Lest We Forget

Volume 6, Issue 3
Fall 2026

A publication of the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp, #443, and dedicated to the memory of those who fought to preserve the Union, 1861-1865

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty



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Trivia #1

The Battle of Antietam on Sept. 17, 1862 remains the bloodiest single day of battle in U.S. History. How many total casualties were there?

A) 18,962
B) 22,726
C) 25,756
D) 28,492

Want the answer? Find the second trivia question.



About this Newsletter

For anyone new to our camp and this newsletter, this camp was first chartered in 1884 as a post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Today, the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 is one of 11 camps in the Department of Illinois for the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). It is the only S.U.V.C.W. camp in southern Illinois. The camp was chartered as part of the S.U.V.C.W. in 1996.

The S.U.V.C.W. is a fraternal organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought and worked to save the Union. In 1881, the G.A.R. formed the S.U.V.C.W. as the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (SV) to carry on its traditions and memory long after the G.A.R. ceased to exist. It became the S.U.V.C.W. in name in 1925 and is the legal successor to the G.A.R., first founded in 1866.

This newsletter is used to help educate readers, as well as continue the tradition of providing camp members, and others who are interested in maintaining our history, news about the S.U.V.C.W., our treasured American history, and what we can all do to help preserve and honor the memories of the Americans who sacrificed to preserve our Union so many years ago. Some of the history of Hecker Post #443 and the G.A.R. is here. Please share this newsletter with anyone who may have an interest. It's free to subscribe and/or send submissions. Just email lestweforget1861@outlook.com. Thank you for your readership of this newsletter and/or your participation in Hecker Camp, and the S.U.V.C.W.

If you are not a member and have an interest and/or a direct connection to the civil war, or know of someone else who may, please consider applying for membership and passing the word along to others. Click here to learn more. As usual, I try to provide a variety of topics and stories in *Lest We Forget*, as well as highlight camp activities and members.



Lest We Forget is a publication of the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). It is the only S.U.V.C.W. Camp south of Springfield, Illinois, covering the "Little Egypt" part of the state.

For more information about the camp and how to become a member, visit our
Website: http://www.heckercamp443.org/
Our Facebook page is here.
For more information or interest in joining, you may also send a message to info@heckercamp443.org.
More about the SUVCW is here: www.suvcw.org.
Camp Commander (CC): Brother Russell Schleicher
Sr. Vice Commander (SVC): Brother John Stanton
Jr. Vice Commander (JVC): Brother Donn Cooks
Secretary, Editor, Webmaster: Brother Gerald Sonnenberg
Treasurer, Patriotic Instructor: Brother Richard Piper
Camp Guide: Brother Justin Ottolini
For submissions or to subscribe to the newsletter, email: lestweforget1861@outlook.com.

On the cover: *Among the battles fought in September during the war, most well known is the Battle of Antietam 164 years ago. In this painting, the 51st Pennsylvania Regiment storms across Burnside's Bridge at the Battle of Antietam, Maryland. This regiment was carrying three flags at the time. (Artwork by Don Troiani)*

The Corner

By Gerald Sonnenberg
Hecker Camp secretary, editor



Hello Brothers,

Camp in Review

July—Camp meeting was held July 1. We had no guests. We then read the financial report and reading of the last meeting's minutes. We then discussed any upcoming events.

Details for the 30th anniversary of the chartering of the Col. Friedrich K. Hecker Camp #443 happening on Aug. 29 were solidified.

We also reported on some completed events:

We marched in the parade June 6 in Murphysboro, Illinois, in honor of the nation's 250th anniversary and the 200th birthday of Gen. John A. Logan. Participating were Brothers Greg Zelinske, Gerald Sonnenberg, Richard Piper, John Stanton, Justin Ottolini and Mike Winkler.

The Koerner House event on June 20 went well. Koerner House staff and volunteers provided several group tours and presentations. Hecker Camp members Jon Stacy, Richard Piper, Greg Zelinske, John Stanton and Gerald Sonnenberg participated. The camp displayed a tent, antiques, memorabilia, equipment and photographs to the dozens in attendance.

While at the Koerner House, we received an invitation to provide and educational display at the St. Clair County Fair Thursday July 30 through Saturday Aug. 1 in the airconditioned expo center. ***See page 8.***

We also presented the colors before the concert in the Shiloh, Illinois park, Wednesday, July 1 before the July meeting. PCC Greg Zelinske and Brother Gerald Sonnenberg performed this duty. We had the assistance of Mr. John Hoffman portraying Col. William Moultrie. He was dressed in a Continental Army officer's uniform and carried the colors for us.

For Patriotic Instruction, Brother Sonnenberg discussed the flag of the United States" in regard to some of its history and meaning.

August—Camp meeting was held Aug. 5. We had two guests. After the financial report and reading of the last meeting's minutes, we discussed any upcoming events and other topics.

We discussed our participation at the St. Clair County Fair Thursday July 30 through Saturday Aug. 1 in the expo center. It was called Fair St. Clair. We are grateful for the opportunity as it seemed a positive experience for the camp with a high traffic rate compared to the size of the crowd. We talked to dozens of individuals, had nine individuals sign up to receive the newsletter and one potential new member.

We discussed new applications to the camp, including one guest. In all there have been several possible new members this year. Some have submitted their applications. Others are considering membership. We appreciate their consideration at joining and hope to welcome them soon.

For Patriotic Instruction, Brother Piper discussed the Union Navy. ***See pages 10-11.***

September—The September Camp meeting was held Aug. 29 at the conclusion of the camp picnic/reunion. We had several guests to include several family members and one former member, as well as our picnic guest speaker.

After the financial report and reading of the last meeting's minutes, we discussed past any upcoming events.

The City of Shiloh will once again have its homecoming in September. Plans were made to support that event over the two days.

We also discussed participating in the O'Fallon, Illinois Veterans Day Parade on Wednesday, Nov. 11.

For Patriotic Instruction, Brother Piper discussed Civil War trivia.

Upcoming Events - For a full list of upcoming events, **see page 9.**

Next scheduled meetings - Our next scheduled meetings are Nov. 4, and Jan. 6 at 7 p.m. at the Shiloh, Illinois Community Center. A Zoom option is usually also available for those who cannot attend in person.

Please keep the newsletter in mind if you have an article or idea to share and if you have attended or participated in any event as a living historian or representative of the Camp. Deadline for the next issue is Dec. 15. Contact Brother Sonnenberg at lestweforget1861@outlook.com or gsonnenberg@hotmail.com.



Farewell to a friend

The following is an official obituary with added information from the editor:

A friend of Hecker Camp, as well as a great, great grandson of Col. Friedrich K. Hecker, for which this camp is named, passed away on Thursday, June 25, 2026.

Lansing Hecker was born May 17, 1949 in St. Louis. He graduated from Ladue High School and the University of Missouri before proudly serving his country in the United States Navy. After completing his military service, he built a successful career in advertising.

Loving son of the late William and Phyllis Hecker (nee Gervig); dearest father of Emily A. Corley and Patrick P. Hecker; dear grandfather of Amelia “Mia”, Amelyn and Aurora “Auri”; beloved brother of Bill (Nancy), Hans (Marilyn), Fred (Marcia) and John (Cheryl) Hecker; a dear uncle, cousin and friend of many.

Lansing served as the Honorary Consul for the Federal Republic of Germany from 2004 until 2017. Lansing was also a founding member of the German American Heritage Society. He served as GAHS President for many years and was dedicated to the preservation of the history and heritage of his German forebears.

In September 2025, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Hecker Camp in Illinois and Grant Camp in Missouri participated with the Hecker family, friends and members of Col. Hecker's hometown in Angelbachtal, Germany to complete a six-year, bi-state project to celebrate the life of Col. Friedrich K. Hecker. The effort concluded with two events. The first event was a ceremony on Sept. 8 in the Summerfield, Illinois cemetery where he is buried. Hecker lived and farmed nearby the small town. The second event was the rededication of the restored Hecker Obelisk in St. Louis, Missouri’s Benton Park. These celebrations were timed to coincide with the tour of a delegation of 30 people from Hecker’s birth town in Angelbachtal, including its current Mayor Frank Werner.

In a letter after Lansing's passing, Mayor Werner said, " It is with great sadness that we received the news of the death of Lansing Hecker...We mourn for Lansing and feel in these difficult hours with you and the whole family Hecker. With him not only his family loses a wonderful person, but also the community of Angelbachtal a sincere supporter of the Hecker partnership...Far beyond his task as honorary consul, it was a personal concern of his heart to keep the connection between his family and our community alive...One has always felt that it was Lansing's deep concern to keep the memory of the great merits of his ancestor Friedrich Hecker alive and to carry on his importance for freedom and democracy on both sides of the Atlantic. The municipality of Angelbachtal will preserve an honorable memory of Lansing Hecker. We will always keep his special merits for the friendship between the Hecker family and our community in grateful memory."

Lansing will be remembered for his generosity, sense of humor and unwavering love for those closest to him.



(left to right) Gerald Sonnenberg, Lansing Hecker, SVC John Stanton, Justin Ottolini and Richard Piper pose in front of the Hecker display at a Sons of the American Revolution event in May 2024. (Courtesy photo)



Doc's Notes:

The U.S. Navy Medical Department during the Civil War

By Dr. Garry "Doc" Ladd
Hecker Camp Past Camp Commander

During the American Civil War (1861–1865), medical challenges affected both the Army and Navy. In a previous article, I pointed out the transformation of medical evacuation of the U.S. Army Medical Department, specifically Dr. Jonathan Letterman's innovations to improve the movement of casualties from battlefield to advanced medical care.

The U.S. Navy Medical Department had its own challenges as the Union Navy rapidly expanded from fewer than 100 ships to more than 600 vessels. This resulted in the demand for qualified medical personnel, improved sanitation and effective treatment of disease.

Navy surgeons and assistant surgeons served aboard warships, hospital ships and naval hospitals, where they treated combat injuries while also combating the far more common threats of infectious disease. Their efforts significantly improved survival rates among sailors and helped establish many practices that influenced modern U.S. Navy military medicine.



The steamboat State of Maine at Alexandria, Virginia, during the American Civil War. Built in New York in 1848, State of Maine was a hospital boat with the United States Sanitary Commission during the Peninsula Campaign in 1862, when this photograph was probably taken. (Source, Wikipedia)

At the beginning of the Civil War, the U.S. Navy Medical Department was relatively small and lacked the resources necessary to support a rapidly growing fleet. Medical officers often worked under difficult conditions with limited supplies, overcrowded ships and inadequate facilities. Despite these challenges, Navy physicians adapted quickly by improving sanitation practices, organizing medical supply systems and expanding the use of naval hospitals. Their work reflected an increasing understanding that preventing disease was just as important as treating injuries.

Disease posed a greater threat to sailors than combat itself, as was also the case for the Army. Conditions aboard ships often included poor ventilation, contaminated drinking water, inadequate nutrition and crowded living quarters, all of which contributed to outbreaks of illnesses such as typhoid fever, dysentery, smallpox and malaria.

Medical officers emphasized cleanliness, quarantine procedures and improved hygiene whenever possible. Although the germ theory of disease had not yet gained widespread acceptance, many Navy surgeons recognized that better sanitation reduced illness and improved the health of crews.

Combat injuries presented another major challenge. Naval battles exposed sailors to cannon fire, exploding shells, burns, fractures and traumatic amputations. Surgeons worked in cramped shipboard operating rooms, frequently performing emergency procedures while battles continued overhead. Anesthesia, particularly chloroform and ether, had become widely accepted by the Civil War and allowed surgeons to perform amputations and other operations with significantly less pain than in previous conflicts.

Although antiseptic techniques were still in their infancy, the use of anesthesia represented a major advancement in military medicine.

The Union Navy also relied on an expanding network of naval hospitals to care for wounded and sick sailors. Facilities in cities such as Philadelphia, New York and Boston treated thousands of patients

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The answer to Trivia #1 is B) 22,726. While D-Day and the Battle of Saint-Mihiel (1918) saw over 2,500 U.S. deaths in a single day, according to the National Park Service, 2,100 Union soldiers and 1,550 Confederate soldiers were killed, with additional thousands wounded or missing. This made Antietam the single bloodiest day in American history, regardless of which side's casualties are counted.

Where does the South's nickname "Dixie" come from? Want the answer? Find the third trivia question.



A photograph of Mound City National Cemetery in Mound City, Illinois. (Photo by Greg and Diane Zelinske)

Lest we forget...

By Gerald Sonnenberg
Hecker Camp Secretary/Editor

I am sometimes asked why I put so much effort into the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). I answer by talking about sacrifice. Not mine, but of my great-great-grandfather's, his three brothers and the hundreds of thousands who fought to save this country and end slavery.

Our Hecker Camp newsletter is called *Lest We Forget* because the phrase basically refers to something that should not be forgotten. It comes from a poem by British writer Rudyard Kipling. It also sounds like a warning of sorts, and it is. "Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it" is a phrase too many choose to forget.

The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 reminded me of a way to explain why I'm a member. While most Americans remember where they were that day, I have heard much to do regarding one-third of Americans, (100,000,000 people) not being born when the attacks took the lives of nearly 3,000 innocent victims.

They stressed that because of these deaths and the resulting deaths from the wars that followed, that this is all the more reason to continue to commemorate their sacrifice. What's more, because of carcinogens in the rubble from the twin towers in New York City, about 9,000 more people have since died from related illnesses.

We remember these people because these victims of Muslim extremist hate were men, women and children; mothers, fathers, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, etc., mostly American, but from other nations as well. We also learn lessons when things like this happen.

Can generations right now imagine a time when we will not commemorate and remember their sacrifice? Probably not, and I hope not. However, I'm sure that our ancestors in the 1880s and 1890s were thinking the same thing.

There were hundreds of thousands of members of the Grand Army of the Republic or GAR. This fraternal organization, established in 1866, of Veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marines and Revenue Cutter Service who served during the American Civil War became one of the most influential Veterans' groups in U.S. history. It gave us today's Memorial Day, for one thing, and its political and advocacy work shaped the federal policies, funding and infrastructure that enabled Veterans' medical care and influenced military pensions. It was the father of Veteran Service Organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion today.

The GAR established the SUVCW in 1881 so their children and ours could carry on preserving the history and legacy of heroes who fought and sacrificed to save the Union. More than 360,000 Union men died and nearly 300,000 were wounded. In all, about 750,000 Americans died during the conflict, North and South. It resulted in the end of slavery, efforts toward equal rights and citizenship of Black Americans and former slaves. It ushered in a multitude of changes in this nation.

Fictional books have been written about what would have happened throughout the world if the Union had lost. All of them, that I've read, resulted in a disaster for the world as we know it.

My college history professor and advisor always said "what iffing" is a waste of time because facts are facts. They don't change. That's true. However, I think "what iffing" is important in teaching us lessons and giving us an opportunity to realize the significance of what actually happened.

Have you ever had a near accident? What if you had not stopped at the stop sign and driven through that intersection?

See REMEMBER, next page ...

NOTES, continued ...

throughout the war. Hospital ships transported injured personnel from combat zones to permanent medical facilities where they could receive more comprehensive care. These hospitals became important centers for surgical practice, patient recovery and medical recordkeeping. The Navy Medical Department carefully documented illnesses, injuries and treatments, creating valuable data that improved military medical knowledge.

The Civil War demonstrated the importance of preventive medicine, organized medical logistics and professional medical education. Many lessons learned by Navy physicians, such as improvements in sanitation, hospital administration and medical documentation, continued to influence military medicine long after the war ended. The experience also reinforced the need for permanent medical infrastructure capable of supporting large naval operations during wartime.

Although Navy medical officers faced limited resources, widespread disease and the challenges of treating combat injuries at sea, they adapted through innovation and dedication. Their contributions not only improved the survival and health of thousands of sailors, but also helped shape the future of military medicine in the United States. The advancements made during the Civil War laid the foundation for many practices that remain essential within the U.S. Navy Medical Corps today.

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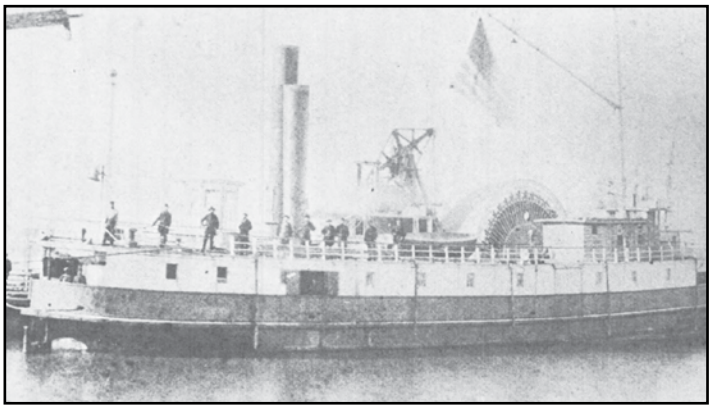
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(Above) The steam barge Elizabeth with an unidentified side-wheel steamboat in the background. Elizabeth was used as a storeboat by the United States Sanitary Commission during the Peninsula Campaign of the American Civil War. (Source, Wikipedia)

REMEMBER continued ...

We could go on and on about "what ifs" like this in our personal lives, but the Civil War is much more. It's about preserving the world's "last best hope on earth," as said by President Abraham Lincoln in his Annual Message to Congress on Dec. 1, 1862.

I don't think his statement is an exaggeration.

Forgetting the sacrifice of Union soldiers and sailors is like not celebrating Independence Day or forgetting about the allies that saved the world from Nazi oppression. In fact, each June, citizens of France, Belgium and other countries freed by the Allies still recognize those sacrifices from World War II and tend to the graves of the Allied dead, including Americans.

The big cause of the Civil War doesn't exist because no Americans alive today owned slaves or were slaves or remember it firsthand. Just like no one alive today fought in the American Civil War or remembers it firsthand. An event that significant must be remembered. While we had a revolution for independence, winning the civil war solidified us as a nation and subsequently changed the world.

For me, being a descendant of a Union soldier (actually several) is a responsibility to help protect and teach about their sacrifice and the results thereafter. That's the biggest reason why I'm a part of the SUVCW. If I can educate through my writing, marching in parades, displays, decorating graves and proudly wearing my uniforms, that's the least I can do after their sacrifice.

If you are a fan of the movie National Treasure, the main character refers to himself and his sidekick as "treasure protectors" trying to protect the Constitution from being stolen. We in the Sons and similar organizations are really history protectors with a big responsibility to protect our nation's history for our children and theirs to come.



The remains of the unit flag belonging to this author's grandfather, the 102nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

Lest we forget.



Hecker Camp provides education to public at Fair St. Clair

Story and photos by Gerald Sonnenberg
Hecker Camp Secretary/Editor

Hecker Camp participated at the St. Clair County Fair Thursday July 30 through Saturday Aug. 1 in the fairground expo center in Belleville, Illinois. The event was formally called Fair St. Clair.

The 10x13 display included graphics, video, memorabilia, uniforms a rifle, flags and a diorama to provide education to the public regarding the camp and the civil war in general. The display was open from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m. each day. Past Camp Commander Greg Zelinske, Senior Vice Commander John Stanton and Camp Treasurer Richard Piper assisted Camp Secretary Gerald Sonnenberg by taking turns manning the display each day and speaking with dozens of individuals who toured the expo center.



In the end, nine individuals signed up to receive the newsletter and we had one potential new member. We also received great support from both the public and the team organizing the fair.



(Photo, top) Hecker Camp booth display. (Above), Brother Richard Piper speaks with active duty Airmen from Scott AFB, Illinois who worked as volunteers at the fair.
(Left) A civil war diorama by Brother Gerald Sonnenberg.

Annual picnic

Our annual picnic/reunion for Hecker Camp's 30th anniversary for past and present members of the camp occurred on Saturday, Aug. 29. We are grateful for the brothers, present and past, our family and friends that attended and also provided side dishes and desserts.



We are also grateful to Mr. Jack LeChien of the Koerner House for his presentation on the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and four Belleville men: Gustave Koerner, General James Shields, William Bissell and Lyman Trumbull. Pictured above, left to right are Brothers Gerald Sonnenberg, Greg Zelinske, Justin Ottolini, Richard Piper, John Stanton, Jon Stacy, Garry Ladd, Russell Schleicher and past member David Buechler. *(Courtesy photo)*



Colors posted

On July 1, Hecker Camp #443 Past Camp Commander Greg Zelinske and Brother Gerald Sonnenberg presented the colors before a concert at the park in Shiloh, Illinois. Joining them was John Hoffman, who conducts a "first person" living history presentation as Col. William Moultrie and shares the story of the British bombardment of Charleston, South Carolina in June 1776. (*Photo by Steffany Slininger)*

Parking crew

Hecker Camp #443 Senior Vice Commander John Stanton and Treasurer Richard Piper helped with parking hundreds of vehicles during the Shiloh, Illinois homecoming event Sept. 11-12.

Supporting this event with parking, as well as our presence at the city cemetery and other events allows Hecker Camp members to interact with the community and bring some goodwill with the small city.

Along with rides and food, the city also provided music during the annual event.

Trivia #3

The answer to trivia question #2 is the South's nickname "Dixie" may have come from the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland, which was surveyed by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon between 1763 and 1767 and called the Mason and Dixon Line. As Pennsylvania was a free state and Maryland was a slave state, it came to be regarded as the border between the North and slaveholding South.

What was the name of the youngest soldier believed to have been wounded in the Civil War?

The answer is William Black. He was a 12-year-old Union drummer boy whose left arm and shoulder were shattered by an exploding shell. He first enlisted on July 24, 1861, at just eight years and two months old as a musician in Company L of the 21st Indiana Volunteer Infantry.

Upcoming Camp Events

Please contact Brother Sonnenberg if interested in participating or for questions pertaining to these events.



***O'Fallon, Illinois -** The O'Fallon Veterans Day Parade, sponsored by VFW 805, starts at 2 p.m. Any camp members interested in participating, please assemble on South Hilgard and 5th streets on the east side of the park by 1:15 p.m. If you have a uniform, please wear it. If no uniform, please march with us. The parade is about .75 miles long.

***Shiloh, Illinois - Next scheduled meetings** - Our next scheduled meetings are Nov. 4, and Jan. 6 at 7 p.m. at the Shiloh, Illinois Community Center. A Zoom option is usually also available for those who cannot attend in person.

***Christmas party -** We typically hold a dinner to induct our officers for the coming year. A date is yet to be determined.

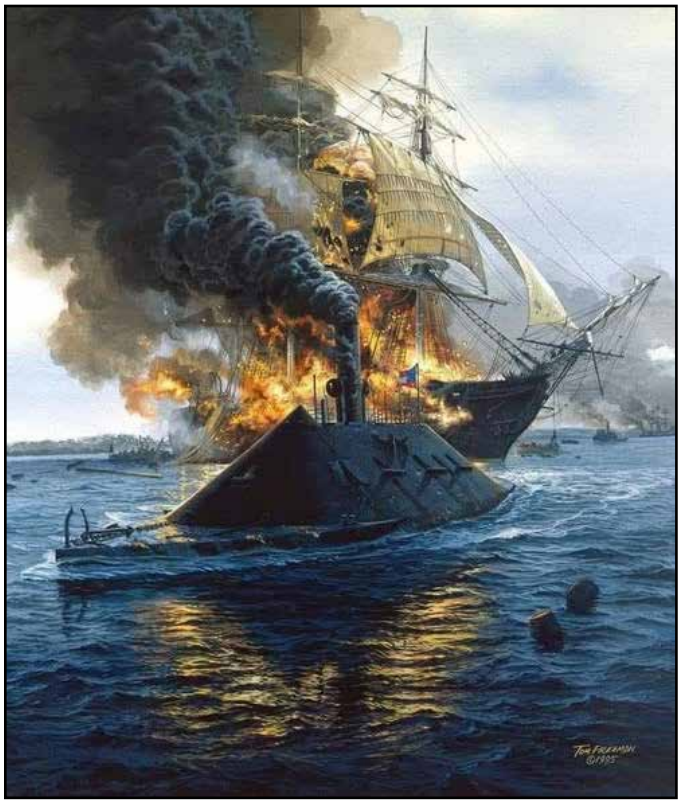
***Camp Elections -** During our November meeting, we plan to have elections of officers for the coming year. Please send any nominations to gsonnenberg@hotmail.com. These can be nominations for another person or yourself.

Please keep the newsletter in mind if you have an article or idea to share and if you have attended or participated in any event as a living historian or representative of the Camp. Deadline for the next issue is Dec. 15. Contact Brother Sonnenberg at lestweforget1861@outlook.com or gsonnenberg@hotmail.com.

Feature

The Union Navy

By Richard Piper
Hecker Camp Treasurer, Patriotic Instructor



The C.S.S. Virginia (U.S.S. Merrimack) ironclad battles a Union wooden frigate on the first day of the Battle of Hampton Roads March 8, 1862. (Courtesy image)

When our civil war began, the U.S. Navy had 90 ships, but only 41 could be used as many were scattered around the world. Of the 1,457 naval officers, 237 resigned to join the Confederacy. Enlisted men numbered 7,500.

The Union's Anaconda Plan was designed to blockade ports in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia. To do this, the U.S. Navy needed more ships. By the end of 1861, there were about 200 ships in Union service, with 22,000 navy personnel, which would increase to 670 ships and 51,500 men by the war's end.

In May 1861, the Navy set up a blockading squadron for the Atlantic coast and another one for the Gulf of Mexico. These two squadrons were further divided into the North and South Atlantic Blockading Squadrons, and the East and West Gulf Blockading Squadrons. Each squadron was commanded by a commodore who controlled the blockading duties. In July 1862, the commodore position was replaced by the newly created rank of rear admiral. By the end of the war, 600 ships had served in the blockade to cover 187 ports and inlets from the Rio Grande River to Chesapeake Bay.

To support the blockade, the Union Navy captured bases along the southern coast which were used for coal depots and repairs. New Orleans, the South's largest port, was the first to be captured on April 25, 1862 by Admiral David G. Farragut. By the end of December 1864, Wilmington, North Carolina was the only port still open. By Jan. 15, 1865, it too had been closed.

During the war, the South used blockade runners to import goods and military supplies. Many of them that were built in Britain had shallow drafts to move up inlets, had low profiles, were painted gray to be seen less clearly and used anthracite coal to produce less smoke.

Loaded with cotton, they sailed to the neutral ports of Nassau, Bahamas; St. George, Bermuda; Havana, Cuba; and St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands where their cargo was transferred to regular merchant ships bound for Europe. Operating for profit, the blockade runners carried luxury goods back to the South to the end of the war. The Confederate government was slow to make the ships provide more cargo space for southern military supplies. In 1861, nine out of ten blockade runners made successful trips, which fell to five in ten in 1865. Overall, the Union blockaded Confederate supplies by sea by more than two-thirds.

In 1861, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles commissioned John Ericsson to build the first Union ironclad, the U.S.S. Monitor, which was 172 feet long, with two, eleven-inch Dahlgren guns in a revolving iron turret. It had armor plating eight inches thick, made of 1-inch plates bolted together. The U.S.S. Monitor was barely seaworthy with a deck only one foot above the waterline. In fact, it was towed from New York to Virginia where it battled the C.S.S. Virginia. The Union Navy contracted 52 coastal ironclads, with 48 of them of the monitor design.

To achieve the opening of the Mississippi River, the Union Navy created the Mississippi Squadron in May 1861. An ironclad building program produced gunboats for this squadron with the first ones launched in October 1861.

The Pook Turtles or city-class gunboats were also known as "Eads gunboats." They were seven boats built from their keels up in a Carondelet, Missouri shipyard owned by James B. Eads, who was a wealthy St. Louis industrialist. These first ironclad warships were designed by Samuel M. Pook, who was employed at the time for the Navy Department in Cairo, Illinois.

Pook's vessels drew only six feet of water, carried 13 guns and could travel eight knots. Each had three keels. The two outboard keels were longer than the middle one that contained a paddlewheel at its rear. The casement armor on the outer keels protected the paddle wheel from the front and sides, but not from astern. The casements had sloping sides which was why Union farm boys christened them Pooks Turtles. James Eads submitted the winning bid from the contract to build the seven boats, which were named for cities on the Mississippi and its tributaries, namely the U.S.S. Cairo, Carondelet, Cincinnati, Louisville, Mound City, Pittsburgh and St. Louis, which was later renamed the U.S.S. Baron DeKalb.

Each of these vessels had three gunports facing forward; two aft; and four on each side. Their casement armor was 2.5 inches thick, rolled in plates 13 inches wide and 8 to 13 feet long. Each vessel was 175 feet long and all were identical except for a different colored band on their chimney stack.

As part of the Mississippi River Squadron, they were first commanded by the Army. Then, in October 1862, their com-

See NAVY, next page ...

NAVY, continued ...

mand was transferred to the Navy.

The Union converted steamers with 1-inch-thick armor, which could protect the vessel from riverbank rifle fire. These so called tinclads could navigate shallower waterways that heavier armored ironclads could not.

Several gunboats were badly damaged, but two were lost. The U.S.S. Cairo sank in the Yazoo River in December 1862 when it hit a mine. The U.S.S. Baron DeKalb also was sunk by a mine in July 1863 in the Yazoo River in Mississippi. In the Battle of St. Charles, Arkansas in June 1862, the U.S.S. Mound City's steam drum exploded and 125 of her crew were killed or mortally wounded.

Some gunboats had armor made from cotton bails to be light enough to navigate shallow rivers and inlets. Union gunboats did great service in the Western Theater helping to capture Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862. They were also crucial in capturing New Orleans, Vicksburg and Island Number 10.

Atlantic coast squadrons also maintained ironclads on rivers that opened into the sea. They were also used in joint army/navy operations. Washington and the Potomac River were protected by the Potomac Flotilla. Union Navy ships also patrolled the coasts of South America, Europe and Africa for Confederate commerce raiders that preyed on Union merchant ships.

Union naval officers were of two types: Executive officers in charge of ships beginning in August 1863 wore a star over their gold sleeve rank stripes. The second group who wore no star were specialists that included surgeons on ships and in naval hospitals in ports, constructors who designed and built ships, paymasters, engineers, chaplains and math and chemistry professors who taught midshipmen and cadets.



Navy Medal of Honor, our country's oldest continuously awarded medal for military gallantry, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on Dec. 21, 1861.

(Right) The U.S.S. Cairo, one of seven U.S. Navy gunboats built by James Eads of St. Louis during and after its recovery from the Yazoo River in Mississippi. It was sunk by a Confederate mine (torpedo) in December 1862.

(Below right) The U.S.S. Cairo at anchor.





To help address the shortage of officers, the secretary of the navy had 7,500 volunteer officers and 84,500 enlisted men in the Navy during the war.

Black sailors had served on navy ships for years and were part of the unsegregated Union Navy from the start of the Civil War, comprising between eight and 25% of all Union Navy personnel.

New volunteers were first posted to receiving ships that were, after conversion, floating barracks and training facilities where they learned seamanship and gunnery. They were issued their uniforms, which they had to pay for. As soon as they were needed, sailors were sent from their receiving ships to their duty stations despite how much or little training they had. Most new sailors received their job knowledge after they reached their duty station.

The Navy Medal of Honor, our country's oldest continuously awarded medal for military gallantry, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on Dec. 21, 1861. The award was only eligible for enlisted personnel. After 1915, officers became eligible.

On our rivers, coasts and the open seas, the U.S. Navy and its men bravely served to defend and restore our country.

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