

# *Covering the Civil War by Kayak*

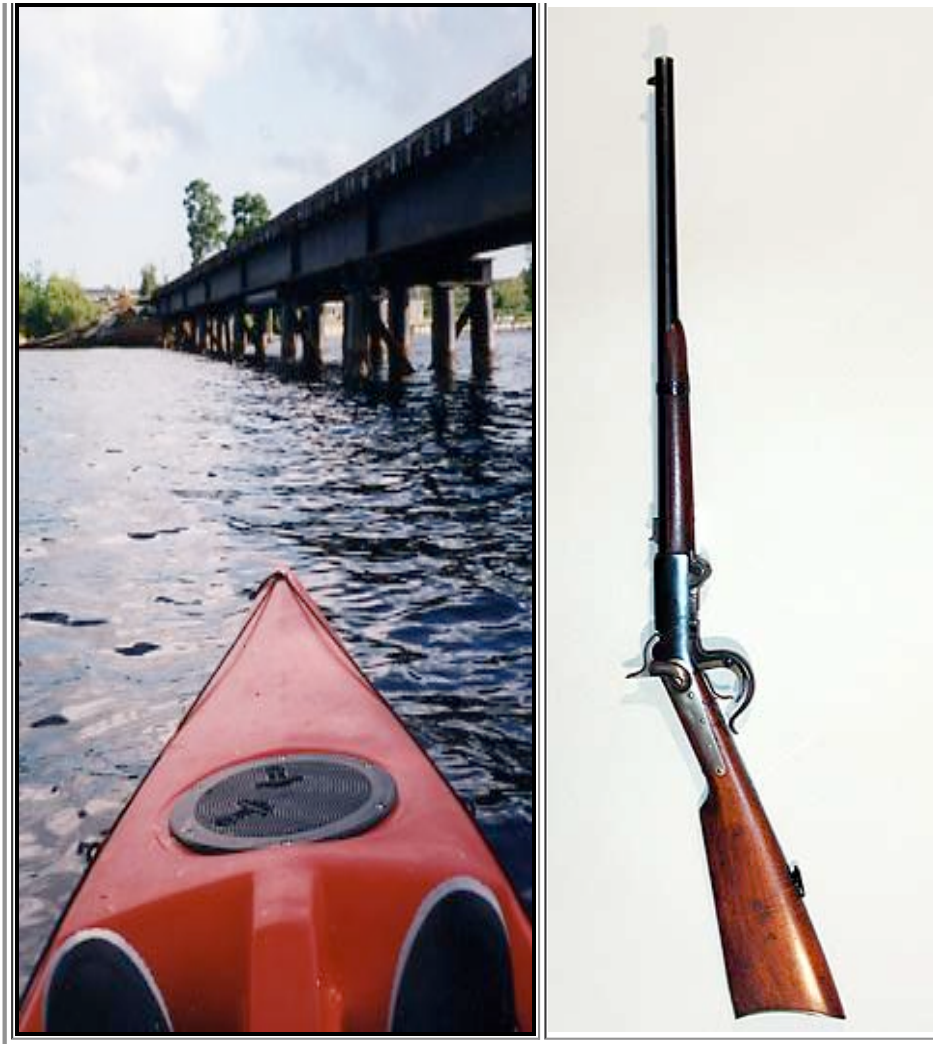
**The day Ambrose Burnside "Drove Old Dixie  
Down:"**

**Four forgotten hours help shape the world**

*Apologies to [Mark Twain](#): a tale of ["Time Travel"](#)*

*Kayak back to March 1862 with [Frederic A. Moritz](#)  
for an eyewitness ["blog"](#) of the New Bern day  
which "began" the strangling of the South.*

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*Reporting from under the bridge which carries the wounded;  
See where some wounded will be treated  
"The Burnside" is more than a carbine*

*[A New Bern Battle Summary](#)  
[Spartanburg, NC Newspaper Battle Dispatch from New Bern](#)  
[Cell Phones in the Civil War Battle for New Bern](#)*

*Visit Burnside's July 1864 disgrace when  
["The Crater" met "Cold Mountain"](#)*



[Union General Ambrose Burnside](#)

[Burnside: a biography](#)

[Burnside reconsidered: insane or stupid?](#)

[North Carolina operations: McClellan's instructions to Burnside](#)

[New Bern battle map](#)

[The battle for New Bern: a brief profile](#)

[Eyewitness accounts New Bern battle](#)

[Burnside's official account](#)

[The battle for New Bern: letter from a soldier](#)

["The Crater" meets "Cold Mountain"](#)

[Moritz Blog: "Exploring on the Roads Less Taken"](#)



***FROM VERACRUZ TO NEW BERN***

***"Old Fuss and Feathers" helped seal the rebel fate:  
Winfield Scott had resigned at 75 - but in Burnside's hands his  
"Anaconda" blockade strategy begins a later fatal squeeze.***



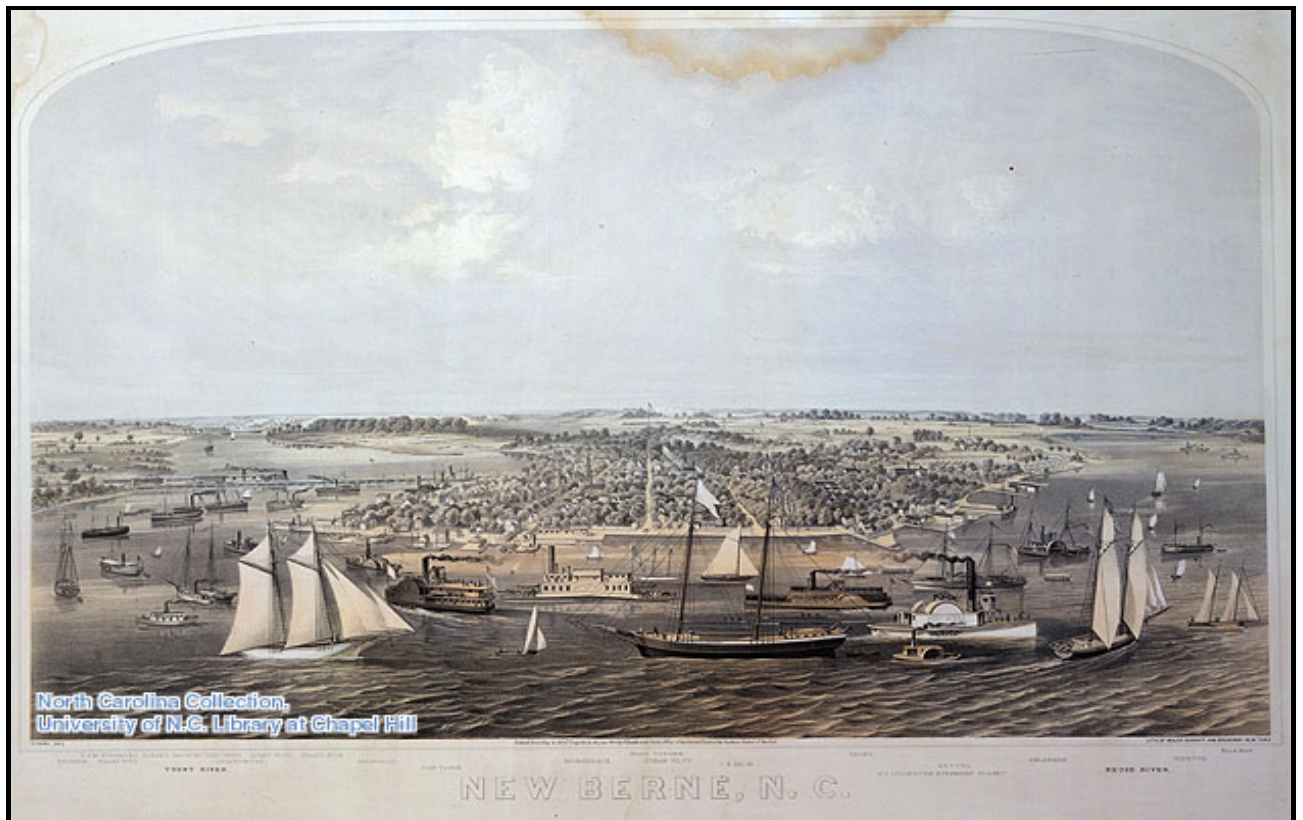
***Despite the best efforts of rebel re-enactors (above),  
'Ol AMBROSE BURNSIDE clearly won the day***

***Click [here](#) for a "kayak's eye blogger's view"  
of the topics below:***

***COMING OF THE GHOSTS  
STUCK WITH THE MISSION...WHY ME, OH LORD?  
BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE SOUTH? WINFIELD WINS HIS***

**GAME**

**LET'S HYPE IT UP A BIT, BOYS! RACE TALK!!  
 WHERE FORMER SLAVES WILL LEAVE A MARK  
 I'VE HAD LOTS OF EXPERIENCE -- BUT MOSTLY IN THE FUTURE  
 THIS IS NO TIME TO "FLASH LAMINATE"  
 THE ROAD TO BATTLE: IN THE SHADOW OF VERACRUZ  
 'OL AMBROSE KNOWS HOW TO MOVE!  
 'OL AMBROSE WILL TAKE RISKS TO GET HIS WAY  
 SCHOOLED BY A QUAKER IN HIS DAY  
 WINFIELD'S DREAM IS UNDERWAY  
 "SHOCK AND AWE:" MOVIN' AND BOOMIN'  
 'OL ABE WANTS HIM A "TOP GUN"  
 HOW BURNSIDE WILL SCREW UP BIG TIME  
 AT "THE CRATER" - BURNSIDE MEETS "COLD MOUNTAIN"  
 THE ROAD TO "COLD MOUNTAIN"  
 BURNSIDE REDEEMED -- A LITTLE OR A LOT?  
 WHAT OF THE REBS?  
 A BLOODY RETREAT  
 A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY  
 LAST TRAIN TO KINSTON TOWN!  
 THE YANKS ARE IN NEW BERN...FOR NOW  
 THE SKIRTS OF YANKEE LADIES FLUTTER  
 AH, SWEET VICTORY!**



## ***NEW BERN 1864***

**Maps: New Bern in the [Pamlico/Neuse](#)  
region of historic [North Carolina](#);  
[New Bern history and slide show](#)  
[New Bern aerial view](#)**

[Moritz kayak](#)

[Prelude to New Bern: Scott's amphibious assault on Vera Cruz in '47](#)

[D-Day: Veracruz; a Grand Design .pdf](#)

[Harper's Weekly '62: Union fleet prepares for amphibious assault](#)

[New Bern and medicine in the Civil War: photos and images](#)

[Civil War medicine](#)

[Where ex-slaves gathered: the James City Settlement: \(download .pdf1; .pdf2\)](#)

[David S. Cecelski: "Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina"](#)

[Cecelski: After the war: oral history of ex-slaves in New Bern region's  
maritime life](#)

[Cecelski paddles into the past: "A Historian's Coast"](#)

[The Allen Parker slave narrative: a coastal slave's life 1838-1862](#)

[Parker serves US Navy off New Bern after fleeing to Yank gunboat, August,  
1862](#)

[William Henry Singleton, born New Bern: "Recollections of My Slavery  
Days"](#)

[North American slave narratives: the UNC online collection](#)

[Voices From the Days of Slavery: Library of Congress](#)

["Mark Twain's Rachel:" a tale of slavery set in Union occupied New Bern](#)

[Gender and race in post Civil War New Bern](#)

[New Bern: North Carolina's first capitol, Tryon Palace historic sites, gardens](#)



***BURNSIDE WINS HIS NEW BERN GAMBLE,***

## ***THEN PLAYS HIS LAST CARD AT "THE CRATER"***

**When you play the slots at [Reno](#), Nevada casinos, remember [Jesse L. Reno](#), the Mexican War veteran. He led the Union's left flank March 14 to break through rebel defenses along a line of mounds, trenches, and barricaded trees five miles south of New Bern.**

**Eight thousand of Ambrose Burnside's 12,000 had put ashore at Slocum Creek the day before in one of the most ambitious amphibious operations of the 19th Century. It was a game 'Ol Ambrose was destined to win, partly because he was so bold and partly because the rebels were so weak.**

**Ambrose Burnside was a "top gun" of the day. After his victory at New Bern, Abe Lincoln selected him for his daring to be the new top Union commander. Disaster courted him in reverses at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and the "Mud March."**

**Then came final disgrace in his disastrous attempt to mine the Confederate lines before Petersburg, Virginia on July 30, 1864. See ["The Crater" meets "Cold Mountain."](#) Burnside took a leave of absence and was never called back to the war.**



**Slocum Creek beachhead: where Burnside landed  
in the "[shadow of Veracruz](#)"**

**Burnside from Rhode Island was a risk taker, a man who in his youth loved to try his hand with river boat gamblers. No matter that his childhood teacher was a Quaker, that his Indiana father was influenced by Quaker teachings, that he was known for kindness and compassion.**

**'Ol Ambrose could pour it on, up the ante, send in wave after wave to be shot down, if necessary -- as he later did when commanding the Union defeat at [Fredericksburg](#), Virginia in December 1862. As he was to do again at "[The Crater](#)" disaster before Petersburg, Virginia on July 30, 1864.**

**At New Bern his star was high.**

**Burnside began implementation of the General Winfield Scott's [Anaconda blockade strategy](#), designed to break Confederate supply lines by planting a Union presence on Confederate territory, blockading Confederate ports, then squeezing rail supply lines north to Confederate forces in Virginia. He received his marching orders after consultation with Scott's successor as supreme commander, [General George McClellan](#).**

**Could it be that Burnside learned a bit about amphibious**



landings from what General Winfield Scott did back in the Mexican War? Few Civil War generals could be ignorant of the exploits of the venerable [Winfield Scott](#).

Burnside was known for his interest in amphibious warfare, for training his Rhode Island regiments in those skills. True, the 8,000 men Burnside landed at Slocum Creek were a smaller force than the the 12,000 Scott landed at [Veracruz](#) in 1847 for the dusty six months march to take Mexico City. But the method was similar.

'Ol Winnie put his men ashore south of Veracruz -- to spare them from bombardment. Then softened up that Mexican coastal fortress by cannonade from land and naval guns.

Fifteen years later the Federals use similar tactics to take New Bern: landing at a safe spot, Slocum Creek, some nine miles south of Rebel defended Fort Thompson. Staying away from enemy guns, until the time was right.

The Confederate line stretched more than a mile from its left at Fort Thompson by the Neuse River (north of Thurman) across and to the west of the Atlantic Carolina Beaufort--New Bern railroad. Rebel General Lawrence O'Bryan Branch fielded some 4,500 men ([Map](#)).

The Confederates dammed a tiny eastern tributary of [Brice Creek](#) to create barrier marshes in front of their positions around their right flank west of the railroad. Trench fortifications were reinforced before the battle. But green rebel militia defending the brickyard near the rail line broke when thousands of bluecoats under Reno's command attacked north along the west of the tracks.

The [26th North Carolina](#) under [Col. Zebulon B. Vance](#), later wartime governor of the state, fought a delaying action on the Confederate right before retreating west

across Brice Creek. Part of the area where the 26th did battle is now occupied by the [Taberna](#) golf and residential development. Not far from the center of the rebel defense, just east of Highway 70, is the Craven County Fairground, just across from the adult video shop.

Notes [Will Gorges](#) in the "Newsletter of New Bern Historical Society:"

*"The majority of the Confederates had not yet been issued military uniforms and most were armed with second class muskets, antiquated flintlocks, and assorted sporting rifles and shotguns.*

*"The Union troops were armed for the most part with the modern Springfield rifled muskets and the English Enfield rifles, both of which utilized the deadly "minie" ball bullet.*





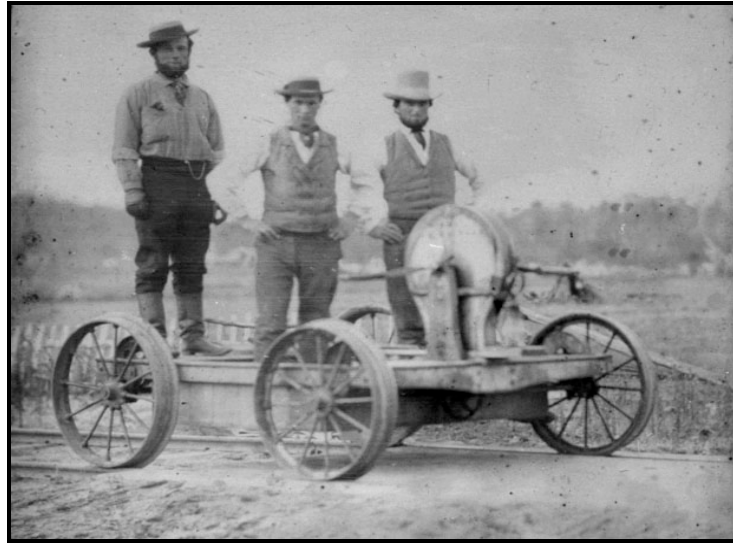
*"Amidst the roar of naval cannon bombarding the shore and woods in the direction of the Confederate line, blowing the tops of trees apart and showering the troops below with fiery fragments of iron and wood, the early hours of March 14, 1862, proved to be a fatal test of combat for the Rebel forces."*

The quick Union victory after only four hours of fighting brought extraordinarily low casualties. Branch lost an estimated 68 killed, 116 wounded, and 400 captured or missing compared to Burnside's 90 killed, 385 wounded, and a single man captured.

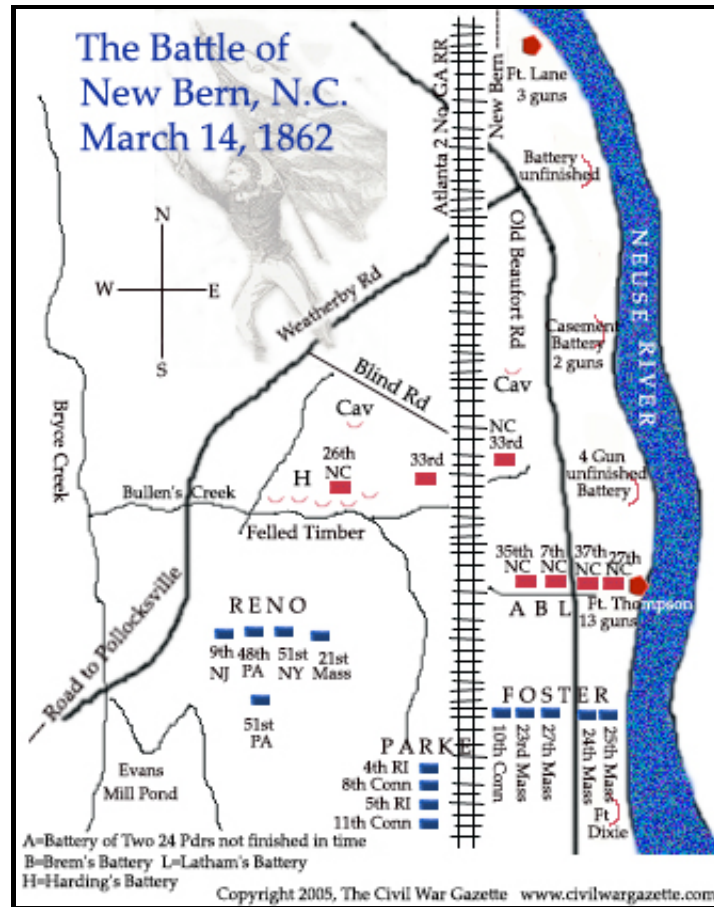
Check online eyewitness [battle accounts](#), including one by Union commander [Ambrose Burnside](#).

Retreating Confederates straggled into New Bern, some on hand cranked railroad handcars, some swimming the Trent River after fighting a rearguard action across Brice Creek.

Back in New Bern travel with me by kayak "time machine" for my own blogger's [eyewitness view](#) of the Confederate retreat.



[Pre-Civil War crank handcar](#)





***THE BATTLE FOR NEW BERN: 1862***  
A building block in Jim Lehrer's Civil War mystery:  
*No Certain Rest*



***THE BATTLE FOR NEW BERN: TODAY***



***New Bern Landmark: newly restored slave quarters now on grounds of Craven Regional Airport, not far from New Bern battleground. Originally at the location of current Taco Bell, New Bern***



*This correspondent paddles toward a bridge to the past*

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