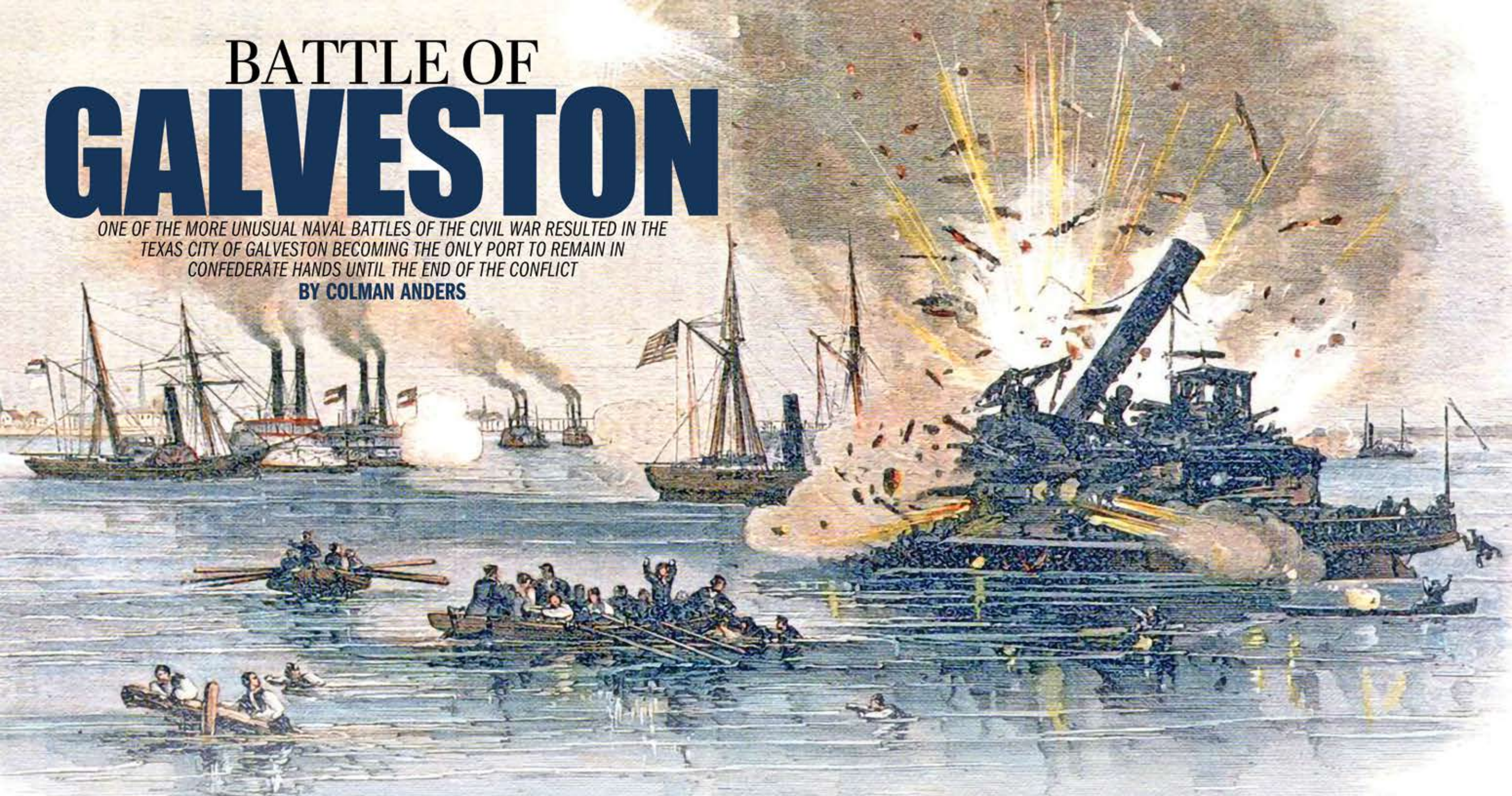


BATTLE OF GALVESTON

ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL NAVAL BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR RESULTED IN THE TEXAS CITY OF GALVESTON BECOMING THE ONLY PORT TO REMAIN IN CONFEDERATE HANDS UNTIL THE END OF THE CONFLICT

BY COLMAN ANDERS



When it came to naval engagements during America's deadly Civil War, sometimes daring and resourcefulness would overcome superior military force. Such was the case in the oft-storm-tossed bay of Galveston. During the Civil War, the Texas city was a focal point for both Union and Confederate naval movements since its geographical loca-

tion was ideal for both forces. From the very beginning, the Confederate Navy was under-resourced in virtually every aspect so the commanders had to rely on forward thinking and the bravery of those under their command if they hoped to achieve even a modicum of victory.

Confederate Major General John Bankhead Magruder was a

graduate of West Point and he had served with distinction during the Mexican-American War of 1846/1848. However, when the Civil War began in 1861 Magruder's loyalties were with the South and he left the Union Army to accept a commission in the Confederacy. As commander of the Army of the Peninsula, he fortified the Virginia Peninsula and

won the Battle of Big Bethel. During the Peninsula Campaign, he stalled McClellan's Army of the Potomac outside Yorktown and this allowed Maj. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston to arrive with reinforcements, organize a retreat, and defend the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. However, he was also criticized for his leadership during battles at Savage's Station and Malvern Hill during the Seven Days Battles.

In the fighting at Malvern Hill,

Magruder came under sharp criticism and one account stated he was "under the intoxicating influence of ardent spirits" which, in the rather florid terms of the time, meant he was drunk. Robert E. Lee did not believe these accounts and thus never lent support to the charges of drunkenness or incompetency and this dispelled those that demanded Magruder's recall. These unsubstantiated charges led President Jefferson Davis to reassign

Magruder. In his new position, he was to command the District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona beginning on 10 October 1861.

At this time, Galveston had been under a Union blockade led by Cmdr. William B. Renshaw and Confederate Brig. Gen. Paul Octave Hebert surrendered the valuable port to Union forces on 9 October 1862, believing the area to be indefensible. When Magruder arrived in the area,

Destruction of the USS *Westfield* during the Battle of Galveston.