

The Day Book

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A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

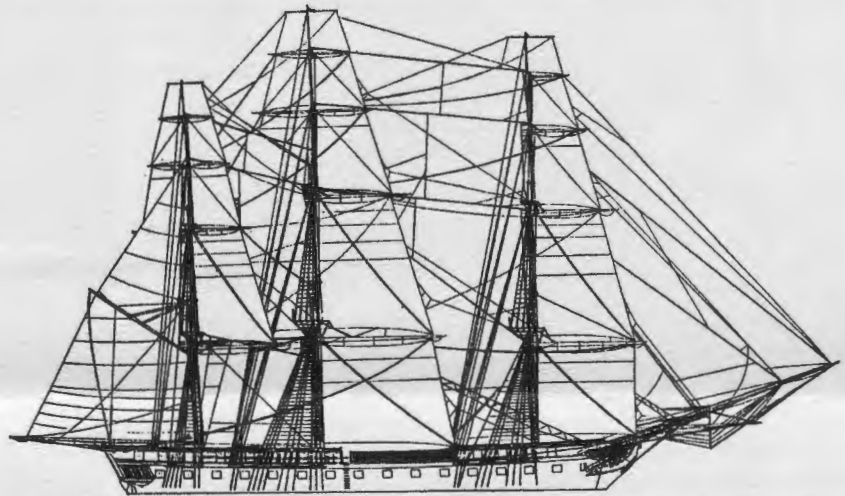
“Now My Brave Boys, Are You Ready?!”

A joint American force turns back the British at Craney Island

by Joe Mosier

In the first few months after Congress declared war on England in June 1812, Norfolk and Portsmouth were largely untouched by the conflict. It was an unpopular war with most of the merchants in the twin seaport cities. They had suffered heavily during the embargo of 1807-1809 and had found it difficult to recover their markets under the Nonimportation Acts which followed.

After the Federal government lifted the embargo of 1807, Hampton Roads merchants found that exporting grain to the British Army was a quick way to recover lost profits. The English need for American foodstuffs had led to a gradual relaxation of its long-standing anti-neutral shipping policies. The British even repealed their policy of seizing neutral merchant ships that Americans found so offensive shortly before the war began. As a result of the lucrative grain trade, many in Hampton Roads were opposed to President James Madison’s war policy as they saw darker motives behind the war motto of “Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights.” They believed the real roots of the war were the pro-French bias



The target during the War of 1812, the main objective of the British forces in Hampton Roads was to seize and destroy the 36-gun frigate USS Constellation. The British blockaded Hampton Roads with several warships including two to three ships-of-the-line which prevented Constellation from leaving its base in the Elizabeth River. (Sail plan from National Archives)

of the Jeffersonian Republicans and the desire to wrest Canada away from Britain.

In the first year of the war, United States forces made three attempts to invade Canada. Although none had proven successful, the British government decided “to effect a diversion on the coasts of the United States of America, in favor of Upper and Lower Canada” by shifting the focus of the war to the Chesapeake Bay. In December 1812, Adm. Sir John Borlase Warren, Commander in Chief for the American and West Indies Station, was directed to focus his 25-ship force blockading the American coast as near to the Chesapeake as possible.

For action within the Bay in support of Warren, Rear Adm. George Cockburn took command of a squadron including

three 74-gun ships of the line and four frigates. Warren was to be reinforced in March by a ground force contingent enroute from England via Bermuda. The troops under the command of Col. Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith were composed of two battalions of Royal Marines, a detachment of the 102nd Regiment, two companies of *Chasseurs Britanniques* (see page 11) and a detachment of Royal Marine Artillery - a total of about 2,200 men. The object of the expedition was a series of pin-prick raids that would force the Americans to pull troops off the border to protect their heartland.

The first of Adm. Warren’s ships arrived within the Capes in February 1813. Simultaneously, the frigate USS *Constellation* commanded by Capt. *Craney Island continued on page 6*

Inside *The Day Book*

Director’s Column.....	2
New Acquisitions.....	3
Brave or Insane?, pt. 2.....	4
Law & Order.....	8
Volunteer News&Notes.....	10
Museum Sage.....	11

Reaching Out to the Public

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

This spring, the staff and volunteers of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum began a campaign to reach out to the surrounding community. Our goals were two-fold: to increase community awareness at large and to cultivate potential group audiences.

From February through April, the HRNM put together a three-part roving lecture series on Naval aviation by local author and historian, Amy Waters Yarsinske. The talks focused on Hampton Roads, and appropriately enough each program was held at military bases: two on Naval Base Norfolk and one on Naval Air Station Oceana. With the support of Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, we were able to offer a farewell tour of USS *America* (CV-66) in combination with the session on the history of the aircraft carrier. The Association of Naval Aviation co-sponsored the last talk at the Oceana Officer's Club before a packed crowd. More than 400 attended this series, by far the most popular lectures ever for

the museum.

Another outreach effort, a Speakers' Bureau, was mentioned in the last issue of *The Daybook*. Under the capable leadership of Chairman **David Dashiell** the program got under way with 15 volunteer members. Docent **Gurley Ritter** agreed to start a pilot program with the Norfolk Kiwanis Clubs, which to date have netted 15 presentations with good reviews. We are now ambitious. A brochure advertising the program is being designed, and the bureau has expanded its efforts to other local civic groups.

As for future events, we will continue our guest speakers series with **Dr. James Valle** (see page 9) on **May 15** and the ship's company of *CSS Virginia* on **June 14**. On **June 6**, the Navy is sponsoring an evening with the



This issue of *The Daybook* is dedicated to the memory of HRNM docent retired **Capt. Leon Chevallay**, who passed away on April 22. Leon loyally contributed more than 300 hours of volunteer service to the museum. His kind and gentle spirit will not be forgotten. (Photo provided by Leon Chevallay's family)

Virginia Symphony. The symphony will perform a free concert at Naval Base Norfolk with a military theme. If you have questions about this, call me at 444-8971 ext. 117.

This issue of *The Daybook* focuses on the War of 1812. The British had all but shut down the port of Hampton Roads with a naval blockade and elected to attack the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth. A gallant band of sailors, Marines, militiamen and soldiers met Britain's best at Craney Island during the summer of 1813 and fought a sharp action.

I regret to end this column on a sad note. It is with deep sadness that I must inform you that one of our volunteer docents, **Leon Chevallay**, died on April 22 of cancer. Leon contributed more than 300 hours of volunteer service to the museum. His kind and gentle soul will not be forgotten. On behalf of the museum's staff and volunteers, I would like to dedicate this issue of *The Daybook* to his memory.

Becky

About *The Day Book*

The Day Book is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 200 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The DayBook's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum. The newsletter takes its name from a 19th century Norfolk newspaper.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Day Book* can be reached at 444-8971, by fax at 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~VAM/vamhome.html>. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1,000.

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Museum Acquires Two Intriguing Artifacts

by Joe Judge

The museum has added two important accessions to its collection. One is an early nineteenth century enlisted man's jacket. The other is a half-model of the famous ironclad USS *Monitor*.

The enlisted man's jacket is a dark blue, double-breasted, short coat. The U.S. Navy authorized jackets of this style in 1841 when it issued the first uniform regulation that addressed the clothing of enlisted personnel. In the case of the enlisted jacket, the 1841 regulation, like many 19th century uniform regulations, merely authorized an article of clothing that was already popular below decks. Sailors had been wearing the short double-breasted coat since the Navy first signed on crews to the first frigates in 1797. Despite the absence of a written instruction in the

early American Navy, a certain uniformity of dress existed.

In the early 19th century the Navy procured sailor's clothing by contract. Clothing tailors manufactured jackets and other items according to samples on view in the various navy yards. They were then offered for sale by the ship's purser in "slop stores," the forerunners of modern ship's stores. The short jacket was one of the basic articles of early naval clothing, along with full bottomed trousers, vest and a hat.

Still, tremendous variation in the dress of seamen continued to exist, many wearing the same clothing in which they enlisted.

Captains of ships also had great latitude in determining how their crews were dressed. The Navy did not establish real uniformity in clothing until the Civil War and after.

The artifact that the museum has acquired is an example of the 1841 pattern, with two rows of nine small buttons down the front and three small buttons on each sleeve. The garment is in excellent condition and probably dates from 1852. This short jacket remained authorized until 1886, although it was rare to see it during the Civil War period and after. A sailor wearing the short jacket during the



This is an excellent example of the seamen's jacket which the museum has recently acquired. The picture is an 1836 woodcut engraving of Boatswain's Mate George Brown. (Navy Historical Center photo of an 1836 Naval Magazine engraving)



Shown here is a 19th century seaman's jacket. This was part of the standard uniform for U.S. Navy sailors during the 18th and 19th century. This particular artifact is rare as there only a handful of them left. (Photo by Bob Matteson)

Civil War was more than likely an "old timer."

The museum plans to exhibit the seaman's jacket in the first gallery of the museum, in the exhibit with the cut-out engraving of "George Brown, American seaman," who is wearing the same jacket. The jacket represents the museum's first piece of pre-Civil War enlisted man's clothing in the permanent collection.

The other important accession that the museum has acquired is a half-model of USS *Monitor*, the famous Union ironclad that fought CSS *Virginia* in the Battle of Hampton Roads in 1862. In the summer of 1995, a Minnesota family wrote the museum asking about interest in an old model of the Union ironclad. A photograph revealed the model to be a half-model

Artifacts continued on page 9

Brave or Just Plain Whacko?

Part 2 of the adventures of "The Fighting Man of the North Carolina Sounds"

by David Rawlings

In the last issue of *The Daybook*, William Barker Cushing had just been promoted to lieutenant and assigned as executive officer aboard the steamer USS *Commodore Perry*, commanded by his old friend and mentor, Lt. Cmdr. Charles Flusser. Assigned to the North Carolina sounds, *Perry* offered Cushing a chance he had awaited since the start of the war: to join a ship heading in harm's way with an aggressive skipper who would take it there.

On Oct. 2, 1862, accompanied by the gunboats USS *Hunchback* and USS *Whitehead*, *Perry* proceeded from Albermarle Sound, up the Chowan River to the Blackwater River and headed towards Franklin, Va. Intended to be a joint operation with Union Army troops advancing from Suffolk, Va., the mission turned into a deadly trap. Unaware that the Army forces had delayed their

position. As his makeshift gun crew was struck down by rifle, Cushing continued to load the gun. Firing a canister round at close range, the shot pushed back the advancing Confederate forces. Cushing subsequently received his own command 11 days later, a month before his twentieth birthday.

Cushing ended up in command of the two-gun gunboat USS *Ellis*. Assigned to patrol duty off Bogue Inlet, Cushing quickly became bored with the lack of enemy activity and abandoned his station in favor of the New Topsail Inlet further south.

Given enough leeway to determine his own operations, Cushing and *Ellis* returned to New Topsail Inlet where his party destroyed a Confederate salt works. Having now tasted his first landing part action in enemy territory, Cushing decided on bolder operations. A few weeks later,

the coast. Determined not to let his first command be captured without a fight, Cushing kept six volunteers aboard the gunboat. At dawn, Confederate shore batteries pummeled *Ellis* into a useless wreck. Cushing and his men escaped to New Bern, N.C. on a small boat.

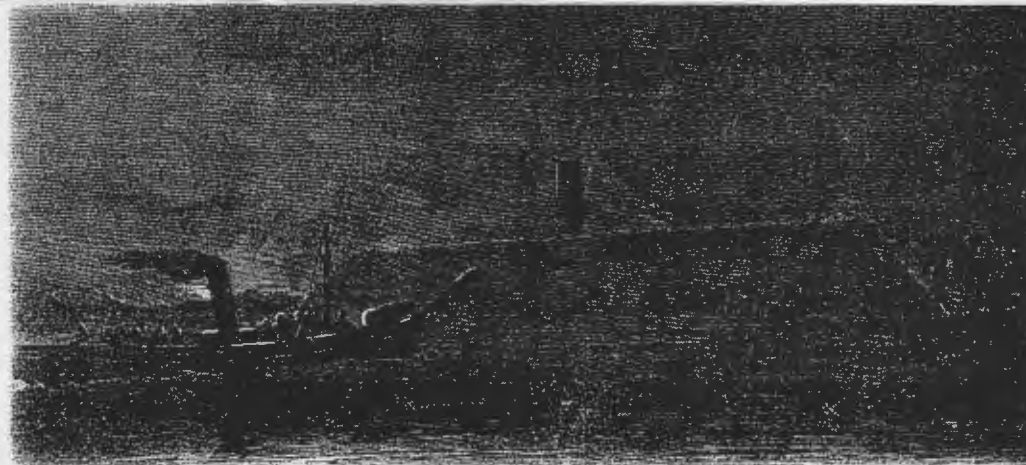
Cushing next proposed to his commanders that it was possible to capture a pilot more familiar with the local waters. He tried twice to capture one, but failed both times. However, the attempts to capture a pilot received high praise from Cushing's superiors and they gave him command of the 500-ton, six-gun gunboat USS *Commodore Barney* which operated out of Hampton Roads. Between April 9 and April 22, 1863, Cushing commanded a squadron of five vessels on the Nansemond River. Assigned to defend the right flank of the Union army against a Confederate attack lead by Gen.

Longstreet, Cushing's squadron was involved in daily cannon duels with Confederate shore batteries. Cushing also lead a party of 90 sailors and soldiers ashore where they successfully repulsed a troop of Confederate cavalry by a dramatic charge on foot.

Cushing continued to move up in status as the Union command assigned him to the gunboat USS *Monticello* which was

ordered to join the blockade squadron off Fort Fisher, N.C. in January 1864. Once his ship arrived, Cushing planned his most daring raid yet. On Jan. 29, he led twenty men to the headquarters of the Confederate defenses for the area, in the coastal town of Smithville, N.C.

Accompanied by five men, Cushing slipped into town after midnight and
Cushing continued on page 5



Angered by the death of his commanding officer at the hands of the ironclad CSS *Albemarle*, Cushing vowed to sink the Confederate warship. Using a spar torpedo attached to a steam launch, Cushing sank the ironclad on the night of Sept. 24, 1864. Of the 13 men who volunteered for the expedition, only two returned. Cushing was one of the two and he returned with three bullet holes in his jacket. (Nov. 19, 1864 Harper's Weekly engraving)

advance, the squadron advanced up the narrow Blackwater River on Oct. 3 where they were ambushed by Confederate infantry lining the banks of the river. With no room to maneuver, the Confederates blasted *Perry* at close range.

With the crew scrambling for cover, Cushing called for volunteers and wheeled the ship's field howitzer into

he raided and captured the town of Jacksonville, N.C., near the New River. Burning one turpentine-laden vessel and capturing two small schooners, *Ellis* withdrew back down the New River before expected Confederate forces arrived to reclaim the town.

The Confederates, however, caught up with *Ellis* and engaged the gunboat when it ran aground about five miles from



Pictured here are the senior Union Naval officers of the second Fort Fisher expedition. On the far left, facing inward with his hair down to his shoulders, is Lt. Cushing. Cushing's heroics at Fort Fisher climaxed an amazing career in the Navy. He would finish out his tenure in the Navy as a commander. Unfortunately, about ten years after the war, he suffered a nervous breakdown and died at the Government Hospital for the Insane. (U.S. Navy photo)

Cushing continued from page 4

attempted to kidnap the Confederate commanding officer, Gen. Hebert, from his quarters. For once, Cushing's luck was sub-par, as the general was out of town that evening.

Cushing settled for Hebert's chief engineer and delivered him to the flagship for breakfast the next morning. Cushing later sent a note ashore under a flag of truce to Hebert saying "I deeply regret that you were not at home when I called." Angered by the smug note, the commander of the Smithville fort, Col. Jones, vowed that he would be prepared for any further raids and that Cushing's feat would never be repeated.

After a brief search for the ironclad CSS *Raleigh*, Cushing posed as a highwayman on the Wilmington-Fort Fisher road and captured more than 20 prisoners as well as the Fort Fisher mailbag. Making his escape on the third night, Cushing's boat dodged alerted Confederate boats and shore batteries and once again escaped unscathed to the safety of the Atlantic. On his way south past Smithville, he left a note on a buoy addressed to Col. Jones, informing him that he had, indeed, repeated his raid. Widely publicized in both Northern and Southern newspapers, Cushing's latest exploit was even used as justification for

reinforcements by the Confederate commander of Fort Fisher.

The most famous of Cushing's exploits, however, occurred later in 1864. To improve their defensive posture in the Albermarle Sound region, the Confederates elected to construct ironclads similar to CSS *Virginia*. By mid-1864, they built and commissioned CSS *Albemarle*.

The construction and sortie of *Albemarle* struck fear and panic into the Union naval officers much in the same way that *Virginia* had done in Hampton Roads two years earlier. In its first engagement with Union vessels, *Albemarle* attacked the gunboats USS *Miami* and USS *Southfield* which were assigned to guard the Roanoke River. *Albemarle* rammed and sunk *Southfield* and severely damaged *Miami* with cannon fire. The gunboats' counterattacks proved fruitless against the ironclad's armor. One of the cannonballs rejected by *Albemarle*'s armor rebounded back onto the *Miami* where it exploded and killed Cushing's closest friend, Cmdr. Flusser.

Cushing naturally demanded immediate revenge, but his vengeance was put on hold as no one knew exactly how to go about destroying the ironclad.

Monitor-type ironclads drew too much water to sail up the shallow Roanoke River and smaller wooden boats would simply be blown out of the water. The Union navy needed someone crazy enough to go through with the operation. After much searching for the right person, the Union high command looked no further than Cushing. He accepted the mission as a chance to redeem Flusser's honor.

Cushing decided to use a steam launch with an explosive charge, called a spar torpedo, attached at the front of the ship. On the night of Oct. 27, 1864, his ship and all volunteer crew ascended the Roanoke River where *Albemarle* was being repaired. Confederate lookouts near the ironclad spotted the launch and began to fire on it. Cushing pressed ahead in spite of the enemy fire drove the torpedo into *Albemarle* and sunk the formidable ironclad. Cushing himself dove into the river after the launch was struck several times and began to sink.

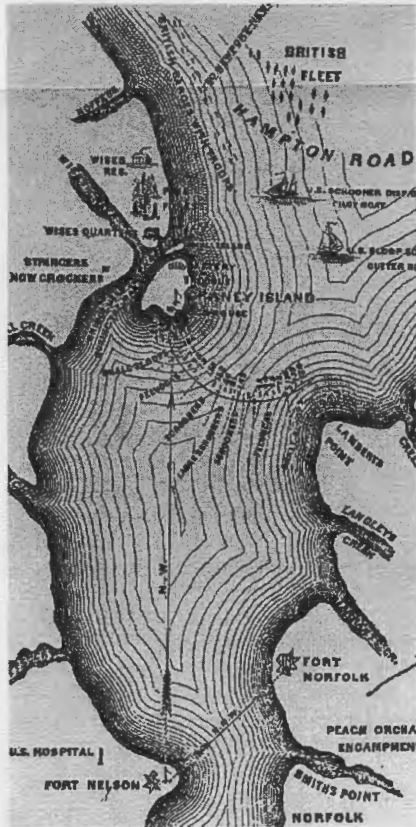
Only two of the 13 men made it back to Union lines after the ensuing fight with the Confederate. Cushing was one of the two. He returned with three bullet holes in his jacket only after overhearing some Confederate officers in a swamp say that

Cushing continued on page 8

Craney Island continued from page 1

Charles Stewart came down the Bay. After a lengthy fitting out period in Baltimore, *Constellation* was under way for its first wartime cruise.

With passage blocked by enemy vessels between the Middle Ground and Horseshoe Shoals, Stewart made reluctantly for the Elizabeth River and the safety of the guns of Forts Norfolk and Nelson. News of the appearance of the British squadron was quickly carried to Richmond. Virginia Governor James Barbour dispatched militia reinforcements from Petersburg, Richmond and Albemarle to Brig. Gen. Robert B. Taylor, commander of the Norfolk Military District. Taylor worked hard to bring discipline to the militia companies and to strengthen the landward defenses of Norfolk and Portsmouth. With his militiamen augmented by the few regular troops at Fort Norfolk and sailors from *Constellation* and the Gosport Navy Yard, Taylor believed he had a good



The theatre of battle-To counter the British invasion, the American leaders deployed artillery batteries on Craney Island itself and placed several Navy gunboats between Lambert's Point and the island. (From The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812)

chance of repelling any assault by the English.

But the expected British attack did not come immediately. Rear Adm. Cockburn had reconnoitered the mouth of the Elizabeth River, but had been unable to find a channel deep enough for his ships. Leaving three ships of the line and two frigates to continue the blockade, Warren and Cockburn sailed up the Chesapeake to conduct raids on towns along the Bay. While Cockburn concentrated on the upper bay, Warren sailed only as far as Annapolis. Both returned to Hampton Roads in May 1813 before Warren departed for Bermuda to transport Beckwith's force. While at Bermuda, Warren received a letter from the Admiralty criticizing his handling of the Chesapeake expedition. They felt he had been too lenient in his dealings with civilians in the Hampton Roads area and was tying up too great a portion of his force in the blockade of *Constellation*. Warren returned to Virginia in mid-June determined to rectify both criticisms.

In Norfolk, the initial invasion hysteria had subsided in March when the bulk of the British fleet left to conduct other operations. Gen. Taylor reasoned that if the enemy attacked in force, their most likely avenue of approach would be up the Elizabeth River. To forestall this, he decided to fortify Craney Island, several miles downriver from Norfolk and Portsmouth. Although the island has since been greatly expanded by the Army Corps of Engineers, it then was only about 50 acres in size separated from the shore by two creeks. The shallow water surrounding it extended for about two miles, protecting it from approach by large ships. A blockhouse was under construction on the southeastern end of the island and several redoubts were dug facing the mouth of the river. Troops were rotated out to the island to take part in the construction with their number varying between 350 and 500. Off Lambert's Point opposite Craney Island a number of ships were sunk to block the river channel. Captain John Cassin, *Craney Island continued on page 7*

Saved From the British, Wrecked by the Americans

While the American forces in Norfolk saved *Constellation* from the British invasion fleet, the frigate did not leave Norfolk unscathed. By late 1813, the warship had fallen into such disrepair that it even if the British lifted the blockade on Hampton Roads, *Constellation* could not have escaped to the open sea.

The frigate's current commanding officer, Capt. Charles Gordon, wanted to get the ship ready for sea as soon as possible, but when he mustered the crew at Gosport, he discovered *Constellation* was in wretched shape. Gordon wrote to Secretary Jones, "the ship is entirely stripped and everything landed with a swept hold. There being no inventory taken and no receipt from Capt. Tarbell to Capt. Stewart, I find it difficult to ascertain precisely what is deficient or where the deficiencies are gone, particularly the cabin furniture." Missing were more than 200 pieces of fine dinning and cooking ware and all of the cabin furniture. Gordon also commented that most of the sails and riggings had been torn or allowed to rot and that more than a ton of powder was now useless.

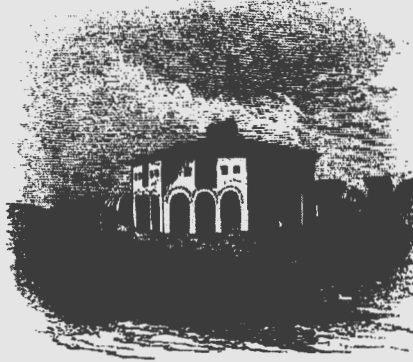
Secretary Jones, naturally, was quite angry and wrote to Stewart demanding to know what happened to the ship's stores and why *Constellation* had fallen into such a bad state of repair. Stewart tried to place the blame on someone else as he could not account for the missing furniture. He claimed to have locked up all the stores in their proper place before he turned the ship over.

Surprisingly, Jones was satisfied with Stewart's response as he agreed that the problems occurred at a later date. That is, Jones believed Tarbell was the one to blame. As for the missing items, one can only speculate what happened to them. Whether or not the citizens of Norfolk and Portsmouth were the ones who looted the ship is not known either, but the possibility certainly exists. What is known is that the incident forced the Navy to keep *Constellation* in port for the rest of the year.

Craney Island continued from page 6

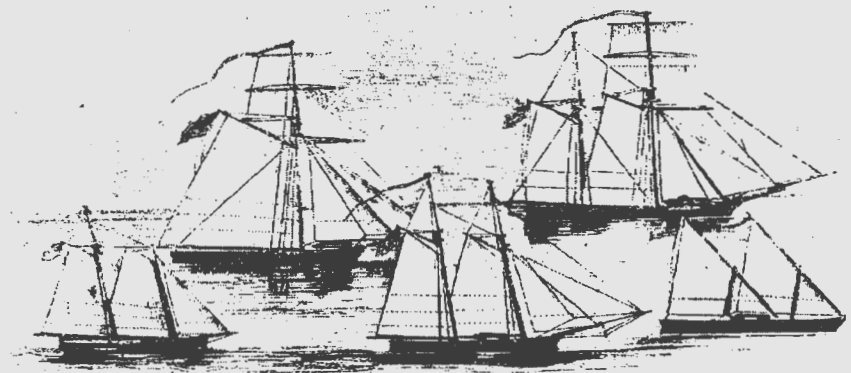
Commandant of the Gosport Navy Yard, ordered the flotilla of fifteen gunboats under his command to back up the land defenses. In May, 1813, Capt. Stewart departed for Boston to take over USS *Constitution*, Master Commandant John Tarbell had assumed temporary command of *Constellation*. He enjoyed a close working relationship with Taylor and willingly offered the frigate's sailors for use ashore.

After Warren return to Hampton Roads, HMS *Junon*, *Narcissus* and *Barossa* were ordered to attack American shipping in the James River. June 19, calm winds stranded the ships off Newport News with *Junon* lying about three miles away from her consorts. At 11 p.m., two divisions of US Navy gunboats under Lt. John Gardener and Robert Henley proceeded down the river to attack *Junon*. By 4 a.m, the gunboats had gained position within 1,500 yards of the ship and opened fire.



*The defenses-shown here is one of the fortifications built on Craney Island. Servicemen from all branches participated to help defend the island. This included sailors and Marines from USS *Constellation*, Virginia militiamen from all over the state and U.S. Army troops from Fort Norfolk. (Engraving from The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812)*

The attack lasted about 45 minutes before a breeze came up and the other British ships were able to make sail, forcing the gunboats to retire. *Junon* suffered one marine killed and three seamen wounded as well as "several shot in our hull and some of the standing and running rigging cut." American losses were one petty officer killed and two sailors slightly wounded by splinters. Although the attack was largely ineffective, it provided a significant boost to American morale



The Jeffersonian idea of national defense consisted of a few frigates, a few brigs and gunboats by the truckload. The Navy acquired more than 200 of these gunboats, several of them being built in Norfolk. These "humble" little gunboats had only one or two guns and were no match against larger British warships. However, 12 of these ships proved their worth at the Battle of Craney Island as they were able to prevent British troop transports from passing Lambert's Point on the Elizabeth River.

as the usual overly optimistic action reports circulated.

That same day Warren, his fundament somewhat blackened by the blast he had received from the Admiralty, began "to particularly attend to their Lordships former directions." His squadron of 13 warships including three troop transports moved from Lynnhaven Bay to the James. Reports of large numbers of barges indicated the long-awaited British attack would soon commence.

Taylor's garrison on Craney Island was relatively weak: two light artillery companies with four six-pounders, 50 riflemen and 416 infantry - a total of 557 men. The post was under the command of Lt. Col. Henry Beatty with Maj. James Faulkner as his artillery commander. Taylor sent his aide, Capt. John Myers, to Tarbell with a request for sailors to augment the Craney Island force. Tarbell immediately dispatched 100 sailors under Lt. B. J. Neale, Lt. W. B. Shubrick and Lt. James Sanders together with 50 marines headed by 1st Lt. H. B. Breckenridge. The artillery line was strengthened when two 24-pounders and an 18-pounder were manhandled from the unfinished blockhouse to the opposite end of the island. Cassin placed his fifteen gunboats in arc between Craney Island and Lambert's Point. Men on the island realized they would be in for a tough fight with no possibility of retreat.

The 2,200 troops under Beckwith were landed with some confusion two to three miles west of the island on June 22. They marched towards Wise's Creek

with the intention of storming Craney Island on its south side. Capt. S. G. Pechell of HMS *San Domingo* commanded a second British force made up of about 1,500 sailors and marines. This element conducted a direct amphibious assault using 50 barges from the fleet. As Beckwith's column reached the creek, they discovered it was too deep to ford. To cover their movements, a Royal Marine Artillery battery loosed a spectacular but ineffective barrage of Congreve rockets at the Americans. Faulkner, with continuous volleys of grapeshot and canister succeeded in driving back Beckwith's men.

As that threat eased, the British barges began to close the island. Led by Neale's superb gunnery with the 18-pounder, the American artillery began to break up the waterborne assault. Some boats did close to within a few hundred yards, but when men began to go over the side they discovered the bottom consisted of three or four feet of slimy mud. Pechell saw the impossibility of the situation and ordered his men back to the fleet. One column of boats under Capt. John Hanchett (natural son of the British king) had veered off into one the creeks behind Craney Island. Hanchett was standing upright in Warren's barge, the *Centipede*, when he was mortally wounded by a canister ball in the thigh. Hanchett's men quickly carried him back to his ship, but the barge was captured by Neale's sailors who waded out after it. British casualties killed, drowned and wounded were reported by the Americans at more than 200, plus 30
Craney Island continued on page 11

Museum To Present Talk on Law and Order in the Navy During the Age Of Sail




Dr. James Valle will speak at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum on May 15 at 7 p.m. Valle is the author of *Rocks and Shoals*, which is the definitive work on order and discipline in the U.S. Navy during the Age of Sail.

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is proud to welcome renowned marine historian Dr. James Valle for a May 15 presentation. Dr. Valle will speak on the day-to-day problems of enforcing discipline aboard U.S. Navy vessels during its first 60 years. He will talk about the policies laid down, the crises and near scandals of the period between 1800-1861. Issues such as widespread alcoholism, uncooperativeness and frequent insubordination among the sailors will also be addressed.

Valle is the author of *Rocks and Shoals: Social Order and Discipline in the United States Navy, 1800-1861* (Naval Institute Press: 1979) which is the basis for this presentation. The book is a history of the common American sailor and the iron fisted methods used to keep him in line during the Age of Sail.

Valle is currently a professor of history and political science at Delaware State University, where he has worked since 1968. He graduated from San Francisco State University in June 1965 and completed his Masters in American History at UCLA in 1967. His masters thesis was *The Civil War Military Career of John A. McClernand*. His book *Rocks and Shoals* grew from his Ph.D. dissertation, which the Naval Institute published.

In addition to his maritime and naval speciality, Valle is also interested in ferronequinology and has published *The Iron Horse at War*, a pictorial account of the American railroad industry in World War II.

Valle's presentation takes place on May 15 at 7 p.m. inside the Nauticus Theater. Anyone wanting more information is ask to call 444-8971. 

Cushing continued from page 5

Albemarle had indeed been sunk. The daring raid earned Cushing a letter of commendation from President Abraham Lincoln and the U.S. Congress and appeared on the front page of *Harper's Weekly*. With the letter of commendation came an automatic promotion to lieutenant commander.

The sinking of *Albemarle* made Cushing a national hero. Politicians paraded him around the North. He went on the 19th century equivalent of the celebrity talk show circuit. However, the war was not yet over and one major obstacle still remained in North Carolina, Fort Fisher. Fort Fisher layed at the entrance of the Cape Fear River and guarded the approach to the all important port city of Wilmington. Cushing returned to his command of the gunboat USS *Monticello* in Hampton Roads where it joined with the armada assembling to seize the fortress.

The head of the expedition, Adm. David D. Porter, had two options in attacking Fort Fisher. He could either attempt to run the guns of the fort, or he


could launch a ground assault. The first option required someone to take sounding measures and to check for undersea mines near the fort. Porter offered Cushing the job and without hesitation, he accepted.

He led a squadron of ten small boats near the fort after a prolonged bombardment from Union ships. At first, the fort did not return fire. But they were not silent for long, as cannonballs soon rained down on the squadron. Historian Rod Gragg notes in his history of the battle for Fort Fisher that Cushing made an especially inviting target as his boat flew a blue and white officer's pennant and he would often stand up in the boat to more closely observe the fort. Incredibly, his squadron succeeded in sounding and marking the channel with only one of his ten boats hit.

Porter then decided, however, on a ground assault. He assembled more than 1,500 volunteers from the fleet, Cushing naturally being one of them, into a Naval brigade. Armed with nothing more than revolvers and cutlasses, the Naval

brigade charged the northeastern bastion. Confederate gunners quickly cut them down. Gragg described the fire from the fort was so deadly that "even the daredevil Cushing took cover." It was not until Union army troops succeeded in storming the walls that the fortress fell.

Fort Fisher was the last great naval battle of the war and with the end of the campaign, so ended the war two months later and Cushing's wartime career. After the war, Cushing continued to serve in the Navy, mostly on shore duty where he achieved the rank of commander. He married and moved to Boston.

Unfortunately, his health deteriorated as he suffered a bad case of pneumonia. In addition, his mind was never able to fully adjust with peace time shore duty and he suffered a nervous breakdown. He was committed to the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington, D.C., and given frequent doses of morphine to ease his pain. He died at the hospital on Dec. 8, 1874. Ironically, Cushing died never receiving the Medal of Honor. 



Detail of the recently purchased half-model of USS Monitor. The photographic portraits of Rear Adm. Worden, Secretary Gideon Welles and inventor/engineer John Ericsson surround the ship as does the faux wooden rope. The model itself is screwed onto the backing. Once restored, the half-model will replace the copy of the engineer drawings of Monitor in the museum's Civil War gallery. (Photo provided by the seller)

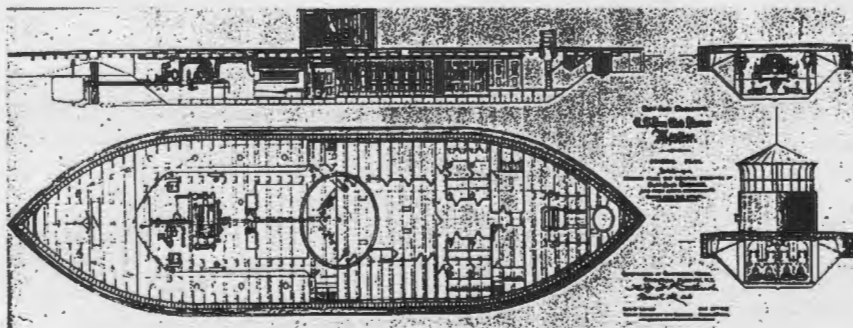
Artifacts continued from page 3

mounted on a wooden oval, with photographic portraits of John Ericsson, the ship's designer, Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy and John Worden, the ship's first captain. A carved wooden rope surrounded the model as a decorative motif. Further examination showed that the scale of the model is 1:64, and that it was made of wood. After consultation with the Navy's Curator of Models, the museum decided to purchase the model for its Civil War collection.


A family tradition associated with the model stated that it was one of three

ironclad and one of the men pictured on the wooden background. The Abraham Lincoln Museum's model carried the legend that the model was made from wood taken from *Monitor*. It has not been possible to authenticate these stories, which are typical of tales that grow like moss on old artifacts.

The discovery of a companion model owned by Worden, and the construction of the model makes it possible to date the model to the 19th century. The staff will continue to investigate other collections to better date the model. In addition, museum



which were made at the time of the Civil War, and that the model was originally owned by the commander of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Further correspondence with the Abraham Lincoln Museum in Harrogate, Tenn., unearthed an identical model in their collection pertaining to Rear Adm. John Worden, the captain of the

staff will arrange for professional restoration of the piece, which may provide some clues as to the exact date. Whatever the age of the model, it is an eloquent testimony to the appeal and excitement that the *Monitor* has generated since 1862. Eventually the model will be exhibited in the Civil War gallery. 



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Volunteer News & Notes

by Edward Lane

Recognition

The museum would like to thank all the volunteers who participated in the Virginia Association of Museum's conference and the reception held at the museum itself. They are **Gary Abrams, Jud Hill, Joe Mosier and Charlie Devine**. We would also like to thank **Ralph Preston and Charlie Devine** for their participation in the Nauticus Teacher's Open House night.

The last quarterly docent meeting was a huge success as we had the highest turnout for one of these meetings ever. We would like to thank all (too many to mention here) of those who attended and provided their input.

A special thanks to **Joe Mosier** for hosting the first ever meeting of the Dunderfunk Society which took place on April 25. The food and guest speaker **George Tucker's** stories were enjoyed by all who attended.

in the Nauticus Theater on order and discipline during the Age of Sail. The talk will begin at 7 p.m.

There will be an informal get together for staff members and docents on **May 23** at Legends of Norfolk located at Norfolk's Waterside. We plan to meet around 5:30 p.m.

On **June 13**, president and CEO of Nauticus, **David Gernsey**, will give a special tour with lunch to follow. This will take place between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. We hope to have a large turnout.

On **June 15**, **Mark Greenough** and **Living History Associates** will present a vignette on the defense of Norfolk during the War of 1812. This will take place outside the Nauticus Theatre at 2 p.m.

plaque for his efforts. The 500-hour volunteers will receive the Hampton Roads Naval Museum patch.

Happy Birthday to you....

May
Miriam Burgess
Jud Hill
Jack Robertson
David Dashiell

June
Harold Jarashow
Charles Wattley



Wide World of Webbing Update

The museum's home page on the Internet/World Wide Web is officially up and running. The address is <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~VAM/vamhome.html>. This address will take you to the Virginia Association of Museums' page. From there you will find our museum's page along with several other Virginia museums. If you have any question about this, call **Gordon Calhoun** at the museum.

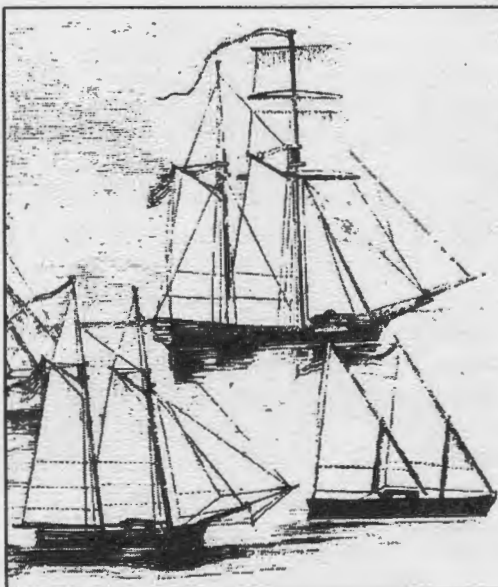
Things of note

Keeps your eyes open and your schedules clean for the following upcoming, museum-sponsored events:

May 15, Dr. Jim Valle, a professor of history and political science at Delaware State University, will speak

Rewards!

The following devoted volunteers have achieved the much coveted goal of 500 hours of active duty: **Al Petrich, Eleanor DiPeppe, Jud Hill, Harrell Forrest and Preston Turpin**. **Hunt Lewis** has recently achieved the level of 1000 hours. He will receive a special



Now that you've read about it... See it live!

Come see and hear Living History Associates' first person interpretation of how the frigate *USS Constellation* and the cities of Norfolk & Portsmouth were saved from a British attack during the War of 1812.

To be held just outside the Nauticus Theater on June 15 at 2 p.m.

The Museum Sage

Time for a Sage Stumper!

Recently, there has been much discussion about whether or not the Navy should develop and build a new type of warship specifically tailored for ground support. Dubbed the "arsenal ship," this type of warship is not a new idea. In the early part of the Age of Steel (pre-World War I), the Navy built a vessel with this role in mind. What was its name and what was its official classification?

The benevolent sage will give his readers two hints. 1) It is not a battleship. 2) It can be found in the museum's temporary exhibit "To My Loving Mother," which is currently on display through May 31.

If you know the answer, call the sage at 444-8971. The first person with the


correct answer will receive a beautiful Hampton Roads Naval Museum coffee mug courtesy of the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation. Please note that unlike the last quiz question, the sage does know the answer to this one. Good Luck!

Why do sailing ships have copper sheets lining the hulls?

One of the most severe problems wooden hull ships faced during the Age of Sail was the dreaded teredo worm. The teredo worm is a small, marine life-form that likes to attach itself and dine on the wood of ships. The resulting holes would slow the ship down and gave major headaches to ship captains as the cost of repairing the holes was

not cheap. In 1761, the Royal Navy experimented with the idea of lining the hulls with copper sheets. The British not only wanted to protect against the teredo worm, but also prevent fouling of the wood in general. The initial experiments were a success and by 1783, most British warships had the copper-lined hulls. The U.S. Navy used copper-lined hulls from the start with the construction of the 44 and 36-gun frigates.

Anything else new?

The model of the frigate HMS *Broadsword* will be replaced by a model of the attack submarine USS *Norfolk* (SSN-714) in the museum's NATO display. 

Craney Island continued from page 7

prisoners and 40 deserters. Warren, however, reported only one officer and seven seamen wounded and 10 missing.

On June 25, Cockburn made up for the failure at Craney Island by taking the town of Hampton. Coming ashore near the site of the later Mary Immaculate Hospital, a force of more than a thousand soldiers, marines and chassuers marched down Kecoughtan Road into Hampton. After a sharp fight with Virginia militiamen, the victorious British commenced sacking the town, one of the worst incidents of its type during the war. In the words of British Lt. Col. Charles Napier, "every horror was perpetrated with impunity - rape, murder, pillage - and not a man punished." The sack of Hampton fortunately proved to be the last attack on Hampton Roads. A British blockading force was maintained at Lynnhaven Bay while Cockburn sailed south to harass the Carolinas. The next year Warren and Cockburn rejoined forces in the Chesapeake to attack Washington, but Norfolk and Portsmouth had been spared.

Every Horror was Perpetrated: Napoleon's Soldiers in British Pay

British manpower in 1813 was tremendously overtaxed with demands of the war against Napoleon. When America declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812, the British government was baffled as to how sufficient troops were to be enrolled to fight both conflicts. One method suggested was to make use of French prisoners against the Americans. Accordingly, soldiers of Napoleon's army captured in Spain were given the choice of serving England in America or going to the infamous prison at Dartmoor. Three hundred made the decision to serve George III.

Referred to as *Chasseurs Britanniques*, they were officially known as the First and Second Independent Companies of Foreigners. They were assigned to Col. Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith's force ordered in March 1813 to support Admiral Sir John Warren's expedition against Chesapeake Bay.

Mutinous and insubordinate before battle, they proved unreliable under fire and rapacious against civilians. They took part in only two engagements,

the attack on Craney Island and the capture of Hampton. After the second, Beckwith wrote Warren: "Their behavior on the recent landing at Hampton, has already been reported to you, together with the circumstances of their dispersing to plunder in every direction; their brutal treatment of several peaceable inhabitants, whose age or infirmities rendered them unable to get out of their way; and upon the representations of their officers, who found it impossible to check them, and whose lives they threatened, the subsequent necessity of re-embarking and sending them off to their ship. Impressed with the conviction that these companies can no longer be safely employed on the present service, and that retaining them may be productive of some serious disaster; I take the liberty of submitting to you, the necessity of their being sent away as soon as possible."

Warren concurred with Beckwith's appraisal. The British took the chassuers back to Halifax, Nova Scotia where they were disbanded. 