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# The Cape Fear Civil War Round Table

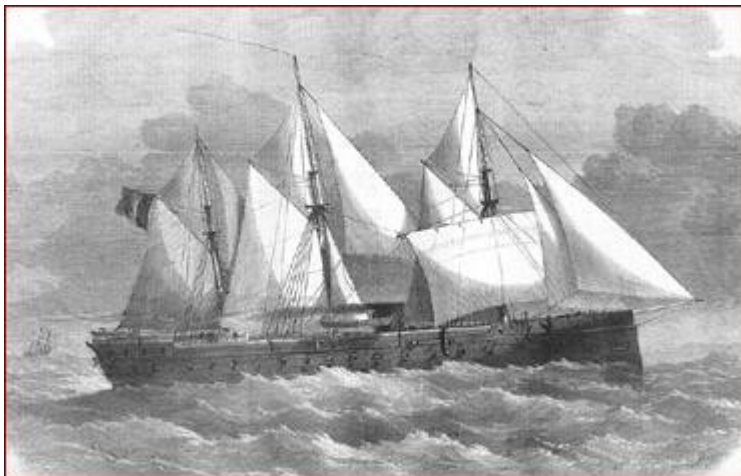
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## The CSS Stonewall - Ironclad Ship of War

By **Robert Long**

**The history of Ironclad ships** began with the Japanese. In 1558, Oda Nobunaga had six iron-covered "Oatakebune" referred to as floating fortresses rather than warships. The Koreans developed a turtle like ship called Geobukseon in the 16th century. These ships were covered with iron over the roof instead of the hull. Admiral Yi Sun-Sin used these ships several times in his attempts to stop Japan from invading Joseon.

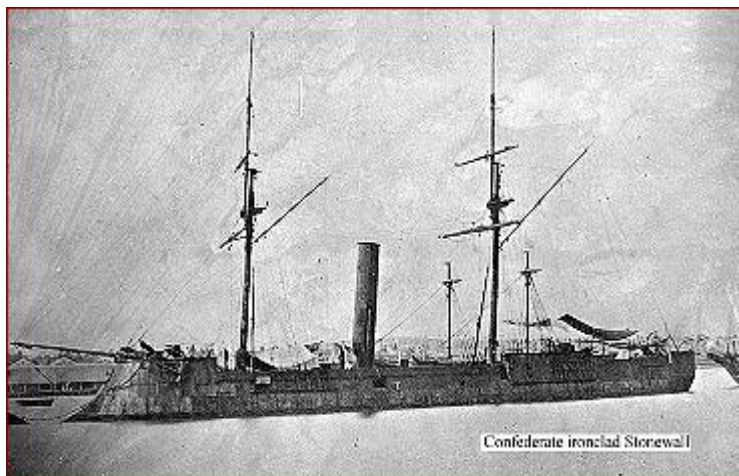
The Crimean War was responsible for the evolution of the modern ironclad. In 1856 the French used ironclads that were nothing more than floating batteries of cannons on rafts. Later these French built ironclads could move about on their own power. The British also built several ironclad rafts but theirs were towed into position and anchored. In 1857, the British used them to reduce the coastal defenses at Lithuania. A new era in warfare had begun.



The French had experimented with rifled cannon and armor plate in the early 1850's. These experiments culminated with the building of the *Le Gloire*. The *Le Gloire* was the world's first **modern** ironclad warship. She was built by the French at Toulon, laid down in April of 1858 and launched on November 24th, 1859. Napoleon III, Emperor of France, was determined to make France **Master of the Seas**.

The story of both the *Le Gloire* and *CSS Stonewall* started with their construction in France. The *Le Gloire* was designed by Stanislaus Du'puy De'lone. He was very likely also involved in the design of the *Stonewall*. The *Stonewall* was of a design called a **Ram** and would have been heavily reinforced in the area of the bow. This type of construction made her prone to drive her bow into heavy seas. Pictures of these two ships clearly show similarities in their design.

On the eve of the completion of the *CSS Stonewall* it was rumored that she was designed for the Confederate Government. This rumor reached the ears of the Mexican Government and thus started some controversy. **Emperor Napoleon III** was informed, that if the *Stonewall* fell into the possession of the Confederate Government, Mexico would be made off limits for French troops. The Emperor worried a bit more what his people might think because of his policies in Mexico. It was decided the ship would be sold to Denmark instead. Shortly after the ship arrived in Denmark, Danish



Naval officers took her out to sea for trials. These Viking descendants were use to sleek sailing vessels and didn't like the way the ship plowed her way through the sea. After sea trials the Danish government received the report from their Naval officers and decided to return her to the builder.

The builder's agent soon took position and before she was returned to France, a secret deal had been worked out between the builder and the Confederate government. The ship entered a small harbor and the anchor was dropped. There was another ship waiting with the *Stonewall*'s new crew. The Confederate crew came aboard and received her as their own. The Confederate flag was raised the crew was in attendance, so the commander now announced her to be the *CSS Stonewall*.

The *Stonewall*, was a small twin-screw ironclad man of war. She weighed twelve hundred tons and was armed with one **three hundred pounder** and two **seventy pounder guns**. The information listed here is a very short history of the development of ironclad ships. I enjoyed doing this research and hope you enjoyed reading it.

Ref: For long version of this material see, Southern Historical Society Papers, Volume 7, page 263 Vol. VII. Richmond, Va., June 1879. No. 6.

