

# USS MONITOR TRAIL

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

MONITOR NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



## USS MONITOR: AMERICA'S FIRST IRONCLAD



On July 9, 1862, as the ship docked in Virginia on the James River, James F. Gibson took the only known photos of the *Monitor* and her crew (above). Monitor National Marine Sanctuary is located approximately 16 miles south-southeast of Cape Hatteras, N.C.

Launched on Jan. 30, 1862, at the Continental Iron Works in Greenpoint, N.Y., the USS *Monitor* made history as the Union Navy's first ironclad warship. It fought the Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* in the first-ever clash between two ironclads at the Battle of Hampton Roads on March 9 — an encounter that signaled the start of a new era of naval warfare. The *Monitor's* short but historic career came to an end on Dec. 31, 1862, when it sank in a storm off Cape Hatteras, N.C., with the loss of 16 sailors.

In 1975, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) designated the USS *Monitor's* wreck site as the nation's first national marine sanctuary. Over the years, NOAA and partners have undertaken several recovery operations and retrieved artifacts for conservation. When U.S. Navy divers recovered the ship's iconic gun turret in 2002, archaeologists discovered the remains of two sailors inside.



Left: Duke University Research Vessel *Eastward*. Right: Scientists in galley of R/V *Eastward* aboard the discovery cruise (counterclockwise): Harold "Doc" Edgerton, Cathryn Newton, John Newton, Bob Sheridan, unidentified men, Gordon Watts.

## DISCOVERY OF THE USS MONITOR

In August 1973, John G. Newton of the Duke University Marine Lab in Beaufort, N.C., led an interdisciplinary team of distinguished scientists — Harold "Doc" Edgerton, Robert Sheridan and Gordon Watts — in search of the USS *Monitor*. Aboard the Duke University Research Vessel *Eastward*, they used an innovative combination of Edgerton's new side-scan sonar, remotely operated still and video cameras, a magnetometer, and a predecessor of modern GPS technology to hunt for the lost ironclad over an area covering 96 square miles of seafloor. The survey located 22 shipwrecks, only two of which resembled the *Monitor*. One of these was ruled out after three days. After months of intensive research, the team announced their findings on March 7, 1974: the second wreck, resting in 230 feet of water about 16 miles off Cape Hatteras, N.C., was indeed the USS *Monitor*.

