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Mariners' Museum marks 152nd anniversary of ironclad battle

"The fierce struggle in Hampton Roads... was a conflict of the old with the new and the new has won the day. It will stand out in bold relief in the history of naval warfare as one of the signal battles of the world."

The Philadelphia Inquirer
March 12, 1862

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – One hundred and fifty-two years ago on March 8 and 9, the great naval conflict of The American Civil War raged in the body of water known as Hampton Roads.

The Mariners' Museum will commemorate the 152nd anniversary of the first meeting of ironclad ships from March 7 to 9 with Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend. The event features a Civil War motor coach tour; History Bites, a food-tasting event featuring celebrity judges; family programs; living history interpreters and "A Conversation with Mr. Lincoln," featuring Pulitzer Prize winner Harold Holzer and George Buss, a leading Lincoln interpreter who has appeared at the White House. Visitors will also get a first look at the traveling exhibition *Between the States: Photographs of the American Civil War from the George Eastman House*.

The History

The Battle of Hampton Roads was the culmination of a Civil War arms race between the Union and the Confederacy. After word reached the Union that the Confederacy was converting the hull of the burned frigate USS *Merrimac* into the ironclad CSS *Virginia*, the scramble to build a Union ironclad commenced.

Built in 118 days, the USS *Monitor*, Swedish engineer John Ericsson's "cheesebox on a raft," arrived in Hampton Roads on the evening of March 8, just a few hours too late to save the Union vessels USS *Cumberland* and USS *Congress* from the Confederate ironclad's rampage earlier that day.

The March 9 four and a half-hour battle was a draw between the *Monitor* and the *Virginia* (popularly called the *Merrimac*). But there was a clear winner in iron vs. wood. On March 8, every wooden warship in the world had been rendered obsolete in the space of one afternoon. On March 9, their designs changed forever with the advent of the *Monitor's* gun turret.

The *Monitor* met her end at the close of 1862, sinking off the coast of North Carolina while in route to Beaufort, NC. Sixteen men out of her crew of 63 went to the bottom with her.

In 1973, the wreck of the *Monitor* was discovered, leading to the creation of the first federally protected marine sanctuary, the NOAA *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary. In 1987, The Mariners' Museum was designated by NOAA, on behalf of the federal government, as the repository for artifacts and archives from the USS *Monitor*. Working with NOAA and the U.S. Navy, the Museum has received more than 1,100 artifacts from the *Monitor*, including its steam engine, propeller and the *Monitor's* iconic artifact - its revolving gun turret, recovered in 2002. In 2007, The Mariners' Museum opened the \$30-million, 65,000-square-foot USS *Monitor* Center, proclaimed by *The Wall Street Journal* as "an ironclad must-see."

Weekend Highlights

A full listing of weekend activities is available at BattleofHamptonRoads.com

Then and Now: An Illustrated Tour of the Peninsular Campaign
March 7, 8:45 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Separate ticket pricing

This motor coach tour will examine historic sites in Virginia's Tidewater region that were documented by the artists and photographers in the area in the 1860s. The tour features Dr. Anna Holloway, curator of the USS *Monitor* Center, and Civil War historian and photographer Fran DuCoin, featured in the December 2013 issue of *Civil War Times*.

The tour will take visitors to sites depicted in such publications as *Harper's Weekly* and *Leslie's Illustrated*, and where photographers James Gibson, Alexander Gardner and Mathew Brady documented Gen. George McClellan's 1862 Peninsular Campaign.

The tour is \$120 for Mariners' Museum Members and \$145 for non-members, and includes a box lunch and an evening reception with President Abraham Lincoln. For tickets, visit BattleofHamptonRoads.com.

The Civil War in the East: Then & Now, with Garry Adelman
Saturday, March 8, 11 a.m.
Included with admission

Join Civil War Trust Director of History and Education Garry Adelman for a photographic tour of the Civil War's eastern theater, with an emphasis on the Virginia Peninsula. Adelman will feature campaigns and actions from Harpers Ferry to Appomattox, from Washington to Richmond and from the Shenandoah River to the James River.

Adelman is author, co-author or editor of 20 books on the Civil War, and is vice president of the Center for Civil War Photography.

A Conversation with President Lincoln,
with Harold Holzer and George Buss
Saturday, March 8, 2 p.m.
Included with admission

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Harold Holzer will sit down Saturday afternoon with President Abraham Lincoln for a conversation about current events. Current events of the 1860s, that is.

Holzer is a leading authority on Abraham Lincoln and the political culture of the Civil War era. He has authored, co-authored or edited 46 books, including *The Civil War in 50 Objects* and *1863: Lincoln's Pivotal Year*. Buss is a leading Lincoln interpreter, whose likeness to Lincoln and mastery of the 16th president's history and mannerisms has been witnessed by audiences including President George W. Bush.

History Bites: A Food-Tasting of Historical Proportions
Saturday, March 8, 6-9 p.m.
Separate ticket pricing

Saturday night, the Battle of Hampton Roads commemoration takes a mouth-watering turn, as 10 of the region's top restaurants and

caterers prepare culinary delights inspired by Civil War-era menus from both the North and South.

Winners will be selected in several categories, including Judges' Choice, Ironclad Chefs' Choice, Best Presentation and Peoples' Choice. Dishes will include Sausages and Apples, Pepper-Pot, Tinned Beef Pie, Mulligatawny Soup, Sliced Apple Pudding and Skillygalee.

The event will be emceed by "Virginia's Secretary of Taste," Hampton Roads food writer Patrick Evans-Hylton, author of *Dishing Up Virginia*. The judging panel will include Stephanie Cooke, producer of WAVY TV's Hampton Roads Show; David Nicholson, food writer for *The Daily Press*; Jae Sinnett, host of "Sinnett in Session" on WHRV Radio and Abraham Lincoln interpreter George Buss. Civil War food experts Wisteria Perry and Eric Jeanneret will have food-related exhibits at the event, and will present the award for best historical interpretation.

Tickets are \$35 in advance and \$45 on the day of the event. For tickets, visit BattleofHamptonRoads.com.

Family programs and activities Included with admission

The Mariners' Museum's Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend isn't just for Civil War aficionados. Programming included with regular Museum admission, and free for Museum members, is designed for families.

Ironclad BattleQuest is an interactive family adventure encouraging visitors to conduct a scavenger hunt in the Museum. This year, families are encouraged to bring cameras or smartphones, taking pictures based on the photographs included in the new exhibition *Between the States*.

There will be family crafts, such as making USS *Monitor* models, and programs, including "A Slave's Perspective on the War" and a Sunday presentation on artifact conservation by USS *Monitor* Center staff. Also, the weekend will include costumed interpreters and a Living History encampment.

For information on Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend, visit BattleofHamptonRoads.com or call (757) 596-2222 or (800) 581-7245.

The Mariners' Museum is located at 100 Museum Drive, Newport News, VA 23606. The Mariners' Museum is off I-64 Exit 258A. For hours and other information, visit MarinersMuseum.org.