

# Franklin Buchanan



*Franklin Buchanan, the highest-ranking Confederate naval officer and MAC president from 1868 to 1869, faced his brother, McKean, in one of the most significant battles at sea during the conflict.*

Born in Baltimore in 1800, Franklin Buchanan became a midshipman at the age of 15, beginning a storied federal naval career of over 45 years. During that time, he had varied sea and battle experience, on schooners, sloops, and frigates the world over - the Mediterranean, Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Ocean.

Buchanan drafted the organizational plan for the new Naval School at Annapolis and served as its first superintendent from 1845 to 1847, when he returned to active duty during the Mexican War. Later, he oversaw the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., achieving the highest rank then available, captain.

In 1835, he married the daughter of former Governor Edward Lloyd of Talbot County, Maryland, joining a prominent Eastern Shore slave-holding family. That association further solidified his Southern perspective in opposition to the anti-slavery views of his own father. He resigned from the United States Navy several days after the April 19, 1861, riot in Baltimore, certain that Maryland would follow her southern neighbors out of the Union. When Maryland did not secede, he attempted to rescind his resignation but was rebuffed.

He joined the Confederate States Navy at the rank of captain on September 4, 1861, and in February 1862, was placed in command of the Chesapeake Bay Squadron and of the CSS *Virginia*, the reconstructed USS *Merrimack*. Weeks later, on March 8, he participated in the first day of the Battle of Hampton Roads, in which the USS *Congress*, on which his brother, McKean Buchanan (at right), served as purser, was destroyed, at his order, along with four other vessels. The losses were a huge blow to the Union navy.



Seriously wounded in the leg, Franklin Buchanan was not at the helm of the ironclad the next day when the *Virginia* battled the USS *Monitor*, the most significant naval engagement of the war and the first between two ironclad ships. The newly arrived *Monitor*, a much smaller vessel designed with a rotating gun turret, prevented the *Virginia* from inflicting more damage. The two ships fought to a draw, and the Union blockade remained in place.

Buchanan was promoted to the rank of admiral on August 26, 1862, the highest-ranking officer in the Confederate Navy, and named commander of the naval forces at Mobile, Alabama. The loss of his vast naval experience to the Union was recognized by Lincoln himself. Writing in 1863, Lincoln included Buchanan on a list of former Union officers when he lamented "if we had seized and held them, the insurgent cause would be much weaker."

Buchanan was wounded again in the Battle of Mobile Bay in August 1864, where, on the CSS *Tennessee*, he battled 17 Union ships. Forced to surrender, he was held prisoner at Fort Lafayette in New York until he was exchanged in February 1865.

After his MAC presidency, Buchanan served briefly as an insurance company executive in Mobile, then returned to Talbot County, where he died in 1874.