

FRANKLIN BUCHANAN – Forgotten American Warrior



~ FOREWORD ~

Accounts of war that are written by those on the winning side do not always give proper due to a vanquished foe. This happened more than once immediately following the end of the American Civil War. Over time, more balanced accounts were published that often included insights provided by Confederate participants.

Through their efforts, a number of Americans who fought on the losing side were duly accorded recognition and respect by history; never mind that some of their greatest accomplishments were in opposition to the Union. Franklin Buchanan was one of several naval officers who had fought valiantly but vainly for the Confederate cause after previously serving in the United States Navy with distinction and honor. Following the war's end, some of them who, after all, were *Americans* before, during and after the war performed further valuable public service to a reunited...an ultimately forgiving...nation.

The most familiar example is General Robert E. Lee, whose life story has become legendary. Less remembered today is Franklin Buchanan, a career naval officer in the United States Navy who accumulated an astonishing number of 'firsts' for the Navy before resigning his commission and ultimately becoming the Confederacy's only full admiral. His Civil War successes were initially suppressed or ignored by Northern journalists who felt he had betrayed his US Navy oath. Another factor, undoubtedly...he inflicted upon the Navy the worst losses suffered on any single day in that entire conflict.

In time, the Navy also forgave him, naming not one, but *three* warships in his honor. Nevertheless, today, save for students of American naval history, Franklin Buchanan's life story is little known. He deserves better. Therefore, I have created the following remembrance in this, the 150th anniversary year of his greatest military success...which transpired during the first day of The Battle of Hampton Roads.

Bill Lee

July 2012

~ EARLY LIFE AND SAILING ADVENTURES ~

Franklin Buchanan was born in Baltimore, Maryland on September 17, 1800, the son of a prominent physician. His paternal grandfather was a general in the Maryland militia during the Revolutionary War. His maternal grandfather was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Franklin's last name was pronounced *Buck-annon*. His friends often called him 'Buck'.

Franklin Buchanan's father died when he was seven. At age fourteen, encouraged by his mother, he became a midshipman in the US Navy in January of 1815; one month before the end of the War of 1812.

For the first few years of his naval career, Buchanan learned to handle sailing vessels and sailors during two lengthy Mediterranean cruises. When he returned to America in the spring of 1820, he had become a skilled seaman and had impressed his superiors. Before he reached the age of twenty-one, he was promoted to the rank of acting-lieutenant, with a monthly salary of nineteen dollars.



During the early 1800's, it was common practice for American naval officers lacking an immediate assignment to take extended furloughs and go back to sea commercially. In 1821, Buchanan served as third officer in a merchant ship bound for China. Departing from Philadelphia, she sailed for 125 days before next touching land. During a months-long wait for cargo to take back home, twenty one year-old Franklin Buchanan and his shipmates enjoyed the opportunity to explore some of the China coast. The trip was a valuable experience in which he mastered the art of navigating by dead reckoning.



Upon his return, he served in several naval vessels, protecting American interests and fighting piracy in the West Indies. On January 13, 1825, at age twenty four, Franklin Buchanan was appointed to the permanent rank of Lieutenant. This painting, created in 1826 by the distinguished American artist Rembrandt Peale reflects how Buchanan appeared as a dashing young Navy Lieutenant.

Of medium height, broad-shouldered and ramrod straight, Buchanan was known as one of the boldest and strongest men in the Navy. Quick of both temper and decision-making, he had learned early in his naval career to dispense harsh punishments for any presumed infraction by men under his command.

Once, while traveling in a merchant ship as a passenger, he was threatened by some seamen also in travel who felt they had previously suffered some injustices under his command. Temporarily retreating to his cabin, he emerged with a sword cane.

"There he stood," an eyewitness recalled, "with form erect, both hands resting on his cane; the expression of his countenance calm, resolute, and defiant. The seamen gathered around him and gave vent to their feelings in blasphemous oaths ... He stood in statue-like repose, not a word escaping his lips. For full five minutes or more he braved the tempest, but not a man dared lay the weight of a finger upon him. Then, he turned upon his heel, returned to his cabin and went to bed."

After a brief time on patrol in the Caribbean hunting pirates, Buchanan was again faced with no immediate Navy assignment. He applied for and, somewhat to his surprise, was selected by the builders of the frigate BALTIMORE to deliver her to the Brazilian Navy. In November of that year Buchanan, in command of a civilian crew, set sail for Brazil.

The voyage was anything but routine. Storms caused damage to the vessel, which had to be repaired while underway. During one storm, a seaman fell from a mast and was killed instantly. The next day, Franklin Buchanan conducted his first burial at sea ceremony.

In spite of these misadventures, he safely entered the harbor at Rio de Janeiro on Christmas Day, 1826. After turning the frigate over to the Brazilian Navy, Buchanan returned to America as a passenger in the brig RUTH. Once back on active duty, he resumed searching for pirates for eighteen months as an officer in the sloop-rigged corvette NATCHEZ. He later wrote a record of that period in his career, which he entitled *The Journal of the BALTIMORE, the RUTH and the U.S.S. NATCHEZ*. Decades later, his family donated that treasure to the United States Naval Academy Library.

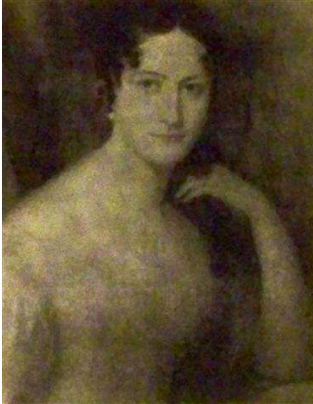
Lieutenant Buchanan next received orders to the frigate CONSTELLATION, one of the six original frigates built for the Navy. He spent eighteen months on another Mediterranean cruise in her, followed by tours of duty in two other naval vessels, resulting in his spending an additional year overseas and at sea.

Returning to America, Buchanan received orders to the Philadelphia Navy Yard, where he was involved in the testing of cannon. Between 1836 and 1839, he was in charge of a ship moored in Baltimore harbor and used for training seamen recruits. By that time he was married.



~ A LENGTHY COURTSHIP ~

Before departing for South America in 1826, Franklin Buchanan had traveled to Maryland's Eastern Shore to attend a fellow naval officer's wedding. One of bride's attendants was her younger sister, eighteen-year-old Ann Catherine Lloyd. A courship of nearly nine years followed, punctuated on frequent occasions by Buchanan's lengthy absences while he was at sea.



Ann Catherine, whom family and friends often called Nan or Nannie, was the daughter of Edward Lloyd, a wealthy plantation and slave owner, a United States Senator and a former Governor of Maryland. Ann Catherine and Franklin became engaged in June of 1833 during one of Buchanan's infrequent shore leaves. By the time he had returned from sea in early 1835 her father had passed away.

On February 19, 1835, with the blessing of Ann Catherine's mother and her eldest brother, who had become the head of the Lloyd family, the thirty four year-old navy lieutenant and the twenty seven year-old Eastern Shore aristocrat were married at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Annapolis, Maryland.

At that time, the bride's mother was living in Annapolis on one corner of Maryland Avenue and King George Street. She also owned an adjacent mansion, Ogle Hall, which years later became the US Naval Academy Alumni Association's home. Renovated and expanded several times, Ogle Hall faces King George Street and the oldest part of the Naval Academy complex.



For a few months, Franklin and his bride lived in the Lloyd family's ancestral Eastern Shore mansion before buying a house in Annapolis. Their first child, a daughter, was born there in mid-December, 1835, followed by two others that were also born there. Over time, the Buchanans' produced eight girls and one boy; Franklin, Jr.

Buchanan's assignment in nearby Baltimore, plus ordinance testing work in Annapolis and Norfolk, Virginia, allowed him to remain close to home for almost three years. Ann Catherine's letters to relatives characterized him as a doting father and devoted husband. Although money was tight as they tried to live solely on his navy pay, Franklin Buchanan often gave his wife extravagant presents. His generosity and the needs of his numerous children eventually forced his wife to periodically ask for loans from her mother and older brother; a situation that was an embarrassment to her proud husband.

~ AT SEA IN A NAVAL ICON ~

In April of 1839, Franklin Buchanan received orders to report to the 44-gun frigate **CONSTITUTION**. Built in 1797 “Old Ironsides” is still afloat and is the oldest naval vessel in the world still in commission. Departing from Norfolk, Virginia, she sailed throughout the Caribbean, down the east coast of South America, around Cape Horn and northward to patrol and ‘show the flag’ along that continent’s western coast.

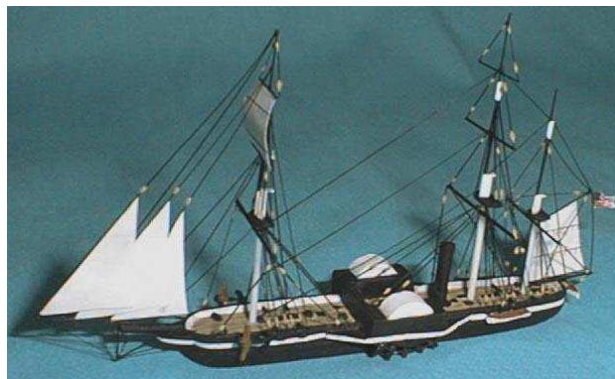


The trip marked Buchanan’s first naval service in the Pacific, and also the only time he sailed with his older brother, McKean Buchanan. His brother had received a warrant as a pay master in 1823. During that voyage Franklin Buchanan served as a flag lieutenant to the senior officer onboard **CONSTITUTION**. Consequently, he did not stand watches, but when a man overboard alarm was sounded near the Cayman Islands he took charge of the rescue boat that was quickly launched and rescued the hapless seaman.

In February of 1840, he transferred to a smaller naval vessel and returned home in June of that same year. On September 8, 1841 Franklin Buchanan was promoted to the rank of Commander. That same year, he moved his family from Annapolis to a residence located on an Eastern Shore estate that had been purchased by Ann Catherine’s oldest brother. Called the ‘Rest’, it faced the Miles River and became the Buchanan’s permanent home.

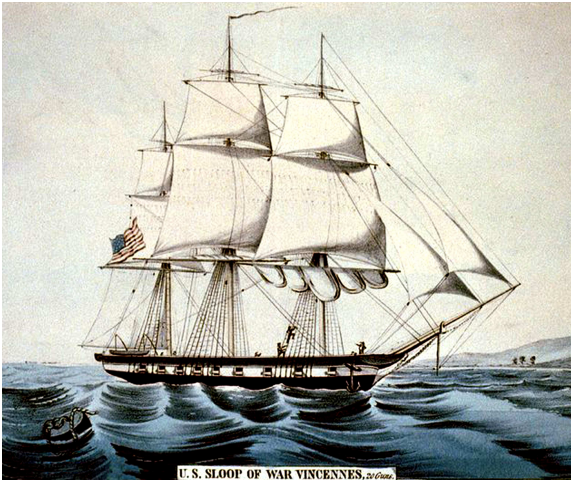
~ FIRST US NAVY STEAMSHIP ~

In the summer of 1842, Commander Buchanan reported for duty onboard the steam frigate **MISSISSIPPI**, shortly after she was commissioned. Propelled by paddlewheels, she also had been fitted by a dubious Navy with sailing gear. Buchanan spent just seven months in **MISSISSIPPI**, mostly at anchor while the vessel’s engineers tinkered with her engines.



Buchanan was responsible for the ship’s cleanliness. He found that to be an impossible task. Coal dust seemed to penetrate everything, even the food and water. When they did go to sea under just steam power, the **MISSISSIPPI** could barely make headway. Once, when passing Cape Hatteras, it took twenty-four hours for her to advance seven miles. The Navy ordered a complete overhaul of the vessel, and her crew was transferred to other ships, including Franklin Buchanan, who was given command of a sloop of war.

~ FIRST US NAVY COMMAND ~



On December 17, 1842, Commander Buchanan assumed command of the sloop of war VINCENNES. While he was captain of this 700-ton sailing vessel, she participated in the rescue of sailors from two British ships that had gone aground off the coast of Texas.

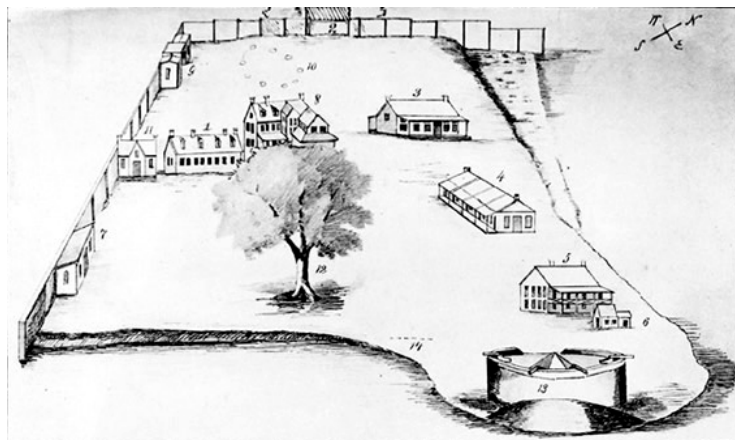
During that same Caribbean cruise, his vessel struck an uncharted reef at sunset while approaching Trinidad. That night, and throughout the next day, all attempts to free her proved futile. After removing the ship's boats, fresh water and provisions, the VINCENNES remained hard aground. Buchanan was at the point of throwing her guns overboard when a favorable wind sprang up, allowing him to claw his way off the reef.

In 1844, Franklin Buchanan placed her in potential harm's way to help prevent an anticipated invasion of the new Republic of Texas by Mexico. That attack never materialized, so VINCENNES returned to her home port of Norfolk, Virginia, where Buchanan was relieved of his command in early 1845. On furlough at the Rest, in July of 1845, he received orders to report to the Secretary of the Navy in Washington.

~ THE NAVAL SCHOOL ~

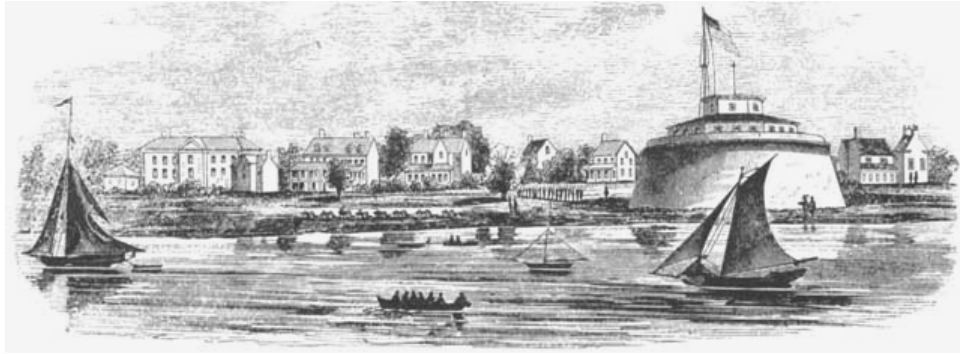
Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft tasked Buchanan with developing a plan to create a new naval school in Annapolis, Maryland. A few weeks after that assignment was made, Buchanan's proposal detailing a curriculum, and the use of Fort Severn, a former army post, was approved by Bancroft.

On August 14, 1845, Buchanan was appointed the first Superintendent of the 'Naval School'; later renamed as the United States Naval Academy. When the Naval School commenced operation in October, 1845, Maryland native Franklin Buchanan was in residence there at a two-story home that had previously used by army commanders.



Buchanan assembled a faculty of seven professors that consisted of three civilians and four naval officers; some of whom were quartered in four smaller houses on the post. The remaining members of the school's faculty boarded at the Buchanan's former residence on Scott Street, just outside the school's main gate. While his faculty settled into their quarters, Franklin Buchanan's wife and six children joined him in Annapolis.

Housing, classrooms and other primary needs for the first class of midshipman were created by modifying the former army buildings, including the fortifications that had once guarded the mouth of the Severn River. The first naval school occupied barely nine acres and was enclosed by a brick wall.



In his opening address to the fifty entering midshipmen on October 18, 1845, Buchanan made it clear that the discipline he had demanded on the quarterdeck would apply at the school. He read aloud eighteen articles that comprised the "Rules and Regulations for the Internal Government of the Naval School". He meant every word. However, boys will be boys, and in February of 1846 a midshipman violated direct orders from Buchanan. Three days later that student became the first midshipman to be dismissed from the school.

Nevertheless, after only one semester, the Navy secretary considered the Naval School a success. In his annual report to Congress, Bancroft praised Buchanan, who, he said, *"...has carried his instructions into effect with precision and sound judgement, and with a wide adaptation of simple and moderate means to achieve a great and noble end"*.

As a result of the outbreak of war with Mexico in May of 1846, Buchanan volunteered for 'immediate active service at sea'. His request was denied, but Secretary Bancroft sought to console him by writing: *"Were it not important business on which you are at present engaged, you would be among the first whom the Department would call"*.

Franklin Buchanan stayed at the Naval School as his young students went on active duty. Requests for assignment of midshipmen to the fleet came in such abundance that he had to advance the date of final examinations in 1846 so that more of his students could complete their studies and go off to war. In March of 1847, when he felt the school was well established, Franklin Buchanan again sought the opportunity to fight in the Mexican-American War. When relieved of his assignment at the Naval School, he went to Norfolk to take command of a newly completed sloop of war.

~ PLANKOWNER ~

The USS GERMANTOWN was built in Philadelphia in 1846. Due to the threat of damaging ice, in mid-December, she was moved to the Norfolk Navy Yard for completion. When commissioned there on March 9, 1847, Buchanan became her captain and a 'plank owner' for the first time in his naval career. Only six days later, Buchanan set sail for the Gulf of Mexico to participate in the Mexican-American War; joining Commodore Perry's Home Squadron.



Sent to the Mexican city of Alvarado, when the GERMANTOWN arrived, the town surrendered without Commander Buchanan 'having to fire a single gun'. Later, in the company of several other Navy ships, she participated in the landings of marines and seamen at Tuxpan and Tabasco, where they successfully stormed those cities' fortifications. During one engagement, Buchanan went ashore, sword in hand to lead a charge on a small fort. The result was a bloodless victory, as the badly outnumbered Mexicans defenders broke ranks and ran away.

Buchanan had several large cannon balls removed from the captured fort and placed onboard the GERMANTOWN as souvenirs of his success. Over the next several months, he and his crew participated in several similar adventures before returning to the United States in early 1848. During that period of time, GERMANTOWN also served periodically as the flagship for Perry's forces. Soon, Commander Buchanan and Commodore Perry would sail together again, albeit more than halfway around the world.

Back in Norfolk, Franklin Buchanan relinquished his command to his friend and brother-in-law; the naval officer who had married Ann Catherine's sister twenty years previously. Returning to the Rest, Buchanan placed two of his cannon ball trophies atop the entrance gate posts to his home. Impatient to get back to sea, he hoped to obtain another warship command. Instead, Buchanan was faced with a lengthy period of shore duty. Over the next two years, he performed inspections of light houses and served on courts martials.

During that same period of time, he concluded that the Naval School in Annapolis was not being run to what he considered a satisfactory standard of discipline. Apparently others in the Navy were of the same opinion. In 1849 a commission was appointed to update the school's regulations. Franklin Buchanan was named to that group. As a part of their work, the group's members also recommended giving the school a new name, and it became the United States Naval Academy.

~ A CONTENTIOUS SITUATION ~

In the winter of 1851-52 he received an unexpected set of orders. He was instructed to proceed to the Far East to take command of the Navy's newest and largest steam frigate, the SUSQUEHANNA. She was considered the best sea command in the entire Navy.



That directive was quite unusual, for the vessel was in the middle of a lengthy deployment in the western Pacific Ocean. Buchanan soon found out why he was being sent to that ship.

Shortly after the SUSQUEHANNA and a squadron of smaller ships had left Norfolk, the vessel's captain and the squadron's commodore began to disagree about many things. Their relationship deteriorated to the point of the commodore ordering the captain off his own ship in Rio! When the ship reached Hong Kong, the commodore then greatly alienated the United States' Commissioner to China. Those extraordinary actions caused the Secretary of the Navy to recall the commodore.

Although that situation created the opportunity for Buchanan to become the vessel's commanding officer, plans for an expedition to Japan required that a new commodore be appointed. That assignment was given to Commodore Perry, who was empowered to visit Japan and negotiate a treaty opening diplomatic relations with that isolated country.

Both Buchanan and Perry had to travel to China to reach the ship. Perry made the lengthy trip by naval vessel. Franklin Buchanan left his home in mid-August, 1852, and traveled in merchant ships over a period of three months in order to get to China. Along the way, he spent a month in London, sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar to Alexandria and crossed Egypt over land to the Indian Ocean, Singapore and finally Hong Kong.

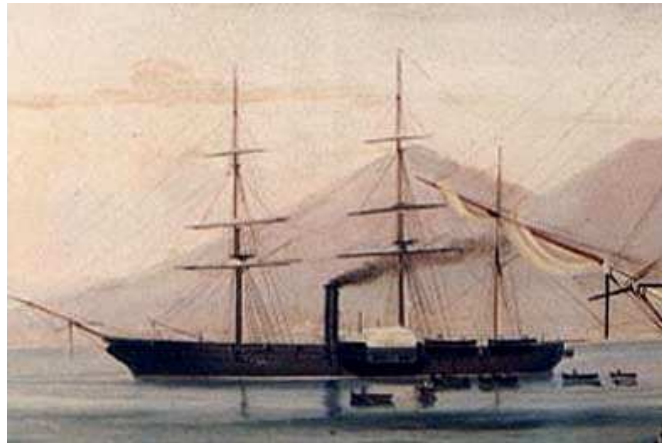
But when he arrived in November, he found the disgraced commodore still onboard the SESQUEHANNA and unwilling to accept Buchanan as her rightful commanding officer! As they argued over a period of weeks, the commodore took seriously ill. Eventually, he accepted the inevitable and took passage back to the United States. Perry arrived in early May of 1853, and transferred his flag to Buchanan's ship.

On May 23, 1853, the SESQUEHANNA and three other American naval vessels left China and made their way to Edo Bay [present-day Tokyo Bay]. Perry and Buchanan did not know what to expect when they got to their destination. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Japanese did not allow foreign vessels to enter their harbors.

~ HISTORIC EXPEDITION TO JAPAN ~

Commodore Perry's squadron entered Edo Bay on July 8, 1853. Their arrival caused a near panic amongst local Japanese officials. Not only were they afraid that the Emperor might blame them for this uninvited intrusion into the 'hermit kingdom', but also because the strange American vessels were the first steam-powered vessels they had ever seen.

As a precaution, Franklin Buchanan anchored his command fore and aft so that the SUSQUEHANNA's broadside faced the Japanese gun batteries ashore. For days, tedious diplomatic negotiations dragged on. Eventually, agreement was reached to allow a letter from American President Fillmore to the Emperor to be hand-delivered to a high-ranking Japanese representative.



Commodore Perry was taking no chances of an ambush. He sent an advance party of 250 sailors and marines ashore, led by Buchanan, who virtually sprang ashore. Franklin Buchanan is reputed to have been the first American in that expedition to set foot on Japanese soil. Seeing no signs of danger, a signal was made to Perry, who then came ashore and in a short ceremony, delivered the document.

Buchanan was one of the last to depart. In bidding farewell to one of the Japanese negotiators, he remarked: "*We hope that Japan and the United States will always be friends*". Shortly thereafter, the American ships left and went to Shanghai.

Ninety-two years later, World War II ended when surrender ceremonies were conducted onboard the USS MISSOURI. On that occasion, the American battleship was positioned in Tokyo Bay at roughly the same spot where SUSQUEHANNA had anchored in 1853.



Before those ceremonies took place, this 31-star American flag that had flown over SUSQUEHANNA was rushed from the Naval Academy museum to Japan at the request of General MacArthur, a blood-relative of Commodore Perry. The flag was attached to the MISSOURI's superstructure as a backdrop for the surrender ceremonies that signaled the end of a world-wide conflict.

~ UP THE YANGTZE ~

Perry and Buchanan made a second trip to Japan in 1854. When Perry went ashore this time, Buchanan arranged a grand event that was more pageant than military operation. After gaining additional concessions, they returned to Shanghai to help protect American interests being threatened by an on-going Chinese civil war.

In order for an American diplomat to make contact with rebels opposing China's imperial authority, Franklin Buchanan steamed 150 miles up the Yangtze River. No vessel as large as the SUSQUEHANNA had ever done that before. The only charts available were old. Working her way slowly upstream, the ship grounded numerous times.

After two months of dangerous river navigation, Buchanan made contact with rebel leaders and the embarked diplomat conducted his business. Returning to Shanghai and Hong Kong to join Perry took another two months. Following their adventure, the diplomat complimented Buchanan and his "*cheerful spirit and consummate skill*".

Buchanan, ship and crew then headed home. During a stop in Hawaii, Buchanan hosted a dinner for King Kamehameha III onboard his ship. Then, heading further eastward, the ship made stops in San Francisco, Mexico and Chile before rounding Cape Horn and steaming to Philadelphia. They arrived there on March 10, 1855, after an absence of two and a half years, during which time Franklin Buchanan had circumnavigated the world.



After returning to the Rest, he suffered bouts of ill health that frequently caused him to be bedridden. In letters to friends, he referred to his ailment as "*my old China complaint*". Otherwise, awaiting another naval assignment, he assumed the role of a gentleman farmer.

On September 14, 1855, three days shy of his 55th birthday, Franklin Buchanan was nominated to the grade of Captain, the highest rank in the US Navy at that time. But it would be months later before he could don a naval captain's three broad stripe uniform jacket...

THE BOARD OF FIFTEEN: Congress had passed legislation in January of 1855 to deal with a serious naval problem. In the 1850's, the Navy had no retirement policy and many officers served until incapacitated...or death. Consequently, the organization was extremely top-heavy. The youngest person holding the rank of Captain, aside from Buchanan, was 56. Many senior officers were drawing full pay while staying at home.

The President was required to appoint fifteen naval officers of varying rank to what was officially titled the Board of Officers to Promote Efficiency in the Navy. Franklin Buchanan was one of the senior officers named to serve on that board.

Examining the entire list of individuals holding commissions in the Navy took them five weeks of working long hours in the sweltering summer climate of Washington. But that heat was nothing to compare with reactions to their recommendations.

The Board recommended that 201 individuals, constituting thirty percent of the Navy's entire officer corps, be retired or dismissed from service. Over 150 were senior officers in the Navy. Predictably, those who recommended for retirement or dismissal vehemently objected and sought support from powerful politicians. A frequently voiced accusation was that the Board members were clearing the way for their own promotions. Franklin Buchanan's coincidental nomination to the rank of captain drew particular ire. It was full year after being nominated before his promotion was approved.

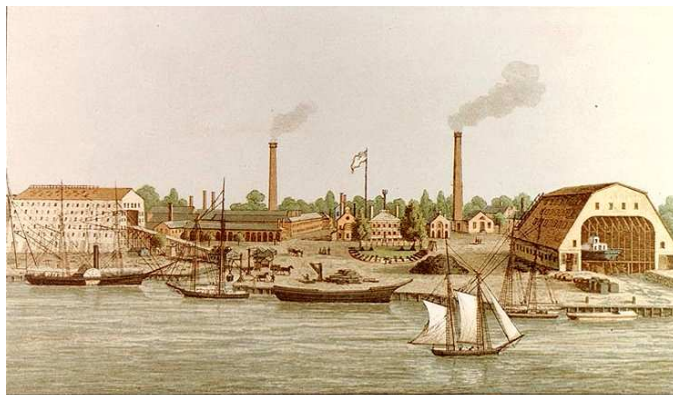
After months of hearings and investigation, Congress hammered out a compromise. Ultimately, 137 officers were retired. Although this number was 68% of the total recommended by Franklin Buchanan and the other Board members, he felt that politics and personal interests had interfered with what was good for the Navy. Years later, he said: *"If I had the duty to perform over again, I would give my vote to retire more"*.

After achieving the rank of captain, Franklin Buchanan thought he might be given command of a squadron or of a navy yard. However, it was not until the spring of 1859 that he received a new assignment.

~ WASHINGTON NAVY YARD YEARS ~

On May 26, 1859, while sitting on a board of examination for midshipmen, he received orders to report by the end of the month as the next Commandant of the Washington Navy Yard, located in the nation's capital. That position was considered to be one of the best assignments in the entire navy.

The Washington Navy Yard dates to 1799. Still in use, it is the oldest shore establishment in the US Navy. Originally, its purpose was to build ships. The shallow waters of the Anacostia River, on the banks of which the navy yard is located, precluded building the larger naval vessels of the mid-1800's there.



Over time, the primary mission of the facility shifted from shipbuilding to the manufacture of weaponry, steam engines and other shipboard items. Repair of small vessels had become a secondary mission at the Washington Navy Yard by the time Buchanan assumed command, along with some ordinance technology development.

Although he would have preferred sea duty, Buchanan went to Washington two days after receiving his orders and relieved his predecessor. Provided with spacious quarters at the Washington Navy Yard, Franklin Buchanan moved his large family to his new post and settled in to what he presumed would be a quiet tour of duty. Less than two years later, his service to the Navy ended all too abruptly...

But before war clouds cast a lasting shadow on his life, a Japanese Treaty Mission to the United States visited the Washington Navy Yard in May, 1860. Commandant Buchanan is in the second row of this photo, seventh from the right, as indicated by the arrow. Senior members of the foreign delegation are in the front row in their ceremonial robes.



~ WAR CLOUDS AND A MOMENTOUS MONTH ~

Shortly after Abraham Lincoln was elected President, the seeds of war were sown when South Carolina seceded from the Union a month later. Several other southern states soon followed, and the Confederate States of America declared themselves a sovereign nation in early 1861. As inauguration day for the newly elected president approached, attempts at compromise between the North and the South fell apart and tempers flared on both sides.

In late January of 1861, rumors spread that a mob might attempt to occupy the Washington Navy Yard in order to secure weapons and ammunition to forceably prevent Lincoln from taking office. Although not in favor of Mr. Lincoln's politics, Captain Buchanan gave the following orders to prepare for such a possibility:

"This yard shall not be surrendered to any person or persons except by an order of the honorable Secretary of the Navy, and in the event of an attack I shall require all the officers and others under my command to defend it to the last extremity; and if we be overpowered by numbers, the armory and magazine must be blown up."

No such attack ever transpired. Nevertheless, at the time, Buchanan left little doubt in anyone's mind that he was loyal to the Union and would stoutly defend his assigned post. Closely guarded on his way to Washington, DC, Lincoln was inaugurated without incident on March 4th. Although the situation between the Union and the Confederacy continued to deteriorate, Franklin Buchanan's family soon turned their attentions to matters of family importance.

On April 3, 1861, twenty year-old Nannie Buchanan married Julius Ernest Meiere, a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. Quite possibly, they may have met while he was posted to the Marine Barracks, located just a few blocks from the Washington Navy Yard. In any case, the wedding was held at the navy yard. President Lincoln, his cabinet, other high-ranking officials and military officers were among the invited guests.

According to the 'Lincoln Log', a day by day written and preserved accounting of the president's activities, Mr. Lincoln did attend the reception, but got there too late to witness the wedding ceremony. Reportedly, numerous American flags were widely displayed at the large party given in the Commandant's house that followed the wedding.

Not long after that happy event, the month of April, 1861 took on a terrible turn for all Americans. On the 12th, the Confederates attacked Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor; essentially beginning the Civil War in earnest. Seven days later, when President Lincoln dispatched Union troops to Baltimore to protect the city's port facilities and railroads, a secessionist mob confronted them. In the riot that ensued, four soldiers and twelve civilians were killed.



This news troubled Franklin Buchanan greatly. He was noted as being a man who held an uncompromising sense of what he considered right and wrong. His beloved Maryland was a slave state and had over 87,000 slaves listed in the 1860 census. Seven hundred of them were on his wife's family plantation. In addition, Maryland was located entirely below the Mason-Dixon Line and was considered to be a southern state.

When it appeared certain to Buchanan that Maryland was going to secede, he reluctantly decided, as many Southerners did at that pivotal point in America's history, that his loyalty to state was greater than that to the Union. In spite of previously devoting himself wholeheartedly to his duty in the US Navy for decades, he tendered his resignation on April 22, 1861. He later said: *"It is the most unpleasant duty I ever performed."*

Just a few days later, he learned that Maryland had been politically pressured to remain in the Union. To allow Maryland to secede would have left Washington, DC surrounded by Confederate states. Had that happened, the state would have been quickly invaded, and had few resources to resist the Union Army already gathered on its northern border.

When Buchanan subsequently tried to withdraw his resignation, his request was refused because of concerns about his loyalty. In early May, the Secretary of Navy sent Buchanan a curt note of dismissal and removed his name from the list of US Navy captains.

~ A SECOND AMERICAN NAVAL CAREER ~

Following his dismissal, Buchanan took his family home. He tried several times to return to the Navy, but was unsuccessful. Further disappointed, he also worried that the Civil War was leading to a radical change to the way of life enjoyed by his family.

One day in June of 1861, he looked out a window of his home and was shocked to see Union militia removing the cannon balls from atop his gate posts. Infuriated, he stormed outside and ordered a colonel in the Brooklyn Volunteers to stop the stealing. Buchanan was in civilian clothing, but when he used 'strong language in his best quarterdeck voice' the startled officer recognized a man of authority and quickly did as ordered.

Franklin Buchanan tried to remain neutral in the nation's agony of separation and the resultant civil war. But left with little means to support his family, he ultimately decided to support the Southern cause. Slipping through the porous battle lines in Northern Virginia, Franklin Buchanan joined the Confederate Navy on September 5, 1861. But before he made his way to the Confederate capital in Richmond, Virginia, he transferred title of his property to his wife and children. That way, if he was subsequently labeled a traitor, the Federal Government could not confiscate his property, for he had none.



Given the rank of naval captain, his initial assignment was to serve as the first Chief of the Confederate Bureau of Orders and Details. A few months later, he was put in command of the defenses of the James River approaches to the Confederate capital in Richmond. The prospect of fighting against former comrades undoubtedly tormented him, and was reflected in this photo of him, taken in 1862.

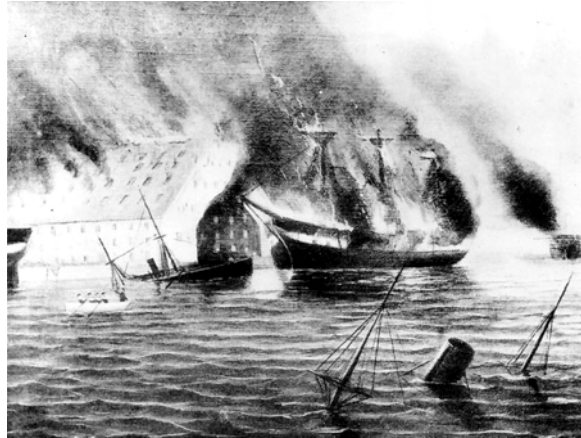
In those early days of his service to the Confederacy, some Southerners questioned Buchanan's loyalty to the South because of his well known attempts to rejoin the Union Navy. Confederate Secretary of the Navy Steven R. Mallory was not one of them.

Mallory, depicted on the right had also been tormented by divided loyalties. A United States Senator from Florida, he had advocated reconciliation of differences between the North and South until his native state seceded from the Union.

Given no choice when that happened, he delivered a farewell speech in the Senate and went home. Soon, he was selected to become the Confederacy's Secretary of the Navy; the only person to hold that position throughout the existence of the Confederacy.



Two days before Franklin Buchanan resigned his US Navy commission, the Gosport Shipyard, which is now the Norfolk Navy Yard, was burned by retreating Union forces to prevent that resource from being used by the Confederacy. Unable to move them, the steam frigate MERRIMACK and several smaller warships were put to the torch by Union forces, but not totally destroyed. The steam frigate's propulsion machinery had been removed for overhaul and was left largely intact.



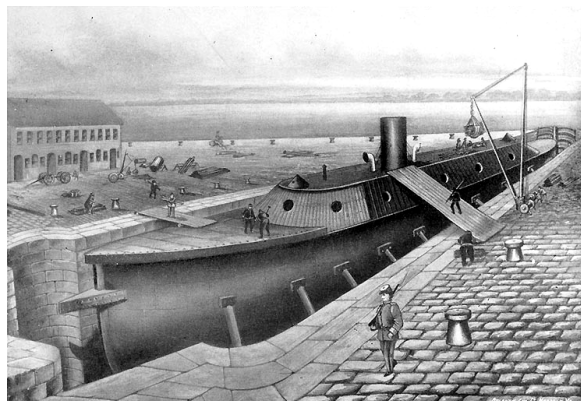
Steven Mallory soon learned that the MERRIMACK's hull was salvageable, and her propulsion machinery reusable. He conceived a novel use for her. It was a use that also resulted in a new assignment for Buchanan.

~ THE IRONCLAD RAM VIRGINIA ~

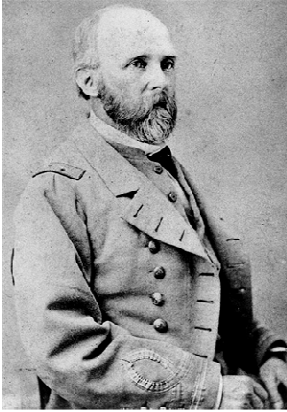
Although the story of the MERRIMACK's resurrection and transformation to become the CSS VIRGINIA is well known, little has been written about Malloy's leadership role in advocating the use of armored vessels to overcome the numerical superiority of the Union Navy. As he saw it, the South's limited shipbuilding resources should be utilized to create a handful of warships far superior to those possessed by their northern opponent.

He envisioned that an armored warship could become the ultimate naval weapon. When Mallory's opposite number in the Union Navy learned of the iron-clad being created by the South, he launched a parallel effort that resulted in the rapid design and construction of the USS MONITOR; closely followed by additional vessels of that innovative design.

By mid-February of 1862, the VIRGINIA was ready for service, including the addition of a cast-iron ram to her bow. Mallory wanted the best possible officer to command this new weapon. He felt that person was Franklin Buchanan; well known to be a bold and able commander. But the Confederate Navy's seniority system was patterned after that of the Union Navy. That practice would have entitled a more senior officer to demand and possibly receive the coveted post, albeit with the aid of political influence.



Mallory deliberately procrastinated on the naming of a commanding officer for VIRGINIA. Instead, on February 24, 1862, he appointed Buchanan...now called “Old Buch” by admirers under his command as Flag-Officer of the James River Squadron. Initially, the Confederacy didn’t use the rank of Admiral; instead calling senior officers either Commodores or Flag-Officers. The James River Squadron had been assembled to protect the waterborne approach to the Confederate capital via the James River.



The CSS VIRGINIA had been commissioned a week earlier. But in early March, finishing touches by shipyard workers and the outfitting of the vessel for combat were still in progress, under the direction of the vessel’s executive officer, Lieutenant Catesby ap Roger Jones, depicted on the left.

Jones, a Virginian, had been an officer in the Union Navy before resigning his commission to join the Confederacy. Ironically, he had been the MERRIMACK’s ordinance officer some time prior to his departure from the Union Navy.

Before leaving Richmond, Buchanan received two messages from Mallory. In the first, he urged Buchanan to be creative: *“The Virginia is a novelty, untried and its powers unknown. Her powers as a ram are regarded as very formidable, and it is hoped you may be able to test them”*.

In a subsequent letter, Mallory suggested that Buchanan be bold, suggesting: *“A dashing cruise on the Potomac as far as Washington”* and concluded: *“Action - prompt and successful action - now would be of serious importance to our cause”*.

When Flag Officer Franklin Buchanan arrived at the Gosport Shipyard on the afternoon of February 25, 1862, her crew was hand loading an initial supply of coal. The VIRGINIA’s initial crew of 350 was an eclectic mix of former Union naval officers and seamen, and 39 volunteers from an artillery unit. This latter group was needed because of a scarcity of skilled seamen in the South.

Also included in her complement were men from Company C of the Confederate States Marine Corps. The CSA marines were organized along lines similar to the United States Marines. The majority of the Confederacy’s marine officers had defected from the Union’s Marine Corps in order to help protect their southern home states.

Franklin Buchanan naturally selected the VIRGINIA to be his flagship, and he assumed tactical command of her and a flotilla of five less-capable wooden support vessels that constituted the James River Squadron. Technically, the CSS VIRGINIA never actually had a captain during her short career. Those who commanded her were either Flag Officers or ‘acting’ captains.

~ “OLD BUCH”; AN INSIGHT ~

The following condensed eye-witness account was recorded half a century later by H. Ashton Ramsay, acting chief engineer of the VIRGINIA, who, ironically, had been an engineering officer when that vessel was the USS MERRIMACK. Ramsay vividly illustrates the kind of bold, decisive naval officer that Steven Mallory had wisely selected to make his vision of naval supremacy a reality.

“The ship was still full of workmen hurrying her to completion when Commodore Franklin Buchanan arrived from Richmond and ordered every one out of the ship, except her crew. He then directed Executive Officer Jones to prepare to sail at once.

“At that time nothing was known of our destination. All we knew was that we were off at last. Buchanan sent for me. The veteran sailor, the beau ideal of a naval officer of the old school, with his tall form, harsh features, and clear, piercing eyes, was pacing the deck with a stride I found it difficult to match, although he was then over sixty and I but twenty-four.

“He asked what would happen to the engines and boilers if there should be a collision? I assured him that they are braced tight and so securely fastened that no collision could budge them. ‘I am going to ram the Cumberland,’ said the commander. ‘I’m told she has the new rifled guns, the only ones in their whole fleet we have cause to fear. The moment we are in the Roads I’m going to make right for her and ram her.’

“I watched the machinery carefully as we sped down the Elizabeth River, and soon satisfied myself that all was well. Then I went on deck. I presented myself to the commodore. ‘The machinery is all right, sir’, I assured him.

“Our crew was summoned to the gun deck, and Buchanan addressed us: ‘Sailors, in a few minutes you will have the opportunity of showing your devotion to our cause. Remember that you are about to strike for your country and your homes. The Confederacy expects every man to do his duty. Beat to quarters.’

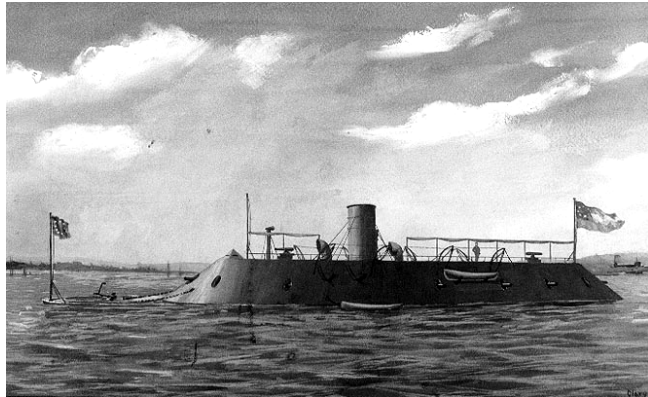
“Every terse, burning word is engraved on my memory, though fifty years have passed since they were spoken.”

Ramsay’s recollections continue for several more pages, dramatically describing the events that followed from the perspective of a member of the VIRGINIA’s crew who toiled in the vessel’s engine room. But numerous other accounts, summarized below and presented from a much broader perspective, provide a more informative account of a day that changed naval history forever.

~ THE BATTLE OF HAMPTON ROADS ~

On March 8, 1862, 61-year-old Franklin Buchanan and his crew rendered obsolete all of the world's wooden warships. What was supposedly a trial run to test the VIRGINIA's seaworthiness became 'a trial of battle'; in part because of news of the USS MONITOR's reported impending arrival in Hampton Roads.

Buchanan had advised the captains of the other ships in his squadron of his intent to engage the enemy before leaving port. The strange-looking craft attracted a number of curious civilians, who lined both sides of the Elizabeth River. Naysayers in the crowd, watching the vessel wallow, nearly awash into Hampton Roads, predicted failure.



The following narrative is interspersed with verbatim excerpts from Buchanan's report concerning events that transpired on the first day of The Battle of Hampton Roads.

“On the 8th instant, at 11 a.m., the Virginia left the navy yard (Norfolk), accompanied by the Raleigh and Beaufort, and proceeded to Newport News, to engage the enemy's frigates Cumberland and Congress, gunboats, and shore batteries.”

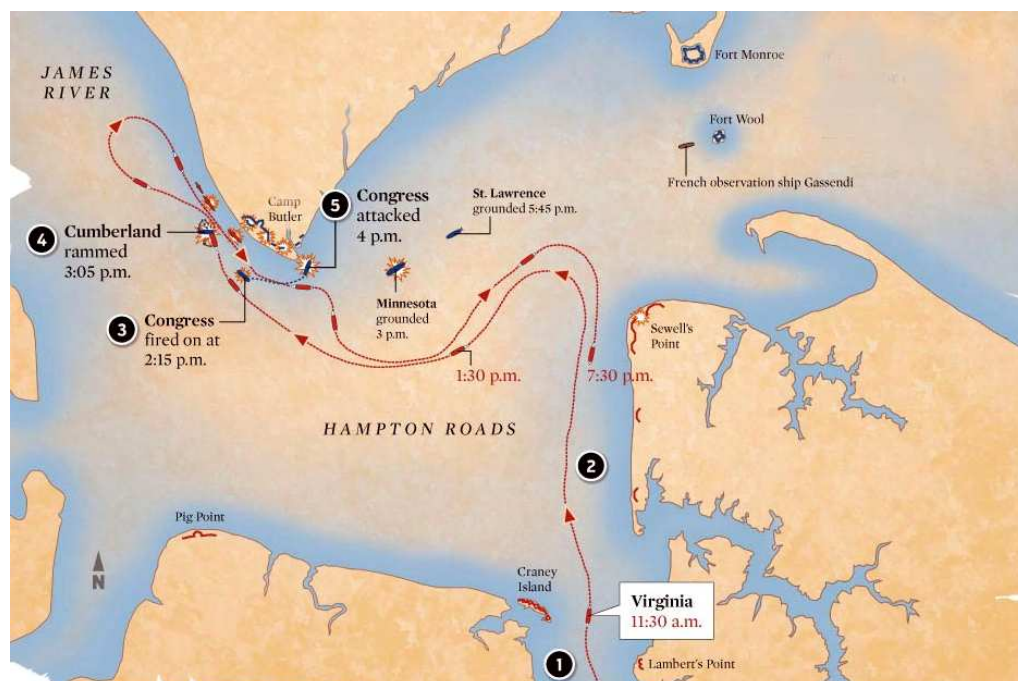
Navigating the narrow and in places very shallow Elizabeth River was challenging. The VIRGINIA's engines, rebuilt following her incomplete destruction in 1861 proved to be sluggish and slow to respond, given her heavy weight.

Her relatively deep draft of 22 feet also required her to be carefully piloted, once she reached Hampton Roads; lest she run aground and be captured by nearby Union forces. By 11:30 AM that fateful spring day, she was abeam of Craney Island, where the floating Confederate gun battery CSS GERMANTOWN was anchored.



This vessel was the very same GERMANTOWN that Buchanan had commanded in 1847. She, like the MERRIMACK had been damaged when Union forces abandoned the Gosport Shipyard. Restored to limited service as an immobile gun battery she had been anchored opposite Lambert's Point to help guard the entrance to the Elizabeth River [See position **1** on the map, below].

The Confederate's first iron clad was only capable of a speed of a few knots, and it took her the best part of a half hour to reverse course. Once Buchanan had cleared the Elizabeth River, he followed a necessarily circuitous route across Hampton Roads. Skirting waters too shallow for the VIRGINIA to navigate, he confronted a group of powerful vessels anchored off the tip of the Virginia Peninsula. Around midday, she was sighted by Union forces as she followed the channel past Sewell's Point [Position **2**].



“When within less than a mile of the Cumberland the Virginia commenced the engagement with that ship with her bow gun, and the action soon became general, the Cumberland, Congress, gunboats, and shore batteries concentrating upon us their heavy fire, which was returned with great spirit and determination.”

Over the next few hours of what constituted the first of a two-day historic event known as The Battle of Hampton Roads, the VIRGINIA proved to be immune to the broadsides fired at her by Union forces. After firing a broadside at the USS CONGRESS in passing [3], Buchanan headed for the CUMBERLAND, and rammed her starboard quarter, leaving a huge hole [4]. As the CUMBERLAND sank [very near NNS' Carrier Innovation Center], the VIRGINIA began to be dragged under, as well. But then her ram broke off, and she was free to continue the action. Making a long, slow turn upstream in the James River, she next went after the CONGRESS, which had gone aground [5].

“We were some time in getting our proper position in consequence of the shoalness of the water and the great difficulty of managing the ship when in or near the mud. To succeed in my object I was obliged to run the ship a short distance above the batteries on James River. During all the time her keel was in the mud she moved but slowly. Thus we were subjected twice to the heavy guns of all the batteries in passing up and down the river, but it could not be avoided. We silenced several of the batteries and did much injury on shore. A large transport steamer alongside the wharf was blown up, one schooner sunk, and another captured and sent to Norfolk.”

Once in position to do so, the CSS VIRGINIA commenced to deliver an unrelenting barrage of fire on the grounded and helpless USS CONGRESS.

“The carnage, havoc and dismay caused by our fire compelled them to haul down their colors and to hoist a white flag at their gaff and half-mast and another at the main.”

Buchanan ordered the captain of one of his smaller escort vessels, CSS BEAUFORT to board and capture the CONGRESS’ officers, rescue and remove the wounded and to allow all others to escape by boat or by swimming to the nearby shore. But when that was attempted, Union soldiers at Camp Butler, located at Newport News Point, fired on the BEAUFORT, killing and wounded some Confederates as well as a number of Union sailors. The Confederate vessel withdrew in haste, to Buchanan’s consternation.

“I was determined that the Congress should not again fall into the hands of the enemy. I remarked to that gallant young officer Flag Lieutenant Minor, ‘That ship must be burned.’ He promptly volunteered to take a boat and burn her. Lieutenant Minor had scarcely reached within 50 yards of the Congress when a deadly fire was opened upon him, wounding him severely and several of his men. I instantly recalled the boat and ordered the Congress destroyed by hot shot and incendiary shell.”

Incensed because the CONGRESS had struck her colors and ceased fighting, Franklin Buchanan took up an exposed position on the upper deck of the VIRGINIA and started firing a carbine towards shore. A Union sharpshooter’s minie ball struck Buchanan, shattering his right thigh.

“About this period I was disabled, and transferred the command of the ship to that gallant, intelligent officer Lieut. Catesby Jones, with orders to fight her as long as the men could stand to their guns.”



It is often said that one of the most tragic aspects of the Civil War was that it pitted brother against brother. Buchanan's brother, McKean Buchanan had remained loyal to the Union and was one of the naval officers onboard the CONGRESS when Union shore batteries betrayed her temporary truce. McKean Buchanan did manage to make it ashore that day and survived the rest of the war.

By the time those dramatic events had played out, it was late afternoon. Not wanting to attempt navigating the Elizabeth River in darkness, the VIRGINIA was withdrawn from the battle scene, leaving the CONGRESS to burn herself out. Around midnight, the fire reached her magazines, which exploded, and her remains disappeared from view.



Buchanan's successes that day included two major warships totally destroyed, several others damaged, 247 sailors killed and many more wounded, including some Union soldiers. As a result, the Union Navy was in a panic. Telegraph messages were sent to major northern ports warning them to block their harbors to prevent the VIRGINIA from attacking them. Lincoln's cabinet feared that the VIRGINIA would steam up the Potomac River to bombard the capital. Later that same day, the MONITOR arrived in Hampton Roads in the proverbial nick of time.

Buchanan was carried ashore when the VIRGINIA returned to port to receive medical treatment; never again to command her. The next day, the MONITOR and the VIRGINIA, under the command of her executive officer fought to a draw. This encounter between the first ironclads revealed a flaw in Steven Mallory's hypothesis; i.e., an 'ultimate weapon' can only be decisive if the other side does not have it.

"At an early hour next morning (the 9th), upon the urgent solicitations of the surgeons, Lieutenant Minor and myself were very reluctantly taken on shore. In the course of the day we were sent in a steamer to the hospital at Norfolk".

Weeks later, after learning the details of the VIRGINIA's encounter with the MONITOR, Buchanan told Secretary Mallory that had he been able to confront the MONITOR in battle, he would have attempted to board her and tried to disable her turret by using iron wedges to prevent rotation. Additional actions he contemplated included throwing hand grenades down the Union vessel's hatches, then covering her hatches and ventilators with tarpaulins in hopes of incapacitating, then capturing the MONITOR's crew.

Following the VIRGINIA's indecisive duel with the MONITOR, 67-year-old Josiah Tattnall, a Georgia native and another former US Navy veteran, relieved Franklin Buchanan as Flag Officer in charge of the James River Squadron. Under Tattnall's command, the VIRGINIA made several unsuccessful attempts to engage the MONITOR again. Both sides claimed the other was avoiding further conflict. But the VIRGINIA's mere presence did prevent Union forces from initially moving towards Richmond.

Nevertheless, forty-five days after the Battle of Hampton Roads ended, Confederate forces were driven from their defense positions in Tidewater, leaving Norfolk isolated and Gosport untenable as a base for the VIRGINIA. The shipyard was once again set afire. The VIRGINIA, short of coal, was not seaworthy. Any attempt to take her into the Atlantic Ocean to escape to another southern port was simply not possible. Because of her great draft, she could not transit the shallow James River to reach Richmond and help defend the city. Consequently, the VIRGINIA was destroyed off Craney Island to prevent capture. Her battle ensign was saved by a young midshipman.

At the time of the Confederate ironclad's destruction, a number of her crewmembers had been changed out, including the commanding officer of her marine contingent. His replacement was Franklin Buchanan's son-in-law, who, by that time, had been promoted to the rank of Captain in the Confederate Marine Corps. Meiere, depicted here, was a Maryland native and had also resigned his United States Marine Corps' commission in 1861.

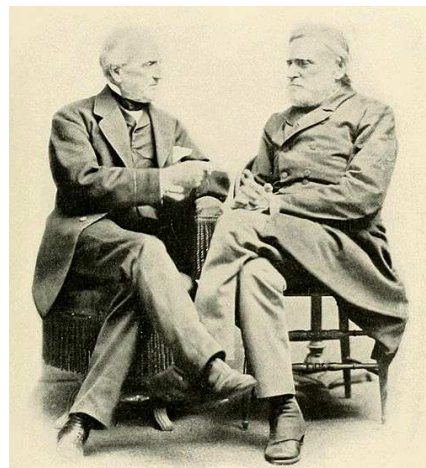


After the Battle of Hampton Roads, no Southerner ever again doubted Franklin Buchanan's loyalty or bravery. As he lay in a hospital bed, he drafted a lengthy report, including commendations for many of the VIRGINIA's crew, whom he individually named. His report was not finished and submitted to his superiors until March 27, 1862.

“While in the act of closing this report I received the communication of the Department, dated 22d instant, relieving me temporarily of the command of the squadron for the naval defense of James River. I feel honored in being relieved by the gallant Flag-Officer Tattnall. I regret that I am not now in a condition to resume my command, but trust that I shall soon be restored to health, when I shall be ready for any duty assigned to me.”

Following the VIRGINIA's destruction, there was a public outcry in the South, condemning Tattnall for not saving her. His loyalty and bravery was questioned in newspaper articles that blithely ignored the realities of the situation he had faced. A court of inquiry found him derelict in his duty. Incensed, Tattnall demanded a general court marshal in hopes of clearing his name.

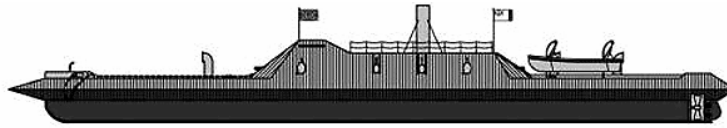
Those proceedings, conducted by twelve officers in the Confederate Navy, including Franklin Buchanan, on the left, exonerated Josiah Tattnall, shown on the right. Tattnall returned to Georgia to command the defenses at Savannah. Ironically, in December of 1864, in the face of overwhelming Union forces, he was forced to destroy the ironclad SAVANNAH to prevent her capture before retreating inland.



~ ADMIRAL BUCHANAN, CSN ~

It took Franklin Buchanan two months to recover from the wound to his right thigh and report back to duty. But he never had full use of that leg again. He was promoted to Admiral in August 1862; the only individual ever to hold that rank in the Confederate Navy. Several others in the Confederate Navy did attain the lesser rank of Rear Admiral.

Buchanan was sent to command the Confederate naval forces defending Mobile Bay, Alabama, as well as to oversee the construction of the iron-clad CSS TENNESSEE, whose hull was being built far inland in Selma, Alabama. Her keel was laid in October of 1862, but due to the scarcity of materials and experienced shipbuilders, her construction time was lengthy. Towed to Mobile following her launching ceremonies in February of 1863, she was not completed and commissioned until a year later.



She was a smaller version of the VIRGINIA, classified as a casemate iron-clad steamer. Designed and built to a set of standardized plans developed by Steven Mallory's staff, her draft was fourteen feet. Her casemate armor was several inches thicker than the boiler plate iron that had been used in her role model. But TENNESSEE's engines were temperamental and could only propel her at a maximum of six knots. Plus, her design included what later proved to be a fatal flaw. The chains that controlled her rudder ran exposed and unprotected atop of her main deck, aft of the casemate.

Admiral Buchanan was kept busy for two years helping to establish defensive positions in and around Mobile Bay in anticipation of an inevitable Union assault. His primary task was to create a naval squadron. To accomplish this task, he had two wooden hulls constructed, then plated over with sheets of iron. An existing tug was also armored, but Buchanan considered her too slow and unwieldy to be of use in battle.

A paddlewheel steamer was also being built in Alabama when he arrived. Like TENNESSEE, this vessel required iron plates, naval guns and seasoned manpower. All of which were in short supply. In spite of such logistical problems, Buchanan made progress in his quest to create a naval force capable of defending Mobile.



In addition, he had to work with army and civil authorities to develop the best possible combined harbor defenses. Coordination was hampered by political personalities and difficult logistical circumstances. One of the few bright spots in these efforts was the commanding officer of Mobile's marine contingent, his son-in-law, Julius Meiere.

~ BAD NEWS FROM MARYLAND ~

Although correspondence with his family and friends in Maryland was difficult, it was not impossible. Often, his wife sent letters to Nassau or Bermuda, which were then smuggled through the Union blockade of Mobile. But in mid-1863, a letter from Franklin Buchanan's wife was delivered under a Union flag of truce.

The letter was brief, and without much detail. The Rest had burned to the ground. Little had been saved. Although his family escaped without injury, all they had left were the clothes on their backs. Buchanan was depressed by this news, and frustrated that he could do little to help his family cope with their loss.

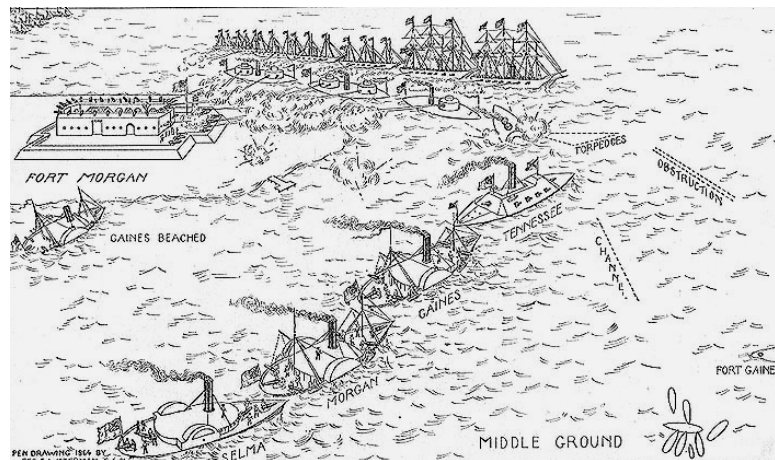
The news throughout the Confederacy was not any better. The southern forces were slowly but surely being overwhelmed by the superior manufacturing capabilities of the Union. Knowing that it was only a matter of time before a seaborne attack on Mobile could be expected, Buchanan decided to move the TENNESSEE into a defensive position in the lower part of Mobile Bay to augment shore-based defenses at the mouth of the bay.

But the water's depth in one place, even at high tide, was only eight feet. The TENNESSEE's draft was thirteen feet. Buchanan had six tanks built, which he called 'sectional docks' [Today they would be called pontoons]. Lashed to the sides of the warship after being filled with water, when they were pumped dry, the TENNESSEE's draft was decreased to seven feet and she was moved into the desired position.

~ THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY ~

Early on the morning of August 5, 1864, Buchanan, who had made the TENNESSEE his flagship, was awakened with the news that the Union fleet was on the move and approaching the entrance to the bay. Weighing anchor, he positioned his small squadron to challenge a much superior force.

Union Admiral David Farragut had four iron clad monitors and 14 wooden steamers. The lead monitor soon struck a 'torpedo' [mine] and was sunk. The remaining Union vessels fought their way past the forts, closed the range and then opened fire on Buchanan's ships.



One by one, Buchanan's escorts were disabled. Farragut's flagship, the wooden steamer HARTFORD, attacked Buchanan's vessel, but her shells just glanced harmlessly off the TENNESSEE's casemate. Hoping to replicate his success at the Battle of Hampton Roads, Franklin Buchanan tried to ram the HARTFORD. But the Confederate ship was too slow and ungainly to do so, despite several attempts.

Undaunted, Buchanan steamed into the midst of the enemy fleet. He ordered the captain of the outgunned TENNESSEE to go alongside the Union flagship and *"...to not fire until the vessels are in actual contact"*. The battle continued for almost four hours.

The TENNESSEE'S vigorous fire damaged, but did not sink the HARTFORD. In return, the iron clad was being pounded from all sides by heavy weapons. Several of the Union steamers rammed Buchanan's flagship, but did more damage to their wooden bows than they did to the Confederate iron clad.



But when the TENNESSEE's exposed rudder chains were shot away, she was left unable to maneuver. That allowed two of the Union monitors to get alongside the hapless iron clad. At close range, their huge cannons were able to penetrate her armor. Unsatisfied with the rate of return fire his gunners was able to produce, Admiral Buchanan left his ship's armored pilot house to take personal charge of the fighting from the gun deck.

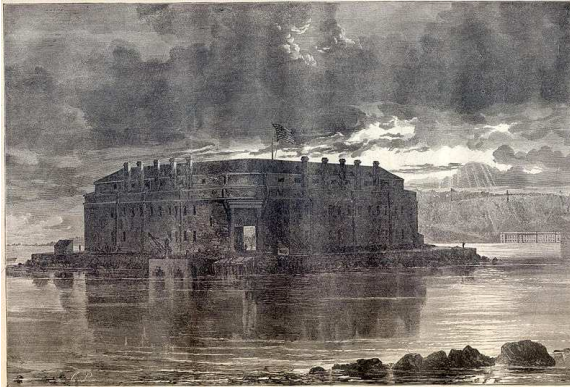
When a shell smashed into the TENNESSEE's casemate near where Buchanan was standing, he was hit by flying debris. He fell to the deck, his good left leg broken in multiple compound fractures. Buchanan called for the vessel's captain, and said: *"They have got me again. Do the best you can, sir, and when all is done, surrender"*.

Under an unrelenting fire, with two killed and eight wounded, and with his vessel slowly being pounded to pieces; the TENNESSEE's captain surrendered shortly thereafter. Buchanan refused any preferential treatment, only asking to be treated kindly as a prisoner of war. His only solace was that the Union forces were unable to capture Mobile.

His surgeon feared that the Admiral's leg might have to be amputated. When told that Buchanan was to be taken to the US naval hospital in Pensacola, he asked to go along. That request was readily granted by Admiral Farragut, who respected his foe. The former Confederate ironclad was repaired. As the USS TENNESSEE, she served in the Union Navy until the end of the war. When she was scrapped in 1867, her cannons were removed and placed on display at the Washington Naval Yard, where they remain today.

~ HOME IS THE SAILOR ~

At Pensacola, a Union Navy's fleet surgeon was determined to save Buchanan's leg...and succeeded. In addition, he kindly served as a go-between for Franklin and Ann Catherine, keeping her informed of the progress of her husband's recovery. By mid-November of 1864, Franklin Buchanan was well enough to leave the hospital. He was sent by steamer to Fort Lafayette, located on a small island in New York harbor. That obsolete fortification had been turned into a prisoner-of-war camp to sequester former US Army and Navy officers that had fought for the Confederacy.



Ann Catherine was allowed to visit Her husband, after not seeing him for almost three and a half years. Franklin accepted his situation as one of the fortunes of war. Ann Catherine did not. She pleaded with Union officials for mercy. President Lincoln met with her and explained that an exchange would be difficult, because the Confederates did not hold a Union officer of Buchanan's high rank.

Admiral Farragut and General Grant spoke up in favor of exchanging Buchanan for a large number of Union sailors. Some in the North disagreed, fearing that Buchanan might make further contributions to the Southern cause, if repatriated. The Navy secretary who had refused Buchanan's request to withdraw his resignation in 1862 soon authorized the exchange. He assumed that a man sixty-four years old that could only hobble with the use of two canes was little threat in a war that was also obviously winding down.

Returned to Richmond in March of 1865, Franklin Buchanan was dispatched to Mobile to try and help prevent that city's capture. By the time he arrived there in early April, the war was over. After accepting a parole from the victorious Yankees, Franklin Buchanan returned to Maryland's Eastern Shore and was reunited with his family. But his beloved home was just charred remains and his family was living with friends.

A few years later, Buchanan built a new 'Rest', shown on the right that was smaller than its predecessor and more of the style of a town house than a plantation mansion. But the view of the Miles River remained unchanged, and the Buchanans enjoyed a quiet life there until 1868.



~ CITIZEN BUCHANAN ~

At age sixty-eight, Franklin Buchanan responded to another call for duty. In September of 1868, he was named President of the Maryland Agricultural College, forerunner of the University of Maryland. During the Civil War, the school had been called a bastion of southern sympathy. When the war ended, the school was struggling to survive. Upon his arrival there, Buchanan found there were only a dozen students and four professors.



Franklin Buchanan slashed tuition and soon attracted nearly a hundred new students. He also introduced a sense of order and hierarchy. When two professors refused to follow his directives, he fired them. Following their appeals to the institution's trustees, one firing was sustained; the other reversed. Disappointed, Buchanan resigned and went home.

The financial needs of his family caused him to seek further employment. In January of 1870, he returned to Mobile, Alabama and became secretary and state manager for the Life Association of America. Living there alone, and in failing health, he returned for good to Maryland in June of 1871.

For the next few years he seldom left the Rest. In April, 1874, he caught cold which led to pneumonia. His beloved Ann Catherine and two doctors were at his bedside when he passed away on May 11, 1874, a few months shy of his 74th birthday. Three days later, he was interred in his wife's family cemetery, located a few miles from the Rest.

This battle-scarred flag covered his coffin. It was reported in accounts of his funeral as being the battle ensign that flew over the CSS VIRGINIA on March 8, 1862, when Franklin Buchanan achieved his great naval victory. An impressive headstone was set at the head of his grave.



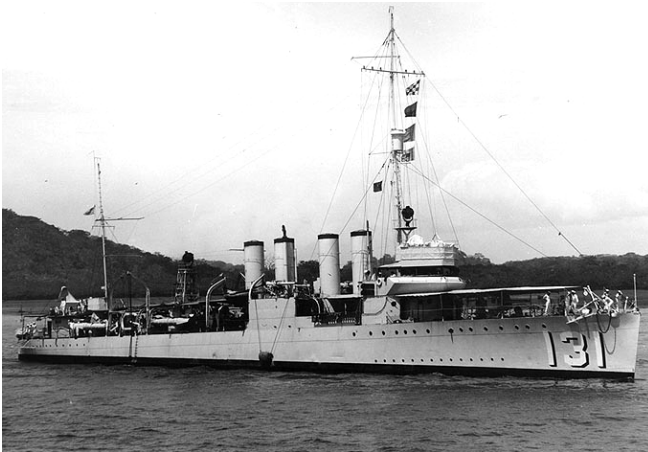
The two iron cannon balls that he brought home from Mexico, which he kept from being stolen in 1861, were placed at the foot of his grave, flanking a footstone. They are still there. Ann Catherine was buried alongside him in 1892. Three of their children were also laid to rest nearby.

~ FRANKLIN BUCHANAN REMEMBERED ~

When a new Superintendent's residence at the Naval Academy was constructed in 1906, the Navy saw fit to name it Buchanan House in honor of that institution's first leader. Renovated several times over the past 100-plus years, it still serves as the quarters for every Superintendent. The street that provides public entrance to the institution is named Buchanan Street, and the academy's mailing address is 101 Buchanan Street.



Franklin Buchanan was further more honored by becoming the namesake for *three* United States Navy destroyers. Of all the honors bestowed on him, this undoubtedly would have been those most appreciated by him.



The first, DD-131, was completed in 1919. One of the 'four-stackers' transferred to the Royal Navy in 1940, she was renamed HMS CAMPBELTOWN and was the central figure in one of Great Britain's most audacious and successful military operations during World War II. Her saga, reminiscent of Franklin Buchanan's own brand of exploits, is a classic sea story that is often told and retold.

The second destroyer named in honor of Franklin Buchanan was the USS BUCHANAN (DD-484). She was christened on November 22, 1941 by Miss Hildreth Meiere; Buchanan's great-granddaughter and the granddaughter of Julius Meiere. She also created this oil painting, which closely resembles one done in 1826. Her painting was subsequently presented to the crew at commissioning.

Hildreth Meiere was a noted artist. Her numerous commissions included murals for the liners AMERICA and UNITED STATES. Both of these famous vessels were built by Newport New Shipbuilding within sight of the location where her great-grandfather sank the CUMBERLAND.



DD-484 headed to the Pacific in May of 1942, where she remained for the duration of World War II. She participated in several major battles, and in 1944 destroyed a Japanese submarine. The BUCHANAN received a Presidential Unit Citation and also amassed sixteen battle stars for her wartime service.

She was one of the numerous American naval vessels that entered Tokyo Bay on August 29, 1945. The BUCHANAN was used to transport General MacArthur, other high-ranking military personnel and several allied civilian dignitaries from Yokohama to the MISSOURI. The SUSQUEHANNA's 31-star flag was also delivered by DD-484 to the MISSOURI.

The second BUCHANAN then returned to the United States and was decommissioned in Charleston, South Carolina. Reactivated in 1948, she was turned over to the Turkish Navy and renamed TCG GELIBOLU (D-346). She served until 1976, when she was scrapped.



In 1958, the third vessel honoring Franklin Buchanan was ordered. Designated DDG-14, she was the first of three destroyers of her class that were named in honor of Confederate naval officers. The others were Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes and Commodore Josiah Tattnall. All three of these CSN officers had previously served in the United States Navy, and they all had once commanded the Confederacy's James River Squadron.

DDG-14 was christened on May 11, 1960...eighty six years to the day of Franklin Buchanan's death. Nancy Hardcastle Fisher, a great-granddaughter of Franklin Buchanan served as sponsor. Her matron of honor was her daughter. Both ladies were natives of Maryland's Eastern Shore. An American flag draped the peak of the bow of the newest USS BUCHANAN as she slid down the ways. A Confederate battle flag hung below it.



Armed with guided missiles as well as conventional weaponry, the USS BUCHANAN (DDG-14) was commissioned on February 7, 1962; within a few days of the hundredth anniversary of the commissioning of CSS VIRGINIA. The third USS BUCHANAN took part in the dedication ceremonies for the ARIZONA Memorial shortly after

being commissioned. During the Viet Nam War, she deployed several times to provide gunfire support for American forces ashore. DDG-14 was twice hit by enemy gunfire. The second time, she suffered one killed and seven wounded.

In the late 1980's, she deployed to the North Arabian Sea and participated in naval support operations during the Iran/Iraq War, including escorting neutral country's tankers through the Straits of Hormuz. After almost two decades of service, DDG-14 was decommissioned in late 1991 and later performed her last service to the nation when she was sunk as a target vessel off Hawaii in the summer of 2000.



Franklin Buchanan is also still remembered in Alabama. At the Mobile Museum, his bust is included in a permanent exhibit that tells the story of The Battle of Mobile Bay. His home in Maryland, "The Rest", no longer exists, but its site is marked by this plaque.



~ POSTSCRIPT ~

I became interested in learning more about Franklin Buchanan after recently reading some articles commemorating the 150th anniversary of The Battle of Hampton Roads. While they properly referred to the Confederacy's first iron clad as the VIRGINIA and not the MERRIMACK, they all incorrectly identified Buchanan as her captain.

These and other contemporary articles about The Battle of Hampton Roads provided little information about Franklin Buchanan, just hinting at other equally interesting aspects of his life. So I sought 'the rest of the story' of this naval officer who had a major role in two Civil War naval battles...and was seriously wounded in both. Initially, I was impressed by what Franklin Buchanan, a nearly forgotten American warrior had accomplished and stood for in, what at times were the most difficult of circumstances.

As I researched, I pondered what might have transpired if Franklin Buchanan had not resigned from the Union Navy, or, if he had not been wounded on the first day of the Battle in Hampton Roads. Neither change in history would likely have altered the eventual outcome of the Civil War. But it is intriguing to speculate about such things.

Part of my interest in learning more about Buchanan was because some of my ancestors once resided near to the Washington Navy Yard. My great-grandmother, twelve in 1861, and her parents lived close enough that my great-great-grandfather walked to work at the navy yard. Previously a sailor in the US Navy, he was employed in the manufacture of munitions before the Civil War began and also throughout the war. So, it is certainly possible that he may have come into contact with Franklin Buchanan. I like to think so.

The following early 20th century photo, looking up 8th Street in Southeast DC indicates [A] where my ancestors resided in 1861, [B] the Marine Barracks and [C] the Commandant's residence; to the left of the latter letter-indicator and behind the navy yard's main gate. A few years ago, I toured that neighborhood. All of the structures indicated are still standing, albeit modernized, and are being put to good use. The house where my relatives lived is now the neighborhood's historical society.



Back to Franklin Buchanan's story. When I delved into information about him on the Internet; it became apparent that many details, curiosities and coincidences, as well as ironies associated with his life have been misconstrued over time. So I endeavored to separate fact from fiction, and present a fuller and more accurate account of his life and service than can be found on the Internet. In part because I found, along with many other inaccuracies, *five* different birth dates recorded for him in what might otherwise be considered reputable sources. At least they all specified the same year; i.e., 1800!

I naturally elected to use the date of birth that's engraved on his tombstone. The inscription at the bottom, albeit hard to ascertain after decades of exposure to the elements, reads as follows:

**THE MEMORY OF THE
JUST IS BLESSED.**

**FAITH'S JOURNEY ENDS IN
REFUGE TO THE WEARY.**

THE STRIFE IS O'ER.

THE BATTLE WON.

Nothing more need be said. Not by me,
certainly.

