THE DAYBOOK®

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 1

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Direct questions or comments to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at 757-445-8574, by fax at 757-445-1867, e-mail at hrnavalmuseum@navy.mil or write:
The Daybook, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607.
The museum is on the World Wide Web at http://www.history.navy.mil/museums/hrnm/index.html.

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Our Programs Hit the Mark

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

This year began, and continues to unfold, at a breakneck pace. The 2015 Special Events activities have been true partnership efforts, geared toward attracting the museum's core audience—active and retired military members, their families and the local community. We tried something new this year. Individual foundation board members "adopted" events by assisting in the planning and conducting of the activities and the post-event receptions. This collaboration has resulted in stronger programs and greater attendance at our events.

For example, Lego Shipbuilding Day, now in its fourth year, brought in more than 2,000 people on February 7. Lego Day has become the museum's signature event because it pushes all the buttons for successful programming. It's fun, educational, and mission-related. Lego Day focuses on core artifacts: the ship models displayed in the gallery. People are able to use templates and build a copy of our models using Legos. The program is hands-on and educational, but also so much fun that we have a fan-following.

Our second event, held on George Washington's birthday, was a Tea commemorating the signing of the Treaty of Ghent. This was a first for us because we partnered with interpreters from the Regency Society, the Daughters of the War of 1812, Norfolk Chapter, and Fort Norfolk. Dressed in reproduction costumes, the interpreters served tea while conversing as though it were 1815. The breadth of their knowledge was amazing—visitors commented that they felt transported back in time.

Becky Poulliot addresses special guests Rear Adm. Ann Phillips (Ret), WWII WAVES veterans Judith Hathaway and Isabella Bryant, retired Chief Petty Officer Jo-Anne Teel, and Vice Adm. Nora Tyson during the HRNM Women in the Navy Event March 4.

The third event, a panel presentation for Women in the Navy, was another first: a program specifically related to women in the military. We had representatives from the watershed moments of naval history spanning from WWII through today's Navy. One of our visitors told us, "The Women in the Navy event held on the fourth was beyond fantastic! I laughed. I cried. I met wonderful women that served yesterday and continue to serve today."

Our last event for the spring was more than 150 years in the making, yet it was worth the wait. On April 22 we unveiled a new addition to our Civil War gallery: the recently conserved —and one of a kind— flag from the Confederate gunboat CSS *Hampton*, which was built in 1862, right across the Elizabeth River from where our museum now stands. Taken from the gunboat prior to its destruction on the James River in April 1865, this rare artifact was generously donated to our museum by The Heritage Museum in Dayton, Virginia, nearly two years ago.

Since then, it has been painstakingly restored and specially mounted for public display. After reading more about CSS *Hampton* in this issue, I think you would agree that her ensign was probably in pretty rough shape even before it was removed from the stricken vessel.

Kenneth D. Alford, author of *Civil War Museum Treasures: Outstanding Artifacts and the Stories Behind Them*, served as our keynote speaker on the evening of April 22, as we closed the Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration. Mr. Alford gained an expertise on nautical and battle flags while writing his book, and we will rely on him as we continue to interpret the flag. Thanks to the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation for hosting the event and to an anonymous donor who underwrote the reception for the foundation.

Regardless of when you can visit, take the opportunity to examine our new accession. Here's to seeing you soon, whether it is at a special event or a walk-through of the gallery.

Becky

Volunteer Service Achivements

Michelle Davenport- 250 hour award
Dan Chamberlin- 4000 hour award
Jim Cole- 1500 hour award
Sharon D'Angelo- 500 hour award
Tony D'Angelo- 1250 hour award
Jim Elliot- 1250 hour award
Lou Gull- 1750 hour award
Dick Hanna- 3000 hour award
Mike Hodgis- 1500 hour award
Hunt Lewis- 9500 hour award
Allen Mandel- 1250 hour award
Russ Martin- 500 hour award
John Mullen- 3000 hour award
Ernie Nucup- 1000 hour award
JJ Reed- 1750 hour award
James Reid- 3500 hour award
Jane Riley- 750 hour award
Robert Rode- 2500 hour award
Doc Shoop- 11500 hour award
John Stansell- 4500 hour award
Sally Tully- 1750 hour award
Frank Zurschmit- 3000 hour award

Based upon the depiction of the ships in "The Blowing up of the James River Fleet, on the Night of the Evacuation of Richmond," illustrator Allen C. Redwood was probably influenced by existing illustrations of City-class Union ironclads of the Mississippi River Squadron. In fact the ironclads depicted here bore little resemblance to the ironclads Virginia II, Fredericksburg, *and* Richmond, *and even today some details of their design and construction remain wrapped in conjecture. (Hampton Roads Naval Museum collection/ Hoen and Co.) INSET: Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes, the squadron's last commander (Naval History and Heritage Command Image)*

First Man In, Last Flag Out

How a Union Captain Saved a Confederate Squadron's Last Ensign

By Clayton Farrington
Editor, *The Daybook*

On Sunday afternoon, April 2, 1865, Confederate Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes, commanding the James River Squadron protecting Richmond, Virginia, had his dinner interrupted aboard his flagship *Virginia II* by a most unenviable order from Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory.

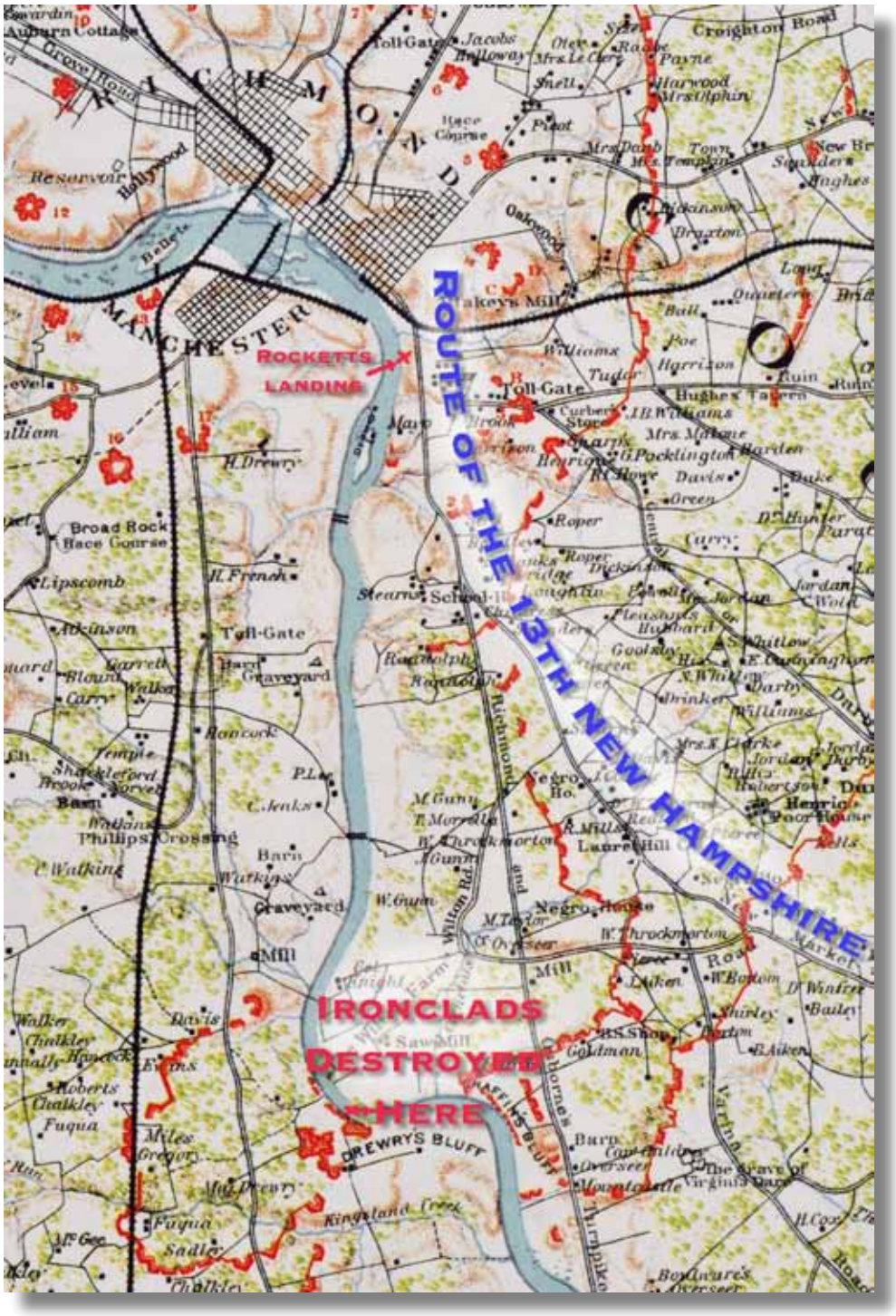
"This was rather short notice," recounted Semmes later. "Richmond was to be evacuated during the night, during which I was to burn my ships, accoutre and provision my men, and join General Lee!" No stranger to destroying ships, Semmes had burned over five dozen Union merchantmen as captain of the commerce raider *Alabama* earlier in the war. His task this night would be to destroy only three ironclads, four gunboats, one torpedo boat and a steam tug; all that was left of the squadron after four years of struggle and setback which pushed its operating area from Norfolk all the way back to just a few miles below Richmond. Despite the order to destroy his own squadron after only six weeks as its commander, Semmes calmly disseminated the orders to his captains, methodically planning the timing of the operation and emphasizing the need for secrecy. He then stepped out onto the ironclad's deck, taking in one last afternoon of seeming normalcy on the stretch of the James River where his squadron held sway. "I looked abroad upon the landscape," Semmes recalled, "and contrasted the peace and quiet of nature, so heedless of man's woes, with the disruption of a great Government, and the ruin of an entire people which were at hand!" Semmes continued:

"So unsuspicious were the Government subordinates, of what was going on, that the flag-of-truce boats were still plying between Richmond, and the enemy's head-quarters, a few miles below us, on the river, carrying backward and forward exchanged prisoners. As those boats would pass us, coming up the river, filled to overflowing with our poor fellows just released from Yankee prisons, looking wan and hollow-eyed, the prisoners

would break into the most enthusiastic cheering as they passed my flag. It seemed to welcome them home. They little dreamed, that it would be struck that night, forever, and the fleet blown into the air; that their own fetters had been knocked off in vain, and that they were to pass, henceforth, under the rule of the hated Yankee. I was sick at heart as I listened to those cheers, and reflected upon the morrow."

As it turned out, not all of the flags that inspired such relief and comfort to those prisoners that idyllic afternoon were struck the next morning. This is the story of a particularly rare Confederate ensign that inexplicably still waved the following morning, just long enough to entice a young Union officer to unknowingly risk his life trying to obtain it. Because of his split-second decision, the flag survived to become the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's latest major accession. This is also the story of how memories and accounts of history's watershed moments can intersect and diverge.

As long as there has been war, there have been war souvenirs. Few have been as desirable as guidons or ensigns; the very symbols of enemy units, their commanders, or even their nation. Records of the Civil War frequently mention the targeting of enemy flags and the valiant attempts of Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines on both sides to keep their own guidons and ensigns flying high under intense fire. After defeat, these symbols were sometimes solemnly transferred from vanquished to victor; the significance and sanctity of the object maintained for posterity. All too often amongst the smoke, confusion and anarchy of battle, however, no orderly transition occurred and the victors plundered anything of value they could carry away from the field of battle as spoils of war. For the museum's newly acquired ensign, however, one man's desire to carry it away would ultimately save it, preserving the iconic artifact from Rear Adm. Semmes' doomed squadron for generations to come.



*At around 3 A.M. on April 3, 1865, the ironclads of the Confederate James River Squadron were destroyed and its Sailors and Marines evacuated upriver to Manchester, across from downtown Richmond. Meanwhile, Union soldiers of the 13th New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, including Capt. William Ladd, made their way through Confederate lines toward Richmond along the New Market Road. (*Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*)*

Grand Beyond Description

For the sheer scale of anarchy and wholesale plunder, few venues of the war could equal Richmond, Virginia, early on the morning of April 3, 1865. Abandoned by virtually all who had the means to escape, the former capitol of the Confederacy had for a few hours been the domain of neither army, and the many spoils to be had were under the reign of flames set by retreating Confederate forces. Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell, commanding the Department of Richmond, had found it impossible to coordinate an orderly withdrawal in concert with the local defense brigade the day before, as virtually all Confederate civilian and military personnel, including Confederate Navy midshipmen and even convalescing soldiers brought out of local hospitals, were already engaged in ensuring the safe conduct of the Confederate Cabinet and the treasury out of the city.

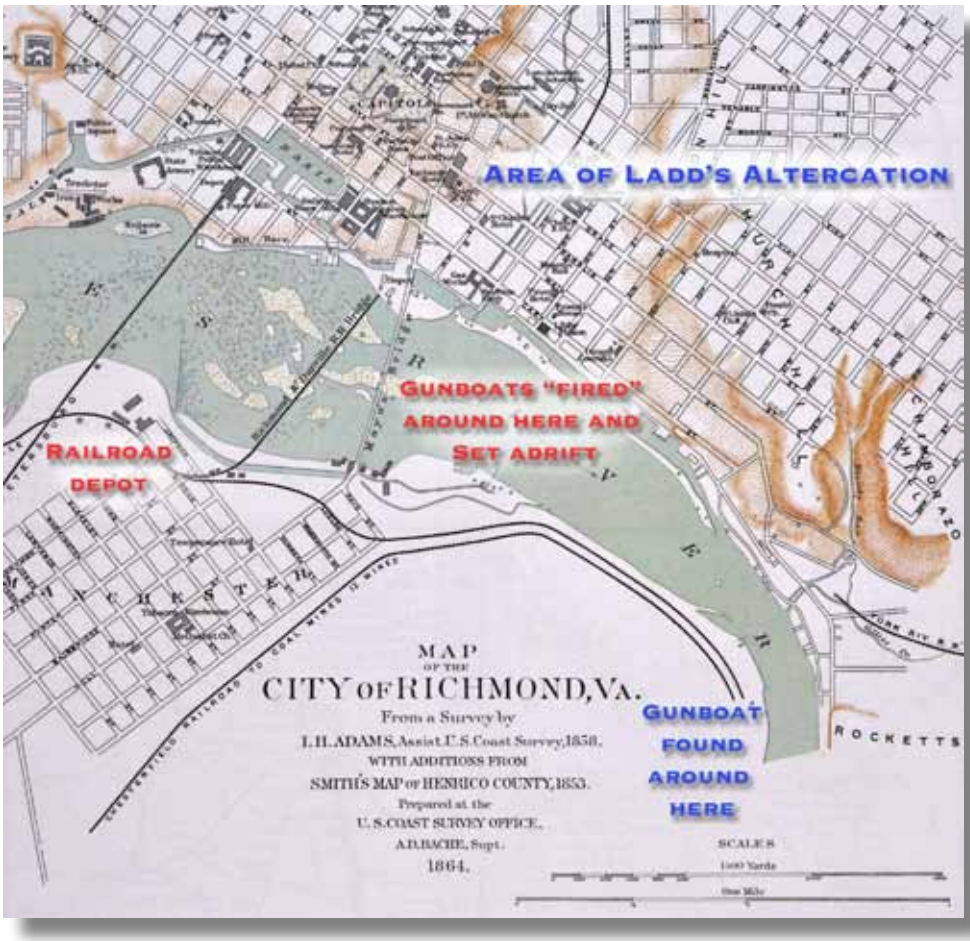
Due in part to the lack of personnel capable of keeping order on the evening of

April 2, according to the Richmond *Whig*, "a saturnalia had begun in the city." Mass looting began after midnight as tobacco and cotton stores were put to the torch by Ewell's retreating men. Outraged residents, male and female, black and white, along with disaffected and drunk deserters and even escaped convicts helped themselves to the whole of the Richmond waterfront as building after building fell to the rapacious rabble, then to the spreading flames.

Meanwhile, under the guns of Fort Darling, still guarding the city at Drewry's Bluff a few miles downriver, the final orders of the James River Squadron were grimly being carried out. "It was here I designed to blow up the iron-clads, throw their crews on board the wooden gunboats, and proceed in the latter to Manchester, opposite Richmond, on my way to join General Lee," Rear Adm. Semmes recalled. "My officers and men worked like beavers. There were a thousand things to be done."

"It was between two and three o'clock in the morning, before the crews of the iron-clads were all safely embarked on board the wooden gunboats, and the iron-clads were well on fire," Semmes wrote. "My little squadron of wooden boats now moved off up the river, by the glare of the burning iron-clads. They had not proceeded far, before an explosion, like the shock of an earthquake, took place, and the air was filled with missiles. It was the blowing up of the *Virginia*, my late flag-ship. The spectacle was grand beyond description."

After midnight, the evacuation across Mayo's Bridge to Manchester is in full swing as storehouses and magazines burn. By the time Raphael Semmes' gunboats reached Manchester, only two disabled engines and scattered rolling stock were left. (Currier and Ives engraving)



According to Semmes, his Sailors and Marines arrived at Manchester after sunrise on his remaining gunboats, including Hampton *and* Nansemond*, and afterward they were set on fire and cast adrift. According to Captains George A. Bruce and William J. Ladd of the 13th New Hampshire Regiment, one of those gunboats, believed to be* Hampton*, ended up near Rocketts Landing that morning, and Ladd managed to climb aboard and take down a Confederate ensign before she exploded. (*Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*)*

The Greatest Tragedy of History

"Presently a bright fire was observed in the direction of Richmond," wrote another observer, Captain George Anson Bruce of the 13th New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, who was at his post in charge of the sentinels just behind Union lines no more than a mile or so to the east of Drewry's Bluff. "Soon other fires appeared, spreading rapidly and increasing in volume, which quickly ignited up the whole northern circle of the heavens." Bruce continued:

"Then the line of the James River was marked by the burning of the Confederate Fleet. No words can adequately picture the burning fleet and town. The scenic display was equal to the catastrophe in the greatest tragedy of history. While we were

Captain William J. Ladd appears at the upper right of this group portrait taken in April 1865 of Brevet Major General Charles Devens (center) and his staff on the portico of the Virginia Executive Mansion in Richmond. It is probable, though not definitive, that Captain George A. Bruce appears at the opposite end of the back row. Despite his youthful appearance, Ladd's dash before dawn through the streets of the forsaken city was not indicative of foolhardiness borne of inexperience. He had enlisted on September 13, 1862, at the age of 18, tasting combat for the first time during the Battle of Fredericksburg in December when his unit lost 41 Soldiers. Promoted to sergeant major within a year and then into the officer ranks, he fought his way through most of the major Virginia battlefields of the war, including Suffolk and Cold Harbor. (Library of Congress image)

standing almost speechless, wondering at the scene, just to our left a huge volume of smoke like an illuminated balloon shot high into the air, followed by an explosion that shook the earth under our feet. The echoes rumbled heavily along the banks of the river and then died away in the distance. The ironclad Richmond *had blown up. This was followed by other explosions of greater or less magnitude, and in a few moments the James River fleet, which had so long been the pride of the citizens of Richmond, was no more."*

In at the "Killing"

Convinced that Richmond was falling, Bruce sent a note shortly after 3 A.M. to his "tent mate," Captain William Jones Ladd, who was also attached to the staff of their division commander, Brigadier General Charles Devens, "advising him, if he wished to be in at the 'killing,' to join me at once." "Being the owner of a fleet horse," wrote Bruce, "he was very soon thereafter by my side."

Capt. Bruce then utilized one of the Confederate deserters then streaming through the lines to lead his men back through the path from whence he came. They carefully traced their way through three lines of cheval de frise, arbitis, and fraise (wooden barriers consisting mainly of sharpened stakes), separated by lines of buried "torpedoes" (known today as minefields), finally reaching row upon row of deserted tents and abandoned artillery pieces. Bruce assigned subordinates to guard the guns of several fortifications and batteries along a half-mile stretch of the front before realizing Brig. Gen. Devens didn't even know the Richmond lines had been breached.

A portrait of William J. Ladd published in The Capture and Occupation of Richmond *(1900) by George A. Bruce. Although he is referred to as a major in Bruce's book, he was a captain in April 1865. According to his entry in the* Twenty-Second Secretary's Report of the Class of 1866 of Harvard College *(1924), Ladd was "brevetted [awarded the temporary rank of] Captain for gallant and meritorious services" after being wounded at the Battle of Fort Harrison, also known as the Battle of Chaffin's Farm and New Market Heights, in September 1864. He left the Army as a major in June, 1865.*

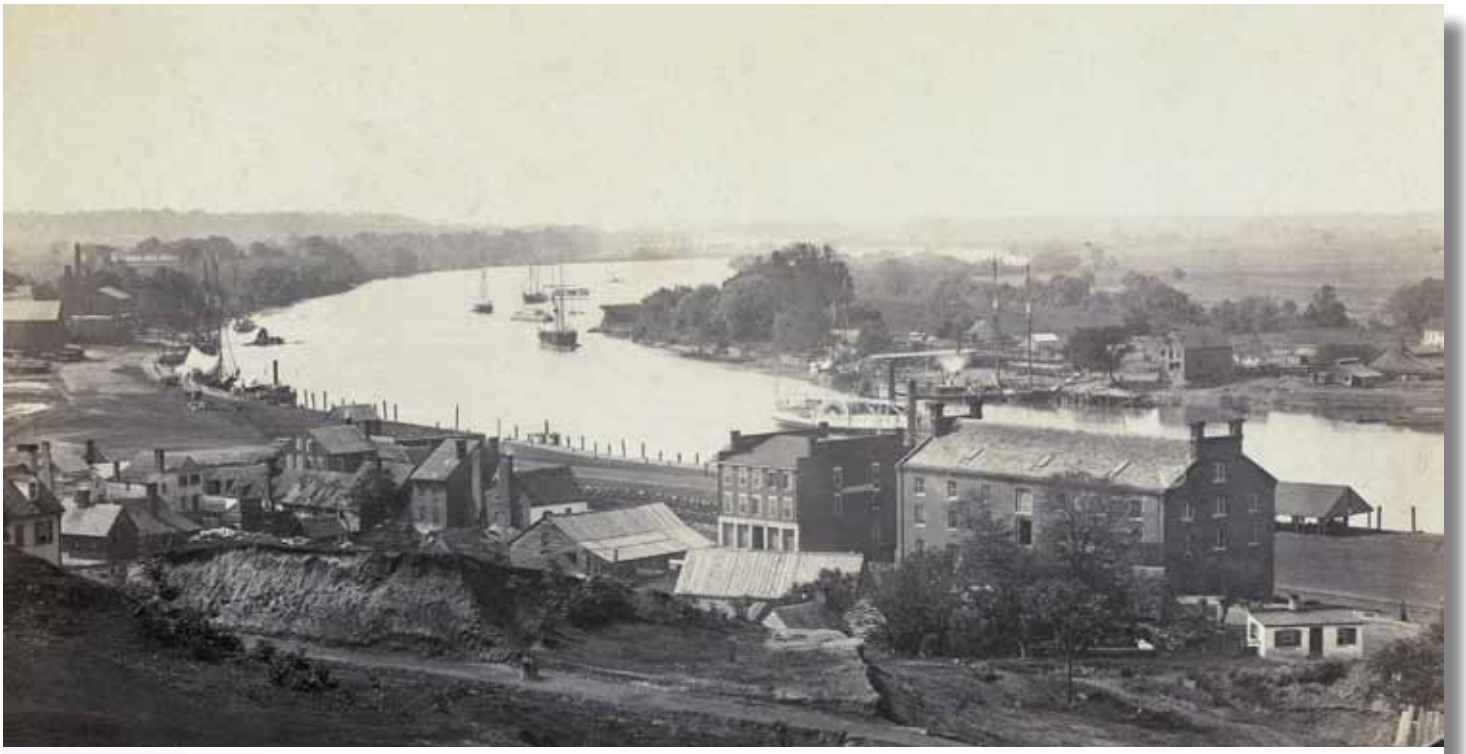
Seen from Manchester, the remains of Mayo's Bridge stretch north nto Richmond in this composite of photos made by the Matthew Brady Studio in 1865. (Morgan Riley/ National Archives image)

Rockett's Landing as seen from the south bank of the James River. (Library of Congress image)

Bruce was the designated staff officer on the picket line. It was incumbent upon him to inform Devens of this major development. Meanwhile, an errant soldier of the Ninth Vermont Infantry Regiment had blown himself up trying to cross the Confederate barriers, and in response Devens ordered a halt to the advance, still unaware that Capt. Bruce had already penetrated the lines.

While Bruce made his way back through the obstructions at 5 A.M. to inform Devens of the latest developments, Capt. Ladd and a Maj. Joseph. C. Brooks of the Ninth Vermont rode onward towards Richmond. According to Bruce, Maj. Brooks was attached to another brigade staff in the same capacity and duty status as he had been that morning. Brooks therefore also had to return to the pickets under his command, while Ladd rode on alone, becoming the first Union Soldier to enter Capitol Square.

According to Ladd's own account recorded over two decades later by S. Millett Thompson, former second lieutenant with the 13th New Hampshire and the regiment's historian, however, Brooks was only one of "a party of about a half a dozen" officers and men who had already rode well past the Confederate breastworks and obstructions by 6 A.M. At that time, Devens' division received the official order to move into Richmond. What happened next could fairly be described as a horserace; one that Ladd ended up winning. "As Richmond came into view," recalled Ladd, "we began to run our horses to see who would be the



TOP: *In this photograph taken in April 1865 of Rocketts Landing from Libby Hill looking towards the south bank of the James River, it is possible but not definite that the remains of the Confederate School Ship* Patrick Henry *are on the left bank of the river bend in the background. Troops from the 13th New Hampshire Regiment would have crossed through this area on their way into Richmond. (Library of Congress image)* ***ABOVE:*** *The same area in April 2015. (HRNM Photo by M.C. Farrington)*

first to reach the city. My horse outran the rest, and I finally entered the city without molestation or opposition; and entirely alone rode directly up the streets and entered the Capitol grounds through the street in the rear of the governor's house."

Pandemonium Broken Loose

On the James River, Semmes' plan was still in motion, albeit behind schedule, as his gunboats waited for Lt. Gen. Ewell's forces to finish crossing a pontoon bridge from the north bank of the river. "Owing to this delay," wrote Semmes, "the sun—a glorious, unclouded sun, as if to mock our misfortunes—was now rising over Richmond."

As the last gunboats slowly made their way past the bridges to their destination on the James' south bank, Semmes noted, "In the lower part of the city, the School-ship *Patrick Henry* was burning, and some of the houses near the Navy Yard were on fire… In short, the scene cannot be described by mere words, but the reader may conceive a tolerable idea of it, if he can imagine himself to be looking on Pandemonium broken loose."

After Capt. Ladd rejoined his unit after his solo ride into Richmond, Bruce wrote that he and Ladd made their way along the New Market Road towards Richmond from the eastern side of the James River, where it curves to the northeast into the city. "The city was wrapped in a cloud of densest smoke, through which great tongues of flame leaped in madness to the skies," Bruce wrote of his first sight of Richmond. "Added to the wild tumult of the flames, ten thousand shells bursting every minute in the Confederate arsenals and laboratories were making an uproar such as might arise from the field when the world's artillery joins in battle."

Before reaching Richmond, Capt. Bruce passed through Rockett's Landing, the Confederate naval yard, at the southeastern end of an arc of incendiary destruction that stretched for two miles along the north bank of the James, where he encountered

Shown in 2013 after its donation to the Naval History and Heritage Command by The Heritage Museum and before its conservation, this handwritten note is the main primary source identifying CSS Hampton *as the source of the flag. It reads in part, "Flag of Confed. Gun Boat Hampton burnt in James River at the taking of Richmond. The flag was taken from the burning ship by Lieut. Ladd (13th N. Hampshire) Gen. Devens staff." (NHHC Photo by Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Tim Comerford)*

Richmond Mayor Joseph Mayo, whose brother "in a state of extreme excitement and alarm, told me that Richmond was in control of a mob and would soon be totally destroyed by fire which no one was attempting to control."

Devil Take the Hindmost

Despite what Bruce called the "maelstrom of smoke and fire" brought on by Ewell's scorched earth departure and the subsequent power vacuum, Semmes wrote that about 500 of his Sailors, "loaded down…with pots, and pans, and mess-kettles, bags of bread, and chunks of salted pork, sugar, tea, tobacco, and pipes," somehow arrived at the Manchester section of the city on the south bank, directly across the river from the warehouses and mills at the epicenter of the destruction. "Amid flames and smoke and tumult and disorder," the admiral recalled looking across the river, "the enemy's hosts were pouring into the streets of the proud old capitol."

Meanwhile, the last of the Confederate cavalry's rear-guard had made it across the smoldering Mayo's Bridge into Manchester. "Some of the young cavalry rascals—lads of eighteen or twenty—as they passed, jibed and joked with my old salts, asking them how they liked navigating the land," remembered Semmes, "and whether they did not expect to anchor in Fort Warren [the prison in Boston Harbor] pretty soon?"

Semmes watched the last cavalry troops leave. "It was every man for himself," Semmes recalled, "and d—l take the hindmost." Despite feeling utterly abandoned by his government, without "so much as a pack-mule to carry a load of provisions," and having seemingly no way to join Lee's forces, the admiral still proceeded with plans to finish the destruction of his squadron as if everything were going according to plan.

"The first thing, of course, after landing my men," wrote Semmes, "was to burn my wooden gunboats." "This was done," he added. "They were fired, and shoved off the landing, and permitted to float down the stream." Semmes then marched his men several blocks to the Manchester railroad depot. In a feat of improvisation that saved the remainder of his squadron from capture, his engineers brought a derelict railroad engine back to life, making it to the provisional Confederate seat of government in Danville only an hour-and-a-half before Union troops tore up a critical section of the railroad track leading from Manchester.

Rogue Sailors in Richmond?

Two events involving Ladd early on the morning of April 3, recorded by both Bruce and Thompson, the 13th New Hampshire Volunteers' historian, affect the circumstances of Ladd's fateful encounter with the gunboat *Hampton*. In his *The Capture and Occupation of Richmond*, published over a half-century after the events it describes, Bruce writes from the vantage point of a witness, claiming his information came from "a transcript of events and experiences… recorded by the writer at the time." In contrast, Thompson's *History of the Thirteenth New Hampshire Regiment* display Ladd's recollections, made 22 years after the war, as first-person accounts, almost in the style of an affidavit.

The first event happened to Ladd during his solo ride to Capitol Square just before dawn. Capt. Bruce wrote, "As [Ladd] was riding up Franklin Street near the Ballard and Exchange Hotel, one of a group of sailors from a Confederate gunboat rushed out from the sidewalk with a drawn cutlass and endeavored to stab him." "Warding off the blow," Bruce continued, "he rode on, and after wandering through the city without

further molestation he came back and joined General Devens."

"Near the grounds was a bridge running across the street from an old hotel, the Ballard, I think," Ladd told Thompson in 1887. "At this bridge was a squad of Confederate soldiers on the sidewalk. One of them drew an old Navy cutlass, ran out and made a lunge at me as I came up. I drew my sabre, in defense, and charged upon him, when he retreated and his companions merely laughed without assisting him or opposing me."

"I think he was intoxicated," Ladd surmised.

The Skiff on the North Bank

The central event of our flag's story is also told in two different ways, yet the subtle differences between them are even more perplexing.

Capt. Bruce wrote that, as the division approached the river when passing through Rockett's Landing, "a gunboat was seen anchored in midstream, from which a Confederate flag was still flying." Bruce continued:

"Major William J. Ladd, of Devens' staff, jumped from his horse and rowed in a boat to the ship. He quickly ran up the mast, secured the flag, and had just stepped ashore when the magazine blew up and scattered the gunboat in fragments from bank to bank. This flag he now retains at his home in Milton [Massachusetts]."

And now for Ladd's own description of the event as given to Thompson:

"I was in the Capitol grounds as early as 5:30am[sic]. I saw no flag on the Capitol at that time. After looking about the grounds and vicinity for a few minutes, and realizing I was alone in the city, I rode back towards Rocketts, and when near there met a white Union cavalryman – the first Union soldier I had seen in Richmond that morning. We tied our horses, took a skiff and rowed out to a rebel war ship in the James, and captured two Confederate flags then flying upon her. I pulled down the larger flag, the cavalryman the smaller one, and we rolled them up and tied them to our saddles. These were the first and only flags of any kind – Federal or Confederate – that I saw in Richmond that morning. I still, 1887, have this flag. Soon after we secured these flags the vessel blew up."

First Man In, Last Flag Out
Continued on Page 22

The *Hampton* Class

Commander Matthew F. Maury's Gunboats

Shortly after the founding of the Confederate States Navy, competing visions emerged about what type of vessels would achieve the nascent nation's strategic objectives. Navy Secretary Stephen Mallory argued that technological innovation would make up for lack of numbers. He told Naval Affairs Committee Chairman C. M. Conrad in May 1861:

"I regard the possession of an iron-armored ship as a matter of the first necessity. Such a vessel at this time could traverse the entire coast of the United States, prevent all blockades, and encounter, with a fair prospect of success, their entire Navy…But inequality of numbers may be compensated by invulnerability; and thus not only does economy but naval success dictate the wisdom and expediency of fighting with iron against wood, without regard to first cost."

Confederate States Navy Secretary Stephen Mallory, who championed casemate ironclads for the Confederate Navy. (Library of Congress image)

Cost, as well as the industrial capability, were serious impediments to building a technologically advanced navy. Not everyone agreed that a small number of very expensive ironclads, despite their supposed invulnerability, would compensate for the overwhelming numerical advantage the U.S. Navy held. A very different approach was advocated by the renowned oceanographer Commander Matthew F. Maury, who believed that constructing plenty of "Jeffersonian-type" gunboats, a "contemporary manifestation of a recurrent theory that wars may be fought economically with mosquito fleets," would be essential during the defensive naval war he knew the Confederacy was fated to fight.

Maury not only designed a gunboat, but also an economical production system in which many "standard ships" could be made simultaneously at shipyards throughout the Confederacy. Congress authorized construction of 100 "Maury Gunboats," appropriating $2,000,000. On January 19th, 1862, Maury reported confidently to Commodore William F. Lynch, who as "Mosquito Fleet" commander in northeast North Carolina would have been one of his greatest benefactors, "most of the engines and boilers are provided for, and by the end of the week I hope to be able to say that in 90 days or less all the hulls will be ready for the machinery."

Unfortunately for Maury, the lethality displayed by CSS *Virginia* against the sloop-of-war USS *Cumberland* during the Battle of Hampton Roads only 48 days later burnished Mallory's reputation, and he used his clout to kill Maury's rival shipbuilding program. He advised President Jefferson Davis on March 29 that "$2,000,000 appropriated for the [Maury] gunboats… be expended upon building iron-clad vessels; and I suggest… the expediency of completing those vessels already commenced according to the original design but of making iron-clad gunboats of the others as far as the appropriations will allow."

By then, only CSS *Hampton* and *Nansemond* had been completed at Norfolk Navy Yard. As for the handful of other gunboats under construction there that Mallory hadn't managed to kill outright, they shared a similar fiery fate to CSS *Virginia* when the city was evacuated by Confederate forces in May. By

Commander Matthew F. Maury depicted in a U.S. Navy uniform in a 1923 painting by E.S. Hergesheimer. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

A 1/2" to 1 foot scale model of the Hampton-*class gunboat CSS* Nansemond *in the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's gallery, made by C. Lester McLeod. INSET: The only known drawing of the gunboat, depicted below Chaffin's Bluff on the James River by Lieutenant Walter R. Butt, CSN, in March, 1865. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)*

early June, Norfolk and virtually every other major shipyard in the Confederacy had fallen under Union control. The ersatz yards left over continued to attempt making Mallory's hulking, resource-intensive behemoths that would sometimes run aground shortly after launching. Out of 50 contracts and starts, only 23 Confederate ironclads, most inferior in practically every respect to those of their northern adversaries, were commissioned into service during the war.

Although he was shunted off to Europe that autumn to perform other assignments during the remainder of the war, Maury could take solace that his son John would ultimately command his father's brainchild, CSS *Hampton*, as a Confederate naval officer.

Although she never left the James River during her career, *Hampton* racked up an eventful combat record, participating in the Battle of Dutch Gap in August 1864 and operations against Fort Harrison and Chaffin's Bluff later that fall. Of the eight ships sent on a mission late-January 1865 to neutralize City Point as a logistics base for Lt. Gen. Ulysses Grant, the James River Squadron's last offensive operation, only the ironclad *Fredericksburg* and gunboat *Hampton* managed to breach Union obstructions at Trent's Reach.

"I may mention as an instance to the severity of the enemy's fire," wrote *Hampton's* acting skipper Joseph D. Wilson afterward, "that 810 balls and slugs were found on the deck of the *Hampton* after she had anchored near Chaffin's Bluff."

"It seems almost miraculous that we should have passed through this fiery ordeal unharmed," wrote Lieutenant Walter R. Butt, who as commander of CSS *Nansemond* spent a good part of the battle under heavy fire trying to free the squadron's grounded ironclad flagship *Virginia II*. "The vessel is in the same condition as when she was inspected two weeks ago, save the riddling of the funnel, quarter boats, and hammock nettings with Minie[sic] balls and fragments of shell. The iron casing to the pilot house formed an admirable protection for the helmsman against sharpshooters."

Maury's gunboat program for the Confederacy bore some resemblance to the U.S. Navy's so-called "90-day" *Unadilla*-class gunboat program. Both programs utilized a common design distributed among different shipyards to produce as many ships possible in the shortest amount of time. Despite some problems with quality, the 23 *Unadilla*-Class vessels were quite succesful. Unfortunately, Secretary Mallory's fixation on ironclads to deliver southern ports from the Union blockade monopolized what little resources were available to Confederate shipbuilders. As a result, only two "Maury Gunboats" were ever completed.

Had Maury's strategy been supported and carried out, perhaps employing swarms of *Hampton*-class gunboats, in his words, "like a nest of hornets" against blockade ships, instead of Mallory's favored floating fortresses, it might have made an impact on Civil War naval history in Hampton Roads. In any event, the failure was a rare disappointment for a man now remembered as the "Pathfinder of the Seas."

The Ensign of Gunboat

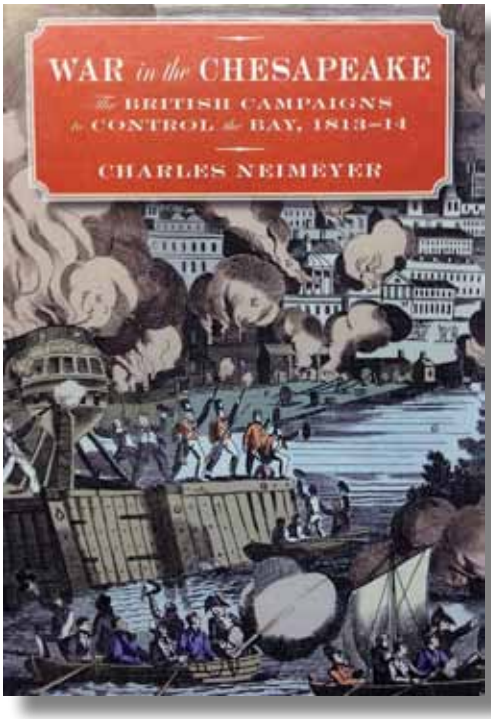
CSS *Hampton*, 1865

Book Reviews

War in the Chesapeake: The British Campaigns to Control the Bay, 1813-14

By Charles Neimeyer

Reviewed by Matthew O. Krogh



War in the Chesapeake is a well-researched and exciting narrative about military operations in the Chesapeake Bay during the War of 1812. A timely publication for the bicentennial, this tale of Congreve rockets and Jefferson gunboats is enhanced by Neimeyer's fair approach to the war which scholars and novices can both enjoy.

The book begins by paying homage to Lord Horatio Nelson, who destroyed the combined French and Spanish fleets at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805: the signature British naval victory in the Napoleonic era. In what is a very cosmopolitan approach to the War of 1812, Neimeyer then funnels the reader toward America, correctly asserting that the War of 1812 was an outgrowth of Europe's wars for empire.

Charles Neimeyer. *War in the Chesapeake: The British Campaigns to Control the Chesapeake, 1813-14*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-61251-865-7.

Neimeyer proceeds quickly to Hampton Roads, where war fever brewed long before it was declared. He not only deftly covers the attack on Commodore James Barron's frigate in 1807, but also the public outcry regarding the violation of sailors' rights and national sovereignty that followed the *Chesapeake-Leopard* Affair. Neimeyer continues ". . . the affair's aftereffects resounded throughout the Atlantic community . . . a directed search for deserters on a foreign warship had no precedent." Such events ruffled the feathers of Virginians, government officials, and Sailors for years to come.

Impressment (forced military service) is also much more than a rallying cry in Neimeyer's book. He correctly lays out the full scope of British atrocities beyond pressing American seaman into the British Navy, such as stealing supplies and ammunition and abusing American shipping.

War in the Chesapeake also goes into the geopolitical world of treaties and admiralty courts that laid out British and American policy leading up to the war. Neimeyer shows how the British remained especially adept at stirring up hostility among America's rivals including the Shawnee and Creek nations. Neimeyer's depth of research shines in this area as readers envision a cold war of embargoes, unfulfilled treaties, and brewing Native American hostility.

Once the war begins, Neimeyer essentially covers two fronts: Virginia and Maryland. The British focus on the Old Dominion first, culminating in the Battle of Craney Island in Norfolk and the resulting sack of Hampton in 1813. In 1814, they concentrate on Maryland at the Battle of Bladensburg (near Washington, D.C.) and the ensuing bombardment of Fort McHenry near Baltimore. From the humiliating raid on Havre De Grace to the incompetent leadership of General William Winder, Americans were dealt a variety of setbacks from General Robert Ross and Admirals Alexander Cochrane and George Cockburn until the Chesapeake was saved by Major George Armistead, General Robert Taylor, Commodore Joshua Barney, and General Samuel Smith.

Neimeyer expertly analyzes the campaigns' strategies, mistakes and consequences, explaining that the Soldiers and Sailors of Virginia and Maryland were largely left to defend themselves. He brings these defenders back to life, allowing the reader to empathize with their plight and applaud their heroism.

Overall, *War in the Chesapeake* is a firmly researched tome that addresses the War of 1812 with professional acumen. Only a few minor changes could improve this work. The Revenue Cutter Service, the precursor to the Coast Guard, receives little notice in the book, and Neimeyer leaves out several skirmishes such as the British attack on the U.S. Revenue Cutter Surveyor on the York River in June 1813. The book also includes a mediocre map of the Battle of Craney Island from 1868, rather than the detailed maps from the University of Virginia which were drawn days after the battle by its participants.

Furthermore, although Tangier Island seems to be the linchpin of British activity, nothing is said about it or its inhabitants. In fact, the British erected Fort Albion on Tangier for many reasons, not just to avoid mosquitoes as Neimeyer claims. The island was vastly larger in 1813 than it is today and the water deeper in that part of the bay.

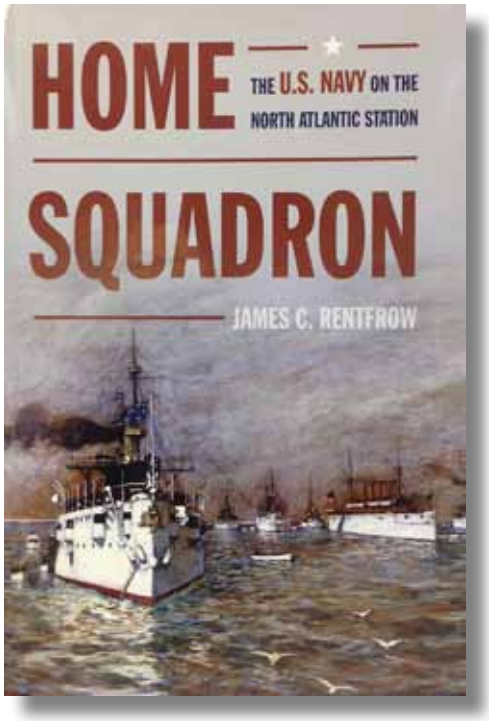
Glaringly, Neimeyer also neglects to mention the smaller storm flag that flew over Fort McHenry during the British bombardment. In fact, the Americans only raised Mary Pickersgill's larger flag in the morning during reveille, where it was viewed by Francis Scott Key from the harbor.

Lastly, Neimeyer ends with an epilogue that is too succinct. He misses a chance to celebrate America's gutsy survival and trace the postwar fortunes of the participants, British and American.

Nevertheless, *War in the Chesapeake* is a welcome addition to the plethora of historical narratives regarding America's first forgotten war. Much gratitude is due to this Marine Corps historian who seeks to ignite in others the same esprit de corps that has produced this signatory work.

Home Squadron: The U.S. Navy on the North Atlantic Station

By James C. Rentfrow
Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna



While in graduate school, my history professors unequivocally stated that in order to write an article or book, you had to exhaustingly research the topic; express your premise in a succinct and understandable statement; and make your paragraphs or chapters follow logically to a reasonable conclusion. The author of *Home Squadron* certainly followed that format. His narrative unfolds in a series of events and must be considered in an all-inclusive perspective. Rentfrow does this meticulously, with many insights into the personalities of the major participants.

James C. Rentfrow. *Home Squadron: The U.S. Navy on the North Atlantic Station.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-61251-447-5.

His chapters chronologically trace the process the Navy went through to achieve a fleet that was trained as a fighting unit. In 1874, the North Atlantic Squadron (with not enough ships to be called a fleet) was headquartered in Hampton Roads. Its few ships "cruised" throughout the world independently, mainly protecting our country's business and commercial interests. By 1897, the squadron's mission had changed significantly. It went from cruising, providing security to home ports and conducting public relations tours, to training for combat. This culminated in 1898 in the victories during the Spanish-American War.

Rentfrow gives the most credit for that transformation to Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, who established the Naval War College in 1884 and stressed the need for training as a unit; and to Rear Admiral Francis M. Bunce, who brought it to fruition through the practice of concentrated fleet exercises from 1895-97. He also cites the significant contribution of Commodore Foxhall Parker who wrote textbooks and developed new signaling capabilities that made it possible to have more effective tactical formations.

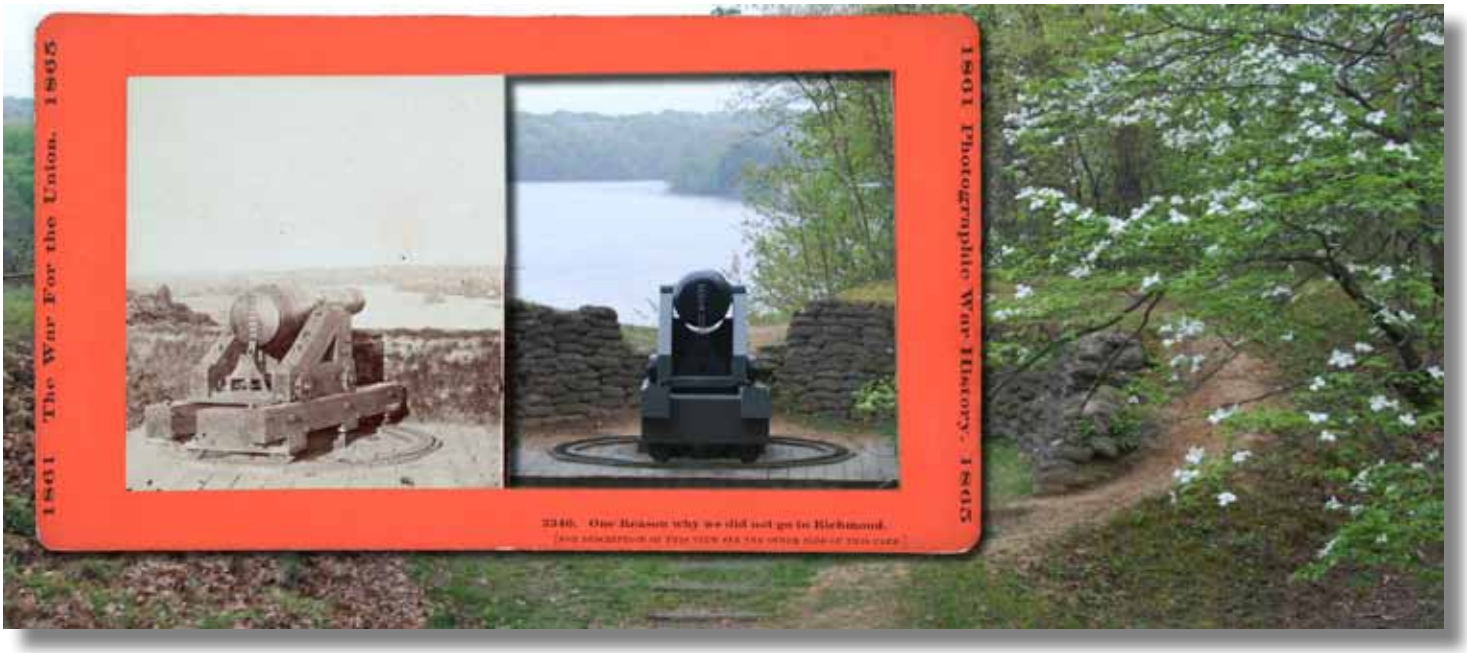
As an example of the change, Rentfrow relates the life of William B. Cushing. Cushing was a brash, aggressive commander who in 1873 took it upon himself to stop the execution of American citizens by Cuban authorities by threatening the annihilation of a Cuban city (otherwise known as the *Virginius* Affair). He writes:

"For Cushing, command involved making decisions that amounted to the execution of national policy at an operational, and even strategic, level. Cushing's performance in this episode epitomizes the warrior/diplomat naval officer of the first half of the nineteenth century. However, two months after the Virginius incident, [Cushing, in command of] the same USS Wyoming *that had taken a city under her guns and risked war with the Spanish Empire was steaming in close order formation with eleven other ships"*

Never again was Cushing to act independently. His ship would be expected "to respond to signals quickly and accurately, keep her station in close order with the ships in front and behind of her, and execute complicated maneuvers in concert with the other ships of the fleet while an admiral made strategic and operational decisions." The *Virginius* Affair highlighted the fact that the U.S. government could no longer pursue its strategic priorities in the Caribbean region with the Navy as it was then constituted. Political as well as naval leaders pressed for change.

In his excellent introductory chapter, especially the historiography section, Rentfrow traces how historians have looked at this change. It was apparent that a new strategic purpose was needed, and the president wanted "a navy second to none." Another impressive part of this book is that the information beside each of the pictures of ship and squadron commanders portrayed as clearly as the author's words the struggles that the Navy endured during those transition years. The last photo (UNITED STATES NAVY, 1898) is the same one that is displayed prominently in our own Steel Navy exhibit. It shows that the number of modern ships in the U.S. Navy had reached a comparative level with the navies of other powerful countries, though it still was not until 1906 that the North Atlantic Squadron became the Atlantic Fleet.

The epilogue is a prime example of what a conclusive chapter in a history book should be – a review of facts elaborated in previous chapters that lead to the conclusion. Rentfrow even provides the arguments of other historians of how the transition occurred, comparing the changes in the U.S. Navy at the end of the 19th century to the challenges to today's Navy. He says that the fight against global terrorism is forcing the Navy to consider change again to its strategy and tactics. This book is one in a series entitled "New Perspectives on Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology." I have read all four books in this series, and it is my opinion that *Home Squadron* is the best - worthy to be included in any naval officer's library and especially used to study this most important part of the history of the U.S. Navy.



A stereograph made in the 1880s by Taylor and Huntington of a Columbiad photographed in 1865 at Fort Darling, atop Drewry's Bluff, overlays a more recent image taken at Richmond National Battlefield Park. Confederate naval officer John R. Tucker played a key role in establishing fortifications here in 1862, and after an interim assignment in Charleston, he was commander of the batteries atop the bluff until the fall of Richmond. (Library of Congress image/ HRNM Photo by M.C. Farrington)

From the James River to Sailor's Creek

John Randolph Tucker and the End of the Confederate Navy in Virginia

By Joseph Miechle
HRNM Educator

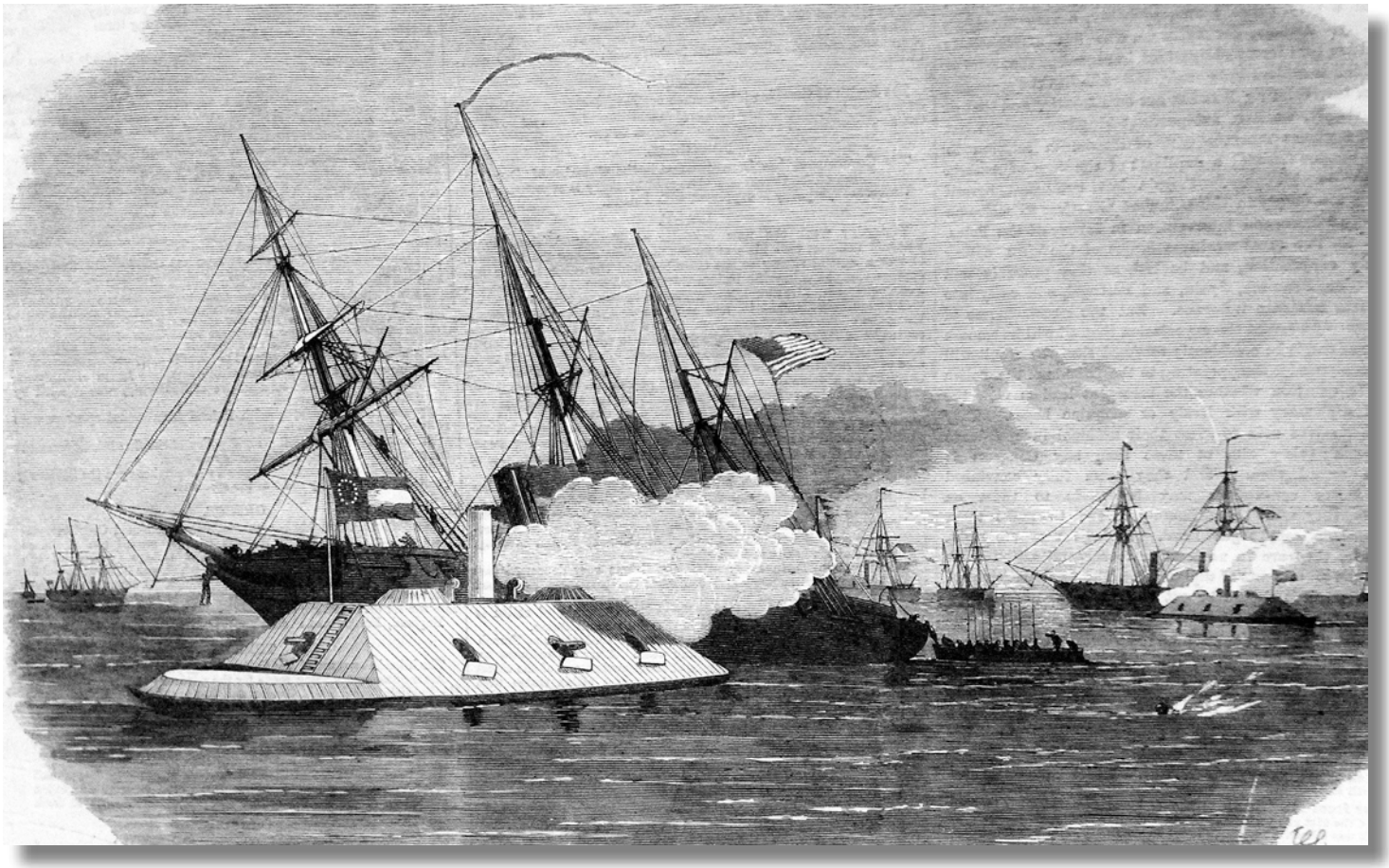
Now that the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War in Hampton Roads has come, we can expect to see much reflection on the final days of conflict and the Confederacy. This will no doubt bring back memories of grade school lessons of Appomattox Courthouse and the capitulation of General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia to General U.S. Grant in Wilmer McLean's parlor. What seems left out at every retelling of the sacrifice and surrender during those last days of the war in Virginia is that Confederate Sailors were some of the last to surrender. Despite having destroyed their ships and joined the Confederate withdrawal from Richmond, they continued serving as intact naval units until the end.

The story of the final days of the Confederate Navy can be fairly well told by following the story of one of its most senior leaders, Commodore John Randolph Tucker. Tucker began his naval career when he was made a midshipman in 1826 at the age of 15. He later saw service during the Mexican-American War aboard USS *Stromboli.* His last cruise for the United States Navy was made aboard USS *Cumberland* as executive officer while on patrol in the Mediterranean. Afterwards, he was assigned to Norfolk as the commander of the receiving ship *Pennsylvania* with a following assignment to the Norfolk Naval Yard as an ordnance officer. He resigned his commission after Virginia seceded in April, 1861.

After Tucker's commissioning into the Virginia Navy, then the Confederate Navy, he had a hand in creating what for the duration of the war would be known as the James River Squadron. He was assigned the task of preparing defenses for the squadron in and around Norfolk. He oversaw the conversion of the passenger ships *Yorktown* and *Jamestown* into the gunboats CSS *Patrick Henry* and CSS *Thomas Jefferson,* respectively. Commander Tucker commanded these two ships as well as the converted tug CSS *Teaser* from his flagship *Patrick Henry* as commander of the James River Squadron during the Battle of Hampton Roads, March 8-9, 1862.

CSS Patrick Henry*,* Jamestown*, and other support vessels escort CSS* Virginia *against USS* Monitor*. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)*

The first day of battle may have been especially poignant for both Tucker and his executive officer, Lieutenant James Henry Rochelle, as they watched USS *Cumberland* rammed and set afire by the ironclad *Virginia*, as both had served aboard her



On the night of January 30, 1863, the ironclads Palmetto State *and* Chicora *went on the offensive, forcing the surrender of* USS Mercedita *and heavily damaging USS* Keystone State*. As captain of CSS* Chicora*, Commander Tucker led an attack that temporarily lifted the Union blockade upon the city. (*Harper's Weekly *engraving)*

as part of the U.S. Navy's Mediterranean Squadron before the war. The two officers were nearby when the sloop-of-war slipped beneath the waters of the James River off Newport News Point with 121 of her crew. "It has been said of a great admiral that he could perform with his own hands the duties of every station on board a ship-of-war, from seaman-gunner to admiral," Rochelle said later, "and the same may be, without exaggeration, said of Tucker."

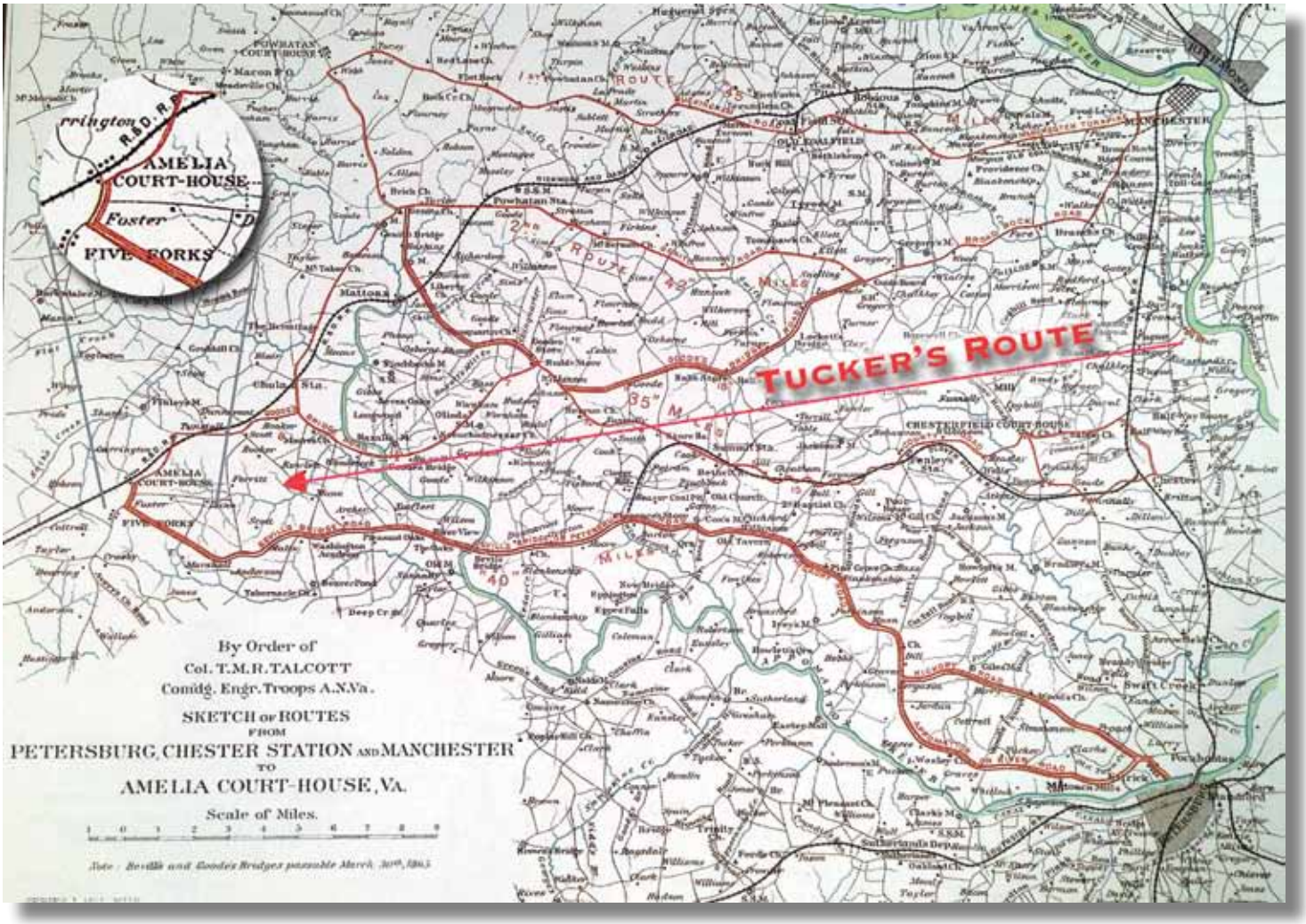
Despite the display of such destructive power during the Battle of Hampton Roads, the Confederate Navy could not prevent the capture of Norfolk on May 10. Without an escape route and too deep a draft to accompany the rest of her squadron up the James River closer to Richmond, CSS *Virginia* was scuttled off Craney Island and the squadron's incomplete ships under construction at Gosport Navy Yard (now known as Norfolk Naval Shipyard) were burned by retreating Confederate forces. Although she made the journey upriver, CSS *Jamestown* was sunk as an obstruction down river of an earthen fortification called Fort Darling, atop Drewry's Bluff. Tucker dismounted an 8-inch naval gun and two 6-inch rifled guns from *Patrick Henry* and used them to great effect on Union ships during the Battle of Drewry's Bluff in May, 1862. The Union would not attempt an attack on Richmond via the James River until much later in the war.

Tucker next saw service away from his home state of Virginia. In November 1862 he was assigned to command the ironclad *Chicora* in Charleston, South Carolina. Tucker attacked ships of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron in Charleston and drove them off temporarily at the end of January 1863. When the squadron returned, it did so with its own ironclad ships. While protecting the waters around Charleston, Tucker was promoted to captain in the Confederate Navy in February, 1863, and was quickly promoted to flag officer in March. No doubt feeling pressure from Richmond to once again break the blockade, Tucker employed semi-submersibles or "torpedo boats" against the Union ships. In the first such attack, CSS *David* struck USS *New Ironsides* in October 1863, causing only slight damage. While it proved ultimately fatal for the crew, the submarine *Hunley* sank USS *Housatonic* in Charleston Harbor in February, 1864.

John R. Tucker. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

By April 1864 the war had been fought bitterly across much of the United States. A combined total of over 800,000 had been killed, wounded, incapacitated with disease, had been taken prisoner, or were missing on both sides. The Confederate Army had suffered defeat at Gettysburg in the north, and although it won a tactical victory at Chickamauga in the west, there was no way to replace the men who had been killed or wounded. Likewise, the Confederate Navy too was rapidly losing ships and could not replace them, nor their skilled crews.

On February 18, 1865, as Charleston was being evacuated by Confederate forces, Tucker and Lieutenant Commander Ro-



Commodore John Tucker and his "Naval Brigade" made up of Sailors from Fort Darling and Marines from nearby Camp Beall cut roughly right between the routes taken by the other major Confederate units converging upon the important rail hub at Amelia Court House on April 4 and 5, 1865. (Offical Military Atlas of the Civil War)

chelle destroyed their ironclads *Palmetto State* and *Chicora* and led 300 Sailors, along with recruits from the receiving ship *Indian Chief*, north to reinforce Major General Robert Hoke's division around Wilmington, North Carolina after the Second Battle of Fort Fisher. Wilmington surrendered on February 22, so the Sailors were forced to continue north with what remained of the Confederate Army. Tucker consolidated the remaining naval forces in the Wilmington area and joined Rochelle at Fayetteville, ultimately making their way to Richmond.

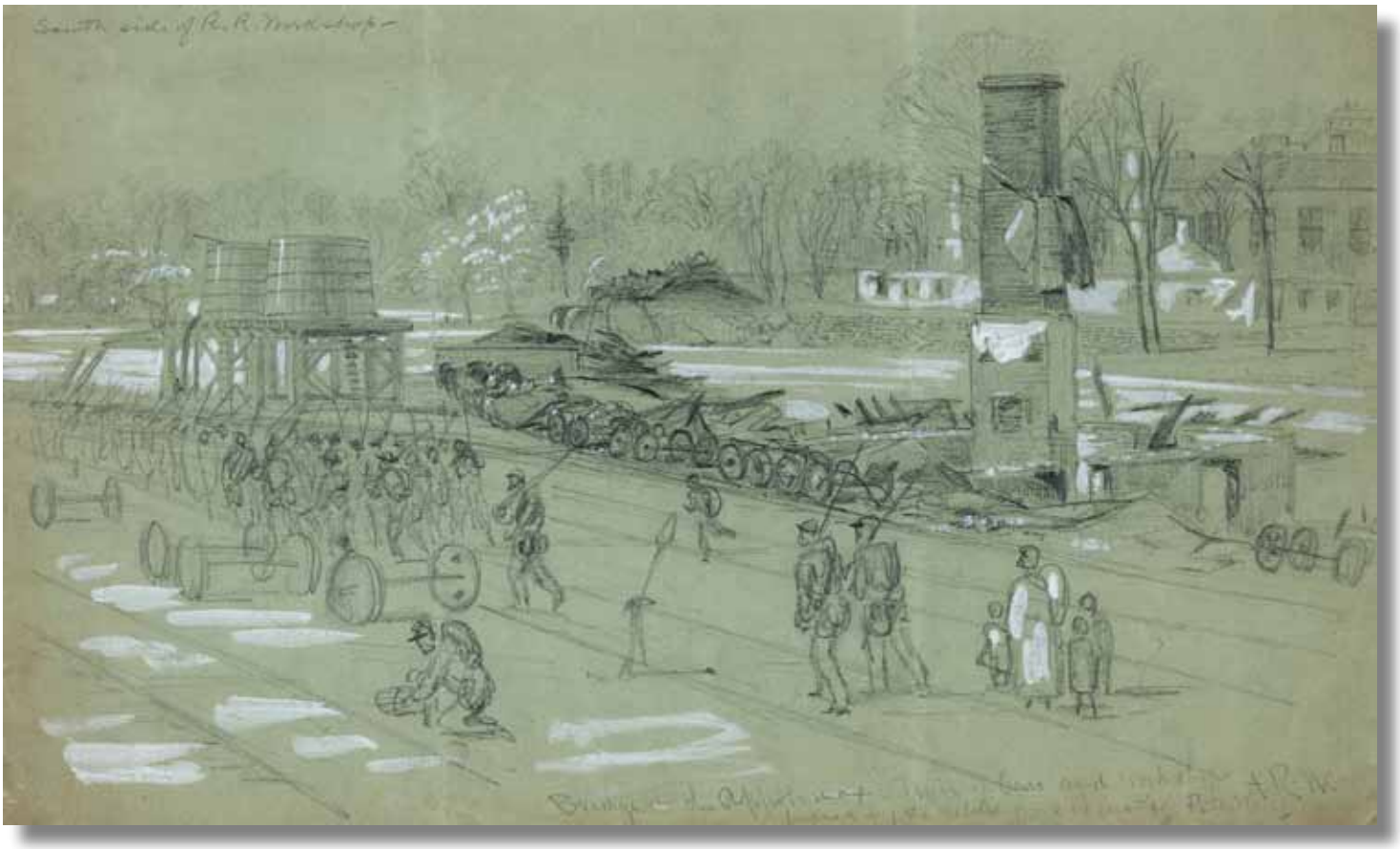
Upon reaching Richmond with his newly formed "Naval Brigade," Tucker was again assigned to Drewry's Bluff, this time in command of about 500 Sailors and Marines manning over 20 heavy guns at Fort Darling. He had declined an army commission from President Jefferson Davis. Instead, he commanded his Sailors as "Flag Officer Ashore."

Also newly-arrived in Richmond was arguably the most famous commerce raider captain of the war, Raphael Semmes. After his CSS *Alabama* lost its duel with USS *Kearsarge* off the coast of France in June 1864, he had made his way back into Confederate territory by traveling from England to Texas by way of the Caribbean and Mexico. By the second week of February, the newly-minted rear admiral was settling into his new assignment over what was left of the James River Squadron: around 500 Sailors and Marines aboard three ironclads, four gunboats, and two support vessels.

Rounding out the Confederate naval forces on the river below Richmond was the Confederate States Naval Academy School Ship *Patrick Henry*, commanded by Lieutenant William H. Parker, with 13 instructors and around 60 midshipmen.

Semmes realized, as did most others, that the Confederacy would no longer be able to win the war. The naval forces were used to regular rations and supplies, but they had been cut by half. Morale among the Sailors had reached an all-time low. Semmes claimed desertion rates were out of control. Many of the crew members on his remaining ships were not even regular Sailors but Soldiers, pressed into service from the Army. On the evening of April 2, 1865 aboard his flagship *Virginia II* near Drewry's Bluff, Semmes received orders from Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory to burn all his remaining ships and then join Lee's Army, which was busily evacuating the capital.

Semmes ordered his men first to remove all items from the ships that that would be needed to operate as a ground force, and then to burn the vessels. The Sailors rolled up their blankets, produced haversacks as best they could, and accordingly burned the three ironclads of the James River Squadron. They then made



Commissioned by Harper's Weekly *in 1861, British artist Alfred R. Waud covered the Army of the Potomac for most of the Civil War, submitting over 2,000 drawings which were modified by staff artists and made into lithographic plates by engravers. He entitled this drawing "Bridge on the Appotomax [sic]--Train of Cars and workshops burned by the rebels on evacuating Petersburg," showing Union forces on the heels of Confederate forces retreating west. (Library of Congress image)*

their way on the remaining wooden boats to a train station just south of the James River, across from downtown Richmond, then engulfed in flames, in order to join forces with General Lee. After disembarking near the train station, the remaining gunboats were set aflame. Semmes was unable to locate anyone of authority amid the chaos and cinders sweeping over the station, so using true Navy ingenuity, he had his engineers make ready a locomotive that was found in the rail yard. After using wood fence rails (as opposed to hotter burning coal) to get up enough steam in the boilers, they were able to move the train along and leave Richmond just ahead of the Union troops. The train arrived at Danville, Virginia with the remnants of Semmes' command on April 5.

Upon arrival, Semmes had a meeting with Confederate President Jefferson Davis who provided him with an Army commission of Brigadier General and orders to join General Joseph E. Johnston's army in North Carolina as an artillery force. By this time, however, Semmes' forces had dwindled down to about 250 men due to the high rate of desertion.

While Semmes set his evacuation plan in motion early on April 3, Commodore Tucker held fast at Drewry's Bluff, seemingly oblivious to the grave decisions made by his superiors. Due to the frantic evacuation of the city and breakdown in communication, no orders had been delivered to Tucker to abandon his position. After hearing the tremendous explosions ripping apart the ironclads on the river below, Tucker suddenly realized the time to abandon their position was nigh. Like Semmes' Sailors, the men under Tucker improvised marching gear as best they could and made their way nearly 30 miles west to Amelia Court House.

After catching up with Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell's corps there, Tucker and his brigade were assigned to the division of General Robert E. Lee's son, Major General George Washington Custis Lee. The elder Lee later told Tucker that of all the mistakes committed by the Richmond authorities on April 2, he regretted none more than neglecting to inform the naval force of Drewry's Bluff that the city was being evacuated.

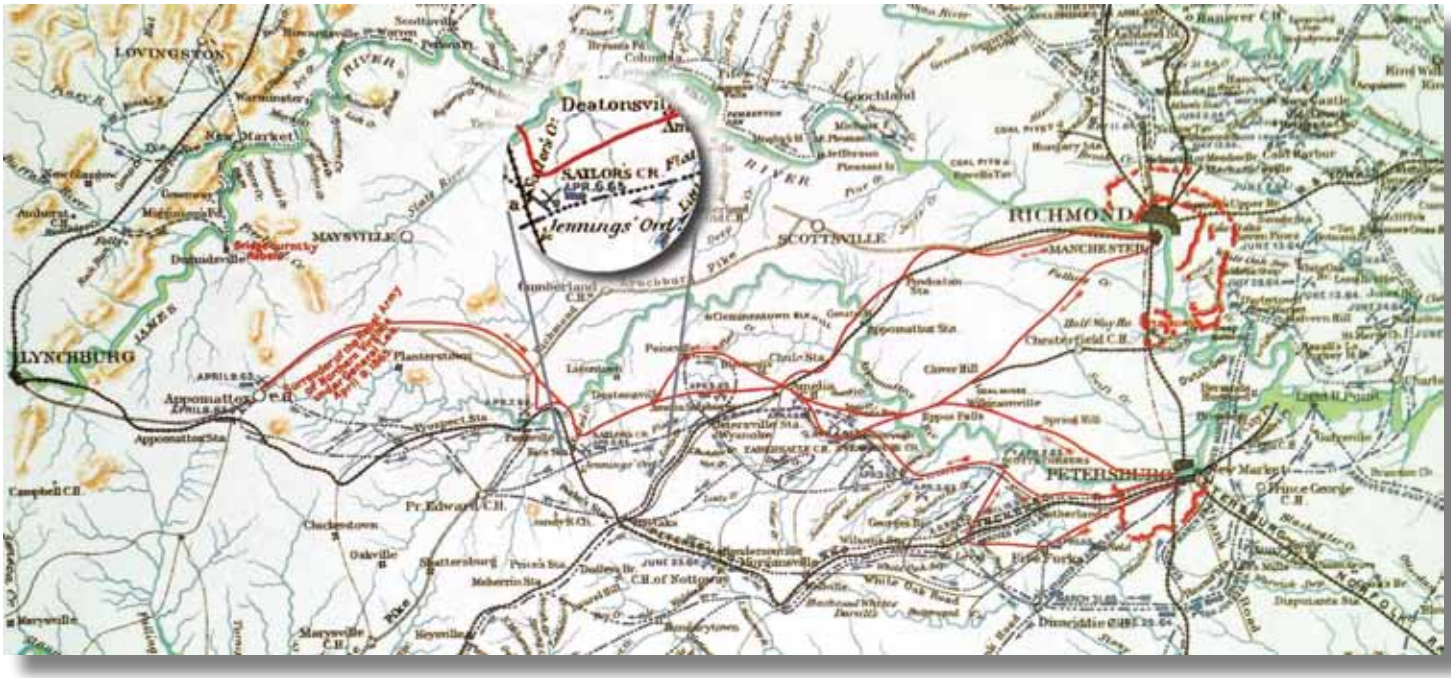
No longer in possession of ships or even naval batteries, the stage was set for the Confederate Navy in Virginia to fight its last great fight. Tucker and his Naval Brigade comprised the rear guard of Lt. Gen. Ewell's corps, itself trailing Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in its march west. Divisions of General Ulysses Grant's Army of the Potomac and Major General Philip Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah caught up to Ewell's corps on April 6, at a location then known as Sayler's Creek. The battle here would not only be the last major engagement for the Navy, but the last significant land battle of the war. "The creek had been named for a local family," wrote Professor Maurice Melton of Albany State University in his recent book *The Best Station of Them All: The Savannah Squadron, 1861-1865*. "Because of the Confederate Navy's participating in the… battle, it became known as 'Sailor's Creek.'"

Tucker's naval brigade occupied a prominent position in the Confederate line of battle on April 6 as two Divisions

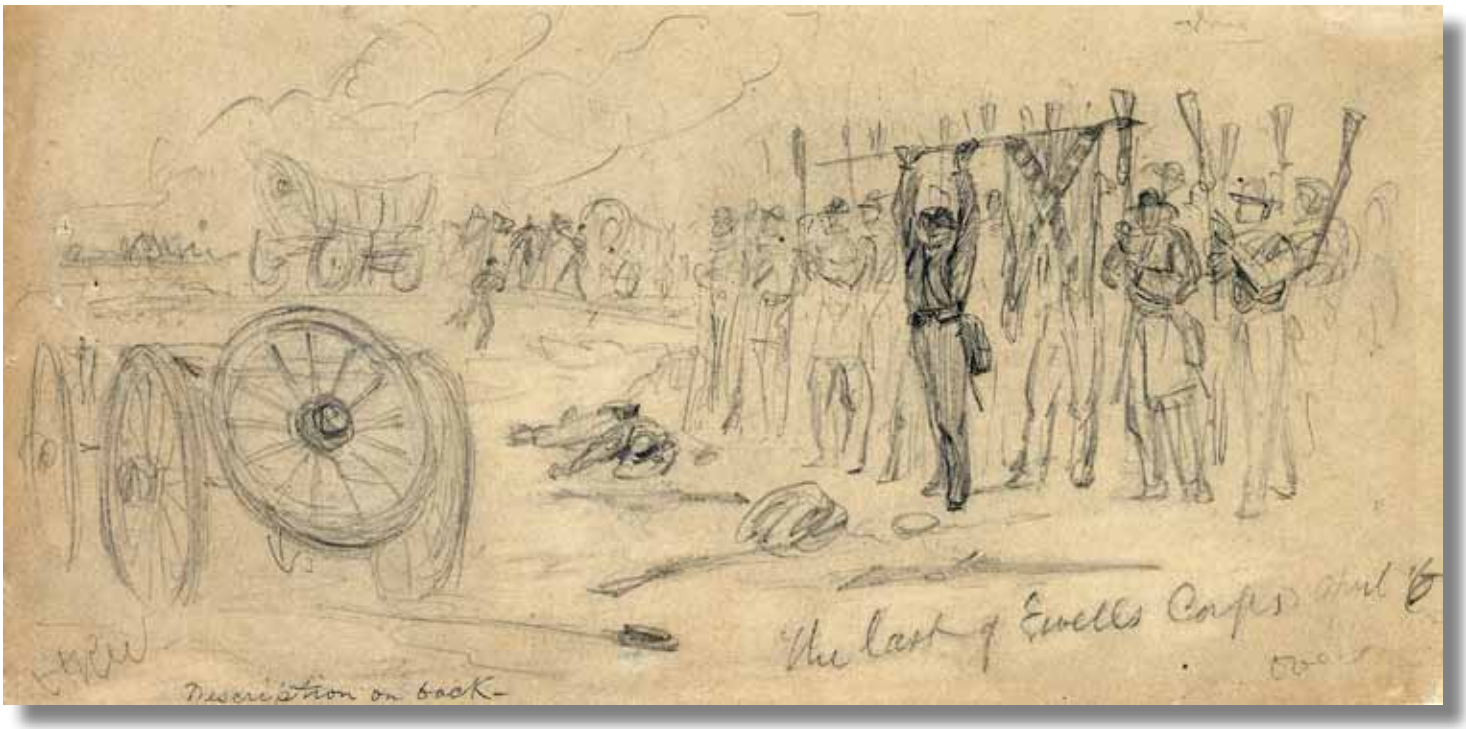
of the Army of the Potomac's VI Corps, including an entire artillery brigade, closed in from the east and two divisions of the Army of the Shenandoah's Calvary Corps raced up from the south. As their envelopment began, a Confederate Army officer was heard to offer "Flag Officer Ashore" Tucker assistance in lining his Sailors up for battle, to which Tucker is quoted with replying, "Young man, I know how to talk to my people." Tucker then began issuing orders to the Sailors with "starboard and larboard" movements which were answered with sharp "aye-aye's" from the men. Tucker's men settled into position and from all accounts fought quite gallantly despite the overwhelming odds against them.

On the morning of April 6, 1865, Alfred R.Waud depicted Union Soldiers of the Army of the Potomac's II Corps under Major General Andrew Humphries as they crossed a ravine near Sayler's Creek (even then known also as Sailor's Creek) in pursuit of Brigadier General James A. Walker's division on the opposite side, capturing wagons and supplies belonging to Confederate Major General John B. Gordon's retreating II Corps of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. (Library of Congress image)

The majority of Ewell's 3,600 troops were surrounded by over 10,000 Union soldiers, and he and his corps had surrendered by the afternoon. Maj. Gen. Custis Lee was also captured, but Tucker and his brigade continued to fight. Union Brevet Maj. Gen. General Truman Seymour, commanding the 3rd Division of VI Corps, reported, "The Confederate Marines fought with a peculiar obstinacy." Contemporary accounts of the battle invoke imagery of the savage fighting between the Confederate Sailors and the Union forces. Men were engaged in hand-to-hand combat across the line and fought each other with cutlasses and clubs, even attacking their opponents by "biting off their ears." Commodore Tucker, still holding his place on the battlefield with the remnants of his naval brigade, withdrew to



*This map shows roughly how far Tucker's "Naval Brigade" along with the rest of Lt.Gen Richard Ewell's corps made it across Virginia in comparison with the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia before they were surrounded and captured during the Battle of Sailor's Creek. (*Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*)*



Alfred R.Waud, accompanying Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer's cavalry as they swept in from the south late in the afternoon on April 6 to cut off Lt.Gen Richard Ewell's corps from joining Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia further west, wrote of the resulting surrender, "This was quite an effective incident in its way. The soldiers silhouetted [sic] against the western sky with their muskets thrown butt upwards in token of surrender, as our troops closed in beyond a wagon train which was captured, and burning debris probably [from] other wagons in the gathering gloom." (Library of Congress image)

a nearby patch of woods and hastily established defensive positions. By late afternoon his command was completely surrounded and vastly outnumbered. Union Colonel Joseph W. Keifer, who led the 2rd Brigade of Seymour's division, rode into the area occupied by the Confederates and urged them to surrender to avoid further casualties. There was no chance of escape for the remnants of the naval battalion, and so Tucker surrendered his command and sword to Col. Keifer that evening. Keifer later wrote, "The rebel marine brigade fought with most extraordinary courage, but were finally cut off and captured."

Some of the Sailors and Marines serving under Tucker managed to evade capture at the Battle of Sailor's Creek and their names were recorded in the official *Paroles of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Courthous*e three days later, April 9, 1865. Over 100 of the names on the document were credited as being in the Confederate States naval services. Semmes ultimately surrendered what remained of his naval command, along with the rest of General Johnston's army in North Carolina on April 26.

Despite the end of organized resistance in Virginia and North Carolina, individual Confederate warships and blockade runners continued to operate in scattered pockets of the south, from Galveston, Texas, to above Mobile, Alabama and Columbus, Georgia. In the Atlantic, the Confederacy's newest warship, the ram CSS *Stonewall*, was at large. In the Pacific, the commerce raider *Shenandoah* was only beginning the most successful segment of an epic mission against whaling ships in the Northern Pacific Ocean. *Stonewall* was sold to Spanish authorities shortly after reaching Havana in May, while CSS *Shenandoah* was finally turned over to British authorities after reaching Liverpool in November.

Lt. Parker and his midshipmen successfully shepherded the Confederate treasury and archives out of Richmond on a long journey that led them to Danville, and then southward into the Carolinas as the Confederacy continued to collapse. After uniting with the detail escorting Confederate First Lady Varina Davis in South Carolina, they arrived in Augusta, Georgia on April 20. Finding the security situation tenuous after the general collapse of the Confederate Army in the area, they moved northward again to Abbeville, South Carolina, finally reuniting President Davis and members of his cabinet with the treasury and essential records on April 30. Its duty successfully carried out, the Confederate Naval Academy was disestablished on May 2 as Parker then gave each midshipman detaching orders and $40 in gold from the treasury. On May 10, Union forces captured Confederate President Jefferson Davis and some of his cabinet just north of Irwinville, Georgia. Davis was then taken to Fort Monroe, where he was held for the next two years. Released in 1868, he was later pardoned by President Andrew Johnson.

After his release from custody, Raphael Semmes returned home to Alabama. That December, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles ordered Semmes imprisoned on charges of piracy. After appealing to President Johnson that he had been officially pardoned when he surrendered, he was also granted a presidential pardon and released. He returned to his legal career and died in 1877.

After the war, at the request of the President of Peru, John Tucker saw service in the Peruvian navy and later served as the President of the Peruvian Hydrographical Commission of the Amazon. Col. Keifer, who had accepted Tuckers surrender at Sailor's Creek, served as a Congressional Representative in his home state of Ohio and returned the sword he had captured from Tucker. Tucker died in 1883 and was buried next to his wife in Norfolk.

Saving History, One Stitch at a Time

A conservator's "up close and personal" view of CSS *Hampton's* ensign

In her workshop in Alexandria, Virginia, A. Newbold Richardson of Costume and Textile Specialists explains the challenges involved in "resurrecting" large flags such as CSS Hampton's. *"It was a privilege to work with such a very rare artifact," she said. (HRNM Photo by Marta Joiner)*

While conducting archival stabilization and conservation on CSS *Hampton's* flag, A. Newbold Richardson picked up clues about its construction and what it had been through, both during the Civil War and afterward.

She determined that the flag was machine-sewn of wool bunting, and suspects the material might have come from Britain, she said, "because it was cheaper." "Flag bunting is loose to begin with, on par with cheesecloth," said Richardson, noting the coarseness of the fibers. "For a [ship's] flag, you don't want resistance, unlike a sail, in which you want resistance."

Despite an early museum record claiming that it was "burned by shell fire… when Gen. Grant took [Richmond]," and various holes in the flag that to the untrained eye might suggest exposure to gunfire, Richardson flatly rejects the notion. "All the holes came from poor storage and exposure to the elements," she said, naming ultraviolet radiation as particularly damaging to fabrics. "Think of what the sun's rays do to your skin," she said. Because the hem at the outer edge was "wind-whipped," Richardson indicated that the extensive damage actually began during its active service aboard the Confederate gunboat.

First Man In, Last Flag Out
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The two accounts of Ladd's brief boarding of CSS *Hampton* conflict in major respects. Bruce describes a scene in which multiple witnesses from the 13th New Hampshire Infantry Regiment would have seen Ladd climb aboard the rebel gunboat, making his getaway in the nick of time. In stark contrast, Ladd himself describes an event he shared with only one other person, someone it seems he did not even know.

Both descriptions of the event differ with Rear Adm. Semmes' account of the disposal of his squadron's gunboats. Both accounts place the site of Ladd's brief boarding of a gunboat as being at or near Rockett's Landing, nearly a mile from where Semmes' men would have set fire to the gunboats and set them adrift. After the frustrating delays experienced that morning in moving his 500 or so Sailors over five miles upriver from Drewry's Bluff, an evolution that probably did not end until mid-morning, it is hard to imagine one of their gunboats having drifted that far back down the river. Neither account mentions the gunboat being on fire before the catastrophic explosion. In addition, considering the rampant theft and arson supposedly overtaking the shipyard before dawn, it seems just too convenient that a skiff or rowboat just happened to be nearby. Pictures taken on the south bank not long after the fall of Richmond, however, do

Detail from the 1865 photograph,"View on Docks at Rocketts," in the Library of Congress collection.

show rowboats stacked around the heavily damaged funnel of CSS *Virginia II.* It had been replaced at the shipyard after the Battle of Trent's Reach, an abortive attempt in January to attack the Army of the Potomac's logistics base at City Point. Other images overlooking Rocketts' north bank around the same time, as well as the reports of Rear Admiral David D. Porter after his arrival in Richmond, suggest that the damage and looting there might not have been as extensive as it was downtown.

Bruce claimed that the gunboat had been anchored off Rockett's Landing. This might lead one to believe that perhaps the gunboat was being repaired at the navy yard at the time of the evacuation. CSS *Hampton's* propeller had been damaged at Trent's Reach in late January. Upon turning over the command of the James River Squadron to Semmes, however, Commodore John K. Mitchell reported on February 19 that *Hampton* was "in good condition."

And who brandished the old naval cutlass near the Exchange Hotel early that morning? Could he and his companions have been deserters from the James River Squadron who arrived in the hours or even days before the evacuation of Richmond? In his memoirs, Semmes expressed his disappointment at the numbers of his Sailors who deserted the squadron as the war ground to a close. Could they have even been mutineers, having hijacked one

TOP: *Damage to the flag's lower canton before conservation. (Courtesy A. Newbold Richardson)*
ABOVE: *The same area after conservation. (HRNM Photo by M.C. Farrington)*

Hampton Roads Naval Museum Exhibits Specialist Marta Joiner carefully opens the box containing CSS Hampton's *ensign after its arrival at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum after months of painstaking restoration. (HRNM Photo by M.C. Farrington)*

of Semmes' gunboats, leaving her within easy reach of the young Union officer? Joseph D. "Fighting Joe" Wilson, who served as third lieutenant under Semmes aboard the raider *Alabama*, had recently been transferred from *Virginia II* to take command of CSS *Hampton,* and it seems doubtful that he would have relinquished his first command assignment without a fight.

Another possibility exists. Due to logistical difficulty or oversight, the order from Secretary Mallory that reached Rear Adm. Semmes April 2 never reached his counterpart commanding the batteries ashore, John Randolph Tucker. His notice to leave came at about 3 A.M. the following morning in the form of Semmes' exploding ironclads on the river below, forcing the commodore and his Sailors and Marines to hurriedly evacuate without orders. If Tucker had led his naval brigade all the way to Richmond in the frenetic attempt to join the Army of Northern Virginia, they could have easily still been arriving when Ladd made his solo reconnoiter. Ladd could have actually misidentified the Marines in Tucker's brigade as Soldiers. They were probably short on small arms, and they would certainly have not been happy to see him.

As it happens, Tucker was cognizant that a rendezvous point had been established at Amelia Court House about 30 miles due west, so the trip north into Richmond would have been unnecessary.

If they were not deserters, the most likely explanation as to who threatened Capt. Ladd on his way to Capitol Square is that they were part of the rear guard of the local defense brigade serving under Brigadier General Seth M. Barton, using whatever weapons they had on hand to cover their own retreat or those of Lt. Gen. Ewell's last Soldiers south across Mayo's Bridge. Barton's Brigade and Commodore Tucker's Naval Brigade would unite under Ewell's Department of Richmond in the days to come.

Despite differences in details, there is general agreement among pertinent primary sources that the morning of April 3, 1865, was an eventful one for Capt. William Ladd, and his flag remained a memento of that time for many years afterward. After mustering out of the Army along with the rest of the 13th New Hampshire Volunteers in June, he began a long career in mining and railroad business operations. As the decades advanced and memories of battles and the passions that drove them receded, perhaps Ladd or those who documented his eventful morning lost critical details along the way. Much as his flag began to degrade around its edges and seams during the intervening years, information that would help us understand precisely how the young officer got the flag has been irretrievably lost. Fortunately for us, however, flags can be protected from further degradation. After undergoing extensive stabilization and conservation, the ensign now takes its place among other irreplaceable treasures within the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's Civil War Gallery, probably looking better than it has since Ladd, who died in 1923, brought it home a century and a half ago.

"For a museum director, there is that one outstanding treasure that comes along once in a career," said Becky Poulliot, Hampton Roads Naval Museum Director.

"The flag of CSS *Hampton* is exactly that artifact that exists nowhere else."

Aft Lookout: "The Squadron of Evolution"

In 1889, the cruiser USS Chicago *is moored ahead of the gunboat USS* Yorktown *and the cruisers USS* Boston *and USS* Atlanta *during trials pioneering new ways of conducting coordinated operations in the "New Steel Navy." The story of this revolution in American naval operations is told in James C. Rentfrow's* Home Squadron: The U.S. Navy on the North Atlantic Station*, reviewed on page 15. (National Archives image)*

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