

# BATTLE OF GLOUCESTER POINT

WHEN THE USS YANKEE ENGAGED WITH A CONFEDERATE BATTERY, IT WOULD BECOME THE FIRST CANNON FIRED IN VIRGINIA DURING THE CIVIL WAR

BY FRED ROBERTS

April of 1861 was a bleak month for President Abraham Lincoln. On 14 April, the US Army garrison at Fort Sumter surrendered to Confederate forces in a humiliating defeat. The next day, Lincoln

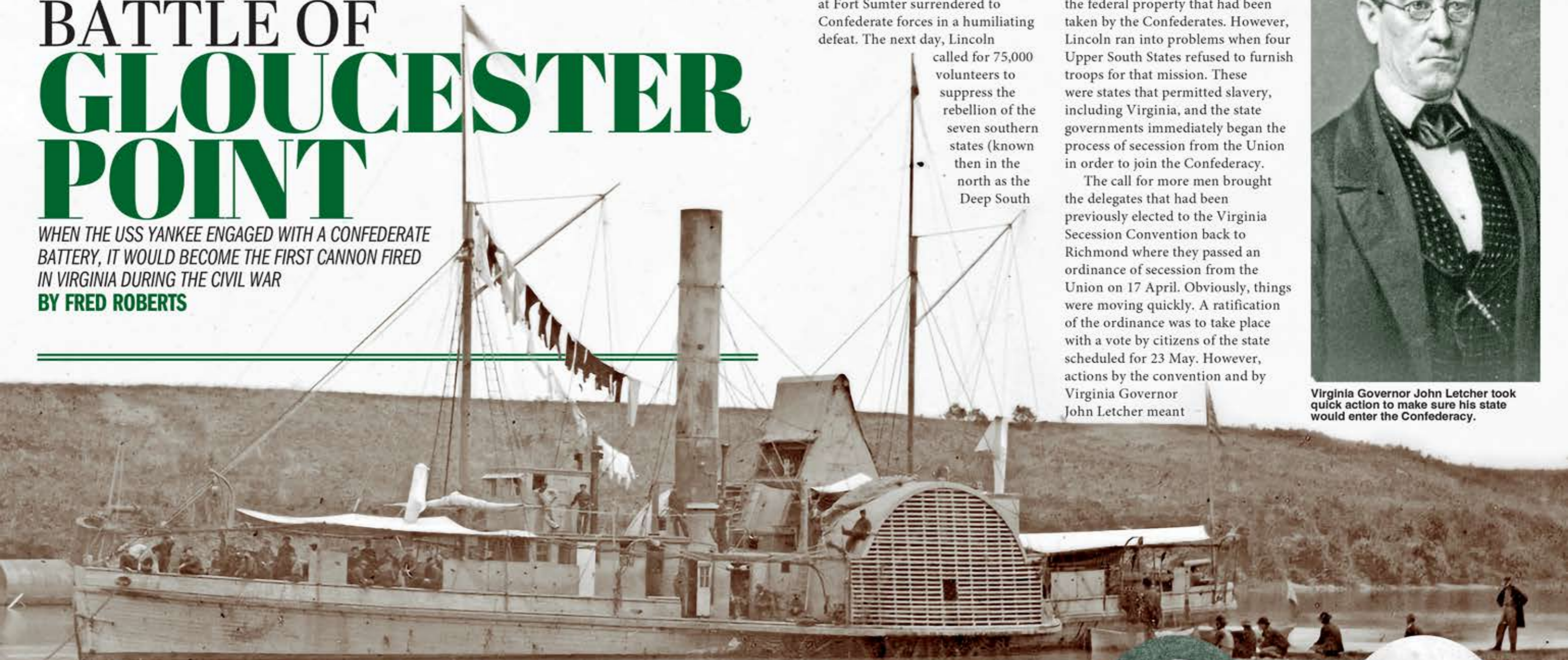
called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion of the seven southern states (known then in the north as the Deep South

Slave States) that had formed the Confederate States of America. This huge force was also needed to reclaim the federal property that had been taken by the Confederates. However, Lincoln ran into problems when four Upper South States refused to furnish troops for that mission. These were states that permitted slavery, including Virginia, and the state governments immediately began the process of secession from the Union in order to join the Confederacy.

The call for more men brought the delegates that had been previously elected to the Virginia Secession Convention back to Richmond where they passed an ordinance of secession from the Union on 17 April. Obviously, things were moving quickly. A ratification of the ordinance was to take place with a vote by citizens of the state scheduled for 23 May. However, actions by the convention and by Virginia Governor John Letcher meant



Virginia Governor John Letcher took quick action to make sure his state would enter the Confederacy.



In 2017, this map was discovered and it illustrates the fortifications at Gloucester Point.

USS *Yankee* was built in 1860 in New York City as a steam tug. In early April 1861, she was chartered to help provision Fort Sumter and then would assist in the evacuation of the Norfolk Navy Yard. She was commissioned USS *Yankee* in April of that year. The rather ramshackle vessel — note the hanging laundry — was sold at the end of the conflict and was probably scrapped.



Letcher would appoint Robert E. Lee as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of Virginia.



In turn, Lee would appoint William B. Tallaferro as commander of the battery at Gloucester Point.