

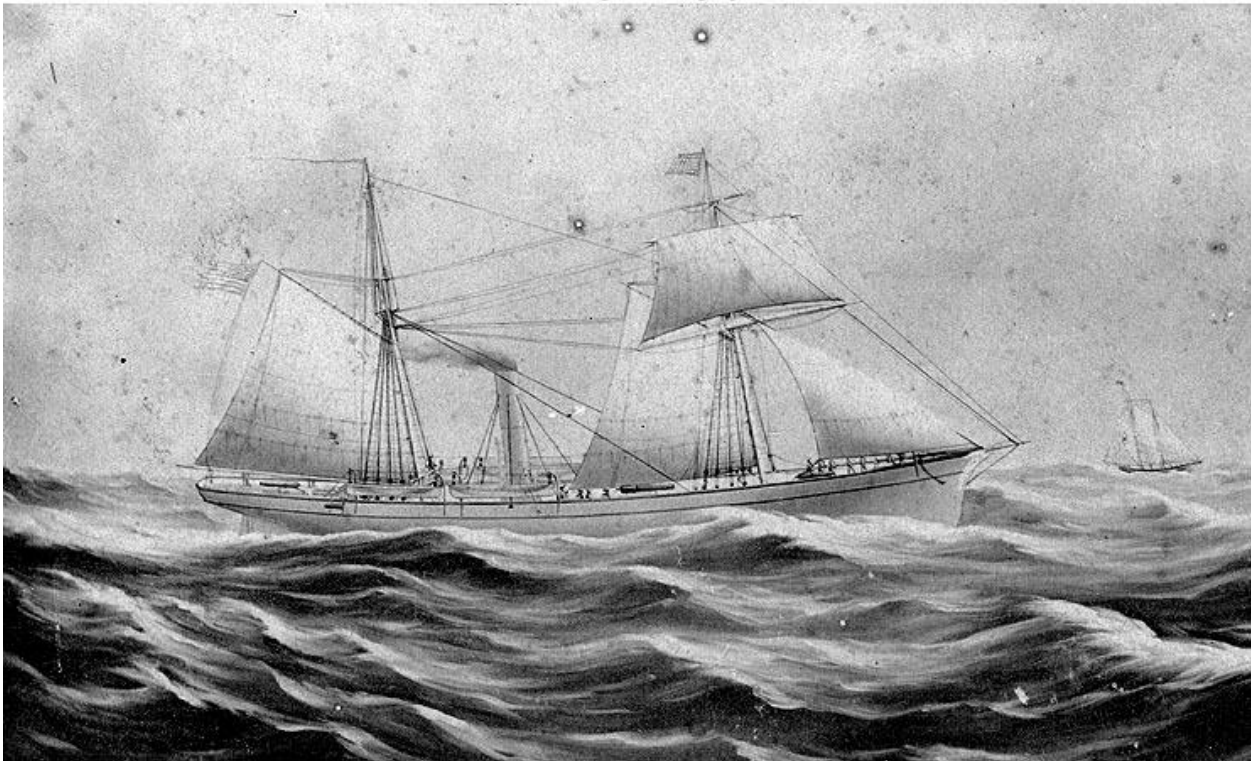
## Francis “Frank” G. Osborn

### *People of London Town, Maryland<sup>i</sup>*

Francis “Frank” G. Osborn eagerly joined the United States Navy in 1860 or 1861 “on breaking out of the rebellion.”<sup>1</sup> In September, 1863 Osborn was listed as “under instruction at New York” to become an acting ensign in the Navy.<sup>2</sup> He had been assigned to the steamer *USS Vicksburg* the month before, and was likely continuing his studies during active service.<sup>3</sup>

The *USS Vicksburg* was a newly launched steam boat purchased by the US Navy in its effort to enforce the blockade along the Southern coastline. Mounting a heavy, pivoting 100 pound Parrott gun and other armaments, it was a speedy and impressive vessel that could be deployed in close shore support.<sup>4</sup>

Photo # NH 42052 USS Vicksburg. Photograph of a Civil War era artwork



[U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph.](#)

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<sup>1</sup> “Naval Intelligence.; ARRIVAL OF THE STEAMER VICKSBURGH,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1865, Accessed December 5, 2016, < <http://www.nytimes.com/1865/04/10/news/naval-intelligence-arrival-of-the-steamer-vicksburgh.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> *Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States*, Government Printing Office: Washington, 1864, page 248.

<sup>3</sup> *Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps*, Government Printing Office: Washington, 1864, page 135.

<sup>4</sup> “Vicksburg I (ScGbt),” Mark L. Evans, *Naval History and Heritage Command*, June 30, 2015, Accessed December 5, 2016, <<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/v/vicksburg-i.html>>.

While Osborn was learning how to be a naval officer aboard the *Vicksburg*, the American Civil War took a startling turn. In July 1864, Confederate General Jubal Early mounted an invasion of Maryland. Before pivoting for an attack against the fortifications around Washington, DC, General Early's forces seized the Washington Branch Railroad, which ran straight into the heart of Annapolis.<sup>5</sup> Virtually without any entrenchments or means of defense, the people of Annapolis scrambled into a near panic. Hospitals emptied of their patients, shops and administrative offices closed as their clerks and secretaries went to dig trenches, and secessionist sympathizers were rounded up to fight off the invasion.<sup>6</sup> Acting Rear Admiral Samuel P. Lee ordered the *USS Vicksburg* to Annapolis "with all practical dispatch" to shore up the defenses of the city with her big guns.<sup>7</sup>

Under her captain, Lieutenant Commander Daniel L. Braine, the *USS Vicksburg* steamed into the Severn and found the city defended only by "300 invalids." Even these would be useless if a Confederate force crossed the South River behind the entrenchments. Recognizing this threat, Braine dispatched Francis G. Osborn with a small party of volunteers aboard a seized tug boat, the *Grace Titus*, to seize all means of crossing the South River.<sup>8</sup> Osborn mounted a "12 pnd'r Howitzer" on the tug in preparation for a nighttime raid.<sup>9</sup>

London Town, though long extinct by the time of the Civil War, was still the site of a ferry crossing, and therefore a threat to Annapolis. Osborn "landed with an armed force" at several locations on the South River to seize all vessels that could be used by the Confederate invaders. These included "one scow, or ferryboat, and two small boats, said to belong to one Samuel Duvall, of Taylorsville, and Colonel Walton, of Annapolis."<sup>10</sup> Duvall ran ferry operation on the north shore of the South River, partnering with Colonel Walton who maintained the ferry at the former site of London Town itself.

Osborn's mission was a success. "The operation was conducted with the utmost quietude," he wrote in his official report, "My precautions in this respect, combined with the lateness of the hour, enabled me to perform all my duty and return without the knowledge of anyone up the river."<sup>11</sup> The inmates of the nearby Almshouse, formerly William Brown's house and tavern, were probably never aware of the armed sailors that touched their shores.

Eventually Osborn would rise to take command of the *Vicksburg* by the end of the war, and was honorably discharged after the war finally came to an end.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> As the research into colonial London Town's inhabitants is an ongoing process, the caveat is offered that additional information may be found at any time and that a correction of information might also occur at any time.

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<sup>5</sup> "Affairs at Annapolis," *Annapolis Gazette*, July 14, 1864, page 2.

<sup>6</sup> *The Ancient City: A History of Annapolis in Maryland, 1649-1887*, Elihu S. Riley, Record Printing Office: Annapolis, 1887, page 314.

<sup>7</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series I - Volume 10, page 254.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, page 270.

<sup>9</sup> Logbook of the *USS Vicksburg*, entry for July 13, 1864, Library of Congress.

<sup>10</sup> *Official Records*, 271

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Naval Intelligence," *New York Times*, April 10, 1865; *Complete Army and Navy Register of the United States of America, from 1776 to 1887*, Thomas H. S. Hammslerly, THS Hammersley Publisher: New York, 1888, page 542.