War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies, 1861-18...

SUMMARY KEYWORDS
farragut, dupont, forts, navy, confederate, fleet, ships, guns, du pont, new orleans, union, wells, charleston, attack, capture, hartford, river, army, confederates, torpedoes

SPEAKERS
Mac Brown, James McPherson, Mark Wetherington

Hi, I'm Mack Brown. I'm the president of the Filson Historical Society. And on behalf of the board, I'd like to welcome you and thank you for coming to another presentation in our outstanding Gertrude Pope Brown lecture series. The series was started 20 years ago, and has brought to Louisville some of our nation's finest authors and historians. I think you'll find tonight's speaker very compelling. I'd also like to thank our sponsors, David Brown Stubbs and George Garvin Brown, the fourth, the daughter and grandson of Gertrude Pope Brown, and whom, in whose memory this series was named, their generosity makes this series possible. And we are truly grateful for their kindness. People live in the present, they plan for and worry about the future. And the questions they ask are complex. Reflecting the issues of today. Understanding how people and societies function and React is difficult. How can we understand the influence of technological innovations? If we don't use what we know about experiences from the past? How can we possibly consider issues such as the righteousness of war, or civil liberties, or government overreach unless we use historical material, some social scientists attempt to formulate laws and theories about human behavior. But even these alternatives depend on historical information. The value history offers is our ability to understand how our options to address today's needs may fit in the context of different points of view. History offers a storehouse of information about people and societies. It serves, however, imperfectly as a laboratory, and with the data from the past, we have the opportunity to see why certain things worked, or didn't work, thus enabling us to make better decisions for the future. The Filson staff works exceptionally hard to organize not only this wonderful series, but almost 100 Other events throughout the year, telling the stories that are relevant to today's issues. I would also like to thank the dedicated staff of the Felson led by our director, Dr. Mark Wetherington. And by Judy Miller, the Deputy Director for all they have done to bring us to this program, thank you. As always, I'd like to take a moment to promote the membership. If you're already a member, thank you. If you're not, and would like to become a member, we have plenty of information in the back. And we'd like to invite you to go fill out the forms. I'd also offer the traditional offer that we make during this series for new members. We will credit the cost of tonight's performance or talk to your membership. Now I'd like to ask Dr. Mark whether intend to come forward to introduce tonight's speaker. Thank you.
James M McPherson is the George Henry Davis 86 Professor Emeritus of United States history at Princeton University, having taught there for 42 years. Born and Valley City, North Dakota, he received his bachelor's degree at Gustavus Adolphus College and his PhD at John Hopkins University. He is the author of more than a dozen books on the Civil War era. These have explored a wide range of topics including abolition, African Americans, President Lincoln and Tetum why soldiers fought and now the Union and Confederate navies the subject of his latest book or on the waters, the union, Confederate navies 1861 Dating 65 and his topic tonight. Many of these books are award winning works that have set a standard for scholarship. The struggle for equality was awarded that Anna spelled wolf award in 1965. His 1989 Battle Cry of freedom, the Civil War era, the topic of his previous Gertrude Pope brown lecture, won the Pulitzer Prize, his 1998 book for calls and comrades. Why men fought in the Civil War receive The Lincoln prize. The Filson Historical Society with our outstanding civil work elections, was one of the institutions Professor McPherson visited while researching this project. Our speaker has a reputation for making history more accessible to the general public and to children. His films a fury is a history of the civil war for young readers, while battle cry of freedom is a popular one volume history of the war among both historians and popular audiences. He has also been an outspoken advocate for the preservation of civil war battlefields and lobbied against the construction of a Disney theme park near Manassas Battlefield, while serving as president protect historic America in the early 90s. Harold Holzer, chairman of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation, and a Gertrude Pope brown lecture wrote of war on the waters quote, McPherson never argues that the Union navy won the Civil War. But readers will argue that no civil war library will ever be complete without this volume. Please join me in welcoming Professor Emeritus at first and once again to Louisville, and the Gertrude Pope brown lecture series.

Thank you for that great introduction. And thanks to all of you for your warm welcome here this evening. I'm glad to be back in Louisville. And I'm especially glad to be appearing again before an audience sponsored by the Filson Historical Society as Mark said, I did a week's worth of research. Now I think 21 years ago back in 1992, for my book for, for cause and comrades. Because there are a lot of good collections of Civil War letters and diaries at the Filson Historical Society. And so I couldn't miss going through that material and it was a considerable value for that book. My talk this evening will focus on two prominent southern naval officers, many of whose friends sympathized with the Confederacy in the sectional conflict that led to in the end in the Civil War, and some of whom actually fought for the Confederacy. Like the state of Kentucky, Southern officers in the United States Navy were sharply divided on the question of dis union. And a good many of those southern naval officers remained loyal to the Union. And that included the two men that are the subject of my lecture this evening, David Glasgow Farragut and Samuel Francis Dupont. In September 1864, Captain Charles Steedman of the United States Navy, who by the way was also from the south but remained loyal to the Union. He was actually from South Carolina, Steedman praised Rear Admiral David Glasgow Farragut for his decisive victory over the Confederate forts and warships in the Battle of Mobile Bay the previous month. That little man, wrote Steedman of the wiry Farragut who was actually just under medium height. That little man has done more to put down the rebellion than any general except Grant and Sherman. Stephens comment was not simply another example of
naval boastfulness in the age old rivalry between the army and navy. After many years of studying the American Civil War, I'm convinced that Steedman was correct faregates victory at mobiel Bay and his even more spectacular achievement in the capture of New Orleans back in April 1862. Plus, the part played by his fleet in the Mississippi River campaigns of 1862 and 1863 did indeed entitle him to virtually equal rank with Grant and Sherman in winning the war. But statement I think was making a larger point and I also agree with that larger point, the Union navy deserves more credit for Northern victory than it is traditionally received. General Grant made a similar point in his famous memoirs, when he praised the role of the Navy’s Mississippi River squadron in Grant's most significant victory, the capture of Vicksburg in July 1863. Without the Navy's assistance, wrote, grant, the campaign could not have been made Farragut emerged as the Navy's foremost hero in the Civil War, and he was appointed as the nation's first Rear Admiral in July 1862. But for the initial year of the war, the most prominent and successful naval officer was Samuel Francis Dupont, whose fleet won the most important Union victory in 1861. And who was subsequently named the third ranking Rear Admiral in American history. Why General George B. McClellan. DuPont was the great hope of the North in 1861. Like Ulysses S Grant, Farragut labored in relative obscurity during most of the wars first year, until they both burst forth with major victories in early 1862. And went on thoroughly to eclipse McClellan and DuPont in the later stages of the war. In the similarities between McClellan and DuPont, on the one hand, and grant and Farragut on the other, included personalities and qualities of leadership that explained how one pair faded into obscurity, and the other pair emerged into greatness. DuPont was descended from one of the foremost families in America. And of course the DuPont name remains famous today. In 1861, he was a veteran of 45 years in the United States Navy. Although he was from the slave state of Delaware, and several of his friends supported or at least sympathize with a confederacy, DuPont left no uncertainty about where he stood. What has made me most sick at heart is to see the resignations from of the Navy from the Navy of officers from southern states. He said in 1861. I stick by the flag in the national government he declared whether my state do or not about faregates allegiance, though, there were initially some doubts. He had served 50 of his 59 years Yes, he had gone into the Navy when he was nine years old as a midshipman, which was not absolutely unique in those days. He had served 50 of his 59 years in the Navy. When the state he called home, Virginia seceded in 1861. Farragut had been born in Tennessee, and he had married a Virginian. After his first wife died, he married another Virginia woman, who also happened to be named Virginia. He had a brother in New Orleans and a sister in Mississippi. God forbid I should ever have to raise my hand against the South. He said the friends in Virginia as the sectional conflict heated up. But when Kentucky and Kentucky native Abraham Lincoln called out the militia after the Confederates attacked fort Sumpter, fair to fair get expressed approval of that action. His Virginia friends told him that anyone holding this opinion could not live in Norfolk than his home. Well, then Farragut replied, I can live somewhere else. He decided to move to New York. This act of mine may cause years of separation from your family he told his wife so you must decide quickly whether you will go north or remain here. She went with him. As they prepared to leave the thin lipped Farragut offered a few parting words to his Virginia neighbors. You fellows will catch the devil before you get through with his business. And as Matt has turned out, they caught a good many devils from Farragut himself. Congressional legislation gave Secretary of the Navy Gideon wells the authority to ignore the age old rule of seniority and making promotions during the Civil War. Wells was quick to use that authority to weed out Deadwood in the senior ranks of captains in order to promote younger and more promising officers over their heads. He did precisely that with DuPont and Farragut. He jumped DuPont over 18 of his seniors and named him commander of the South Atlantic blockading squadron in September 1861. DuPont had already achieved prominence as chairman of the blockade board that summer, which produced comprehensive have strategic plans for organizing the blockade and capturing ports and cities.
along the Confederate coast. DuPont himself would command the first of these efforts. A major campaign to capture Port Royal Bay, Port Royal sound in South Carolina about halfway between Charleston and Savannah to command the West Gulf blockading squadron whose main objective in 1862 would be the capture of New Orleans. Wells named Farragut, who was at that time 37th on the seniority list of captains. Farragut was respected by many of his fellow officers, but virtually unknown to the public at that time, as well as wrote in his famous diary. Neither the president nor any member of the cabinet knew him or knew of him. Members of Congress inquired who he was, and some of them were remonstrated and questioned whether I was not making a mistake, for he was a southern man and had a southern wife. But wells knew about faregates expressions of unionism when he moved from Norfolk to New York, and was willing to gamble on his loyalty, as well as his ability. Rarely in the history of naval warfare as a gamble paid off so handsomely. Meanwhile, DuPont was putting together the largest fleet in American history to that time. 17 warships with 157 guns 25 collars and supply ships, and 33 troop transports carrying 13,000 soldiers and 600 Marines to go ashore when the Navy attacked the forts at the entrance to Port Royal Bay. This Armada was more impressive in numbers than in the seagoing qualities of some of its vessels. In the rapid build up of 1861, the Navy had bought and charter dozens of merchant ships, and even several New York ferry boats, and tugs never intended for open water navigation. Some of these in addition to regular Navy warships were part of du Pont's du Pont's fleet. This fleet departed from Hampton Roads on October 29 1861. As they emerged on to a smooth see the first day they volunteer lieutenant to head some literary aspirations, but was also commander of gun crew on du Pont's flagship, the 44 gan steam frigate USS Wabash. He wrote that he looked out and saw on either side of us in line abreast stretch for six miles, the advanced guard of gunboats followed by the transports. Never did such a heterogeneous squadron venture upon the waters, nondescript ad infinitum. vessels without shape before known to the maritime world, had some Homeward Bound vessel helplessly got within our what lines? Surely would they be Willard Skipper have imagined that great Burnham would to hide Dunsinane had come against him. This literary romantic image gave way to chaos and panic on November 1, as the fleet ran into what another officer on the Wabash described as one of the severest gales I have ever experienced off the North Carolina coast. A steamer carrying 300 Marines went down the sailing frigate USSC bind rescued all but seven of them. Some vessels had to turn back, including small steamers for towing surf boats to land troops. Much of the Army's ammunition was lost. On the morning of November 2, only eight other ships were in sight from the Wabash. By the time the flag ship reached the bar off Port Royal on November 4, however, most of the fleet was reunited. More vessels continued to arrive as the warships got over the bar on November 5, and prepared to attack the two Confederate earthwork forts mounting 43 guns, and situated three miles apart on either side of the wide channel. This attack would have to be an all Navy show, because the loss of ammunition and surf boats made spectators out of the army troops. DuPont adopted a tactical plan made possible by steam power, which had revolutionized naval warfare during the past two decades. The ships would steam in an oval pattern between the two forts, pounding each in turn, while presenting a moving target to the enemy. This tactic up into the old adage from the days of sailing ships that one gun on shore in a fort was worth four on shipboard at 9:26am. On November 7 1861 14 warships led by the Wabash moved up mid channel between Fort Beauregard to the north and the stronger fort Walker to the south. Firing broadsides at both simultaneously. DuPont placed five of his gunboats in a flanking position to protect the main fleet from the harassing fire of a small Confederate flotilla of converted tugs, carrying one or two guns each. This so called mosquito fleet soon fled up the Beaufort river out of range, the heavier Yankee guns. DuPont turned back and brought the fleet close under the guns of Fort Walker then turned again for a second pass up mid channel. On the second pass, he was joined by the USS Pocahontas, which had just arrived after battling the storm that had separated the fleet. This ship was commanded by South Carolina native Percival Drayton,
member of one of the largest planting fat planter families in South Carolina, who had remained loyal to the United States while his brother William had gone with the Confederacy and was a general now in command of Fort Walker, which came under fire from his brothers ship. The Pocahontas. Most of the damage to the fort, however, was accomplished by the big nine inch guns of the Wabash, which DuPont brought to within 500 yards of the fort on the second pass are done captain on the Wabash describe the firing from the fort of Shell guns, Colombians and rifled. They cut us up in spires, rigging and hold pretty severely, but our guns finally drove them out. They fled in all directions, leaving some of the guns loaded their arms, tents, et cetera, behind the wall bash landed its Marines and 50 sailors to take possession of Fort Walker. Across the entrance to the bay Confederates also evacuated fort Beauregard before the ships could make another turn to drive them out. DuPont was elated by his victory. Several days later, he wrote to a friend. I never get transportation as the French tournament. But I will repeat to the day of my death, that the second assault of this ship upon the forts for rapidity, continuity and precision of fire has never been surpassed in naval warfare. Army troops landed and took possession of the forts, the town of Beaufort, and eventually most of the rich long staple cotton plantations and rice plantations on the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands. White planters and their families fled to the mainland. Almost 10,000 slaves stayed behind, making this campaign the largest emancipation of slaves so far in the war. Panic spread through the Carolina low country. Department built up a large naval base at Port Royal and occupied other ports as far south as Fernandina in Jacksonville, Florida. Army artillery forced to surrender fort Pulaski at the mouth of the Savannah River in April 1862. Pretty much sealing off Savannah from blockade runners. DuPont build up his blockade fleet in numbers and efficiency during 1862 and began planning for an attack on the so called Cradle of secession, Charleston itself. In the meantime, Farragut took command of the West Gulf Squadron and began building up his fleet for an effort to capture the biggest prize of all New Orleans, the South's largest Port and City by far. By April 1862. Farragut had gotten his fleet of 22 Steam slips and gunboats across the bar at Southwest pass of the Mississippi River where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico. They were supported by 20 schooners that had been modified to carry a 13 inch mortar each to bombard the Confederate defenses at two forts flanking the Mississippi 70 miles below New Orleans, forts Jackson, and Fort St. Philip. Together these forts mounted 126 Big Sea coast guns to try to blow out of the water any fleet attempting to ascend the river. In addition, the Confederates have put together a squadron of eet gunboats converted from river steamboats, one small iron clad and another large iron clad the CSS Louisiana which had its guns in place, but not yet its engines, so it was anchored near the forts as a kind of floating battery. faregates fleet was supported by an army of 15,000. Union soldiers commanded by General Benjamin Butler, who was definitely not much of a military asset for the Union effort. But the public expected the Navy to do the heavy work, just as it had done at Port Royal. Iowa's Senator James Grimes, a member of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, told Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gus Davis Fox, the country looks to the Navy. Don't wait for the army. Take New Orleans and hold it until the army comes up. And that's exactly how it happened. The mortar schooners commanded by faregates foster brother David Dixon Porter were towed into position on April 18, to be to begin bombarding the forts. Over the next six days and nights they lobbed 1000s of 216 pound shells into the forts, doing a lot of damage but not knocking out many of the guns. Farragut grew impatient, he decided to run his fleet past the forts in the pre Dawn darkness of April 24. This was not a popular decision among his ship captains, who had as one of them put it little or no sanguine feeling of success. On April 22, Farragut had called for a meeting of his captains to plan the attack. Now in military animals, its proverbial the council's of war never fight. They always come up with some reason why they shouldn't. But this one proved to be an exception. After Farragut outlined his plans for running past the forts in the darkness, he invited the responses of his captains. As one of the participants wrote, The prevailing opinion seemed to be adverse to making the attempt to have to pass the forts at this
at that time, that it was premature, that the forts had not yet been sufficiently reduced by the fire of the mortar vessels, and that the risk of loss of too many vessels was too great to be run. But Farragut said that the mortars would soon exhaust their ammunition. It was now or never. And he concluded the meeting with the words I believe in celerity. Translated I believe in going and doing it now not waiting, I believe in celerity was home was fares gate Hallmark at 2am on April 24, is 17 ships carrying 154 guns that were to make the attempt. Wait anchor began moving up river with fagates flagship, the USS Hartford. In the middle of three divisions of the fleet in which the smaller guns gun boats were in the first and third divisions. The mortar fleet and the five steamers that towed them opened a furious fuselage to keep down the fire of the forts. While the ships of the three divisions also opened fire as they approached the forts, these forts began firing on the ships as they approached. And as the first ones got through the Confederate gunboats above the Fords also engaged in this melee, with hundreds of guns firing, scores of shells were in the air and exploding at the same time, in what was surely the most spectacular fireworks display in American history to that time. The Confederates had also prepared fire rafts, large rafts piled with kindling and logs soaked with salt with oil, which they lit and floated down on the union ships. As the Hartford approach the Fords, Farragut climbed up the port mizzen Rattlin to get above the roiling smoke from the guns in the fire rafts for a better view of what was happening. Holding on to the shrouds. He stood there as cool as if leaning against a mantle in his own home. According to a sailor on the Hartford Farragut signal officer pleaded with him to come down. We can't afford to lose you flag officer. He said. They'll get you up there short. Farragut finally did come down and as he reached the DECA shell exploded where he had been standing on the Rattlin. By this time, the river was full of fire rafts. veering to evade one of them the Hartford ran aground under the guns of Fort St. Philip. The Confederate tug push the raft against her port quarter. Flames climbed up the side of the hole and shot halfway up the mast I thought it was all up with us what Farragut Lee After. But after a few seconds of confusion, the crew went to the fire stations and began playing hoses on the burning ship. The hoses the hoses finally douse the fire. The engineers applied all power to back the Hartford off the mud. And she proceeded on a river. 14 of the 17 Union ships made it past the forts, three were turned back by the forts, as it began to grow light that morning. And one of the 14 that did get through was sunk by Confederate gunboats. But seven of those eight gunboats plus the small iron clad CSS Manassas were sunk by the Union fleet, and the other one was captured. At the cost of only 37 killed and 147 wounded. The Union fleet had one remarkable victory, but that victory was incomplete until New Orleans was in their possession. At mid morning on April 24, fagates, surviving 13 ships rendezvous seven miles above the forts. They were all more or less damaged, but still operational. Farragut decided to continue up river remember, I believe in celerity and do attack the city. The Confederate troops that had been stationed in New Orleans had been called up river to Tennessee to meet the union threat there after granted captured Fort Donelson back in February, leaving behind in New Orleans only local militia, which fled at the approach of the fleet. The city was virtually defenseless except for two earthworks, with 14 guns flanking the river at Chalmette three miles downstream from New Orleans, where Andrew Jackson had stopped the British back in 1815. But nothing was going to stop Farragut. Five of his ships, including the flagship Hartford came on firing first with their bow guns and then veering left or right to fire crushing broadsides into the works. In 20 minutes the Confederate guns were silenced. Those who could run Farragut reported to Secretary of the Navy wells were running in every direction. Cut off and isolated downriver with Butler's troops finally approaching the forts. The garrison at Fort Jackson mutiny, and both forts surrendered to the Navy on April 28. The Confederates blew up they're too big but unfinished ironclads CSS Louisiana and CSS Mississippi. The Union fleet proceeded to New Orleans where they found all of the ships at the waterfront and 1000s and 1000s of bales of cotton on the horse on fire. Mobs rioted in the streets and threatened the Yankees with bloody vengeance. The future southern author 17 year old George Washington cable witnessed
the fury of the mob. The crowds on the levee how old and screamed with rage he recalled. The swarming decks answered never a word but one old tire on the Hartford, standing with lanyard in hand beside a great pivot gun, so plain to view that you could see him smile, silently padded, it's big black breach in blandly grinned. With naval guns trained on its streets New Orleans solidly surrendered, and Butler's truce finally arrived to preserve some kind of order. If the passage of the forts by the Union fleet was not quite the night the war was lost, as the title of a modern book about this campaign would have it. The capture of New Orleans was unquestionably one of the most important union victories of the war with major consequences both at home and abroad. Farragut continued up the Mississippi River was part of his fleet all the way to Vicksburg, where he met the gunboats of the Mississippi flotilla that had fought their way down the river in the spring of 1862, capturing Memphis in June of that year. Together these fleets bombarded Vicksburg. Farragut twice ran his ships past the Confederate batteries there once up river and once down, but the combined fleets failed the force Vicksburg surrender in 1862. That had to wait another year. The following March 8, that is 1863. Now as part of the eventually successful union campaign to capture Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Farragut tried to pass the Confederate fortifications at Port Hudson, which is just north of Baton Rouge, going up river with seven ships, but only his flagship Hartford and a smaller gunboat concert got through, while two of the Hartford's sisterships were turned back with shots through their boiler and steamed him, and one other ship was sunk. When Farragut sat down next day to write his report to Wells, he began with the words, it becomes my duty to report disaster to my fleet. But wells did not think it was a disaster at all. But a valiant action in which the Hartford and its gunboat concert gained a position to contest control of the 250 river miles of river between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, to contest that stretch of the river with the Confederates and to blockade the mouth of the Red River where supplies poured down to the Confederate Garrison's at Vicksburg in Port Hudson. Assistant Secretary Foxx no doubt gladdened faregates heart with the assurance that the President thinks the importance of keeping a force of strength in this part of the river is so great that he fully approves of your of your proceeding. And Farragut himself looking back four months later, told his wife, my last dash passport Hudson was the best thing I ever did, except taking New Orleans. It assisted materially in the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson. Now, while all of this was going on in the Mississippi Valley, matters of Charleston, we're coming to a head capture of that symbolic heart of the Confederacy had been a goal of union strategy ever since du Pont's success at Port Royal back in November of 1861. But a fundamental difference existed between the Navy Department in Washington and Admiral Dupont, in South Carolina, on how to carry out that strategy. Through the spring and summer of 1862, DuPont and Assistant Secretary Navy Secretary Foxx carried on a correspondence about this in which they seem to be talking past each other. Fox wanted it to be entirely a navy operation on the model of du Pont's capture of New Orleans of Port Royal and faregates captured in New Orleans. Our summers work must be Charleston by the Navy, Fox road to depart if we give you the Galena and monitor two of the first blue water ironclads the monitor of course being the very first one. If we give you the Galena and the monitor monitor, don't you think we can make it purely navy? Any other plan we shall play second fiddle to the army, which never does us justice. Even when we win it. Is it New Orleans, the monitor can go all over Charleston Harbor and return with impunity. I feel that my duties are twofold. First to beat our southern friends. Second to beat the army. Department was exasperated by this kind of talk. He believed that Charleston could only be captured by army troops moving against the forts and other defenses, step by step supported by the Navy do not go at half cocked about Charleston, he told Fox think coolly and dispassionately on the main object, which was to take Charleston not to glorify the Navy. There is no running the gauntlet of forts at South Austin as it was at the forts below New Orleans, he reminded Fox the whole harbor is ringed with batteries. It is like a cul de sac or bag. In a striking simile that he would repeat several times DuPont described the Charleston defenses as like a porcupines hide with
quills turned outside in and sewed up at one end. In October 1862, Hart went north for a visit home and for consultations in Washington, where he and Fox discussed their differences face to face. The number of forts and guns in the Charleston defenses was simply fabulous. His department told Fox to say nothing of obstruction strung across the channel between Fort Sumter and Moultrie consisting of pilings of logs strung together with ropes and chains, and of torpedoes, which is what they called naval minds in the Civil War. But he could not get to the fox DuPont complained to a friend. His Navy feelings are so strong and his prejudices or dislike of army selfishness so great that he listened unwillingly, to the idea of Combined Army Navy movements. Department was nettled by foaxes frequent references to New Orleans, which went something like this. If Farragut could do it with wooden ships, why can't you do it with ironclads a second generation of monitor type iron clad We're becoming available, and nearly all of them were sent to DuPont during the winter of 1860 to 63 with the idea that he could steam right past the heavy guns in Fort Sumter, Fort Moultrie, Fort Johnson and several other batteries, and compel the surrender of Charleston with naval guns trained on its streets just as Farragut had done in New Orleans, Fox wax poetic and his vision of du Pont's nine iron clads, which now included the 20 gun, new Iron sides of traditional frigate design as well as the new monitor Class ships. Fox wax poetic and his vision of these nine ships carrying in your flag supreme and superb, defiant and disdainful, silent amid the 200 guns until you arrive at the center of this wicked rebellion to demand the surrender of the forts or swift destruction. The President and Mr. Wells are very much struck with this program. The sublimity of such a silent attack is beyond words to describe, and I beg of you not to let the army spoil it. When DuPont read these words, he wondered what Fox was smoking when he wrote them. Nevertheless, he replied to Fox will do it if it can be done. I would like to make you happy. But running silently past the forts, he said was a non starter. I think we shall have to pound and pound beyond any precedent in history to subdue the forts so that Army, Army troops can advance step by step toward the city. The idea this a DuPont again, the idea that ironclads can go pirouetting around the harbor and that the forts can be run a lot Mississippi just was not likely to work, he insisted. The closer the date for his attack approached, the more pessimistic DuPont grew. The probabilities are all against us. He told the friend 32 guns to overcome or silence two or 300 which however, would not disturb me much if it were not for the idea of the obstructions. To remove these under fire is simply absurd. Du Pont's gloominess infected several of his iron clad captains, who also began to ride home. We are not very sanguine, with the attack being successful against enemy defenses in every conceivable shape, such as torpedoes, obstructions of piles and innumerable ropes and the channel to follow the propellers. Today, days before the scheduled beginning of his attack, which finally took place on April 7 1863. DuPont forlornly referred to these operations for the capture of Charleston, or what is more probable, the failure of its capture. In Washington, Wells and Lincoln were increasingly disturbed by the defeatist tone du Pont's dispatches. They reminded Lincoln unpleasantly of McClellan. Wells was also a shrewd if sometimes harsh judge of character. He wrote in his famous diary, I deplore the signs of Miss misgiving and doubt that have recently come over to pawn will and determination are necessary to success. But instead of emulating the firm and impetuous Farragut du Pont is getting as prudent as McClellan is very careful. Well, dash energy and force are softened under great responsibility. He has a reputation to preserve instead of one to make. And I think wells nailed it. The attack on April 7 by du Pont's nine ironclads turned out just as he had feared, that sort of self fulfilling prophecy. The new Iron Sights could not be controlled in the Swift currents and had to anchor to avoid going underground and got off on the one ineffective broadside during the whole attack. Unknown to Dupont, it anchored right over a 2000 pound torpedo, which the Confederates on shore repeatedly tried to explode electrically without success. They later discovered that a wagon and run over the wires on Morris Island and cut them. That was the only thing that went right for the pump that day. The monitor class ironclads ready to fire against the forts was too slow
to do that much damage and the forts in return. Using prepositioned range markers, Rebelde
the union ships with accurate fire. The ships got off only 151 shots during the battle, while the
76 guns in the forts fired 20,209 Shots, of which a remarkable feat 520 struck the ironclads,
partly disabling several and damaging the USS Kilcock so badly that she sank the next morning.
DuPont broke off the action after two hours. He intended to renew it the next day. But at a
conference that evening, his ship captains told them that their vessels were so severely
damaged, that it would be suicidal to try it again. So DuPont has informed Wells, determined
not to renew the attack. For in my judgment, it would have converted the failure into a disaster
induced response to criticism that the attack failed because his heart was not in it. Department
wrote to a member of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, no officer living could have gone
into the experiment with more earnest zeal than I did. Well, that was disingenuous to say the
least. Soon after the battle, DuPont had written to his wife. We have failed as I felt sure we
would. To me, there was no disappointment for I expected nothing. Over the next few weeks,
DuPont became obsessed with defending himself against newspaper criticism, especially in art
and article in the Baltimore newspaper, which concluded, oh, that we had a Farragut here to
take command at once and do what has been so weakly attempted by Admiral Dupont. Just as
McClellan had routinely blamed others for his failures, DuPont openly criticized the defects of
the ironclads, which as he said, are miserable failures were fortes our concern. Secretary wells
grew increasingly irritated with DuPont for spending so much time and energy trying to justify
himself instead of planning a new campaign against the enemy. In du Pont's obsession with the
supposed insult to his honor and self esteem. Wells wrote in his diary, he is evidently thinking
much more of DuPont than of the service for the country. Well, it's concluded the department is
against doing anything. He is demoralizing others. If anything is to be done, we must have a
new commander. In June 1863, Wells accepted the funds resignation and replaced him with
Admiral John Dahlgren, whose efforts over the next several months to capture Charleston with
Combined Army Navy operations also failed. Department home a bitter and in some ways, a
broken man. He never again held an important command and he died in 1865. He was in the
words of his most recent biographer, Lincoln's tragic Admiral. His tragic flaw like that of McAllen
was his unwillingness to teach to take large risks, and then to refuse to take responsibility for
the failures that stemmed from that unwillingness. The opposite was true of Farragut. He was
willing to risk his fleet and his reputation on the effort to achieve victory, and he proved it again
in August 1864 at the Battle of Mobile Bay. Ever since his capture of New Orleans two years
earlier, Farragut had wanted to attack the forts guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay and shut
down that port to blockade running. But other priorities had intervened. And it wasn't until the
summer of 1864 that the Navy Department turned him loose on Mobile Bay. Farragut made the
most of his opportunity. He now had four iron clads plus his fleet of wooden warships to take on
the three forts. Plus a small Confederate fleet led by the formidable iron clad CSS Tennessee,
and some 180 torpedoes that the Confederate said stretched across the entrance of the Bay
between the two main forts, leaving only a small opening. On August 5, the fleet weighed
anchor and headed toward this opening with the iron clads on the right closest to powerful Fort
Morgan with its 86 Big Seacoast guns. The leading iron clad USS to come Sup, struck a torpedo
and went down in less than a minute taking 90 Men whether the captain of the steam sloop,
USS Brooklyn. After watching this, hesitated at the line of torpedoes, not surprisingly, and the
whole fleet came to a halt under the punishing fire of Fort Morgan. Next in line behind the
Brooklyn was faregates flagship, the Hartford without hesitating, Farragut ordered the Hartford
to pass the Brooklyn. And in that moment, one of the great legends in the history of the United
States Navy was born. Damn the torpedoes full speed ahead. Farragut supposedly shouted
whether or not Farragut actually said these words and you'll see that disputed. He certainly did
order the Hartford to go ahead. Captain first of all Drayton, the fleet Captain commanding the
Hartford, describe these events. When the Tecumseh went down, he wrote, our line was getting
crowded, and very soon we should have all been huddled together a splendid mark for the
enemy's guns. The admiral immediately gave the word to go ahead with the Hartford and pass the Brooklyn we shared the port and paths directly over the line of torpedoes planted by the enemy, and we could hear the snapping of the submerge devilish contrivances as our whole drove through the water, but it was neck or nothing, and that risk must be taken. All the other vessels followed in our wake, and providentially all escaped. It turned out that the rapid and Shifting Currents in the channel off Fort Morgan had evidently broken loose some of the torpedoes and caused others to leak dampening their powder. But of course, Farragut couldn't have known that, especially after seeing what happened to the Tecumseh as the Hartford forged ahead dueling with the guns of Fort Morgan, Farragut claimed the rigging for a better view of the smoke and was lashed to the shrouds by the Boson a rifleman on the Confederate iron clad Tennessee fired several shots at him. If he had managed to hit him, Farragut would have been a martyred hero like Horatio Nelson that Trafalgar instead of merely the living hero of Moby obey. Once into the bay, the Union fleet engaged in a bloody firefight with the Confederate ships, especially the Tennessee before eventually sinking or capturing two of the smaller ships and damaging the Tennessee so badly that she surrendered. Over the next two and a half weeks the union ships with the help of army troops forced the surrender of all the forts, and gain complete control of the bay. It was the first unequivocal strategic Union victory in 1864 and set the stage for several more victories in the following months that assured Lincoln's reelection and eventually final triumph at Appomattox. In July 1866, Farragut became the first full admiral in American history. One day after Ulysses S. Grant became the first full four star general in their epitaphs, it could have been written that they were willing to take great risks and accept the responsibility if they failed, and reap the rewards of success they achieved by their willingness to take those risks. Well, I am now willing to answer your questions if you have them. I'll take the risk of answering your questions. If you'll just raise your hand and I'll repeat your questions ever been here? Yes. Question concerns Lincoln and Jefferson Davis in their respective policies with regard to the Navy Lincoln praised the Union navy Jefferson Davis never actually said much about the Confederate Navy. Although he did have a very good relationship with Steven Mallory, who was the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, and Dave has pretty much left Mallory to run the Navy and focused all of his concern and energies and so on on the army. Well, the Confederate Navy was was a fairly tiny concern. Mallory recognized from the beginning of the war that the Confederacy which had few shipyards, no industry capable of building marine engines, all of the marine engines in American maritime in the American merchant marine or the Navy had been built in the north. Recognize that they could never match the United States Navy in terms of the size and power and weight of guns that it would carry so he focused on innovation and on quality if he could. He encouraged the building of the CSS Virginia out of the whole of the old Merrimack the first ironclad he tried to he sent the agents abroad to Britain in France to buy ships or build them contract to build them. As commerce writers which wreaked havoc on the United States Merchant Marine during the course of the war, especially the CSS, Alabama and the Florida, all together, there were 12 Confederate commerce Raiders. They were sort of the submarines of the Civil War attacking enemy merchant ships, American merchant ships, and they sank. I think Sanko did burn 264 of them in the course of the war. The Confederate ironclads, of course, did accomplish some things they help to capture recapture Plymouth, North Carolina in 1864. They had sunk. The Virginia sank to Union ships at Hampton Roads in March of 1862. But for the most part, the Confederate Navy made relatively little contribution Despite the success of the Commerce Raiders, to the Confederate War effort. And whereas I, the Union navy made a major contribution to the Union war effort and I think that's the main difference. So link, Lincoln really benefited in a major way as commander in chief from the actions and accomplishments of the United States Navy, whereas Jefferson Davis really didn't know. His cause the Confederate cause did not benefit that much from the contributions of the Confederate Navy despite a few spectacular achievements. Yes. Your question concerns how discipline was imposed in the Navy
and court marshals, flogging it actually been abolished in the United States Navy back in the late 1846. So they couldn’t fall. They would have they would, they would have court marshals, they would punish them by minor punishments. Sometimes they would bring them up for desertion, and they would be imprisoned. But the Navy really didn’t face much in the way of serious indifference during the course of the Civil War. And so most of the court martial most of the punishment for desertion, most of the other kinds of smaller punishments for other kinds of infractions occurred in the army, of course, in the Confederate in the United States, in the the Union armed forces, only 5% of the total personnel were Navy 95% of the army. In the Confederate armed forces, an even smaller percentage between one and 2% were in the Navy. So in terms of the actual personnel who had to be disciplined and dealt with, you don’t have they don’t have that large scale of two to focus on in the case of the Civil War. So cases of severe lack of discipline were relatively rare in the Navy. Do I think that Farragut would have done any better in Charleston Harbor? That we can’t know. And maybe DuPont was right to say that it was just impossible to use the kind of tactics that Fox and well’s wanted them to use at Charleston and that Farragut had made available to us at both New Orleans and on the Mississippi River. And of course, it will be obey. But what I am sure, is that fair that would have tried, whether he would have succeeded or whether he would have gotten, you know, several of his ships sunk, is impossible to say. But unlike DuPont, I think he would have tried and what the outcome of that would have been, I don’t know, but Charleston really was. Apart from Richmond, I guess the most heavily defended Confederate city. So it was clearly going to be a tough nut to crack no matter what happened. And one can feel some sympathy for DuPont. Because he made maybe he was being asked unreasonably by Fox to do something that was impossible to accomplish. And when Dahlgren took over for him, and they appointed a new army commander, who was also an artillery expert, Quincy Gilmore, Dahlgren and Gilmore worked well together, and they captured some of the otter islands protecting Charleston Harbor, especially Morris Island, and completely closed down Charleston to blockade runners. But they you know, they could not crack the Confederate defenses, especially at Fort Sumter in Fort Moultrie. They reduced Fort Sumter to rumble but it’s still this it’s still protected the harbor and so Charleston didn’t fall until Sherman and As March North to South Carolina, in February of 1865, completely cut off its communications to the interior. It never did fall to the effort by the combined forces of the Army and Navy to take it. So one can feel some sympathy with DuPont. I guess where I part company from him was in his I would almost have to call it whining after in response to criticism after the failure of that April 7 attack, yeah, back there. Porter David Dixon Porter emerged by the latter part of the war as one of the top union naval commanders. He was a he was a very good commander. He took over the Mississippi Squadron and October of 1862 cooperated with grant in the Vicksburg campaign very effectively and with Sherman. And then wells put him in charge of the attack on Fort Fisher protecting the entrance to Wilmington, Cape Fear River in Wilmington Harbor, which was the last major Union victory along the Atlantic coast in January of 1865. I think Porter was a very efficient commander as a human being he had some negative qualities he had a tendency to glorify himself to criticize others behind their backs, in a way to him as a way of getting ahead of himself. Later on when he wrote his memoirs, you can’t rely on them. His it so while he was a really good naval commander, he was not such a admirable human being. Yeah. How did the ships communicate with each other when they were attacking by flag communication? And that night by by lights by torches that of course, was an age old way of communicating, they would, they would have a signalman all of the ships had signalman and they they had code books and they communicate with each other that way. When the Confederate sank the Kirkuk, which was an experimental ironclad that participated in that attack on Charleston and April 7 1863. They got lucky. Because the signal book from the Kirkuk floated ashore after the Kirkuk and the Confederates found it, and the Union Navy underdog and the army under Gilmore didn’t realize that and when in that they didn’t change the code. So the Confederates could read their
signals, and when the Gilmore and doggone will going to try a boat attack on Fort Sumter after they had pounded the fort to rubble with their artillery. In September of 1863. The Confederates were still holding out there, while the Confederates knew they were coming, because they could read the signals. And they they decimated that that boat attack and that's one reason that they never were able to capture Charleston. So they did they did it by flag signals. Anybody over here? Yeah. Did Lincoln meet with that with Farragut and depart another naval officers or have any correspondence with him? Yes, he did meet with him. But unlike his hands on communications with in relations with principal generals, starting with Winfield Scott and McClellan in 1861, and 1862, and continuing on through and, and so on. He basically because the Navy was relatively successful from the first and because Wells and Fox just might foxes, idiosyncratic idiosyncrasies, made a good team. Lincoln really let them run the Navy. He felt he didn't really have to intervene in the same way that he did with his generals because things were not always going very well in the case of the army. So Lincoln was relatively hands off as far as the Navy was concerned, he would send congratulations to them when they achieved the victory. He would let it be known that he approved what they were doing. He led to beat now Elon that he that he backed up wells and wells as criticism of DuPont, after in Wells was basically forced upon his resignation. But basically he let he let the wells run the Navy Department in a way that he could never really let the army operate on its own because you needed Lincoln's intervention. But of course, remember that personnel in the Navy are only 5% of the total the Army's 95% So it's not surprising that he's going to spend a lot more time with the army to Yes, right there. What kind of an iron clad was the USS to come so it was an advanced version of the original monitor class with a single turret. Some of the some of the monitors that were built later in the war had double turrets and then some of the river ironclads designed by James B. EADS later in the war also had double turrets. The USS Chickasaw, which fought with Farragut and mobiel Bay was a river iron clad and its sister ship I'm blanking on the name and then it was also there they had double turrets, but to come so it was it was it was a single turret that ship Okay,