

**The Main Ship Channel at Savannah Opens.**

The Savannah Republican of January 23d says:— "The most delightful piece of local information we can furnish our readers with this morning is the news of the opening of the Main Ship Channel. Captain Bennett, agent of the new board of underwriters, has been laboring incessantly and assiduously with a small gang of divers, and a limited supply of submarine apparatus, endeavoring to clear the channel for navigation, and to his indomitable energy and Yankee perseverance we are at last indebted for the removal of the obstructions. The rebels expended a great deal of labor and time in erecting these obstructions, which were of the strongest kind and exceedingly difficult to remove. Huge pons, formed of piles driven into the bed of the river and interlaced with the heaviest kind of iron chains, were filled with paving stones and rocks of all kinds, the whole cemented with vast quantities of clay. The wreck of the rebel gunboat Georgia, built from the contributions of Georgia ladies, is still in the river opposite Fort Jackson." The Republican also says that the remains of the ram launched a few weeks before the capture of the city, and which was burnt and scuttled to prevent her falling into our hands, still lie at the wharf. Besides these, the wreck of the dry dock, two brigs, a schooner and one or two small vessels, with a few pilot boats, still blockade some portions of the river. Capt. Bennett is anxiously awaiting the arrival from the North of suitable machinery, heavy derricks, chains and other material requisite for the removal of these obstructions; and as soon as they reach there the Savannah River will once more be free for rapid navigation. The day before the steamships Oriental and Ajax—the former drawing fourteen feet and the latter fifteen feet—passed through the obstructions without the slightest difficulty, landing below the bluff into and sound. A passage of one hundred feet has now been cleared, and steamers of the heaviest draft which have been obliged to enter Warsaw Sound and thence pass up the Warsaw River to Thunderbolt, and through St. Augustine Creek, will now be able to obviate all this circumlocution and come directly to the city.

**February 1, 1865. Boston Daily Advertiser, Boston, Massachusetts.**

**The obstructions sunk in the channel at Savannah during the rebellion are a very serious obstruction to navigation even now. The people of Savannah want help from Washington to remove them.**

**December 21, 1867. Flake's Weekly Galveston Bulletin. Galveston, Texas.**

# CSS Georgia from Shipwreck to Recovery

Augusta, Ga., Thursday Morning, November 22, 1879.

## Sunken battleship yields shells and artifacts

SAVANNAH (AP) — The sunken Confederate ironclad warship CSS Georgia has yielded its first large batch of artifacts to Army engineers — including 10 high-explosive shells, charged with powder.

The shells and other artifacts, including a shackle and what may have been part of a whiskey bottle, were recovered from the Savannah River shipping channel last weekend by U.S. Army Corps divers.

The wreck of the Georgia — a 10-gun, 150-foot ironclad built in 1862 to defend Savannah from the Union Navy — lies on the edge of the channel in 30 feet of water about two miles downstream from the city.

"All the shells ... were for the 6.4-inch Brooke rifle," a large naval cannon, said archaeologist Rick Anuskiewicz. "They all weigh 73 pounds, except one that was a bit smaller and weighed about 10 pounds less.

"All of them had (safety) pins in them and all of them had water in them, which neutralizes them," he said.

The other artifacts included "the base end of a spirits bottle, amber in color and very thick, with a lot of impurities in the glass," Anuskiewicz said. "Also a device that looks like a set of shackles, a rod 10 to 11 inches long" with U-shaped brackets at each end. "To me it looks like a pair of an-

kle irons that you'd have in the brig," he said.

The Confederate ironclad was scuttled by its crew in 1864 as Gen. William T. Sherman's Union army completed its march to the sea by capturing the port city of Savannah.

The wreckage is a potential hazard to navigation, and the Corps is study-

ing the possibility of raising the vessel and restoring it as part of an historical exhibit at Fort Jackson.

Shells like those recovered from the river are "basically point-detonating, percussion projectiles used against ships or forts that would burst when they hit the ground," said Scott Smith,

executive director of the Fort Jackson

Coastal Preservation Society. "They wouldn't do much against an ironclad ship.

"The fact that these were loaded, fused projectiles means that these did not come out of the ship's magazine," he said. "You didn't load powder into the shell and load the fuse until it was ready for action."

He said ships' crews "would keep a certain number loaded (and stacked on deck near the guns) in case you got jumped, and the Georgia's crew was expecting trouble because they knew Sherman was coming."

The shells were taken to a Corps work yard and stored in water-filled vats, he said.

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## Dam a Must To Recover Sunken Ship

Savannah, Ga. (AP) — If the Confederate ironclad warship CSS Georgia is to be salvaged from the Savannah River, the next step is to dam the river, according to a Texas archaeologist.

"The only option is to turn the river off. That means some sort of impoundment structure has to be built on the site," said Ervan Garrison, who has led the project's team of divers from Texas A&M University.

"It's a question of being able to do your job without a blind-fold on. We've done the best we can so far, but it isn't enough," said Garrison, who with the college divers and others from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finished field work on the wreck site during the weekend.

### Federal Funds

Garrison said a coffer dam would allow divers to work in clear, still water instead of the Savannah's usual muddy, swift-flowing current.

A dam project would require federal funds, and Garrison said the next move is persuading the Congress or the Corps of Engineers. The money won't be available until at least fiscal 1982, which begins Oct. 1, 1981, he said.

Until then, divers will continue to work on the perimeter of the wreck and scour the channel for items — such as 14 cannon shells they have found — which fell out of the wreck.

The divers also will be trying to determine whether the wreck can or should be raised.

The wreck is adjacent to the river's shipping channel, which is under process of being widened.

### Not Visible

It has been struck by dredges working on the channel and will eventually have to be moved or destroyed, according to the corps.

In their two years of work, divers have learned that "no part of the hull that we can see is above the silt line. All that we can see, all that we have mapped in, is all superstructure — great chunks of superstructure," Garrison said in a telephone interview from his College Station, Texas, home.

"The top is pretty well battered, but we're talking about pieces 30 to 40 feet long, 3 feet thick, still carrying her iron," he said.

**April 30, 1980. Omaha World Herald. April 30, 1980.**

## Salvaging warship possible

SAVANNAH, Ga. (UPI) — The Army Corps of Engineers is considering salvaging a sunken Confederate ironclad resting in 30 feet of water in the Savannah harbor.

Col. Tilford C. Creel said Saturday no definite plans had been made to remove the CSS Georgia but divers would study the possibility.

"The CSS Georgia is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places," said Creel. "Because of this we plan to study any removal action carefully."

Creel said divers would determine the ship's condition, exactly where it is located and how difficult removal would be.

"The team," he said, "will also try to determine the vessel's dimensions and assess any damage done to the Georgia during two previous dredging operations near it in the harbor."

Creel said a task force of historians would determine how best to handle the old warship. It could be left alone or recovered with its artifacts. It is not known how the ship went down.

"This is not an overnight operation," said Creel. "It will be anywhere from two to three years before any action is taken, and nothing will be done unless it is in the best interest of the vessel and the public."

**October 22, 1978. Augusta Chronicle, Augusta, Georgia.**

## Sunken ship is registered as historic

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — The CSS Georgia, a 10-gun ironclad that helped guard Savannah from the Union Navy, has been added to the National Register of Historic Places even though the vessel lies in the mud off Fort Jackson.

"The Georgia is one of the few underwater resources placed on the register," said Scott W. Smith, head of Georgia's Coastal Heritage Society, which is seeking to save at least part of the Civil War ship.

The Georgia was financed by the people of Savannah and presented to the Confederate Navy. It was scuttled in the Savannah River in 1864 when Gen. William T. Sherman's troops captured Savannah, ending their march across Georgia.

The listing came Feb. 10, after two decades of work by the Savannah District of the Army Corps of Engineers and local preservationists.

Getting the Georgia included was difficult because guidelines for the register are designed to list buildings, which have specific dimensions and locations, and can be photographed.

The Georgia is about 30 feet deep in water so muddy that divers working on the wreck can't see their hands six inches from their face masks. The vessel's dimensions aren't known and there are no photographs, only sketches made during the Civil War.

It is on the edge of the shipping channel. Its ironclad casement has been severely damaged and has collapsed, but the hull is believed to be intact.

A volunteer group meets once a month to work on various problems involving salvaging the Georgia.

"We're beginning to plug in little pieces of the picture of those who served on the Georgia," Smith said, adding that those "little pieces" are probably in small private collections of Civil War mementoes.

"We're asking people to look at what they have, and if it bears on Savannah at all, we would be interested in copying it," he said. "We don't want to own it."

**April 22, 1987. Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio.**

## Civil War ship awaits divers

Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Scuba divers might soon uncover the secrets of the CSS Georgia, a mysterious ship buried off the coast of Georgia since the Civil War.

The divers are exploring the CSS Georgia as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts studies for a proposed river-deepening project.

The project could result in discoveries about the ship, one of the Confederacy's earliest ironclad naval vessels. Divers will continue their work over the next five or six weeks.

The ship is largely unknown even to experts.

No one can say for sure exactly how long it was. No formal building plans have survived. Extensive searches of historical records haven't turned up much contemporary information.

It sits in pieces, buried in silt under 40 feet of water.

"The Georgia was pretty much a home-grown product," said Scott Smith, the director of the Coastal Heritage Society.

Mr. Smith said the Georgia might rank among the 10 most historically important shipwrecks in U.S. waters.

If the divers find significant remnants, the project could lead to a multimillion-dollar recovery.

The Corps has paid \$375,000 for the archaeological study — a prelude to a proposed river-deepening project that would enable Savannah's port to handle the world's biggest and newest cargo ships — and has set aside \$13 million for a potential recovery effort.

The ship sat moored for more than two years during the Civil War, guarding the river after Union troops took Fort Pulaski. The ship was too slow to sail into battle, but could fire from the stationary position.

The CSS Georgia was credited for discouraging Union ships from moving upriver into Savannah after Fort Pulaski fell in April 1862.

On Dec. 20, 1864, Confederate defenders sank the Georgia as Gen. William Sherman's Union troops moved toward Fort Jackson.

**July 28, 2003. Augusta Chronicle. Augusta, Georgia.**

Civil War wreck in Ga. port project's way

by Russ Bynum - May. 5, 2012 09:18 AM  
Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. -- Before government engineers can deepen one of the busiest U.S. seaports to accommodate future trade, they first need to remove a \$14 million obstacle from the past -- a Confederate warship rotting on the Savannah River bottom since the American Civil War nearly 150 years ago.

Confederate troops scuttled the ironclad CSS Georgia to prevent its capture by Gen. William T. Sherman when his Union troops took Savannah in December 1864. It's been on the river bottom ever since.

Now, the Civil War shipwreck sits in the way of a government agency's \$653 million plan to deepen the waterway that links the nation's fourth-busiest container port to the Atlantic Ocean. The ship's remains are considered so historically significant that dredging the river is prohibited within 50 feet (15 meters) of the wreckage.

So the Army Corps of Engineers plans to raise and preserve what's left of the CSS Georgia. The agency's final report on the project last month estimated the cost to taxpayers at \$14 million. The work could start next year on what's sure to be a painstaking effort.

**May 5, 2012. Associated Press.**