



Reading
Passages

Civil War Battles 1 *(cont.)*

Fort Donelson

Fort Donelson was an important Confederate fort guarding the Cumberland River near the Kentucky–Tennessee border. Union forces, led by the then unknown Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant, attacked the fort in February 1862. They managed to surround the fort with gunboats on the river side and troops around the landward side. The Confederates attempted to break out in the middle of a snowstorm, which hid their attack. Although Union forces were



pushed back almost a mile, the exhausted Rebels were forced to retreat and surrendered unconditionally to Grant on February 16, 1862. Grant became a Northern hero with the nickname “Unconditional Surrender” (U.S.) Grant. This was the first major Union victory of the war and opened the deep South to attack by Union forces.

Naval Battles at Hampton Roads

The Confederates built an ironclad ship to help smash the blockade of their ports by the Union. The *Virginia* (often called the *Merrimack*) looked like a floating, iron barn. On March 8, 1862, the *Virginia* sailed out of Norfolk to attack Union ships blockading the port. Despite its very slow speed, it managed to ram and sink one ship and destroy two other ships with cannon fire. Union cannon balls bounced off the ship without effect. The next day, a Union ironclad named the *Monitor* arrived, and the two ships duelled for hours without a clear winner. Naval warfare changed with this battle, however, and the days of the wooden ship were numbered.

Shiloh (Pittsburg Landing)

The Confederates launched an unexpected attack on General Grant’s forces near Pittsburg Landing and Shiloh Church in Tennessee. The Confederates managed to force the Union troops back after 12 hours of bloody warfare on April 6, 1862. That night Grant refused to retreat. General Sherman rallied Union troops, and the next day they fought back. The Confederates were forced to retreat, and Shiloh was another costly Union victory. Shiloh was one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Union losses were over 13,000 while Confederate losses were over 10,000 soldiers.

**BATTLES IN TENNESSEE:
FORT HENRY AND FORT DONELSON,
FEBRUARY 6-16, UNION VICTORY**

Southern soldiers at Fort Henry stood guard along the Tennessee River, the gateway to Kentucky. This spot was important because river traffic on the waterway linked the two halves of the Confederacy—the upper South and the deep South. Union General Ulysses S. Grant knew the river was the main supply route for the Southern army, so he and his force of fifteen thousand (including seven federal gunboats) bombarded the Rebels and won.

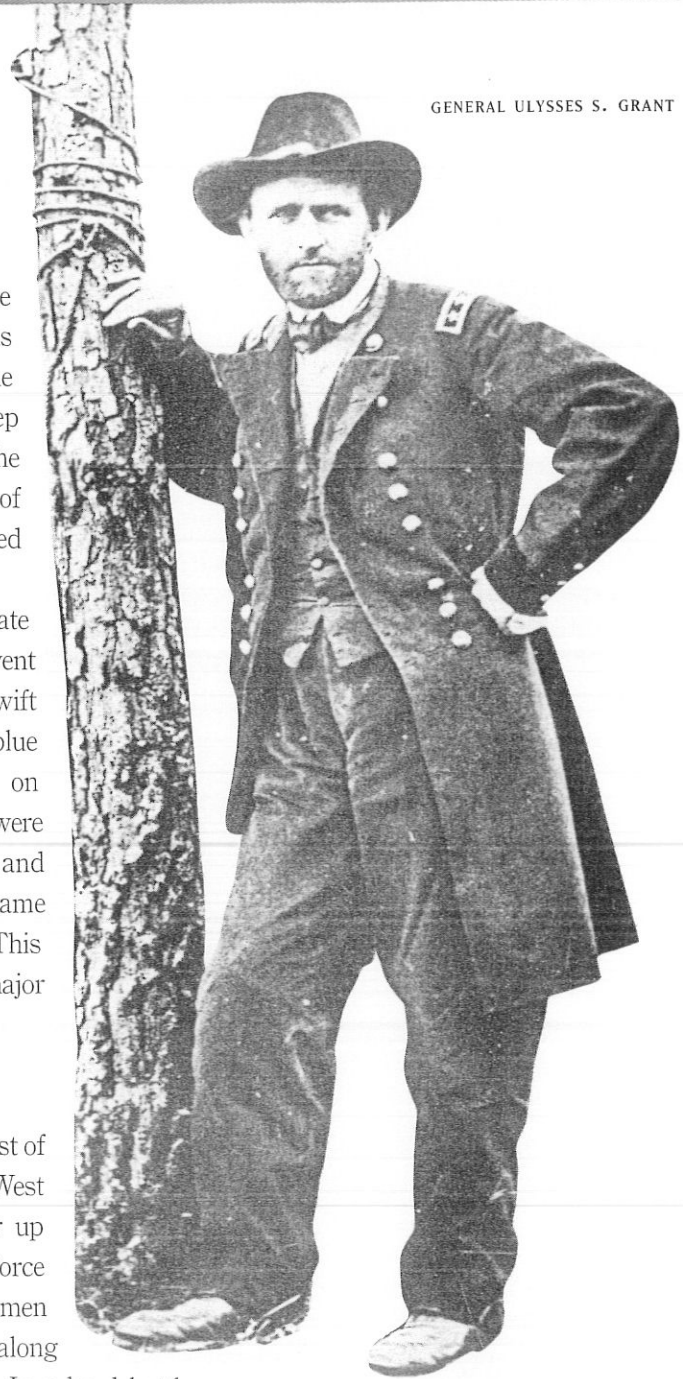
The fall of Fort Henry caused the remaining Confederate troops in the area to race back toward Fort Donelson to prevent its capture. A winter storm derailed Grant's plans of swift victory at Fort Donelson and for two days Northern men in blue and Southern soldiers in gray fought fiercely. Finally, on February 16, the Union army was victorious. Confederates were forced to accept Grant's harsh terms for "immediate and unconditional" surrender, and Grant earned the nickname "Unconditional Surrender" (like his initials, U. S.) Grant. This stunning twin triumph in Tennessee was the Union's first major military success.

WAR IN THE FAR WEST

Although most of the fighting in the Civil War occurred east of the Mississippi, the blue and the gray clashed in the far West as well. Confederate General Henry Sibley decided to stir up some trouble near San Antonio, Texas, where he recruited a force of nearly four thousand troops, mostly Texans, tough horsemen known as the Texas Rangers. These rangers moved west along the Rio Grande until Union forces met them at Val Verde. In a hard battle, the federal soldiers were forced to retreat.

Next General Sibley led his men northward toward Santa Fe, New Mexico. When Union troops from Colorado tried to block the Confederates, the two forces fought at Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, on March 27. The eager "Pikes Peakers," as the raw Colorado recruits were known, threw themselves into a blistering battle where smoke and gunpowder filled the air. A small detachment of Union soldiers sneaked around behind the battle lines to steal Confederate supply wagons and force the Texas Rangers to turn back. This battle eventually became known as the "Gettysburg of the West" and ended Confederate dreams of conquest west of the Mississippi River.

GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT



BATTLE AT-A-GLANCE

BATTLE OF SHILOH
Shiloh Church, Tennessee,
April 6-7

Union troops: 65,000
Confederate troops: 40,000

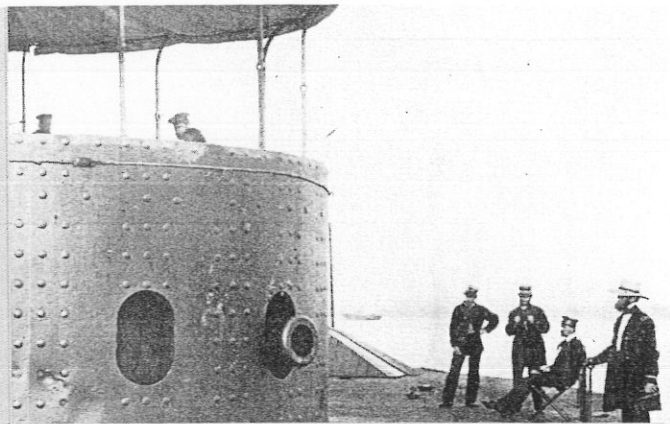
Union casualties: 13,000
Confederate casualties: 10,500
UNION VICTORY

Showdown

THE MONITOR VS. MERRIMACK
HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA
MARCH 9
DRAW

This clash at Hampton Roads was the first sea battle using “ironclads,” wooden ships covered in metal armor for ramming strength and defensive protection. Although neither side could claim victory, this encounter showed that wooden ships were no longer any match for the odd-looking but effective ironclads.

When they abandoned the shipyards at Norfolk, Virginia, the Union troops sank all the ships left behind. The Confederacy raised a warship called the *Merrimack* from the depths of the Norfolk harbor, rebuilt her, and covered her in heavy iron armament. Renamed the C.S.S. *Virginia* and relaunched off Hampton Roads on March 8, the *Merrimack* was determined to break through the Union blockade. She encountered a flotilla of Union ships, sank two



Turret of the ironclad *Monitor*

and fired on the others. The next day the *Monitor*, the Union’s prize ironclad, steamed into the harbor to take on the *Merrimack*. Although the battle between these two ships was technically considered a draw, the clash of the “invincible” ironclads was a spectacular sight. In the end, neither the *Merrimack* nor the *Monitor* survived the war. The Rebels blew up their prize ironclad rather than let her fall into Union hands. Months later the *Monitor* was lost in a storm at sea.

BATTLE OF SHILOH

Shiloh Church was a quiet spot until the Confederates made a surprise attack on the Union army camped nearby. General Ulysses S. Grant and his troops had stopped at Shiloh Church to wait for reinforcements before trying to capture Corinth, a town and important railway station in northeast Mississippi that connected the western Confederacy with headquarters in Virginia.

Yankee soldiers were cooking their breakfast when they heard the terrifying sound of the Rebel yell. Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston launched a surprise attack and nearly pushed the Union troops into the Tennessee River. During the battle’s earliest hours, Johnston was wounded in the leg and bled to death before medical help could arrive. A long night of rain and the arrival of Union reinforcements gave U. S. Grant the opportunity he needed to prepare for battle the next morning.

The two armies fought ferociously the next day, until the Confederates, now commanded by P.G.T. Beauregard, reluctantly withdrew. In telegrams back to Richmond, Beauregard had prematurely declared the battle a victory, so the defeat was doubly humiliating for the retreating Rebels. The fierce and bloody nature of the Shiloh encounter, with its huge death toll and combined casualties of nearly twenty-five thousand, taught Grant and his friend and division commander, General William T. Sherman, a terrible lesson about war. They could never underestimate the South’s determination to win. It would not be a short or fair war.

EYEWITNESS

“I write you a few lines to inform you of the times. Hugh has got the measles. He has been complaining two or three days. I have just returned from the hospital where I have been to carry him—distance from camp half mile. . . . There was twelve of us at first. There is but six now able for duty. Four has the measles, one has the chills, one the typhoid newmonia. . . .”

D. C. JONES,
a teenager who joined up with
the Texas Rangers