THE
DAYBOOK®

VOLUME 16 ISSUE 2

In This Issue

The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command, Museums Division (www.history.navy.mil). The museum is dedicated to the study of 237 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. HRNM was accredited by the American Association of Museums in 2008.

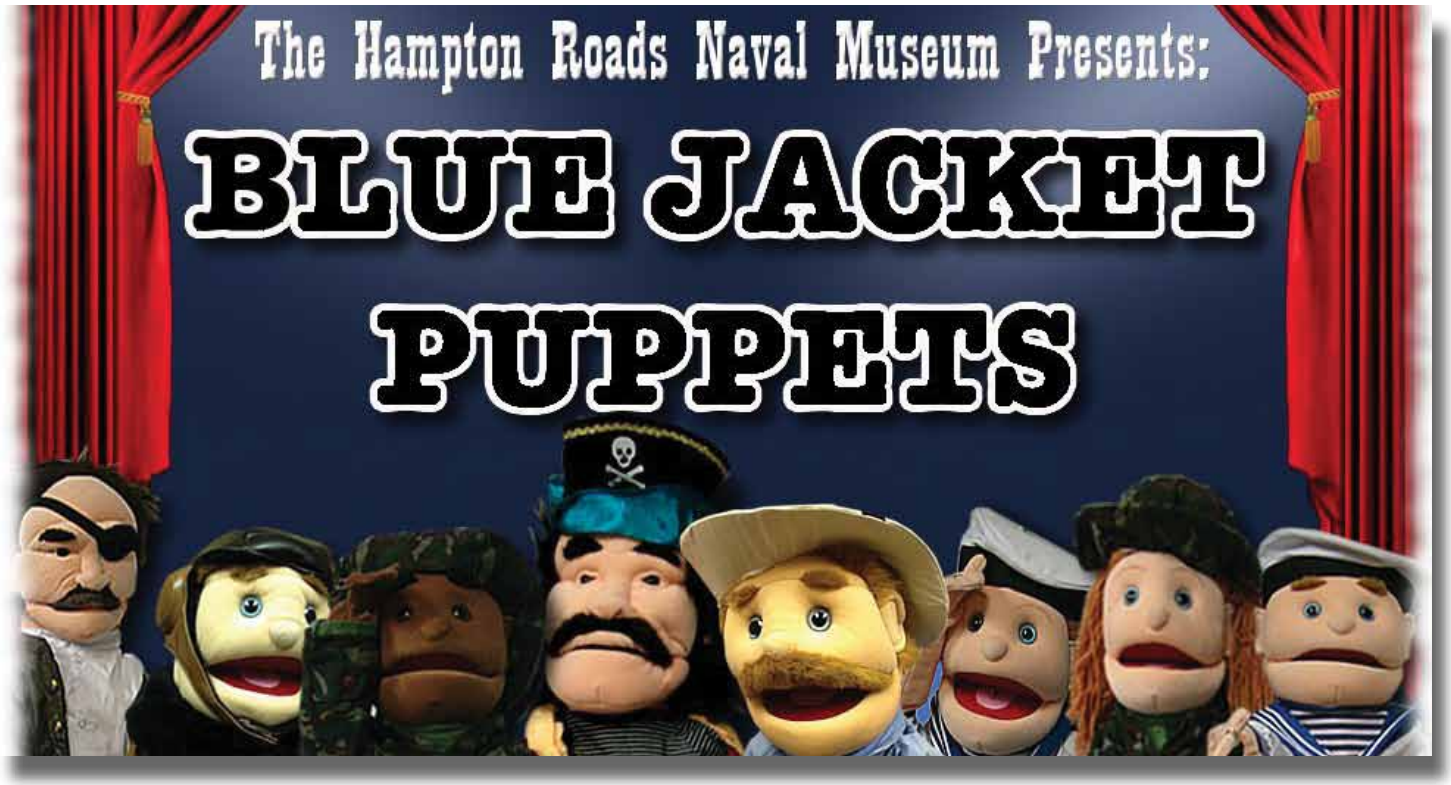
The Daybook's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum-related events. It is written by staff and volunteers.

Direct questions or comments to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at 757-322-2993, by fax at 757-445-1867, e-mail at hrnavalmuseum@navy.mil or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum is on the World Wide Web at http://www.hrnm.navy.mil.

The Daybook is published quarterly. To subscribe, contact the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation at (757) 445-9932 or visit http://www.hrnhf.org. To learn more about the naval side of the Civil War, visit www.civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com.

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

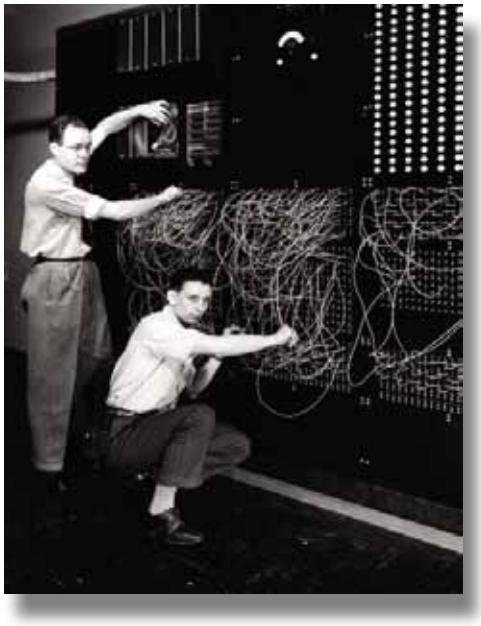
HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL MUSEUM



The Hampton Roads Naval Museum's Blue Jacket Puppets program is a new endeavor from the museum's Education Department. It began with a generous grant from the Tidewater Officers' Spouses' Association of Hampton Roads (TOSA). TOSA's gracious donation allowed staff to purchase puppets and a puppet stage. Work began on the program in May 2011. Since then, HRNM Education staff member have developed several puppet plays, including "We're All Friends Under the Sea," a 15-minute play about the dangers of bullying. The Education Staff also developed plays for HRNM's Halloween event, "The Hunt for Dead October."

Puppets provide both children and adults a new and creative way to entertain and inform. Future projects and shows will reflect the role of the Navy family and important aspects of local naval history in Hampton Roads. HRNM staff believes this endeavor will provide a creative outlet for fans to experience a new approach to history and museums. We ultimately want to make Blue Jacket Puppets as interactive as possible for fans. For more information about the puppets, or to schedule a show, please contact Laura Orr at laura.l.orr@navy.mil, call 322-3108, or visit their blog at http://hrnmbluejacketpuppets.blogspot.com.

Connect With HRNM Online!

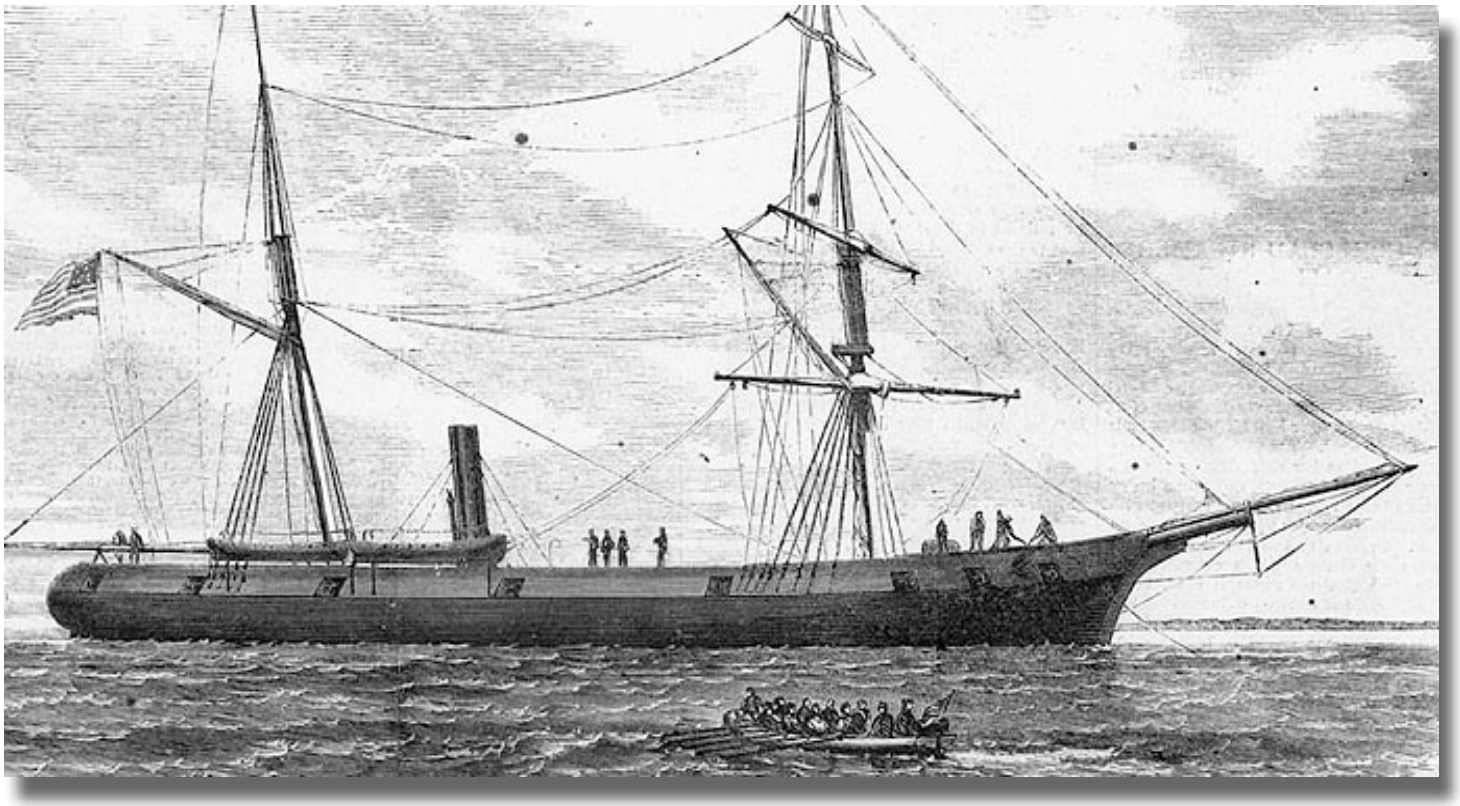


Museum Web site:
www.hrnm.navy.mil

Museum Blog:
hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com

Civil War Navy 150:
civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/HRNavalMuseum



The second of the three ironclads built for Atlantic blockading squadrons, USS Galena, *arrived in Hampton Roads in mid-April, 1862. She joined USS* Monitor *and USRC* E.A. Stevens *to await a possible assault by the Confederate ironclad CSS* Virginia. *She carried an acceptable battery, but possessed an unproven "tumblehome" design for her armor scheme.* (Harper's Weekly *engraving)*

On to Richmond!...Then Retreat to Norfolk

Navy Operations in Hampton Roads, April to July 1862

By Gordon Calhoun

It had been a month since the ironclads USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia* fought their legendary duel, and the strategic situation in Hampton Roads remained about the same. With the Elizabeth River fortified and *Virginia* still afloat, Confederate forces continued to hold the southern part of Hampton Roads. On the other side, Fort Monroe was manned by a large U.S. Army garrison and several U.S. Navy warships remained at anchor near the fort. The blockade on Hampton Roads was secured. With this situation in mind, both Confederate and Federal leaders plotted their next moves.

In the short term, the U.S. Navy made one significant strategic change as a direct result of the March 8-9 actions: big ships with their large drafts were out, and small ships were in. When the commanding officer of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, Flag Officer Goldsborough, sent his bi-weekly status update to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, the list included only one large vessel, USS *Minnesota*. The remaining large wooden ships, USS *St. Lawrence* and *Roanoke,* were withdrawn and not replaced with ships of equal stature. Fifty warships stood in their place, of which only three displaced above 1,000-tons. Small wooden steamers with varied names, including USS *Commodore Perry* (a New York City ferry boat), *Underwriter*, and *Stars and Stripes* dominated the squadron. Goldsborough did receive another ironclad, USS *Galena*, but she also displaced a significantly smaller amount that the large wooden frigates.

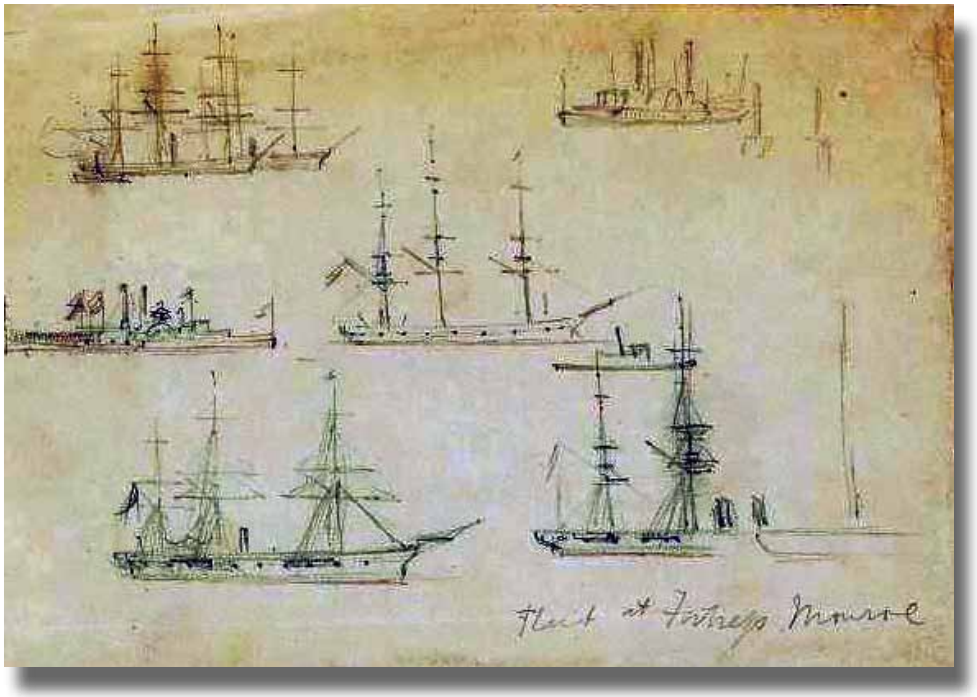
This change reflected a direct response to the U.S. Navy's actual mission. For as much press as the Battle of Hampton Roads created, the war for the region's waters would not be contested by capital warships with large batteries attempting to produce a decisive naval battle. Rather, it would be a long contest where both sides struggled to control the shallow waterways using small warships.

On the Confederate side, Flag Officer Josiah Tattnall, *Virginia*'s new commanding officer, attempted to refit his ironclad for battle. The large number of ships in Hampton Roads produced a certain sense of urgency for Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, who believed the enemy was preparing for a major offensive in Virginia. Mallory wanted assurances that *Virginia* would be ready to stop it. Tattnall agreed, as did Commander Sydney Lee, General Robert E. Lee's older brother and the new commanding officer of Gosport. All three men came up with new schemes on how to attack USS *Monitor*, including throwing a tarp over the smokestack and using hand grenades. However, one man strongly disagreed regarding the ironclad's readiness.

H. Ashton Ramsay, *Virginia*'s overworked and under-appreciated chief engineer, wrote that the ironclad's machinery continued to be a problem. He additionally resented the fact that his commanding officers ignored his advice on this matter.

There was, indeed, a major offensive in the works. Under the command of Major General George McClellan, the Army adopted a plan where Richmond would be taken by a ground assault up the Virginia Peninsula. Initially, the plan called for the use of the James River as a main source of support and supplies. However, given the potential threat of *Virginia*, the York River on the Peninsula's northern shore provided a safer alternative. Nonetheless, some smaller gunboats made their way up the James River and began to raid Confederate positions around Warwick Creek.

These minor raids brought a torrent of criticism upon Tattnall from the Confederate Army. The Army could not understand how the U.S. Navy was able to make the attacks with *Virginia* nearby. Tattnall, a fifty-year veteran of the sea services, provided a condescending lecture to his Army counterparts concerning the fundamentals of naval warfare. Among other points, he explained that his ironclad, for all of her powers, did have her limitations. For example, he was of the opinion that if *Virginia* attacked the Union squadron in Hampton Roads, the ironclad might break down and be captured. Additionally, if *Virginia* positioned herself in a blockading position across the James River, she would be cut off from her base at Gosport, overwhelmed, and captured. He also had to, in the most professional way possible, inform Robert E. Lee personally that his idea of using *Virginia* to attack Union forces on the York River was highly questionable. At one point, Tattnall threatened to resign his commission if his Army counterparts did not stop harassing him.

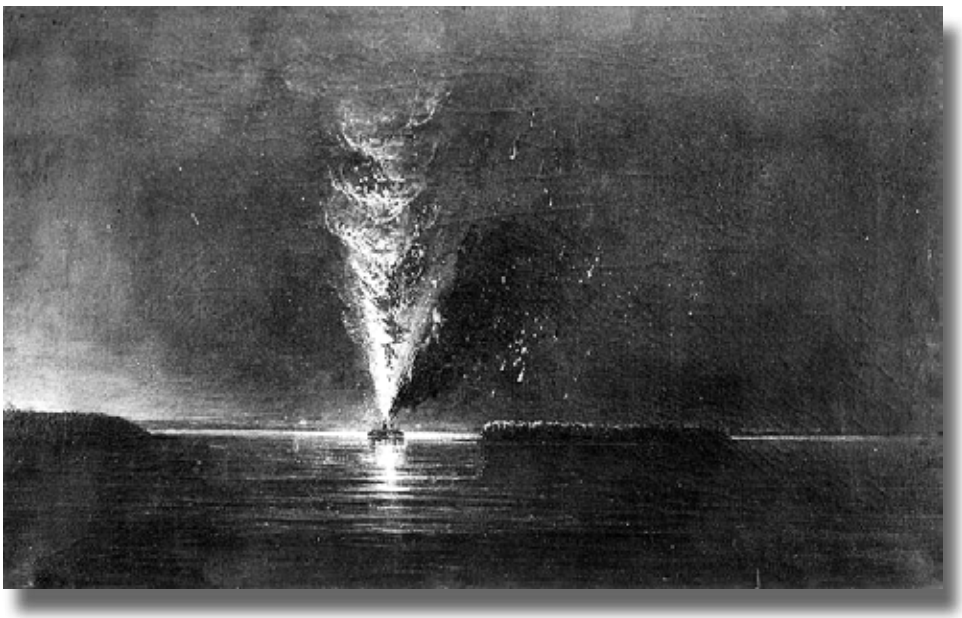


This is a sketch by Alfred Waud of several ships at anchor in Hampton Roads, 1862. While he did not identify the ships by name, the picture shows the change in the makeup of the Blockading Squadron: the big ships had been removed and replaced by smaller ones. (Library of Congress image)

Tattnall, however, did provide a compromise. He sent most of his wooden vessels including CSS *Patrick Henry, Teaser,* and *Jamestown* out of Norfolk and up the Elizabeth River. The ships slipped past the Union shore batteries at Newport News at night and took positions farther up the James, near the heights of Drewry's Bluff. There, the ships and sailors worked with Confederate ground forces to prepare a sustainable defense.

By the end of April, Mallory's anxieties proved accurate: Union troops threatened capture of the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, the Gosport Navy Yard, and any enemy ship in the area. Thus, with Confederate General Joseph Johnston's consent, Mallory ordered the region evacuated. This included launching the uncompleted shallow draft ironclad *Richmond*. Even after giving the evacuation order, Mallory implored Tattnall to defend all the region's waterways from U.S. Naval forces with his one ironclad. He wrote to the flag officer, "In connection with my telegram of last evening, please endeavor to afford protection to Norfolk, as well as to James River."

It was fortunate for Tattnall that the lack of cooperation and misunderstanding between himself and his Army counterparts occurred on the Federal side as well. For example, Goldsborough's new plan to sink *Virginia* was to ram her, though finding a suitable ship to pull off such a mission became problematic. When railroad tycoon "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt's monster 4,000-ton



With no base of operations and no means of escape, Flag Officer Tattnall reluctantly ordered the ironclad Virginia *to be set on fire and destroyed off of Craney Island. (NHHC image)*

Titled Views of Norfolk and Portsmouth from the U.S. Naval Hospital*, published shortly after Federal forces occupied Norfolk and Portsmouth. (HRNM image)*

steamer (named after himself) arrived in Hampton Roads under a Department of War charter, Goldsborough believed he had found his ship. Unfortunately, when Secretary of War Edwin Stanton heard that Goldsborough was going to send the ship into combat, Stanton strenuously objected.

It took none other than President Abraham Lincoln to get his military working together and the Federal war machine moving. In early May, Lincoln visited Hampton Roads and personally assessed the situation. He started prodding Goldsborough to make use of his naval superiority in Hampton Roads and act. The first operation involved a sortie of small gunboats led by *Monitor* to attack the Confederate batteries at Sewells Point. In this plan, Goldsborough intended for *Monitor* to lure *Virginia* out into open water. If the Confederate ironclad deployed in response to the attack on Sewells Point, *Monitor* would withdraw and the ships equipped to ram would charge in and hit *Virginia*. Tattnall, however, did not take the bait.

Lincoln continued to goad his flag officers into action, and in some cases, he gave direct orders. The President/Commander-in-Chief's direct intervention led Union ground forces to land at Ocean View (northern part of Norfolk County) and to advance south towards the City of Norfolk. Upon hearing about the Ocean View landing and that Confederate forces had withdrawn from Yorktown, local Confederate leaders decided that Norfolk and Portsmouth could no longer be held. They gave orders for all Confederate ground forces to accelerate their evacuation of fortifications and to proceed to Suffolk, so they could be shipped out to Richmond. Commanding officers then gave orders to burn down the Gosport Navy Yard. In this respect, Chief Engineer Ramsay was not about to give up. Instead of completely destroying all the Yard's property, Ramsay ordered his men to pack up as much heavy machinery as possible into train cars and to send it southwest to Charlotte, North Carolina. Here he set up a new navy yard, far from the front lines.

*Like Union forces in 1861, Confederate forces decided if they could not keep the Gosport Navy Yard, they would burn it. Shown here are citizens of Norfolk watching the Yard go up in flames. Upon being told that the Yard was destroyed and therefore useless, one U.S. Naval officer confidently countered, "Not destroyed, just burned down." (*Harper's Weekly *engraving)*

Around this time, the first true sign of U.S. Army-Navy cooperation during the Peninsula Campaign appeared. McClellan's first test in the campaign was Yorktown, which had been hastily fortified by Confederate forces on top of the old Revolutionary War redoubts. Instead of simply storming the lightly-garrisoned defenses, McClellan settled for a siege strategy and off-loaded large guns to shell his opponents. To augment his siege train further, he requested that the Navy "annoy the enemy" by shelling the town from the river.

To carry out this request, a squadron

The Gosport Navy Yard in Charlotte, North Carolina

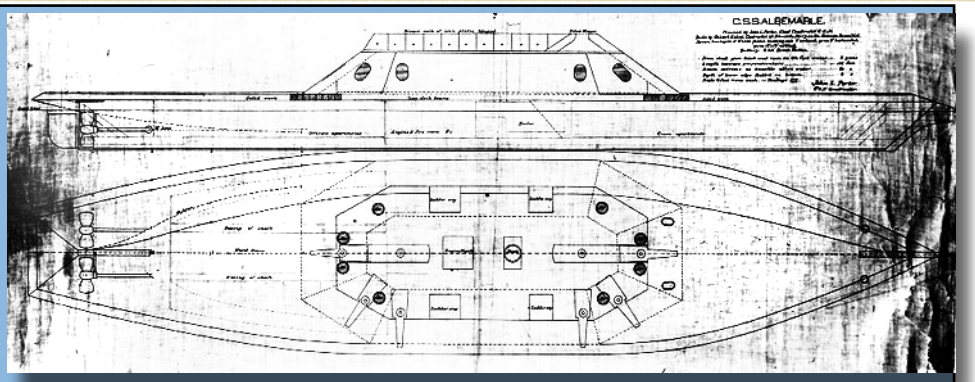
Other than North Carolina's Historical Marker "L-56/ Confederate Navy Yard," there is nothing left to indicate that a Confederate Navy Yard existed in Charlotte. At first glance, one might think that Charlotte would be an odd place to set up a navy yard. After the war, some who did not know about the yard, mocked the very idea that the Confederate Navy ran a facility in a landlocked town like Charlotte. After all, navy yards should logically have access to a body of water. But, as with many aspects of the Confederate States Navy, a combination of necessity and shortages birthed innovation.

The idea to move the Yard to southwest North Carolina came from H. Ashton Ramsey, chief engineer of the late CSS *Virginia*. With Union ground and naval forces moving in on the Gosport Navy Yard, Ramsey had his men pack up as many industrial tools and machines as they could carry and load them onto rail cars. Working with ordnance expert John Brooke, the two men identified an abandoned machine shop located on the main line of the North Carolina Central railroad. Most importantly to Ramsey, it was safe from interference of both Union ground and naval forces.

After convincing the property owner to sell on a promise to pay when the war ended, workers from Gosport immediately started unloading several pieces of heavy industrial equipment. The workers' families arrived a short time later. Many of the families settled permanently in Charlotte after the war.

For the rest of the war, Ramsey's men manufactured and assembled shafts, propellers, ordnance, and torpedoes for use by the Confederate Navy. A fellow ex-CSS *Virginia* officer, Catesby ap Roger Jones joined Ramsey in running the yard, until his management skills were needed at the Confederate Navy's ordnance facility in Selma, Alabama. Most of the parts constructed by the yard were used in building mid- to late-war ironclads such as CSS *Virginia II*, *Albemarle*, *Georgia*, and *Tennessee*.

The former owner of the property never got paid, but he did get the land back. After the war, he founded the Mecklenburg Iron Works on the property. Many of the men who worked at the Navy Yard stayed on as employees.



CSS Albemarle *was one of several mid-war ironclads whose parts were built by the Charlotte Navy Yard. (NHHC image)*

of ships led by the steam sloop USS *Wachusett* detached from the main squadron in Hampton Roads and steamed north to the York River. Upon arrival, one ship from the squadron fired a few shells at the Yorktown fortifications and withdrew. Occasionally, the Confederate gunners would return fire. This skirmish went on for the last two weeks of April.

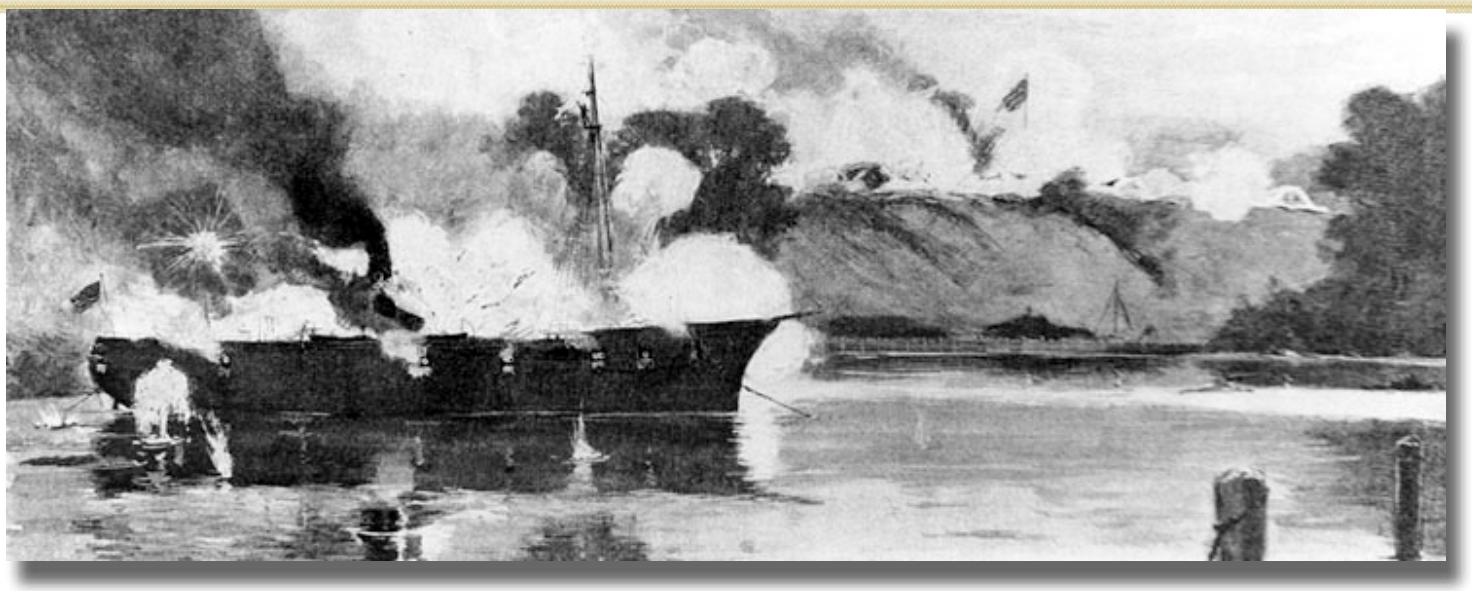
The fighting gave one Northern inventor a chance to test his latest creation. When it was USS *Marblehead*'s turn in the rotation, her gun crews loaded and fired seven "Birney shells". This ordnance was a Parrott Rifle shell that the inventor modified to unleash a fiery, napalm-like explosion upon impact. Mr. Birney himself was on board *Marblehead* to witness the attack. After observing some of the fireballs created, the inventor asked *Marblehead*'s commanding officer to call off the attack. There is no indication of what formal conclusions he drew from the experiment. U.S. Naval officers later indicated that Birney grumbled about the marksmanship of *Marblehead*'s gunners, as he thought the gunners overshot their targets.

Birney was being too harsh on the sailors. The shells did set the wharf and some of the wooden buildings within Yorktown on fire. The wharf's destruction may have been the deciding factor for General "Prince" John Magruder to abandon the town. The decision was not difficult to make. His job was only to delay Union forces and he had succeeded. Since the wharf served as his supply depot, there was no further reason to remain. In other words, for all of McClellan's huge siege guns and mortars, it is entirely possible that seven incendiary shells fired from one waterborne rifle allowed Yorktown to be captured.

With Yorktown captured, the Army of the Potomac made its slow march up the Peninsula. Union troops engaged more Confederate forces in delaying actions around Williamsburg.

As there were no Confederate forces on the York River to delay them, the Navy moved with a bit more speed. The "siege" of Yorktown ended on May 2. By May 5, the former U.S. Coast Survey steamer USS *Corwin* was sending back intelligence reports and capturing fishing schooners at West Point, thirty-five miles up river.

On the Confederate side, events were not going well for Tattnall. No stranger to a hard fight, Tattnall was prepared to make a last stand, but instead he elected to move the ironclad up the James River. He solicited the advice of two local harbor pilots, who stated that if *Virginia*'s draft was lightened to draw only 18 feet of water (as opposed to her normal 22 feet), the ironclad could make it to safety near City Point. The flag officer went with the plan and had all the guns and stores removed. On May 10, 1862, Tattnall was ready to make the attempt. The pilots, however, changed their minds and informed



Before the war, the U.S. Navy's Ironclad Board warned against sending ironclad warships of any type up against fixed fortifications. The fight between USS Galena *and Fort Darling proved the Board's point.* Galena *was the only ship in the Navy's five-ship squadron capable of firing back at the fort. For over three hours, the two sides dueled, until* Galena *retired when she ran out of ammunition and had her iron hull pierced several times. (NHHC image)*

Tattnall that the attempt could not be made. One of *Virginia*'s division officers, John Taylor Wood, would later remark, "Moral: All officers should learn to do their own piloting."

Knowing the Union forces were closing in, and with great reluctance, Tattnall ordered *Virginia* burned. *Virginia*'s executive officer, Catesby ap Roger Jones, did the honors and set the ship on fire. The ship's company marched to Suffolk and boarded a train for Richmond. The veteran flag officer knew the move would be controversial and he fully expected to be grilled by his superiors, but he did not expect to be second-guessed. Three of the Confederate Navy's senior officers and Tattnall's personal colleagues, French Forrest, Duncan Ingraham, and William Lynch blasted the commodore for incompetence and accused him of being "panic-stricken." Many officers came to Tattnall's defense and counter-accused the Board for speaking about things they knew nothing about. Tattnall demanded and received a formal court martial to clear his name.

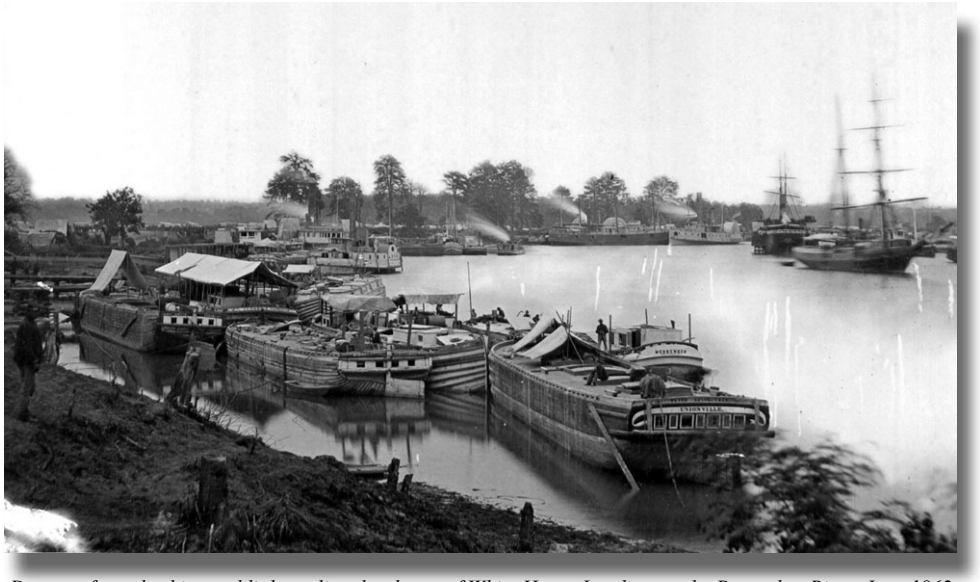
Two months later, a board of twelve officers, including Franklin Buchanan, Sydney Lee, and Matthew Maury heard three charges against Tattnall. After listening to Tattnall's account of *Virginia*'s scuttling and the dire situation in Hampton Roads, the court unanimously cleared the commodore of incompetence. Tattnall was allowed to continue with his new command in Georgia.

Even with *Virginia* destroyed, Federal forces moved cautiously toward downtown Norfolk. A squadron of six ships, *Susquehanna, Seminole, Dacotah*, *Monitor*, *San Jacinto*, and USRC *E.A. Stevens,* moved down the Elizabeth River. Major General John Wool marched his troops south, expecting a fight, but did not receive one. The Mayor and the City Council met Wool half-way to the city and surrendered.

Once all Federal forces reached the downtown area, they saw the Navy Yard across the water completely burned to the ground. U.S. Marines disembarked at the Navy Yard and officially recaptured it for the Union.

As for movement on the James River, while the President was in town, he once again decided he needed to intervene in the military affairs. Lincoln ordered Goldsborough to send more ships up the James. Goldsborough acted with unusual speed and hastily passed on the order to Commander John Rodgers (son of the legendary Age of Sail Commodore John Rodgers) to take five ships, including USS *Galena*, *Monitor*, and *E.A. Stevens*, to proceed up the James River in support of the Army.

As the squadron steamed upstream, it occasionally encountered small Confederate shore batteries on the various small islands that dot the river. Most encounters were short, as the Confederate garrisons realized



Dozens of supply ships and lighters line the shores of White House Landing on the Pamunkey River, June 1862. U.S. Navy gunboats had seized control of the York River and its tributaries by early May. The rivers served as a major supply route for the Army of the Potomac. (Library of Congress image)

Led by his flagship USS Octorara*, David Dixon Porter's squadron of mortar boat schooners is shown here underway. (*Harper's Weekly *engraving)*

Porter's Mortar Boat Fleet in Hampton Roads

Many historians agree that the U.S. Navy's James River Flotilla was ill-equipped to attack the Confederate garrison at Fort Darling along Drewry's Bluff in May 1862. Besides the lack of Union Army units nearby, the Flotilla's ships were designed for ship-to-ship action. They were not designed to tackle a fort sitting far above the river.

Why didn't the Navy use mortar boats on the James River as in the Mississippi? Even if they were less than effective at engagements like Island No. 10, their involvement might have inflicted some damage on the approach to Richmond. Several Federal Army and Navy officers, including McClellan, proposed using mortars on ships to help reduce Confederate forts along the James and York Rivers. Unfortunately for the Federals, the execution of the idea came far too late.

On July 9, 1862, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles ordered Porter and most of the mortar fleet to transfer from the Mississippi River to the James. The mortar ships were used against Vicksburg for much of June in preparation for an assault on the fortress city. However, Welles received reports that Union ground forces under General Halleck were not ready to attack and the water level in the Mississippi was beginning to drop. Seeing that the mortar ships could be better used in the East and with the endorsement of Assistant Secretary Fox, Welles ordered the transfer.

The move took four weeks. The first ships began to filter into Hampton Roads in the beginning of August. En route to Hampton Roads, Porter's flagship USS *Octorara* captured the blockade runner *Tubal Cain* off the east coast of Key West. That was the only positive development of the transfer.

Leaving aside the fact that the fleet arrived a full month after the Army of the Potomac ended the Peninsula Campaign, the mortar fleet and its sailors were in no shape for action. Flag Officer Goldsborough reported that many of the sailors were suffering from what we now call relapsing fever (older terms: "bilious remittent" and "camp fever"), which had spread throughout ships serving on the Mississippi. Porter himself was among the sick and travelled to Annapolis to get better. Welles responded to this issue, suggesting that the Navy enlist African American men camped around Fort Monroe to fill in the ranks, as there were not enough sailors in Northern ports to provide replacements.

Upon looking at the ships themselves, Goldsborough questioned their seaworthiness to Welles. "Are these vessels to be sent up the James River in their present condition?" he asked. Commodore Charles Wilkes further questioned Welles, implying that the Secretary was seriously misinformed about the readiness of the ships. He stated that it would be several months before the ships could see offensive action again, as many of the mounts holding the mortars were in serious disrepair. Furthermore, Army commanders in Hampton Roads refused to release any African Americans to the Navy.

Thus, the idea of using mortar ships to capture Richmond ended. Additionally, Farragut and Porter pull back from Vicksburg effectively lifted the seige of that city.

the numbers were against them. The garrisons slowed the advance, causing *Galena* to run hard aground on more than one occasion when the ironclad attempted to move into a firing position. It was also during these skirmishes that Lieutenant William Jeffers, *Monitor*'s commanding officer, noticed that his men had difficulty elevating the ship's twin XI-inch Dahlgren battery.

The squadron continued its advance upstream to within seven miles of Richmond with no resistance, until it encountered Fort Darling at Drewry's Bluff. The Confederates had fortified the bluff with guns taken from *Virginia*. They obstructed the river by sinking *Jamestown* and digging rifle trenches along the banks of the river.

Given this situation, Rodgers ordered *Galena* to take the lead. As *Galena* steamed upstream, Rodgers ordered the ship's main anchor to be dropped and allowed the momentum of the ship to bring the vessel's main battery parallel to the Confederate battery. The two sides began to exchange shots on May 15 at 7:30 a.m. The other ironclads attempted to join in, but Jeffers found out again that his guns could not be sufficiently elevated and *E.A. Stevens*' lone

On to Richmond continued on page 13

The Hospital Transport Service During the Peninsula Campaign

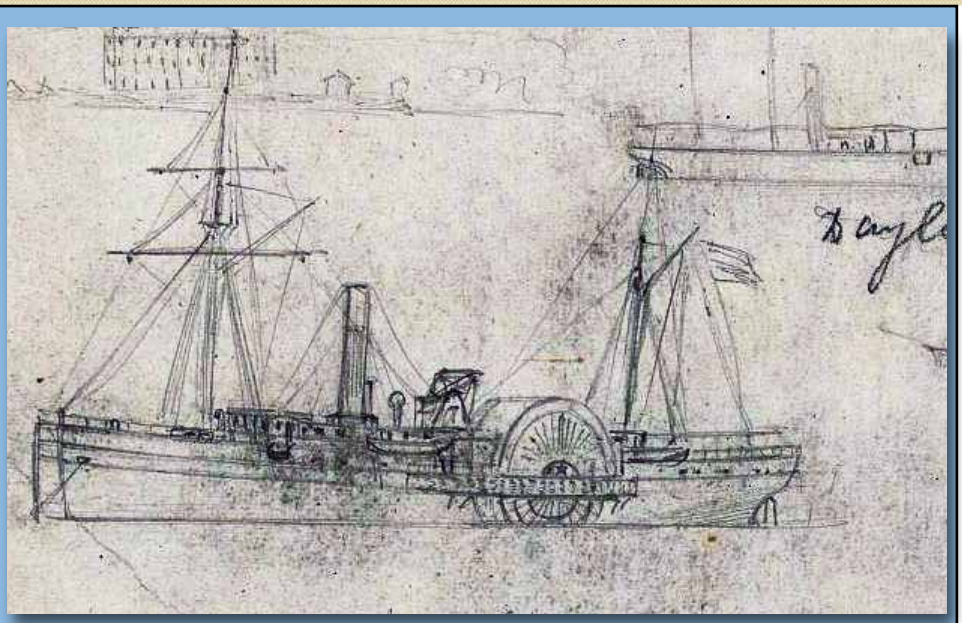
In 1861, almost no one predicted the bloodshed that would be caused by the ground fighting during the Civil War. Fortunately for thousands of soldiers, the U.S. Sanitary Commission, a volunteer group of civilian medical professionals and other well meaning citizens filled critical gaps in the Army's medical system.

One of the gaps the Commission noticed was that the Army of the Potomac had no means of getting critical wounded soldiers off the battlefield and into the hands of medical staff. This problem was particularly acute during the Peninsula Campaign, as the Army no longer had a land route to Northern cities and hospitals.

The Commission's executive secretary Frederick Law Olmsted's (most famous for co-desigining New York City's Central Park), solution was surplus steamers owned by the Army's Quartermaster Corps. He asked if the Commission could use them as hospital ships. The Quartermaster Corps was unsure how to reply. The Army's supply officers did not want to give up ships that might be needed in the future. But, they also saw the need for hospital ships.

By late April 1862, Olmsted's persistence paid off and the Commission received the steamer *Daniel Webster*. By mid-May, the Commission's Hospital Transport Service had seven ships working out of White House, Virginia on the York River and Harrison's Landing on the James River.

Each ship carried upwards of several hundred soldiers. Female nurses tended to the sick and wounded on the ships. Many of these women followed their husbands, who were either working as doctors on board, or were Army officers serving in the Campaign.



The steamer J.R. Spaulding *served as one of Sanitary Commission's hospital ships on the James River during the 1862 Peninsula Campaign. Famed sketch artist Alfred Waud drew this image of* Spaulding *while she was in Hampton Roads. (Library of Congress image)*

Commission workers provided wounded soldiers not only with medical care, but also with several comfort items to allow the soldiers to keep their minds off the war. These included: large quantities of tea and coffee, rice pudding, thick soup, farina gruel, beef stew, and clean linens. All of the supplies came from private donors and not the Government. Many patients remarked that they thought they were home again.

The hospital ships provided the most help to soldiers suffering from typhoid fever. The weather during the Campaign had been particularly wet, and many of the fever-suffering soldiers had been left out in the rain. Such disregard for the wounded infuriated Olmsted, and he often let the Army of the Potomac's senior leadership know his strong feelings on the issue.

Toward the end of July, one ship, *J.R. Spaulding* rescued several hundred wounded soldiers trapped behind the lines as the Army of the Potomac retreated back down the Peninsula. Against the advice of officers on USS *Galena* and *Monitor*, *Spaulding* flew a flag of truce and steamed past Confederate shore batteries. Some of the nurses joked with *Monitor*'s commanding officer, Lieutenant Jeffers, that they would be sure to put mattresses in the wheelhouse for protection. Jeffers later thought that was a good idea and took some of *Spaulding*'s mattresses...for the *Monitor*!

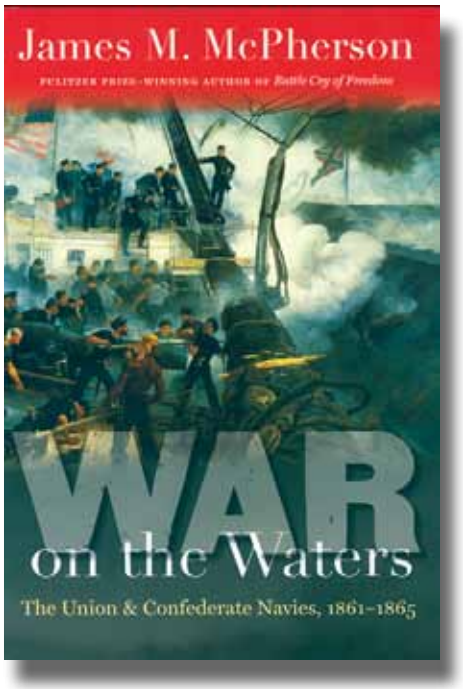
The Service ended with the completion of the Peninsula Campaign in July 1862. The ships were able to take several thousand soldiers to hospitals outside the war zone. As a result, many were saved. Two of the Commission's nurses penned excellent first person accounts of the Hospital Transport Service in their memoir *Woman's Work in the Civil War*. Shortly after the campaign ended, Olmsted published a work entitled *Hospital Transports: A Memoir of the Embarkation of the Sick and Wounded from the Peninsula of Virginia.*

Daniel Webster *was formerly a mail steamer before the Sanitary Commission took it over from the Army as its first hospital ship. The vessel worked the York River and removed wounded soldiers from West Point, Virginia, during the heavy fighting of the Seven Days' Battle. (Library of Congress image)*

Book Reviews

War on the Waters: The Union & Confederate Navies, 1861-1865

By James M. McPherson
Reviewed by Joseph Judge



James McPherson, Professor Emeritus of United States History at Princeton University, is a man of singular talent regarding the history of the Civil War. His reputation is based on a lifetime of work, and most particularly on *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, a history of the conflict.

Considerable excitement swept salty historical circles when the University of North Carolina Press recruited Professor McPherson to address the naval side of the war. His book has finally appeared: *War on the Waters: the Union and Confederate Navies, 1861-1865*. It commands immediate attention from anyone interested in "Uncle Sam's Web-feet," as Lincoln referred to the sea service.

James M. McPherson. *War on the Waters: The Union & Confederate Navies, 1861-1865*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8078-3588-3

Any prospective reader will want to understand what the book is and what it is not. Like the famous *Battle Cry of Freedom*, it is part of a series. Thus, *War on the Waters* by its charter is intended to provide an overview of the naval war and not an in-depth analysis of any particular element. Its length, 226 pages, reflects this generalist intent.

A generalist approach does not mean that Professor McPherson resists making judgments about important issues. Almost any Civil War naval history – good, bad or indifferent – begins with the protestation that the naval war is overshadowed and its importance therefore slighted. As one author wrote in 2006, "The public has been fed a steady diet of land commanders … The result has been a decidedly unbalanced treatment…" In *War on the Waters* the naval history community is gently told to calm itself down: "The storied armies of the Civil War and the great battles they fought captured public attention during the war and have likewise attracted the lion's share of historical writing and popular memory ever since. This predominant focus on the land war is not unreasonable. The numbers of soldiers involved and the casualties they suffered dwarfed the size of the navies and their casualties."

That is not to say that the Navy's role is slighted - indeed the thesis of the book is that the Navy, while not primarily responsible for winning the war, was nonetheless indispensable to victory. When McPherson refers to the U.S. Navy, he is clear about the subject matter of his book: "the main focus is necessarily on the Union navy." Why "necessarily"? Because unlike the Confederate army, which matched its Union counterpart for four years, the Confederate navy was "asymmetrical in every respect" – that is, not as powerful and therefore not as consequential as the ships manned by sailors in blue.

Within these parameters the narrative begins, and sweeps across the seas and rivers of the world. McPherson supports accounts of the fleets and battles with deftly drawn portraits of the protagonists. For example, he illuminates the Confederate raider Raphael Semmes as "a strong proslavery partisan," by quoting Semmes' statement to the governor of Martinique: "I explained the true issue of the war, to wit, an abolition crusade against our slave property."

This cold-blooded admission of a racist cause of the war is contrasted by the change of heart experienced by the Union's Samuel DuPont, who in *antebellum* years defended slavery. Once the gunfire began DuPont changed, referring to his previous opinion as, "What a delusion … The degradation, overwork, and ill treatment of the slaves in the cotton states is greater than I deemed possible."

His transformation was partially the result of his observation of former slaves who joined the Union Navy. They eventually comprised about seventeen percent of the force. The African-American sailor's story is a particularly strong element of *War on the Waters*.

Another topic of examination is the responsibility that the Navy had from the first month of the war until its last days: the blockade of the southern coast. McPherson acknowledges the seeming justice of those who call the blockade a failure based on the large number of runners that got through. He then goes on to point out that totaling the number of successful blockade runners is missing the point. Instead, McPherson notes that the overall tonnage of shipping in and out of Southern ports dropped dramatically.

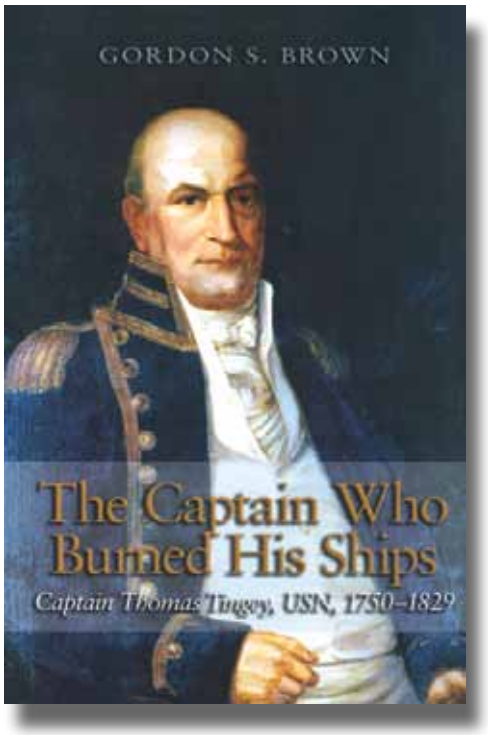
Finally, McPherson's narrative emphasizes the importance of the Mississippi to the Union's war goals. His list of the five most important strategic victories of the war includes three from campaigns on the western rivers: Fort Henry, New Orleans, and Memphis. (The other two are Hatteras Inlet and Port Royal.) The absence of Hampton Roads on this list may give lovers of southeastern Virginia some heartburn. There is an extended treatment of the Battle of Hampton Roads that does justice to the technological innovations that marked the battle.

Anyone wishing to acquire an immediate grasp on the main narrative points of the Civil War at sea, while enjoying a masterful summation of past and current historical thinking, should read this book.

The Captain Who Burned His Ships: Captain Thomas Tingey, USN, 1750-1829

By Gordon S. Brown

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna



What a misnomer! This book should not have been titled "The Captain Who Burned His Ships." It should have been "The Captain Who Built Ships!" Thomas Tingey was Commandant of the Washington Naval Shipyard for twenty nine years (1800-1829). During that time, over fifty ships were built and every major ship in the Navy including *Chesapeake,* was repaired and/or modernized there. Near the end of the War of 1812, in order to keep the British from capturing them, Tingey was ordered by the President and Secretary of the Navy to burn five ships still at the shipyard – the frigate *Columbia,* the sloop *Argus*, and the semi-abandoned hulks of frigates *New York, Boston,* and *General Greene.* The day after the burning of the shipyard, and the British departed, Tingey was back at his duty station, and ordered the clean up, repairs and rebuilding of the shops and launching ways. He soon began the largest shipbuilding program during Madison's presidency, later continued under James Monroe and John Quincy Adams. During his long tenure at the Washington shipyard, Tingey introduced administrative and management systems, such as rules for shop supervisors and stewards, many of which are still in use today at civilian as well as naval shipyards.

Gordon S. Brown. *The Captain Who Burned His Ships: Captain Thomas Tingey, USN, 1750-1829.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-6125-1044-6

The book's author, Gordon Brown, admitted that, "while a biography of the captain, (this book) is also about transitions – at the navy yard, and simultaneously in the Navy itself, as well as in the city of Washington." In its entirety, in my opinion, it is about the maturing of this nation.

The saga of Thomas Tingey details his journey from an over-aged midshipman in the Royal Navy in 1768 to Commodore in the U. S. Navy by 1800. He resigned from the Royal Navy in 1771 and in 1773 migrated to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, then America's largest city and the center of a booming maritime industry. During the next twenty years, he commanded several merchant ships and became known for his integrity and resourcefulness in making profitable sales for his consignments. In 1798, having succeeded financially as well as professionally, he decided to retire to his New Jersey estate to enjoy his family.

Only a few months later, he was offered a commission as a senior captain in the U.S. Navy and the command of the *Ganges*, his last merchant command that had been purchased by the government to serve in the Quasi-War with France. Tingey was convinced to accept this offer by the Secretary of the Navy, who promised that he would eventually command one of the six frigates that was anticipated to be authorized by Congress that next year. Even more convincing was the promise to be able to build his own frigate as Commandant of the recently commissioned Washington Naval Shipyard. Thus, he moved his family to Washington and began the most important part of his naval career.

Few, if any, history books mention Tingey's contributions to naval events during the War of 1812, much less his heroism aboard *Ganges* in January 1799. While in the Caribbean, his ship was hailed and boarded by officers of the 44-gun HMS *Surprise* who requested Tingey to muster the crew to see if any were British subjects. He responded that he "considered all his crew American born or adopted," and that "the only protection the ship had was the American flag." The British were so astonished at his bravado that they left the ship soon thereafter without checking for British deserters. The story became much more dramatic after members of the crew wrote home and the story was published in the newspapers. In them, Tingey was reported to have said, "A public ship carries no protection but her flag. I do not expect to succeed in a contest with you but I will die at my quarters before a man shall be taken from this ship."

Because so much of Tingey's life was spent in Washington, D.C., a major part of Brown's book described the political and social activities of the people who guided this nation in its formative stage. To Washingtonians, Tingey was known as a "jolly sea dog" as well as a distinguished leader. He enjoyed organizing dances, singing, and was often the one who gave "life to the party." He organized numerous civic and patriotic events for over twenty-five years. He regularly attended Dolly Madison's Wednesday open house and at her husband's inauguration, he was requested to lead her onto the dance floor.

Since the author spent thirty-five years in the Foreign Service and as a political advisor, it is no wonder that his book described the political machinations of Presidents, Secretaries of States, and naval officers so well. Though it is a short book (173 pages), the first sixty-eight pages seem to flow much better than the rest. Still, Brown has provided a glimpse of what it meant to be a part of the nation's navy in its formative years. He has increased our knowledge of the intimate lives of our early naval commanders. It is well worth adding to anyone's library of naval history.

The Navy Goes Small

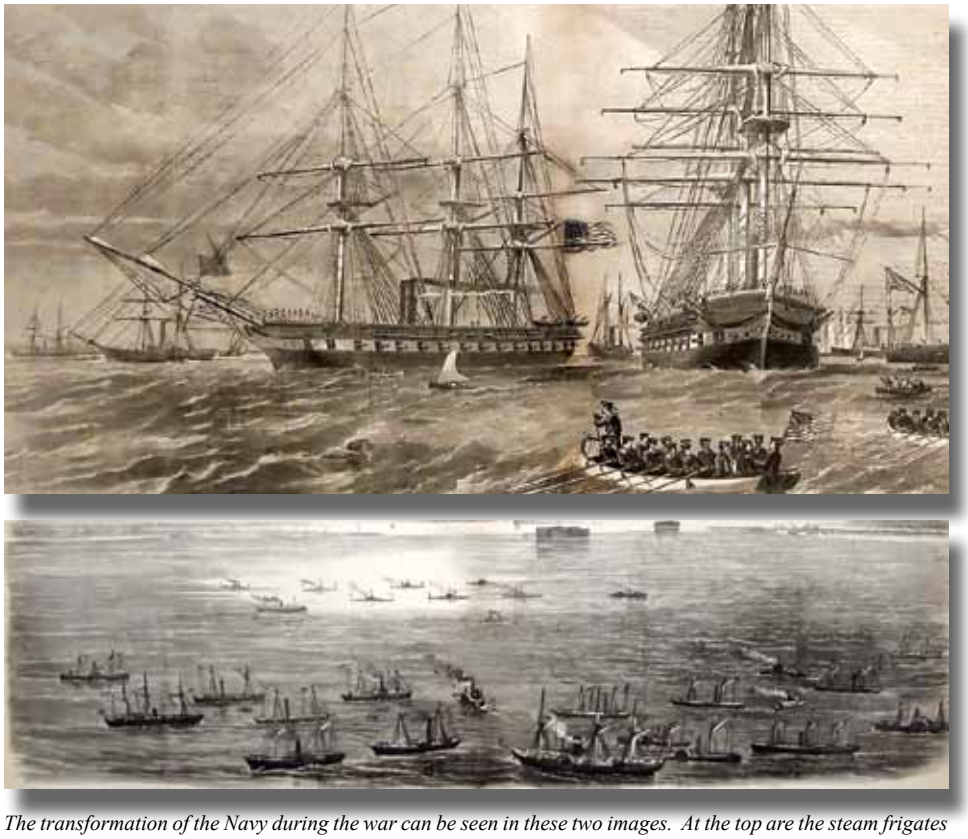
Transforming the Fleet from Blue Water to Brown Water in One Year

At the beginning of the Civil War, the U.S. Navy was not prepared for the duties thrust upon it. The Fleet did not have nearly enough ships to blockade thousands of miles of coastline, seize control of the nation's rivers, and hunt down Confederate cruisers as they appeared. It would be incorrect to say that this was due to neglect or incompetence. The fact of the matter is that the Fleet was built to fight a European navy After all, that was the lesson learned from the War of 1812, right? The nation did not have a fleet capable of protecting its own

The Museum Sage

coastline during the 1812 conflict. The post-war Congressional solution was the *Act for a Gradual Increase of the United States Navy*. As money became available, the Navy procured several large warships ready to do battle with Britain, France, or whichever other nation's fleet came along to threaten our interests.

Thus, when the Civil War started, the Navy found itself not only without enough ships, but also with the *wrong type* of ships. By "wrong type," it is not that the Fleet did not have enough steam ships or ironclad warships. The problem was much more fundamental: the Navy's ships drew too much water. Like many other aspects of the Civil War, this defect was somewhat flushed out in the Mexican-American War when Naval officers discovered the inability of their large ships to seize control of Mexican ports due to the fact they drew too much water.



The transformation of the Navy during the war can be seen in these two images. At the top are the steam frigates USS Wabash *and* Minnesota *in Hampton Roads preparing to deploy for the Cape Hatteras Expedition in 1861. At the bottom is the fleet off of Charleston in 1863, loaded with small to mid-size steamers and ironclads. (*Harper's Weekly *images)*

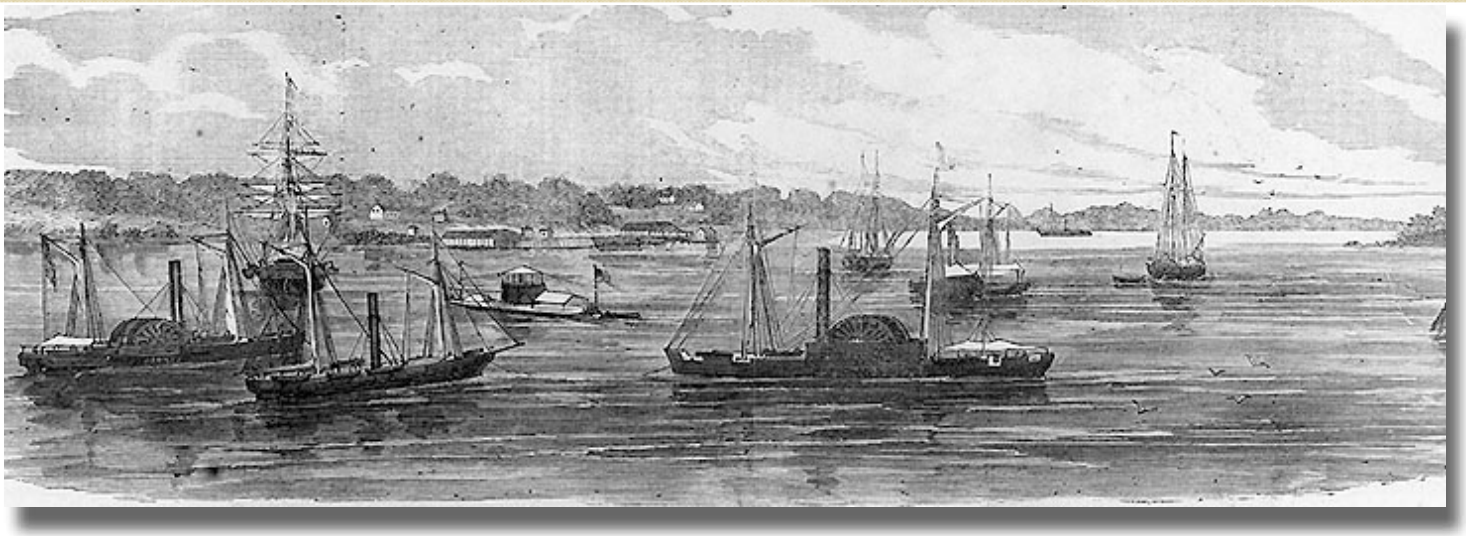
During the early stages of the War, Naval officers bombarded Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles with letters demanding ships with shallow drafts. Welles understood the problem, but was slow coming to fix it. When the ironclad CSS *Virginia* sortied into Hampton Roads, the U.S. Navy was forced to meet her with large wooden ships designed to fight a battle in the open ocean. After the Battle of Hampton Roads, the Navy's large warships would only see battle one more time (at the Battle of Fort Fisher) before the war ended. Large sailing warships such as *St. Lawrence* and *Savannah* were quickly withdrawn from the front lines and sent to safe harbors up north never to be used again.

The Navy's crash shipbuilding and procurement program focused on getting the Fleet to go small. By the time of the Peninsula Campaign, the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron in Hampton Roads had completed its transformation.

In June 1861, Commodore Silas Stringham reported that the Atlantic Blockading Squadron in Hampton Roads had a respectable twenty-one ships under his command. This was not a bad number considering the Navy had only been mobilized for war for two months. Of the twenty-one ships, however, eight of them were ships built to patrol the high seas and to deter war.

By May 1862, Stringham's successor, Flag Officer Louis Goldsborough, reported that he had sixty-six warships in his squadron, with only one "large" ship. That one ship, USS *Minnesota*, could easily have been sent away, but squadron flag officers had a way of making sure they had the most comfortable ship for sleep and work.

Such transformations occurred with all of the Navy's squadrons. Thus, there is and always has been, the eternal question for naval planners: do you have the right ships for the next war?



The ironclads USS Monitor *and* Galena *sit at anchor with the rest of the James River flotilla at the confluence of the James and Appomattox Rivers at City Point, Virginia, May 29, 1862. Despite the major setback at Drewry's Bluff, the flotilla maintained a forward presence on the James River. Flotilla commander John Rodgers wisely rejected a plan to steam up the Appomattox to raid Petersburg.(*Harper's Weekly *image)*

On to Richmond Continued from Page 8

100-pounder Parrott Rifle exploded on the third shot. The two wooden gunboats, USS *Port Royal* and *Aroostook,* engaged the Confederate infantry along the shore.

Because the bluffs were about 200 feet above the water, the Confederate gunners had a decisive advantage. Not only did the height make it very difficult for Union gunners to hit them, but the Confederates were able to shoot back at a good angle of attack. Most of their shots hit *Galena*, whose flawed armor scheme was pierced in several locations. Nonetheless, Rodgers held his position for the next three and a half hours. When his ship's ammunition ran out, he called for a retreat. The battle had cost Rodgers fifteen men. There were also a few wounded throughout the squadron. Among those wounded was Lieutenant George Morris, the former acting commanding officer of USS *Cumberland* during the Battle of Hampton Roads and now commanding officer of *Port Royal*. He suffered no physical injuries during the Battle of Hampton Roads. However, during the Battle of Drewry's Bluff, a sniper bullet hit him in the leg. He refused to ask for shore leave to heal and continued serving on the front lines for the rest of the war.

After receiving a damage report from his executive officer that his ship's armor had been pierced at least twelve times, Rodgers concluded in his final report on the battle that "[*Galena*] is not shot proof." He also concluded that the Army would be needed to take Fort Darling as, "the barrier is such… that our ships cannot get in."

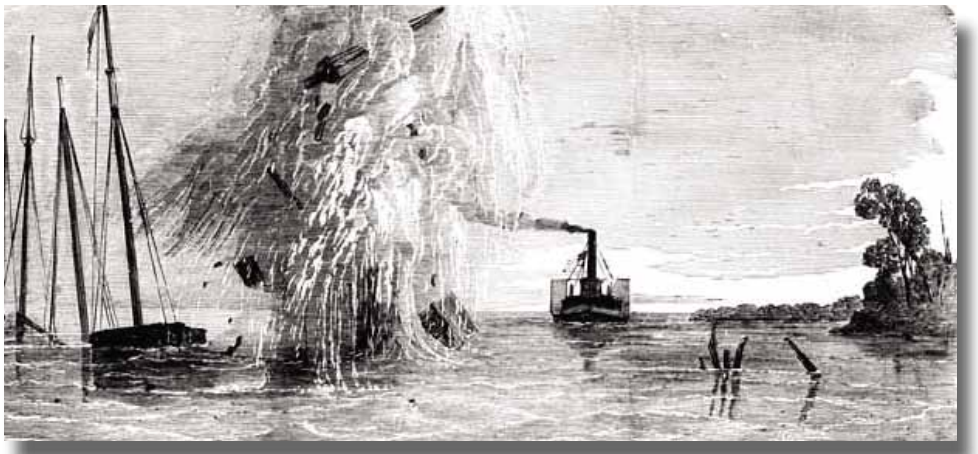
The squadron withdrew to make repairs and lick its wounds. Drewry's Bluff had given the squadron a sharp check, but it was not enough to convince the Navy to withdraw all the way back to Hampton Roads. Several gunboats laid at anchor and occupied City Point (modern day Hopewell), where the Appomattox River joined the James.

As the Peninsula Campaign moved further inland, there was less use for the Navy. The small squadron on the York River, led by Lieutenant Alexander Murray (grandson of the Age of Sail captain of the same name), conducted a few raids up the York and Pamunkey Rivers. In one raid, Confederate authorities burned several fishing schooners rather than let them be captured. Local fishermen later expressed their displeasure at this act. They demanded and got reimbursed for their losses by Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory.

During this downtime, U.S. Navy's forces could claim that they had accomplished one of the campaign's goals: seize the rivers and keep them open for supply ships, troops ships, and hospital ships. The second goal, to capture Richmond via the James River, however would forever elude them.

U.S. Naval officers talked about using Commander David Dixon Porter's mortar boat squadron against Fort Darling. But discussion and execution of this idea came a month too late. The idea itself was not new. Several months earlier, McClellan inquired if the Navy had any schooners or sloops available to put siege mortars on, in order to bomb Yorktown from the river. Goldsborough declined to answer.

Another extraordinary scheme that officers discussed, but never executed, was to launch a Naval raid on Confederate



When Union forces captured Norfolk and Portsmouth, there was a strong desire to get the harbor back up and running at peak efficiency. Among other tasks, the U.S. Navy had to clear out the obstructions in the Elizabeth River. Among the ships used by the Confederates as a block ship was the frigate United States *(*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper *engraving)*

The U.S. Navy participated in the Peninsula Campaign one last time during the July 1, 1862 Battle of Malvern Hill. Shown here are two different depictions of the battle. On the l James River Flotilla bombarding the Confederate Army. On the right is the more accurate, yet less dramatic image of the Navy at Malvern Hill. It accurately shows only USS Gal

railroad junctions and bridges in Petersburg. The City of Petersburg served as a major hub for several railroads, including the Richmond & Petersburg, the Virginia Central (which ran west toward Danville), and the Petersburg Railroad (which ran south towards Wilmington, North Carolina).

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox proposed that the James River Flotilla at City Point should make its way up the Appomattox and destroy key bridges that carried railroad traffic to Richmond. Upon hearing this plan, Commander Rodgers strongly recommended against the idea. He pointed out that Petersburg had a garrison of about 6,000 men, an unknown number of cannons, and possible obstructions in the river. Anticipating a rejection, Fox had another scheme. Fox proposed, and with Goldsborough's consent, that Rodgers offer $50,000 to any person in Petersburg who would blow up the bridges. Rodgers believed recruiting a local to do this operation would be unlikely. He instead recommended finding a Virginia Unionist near Fort Monore to do it.

The sabotage attempt never went further than initial planning. Mostly this had to do with the fact that, by late June, McClellan ordered the Army of the Potomac to retreat. For various reasons that many wondered about, McClellan elected to "change his base" of operations from White House, Virginia (near West Point), to Harrison's Landing on the James. The general called it a change of base, but it was clear that the Army of the Potomac was withdrawing from the Peninsula and ending the campaign.

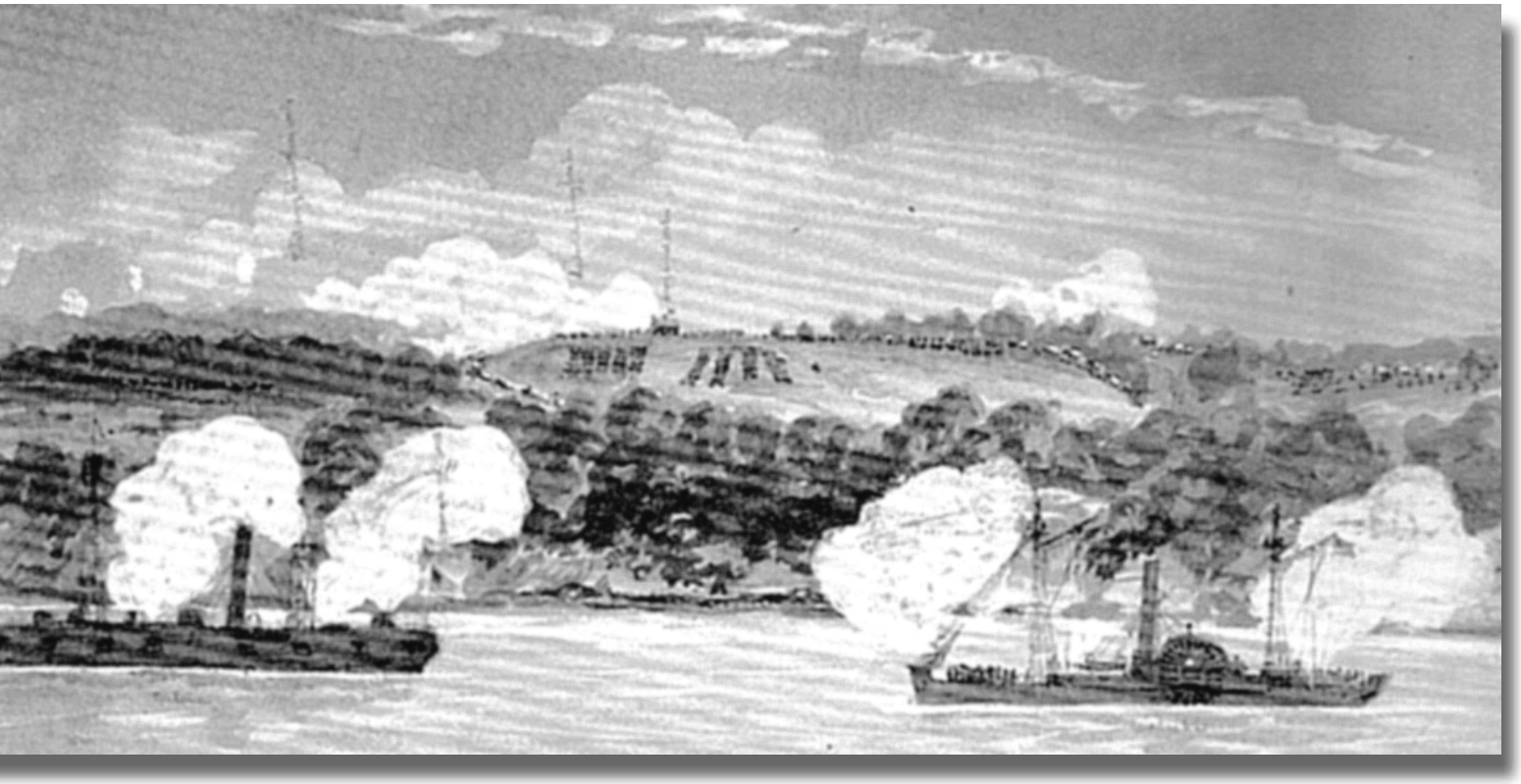
With the Confederate Army in hot pursuit, the Union Army made its stand at Malvern Hill, located a few miles north of the James River. The James River Flotilla redeployed from City Point to provide assistance to the retreating army. At the time, the squadron consisted of the ironclads *Galena* and *Monitor,* along with the wooden gunboats USS *Jacob Bell, Aroostook,* and *Mahaska.*

Monitor and *Jacob Bell* provided cover for the Army upstream near City Point. *Aroostook* served as a communications vessel with signaling officers keeping lines open between ships and the Army on shore. *Galena* and *Mahaska* anchored at a section of the James River known as Turkey Bend (now known as Turkey Point due to changes in the river by the modern-day Army Corps of Engineers) with a clear view of Malvern Hill.

In a move that would bring great ridicule upon him in the press, McClellan then came on board *Galena* for discussions with the Navy. The press did not criticize him for having meetings with his Navy counterparts. Rather, it noted that even when the Battle of Malvern Hill was well underway, McClellan remained on board *Galena* and did not join his troops.

On July 1, watches on *Galena* spotted the Confederate Army approaching Malvern Hill. With U.S. Army Signal Corps officers on board, *Galena* and *Mahaska* opened up on Confederate positions with their 100-Parrott Rifles and IX-Inch Dahlgrens for two hours. When rapid fire bombardment stopped at 8 p.m., the two ships had fired 206 shells. While the rate of fire was impressive, there were considerable problems with the bombardment. All issues originated from the fact that the Confederate formations were upwards of two miles away. The longest fuses in the ships' arsenals were for 15-seconds; thus, several shells exploded prematurely and some even exploded near Union formations. Despite the issues, Union soldiers were thankful that the Navy covered their positions during this retreat. Several times, U.S. Naval officers reported that when Union soldiers spotted them from shore, they cheered.

Thus ended the Peninsula Campaign and active U.S. Naval operations. Federal forces conducted one last act of spite before officially ending the campaign. On July



left is an 1863 print published by C. Parsons, a publishing company in New York. It is striking for its vivid color and action. Unfortunately, it is not accurate, as it shows the entire ena *and* Mahaska *providing gun fire support. It also more accurately portrays the topography of Malvern Hill as seen from the river. (HRNM images)*

31, soldiers from a Connecticut infantry regiment loaded up on transports at a plantation opposite Coggins Point (just east of City Point) with *Mahaska* and *Wachusett* at anchor nearby. A few Confederate soldiers ambushed the Union soldiers. The U.S. Naval warships returned fire, scattering the Confederates. The Connecticut soldiers pursued the Confederate soldiers as far as the plantation's mansion.

Federal officers then discovered that the mansion and the plantation belonged to Edwin Ruffin, one of Virginia's and the South's leading voices for succession before the war. Ruffin so strongly believed in the cause that he travelled to Charleston, South Carolina in 1861 so he could fire one of the first cannons at Fort Sumter.

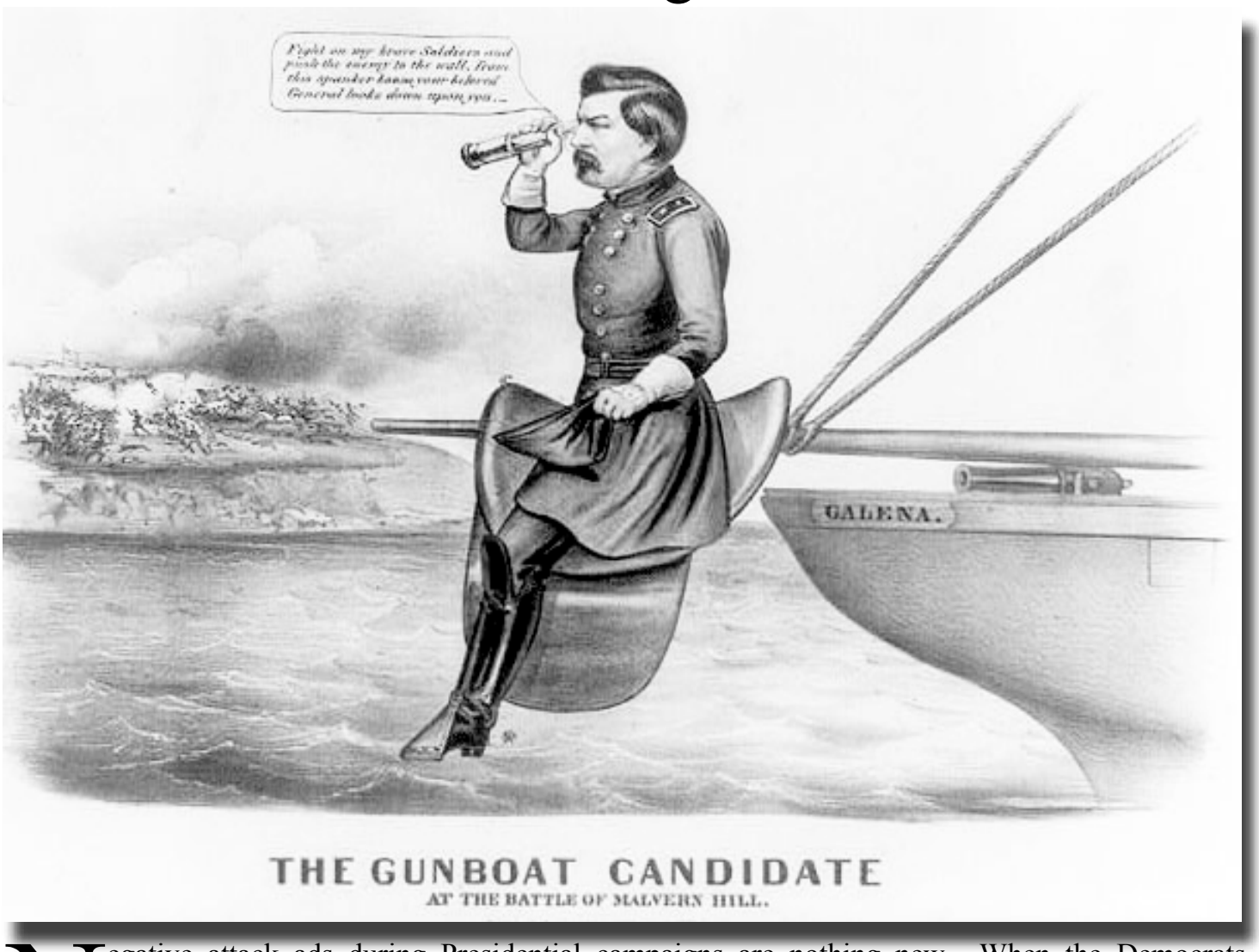
During the campaign, Federal forces respected the beautiful plantations, many of them owned by Virginia's leading families, such as the Tylers, along the James River, and left them alone. In Ruffin's case, however, Union officers made an exception. The soldiers and sailors burned the mansion and all auxiliary buildings on the plantation to the ground. A *Harper's Weekly* reporter embedded with the Federal forces wrote, "Cheers rent out when the fire was discovered burning out the other side [of the mansion.]"

The results of the campaign for Federal forces were mixed. They failed to take Richmond, even though they came within seven miles of the city. However, they did capture Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Suffolk, holding onto them for the rest of the war. The Navy immediately began building Gosport Navy Yard again. However, before any repair work began, the Department changed the name of the Yard from Gosport to Norfolk Navy Yard.

The end of the campaign also marked the end of Goldsborough as commanding officer of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. He never got along with the Department's civilian leadership since he took command. He asked to be relieved. Welles granted the request and the Department appointed Flag Officer Sydney Phillips Lee, cousin of Robert E. Lee, to take command.

With USS Mahaska *providing cover, Connecticut soldiers burned down a mansion belonging to fire-brand secessionist Edwin Ruffin. As a general rule, Federal forces left the James River plantations alone. But in the case of Ruffin's plantation, they made an exception because of his outspoken political views. (*Harper's Weekly *engraving)*

"Swift Boating" in 1864?



Negative attack ads during Presidential campaigns are nothing new. When the Democrats nominated General George McClellan in 1864 to be their candidate against President Abraham Lincoln, the Democrats hoped McClellan's charismatic military presence would win some votes. The famed and very pro-Republican print shop of Currier & Ives sought to discredit McClellan's military credentials by publishing this cartoon. It reminded voters where McClellan was during the desperate Battle of Malvern Hill: safely on board the ironclad USS *Galena* on his patented "McClellan" saddle, and not leading his men in the field.

In Our Next Issue...

-The Loss of USS *Chesapeake* and the Case of Lieutanant William S. Cox

-The Revenue Service in the War of 1812