

Iron Plates & Belching Stacks: Marine Painting of the Civil War and Industrialization on the High Seas

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Introduction

The Anglo-American landscape and marine painter Thomas Chambers (1808-1869)—considered to be “America’s first modern”—was one of the few artists to depict naval action from both the War of 1812 and the Civil War.¹ His method for constructing marine paintings throughout his career is noted by Kathleen A. Foster, the Robert L. McNeil, Jr., Senior Curator of American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as “a practice based on memory and experience, on the study of other artists and prints, and to a much lesser degree on observation and work done on the spot.”² Chambers best exemplifies the continuation of traditional naval battle portraiture more than any other marine artist active during the Civil War, as his working methods were similar to a generation of artists that came before him.

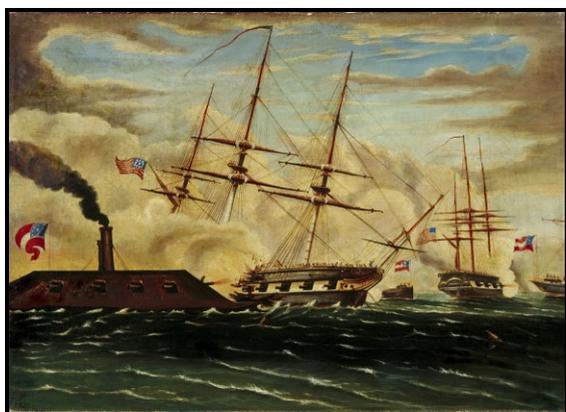


Figure 1. The USS *Cumberland* Rammed by the CSS *Virginia*, March 8, 1862, ca. 1862-1866, attributed to Thomas Chambers (1808-1869). Oil on canvas. 24 ½ x 34 inches. Peabody Essex Museum.

One of Chambers’ last works depicts a seminal moment in the development of modern naval warfare—the encounter between the Confederate

ironclad *Virginia* (ex-*Merrimac*) and the Union wooden frigate *Cumberland* off Newport News, Virginia on March 8, 1862.³ This encounter would mark the first naval battle involving an ironclad vessel, one of the many forms of advanced naval technology introduced during the Civil War, and signal a changing of the guard from old sailing frigates to modern steam powered iron hulled vessels.⁴ Chambers’ painting in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts (fig. 1) is a condensed version of a panoramic print that ran in the March 22, 1862 edition of *Harper’s Weekly* (fig. 2).⁵ The action is contained in a smaller rectangular frame, and Chambers has elevated the treatment of the water and clouds in the print to accentuate the drama of the encounter, denoting a more sophisticated understanding of the marine environment.

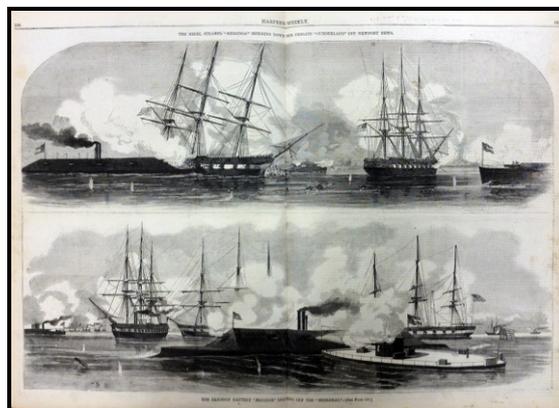


Figure 2. “The Rebel Steamer ‘*Merrimac*’ Running Down the Frigate ‘*Cumberland*’ off Newport News.” (top). *Harper’s Weekly*, March 22, 1862. Peabody Essex Museum.

The encounter between these two drastically different vessels dominates the left side of the canvas. The odd trapezoidal *Virginia* with its centrally placed smokestack belching black fumes and its bow guns blazing—noted in *Harper’s* as a “submerged house with only the roof only above water”—has rammed the wooden hulled *Cumberland* at midships, splintering her planks in a manner reminiscent of naval warfare in the Ancient Mediterranean.⁶ White smoke clouds the aft portion of the *Cumberland* apart from the upper yards and rigging of

her main and mizzen masts, and her ensign flaps in a manner similar to the *Virginia*'s, an addition made by the artist that is not found in the print. A throng of sailors surrounding the *Cumberland*'s forward rail accentuates the drama on her main deck. The terror surrounding this event, noted by Foster as sending "shock waves through the country,"⁷ is accurately captured by Chambers' brush, and Foster correctly notes that Chambers' final naval work "shows remarkable consistency in his treatment of marine subjects, for the handling of the ships, the figures, and the sky and water all bear direct relationship to his earlier naval pictures."⁸

What differentiates this work from Chambers' earlier canvases—beyond the technological advances in naval warfare—is a foreshadowing of the industrialization that will characterize American enterprise following the war. This picture, therefore, is a watershed canvas that not only encapsulates the nature of marine painting during the period but the future of the country at large. Chambers captures this transition in several ways. The *Virginia* is shown in a clear broadside view, allowing the viewer to absorb this mechanical monster, while the *Cumberland* is mostly obscured in smoke. Chambers also focuses the viewers' attention to the *Virginia*'s ram with billowing white smoke and a canon firing forward, accentuating the symbolic destruction of antiquated naval technology.

At the same time, Chamber's painting embodies many of the features that have minimized marine painting of the Civil War into obscurity. As Foster notes:

The efficient and successful underdog in this picture is not the fledgling U.S. Navy cheered in the War of 1812, but the new Confederate armada. One wonders what motivated these paintings: Sympathy for the Southern cause? Outrage in the North? A mariner's interest in naval battles in general? The old-school sailor would have been horrified by the dark, alien

form of the *Virginia* and appalled by the fate of the helpless *Cumberland*; for such viewers, the good and bad forces in this awkward painting seem easy to identify. But the military-minded would have been thrilled by the destructive power of this new machine⁹—if such paintings are usually tributes to the victorious—we have to speculate that Chambers or his patron enjoyed this vision of progress.¹⁰

It appears that only the Southern sympathizer or the military buff could appreciate the dawn of the ironclad in oils. The paintings of naval operations during the Civil War, therefore, are an often forgotten, or glossed over, subject in contemporary popular and scholarly literature on the War Between the States. Even though the war was predominately contested on land, this is a surprising fact. The Union owed its victory to the blockade of Southern ports, limiting the Confederacy's ability to export cotton and import essential materials. In addition, the ports of New Orleans and Mobile Bay were taken from the sea, and the Confederacy was cut in half when the Union secured control of the Mississippi River.¹¹

The obscurity of Civil War marine paintings lies in a number of factors beyond Foster's conclusions. Naval operations were infrequently on the open sea—the popular locale for marine battles—apart from Southern steam-powered sailing vessels known as Confederate raiders attacking Northern merchantmen in ocean waters. The majority of the conflict between the two navies occurred close to land in the unglamorous environment of Southern coastal waters, estuaries, and rivers. In addition, these works are not held in high opinion in art historical circles as some scholars have argued that marine paintings made during the war were unable to

accurately document the realistic attributes of marine battles or capture the symbolic significance of naval conflict.

In this paper, I will attempt to resurrect the stature of Civil War marine painting from the depths of an artistic abyss. The dawn of modern naval warfare was reflected in marine paintings, a seminal moment in the transformation of the United States Navy that was effectively captured by artists both during and after the conflict. On these canvases, painters captured a new era of mechanization on the seas and foreshadowed the coming industrial age in the country.

Of the approximately two hundred extant Civil War ship portraits and paintings of naval operations, many were crafted in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, when nostalgia for the war led to the desire for new artwork and romantic imagery. This paper will focus instead on only those works created during the war and in the first five years of Reconstruction. A wide spectrum of marine artists crafted paintings during this period—those that served in either the Union or Confederacy; established marine painters living in the United States or the port of Liverpool, England—an important trading partner for the South—; and other artists who occasionally depicted nautical scenes. Their combined work reflects the vast scope of naval engagements during the war—port scenes, ship portraits, individual engagements, full-scale battles—and some works of more universal significance. Artists from this period used an already established visual vocabulary of marine painting to highlight a changing of the guard in naval technology, and were often more accurate in their portrayal of events than the romantic works following the war. Attention will also be paid to the popular prints and images that were produced in massive quantities during and after the war, many of which aided the creation of the oils.

A Brief History of American Marine Painting up to the Civil War

The marine paintings of the Civil War are steeped in a tradition of American maritime art that was influenced by English, Dutch, and Mediterranean artists in the eighteenth century. While mostly documentary in nature, the paintings created during this period depicting battles between two or more naval ships were highly symbolic images. As seafaring was a ubiquitous presence in Colonial America, English and Dutch artwork was imported into the colonies in the form of engravings of master artists like Willem Van de Velde the Elder (1611-1693) and Younger (1633-1707), John Cleveley the Younger (1747-1786), and Dominic Serres (1722-1793).¹²

At the end of the eighteenth century, a Neapolitan artist named Michele Felice Cornè (1752-1845) had a profound impact on the fledgling marine painters of the newly formed United States. Cornè emigrated to Salem, Massachusetts aboard the ship *Mount Vernon*¹³, and painted gouache scenes of local ships, historical and allegorical images in oils,¹⁴ and portraits based on engravings.

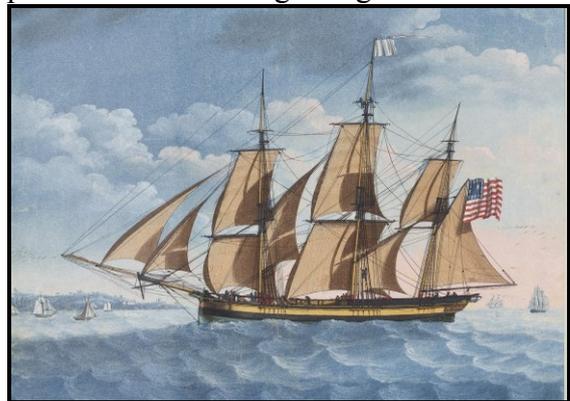


Figure 3. Ship *John*, Salem, Mass., 1803, by Michele Felice Cornè. Oil on canvas. 17 ¼ x 23 ¼ inches. Peabody Essex Museum.

He also taught his craft to other burgeoning artists, such as a young deaf-mute sign and carriage painter George Ropes, Jr. (1788-1819). Most importantly, he established the genre of ship portraiture in America—the most specialized form of marine art. A typical ship portrait is a

carefully constructed composition that places a vessel in a specific situation, combining artistic skill with nautical accuracy and detail to document maritime culture in a unique way (fig. 3). The ship is almost always in broadside perspective to display specific attributes of her masts, rigging, bow, and carving, and the best practitioners of this genre were those who were able to present accuracy in ship design.

Among his many scenes of Salem ships and shipping, Cornè painted naval engagements of the War of 1812. Cornè's works—based on published images, first hand accounts of the battles, and sometimes observations made when visiting frigates like the USS *Constitution*—were also the inspiration for some of the earliest American naval prints. Cornè was followed by other artists, such as Anglo-American marine painter Robert Salmon (1755-1858)—who was more renowned for his work in New York and Boston than his those paintings done for clients in Whitehaven and Liverpool—and Thomas Birch (1779-1851), who emigrated from London to Philadelphia in



Figure 4. *USS Wasp and HMS Frolic*, ca. 1815, by Thomas Birch (1779-1851). Oil on canvas. Peabody Essex Museum.

1793 and is famous for his representations of War of 1812 naval engagements.¹⁵ Birch's painting of the encounter between the USS *Wasp* and HMS *Frolic*, ca. 1815 (fig. 4), is a quintessential depiction of a naval battle from the era. It focuses on the struggle between two ships and is a highly symbolic image representing values of

unfettered trade and national defense, even though this style of warfare typified only a brief period of American history.¹⁶

Thus, by the nineteenth century, a formal codification of marine portraiture was established to capture ships and scenes accurately. Additionally, though a duality formed between artists who specialized in ship portraiture or seascapes, there were artists who perfected a palette for incorporating aspects of both styles in a single canvas. Many of these artists were painting in the port of Liverpool England, such as Samuel Walters (1811-1882)¹⁷ and Duncan McFarlane (1818-1865), while some emigrated to America like James Edward Buttersworth (1817-1894). Daniel Finamore, the Russell W. Knight Curator of Maritime Art and History at the Peabody Essex Museum, notes that these artists were able to capture the desired and important technical information of a ship (sail and rigging, e.g.) for their clients (ship owners, captains, e.g.), "while also exuding an air of mastery over the forces of nature."¹⁸ The combination of these two elements was essential to many shipowners who wanted to display a work in their counting house that was not only technically accurate but also boldly represented the shipping line.¹⁹

Before the mid-nineteenth century, a new genre of marine painting emerged that Finamore characterizes as "a departure from the documentary tradition for marine paintings and a sacrificing of strict nautical veracity in favor of experiments in artistic expression that embraced the natural world for its own inherent qualities."²⁰ The Romantic and Luminist schools, as well as the era of the Great Panoramic and Pictorial painting, saw the emergence of Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), Fritz Henry Lane (1804-1865), J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), and others. While some of these artists were not solely marine painters, their work was influential within the genre. During the war other artists who would

focus on marine scenes came into the fold, such as Winslow Homer (1836-1910) and Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), who would continue in this more symbolic tradition of marine painting.

The turmoil wrought by the Civil War on commerce and shipping also affected marine painting. John Wilmerding, the Christopher Binyon Sarofim Professor of American Art at Princeton University, writes, “thereafter, the country would look increasingly westward to the continent... The upheaval of the Civil War marked not only the passing of the age of sail, but also the closing of the New England ‘Renaissance.’”²¹ Thus, the changing of the guard in marine painting came at the same moment as the Civil War, reducing the number of artists who still adhered to the old tradition of ship portraiture. It is essential to understand these developments and the establishment of American marine painting to properly assess the work done during the Civil War.

“Victory Without the Gaud”? Reassessing Civil War Marine Paintings

Herman Melville (1819-1891) was not flattering in his assessment of the first encounter between Union and Confederate ironclad vessels at Hampton Roads on March 9, 1862. In his five-stanza poem “A Utilitarian View of the Monitor’s Fight,” Melville describes the mechanical and unheroic nature of the encounter between the USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia* with lines such as “Hail to victory without the gaud,” “No passion; all went on by crank, Pivot, and screw, And calculations of caloric.”²² Civil War historian Harold Holzer—the only scholar to tackle the subject of marine paintings and prints of the war to date—accurately interprets Melville’s poem as “a vision of triumph of the industrial revolution over military glory.”²³ He extends Melville’s perception to the world of maritime painting, and believes that many of the works produced

during and after the war were inaccurate depictions of events as artists “proved unable to invest the historic encounter with more than obvious significance.”²⁴

It is hard to argue against Herman Melville these days,²⁵ but a level of objectivity needs to be reinserted into his poem as well as Holzer’s assessment of these paintings. Melville was born and bred on wooden ships, and while his characterization of this ironclad conflict is justified, it is seeped in nostalgia for the days of iron men and wooden ships that Melville sees disappearing before his eyes. It is this wistful desire for the “good ol’ days” of sailing ships that plagues current interpretations of Civil War maritime paintings capturing a new era of marine technology.²⁶ The naval artillery advancements of the Civil War—including armor plated warships, mines known as “torpedoes”, submersible watercraft—, however, created what Holzer acknowledges as “the technology of impenetrability at sea... with the result that the rate of naval casualties continued lower than that of land forces.”²⁷ In a time period focused on modern warfare, these new advances did translate into popular literature even if a sense of heroism was lost.

While Holzer is correct in stating that many of the postbellum paintings of Civil War naval action are inaccurate, his similar characterization of all works crafted during and just after the war is problematic. In fact, few paintings from this era can be regarded as completely precise portrayals of events. Artists interpreted these encounters from their own aesthetic and moral viewpoint, and had to acknowledge their client’s requests. In the history of naval painting, few artists apart from the Dutch marine painter Willem van de Velde the Elder—who was given a galiot to sketch from during battles²⁸—witnessed marine encounters firsthand. In addition, artists did not travel with naval vessels with the same frequency as battlefield correspondents

due to the difficulties of life aboard ship and the isolation of the ships on water, limiting their ability to send sketches and accounts from a naval vessel in comparison to field artists.²⁹ Finally, though there were commercial photographers that specialized in ship portraiture of vessels in port in the 1860s—including new ironclad vessels—the inherent challenges of marine photography at sea³⁰ combined with only wet-collodian capabilities made it impossible to capture images of naval conflicts until the development of the dry-plate process in the 1870s.³¹ With Holzer³² and Melvile in mind, a reassessment of Civil War marine painting is required to demonstrate that despite these disadvantages, artists were more than proficient in documenting and highlight the technical aspects of ships, as well as creating symbolic subjects of more universal significance.

Xanthus Smith (1839-1929)—a former sailor in the Union Navy—painted one of the most accurate depictions of the Battle of Hampton Roads. He was born in Philadelphia, the son of artist Russell Smith, and studied anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania before his artistic training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the Royal Academy in London. When the Civil War broke out, Smith enlisted in the navy and mainly served in blockading squadrons on the USS *Wabash*, and was known to sketch vessels from several perspectives at sea using a launch from the ship.³³

Smith was one of the few marine artists to have seen an ironclad vessel.³⁴ In 1864, serving under the command of Captain Corbin on the *Augusta* in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, Smith saw the ironclad *Tecumseh* and provides a narrative sketch of life onboard this unusual vessel: “What is strange though with the ‘monitors’ is that notwithstanding they are the very embodiment [sic] or acme of power, there is nothing in the slightest degree imposing

in their appearance; they are the most droll, commonplace, little objects you could wish to behold. It is very disagreeable to be on board of them too, as the deck & turret are slushed with tallow, which gets ground up underfoot with the iron rust and carried down below, so that the wardroom, and, even the cabin floor are a pretty looking mess. The men and Officers get their clothes full of this iron rust and tallow.”³⁵ After the war, Smith focused solely on painting marine scenes, landscapes, and portraits to general acclaim, drawing on his time at sea.

Xanthus Smith depicted the Battle of Hampton Roads several times over the course of his career. His painting in the collection of the Union League of Philadelphia for over a hundred years (fig. 5) was one of his earliest, executed around



Figure 5. Engagement Between the US Ericson Battery *Monitor* and the Confederate States Ram *Virginia* or *Merrimac* in Hampton Roads, Virginia, Morning of March 9, 1862, 1869, by Xanthus Smith (1839-1929). Oil on canvas. 30 x 66 inches. Courtesy of The Abraham Lincoln Foundation of The Union League of Philadelphia.

1869. It depicts the two ironclads trading merciless but ineffective gunfire for nearly four hours—according to an eyewitness—as the thickly armored hulls of both vessels were impenetrable. Unsurprisingly as a former Union naval seaman, Smith painted white smoke emanating from the *Monitor* and black smoke from the *Merrimac*. Set behind the *Monitor*’s stern is a wooden frigate, the *Minnesota*, engaged with a smaller craft.

Smith’s work was not based solely on printed sources, and he rarely used artistic license in any of his paintings unless necessary to incorporate important elements into a scene. Stressing accuracy, he would send sketches to eyewitnesses.³⁶ For this painting, he consulted three Union

officers who were present at the battle, who passed along sketches, hand-drawn maps, and other written accounts of the encounter.³⁷ One was Captain S. D. Greene, a lieutenant on the *Monitor* during the battle who took charge of the ship when Captain John Worden was temporarily blinded. He informed Smith:

The general appearance of the Battle, in the sketch you sent me is correct, except the *Merrimac*'s [*Virginia*'s] smoke stack. That was not materially injured during the engagement with the *Congress* and *Cumberland*. It might have been perforated, but to all appearance it was intact on the day we fought her. The position of the *Minnesota* with respect to Fortress Monroe is correct. The battle ground was on the port quarter of the *Minnesota* at an average distance of about one mile: but as you remark, you are privileged, with an artist's license, to place the vessels in the relative positions that you have in the sketch, in order to bring in all three vessels.³⁸

The result was a far more accurate depiction of the battle than the voluminous amount of prints and engravings produced of the battle. A Currier & Ives print based on Fanny Palmer's (1812-1876) illustration (fig. 6) is filled with cannon fire and smoke, characteristic of most naval prints produced during the Civil War.

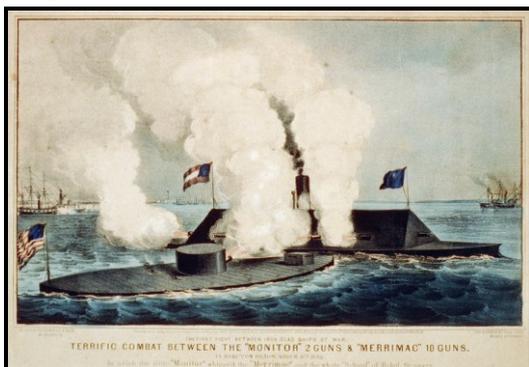


Figure 6. "Terrific Combat Between the 'Monitor' 2 Guns & 'Merrimac' 10 Guns," 1862, after Fanny Palmer (1812-1876), published by Currier & Ives, New York. Library of Congress. Other marine paintings of this encounter,

such as the primitive view in The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library collection purportedly crafted by an eye witness (fig. 7), is characterized by inaccurate rolling seas, unnaturally parallel ridges, and untattered flags still flapping in the wind despite the constant barrage unleashed by both vessels.³⁹



Figure 7. *The Monitor and the Merrimac at Short Range* by an Eye Witness, n.d., by an unknown artist. Oil on canvas. 13 x 20 inches. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York.

Despite Smith's skillful encapsulation of new marine technology, Holzer reads the depiction of the *Minnesota* in this painting as a nostalgic clinging to traditional sailing vessels, claiming that Smith "painted the two ironclads in shadow in the foreground, with a ship of the wooden blockading squadron highlighted in the distance. The effect, intensified by the crisp line of white paint across the wooden ship's battery, was to show the older ship to bright advantage. Smith seemed reluctant to acknowledge in oils...that the hideous ironclad vessels represented the wave of the future in shipbuilding technology as the wooden ship in the background is lit to emphasize its prominence in his mind."⁴⁰ Holzer's reading is problematic when taking a close look at the painting. Smith hardly minimizes the importance of new nautical technology since the duel between the ironclads dominates the canvas. In addition, the presence of crisply rendered and bright ensigns, and the red tinge to the deck of the *Monitor*, allow the vessels to pop from the canvas. In regards to the *Minnesota*, this purported wooden ship is

actually a steam frigate, a hybrid vessel that played an important role in the Civil War and beyond. Smith has depicted this vessel sailing towards the liminal edge of the canvas with its correct white stripe across its battery, steaming off “to pasture” with no sails set. In this compositional manner, Smith is showing the end, and not the beginning, of the era of wood and sail.

On the opposite end of the national conflict was Conrad Wise Chapman (1842-1910), an artist of the Confederacy. He was the son of history painter John Gadsby Chapman, who moved his family to Rome in the 1850s where Conrad studied art. Primarily a landscape rather than a marine artist, Chapman returned to fight for the South and enlisted in the 3rd Kentucky infantry—known as the “Orphan Brigade.” After being wounded at the battle of Shiloh, he was transferred to the 59th Virginia infantry and was commissioned to paint a series of pictures of the fortifications protecting Charleston harbor under the patronage of General P.G.T. Beauregard.⁴¹

One of these paintings captures one of the most advanced yet doomed technological innovations of the war: the submersible *H.L. Hunley* (fig. 8).



Figure 8. Submarine Torpedo Boat *H.L. Hunley*, December 6, 1863, 1864, by Conrad Wise Chapman (1842-1910). Oil on board. 9 ¾ x 13 ¾ inches. The Museum of the Confederacy Collection at The American Civil War Museum.

This floating cigar—measuring forty feet in length, four feet in width and five feet in height—was named after its inventor Horace L. Hunley who died when it sank during its second trial run. Chapman records the vessel perched on a

few planks sitting on a dock in Charleston harbor. His work is, in a sense, a ship portrait as it is technically accurate in its depiction of the front spar, the hatches, the visible screw, and even the rivets on the hull, all confirmed by the recovery of the vessel in 2002 and subsequent archaeological analysis. But it is imbued with artistic license in Chapman’s treatment of the metal hull, which is carefully positioned on a diagonal, making the submersible look almost elegant. In actuality, contemporaries described it as a tin can.⁴²

The casually attired seated guard is thought to be a self-portrait of Chapman, and the artist notes the other individual is Hunley himself. Both men serve as visual markers of the extreme conditions within this vessel. The *Hunley* was manned by a crew of eight who sat crowded shoulder to shoulder on a bench in the cramped confines of a metal tube and turned an iron crankshaft to power the vessel’s propeller. Years later, Chapman provided a more in-depth dissection of his painting and the ill-fated vessel:

This boat, it was at first thought would be very effective; twice it went out on its mission of destruction, but on both occasions returned with all the crew dead. After this had happened the second time, someone painted on it the word ‘Coffin.’ There was just room enough in it for eight men, one in front of the other, with no possibility of anyone sitting straight. The third time it started out, it never came back, nor was anything ever heard from it, but as one of the united States men-of-war in the harbor (USS *Housatonic*) was sunk at about the same time, the supposition was that they both went to the bottom together. Other objects to be seen in the picture are, Sullivans Island, and a Dispatch boat.⁴³

Unfortunately, Chapman does not go into further analysis of the composition of the painting. Symbolically, there is more to his rendering of the *Hunley*'s spar pointing towards the small sailing skiff. It foreshadows not only the first and last action for the submersible in 1864—when it became the first submarine to sink a warship—but the death of wooden ships in general.

Alexander Simplot (1837-1914), an artist who worked for *Harper's Weekly*, executed one of the more curious marine paintings of Civil War ironclad gunboats. Simplot was born in Dubuque, Iowa, and spent his childhood surrounded by riverine traffic. Later in his life, he reminisced on the impact of these steamboats: "I know of nothing which struck my imagination more vividly than the appearance of one of our large steamers...approaching you at night with bows headed directly for you...with its two large open furnaces, one on each side, like huge fiery eyes, and the thick black smoke surging from the chimneys, with the bellowing cough of the escaping steam...aglow at the landing as some base monster darting out of the darkness."⁴⁴ This industrial vision of inland merchant and passenger ships is present in the oil painting Simplot executed of the Battle of Memphis on June 6, 1862 (fig. 9).



Figure 9. The Great Naval Battle Opposite the City of Memphis, 1862, by Alexander Simplot (1837-1914). Oil on canvas. Chicago History Museum, ICHI-69961.

He was the only artist present when a fleet of Union ironclads defeated eight lightly armed Confederate ships, and like the other citizens of Memphis who watched

the action from the bluffs—which unfortunately denied him “the opportunity to witness the detail of the battle” —he did sketch the destruction of the Southern vessels.⁴⁵ Simplot's sketches were the only depictions of this crucial victory to see print.⁴⁶ *Harper's* published nine of his illustrations in their June 28th and July 5th issues—including “The Great Naval Battle Before Memphis” (fig. 10) —earning Simplot his greatest fame and recognition.⁴⁷

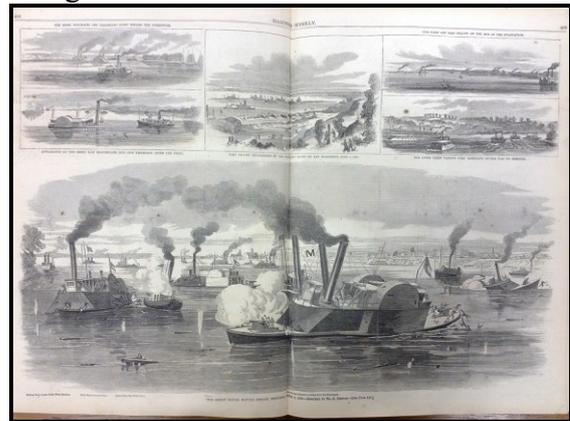


Figure 10. “The Great Naval Battle Before Memphis, June 6, 1862 – Sketched by Mr. A. Simplot.” (bottom) *Harper's Weekly*, June 28, 1862. Peabody Essex Museum.

While the *Harper's* print captures some of the smoke filled environment, Simplot's oil painting truly imbues the scene with hints of industrialized America. Simplot was well versed in depicting the types of vessels that dominate the scene—converted river steam vessels, known as gunboats. In a sketch made on October 15, 1861 entitled *Ferry 'New Era,'* [in the collection of Wisconsin Historical Society](#), Simplot documented a similar vessel being transformed by workers in St. Louis. Still, his painting on the Battle of Memphis is less about naval armament than propulsion. Blackened smoke stacks belching fumes are littered throughout the canvas, emerging from vessels in the foreground and in receding into the distant skyline of the city. White puffs of smoke hover only slightly above ships' decks to denote a constant battery of gunfire. Patches of blue sky emerge from the black columns to remind the viewer of the presence of natural elements, but the scene

is dominated by a cacophony of industrialization on the water.

Other professional artists were able to capture technological advancements within industrial looking seascapes. The Dutch-American painter Mauritz Frederick Hendrick De Haas (1832-1895) was one of the most famous nineteenth century marine artists and already an established painter by the outbreak of the Civil War as an associate of the National Academy of Design in 1863 (and an acamedician in 1867). He was born in Rotterdam and studied at the Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts with Jacob Spoel and Nicholas J. Roosenboom.⁴⁸ In 1857 he was appointed official artist of the Dutch navy with a berth aboard the flagship, but emigrated to New York City in 1859 under the patronage of August Belmont, American minister at the Hague. From 1864 on, he occupied a studio in the Tenth Street quarters home to other prominent artists such as Church, Bierstadt, and William Bradford (1823-1892).⁴⁹



Figure 11. Farragut's Fleet Passing the Forts below New Orleans, ca. 1867, by Mauritz F.H. de Haas (1832-1895). Oil on canvas. 59 x 105 ¾ inches. The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. No. 1974.80.

In his large scale work *Farragut's Fleet Passing the Forts below New Orleans*, ca. 1867 (fig. 11)—exhibited at the 1878 Paris Exposition and now in The Historic New Orleans Collection—De Haas has accurately and effectively captured the night battle in comparison to the Thomas S. Sinclair lithograph entitled *The Battle of New Orleans* (fig. 12) and J. Joffray's (n.d.) folk art painting based on the same print in the collection of the Chicago Historical Society (fig. 13).

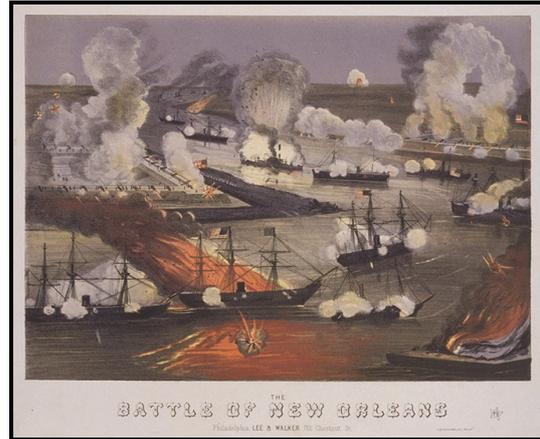


Figure 12. The Battle of New Orleans, Thomas S. Sinclair (ca. 1805-1881) lithographer, printed by Lee & Walker, Philadelphia, ca. 1862-1865. Library of Congress.

It is not surprising that De Haas chose to paint a difficult subject, a night scene, as he enjoyed the challenge: "I have, and always have had, a special fancy for moonlight-scenes; the oftener I see them the more I am impressed by them."⁵⁰ De Haas paints Admiral Farragut running the gauntlet between Forts Jackson and St. Philip on the Mississippi, past a blockade of moored hulks at 2:00 a.m. on April 24, 1862. Farragut sent in the fleet in two columns, aware that the channel was full of torpedoes, which lead to his famous command "Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead!" De Haas depicts Farragut's flagship, the *Hartford*, under attack by the Confederate ram *Manassas* on the left side of the painting, and the Confederate tugboat *Mosher* is seen heeling to port in the right foreground.⁵¹



Figure 13. Farragut's Fleet Passing Ft. Jackson and Ft. St. Philip, Louisiana, April 24, 1862, ca. 1862, by J. Joffray (n.d.). Chicago History Museum, ICHI-69962.

De Haas correctly shows the Union vessels lashed together as they passed the forts below New Orleans. As opposed to the Joffray painting of this battle—which incorrectly depicts the conflict happening in broad daylight—De Haas effectively captures the nighttime action. Liverpool marine art collector Fritz Gold notes that De Haas “uses strong colors with contrasting tones and he polarized light and dark for dramatic effect. Flashes of gunfire and the flames of burning ships light up the sky, made darker by the billowing smoke. Horizontal bands of light and shade across the water give depth to the surface, which reflects a ruddy glow. De Haas selects his detail carefully and creates a triangular composition with the vessels positioned in articulate groups.”⁵² De Haas’ accuracy is confirmed by the contemporary eyewitness account of Major Bell, staff officer under Major-General Benjamin F. Butler: “Imagine all the earthquakes in the world, and all the thunder and lightning storms together, in a space of two miles, all going off at once.”⁵³ Holzer, too, acknowledges this work as a “virtuoso painting,” particularly since night battles were difficult subjects to capture, “but it attracted skilled painters who prided themselves on their ability to master difficult subjects.”⁵⁴ Beyond the battle, De Haas painting is reminiscent of an industrial complex, complete with the orange glow of blazing infernos, piercing stacks and billowing black smoke.



Figure 14. *CSS Nashville, burning the Harvey Birch*, 1864, by Duncan McFarlane (1818-1865). Oil on canvas. 24 x 35 ½ inches. Peabody Essex Museum.

Apart from the distinct battles mentioned to this point, the majority of

maritime activity during the war involved Union blockades of the entire Atlantic and Southern coasts, which was combated by Confederate blockade-runners and raiders. Many of these vessels were built and purchased from British shipyards. One of the best examples involving the later vessel type—and one of the clearest examples of a Civil War marine painting constructed from a widely published illustration—is Duncan McFarlane’s *CSS Nashville Burning the Ship Harvey Birch*, 1864 (fig. 14), in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum. Scottish born Duncan McFarlane (1818-1865) settled in Liverpool, England around 1845, and became a marine artist who had ties to American shipmasters.⁵⁵ He may have visited the United States, probably Boston, as Nathaniel Currier published one of his works of the famous clipper ship *Dreadnought* off Tuskar light in 1856. He was essentially a regional English artist steeped in the traditions and conventions of Liverpool ship portraiture during that city’s shipping boom.⁵⁶ In this work depicting an encounter in the English Channel on November 19, 1862, McFarlane has crafted a documentary style painting elevated to the level of high style marine art in the manner of most recognizable artist of this genre, Samuel Walters.

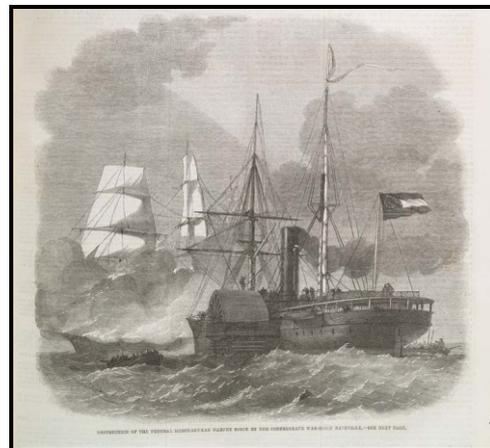


Figure 15. “Destruction of the Federal Merchantman *Harvey Birch* by the Confederate War-sloop *Nashville*.” *The Illustrated London News*, November 30, 1861. Courtesy of “The Civil War in America from the Illustrated London News”: A Joint Project by Sandra J. Still, Emily E. Katt, Collection Management, and the Beck Center of Emory University.

MacFarlane's painting depicts the medium clipper *Harvey Birch*—built by Irons and Grinell in Mystic, Connecticut, in 1854—hove-to with all sails set, engulfed in flames.⁵⁷ Contemporary accounts note a strong westerly wind during this event, but McFarlane has painted a rather calm scene in comparison to the description of the encounter and the print he worked from that ran in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 15). McFarlane uses a low horizon to allow the two vessels to sit in front of a vast sky, a traditional English composition and format in comparison to other paintings of ship rescues.⁵⁸ He has captured the *Nashville* in relative similarity to the print source, but has moved her from the right to left side of the scene in order to show the *Harvey Birch* in full broadside view. This is an effective adaptation to heighten the drama between both ships, but may stem from the fact that Captain W.H. Nelson of the *Harvey Birch* probably commissioned the painting.⁵⁹ Indeed, McFarlane has used effective techniques to highlight two essential symbolic readings of the painting. The most obvious is the documenting of a successful engagement for the South, while the other foreshadows the dominance of steam power over sail. While ominous skies hover over the burning *Harvey Birch*, they have opened over the *Nashville* with a subtle spotlight of sun hitting her stern.

As a counterpoint to McFarlane's painting of Confederate success, the Irish born marine painter James Hamilton, who emigrated to Philadelphia at the age of fifteen and garnered a reputation as the "American Turner," crafted one of the most symbolic works for the doomed secessionist South and the demise of wooden ships. Entitled *Foundering*, this work was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1864 and has been in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum since 1955 (fig. 16). It is very similar to works by Turner. Here, a distressed ship heels to port in a

cataclysmic scene where sea and sky meld. The only source of light rains down on the ship's ensign, a Confederate flag hoisted upside down, a common nautical practice to signal distress.



Figure 16. *Foundering*, 1863, by James Hamilton (1819-1878). Oil on canvas. 59 5/8 x 48 1/16 inches. Brooklyn Museum.

When the painting was acquired by the Brooklyn Museum in 1955, John Gordon, Curator of Paintings and Sculpture, noted: "It is daringly conceived and executed with broad, coarse brush strokes showing remarkable freedom for such an early date in American painting. Except for the warm color of the sunlight breaking through the clouds, the brilliant red, white and blue flag, the muddy tan of the sails and the spots of red in the rigging and along the decks, the colors are almost all cool greys, becoming increasingly darker and more forbidding until they reach the black of the sea in the foreground. In the background, only the fine spray whipped off the top of the waves by the wind relieves the grey sea."⁶⁰ Art historian Katherine Manthorne notes that Hamilton paired this painting with his 1864 *The Last Days of Pompeii*, which shows the ancient city's destruction in the midst of lurid lighting and raining ash and rock.⁶¹ This fitting ensemble heightened the impending doom for the South, as well as the beginning of the end for wood and sail.

Conclusion

On November 9, 1864, a ten-day fair was held in Boston to raise money for a National Sailor's Home. It was organized by local women associated with the Charlestown Navy Yard who believed that the United States Sanitary Commission's fairs did not address the needs of wounded seamen, one-third of whom were from New England. This event raised a staggering \$249,500 and culminated in the construction of the Sailor's Home in Quincy, Massachusetts.⁶² The fair was open from eleven in the morning until ten at night, and for the admission of one dollar, patrons could partake in special art exhibits and concerts, and purchase nautical goods such as ship models or even scraps of metal from both Union and Confederate ships.⁶³ In addition, a special newspaper entitled *The Boatswains' Whistle* was published during the run of the under the editorial oversight of Julia Ward Howe, lyricist of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.⁶⁴

One of the peculiar attractions of the fair, though, was a reenactment of the Battle of Hampton roads on the Frog Pond in the Boston Common using miniature models of the vessels (fig. 17).

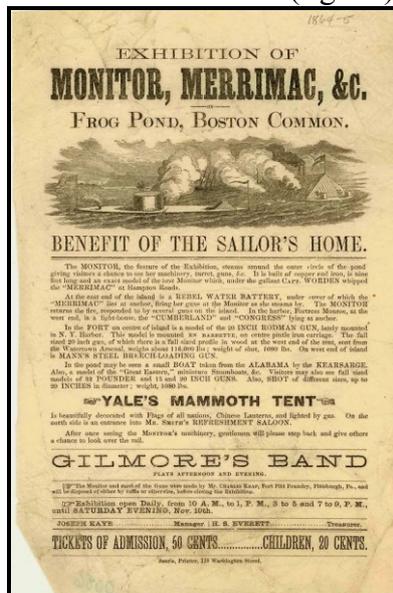


Figure 17. "Exhibition of Monitor, Merrimac, &c. on Frog Pond, Boston Common. Benefit of the Sailor's Home." Broadside. Boston: Searle, 1864. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society. Naturally, the *Monitor* was the star

attraction of this display shown three times a day as a recently unearthed broadside recounts:

The MONITOR, the feature of the Exhibition, steams around the outer circle of the pond giving visitors a chance to see her machinery, turret, guns, &c. It is built of copper and iron, is nine feet long and an exact model of the first Monitor, which, under the gallant Capt. WORDEN whipped the "Merrimac" at Hampton Roads. At the east end of the island is a REBEL WATER BATTERY, under cover of which the "MERRIMAC" lies at anchor, firing her guns at the Monitor as she steams by. The MONITOR returns the fire, responded to by several guns on the island. In the harbor, Fortess Monroe, at the west end, is a light-house, the "CUMBERLAND" and "CONGRESS" lying at anchor.⁶⁵

Only two years removed from the battle, the duel of ironclads was still fresh in the minds of the public. In addition, the battle was already mythologized as a Union victory when in fact both vessels had fought to a standstill, and both perished soon after their famed encounter.

Ironclads were not the only vessels represented at the fair. The *New Hampshire Sentinel* of November 17, 1864, mentions a miniature version of the USS *Kearsarge* that was constructed at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, "manned by 180 miniature figures, representing officers, marines and sailors,"⁶⁶ and there was also a small boat on display captured from the Confederate raider *Alabama*.⁶⁷ In fact, among the celebrities to attend the festivities such as Captain John Worden of the USS *Monitor*, was the USS *Kearsarge* along with the entire crew and Captain John Winslow. The vessel had serendipitously come to Boston only five months after her successful encounter with *Alabama* off the coast of Cherbourg in the

English Channel. The ship was one of the main attractions of the fair averaging sixteen hundred visitors a day—more than the *Monitor* display.⁶⁸

This coincidental pairing of two historic battles from the Civil War—one between ironclad vessels and the other between wooden ships—encapsulates the issues surrounding marine painting of the Civil War. Though the number of images made of the encounter between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac* is slightly greater than those of the battle between the CSS *Alabama* and the USS *Kearsarge*, the public popularity of the later conflict far outweighs the ironclad duel. Several well-known artists painted this subject during the war, including the French Impressionist Édouard Manet (1832-1883)(fig. 18).



Figure 18. The Battle of the U.S.S. Kearsarge and the C.S.S. Alabama, 1864, by Édouard Manet, (1832-1883). Oil on canvas. 54 ¼ x 50 ¾ inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Apart from the status of the artists, Holzer believes the popularity of the battle between the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama* stems from a nostalgia for the days of wooden ships after the war since: “One more great naval event captured the attention of Civil War artists. And while the first had been a battle of new technology—the *Monitor* and *Virginia*—...this...event was an archaic anachronism. But nonetheless (or maybe

precisely because it was old-fashioned) it was irresistible.”⁶⁹ In essence, this battle was viewed as a throwback of sorts—a duel on the high seas between two individual sailing ships like the War of 1812.

This was not a return to the days of yore, however. Both vessels were hybrid ships run by either sail or steam power, and during the encounter, only steam was used. Ironically, it was the deceptive use of iron that propelled the *Kearsarge* to victory. Captain Winslow covered areas of his ship’s hull in protective sheet chain, hidden underneath thin strips of sawed yellow pine. In his memoirs, the *Alabama*’s flamboyant captain Raphael Semmes opined: “Still the disparity was not so great, but that I might hope to beat my enemy in a fair fight. But he did not show me a fair fight, for, as it afterward turned out, his ship was iron-clad. It was the same thing, as if two men were to go out to fight a duel, and one of them, unknown to the other, were to put a shirt of mail under his outer garment. The days of chivalry being past...”⁷⁰

The longing for these encounters would be short lived, though. While both battles would be memorialized and romanticized in some paintings over the next few decades, their relevance would fade from the public consciousness in favor of Romantic seascapes and ship portraits of sailing yachts, the new obsession of the sailing world. Writer Henry James wrote in 1879: “because the Civil War was an internecine struggle, indeed a family conflict, it produced nothing near the nationalistic splurge of art that the War of 1812 engendered. What is remarkable aesthetically is less the paintings of the war itself than the transformation in American attitudes toward seascape that was occurring in the years around the war.”⁷¹ James assessment is accurate in terms of a shift. The public did not want to continue to see mechanization on the high seas, and ironically, neither did the United States government. Partisan politics

hampered the incorporation of steel plating into the navy for nearly two decades after the war, and the technological innovation of the iron-hulled warship would not emerge until the 1890s.

John Wilmerding believes that Civil War conflicts between steam-powered iron-hulled vessels “never stimulated artists in the way that they had been in the age of sail.”⁷² The reality, though, is that the naval Civil War has never caught on in the art market, and is not appreciated on a

connoisseurship level.⁷³ While Wilmerding notes that “Few marines of great prominence emerge from these years: it was not a war for marine painters to record,”⁷⁴ the breadth of canvases discussed in this paper shows that marine artists were still producing sophisticated works during the Civil War, ones that were imbued with nautical accuracy and universal significance and rivaled their contemporaries on land.

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Notes:

¹ This paper is dedicated to the memory of Fritz Gold, an important collector of marine art from the port of Liverpool, who worked on locating all the known maritime paintings of the Civil War in the hopes of crafting a book on the subject.

² Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Chambers: American Marine and Landscape Painter, 1808-1869* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2008), 43. Foster notes that this method of working was probably adopted from Thomas Chambers' brother George, also a marine painter, who "had renounced copying prints and the compositions of other artists in the late 1820s, vowing to work from nature as much as possible."

³ The *Merrimac* was one of many Union vessels in the Norfolk Naval Yard burnt and sunk at the outbreak of the war to prevent the Confederacy from using them. The Confederates were able to raise the *Merrimac* and refit her as an ironclad, "rechristening" it as the CSS *Virginia*. She was the most prominent Confederate ironclad vessel.

⁴ An ironclad was a wooden hulled vessel converted into an armored ship by sheathing it with iron railroad planking.

⁵ Foster, *Thomas Chambers*, 43, 129, footnote 67.

⁶ "The Naval Combat in the Chesapeake." *Harper's Weekly*, March 22, 1862: 183.

⁷ Foster, *Thomas Chambers*, 42.

⁸ Foster, *Thomas Chambers*, 42.

⁹ After the battle, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory wrote to Jefferson Davis echoing Foster's sentiment: "It will be remembered that the *Virginia* was a novelty in naval architecture, wholly unlike any ship that ever floated;...and yet, under all these disadvantages, the dashing courage and consummate professional ability of Flag Officer Buchanan and his associates achieved the most remarkable victory which naval annals record." Official records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion I, v. 7, 43. ebooks.library.cornell.edu.

¹⁰ As this painting is an unsigned attribution to Chambers, and one that was based directly on a print source, Foster believes that it was not a particular favorite of the artist. Based on her knowledge of Chambers' work, his signed canvases are ones of his own design, "holding to a standard of originality established by his brother, a distinguished marine artist." Foster, *Thomas Chambers*, 42.

¹¹ Fritz Gold, "Marine Painting and the Civil War," (Unpublished book proposal, Fritz Gold papers, 2002), 2.

¹² Daniel Finamore, "'To Paint a Storm': Perception and Meaning in Marine Painting," in *Romance of the Sea: An Exhibition of Marine Painting from Members' Collections* (Boston: St. Botolph Club, 2002), 2. The first American works that incorporated nautical subjects were Colonial era portraits of wealthy individuals. These paintings follow a formulaic convention of the sitter positioned standing or seated, surrounded with attributes of his profession in the foreground and/or background. For those men involved in mercantile trade, they were portrayed with easily discernable symbols of maritime ventures such as a spyglass.

¹³ The *Mount Vernon* was owned by the successful Salem merchant Elias Hasket, considered to be the first millionaire in the United States. Cornè painted the *Mount Vernon* at least twelve times for the family, attesting to the significance of the ship to Cornè.

¹⁴ Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 2. One of these scenes in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum is of Columbus and the Egg, based on and etching by Hogarth. This work, and many others, was commissioned by the East India Marine Society—an organization comprised of Salem supercargoes and masters who navigated the seas

beyond the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn. The mission of the society was to provide relief to widows and children of deceased members, to collect all material related to improving navigation, and to form "a museum of natural and artificial curiosities," which today is the Peabody Essex Museum.

¹⁵ Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 3.

¹⁶ Despite a growing number of artists painting nautical scenes in the United States, most marine art was still imported into the country. Daniel Finamore, the Russell W. Knight Curator of Maritime Art and History at the Peabody Essex Museum, sees a connection to the rise of American shipping and marine painting: "Possibly coincidentally, the international rise of ship portraiture as a genre closely mirrors the first arrivals of American ships in many of the world's major seaports. A market for documentary images of ships arose in many harbors of the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas, and as far off as Canton. Most of these paintings portray their subjects in almost photographic detail, with more formulaic backgrounds that often contain a single signature element to indicate the port the ship is entering or departing from, such as a distinctive lighthouse, breakwater or mountain...they were internationally influential with marine artists wherever they were transported." Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 3.

¹⁷ Walters painted ship portraits as well as seascapes and coastal views that he exhibited at the Liverpool Academy of Fine Arts and the Royal Academy. Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 4.

¹⁸ Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 3.

¹⁹ Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 4.

²⁰ Finamore, "To Paint a Storm," 5.

²¹ John Wilmerding, *American Marine Painting* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1987), 151.

²² Herman Melville, "A Utilitarian View of the Monitor's Fight," in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1866), 61-62.

²³ Harold Holzer and Mark E. Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: The Civil War in Art* (New York: Orion Books, 1993), 86-87.

²⁴ Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 90. Not all agreed with Melville. Literary critic Edmund Wilson sneered, "The celebration of current battles by poets who have not taken part in them has produced some of the emptiest verse that exists." Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 479, quoted in Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 94. Holzer's opinion of Civil War marine art changed a decade after this book, stating "In portraying technology, marine artists did brilliantly: prints of the land war rarely if at all

recognized the role of the railroad, the telegraph, or advanced weaponry... Like the literary giants Hawthorne and Herman Melville, marine artists recognized this military revolution immediately and fixed it into American visual memory." Harold Holzer, "Windows on the Civil War at Sea," *Naval History* Vol. 18 Issue 4 (Aug 2004): 17

²⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne also shared Melville's opinion of this new naval technology. In an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, he wrote: "On her quarter-deck, an elderly flag-officer was pacing to and fro, with a self-conscious dignity to which a touch of the gout or rheumatism perhaps contributed a little additional stiffness. He seemed to be a gallant gentleman, but of the old, slow, and pompous school of naval worthies, who have grown up amid rules, forms, and etiquette which were adopted full-blown from the British navy into ours, and are somewhat too cumbersome for the quick spirit of to-day. This order of nautical heroes will probably go down, along with the ships in which they fought valorously and strutted most intolerably. How can an admiral condescend to go to sea in an iron pot? What space and elbow-room can be found for quarter-deck dignity in the cramped lookout of the *Monitor*, or even in the twenty-foot diameter of her cheese-box? All the pomp and splendor of naval warfare are gone by. Henceforth there must come up a race of enginemen and smoke-blackened cannoneers, who will hammer away at their enemies under the direction of a single pair of eyes; and even heroism--so deadly a gripe is Science laying on our noble possibilities--will become a quality of very minor importance, when its possessor cannot break through the iron crust of his own armament and give the world a glimpse of it. At no great distance from the *Minnesota* lay the strangest-looking craft I ever saw. It was a platform of iron, so nearly on a level with the water that the swash of the waves broke over it, under the impulse of a very moderate breeze; and on this platform was raised a circular structure, likewise of iron, and rather broad and capacious, but of no great height. It could not be called a vessel at all; it was a machine,—and I have seen one of somewhat similar appearance employed in cleaning out the docks, or, for lack of a better similitude, it looked like a gigantic rat-trap. It was ugly, questionable, suspicious, evidently mischievous,—nay, I will allow myself to call it devilish; for this was the new war-fiend, destined, along with others of the same breed, to annihilate whole navies and batter down old supremacies. The wooden walls of Old England cease to exist, and a whole history of naval renown reaches its period, now that the *Monitor* comes smoking into view; while the billows dash over what seems her deck, and storms bury even her turret in green water, as she burrows and snorts along, oftener under the

surface than above. The singularity of the object has betrayed me into a more ambitious vein of description than I often indulge; and, after all, I might as well have contented myself with simply saying that she looked very queer. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Chiefly About War Matters by a Peaceable Man," *Atlantic Monthly* 10 (July 1862): 57-59. www.eldritchpress.org/nh/cawm.html.

²⁶ In reality, engagements between wooden frigates centered on unloading a barrage of heavy, iron canon balls against timber, crushing planks and exposing sailors to flying shrapnel. The aftermath of a battle, therefore, was a gruesome sight.

²⁷ Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 90.

²⁸ Jenny Gaschke, *Turmoil and Tranquility: The Sea Through the Eyes of Dutch and Flemish Masters, 1550-1700* (Greenwich, England: National Maritime Museum, 2008), 57.

²⁹ Harold Holzer, "Victory Without Glory? The Battle of Hampton Roads in Art," in *The Battle of Hampton Roads: New Perspectives on the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia*, Holzer, Harold and Tim Mulligan, eds. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 112. Holzer writes: "Land-based battlefield artists like Winslow Homer, by comparison, by using the United States mails, or hopping on board trains and traveling to publishing centers like Philadelphia or New York themselves, could quickly transport their first-hand action sketches to picture weeklies like *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, or to printmakers like Currier & Ives, which in turn promptly engraved or lithographed them and widely distributed them while the scenes they portrayed were still fresh. Not so with the marine artists. They were, after all, stuck on board ship, out of communication with their constituencies and potential patrons on land. They amassed sketchbooks, but in most cases, it took time before land-based Americans got to see the results of their experiences. Xanthus R. Smith's superb works, including several showing Admiral Du Pont's picturesque flagship, seldom made it to wide public view in a timely manner. Marine artists simply had no opportunity to display their works, or see to their adaptation into popular prints, while the war raged. Smith's greatest works were painted after the war ended."

³⁰ Daniel Finamore, *Capturing Poseidon: Photographic Encounters with the Sea* (Salem, Massachusetts: Peabody Essex Museum, 1998), 4. Finamore argues that long exposure times, the reflection of light on the sea, the movement of both clouds and water, and many other natural factors beyond the control of the photographer "were enough to chase all but the most intrepid photographers back into their studios." Finite water supply aboard ship also restricted processing

photographs to when the expedition returned. Most important, however, was the factor of the movement of ships and the design of an ironclad's exposed deck made it virtually impossible to capture a naval battle at this time.

³¹ Holzer states that one of the reasons marine artists were unable to accurately capture naval conflict was due to the Union Navy's reluctance to allow photography aboard ships, quoting Union Admiral David D. Porter's assessment of the situation in comparison to army artists and photographers: "Naval ships did not travel with reporters, photographers or sketchers, there was no room for these on board ship, and if perchance some stray reporter should get on board, the discomfort of a man of war, the exacting discipline, and the freer life in camp sent him back to shore, where in most cases he only remembered his association with the Navy as a trip without any satisfaction, and with no desire to do justice to the work of the naval service... The photographer, while he traveled with the army, would spend his days in photographing every noted scene, reprints of which were scattered broadcast over the Union, keeping the movement of our armies as clearly before the millions of people in the North as if the battles had been reflected in a mirror." While Porter's assessment is accurate, Holzer's analysis is skewed. David D. Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Sherman Publishing Company, 1886), iv, quoted in Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 94-94.

³² Another part of Holzer's analysis is based in a rather tautological critique of this genre of marine painting: "As for those few artists who did see the naval war firsthand, few captured the human experience in their work. There was no naval equivalent of camp artist Winslow Homer among them to depict the day-to-day-life of the common sailor. Civil War marine artists emphasized what they painted best: ships. And while landscape artists could shock the public by showing how war was ravaging the beauty of the terrain, marine painters could not: the sea inevitably swallowed up the evidence of death and destruction after battle, leaving little evidence to portray." Thus, artists are condemned for their inability to depict what cannot be seen: subjects outside of their artistic purview. Holzer, "Windows on the Civil War at Sea," 21.

³³ Heritage Auction Galleries, *The Honorable Paul H. Buchanan, Jr. Collection of American Paintings* (Dallas: Heritage Auction Galleries, June 10-11, 2009), 20.

³⁴ These new nautical innovations were of two general types: *rams* (like the *Virginia*) and *gunboats*—the principle new vessels for both navies, the former containing an iron bow-rams—or the monitor class (like the *USS Monitor*), which were completely new raft-like vessels with mostly

submerged hulls and a single rotating gun turret, created by the Swedish-American inventor John Ericsson. The term "monitor" was chosen by the Union as it represented the lesson they thought these boats would teach the Confederacy and Great Britain. Benjamin W. Labaree, et al., *America and the Sea: A Maritime History* (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1998), 338, 353.

³⁵ Barbara McNew, "The Fury and Terrible Beauty," *Naval History*, Vol. 14, Issue 3 (June 2000). web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.bu.edu.

³⁶ Quoted in McNew, "The Fury and Terrible Beauty." web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.bu.edu.

³⁷ Robert Wilson Torchia, *Xanthus Smith and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: The Schwarz Gallery, 1999), 11.

³⁸ McNew, "The Fury and Terrible Beauty." web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.bu.edu.

³⁹ Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 91.

⁴⁰ Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 94.

⁴¹ For more on Chapman, see Ben L. Bassham, *Artist and Soldier of the Confederacy* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998).

⁴² Gold, "Marine Painting and the Civil War," 15.

⁴³ Conrad Wise Chapman, 1898. www.mocchapmans.org.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Edward E. Deckert and Constance R. Cherba, "Alexander Simplot: Civil War Artist," *American History*, Vol. 41, Issue 2 (June 2006): 16-18, 70.

⁴⁵ Deckert and Cherba, "Alexander Simplot," 18.

⁴⁶ Deckert and Cherba, "Alexander Simplot," 18.

⁴⁷ Deckert and Cherba, "Alexander Simplot," 18.

⁴⁸ George William Sheldon, *American Painters: With One hundred and Four Examples of Their Work Engraved on Wood* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), 41.

⁴⁹ David Bernard Dearing, *Paintings and Sculpture in the Collection of the National Academy of Design* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2004), 149.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Sheldon, *American Painters*, 41.

⁵¹ Troiani, Don, *Civil War Journal: The Battles* (Thomas Nelson Inc, 1998),

⁵² Gold, "Marine Painting and the Civil War," 15-16.

⁵³ Benjamin Franklin Butler, *Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences of Major-General Benj. F. Butler* (Boston: A.M. Thayer & Co., 1892), 366.

⁵⁴ Holzer and Neely, Jr., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 88.

⁵⁵ A.S. Davidson, "Across the Western Ocean: American Ships by Liverpool Artists," in *Across the Western Ocean: American Ships by Liverpool Artists*, Daniel Finamore (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 1995), 20.

⁵⁶ Gold, "Marine Painting and the Civil War," 16.

⁵⁷ Daniel Finamore, *Across the Western Ocean: American Ships by Liverpool Artists* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 1995), 69.

⁵⁸ Gold, "Marine Painting and the Civil War," 16.

⁵⁹ Captain W.H. Nelson donated the painting to the Essex Institute in Salem, MA, and it was subsequently donated to the Peabody Museum of Salem. Before my clarification of the painting's provenance, the prominent Confederate flag off the *Nashville's* stern was viewed as a visual marker that the painting was crafted for a Southern client, not surprising given the strong ties between England and the South during most of the war, specifically the port of Liverpool. Dan Finamore notes that MacFarlane's signature is prominent on the canvas, characteristic of his paintings for American clients. Personal correspondence, April 17, 2012.

⁶⁰ John Gordon, "Two Paintings by James Hamilton (1819-1878)," *The Brooklyn Museum Bulletin* Vol. XVII, Number 4 (Summer 1956): 1.

⁶¹ Katherine Manthorne, *Creations and Renewal: Views of Cotopaxi by Frederic Edwin Church* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 50.

⁶² Helen Hannon, "Sea Battles on Boston Common," *Nineteenth Century* Vol. 30 Issue 2 (Winter 2010): 31.

⁶³ Hannon, "Sea Battles on Boston Common," 32-33.

⁶⁴ Hannon, "Sea Battles on Boston Common," 32.

⁶⁵ "Exhibition of *Monitor, Merrimac, &c.* on Frog Pond, Boston Common. Benefit of the Sailor's Home." Broadside. Boston: Searle, 1864. *American Broadsides and Ephemera*, Series 1, no. 22787.

⁶⁶ *New Hampshire Sentinel*, November 17, 1864.

⁶⁷ "Exhibition of *Monitor, Merrimac, &c.* on Frog Pond, Boston Common. Benefit of the Sailor's Home." Broadside. Boston: Searle, 1864. *American Broadsides and Ephemera*, Series 1, no. 22787.

⁶⁸ Hannon, "Sea Battles on Boston Common," 33.

⁶⁹ Holzer, "Windows on the Civil War at Sea," 19.

⁷⁰ Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* (Baltimore, MD: Kelly Piet & Co., 1869), 753.

⁷¹ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (1879) in *The Shock of Recognition*, Edmund Wilson ed., rev. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955), 536, quoted in Roger B. Stein, *Seascape and the American Imagination* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc./Publisher, in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1975), 84.

⁷² Wilmerding, *American Marine Painting*, 150.

⁷³ Holzer believes this is the case for prints as well: "Heroism and glorious feats of arms were the principal subjects of popular prints of the Civil War, and one finds in them quite a different outlook from Hawthorne's. But the ironclad naval vessels devised during the Civil War did look like

harbingers of an ugly industrialism to come, and one might think that printmakers had difficulty making them fit the simple need for glory and patriotism. Certainly collectors and connoisseurs since that time have shunned Civil War naval subjects. Naval prints of the Civil War are twice removed from genuine respect. First, the prestige in collecting naval prints attaches to images from the age of sail, especially from the War of 1812. Second, the navy's role in the Civil War was, by almost any reckoning, of less importance than the army's." Mark E. Neely, Jr. and Harold Holzer, "Twilight of the Wooden Ships: Technology and Tradition in Naval Prints," in *The Union Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War North* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 111.

⁷⁴ Wilmerding, *American Marine Painting*, 150.