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**For immediate release:
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**PORT HUDSON STATE HISTORIC SITE RECEIVES
DONATION OF SCALE MODEL CIVIL WAR-ERA GUNBOAT**

Port Hudson State Historic Site has added to its exhibits, with the donation of a 1:32 scale model of the Union Gunboat USS Essex that served during the Civil War. The model, created and donated by Robert Seal of American Battlesite Productions, LLC and Baton Rouge-area artist Bill Toups is currently on display in the site's museum. The USS Essex model has the capability of two radio operated motors allowing the ship to maneuver under its own power.

Historically, the USS Essex served on the lower Mississippi and was involved in the first siege of Vicksburg and fought against the Confederate Ironclad CSS Arkansas on July 22, 1862. A couple of weeks later, Union troops in Baton Rouge were protected by the USS Essex's naval guns; the USS Essex then was stationed south of Port Hudson supporting US naval operations prior to and during the Siege of Port Hudson in 1863.

Seal has volunteered at Port Hudson State Historic Site, for more than 12 years, maintaining the site's historic ship models, and assisting with regularly scheduled programs and demonstrations and the site's annual reenactment. The idea for the USS Essex model was born after a program using radio-operated model ships built by Seal. He developed and engineered the model starting in June 2014, using existing records and historic photographs.



Toups became interested in the naval programs after attending a program at Port Hudson State Historic Site and offered to volunteer his time. Using his skills in wood turning on a lathe and historic records, photographs and measurements of the cannons on the USS Essex, he made the cannons included on the model. The USS Essex was completed and brought to the historic site on Feb. 5.

The USS Essex model's first official participation at one of Port Hudson State Historic Site's programs will occur on Saturday, Feb. 28, during *The Waterfront: Vicksburg, Port Hudson and The Fight for the Mississippi* at 11 a.m. The program will be preceded by an official presentation of the model to Louisiana State Parks representatives. The model will be on display in the lobby of the Port Hudson State Historic Site's visitor center. This ship will be used during the gunboat demonstrations during the site's annual reenactment on March 28 – 29, and upcoming spring school day programs. It then will join the site's ship models on display from February until June on the site's pond. The rest of the year the ship models are on display in the site's museum. Most of these ships represent the US Navy ships that were involved in Admiral David Glasgow Farragut's Mississippi River campaign of 1862 – 1863.

Port Hudson State Historic Site, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974, and is located on US 61 near Zachary, about 15 minutes north of Baton Rouge. Admission to the site and the event is \$4/person, free for children (12 and under) and seniors (62 and older). For more information, call 888.677.3400 toll free or 654.3775 in the Zachary area.

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