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Robert Thorp

# The Life and Times of Captain John Low

*An Englishman in the Confederate States Navy*

SERIES IN AMERICAN HISTORY

*This work shines a bright new light on the life and times of Captain John Low, a British mariner and key player in the American Civil War. As a chronicle of the Captain's historically important life it dispels many misconceptions and adds significantly to our understanding of the roles played by both him and the United Kingdom in that formative conflict.*

**Keith Webster**

Retired journalist and corporate communications manager, consultant and tutor

*This authoritative and well referenced biography by Thorp provides new insight into both the life and times of Captain John Low.*

**W Cairns Smith OBE**

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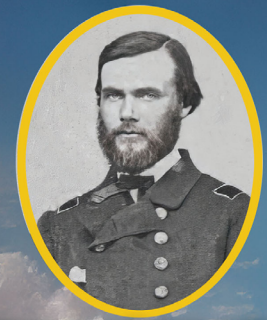
## About the author

**Robert Thorp** is a British subject and a graduate of Reading University. He is directly descended from William Cowley Miller, and Captain James Alexander Duguid – the former being the builder of CSS 'Florida', and the latter, Miller's son-in-law, who delivered the CSS 'Florida' from Liverpool to Nassau in the company of Captain John Low. The author, who is now retired, and living in Scotland, has devoted decades to the study of the Confederate States Navy and to the involvement of his ancestors in the American Civil War at sea. His book, 'Mersey Built – The Role of Merseyside in the American Civil War', published by Vernon Press in 2017, has been well received by civil war naval historians. He has given papers on the subject of Confederate commerce raiders to The American Civil War Museum in Richmond VA, and to the prestigious McMullen Naval History Symposium at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD.

## Summary

Captain John Low (1836 -1906) earned his place in history through four years of service in the Confederate States Navy (1861-1865). He served on CSS 'Fingal', 'Florida', and 'Alabama', and commanded CSS 'Tuscaloosa' and 'Ajax'. However, it would be wrong to define the man simply by his Civil War record. His seventy-year life was full of adventures, triumphs, tragedies, and altruistic philanthropy. He led a good life and was known as a good man, respected and revered by all who knew him. This book contains a detailed account of Captain Low's whole life from cradle to grave. Using primary source documents, not available to earlier biographers, the author delves into John Low's life to a much greater depth than any preceding work has been able to achieve. For the first time ever, his genealogy is fully divulged, allowing previously misunderstood relationships to be challenged and corrected, and the roles of his previously unknown siblings to be fully explored. Description of his military service is based on his personal log books and the eye witness accounts of his contemporaries. Along the way, the book sheds new perspectives on the roles played by his relations, Charles Green and Andrew Low of Savannah, in facilitating purchase of CSS 'Fingal'; it unmasks the mysterious Thomas Byrne, Louisiana's secret agent, and explains the hitherto unrecognised role of Liverpool's Isaac, Low & Co. The captain's post-war life, firstly as a manager of Lancashire cotton mills, and latterly as a successful Liverpool businessman, is similarly illuminated with many previously unwritten facts. Anyone with an interest in Civil War history will find a wealth of new and unique material between these covers. Those who just enjoy a good biography should also be delighted.

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