

CSS ALBEMARLE



Ironclad Gunboat



In 1863, 19-year-old engineer Gilbert Elliott contracted with the Confederate Navy Department to construct an ironclad gunboat designed by John L. Porter, the navy's chief architect. Elliott built the vessel at Edwards Ferry on the Roanoke River, ___ miles upstream from here, where his

"shipyard" was Peter E. Smith's cornfield. It took more than a year to construct CSS *Albemarle*, which was 158 feet long, 35 feet wide, and topped with a 60-foot-long casemate sheathed with two layers of two-inch-thick iron plates. Inside the casemate, two large Brooke

Rifle cannons could fire hundred-pound shells. An 18-foot-long white-oak ram, also sheathed with iron plates, extended from *Albemarle's* bow to puncture the sides of wooden vessels and sink them.

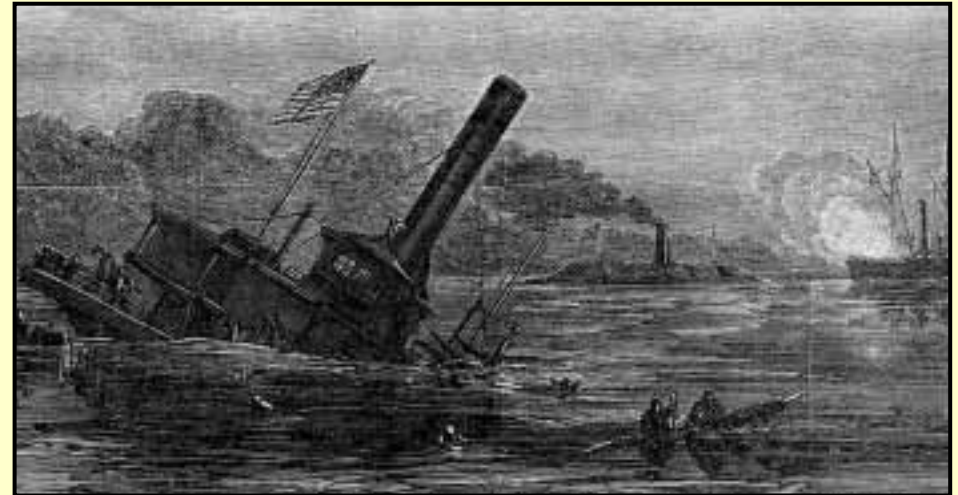
Albemarle first saw action on April 19, 1864, during the Battle of Plymouth, when it rammed and sank USS *Southfield*. It also indirectly caused the death of the Federal fleet's commander, Charles W. Flusser. A shell fired from Flusser's ship (USS *Miami*) at *Albemarle* bounced off the iron plating back onto *Miami* and exploded, killing Flusser, who was standing next to the cannon that had fired the shell.

On May 5, in an engagement in Albemarle Sound, the *Albemarle* faced seven U.S. gunboats. Despite being outgunned 60 cannons to two,

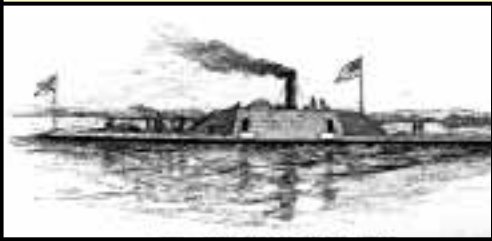
outshelled 557 to 27, and rammed, *Albemarle* escaped destruction. The ironclad finally was torpedoed (blown up with a mine on the end of a wooden spar) on October 27, by a motor launch commanded by Lt. William B. Cushing, and sank. The Federals recaptured Plymouth on October 31.



The CSS *Albemarle* rammed by the USS *Sassacus*.



The CSS *Albemarle* sinking the USS *Southfield*.



The CSS *Albemarle* ready for action.