THE
DAYBOOK®

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The Case For Civil War Naval History

Cover Illustration: On the cover is the painting of the USRC *Hudson* during the 1898 Battle of Cardenas and her commanding officer Harry Newcomb of the United States Revenue Cutter Service. In this issue we will look at a regional and naval aspect of the United States Revenue Cutter Service (one of the forerunners of the modern United States Coast Guard.) Newcomb's service as both the commanding officer of a regional life saving station and of a combat vessel during the Spanish-American War demonstrated why he was one of the most highly respected officers ever to serve in the USRCS.

HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL MUSEUM
Local History. World Events.

About The Daybook® *and the Museum*

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The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command, Museums Division. 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.

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

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2010 Interns

The Director's Column

By Becky Poulliot

Summer 2010 is upon us, and with it comes two new summer interns. Since 2006, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's paid summer internship program provided an opportunity for aspiring college students to enrich their knowledge of museum studies through the application of historical interpretation of both local and world events. It is a win-win situation for our institution and the interns. They gain experience, and we gain additional enthusiastic staff. The museum always provides actual hands-on work with one-on-one mentorship. This year, the interns will research and develop educational programs and then present them at the museum's teacher workshop in August.

The museum's interns for 2010-At left is Kate Douglass,who is a rising senior at Virginia Tech. At right is Nicole Dressler who is a graduate student at Old Dominion University. They are developing programs for the teacher's workshop and are presenting programs for the museum education department. (Photos by Stephen Hebert)

Joining the museum staff this summer are Nicole Dressler and Kate Douglass. Both have impressive credentials.

Nicole Dressler is a native of Clarksville, Virginia and comes to the museum as a graduate student from Old Dominion University. She received her B.A. in History and a B.S. in Psychology from Longwood University in 2008. Currently, she is finishing her master's thesis in American History, specifically on labor in colonial Virginia. Nicole hopes to build on her experience here at the museum for a future pursuit of museum work or in preparation for a Ph.D. in American History.

Nicole is an active member in several academic honor societies and organizations. As an undergraduate at Longwood University, Nicole was an active member of Phi Alpha Theta, Mortar Board, Omicron Delta Kappa, and Psi Chi. While working on her graduate studies, Nicole served as a teaching assistant in the History Department teaching American and African history courses.

Kate Douglass, who is originally from Chesapeake, Virginia attended Great Bridge High School. She is a rising senior at Virginia Tech in the University Honors program and plans to graduate in May 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a minor in Political Science. At Virginia Tech, Kate recently served as Executive Historian and Fundraising Chair for the Phi Sigma Pi, National Honor Fraternity. Kate is also a member of Phi Alpha Theta and actively works with her school's history department. Following graduation, Kate hopes to pursue a Master of Arts in History focusing on American studies along with a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction. Upon the completion of this graduate coursework, Kate hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in History.

Here at HRNM, the staff believes firmly in collaboration and staying in touch with what's new in the field. New staff bring fresh perspectives and form the basis of the next generation of museologists.

Next time you are in the museum, take the time to say Welcome Aboard to Nicole and Kate.

Becky

Civil War Navy Game in the Works

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is the U.S. Navy's lead agent to commemorate the maritime aspect of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. One of the initiatives that the museum staff has been working on is a collectable trading card game. Based on the ships, personalities, and events of the four year struggle between the U.S. Navy and the Confederate States Navy, the game allows participants to learn about the importance of the Civil War's naval aspects.

As a genre, trading card games have been around for only about twenty years, but recently have become very popular among the younger generations of game players. Unlike traditional card games with fifty-two cards divided among four suits, trading card games have a unique themes. Popular movies and television shows such as *Star Wars* and *Pokemon* have been used and sold on the commercial market.

In the museum's game, the blockade of the Southern coastline is the central theme. Each player will take the role of Gideon Welles, the U.S. Secretary of the Navy, or Stephen Mallory, the Confederate Secretary of the Navy. The Confederate player's goal is to get blockade runners safely into Southern ports, while the USN's goal is to stop the blockade runners. Each side has the same tools that its respective fleet had during the war. The Confederate player has ironclads, forts, and special weapons like torpedo boats and undersea mines. The USN player counters with monitors, wooden steam frigates, and a large number of steamers.

Each player will have a deck of 150 cards in which to battle out the war. The game is not supposed to be a historical re-creation, but it is based on historical fact. Additionally, as the purpose of the game is to educate, each card has a historical fact about the unit that the card represents.

The game is currently undergoing playtesting. When it is ready, it will be available in a paper version and online in a PDF format. Two more decks are planned to cover the war on the rivers, famous personalities, and the global aspect of the war.

To learn more about the game, contact Gordon Calhoun at 757-322-2993 or gordon.b.calhoun@navy.mil. See more about the museum's other Civil War Navy 150 initiatives at civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com.

The 1798, 18-pounder cannon the museum acquired a few months ago is now on display. Already attracting attention from visitors, a more exciting and interactive exhibit is planned for the weapon. Artist conception of the exhibit at right. (Photo by Marta Joiner)

Current Exhibit Projects

New Exhibits in the Works to Mark Navy Commemoration

Museum visitors love to ask questions and make comments, and rightly so! A popular question is always, "Are you going to make any changes in the gallery?" The answer is always "yes." We make it a point to have exhibit projects in every stage of the planning process. In the upcoming months, museum staff will improve the permanent gallery. These upgrades are designed to take advantage of nationwide commemorations of the War of 1812 (2012-2015) and the Civil War (2011-2015).

The War of 1812 exhibit upgrade has already proceeded past its most difficult point, the installation of a 1798 naval gun. This 18-pounder "long gun" formed the main armament for smaller warships, and the secondary armament for larger warships. The term "18-pounder" refers to the weight of the ball that the cannon fires. The actual cannon weighs 4,700 pounds. It arrived in the gallery in May, after an engineering study made sure that the floor could bear the load, and a special platform was constructed to distribute the weight.

Phase two of the exhibit will include dynamic images of the War of 1812 and the foremost naval officer of that era, Stephen Decatur. By the time the war began, Decatur was already a national hero due to his courageous conduct during the 1804 bombardment of Tripoli. In October 1812, while in command of USS *United States*, he engaged and captured the British frigate *Macedonian*, an action that gained him further acclaim. Later, he was able to break out of New York in the frigate *President* on January 15, 1815. Captain Decatur was wounded when his ship was captured the next day by a superior enemy force, but he soon recovered and was given command of a powerful squadron. Decatur was often in Norfolk – in fact he married the mayor's daughter.

The museum recently acquired a sailor's box from the period. The wooden box is decorated with brass tacks and bears brass plates marked "USS Wasp," and "1809." USS *Wasp* was a sloop of war that operated in a squadron under Decatur in 1811. In 1812, Wasp fought HMS *Frolic* in one of the famous ship-to-ship actions of the war. *Wasp* was victorious but unfortunately was forced to surrender to a more powerful British ship that appeared. The captured *Wasp* served under the British flag only to sink off the Virginia capes in 1813. Plans to exhibit this rare item are underway.

The Civil War section of the museum will also receive attention in the upcoming months. The most significant upgrade will involve the CSS *Florida*/Underwater Archaeology exhibit. CSS *Florida*, a Confederate commerce raider, waged war by destroying Union merchant shipping. She succeeded for two years before the Union ship *Wachusett* seized her in Brazil and towed her to Hampton Roads in 1864. Here, in November 1864, *Florida* sank under mysterious circumstances.

The museum constantly tries to increase the number of artifacts on exhibit while keeping an eye on the design of the limited space available. The new *Florida* exhibit will feature forty-six different artifacts from the collection. Many of the most popular, such as the sailor's shoe and apothecary items, will remain. Joining these will

Exhibit Projects continued on page 5

One of the collections that the museum is nationally known for is its collection from the cruiser CSS Florida. *Just in time for the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the museum is currently in the planning stages of upgrading the exhibit to tell the story of the famous warship more effectively.*

Exhibit Projects Continued from Page 4

be shells from the ship's guns. Plus an interactive section of the exhibit will help visitors understand what kind of ships and cargo *Florida* raided during her career.

Historians work to democratize the study of the past by including the words and deeds of the common man and woman. HRNM's "Sailor" audio stations currently in the gallery support this trend by introducing visitors to four typical bluejackets. The audio recordings are short, first person narratives, edited from primary sources and recorded for the visitor's enjoyment. As part of the new Civil War exhibits, the "Sailor on Station" section of the museum will be re-made using some of the most up-to-date and exciting exhibit technology. Rather than listen to a recording, initial plans call for a computerized exhibit program that will allow visitors to interact with the sailors. This project in is in the very beginning of development and will serve as a test case for the introduction of dynamic and exciting exhibit technology.

As always, these gallery changes will be supported by our ongoing educational programs, research, and special events. Keep your eye on *The Daybook* to take advantage of these new exhibits as they appear!

Attention Internet Nation!

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum Has Expanded Its Presence on the Web

The museum's main website is http://www.hrnm.navy.mil. We also have expanded our presence on the Internet to other popular social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger. On Facebook and Twitter, you can keep up to date with the museum's events in real time. On our blog, you can read more about the museum's collection and events. We have future endeavors planned, so keep a watch for them!

Museum Web site: www.hrnm.navy.mil

Blogger: hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com, look for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum "Page" and become a "fan."

Twitter: www.twitter.com/hrnm

The Fighting Captain of the United States Revenue Cutter Service

The Career of Commodore Frank Hamilton Newcomb, USRC

By William H. Thiesen

In the spring of 1940, when asked by the United States Navy to identify a historic Coast Guard officer who could provide the namesake for a new warship, Coast Guard commandant Vice-Admiral Russell Waesche singled out Commodore Frank Hamilton Newcomb as the best candidate. The only American warship named for a member of the United States Revenue Cutter Service, USS *Newcomb* (DD-586) proved a hard fighter during World War II. The plucky *Fletcher*-class tin can sank a Japanese submarine at Saipan, and also provided fire support at Saipan, Tinian, the Palaus, and Iwo Jima. She also torpedoed the Japanese battleship *Yamashiro* to help defeat the enemy in the Battle of Surigao Strait and sustained five kamikaze hits at Okinawa, killing or wounding dozens of her crew.

Newcomb and her battle-hardened crew exemplified the personality of the ship's namesake whose distinguished career is largely unknown today. Born in Boston in 1846 and the oldest of three children, Frank Newcomb had the sea in his veins. His father, Captain Hiram Newcomb went to sea at the age of fifteen and commanded his own merchant ship before reaching the age of twenty. Frank followed in his father's footsteps sailing on board his father's ship as a boy and at the age of sixteen, he served on board another merchant vessel on a round the world trading voyage. During his formative years at sea, Newcomb saw that the merchant service was a true melting pot of mariners and seamen and came to know men from every sort of ethnic and cultural background.

Described by shipmates as humble, Newcomb began his naval career during the Civil War. In 1863, at the age of seventeen, Frank received an officer's appointment as an Acting Master's Mate on board the mortar schooner USS *Para*, which served in numerous engagements as part of the U.S. Navy's South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. In early 1865, he transferred to the USS *Arethusa*, a coaling vessel home-ported at Port Royal, South Carolina, a local military hub for the Union and a safe haven for slaves escaping Georgia and South Carolina plantations. Civil War colliers required large crews of coal heavers and many freed slaves, or "contrabands," found work on board vessels such as Newcomb's *Arethusa*.

A veteran of the American Civil War as a U.S. Naval officer, and the Spanish-American War as part of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, Frank Hamilton Newcomb served for over forty years in the sea services. He was a progressive thinking man and considered to be one of the finest officers of the Revenue Cutter Service. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

At the end of the war, Newcomb tendered his resignation and returned to Boston to make a living. First, he tried his hand as a merchant then as an officer in the merchant service, voyaging to Europe and the West Coast. But American merchant shipping saw significant declines after the war and Newcomb failed to enjoy the same prospects and prosperity he had seen as a merchant mariner before the war. By 1869, he began working in the nation's booming railroad industry, including the Alabama & Chattanooga Railroad and later with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe.

By the early 1870s, Newcomb had had enough of life on land and returned to the sea. He applied for an appointment with the United States Revenue Cutter Service and in 1873, received a third lieutenant's commission in that service. Newcomb spent the rest of the 1870s serving as a junior officer on board cutters *Petrel*, *Crawford*, and *Johnson*, achieving the rank of second lieutenant in 1878.

Newcomb first made a name for himself beginning in 1879 when he received an appointment as an Assistant Inspector for the United States Life-Saving Service. During the late-nineteenth century, the Life-Saving Service suffered from corruption in certain areas and its superintendent, Sumner I. Kimball, chose to appoint officers from the Revenue Cutter Service as his inspectors to help minimize local cronyism and political patronage within the service. Regarding Newcomb's appointment, the *Wilmington* (North Carolina) *Post* commended Superintendent Kimball as an "excellent judge of character" for such a "wise and judicious" selection.

For the next three years Newcomb helped oversee the Sixth District, which

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This is the company of the Pea Island Live-Saving Station on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. At Newcomb's direction and insistence, the company was manned by African-Americans. The idea of having any African-Americans in the Life-Saving Service, much less integrated companies in the South, met fierce opposition. Newcomb, however, pressed hard on the issue and put together one of the finest outfits in the service. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

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included Life-Saving Service stations from southeastern Virginia south through the treacherous Outer Banks of North Carolina. In April 1879, when Newcomb arrived at his new duty station in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, he found a firestorm of political and racial tensions among crew members of the life-saving stations and the local communities located adjacent to them. Newly franchised African Americans enjoyed appointments to federal jobs like never before. At the same time, the hardscrabble lifestyle of coastal residents meant that even seasonal jobs, such as those with the Life-Saving Service, were highly sought after. A handful of families that traced their ancestry back through generations presided over the Sixth District's area and nepotism often found its way into local Federal appointments.

Newcomb had always believed in merit-based promotion for deserving personnel no matter what their ethnic or cultural background. The senior inspector for the Sixth District, Lt. Charles F. Shoemaker (U.S. Revenue Cutter Service) and Superintendent Kimball felt the same way. With white Life-Saving Service crew members often refusing to serve with blacks in racially mixed "checkerboard" crews, Newcomb championed the cause for a station manned by an all-African American crew. For this crew, he selected the Pea Island Life-Saving Station, located on the Outer Banks north of Cape Hatteras. He appointed a former slave, the distinguished Civil War veteran and locally recognized waterman Richard Etheridge, as the station's head keeper.

In 1880, the newly formed African American crew began service at Pea Island despite white opposition. Newcomb worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure the establishment and success of this crew. Within a year of instituting Pea Island's African-American crew, arsonists burned down the station. To prevent sabotage a second time, Newcomb camped out at the station site during construction of a new building. For the next seventy years, an African American crew served at Pea Island participating in many dramatic rescues, including the 1896 Gold Life-Saving Medal rescue of the schooner *E.S. Newman*. While no one should diminish the accomplishments of Pea Island's courageous life-savers, it was Newcomb who risked his career and reputation to fight for the station's African-American crew in a racially charged postwar South.

Late in the 1890s, Newcomb found himself in the midst of a new sort of conflagration. During much of the 1880s and 1890s, Newcomb had served nearly continuously on Revenue Service cutters at stations along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and in Alaskan waters. In 1891, he received promotion to first lieutenant and in September 1897 he assumed command of the cutter *Hudson*, which was home-ported in New York Harbor. In the succeeding months, tensions mounted between the United States and Spain reaching a crescendo in late February 1898 with the sinking of the USS

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Maine in Havana, Cuba.

On the second day of April, *Hudson* slipped her moorings in New York and steamed down the East Coast to Virginia and the Norfolk Naval Shipyard to take on arms, armor, and ammunition. The ninety-four-foot *Hudson* had a tugboat design, drew ten feet of water, and had a top speed of twelve knots. However, she proved technologically advanced for her day. She was the service's first steel-hulled cutter and she was powered by a triple-expansion reciprocating steam engine. Designed to serve harbor patrol duties on the East Coast, *Hudson* included a complement of three line and two engineering officers. She also carried eighteen enlisted men, including two warrant officers, a cook, a steward, and a boy.

In the months leading up to the Spanish-American War, the Norfolk Navy Yard was tasked with outfitting and arming the American fleet and consequently the facility was bustling with activity when *Hudson* arrived. Soon after *Hudson* moored at Norfolk, the shipyard's commandant visited the cutter and asked Newcomb how soon the cutter could get underway. Newcomb answered, "As soon as we get food and coal." The commandant yelled back, "Why, you have no guns and your protecting plates are not finished." To which Newcomb replied, "I know that, but we could go." *Hudson* later received an armament of two six-pound rapid-fire guns located fore and aft and a Colt automatic "machine" gun on top of the aft deckhouse. She also had a layer of 5/8ths-inch armor bolted around her pilothouse and the deckhouse. On April 21, Congress declared war with Spain and with the Revenue Cutter Service on a war-time footing and oversight of cutters transferred from the Treasury Department to the Navy, Newcomb found himself serving in the U.S. Navy once again.

On Saturday, April 23, after fitting out at Norfolk, *Hudson* steamed south toward Key West, Florida, a staging area for U.S. naval operations around Cuba. Off the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the cutter met with a severe storm, including hurricane force winds, thunder, lightning, mountainous seas, torrential rain, and hail the size of "hen's eggs." The storm nearly washed away the cutter's pilothouse, but the new armor plating held everything together against the heavy seas. After the storm, Newcomb steered *Hudson* up the Cape Fear River and moored off Wilmington, North Carolina, to make repairs and re-stow her gear and supplies.

The USRC Hudson *normally patrolled the waters of New York City. The Navy called her into service for the Spanish-American War and ordered Newcomb to bring the cutter to the Norfolk Navy Yard (shown above at the Yard) to be outfitted for war. (NHHC photo)*

By Thursday, May 5, *Hudson* finally arrived in Key West and on May 9 *Hudson* took up her assigned duty station off the coast of Cuba. Likely due to her relatively shallow draft of ten feet, the naval command assigned *Hudson* to enforce the blockade between the ports of Cardenas and Matanzas. On May 10, Newcomb used *Hudson* to reconnoiter the approaches to the bay, which was defended by three Spanish gunboats. Newcomb tried his best to draw the gunboats out for a fight, but they refused to steam outside the safety of the bay. Newcomb later found that the two main channels into the bay were blocked with debris and considered steaming his way through it, but feared the presence of underwater mines. After further reconnaissance, he found a third channel that contained no mines, but was passable only at high tide with shallow-draft vessels. Newcomb developed a plan to capture the gunboats by sending shallow-draft warships through the un-mined channel. Through the squadron commander Commander J.F. Merry on board the gunboat USS *Machias* (PG-5), he presented the plan to the fleet commander Rear Admiral John Watson on board the flagship USS *Dolphin*. Merry would later take much, if not all, the credit for planning this raid in after action reports. In his own reports, the humble Newcomb did not take any credit for himself. Only through the histories written by Newcomb's crew are we made aware of the cutterman's tactics and planning.

The torpedo boat USS Winslow *(TB-5) cruises the Delaware River in 1898. Like all other U.S. Navy torpedo boats of the time, the hull of the Norfolk-based torpedo boat was always painted a distinctive olive green color. All other Navy ship were painted either white in peacetime and slate grey in war time. (HRNM photo)*

On Wednesday, May 11, the day after pitching his proposal to Admiral Watson, *Machias* and the Norfolk-based gunboat

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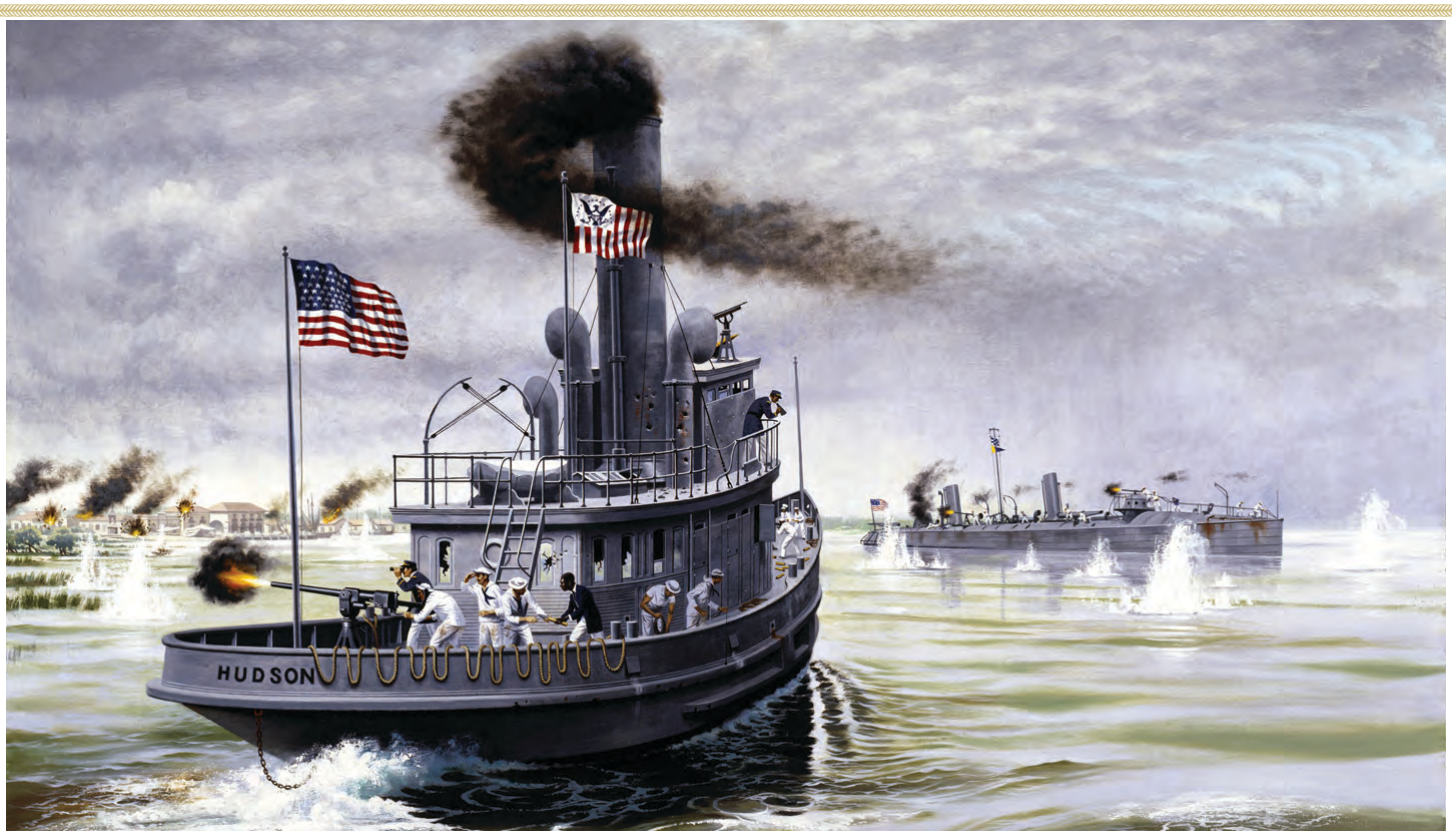

With Newcomb barking orders from the bridge, the company of the cutter USRC Hudson*, provides covering fire with their six-pounder guns en route to rescuing the disabled* Winslow*. Each of the guns fired 145 shells during the action. The cutter was successful in reaching and towing the disabled torpedo boat out of harm's way. (1989 USCG painting by Doug Ellis)*

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USS *Wilmington* (PG-8) and Norfolk-based torpedo boat USS *Winslow* (TB-5) appeared outside Cardenas Bay to help carry out Newcomb's plan. The *Machias* drew too much water to enter the bay and participate in the attack on Cardenas, so she laid down a bombardment of the barrier islands to eliminate any Spanish snipers near the shallow entrance to the bay. Afterward, *Hudson*, *Wilmington*, and *Winslow* slowly steamed through the narrow passage toward Cardenas Bay. Between noon and 1:00 p.m., the vessels had entered the bay and *Wilmington*'s captain, Commander Coleman Todd, sent *Hudson* in search of the gunboats on the western side of the bay and ordered *Winslow* search the eastern side of the bay. While *Hudson* carried out her survey, *Winslow* and *Wilmington* met about 3,500 yards offshore from Cardenas, where Commander Todd had spied the gunboats moored along the city's waterfront.

Todd next directed *Winslow*'s commanding officer, Lt. John Baptiste Bernadou, to investigate the situation with *Winslow*. Armed with torpedoes and three rapid-firing one pound guns, drawing only five feet, a top speed of nearly twenty-five knots, compared to *Hudson*'s twelve, *Winslow* seemed perfectly suited to capture or destroy the Spanish gunboats. Originally stationed at the Norfolk Navy Yard, *Winslow* was the fifth of the *Foote*-class of swift torpedo boats. *Winslow*'s crew included twenty enlisted crew and the dashing Bernadou. *Winslow*'s executive officer, Ensign Worth Bagley came from a distinguished North Carolina military family that included brother-in-law Josephus Daniels, future Secretary of the Navy during World War I.

As often happens in combat, the original plan of attack proved useless after the battle began. Bernadou had ordered *Winslow* to steam toward the waterfront in reverse, probably to make full use of the stern-mounted centerline torpedo tube. But as soon as *Winslow* reached a distance of 1,500 yards from the wharves, Bernadou found himself within the white range buoys used for aiming enemy artillery and the Spanish defenders surprised the torpedo boat with salvoes from heavy artillery hidden along Cardenas's waterfront, in addition to one-pound guns blazing from the moored gunboats.

The firefight quickly escalated. Having witnessed the shelling, *Hudson* steamed

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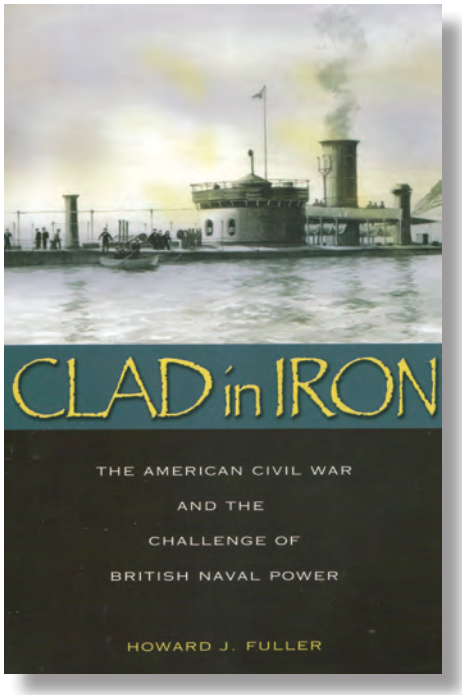
Famed Naval artist Henry Reuterdahl painted this image of the Battle of Cardenas as seen from USS Winslow *(TB-5). It shows* Hudson *in the center and* Wilmington *(PG-8) off to the right. (1898 painting by Henry Reuterdahl)*

Book Reviews

Clad in Iron: The American Civil War and the Challenge of British Naval Power

By Howard J. Fuller

Reviewed by Matthew Eng



Civil War naval histories form a niche market in the spectrum of scholarship written about the five year conflict. As time draws nearer to the beginning of the sesquicentennial celebration of the war, a cursory examination of previous scholarship reveals an obsession with fleet operations and technology. It is no surprise then, that monographs written about naval battles and leaders of the Union and Confederacy will continue to increase in their appeal. Yet what is perceived as new scholarship about the dawn of modern naval warfare is more often a metaphorical "sleight of hand" to previous arguments. University of Wolverhampton Senior War Studies lecturer Howard J. Fuller's recent work, *Clad in Iron: The American Civil War and the Challenge of British Naval Power*, offers readers a completely different approach. This work diplomatic interpretation of the Civil War's naval history, instead of just another operational one.

Howard J. Fuller. *Clad in Iron: The American Civil War and the Challenge of British Naval Power*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-59-114297-3 . $23.95.

Amidst the greatest test in our nation's history, many changes occurred on all fronts in the United States. Among the daily domestic affairs, a far more pressing issue occurred between policymakers in Washington and London was the complicated international relations between the British Empire and the divided United States. Fuller discusses these issues thoroughly from a naval perspective, examining the diplomatic and strategic goals of Britain's budding ironclad navy in direct response to American sea power.

Clad in Iron is not a narrative of conflict so often found in Civil War historiography. The focus instead resides in how conflict was ultimately avoided with Britain. Even in the wake of an international crisis like the *Trent* Affair, an unnecessary war with Britain would have been an equally unprepared one between fleets on either side of the Atlantic. That possibility of war from the British perspective, Fuller suggests, became a necessary challenge to the growth of a large maritime force in the pre-*Dreadnaught* era.

Clad in Iron begins with an informative discussion on why Anglo-French naval policy before the Civil War inexorably altered the course of change in American naval affairs. Although the British ironclad program "began purely as a response to the establishment of the French ironclad fleet of Napoleon III," focus shifted after the introduction of the American program in the first two years of the war. It is interesting to note how Fuller details the naval rivalry between France's *La Gloire* and Britain's *Warrior*, which occurred well before the *Monitor* and *Virginia* ever engaged in combat. Naval architects like Captain Cowper Coles and Dupuy de Lôme are given due credit to the evolution and revolution of ironclad navies.

Several chapters are devoted to the "war within," as the debate and hesitancy of Union political and military officials mirrored that of Great Britain. The need to satisfy Washington for a sufficient coastal force, with the possibility of foreign intervention, became the ammunition to the argument for the ambitious program initiated by Ericsson. With regards to Hampton Roads, it is one of Fuller's main points to mention how *monitors* were used not for their capacity to become the scourge of Confederate fleets and coastal force, but as a technological "check" to competing programs in Britain as well. The *Trent* Affair is used "in direct contrast to the battle of Hampton Roads," because "the Anglo-American naval balance of power was completely upset" in a mere three month window. Fuller also suggests the greatest loser in mid-19th century naval innovations were the French. Through clash of armor, Union and Confederate ironclad warships confirmed British suspicions while damning the French's narrow disregard for such vessels. It would be multi-turreted ships that survived and evolved after the war, not broadside and sail ironclads as the French suspected.

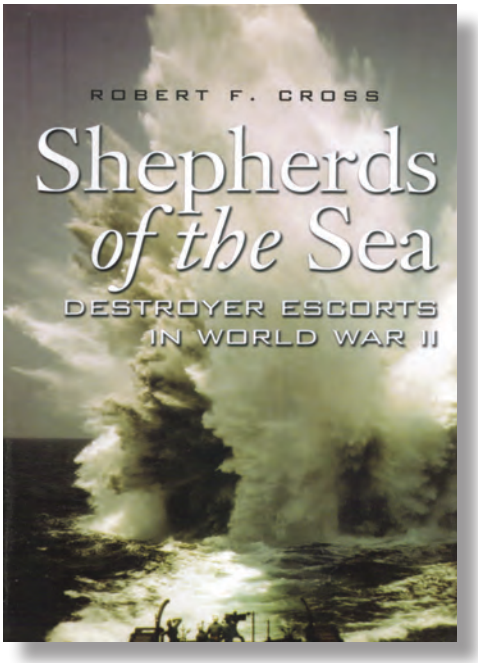
One of *Clad in Iron's* hallmarks is the method Fuller uses to formulate his arguments. Interpretations of events are taken from letters and reports written by sailors, foreign ministers, and politicians. The analysis is evenhanded and methodical, often offering comparisons in minute details like tonnage and budgetary restrictions. Indeed, Fuller intends to leave no stone unturned. Flaws to *Clad in Iron* are merely superficial. More attention might be paid in future scholarship on the relationship between Britain and Confederate blockade running, which is mentioned only in passing. Fuller also gives very little credit to the Union's broadside ironclad USS *New Ironsides*, which many consider to be a comparable vessel to the *Monitor*.

Civil War historians will champion the level of care taken by Fuller to accurately document and chronicle the challenge British naval experts and politicians had with the American ironclad program. His work is highly recommended for scholars and layman alike who might find interest in the unspoken foe across the Atlantic chessboard. *Clad in Iron* is not the definitive Civil War naval history written on the heels of the sesquicentennial, but it is a fantastic and fresh start.

Shepherds of the Sea: Destroyer Escorts in World War II

By Robert F. Cross

Reviewed by Stephen Hebert



During the early stages of the Second World War, Hitler's U-boats operated virtually unchallenged as they sank tons of Allied merchant shipping. Effectively hunting in "wolf packs," Hitler's U-boats picked off unguarded merchant vessels throughout the Atlantic Ocean and in plain sight of Virginia beach-goers in broad daylight. The lambs were blindly leading each other to the slaughter. Robert F. Cross chronicles the pivotal Battle of the Atlantic and the ships which turned the tide of battle in *Shepherds of the Sea: Destroyer Escorts in World War II*. The story and role of the destroyer escort (DE) is recounted by Robert Cross as he tells the stories of the ships and men who braved the rough, icy, U-boat infested Atlantic to safely deliver needed war material to the European theatre.

Robert F. Cross. *Shepherds of the Sea: Destroyer Escort in World War II*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-59-114144-0. $36.00.

Smaller than destroyers, DEs only displaced about 1,500 tons and were lightly armed with 3-inch guns and depth charges. However, they were manoeuvrable and could be built quickly. The Navy contracted 625 of the vessels during World War II.

Shepherds of the Sea is written as both narrative and oral history, retelling the trials and tribulations faced by the teenagers who became men on these ships during the dangerous game of cat and mouse that was the Atlantic during the Second World War. The main point of the book is not just to tell the stories of the ships themselves but of the extremely young boys who made up their crews. Of the many personal accounts throughout the book several come from boys, who were seventeen and not out of high school, and prevaricated their way into military service out of patriotic zeal.

Intended as a serious and at times graphic history, Robert Cross balances the mood with humorous and light hearted stories. One recruit was able to fool recruiters by wearing contact lenses. He started to read P-A-T but was stopped for reading "patent pending" on the eye chart. Another humorous story relates that F.D.R., a strong advocate for the construction of DEs, did not even know what the ships looked like and needed to ask "what is that vessel over there" while gazing at the USS *Gendreau* (DE-639) in Pearl Harbor.

In order to give the best account possible of DE actions in the Atlantic, Robert Cross also uses oral history accounts from surviving U-boat captains and crew members, who themselves were teenagers, to balance the story from the side of the hunter turned hunted. In spite of trying to kill each other some sixty years ago, a few surviving German sailors have become friends with their former foes. Many accounts speak of the stressful moments of actually boarding one of Hitler's U-boats, disabling scuttle charges, and capturing the coveted Enigma machine. One of the more interesting and lesser known stories from the Battle of the Atlantic concerns the USS *Buckley* (DE-51) and *U-66*, in which American sailors engaged in hand-to-hand combat repelling boarding Germans. Another story describes the first seizure of an enemy ship, *U-505*, in more than 129 years.

Whereas a majority of the book focuses on the Battle of the Atlantic, the contributions made by DEs in the Pacific do not go unmentioned. Many DEs saw action in both theatres, fighting U-boats and *Luftwaffe* in the Atlantic, and fending off Japanese *kamikazes*, subs, *kaitens*, and the bulk of the Imperial Navy including the battleship *Yamato* in the Pacific.

Throughout the book the author digresses into other stories about the history of DEs from the shipbuilding company of Gibbs & Cox to the wartime assistance to Great Britain through Lend-Lease. Although these events are relevant, however, they do not seem to fit in the chapters in which they appear, causing the flow of the story to become choppy at times. Within the book, there are also multiple editorial overlooks such as the misspelling of Iwo Jima as "Iowa Jima" several times over six pages.

Despite consulting research institutions in the Hampton Roads area, there is an oversight of the function Naval Station Norfolk had in the training of the DEs. The author focuses more on the boot camp at Great Lakes and the Subchaser Training Center in Miami.

Aside from the secondary source literature, the author also interviewed a great number of surviving DE sailors. Many others could not make it into the book, but were invaluable in helping him understand the history of the DE. Photographs provided primarily come from the USS *Liddle* (DE-206) since the captain wanted photographic documentation of life onboard the DE, even though this was against Navy regulations. The book also serves as a platform to extol F.D.R. Jr., captain of USS *Ulvert M. Moore* (DE-442), along with the book's foreword provided by his son Christopher Roosevelt. There are three appendices that list where DEs were built, the ones lost to enemy fire, and those manned by Coast Guard crews. In the first six months of 1942, Hitler's U-boats sank 682 Allied ships, but after the introduction of the DE in 1943 the "wolves" rarely harassed the "flock."

Civil War Naval History 150

A Few Reasons to Remember the Other Side of the War

One of the great landmarks in television history was filmmaker Ken Burns' *The Civil War,* which aired on public television in 1990. The nine-part documentary received the highest ratings in public television's history, reflecting its production quality and its innovative methods of presenting history to the general public.

When PBS broadcast the series, the Sage was a young intern at the National Museum of the United States Navy and was working with Civil War naval history for most of the summer. He remembers quite vividly the episode that covered the events of 1864. Specifically, he remembers long and vivid descriptions of the siege of

The Museum Sage

Petersburg to the point that he felt like one of the solders in the trenches. Then out of nowhere, like a guided missile flying past you, Farragut and his squadron came blasting into Mobile Bay and the torpedoes were damned, and then….back to the trenches in Petersburg for more vivid and lengthy discussions on how rotten it was to be in them.

It would be unfair to single out Ken Burns for the oversight of the naval aspect of the Civil War. It is, unfortunately, the norm. Some of the biggest names in Civil War history are guilty of neglect and have made similar errors.

The Sage also understands that there is a powerful genealogy connection to ground units. Many people today can find some family connection to a unit that fought in the Union and Confederate armies. The Sage has seen a monument to a local Civil War volunteer regiment as far north as Hart, Michigan (about 250 miles up the west coast of the Lower Peninsula).

This image comes from Confederate "cotton bonds" sold by agents to raise money in Europe. It is also representative of why one should put the naval side of the Civil War on par with the ground side: cotton and ships. The South needed money and had cotton. Europe had the money and wanted cotton. Confederate ships needed to take cotton to Europe. The North needs to prevent all of the above. Gentlemen, you may begin fighting.

Additionally, the Sage has a relative that served at Little Round Top with Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's regiment while in the 124th New York (the "Orange Blossoms"). He later was captured and died shortly after the war from injuries suffered at the Andersonville Prison.

Along with the genealogy, the ground war also has the advantage that the public can visit the actual battlefields. One can stand at, and touch, for example, Marye's Heights, the Crater, and Little Round Top. With the Navy, it is awfully hard to visit the battles, unless one visits a fort or has a boat.

The Naval side of the war is usually summed up by the Battle of Hampton Roads (the second day, not the first), Mobile Bay, and the Mississippi River. On the other hand, the Battle of Gettysburg has been studied and written (and rewritten in "alternate history" books) and into infinitum. It is time to bring the needed attention to the naval side of the American Civil War. The next issue of *The Daybook* is going to be devoted solely to this subject. In the meantime, here are some numbers and facts to wet the palate:

Number of Guns at One Location

Let us start with numbers: One aspect of the Civil War that always catches the public's attention is its size, particularly the number of men mobilized, causalities, and the size of the campaigns.

At the Battle of Gettysburg, the Army of Northern Virginia fired 140 guns before "Pickett's Charge." The Army of the Potomac brought about 300 guns to the battle itself. At the Battle of Fort Fisher, the U.S. Navy fleet had 660 guns with a combined broadside weight of 22 tons. At the battle, it has been estimated that the Navy fired 600 shells per minute.

Number of Guns in One Unit

A U.S. artillery brigade had at the maximum 24 guns with a combined shot weight of 288 pounds. The most powerful warship in the U.S. Navy was the steam frigate USS *Minnesota*. The ship carried 34 guns (could carry 48) with a combined shot and shell weight of 2,440 pounds.

The Sage Continued on Page 13

This is a Currier & Ives print of the assault and capture of Island Number 10 on the Mississippi River and brings us to Reason #2 for Civil War naval history. The importance of the Mississippi River can not be understated. The river was the superhighway of the United States. Without control of it, all of the U.S. Army's horses, wagons, and men were not going anywhere. (NHHC image of a 1862 Currier & Ives print)

The Sage continues from page 12

Mobilization of the Fleet

The U.S. Navy in 1860 had a respectable fleet of about 50 ships, but it needed more, a lot more, to enforce the blockade (see below). The Department of the Navy began the second largest mobilization of ships in American history, second only to the mobilization for World War II. Four years later, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles reported to Congress that the U.S. Navy had 671 ships in its inventory.

Building this armada required a serious increase in the Navy's budget, which leads to another under-appreciated "advantage" that the North had over the South: access to cash. In more scholarly terms, the nation's banks and the men who had ties to the international banking system had their headquarters in Northern states. As a result, Congress was able to grant the U.S. Navy a budget increase of over 1000% between 1861 and 1863 ($10 million vs. $183 million), allowing the Department to buy whatever ship it needed.

The Confederate Government had a mobilization of its own since it basically started with zero ships. However, by the end of the war, it could claim a rather large one. Stephen Wise in his indispensable book *Lifeline of the Confederacy* lists 381 vessels that served as blockade runners. Some of these blockade runners served in the war from beginning to end, such as *Syren*, and others were captured on their first run. While without the blockade runners and men willing to risk their lives and money (mostly money), the Confederate ground forces would have been destroyed early in the war. Lacking arsenals and factories, the South imported 600,000 Enfield Rifles, ammunition, and clothing from Europe.

Mobilization of Human Resources

Along with a mobilization of ships, there was a mobilization of human resources. The short version of the American Civil War is that the North had access to money, was more industrialized, had better infrastructure, and had a large population. The South, on the other hand, had the advantages that came with a rural society. such as the fact that the men tended to be better horsemen and better marksmen.

Not listed, however, is the North's maritime tradition. In the North, there were thousands of ships used for everything from hunting whales to transporting goods (often Southern cotton) and people across the Atlantic and around the world. Knowing how to operate and manage a ship takes experienced men. It is safe to say that even if no officer "Went South" in 1861, the U.S. Navy would have had a severe shortage of officers needed to man the 671 ships it would eventually acquire. As a result, the U.S. Navy heavily recruited civilian ship officers to volunteer for Naval service and accepted a large number of "citizen sailors." By the end of the war, the vast majority of the officers in the U.S. Navy were volunteer officers, not Academy graduates.

Innovation

Both navies are to be commended for the imagination and innovation as both sides had serious obstacles to overcome if their side were to win. The South was outnumbered on land about two to one. At sea, however, it was outnumbered over twenty to one. The South sought to even the odds with innovative weapons such as ironclad warships, undersea mines, and spar torpedoes. As for the ironclad programs, the most fascinating part is not the vessels themselves, but how they were built. As most shipyards were in the North, Southern builders found creative ways of building ships using makeshift yards in a plantation cornfield (CSS *Albemarle*) or taking a boiler tube, making it into a submersible, and shipping it by rail to where it was needed (*H.L. Hunley*). Additionally, the Confederacy procured blockade runners with innovative hull designs that achieved among the fastest speeds in the world.

Geography

The infrastructure of the United States was slowly converting to rails and roads, but waterways dominated the landscape. The nation's rivers became critical battlegrounds for control of the country's original superhighways. Additionally, every large Southern city, except Atlanta, was located next to a river or the ocean.

Compelling Stories

History would be nothing without compelling stories. The naval side has just as many as the ground side. Of course there is the drama of the Battle of Hampton Roads. Here a few others:

The spy vs. spy intrigue between Union and Confederate diplomats trying to get or stop ships built in England and France.

-At one point the U.S. Army had a bigger fleet on the Mississippi River than the U.S. Navy.

-The career of CSS *Alabama* and her duel with USS *Kearsarge*

-The career and capture of CSS *Florida*

-The drama of the blockade runner *Ella & Annie*, a ship whose capture exposed European involvement in the war.

-The irony of USS *Daylight*, a small steamer that could pull no more than five knots that somehow captured 15 blockade runners.

What has been written here is a micro piece of what Civil War naval history has in store. Look for more in the special edition next issue. Better yet, be prepared to read up on the subject. We will have a list.

Newcomb continued from page 9

at top speed from the eastern shore and received permission from Commander Todd to engage the enemy along with the *Winslow*. By 2:00 p.m. the battle was on between the Spanish gunboats and artillery on one hand, against *Winslow*, with her one-pounders; *Hudson*, with her six-pounders; and the distant *Wilmington*, with her heavier four-inchers. During the gun duel, *Hudson*'s Assistant Engineer Nathaniel E. Cutchin oversaw the rapidly changing engine operations, while Second Lieutenant James Hutchinson Scott and Third Lieutenant Ernest E. Meade commanded *Hudson*'s six-pound guns.

According to an eyewitness account, Spanish guns blazed from half-a-dozen directions, but they were difficult to spot because the enemy used smokeless powder and the Americans were blinded by their own black powder ammunition. To help

In recognition of his heroic deeds at Cardenas, Congress singled out Newcomb and awarded him a gold medal entitled the "Cardenas Medal of Honor." His company received silver and bronze versions of the medal. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

Lt. Newcomb navigate the shallow bay and see his way through the fog of *Hudson*'s guns, Second Assistant Engineer Theodore G. Lewton mounted the deckhouse behind the pilothouse and helped Newcomb direct the cutter's movements. As Newcomb later wrote, "Each and every member of Hudson's crew . . . did his whole duty cheerfully and without the least hesitation." The ship's boy, sixteen-year-old Moses Jones of New Bern, North Carolina, fed ammunition to the aft gun while Ship's Steward Henry Savage passed up shells from the magazine. Savage, a veteran of the Civil War, shouted up to Engineer Lewton, "Hot time in the old town tonight, Mr. Lewton!"

By now the battle was hotly contested, with Spanish gunners closing the range of the *Winslow*. As the battle raged, accurate enemy fire disabled *Winslow*'s steering gear and one of her engines. Lt. Bernadou called out to the passing *Hudson*, "I am injured; haul me out." In addition to the battle damage, a strong breeze was pushing the torpedo boat toward the Spanish batteries and into shoal water too shallow for the ten-foot-draft *Hudson* to navigate. Newcomb reacted quickly, steering *Hudson* through the muddy shallows toward *Winslow* while the cutter's propeller churned up brown water. *Hudson* steamed as close as she could while Ensign Bagley and a number of crew members stood on *Winslow*'s deck to receive a heaving line from Lieutenant Scott. The intensity of the enemy fire increased and Bagley yelled out, "Heave her. Let her come. It's getting pretty hot here." But by the time the vessels closed enough for Scott to heave the line, an enemy shell exploded among *Winslow*'s men, mortally wounding three men and instantly killing a fourth as well as Ensign Bagley. Bagley had become the first American military officer killed in the Spanish-American War.

Despite the enemy shelling, strong winds and shallow water, *Hudson*'s crew managed to secure a three-inch hawser to the *Winslow* and tried to tow her out of range. The hawser snapped due either to the strain or enemy fire, but Newcomb determined to succeed a second time, exclaiming ,"We will make it fast this time." Newcomb plowed further into the mud, backing and filling to carve a path to the stricken *Winslow*. *Hudson*'s crew tied the torpedo boat alongside the cutter in tugboat fashion and Newcomb finally hauled the torpedo boat out of range of the Spanish guns.

The men of the *Winslow* and *Hudson* served with honor during the Battle of Cardenas Bay. *Winslow* withstood eighteen shell hits. Her smokestack and ventilator were shot down, her armored conning tower was disabled, and her hull holed just above the water line. The enemy killed five of her crew, including Ensign Bagley, and wounded several more. Suffering from a

Lieutenant John Bernadou served as Winslow's *first commanding officer. Before the war, Bernadou served as an intelligence analyst and as a weapons officer at the Navy's Torpedo Station in Newport, Rhode Island. (NHHC photo)*

serious shrapnel wound, Bernadou was transferred with the other wounded to the *Wilmington* for medical attention. Congress recognized three of *Winslow*'s crew with the Congressional Medal of Honor for their heroism. Despite the fierce fighting experienced during the day, *Hudson*'s work was not finished and Newcomb received orders to ferry *Winslow*'s dead and wounded to Key West. That evening, *Winslow*'s casualties were loaded onto the *Hudson* and Newcomb steamed the cutter to the fleet's base of operations, arriving at 7:00 a.m. the next morning.

During the summer, *Hudson* continued to serve as the guard ship for Cardenas Bay, stationed farther east than any other blockade vessel. While blockading the approaches to the bay, *Hudson* captured three vessels carrying stores to the enemy at Cardenas and destroyed a fourth. In addition, *Hudson* landed two detachments of Cuban insurgents and their equipment inside the bay to reinforce the insurgents surrounding the port city. *Hudson* also fired on a suspected Spanish torpedo boat. The vessel proved to be a hulk filled with explosives by the Spanish in hopes of destroying an unsuspecting U.S. Navy vessel. The explosives ship was later destroyed by the USS *San Francisco*.

Newcomb continued on page 15

When asked in 1940 to provide a name for a Fletcher-*class destroyer, Coast Guard commandant Russell Wasesche forwarded Newcomb's name without hesitation. The destroyer enjoyed a very active operations career in World War II. During the 1945 Okinawa campaign, the ship suffered several kamikaze strikes, however the crew kept the ship afloat and she survived the war. (NHHC photo)*

Newcomb continued from page 14

One night while on duty at Cardenas, the Spanish liner *Monserrat* attempted to break through the blockade at nearby Matanzas. Signal rockets shot up from the American guard ship and *Hudson* poured on the steam to assist. *Hudson* made her best speed ever with flames shooting out of her smoke stack, but *Hudson* arrived too late and the *Monserrat* made the safety of the Cuban harbor. It was rumored that the Spanish ship carried a cargo of war munitions and pay for the Spanish troops, and thus Newcomb tried to devise a way to capture the moored vessel while patrolling outside of Matanzas.

At 4:00 a.m. on Monday, May 16 Newcomb declared, "I think that we will take a look at the Monserrat." In the darkness of the early morning, Newcomb quietly steered his cutter under the walls of the fort overlooking the harbor, just inside the white ranging buoys of enemy artillery. Day broke just as *Hudson* approached *Monserrat* and the sun lit up the cutter. Completely exposed by the light and vulnerable to Spanish artillery, Newcomb ordered *Hudson* out of the bay at full speed. He had, however, confirmed the identity and location of the steamer for the fleet's commander.

Hudson continued her patrol operations through July and by mid-August, at the conclusion of the brief war, the cutter returned to a rousing welcome at her homeport of New York City. In a special message to Congress, President William McKinley commended *Hudson* for rescuing the *Winslow* "in the face of a most galling fire" and Congress recognized *Hudson*'s crew with specially minted medals for their valor. A joint resolution provided Lt. Newcomb with the war's only gold medal awarded by Congress and the Revenue Cutter Service advanced Newcomb seven points in the promotion system, fast-tracking him to the rank of captain by 1902. Congress awarded *Hudson*'s line and engineering officers silver medals, and awarded bronze medals to the enlisted crew members, including Ship's Steward Henry Savage and Boy Moses Jones. This proved the first time in Revenue Cutter Service history that African Americans received such medals for heroism in combat.

By 1900, Newcomb had reached the age of fifty-four and served in a variety of service roles for the next decade. Highlights of his final ten years included assignments as Supervisor of Anchorages (an early version of captain of the port) for New York Harbor, and Superintendent of Construction of Life-Saving Stations for the Atlantic Coast and Great Lakes at a time when dozens of such stations were erected on those shores.

In 1910, after forty-six years of service, Frank Newcomb retired at the mandatory age of sixty-four. He concluded his career with the rank of captain commandant, a flag rank by today's standards, and in 1927, received the rank of commodore on the retired list. In 1943, Newcomb died of natural causes and was interred with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. From his birth in Boston to the christening of a World War II warship in his honor, the story of Frank Newcomb had spanned a century. It also involved three of the nation's sea services, or possibly four if one includes the U.S. Navy, the Revenue Cutter Service, the U.S. Life-Saving Service as well as the modern Coast Guard.

Throughout his career, Newcomb achieved success through modesty and humility and dedicated his life to the betterment of others regardless of their background or station in life. In addition to his role in saving *Winslow* in the Battle of Cardenas Bay, Newcomb also played an important part in instituting Pea Island's African American crew, helping pioneer the role of minorities in the Coast Guard. Newcomb's courage and determination prevailed not only in the field of battle against a foreign enemy, but also in the struggle for racial equality against entrenched cultural norms and political forces in his own country. His career and life proved a testament to the Coast Guard's core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty.

USN United, One Last Time

This is a group picture of the Japanese Mission to the United States, posing with the officers of the U.S. Navy at the Washington Navy Yard. Taken on May 15, 1860, this picture includes men who would become household names when they engaged in battle against each other just a year later. Officers pictured and their role in the Civil War are Somerville Nicholson (USN commander of two ships during the war), Henry H. Lewis (CSN officer) David Dixon Porter (USN admiral), Charles C. Simms (CSN officer on CSS *Virginia*), William McBlair (CSN commander), Samuel DuPont (USN admiral), Franklin Buchanan (commanding officer of CSS *Virginia* and CSN flag officer during the war), William L. Maury (CSN officer), and Richard T. Allison (CSN paymaster).

The steamer USS *Powhatan* and the officers brought the Japanese delegation from Japan to San Fransico and then to Washington, D.C. The delegation established the first formal diplomatic ties between the United States and Japan.

In Our Next Issue...

Daybook Special Edition

150th Anniversary of the American Civil War at Sea