The purpose of this thesis is to examine the attempt to build and maintain a Confederate naval squadron at Wilmington, North Carolina, during the Civil War, 1861-1865, tracing the evolution of Confederate naval policy at Wilmington. At Wilmington the Confederate navy's attempt to create a squadron for use in the city's defense was inextricably linked to the service's ability to build usable warships in the port city. Many factors influenced this process. The strengths and weaknesses of the Cape Fear industrial structure, material shortages, transportation and bureaucratic inefficiency, interservice relations, and the evolution of naval policy, all bore directly on the effort to build ships in Confederate Wilmington.

Several conclusions emerge from the study. Early indecision by the Navy Department resulted in poor planning for the Wilmington station. Flag Officer William F. Lynch played an active and significant role in Confederate shipbuilding and, in spite of his difficult personality, tried to speed the process. A thriving and heretofore unrecognized Wilmington industrial base played an important role in the construction process. Most important, the ultimate failure of naval construction at Wilmington altered the role of the navy in the region's defense, shifting its focus from water to land. In these respects, the Wilmington
squadron helps generate a more thorough understanding of the Confederate navy and the larger naval war.

This work was not meant to be an exhaustive account of the Confederate navy at Wilmington. It focuses on shipbuilding and its significance to the Wilmington naval squadron, paying particular attention to primary source material. This thesis does not emphasize the 1864 commerce raiding program, crew life, the Fort Fisher battles, or the establishment of the Fayetteville Naval Iron Works late in the war. These topics should provide fruitful avenues for further discussion in a forum beyond that of the masters thesis.
ON DUTY AT WILMINGTON:

THE CONFEDERATE NAVY ON THE CAPE FEAR RIVER

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of History

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Edwin L. Combs, III

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

The 13 April 1861 edition of the *Wilmington Daily Journal*, an ardent supporter of states rights and secession, enthusiastically reported the news from Charleston Harbor: "War!!! War!!! War!!! War!!! Hostilities Commenced! Exciting News!" For a week the editors had monitored the crisis in Charleston and had carefully related all of its particulars: the progress of negotiations between Confederate commissioners in Washington, D.C., and Secretary of State William Seward, the organization of a relief expedition in New York, Beauregard's ultimatum to Major Robert Anderson, and finally, the bombardment. The *Journal* recognized the significance of Fort Sumter and hoped that the events at Charleston would boost secession sentiments along the Cape Fear River and beyond. In these respects, the *Journal*’s hopes were realized. But in an unexpected twist of fate, the Fort Sumter crisis directly impacted the Cape Fear region and ultimately provided the foundations for a Confederate naval squadron at Wilmington.¹

Buried amid the *Journal*’s reports of preparations to relieve Fort Sumter was a small notice that the steam tug *Uncle Ben*, chartered in New York City for Gustavus Fox's expedition to Charleston, sailed south on 9 April. Rough weather pounded the expedition as it steamed for Fort Sumter and several vessels, including the *Uncle Ben* and the tug *Yankee*, put in at Hampton Roads to escape

gale force winds. Though conditions in the Atlantic were dangerous (the Yankee had already sustained damage to her rigging) both vessels took on coal and continued on to Charleston. On or about the fifteenth, heavy seas damaged the 163-ton Uncle Ben and forced her captain to put in at Wilmington for repairs. The captain, probably ignorant of recent events at Charleston, piloted his vessel upriver to Wilmington where he docked at the city wharf. The appearance of a Union vessel in the Cape Fear, a region charged with secession fever, aroused great suspicion and prompted local officials to act.²

Under orders from Governor John Ellis, the "Committee of Safety of the Town of Wilmington," a citizens group recently formed in the spirit of its Revolutionary predecessor, seized the Uncle Ben and imprisoned her captain and crew. Wilmington locals condemned the captain as "a spy . . . evidently a mean and malignant person," and interpreted his unaided ascent of the Cape Fear as evidence that too many Yankee captains would willingly pilot Union vessels up the river. The next morning local militia boarded the steamer, now in the service of North Carolina, and headed downriver. The mob descended on Forts Johnston and Caswell at Smithville and took possession of them for the state. The Uncle Ben's captain, "not from any notion that he deserved courtesy, or even life," was

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2. Ibid., 11 April 1861; Wilmington Journal, 9 May 1861; Fayetteville Observer, 25 April 1861; Wilmington shipbuilder James Cassidey rated the Uncle Ben at 163 tons. Cassidey, Citizens File, Record Group 109, National Archives (cited hereafter as Citizens File, RG 109).
released with his crew, but the state retained the little steamer and incorporated it into the North Carolina Navy.\textsuperscript{3}

As the state assumed control of Fort Macon, the Fayetteville Arsenal, and other Federal property within its borders, the Committee took one more step to secure the entrances to the Cape Fear. On 25 April the Committee hired the Wilmington Steam Tug Company to remove the lightship \textit{Frying Pan Shoals} from its station near the shoals that separated Old and New Inlets. The company towed the ship to James Cassidey's shipyard in Wilmington for repairs. The 125-ton screw steamer, formerly known as the \textit{Arctic}, was built at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1855. In 1859, after a short career with the Coast Survey, the navy removed the \textit{Arctic}'s machinery and fitted her out as a lightship. In April 1861, Cassidey hauled the ship on the ways and readied it for service. North Carolina reimbursed the Committee for its expenses and later turned the \textit{Arctic} over to the Confederate Navy, which used the vessel as a receiving ship and floating battery. By the end of April, North Carolina had inherited an unarmed and unimpressive two-ship squadron to defend the Cape Fear. Surprisingly, the \textit{Uncle Ben} and \textit{Arctic} remained the only naval vessels afloat on the Cape Fear for well over a year.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Wilmington Journal}, 9 May 1861; \textit{Uncle Ben}, Vessel Papers, Record Group 109, National Archives (cited hereafter as Vessel Papers, RG 109).
\textsuperscript{4} Wilmington Steam Tug Company, Citizens File, RG 109; Cassidey, Citizens File, \textit{ibid.}; Cassidey rated the \textit{Arctic} at 280 tons; Mooney, ed., \textit{Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships}, Vol. 1, 353.
The events of April 1861 had seemingly carried the war directly to Wilmington and the Cape Fear; yet naval development on the Cape Fear lagged noticeably after the initial burst of patriotic energy dissipated. North Carolina's ambiguous status contributed to the slowdown. The Old North State followed a cautious, even Unionist, course during the first wave of secession from December 1860 through February 1861. After refusing Lincoln's call for troops and taking possession of Federal property in the state, North Carolina, still officially in the Union, determined to provide for its own defense. Initially, civil and military authorities were not concerned for the port's safety. State officials considered the Cape Fear River, guarded by Forts Caswell and Johnston, secure from any invasion. Governor Ellis summarized the general belief that if the forts were manned by patriotic Carolinians "the power of the United States Navy is not sufficient to effect an entrance into any one of the harbors of the State." In addition, Wilmington had not yet assumed the great importance it would later achieve as a transportation hub and the Confederacy's busiest port. Attention focused on the unprotected barrier islands that separated the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds from Union invasion.\(^5\)

As laborers erected forts at Hatteras and Ocracoke Inlets, the state purchased several steamers and sent Captain William T. Muse, North Carolina Navy, to Norfolk to fit them out as gunboats. By August, Muse had sent four steamers, the *Winslow*, *Beaufort*, *Raleigh*, and *Ellis* through the Chesapeake and

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Albemarle Canal into Carolina waters. Each was mounted with one or two small
guns, generally 32 pounders from Gosport Navy Yard. The *Winslow* enjoyed a
brief career intercepting Union shipping off Cape Hatteras but none of the
"Mosquito Fleet" made formidable gunboats. Collectively the squadron could
only hope to provide transportation and perform picket duties. It is unlikely that
the state ever planned to send any of the steamers to Wilmington but so long as
the inlets along the Outer Banks remained in Confederate hands, the option
existed.⁶

Oddly, while North Carolina attempted to purchase steamers in Norfolk
and the sounds, it made no such effort on the Cape Fear. The river trade between
Wilmington and Fayetteville employed a number of vessels, many locally built.
Though none were ideal for use as naval vessels, many would have answered the
same purposes as those comprising the Mosquito Fleet. In May the *Journal*
suggested that the *Uncle Ben*, fitted out as a gunboat, would protect the river and
chase away Union blockaders: "Why don't the authorities fit out the Uncle Ben.
Naval men say that she would carry two howitzers aft and a long pivot gun
forward, and she runs like the devil. With a proper Commodore and crew, she
would keep off or capture such craft as the Huntsville." The state took no action.⁷

The *Journal* unwittingly answered its own question. There were no naval
authorities in Wilmington in the spring of 1861. The state, believing the water

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⁷ *Wilmington Journal*, 23 May 1861.
approaches to Wilmington secure, concentrated its meager naval force in the northern sounds. The state did not send a regular officer to take charge of the *Uncle Ben*; neither had the Confederate Navy sent an officer. There was no "proper Commodore and crew" to fit out and operate the steamer. From April to August 1861 the North Carolina Quartermaster's Department operated the steamer, presumably to transport men and material. The state retained ownership and paid bills for maintenance and repair. Apparently, the *Uncle Ben* remained in state service until October, after the rest of the North Carolina Navy was turned over to Confederate authorities.  

Rather than convert Cape Fear steamers into gunboats, or build new ones from scratch, the state employed Wilmington's shipbuilding facilities in military service. The Cassidey shipyard repaired a lighter for the Quartermaster's Department in May and repaired leaks on the *Uncle Ben* in June and July. Wilmington's other yard, owned by Benjamin Beery, built gun carriages for Fort Caswell. Wilmington's largest ironworks, Hart & Bailey, performed a variety of services on state account. The firm cast 24 pound canister rounds, ironwork for carriages, ordnance accouterments, and repaired the *Uncle Ben*'s boilers and engines. Amidst calls for more troops and field guns to meet an invasion, military preparations continued briskly on the lower Cape Fear while naval matters went unattended.  

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In August 1861 the Confederate Navy assumed control of the North Carolina Navy, such as it was. Though naval administration in the state should have rested with the Confederate government after North Carolina's secession from the Union on 10 May, organizational problems slowed the transfer of authority. Just as North Carolina struggled to organize its forces amid an atmosphere of crisis early in the war, Confederate Navy Secretary Stephen R. Mallory hurriedly shaped his department under trying circumstances. The Confederacy's provisional Congress established the Navy Department on 21 February 1861, only two months before war began, but the department possessed few of the resources needed to create a navy. As Mallory initiated attempts to build and purchase warships abroad, he also organized the odd assortments of converted gunboats inherited from seceded states. The movement of the Confederate government from Montgomery to Richmond, begun in late May, further complicated an already confusing business. Undoubtedly this confusion delayed the transfer of state vessels to the Confederate Navy and the organization of North Carolina waters into a naval command.\(^\text{10}\)

Early in August the navy created a command known as the Naval Defences of Virginia and North Carolina, embracing the waters south of Norfolk to Wilmington. Captain Samuel Barron took charge as flag officer and set up headquarters at New Bern. With an administrative unit in place, naval matters on the Cape Fear and in the sounds assumed a more organized form. Barron

\(^{10}\) For details on the formation of the Confederate Navy, see William N. Still, *Confederate Shipbuilding* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), 3-5.
promised to "remain here until I get this score organized" but the progress was slow. Union forces captured Barron on 29 August at Hatteras Island, thereby frustrating his plans for the navy in North Carolina. The navy quickly replaced Barron with Captain William F. Lynch. During Lynch's tenure as flag officer the navy finally established an official presence at Wilmington. In October William Muse, now a commander in the Confederate States Navy, arrived in Wilmington to take charge of the Uncle Ben. About the time of Muse's arrival, the steamer was armed as a gunboat. After seven months of war, only one Confederate vessel stood guard over the port of Wilmington.\textsuperscript{11}

For the next year, Muse served as the ranking naval officer on the Cape Fear. Born in 1812 near Edenton, Muse was orphaned at age fifteen. His surviving relatives, unable to provide for his education, encouraged him to enter the navy. Several prominent townsmen, including former Supreme Court Justice James Iredell, pressed for his appointment as a midshipman, citing his pleasant demeanor and abilities as a student. One supporter found young Muse "very well qualified for admission into the Navy," adding, "I trust [he] will become an ornament to that profession which he seems so anxious to embrace." The teenager got his appointment in 1828 and eventually rose to the rank of commander in an otherwise uneventful career. Muse was well-liked and made many friends in the "Old Navy," among them Catesby ap. R. Jones and John

\textsuperscript{11} Barron to P. A. Murphy, 20 August 1861, Confederate Navy Area File 7, Record Group 45, National Archives (cited hereafter as Confederate Navy Area File, RG 45); Barron to C.ap.R. Jones, 23 August 1861, ibid; Minor to Sir, 4 September 1861, ibid.
Newland Maffitt, who characterized him as "that old and valued friend," a gentleman "of the highest order of mind." But as a Confederate officer in Wilmington, the commander earned a reputation as an alcoholic. One crewman noted: "He is a very kind old man, but the troubles of this war bearing upon his mind I suppose gets him to drinking." The same sailor later remembered, "Old Captain Muse was a fine old man but he never had brains or anything of the kind on his ship." 12

Throughout the war Muse remained loyal to his native state and criticized Mallory's administrative decisions when he felt that they sacrificed North Carolina's interests. Muse was dissatisfied with the August transfer of North Carolina naval vessels and personnel to the Confederate Navy, citing the cases of two prominent Carolina officers who were not accepted. He wrote: "The State ought to exhaust its influence in endeavoring to get the C.S. to receive them." Muse later charged that Mallory deliberately refused appointments to North Carolina natives though he knew they were underrepresented in the navy. The commander considered the secretary's actions "a state affront" and urged Governor Zebulon Vance to "insist on her [North Carolina's] native sons receiving the appointments to office in the Army and Navy that are due to the State . . . there will be none so true to her as those to the 'Manner born.'" Muse took a

12. James Iredell to Samual Southard, 3 March 1827, ZB File, Naval Historical Center (cited hereafter as ZB File); N. Bruser to Southard, 30 May 1828, ibid.; Jos. Saunders to Southard, 30 May 1828, ibid.; Charlie to Sis, 16 March 1864, 2 October 1864, Charles Smith Peek Papers, from the private collection of Charles V. Peery, Charleston, South Carolina (cited hereafter as Peek Papers); Maffitt to George Davis, 17 August, 1874, George Davis Papers, Duke University Library.
special interest in the Albemarle region and frequently urged the secretary to expand the navy's role in North Carolina's defense.\textsuperscript{13}

Muse's appointment, a clear step toward the development of a proper naval establishment at Wilmington, did not create a coherent organization overnight. Muse did not have a paymaster to settle accounts and keep records; in fact, the entire North Carolina squadron lacked a paymaster and operated on credit from September through December 1861. With no officer authorized to accept and disburse funds from the Treasury Department, commanding officers paid for fuel, repairs, and provisions on an individual basis, keeping no official ledger for the squadron as a whole. The result was an accounting nightmare that confused Richmond auditors for years. In Wilmington Muse issued vouchers for goods and services payable by the navy at some future date. Owing to the inefficiency of this arrangement, early records for the Wilmington station are scattered and sketchy.\textsuperscript{14}

After repeated requests by Flag Officer Lynch the navy sent Paymaster George Ritchie to North Carolina in December 1861. Ritchie set about the frustrating task of organizing the squadron's finances. In the face of an audit, he reported: "Owing to the confusion existing in the affairs of this squadron it will not be possible for me to make any regular returns." Lynch quickly ordered Ritchie to Wilmington "to settle the bills against the Government in the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[Muse to Parks, 27 August 1861, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45; Muse to Vance, 14 November 1863, Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina State Archives (cited hereafter as Vance Papers).]
\item[Lynch to Baker, 6 February 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45.]
\end{enumerate}
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department of the Navy." The arrival of an officer authorized to settle navy accounts in Wilmington must have relieved Muse, but it did not address the defects of naval organization on the Cape Fear. Isolated from the rest of the squadron, the Wilmington station needed its own distinct administration. Ideally, the Wilmington station should have comprised a separate naval command.  

In October the navy began building a fleet of wooden gunboats as part of a program emphasizing harbor defense. In North Carolina the gunboat program again focused on the Albemarle and Pamlico regions. At Washington the navy contracted with Myers and Co. and Ritch and Farrow for three 150-foot gunboats. At Elizabeth City the department initially contracted for one 130-foot boat from Gilbert Elliott, ordering two smaller gunboats in January 1862. Strangely, Wilmington shipbuilders remained idle, performing odd jobs for the army. The navy apparently shared the widely held belief that Forts Caswell and Johnston, along with new earthen fortifications being built at New Inlet, were sufficient to deter a Union naval assault. The Uncle Ben remained the navy's sole representative on the Cape Fear. Wilmington, quickly developing as a blockade running center, was also the only major Confederate port untouched by the navy's building program. The mistake would diminish the navy's ability to defend the Cape Fear later in the war.  

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15. Ritchie to Baker, 8 January 1862, ibid.; Lynch to Ritchie, 18 December 1861, ibid.  
16. For information on the Confederate gunboat program, see Robert Holcombe, "The Confederate Navy's 1861 Gunboat Program," (paper in possession of author).
Early in 1862 military and naval defeats in the North Carolina sounds and in Virginia forced changes in the structure of the naval command in North Carolina and compelled the navy to develop a more effective squadron on the Cape Fear. In late August Union forces captured Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands, closing the Outer Banks inlets to Confederate shipping and providing a base for future operations. Lynch carefully monitored Union movements, powerless to stop an invasion should it occur. In February a Union expedition commanded by Major General Ambrose Burnside entered the sounds and captured Roanoke Island. Federal gunboats destroyed Lynch's Mosquito Fleet at Elizabeth City on 10 February; Union forces quickly occupied Edenton, Plymouth, Washington, Beaufort, New Bern and the surrounding waters. All of the gunboats under construction at Elizabeth City and Washington were destroyed to prevent capture. In May Confederate forces abandoned Norfolk and the Gosport Navy Yard, surrendering the waterways north of Elizabeth City. The command formerly known as the Naval Defenses of Virginia and North Carolina was all but destroyed. Only the Cape Fear River, defended by the *Uncle Ben* and her twenty-nine man crew, remained in Confederate hands.\(^{17}\)

Wilmington residents, alarmed by the defeats in the sounds, voiced their concerns for the city's safety and developed their own plan for its defense. In the 27 March edition of the *Daily Journal* an editorial called for the construction of an ironclad ram to defend the Cape Fear River. Cape Fear locals, like many

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\(^{17}\) Wilmington Station Payroll, 1861, RG 45.
observers North and South, were impressed by the performance of the C.S.S. 
*Virginia* in its engagements with the Union fleet at Hampton Roads. With a 
Union noose tightening around the Carolina coast, the *Virginia* seemed to offer a 
foolproof plan for protection. Citing the idea as "one of the most pressing 
necessities of the day, in connection with harbor defense," the *Journal* called for 
"immediate and efficient action." The *Journal* proposed that the Committee of 
Safety appoint a special "Executive Committee" to collect funds and "if possible, 
with the State and Confederate authorities, push forward the construction and 
equipment of the most efficient vessel, in the shortest possible space of time."
Well aware of the *Virginia's* great draft the *Journal* outlined a perceptive 
adaptation of the *Virginia* design: "While of course a vessel for our purposes 
ought not to draw more than half that much water if even that, and ought to be in 
everything but power of resistance far smaller that the 'Colossus of the Roads.'
No matter how rough or ugly she looks. She don't want more than two guns, but 
they must be rousers."  

Ram fever caught on quickly. An emergency meeting of the Safety 
Committee appointed a three-man "Special Committee" chaired by William A. 
Wright to accept money for the "Gunboat Fund." The special committee, now 
responsible for "all matters connected with the construction of one or more iron 
clad gun-boats," opened an account at the Wilmington branch of the Bank of the 
Cape Fear and solicited donations. Civilians and military personnel tendered

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donations as a sense of patriotism swept over the Cape Fear region. A local planter, short on cash, reminded his fellow citizens that "other articles, to be converted into money" were equally acceptable: "I have no money, but you may put me down for ten bales of cotton." North Carolina women made a particular effort to raise money. The "Ladies Association for the Defence of North Carolina" called attention to the contributions of Southern women in other states: "Shall we, the Ladies of North Carolina, remain insensible to the dangers of our beloved State . . . . Let us at once arise and pour in our freewill offerings." Amid a sense of crisis the private effort to build "one or more" ironclad steamers gathered steam in April 1862. North Carolina residents no longer trusted their forts to hold back the Yankee invaders.19

The pressing need for more effective naval defenses on the Cape Fear also attracted the attention of the Confederate Navy. Just as the success of the Virginia at Hampton Roads focused the public mind on the potential of ironclad warships so, too, did Secretary Mallory grasp the importance of the battle. Confederate naval policy quickly shifted in the spring of 1862. The department virtually halted the construction of wooden gunboats and began building a fleet of home-built ironclads. In March, after eleven months of war, the navy took the first steps toward the construction of a naval squadron on the Cape Fear. Two weeks after the battle of Hampton Roads Mallory sent "instructions relative to gunboats" to Commander Muse. These instructions predated the formation of the gunboat

19. Ibid., 27 March 1862, 3 April 1862, 10 April 1862, 17 April 1862.
committee and probably pertained to ironclad construction, since on 3 April, the
*Journal* informed citizens contributing to the gunboat fund that the "whole matter
has been undertaken by the Confederate government." In May, Wilmington
shipbuilders began collecting materials for two ironclad rams.\(^{20}\)

The *Journal's* concept of a "most efficient vessel" suitable for use on the
Cape Fear River was not far off the mark. The navy ordered two *Richmond*-class
ironclads built in Wilmington, the *North Carolina* at the Beery yard, and the
*Raleigh* at the Cassidey yard. The *Richmond* ironclads were designed by naval
constructor John L. Porter, using plans originally conceived in 1846. Eventually,
Confederate shipbuilders completed six *Richmond* vessels in Richmond,
Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah during the war.

Though plans for the Wilmington ironclads have not been located,
surviving drawings for the C.S.S. *Savannah* provide an overview of the
*Richmond*-class' characteristics. The vessels had a length of 150 feet between
perpendiculars and an overall length of 174 feet. Atop the hull, a 105 foot
wooden casemate, built 20 inches thick, angled at 35 degrees, housed a four-gun
battery. Two inches of iron plating protected the forward and aft decks, while
four inches covered the casemate. Forward, a pointed bow produced a formidable
ram; at the stern, a similarly shaped overhang sheltered the propeller and rudder.

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With a projected draft of thirteen feet, the ironclads were to be powered by two engines attached to a single propeller shaft. Two such vessels afloat on the Cape Fear promised to provide a defensive commitment the Uncle Ben could not hope to match.  

The Richmond design, however, was not altogether suited to the particular needs of a Cape Fear squadron. Richmond vessels, with a strong battery and integrated ram, promised formidable resistance to any Union vessels that might pass the forts and enter the river, but the thirteen-foot draft was too deep for the Cape Fear. After commissioning, the Raleigh and North Carolina both experienced significant problems navigating the shoals along the lower Cape Fear. The Journal's suggestion that the ironclads be armed with only two guns would have significantly reduced the draft of both vessels though it would have compromised their firepower. Simpler shallow draft designs introduced later in the war would have better served the navy's needs.  

The decision to build a squadron on the Cape Fear River came inexplicably late. By the close of 1861 the naval construction (mostly wooden gunboats) had begun along every major Confederate waterway except the Cape Fear. Neither did the navy purchase existing steamers for conversion into gunboats. The lack of initiative casts some doubt on Mallory's judgment as navy

21. For technical details on Richmond-class ironclads, see Robert Holcombe, "The Evolution of Confederate Ironclad Design," M.A. thesis, East Carolina University, 1993, 62-88. The exact arrangement under which the North Carolina and Raleigh were built is unknown; contracts for either vessel are not known to exist.
secretary. Like many military authorities, he probably placed too much reliance
on land based forts to deter and defeat a naval attack. Certainly Mallory
considered the Carolina sounds more important waterways in 1861, as evidenced
by his decision to build six gunboats at Elizabeth City and Washington.
Surviving records do not indicate that Barron, Lynch, or Muse ever suggested that
the navy build vessels on the Cape Fear before April 1862. Only after the fall of
the Albemarle and Pamlico regions did the navy shift construction to Wilmington.

Progress on the new ironclads was slow. Though Muse received
"instructions" from Mallory in late March, construction did not begin
immediately. The Journal feared that the private effort to build one or more
ironclads might interfere with the government's plans. Worried about the
competition for labor and materials, the paper admitted: "These we know are
limited. The effort to construct an iron-clad boat separate and independent of the
government would only have the effect of dividing the resources available in this
section and delaying and confusing the operations of the government." In mid-
April the Journal stopped soliciting donations to the gunboat fund. Negotiations
between the government and Wilmington shipbuilders may have delayed
construction throughout April. In May the Beery yard finally began collecting
materials for use on the North Carolina, but actual construction on both vessels
probably did not begin until June. Two crucial months had passed with little
progress. The delay would prove significant in the fall when forces beyond the navy's control retarded ship construction at Wilmington.\textsuperscript{23}

Though the shipbuilding program initiated at Wilmington in the spring of 1862 indicated recognition of the Cape Fear's strategic importance to the Confederacy, the navy did not remedy the faulty command structure instituted in August 1861. After the destruction of the North Carolina squadron at Elizabeth City, Flag Officer Lynch was reassigned to a command in the West. Muse remained the ranking officer in Wilmington, commanding the only remnant of the squadron. Though Muse effectively administered the Wilmington station as a separate command, as he had since October 1861, the navy did not officially designate the Wilmington station as such or assign a paymaster to regulate navy accounts; the same omission produced chaos in the North Carolina squadron during its brief existence (auditors dutifully scrutinized the squadron's accounts in 1864, two years after its destruction). Nor did the department assign officers to take charge of the Wilmington ironclads and oversee their construction. The navy saddled Muse with new responsibilities without providing the proper means to execute them.\textsuperscript{24}

In mid-summer 1862 Muse openly criticized Secretary Mallory for the navy's inaction in North Carolina. Arguing that the navy had not acted soon enough to prevent the capture of the Albemarle and Pamlico regions, Muse

\textsuperscript{23} *Wilmington Journal*, 3 April 1862; Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, Citizens File, RG 109.
\textsuperscript{24} Lynch to Baker, 6 February 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45.
proposed that the secretary build an ironclad on the Roanoke River. Convinced that the recovery of the sounds was an issue of "great importance," the commander regretted "that the Genl. Govt is not equally sensible of its importance or if sensible of it, dont take some proper measures to accomplish it." Mallory agreed with Muse but "for reasons which seemed good to him," hesitated. In August, when Mallory doubted the feasibility of shipbuilding on the Roanoke, Muse again advanced the idea. Finally Mallory agreed to the proposal, authorizing the construction of the ironclad Albemarle. Muse later complained that the government did not push construction forcefully; Mallory's months of indecision had cost the Confederacy a golden opportunity to recover eastern North Carolina, thereby freeing troops for other theaters of operations. In May 1863, Muse noted, "We have no boat yet." 25

Mallory's decision to build an ironclad on the Roanoke was only part of a larger program for eastern North Carolina, a program which ultimately wrought changes in the command structure on the Cape Fear and elsewhere in the state. The navy let contracts for two additional ironclads, one to be built on the Neuse River near Kinston and the other at Tarboro on the Tar River. The contracts called for the hulls to be built by individual contractors and turned over to the navy for completion. Muse, the ranking naval officer stationed in eastern North Carolina, already administering a naval station and overseeing the construction of two ironclads in Wilmington, could not possibly hope to direct work on three

25. Muse to Vance, 8 May 1863, Vance Papers.
additional boats at three different locations. Naval officers would have to be assigned to each vessel at some point in the near future. Ideally, a high ranking officer would coordinate work on all of the vessels, distribute materials and labor, and recruit men to crew the new ironclads.\textsuperscript{26}

In Wilmington, work on the \textit{Raleigh} and \textit{North Carolina} proceeded slowly. Wilmington shipyards faced the same difficulties as other yards around the Confederacy, notably material shortages, the lack of labor, and an inadequate transportation network. In August, however, an additional problem crippled the shipyards just as construction got underway. On the sixth the blockade runner \textit{Kate} arrived from Nassau, bringing yellow fever with it. By September an epidemic that killed seven hundred people raged through the city. Citizens panicked and fled inland. Carpenters working on the \textit{Raleigh} and \textit{North Carolina} joined the exodus and by October construction had all but halted. Military authorities shifted troops away from the city and waited for the crisis to subside. Muse moved the naval office north to Warsaw, a small town on the Wilmington \& Weldon Railroad. Though the epidemic ended in November, carpenters did not return to the city until January, adding months to the delay. The fever significantly slowed the shipbuilding program, an effort already behind schedule.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} For information on the navy contracts, see correspondence between the Navy Department and Martin \& Elliott, 10 October 1862, William Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection; also, Still, \textit{Confederate Shipbuilding}.

Late in the year the tardy pace of ship construction at Wilmington became a source of censure for the navy. Again, discontent within the ranks fueled the criticism. Lieutenant John Julius Guthrie, a native North Carolinian embittered by his lackluster assignment to the receiving ship *Arctic*, pointed to the slow rate of progress at Wilmington and suggested that additional officers be appointed to oversee construction. In a September letter to Governor Zebulon B. Vance, Guthrie echoed Muse's complaints that the navy refused to appoint North Carolina officers and urged the governor to press the issue. At Guthrie's behest, Brigadier General Gabriel Rains, commanding the military District of the Cape Fear, also wrote to Mallory "inviting his attention to the condition of the defenses in this locality, in which both branches of the military service are equally intrusted."

Armed with a letter from Vance, Guthrie appeared at the Navy Department in Richmond, hoping to be assigned to one of the Wilmington ironclads still under construction. The lieutenant's scheme angered the secretary, who "conseeded a few moments, said he was busy, and ... seemed quite uncourteous." Disgusted and disappointed, Guthrie returned to the *Arctic*, expecting "nothing creditable from his [Mallory's] rules of equity." Though Guthrie failed to get a more respectable assignment, his campaign exposed deficiencies at Wilmington that Mallory could not ignore.²⁸

North Carolina required a more effective command system to replace the one shattered in February 1862. In Wilmington, Muse barely kept up with the

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²⁸. Guthrie to Vance, 16 September 1862, Vance Papers; Guthrie to Vance, 1 December 1862, ZB File.
administration of his station. Audits revealed that Muse's first, second, and third quarter accounts for 1862 were out of balance. The commander could not administer his own station and also direct new construction underway on the rivers north of Wilmington. Mallory created a new command, the Naval Defenses of North Carolina, stretching from the Roanoke River to the Cape Fear and sent an officer of rank to assume command as flag officer. In November the secretary chose Captain William F. Lynch, the former commander of the Mosquito Fleet, to administer the new command.29

The navy's performance on the Cape Fear River had been unimpressive during the first eighteen months of war. Naval organization, wholly lacking from April to October 1861, developed slowly owing to the disaster in the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds and indecision in Richmond. William Muse, an officer with limited administrative experience, a reputation for drinking, and a critical assessment of Mallory's leadership, was probably not the best choice to command a naval station. Undoubtedly the secretary expected William Lynch to bring order to the Cape Fear after eighteen months of neglect.

29. Comptroller and Auditors Reports, Confederate Navy Subject File, Record Group 45, National Archives (cited hereafter as Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45).
Chapter 2

Secretary Mallory's decision to implement a new command in eastern North Carolina was sound. His choice for flag officer, however, proved less prudent. While Captain William Francis Lynch, a forty-year veteran of naval service, had the experience and drive needed to build and administer a squadron on the Cape Fear, he was also a controversial figure with a history of personal conflict. Though Lynch served the navy with an unwavering sense of patriotism, his running feuds with civil and military officials brought embarrassment to the service and contributed to his removal. For two years Lynch directed the naval effort at Wilmington and the station's fortunes rose and fell with him.

Lynch was a complex personality who inspired admiration and animosity all at once. His admirers viewed him as a man of honor and integrity and Mallory supported him as an "an intelligent, faithful, zealous, and energetic Officer." The commodore's secretary thought him possessed of "an excellent heart, full of kindness and discretion." The captain maintained high moral standards and especially abhorred drinking. Once a devout Catholic, Lynch became an Episcopalian so he could remarry. He enjoyed good company and socialized in gentlemanly fashion, occasionally entertaining guests on board his vessels. For sport the captain and several other officers ran their dogs in rat hunts inside Wilmington warehouses; an observer noted that "the old Commodore goes into the game with as much vein as though he were leading a line-of-battle ship into action." Recognized as an accomplished author, Lynch felt equally comfortable
discussing literature or naval affairs. To his credit, Lynch exhibited the zeal and
energy Mallory attributed to him as he performed his official duties.¹

There was, however, a disagreeable side to the captain. Lynch's prickly
demeanor and insistence on proper protocol inspired conflict. Even Lynch's
secretary admitted he was prone to "whims, vageries, and cratchets." An
uncompromising patriot, he fervently protected the reputation of the navy, sensing
insults to it where none were intended. His aggressive nature caused conflicts that
might have been avoided with a more subtle approach. The captain frequently
applied his literary talents in the form of biting letters, proffering unsolicited
criticisms of other officers. Lynch jealously guarded his authority and resisted
any encroachment, real or perceived, on it. These negative traits poisoned several
official relationships vital to the efficient performance of the captain's duties and,
ultimately, compromised his leadership in North Carolina.²

Lynch's contemporaries (regardless of their personal feelings toward him)
respected his service record and agreed that he was one of the most experienced
officers in the Southern navy. As a career officer in the "Old Navy" Lynch rose
from the rank of midshipman to that of captain, serving in varied capacities at
stations around the world. Lynch gained a wealth of practical experience on
interdictions against West Indian pirates, in command of steam and sail vessels, in

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¹ Elliott to Vance, 27 January 1864, Vance Papers; Jimmy to Katie, 16 December
1863, 10 February 1864, James Ryder Randall Papers, Southern Historical Collection
(cited hereafter as Randall Papers); Rochelle to Tucker, 30 January 1865, O.R.N., Ser. 1,
Vol. 7.
² Jimmy to Katie, 21 May 1864, Randall Papers.
charge of special expeditions, and as a flag officer. More importantly, Lynch
developed a personal regard for and a special devotion to the naval service. The
captain's experience and attitudes heavily influenced his decisions as flag officer
of the Wilmington station.

Injuries, illness, and family crises marred Lynch's early career and retarded
his professional development. Lynch first saw duty on board the *U.S.S. Congress*
following his appointment as a midshipman in 1819. The young middy severely
injured an ankle while launching the ship's cutter and the effects of the injury
persisted for years. The department graciously accommodated Lynch, providing
leaves and furloughs as he sought effective medical treatment throughout the
1820s. In June 1825 the navy granted Lynch two months leave for an operation
intended to repair the damage sustained in the accident. The months, however,
turned to years as the officer sought relief in New York, Philadelphia, and France.
Lynch did not report for duty again until 1828 when he appeared at the Brooklyn
Navy Yard to take the midshipman examination. A bout with cholera and an eye
ailment interrupted Lynch's career in the 1830s. More devastating were the deaths
of two brothers in 1843. Lynch took leave to care for their families before
returning to active duty later in the year.³

Though circumstances beyond Lynch's control interfered in a seemingly
endless train of mishaps, the young officer advanced his rank, earned letters of
commendation, and investigated new technologies. Lynch passed the

³ ZB File.
midshipman examination and was commissioned a lieutenant from 17 May 1828. In the 1830s he travelled to England to study steam technology, served aboard the steamer *Fulton*, and commanded the steamer *Poinsett*. The exposure to steam warfare must have been useful during the Civil War when Lynch was involved in the construction and operations of steamers.⁴

Lynch also exhibited an intense devotion to the service. In several letters to the department the lieutenant expressed his gratitude for its generosity and his willingness to resign if his health problems should prove too burdensome. Lynch placed the interests of the service above his own when the two were not compatible. His letters also reveal a sense of bitterness, yet to blossom, at the country's unwillingness to provide for the navy's needs. In an 1845 letter to former Secretary of the Navy James Mason, the lieutenant criticized the unrewarding relationship between the public and the navy as he praised Mason's performance as secretary: "... the Navy, like a generous steed, long ill cared for, or badly ridden, will ever gratefully remember the voice that was attuned in sympathy with its wants ...." Lynch carried his conviction that the navy was an unappreciated stepchild of the public into the Civil War where it affected his judgment as a flag officer.⁵

In 1847, the lieutenant's career took a turn for the better. Bored with patrol duty off Vera Cruz during the Mexican War, Lynch proposed an expedition to explore and map the Dead Sea and its tributary, the Jordan River. The

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⁴. Ibid.
⁵. Lynch to Mason, 12 May 1845, Mason Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.
department consented and ordered Lynch to New York where he fitted out the expedition. Sailing from the United States on board the storeship *Supply* in late November, the expedition arrived in the Mediterranean and proceeded overland to the inland sea with two specially-built small boats. The expedition produced an accurate chart of the Dead Sea, conclusively established the fact that the sea lay some 1300 feet below the Mediterranean, and was applauded as a great success. Lynch published a lengthy account of his endeavor, entitled *Narrative of the United States' Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea*. The book, well-received and printed through several editions, brought Lynch personal recognition as an author, explorer, and naval officer. The navy rewarded him with a promotion to commander in 1849 and a commission as captain in 1850. Bouyed by the recognition and praise, Lynch proposed new expeditions to explore South America, Antarctica, and western Africa. The navy approved only the Africa expedition; it was aborted when Lynch reported ill from Liberia.  

In 1853 the navy sent Lynch to the Brazil squadron where he commanded the U.S.S. *Germantown*. One year later, the captain's involvement in a dispute between British authorities and American merchants at the Falkland Islands almost precipitated an international incident. In March 1854 Lynch brought the *Germantown* to the islands after two American captains had been arrested for poaching. Finding the American vessels seized by H. B. M. Sloop *Express* at the direction of the colonial governor, Lynch sent a accusatory communication to the

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governor, charging him with "a gross violation of the Law of Nations." Lynch sent officers and men to retake the impounded ships and anchored them under his guns, warning the Royal Navy to stay clear. After days of abusive exchanges, in which both parties threatened the use of force, the Americans were released with minor fines and sailed for home.7

In the face of much disrespect and adversity, Lynch had successfully thwarted a British effort to interrupt American commerce in the south Atlantic. The United States commercial agent for the Falklands heaped praise on Lynch, "a man of more than ordinary command." The agent wrote to Lynch's commanding officer: "Capt'n L. was cool and collected... yet forcible and impressive... You surely could not have selected a more competent person for this occasion." The British government requested an apology for the captain's actions but the State Department never complied. The affair demonstrated Lynch's aggressive nature and foreshadowed a similar incident which would take place at Wilmington in 1864. Lynch returned to the United States in 1857 and waited for a new assignment.8

Lynch resigned from the United States Navy on 21 April 1861, four days after his native state of Virginia seceded from the Union. The unemployed captain offered his services to his native state, then organizing an army and navy

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7. Lynch to Governor Rennie, 7 March 1854, Letter Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanders of Squadrons, Brazil, Record Group 45, National Archives; for Lynch's official report, see Lynch to W. D. Salter, 31 March 1854, ibid.
of its own. Virginia quickly accepted Lynch's services and appointed him captain in the Virginia State Navy. As commander of the Naval Defenses of the Potomac River, Lynch ordered shore batteries built near the junction of Aquia Creek and the Potomac, cutting Washington, D.C., from the Potomac. Late in May Union vessels tested the Confederate blockade and Captain Lynch became one of the first Confederate naval officers to see combat in the Civil War.9

Lynch's performance in the 31 May and 1 June engagement at Aquia Creek was admirable, but his reaction to the fight was more significant. As Union gunboats exchanged fire with the batteries Lynch stood boldly atop the parapet in the midst of bursting shells. The conspicuous demonstration of bravery impressed one Union officer who noted that Lynch "held his post, glass in hand, on the ramparts, against all the urgency of his men to quit a post made desperately hazardous by the shot and shell falling thickly and exploding about him." After the Union gunboats withdrew, Confederate journalists touted the minor action as a great victory, but the battle was not quite over yet. Lynch took to the papers to defend Southern honor after a Union officer questioned the bravery of his volunteer gun crews. Responding to the "slanderous assertion," Lynch prepared a letter which carefully credited each individual unit involved in the fight and offered it for publication in the Fredericksburg News. The incident was the first

9. ZB File.
of several which demonstrated the captain's sensitivity to any insult that might tarnish the honor of the Southern navy and his willingness to protect its image.  

Lynch's tenure as commander of the North Carolina squadron from August 1861 to February 1862 revealed much about his ability to function as a flag officer and was similar in many respects to his command of the Wilmington station. In North Carolina Lynch assumed greater responsibilities and oversaw matters relating to naval construction and procurement, recruiting and training, ordnance and supply, along with the routine paperwork generated by the administration of a naval station. These functions, already made difficult by a general lack of resources, the proximity of the enemy, and a nascent administrative structure, sometimes caused friction between the navy and the army. Lynch advanced the navy's interests aggressively, alienating the local military commander, Brigadier General Henry A. Wise, a political general from Virginia. The poor interservice relationship established between Lynch and Wise marked the beginning of a pattern that would characterize Lynch's Confederate career and eventually impact the naval effort on the Cape Fear.

Early conflict between Lynch and Wise centered around Lynch's efforts to purchase local steamers for conversion into gunboats. The navy let contracts for the Washington and Elizabeth City gunboats in October and January after Lynch's (and the enemy's) arrival. Faced with an immediate need for vessels, the commodore turned to procurement as a stop-gap measure, the fastest means of

10. For official reports on the Aquia engagements see O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol. 4; Ward to Fox, 11 June 1861; ibid; Lynch to Sir, 9 June 1861, ibid.
assembling a defense fleet until the gunboats became serviceable. Under Lynch's direction, navy agents purchased available steamers for use as gunboats and transports. The incorporation of local vessels into naval service, however, reduced the number of vessels available for shipping just as the war increased the demand for it. The army also purchased ships for its own transportation needs, competing with the navy for a limited pool of vessels. The ensuing conflict was inevitable, but neither Lynch nor Wise displayed the tact and congeniality necessary to retain harmonious interservice relations.11

Lynch became aggravated after the navy lost a bid to the Quartermaster's Department for the steamer Kakakee late in 1861. The commodore faulted the army for a dishonest deal and later wrote: "we [the navy] were treated unkindly in the matter of the Kakakee, though I feel no disposition to retaliate." Later the flag officer seized the tug Powhatan and purchased it for $12,000 though its owner already claimed to have a conditional agreement for purchase by the army. Lynch claimed that the owner had tricked him and that the vessel was not under any binding contract. Wise, who believed that the navy's Mosquito Fleet would better serve the region in its pre-war capacity, charged that Lynch "said he had been so badly treated by Quartermaster Johnston in respect to another steamer [Kakakee] . . . that he was determined to have the Powhatan, whether the bargain by him for her was legally binding or not." Lynch denied the allegation, stating: "I do not

11. Lynch, 23 April 1862, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45; CSN to Hyman Darrey & Co., 20 September 1861, ibid.; CSN to Marshall Parks, 30 September 1861, ibid.; Lynch to W. Parker, 31 December 1861, ibid; Lynch, 13 October 1861, ibid; Lynch to Cooke, 23 September 1861, ibid.
think the claim of the Army as good as our own." Lynch and Wise transformed an unavoidable competition for limited transportation resources into a personal feud. The incident was one of several that generated bitterness between the two officers.12

Details surrounding the command of a "floating battery" at Roanoke Island generated additional tension. In September 1861 Lynch purchased two barges for use as floating batteries at Roanoke Island. Though the navy fitted out the barges and positioned them at the southern end of the island, it did not have the crews to work the battery. Wise provided an untrained volunteer artillery company to man the guns and asked Lynch to detail an officer for their instruction. Lynch detailed a midshipman to drill the recruits, and for a while the arrangement worked satisfactorily. But in January 1862 a command problem arose when the battery commander, an army captain, refused to give the midshipman the keys to the powder magazine. Both officers appealed to their superiors, but Lynch and Wise could not reach an amicable solution.13

Lynch claimed the battery as part of his command, purchased and fitted out under his authority, and insisted that the midshipman command the battery and the men. Wise professed his desire "to cooperate . . . in the way to insure the most efficient military and naval service" and ordered that the captain yield

command of his company to the midshipman "during such hours of the day as the men may be under drill." But Wise would not bend on the larger issue of command. He wrote: "If you claim the command of this battery as a naval battery, I yield it at once. If it is a military battery, it must be under military command." In a statement that revealed the limits of Wise's cooperative spirit, he recalled: "I offered to give the battery up to him wholly, but said I must remove the company of infantry from the battery rather than have a midshipman of the Navy put in command of a captain of the Army." With no men to man the guns, Lynch backed down. Wise viewed the incident as a simple matter of command but Lynch sensed an affront to the navy, requiring an appropriate response.14

The response came in the form of a blistering letter to Secretary Mallory, criticizing Wise's leadership abilities and his arrangements for the defense of Roanoke Island. The captain claimed that Wise's men, "so devoid of energy . . . incapable of determined and long-continued resistance," would not fight. Lynch also condemned the general's defensive positions at Nags Head, predicting that a single gunboat could rout them. Lynch also noted that Wise, who was then in Virginia, could not possibly direct the defense in absentia. He wrote: "Should General Wise be in Richmond, you can not exert your great influence more patriotically than by urging him to come here at once, or at least to send some energetic officer of rank to take command." Significantly, the captain offered his assessment only "to protect, in a very probable event, the reputation of the Navy."

Lynch's covert attack, mailed on 22 January, reached Richmond where it "excited the deepest solicitude of the President" and the secretary of war. On 3 February Wise's superior officer, Major General Benjamin Huger, ordered Wise to "remedy the deficiencies . . . suggested by Captain Lynch." Lynch's letter, generating a swift response from Richmond, had seemingly vindicated the navy's honor.¹⁵

Lynch's denunciation of Wise, and of the army itself, shattered any remaining spirit of cooperation between the two officers just as a Union flotilla advanced on Roanoke Island. Wise, already facing a known enemy on his front, was shocked to find one in his rear. The general was livid; he responded to Lynch's "unwarrantable letter" with one of his own. Wise characterized the Mosquito Fleet as "useless and worthless" and defended his placement of troops at Nags Head as the best choice possible, adding: "It was unauthorized intermeddling in Captain Lynch to criticize military positions without better information . . . My defenses . . . were incomparably beyond any Captain Lynch's fleet could possibly render." He also described the captain as "superserviceable and overzealous; grasped at too much command and meddled too much with mine." The incident unmasked a lack of professionalism on the part of both officers and drove a wedge between the two services at the worst possible moment.¹⁶

On 7 February a Union expedition led by Ambrose Burnside invested Roanoke Island and captured it the next day. Lynch led his fleet to Elizabeth City where Union vessels engaged and destroyed it on the tenth. Again Lynch fought bravely but his tiny force was no match for the Union gunboats. The captain's decision to fight against a vastly superior fleet invited criticism from Wise and local citizens who saw no purpose in the sacrifice of the tiny fleet Lynch had worked so hard to assemble. Wise asserted that the naval flotilla was a waste of resources from the beginning: "It would have been well for the service to have employed his boats for transportation instead of vainly trying to turn tugs into gunboats . . . . It fought bravely and well for its size and construction, but had to run into a trap, where . . . it was nearly destroyed." Shipbuilder Gilbert Elliott, who sustained substantial losses with the fall of Elizabeth City, wrote: "His [Lynch's] management of the Roanoke Island fleet convinced the people in my district of his utter incapacity. He retreated to Elizabeth City where he must have known his fleet would inevitably meet the fate that befell it. Why did he not bring the boats up the Roanoke or carry them through the new canal to Norfolk?"17

Clearly the sole responsibility for the capture of Roanoke Island and the Albemarle Sound did not rest with Lynch or any other single officer.

Nevertheless he shouldered much of the blame. The captain defended his

decision to fight at Elizabeth City, citing the town's strategic importance and his concerns for the region's morale. He wrote: "the desertion of that town . . . would have been unseemly and discouraging." It was also his duty to protect the navy gunboats building in the town at all costs. Most significantly, the hopeless engagement at Elizabeth City demonstrated Lynch's willingness to fight. The aging captain met the Union navy and Henry Wise with the same vigor and determination.18

Following the destruction of the North Carolina Squadron the navy department sent Lynch to the Mississippi as commander of naval forces in the West. Controversy followed the captain as he tried to build a squadron at Yazoo City following devastating defeats for the navy at New Orleans and Memphis. During his brief tenure, Lynch focused on the safety of the inland shipyard and tried to improve the navy's industrial infrastructure in the region by negotiating a contract with the Shelby Iron Company to roll iron plate for vessels building on the Yazoo. A conflict arose when the iron company defaulted on an existing contract with the army's Ordnance Bureau. Colin McRae, the bureau's iron agent, argued that the Lynch contract interfered with existing agreements between the iron works and the army. The conflict of interests so angered McRae that he asked to be removed, but the Richmond government ignored the protest and upheld the Lynch contract. But dim prospects for the navy's success on the Mississippi discouraged the captain. Lynch finally asked for a transfer on 13

18. Lynch to Mallory, 18 February 1862, ibid.
September. Mallory consented and assigned Lynch, a veteran of combat with the enemy and the army, to command of the Wilmington station.  

Secretary Mallory surely considered Lynch's record carefully before assigning him to Wilmington. Both positive and negative indications of the captain's suitability for command surfaced during his first year in Confederate service. On two occasions, the aging officer distinguished himself in combat. Familiar with every aspect of naval service, he proved an able administrator. Lynch clearly advanced the interests of the navy at every opportunity, notably in his attempt to enhance the navy's industrial infrastructure in the West. Lynch's conception of the "stepchild" navy clearly influenced his interactions with army officers and interservice relations in his commands were anything but harmonious. No evidence suggests, however, that Mallory ever doubted Lynch's abilities and there was no substantive reason for him to do so. Lynch's conduct, excepting the letter campaign against Wise, indicated that Lynch was an experienced, competent officer.

Orders dated 28 October 1862 directed Lynch to take command at Wilmington and "expedite the completion of the iron clad gunboats being constructed at that point and communicate to the department any suggestions ... conducive to the public interests." Lynch brought energy to the naval effort on the Cape Fear. The commodore quickly set to work, strengthening his force and

19. Lynch to Pemberton, 10 October, 1862, O.R.N., Ser. 1, Vol. 23; Lynch to Ruggles, 9 October 1862, ibid.; Mallory to Lynch, 2 October 1862, ZB File; Forrest to Lynch, 28 October 1862, ibid.; for information on the controversy surrounding the Shelby Iron contract, see Still, Confederate Shipbuilding, 35-36.
pushing naval construction throughout eastern North Carolina. Even Lieutenant Guthrie, who detested service on board the *Arctic* and felt slighted by Mallory, admitted that "much greater activity and spirit" blossomed following Lynch's arrival. Not all of the "spirit" which arrived with the captain was beneficial to the navy. Lynch interpreted his orders and the authority they conferred on him broadly. Though he generally acted with the navy's best interest in mind, his actions frequently brought him into conflict with military officials, the governor, and even fellow officers. The "Old Flag's" two year tenure was marked by controversy and conflict.\(^{20}\)

Lynch assumed command in mid-November as yellow fever raged through Wilmington. Since the steamer *Kate* introduced the disease in August an estimated fifteen percent of the city's population had died. Many residents fled to the countryside for safety and business ground to a halt. From Warsaw Brigadier General William Henry Chase Whiting, the newly appointed commander of the District of Cape Fear, described the devastating effect of the "pestilence" on military and naval activity in the region: "Preparations have been suspended, the garrison reduced and withdrawn, the workshops deserted, transportation rendered irregular and uncertain, provisions, forage, and supplies exhausted." Few ship carpenters remained in the city, and work on the *North Carolina* and *Raleigh* all but stopped. As the fever subsided in late November, Lynch and Whiting returned their offices to Wilmington. As life in Wilmington regained a semblance

\(^{20}\) Ibid.; Forrest to Lynch, 28 October 1862, ZB File.
of normality, Lynch focused on the problems facing him as commander of the Wilmington station.  

Lynch's immediate concern was the safety of the gunboats building at Wilmington. A widely held belief among Confederate authorities, including Whiting, that Wilmington would soon be attacked by a joint Union operation caused considerable apprehension in the port city. Lynch, having already suffered the loss of six incomplete vessels as commander of the North Carolina squadron, worked to prevent a recurrence. He suggested that a naval battery be built on the west bank of the river below Wilmington to protect the shipyards. Whiting agreed and promised troop support in the event of an attack. The battery was to be armed with guns taken from the Arctic and manned by her crew. Lynch hoped the battery would provide useful training for the men as they waited for assignment to one of the unfinished ironclads. Lynch also ordered a complete sounding of the Cape Fear from Wilmington to Fayetteville and chose an upriver site at Indian Wells for an additional battery. Should Union forces occupy Wilmington, the site offered a good vantage point to obstruct the river and block a naval advance up the river. Lynch chartered river steamers to carry materials.

black laborers, and ordnance stores from Wilmington to Indian Wells from December 1862 to February 1863 when workers apparently completed the battery.22

The threat of enemy incursions into the North Carolina interior had troubled military and naval authorities since the capture of the Albemarle and Pamlico regions. Lynch worried especially for the security of the Roanoke, Tar, and Neuse gunboats. He seemed particularly concerned about the Albemarle, "alike for her safety and speedy completion." Soon after his arrival, the flag officer developed a plan for their security. Lynch proposed the formation of a special marine battery, subdivided into three companies, each armed with two light 32-pound guns and equipped with small boats. Posted at points between the Chowan and Roanoke, Roanoke and Tar, and Tar and Neuse Rivers, the captain believed that these mobile naval batteries could travel quickly overland, and by water when necessary, to deter Union advances up any of the three major river systems. By means of an elaborate system using red, white, and black canvass balls displayed at signal stations, two batteries could converge from either bank to check a waterborne advance.23

The chief obstacle blocking implementation of the plan was the lack of manpower. Lynch first suggested the idea to Major General S. G. French and Governor Vance. Both men promised support, but neither could supply the men required for the project; Lynch turned to the war department. In a letter to James Seddon, secretary of war, the captain reminded the secretary that his predecessor, George Randolph, promised to detail mariners and seamen serving in the ranks of the army for naval service, provided their units were not engaged in combat. Without these men the project could not succeed. He wrote: "There are many men now in the camps who, from their former pursuits, are admirably fitted for such an undertaking, and I respectfully ask your permission to procure their names and . . . their transfer to the rolls of the Navy." Vance offered laborers to build and repair the roads necessary for effective operations and Lynch procured the guns, but the war department did not offer any men. The commodore finally admitted defeat owing to "the crying want of men."\(^{24}\)

The manning problem that sidelined the marine artillery, part of a larger manpower shortage experienced throughout the Confederacy, particularly affected the navy as it tried to man its vessels and operate its facilities. Early in the war heavy recruiting and conscription swept many of the South's watermen, an already low percentage of the professional population, into the military. Mallory hoped to have them transferred or detailed to the navy. In General Order 77 the War Department agreed and directed army officers to submit lists of candidates willing

\(^{24}\) Ibid.
to transfer, subject to the approval of their commanders. Some commanders cooperated but understandably, most resisted any attempt to remove soldiers from their command. The program produced fewer sailors than desired by the navy, handicapping the service with undermanned vessels.

In Wilmington Lynch faced the dilemma as the *North Carolina* neared completion in the spring of 1863. When the captain took command in November, the rolls counted only thirty men. In accordance with General Order 77, Whiting transferred at least twenty-one men to Lynch's command in January. Though the number had doubled by April, Lynch still did not have enough sailors to man even one of the ironclads building in his district. The navy department maintained a recruiting office in Raleigh, sending most recruits to Wilmington and Charleston, though many seemed to prefer duty in Wilmington. Because the recruiting office lacked a permanent medical officer, essential for the required physical examinations, recruiting proceeded slowly. The recruiting officer reported to the Bureau of Orders and Detail: "I can get no more men here until a Medical Officer is sent." Lynch exhibited an excessive concern for the moral character of the recruits and apparently rejected some of the few men who volunteered for service. In disbelief the recruiter remarked: "If Flag Officer Lynch sends men back on account of morals, we will get none at all."25

With only sixty men in his command, Lynch addressed North Carolina Senator George Davis, stressing the "urgent necessity for men to compose the crews of the ironclad gunboats building in North Carolina." He outlined the problem in detail: "the North Carolina, building here, is very nearly ready for her crew, the complement of which is 150 men." Provided with the proper materials, the navy could finish the Raleigh and Neuse in eight weeks, a contingency which would generate an immediate need for three hundred and ninety men. Lynch blamed regimental and district commanders, also in need of men, for evading General Order 77: "So long as captains of companies are clothed with discretionary power, or are permitted to interpose obstacles to transfers, there can be no hope of success . . . . With limitation of a certain number from any company, every man accustomed to the water . . . should be entitled to a transfer thereto until its [the navy's] immediate wants are supplied." Lynch asked the senator to propose legislation, or ask for executive authority from the president, that would remedy the defects of the general order and provide sailors to the navy. But Lynch's efforts did not produce significant results and the Wilmington squadron operated with undermanned vessels throughout the war.26

In addition to his attempts to protect naval property and obtain men, Lynch bought two steamers for conversion into gunboats soon after his arrival at Wilmington. Late in December the captain purchased the steam tug Equator and

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one boiler from the Wilmington Steam Tug Company. In March the navy bought the steamer *Caswell* and began construction of a new gunboat, *Yadkin*. The squadron sorely needed light vessels as the new year began. In the late summer of 1862 machinists removed the engines and shafting from the *Uncle Ben* for use in the *North Carolina*, immobilizing the navy's lone Cape Fear gunboat. Muse hired local riverboats, including the *Caswell*, to transport supplies and material but did not purchase any new vessels. The squadron did not have any shallow draft steamers suitable for picket or transport service. The *Equator* and *Caswell* both underwent repairs during the spring of 1863 and continued in naval service until 1865. The *Yadkin* joined the two steamers in the spring of 1864.27

As Lynch dealt with matters of construction, defense, personnel, and procurement he forged a relationship with his military counterpart, Brigadier General W. H. C. Whiting. Like Lynch, Whiting was an aggressive commander who protected the interests of his service and stood his ground in administrative conflicts. In the summer of 1862 the general knocked heads with President Jefferson Davis in a dispute over the president's plan to let soldiers elect their regimental officers. The incident cost Whiting his command in the Army of Northern Virginia and earned Davis's enduring enmity. As commander of the District of the Cape Fear, Whiting's advancement of military interests soured his relationship with Governor Vance, who thought the general's policies were too

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27. Wilmington Steam Tug Co. voucher, 31 December 1862, Confederate Navy Area File 8, RG 45; Hart & Bailey vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, ibid.; Beery vouchers, ibid.
strict. Lynch and Whiting shared similar, strong-willed personalities and an equal devotion to their respective services. The potential for an explosive personality conflict existed.

Initially both men worked well together. In January the flag officer graciously placed his naval forces at Whiting's disposal, expressing his desire for cooperation between the two services. Both officers worried that a Union naval force might pass the forts guarding the entrances to the Cape Fear. Whiting offered assistance for the proposed naval battery and both agreed that the river should be obstructed in some way. Lynch advocated immediate obstruction but Whiting counseled delay, believing that any obstructions would be washed away by the spring freshets. In February, navy lieutenant John Taylor Wood, serving as President Davis's personal aid, reported: "There is a perfect accord between the military and naval commanders; both are working with spirit." The "spirit" soon dissipated and within two months, the officers were no longer on speaking terms. 28

The conflict began in April after Lynch disapproved of Whiting's management of the Indian Wells battery. Lynch, still concerned about the safety of his gunboats, proposed that the battery be manned by army personnel, immediately if possible. Whiting responded that he did not have men to spare at present and could not garrison the fort. He further directed that the battery's guns

be stored for the present, "as to insure their protection from the weather." In response to what was a very minor and honest disagreement, Lynch penned a secret letter from Lynch to Secretary Mallory, criticizing Whiting and the military defenses of the Cape Fear. 29

Lynch charged that Whiting's lack of preparation had generated an "uneasiness . . . in the community." The flag officer claimed Whiting had abandoned the river battery built for the protection of the gunboats and had taken no steps to obstruct the river. Asserting the navy's ability to defend the Cape Fear, Lynch asked the secretary for "authority to obstruct the river, which in twelve days I will be ready to defend with the North Carolina under one coat of plating."

Whiting responded to the "mistakes and improprieties" contained in the letter, stating: "I have always assisted and cooperated with the Navy and always shall." Of river obstructions, he noted, "nearly all that has been done in this matter has been done since I assumed command." Whiting doubted the navy's ability to defend the river, adding: "I think that the completion of the gunboats will be quite as much as the navy authorities can attend to, the North Carolina not yet being ready for the purpose proposed" by Lynch. 30

The facts do not support Lynch's criticisms of Whiting. The general wanted "every possible preparation . . . to be made" for obstructing the river and already had seized a number of flats for that purpose. Furthermore he had expressed his desire that the Arctic be held in readiness for use as an obstruction

should the need arise. Army engineers also maintained and operated a pile driver used to sink rows of piles in the river channels. Whiting had shown considerable concern for the safety the navy’s gunboats. The general simply did not have enough men or ordnance to meet his many commitments at Wilmington and on the lower Cape Fear, a fact made clear by his many official communications to the War Department.  

A desire to protect the navy’s construction projects and reputation in the event of disaster probably motivated the flag officer. In January and March, Confederate intelligence reports incorrectly indicated that the Union fleet bound for Charleston would strike at Wilmington, fueling a general apprehension for the safety of the Cape Fear. Neither the army nor the navy was ready for an attack. Worried by the lack of troops and heavy ordnance at Forts Caswell and Fisher, Whiting prepared for the worst, advising his subordinates on the appropriate course of action should the Union fleet pass the forts. Muse wrote: "What will be the result I can't say. We are stronger than before, but still I am afraid our forts can't withstand their heavy bolts, and if they demolish them there are no obstructions to prevent their light vessels from coming up. Our boats will not be ready, and I can't say when they will be." Lynch must also have known the region's weakness, even if he believed the North Carolina to be ready for action.

32. Whiting to Gwathmey, 13 January 1863, O.R.N., Ser I, Vol. 8; Whiting to Lamb, 13 January 1863, ibid.; Muse to Jones, 28 March 1863, ibid.
On the heels of Lynch's covert letter campaign against Whiting, similar to his earlier attack against Henry A. Wise, a disagreement involving ongoing projects at the Hart & Bailey works caused a more serious rift. Whiting engaged the firm to make modifications to the steamer *Merrimac*, hoping to increase the vessel's speed and suitability for blockade running. In May Hart & Bailey reported that Lynch refused to supply a quantity of one-inch plate iron needed to complete the work. In addition, the flag officer "expressly forbid us doing the work as it will conflict with his work and retard the completion of the iron clad gun boat N.C." Whiting ordered the firm to complete work on the *Merrimac* "without delay and without regard to any other orders they may have on hand for other depts. of the government." Lynch angrily claimed that Whiting's order intentionally infringed on his authority and that "work on the iron clads building here is almost wholly suspended in consequence."\(^{33}\)

Whiting's response reached beyond the specific charges levelled by Lynch and commented on the necessity for cooperation. Whiting explained his actions, specifying that he would never have given the order had Lynch not first interfered with the army work then in progress. He added: "They [Hart & Bailey] are employed by you but not exclusively. They have work for the defense quite as important as yours. They are iron founders in general business." Whiting closed with a personal appeal for courtesy and respect:

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You know too that my anxiety for the successful completion of your important work equals your own and are equally aware of the kindly feelings I entertain for the Navy at all times, which would never permit any considerations of Naval or Military etiquette to hinder for a moment the efficient and cordial cooperation of the two services. I am thus replying to your demand because it would appear from its tone that these feelings are not reciprocated. Nor is this the first indication I have perceived of that, I am sorry to say.

The general's closing statement indicated the ongoing deterioration of relations between both officers.\textsuperscript{34}

Whiting's explanation, however, did not conciliate Lynch; in fact, it had just the opposite effect. On 25 May the captain sent Whiting an abusive note, charging the general with interference in his command and suggesting an appeal to "higher authorities" for resolution. Lynch added new items to his lists of accusations, claiming that Whiting did not acknowledge the services Lynch and the navy had rendered to the army at Wilmington, ignored Lynch's calls for manpower, and wished to delay construction on the Wilmington ironclads. The flag officer also found Whiting "unaccomodating and assuming" in conversation, noting that the general once failed to offer him a seat at his headquarters. Lynch felt that Whiting's actions insulted the navy by ignoring its rights and he expressed his convictions in blunt, unforgiving language. Given the commodore's rigid sense of honor, and the general's personality, chances for reconciliation were slim.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Whiting to Lynch, 26 May 1863, ibid.
Again Whiting responded with a "letter intended purely as one of explanation and not of rejoinder still less of incrimination.". He began: "I could not have supposed that a gentleman of your character and station would have adopted such a tone and such language in addressing me officially or socially. I trust in reply that I shall not do likewise, both from respect to you and respect to myself." Whiting again explained his actions and indicated his willingness to defend himself to a board of naval officers, "being sure that their and your sense of duty would be superior to either personal or professional feeling." Though Whiting did not yield to any of Lynch's accusations, he feared that the ill will developing between them could become detrimental to the common cause both officers shared. He closed with a plea for harmony and respect:

I am averse to controversy and entirely regret having been forced into this. In my opinion this had better cease, certainly for the good of the cause of both services, I may add of you and me. I have then only to add that if you see fit to reply to this letter . . . I must respectfully request you not to use the tone of your letter of the 25th. If met in the spirit which I hope and believes governs me in this matter which intends no disrespect and expresses no anger, I am willing to correspond if more is necessary, or to converse if you prefer it.

Clearly, the general's patience was wearing thin.\footnote{36}

Unfortunately, Whiting's call for cooperation fell on deaf ears. In June Lynch requested the general to return two Brooke rifles borrowed from the navy in April. The captain wanted to mount the guns on the Roanoke River for the protection of the ironclad building there. Whiting refused, maintaining that the

\footnote{36. Ibid.}
guns had been loaned by Secretary Mallory and were subject to recall only on his authority. At this, the flag officer composed another letter to Mallory for referral to the War Department. Lynch reported Whiting for "discourtesy and breach of faith," calling for the general's removal. The "Old Flag" directed a copy to Whiting, duly informing him of his objections.  

The general could not contain his annoyance and disgust. He acknowledged Lynch's note, adding, "It gives me no concern, and it only adds to the numerous misstatements which your official correspondence contains . . . . I have nothing to say to you on the subject, except to congratulate you that you have at last abandoned your custom of writing letters, to the Dep't. reflecting on me, without notifying me." The general wrote to Mallory explaining his great need for the guns and his offer to supply two VIII-inch shell guns and four 24 pounders instead. Of Lynch, the general warned: "I shall do full justice to that Officer not only in this respect but in many others, at the proper time." The incident permanently shattered any hopes for reconciliation between the two. To Whiting it represented a breaking point. Thereafter he confined his contact with Lynch strictly to official communications.  

In an unrelated incident, Lynch's relationship with Governor Vance also deteriorated in June. The capture of two Union mail steamers, the Arrow and

Emily, in the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal by state troops on 15 May precipitated the affair. The captors ran their prizes up the Blackwater River to Franklin, Virginia, where low water prevented a Union expedition from recapturing or burning the boats. Vance hoped the vessels might be converted into gunboats and asked Lynch to send an officer to survey the boats and determine their utility. The commodore being absent, Commander Muse dispatched a lieutenant and an engineer. The Emily proved suitable for mounting one or two guns. Muse had long deplored the lack of a naval force on the Chowan and hoped the captures might form the basis for joint operations: "I have for some time been thinking of trying to get Mr. Mallory to try something in the naval way on the Chowan, such as preparing open boats with a 12pdr in each, besides other river boats to act with our rangers. This seems to have happened to give us a nucleus to build around. I have no doubt they will be of great benefit." Muse ordered the boats held at safe location, "until any alterations which they may require be made."

Lynch had his own designs for the two steamers but he presented them in a manner which provoked a confrontation with Vance. Hoping to move them to the Roanoke and employ them in the river's defenses, the flag officer claimed the steamers for the government. Muse reluctantly agreed to Lynch's plans as "probably the best disposition of them," though he "hoped they would be kept on the Chowan." When Vance protested against Lynch's claim, the captain haughtily

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\(^{39}\) Muse to Vance, 20 May 1863, 25 May 1863, Vance Papers.
responded: "I can recognize but two parties to the present War, namely: the
Government of the Confederate States, and that of the remaining States of the old
Union." Lynch's attitude incensed the governor, inspiring a sarcastic reply:

Yours of the 3rd inst. has just been received informing me that the State of North
Carolina has not yet been 'recognized' by the Navy Department and that you have
therefore applied to the authorities at Richmond for permission to use my boats.
The boats were captured by troops entirely in the service of this State and are
absolutely and completely her property; and it seems strange indeed that you
should feel greater hesitation in accepting them than the rail road iron which you
so far recognized me as to apply for. Should the Navy Dept. graciously permit me
to use my own boats I shall be indebted to you for the favor. 40

The exchange might have been prevented had Lynch shown more tact.

Vance was the navy's greatest benefactor in the state, supporting ironclad
construction even when it was politically inexpedient. The service could not
afford to lose Vance's support, or worse, to encourage his active opposition.
Fortunately Vance continued to support naval construction in North Carolina,
though he now entertained misgivings about the officer entrusted with its
management.

In the midst of these personal conflicts, naval construction at Wilmington
slowly yielded dividends in the summer of 1863. In June the Beery brothers
completed the North Carolina and devoted their resources to the Yadkin. Lynch
ordered the ironclad, commanded by Muse, downriver to Smithville where it
could cooperate with the forts guarding Old and New Inlets. The ship's maiden

40. Lynch to Vance, 3 June 1863, Muse to Vance 25 May 1863, Vance Papers.
voyage revealed the limitations imposed by its deep draft. The heavy ironclad
grounded in the river as the tide ran out, stranding it for the night. With fires
banked, several crewman took the ship's boat and "went to catching clams oysters
& crabs." The next day engineers raised steam and with the aid of a high tide, got
the vessel underway. Subsequent ventures up and down the river resulted in
similar groundings and delays. The *North Carolina* was simply too big to
navigate the Cape Fear. Extensive leaking compounded the problem, adding to
the ship's displacement and draft. In most cases, the ship required a tow, much to
her crew's embarrassment. Nonetheless, the *North Carolina* remained on station
at Smithville throughout the summer of 1863, where she added strength to the
inner harbor's defenses and finally established a significant naval presence on the
Cape Fear.\(^{41}\)

As a flag officer, however, Lynch's responsibilities reached beyond
Wilmington and the Cape Fear. Work on the three ironclads building at Scotland
Neck on the Roanoke River, Tarboro on the Tar River, and Kinston on the Neuse
River, progressed slowly and Lynch devoted considerable energy toward their
completion. In July Lynch sent his secretary to Wilson, a small town on the
Wilmington & Weldon north of Goldsboro, with orders to make "necessary
arrangements for establishing headquarters at that place." Lynch arrived shortly
thereafter along with his secretary and Paymaster Adam Tredwell. The
headquarters for the naval defenses of North Carolina remained in Wilson until

\(^{41}\text{ Charlie to Sis, 1 July 1863, Peek Papers; Beery vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45.}\)
October, though Lynch apparently lived in Halifax for at least a portion of that time. From this more central location, the flag officer hoped to monitor construction on the new ironclads and administer the Wilmington station.\textsuperscript{42}

The immediate cause of the move to Wilson was a change in the status of the Tarboro ironclad. In September 1862 Colonel William F. Martin and shipbuilder Gilbert Elliott accepted a contract to build "the hull of one ironclad . . . ready to receive the engine and machinery," to be delivered at Tarboro on or before 1 March 1863. In October Martin and Elliott accepted a contract to build an additional ironclad on the Roanoke River, to be delivered in April. By March both ironclads remained unfinished and the prospects for speedy completion looked dim. Several factors slowed work on the Tarboro ironclad. Severe winter weather and a shortage of bolt iron suspended construction for weeks at a time. Most important, Martin and Elliott had spread their resources too thin. Nineteen year-old Elliott was not a major builder before the war and he had neither the capital nor the workforce to undertake two major projects at one time. Elliott apparently concentrated on the Roanoke ironclad leaving the Tarboro vessel incomplete. In April Martin and Elliott accepted the third and fourth of six payments on the ironclad and relinquished "all claim for damages consequent upon the suspension of the work" on the Tarboro gunboat and transferred to the navy all "title claim and demand to the portion of the said boat at Tarboro."

\textsuperscript{42} Lynch to E. Courtney Jenkins, 8 July 1863, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45.
Martin and Elliott had essentially sold the Tarboro contract back to the navy and shifted the responsibility for its completion to Flag Officer Lynch. 43

Lynch’s attempts to push naval construction on the Roanoke, Tar, and Neuse rivers met with frustration and generated more controversy. A shortage of bolt iron plagued all three projects despite Lynch’s best efforts to have iron shipped in from Richmond and elsewhere. In June a Union raid launched from New Bern destroyed the Tarboro ironclad, still on the stocks. The devastating effects of the raid and the ease with which it was executed worried Lynch, who had shown considerable concern for the safety of naval construction in his command since his arrival in November 1862. The captain took new measures to insure the safety of the Neuse and Roanoke ironclads. His actions sparked a conflict with Gilbert Elliott and Governor Vance and ultimately affected his command in North Carolina. 44

In September Lynch ordered the Roanoke ironclad launched as soon as possible and towed upriver to Halifax for completion. Elliott objected to the move, paid off his work force, and indicated an unwillingness to complete the vessel on anything but his own terms. Lynch (who returned naval headquarters to Wilmington on 17 October) ordered Commander James Cooke, the officer directly overseeing construction, to seize the vessel and any materials prepared for

43. Tarboro contract quoted from Robert G. Elliott, *Ironclad of the Roanoke: Gilbert Elliott’s Albemarle* (Shippensburg: White Mane Press, 1994), 62; Mallory to James Cooke, 10 October 1862, Martin Papers; Lynch to Tredwell, 15 April 1863, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45; Martin & Elliott, 16 April 1863, ibid.
44. Lynch to H. C. Burr, 19 July 1863, Confederate Navy Area File 7, RG 45.
its use. Elliott fired off a bitter letter to Vance, who addressed Mallory on the seizure. In late-November Vance denounced Lynch in unmistakable language: "I am satisfied of his total and utter incapacity for the duties of his position, which has for some time been evident to the whole state... I am so out of heart in the matter that if the water defenses of NC are to continue in the hands of Commander Lynch, I feel it useless and will decline to furnish any more iron or other assistance whatsoever." Vance's stinging rebuke forced Mallory's hand. In January the secretary removed the Roanoke ironclad from Lynch's command and placed naval construction on the river in Cooke's hands.  

Lynch's first year as flag officer of the Naval Defenses of North Carolina ended on a sour note. In Wilmington, the captain had alienated Whiting, setting the stage for further conflict between the army and navy. Worse yet, the clash between Vance and Lynch in May threatened to disrupt the amiable relationship between the governor and the navy. Elliott's criticisms against Lynch found a sympathetic ear with Vance, who supported the contractor in his campaign against the "Old Flag." These three major personality conflicts marred an otherwise admirable effort from Lynch. Under trying conditions and with heavy responsibilities, the captain pushed construction at every turn. At Wilmington, Lynch took positive steps to strengthen his squadron and protect navy interests.

Undoubtedly the captain looked forward to the new year with hopes that his efforts might finally bear fruit.
Chapter 3

By 1864 naval construction at Wilmington had yet to produce significant results. Early that year Gilbert Elliott commented on the lack of progress and blamed Lynch for the absence of a fighting squadron on the Cape Fear: He wrote: "where are the material results of his efforts? Has he a boat at Wilmington able to inflict damage upon the blockaders?" Elliott's assessment greatly oversimplified an industrial undertaking that was, in many respects, beyond the control of one man. The industrial infrastructure in Wilmington and the Cape Fear river valley was the sum of many component parts; Wilmington shipbuilders labored in a unique environment that was shaped by many factors, some beneficial and some detrimental to the Confederate naval effort. Delays and shortages plagued the navy and as a result, the shipbuilding program implemented at Wilmington in the spring of 1862 did not yield substantial dividends until 1864.¹

Though shipbuilders had long built vessels on the Cape Fear, Wilmington never enjoyed a reputation as a shipbuilding center. As early as 1737 one shipyard operated in the port city and a significant number of vessels trading with the Cape Fear region during the colonial period were built locally. At least twenty-seven ships, including seven steamers, were built in Wilmington between 1815 and 1860. As the river trade between Fayetteville and Wilmington grew, the industry expanded upriver to Fayetteville where merchants built shallow draft steamers and flats. Wilmington shipbuilders actively encouraged the river trade, profited from the repair business it generated, and promoted

¹. Elliott to Vance, 27 January 1864, Vance Papers.
attempts to improve navigation on the Cape Fear River and its tributaries. By the mid-nineteenth century Wilmington was home to a small pool of experienced shipwrights, carpenters, and mechanics.²

In 1861, two shipyards built and repaired vessels in Wilmington. James Cassidey, a Massachusetts native, had been building boats on the Cape Fear for twenty years. Cassidey, the most experienced shipbuilder in the port city and a recognized leader in the Wilmington business community, served as president of the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company before and during the war. Though the company’s plan to link the Cape Fear with the coal and iron producing regions along the Deep River in Chatham County never materialized, Cassidey proved a capable financier and gained experience building and repairing vessels for the river trade. The Cassidey yard, located on the east side of the river in Wilmington, included launching ways, a marine railway, and a blacksmith’s shop. During the war the Cassidey yard performed routine maintenance for the navy and also built the ironclad Raleigh.³

The second yard, owned by Benjamin Beery and operated with his brother William, undertook the majority of naval construction during the war. The Beery yard was the larger of the two Wilmington yards. Its facilities, including launching ways, a railway, a saw mill, and a limited ironworking capacity, closely approximated those at

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3. New Hanover County Tax List, 1836; New Hanover County Tax List, 1845; Federal Census, New Hanover County, 1860; Cassidey to Henry Adolphus London, 10 February 1857, Henry Adolphus London Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
Cassidey's, though the two brothers (both in their late-thirties) were probably not as experienced. The Beerys were shippers as well as builders, and like Cassidey, they also owned stock in the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company. The yard's location on Eagle Island across from town offered direct access with the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad and room for expansion. By 1863, navy projects, including the construction of the ironclad *North Carolina*, the tender *Yadkin*, torpedo boats, and launches nearly monopolized the yard's resources. The Beery yard, commonly referred to as the "Navy yard," grew in response to the increased demands of a wartime economy and provided the navy with the basic facilities needed to build and maintain vessels.⁴

Other Wilmington firms participated indirectly in the shipbuilding industry. The most important of these was the Hart & Bailey ironworks located on Front Street near the Cassidey yard. The foundry, originally known as Polley & Hart, opened in 1840 when Samuel Polley and Levi Hart, a mechanic from Connecticut, began manufacturing copper stills used in the turpentine industry that flourished in the Cape Fear river valley. Polley & Hart expanded in the 1850s, branching out into ironwork as well. When Polley retired in 1857, John C. Bailey, a Norwegian machinist, joined the firm and shifted its focus further away from copperwork. By 1860, Hart & Bailey included copper, machine, and pattern shops and a foundry. The company not only supplied the city with much of its

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⁴ Federal Census, New Hanover County, 1860; "State of Stock in the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company," London Papers. The precise arrangement under which Cassidey and the Beerys built ships for the navy is unknown; the vessels were probably built by contract. The navy may have also leased or rented space in the Beery yard.
ironwork, but also participated in ship construction, repairing machinery and building pump engines.\(^5\)

During the war, Hart & Bailey became heavily involved in ship construction. The firm forged a variety of necessary hardware, such as bolts, nails, and spikes. Hart, Bailey, and their machinists also produced and installed machinery parts and donkey engines for the Wilmington-built squadron. The foundry was one of a few ironworks in the Confederacy with the capacity for heavy forging. Hart & Bailey forged wrought iron stern posts, port shutters, and torpedo spars. The company modified the propeller shaft of the *Yadkin*, and produced the shafts for the *North Carolina* (using materials removed from the *Uncle Ben*) and the army torpedo boat. Hart & Bailey also played a role in the construction of steam machinery and probably built several complete boilers during the course of the war. Evidence suggests the firm may have fabricated engines for the Wilmington torpedo boats; the foundry had experience in producing small engines and this possibility was not beyond its capabilities.\(^6\)

A second foundry, established in Wilmington by Thomas E. Roberts, also participated in naval construction. Roberts probably established the foundry, known as the Clarendon Iron Works, early in the war and its capabilities were not as advanced as Hart & Bailey. The Clarendon Works manufactured many of the same products as the older firm, but did not have the capacity for heavy forging. Roberts and his crew helped

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build and install the machinery for all three gunboats completed at Wilmington. The foundry cast a substantial quantity of boiler parts, including boiler iron, grate bars, flues, and fronts, suggesting that it built the boilers for the Raleigh and possibly the Yadkin. Both foundries played an important role in ship construction during the war and the absence of either would have materially impaired the naval effort at Wilmington.\(^7\)

The facilities for shipbuilding in Wilmington were adequate, though they had never been mobilized to build warships. The presence of two shipyards and two iron foundries in the city combined several necessary and important facilities in one locality, minimizing transportation difficulties. The Cassidey and Beery yards were small in comparison to the shipyards of Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans, but they provided the basis for wartime expansion. During the war, military conditions often forced the navy to create shipyards where none had previously existed. Inland yards such as those at Edward's Ferry and Whitehall, North Carolina, Marion, South Carolina, and Yazoo City, Mississippi, lacked the existing infrastructure found at Wilmington. Though the facilities for naval construction at Wilmington may not have been ideal, they were certainly better than those at many other points in the Confederacy.

The mere existence of facilities for shipbuilding, however, did not guarantee prompt results. Other problems confronted the navy and Wilmington shipwrights as they began building. The lack of suitable materials, especially seasoned timber, materially diminished the quality of Wilmington-built gunboats and delayed their completion.

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7. Thomas E. Roberts vouchers, RG 45, Confederate Navy Subject File, NA.
Large stocks of seasoned timber were not available in the Confederacy and during the war the Beery and Cassidey yards used green timber almost exclusively. The Confederates captured a sizable quantity of timber at Gopsort navy yard in Norfolk, but most of it was used in Norfolk or burned in May 1862 before it could be used or shipped to other yards. Freshly cut timber arrived in Wilmington in several forms. Raw timber was cheapest, but it required milling before use. Planks and beams cut at local mills cost more. A variety of timber reached the Wilmington shipyards. Oak and pine served for floors, beams, and planking, while gum proved ideal for keels and keelsons. The Beerys used juniper and ash to plank small boats and launches and finished the interior of the North Carolina with cherry. Timber prices soared as the war dragged on and inflation grew uncontrollable. In June 1862 white oak timber cost forty dollars per thousand feet; in June 1864 oak timber cost one hundred and fifty dollars while oak planks cost two hundred and fifty. Pine lumber, priced at twenty-five dollars per thousand feet in 1862 jumped to one hundred and twenty-five dollars in 1864.8

The use of green timber particularly affected the North Carolina and rendered it ineffective as a fighting vessel. Major structural problems surfaced soon after the Beerys completed the ship in June 1863. As the unseasoned timbers warped and split the ironclad hogged. By December the bow sagged noticeably and Lynch decided to remove the armor plating covering the deck forward of the casemate "for the purpose of having the ship near an even keel." Without deck armor, the ship was liable to heavy damage in combat. Other structural problems interfered with the North Carolina's operational

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8. Beery and Cassidey vouchers, ibid.
status. Strained by the weight of the ship's battery, the deck beams began to warp. In June 1864 a crewman wrote, "Our ship is not worth much, her decks are beginning to give way so much that we can hardly work the guns. I don't think that she will last 6 months longer." That estimate proved too liberal, as Lynch ordered the ship's guns and ammunition ashore in July for use elsewhere.⁹

Inferior timber also caused extensive leaking on the North Carolina. Caulkers, carpenters, and engineers entered the losing battle against leaks soon after the ship hit the water. In the summer of 1863 caulkers used cotton to close seams while hired hands pumped the ship manually. Hart & Bailey built a donkey engine and worked on board to plug a major leak in October. Further attempts to caulk the vessel failed and engineers began to run the pumps continually. In July 1864 an engineer wrote, "we have to keep up steam to pump the ship out, it is very hard." Finally the ship was moored in shoal water across the river from Smithville where remaining crew members contemplated the inevitable result of the contest against incoming water.¹⁰

Though timber was generally available to Wilmington shipbuilders, they encountered special difficulties transporting it to the sawmills and construction sites. In the pre-war economy, sawyers floated large rafts of timber to Wilmington where brokers sold them for milling, local consumption, and exportation. A timber shortage developed as the war disrupted traditional economic patterns; local forests did not satisfy the needs

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⁹. Charlie to Sis, 14 June 1864, 8 July 1864, Peek Papers; Lynch to Muse, 27 December 1863, Confederate States Navy Papers, Georgia Historical Society (cited hereafter as Confederate States Navy Papers).
¹⁰. Beery and Hart & Bailey vouchers, RG 45, Confederate Navy Subject File, NA; Charlie to Sis, 8 July 1864, Charlie to Bro, 24 July 1864, Peek Papers.
of military and naval construction. The shortage forced one saw mill to shut down while its sawyers went into the country to cut timber and bring it to the city. In April 1864 a fire at the Beery yard consumed the yard's saw mill and a quantity of cut timber. Months later a boiler explosion at another local saw mill further diminished the availability of lumber for shipbuilding. Repairs on a private steamer at the Cassidey yard ground to a halt when the owners could not find any deck planks. One sawyer offered to cut planks from forests in Chatham County in central North Carolina. 11

Timber often travelled considerable distance before reaching Wilmington shipyards. The Beery brothers imported much of their timber from the vicinity of Laurinburg, west of Wilmington. They reported: "We find it extremely difficult getting it elsewhere, as upon all the watercourses the timber cannot be had." An army engineer echoed the Beerys' complaints, writing, "I have found it impossible to get anything like an adequate supply." By October 1864, most of the timber used in the navy yard came from Marion Court House in South Carolina. Overburdened and broken down railroads provided the link between the Wilmington yards and distant forests. The Beerys protested when the Confederate government proposed to remove rails from the Wilmington Charlotte & Rutherfordton for use on more important routes because such a move would interrupt service to timber sources near Laurinburg. The Wilmington & Manchester, "in such a condition that it must soon be unfit for use," suffered almost daily derailments, delaying the movement of timber from South Carolina to the Beery yard. In

11. Browne to Mallett, 7 July 1864, 10 July 1864, 14 July 1864, 16 July 1864, Charles Beatty Mallett Papers, Southern Historical Collection (cited hereafter as Mallett Papers); Dix to Don, 22 July 1862, Hugh MacRae Papers, Duke University Library; Wilmington Journal, 30 April 1864.
contrast to the problems experienced by Wilmington shipbuilders, many inland yards enjoyed convenient access to local timber stands.  

Wilmington ironworkers enjoyed easier access to the raw materials of their trade. The Confederate government encouraged attempts to mine iron ore and coal deposits along the Deep River in central North Carolina. Contracts with the Niter and Mining Bureau offered generous terms to entrepreneurs and subsidized production. The Bureau contracted with private firms to produce coal and iron to be received by Bureau agents and distributed accordingly. Generally coal and iron produced at the Endor Works travelled down the Deep River from Endor to Locksville where broken locks prevented further navigation. Wagons carried the iron to Raleigh or the railhead of the unfinished Western Railroad for transportation to Fayetteville. Contracts with Mallett & Browne, proprietors of the Egypt Coal Mine, specified that the company deliver its coal directly to Wilmington via the Cape Fear River. The Wilmington foundries consumed only small amounts of the coal that reached Wilmington and most was distributed to the navy, private steamers, and railroads. Hart & Bailey and Thomas Roberts, unlike Cassidey and the Beery brothers, were not responsible for transporting the raw materials needed by their foundries.

Though the Niter and Mining pledged to supply iron and coal, only limited quantities were available. Before the war, iron production had always lagged in the

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13. Niter and Mining Bureau Contract, 1 September 1863, Mallett Papers; later the Bureau decided to lease Egypt Coal Mine, Niter and Mining Bureau Contract, 2 December 1864, ibid.; Wilmington Agency Report, September 1864, ibid.; Donald MacRae to Vance, 22 October 1863, Vance Papers.
South, even where the necessary conditions for production existed. During the war the Confederate government boosted production with massive subsidies but the supply never came close to meeting wartime demands. The output of the Deep River furnaces was never great and often the mines were unable to operate at capacity. Both Wilmington foundries bought scrap iron when available to augment the supply provided by the Niter and Mining Bureau. In August 1862, Roberts advised private customers that they must provide their own iron. Irregular shipments from other shipbuilding sites, such as an 1864 load of spikes and nails from Columbus, Georgia, also increased the supply. Wilmington foundries did not suffer from iron shortages more than any other Southern ironworks. The availability of a water route from iron mines and furnaces decreased the dependency on railroads and eased transportation problems. There is no evidence that shortages of iron hardware ever delayed naval construction in Wilmington.¹⁴

The availability of iron plate for armor did occasion a significant delay in the completion of the first Wilmington ironclads, particularly the Raleigh. The scarcity of iron in the Confederacy forced the navy to manufacture armor plating from railroad iron. The department bought or impressed worn out iron from the roads, shipping it to Scofield & Markum Works in Atlanta or Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond where it was rolled into two-inch plates. In several cases portions of lines were removed when no replacement rails were available and railroad owners commonly resisted attempts to impress their iron. The process of procuring, shipping, rolling, and re-shipping was time

¹⁴. For information on iron production in the Confederacy, see Report of Chief of Nitre and Mining Bureau, 31 January 1865, Confederate Imprint; Dix to Don, 11 August 1862, Hugh MacRae Papers; Warner to Lynch, 23 June 1864, James H. Warner Letterbook, Confederate Naval Museum.
consuming, given the resistance of railroad officials, the shortage of skilled ironworkers in the rolling mills, and the destruction of the rail system needed to sustain it. By the end of 1862, five ironclad rams, each requiring two to three miles of track, and one ironclad floating battery were under construction in *North Carolina*. As the ships progressed, a severe shortage of armor developed.\(^{15}\)

Shortly after his arrival at Wilmington, Flag Officer Lynch realized that the armor shortage would soon cripple naval construction at Wilmington and elsewhere in the state. In June 1862 the Navy Department seized 1076 tons of railroad iron from the Albany & Gulf Railroad in Georgia. When the railroad refused to transport the iron to Atlanta for rolling Secretary Mallory called on the secretary of war for aid and reminded the road's president that "the exigencies of the public service alone preclude me from surrendering the iron. The want of iron is pressing upon us, and its supply is being curtailed." The road finally delivered the iron, part of which was sent to Wilmington for use on the *North Carolina*. With five vessels, including one at Wilmington, still without plating, Flag Officer Lynch devoted considerable time and energy to locating, procuring and transporting railroad iron. The problem would haunt the flag officer for almost two years despite his best efforts to resolve it.\(^{16}\)

Lynch turned to Governor Vance for aid. The state had a financial interest in every railroad operating in North Carolina and the captain hoped that the governor could

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15. In Mallory to D. H. Hill, 13 March 1863, Vance Papers, the secretary estimated that ten to twelve miles of track would provide enough iron for the vessels building on the Roanoke, Tar, Neuse, and Cape Fear.
persuade the roads to cooperate with the navy. In November 1862 Secretary Mallory asked the governor to help supply iron for the gunboats building on the Roanoke and Neuse Rivers. Vance agreed to furnish a limited quantity of rails and scrap iron from the Atlantic & North Carolina, partially under Union control, for use on the ironclad Neuse, but suggested that the Seaboard & Roanoke, "the property of an alien enemy," should provide iron for the Albemarle. Lynch believed that the lower portion of the Atlantic & North Carolina might provide enough iron for other vessels as well and early in December, he argued his case in a letter to the governor. At the same time he sent officers to Atlanta where the plates for the North Carolina were being rolled, ordering them to "keep a vigilant lookout for iron plates sent for the gunboats building here [Wilmington]" and speed their delivery to the shipyards.\footnote{17}

As the new year began the armor shortage dimmed prospects for the timely completion of the North Carolina ironclads, prompting Lynch to remind the governor of "the urgent want of iron for the Naval defence of North Carolina." Commander James Cooke, overseeing construction on the Roanoke River, learned that the North Carolina Railroad wanted the Atlantic & North Carolina rails to replace its own worn out track. Frustrated by the navy's inability to procure iron, he stated: "if no iron can be obtained to clad these boats, I think the entire work ought to be abandoned . . . . I think it is impossible to procure any Rail Road iron unless it is seized." Mallory, distressed by Cooke's gloomy assessment, expressed his "great anxiety" to Vance, noting "these vessels

\footnote{17. Mallory to Vance, 4 November 1862, Barnes to Mallory, 15 November 1862, Vance to Mallory, 21 November 1862, Lynch to Vance, 14 May 1863, Vance Papers; Confederate Navy Subject File, Lynch to Pearson, 28 November 1862, Lynch to Dozier, 6 December 1862, Lynch to Jack, 16 December 1862, RG 45.}
would not have been undertaken had the Department not had good reason to believe the Rail Road iron could be obtained in North Carolina." As the stalemate continued, the North Carolina ironclads waited for their armor. Mallory reported: "the engines of these boats are ready, and we are delayed for iron alone."\(^{18}\)

Lynch pressured the three Wilmington railroads with mixed results. The Wilmington & Weldon and Wilmington & Manchester agreed to turn over their worn out rails for direct payments or exchange after a declaration of peace. The Wilmington & Manchester had already delivered a large quantity of round iron to the Beerys in May 1862. Lynch learned of a quantity of new rails at Laurinburg on the unfinished Wilmington Charlotte & Rutherfordton and applied "in the name of the Government" for them. Other railroads, including the Western North Carolina and the Wilmington and Weldon asked for the rails as well. President Stephen D. Wallace of the Wilmington & Weldon wrote Vance asking for at least three hundred tons of iron, though he regretted that such a "contingency would cause the destruction or abandonment" of his competitor.

In January the Richmond government announced its plans to remove ten miles of track west of Laurinburg for redistribution to other lines, including the Wilmington & Manchester. Besieged on all sides by the navy, the Confederate government, and competing roads, the Wilmington Charlotte & Rutherfordton determined not to part with any of its rails and applied to Vance for protection.\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Mallory to Lynch, 23 January 1863, Lynch to Vance, 26 January 1863, Vance Papers.
\(^{19}\) Wallace to Vance, 6 February 1863, Vance Papers; Garnett to Cowan, 28 January 1864, ibid.; Lynch to D. H. Hill, 9 March 1863, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina Archives.
Union naval attacks against Charleston prompted the navy department to direct all shipments from the rolling mill in Atlanta to the city for use on the ironclad Charleston, temporarily cutting the supply of iron plate to Wilmington. With a limited quantity of iron available, Lynch faced tough strategic decisions. By March 1863 the only North Carolina vessel to receive its plating was the *North Carolina*. Believing that the vessel's presence secured the water approaches to Wilmington, the flag officer determined that the *Albemarle*, which could "clean the enemy out of the Albemarle Sound . . . provided it be finished in time," should receive the next available lot of plating. As more armor arrived, Lynch hoped to complete the ironclads *Neuse* and *Raleigh*. The navy, however, still did not have enough iron for all of the vessels. Disgusted by the hesitancy shown by railroad officials, Lynch wrote: "Iron must be had, or the further construction of gunboats discontinued."\(^{20}\)

Lynch redoubled his efforts, focusing on the Laurinburg iron. Under instructions from Mallory, the captain solicited Major General Daniel Harvey Hill, commanding the Department of Eastern North Carolina, asking the general to address the governor on his behalf. Mallory offered to purchase the iron at market value or replace it with interest six months after a declaration of peace, promising to use the iron only on vessels building in North Carolina. On 7 March Vance consented, stipulating that the iron be exchanged for worn out rails on other railroads in the state. The Wilmington Charlotte & Rutherfordton's board of directors, no longer protected by the governor, scheduled a

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meeting in Wilmington for the 25th to discuss their options. The board invited Lynch, who arrived with orders to seize the iron if the directors refused to sell it and call upon the military authorities if necessary. Lynch informed the board that "he should certainly do so," and the directors, "sensing their inability to resist," agreed to deliver the iron to the navy at the Wilmington waterfront, "protesting against the same as extremely injurious to the road." 21

The railroad, however, did not deliver the iron promptly and the delay adversely affected naval construction at Wilmington and elsewhere. On three occasions naval officers sent to Laurinburg failed to return with the iron, each receiving a different excuse from railroad officials. Lynch again turned to Vance for help: "At first, the cause alleged by the Superintendent of the road was the want of cars or flats; to the second officer I sent, the impossibility of procuring laborers . . . the third officer sent returned with the report that the Superintendent declares his inability to send any portion of the iron down from want of locomotion. Your Excellency will see with what a spirit of procrastination I have to deal." Furthermore, the railroad sold some of the iron to private interests. Vance, "exceeding anxious that the gunboat [Albemarle]" be completed, wrote Henry Guion, president of the Wilmington Charlotte & Rutherfordton, asking that the railroad "at the earliest possible moment deliver such quantities of iron" as it could to Lynch. By October the railroad still had not delivered all of the iron. Amid rumors of an impending attack on Wilmington, the flag officer expressed his "urgent considerations" for the

completion of the *Raleigh*, realizing that the leaky, underpowered *North Carolina* could not defend the river alone.22

The railroad finally complied, but then competition for the use of freight cars delayed transportation of rolled plate from Atlanta to Wilmington. Throughout February and March 1864 the "Old Flag" sent officers out along the railroads to Atlanta to expedite delivery. Finally, several trainloads of iron plate arrived in Wilmington early in March. The months of footdragging and delay seriously compromised the navy's ability to defend the Cape Fear, Neuse, and Roanoke Rivers. Cassidey did not complete the *Raleigh* until late April, a full year after the North Carolina. The armor shortage did not affect the quality of the vessels built at Wilmington but it delayed the timetable for their completion.23

Other material shortages affected naval construction on the Cape Fear. The lack of oakum contributed to the "very leaky condition" of the *North Carolina* and reduced her efficiency. Oakum, the most suitable caulking material, was not available in quantity and Wilmington shipbuilders, like other shipbuilders around the Confederacy, substituted raw cotton. Cassidey and the Beerys did obtain small amounts of oakum, including an 1862 shipment from naval constructor John Porter, and at least some oakum found its way into every Wilmington-built vessel. As the *North Carolina* took on more water, caulkers pushed more and more cotton between its seams. Naval officers recognized the problems inherent in the *North Carolina* and tried to accumulate a supply of oakum in 1864. With

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22. Lynch to Vance, 14 May 1863, Vance Papers; David Barnes to Lynch, 18 May 1863, ibid.; Barnes to Giouon, 18 May 1863, ibid.; Lynch to Vance, 21 October 1863, ibid.
23. Lynch to Robinson, 7 February 1864, RG 45, Confederate Navy Area File 8, NA; Lynch to Robinson, 2 March 1864, ibid.
hesitancy the navy loaned a small quantity of oakum to Charles Browne, a private shipper, who feared for his safety when he was unable to repay the loan. Browne urged a business partner to hurry oakum from Fayetteville, stating that Captain C. B. Poindexter "was violent about it not being returned."  

The navy also lacked copper sheathing to protect the bottoms of its vessels. The North Carolina presented an inviting target for toreado worms. Marine life clustered on the ship's hull and riddled the timbers, contributing to its waterlogged condition. Periodically the vessel travelled from its station at Smithville to fresher water in Wilmington in a vain attempt to kill the worms. The ironclad's affliction was well-known. In August 1864 a passenger on the blockade runner Advance described the "old" ironclad as "worthless from the number of barnacles which have fostered on her bottom." The Raleigh and Yadkin, constructed in similar fashion with similar materials, probably would have shared the same problems had they been in service longer. Even without sheathing, however, marine growth would not have been a major problem for the North Carolina but for her size. The ironclad and her sister Raleigh, with an estimated 700 tons displacement, were too heavy to be hauled up on either marine railway at Wilmington; hull planking below their waterlines could not be replaced. The Yadkin, at 180 tons, could be hauled up in either of the Wilmington shipyards for regular maintenance. Only one dry dock existed in the Confederacy and it was lost when Norfolk fell to Union forces in May 1862.  

24. Charlie to Sis, 10 July 1864, Peek Papers; Browne to Mallett, 10 July 1864, Mallett Papers.  
25. Beery vouchers, RG 45, Confederate Navy Subject File, NA; Mary Johnston Beckwith Diary, 16 August 1864, James Payne Beckwith, Jr. Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
Another factor adding to the problems associated with naval construction at Wilmington was the intense interservice rivalry generally associated with the mutual feeling of dislike shared between Lynch and Whiting. Whiting did not actively subvert naval construction at Wilmington, but he did nothing to resolve conflicts that ultimately thwarted Lynch and his shipbuilders. Whiting consistently criticized Confederate naval policy and his indifferent attitude surfaced on several occasions. In August 1863 he expressed his sentiments concerning naval construction with special reference to the Neuse and the Wilmington gunboats:

As to the gunboat, I care very little. I never expect it to be finished or if finished to do anything. So far the gunboats have caused more trouble, interfered more with government business and transportation, been bound up and accomplished less than any other part of the service. Here [Wilmington] I do not permit them to interfere any longer. They must give way to more useful business.

Interservice relations were never perfect in the Confederacy and in an environment possessed of limited resources, tensions between army and navy officers were more the norm than the exception. But in Wilmington, the particularly poor relationship between Whiting and Lynch interfered with the shipbuilding program and ultimately compromised the defense of the Cape Fear and eastern North Carolina.²⁶

The focal point of the interservice rivalry as it affected shipbuilding was the competition between the Quartermaster's Department and the navy for flat cars required to haul armor plate from the rolling mills to the construction sites. The navy needed special authorization to use flat cars that were otherwise employed moving military supplies. In March 1864 Quartermaster General A. R. Lawton maintained that military

necessity demanded that all available transportation be employed hauling army freight. The navy's inability to procure transportation delayed work on all of the ironclads nearing completion in the spring of 1864. Lynch was furious: "The whole rolling stock of the road . . . has been monopolized by the Army . . . The rights of the Navy are not respected, its wants are utterly disregarded." Had Whiting been inclined, he could have provided the necessary transportation to and from Wilmington. Feeling no sympathy for Lynch or the navy, he did nothing. Commander Cooke, superintending work on the Albemarle, attributed the problems to the poor relationship between Whiting and Lynch: "There has been little or nothing accomplished in Wilmington and I think had there been a proper degree of harmony between him [Lynch] and the commanding General much property could have been saved." 27

Interservice competition also affected naval construction at Wilmington in less obvious ways. Army projects drew labor and materials from navy jobs at the Cassidey and Beery yards. The Beerys constructed several large flats for the Quartermaster's Department as well as General Whiting's torpedo boat. Routine maintenance on supply schooners, flats, army steamers, and blockade runners, including the Cornubia and Robert E. Lee, also consumed a considerable portion of the navy yard's resources. James Cassidey built flats and maintained vessels for the military as well. Between 1862 and 1864, both yards repaired at least fifteen army steamers and schooners and built at least five flats for the Quartermaster's Department. 28

Military needs also siphoned considerable resources from Hart & Bailey, adding additional commitments against its resources. The company served the Quartermaster and Engineer Departments in a variety of ways. Its mechanics repaired and rebuilt machinery for army transport steamers and built the machinery for the army torpedo boat. The firm performed minor and major repairs to government blockade runners too. Extensive work on the iron-hulled steamer Eugenie, badly damaged after grounding in New Inlet, consumed two whole months in 1863. Aside from ship construction, Hart & Bailey also built a cotton press on Eagle Island, manufactured a steam hoist used to erect the Mound Battery at Fort Fisher, maintained a pile driver for army engineers, and cast shells for the Ordnance Bureau. The combined workload of naval and military construction placed heavy demands on Wilmington's industrial infrastructure, far greater than it had ever experienced in pre-war years. No facility was ever able to devote all of its resources to one project, whatever its nature. Delays and slowdowns were the inevitable result for Wilmington shipwrights and the navy's construction program.29

The navy, however, was not the only customer to experience delays in Wilmington shipyards. Caught between the interests of the navy and the army were private shippers, who placed last on the priority list. Much, if not most, of the Cassidey's and Beerys' pre-war business had been generated by river traffic. During the war, extra shipping demands caused more damages to boats and equipment. As breakdowns and bang-ups on the river became more frequent, however, Wilmington shipbuilders had less time to serve their normal clientele. The Beerys declined private work altogether,

possibly due to an arrangement with the navy, leaving only the Cassidey yard to service private vessels.

With just one yard available for private business, shipowners had to squeeze repairs into a schedule already dominated by public work. Frustrating delays were common. In 1863, Mallett & Browne had to wait four months for Cassidey to repair a coal barge damaged by army engineers. When the company's lone steamer Chatham needed a new bottom and deck in March 1864, James Browne informed his partner that it would be some time before the work would begin: "I saw Mr. Cassidey this morning he cannot promise to give dispatch as the Govt controls him . . . . There is now on the ways a steamer that will be threw about a week more and the Coquette another Govt steamer wants to go on." The repairs to the Chatham, probably started in April, were not completed until August. Late in the year Mallett & Browne hoped to build new coal flats in Wilmington but neither Cassidey nor the Beerys, already taxed to capacity, had resources available for even such a small job. In November 1864, Charles Mallett finally built his own barge in Fayetteville using local timber and iron provided by the Niter and Mining Bureau.30

Bureaucratic inefficiency in the Confederate Treasury Department also delayed naval construction in Wilmington. Navy paymasters settled all claims against the department using funds provided by the Treasury in accordance with legislation passed by the Confederate Congress. Paymasters received drafts from the Secretary of the Treasury, disbursed the funds under the appropriate expenditure headings, and returned

30. Mallett and Browne to J. M. Sexias, 26 December 1863, Citizens File, RG 109; Mallett to Browne, 14 March 1864, 2 November 1864, Mallett Papers.
payment vouchers to the Treasury Department to insure accurate record keeping. Naval contractors tendered bills for labor and materials for payment upon the approval of the officer in charge. Paymasters submitted new warrants for funding as they disbursed previous drafts. The system worked well when the Treasury approved and issued drafts promptly. Often, however, the Treasury department failed to supply new drafts before navy paymasters exhausted their funds. Paymasters watched helplessly as fresh bills stacked up and angry workers demanded their wages. The problem was the frequent subject of bitter correspondence between Mallory and the Secretary of the Treasury.\textsuperscript{31}

In March 1863 ominous reports from Wilmington station Assistant Paymaster Adam Tredwell portended trouble. Tredwell complained that he had "no funds and they are required to pay mechanics and purchase material for construction of vessels." Mallory asked that the paymaster's last requisition "may be complied with as early as practicable." On 9 June Lynch telegraphed Mallory: "Mechanics on Raleigh refuse to work until paid. Borrowed five thousand (5000) dollars for present emergency. Please send funds." Two weeks later, the money still had not arrived in Wilmington. Tredwell warned: "The Contractors are complaining as they have not been able to get paid since the first of the month I have borrowed money out of the Bank to keep the men at work but cannot do so any more." Mallory again called on the Secretary of the Treasury

\textsuperscript{31} For a sampling of the correspondence between Mallory and Secretaries Christopher Memminger and George Trenholm, see Letters Received by the Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, Mallory file, Record Group 365, National Archives (cited hereafter as Letters Received Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, RG 365).
Christopher Memminger to send funds. The strike temporarily stopped work on the 
*Raleigh*, already behind schedule.\(^\text{32}\)

The Treasury Department's response was anything but punctual. The Treasury 
finally approved a draft to Tredwell for two hundred and fifty-thousand dollars on 25 
June; but the funds never arrived. With a full month of unpaid bills in hand, the 
paymaster sent off a new requisition, which was approved in early August. Presumably, 
Tredwell settled his accounts and any work stoppage on the *Raleigh* or in the navy yard 
ended. In October Memminger informed Mallory that the draft of 25 June had just 
returned from the dead letter office. In frustration the navy secretary cancelled the draft 
as the crisis had already passed two months earlier. The Treasury Department's mistakes 
and the resulting strike temporarily halted work on the *Raleigh* when it was already 
behind schedule. The delay compounded the other difficulties that already impeded naval 
construction on the Cape Fear.\(^\text{33}\)

The lack of skilled labor, more detrimental than interservice rivalry, competition 
for facilities, or the difficulties associated with transportation, was the most serious 
obstacle confronting Wilmington shipbuilders and the navy. Because Wilmington had 
not been a major shipbuilding center before the war, the labor pool available to Cassidey 
and the Beery brothers was small. The construction program implemented in 1862 
represented a great boon to the two yards but both yards needed more workers to reap the 
benefits. On a regional scale, Cassidey and the Beerys competed with other yards around

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32. Mallory to Memminger, 18 March 1863, 8 June 1863, 19 June 1863, ibid.
33. Mallory to Memminger, 15 October 1863, ibid.
the Confederacy for a limited number of ship carpenters. On the local level, both yards competed with each other, a factor that may have slowed construction on the *Raleigh*. The regional and local competition for labor significantly raised the cost of shipbuilding in Wilmington, but higher wages failed to attract suitable labor and both yards struggled with an inadequate work force throughout the war.

Wilmington shipbuilders entered the competition for labor with a handicap. By the time Cassidey and the Beerys laid keels for their ironclads in the spring of 1862, other shipyards in the Confederacy had been building naval vessels for over a year and already employed most the South’s ship carpenters. Other carpenters entered the army and in spite of the navy’s best efforts to have them transferred or detailed, were also unavailable. The two Wilmington yards reacted immediately, offering wages ranging from $1.00 to $0.50 higher per day than those paid elsewhere in the Confederacy. In Charleston most hands working on the *Palmetto State* earned $1.50 per day; laborers on the Atlanta in Savannah received $1.00; caulkers, machinists, and carpenters on the *Louisiana* in New Orleans made $1.50 per day, even as they worked in a potentially hazardous environment at Fort St. Philip; master carpenters employed on the James River ironclads earned $4.00 a day. By contrast, the Wilmington yards offered $5.00 daily for master carpenters, and $3.50 to $2.50 for first-class carpenters and ordinary laborers. Though there were exceptions, usually in regard to specialized labor, average wages at Wilmington were significantly greater than those paid across the South. These higher labor costs, already evident in 1862, increased steadily throughout the war.34

As the conflict dragged on the shrinking Confederate labor pool, coupled with the pressures of runaway inflation, forced the Wilmington yards to raise wages just to maintain their existing work forces. Labor costs skyrocketed. The Berry yard boosted its wages twice after only three months of construction. By June 1863 daily pay for second-class carpenters had doubled from $3.00 to $6.00. Crews normally worked six days a week but occasionally worked extra hours, further boosting costs. White workers at the Cassidey yard claimed $.50 extra for overtime. Cassidey also provided men for night work on the *North Carolina* at $9.00 to $10.00. In 1864 caulkers earned up to $12.00 per day while first-class carpenters made $9.50. By comparison, in 1864 the Confederate Congress raised pay for army privates from $10.00 to $13.00 a month.35

In spite of the high wages, the Wilmington yards never employed the sizable crews found at other yards. In Charleston, for example, the lowest paid worker at the Kirkwood & Knox yard earned $2.50 per day in July 1863; at the Beery yard the lowest paid employee made $4.00. In May 1864, James Marsh's Charleston yard paid its first-class carpenters $7.00 per day while the Beerys offered $9.50. Yet both Charleston yards maintained a larger work force than that of either Cassidey or the Beerys. This fact probably resulted from the availability of a larger and cheaper pool of black ship carpenters and laborers in Charleston and other Southern cities.36

For a time, the Wilmington shipbuilders attracted more workers. From June to September 1862 the Beery and Cassidey yards steadily enlarged their work forces. But

35. Beery and Cassidey vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45.
36. Ibid.
both yards experienced dramatic, if temporary losses during the yellow fever epidemic that fall. As workers fled the town, the labor force fell by 65 percent at the Cassidey yard and over 70 percent at the Beery yard. The shipwrights returned in early 1863 and the total number of workers employed in naval construction continued to grow. In the spring, as the Beery yard began work on the *Yadkin* and other small boats, employment at the navy yard soared to a wartime high. By mid-April naval construction employed over 180 men in the Beery yard, double the number engaged in June 1862. Thereafter, the number of workers employed on navy projects began to drop. In his annual report of 1863 Secretary Mallory, reviewing the state of ironclad construction throughout the Confederacy, noted: "The lack of skilled labor is seriously felt."37

The competition for labor in the national market was accompanied by a local duel between James Cassidey and the Beerys. Both yards did not offer the same wages at the same time and as one yard increased its salaries the other had to respond. The Beerys, who performed more work for the navy, took the lead in the bidding war and, consequently, maintained a larger workforce. James Cassidey had a reputation as a shrewd businessman, perhaps too shrewd. A private customer noted: "I am getting along very unpleasantly with 'Jessie Cassidey' he is a trifling fellow and I am very anxious . . . to terminate business with him." The same customer later complained that "Cassidey has been clamoring for money I paid him $3000 on Saturday and he wants more now." This characterization of Cassidey is supported by his wage schedules. Throughout the war Cassidey consistently offered lower wages than the Beerys, resulting in a steady flow of

workers to the navy yard. In July 1862 the Beerys employed about one hundred and ten men on the *North Carolina*, while Cassidey had only eighty. By March 1863 the navy yard employed over one hundred and sixty men yet Cassidey still counted eighty. This disparity slowed work on the *Raleigh* and influenced Lynch's decision to armor the *North Carolina* with the plating available to him at that time. The Beery ironclad, launched before the *Raleigh*, was probably at a more advanced stage of construction.\(^{38}\)

In March 1863 the Beerys significantly increased wages at their yard. At that time the brothers assumed greater responsibilities, including the construction of the *Yadkin*, several launches, small boats, and a storehouse, and needed more carpenters. Immediately the labor force employed in naval construction jumped to almost two hundred at the Beery yard and dropped to seventy at Cassidey's. Cassidey's force finally stabilized at an average of forty to fifty carpenters per month. Though the Beerys won the labor war they still did not have enough men. They had to shuffle workers between projects to support each one. Only after the yard finished the *North Carolina* in July did work on the *Yadkin*, started in March, begin in earnest.\(^{39}\)

While the general shortage of manpower is easy to identify, the quality of labor in Wilmington shipyards is more difficult to assess. Most Confederate shipyards tried to check rising labor costs by dividing their workers into classes based on ability and experience. First-class carpenters earned the most pay while fourth-class workers earned slightly more than ordinary laborers. This wage system was not new, but in a period of

\(^{38}\) Beery and Cassidey vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45; Browne to Mallett, 15 June 1864, 18 June 1864, Mallett Papers.
\(^{39}\) Beery and Cassidey vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45.
runaway inflation it allowed yard owners a degree of flexibility as labor costs followed an upward trend. The Beery yard generally employed fewer first- and second-class workers than Cassidey’s, but at both yards the combined totals of third- and fourth-class workers consistently outnumbered first- and second-class workers throughout the war. James Browne worried that the lack of skilled shipwrights might affect the quality of work on the Chatham while it repaired in the Cassidey yard. He wrote: "We have done a good deal of work on the Chatham but we are badly off for a foreman . . . . We cannot well get along without some head to direct the work."40

The presence of a larger proportion of third- and fourth-class carpenters in the Beery yard, however, may not denote a shortage of skilled labor. Race was another consideration that helped determine a worker’s pay rate. Some Cassidey vouchers specifically separated carpenters and laborers according to race, showing that blacks generally occupied the lower two of the four pay scales. These returns indicate that the number of blacks employed on the Raleigh was substantial, fluctuating from 25 to 45 percent of the total work force. Beery vouchers did not directly distinguish between black and white labor, though they show that third- and fourth-class workers, presumably blacks, totaled a slightly higher percentage of the overall work force. Many Confederate shipyards relied principally on black workers, free and slave, many of whom were skilled shipwrights. In Wilmington, slaves preferred shipyard work as an alternative to military construction at the forts on the lower Cape Fear. The prospect of hard, backbreaking labor for the army encouraged bonded carpenters and laborers to work hard. James

40. Beery and Cassidey vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45; Browne to Mallett, 21 May 1864, Mallett Papers.
Browne wrote that slaves working in the Cassidey yard "were afraid of being sent on the fortifications the result is that they are afraid of me and are now working well." Black labor, skilled and semi-skilled, free and slave, contributed substantially to the naval effort in Wilmington as it did throughout the Confederacy.  

Gilbert Elliott's observation that the navy's effort to build ships in Wilmington had not produced significant results as of January 1864 was correct, even if his understanding of the factors which retarded the process was not. Material shortages, uncooperative railroad officials, natural disasters, interservice competition, and demographic realities hampered Flag Officer Lynch and the navy at every turn. The primary result was delay, and diminished utility in the case of the North Carolina. In the spring of 1864, however, the Wilmington squadron assumed a tangible form as the navy yard turned out the Yadkin and Cassidey completed the Raleigh. Two years of trying labor finally yielded results.

41. Cassidey and Beery vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45; Browne to Mallett, 12 May 1864, Mallett Papers.
Chapter 4

The future looked bright for the Wilmington squadron in the spring of 1864. The addition of the *Yadkin* and *Raleigh* added power to a force that for almost a year had been represented only by the leaky, underpowered *North Carolina*. The presence of the *Raleigh* boosted the squadron's strength considerably and gave it a realistic chance to successfully meet its defensive commitments on the lower Cape Fear. For a moment, the squadron presented the appearance of an effective unit, capable of controlling the river and lending aid to the network of fortifications that guarded the entrances to the river. The moment, however, was brief.

The year that could have cloaked the Wilmington station with respectability produced only embarrassments and disaster. Early in 1864 tensions between Lynch and Whiting nearly erupted into a violent clash between the army and navy after several factors fueled animosity between the two officers and their services. The unfriendly exchange in the summer of 1863 had irreparably damaged personal relations between the two officers and severely strained their professional relationship as well. For several months, however, no major conflicts of interest tested what little spirit of cooperation remained between them. Whiting's interest in the new technology of torpedo boats and its possible application to the Cape Fear was the first major disagreement that aggravated the precarious association between he and Lynch in 1864.
Experimentation in the use of torpedo boats by Confederate engineers at Charleston first attracted Whiting's attention in 1863. In May Whiting sent his ordnance officer to Charleston with instructions to study General P. G. T. Beauregard's "torpedo boat system." A concern for the safety of blockade runners trading with Wilmington motivated Whiting's order. He noted: "From what I have heard I think by applying it here we can destroy one or more of the enemy's fine sloops of war." The successful attack of the torpedo boat David against the blockader New Ironsides in October rekindled the general's interest. He again sent an officer to Charleston to "procure drawings, dimensions, &c and notes by which you could arrange or construct similar ones here." In a letter to Beauregard Whiting remarked: "There is a large fleet off here of wooden vessels and I think something ought to be done."¹

With specific information in hand, Whiting determined to build two torpedo boats of his own at Wilmington. In December the general received Secretary Seddon's sanction and directed his ordnance officer to prepare specifications and order one boat each from Cassidey and the Beerys, who immediately started building. Whiting also engaged Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond and Hart & Bailey to produce machinery and hardware for the two boats. In an attempt to speed construction he urged Seddon to send an army officer abroad with authorization to procure materials. Whiting hurried the project as quickly as possible, convinced that the boats could "destroy enemy's

ships and materially aid the running of the blockade with our supplies if the matter is pushed." Work proceeded slowly, however, and early in 1864 the general reported that the boats were "nowhere near ready."²

Lynch's reaction to Whiting's plan was predictable. The captain rightly viewed the initiative as yet another encroachment on the navy's authority. The navy was already building one torpedo boat at the Beery yard and the work on two new boats would divide precious labor and materials, slowing the completion of all three vessels. Furthermore, the existence of two separate forces operating in the same waters would create more confusion and inefficiency. Yet Whiting insisted that the boats remain under army command. In a letter to Seddon he wrote: "It must be put in my hands and not in those of the navy." The flag officer's dissatisfaction was well known among naval officers around the South though no official communication of his disapproval survives. In February 1864, Lieutenant Augustus McLaughlin, stationed in Columbus, Georgia, passed the juicy gossip in a letter to another officer: "General Whiting and Commander Lynch have had a great row. Whiting is now building vessels on his own hook, so I hear."³

Lynch's reluctance to deploy a naval picket force in the lower entrance to the Cape Fear also caused friction between the two services. On the night of 28 February a Union small boat party led by Lieutenant William Cushing passed Fort

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² Whiting to James, 1 December 1863, ibid.; Whiting to Seddon, ibid.; Whiting to Cooper, 14 December 1863, ibid.
³ Whiting to Cooper, 14 December 1863, ibid.; Beery vouchers, Citizens File, RG 109; McLaughlin to Jones, 23 February 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 6, RG 45.
Caswell and landed at Smithville, hoping to capture Whiting's second in command Brigadier General Louis Herbert. Frustrated only by the general's absence, the raiders carried off a captain of his staff and rejoined the blockading squadron unnoticed. The incident concerned Whiting, who asked Lynch to employ small boats and maintain a more aggressive picket line in the harbor. Though Lynch agreed that a deficiency existed, he argued that his men, "mostly conscripts whose loyalty is not unquestionable," would desert. Lynch hoped that the presence on the lower river of the Yadkin and Raleigh, in conjunction with the North Carolina and Equator, would be "far more effective than rowing guard with boats manned by unreliable crews." Lynch's refusal to deploy new picket boats forced the army to perform the duty. Army officers complained bitterly. An officer of the Tenth North Carolina Battalion stationed at Fort Holmes wrote: "he [General Herbert] thinks that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty' and we have to picket the inlet in a boat, thereby performing the duty of those drones stationed at Wilmington, commonly known as the C. S. Navy."4

Competition for rail transportation aggravated relations between the two services as well. Work on the Albemarle and Neuse, both of which neared completion in the spring of 1864, slowed significantly while workers waited for iron plating to arrive from Augusta, Georgia, where a large quantity of iron plate awaited transportation. Lynch asked Whiting to help push delivery of the iron. Whiting conveniently replied that he had no authority over the track near Augusta,

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suggesting that the captain apply to General Beauregard for relief. In frustration, Lynch sent an officer to Augusta to expedite the movement. Finally the flag officer detailed an officer and fifteen men from the *Arctic* to load the armor and accompany it to Wilmington.\(^5\)

In March the iron finally reached Wilmington via the Wilmington and Manchester, but the army refused to provide cars on the Wilmington and Weldon for shipment north. Lynch applied twice daily to the Wilmington quartermaster for transportation, only to be rebuffed. Lynch informed Mallory of his frustrations, noting that "it is in the power of an acting assistant quartermaster to cause our transportation to be set aside at will. The importance of speedily completing the iron clad on the Neuse and Roanoke does not seem to be comprehended." While Mallory referred the letter to the secretary of war sixteen loads of iron plating sat at Wilmington waiting for transportation.\(^6\)

In this tense atmosphere of mutual enmity between Lynch and Whiting a minor incident involving the exportation of navy-owned cotton almost ballooned into open conflict. Early in the war, Secretary Mallory turned to cotton as a means of financing overseas naval construction. European investors bought navy cotton bonds bearing 8 percent interest, allowing navy agents to finance purchases. By August 1863 the navy received cotton from the Treasury Department at Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah for shipment abroad. In

\(^5\). Whiting to Lynch, 6 February 1864, Letters Sent Whiting's Command, RG 109; Lynch to Robinson, 7 February 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 8; Lynch to Robinson, 2 March 1864, ibid.

Wilmington Mallory appointed William Peters as the department's agent to receive cotton and send it through the blockade, though Lynch ultimately bore responsibility for the navy's interests. Regulations in place by 1864 dictated that blockade runners reserve a portion of their carrying capacity for government cargo. If the military was unable to fill its allotted space, the navy used its own cotton to supply the balance. In February 1864 two steamers, the *Alice* and *Hansa*, cleared Wilmington without their share of government cotton. Lynch agreed to their departure on the condition that the vessels load one half of their cargo with navy cotton on their next voyage. In early March, however, the owners of both vessels reneged on their pledge when Peters attempted to load the navy cotton. Mallory instructed Peters to hold the runners and call on Lynch for support if necessary. The stage was set for a showdown. 7

On 6 March, as the *Alice* prepared to clear Wilmington, Peters threatened to detain the vessel unless it complied with the February arrangement. The *Alice*’s agent appealed to Whiting, who possessed authority to regulate the harbor and issued all passes for departure and clearance. Whiting was unfamiliar with the navy's claim and summoned Peters. Unwilling to detain the ship unnecessarily, the general telegraphed Secretary of War Seddon for instructions. Seddon "directed that the claim of the Navy be sustained," and accordingly, Whiting held

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7. Mallory to Memminger, 27 December 1861, Letters Received Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, RG 365; Mallory to Memminger, 26 May 1863, 4 August 1864, Citizens File, RG 109; Jimmy to Katie, 10 March 1864, Randall Papers; for details regarding blockade running regulations and the shipment of navy cotton, see Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 55, 93,152-156.
the runner until it shipped the navy cotton, reminding Peters that only he had the authority to detain and release vessels in port. On the eighth, the *Hansa* hauled out from the quartermaster's wharf, apparently ready to depart without its share of navy cotton. Fearing the runner might "slip off," Lynch ordered the *Alice* to anchor under the guns of the *North Carolina*, then undergoing minor repairs at the navy yard. When the runner's captain "declined to do so," Lynch ordered a marine guard on board the steamer, weighed its anchor, and moved it to a position opposite the ironclad. 8

While Lynch was anchoring the *Alice* opposite the *North Carolina*, Whiting received a brief note from the blockade runner's agent, informing him of Lynch's order to anchor near the ironclad. When the general learned that Lynch had in fact seized the vessel, he fired off a quick note to the captain demanding an explanation. "I will permit no interference with any vessel whatever in this department not belonging to the C.S. Navy by any authority but my own," he wrote, "or by orders emanating from the War Department." Whiting ordered a guard on board the *Hansa* to secure the steamer. Lynch answered that standing orders from Mallory directed him to seize *Alice* and *Hansa* should they attempt to depart without navy cotton. Lynch ordered Muse to prevent the *Hansa* from "slipping off." In a tone reminiscent of that employed against Governor Vance in May 1863, he wrote: "Commander Muse is ordered not to use force except in the last resort, but if it be necessary . . . to exercise all the means at his disposal. In

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this I will sustain him against any authority not paramount to that of the honorable Secretary of the Navy, and the only one I recognize as paramount thereto is that of His Excellency the President of the Confederate States." Curiously, Lynch expressed his desire to avoid "a collision between two branches of a profession which should ever act in harmony."\(^9\)

Dissatisfied with Lynch's haughty reply, Whiting escalated the battle of wills to the point of the bayonet. The general refused to discuss the details of the case and sent his adjutant, Major James H. Hill, with a communication "requiring" Lynch to remove the marine guard at once. Commander Muse, suddenly finding himself in an untenable position, called on Whiting to personally inform the general of his orders to sink the *Hansa* if it attempted to leave port. Whiting assured Muse that he never intended to clear the vessel and that he would have detained her (as in the case of the *Alice*) had Lynch or Peters requested him to do so. Satisfied that the navy's interests would be respected Muse promised to remove the marine guard and release the blockade runner to Whiting's custody. Muse returned minutes later, however, with news that Lynch specifically forbade him to remove the marine guard. Whiting penned a brief to Adjutant and Inspector General Samuel Cooper in Richmond, asking for instructions and Lynch's removal from command. In the meantime the general placed an armed guard at the navy wharf to prevent communication between the Wilmington squadron and the shore.\(^{10}\)

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10. Whiting to Lynch, 8 March 1864, ibid.; Whiting to Seddon, ibid.
On the morning of the ninth the crisis reached a climax. During the night an army guard boarded the Hansa and returned her to the quartermaster's wharf. Traditional accounts maintain that Whiting's men "ejected" the marines, but apparently no confrontation occurred; Muse may have already removed the marine guard contrary to Lynch's orders. That morning, as Lynch attempted to board the Yadkin, he "was challenged by a sentry, and might have been shot, had not the intrepid old man put aside the brute's musket with his walking cane and awed him with a look of command." On board the Yadkin, Lynch took the North Carolina in tow and moored her opposite the Hansa with guns run out and "said if she was moved he would sink her." There the curious spectacle presented itself to Wilmington citizenry for the remainder of the day, as both branches of the Confederate service faced off, ready for battle with each other. That night Adjutant and Inspector General Cooper finally responded to Whiting's telegram, ordering him to "desist at once from any collision with Captain Lynch or his people." Whiting removed the armed guard and the standoff ended peaceably.\textsuperscript{11}

The Hansa affair represented the total breakdown of communication and cooperation between Lynch and Whiting, a breakdown that manifested itself in a most embarrassing fashion. The general public could not help but notice the interruption of daily routine along the waterfront. A workman at the Clarendon works observed: "the land forces ware in arms a day and night linch brant up the iron cladd North Carolina abrest with her guns run out and loaded. I thout that

\textsuperscript{11} Jimmy to Katie, 10 March 1864, Randall Papers; John C. McRae to Don, 12 March 1864, Hugh MacRae Papers; Cooper to Whiting, 9 March 1864, O.R.A., Ser. I, Vol. 33.
was funny, our men going to fight. I was glad the settled." Lynch's secretary, James Randall, wrote: "It was proposteous . . . to march his [Whiting's] regiment down against the iron clads - a single broadside from which would have scattered him and his miscreants to the winds." A Wilmington businessman stated: "Who was whipped the outside world does not know . . . Lynch and Whiting have gone to Richmond and so the affair stands as far as the public are informed."12

In Richmond both officers met with Mallory, Seddon, and President Davis to discuss the incident and interservice relations at Wilmington. Lynch apparently left Wilmington on his own initiative on or about the tenth. Davis personally summoned Whiting on the eleventh. Randall plainly remarked, "either he [Lynch] or Whiting will have to be removed of command." The details of the Richmond meetings are not known but Randall feared that Whiting, "by political intrigue, personal influence with the Presdt, and through the weakness of Mallory," would have the better of it. Events proved Randall partially correct. Lynch seemingly took the opportunity to express his grievances against the army and Whiting, while the general lobbied for Lynch's removal. After a joint conference including all the principal participants, "Mr. Mallory came in for the chief blame." Davis decided that Mallory's orders directing Lynch to seize the ship if necessary was the chief cause of the confrontation. Yet Davis returned both officers to

12. Wm. A. Burgess to Father, 13 March 1864, Confederate States of America Archives, Army, Officers and Soldiers Miscellaneous Letters, Duke University Library; Jimmy to Katie, 10 March 1864, Randall Papers; MacRae to Don, 12 March 1864, Hugh MacRae Papers.
Wilmington, where Randall lamented that "things will go on as usual." Whiting certainly felt that the Richmond conference had vindicated his actions. When Lynch later offered to supply documents explaining his position, Whiting boasted:

I do not desire to enter into any further correspondence on the subject, since so far as I am concerned, it has been settled by my superiors at Richmond, & to my satisfaction. As they did not see fit to refer your report to me, I do not feel called upon to examine it . . . I regretted the matter; but it was entirely official - Had it been otherwise, or my course of action been due to any other feeling than a sense of duty, I should hardly have had the honor of an interview upon the relations of the army and the navy here, by direction of the President, with the Honorable Mallory, personally so satisfactory to myself.13

Though Whiting blamed Lynch for the Hansa affair, the existing records do not entirely support his claim. Lynch's orders to hold the Hansa and Alice had been communicated to their agents ahead of time. Whiting certainly knew of the orders in regard to the Alice, though he claimed no knowledge of their application to the Hansa. Lynch should have also informed Whiting of the difficulty before seizing the Hansa. The seizure on the eighth, however, did not project an atmosphere of potential conflict between the army and navy to the public. When Whiting "required" the marine guard to leave the steamer, Lynch advocated an appeal to Richmond to prevent any appearance of confrontation. Randall recalled: "he [Lynch] deprecated any public exhibition of feeling, and wished to refer the conflict of authority to Richmond for settlement. Gen Whiting declined . . . Flag Officer Lynch had no discretion in the matter. He had to obey orders." Whiting's

13. Jimmy to Katie, 10 March 1864, 16 March 1864, James Randall Papers; Whiting to Lynch, 22 March 1864, Whiting Letterbook, North Carolina Archives.
pride may also have been fortified with alcohol. The general had a reputation as a drinker and Randall claimed that "had his vanity been less and his love for liquor in curb [the] challenge for bloodshed and . . . shame to liberty" might have been avoided. Though Lynch acted in accordance with his orders, the whole affair stung as a slap in his face, a stain on the navy's honor.14

After the incident, however, "things" did not go on as usual. On 11 March the navy department sent Lt. James Wilkinson to Wilmington for "special duty." Wilkinson's orders directed him to oversee the shipment of government cotton from Wilmington, inviting "the cordial cooperation of the military authorities in command." Mallory ordered the lieutenant to establish a system of lights and signals, examine pilot's qualifications, determine the suitability of vessels for carrying government cargoes, and establish port regulations necessary to regulate the exportation of government cotton. Though the assignment reflected the increasing importance of the cotton trade to the Confederacy, it also recognized the need for interservice cooperation at Wilmington and the deficiencies of the arrangement that helped produce the recent "collision." Mallory had discussed the appointment with Seddon before the Hansa affair, which undoubtedly prompted a quick response. Wilkinson's appointment may have been the subject of Whiting's "satisfactory" interview with the secretary.15

Wilkinson quickly set to work, making a number of improvements that helped blockade runners safely enter and clear the port. Under Wilkinson's direction James Cassidey built five wooden lighthouses on the lower Cape Fear, two at Fort Fisher, and three on Oak Island. The range lights produced immediate results. One soldier noted: "There are more vessels in port than at any time since the war. None get aground since the lights have been properly displayed." The lieutenant also made arrangements to rescue stranded crews and cargoes before Union blockaders captured them. In addition to these useful services Wilkinson's appointment smoothed ruffled feathers and eased tensions between the army and the navy.  

On the heels of the confrontation between Lynch and Whiting, a more somber misfortune touched the Wilmington station. On 8 April Commander Muse died of typhoid fever. At Wilmington the navy staged a large funeral, attended by many locals and members of both services. An honor guard of army and navy personnel escorted Muse's remains to Warrenton, North Carolina, for burial. Engineer Charles Peek of the *North Carolina* wrote that Muse was "loved and respected by all who knew him." The commander probably contracted the disease from other crewmen on board his ship; the ship's surgeon reported several cases of typhoid between March and May, including one death ten days before Muse's. Command of the *North Carolina* fell to Commander William L. Maury.

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\textsuperscript{16} James Craig voucher, 28 May 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 8; Cassidey voucher, 4 July 1864, ibid; James W. Albright, 11 May 1864, Vol. I, Albright Diary, Southern Historical Collection; see Wise, \textit{Lifeline of the Confederacy}, 157.
formerly in charge of the raider *Georgia*. Maury blended well in his new command. Crewman on the ironclad took to their new commander quickly and Randall noted that "he is as amiable as he can be."\(^{17}\)

Only days after the funeral Mallory readjusted the command system in North Carolina. Mallory assigned Captain Robert F. Pinckney to command the Naval Defenses of North Carolina, excepting Wilmington and the Cape Fear River. The new arrangement, which officially split Lynch's old command in two, removed the ironclad *Neuse* from Lynch's authority, coupling it with the *Albemarle*, under the charge of Commander Cooke since January. The reasons for the change are unclear. Pinckney's new command probably reflected the need for coordination in the North Carolina sounds once the *Neuse* and *Albemarle* became operational. Under an integrated command, conflicts of authority would be avoided and cooperation between both vessels assured. The assignment, however, may have reflected back to Lynch's conflict with Gilbert Elliott and Governor Vance. During the course of the disagreement, Cooke sided with Vance and Elliott, condemning Lynch's management of the *Neuse*. By limiting Lynch's authority to the Cape Fear River, Mallory could appease Governor Vance and reduce the potential for conflict between the captain and his civilian detractors.\(^{18}\)

Two weeks after Muse's death, yet another disaster disrupted naval activity at Wilmington. On 26 April fire broke out at the government cotton yard on

\(^{17}\) Wm. Gregg to C. L. Jones, 28 March 1864, 8 April 1864, Confederate States Navy Papers; Jimmy to Katie, 13 April 1864, 21 May 1864, Randall Papers; Charlie to Ma, 16 April 1864, Peek Papers; Charlie to Bro, 6 June 1864, ibid.

\(^{18}\) Robert F. Pinckney, ZB File; Cooke to Vance, 28 January 1864, Vance Papers.
Eagle Island. The blaze spread south from the warehouses at the terminus of the
Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, engulfing twenty-five railroad cars, large
quantities of stored cotton, one quarter mile of the wharf, and the government
cotton press. At the Beery yard the flames consumed the saw mill at the back of
the yard, a quantity of cut timber, and the army and navy torpedo boats, then
nearing completion. The Daily Journal published an account of the damage,
omitting reference to the boats: "The damage to the machinery and tools at B.W.
& W.L. Beery's ship-yard is comparatively light. Most of the workman's tools
were saved. They expect to be able to resume work in about three weeks."
Investigators never determined the cause of the blaze, but riverfront fires were not
uncommon in Wilmington. One year earlier a similar outbreak, ignited by sparks
from a passing steamer, occurred at the Wilmington and Weldon yard. Private
shippers shouldered the principal financial loss (estimated at six million dollars)
but the damage to the navy yard proved too devastating. The torpedo boats
offered the greatest potential for offensive action against Union blockaders and
represented a precious investment of finite resources; the navy could not replace
them. 19

The string of embarrassments and mishaps did not break the station's
spirit. With two new vessels under his command, Lynch deployed his squadron
downriver. The North Carolina had been anchored two miles below Wilmington

19. Wilmington Journal, 30 July 1863; Wilmington Daily Journal, 29 April 1864, 30
April 1864; Fayetteville Observer, 2 May 1864; see also, Ralph Donnelly, The Rebel
Leathernecks (Shippensburg: White Mane Press, 1989), 105-106.
at Fort French since December. In early April, after receiving minor repairs to her stack and battery at the navy yard, the ship took a position downriver near Fort Fisher. The focus of attention, however, was the newly commissioned *Raleigh*. On 20 April the ironclad joined her sister ship, boosting naval morale and strength. Lynch immediately determined to take the ship through New Inlet and attack the Union squadron offshore. Days later engineer Peek anxiously wrote home that "they are planning to go outside to fight with the blockading [sic] squadron off the fort."

For Lynch and his squadron, the availability of the *Raleigh* offered an opportunity to reverse the fortunes of the Wilmington station and win credibility for the navy. The service's inability to drive off blockaders and protect blockade runners produced much criticism for Lynch and the navy, even though the ironclads were not designed for offensive operations in the open ocean. In November 1863, Vance asked Mallory "whether something might not be done to arrest the depredations of the enemy upon vessels trading" with Wilmington. Lynch replied that the "draft of the 'N. Carolina' is too great to cross the bar, and her sister ship, the 'Raleigh' is incomplete." The flag officer hoped to use his torpedo boat against the blockading squadron; unfortunately, his hopes for a successful torpedo attack literally vanished in smoke. The *Raleigh* represented the navy's only chance to earn respect from the army and the general public.

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20. Charlie to Sis, 22 April 1864, Peek Papers.
Divers from Charleston measured the ship's draft in mid-April, and finding it sufficient to cross the bar, Lynch prepared for an attack. 21

Though the *Raleigh* was complete and in commission, the ship was not yet operational. The manning problem that frustrated Lynch as the *North Carolina* fitted out had never been solved; the new ironclad did not have officers or a crew. Mallory sent Lieutenant John Pembroke Jones from Richmond to command the steamer. Jones had served on the James River and at Savannah, where he commanded the ironclad battery *Georgia* and another *Richmond*-class ironclad, the *Savannah*. Lynch pulled other officers from the *North Carolina* and *Arctic* to round out the complement. The flag officer ordered most of the *North Carolina*'s sailors on to the *Raleigh* as well, stripping her crew to the bare essentials. On board the older ironclad, Engineer Peek wrote: "I have been keeping watch ever since our men have been on the Raleigh. We only had 4 officers on board Pay master Surgeon and two Engineers I forgot our Captain he made 5." 22

The lack of ordnance stores also slowed Lynch's preparations. The *Raleigh*'s battery, consisting of one IX-inch gun, one VII-inch Brooke rifle, and two 6.4-inch Brooke rifles, differed slightly from that of the *North Carolina*, armed only with four Brooke rifles. The exact placement of the new ironclad's ordnance is unknown. One of the VII-inch Brookes probably occupied the forward pivot; with longer range, the rifled gun would have allowed the ship to

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21. Lynch to Vance, 15 November 1863, Vance Papers; Charlie to Bro, 30 December 1863, Peek Papers; Smith and Broadfoot voucher, 25 April 1864, Confederate States Navy Papers.
22. John Pembroke Jones, ZB File; Charlie to Sis, 7 May 1864, Peek Papers.
attack from greater distances. The larger IX-inch gun may have occupied the aft pivot, to generate greater firepower at close range. The stores for the Brooke guns could be borrowed from the North Carolina but the Ordnance Bureau had to send powder and shot for the IX-inch gun from Richmond. The bureau shipped the stores in late-April.  

Chances for a successful attack hinged on rigorous training, since most Wilmington sailors had little, if any, combat experience. At least thirty-five men from the North Carolina participated in a small boat expedition against New Bern led by Lt. John Taylor Wood in January, but their involvement in the action was probably minimal. A few seamen transferred from other stations, such as the James River, Charleston, and Savannah, brought combat experience with them. But most Wilmington crewmen were conscripts from the army; for the majority of them, the forthcoming attack would be their first experience in combat. Lynch and Jones spent several weeks training the Raleigh's crew, preparing them for battle. One crewman noted that "the men and Officers are drilling every day getting everything in fighting trim."  

Lynch planned his attack for the night of 6 May, less than a month after the Raleigh's arrival on the lower Cape Fear. That day Lynch anchored the ironclad, accompanied by the Yadkin and Equator, just inside the bar at New Inlet. The flag officer communicated with Colonel William Lamb, commander of

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24. Charlie to Sis, 22 April 1864, Peek Papers; Muse to Charles Lucien Jones, 28 January 1864, Confederate States Navy Papers.
Fort Fisher, to arrange for cooperation between his squadron and the fort. Lamb agreed to burn extra range lights as navigational aids and Lynch promised to burn two lanterns on the Raleigh so that the fort's artillerists might distinguish it from Federal blockaders. At least one other steamer, possibly the side-wheeler Thistle, loaded and ready to run the blockade, joined the trio as they waited for night and the next high tide. At 8:00 P.M. Lamb lit the range lights atop the Mound Battery and the Raleigh, with Jones in command and the flag officer on board, slipped over the bar and into the Atlantic.\(^{25}\)

The ensuing engagement, shrouded in darkness and marred by confusion, took the Union blockading squadron, well-adapted to night operations against unknown and unseen vessels, by surprise. The Raleigh, followed by the Thistle, made for the nearest blockader, U.S.S. Britannia, lying just off the bar. Earlier that afternoon, the Britannia's skipper warily eyed the suspicious gathering in the river, bringing his vessel in for a closer look. At 8:30 the blockader discovered the approaching ram and quickly put to sea. Firing as it advanced, the ironclad closed to within six hundred yards, forcing the Federal to change course three times to escape. The Britannia returned fire and sent up several signal rockets to warn other blockaders. As the chase continued, the Thistle turned northeast and escaped to sea. Gathering steam, the Union vessel outran the ironclad, and with an ineffectual parting shot, disappeared into the darkness. Other blockaders

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\(^{25}\) See James Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1916), 480-481; Federal reports confirm the presence of a blockade runner among the vessels anchored inside the bar. In *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, Stephen Wise estimates the Thistle's departure from Wilmington as 6 May.
responded to the flares, supposing a blockade runner had been cornered, but none made contact with the Raleigh. For two hours the ironclad lay undetected, her presence known only to one of the eight Union vessels on station that night.  

The Raleigh next made contact with the U.S.S Nansemond. The Nansemond had responded to the Britannia's signals three hours previously, but finding nothing unusual, returned to her station off the bar. At 11:45 the Federal "discovered a sail" laying dead in the water. The Nansemond steamed closer and challenged the "strange vessel" that got underway, "steering directly toward us." After a third challenge the blockader fired on the dark ship, now only five hundred yards off. Much to the Federal's surprise the ship returned fire, the shot passing over the walking beam. With the ram quickly bearing in, the Nansemond "put on more steam" and fled seaward, burning a blue light to warn the other Union vessels. The Raleigh gave chase only to be outrun by her lighter, faster, more maneuverable opponent.  

For several hours silence blanketed the waters off of New Inlet as the Raleigh steamed unnoticed through the blockading squadron. At 4:25 A.M. the U.S.S. Howquah sighted the ironclad approaching from the direction of Fort Fisher. The blockader headed offshore, followed by the ram, "making towards us fast." As daylight broke the two ships exchanged shots without effect. At 5:00 other Union vessels steamed toward the sound of gunfire, and by 5:50, all eight Union vessels guarding New Inlet gathered around the ram, carefully maintaining  

27. J. H. Porter to B. F. Sands, 7 May 1864, ibid.
a safe distance. At 6:00 the ironclad put a shot through the *Howquah*’s stack and
turned for New Inlet. The Union vessels followed slowly and watched as the
*Raleigh* crossed the bar at 6:45. An observer summarized the action: "At night I
witnessed a few rounds between the Yankee fleet off Fort Fisher & our ironclads
at Wilmington which went down to try their skill in the sea. The sight was
beautiful - the Yankees displayed signal lights - blue & red - and shot up brilliant
rockets; but our fleet ran them off - no serious damage done." At Fort Fisher,
Confederate gunners fired a nine-gun salute as the ram passed into the Cape Fear
River. In light of the station's recent embarrassments, the salute must have been
gratifying for Lynch and his men.²⁸

The night's engagement, however, had accomplished little. Surviving
records do not indicate a clear objective in the attack. If Lynch intended to escort
the *Thistle* out of New Inlet or create a diversion to facilitate her escape, the attack
proved a success. But having accomplished that objective, why did the *Raleigh*
steam through the darkness for ten more hours? Lynch may have hoped to imitate
Captain Duncan Ingraham's January 1863 foray against the blockading squadron
off Charleston Harbor. In this respect, Lynch's assault was less successful. The
*Richmond* vessels, built for harbor defense, could not catch fast steamers in the
open ocean. In Charleston a dense mist obscured Ingraham's ironclads, allowing
them to close on their prey. Conditions on 6 May did not favor surprise. A
Wilmington sailor wrote: "she [Raleigh] went over the bar last night with the

²⁸ W. Balch to W. A. Parker, 7 May 1864, ibid; James W. Albright Diary, 6 May
1864.
expectation of sinking some of the blockades off this port; and the night was a bright star light night and they saw her before she could ram into them." The Britannia, Nansemond, and Howquah, though taken off guard, got underway quickly and easily outran the Raleigh. The ironclad temporarily drove the blockaders off station, but did not inflict any serious damage on them. Lynch's likely objective was to earn some measure of respect for the Wilmington station. To that end, the attack failed miserably.  

Passing through the inlet, the Raleigh turned downriver and grounded on a bar known as "the Rip." As the tide dropped the ship's bow stuck hard as the stern floated free. Under the weight of her heavy armored casemate, the ironclad hogged and finally "broke her back;" the keel simply snapped under the strain. Within two days water lapped at the ship's gun deck. James Randall visited the scene and remarked: "just a few yards from the channel, was all that remains of the ironclad 'Raleigh.' She was very much sunken at the stern, lifting her bow considerably . . . altogether she had the appearance of a monsterous turtle stranded and forlorn." A piloting error that took the ship only yards off course resulted in the crowning disaster for Lynch, and the Wilmington station.  

The impact on the station's morale was immediate. Engineer Peek recorded: "A great Calamity has befallen the navy in this station." Again, the navy became the object of scornful insults from the army. One soldier scoffed: "The ironclad that scared the Yankee fleet so got aground in the mouth of New

29. For information on the Charleston attack, see Still, Iron Afloat, 116-125.
30. Jimmy to Katie, 29 June 1864, Randall Papers.
Inlet & it is reported a total wreck - so much for our unwieldy boats. If they were built more for sea-going and less for protecting those on board, they might do good service." The flag officer "was very much down in the mouth about it, he expected to do great things with her as she could go over the bar." The debacle disappointed Peek and his fellow crewmen, who were "in hopes that the Raleigh would do something for the navy does not stand high at this station."\(^\text{31}\)

In the wake of the disaster the navy assembled a court of inquiry to review the incident and determine its cause. The court exonerated Lynch and Jones, claiming that "the loss of the Raleigh can not be attributed to negligence or inattention on the part of anyone on board of her, and every effort was made to save the vessel." The court further concluded that the ship's draft "was too great, even lightened as she had been on this occasion, to render her passage of the bar, except under favorable circumstances, a safe operation." Ultimately the report blamed faulty construction for the wreck, noting that "her strength seems to have been insufficient to enable her to sustain the weight of her armor long enough to permit every practicable means of lightening her to be exhausted."\(^\text{32}\)

Faulty workmanship may not have been the cause for the wreck. The Raleigh was not the only Confederate ironclad to break up after grounding. The Columbia in Charleston suffered a similar fate. Confederate ironclads, burdened by the extra weight of their armored casemates, simply could not endure the

\(^{31}\) James W. Albright Diary, 8 May 1864; Charlie to Sis 7 May 1864, 9 May 1864, Peek Papers.

stresses caused by grounding. Furthermore the weight of the Raleigh's armor was not spread evenly around the ship when it grounded. The North Carolina grounded hard in July, but under different circumstances. The entire ship lodged on a shoal and rose five feet out of the water at high tide. Crewmen packed their bags, remembering the Raleigh, in anticipation of disaster. But the ship, supported by the river bottom from stem to stern, held together. In April the ironclad Neuse grounded bow first much as the Raleigh did, but it was not completely armored and did not wreck. The Raleigh's loss resulted directly from a piloting error and indirectly from an inherent design flaw. The navy certainly had an interest in exonerating itself.33

Salvage work began immediately and continued for several months. The ship's guns were removed and sent up to Wilmington. Lynch hired a local steamer, the J. R. Grist, to transport materials back to the navy yard for storage. In June divers retrieved the vessel's boilers and sent them to Columbus, Georgia, for use in the gunboat Chattahoochee; the engines, shafting, and propeller remained on board. Of particular importance was the ship's armor, which had caused Lynch so much trouble and expense. Workmen carefully stripped as much iron as possible from the wreck, successfully clearing the casemate. A large portion of the plating around the knuckle and below the surface could not be retrieved.34

33. Charlie to Sis, 6 July 1864, Peek Papers; for details on Confederate ironclad design, see Holcombe, “The Evolution of Confederate Ironclad Design.”
34. D.G. Worth voucher, 20 June 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 8, RG 45. For information regarding the Raleigh wreck site, see Martin D. Peebles, “C.S.S. Raleigh:
The *Raleigh*’s loss all but eliminated the navy’s defensive capabilities on the Cape Fear. Lynch’s squadron, consisting of the receiving ship *Arctic*, the leaky, partially armored *North Carolina*, and the gunboats *Yadkin*, *Equator*, and *Caswell*, could offer but little resistance to any Union force that might pass the forts and enter the Cape Fear. Mallory responded quickly, sending Chief Constructor John L. Porter from Richmond to Wilmington with orders to "build and equip . . . an iron clad war steamer in the shortest possible time." In an effort to streamline bureaucracy the secretary authorized him to regulate his own activities and submit his bills to the Wilmington station paymaster for payment. Porter optimistically claimed he could finish the vessel in three months. Engineer Peek remarked: "I think if they finish her in 9 months they will surprise me very much."35

The year that held such promise for the Wilmington station brought only bitter disappointments to Lynch and his men. Once again, the fate and reputation of the navy on the Cape Fear hinged on its ability to build and operate an effective warship in Wilmington. The process had been difficult enough in 1862 and 1863. In 1864, however, the exigencies of war accentuated shortages and delays across the Confederacy, hindering Southern industry at every turn. In Wilmington, the realities of war altered the navy’s role as it struggled to maintain a presence on the

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35. Mallory to Porter, 23 May 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 8; Charlie to Bro, 4 June 1864, Peek Papers.
Cape Fear. The future that had seemed bright in the spring of 1864 looked dark as summer arrived.
Chapter 5

The calamities of the spring of 1864 forced Secretary Mallory to reconsider Confederate naval policy and its application to the Cape Fear. The *Raleigh* disaster ultimately transformed the role of the Wilmington squadron. In a race against time, Mallory tried to correct the mistakes of the past and build a new squadron that might secure Wilmington's future. Mallory took new steps to strengthen the naval presence on the river and create a useful squadron that could participate in the region's defense. Numerous obstacles, however, blocked the implementation of Mallory's initiatives. Confederate defeats on distant battlefields dislocated and interrupted industrial activity throughout the South. Worse yet, Union strategists recognized Wilmington's importance to the Confederate war effort; each passing day brought the long-expected Union attack closer.

The new ironclad commenced by Porter in May represented a major change in naval policy as applied at Wilmington. The new vessel, unofficially known as C.S.S. *Wilmington*, shared few characteristics with her *Richmond*-class predecessors, utilizing a design that emphasized speed and offensive capabilities. The ironclad was to be 224 feet between perpendiculars with a 34 foot moulded beam. The ship's nine and one-half foot draft measured some two and one-half feet less than the *Richmond* design. Most significantly, the *Wilmington* would carry a small two-gun battery, each gun being housed separately in one of two small twenty-one foot octagonal casemates, located fore and aft. "She will have
two shields. Something like the Yankee turrets," noted one astute observer. The new design dispensed with the ram, a prominent feature of the Richmond vessels and most other Confederate ironclads, but offered an overhang at the stern to protect the ship's two propellers. Two high pressure engines, each attached to a propeller shaft by means of a gearing system that produced greater revolutions, supplied the ship's motive power. The Wilmington was the only vessel of its type built in the Confederacy.1

The Wilmington's unique characteristics stemmed from the unsuitability of the Richmond design for service on the Cape Fear. Saddled with deep drafts and weak power plants, the Raleigh and North Carolina could not freely navigate the lower river, clogged by shoals and shallow inlets. The new ironclad's small casemates required less armor, thereby reducing the ship's tonnage and draft. Furthermore, the Wilmington's machinery promised greater speed, remedying the deficiency revealed by the Raleigh's foray into the open ocean. The improvements incorporated into the Wilmington's design recognized the unique requirements imposed by the Cape Fear. Surely the new ironclad came closer to the Wilmington Journal's concept of "a most efficient vessel" than either the Raleigh or the North Carolina.2

2. Ibid. Holcombe writes: "The Raleigh's primary failings were insufficient speed . . . and excessive draft . . . . Two original plans of the Wilmington indicate a potential improvement in the first shortcoming and a definite improvement in the second."
The _Wilmington_’s_ departure from the standard casemated design incorporated by most Confederate ironclads indicated that it was not intended solely for harbor defense. The lack of vessels suitable for special duties other than harbor defense often embarrassed the Wilmington squadron. On several occasions, military authorities requested protection for work parties salvaging steamers wrecked outside the bar. Lynch could only offer the _Yadkin_ and _Equator_ for such service, though an ironclad would have been preferable. In response to Governor Vance’s November 1863 request to attack the blockaders off New Inlet, Lynch hopelessly proposed to arm the blockade runner _Advance_ with a spar torpedo. The _Wilmington_, with a lighter draft and better speed, could easily have served either of these purposes. Engineer Peek observed: "She will not draw but 9 ft. of water and we can carry her out side and destroy this blockading fleet."³

Aside from the potential operational advantages of the _Wilmington_ design, the ship offered an opportunity to check growing disappointment with the navy and its ironclad program. The defensive characteristics emphasized by the casemated design as adapted from the prototype _Virginia_ generated much criticism against the navy from outside observers. General P. G. T. Beauregard and his political ally, South Carolina Congressman William Porcher Miles singled out the _Richmond_ design for special condemnation. The general complained that the vessels were too slow, too weak, drew too much water, and were unseaworthy. At Wilmington, the _North Carolina_’s inability to cross the bar produced the same

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³ Ibid., 130; Charlie to Sis, 24 July 1864, Peek Papers.
censure from Governor Vance and others who wanted the navy to attack Union
vessels off the coast. Mallory answered the criticisms in a letter to Miles, stating
that the Richmond vessels were built "for harbor defense chiefly," and were never
intended to operate in the open ocean. Mallory's rebuttal, though rooted in naval
strategy and tactics, held little sway with anxious officials who remembered only
the singular success of Hampton Roads. The new ironclad might polish the
tarnished perception of a navy short on visible successes. ⁴

The Wilmington represented only one part of a plan to furnish a useful
squadron on the Cape Fear. As Porter pushed construction in the port city,
Mallory turned to foreign builders in an attempt to effect more immediate results.
In a July letter to Commander James Bulloch, the navy's chief representative in
Europe, the secretary wrote: "We require for the port of Wilmington two small
steamers . . . for service in the harbor . . . . They should be small, snug, strong, fast,
and handy vessels for quick working with light crews." Later, Mallory requested
two more gunboats from Europe, slightly larger than the first pair. The
department also ordered a number of torpedo boats and several small steam
launches to be used as picket boats at Wilmington and Charleston. Mallory's
foreign initiative acknowledged not only the pressing need for an effective naval
force at Wilmington, but also the inherent difficulty of building that force on the
Cape Fear. It was easier to contract for the vessels abroad and run them through

⁴ Beauregard to Miles, November 1863, O.R.A., Ser.1, Vol. 28; Mallory to Miles, 19
the blockade than to employ a local industrial infrastructure already taxed to capacity.\(^5\)

Mallory's plans for a foreign-built squadron hinged on secrecy and quick action. Bulloch engaged a Scottish builder, Peter Denny, to construct the small ironhulled gunboats, tentatively named *Ajax* and *Hercules*. Represented to the public as ocean going tugs, the two vessels measured 170 feet long, drawing 12 feet 6 inches, powered by two engines producing 120 horsepower. Mallory expected delivery of both ships in ninety to one-hundred days. Denny promised the *Ajax* by 1 January 1865, to be followed by *Hercules* in February. In accordance with Great Britain's policy of neutrality, both vessels would have to be armed at sea or in the Confederacy, adding days or even weeks to the transatlantic passage. At best the *Ajax* might reach Wilmington by February 1865, assuming no delays or complications interfered with Bulloch's plans.\(^6\)

While shipbuilders at Wilmington and abroad worked to create a new squadron for the station, Mallory decided to use the port as a base of operations for Confederate commerce raiders. The decision added an entirely new element to the naval presence on the Cape Fear. In July 1864 the navy purchased the blockade runner *Atalanta* and outfitted her for service as a cruiser. Renamed C.S.S. *Tallahassee*, the ship made a successful cruise in August under the command of Lieutenant John Taylor Wood. In September Mallory purchased a

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second vessel, the *Edith*, and armed her as C.S.S. *Chickamauga*. Both ships cruised along the eastern seaboard in the late summer and early fall, making substantial contributions to the navy's guerre de course policy. As the only Confederate raiders to operate exclusively from a Southern port, the two vessels were unique among the few Confederate vessels that plied the high seas.\(^7\)

Though the two ships were not officially part of the Wilmington squadron, their operations from the port affected the station in several aspects. Many administrative details relating to both ships flowed through the Wilmington station office, adding work for the flag officer and the station paymaster. Vouchers and receipts for supplies and ordnance stores, as well as warrants from the Treasury Department, all followed the same protocol as other paperwork relating directly to the squadron. Since the two vessels would operate outside of the Confederacy, officers and crew were entitled to payment in specie. The department shuffled assistant paymasters from vessels in the squadron to the *Tallahassee* and *Chickamauga* to receive and disburse gold from the Treasury Department and handle any financial affairs incurred in foreign ports.

Wilmington station officers aided in fitting out both ships and preparing them for sea. Agent Peters bore the responsibility for coaling the two ships and supplying other articles purchased from private merchants. Lastly, the department transferred many of the squadron's seamen, gunners, and officers for duty on

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board the raiders. In port, both ships added to the naval presence on the river, though neither had great potential as a harbor defense vessel. In December the navy returned the Tallahassee to blockade running as the Chameleon but retained the Chickamauga for use on the Cape Fear.

The secretary also made a major personnel change, removing William Lynch from command of the Wilmington station on 13 September. Lynch's removal probably resulted from a combination of factors. The captain may have requested the change in wake of the March "collision" with Whiting. The affair proved embarrassing to Lynch, an officer already sensitive about his reputation. The fact that Whiting remained in command and believed he had bettered Lynch in the conflict must have seemed a vindication of the general. James Randall wrote shortly thereafter: "The Flag Officer cannot remain honorably." Certainly Mallory might have hoped for better interservice relations at Wilmington with another officer in command. Health concerns may have prompted the move as well. For reasons unknown Lynch expected to be removed as early as June 1864 and in August the captain made a long visit to Richmond. Though no evidence demonstrates that he suffered from any ailments, he survived the war by only five months. 8

Though Lynch's tenure as flag officer produced much controversy and unimpressive results, he admitted no wrongdoing in any case. His responsibilities, met under trying circumstances, were heavy. With the exception

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8. S. S. Lee to Lynch 13 September 1864, ZB File; Jimmy to Katie, 10 March 1864, 29 June 1864, Randall Papers.
of his conflicts with Whiting, and to a lesser degree Governor Vance, his conduct had been professional. Looking back on his command, he may have remembered the graceful introduction he wrote years earlier for his *Narrative of the United States' Expedition to the River Jordan*:

I am wholly unskilled in author-craft, and have sought rather to convey correct ideas, than to mould harmonious sentences. I send this forth, therefore, in trepidation, yet with a confiding trust in that charitable construction which the people of this country have never denied to any one who honestly does his best.

Mallory never returned Lynch to an active command.9

Captain Robert F. Pinkney replaced Lynch at Wilmington. Pinkney entered the United States Navy as a midshipman in 1827, being promoted to lieutenant in 1838 and commander in 1855. The captain had seen little combat action during the war though he did have some experience in command of ironclads. After a brief stint as commander of the gunboat *Livingston*, Pinkney reported to Georgia for command of the ironclad *Savannah*. As commander of naval defenses on the Roanoke and Neuse the captain gained his first experience as a station commander. Charged with the construction of a new ironclad on the Roanoke River in the summer of 1864, Pinkney rejected business arrangements proposed by shipbuilder Gilbert Elliott, fearing that his terms would generate excessive profits. Secretary Mallory was no doubt anxious to avoid further

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controversy at Wilmington, and the new flag officer's career had been pleasantly inconspicuous if nothing else. 10

Mallory's new initiatives, enacted after the Raleigh disaster, came too late to remedy the fundamental inadequacies of the Wilmington squadron. The North Carolina's deficiencies as a warship had been well known since December 1863. In June engineer Peek wrote: "I dont think she will last more than 6 months longer. She is beginning to leak very badly." Weeks later James Randall remarked that "the 'North Carolina' is so worm eaten that fears are entertaining of her speedy sinking." Even before the Raleigh's loss, most naval officers understood that the squadron would soon have only one ironclad in any event. Given the difficult nature of ship construction in the Confederacy, work on a new ironclad should have begun long before the misfortune of 7 May. Though new ironclad construction was underway at Richmond, Charleston, Mobile, and other points in the South, the navy took no steps to strengthen the existing squadron at Wilmington until events forced a reaction. Mallory's policies simply responded to a series of mishaps that utterly exposed the squadron's weakness. By then, however, insurmountable obstacles blocked the implementation of his plans. 11

Several problems slowed work on the Wilmington. Most important was the labor shortage, which had reached a critical point in 1864. Naval construction in Wilmington briefly halted after the April fire at the navy yard. For a month

10. Robert F. Pinkney, ZB File; Pinkney to Elliott, 2 July 1864, Vance Papers.
11. Charlie to Sis, 14 June 1864, Peek Papers; Jimmy to Katie, 10 July 1864, Randall Papers.
neither Cassidey nor the Beerys undertook any major naval projects, though both yards continued with repair work. Many ship carpenters apparently left town for employment on bigger jobs elsewhere; some may have even been laid off while the Beerys rebuilt. Whatever the cause, the labor force at Beery yard fell sharply in the late spring. When Porter began building the Wilmington in May only fifty carpenters worked on the vessel. In December the number remained unchanged. Lynch detailed over twenty men to work on the vessel, probably not enough to significantly impact progress. In addition, Porter brought more carpenters from the Halifax Naval Yard on the Roanoke. At the Cassidey yard James Browne, overseeing work on the Chatham, complained about the lack of hands and vainly tried to have more sent from Fayetteville.  

Wilmington shipbuilders were not alone in their thirst for skilled labor. Hart & Bailey and the Clarendon Works also lost workers in 1864. Thomas Roberts charged that the Wilmington and Weldon, which operated four forges to repair used rails at its Wilmington shops, unfairly encouraged machinists to leave his ironworks and work for the railroad. When Roberts travelled to Richmond to complain, the railroad replied that it, too, was loosing its best mechanics. Whiting later instructed railroad president Stephen Wallace to modify his labor policies, as they caused "dissatisfaction among the employees of other companies." The navy detailed a few men each to Hart & Bailey and Roberts, but skilled mechanics and

12. Beery vouchers, Confederate Navy Subject File, RG 45; Payroll, Wilmington Station, Third Quarter 1864, RG 45, NA; Browne to Mallett, 12 May 1864, 15 June 1864, 18 June 1864, Mallett Papers; Porter to Mallory, 10 June 1864, Letters Received Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, RG 365.
machinists were a rare find. The acute manpower shortage which threatened the entire Confederate war effort in 1864 seriously impacted the naval effort in Wilmington. There simply were not enough men to satisfy the Confederacy's need for soldiers and skilled workers.\textsuperscript{13}

Irregular payment schedules compounded the shortage of carpenters and machinists, lowering morale among the few workers that remained in Wilmington. Once again, incompetence at the Treasury Department affected the navy's ability to pay its labor force in a timely manner. On 10 June Porter informed Mallory that some of his workers had not been paid for six weeks and were "destitute of funds." He suggested: "The Paymaster here has no money but plenty of provisions. Can he not sell them some and may he not feel authorized to purchase provisions for them and sell them at cost. Their wages wont pay [for] their bread." In a familiar routine Mallory asked the secretary of the treasury to provide Paymaster Tredwell with the much needed funds. Mallory wrote: "Our mechanics are reported as being demoralized and dissatisfied because they cannot receive their wages and we are losing some of our best workmen."\textsuperscript{14}

The problem was not unique to Wilmington though it had surfaced there previously. By 1864, however, the Treasury Department's failure to supply the navy with funds was more widespread. Paymasters across the Confederacy

\textsuperscript{13} S. D. Wallace to Vance, 6 February 1863, Vance Papers; S. L. Fremont to Lt. Col. F. W. Sims, 24 April 1864, Wilmington & Weldon, Citizens File, RG 109; Whiting to S. D. Wallace, 31 August 1864, Letters Sent Whiting's Command, RG 109; Payroll, Wilmington Station, Third Quarter 1864, RG 45.

\textsuperscript{14} Porter to Mallory, 10 June 1864, Letters Received Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, RG 365: Mallory to Memminger, 13 June 1864, ibid.
reported similar problems. In April mechanics in Charleston were "much
distressed for want of funds." In September ship carpenters in Mobile went on
strike, refusing work until paid. From Savannah and at Pee Dee, South Carolina,
came similar complaints. In Wilmington Porter took special care to provide for
his workmen keep them content. In accordance with his earlier recommendation,
he provided cheap food and housing for those working at the navy yard. One
satisfied workman wrote: "I think we shall get a plenty to eat. Porter gived us 30
Pound of Flour, 10 Pounds of Bacon & 2 pounds of rice for 1 month if we eat it
up then he will sell us as much more at government prices." Porter seized the
initiative, solving at the local level an administrative problem that could not be
resolved in Richmond. Undoubtedly his system eased tensions among his
workforce.\textsuperscript{15}

Porter's manpower shortage, however, worsened in October when Union
pressure against the Army of Northern Virginia at Petersburg forced a recall of
soldiers detailed by the army to work in the navy yard. On 8 October General
Robert E. Lee ordered Whiting to "return all those men (Clingman's Brigade)
detailed by his order unless there be some cases where their services are deemed
indispensable for the performance of some important work." Accordingly,
Whiting ordered the city commandant to return all detailed workers to army
headquarters. When an army officer called at the navy yard on the thirteenth

\textsuperscript{15} Henry Myers to Mallory, 11 April 1864, ibid.; Mallory to Trenholm, 2 August
1864, 9 September 1864, ibid.; R. Elmore to Wife, 26 October 1864, Elmore Family
Papers.
Porter refused to release his workers. Whiting sent an armed guard to the yard and angrily demanded compliance to his orders: "All men belonging to the army will be reported at once. . . . It is for me to decide what work is important and indispensable here." Faced with few choices, Porter reluctantly returned the soldiers.  

Using a medium perfected by the former flag officer, Porter reported Whiting to the War Department for using force in recalling the detailed men. Whiting denied the charge claiming that "Mr. Porter's report is disingenuous: it conveys & was no doubt calculated to convey the impression that I had forcibly interrupted or interfered with Navy operations." The general went on to demonstrate that he now saw no further utility in naval construction at Wilmington:

I claim authority over men under my own orders. These were not transferred to the Navy. At various times when the exigencies of the service would permit I have at the request of the Naval Comdt assisted their work with details but always have claimed & exercised the right to withdraw such assistance whenever in my judgment it was necessary for work of much greater importance than the construction of Iron Clads. This is the case now & all these men detailed by me would have been taken & put to their proper service had no order from General Lee on the subject been received.

Whiting had by no means buried the hatchet with the navy. The feud that began between he and Lynch continued in the latter's absence. Unfortunately for Porter, the navy, and the Wilmington squadron, Whiting's refusal to view the

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construction of the *Wilmington* as "important work" materially handicapped any remaining chance for its completion.\(^\text{17}\)

The steady deterioration of the *North Carolina* made the speedy completion of the *Wilmington* imperative. By July the ship's leaky condition rendered it all but useless as a naval vessel. Engineer Peek wrote: "Our old ship has nearly played out. We have her moured [sic] head and stern in shoal water that is at low water. She is about twelve inches from the bottom, and she leaks so badly that we have to keep steam up all the time. There is no discipline on her now." For the month of August the ship remained immobilized, lying opposite Smithville. In vain engineers continued their losing battle against incoming water. In September the ironclad sank at its moorings, her hull riddled by torpedo worms. Peek advised his family of the misfortune from his new assignment on board the *Chickamauga*: "The old 'North Carolina' is no more. She full with water before I left. The men are now employed taking the iron from her." He later wrote that "she has broken in two pieces." Pinkney apparently left a small detachment on board the wreck during October, using the vessel as a picket station. But the *North Carolina*'s career as an ironclad warship, such as it had been, was over.\(^\text{18}\)

In response to the *North Carolina*'s deterioration the navy shipped the torpedo boat *Squib* by rail from Richmond to Wilmington. In April the *Squib*

\(^{17}\) Whiting to Seddon, 22 October 1864, ibid.
\(^{18}\) Charlie to Bro, 24 July 1864, Peek Papers; Charlie to Sis, 16 September 1864, 25 September 1864, ibid.
successfully attacked the U.S.S. *Minnesota* in Hampton Roads, earning a promotion for her commander, Hunter Davidson. The exact date of the boat's arrival on the Cape Fear is not known, but by August officers and men from the Wilmington station trained on the small craft, apparently preparing for an attack. One observer was not impressed with the *Squib*, noting its small size. "It looks about the size or very little larger than some of the boats that belong to ships . . . It is a regular little steam propeller, has an iron rod projecting from the bow, to which the torpedo is attached . . . I think anyone who would trust himself on board must have little regard for his own life." The boat may have used the *North Carolina* as a supply base, since a portion of the wreck remained above water. The navy also armed the *Equator* with a spar torpedo late in the year, but no evidence suggests that either vessel ever operated from Old or New Inlet.¹⁹

The demise of the *North Carolina*, closely following the loss of the *Raleigh*, left only one Wilmington-built vessel, the gunboat *Yadkin*, afloat in the Wilmington squadron. Whiting complained bitterly about the navy's failure to construct an effective force for use on the Cape Fear. He had already asked the War Department to supply him with galvanic torpedo batteries, noting that "It would be a very great addition to my power of defense, especially since the destruction of one ironclad of our Navy here, and the almost entire uselessness of

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¹⁹. Mary Johnston White Dairy, 26-30 August 1864, Beckwith Papers; Hart & Baily voucher, RG 45. At least one reference states that a Confederate torpedo boat operated from New Inlet in March 1864, failing to close with any Union vessels. The identity and final disposition of this boat, perhaps the army boat built by Cassidey, is unknown; Bonner Macon to Jenni, 7 March 1864, Macon Papers.
the other." Now the general's criticisms became more blunt and direct. To
Mallory, he wrote: "We have no naval forces afloat, and one is greatly needed."
To Lt. Wood, he complained of the "entire absence of anything like Naval guard
ships or defenses in the river." After three years of war the navy could muster
only three gunboats, one torpedo boat, and a floating battery to protect the
Confederacy's most important port.20

The lack of a naval force on the Cape Fear forced changes in the lower
river's defenses, changes that redefined the navy's role on the Cape Fear. Whiting
ordered a new battery built on the southern tip of Confederate Point. Its guns
were to bear on the New Inlet channel and prevent a passage by Union vessels.
Whiting considered the battery as a substitute for the ironclads, stating that the
battery "was only ordered when I lost all hope of aid in defense of the 'Rip bars'
by the North Carolina & Raleigh." The general reluctantly agreed to make the
battery a naval command, manned by navy personnel and armed with navy guns.
Construction began in September and by October, Whiting had temporarily
mounted two X-inch Columbiads. On 6 November Whiting notified Flag Officer
Pinkney that the battery was nearly complete and ready for its naval garrison. The
general noted that the "command will be exclusively naval, as much so as if the
defensive force was in a ship of war at anchor off the Rip." Pinkney ordered the
remaining officers and men, along with their provisions, small stores, and

20. Whiting to Cooper, 31 August 1864, O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol. 10; Whiting to Mallory, 27
September 1864, ibid.; Whiting to Wood, 25 September 1864, Letters Sent Whiting's
Command, RG 109.
accounts, transferred to the new work, dubbed Battery Buchanan. Though the
Yadkin, Equator, Caswell, Squib, and Arctic, remained afloat, the chief naval
presence on the Cape Fear officially passed from ship to shore. 21

As Battery Buchanan neared completion a minor controversy developed in
regard to its ordnance. Mallory wished to mount two XI-inch Brooke
smoothbores, the most powerful and destructive Confederate-built weapon
available, in the battery. Whiting objected, claiming that Brooke could provide
only a limited number of rounds for the guns. "It would not do to have this . . .
battery short of ammunition," he wrote, "It commands a pass which would let the
enemy into the inner harbor." The general further charged that the navy wanted to
mount the XI-inch guns at Buchanan so they could experiment with them.
Brooke assured Whiting that more ammunition was already in route and he denied
that the navy had ulterior motives in mounting his XI-inch guns. He explained:
"The object in desiring the XI-inch guns should be served by the navy was not
that the guns might be experimented with . . . but that the Navy not having an
opportunity to serve afloat at Wilmington might have one in a powerful battery of
their ordnance on shore." Ultimately the battery boasted an armament of two VII-
inch Brooke rifles and the two XI-inch smoothbores, far more powerful than
either the Raleigh or the North Carolina. Pinkney's sailors occupied Battery

21. Whiting to Brooke, 21 October 1864, Letters Sent Whiting's Command, RG 109;
Whiting to Pinkney, 6 November 1864, O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol. 11; Pinkney to Jones, 1
November 1864, Confederate States Navy Papers.
Buchanan just before the long feared Union assault against Fort Fisher and Wilmington.\textsuperscript{22}

After the Federal fleet appeared off Fort Fisher on December 20 military authorities showered the navy with requests for cooperation in the coming battle. General Braxton Bragg, having superseded Whiting as commander of the District of the Cape Fear, hoped that the Chickamauga might rescue a stranded blockade runner off of Fort Caswell. Whiting asked for use of the Arctic as an obstruction for New Inlet. Colonel Lamb suggested that the Equator could be used as a vessel picket in the waters outside the Mound Battery. The navy, however, could not muster an effective force to comply with the requests. The Wilmington was not near completion, leaving only the Yadkin, Equator, Chickamauga, and Caswell to help in the defense. All four vessels were ill suited for combat.

Pinkney could barely provide transportation for the naval garrison at Battery Buchanan and at best, he could only assist the army by moving men and supplies up and down the river. During battles for Fort Fisher, the navy provided its most important service not on water, but on land.\textsuperscript{23}

The Wilmington station's involvement in the December assault against Fort Fisher centered around the garrison at Battery Buchanan, commanded by

\textsuperscript{22} Whiting to Brooke, 21 October 1864, Letters Sent Whiting's Command, RG 109; Brooke to Whiting, 9 November 1864, Letters Sent Orndance and Hydrography, Record Group 109, National Archives (cited hereafter as Letters Sent Ordnance and Hydrography, RG 109); Whiting to Brooke, 29 November 1864, Confederate Area File 8, RG 45.

\textsuperscript{23} Whiting to James, 21 December 1864, O.R.N., Ser. I, Vol 11; Pinkney to Bragg, 21 December 1864, ibid.; Whiting to Pinkney, 23 December 1864, ibid.; Lamb to Whiting, 23 December 1864, ibid.
Lieutenant Robert F. Chapman. After the Union fleet appeared off the fort, Pinkney sent "all available" officers and men from the Chickamauga down to the battery on board the Yadkin. A detachment of men commanded by Lieutenant Francis M. Roby reported to Colonel Lamb, who placed two VII-inch Brooke guns taken from the Raleigh and mounted between the Mound Battery and the sea face in his charge. Roby's men fought bravely during the bombardment on the twenty-fourth. One officer remarked: "Our sailors behaved with great coolness, and as we had no relief crews, they had tiresome work." On the second day, both rifles burst wounding fifteen sailors. One observer recalled: "The gun burst into a thousand pieces, knocking everybody down, but fortunately killing none . . . The other 7-inch Brooke was then fired, and burst worse than the other. How the men escaped God only knows." Under heavy fire, Passed Midshipman Clarence Cary led a group of volunteers down the sea face to help repel the impending land assault. Though the attack never came, Lamb employed Cary to rally militia units out of their bunkers to man the parapets. "I had then the opportunity of using all the 'Boatswains Mate' talk that I ever heard," Cary wrote. At Battery Buchanan Chapman easily repulsed a Union small boat party that entered New Inlet to sound the channel. A lieutenant observed: "Chapman has a nice place, and is lord of all he surveys on the point." When the smoke cleared on the twenty-fifth, nineteen of the twenty-nine men in Roby's detachment lay dead or wounded.  

24. Report of R. F. Pinkney, 4 January 1864, ibid.; report of R. T. Chapman, 29 December 1864, ibid.; report of F. M. Roby, ibid.; Armstrong to Galt, 29 December, ibid.; Clarence Cary Diary, RG 45; for a detailed account of the first Fort Fisher battle,
After the Union fleet sailed home on the twenty-eighth the naval garrison received high praise from Lamb and Whiting. Lamb reported that the navy detachment earned special merit by their performance. He wrote: "I could mention numberless cases of daring equally deserving commendation . . . I would make special mention, however, of the detachment of officers, sailors, and marines from the Navy . . . who came as volunteers from Battery Buchanan." Whiting heaped praise on the navy "for the welcome and efficient aid sent to Colonel Lamb." The general praised Roby's men but also credited Chapman, who "by his skillful gunnery saved us on our right." In language that must have been satisfying to the officers and sailors who had long sought recognition from the army, Whiting wrote: "No commendations of mine can be too much for the coolness, discipline, and skill displayed by officers and men." Ironically, that recognition came for outstanding service performed in a land engagement.25

The disposition of the Wilmington squadron's vessels during the fight is unclear. In November when attack seemed imminent Whiting reminded Pinkney to "hold your force ready to cooperate in the defense as far as possible." During the battle Union forces cut river communication from Wilmington to Fort Fisher, trapping the naval squadron above Sugar Loaf. On the twenty-sixth Bragg announced that the river was open again, telling Pinkney "I would be glad to have the gunboat down to cooperate, but it should not open fire." Pinkney established a

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river patrol which he maintained until the twenty-ninth, when there was "no longer a necessity." The fact that the squadron is not mentioned in any of the official reports demonstrates the comparative worth of its contribution to the battle.\textsuperscript{26}

Few Confederates believed the two-day battle had permanently decided the fate of Fort Fisher and the port it protected; military and naval authorities immediately prepared for another assault. Damage at Battery Buchanan was slight and Pinkney's immediate concern was the lack of manpower. Twice in December the flag officer sent men from Wilmington to Charleston for service on the new ironclad \textit{Columbia}. A few men deserted after the battle, and more still lay dead or wounded. Recognizing Pinkney's "immediate want of men and officers," the department ordered the officers and men formerly stationed in Savannah to Wilmington. On 1 January 1865 fifty-one men and officers arrived at Wilmington after a difficult overland journey. Included in the draft were nine free black sailors, all transferred to Battery Buchanan's official rolls. The reinforcements provided the squadron with essential manpower for the coming campaign.\textsuperscript{27}

The navy's involvement in the second battle for Fort Fisher, however, was less pronounced. On 12 January the Union fleet reappeared off Fort Fisher. For

\textsuperscript{26} Whiting to Pinkney, 20 November 1864, ibid.; Bragg to Pinkney, 26 December 1864, 29 December 1864, ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} Lee to Pinkney, 14 December 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 8; Pinkney to King, 16 December 1864, ibid.; Pinkney to Jack, ibid.; Lee to Tucker, 28 December 1864, ibid.; Battery Buchanan deserter list, hospital rolls, Savannah Squadron rolls, Confederate States Navy Papers.
two days the naval force pounded the fort, disabling most of its guns. Again a
navy detachment of sailors and marines reported to Lamb and damage to Battery
Buchanan was minimal. After Union troops landed on the fourteenth, the
Chickamauga steamed downriver and lobbed shells toward the beach at Whiting's
request. The marines fought hard in the hand to hand combat on the fifteenth,
recapturing Whiting after the general fell wounded. Chapman's performance,
however, was less brilliant. When Union flags appeared on the land face the
lieutenant turned Buchanan's massive guns on the fort, killing friend and foe alike.
Lamb ordered a halt to the shelling. When the garrison retreated to Battery
Buchanan that evening, they found its guns abandoned and spiked. The navy had
already pulled out and escaped across the river. The remaining Confederate
troops surrendered around 10:00 P.M. As day broke the next morning, the Union
flag flew over the Mound Battery; the port of Wilmington was closed.28

The defeat had two important effects on the Wilmington naval station.
The battle wrecked Mallory's plans for a foreign-built squadron. In Scotland Peter
Denny had delivered the Ajax on time in early January. The vessel sailed on 12
January, the day the Union fleet appeared off Wilmington. Under Confederate
command the Ajax reached Nassau, Bahamas, where her commander learned that
Wilmington was closed. In December the blockade runner Colonel Lamb carried
one of the small steam launches ordered by Bulloch through the blockade to

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January 1865, ibid.; for details on the January battle of Fort Fisher, see Gragg,
Confederate Goliath.
Wilmington, the only vessel smuggled into the Confederacy on navy account. The navy originally planned to ship the boat to Charleston for use as a picket boat, but decided to convert it into a torpedo boat for service at Wilmington instead. Known as the General Whiting, the boat proved "too small for effective use" and never saw action. All hopes for rebuilding the squadron now rested on the speedy completion of the Wilmington.  

More importantly, the battle ended the role of the squadron on the Cape Fear River. Pinkney transferred all remaining men and officers from Battery Buchanan to Batteries Meares and Campbell, located on the east bank of the river several miles below Wilmington. The flag officer ordered the men and guns off the Yadkin and Arctic and sank the vessels as obstructions opposite the two batteries. Significantly, Pinkney ordered shoes issued to his sailors on the day Fort Fisher fell. The transformation that began when the navy occupied Battery Buchanan was complete. With the second battle of Fort Fisher, the Wilmington squadron became a land force.

After the battle, Porter continued work on the Wilmington, though his labor force must have been much reduced. Porter claimed he could finish the vessel in ninety days. Her machinery, built at the Naval Iron Works in Columbus, Georgia, was ready for shipment. Mallory telegraphed Bragg, stating, "I do not wish to move it without reliable assurance that Wilmington will be held long

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29. Tucker to Glassell, 17 December 1864, Confederate Navy Area File 8; Sprunt, Chronicles of the Cape Fear, 500.
30. Pinkney to Jones, 15 January 1865, Confederate States Navy Papers; Pinkney to Jones, 1 February 1865, ibid.; Battery Meares roll, ibid.; Battery Campbell roll, ibid.
enough [to complete] the work." Bragg sent a hazy reply. "I hope your gunboat will be pushed to completion," he wrote, "This place will be held so long as our means enable us." Though the Chickamauga, Equator, and Caswell, remained afloat, they could not contribute to Wilmington's defense. The Wilmington offered the only hope for the station.31

As Porter pushed work on the ironclad morale among the sailors serving in the land batteries fell dramatically. Most of the officers and men lost all their possessions in the retreat from Battery Buchanan. In February requests for provisions and clothing poured in to the station paymaster. The men at Battery Meares suffered greatly for want of blankets. Several officers, now without uniforms, begged for cloth to sew new ones. Food was in short supply too. Lieutenant S. S. Gregory, commanding Battery Meares, reported that an issue of beef sent to his men was "so bad that I must refuse to receive it." Furthermore, stores for both batteries arrived at Battery Campbell, where hungry sailors took the best and passed the leftovers on to Battery Meares. The commanding officer of Battery Campbell complained that unknown parties repeatedly absconded with the spirit ration and "the men do not get it." The station paymaster emptied the naval warehouse in Wilmington in an attempt to provide the batteries with much needed supplies. Just as the squadron itself ceased to function, its logistical

support faltered as well. The shift from Buchanan to Meares and Campbell would take time.\textsuperscript{32}

With Union forces gearing for a final assault on the Wilmington defenses, however, time was running out. The naval contingent at Meares and Campbell saw little action in the last days of the campaign. On 19 February Union troops occupied Fort Anderson on the west bank and began a final push toward the city. On the twentieth Union gunboats shelled Batteries Meares and Campbell. The forts ineffectually returned "three or four shot," but were "soon silenced." Confederate Major General Robert F. Hoke pulled back toward Wilmington. Bragg decided to evacuate and troops began destroying government stores. A witness described the scene: "Shops are closed, government property being destroyed, huge piles of cotton and resin being set afire, tobacco being thrown in the river." Benjamin Beery and his son-in-law carefully torched the navy yard, destroying the unfinished \textit{Wilmington} and everything else of value. Beery took special care to burn any official records that might link his shipyard to the Confederate government. The navy scuttled the \textit{Caswell} and \textit{Equator} and sank the \textit{Squib} and \textit{General Whiting} at Point Peter. Pinkney took the \textit{Chickamauga} upriver and sank her at Indian Wells opposite the battery built for just such an emergency. On the twenty-first the remaining Confederate forces abandoned the city and retreated north along the Wilmington & Weldon. The next day Union

\textsuperscript{32} Clothing Returns, Quarter Ending 21 February 1865, Confederate States Navy Papers; Gregory to Jones, 9 February 1865, ibid.; - to Jones, 11 February 1865, ibid.
Rear Admiral David D. Porter reported that "Wilmington has been evacuated and is in possession of our troops."  

With the occupation of the city, the Wilmington squadron ceased to exist. The navy failed to provide a useful force to defend the Wilmington and the lower Cape Fear. That failure, evident long before the Fort Fisher battles, transformed the role of the navy on the Cape Fear. Though Mallory tried to rebuild the squadron in the summer of 1864, his efforts brought no tangible results. In the most critical hour of need the navy performed its most important service on land, not water. Ultimately, the Wilmington squadron lost its race against time.

Conclusions

Though the Wilmington squadron generated little success during its four years of existence, its history presents a useful opportunity to examine the broader history of the Confederate navy and the naval war. The conclusions drawn from this study shed new light on the Confederate attempt to build warships at Wilmington and in North Carolina. Beyond the local level, these conclusions have applications to the larger Confederate experience.

Traditional interpretations of Confederate naval leadership seem imbalanced in light of the Wilmington station's history. Secretary Mallory, usually credited for his willingness to accept and apply new technology, did not act decisively at Wilmington. Inexplicably, the navy made no attempt to build warships on the Cape Fear from August 1861 to April 1862, though construction was already underway along most other major Southern river systems. Nor was any attempt made to establish an efficient naval command in North Carolina. Though historians have generally applauded Mallory's leadership, a contingent of Confederate naval officers, including Catesby ap R. Jones, John Newland Maffitt, and perhaps even John L. Porter, disliked the secretary and criticized his indecisiveness and favoritism. At Wilmington, William Muse and John Julius Guthrie also denounced the secretary, perhaps with some justification.¹

The established image of William F. Lynch appears distorted as well. Most accounts present the flag officer as an incompetent crackpot, repeating the sentiments of Lynch's contemporary detractors. The historical evidence shows otherwise. Clearly, Lynch's personal mannerisms irritated many he came into contact with, but he did have a small group of friends and admirers. Furthermore he was one of the South's most experienced naval officers. He advanced the navy's interests at every turn, with an aggressive style that understandably made enemies. Lynch's involvement in the struggle to obtain iron for the North Carolina ironclads has never been acknowledged; in fact, much of the credit has errantly passed to James Cooke. Evidence supports Lynch's position in the conflict with Gilbert Elliott. The shipbuilder overcharged the government for labor and materials on several occasions and abandoned work on the Tarboro ironclad. Lynch's predecessor, Robert F. Pinkney, also felt that Elliott's proposals excessively promoted his own interests.²

In depth study of Confederate shipbuilding on the Cape Fear reveals a heavy reliance on local industry. Both Wilmington ironworks contributed substantially to the effort, manufacturing boilers, hardware, and even small shafting in the case of Hart & Bailey. Previous accounts indicate a general reliance on larger Southern ironworks such as Tredegar in Richmond, Scofield and Markum in Atlanta, and the Naval Ironworks in Richmond, Charlotte, Atlanta, and Columbus. The Wilmington experience suggests greater

participation from smaller shops around the Confederacy though it does not lessen
the importance of the principal mills and forges already mentioned.\(^3\)

Evidence also indicates that special factors contributed to the poor results
achieved by the shipbuilding program at Wilmington. Unforeseen disasters such
as the yellow fever outbreak and the April 1864 fire interrupted plans and
destroyed valuable work in progress. The interservice rivalry, especially bitter at
Wilmington, also hampered construction. Most damning, however, was the lack
of skilled workers, a problem more pronounced at Wilmington than at other major
Southern ports. Throughout the war James Cassidey, the Beery brothers, Thomas
Roberts, and Hart & Bailey struggled to perform with an undersized labor force.
This fact also explains the unusually high cost of shipbuilding at Wilmington.

Most important, the history of the Wilmington station affects the
understanding of the navy's ultimate role in the defense of Southern waterways.
Other Southern naval squadrons, like the Wilmington squadron, were intended to
serve as harbor defense forces. In Wilmington, however, the arming and manning
of land batteries was the most important service rendered by the navy. On the
Cape Fear this fact related directly to the failure of naval construction.

Nonetheless, other naval stations also performed critical services on land late in
the war. On the James River navy guns and crews occupied important batteries

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3. At present, the only study of Confederate naval construction remains William Still's,
Confederate Shipbuilding. Maxine Turner's Navy Gray: A Story of the Confederate
Navy on the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola Rivers (Tuscaloosa: University of
Alabama Press, 1988), however, also emphasizes the importance of local industry in
Confederate shipbuilding.
freeing up troops for service elsewhere. At Mobile similar arrangements existed. Army officers throughout the South, including William H. C. Whiting, recognized the value of the Brooke gun as the most powerful weapon manufactured in the Confederacy and one of the best heavy guns of the war. By 1864-1865 the manufacture of the Brooke gun for use on land constituted, perhaps, the most important contribution of the navy to the defense of southern harbors.⁴

These conclusions suggest that further study of Confederate industry and the Confederate navy and the naval war itself may yield new interpretations of the Confederate experience and the Civil War. With a few notable exceptions, the naval aspects of the war have been long neglected by scholars. In depth study of Confederate naval activity in other theaters may strengthen the conclusions reached in this work and possibly generate new ones.

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