

Maritime History on the Internet: USS *Monitor* and The Civil War

by Peter McCracken

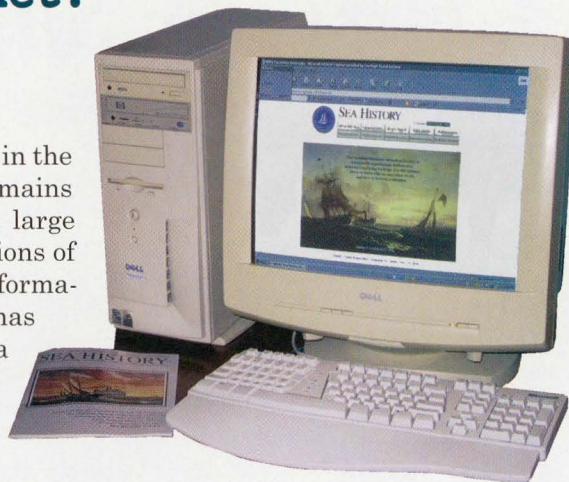
As other features in this issue of *Sea History* attest, interest in the Civil War in general, and in *USS Monitor* in particular, remains high. Web sites can leverage this interest by providing large amounts of historical information without the traditional limitations of print publishing: there's essentially no limit to the amount of information that one can put online, and each megabyte of information has essentially no impact on the incremental cost of publishing it—a process very different from that involved in printing a book. Below is a list of sites that provide introductions to *Monitor* and its restoration, followed by several other sites that provide significant amounts of information regarding the Civil War in general.

The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) maintains their *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary site at <http://monitor.nos.noaa.gov/>. NOAA's other site, "Ocean Explorer," provides nice overviews of the 2001 and 2002 dive seasons on *Monitor*, including logs and many photos at <http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/monitor01/monitor01.html> and <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/02monitor/monitor.html>. The Mariners' Museum's *Monitor* Center, at <http://www.monitorcenter.org/>, provides much more background information on the history and conservation of the vessel. A 'memorial' site for *CSS Virginia* appears at <http://www.cssvirginia.org/>, and contains historical information about the *Monitor*'s opponent.

Particularly impressive Civil War sites include the "Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System," created by the National Park Service, at <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/>. This site compiles multiple searchable sources: five million soldiers' names reflecting Union and Confederate muster rolls, 18,000 African-American sailors in the "Black Sailors Research Project," plus information regarding regiments, prisoners, cemeteries, battles, medals, and more. Note that the "Sailors" section focuses just on black sailors and is not limited only to those who enlisted, while the "Soldiers" section lists those whose names appeared on muster rolls. The US Civil War Center, at <http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/>, includes a lengthy list of Civil War cemeteries at <http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/links/hist.htm#Cemeteries>, though unfortunately there is no central compilation of this information. The Library of Congress has digitized many impressive Civil War maps at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gm-dhtml/cwmhtml/>, and the Smithsonian highlights its Civil War resources at <http://civilwar.si.edu/>.

One of the neatest online resources, though, is the complete text of *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, the 128-volume work published from 1880 to 1901. The fantastic Making of America (MOA) project, currently containing a total of over 4 million pages of early American history, has scanned and digitized almost the complete Official Records. (MOA is a joint project of Cornell University [<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>] and the University of Michigan [<http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrpf/>]; each site has different contents.) The MOA version of the Official Records is at <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/browse.monographs/war.html>; another version is available at <http://www.ehistory.com/uscw/library/or/index.cfm>. This highlights the best the Internet has to offer: digitized versions of primary sources, available for free to anyone, from anywhere.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at shipindex@yahoo.com. See <http://www.shipindex.org> for a compilation of over 100,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ↴



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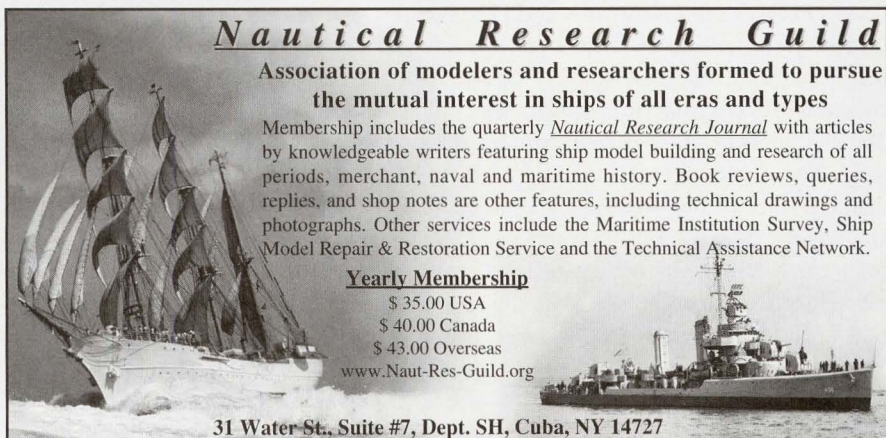
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