

Apparent veterans of the Civil War march to the cadence of a drum and flute as they lead a parade of Bellflower citizens in 1914.

## ■ California – and Los Angeles – played a significant role in the War Between the States.

*Photos courtesy Security Pacific Collection, Los Angeles Public Library photo archive, Christine Rice, Director*

Most of us are aware that the Civil War in this nation was fought from 1861 to 1865 and began at Fort Sumter, S.C. April 12, 1861. But most do not know that California played a major role in the War Between the States.

As we know, California became a state in 1850. In 1859, the California legislature approved the division of California into two states, Upper and Lower California.

With rumors of war, the decision was never acted upon, but there was definite social, economic and environmental differences between Upper and Lower California.

Interestingly enough, Southern California was part of the free Union, but it had strong Confederate sympathies in the Democratic Party. This was due to large numbers of Southerners migrating to California. Also, this became evident when the 1860 presidential election delivered only 25 percent of the voters for Abraham Lincoln in Southern California. Also, Los Angeles' only newspaper, the *Los Angeles Star*, was fanatically hostile to California's antislavery Sen. William Broderick, and the Republican movement represented an obvious minority.

With the outbreak of the war, 250 Angelenos went to fight for the Confederacy. Among them was future Mayor Cameron Thom and

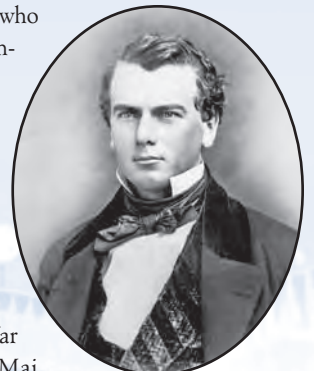
Albert Sidney Johnston, who had been appointed commander of the Western front and died at the battle of Shiloh at Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn. On the other side, Capt. Winfield Scott Hancock went east to serve the Union forces.

In 1861, the federal War Department ordered Maj. James Henry Carlton and his first Dragoons (mounted infantrymen) from Fort Tejon to Los Angeles to protect a one-man quartermaster depot occupied by Capt. Winfield Scott Hancock, chief quartermaster for the District of Southern California. The Dragoons settled into a temporary tent encampment just south of the depot and called it Camp Fitzgerald. Within a short distance of the encampment were 36 camels that the Dragoons brought with them.

The camp did not last long and eventually was moved closer to the harbor. It was about one-half-mile from the port. The location was named Camp Drum, which exists to this day. This camp became the new home for the newly promoted Col. Carlton and the California Column (a long row of militia and volunteers). They would move in April 1862 to assist in stopping the Confederate invasion of Arizona and New Mexico territories.

By the time the Column reached the Rio Grande River in August 1862, the Confederate troops retreated, and a threat to a California invasion was almost over. Parts of the California Column were dispersed throughout the Southwest, continuing to protect the region from further Confederate attacks.

During that time, Winfield Scott Hancock had become good friends with Phineas Banning, a prominent Los



Phineas Banning  
at age 22.



Two grated cell doors of the old guard house at the Drum Barracks at the Los Angeles Harbor, used during the Civil War. (Undated)



# History Comes Alive!

Tales From the City Archives



by Hynda Rudd,  
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A camel at the Fort Drum Barracks in Wilmington, military headquarters during the Civil War. The men are wearing Union uniforms. The camel is one that Jefferson Davis imported from Arabia in the 1850s for desert freighting. The photo is undated.

Angeles citizen and Unionist. Both Hancock and Banning decided there was a need for a strong Union military presence in the area. So Banning called upon one of his friends, Don Benito Wilson, second Mayor of Los Angeles and later, grandfather to Gen. George Patton. Wilson was also a wealthy rancher and businessman. Both Wilson and Banning donated a tract of land to the United States government to build permanent facilities for the military.

Banning and Wilson were paid \$1 each by the federal government. After the war was over, the land was returned to both the men.

These facilities were about a mile from Camp Drum. It would be called Drum Barracks.\* This facility was built near an adjacent wharf owned by Banning, who had been promised military shipping contracts to supply military bases in the Southwest. This arrangement also helped Banning protect the future San Pedro and Los Angeles area from having Confederacy attacks.

But during this same time, the Union forces arrested some Confederate hotheads, including State Assemblyman Edward J.C. Kewen, who was thought to be plotting to take over the government. In 1863, the Democratic candidate for governor defeated the Union candidate. At that point, California Union volunteers passed through the San Pedro Channel to seize Santa Catalina Island from the Confederate sympathizers, who had taken over the island.

In the presidential election of 1864, Lincoln garnered 872 votes in Los Angeles, while his Democratic opponent accumulated 593 votes. The town of Los Angeles was now a Union victory. The outcome of the war changed the political focus from Democrat to a Republican majority, who had the upper hand for many years to come.

## The Drum Barracks

The Drum Barracks Civil War Museum is housed in the last remaining wooden building of Drum Barracks, named after Adjutant General Richard Coulter Drum, head of the Department of the Pacific. The facility served as the Union Army headquarters Southwest (Southern California and the Arizona Territory) from 1861 to 1871.

The lumber used to construct the building was shipped from New York City. It came around the horn and arrived in late 1862. The facility, being built with other buildings, was estimated to have cost \$1 million. The facilities were completed in September 1863. From 1861 through 1865, approximately 17,000 Californians served in both volunteer regiments in the West and regiments fighting in the East.

After the surrender of the Confederacy at

Appomattox, the Drum Barracks continued to be used in the Southwest for other military needs, including the Indian Wars. Army commanders at that time considered this facility among the best equipped and its militias the best trained in the U.S. Army. Drum Barracks included the most important medical facility in the western United States. The hospital at the camp was recognized as the best-equipped and -staffed medical facility west of the Mississippi River.

The building housing the current museum served as the junior officer's quarters of the camp. In the early 1960s, the structure was scheduled to be demolished, but due to efforts by community groups, it was saved and opened as a museum in 1987. This Civil War Museum can be found in Wilmington.

## The Camels

The camels used by the military in Los Angeles came from Fort Tejon between 1860 and 1861, and left for Benicia in Santa Barbara in December 1863. They left Drum Barracks in February 1862 and went to Fort Latham in Culver City until they left the following year for Santa Barbara.

## Capt. Cameron Thom

Cameron E. Thom was a southern gentleman born in Virginia in 1825. He arrived in Los Angeles in 1854. During the next decade he returned south to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War and became a captain. Upon his return to Los Angeles and prior to becoming mayor, he was a City Attorney and Police Judge and sat on the Police Commission, then called the Board of Freeholders, to draft the first home rule charter for the City, adopted in 1889. He was also the County District Attorney for four terms. As mayor, Thom was determined that City government should have its own city hall built for such a purpose. The municipal facility was built in 1885, where it sat on Second Street between Spring and Fort (later Broadway) Streets. But within two years, that City Hall became inadequate for all the services rendered by the municipal government.

*Note: Also there are some reports that claim that there were Civil War troops, and I suppose tents, stationed on Main Street, somewhere between Fourth and Sixth Streets downtown. I was unable to find the citation. If one of you readers, know where I can find it, please contact me at hyn-darudd@att.net. Thank you.*

—Hynda

\* In some of the references used for this article, Camp Drum and Drum Barracks appear to be the same place. Other texts state that the Drum Barracks, built later, was about one mile away and higher than Camp Drum.



Cameron Erskine Thom.



Fort Drum Barracks at Wilmington, built during the Civil War. This photo is circa 1920.