

THE DAYBOOK®

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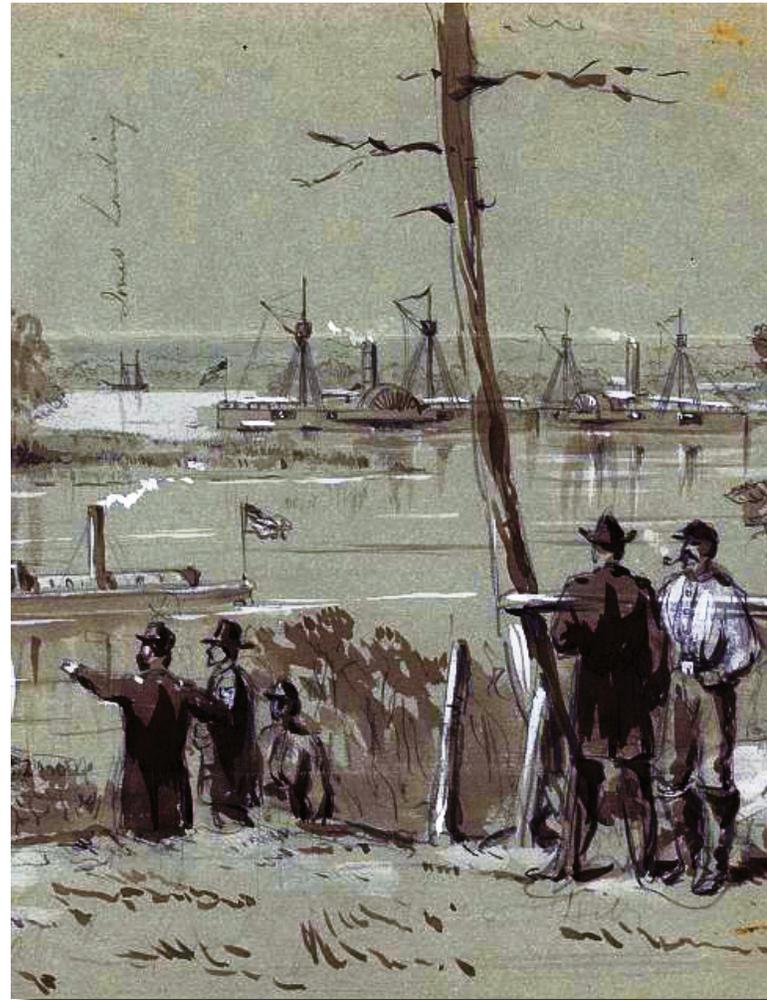


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NAVAL HISTORY &
HERITAGE COMMAND

NAVAL MUSEUM

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

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Change of Command & Home Port

When the staff of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum started a newsletter in September 1994, we set out to create a publication that would serve as an outlet for original research and interpretation and would be accessible to the general public. We did not want the publication to be too “fluffy.” We also did not want the publication to be loaded down with writing that reminded the public why they hated high school history. We wanted to avoid being a publication that accepted the beaten path of naval history, while at the same time uplifting the magnificent institution known as the United States Navy and the region of Hampton Roads. The result was *The Daybook*.

After thirty-five regular issues and four special editions, this will be my last *Daybook* as its editor. I am handing over the reins of this publication to other staff members at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. The Museum Sage and I are heading north to join the staff at the Great Lakes Naval Museum in North Chicago, Illinois. I believe we have succeeded in creating a model journal for history. *The Daybook* is a publication that is both original and informative while also being readable.

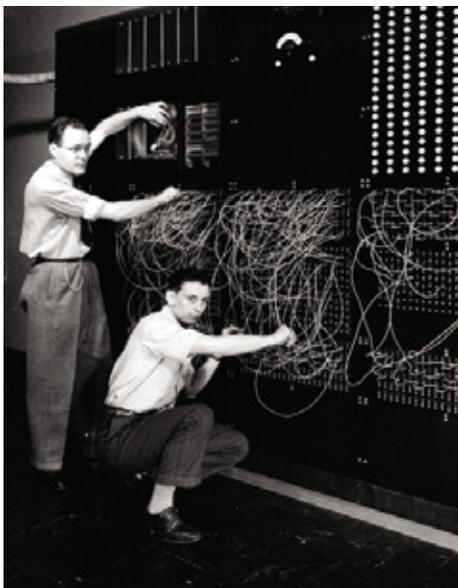
This publication would not have been possible without the support and advice of the museum’s staff, particularly HRNM’s director, Becky Poulliot, whose idea it was to start a newsletter. Additionally, the publication has had several volunteer writers who gladly gave their time and talents to produce articles. I have learned much assembling *The Daybook* and hope you have as well.

To all, I say thank you.

-Gordon B. Calhoun, Editor, *The Daybook*



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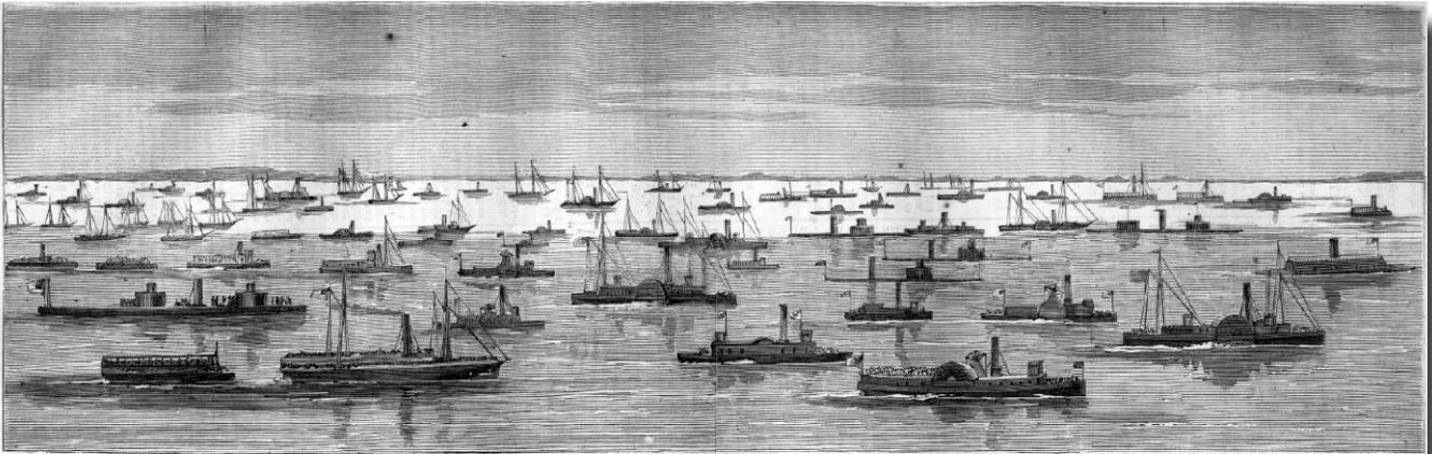


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•DEPARTURE OF THE UNION FLEET FROM NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA, ON MAY 4, 1864.—FROM A SKETCH BY A NAVAL OFFICER.—[SEE PAGE 106.]



An armada of ironclads, wooden gunboats, and transports left Newport News on May 4, 1864, carrying the Army of the James up the James River to Bermuda Hundred. Under the command of Acting Rear Admiral S.P. Lee, the Navy assembled the fleet in just a week. It was one of the largest assemblies of ships in the entire war. (Harper's Weekly engraving)

“The Navy Can Do Nothing in a River like This”

The U.S. Navy in the Bermuda Hundred Campaign

By Timothy Orr, Ph.D.

As the commemorative exercises of the Civil War Sesquicentennial trudge along, this year, 2014, promises to be a banner period for reflecting on the services of the U.S.



Navy. After all, the year 1864 witnessed some of the Navy's most impressive victories. That year, the West Gulf Squadron won the Battle of Mobile Bay; a frigate, USS *Kearsarge*, sank the notorious raider CSS *Alabama*;

and in October, Lieutenant William B. Cushing executed his daring attack that sank the ironclad CSS *Albatross*. It will be easy enough to pay attention to the victories; but let us strive also to commemorate one of the U.S. Navy's forgotten actions, the North Atlantic Squadron's involvement in the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, a joint Army-Navy operation that started off with great promise but ended with terrible disappointment and misfortune. In this campaign, the North Atlantic Squadron showed off its riverine skills, battling underwater explosives and shore-mounted Confederate ambushes. Obediently, it performed at the whims of the Army, escorting troop transports and protecting supply lines. Through it all, the

North Atlantic Squadron's high command struggled to achieve an equal partnership with the Army of the James, and in the end, this inter-service rivalry hamstrung the Navy's mission, relegating it to a mere support force, reliant upon the Army's success to achieve lasting glory. The story of the Navy's Bermuda Hundred Campaign, then, is a tale of danger, frustration, and deadlock.

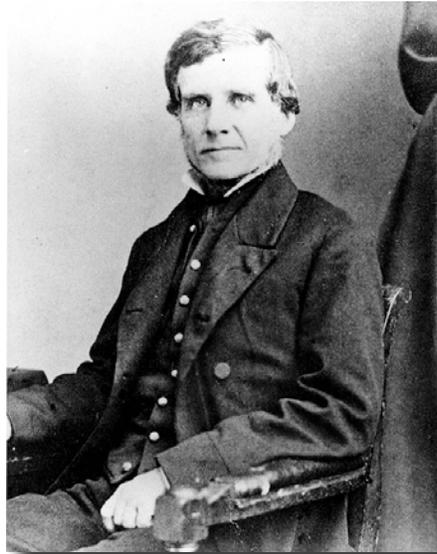
It did not have to be so.

In the spring of 1864, everything looked promising. Newly-promoted Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant had devised a sensible strategy, one that might conquer Virginia before the end of the summer. Unlike previous commanders in the Eastern Theater, he intended to concentrate his

forces across time and space. That is, during the first week of May, he planned to put three armies into motion--among them, Major General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James.

Although Grant's strategy primarily hinged on the cooperation of his three participating armies, he also expected the U.S. Navy to play a vital role. Grant knew that Major General George Meade's Army of the Potomac--the largest of the three armies, at 118,000 men--would draw the most attention. Once it trudged overland from the Rapidan River, Grant anticipated that General Robert E. Lee's army would leave its entrenchments at Mine Run to come after it. If the Army of the Potomac locked horns with Lee's army somewhere north of Richmond, the capital would remain lightly defended. At that point, another army could sweep up the James River basin, land at the Bermuda Hundred, and take Richmond from the "back door." Grant had high hopes for Butler's success. If his army moved with celerity, Richmond's days as the Confederacy's capital would be numbered.

Naturally, an amphibious landing at the confluence of the James and Appomattox Rivers required a strong naval presence, and Grant wanted Butler to have plenty of ships at his disposal. What, exactly, did Grant want the Navy to do? Unusually, despite Grant's intense planning, the new general-in-chief never spelled out the particulars of the Navy's mission. In all certainty, he wanted the Navy to be at the beck and call of Butler, but he failed to delineate how the two services ought to coordinate their efforts. On April 1, 1864, Grant visited Fort Monroe, conferring with Butler and making certain that the troublesome general well understood the goals of the Bermuda Hundred operation. The conference with Butler wore on Grant's patience, and after two days of poring over maps and reports, Grant departed without describing the Navy's mission in similar detail. Grant spoke with Acting Rear Admiral Samuel P. Lee, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, but their meeting did not last near as long. Instead, Grant gave Admiral Lee a thumbnail sketch of the coming operation: Butler intended to lead an offensive against Richmond and he required the Navy to escort the transport ships. Grant departed immediately thereafter, leaving it to Butler to work out the specifics with Admiral Lee. In short, the general-in-chief offered nothing more than a warning: be prepared



"Acting" Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee and Major General Ben Butler were the two Union leaders in charge of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign. While both men were well connected politically, senior Union leadership did not particularly like either one. By early 1865, the Lincoln administration had both of them removed from their positions. (Library of Congress images)

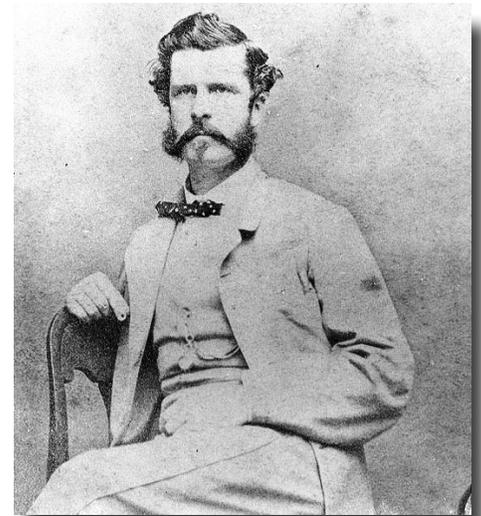
for the campaign, he said—but communicate with Butler.

If Grant expected Butler and Lee to commence a lengthy correspondence upon his departure, it did not happen. The month of April slipped away, and Butler did nothing to convey his list of requirements. Although no preparatory orders ever reached them, the coming of the campaign came as no surprise to the thousands of bluejackets stationed at Hampton Roads. The sailors from the North Atlantic Squadron could tell that a great offensive was in the offing. Each day, a new batch of transport vessels arrived, dumping Union soldiers at Yorktown, the primary assembly point for Butler's army. The sailors could not tell where the Army of the James intended to go, but they surmised that the North Atlantic Squadron would accompany them there.

Finally, on April 25, when it became obvious that Butler's campaign would begin in a matter of days, Secretary Gideon Welles grew concerned that the North Atlantic Squadron would be caught unawares. He sent a letter to Admiral Lee, warning him that he must figure out what Butler wanted. Welles wrote, "The army preparation is progressing rapidly, judging from the arrival of troops from the South, and I fear delay will be experienced from the want of naval preparation. This movement, considering its character, has been sprung rather suddenly." Not wanting the Navy to appear negligent in its obligations to the Army, Admiral Lee sent a missive to Butler, thanking him to "inform me of the extent and character of

the joint expedition which you propose to make, showing the exact service which you expect the navy to render."

Once Lee's reminder arrived, Butler wasted no time in sending his long overdue request. In short, Butler wanted the North Atlantic Squadron to accomplish five things.



Lieutenant Hunter S. Davidson's work with the "Submarine Battery Service" did more damage to the U.S. Navy than did any other Confederate branch. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

First, Lee's ships had to escort the army's fifty transports and thirty landing schooners to three prescribed landing zones with "the utmost celerity." Butler expected to land troops at Wilson's Wharf, City Point, and the Bermuda Hundred. Second, Butler wanted the Navy to provide covering fire for the troops as they landed. If the Confederates defended the beaches, the Navy had to



Situated on top of Drewry's Bluff, Fort Darling formed the Confederates' main line of defense and the U.S. Navy's biggest obstacle on the James River. Since repelling the U.S. Navy's assault in 1862, the Confederates had reinforced the position. The Confederates improved the physical obstructions, deployed three casemate-type ironclads to patrol the area, and planted torpedoes. (Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper engraving)

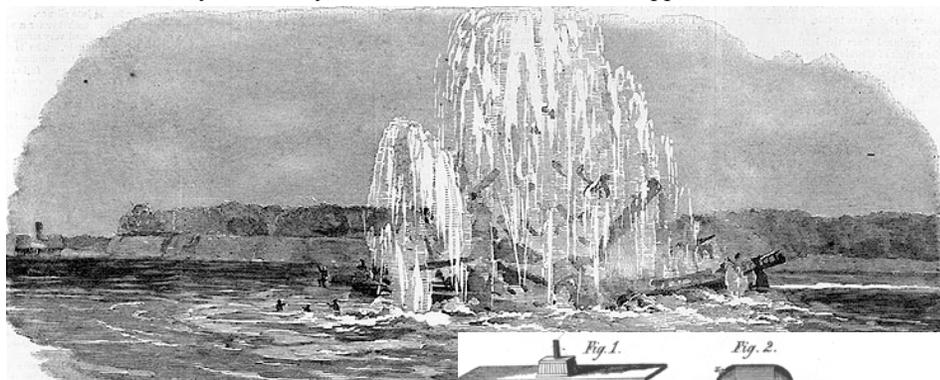
bombard the earthworks while the army's landing boats paddled ashore. Third, Butler desired the Navy to clear all obstructions in the James River, sweeping the channels for torpedoes. If a single transport struck an underwater mine, it could spell doom for an entire infantry brigade. Fourth, after the Army of the James completed its landings, Butler expected the North Atlantic Squadron to send its divisions into the James and Appomattox Rivers, traveling as far as Farrar's Island and Port Walthall. This way, the Navy could secure passage of the rivers and protect the flanks of the Army of the James as it entrenched on the Bermuda Hundred.

Finally, Butler explained that all naval preparations should be completed by April 30, only five days away. This last point—the deadline to make preparations—caught Admiral Lee off-guard. To make the requisite preparations, at least as Butler explained them, required both officers and enlisted sailors to work round-the-clock. Even Secretary Welles considered Butler's request absurd. Writing to Lee, he explained, "Only four days to improvise a navy, and they are to proceed up a river whose channel is not buoyed out. The scheme is not practical, yet it has the sanction of General Grant. It must, however, be a blind, intended to deceive the enemy, and to do this effectually he must first deceive our own people. . . . General B. himself fully believes he is to make a demonstration up the James River. It may be that this is General Grant's intention also, but if it is, I shall likely have my faith in him impaired. Certainly there have been no sufficient preparations for such a demonstration and the call upon the Navy is unreasonable."

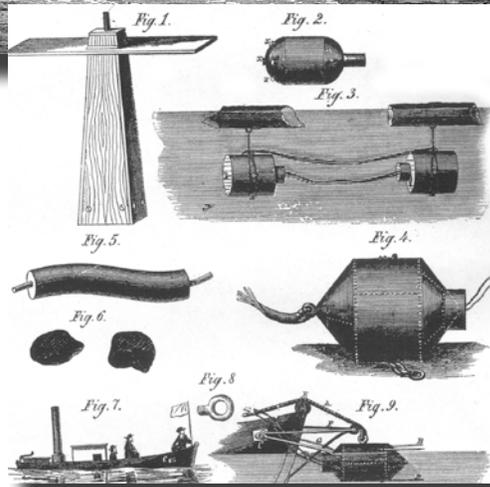
Unreasonable or not, Admiral Lee

complied with Butler's directives, assigning ships to the Bermuda Hundred operation. As of April 1864, the North Atlantic Squadron consisted of ninety-five ships, forty-two of which were busily engaged in the blockade of Beaufort and Wilmington or patrolling the sounds of North Carolina. Of the remaining ships, Lee selected twenty-three: five monitor-type ironclads, six screw steamers, and twelve side-wheel steamers. In a flurry of activity, the sailors

commanders, telling them how to advance and delivering precise instructions on how to drag for torpedoes, the most feared of all the Confederacy's naval defenses. Lee reminded his squadron that the army's success hinged on the Navy's timing. The squadron had to reach Harrison's Bar at high tide, or else the five deep-drafted monitors would be unable to reach the landing zones. Lee warned, "No excuse will be received for not being ready to move at the appointed time."

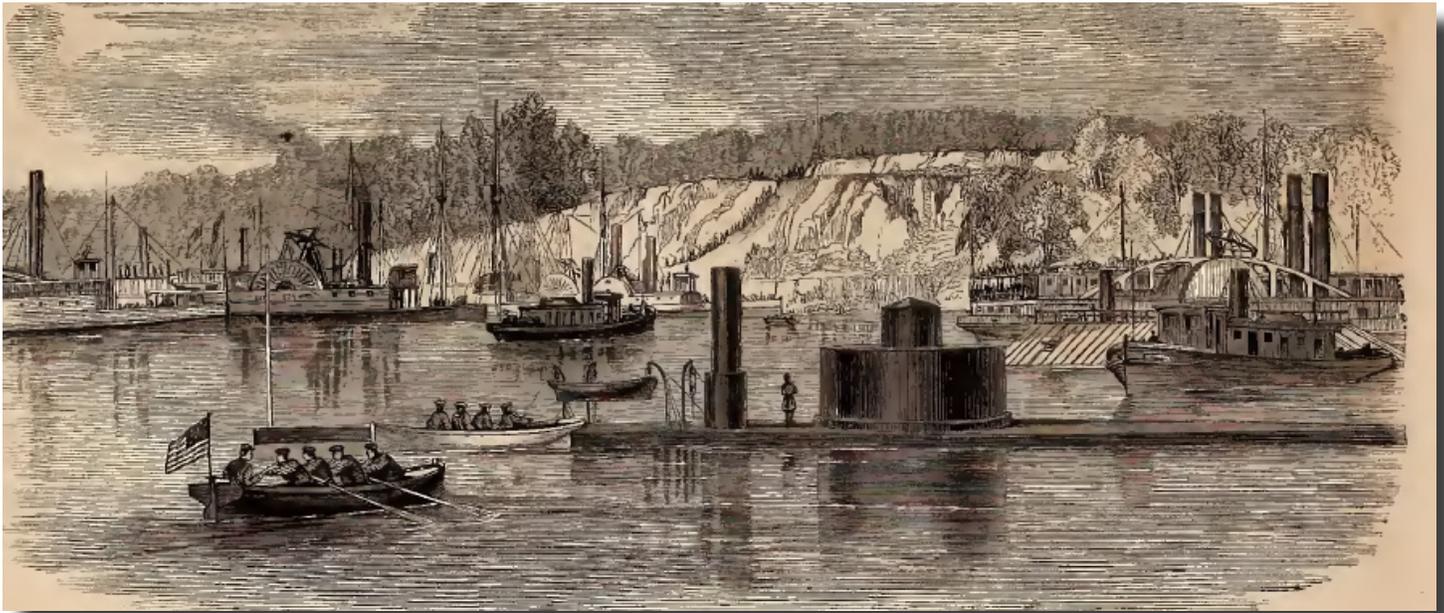


When a U.S. Navy warship was unfortunate enough to be hit by one of the Confederate "torpedoes," total destruction usually occurred. The above image depicts USS Commodore Jones being blown up in 1864. At right are Scientific American sketches of Confederate torpedoes fished out of the James River by U.S. Navy picket boats. (Above, Harper's Weekly engraving. Right, Scientific American engraving)



of the selected ships re-coaled their engine rooms, stocked ammunition and rations, and performed inspections of ordnance, rigging, and hull. Amazingly, in one week, the North Atlantic Squadron had every vessel ready for departure. The orders arrived on May 4, when Butler sent a message to Lee, telling him that the operation would begin at daylight the next day. In turn, Lee hastily issued a directive to his ship

At daybreak on May 5—a bright, hazy day—the Union soldiers loaded up at their embarkation points at Yorktown, Gloucester, West Point, Grove Landing, and Fort



Shown here is Fort Powhatan, one of many small Confederate fortifications on the James River seized with little resistance during the joint Army/Navy advance. (Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper engraving)

Monroe and the vast armada got underway. In addition to the Navy's twenty-three warships, fifty transports and ten army-controlled gunboats accompanied the expedition. Between them, the ships carried 35,916 infantrymen and artillerymen. For the infantrymen, the sight of the sprawling fleet provided a breath-taking scene. A Massachusetts soldier on board the transport *George Leary* wrote, "The river is filled with the shipping necessary for the expedition, and those on history bent are not unmindful that they are again in historic scenes." Another Massachusetts veteran remembered the fleet as "one of those mighty pageants in which the North showed its power and resources by sending a whole army at once, in transports, to its destination."

The massive convoy surged down the York River, passed the strait at Hampton Roads, and then cruised up the James. One brigade landed at Wilson's Wharf and soon occupied Fort Powhatan, as the ironclad USS *Atlanta* and its two escorts provided cover. At midday, the North Atlantic Squadron passed over the shoal at Harrison's Bar—which proved to be less troublesome of an obstruction than previously believed—and by mid-afternoon, a second Union brigade landed at City Point, establishing a supply center that later enabled Grant's siege of Petersburg. Finally, at 5 P.M., the first Union troops splashed ashore at the Bermuda Hundred. The first brigades to go ashore encountered no enemy resistance. When it became obvious that the entire peninsula would

fall without a fight, the transports ground themselves against the bank, threw down their ladders, and started disgorging troops by the thousands. In twenty-four hours, the entirety of the Army of the James made it ashore. Amazingly, Butler now possessed an easily defensible supply base, twelve miles south of the Confederate capital, all without the loss of a single man.

The amphibious operations of May 5, 1864, had been stunning successes, and much of that came from the readiness of the Navy. Although Butler had failed to share his plans with Admiral Lee, the North Atlantic Squadron somehow assembled a sufficient number of craft and managed to get all of them over the un-dredged shoal at Harrison's Bar. Luck figured into the equation. The Confederate defenders at Wilson's Wharf, City Point, Fort Powhatan, and the Bermuda Hundred resisted timidly, or not at all. Consequently, the Navy discovered no opportunity to prove itself with a ship-to-shore bombardment. In short, the Navy had completed three of Butler's five objectives on a flawless first day. Now, the bluejackets had only to seize the upper reaches of the James and Appomattox, clearing the torpedoes as they did so.

The second phase of the Navy's campaign began on May 6, when Admiral Lee dispatched one-quarter of his fleet to the James and Appomattox Rivers. Two vessels sailed up the latter, reaching as far as Point of Rocks. Meanwhile, three gunboats ascended the James, chugging their way to Farrar's Island, the location of the fourth bend in the river. Disaster struck early. As the division

assigned to Farrar's Island passed Jones Neck, it came within sight of a Confederate submarine battery. The three slow-moving gunboats fell into a deadly trap.

The gunboatmen advanced their ships cautiously, reaching the sector known as Deep Bottom without incident. In many ways, the third bend in the James River represented something of a frontier. Excepting a small raid in August 1863, the North Atlantic Squadron had not advanced this far since George McClellan's Peninsula Campaign. Two years had given the Confederates ample time to improve the river's defenses. An intricate web of entrenchments now encircled Richmond, and all of the primary parallels anchored themselves against the north bank, each one sporting a battery of heavy guns facing the river. The entrenchments were taller and thicker than they had been in 1862, impervious to fire from shipboard cannon. Beyond Turkey Point—the first bend in the James upriver from the Bermuda Hundred—a system of observation posts run by the Confederate Navy's "Submarine Battery Service" monitored fields of electrically-detonated torpedoes.

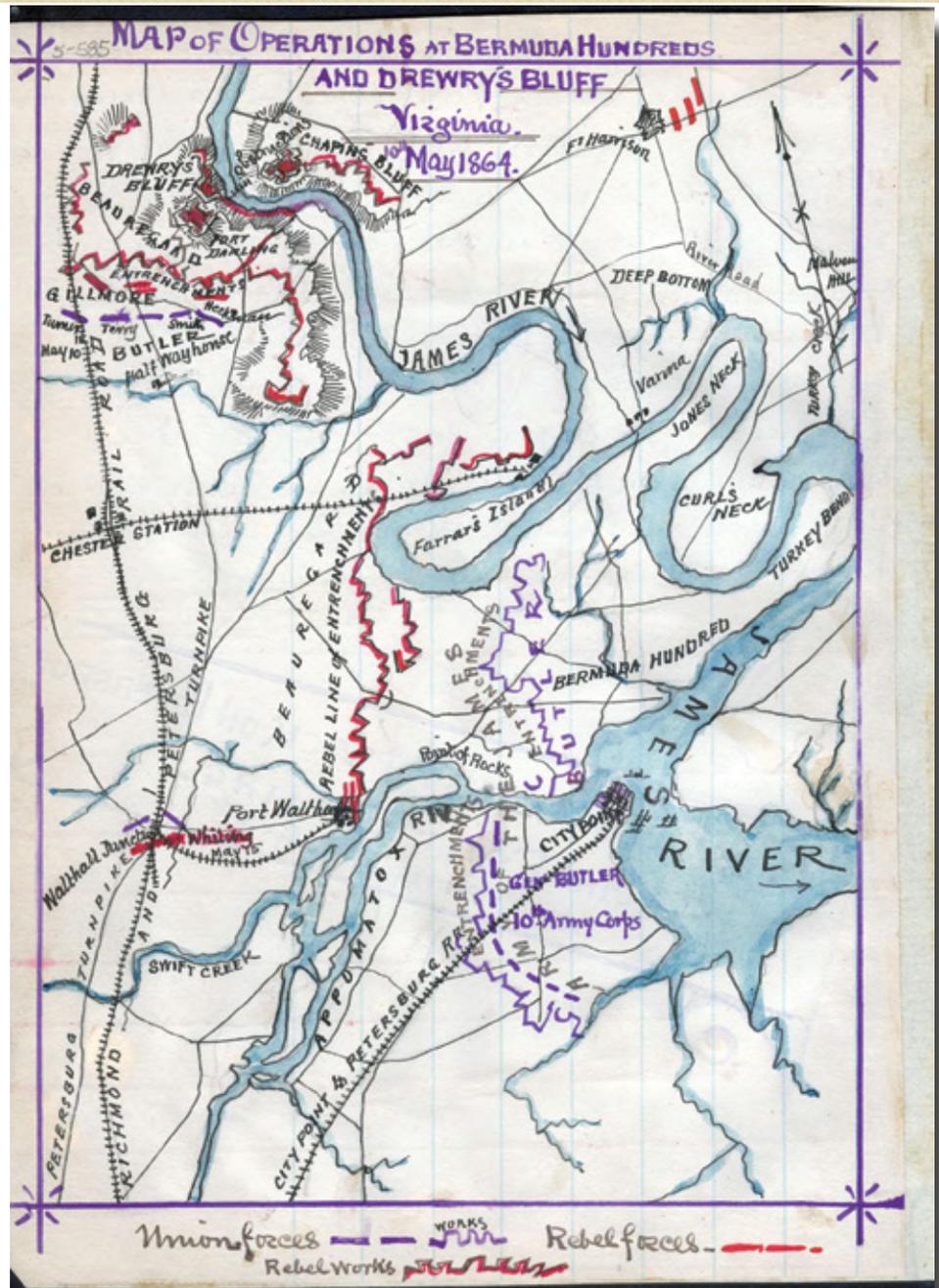
One of these Confederate submarine batteries laid claim to first blood. It consisted of twelve men under the command of Lieutenant Hunter Davidson. Twenty-two months earlier, at the point where Four-Mile Creek emptied into Deep Bottom, Davidson and his Confederates had floated two 2,000-pound torpedoes, spacing them 150 feet apart. Lateral wires ran underneath the surface of the river for 250 feet and then

connected the torpedoes to a tree on the south bank. From there, the wires connected to a concealed galvanic battery. Although the torpedoes had been submerged for almost two years, they were airtight—the powder bone dry. A Union officer who later examined a similar torpedo recounted, “These torpedoes (galvanic) are constructed with great ingenuity and scientific skill, and when taken from the water were in as good a state of preservation as when first put down.”

Davidson’s submarine battery did not take the Union sailors unaware. Since the beginning of the campaign, the bluejackets had followed specific instructions to avoid hitting torpedoes, using boats to search the shoreline for submerged wires. The ship commanders employed freed slaves in their pilot houses. With precision, they pointed out the locations of known Confederate submarine batteries. Consequently, on May 6, when the first three Union gunboats rounded the bend at Deep Bottom, the gunboatmen spotted the two explosives. USS *Mackinaw*’s freed slave alerted Commander J. C. Beaumont of the danger. Dutifully, Beaumont halted his ship and hoisted a meal pennant, the customary signal for sighting a torpedo. Another ship, USS *Commodore Morris*, halted midstream, and both ships began deploying boats to scout the banks. However, for some unexplained reason, the commander of the third gunboat, Lieutenant Thomas F. Wade, failed to heed the warning. He sailed USS *Commodore Jones* directly over one of the torpedoes.

When *Commodore Jones* made its error, the Confederate sailors inside the concealed submarine battery connected their leads, sending a spark into the torpedo. The detonation lifted the 542-ton ship out of water. A Confederate sailor remembered seeing the ship’s side-wheels spinning in midair. Then, a geyser of mud, splinters, and broken human bodies shot through the ship, and as a Confederate witness reported, “[it] dissolved as if it were in mid-air.” Splinters and shrapnel rained down into the river, leaving nothing behind but blood and wreckage. A Union officer who visited the site of the sinking eight days later confirmed, “The *Commodore Jones* looks as though she has been ground through the mill—she was literally torn into splinters.” A New York newspaperman claimed that the ship was “crushed like a piece of paper.” Of *Commodore Jones*’ eighty-eight crewmen, forty died and twenty-nine were wounded.

Immediately, the gunboatmen retaliated.



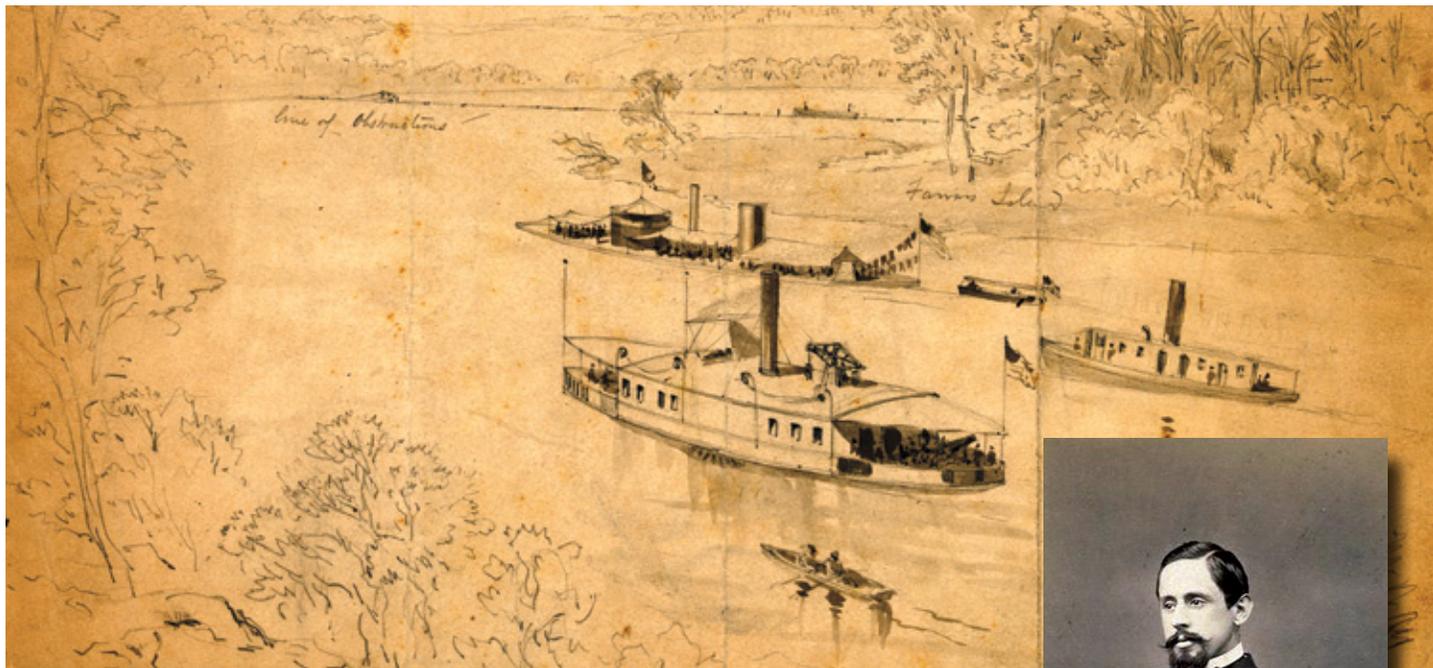
This contemporary 1864 map shows the Bermuda Hundred Campaign with Butler’s forces entrenched around City Point (modern-day Hopewell, Virginia). (Library of Congress map)

Sailors and Marines from USS *Mackinaw* landed ashore, routing the submarine battery. They killed one Confederate, shooting him through the head, and they captured two others, including the man who had ignited the torpedo. They promptly cut the wires to the second 2,000-pound torpedo and let it sink to the bottom. The two captured torpedo operators divulged some useful information about the location of the remaining submarine batteries along the James, although it took some coercion to convince them to spill their news.

Captain John Barnes recalled that one of the captives, Jeffries Johnson, “was not communicative and evaded on the grounds

of ignorance, . . . but being placed in one of the forward gunboats employed in dragging for torpedoes and given to understand that he would share the fate of the boat, he signified his willingness to tell all he knew about them.”

With prisoner Johnson’s help, the North Atlantic Squadron possessed essential information to ascend the James River in safety; however, the bluejackets realized that torpedoes were not their only problem. On May 7, the squadron lost another ship, this one down river, near Turkey Bend. It happened when USS *Shawsheen* paused to search for torpedoes. Finding nothing, at 11:20 A.M., the ship piped the crew to



Shown here is an Alfred Waud sketch of a monitor and a converted ferry boat deployed behind Union-placed obstructions at a bend at Farrar's Island. This defensive posture went against Admiral Lee's wishes. Once his ships delivered the Army of the James, Lee wanted to attack Confederate ships and forts upstream. But Grant wanted Lee's ships to ensure that the Union Army supply base at City Point and the supply lines crossing the James River were protected. Coincidentally, Admiral Lee's Confederate navy counterparts also wanted to engage U.S. Navy ships, but were overruled. (Library of Congress image)

lunch. Twenty minutes later, as the crewmen prepared their meals, a six-gun Confederate battery opened fire from the north shore, it having arrived unnoticed and unlimbered quietly. The first shot missed *Shawsheen*, but the second pierced the engine room, opening wide the steam pipe. Superheated gas spilled onto the deck, scalding several sailors, including the captain, Acting Ensign Charles Ringot. The ship tried to back away from the shore line, but no one managed to sever the anchor chain from the bitt.

Scalded in the face, Ensign Ringot jumped overboard along with seven other crewmen, shouting back to his assistant engineer, "For God's sake, send a boat!" While in the water, Ringot shouted his last order, telling Acting Master's Mate William Rushmore to haul down the ensign and hoist a white flag—anything to get the Confederates to cease fire. As the white flag went up, four companies from the 25th Virginia Battalion joined in the fray, firing at the panicked men flailing in the water. One ball struck Ringot in the right eye, killing him. The Virginia infantrymen attempted to capture the vessel, but found it too mired in the shallows and too shell-riddled to risk a boarding operation. Instead, they set *Shawsheen* afire, and once the flames reached the magazine, at 1:15 P.M., it exploded in a magnificent burst of pyrotechnics.

Assistant Engineer Richard Anderson

argued that only a herculean effort could have saved *Shawsheen* from its ambush. He explained, "During the whole time, from the firing of the first shot the enemy kept up a constant and murderous fire of shell, grape, canister, and rifle balls at short range, completely riddling our boat and rendering any effort—fast aground as we were—to save her entirely useless." In the end, the North Atlantic Squadron counted six killed or drowned and twenty-seven captured. Only seven of the forty-man crew escaped.

Thus in two days, the North Atlantic Squadron counted the total loss of two ships, USS *Commodore Jones* and *Shawsheen*, one sunk by a torpedo and one ambushed by a shore battery. Admiral Lee made clear to Butler that ascending the James River would be no easy task.

On May 13, he wrote, "The explosion of the gunboat *Commodore Jones* by a torpedo shows that the river must be cleared of them before we can ascend, and the quick destruction of the gunboat *Shawsheen* just in our rear in Turkey Bend by a rebel battery shows that considerable naval force will be necessary to keep open our communication even if we clear out the torpedoes." If the Army of the James wished to have the support of the Navy on its flanks, Butler's soldiers had to reciprocate the Navy's backing by going after the ambush sites and the submarine batteries on land. Lee



Admiral Lee recalled his most capable junior officer, Lieutenant Roswell Lamson, from blockade duty to participate in the 1864 drive on Richmond. Lee gave Lamson the important, but unenviable, task of clearing mines from the James River. (National Archives image)

continued, "I greatly need the military forces on the left bank, for which I have heretofore applied. Our crews are barely sufficient to man the guns. . . . I ought to have a cooperating army force to occupy such points in the reaches, on this narrow river with overhanging banks, as Wilson's Wharf and Powhatan Reach, to aid us to clear out the river, open and keep it open. Can not you cooperate?"

At the time he sent his missive to Butler, the Army of the James had already advanced beyond the fourth bend at Trent's Reach. In fact, the Union army was fast approaching Drewry's Bluff, although its right flank did not connect with the river. The Union vessels in the James River would have to catch up without the Army's help.

Admiral Lee did his best to adapt to the dangers. On May 12, he issued orders forming a special division, the "Torpedo and Picket Division," commanded by Lieutenant



Alfred Waud drew this pen and ink sketch of Deep Bottom (named because of the unusual thirty-five foot depth in the river), where Fourmile Creek meets the James River. Located about twenty miles upstream from City Point, Butler's troops built a pontoon bridge across the river to establish communication and a supply line with Grant's forces located farther north. Shown here are troops from the 10th Corps's 2nd Division marching north across the bridge and their leader, Major General Robert Foster, overseeing the move. Two "double-ender" gunboats, USS Mendota and Mackinaw, stand by at Fourmile Creek with their guns facing north, ready to assist. No information is available on the man on the bridge who decided to ignore all the activity and go fishing. (Library of Congress image)

Roswell H. Lamson. With his three ships, Lamson took up the special task of leading the vanguard into the upper reaches of the James, searching for torpedoes and dismantling them. Additionally, Lamson's division deployed picket boats each night, each one mounting alarm bells and flares to alert the squadron if any Confederate craft sailed down the river. Finally, Lamson put men ashore each night to watch for any Confederate attempts to erect new shore batteries similar to the one that ambushed *Shawsheen*.

For the next two weeks, Lamson's 175 sailors went to work, dragging the river for the "infernal machines," as they called

them. It was tiresome, anxious work, testing the nerves of the sailors. Torpedo dragging consisted of three elements. First, a party of Sailors and Marines patrolled the shore, searching for submarine battery operatives. Behind them, eleven cutters with grapnel lines sailed along the shoreline, hugging it closely, hoping to pull up the torpedoes' lanyards or sever their electrical wires. Finally, the three gunboats moved cautiously down the main channel, covering the shore party and the cutters. The gunboats also deployed grapnels, searching for torpedoes in the deep channels, making sure to keep a safe distance from each other, so as not to detonate a torpedo underneath a friendly vessel accidentally.

Lamson's Torpedo and Picket Division had plenty to do. On the first two days, May 13-14, his sailors found and diffused ten torpedoes, including a massive 1,800-pounder. By day four, they dismantled fifteen. Although each mine represented its own unique contraption, they fell into three general categories. The first category, swaying torpedoes, consisted of conical-shaped tin or copper containers filled with fifty to 100 pounds of powder. Each swaying torpedo anchored to the bottom of the river and bobbed in place just below the surface. A chimney shaft breached waves, providing the powder with air. Whenever a foreign object—that is, a Union gunboat—struck the chimney, it released a plunger that ignited

the powder. Typically, when a grapnel hooked the anchor or the mine itself, the device detonated.

The second type, floating or drifting torpedoes, consisted of a tin container suspended six to eight feet below two buoys. These torpedoes detonated when an operative pulled a lanyard, or when a ship caught one of the buoys, which pulled a lanyard from the ignition device. Lamson's men silenced these weapons by cutting the shore-bound lanyard, but if the torpedo used a buoy-actuated lanyard, they had to detonate it with the grapnels.

Finally, Lamson's men found a third type, electrically-detonated torpedoes, called Rains torpedoes by the Confederacy. These underwater mines consisted of a cylindrical casing with conical ends. Their mass varied, but they usually contained the largest explosive charges, between 1,200 and 2,000 pounds. In operation, Rains torpedoes floated beneath the surface, anchored at the deepest part of the channel. When U.S. warships passed by, operatives on the shore used a galvanic battery to send a current through the ignition system. All electrically-detonated torpedoes required two wires, one positive and one negative. If Union gunboatmen severed either of the wires, the torpedo failed to fire.

Unfortunately, minesweeping proceeded
Bermuda Hundred Campaign
 Continued on Page 13



The monitor USS Canonicus is shown here being rearmed by an ammunition schooner in the James River, 1864. This particular monitor would survive until 1907 and be the last of the Civil War ironclads scrapped. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

Book Reviews

Pushing the Limits: The Remarkable Life and Times of Vice Adm. Rockewell McCann, USN

By Carl LaVo

Reviewed by Gordon Calhoun

Over the long and glorious history of the U.S. Navy, several hundred men and women have had the privilege and honor to be promoted to flag rank/admiral. The vast majority of U.S. Navy admirals' careers have gone unnoticed and will more than likely continue to go unnoticed. These are the admirals that led a career of quiet competence.

In his biography *Pushing the Limits*, Carl LaVo brings forward the life and times of one of those flag officers who career has

Carl LaVo. *Pushing the Limits: The Remarkable Life of Vice Adm. Allan Rockwell McCann*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-591114-485-4.

gone unappreciated: Vice Admiral Allan Rockwell McCann.

A surface review of McCann's career shows that the vice admiral did indeed, as the book's subtitle suggests, have a remarkable career. During World War II, he was the commanding officer of a Pearl Harbor-based submarine squadron during the December 7 air raid on the naval facility; he commanded the battleship USS *Iowa* (BB-61) during the war and commanded her during the Battle of Leyte Gulf; and was commanding officer of the Tenth Fleet towards the end of the war. After the war, he served as Inspector General of the Navy.

McCann's most remarkable achievement, however, did not occur during war or during a battle. Having served on submarines during the early part of his Navy career, McCann was witness to or keenly aware of several submarine accidents. Because the boats could not be reached underwater, several dozen sailors died.

In the 1920s and 30s, the Navy placed McCann in charge of fixing this serious problem. After reviewing several ideas, McCann sketched out his own. The result was the McCann Submarine Rescue

Chamber. After several successful tests, the Navy adopted the design and procured several of them. In May 1939, under McCann's personal direction, Navy divers used the Rescue Chamber to successfully save all surviving sailors and officers from USS *Squalus* (SS-192). Navies worldwide today still use rescue chambers that are modeled after McCann's original design.

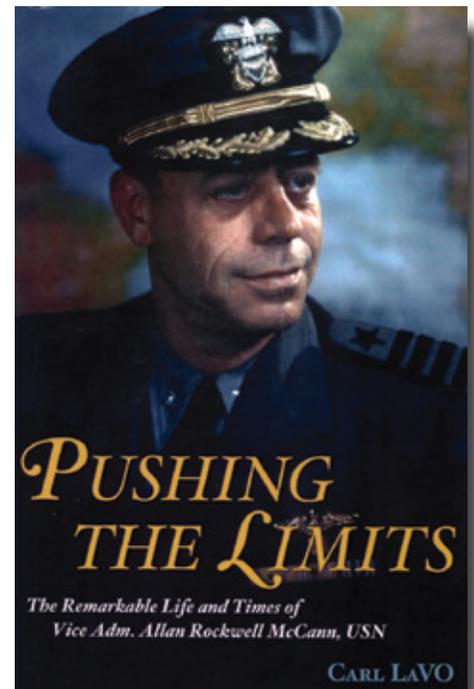
McCann's career was indeed remarkable, and he served his country with all the devotion and honor that is expected of a Naval officer. Having said that, this book does not do service to Admiral McCann nor does it inspire the reader to learn from his career.

The main issue with this work is that it focuses entirely too much on the "times" of Admiral McCann and not enough on the "life." The book is full of accounts of historical naval events, some of which McCann was actually a participant in. It is the author's intent to show how world events shaped McCann's career. But at some point in any biography, the author has to show how the subject of the work shaped world events.

This error is augmented in the work by the fact that the reader rarely hears McCann's own words. It could be argued that McCann did not write down his thoughts in a journal or diary, which would be a fair point. However, as a senior Naval officer, McCann has, at the very least, a trial of official documents such as a log books and official Navy correspondence. If the author did use official documents, it is difficult to know as there are no footnotes.

A second issue is the author's complete admiration for his subject. McCann, in the author's mind, never did anything wrong or made any mistakes. Since the very first war, no senior flag officer's career has been clean of errors. Even the great ones, like Nelson and Farragut, made mistakes.

When one reads this work, there are some strong implications that McCann did indeed make some errors and questionable decisions, but the author ignores them. For



example, while McCann was Inspector General of the Navy, the pivotal "Revolt of the Admirals" incident occurred. McCann became the Department of Defense's chief investigator/witch hunter to find out who was leaking documents to the press and Congress and embarrassing the political appointees in the Department of Defense and Navy.

Based on his actions, some might see McCann's as nothing more than a political stooge. After all, McCann investigated his fellow Naval officers who were doing nothing more than sticking up for their service. If McCann was acting otherwise, the author should have provided evidence to the contrary.

There are other issues in the book, some of which are the editor's fault and not the author's. For example, the March 8 and 9, 1862 battle in Hampton Roads is referred to as the "Battle of Hamptons Road" and took place in the Chesapeake Bay. It is the "Battle of Hampton Roads" and Hampton Roads and the Chesapeake Bay are two very distinctive bodies of water, even if they are next to each other. This maybe nitpicking, but it is an error that should not have happened and leads one to think there are other similar errors in the book.

These errors are unfortunate. McCann did indeed live a remarkable life. The reader will just have to explore other avenues to find out about it. 

Whips to Walls: Naval Discipline From Flogging to Progressive-Era Reform at Portsmouth Prison

By Rodney K. Watterson

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna

Before 1850, sailors could be whipped for the slightest infraction of the captain's or boatswain's rules. They would not have been put in the brig or locked in irons except for major crimes. They were needed to do their regular duties and man their battle stations. If not, others would have to do that sailor's duties as well as their own. At that time, discipline was maintained under the 1800 "Articles of War," otherwise known as "Rocks and Shoals." In 1850, the Navy

Rodney K. Watterson. *Whips to Walls: Naval Discipline From Flogging to Progressive Era Reform at Portsmouth Prison*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-61251-445-1.

abolished flogging and confinement became the rule; however, there was a shortage of confinement facilities. Ships had little space for brigs and prisons on shore bases were few and widely separated. The formal establishment of the naval prison system in 1888 did solve the problem partially. In 1908, the Navy built Portsmouth Naval Prison in New Hampshire, an imposing Gothic structure often called "Alcatraz of the East," which became a more permanent solution.

Historian Rodney Watterson's *Whips to Walls*, as its subtitle indicates, is the story of how discipline in the navy has changed in the past 200 years. In particular, it focuses on how one man, Thomas Mott Osborne, made reforms at Portsmouth during the two years when he was the warden – reforms that are practiced today at civilian as well as Naval prisons.

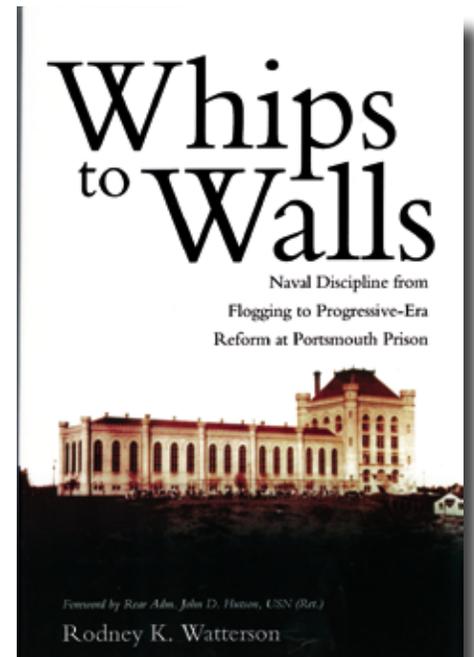
To learn what being a prisoner at Portsmouth was like, Osborne disguised himself and another staff member. They spent several weeks as prisoners. He returned to his office with a better idea of what prisoners needed to change their lives. It confirmed the reforms that he had

installed years before at Sing Sing Prison in New York. These changes included the creation of The Mutual Welfare League, a self-governing body of convicts that took over a large share of prison management, including the formation of committees to judge violators of prison rules and even to plan entertainment events. It was Osborne's aim that when returned to society, former prisoners would have been changed enough not to return to a life of crime.

The Navy has come a long way from whips to detention walls that do not hinder the efforts of prisoners to rehabilitate themselves under humane and supportive supervision. Some petty officers even choose brig duty to concentrate on developing their leadership skills. The Navy now uses a three-tiered system of incarceration based on the length of a prisoner's sentence. This book does not discuss the modern Navy. If it did, it would have provided facts for a more substantive conclusion than the author provided.

Something that did add to understanding the journey from whips to walls was the author's inclusion of the political connection to changes in society during the Progressive Age, including Osborne's support from the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, his assistant, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and President Theodore Roosevelt. But his final chapter does not clearly express a conclusion. It merely recounts the history of Portsmouth Naval Prison until its closure in 1973 and concentrates on the high and low inmate numbers throughout the decades of its operation. The author does point out that Osborne restored to duty more sailors during World War I than was done during World War II, when the highest number of prisoners was incarcerated there.

Watterson also recounted the inhumane treatment of German submarine prisoners who were interrogated at Portsmouth after the end of WWII. He intimated, but did not specifically comment, that if Osborne had been in charge, that sordid affair would



never have happened.

On the other hand, he does a much better job in Chapter 16. It provides not only the activities of Osborne after Portsmouth, but the legacy of his Mutual Welfare League, and the efforts of his closest associate, Austin MacCormick, to continue to uphold Osborne's prison reforms through the Osborne Association. In particular, MacCormick chaired a study of educational programs in American prisons, the goal of which was to develop a standard educational program for all penal institutions. In 1931, he published *Education of Adult Prisoners: A Survey and A Program*, which became the standard text for prison educational programs.

One other criticism is that no mention is made of the effect that the creation and implementation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in the 1950s had on the way sailors today are disciplined. Naval Officers take courses on the application of that Code and are made aware of disciplinary procedures that stress rehabilitation. Although the Code mainly specifies the judicial process before a sailor is sent to prison, it is still part of the military penal system and determines the type of prison to which the prisoner is assigned.

Despite these deficiencies, the author has provided a vivid picture of the naval penal system from the use of whips to use of prisons that seek to rehabilitate prisoners. His book is an admirable addition to the Naval Institute's series on "New Perspectives in Maritime and Nautical Archaeology." 

When Great Wasn't Good Enough

Secretary Welles' Removal of Acting Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee

When the Bermuda Hundred Campaign came to a close, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles decided to do some house cleaning. He wrote this to Admiral Lee: "NAVY DEPARTMENT, September 17, 1864. Sir: Rear-Admiral D.G. Farragut having been ordered to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, you are designated to relieve that distinguished officer in command of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron. -Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy"

With that slap in the face, Acting Rear Admiral S.P. Lee was unceremoniously removed from his post as chief of the most important squadron in the Navy and exiled to the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River. Don't you like how Welles wrote it? Lee had to relieve "that distinguished officer," as if Lee's service for the past twenty years and several combat missions



The Museum Sage

mattered for nothing.

What makes Lee's transfer somewhat puzzling is that Lee did nothing wrong. In fact, one could say he did everything right. He completed the task assigned to him, successfully managing the largest squadron for two years.

Unlike DuPont or Dahlgren, Lee did not have a black mark on his service record. He worked reasonably well with his Army counterparts. This alone should have rocketed him to the top of the list of flag officers, as many Naval officers had major problems working with the Army. It has been suggested that maybe Welles perceived Lee as too timid and that he could not stomach the upcoming campaign against the Confederate Gibraltar at Fort Fisher. If this was the case, then Welles did not read Lee's correspondence very well.

Lee wanted to go after the Confederate ironclads on several occasions and bitterly opposed placing obstacles in the water. Additionally, as mentioned in the main article, when Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant gave Lee *a week* to prepare enough ships and escorts to move 30,000 troops up the James River, Lee and his staff fulfilled the order. Neither Porter nor Farragut pulled off an equal administrative feat during the war.

Lee's removal did not come from his lack of political connections. If anything, Welles might have kicked him out sooner had he not had married into the Blair family, one of the most politically powerful families in Washington.

Some of the best historians in the field have pondered why Welles relieved Lee, dissecting official and unofficial correspondence to try find an answer. They all came to one conclusion: Welles simply did not like Lee. In their respective works on the U.S. Navy in the Civil War, historians Stephen Taaffee and Robert Browning both pointed to the fact that Grant wanted his own man commanding local Naval forces during the Overland Campaign. But Grant never gave a logical military reason why he wanted Lee gone. Perhaps he liked David Dixon Porter (Lee's eventual replacement) better. The two men, had after all, served together on the Mississippi River from the beginning of the war through 1863.

Taaffee noted that, nominally, Welles might have been taken aback by the Army telling his department how to run things. But in this case, Welles used Grant's wish to make the change.

The Secretary had set the stage for removal when he twice formally censured Lee in 1864, once for allegedly causing panic by moving Naval forces up to Washington, D.C., during Early's raid on the capital, and again for not doing enough to secure the blockade. Once Grant asked for someone else, Welles had ample political cover to issue Lee his demotion.

The Secretary's personal dislike of Lee is evident in what happened after the war. When many rear admirals had their "acting" prefix dropped from their titles as a way of showing thanks from a grateful nation, allowing the men to retire at a higher pay grade and with more personal prestige, Lee



did not receive any such gratitude. Despite intense lobbying, Welles refused to endorse any Congressional action making Lee's flag-rank permanent. Lee eventually made the permanent rank of rear admiral--only after ten more years on active duty and a different Secretary of the Navy in office.

Lest we think that we would never treat a man like Lee so harshly, The Sage would like the point out that the Navy has only named two ships after him: a destroyer that wrecked at Honda Point in 1923, and an oceanographic survey vessel. Meanwhile, Porter, Farragut, Dahlgren, and many others have had ships and town squares named after them.

This was an awful way to treat a man who not only served his nation well during times of crisis, but could have easily "gone South." It showed poor leadership skills on the part of Welles. When Lee made the famous statement, "when I see Virginia on my commission I will serve it," he not only turned his back on his state of birth, but also on three generations of family who called Virginia home. Farragut's decision to remain loyal did not come with that many consequences. 

A Little Gunboat Helps to Create a Big Legend

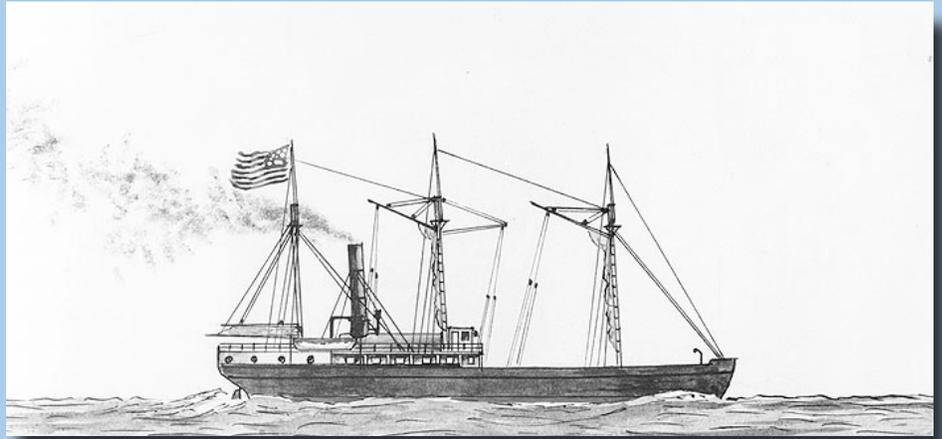
USS *Dawn* at the Battle of Wilson's Wharf

At the beginning of the war, the Navy purchased the tiny, 399-ton steamer *Dawn*. Originally constructed for local use around New York harbor and capable of a maximum eight knots, the Navy equipped this vessel with two 32-pounder smoothbore cannons and assigned *Dawn* to patrol the Potomac River.

As the war progressed, the Navy pressed this little warrior into major combat. Assigned to the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, *Dawn* took part in the capture of Fort McAllister and the destruction of the Confederate raider/privateer *Nashville*. The Navy then assigned her to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. After being used as a blockader, Admiral Lee reassigned *Dawn* to patrol the James River, a role more suited to the ship's diminutive size. Before *Dawn* began this new role, the Navy upgraded the battery by removing the 32-pounders and installing 100-pounder Parrott Rifle in their place.

During the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, Lee had *Dawn* patrol the river near President John Tyler's Sherwood Forest plantation. Here, a unit of United States Colored Troops under the command of Brigadier General Edward Wild had been constructing what would eventually be called Fort Pocahontas, one of several fortifications built to guard the shores of the James River from Confederate partisans.

Upon learning that Wild's formation was in Virginia, certain generals among the Confederate Army made it their mission to capture it. Wild's brigade had gained a notorious reputation for



vigilantism while campaigning in North Carolina, particularly among plantation owners. The African American formation actively recruited freed slaves and severely punished any slave masters or overseers it captured.

On May 25, 1864, Major General Fitzhugh Lee, Robert E. Lee's nephew, led a Confederate attack against the fort with 3,200 cavalry and infantry and three artillery pieces. The Confederates had the advantage of numbers, but the Union forces had a gunboat at their back.

Watches aboard *Dawn* heard gunfire near the plantation at a location called Wilson's Wharf. Volunteer Lieutenant John W. Simmons had his ship get as close as possible to shore, ordering his company to fire percussion shells from the 100-pounder rifle and a 20-pounder rifle. For added measure, he had the ship's 12-pounder boat howitzer fire into the woods. Confederate sharpshooters returned fire by taking aim at the gun crews, who were completely exposed.

Dawn's guns forced the Confederates to abort their flanking maneuver. After

five and a half hours of fighting, Lee's brigade withdrew. In his final report, Simmons wrote that his company fired 114 shells. His only regret was that his ship did not have the old 32-pounders! The rifled guns may have been more accurate, he noted, but they could not fire anti-infantry projectiles, such as canister or grape shot. For his part, Wild was extremely pleased with the Navy's assistance and specifically commended Simmons and his company for their cooperation in helping to win the engagement.

Even though the battle was small in size and had little strategic effect on the war, the victory at Wilson's Wharf became a legendary part of African American military history. As General Lee threatened to torture and/or return the Union soldiers to their masters, some have viewed the battle as a true symbol of African Americans fighting against the very institution that wanted to enslave them. Right there with them was a small New York City freighter and her company of sixty sailors. 

Bermuda Hundred Campaign Continued from Page 9

at an agonizingly slow pace, and Lamson could sense Admiral Lee's frustration. On May 17, he wrote, "My division have been working hard for the Admiral is anxious to get up as fast as possible, and they all have to await our movements." By May 17, Lamson's three vessels reached a point within three miles of Chaffin's Bluff, allowing the main body of Lee's squadron to proceed as far as Trent's Reach. Writing

to his fiancée, Lamson editorialized, "It is very annoying to have to contend with an enemy of this kind—that lies hid in the bottom of the river—and that you only discover by its terrible effects."

While Lamson's anti-torpedo division proceeded up the James, the larger vessels—those whose draft prevented them from moving beyond the confluence—dealt with torpedoes around the Bermuda Hundred

landing zone. Although this portion of the squadron had been on station for a full week, the sailors continued to encounter drift-torpedoes, mines that floated on the currents.

From the deck of a ship these torpedoes looked like harmless driftwood. Only a close inspection revealed them as underwater explosives. For instance, on the morning of May 13, sailors on USS *Pink* investigated a two-foot board drifting toward their ship.



With many members of the press accompanying the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, it seemed like a good time for many ship's companies to get their photograph taken. This resulted in a plethora of ship's company photographs. From upper left going clockwise are photos of: the double-ender gunboat USS Mendota, the casemate ironclad USS Atlanta (ex-CSS Atlanta), the monitor USS Saugus, and the ferryboat USS Hunchback. (Library of Congress and Naval History and Heritage Command images)

They lowered a boat, went to investigate, and threw out a line. The towing action caused the torpedo to detonate, and providentially, it killed no one and inflicted no damage. Expressing the paranoia of the fleet, Lieutenant Commander Homer Blake of USS *Eutaw* said he intended to “critically examine every floating object.”

Torpedo destruction represented only one of the ever-present dangers of the Navy's Bermuda Hundred Campaign. Although seemingly minor affairs in the great military tapestry of the Civil War, these short engagements resulted in significant tactical consequences. For instance, the sequence of fire-fights on the Appomattox River that occurred between May 7 and 11, 1864, drove the U.S. Navy from its position at Gilliam's Bar and the Army had to abandon one of its gunboats. The failure of the U.S. Navy to proceed beyond Gilliam's Bar meant that it could not mount an attack on Fort Clifton, which meant that it could not sail into Petersburg. Had the Appomattox River division been able to take Petersburg, the nine-month siege that took place between June 1864 and April 1865 would have

been entirely unnecessary. Truly, the fate of the war rested on slender threads.

The various dangers and delays encountered by the Navy caused Admiral Lee to grow concerned about the inequalities of the Army-Navy partnership. In short, Lee believed that much of the Navy's troubles could have been solved if the Army of the James had made a deliberate attempt to patrol the south bank of the James. On May 17, Lee again pleaded with Butler, asking him to provide support: “The bushes along the bank which serve to conceal the enemy need to be cut down. In this way the two services will support each other, each performing its appropriate part, and our communications can be kept open.”

Any plea for inter-service cooperation ended when the May 16 Battle of Drewry's Bluff ruined Butler's aspirations. On that day, the Army of the James crawled within striking distance of Fort Darling, the massive earthwork that protected the south

bank. On a foggy morning, General P. G. T. Beauregard's 18,000 infantry attacked. One division managed to flank the Union 18th Corps, driving it from its earthworks. The tactical error belonged to Butler; he had unwisely kept his army's right flank disconnected with the James River.

The unexpected bottling up of Butler on the Bermuda Hundred spelled an end to his campaign. By that point, Meade's Army of the Potomac had just departed from the North Anna River, and now surged toward the Chickahominy, its twenty-first day of continuous combat. Having lost faith in Butler's ability to take Richmond from behind, Grant dismembered his army. He instructed Butler to retain the 10th Corps in position on the Bermuda Hundred, holding Beauregard's Confederates in check. Meanwhile, the 18th Corps, under Major General William F. Smith, loaded back onto its transports and shipped to White House Landing on the Pamunkey River.

With half of Butler's army shifted to



This is a Harper's Weekly engraving showing the many different Navy warships and Army transports at City Point, Virginia. If the Bermuda Hundred campaign achieved nothing else, it established a huge supply base at City Point that kept Grant's troops well-supplied. (Harper's Weekly engraving)

the aid of Meade's Army of the Potomac, there was little that the Army of the James could do, at least offensively. Thus, it continued to hold the Bermuda Hundred line. By June 1, Butler's 10th Corps veterans admitted that the campaign had fizzled. However, as the fighting subsided into a stalemate, the Navy found itself with one more role to play, albeit reluctantly. The Army now demanded that the North Atlantic Squadron seal the James River permanently by sinking vessels into the narrow channels at Trent's Reach. Escaped slaves warned of a Confederate Naval attack, and lacking confidence in Admiral Lee's ability to repel it, Butler wished for the Navy to block the channel.

Although fearful of the Confederate Navy's professed use of torpedoes and fire ships, Lee considered it unwise to lay obstructions in the river. As he explained, "The Navy is not accustomed to putting down obstructions before it, and the act might be construed as implying an admission of superiority of resources on the part of the

enemy." If Lee felt confident in his sailors' ability to repel what he called the "novel" Confederate plan, Grant and Butler did not share his self-assurance. They believed the Navy could not defend Trent's Reach with ships alone. On June 2, Butler offered to send Admiral Lee five barges and schooners captured by the Army of the James for the purpose of obstructing Trent's Reach. Lee promptly replied, refusing to sink the ships, telling Butler that, "It must be your operation, not mine." Butler saw Admiral Lee's intentions clearly. The admiral feared that bottling up the James River would be perceived as an admission of defeat.

Despite coaxing from Butler, Lee refused to sanction the sinking of obstructions. Finally, Grant issued a directive, telling the Navy that it must comply, and Welles gave Lee a quiet nod. Admiral Lee sent the captured barges to Lieutenant Lamson, who, on June 15, dutifully carried out the task.

Although some believed that the sealing of Trent's Reach would end the naval engagements, one last sparring

occurred. On June 21, the Confederate ironclads and their escorts steamed toward Trent's Reach, exactly as the escaped slaves had predicted. The fight began when a Confederate battery at Howlett's Bluff unmasked its guns, triggering a response from Lee's monitors. The Confederate warships approached the fight, but never rounded the bend. They halted and began lobbing shells over Farrar's Island. The Union ships countered by firing shells

back at their unseen adversaries, and for four hours, the two fleets heaved more than 300 projectiles into the air. Only four shots struck their targets: two shells hit USS *Canonicus*, one shot struck USS *Saugus*, and one shot dismounted a gun at Howlett's. Neither side reported any casualties.

With the end of the campaign, the North Atlantic Squadron began changing its duties. Meade's army now besieged Petersburg; Admiral Lee's ships became a ferry service, shipping vital supplies into and out of City Point. Additionally, the North Atlantic Squadron provided escorts for incoming and outgoing troop transports. New recruits flowed into City Point and wounded men flowed out. It was hardly glamorous service, but incredibly vital, even life-saving, as U.S. ships escorted hospital ships out of the war zone and to hospitals in Washington, D.C.

By that point, the Squadron had come to accept that the Bermuda Hundred Campaign had reached a stalemate. Lieutenant Lamson commented: "This does not look like any advance on Richmond, and I greatly fear that the hopes of the country in this direction will be disappointed—of course the Navy can do nothing in a river like this except to support and assist the army, and we are requested to lie where we are." Lamson hated what the Navy had become—the support staff of the Army of the James. He continued, "How nobly the Potomac Army has been doing, and how sure that we are not emulating its splendid example it makes me blush to think of our inactivity."

The campaign had failed, but the North Atlantic Squadron had cooperated with the Army, facing danger and uncertainty every single day. For that, at least, the Navy's Bermuda Hundred operation should be remembered. 



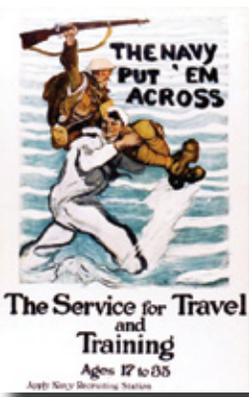
Toward the end of the campaign, the double-turreted monitor USS Onondaga arrived in the James River. From September 1864 to the end of the war, Onondaga remained the sole ironclad in the James River. (Library of Congress image)

The Public Chooses Their Heroes



This is an 1864 Currier & Ives Print entitled, “The True Peace Commissioners.” With an upcoming Presidential election where one candidate ran on a platform of peace, the always pro-Lincoln Currier & Ives chose four charismatic military men who they believed should settle the issue: Grant, Sheridan, Sherman, and, of course, Farragut (and not S.P. Lee). (Library of Congress image)

In Our Next Issue...



Putting Them Across:
Hampton Roads' Navy in
World War I