

The First Use of Torpedoes in Naval Warfare



Civil War torpedo

A torpedo from the Civil War period. "Francis Edgar Shepperd is said to have been the first man to use the torpedo in Naval warfare. He came from an old North Carolina family and was a graduate of the Naval Academy. He resigned when his State seceded and entered the Confederate Navy.

Twenty five years ago Shepperd, then a captain in the Confederate Navy, blew up the US gunboat Cairo with an old fashioned fixed torpedo fastened to the bottom of the Mississippi (River). Lieutenant-Commander, now Rear Admiral Thomas O. Selfridge, was in command of the Cairo. He and his men were badly shaken, but no one was killed or seriously injured. Captain Shepperd, who was lying on the bank watching the explosion made up his mind then and there that that was a cowardly way of fighting and that he never used another torpedo. He died recently in Georgetown and was buried in Philadelphia."

Source: The Jones Headlight, Gray's Station, Georgia. February 11 1888.