

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 22 1975
DATE ENTERED	MAY 14 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
U.S.S. TECUMSEH - Canonicus Class
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER W of in
~~Off~~ Fort Morgan Mobile Bay ~~two~~ __NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN Fort Morgan VICINITY OF Mobile CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
STATE Alabama CODE COUNTY Baldwin CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
<u>ship</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*
General Services Administration
STREET & NUMBER
18th & F Streets, N.W.
CITY, TOWN Washington STATE District of Columbia
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
General Services Administration
STREET & NUMBER
18th & F Streets, N.W.
CITY, TOWN Washington, DC STATE 20405

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The U.S.S. Tecumseh lies upside down in approximately 29 feet of water at the entrance to Mobile Bay, Alabama, approximately 300 yards northwest of Fort Morgan, where she sank after hitting a mine on the morning of the Battle of Mobile Bay, August 5, 1864. The ironclad monitor, because of the seniority of her commander, Captain T.A. Craven, was assigned by Admiral David Farragut, who was aboard his flagship Hartford, to lead the Union fleet into battle.

Thirty ships were in Farragut's flotilla including four ironclads; the single turret Tecumseh, her sistership Manhattan, and two double turreted river monitors, Chickasaw and Winnabago. They were to lead 14 selected ships to force a passage into the Bay past Fort Morgan guarding the entrance.

Shortly after daybreak on the morning of August 5th, the Federal fleet began to form a column, the wooden ships lashed together in pairs behind the ironclads. At six o'clock the Confederate ironclad ramship Tennessee and three small gunboats emerged from behind Fort Morgan and took positions in front of the on-coming fleet.

At six thirty, the Tecumseh fired one of her guns to test the range of the Fort. A half hour later the guns of the Fort Morgan replied and the battle was on.

At seven thirty, the Tecumseh was almost abreast of Fort Morgan, her course set to pass between the beach and a red bouy which marked the mine-free channel used by the Confederate blockade runners when entering and leaving Mobile Bay.

As the Tecumseh approached the bouy Captain Craven realized that by passing inside of it, as Admiral Farragut had directed, the ironclad would be deflected away from the Tennessee, thereby exposing the lead wooden ship, the Brooklyn, by an attack from the Tennessee.

Craven realized he had no choice but to risk the mine field and engage the Tennessee head-on. At seven thirty-three he gave the command to "Hard port." As the bow of the ironclad swung to the left of the red bouy a violent underwater explosion jolted the hull of the Tecumseh and in less than a minute rolled over to port and sank, bow first. Of the 114 crew aboard only 21 survived, including the pilot and 3 line officers.

When, in 1967, Smithsonian Institution divers examined the Tecumseh, she was found lying upside-down, completely covered with silt. A large rupture 8'-0" fore and aft and 5'-0" wide was located in the bottom of the hull, just to starboard of the keel directly beneath the turret, proved conclusively the disaster was caused by a mine. In addition, several cannon

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7 DESCRIPTION DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN)

holes were discovered in the hull, apparently inflicted by Fort Morgan battery as the vessel rolled over.

The monitor's sudden loss caused the Brooklyn to falter and general disorder followed. To restore order Admiral Farragut sent out the order which has made him known in American history, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!"

The Tecumseh was one of three identical ironclad "River and Harbor monitors" of the Tippecanoe Class (to be historically termed Canonicus Class) for which the U.S. Navy Department advertised on August 14, 1862. The new class was to be longer and have more powerful engines than the Passaic class, just being completed. On September 1, the Secretary of Navy telegraphed the firm of Charles A. Secor & Company, Jersey City, New Jersey, that their bid of \$460,000 per vessel was accepted. The firm, also known as Secor & Company, began work immediately on the Tecumseh, Manhattan, and Mahopac and by September 15, when the contracts were signed, sub-contracts were let and work was well underway.

Although Secor & Company was following the printed modifications to the Passaic Class which were issued with the bid proposal invitation, they didn't allow for the presence of the General Inspector of Ironclads, Alban C. Stimers, who set up an office in New York and would continue to issue further modifications and changes during the construction. His first changes came on October 8, shortly after the keel was laid, the frames erected and several courses of hull plates secured in place. Stimers' new general plan and specifications added a great deal of weight, too much, by the Secor's calculations, for the vessel to float. They brought this to the attention of Rear Admiral Francis H. Gregory, General Superintendent of Ironclads, who stopped all construction until Stimers and John Ericsson, the original ironclad (Monitor) designer, could revise the plans.

When it became apparent to the Secors that there would be continual changes necessitating work already completed to be torn out, they appealed to the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, for a promise they would be reimbursed. Their suggestion that the Government pay for the work completed to date and forget the contract was met by Gideon's threat to seize the establishment and the Government would complete the vessels. Being patriotic American businessmen they continued construction and the Tecumseh was finally completed on March 17, 1864 and commissioned on April 19, 1864.

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The Secors counted some 290 "major" changes in her construction. James Secor later summarized the effort to build the Tecumseh as actually building three custom made vessels but only having one when the work was finished.

When the Tecumseh was officially accepted on March 17, 1864 the cost had risen to \$636,941.76. Her deck was 225 feet long and 43 feet 8 inches at its extreme width. From stem to stern she measured 190 feet, the aft part projected 24 feet, but the forward overhang was only about 9 feet. The mean-load draft was 13 feet 6 inches, with a displacement of 2100 tons, approximately the same as the Fletcher - Class destroyer of World War II.

Her two main engines were the Ericsson vibrating lever type, one screw, and produced 640 horse power, moving one four-blade cast iron propeller, 14 feet in diameter with a 20 foot pitch. The propeller shaft was a tapering, wrought iron tube which averaged 15 inches in diameter.

The Tecumseh's four boilers were about one-third forward in the vessel. Two were large main boilers with six furnaces each, the other two were small auxiliary boilers with one furnace each. All were the Martin horizontal fire tube type arranged on each side of the vessel so that the two main and the auxiliary boilers faced each other, thus sharing a common fire room space.

The deck armor consisted of two layers of 3/4 inch plates laid on 7 inches by 8 inches white oak planks spiked to oak beams 12 inches deep by 16 inches wide, 24 inches apart which provided transverse strength in the hull. The side armor consisted of five layers of 1 inch plates.

On the deck's surface were three short vents, three flag staffs, two life boats, carried on two sets of crane-like davits, aft of the turret an armored ventilator pipe, an armored smoke pipe, and a single rotating turret topped with the ship's pilot house.

The vital turret was 9 feet high and 21 feet inside diameter holding two 15-inch Dahlgren smooth bore, muzzle loading cast iron guns. Gun ports, which could be closed by swinging heavy forged shutters during re-loading, were cut in the 10-inch thick armor (ten layers, 1 inch each).

The smaller pilot house sat above the turret on the central shaft but did not rotate with the turret. Its shell was as thick as the turret with

(Over)

sighting slits 12 inches long providing visibility. The iron grating floor contained a hatch for entrance and egress. Within the pilot house were the ship's steering wheel, brass speaking tubes to provide contact with the turret, berth deck and engine room. A compass was hung from a roof bracket inside the pilot house.

Below deck the Tecumseh's boilers were one-third forward in the vessel, ahead of the engine room. Forward of the boilers and almost midships were the coal bunkers with a topped off capacity of 212 tons. Forward was the crew's berth deck which rested on cross floors above compartments for power bins, shell rooms, store rooms and water tanks.

The ward room and officers quarters were forward of the turret bulkhead with the ward room centrally located and the officer's quarters lining each side. The compartments below this deck held mess stores, general stores and sailmakers stores.

Near the bow of the vessel a watertight bulkhead with a sealable door extended from the keel deck.

The entire ship's metal surfaces, inside and out were covered with 3 coats of white lead paint.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES Sept. 15, 1862
March 17, 1864

BUILDER/~~UNKNOWN~~ Charles A. Secor & Company
Jersey City, New Jersey

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The U.S.S. Tecumseh could claim historical significance as the relic of a famous naval engagement and a product of the genius of her inventor, John Ericsson (he also designed the original Monitor). Of greater importance she is a specimen of the transition from sail to steam, from unprotected wood to iron armor and from fixed broadside to revolving turret. To the 20th Century man she offers, in her present state, a rare and unique opportunity to glimpse in intimate detail the United States Navy in capsule form, just as she appeared in battle trim 104 years ago. To clear the decks for action all her gear and equipment had been packed in lockers or stored in the compartments below the berth decks and it is expected these artifacts will be intact and number in the thousands when the ship is raised.

Early in 1967 a team of Smithsonian and Navy salvage personnel made an initial attempt to locate the Tecumseh. The first dratting with a cable failed to reveal the ship because the team did not know she was lying bottom up. The use of equipment developed by Weston Instrument Corporation did locate the ship and confirmed the accuracy of the survey report of Commander George P. Ryan of the U.S.S. Huron, July 10, 1877, to the Commanding Officer of the North Atlantic Squadron. The Report responded to a Joint Resolution of the 44th Congress, August 15, 1876, which directed the Secretary of the Treasury to return \$50, plus interest, to a party (James Slaughter) claiming to have purchased Tecumseh in August 1873. Further the Secretary of the Navy was directed to assume control and protection of the monitor and to provide proper burial of the remains of persons "carried down with her."

Late in January 1967, a Navy diver was lowered into the water and landed on the upturned bilge, the only exposed area of her bottom, the rest of the ship had been completely covered with sand and mud. It was this coverage of silt which has given the ship and her contents protection against the ravages of underwater encrustation.

In July divers examined the outside of the hull and removed samples of the iron plates for analysis. Laboratory analysis indicated she had the structural strength to permit it to be salvaged intact. Later expeditions in the summer of 1968 entered the hull to examine the general condition of

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the interior. Except for removing several objects encountered in the process, no attempt was made to remove the artifacts. Among the objects brought to the surface were: the large brass engine room gong, (still in working condition) several pieces of dinner ware from the ward room, a bronze floor ventilator, part of a pewter cruet holder and the main anchor weighing 2000 pounds.

The salvage of Tecumseh, along with the myriad objects within her hull, will enrich the nation's historical treasures store by providing education and inspiration to the general public. Conservators will have a unique opportunity to examine the corrosion and degradation caused by long term exposure to a polluted salt water environment.

Of the nine monitors built in the Canonicus Class, the Tecumseh is the only one sunk in battle and yet the only survivor. Although all were launched by December, 1864, three, Catawba, Oneonta and Tippecanoe were never commissioned though officially accepted from the builders. The first two became Peruvian monitors in April 1868 and the other was (1868) extensively rebuilt in 1872-74, with the decks raised 15 inches. In 1895-99 she was renamed the Wyandotte and served as a training vessel. The remaining ships of this Class were all sold as junk, with the Mahopac and Manhattan (which accompanied the Tecumseh into Mobile Bay) being the last. They were sold off on March 3, 1902 and the transition from wood to iron was complete.

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