

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Campaign for Island No. 10 (February 28, 1862 – April 8, 1862)

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Although time and the shifting currents of the Mississippi River have long ago demolished Island No. 10, it was the site of the first of three important Union victories that wrested possession of the Mississippi Valley and the nation's most vital waterway from Confederate control. The campaign for the island confronted both sides with significant challenges in assembling and coordinating joint army-navy forces and balancing their sometimes-divergent goals. The Union not only had to assemble armies, they had to design and build an entirely new type of gunboat fleet while the Confederacy had to formulate a strategy and construct defenses able to protect territory stretching from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River with limited men and material. If roads drew armies to particular battlefields, then the Mississippi River propelled the combatants towards Island No. 10, a spit of land so named because it was the tenth island south of the juncture of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In September 1861, southern troops violated Kentucky neutrality to seize the commanding bluffs at Columbus, thereby blockading the Mississippi River.¹ The following spring, however, proved militarily disastrous for the Confederacy; Union troops routed a motley force at Mill Springs in eastern Kentucky, forced the surrender of Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, and then captured Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. Nashville fell and all of West Tennessee lay open to invasion. This triple breach of rebel defensive lines forced the evacuation of Columbus leaving the next viable barrier to Union descent of the river some thirty miles further south at Island No. 10.

Located just below the Tennessee state line, the island was scarcely a mile long and 450 yards wide inhabited only by James Price and several slaves cultivating corn and fruit orchards. While sitting barely ten feet above low water, Island No. 10's geographic position mid-river at the base of a hairpin curve of the Mississippi commanded the river from three directions. The river's capricious change of direction added to the island's strength as a long stretch of river flowed southward until it just reached the island when the stream turned sharply 180 degrees northward in a horseshoe curve flowing for seven

¹ Albert S. Johnston to Jefferson Davis, September 16, 1861, National Archives of the United States [NA], Record Group [RG] 109, Entry 103, Correspondence of the Western Department and the Army of the Mississippi, 1861-1862, Box 1.

miles before it made another 180 degree turn southward again.² Next to the island in strategic importance was the river town of New Madrid, Missouri, located at the top of the river's second bend and a key supply link in keeping Island No. 10 connected to the lower South. Bluffs overlooking the river on the Tennessee shore ranging from the island northward were another important piece of the region's topography contrasting with swampy Madrid Bend which lay directly north of the island. Immediately eastwards, the Tennessee shoreline was fringed with impassable swamps adjoining the forty-mile-long expanse of Reelfoot Lake. Only a single road ran from the river west of the lake to Tiptonville, Tennessee, six miles away, with a spur route running from the village eastwards to Troy and Union City but the lake had to be crossed by ferry.³

From the beginning of the war the Mississippi Valley's powerful slaveholding political and economic interests feared the impact of a federal invasion on their mercantile trade and slave controls and pressured the Confederate government to fortify strong points like Island No. 10.⁴ However, a shortage of military engineers, repeated changes in the western command structure, and conflicting departmental overlaps prevented implementation of any cohesive defensive strategy. Confederate engineers relied on traditional methods to defend navigable waterways by using a combination of shore batteries, channel obstructions, chain barriers, and whatever naval forces that could be assembled. Although effective in the past, such measures had not been tested against steam propelled and iron-plated warships.⁵ In mid-August 1861 erection of earthworks began under direction of Captain Andrew B. Gray and a crew of several hundred requisitioned enslaved laborers, but the occupation of Columbus diverted men, material, and attention away from the project.⁶ Beset by shortages of labor and tools like shovels and wheelbarrows, fortifying the island continued only sporadically throughout the fall.⁷

² Andrew B. Gray to E. D. Blake, September 18, 1861, United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. in 128 parts (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, volume 8, p. 141-2 (hereafter cited as *O.R.*, I, 8, 141-2).

³ Larry J. Daniel and Lynn N. Bock, *Island No. 10: Struggle for the Mississippi Valley*, (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1996), 5-6.

⁴ Alexander M. Clayton to Leroy P. Walker, May 3, 1861, *O.R.*, IV, 1, 276; John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, December 1, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 52, pt. 2, 223; Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862*, (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1967), 20-22.

⁵ Daniel, *Island No. 10*, 11-12; A. L. Saunders to Leonidas Polk, December 5, 1861, United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), Series I, volume 22, p. 807 (hereafter cited as *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 807); James Trudeau to Leonidas Polk, December 2, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 52, pt. 2, 224.

⁶ Leonidas Polk to Gideon Pillow, August 15, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 3, 650-1; James Trudeau to Leonidas Polk, January 26, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 52, pt. 2, 257-8; John P. McCown to G. A. Henry, August 18, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 3, 661; Leonidas Polk to William W. Mackall, October 7, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 4, 440; Thomas Jordan to Edward Pickett, Jr., March 15, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 782; Andrew B. Gray to E. D. Blake, September 18, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 3, 703-5.

⁷ Gideon J. Pillow to Leonidas Polk, August 20, 1861 and Andrew B Gray to E. D. Blake, August 29, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 3, 665-6 and 688; John P. McCown to Thomas Jordan, March 23, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 800; D. B. Harris to Thomas A. Jordan, March 9, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 148.

Attempts to employ unarmed regiments in construction were resisted as southern soldiers objected to being assigned similar tasks alongside slaves.⁸ An additional problem was that many of the heavy guns emplaced were mounted on squat naval carriages which required cutting deep embrasures that weakened parapet strength and increased the likelihood of being flooded.⁹ Gray's complaints went unheeded and only after General Albert Sidney Johnston's western defensive line collapsed in mid-February 1862 did Confederate headquarters energetically push for New Madrid and Island No. 10 to be fully prepared to meet a federal onslaught.¹⁰

Union Departmental Commander Major-General Henry Wager Halleck was the first to set federal troops in motion towards Island No. 10 by rerouting troops intended for Tennessee to Commerce, Missouri, and selecting West Point-trained and politically well-connected Brigadier General John Pope to lead them. Pope had spent most of 1861 fighting guerrilla bands plaguing Missouri, but on February 18 Halleck ordered him to take charge of the Army of the Mississippi and crack rebel defenses at Island No. 10.¹¹ On February 21 Pope joined his army numbering nearly 25,000 men at Commerce, Missouri, and organized it into five small infantry divisions commanded by West Pointers Brigadier General Schuyler Hamilton, Brigadier General John McAuley Palmer, Colonel John Bennett Plummer, Colonel Gordon Granger, and Brigadier General David Sloane Stanley.¹² A week later, Pope's force advanced southward to secure Sikeston as the nearest railhead to supply operations against Island No. 10 and on March 1 encountered the first rebel resistance from the secessionist Missouri State Guard.¹³ The Army of the Mississippi arrived in front of New Madrid on March 3 but no immediate assault on enemy works was planned as the worst spring flooding in three years had raised Mississippi so high that rebel gunboats could fire over the levee on any attacking column crossing the flat terrain surrounding the town. Lacking heavy artillery, Pope kept his main force out of range while locking the Confederate garrison inside their entrenchments under harassing fire. Union troops then awaited siege guns from Cairo and

⁸ M. Jeff Thompson to Leonidas Polk, December 16, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 8, 715-6.

⁹ Andrew B. Gray to E. D. Blake, September 18, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 3, 703-5.

¹⁰ Pierre G. T. Beauregard to Leonidas Polk, February 23, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 754; "Russell to the London Times," August 2, 1861, in *Memphis Daily Appeal*, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1861-08-02/ed-1/seq-1/>, accessed February 18, 2018; Andrew B. Gray to Lewis G. DeRussey, August 20, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 4, 390-1.

¹¹ Wallace J. Shultz & Walter Trenerry. *Abandoned by Lincoln*. (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 109; John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, June 16, 1861, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹² Manning F. Force. *The Campaigns of the Civil War*, 14 vols.vol.2, *Fort Henry to Corinth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881-1886), 2:69; Abstract from return of the Department of the Mississippi, Major General Henry W. Halleck, commanding, for March 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 652; Abstract of Casualties, Army of the Mississippi, February 28-March 14, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 91-93. At the end of March Pope's aggregate present was 24,519 suffering less than 100 casualties.

¹³ John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, March 1, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 580-1.

for Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote's ironclad flotilla to arrive before resuming active operations against Island No. 10.¹⁴

Evacuation of Columbus had hurriedly increased Confederate attempts to fortify Island No. 10 and the first troops arrived on February 24 allowing Colonel Edward W. Gantt, to assure General Pierre G. T. Beauregard that they would "make a splendid defense."¹⁵ Brigadier General John Porter McCown soon assumed command having been one of the officers to have surveyed the island the previous summer and while some described him as a fine martial figure, others thought him "an old dilapidated fellow with very little energy."¹⁶ His command was bolstered by Brigadier General Alexander Peter Stewart and his brigade along with Brigadier General James de Berty Trudeau and ten companies of heavy artillerists supplemented by the Southern Guards Battalion detailed to serve the heavy guns.¹⁷ In trying to untangle the rapid influx of men and material arriving at the island McCowan discovered the carriages and iron traverse plates for some of the best cannon could not be found, lumber for gun platforms was lacking, and the limited supply on hand was being rapidly used up by practice firing.¹⁸ Battling inclement weather and soggy terrain, McCown raced to emplace additional artillery; by March 13 nineteen guns were mounted on the island with another twenty-two on the Tennessee shore and ten days later the number had risen to fifty-two cannon.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the rising Mississippi continued to imperil Confederate positions despite efforts at sandbagging or pumping.²⁰ McCown briefly harbored hopes of attacking Pope if the 3,000 Confederates defending New Madrid could be heavily reinforced from Major General Earl Van Dorn's command in Arkansas, but no troops were forthcoming.²¹ Some

¹⁴ George W. Cullum to Henry W. Halleck, March 10, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 602.

¹⁵ Pierre G. T. Beauregard to Governors of Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, February 21, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 826-7; Pierre G. T. Beauregard to Leonidas Polk; Leonidas Polk to Edward W. Gantt; Edward W. Gantt to Leonidas Polk, February 26, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 757-9; "Edward W. Gantt," *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=3215>, accessed February 18, 2018.

¹⁶ Leonidas Polk to Thomas Jordan, March 18, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 438; Albert S. Johnston to Samuel Cooper, October 5, 1861, NA, RG 109, E103, Correspondence of the Western Department and the Army of the Mississippi, 1861-1862, Box 1; Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes Jr., *The Battle of Belmont: Grant Strikes South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 37. "John Porter McCown," <http://www.civilwarhome.com/mcCownbio.html>, accessed February 18, 2018.

¹⁷ John P. McCown to Thomas Jordan, March 1, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 125-16; Force, *Campaigns*, 2:68.

¹⁸ John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, March 14, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 781; John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, March 7, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 769-70; Andrew B. Gray to John J. Guthrie, February 19, 1862, NA, RG 45, Confederate Navy Subject File, Microfilm M1091, Roll 13; *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 824; John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, February 27, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 759-60; John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, March 4, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 765.

¹⁹ Memorandum of Batteries at Island No. 10 and Madrid Bend, March 24, 1862, NA, RG 109, Entry 4, Box 13; Leonidas Polk to Pierre G. T. Beauregard; I. G. Steedman to Captain Hughes. March 28, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 776; 174-5.

²⁰ Report of Andrew B. Gray, March 29, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 138-45.

²¹ John P. McCown to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, March 8, 1862, in Alfred Roman, *The Military Operations of General Beauregard in the War Between the States, 1861-1865*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1884), 1: 552; Pierre G. T. Beauregard to John P. McCown, March 22, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 797.

help did appear in the form of an improvised Confederate naval squadron commanded by sixty-two year old Commodore George Nichols Hollins, one of the few regular naval officers to join the Confederacy. Although lacking full crews, his flotilla consisted of seven converted river steamers *Livingston*, *Polk*, *Maurepas*, *Pontchartrain*, *Calhoun*, *Grampus*, *Jackson*, and the two-masted screw propelled brig *McRae*.²² Another arrival was the floating battery *New Orleans* constructed out of the Pelican Floating Dock, now refashioned with a sloping casemate sheathed in boiler plate housing sixteen guns and possessing the ability to raise and lower itself in the water by a system of valves. It was floated into position on the north side the island to assist in closing off the main shipping channel.²³

Although temporarily stymied by rebel artillery at New Madrid, Pope did not remain idle and on March 5 he dispatched Joseph B. Plummer to secure a lodgment on the Mississippi at Point Pleasant nearly ten miles to the south. The following day Plummer's men seized the objective and overnight carved out hasty field gun emplacements to harass rebel river traffic supplying Island No. 10. For several days thereafter, Hollins responded by furiously shelling federal positions, but was repeatedly frustrated as Union gun crews merely withdrew under heavy fire and then returned when rebel gunboats drew off. Plummer also placed an additional battery at Riddles Point, directly across the Mississippi from Tiptonville, Tennessee, the only land route which the Confederates to extricate their forces at Island No. 10.²⁴ On March 12 Pope received one eight-inch howitzer and three 24 pound siege guns shipped from Cairo and that same evening the combined efforts of the 10th and 16th Illinois Infantry regiments threw up preplanned gun emplacements within 800 yards of rebel lines and had the guns ready to open fire by dawn the next day.²⁵ After a day of shelling, McCown summoned his commanders and gunboat captains for a war council aboard the *McRae*. At the meeting the navy insisted their vessels must withdraw downriver and that the infantry and stores must be loaded immediately, or nothing might be salvaged. In a decision that would later be heavily criticized, the officers concluded to remove the entire garrison that same evening, but poor execution and bad weather quickly wrecked an orderly withdrawal. At 11 p.m. a strong thunderstorm commenced just as the retreat began resulting in troops becoming confused and sullen in the darkness, several transport commanders refused to obey orders, and efforts to remove the heavy ordnance utterly failed.²⁶ Near dawn, the last steamer towed the hospital wharf-boat filled with sick men to the Tennessee shore

²² George N. Hollins to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, March 15, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 184; S. Kellogg to William D. Porter, April 8, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 767-8.

²³ George N. Hollins to John J. Guthrie, March 2, 1862, NA, RG 45, Confederate Navy Subject File, Microfilm M1091, roll 13; *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 832.

²⁴ John M. Palmer to John Pope, March 23, 1862, NA, RG 393, Part II, Entry 6095, Miscellaneous Records, Army of the Mississippi, Box 1, 1862; John P. McCowan to Thomas Jordan, March 12, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 777.

²⁵ W. L. Lothrop to Speed Butler, March 16, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 97; James D. Morgan to George D. Kellogg, March 15, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 53, 453-4.

²⁶ John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, March 13, 1862 and March 14, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 778; 780-1; Alexander P. Stewart to Thomas Jordan, March 31 and April 13, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 162.

and the gunboats dropped down river below Tiptonville.²⁷ Confederate naval participation in the campaign was now effectively ended as Hollins believed his entire squadron would face annihilation if forced to confront even a lone Union ironclad.²⁸

Pope marched into New Madrid on the morning of March 14 and telegraphed St. Louis "to my utter amazement the enemy hurriedly evacuated the place last night leaving everything."²⁹ Besides occupying an important strategic position, Pope also counted spoils including 33 cannon, thousands of small arms, tents and entrenching tools, as well as horses, mules, wagons, and plentiful ammunition.³⁰ Union possession of New Madrid endangered Island No. 10, but Pope could not cross the river without transports and gunboats to protect them. On March 15, the federal ironclad flotilla finally arrived under the command of Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, a pious, saltwater sailor who already had seen action on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. It was the aftermath of those campaigns that had delayed the navy as cracked iron plates had to be replaced and Foote had sworn he would "never again...go into a fight half prepared."³¹ Obtaining full crews was an additional problem with men having to be recruited from among the Great Lakes watermen further supplemented by a thousand volunteers culled from the Army of the Potomac.³² Foote was also keenly aware that fighting on the Mississippi would be different than it had been on other rivers. Engaging rebel land batteries on northward flowing streams permitted his vessels to 'stand on their wheels' exerting only enough motive power to keep in their battle positions with their heavily armored bows facing the enemy. If disabled a vessel drifted with the current back to safety but the Mississippi flowed southward, and any gunboat knocked out of action would be swept into enemy hands. Experiments to test whether the ironclads could fight while backing upstream against the current failed even when twin anchors were placed astern to try and hold the ship in place.³³ Finally, at 10:00 a.m. on March 14, Foote's squadron consisting of the

²⁷ John P. McCown to Thomas Jordan, March 31, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 749-52.

²⁸ George N. Hollins to Stephen R. Mallory, April 11, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 6, 873; George N. Hollins to Stephen R. Mallory, April 9, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 839.

²⁹ John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, March 14, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 613.

³⁰ John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, March 14, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 613-4; Benson J. Lossing. *Pictorial History of the Civil War*, (Philadelphia: G. W. Childs, 1866), 240.

³¹ Andrew H. Foote to Caroline A. Foote, February 6, 1862, NA, RG 45, E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47; Andrew H. Foote to Montgomery C. Meigs, March 9, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 601; George W. Cullum to Andrew H. Foote, March 6, 1862; Andrew H. Foote to Henry A. Wise, March 8, 1862; Andrew H. Foote to George Cullum, March 8, 1862, NA, RG 45 E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47; Henry W. Halleck to George W. Cullum; George W. Cullum to Henry W. Halleck, March 10, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 602.

³² Henry A. Wise to Abraham Lincoln, March 5, 1862, NA, RG 393, Part I, Entry 2593, Military Division of the Missouri, Letters Received, 1861-1867; Henry W. Halleck to Andrew H. Foote, March 19, 1862; George D. Wise to Andrew H. Foote, December 11, 1861; Montgomery C. Meigs to Andrew H. Foote, December 24, 1861, NA, RG 45 E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47.

³³ Henry Walke, "The Western Flotilla at Fort Donelson, Island Number 10, Fort Pillow and Memphis," 1958 Yoseloff ed. in

Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War. Being for the Most Part Contributions by Union and Confederate Officers. Based Upon "The Century War Series"*, 4 vols. (New York: The Century Co. 1884-1888), 1:438; "From Island No. 10," *New York Times*,

ironclads *Benton*, *Mound City*, *St. Louis*, *Louisville*, *Carondelet*, *Pittsburg*, *Cincinnati*, and the wooden gunboat *Conestoga* cast off and accompanied by ordnance boats, fourteen mortar boats towed by steamers, and several transports loaded with troops, steamed downriver towards Island No. 10.³⁴

The Union flotilla arrived off the island near 9 a.m. the next day, but prospects for immediate attack were not good as the Mississippi's flood current was strong, and as Foote told Gideon Welles, "Island number ten is harder to conquer than Columbus, as the island's shores are lined with forts, each fort commanding the other above it."³⁵ Foote would avoid rash action and ignored suggestions that his flotilla steam past rebel fortified points and wreak havoc all the way to New Orleans--a move Confederates secretly dreaded. Instead, Foote placed his faith in the eleven mortar boats under command of army Captain Henry Eveleth Maynadier that had been assigned to his squadron.³⁶ These odd craft were flat bottomed scows 60 feet long and 25 feet abeam.³⁷ Their sloping, boiler plated bulwarks enclosed a 17,000 pound seacoast mortar that fired a 13-inch, 230 pound shell several miles in an arc propelled by 20 pounds of gunpowder.³⁸ Although the mortar crews had to huddle outside the bulwark and endure a stunning concussion each time the squat monster was fired, the scows were also equipped with weather awnings and had some individual maneuverability by using sweeps. Hopes that these mighty weapons would blast Confederates from their positions even emanated from the White House as President Lincoln took personal interest in that ensuring a large supply of mortar ammunition was ready "to rain the rebels out" of their entrenchments by "treating them to a refreshing shower of sulphur and brimstone."³⁹

On Sunday 16 March Foote's gunboats reconnoitered enemy positions while the mortars tested proper range resulting in desultory firing by both sides.⁴⁰ In preparing for combat the *St. Louis* and the *Cincinnati* were lashed on either side of the flagship *Benton* so that if one vessel were disabled, the combined power of the others would prevent her drifting downstream. At 11 a.m. on March 17 the *Mound City* opened fire on rebel positions and was joined by the rest of the flotilla, except the *Louisville*, which had to return to Cairo to repair a boiler leak. Fire was concentrated on Rucker's Battery on the

March 29, 1862, 5, <http://www.nytimes.com/1862/03/29/news/island-no-ten-cannonading-heard-direction-point-pleasant-results-balloon.html?pagewanted=all> , accessed February 18, 2018.

³⁴ Abstract Log of Mortar Division of the Western Flotilla, March 14 to April 10, 1862, NA, RG 24, E118; printed version: *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 769-71.

³⁵ Log of the USS *Benton*, NA, RG 24, Entry 118, 24-25; *The New York Tribune*, April 4, 1862, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1862-04-04/ed-1/seq-4/> , accessed February 18, 2018; Lossing, *Pictorial History*, 243.

³⁶ Henry A. Wise to Andrew H. Foote, March 15, 1862, NA, RG 45, E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47.

³⁷ "Report of Rear Admiral Andrew H. Foote." November 13, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 314-16.

³⁸ Lossing, *Pictorial History of the Civil War*, 242.

³⁹ Henry A. Wise to Andrew H. Foote, January 31, 1862, Box 1, NA, RG 45, E500, Area File, 1775-1910; John T. Trezevant to Leonidas Polk, November 21, 1861, *O.R.* I, 52, pt. 2, 214-6.

⁴⁰ Andrew H. Foote to Montgomery C. Meigs, March 9, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 601.

Tennessee shoreline and on the Belmont Battery located at the tip of Island No. 10.⁴¹ Confederate guns replied briskly although outmatched in range and the gunners of Rucker's Battery had to use twenty men up to their knees in water to work the submerged block and tackle to wrestle each cannon back into position after every discharge.⁴² The *Cincinnati* was struck several times and the *Benton* took four direct hits with one 8-inch solid shot smashing through the upper deck and passing the entire length of the vessel before finally falling spent upon the commodore's writing desk.⁴³ The only fatalities in the fleet, however, occurred when one of the *St. Louis's* rifled guns exploded, killing three men and wounding a dozen more. By day's end little serious damage had been done although naval observers witnessed their shells undoubtedly cutting up the enemy's earthworks; more water was let into some of the shore batteries, a 64 pounder was dismantled, and two Confederates killed but nothing more. The engagement ended at 7 p.m. as the gunboats returned to their anchorages while the mortar boats maintained a steady fire; Foote was now content to let the mortars pound Island No. 10 submission.⁴⁴

As Union leaders settled into a siege, the Confederates underwent a command change; McCown was promoted major general and sent to Fort Pillow while Brigadier General William Whann Mackall was dispatched to replace him. Mackall was a forty-five year old West Pointer from Maryland who had been twice brevetted for gallantry in the U. S. Army, but had resigned and eventually joined the staff of Albert S. Johnston as assistant adjutant general.⁴⁵ Hastily promoted brigadier general, he arrived at Island No. 10 on the morning of March 31 and learned that Pope had an estimated 30,000 men, was alleged to be digging a canal to circumvent the island, and that Union gunboats could not be challenged. McCown departed immediately taking along several ranking officers, five infantry regiments, several field batteries, and all post records making it difficult for Mackall to accurately estimate of his remaining force.⁴⁶ Reports showed only 2,273 effectives on hand for defense of the island, the Tennessee shore batteries, and to man the fifty guns along a twenty-five mile stretch of river.⁴⁷ However, many men were sick with measles or mumps and others lacked proper arms and officers reported many more were broken down from hard labor and exposure as well as depressed by the lack of mail and

⁴¹ Log of the USS *Benton*, NA, RG 24, Entry 118, 24-25.

⁴² Report of James Trudeau, March 29, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 154-5. The Belmont Battery was Battery #1 on the island while Battery #1 on the Tennessee shore was called the Redan or Rucker's Battery.

⁴³ James A. Merrill. *Battle Flags South: Story of the Civil War Navies on Western Waters* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1970), 123.

⁴⁴ John P. McCown to Edward Pickett, Jr.; John P. McCown to Thomas Jordan, March 17, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 785-6. McCown claimed 600 were rounds fired at his works.

⁴⁵ Ezra J. Warner. *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 203. John E. Stanchak, "Mackall, William Whann" in *Historical Times Illustrated History of the Civil War*, edited by Patricia L. Faust, (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 462; *New York Herald*, April 10, 1862, 10.

⁴⁶ Special Orders No. 445, Army of the Mississippi, March 26, 1862, NA, RG 109, Entry 4, Box 13; William W. Mackall to Samuel Cooper, August 21, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 132-3.

⁴⁷ William W. Mackall to Thomas Jordan, April 3, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 809; Abstract from return of the troops at Madrid Bend, March 21, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 795 showed 3,885 with no numbers of scattered cavalry companies were reported.

the pervading notion that Island No. 10 was untenable.⁴⁸ On the island provisions were in short supply, there were no bomb-proof shelters, and ammunition kegs had to be stored outdoors protected only by tarpaulins.⁴⁹ As for the Confederate river squadron, Mackall judged it “worthless for offense or defense” and if Pope crossed the river “the game is practically up.”⁵⁰ On April 3, the Confederate engineers reported that the “water batteries on the main shore and island will be able to beat the enemy’s boats back by daylight,” but added “whether they will be able or not to prevent them from passing by during a dark and boisterous night the future alone can disclose.”⁵¹

Confederate fears were justified for although Foote was willing to wait and let the mortars slowly do their work not all his subordinates agreed and Pope repeated assurances that the gunboats might pass the island in the dark as it was impossible to fire at night with any accuracy.⁵² The question of running past the rebel batteries was first raised at a conference of naval commanders on March 20, but Foote dreaded the thought of one of his gunboats falling into enemy hands. The havoc recently wrought by one rebel ironclad in Hampton Roads, CSS *Virginia*, added to his caution since it was known that two casemated enemy vessels, *Arkansas* and *Tennessee*, were under construction at Memphis.⁵³ To counter these enemy threats, the War Department hastily approved the outfitting of two specially equipped rams to sink Hollins’ fleet if the gunboats could not do it.⁵⁴ Pope also investigated using the Mississippi to his advantage as springtime inundations had covered low-lying areas with as much as ten feet of water. If a backwater channel could be found, then transports and even gunboats might safely bypass enemy guns. General Schuyler Hamilton initially suggested such a plan and Pope seized upon it as a way to circumvent both rebel fortifications and Foote’s intransigence.⁵⁵ Colonel Josiah W. Bissell and his six hundred-strong Engineer Regiment of the West were summoned and needed equipment was requisitioned from Cairo.⁵⁶ Bissell’s plan would connect the Mississippi to its tributary stream of Wilson’s Bayou that debouched near New Madrid. The route would follow a flooded wagon road then pass through a dense

⁴⁸ William W. Mackall to Samuel Cooper, August 21, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 132-3

⁴⁹ E. D. Blake to Leonidas Polk, April 10, 1862; William W. Mackall to Thomas Jordan, April 3, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 137-188; Victor von Sheliha to H. B. Davidson, April 3, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, April 3, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 811.

⁵⁰ William W. Mackall to Thomas Jordan, March 31, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 805; William W. Mackall to Thomas Jordan, April 3, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 809.

⁵¹ Victor von Sheliha to H. B. Davidson, April 3, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 810-11.

⁵² Thomas A. Scott to Andrew H. Foote, April 4, 1862 and John Pope to Andrew H. Foote, April 6, 1862, NA, RG 45 E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47.

⁵³ Stephen R. Mallory to Leonidas Polk, December 24, 1861, *O.R.*, I, 8, 789; Thomas Jordan to John J. Guthrie, March 18, 1862, NA, RG 45, Confederate Navy Subject File, Microfilm M1091, Roll 13, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 832-3.

⁵⁴ Charles Ellet, Jr., to Edwin M. Stanton, March 29, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 684; Andrew H. Foote to Montgomery C. Meigs, 1, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 653. Foote asked for \$56,000 to complete the *Eastport* as a ram as its rebel designers originally intended.

⁵⁵ John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, March 19, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 625.

⁵⁶ Josiah W. Bissell, “Sawing out the Channel Above Island Number Ten,” in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 1:460-1. <https://ehistory.osu.edu/books/battles/vol1/460>, accessed February 18, 2018.

swampy wood for several miles before reaching the intended bayou.⁵⁷ What was sometimes described as 'Pope's Canal' was never a canal at all as the only digging was to widen the levee breach for easier access by work vessels and to permit a greater influx of river water. Bissell employed several stern-wheelers equipped with powerful capstans arraigned single file to carve out a usable channel, and although progress through the inundated cornfields was easy, the greatest difficulty was cutting through the thick forest that separated the working parties from their goal. This was achieved by organizing round-the-clock relays of men with each section assigned specialized tasks. First, men standing on small rafts would cut the trees off about eight feet from the waterline and once toppled, the second group attached hawsers which were run back to the steamboat capstan which then dragged the tree out of the way so it could be shorn of its branches and eliminated.⁵⁸ Although Confederate commanders were aware of Pope's activities, no efforts were made to hinder the operation as no one believed it would succeed.⁵⁹

While Bissell worked, the naval bombardment of Island No. 10 continued with the mortar shells resembling shooting stars lighting up the night sky often watched by sailors sitting on deck reading newspapers or writing letters.⁶⁰ An additional aerial component was added on March 25 when Captain John Steiner's balloon *Eagle* ascended 500 feet to survey enemy strength and gauge the effectiveness of the shell fire but hazy weather prevented a clear picture being attained.⁶¹ By the beginning of April it was apparent that mortar shelling alone would not destroy enemy defenses, provoking army men to joke that the navy's only contribution to the campaign was "bombarding the State of Tennessee at long range."⁶² Foote finally bowed to pressure and agreed to risk one of his gunboats to break the stalemate. Commander Henry Walke of the *Carondelet* won permission to test whether the enemy's batteries could be evaded—a maneuver that lower ranking sailors already believed would surely succeed.⁶³ To improve Walke's chances Colonel George Washington Roberts of the 42nd Illinois and forty picked men launched a

⁵⁷ N. H. Buford to John Pope, March 26, 1862; William K. Strong to John Pope, March 31, 1862, NA, RG 393, Part II, Entry 6095, Miscellaneous Records, Army of the Mississippi, Box 1, 1862; John Pope to Josiah W. Bissell, March 19, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 625-6. This stream was referred to as Bayou St. John in Confederate records.

⁵⁸ Bissell, "Sawing out the Channel Above Island Number Ten, in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 1:461-2. <https://ehistory.osu.edu/books/battles/vol1/461>, accessed February 18, 2018. The completed channel was nearly twelve miles in length.

⁵⁹ Leonidas Polk to John P. McCown, March 20, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 793-4; Pierre G. T. Beauregard to Lucius M. Walker, March 22, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 798. Polk erroneously believed a canal was being cut into Reelfoot Lake.

⁶⁰ Pierre G. T. Beauregard to Samuel Cooper, April 1, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 125; Alexander M. Pennock to Henry A. Wise, March 18, 1862; Henry Walke to Andrew H. Foote, March 22, 1862; Andrew H. Foote to Caroline A. Foote, March 19, 1862, NA, RG 45 E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47.

⁶¹ Abstract Log of Mortar Division of the Western Flotilla, March 14 to April 10, 1862, NA, RG 24, E118; printed version: *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 770-2.

⁶² Walke, "The Western Flotilla at Fort Donelson, Island Number 10, Fort Pillow and Memphis," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles & Leaders*, 1:441.

⁶³ John D. Milligan ed. *From the Fresh Water Navy: 1861-1865. The Letters of Acting Master's Mate Henry R. Browne and Acting Ensign Symmes E. Browne*. Naval Letters Series vol. III, (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1970), 49.

nighttime raid on Rucker's Battery on the Tennessee shore. Cloaked by a rainstorm, the federals landed, drove off two startled enemy pickets, and in a matter of minutes spiked the guns and shoved off to return to the fleet. Robert's men were long out of sight by the time Confederate reinforcements waded through hip deep water to reclaim the emplacement.⁶⁴ The floating battery *New Orleans* was the next obstacle to be removed and on the morning of April 3, the *Benton*, *Pittsburg*, *Cincinnati*, and three mortar boats concentrated their fire on it scoring several direct hits. Fearing destruction, its commander, Lieutenant Samuel W. Averett, cut the mooring cables and the *New Orleans* drifted downstream to an ineffectual new position two miles below the island.⁶⁵

The following morning the *Carondelet* was stripped for action: planks from a wrecked barge covered the unprotected deck to resist plunging shot; surplus chains were coiled over the vessel's most vulnerable parts, an 11-inch hawser was wound round the pilot house as far up as the viewing slits, and cord wood barriers stacked about the boilers.⁶⁶ Sailors were armed with pistols, hand grenades, and cutlasses, hoses were attached to the boilers to scald enemy boarders, and twenty-three sharpshooters from the 42nd Illinois supplemented the crew. Engineers rerouted the steam exhaust pipes aft to muffle the distinctive tell-tale noise that normally occurred when steam escaped through the chimneys, and to in case of capture, preparations were made to cut the cold-water supply and injector pipes so as to ruin the engines beyond repair. Additionally, a coal laden barge stacked high with baled hay was tied to the port side to shield the vulnerable magazine.⁶⁷ Near 10 p.m. the moonless night of April 4 unexpectedly erupted with a violent thunderstorm as the *Carondelet* moved into the current. The gun ports were sealed, all orders were whispered, and the only light permitted was a lantern in the engine room. Shrouded in rain, the *Carondelet* passed the Tennessee emplacements unchallenged, but when just opposite island emplacements, the collected soot in one of the smoke stacks, no longer dampened by steam exhaust vapor "burned out" sending flames shooting out the chimney.⁶⁸ Confederate sentries opened fire sending artillerymen running through the downpour, however, the rebel gunners had great difficulty gauging the range between flashes of lightening and each cannon rarely had a chance to fire more than two shots.⁶⁹ Piloted by twenty-year river veteran William R. Hoel, the *Carondelet* and its ungainly coal barge grazed the shallows near the head of the island, but buoyed by

⁶⁴ Andrew H. Foote to Henry W. Halleck; Thomas A. Scott to Edwin M. Stanton, April 2, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 120-1; 124-5.

⁶⁵ Andrew H. Foote to Henry W. Halleck, April 3, 1862, NA, RG 45, E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47.

⁶⁶ Allen H. Gosnell, *Guns on the Western Waters*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 74.

⁶⁷ Andrew H. Foote to Henry Walke, March 30, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 121; James Brooks to Montgomery C. Meigs, November 7, 1862 *O.R.*, III, 2, 833-4; Walke, "The Western Flotilla at Fort Donelson, Island Number 10, Fort Pillow and Memphis," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 1:442.

⁶⁸ "The Federal Gunboats Running the Batteries at New Madrid," in *Memphis Daily Appeal*, May 1, 1862, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1862-05-01/ed-1/seq-2/>; accessed February 18, 2018. These flames were not mentioned in Confederate reports, most likely the vessel was revealed by a flash of lightening and the alarm raised coincidentally near the same moment as the fire.

⁶⁹ W. D. S. Cook to Thomas Jordan, April 13, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 175-7.

the swift current regained the main channel.⁷⁰ On the open deck, exposed to the storm and enemy fire, were Charles Wilson and Theodore H. Gilmore tasked to gauge the water depth using leaded weights and passing the information onto the pilothouse.⁷¹ Once past the island confrontation with the floating battery *New Orleans* proved anti-climactic as the hulk fired only a few ineffective shots.⁷² Greeted by bonfires at New Madrid, the *Carondelet* suffered her only mishap of the night by running aground fifty yards from berthing. Shifting astern the crew and the forward guns allowed the lightened bow to swing free and the gunboat safely moored at 1 a.m. having taken two hours in passage and one hour aground. Rebel guns had fired some forty-seven shots but only two solid projectiles lodged in the coal barge.⁷³ That same night Pope had received the additional cheering news that his transports had made it through Bissell's channel and were now waiting concealed in Wilson's Bayou. As April 5 dawned, army staff officers boarded the *Carondelet* to reconnoiter enemy fortifications twenty miles downriver and on the return trip, the gunboat delayed long enough to shell an enemy emplacement opposite Point Pleasant and send a squad ashore to spike the cannon after the defenders hastily withdrew.⁷⁴

Pope immediately requested a second ironclad be sent to him and Foote grudgingly agreed. On the night of April 6, under cover of another serendipitous thunderstorm, the *Pittsburg* made a successful dash past Island No. 10 arriving undamaged at New Madrid at 5 a.m. the next day. Although Walke desired to immediately proceed in tandem to engage the rebel batteries blocking Pope's intended landing site, the *Pittsburg's* commander, Egbert Thompson, requested delay. At 6:30 a.m. the *Carondelet* alone steamed downriver past the enemy emplacements at Watson's Landing firing a port broadside then wheeling about mid-stream before briskly engaging rebel guns, only ceasing fire periodically to allow the powder smoke to clear for more accurate aiming.⁷⁵ Belatedly joined by the *Pittsburg*, which sometimes fired recklessly across the *Carondelet's* bow, the two vessels closed the range as enemy shore fire slackened. Seeing the rebels retreating in disorder, Walke steamed upriver to attack other enemy river installations meeting only minimal resistance and sent landing parties ashore to spike the abandoned guns.⁷⁶ By late morning Walke signaled that embarkation could begin and

⁷⁰ Walke, "The Western Flotilla at Fort Donelson, Island No. Ten, Fort Pillow and Memphis," in Johnson and Buel *Battles and Leaders*, 1:444; Gideon Welles to Andrew H. Foote, April 12, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 729; NA, RG 15, Microfilm M1279, Navy Widows Pension Certificates; Gosnell, *Guns on the Western Waters*, 78. Hoel received a promotion for his skill.

⁷¹ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 33; "Rebel Blockade Run," in *The New York Tribune*, April 7, 1862, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1862-04-07/ed-1/seq-5/> accessed September 16, 2018.

⁷² Andrew H. Foote to John Pope, April 4, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 122-3.

⁷³ Log Book of the USS *Benton*, NA, RG24, E118; the log books for the *Carondelet* and *Pittsburg* are not extant for the Island No. 10 campaign period. "Rebel Blockade Run," *The New York Tribune*, April 7, 1862, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1862-04-07/ed-1/seq-5/> accessed September 16, 2018.

⁷⁴ Henry Walke to Andrew H. Foote, April 8, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 727.

⁷⁵ John D. Milligan, *Gunboats Down the Mississippi*, (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1965), 59.

⁷⁶ Henry Walke to John Pope, April 7, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 123.

Pope brought out the concealed transports *Hetty Gilmore*, *Terry*, *Trio*, and *Emma* to ferry his troops across the river in shifts.⁷⁷ Facing no opposition, Union troops landed on the river's east bank at Watson's Landing while the gunboats moved further south to cut off any rebel retreat via the river road, the only route that Mackall could use to extricate his forces. While a sortie by the Confederate river fleet was feared, it never materialized as Hollins told Richmond "I see nothing that I can do against them in a fight."⁷⁸

General Mackall was initially reluctant to believe that an enemy ironclad had made it past the island, and when he did his next move was to assemble a mobile strike force intending to repulse Pope at any attempted landing site.⁷⁹ Early on April 7 word arrived that a second ironclad had reached New Madrid and by noon a council of war decided on immediate retreat toward Tiptonville hoping that speed might evade interference from the Union gunboats.⁸⁰ Such hopes were quickly dashed as Union forces pushed rapidly inland from their landing zone, and facing only limited resistance, quickly took control of the road thereby penning rebel forces on the neck of land between Reelfoot Lake and the Mississippi. Union ironclads took up positions near Tiptonville making rebel encirclement complete.⁸¹ With escape impossible, his troops demoralized and deserting, Mackall tendered the unconditional surrender of his command in the early hours of April 8. While small numbers of Confederates slipped away to make the arduous crossing of Reelfoot Lake, the rest of Mackall's ragged and tired force marched into Tiptonville and laid down their arms.⁸² Pope's crossing the Mississippi sealed Island No. 10's fate; on the evening of April 7 the rebel steamer *De Soto* cautiously approached the Union flotilla displaying signal lights and sounding whistle blasts carrying Confederate officers who officially surrendered the island to Foote.⁸³ Captured along with the island were 17 officers, 368 men, 100 sick and 100 men from the transports, the Confederate Navy's signal books, and telegraphic dictionary, as well as the enemy's floating battery.⁸⁴ At

⁷⁷ David S. Stanely to Speed Butler, April 20, 1862; Eleazer A. Paine to Speed Butler, April 16, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 98; 109-10; Shultz & Trenerry, *Abandoned by Lincoln*, 82; "Important From New Madrid," in *Daily Missouri Republican*, April 11, 1862, 1,

<http://digital.shsmo.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/dmr/id/15071/rec/1>, accessed February 18, 2018.

⁷⁸ George N. Hollins to Stephen R. Mallory, April 9, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 839.

⁷⁹ William W. Mackall to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, August 21, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 132-3; A. Jackson, Jr., to Thomas Jordan, April 16, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 157-8.

⁸⁰ William W. Mackall to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, August 21, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 133.

⁸¹ David S. Stanley to Speed Butler, April 20, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 98-100; Eleazer A. Paine to Speed Butler, April 16, 1862, 110; John Pope to Andrew H. Foote, April 7, 1862, 669; Henry W. Halleck to Edwin M. Stanton, April 8, 1862, 677.

⁸² A. Jackson, Jr. to Thomas Jordan, April 16, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 158-9; W. D. S. Cook to Thomas Jordan, April 13, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 176-8; Gilbert W. Cumming to Eleazer A. Paine, April 10, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 112-3; Cumming estimated the number of prisoners at 3,000; "The Capture of Island No. 10," in *Daily Missouri Republican*, April 11, 1862, 2, <http://digital.shsmo.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/dmr/id/15071/rec/1>, accessed February 18, 2018.

⁸³ USS *Benton* Log Book, NA, RG 24 E118; "The Surrender of Island No. 10," in *The Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1862, 1.

⁸⁴ Andrew H. Foote to Henry W. Halleck, April 8, 1862, NA, RG 45 E500, Area 5, Microfilm M625, Roll 47; Andrew H. Foote to Henry W. Halleck, April 8, 1862 and A. Jackson, Jr. to Thomas Jordan, April 16,

dawn belated Confederate efforts to scuttle their transports ended abruptly when federal gunboats arrived and sent engineers aboard to plug the leaks. The *Red Rover* was towed into shallow water, but other rebel vessels fared less well: the sternwheel gunboat *Grampus* and transports *Prince*, *John Simonds*, *Mohawk*, and *Yazoo* foundered while the *Red Rover*, *Mars* [sometimes incorrectly referred to as *H. D. Mears*], *Ohio Belle*, and *De Soto* were partially sunk, leaving only the wharf boat and hospital ships *Champion* and *Admiral* afloat. The loss of these vessels, all heavy guns, plus accoutrements and equipment led to a Southern outcry as to why so many public stores were allowed to be captured intact.⁸⁵ While Pope's official report claimed capture of three generals, seven colonels, seven regiments, 100 heavy guns, 24 field guns, thousands of small arms, and large quantities of ammunition and provisions, these figures were soon disputed and remain imprecise to this day.⁸⁶ Confederate sources maintained that no more than 3,500 men surrendered.⁸⁷ Yet despite Pope's claims he was nevertheless congratulated by Halleck on an achievement that exceeded "in boldness and brilliancy all other operations of the war."⁸⁸

News of Island No. 10's surrender set off salutes and celebrations across the North even though news of the bloodletting at Pittsburg Landing (Battle of Shiloh) soon dominated the headlines. In the Confederacy word of the surrender took nearly ten days to filter across the South, and when the news reached Memphis panic ensued resulting in a declaration of martial law.⁸⁹ The new focus of the river war was now Fort Pillow and Fort Randolph, yet before Pope could advance, military housekeeping chores had to be completed; all Confederate sick were shipped to St. Louis while the general and field officers were sent to Fort Warren in Boston or to Columbus, Ohio. For the enlisted men, 1,500 were sent to Chicago, 1,000 to Springfield, Illinois, and the remainder slated for detention at Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁹⁰ Although Beauregard sought early release for the men captured at Island No. 10, the offer was declined and accompanying

1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 674; 158-9; Andrew H. Foote to Gideon Welles, April 8, 1862 and April 10, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 721; 723.

⁸⁵ John P. McCown to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, March 23, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 779-80; List of Confederate boats left at Island No. 10 above New Madrid, Missouri, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 757; *The Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1862, p. 1; Naval History Division, Navy Dept. *Civil War Naval Chronology 1861-1865*, (Washington: U.S. Printing Office, 1971), Appendix: Confederate Steamers; "The Result at Island No. 10," in *Memphis Daily Appeal*, April 19, 1862, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1862-04-19/ed-1/seq-2/>. Accessed February 18, 2018; Report of Acting Rear-Admiral Davis, U. S. Navy, transmitting list of capture, September 25, 1862, *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 379.

⁸⁶ John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, April 8, 1862 and John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, April 9, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 675 and 78-79. A copy of Pope's report also found in *O.R.N.*, I, 22, 724-5.

⁸⁷ Daniel, *Island No. 10*, 143-5; 159-60. Pope claimed capture of 6,973 men when the actual number was closer to 4,500. Total Union casualties for the second half of the campaign tallied 25 killed, wounded and missing. The total of captured guns was also likely closer to 109.

⁸⁸ Henry W. Halleck to John Pope, April 8, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 675. Questions concerning Pope's inflated prisoner count center on whether it was his notorious boastfulness, dubious counting all captured units at full rather than actual strength or a desire to disguise that so small an enemy force had tied up both a Union army and the gunboat flotilla for over a month.

⁸⁹ Daniel, *Island No. 10*, 145-6.

⁹⁰ Henry W. Halleck to John Pope, April 9, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 678.

the prisoners were several wives who had been employed at the island who now choose to go north into captivity.⁹¹ Although Island No. 10 had changed hands, the war was not yet over for the post. Confederate weaponry had to be dismantled and the sunken steamers salvaged with questions about their ownership to be settled—the northern owners of the *Grampus* and the *Mohawk* litigated unsuccessfully for the next thirty years seeking recompense.⁹² Citing the availability of timber, cultivatable land, and lack of flooding, the Union army considered using the island as a prisoner of war camp or a temporary transfer station for northward-bound captives.⁹³ The New Madrid fortifications were ordered repaired to secure the area against attack and a small garrison was to be maintained on the island itself.⁹⁴ For the next two years the Union army used the island as a transit station for army-bound cattle and as a launching pad to seek out deserters and marauders firing on government steamers.⁹⁵ By late summer 1863 it was also a haven for nearly 1,000 contrabands of all ages seeking refuge from the Confederate guerillas protected by less than a hundred soldiers.⁹⁶ Periodic alarms that the island was about to be retaken provoked grave concern at Union headquarters in Memphis.⁹⁷ In late 1862 General Thomas A. Davis ordered that the outpost be totally disarmed with all ammunition destroyed and any remaining cannon spiked and their carriages burned.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Union soldiers remained on Island No. 10 until May 1864 when Lieutenant General Grant finally ordered all weak or isolated installations be abandoned.⁹⁹

The campaign for Island No. 10 turned out to be the most important wartime service for many of the leading participants. John Pope's nearly bloodless triumph catapulted him to command the new Army of Virginia tasked with recovering Union fortunes on the

⁹¹ John D. C. Atkins to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, April 22, 1862, *O.R.*, II, 3, 856; Joseph H. Tucker to William Hoffman, July 16, 1862, *O.R.*, II, 4, 228.

⁹² William Myers to Montgomery C. Meigs, June 26, 1862, NA, RG 92, Letters Received, Entry 20, Box 92. Thomas R. Chester and his sons sought government compensation until 1913 when a federal court disallowed their claim because they had ignored the presidential proclamation of rebellion and blockade by continuing a voyage to New Orleans.

⁹³ W. H. Thurston to Stephen A. Hurlbut, April 8, 1863, *O.R.*, II, 5, 534-5. Special Order No. 139, May 24, 1863, 695-696.

⁹⁴ Special Orders No. 164, June 18, 1863, *O.R.*, I, 53, 560; Statement of Henry Price, May 1, 1864, *O.R.*, I, 39, pt. 2, 5; Abstract from returns of the Department of the Tennessee, May 1864, *O.R.*, I, 38, pt. 4, 375. Aggregate present and absent numbered 217; in early 1864 some 90 men of 34th New Jersey were stationed on the island.

⁹⁵ R. M. Ekins to J. H. Odlin, February 18, 1864 and March 8, 1864, *O.R.*, I, 32, pt. 2, 404 and 491-2.

⁹⁶ Special Order No. 164, December 9, 1863, NA, RG 393, Part IV, Entry 595, Vol. 80; R. S. Benson to J. Hough, September 16, 1863; November 12, 1863, NA, RG 393, Part IV, Entry 594, Vol. 80; Alexander Asboth to John M. Schofield, June 20, 1863, *O.R.*, I, 22, pt. 2, 331.

⁹⁷ Quincy McNeil to H. W. Lowner, October 17, 1862, NA, RG 393, Part IV, Entry 594, Vol. 80; Alexander Asboth to Charles S. Hamilton, February 3, 1863, *O.R.*, I, 24, pt. 3, 31-32; Henry Price to Cadwallader C. Washburn, May 26, 1864, *O.R.*, I, 39, pt. 2, 54.

⁹⁸ Thomas A. Davies to R. B. Jones, December 24/25, 1862; George P. Ihrie to John Rawlins, February 3, 1863; Thomas A. Davies to Henry W. Halleck, December 25, 1862; December 28, 1862, NA, RG 108, E22, Microfilm M1635; William A. Montgomery to Thomas J. Newsham, February 1, 1863, *O.R.*, I, 17, pt. 2, 479; 500; 880-1.

⁹⁹ James B. McPherson to Cadwallader C. Washburn, April 29, 1864, *O.R.*, I, 32, pt. 3, 536.

Peninsula, but a disastrous defeat at Second Bull Run derailed his military career and he sat out the rest of the war on the western frontier. Andrew H. Foote received the thanks of Congress and promotion to Rear Admiral, but it was also his last combat success. Given Washington desk duty, his declining health and unexpected death in June 1863 prevented him from taking up his longed-for sea duty commanding the South Atlantic Blockade Squadron.¹⁰⁰ John P. McCown led a division in the Army of Tennessee until he clashed with Braxton Bragg resulting in his court martial and loss of command. His replacement, William W. Mackall was exchanged in August 1862 and held a variety of Confederate military posts, including serving as chief of staff for both Bragg and Joseph E. Johnston until the latter was dismissed in July 1864. George N. Hollins's dismal performance at Island No. 10 earned widespread criticism resulted in his permanent transfer to administrative duty. In a surprising twist, Edward W. Gantt, who had first commanded the Island No. 10 area, abandoned his southern loyalties after his exchange and became an outspoken unionist traveling across the North denouncing the Confederacy.¹⁰¹

In the struggle to control the Mississippi River a clash at Island No. 10 was unavoidable. The Confederacy had no choice but to fight for the island as the only viable river barrier between Columbus and Memphis despite the difficulties of topography, construction, and supply.¹⁰² General McCown erred in his defensive planning and in his haphazard evacuation of New Madrid thereby handing Union forces a key strategic position. By the time General Mackall took over the defense of the island there were few options to reverse the tide of events. Painfully evident at Island No. 10 was the Confederacy's inability to build a river navy that could challenge Union vessels for control of the water.¹⁰³ Southern hopes that a traditional static defense consisting of heavy cannon mounted in earthen forts would present an impassible barrier failed as muzzle-loading artillery could not fire with enough accuracy or speed to prevent steam-driven targets from running past. The South could never formulate a strategy to keep federal gunboats from achieving total dominance, and repeatedly sacrificed large garrisons attempting to defend the Mississippi. The loss of Island No. 10 might have been erased with a Confederate victory at Shiloh, but its surrender ended the struggle for control of the upper river; Memphis fell in early June and no southern stronghold remained north of Vicksburg. Southerners were left hoping that if land fortifications

¹⁰⁰ "Rear Admiral Andrew Hull Foote, United States Navy," in *New York Herald*, June 27, 1863, 5.

¹⁰¹ "Edward W. Gantt," <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=3215>, accessed February 18, 2018; "Speech of Hon. E. W. Gantt at Cooper Union," <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/02/02/news/hon-ew-gantt-his-speech-cooper-institute-rebel-ex-general-rebellion-slavery.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed February 18, 2018; Charles A. Dana to Edwin M. Stanton, June 12, 1863, *O.R.*, I, 24, pt. 1, 97.

¹⁰² William C. Whittle [CSN] to Leonidas Polk, January 21, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 738; Memorandum of Pierre G. T. Beauregard, February 7, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 7, 862.

¹⁰³ John P. McCown to Leonidas Polk, February 28, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 762-3; John P. McCown to Thomas Jordan, March 12, 1862, *O.R.*, I, 8, 777.

failed to stop the Yankee onslaught, then Yellow Fever or other pestilent maladies might do the job instead.¹⁰⁴

Union efforts to regain control of Island No. 10 as the first step to reopening the Mississippi River, while ultimately successful, were not without flaws. Season and weather also unintentionally aided Union efforts; if the federals had arrived later in the summer after the spring freshet of high water, then their options would have been much more limited and Confederate chances for defense much improved. Pope handled his portion of the campaign well with remarkably little loss, but like his opponents, he found working with his naval counterpart difficult. Foote's insistence on a highly cautious approach, continual over-estimation of Confederate navy strength, and his initial unwillingness to heed recommendations to run past the batteries, dragged out the campaign far longer than otherwise necessary. Island No. 10 was supposed to be the bolt on the door barring Union descent of the Mississippi but once that lock was broken the Confederacy could never close it again. Union victory at Island No. 10 was the harbinger of ultimate Confederate defeat in the Mississippi Valley.¹⁰⁵ In the words of a Nashville newspaper in the wake of the island's surrender, "the Mississippi is now unlocked, the victory one of the most momentous and decisive of the war notwithstanding its relative bloodlessness...the capture of Island No. 10 is tantamount to the virtual opening of the great stream."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ "Our Inland Sea," in *The Memphis Daily Appeal*, May 7, 1862.
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1862-05-07/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1862&index=0&rows=20&words=Island+Ten&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Tennessee&date2=1862&proxtext=Island+Ten&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>, accessed February 18, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Bruce Catton, *The Centennial History of the Civil War*, vol. 2, *Terrible Swift Sword*, (New York: Double Day & Co., 1963) 2:239.

¹⁰⁶ "The Mississippi Unlocked," *The Nashville Daily Union*, April 16, 1862.
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85033708/1862-04-16/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=1862&index=2&rows=20&words=Island+Ten&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Tennessee&date2=1862&proxtext=Island+Ten&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>, accessed February 18, 2018.