

# Thomas William Kennard and the The Steam Yacht *Octavia* (1865)

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Thomas W. Kennard, Chief Engineer for the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad, owned one of the early Gold Coast estates (“Glen Chalet”) on Glen Cove’s waterfront. His yacht, considered at the time to be the epitome of floating luxury and an engineering marvel, was called the *Octavia* and was one of the earliest steam yachts associated with Glen Cove’s estates.

During the Gold Coast era in Glen Cove, which covered the period from the early 1850’s until about 1945, the waters surrounding the community were home to numerous luxury yachts designed to offer rest and relaxation to the wealthy owners of local estates.

Among the earliest of the steam yachts – if not *the* earliest – was Thomas W. Kennard’s *Octavia*, built in 1864. Kennard’s estate, “Glen Chalet”, was located just north of the Glen Cove steamboat landing, at the western terminus of Landing Road, in what is today called “The Landing” district.

method for constructing iron railroad bridge trusses (Thomas W. Kennard, “Improvements in Iron Bridges,” U.K. Patent Number 1,613; issued 6 July 1853) which provided better strength using less iron than earlier methods. As a result, he was tasked with constructing an iron railroad bridge, called the Crumlin Viaduct, across a deep valley in Wales in order to facilitate the shipment of Welsh coal to the iron foundries of England. The cast iron columns for the bridge were provided by the Kennard family ironworks in Falkirk, Scotland, while the wrought iron was provided by Kennard’s newly formed Crumlin

## **Kennard’s Early Life and Career:**

Thomas William Kennard was born on 29 August 1825 in England. His father, Robert William Kennard, was a successful London merchant who owned iron foundries in Wales and Scotland, sat on the board of two British railroad companies, and served several terms as a Minister of Parliament. On 20 April, 1847 Thomas married Octavia Smale, daughter of Henry Lewis Smale (Anon. 1847). It appears that Smale was also involved in both the railroad and the iron industry, as he was a Director of the Northern and Eastern Railway and the Cambrian Iron and Spelter Company (Clarke, 1846).

Taking an interest in the family iron business, Thomas W. Kennard developed an improved



The Crumlin Viaduct -One of the great technological triumphs of early Victorian England.

Iron Works. More than 2,500 tons of iron would go into the construction of the 1,658 feet long, 200 foot high span. When officially dedicated in 1857, the Viaduct was regarded as one of the engineering marvels of its age. (Maynard, 1862; also McDonnell, 1864)

Kennard's success with the Crumlin Viaduct brought him to the attention of James McHenry, a native of Ireland who had immigrated to the United States at the age of six with his parents. He eventually settled in Philadelphia, where he established successful mercantile interests in Liverpool, specializing in importing US-made foodstuffs and consumer goods to England. In early 1858, McHenry – as an established conduit for Anglo-American trade – was approached by joint representatives of three middling-sized railroad companies operating respectively in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The three companies were contemplating merging to form a new railroad that connect New York City with the Mississippi River by way of the Ohio River at Cincinnati, Ohio. The new company would be called the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad. A spur line would connect to the Great Lakes at the port city of Cleveland Ohio. It would also pass through the Pennsylvania oil fields, which were then shipping most of the crude oil production to Cleveland to be refined. The managers of the proposed Atlantic and Great Western hoped that the revenue from transporting crude oil would help pay a significant part of the costs of the new construction that would be required.

To accomplish this visionary plan they needed capital, and wanted McHenry to raise £3,000,000 among British investors through the sale of bonds. McHenry consented, but on one condition – they would have to hire Thomas W. Kennard as Chief Engineer. The boards of directors of the railroads agreed. By 1859, Kennard was in the United States, surveying various routes which could be used to connect together the three existing rail lines as well as searching for the optimal path to expand the tracks to New York and Cincinnati.

Combining the three existing railways was no simple feat. The main stumbling block was the width of tracks, which varied from state to state and often from railroad to railroad. The New York and Erie Railroad's tracks were six feet wide... while the track in Ohio was commonly four feet ten inches wide. Elsewhere, the track gauge might be five feet wide, or four feet eight and a half inches wide. This preposterous state of affairs frequently made it impossible for trains of one railroad company to operate on the tracks of another. Passengers were commonly forced to transfer from one train to another as they traveled from city to city simply because of the incompatibility of track width. Transferring freight from railroad to railroad added to shipping costs – each company levied their own shipping charges either directly or indirectly – and caused shipping delays. Kennard first step was to standardize the track width at 6 feet for the entire Atlantic and Great Western rail system, making it possible for any locomotive operating on the system to pull any train of rail cars.

Kennard prosecuted the work at break-neck speed. In 1863, Scientific American described the on-going construction under Kennard as

...unprecedented in railway history, and was the more remarkable as no portion of the work was sub-contracted, but carried forward under the personal superintendence of the Engineer-in-Chief, T. W. Kennard, Esq. The magnitude of the work can be appreciated when it is remembered that it required nearly one mile of railroad to be constructed daily. (Scientific American, 1863)

William Reynolds, President of the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad during Kennard's tenure as chief engineer, would later remember Kennard as

...vain and very susceptible to flattery, was fond of show, and reckless of expenditure to accomplish his ends. Yet, he was kind and generous. With appearance of wealth he was soon beset with shrewd and designing persons who found no trouble in taking his measure, and adopting sure methods of accomplishing their ends. He was soon enlisted in numbers of worthless schemes and his attention diverted from the true interests of the [Atlantic and Great Western Railroad]. (Reynolds, 2002)

### **Kennard's Glen Cove Estate, "Glen Chalet":**

As part of Kennard's fondness of "show", he convinced himself that he was in need of a country estate. Like many wealthy people during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a country estate represented a place where his family could escape from the sweltering summers of New York City, far from the stench of rotting garbage and animal waste that littered the streets of Manhattan... a place where he could entertain friends and colleagues and prospective clients in the lavish style that railroad tycoons had so quickly become accustomed to.

Word reached Kennard that the Glen Cove mansion of the late William Evans Burton was available. Like Kennard, Burton had been born in England and had emigrated to the United States as a young man. He made his fortune as a publisher, theatrical manager, theater owner, and comedic actor. He died on 10 February 1860, leaving a wife named Cecelia in New York, a wife named Elizabeth in England, and three daughters.



Glen Chalet as it appeared circa 1870. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Institute of British Architects



Glen Chalet as it appeared circa 1870. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Institute of British Architects

ters. (Burton's life was... complicated.)

The 40 acre estate was directly north of the steamboat landing, offering an easy commute from Manhattan. The mansion itself was on a tall bluff commanding a sweeping vista of Hempstead Harbor. Burton had established greenhouses on the property, and his conservatory (modeled after London's Crystal Palace) was one of the largest in New York State.

It would appear that Kennard bought the Burton estate roughly around mid-October, 1863; at that time the *Glen Cove Gazette* announced "the famous 'Burton Place' at the Landing has been sold. We have not yet heard the name of the purchaser or the price paid." (*GC Gazette*, 1863). He contracted English architect Jacob Wrey Mould to design a Swiss chalet style wooden mansion, which Kennard named "Glen Chalet". (Van Zanten, 1969; MacKay et al. 1997). Mould was an *irascible* figure who a contemporary once referred to as "that ugly and uncouth but very clever J. Wrey Mould, architect and universal genius." (Strong, 1952). Sources seem to be at odds as to whether Glen Chalet was a completely new structure, or if Mould reused some of the internal components of Burton's former mansion. The *New York Sun*, in 1868, commented that Kennard had "remodelled the original house externally, leaving only the inner walls," and that the estate was worth an estimated \$250,000 (quoted in Scudder, 1868).

The new (or significantly renovated) mansion was a splendid example of an early Victorian English wood frame manor house. An anonymous 19<sup>th</sup> century article described the appearance of Kennard's new home:

Mr. Kennard determined to make his permanent home at this place, one of the most charming spots anywhere near New York. He tore down a portion of the elegant Burton mansion, moved the hot-houses some distance away, and built a large and magnificent house in the style of a Swiss chateau. He spent money lavishly, as if he had been a prince, and in turn, so we are informed, was robbed on all sides by carpenters, masons, contractors, painters, etc. But his money held out until a palatial coun-

try seat had been erected, which was most elaborately decorated, inside and out. A great deal of the outside of the building was actually covered with gold. It had towers, piazzas, wings and elaborate carvings in all directions. The great hall and dining room of this mansion are very beautiful, with inlaid wood, carving, arches, pillars, etc. The whole outside of the house is elaborately ornamented... He added to the hot-houses until they covered a vast extent of ground. (Anon., 1873)

Perched atop the hill, facing west on the shore of Hempstead Harbor, Glen Chalet must have been spectacular sight as its gilt woodwork sparkled and glowed in the setting sun.

As work progressed on both the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad and Glen Chalet, Kennard determined he also needed a yacht. Not a small sailing yacht to tack lazily across the waters of Long Island Sound, but a substantial luxury yacht. A yacht capable of plying the oceans. Befitting an engineer in the age of steam and steel, Kennard's yacht would be a steam yacht.

### The Octavia:

In 1864, Kennard commissioned the firm of Peck & Masters of Cleveland, Ohio to construct a yacht to his specifications. The choice of Cleveland, rather than New York City, was mostly a pragmatic one. The Atlantic and Great Western Railroad had extended its tracks to Cleveland the previous November, making it easy for Kennard to monitor the progress on the vessel as he shuttled around the mid-west in his 45 foot long private railway car that was elegantly fitted out with a parlor, bedroom, kitchen and washroom. (White, 1985) Also, the shipyard, owned by Elihu M Peck and Irvine U Masters, had a well established record of constructing large sail powered cargo vessels for service on the Great Lakes. They clearly had all the necessary skills to produce a large yacht.

Named in honor of Kennard's wife, the *Octavia* was 145 feet long and had a beam of 22 feet, and was 430 tons burden. Her hold was 13 feet 6 inches deep. The *London Daily Telegraph* reported soon after her launch that she was "constructed in the most substantial manner, entirely of American wood, principally white oak, with combings and finishings of hard pine, cherry, curled maple, black walnut, &c, all of which were transported over the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad." It appears that the *Octavia* was initially constructed as a schooner-rigged sailing vessel, and that Kennard intended to have her sailed from Cleveland to New York City to be converted to steam.

En route to New York to be fitted out, the new yacht paid a brief visit to Kingston, Ontario, where she caught the eye of the local press:

The Ocean Steam Yacht *Octavia* - A very handsome brigantine-rigged vessel came to anchor during last night opposite Murney Tower, and remained there during the greater part of the day. It turned out to be the yacht *Octavia*, built... for Mr. Kennard, one of the contractors for building the Atlantic and Great Western Railway, on her way to New York to receive her engines and other appliances necessary to convert her into a yacht of great power, for which purpose she was built. The *Octavia* is four hundred and fifteen tons burthen, and will cost when completed

from \$100,000 to \$130,000 in gold. As she at present stands, she is insured for \$30,000. Mr. J. M. Miller, to whose care she was intrusted while here, sends the *Octavia* on her way to New York this afternoon. She is intended for the ocean. (Daily News, 1864)

By early 1865, she was in the shipyard of Michael S. Allison in Jersey City, New Jersey, being converted to steam power as well as having the finishing work done on her accommodations. Allison had built the *Mary Powell*, one of the most elegant and popular of the Hudson River passenger steamboats, only four years earlier, making his yard the obvious candidate for the job.

The New York Times reported “The *Octavia* is a most splendid specimen of naval architecture, sitting as gracefully in the water as a swan” (NY Times, 1865).

The ship was beautifully appointed. Below deck was the main stateroom, for the owner and his family, and in the rear of the ship was the cabin for the ship’s officers. There were pantries, store-rooms, and closets, and even a children’s nursery “supplied with all family conveniences” (Kennard had four children of his own). The “gentlemen’s saloon” or “main saloon” – the common area where Kennard and his guests congregated while on board – which could accommodate sixteen people. The interior woodwork of the saloon was made of rosewood, satinwood, curled maple (bird’s-eye maple), wild cherry and white holly, all worked to a high polish (even her boilers were cased in black walnut). The saloon connected to state-rooms for Kennard and his guests, “all superbly finished”. “Her accommodations,” wrote a New York Times correspondent, “are of the most superior order, and her decorations may be characterized as regal splendor.” The London Daily Telegraph added that “the mirrors and upholstery work generally will be of the highest possible taste and excellence.”

The dining room was on the main deck, as was the smoking room, galley (kitchen), and larder (pantry). One of the more interesting features of the new yacht were two 6-pounder brass howitzer cannons mounted aft on her rear deck – compact but formidable weapons capable of dissuading pirates and privateers while cruising the world’s oceans.

The yacht’s twin steam engines were constructed at the Jersey City Locomotive Works, which had been leased by James McHenry in that year to manufacture train engines for the Atlantic and Great Western. They were estimated to produce 250 nominal and 700 actual horsepower. Norman W. Wheeler, a Brooklyn engineer who worked with Kennard on designing *Octavia*’s engines, wrote:

The steam yacht *Octavia*, the property of Mr. T. W. Kennard, is believed to be the most economical ship extant, and the earliest example of compound-engines connected directly to the screw shaft. The hull and engines were designed by the writer, some of the leading features having been dictated by Mr. Kennard. The *Octavia* is... fitted with one pair of Wolff cricket engines, with steam jackets, four to eight fold expansion, surface condenser, and flue and return tubular boilers. The engines develop 250 indicated horsepower, with the consumption of 300 lb. of anthracite coal per hour; the efficiency using one horse-power per hour per 1.2 lb coal. With the above indicated development of power and consumption of coal, she runs full 11 miles per hour

in calm weather, is has been proved by repeated trials. In a winter cruise lasting 23 days (steaming time), with the wind varying from a full gale to a strong breeze, always in such directions that no sail could be carried, her average run per day was 200 miles, and the daily consumption four tons of anthracite. She is, however, capable of a much better performance. During the whole of the cruise the steam jackets were not used, but allowed to remain full of water, through a misapprehension of the engineers relating to steam traps.

It will be fair to assume that with the power required for a calm weather speed of 11 miles, her mean sea speed will be 9 miles per hour. (Wheeler, 1869)

The London Daily Telegraph added that the engines were a combination of

...low and high pressure styles – a union of locomotive and marine descriptions – making the vessel... a sort of locomotive on water.

The engines have a surface condenser, calculated to use steam at the rate of seventy-five pounds to the inch. Dimensions of cylinders, high pressure, eighteen by eighteen inches; low pressure, thirty-six by eighteen inches. The cylinders are connected, and move on a beam. The steam first goes into the small cylinder, and, after having performed its functions there, goes into the larger one, and thence into the condenser, where it is returned to the boiler at a temperature of about one hundred and twenty five degrees. The boilers are of the ordinary marine tubular kind, with about two thousand feet heating surface. (Daily Telegraph, 1865)

The engines and boilers powered a propeller that was nine feet six inches in diameter, with four feet six inches pitch.

In addition to her steam engines, the *Octavia* was fully capable of operating under sail, having two masts with sails. The New York Times described her as “brig-rigged”. The ship could hold 200 tons of coal, giving her more than 50 days of steaming time before needing to re-coal... enough, according to the London Daily Telegraph, to “make the circuit of the globe.”

Completed, the *Octavia* was estimated to have cost \$150,000 in 1865 US dollars (about \$2,000,000 in current dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index).

Her Captain was Sereno T. Dayton, and her first officer was Thomas B. Hawkins. The yacht’s Chief Engineer was William C. Clearey, with Nichols B. Cushing serving as First Assistant Engineer. The Steward was John Alderman, supported by two cooks and a cabin boy. Seven seamen and two firemen rounded out the crew.

The *Octavia* was registered as an English vessel. She flew the Cross of St George from the main mast, and the United States flag on her fore – the traditional signal that she was a foreign vessel sailing in American waters. It was also symbolic of Kennard’s sentiments... he was English, and he had no inclination to embrace the United States and making it his permanent home.

### **A Chance Encounter With Lincoln:**

During the first days of April, 1865, Kennard, one of his

sons and several guests were on a shake-down cruise from New York City to Fortress Monroe in Virginia, and decided to sail the *Octavia* up the James River on a sight-seeing tour into the seat of the Civil War. Arriving at Hampton Roads, scene of the famous clash between the Monitor and the Merrimack, the officers of the *Octavia* committed a major faux pas. A British Navy steam sloop called the HMS *Styx* was lying at anchor and as the *Octavia* passed her, the *Octavia* dipped her national color – the Cross of St George – in salute. Her crew also dipped the United States flag... a major breach of etiquette. As the *Octavia* passed the USS *Mendota*, a US Navy steamer which was in charge of controlling ship movements in the lower portion of the James River, she made no salute at all... another breach of naval etiquette. The commanding officer of the *Mendota*, Commander Edward T Nichols, was so incensed that he sent an officer on board the *Octavia* “to demand an explanation of the dipping of our flag to a foreign vessel of war.” Kennard explained to the officer that “everybody was green on board and our flag had been dipped once by mistake, for which profuse apologies were made, and any intent of disrespect disclaimed.” Subsequently Kennard went aboard the *Mendota* to personally apologize to Nichols. Nichols did, however, send an official report of the incident to Admiral David Dixon Porter. (Rawson et al., 1901)

Heading up-river the yacht passed Fort Powhatan, a Union stronghold which dominated a key stretch of the James. The *Octavia* fired her two brass 6-pounder howitzers in salute. Fort Powhatan fired a salute in reply, and her soldiers cheered *Octavia*. The vessel anchored off City Point, and Kennard and his party went ashore. Kennard first paid a social call upon General Charles H T Collis, the Federal officer in command of the fortifications in the area. The Union authorities were understandably concerned that *Octavia* had penetrated as far up the James River as she had without permission... and the very next morning Kennard was summoned before Admiral David

Dixon Porter on his flagship the USS *Malvern*. The London press reported that Kennard “made a satisfactory apology for having ventured, without a pass, to bring his yacht up the river, as the Federal authorities had ordered that no vessel should go above Fortress Monroe.”

Sailing any civilian vessel into a war zone is unsafe... although flying the British flag theoretically made a vessel immune from attack, theory provides little protection against artillery fire. The voyage was even more foolhardy in light of the fact that the James River was still dotted with Confederate naval mines – then known as “torpedoes” – which the Union Army was desperately working to remove. Kennard noted

Suspicious little red flags stuck in floating logs of wood commanded the greatest possible respect from the man at the wheel. These had been placed by a torpedo-hunting gun-boat to mark the proximity of its deadly game... The torpedoes fished up by the hunters were lying on each bank—one containing no less than 1700 lb. of powder. (Illustrated London News, 1865)

On Monday, April 3rd, Kennard and the *Octavia* arrived off Richmond, Virginia – which had only the day before been evacuated by the Confederate government. Kennard and his guests toured the ruined city, which had been under siege by the Union Army, since June 1864. Ever the engineer-draftsman, Kennard prepared sketches of the city which he sent back to England. In a letter back to London, he observed

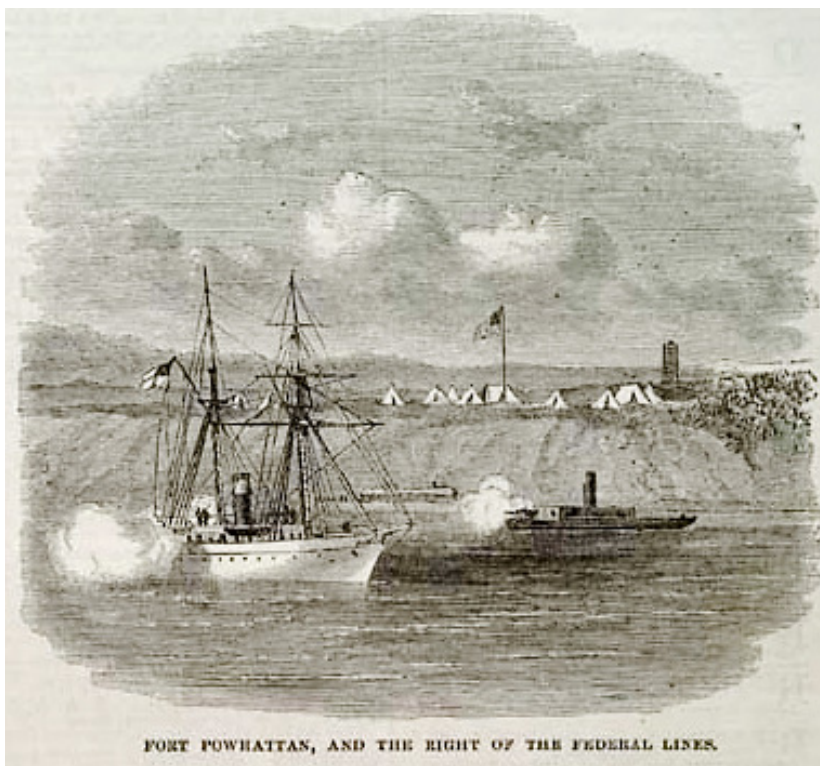
The scene of ruin and devastation presented on entering the place is beyond description. The main street, and the entire blocks of buildings stretching down to the river, had been totally destroyed by fire—some say by order of General Ewell, others by accident. At any rate, nearly half the city has been reduced to ashes, notwithstanding the efforts of the Federal troops to arrest the flames. Only one hotel was open, and but few shops, and those very bare of goods. The Capitol was visited, also Jeff Davis’s house, Castle Thunder [a Confederate prison used to hold Union prisoners of war], and the notorious Libby prison... Both are miserably small holes, originally warehouses.

No pillage or destruction of property had taken place; and, to the great honour of the Federal arms be it fairly said, never before did cities like Petersburg and Richmond, entered by excited troops after years of siege, suffer to so trifling an extent. Tobacco was the only temptation that could not be resisted. There was not a whisper amongst the inhabitants conversed with, other than that they had been treated in the most humane and proper manner. (Illustrated London News, 1865)

One member of Kennard’s party was accidentally separated from the group, and ended up spending the evening with Union general Godfrey Weitzel, who had taken Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ house as his quarters. He was even treated to an impromptu tour of Richmond in old Jeff Davis’ confiscated carriage.



The burning of Richmond in 1865, based on sketches by members of Kennard’s party..



PORT POWHATTAN, AND THE RIGHT OF THE FEDERAL LINES.

A sketch - made by one of Kennard's party - of a steam yacht firing a salute to Fort Powhattan... could the yacht be a representation of the *Octavia*?

The group spent five days in Richmond, then returned down river to City Point, which had served as the General Ulysses S. Grant's headquarters during the siege. On that Saturday, April 8th, Kennard recorded that he and his guests spent that day "in making our adieus to all those who had shown our party such great and unusual attentions. We saw a train of 2000 men dispatched to bring back some 12,000 prisoners captured on Thursday, including General Ewell and five other generals." The party learned that President Abraham Lincoln was at City Point on board Grant's private dispatch boat, the steamboat *River Queen*, and decided to pay the President a impromptu social call.

Upon our way back to the yacht the English portion of the party called upon the President, who had been here for some time on board the *River Queen* steamer. The President received us with the greatest courtesy, and we enjoyed a long and interesting conversation with him, not the least amusing part of it being a history he gave of General Grant's career, winding up with a happy anecdote of a boyhood adventure of the General. The President looked very careworn, and with feeling expressed his delight at the prospect of a speedy close of this dreadful war. (Illustrated London News, 1865)

The very next day Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House, ending the Civil War. Only a week after Kennard and friends had an audience with the President, Lincoln was dead from an assassin's bullet.

By the end of the Civil War Kennard's work to forge the disparate fragments of three separate rail lines in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio into the Atlantic and Great Western Railway was essentially complete. In spite of significant finan-

cial impediments, and at a time when most of the iron and steel produced in the North were being absorbed by the Union war effort, Kennard had connected New York by rail with the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. It was possible to travel from New York City to Cincinnati, Cleveland, or St Louis over the railroad's line, and a spur line crossing an iron bridge constructed by Kennard over the Niagara Falls connected the Atlantic and Great Western to Canada.

In May of 1865, Kennard returned for a brief time to London, where he was feted by more than 100 people at a banquet held in his honor at the Palace Hotel. Sir Samuel Morton Peto, one of the major investors in the Atlantic and Great Western, offered up the toast to Kennard, saying

It is no light honour for a man so young as my esteemed friend to return home, after having successfully prosecuted a most arduous enterprise, and having constructed a Railway of upwards of 500 miles in length on the other side of the Atlantic – that Rail-

way executed within the estimate, and to the perfect satisfaction of every person connected with it... I have been associated with a great many engineers, some of them men of great talent, of great powers of perception and appreciation of the forces required for carrying out a great work, but I am prepared to say, that my partner and myself have never been associated with a gentleman who was so thoroughly a man of business, and, at the same time, so thorough an engineer. (Anon, 1865)

Many of the American directors of the Atlantic and Great Western – largely absent from the testimonial dinner – did not share Sir Peto's warm view of the chief engineer. William Reynolds complained of Kennard's "personal expenditures and extravagancies and private speculations" and of his "expenditures of company money for personal purposes and projects". He also grumbled over Kennard's ever-increasing tendency to micro-manage every aspect of the railroad's operation. "Intoxicated with flattery and adulation," Reynolds later wrote, "Kennard was desirous of exercising a control in every department of the company." (Reynolds, 2002) Many of Kennard's speculations profited Kennard, but diverted his attention and energy from the work on the Atlantic and Great Western. Exemplative of this was his purchase of one of the largest hotels in Cleveland, the Angier House, which Kennard remodeled and re-opened as the Kennard House. (Rose, 1990)

Late July, 1865 found Kennard aboard the *Octavia* cruising the eastern seaboard between New York City and Martha's Vineyard with guests that included (among others) his brother, Howard Kennard (who had taken over management of the family's Falkirk ironworks) and a Colonel H. S. Rowen (NY

Times, 1865). A few weeks later, the three separate companies that owned the segments of rail line in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio finally merged together to form the Atlantic and Great Western Railway Company. In order to pay off the standing debts of the three parent companies, the new corporation had to float a \$30,000,000 mortgage.

Less than two years later, the Atlantic and Great Western would be in receivership, nearly destroyed by the crushing debt of the new mortgage and by the railroad's failure to obtain the lucrative contracts to transport oil from Rockefeller's Pennsylvania fields to the refineries in Ohio. Jay Gould, owner of the Erie Railroad and one of the great "robber barons" of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century attempted to seize control of the railroad, setting off a protracted court fight. One of the key players in the battle was the Atlantic and Great Western's attorney, Samuel Latham Mitchell Barlow... who would later acquire Kennard's Glen Cove estate and rename it "Elsinore".

In spite of the railroad's economic problems, Kennard found time to enjoy his yacht and his country estate in Glen Cove. He expended nearly \$20,000 in July of 1867 to refurbish the *Octavia*, and reportedly considered renaming her the *Firefly* (which he apparently reconsidered and rejected). (GC Gazette, 1867a)

The summer of 1867, Kennard hosted members of the New York Yacht Club during their annual cruise to Newport, Rhode Island, (GC Gazette, 1867c)

Captain Kennard, of the royal yacht *Octavia*, assisted by his son, Louis Kennard, Captain of the *Alice Rosa*, at the villa of the former, gave a splendid entertainment to the owners of the respective yachts and their friends, which was characterized by the usual English hospitality. The rain interfered with the fireworks, but did not prevent youth and beauty at the hotel from enjoying the dance until the small hours." (NY Times, 1867)

As an historic footnote, young Louis' boat *Alice Rosa* was named for his two eldest sisters - Alice Irvina and Rosa Marion Kennard.

In the same month, he played host at Glen Chalet to the wife of his railroad partner/patron, James McHenry.

Mrs. James McHenry, wife of the well-known London capitalist, is staying at Glen Cove, at the residence of Mr. T. W. Kennard, son of the M.P. Mr. Kennard's residence is of Moorish architecture, perhaps the only one in this country, and is extremely gorgeous. The dining hall is forty feet high. Mrs. McHenry has made the most favorable impression in our fashionable circles by her suavity of manner, and her beauty of person. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1867a)

An interesting snippet appeared in the Glen Cove Gazette later that year, stating that Kennard was planning to go to Japan during the winter of 1867-8 (GC Gazette, 1867b). This was echoed in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle a few days later, albeit with exceptionally poor orthography of Kennard's name: "Mr. Kenward (sic) of Glen Cove, who intends going to Japan in his

steam yacht, gave a farewell entertainment last Tuesday Evening." (Brooklyn Eagle, 1867b). Japan, after a long slumber, was embracing western technology; in that year, the Tokugawa Shogunate had issued a permit to a US faction to construct a railroad between Edo and Yokohama (which the Japanese later rescinded) and the next year granted a British group a license to construct a rail line between Yokohama and Tokyo. Was Kennard serving as a consultant on one of these projects, or looking for new projects to tackle, or seeking additional investment opportunities for his London friends?

In August, 1868, Kennard and the *Octavia* participated in the annual New York Yacht Club cruise from Glen Cove to Newport, Rhode Island. En route, the NYYC squadron stopped at New London, Connecticut. The Times' correspondent recorded that "Mr Kennard's handsome steam yacht, the *Octavia*, also anchored off the Pequot at 8 o'clock. They came up from Glen Cove for the ball." (NY Times, 1868) The Pequot House was one of the largest hotels at New London, Connecticut, catering to the visiting elite from around the world. It was one of the primary sites of social activity for the New York Yacht Club during the Connecticut leg of their annual cruise between New York City and Newport, Rhode Island.

The previous owner of the estate, William Evans Burton, had actively participated in the Queens County Agricultural Fair with displays of the finest flowers, fruits and vegetables that were grown on the property. Kennard followed suit, and had his gardener, George Lucas, prepare an exhibit of the exquisite flowers produced by Glen Chalet's gardens and green houses for the 1869 Queens County Fair. Kennard "had a larger display than any other contributor, having 120 varieties of roses; also, a large collection of exotics, from Brazil; fine grapes, lemons, oranges, figs and bananas." (Anon., 1870).

It is not certain when Kennard ceased using Glen Chalet as his country home. By 1870, Kennard's engineering work on the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad had effectively ended – in no small part because of the railroad's economic problems – and he appears to have ceased participating in the day to day affairs of the company. A small item in the the Brooklyn Daily Eagle – mostly meant as a jibe at a competing newspaper – sheds some light on the status of Kennard and Glen Chalet in the final days of his proprietorship:

The disadvantages of reporting in advance of facts is illustrated in this morning's Tribune. It has an account off the rendezvous of the New York Yacht Club at Glen Cove, and of a magnificent banquet to the officers and guests at the mansion of Mr T W Kinnard (sic), of that village. The mere fact that the squadron did not rendezvous at Glen Cove... and the further fact that that magnificent mansion of Mr. T W Kinnard has been closed for a year, and that the host of last night has been absent in Europe for months, does not effect or impeach the peculiar enterprise of the Tribune in the least. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1870)

One anonymous author offered a somewhat jaundiced view of the cause of Kennard's departure from Glen Chalet.

“Like many another man, he lived beyond his mean; he had serious domestic difficulties, and finally he was obliged to mortgage his estate to Mr. [Samuel Latham Mitchill] Barlow, who was his lawyer. In the end the lawyer got possession of the whole property at a figure far less than the original cost.” (Anon., 1873). E H Mott, in his history of the Erie Railroad commented that James McHenry “in a burst of generosity” had purchased Kennard’s “magnificent estate at Glen Cove, L.I., and presented it to his then friend and adviser, S. L. M. Barlow, later so conspicuous in the Erie-Atlantic and Great Western entanglements.” (Mott, 1899) The Glen Cove Gazette reported in late July, 1871 that Barlow was leasing Kennard’s estate (GC Gazette, 1871a), and in mid August that Barlow had purchased the property (GC Gazette, 1871b)

After returning to England, Kennard did not divest himself of his American investments, and even after his death a company called the American Estates Association was managing both his and James McHenry’s US holdings which included real estate and coal fields and was valued at over \$2,000,000. (NY Times, 1897)

Thomas William Kennard died on 10 September 1893 at Orchard House, his 17<sup>th</sup> Century mansion at Sunbury, England. He was 68 years old. (Anon. 1893)

### **Octavia – the Filibuster Sloop**

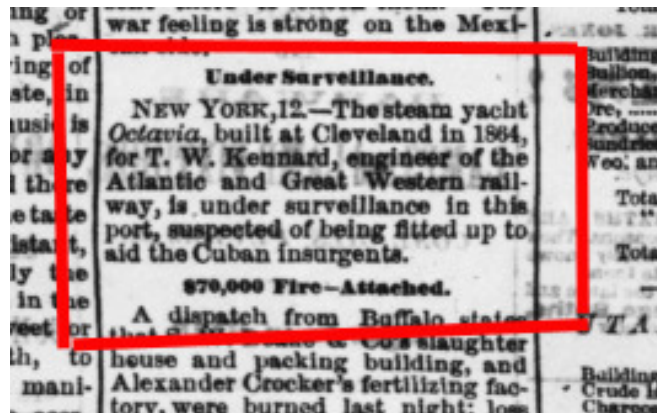
The *Octavia* dropped out of sight for the next few years, but reappears in 1875... as a suspected “filibuster sloop” supplying arms and ammunition to Cuban insurgents seeking freedom from Spain.

In modern parlance, the term “filibuster” refers to using protracted debate to prevent a vote on a piece of legislation. The word had a much different connotation in the 19th Century. It is derived from the Spanish *filibustero* and the Dutch *vrijbouter*, both of which mean “pirate” or “freebooter”. By the mid-1800’s it was applied to anyone who launched unauthorized military expeditions (usually against Caribbean countries, but also against Mexico and the nations of Central and South America) to either support or create a revolution. The motivation of the leaders of these expeditions covered a broad spectrum: some were former Union and Confederate officers thirsting to carve out their own empire in the tropics, or to become the power behind the throne of some tin-pot dictator; others were merely soldiers of fortune; others fought because they truly wished to see an end to colonialism and slavery.

The Ten Years War was rife with “filibusterers”. The war began in the Fall of 1868, when two wealthy sugar refinery owners (Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and Francisco Vicente Aguilera) had incited a popular revolt to wrest control of Cuba away from Spain and to free Cuba’s large slave population. The unsuccessful rebellion was marked by a decade of bloody guerrilla warfare coupled with equally bloody reprisals. Many Americans were sympathetic to the plight of the Cuban people, and the move to free the slaves there evoked the same spirit with which the North had fought to abolish slavery during the Civil War. But the United States was still in the process of mending itself economically, militarily, politically, socially, and emo-

tionally after its own long, bloody war, and was in no position to challenge Spain, then one of the great colonial superpowers.

In early June, 1875 it was reported in the press that “the steam yacht *Octavia*, built at Cleveland in 1864 for T W Kennard, engineer of the Atlantic and Great Western railway, is under surveillance in this port, suspected of being fitted up to aid the Cuban insurgents.” (Deseret News, 1875).



Clearly the rumors circulating about the *Octavia* being a “filibuster” ship were taken seriously. In the beginning of July, the New York Times reported that “the steam-yacht *Octavia* is in trouble again.” The “trouble” stemmed from the fact that when Kennard converted her from a sailing vessel to a steam vessel in 1865, he failed to take her to a British port to be remeasured and a new registry certificate issued for her. The British Consul General in New York, Sir Edward Mortimer Archibald, C. B., K.C.M.G, formally notified the Collector of Customs in Port of New York (future US President Chester A Arthur) of that fact. While the *Octavia* might be flying the British colors from her mainmast, Great Britain did not consider her to be a registered vessel of that country, and would offer her no protection under international law. (NY Times, 1875a)

Since *Octavia* was not a British vessel, the vessel’s actions could not compromise England’s neutrality in the fight between Cuba and Spain. The United States, however, was in a less certain position; the *Octavia* was in US waters, and it was decided not to allow her to sail until the matter of precisely what country’s flag she flew was clarified. This was accomplished in late July of that summer, when that the *Octavia*’s owner, Richard B. Bainbridge, announced that he had sold the yacht to Angel S. Arias, a citizen of Uruguay, for a purported \$50,000. (NY Times, 1875b) Arias immediately made application to the Consul General of Uruguay for a letter of protection, authorizing Arias to immediately change the name of the yacht to the *Uruguay* and place her officially under the national colors of Uruguay. He also petitioned the Uruguayan government for permission to take the *Octavia* to Montevideo to be formally registered. Consul General Edwin C B Garsia gave his consent, and the British Consul General offered no objection. Within a few days, the Customs House in New York cleared tythe *Octavia* to leave port. (NY Times, 1875c)

One major question persists: who was Richard Bainbridge and how did he acquire the *Octavia*? It is perhaps no more than a strange coincidence that, in 1881, Thomas Kennard’s



daughter married a “Captain Bainbridge” as her second husband. (Pine, 1959)

A foreign correspondent of the New York Times said that the yacht had arrived in Panama on 11 August, “bearing the flag of Uruguay.” He added that the *Octavia* was “commanded by Captain Summers, an American, I think” and that the crew was mostly Cubans. She had just come from the island of San Andres, off the coast of Columbia, to take on board a shipment of arms and ammunition that had been stockpiled there months previously by another ship. This is a clear indication that the “filibuster” ships were an organized operation. After rendezvousing with a sloop carrying coal to refuel *Octavia*, the vessel headed out to sea once more. (NY Times, 1875h) There is also some suggestion that in August, 1875 the *Octavia* was running shipments of arms and ammunition between Haiti, where the weapons had been illegally stockpiled, and Cuba. (NY Times, 1875d)

The *Octavia* delivered a large shipment of contraband arms to Cuba’s rebels on the evening of 19 September 1875. Despite Spanish warships patrolling the area, “the heavily-laden blockade runner succeeded, under of night, in reaching the coast of Cuba in safety.” She landed 1,500 rifles, 500,000 rounds of ammunition, and 8 cannons into the hands of a small army of insurgents waiting on shore. (NY Times 1875e)

Later in the month, the crew of the *Octavia* tried to land another shipment of munitions at Cape Cruz, Cuba. The yacht was spotted by the Spanish naval patrols, and was chased into Port Royal, Jamaica by the Spanish cruiser *Tornado*. The *Tornado* was the same warship that had captured another “filibuster” ship, the steamer *Virginius* just two years earlier. After a drum-head court martial, the Spanish government executed 53 of the 155 crew and passengers aboard the ship as pirates. (The only thing that prevented more executions was the arrival of a British warship, the HMS *Niobe*.) The British authorities embargoed *Octavia*’s cargo, but apparently took no other action against the vessel or her crew. (NY Times, 1875f and NY Times, 1875g)

The *Octavia* left the island of Jamaica on 17 February, 1876, claiming to be bound for New York City. She arrived at Jacmel, Haiti, on 25 February. No one was able to explain why it had taken *Octavia* eight days to travel the short distance between the two ports, leading to rumors that she had covertly landed another shipment of arms in Cuba. The Haitian government had heard rumors that the *Octavia* was carrying arms for Cuba and had no desire to provoke the Spanish authorities. They denied the *Octavia* access to the harbor, even though her captain claimed that the ship had sustained damage and was in need of coal. *Octavia* headed for the island of St Thomas, arriving there on 2 March. (NY Times 1876e)

Eager to prevent more arms and ammunition from reaching the insurgents, the Spanish government ordered their steam gunboat *Hernan Cortes* to sea to watch the *Octavia*. The *Cortes* was hardly the pride of the Spanish fleet in the New World: she was an old, lumbering sidewheel steamer who had been publicly embarrassed the year before when her leaky boilers couldn’t get up enough steam to move the ship. When the *Cortes* arrived at St Thomas on the 6th of March, the crew of the *Octavia*

made a decided effort to provoke and insult the sailors of the *Cortes*. They mounted a mock guard armed with broomsticks on deck, and offered up “other less flattering demonstrations”. On the 12th of March, the *Octavia* – certain that she was faster than the Spanish gunboat – raised anchor and headed to sea. The *Cortes*, her ancient boilers now clearly in fine fettle, followed in close pursuit. The captain of the *Octavia* tried to shake off the *Cortes* by taking a short-cut through a narrow, shallow channel between St Thomas and another small island, hoping that the shallow water would prevent the larger *Cortes* from following; the captain of the *Cortes* risked grounding his ship and continued the chase. By mid-day the next day, off Culebra Island in what is today Puerto Rico, the *Cortes* was close enough to fire two blank cannon shots at *Octavia* to signal the ship to surrender. The warning was ignored. The third shot was not a blank – and the shell grazed the *Octavia*’s mast. The *Octavia* surrendered. (NY Times, 1876e)

In the holds of the *Octavia*, the Spanish authorities discovered 1,000 muskets, 300 rifles, 2 cannons, 240 kegs of gunpowder, 12 crates of hand grenades, and 48 cases of metallic cartridges (NY Times, 1876a and NY Times 1876d). Her captain was identified in press accounts as “Captain J W Walsman” (believed to be the same person identified as “Capt. Summers” in the New York Times report from Panama the previous year) who was accompanied by by his wife. At the time she was captured, the *Octavia* had a crew of 26, and was carrying a male passenger and his wife. The crew were imprisoned in Fort San Felipe del Morro in Puerto Rico (NY Times, 1876e).

The New York Times commented that “upon her capture the boilers of the *Octavia* were found full of grease, and choked by the variety of combustible matter thrown into them, and it was found impossible to work the engines afterward” (NY Times, 1876e). Presuming that this was not an act of deliberate sabotage by the crew of *Octavia* – an attempt to hand the Spanish a pyrrhic victory by denying them a functional prize – it certainly demonstrates how low the *Octavia* had fallen compared to the care that Kennard had lavished upon her.

The New York Times reported “as no owner has appeared to claim the steamer *Octavia* she has been declared a lawful prize by the Spanish authorities,” but added that the British government was investigating the case with an eye to contending the Spain’s claim. (NY Times, 1876f and NY Times, 1876g) Confidential communications by Sir William Grey, Governor of Jamaica to the Colonial Office in London seem to indicate that the owner of the *Octavia* during at least part of her career as a filibuster was a Mr. A. De Cordova (further inspection of the Colonial Office files might shed more light on the chain of ownership of the yacht).

The final note on the *Octavia* comes from a small item appearing in the New York Times, stating that the Spanish authorities had placed the yacht up for auction on 17 January, 1878 as a lawfully forfeited war prize. Since the highest bid offered was a mere \$3,000 the Spanish government withdrew the vessel from sale. (NY Times 1878) The vessel’s ultimate disposition is unknown.

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