



# Iron Dawn: The Monitor, the Merrimack, and the Civil War Sea Battle that Changed History

*Richard Snow*

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From acclaimed popular historian Richard Snow, who “writes with verve and a keen eye” (*The New York Times Book Review*), the thrilling story of the naval battle that not only changed the Civil War but the future of all sea power.

No single sea battle has had more far-reaching consequences than the one fought in the harbor at Hampton Roads, Virginia, in March 1862. The Confederacy, with no fleet of its own, built an iron fort containing ten heavy guns on the hull of a captured Union frigate named the *Merrimack*. The North got word of the project when it was already well along, and, in desperation, commissioned an eccentric inventor named John Ericsson to build the *Monitor*, an entirely revolutionary iron warship—at the time, the single most complicated machine ever made. Abraham Lincoln himself was closely involved with the ship’s design. Rushed through to completion in just 100 days, it mounted only two guns, but they were housed in a shot-proof revolving turret. The ship hurried south from Brooklyn (and nearly sank twice on the voyage), only to arrive to find the *Merrimack* had arrived blazing that morning, destroyed half the Union fleet, and would be back to finish the job the next day. When she returned, the *Monitor* was there. She fought the *Merrimack* to a standstill, and saved the Union cause. As soon as word of the battle spread, Great Britain—the foremost sea power of the day—ceased work on all wooden ships. A thousand-year-old tradition ended, and the path to the naval future opened.

Richly illustrated with photos, maps, and engravings, *Iron Dawn* is the irresistible story of these incredible, intimidating war machines. Historian Richard Snow brings to vivid life the tensions of the time, explaining how wooden and ironclad ships worked, maneuvered, battled, and sank. This full account of the *Merrimack* and *Monitor* has never been told in such immediate, compelling detail.

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