  
Tuscaloosa & Ajax*

BY



August 1984

51012-1

# The **GUN** **REPORT**

**The Rare and Historic Pistols  
of Lieutenant John Low, C.S.N.**

**By**

**John G. Hamilton**

**\$2.50**

**Cover Photo**

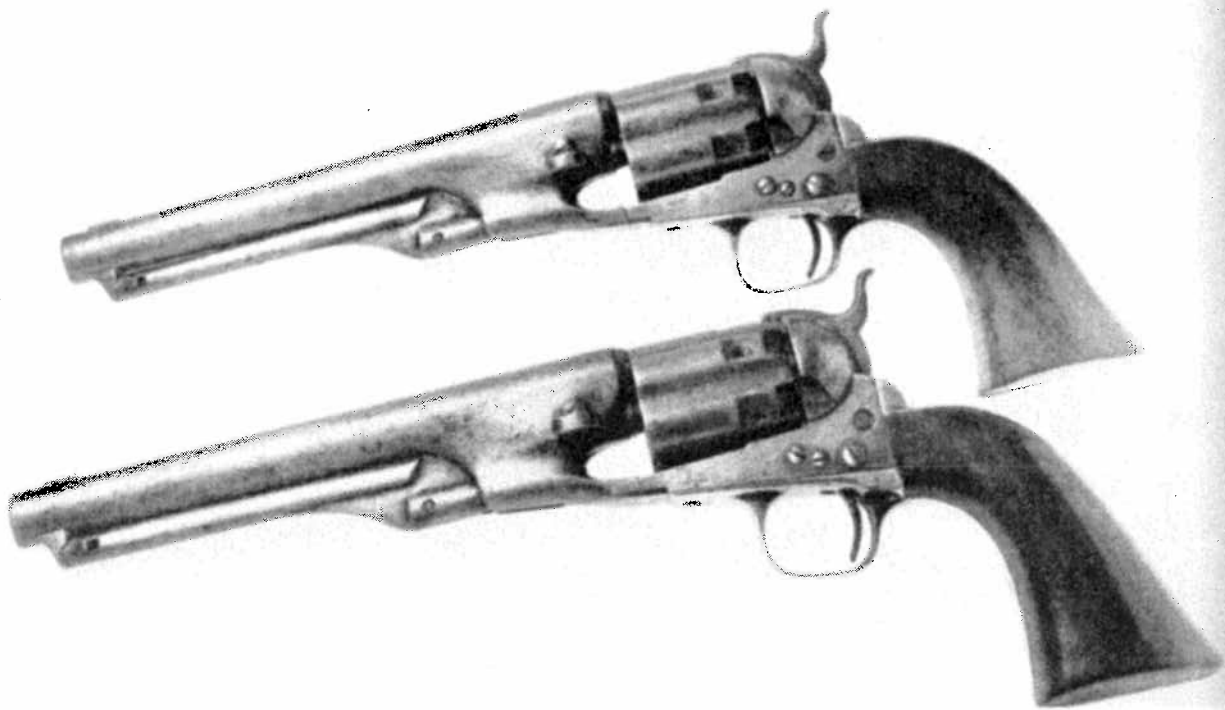
Pair of Southern deringers, Brown Manufacturing Company, Himschke  
engraved, gold and silver washed ivory grips. (Herbert G. Rainer, Jr.  
Collection)





# ***The Rare and Historic Pistols of Lieutenant John Low, C.S.N.***

***By John G. Hamilton***



**Figure 1: Pair of 1860 fluted cylinder Army Colts, serial numbers 923 and 959. Hartford address, 7½" barrels. Pistols were once the property of Captain John Low, C.S.N.**

The pair of Colt New Model Army Pistols, Fig. 1, were once the property of Lieutenant John Low who served ten months with Raphael Semmes on the C.S.S. Alabama. This popular model became the principal handgun of the Civil War and some 200,000 were produced; of these the United States Government purchased approximately 132,000. Additional quantities were purchased by the officers and men on both sides. A number of desirable variations of this model were produced; one was the cavalry model which can be identified by the fluted cylinder and the frame which is milled for the attachment of a shoulder stock and equipped with a fourth screw for holding same in place. Best estimates place the production of this model at 1,000 pieces or approximately 2% of the total production. This makes it rarer than most Colt percussion revolvers, including the first and third model dragoons. The fluted cylinder is found in the serial number range from 1 through 7,000. The purpose of the fluted cylinder has never been fully explained, but it was apparently designed to reduce the overall weight of the arm. This is logical since the Model 1860 or New Model Army was designed by Colt to replace the heavy dragoon models he had been supplying the mil-

itary with since 1847. There was a dramatic change in the weight and size of the New Model Army which weighed 2 lb. 11 oz. compared with the dragoon which weighed 4 lb. 2 oz. The fluted cylinder was not popular with Colt's customers and, in view of the extra expense and time involved in production, it was discontinued.

Lieutenant Low's pair of fluted cylinder New Model Army Colts, serial numbers 923 and 959, have the scarce Hartford address. Approximately 1% or 2,000 pieces were produced with such address, 7½" barrels, and fine varnished walnut stocks. The pistols are in untouched, uncleaned condition and completely original with matching numbers on all parts. They have an overall grey patina with just traces of original blue in protected areas and traces of silver showing on the trigger guards.

While the above variations make this pair of pistols very desirable, it is their historical association with a Confederate officer who served aboard the C.S.S. Alabama that makes them truly rare and historically important. The author knows of no other firearms with a provenance that definitely associates them with a member of the crew of the Alabama, the most famous ship in the Civil War and

considered by many to be one of the ten most famous ships in history.

John Low was born in Aberdeen, England January 24, 1836 and grew up in the Liverpool area where, at an early age, he was exposed to and came in contact with the seafaring men, ships, and the lure of the sea. At sixteen he shipped out on the H.M.S. *Shalimar* and within two years had earned his papers as a ship's mate.

In 1856, at the invitation of an uncle living in Savannah, Georgia, he came to the United States and settled in Savannah where he established a business as a ship's chandler. He prospered and at the outbreak of the Civil War had become a respected and prosperous citizen. When Georgia seceded from the Union on January 19, 1861, he enlisted in the Georgia Hussars. His duty with the Hussars was short-lived; once the Confederacy learned of his background as a seafarer, he was awarded a commission in the Confederate Navy with the rank of Lieutenant. History does not tell us how or when Lieutenant Low acquired his pistols, but it does tell he received his commission sometime during the summer of 1861. The serial numbers of the pistols, 923 and 959, tell us they were produced in 1861

and probably sometime during the first half of the year since the total production for the year was approximately 2,000 pieces. This, coupled with the fact that a number of Colt pistols found their way into the southern states in the early stages of the war, lends credence to the supposition that Low acquired the pistols either at the time he enlisted in the Hussars or when he received his commission. It would have been fairly easy for Low to have acquired a fine pair of pistols at either time not only because of his position, but because he was associated with many people in influential positions who could have helped him acquire them and this was particularly true of his uncle, who was very prominent in financial circles in Savannah at the time. Also, the serial numbers leave little doubt that they were acquired as and intended to be a pair.

Lieutenant Low's first assignment saw him return to England as an assistant to Commander Bulloch, a Confederate agent working in England, whose mission was to obtain war supplies, munitions, and cruisers for the Confederate Navy. Bulloch had succeeded in purchasing a vessel, the *Fingal*, to be used as a blockade runner by the Confederacy and had loaded her with \$250,000 worth of munitions and ordnance supplies. Upon the arrival of Low, he took advantage of his new assistant's experience as a mariner and appointed him second officer of the *Fingal*. On October 11, Low and Bulloch sailed for Savannah, Georgia and one month and one day later, after successfully running the blockade, the *Fingal* dropped anchor in Confederate waters.

When their mission was complete, Bulloch and Low booked passage on the *Annie Childs*, a speedy blockade runner. Leaving Wilmington, North Carolina on January 4, 1862, they were back in Liverpool, England on March 10. They were surprised to learn that one of the cruisers, the *Oreto*, a 750-ton twin stacked cruiser built by William Miller and Sons, had been completed. Bulloch and Low immediately got busy and lined up a crew. On March 22, the *Oreto* (later to become the C.S.S. *Florida*) sailed down the Mersey with Lieutenant John Low on board as First Officer and Special Emissary of Bulloch. Low's assignment was to take charge of the cargo and deliver certain papers to Captain John Maffit of the Confederate Navy at Nassau in the Bahamas. Captain Maffit in turn was to take charge of the vessel, run the blockade, and deliver the cruiser to a Confederate port. Thirty-seven days later the *Oreto* slipped into the harbor at Nassau and John Low had completed another assignment for the Confederate Navy. Fig. 2 shows Lieutenant Low as he appeared in his Confederate uniform and Fig. 3 as he appeared later in life as a civilian.

When the *Oreto* slid down the ways into the Mersey River, her sister ship the 290 was only a number on the production records of the Laird Brothers and work was progressing slowly. However, on May 15, an English lady broke a bottle over her bow and she slid down the ways. The lady's name was Henrietta and the 290 became the *Enrica*, the Spanish equi-

AUGUST 1984



Figure 2: Lieutenant John Low, C.S.N., in 1862. From "Photographic History of the Civil War", VI.

valent of her name.

The *Enrica* was a graceful lady some 211½ feet in length, a width of 31-2/3 feet, tonnage 1,050, a draft of 15 feet when weighted and equipped with two 300 horsepower engines capable of driving her at speeds up to 13 knots. With all plain sail in place she was also capable of making 13 knots. She was a screw steamer with full sail power and when not in use the screws could be hoisted clear of the

water into a well. Her armament consisted of six 32 pounders, two pivot guns, and a Blakely capable of throwing a one hundred pound shell. She was not designed as a battleship, but as a cruiser with the speed and maneuverability to hit and run and with the firepower to defend herself when necessary. The Laird Brothers made a beautiful scale model from which she was built. The motto on her steering wheel, "Aide toi et Dieu t'" (Help

Yourself and God Will Help You) was one which fit in very well with the beliefs of her future commander, Raphael Semmes. When John Low returned to Liverpool he learned that the 290, now the *Enrica*, had been completed and his first order from Bulloch was to sign up a crew and prepare to ship out with them as First Lieutenant. Bulloch had already signed up Mathew J. Butcher to captain the *Enrica* on her maiden voyage. Bulloch had visions of being chosen to command the *Enrica*, but such was not to be the case because he had received word from Secretary of the Navy, Mallory, informing him of the appointment of Raphael Semmes to be her commander. His only explanation was that Bulloch could best serve the Confederate cause by remaining in England.

On the morning of July 28, 1862, the *Enrica* moved slowly out of the dock at Birkenhead, and she was on her way to keep her date with destiny as the C.S.S. *Alabama* with Lieutenant John Low on board. On August 10, after a journey of some 500 miles, she dropped anchor in the Bay of Praya.

August 18 saw the arrival of the *Agripina*, the supply ship bringing with her the *Enrica*'s armament, coal, and other supplies. Commander Semmes, Commander Bulloch, and thirty-seven men and officers arrived on the 20th on board the *Bahama*.

August 25, 1862 would be a date long remembered and would go down in history as an important date in the annals of naval warfare. It was on this date that the *Enrica* sailed away from the island of Terciera to launch a career that would eventually win her immortality as one of the most famous ships in history. Some two hours after their departure Semmes decided it was time to talk to the officers and men, and for this purpose he had them assemble on the quarter deck. Then he read them his commission from the President and the Order of the Secretary of the Navy instructing him to take command of the *Enrica*. When he finished, the halliards at the peak of the main mast were broken and the flag and pennant of the Confederacy floated in the breeze; simultaneously a cannon boomed from the weather deck and a quartermaster standing by the English colors hauled them down and the *Enrica* officially became the C.S.S. *Alabama*.

Semmes then proceeded to explain the nature of the vessel, her nationality, purpose of the cruise, and causes leading to it. The men were told they would receive double the wages paid by the English government and payment would be in gold. They would also receive the equivalent of one half the value of property destroyed and bonded as prize money. He made it a point to emphasize that the *Alabama* was not a privateer, an irresponsible nonscript to roam the seas with no pretense of discipline or order for the purpose of plunder, but a bonafide man of war commissioned by the President, flying the flag of the Young Republic. He warned them of the hardships which lay ahead, the constant cruising in all seas and climes, the daily work required to keep the ship in fighting trim.

Page 20

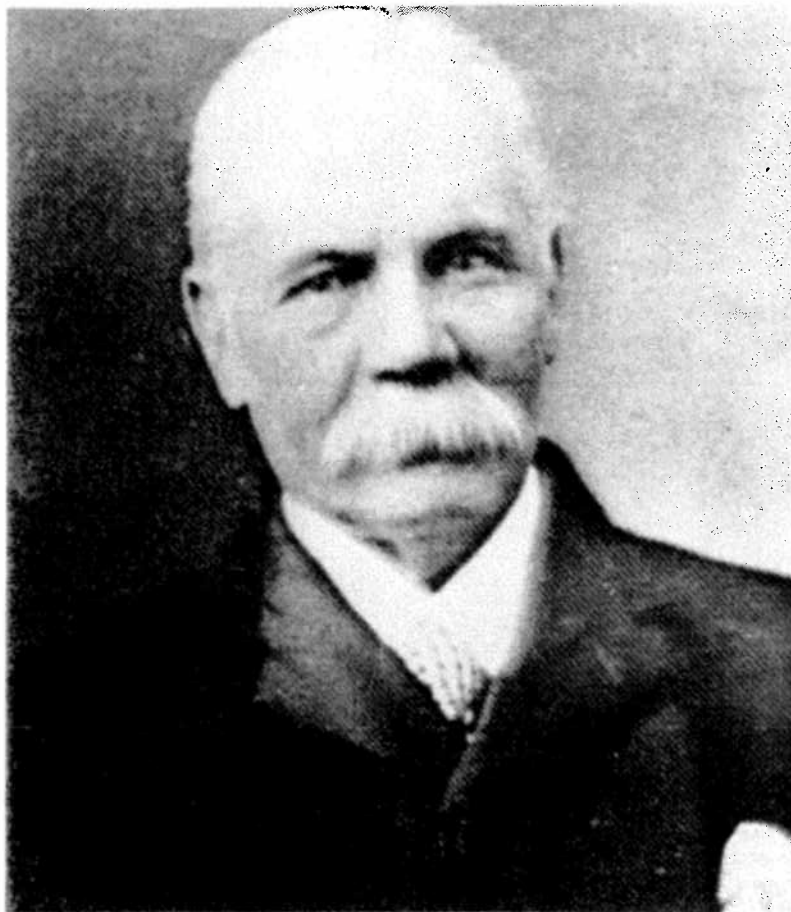


Figure 3: Captain John Low in his later years. Photograph courtesy of William Stanley Hoole.

and the danger involved in boarding vessels in all kinds of weather, day or night, with little respite and all with the constant threat of ending up with a rope around their necks. He then made a pitch for the men to come forward and sign up for the cruise.

The men split up into groups to discuss the proposal and make their individual decisions. Within a short time, the men began to come forward and sign up. The final count showed eighty-five men had accepted Semmes' offer, and this was almost enough to man and fight the ship's entire battery. Commander Bulloch immediately directed the paymaster to prepare advance half pay allotments to be delivered to the seamen's dependents back home. When the allotments were complete, Bulloch met with Semmes and then Bulloch, Captain Butcher, and the members of the crew who did not accept Semmes' offer returned to the *Bahama*, which had accompanied the *Enrica* to this point.

Semmes immediately set about putting his ship in order and giving the crew some practice on the guns. Then he turned his attention to the real reason for his mission; namely, that of crippling the commerce of the United States. There were many possibilities, but after careful thought he decided to attack the whaling fleet off the Azores and history tells

us he made an excellent choice. Semmes took his first prize on September 5. Lieutenant John Low made the following entry in his book:

*(5th) at 8:30 a.m. made a Brig. on our lee standing to the Northwest. Exercised at quarters at 9:00 a.m. As usual in nearing the chase we found she was hove to and heading across our bow. As we ran her down she appeared a very neat looking ship aloft and our suspicions began to be aroused that she might be Elmo a United States Cruiser which we had been stationed about the islands so we luffed a little in case it might be her so we could get weather gage of her in case we came in contact (6th) Contact with her making sure we were going to have an engagement with her, the boats employed down below in laying out their instruments in case of need but on nearing her we found she had quartered and every semblance of whaler — 2:05 P. came up alongside her. We sent a boat board her — she proved to be the ship "Ocmgee" on a whaling voyage with the United States Register. Lieutenant Armstrong was sent on board her to take possession. Her crew and baggage from the prize. Confirmed S.F. Turner fourth officer of the prize*

THE GUN REPORT



account drunkenness by order of the Capt. By order of Commander Semmes, Lieuts. Armstrong and Kell were appointed a board to value the ship "Ocmulgee" and appraised her at fifty thousand dollars. At 8:30 Lieut. Wilson and boats crew fired the prize at noon 38° 27'N/Long. 30° 40' West.

Within five hours another ship hove into view and was captured. This time Lieutenant Low led the boarding party and upon examining the ship's papers learned she was the "Starlight" out of Boston. The passengers and crew were removed and placed on the Alabama and the prize was fired.

During the next ten months Lieutenant Low participated in some forty chases and captures of enemy vessels and in many cases he was chosen by Commander Semmes to lead the boarding parties and apply the torch.

Lieutenant Low noted in his log on October 11 that it was becoming rather monotonous cruising and cruising. Little did he realize that the monotony would soon come to an abrupt end at the hands of mother nature. On the evening of October 15 the weather took a turn for the worse and the barometer began to fall. The wind continued to increase in intensity and the sea was running higher and higher until it became very difficult, if not impossible, for the men to work on deck without holding onto something for fear of being washed overboard. The sky became very dark and foreboding, and the fury of the storm steadily increased until it became apparent to all on board that the forces of nature were going to put the Alabama to the supreme test. The storm was fast beginning to take on all the earmarks of a real hurricane. The wind and rain continued all during the night accompanied by the heavy roll of thunder, and all the while brilliant flashes of lightning illuminated the heavens. As morning dawned on the 16th, the barometer continued its downward plunge and Semmes ordered the ship put under short sail. The wind and the sea continued to lash and pound the Alabama until all on board feared she would be destroyed and they would all be swept into the sea. As the sea rose higher the water poured over the decks until the crew found themselves in water waist high in their efforts to keep her right side up and afloat. Further adjustments were necessary in the sails until the ship was under nothing more than a small storm sail and she was in danger of being thrown on her beams and her masts swept away. The storm continued for two more hours and the barometer fell to 28.64. Then it happened—a deep calm settled over the Alabama, a calm which seemed to portend of something worse to come and which caused much apprehension and concern among those on board. Seamen are, as a lot, superstitious and many of them may have guessed or knew they were passing through the vortex of the hurricane and that few men ever lived to tell about it.

Everything remained calm for about thirty minutes and then the hurricane returned with a new fury that sent mountains of water

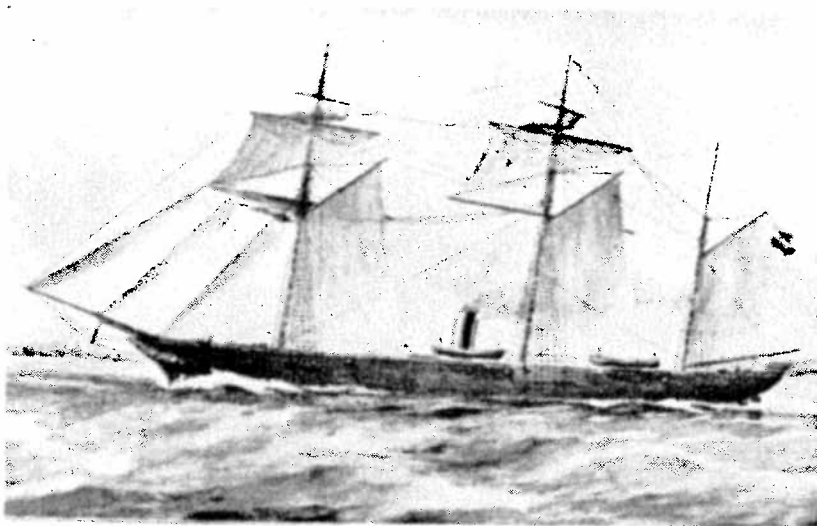


Figure 4: C.S.S. Alabama. From "Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies...," I, I. Photograph courtesy of William Stanley Hoole.

cascading over the stricken Alabama. When it appeared to all hands on board that the storm was about to put an end to the illustrious career of the Confederate cruiser, Lieutenant Low, acting entirely on his own volition but with instinct of a veteran officer, grabbed the helm and by exerting great strength succeeded in slowly turning the ship from the port tack, thereby righting and preventing her from floundering. It became immediately apparent to all on board that Lieutenant Low's quick thinking, combined with his excellent seamanship, had saved the Alabama and with it the lives of those on board. The Alabama, as she appeared to the merchant men she captured and burned or ransomed, is shown in Fig. 4. The day following the storm found all hands engaged in cleaning up the havoc wrought by the storm and making any necessary repairs. When the ship was once again in fighting trim, Semmes took to the sea lanes to search out and destroy or ransom Yankee merchant men. Hunting was not very lucrative and, during the period of October 17 through December 7, only seven ships were taken, four were burned and three ransomed. Then they ran into foul weather and this, coupled with engine trouble, made it necessary for them to head for a neutral port. On December 23 they arrived in the Gulf of Camechecke and dropped anchor off the Arcas Keys.

During their stay at the Arcas Keys, Semmes took time out to catch up on his reading and, after reading and studying the newspapers taken from captured vessels, he was able to piece together information which indicated Union General Banks was planning a 30,000 man invasion of Texas. A large convoy of some hundred ships consisting of gun boats, troops, and supply ships had been assembled in Boston and New York were scheduled to arrive off Galveston on or about January 10. He seized upon the idea of making a dashing

hit and run attack on the convoy, believing that with the element of surprise on his side he could, with some luck, destroy it or at least blunt the force of the attack. With this in mind he pointed the Alabama in the direction of Galveston. The Alabama and her crew were on their way to meet the greatest challenge of their career as this would be the first time they would challenge another warship in combat. The trip from Arcas Keys took nearly a week and by noon on January 11 the Alabama lay thirty miles off the coast of Texas.

Lieutenant Low entered the following account of the actual engagement in his log book:

*We arrived (off Galveston) in sight from aloft of the blockading squadron off that port consisting of seven steamers on the 11th. On the afternoon of the same day one of the steamers reported coming out and standing for us when we downed the propeller and got up steam and headed off shore going along easily for the steamer to approach, at dusk furled all sail and went to quarters and loaded with 5 shells when we stood back from the vessel as she was not very far astern we soon approached each other and upon doing so hailed her to know what steamer that was, but not hearing distinctly her reply we ran nearer to her when she hailed us to know what vessel we were. When we replied her Majesty's Gun Boat Petrel; we then asked her a second time what steamer that was. When she replied the U.S. Steamer Hatteras. So as we heard that we informed them that we were the Confederate States Steamer Alabama. Upon saying so fired a broadside which she instantly replied to whereupon the action became general, after the engagement lasted about ten minutes, we found she was blowing off steam for several of our shots had disabled the engine and one went through the*

steam chest. At this time I suppose we were two hundred yards from each other and the rifle shots and shells she was throwing pretty rapidly at us but generally going too high. We were both firing small arms as well but the most part past over us, after we saw what she was getting disabled she made an attempt to board us, but we were too smart for her. After the engagement lasted about fifteen minutes she fired a gun to the leeward as an indication of surrender when we ceased firing, but thinking it might only be a ruse on her part we loaded up and ran nearer her asking if she had surrendered and when she informed us she had she sent a boat informing us she was on fire and sinking. So we lowered our boats immediately and sent them to her in assistance and in about three quarters of an hour afterwards we had them all on board.

With 118 prisoners of war on board, the Alabama sailed out of the Gulf of Mexico and headed for Jamaica where they were put ashore. When Lieutenant Homer Blake, the commanding officer of the Hatteras, surrendered his sword, Semmes learned that two men were killed and five wounded on the Hatteras. He also learned there were five ships in the blockading squadron and the Hatteras was the weakest of the lot. It was difficult for Semmes to understand why she was chosen to pursue the Alabama when one of the ships was the Brooklyn, a much better equipped warship. When Blake made his

report to Secretary of the Navy Wells, he referred to the Alabama as a pirate craft. She had been referred to as such before.

Following her victory over the Hatteras, the Alabama returned to the sea lanes and moved southward along the coast of Brazil, capturing and burning Yankee shipping as then went. Then on June 20, a trim clipper made her appearance on the horizon and after a six-hour chase, Lieutenant Low and a boarding party went on board. She turned out to be the Conrad bound for New York. It was June 20 and the score now read 120 vessels overtaken and the forty-third vessel joined the long list of vessels to either disappear beneath the waves or be ransomed. The record was impressive after ten months at sea and 20,000 miles.

The Conrad turned out to be the most unique prize Semmes had taken to date. He had never hesitated to sink and burn the Yankee prizes without any compunction. However, there was something about the Conrad that made him stop and think; perhaps it was her fine lines and sailing qualities. Most important, he saw her potential as another Confederate cruiser. In any case, he decided to commission her and send her off to roam the seas, search out, burn, and/or ransom Yankee merchant men. The man he chose to be her captain was Lieutenant John Low, a man he described as a capital seaman and excellent officer. None of the officers or men questioned his choice. Low immediately set about

to outfit the new cruiser from supplies and armament taken from the prize then selected ten men and four officers crew and, after a brief speech by Semmes which he renamed the Conrad the *Loosa*, the two men parted, agreeing again at Cape Town.

Lieutenant Low closed out the first his new command by making the following brief entry in his log:

*21st July 1863 — This day the barge of Philadelphia captured as a prize of the Confederate States Steamer Alabama the 20th of June this year was put in commission as a tender to the later vessel under Confederate Flag at 5 P.M. this day receiving on board two rifles, a brass 6 twenty Springfield Rifles with ammunition. One of the guns was fired and the Confederate Flag run up amidst loud cheers from the Alabama when (the Conrad) Tuscaloosa proceeded on a cruise under command of Lieut. Low, Officer William Clair, Master, S.H. Minor (Master Marmelstein (Master Mate) and eleven*

John Low was in command of his own but it came at a most inopportune because even though it was still open on Yankee merchant men, most of them had been swept from the seas by the Alabama, Florida, and other Confederate

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**Winchester Model 70's**  
**Winchester Model 21's**  
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**Winchester Lever Actions**

During the months of June and July, Lieutenant Low ran down forty-eight vessels, but none proved to be of the United States Registry. Things took a turn for the better on the morning of September 13, when another sail was sighted and she turned out to be a Yankee, the *Living Age*, out of Maine with a cargo of rice bound for Falmouth. Captain Low ransomed her for \$160,000 and accepted the Captain's bond as security and released her. The search was continued, but then the days and weeks passed and on November 19 the *Tuscaloosa* arrived at St. Catherine's Island off the coast of Brazil, having sailed more than 6,000 miles and run down or boarded more than one hundred vessels of various nationalities and only one, the *Living Age*, having proved to be a legitimate prize of war.

No sooner had the *Tuscaloosa* dropped anchor in St. Catherine's Harbor than she was boarded by some armed men whose officer informed Low that he would not be permitted to communicate with the shore until he hove to and stood up. To insure compliance with such order a Brazilian warship was anchored alongside the *Tuscaloosa* during the night. The next morning Low explained to the officer that his primary concern was to obtain food for his men. The officer listened but it was to no avail, and he informed Low that the President of Brazil had ordered the *Tuscaloosa* out of the harbor. If Low failed to comply, they would put the vessel under Brazilian protection. This was the last thing

Low wanted and so by 5 P.M. the anchor was up and they were heading for blue water.

Low was aware that it was becoming imperative that he obtain food for the men and officers as soon as possible and there appeared but two alternatives; either capture a Yankee merchant man or intercept a vessel whose captain would be sympathetic to the Confederate cause. Lady luck smiled on him and on November 27 they ran down the *Tulium*, a British merchant man, whose captain let them have a few of the items they required. Then a short stop at the little island of Tristan de Cunha where they were able to get all the supplies they needed and they were on their way to Cape Town some 2,000 miles away.

On December 26 they dropped anchor in Simon's Bay, and Low was sure they were at last in friendly port where they could expect the usual maritime courtesies. He did not have long to wait to learn he was wrong. They had been at anchor less than an hour when the Simon Bay Harbor Master and a Lieutenant Wood from the H.M.S. *Narcissus* came aboard and questioned Low. Low explained that it was a routine stop for repairs and provisions. The Harbor Master demanded that Low put his answers in writing and when Low complied they left. Low did not give the matter much thought until the Harbor Master returned later with a letter from Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker personally addressed to Low. The letter read as follows:

*As it appears that the Tuscaloosa under your*

*charge and command is a vessel that belongs to the Federal States of America, having been captured by the Confederate States Ship of War Alabama, and not having been adjudicated before any competent prize court is still an uncondemned prize, which you brought to this port in violation of her Britannic Majesty's orders for the maintenance of her neutrality. I have the honor to inform you that, in consequence, I am compelled to detain the so called Tuscaloosa (late Conrad) with a view to her being restored to her original owners, and I request that you will be so good as to transfer the charge of the vessel to the officer bearing this letter.*

Lieutenant Low protested, but the only concession he could obtain was permission for the officers and men to remain on board until the arrival of the *Alabama*; in any case they would ultimately have to leave. Low lost no time in filing an official report directly with Sir William Wodehouse, the highest British official in all South Africa. The reply he received gave him two options, abandon the ship or await the arrival of Semmes and the *Alabama*. It was a difficult decision because he did not know when Semmes would return. After ten monotonous days during which the crew loafed, complained, and took inventory of the *Tuscaloosa's* stores, etc., Low decided to pay the men off, discharge them, and turn the vessel over to the British authority.

The *Tuscaloosa's* career was brief and cer-

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tainly not very productive in terms of Yankee commerce destroyed, but it did emblazon her name on the pages of history forever. Raphael Semmes pointed out in his "Memoirs of Service Afloat" that the case of the Tuscaloosa settled an important point of law; namely, that ONE NATION CANNOT INQUIRE INTO THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE SHIPS OF WAR OF ANOTHER NATION.

Lieutenant Low remained in Cape Town until January 20, 1864 on which date he sailed with Lieutenant William Sinclair for England. Their tickets were obtained through the courtesy of Rear Admiral Sir Baldwin Walker. When John Low returned to England, his valuable service to the Confederacy was recognized by Commander Bulloch, who recommended him for promotion to First Lieutenant and gave him a new assignment. His new duties included the overseeing the construction of four new gunboats being built by the Peter Denny Company of Dumbarton, Scotland.

After the sinking of the Alabama by the Kearsage on June 19, 1864, he spent some time in South Hampton reminiscing with his former shipmates. He became bored with the inactivity of shore duty and decided to resign from the Confederate Navy.

In September he wrote to Semmes and requested a recommendation which he planned to use in an effort to obtain an English master's license. Semmes wrote him a letter giving him a good recommendation. In the

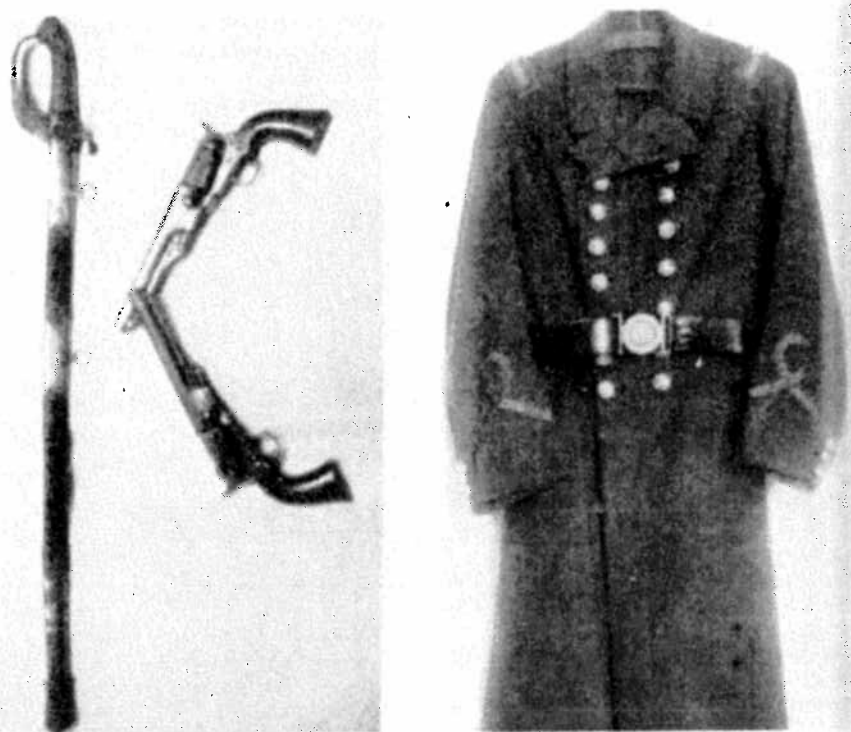


Figure 5: Low's Confederate uniform, sabre and pistols. Courtesy Malcolm F.S. Low, Cheshire, England. Photographs by Low's great-grandson, Roger Clarke. Photograph courtesy William Stanley Hoole.

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**ALEXANDER HENRY DOUBLE RIFLE**, 500 Black Powder Express cal. 28" barrels, marked Alex Henry, Edinburgh & London, underlever action with back action sidelocks, tang safety, indicators on each side of sidelocks to indicate cocked (In Gold), pistol grip stock of deluxe grade of wood, cheek piece, toe & heel plates and checkered butt, pistol grip cap with trap for spare firing pins, engraved action, sidelocks, underlever and trigger guard with 90% coverage of fine tight scroll engravings, bead front and two leaf rear sights plus original telescope that clips onto barrel rib, cased in original oak and leather case with Alexander Henry label, and complete with bullet mould, loading dies, powder flask, screw drivers, ivory container with two spare strikers, (firing pins), oil bottle, original telescope, etc. Excellent plus condition retaining apx. 99% original blue on barrels, perfect bores, 95% bright case colors on action and sidelocks, excellent plus solid tight deluxe wood retaining apx. 98% original wood finish, perfect working order and all original except the powder flask may be a replacement. This is a very nice clean original and complete cased double rifle. The oak and leather case is in excellent condition . . . . . \$4,750.00

**VOLCANIC, (NEW HAVEN ARMS CO.) LEVER ACTION NO. ONE POCKET PISTOL**, 30 caliber, 3 1/2" barrel, engraved silver plated brass frame, non-original ivory grips, serial number 1515. Excellent condition retaining apx. 95-98% bright blue on barrel and cartridge carrier, perfect bore, 50-60% original silver plating on frame but a little light, 50% original blue on lever, traces case colors on hammer, excellent ivory grips, perfect working order and all original except replaced ivory grips . . . . . \$3,250.00

**COLT OFFICERS MODEL TARGET REVOLVER**, 38 Spl cal 6" barrel, factory engraved, nickel plated, ivory grips with OBM on light grip, serial number 585683. See page 408 in book of Colt Engraving by Wilson. (This is the gun pictured at the top of page 408). Excellent plus condition retaining apx. 95% original nickel finish, perfect ivory grips, perfect bore, perfect working order and 100% factory original . . . . . \$4,250.00

**COLT DRAGOON REVOLVER, U.S. MILITARY SECOND MODEL**, 44 cal. 7 1/2" barrel, smooth walnut grips with inspectors cartouche on either side of grip, serial number 9580. Excellent plus condition retaining apx. 85-90% original blue on barrel, 75% original blue on cylinder with excellent plus cylinder scene, case colors have faded to a light and dark gray patina, exceptionally fine walnut grips with excellent plus sharp inspector marking, retaining most of the original safety fits, perfect bore, most of the original blue is still visible in the cylinder chambers, perfect working order and 100% factory original. This is an exceptionally fine second model Dragoon . . . . . \$17,500.00

**COLT ACE PISTOL**, 22 Long Rifle cal. ENGRAVED by WILBUR A. GLAHN, see page 419 in book Colt Engraving by Wilson, bottom of page, but with more engraving coverage than the gun shown, non-original stag type grips, serial number 7708. This gun does not list in factory records as being factory engraved but after close examination I am sure that it was engraved in the Wilbur A. Glahn house of engraving. Excellent plus condition retaining apx. 95% original factory blue, perfect bore, very good grips, perfect working order and all original except for the replaced grips . . . . . \$3,250.00

**MATCHED PAIR COLT SINGLE ACTION ENGRAVED REVOLVERS**, 45 Long Colt cal. 7 1/2" barrels, carved ivory grips, serial numbers 356118 and 356283. See page 400 in book of Colt Engraving by Wilson. This pair of Colt single action revolvers are in exceptionally fine condition retaining 99% original silver finish, perfect bores, perfect ivory grips, perfect working order and 100% factory original with letters from factory and Larry Wilson. Need I say more . . . . . Price on request.

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postscript he indicated he would be sorry to see Low leave the service of the Confederacy. Low changed his mind and devoted his time to the assignment he had received from Bulloch. In January the Ajax was completed and Low became her captain. At the close of the war Captain Low sailed his ship back across the Atlantic and turned her over to the British authorities in Liverpool on June 10, 1865.

John Low spent the remainder of his life in England where he became a prosperous and influential citizen. Throughout his life he became known as the man who had sailed with Semmes on the famous Alabama. He would, from time to time, grant interviews with the local newspapers and discuss his experiences as a Confederate officer on the C.S.S. Alabama. On other occasions he would appear before civic and other groups to relate what life was like in the Confederate Navy with Raphael Semmes. During his lifetime he carefully preserved his Confederate uniform, sabre, pistols, and the log book he kept while serving on the Tuscaloosa and Alabama and frequently displayed the items shown in Fig. 5.

Captain John Low passed away at his residence in Liverpool, England on September 6, 1906. The Liverpool Journal of Commerce, in reporting his passing, stated, "Captain John Low, a man of world notoriety died... an important link thus being broken with the historic past, for the deceased is probably the last of the officers of the noted Alabama."

With his passing, the mementos he so treasured during his life passed to various members of his family. The historic pair of Colt 1860 Army pistols, which are the subject of the writing, went to one of his sons, Herbert A. Low, along with the ship's clock. Miss Doreen Low, the granddaughter of Captain John Low, inherited them from her father, Herbert A. Low. They remained in the family

for some 120 years and did not come to the open market until the property of Miss Doreen Low, deceased, was disposed of at public auction by Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co.

#### Acknowledgements

Mr. Alan Beadle of London, England, who obtained the pistols from the estate of the late Miss Doreen Low, granddaughter of Captain John Low, for returning them to America.

Dr. William Stanley Hoole, Librarian of the University of Alabama, for permission to reproduce and use photographs and quotes from his book, "Four Years in the Confederate Navy", published by the University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia 1964.

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