

150th Anniversary of the American Civil War



CSS Hunley

Winter on the Potomac

Cape May County Civil War Round Table Newsletter January 2013

6 Dec: Pot Luck Christmas Party; will be at the Jury Room.
Cost will be approximately \$10.

2013 Meeting Schedule

No meetings in January or February 2013

21 March: Refreshments:

18 April: Dick Simpson will be back to tell us about "The 2nd Vermont Brigade; Gettysburg Heroes." Refreshments:

16 May:

20 June:

18 July:

15 August:

19 September:

17 October:

21 November:

?? December:

CMCCWRT Officers for 2012/2013

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**REMINDER:
DUES FOR 2012 ARE DUE NOW!!!
Send to Jim Marshall, address above**



Civil War Milestones in February

1861

- | | | |
|-----------------|----|---|
| February | 1 | Texas secedes |
| | 18 | Davis inaugurated as provisional president of Confederacy |
| | 23 | Lincoln arrives in Washington DC |

1862

- | | | |
|-----------------|----|---|
| February | 6 | Union army/navy forces take Fort Henry on the Tennessee River |
| | 8 | Union soldiers take Roanoke Island (NC) |
| | 16 | Confederates surrender Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River (TN) |
| | 22 | Davis officially inaugurated Confederate president in Richmond |

1863

Nothing really important happened in February 1863

1864

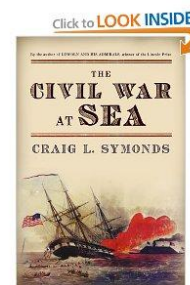
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|-----------------|----|--|
| February | 17 | Confederate sub Hunley sinks Housatonic (SC) |
|-----------------|----|--|

1865

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|-----------------|----|--|
| February | 3 | Peace conference at Hampton Roads (VA) |
| | 17 | Columbia (SC) occupied by Union troops, burned |
| | 18 | Charleston (SC) occupied by Union troops |
| | 22 | Wilmington (NC) falls to Union troops |

Civil War Related Events in January 2013

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|---|---|
| <p>2 PA Lecture, "The Bloodless Campaign in Tennessee," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>2 MD Movie: <i>The General</i>. 1 pm, Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, 401 Museum Drive, Hagerstown. www.wcmfa.org</p> <p>3 PA Lecture, "Chickamauga," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>6 DC Seminar, "The Civil War at Sea: Ironclads, Rams, and Blockade Runners," at the Ripley Center, 1100 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington. 6:45-8:45 pm. \$42. www.smithsonianassociates.org (click on Civil War).</p> <p>7 MD Lecture and dinner, "The War You Might Have Overlooked." at the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts in Hagerstown. 6-8 pm. \$25 with dinner, \$5 lecture only (7 pm). www.wcmfa.org</p> <p>9 PA Lecture, "'Where death for noble ends making dying sweet,' — Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>9 MD Talk, "The Evolution of Military Medicine: The Letterman Plan 1862 to 2012," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick. 2 pm. Free with museum admission. www.civilwarmed.org</p> <p>9 VA Lecture, "Diamonds, Education, Emancipation and Race: The Family of Silas Omohundro," a slave trader's family, at the Dorey Recreation Center, 7200 Dorey Park Drive in Varina (near Richmond). 2 pm. Free. 804-652-3409.</p> <p>10 PA Lecture, "'We Shall be Whipped Out of Existence,' — From Calamity to Crisis: Oliver O. Howard, Out of Chancellorsville and into Gettysburg," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>16 PA Lecture, "Burnside vs. Longstreet in East Tennessee: The Fall 1863 Knoxville Campaign," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>16 VA Seminar, "1863: The Turning Point," at Longwood University in Farmville. Co-sponsored with the Appomattox National Historical Park. Top speakers include Robert K. Krick and Frank O'Reilly. Doors open 8:45 am at the Jarman Auditorium on campus. Free. No reservations necessary. 434-352-8987 extension 232.</p> <p>17 PA Lecture, "With Porter on the Mississippi — Union Naval Operations in the Vicksburg</p> | <p>Campaign," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>21 MD Lecture, "Battle of Vicksburg," at the Carroll Community College, 1601 Washington Road, Westminster. 6:30-9:30 pm. \$35. 410-386-8100.</p> <p>21-23 VA Conference, "Lest We Forget: A Conference on Enslavement and Emancipation," talks, panels and optional tours, in Manassas. Free. www.manassasbullrun.com/page/event-contact.htm</p> <p>23 DC VA Bus tour, "First Battle of Manassas," with Ed Bearss, begins at Sixth and C streets in Washington. A Smithsonian tour. 8 am-6 pm. \$165. www.smithsonianassociates.org (click on Civil War).</p> <p>23 DC Bike tour, "Civil War Defenses of Washington," follows off-road trails to remains of the city's fortifications. Begins at Fort Dupont Park, Fort Dupont Drive SE in Washington. 10 am. Free. Sign up: 202-426-7723.</p> <p>23 PA Lecture, "The Chancellorsville Campaign," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> <p>23 MD Talk, "African American Men and Women in Medicine during the Civil War," at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick. 2 pm. Free with museum admission. www.civilwarmed.org</p> <p>23 VA Special tours, "A Hidden History: African Americans at Dabbs" at the Dabbs House Museum, 3812 Nine Mile Road, near Richmond. 1-3 pm. Free. 804-652-3409.</p> <p>24 VA Music, "Civil War Music Brought to Life," at the South County Library, 6303 Merriman Road, Roanoke. 3-8 pm. \$10/adult. 540-387-6078.</p> <p>24 PA Lecture, "Gettysburg Redeemed: Bristoe Station, Mine Run, and the Fall Campaigns of 1863," at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. 1:30 pm. Free. www.nps.gov/gett</p> |
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The Civil War at Sea by Craig L. Symonds

Professor emeritus at the U.S. Naval Academy Craig Symonds has written or edited some dozen books. In the span of only a few years, he has established himself as one of the foremost historians of the Civil War at sea. In his latest book, *Union Combined Operations in the Civil War*, Symonds brings together a series of essays by well-known scholars treating Union army-naval cooperation or lack thereof during the war. The book does not cover all such operations but is limited to those along the seacoast. Notably absent here are such strategically important combined operations on western waters as those against Forts Henry and Donelson, Island No. 10, and Vicksburg.

Unfortunately the early Union seacoast operations were designed simply to secure coastal enclaves for coaling, supply, and repair facilities to support the blockade of the Confederate coastline, itself the major Union naval effort of the war. As a result, the locations picked by the so-called Blockade Board were selected for their ability to defend against land attack as opposed to facilitating offensive operations to the interior. As Rear Admiral Francis Du Pont pointed out, there were opportunities early in the war to take major Confederate cities from the sea, but these would have entailed large commitments of ground troops, and, once taken, the cities would have to have been held. The notable exception to this Union strategy was Major General George B. McClellan's Peninsula campaign, launched up the Virginia Peninsula from Union-held Fortress Monroe with the goal of capturing Richmond. It was, however, doomed by McClellan's own shortcomings as a commander, most notably his inability to take risks and his lack of offensive spirit.

The operations discussed in the book and their authors are as follows: operations in Pamlico Sound (David E. Long); Brigadier General Ambrose P. Burnside's North Carolina campaign (David C. Skaggs), Brigadier General William B. Franklin's assault at Eltham's Landing on the York River during the Peninsula campaign (Mark A. Snell); the first battle at Drewry's Bluff (Robert E. Sheridan); operations along the Texas Gulf coast (John P. Fisher); against Charleston (Francis J. DuCoin); on the James River in 1864 (Craig Symonds); and against Wilmington (Chris E. Fonvielle Jr.). The last two chapters look at British assessments of Union combined operations (Howard J. Fuller) and lessons learned and forgotten from combined operations in the war (Edward H. Wiser).

Symonds points out that despite a plethora of books treating the Civil War, combined operations have been largely ignored. He is rightly critical of the single other book devoted to the subject, Rowena Reed's *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (first published in 1978), which is deeply flawed in that it is largely a paean to General McClellan. Reed reached the unusual conclusion that, had Union leaders only followed McClellan's strategy, the war would have been won in 1862.

As Symonds notes in his introductory essay, there was no tradition of combined operations at the start of the war. Despite the experiences of the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American

War (1846–48), training manuals failed to address the subject, and the army and naval departments had no means of effecting cooperation. Each service jealously guarded its own independence, and officers of one service were under no obligation to accept orders from officers of another. They also tended to ignore differences in rank. President Abraham Lincoln was the only person on the Union side who actually had command authority over both army and navy and could order cooperation. His presence at Hampton Roads in the spring of 1862 led to his "suggestion" of an operation against Sewall's Point that brought the capture of Norfolk.

Success in combined operations rested largely on individual army and navy commanders working in harmony. Where this occurred, and where there was sound planning and adequate support, success was likely. Without close cooperation, defeat invariably followed, as in the Red River campaign...

Continuing in the vein of his Lincoln Prize-winning book *Lincoln and His Admirals*, acclaimed naval historian Craig L. Symonds presents a masterful history of the Civil War navies--both Union and Confederate--and places them within the broader context of the emerging industrial age.

Symonds begins with an account of the dramatic pre-war revolution in naval technology--the advent of steam propulsion, the screw propeller, and larger and more powerful rifled guns that could fire explosive shells as well as solid shot. These extraordinary changes were epitomized in the famous "Battle of the Ironclads"--one of the great stories of the Civil War--pitting USS *Monitor* against the larger and more heavily armed CSS *Virginia* (also known as *Merrimack*). Symonds also offers an overview of Lincoln's blockade of the South, a vast campaign involving as many as 500 ships and 100,000 men; discusses the fierce naval war for control of the rivers in the West; and looks at the important siege of Charleston, which would last three years and involve 40,000 men and sixty warships. Symonds concludes with three key episodes from the end of the war--the dramatic Battle of Mobile Bay, where Farragut delivered his famous cry: "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!"; the battle of Wilmington, where combined naval and army forces successfully overran Fort Fisher, a giant earthwork fort called by one historian "the mightiest fortress in America"; and the remarkable cruise of the CSS *Shenandoah*, a round-the-world voyage of 58,000 miles, during which she captured thirty-eight prizes--mostly after Lee had surrendered, alas.

The Civil War at Sea illuminates a little-discussed and greatly undervalued aspect of America's national conflict. Concise yet comprehensive, this volume is a lively addition to the field of naval history.

Features

An operational history of the Civil War navies, this serves as a complimentary text to *Lincoln and His Admirals*

Reviews

"Symonds writes briskly and with great competence, and *The Civil War at Sea* (and on the rivers) is a masterful overview of a most meaningful topic."--*Naval History*

"Excellent.... Crisp writing, incisive assessments of leading personalities, and attention to details often overlooked enhance Symonds's book." --*Choice*

"Symond's account of the campaigns, strategies, tactics, and personalities that characterized the naval conflict is both detailed and comprehensible for laypersons. He effectively places the naval war within the broader context of an emerging industrial age, as steam and steel led to great changes in the construction and use of warships. The author uses a topical approach, with his descriptions of the Union blockade and Confederate efforts to thwart it are particularly interesting. A good addition to Civil War collections." --*Booklist*

"Covering river and sea, tradition and technology, strategy and happenstance, admirals and sailors, this is as comprehensive and authoritative a book as has ever been written on the naval side of the Civil War. Craig Symonds' hand at the tiller guarantees superb scholarship and lucid prose. All hands aboard!" --Harold Holzer, Chairman of The Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation

"Craig Symonds combines his talents as a fine historian of the U.S. Navy and of the Civil War to produce this outstanding study of the Union and Confederate navies. Focusing on the ways in which Southern technological innovations and Northern industrial productivity shaped the strategy and tactics of the naval war, he offers important insights on the course and outcome of the conflict." --James M. McPherson

"Distinguished naval historian Craig Symonds' well-researched and engagingly written overview, *The Civil War at Sea*, touches all the major areas of the naval war, including the ships and their guns, the differing strategies pursued by the North and South, and the contest that ensued. Simply put, it is a splendid introduction to the naval side of the conflict." --Spencer C. Tucker

"*The Civil War at Sea* is crisp and well written, well researched and insightful as well as a timeless contribution to that neglected aspect of Civil War literature." --B. Franklin Cooling

"This is a superb read that melds emerging technology and captivating personalities, both of which continue to mold the U.S. Navy to this day. Craig Symonds masterfully brings this largely overlooked piece of our country's history to life, in a fine book that will appeal to a wide range of interests." --Admiral Bruce DeMars, USN (Ret)

"Craig Symonds' timely and readable tour-de-force, detailing the actions of the U.S. and Confederate navies, sheds new light on both well-known strategies, battles, and personalities as well as on those less well known. Here is a book for Civil War buffs and those looking for good history." --Vice Admiral Robert F. Dunn, USN (Ret), and President of the Naval Historical Foundation

"Symonds has a gift for making complex and technical issues easy to understand, and his straightforward style makes for enjoyable reading. This book will appeal to general readers interested in either U.S. naval history or naval aspects of the Civil War. His thematic structure allows readers to understand the big picture of naval tactics and strategy without being overwhelmed by minutiae." --*Library Journal*



CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL : Did Economics Dictate the Outcome of the Civil War?

by Hahn, Barbara **Issue:** Summer
2012

State of the Field: Using Economics to Explain the Civil War's Outcome

"The North can make a steam engine, locomotive, or railway car; hardly a yard of cloth or pair of shoes can you make... You are bound to fail. Only in your spirit and determination are you prepared for war. In all else you are totally unprepared, with a bad cause to start with. At first you will make headway, but as your limited resources begin to fail, shut out from the markets of Europe as you will be, your cause will begin to wane. If your people will but stop and think, they must see in the end that you will surely fail."¹

As William T. Sherman reputedly declared in December 1860, economics would eventually dictate the outcome of the impending war. The North had the men, the materiel, the industry, and the transportation and distribution systems to fight; the South had exports and ideals. By some accountings, as in Sherman's, the result was practically foreordained.

Nothing is inevitable, however. Had the Confederacy (the CSA) found an ally in Great Britain—and maintained the market for its exports—the result might have been very different. Capital from cotton could have provided many of the nation's needs, but the Confederacy at first embargoed its staple, hoping to make Britain choose sides. By 1863, English textile manufacturers had found new sources of cotton supplies in Egypt, India, and Brazil. Moreover, the northern blockade of southern ports threatened the Confederacy's intercourse with the outside world. Though the impact and effectiveness of the blockade remains a hotly debated topic, careful recent analysis concludes that it played a significant role in Confederate defeat, damaging especially internal commerce and the coastwise trade. Moving men and goods within the Confederacy, maintaining a navy, exporting cotton, and importing pig iron, arms, and consumer goods all struggled. As the Anaconda Plan tightened around the Confederacy, it also shrank as a result of military engagements and Union occupation.²

In fact, however, for a year or more after Lincoln's election, neither side was really up to the task of extended war. Initial

optimism rapidly gave way to the reality of a long conflict. The two nations had different goals—southern leaders sought independence while their counterparts in the north aimed to quell secession and preserve the union. Nonetheless, the two sides had remarkably similar political institutions within which their economies operated. Secessionists viewed their nation as the true heir of the founding fathers, and thus wrote a Constitution modeled on that of the United States. It forbade tariffs to protect industry but allowed them as revenue measures—and the CSA rapidly levied a tariff in spring of 1861. Both nations printed money and borrowed vast sums. In both nations, the War Department was largely responsible for the conflict, while a Quartermaster system handled logistics, supply and distribution. The Confederate Quartermasters operated factories and workshops, employed 50,000 workers, and dictated price and policy terms even to private textile mills. In other words, the South made larger attempts at government control of the economy than did the North. The results, however, were poorer.³

Because neither the USA nor the CSA possessed a fully operational federal bureaucracy in 1860-1861, the first years of mobilization depended heavily on the states. In the North, Lincoln's calls in April and May of 1861 to expand the army from 16,000 to 156,000 resulted in a rush of enthusiastic volunteers, but the individual states provided these troops (and the state militias) with uniforms, equipment, arms, and garrisons. Massachusetts and New York—the most abolitionist and the most well financed states, respectively—provided the most troops, money, aid and expertise to the Union. Out west, things were much worse. Less developed economies and conflicted loyalties may have slowed support for the conflict in the Old Northwest. In Mark Geiger's Missouri, country banks in plantation districts provided money to Confederate mobilization; when the state stayed in the Union, its planters lost their land and became guerrilla warriors. In the South, the states provided the men, arms, and equipment for the conflict through 1861, but fell back at different rates thereafter. Despite early enthusiasm in the lower South, by 1863 the relations between the states and the CSA had deteriorated and internal divisions prevented adequate support for the war effort.

The two nations had comparable difficulties arming their soldiers in the first few years of the war. Under Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War until replaced by Edwin M. Stanton in January 1862, the Union failed to arm and equip its soldiers adequately for battle and extended mobilization. The rifles and muskets in the Union numbered 440,000 at the start of hostilities, compared to 150,000 in the Confederacy, but the rush by southern states to secure weapons at first resulted in thievery, rapidly rising prices, and the seizure of inferior or antiquated firearms. On both sides, the Navy Department did much better, though the Union use of armored vessels, submarines, mines, and torpedoes, in naval conflicts lagged that of the Confederacy. Early in 1862, however, combined operations of Union army and navy forces resulted in significant military victories, especially Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee, which cut river connections within the CSA and access to its northern reaches of the Mississippi.

Both nations needed their railroads, a milestone of this conflict's modernity. Railroad executives assisted the Union's War Department from April 1861 on, but the rates they set that summer led to charges of corruption and the reorganization of the Department early in 1862. The government seized the railroads in May 1862 but actually ran only a few lines. Herman Haupt and the U.S. Military Railroad kept the railroads operational in the East, though the Western Theater struggled until fall 1863. In the Confederacy (which contained 9,500 miles of railroads to the Union's 21,000 miles), the "fatal hesitation" of the government prevented optimal use and control of the rail system, despite a few notable efforts and dramatic military successes. The Confederate railroads and the navy both suffered from the lack of iron for maintenance and expansion. Richmond worked with individual railroads, which led to wide variations in coordination and control, while domestic iron producers (Tredegar, for example) made more munitions than rails. Efforts to buy railroad equipment in Europe received little aid from the War Department, so the roads cannibalized existing systems to keep CSA trains running, albeit barely, until surrender.⁶

For some scholars, the CSA's bid for independence stumbled due to financial failure—problems with the treasury, its monetary policy and taxes. It made no attempt to sell bonds abroad until summer 1862, and then retreated from that effort again in the fall. Its poor fiscal policies led to runaway inflation, even as goods became scarce for soldiers and civilians alike, chipping away at morale. "The Union taxed more and borrowed less," supported its greenbacks and suppressed competing currencies. Yet, for most historians, factor endowments mattered more than fiscal policy, and infrastructure and organization even more than that. By September 1862, and the bloody battle of Antietam, the economic distinctions between the warring nations had finally reached the sorry point assumed in Sherman's analysis two years earlier.⁷

Nonetheless, the Confederacy maintained the second largest army in the world for four years of extended warfare over half a million square miles—an achievement that undermines Sherman's 1860 assumptions. By the end of 1861, few people any longer thought the war's outcome inevitable. While Union victory and Confederate defeat certainly had economic components, the first few years of the war did not immediately reveal the asymmetry between the sections that Sherman and others assumed at the start of the conflict.⁸

Notes:

(1) William Tecumseh Sherman, Comments to Prof. David F. Boyd at the Louisiana State Seminary, Dec. 24, 1860, quoted in Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) 1:58.

(2) Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review* 109 (Dec. 2004): 1405-38; Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random

House, 2010); David G. Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

(3) Richard Franklin Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); John Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 131-33, 149; Harold Wilson, *Confederate Industry: Manufacturers and Quartermasters in the Civil War* (University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 3, 64, 101.

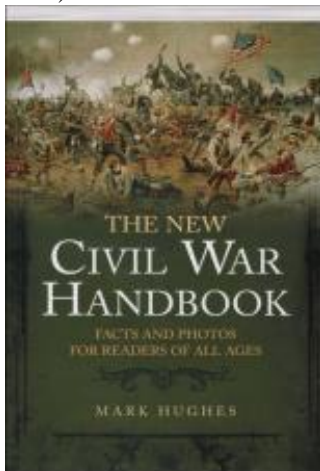
(4) Mark W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (Yale University Press, 2010); Paul A.C. Koistinen, *Beating Plowshares into Swords: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1606-1865* (University Press of Kansas), 107-14, 205-09.

(5) Koistinen, *Beating Plowshares into Swords*, 160, 174, 207-08, 260; Rowena Reed, *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (U.S. Naval Institute, 1978).

(6) Robert C. Black III, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* (University of North Carolina Press), 63; quoted in Koistinen, 229n8; "Appendix: Total Miles in 1860 by Region," on Railroads and the Making of Modern America, <http://railroads.unl.edu/views/item/appendix?p=3>, accessed July 18, 2012; produced for William G. Thomas, *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (Yale University Press, 2011).

(7) Douglas B. Ball, *Financial Failure and Confederate Defeat* (University of Illinois Press, 1991), 75, 255.

(8) For contradictory assessments of internal support for the CSA, see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Save Off Defeat* (Harvard University Press, 1999); William W. Freehling, *The South versus the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2001).



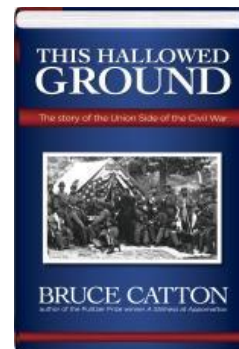
The New Civil War Handbook

[by Mark Hughes](#)

Simplifying a complex war is a challenge for any author, but with *The New Civil War Handbook*, Mark Hughes has written a concise guide to the conflict that makes it easy to understand for readers of all ages. Using clear and concise writing, tables, charts and nearly 150 photographs, Hughes traces the entire history of the war from the beginning of the conflict through the surrender and the Reconstruction era.

Coverage includes battles and campaigns, the common soldier, technology, weapons, women and minorities at war, hospitals, prisons, generals, the naval war, artillery and much more. In addition to these important areas, Hughes includes dozens of quotations, information on troop strengths, alternate names for battles, a breakdown of forces by state and a complete glossary. He also cites valuable but hard-to-locate data as losses in battles, major causes of death of Union soldiers (no data exists for Confederates) and deaths in POW camps. Finally, the book includes an extensive list of Civil War sites around the country, and a fascinating section about Civil War resources online.

The New Civil War Handbook is an invaluable quick reference guide for experts and novices alike.



This Hallowed Ground: The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War

[by Bruce Catton](#)

In the long and distinguished line of Civil War historians, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Bruce Catton stands virtually alone. Originally published in 1956, Catton's masterful *This Hallowed Ground: The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War* was reviewed as the best single-volume history of the war at that time—and it remains one of the finest examples of Civil War writing on record. Henry Steele Commager, the author of *The Blue and the Gray*, hailed *This Hallowed Ground*, writing, "The story of the Union in arms comes to life as in no other book on the war as a whole... marches along, powerfully, breathlessly, but with assurance.... A moving and exciting book."

Catton leads us down the path toward war with a darkly

foreboding narrative. And, when war finally arrives, he takes us into the cauldron along with the millions of Americans, both great and ordinary, caught in its grip. For all the exemplary scholarship that informs *This Hallowed Ground*, Catton is, first and foremost, a storyteller. Here, he combines an irresistible sweep with a wealth of telling details that bring the story to brilliant life. And while *This Hallowed Ground* chronicles the war from the Union point of view, it is ultimately the story of the men from both sides who lived and died on the battlefields—and who played their parts in the making of a new America.

Astounding in both breadth and depth, *This Hallowed Ground* is a uniquely magnificent chronicle of America's defining event.

The Navies of the Civil War

DONALD L. CANNEY, NAVAL HISTORIAN



Naval battles were often spectacular with clouds of smoke, thunderous cannon, and lurid flames reflected off the water. In addition to their use in battles and blockades, however, ships were useful in transporting soldiers, carrying supplies, and as hospitals. (National Archives)

As the Civil War raged on the land, the two national navies—Union and Confederate—created another war on the water. The naval war was one of sudden, spectacular lightning battles as well as continual and fatal vigilance on the coasts, rivers, and seas.

Union President Abraham Lincoln set the Union's first naval goal when he declared a blockade of the Southern coasts. His plan was to cut off Southern trade with the outside world and prevent sale of the Confederacy's major crop, cotton. The task was daunting; the Southern coast measured over 2,500 miles and the Union navy numbered less than 40 usable ships. The Union also needed a "brown water navy" of gunboats to support army campaigns down the Mississippi River and in Northern Virginia.

The Southern states had few resources compared to the North: a handful of shipyards, a small merchant marine, and no navy at all. Yet the Confederates needed a navy to break the Union blockade and to defend the port cities. Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen Mallory, scrambled to find ships and even

took on an offensive task: attacking Union merchant shipping on the high seas.

The first task for Lincoln's naval secretary, Gideon Welles, was a straightforward, but huge, fill-in-the-blank: acquire enough vessels to make every Southern inlet, port, and bay dangerous for trade. The Northern navy immediately began building dozens of new warships and purchased hundreds of merchant ships to convert into blockaders by adding a few guns. The result was a motley assortment that ranged from old sailing ships to New York harbor ferryboats. Critics called it Welles' "soapbox navy."

The Union's blockading squadrons needed not only ships, but also bases on the Southern coast from which to operate. In 1861 the Union began a series of attacks on port cities like Hatteras, North Carolina and Port Royal, South Carolina along the southeastern seaboard. Poorly defended, they fell to Union gunnery and were seized to use as bases. Though never air-tight, by late 1862 the blockade had become a major impediment to Rebel trade.

With a smaller fleet and fewer shipyards than the North, the Confederates counted on making the ships they had as formidable as possible. They decided to challenge the Union navy with the latest technology: ironclads. Though iron-armored ships had appeared in Europe in the 1850s, Union warships were still built of wood. The first Confederate ironclad began its career as a Union cruiser, the *Merrimack*, captured by the Southerners when they seized Norfolk navy yard in Virginia. The Confederates ripped off nearly everything above the waterline of the ship—which they renamed *Virginia*—and replaced it with a casemate of heavy timbers covered by four inches of iron plating. Though underpowered and crude, as yet there was no match for her in Lincoln's wooden navy.



The USS Monitor and CSS Virginia engage off of Hampton Roads (Library of Congress)

The Union quickly met this challenge with the ingenuity of inventor John Ericsson. Most of his ironclad—the *Monitor*—was underwater. All that appeared above board was a flat main deck and a circular housing carrying two guns. This "tin can on a raft" was the world's first rotating gun turret, and it was protected by eight inches of iron. *Monitor* met *Virginia* in March 1862 at **Hampton Roads**, Virginia. Their three-hour engagement—often fought at point-blank range—was the world's first battle between ironclad vessels. The engagement

itself was a draw but the very existence of Virginia deterred Union army operations in the area for some months afterwards. Suddenly the wooden naval vessel—and most of the Union fleet—was obsolete. Shipyards North and South began to turn out ironclads as quickly as possible.

Early 1862 also marked the beginning of the Union campaigns to split the Confederacy apart along the Mississippi River. A fleet of gunboats was built to support Ulysses S. Grant's army as it moved from Illinois down the Mississippi River into the heart of the South. Most of these vessels were little more than flat-bottomed, steam-driven barges with heavy timbered sides; the most powerful, like the *Cairo*, were also iron plated. Grant's army and the brown water navy captured Rebel strongholds such as Forts Henry and Donelson in Tennessee. At the same time, a squadron in the Gulf of Mexico, under David G. Farragut, boldly took on the defenses of New Orleans, Louisiana, with the intention of moving past the city and northward up the Mississippi River. In April 1862, Farragut's fleet fought past two formidable forts and forced New Orleans to surrender. In July, 1863, after a series of hard-fought campaigns against both Rebel forts and fleets, these two Union forces—one moving south and one moving north—would meet at **Vicksburg**, Mississippi and sever everything west of the River from the rest of the Confederacy.

In April 1863, the Union navy turned with force on the Southern port cities when it took on the defenses of Charleston, South Carolina. The Confederates were well prepared—having had

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two years to position guns, floating obstructions and mines (torpedoes)—and the attack failed. Charleston did not fall until the war was nearly ended. After the debacle at Charleston, two other major port cities were targeted: Mobile, Alabama—the last major port in the Gulf—and Wilmington, North Carolina—the last and most important Atlantic gateway in the Confederacy. Mobile was defended by two large forts but these fell under **Farragut's assault in August 1864**. In January, 1865, after a failed first attempt, the largest Union fleet ever assembled attacked **Fort Fisher**—the key to Wilmington's defense—and the stronghold fell. Its loss deprived Confederate General Robert E. Lee's army in Virginia of a major supply source and contributed directly to the end of the war.

While the war rumbled along on the home front, the Confederates outfitted a series of commerce raiders, vessels such as *Sumter*, *Alabama*, and *Shenandoah* to attack Union merchant shipping worldwide. These ships were acquired by Confederate agents in Europe and most never entered a Southern port. *Alabama*, under Raphael Semmes, was the most famous. Destroying over 60 ships in a 21-month cruise and sending the Union shipping interests into a frenzy, *Alabama* was finally confronted by the Union cruiser *Kearsarge* off Cherbourg, France in 1864. In one of history's last classic one-on-one sea duels, the famed Confederate raider was sunk by accurate Union gunfire.

Finally, the last official act of the Confederate States of America was a naval one. The Confederate raider *Shenandoah*, far at sea in Pacific waters, only learned of the Civil War's end four months after the Confederate armies surrendered. *Shenandoah* finally lowered her flag in England on November 6, 1865.