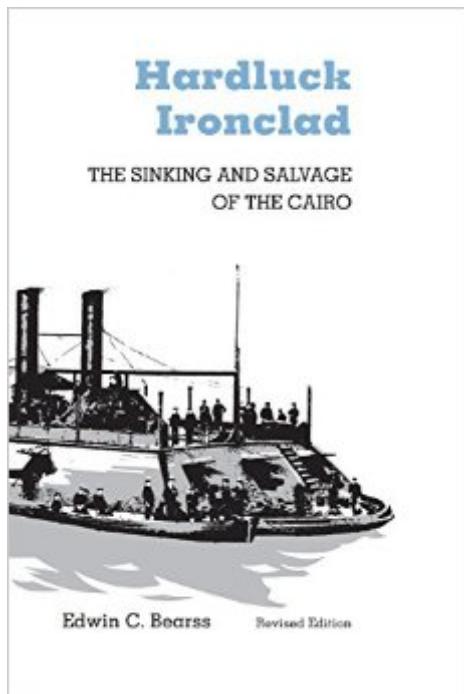


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Hardluck Ironclad: The Sinking And Salvage Of The Cairo



Synopsis

On the morning of December 12, 1862, the Union gunboat Cairo, nosing her way up the Yazoo River north of Vicksburg, Mississippi, triggered two Confederate demijohn mines. Within minutes the 512-ton ironclad had sunk six fathoms to the muddy bottom with no loss of life -- the first armored war vessel ever downed by an electronically activated mine. A whole new era of naval warfare had begun. In *Hardluck Ironclad* Edwin Bearss tells how he and two other Civil War historians discovered the Cairo almost a century later -- still intact at the bottom of the Yazoo, her big guns loaded and ready to fire, much of the gear aboard just as it was that December morning when the crew abandoned her -- and how, almost miraculously, she was later salvaged and restored.

Book Information

Series: Sinking and Salvage of the Cairo

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Customer Reviews

This book, really two books in one, is the history of the USS Cairo one of seven City Class Ironclad River Gunboats built between August 1861 and Jan 1862 in Illinois and Missouri. It is also an excellent history of the battles of the river fleet up and until the Cairo was sunk by an electric torpedo, now considered an underwater mine. The ship went down in six fathoms of water in the Yazoo River with no loss of life on 12 Dec 1862. The second book takes over at the time of the location of the sunken vessel and it then becomes the story of the discovery, recovery and ultimate the display of the Cairo at the Vicksburg National Military Park. This story is nearly as fascinating as the history of the ship. Dr Bearss leads the reader from the discovery of the sunken ship on 12 Nov

1956 through 29 Apr 1979 when the final decisions regarding the how and where the relic would be displayed. The salvage operation didn't go smoothly and the sunken wreck was received some damage and artifacts were lost during the recovery operation. The vessel recovery was completed on 22 Dec 1964 102 years after it was sunk. Artifacts recovered during the salvage operation included everything from ordnance to personal items belonging to the crew. Through the recovery of these artifacts, we are allowed to meet and learn about some of the crew members. With the recovery of the ship came care and storage problems. The timbers had to be kept wet to prevent rot and decay. The hulk weathered Hurricane Camille at a shipyard in Pascagoula, MS where it suffered more damage and valuable pieces of the ship were lost. Along the road to the final display, there were battles as to who owned the vessel, and who, where and how it would be displayed.

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