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Union River Ironclad 1861–65 (New Vanguard)



Synopsis

At the start of the American Civil War, neither side had warships on the Mississippi River, which was a vital strategic artery. In what would prove the vital naval campaign of the war, both sides fought for control of the river. While the Confederates relied on field fortifications and small gunboats, the Union built a series of revolutionary river ironclads. First commissioned in January 1862, these ironclads spent the next two years battling for control of the Mississippi, fighting in a string of decisive engagements that altered the entire course of the war. This book explains how these vessels worked, how they were constructed, how they were manned and how they were fought.

Book Information

Series: New Vanguard (Book 56)

Paperback: 48 pages

Publisher: Osprey Publishing; First Edition edition (August 19, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1841764442

ISBN-13: 978-1841764443

Product Dimensions: 7.2 x 0.1 x 245.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #715,125 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #482 in [Books > History > Military > Vehicles](#) #943 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Ships](#) #1334 in [Books > Science & Math > Technology > History of Technology](#)

Customer Reviews

The unrivalled illustrated reference on fighting vehicles, transport and artillery through the ages. Each volume is illustrated throughout, making these books uniquely accessible to history enthusiasts of all ages.

Angus Konstam is an experienced Osprey author with over 20 books in print. Formerly the Curator of Weapons in the Royal Armouries at the Tower of London, he also served as the Chief Curator of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West, Florida. His maritime titles for Osprey include New Vanguard 45: Union Monitor 1861-1865 and New Vanguard 49: Mississippi River Gunboats of the American Civil War 1861-1865. Angus lives in London, where he combines a freelance museum consultancy business with a career as a historian and writer.

This product is more like a concise, yet relatively substantial guide, and can be read in a couple of sittings. It provides a brief history on their evolution and on some key engagements of the "ironclads," as well as what were referred to as the "tinclads," and the river monitors. Good photos and illustrations are included, and stats of some of the key or representative boats such as dimensions, displacement, armament, crew size, commanders, notable actions or campaigns involved in, and when and where they were damaged or sunk, if applicable. Be aware this product does not pertain to the "timberclads" or rams, which also played an important role on the riverways. Personally, I was hoping for a bit more information on the crews, life on board, and activities when engaged in battle. If you are looking for an abbreviated, but very good introduction and overview of the ironclads with photos and illustrations, then this product is for you. If you want more in-depth information on their design and evolution, key engagements/campaigns, and backgrounds and actions of those responsible for procuring, designing, building, and leading them, etc.--there are other sources. Consider the outstanding books "War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies, 1861-1865" and/or "The USS Carondelet." The latter book delves further into the crews, life on board, and activities and what it was like on board when engaged in battle. It also has substantial information on the activities and those responsible for procuring, designing, building the ironclads.

This book is an Osprey publication and part of a series the author, a distinguished naval historian, has written. Others are being worked on as stated in the short biography section at the beginning. This book is valuable as a summary of the subject and a must for Civil War buffs interested in ships. I learned that the first ironclads used in this war were designed for inland rivers especially the Mississippi and its tributaries. Particularly useful, are the specifications of the Union ironclads like the Benton at the end. It seems as if all Konstam's books on Civil War navies are only 47 pages but some rare photographs are squeezed in. The paintings by Tony Bryan are very good and in conformity.

This book met my needs. It told about how the first ironclads were developed, where they were constructed, the materials used, their engines and speeds, and their guns. It also told of the different classes of the ironclads. I learned a lot from this book.

This was an adequate exposition of the river ironclads with a good cutaway drawing. I had expected more technical details, especially on the armor disposition and the engines. Some detail on the

living conditions and fighting experiences of the crew would also have been nice.

Just what I was looking for.

An excellent illustrated 47 page booklet of Civil War Union ironclad warships used on the inland waterways of the United States. This booklet provides brief historical glimpses of a number of Union ironclads and their operations and roles in the War. This provides an excellent adjunct to the history of the USS Cairo which further details both the construction, and battle history of this specific Ironclad, and its sinking and raising some 100 years later, as well as some of the history of its six city-named sister-ships in the book "Hardluck Ironclad, the Sinking and Salvage of the Cairo" by Edwin C. Bearss (revised Edition)Hardluck Ironclad: The Sinking and Salvage of the Cairo

Another well done reference and historical book by New Vanguard.

A number of books have been written about America's bloodiest conflict - the Civil War. This book concentrates on Union river ironclads, which formed the nation's first "brownwater navy." The book details the design and development of the ironclads, major operations involving them, and a catalog of vessels with specifications. What makes Konstam's book different is that it focuses solely on Union river ironclads and subsequently has more technical data and photos of these particular ships than any other tome that I have encountered. The book does focus on this particular class of ships somewhat in a vacuum and pays little attention to the overall strategy of the riverine campaign or wooden support vessels. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in naval warfare - especially those who enjoy reading about the transition from ships of wood to steel. Union River Ironclads has a wealth of technical information and dazzling full-color drawings and schematics of the ships. I have enjoyed both its academic utility and just looking at the pictures.

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