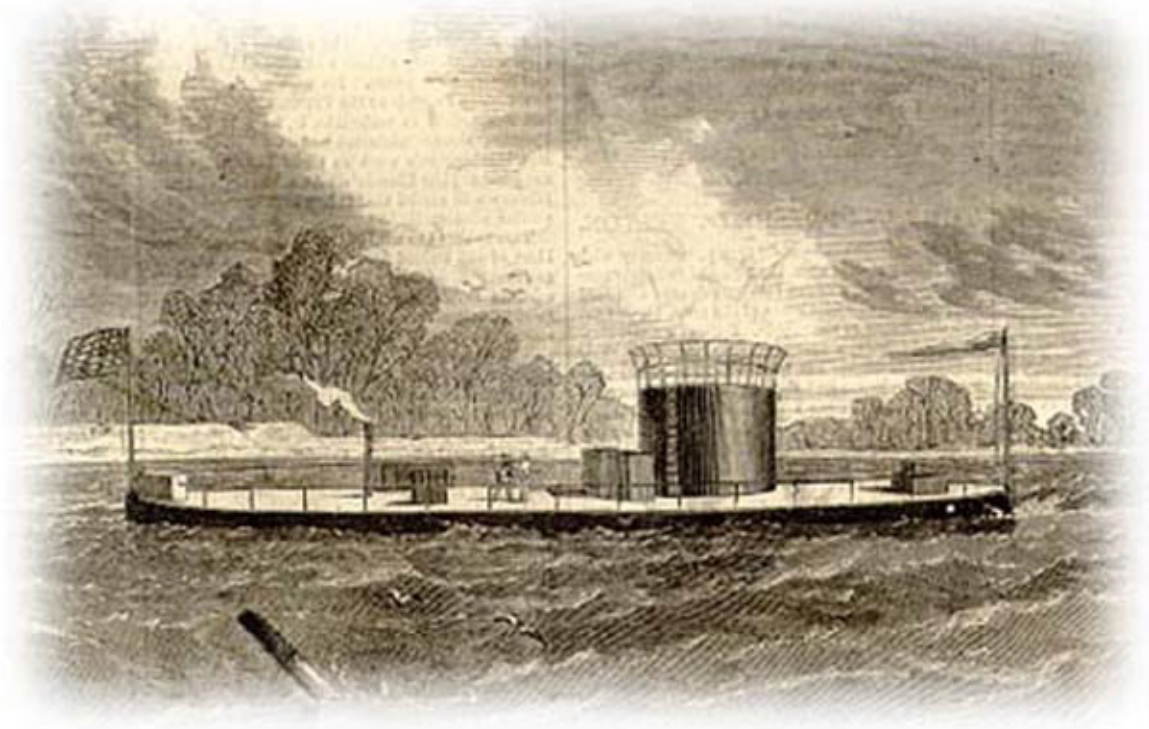


The USS MONITOR



The Ericsson Ironclad Battery Monitor as illustrated in Harper's Weekly, March 22, 1862. (Monitor Collection, NOAA) From this webpage: <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/monitor01/history/media/monitor.html>)

USS Monitor

Finding and Researching the *Monitor*

For more than 100 years, this famous U.S. war ship sat at the bottom of the ocean floor – its location unknown. Then in 1973, it was found. For scientists and historians this was like finding “buried treasure”!

In order to find the *Monitor*, scientists first had to choose an area of the ocean to explore (“sweep”) based on historical records from log books. Then scientists began “sweeping” the area about 5 miles by 14 miles where they believed the *Monitor* to be. In this area they found 22 total shipwrecks on the ocean floor, and all of them needed to be investigated to figure out which one might be the *Monitor*.

It took five months of investigating to confirm that one particular wreck was the *USS Monitor*. The researchers had to take a lot of photos and measurements, as well as video. It was difficult to do from boats, with cameras hung on cables, without much light! It was also difficult because the ship lay upside down on the ocean floor. Researchers had to compare the videos and pictures with the original plans of the *Monitor*. Finally, in March 1974 they made the official announcement – the *USS Monitor* had been found!

Then scientists could begin to form a plan for retrieving and studying the shipwreck. Scientists have dived down and taken many measurements, photos, and notes on

what they were able to see, and they have brought up various pieces of the *Monitor* to study. In 1998, they recovered the 9-foot iron propeller. In 2000, they lifted out the 30-ton steam engine! They have also lifted the gun turret from the wreck and have even found bones from skeletons of the crew.

One worry was that the sunken ship was not stable and might be further ruined by the research. But scientists have done a great job of preserving it. Many of the USS *Monitor's* artifacts are currently on display at The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia.

What the *Monitor* Looked Like

The *Monitor* had no sails and used steam for power. It was the first ironclad ship built by the US Navy. It sat very low in the water; in fact most of the ship was underwater. Probably the most interesting invention for this ship was the revolving "turret" that sat in the middle of the ship. It was 9 feet high, and had two 11-inch cannons. Since it could turn in any direction, this was a big advantage over enemies! All the other ships during that time had to move into position, as the cannons faced out the sides of the ships. So, while other ships had to steer and turn their ship, the *Monitor* could have already started shooting at them!

The Importance of the *Monitor*

The *USS Monitor* was a famous American warship, built during the U.S. Civil War and it served the Union (North) cause. It was launched in 1862 and saw its most famous battle with the Confederate navy ship *Virginia* off the coast of Virginia. Even though the battle was basically a "draw" the *Monitor* gained recognition for its action against the Confederacy (South). On December 31, 1863, the *Monitor* sunk near Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

The *Monitor* lasted less than a year, yet its designs and its action against the Confederate Navy brought attention to it. Ship designers from around the world were influenced by its new features, which helped change the way other warships were built. And now, as a shipwreck, we study it and bring pieces of it into a museum. This gives us valuable information on history, science, and culture.

This shipwreck is a sunken treasure that is a link to America's past and to a world-famous era of ship design and building. In 1975 the *Monitor* was designated the first U.S. National Marine Sanctuary, an area that covers about 1 square mile of ocean. This helped to protect the area and the sunken ship from people.