

Petty Officer Samuel Joseph Chappell

CSS *Jamestown*, Naval Battalion at Drewry's Bluff, CSS *Fredericksburg*

Samuel was born about 1842 near Hanover Courthouse, Virginia. The 1860 census shows him in Hampton, Virginia, where he at the age of 12 or 13 has run away to sea as a cook on the *Abner Bethany*. The census lists him with 'ship's crew' in Hampton. On May 14, 1861, he enlisted for one year in Company E of the 32nd Virginia Infantry under the command of Col. Benjamin Ewell.

He was present in the defense forces of the lower Virginia Peninsula at the time of Big Bethel. Transferred to the CS Navy in December, 1861. Discharged from the 32nd Virginia on January 6, 1862 and assigned to the CSS *Jamestown* of the James River Squadron. Was present and participated in the Battle of Hampton Roads on March 8 & 9 of 1862 and subsequent action on April 11 when the *Jamestown* captured three Union merchant ships when the *Monitor* would not steam to their protection and engage the *Virginia*.

On May 15, 1862, the *Jamestown* was sunk near Drewry's Bluff to block the channel leading up the James River to Richmond. Samuel was assigned to the Naval battalion at Drewry's Bluff under the command of Captain Sydney Lee and he was present during the May 15, 1862 repulse of the Union fleet.

The CSS *Fredericksburg* was completed on November 30, 1863. In March, 1864 she was taken down to Drewry's Bluff, fitted out, and placed under the command of Commodore T. R. Rootes. Samuel transferred to the *Fredericksburg* where he served as a Petty Officer. The *Fredericksburg* was engaged in the Battle of Trent's Reach on June 21, 1864. In August, October and December additional minor actions took place between the two fleets.

In early 1865 Samuel was sent to the Chimborazo hospital system in Richmond. He would be a patient at the hospital when Richmond fell in April of 1865.

Postwar Samuel resided in Henrico County and married Emma J. Harris. He served as both a river and bay Captain and had over 70 years sailing and piloting experience on the James River and the Chesapeake Bay. It was said that he "*knew every shoal, rock and inlet of the James River.*" In 1880 he was a resident of Richmond and was a tugboat captain. He and his wife had at least 4 children and two of them died in accidents on the James River and are buried in Hollywood Cemetery.

Samuel applied for his Confederate pension in 1924. In March of 1931 he was admitted to the R. E. Lee Camp #1 Confederate Veterans Home in Richmond. Sam's daughter Emma Lee Breeden passed away during the same year and her son Lloyd Breeden would visit the 'old captain' and later related many of his stories to Fred Breeden. One of those stories was of 'capturing some of the first Union sailors of the war in Hampton Roads on April 11, 1862.' Fred Breeden has since found the *Harper's Weekly* issue with an engraving depicting the 'CSS *Jamestown* capturing Union schooners.' Sam died on March 24, 1932 and was buried in an unmarked grave in Riverside Cemetery in Richmond. In June, 2008 a gravestone was installed and dedicated by his descendants.

(Compiled Service Records – Confederate, Brewer Library, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia, Microcopy 324, Roll 781; Obituary Information for the *Richmond Times Dispatch* of Friday, March 25, 1932; Additional family history provided by Fred Breeden.)