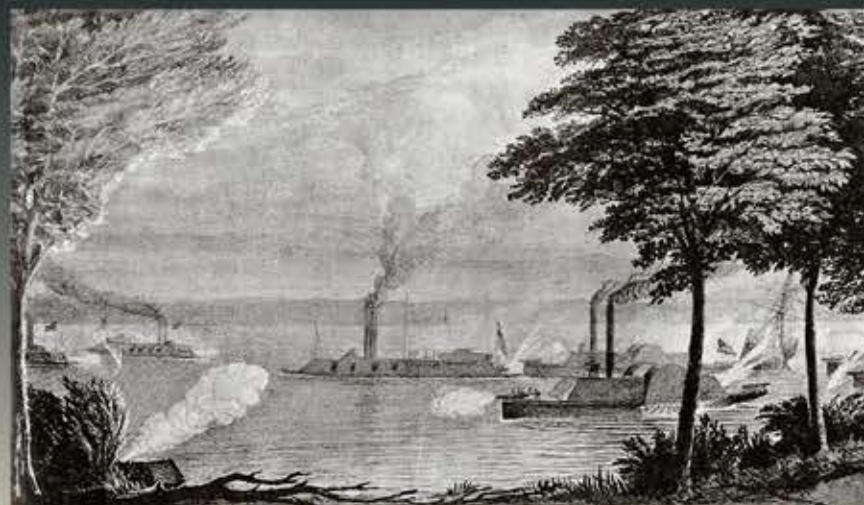


# RAM THE DAMN YANKEES!

THE SHORT LIFE OF CURIOUS COTTONCLAD CSS GENERAL BEAUREGARD  
AND THE FIRST BATTLE OF MEMPHIS  
BY KYLE ROBERTS



Lithograph depicting *General Beauregard* and other cottonclads in the Battle of Fort Pillow.

During the sweltering summer of 1847 in the Algiers section of New Orleans, Louisiana, workers completed work on a paddle-wheel steamer named *Ocean* that would be utilized as a towboat for the increasingly busy river traffic that was hauling all manner of items. The ship went into its workaday life pushing and pulling a variety of cargo vessels and this unglamorous work continued until increasing tensions between the North and the South resulted in the Civil War.

From the immediate start of the conflict, the new Confederate States Navy was short of ships. Accordingly, many civilian vessels were pressed into service. At first, *Ocean* just kept on with her tug duties but as the war on water became more desperate, she was taken over by the Confederate Navy. Captain J.E. Montgomery, who in civilian life had been a river steamboat master, undertook a careful examination of *Ocean* and decided that the ship could be modified into a combat vessel for his River Defense Fleet.

Captain Montgomery ordered *Ocean* to be modified into what was called a cottonclad ram. The Confederates had short supplies of iron but plenty of cotton and the cottonclad ram was a rather ingenious solution to make do with what one had. These



The cottonclad was named after Gen. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.

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The Confederate cottonclads faced the withering firepower of the Union ironclads at the Battle of Plum Point Bend on 10 May 1862. The *General Beauregard* barely lasted two months.