



TRAVELLER



The official publication of the General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640

Sons of Confederate Veterans, Germantown, Tennessee

Duty, Honor, Integrity, Chivalry

Deo Vindici

February 2012

**CAMP MEETING
Monday February 13, 2012**

7:00 p.m. at the Pickering Center

The Daring Exploits of the Ironclad Ram CSS *Tennessee*

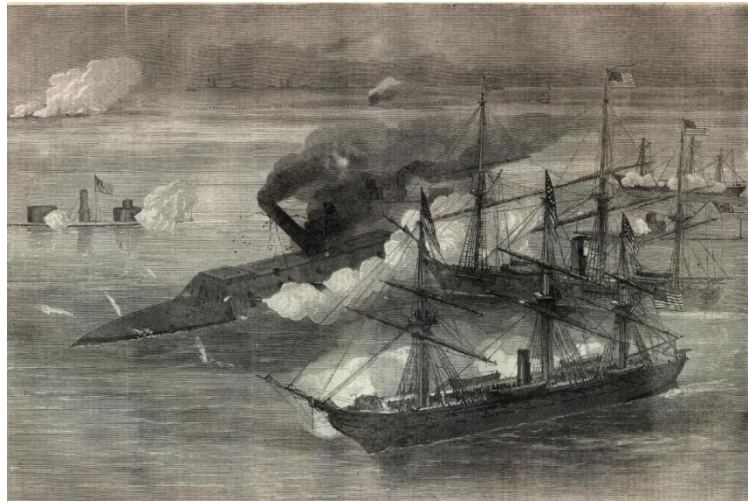
Stephen R. Mallory the Confederate States Secretary of the Navy had asked that two ironclads be built to protect the entrance to the Mississippi. Those two were to be the *Arkansas* and the *Tennessee*.

There were actually two ironclads with the name *Tennessee*. The first was never finished and was burned in her slipway to prevent capture just before the fall of Memphis. The second, *Tennessee II* was to be built at the Selma Navy Yard on the Alabama River. Nothing but a small monument remains there today. She was ready to be launched at the end of February 1863 and in May of that year was to receive her engines.

Because of the haste to defend the West the South's constructors plucked two engines from the *Alonzo Child*, a stranded side-wheeler riverboat. The propelling mechanism had to be modified substantially to fit the ironclad. For this reason some of the gears would be made of wood. This caused the *Tennessee* to have a major weakness, slow speed, a factor that would prove to be her undoing.

From December 20, 1863 to January 1864 the *Tennessee* received the first of her guns from the Selma Cannon Foundry. The *Tennessee* would be the most powerful ironclad ram the South would ever produce. She had a total of six rifled Brooke guns (John Mercer Brooke the designer and builder of the Brooke rifled guns was born in Tampa, Florida) consisting of two 7.5" Brookes, one forward and one aft; both could pivot through 180 degrees; and four 6" broadsides.

As completed the *Tennessee* was 1,273 tons, 209 feet long and had a beam of 48'. Her casemate was 79' in length and was made of yellow pine beams 18.5" thick and 4" of oak on top of that. Bolts of 1.5" were driven into the entire shield. Her iron plating was 5 inches thick to 6 inches forward and was riveted inside. The lower part of the casemate descended several feet underwater making her difficult to ram. The plating was cast at the Shelby Iron Works.



**THE CAPTURE OF THE REBEL RAM "TENNESSEE."--
SKETCHED BY ROBERT WEIR**

But she had several serious flaws in design. The engines had been borrowed from a side wheeled steamer and modified making her maximum speed 6 knots. This was less than the speed of enemy ships and insufficient for ramming. The port shutters were hinged high allowing them to fall when sufficiently hit and block firing of the guns. Most significantly the rudder chains passed over the deck astern and while covered with one inch of

plating were exposed to potentially disabling enemy fire.

Reaching Mobile Bay

There remained only to float the great ironclad down the Alabama to the Bay. There was only one problem, the ship's draft averaged 14' while the approximately 20 miles of estuary was only 9' in depth. To overcome this problem a group of "camels" or caissons had to be built, attached all around the deck and inflated to raise the ironclad the required distance.

The first set of camels proved too small and the second set burned before they could be attached. A third set were finally completed by May of 1864 and the powerful ironclad was towed to Mobile Bay where she anchored 10 miles from Fort Morgan with three gunboats, the Selma (4 guns), the Gaines (6 guns) and the Morgan (6).

This small Confederate flotilla was to be commanded by Admiral Franklin Buchanan. He was the former commander of the *CSS Virginia* but was wounded and did not remain on board for *Virginia's* historic battle with the *Monitor*.



Confederate ironclad ram CSS Tennessee acquits herself proud in the Battle of Mobile Bay against a superior force. She is captured and becomes a U.S. ship.

Farragut's Defense

The Union Admiral Farragut had studied all the charts of Mobile Bay. While rather broad at its entrance the main shipping channel was narrowed by shoals on the one side and Dauphine Island on the other. On Dauphine Island stood Fort Gaines. Also to the Fort Gaines side was a series of piles that were mined with Confederate torpedoes (mines) . This forced all shipping to stay within range of the many

guns of Fort Morgan which guarded the opposite side of the bay.

But Farragut determined that his fleet of 18 ships would stay in front of Fort Morgan for only a short time. His fleet consisted of seven sloops-of-war with gunboats lashed to their sides and to their right and slightly astern 4 ironclad monitors. Unarmored ships would also have anchor chains lashed to their sides and layer after layer of sandbags on their decks. The four ironclads, the *Tecumseh*, *Manhattan*, *Winnebago* and *Chickasaw* were immensely more powerful than the first ironclad, the *Monitor*.

The Battle for Mobile Bay - Part I

On August 5 at 5:30 AM with the tide rising the Union squadron of eighteen ships got under way. Admiral Farragut had planned to throw his wooden ships against the Confederate ironclad and crush her. At 6:30 AM the *Tecumseh* opened fire with her powerful 15" gun. Hit by the guns of Fort Morgan she veered off her original course and into the torpedo field. A huge explosion suddenly ripped open the *Tecumseh* and she sank by the bow with great loss of life.

It was shortly after the *Tecumseh* went down that Admiral Farragut uttered his now famous order: "Damn the Torpedoes, Full Speed Ahead!" as he urged the rest of his ships to sail past Fort Morgan.

The *Tennessee* attempted to ram Farragut's ship the *Hartford* but she proved much too slow for the task. Accompanying gunboats *Gaines* and *Selma* began to rake the Union ships to great effect but were soon disabled by enemy fire. The great ironclad was as yet undamaged.

The Battle - Part II

At this point in the battle the Federals had made it past Fort Morgan and were in the process of anchoring. Although criticized much later for his decision, Admiral Buchanan decided to surprise the Northern task force. He had only about 6 hours of coal left anyway so he proceeded with the attack rather than wait in the shallows.

Farragut responded immediately sending three of his wooden ships to converge on the *Tennessee* in an attempt to ram and do away with her forthwith. In rapid succession the *Monongahela* the *Lackawanna* and flagship *Hartford* all rammed the *Tennessee*. But these rammings had very little effect on the ironclad.

The remaining three Union ironclads now rushed into the fray. The *Manhattan* fired from her monster gun a shell weighing 440 lbs. at a range of only 9 feet

breaching 2 feet of wood and 5 inches of solid iron; but, no one was killed. In fact in the entire encounter with a superior enemy force the *Tennessee* only lost 2 killed.

Ironclad *Tennessee* retreated but fired all the while, chased by the ironclads *Chickasaw* and *Winnebago*. Her faulty shutters were damaged and stuck shut disabling the port guns. Poorly designed rudder chains were smashed causing her to have no way to steer and the funnel was riddled with holes making her dead in the water. Suffocating smoke poured into the engine room where temperatures rose to 140 degrees. After the *Tennessee* became motionless and dead in the water, the monitors continued to pound the helpless ironclad for 30 more minutes. By the end of the confrontation the *Chickasaw* had delivered 52 accurate shots on the helpless *Tennessee*.

Admiral Buchanan Surrenders

During this time the ship's surgeon Dr. Daniel B. Conrad was informed that the admiral was badly injured. In fact Conrad noted that Buchanan had a severely crushed leg. The surgeon then carried the hurt old man down the ladder away from the smoking gun deck to the safety on the cock-pit.

The *Tennessee* was helpless, unable to fire her guns without a rudder and running at four miles per hour for over 30 minutes. At this point the wounded admiral turned the ship over to Captain Johnston who informed the white haired admiral of his ship's inability to fight. He replied: "Well, Johnston, if you cannot do them any further damage, you had better surrender." This story is related by R. Thomas Campbell in his book, *Southern Thunder, Exploits of the Confederate States Navy*. Thus ended one of the greatest sea battles of the Civil War.

Final Tally

The Northern force had lost 52 officers and men killed and 170 wounded in addition to the 93 drowned when the *Tecumseh* plunged to her doom. The *Oneida* was disabled, the *Hartford* hit 20 times and the *Brooklyn* was hit 30 times. The Union ironclads held up relatively well despite being hit many times; as an example the *Winnebago* was hit 19

times herself.

The Confederates lost 12 killed and 20 wounded (*Tennessee* herself lost only 2 killed and 9 wounded) with Admiral Buchanan taken prisoner. Mobile was later captured causing the South an irreparable strategic loss. The ironclad was captured and renamed by the North the *U.S.S. Tennessee*.

Shelby Ironworks in Selma could be proud as only one shell burst through the iron plates (but did not actually enter the ship) that they had produced.



Admiral Franklin Buchanan – Commander of the Confederate flotilla at Mobile Bay had previously been Commander of the CSS Virginia

Tecumseh Footnote

Because of her tremendous weight and the fact that she is buried in mud, raising the *Tecumseh* is estimated to cost in excess of \$80 M. She still lies on the bottom of Mobile Bay today.

Bibliography:

Campbell, R. Thomas, *Southern Thunder Exploits of the Confederate States Navy*, Shippensburg, Pa: Burd Street Press, Division of White Mane Publishing Company, Inc. , 1996.

Luraghi, Raimondo, *A History of the Confederate Navy*, Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1996.



**USS Buchanan
DDG 14 guided missile destroyer Admiral
Franklin Buchanan**

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!



(The following EXTRA to Traveller was submitted by Commander Tarry Beasley)

The Lee Jackson Chalmers Banquet was an outstanding Success and was the largest such event in the 44 years I have been in the SCV. The accommodations at Ridgeway Country Club were exquisite and the food was delicious. The cooperation between the camps in Shelby County was also outstanding and is the model we should follow hereinafter. There were 141 tickets sold and there were eight tables of silent auction items available to bid on. Of the eleven items I took only one did not sell. There were books, prints, flags and much, much more of items you just had to have.

The event covered its cost and per the prior determination the proceeds of the silent auction of about \$1,000.00 was divided and given to four

projects which are: The Confederate Museum owned by the SCV in Columbia TN, The N. B. Forrest Boyhood Home in Chapel Hill, TN, The Confederate Park Cannon Project in Memphis, TN and the U.D.C.'s monument designating Highway 51 as the Jefferson Davis Highway in Millington, TN.

The speaker was very good and gave a very interesting talk on her Great Grandfather Sam Watkins the author of "Co. Aytch" with personal recollections of the family home and the tracking of the original book of Sam Watkins with his note written in it.

This is an event you should not miss next year! Mark your calendar for JANUARY 19th, 2013 and plan to be there.

Confederate Silver Dollar

*Coin in plastic sleeve \$65.00 ea.
Coin encased in plastic \$75.00 ea.
Add \$20.00 for shipping & handling*

**Price subject to change with market fluctuation.
Call for live quotes*



The coin itself is one troy ounce of .999 fine silver. It was minted in Washington State by the Northwest Territorial Mint (NWTM).

One side of the coin features the Great Seal of the Confederacy, showing Colonial George Washington astride his horse. The other side of the coin was designed in 2002. The scripture "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" is from Psalm 33:12 and celebrates the strong Christian faith and tradition of the old South. The centerpiece is an eagle from a U.S. 1830s silver half-dollar, a coin in circulation during the war. The Breastplate or shield has the "Stars and Bars" of the battle flag with CSA (Confederate States of America) above.

Much history rests in this coin. It can be kept as a treasured keepsake or given as a gift.

YOURS FREE

*With a new member
brought in by yourself*

Lee Camp Members Only

*See Camp Commander
for more information
Tarry Beasley*

Visit our website @ www.atlanticbullionandcoin.com

Commander's Corner

Gentlemen,

Thank you for the honor of once again being your Commander. Obviously I do not "command" you to do anything but I am here to help you and our Camp reach the goals that you want to accomplish.

I know from talking with many of you that one of the objectives is to increase our size in membership and attendance. We currently have 81 on our camp rolls of which 59 have renewed their dues and are current for national purposes. Our attendance has run about 32 or 34 at each meeting which means that we are missing a great number of you both as to attendance and to dues being paid current. Dues are: National \$30.00, TN Division \$5.00 and Camp \$25.00 total of \$60.00 if paid by November 1st if not then a reinstatement fee is due of \$5.00 for a current total of \$65.00. At Monday's meeting I will be announcing a new incentive for you to bring in new members. You will love this.

New Officers will be appointed in the next few months. If you would like to serve in any capacity please let Mark or I know. If the Camp is to do what you want and go where you want it to YOU need to be involved in a manner that suits you best, so let us know how you want to help before you are "volunteered".

I would personally like to thank Steve McIntyre and Mark Buchanan for their service to the Camp for the last two years in their respective capacities of Editor and Commander. They have each done a great job and we have benefited from their service. Several other members will be honored and recognized at our January meeting and you should plan on attending - - You might be one of the recipient's.

LEE, JACKSON CHALMERS BANQUET occurs this month on the 21st at the Ridgeway Country Club beginning at 6:00 and All the Camps in the Shelby County area are coming. We need a BIG representation by our Camp. Tickets are \$30.00 for the 1st ticket and \$25.00 for each additional one you bring to the dinner and excellent talk. This is for members, wives, girlfriends, and all your friends, but we have to have your money for the tickets Monday night the 9th so that the head count can be assured. This will be a fantastic evening and the speaker is the great-granddaughter of the diarists who wrote COMPANY AYTCH the phenomenal diary of a

soldier's life in the Army of Tennessee. You have got to be there to hear this!

There are lots of new things coming up this year so come to the meeting Monday (Jan. 9th) to find out about them.

Tarry Beasley, Commander

150 YEARS AGO: Ironclads Make Assault at Fort Henry

February 6, 1862

FORT HENRY, Tenn. — A Union thrust up the Tennessee River cracked the Confederate defense line in the west when ironclad gunboats and a Union army of 15,000 took Fort Henry while the infantry foundered in flooded underbrush.

Commodore Andrew Foote commanded the flotilla of four ironclads and three wooden gunboats that began its bombardment of the fort at 11 a.m. Confederate Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman, seeing that his position was hopeless, had sent his garrison of 2,800 men to Fort Donelson, 11 miles away, to avoid capture. He kept 90 men with him to man the heavy guns intended to control the river.

Brig. Gen. Ulysses Grant had used riverboats to move from Cairo, Ill., to the fort in four days. He had unloaded downstream from the fort, and his men struggled through mud and floodwaters while Foote approached the fort in support.

"This is a victory the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated," the St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican said when it reported the victory. "It cuts in twain that strong line of occupation of the rebels. ... It will allow a column to proceed up the Tennessee River into northern Alabama and Mississippi, turning the flank of Memphis."

If Union commanders keep up the pressure, "rebellion in the Southwest is squeezed within a vice so tightly as to make it knock its knees in fear and trepidation."

After the surrender, Grant sent Capt. Henry Walke and the Carondelet ironclad upstream to destroy the Memphis and Ohio Railroad bridge, a vital link for quickly shifting Confederate defenders between Bowling Green, Ky., and the Mississippi River.



Battle of Fort Henry

Traveller - Now Online

Traveller, the R.E Lee Camp 1640 newsletter, has caught up with the 21st century and is now available on line. Find it monthly at:

<http://www.tennessee-scv.org/camp1640/>

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Traveller is the monthly newsletter of:

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Sons of Confederate Veterans

and

The Mary Custis Lee Chapter,

Order of the Confederate Rose

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Steve M. McIntyre, Editor



**Next Camp Meeting ** February 13, 2012
Germantown Pickering Center, 7771 Old Poplar Pike, Germantown, TN**