



UNION NAVY REPULSED—In April of 1863, the Union Navy decided to capture the Confederate port of Charleston, S.C. The decision was made partly because of Charleston's symbolic status, partly because it was a haven for blockade runners and partly because the North now had a fleet of new iron-clad fighting ships. The attack failed, and after inspecting the damage

inflicted on his fleet by Confederate guns, Adm. Samuel DuPont decided not to renew the attack. Union Navy guns reduced Fort Sumter to a pile of rubble, but Charleston was to remain in Confederate hands until early 1865. This drawing from the Library of Congress collection shows the bombardment of the city. (UPI)

Union Repulsed at Charleston

By MERTON T. AKERS
UPI Correspondent

To Northerners, Charleston, S.C., was "the nursery of disunion."

For it was in Charleston, when the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, that the shooting part of the Civil War started.

Charleston ranked second only to Richmond as a symbol of the Confederacy and second only to the capital as a prime target to be hit.

In addition to its symbolic value Charleston also was a rich port for blockade running.

By early 1863 the Federal blockade was strangling the Confederacy. At first the Southerners had laughed it off. They said it never could be enforced along the vast Atlantic and Gulf coasts, so cut up with streams, small harbors and inlets.

"This reasoning had good basis at first and, had the South made prompt and efficient use of opportunity and resources at hand, by placing credits abroad and running in

essential supplies, the result of the first year's blockade might largely have nullified its effect for the last three," Thomas C. DeLeon, a protégé of President Jefferson Davis and a confidential clerk in the Richmond government, wrote later. "But the very inefficiency of the blockade at the outset lulled the South into false security."

Enterprise Misjudged
"The South misjudged—until error had proved fatal—the enterprise and grit of Yankee character. So gradual were appreciable results of this naval growth, so nearly imperceptible was the actual closing of southern ports, that the masses of the people realized no real evil until it had long been an accomplished fact."

Partly because of Charleston's symbolic status, partly because it was a haven for blockade runners and partly because the North now had a new fleet of iron-clad fighting ships, the U.S. Navy decided in April 1863 to try to capture the port.

Admiral Samuel F. DuPont, commanding the South Atlantic blockading squadron, had assembled a formidable fleet of iron-clads. He had seven monitors, improved versions of John Ericsson's original ship which had fought the Confederate iron-clad Merrimack to a standstill in Hampton Roads more than a year before.

The Admiral had been impressed with the ability of the new monitors to take punishment when the Montauk destroyed the C.S.S. Nashville in the Ogeechee River south of Savannah, Ga., while under fire from Fort McAllister.

The new monitors carried two guns—a 15-inch and an 11-inch.

The fleet left its anchorage at 1:15 p.m. April 7, 1863 and started up the main ship channel to the Charleston harbor. Fort Sumter was its chief target, the day which had withstood a fort and night of bombardment in '61 before surrendering to the South Carolinians, commanded then and now by Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard.

Pushed Big Raft
Four monitors led the line of ships, the Weehawken in front, then the Passaic, the Montauk and the Patapsco. The Weehawken pushed a big raft ahead to guard against mines.

Then came the flag-ship, New Ironsides, with DuPont aboard. It was a powerful but unwieldy iron-clad ship, carrying 14 11-inch guns, 2 150-pound Parrotts and 2 50-pound Dahlgrens.

Next came the monitors Catskill, Nantucket and Nahant.

The Keokuk, a double-turreted "turtleback," brought up the rear.

"The day . . . was very beautiful; there was little wind and the sea was smooth," Cmdr. C. R. P. Rodgers, DuPont's chief of staff, wrote later.

But the going was rough for the Federal fleet.

The first shot was fired at 3 p.m. from Fort Moultrie, on the east shore of the harbor. Fort Sumter at the mouth of the harbor then went into action along with Battery Wagner on the south and the others around the area within range.

The Weehawken hit obstructions the Confederates had placed in the channel and stopped. That threw the line of ships into confusion. The New Ironsides, a deep-draft ship found itself with only a foot of water under it and was forced to toss out an anchor so the tide would swing it

THIS WAS THE CIVIL WAR

back into the deeper part of the channel.

As it floated back into the channel, it came directly over a Confederate mine. On shore the gunner charged with setting off the mine electrified it. But an ordnance wagon had run over the wires on the beach and he was unable to set off the mine.

Fire and Hell

When the Confederate guns . . . were turned upon the ironclads, the sight was one that no one who witnessed it will ever forget," Rodgers wrote, "sublime, infernal, it seemed as if the fires of hell were turned on the Union fleet."

"The air seemed full of heavy shot, and as they flew they could be seen as plainly as a baseball in one of our games."

"On board the Ironsides, the sense of security the iron walls gave those within was wonderful—a feeling akin to that which one experiences in a heavy storm when the wind

and hail beat harmlessly against the windows of a well-protected house.

"This, however, was not equally felt in the monitors; for in their turrets the nuts that secured their laminated plates flew wildly, to the injury and discomfiture of the men at the guns, while the solid plates of the Ironsides gave no such trouble; and although she was reported to have been struck ninety-five times, she was uninjured except by the loss of a port shutter and the piercing of her unarmored ends."

The forward Union monitors penetrated to about 1,400 yards of Sumter but short of the point DuPont had designated as the best position to attack.

There they traded shots with the fort. The Keokuk steamed up and joined in the fight. She advanced to a point about 900 yards from the fort and was hit many times.

About 5 p.m. DuPont signaled his fleet to retire. "We

will renew (the fight) early in the morning," he told his chief of staff.

That night DuPont surveyed the damage. He found that the Keokuk had been hit 90 times. (It sank the next morning.)

Hit 53 Times
The Weehawken had been hit 53 times and was leaking; the Passaic 35 times; the Montauk 14 times without material damage; the Patapsco 47 times; the Catskill 20 times; the Nantucket 51 times; the Nahant 36 times and badly mauled.

The Ironsides had fired only one broadside and was uninjured.

DuPont decided the next morning not to renew the action.

"We have met with a sad repulse; I shall not turn it into a great disaster."

Although Navy guns later shot Sumter into a pile of rubble, Charleston was not taken until it was flanked on the land side by Gen. William T. Sherman early in 1865.

Lectures Continue Throughout Week

"It is Written" lectures are continuing three nights weekly in the American Legion hall in Central Point, according to Duane Corwin, lecturer.

"David, a Young Hero," will be shown Monday night and the lecture subject will be, "The Mark of Two Families."

On Tuesday night the topic will be "Baptized Embezzlers," and the film shown, "David, King of Israel."

The same schedule will be followed in the grade school gymnasium in Shady Cove on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights.

Hospital Escapee Cornered in Texas

Nacogdoches, Tex. — (UPI) — Bloodhounds and a National Guard tank Saturday flushed out a criminally insane man holed up in the East Texas Piney Woods with five rifles and shotguns.

The man, Ellis Whitaker, 49, broke out of the state hospital for the criminally insane at Rusk, Tex., a week ago.

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