

In Our Waters

The U.S.S. Monitor by Adam M. Grohman

The paddle wheels of the *U.S.S. Rhode Island* surged through the gale force winds and stormy seas south of the Diamond Shoals off the Outer Banks of North Carolina. On a long hawser, the 173-foot *U.S.S. Monitor*, with its 41-foot beam, attempted to survive the savage onslaught of the waves. Despite the valiant efforts of both crews to save the floundering vessel, the *U.S.S. Monitor* succumbed to the raging seas of the Graveyard of the Atlantic, taking 16 sailors with her to the bottom. The year was 1862, and it would be more than 111 years before the historic vessel would be seen again by anyone.

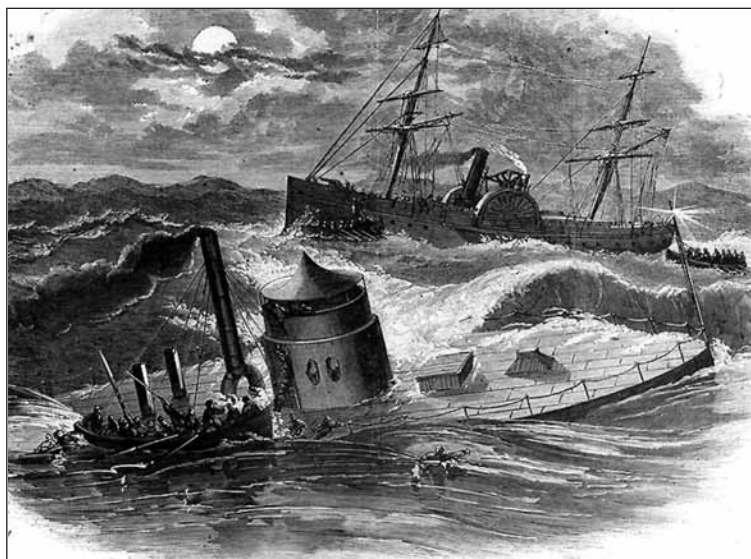
The *U.S.S. Monitor* had been designed by John Ericsson, a Swedish-American engineer and inventor. The craft was built at the Continental Iron Works in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, and its engine and machinery were fabricated at the Delamater Iron Works in Greenwich Village. The "cheese box on a raft" may not have impressed those who looked upon the craft, but in battle, the *U.S.S. Monitor* would prove to be a tough adversary, and its revolving turret would revolutionize naval fighting ships.



John Ericsson

She had been built and launched in a hurried attempt to combat the Confederate blockade-buster *C.S.S. Virginia*. In early March, the *Virginia* had steamed to Hampton Roads, Virginia and decimated the Union's wooden blockading squadron. The *Virginia* had destroyed three wooden warships and had killed 250 sailors – the worst day for U.S. Naval sailors prior to the fateful attacks at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

On March 9, 1862, under cover of darkness, the *U.S.S. Monitor* arrived at Hampton Roads from Brooklyn. As the *C.S.S. Virginia* churned out towards its wooden victims, it found itself head-to-head with the Union's answer to the Confederate's armored warship. Over the next four hours, the vessels volleyed shot after shot at each other. The *U.S.S. Monitor* proved to be a difficult target since the only aspect of the vessel above the water line was the rotating turret. Though the turret proved to be difficult to stop when it began rotating, the Union gunners fired instead as the turret revolved and came on their target. Both vessels were spared any serious damage throughout the engagement.



The wreck of the "Monitor" - December 1862

Though the battle of the ironclads was considered a draw, some argue that the *U.S.S. Monitor* was the victor since she had repelled the *C.S.S. Virginia* from her primary objective of destroying the Union blockade force. Neither vessel would ever face each other again.

On March 9, 2007, the *U.S.S. Monitor* Center, a \$30 million Civil War attraction, opened at the Mariner's Museum in Newport News, Virginia. The 63,500-square foot center

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