



**Cape May County Civil War Round Table  
Newsletter  
October 2014**

**Meeting Schedule**

**Meetings are at the Jury Room in the Court House in Cape May Court House, and start at 6:30pm**

**16 October:** Presentation by DVD. **Refreshments:** John Burke

**20 November:** John Burke will be lecturing on the subject of the Battle of Franklin **Refreshments:** Mike & Barbara Golla

**?? December:**

**Round Table Officers**

President: Marty Runner  
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42 Franklin Ave., Villas, NJ 08251-2407  
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Treasurer: Jim Marshall  
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**Minutes of the Business Meeting  
18 Sept 2014**

President Runner opened the meeting. We saluted the flag and held a moment of silence for those standing in harm's way to protect us.

Secretary informed members that Carol Ruhl is due for surgery in the next week, and the time and date of the memorial service for John McDonough. Cards have been sent to both families. John's daughter has donated a number of his Civil War history books to the Round Table to be used in our fund raising efforts.

President Runner proposed meetings start at 6:30 instead of 7, as we HAVE to be out of the building by 9pm and we have overshot that time several times this summer. Motion seconded, and then passed by a majority.

Treasurer Marshall gave his report. Motion made to accept the report and file it for audit; seconded and passed.

Things to consider for 2015:

We have \$500 less in the kitty than we did last year, despite saving of sending out a bit more than half our newsletters via email. This is mostly due to speakers costing more. Also, money raised by book sales went almost entirely to preservation donations instead of being split half and half to operating funds.

We need to recruit more members. Lots of potential members at local events like the Civil War weekend, military timelines, etc at places like CSV, MAC, etc. We need to consider asking for and/or paying for display tables at such events, and we'll need volunteers to sit at said recruitment tables. Do we want to update the current flyer?

Next month's speaker has cancelled. Looking at DVD presentation or a round table discussion of reenactment events, getting involved in re enacting, etc are possible if we can't get a new speaker on such short notice.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned so Tracy Evans could begin her presentation.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Munson-Siter



### Historical Civil War Events in November

#### 1860

November 6 Lincoln elected to Presidency

#### 1861

November 6 Jefferson Davis elected to 6 year term as president of the Confederacy

#### 1862

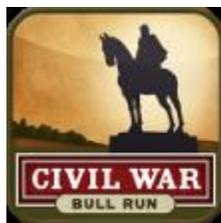
Nothing of note happened

#### 1863

November 6 Battle of Droop Mountain, WV  
November 19 Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address  
November 23-25 Battles for Chattanooga, TN (Lookout Mountain & Missionary Ridge)

#### 1864

November 8 Lincoln elected for 2<sup>nd</sup> term  
November 15 Gen. Sherman begins his "March to the Sea"



### Civil War Related Activities November 2014

Be sure to check out the [www.civilwartraveler.com](http://www.civilwartraveler.com) website for more information and events!

1 **PA** Seminar, "Yes, We Fought There as Well: The

Other Maine Units at Gettysburg," lectures and tour, based at the Gettysburg NMP Visitor Center. Lectures begin 9 am. \$95. Register by Oct 10: [friendsofgettysburg.org/EventsCalendar/AdamsSeminarNovember12014.aspx](http://friendsofgettysburg.org/EventsCalendar/AdamsSeminarNovember12014.aspx)

1 **MD** Film and talk, "Hollywood and the Civil War: Shenandoah," at the Surratt House Museum in Clinton. 6 pm. Free. [surrattmuseum.org](http://surrattmuseum.org)

1 **VA** Living history, "United States Colored Troops in Winter Camps," at the Petersburg National Battlefield. 10 am-2 pm. Free with park admission. [nps.gov/pete](http://nps.gov/pete)

1 **VA** Car-caravan tour, "The Final Rendezvous: A Visit to Mosby Graves in Mt. Zion Church, Sharon and Ivy Hill Cemeteries," begins at Mount Zion Church in Aldie. 9 am-noon. \$10. Sign up, more info: 703-851-9088.

1 **VA** Living history, "Cavaliers, Courage and Coffee: The Haunted Turnpike," unnerving tales of the Route 50 corridor at Aldie Mill, 39401 John Mosby Turnpike, Aldie. 7:30 pm. \$8/adult. 703-327-9777.

1 **VA** Walking tour, "Battle of Smithfield," meets at the Isle of Wight Museum in Smithfield. 2 pm. Free. [historicisleofwight.com](http://historicisleofwight.com)

1 **VA** Guided walking tour of Fort Huger, 15080 Talcott Terrace, on the James River near Smithfield. 10 am. Free. 757-357-0115.

6 **VA** Film/discussion, "The Abolitionists," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. 6:30 pm. Free. [vahistorical.org](http://vahistorical.org)

8 **VA** Luminary program at the Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical Park near Amelia. Begins at 6 pm. Free. 804-561-7510.

8 **VA** Living history, soldier-led tours of Fort Ward in Alexandria. 90-minute tours begin at 10 am and 2 pm. Free. [fortward.org](http://fortward.org)

8 **VA** Luminary at Poplar Grove National Cemetery near Petersburg. 6,000 graves with luminary candles, music and talks. 5:30-8 pm. Free. [nps.gov/pete](http://nps.gov/pete)

8-9 **VA** Bus tour, "Lee's Retreat: Petersburg to Appomattox," an overnight Smithsonian tour with Ed Bearss. Leaves Washington DC at 7 am Saturday. \$527. More info: [smithsonianassociates.org](http://smithsonianassociates.org) (click on Civil War) or 202-633-8647.

9 **VA** Car-caravan tours, "Civil War's Impact on Petersburg," NPS ranger-led tour begins at the

- South Side Railroad Station in downtown Petersburg. 10:30 am and 2:30 pm. Free. Reservations: 804-732-3531 extension 205.
- 11 **VA** Lecture, "Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy: Four Women Undercover in the Civil War," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. Noon. \$6. [vahistorical.org](http://vahistorical.org)
- 12 **VA** Talk, "1864 Presidential Campaign and Lincoln's Re-election," at the Museum of the Confederacy in Appomattox. 12:15 pm. Free with museum admission. [moc.org](http://moc.org)
- 13 **VA** Lecture, "'Ours is no longer a divided country,' The Path to Reconciliation in the Shenandoah Valley," at Lord Fairfax Community College, 173 Skirmisher Lane, Middletown. 7 pm. Free. [nps.gov/cebe](http://nps.gov/cebe)
- 13 **VA** Lecture, "The First Ladies of the Civil War," at the Museum of the Confederacy in Appomattox. 6:30 pm. Fee charged. [moc.org](http://moc.org)
- 14 **VA** Lecture, "The Civil War in Virginia," at the Petersburg Library, 201 W Washington St, Petersburg. 7 pm. Free. 804-733-2402.
- 14 **PA** "An Evening with the Painting," after-hours extended look at the Gettysburg Cyclorama at the Gettysburg NMP visitor center. 4:30 pm. \$20. [gettysburgfoundation.org](http://gettysburgfoundation.org)
- 15 **PA** Living history, "Remembrance Day Parade," in Gettysburg. 1 pm. Free. [suvcw.org](http://suvcw.org)
- 15 **PA** Illumination of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. 5:30-9:30 pm. Free. [gettysburgfoundation.org](http://gettysburgfoundation.org)
- 15 **PA** "Stories and Songs of a Civil War Hospital," music and readings at Christ Church, 30 Chambersburg St, Gettysburg. 8 pm. Free. [candlelightatchrist.org](http://candlelightatchrist.org)
- 15 **PA** Lectures and book signing, "Lincoln and the Power of the Press: the War for Public Opinion," (3 pm) and "Lincoln and the Press; at Gettysburg and Beyond," (4 pm) with Harold Holzer, at the Gettysburg NMP visitor center. Free. [gettysburgfoundation.org](http://gettysburgfoundation.org)
- 15 **VA** Lecture, "Daughters of the Lost Cause," at Stratford Hall, 483 Great House Road, Stratford. 10 am. \$15. Registration info: [stratfordhall.org](http://stratfordhall.org)
- 15 **VA** Talk, "Lincoln's Re-election," at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. Noon. Free with museum admission. [moc.org](http://moc.org)
- 19 **PA** Dedication Day at the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. Speech and wreath laying followed by special graveside salute to U.S. Colored Troops. Free. Details, times: [nps.gov/gett](http://nps.gov/gett)
- 22 **VA** Lecture, "Brother Against Sister: Rape in the Civil War," at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. 2 pm. Free. 703-591-0560.
- 22 **VA** Living history, "17th Mississippi" camp and demonstrations at Morven Park, 17263 Southern Planter Lane, Leesburg. Noon-4 pm. Free. Evening program, "Huts by Firelight," 6-8 pm. \$10/adult. 703-777-6034.
- 22 **VA** Living history tours, "Thanksgiving in the Trenches," popular annual event at the Petersburg National Battlefield. 5:30, 6:45 and 8 pm. Free. Reservations: 804-732-3531 extension 205. [nps.gov/pete](http://nps.gov/pete)
- 23 **VA** Living history, artillery demonstrations at the Petersburg National Battlefield 1-4 pm. Free with park admission. [nps.gov/pete](http://nps.gov/pete)
- 29 **VA** Living history, "Cavaliers, Courage and Coffee — The Great Burning Raid," lantern-light stories at the Silverbrook Farm B&B, 15286 Woodgrove Road, Purcellville. 7:30 pm. \$8/adults. 540-668-6056.

**USS Monitor: A Cheesebox on a Raft**  
**FROM AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR MAGAZINE**  
**(HISTORYNET.COM)**



*Closeup of the USS Monitor's turret (Library of Congress)*

Few ships in American naval history have been so highly acclaimed as USS *Monitor*, a vessel that transformed naval warfare with its revolving turret. When *Monitor*, armed with only two cannons, fought the much more heavily armed CSS *Virginia* (constructed on the hull of USS *Merrimac*) to a draw on March 9, 1862, the world took note. In 1870 the British Admiralty built the turreted *Captain*. Decades later, in 1937, Winston Churchill wrote, 'The combat of the *Merrimac* and the *Monitor* made the greatest change in the sea-fighting since cannon fire by gunpowder had been mounted on ships about four hundred years before.'

The revolutionary *Monitor* nearly didn't get built. Controversy raged over engineer John Ericsson's design, and Abraham Lincoln had to intercede on behalf of the ship.

After the Civil War's outbreak in April 1861, shipyards in the North hummed and clanked with the efforts of thousands of workmen building 47 new wooden vessels ranging from 300 to more than 2,000 tons. There was no time to waste if the planned blockade of Southern ports was to be successful. Lincoln's navy lagged far behind the Southern counterpart in accepting innovations. In May 1861, the Confederates raised the sunken frigate USS *Merrimac* — which had been burned to the waterline by retreating Union tars — and began converting it into a large ironclad gunboat, CSS *Virginia*, at the Gosport Navy Yard in Portsmouth, Va.

In belated response, during an extra session of the U.S. Congress convened on July 4, 1861, at Lincoln's recommendation, a report was submitted that noted the Confederacy was constructing an armored vessel. The paper recommended the construction of 'one or more ironclad steamers or floating batteries, and to select a proper and competent board to inquire into and report in regard to a measure so important.' A month later Congress authorized the creation of an 'Ironclad Board of three skilful naval officers' to decide on new warships and appropriated \$1.5 million for armored vessels. On August 7, 1861, Gideon Welles, whom Lincoln had appointed secretary of the Navy in March 1861, advertised for proposals for 'impregnable' warships, related to the construction of 'One or more ironclad steam vessels of war...for either sea or river service to be no less than ten or sixteen feet draught of water...The smaller draughts of water...will be preferred.' A bit of orthodoxy crept into the request with the stipulations that such vessels were to be 'rigged with two masts, with wire rope standing rigging, to navigate at sea...'

### Enter John Ericsson

Swedish-born engineer John Ericsson was one of the designers who read Welles' notice with particular interest. Ericsson was a child prodigy who had worked with his father designing canals in his native country as a teenager.

By his late teens, he was an engineer officer in the Swedish army. In 1826 he resigned that post and moved to England, where he devoted himself to building steam engines, many of which were radically different in design, but which also contained flaws that made them impractical.

At the urging of U.S. naval officer John Stockton, Ericsson moved to New York in 1839. Stockton was from a prominent, connected New Jersey family, and he helped get funds allocated to Ericsson for the development of a ship powered by an innovative screw propeller system, which was launched as USS *Princeton* in 1843.



John Ericsson, Designer of the USS Monitor (Library of Congress)

Things got complicated, however, as the ship neared completion. Stockton and Ericsson bickered, and the officer began to do what he could to relegate the inventor to the background. Ericsson had designed a huge cannon with a 12-inch muzzle, mounted on a revolving platform, for *Princeton*. Jealous, Stockton copied the cannon on his own to try and claim credit for the design.

Stockton did not understand how to properly construct the breech-reinforcing pieces for his copy, however, and during an 1844 Potomac River demonstration run attended by President John Tyler's secretary of state, Abel P. Upshur, and Secretary of the Navy Thomas Gilmer and other dignitaries, Stockton's gun exploded. Upshur, Gilmer and six others were killed.

Ericsson, a foreigner, became the scapegoat on which Stockton blamed the tragedy — no matter that nothing Ericsson had designed or built was the problem. The Swede quickly became persona non grata to the Navy, and he consequently resented the Navy's reaction. In the 1850s he drafted some designs for iron-sheathed ships for Napoleon III

of France, including a curious iron vessel with a rotating cupola, but nothing came of that effort.

Now, after many painful years of misunderstanding and neglect, Ericsson believed the time had come to show what he could do to revolutionize naval construction and help the Union win the war. He was convinced that 'victory will rest upon the side which holds possession of the seas, and I will offer my services to the Federal Government to assure that its navy will dominate.'

Full of confidence, he submitted his plan for a 'subaquatic ironclad vessel with a gun turret' directly to the president. In part his letter of August 29, 1861, read:

*His Excellency Abraham Lincoln  
President of the United States*

*Sir: The writer, having introduced the present system of naval propulsion and constructed the first screw ship of war, now offers to construct a vessel for destruction of the rebel fleet at Norfolk and for scouring the Southern rivers and inlets of all craft protected by rebel batteries...in making this offer I seek no private advantage or emolument of any kind. Attachment to the Union alone impels me to offer my services at this fearful crisis — my life if need be — in the great cause which Providence has called you to defend.*

*Apart from the fact that the proposed vessel is very simple in construction, due weight, I respectfully submit, should be given to the circumstance that its projector possesses practical and constructive skill shared by no engineer now living. I have planned upward of one hundred marine engines and I furnish daily, working-plans made of my own hands of mechanical and naval structures of various kinds, and I have done so for thirty years. Besides this I have received military education and feel at home in the science of artillery. You will not, Sir, attribute these statements to any other cause than my anxiety to prove that you may safely entrust me with the work I propose. If you cannot do so then the country must lose the benefit of my proffered services.*

Fearing his letter might be intercepted, he did not include actual drawings of the ship, and added the following note of caution: 'At the moment of putting this communication under envelope it occurs to me finally that it is unsafe to trust the plans to the mails. Therefore I respectfully suggest that you reflect on my proposition. Should you decide to put the work in hand, if my plan meets your approbation, please telegraph and within forty-eight hours the writer will report himself at the White House.'

Ericsson anxiously awaited an answer, but his letter had been redirected, and his proposal was rejected by the Navy's chief engineers, Benjamin Isherwood and John Lenthall, who were jealous of Ericsson and considered ironclads 'humbug.'

## Lucky Coincidence

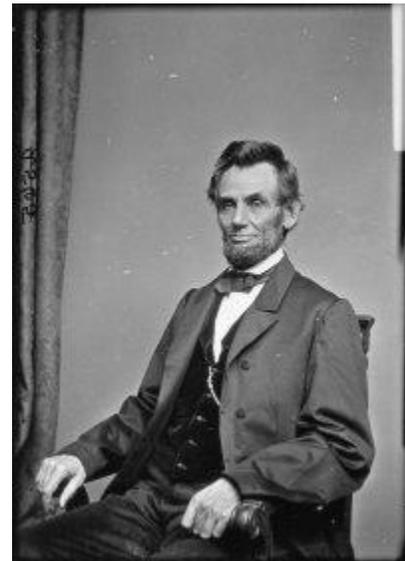
In September 1861, the Ironclad Board, which consisted of Captains Hiram Paulding, Joseph Smith and Charles Davis, recommended that two contracts be let. One went to Cornelius Bushnell of New Haven, Conn., for Galena, and the other to Merrick & Sons, Philadelphia, for New Ironsides. Both were conventional masted and sparred iron-plated broadside warships.

Ericsson was disappointed and depressed. Then he received an unexpected visitor at his home on Franklin Street: Cornelius Bushnell. Bushnell was concerned because naval authorities doubted whether Galena would be able to carry the stipulated amount of 400 tons of armor on her topsides. Bushnell had been told to consult with Ericsson on the matter.

Ericsson happily received his guest, and advised him on the matter. As Bushnell prepared to leave, Ericsson asked if he was interested to see his own plans for a totally new type of low-draft ironclad warship. Ericsson showed him the latest version of the model of his 'Cupola Vessel' and copies of drawings for his proposal to President Lincoln.

The ship looked simple enough, a raft with a gun turret in the middle. Ericsson boasted that it was secure against the heaviest shot and designed for action in shallow coastal waters like Hampton Roads and Southern rivers. He explained that even in narrow passages it could operate its guns in battle, since only the turret needed to be turned.

## Abraham Lincoln's Role



*Abraham Lincoln (National Archives)*

Bushnell was impressed and urged Ericsson to present his model and plans to the secretary of the Navy. As Ericsson was reluctant to do so, Bushnell asked if he might take them, and

Ericsson agreed. Bushnell then took the plans to his old friend, Welles, at his home in Hartford, Conn.

The timing was good, because Welles was worried. He had just been informed that since June the South had been pushing forward work on Virginia. Welles urged that the model and plans be taken to Washington for further scrutiny by the Ironclad Board. Bushnell agreed, and well aware of the difficulties of dealing with the board, he managed to arrange an appointment with Abraham Lincoln.

On September 12, Lincoln received Bushnell in the White House. The unique features of Ericsson's raft-like design and turret impressed the president, and he accompanied Bushnell to the Navy Department, where they met with the Ironclad Board the following day for a discussion. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox was present, as were several other naval officers. They all listened intently to Bushnell's presentation. There were many negative murmurs in the room, and opinion was split on the peculiar warship, but the president openly backed it. As he was holding the pasteboard model, studying its unique features, he remarked: 'All I have to say is what the girl said when she stuck her foot in the stocking. It strikes me there's something in it.'

The next day the board held an official meeting to decide on Ericsson's proposal. The ship was unlike anything they had ever seen or even imagined before, and the very mention of Ericsson's name made them suspicious. In the ensuing discussion, Paulding and Smith agreed to proceed with construction because the boat was inexpensive and could be ready in three months.

The third member, Captain Davis, had witnessed the *Princeton* tragedy and did not trust Ericsson. He handed back the model to Bushnell and, paraphrasing a Bible text, said: 'Take it home and worship it. It will not be idolatry. It is the image of nothing in the heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth.'

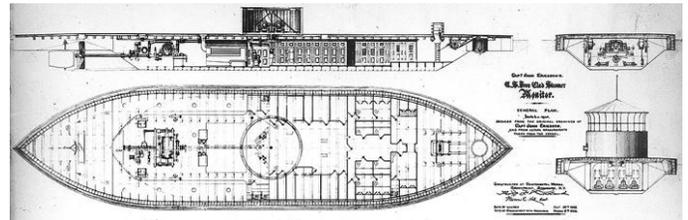
That same evening Bushnell left for New York. When he met Ericsson the next morning, he tried to appeal to his vanity, saying: 'The Board has been very impressed by your ingenious floating battery but one member, Commander Davis, only needs some further explanation about your design before signing a contract, details I was unable to explain. Therefore Secretary Welles suggested you come to Washington to give a personal explanation.'

Ericsson agreed to leave immediately for the capital and took the night train to Washington. Great was Ericsson's surprise when he heard that his plan had been rejected by the junior member, Captain Davis. When confronted by Ericsson, Davis said, 'Your ship, Captain Ericsson, lacks stability.' The inventor proceeded to defend his creation with detailed knowledge and numbers, and pointed out that the low freeboard of his vessel in no way made it unstable. In fact, he

said from his own experience with rafts in Sweden he knew that high seas washed over the decks, but the body of the ship itself remained steady.

He concluded, 'Gentlemen, after what I have said, I consider it to be your duty to the country to give me an order to build the vessel before I leave this room.' Davis relented and reluctantly recommended construction as an experiment. Ericsson was asked to return in an hour, and only five minutes after he was ushered into the room, Welles told him to 'go ahead and start building as soon as possible; don't wait for a formal contract.' Ericsson and his strange little ship were suddenly at the forefront of the Union's ironclad race.

A contract for 'an ironclad, shot-proof steam battery' was issued on October 4, 1861. The contract for building it stipulated a money-back clause if it proved to be a failure. Furthermore it specified that the vessel must be provided with masts and sails and that it should make 6 knots under sail and 8 knots under steam. It was also agreed 'that said vessel and equipment in all respects shall be completed and ready for sea in one hundred days from the date of this indenture.'



*Plan of the USS Monitor (U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command)*

*Monitor* was built from scratch in an amazingly short amount of time; some accounts claim it took 98 days. Contractors throughout the Northeast scrambled to provide the necessary iron plate, and foundries worked overtime to cast the boat's intricate machinery. The remarkable vessel contained 40 patentable inventions.

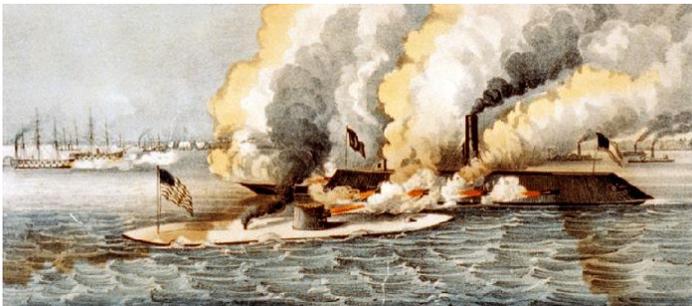
The ship was launched on January 30, 1862, from Continental Iron Works in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, N.Y., and was fitted out with two massive 11-inch Dahlgren guns. Its crew spent the next several weeks working out the brand-new boat's kinks. Its unique appearance earned the vessel the nickname 'cheesebox on a raft.'

### **Ironclad Duel**

On March 8, Virginia steamed into Hampton Roads and made short work of USS *Cumberland* and *Congress*. With USS *Minnesota* aground, Virginia steamed off with the falling tide, its crew confident that they could return and finish the job. The entire U.S. Navy fleet, not to mention Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's impending Peninsula campaign, seemed vulnerable to the new threat.

That next day, however, *Virginia's* crew got a surprise. *Monitor* had arrived under tow from New York the previous evening, battered from her journey, but ready to fight. The ship stood between the Confederate ironclad and the stricken *Minnesota*. For more than four hours the iron beasts blasted away at each other.

*Virginia's* guns raked the ironclad, and friendly fire also dented *Monitor's* armor. The Rebel ship even rammed *Monitor*, and a shell landed a direct hit on the pilothouse, temporarily blinding Captain John Worden and forcing him to turn over command to Lieutenant Samuel Dana Greene. But *Monitor* gave as good as it got, and its Dahlgrens defiantly pounded away at *Virginia*.



*Duel of the USS Monitor and CSS Virginia in Hampton Roads*  
(Library of Congress)

When the day ended, *Virginia* steamed away with the mission of destroying *Minnesota* unfulfilled. The two ironclads maintained an uneasy stalemate on their respective sides of Hampton Roads. One officer on *Monitor* commented, 'Each party steamed back & forth before their respective friends till dinner time...the same comedy I suppose will be enacted day after day for I don't know how long...'

Kept at bay by *Monitor*, *Virginia* was eventually destroyed by her own crew after it was forced to a shallow part of the James by the advance of McClellan's campaign. Ericsson would keep his money. His 'cheesebox' had forever changed the face of naval warfare.

This article was written by Olav Thulesius and published in the November 2006 issue of America's Civil War magazine.

### Marching through Georgia



Dandy Yankees dawdling

**Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman.** By Robert O'Connell. *Random House*; 404 pages; \$28. Buy from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk)

THE American South will never forget William Tecumseh Sherman. One hundred and fifty years ago, in 1864, General Sherman led an army of 60,000 northerners through Georgia and the Carolinas, burning Atlanta and foraging off the land. He aimed to shatter the Confederates into submission and to hasten the end of the civil war. Sherman's "March to the Sea" endures as one of the most memorable, and innovative, campaigns of the four-year conflict.

Yet Sherman (pictured above right), a military man for most of his career, had come perilously close to missing the action. An earlier command in Kentucky had gone badly, as he fought depression and the press bashed him as insane. An alignment with General Ulysses Grant, who emerged as the Union's military saviour, turned his fortunes around. The Grant-Sherman team proved hard-nosed, imaginative and determined to win, outshining more lackadaisical Union generals. Together, Grant and Sherman won important battles at Shiloh and Vicksburg. "He stood by me when I was crazy and I stood by him when he was drunk; now, sir, we stand by each other," Sherman remarked of Grant.

Robert O'Connell's Sherman is a complex and vibrant man—a "firehose of ideas", voluble and mercurial, yet cool under pressure. Above all he was a strategic thinker able to adapt to changing circumstances. His men adored him as "Uncle Billy", not least because he took care not to waste their lives in futile charges ("I'd follow Uncle Billy to hell," said one soldier). He was a "modern Attila", who continued to campaign ruthlessly against the Indians and their buffalo when, after the civil war ended, he took responsibility for the security of America's transcontinental railway, then under construction. After Grant was elected president, Sherman replaced him as America's leading general.

Mr O'Connell, a longtime military analyst, shares plenty of nuggets about human motivations in war. He draws out the tensions in both the Union and the Confederacy between impatient politicians and more cautious (or realistic) generals. Sherman was an unusual psychological case; he was content to be Grant's "wingman" and had asked President Lincoln not to make him the top dog in one of America's western armies. He and Grant made an interesting duo: Sherman garrulous, Grant laconic and determined. Sherman's march to the sea, Mr O'Connell contends, made the general "one of the originators of what is termed 'modern war'—wholesale assaults on civilian populations as an integral part of military strategy". Alas, it is a point that he fails to develop.

For all his battlefield cleverness, Sherman also had some curious blind spots. Devoted to preserving the Union, he apparently failed to see the civil war coming. In 1860, just before war broke out, he was heading a new military academy in Louisiana, training secession-ready recruits. During the war, blinded by prejudice and narrow-mindedness, he placed little value on the military intelligence provided by former slaves who knew the area and attached themselves to his armies. Fortunately, Sherman's soldiers took notice.

Mr O'Connell's writing can be engaging, but he overplays his hand in ascribing strategic and tactical motives

to every aspect of Sherman's life, from his pre-war fling with banking to his bizarre family life (he married his foster sister, leading to drama "worthy of Dickens", Mr O'Connell writes). Sherman's youngest son is described as another shot from his "strategic revolver". The book would also have benefited from better editing. It is oddly organised, with later parts doubling back chronologically on already-trodden ground. Mr O'Connell's subject, General Sherman, would have marched straight onward, without a backward glance.



Cape May County Civil War Round Table

