

THE
DAYBOOK

A PUBLICATION OF THE HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL MUSEUM

SPECIAL EDITION

*Civil War
at Sea*



THE DAYBOOK®

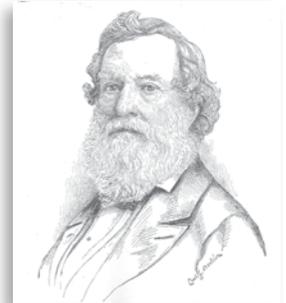
CIVIL WAR NAVY SPECIAL EDITION

The American Civil War has been studied and interpreted from many different angles to include its political causes and ultimate effects on American society, the War's great leaders, and of course, its armies. With the exclusion of the famous battle of the *Monitor* versus *Virginia* that every student learns about, naval engagements are notably lacking in Civil War histories.

The naval aspect of the war was as important to the war's conduct and outcome as any ground campaign. Despite ongoing advances in transportation technology, the majority of men and materiel moved by water. He who controlled America's waterways would win the war.

This naval war was directed by two men: Gideon Welles, the 24th U.S. Secretary of the Navy, and Stephen Mallory, the Confederate States of America's Secretary of the Navy. Both leaders faced an impossible task. Welles had to transform a peacetime flotilla of fifty decrepit ships into a global fighting force capable of patrolling and controlling thousands of miles of coastline and rivers. Mallory did not even have a navy, yet he had to stave off the U.S. fleet, all the while maintaining a steady flow of supplies from Europe to supply a Confederate Army.

Some of the brightest minds and bravest souls this country had to offer ably assisted both Secretaries. The naval battles they fought ultimately determined the war's timeline and course.



NAVAL HISTORY &
HERITAGE COMMAND

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Local History. World Events.

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The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command, Museums Division (www.history.navy.mil). The museum is dedicated to the study of 235 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.

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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.

WELCOME

The Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War is near, and the U.S. Naval History and Heritage

Command has appointed the Hampton Roads Naval Museum as the lead agent for its commemoration. We devote this issue of *The Daybook* to that effort. Three essential aspects of naval warfare are addressed herein:

the Northern blockade of Southern ports; the riverine front; and the Confederate cruiser attacks on Union merchant ships. Interspersed in the articles that follow are the men, their vessels and the operations that made the Civil War the most traumatic and defining conflict in American History.



We turn first to the Northern blockade of Southern ports. The vast majority of America's manufacturing capacity was located in Northern states. There were a few industrial centers in the South, but not nearly enough to sustain a large field army. The Confederacy needed European factories. President Abraham Lincoln was determined in 1861 to prevent that access, and proclaimed the Southern ports were to be a state of blockage. During the entire course of the war, a daily chess match occurred between the blockaders and the crafty blockade runners. This slow grind was interceded by large, dramatic battles as the U.S. Navy moved to permanently shut down key Southern ports.

The second naval linchpin was found in America's rivers. While the 19th century saw great improvement in ground transportation technology, the vast majority of people and goods moved by river. With the notable exception of Atlanta, all of the major urban areas in the South were located on a major river. Lincoln knew that in order to subdue the Confederacy, the Union must gain control of the interior waterways. A series of violent encounters occurred between U.S. Navy and Army gunboats and Confederate fortifications.

The Confederate cruiser attacks played out on the high seas in a world-wide campaign to hunt down U.S.- flagged merchant ships. Though small in number, the Confederate ships did an extreme amount of damage. Part of that damage was intended to be propaganda in nature, to wear down Northern support for the war. A specific Northern voting bloc of wealthy entrepreneurs, whose ships and goods were being taken, could easily see the war was detrimental to business.

A wealth of information exists on these topics; this issue provides but an overview. Future issues of *The Daybook* will delve into Hampton Roads - specific topics. We are seeking scholars willing to write original pieces for future issues. We will keep readers up to date about the Civil War at Sea on our blog civilwarnavy150blogspot.com. You may also call us.



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PART I - THE BLOCKADE

THE U.S. NAVY PATROLS 3,000 MILES OF COASTLINE
IN SEARCH OF CONFEDERATE BLOCKADE RUNNERS

Naval paymaster William Keeler was enjoying a June afternoon fishing off Wilmington, North Carolina in 1863, catching “hundreds of the finest blackfish.” His sport was interrupted when the cry “Sail Ho” roused Keeler and his fellow shipmates of the blockade ship *USS Florida*. *Florida* became suspicious of the strange sail, and received permission to give chase.

Keller describes the efforts of the ship’s crew to get maximum power from the steam engines: “Oil, grease and pitch were freely used in our furnaces & it was difficult to say from whose pipe issued the blackest smoke. Every sail that would draw was set & every exertion made to bring our vessel up to her highest possible speed & keep her there.” The ship’s gunners stood ready and when the stranger was in range “our first shot tore howling through the air . . . we knew that she was ours.” The blockade runner *Calypso* soon become Union property

The capture of *Calypso* is but one episode in an ongoing drama that occupied the U.S. Navy from the first shots of the war in April 1861 until the guns fell silent in 1865: the naval blockade of the Confederacy. This enormous effort involved thousands of miles of coastline, hundreds of vessels and a level of strategic and tactical planning that the Navy had never attempted. Admiral David Dixon Porter went so far as to write that “taking into consideration the extent of the coast that had to be blockaded, and the short time in which it was all accomplished, the work can scarcely be comprehended by the ordinary mind . . .”

The blockade was announced from the highest level of the government: President Abraham Lincoln declared it on April 19, 1861 (a few days after Fort Sumter). The idea, really a very old naval strategy, was mentioned the month before in a memo from Army Lieutenant General Winfield Scott. Scott had seen naval power used to effect by the British in the War of 1812 (of which he was a veteran) and by the United States in the Mexican War (in which he commanded land forces).

In March 1861 Scott advocated a naval blockade as a way to avoid the “enormous waste of human life.” In May of that year, in a famous letter to the young Union General George McClellan, Scott continued his advocacy of a blockade, and recommended it as part of a grand Union strategy. He wrote: “We rely greatly on the sure operation of a complete blockade of the Atlantic and Gulf ports soon to commence. In connection



1861 - Chase of a Blockade Runner

This Harper’s Weekly engraving of a U.S. Naval gun crew preparing to take a shot at a ship on the horizon was a scene that was played out thousands of times throughout the war along America’s coastlines. A blockading ship would patrol for days without seeing a thing, only to be called into action when a blockade runner attempted to evade. (HRNM image)

with such blockade we propose a powerful movement down the Mississippi to the ocean, with a cordon of posts at proper points . . . the object being to clear out and keep open this great line of communication in connection with the strict blockade of the seaboard, so as to envelop the insurgent States and bring them to terms with less bloodshed than by any other plan.”

The plan proposed the slow economic strangulation of the Southern states, as if by

guide Union grand strategy.

At the beginning of the war, the United States Navy was too small to mount a serious blockade of the southern coast. The Secretary of Navy Gideon Welles began his enormous task of obtaining ships for the service. At first, Navy ships steamed south to take up positions off southern ports, but historian Craig Symonds pointed out that “there was little system or order to the deployment.” Symonds further quotes



1861 - War is Good For Business

This is a stock certificate for the Charleston Importing and Exporting Company, one of the leading blockade running outfits. While there was a patriotic motivation to blockade running, many Southerners realized there was a huge amount of money to be made in bringing goods into Southern ports during the war. (Museum of the Confederacy image)

a giant snake. Therefore, it quickly acquired the name “Anaconda.” Scott’s hope that its application would avoid bloodshed was wrong, but the concept of blockading the Confederacy, while splitting it in two, did

the President’s own fear that “we could not make the blockade of all the Ports effectual.”

The Chief Executive had reason to worry. The blockade was not only an instrument of war; it was a recognized

VOICES FROM THE WAR

1861 - A BLOCKADE BUSTER IS BORN

Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, Richmond

The frigate Merrimac has been raised and docked at an expense of \$6,000, and the necessary repairs to hull and machinery to place her in her former condition is estimated by experts at \$450,000. The vessel would then be in the river, and by the blockade of the enemy's fleets and batteries rendered comparatively useless. It has, therefore, been determined to shield her completely with three-inch iron, placed at such angles as to render her ball-proof, to complete her on the earliest moment, to arm her with the heaviest ordnance, and to send her at once against the enemy's fleet. It is believed that thus prepared she will be able to contend successfully against the heaviest of the enemy's ships, and to drive them from Hampton Roads and the ports of Virginia.

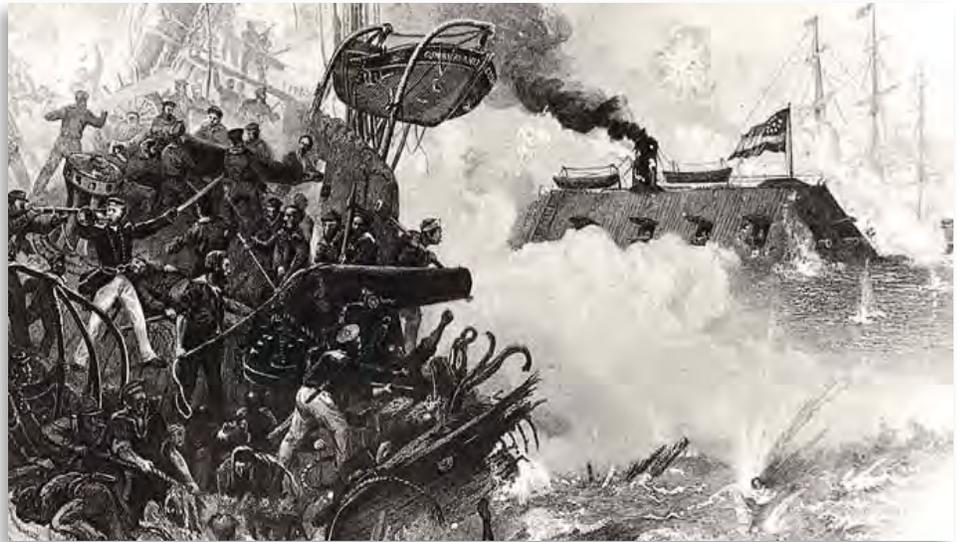


element in the complex web of nineteenth century treaty diplomacy. The Confederate government pinned its hopes for ultimate independence on the support of Europe. The Lincoln administration worked tirelessly against any possible European intervention.

The problem was two-fold for the Union: first, a blockade had to be effective to be recognized under international law. Historian Rowena Reed states that "The British, worried about their textile industry, were actively searching for evidence that the proclaimed blockade was ineffective. It was therefore unmistakably impressed upon the Secretary of the Navy that it was government policy to strengthen the blockade and that the Navy's first (and for the moment only) duty was to enforce this policy." Secondly, did the concept of a blockade allow for the idea that the Confederacy was an independent nation, and not a rebellious section of the United States? There was never a good answer to this question.

Thankfully for the Navy, its sailors did not have to wrestle with this diplomatic question. They had to put to sea. Some in the Navy had a ready understanding of the blockade's purpose. Rear Admiral Theodorus Bailey, Commander, East Gulf Coast Squadron, possibly summed it up best when he wrote, "The outward pressure of our Navy, in barring the enemy's ports, crippling their power, and exhausting the resources of the States in rebellion; in depriving them of a market for their particular productions, and of the facilities for importing many vital requisites for the use of their Army and peoples, is slowly, surely ... reducing the rebellion to ... unconditional surrender." Other naval officers could not be bothered with Bailey's grasp of grand strategy - they required a plan of action.

In a remarkable development, this plan of action came from four men meeting in a museum during a hot Washington summer. Alexander Dallas Bache, superintendent of the Coast Survey, and Assistant Secretary of

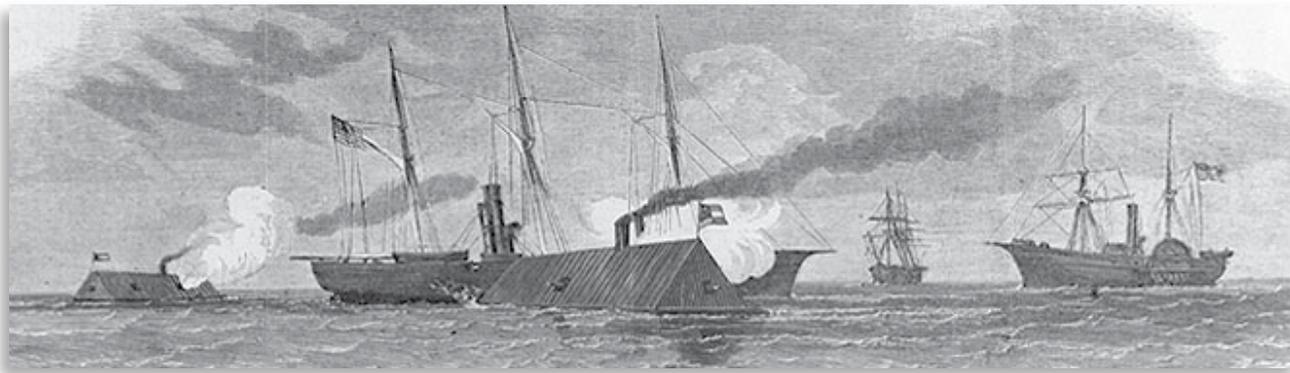


1862 - Breaking the Blockade I

Mallory had envisioned not only building swift ships to evade the blockade, but iron ships break it in two. The first serious attempt to break the blockade came when the ironclad CSS Virginia sortied into Hampton Roads on March 8, 1862 and attacked (upper image). The U.S. Navy countered the Confederate ironclads with innovative ironclads of their own like USS Monitor, which dueled with Virginia on March 9 (lower image). (HRNM images)

the Navy Gustavus Fox quickly agreed on the need to plan and the "Blockade Board" (also known as the "Strategy Board") came together. Throughout the summer of 1861, the Board met almost daily at the Smithsonian Institution. Their resulting six reports comprised an exhaustive survey of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Civil War

naval historian Stephen Taaffe summarizes the importance of the Board's work: "Fortunately, the Strategy Board offered a number of solutions to seemingly intractable problems that ultimately found their way into the Union Navy's strategic plans. The Strategy Board called for the occupation of isolated Confederate harbors that could



1862 - Breaking the Blockade II

Eight months after CSS Virginia put fear into the heart of the U.S. Navy, the ironclads CSS Palmetto State and Chicora found the blockade off Charleston in a weakened state and attacked. For a short time, the blockade was lifted before reinforcements arrived. (NHHC image)

be easily seized, held and converted into logistical bases. Doing so would not only extend the amount of time Union warships could remain on their blockading stations, but it would also mean one less harbor for the Navy to watch.”

One hundred miles to the South, the Confederate government considered the blockade. Breaking it was the top priority for the Confederacy’s Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, who knew that the South could never equal the U.S. Navy’s number of ships. As historian Stephen Tucker wrote, Mallory turned to “a few powerful, technologically advanced ironclad vessels, armed with large powerful rifled guns.” These ironclads emerged periodically to threaten Union fleets, most spectacularly at Hampton Roads in 1862. However, none of these Confederate efforts resulted in freeing a Southern port. They remained spectacular failures.

The Confederacy did penetrate the blockade with stealth, as a fleet of blockade runners began a procession of successful missions, mainly from the Bahamas and Bermuda. Historian Robert Browning described the technological edge that blockade runners possessed: “These new,

specially designed steamships constructed expressively for speed usually displaced between 400 and 600 tons. Most often built of iron or steel, they sat low in the water, had extremely narrow beams, and raking designs... In many cases they carried only a light pair of lower masts, with no yards. ... the hull showed little above the water and was usually painted dull grey to camouflage the vessel. ... Under certain stages of the moon and atmosphere, the blockade runners were almost invisible at even 100 yards and blended so perfectly with their surroundings that on dark nights only their wakes could be seen as they steamed by.”

Blockade running was hugely profitable, if over-romanticized. The false veneer of the dashing runner culminated in *Gone with the Wind’s* Rhett Butler. Blockade runners were generally unarmed-

they wanted to run away from the U.S. Navy, not fight it. In fact, if properly registered, their activity was not illegal.

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1863 - ONE DAY ON THE BLOCKADE

Log Book, USS *Nippon*, Cape Fear

November 9 - At 12:25 a.m., being to the northward of Big Hill, saw a blockade runner [either Flora II or Syren] close to the beach. Gave chase and beat to quarters. Running along the beach at full speed, sending up rockets all the time. Fire was opened from Fort Fisher. Stood to the north and beat the retreat.

At 5:25 a.m. Saw a steamer [Ellia & Annie] to the northward, coming down the coast. Gave chase and beat to quarters. At 5:30 a.m., opened fire upon the steamer. She now stood directly for us at full speed, evidently with the intention of running us down. The helm was put hard astarboard, all the starboard guns were fired directly into her, and the vessels were brought side by side, coming in collision at the bows. At the moment of collision the steamer was boarded, carried, and hawser hove on board and made fast. In five minutes from the time of firing, she was in our possession and a prize.

The runners did their job well. Blockade runner historian Stephen Wise has estimated that 1,000 out of some 1,300 attempts to run the blockade were successful. They brought to the Confederacy weapons, ordnance, medical supplies, and luxury goods that made the hazardous trips especially profitable. The Confederate government in 1864 ushered in strict new regulations that, among other things, banned the import of alcohol, and imposed fixed rates for the inward run. This law was posted on the books too late in the war to be of any real use.

The Union recognized and acknowledged the persistent victories of the blockade runners. One angry citizen wrote to the Navy in 1861, “Why can not those



1863 - The Most Important Ship to the Confederacy

This is the blockade runner Denbigh, one of the most successful blockade runners of the war. Launched in 1863, the ship made thirteen round trip runs through the blockade and was captured only after running hard aground near Galveston, Texas. With a low, sleek profile, Denbigh is an example of a typical blockade runner that started to come on line in 1862. Because of ships like this, was the Confederate Army received necessary supplies to keep fighting. (HRNM image)

ports be blockaded? God knows there are steamers enough in this country – guns, men and materials to close them up as tight as a bottle.” The Navy concurred. Flag Officer Silas Stringham wrote, “The accounts which we get of intercourse at different ports and inlets on the coast of North Carolina alarm our commercial community and cause embarrassment and distrust to the Department.”

Two years later, Rear Admiral S.P. Lee gave no indication that things had improved. He commented that “swift and suitable armed steamers are needed to capture the blockade runners. The blockade requires more and better vessels and must eventually fail without them.” Lee was inclined to be pessimistic, a quality which made it easy for the Navy to push him aside for more positive leadership. But there was no denying that most blockade runners made port.

No doubt the daily tedium of blockade duty wore on the Navy and contributed to the failure to corral the sleek runners. Paymaster Keeler tried to convey the mental strain in a letter to his wife: “Here we are

1863 - The Watcher

When the U.S. Navy began their rapid expansion of the fleet in 1861, the vast majority of the vessels were small steamers with good speed, not large capital ships. One example is the USS Niphon (right) a 600-ton, iron hulled ship, originally designed for the coastal China trade. Niphon captured eight blockade runners from 1863 to 1865. (NHHC image)



1862 - 1863 Assaults From the Sea

The best way to enforce the blockade was to capture the ports from which the blockade runners called home. Taking the ports required cooperation between the U.S. Army and Navy. Sometimes joint operations went smoothly such as the 1862 Battle of Roanoke Island (at left) in North Carolina. But often it did not, such as the siege of Charleston (at right) where senior U.S. Army and Naval officers often bickered and blamed each other for numerous failures. (HRNM images)

dear Anna, on ‘our Station’ and here we are like to be for, I don’t know how long ... It is to be one dull monotonous round, day after day, week after week, yes month after month, for expect to count the time here by

months. No papers, no letters, no news, ‘no nothing.’ The latest fashions, the last great murder or railroad accident we regard with the same stoical indifference.” It did not help, as historian Rowena Reed wrote, that “the thankless job of chasing elusive blockade runners could hardly compare with the more glamorous task of capturing Beaufort or Norfolk.”

Yet these more glamorous tasks were also part of the blockade, as they stemmed directly from the Blockade Board’s recommendations to establish logistical bases on the Southern coastline, and the logical extension of that idea, the



VOICES FROM THE WAR

1863 - THE YANKEE IRONCLADS ATTACK

Major William Echols, CSA, Fort Sumter

They steamed up main Ship Channel toward Fort Moultrie in lines of battle as follows: Four single turrets, Ironsides, three single turrets, and Keokuk, following one after the other at intervals of about 300 yards. When within 2,200 yards, Fort Moultrie fired the first gun.

The first turret opened fire at five minutes past 3 and moved backwards, thus developing their maneuver of attack. At this moment the engagement became general. The second turret passed the first, fired, moved backward.

The Ironsides, when at 1,700 yards from Fort Moultrie and 2,000 yards from Sumter, stopped, discharged a battery at the former; when Sumter concentrated a heavy fire upon her. Numbers of shot were seen to strike her and several to penetrate, three, at least, in her wooden stern.

The Keokuk, at five minutes past 4, defiantly turning her prow directly toward Sumter, firing from her forward turret gun, the batteries of Sumter, Moultrie, Bee, and Cumming’s Point were concentrated upon her. Within 900 yards she was struck, supposed by a wrought-iron bolt, 117 pounds, from a 7-inch Brooke rifle, en barbette, near her bow, penetrating and ripping up a plating about 6 feet long and 2 1/2 wide, which ended her career.

She sank off the south end of Morris Island at half past 8 o’clock the following morning. From her wreck floated ashore a book, a spyglass, and pieces of furniture bespattered with blood and small fragments of iron sticking in them.



VOICES FROM THE WAR 1864 - DAMN THE TORPEDOES

Foxhall Alexander Parker, Mobile Bay

Beholding the disaster to the Tecumseh, the Brooklyn stopped. "What is the matter with the Brooklyn?" asked the admiral, anxiously, "Freeman, she must have plenty of water there."

"Plenty of water, and to spare, admiral," replied the sturdy pilot; "but her screw is moving: I think she is going ahead again, sir."

The enemy, not slow to comprehend this condition of affairs, take advantage of their opportunity, and, manning all the guns from which they have so recently been driven, pour in a murderous fire upon our fleet, which meets with but a feeble fire in return.

"At this critical moment," writes an eye-witness, "the batteries of our ships were almost silent, while the whole of Mobile Point was a living line of flame." The slightest vacillation then on the part of the admiral, and the battle would have been lost, and the greater part of the fleet destroyed.

Then was made manifest the soundness of the admiral's judgment in lashing his vessels together by pairs; for the Hartford going ahead, while the Metacomet backed, the bows of the former were swung to the westward, until clear of the Brooklyn's stern, when both vessels gathered headway. As they were slowly passing the Brooklyn, her captain reported "a heavy line of torpedoes across the channel."

"Damn the torpedoes!" was the emphatic reply of Farragut. "Jouett, full speed! Four bells, Captain Drayton." And the Hartford, as if eager to bear the admiral's flag to the front, bounded forward "like a thing of life," and, increasing her speed at each instant, crossed both lines of torpedoes, going over the ground at the rate of nine miles an hour; for so far had she drifted to the northward and westward while her engines were stopped, as to make it impossible for the admiral, without heading directly on to Fort Morgan, to obey his own instructions to "pass eastward of the easternmost buoy."

As soon as he could get his vessel's head to the northward, Alden, the captain of the Brooklyn, "pushed up the channel at full speed, in the Hartford's wake," and, during the fight which ensued with the Confederate ram, displayed his usual gallantry. A good seaman, a skilful officer, whose battle-record attests his bravery, his hesitancy at "Mobile's Gate" must needs be ascribed to an error of judgment, since all will admit that in many a stubborn fight elsewhere he served the Republic well.



1864 - The Anaconda Tightens

Admiral David Glasgow Farragut led a combined squadron of wooden steam sloops, gunboats, and ironclad monitors into Mobile Bay. The victory shut the Gulf of Mexico off to blockade runners. (NHHC image)

seizure of Confederate ports. The Southern coast was thousands of miles long, but for military value it was not all of one piece. The blockade required steamships, which required coal, which required coaling stations. Thus, the U.S. Navy proceeded to execute a series of hammer blows landing on southern ports: Hatteras and North Carolina Sounds (1861); Port Royal, South Carolina (1861); New Bern, North Carolina (1862);

Norfolk (1862); New Orleans (1862); and so on. The Confederates never mounted an effective response to these incursions and were lucky that the Union did not exploit the captures of the ports to their fullest military advantage. The slaughter of the great land battles continued.

While it did, the Navy was steadily building to a size undreamed of in the service's history – eventually more than

1864 - Medal of Honor

John Lawson was one of nearly 20,000 African Americans who enlisted in the U.S. Navy during the American Civil War. While they were restricted in rate, African American sailors served with great distinction throughout the war. Lawson earned the Medal of Honor for courageous acts under fire during the Battle of Mobile Bay while serving as an ordnance handler on USS Hartford. Lawson was one of eight African American sailors to receive America's highest military honor during the war. (NHHC image)



600 ships flew the Union jack. No one in Europe opined any more that the blockade was not real. For perceptive observers, the embarrassment of the blockade runners was beside the point. They were steaming into the South one small ship at a time. What was coming out? The answer was very little.

Craig Symonds explained the key, and erroneous, assumption of the Confederate government: "From the beginning of the



1865 - The Anaconda Strangles

With over 600 guns deployed at sea, 10,000 of Grant's veterans, and 2,000 of his own sailors and marines, Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter captured Fort Fisher, the South's last major coastal fort, in January. With the victory, the blockade finally achieved its goal of cutting the Confederacy off from the outside world. (HRNM image)

war, Confederate officials had insisted that cotton was their secret weapon. The world's need for cotton was so great, they believed, that lack of it would compel the powers of Europe to support the Southern bid for independence. By the time Southern lawmakers had realized their error, the blockade had become more efficient and the opportunity was lost. Fat bales of cotton, piled up on the wharves of Charleston, Galveston, and Mobile." Assistant Secretary Gustavus Fox told President Lincoln's private secretary that the rebellion was sustained "not by what entereth into their ports but by what proceedeth out." Without cotton exports the Confederate economy

hastened to an inevitable collapse.

U.S. Naval commanders also changed tactics to make the blockade more effective. Commanders urged the Navy to obtain vessels of light draft to cross sand bars and speedy vessels to pursue blockaders as they fled to open waters. Transport colliers allowed blockading ships to stay on station.

As the war continued, Wilmington, North Carolina became the most important remaining port in the Confederacy, as a combination of natural geography and the powerful guns of Fort Fisher allowed it to remain open to blockade runners. The town took on a 'Wild West' atmosphere of lawlessness in the light of the freewheeling

activity associated with the running of the blockade (and the influx of luxury goods and alcohol). Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles told Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant that, from a military point of view, Wilmington was more important than Richmond. Grant subsequently committed troops to subdue Fort Fisher, and the fall of that bastion was the final cinch in the blockading noose.

How effective was the blockade? For Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, that was really no question at all: "the system of blockade resorted to is unparalleled in the naval records of the world ... proofs of its efficiency were so comprehensive and conclusive that no objections to it could be made." Other writers have not been so sure, and the debate continues among historians to this day.

It is true that as the war went on, the blockade tightened, and it had an effect on the Southern economy. Even though cotton was the principle outbound cargo, the amount of cotton was at a fraction of pre-war export levels (about ten percent). Every component of Southern life was affected by shortages - shoes, clothing, housewares - and this was due to the blockade. The Confederate army did not receive enough of the materiel it needed and at the end of the conflict, it was a poorly equipped half-starved force. The psychological burden of all this privation was enormous and was not helped by the image of a Union fleet growing by hundreds of ships each year, relentlessly patrolling the coast.

VOICES FROM THE WAR

1865 - THE CHARGE OF THE NAVAL BRIGADE

Lieutenant Commander James Parker, Fort Fisher

While, occasionally, a shell would burst prematurely and scatter its murderous fragments in our midst. About three o'clock the troops were seen to emerge from the woods and rush to the assault. In an instant the fire from the fleet ceased; fifty-eight steam whistles set up a dismal shriek (I verily believe that those "trumpets of rams' horns" were not such an absurd means of warfare after all). We sprang up and made an effort to obey the Admiral's order to "board the fort in a seamanlike manner." It was an impossible task. The rush up was gallantly made, but we found the fort to be forty feet high, and as nearly perpendicular as a sand fort could be made. The enemy treated us to liberal doses of grape. While one thousand two hundred men were posted on the ramparts to fire down upon us. Naval history may be searched in vain for another such instance of assault by sailors. There had been instances where sailors had landed close under small batteries (Teneriffe, where Nelson lost his arm, is one such case), but never before had such a force been landed, without organization, or plan, or knowledge of the work to be done, to attempt such an assault. I don't believe it will ever be repeated.



1865 - American Naval Icon

Ensign Robley Evans suffered four bullet wounds while leading men at Fort Fisher. While the wounds forced him to walk with a limp for the rest of his life, he served for forty-five more years in the Navy. He commanded the battleship USS Iowa (BB-4) during the Spanish-American War and was the senior flag officer of the 1907 "Great White Fleet." (HRNM image)



PART II - THE RIVERS

THE U.S. NAVY ATTEMPTS TO WRESTLE CONTROL OF THE INTERIOR AWAY FROM CONFEDERATE FORTS

hips and sailors of the United States Navy have historically traveled through inland waterways to take strategy to the enemy. Now in contested waters during the Civil War, nautical highways of commerce and trade in antebellum America quickly converted into free-flowing theaters of warfare. Even if the naval war focused on the blockade, it would be the shallow interior of the divided states where opposing forces tested each other with wood, iron, and water. Indeed, the fiercest of all naval combat during the war occurred during the myriad campaigns waged along narrow riverways traversing the United States.

Union and Confederate leaders understood the strategic value that rivers had on the overall theater of operations. Many officers and squadron commanders felt they knew how their former comrades would fight, and could accordingly expect the unexpected. This was not the case for the river war, however, where the uncharacteristic nature of the battleground made heroes of many men and failures of countless more. Compared to strategies implemented on land, the riverine campaigns waged by Union and Confederate navies constantly evolved, often finding that environmental barriers were as troublesome an adversary as the enemy. It was the action taken by combined naval forces that dictated their importance to officials in Washington and Richmond, especially in the West.

President Abraham Lincoln and his newly-installed Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, devised a three-pronged naval strategy for the Union. Both were hoping to awaken a department described in its prewar existence as a “drowsy, moth-eaten organization.” Using Lieutenant General Winfield Scott’s “Anaconda Plan”



1862 - Opening the Way

In this dramatic Currier & Ives print, U.S. Navy gunboats bombard Fort Henry on the Tennessee River. Assisted by massive flooding, the squadron forced the fort into surrender. (NHHC image)

as a guideline, the blockade of the Southern seacoast and amphibious assaults on crucial port cities would be accompanied by a concerted offensive down the Mississippi River and its tributaries from a base at Cairo, Illinois. Located at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, Cairo allowed damaged gunboats to quickly repair and return down river for future action. Welles knew the lifeline of the Confederacy could be cut through a series of assaults, using the South’s own river system. The eventual control of the Mississippi and its tributaries would then split the Confederacy in two.

In the East, Lincoln planned to find a way to use gunboats and transports to move the offensive upriver from the Chesapeake Bay into the Confederate

capital at Richmond. To accomplish this goal, the Navy established the James River Flotilla early in the war, which acted independently from the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Lincoln essentially wanted to attack the Confederacy at several different points at the same time. The main focus of Union river strategy, however, was taking the mighty Mississippi.

The Union war aims for riverine operations were clear. The execution of such strategy took both time and manpower. The Union needed hundreds of warships acting independently of wind power, far different than those situated along the blockade. Naturally, they decided to convert steamships and create ironclad gunboats, “the backbone of the fleet.” Gunboats designed for use on rivers had shallow drafts and heavy guns, which provided the means to tackle any obstacle, from fleet to fortification. Steamships and gunboats also had the ability to move troops and supplies up and down the waterborne highways much faster than the poorly maintained roads of the southern states. While Union naval forces dwarfed the Confederacy in sheer number of vessels and men, the politics of persuasion stalled officials in Washington from making any campaign on the inland waters possible. The river navy waited for the right time to strike inward.

Action along the Mississippi River and its tributaries remained quiet throughout 1861. Operations in the East on the James River included the buildup of the



1861 - The Civil Engineer of the West and His Weapon of War

James Eads was one of the nation’s foremost civil engineers and river boat builders, having fifty patents and the world’s first steel alloy bridge to his name. The U.S. Navy turned to Eads to design an ironclad warship for use on the Mississippi River. The result was the formidable “City”- class ironclad, which the Navy used with great effectiveness in subduing the Confederacy’s river forts. (HRNM image)



1862 - The Mississippi Offensive Begins

In summer, the combined Federal offensive on the Mississippi River began. Farragut's squadron stormed past Fort St. Philip and Jackson on the lower Mississippi and captured New Orleans (left). On the upper Mississippi near Memphis, a Federal squadron of rams destroyed a Confederate squadron of gunboats (right). (NHHC images)

Confederate James River Squadron, a small yet formidable force which eventually included the infamous ironclad CSS *Virginia*. This all changed in the opening months of 1862, as authorities in Washington grew convinced that the quickest way to the Confederate heartland was through its very veins: the rivers. When U.S. Army General George McClellan's forces failed to achieve substantial victory in the East, the war in the West proved vital for the morale of troops in both theaters.

The Federal army and navy intended to make good on their promise to split the South in half by controlling all rivers from St. Louis to the Gulf of Mexico. By the end of April 1862, the Union achieved significant victories at Shiloh as well as Admiral David Glasgow Farragut's capture of New Orleans, Louisiana. New Orleans, the South's largest city and key commercial and supply center, fell in part due to the expert use of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron and mortar boat flotilla. The intrepid Farragut, already sixty and the veteran of two American wars, secured the city easily with superior firepower against supposedly "impenetrable" fortifications at Forts Jackson and St. Philip located seventy miles below the famed city at the

mouth of the river. In a matter of extreme oversight, the Confederate military felt the aged fortifications so powerful that they never constructed fortifications closer to the Crescent City. With the barriers taken out in relative ease in a night time artillery duel on April 24, 1862, Farragut's capture of New Orleans five days later solidified the first huge Union naval success of the war.

Disregarding strategy, there was a large amount of luck thrown in the direction of the Federal navy that further dictated its future accomplishments in the months to come. It would be unfair to assume

Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy were idle in the west through the first year of the war. Yet Davis and Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory grew more concerned by early 1862 with the possibility of attack from the upper Mississippi, making it their prime focus for river strategy. Mallory and Davis decided fortifications extending from Columbus, Kentucky to Vicksburg, Mississippi sufficient enough to stave off any naval force brave enough to pass through. Officials in Richmond additionally relied on Mother Nature to assist. The Mississippi River, and the system of



1862- The Offensive Rolls On

The offensive on the upper Mississippi rolled on in the summer as U.S. Navy gunboats and mortar boats captured the fort on Island Number 10. (NHHC image)

VOICES FROM THE WAR

1862 - LEARNING ABOUT WAR THE HARD WAY

Captain Henry Walke, USS *Carondelet*

So I repeated the instructions and warned the men at the guns and the crew generally to bow or stand off from the ports when a shot was seen coming. But some of the young men, from a spirit of bravado or from a belief in the doctrine of fatalism, disregarded the instructions, saying it was useless to attempt to dodge a cannon-ball, and they would trust to luck. The warning words, "Look out!" "Down!" were again soon heard; down went the gunner and his men, as the whizzing shot glanced on the gun, taking off the gunner's cap and the heads of two of the young men who trusted to luck, and in defiance of the order were standing up or passing behind him. This shot killed another man also, who was at the last gun of the starboard side, and disabled the gun. It came in with a hissing sound; three sharp spats and a heavy band told the sad fate of three brave comrades. Before the decks were well sanded, there was so much blood on them that our men could not work the guns without slipping.



VOICES FROM THE WAR 1862 - RAMS CLASH ON THE MISSISSIPPI

Brigadier General Alfred Ellet, USA, Memphis

The morning was beautifully clear and perfectly still; a heavy wall of smoke was formed across the river, so that the position of our gun-boats could only be seen by the flashes of their guns. The Queen plunged forward, under a full head of steam, right into this wall of smoke and was lost sight of, her position being known only by her tall pipes which reached above the smoke. The Monarch, following, was greeted, while passing the gun-boats, with wild huzzas from our gallant tars.

When freed from the smoke, those of us who were on the Monarch could see Colonel Ellet's tall and commanding form still standing on the hurricane-deck, waving his hat to show me which one of the enemy's vessels he desired the Monarch to attack,-namely, the General Price, which was on the right wing of their advancing line. For himself he selected the General Lovell and directed the Queen straight for her, she being about the middle of the enemy's advancing line. The two vessels came toward each other in most gallant style, head to head, prow to prow; and had they met in that way, it was most likely that both vessels would have gone down. But at the critical moment the General Lovell began to turn; and that moment sealed her fate. The Queen came on and plunged straight into the Lovell's exposed broadside; the vessel was cut almost in two and disappeared under the dark waters in less time than it takes to tell the story.



ivers that fed it had a unpredictable cycle of flooding and drought, making it difficult for an attacking squadron to launch timely assaults.

Despite the Confederate capital's location in Virginia, those primarily concerned with the overall success of the South watched intently as events unfolded in the lower and upper valley, continually in the favor of their aggressors. As historian John D. Milligan suggested in *Gunboats Down the Mississippi*, the most Confederate strategy might expect throughout the war "was to deny superiority to the North."

The free flow of trans-Mississippi communications in the West depended upon Confederate success in holding the line over long periods of time. Given the almost immediate possibility of conflict, Confederate strategy could only warrant a policy defensive in nature. Officials in Richmond did not heed the warnings of Colonel Mansfield Lovell, commander at New Orleans, concerning the buildup of vessels at the mouth of the river and the



1862 - Stopped Cold on the James

With the destruction of the ironclad CSS Virginia in May, U.S. Naval warships led by the ironclads USS Monitor and Galena steamed up the James River in an attempt to attack Richmond. They ran into Fort Darling at Drewry's Bluff and retreated with heavy losses. (NHHC image)

necessity for more support to stave off an eventual attack. Had the Confederate vessels completed at New Orleans stayed behind instead of joining the fleet at Fort Pillow on April 17-18, 1862, Farragut's

capture might have drummed up more resistance.

Union naval forces along the northern border of Missouri and Kentucky also achieved success in the early months of

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1862 - BREAKING THE MISSISSIPPI PADLOCK

Flag Officer David Farragut, Forts St. Philips and Jackson

We have been bombarding the forts for three or four days, but the current is running so strong that we cannot stem it sufficiently to do anything with our ships, so that I am now waiting a change of wind, which brings a slacker tide, and we shall be enabled to run up.

We had a deserter from the fort yesterday, who says the mortars and shells have done great damage. I can not find out what [Confederate] naval officers are here, except John Wilkinson. The deserter says Fort Pulaski is taken, and that Island No. Ten has been passed by the gunboats, but that the rebels beat us at Corinth. I hope to hear all about it by the Rhode Island, and much more from McClellan.

Captain Bell went last night to cut the chain across the river. I never felt such anxiety in my life as I did until his return. One of his vessels got on shore, and I was fearful she would be captured. They kept up a tremendous fire on him; but Porter diverted their fire with a heavy cannonade. They let the chain go, but the man sent to explode the petard did not succeed; his wires broke. Bell would have burned the hulks, but the illumination would have given the enemy a chance to destroy his gunboat, which got aground. However, the chain was divided, and it gives us space enough to go through. I was as glad to see Bell on his return as if he had been my boy. I was up all night, and could not sleep until he got back to the ship.



1862. In February, Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant's capture of Forts Henry and Donelson in coordination with Rear Admiral Andrew H. Foote started a chain effect leading to a string of "near decisive victories" for the Union. For good reason, the Western Flotilla still remained under army control in early 1862. This guaranteed joint service cooperation during the war's most successful campaigns. Accordingly, Grant and Foote's relationship in the west comprised one of the best duos in the entire war. Grant utilized Foote's Western Flotilla to bombard river defenses and swept up any remaining elements on land. Both possessed the knowledge and skill necessary to take out large sections of the Confederate army while still being able to counter the threat of fortifications with well supplied and powerful gunboats. Victories at Forts Henry and Donelson in February secured Federal control of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers for the remainder of the war.

The Battle of Island No. 10, which occurred seventeen days before the fall of New Orleans, proved an essential step in securing the upper Mississippi River from Confederate forces. Writing from Fort Jackson, Tennessee, General P.G.T. Beauregard commented that the loss of Island No. 10 "must also be followed immediately by the loss of the whole Mississippi Valley." Although the news of Island No. 10's fall reached Richmond several days later, Stephen Mallory knew the approaching Union ironclads might spell immediate disaster in the west.

If Mallory grew convinced that Union forces could not breach the upper Mississippi valley, the surrender of Island No. 10 forced the secretary to reconsider his position. Mallory looked further down



1862 - One Versus A Hundred

By mid-1862, CSS Arkansas was the only functioning Confederate ironclad on the Mississippi River. She barely escaped destruction at Memphis when Federal forces took the city. She later took on the combined U.S. Naval squadrons anchored above Vicksburg, ran through them, and damaged two U.S. Naval ships along the way. Malfunctioning engines prevented further success. USS Essex later tracked down the ironclad, forcing her company to scuttle the ship near Sunrise, Louisiana. (NHHC image)

river for the possibility of a domino effect. Noting strategic positions spotted along the Mississippi River, Mallory knew that the construction of the gunboat *Arkansas* neared completion under the direction of Captain John T. Shirley at Memphis, Tennessee. With the iron-reinforced hull near completion, the vessel proved highly valuable to the Confederate cause once word spread of the events in early April. Mallory sent a message to Captain George N. Hollins at Fort Pillow on April 10 to discuss the possibility of further Federal molestations. "On your best judgment," the secretary remarked, "do not let the enemy get the boats at Memphis." Once news arrived of New Orleans' eminent demise, *Arkansas* Commander Charles H. McBlair made the decision to retreat to Yazoo City, Mississippi, to finish its construction, leaving its sister ship *CSS Tennessee* behind in Memphis.

Strongpoint after strongpoint, Confederate forces ran away from what

historian Michael Bennett called "coarse, untested, and unsafe vessels." Combined Union forces knew that the eventual command of the river in its entirety depended upon the capture of any and all bases under Confederate control. The only thing that stood in the way of linking the Union-held strongholds on the Mississippi was the bustling cities of Memphis, Tennessee, and Vicksburg, Mississippi. The river allowed a secondary outlet for attack should Western Theater commander Major General Henry Halleck's ground forces fail to reach their objectives. Situated forty miles above the levee in late May, the Western Flotilla made Memphis its primary target in the month to come.

Admiral Farragut originally intended to meet up with Foote's fleet upriver at Vicksburg. His initial instructions from Gideon Welles on January 20 were not only to provide a "vigorous" and effective blockade of the Gulf, but to "push a strong force up the river" should any advance

VOICES FROM THE WAR

1862 - STOPPING THE ADVANCE ON RICHMOND

Private William Izard Clompton, CSA, Drewry's Bluff

This, I think, was the first shot fired during the engagement. Then I ran back to my post on the gun, served the vent—the detachment continuing to load as coolly as if on parade. We ran the gun "in battery" and I pointed it, aiming at the Galena "amid-ship," about half-way up her shield, ran to my post of observation. Then Lieutenant Wilson again gave the order to "fire" in his most strenuous tones. When the shot struck pretty much where it had been aimed, and glanced off, and the last I saw of it, it was vanishing in the distance, towards Chaffin's Bluff, but it left a visible scar on the boat.

As soon as we opened fire every gunboat simultaneously commenced pouring their huge shells into us. All the boats using one hundred-pound (Parrott) rifle shells, except the Monitor, which used her two eleven-inch smooth-bore (Dahlgren) gunshells, which weighed about one hundred and sixty pounds. The first broadside of four shells from the Galena passed just over the crest of our parapets and exploded in our rear, scattering their fragments in every direction, together with the sounds of the shells from the others, [it] was the most startling, terrifying and diabolical sound which I had ever heard or ever expected to hear again.

With "blanched," but earnest faces, we continued to pelt the flagship, Galena, trying to penetrate her armor, which we finally did at the water-line, when the shot could be seen coming out of and tearing up her deck, after glancing up, having been deflected by something inside of her hull.

approaching down from Cairo prove ineffective. If successful, as most naval historians suggest, the Confederacy “would be cut in two.” When Farragut attempted to proceed upon orders in May, pushing as far as three hundred miles to the outskirts of Vicksburg, he made the decision to pull his fleet back to New Orleans after he encountered problems with navigation, supplies, and the shallow depth of the river. Farragut also had to deal with the decrepit state of the ships themselves, as a majority of them needed repairs after months of rigorous blockade duty. River pilots knowledgeable of the Mississippi who Farragut recruited were too afraid to move the vessels upriver for fear of running aground. After the failed attempt to penetrate past Vicksburg in late May, Farragut grew frustrated, anxiety-ridden, and sleep-deprived.

Colonel Lovell, now in Jackson, Mississippi, understood that the complicated nature of the river would force Farragut to retreat back down river to safer ground, and accordingly did not worry about Vicksburg’s fate. For Welles and Assistant Secretary Gustavus Vasa Fox, however, Farragut’s retreat dramatically altered their timetable for success in the West. Upon hearing the latest news wires from Natchez and Cairo concerning the repulse, Fox wrote Farragut a concerned letter that his actions “may be a fatal step as regards our western movements, since our advance to Memphis would have been the means of forcing Beauregard to fight or retreat.” These ruminations confirm that, despite the instance that ascending the river from its mouth was “of the utmost importance” according to officials in the Navy Department, it would have to occur further upriver where Rebel fortifications and fleets, not water levels, proved the only antagonist. With Vicksburg out of the question at the end of May, the next geostrategic barriers posed by the Confederacy at the beginning of June were Fort Pillow and the city of Memphis, Tennessee.

Foote took his fleet fresh off the success at Island No. 10 downriver to the nearby Fort along with 20,000 Army troops in transports. Overwhelmed and suddenly surrounded by river and land, the garrison was evacuated on June 4. The momentum of Union victory in the hands of Foote and Grant came as rapid as the waters of the Mississippi itself. The surrender at Fort Pillow signaled the inevitable destruction and capture of Memphis, the sixth largest city in the Confederacy and key



1863 - Port Hudson Gunners Make Farragut Pay

The attack on Port Hudson, a small town south of Vicksburg on the Mississippi, showed that even the great David Farragut could make mistakes. The flag officer attempted to pass fortifications in a spectacular night attack. However, most of the squadron failed to make it past and suffered heavy casualties. (HRNM image)

commercial hub.

The decisive June 6, 1862 Battle of Memphis between the Union and Confederate navies is one such example. In just under two hours, the crowded and anxious populace lined along the Memphis bluffs witnessed the complete destruction of the last remaining Confederate fleet along the Mississippi River at the hands of the Western Flotilla and newly-created Ram Fleet. All the gallantry of the Confederate forces could not outweigh the overwhelming inertia of the combined Union force. When the smoke cleared after an hour and a half of pitched battle, the Confederate River Defense Fleet laid in ruins. As historian H. Allen Gosnell commented in *Guns on the Western Waters*, “the effort...was glorious but the failure was fatal and complete.” Memphis served as a main naval depot and occupation facility for the Western Flotilla until 1865. The citizens and military on

shore beheld a monumental defeat, many asking if the fate of the Confederacy critically hung in the balance. The only obstacle left on the Mississippi was the Confederate bastion at Vicksburg, Lincoln’s self proclaimed “key” to bringing about an end to the war.

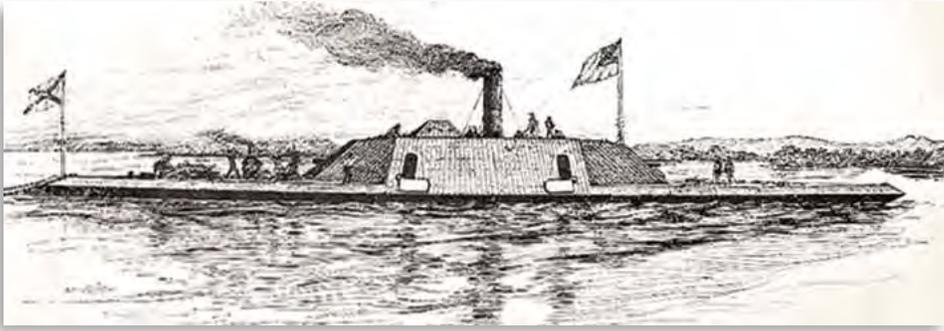
Vicksburg proved to be the most formidable obstacle in the Mississippi River. Southern forces in the west already had lost valuable materiel, territory, and strategic position. With initial attempts thwarted in July 1862, Vicksburg held out until the following year. Union river forces preoccupied themselves with venturing up the Yazoo River, sweeping up remaining elements of forces in the region despite the difficulties navigating “City”-class gunboats up and down the narrow waterways.

Preparations for a powerful return to capture Vicksburg began as early as December 1862. The Union fleet suffered



1863 - Tightening the Noose on the Mississippi

David Dixon Porter pulled off a more successful night maneuver than Farragut did at Port Hudson when his squadron of ironclads and gunboats passed by Vicksburg’s guns. The maneuver greatly assisted in the eventual surrender of the key fortress on July 4. (NHHC image)



1864 - Counterattack on the Roanoke

The Confederate Navy continued to fight for control of North Carolina's rivers with the ironclad CSS Albemarle. With the formidable warship, it recaptured towns along the Roanoke River in May 1864. A daring commando raid led by Lieutenant William Cushing destroyed the ironclad and allowed Federal forces to counterattack. (HRNM image)

the loss of USS *Cairo* from a naval mine (torpedo) during preparatory sweeping operations. Confederate forces did an excellent job laying a complicated system of defensive and offensive mines for Union ships to clear. It was not until late February 1863 that the combined forces of the Federal Army and Navy could move free from obstructions. The eventual siege of Vicksburg ended in the surrender of 30,000 Confederate soldiers with minimal loss for the Union army and navy. Conditions for the Confederate garrison were so bad at Vicksburg, that one historian noted how many soldiers swam to Union gunboats to surrender. The successful completion of the Vicksburg campaign on July 4, 1863 gave Union vessels the opportunity to navigate and protect the Mississippi River from St. Louis to the Gulf of Mexico.

The initial southern press reaction after the fall of Vicksburg was "hot resentment of the deceptive news reports." Either through misinformation or overconfidence in the garrison itself, journalists in the area took the news harshly. Southern newspapers like the *Savannah Republican* declared such reports as "systematic lying" by Confederate officials within the city, which had earlier promised that it could hold out. The slow trickle of losses sped up by the capitulation of Memphis increased to a steady stream of defeat. *Memphis Appeal* correspondent J.R. Thompson wrote from Richmond on July 13, 1863 that the general public grew increasingly convinced that "we have lost our stronghold on the Mississippi." Although the fall was not a complete surprise to the southern public, Thompson's ruminations were correct. The Mississippi River now had a lone principal actor and agent for the remainder of the war. As U.S. Attorney General Edward Bates wrote so poignantly in his diary entry concerning

the complicated interplay between power and control along the Mississippi, "the Government may be changed, but the river cannot be divided." One force. One river.

Although the Mississippi River was free from Confederate control, some of its tributaries along the western Confederacy remained under rebel control. With the Confederacy then split in two, rivers in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana had little military value. It was not until the summer of 1863 that the land and rivers west of the Mississippi became strategically valuable in the eyes of Secretary of War Edward Stanton. Either for its strategic position near Texas or fear from Napoleon III's puppet empire in Mexico, Stanton drew up plans to use the veteran river force to push up the Red River and capture the chief military depot for the western Confederacy at Shreveport, Louisiana. The combined Army-Navy operations of Admiral David Dixon Porter and Major General Nathaniel Banks proved to be a failure, as they severely underestimated the level of resistance put up by Confederates ashore.

Admiral Porter feared such an offensive necessary. He was correct. The campaign proved a monumental failure for the U.S. Navy, costing the career of General Nathaniel Banks in the process. His gunboat fleet had great difficulty moving along the Red River's fluctuating waters amidst sniper fire and raid parties. Further investigation deemed the 1864 campaign poorly planned and managed, yet had little or no impact on the overall war effort. Confederates held the river for the remainder of the war. Forces there surrendered in June 1865, two months after Robert E. Lee's capitulation at Appomattox. For the Confederacy, it was one of few victories in the western rivers. The U.S. Navy in the west licked its wounds and returned focus

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1864 - CSS ALBERMARLE IS SUNK

Lieutenant William Cushing, Roanoke River

The light of a fire ashore showed me the ironclad [i.e. CSS Albemarle] made fast to the wharf, with a pen of logs around her about 30 feet from her side.



Passing her closely, we made a complete circle so as to strike her fairly, and went into her bows on. By this time the enemy's fire was very severe, but a dose of canister at short range served to moderate their zeal and disturb their aim. Three bullets struck my clothing, and the air seemed full of them.

In a moment we had struck the logs, just abreast of the quarter port, breasting them in some feet, and out bows resting on them. The torpedo boom was then lowered and by a vigorous pull I succeeded in firing the torpedo under the overhang and exploding it at the same time that the Albemarle's gun was fired. A shot seemed to go crashing through my boat and a dense mass of water rushed in from the torpedo, filling the launch and completely disabling her. The ram is now completely submerged.

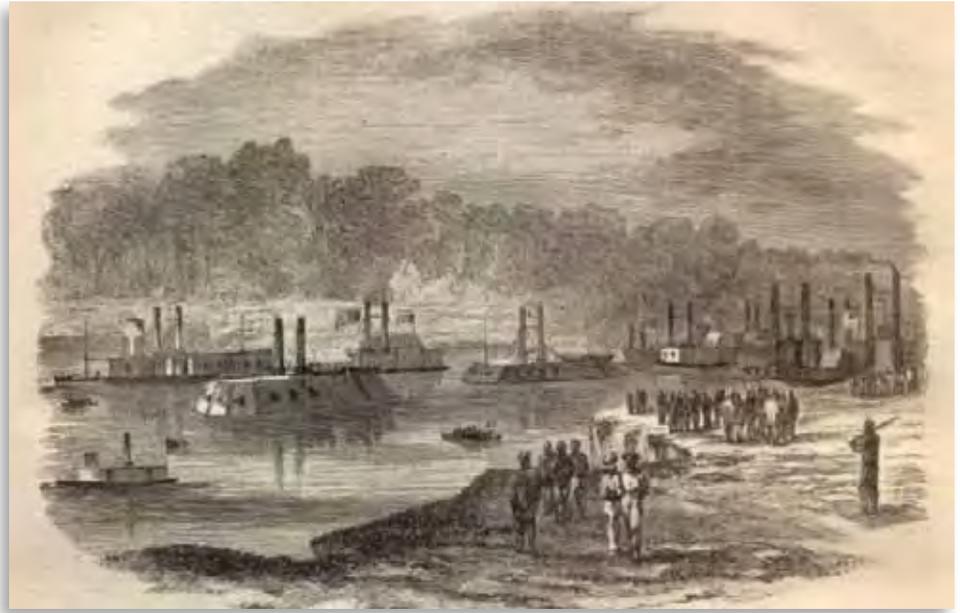
on the Mississippi River itself, resuming the trade and transport of King Cotton among countless Northern speculators.

The U.S. Navy took a decidedly offensive approach in the East throughout the war. Their Confederate counterparts, however, once again chose a defensive one. The blockade kept the mouths of many rivers and port cities tightly controlled, thereby offering few opportunities for action. Much like the Mississippi to the West, the James River was the decided locale to engage the enemy. If the James River was a football field, the U.S. Navy's James River Flotilla never reached beyond the scrimmage line throughout the war. The first Union push to Richmond in early 1862 never reached beyond Drewry's Bluff, just seven miles down river from the capital. There, shallow river bends, underwater obstructions, and high defenses decisively repulsed five Union gunboats from further advancing. USS *Monitor*'s guns could not elevate to reach targets along the bluff, while the *Galena*'s

poor design and maneuverability damaged her badly. The Confederate victory signified the difficulty in reaching the capital by water, and the furthest waterborne approach to Richmond reached the Union James River Flotilla. This problem would persist for Union forces for the remainder of the war. Bluejackets on the James spent a majority of their time waiting, often in slow and tedious cycles. Sailors in the James River Flotilla saw more action against oppressive heat and mosquitoes than from Confederates.

The Confederate navy remained defensively-minded for the remainder of the war. Richmond often chose to place sailors from the idling James River Squadron into shore batteries and units on land. Such relative inactivity may be due to the fact that the ironclads constructed by the Confederate navy had difficulty navigating the James River. Several ships during the war ended their service under similar circumstances, including CSS *Virginia* at the mouth of the James and CSS *Neuse* along its namesake rivulet. The forts, torpedoes, and blockship obstructions along the river proved as sufficient a defense to Richmond as any ironclad vessel could ever hope to become. Admiral David Dixon Porter later proclaimed the James River Squadron “the most useless force the Confederates had ever put afloat” when compared to the static and environmental hazards. Periodic skirmishes between the James River Squadron and Union shore batteries near Drewry’s Bluff occurred in mid to late 1864. The Confederate squadron made one last attempt to run past the Union batteries in January 1865, but was handily repulsed back to Richmond.

To Mallory’s credit, Union naval forces



1864 - Prepping for Disaster on the Red River

David Dixon Porter’s squadron of gunboats rest in the Red River while awaiting for the word to proceed upstream towards Alexandria, Louisiana. The joint U.S. Army-Navy operation was an ill-conceived offensive that resulted in a major defeat. It almost resulted in the capture of the entire squadron when the Red River flowed at dangerously low levels. (NHHC image)

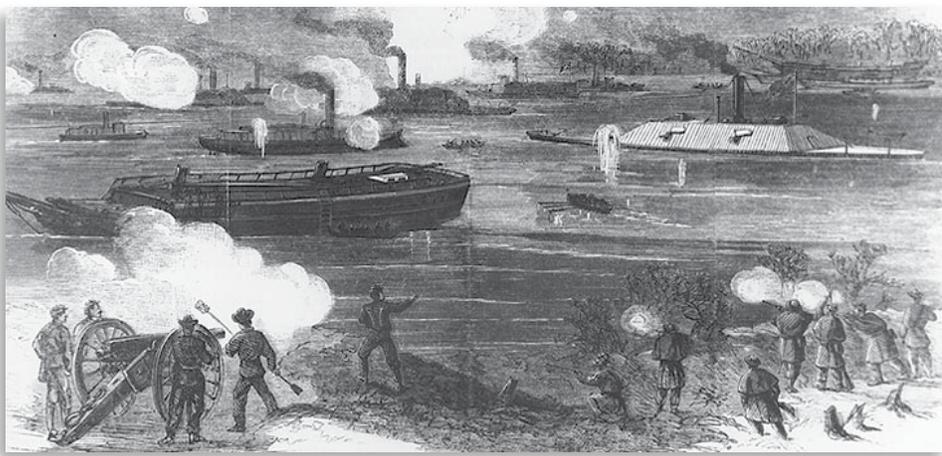
failed to approach Richmond by water. Commenting on his success, the boisterous Mallory stated the Confederate navy alone “kept that of U.S. from Richmond by the James River.” The seemingly simple task to take the capital city by naval force proved herculean and the Union would have to march its way to Richmond by foot.

The last ships in the James River Squadron were destroyed under orders of Admiral Raphael Semmes in the wake of Richmond’s 1865 fall. Remaining elements of the squadron under General Joe Johnston’s command surrendered to Grant in May. The river war was officially over, east and west. In terms of longevity

and success through defensive objectives, the James River Squadron far surpassed its Mississippi River counterparts by two years.

Historian Jay W. Simson stated that “one of the most little known aspects of the American Civil War has been the naval strategies followed by the Union navy and the infant Confederate navy.” Within that broad area of operations, river warfare is even lesser known. Often overshadowed by the “thunder in Hampton Roads” or daring stories of breaking past the blockade, riverine combat evolved from humble beginnings into effective military strategy. Like the minie bullet to a rifle company, iron-wielded vessels on rivers changed the way the world witnessed naval conflict, large or small.

By the end of the war, the victorious U.S. Navy became the most formidable maritime force in the world. Such success was attributed to all involved, from leaders in Washington to the sailors operating around the world. Those brave sailors who experienced the river war saw new technological advancements and close-quarter fighting until the war ended in 1865. The reunified United States Navy would take the lessons of the brown water fleet and duplicate, expand, and evolve its practice into the next century, when river warfare proved critical again.



1865 - One Last Gasp on the James

In desperate attempt to destroy Grant’s supply depot, the Confederacy’s James River Squadron made one last sortie with three ironclads. Shore batteries and the double turreted USS Onondaga intercepted the squadron and put it to flight. (HRNM image)



PART III - WORLD WAR

CONFEDERATE CRUISERS TAKE TO THE HIGH SEAS
IN SEARCH OF PREY AND U.S. NAVY
CRUISERS ATTEMPT TO HUNT THEM DOWN

Having vastly superior numbers to its opposing fleet, the U.S. Navy was in the position to engage an offensive strategy along the coastlines and interior rivers. There was one area where the Confederacy could strike at the North: the world's sea lanes. By 1861, the U.S. merchant marine was among the largest in the world. Its ships could be found all the world's major ports. Secretary Mallory realized early on in the war that these merchant ships were easy targets and the U.S. merchant marine as a whole was very vulnerable.

Known by the French term *guerre d'course*, this "commerce raiding" was a classic naval strategy employed by weaker navies. The strategy called for swift, lightly-armed ships to seek out and capture the enemy's merchant ships, while avoiding detection and combat with the enemy's warships. The goal was to make the owners of the merchant ships, often members of the ruling class, to reconsider the merits of the war and pressure their elected officials into making peace terms. The United States had used this strategy against the British in the American Revolution and War of 1812.

Like previous wars, there were two distinctly different groups of commerce raiders: privateers and government-owned cruisers. The privateers firms were owned and operated by private citizens. They operated with the legal blessing of President Jefferson Davis, who issued a proclamation encouraging patriotic Southerners to wage war on Union commerce.

Unfortunately for Davis and his naval secretary, the privateering initiative came nowhere close to duplicating the legendary success of American privateers in previous wars. The main reason for the failure was that the South lacked the infrastructure and tradition to deploy the large numbers of privateers needed for a successful campaign. Most of America's shipping companies were located in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania.

By early 1862, the U.S. Navy succeeded in either putting most of the twenty-one privateers out of action or preventing them from putting to sea. In one case, the giant forty-eight gun frigate USS *St. Lawrence* demolished the two-gun privateer *Petrel* in a well publicized, one-sided battle. The public placed great confidence and pride in the U.S. Navy, as these early actions against the privateers seemed to portray a short and easy campaign. Their confidence was very much premature.



1861 - Semmes and CSS *Sumter* Strike Early

The first of the Confederacy's commissioned warships to take to the high seas in search of Union merchant ships was CSS Sumter. The ship successfully broke out into the Gulf of Mexico and captured several U.S.-flagged merchant ships. (NHHC image)

Mallory realized as soon as he took office that the privateers could not accomplish the task. He realized he needed commissioned warships with professionally trained officers and crews. By the end of the war, his small force of steam-powered warships had unleashed a devastating campaign on the North.

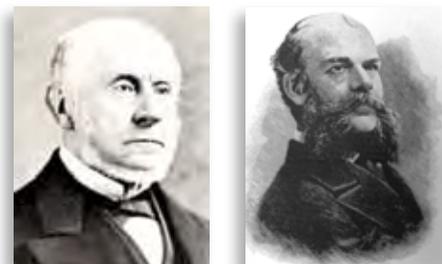
The first of these government-owned commissioned cruisers was CSS *Sumter*. Just two weeks after the war began, Mallory assembled her. He ordered the talented Raphael Semmes to take charge of the steamer. The ship put to sea and cleared the Head of Passes on the Mississippi River and headed out to sea. Over the next week, *Sumter* found immediate success as she captured seven U.S.-flagged merchant ships in the Gulf.

Sumter proceeded south toward Brazil and then east toward Gibraltar. At every port *Sumter* called upon, American diplomats filed official protests with local authorities. But Confederate captains found that most neutral ports were quite friendly to the Southern cause. In particular, the British government ruled that if a U.S. Naval warship and a Confederate warship happened to be in the same British-controlled port, the second ship had to wait a full twenty-four hours after the first ship left port before beginning a pursuit. The British claimed this was to prevent conflict between opposing warships in their waters. Other European nations followed suit with similar rulings, which made it extremely difficult for the U.S. cruisers to engage the raiders.

However, before Confederate cruisers could be engaged, the U.S. warships had to find them first. The U.S. Navy adopted what can be described as a "search and

destroy" strategy. Warships would patrol independently around high traffic areas and hope they would spot and intercept a Confederate cruiser. Captain James Glynn, commanding officer of the sail frigate USS *Macedonian*, was one of several Union captains searching for *Sumter*. He explained the Navy's strategy when he wrote, "the Government of the United States has sent a few active steamers to make a circuit of the West Indies, in rapid succession, without delay, and they be kept going without cessation."

The problem with this strategy was that



1861 - The War of the Diplomats

Waging a series of behind-the-scene battles throughout the war over the foreign construction of Confederate cruisers was Charles Francis Adams (at left), the United States ambassador to the Court of St. James, and James Bulloch (at right), the Confederacy's chief foreign agent for England. The two men had a network of spies and agents to gather and conceal information about the true nature of certain shipbuilding projects. (HRNM images)

it assumed that ships like *Sumter* wanted to be found. The captains of Confederate commerce raiders knew that the world's oceans had many places to hide. In the case of *Sumter*, the U.S. Navy sent eight cruisers around the West Indies and Gulf of Mexico in the hopes that *Sumter* would make an appearance. They never found her as Semmes took his ship to South America.

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1861 - CSS SUMTER MAKES A BREAK FOR IT

Captain Raphael Semmes, Head of Passes

Finally, on Sunday morning, the 30th of June, it having been reported to me that the Brooklyn was absent from her station, I caused steam to be gotten up, got underway, and ran down toward the Pass. As we approached the mouth of the river we discovered the Brooklyn with our glasses, standing back under steam and sail to regain her station, and it was for some time a little doubtful whether we could pass the bar before she came up.

To add to my perplexity, the pilot protested that he knew only the bar of the Southwest Pass, and could not undertake to run me out of Pass a l'Outre [the eastern branch of the Mississippi River delta]. I continued on, however, hoisting a signal for a pilot at the fore. As luck would have it, a pilot happened to be present at the pilots' station a little above the light house, and as we ran by it the gallant fellow pushed aboard in his boat, and in fifteen minutes afterwards he had us outside the bar. We discharged him in great haste and all sail and steam, the Brooklyn being in pursuit about 4 miles distant. The next few hours were of course very anxious ones for me, as the Brooklyn had the reputation of great speed, and our relative powers were to be tested.

By 3:30, Commander Poor gave up the chase. As he bore up, I sent my men into the rigging, and we gave three hearty cheers for the flag of the Confederate States, thus for the first time thrown to the breeze on the high seas by a ship of war.



While the U.S. Navy was busy not finding *Sumter*, a second cruiser, CSS *Nashville*, prepared to put to sea out of Charleston. Despite the blockade of the harbor, *Nashville* was able to escape to Bermuda and then proceeded across the North Atlantic, to the further embarrassment of the U.S. Navy. Within a few days, *Nashville* intercepted and burned the clipper ship *Harvey Birch*. Newspapers in the North mocked the U.S. Navy's inability to catch *Nashville* or other cruisers. Instead of following the "Anaconda Plan" they commented that the Navy was following the "Connecticut Plan," in reference to Secretary of the Navy Welles' home state.

In the second year of the war, the Confederacy threatened to blow the commerce raiding campaign wide open. To supplement the domestically acquired commerce raiders, the Confederacy dispatched a network of agents in France and England to commission warships from some of Europe's finest shipbuilders. Built under false names, specifically "No. 290" and *Oreto*, to avoid British neutrality laws and Union diplomats' suspicions, British shipyards laid the keel of the first two of these foreign-built cruisers in early 1862.

While these two ships were being built, U.S. Navy cruisers finally caught and trapped *Sumter* in Gibraltar. A squadron of four ships, led by the newly-commissioned USS *Kearsarge*, cornered *Sumter*. After reviewing his options, Semmes decided that

Sumter was in no condition to try another breakout. Creating the false impression that the ship was being repaired, Semmes and his lieutenants abandoned her and headed for England to take charge of the ship called "No. 290." Semmes and company walked away from their cruiser with pride as they captured eighteen U.S.-flagged ships in just six months.

The other domestically-acquired cruiser, *Nashville*, did not have similar success. Despite the fearful headlines in Northern newspapers, *Nashville* captured only two ships before being sold off. The U.S. Navy later found the ship in a Georgia river and used the monitor USS *Montauk* to destroy her.

In March 1862, *Oreto*, the first of the foreign-built cruisers put to sea under the command of a British captain. She headed for the Bahamas. Here she picked up the talented

John Maffitt as her permanent captain and revealed her true name, CSS *Florida*. When Maffitt took command, he discovered that his ship was missing the proper equipment to fire the guns, and needed to put into Mobile, Alabama. As *Florida* approached

Mobile, she was spotted and attacked by two blockading ships, USS *Oneida* and *Winona*. Most of the shots missed and *Florida* escaped into Mobile.

Back in Great Britain, "No. 290" got underway with a skeleton crew and headed south for the Azores Islands in September 1862. Semmes and his lieutenants met the ship and officially commissioned the vessel CSS *Alabama*. Semmes wasted no time and began the ship's raiding campaign immediately. He sailed west towards the French island of Martinique.

Over the next three months, *Alabama* captured twenty-five ships. The U.S. Navy's hunters periodically received intelligence reports on the elusive cruiser. The closest they came was when *San Jacinto* spotted *Alabama* in Martinique. Using the twenty-four hour rule to her advantage, the Confederate cruiser slipped away towards Texas and continued her raids. Once she arrived in Texas, *Alabama* added to her tally. Semmes spotted the small gunboat USS *Hatteras* and ambushed her. The gunboat fought as well as she could, but the Confederate cruiser sank her.

Adding to Secretary Welles' problems, Maffitt and *Florida* decided to make a dash for freedom just a week later. Seven U.S. Navy ships were now on station outside of Mobile Bay. At 3 a.m. on January 16, 1863, *Florida* launched her breakout attempt. With the help of foul weather, the cruiser



1861 - Mocking the Navy

Lampooning the U.S. Navy's inability to catch the commerce raider CSS Nashville, Northern newspapers suggested that Federal strategy should be renamed. They suggested instead of the Anaconda Plan, it should be called the Connecticut Plan, in honor of Connecticut-native Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. (HRNM image)

evaded the blockaders and made the open ocean by 4 p.m. Within three days, she captured and burned her first of many prizes. Two days after that, she captured and burned two more ships off the coast of Cuba.

Florida proceeded east. Maffitt's



1862 - The "Grey Ghost" Puts to Sea

The king of the commerce raiders was a ship once known only as "No. 290." During her two year campaign, CSS Alabama captured sixty-three U.S.-flagged vessels and one U.S. Navy gunboat. (NHHC image)

intention was to head north toward New England and raid merchant ships in their own backyard. Foul weather forced Maffitt to turn his ship back south to the West Indies. Maffitt, however, was to be richly rewarded for his decision. On February 12, *Florida* intercepted the massive clipper ship *Jacob Bell*. Homeward bound from the Chinese port of Fuzhow, *Jacob Bell* was carrying a large load of tea and other luxury goods. Maffitt estimated the cargo to be worth at least two million dollars. He continued to raid and by the end of 1863, Maffitt had sunk thirteen ships.

While *Alabama* and *Florida* were wrecking havoc among the shipping lanes, Confederate agents in Europe made preparations for a third foreign-built cruiser, CSS *Georgia*. With her company and guns in order, the ship left France under false papers on April 9, 1863.

Her cruise was short and was not nearly as successful. For the next six months, the ship captured only eight merchants, while releasing several dozen neutral ships. When the ship made port in Cherbourg, the inspector found the vessel to be falling apart. Her guns were removed and the ship was eventually sold to a civilian merchant in 1864. Despite flying civilian colors, USS *Niagara* recognized and captured her off the coast of Spain. The civilian master objected to being taken. American courts, however, ruled in favor of *Niagara* and the ship was deemed a lawful prize.

Alabama and *Florida*, however, both continued their devastating campaigns. *Alabama* captured eight ships between June and August 1863 and would capture

another twenty-two before the end of the year. Semmes took one of the eight ships and outfitted her as a cruiser. Named *Tuscaloosa*, he always referred to her as a "tender" and not a ship of war. *Florida* created two new cruisers of her own. Under the leadership and initiative of Lieutenant Charles Read, the *Clarence* and later the *Tacony* raided the New England coast. Between the two ships, Read burned twenty-one ships, including a U.S. Revenue Cutter vessel. In terms of psychological shock to Northern morale, none of the Confederate cruisers had more of an impact than Read's ships. Only a makeshift squadron of tugs

and coastal steamers assembled by local authorities put a stop to Read's operations.

It was not for a lack of trying that Secretary Welles did not put a stop to the raiding. By 1863, he had sixteen cruisers patrolling the West Indies and the eastern half of the Atlantic Ocean looking for *Alabama* and *Florida*. Additionally, he wrote orders to U.S. Navy ships as far away as Cape Town, South Africa, and Yokohama, Japan, to be on the lookout for the two cruisers.

The Secretary assumed correctly that the Confederates would expand their area of raiding. When Semmes and *Alabama* left Texas, they headed southeast and rounded the Cape of Good Hope in October, arriving in Singapore on December 19, 1863. Semmes reporting sinking three ships and would have captured more, except that a major recession in the tea trade kept more ships from putting to sea. American diplomats provided some good news to Welles later in the year. Charles Adams, President Lincoln's ambassador to Great Britain, convinced British authorities to indefinitely detain a ship named CSS *Rappahannock*. This would have been the fourth foreign-built cruiser. The ship never left port.

By 1864, the U.S. Navy changed its strategy to catch enemy cruisers. Instead of patrolling the high seas hoping to find them, ships were based at the major ports around the North and South Atlantic. *Kearsarge*, for example, was assigned to the French coast,



1863 - CSS Florida Burns Jacob Bell

When John Maffitt, Florida's commanding officer, elected to turn the cruiser back south, he was richly rewarded. Off the coast of Puerto Rico, Florida intercepted the huge clipper ship Jacob Bell. The New York-based ship was returning from China with tons of tea and luxury goods. The capture was the single biggest destruction of property at sea in world history and produced terrified headlines in the North. (HRNM image)

VOICES FROM THE WAR

1863 - THE GENTLEMAN RAIDER

Lieutenant John Maffitt's Journal, At Sea Near Puerto Rico

February 12-At 4 p.m., made a prize of the ship Jacob Bell, of New York. Her tonnage was about 1,300, and she is esteemed as one of the most splendid vessels out of New York that trades with China. A message came that the captain had ladies on board, and that his wife was on the eve of confinement. Sent Dr. Garretson on board to investigate, and that the ladies must leave the ship, as I was determined to burn the ship. The ladies came aboard, and with tons of baggage. I surrendered the cabin. The party consisted of Mrs. Frisbee (captain's wife), Mrs. Williams, whose husband is a custom-house officer at Swatow, China; a lad, Louis Frisbee, and another, son of a missionary from Rhode Island, now stationed at Swatow. The passengers and crew amounted to forty-three persons. The Jacob Bell had a cargo of choice tea, camphor, chowchow [ed. note: Chinese pickles, not the dog breed], etc. value at \$2,000,000 or more.

Took such articles as we required, and on the 13th set her on fire.

Mrs. Frisbee was a very quiet, kind hearted lady; Mrs. Williams, I fancy, something of a tartar; she and Captain Frisbee were not on terms. They remained in possession of my cabin for five days, when I put the entire party on board the Danish brig Morning Star, bound to St. Thomas. If they speak unkindly, such a thing as gratitude is a stranger to their abolition hearts.



specifically Brest. There, on January 16, 1864 her commanding officer John Winslow spotted *Florida*. However, he reported that he was watching not only *Florida*, but *Georgia* and *Rappahannock*. Fortunately for him, poor design took care of *Georgia* and the diplomats took care of *Rappahannock*.

After capturing a few more ships in the East Indies, *Alabama* turned back to the west and made port in Cherbourg, France. Here *Kearsarge* found her and instead of running, Semmes proposed a challenge for the two ships to fight. The duel between *Kearsarge* and *Alabama* is among the most legendary fights of the war.

In front of thousands of spectators, and some of Europe's finest artists such as Claude Monet, the two ships exchanged shots for hours. The two ships were about equal on paper, though *Kearsarge* was somewhat more prepared to fight and Winslow had chain links placed over vital parts of the ship. Luck also helped *Kearsarge* as one of *Alabama*'s shots hit one of *Kearsarge*'s masts, but failed to explode. At the end of the battle, *Alabama* sank. However, it had done considerable damage, capturing sixty-five merchant ships during her service to the Confederacy.

1864 saw the end of *Florida*'s operations as well, but in a different manner. Morris put into Bahia, Brazil for repairs. Determined not to let *Florida* escape again, the U.S. Navy resorted to more extreme measures. On the night of October 7, the steam sloop USS *Wachusett* slipped quietly into the Bay of San Salvador with the intent of boarding and capturing *Florida*. The plan did not go exactly as planned, as *Wachusett*

rammed *Florida* and fired two of her main guns into the ship. But the main objective had been accomplished and *Wachusett* was heading out of the harbor with *Florida* in tow bound for Hampton Roads. The raid led to an international firestorm with demands from several nations for the United States to return the ship. The protests soon became moot. Either by chance or design, when the U.S. Army transport *Alliance* rammed *Florida* in Hampton Roads, the Confederate cruiser sank.

Even though the Confederacy had lost two of its best cruisers, its navy continued to have faith in the strategy and made preparations to outfit more. It commissioned CSS *Chickamauga* and *Tallahassee* in Wilmington, North Carolina. *Chickamauga* broke through the blockade on October 7, 1864. Over the next four weeks, she took seven prizes before returning back to Wilmington. Under the command of John Taylor Wood, *Tallahassee* headed north towards Nova Scotia to raid local shipping traffic. At first, the cruise was a bust as Wood found no prizes and encountered a hostile British government in Nova Scotia. However, the return trip made the operation a major success. Before returning to Wilmington, Wood and *Tallahassee* captured

thirty-one prizes, mostly schooners.

The last of the major cruisers assembled in Liverpool under the guise of the ship *Storm King*. Unlike *Rappahannock*, American diplomats did not convince British authorities to have her detained in port. After putting to sea, James Wadell



1863 - One of the Hunters

One of the U.S. Navy's hunters of Confederate commerce raiders was the steam frigate USS Niagara. At one point in the war, the Navy had forty-eight warships searching the globe for Confederate cruisers. Niagara herself captured the cruiser CSS Georgia in 1863. (NHHC image)

commissioned the vessel CSS *Shenandoah*. He had orders to head immediately for the North Pacific. *Shenandoah* arrived in Melbourne, Australia, in January 1865 and received a warm welcome. She had already taken seven prizes before putting into port. Upon leaving Australia, she headed northeast into the Pacific. On June 22, she spotted the New England whaling fleet near the Bering Straits. By June 28, she had captured, and burning most of them, twenty-eight ships. The war, however, ended on April 9. Upon getting the notice,



1864 - Alabama and Florida are Captured

The U.S. Navy's hunters finally brought an end to the Confederacy's two most successful raiders in 1864. In June, USS Kearsarge and CSS Alabama dueled off the coast of France, resulting in Alabama's destruction (left). Later that year, USS Wachusett found CSS Florida in Bahia, Brazil. Illegally entering the Brazilian harbor, Wachusett was able to board and take Florida back to the United States (right). (NHHC images)

Wadell realized the diplomatic implications of his actions. He sailed back to England and surrendered the ship to the British. The cruiser campaign in the American Civil War ended in failure on both sides. The goal of the Confederate *guerre de course* campaign was to make the war painful for

Northern merchants and thus get them to influence the Lincoln Administration to end the war. There is no evidence it did this. Charles Read's campaign with *Florida's* "children" did the only actual damage to Northern moral as evident by the frantic letters written, which included a memo from the President to Gideon Welles.

One possible winner was steam technology. With the ability to move anywhere in the world at will, Confederate raiders were able to quickly dash from target to target. The need for such technology did spell the end of privateers, as private outfits generally could not afford steam ships. After the war, the United States put an end to privateering for good when it signed a treaty outlawing it.



1865 - The Confederacy's Last Raid

CSS Shenandoah gave the Union one last reminder and the U.S. Navy one last humiliating moment in mid-1865. After successfully escaping from England, the cruiser headed to the North Pacific Ocean. There she captured twenty-eight ships. Communications being what they were in the 1860s, Shenandoah's company found out much later that the war had ended a month earlier. (Museum of the Confederacy image)

For the U.S. Navy, its campaign to hunt down the commerce raiders was a colossal failure. By 1864, it had committed forty-eight cruisers to find Confederate ships on the high seas. At no time during the war did the Confederates have more than five cruisers. Basic and proven anti-raider tactics, such as convoys, were never even discussed until the end of the war. The most effective weapon in the U.S. arsenal was Charles Francis Adams. His tireless diplomacy succeeded in delaying, or outright stopping, several Confederate cruisers from getting to sea.

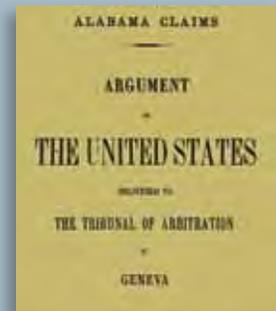
The final damage was 228 ships captured by twelve Confederate commerce raiders, or about fourteen captures per raider. Not included in this are the twenty-one Confederate privateers, almost all sail ships, that captured eighteen ships. In contrast, in the War of 1812, eighteen U.S. Navy warships and 530 privateers captured 1,439 British ships or about 2.6 captures per cruiser.

VOICES FROM THE WAR

1872 - SENDING QUEEN VICTORIA A BILL FOR DAMAGES

Ambassador Charles Adams, Argument Before the Tribunal of Arbitration, Geneva

The United States maintains, as matter of fact, that the British Government was guilty of want of due diligence, that is, of culpable negligence, in permitting, or in not preventing, the construction, equipment, manning, or arming, of Confederate men-of-war or cruisers, in the ports of Great Britain or of the British colonies; that such acts of commission or omission, on the part of the British Government, constituted violation of the international obligations of Great Britain toward the United States, whether it be regarded in the light of the treaty friend of the United States, while the latter were engaged in the suppression of domestic rebellion, or whether in the light of a neutral in relation to two belligerents; that such absence of due diligence on the part of the British Government led to acts of commission or omission, injurious to the United States, on the part of subordinates, as well as of the ministers themselves; and that thus and therefore Great Britain became responsible to the United States for injuries done to them by the operation of such cruisers of the Confederates.



[Editor's Note: The Tribunal unanimously found Great Britain libel for damages. Great Britain agreed to pay \$15,500,000 without admitting guilt.]

-EPILOGUE-



The American Civil War ended at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. However, communications being what they were in the 1860s, the war at sea continued on for another three months. Here are a few final voices from the war that marked the end of hostilities at sea.

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1865 - THE SECRETARY ORDERS HIS SHIPS TO STAND DOWN

Secretary Gideon Welles Instructions to Commanding Officers of the U. S. Navy



Sir: Information has been communicated to this Department by the Secretary of State that the Imperial Government of France has removed all restrictions heretofore imposed by it upon naval intercourse with the United States, and has withdrawn from the insurgents the character of belligerents.

The Government of Great Britain also withdraws her concessions heretofore made of belligerent character from the insurgents, but the withdrawal of the twenty-four-hour rule has not been made absolute; reciprocal measures will be extended to the vessels of that country.

The blockade of the ports of the coast of the United States will soon cease, and with the cessation of hostilities the belligerent right of search will also cease.

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1865 - THE PRESIDENT LIFTS THE BLOCKADE

Proclamation of President Andrew Johnson



Whereas by the proclamation of the President of the 11th day of April last, certain ports of the United States therein specified, which had previously been subject to blockade, were, for objects of public safety, declared, in conformity with previous special legislation of Congress, to be closed against foreign commerce during the national will, to be thereafter expressed and made known by the President; and

Whereas events and circumstances have since occurred which, in my judgment, render it expedient to remove that restriction, except as to the ports of Galveston, La Salle, Brazos de Santiago (Point Isabel), and Brownsville, in the State of Texas:

Now, therefore, be it known that I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do hereby declare that the ports aforesaid, not excepted as above, shall be open to foreign commerce from and after the 1st day of July next; that commercial intercourse with the said ports may from that time be carried on, subject to the laws of the United States and in pursuance of such regulations as may be prescribed by the Secretary of the Treasury.

VOICES FROM THE WAR 1865 - THE DREAM IS SHATTERED

Assistant Surgeon Charles Lining's Journal, CSS Shenandoah, Bering Sea

June 22, 1865

Sight and capture the ships William Thompson and Euphrates. Heard through papers which were on board a batch of bad news, which if it proves true will be terrible—First that Charleston was captured. This, I was expecting, as I did not think we could hold it against Sherman's army. But, when I heard that Gen. Lee had surrendered with the whole of the Army of Northern Virginia, I was knocked flat aback—can I believe it? And after the official letters which are published as being written by Grant & Lee can I help believing it? It is either true, or the Yankees are again publishing official lies. God grant it may not be true!



June 22, 1865

Sight six ships—capture of the bark Milo—the Sophia Thornton takes to the ice—but returns—capture the Jireh Swift—burn her at once—the Milo bonded for \$48,000 to carry the prisoners ashore.

June 26, 1865

Manning's fine navigation—capture barks, Nimrod, W. C. Nye, and Catherine, all of New Bedford—took off what was wanted and fired all—captured barks Genl. Pike, Isabella, and Gypsy—bonded the Pike and transferred prisoners—repairs to engine—fire the prizes.

June 28, 1865

Capture the bark Waverly—burn her—capture eight barks—names not given—peculiar courage of the Favorite's captain—two bonded to carry prisoners—others burned—Aug. 2, 1865

This is doomed to be one of the blackest of all the black days of my life, for from to-day I must look forward to begin life over again, starting where I cannot tell, how I cannot say—but I have learned for a certainty that I have no country. Came up to her about 5 P. M. when she hoisted English Colours. Hailed her, asked her name, & sent a boat on board to get some news from her. She proved to be the Eng. Bark Baraconta of Liverpool, thirteen days out from San Francisco. 'Bullock' boarded her and brought off the news that the Southern Confederacy was a thing of the past, all her armies having surrendered, Mr. Davis & Mr. Stephens prisoners.

Thus ends our dream! — But I am too sad to think of it.