

# **THE VESSELS OF THE ANNAPOLIS FLEET AND THEIR ARMAMENT.; SHIP SIGNALS AND THE SIGNAL CORPS. BRIDGE-FLOATS. THE NAVAL BRIGADE. SHIP HOSPITAL.**

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The transport fleet, as it rendezvoused at Annapolis, consisted, aside from the naval forces of 59 vessels of all sizes, ranging from the steam-tug, to the big side wheel steamship, and from the schooner to the largest ship. In tonnage, they range from one to twelve hundred tons, and in draft from three to eleven feet. The class of vessels employed, naval and transport, and the whole character of the force, are adapted only to such operations as could be conducted in inland waters, and it was evident from the first that the North Carolina waters were to be the scene of action, as there are no other accessible south of Fortress Monroe. There has been great dissatisfaction at the character of some of the vessels, but the great bulk of them, as the event has shown, are staunch and seaworthy.

The gunboat transports are of a very peculiar and formidable character. They are screw propellers, of about 500 tons burden, rigged with masts and sails, and carrying from four to seven guns each. The guns are 12-pounder steel rifled Wiard's, 12-pounder rifled Dahlgreens, 30-pounder rifled Parrotts, and mountain howitzers. The armaments of these boats, with the exception of the howitzers, are all rifled guns, capable of reaching the enemy at a great distance, and effectually covering the landing of their troops, as well as rendering much assistance in a bombardment.

The smallest steamer is the flag-ship Picket, drawing five feet, and the largest is the Northerner, drawing, when laden, about ten feet. No other steamers draw over nine feet.

The gunboat Union, owing to the peculiar service for which she is intended, draws less water than any other of the fleet, except the floating batteries. She is a stern-wheeler, and formerly ran on the Kennebec River, Maine. She has two 16-inch cylinders, with 6-feet stroke, and her captain, a shrewd Down-Easter, when asked what her draft was, said she could "run close enough to shore to enable passengers to pick apples off the trees, and make her retreat without touching bottom." With 700 men on board she draws three feet of water. The sailing vessels draw from five to nine feet, and will follow the steam transports to any point.

A very original feature of the expedition is the equipment of five floating batteries, which are designed to do effective service in action. Five of the largest and staunchest canal boats that could be found on the North River were selected for the business. They were strengthened and each divided into five watertight compartments. They have but one deck, with strong platforms for the guns. Their armament consists of Wiard rifled guns, of 6 and 12-pounder calibre. Each battery carries a crew of ten to sixteen experienced gunners. They will be anchored in position, and with their rifled guns can deal with the enemy at great distance. The gunners will be

protected by bales of wet hay, and the surface that the batteries present to the enemy is so small that it will be exceedingly difficult to touch them at any range, however short.

The steamers, as far as size and tonnage are concerned, are very much like the smaller class of North River steamers. Having been built for sea service, they are staunch, sit low in the water, and are seaworthy. Most of them have run for years on our coast from Boston to St. Johns, and Halifax. Such as have been purchased by the Government, have been painted black, and have had their names changed.

The total number of guns in the fleet of transports is 45, all of which, save four, the shell-howitzers, are rifled. The effective range of these pieces is from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 miles. The calibre of the guns is as follows:

Ten 30-pounder rifled Parrotts.

Four 6-pounder rifled Wiards.

Twelve 12-pounder rifled Wiards.

Twelve 12-pounder rifled boat-howitzers.

Six 12-pounder mountain howitzers.

Which is the total armament in the fleet from Annapolis.

These guns, together with 5,800 rounds of ammunition for the same, were all furnished under a contract with NORMAN WIARD, the inventor of the steel rifled-cannon, who filled the order in the short space of two weeks, and at the economical cost of \$60,000. The work was done in New-York and Troy, and a total of 2,000 hands employed in their manufacture.

The 12-pounder rifled boat-howitzers are intended for use either on ship-board or in launches, and every gun in the fleet is provided with the carriage and implements for use on land as efficiently as at sea. The reader will readily perceive that these guns thus placed on land will be equivalent to eight batteries of field-artillery. The ammunition for these guns is of the "Hotchkiss" pattern, of which there have been furnished 5,800 rounds of shot, shell and canister, and 800 rounds of the Parrott ammunition.

There are likewise on board each transport vessel in the fleet 40,000 rounds of ball-cartridge, and 50 navy revolvers, with a large supply of cutlasses to be used to repel boarders in case any vessel is attacked while separated from the fleet. There is also on board the schooner Col. Satterly a siege-train of four eight-inch mortars, and on another vessel there are four guns of like calibre, which armament, we believe, was largely increased at Fortress Monroe before sailing. The same vessels carry 200 rounds of shell for each gun.

Large reinforcements to the working crews of the transports were made from the ranks of the New-England regiments of the expedition, among whom are many sailors and fishermen. Among

those detailed for this service are one-hundred men from the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts, one hundred and thirty from the Twenty-third Massachusetts, and a company from the Tenth Connecticut, which is composed exclusive of sailors, whalers and coast-fishermen.

Each vessel in the fleet is designated by a signal number, and the vessels in each brigade are known by a different colored flag, from which it is known to what brigade it belongs. The first brigade will be designated by a red flag with white figures; the second brigade by a blue flag with white figures; the third brigade by a red and blue flag with white figures. When they go into action they will be signaled and designated by these numbers.

There has also been a signal corps organized and instructed in the use of a new system of signals, by which orders can be communicated from the deck of one ship to another, or from one division of an army to another, with great facility. The corps consists of 22 lieutenants and 66 privates, and has been organized and instructed by Lieuts. FRICKER, ROBESON and FOSTER, of the Eighth Pennsylvania Reserve Corps. The system is that recently invented by Maj. MYERS, of the same regiment.

The act of signaling is performed by waving, in certain directions, to represent certain combinations of figures, which in turn represent the letters of the alphabet, different colored and sized flags, and at night colored lights. The flagman knows how to make the movements when the combination of figures is announced to him, but the letter represented by the combination is only known to the signal officer, who stands by and directs him, and reads in return the signals from the opposite correspondent in the army of the Potomac these signals have been read at a distance of fifteen miles from a high position on a clear day.

The signal corps, when attached to a division, is mounted, and the men carry only a canvas pouch, which contains the signals, torches, and sections of the staff. The expedition corps will be stationed, two Lieutenants and four flag-men, on a ship, and will act as signal operators during the sailing of the transport fleet, and on shore when necessary.

The following Lieutenants were detailed from different regiments, and formed the signal corps of the expedition:

M.B. Bessey, W.F. Draper -- Massachusetts Twenty-seventh.

W.F. Barrett, Luther Bradley -- Massachusetts Twenty-seventh.

Thos. B. Marsh, W.H. Barker -- New-York Fifty-first.

J. Lyman Van Buren, R.T. Gordon -- New-York Fifty-third.

D. Jarjis, W.T. Barstow -- Massachusetts Twenty-fourth.

Sandford B. Palmer, Samuel M. Smith -- Connecticut Tenth.

Peter H. Niles, Anthony Laing -- Massachusetts Twenty-third.

Geo. W. Warner, Frederick Schlachter -- Connecticut Eleventh.

Chas. A. Breed, Marvin Wait -- Connecticut Eighth.

J.C. Reed, J.G. Beaver -- Pennsylvania Fifty-first.

J.W. Hopkins, J.H. Shumway -- Massachusetts Twenty-first.

The Signal Corps went South on the schooner Col. Slatterly.

There have been constructed for this expedition 300 bridge-floats, or boats, for crossing rivers or creeks with the greatest rapidity. They are built in the shape of small scows, tapering somewhat toward each end, leaving the largest diameter in the centre. They are each 8 feet wide, and 32 feet long. They are anchored in the water two abreast, with pins projecting from the bulwarks of each, on which stringers are placed, and planks placed thereon, which form a substantial bridge, all the work of a few moments, on which infantry, cavalry and artillery can pass with ease and rapidity. The entire length of the bridge which can thus be formed is 5,440 feet, or about a mile. When the floats are wanted for any other points, they can be taken out, put on wheels and axles made for the purpose, and drawn by horses. This bridge is of the same pattern as those used by the French in the war in Italy. Another pontoon train, of the regular India-rubber pattern, will also accompany the expedition, in charge of Mr. S.D. FIELD.

The military forces of the Expedition will be accompanied by a naval brigade, composed of sailors, who are to man the small boats and render assistance in landing troops. The brigade will be under command of Col. W.A. HOWARD, who is a person of great experience, having been for many years attached to both the navy and the revenue service. He was in the navy as midshipman while quite young, and won the esteem of his comrades. He left the service and entered the revenue marine, in which he continued for some time. During the Mexican war he was engaged in the conflict, and acquitted himself nobly. He was also engaged in the merchant service. After being some years out of the service, he again returned to it, and, before the present Expedition, stood in the rank of Captain in the revenue marine.

The schooner Recruit, Capt. COGGSWELL, and Scout, Capt. LOONEY, have been detailed for service as the Division Hospital. They are fitted up with 440 berths, on two decks, under the spar deck. They will give ample accommodation to all the sick of the Division. The hospital is under the supervision of Dr. S.A. GREEN, of the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts, assisted by Dr. DODGE, of the New-York Fifty-first, and Dr. TEMPLE, of the Twenty-fifth Massachusetts.

Dr. CHURCH, the Medical Director of the Burnside Expedition, conceived the idea of establishing hospital ships to be connected with the transport fleet, which has been successfully carried out. The hospital ships are placed in charge of a surgeon and three assistant surgeons, and the arrangements are made to conform to those of the best regulated hospitals. Each hospital ship is capable of accommodating 250 patients, with due regard to ventilation and cleanliness. The [??] nurses and attendants are carefully selected. All the stores and medicines required in the hospital are placed on board the hospital ships. Every facility for the treatment of surgical cases is afforded. The number of hospital ships can be increased so as to meet the greatest emergency.

From the above details it will be seen how truly formidable is this Naval and Military Expedition under Gen. BURNSIDE, which has just effected a foothold on the soil of North Carolina. In the main, it was undoubtedly well devised, well planned and well got up. The casualties that have befallen two or three of the vessels were trifling in comparison with the vast force of the expedition; and, considering the terrific gale through which it passed, the only wonder is that they were not more and far greater. We have had our record of the regiments and of the gunboats and ships of the fleet in type since the expedition sailed, but have delayed their publication till now that it has operated, for fear the facts of the force should by some means fall into the hands of the enemy, and he thereby discover from the character of the ships where it was destined, and thus be enabled to prepare for its destruction.