

Sinking the Stone Fleet

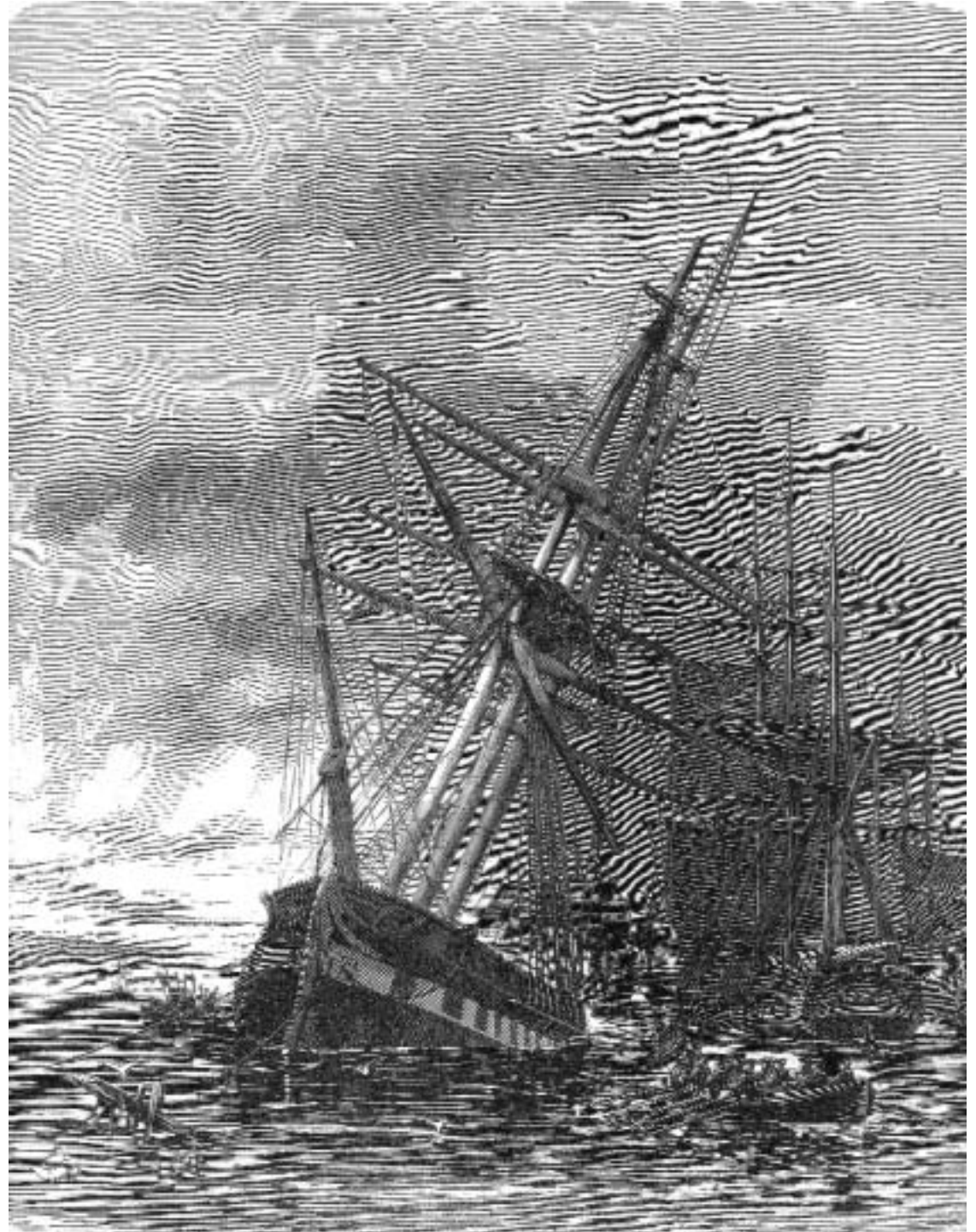
Artist: unknown

Harper's Weekly

The federal government needed to find an effective method to blockade key Southern ports without maintaining a large fleet in every location. Much like the Confederacy had done earlier in the year, the Union army blocked the harbors of Charleston and Savannah using sunken schooners. The presence of the sunken ships would prevent deep-draft ships from safely negotiating their way through the harbor.

Twenty-five schooners left New Bedford, Mass., on Nov. 20, 1861, bound for Charleston and Savannah. Loaded with granite, the schooners arrived in Charleston harbor on Dec. 19. The Union navy carefully placed 15 of the schooners in position and pulled plugs that had been previously installed in each ship. The schooners quickly made their way to the bottom of the shipping channel, leaving their upper rigging exposed. The remaining 10 schooners set sail for Savannah to repeat the process.

The swift current in Charleston harbor dismantled the sunken schooners and swept the debris out to sea. The Union navy sank 13 additional schooners in January 1862.





Black Firemen's Ball

Artist: William Waud
New York Illustrated News

Artist William Waud attended the Charleston "Negro Fireman's Ball" in 1862 and forwarded his illustration and observations to the *New York Illustrated News*. Slaves were allowed, with the permission of their masters, to volunteer for service with one of the 10 city ward engine companies that served in addition to the white volunteer fire companies. Each city ward engine company was staffed with slaves under the command of three white managers. As was the tradition with the white volunteer fire companies, the city sponsored a firemen's ball for the members of the 10 ward companies.

William Waud writes:

The Hall was fashionably crowded and the ladies and gentlemen (all slaves) well, in some cases, elegantly dressed; the mistresses often attiring their favorite female slaves with great care, providing them with dresses and

lending them their own jewels. The excessive gallantry of the men, and the coy little airs of the colored belles were very amusing; everything was conducted in the most orderly manner, the city furnishing them with a couple of policemen (one of whom is represented in the cut) to prevent the intrusion of evil disposed persons. A supper followed the ball, excellently laid out, and very choice in material, the only restriction being placed on wines and liquors, none of which is allowed to be introduced. The overpowering politeness displayed to the ladies during the repast, and afterward in the shawling and escorting home, was beyond all praise.