

Ironclad ships 15721

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The Battle of Hampton Roads changed the course of naval history. This battle marked the first time that two ironclad warships engaged in ship to ship combat. However the USS Monitor and Popov and the Novgorod. These circular monitors were impossible to control and just drifted around (Greene 351-356). The civil wars in South America also saw widespread use of ironclad warships, especially in Chile and Brazil. The revolutionaries of Peru purchased unfinished Confederate ironclads from England and used them in their war for independence against Spain (Greene 263-274).

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The Battle of Hampton Roads changed the course of naval history. This battle marked the first time that two ironclad warships engaged in ship to ship combat. However the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia were not the first ironclad warships that were produced.

The use of ironclad warships predated the United States Civil War. In 1592 the Korean Admiral Yi-sun designed and produced an ironclad warship to counter the large Japanese fleet that was attacking Korea. This ship was designed to repel the Japanese arrows and bullets that were fired at the ship. This ship played key roles in many major victories for the Korean Navy. Steam power was used in warships for the first time in 1850 by the French. The Napoleon was the first warship built with steam power used as its main power. The British followed suit later that year with the HMS Agamemnon. Ship builders believed that steam power would provide enough energy to power ironclad warships. When the Crimean War began in 1853 the Allied navies (Britain and France) saw the need for ironclad warships. The French developed a steam powered ironclad “battery”. These batteries were little more than floating ships with cannons and iron armor. The armor was brittle and often shattered after two direct hits. The conditions on these batteries were poor and they only saw limited action. The British developed similar batteries but they were only used in the Battle of Kinburn. The two navies began developing true ironclads after the Crimean war. The French produced <https://assignbuster.com/ironclad-ships-15721/>

the Gloire in 1858 and the British followed with the HMS Warrior. The Russians joined in with the Prevenetz in 1859. These were the first true ironclads (Greene 15-35).

The beginning of the Civil War in the United States began concerted efforts by both sides to develop ironclad warships. The Confederate States of America first saw the need for ironclad ships at the onset of hostilities in 1861. Stephen Mallory, the Secretary of the Confederate Navy, saw the need for a southern ironclad and ordered one to be built. The Union Navy had abandoned Gosport Navy Yard in Virginia on April 20, 1861, the day after Virginia's order of secession. The major steam frigate USS Merrimack was scuttled and left behind. The Confederates immediately raised the sunken ship and renamed it CSS Virginia, this began its conversion to an ironclad (Gibbons 22). On July 23 of that same year the Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond, Virginia began producing the 723 tons of iron plates for Virginia (Carter 17). The armor of the Virginia was four inches thick and eight inches wide. An iron ram was placed on the bow of the ship, this was installed to be used in ramming enemy ships. The engines of the USS Merrimack remained in the Virginia and were the main propulsion system for the Confederate ironclad. As the Virginia completed her sea trials she was deemed unseaworthy and therefore restricted to the bay and its immediate vicinity (Jones). Northern spies had alerted the Union Secretary of the Navy of these developments in early August. This sparked the beginning of the Union ironclad program. A Swedish shipbuilder named John Ericsson volunteered to design an ironclad ship that would be put to sea within ten weeks of its keel being laid down. Two other companies began work on the ironclads New

Ironsides and Galena but Ericsson's Monitor was the only one with a realistic chance of being completed in time to counter the Virginia (Gibbons 24).

Ericsson had been upset with the United States Navy (USN) since the explosion of one of his cannons on board the USS Princeton in 1844, the explosion killed the Secretary of the Navy. Ericsson used a monitor design which was an iron hull with an ironplated turret on top that contained the cannons. The USS Monitor was completed on January 30, 1862, ten days past its deadline. It became known as a "cheesebox on a raft" (Johnston).

The first engagement between two ironclad warships occurred at Hampton Roads, Virginia on March 9, 1862. On March 8 the Virginia steamed into Hampton Roads to engage the Union blockade squadron. The Union force consisted of the frigates Cumberland and Congress. Virginia made a direct line to the Cumberland at top speed. As she approached Cumberland both ships fired but with no effect. Virginia rammed Cumberland and a moment later and Cumberland instantly broke up, burning. With the appearance of the Virginia the Union force requested additional assistance from the blockade. The commander of the blockade dispatched the frigates Minnesota, Roanoke, and St. Lawrence. As these ships sailed to the scene the Virginia engaged the Congress. The Virginia was outgunned but pressed on as the shots glanced off of her iron armor. She raked the Congress with cannon fire and finally the ship struck its colors. At this time the Minnesota had arrived with the aide of steam tugs but had run aground and was stranded. Virginia and two supporting Confederate gunboats raked her with fire until a large hole appeared in Minnesota's side. Virginia then broke off to pursue the Roanoke and St. Lawrence but it was becoming dark and Virginia

disengaged for the night. The next day Virginia steamed back to Hampton Roads without knowing that the Monitor had arrived that night. As Virginia approached the Minnesota the Monitor emerged from behind the stranded ship. Monitor herself between Virginia and her intended victim. This began the engagement as the two had a fierce duel with their cannon. Monitor carried heavier cannon, but only had two aboard. The gunnery had little effect on both ships and Virginia attempted to ram her foe. The two ironclads collided and a leak opened in Virginia's bow. After this the Monitor withdrew and the Virginia limped back to Norfolk for repairs. This ended the first engagement between ironclad warships (Colston).

The success of the ironclads at Hampton Roads began an increase of ironclad design and production. The Union Navy concentrated on duplicating the design of the USS Monitor. Most Union ironclads followed the "cheesebox on a raft" design of a turret sitting on an iron hull. There were exceptions to this though. Perhaps the most widely known Union ironclad that didn't follow this design was the USS New Ironsides. This ship was built as an iron hulled steam powered ship that looked like a wooden frigate except for the iron armor. The Union also converted many Mississippi river steamboats into ironclad gunboats. These ships were called tinclads due to their thin armor. These ships were used in many riverine engagements. The Confederate Navy stayed with the casemate design that was used with the Virginia. These ships had a large armored rise in the center of the hull which was referred to as the casemate. The casemate contained the cannons. Due to the economic problems the Confederacy faced, the production of ironclads was slow and often poorly carried out. The iron armor was brittle and often

shattered after one or two shots from a cannon (Greene 93-114). The Confederate Navy also began research and production of submarine vessels such as the David and the Hunley. David successfully attacked the New Ironsides but failed to sink her. On February 17, 1864 the Hunley successfully attacked and sank the USS Housatonic but she was swamped as a result and sank with the loss of all hands (Gibbons 158).

Ironclads were involved in many Civil War Battles that followed the Battle of Hampton Roads. The East coast of the Confederacy was very active with the blockade of southern ports. Union ships stopped Confederate blockade runners daily. These blockade runners carried cotton that was to be traded with European nations in exchange for military equipment and hard currency (Gibbons 152-157). Other engagements were much different, they mainly involved one Confederate ship against multiple Union ships. One of these better known engagements was the CSS Albermale saga. Union forces had taken control of the Albermale Sound area and were blockading it actively. The Confederates saw this area as a strategic staging area for blockade running. The Confederate Navy Department decided to build an ironclad to recapture this area. Albermale was a casemate ironclad built for shallow water combat. Due to the lack of proper shipbuilding facilities she was built in a cornfield using green timber and scrap iron. When she finally set sail on April 9, 1864 she arrived in the Albermale Sound and devastated the Union flotilla. She was destroyed by a daring torpedo raid led by Lieutenant William B. Cushing of the USN (Greene 176-183). The southern coast of the Confederacy was also an active area of combat. Blockade runners were very active in the southern coast areas and the Union commanders decided to

attack the main source of these blockade runners, New Orleans. Admiral David Farragut led the Union force in a daring blitz past the forts that guarded the entrance to the harbor on April 24, 1862. The Union forces took heavy casualties but succeeded in capturing the port (Greene 100-107). Farragut also led perhaps the best known naval action of the Civil War in the south at the Battle of Mobile Bay. This battle was the last major naval engagement in the south. Farragut designed this mission to eliminate the five Confederate ironclads that were rumored to be in Mobile Bay. The Union fleet was led by four ironclads, the Tecumseh and Manhattan, both single turret monitors, and the Winnebago and Chickasaw, double turret monitors. The ironclads were followed by 14 wooden ships. The ironclads led the way and the Tecumseh led them. As they were making their way through the minefield the Tecumseh turned and went straight after the CSS Tennessee as she was approaching the Tecumseh suddenly exploded and sank. Upon seeing this the crews of Farragut's ships became uneasy. Farragut then said perhaps the most famous quote of the war: " Damn the torpedos. Full speed ahead!" The Union emerged from this battle victorious (Donovan 134-143). The rivers in the west also saw much naval action. The Battles of Fort Donaldson and Island No. 10 are the best known of these. The largest of these was the Battle of Vicksburg (Donovan 80-92).

Nations around the world began producing ironclad warships after the Battle of Hampton Roads. European nations began producing more and more ironclads after the war. The British built many ironclad ships that were large ships of the line that had iron armor. The largest of these was the HMS Devastation, known as the world's first capital ship and the battleship

designs of the 20th century can be traced to this ship. The French were also involved in building ironclads, but they met with little success. The Russians also built many ironclads, mostly of the cruiser design. The Russians also produced monitor which were largely failures, including a class of circular monitors, the Admiral C o m p O b j yyyyyyyyyyyyyy U yyyyyyyyyyyyyy yyyyyyyyyyyyy yyyyyyyyyyyyy

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