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NAVAL HISTORY &  
HERITAGE COMMAND

NAHAMPTONROADS  
NAVAL MUSEUM

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*The Daybook's* purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by staff and volunteers.

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# The Only Thing That Is Constant is Change

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

For the past eighteen years, Ofelia Elbo has served as the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's office manager, budget specialist, timekeeper, librarian...and my right hand. During the course of the last year, she decided to start a new chapter in her life by retiring. Since November 30, 2010, her departure has been our institution's loss. We were fortunate to have her at the main office helm through our museum's relocation and the arrival and departure of a battleship. Most of all, we were fortunate to see her smiling face and team spirit each day. Please bear with our staff as we scramble to fill the void. Our higher office, the Naval History and Heritage Command, has assured us that a replacement is forthcoming.

Ofelia's departure is just one of many challenges the museum is facing. As with many other cultural institutions around the country in 2011, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum is facing massive resource reductions. Now more than ever, the museum needs your support of time,

talent, and sponsorship to continue its high quality programs. You can make a difference by joining the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation Membership Program and by attending at least one of these special events:

### Luncheon Lectures

-Author **Scott Carmichael** talks about the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* (CV-12) and its role in recovering the historic 1969 Apollo 11 mission.

-High Point University professor of history **Michael Bennett** paints a picture of the ordinary Civil War Sailor. This presentation is part of the Museum's Civil War 150th Commemoration.

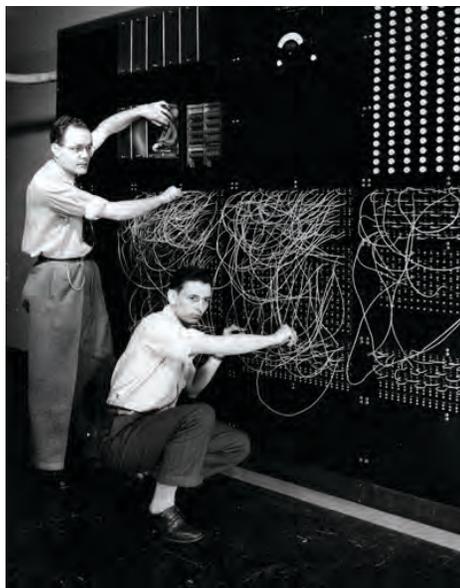
-Battle of Midway veteran **Norman J. "Dusty" Kleiss**, shares his sea stories about his role as a bomber pilot onboard USS *Enterprise* (CV-6).

**After Hours History**-These evening receptions offer free wine, munchies and of course exciting topics to explore. The After Hours events are underwritten by the U.S. Navy League, Hampton Roads Chapter, and this year will include two topics Underwater Archaeology and Tattoos.

To learn more about these events, please contact our Special Events Coordinator Laura Orr at (757) 322-3108. Remember, that as a member of the museum entitles you are entitled to discounted price on the luncheons, and the opportunity to attend our Behind the Scenes Tours. On April 1, we'll be jumping on a bus to Richmond, Virginia for a guided tour of the treasures of the Museum of the Confederacy, the Virginia Historical Society, and Tredegar Iron Works. And for those lovers of art, there will be an opportunity to see the new addition of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Call (757) 445-9932 to sign up. I hope to see you there!

*Becky*

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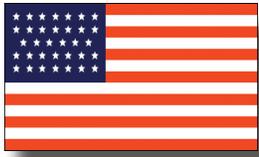
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# Leaders and Heroes of Lincoln's Navy, Part 1

**T**he *Daybook* is the Navy's mouthpiece for commemorating the Civil War Sesquicentennial. In this article, we look at some of the leading naval personalities from the Union perspective. Future issues will address Confederate naval leaders. Not all of these figures listed are admirals, nor are they all even Naval officers, since maritime warfare required cooperation among government branches. Army and Department of State in order to win the war. One should notice that a number of these men are from Southern states. On the eve of the Civil War, the United States Navy was one of the few true national institutions. The men who worked for it did so out of national loyalty rather than for an individual state. While a good number of officers resigned and went South, a majority of Southern naval officers, particularly those from Virginia, chose to retain their U.S. Naval commission.



**Gideon Welles, 24th Secretary of the Navy**

**S**porting a huge white beard, Welles was Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln. Nicknamed "Father Neptune," he was a Connecticut Yankee in King Abraham's court. He was the ablest and closest of Lincoln's advisors and only learned of his appointment on Inauguration Day. He was an organizer. He ran the Bureau of Provisions and Clothing for the Navy from 1845-49 and did a good job. His assistant, Gustavus V. Fox, a former naval officer, helped him form a great team. Welles' task came from a political proclamation: the blockade and isolation of the South. The Secretary inherited a small fleet of sailing warships. He quickly built and purchased a huge, steam-powered fleet that was capable of blockading the coast and supporting the Army. Welles purchased 418 vessels and built 208 warships.



**Gustavus Vasa Fox, 1st Assistant Secretary of the Navy**

**I**n March 1861, after South Carolina had left the Union and tried to isolate Fort Sumter, Fox offered his services to President Abraham Lincoln. He displayed such energy and ability that he became the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. During the four long years of the Civil War, and for a year and a half after the end of the conflict, Fox played an extremely important role in the management of the Navy. Described by one authority as the "*de facto* chief of naval operations," he maintained close relations with squadron commanders and other senior officers, and planned many of the Navy's campaigns against the Confederacy. He was also a forceful advocate of new technologies, notably the monitor-type of armored warships. His partnership with Gideon Welles was instrumental to the Navy's success during the war.



**Andrew Hull Foote,  
Rear Admiral**

**O**ne of the most respected Naval officers of his day, Foote was in charge of the U.S. Navy's gunboat flotilla in Western rivers until his death in 1863. When he was a boy, Foote's father refused to let him join the Navy and forced him to go to West Point. The call to the sea was so strong, however, that Foote quit the U.S. Military Academy and became a midshipman in 1822. He served on four different warships before getting his own command in 1851. During the war, he showed a great knack for riverine warfare, despite never commanding a "brown water" ship in his career. He led a squadron during the critical victories at Fort Donelson, Fort Henry, and Island No. 10. A piece of shrapnel hit him during the battle of Fort Donelson. This led to his death several months later. His loss was mourned throughout the North.



### David Glasgow Farragut, Rear Admiral

The son of a Spanish merchant that lived in Tennessee, Farragut was later adopted by Commodore David Porter. A midshipman at 12 and a lieutenant by 22, he made captain by 1855. Despite his birthplace and the fact that he made his home in Norfolk, he was fiercely loyal to the U.S. Government. Assigned to command USS *Hartford* in the Gulf of Mexico, he led a squadron of ships up and down the Mississippi River in 1862 and 1863. He led them in battles such as New Orleans, Port Hudson, and Vicksburg. In 1864, he led a squadron into Mobile Bay where he uttered his legendary phrase “Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!”

He became the U.S. Navy’s first rear admiral in 1862 and its first vice admiral in 1864. Aggressive and bold, he was one of the finest officers ever to serve in the U.S. Navy.



### Samuel Du Pont, Rear Admiral

A member of the famous Du Pont family, Samuel Du Pont (who, unlike the rest of his family, always wrote his last name with a capital “D”) entered the U.S. Navy as a midshipman when he was 12. At the beginning of the Civil War, he was one of the senior flag officers in the Fleet and showed great promise as a strategist and leader. Under his leadership of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, the U.S. Navy captured the forts at Port Royal using innovative tactics. However, his abilities came under severe public criticism for his handling of the Navy’s ironclads and failing to subdue the forts protecting Charleston, South Carolina. In 1863, he resigned his position as head of the Squadron at his own choosing. His reputation was partially restored after his death with the dedication of Du Pont Circle in Washington, D.C. in 1882.



### Winfield Scott, Lieutenant General

Nicknamed “Old Fuss and Feathers,” Scott was one of the greatest military minds ever produced by the United States. A combat veteran of the War of 1812 and Mexican-American War, he was the general-in-chief at the time of Fort Sumter. He was one of the few who realized that the Federals needed a long term strategy. Dubbed the “Anaconda Plan” by the press, Scott proposed a strategy where the U.S. Navy would cut off the Southern ports, the rivers would be seized by flotillas, and the U.S. Army would capture the major Southern cities. Initially scoffed by politicians that forced him into retirement due to ill health, Scott lived long enough to see his plan work.



### David Dixon Porter, Rear Admiral

The son of War of 1812 Captain David Porter and step-brother of Rear Admiral David Farragut, Porter was one of the senior officers of the U.S. Navy during the war. He began his war career as an officer of gunboats on the western rivers, where he worked closely with his U.S. Army counterparts, particularly Ulysses S. Grant. This cooperation led to the capture of Vicksburg in 1863.

He led a squadron in the disastrous Red River Campaign, where he somewhat vainly proclaimed that his gunboats could go “wherever the sand was wet.” Transferred to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, he managed the Naval side of the campaigns against Fort Fisher. His descendants continued the family tradition of national service long after the admiral’s death.



### John Dahlgren, Rear Admiral

Intellectually brilliant, Dahlgren was one of America’s foremost experts in naval ordnance. The U.S. Navy manufactured thousands of “Dahlgren” cannons that were used by both sides in the war. He advanced from lieutenant to rear admiral in just two years. He took charge of the Bureau of Ordnance in 1861 before assuming command of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron in 1863. His son, Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, served in the U.S. Cavalry and was shot and killed during a botched raid on Richmond. His younger brother, Charles Dahlgren, resigned his U.S. Army commission and served as a brigadier general in the Confederate States Army.



**Samuel Phillips Lee, Rear Admiral**

It is a commonplace observation that the Civil War divided families as well as the nation. But it remains a surprising fact that one of the famous Lees of Virginia was a U.S. Naval officer. Samuel Phillips Lee, a Virginian, was a third cousin of Robert E. Lee.

At the outbreak of war, he joined the Atlantic Blockading Squadron and was senior officer present when the Union ships first blockaded Charleston. He was appointed to head the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron in September 1862 and served in that position until October, 1864.

Lee was a capable officer who was largely responsible for bringing much needed direction and order to the blockading patrols. However, he lacked the confidence of General Ulysses S. Grant. As a result, Grant turned to David Dixon Porter to lead the Navy in the all-important naval assault on Fort Fisher.



**John Worden, Captain**

As the secession crisis moved toward civil war in early 1861, Lieutenant Worden was sent to Pensacola with secret instructions for the local naval commander. While returning to Washington, D.C. by rail, he was arrested by Southern authorities. After being exchanged in February 1862, he was given command of the revolutionary ironclad *Monitor* and took her into a historic battle with CSS *Virginia*. Receiving serious eye injuries in the action, he had to relinquish command; however, this battle made him a major war hero in the North. While recovering, Worden was promoted to captain. He commanded the monitor USS *Montauk* during the first months of 1863, bombarding Fort McAllister, Georgia, in January, destroying the privateer *Rattlesnake* in February, and participating in the April 7, 1863 attack on Fort Sumter. He was promoted to rear admiral in 1872 and remained a national figure for the rest of his life.



**George U. Morris, Lieutenant**

Son of the famed War of 1812 officer Charles Morris, George Morris had served in the Navy for nine years before the war. The hard-drinking lieutenant found himself in the unenviable position of commanding USS *Cumberland* when the ironclad CSS *Virginia* made her historic assault on March 8, 1862. After the Confederate ship drove home a deadly ramming, he refused to surrender. His defiance was hailed throughout the North. He commanded two other ships during the war and suffered a serious injury during the 1862 Battle of Drewry's Bluff. He died in 1876 at a spa in Virginia.



**John Ericsson, Engineer**

Among the most prolific inventors of the 19th century, Ericsson is most famous for the design of the turreted ironclad USS *Monitor*. Born in Sweden, he spent his early efforts attempting to make a better steam boiler. He emigrated to the United States in 1839, where he designed the world's first screw propeller. He refused to work for the U.S. Government for many years due to political fallout from an accident aboard USS *Princeton*. Convinced by shipbuilders to submit the *Monitor* design, Ericsson became world renown for his ship of iron. For the rest of the war, he worked to perfect the design.



**Charles Wilkes, Captain**

Among the more controversial figures in U.S. Naval history, Wilkes was an intellectually brilliant officer. However, he possessed the personality of a rattlesnake. His leadership of the U.S. Exploring Expedition in the 1840s was very controversial. From data collected, however, he laid down the foundation for the theory that there was a seventh continent at the bottom of the world. Scientists later confirmed his theory when they discovered Antarctica. In his honor, scientists named a large portion of the continent "Wilkes Land."

During the Civil War, he nearly started a third war with Britain. In 1861, while commanding USS *San Jacinto*, he stopped and seized HMS *Trent*. During the course of the war, Wilkes' rash personality and actions often ran him afoul of Gideon Welles.



*Launch Day, June 19, 1856-Thousands of Hampton Roads locals came to see the launch of the massive steam frigate Colorado at the Gosport Navy Yard. The frigate was one of several projects awarded to Hampton Roads by the Navy in the years leading up to the Civil War. (Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper image)*

# The Calm Before the Crisis

## The Navy in Hampton Roads Before April 12, 1861

by Gordon Calhoun

**D**uring the last years of what historians have since labelled the *antebellum* period of American history, there were no signs that the U.S. Navy was operating any differently. Despite heated rhetoric and talk of a national secession crisis among American citizens, the country's Naval service carried on normal duties.

In the 1850s, however, Naval life was different in Hampton Roads, as the Gosport Naval Yard received an unprecedented influx of federal dollars to build and home port vessels, thereby contributing to the entire region's economic vitality. Ironically, it was a maritime activity that brought Hampton Roads residents a crisis of epidemic proportions, that of Yellow Fever.

In the summer of 1855, the merchant vessel *Ben Franklin* arrived in Portsmouth from the island of St. Thomas. When

she unloaded its cargo, she also emptied its bilge water, which was infested with mosquito larva. Despite a few mysterious deaths aboard the ship, public health officials were pressured to release the ship from quarantine without being allowed to properly investigate the deaths. The result was the among worst public health crisis to hit Hampton Roads. The disease quickly became an epidemic within two months, infecting thousands of people. Sixty to seventy people a day became infected. In one week in September, an average of fifty people died daily.

The Common Council of Portsmouth pleaded with the Navy to help, as the regional health system was on the verge of collapse. Upon getting instructions from Washington, Dr. Lewis Minor, the Navy's surgeon in charge of the Portsmouth Naval Hospital, opened its doors to the general public.

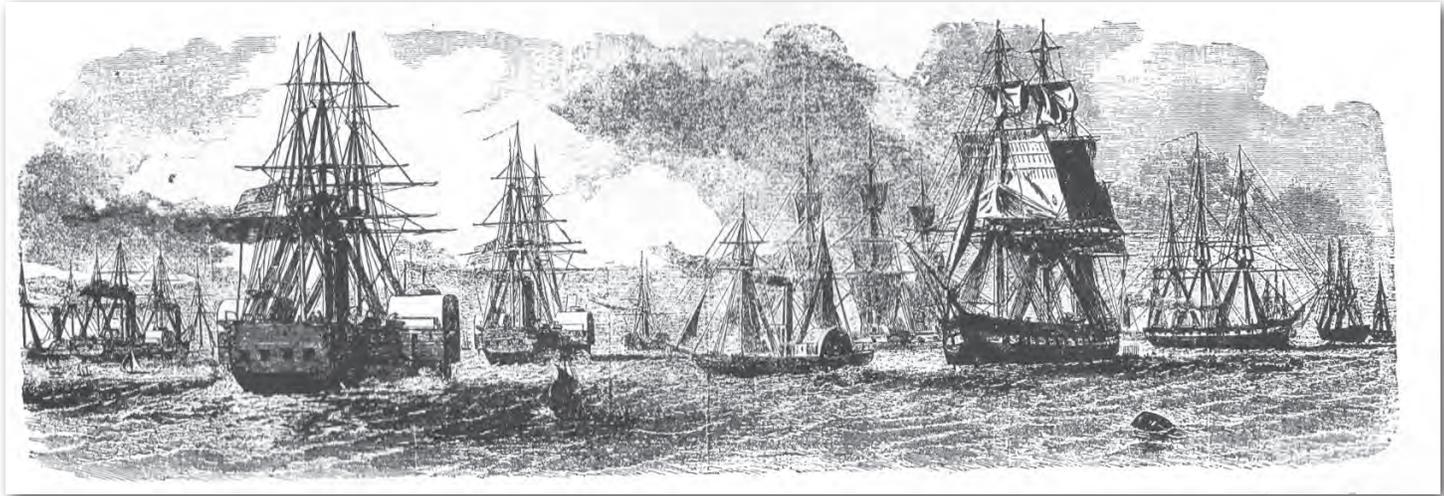
The staff at the Hospital was overwhelmed right away. With assistance from three Sisters of Charity orders, hospital staff handled 600 cases during a period of twelve weeks. The commandant of the Gosport Navy Yard put the Yard's carpenters to work building extra coffins to the Hospital.

The "ravages of the Destroyer," as Minor referred to it, ran its course by the end of November. In its deep appreciation to the Naval Hospital, the Common Council commissioned a gold medal for each of the six surgeons.

Having survived the epidemic, the Navy and the region began to recover. After years of being fed scraps from the Federal budget and even with an overall cut in defense spending, the region's Navy saw an increase in appropriations.

The *Norfolk Argus* described in 1858 just how well things were going at the





From 1840 to 1861, Hampton Roads was home to the Navy's "Home Squadron." The Navy formed the squadron to keep a group of commissioned warships in waters close to the homeland, such as the Atlantic Coast, West Indies, and Mexico on a permanent basis. By the 1850s, the squadron was a mixed group of modern steam warships such as *Mississippi*, *Brooklyn*, and *Susquehanna* and older sail warships such as *Cumberland* and *Macedonian*. (Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper image)

local yard. The Gosport Navy Yard had just finished two large steam frigates, *USS Roanoke* and *Colorado* and was in the process of preparing them for their first sea deployments. Two sail frigates, *Columbia* and *Raritan*, and two brigs, *Dale* and *Marion*, were undergoing repairs. The paddle steamer *USS Powhatan* just returned from a successful diplomatic mission and was scheduled for an overhaul.

The only visible blots were the rotting hulks of the older ships-of-the-line, *Delaware*, *New York*, *Columbus*, and *Pennsylvania*. One out-of-town journalist remarked that the four old battleships presented "a striking picture of formidable imbecility." He reserved special wrath for the giant 120-gun *Pennsylvania*, which was serving as the region's barracks ship for sailors awaiting orders to a ship. He wrote, "this huge monster has never performed a service that could point a moral or adorn a tale; except a moral might be drawn from

the unwise course of spending a million dollars for a monument to administrative foolishness."

The region was benefitting so well that other ports began to complain of favoritism. The editor of *The Sun* in Baltimore, for example, lodged a public complaint against the Navy. He noted that in the Navy's 1857 building program, Congress authorized the Navy to build twelve new steam sloops-of-war. The paper cynically noted that despite the fact the U.S. Government owned eight navy yards, the Department awarded Gosport the rights to build two of the ships, *Dacotah* and *Richmond*, at the same time. In addition, the paper discovered over the last three years, Gosport had repair contracts on twenty-eight ships. "All things considered," wrote the editor, "Norfolk has doubtless had its full share of work of all descriptions."

In addition to the construction and repair work, the region benefitted even more from the Navy's decision to stand up a new permanent squadron for North American waters in the 1840s. Called the "Home Squadron," ships assigned to this organization operated out of local ports and remained in commission when in port. Normally, the Navy placed a ship out of commission when the ship arrived in a home port.

By the mid-1850s, the squadron had grown from four ships to twelve. The Navy assigned six ships of the squadron to Hampton Roads, with the other six assigned to New York City. Ships in the squadron patrolled the region along the coast, to Mexico and the West Indies, and

occasionally out into the North Atlantic. Along with supporting the Home Squadron, the region outfitted several other ships before they headed to points worldwide.

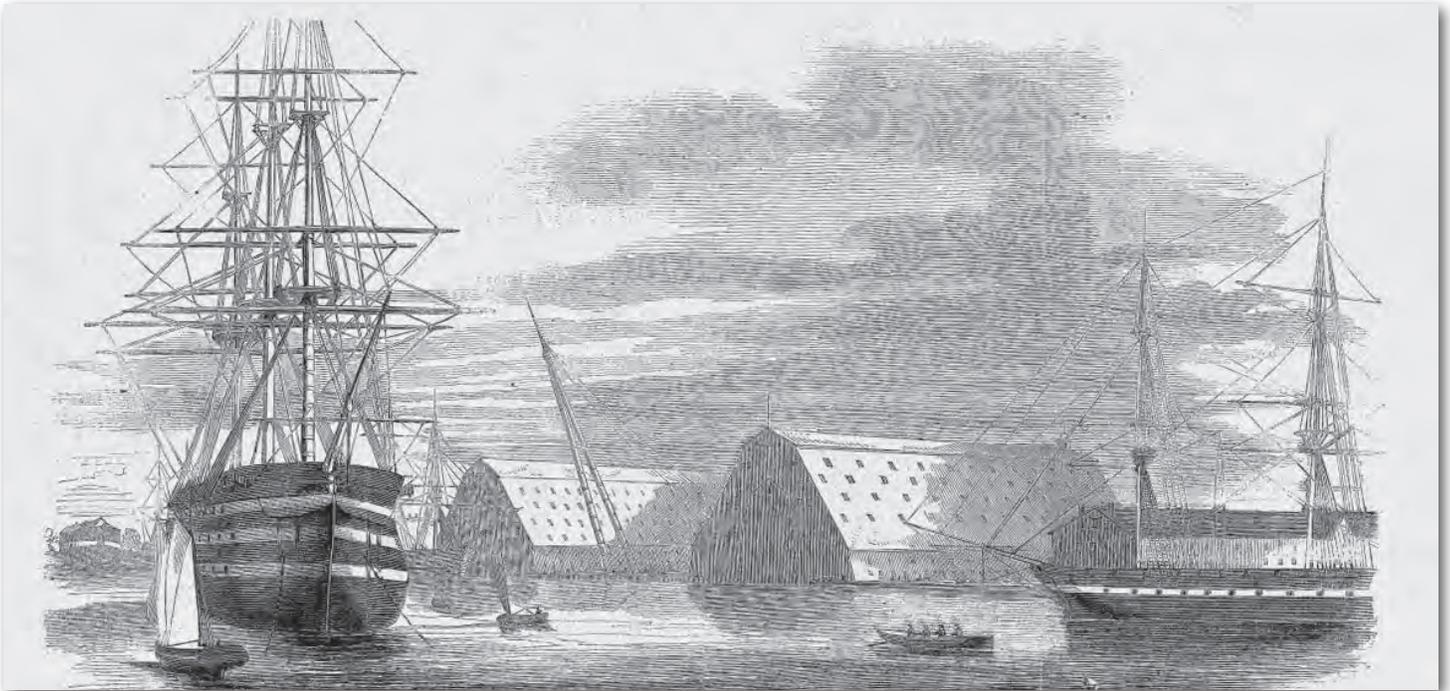
After 1855, the Navy Yard continued over the next several years with the usual cyclical pattern of hiring workers when ships needed to be built or repaired and then laying them off when the contract was complete. Captain Charles Stewart McCauley assumed command of the Yard in 1860. A long-serving Naval veteran with excellent diplomatic skills that prevented at least two different nations from declaring war on the United States, the command would be his last. Shortly after McCauley assumed command, the large steam frigate *USS Merrimack* arrived in port after being at sea for more than three years in the Pacific. As there was no money left to overhaul her, the Department instructed McCauley to decommission the ship until further notice.

Since there was not enough money to put *Merrimack* back into service, McCauley put his employees to work cleaning up the Yard. Strewn about all over the facility were guns of every shape and size, many allegedly dating back to the 1770s. The clean-up project ensued the guns and were secured, repainted, and repaired. Obsolete guns were put on concrete mounts and used to decorate the Yard's many small parks. Several of the Yard's ship houses that had fallen into disrepair were also restored.

The last major peaceful event in this period occurred with the arrival of the Japanese diplomatic mission in 1860. Six years after Commodore Matthew Perry



The citizens of Portsmouth commissioned six gold medals in thanks to the six Naval surgeons at Portsmouth Naval Hospital for their assistance in coping with the 1855 yellow fever epidemic. (HRNM image)



*This peaceful engraving of the Gosport Navy Yard is somewhat deceiving. Hampton Roads' center of Naval activity was a busy place in the years leading up to the secession crisis. The Yard served as the Home Squadron's ad hoc naval station and supported the squadron's many functions. (Harper's Weekly engraving)*

established the first treaty with Japanese royalty, Japan agreed to send its first diplomatic mission to Washington, D.C. The frigate *Roanoke* arrived in Hampton Roads from Panama with the mission on April 26. On board were Japanese ambassadors Sim'Mi Boojsen No-Kami and Mooragaki Awajsi No-Kami.

The charter steamer *Philadelphia* met the frigate off Fort Monroe. With *Roanoke's* sailors manning the yard arms and *Philadelphia's* band playing, Commander S.P. Lee and Lieutenant David Dixon Porter

escorted the Japanese delegation over to *Philadelphia* and introduced them to Captain Samuel Du Pont, who commanded the steamer. Though interpreters were present, the Japanese ambassadors learned to speak English from a Chinese-to-English dictionary while traveling from California to Hampton Roads and freely talked to the American Naval officers and members of the American press. Once all the formal exchanges and ceremonies had taken place, *Philadelphia* left Hampton Roads and headed for Washington.

National events soon overtook the good times in the region. The election of Abraham Lincoln in November accelerated the drive in the Southern states to break from the Union. South Carolina publicly proclaimed its dislike for the new President and open threats were made at Fort Sumter. Finally on December 22, South Carolina formally announced its intention to leave the Union with the passage of the Ordinance of Secession.

After two weeks of inactivity, the Buchanan Administration finally moved to do something about the crisis. Conceived by the U.S. Army's General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, the Federal government sent *Star of the West*, a contract U.S. Army vessel directly to Fort Sumter with soldiers from Governor's Island to reinforce the embattled garrison. Fearing that the transport was being sent into a hornet's

nest without an armed escort, General Scott attempted to redirect *Star of the West* to Hampton Roads by countermanding his order. Unfortunately for Scott, it was too late, as the ship had already left New York. It was only then that Scott requested that the Navy provide assistance.

Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, however, could only provide limited  
**Before the Crisis continues on page 14**



*Among the many operations the Navy conducted in Hampton Roads during the last years of the antebellum period was hosting the first ambassadors from Japan to the United States. The frigate USS *Roanoke* arrived in the region on April 26, 1860 with the delegation. (Harper's Weekly engraving)*



*Captain Charles Stewart McCauley assumed command of the Gosport Navy Yard on May 24, 1860. McCauley compiled an impressive Naval resume. His reputation, however, would be tarnished forever by the burning of the Gosport Navy Yard. (HRNM image)*



"The Horred [sic] Massacre in Virginia"-This is a newspaper print depicting the 1831 Nat Turner slave revolt. Local authorities pleaded with Hampton Roads-based Naval units to help suppress the revolt. (Library of Congress image)

## The Navy Response to the Horrid Massacre

One of the pivotal events leading up to secession and the Civil War was the Nat Turner Slave Revolt. Local and state authorities were so fearful that the revolt was just a small part of a widespread slave rebellion, that they asked local Naval units to assist in its suppression.

The uprising began in the summer



of 1831 when Turner organized an insurrection in Southampton County, Virginia. Believing they were being led by the Holy Spirit, Turner and seventy slaves and freemen revolted against their white masters. On August 23, they began massacring any whites that they encountered. By the time the revolt was suppressed, the group killed sixty-one whites without regard for gender or age.

Upon hearing about the nature of the reported crimes, local authorities alerted militia companies from all around the state. They also sent word to the U.S. Navy and Army that they needed their help was needed.

Commodore John Warrington was serving as commandant of the Gosport Navy Yard at the time. Seeing that the militias were severely under-equipped, he ordered the Yard's ordnance warehouse to be opened and weapons loaned out. In addition, he sent word to any warship at anchor to provide assistance.

At the time, there were two

commissioned warships in Hampton Roads. The sloop-of-war USS *Natchez* had just returned from anti-piracy duty in the West Indies, and the sloop-of-war USS *Warren* had just returned from a two-year deployment in Europe. Upon hearing the request for Federal assistance, West Indies Squadron commander Commodore Jesse Elliot ordered the ship companies of both vessels to arm themselves.

Led by *Natchez's* commanding officer, Captain John Newton, and joined by U.S. Army regulars from Fort Monroe, a hundred men from *Natchez's* company were the first units on the ground. A small steamer took the company down the Nansemond River and disembarked in Suffolk. Prominent citizens in Suffolk loaned their horses to the company upon arrival, which were used to form a reconnaissance unit. The company then proceeded to march toward Jerusalem (now called Courtland). After a day of marching, the company rested. Midshipman, and future rear admiral, Charles Steedman headed the mounted unit and conducted his scouting mission on the road ahead.

Steedman encountered militiamen who told the him that Turner's party had already been put to flight and Turner was fleeing for the Great Dismal Swamp. Still the local population was on edge. As the Federal company continued its march, a panicked and hyperventilating farmer informed Newton that a group of slaves had just murdered his family and his neighbors. Upon hearing the tale, some of the sailors broke ranks, disobeyed Newton's orders to stand fast, and dashed to the scene of the crime.

Upon arriving, the sailors discovered that the farmer had misinterpreted a group

of young ladies' hysterical laughter for screams. To his shame, the farmer admitted that he never actually checked on his family. His wife scorned him in front of the company.

Possibly to make up for wasting the Government's time or simply trying to "support the troops," the farmer and his wife offered the men in uniform something to drink. Specifically, the farm had a cider press and a large amount of hard cider on hand. The officers did not stop their men from drinking as much as they wanted. When the company finally got underway again, half of the company was stone drunk. It stumbled into Jerusalem that evening.

Steedman later wrote in his memoirs that his inebriated Sailors and Marines were not the only ones who had been drinking excessively. When the Federal unit arrived in Jerusalem, there were three companies of equally drunk militiamen from Norfolk and Richmond.

The company stayed in Southampton County for a few more weeks to ensure that uprising was truly a local event. They also stayed around to reassure a jittery public and restore public order. Rumors on Turner's location caused the public to shutter themselves in their homes. Once Turner was caught on October 30 and brought to trial, the company returned to its ships.

Some historians later implied that some members of the company participated in vengeance killings against innocent slaves. Research shows that there were some vengeance killings, but these seem to have been done by private citizens. There is no proof that Sailors or Marines participated in any of these acts. 

## Book Reviews

### *A Society of Gentlemen: Midshipmen at the Naval Academy, 1845-1861*

By Mark C. Hunter

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna

Almost every year the Naval Institute Press publishes a book that explains the rise of professionalism in the U.S. Navy or that defines the modern professional naval officer. *A Society of Gentlemen*, written by Mark C. Hunter, is the one for this year. Hunter successfully covers both topics but does so by telling why the Naval Academy was established and how it changed during the first sixteen years of its existence. He explains that from America's beginning, the public and its politicians debated when, where, and

Mark C. Hunter. *A Society of Gentlemen: Midshipmen at the Navy Academy, 1845-1861*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-59114-397-0.

how professionalism in the armed services should be developed. It was agreed that the professional soldier needed a type of specialized knowledge and expertise different from any other profession and that it should be gained through training at an institution established for that purpose. In 1802, the Army was allowed to establish such an academy at West Point, New York. On the other hand, for the next forty years, Congress failed to fund a similar school for Naval officers.

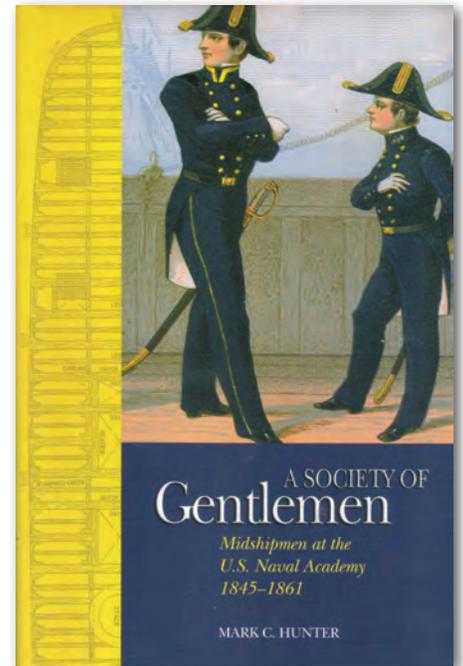
With no other way, the Navy continued to develop its officers through rigorous experiences aboard ships at sea and limited formal education at a few small Naval schools in major ports such as Boston, Norfolk, and Philadelphia. It was not until December 1842 that a serious effort was begun to combine the naval schools into a single academy that would provide better-coordinated classroom education and shipboard experience for midshipmen taking that responsibility away from the ship captains. Finally, on October 10, 1845, the U.S. Naval School was established on the grounds of old Fort Severn at

Annapolis, Maryland. After five years, it became known as the Naval Academy. Discipline was relaxed because the students were considered "boys" and a set of rules (demerit system that is still in use today) was established to punish their "pranks". The curriculum was upgraded and the staff expanded. Unfortunately, at this point in his commentary, Hunter misses emphasizing that an important reason for the creation of the Naval Academy was the Naval officers' lack of knowledge of scientific advances in ship design and propulsion.

Hunter claims that his study reveals that before the Civil War, the Navy's officer development program at the Naval Academy and at sea aboard ships exhibited "the criteria that historians have looked for in a professional organization." Though he substantiates his conclusion by an abundance of historical references and statistics, the book, in general, has too many details. It is saved from boredom by the vignettes of academy life provided by Naval heroes such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Robley C. Evans, and George Dewey.

For example, as a young boy, Dewey's father, who was a physician, said that although George was intelligent, he was "a hand full." After he broke his father's horse cart at the age of fourteen, George was sent off to the Military Academy at Norwich, Vermont and eventually to the Naval Academy because there were no appointments to West Point available. Despite almost being dismissed the first year for receiving 113 demerits (200 was the limit), George did graduate. Dewey's description of Academy life revealed that it brought together young men from every region of the nation, trained them as warriors, and emphasized their common purpose to serve the nation with honor. All of which, Dewey said, made them professional naval officers and gentlemen.

Hunter also uses the recollections and opinions of senior officers who graduated after 1865 and junior officers who chose to seek their fortunes in business or other careers



instead of the Navy. He compared the success of Military Academy graduates with that of Naval Academy graduates before and after 1861. The most interesting of these were the officers who resigned to join the Confederate Navy versus those who stayed and served in the Union Navy.

The book is divided between the "School" and "Academy" years with emphasis on discipline and regulation. Hunter brackets these chapters by those on the foundation of the Academy's system of professional development, summer cruises, school ships, and the outbreak of the Civil War. The book has numerous figures and statistical tables to verify the author's analysis. The endnotes are so numerous and detailed that they almost read like a book in themselves.

*A Society of Gentlemen* chronicles the transformation of the original Naval School into an Academy that produced professional naval officers. Its value is that it provides insights into the social as well as the scholastic life of midshipmen in the formative years of that institution. Though the book lacks a comparison to the modern-day Academy, every Naval Academy alumnus would enjoy reading it. 



*The Whaling Expedition of the Ulysses, 1937-38*

By Lt. (J.G.) Quintien Walsh

Edited by P. J. Capelotti

Reviewed by Howard Sandefer

This is a book about whaling and one American officer's observation of whaling in the early part of the 20th century. We have a certain romantic notion about whaling as it brings up images of action and adventure. This book brings us back to reality.

Lieutenant Quentin Walsh's book about pelagic whaling is not *Moby Dick*, and the *Ulysses* is not the *Pequod*. The book was originally written in a time when whaling was about to be largely banished around the world. Whaling was allowed by treaty to three countries, one of which was not

Quentin R. Walsh & P.J. Capelotti (editor) *The Whaling Expedition of the Ulysses, 1937-38*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010. ISBN 978-0-81303-479-9.

the United States. By the time the book was written, the whaling industry in this country had fallen into such disuse that Lt. Walsh was asked by his superiors to write a report that would allow the Federal government some insight into the industry, should oversight deem needed.

Walsh was detailed by the U.S. Coast Guard as an official U.S. Government inspector on the voyage of *Ulysses* during the whaling season from April 1937 to April 1938. Walsh's presence was to oversee, for the first time, an American-owned whaling ship under the new restrictions outlined by a 1937 international treaty that regulated the world's whaling industry.

The U.S.-built tanker was originally purchased by a Norwegian concern in order to take advantage of U.S. laws of the time. She was registered under the U.S. flag, but the owner hired a Norwegian crew to operate her. The owner also had the tanker converted into a whale factory ship in Sweden. Lt. Walsh joined the ship in Sweden and was the only U.S. citizen aboard during the voyage.

This time frame included the conversion

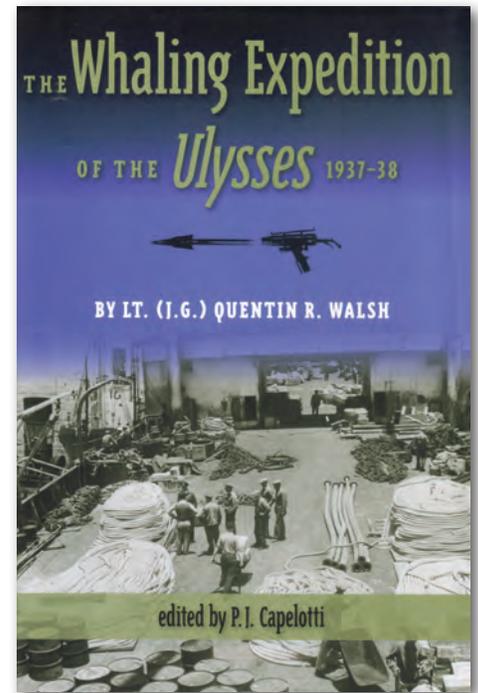
of the *Ulysses* from an oil tanker into whale factory ship in Goteborg, Sweden, and the transit to Australia and the Antarctic Sea, and the return to New York to discharge the collected whale oil.

Walsh wrote the book initially as a report to American authorities who knew very little about whaling. This, in itself, indicates how depressed whaling in the United States had become. This situation came about because of the depredations of the Confederate raiders, specifically CSS *Shenadoah* in 1865. Although the war was over when the destruction occurred, the destruction of the whaling ships in the Pacific caused irreparable damage to the industry. Walsh documented the course of whaling under the U.S. flag after the romance of *Moby Dick*. He traced the decline from the Civil War to 1986 (in a later addendum) when whaling was banned for most nations, excepting Japan, Norway, Iceland, and Russia. By this time, pelagic whaling under the U.S. flag had come to a virtual end. Whaling was destroyed during World War II and is now pursued only by Japan, Norway, and Iceland.

The discovery of large petroleum deposits and its relative ease of recovery were factors in the lessening demand for whale oil, aided by the invention of electric light and the growing electrical grid. Undoubtedly, the Depression further exacerbated the decline and World War II completed the drop off. Thus, most uses for whale products were replaced during the period by other products, namely crude oil, that were more economically produced and available.

Walsh made numerous sketches to illustrate his text, as well as describing the various species of whale that were hunted. He also included detailed drawings of the ships and equipment used the methods of flensing the whales, and a myriad of other details in the expedition.

He displayed affection for the great whales that were the object of the hunt and for the men who hunted them. He realized



that these men were the last of a breed, plying their outmoded skill in an effort to feed, house, and clothe their families in a demanding world. He devoted several chapters to the description of each of the primary species hunted for oil.

Walsh later had a complete career in the Coast Guard and was awarded a Navy Cross for his heroism in the liberation of Cherbourg during the Normandy campaign. He retired as a captain. He passed away in 2000 at the age of ninety.

All told, Walsh's book was a good primer for the regulatory arm of the Federal government in the late thirties, but it is of little value now in that the United States does not even commission whaling ships, much less partake of whaling. The nation's expertise was largely lost during the Civil War. Walsh presented a detailed and clinical description of whaling which could be used if a revival of the practice were ever needed. 



# The State of the Fleet, 1861

In his history of the U.S. Navy in the Civil War, Admiral David Dixon Porter reflected that his Navy could have stomped out the secessionists before their movement ever gained any traction. That is, if it had the right equipment and was ready to move.

He wrote “the first policy of our Government should have been to get possession of all the ports in the South, and no doubt the Administration would gladly have done so, but for their inability to carry out such designs if entertained, owing to the fact that we had no Navy of any account to commence with. Many of our vessels of war were, as a rule, too large, and drew too much water to enter the shoal



## *The Museum Sage*

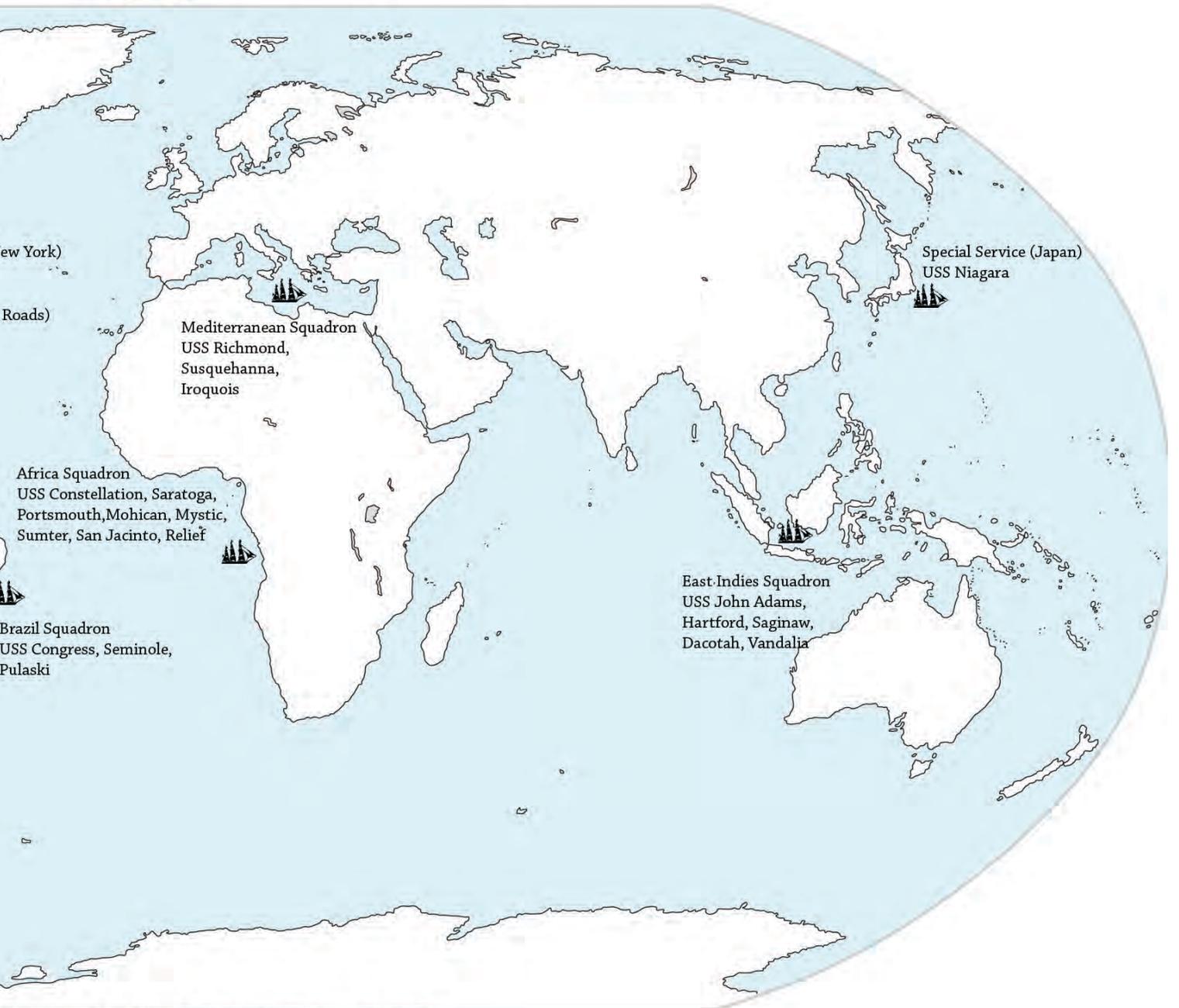
Southern harbors, and a majority of them were sailing frigates and sloops of war not at all suited to the work required of them.”

Here in the 21st century, in every issue, the newspaper weekly *Navy Times* produces a map to show why, when, and where in the world the Fleet is currently operating. If *Navy Times* had been in circulation in 1861, Porter would be reminded that despite the looming crisis, the Navy had a full slate of worldly responsibilities and could not have intervened in South Carolina even if they had the desire to do so.

Nonetheless, even before Lincoln had been inaugurated in March, the Navy had issued recall orders to most ships to return home as soon as possible. In addition, there were fifteen decommissioned ships that had just returned from duty or were prepping for sea. In the days leading to the attack on Fort Sumter in late April, the Department had ordered all ships to be made ready. Most were ready for action by July. 

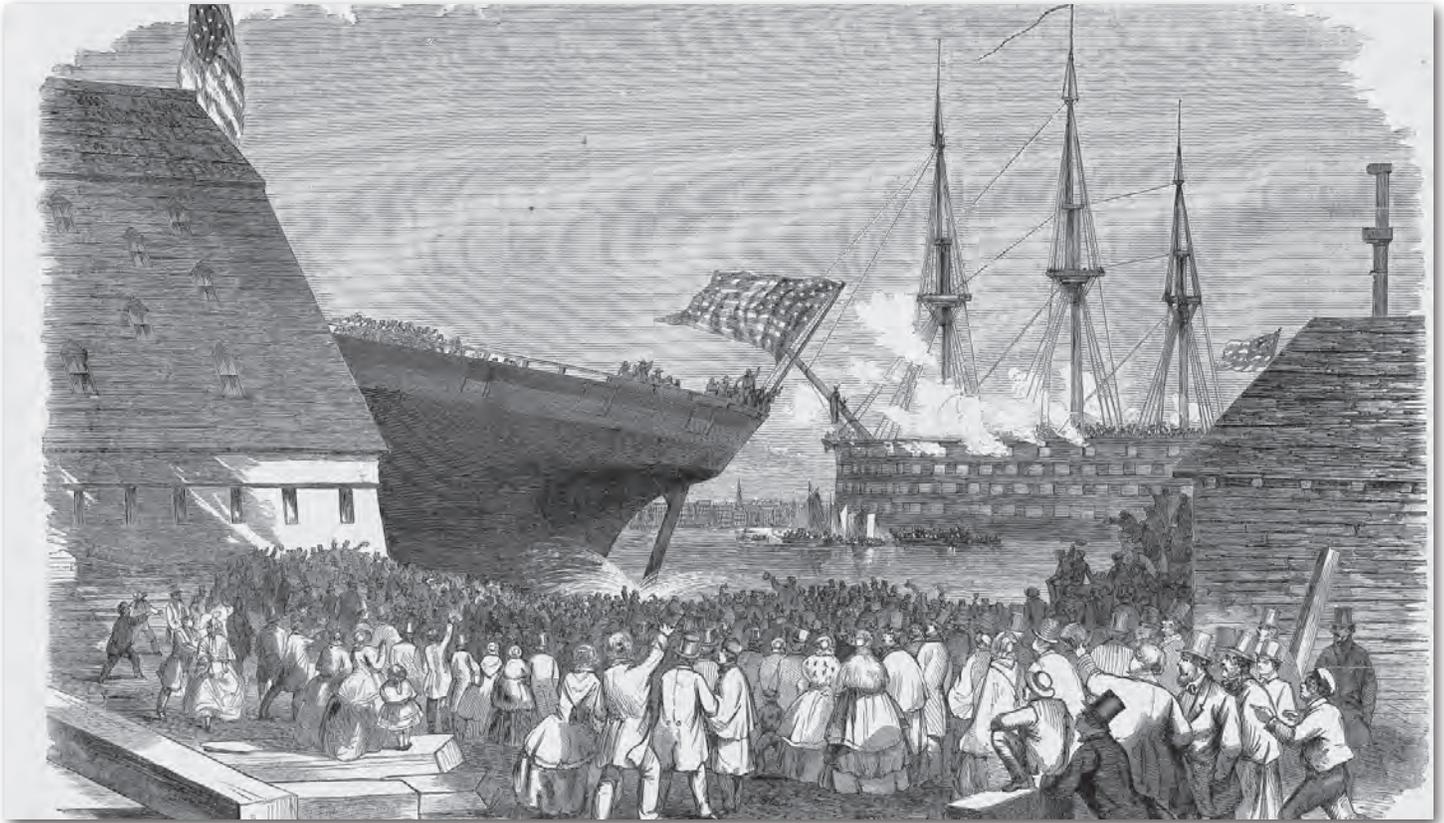


- Decommissioned Ships with a hi
- In Portsmouth, N.H.-*Santee, Ma*
- In Boston-*Colorado, Minnesota,*
- In New York-*Wabash, Roanoke, E*
- In Philadelphia-*Jamestown, Wat*
- In Washington-*Pensacola*



high state of readiness (9 to 12 weeks prep time)

*Warion, Dale*  
*Mississippi, Preble, Bainbridge*  
*Potomac, Savannah, Perry*  
*er Witch*



Five months before the war-With saluting guns firing from the ship-of-the-line *Pennsylvania* and the American flag flying, the Portsmouth locals cheer the launching of the steam sloop-of-war *Richmond* at the Gosport Navy Yard, October 13, 1860.(Harper's Weekly engraving)

### Before the Crisis continued from page 8

assistance. Most of his active ships were on assignments around the world (see page 12). The only two ships available were in Hampton Roads. The first was the sail sloop USS *St. Louis*. Scott and Toucey jointly decided that Fort Pickens in Pensacola was the next potential trouble spot and dispatched *St. Louis* to reinforce the garrison. That left the steam sloop USS *Brooklyn*.

One of the more modern ships in the Navy's inventory, *Brooklyn* had just returned from supporting the 1859 "Chiriquí Expedition," a project seeking to build a railroad across the isthmus of Panama. The ship's commanding officer, Captain William S. Walker, had no clue about his next assignment. He fully expected to pay off his crew and hand the ship over to workers at Gosport for repairs, so he could put up his feet at the local tavern and decompress from being at sea for two years. Walker's desire to stand down and relax, however, was cut short by a series of frantic letters and telegrams.

Toucey composed a secret letter to Walker to make his ship ready for sea as soon as possible. The ship was then to proceed to Fort Monroe, embarked two

hundred more soldiers, and wait for further instructions. He then handed the letter over to Norfolk native Captain Samuel Barron, Jr. to personally deliver it to Walker.

While Barron was en route, Toucey sent a separate classified telegram to Commodore McCauley at Gosport ordering him to prepare *Brooklyn* for war as soon as the ship arrived at his facility.

Once the ship was ready, *Brooklyn's* mission was to head to Charleston at best possible speed with a full load of guns and ordnance and intercept *Star of the West*. The ship was not to proceed into the harbor. It was feared that such a move by a U.S. Government warship would provoke South Carolina authorities.

The warship left Hampton Roads within days of the orders arriving. Walker believed the mission was so serious that he refused to slow down to discharge the local harbor pilot.

Despite all the demands for secrecy and coded messages between Gosport and Washington, *Brooklyn's* departure was a poorly kept secret. For days, Norfolk newspapers provided up-to-date information to other newspapers around the nation on *Brooklyn's* status. They also

reported that Charleston was the most likely destination of the ship. Local newspapers were not doing anything out of the ordinary. The U.S. Navy was a popular topic and a ship getting ready for sea always drummed a certain level of excitement. That the ship might be heading into harm's way only made it that more newsworthy.

The result of the reporting, however, was that Charleston authorities now knew the Federal government's plans and openly mocked the operation. One editor wrote, "The coercive power of the Federal Government, so long vaunted as adequate to suppress the secession of a State, is rapidly proving itself to be what it has long been supposed and said to be - a wretched humbug - a scarecrow - a dirty bundle of red rags and old clothes."

To resist a possible attack by *Brooklyn*, authorities purchased the steamer *Marion* and armed her. They pulled all the buoy markers from the harbor and ordered all the harbor pilots not to assist any U.S. Navy ships. They were also of the opinion that if any Federal forces arrived in Hampton Roads to be used against South Carolina, Virginians would rise up. This was not to be the case. Hampton Roads locals, at this

point, were content just being spectators to the events.

Walker and his ship arrived outside Charleston on January 13, 1861. Unfortunately for Walker, he did not intercept *Star of the West* in time. Three days before, the transport already crossed the bar and headed up towards the harbor's main channel. Guns on Morris Island fired nineteen shots at the vessel and forced the transport to turn around.

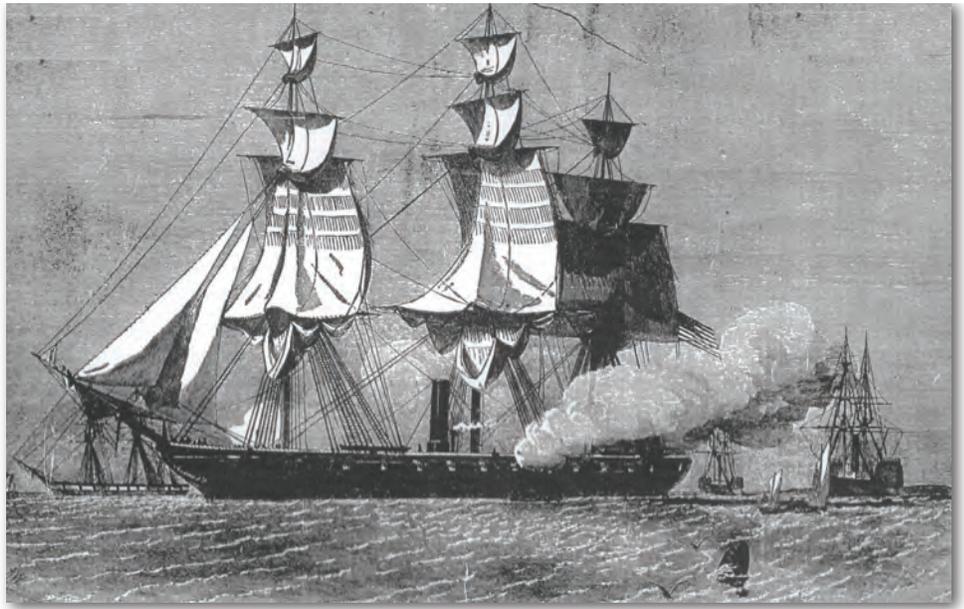
When *Brooklyn* arrived at Charleston, a small schooner came out to meet the ship. The schooner's master informed Walker of the many hazards the captain faced if he chose to proceed to Fort Sumter.

Walker decided to take the advice and ordered his ship back to Hampton Roads. Walker's junior officers felt that their captain was "cutting and running" and strongly believed the ship should ignore the warning and stand by Fort Sumter. The schooner, they thought, was nothing more than a ruse sent to confuse their captain. Walker, however, believed he had fulfilled his orders and nothing more was to be done. The ship arrived back in Norfolk on January 15.

Once again, the Department did not allow Walker and his company to rest. As soon as the warship pulled into Hampton Roads, Walker found a new set of orders from Washington instructing *Brooklyn* to head to the Gulf of Mexico and Florida.

Seeking to prevent a repeat of the crisis occurring in South Carolina, the Navy and Army continued to slowly and quietly reinforce Fort Pickens. The Department instructed Walker to join that effort and to intercept any U.S. Government transports bound for the port. The warship spent a few days in Hampton Roads resupplying before heading back out to sea and south to Florida. This mission was far more successful than the Fort Sumter operation. Fort Pickens remained in Union hands for the entire war and led to Pensacola's eventual capture during the war.

Rumors of war continued to fly around Hampton Roads. The same reporters who notified the world about *Brooklyn's* plans saw the sail brig USS *Dolphin* moored off of Fort Norfolk. As the U.S. Navy had an ordnance facility there, the reporters immediately concluded that *Dolphin* was being made ready for war. In this case, the reporters got it wrong. *Dolphin* was actually unloading her ordnance. She had



One of the Navy's most modern ships, the Norfolk-based USS *Brooklyn* was one of the few ships available to the Buchanan administration in the early days of the South Carolina secession crisis. (Harper's Weekly engraving)

just returned from Africa and was being made ready for an overhaul. The Navy eventually moved the warship down to the Gosport Navy Yard and decommissioned her.

With just weeks left in his tenure as Secretary, and possibly at the urging of his successor Gideon Welles, Toucey issued recall orders to most of the Fleet. Ships that received the recall orders were to return home at best possible speed.

Three of the ships that received the orders were the sail sloop-of-war USS *Cumberland* and the paddle steamers USS *Pocahontas* and *Powhatan*. All three ships were off the coast of Vera Cruz, Mexico when each commanding officer received sealed orders to head immediately to Hampton Roads. The ships arrived in early March 1861. The two paddle steamers were then subsequently ordered to New York.

Lincoln's inauguration in early March further inflamed passions and talk of a wider breakup of the Union. In late March, several Southern states assembled a convention in Montgomery, Alabama to create the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis as president.

Despite part of the South seceding, *Cumberland's* company did not sense any hostility from the locals. Some memoirs from *Cumberland's* officers would later recall that there was tension in the air, but everyone still remained calm. It would seem that the presence of a U.S. Naval warship continued to be a normal, everyday occurrence. The ship moved upstream,

anchored off the Naval Hospital, and began receiving supplies from the Navy Yard.

A few days later, *Powhatan* returned to Hampton Roads from New York with the steam sloop USS *Pawnee* arriving from Washington, D.C. The two ships' arrival caught the public's attention, though it was not clear to them of their intentions. The newspapers knew for sure that the two ships were to anchor and wait for further instructions. As was the case with *Brooklyn's* aborted relief attempt, however, local newspapers were not above speculating, and declared that the ships were bound for Charleston.

Both ships were carrying two hundred men from Fort Columbus and were indeed heading to Fort Sumter to attempt a second relief attempt. Welles instructed both vessels to head to Hampton Roads to pick up small arms and supplies from Gosport. They remained in the Elizabeth River for three days and then left for Charleston. Though given orders to act more assertively than *Brooklyn's* captain, the second relief expedition failed due to a combination of bad weather and miscommunication.

Local South Carolina forces opened fire on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. Virginia soon followed the lead of other southern states and seceded from the Union. This act instantly left the U.S. Navy and the Gosport Navy Yard a virtual island of Federal territory. The events at the Navy Yard that soon followed brought the American Civil War home to Hampton Roads in a violent manner. 

# A Month Before the Defenses Went Up



Charles Cassell drew this detailed map of downtown Norfolk and Portsmouth in March 1861, at the age of 18. A native of Portsmouth, Cassell trained as a naval architect and engineer at the University of Virginia and graduated at the age of 15. He served on J.E.B. Stuart's staff during the war. (Library of Congress map)

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## In Our Next Issue...

-Opening Shots: The Blockade in Hampton Roads is Established and Plans Are Made to Break It

-Book Reviews: *U.S.S. Cyclops* and *The Long Road to Annapolis*