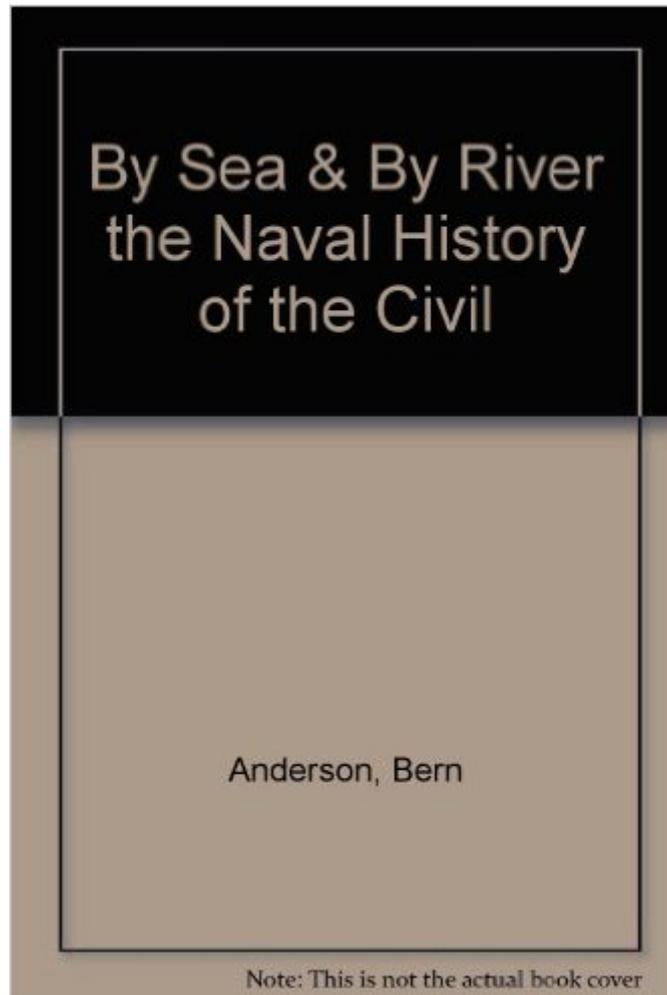


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# By Sea And By River;: The Naval History Of The Civil War



## Synopsis

Less bloody and less known than the land campaigns of the Civil War, the naval battles—and especially the naval blockade of the South—were crucial factors in the outcome of the war. The spectacular battle between the Monitor and the Merrimack marked the debut of ironclads, a revolution in naval warfare. Ships supported McClellan's Peninsula Campaign and Grant's conquest of the Mississippi Valley. The raiding of the Confederate cruisers Sumter, Florida, and Alabama, Farragut's capture of the forts in Mobile Bay, and the interception of foreign ships on their way to trade with the South all led to the North's eventual triumph. Bern Anderson, a retired admiral, provides sketches of many of the leading characters in the action: Gideon Welles, David Farragut, Stephen Mallory, Andrew Foote, and the Confederate commander Raphael Semmes. Anderson delineates the new kind of war being born in the rivers and oceans of the U.S. during these years, in this first effective joint action by military and naval forces in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Admiral Bern is an entertaining writer of history and manages to include a lot of personal anecdotes from letters and diaries. From my knowledge and visits to Civil War forts around the country the author appears to be historically accurate. I would caution that the author seems to be writing primarily from a Union viewpoint. I am sending the book to some of my Navy friends.

"By Sea and by River" by Bern Anderson, is an excellent, easy to read story of the Naval History of the Civil War. Without going into detail which would bore the amateur historian, Anderson provides

the reader with an excellent overview of Naval aspects of the war. This book covers the major naval theatres of the war. In the war on the western rivers the Union Navy played a major role in support of the Army attacks along the rivers, such as at Forts Henry and Donelson and Vicksburg. The assault on Island Number Ten in the Mississippi River makes an interesting read. Much attention is directed toward the Blockade, which was, probably, the major naval contribution to the war. All aspects of the blockade are examined. Anderson explains the purpose of the blockade and its role as one of the major methods of strangling the South economically. He details the amphibious operations and how they fit into the blockade. In opposition to the blockade Confederate iron-clad rams had spectacular moments of success but were of little overall significance. The book explains the efforts and limitations of blockade runners and Confederate raiders. The diplomatic entanglements occasioned by the blockade and raiders are presented from all sides. At the conclusion, Anderson sums up the significance of the naval aspect of the war, a significance which many Civil War students will overlook. "By Sea and by River" is an excellent introduction to a very important and, perhaps, decisive, aspect of the Civil War.

Most popular histories of the Civil War focus almost primarily on land battles, almost to the exclusion of naval aspects of the war. What little reference there is to naval actions tends to be in the nature of trivia, such as the first submarine to sink a ship (C.S.S. R. L. Huntley), the first battle of ironclads in the Western World, the Monitor and Virginia (Merrimack) or songs about the daring Confederate raider, Alabama. As interesting as these anecdotes are, they fail to tell the true story of the important part that naval forces played in the Union conquest of the Confederacy. One seeking an understanding of the significance of the naval forces in the Civil War can find it in *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War* by Bern Anderson. Anderson provides the reader with an excellent overview of naval aspects of the war. The Union war plans called for conquest of the Confederacy by dividing the South and preventing the importation of needed manufactured goods from Europe. Despite attention directed toward the land war, the war was really decided in the West and along the Confederate coastlines. In these two theatres the Union Navy played a crucial role which is often overlooked by leading to the division and economic strangulation of the South. The division of the Confederacy was achieved by two major thrusts, one down the Mississippi River and another through Kentucky, Tennessee and on to Atlanta, culminating in Sherman's March to the Sea. The thrust down the Mississippi involved significant naval action. The economic strangulation of the Confederacy, was achieved by the naval blockade. The U.S. Navy on the western rivers was placed under the command of Captain Andrew H. Foote in September, 1861. In the beginning he

was lacking only two requirements of a successful navy, boats and sailors. The shortage of boats was solved by purchases from the Eads Boatworks of St. Louis, founded by engineer James B. Eads, who is primarily remembered for building the Eads Bridge at St. Louis. The shortage of sailors was greater challenge. Although provided with sufficient officers, Foote was left to his own devices to recruit enlisted men. He finally achieved some success in recruiting sailors in the Great Lakes region. With the fleet assembled, Foote was ready to join General Grant in the planning and execution of the thrust down the Mississippi and other western rivers. In November, 1861 Grant began moving against Confederate strongholds in Kentucky, transported by river and supported by naval gunboats. Grant's first great conquest in Southern territory was the conquest of Fort Henry, Tennessee on February 6, 1862. The attack was commenced by four gunboats under the command of Capt. Foote. The plan was for troops under Grant's command to cut off the fort from the rear while it was being bombarded from the river. Muddy roads and high water prevented Grant from cutting off the troops sent from Fort Henry to Fort Donelson. At 1:50, after less than two hours of naval bombardment, the fort surrendered. Grant's troops then arrived to take possession. The next Fort attacked was Fort Donelson on February 14. The fort yielded to a combination of bombardment by four gunboats and assault of 17,000 troops under Grant's command on February 15. Action next shifted to the Middle Mississippi from March to June, 1862. The first Confederate obstacle encountered was Island No. 10, the tenth island south of Cairo. It surrendered on April 6, 1862 after a spectacular nighttime naval bombardment and a land assault. Similar methods were successful at Fort Pillow and Memphis. Vicksburg would fall to a land based siege and a naval bombardment from both river and ocean based vessels. The main mission of the ocean going Navy was to enforce the blockade. This was accomplished by interception of blockade runners and the capture of ports. In his book, Anderson does a fine job of relating both the strategy behind the actions and details about the actions themselves. The actual nature of blockade running actions, involving the shallow draft runners against the deeper water naval vessels is described. The actions against port cities often involved a joint naval bombardment with land assault, the combination which was successful along the western rivers and in later wars. Prominent among these assaults were the captures of Charleston, New Orleans and forts guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay. The final assault upon Fort Fisher was a fitting conclusion to the campaigns of naval-land assaults. General Lee had predicted that his army could not hold out if supplies coming through Fort Fisher were cut. Within three months after the fall of Fort Fisher, the Army of Northern Virginia was compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. *By Sea and By River* also includes analysis of the effects of the campaigns on other aspects of the war. The stories of the Confederate raiders are told, both in

their own rights, as well as the effect that they had on Northern commerce and the obligation they created on the Union Navy to reassign ships from blockade duty to raider chasing. The effect of the raiders and the blockade on relations with foreign nations, with particular regard to the Confederate attempts to obtain recognition and aid are discussed. *By Sea and By River* provides the reader with a fine understanding of this most significant, but often overlooked part of a most studied war.

Bern Anderson's "By Sea and By River" is still perhaps the best one-volume history of the naval side of the Civil War. Strongly recommended for first-time readers on the topic.

A very satisfying read that I found through the bibliography in another book I was reading. A lot of information is in print about the activities of the river gunboats, but this is the first modern (1962) account of naval affairs on both fresh and salt water I have found. Doubtless there are others, but this is a good one.

Still reading it. A great overview of the War on the water. Not knowing as much as I should about this aspect of the Civil War I find the material to still be detailed and engaging.

somewhat helpful to my research

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