

The Chemawa American

Printed at Chemawa, Oregon, and Devoted to the Interests of Indian Education

Vol. XXI

Wednesday, April 9, 1919

No. 26

ERICSSON'S "CHEESE-BOX"

It is well for all of us to familiarize ourselves with important facts relative to the history of our country. Our patriotism is based upon either our national history or the ideals for which the nation stands. The following article from an exchange dealing with history relative to Ericsson's "Cheese-Box" is certainly worth reading by our younger readers and worthy of review by all who may have read it "years ago:"

The people of the North who had anxiously noted the destruction wrought in Hampton Roads, Va., early in March, 1862, by the Confederate iron-clad ram Virginia—the Merrimac which had been raised from the bottom of the harbor at the Gosport navy yard, near Norfolk and rebuilt—and awaited with sinking hearts the further disastrous inroads on shipping which they believed inevitable must have found little to encourage and cheer them in the sight of the odd little vessel that at a little after 12 o'clock on the the night of March 9 moved into Hampton Roads from the sea.

This queer-looking craft, commanded by Lieut. John L. Worden, had been named the Monitor. It had been built rather quietly at Greenpoint, L. I., under the direction of Capt. John Ericsson, eminent Swedish engineer and inventor of the screw propeller for navigation.

Though it was novel in form and appearance, it was quite a pygmy, compared to the formidable Confederate vessel. Its flat-bottom hull was only 124 feet long, 34 feet wide at the widest part and eight and a-half feet deep. Above it was a second hull which was five feet high and extended out over it more than three feet all around except at the ends where the projection was 25 feet, affording protection to the propeller, anchor and rudder.

It was strongly built of three-inch iron and the exposed parts were covered by a 30-inch wall of hard oak which in turn was protected by six-inch iron armor. A shot could not reach the lower hull without passing through 52 feet of water and then instead of a square hit it would imping against the iron wall at an angle of 10 degrees.

Projecting above the low deck at the center was a

round tower, 20 feet in diameter and 10 feet in height, made to revolve by steam power. The tower which was known as a revolving turret was the invention of T. R. Timby, an American inventor who conceived the idea of such a turret for military purposes in his boyhood and subsequently developed it as well as a floating dry-dock, a turbine water wheel and a method of firing ordnance by electricity. In this turret which was made of heavy iron were mounted two 11-inch Dahlgren guns.

When the steel-clad Merrimac which had steamed out of Norfolk before sunrise on the morning of March 9—Sunday—appeared the Monitor bravely moved out to meet her. Then the turret which the Confederates dubbed the "Yankee cheese-box" began to revolve and the guns inside hurled forth their big projectiles in rapid succession. The Merrimac let go with mighty broadsides but the heaviest of her missiles rebounded harmlessly from the turret and hull of the Monitor. For some time neither antagonist succeeded in getting in a telling blow but at length in an unusually severe encounter the Confederate vessel was so much disabled that she was obliged to run back to Norfolk.

That battle, regarded by historians as one of the decisive battles of the Civil war, marked the transition from wooden sailing vessels for naval use to steam-driven ships of steel. The advantages of the Monitor type of vessels were recognized by the government and a number were built and used successfully. Several European countries also built similar vessels at once.

An uncovered still full of fermenting grain, tucked away in the hills some 12 miles north of Columbus, Ga., looked so inviting to a cow that she couldn't resist pushing her head through the narrow opening and eating her fill of the sour mash. With her greediness appeased her next thought was for a shady spot where she could sleep off the effects of her alcoholic repast but her head wouldn't come out of the opening. The still wasn't a large one and the cow, thoroughly frightened, gyrated away in a blind dash for liberty, carrying the still with her. She was finally caught and released, sobered and chastened by her unpleasant experience. Revenue officers were notified and they took the trail back to where the still originally stood but nothing of the whereabouts of the owners could be learned.