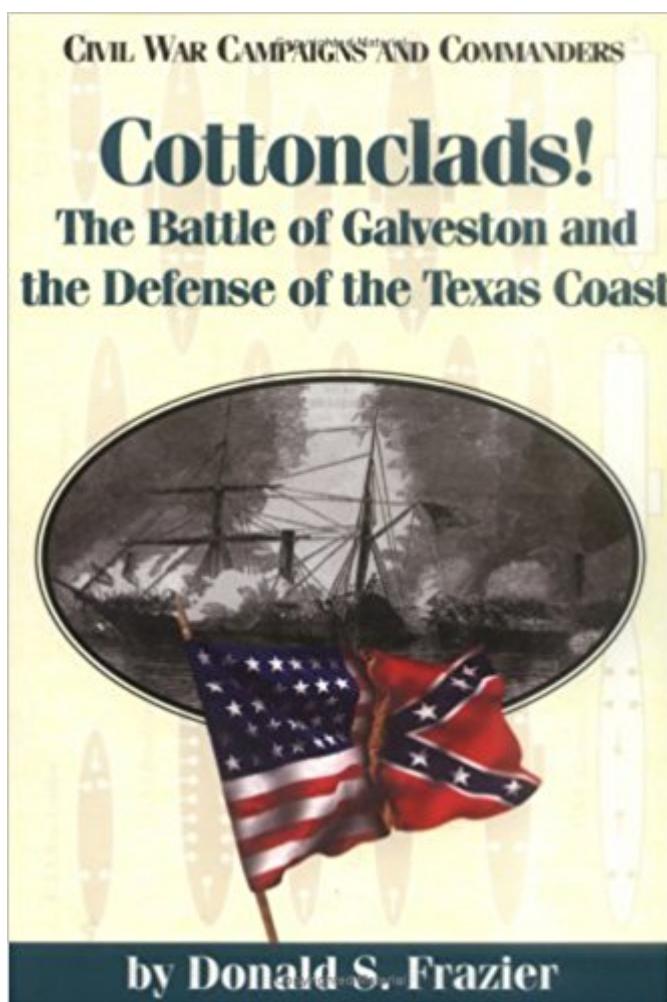


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# **Cottonclads!: The Battle Of Galveston And The Defense Of The Texas Coast (Civil War Campaigns And Commanders Series)**



## Synopsis

1862. Admiral David Farragut orders enclaves to be established in Texas as part of the Federal blockade. This involves attempts against Corpus Christi, Sabine Pass, Galveston, and Port Lavaca. By the end of the year Federal troops reduce the defenses of Sabine Pass and occupy Galveston, the state's principal port. However, the gains prove tenuous. While Federal sailors await Union infantry reinforcements, the Confederates, under Gen. John B. Magruder, seize the initiative. They organize a makeshift fleet of "cottonclads" — lightly armed and armored, but good platforms for sharpshooters — and boldly attack the Union fleet whenever it lies close to shore. Meanwhile, Confederate troops bombard from land. Ultimately, this counterattack results in the destruction or capture of four Union warships and three supply vessels and temporarily lifts the blockade. A lively account of innovative and daring tactics against superior forces by a dynamic historian.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"an excellent series [that] should be in every Texas school!" -- Empire Books

DONALD S. FRAZIER holds a Ph.D. from Texas Christian University and is a professor of history at McMurry University. His book *Blood and Treasure: Confederate Empire in the Southwest* is a

History Book Club selection and he has published over 300 cartographic illustrations appearing in over two dozen scholarly books and journals.

In 1862, the Union Navy under Admiral David Farrugut tried to invade the Texas Coast to strengthen the Union Blockade of all goods being shipped to Texas to supply the Confederacy. He attempted to invade and blockade various Texas Coastal towns such as Corpus Christi, Sabine Pass, Galveston, and Port Lavaca. After initially having success in occupying Galveston, it was short lived. While Union Sailors were waiting for supplies, the Confederate Cavalry and Infantry under General John B. Magruder seized the opportunity to drive the Union back to the sea. The Confederates had the "cottonclads", a lightly armored and armed platforms for Confederate sharpshooters to shoot and attack the Union forces on the shore and also to bombard various Union coastal defenses around Galveston and Sabine Pass. In the end, the Confederates capture or destroy four Union warships, three supply vessels and for a short time lift the Federal Blockade of the Texas Gulf Coast. President Lyndon B. Johnson's grandfather, Private Sam Ely Johnson Sr. was a cavalryman in the 26th Texas Cavalry DeBray's Regiment) and participated in the Battle of Galveston. Private Johnson was noted for his bravery in the battle and his excellent tenacity in saving a wounded soldier while under fire. Later in life, Private Johnson told his Civil War experiences to his grandson Lyndon who was captivated with his grandfather's Civil War experiences. Donald Frazier has written an excellent summary about the Battle Of Galveston and the failed Union attempt to invade and block Texas from the Gulf Coast. This is a highly recommended read for anyone interested in Texas Civil War History, the Western Theatre of The Civil War, and Civil War Nautical History.

Having read and thoroughly enjoyed Cotham's works about Galveston and Sabine Pass, I did not expect much from "Cottonclads!" Generally I find the "Civil War Campaigns and Commanders" series books too short and sparse on detail. To my pleasant surprise Donald Frazier's slim volume packs a reasonably detailed narrative between the covers. Frazier's overall approach is more businesslike and concise focusing on the facts, figures, and positions while Cotham's contains a wider background narrative and more details in most areas. Each succeeds as I found these surprisingly complimentary companions. Frazier's coverage of events other than those surrounding the recapture of Galveston is more of a summary and clipped short in some areas. "Cottonclads!" is centered on the Texan recapture of Galveston in a joint land and sea attack. The Union navy inflicted heavy casualties that repulsed the initial land assault against the small garrison at Kuhn's

wharf. Then the cottonclads CSS Bayou City and Neptune attacked, dismounted cavalry serving as snipers and boarding parties on the boats. At first this too appeared to be unsuccessful as the Neptune was sunk in shallow water. However, this proved of some benefit as men continued to snipe from the top of the vessel. The Bayou City rammed the USS Harriet Lane and took it by storm. This led to the withdrawal of the U.S. Navy and the loss of the USS Westfield through scuttling after it ran aground. Without support the troops on the wharf were compelled to surrender. It was a stunning victory for a cobbled together land & sea operation, and a major debacle for the Federal blockading squadron. Frazier includes some decent maps (although the map scale is not given.) He also includes orders of battle for Galveston and Sabine Pass, and provides a good description of the vessels involved along with basic layouts of the gun positions and calibers. Ample biographical sketches of the various land and sea commanders are included. Casualties are tallied for the CS forces and by vessel for the Union. There are some odd errors in the Anaconda plan maps: Savannah, GA is shown as a blockade running port throughout, while Wilmington, NC is not shown. Overall I can recommend this book as a useful and concise summary with maps, orders of battle, and ships details.

I found that Cottonclads! was a quick read as I finished it in one day. This book really helps to paint a picture of the state of affairs along the Texas Gulf Coast during the Civil War. The book places special emphasis on the Battle of Galveston, which freed this important Texas port from Union control. Additional chapters cover battles at nearby Sabine Pass. What I liked most about this book was its ability to get me to think about Galveston in a different way. I had never thought of what this city was like in the 19th Century, but the book claims that it was the largest city in Texas. When the Union Army occupied the city, it was with the intent to legitimize a Union-backed government there and to use the city as a base of operations for Union troops to penetrate deeper into Texas. In the end, the Union penetration of Texas failed, just as Sibley's Brigade failed to take the desert Southwest. It was only fitting that the regiments of Sibley's brigade were present at the freeing of Galveston from Union control. I recommend this book as a starting point in learning about the Union blockade of the Confederacy and the Rebels' efforts to thwart it.

Cottonclads! The Battle of Galveston and the Defense of the Texas Coast presents a good account of the many naval operations along Texas. The book has good details; it includes battles ranging from Galveston to Sabine Pass. The book provides a good starting point for the interested reader to research and learn more.

Well written and interesting for Texans who may not be aware of the cottonclads participation in Civil War coastal protection.

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