

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Civil War Ironclad Ship Surfaces Again

Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and Newport News, Virginia



“The opening of the USS *Monitor* Center is the result of 30 years of a highly successful public-private partnership...All who visit the USS *Monitor* Center will no doubt leave with a sense of pride, history and appreciation for those who have served, and continue to serve, their country.”

—U.S. NAVY RETIRED VICE  
ADMIRAL CONRAD C.  
LAUTENBACHER, PH.D.

former Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA  
Administrator, at the 2007 ribbon  
cutting ceremony for the USS *Monitor*  
Center



### THE STORY

Soon after the start of the Civil War, the Confederacy seized the Norfolk Navy Yard and converted a scuttled Union wooden warship, the USS *Merrimack*, into the ironclad vessel C.S.S. *Virginia*. The U.S. Navy promptly started building its own iron ship, awarding a contract to Swedish American engineer John Ericsson for a low-hulled vessel with a rotating round gun turret. The resulting U.S.S. *Monitor*, nicknamed “cheese box on a raft” because of its looks, was commissioned in early 1862 and sent to Hampton Roads to protect the blockading U.S. fleet from the *Virginia*. On March 9 and again on May 8, 1862, the *Monitor* and *Virginia* fought to a draw. The Confederates were forced to destroy the *Virginia* when they withdrew from the area, but the *Monitor* continued to serve until it sank in a storm off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, on December 31, 1862.

### THE PROJECT

The wreck of the *Monitor* was found 16 miles off Cape Hatteras in 1973. The discovery followed nearly 25 years of underwater searches by the Navy and a team sponsored by Duke University, the National Geographic Society, and the National Science Foundation. The initial survey and research in 1976-1977 indicated that the *Monitor* was intact and well preserved. The wreck site, located on the outer continental shelf, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. To address concerns about unauthorized diving, salvage, and damage from fishing nets, President Gerald Ford designated the wreck site of the *Monitor* as the first National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) in 1975. The *Monitor* sanctuary boundary is one mile in diameter and is protected and managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Department of Commerce, in consultation with the Navy. Research and other investigations in the 1990s indicated that the *Monitor* was deteriorating. After a public process, a decision was made to recover portions of the deteriorating iron vessel for preservation and permanent public display in the Mariners’ Museum in Newport News, Virginia.

### THE 106 PROCESS

Section 106 requires agencies to identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when

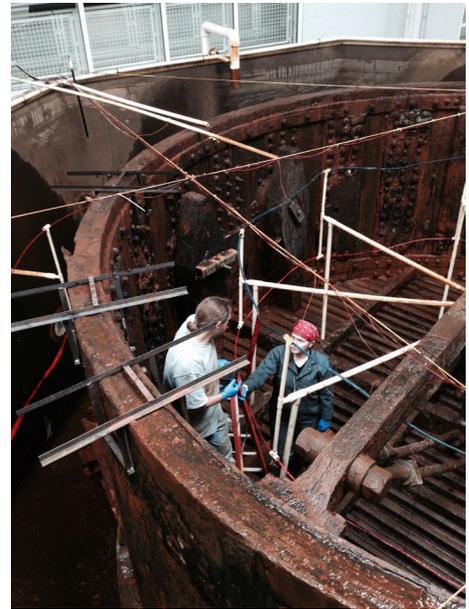
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Photos: Above, raising the turret (photo courtesy NOAA); Right, Battle of Hampton Roads; officers sit for a portrait before the *Monitor*'s rotating gun turret (photos courtesy Library of Congress)



Photos: From left, investigating the *Monitor* wreck (photo courtesy NOAA); In 2013, two of the *Monitor* sailors, whose remains were discovered in the ship's turret, were laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery (NOAA photo by David Hall); In 2015, the 90,000-gallon treatment tank holding the gun turret was drained to enable conservators to visually inspect the progress of conservation efforts. It weighs 120 tons and is the largest metal marine artifact ever recovered from the ocean. Here, conservators at the Mariners' Museum install equipment to aid in its conservation (NOAA photo by Shannon Ricles).

adverse effects may occur. The Navy and NOAA were both involved in recovery operations. NOAA, as the federal agency that manages the sanctuary, proposed the following as the undertaking: data recovery and curation, and preservation of the historic property in the water and on land. NOAA complied with Section 106 and voluntarily worked with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on an agreement covering the 1976 research permit. A second agreement was signed in 1987 and amended in 2000 following selection of the Mariners' Museum to house the *Monitor* collection. Subsequent efforts included recovery and conservation of the propeller, engine, turret, and guns, as well as respectful care of the remains of *Monitor* crew members. In 2004, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) was developed among NOAA, the Virginia SHPO, the Mariners' Museum, and the ACHP outlining further onsite and offsite resource protection, and stipulating continuing research and monitoring, funding, oversight, and public outreach.



## THE SUCCESS

The result has been an excellent public-private partnership for cooperative management of a nationally important maritime cultural resource. It led to additional National Marine Sanctuary designations for significant shipwrecks such as the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, jointly managed by NOAA and the State of Michigan. Under the PA, the *Monitor* Sanctuary Advisory Council was established in 2005 to advise NOAA and the Mariners' Museum regarding protection and management of the NMS and the *Monitor* collection. For the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Hampton Roads in 2012, special events took place at the museum, and interpretive signs were installed along the Newport News waterfront. A final *Monitor* NMS Management Plan was approved in 2013, which included a cooperative site stewardship program with commercial dive operators. In 2007, the *New York Times* lauded the cumulative success of these partnerships in an article titled "A Celebrity Warship Gets a Hall of Fame To Call Its Own" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/10/arts/design/10cent.html>).

### ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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#### Consulting Parties:

NOAA

Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer

The Mariners' Museum

ACHP

City of Newport News

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)



Preserving America's Heritage