**The First U.S. Navy Turreted Ironclad Warship**

On Jan. 30, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, the USS Monitor emerged from the Continental Iron Works in Brooklyn, New York. The strange, iron-plated warship was unlike anything the world had seen. For centuries wooden vessels had ruled the seas, but when the Monitor clashed with the Confederate ironclad CSS Virginia at the Battle of Hampton Roads, it marked the dawn of a new era of iron warships. In 2022, NOAA celebrates the 160th anniversary of this revolutionary vessel and its role in shaping our maritime history.

On March 7, 1862, two days before it clashed with the CSS Virginia, the USS Monitor was launched. Its low profile and odd, round turret earned it the nickname “cheesebox on a raft.” The strange, iron-plated warship was unlike anything the world had seen. For centuries wooden vessels had ruled the seas, but when the Monitor emerged from the Continental Iron Works in Brooklyn, New York, it marked the dawn of a new era of iron warships. In 2022, NOAA celebrates the 160th anniversary of this revolutionary vessel and its role in shaping our maritime history.

**Launch**

- **Oct. 25 – Construction Begins**
- **Aug. 27 – Whichever Discovers**
- **Jan. 30 – Sanctuary Designation**
- **1987 – Discovery Confirmed**
- **1977 – Research & Recovery Expeditions**
- **1977-2002 – Research & Recovery Expeditions**
- **2002 – Turret Raised**
- **2002 – Engine Raised**
- **2007 – Monitor Center Opens**

**Life Aboard**

- **During the Monitor’s short time in service, the design of the crew’s quarters was simple and functional. The low profile and odd, round turret earned it the nickname “cheesebox on a raft.”**
- **Through letters written by Crewman George S. Geer, we know that their life was crowded and lighting was poor.**
- **Crewmen stripped to the waist and washed with a pail of water. Yet despite these hardships, the crew persevered.**
- **Sundays were bath days, when the precious few beans was a staple.**
- **On New Year’s Eve 1862, less than a year after launch, the USS Monitor was discovered lying on the sandy seafloor near the confluence of the North and Elizabeth rivers in Hampton Roads, Virginia.**
- **More than a century later, this lantern was discovered lying on the sandy seafloor near the confluence of the North and Elizabeth rivers in Hampton Roads, Virginia.**

**An Ironclad Opponent**

- **The CSS Virginia, a 34-gun ironclad, was the first Union warship to employ a rotating turret.**
- **To find a scene of carnage. Earlier that day, the CSS Virginia had attacked the Monitor in the Battle of Hampton Roads.**
- **The two ironclads fought a fierce battle, with the Monitor emerging victorious.**
- **The CSS Virginia was run aground and destroyed rather than scuttled and abandoned.**

**Turret Conservation**

- **In 2002, a 41-day multi-agency recovery expedition was launched to raise the Monitor from the seafloor.**
- **Between 1977 and 2002, several expeditions worked to document and recover the Monitor’s remains.**
- **During the 2002 expedition, the Monitor was raised intact from the seafloor.**
- **Since then, the Monitor’s turret has been conserved and restored.**

**Famous Firsts**

- **U.S. Navy turreted ironclad warship**
- **Battle between ironclads**
- **U.S. warship without masts or sails**
- **In an entire class of warships**
- **National marine sanctuary**
- **Below-the-waterline flushing toilet**

**Timeline**

- **1861 – Construction Begins**
- **1862 – Launch**
- **March 9 – Battle of Hampton Roads**
- **1873 – Whichever Discovers**
- **1874 – Discovery Confirmed**
- **1875 – Turret Conservation**
- **1987 – Discovery Confirmed**
- **1977 – Research & Recovery Expeditions**
- **2002 – Turret Raised**
- **2002 – Engine Raised**
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**Image Credits**

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