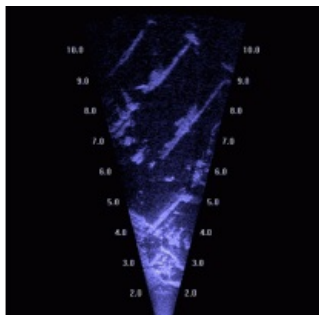


Civil War Wrecks Surrender Their Secrets



A two-day research expedition to survey the condition of two sunken Civil War vessels that have rested on the floor of the James River in Hampton Roads, VA, USA, for nearly 150 years is being undertaken by NOAA and the US Navy. Using sonar technology to acquire data, researchers will create three-dimensional maps of the two shipwrecks, USS *Cumberland* and CSS *Florida*, to analysis on their current condition and better understand the technological innovations of the time.

USS *Cumberland* (Didson survey image with this article) was lost on 8th March 1862, during the Battle of Hampton Roads, where she served in the US Navy's North Atlantic

Blockading Squadron. She sank after being rammed by the Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* (formerly USS *Merrimack*) and went down with more than 121 men.

CSS *Florida* was a Confederate commerce raider which had been captured by the US Navy in Brazil. Towed to United States as a prize despite Brazil's protests, it was lost on 19th November 1864, following a collision with a US Navy troop ferry.

Both vessels are protected by federal law under the Sunken Military Craft Act of 2005, the Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987, and the Territorial Clause of the US Constitution, which gives the US government exclusive rights to its own property.

The last survey of the USS *Cumberland* took place in 2007. The expedition will be the first time the CSS *Florida* will be surveyed by the federal government. In addition to archaeological and historic significance, this project will also develop education and outreach materials to expand public awareness of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, with sesquicentennial commemoration events throughout 2011.

"The remains of the USS *Cumberland* and CSS *Florida*, preserved in the waters of Hampton Roads, remind us of the sacrifices made during the Civil War and give us a unique and rare opportunity to explore a pivotal chapter in our nation's history," said David Alberg, superintendent of NOAA's Monitor National Marine Sanctuary.

"The more we learn about our cultural resources, the more we discover about our nation's history and the people who shaped it," said Rear Admiral Jay DeLoach, NHHHC director. "The survey work on the USS *Cumberland* and the CSS *Florida* will improve our understanding of the vessels themselves, and it will help us gather information on the Civil War and the technological innovations of the time and allow us to bring those stories to the public in a way we have not been able to in the past."

The project will take place aboard a NOAA research vessel from the nearby USS *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary, which was designated to protect the cultural heritage of its namesake, another shipwreck lost in the Civil War.

Artifacts from the USS *Cumberland* and CSS *Florida*, including gun and cannon parts, glassware, and a belt buckle are on permanent exhibit at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum in Norfolk, VA.