Co-Author of ‘Our Little Monitor’ Presents Talk of Most Recent Archaeological Findings and Late 19th Century Popular Culture Impact of Famed Civil War Battleship

Hampton, VA - Jonathan W. White, associate professor of American Studies at Christopher Newport University, presents the most recent archaeological findings of the iconic Civil War Union battleship, the subject of a recent book co-authored with Anna Gibson Holloway, Our Little Monitor, as part of the Hampton History Museum’s Port Hampton Lecture series on Monday, July 2, 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

On March 9, 1862, the USS Monitor and CSS Virginia met in the Battle of Hampton Roads—the first time ironclad vessels would engage each other in combat. For four hours

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the two ships pummeled one another as thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers and civilians watched from the shorelines. Although the battle ended in a draw, this engagement would change the nature of naval warfare by informing both vessel design and battle tactics. The “wooden walls” of navies around the world suddenly appeared far more vulnerable, and many political and military leaders initiated or accelerated their own ironclad-building programs.

Americans did not initially have much faith in the Monitor. Few believed that this strange little vessel could hold her own against the formidable Confederate ironclad Virginia, which had been built on the bones of the scuttled USS Merrimack in Portsmouth, Virginia. The Virginia, seemingly relentless and unstoppable, had ravaged the U.S. Navy in Hampton Roads on March 8, just before the Monitor arrived. Yet the following day, the “cheesebox on a raft” proved her Union mettle, becoming a national hero in her own right.

For the remainder of the Civil War the Union Navy used dozens of monitor-style vessels on inland waters as well as at sea. But there would always be only one first Monitor, and she became affectionately known to many throughout the nation as “Our Little Monitor.” Her loss off Cape Hatteras on December 31, 1862, was mourned as keenly in the press as the loss of 16 of her men that night.

Using the latest archaeological finds from the USS Monitor Center in Newport News, Virginia, as well as untapped archival material, Anna Gibson Holloway and Jonathan W. White bring “Our Little Monitor” to life once more in this beautifully illustrated volume. In addition to telling her story from conception in 1861 to sinking in 1862, as well as her

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recent recovery and ongoing restoration, they explain how fighting in this new “machine”
changed the experience of her crew and reveal how the Monitor became “the pet of the
people”—a vessel celebrated in prints, tokens, and household bric-a-brac; a marketing
tool; and a prominent feature in parades, Sanitary Fairs, and politics.

Jonathan W. White
Jonathan W. White is associate professor of American Studies at Christopher Newport
University and is the author of several books, including Abraham Lincoln and Treason in
the Civil War: The Trials of John Merryman, and Emancipation, the Union Army, and the
Reelection of Abraham Lincoln, which was a finalist for both the Lincoln Prize and
Jefferson Davis Prize, a “best book” in Civil War Monitor, and the winner of the
Abraham Lincoln Institute’s 2015 book prize. He has published more than seventy-five
articles, essays and reviews, and is the winner of the 2005 John T. Hubbell Prize for the
best article in Civil War History, the 2010 Hay-Nicolay Dissertation Prize, and the 2012
is president of the Abraham Lincoln Institute, he serves on the Board of Directors of the
Abraham Lincoln Association and the Lincoln Forum, the Board of Advisors of the John
L. Nau III Center for Civil War History at the University of Virginia, and the Ford’s
Theatre Advisory Council. His most recent books include Lincoln on Law, Leadership
and Life (2015), Midnight in America: Darkness, Sleep, and Dreams during the Civil
War (2017), and “Our Little Monitor”: The Greatest Invention of the Civil War (2018),
which he co-authored with Anna Gibson Holloway. Check out his website at
www.jonathanwhite.org/ or follow him on Twitter at @CivilWarJon

Hampton History Museum
Admission to the lecture is free for museum members, $5.00 for non-members. The
Hampton History Museum is located at 120 Old Hampton Lane in Downtown Hampton.
There is free parking in the garage across the street from the museum. For more
information call 757-727-1102 or visit www.HamptonHistoryMuseum.org.

Partially bordered by the Hampton Roads harbor and Chesapeake Bay, Hampton, with
the 344,000 sq. ft. Hampton Roads Convention Center and the award-winning Hampton
Coliseum, is located in the center of Coastal Virginia and the Hampton Roads

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metropolitan area. Hampton is the site of America's first continuous English-speaking settlement, the site of the first arrival of Africans in English North America, and is home to such visitor attractions as the Virginia Air & Space Center, Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton History Museum, harbor tours and cruises, Hampton University Museum, The American Theatre, among others.

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Photos attached:
- Our Little Monitor book cover, courtesy of the author
- Jonathan W. White portrait, courtesy of the author