

# THE SENTINEL

## A Navy Divided (1861-1865)

On April 19, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln called for the U.S. Navy to blockade the Confederate ports from Texas to South Carolina. This was a central element of the so-called Anaconda Plan, a plan to strangle the South in every way possible to force its capitulation. In addition to blockading the South's coastline, naval forces would play a strategic role in seizing control of the Mississippi River, the nation's most vital artery. The battle for Island #10 (the tenth island from the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers) was a crucial success in this task, along with the Navy's assistance in the fall of Vicksburg in 1863. Accomplishing these and other similar victories would divide the Confederacy in two. The Navy, however, was ill-prepared for all of this at the outset of the war. In the past, ships were rarely concentrated in one place, with cruises taking them to squadrons located around the world. The 1860 inventory consisted of a little over 40 vessels, only 24 of which could truly be called warships. The navy's officer corps lost about one-fourth of its strength to those who resigned and went with the Confederacy, including Frank Buchanan, the first superintendent of the Naval Academy. Overcoming these inadequacies would become a hallmark of the navy's future.

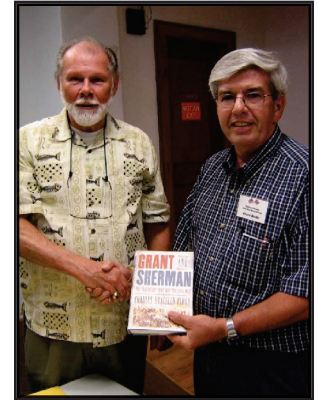
The Civil War saw many changes in naval warfare. Iron ships replaced the great wooden sailing ships of old, and steam now propelled them rather than wind. Nowhere did this become more pronounced than in the battle of the *USS Monitor* and the *CSS Virginia* at Hampton Roads in 1862—the first battle in naval history between two ironclad warships. There were revolutionary changes in ordnance, as well. One of the most significant was the Dahlgren gun, a modern, powerful and accurate version of the old ship's cannon, named after its inventor, Rear Admiral John Dahlgren. The first ship that presenter Worsena served on during his naval career was named after Dahlgren. Rifled guns were introduced into the naval armament make-up, just as the Civil War saw them appear in both infantry muskets and field artillery for land-based forces. The extensive use of underwater mines, then called torpedoes, was yet another innovation. These arms were a critical factor in the Battle of Mobile Bay, immortalized in the words of the victorious Admiral David G. Farragut, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" The sinking

of the Union warship *Housatonic* in Charleston harbor by the Confederate submarine *Hunley* introduced another radical development in all of naval history — underwater warfare. It would show the world what would happen in the future. Officers reared in the age of sail would lead the Union to eventual victory, and cooperation between the Navy and Army, although in many cases not thoroughly planned, would become the beginning of what would evolve into the critical joint operations of World War II and beyond.

Though most of the significant naval actions of the Civil War would occur within sight of land, the public became keenly caught up with the open-sea exploits of Confederate commerce raiders like the *Alabama*, commanded by Captain Raphael Semmes. While in today's navy sea duty tours of six months are considered extreme, the *Alabama*, in over 23 consecutive months of sea raiding, captured 68 of the 225 Union merchantmen lost in the war. Her eventual loss in battle off the coast of France to the *USS Kearsarge* would go down in the annals of all naval warfare.

The Navy grew significantly over the war years from its original 24 warships. By 1865, there were over 700 ships in inventory and personnel grew from less than 10,000 in 1861 to over 58,000 by the end of the war. Casualties were naturally less than for land based forces, but there were still over 2,000 "blue jackets" killed and 1,700 wounded. Another indicator of the Navy being far ahead of its time was the fact that, unlike the Army, it was fully integrated.

In the final assessment, between blockading the Confederate coastline and capturing coastal ports and inland forts that secured the nation's river highways, the Navy provided the "squeeze" that spelled success for the Anaconda Plan. Lincoln said of the Navy and its sailors, "At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have made their tracks."



At the October meeting, Steve Rolfe presents a memento of the occasion to Dick Rosena after his presentation of "The Navy Divided."



Sailors at leisure aboard the *USS Monitor* on the James River, July 1862. Photo, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Collection.

## Don't Forget the Overlease Library

This month's presenter, Dick Worsena, discovered a volume in our own "portable" Overlease Library that not only expanded his naval program but, to his surprise, was written by one of our own, Mary Pat Livingston. Recently, member Herman Edwards donated an amazing collection of his own to the library. It includes many of the National Park Civil War Series, a series commissioned by the park service to be sold at national battlefield stores and written by experts in the field like Peter Cozzens, James Robertson, William Davis, Gary Gallagher and others. Shiloh, Antietam, Pea Ridge, Stones River, Manassas, and on and on, they give an excellent overview of the site being visited, both for the "veteran" battlefield crawler and the "rookie" tourist. Take a look at these and check one out to prepare for your next trip. These are only a couple of reasons to remember our library. Donate to it if you have something you don't need to keep around the house any more, or check something out. Just fill out a card found inside each book and leave it until you return the item.

## IU Course Still Available

Indiana University is sponsoring a Lifelong Learning course entitled *Arguing about History: Battlefields, Museums, and Other Memorial Sites* this fall. The course is taught by IU professor Ed Linenthal, who is also the editor of the *Journal of American History*, and currently serves as an advisor on the planning for the Pennsylvania 9/11 memorial.

Historic sites, like individuals, have revealing and interesting histories. This course will examine the contested histories of several battlefields including Gettysburg, the Little Bighorn, and Pearl Harbor, along with the making of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the complexities of building a memorial after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Each presentation will be illustrated. The course will be taught on three Mondays, Nov. 3, 10 & 17 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6<sup>th</sup> St. Course fee is \$50 until 10/27, \$55 thereafter.

## New Book to Consider

The Roundtable has been asked to pass on information about *The Rebel and the Rose*, a new book by Wesley Millett and Gerald White. Set in April of 1865, it is the story of navy paymaster, James A. Semple, entrusted by President Davis with \$86,000 in coins and bullion that would be worth \$2 million in today's currency. Semple had instructions to secure the money, but he simply disappeared into the night.

The authors reveal what happened to this loot in a captivating story with Semple nearly evading capture all the way to the swamps of Georgia, where our "rebel" meets his "rose" in the enchanting Julia Gardiner Tyler, the widow of former U.S. President John Tyler.

Already nominated for the **Jefferson Davis Award**, the novel is a history buff's delight—the result of nearly twelve years of work. We don't talk about this kind of Civil War literature much, but *The Killer Angels* proved that there is a place for it in some buffs' libraries. The Roundtable hopes to soon receive a copy to share.

## Legacy Profiles – A New Feature for 2009-2010

Our stalwart Program Committee is introducing a new feature called "Legacy Profiles" for next year. We would like anyone with an ancestor or, for that matter, simply someone in his or her own personal history, to give a short talk on this person. John Crosby will kick things off by telling about his great, great, grandfather, Corporal Charles Thomas Shanner, Company "A" 63rd Regular, Indiana Volunteers from Gibson County, Indiana. Joining John that evening will be David Wiley to talk about his grandfather, Captain Ephraim W. Wiley, Company "H", 8<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteers. These presentations do not have to be fancy or long. We just want to hear about our own connections to the Civil War.

### Coming Soon!

**Nov. 11: Dave Sutherland** on "The Virginia Military Institute in the War" — Dave visits us from the Indianapolis Roundtable and highlights the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, where Stonewall Jackson taught before the war and whose cadets figured into the fighting in more ways than one. VMI is still the home of Jackson's favorite "double-brace" of cannons, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, so-called because, when they spoke, people listened.

**Dec. 9:** [NOTE: *special time: 6:30 p.m.*] Join your fellow members at the Uptown Café for a relaxed evening of conversation and fellowship over dinner. We have reserved a party room for the evening and hope you will make it a special part of the holiday season. Dinner will be off the regular Uptown menu rather than a set meal and price, so prices are flexible from \$10-\$25. Bring your spouse, your kids, a friend...anyone you would like. We need to know a head count for keeping the room, so please contact one of the people at the end of the newsletter and "sign up"! There will be no regular meeting in December, although a brief program may be included here.

See the menu at <http://www.the-uptown.com/>

## Can You Help?

Thanks to a few of our members who brought refreshments last time and even helped with kitchen duty at the end. Again, if you can, please consider volunteering to help out with refreshments at an upcoming meeting. Our Hospitality Chair, Deborah Cronin, can always use the help. If you can help us out even one time, just contact Deborah at the number below.

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