Published on *NCpedia* (https://www.ncpedia.org)

Home > ANCHOR > Civil War and Reconstruction (1860-1876) > The War Continues, 1862–1864 > Primary Source: The Capture of Plymouth

Primary Source: The Capture of Plymouth [1]

At 4 P.M. on April 17, 1864, an advanced Union patrol on the Washington Road was captured by Confederate cavalry [2]. A company of the 12th N. Y. Cavalry attacked the Confederates, but was repulsed [3]. Soon a large force of Confederate infantry [4] appeared on the Washington Road, and at the same time Fort Gray, two miles above Plymouth on the river bank, was attacked by advanced Confederate infantry. During the evening skirmishing [5] continued from the Washington Road to the Acre Road. Union General Henry W. Wessells' garrison of about 3,000, which had held Plymouth since December, 1862, was under attack by General Robert F. Hoke's Division of over 5,000 men.

At 5:30 A.M. on April 18, a heavy Confederate artillery [6] fire was directed against Fort Gray. Both Fort Gray and Battery [7] Worth in Plymouth returned the fire. Soon a Union gunboat [8], the Bombshell, was disabled by the Confederate barrage.

At 6:30 P.M. on the 18th the Confederates advanced their line and began an infantry assault upon the Union position; but this attack was abandoned at 8 P.M. The 85th Redoubt was then attacked and captured at 11 P.M.

At 3 A.M. on April 19, the Confederates again attacked Fort Gray. Soon the Confederate iron-clad ram Albemarle, aiding the army, passed undetected down the river. The Albemarle engaged the Southfield and the Miami at 3:30 A.M., sinking the former and driving the latter away. The Albemarle then began to shell the Union defenses.

On April 19 the Confederates opened fire on the Union line from the 85th Redoubt. Fort Williams and Battery Worth returned the fire. Heavy skirmishing continued all day. At 6:30 P.M. the Confederates crossed Coneby Creek in an unexpected advance. Their infantry were now in an important position east of Plymouth. At 5 A.M. on April 20, the Confederates under General Matt W. Ransom assaulted the Union line east of Plymouth, while General Hoke, with two brigades, demonstrated against the Union right. After capturing the Union defenses east of Plymouth, the Confederates halted their advance and re-formed. Union infantry counter-attacked, but were repulsed by a renewed Confederate advance. In spite of determined resistance by the garrison of Fort Williams, the town was surrendered by General Wessells at 10 A.M.

The capture of Plymouth by the Confederates was significant because it returned two rich eastern North Carolina counties to the Confederacy; it supplied "immense ordnance [9] stores" to the Southern war effort; and the Roanoke River was reopened to Confederate commerce [10] and military operations.

Source Citation:

"Hoke's Final Line." North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. Accessed May 25, 2019. https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=map&sv=BBB-4 [11].

User Tags:
Civil War [12]
history [13]
military [14]
North Carolina [15]
North Carolina History [16]
Page [17]
Students [18]
Teachers [19]
All Rights Reserved [20]
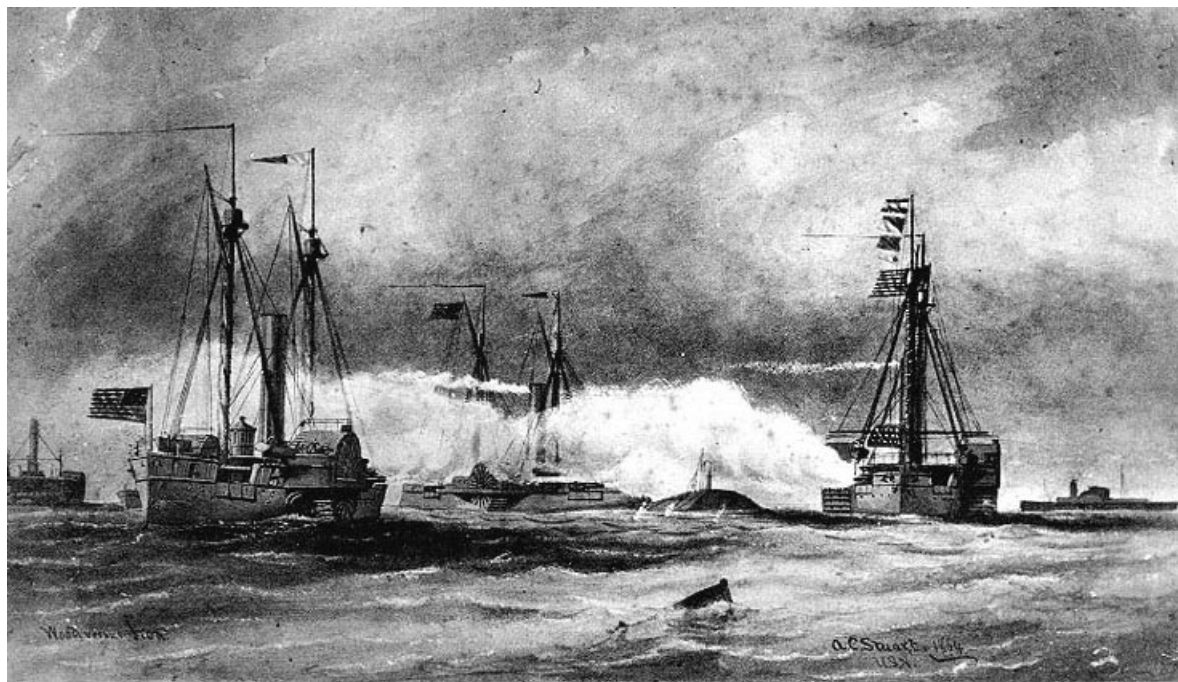**From:**
ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource [21]
Copyright Date:
2009
Related Topics:

Battle of Plymouth [22]

Artifacts:

The Confederate iron-clad ship Albemarle, shown here in action in May 1864.

3 January 2018

Links
[1] https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-capture [2] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/cavalry [3] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/repulse
[4] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/infantry [5] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/skirmish [6] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/artillery [7]
https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/battery [8] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/gunboat [9] https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/ordnance [10]
https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/commerce [11] http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=BBB-4 [12]
https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/civil-war [13] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history [14]
https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/military [15] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-5 [16]
https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-6 [17] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/page [18]
https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students [19] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers [20]
https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/all-rights [21] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/anchor-north [22]
https://www.ncpedia.org/plymouth-battle [23] https://www.ncpedia.org/media/css-albemarle-action-may-5