

CSS Planter (Robert Smalls)

In May 1862, Robert Smalls (1839-1915) committed an act that would lead to him being known as a daring hero during the Civil War.

The Confederates had commandeered into service the Planter, a transport steamer whose crew included Smalls and three other slaves. From the Planter in Charleston Harbor, the men could see the Union ships tantalizingly close as the Union Navy blockaded Fort Sumter. When all of the white crew went ashore for the evening on May 12, 1862, Smalls and the other slaves gathered their families on the Planter for a daring escape to freedom. Casting off, Smalls eased the ship into the current and headed out of Charleston harbor. Familiar with the waters and the Confederate routines, he steamed the Planter past five Confederate gun batteries, giving the correct signals for safe passage at each.

By dawn on May 13, 1862, Smalls had successfully cleared the harbor and surrendered the Planter to the Union forces.

"One of the most heroic acts of the war," reported the *New York Times* on May 19, 1862. The commander of the Union Navy along the South Atlantic coast, Rear Admiral Samuel F. Du Pont, pronounced it "one of the coolest and most gallant naval acts of war." Southern newspapers considered it "one of the most shameful events of this or any other war."

In addition to providing the Union forces with the Planter, Smalls and the other former slaves provided invaluable intelligence, including information that allowed for the establishment of an important base on the Stono Inlet and Stono River for future military operations.

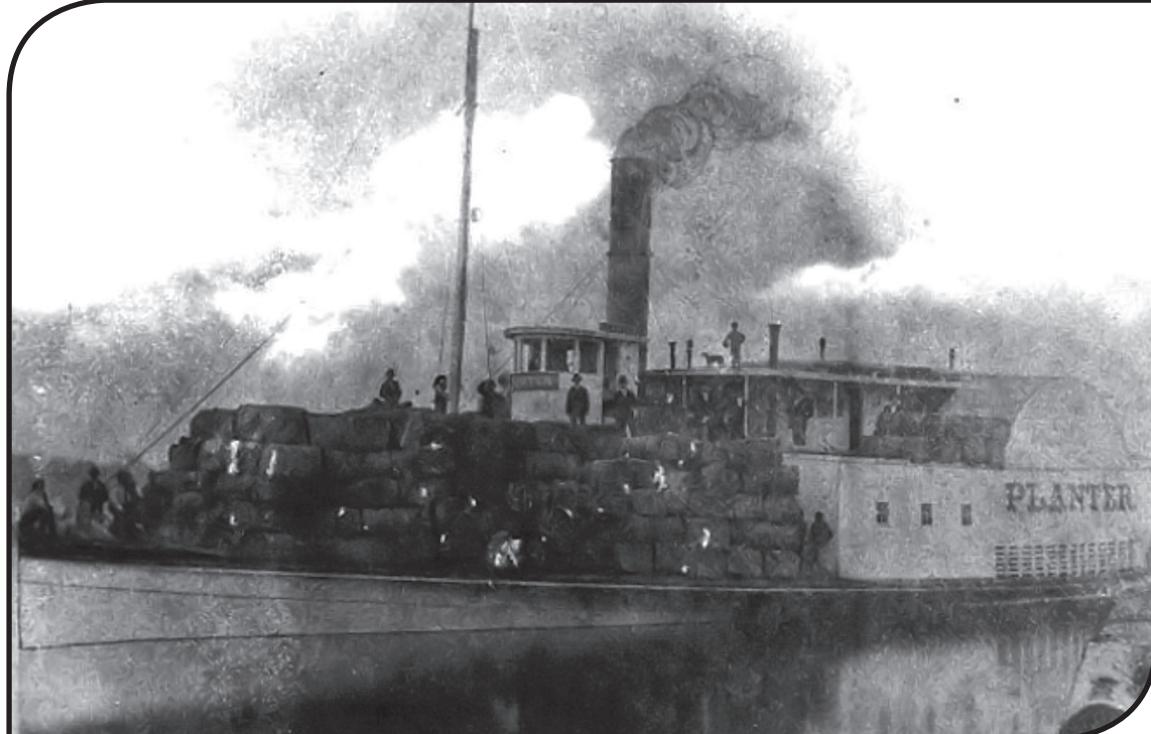


Photo courtesy of the Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

South Carolina African American History Calendar May Celebrates 25 Years. 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 CINCO DE MAYO	6	7	8	9	10
11 MOTHER'S DAY	12	13 <small>1862 – Enslaved ship pilot and future SC politician Robert Smalls liberates 16 slaves by piloting a stolen Confederate Ship called the Planter through enemy territory</small> <small>1872 – Matilda Evans was born in Aiken, SC. Evans moved to Columbia, SC and began her own practice, becoming the first licensed African American female physician in the state</small> <small>1862 – Robert Smalls seized Confederate warship</small>	14	15	16	17 ARMED FORCES DAY
18	19	20 <small>1963 – Over 1,000 University of South Carolina students support an anti-integration rally in Columbia by marching to the State House</small>	21	22	23	24
25	26 MEMORIAL DAY	27 <small>1956 – Althea Gibson won the French Open, becoming the first black tennis player to win a major tennis title</small>	28	29	30 <small>1822 – The Denmark Vesey "conspiracy" is uncovered and curtailed by authorities in Charleston, SC</small>	31