

Civil war technology.

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These new ships could repel enemy fire as well as ram inferior wooden ships into pieces. One such ship built by the Confederates was the Virginia, "The Ironclad carried ten guns and an iron ram on her prow; she moved slowly and awkwardly, powered by the two old engines of the Merrimack, and it took half an hour to turn her around. In the harbor of the Hampton Roads, the Virginia, on her first day at war, attacked five Union ships" (McGreevy, 17) "Five Union ships containing 219 guns guarded the mouth of the James River at Hampton Roads but the fighting this day would make them obsolescent.

What day- the worst in the eighty-six year history of the US. Navy. The Virginia sank two proud ships. " (McPherson, 375, 376) The Confederates were not alone in the building of ironclad although not everyone shared in the enthusiasm of these new ships" Secretary of Navy Wells did not at first want to experiment with new fangled notions. But rumors of rebel activities caused Congress to force his hand with a law of August 3, 1861, directing the construction of three prototype ironclads. " (McPherson, 374) several designs were submitted but John Ericson was the one the Navy department accepted. Ericson's proposal incorporated several novel features. A wooden hull sheathed with thin iron plate would be overlaid by a flat deck with perpendicular sides extending below the water line and protected by 4_5-inch armor plating. The propeller, anchor and all vital machinery would be protected by this shell. Sitting on the deck was Ericson's most important innovation: a revolving turret encased in eight inches of armor and containing two eleven-inch guns. " (McPherson, 374) This ship was named the Monitor, and while the Virginia reaped havoc at Hampton Roads the

Monitor was on her way to meet her. On March 9, the Monitor arrived from Brooklyn, and the two strange ships blasted away at each other, the Monitor circling her opponent. The battle ended in a draw, but it changed naval warfare overnight by making wooden fleets obsolete. " (McGreevy, 17) Other technologies that were heavily used during the war were the Railroad and telegraph. The railroads allowed for speed of troop movement and heavy artillery that could only be moved rail. The telegraph likewise sped communications between Office issued over 240 military related patents.

The monitor itself had 47 individual patents. Another innovative advancement in weaponry was the rifle. While these weapons were not new to the battle field recent advancements in bullet technology developed in the sass, by Claude E. Minnie' and improved upon by James H. Burton made the weapons more practical and cost effective. " At the beginning of the war both sides were armed chiefly with smoothbore muskets that had an effective range of about eighty yards and took about twenty five minutes to reload.

But during 1862 Union soldiers were with new rifles that had spiral grooves cut in the barrels, and by 1863 nearly all infantrymen, Yankee and confederate carried these weapons. These rifles put a spin on the bullet, increasing its range and accuracy. These new rifles meant that assaulting infantrymen in close formation could be picked off with rifles at four hundred yards. The casualty cost for a frontal assault became tremendous. "

(McGreevy, 17) The impact of the rifle on the battlefield was huge. One reason for the high casualties of the Civil War was the disparity between traditional tactics and modern weapons. The tactical legacy of the

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eighteenth-century and Napoleonic warfare had emphasized close order formations. " (McPherson, 473, 474) Some other technological break through brought on by the war were the creation of The Sanitary Commission and improvements in army medical practices. " The Civil War marked a milestone in the transformation of nursing from a menial service to a nine profession. The war also produced important innovations in army medical practice.

One such innovation was the creation of special ambulance corps for first aid treatment of the wounded and their evacuation to field hospitals. These non-combat medics risked their lives to reach the wounded in the midst of the battle and evacuate them as quickly as possible to surgeons' stations and field hospitals. The ambulance corps became a model for European armies down to World War I. " (McPherson, 484, 485) Sanitary conditions by our standard today were inhuman but at the time of the war they were a vast improvement from previous wars.

Diseases was a greater threat to the health of Civil War soldiers than enemy weapons. This had been true for every army in history. Civil war armies suffered comparatively less disease mortality then any previous army. While two soldiers died of disease for everyone killed in combat, the ratio for soldiers in the Napoleonic and Crimean Wars had been Eight to one. Only by twentieth century standards was Civil War disease mortality high. "

(McPherson, 487) In conclusion the Civil War saw the introduction of the ironclads which made all fighting vessels obsolete in a single afternoon of battle at Hampton Roads.