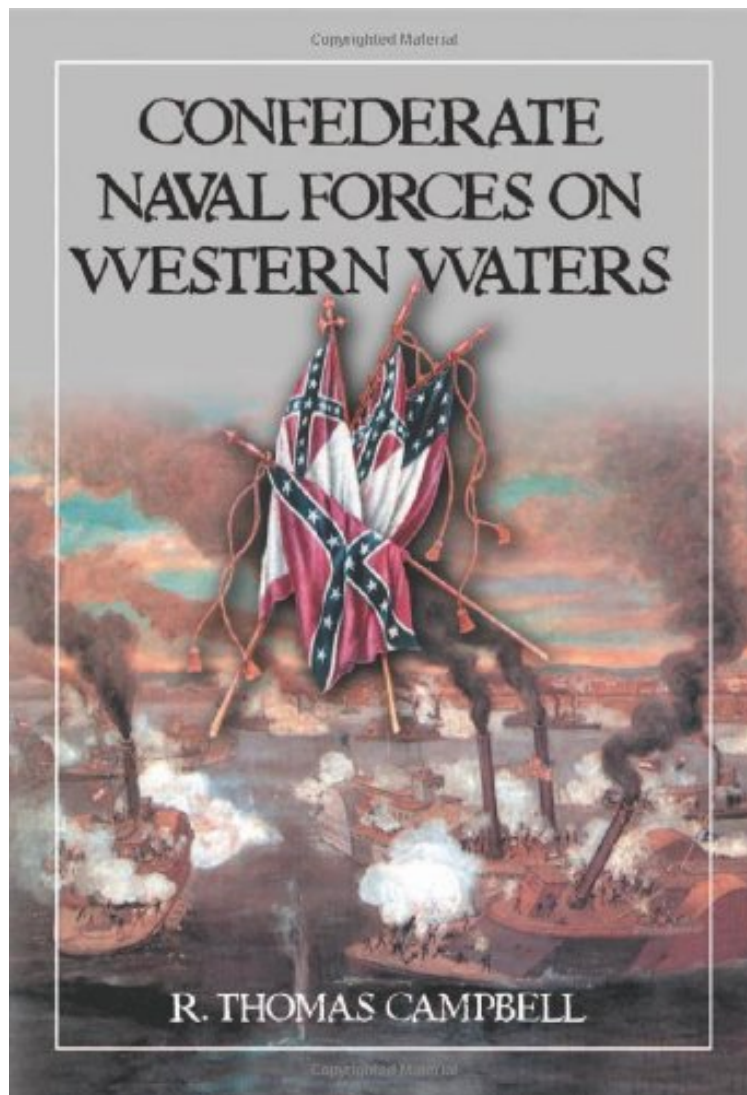


Confederate Naval Forces on Western Waters: The Defense of the Mississippi River and Its Tributaries

R. Thomas Campbell

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No body of water was more vital to the Confederacy's efforts in the Civil War than the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Though the Confederate Congress declared the Mississippi free and open to all states north and south, the Union launched plans for an effective blockade of the 1700 miles of Southern coastline, coupled with a strong naval and army thrust down the Mississippi Valley from Cairo, Illinois, to the Gulf of Mexico. To defend the river and to prevent Union forces from advancing, the South would require a strong naval force. There was only one problem with the strategy: The Confederacy had no navy. On February 25, 1861, Confederate president Jefferson Davis nominated Stephen R. Mallory to be secretary of the newly formed Confederate States Navy. Mallory faced significant obstacles--no shipyards, few skilled craftsmen and machinists, and a lack of production facilities to process raw materials. Mallory was able to overcome the many shortcomings to build a formidable navy, but the efforts in the Mississippi theater were hamstrung by a disjointed command structure and interservice bickering. Despite these problems, the Confederate Navy contested the Union forces at every turn. The history of Confederate naval forces on the western waters is a story of desperation, intrigue, ineptitude, and humiliating defeats, interspersed with moments of courage, innovation, resourcefulness, and a few hard-earned victories.

"highly readable...writing is always crisp and clear...very well illustrated...excellent work...highly recommended" --The Civil War News"well written" --The Nymas "Campbell paints a picture of naval combat vital to the Confederate war effort" --H-Net sAbout the AuthorWriter and historian R. Thomas Campbell is a retired health systems consultant who lives in West Chester, Pennsylvania and Cape Canaveral, Florida.