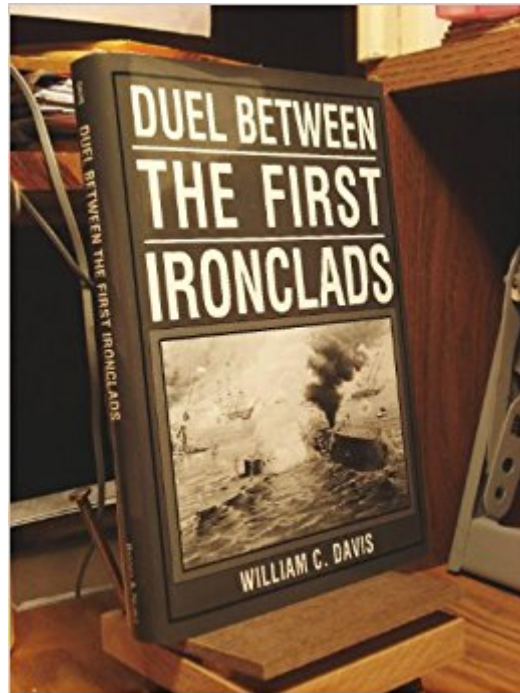




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# Duel Between The First Ironclads



## Synopsis

One was called "a tin can on a shingle"; the other, "a half-submerged crocodile." Yet, on a March day in 1862 in Hampton Roads, Virginia, after a five-hour duel, the U.S.S. Monitor and the C.S.S. Virginia (formerly the U.S.S. Merrimack) were to change the course of not only the Civil War but also naval warfare forever. Using letters, diaries, and memoirs of men who lived through the epic battle of the Monitor and the Merrimack and of those who witnessed it from afar, William C. Davis documents and analyzes this famous confrontation of the first two modern warships. The result is a full-scale history that is as exciting as a novel. Besides a thorough discussion of the designs of each ship, Davis portrays some of the men involved in the building and operation of America's first ironclads—John Ericsson, supreme egoist and engineering genius who designed the Monitor; John Brooke, designer of the Virginia; John Worden, the well-loved captain of the Monitor; Captain Franklin Buchanan of the Virginia; and a host of other men on both Union and Confederate sides whose contributions make this history as much a story of men as of ships and war. William C. Davis is the editor of *Civil War Times Illustrated* and the author of *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol*; *The Battle of New Market*; *Battle at Bull Run*; and *The Orphan Brigade*. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 201 pages

Publisher: Barnes & Noble Books (1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1566197937

ISBN-13: 978-1566197939

Package Dimensions: 8.5 x 5.8 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #936,173 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 in [Books > History >](#)

[Americas > United States > Civil War > Naval Operations](#) #1907 in [Books > History > Military >](#)

[Naval](#) #9593 in [Books > History > Military > United States](#)

## Customer Reviews

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I reviewed "The Battle Of The Ironclads" by Quarstein and called it the best book that I'd read on the Monitor and Virginia/Merrimack. That was before reading this book. This book has more source material and, consequently, more detail and is a better text. "The Battle Of The Ironclads" has more contemporary illustrations so both books complement each other in some ways. Despite the additional source material there are strange omissions in Davis' book, for one he does not mention why the Navy Department disliked Erickson: "The Princeton" affair wherein a gun, not designed by Erickson, blew up killing some high government officials when tested on the Princeton, a ship designed by Erickson, and Erickson was blamed for the deaths. Davis also casually mentions that the Confederacy was working on an ironclad called the Richmond when the Confederates abandoned the Norfolk Boatyard. In fact, work was proceeding on both the Richmond and Virginia simultaneously and it is possible that the Virginia could have been completed earlier with more devastating affect on the Union fleet if all work had concentrated on her. Davis' work is the more scholarly of the two with an index and list of references. Either one is a great read with much detail and the true student of the Battle or of the Civil War will want to read both.

Very well researched. Interesting story, that illuminates the character of the men involved as well as the nuts and bolts of the iron clads. The writing is a little stilted. Overall, an informative, enjoyable read.

One of the very best books on this subject that I have read in a long time. Started reading and could hardly put it down. I like Davis, he is a good writer on Civil War.

This shows the first fight between ironclads. The previous day the C.S.S. Virginia had sunk the Congress and Cumberland, two older ships of the Union Navy. She went back the next day to finish off the grounded Minnesota and open up Hampton Roads to Confederate shipping. However, from the shipyards of New York came the plucky U.S.S. Monitor, and she dueled with the C.S.S. Virginia for 3-4 hours. Both left the field of battle with slight casualties, but the Union design was much more

robust. Due to the advance of Union Armies, the Confederates had to burn the C.S.S. Virginia when they evacuated their bases in Norfolk. This is a nice short read about the duel between the two ironclads. It shows their construction, the epic battle, and their loss in respective times. I learned a lot about early warship construction, and the flow of the writing was good.

"Duel Between the First Ironclads" is probably the best book I have read about the historic clash between the CSS Virginia (Merrimac) and the USS Monitor. It relates the fascinating tale of the development and fight between the two great ironclads and their meeting on March 9, 1862. William C. Davis is both a historian and a storyteller. He expertly weaves memoir and journal accounts from actual participants to reveal a human side to what many would consider 'dry' history. That Monitor and Virginia were the first Ironclads to meet in battle is notable. But it is the men who commanded those ships, fired their guns and worked their engines who were behind it all. Davis expertly captures that and brings it to life. It is this mesh of human drama and military might that makes this book so valuable. Then there's the fact that it is simply well written, well paced and just entertaining. While this subject has been covered before in countless books on Civil War Naval history and military, none I have seen has gone into this much depth, both for the human side and the historical background. I really enjoyed this one. I think it's written well enough that I could suggest this book to just about anyone who has an interest in military history, or just likes a good story.

This is a first class read! Gives the story behind a well known but seldom detailed turning point in the Civil War. Davis gives us the tension of the engineering/technology race, the danger of untested deployment of "secret" weapons, the devastation wrought by this deeply flawed but clearly superior innovation and its tipping point impact on the future of naval warfare. He gives us an understanding of the many personalities involved, including cameos by Lincoln, Stanton & Chase. Well researched and authoritative!

William C. Davis chronicles the race to build the ironclads as well as the dramatic battle that ended unresolved. All of the colorful characters on both sides of the war are portrayed as both human and visionary, in their desperate gamble to win.. More importantly, however, Mr. Davis places this battle into its proper context as a crucial turning point in military and naval history. The chapter on the development of ironclad technology after the battle and war is the proper ending. For the first time, the true importance of this battle and the race to build the ironclads was brought home to me. Highly recommended.

The USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia (ex-Merrimack) were not the "first" ironclads... rather, it was the First Duel of Ironclads. It can only be supposed that the title was forced on Mr. Davis by the publisher. Still... this is perhaps the best of all books on the historic fight between the Monitor and the Virginia, stirring re-created and well annotated, and is a vital work for anyone wanting to know what really happened on the water in the Civil War. Highly recommended.

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