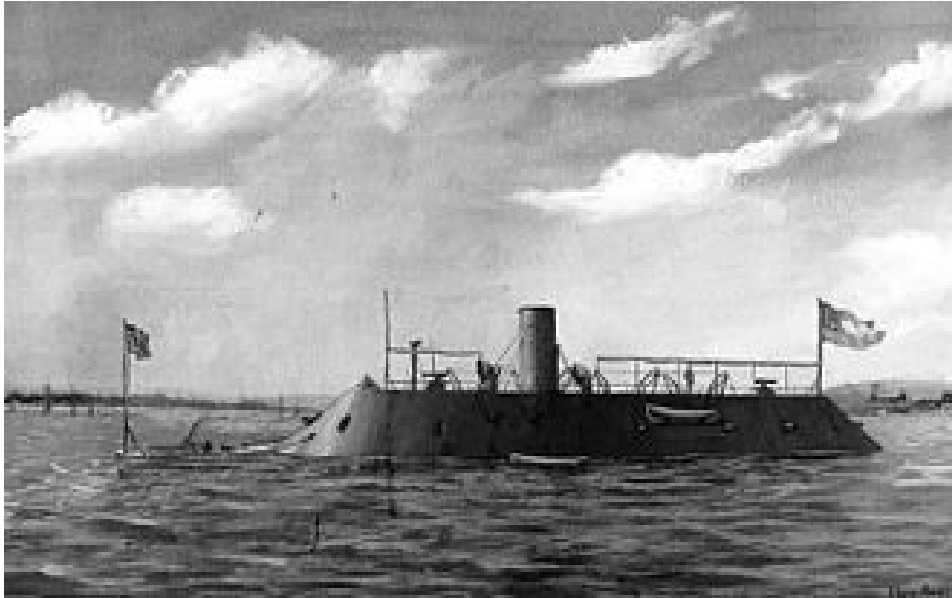


# Battle of Hampton Roads

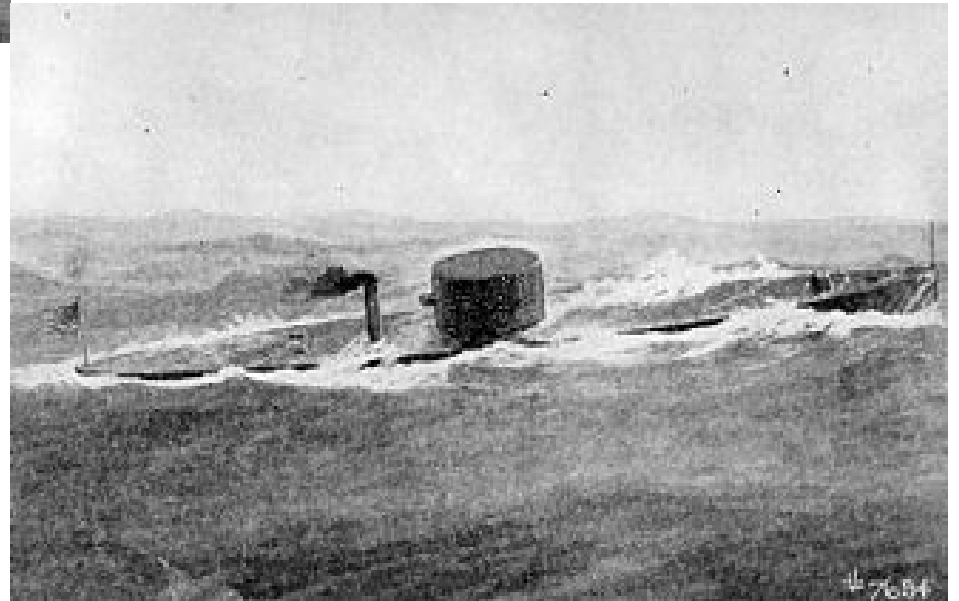


# The Protagonists

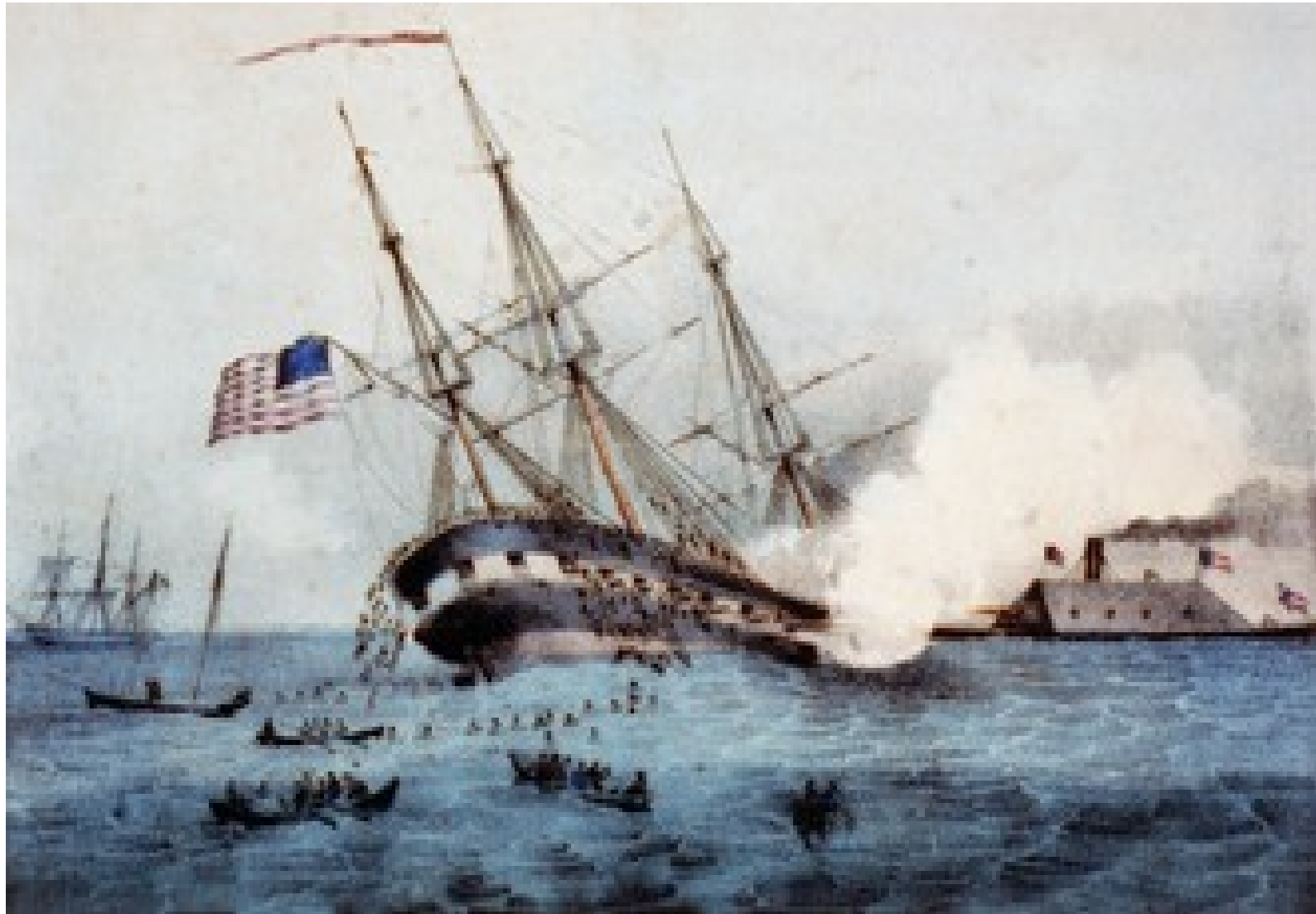


CSS Virginia

USS Monitor



# March 8<sup>th</sup> – Virginia Wreaks Havoc



# March 9<sup>th</sup> – Monitor Fights Virginia



# Destruction of the Combatants



# The Victors

- Tactically – CSS Virginia
- Strategically – USS Monitor (only in part)
- Monitor name defined a new type of warship

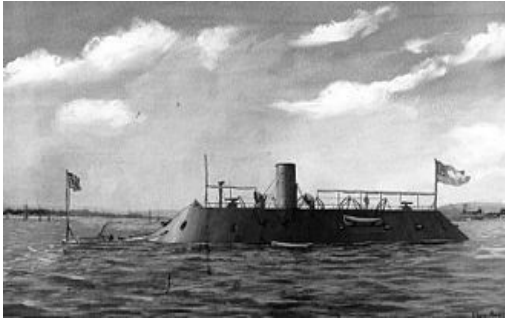
# Battle of Hampton Roads



## *The First Fight between Ironclads – by Louis Prang*

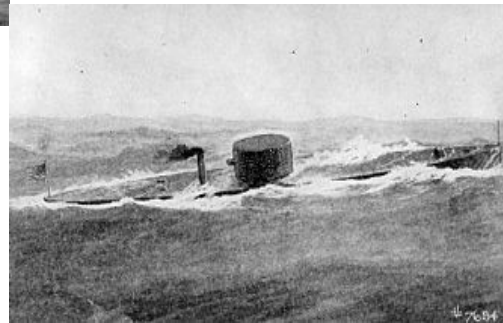
- 1<sup>st</sup> between armoured ships
- Not the first armoured ships to be built (French armoured frigate Gloire in '59 then HMS Warrior in '60)
- Hampton Roads, VA, a branch of Chesapeake Bay fed by several rivers, principally the James River, leading to Richmond. Close to Potomac River, leading to Washington DC.
- Fought over 2 days March 8&9, 1862.

# The Protagonists



CSS Virginia

USS Monitor



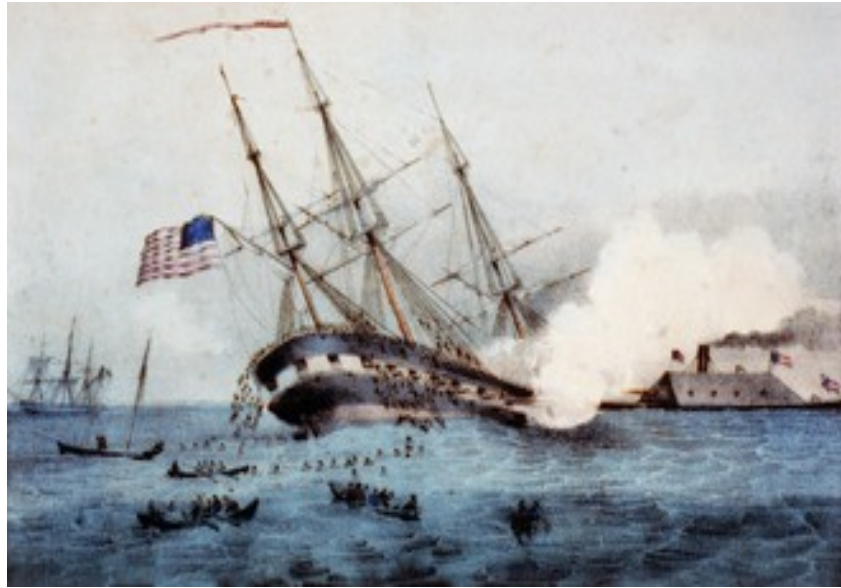
## CSS Virginia

- Built as Steam Frigate USS Merrimac(k) – scuttled in Gosport Navy Yard (since named Norfolk NY) by burning to waterline 20/04/1861 after Feds blocked the channel.
- USN, part of Union forces, left her, along with much equipment inc. 1000 guns, when they evacuated the area.
- Recovered by Feds and rebuilt as a “casemate” Ironclad. 4000Tons, with 4” armour over 24” timber, 1200hp giving 5-6kn. (but engines were shot, so maybe only 3-4). 2 \* 7” & 2 \* 6.4” rifled guns, 6 \* 9” smooth-bore, all muzzle-loaders. 3 gun ports forward and aft, 4 on each beam. Also a ram! Plus, midships guns could fire heated shot!
- Commissioned just a few days before 1<sup>st</sup> sortie, still had workmen aboard.

## USS Monitor

- Designed by Swede John Erickson, built in 101 days. 1<sup>st</sup> turret warship ever.
- 990Tons, 1”-3” armour over 30” timber, but 8” turret. 320Hp giving 6kn. 2 \* 11” smoothbore muzzle-loaders.
- Commissioned Feb. '62. Towed from NY Mar. 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>

## March 8<sup>th</sup> – Virginia Wreaks Havoc



### March 8<sup>th</sup>.

- *Virginia* proceeds down-river with 5 smaller ships into the Roads and engages sailing frigates *Cumberland* and *Congress*, sinking the former by ramming.
- Ram was damaged & *Virginia* took on lots of water, but quickly recovered..
- *Congress* retreated and grounded herself, where she was badly damaged and soon surrendered.
- *Virginia* started to rescue crew, but was fired on by Union shore battery, prompting her captain to use heated shot to set *Congress* alight. Burned all day & eventually blew up.
- *USS Minnesota*, a steam frigate which had run aground earlier, was next engaged, although *Virginia* was unable to close because of shallows (she drew 22') & attack was suspended for the night.
- This was the USN's heaviest defeat until Pearl Harbour! 2 ships sunk, 250 killed (2 killed on *Virginia*). Panic ensued in Washington.

## March 9<sup>th</sup> – Monitor Fights Virginia



### March 9<sup>th</sup>.

- *Monitor* arrived during the night, was ordered to protect *Minnesota*, so positioned accordingly.
- *Virginia* proceeded back down-river at dawn to sink *Minnesota*, but encountered *Monitor*. Action commenced.
- After several hours of inconclusive firing with neither able to seriously damage the other (*Virginia* only had shell ammo. & no AP shot, *Monitor* hampered by using 15lb propellant, not enough for shot to penetrate armour), *Virginia* struck *Monitor's* pilot-house, temporarily blinding her captain. Action was broken off while personnel were changed.
- *Virginia* believed action was over so withdrew to undertake repairs.
- *Monitor* thought that they had won the day, but in accordance with orders to protect *Minnesota*, she did not pursue.

### Spring Stand-off.

- *Virginia* under repair for a month then returned to the Roads. *Monitor* remained on station. Union blockade squadron enhanced by several more ships.
- Neither side prepared to re-engage except in very favourable circumstances, so they spent the next month "posturing".
- Neither ship ever fought again!

# Destruction of the Combatants



## **Virginia:**

Her end came first. The unbroken Northern blockade meant Norfolk was of little use. She was taken down to Craney Island near Portsmouth on May 11<sup>th</sup>, and set alight. She burned throughout the day, until her magazines eventually blew up.

## **Monitor:**

Remained in the area until Christmas Day '62, when she was ordered to Beaufort, NC, to aid the blockade there. Whilst under tow, wind increased, she took on water and foundered, with 16 men lost.

## The Victors

- Tactically – CSS Virginia
- Strategically – USS Monitor (only in part)
- Monitor name defined a new type of warship

- Both ships withdrew from the battle area after largely inconclusive action, although Virginia had inflicted slightly more damage.
- Strategic situation largely unchanged. Union blockade unbroken, although Virginia controlled Hampton Roads and the rivers.
- Monitor design principles used by North throughout the war for a succession of ships principally used in rivers supporting army actions.
- Name used right through to end WWII for a type of slow shallow-draft warship with a big-gun turret (usually a twin), providing support to land forces from shallow coasts and rivers.