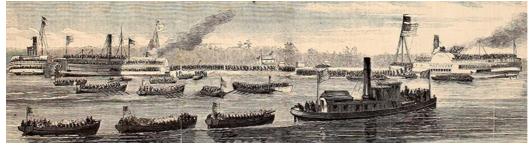
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## Picket, USS [1]

# Picket, USS

by Paul Branch, 2006

The USS Picket was a small Union gunboat [2] that



Engraving labeled "The Burnside Expedition - Landing of the national troops on Roanoke Island, under cover of the Union gunboats Delaware and Picket." Image from Archive.org. in the sounds and rivers of North Carolina until September 1862, when it was sunk in the Tar River at <u>Washington, N.C.</u> <sup>[5]</sup> The Union had purchased this civilian vessel for use in an expedition along the coast of North Carolina led by Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside. The exact origin of the *Picket* was obscured by the existence of a larger, side-wheel steamer of the same name that also served during the war. The two vessels are sometimes confused in existing records.

The smaller *Picket* was one of seven armed propellers accompanying the <u>Burnside expedition</u> (6) when it sailed for North Carolina in January 1862. The ships were collected in haste and formed a motley fleet that inspired skepticism among Burnside's officers and men as to their seaworthiness. Therefore, to demonstrate his own confidence in the vessels, Burnside chose the *Picket* (the smallest ship in the fleet) as his flagship for the voyage. After the Burnside expedition began operations in North Carolina waters, the *Picket*, with its shallow draft, proved to be particularly valuable for covering the landing of Union troops at <u>Roanoke Island</u> [7], New Bern, and <u>Fort Macon</u> [8].

On the morning of 6 Sept. 1862, as the *Picket* lay with the navy gunboat *Louisiana* in the Tar River at Washington, N.C., a Confederate force made a surprise attack on the town. Both gunboats went into action to shell the advancing Confederates, but the *Picket* was able to fire only one gun before it exploded and <u>sank</u> in the river, killing its captain, Sylvester D. Nicoll, along with 18 crewmen and leaving 6 others wounded.

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#### **Additional Resources:**

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"The Burnside Expedition - Landing of the national troops on Roanoke Island, under cover of the Union gunboats Delaware and Picket." *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. March 8, 1862. p. 245.<u>https://archive.org/stream/franklesliesilluv1314lesl#page/n239/mode/2up</u> [3] (accessed October 11, 2012).

Subjects: <u>Civil War (1861-1865)</u> [14] <u>Military</u> [15] <u>Ships</u> [16] **Authors:** <u>Branch, Paul, Jr.</u> [17] **From:** <u>Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.[18]</u>

1 January 2006 | Branch, Paul, Jr.

#### Links

[1] https://ncpedia.org/picket-uss [2] https://ncpedia.org/gunboats-wooden [3] https://archive.org/stream/franklesliesilluv1314lesl#page/n239/mode/2up [4] https://ncpedia.org/history/cw-1900/civil-war [5] https://ncpedia.org/washington-nc-attack [6] http://www.nccivilwar150.com/history/burnside.htm [7] https://ncpedia.org/roanoke-island-battle [8] https://ncpedia.org/fort-macon [9] http://books.google.com/books?id=aU-0X45vbS4C&lpg=PA1838&ots=a1ppm9nXHL&dq=Sylvester%20D.%20Nicoll%2C&pg=PA1838#v=onepage&q=Sylvester%20D.%20Nicoll,&f=false [10] http://sagharborexpress.com/sinking-of-the-picket/ [11] http://www.lib.unc.edu/blogs/civilwar/index.php/2012/02/22/22-february-1862-3/ [12] http://circanceast.beaufortccc.edu/Brown/Picket/picket.htm [13] http://books.google.com/books?id=90d2LcmfpCcC&lpg=PA225&ots=fd-VDLLaDX&dq=%22uss%20picket%22%20civil&pg=PA127#v=onepage&q&f=false [14] https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/civil-war [15]

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