

James S. Schmidt. NAVAL OPERATIONS THE POTOMAC FLOTILLA,
1861-1865. (Under the direction of Dr. Donald H. Parkerson)
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The purpose of this thesis is to examine and evaluate the importance of naval operations of the Potomac Flotilla. It will show that the Potomac Flotilla provided the tactical and logistical advantages necessary to sustain the Union war effort in northeastern Virginia. Naval command of the Potomac River provided Union military campaigns with an unhampered flow of men, supplies and munitions. This permitted northern armies to command a greater range of operations with assured mobility and concentration.

Moreover, blockading activities hampered the trade of recruits, foodstuffs, munitions, and medicines to the southern armies occupying the coastal areas of Virginia. In time, the constant strain for want of supplies severely encumbered southern opposition and dissolved southern morale and willpower.

The Potomac Flotilla relegated its operations to fourth-rate, steam propelled gunboats. Vessels such as the Flotilla's U.S.S. *Tulip*, became the "backbone" of almost all inland naval and military operations. An in-depth study of the *Tulip's* history and construction highlights the need for adequate naval repair and construction facilities to service these vessels.

In addition to mechanical problems, the Potomac Flotilla also suffered from an urgent and ongoing need to maintain its crews with

experienced seamen. The Flotilla's proximity to slave states enabled its commanders to utilize an alternative source of manpower in fugitive slaves (contrabands) and freed blacks. A quantitative analysis of the Flotilla's muster rolls indicates that by 1864, blacks comprised nearly thirty-seven percent of the total personnel. In striking contrast to existing interpretations, black seamen held not only lower rank and ratings, but technical positions and petty officer ratings.

The Potomac Flotilla was an integral link to the success of Union naval and military operations in northeastern Virginia. As a microcosm of the U.S. Naval blockading forces, this study of the Potomac Flotilla gives a new perspective on measures taken to alleviate its operational problems as well as difficulties caused by the acute shortages of skilled labor and experienced seamen.

NAVAL OPERATIONS
OF THE POTOMAC FLOTILLA, 1861-1865

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Introduction

The Flying Flotilla

This thesis examines the vital and commanding role played by the Potomac Flotilla during the American Civil War. The role of the Potomac Flotilla is examined from two perspectives. First, through the strategy, tactics, and effect of the Potomac Flotilla's naval and combined military operations. Second, through a qualitative and quantitative examination of the squadron's muster rolls. Synthesizing this information provides new and original insights into the crucial role of the Union naval operations in the Lower Potomac and other rivers and smaller tributaries throughout tidewater Maryland and Virginia.

Civil war was already upon the nation as newly elected President Abraham Lincoln arrived for his inauguration in February, 1861. Some of the military companies were openly disloyal and there were reports that Baltimore gangs and secret societies plotted his assassination. The open decadence of Union patriotism created an atmosphere of intense apathy directed towards the new administration.

Fears for the security of Washington had sharpened with the secession of Virginia and the turmoil in Maryland agitated by the southern Confederacy. The Federal government was in a precarious position, "held in the balance of equilibrium" with its capitol, the symbol of the nations power, geographically bound by rebellious

states. Rumors were abound in the capital with plots to capture the city and assume control of the government.

The situation immediately assumed crisis proportions as secessionists' tempers flared and pleas for conciliation and compromise failed. As Margaret Leech noted, the seceded states "seized United States property within their borders - forts, arsenals, custom houses, revenue cutters".¹ The Federal government organized its efforts as General-in-Chief of the Army, Winfield Scott, dispatched military companies and spies in and about Baltimore and the capital city.

After Virginia adopted its ordinance of secession, strong anti-Union activity resulted in violent riots in Baltimore and the secession of Maryland seemed imminent. Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* and the presence of Federal troops instigated fear among the capitol's residents. In preparation for an attack on the city, the U.S. War Department seized several large mail steamers of the Potomac Steamboat Company. The Potomac River, which spanned from the Chesapeake Bay to just three miles above Georgetown, was vital to the defense of Washington and Maryland. Thus, securing Maryland was an essential task entrusted to the Union navy.

On April 22, 1861, only three days following the Baltimore riots, Commander James Harmon Ward sent a proposal to Gideon

¹Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1941), 25.

Welles, Secretary of the Navy, regarding the formation of a "flying flotilla" for duty in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; about 1,000 miles of coastline. Ward proposed to organize the flotilla with light and speedy steamers capable of carrying a sufficient armament to keep the Chesapeake and its tributaries free from hostile forces. The flotilla, he contended, would be used to:

...protect loyal citizens; convoy, tow, transport troops or intelligence with dispatch; be generally useful; threaten at all points, and to attack at any desired or important one.²

On April 27, 1861, the same day that President Lincoln extended the blockade proclamation to include Virginia, Welles, ordered the formation of Ward's proposed "Flying Flotilla". The flotilla was organized and outfitted under the direction of Commodore Samuel L. Breese, the commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Ward and Lieutenant D.L. Braine were the first officers detailed for duty in the new flotilla.³

On May 12, 1861, preparation of the Flying Flotilla was nearly complete. In only eight more days, the *Thomas Freeborn*, a

²Ward to Welles, 22 April 1861, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Harrisburg: National Historical Society, reprinted 1987), ser. 1, vol. IV, 420, hereinafter cited as *Official Records, Navies*.

³A Flying Flotilla (also called a flying squadron) is defined by historian Donald Mitchell as a squadron of gunboats usually composed of "vessels of small real fighting value but considerable speed." Donald W. Mitchell, *History of the Modern American Navy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 62. Also see: Welles to Breese, 27 April 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 431.

sidewheel steamer carrying two 32-pounders and screw steamers *Resolute* and *Reliance*, carrying each a 24-pounder howitzer and one 12-pounder, arrived at the Washington Navy Yard ready for sea duty.⁴

The Flying Flotilla was first commanded by Flag Officer Silas Stringham, who was in overall command of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Due to the distance between the flagship, and the flotilla, the vessels in the Potomac usually operated independent of the blockading squadron. Eventually, troubles which appeared to be brewing along the Potomac made it both necessary and expedient for the flotilla to become an independent command.⁵ At the end of May, 1861, Ward was given command over the vessels assigned to the newly designated Potomac Flotilla.

Ward was an appropriate choice for the new command. He had sixteen years of active sea service, and his naval experience and reputation as a scholar had earned him recognition as an authority on naval tactics and gunnery. In 1824 he sailed on the U.S.S. *Constitution* for the Mediterranean, where he remained stationed for four years. Subsequent service took Ward along the coast of Africa and the West Indies. In 1847, he commanded the U.S.S. *Cumberland*,

⁴Breese to Welles, 12 May 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 458; see also: Dahlgren to Navy Department, 20 May 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 471.

⁵Rebellious characters were busy removing channel markers, bouys, and were even credited with destroying the Lower Cedar Point light ship. Dahlgren to Welles, 27 April 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 431.

Mathew C. Perry's flagship, which was stationed off the Mexican coast. Later, at the U.S. Naval Academy, he acted as the head of the Department of Ordinance and Gunnery, and in 1845, he became the Naval Academy's first executive officer. In 1852 the Naval Academy adopted his *An Elementary Course of Instruction on Ordinance and Gunnery*. The Flying Flotilla became Ward's ultimate test of his abilities to organize and command a small squadron of gunboats in a potentially hostile environment.⁶

Together, Ward and the Commandants at the Washington, D.C. and Brooklyn Naval Yards, had to overcome many obstacles in order to quickly establish a well-organized and effectual flotilla of river gunboats. Their primary concern was the procurement of warships capable of navigating the dangerously shallow rivers and tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Another, yet equally important concern, was the lack of experienced naval officers to give the necessary attention to the inexperienced and "green" crews.

The first problem was, perhaps more easily and quickly solved. Welles and Ward were both convinced that fourth-rate screw steamers would function the most effectively in the tidewater Chesapeake area. Fourth-rate steamers were usually armed with three to four cannons, no heavier than 32-pounders, and one 24-

⁶Mary Alice Wills, *The Confederate Blockade of Washington, D.C., 1861-1862* (Parsons: McClain Printing Company, 1975), 15-17. See also: Patricia L. Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986), 801.

pounder howitzer. Steam powered for rapid deployment, and shallow draft, made them formidable adversaries for the small river craft which smugglers used to run contraband articles into Virginia.

Ward and his successors soon discovered, that service in tidewater regions was hard on both steam machinery, and the crews. Two major problems quickly developed; first, with a light armament and construction, fourth rate gunboats were no contest for the heavily fortified Confederate shore batteries; second, their light construction meant those who served on board, were "...exposed to more than ordinary peril."⁷ However, in spite of these drawbacks, fourth rate gunboats became the backbone of naval and military operations in eastern Virginia.

Naval authorities never adequately solved the problem of procuring enough experienced personnel to man the rapidly expanding navy. An urgent shortage of manpower persisted throughout the war. In an attempt to recruit sufficient crews, the naval authorities were compelled to enlist seamen from the merchant service. However, as the shortage persisted, Welles was compelled to authorize the enlistment of foreigners, blacks, and ex-slaves or contrabands. In the ranks of the Potomac Flotilla, between 1861 and 1865, foreigners comprised about thirty percent of the

⁷David Dixon Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: The Sherman Publishing Company, 1886), 677.

enlistments, while black seamen embodied over twenty percent of the total personnel.

Chapter 1

The Blockade of Washington

The exploits of the Potomac Flotilla helped decrease the flow of arms and munitions from Maryland to the Confederacy and crippled the southern war effort in Virginia. In addition, the efforts and vigilance of the small squadron was instrumental in saving Washington, D.C. and holding Maryland in the Union when Confederate forces were only a stones throw away. In 1861, and throughout the Civil War, the Potomac Flotilla's tight blockade of the Potomac River, affected a significant contribution to Union victory.

In the spring of 1861, the defense of Washington brought thousands of troops from the north. Thousands of snowy white tents skirted the banks on either side of the Potomac River. Weeks later, the Potomac became a continuous theater of warfare. Under the "relentless hand of war", the Potomac was soon robbed of its "particular charms".¹

The Potomac River was a natural dividing line between Virginia and southern Maryland and offered easy access to the nation's capitol. In 1861, both the Union and Confederacy struggled to control the Potomac waterway. The Confederate authorities knew

¹This description of the Potomac River was conveyed by Army Correspondent Charles Coffin in *The Boys of 61, or, Four Years of Fighting, a Record of Personal Observation with the Army and Navy* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1881), 34-35.

that in only a few hours, thousands of Federal troops could be transported down the river to "devastate and plunder," along Virginia's eastern shore.² They had to confront a serious disadvantage: the lack of armed vessels to oppose Federal control of the Potomac.³

In order to prevent Federal troops from landing and taking the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Philadelphia Railroad, Virginia volunteers constructed a line of shore batteries. The batteries extended southward along the Virginia shoreline to Yate's Point, and at other places where the Potomac's shipping channel ran close to shore (figure 1.1). Volunteers and slaves manned and constructed these batteries and earthworks in early morning hours to prevent detection.

There was little the Potomac Flotilla could do at first, except reconnoiter the river and watch for signs of hostile activities. The duty was monotonous but essential. Federal shipping must remain open along the river in order to bring provisions and supplies to Washington. Little time had passed before southern rebels had discovered ways in which to interrupt Federal vessels. Navigational aids were destroyed and relocated, and trees and woods which

²Ruggles to Garnett, 30 May 1861, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), Ser. I, Vol. II, 55, hereinafter cited *Official Records, Armies*.

³Mitchell S. Goldberg, *A History of United States Naval Operations During 1861* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1971), 260-266.

formed natural landmarks were cut down. By the middle of April the river pilots were unable to keep up with the changes and no one could rely on the markers.⁴

In the beginning of May, Colonel Daniel Ruggles, commanding the Provisional Army of Virginia Volunteers, erected a formidable battery at Aquia Creek. The shore battery, located on the Virginia side of the Potomac, was commanded by Captain William F. Lynch of the Virginia navy. Its primary purpose was to defend the avenues of approach to the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Philadelphia Railroad terminal and to protect the Stafford County countryside. Thirteen large guns were in place and very capable of also harassing Federal ships passing up and down the river.⁵

The Potomac Flotilla enacted stronger counter measures to protect Federal vessels passing up and down the Potomac. The commanding officers gathered information on Confederate activities from local fisherman and slaves. In addition, two of the Flotilla's largest gunboats, including the U.S.S. *Pawnee*, were sent to

⁴On August 11, 1863, the armed cutter sent from the U.S.S. *Currituck* captured three men, William P. George, John M. George, and Samuel George, who were suspected of stealing canoes and destroying landmarks; see: Logbook, U.S.S. *Currituck*, 10-11 August 1863, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵In Northern Virginia, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Philadelphia Railroad, Potomac Railroad, and Virginia Central-Orange and Alexandria combination furnished the only rail outlets to the Potomac, at Aquia Creek and Alexandria. In addition, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Philadelphia Railroad was the only line which approached Washington from the South. Robert C. Black, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 7.

Alexandria, Virginia, and arrived with their "port holes open and guns ran out," thus ensuring safe passage and strengthening the capitol's defenses.⁶ Such an imposing scene, inspired Anne S. Frobel, a resident to note that the *Pawnee* had been lying in the Potomac "grinning, and showing her teeth to frighten the poor Alexandrians".⁷ The gunboats remained stationed off Alexandria until the city was occupied by Federal troops at the end of the month.

On the evening of May 23, 1861, John A. Dahlgren, commandant of the Washington Navy Yard, launched the War's first combined operation. Under the command of Commander Stephen Rowan, captain of the *Pawnee*, Federal troops embarked from Washington to seize and occupy Alexandria. Three other vessels of the Potomac Flotilla, (*Thomas Freeborn*, *Anacostia*, and *Resolute*), proceeded ahead to cover the entire operation. The Seventy-First New York Regiment landed, and took possession of the city at five-o'clock the next morning. The Confederate troops offered no resistance and evacuated as the gunboats trained their cannons on the town.

Commander John P. Gillis, captain of the U.S.S. *Pocahontas*, proceeded to Aquia Creek in search of an earthen battery which Confederate troops were reportedly constructing. His information,

⁶Duncan to Walker, 12 May 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, LI, 87.

⁷Anne S. Frobel, *The Civil War Diary of Anne S. Frobel of Winton Hill in Virginia*, ed. Mary H. and Dallas M. Lancaster (Birmingham: Birmingham Printing and Publishing Company, 1986), 2.

gathered from local fisherman, led to the battery's discovery on May 14, 1861. It was located inshore from the end of the wharf and consisted of a semi-circular earthworks having four embrasures; one nearest the terminal house mounted a 32-pounder. The battery's guns posed a threat to Federal shipping and had to be destroyed. On May 31, Commander James Ward, commanding the Potomac Flotilla, and the steamers *Freeborn* and *Anacostia* attacked the battery. The *Freeborn's* 32-pounder smashed into the upper works on the heights as "volleys of shot dropped on board and around...like hail for nearly an hour."⁸ The batteries remained; but, miraculously, only one Union sailor was wounded during the engagement.

Ward was faced with an impossible and dangerous task. The batteries at Aquia Creek were positioned on the back of the heights, far from the rivers channel, and thus impossible to reduce. He even doubted that the batteries could cause much harm to shipping; but, Ward followed his orders and renewed the cannonade with the steamers *Pawnee* and *Reliance*.

During the second engagement, rebel shot "fell thick about" the *Freeborn*, Wards' vessel.⁹ Although no one was injured, the vessel

⁸Ward to Welles, 1 June 1861, "Battle of Aquia Creek, Virginia," container 17, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁹Ward to Welles, 1 June 1861, "Battle at Aquia Creek, Virginia," container 17, The Report of Second Day's Action At Aquia Creek, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

was struck several times which caused the ship to leak, crippled the port wheel and gouged the wrought iron shaft. Ward later observed that the *Pawnee*, "was herself, often a sheet of flames, owing to the rapidly of her discharges."¹⁰ There was nothing left to do, but abandon the engagement for another day. Colonel William Bate, C.S.A., penned a report to L.P. Walker, Confederate Secretary of War, stating that everything was peaceable except for the *Pawnee* "which still coils about our shore like a wounded viper."¹¹

The *Official Records* reported that the Aquia batteries sustained only minor material damage to the redoubts and works and that there were no injuries, "except for the death of a chicken".¹² But other sources suggest otherwise. A deserter from the Aquia Creek batteries, John Dowling, stated that the earthworks on the point were almost leveled as shells burst in and around the fort during the

¹⁰ Ward to Welles, 1 June 1861, Report of Second Day's Action At Aquia Creek.

¹¹ Colonel William B. Bate, Commanding Walker Legion, to Secretary of War, L.P. Walker, 1 June 1861, "Battle at Aquia Creek, Virginia," container 17, Report of Colonel William B. Bates Commanding Walker Legion, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹² M. McCluskey to Secretary of War L.P. Walker, 1 June 1861, "Battle at Aquia Creek, Virginia," container 17, Report of M. McCluskey of Second Day's Engagement At Aquia Creek, Virginia, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

bombardment.¹³ Another witness to the episode reported startling information to the *Sun*:

fifteen were killed to her knowledge, and has no doubt as many as fifty were killed, besides a large number wounded...every pains was taken to conceal the fact even from the friends of the victims-that as fast as any causality occurred, the sufferer was removed to the woods for concealment.¹⁴

The failure of Potomac Flotilla to silence the guns, convinced Virginia's Governor John Letcher, that the batteries along with the Confederate forces in the Fredericksburg area could repulse any Union landing. Though no real military threat, the batteries were an embarrassment to the Federal government and a disgrace to national pride.

The thundering engagement at Aquia Creek occurred nearly two months before the first battle at Bull Run. Action at Aquia continued with almost daily engagements; drawing valuable manpower away from the Confederate army in Virginia. These events were not merely isolated engagements. Aquia was a critical point used by the Confederates to cover the rear and right flank,

¹³Rowan to Welles, 22 June 1861, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Commanding Officers of Squadrons, 1841-1886*, Microfilm Publication no. M89, Roll 114, vols. 117-118, National Archives; hereafter cited as *Squadron Letters*). John Dowling originally joined the Confederate State Sentenials in Columbus, Georgia, on May 15, 1861. On May 18, 1861, the Sentenials were transferred to Richmond, Virginia, where he remained for six days and then deserted (about May 24, 1861).

¹⁴*Sun*, 11 June 1861.

southeast of Manassas Junction. The batteries here were essential in order check Union attempts to outflank their position (figure 1.2).¹⁵

By the end of June the Confederates had constructed another battery, eighteen miles farther down river from Aquia Creek, at Mathia's Point. Mathia's Point is located about fifty miles south of the capitol, where the Potomac's channel runs within 1,400 yards of the Virginia shore. The importance of erecting batteries here, was to defend the approaches to Fredericksburg, by either rail or water.

As dawn came up on June 27, the steamers *Freeborn*, *Pawnee*, and *Reliance* anchored near Gryme's Point and threw shot, shell, and grape into the woods and bush at Mathia's Point. A detachment of the ships' crew attempted twice to land ashore and build a sandbag breastwork; both times they were forced to retreat under the cover of the gunboats.¹⁶ Their effort not only failed, but cost the life of Ward.

¹⁵The Aquia batteries were commanded by a company of infantry during the day, and in the evening a company of the Baltimore Tigers guarded against night attacks. For more information refer to: John Wilkinson, *Narrative of a Blockade Runner* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1877), 22-23. Also refer to: R.M. Johnston, *Bull Run Its Strategy and Tactics* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), 37. Joseph Mills Hanson, *Bull Run Remembers* (Manassas: National Capitol Publishers, Inc., 1953).

¹⁶The Union seamen were attacked by Major Robert M. Mayo's battalion, which was composed of Gouldin's company of Sparta Greys, under First Lt. Saunders, and Lee's legion of cavalry under First Lt. Beale. Major Mayo reported that he felt confident, "...from the blood upon the shore, that there were eight or ten killed and several more wounded;" refer to: Mayo to Ruggles, 28 June 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, II, 137-138. Daniel Ruggles, "Fight with Gunboats at Mathia's Point," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 9 (January-December 1881), 496-500.

Ward was mortally wounded in the abdomen while aiming the forward 32-pounder, to cover the second retreat. A musket ball passed through his abdomen and exited two inches to the right of his spinal column. He died less than an hour later from an internal hemorrhage.¹⁷

The lifeless body of Ward was placed on board the *Reliance* and sent up to Aquia Creek, then transferred to the *Pawnee* and shipped to the Washington Navy Yard. There, several companies of the Seventy-First Regiment escorted his remains to the Yard's engine house. The body was laid out, draped in the American flag until it was sent to New York on June 28, 1861. Ward was the first United States Navy officer to die in action during the Civil War.¹⁸

Major-General Robert E. Lee, Commander in Chief of Virginia forces, instructed Ruggles to abandon Mathia's Point, since it was too far from the Confederate main camp to be properly defended. Based on a report from Captain W.F. Lynch, commanding naval defenses on the Potomac, Colonel R.S. Garnett, Adjutant-General Volunteer Forces,

¹⁷Acting Assistant Surgeon J.W. Moore, report of the cause of Ward's death appears in: Moore to Welles, 28 June 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 541. Also see: "Report of Death of Commander Ward at Mathia's Point" Letter Book, Papers of Stephen C. Rowan, 1826-1890, Library of Congress Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸Four years after Ward died, his widow, appealed to President Lincoln to discharge her son [Reuben C. Ward], who had enlisted in the Sixth New York. Lincoln sent the approval to Stanton, "for the memory of his father and that his mother is an indigent widow, let him be discharged;" Ray P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 238, 288.

Richmond, Virginia, advised Ruggles to simply employ the guns elsewhere. Even after the Confederate battery was abandoned, the Union navy considered Mathia's Point essential to free navigation on the Potomac and guarded it closely. To discourage the Confederate army from rebuilding the batteries, the Point was frequently shelled by the Potomac Flotilla. However, Mathia's Point was again reinforced in August as the rebels prepared to attack General Nathaniel P. Banks' troops near Leesburg, Virginia.¹⁹

Upon Ward's death, Welles appointed Commander Thomas T. Craven to take command of the Potomac Flotilla. At this time, the Flotilla was comprised of the ships of war: *Pocahontas*, *Pawnee*, *Yankee*, *Freeborn*, *Release*, *Reliance*, and, the schooners *Chaplin*, *Dana*, *Bailey*, and, *Howell Cobb*.

Keeping the Potomac clear from rebel shore batteries was only a small part of Craven's responsibilities. His principle duty was to blockade the shore of Virginia, to put a "full and final end" to the intercourse between Maryland and Virginia's shores.²⁰ This was no simple task considering the small number of vessels and unexperienced crews under his command. In addition, the contraband trade was carefully calculated to elude detection and

¹⁹Welles to Craven, 19 August 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 623. Enclosure, Welles to Craven, 19 August 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 625.

²⁰Welles to Craven, 9 July 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VI, 570-571.

capture by the Flotilla's gunboats. Those engaged in the traffic were, according to Welles:

reckless, unscrupulous, and unprincipled, so that on no station are greater vigilance and mere unceasing watchfulness required than on the part of the officers and men of the flotilla.²¹

Residents of southern Maryland, who were "sympathetic" to the South, began an illicit trade which flourished profitably for several years. Recruits, mails, information, and quantities of supplies, including food and medicine, were smuggled over to Virginia. Small arms and munitions were covertly taken on board local fishing vessels and hidden in among assorted cargoes. The main depots for the smuggling rings were located down the Lower Potomac at Budd's Ferry, Port Tobacco, Pope's Creek, and, Leonardtown.²²

²¹"Report of the Secretary of the Navy," *Army Navy Journal* 2 (December 1864), 2-3. Another serious problem also plagued the commanders of the Potomac Flotilla. Commanders and their crews were also lured into the illicit trade. For example, Acting Ensign William R. Rude, commander of the mortar schooner *Sophronia*, was charged with attempting to extort a bribe from J.H. Barkley. Barkley, a sutler on board the schooner *Sarah Jane*, was trading under a permit from the Secretary of the Navy and Treasury. Welles to Craven, 22 June 1863, *Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers, 1798-1868*, Microfilm Publications No. 149, Roll 73 (May 25-September 4, 1863), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²²Ludwell Johnson noted that the political separation of the North and South, never completely severed trade relations. Hungered for northern products, the "blockade-strangled" southern states attracted swarms of speculators. See: Ludwell H. Johnson, "Contraband Trade During the Last Year of the Civil War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (March 1963), 635-652.

Smugglers established a line of signals every three to five miles on the Maryland shore, from Piney Point to Fort Washington, to prevent their capture. In the evening, signals were returned on the opposite shore by lanterns, and mirrors during the day.²³ One local, Mrs. Maria Palmer, remembered her mother told stories of how "on moonless nights the light beacon in the lighthouse [Blackistone Island's] would mysteriously go out," and the blockade runners would slip across the river to Virginia.²⁴

The Potomac Flotilla frequently raided the smuggling depots, especially at Leonardtown and Port Tobacco. These raids were seldom successful and appeared only to foster a growing sense of mistrust and hostility towards the Federal government. The residents of St. Mary's County, Maryland, were outraged and aroused after Acting Master William Budd, captain of the U.S.S. *Resolute*, made several "most egregiously humbugged" raids. Roused by the injustice, the *St. Mary's Beacon* carried the following message:

we state for the benefit of Captain Budd, that there is a *wind mill* located a short distance from here of reported

²³*Sun*, 10 September 1861. Maryland soldiers who supported the south, formed a signal corps and made Claremont in Westmoreland County, Virginia, their headquarters. In Alice Maria Lewis Wallace, "Childhood Memories of the Northern Neck," *Northern Neck Historical Magazine* 24 (December 1974), 2631-2640.

²⁴George Morgan Knight, *Intimate Glimpses of Old St. Mary's* (Baltimore: Myer and Thalheimer, 1938), 74.

secession proclivities. Might it not be taken by a valorous charge?²⁵

Throughout the war, no arms, field pieces, or any other stores were discovered at Leonardtown in St. Mary's. Nonetheless, the prevailing impression in Washington maintained that "Leonardtown was a rank secessionist hole."²⁶ At the end of the war, residents of the Port Tobacco area were required by the government, to take the oath of allegiance, before they could engage in any occupation. This appeared in a circular which was issued on May 1, 1865, and accused the residents of rendering "...themselves notorious for their hostility to the Government...supplying the enemy with goods and in some cases munitions of war..."²⁷

The smuggling business was undoubtedly hazardous, but, investors made substantial sums of money and could afford to lose part of the venture, and still show a profit. One captured smuggler informed Acting Ensign Thomas Nelson, executive officer on the U.S.S. *Currituck*, "that if he could save one cargo in ten, he would lose nothing."²⁸

²⁵St. Mary's Beacon, 27 June 1861.

²⁶St. Mary's Beacon, 8 August 1861.

²⁷Reverend Edward Devitt, "The Jesuit Farms in Maryland," *The Woodstock Letters*, vol. 60, no. 3, "Facts and Anecdotes of the Civil War," Special Collections Division, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. p. 195. Hereafter cited as the *Woodstock Letters*.

²⁸Thomas Nelson, "Echoes and Incidents from a Gunboat Flotilla," *War Papers*, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Commandery of the District of Columbia, 78: 10-11.

Another smuggler, William R. Polk of Leonardtown, conducted more than \$20,000 of business in one month's time. Polk negotiated the sale of clothing, food, medicine (opium, calomel, and laudanum), through the Trader Bank of Richmond, in Virginia. He made enormous profits, purchasing boots for 55 to 95 cents in Maryland, and selling them in Richmond for more than \$10.00 a pair.²⁹ Polk also bragged of having sold more shoes to the quarter-masters (Confederate army) than any other store in the Northern Neck.³⁰ The military authorities and the Potomac Flotilla never managed to capture Polk; but, his business was closed down in Maryland.

The fact that Polk took advantage of the Richmond market and smuggled in needed goods at exuberant prices is not out of the ordinary. Smugglers, speculators and profiteers were not motivated by any sense of sympathy or allegiance to the South; but, by greed and the desire to make money. Thomas Scharf mistakes the trade between Maryland and Virginia as one of kindness and the "materializing of sympathy;" but, as demonstrated by Polk's shipping

²⁹According to J.B. Jones, men's boots sold for \$10.00 a pair in May of 1862 in Richmond, Virginia. See: J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital* (New York: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1866), 155.

³⁰Correspondence and the shipping list were discovered among the miscellaneous papers found on board a prize schooner captured by the *Wyandank* in September 1862 (Captain Charles Wilkes, Commanding Potomac Flotilla to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, 9 September 1862, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 114, vols. 117-118, National Archives). Mr. Polk frequently stopped at the house of Mr. Schohardt in Stafford Mills, Va., to store some of the articles (Street to Magaw, 18 June 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser.I, V, 288).

lists (Tables 1.1 and 1.2) such was not the case.³¹ There was little or no trading in kindness on the behalf of the Marylanders.

Captures were actually rare, and Craven, became thoroughly frustrated by the smugglers' craftiness. By August, he was utterly convinced of the people in Maryland, "that along the Potomac there was not one in twenty who is true to the Union."³² However, Craven would have been comforted to know that the blockading vessels were more than just an annoyance to the smugglers.

The failing success of the smuggling was evident in the numerous plots planned to capture the blockading vessels. The Washington-Baltimore packet *St. Nicholas*, was captured by rebels, in a plot designed to capture or destroy the *Pawnee*. The plan almost worked out.

Commander George Hollins, C.S.N., had observed that the *St. Nicholas* regularly supplied the *Pawnee* while making her usual runs.³³ He observed that the latter was not required to stop, but was permitted to approach the *Pawnee* without challenge. Relying on this lax state of discipline, Hollins hoped to lay the *St. Nicholas* alongside the *Pawnee*, and take her by boarding. Thus far, the scheme had

³¹Thomas Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy* (New York: Rogers and Sherwood, 1887), 493.

³²Craven to Welles, 11 August 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 602-603.

³³Hollins was formerly in command of the U.S. Frigate *Susquehanna*.

proceeded smoothly, and the trap was set against the "peace and dignity of Abraham and the *Pawnee*."³⁴

Hollins was forced to abandon the plan due to the death of Ward. The *Pawnee*, and almost every other vessel had left, bound for Washington to attend the funeral. Instead, Hollins planted two torpedoes in the Potomac, off Aquia Creek. The torpedoes were to float down with the tide and set to explode just in time to destroy the *Pawnee*. Again, the rebel plan failed. The torpedoes were spotted and recovered by a crew from the *Resolute*.³⁵

While rebels were making daring raids out in the Potomac, the Army of Northern Virginia struggled to gain control of the lower Potomac. Their efforts finally paid off, after the Union's disastrous defeat at Bull Run, the Confederate army erected shore batteries with little fear of any Union landing.

General Joseph E. Johnston, commander of the Army of the Potomac, was greatly criticized for not following up his victory at Bull Run by marching on into Washington. Such a move would have forced the foreign powers to recognize Southern independence. But, as General T. Bradley Johnson (commanding the Maryland Line)

³⁴Mallory to Walker, Undated, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 552.

³⁵*Sun*, 13 July, 1861. A specific type of "river" torpedo was manufactured in Maryland for the Confederacy. The torpedo was designed to draw only one foot of water, but its high profile made its use limited to the nighttime. U.S. Naval Correspondence, 1863-1865, *Civil War Papers* (Federal, Miscellaneous), 1860-1867, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

pointed out, Johnston believed that his army was exhausted, combat weary, and lacked the necessary transportation, rations, and other equipment and supplies. He firmly believed that his green troops could not have marched the thirty to forty miles, or crossed the Potomac, which was still "dominated by warships."³⁶

Johnston had more than logistical problems to contend with in the aftermath of Bull Run. General Robert Patterson's fresh forces in Centerville, had checked the Confederate pursuit. Johnston felt certain that Patterson's force could reach Washington in plenty of time to prevent any advance against the capitol. He therefore never gave any serious thoughts to advancing against Washington.³⁷

As the last days of September approached, Johnston, President Jefferson Davis, Brigadier-General Gustave T. Beauregard, and Major General G.W. Smith, held a conference in Beauregard's quarters at Fairfax Court House. They determined that no success could be gained by attacking the Army of the Potomac in its present position, under the long line of guns and forts near Washington; but, an offensive was important.

³⁶Bradley T. Johnson, ed., *A Memoir of the Life and Public Service of General Joseph E. Johnston* (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward and Company, 1891), 55-56.

³⁷Johnston to Headquarters Army of the Potomac, 14 October 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, II, 470-478. Robert Patterson, *A Narrative of the Campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah in 1861* (Philadelphia: John Campbell, 1865), 64.

Several alternative plans were debated, but, opposed due to the army's lack of ammunition and transportation. Finally, Davis proposed launching an expedition against General Joseph Hooker's division of 8,000 men, in Maryland, opposite the strong fortifications at Evansport. Johnston objected because he lacked the means to transport sufficient troops quickly, and qualified his objection, stating:

the Potomac being controlled by Federal vessels of war, such a body of, if thrown into Maryland would inevitably be captured or destroyed in attempting to return, even if successful against the land forces.³⁸

Lieutenant John Wilkinson's, C.S.N., narrative, reinforced Johnston's conclusions about the shortage of arms. When Fort Powhatan was abandoned, Wilkinson was appointed command of a battery at Aquia Creek. He later recalled that in August 1861, with ammunition being extremely scarce, he received orders "to be very sparing in the use of it."³⁹ He also asserted that Johnston never made the extensive preparations to invade southern Maryland as the Union military and naval officials were lead to believe.

Davis' plan was further debated and argued during the conference; but, apparently, the generals could agree on one thing only, if given till spring, the effective strength of the Federal army

³⁸Johnston, *Narrative*, 77.

³⁹Wilkinson, *Narrative of a Blockade Runner*, 21.

would become greater and better disciplined.⁴⁰ However, as Johnston noted in his narrative, they could not procure enough arms for the campaign, and "this of course decided the question of active operations then."⁴¹ Johnston's army wasted away, devastated by disease while the Federal army drilled and prepared for a spring campaign within the comfort and safety of the capitol's fortifications.

In spite of all the obstacles, the Confederate army finally prepared to move against Banks' brigade near Leesburg in October. General George B. McClellan, commanding the Army of the Potomac, was led by false reports to believe the invasion would be launched from Aquia Creek, into southern Maryland. His fears were justified in light of the situation on the Potomac.

The Confederacy had gathered a large flotilla of small steamers, scows, longboats, and, other vessels hidden in Aquia, Chopawamsic and Quantico Creek. The steam ferry, *George Page*, which was captured before Alexandria was evacuated, was armed with six

⁴⁰Ibid., 75.

⁴¹Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), 76-77. Rumors of invading Maryland also spread through the Confederate Army. On August 18, 1861, Lieutenant Green B. Samuels noted in a letter to his sister: "at times we hear tremendous cannonading ahead of us or down on the Potomac River...I think... that the greater part of the army will cross over into Maryland by the way of Leesburg..."; Spencer, Carrie Esther, ed.. *A Civil War Marriage in Virginia, Reminiscences and Letters Collected by Carrie Esther Spencer, Bernard Samuels, [and] Walter Berry Samuels* (Boyce: Carr Publishing Company, Inc., 1956), 104-105.

cannons.⁴² In addition, the Confederate army had quickly strengthened their position on the Potomac. A garrison of batteries and earthworks were constructed on the high bluffs between Freestone Point and the Chopawamsic.

McClellan did nothing but, left the defense of southern Maryland to the Potomac Flotilla. Craven reacted quickly by concentrating the entire gunboat flotilla off Aquia Creek. He then ordered all the vessels within his command to destroy every boat within reach on both shores. His last action would later haunt the integrity of the Potomac Flotilla in southern Maryland. But, politics was not Craven's concern, he strongly believed that the enemy was being aided by disloyal parties in southern Maryland.

The situation on the Potomac looked very unfavorable to the Union, but, very tempting and possibly rewarding for the South. With each day, the Confederates strengthened their position. The timing was remarkable. They owned the Potomac; Confederate commissioners James Mason and John Slidell were on their way to Europe; and Washington was itself in jeopardy. This was the opportune time to press for foreign intervention.

President Abraham Lincoln was uncertain how to handle the situation. He wanted the Army of the Potomac to move against the

⁴²The *George Page*, was the only armed steamer the Confederacy managed to keep in the Potomac River; but, Union superiority forced the steamer to remain hidden in Quantico Creek, under the protection of land batteries.

Confederate army, but, he also wanted to ensure the safety of Washington. Lincoln lacked confidence in McClellan and finally decided that the Union could not afford any more ill-conceived attacks. To make matters worse, unforeseen disasters lay ahead. The sudden defeat at Ball's Bluff and the Trent affair were potentially critical blows to the Union.⁴³

On October 21, 1861, a Union reconnaissance force crossed the Potomac, west of Washington near Leesburg, Virginia, and attacked the Seventh Brigade, commanded by General Nathan G. Evans. After an "obstinate contest" the Union troops were driven back under heavy losses. The battle, more commonly called Ball's Bluff or Edward's Ferry was a Confederate victory only forty miles from the nation's capitol. Dr. James Moore, a surgeon in the U.S. Army, later recalled the pathetic scene "the Potomac here was red with blood of the Union slain".⁴⁴

McClellan reacted quickly to the Union loss at Edward's Ferry. First, he dispatched General George A. McCall's division to occupy

⁴³Jay Monaghan, *Diplomat in Carpet Slippers, Abraham Lincoln Deals with Foreign Affairs* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945), 153.

On November 8, 1861, Commander Charles Wilkes, captain of the U.S.S. *San Jacinto*, stopped the British mail steamer, *Trent*, and removed the Confederate commissioners, James Mason and John Slidell. The situation rendered U.S. diplomatic relations with the British government extremely difficult and nearly provoked war.

⁴⁴James Moore, *A Complete History of the Great Rebellion, or, the Civil War in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: Hurstand Company, Publishers, 1866), 81.

Dranesville, Virginia. He then sent General Charles S. Hamilton's brigade to re-enforce General Charles P. Stone's force near Poolesville, and to threaten the Confederate forces at Harrison's Island.⁴⁵ His strategy worked, and the Confederate army was ordered to withdraw from Leesburg. The move prevented a still more serious disaster at Ball's Bluff. Nevertheless, the Confederate victory, which occurred only three months after Bull Run and the blockade of the Potomac was both humiliating and devastating to moral among the Union soldiers and sailors.

Though McClellan's army had retreated and was defeated and demoralized, Welles urged Craven to continue to prevent all hostile movements on the Potomac. The Potomac Flotilla was all which stood between Johnston's Army of Northern Virginia and Maryland. The task seemed futile; three of the most heavily armed vessels in the flotilla had been detached and sent with Commodore Samuel DuPont's expedition to Port Royal, South Carolina.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Banks to Williams, 22 October 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, V, 338-339. McCall to McClellan, 20 December 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, V, 473-474. McCall to Williams, 22 December 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, V, 474-476.

⁴⁶On October 29, 1861, Commodore Samuel DuPont, commanding the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, departed with twenty-seven naval vessels for Port Royal, South Carolina. The engagement at Port Royal Sound took place on November 7, 1861. This was a great naval victory important to the future base of operations and thus strengthening the naval blockade. By 1862, Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina, had also fallen, and Confederate ports were in jeopardy. These naval operations would eventually rupture the flow of arms from England to the Confederate armies in North Carolina and Virginia.

Craven's greatly weakened flotilla shelled the banks of the Potomac daily, with no or little result. The Confederate shore batteries became even more effective. The ships' crews were humiliated and outraged at the officers of the Flotilla, and their ineffectiveness. Pilot Ransom Brown declared to Lieutenant Abram Harrell, captain of the U.S.S. *Union*, "were [Harrell] not such a coward, he would open the river."⁴⁷ The incident was reported to Craven, who was both outraged, disappointed, and severely discouraged. His command was embarrassed and at any time, the enemy could invade southern Maryland or Washington.

Craven urged the navy to take immediate action to protect navigation on the Potomac. He pointed out that under the current circumstances, none of the vessels could enforce the blockade, and disaster was certain. Problems had plagued the Flotilla, all but four vessels were in desperate need of repairs. Their commanders complained almost daily about the engines and weakening decks.

As Craven struggled to keep the flotilla afloat and on guard, the Confederate stranglehold on the Potomac tightened. It was no longer safe for the Union to ship men, supplies, or provisions up the

⁴⁷Harrell recommended to Welles that Ransom Brown should be dismissed from the service for his exceptional insolence; refer to: Harrell to Craven, 8 November 1861, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 114, vols. 117-118, National Archives (hereafter cited NA). Harrell probably recognized that such discontent among a pilot, could easily be spread about both the officers and men. It should be remembered, that the rank of pilot conferred special privileges similar to commissioned officers. Thus, the case of Brown can not simply be viewed as discontent among the lower ranks.

Potomac. Ships bound up or down the Potomac were stopped below Smith's Point, and detained until their cargoes could be transported by wagon, or rail. After the humiliating defeats at Bull Run and Ball's Bluff, the Confederate blockade was "mortifying to the people and felt as dishonorable to the nation."⁴⁸

For various reasons, McClellan decided not to attack the Confederate batteries. His own belief was that the Army of the Potomac was not in condition to prevent the construction of these batteries. McClellan remained steadfast in his decision, and later defended his position:

their destruction [the batteries], by our army, would have afforded but a temporary relief, unless we had been strong enough to hold the entire line of the Potomac.⁴⁹

McClellan believed that Johnston would abandon the batteries if the Army of the Potomac could drive against the Confederate forces at Manassas. He excused the batteries as a morale, not physical factor, an estimation which may not have been far from the truth; but, obviously another factor affected McClellan's actions. The

⁴⁸Moore, *Rebellion*, 84. On November 29, 1861, Captain Craven was officially detached from commanding the Potomac Flotilla and assigned to the U.S. Steam Sloop *Brooklyn*, commanded by Commodore G.T. Pendergrast, Flag Officer commanding the Home Squadron. Harrell assumed temporary command, until December 6, 1861, when Lieutenant Robert H. Wyman assumed command of the Potomac Flotilla.

⁴⁹George B. McClellan, *Report on the Organization and Campaign of the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Sheldon and Company, Publishers, 1864), 112.

slaughter at Ball's Bluff had a sobering effect, and McClellan and Major John G. Barnard were reluctant to instigate another battle.⁵⁰

Under mounting pressure from President Lincoln and Congress, McClellan reluctantly dispatched Hooker's division to re-open the Potomac. The division was encamped along the Maryland shore, as far south as Port Tobacco. Nothing happened; the Union troops waited impotently, passing the winter in relative idleness, as the Confederate batteries gained in strength. As historian John Evan pointed out, the war-time newspapers had no "proper war to report—only *All Quiet Along the Potomac*," which marked the frustration and tedium after the disaster at Bull Run and Ball's Bluff.⁵¹

The residents of southern Maryland grew angered at the military authorities because the soldiers simply helped themselves to fire wood, fencing, wheat, rye straw, sheep, hogs, and everything else. Chapel Point, a part of St. Thomas Manor, suffered the most. Soldiers encamped there took over the wharf, stockhouse,

⁵⁰Robert Johnson and Clarence Clough, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, (New York: Century, 1888), 2: 114. Also refer to: Otto Eisenschmil, *The Hidden Face of the Civil War* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1961), 242.

⁵¹John Evan, *Atlantic Impact 1861* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1952), 97. Hooker firmly believed that based on balloon observations conducted in cooperation with General Daniel Sickles of Hooker's Excelsior Brigade, the Confederate batteries could be "stormed and carried". He argued that free navigation of the Potomac would give the Union army an advantage over the Confederate forces, while the roads remained impassable. Nevertheless, McClellan was able to forestall pressure from Lincoln and Welles, and cancelled Hooker's impending assault due to an adverse reconnaissance report made by General John Barnard, Chief Engineer of the Army. Hooker to Williams, 20 February 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, V, 724-725.

warehouse, granary, and, the blacksmith's shop, from April, 1861 to June, 1865.

Reverend Edward I. Devitt recalled that the worst piece of vandalism the soldiers committed was to shoot down the tombstones in the graveyard at Chapel Point. Reverend Devitt also recalled that one tombstone was left standing, "this one they spared because it belonged to a husband who had seven wives, their names being chiseled into the stone, one after another in the order in which they died."⁵² Years later, Father Heichemer, the Procurator, received \$4,035.50 from the government to compensate for these damages.⁵³

On November 11, 1861, the Potomac Flotilla and the Seventy-Fourth New York Infantry (Excelsior Brigade) mounted a daring raid across the Potomac, which highly embarrassed McClellan's command. That evening, Colonel Charles K. Graham loaded four-hundred hand-picked men onto the *Island Belle*, *Freeborn*, and schooner *Dana*. The troops were dispatched from Port Tobacco Creek at 10 p.m. and landed at Mathia's Point about forty-five minutes later. It was successful, and in the words of Acting Master William Street, commander of the U.S. Schooner *Dana*:

⁵²Brother Vorbrinck moved the bodies to another graveyard located on the hill above the Point. Edward I. Devitt, "The Jesuit Farms in Maryland" *Woodstock Letters*, vol. 60, no.3, "Facts and Anecdotes of the Civil War," Special Collections Division, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. pp. 43, 83. Also refer to: Tilp Papers, Library, Calvert County Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland.

⁵³The claim against the U.S. Government was finally settled on May 12, 1891. Devitt, *Woodstock Letters*, p. 198.

an affair that will set to rest the supposed existence of heavy artillery on that point, and throwing the enemy into a great state of trepidation for their unprotected coast on the Potomac.⁵⁴

The remainder of the year was passed in relative idleness. McClellan refused to move and instead, chose to drill and prepare his troops in Washington. McClellan's procrastination and the resulting controversies stalled the Federal war machine until early March. Historians have long since criticized his inactivity and focused on the blockaded Potomac. But evidence suggests, that McClellan was at least partially correct.

The rebels fired "wretchedly" and vessels passed up and down the Potomac without the slightest injury.⁵⁵ One night more than thirty vessels with government stores escaped undamaged.⁵⁶ Even Hooker, who was aware of the importance of silencing the batteries dismissed them of any significant military effect. Private Alfred

⁵⁴Street to Craven, 12 November 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 751-752. Colonel Graham made only one mistake; he neglected to inform his superiors in advance. His immediate superior, General D.E. Sickles seemed pleased; but, General McClellan was made a fool of, and ordered Colonel Graham arrested. However, the expedition was such a success, General Hooker decided to overlook Graham's indiscretion. Acting Master Street found it necessary to make a formal apology to Commander Craven for having left his station. See: Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, vol. 1 (New York: MacMillan Company, 1949), 142-144. Also refer to: Mary Alice Wills, *The Confederate Blockade of Washington, D.C. 1861-1862* (Parsons: McClain Printing Company, 1975), 43-44.

⁵⁵Hooker to Williams, 11 November 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, V, 648.

⁵⁶*Port Tobacco Times*, 2 November 1861.

Bellard, Fifth New Jersey Infantry, who was encamped across from Cockpit Point, facetiously wrote "the rebels had a little target practice today."⁵⁷ At Budd's Ferry, Private Martin Haynes, Company I, New Hampshire Regiment, noted that each day hundreds of light-draft schooners passed close into the Maryland shore and ran the line of batteries in broad daylight.⁵⁸

The situation on the Potomac may in fact not have had much military significance; at least not in the tactical sense. But, the closing of the Potomac, the capture of Mason and Slidell, and recent Confederate victories made October and November the most perilous months of the Civil War. In Europe, British cabinet member John Russell strongly recommended to his government that England and France together, should seize the favorable moment to intervene; in effect, recognizing Confederate independence, and declaring the blockade no longer binding on their part. Meanwhile, contributors to the *London Times* kept British citizens informed with events on the Potomac and instilled a sense of doom for the Federal government. No doubt, the British assumed that at any moment, the Confederate army would run its troops into Maryland. On November 9, 1862

⁵⁷David Donald, *Gone for a Soldier, The Civil War Memoirs of Private Alfred Bellard* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), 31.

⁵⁸Martin A. Haynes, *History of the Second Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers: Its Camps, Marches, and Battles* (Manchester: Charles F. Livingston, Printer, 1865), 35.

(Tuesday), the London *Times* reported "...the Federals are pressed even in their own capitol."⁵⁹

Closing the Potomac also helped to further the Confederacy's influence in Maryland's November 7th election for Congressional, State and Local representatives. As the election date approached, Governor Thomas H. Hicks and the Federal authorities became increasingly alarmed over the apparent strength of the Democratic Party and the influence it may have at the polls. In response, Lincoln authorized Simon Cameron (Secretary of War) to issue Major General John A. Dix, commanding the troops in Baltimore, the authority to arrest any alleged disunionists who showed up at the polls. It was a "spirited and violent campaign" with hundreds of citizens arrested before election day.⁶⁰ When the State Legislature convened in Special Session on December 3, 1861, referring to the overwhelming Unionist victory in the elections of June and November, Hicks orated:

⁵⁹From early September through the month of December, the London *Times* kept a close watch of affairs on the Potomac River. Also see: Norman B. Ferris, *Desperate Diplomacy, William Seward's foreign Policy, 1861* (Knoxville: University of Texas Press, 1976), 134.

⁶⁰Harry Wright Newman, *Maryland and the Confederacy* (Annapolis: by the author, 1976), 60. Federal forces under the command of Brigadier-General George Sykes, commanding Second Brigade, Casey's Division, occupied lower Maryland in the election precincts at Chaptico, Oakville, and Bryantown. Leonardtown was not occupied because Sykes did not have the necessary supplies. Nevertheless, the polls were opened and elections were held without any trouble or disturbance in any of the lower counties. Sykes to Smith, 11 November 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, V, 387-388.

The people have declared in the most emphatic tones, when I have never doubted, that Maryland has no sympathy with the rebellion, and desires to do her full share in the duty of suppressing it.⁶¹

What was carried out by the Federal authorities and Dix, prevented the Maryland legislature from passing an act of secession. Another factor was the absolute power of the Potomac Flotilla in preventing a Confederate invasion into Maryland. The consequence of which would have been disastrous. Maryland was vital with its railroad and telegraph connections to Washington and the West.

Welles was so shaken and angered about the situation on the Potomac, he openly criticized McClellan. McClellan, Welles thought, was unfit to command because of his inefficiency and for not recognizing how vile the situation was - "the rebels in sight of us, almost within cannon range, Washington beleaguered, only a single railroad track to Baltimore..."⁶² Samuel Chase and others, agreed with Welles, and even considered McClellan an imbecile, a coward, a traitor, and, the list goes on.⁶³

Public sentiment in southern Maryland had naturally turned against McClellan. The suspension of the operations of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and the entire loss of Southern trade caused a general depression in the business of Baltimore. The decrease in the

⁶¹Newman, *Maryland*, 116.

⁶²Gideon Welles, *1861-March 30, 1864*, vol. 1 of *Diary of Gideon Welles* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), 103.

⁶³Welles, *Diary* 1: 103.

cotton trade was estimated at seventy-five percent. Other trades were completely cut off, or fell by more than one-third of the previous year.⁶⁴ Prices for some goods were enormous.

Fisherman and merchants watched helplessly as their cargoes of tobacco, grains and other products decayed in the Lower Potomac. An editorial in the *Harper's Weekly* entitled "The Closing of the Potomac," verbally attacked McClellan for not remedying the situation. The author also attacked the officers of the Potomac Flotilla, stating:

Balls and shells are unpleasant things to come in contact with, no doubt. It is however the business of war to encounter them, and their captains can no more complain of being under fire than private soldiers.⁶⁵

The first year of war ended in a near stalemate in the east and on the Potomac line and closed rather gloomily for the Union. Two months earlier, Dix's troops occupied the counties of Northampton and Accomac, without contest. Union naval victories in North Carolina persuaded the foreign powers not to recognize Confederate independence.

In an effort to raise civilian morale in Maryland, the Federal government released erroneous reports to local newspapers. The

⁶⁴Despite the obstruction of the Potomac, the commercial trade review for the Port of Baltimore was not discouraging. Business it seems, fell off by more than one-third in some trades, but was overall, profitable. "Trade of Baltimore," *Sun*, 2 January 1862.

⁶⁵*Harper's Weekly*, 2 November 1861. Also see: *Port Tobacco Times*, 10 October 1861.

Baltimore *Sun*, for example, reported that government troops had sealed up the channels from Point Lookout to the Flotilla's base of operations. But, Marylanders sneered at these obvious lies and at the inefficiency of the Navy Department and especially of the Potomac Flotilla, that nothing was done.⁶⁶ In England, a *Times* correspondent exposed these reports as erroneous:

The Confederates rarely fire on vessels going down the river. Therefore, when the safe passage of a flotilla of schooners is reported, the papers [news] set up a cry of joy and declare the river is not closed. It is policy of the enemy [Confederacy] to let all ships go down if they are not vessels of war...But vessels coming up are obstructed as far as possible...⁶⁷

On the Potomac there had been only brief skirmishing since Bull Run. McClellan's procrastination had stalled the Federal war machine and made a spring campaign inevitable. The batteries remained a menace until early spring and had clearly become one of the Confederacy's defensive measures to protect Richmond. It was clearly demonstrated that the Potomac Flotilla's efforts kept Washington and Maryland from falling in the hands of the Confederacy. It was the Flotilla's dominance on the Potomac which ultimately crushed Confederate efforts to gain a negotiated peace or foreign intervention and recognition in 1861. During the war years

⁶⁶ Boynton, *Navy During the Rebellion*, 317.

⁶⁷ *Times* (London), 1 November 1861.

to follow, the Potomac Flotilla performed a significant contribution to Union victory.

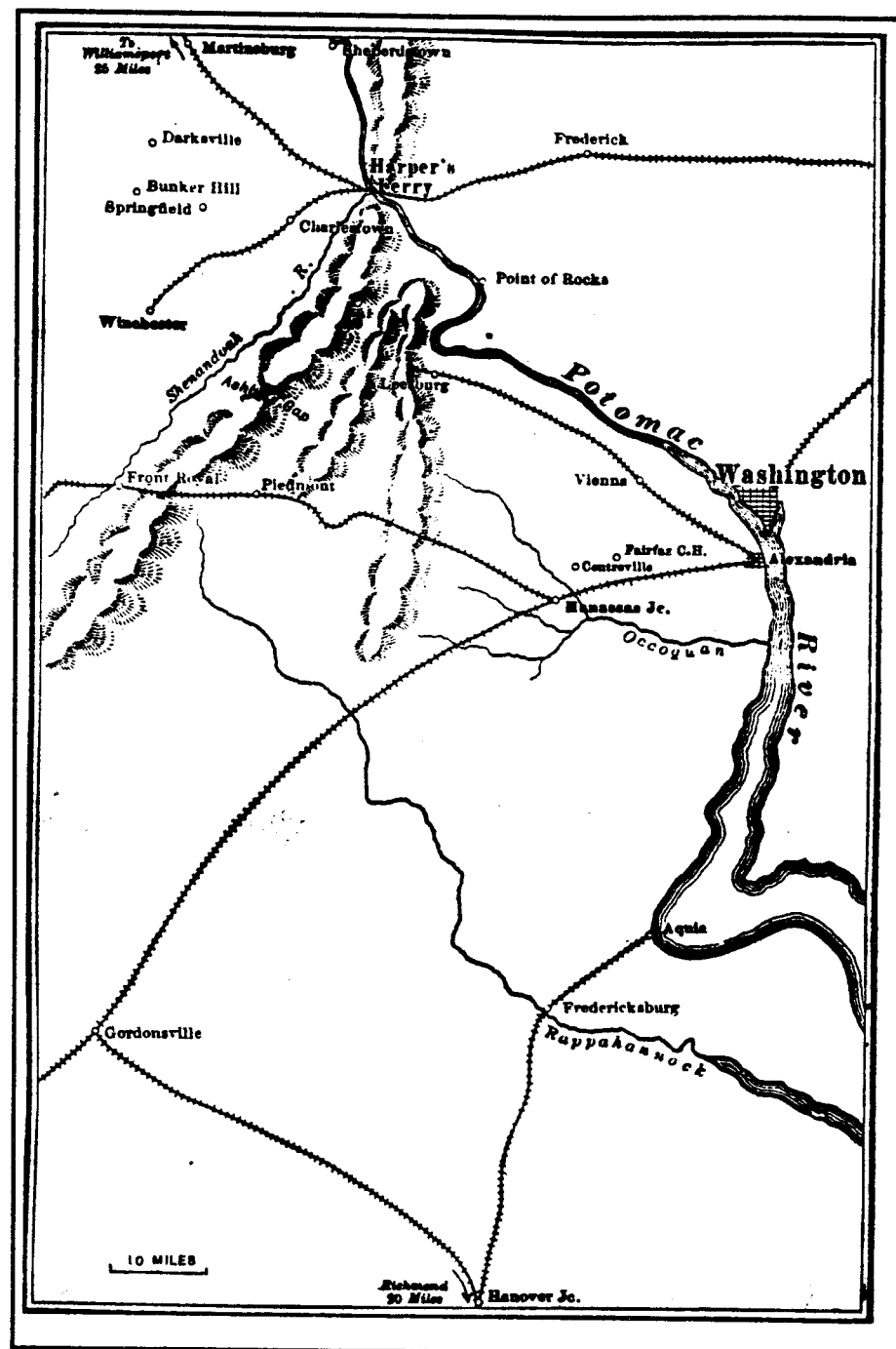


Figure 1.2: Theater of Operations around Manassas, Virginia. Compiled by the engineers of McDowell's staff in the fall of 1861. Re-printed from R.M. Johnston, *Bull Run, Its Strategy and Tactics* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), 13.

Table 1.1: Partial List of Goods Shipped by W.R. Polk in July, 1862

Sheet No. 145

<u>Item</u>	<u>Number of Packages</u>	<u>Price Each</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Men's Hip High Boots	60 pairs	\$0.55	\$33.00
Men's Calf High Boots	60 pairs	\$0.95	\$57.00
Russell Brogans	55 pairs	\$1.00	\$55.00
Leather Buckskins	3	\$1.00	\$3.00
Ladies Garters	6	\$1.50	\$9.00

Sheet No. 148

<u>Item</u>	<u>Number of Packages</u>	<u>Price Each</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Castor Oil	4 bottles	\$0.12	\$0.48
Sweet Oil	1 dozen	\$1.10	
Sweet Oil	3 bottles	\$0.05	\$0.15
^a Paregoric	4 bottles	\$0.15	
Sweet Oil	1 dozen	\$0.63	
^b Calomel	1 dozen	\$1.00	
^c Alum	27	\$0.10	\$2.70

Sheet No. 149

<u>Item</u>	<u>Number of Packages</u>	<u>Price Each</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Ladies Boots	23 pairs	\$1.45	\$33.55
Youths' Shoes	21 pairs	\$0.62	\$13.02
Childrens' Shoes	35	\$0.30	\$10.50
" " Fancy	24	\$0.45	\$10.80
Calomel	5 dozen	\$1.00	\$5.00
^d Mercurial Ointments	2	\$1.00	\$2.00

Sheet No. 161

<u>Item</u>	<u>Number of Packages</u>	<u>Price Each</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Coal Oil	90 gallons	\$0.30	\$30.00
Old Rye	136 gallons	\$0.95	\$129.20
Whiskey	65 1/2 gallons	\$0.32	\$208.48
Old Rye	126 gallons	\$0.45	\$70.70
Bays Rio Coffee	954 pounds	\$0.22	\$209.88
Castor Oil	20 bottles	\$0.29	\$5.80
Black Ink	9 bottles	\$0.25	\$2.25
Oil Cloth Pants	1	\$0.75	\$0.75
Oil Cloth Jacket	1	\$1.00	\$1.00
^e Mustard	3 dozen	\$2.25	\$6.75

Table 1.1 - Continued:

Sheet No. 171			
Item	Number of Packages	Price Each	Total Cost
Alum	143	\$0.05	\$7.15
Calomel	2	\$1.50	\$3.00
^f Camphor	5	\$1.75	\$8.75

Sources: Wilkes, to Welles, 9 September 1862, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 114, vols. 117-118, NA.

Definitions & Notes:

^aParegoric was taken internally for the relief of diarrhea and intestinal pain.

^bCalomel was a white tasteless compound used as a purgative and used to clean or purge the bowels. By 1864 calomel sold in Richmond, Virginia for \$20.00 per ounce. Refer to: Cochran Hamilton, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy* (West Port: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1958), 165; also refer to: George Adams, *Doctors in Blue* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952), 38-39, 222-230.

^cAlum was used as topical astringents and styptics (refer to: Adams, *Doctors*, 38-39).

^dMercurial Ointments were pharmaceuticals which contained mercury. They were used on malarial patients to control their bowels.

^eMustard was used as a stimulant and diuretic.

^fCamphor was used as a stimulant.

Table 1.2: W. R. Polk's Negotiables

Along with the list of items discovered on board the vessel, were a number of negotiable notes and other forms of money that Polk had either received as payment, or planned to sell. The items are listed below, along with their values. The original list appeared to be in Polk's handwriting, but, it is possible the list was made out by one of the Union sailors who boarded the vessel.

Notes & Etc.	Value
Good northern drafts endorsed and returned in 30 days	\$0.40
Yankee treasury notes	\$0.40
Virginia Bank notes and old banks of 20 and 50 dollars	\$0.11
Virginia Bank notes old Banks under 20 dollars	\$8.00 to \$10.00
North Carolina 20 and Upward	\$8.00 to \$10.00
North Carolina under 20	\$5.00 to \$8.00
Virginia Bonds	\$90.00 to \$98.00
North Carolina Bonds, Old issue	\$100.00 or more
Missouri Bonds	\$80.00 to \$90.00
Coupons on Northern Railroad	Not determined
Gold	\$100.00 to \$115.00
Silver	\$75.00 to 90.00

Sources: Wilkes to Welles, 9 September 1862, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 114, vols. 117-118, NA.

Note: Polk, like some other smugglers, speculated with Yankee dollars and a variety of negotiables which also became part of the contraband trade. Also see: Bern Anderson, *By Sea By River* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 274.

Chapter 2

The Potomac Line

The existing historical interpretation underestimates the role of the Potomac Flotilla following the collapse of McClellan's Peninsular Campaign. It is assumed, that all following campaigns were too far inland for the Flotilla to play anything, but a small part.¹ A careful review of the historical evidence actually proves otherwise; the Flotilla was crucial to the protection of Union lines throughout the war. It was by no means, a minor task to keep the river lifeline open to the Federal armies. The massive campaigns launched by McClellan, Ambrose Burnside, and Ulysses S. Grant were indebted to the logistical and tactical advantages effected under the cooperation of the Flotilla's gunboats. Unfortunately, much of the success of the Potomac Flotilla has been eclipsed by larger military campaigns and naval engagements.

Federal and Confederate forces passed the winter of 1861-1862, in relative idleness on the Potomac Line. Johnston grew anxious though, knowing that McClellan would have to move his army when the roads cleared in the spring. He also suspected, that

¹Bern Anderson incorrectly wrote that following the collapse of McClellan's Peninsular Campaign, "there was little naval activity in the rivers flowing into [the] Chesapeake Bay for nearly two years. The land campaigns in Virginia and Maryland during that period, were... beyond the reach of naval support." Refer to Anderson, *By Sea, By River*, 274.

McClellan might choose another route, using the Potomac, Rappahannock, or the York and James Rivers, which would give the Federal forces dozens of bases for operations. Johnston was also aware that the Potomac Flotilla still commanded these navigable rivers and using the waterways would place McClellan's Army of the Potomac "two day's march nearer" to Richmond than the Army of Northern Virginia.²

As the month of March began, the Confederate forces occupied six selected positions to protect Virginia: in Grafton, on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, west of Cumberland; Harpers Ferry to cover the Shenandoah Valley; Manassas Junction to protect the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Philadelphia Railroad and Aquia to cover the flank of Manassas; Yorktown and Norfolk. McClellan's left wing around Alexandria eventually forced Johnston to abandon his right flank in the region of Occoquan and Dumphries.

Provided the weather remained fair, McClellan hoped to open the lower Potomac during the first week of March. His plan proposed moving the Army of the Potomac to occupy and secure positions at Dumphries, Fairfax Court House, Vienna, and, Dranesville. McClellan

²In his memoirs, Johnston wrote that he expected McClellan to make two main thrusts; one to the Lower Rappahannock, the other to Fort Monroe, and from those points, by road towards Richmond. He was certain, that the choice of overland routes had not escaped McClellan's attention. Bradley T. Johnson, ed., *A Memoir of the Life and Public Service of Joseph E. Johnston* (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward and Company, 1891), 75-76; Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 102.

estimated that the objective would require a force of over 118,000 men as well as the cooperation of the Potomac Flotilla.³

The Confederate army could not spare the troops necessary to maintain or strengthen all of the batteries along the Potomac Line.⁴ Two months earlier, in December, every midshipman was removed or transferred from the batteries at Pagan's Creek, Barrett's Point, and Cedar Point, located at the mouth of the Nanesmond River. The transfer of men and supplies appears to have been coordinated so as to reinforce the principle batteries at Shipping Point, Evansport, and Cockpit Point, along the Potomac. Major-General Benjamin Huger, commanding the Department of Norfolk, Virginia, was disgruntled with the lack of supplies and manpower, and complained:

I must not be held responsible for the defense of these batteries if I am to be deprived of the necessary means of making a proper defense.⁵

The Secretary of War, J.P. Benjamin, acknowledged Huger's difficulties and needs for experienced officers. As a result of Huger's complaints, the Confederate Congress passed a law authorizing

³Memorandum on Potomac Batteries, 1 March 1862, in Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), 195.

⁴To avoid any confusion, it must be noted that in 1861, every battery in Huger's department, except Craney Island, was under the command of officers of the navy. Huger to Benjamin, 27 November 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, LI, pt. 2, 391.

⁵Huger to Benjamin, 10 December 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, LI, pt. 2, 410-411.

President Davis to appoint to temporary rank in the army, all officers of the navy commanding shore batteries or posts. In addition, the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen R. Mallory, withdrew his request to remove the naval officers in the department of Huger's command.⁶

On March 9, 1862 the Confederate batteries extending down the Potomac were completely abandoned and Johnston's troops fell back behind the Rappahannock River and selected a new line of defense. The decision to retreat was made by Johnston, himself, who believed his number of troops, about 40,000 strong, were insufficient to survive an attack. With the opening of the Peninsular Campaign, Southern attention was momentarily drawn away from the Potomac. From this time on, the Confederates would never again possess strong batteries along the Potomac.

McClellan began the ill-fated Peninsular Campaign on March 17, 1862, just after the Potomac was opened. His plan was to attack Richmond by driving the Army of the Potomac up the Peninsula formed by the York and the James Rivers. Army transports and navy gunboats were to provide the necessary logistical and tactical support for his troops.⁷ The movement began with the *Anacostia*,

⁶Benjamin to Huger, 25 December 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, LI, pt. 2, 391.

⁷In his *Report on the Organization and Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, McClellan wrote that the efficient co-operation of the navy was an absolute necessity. McClellan, *Army of the Potomac*, 133. McClellan to Welles, 20 March 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 28; Wyman to Welles, 23

Thomas Freeborn, and *Island Belle*, convoying army transports to Hampton Roads.⁸

By the time McClellan had massed over 100,000 troops at Fort Monroe in early April, his plans had already been frustrated. The threat posed by the ironclad warship, C.S.S. *Virginia*, compelled Lewis M. Goldsborough, the commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, to abandon cooperating with the army's movements up the James.⁹ As a result, McClellan was forced to shift his main effort to the York River.

After a month of fighting the Union troops struck a vital blow, Yorktown and Williamsburg fell; the Union army set in motion, only forty miles from the southern capital. As the Army of the Potomac moved into position to attack Richmond, Confederate troops rapidly withdrew from their precarious position at Norfolk. In the process, on May 11, the *Virginia* was moved up the James, then scuttled.

March 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 28-29; Welles to Wyman, 25 March 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 29.

⁸Brigadier-General Samuel Heintzelman's Third Corps were the first troops embarked from Alexandria to Fort Monroe. The *Anacostia*, *Freeborn*, and *Island Belle*, were quickly returned to convoy another large detachment of troops. Telegram, McClellan to Welles, 20 March 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 28.

⁹Although the Union fleet had neutralized the *Virginia*, she still prevented the Union from using the James River, and "demanded the diversion of a large portion of the naval forces;" see: Alexander S. Webb, *The Army in the Civil War*, vol. 3, *The Peninsula-McClellan's Campaign of 1862* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881), 156. For information on the design and history of the *Virginia* (ex. U.S. frigate *Merrimack*) see, William N. Still, Jr. *Iron Afloat, The Story of the Confederate Armorclads* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985).

The destruction of the *Virginia* paved the way for Federal forces because now, the James could be used and naval assistance could be tendered. Moving up the James to aid McClellan's troops, Commodore John Rogers, commanding the U.S.S. *Galena*, requested the assistance of additional gunboats at Jamestown. The ironclad *Monitor* and semi-armored *Naugatuck* steamed up to Roger's assistance, with orders to proceed to Richmond, and shell the city into surrender.

The small Union squadron was suddenly halted by a series of river obstructions, and strong batteries at Fort Darling, on Drewry's Bluff. Thus ended the attempt to clear the James, and bombard Richmond. Part of the navy's failure rested on McClellan, whom refused to dispatch any military support. A mistake for certain; opening the James would have permitted unlimited naval support for McClellan's army.

By May 21, the Army of the Potomac (about 115,000 strong) emerged in a line formed from seven to twelve mile outside of Richmond. Support for the troops came from the rear, at White House Landing on the Pamunkey River. Regrettably for McClellan's troops, the Pamunkey was too narrow to afford adequate naval protection and support. In addition, his army was forced to advance from the direction of the swamp-bordered Chickahominy River (Figure 2.1).

After the devastating but indecisive battle at Fair Oaks or Seven Pines, on May 25, the Army of the Potomac was shaken by its

losses and immobilized. Exhausted and discouraged, the sudden arrival of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and a series of actions in the Seven Day's Battles forced the Union army to retreat. The final movement ended at Malvern Hill on July 1, in a spectacular battle.

A magnificent storm of grape and canister fire from northern artillery and gunboat mortars swept Confederate troop positions. Columns of southern troops recoiled, advanced, then fell back again. Allan Nevins noted that the Confederate losses exceeded five thousand, nearly three times that of the Union.¹⁰

Seeking safety and shielded by the navy, McClellan decided to withdraw back to the James. As darkness closed in, troops were embarked from Malvern Hill, and put in motion towards Harrison's Landing, seven miles distance. McClellan and his army remained securely in place until August, when the decision was made to withdraw the Army of the Potomac into positions around Washington.¹¹

¹⁰Allan Nevins, *War for the Union*, V.4, *The Organized War to Victory, 1864-1865* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 137.

¹¹Stanton had restored the rank of general in chief of the Union Armies and conferred this office upon General Henry W. Halleck. McClellan was reduced to a subordinate position and ordered to remove his army to Aquia Creek. On November 7, 1862, Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, assumed command over McClellan's Army of the Potomac. J.G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1961), 213-219.

Rowena Reed noted that the failure of the Peninsular Campaign signalled the breakdown of combined operations planning.¹² This is not an entirely sufficient conclusion. McClellan's Army of the Potomac was secure, intact, and rehabilitating at Harrison's Landing (figure 2.2). He still had complete control over an immense flotilla of transports and gunboats in the James, Hampton Roads, and Potomac. These, the Federal army would ultimately use to their advantage. In addition, the Union navy had the James River Flotilla blockaded in the James and commanded the navigable rivers in northeastern Virginia; thus, the waterway access to the South remained opened.¹³

While the Army of the Potomac was safe at Harrison's Landing, General John Pope was organizing the widely scattered fragments of his troops near Washington.¹⁴ He managed to pull together a

¹²Rowena Reed, *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), 189.

¹³Rumors and speculation circulated through the Confederate navy, whether or not McClellan's army would make another attempt on Richmond. Gravely concerned, Commander John T. Wood, C.S.N., wrote his wife, "Really our little Navy seems doomed". In addition, the effect of the campaign on Richmond was devastating. Hospital conditions in and around Richmond which were over crowded with the wounded. The situation Wood described was sickening "it requires a strong head to breath the air polluted by hundreds of festering wounds." In addition to the horrors in Richmond, Wood's description reveals that the Potomac Flotilla was experiencing some measure of success at intercepting illicit trade between Maryland and Virginia's shore. See: Wood to Wife, 5 July 1862, Wood, John Taylor, Papers, 1858-1915, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; hereafter cited as *Taylor Papers*.

¹⁴Lincoln appointed Pope to command the new Army of Virginia, which was officially created on June 26, 1862. T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 116-120.

concentrated force which seriously menaced the Confederate lines of communication. As a result, before the Army of the Potomac left Harrison's Landing, Lee was compelled to weaken his army by sending 25,000 men under the command of Jackson and Hill to oppose Pope's forces. Pope, however, reacted quickly and skillfully withdrew his army behind the Rappahannock on July 18. His position prevented the destruction of the railroad line between Falmouth and Aquia Creek, and the wharfs and government storehouses at the latter place.

Lee was anxious to engage Pope's army before it could be reinforced; but, his forces met strong resistance where ever they attempted to cross the Rappahannock and were promptly driven back. Pope finally retired his army back to the line of Thoroughfare Gap, Gainesville, and Manassas Junction, hoping to receive fresh supplies and troops from Washington.

On August 1, 1862, General Henry W. Halleck, general-in-chief of Federal forces, ordered Burnside's force at Newport News, Virginia, to join Pope's troops on the Rappahannock River. Two days later, He telegraphed McClellan to take immediate measures to withdraw the Army of the Potomac from the Peninsular to Aquia Creek. The situation was dangerous for the Union; Lincoln had two widely separated armies not in communication, and General Robert E. Lee's (commanding Army of Northern Virginia) forces were encamped between them, and ready to strike at either one.

The Army of the Potomac was in a particularly precarious position at Harrison's Landing. McClellan feared that during the withdraw, Lee would move his troops rapidly down the Peninsular to Newport News and Aquia Creek. As a result, in protesting to Halleck, McClellan delayed the withdraw until August 14, 1862. Meanwhile, Lee quickly and decisively moved his forces north towards Washington.

Major-General Fitz John Porter's Fifth Corps of the Army of the Potomac reached Aquia Creek in fairly good season. Burnside, who had come from Fort Monroe ordered it forward to join Pope's army. Heintzelman's corps was also ordered to Pope's aide as the Army of the Potomac moved slowly up the Potomac to Alexandria. McClellan arrived at Alexandria on August 26; but, he hesitated to join Pope, stating that his troops were too disorganized and dispirited to move out.

The Army of the Potomac's withdraw to Harrison's Landing, Aquia Creek, and on to Alexandria, required support from both the James River Flotilla and the Potomac Flotilla. With almost daily engagements, the gunboats repulsed rebel attacks and protected Union shipping and encampments. Burnside remained fearful during the army's withdraw, that without the navy's protection, Lee's

remaining troops could prevent the Army of the Potomac from evacuating Harrison's Landing.¹⁵

The situation began to change drastically as the final days of August approached. Lee, Longstreet and Jackson's forces (55,000 men strong) had finally pinned down Pope's army at the old battleground of Bull Run. On August 30, the two army's clashed at Second Bull Run which ended two days later in a Federal defeat. Pope retreated his army within the defensive lines of Washington and was almost immediately relieved from command. McClellan superseded Pope, and was appointed to command all of the Union forces in defense of Washington.

On September 1, 1862, the battle of Ox Hill or Chantilly, ended Second Bull Run in another Union defeat. The "battle for Washington" ensued as Lee suddenly changed the objective of the Virginia theater from Richmond, to the nation's capital. In the meantime, Burnside urged Gustavus V. Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, to send more gunboats to Aquia Creek.¹⁶ Confusion and distress consumed the Union command as it prepared to defend Washington. Only Lincoln and Welles remained rational and

¹⁵Logbook, U.S.S. *Coeur de Lion*, 17 June 1862, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Burnside to Welles, 27 August 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 70.

¹⁶Burnside to Fox, 1 September 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 76.

projected any measure of coolness in the face of a potential catastrophe.¹⁷

While Halleck and Stanton were consumed with apprehension over Washington's safety, Welles saw little fear in the danger. He noted in his diary:

The military believe a great and decisive battle is to be fought in front of the city, but I do not anticipate it. It may be that, retreating within the entrenchments, our generals and managers have inspired the Rebels to be more daring; perhaps they may venture to cross the upper Potomac and strike at Baltimore, our railroad communication, or both, but they will not venture to come here, where we are prepared and fortified with both army and navy to meet them.¹⁸

In the same passage in his diary, Welles apparently found comfort in noting that the Potomac Flotilla was now comprised of twenty-five naval vessels. He apparently had an overwhelming confidence in the Flotilla's new commander, Commodore Charles Wilkes. Although Welles noted Wilkes' trouble and annoyance with the Department, he also noted that under the circumstances, with the rebels having crossed the Potomac, "it was best to give him the position".¹⁹ Tensions subsided after the stalemate at Antietam in

¹⁷Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Symbol, Sword, and Shield, Defending Washington During the Civil War* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1975), 132-134.

¹⁸Welles, *Diary*, 1: 105.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 106. On September 2, 1862, Welles ordered Harwood to turn over all vessels of the Potomac Flotilla to Commodore Charles Wilkes, the commander of the James River Flotilla. Welles apparently consolidated the command to simplify the flotillas' organization until all the troops were safely embarked to

mid-September. The contest had so weakened the Confederate army that it had to retire back across the Potomac into Virginia.²⁰

The lengthy prelude to combat at Fredericksburg, Virginia, began in October (less than one month after the Battle of South Mountain and Antietam) at the conclusion of Lee's unsuccessful invasion of the North.²¹ As Burnside's forces moved towards Falmouth, Lee put his army in motion towards Fredericksburg. Towards the end of November, Lee and Burnside had thousands of troops massed across the Rappahannock from one another in preparation for a new campaign. In setting the stage for the Fredericksburg Campaign, the Potomac Flotilla was a decisive factor. Its presence and activities permitted Burnside to launch a surprise frontal attack against Lee.

Burnside was hesitant and fearful after the Union army had suffered nearly two years of demoralizing defeat. The burden of another potential disaster was too heavy to bear alone; therefore, Burnside wanted the protection which only gunboats could provide. Welles also recalled that this was a wise decision, but, not necessarily

Alexandria. The command was transferred back to Harwood on September 9, 1862. Welles to Harwood, 2 September 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 76-77. Welles to Harwood, 9 September 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 77.

²⁰Cooling, *Defending Washington*, 134-138.

²¹Lee anticipated that a successful invasion into Maryland would rally Marylanders to the Confederate cause and pressure the Federal government to open the way for peace. Vorin E. Whan, *Fiasco at Fredericksburg* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1961), 15.

needed.²² The rapid movement of Confederate troops suddenly changed Welles' mind. He anticipated the worst due to McClellan's sluggishness and inactivity and consequently ordered Wilkes to take fourteen gunboats to aid Burnside.²³

Between December 1st and 3rd, four gunboats of the Potomac Flotilla remained at anchor in the Rappahannock between Liberty Hill and Port Royal, Virginia (figure 2.3). Intense anxiety plagued both Lee and Burnside; but, Lee was unnerved in anticipation that the gunboats would attack and destroy the Port Royal township. He immediately devised a scheme to drive away the gunboats, without drawing their fire on the town.

Lee chose a point two miles south-southeast of Port Royal, high on a tree covered hilltop, to erect a heavy battery. The guns were manned by a division of the Second Corps, under the command of Major-General Daniel H. Hill. On December 4, 1862, solid shot from a Confederate Whitworth exploded around the gunboats. The engagement lasted nearly an hour, until Acting Master William F. Shankland, captain of the U.S.S. *Currituck*, ordered the gunboats to retreat down river, "as no sensible advantage could be gained...the

²²Welles later recalled that it was honorable of Burnside, "that unlike some other generals [McClellan and Peck], he [Burnside] willingly gives credit to the navy." Refer to: Welles, *Diary* 1: 91-93.

²³Welles assigned Wilkes to command the Potomac Flotilla on September 9, 1862. Welles, *Diary* 1: 91-93.

banks of the river lined with rifle pits."²⁴ Hill later boasted to Lee that the battery had driven away the "notorious pirates *Pawnee*, *Anacostia*, and *Live Yankee*."²⁵

The gunboats proceeded in line down the river towards Pratt's Landing, about two miles below Port Conway. As they passed a low bank, another Confederate shore battery opened fire with several small field pieces.²⁶ The *Jacob Bell* and *Anacostia* were damaged, but returned the fire with grape shot and 32-pounders. As soon as the battery was silenced, the gunboats continued proceeding down river, and anchored at Oaken Brow Fishing shore.²⁷ News of the day's engagements and sensational stories spread quickly through Virginia. Cornelia McDonald of Winchester, recalled:

we have heard of a great battle at Fredericksburg; that Burnside was taken prisoner, and his army defeated, a large part being captured.²⁸

²⁴Logbook, U.S.S. *Currituck*, 4 December 1862, RG 24, NA. Also see: Logbook, U.S.S. *Coeur de Lion*, 4 December 1862, RG 24, NA.

²⁵General Hill's report appears in: Hill to Jackson, 5 December 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XXI, 36-37.

²⁶The Confederate battery near Pratt's Landing was commanded by Major T.H. Carter, chief of artillery, D.H. Hill's Division.

²⁷The *Anacostia* reported passing the Confederate batteries at Pratt's Bluff, unharmed, and not struck once; refer to: Logbook, U.S.S. *Anacostia*, 4 December 1862, RG 24, NA. Also see: Logbook, U.S.S. *Currituck*, 4 December 1862, RG 24, NA.

²⁸Cornelia McDonald, *A Diary with Reminiscences of the War and Refugee Life in the Shenandoah Valley, 1860-1865* (Nashville: Cullom and Gertner Company, 1935), 114.

The action on December 4th was a limited success for the Confederate troops. The gunboats left their anchorage at Port Royal, but, did not "suffer so much as I intended," reported Lee.²⁹ In addition, the presence of the gunboats convinced Lee that Burnside's principle maneuver would advance from the direction of Port Royal. Further movements of the gunboats along the river reinforced Lee's belief that Burnside was not seriously considering a frontal attack at Fredericksburg, where the channel was too narrow and shallow for gunboats to navigate.³⁰

Burnside did plan to cross a portion of his troops opposite Port Royal under the cover of the gunboats. A concentrated force would cross at Skinner's Neck, seize the town of Port Royal and thus turn the enemy's right flank without jeopardizing communications. An assault there, had two major advantages. First, it would disrupt Lee's lines of communication to Richmond, and serve as a flanking movement to Lee's left. Second, the Rappahannock was navigable to a point four miles below Fredericksburg and provided the weather turned fair, the Potomac Flotilla could aid his assault. A few miles further upriver, the narrowness of the channel rendered naval cooperation impractical. But, as the month of November passed, the cold and storms of December brought ice into the Potomac, Aquia

²⁹Lee to Headquarters, Army of Northern Virginia, 5 December 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XXI, 38.

³⁰*Ibid.*

Creek, and the Rappahannock. Burnside was forced to abandon the plan as weather conditions remained hazardous; yet, the Flotilla and army kept up feints in the direction of Skinner's Neck.³¹

The severity of the weather compelled Burnside to consider a new plan. He choose to abandon the idea of crossing at Port Royal and opted for a frontal attack at Fredericksburg. In order to draw Lee's attention away from Fredericksburg, Burnside planned a feint down river. On December 10, 1862, the steamers *Anacostia*, *Currituck*, *Yankee*, *Satellite*, and, *Jacob Bell* attacked the Confederate battery at Pratt's Bluff. During the engagement, the *Currituck* was damaged, several men were injured and one man died from his wounds.³²

The feint was only a minor success. Lee sent Hill and General Jubal A. Early, commanding Ewell's Division, in the direction of Skinner's Neck and Port Royal. He still believed that the principle

³¹Less than one week before Burnside planned to cross the river, Acting Master Samuel Magaw reported "two more weeks like this may freeze us in;" see: Magaw to Burnside, 7 December 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XXI, 836. Also refer to: Magaw to Harwood, 11 December 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 195. The gunboats were unable to coal or receive stores, and neither hay or grain could get through to the Union troops. For more information on Burnside's plan to cross at Skinner's Neck, refer to: Augustus Woodbury, *Major General Ambrose E. Burnside and the Ninth Army Corps: A Narrative of Campaigns in North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee, During the War for the Preservation of the Republic* (Providence: Sidney S. Rider and Brother, 1867), 204-208.

³²On December 11, 1862, coal heaver Henry Smith died just after his right thigh had been amputated. The man was mortally wounded when a shell penetrated the starboard side, exploded, and damaged the blower engines. Refer to: Logbook, U.S.S. *Currituck*, 10 December 1862, RG 24, NA.

mass maneuver would operate from this direction. Two days later, on December 12, 1862, Burnside surprised Lee by marching over pontoon bridges into Fredericksburg. The Potomac Flotilla assisted Burnside's army by protecting the supply depot at Bell Plain and escorting the store ships. On Monday, December 15, Welles wrote in his diary "No news from Fredericksburg; and no news at this time, I fear, is not good news."³³ His fears were solemnly confirmed as Fredericksburg became another Union disaster.

Lee was victorious, but unable to follow and destroy Burnside's army. During the night of the 15th, Burnside skillfully retreated his army across the Rappahannock to the northeastern bank; where the troops remained through January. In the meantime, the gunboats, receiving news of Burnside's retreat, remained at their anchorage at Oaken Brow Fishing Shore.³⁴

Towards the end of the year, and into 1863, the Potomac Flotilla stepped up operations to put more pressure on Richmond. The Flotilla's commanders concentrated their efforts on destroying Virginia's salt works, which were a vital southern industry. Without salt, the preservation of meats and other foodstuffs was impossible. The salt works at Dividing Creek, Virginia, a major supply source to

³³Welles, *Diary* 1: 193.

³⁴Magaw to Harwood, 16 December 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, V, 200.

Richmond, were destroyed in mid January.³⁵ Continued operations of the Flotilla and the Union naval blockading fleet complicated Virginia's ability to transport salt to the Confederate army and suffering southern states. Allan Nevins noted, that "only less distressing was the want of drugs."³⁶

In the early part of April, 1863, Lieutenant-General James Longstreet, commanding the First Corps, Army of Northern Virginia, gathered nearly forty-thousand troops at Blackwater River, and advanced on to Suffolk, Virginia. Longstreet's principle objective was to gather food and supplies for Lee's armies in North Carolina and Tennessee.³⁷ By day and night, bacon, corn, and other necessities were hurried towards Richmond and Petersburg. Secondary to foraging, Longstreet's troops attempted to route out the Union forces and overtake Norfolk. This movement was imperative to protect the railroads leading from the vital supply areas into North Carolina.³⁸

³⁵Linnekin to Harwood, 12 January 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, V, 210.

³⁶Allan Nevins, *War for the Union*, V.4, *The Organized War to Victory, 1864-1865* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 244. Ella Lonn noted that the difficulty in transporting salt was partly due to inadequate roads and rail lines and further complicated by the naval blockade. For more information on Virginia's salt works during the Civil War, see: Ella Lonn, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 149-167.

³⁷Lee wrote to Davis on April 16, 1863, concerned over the immobility of the army, due to the scarcity of forage and provisions. Lee to Davis, 16 April 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, XXV, pt. 2, 724-725. Also refer to: Lee to Seddon, 26 January 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, XXV, pt 2, 597-598.

³⁸Donald Bridgman Sanger, *Soldier*, vol. 1 of *James Longstreet* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 138-139.

His plan failed though, due to a small squadron of gunboats which had been dispatched from the Potomac Flotilla. These vessels kept the Confederate line of troops from crossing the Nanesmond River and then overwhelming two divisions of Major-General John J. Peck's troops (15,000 strong).³⁹ The line which Peck's troops had to defend extended from Hill's Point, south and east along the river, to the Dismal Swamp, a distance of about fifteen miles (figure 2.4).

Longstreet quickly concentrated his main force along the Nanesmond and erected heavy batteries which blockaded the river. He hoped to push across the troops, and attack the Union's most vulnerable right flank defenses. The river looked inviting; it was crooked, narrow, and ran seven miles behind Union lines. If another force was thrown against the Union's left flank, and rear, Peck and the city of Norfolk would be surrounded.⁴⁰ If Norfolk had been retaken, the Confederacy could have strengthened their defenses along the James River and successfully defended Richmond.

Peck's troops occupied Suffolk, which is located just southwest of Norfolk. His troops commanded a position where the Petersburg and Norfolk Railroad intersected the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad,

³⁹Peck to Hooker, 4 April 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser.1, XXV, pt. 2, 190-191.

⁴⁰Major-General John A. Dix (commanding the Department of Virginia) regarded the attack as a feint, designed to conceal a maneuver cutting between Suffolk and Norfolk, to take the latter place and to threaten the capture of Fortress Monroe; Morgan Dix, comp., *Memoirs of John Adams Dix* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), 37-43. Also: Enclosure, Peck to Halleck, 18 December 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XVIII, 282-284.

which lead to Weldon, North Carolina. From his position, the Union troops were able to conduct operations into the interior of Virginia, without over-extending their lines of supply and communication.

On April 13, 1863, the Potomac Flotilla was ordered into the Nanesmond, to raise the blockade and to prevent the Confederates from crossing the river. The naval operations were conducted under the command of Lieutenant R.H. Lamson, and Lieutenant William B. Cushing, who had charge of the two divisions of the Potomac Flotilla in the Nanesmond.⁴¹ On Tuesday afternoon, April 14, the flotilla commenced bombarding Suffolk to clear the town for the range of Union artillery. In the heated engagements which followed however, Peck failed twice to cooperate and provide the gunboats with the necessary support.⁴²

⁴¹Lamson and Cushing came under the orders of Rear-Admiral S.P. Lee, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Lee to Peck, 14 April 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, XVIII, 611.

⁴²From April 11 to 16, the gunboats bombarded rebel positions to clear out the enemy. The operations were described by lieutenant Millett Thompson as "exceeding noisy business." Refer to: Millett S. Thompson, *Thirteenth Regiment of New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865: A Diary Covering three Years and a Day* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888), 129; also: Lee to Peck, 6 May 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XVIII, 702-703. New Yorker, Edward Wightman, a private in the Ninth New York Volunteer Infantry, noted that the rebels first attacked Union picket lines on the 13th. That same evening, the "gunboats roared incessantly on the river." Wightman's date of events may be incorrect; if not, it places the gunboats in combat one day earlier than reported in the vessels' logbooks. Edward G. Longacre, ed., *From Antietam to Fort Fisher: The Civil War Letters of Edward King Wightman, 1862-1865* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1985), 127-128.

Major-General John A. Dix, commanding the Department of Virginia, held his line of the river, but, without his flanks yet intact. This left the gunboats to hold an even larger force under the concentrated fire of the shore batteries. Admiral Lee was enraged at the situation and sternly warned Dix that the gunboats could not be relied upon to keep the Confederates from crossing. He informed Dix that the Upper Nanesmond was only a "mere creek".⁴³ The gunboats Lee maintained, were effective:

only from the gallantry with which they are fought, with their boilers, steampipes, and magazines all exposed to the concentrated fire of the rebel batteries, while the sharpshooters pick off with facility, our unprotected gunners.⁴⁴

On April 17, 1863, Lamson prepared the steamers, *Coeur de Lion*, *Primrose*, *Teaser*, and, the *Yankee* (now known as the *Fighting Yankee*) for action. His vessel, the *Stepping Stones*, was prepared for action by fixing canvas screening around the bow and stern; in addition, he made requests for heavy bales of hay to make a barricade for the upper deck to protect the gunners. The *Stepping Stone's* paymaster, Frank Butts, also recalled that muskets, hand-grenades, boarding pikes, cutlasses, and, carbines and revolvers were kept "in hand or ready for use on ship...", in case of an attack. Butts also recalled, that iron plating lined the inside of the pilot houses on

⁴³Lee to Dix, 15 April 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XVIII, 616.

⁴⁴Ibid; Peck to Dix, 15 April 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XVIII, 616.

the *Stepping Stones* to protect the pilots from sharpshooters. On board the *Coeur de Lion*, Acting Master Charles H. Brown used chain cables and hammocks to protect the boiler and steam drum from damage.⁴⁵

At 6:30 P.M., after shelling the Confederate earthworks, sweeping the entire area of the fort, the *Stepping Stones* steamed down river to the shelter of a bluff on the west bank. Six companies of the Eight Connecticut and Eighty-ninth New York, commanded by Colonel John E. Ward (Eight Conn.) were landed and rushed the fort's defenses.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, a party of sailors ran four howitzers ashore, dragged them up the bank, wheeled them into position, and shelled the plain in the rear of the works. Only fifteen minutes later, the works were taken in possession, the Confederates were "driven out, and their guns turned against them".⁴⁷

The *Yankee* returned at 8:00 P.M. without reporting a single loss of life. She, the *Coeur de Lion*, and the *Stepping Stones* arrived, carrying with them five guns and about 130 prisoners captured in

⁴⁵Refer to: Frank B. Butts, "Reminiscences of Gunboat Service on the Nanesmond," *Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society*, Third Series, no. 6 (Providence, 1884): 30. Also see: Lamson to Lee, 17 April 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VIII, 731-733; Brown to Lee, 17 April 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VIII, 735.

⁴⁶The soldiers were concealed on board the *Stepping Stones* by a canvas screen drawn above the vessels' bullworks. Charles Carleton Coffin, *Marching to Victory* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1888), 112

⁴⁷Logbook, U.S.S. *Yankee*, 19 April 1863, RG 24, NA. According to Millett Thompson's diary, the sailors were the first in entering the fort. Thompson, *Thirteenth Regiment*, 131.

the fort's garrison.⁴⁸ The entire incident was "discreditable" to the fort's commander Major-General S.G. French.⁴⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel G. Moxley Sorrel (one of Longstreet's most trusted staff officers) was thoroughly disgusted that the Fifty-fifth North Carolina regiment (700 strong), which Longstreet had particularly ordered to protect the battery, was not posted in supporting distance.⁵⁰

The battery had commanded the bar in the mouth of the river at Hill's Point, close to the left of Longstreet's line, and caused the Flotilla considerable damage. The capture of the battery and over one-hundred Confederate troops was a blow to Longstreet's pride and an embarrassment to both Peck and Dix.⁵¹ In less than an hour, Longstreet's plans had been overturned. Now all hopes of crossing the river were forlorn and Longstreet was forced to consider taking the time to break through the Union line in a regular siege.

Over the next three days, the gunboats fought Longstreet's forces, until the batteries were finally abandoned and the backbone of the Confederate offensive was broken. Peck and Dix took all the

⁴⁸Logbook, U.S.S. *Couer de Lion*, 18 April 1863, RG 24, NA.

⁴⁹Even Sorrel had to admit that the affair was "most remarkable." Sorrel to Hill, 21 April 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, LI, pt. 2, 692.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹Longstreet later wrote in his memoirs, that the movements around Suffolk were executed without serious trouble; while, "The only occurrence of serious moment...was the loss of Captain [Robert M.] Stribling's battery [Battery Huger]." James I. Robertson, ed., *From Manassas to Appomattox, Memoirs of the Civil War In America, James Longstreet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 324-325. Also: Sanger, *James Longstreet* I: 142.

credit though, claiming that the army had held the Nanesmond "without the help of the gunboats."⁵² Nevertheless, the vessels' logbooks clearly demonstrate that these gunboats were the decisive factor in Longstreet's inability to move across the river and surround the Union force.⁵³

This sudden turn in events, and the subsequent build-up of Union troops made Longstreet very apprehensive. He feared that the Union would take advantage of their position and advance on Richmond. Then, as Longstreet began transferring his command from Suffolk to the Rappahannock, the battle of Chancellorsville took place. On the morning of May 6, 1863, Chancellorsville became another brilliant Confederate victory and a disastrous defeat for the Union. Southern morale and enthusiasm was restored while northern morale and confidence dropped to a new low.⁵⁴

⁵²On Wednesday, April 29, 1863, Welles wrote in his diary "General Dix, like most of our generals, cries aloud for gunboats and naval protection, but is not inclined to be grateful, or even just to his defenders;" Welles, *Diary* 1: 287. Also: Lee to Peck, 6 May 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XVIII, 702-704.

⁵³Logbook, U.S.S. *Coeur de Lion*, 17-30 April 1863, RG 24, NA; Logbook, U.S.S. *Primrose*, 19 April 1863, RG 24, NA; Logbook, U.S.S. *Yankee*, 19-19 April 1863, RG 24, NA. The diary of Lieutenant Millett Thompson also supports the important role played by the Flotilla's gunboats. Thompson was greatly impressed with the Flotilla's operations, and recalled "what these men will hesitate to venture were best let alone;" (Thompson, *Thirteenth Regiment*, 137).

⁵⁴As Eckenrode and Conrad noted, Chancellorsville was a Confederate victory, but, at what cost? The Confederate army suffered heavy losses, and General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's life was the price. James H. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet, Lee's Warhorse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 167-166.

While Major-General Joseph E. Hooker withdrew the Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan, Colonel Hugh J. Kilpatrick, commanding a large cavalry corps, had moved across Confederate territory, and was within two and one-half miles of Richmond. Kilpatrick's Dragoons destroyed a portion of the Fredericksburg Railroad, Lee's main line of supply, turned northward and burned the Meadow Bridge over the Chickahominy. Kilpatrick's Dragoons eventually ended their raid in Gloucester, Virginia and skillfully outmaneuvered the Confederates, and made it to Urbanna, on the Rappahannock. From here, the eight-hundred Dragoons were rescued by the Potomac Flotilla and the army transport steamers *Star* and *Long Branch*, and safely landed at Carter's Wharf on the east side of the river.⁵⁵

Lee chose to use the victory at Chancellorsville to launch an invasion into the industrial area of Maryland and Pennsylvania before the Union troops could fully recuperate. He recognized that a thrust at Washington could have a substantial political impact and perhaps reduce pressure in the West. Jefferson Davis agreed, and approved the second invasion into the North. The campaign began on June 3, 1863, as Lee moved his headquarters and three corps of his army towards Culpepper Court House. General Richard Ewell's corps led the way, followed by Longstreet and A.P. Hill's corps. On

⁵⁵Logbook, U.S.S. *Yankee*, 1 June 1863, RG 24, NA; Logbook, U.S.S. *Primrose*, 1 June 1863, RG 24, NA.

the evening of June 13, Ewell's forces had reached Winchester and defeated the Union forces. The Confederate army then pushed forward, crossing the Potomac into Maryland on June 15, and through Pennsylvania over the next two weeks. Hooker's army left Fredericksburg, following Lee's forces which were well ahead of him.

Welles was skeptical concerning the reports and rumors of Confederate advances into Maryland and Pennsylvania, which he called "doubtless exaggerations".⁵⁶ Nevertheless, after a week of alarming reports Welles came to the conclusion that Confederate forces may attempt to enter Maryland via crossing the railroad bridges at Havre de Grace, while simultaneously advancing on Washington from the Potomac Line. In order to guard both of these critical points, gunboats from the Potomac Flotilla were sent to Washington, Annapolis, Havre de Grace, and Wilmington.⁵⁷ Additional gunboats were temporarily detached from Admiral Lee and assigned to Commodore Andrew A. Harwood, commanding the Potomac Flotilla, for duty in the Potomac River.⁵⁸ The additional force was used to keep up a close watch at Aquia Creek which was also of the utmost importance due to its railroad connection with

⁵⁶Welles, *Diary* 1: 329-330.

⁵⁷In volume 10, 1863 of: United State Navy Department, *Annual Reports of the Department of the Navy, 1822-1866*, Microfilm Publications No. M-1099, Record Group 71, National Archives, Washington D.C. Also: Welles, *Diary* 1: 332.

⁵⁸Commodore Andrew A. Harwood assumed command of the Potomac Flotilla, after Commander Charles Wilkes, on September 9, 1862.

Burnside at Falmouth. The gunboats remained to cooperate with the military authorities until July 7, just three days after the Union victory at Gettysburg.

After the battle of Gettysburg, the Federal government decided to use Point Lookout in lower St. Mary's County, as a prison camp for the captured Confederates (figure 2.5). The prison camp was officially named Camp Hoffman after Colonel William A. Hoffman, Commissioner General of Prisoners. The camp was strategically located at the confluence of the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay and could accommodate an estimated 10,000 prisoners. In addition, the protection of Point Lookout was guaranteed by vessels of the Potomac Flotilla. During times of emergency, as many as twelve vessels were stationed or patrolled in the waters off the Point.⁵⁹

On July 23, 1863, St. Mary's was detached from the Middle Department of Maryland and organized into a separate military district. This gave General E.W. Hinks, the commander at Point Lookout, full authority over Union troops stationed in lower

⁵⁹Newman, *Maryland*, 96-101. Also see: Martin A. Haynes, *History of the Second Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers: Its Camps, Marches and Battles* (Manchester: Charles F. Livingston, Printer, 1865), 154-162. Camp Hoffman was often referred to as Point Lookout Hospital, Point Lookout Prison Camp, or simply Point Lookout, even in government documents. Officially the name of the camp's hospital was Hammond General Hospital, named after Brigadier-General W.A. Hammond, Surgeon General of the Federal army. Many of the prisoners took the oath of allegiance and enlisted in the Union army and navy. Martin A. Haynes, *A History of the Second Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion* (Lakeport: 1896), 205-206.

Maryland.⁶⁰ Over the next two years, the regiments stationed at Point Lookout and the Potomac Flotilla participated in joint raids and reconnaissances into lower Maryland and about the Northern Neck of Virginia.

Amid July's summer heat, the Union rallied over three great victories. Lincoln announced the victory at Gettysburg on Independence Day; Vicksburg had surrendered on July 4, and Port Hudson, Louisiana, also surrendered on the 8th. The whole Mississippi River was in Union hands and the Confederate invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania was repelled.

While the Confederate forces reeled from their loss at Gettysburg, Davis secretly and quickly authorized an expedition into the Chesapeake Bay, to draw the attention of Union forces, back to the Potomac Line.⁶¹ The expedition was organized by Commander John T. Wood, C.S.N., and Lieutenant Francis Hodge, second in command. Eighty-two volunteers for the expedition were handpicked from the C.S.S. *Patrick Henry* and C.S.S. *Virginia*, of the James River Squadron.⁶²

⁶⁰Hinks was relieved of command on April 30, 1864, and replaced by Colonel Alonzo G. Draper, Thirty-sixth U.S. Colored Troops. Special Orders No. 110, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, XXXIII, 930-931

⁶¹Davis did not inform his staff nor the Secretary of the Navy, of Wood's expedition to Virginia. Davis to Lee, 16 September 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, XXIX, pt. 2, 725-727.

⁶²Royce Gordon Singleton, *John Taylor Wood, Sea Ghost of the Confederacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 74-89.

Wood's plans were carefully laid out to capture the steamers lying at anchor between Windmill and Stingray Points, in the mouth of the Rappahannock (figure 2.6). The party of volunteers moved out of Turk's Ferry, on the Piankatank River, on the night of August 16, 1863. Each of Wood's men wore white arm bands on their left arm to distinguish themselves in the darkness.

On Saturday evening, August 23, 1863, the objective of Wood's expedition met with success. Two of the Potomac Flotilla's steamers, the *Satellite* and *Reliance*, were boarded and captured. The *Richmond Whig*, a pro-southern newspaper, carried the remarkable and exciting report:

It was a most daring adventure; our men had to climb over bulwarks eight feet high, surrounded by nettings and awnings, and board the vessels in the face of the enemy's fire.⁶³

News of the captures spread quickly, and Lieutenant-Commander Samuel Magaw, commander of the First and Second Divisions, feared that the *Currituck*, which supplied the *Satellite* and *Reliance* with coal, was also taken. Both Welles and Harwood were shocked and dismayed at the success of Wood's expedition. In addition to losing two gunboats, as well as forty-three officers and sailors, eleven blacks (probably contrabands) were taken prisoner.⁶⁴

⁶³*Richmond Whig*, 26 August 1863.

⁶⁴The *Richmond Whig* had reported that on Wednesday, August 26, 1863, the prisoners captured from the *Satellite* and *Reliance* had arrived in

With the increasing shortage of manpower, the capture of officers was probably more disruptive to the Flotilla's operations.⁶⁵ Bad weather and alerted gunboat patrols eventually forced Wood to strip and scuttle the *Satellite* and *Reliance* at a position above Port Royal; but, not before he captured four prizes.⁶⁶

Harwood was obviously outraged by the sheer negligence of the vessels' officers. The Union navy had known of Wood's plans for at least a month, and Harwood had ordered the vessel commanders to take special precautionary measures. He and the official courts of inquiry attributed the captures to disobedience and neglect on behalf of the vessels' commanding officers.⁶⁷

Richmond (a sixty mile march) "much jaded and worn down." Refer to: *Richmond Whig*, 27 August 1863.

⁶⁵By the middle of 1862, the availability of experienced seamen had declined significantly. The manpower situation only became more critical; therefore, any loss of experienced seamen could weaken the effectiveness of the Potomac Flotilla. Chapter 4, "The Crew of the Potomac Flotilla", deals in depth with the navy's efforts to secure experienced personnel.

⁶⁶According to the *Richmond Whig* (26 August 1863) the Confederates had worked for several days to strip the vessels, and at the time Union field batteries opened fire (about September 2), the *Satellite's* machinery had already been removed to a safe place.

⁶⁷James Sessan, a spy from Richmond, alerted the Federal authorities that while he passed Old Church on July 15, he ran into about 500 men with six boats on wagons, who were "going...to surprise the gunboats on the Rappahannock;" refer to: Schenck to Halleck, 24 July 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 310. Although this was actually part of an earlier expedition which was recalled and then resumed again in August, their movements had alerted Commander Harwood and in anticipation of an attack, Harwood sent orders to the commanding officers to take special precautionary measures. Refer to: Linneck to Magaw, 28 August 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 325; also see: "Findings and Opinions of the Court of Inquiry in the Case of the Loss of the U.S. Steamers *Satellite* and *Reliance*", *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 335-342.

It was a rather quiet period from the end of Gettysburg until the Union launched its spring campaign. As late fall approached, the opposing forces were locked in a stalemate; confronting one another along the line of the Rappahannock. General George G. Meade (commanding Army of the Potomac) missed an opportunity to destroy Lee's army at Manassas Gap and was outmaneuvered and forced to retire behind Bull Run, in the so called Bristoe campaign; the two armies feinted with one another along Mine Run in mid December.⁶⁸ But Meade skillfully kept the Army of the Potomac between Lee and the capital; both armies settled down into winter quarters.

In the West, the Confederacy was crippled by Union victories. The South needed another Chancellorsville, or some other substantial victory over the Union. Lee had intended to reduce pressure in the West by attacking Grant in his intrenchments and fortifications around Washington; but his inability to out flank Meade delayed the campaign until late summer. His original plan, however, had called for sending the Maryland Line across the Potomac to attack Point Lookout. Lee had hoped that the released prisoners would offset the odds and heavy losses he expected to absorb during the siege of Washington.⁶⁹ The plan was aborted when Union movements around

⁶⁸Cooling, *Defending Washington*, 167.

⁶⁹Lee to Davis, 26 June 1864, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XXXVII, pt. 1, 766-768.

Hanover Junction rendered the Maryland Line more essential than ever.⁷⁰

Throughout the following winter months, and into the spring of 1864, the Potomac Flotilla continued to deny the Army of Northern Virginia the use of Virginia and Maryland's inland waters, for even marginal support of their operations. Eventually, co-operations with the Army of the Potomac, necessitated moving the Flotilla's base of operations further southward, to the St. Mary's River.⁷¹ The new

⁷⁰In June, 1863 the Maryland Line consisted of the Maryland Battalion, the Baltimore Light Artillery and Company A of the First Maryland Cavalry. In November, 1863, the Maryland Battalion was officially recognized as the Second Maryland Regiment of Infantry.

During the late fall and winter of 1863, the Maryland Line was composed and commanded as follows: First Maryland Cavalry, Lt. Col. Ridgely Brown; Maj. Robert C. Smith; Adjutants George W. Booth, Tom E. Post; Second Maryland Infantry, Capt. J. P. Crane commanding; Lt.-Col. J. R. Herbert and Maj. W.W. Goldsborough; First Maryland artillery, Capt. William F. Dement; Second Maryland artillery, Baltimore light, Capt. William H. Griffin; Fourth Maryland artillery, Chesapeake, Capt. Walter S. Chew.

The organizations of the batteries were as follows: First Maryland, Captain, William F. Dement; Lieutenants, Charles S. Couter, John Gayle, William J. Hill. Second Maryland, Baltimore light artillery, Captain, William H. Griffin; Lieutenants, William B. Bean, John McNulty, J.W. Goodman. Fourth Maryland, Chesapeake artillery, Captain, Walter S. Chew; Lieutenants, John E. Plater, Benjamin G. Roberts.

The field and staff consisted of: Bradley T. Johnson, colonel commanding; George W. Booth, captain, and A.A.G.; Wilson C. Nicholas, captain and A.I.G.; George H. Kyle, major and C.S.; Charles W. Harding, major and Q.M.; Richard P. Johnson, surgeon and medical director; Thomas S. Latimer, assistant surgeon; Rev. Thomas Duncan, chaplin; Andrew C. Trippe, lieutenant and ordnance officer.

For more information on the Maryland Line see: Clement A. Evans, ed., *Confederate Military History*, V. 2, *Maryland* (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 115-116; Harry Wright Newman, *Maryland and the Confederacy* (Annapolis: Newman, 1976), 285, 289.

⁷¹On March 31, 1864, Commander Foxhall A. Parker completed an agreement with Randolph W. Jones, to use a neck of land called Jone's Point (located in St. Inigoes Creek, up the St. Mary's River), as a coaling and refitting

location enabled the Potomac Flotilla to provide a greater range of support to Lieutenant-General U.S. Grant's (commanding Armies of the U.S.) summertime operations.

As summer unfolded, Grant launched an attack against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. By moving his supply base, Grant repeatedly outflanked Lee and continue to advance against Richmond and Petersburg. His entire strategy relied almost entirely on the Potomac Flotilla's command of the rivers reaching inland to Northern Virginia.

Grant's momentum was suddenly halted in the battle of the Wilderness; nevertheless, he pushed his troops forward, running head on into Lee's army on May 9, at Spotsylvania. After another savage fight ending in a drawn battle, and enormous casualties, Grant's army pressed even further south towards Richmond. Meanwhile, the Potomac Flotilla struggled to keep open Grant's supply base and lines of communication to the north.

The Rappahannock was tediously and meticulously dredged for torpedoes as the Union wounded were massed at Fredericksburg, the "Bloody City".⁷² In order to move the wounded and bring in adequate supplies, the gunboat crews worked day and night.⁷³

depot, for the sum of \$29.00 per month. See: Parker to Welles, 31 March 1864, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

⁷²Julia S. Wheelock, *The Boys in White; The Experience of a Hospital Agent in and Around Washington* (New York: Lange and Hillman, 1870), 217.

⁷³The gunboat squadron in the Rappahannock consisted of the *Fuchsia*, *Freeborn*, and *Yankee*, under the command of Lieutenant Edward Hooker. The

Despite their efforts, clearing the river of torpedoes caused shortages in supplies which Julia Wheelock recalled had resulted in "much sufferings and many deaths..."⁷⁴ The site as Wheelock described was pathetic:

We went to the wharf...to take the first boat that should leave for Belle Plain. While waiting there, three boats filled with the wounded arrived. They were crowded, from the upper deck to the hold, with scarcely room to pass between those mangled forms, who were suffering not only from wounds, but famishing with hunger.⁷⁵

It was undoubtedly a tragic beginning, but within two days of Grant's push from Spotsylvania, the Potomac Flotilla was convoying troops and large quantities of supplies to Belle Plain.⁷⁶ The landing there provided Grant's army with ready access to the Potomac and the major supply depots at Washington, D.C. and Alexandria, Virginia. For two weeks in mid May, Belle Plain served as the main junction for all communications between the Army of the Potomac and Washington.

gunboats were outfitted with torpedo fenders in order to safely clear the river. See: Hooker to Parker, 14 May 1864, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 426; Eastman to Hooker, 15 May 1864, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 427.

⁷⁴Wheelock, *Boys in White*, 213.

⁷⁵Ibid., 186.

⁷⁶Welles made an inquiry to determine if any of the transports had been detained by the vessels of the flotilla. The resulting inquiry determined that some of the transports were delayed because they lacked either pilots, coal, or supplies, but, "not a single transport was detained by the vessels of the flotilla." Refer to: Parker to Fox, 27 May 1864, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

The Belle Plain and Fredericksburg base areas were hastily evacuated on May 22, and orders came from army headquarters to establish a temporary base for all support activities at Port Royal. By May 24, Port Royal was receiving all the wounded from Grant's engagement on the North Anna River. Grant disengaged from the North Anna during the night of the 26th (about the time when Port Royal was reaching full operational status), and marched his army towards the Pamunkey at Hanover Town.⁷⁷ His base at Port Royal was closed and a new depot was established in the Pamunkey River, at White House Landing, only fourteen miles east of Cold Harbor Crossroads, where Grant's troops again absorbed enormous casualties.

At Cold Harbor (1-3 June), Grant lost more than 12,000 men in a frontal attack launched against Lee's entrenched Confederate forces. During the Cold Harbor operations, and for more than a week following the Union's disastrous defeat, the First Division of the Potomac Flotilla continued its vigilant efforts to protect the supply and communication lines. In the meantime, Commander Foxhall A. Parker, cooperated with Colonel Alonzo Draper (commanding the Thirty-Sixth Colored Troops and District of St. Mary's) from Point Lookout, in a successful expedition to seek out and destroy a Confederate force which was laying torpedoes in the Flotilla's path.⁷⁸

⁷⁷William A. Frassanito, *Grant and Lee, The Virginia Campaigns, 1864-1865* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 151-153.

⁷⁸On May 16, 1864, Parker's expedition was crowned with success: eleven rebels were killed (including their leader, Acting Master John

On June 12, Grant evacuated his lines at Cold Harbor after a furious battle. As Grant pushed on even further southward, he moved his supply base from White House to City Point, closer to his theater of operations.⁷⁹ Though the battle at Cold Harbor ended in a stalemate, it was a strategic victory for Grant since Lee was forced to commit his army to defend Richmond and Petersburg.

Grant's strategy and tactics to push through the wilderness to isolate Lee's army and Richmond from the productive areas north of the James, failed. However, Grant's army was able to press around Richmond and position itself at Petersburg; the point through which the railways supplying Richmond passed. In addition, Union naval activities had clearly demonstrated a superiority over the inland waterways, extending from the Potomac to the York-Pamunkey and lower James. Overall, tidewater Virginia was in Union hands to within twenty miles of Richmond.⁸⁰

Maxwell), ten taken prisoner; six torpedoes were taken up and four were exploded; a grist mill and a large quantity of grain along with thirty boats were burned. Draper later "spoke in high terms of Master Street [commanding the *Fuchsia*] and the seamen who accompanied him on shore." Parker to Welles, 16 May 1864, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA. Also Refer to: Logbook, U.S.S. *Yankee*, 11 May 1864, RG 24, NA; Parker to Welles, 16 May 1864, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 421-422.

Parker superseded Harwood to command the Potomac Flotilla on December 23, 1863. Welles to Harwood, 18 December 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, V, 379.

⁷⁹City Point served as Grant's headquarters until March 29, 1865. Frassanito, *Grant and Lee*, 151.

⁸⁰Clifford Dowdey, *Lee's Last Campaign* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 314.

Seeking to reduce the pressure exerted by Grant's army, Lee sent Early and the Second Army Corps out of the Valley of the Shenandoah to attack Washington. Lee hoped that Early could occupy Grant's attention at least long enough to give the Confederate troops time to recuperate, while also preventing Grant's army from a quick recovery after the Battle of the Crater (July 30, 1864). If successful, Lee's plan would have been devastating to the Union army's morale.

As Lee's army pressed forward into Maryland, the Potomac Flotilla was ordered to assist General John G. Foster's division (Twenty-fourth Corps of the Army of the James) in destroying all forage and grain within their vicinity. It was hoped this action would deny Lee's army a valuable food source. Then, as the Union troops fell back upon Baltimore, a gunboat was sent to help protect the city's endangered railroad communications.⁸¹

Lee's plan was ill-fated. The Confederate forces could not have hoped to survive with their long extended lines of communication. In one week, Early was abruptly halted and forced back across the Potomac by the opportune arrival of the First and Second Divisions of the Sixth Army, under the command of Major-General Horatio D. Wright. The invasion of Maryland actually did the Confederacy more harm than good. Grant not only held fast at Petersburg, but, his

⁸¹ Welles to Parker, 5 July 1864, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA; Parker to Eastman, 10 July 1864, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

forces seized the Weldon Road. The Army of the Potomac was intact and neither weakened nor split and Grant seemed even more determined to fight ahead. A few weeks later, Sheridan defeated Early in the Shenandoah Valley, thus ending the Confederate campaign in Virginia.⁸²

Lee's invasion of Maryland resulted in another consequence which historians have neglected to consider. Confederate movements in Harford County alerted military authorities to finally recognize the vulnerable and defenseless position of the northern railroads.⁸³ In order to secure connections between New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, on July 25, the operational area of the Potomac Flotilla was extended to protect railroad communications as far north as Havre de Grace, Maryland (figure 2.7). The Flotilla was therefore at

⁸²Welles later wrote that the possibility of an attack against Washington had terrorized both Stanton and Halleck. Stanton actually procured \$300,000 from Congress to place obstructions in the Potomac. Part of the money was used to construct an exceptionally heavy chain which was to stretch across the Potomac River to impede rebel vessels. Welles considered the *Alexandria Chain*, as it was called, ridiculous and worthless; Howard K. Beale, ed., *January 1, 1867-June 6, 1869*, vol. 3 of *Diary of Gideon Welles* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1960), 436-437.

⁸³William Wilson wrote that General Lee was reported to have said "The cutting of the Philadelphia Railroad was the only part of the programme in the Maryland Campaign that was carried out successfully." William Bender Wilson, *History of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company*, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates and Company, 1895), 321-322. For more information on the invasion of Maryland, refer to: Bradley T. Johnston, "My Ride Around Baltimore In 1864," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 30 (1902), 215-225; Frank E. Vandiver, *Jubal's Raid* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960). Nevins, *The War for the Union* 4: 52.

least partly responsible for keeping open communication and commercial and military traffic between Pennsylvania and Maryland.

It must be pointed out that at this point in time, only one bridge, the Old Conowingo Bridge, linked the Susquehanna River into the north. Serious delays were oftentimes caused by broken up tracks and when the frozen waters of the Susquehanna stopped the ferry at Havre de Grace, Washington was isolated from its connections in Philadelphia. Local volunteer troops had proved unable to protect the crossing which placed an even more demanding task on the Flotilla. This was perhaps, the first time the military made any systematic attempt to protect one of the northern railroads.⁸⁴

Very little information on the Flotilla's operations around Havre de Grace and in the Susquehanna has been found.⁸⁵ However, their presence served to maintain a vital link between the North and South. The Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore (PW&B), and the Northern Central railroads linked Baltimore with the Pennsylvania Railroad at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This provided Baltimore with a direct rail line to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and to the western

⁸⁴Thomas Weber, *The Northern Railroads in the Civil War* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1952), 81. Also refer to: Emerson David Fite, *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North during the Civil War* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1963), 58-59.

⁸⁵For information on specific events at Havre de Grace, Perryville, and Port Deposit, refer to: Logbook, U.S.S. *Currituck*, 12-14 June 1864, RG 24, NA; Logbook, U.S.S. *Fuchsia*, 11 July 1864, RG 24, NA.

territories. In addition, since the tracks of the PW&B were open to Perryville, Maryland, at the mouth of the Susquehanna, the Flotilla could ferry troops from here, to Annapolis. This would have been especially crucial if the capital had once again been threatened.

The Potomac Flotilla spent the fall and winter of 1864 in comparable idleness. As Grant and General George Meade were held fast, hammering at Petersburg and Richmond, the gunboat commanders concentrated their efforts on the blockade. Their activities closed down fisheries worked for the Confederacy and seriously hampered the trade of food, ammunition, and other essential supplies.⁸⁶ The Army of Northern Virginia was already becoming disastrously weakened and disheartened due to continuous losses by malnutrition and disease. By the end of January, 1865, the Union navy held firm at every point but three: Wilmington, Charleston, and Mobile. The Flotilla had managed to strengthen and secure its position in Virginia's waterways. However, Confederate activity in the area of City Point prompted Welles to extend the limits of the Flotilla to embrace Back River, Virginia. This permitted the Flotilla to support Grant's wide swing to the southeast of Petersburg to roll up Lee's flank.

Grant's final position south of Petersburg would have been untenable without control of the lower James River by naval forces.

⁸⁶Street to Parker, 26 September 1864, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, V, 484. See also Nevins, *War for the Union* 4: 225-227.

The Confederacy had control of the river for a long time as a result of their strong batteries at Drewry's Bluff. From there, Flag Officer John K. Mitchell launched the James River Squadron's last naval offense against the Union navy. He hoped, that by blocking the river at or below City Point, Grant would be compelled to evacuate his position. The thrust was turned back when both the C.S.S. *Virginia* and *Richmond* ran aground at Trench's Reach. Failure of the offensive left Grant's supply line unbroken.⁸⁷

As spring unfolded, Grant prepared to mount a major offensive against Lee's lines defending Richmond. Grant recognized now more than ever, that any blow against City Point could cause a disastrous delay in his campaign. His Chief of Staff, Brigadier General John A. Rawlins, agreed that any strike against City Point might "inflict incalculable damage."⁸⁸ Unquestionably, Grant was compelled to rely on the naval support of the Potomac Flotilla to guard his lines of supply and communication. The navy's role is confirmed in a letter written by private Edward Wightman, who noted, "City Point...was

⁸⁷The Potomac Flotilla had the vessels *Zeta*, *Commodore Barney*, and, *General Putnam* stationed at Aiken's Landing, near the mouth of Barley's Creek, (the first stream below City Point, emptying into the James), and, in the Appomattox River in case any of the Confederate gunboats had broken through the obstructions at Trent's Reach. Their objective was to prevent the Confederate forces from cutting off the Army of the James (on the left bank) and the Army of the Potomac (on the right bank) from their supplies at City Point. Grant to Parker, 24 January 1865, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, XI, 636.

⁸⁸Enclosure, Rawlins to Grant, 21 January 1865, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, XI, 632.

crowded with steamers and gunboats. New York itself could not have equalled the display."⁸⁹

Lee's army struggled to hold its ground, but faltered under the weight of incredible odds. The Confederate forces were plagued with despair and discouragement. Desertion increased dramatically as they lost all their major sources of supplies. On the opposing side however, Grant's army was assured of full logistical support because the Potomac Flotilla commanded the waterways at City Point. Grant had proved to be a master at employing the advantages of naval power in combined operations to overwhelm the enemy.

On Palm Sunday, April 2, 1865, Grant's forces stormed Petersburg and the Confederate government fled west to Danville, Virginia. One week later, on April 9, 1865, Lee met Grant at Appomattox Court House and officially surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia. Elsewhere, Confederate resistance rapidly gave way and on April 26, Johnston and 37,000 men surrendered to Major-General William T. Sherman, commanding the Military Division of the Mississippi, near Durham Station, North Carolina. That very day, Ms. Cornelia Hancock wrote in her diary "Our condition has been desolate before, but now was forlorn to the last degree."⁹⁰

⁸⁹Longacre, *Letters of Edward King Wightman*, 174. Wightman was a private in the First Brigade, Third Division, Tenth Army Corps, commanded by General Quincy A. Gilmore.

⁹⁰Henrietta S. Jaquette, ed., *South After Gettysburg, Letters of Cornelia Hancock, 1863-1868* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956), 261.

After the fall of Fort Fisher and Wilmington in North Carolina, the Union navy took steps to reduce the number of blockading vessels. The reduction was further accentuated after Charleston, Mobile, and Galveston were in Union hands. The main purpose behind the cut back was to reduce the navy's expenditures.⁹¹ Keeping naval warships afloat was costly; subsequently, commanders were ordered to send north purchased vessels needing extensive repairs and naval stores. By about the beginning of March, the squadrons in home waters were reduced by half, and near the end of May further cuts were made.

Cuts in the Potomac Flotilla began as early as May 5, by decreasing the force and withdrawing all vessels north of the Patapsco River two weeks later.⁹² Parker's command was reduced to only eight vessels in less than four weeks. The Potomac Flotilla was officially disbanded on July 31, 1865. The majority of the Flotilla's vessels were consequently returned to Washington, and sold at public auction in August. In a farewell message to his men, Commander

⁹¹Nevins, *War for the Union* 4: 368.

⁹²Under orders of May 3, 1865 the following vessels were sent to the Washington Navy Yard: *Anacostia*, *Coeur de Lion*, *Casco* (ironclad), *Chime* (ironclad), *Crusader*, *Cactus*, *Commodore Barney*, *Dragon*, *Freeborn*, *General Putnam*, *Jacob Bell*, *J.A. Seymour*, *Mystic*, *Morse*, *Mercury*, *Teaser*, *Resolute*, *Western World*, *Yankee*, *Zita*, *Juniper*, *Adolph Hugel* (schooner), and, *William Bacon* (schooner). Those vessels retained included: *Adela*, *Banshee*, *Currituck*, *Commodore Read*, *Don*, *Delaware*, *Ella*, *Fuchsia*, *Heliotrope*, *Little Ada*, *Moccasin*, *Nanesmond*, *Primrose*, *Perwinkle*, *Picket Launch No.4* and *No.6*, *Rescue*, *Stepping Stones*, *Verbena*, and, *Wyandank* (store ship). Refer to: Parker to Welles, 5 May 1865, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 116, vol. 120, NA.

Parker wrote, "The Potomac Flotilla has not been unmindful of the traditional honor and glory of the Navy."⁹³

Throughout the war, the Potomac Flotilla kept the river lifeline open to the Federal armies. Close cooperation and support continued to strengthen the Union's position in Maryland and Virginia. Command of the Potomac and inland waterways gave the Union army the mobility, surprise, flexibility, and concentration to strike against Confederate forces in eastern Virginia. The Flotilla also demonstrated the ability of even small naval forces, to assist in both mounting and thwarting massive land offensives. Lee suffered repeated disadvantages because he lacked the naval strength to contest the operations of the Flotilla. Clearly, the Potomac Flotilla was an integral link to the success of the Union navy and as Admiral David Porter once recalled, "what was done by the blockaders on the coast on a large scale, was equally well done by the Potomac Flotilla."⁹⁴

⁹³Parker to Officers and Men of the Potomac Flotilla, 31 July 1865, *Squadron Letters*, M89, Roll 116, vol. 120, NA.

⁹⁴Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War*, 677.

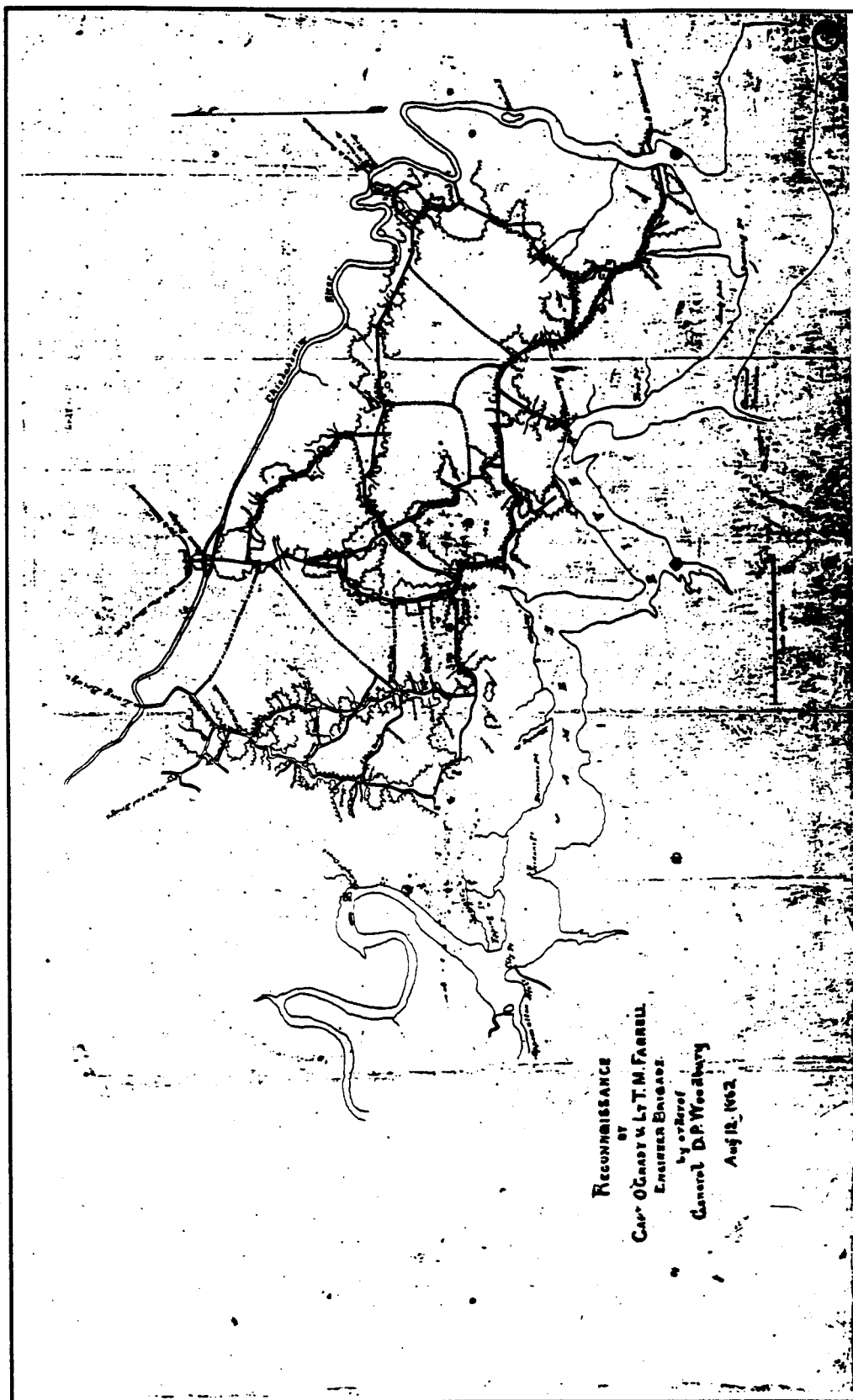


Figure 2.1: Reconnaissance by Capt. O'Grady and Lt. T.M. Ferrell, Engineer Brigade, by Order of General D.P. Woodbury, August 12, 1862, RG 77, G443, vol. VII, NA.



Figure 2.2: Position of the Army of the Potomac at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, Surveyed by Order of Gen. D.P. Woodbury, by Capt. O'Grady & Lt. Ferrell of the Volunteer Engineer Brigade, July 30, 1862, RG 77, G443, vol. VII, p.9, NA.

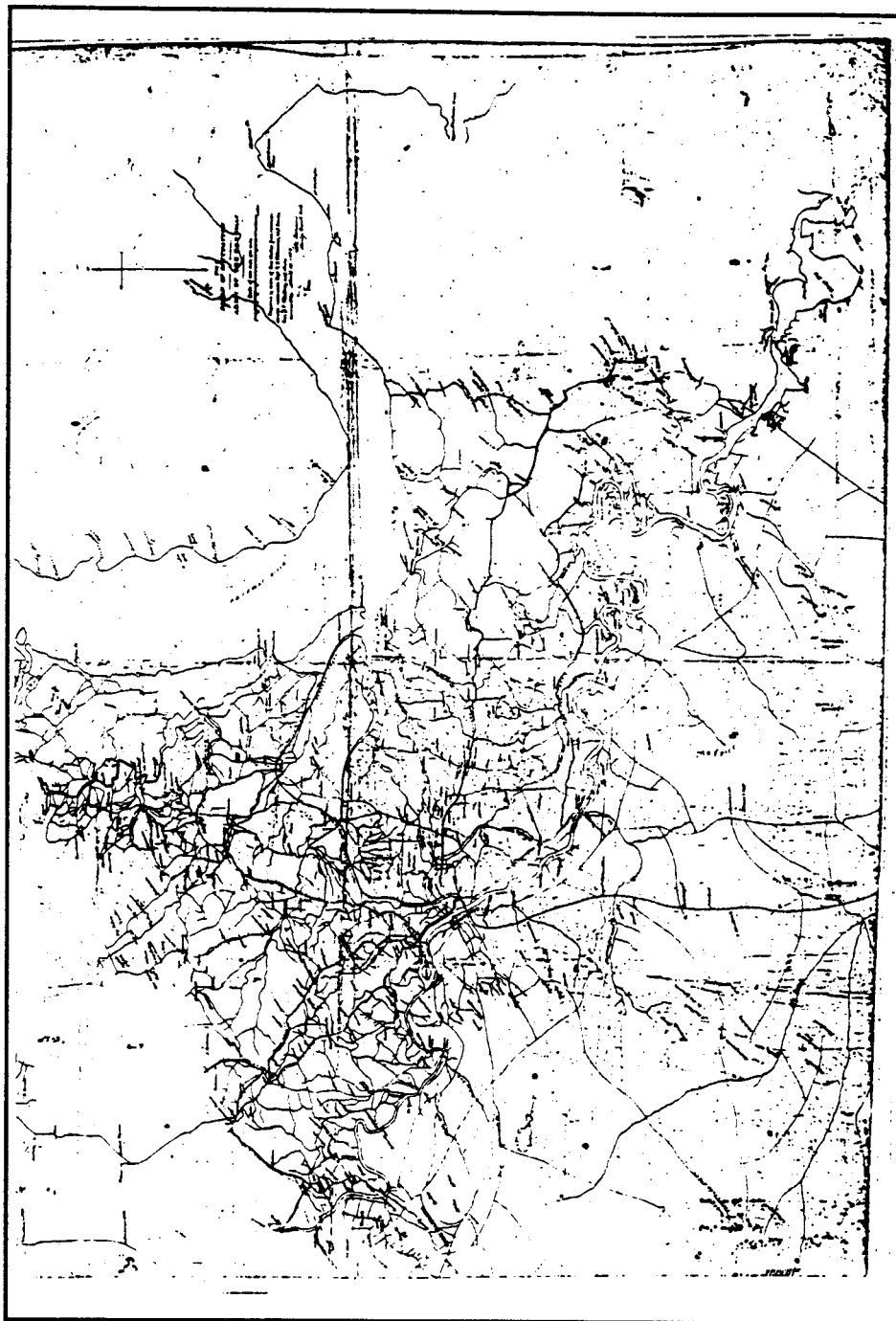


Figure 2.3: Field of Occupation, Army of the Potomac and Adjacent Country. Prepared by order of General Hooker from reconnaissances made under Capt. R.S. Williamson, Lt. N. Bowen, Brig. Gen. D.P. Woodbury, and, others, RG77, Z399-2, NA. Also see: *Official Military Atlas*, Sketch showing position of pontoon bridges and guns covering them at Fredericksburg, Virginia, Plate 25, no. 4.

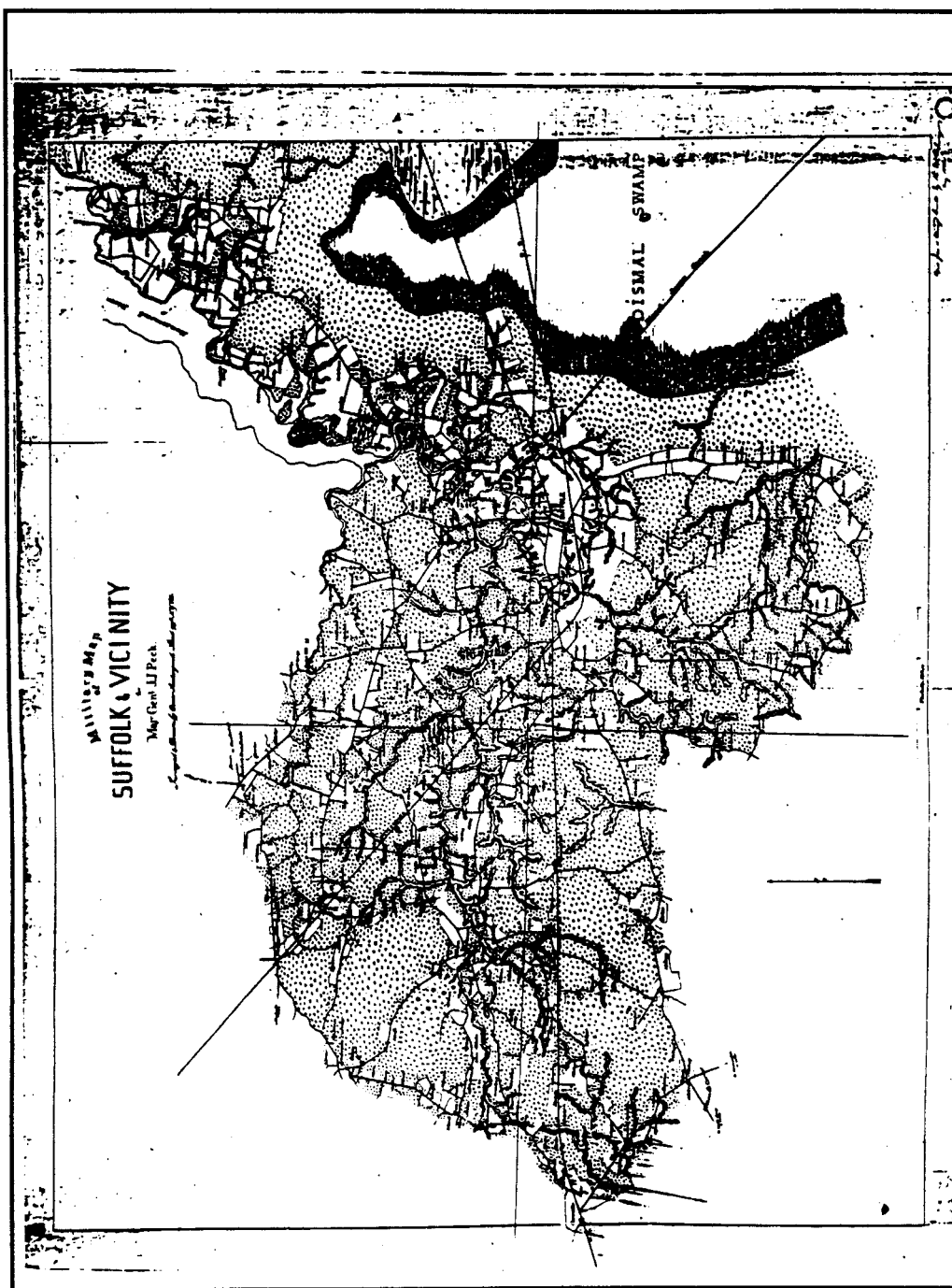


Figure 2.4: Military Map of Suffolk and Vicinity, for Maj. Gen. J.J. Peck, Surveyed and Drawn by Oscar Soederquist, Lt. of the 99th NY Vol., RG 77, G321, NA. Also see: *Official Military Atlas*, Map of Suffolk and Vicinity, April 11-May 4, 1863, Plate 26, no. 4.

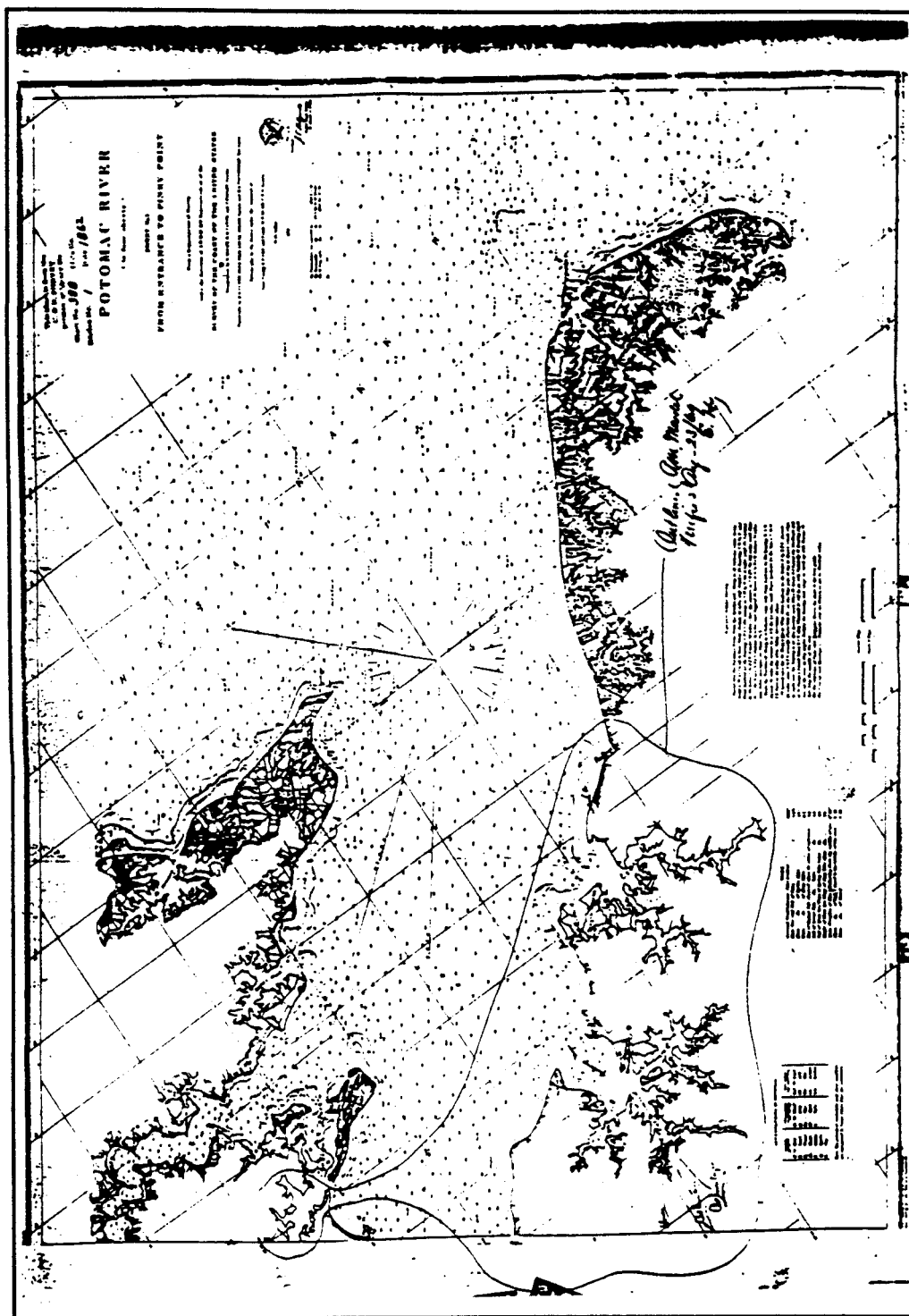


Figure 2.5: Potomac River from Entrance to Piney Point, Records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, Record Group 23, chart 388, sheet 1, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Alexandria, Virginia.

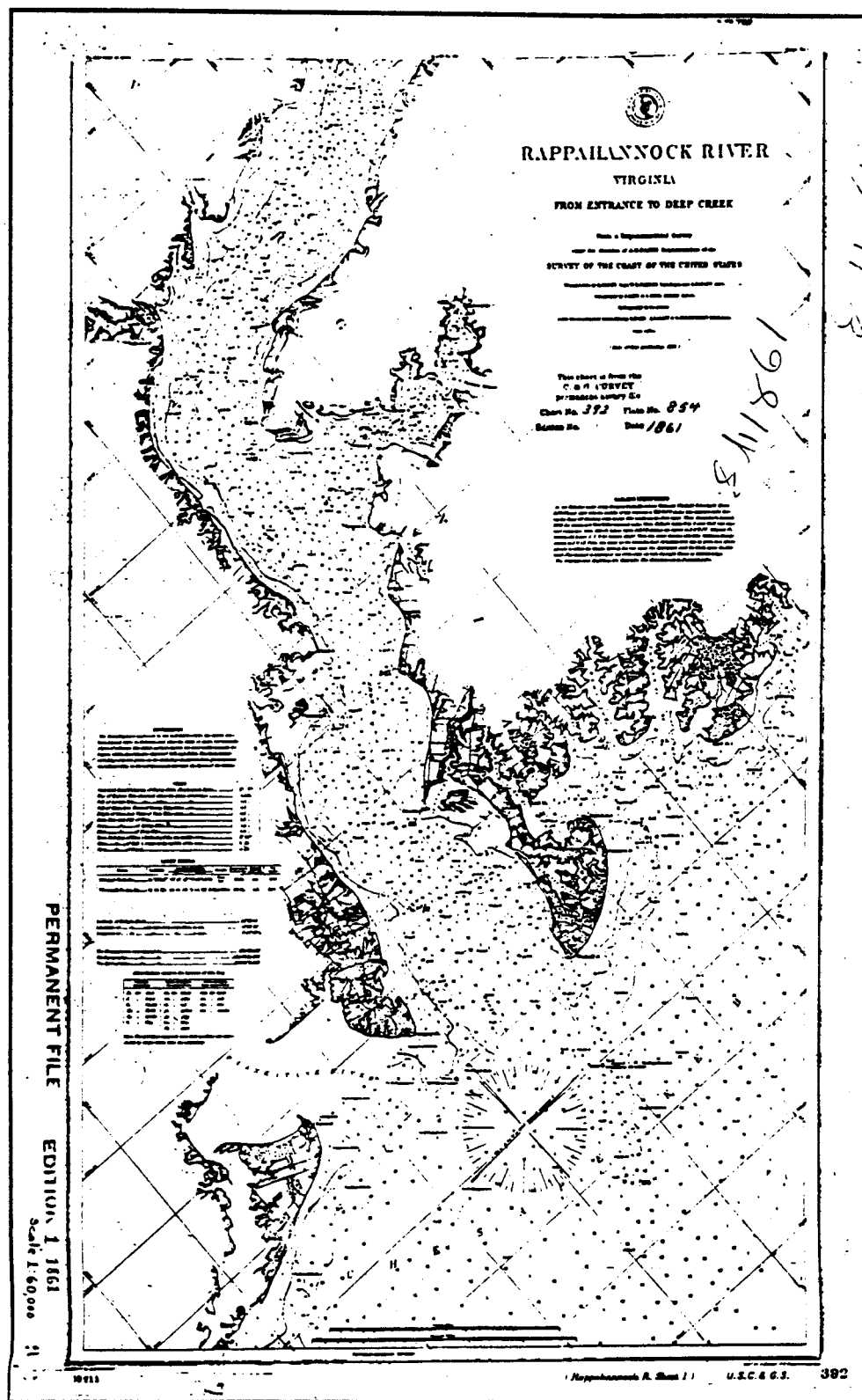


Figure 2.6: Rappahannock River, Virginia, from Entrance to Deep Creek, RG 23, 392-1, NA.

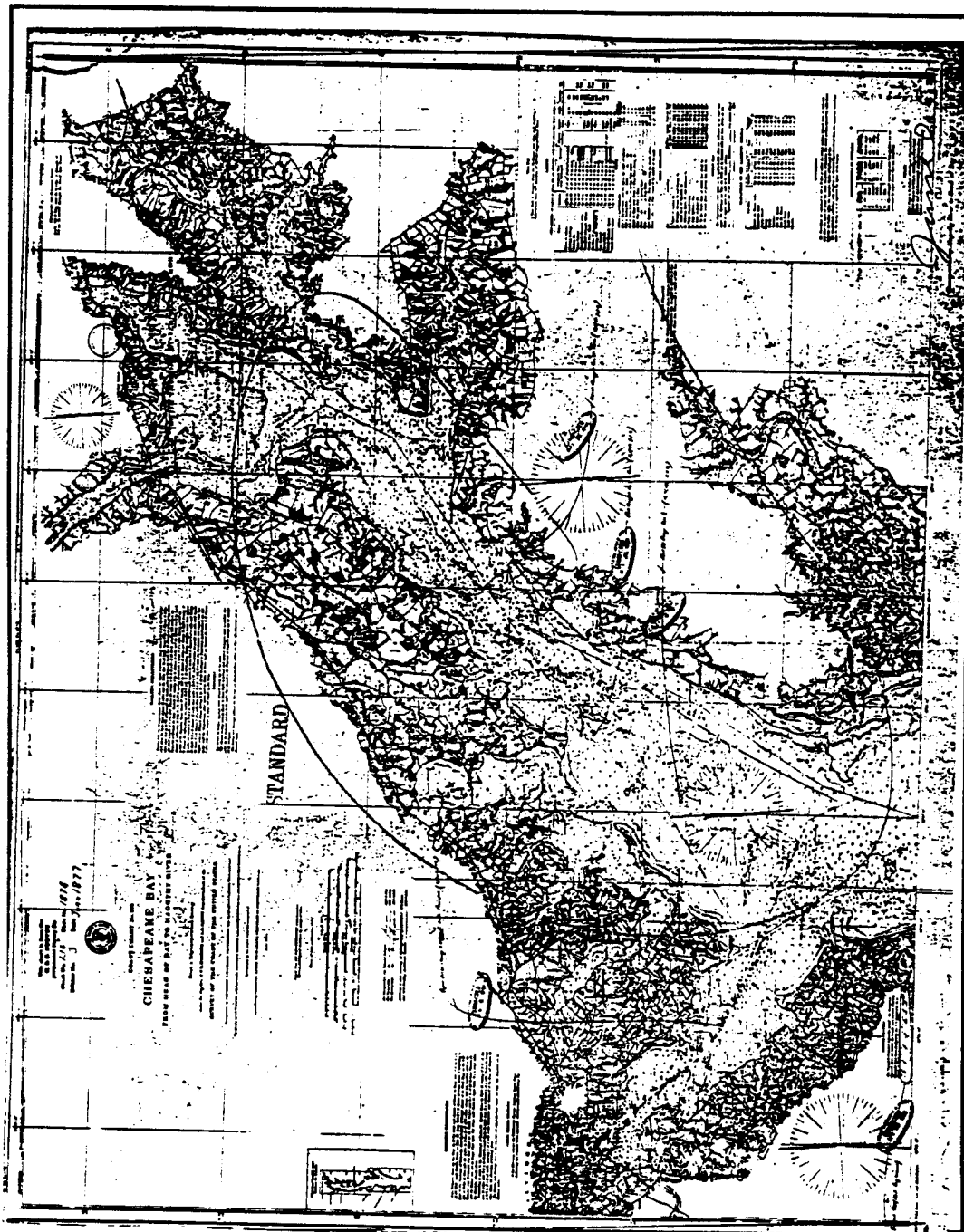


Figure 2.7: Chesapeake Bay, from Head of Bay to Magothy River, RG 23, 136-3, NA. See also: *Official Military Atlas*, General Topographical Map, Plate 136, sheet 1.

Chapter 3

The Loss of the U.S.S. *Tulip*

The Potomac Flotilla conducted its naval operations using a type of naval gunboat designed for a particular function - to maintain the blockade and to interdict all illegal trade. In order to secure and protect communication and supply lines, and to ensure a strangle-hold on the Virginia shoreline, the Potomac Flotilla used light, fast, and sturdy screw steamers. The U.S.S. *Tulip*, attached to the Potomac Flotilla, represented the typical (fourth-rate) screw-propelled, steam gunboat.¹ Studying the history of the *Tulip* provided an important perspective on the operation of naval gunboats during the American Civil War. Technical details revealed problems in maintaining and operating steam powered warships. In addition, her history portrayed a unique perspective of international affairs and American diplomacy in China.

Union military and naval authorities agreed that the Potomac River would become the major avenue to principle bases of military and naval operations throughout tidewater Maryland and Virginia. It was therefore essential to maintain control over this natural

¹The *Tulip* was designated in the screw steamer class and fourth rate. Class listings for Civil War vessels were generally self-explanatory, but, the rate was not necessarily so precise. For more information on the problems of organization refer to: Robert Gardner, ed., *All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1905* (London: Conway Maritime Press, Ltd., 1979), Forward.

boundary between Virginia and Maryland. Thus, when the Union and Confederacy began their struggle to control the Potomac, an immediate and acute need for gunboats pressed the Navy Department into action.

The pressing need for gunboats remained a thorn in the flesh of the Navy Department in 1861. Despite urgent requests for gunboats, the limited resources of the navy yards were totally inadequate to meet the demands. With some note of skepticism, Welles was compelled to contract with private yards for the construction of gunboats. In addition, while naval and private yards worked at building the new steam navy, emergency orders were drafted to purchase and charter steamers which were capable of mounting naval ordnance and carrying troops and supplies.²

In consequence of the immediate need for gunboats, the initial protection of the Potomac waterway was relegated to converted light-draft ferry steamers and merchantmen. But, as affairs along the Potomac became increasingly caustic, even this program was slow and insufficient. For while ferries and merchant vessels were apparently plentiful and available, certain essential modifications were required in order to put them in the proper serviceable

²Welles received harsh criticism for the Navy Department's purchase of so many small vessels from the merchant service; but he defended his position stating that "those vessels were not only the cheapest and the most available, but, the most effective". Welles, *Diary*, I: 497.

condition.³ In fitting out for armament, the slight deck beams and planking were replaced with heavier members. On older vessels, their hulls were re-caulked and coppered. Additional quarters and cooking facilities were installed along with shell lockers and a powder room. On deck, additional boat davits were added to carry the patrol cutters and other small craft.⁴

The Potomac Flotilla's early and continued reliance on these converted commercial vessels resulted in seriously hampering naval operations. Frequent cannonades nearly tore to pieces some of the more slightly built vessels. Their light wooden hulls made service extremely hazardous in the face of Confederate shore batteries. As a result, the Potomac Flotilla earned the fictitious title of a "soapbox navy".⁵

The rapid expansion of naval vessels was crucial if the Union navy wished to enforce a tight naval blockade along the southern coastline. Furthermore, it soon became apparent that naval supremacy would permit the Union army to launch massive inland

³The overwhelming availability of commercial vessels is obvious in that by January 1862, Welles had nearly three hundred war ships afloat. However, circumstances prevented the Department from ever relegating more than a dozen vessels to patrol the Potomac. Welles, *Diary*, I: 497.

⁴Pendergrast to Germain, 25 May 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, V, 668; also: Welles to Pendergrast, 6 June 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, V, 705.

⁵John Van Duyn Southworth, *The Age of Steam, Part One: The Story of Engine-powered Naval Warfare, 1783-1936* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970), 26. Also see: William Edward Sloan, *Benjamin Franklin Isherwood Naval Engineer* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1965), 31.

and coastal military operations which were otherwise too precarious due to the acute problems of logistical support. To remedy the problem, in September 1861, the U.S. Navy invited proposals for constructing gunboats which met particular specifications prepared by the Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repairs. Specialization put an end to the wasteful expense of refitting commercial vessels and produced more effective vessel types, such as the fourth-rate screw combatant.

In December, 1861, the *Scientific American* published an article summarizing the "Kinds of Gunboats Wanted" for the blockade. The article, quoted from a New York *Times* correspondent on board the U.S. Frigate *Roanoke*, who probably acquired the information from the vessels' officers and men. In the article, the correspondent states:

There are a great number of inland seas in the South, separated from the ocean by narrow necks of land, in which there are many shallow gaps, by which vessels of light draft can pass in and out and carry on an illicit traffic. The two gunboats *Resolute* and *Reliance* [attached to the Potomac Flotilla], drawing only from six to seven feet, are the very kind adapted for this service, and fifteen of such are needed. Each is 93 feet in length, 16 feet in breadth, draft of water 6 feet 5 inches, tonnage 100 tons. Their hulls are very strong; they are heavily coppered, and their sterns are protected by thick boiler iron. They are supplied with vertical direct-acting engines; the cylinders are 17 by 17 inches. The diameter of their propellers is 7 feet 8 inches, pitch 14 feet, and 4 blades. The boilers are return tubular 15 feet in length, by 6 feet ten inches in breadth, height 8 feet. Each boat consumes only about one tun of coal in four hours, and

the boilers carry steam at a pressure of 100 pounds, and the engine and boiler do not weigh quite twenty tons. They are stanch and very fleet little gunboats - perfect little bull dogs of war, and are a terror to all the smuggling, sailing schooners on the "secceh" coast of Virginia where they have been cruising.⁶

The *Tulip's* architecture met the criterion cited in "Kinds of Gunboats Wanted", falling into the proposed category of specialized warship designs. She relied on both sail and steam propulsion, was of light draft, had a sturdy wooden hull strengthened by diagonal iron strapping, and was relatively fast. She was described by the *New York Times* as having "all the modern appliances of warships."⁷ Her hull design was of "semi-composite" construction, which comprised using lighter wooden members strengthened by bar-iron. For the small shipbuilder, this method was less expensive than using iron plating and/or iron frames. In addition, the composite construction also produced the ideal lightness for chasing blockade runners.⁸

⁶*Scientific American*, new series, 24 (December 14, 1861): 379.

⁷*New York Times*, 26 January 1863.

⁸ Semi-composite construction later became known in the boat yards as "bastard composite." Douglas Phillips-Birt, *The Building of Boats* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., Inc., 1979), 197-198; also see: John H. Morrison, *A History of American Steam Navigation* (New York: Argosy-Antiquarian, Ltd., 1967), 272-274.

The *Tulip*, originally named *Chi Kiang*, was built for the Chinese navy in the winter of 1862.⁹ Her design was possibly influenced by the English and French gunboats then engaged in suppressing the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). She was schooner rigged for long voyages and screw-propelled for rapid deployment. The diagonal iron strapping ensured a strong, but relatively light hull which could withstand hogging in rough waters, and yet navigate through narrow and shallow rivers.

Master builders James C. Jewett of New York City, New York, constructed the *Tulip's* hull. She was registered in the Port of New York as having two decks, two masts, round stern and tuck, and an *Eagles head* figurehead. Her length was one hundred one feet and four inches; her breadth, twenty-two feet and ten inches; depth of hold, eleven feet and five inches; loaded draft, estimated at eight feet; she measured two hundred forty tons (44/95).¹⁰

Engine manufacturer, Daniel McLeod of New York City, constructed the *Tulip's* machinery.¹¹ He installed a single horizontal

⁹Ibid. The *Tulip* is incorrectly identified and described as the *Chih Kiang* in the *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships* as a wooden-hulled lighthouse tender built by Jewett and Company. James L. Mooney, ed., *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships* (Washington 1981) in volume 7, *Historical Sketches-Letters T through Y*, 329.

¹⁰*Chi Kiang* #48, 24 December 1862, in: *New York Steam Registers*, October 15, 1861 to October 14, 1864.

¹¹*Chi Kiang* #48, 24 December 1862, in: *New York Steam Registers*, October 15, 1861 to October 14, 1864. *New York Times*, 26 January 1863. Daniel McLeod's manufacturing shop was located at Imlay Street and the corner of

direct-acting (compound) engine with a short stroke and a short connecting rod. The engine had two cylinders (13" x 20" x 24" stroke); one high pressure and one low pressure. McLeod chose the horizontal engine over the vertical type of engine for the reason of keeping the machinery below the water line, although the vertical type took up less floor space. It was economic, fuel efficient, turned twenty-three net horsepower, and, was capable of eight knots. The major difficulty with a compound engine was its unreliability and high cost of maintenance.¹²

McLeod furnished the *Tulip* with two horizontal return tubular boilers (a type of fire-tube boiler), probably designed to burn either wood or coal.¹³ The boiler drum was bolted since its bottom was in the firebox. Leaks around these bolts were common; but, fire-tube boilers were less expensive, lighter and smaller than the Martin water-tube boiler used on the "90-day gunboats" commissioned in

Summit Street in New York City, New York. *The Brooklyn City Directory*, 1867-1868.

¹²The compound engine was still in its experiment stage during the 1860s; the engine was economical in operation, but, unreliable and costly to maintain. As a result, compound engines were not generally considered practical for warship propulsion, but, were of common use in some merchant fleets. Sloan, *Benjamin Isherwood*, 30-31, n.251.

¹³One of the greatest problems faced by commanders of naval steam vessels in China was the difficulty in obtaining suitable coal. The poor quality of coal available required hauling fires at least every four hours to remove the solid mass of clinkers left on the grates. As a result, many of the steam vessels built to operate in Chinese waters had boilers designed to burn either wood or coal. This boiler design meant that a large firebox and an absence of baffling, so that much of the combustion took place in the stack. In addition, many such vessels relied on sail-power, instead of steam. R.C. Sutliff "Duty in a Yangtze Gunboat," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 61 (July 1935), 981-983.

the late fall of 1861.¹⁴ It was general practice among the boiler makers of the mid 19th century to furnish from ten to twelve square feet of heating surface per horse power; thus making her boilers from 230 to 276 square feet.¹⁵

Although no architectural plans for the *Tulip* have been discovered, her lines were similar to the 90-day gunboats. She was rigged as a fore and aft schooner and steam-driven for auxiliary power. The forward orlop deck was divided for the crew, store rooms, and the hold. Her after orlop was divided into the ward room and officers' rooms; a cabin was added at the Washington Navy Yard. The engines and machinery were positioned amidships, below the waterline.¹⁶

Henry G. Ward was listed as the *Tulip's* (ex-*Chi Kiang*) sole owner on 16 June 1863, in the *New York Steam Register*. Ward made the contract to build the *Tulip* with funds collected from Wu Hsu (Acting Circuit Intendant of Su-Sung [Shanghai]) and Yang Fang (a wealthy merchant); both men represented the Chinese "Manchu"

¹⁴Benjamin Isherwood, chief of naval engineers, was convinced of the superior efficiency of Martin's boiler and ordered these boilers installed on U.S. Navy warships. Sloan, *Benjamin Isherwood*, 82-83.

The "90-day gunboats", as they were called, were small, 9 1/2 knot, heavily armed screw vessels, built in the short time of 90-days. Sloan, *Isherwood*, 31.

¹⁵At 212° each boiler developed 793.5 pounds of pressure (1 HP=34.5 lbs. from and at 212° F). William Kent, *Steam-Boiler Economy* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1904), 249-318.

¹⁶U.S.S. *Tulip*, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 2, I, 228.

government. He handled the contract either through his commission house in Shanghai (trading as Ward and Company) or through his father's (Frederick Gamaliel Ward) brokerage in New York. The *Tulip*, and two more vessels, *Kiang Soo* and *Dai Ching* were to accompany other purchases of arms and munitions destined to China's Ever-Victorious Army, commanded by General Frederick Townsend Ward (Henry's older brother).¹⁷ This was a precarious arrangement considering the United States government's scrutiny and policy concerning the export of war materials (contraband).¹⁸

Henry Ward became unable to meet the financial arrangements when Frederick was suddenly killed, and Henry apparently lost complete control over the financial account handled by Hsu and Fang. Under forced sale, all three vessels were purchased by Rear-Admiral Hiram Paulding, commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, on June 22,

¹⁷Names of these vessels represent those provinces devastated by the Taiping rebels. *Times* (London), 17 November 1862.

¹⁸Henry was acting as an accredited agent of the Chinese government. In September 1862, he purchased three hundred and thirty-six barrels of gunpowder in New York; but, military necessity forced the Federal government to prevent its shipment. For more information refer to: Richard J. Smith, *Mercenaries and Mandarins, The Ever-Victorious Army in Nineteenth Century China* (New York: Kto Press, 1978), 28, 90-97; also: Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln 5 1861-1862* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 430.

Frederick Ward was killed at Tse-Kzi near Ning Po on September 21, 1862. For a brief biography of Frederick Townsend Ward, refer to: Richard Oakes Patterson, "Frederick Townsend Ward, the Mandarin from Salem," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 70 (February 1953), 157-167.

1863.¹⁹ The U.S. Navy designated both the *Tulip* and *Kiang Soo* (re-commissioned U.S.S. *Fuchsia*) fourth-rate screw tugs.²⁰

Both the *Tulip* and *Fuchsia* were completed and attached to the Potomac Flotilla in mid August 1863. Prior to the *Tulip's* commission the Washington Navy Yard modified her rigging. She was demasted and stripped of her spars and sails. The changes lowered her profile and draft making her less easily detected by the enemy and more maneuverable in the shallows. She was then fitted-out with one 20-pound Parrott Rifle, two 24-pound howitzers, and two heavy 12-pound smooth bore cannons (figure 3.1).²¹

¹⁹Although naval records record \$30,000 was paid for the *Chi Kiang*, the original Bill of Sale (15 April 1863), is for only \$20,000. William H. Fogg of Fogg and Company is listed as the mortgager. For information on claims disputed with the Chinese government refer to: Senate Executive Documents, Hearing on House Resolution No. 103 to Investigate the Expenditures in the State Department etc., *Box Indemnity Use For Payment of Ward Claims Against Chinese Government Investigation*, 45th Cong., 2nd sess., 1911, 48, pt. 12: 4-5. See also: Frederick Wells Williams, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Wells Williams* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 335.

²⁰The *Kiang Soo* and *Dai Ching* were also built by James C. Jewett of New York. The *Kiang Soo* was a sister ship of the *Tulip*, also purchased for \$30,000 in June, 1863, and renamed the U.S.S. *Fuchsia*. The *Dai Ching* was a larger (fourth rate) screw steamer of five-hundred tons. She was acquired on April 12, 1863, for \$117,575 from R.B. Catherwood, but, not renamed. For more information refer to the ZB File, Ship Histories Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C. Also see: Edward Kenneth Haviland, "American Steam Navigation in China, 1845-1878," *American Neptune* 17 (1957), 146-147.

²¹Shuyter to Harwood, 8 August 1863, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers below the Rank of Commander and From Warrant Officers*, National Archives and Record Service, National Archives Microfilm Publication, Microcopy No. M148, Roll 331, Vol. 599; hereinafter cited as *Officers' Letters*; see also: U.S.S. *Tulip*, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 2, I, 228.

The *Tulip* was assigned to the First Division which patrolled the waters extending from the Piankatank River to Blackistone Island in the lower Potomac. Owing to the small force which comprised that division, she was assigned to Station H (embracing Smith's Point to the south entrance of the Piankatank and included that river as well as the Rappahannock); about twenty-five miles of coastline. For most of her service, the *Tulip* could be found lying at anchor in the mouth of the Rappahannock River. There she played a vital role in supplying the firepower and logistical support to the Army of the Potomac, and a less glamorous role in seizing contraband from local smugglers and blockade runners.²²

Perhaps of more interest than the *Tulip's* blockading duties, were the frequency of her mechanical breakdowns; a common occurrence among the river gunboats and blockading vessels. The inadequate number of gunboats assigned to the Potomac Flotilla forced the officers keep their vessels in service as long as possible. Extended lengths of cruises caused serious problems in boiler and engine maintenance. Salt and scale accumulated in the boilers, and in the engine, oil holes and channels became clogged with hard dirt, and the condensers filled with thick tallow and dirt. Equally problematic was the serious damage caused by frequent

²²Magaw to Harwood, 28 August 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser.1, V, 323; also, List of Stations, Hooker to Harwood, 21 November 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser.1, V, 374.

cannonades which nearly tore to pieces some of the more slightly built gunboats.²³

In late August, 1863, only two weeks after the *Tulip* began active service in the Potomac Flotilla, her machinery was in a dangerous condition. Her engine was working water and the boilers were building to dangerous pressures and in jeopardy of blowing. Although these problems were not uncommon, it caused grave concerns in smaller gunboat squadrons such as the Potomac Flotilla, that depended on keeping a sufficient force afloat. Eventually, the necessity for frequent repairs to naval vessels became one of the "greatest handicaps" of the entire naval blockade.²⁴

In late September, two of the *Tulip's* engineers not only complained about the vessel's condition, but, wished to escape their service. George H. Parks and Erastus Barry (3rd assistant engineers), pensive about their own safety and health, requested to be detached from the *Tulip*; however, the Navy Department declined both requests.²⁵ Their concern was not unfounded. John S. Kennedy,

²³Lowry to Craven, 10 July 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser.1, IV, 573; McCutcheon to Harrell, 28 November 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser.1, IV, 759.

²⁴Robert Browning, "The Blockade of Wilmington, North Carolina, 1861-1865" (Master's thesis, East Carolina University, 1980), 46.

²⁵Parks to Welles, 11 September 1863, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 335, Vol. 603; hereinafter cited as *Officers' Letters*. Barry to Welles, 11 September 1863, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 335, vol. 603.

His health "being so impaired", Barry tendered his resignation to Harwood on September 26, 1863. The Navy Department denied his resignation, but, detached Barry from the *Tulip* in October, 1863. Barry to Harwood, 26

surgeon's steward, noted that for the same reasons, William Miller (3rd assistant engineer), two 2nd class fireman, and other shipmates, were in the hospital or on the ship's "sick list" due to the extreme temperature in the engine room.²⁶ According to an official report, the engineers were forced to stand by the boiler's safety valves and the engine room's temperature climbed to an unbearable 130 to 136 degrees Fahrenheit; furthermore, steam was constantly leaking from the boilers into the wardroom causing very unhealthy conditions for the officers as well.²⁷ After several more weeks of complaints, the *Tulip* was finally directed to the Washington Navy Yard, where for ten days, boiler makers and helpers made the necessary repairs.²⁸

Throughout the war, the Navy Department struggled to remedy the constant breakdowns which plagued naval steam machinery. It was quickly discovered, that negligent care was one probable cause for an unusual amount of trouble with ships' boilers. To pursue lighter and faster blockade runners, the engineers and fireman often

September 1863, *Officers' Letters*, vol. 604. Sluyter to Welles, 19 October 1863, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 337, vol. 606.

²⁶Kennedy to Welles, 26 September 1863, *Officers' Letters*, vol. 604. The hazards of working in a warship's engine room are well documented. For example, James W. Boynton (engineer, 3rd assistant) on board the U.S.S. *Conemaugh* noted: the draft of air coming in the boiler room hatch took with it all the heat from that room and pushed it through the small passage and on to the engineer, making it very hot at all times...with the temperature varying from 75 to 105°." Abbott A. Brayton, "The South Atlantic Blockading Squadron: The Diary of James W. Boynton," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 76 (1975): 113.

²⁷Jenks to Welles, 1 October 1863, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 337, vol. 605.

²⁸Sluyter to Harwood, 19 October 1863, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 338, vol. 606.

threw "grease, tar, pork, or anything that could burn into the furnaces to raise the steam pressure;" a destructive habit since these "fuels" left corrosive residues in the ship's machinery.²⁹ In order to rectify this problem, Welles issued a circular which placed engineers liable for the condition of their ship's machinery. In addition, officers commanding steam vessels of the Potomac Flotilla, required their engineers to submit a daily report of the condition of the machinery and boilers.³⁰

As the Navy Department battled to keep shipboard negligence to a minimum, another factor was already impairing operations and compounding mechanical problems. The increasingly heavy and peremptory demand placed on private contractors ultimately resulted in the use of faulty materials and poor workmanship in manufacturing the steam machinery. Welles confronted the problem by alerting the navy's inspectors of machinery at the yards. He issued a circular in March, 1864, which accorded the responsibility for any omissions or defects arising from neglect to the inspectors.³¹ Nevertheless, poor workmanship and inferior materials continued to

²⁹Browning, "Blockade," 48.

³⁰Engine defects were to be repaired as they occurred, not waiting until arrival at the navy yards. Any engineers found grossly negligent in their duties would be expelled from the U.S. Navy under this new order (General Order #19, Logbook, U.S.S. *Jacob Bell*, 16 September 1863, RG 24, NA.). Also, *Potomac Flotilla, General Instructions to Commanding And Other Officers*, 1863, Ship's History Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C..

³¹The *Scientific American*, new series, 20 (March 19, 1864): 197; reprinted in Appendix A.

frustrate the navy. For example, in April, 1864, Benjamin Isherwood, chief of naval engineers, penned Welles, "Nearly all the difficulties experienced with the naval machinery has been owing to poor materials and worse workmanship. This has been especially the case in boilers...".³²

Not surprisingly, these problems were a great hindrance to the Potomac Flotilla, since months of river service compounded troubles of wear and tear on machinery. Routine engagements with Confederate shore batteries shattered upper works, weakened wooden frames and members, threw engines out of line, and, cracked steam piping.³³ Breakdowns became so commonplace and recurring, that at times, during 1863 and 1864, the Potomac was left more or less unguarded; at any one time, from one-third to one-quarter of the vessels were reported unfit for duty and out of service.³⁴

Yet breakdowns and mechanical problems on board the *Tulip* were, perhaps, more a result of faulty design and construction than stresses induced by river service. McLeod built the *Tulip's* boilers without steam drums or chimneys, and only allotted eighteen inches

³²Isherwood to Welles, 16 April 1864, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Chiefs of Navy Bureaus, 1842-1885*, National Archives General Services Administration, 1963, Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. M518, Roll 20, vol. 56, RG 45; hereinafter cited as *Letters, Chiefs of Navy Bureaus*.

³³Spencer to Lowry, 27 June 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 554. Lowry to Rowan, 28 June 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 545-546.

³⁴Parker to Welles, 1 April 1864, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 408-409.

of space for water and steam, from the top of the firebox. He correctly reasoned that the small water space would allow the boiler to rapidly build up steam pressure; an advantage for quickly building speed, but, requiring careful attendance. Without a steam drum, there was constant danger of pressure bursting the boiler drum and cylinder heads.³⁵

Affairs on the Potomac necessitated keeping the *Tulip* on duty until mid October, when nearly disabled, she steamed up river for the Washington Navy Yard to have her boilers repaired. The yard's mechanics decided to correct the problems by adding steam drums. Evidently, this action compounded problems later; for, fire-tube boilers required such large steam drum diameters and plate thicknesses to meet the demand for higher capacities and pressures, that by the late 1800s, they were no longer considered practical or safe.³⁶ Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that adding the steam drums weakened the area of the boilers' shell which was cut away to add the new appendages.³⁷

³⁵Cecil H. Peabody and Edward F. Miller, *Steam Boilers* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1910), 14-15, 170, 257.

In stark contrast to the *Tulip's* repair history, the total cost of repairs on the *Dai Ching* amounted to only \$125.04. Statistical Data Of U.S. Ships, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 2, I, 70.

³⁶Weekly Report, Harwood to Welles, 19 October 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, V, 367.

³⁷Frederick M. Steingress and Harold J. Frost, *High Pressure Boilers* (Homewood: American Technical Publishers, Inc., 1986), 2-10.

Repairs to the *Tulip's* boilers and machinery were only temporarily successful and by August the following year (1864) engineers Jeremiah Riddle and John T. Buckley reported her boilers again unfit for service. She was in such a dangerous condition, that both engineers refused to run her. Riddle and Buckley were subsequently suspended and later re-assigned to subordinate positions.³⁸

Oddly, the engineers' reluctance to chance firing-up the *Tulip's* defective boiler was *not* within accordance to naval regulations. In spite of the navy's resolute policies aimed at keeping machinery in working order, both men acted in defiance of general instructions. Issued in 1863, "Cleaning of Boilers", in part 24 of the *General Instructions* stated: "Commanding Officers are not to refuse permission for cleaning of the boiler, except when it will hinder important service, but will direct the same to be done as soon as practicable."³⁹

The *Tulip* remained in service another four months regardless of the apparent and dangerous condition of her boilers. An acute

³⁸*American and Commercial Advertiser*, 15 November 1864.

³⁹*Potomac Flotilla, General Instructions to Commanding And Other Officers*, 1863, Ship's History Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

Riddle already had one close call as an engineer on the U.S.S. *Dragon* (also attached to the Potomac Flotilla). In January, 1863, a stud bolt on the *Dragon's* boiler blew out causing the death of the ship's carpenter and scalding several shipmates. Apparently, he did not wish to re-live this nightmare. He was commended for his daring and gallantry in rescuing his shipmates. Turner to Parker, 22 January 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

shortage of mechanics, machinists and boiler makers at the Washington Navy Yard was at least partly to blame. After July, 1864, the navy yard at Washington, was unable to meet the demand for repairs of steamers from the Potomac Flotilla and the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. This circumstance certainly influenced Parker's reluctance or hesitance to send the *Tulip* off for repairs; but his decision had an unfortunate and severe consequence. One of the *Tulip's* defective boilers exploded and the entire vessel was destroyed.⁴⁰

On November 11, 1864, the *Tulip's* acting master, William H. Smith, disobeyed a direct order which ultimately decided the fate of the vessel and its crew. Parker had finally dispatched Smith with the *Tulip* to the Washington Navy Yard to have the defective starboard (#2) boiler repaired. Smith directly disobeyed his orders by instructing senior engineer Parks to fire-up the condemned boiler - it must be noted, that John F. Reilly, fleet engineer, cautioned the senior engineer against this action.⁴¹

Smith was reluctant to run the *Tulip* under steam from only one boiler. He feared that under the power of only one boiler, the

⁴⁰ Smith to Welles, 20 July 1864, *Letters, Chiefs of Navy Bureaus*, Roll 20, vol. 57. See Appendix B: "List of Officers And Crew Belonging To And On Board The U.S.S. Tulip At The Time of Her Loss November 11, 1864 So Far As Can Be Ascertained From Paymaster Carpenter's Books," Parker to Welles, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

⁴¹ Parker to Welles, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

vessel's slow progress would make her vulnerable to Confederate shore batteries along the Virginia side of the river. He therefore, decided to use both boilers. Once out of signal distance, he ordered fire on the defective boiler.⁴²

At two o'clock on Friday afternoon, the *Tulip* steamed out of St. Inigoes and bound up the Potomac for the Washington Navy Yard. It took her about one hour to limp out of the St. Mary's River into the Potomac. Around 5:00 P.M., Parks informed Smith and executive officer, Acting Ensign, Richard M. Wagstaff, that if they would lay anchor, in about two hours he could steam built-up on the defective boiler. However, just before the *Tulip* rounded Piney Point, John Gordon, 3rd assistant engineer, informed Smith and Wagstaff, that steam was already building on the defective starboard boiler and so there was no reason to stop. Testimony suggested that Smith then ordered the executive officer, Acting Ensign, Richard M. Wagstaff, to immediately proceed up river.⁴³

About 6:00 P.M., Masters' Mate, John Davis, was just relieved from duty when he was suddenly alarmed by noise and excitement arising from the engine room. Davis quickly made his way from the

⁴²Twelve year old, "Johnnie" Ellicott lived at Cross Manor House, situated on a high bank, overlooking St. Inigoes Creek, and about 100 yards northwest of the Potomac Flotilla's coaling depot wharf. J.M. Ellicott, "A Child's Recollections of the Potomac Flotilla," *Chronicles of St. Mary's* 10 (September 1962), 296; hereinafter cited as "Child's Recollections".

⁴³Wagstaff to Parker, 12 November 1864, ZB File, Ship's History Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

bow, through clouds of steam which filled the fire hatchways. He later recalled hearing Gordon cry out to "haul your fires."⁴⁴ Parks immediately jumped down into the engine room when Gordon shouted out "for God's sake somebody raise the safety valve."⁴⁵ Davis just passed through the cabin's companion way as the boiler exploded.⁴⁶

The explosion blew apart the upper deck and threw the officers and crew in every direction. Some of the officers struggled to get to the lower gig, but not in time. The vessel's bottom, the cabin and pilot house were blown out and in minutes she sank to the bottom of the Potomac. The official naval report suggested that the boiler explosion occurred at 6:20 P.M., abreast of Ragged Point, Virginia.⁴⁷

There were only a few who survived the explosion; the ship's purser (unidentified), who was blown clear and managed to swim ashore and ten officers and men who survived by clinging to pieces

⁴⁴Wagstaff to Parker, 12 November 1864, ZB File, Ship's History Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁵Wagstaff to Parker, 12 November 1864, ZB File, Ship's History Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁶Davis applied to be compensated for clothing lost when the *Tulip* exploded; but being an officer, he was excluded from this benefit. Davis to Welles, 13 November 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 374, vol. 641; also see: Welles to Davis, 15 November 1864, *Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers, 1798-1868*, The National Archives, National Archives and Record Service, General Services Administration, Washington, 1950. M149, Roll 78, vol. 76.

⁴⁷U.S. Military Telegraph, Montgomery to Welles, 12 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA. See also the *Scientific American*, new series, 11 (November 22, 1864), 339.

of wreckage. The purser later recalled that all of the off-duty officers were assembled in the mess room, which was located directly above the ship's boilers. His recollection also placed Smith, Pilot James Jackson, and Masters' Mates John Hammond and John Rafenberg on the ship's bridge, also located above the boilers.⁴⁸

The explosion thundered through the air and alerted the crewmen of several nearby steamers. At 7:00 P.M. the crew of the army steamer *Hudson*, commanded by Captain James Allen, retrieved ten survivors and steamed back towards the St. Inigoes depot. The men were scalded and suffered fractures, injuries and contusions. The *Hudson's* crew apparently remained at the site for several hours before setting off with the wounded.⁴⁹

At 11:00 P.M. the *Hudson* arrived at St. Inigoes and her crew transferred the injured men to the U.S.S. *Wyandank*. The acting assistant surgeon, M.F. Delano, immediately summoned two local doctors to help tend the wounded.⁵⁰ He then sent a note, via Captain Allen, to surgeon A. Hager at Hammond General Hospital and requested a surgeon and medical supplies. The dispensary at the

⁴⁸Sun, 11 November 1964.

⁴⁹The *Hudson* passed the U.S.S. *William Bacon*, stationed at the mouth of the St. Mary's River, at 9:30 P.M. and was ordered by Commander H.E. Ripley to proceed to St. Inigoes. Logbook, U.S.S. *William Bacon*, 11 November 1864, RG 24, NA. At the time the *Hudson* steamed into St. Inigoes, the only thing recovered of Smith was his hat.

⁵⁰Delano summoned doctors Tappington and Miles from St. Mary's City; neither man could be further identified. Delano to Parker, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

depot was completely destitute of even the most basic essentials, including bedding. In the meantime, the medical staff at St. Inigoes tried in vain to provide the scalded with some relief. It was Saturday morning, about 4:00 A.M., before Assistant Surgeon Westerling (U.S.Army) arrived from Hammond General Hospital with splints, anesthetics, and cotton.⁵¹ The army steamer *Northern Lights* arrived about noon to transport the injured men to Hammond General Hospital.⁵²

The injured men were afforded the best quality of medical care that the Flotilla's surgeon could provide. James Tier, a carpenter by trade, made crude splints to support fractured limbs.⁵³ One man's leg was later amputated and two others died of severe burns. The next morning, another survivor suffering from shock did nothing but stand at the water's edge, along the creek, and gaze toward the Potomac for hours.⁵⁴

⁵¹Westerling could not be further identified.

⁵²Logbook, U.S.S. *Don*, 13 November 1864, RG 24, NA. Gaskins (landsman), Fleet Burrell (landsman) and Benjamin Teal (3rd assistant engineer) were sent to Hammond General Hospital while Delano thought it best "not to remove the three scalded men remaining - since two, James Porter [2nd class fireman] and Michael Holland [wardroom cook] have died." Delano to Parker, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

⁵³James Tier (or possibly Thiers) was further identified in Ellicott's recollections as the head blacksmith, in charge of the blacksmith's shop at St. Inigoes. See: Ellicott, "Child's Recollections," 293.

⁵⁴Ellicott recalled that the next morning, he found the paymaster (or purser) sitting alone in the equipment room on a coil of rope. He bursted out with questions, but the paymaster, looking "so pallid" and dazed, walked down to the water's edge, where he just "stood a long time gazing toward the

On Saturday evening, the crew of the U.S.S. *Juniper* began a careful search in the Potomac off Ragged Point and the Maryland shore for bodies and any wreckage of the *Tulip*. Sunday morning, the *Juniper* returned to the depot, where Acting Ensign Philip Sheridan reported that large portions of the *Tulip's* deck, the top of her pilot house, her first cutter which was "entirely stove", ribs, and, knees" were scattered along the Maryland shore.⁵⁵

Among the personal effects recovered by the *Juniper's* crew was a trunk belonging to Acting Masters' Mate, Julian Reynolds, a valise of the pilot's, and articles of clothing. Signal flags and a package of letters marked "U.S. Str. Tulip" were also discovered among the debris. Sheridan reported that at that time, no bodies were discovered.

At the return of the *Juniper* and the verification of the *Tulip's* wreckage, the officers and crew of the Potomac Flotilla paid a period of tribute to the *Tulip's* dead crew. On Sunday afternoon, November 13, 1864, a moderate northwest breeze unfurled the Ensign which

Potomac." J.M. Ellicott, "A Child's Recollections of the Potomac Flotilla," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 61 (February 1935): 185. As an interesting note, the official naval records have failed to show that a purser or paymaster was on board the *Tulip* at the time of her destruction.

For the list and status of officers and men on board the *Tulip* at the time of her destruction see: Appendix C and Appendix D.

⁵⁵Sheridan to Parker, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

was lowered at half mast on the U.S.S. *Don*, in respect to the death and burial of several of the *Tulip's* crew.⁵⁶

On the paymaster's books, forty-nine of fifty-seven officers and men were reported missing (see appendix B). For several weeks bodies washed ashore, all burned and mangled beyond recognition. Eight unidentified bodies were later wrapped in burlap and buried along the lower bank of St. Inigoes Creek (figure 3.2).⁵⁷ On December 13, 1864, Captain Smith's body was discovered washed upon the beach on St. George's Island, at the mouth of the St. Mary's River. An officer from the U.S.S. *William Bacon* interred the badly decomposed remains. Smith's body was identified by a ring marked "Kate", the name of his wife.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Logbook, U.S.S. *Don*, 13 November 1864, RG 24, N.A. On June 15, 1940, a half-acre cemetery with a tall white monument was donated in commemoration of those killed on the U.S.S. *Tulip*. The inscription on the monument reads: "To the memory of those who perished on the explosion of the U.S.S. *Tulip*, November 11, 1864."

On November 11, 1964 (Veterans Day) a centennial commemoration ceremony was conducted at the monument site to pay tribute to the U.S. Navy, and to the "memory of those men who lost their lives in the explosion of the U.S.S. *Tulip*;" Edwin Bietzell, ed., "U.S.S. *Tulip* Centennial Commemoration Ceremony, November 11, 1864," *Chronicles of St. Mary's*, 12 (December 1964) 129; also, *Baltimore Sun*, 11 November 1964 and the *Washington Post*, 14 November 1964.

⁵⁷Ellicott recollected that the graves were dug in locust grove on the creek, near the *Wyandank's* berth. He remembered that there were "eight graves, two rows of four each, and that there were no head markers." Ellicott, "Child's Recollections," 296.

⁵⁸Logbook, U.S.S. *William Bacon*, 13 December 1864, RG 24, NA. U.S. Military Telegram, Parker to Welles, 13 December 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA. The ring was forward to Smith's wife; she was supposed to meet with her husband in Washington on the evening the disaster occurred. *New York Times*, 15 November 1864.

A number of the survivors injured in the *Tulip* explosion were unable to return to sea duty for several months. Wagstaff received a thirty-days leave of absence and, as a result of an injured foot, was unable to resume his duties for another two months.⁵⁹ Benjamin Teal (3rd assistant engineer) was transferred from Hammond General Hospital at Point Lookout, to Philadelphia, where he remained disabled and incapacitated from a leg wound until early January, 1865.⁶⁰ The official status of the crew appears in Appendix B.

The incident passed rather quickly and due to the simple emergency of the war, Parker and the Navy Department did not hold a formal investigation.⁶¹ The late Smith was unofficially charged with the *Tulip's* destruction based on testimony given by Wagstaff.⁶²

⁵⁹Wagstaff to Welles, 21 November 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 375, vol. 642. Wagstaff to Welles, 23 November 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 375, vol. 642. Wagstaff to Welles, 6 December 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 376, vol. 643.

⁶⁰Teal to Welles, 7 December 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 377, vol. 644. Teal suffered from a severe injury to the right leg, involving the ankle joint and various tendons. Medical Certificate, Dillard, 1 December 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 377, vol. 644. Teal to Welles, 19 December 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 377, vol. 644. Teal to Welles, 30 December 1864, *Officers' Letters*, Roll 379, vol. 646.

⁶¹No record of the *Tulip's* loss was found in the Secretary's *Annual Reports* or in the records of *Courts of Inquiry*. This is unusual since it was policy, or at least common practice, to report all transactions relating to the loss of a naval vessel. Perhaps, since the *Tulip* was not lost in combat, Parker decided that no formal investigation was warranted.

⁶²Parker to Welles, 13 November 1864, *Area File of the Naval Records Collection, 1775-1910*, Roll 92, Area 7, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. 625, The National Archives and Record Service, General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., 1965.

Although it was against naval policy to disclose information on the loss of a warship, news of the disaster spread throughout the North and South. The loss of the *Tulip* even spread quickly among the Confederate prisoners at Point Lookout.⁶³

A week after the loss of the *Tulip*, the Potomac Flotilla began salvage operations to ensure the wreckage would not interfere with navigation. For two days (20-21 November) the *Freeborn* dredged the Potomac off Ragged Point for the remaining wreckage of the *Tulip*, but she was never found. More than a hundred years would pass before another attempt to salvage the *Tulip* was undertaken.⁶⁴

The fact that shipbuilders were allowed to construct war vessels for the government of China during the American Civil War is evidence of the United States' continued interest in the Imperial government. An interest, obviously influence by trade relations, and in stark contrast with those of the European and American

⁶³Edwin Bietzell, ed., "The Diary of Charles Warren Hutt," *Chronicles of St. Mary's* 18 (May 1970), 347. For Northern accounts refer to: Baltimore's *American and Commercial Advertiser* (15 November 1864); Washington's *Evening Star* (15 November 1864); *New York Times* (16 November 1864); Pennsylvania's *Lancaster Intelligencer* (16 November 1864); For the South's reports refer to the following papers: *Richmond Whig* (18 November 1864); *Daily Confederate* (18 November 1864). By the way, newspapers and other second hand accounts placed the death toll at sixty to sixty-four men.

⁶⁴Logbook, U.S.S. *Thomas Freeborn*, November 20, 1864 through November 21, 1864, RG 24, NA. The U.S. Navy adheres to their policy of non-discretion of crew members entombed in sunken naval vessels and has denied all applications of salvage rights to the *Tulip*. Blocher to Tuttle, 1 April 1969, ZB File, Ship Histories Branch, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

missionaries in China.⁶⁵ The *Tulip's* destruction is a harsh but accurate picture of the every-day dangers faced by seamen on the blockade duty. It was the end result of the navy's rapid expansion which made inadequate the naval repair facilities and brought on serious shortages in manpower. In addition, it reflected the failure of the navy's efforts to recruit seasoned sailors and skilled laborers, educated and knowledgeable in servicing the new naval steam technology.

⁶⁵For more information on America's policy and attitude towards the Taiping rebels and the official government of China refer to: Seward to Burlingame, 6 March 1862, U.S. Congress, *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), pt. 2, 839; and also, Seward to Adams, 2 April 1862, U.S. Congress, *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), pt. 1, 61.

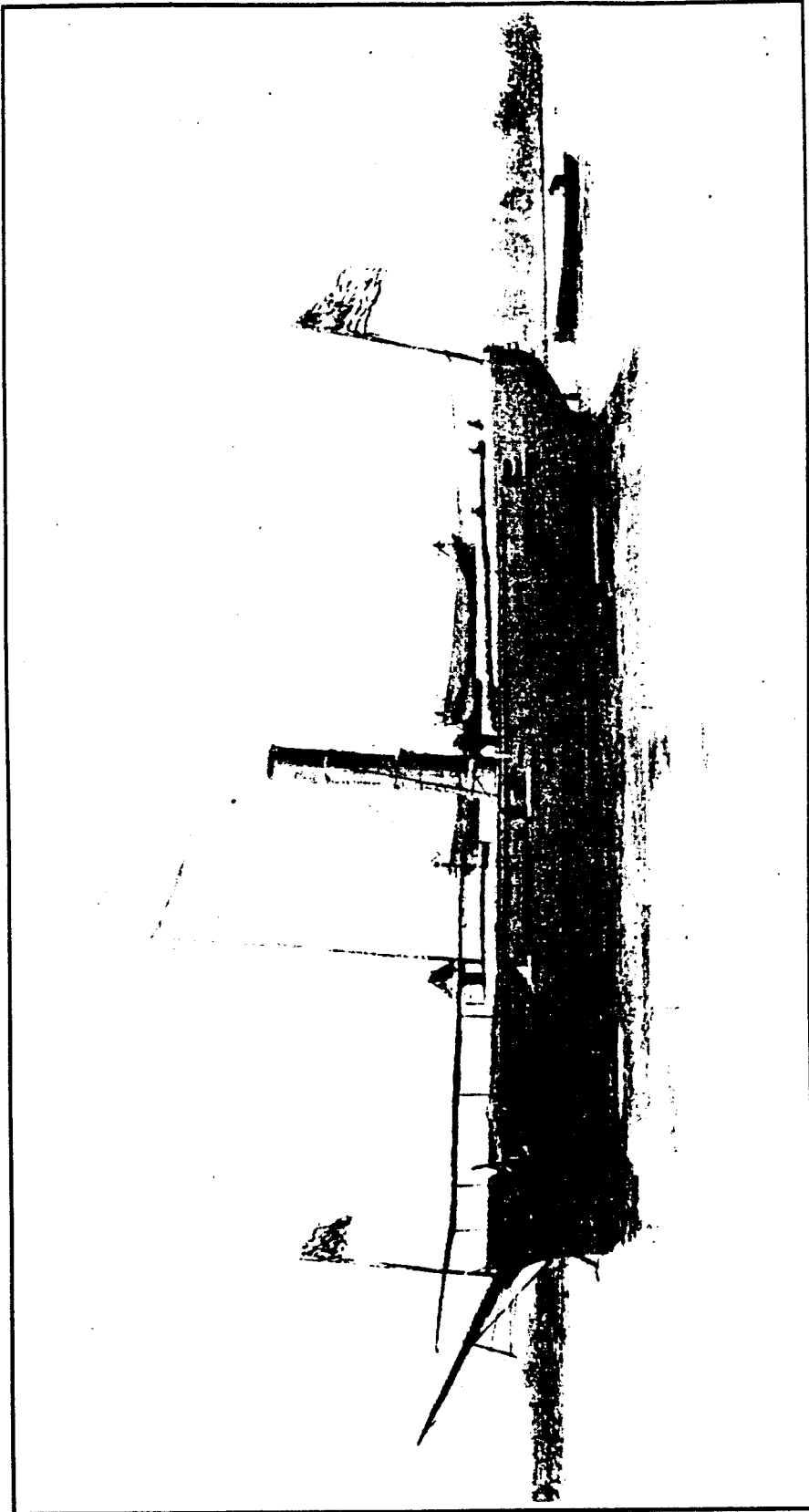


FIGURE: 3.1: The U.S.S. *Fuchsia*, sister ship to the U.S.S. *Tulip*; both were attached to the Potomac Flotilla in 1863. From a watercolor by Clary Robert, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser.1, V, 485.

Potomac Flotilla Base 1864-1865

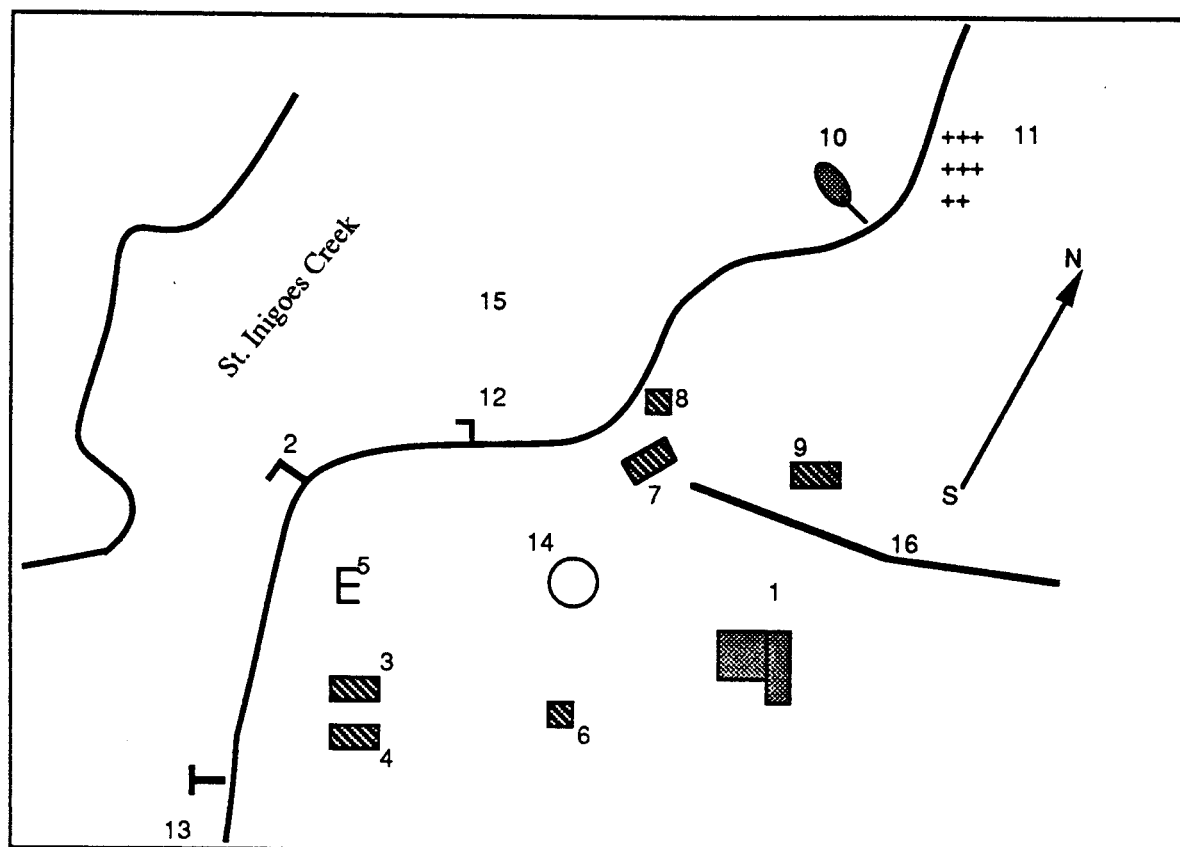


FIGURE 3.2: Reprinted from the original map which appears in J.M. Ellicott, "A Child's Recollections of the Potomac Flotilla," *Chronicles of St. Mary's* 10 (September 1962): 294.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) Cross Manor House | (7) Stables | (13) Latrines |
| (2) Wharf and derrick | (8) Magazine | (14) Telegraph office |
| (3) Carpenter's shop | (9) Sutler's store | (15) Anchorage |
| (4) Blacksmith's shop | (10) U.S.S. Wyandank | (16) Tobacco rolling road |
| (5) Coal bins | (11) Graveyard | |
| (6) Equipment stores | (12) Boat landing | |

Chapter 4

The Crew of the Potomac Flotilla

The Union naval blockade in the American Civil War intensified forces which contributed to the decline in American commercial shipping interests. Technical improvements in trade vessels, displacement from the cotton trade, and general economic conditions compelled many ship owners to abandon the industry or to invest in foreign ships.¹ The consequential reduction of seagoing employment in American merchant vessels forced many sailors to seek employment on naval warships. To thousands of unemployed sailors, American and foreign, white or black, the Civil War created new jobs as the U.S. Navy struggled to meet its enormous shortage of experienced sailors.

Prior to the Civil War, the U.S. Navy had maintained a liberal recruiting policy, with few limitations. Foreigners were required to meet residence requirements and the black enlistment was restricted to five percent of the total enlistment for any weekly or monthly

¹For a report on the American proportion of tonnage entering and clearing in the foreign trade during the periods, 1855-1859, 1863-1870, refer to John B. Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 319-324. See Emerson Fite, *Social and Industrial Conditions in the North During the Civil War* (New York: Ungar, 1963), 148-149, for information on the average number of transfers to foreign flags (1858-1863); see also: John R. Spears, *The Story of the American Merchant Marine* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1919), 292-293.

period. Military necessity however, compelled the navy to remove some of these limitations, and commanders often overlooked others. Throughout the war, experienced sailors, regardless of citizenship or race, were actively recruited and enticed to re-enlist.

The study of the muster rolls for the Potomac Flotilla provides a new perspective on the participation of foreigners and blacks in the U.S. Navy. Each entry in the ship's muster roll contains descriptive information about the ship's personnel, including ethnicity and personal characteristics (figure 4.1).² Alone, the information presented in the muster rolls is little more than a personal description of each seaman. But by examining this data as a whole, using quantitative and qualitative analysis, the historian has a new and vital tool with which to test and challenge existing interpretations. This analysis will clearly demonstrate, that under pressures to meet manpower shortages, the Navy Department relaxed its limitations on employing foreigners and blacks.

²U.S.S. *Currituck* (March 1862, January 1863, January 1864, June 1865, July 1865); U.S.S. *Dragon* (July 1863, April 1864, December 1864, March 1865); U.S.S. *Freeborn* (March 1862, March 1863, April 1863, October 1864, April 1865, May 1865); U.S.S. *Fuchsia* (September 1863, September 1864, March 1865); U.S.S. *Jacob Bell* (October 1862, January 1863, March 1863, March 1864, March 1865); U.S.S. *Pawnee* (September 1860, September 1862); U.S.S. *Primrose* (October 1864); U.S.S. *Teaser* (January 1863, March 1864, September 1864, April 1865); U.S.S. *Tulip* (September 1863, April 1864); U.S.S. *Wyandank* (November 1862, January 1863, April 1863, October 1863, January 1864, December 1864, March 1865); U.S.S. *Yankee* (December 1862, March 1863, June 1864, December 1864, April 1865). "Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865", Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited collectively as Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865.

Circumstances compelled commanders to take the authority and to broadly interpret these orders according to their own needs.

The U.S. Navy acted quickly to supplement its manpower shortage by recruiting officers and sailors from the merchant marine. To meet the need for officers, for example, upper classmen at the Naval Academy were assigned to active service. Additional commissions were given to competent sailors recruited from the merchant marine. Less experienced recruits were enlisted as seaman, or ordinary seaman. This system worked sufficiently until the navy began a rapid expansion in which resulted serious manpower shortages.³

When war broke out, at least nine of the seventeen new recruits received on board the U.S.S. *Pawnee* were seasoned sailors.⁴ Of some 287 new naval recruits, almost half of these recruits, forty-

³Lieutenant Edward Shippen, U.S. Navy, noted the number of young officers on board the receiving ship *Brooklyn*, who "had been mostly masters and mates of merchant vessels." Edward Shippen, *Thirty Years at Sea The Story of a Sailor's Life* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1879), 268.

The rush of officers from commercial vessels into the Union navy, commissioned as acting masters, offended many of the regular navy officers, who resented this *invasion into the wardroom*; but little else could be done. For example, Charles Post likened the volunteer acting masters to hotel hallboys, whom in his mind, "were generally far more intelligent and agreeable than the average acting officer." Charles A. Post, "A Diary on the Blockade in 1863," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 44 (October 1918), 2346-2348.

⁴The *Pawnee's* muster roll only listed the name and rating of each new recruit. To determine the recruits' prior occupation and other characteristics, the names were searched for in the 1862 muster roll. Of the seventeen names which appeared in 1861, only nine of these men appeared in the *Pawnee's* 1862 muster roll. U.S.S. *Pawnee*, 1861-1862, Muster Rolls, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

five percent, were experienced and able sailors, whom the U.S. Navy enlisted at the rate of seaman or ordinary seaman.⁵ A slightly larger percentage of new recruits were "greenhorns", a term used by sailors to describe men who had never been to sea before.⁶ Such a considerable proportion of greenhorns was perhaps, a reflection of changes in America's seafaring communities. Declining wages, and increased brutality, for example, were forcing a good portion of seafarers to seek opportunities ashore and therefore, served to deteriorate the quality of American sailors.⁷

After 1861 the number of available and experienced sailors rapidly declined and other sources of manpower had to be considered.⁸ The U.S. Navy wisely recruited foreign and black sailors to compensate for the unexperienced crews. While this practice created a number of political and operational difficulties, it helped to

⁵According to the naval regulations regarding rates, these men were obviously recruited from the merchant marine, since the rate of Ordinary Seamen required at least three years of sea duty; five years to qualify for the rate of Seaman. David Lawrence Valuska, *The Negro in the Union Navy, 1861-1865* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1974), 29.

⁶New recruits were also called "greeny", and "haymakers" by their experienced shipmates. F.P.B. Sands, A Volunteers Reminiscences of Life in the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1862-1865, in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 14 (1903), 52, 53, 83.

⁷W. Jeffrey Bolster, "To Feel Like A Man: Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," *The Journal of American History* 76 (March 1990), 1096.

⁸The rapid decline of qualified American seamen is noted by Lieutenant Edward Shippen, U.S. Navy. Shippen was obviously amazed to find, that not one of the acting officers on board the U.S.S. *Eagle*, had seen any naval service. Shippen, *Thirty Years at Sea*, 294-295.

alleviate the shortage and thus maintain the crucial blockade of southern ports. It was therefore, no surprise to find that from 1862 on, a great number of the recruits assigned to the Potomac Flotilla were foreign-born and/or black, and represented a variety of nationalities.⁹

Historian, Ella Lonn, estimated that from one-third to two-thirds of the navy was comprised of foreign-born sailors.¹⁰ Her figures coincided closely with those collected from a sample of the Potomac Flotilla's muster rolls. Of 1,372 enlistees, 459 or 33.5 percent were listed in the muster rolls as foreign-born (table 4.1). The term foreign-born is used to describe the alien status of these sailors because there is no way to determine the actual length of naturalization for these men.¹¹

⁹Lonn suggested that a similar scarcity of sailors in the South forced Confederate naval authorities to depend upon foreigners for their cruisers fitted-out in foreign ports; Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 283-284. In support of Lonn's theory, the London *Times* reported that the Confederate steamer *Nashville* arrived off Southampton with a crew of 80 men "all white mostly English and Irish." *Times* (London) 22 November 1861.

¹⁰Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 637.

¹¹Only twenty-four seamen actually claimed citizenship to another country on the ships' muster rolls from 1861 to 1865. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

Table 4.1: American and Foreign Enlistments in the Potomac Flotilla

Nationality	Recruitment Year						Total <u>N</u>
	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	
American	48 (87.3)	175 (69.2)	161 (63.6)	220 (71.2)	288 (63.4)	21 (43.8)	913 (66.5)
Foreign-born	7 (12.7)	78 (30.8)	92 (36.4)	89 (28.8)	166 (36.6)	27 (56.3)	459 (33.5)

Sources: Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

Note: Total N = 1,372. Nationality is determined by state of citizenship and/or place of birth. Figures in parentheses are column percentages for the adjacent numbers.

Enlistments for foreign-born sailors were regularly heavier in New York or in its immediate vicinity according to Lonn's data. The greatest number of foreign-born enlistees (52.5 percent) assigned to the Potomac Flotilla were also recruited in New York. The second largest number of enlistees were recruited from the Boston or Massachusetts area, then elsewhere. For cities of comparable size, Philadelphia and the Baltimore-District of Columbia area contributed the next largest number of foreign enlistees.¹²

The largest number of foreign-born enlistees occurred in two waves. First between 1860 and 1861, when the total number of foreign sailors grew from twelve to thirty percent of the total enlistments. Again, between 1863 and 1864, during the height of Union military losses and setbacks, the number of foreign sailors assigned to the Potomac Flotilla increases from eighty-nine to 166.

¹²Thirty percent of all enlistees came from the city port of New York. The next largest number of enlistees (eighteen percent) came from Washington, D.C. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

The later increase may reflect stricter policies set forth by enrollment boards in relation to the exemption of aliens. Passage of the Enrollment Act in March, 1863, placed alienage exemptions in a more uniform policy:

persons of foreign birth who shall have declared on oath their intention to become citizens...and who of course were males between the ages 20 and 45 were eligible for the draft.¹³

It soon became a common practice for enrollment boards to record the name of all persons subject to military duty, under the Enrollment Act, noting their place of residence, age, color, and occupation. In addition, all transients, whether students, sailors, etc., also were enrolled in the district where they maintained residence.

Enlistments in 1863 and 1864 were also heavier for foreigners because the army began to reluctantly cooperate with the navy's plea for men. According to one source, a soldier of the 4th Illinois Cavalry, the Union army sometimes would weed out unwanted foreigners. On January 31, 1862, the soldier had noted:

Our Captain did some weeding out today. There is a fleet of gunboats just completed here. Men were wanted to man them, and not wanting to wait to enlist them, there was a call for volunteers...from regiments here to be transferred to the gunboats. But the Captain [George J.

¹³ Eugene C. Murdock, *One Million Men, The Civil War Draft in the North* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971), 308. The process of naturalization took many years, and it was brought to question during the Civil War, at what time did alien exemption rights cease. Murdock, *Civil War Draft*, 330.

Shepardson] took it upon himself to detail such men that he would rather spare and told them they had to go, and they went. They were mostly Norwegians and Germans that could hardly speak English. Some of the other companies furnished men for the gunboats also.¹⁴

The Potomac Flotilla received only a small proportion of the military personnel transferred into the navy. In 1863, only twenty-three soldiers, about seven percent, were assigned to duty in the Potomac; twelve soldiers in 1864. Twenty-nine percent of the total soldiers received had held maritime related occupations and were probably considered welcome additions. Thirty-five percent of those transferred were foreign-born, and eleven percent actually claimed citizenship to another country on the ships' muster roll.¹⁵

There were certainly other factors which contributed to the enlistment of foreigners. For example, many immigrants were enlisted illegally or "kidnapped" into the naval service. Brokers, or crimps, and runners lured many foreigners, using the traditional "drink and drug" technique, along with promises of high bounties and wages.¹⁶ In late July 1864, eleven captains of Dutch merchant

¹⁴P.O. Avery, *History of the Fourth Illinois Cavalry Regiment* (Humboldt: The Enterprise, 1903), 51-52. Companies E, K, L, and, Company M discharged several men to enter naval service. Their name and rank appears in the Roster of Regiment 4th Illinois Cavalry in Avery, *Fourth Illinois*, 3-42. Also see: Francis A. Lord, *They Fought for the Union* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1960), 78.

¹⁵Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

¹⁶Historian Eugene Murdock noted power of attorney frauds committed by Philadelphia brokers; whereby, immigrants were often coerced or tricked into signing papers they could not even understand. See: Murdock, *Civil War Draft*, 290.

vessels and several ship owners complained to their legation that sailors were forcibly removed from their vessels. Four months later, the Dutch minister, Roest Van Limburg, wrote to Secretary of State, William H. Seward, summarizing these "intolerable" abuses:

all declaring to have been put to great difficulty in consequence of the desertion of their seamen, who, from their arrival in the waters of the United States, were tampered with, on board even of their own vessels, by numerous kidnappers, who rushed on board of them without any respect for the foreign flag or the authority of the captain; tempting the seamen by bounties and high wages; seducing or stupefying them with intoxicating liquors; menacing the captains with violence...¹⁷

Limburg noted, that when their consular general addressed this issue to the American authorities, no affirmative action was taken. He also complained that instead of finding protection and assistance from the port authorities in New York, desertion was not only tolerable, but favored. In addition, the ship owners found it more expensive to recover the deserters, then warranted. Limburg

¹⁷The document, submitted to the Government of the King, was drawn-up and signed by the following captains and ship owners: L. Van Geelkerke, captain of the ship *Delft*; G.G. Leori, captain of the ship *Sambiri*; J.B. Fergast, captain of the ship *Nederwaard*; H.A. Harms, captain of the ship *Elizabeth*; J. de Veer, captain of the ship *Christina Maria*; A. de Boer, captain of the ship *Elizabeth*; k. Blonpot, captain of the *Syne Jacobs*; H.W. Koetse, captain of the *Fennechiana*; D. Van Amerongen, captain of the *Catharina Maria*; J. Klien, of the *Pieterdina*; J. Snock, of the *Wilhelmina*. The ship owners: Rotterdam, Woogerand, Weldervank, and Veedam. Master shipbuilders: Rouche & Company, W.G. Ledebver, Van Overgee, H & S Kroner, De Boer, and, Vander Goot. House Executive Document, *Correspondence with the Netherlands Legation in the United States*, 38th Cong., 2nd sess., 15 November 1864, no. 1, vol. 3, serial 1218: 330-331. Hereinafter cited as *Foreign Correspondence*.

warned Seward that already, the ship owners and the Dutch King, have insisted:

...in the unexpected event of a refusal of justice, the vessels of the United States shall not be admitted to enjoy, in the ports of the Netherlands the rights and advantages which the vessels of the Netherlands should find refused to them in American ports.¹⁸

These circumstances had created serious tensions and threatened the commerce and navigation treaty concluded with the United States in 1839. Seward was sensitive to the issue, but was rather abrupt in his reply, merely assuring Limburg that all "needful instructions" were given to the proper authorities to prevent any reoccurrence of the "evils".¹⁹ Seward also made it clear that such offenses were previously unheard of by the Federal government.

While Seward promised to look into these matters, there is no evidence to suggest that any investigation took place. Throughout the war, state immigration recruiters, representatives of private immigration agencies, and countless independent "crimps" preyed on ignorant or gullable Europeans; tricking them into three years of naval or military service. Although, Welles had himself denied authorizing recruiting agents sent to Europe, Seward was known to have sent unauthorized agents into Canada and abroad, to excite

¹⁸*Foreign Correspondence*, 331.

¹⁹*Foreign Correspondence*, 332.

public opinion, and to actively encourage immigration.²⁰ The decline in qualified foreign sailors entering naval service, was to some degree related to these injustices.

Seward was not actually authorized to receive foreign sailors into the U.S. Navy. The Homestead Act of May, 1862, provided that foreign-born residents could become citizens after only one year's residence and service in the army, but, makes no reference to naval service.²¹ Yet, no matter how scrupulous the navy's recruitment policy was, it by no means, implied to prohibit enlistment. British subjects, as well as other foreigners, were welcomed additions. Many foreigners had already established a long tradition of serving in the American merchant marine or navy. Captain of the *R.E. Lee*, Lieutenant John Wilkinson, C.S.N., recollected:

a jack tar is probably the only representative left of the old "free lance," who served under any flag where he was sure of pay and booty. The blue jackets will fight under any colors, where there is a fair prospect of adventure and prize money.²²

Nearly every nationality was represented in muster rolls of the Potomac Flotilla. The small percentage of English (seventeen

²⁰Thornton Kirkland Lothrop, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), 260. The Confederate government alleged enlistments in Ireland were made by the Federal government under false pretenses for laborers on railroads or as farm hands and factory workers in the northern states. Mason to Dowling, 8 June 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 2, II, 436.

²¹Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 418.

²²Wilkinson, *Narrative*, 160-161.

percent) is surprising in view of Great Britain's dominating merchant marine.²³ The Irish are most strikingly represented, accounting for forty-eight percent of foreigners and fifteen percent of the total number of enlistees. Germans were also represented, but, not in such overwhelming numbers as in the Union army. On the whole, Africans, Asians, Italians, the West Indies, South Americans, and, Scandinavians were meagerly represented.²⁴

The majority of these foreigners enlisted, not out of patriotic motives, but, evidently due to economic distress caused by crop failures and decreased remittances from America. As Lonn pointed out, during the war, many foreign sailors questioned little whether it was North or South.²⁵ Their questionable loyalty or motives, was also clearly evident in a comment made by William F. Keeler, paymaster on board the U.S.S. *Florida*, "Some of these men have seen service in the war between France, England and Russia-some on one side, some on the other."²⁶

The comparatively small number of British sailors offers or at least suggests that the British merchant marine were not eager for a

²³In comparison, Lonn noted that the majority of Confederate crews were secured abroad, and comprised mainly of British subjects; Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 284.

²⁴Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

²⁵Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 284.

²⁶Robert W. Daly, *Aboard the U.S.S. Florida: 1863-1865. The Letters of Paymaster William Frederick Keeler, U.S. Navy to His Wife, Anna* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1968), 71.

victorious Union. Perhaps, as Philip Foner noted, the merchant marine held similar ideas as other commercial elements in Britain which, "...desired a successful session movement in order to gain possession of the Southern market..." and to escape tariff restrictions.²⁷ Furthermore, a divided American nation could only benefit British merchants by creating a weaker America and thus eliminating commercial competition. Without a doubt, many seasoned sailors recognized these advantages and were probably swayed by economic reasons to support the Confederate effort. Other influential factors, included the emergence of the North as a seapower and its potential threat to Britain's naval supremacy, and the strained Anglo-American relations caused by disputes over neutral trade rights and depredations by British built Confederate cruisers.²⁸ Unfortunately, no one has been able to account for the number of British sailors serving on Confederate vessels of war.

On board the gunboats attached to the Potomac Flotilla, foreign sailors were distributed rather unequally, comprising between fifteen and fifty-five percent of the entire ship's company. This suggests that during the Civil War, the U.S. Navy never attempted to limit the number of foreign-born sailors on warships as they

²⁷Philip S. Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1981), 3.

²⁸Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 299; see also, William M. Fowler, Jr., *Under Two Flags, The American Navy in the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990), 276 and Allan Nevins, ed., *Heard Round the World, the Impact Abroad of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 34-35.

attempted with free blacks and fugitive slaves. For example, the muster roll record of the U.S.S. *Fuchsia* in 1863, reports fifty-five percent of her crew as foreign-born. This marks a striking contrast to crew of the U.S.S. *Wyandank*. Her muster roll records only report about fifteen percent of her crew as foreign-born; only sixteen sailors out of 108 serving on board.²⁹

One striking fact which Lonn pointed out is, that unlike in the Union army, there was no aggregation of one or two nationalities on board any particular naval vessel.³⁰ Likewise, a wide diversity of nationalities were represented on board vessels in the Potomac Flotilla. For example, according to the 1862 muster roll record of the U.S.S. *Pawnee*, in a crew of 153, eleven different nationalities were represented. Thirty foreign-born sailors were quartered elbow to elbow with 103 American sailors.³¹ In addition, Lonn observed that unlike military service, foreign sailors formed an integral part of the entire crew on each vessel. They were not organized into battalions or regiments as the Germans and Irish were in the army. As a result, it is impossible to evaluate the individual contribution of foreign sailors in any single naval engagement. Lonn simply noted that "all

²⁹U.S.S. *Fuchsia* (September, 1863), Muster Rolls, RG 24, NA. U.S.S. *Wyandank* (January, 1863; October, 1863), Muster Rolls, RG 24, NA.

³⁰Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union*, 639.

³¹U.S.S. *Pawnee* (September, 1862), Muster Rolls, RG 24, NA.

which can be said is that foreign sailors contributed proportionally to the work and victories of the navy."³²

Foreign-born sailors filled nearly every rank, rate, and rating in the U.S. Navy. Three of the great naval commanders of the Civil War were directly descended from foreign-born Americans. Vice-Admiral David Glasgow Farragut was born in Minorca to a full-blooded Spaniard. Rear-Admiral John Adolphus Dahlgren was the son of Swiss-born Bernard Dahlgren, who had settled in Philadelphia. Similarly, Rear-Admiral Samuel F. DuPont, was of French extraction.

At the level of commissioned ranks were also personnel of foreign extraction or foreign-born; but, only a few. According to Lonn's study, there was only one foreign-born commander, Aloysius Dornin (commander of the U.S.S. *San Jacinto*), and the rank of captain was held by no one of foreign birth. In addition, among the 331 lieutenants in 1861, only three were born under another flag. At the level of master or acting master, in 1864, only about seven percent or thirty-four in a total of 510 were foreign-born.³³

Through the lower ranks and rates, there appeared a much greater proportion of foreign-born sailors in the U.S. Navy. In the Potomac Flotilla alone, foreign-born sailors comprised between thirty-two and sixty-seven percent of the ships' petty officers and between twenty-eight and fifty-four percent of the enlisted men

³²Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union*, 640.

³³Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union*, 629-633.

(table 4.2). Within each rank, the ratings were distributed quite randomly among each ship, and not aggregated by ethnicity.³⁴

Table 4.2: Comparison of Rank within the Potomac Flotilla

Nationality	Rank		Total N (%)
	Petty Officers	Seamen	
American			
count	114	799	913
row%	12.5	87.5	(66.5)
Col.%	63.7	66.9	
Foreign			
count	65	395	460
row%	14.1	85.9	(33.5)
col.%	36.3	33.1	

Sources: Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

Note: Total N = 1,373. The term "Seamen", refers to those rates held by enlisted, non-commissioned personnel.

Lonn was unable to examine the personnel on each of the warships in her study; but, fortunately many of the muster rolls belonging to the Potomac Flotilla have survived from the war years, 1861 through 1865. In the sample of muster rolls collected, the U.S.S *Jacob Bell*, is represented in various months, from 1862 through 1865. She was typical of the fourth-rate gunboats attached to the Potomac Flotilla. Her company was usually comprised of forty-six to forty-eight enlisted men and eight commissioned officers. In 1862

³⁴In the Potomac Flotilla, one exception was discovered: only foreign-born sailors held the rate of captain of the forecandle; however, it was not dominated by any one nationality, but held by a Dane, an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Prussian. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

not one of the ship's foreign-born sailors occupied a rate higher than seamen; but, in 1863, five of the six petty officers were listed as foreign-born. On this particular vessel, the number of American sailors dominated by three to one.³⁵

By mid year, 1863, foreign-born sailors begin to dominate U.S. Navy vessels. For example, on July 20, 1863, William F. Keeler, paymaster on board the U.S.S. *Florida*, described his new crew as:

... a motley collection for a crew-from all parts of the world- England, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Austria, Poland, Norway, Sweden, have representatives on board. Besides these we have a Lascar, a Mexican, Sardinian, Italians, one from Madeira, one from Manilla, another, from Peru &c. Almost all the different trades & occupations are here...³⁶

From Keeler's description of his crew, it is also obvious, that as the U.S. Navy experienced greater shortages in manpower, foreigners were recruited whether or not they had prior seafaring experience. In 1864, Keeler remarked to his wife, Anna, that of the foreign crew members, almost every trade and occupation was represented.³⁷ Among the foreign-born sailors constituting the Potomac Flotilla, this was equally the case. From 157 foreign-born recruits, twenty-six

³⁵U.S.S. *Jacob Bell* (October, 1862; January, 1863; March, 1863; March, 1864; March, 1865), Muster Rolls, RG 24, NA.

³⁶Daly, *Florida*, 70-71.

³⁷Daly, *Florida*, 70.

percent (forty-one) were unskilled laborers, while only twenty-one percent (thirty-three) had actually held a maritime related job.³⁸

The decline of experienced foreign sailors presented naval vessels with discipline problems, not otherwise common. Frederick Olmstead, surgeon on board the *Ocean Queen*, remarked that the Portuguese sailors were "half mutinous, superstitious," and beastly.³⁹ From Keeler's description of his crew, there is also a note of discontent for some of his foreign shipmates. Although Keeler noted that the character and disposition of the men varied; he was especially critical when he noted:

many of those who were shipped as landsman are hard cases, deserters from the army and it is only the strictest discipline that keeps them in subjection.⁴⁰

The physical characteristics of a typical foreign-born sailor assigned to the Potomac Flotilla met one or more of the following criteria: he enlisted at the age of twenty or twenty-one; rather

³⁸Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

³⁹Frederick Law Olmstead, *Hospital Transports* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863), 32-33.

⁴⁰Daly, *Florida*, 71. Keeler's dislike for the character of transferees from the military may not have been unfounded. For example, Corporal Charles R. Walsh, who was under arrest for drunkenness and attempting to kill Lieutenant William E. Hapeman, was given the alternative to take service on a gunboat, or stand a court martial. Walsh chose the former and was discharged to enter naval service (Avery, *Fourth Illinois*, 32). Even Welles penned to Wilkes, that men received from the Army were generally "not of very good character and of little benefit to the service..." Welles to Wilkes, 31 July 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, VII, 606.

short, 5'5" to 5'8" tall; blue eyes; brown hair and fair skinned.⁴¹

Compared to his American shipmates, who were of equal age; about as tall; same eye color; darker hair (brown - dark); slightly darker complexion.

About their background, certain generalized conclusions can be drawn: both the American and foreign-born sailor claimed residency in a northern city (New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, or Maryland-a border state); seventy percent of the sailors were from urban areas (populations of 15,000 or more); prior to enlisting, they were employed as skilled laborers (28.1 percent), in maritime related jobs (27.6 percent), or, as unskilled laborers (24.3 percent). They enlisted in the navy for a term of three years, and probably began their naval career as a landsman.⁴²

One of the more interesting customs which originated in Europe and appeared on the muster rolls was that of tattooing. Originally tattooing was a means of identification- the sailors "dog tag". Under the "remarks" column in the muster rolls, foreign and American sailors both, were further identified by their tattoos. Although only a small number were accounted for, most of the tattoos were the

⁴¹Stephen Blanding recalled that while on board the U.S.S. *Louisiana*, the ship's company consisted of 100 men "...many of them under twenty." Stephen Blanding, *Recollections of a Sailor Boy, or, The Cruise of the Gunboat Louisiana* (Providence: B.A. Johnson and Company, 1886), 211-212.

⁴²For urban cities, the greatest percent of American enlistees were born in New York City (17), Baltimore (14.6), and Philadelphia (12.1); of foreign-born enlistees, Dublin (10.5), Liverpoole (6.0), and London (7.5). Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

sailor's initials which appeared on their right forearm. More elaborate tattooing also appeared in form of a crucifix, ships, and eagles (etc.).⁴³

What had induced these men, and others to enlist? Possibly the fact, that the U.S. Navy offered foreign sailors the same benefits and justice afforded to American or naturalized citizens. There is no indication that any official policy was adopted to segregate foreigners from their American shipmates. Lonn's implication that foreign-born sailors were denied promotion and relegated to serve in various grades, conflicts with evidence presented in the Potomac Flotilla's muster rolls.⁴⁴ Clearly, foreign sailors were promoted through the various rates and ratings in reward for their service.

While foreign-born sailors were an important component of the Potomac Flotilla, black sailors also played a crucial role. During the antebellum period the merchant marine offered important employment opportunities to free blacks. Although competition with foreign sailors and heightened racial consciousness had eroded the black mariner's prospects, seafaring remained economically important to blacks. Black sailors continued to find congenial situations in predominantly white crews; although, according to

⁴³For more information on the practice of tattooing, refer to Levend P. Lovette, *Naval Customs Traditions and Usage* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1959), 232-233. The Navy also identified seamen by distinguishing characteristics such as scars and birthmarks. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

⁴⁴Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union*, 629-635.

Jeffrey Bolster, "the black sailor was "increasingly relegated to the galley or steward's department."⁴⁵ To what degree free blacks attempted to remain in the merchant marine, instead of enlisting in the navy, is undeterminable.

At the turn of the century, there were few restrictions in the U.S. Navy, except that the number of blacks could not exceed five percent of the total weekly or monthly enlistment.⁴⁶ The onset of civil war, however, brought drastic changes in the opportunities open to black sailors. Naval authorities were compelled by a manpower shortage to soften their position on enlisting blacks and "to approach them with greater equality with the white sailor."⁴⁷ This did not mean that the navy adopted a policy of racial equality; but, it did recognize this invaluable source of manpower.

From the beginning of war, the "five percent policy" was dropped and free blacks were recruited through regular channels. Their ratings, however, were restricted. In the past, historians have

⁴⁵Bolster, "To Feel Like A Man," 1199. Martha Putney noted that the coming of the American Civil War apparently coincided with the proportional decrease in the number of black seamen in the American merchant fleet. Martha S. Putney, "Black Merchant Seamen of Newport, 1803-1865: A Case Study in Foreign Commerce," *The Journal of Negro History* 57 (April 1972), 156-168.

⁴⁶According to the muster rolls, eighteen black sailors had enlisted in the United States Navy in 1860. These statistics are not adequate to test Harold Langley's conclusion that the presence of black seamen in the U.S. Navy was fairly common by 1860. Harold D. Langley, "The Negro in the Navy and Merchant Service-1789-1860," *The Journal of Negro History* 52 (October 1967), 286.

⁴⁷Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 17.

accepted that blacks could only be promoted to rank of seaman, and in no way could he reach a petty officers rank.⁴⁸ This restriction, however, applied only to "contraband" blacks, not to free blacks. Evidence drawn from the Potomac Flotilla's muster rolls suggested that like foreigner-born crew members, black sailors often made up for the lack of experienced white enlistees. As a result, in the Potomac Flotilla, free black sailors are found in nearly every rate short of commissioned officer.

The existing interpretation of black participation in the U.S. Navy is flawed in two major ways. First, there was no attempt to distinguish between free blacks and fugitive slaves or contrabands.⁴⁹ This underestimated the achievement of black sailors by imposing limits placed on contrabands, to free blacks. Second, there has only been one attempt to determine the approximate number of black enlistees. The existing figure was placed at one-quarter of the total;

⁴⁸Herbert Aptheker, "The Negro in the Union Navy," *Journal of Negro History* 32 (April 1947), 183, Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1953), 230, and, Joe H. Mays, *Black Americans and Their Contributions Toward Union Victory in the American Civil War, 1861-1865* (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 62.

⁴⁹The term "contraband" was loosely used to identify all fugitive slaves. For further discussion refer to Hondon B. Hargrove, *Black Union Soldiers in the Civil War* (New York: McFarland and Company, Inc., Pub., 1916), 9-16; also see: Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America During the Great Rebellion, 1860-1865* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1972), enl, published in 1865, 195-260.

but, historian David Valuska has convincingly argued a more conservative eight percent.⁵⁰

In the information provided by the muster rolls, contrabands were distinguished from free-blacks in two ways. First, in the "remarks" column of the muster rolls themselves, the term contraband may appear; second, in the data collected, blacks enlisted in southern slave territories were coded or counted, as contraband. This was not an entirely precise method of distinction; however, by making this distinction whenever possible, at least the contributions of black seamen can be analyzed within a less restrictive role. Therefore, in the data examined, the term contraband is used only in very specific circumstances and the term "black", is used generically except where noted.

In the Potomac Flotilla's muster rolls, black crew members were found in nearly every rate and rating, including those of petty officer.⁵¹ Experienced black sailors were promoted according to the same criterion afforded to their white shipmates. This does not suggest though, that the navy actually encouraged the promotion of black sailors; but, it does suggest that at least some squadron commanders were more concerned with running a tight ship, than

⁵⁰Ibid., 120-124.

⁵¹The number of black petty officers was extremely small, only fifteen, or 4.4 percent of the total black enlistments from 1861-1865; however, in 1864, at the height of manpower shortages, eight black seamen served at petty officer ratings in Potomac Flotilla. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

the skin color of their crew. It would require further study into a larger sample, to determine an approximate number of blacks who served as petty officers during the Civil War. This would provide some insight into how much mobility the U.S. Navy offered experienced black sailors.

The "one-quarter" theory, argued by Herbert Aptheker, was based on a letter written by Secretary of the Navy, John D. Long, in 1902. Long referred to a report furnished by the Superintendent of the Naval War Records Office. In his report, the Superintendent admitted that there were no specific figures available and that in the absence of specific data, the proportion of black crews was only suggested in reports filed by several vessels. Aptheker conducted a rough check on the muster rolls of three "arbitrarily selected" vessels, and confirmed the Superintendent's estimate of about "one-fourth of the total number..."⁵² Valuska admitted, that no precise figures of black naval personnel were available; but, he was able to produce a more accurate representation by data obtained in *Rendezvous Reports*, and *Annual Reports of the Navy*. He identified 9,596 as black sailors, from 117,580 enlistments; thus, bringing the figure closer to eight percent than to twenty-five percent of the total personnel (table 4.3).⁵³

⁵²Herbert Aptheker, "Union Navy," 169-200.

⁵³Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 126.

Table 4.3: Source of Black Enlistments in the U.S. Navy

Area	Year of Enlistment					Total N (%)
	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	
Slave States	306	395	1379	2696	163	4939 (51.5)
Free States	515	644	1202	1056	159	3576 (37.3)
Foreign Areas	102	128	167	636	48	1081 (11.2)
Col. Total	923	1167	2748	4388	370	9,596
% of Total Force	(4.9)	(5.9)	(13.5)	(9.8)	(5.4)	

Source: All information in this table came from Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 125.

Note: Percentages in parenthesis are for the total number of enlistments in the navy.

Valuska's "eight percent" figure was not confirmed in the sample taken from the Potomac Flotilla's muster rolls. From a sample of eleven vessels (1,510 crew men) black sailors comprised almost twenty-three percent (344) of the total personnel (table 4.4).⁵⁴ Two factors may account for this discrepancy. First, the sample size may be too small since it only represents 3.6 percent of the total personnel. Second, the higher percentage of black sailors assigned to the Potomac Flotilla may reflect the greater availability of free black and contraband persons within the proximity of the Flotilla's operations. The latter explanation appeared possible since 24.8 percent of black enlistees were recruited "on board" vessels of the Potomac Flotilla and 53.2 percent were recruited from Maryland and the District of Columbia, both slave states (table 4.5).

⁵⁴Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

Table 4.4: Recruitment of Blacks for the Potomac Flotilla

Race	Year of Enlistment						Total N (%)
	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	
Black							
count	3	11	34	95	195	6	344
row%	.9	3.2	9.9	27.6	56.7	1.7	(22.8)
col.%	5.0	4.2	12.9	28.1	36.9	10.7	
White							
count	57	252	230	243	344	50	1,166
row%	4.9	21.6	19.7	20.8	28.6	4.3	(77.2)
col.%	95.0	95.8	87.1	71.9	63.1	89.3	

Sources: Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

Note: Total N= 1,510 valid cases from which the Total % is based.

Table 4.5: Source of Black Enlistments in the Potomac Flotilla

Area	Year of Enlistment						Total N %
	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865	
Slave States	1 (33.3)	5 (50.0)	26 (89.7)	72 (80.0)	155 (87.6)	4 (66.7)	263 83.5
Free States	2 (66.7)	4 (40.0)	2 (6.9)	15 (16.7)	15 (8.5)	2 (33.3)	40 12.7
Foreign Areas	----	1 (10.0)	1 (3.4)	3 (3.3)	6 (3.4)	----	11 3.5

Sources: Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

Note: Total N= 315; number of missing cases equals 1, at .1 percent of the Total N.

Figures in parenthesis are column percentages for the adjacent number. The term "area" is defined in this table by the recorded "state of birth" and "state of citizenship".

Based on the statistical data acquired from the Potomac Flotilla's muster rolls, the background and physical characteristics of black sailors can be compared to their white shipmates. The similarities are surprising. For both, their median age was 22 years; 5'7" tall. At the time of their enlistment, the black sample population

resided in an urban area of Virginia, Maryland, or the District of Columbia; the white resided in an urban area also, but, largely from New York, Massachusetts, or Pennsylvania. Each began three years naval service as a landsman or ordinary seaman; but, white sailors were afforded better opportunities for advancement. As expected, a major discrepancy existed for prior occupations: the majority of black enlistees held unskilled or farm jobs; white enlistees held maritime related or jobs requiring skilled labor.⁵⁵

As Fort Sumpter fell to Confederate guns, Virginia was swept into the Civil War and a new source of potential manpower came available in escaped slaves. A large number of slaves sought asylum on Union vessels. Many refused to return voluntarily because they feared being murdered.⁵⁶ To return them, would have been "impolitic as well as cruel;" therefore, Welles approved the employment of fugitive slaves for naval storeships.⁵⁷ Union gunboats patrolling the Potomac River were over crowded with

⁵⁵The main purpose of presenting these statistics is to show that reliable statistical data about the black sailor does exist, contrary to what Valuska stated in his dissertation. A more complete examination and comparison of statistics was not possible within the limits of this thesis. Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 172. All statistical data for black and white enlistees were compiled from the Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

⁵⁶Stringham to Welles, 18 July 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VI, 8-9.

⁵⁷Welles to Stringham, 22 July 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VI, 10.

contrabands.⁵⁸ As the shortage of manpower in the U.S. Navy became "acute, the enlistment of contrabands became crucial."⁵⁹

Until the U.S. Navy adopted a policy on employing fugitive slaves, each squadron commander relied on his best judgement and pursued his own policy towards fugitive slaves. Naturally there was some disagreement between naval authorities and opinions varied on just what to do. Some commanders returned the contrabands to their owners. Others like Flag Officer S. H. Stringham, believed that "If the negroes are to be used in this contest, I have no hesitation in saying they should be used to preserve the Government, not to destroy it."⁶⁰

As early as July, Welles was forced to consider the employment of fugitive slaves. He informed Stringham to employ fugitive slaves already on board; but, warned him not to entice slaves from their masters. The situation along the Potomac also warranted Welles to authorize Commander Stephen C. Rowan, captain of the U.S.S. *Pawnee*, to "...as I understand verbally you do, employ the slaves, and those

⁵⁸On August 22, 1861, Commander O.S. Glisson reported having sixteen "negroes" on board the *Mount Vernon*, who were "consuming our provisions and water faster than I think is desirable"; see: Glisson to Stringham, 22 August 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VI, 107.

⁵⁹Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 48.

⁶⁰Stringham to Welles, 18 July 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VI, 8-9.

who are free need not be returned."⁶¹ The fact that Rowan was already employing runaway slaves however, is testimony to the amount of personal judgement exercised by individual commanders.

Welles was hesitant about the employment of contrabands because he recognized that this move could alienate the loyalty of many of the northern states, particularly, pro-slavery factions in the border and mid-west states.⁶² Until a solution could be reached, his squadron commanders were informed to be careful not to receive any contrabands from the state of Maryland, "...or any other state not in rebellion..."⁶³ Welles and the Navy Department struggled for nearly two years to find the best policy which considered both political and military objectives.⁶⁴

From October 1861, Confederate batteries along the Virginia shoreline had kept the Potomac River closed off to commercial traffic.

⁶¹Welles to Rowan, 26 July 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 584. It was nearly one year (June 1862) before Gideon Welles handed down a general order protecting runaway slaves from being returned to their masters. The order stated, that persons enlisted in the navy could not be discharged without the consent of the Department and that "no one should be given up against his wishes;" refer to: Welles to Rowan, 8 June 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VII, 376.

⁶²Dennis D. Nelson, *The Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), 4. See also: Herbert R. Northrup, *Black and Other Minority Participation in the All-Volunteer Navy and Marine Corps*, Studies of Negro Employment, Vol. III (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1979), 9-10.

⁶³Goldsborough to Parker, 6 November 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VI, 409.

⁶⁴Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 47.

As the situation deteriorated the role of the Potomac Flotilla became ever more critical. It was therefore necessary to ensure the vessels were sufficiently manned. Welles was encouraged to reconsider the situation and on September 25, 1861, he officially authorized the employment of contrabands on board ships of war. Commander Thomas T. Craven, commanding the Potomac Flotilla received these instructions:

The Department finds it necessary to adopt a regulation with respect to the large and increasing number of persons of color, commonly known as contraband, now subsisted at the navy yards and on board ships of war. They can neither be expelled from the service to which they have resorted, nor can they be maintained unemployed, and it is not proper that they should be compelled to render necessary and regular services without a stated compensation. You are therefore authorized, when their services can be made useful, to enlist them for the naval service, under the same forms and regulations as apply to other enlistments. They will be allowed however, no higher rating than boys, at a compensation of \$10 per month and one ration a day.⁶⁵

Three months later, on December 19, 1861, Welles approved Dahlgren's request to use contrabands as firemen and coal passers.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Welles to Craven, 25 September 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, IV, 692; Also refer to: Welles to Flag Officers Commanding Blockading Squadrons, 30 April 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VII, 294.

⁶⁶Welles to Dahlgren, *Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers, 1798-1868*, The National Archives, National Archives and Record Service, General Services Administration, Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. 149, Roll 67, vol. 65, p.283, Washington, D.C., 1950.

His decision was reached out of necessity, realizing that the navy could realize some value for its expenditures, and cheap labor. But, necessity was not the only reason, and as Lerone Bennett noted:

It came to some in 1861 and to others in 1863 that the Negro was inextricably involved in the root cause of the war and that the war could not be fought without taking him into consideration; nor and this was most frightening, could the war be ended without coming to grips with the meaning of the Negro and the meaning of America.⁶⁷

In the early months of 1862, as war intensified, the naval authorities struggled to develop a coherent policy for black enlistees. The naval authorities wanted to enlist contrabands, but, not on the same level as whites. By the middle of 1862, the availability of experienced white sailors had declined significantly and forced the U.S. Navy to look for a new source of manpower. On August 5, 1862 Welles ordered Commodore Charles Wilkes, commander of the James River Flotilla, to "fix up the crews with contrabands obtained from Major-General John A. Dix, as there is not an available sailor north."⁶⁸

As the manpower situation became more critical, squadron commanders began filling their crews with contrabands. Flag Officer Louis M. Goldsborough, commanding the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, concentrated on recruiting contrabands during the summer

⁶⁷Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower, A History of Black America* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1969), 167.

⁶⁸Welles to Wilkes, 5 August 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VII, 632.

months. Apparently Goldsborough felt that blacks were more acclimated to the hot and sticky season than were white shipmates. On vessels in the Potomac Flotilla, there did not appear to be any conscious effort to enlist primarily contrabands during the summer season. Between 1862 and 1865, twenty to fifty percent of the black sailors were assigned to the Potomac Flotilla during the Fall and Winter months.⁶⁹

War had inflamed racial tensions and aboard the blockading vessels, and such ill feelings apparently coerced some of the contrabands to desert.⁷⁰ A solution aimed at reducing desertions and attracting re-enlistments was soon reached. Escaped slaves could enter the navy at the lowest enlisting rating and promotion possibilities were limited. However, by September of the same year, Welles informed his squadron commanders that contrabands could be employed in higher ratings, but could only be paid as 1st class boys.⁷¹

⁶⁹Goldsborough to Commanding Officers of Vessels of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 6 May 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VII, 324-325. From the muster rolls selected, 45.2 percent covered the Spring and Summer months while 52.3 percent covered the Fall and Winter months; thus eliminating any problems possibly associated by over sampling one of the seasons. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

⁷⁰Farragut to Welles, 16 July 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, XX, 395-396.

⁷¹Welles to Craven, 25 September 1861, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, IV, 692.

The lower grade and pay encouraged many perspective black recruits to enlist in the army under the additional incentive of bounties. In 1862, the U.S. Navy was only able to recruit 1,167 blacks out of a total force of 19,650 enlisted men. This was an increase of only one percent over the previous year.⁷² As a result, Welles was forced to reconsider the navy's policy in an effort to secure new recruits. In mid December, 1862, changes finally came about. Welles issued a circular to his squadron commanders which authorized the recruitment of contrabands at higher ratings. The circular appears as follows:

Persons known as contrabands will not be shipped or enlisted in the naval service with any higher rating than that of landsman, but if found qualified after being shipped, may be advanced by the commanding officer of the vessel in which they serve to the ratings of seaman, ordinary seaman, fireman, or coal heaver, if their services are needed in such ratings, and will be entitled to the corresponding pay. They will not be transferred from one vessel to another with a higher rating than that of landsman, but if discharged on termination of enlistment, or from a vessel going out of commission, will retain their advanced rating in the discharge.⁷³

The Navy Department adhered to their policy formulated in December of 1862. Between 1862 and 1865, not one contraband enlisted in the Potomac Flotilla achieved the rank of petty officer. It

⁷²Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 56.

⁷³Circular, Welles, 18 December 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, VIII, 309.

was however, a common practice in Maryland and Virginia to use contrabands as pilots to navigate the more difficult inland waters. The practice apparently began to meet the increasing numbers of transport vessels conveying troops and munitions along the Potomac. Since a pilots position was rather technical their pay, blacks included, exceeded that of many commissioned officers.⁷⁴

It is important to note, that pilots for the Potomac Flotilla were not considered permanent appointments. They were only employed by the authority of the Commodore Commanding, and not by the authority of commanding officers of vessels. The commanding officers were not officially authorized to take on board pilots in rivers, although exceptions were made. In 1863, all pilots appointed to serve the Potomac Flotilla were paid \$65 per month plus one ration a day. This situation accounts for the appearance of a pilots' name on the paymaster's books and in the log, but not on the muster roll.⁷⁵

Improved promotion opportunities made the new recruitment policy a success, and during the following three years (1862-1865) black participation would continue to increase. The total number of black enlistments increased from 1,167 in 1862 to 2,478 in 1863. In

⁷⁴On June 10, 1863, Rear-Admiral DuPont, commanding the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, authorized the payment of \$30.00 to \$40.00 per month to contraband pilots (DuPont to Welles, 10 June 1863, *Official Records*, *Navies*, Ser. I, XIV, 251). The pay of white pilots averaged \$250 per month.

⁷⁵Potomac Flotilla, General Instructions to Commanding and Other Officers, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

the Potomac Flotilla a similar increase was witnessed from thirty-four to ninety-five black enlistees, a dramatic thirty-five percent increase.⁷⁶

Some of the credit for increased black enlistments must be attributed to the arrangements made by the Navy Department to fulfill their shortage with soldiers transferred from the army.⁷⁷ In 1863, fifty percent of the soldiers received into the Potomac Flotilla were black. However, as the fervor of the war increased, the rate of attrition began taking its toll on the army's manpower, and in 1864, there was a subsequent, sudden and dramatic decline of black soldiers being transferred into the navy.⁷⁸ A decline to four percent of the number received from the military in the Potomac Flotilla.

While David Valuska has noted that the increasing trend in 1863 reflected the increased utilization of contrabands by the U.S. Navy. The trend was further indicative of the overall emphasis given by the navy to employ contrabands on vessels operating in southern states. In addition, by mid 1863, blacks were being increasingly exploited by substitute brokers. Like their foreign shipmates, ignorance, illiteracy and inferior social standing, made

⁷⁶Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

⁷⁷Dennis Nelson noted that 624 men were transferred into the Navy from all black units of the Union army (Nelson, *Integration of the Negro*, 6).

⁷⁸Valuska noted that northern black participation in the navy diminished somewhat in 1864. He explained the decline, by the increased recruitment of available blacks into the army. Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 85

blacks tempting and easy prey.⁷⁹ Countless numbers were coerced or tricked into naval service, under the false pretenses of huge bounties and high wages. While abuses were common investigations were slowed by corrupt city and government officials.⁸⁰

Contrabands were promoted, but not necessarily with great eagerness or acceptance. While some commanders recognized the need to supplement their diminishing crews, they could not accept the black sailors as an equal. In the Mississippi Squadron, Admiral David D. Porter ordered that blacks must be kept separate from the rest of the crew since they "were not naturally clean in their persons."⁸¹ The black sailors were even exercised separately at the cannons and small arms. On board the gunboat U.S.S. *Silver Lake*, Landsman, Rowland S. True recalled:

Their [blacks'] mess and mess cook was entirely separate from ours. They did all the coal heaving, fired the furnaces and helped the engineers...⁸²

⁷⁹Murdock, *Civil War Draft*, 289.

⁸⁰In the Nation's Capitol, the District of Columbia's jail had been practically turned into a brokers office by its warden, Robert Beale. For more information and details of the subsequent House investigation refer to: U.S. Congress Hearings Supplement, House Committee on D.C., 1865, *Testimony taken before Thomas T. Davis and J.W. Patterson, from the Committee for the District of Columbia, on resolution of inquiry in respect to jail &c.*, HD38-A, p.30; also, Murdock, *Civil War Draft*, 294-298.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Rowland Strafford True, "Life Aboard A Gunboat," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 9 (February 1971), 38.

This idea, that blacks were unclean and must be trained and quartered and messed separately from their white shipmates, demonstrates the extent of prejudice held against free blacks and fugitive slaves by other crewmen and officers. There is no evidence to suggest, that these types prejudice and segregation existed in the Potomac Flotilla; however, this should not be equated with equal treatment. The large percentage of black sailors assigned to the Potomac Flotilla may have worked to their benefit to produce more congenial conditions in comparison to the West Gulf Blockading Squadron.

As expected, there were some exceptions and problems which resulted from employing greater number of fugitive slaves and blacks in general. Rear-Admiral Farragut, commanding the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, had a difficult time recruiting contrabands due to racial tensions on board his ships. On July 16, 1863, Farragut wrote to Welles, and explained the problem as follows:

As to the contrabands, it is very difficult to get them. The men disagree with them so much that we are obliged to be very rigid with the sailors in consequence. The contrabands soon desert because of the ill feeling manifested toward them by the sailors.⁸³

Again, the racial problems Farragut experienced were not apparent or common on board vessels of the Potomac Flotilla. The *Official Records* related no incidents of racially motivated fights,

⁸³Farragut to Welles, 16 July 1863, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, XX, 395-396.

arguments, or other forms of disobedience. In addition, the Flotilla's logbooks have not provided any evidence of racially motivated disputes; nor do the logbooks record a higher percentage of black desertions.⁸⁴

By March, 1864, the successful recruitment policy of 1863 had lost its momentum and the U.S. Navy was again experiencing severe manpower shortages. Welles expressed his concern, writing "We are running short of sailors and I have no immediate remedy."⁸⁵ Adding to the problem, Rowan informed Welles that thirty to forty vessels in the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron were awaiting crews. Welles immediately completed a letter to the President, which urged the importance and necessity of transferring 12,000 men into the navy. Undoubtedly angered, Welles met with the President and informed him:

In this whole matter of procuring seamen for the Navy there has been a sorry display of the prejudices of some of the military authorities. Halleck appears to dislike the Navy more than he loves his country.⁸⁶

The shortage was further accentuated by the increasing number of sailors whose enlistments were expiring. In March,

⁸⁴Naturally, not every logbook was examined; however, a random selection was taken from the U.S.S. *Fuchsia* (December, 1862; January, April, July, November, and, December, 1863; January and February, 1864) and U.S.S. *Wyandank* (May, June, July, August, October, and, December 1864; January and March 1865).

⁸⁵Beale, *Welles*, 545.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 546-547.

Rowan informed Welles that the times of the men were running out and that there were no re-enlistments.⁸⁷ Among the personnel of the Potomac Flotilla, the enlistments of 413 sailors (27.6 percent of 1495 crew members sampled from ten vessels) were due to expire in 1864. The largest number of sailors being discharged in June (80 - 18.0 percent) and July (83 - 18.7 percent).⁸⁸ In order to replenish deleting crews, naval commanders offered inducements to re-enlist. In addition, sailors charged with repeated offenses were given the option of confinement, or, a return to duty on conditions of re-enlisting for at least one year.⁸⁹

By late summer, 1864, the tide had changed, Mobile Bay and Atlanta were in Union hands, and as a result of increased activity by the U.S. Navy, recruiting agents were able to enter into more southern states to fill their quotas. The occupation of the southern territory is reflected in a dramatic increase in black enlistments from the border and southern states. Additional state and county bounties and transfers of men from the army, were also helping to intensify the recruitment of blacks.

⁸⁷Ibid., 545-546.

⁸⁸Black seamen comprised sixty-one (14.8 percent) of the discharges in 1864. Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

⁸⁹Caleb Dulaney, a black landsman on board the U.S.S. *Wyandank*, was confined in double irons and turned over to the Navy Yard on January 30, 1864, because of a dispute with another shipmate, involving a pistol. Dulaney was returned to duty on February 26, 1864, on the condition of re-enlisting for one year. Logbook, U.S.S. *Wyandank*, 1 December 1862-16 March 1864, RG 24, NA; see also: Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1861, RG 24, NA.

A similar trend was experienced in the Potomac Flotilla. The black enlistment increased from ninety-five in 1863 to 194 in 1864. One-quarter of the black recruits were enlisted and received on board vessels attached to the Potomac Flotilla. This dramatic increase was due to General U.S. Grant's campaign in eastern Virginia. In the sample, fifty-four blacks (27.8 percent of the black personnel) were recruited and received on board the Potomac Flotilla's vessels (many of these recruits were probably considered contrabands).⁹⁰

As the war came to an end the navy's manpower needs became less critical, resulting in a decline among American (white and black) enlistments in 1865. In addition, it appears as though the Navy Department's inducements to re-enlist were unsuccessful. Between January and June 1865, the percent of blacks in the Potomac Flotilla dropped drastically from thirty-seven to eleven percent of the total personnel. Throughout the navy, the black enlistment declined from a previous 9.8 percent to only 5.4 percent of the total force.⁹¹ An even more dramatic decrease was expected for May, when the squadrons in home waters were reduced by half.

⁹⁰The Confederate army took drastic steps to prevent slaves from escaping to Union lines. In 1864, the picket lines on the York River were doubled; but, on June 2, 1864, the U.S.S. *Commodore Read* took on board 116 refugees, while patrolling in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, in the Rappahannock River, Virginia. Refer to : *Richmond Enquirer*, 9 February 1864 and Parker to Welles, 2 June, 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA; see also: Muster Rolls of the Potomac Flotilla, 1860-1865, RG 24, NA.

⁹¹Valuska, *Negro in the Union Navy*, 125.

As the number of black sailors declined, the number of foreign-born sailors increased from about one-quarter to one-half of the total enlistments. In addition, according to Valuska's study, in 1865 foreign blacks then comprised fifteen percent of the total black enlistment. With war coming to an end and a victorious Union, the U.S. Navy was now one of the most formidable navies in the world. Thus, foreign sailors soon discovered awaiting opportunities as American naval veterans returned home.

The question of securing sailors to man the Potomac Flotilla was just as critical as the problem of securing a sufficient gunboat force to patrol the Potomac. The expansion of experienced personnel was not nearly as rapid as that in vessels. Despite the navy's use of foreign and black sailors, the demand for trained and experienced sailors was greatly in excess of supply. Non-technical positions were quickly filled by recruits with no seafaring experience, from all types of occupations. In order to continue to attract new recruits, it was imperative for the navy to adopt and enforce only one administrative policy - the same for white, foreign, and black sailors. In addition, as Harold Langley concluded, the navy's growing dependence on foreigners and blacks during the Civil War, provided naval reformers with "...a constant excuse to discuss the steps that

should be taken to make service in the United States Navy attractive to Americans."⁹²

All evidence suggests that foreign and black sailors were afforded the same legal rights as their white shipmates. Semi-officially, certain naval commanders imposed restrictions on foreign and black sailors which exposed their own prejudices and fears. In the ranks of the Potomac Flotilla, this habit appears to be at most, an exception, and definitely not the rule. Unfortunately, the opportunities which were availed to black sailors during the Civil War did not carry over into the post war era. The depressed American merchant marine forced seaman of all color and creed to seek better opportunities on land. Others, undoubtedly sought opportunities in the whaling fleets, but, there is no evidence to suggest to what degree black seaman participated in this industry.

⁹²Harold D. Langley, *Social Reform in the United States Navy, 1798-1862* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 92-96.

COMPLETE DESCRIPTIVE LIST OR MUSTER ROLL of the Crew of the U. S. S. *Albatross*

on the 21st day of September, 1864

Plummer Kings

NOTE.—Care must be taken that every person is properly rated, and that every rating is made in accordance with the regulations for rating.

No.	NAME	RANK	DATE OF ENLISTMENT		PLACE OF BIRTH	EDUCATION	REMARKS	AGE		HEIGHT		WEIGHT		COMPLEXION	EYES	HAIR	TENDENCY	SCARS
			Year	Month				Year	Month	Feet	Inches	Pounds	Stones					
1	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
2	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
3	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
4	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
5	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
6	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
7	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
8	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
9	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
10	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
11	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
12	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
13	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
14	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
15	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
16	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
17	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
18	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
19	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
20	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
21	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
22	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
23	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
24	William Williams	Seaman	1862	May	11	Chen	Chinese	21	5	5	150	14	150	Dark	Black	Black	None	None
25	William Williams	Seaman																

Figure 4.1: Muster Roll of the U.S.S. *Tulip*, 30 September 1863, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[illegible]

Figure 4.1 - *Continued*: Muster Roll of the U.S.S. *Tulip*, 30 September 1863, RG 24, NA.

Conclusion

The Potomac River quickly became a continuous theater of naval actions during the Civil War. Struggle to control the Potomac River had both military and political consequences; afterall, the Potomac was a natural boundary line, separating the social, political and economic aspects the region. In addition, the river was a natural link or avenue, which served both Union military and naval operations throughout tidewater Maryland and Virginia. Therefore, naval command and domination of the river was essential to the Union war effort.

The Potomac Flotilla essentially provided the tactical and logistical advantages necessary to sustain the Union war effort in northeastern Virginia. Naval command of the Potomac River provided Union military campaigns with an unhampered flow of men, supplies and munitions. This permitted northern armies to command a greater range of operations with assured mobility and concentration.

It ultimately became the responsibility of the Potomac Flotilla to hold the right flank of the Potomac Line. In November 1861, operations in this vicinity kept the plans for a Confederate invasion of southern Maryland from ever materializing and consequently, compelled the legislature from passing an act of secession. Along the lower Potomac, the presence of Union gunboats also remained the

symbol of Union power in the face of recent defeat at Bull Run and Ball's Bluff.

In Spring, 1863, not long after the defeat of a Union offensive at Fredericksburg, several gunboats attached to the Potomac Flotilla prevented about 40,000 Confederate troops (under the command of Longstreet) from threatening the Union's position at Suffolk. Co-operative maneuvers in the Nanesmond River broke the backbone of the Confederate offensive and overturned Longstreet's plans - he was notably embarrassed.

During Grant's brutish push towards Richmond in 1864, the Potomac Flotilla demonstrated its superiority over the inland waterways, extending from the Potomac to the York-Pamunkey and Back Rivers. The ability to quickly relocate and establish bases of operations closer to Union lines, placed the Confederate occupying forces a decisive disadvantage.

Moreover, blockading activities hampered the trade of recruits, foodstuffs, munitions, and medicines to the southern armies occupying the coastal areas of Virginia. In time, the constant strain for want of supplies severely encumbered southern opposition and dissolved southern morale and willpower. For example, within one year, blockading activities the Confederate capital and occupying armies in the Northern Neck of Virginia were nearly destitute of even basic medical supplies (*eg.*, laudanum, opium, salt, etc...).

In order to maintain the blockade of almost 1,000 miles of coastline, stretching from the Susquehanna River, Maryland to Back

River, Virginia, the Potomac Flotilla relegated its operations to fourth-rate, steam propelled gunboats. Vessels such as the Flotilla's U.S.S. *Tulip*, became the "backbone" of almost all inland naval and military operations. Fourth-raters imparted the muscle and agility to perform with potency inside southern occupied territory. The in-depth study of the *Tulip's* history and construction highlights the need for adequate naval repair and construction facilities to service these vessels.

In addition to mechanical problems, the Potomac Flotilla also suffered from an urgent and ongoing need to maintain its crews with experienced seamen. The Flotilla's proximity to slave states enabled its commanders to utilize an alternative source of manpower in fugitive slaves (contrabands) and freed blacks. The quantitative analysis of the Flotilla's muster rolls indicates that by 1864, blacks comprised nearly thirty-seven percent of the total personnel. In striking contrast to existing interpretations, black seamen held not only lower rank and ratings, but technical positions and petty officer ratings. The miscegenation of black, white, and foreign shipmates apparently compensated well for vacancies and shortages. In spite of the operational difficulties which plagued some squadrons, the Potomac Flotilla provided opportunity for all enlistees and evidence suggests that there was never anything but at least a congenial situation on board.

The Potomac Flotilla was an integral link to the success of Union naval and military operations in northeastern Virginia. Naval

operations crippled the southern war effort in Virginia by denying the Army of Northern Virginia the use of Virginia's and Maryland's inland waterways, even for marginal support of their operations. As a microcosm of the U.S. Naval blockading forces, this study of the Potomac Flotilla gives a new perspective on measures taken to alleviate its operational problems as well as difficulties caused by the acute shortages of skilled labor and experienced seamen.

Appendix A: Circular to Naval Inspectors

Important Circular From the Navy Department

The Navy Department has issued the following circular to each of its inspectors of

Sir:- The great damage which has been sustained by the Navy Department from the poor materials and bad workmanship by some of the contractors in the manufacture of its steam machinery, requires that every possible precaution and vigilance on the part of its inspectors should be exercised to prevent their occurrence in the future.

The loss to the Government from badly-built machinery is not to be measured by the money cost thus saved to the contractor. It is immeasurably greater; the giving way of a part in which but a few dollars could be retrenched by the substitution of inferior materials, or the employment of unskillful labor may involve the loss of the use of a steamer at a time when her services may be worth more than her whole commercial value; in fact, at a time when an event of national importance, not to be measured by money at all, may depend on her efficiency. Your patriotism, as well as your honor, honest, and professional reputation, is involved in the performance of your duty with inflexible fidelity to the Government, and you are expected to give your whole time and your whole mind to the important work which the department has committed to your supervision. For any omission or defects arising from neglect of this you will be considered responsible; and any presents made by contractors to any person in the employment of the department will be viewed by it with strong disapprobation, and the reception of such present will be sufficient cause for removal.

Your attention is particularly called to the following points:-

1st. That the boiler plate is of the first quality, highly malleable, ductile and tough, capable of being tightly compressed by the rivets, and of being calked in a durable manner. It is impossible to make a tight boiler of inferior iron. The rivets should be of the best quality of iron that it is possible to make, and thoroughly worked. The double-riveted seams are to be made true and fair, and calked on both sides. There are but few places where this cannot be done, whereas it is believed there are many cases where it is not done. The rivets are to be staggered, and not placed too far apart. It should be remembered that the principal object of double-riveting in rectangular boilers is tightness, not strength. Neither acids nor "quakers" to be allowed in making the seams.

2nd. The tube plates are to be drilled, not punched, and to the precise diameter of the tube, so that the latter fits the hole absolutely tight before being expanded. Immense loss has been inflicted on the department by some contractors making the tube holes from one thirty-second to two thirty seconds of an inch too large, in order to secure a cheap and easy fit of the tube; and the latter, being of too poor material to endure the expansion required to fill a hole so much too large, splits at the ends and leaks ever afterwards. This leakage, even at only a few joints, with iron vertical water tubes, soon destroys all the tubes in the box; the lye formed by the water with the coal ashes and soot on the lower tube plate spreading over the entire bottom of the box and rapidly corroding out the lower part of every tube in it. You will be vigilant to see that the diameters of the tube holes are accurate. Nothing is so destructive to a boiler as leaks, and no pains or cost should be spared to prevent them. The socket bolts of the water bottoms

should all have heads on the inside, and on the outside large washers and nuts.

3rd. As the boilers are intended for carrying high steam, and are braced for the same, you will be particular to secure in the crow-feet, halfmoons, joints, angle and T-iron, pins, &c., and in the riveting by which the braces are attached to the boiler shell, the same strength which the specifications require in the braces. It is obviously useless to make a boiler for high steam and attach its heavy bracing to the shell by a system of riveting with strength inferior to that of the braces.

4th. The quality of the iron for its cylinder and its valve should receive your most anxious scrutiny. It should be of the best scrap, carefully selected, tough, with a fine compact grain, and so hard that the tool can barely work it. The cylinder and its valve must be cast at different times and of different metals. With steam of high pressure and superheated, the greatest care is required in securing the proper quality of metal and workmanship for horizontal cylinders with slide valves. The boring of the cylinder and the facing of the valve and its seat should be perfect.

5th. The main and crank-pin journals must be turned perfectly true from end to end, and highly polished. They must also be mathematically in line and without a flaw.

6th. The brasses for these journals must be the composition required in the specifications, and you will personally be present and see the metals weighed out in the proper proportions, mixed and poured. They are to be first bored and channeled, and then scraped to their journals. They are to have sufficient end play to allow for expansion when heated. They are to be closely examined, and if not of uniform texture, rejected. You will personally see to the securing of the thrust pillowblock, and to the quality and workmanship of its brasses. You will personally superintend the "lining" of the engine. You will give particular attention to the tightness of the joints, especially of the vacuum joints, and to the packing of the engine. The lignum-vite in the pump packings and in the stern bushings is to be thoroughly soaked before being bored to the required diameter.

GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

SOURCE: *Scientific American*,
new series, 20 (March 19, 1864):
197.

Appendix B: Officers and Crew of the U.S.S. Tulip

Name	Rate	Status	Remarks
Smith, William H.	Act'g Master Comdg.	Missing	
Wagstaff, R. M.	Act'g Ensign & Executive Officer	Saved	Contusion to right foot
Raffenburg, John	Masters Mate	Missing	
Davis, John	Masters Mate	Saved	Uninjured
Reynolds, Julian L.	Masters Mate	Saved	Oblique fracture to left femur
Hammond, John	Masters Mate	Missing	
Parks, George H.	3rd Asst. Engineer	Missing	
Gordon, John	3rd Asst. Engineer	Missing	
Teal, Benjamin T.	3rd Asst. Engineer	Saved	Contusion to right temple and face
Henning, Charles	Paymaster's Steward	Missing	
McCormick, William	Surgeon's Steward	Missing	
Jackson, James	Pilot	Missing	
Roberts, John	Boatswain's Mate	Missing	
Allison, John	2nd Class Fireman	Missing	
Nolan, John	2nd Class Fireman	Missing	
Porter, James	2nd Class Fireman	Saved	Since dead
Campbell, James	2nd Class Fireman	Missing	
Simmonson, Wm. H.	2nd Class Fireman	Missing	
Pollock, Benjamin	2nd Class Fireman	Missing	
Carroll, Patrick	2nd Class Fireman	Saved	Hospital at Point Lookout
Johnston, Henry	Ship's Cook	Missing	
Holland, Michael	Wardroom Cook	Saved	Since dead
Carter, Thomas	Wardroom Steward	Missing	
Ruoff, Charles	Captain's Steward	Missing	
Johnson, Peter	Seamen	Missing	
Beatyin, Martin	Ordinary Seamen	Missing	
Quinlan, Patrick	Ordinary Seamen	Missing	
Robinson, James	Coal Heaver	Missing	
Niles, George H.	Coal Heaver	Missing	
Carroll, James	Coal Heaver	Missing	
Collay, John	Coal Heaver	Missing	
Holland, Jeremiah	Coal Heaver	Saved	
O'Connell, William	Landsman	Missing	
Wilson, George	Landsman	Missing	
Bracken, James	Landsman	Missing	
Watson, Thomas	Landsman	Missing	
Conover, Richard	Landsman	Missing	
Leary, James	Landsman	Missing	
Pieyser, David	Landsman	Missing	
Gaskins, Nelson	Landsman	Saved	Compound fracture to right femur, extending into the knee joint and dislocation

Appendix B - Continued:

			of the same
Burk, Beverly	Landsman	Missing	
Jefferson, Elizah	Landsman	Missing	
Warren, Robert	Landsman	Missing	
Brown, Benjamin	Landsman	Missing	
Burrell, Fleet	Landsman	Saved	Scald on left arm and hand
Mason, Waverly	Landsman	Missing	
Green, Frank	Landsman	Missing	
Fletcher, William	Landsman	Missing	
Sterns, Charles	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Fitzhugh, Battle	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Brooks, Noah	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Bulger, James	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Diggs, John	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Snowden, Frank	1st Class Boy	Saved	Traverse fracture of left femur
Talbot, Jules	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Lindsay, William	1st Class Boy	Missing	
Smith, ?	----	----	Just discharged from <i>Yankee</i>
Ireland, George	Boy, not enlisted	Missing	Comes from Annapolis, Maryland

Source: "List of Officers and Crew Belonging to and on Board the U.S.S. Tulip at the Time of her Loss, November 11, 1864, so far as can be ascertained from the Paymaster Carpenter's Books," Parker to Welles, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

Appendix C: List of Officers and Enlisted Men Lost in the
U.S.S. *Tulip* Disaster, November 11, 1864

Name	Rate	Age	Born	Injury	Died/Remarks
Smith, William	Act'g Master Mate	--	----	Scald	11/11/64
Raffenburg, John	Act'g Master Mate	--	----	Scald	11/11/64
Hammond, John	"	--	----	"	"
Parks, George W.	3rd Asst. Engineer	--	----	"	"
Gordon, John	3rd Asst. Engineer	--	----	"	"
Hemming, Charles	Paymaster's Steward	--	----	"	"
McCormick, William	Surgeon's Steward	--	----	"	"
Jackson, James	Pilot	--	----	"	"
Roberts, John	Boatswain's Mate	45	Michigan	"	"
Allison, John	2nd Class Fireman	29	England	"	"
Nolan, John	2nd Class Fireman	23	Ireland	"	"
Porter, James	"	31	Scotland	"	11/12/64
Campbell, James	"	22	Nova Scotia	"	11/11/64
Simmonson, W.H.	"	23	New York	"	11/11/64
Pollock, Benjamin	"	--	Ireland	"	"
Johnston, Patrick H.	Ship's Cook	--	----	"	"
Holland, Michael	Wardroom Cook	20	Mass.	"	11/13/64
Carter, Thomas	Captain's Steward	26	Ireland	"	11/11/64
Ruoff, Charles	Captain's Steward	26	Germany	"	11/11/64
Johnston, Peter	Seaman	24	New Jersey	"	"
Beatzin, Peter	Ordinary Seaman	26	Germany	"	"
Quinlan, Patrick	Ordinary Seaman	16	New York	"	"
Robinson, James	Coal Heaver	21	Maryland	"	"
Niles, George H.	Coal Heaver	--	----	"	"
Carroll, James	"	21	Maryland	"	"
Colley, John	"	21	New York	"	"
Wilson, George	"	25	Maryland	"	"
O'Connell, William	Landsman	26	Ireland	"	"
Bracken, James	Landsman	19	New York	"	"
Watson, Thomas	"	19	Jamaica WI	"	"
Conover, Richard	"	20	New Jersey	"	"
Leary, James	"	25	Ireland	"	"
Peyser, David	"	16	Germany	"	"
Burke, Beverly	"	20	Virginia	"	"
Jefferson, Robert	"	22	Virginia	"	"
Warren, Robert	"	21	"	"	"
Brown, Benjamin	"	19	"	"	"
Mason, Waverly	"	23	"	"	"
Green, Frank	"	17	England	"	"
Fletcher, William	"	20	Virginia	"	"
Diggs, John	"	19	Virginia	"	"
Talbot, Jules	"	--	----	"	"
Sterns, Charles	1st Class Boy	18	Penn.	"	"
Fitzhugh, Battle	"	19	Virginia	"	"

Appendix C - *Continued*:

Brooks, Noah	"	"	20	Virginia	Scald	11/11/64
Bulger, James	"	"	20	Virginia	Scald	" "
Smith, ?	----		--	----	" "	" "
Ireland, George	Boy, not enlisted		--	Maryland	" "	" "
Burrell, Fleet	Landsman		22	Virginia	Survived.	
					Dislocation and	
					contusion.	
					Amputation partial	
					foot. To Norfolk, Va.,	
					and Washington. D.C.	
					Naval Hospitals.	
Watson, James	Landsman	--	29	Virginia	Survived. Contusion	
					to back. To Naval	
					Hospital,	
					Washington, D.C.	
Gaskins, Nelson	Landsman	--	22	Virginia	Survived. To Point	
					Lookout Hospital	
					(U.S. Army).	
Wagstaff, Richard	Act'g Ensign	--	29	----	Survived.	
					Contusion.	
					To Naval Hospital,	
					Washington, D.C.	
Reynolds, Julian	Act'g Master	--	----	----	Survived Contusion.	
	Mate				Scald and fracture,	
					sent to Point	
					Lookout Hospital,	
					via Wyandank.	
Snowden, Frank	1st Class Boy	--	18	Virginia	Survived. Sent to	
					Point Lookout	
					Hospital via	
					Wyandank.	

SOURCE: Parker to Welles, 13 November 1864, *Squadron Letters*, Roll 115, vol. 119, NA.

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