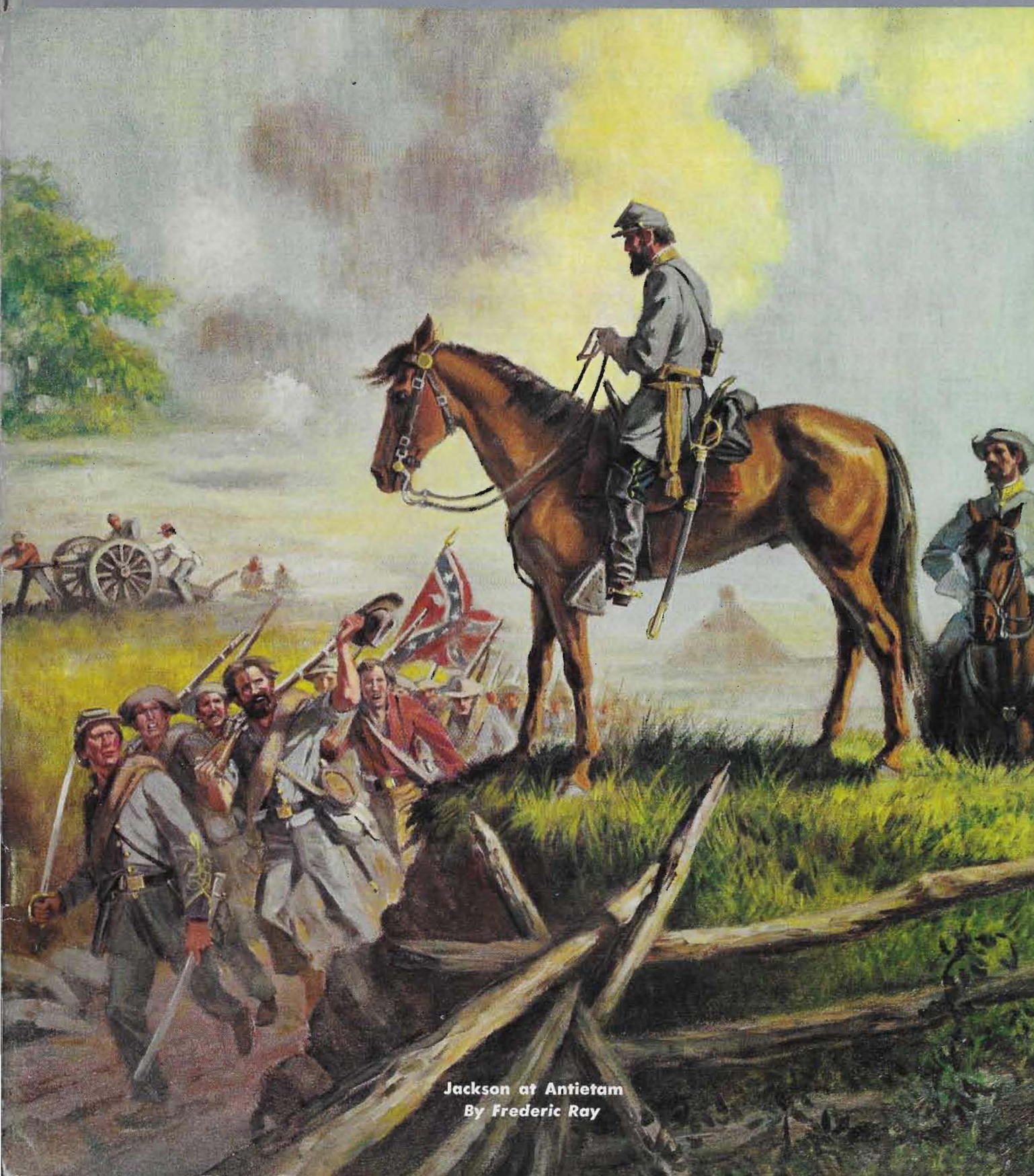


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Jackson at Antietam
By Frederic Ray

CONFEDERATES IN CALIFORNIA

LATE AT NIGHT on June 30, 1864 two Wells Fargo coaches crawled down the western slope of the Sierras toward Placerville, California. The driver of the leading coach applied the brakes as he neared the hairpin turn called Bullion Bend. As the vehicle slowed down there was a shout from the darkness: "Pull up or we'll fire!" Half a dozen masked figures emerged into the flickering light of the coach lamps. The same voice was reassuring: "Gentlemen, we are not robbers. We're Confederate soldiers. All we want is the Wells Fargo treasure to help us recruit for the Confederate Army." The second coach stopped behind the first, and the warning and assurance were repeated.

Quietly and quickly several treasure chests and heavy silver bars were removed from the coaches. The leader of the band handed a receipt to Edward Blair, the leading driver, and the raiders vanished into the night. The receipt was signed, "R. Henry Ingram, captain commanding, C.S.A."

Three or four miles farther down the road, at an inn called Thirteen Mile House, the drivers sent telegraphic reports of the episode to Placerville and to their company's headquarters. In Placerville, preparations were quickly under way for the search and pursuit. There was an immediate and unexpected break. A few minutes after the vehicles lumbered away from Thirteen

Mile House, two strangers appeared on foot and engaged a room. They were arrested on suspicion, a suspicion that proved well-founded. At Placerville the sheriff learned that a group of strangers was at Somerset House, a wayside inn some fourteen miles to the south. Early in the morning Deputy Sheriff Joseph Staples and Constable George Ranney rode in that direction. Boldly, since they knew that Sheriff Hume, with a strong posse, was close behind them, the two men swung open the door of Somerset House and demanded the surrender of the men inside. A burst of gunfire killed Staples instantly and wounded Ranney. But before falling he managed to fire one shot. One of the gunmen staggered, but the band vanished. Sheriff Hume arrived a few minutes later and quickly found the wounded raider, who turned out to be a Thomas Poole, a former undersheriff of Monterey County.

FOR TWO WEEKS nothing was heard of the other raiders. Then, on the afternoon of July 14, a farmer named Hill, whose place was on the New Almaden Road two miles south of San Jose, came to the sheriff's office. Three men, he told Sheriff J. H. Adams, had come to his farm and asked to stay there while they waited for some friends. Hill, suspicious, had slipped away to tell the sheriff. His description was accurate, and Adams nodded in recognition.

At seven o'clock that evening, as the sun was dropping behind the Santa Cruz Mountains, Adams and a posse surrounded the outlying cabin on Hill's farm. His arrangements complete, the sheriff shouted, "You're surrounded. Come out peaceably, with your hands up."

There was a moment of silence. The cabin door burst open and three men erupted, guns in hand, firing as they came. A constable fell; one of the raiders tried to fire a second shot, but sprawled on the ground as two bullets smashed into him. The second man's pistol was knocked from his hand by a posseman's shot; livid with terror, he raised his hands in surrender. The third man fired at Sheriff Adams. The impact of the bullet knocked the sheriff down but it hit his heavy silver watch. He was back on his feet almost instantly. Someone, probably the sheriff himself, fired directly into the pit of the man's stomach. He screamed and staggered into the brush where he was found a few minutes later, moaning and helpless.

The wounded men were loaded into a wagon and taken to San Jose. There the man who had fallen near the cabin door died within a few hours. The man (his name was John Clendenin) who had fired at the sheriff lingered through the night, and died the next day.

IN the summer of 1864, with Confederate manpower ebbing away, there were a number of schemes to tap the supposedly large reservoir of Southern sympathizers in California. On the very day on which the fight occurred at Hill's farm, "H. Kennedy, Captain, C.S.A.," arrived unobtrusively in San Francisco for the purpose of organizing the Southerners in California. But to get any of them to the battlefields in the East would cost money—more money than the impoverished Confederate treasury could spare.

The unsympathetic State of California, refusing to recognize the raiders of Bullion Bend as Confederate soldiers, tried them for murder and highway robbery. Former undersheriff Poole was hanged; the others received varying sentences, but eventually all were pardoned. They had consistently insisted that they were not bandits, but soldiers. The leader of the band, Ingram (who apparently was never captured), carried a commission as a captain in the Confederate Army, and the exclamation of one of the band at Somerset House had a ring of sincerity: "Do you think two damned Yankees could take six Confederate soldiers?"

Whether they were regularly enrolled in the Confederate Army seems unimportant historically. Their status was as regular as that of thousands of men who fought on the edges of the war in the Eastern theaters. Their claim that they were Confederate soldiers makes the little and forgotten fights at Somerset House and Hill's farm a part of the Civil War.

— Col. Clarence C. Clendenen.