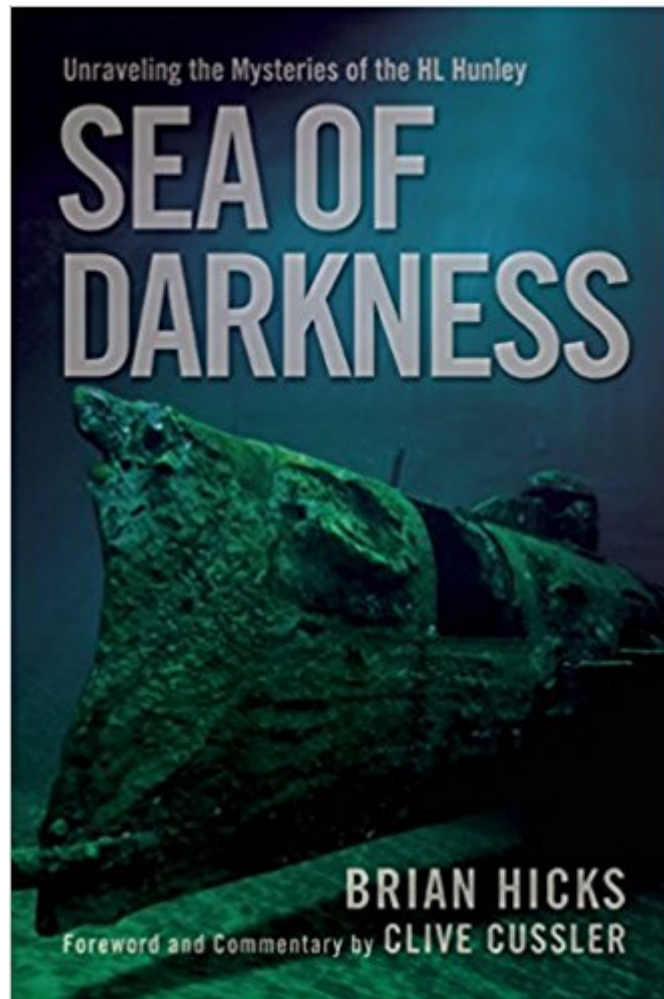


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# Sea Of Darkness: Unraveling The Mysteries Of The H.L. Hunley



## Synopsis

On a dark night in February of 1864, the H.L. Hunley, the first submarine to sink an enemy ship in combat, torpedoed the Union blockade ship USS Housatonic, a feat that would not be repeated for another 50 years. But fate was not kind to the Hunley that night as it sank with all of its crew on board before it could return to shore. Considered by many to be the Civil War's greatest mystery, the Hunley's demise and its resting place have been a topic of discussion for historians and Civil War buffs alike for more than a hundred years. Adding still more to the intrigue, the vessel was discovered in 1995 by a dive team led by famed novelist and shipwreck hunter Clive Cussler, sparking an underwater investigation that resulted in the raising of the Hunley on August 8, 2000. Since that time, the extensive research and restorative efforts underway have unraveled the incredible secrets that were locked within the submarine at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Join Civil War expert Brian Hicks as *Sea of Darkness* recounts the most historically accurate narrative of the sinking and eventual recovery ever written. Hicks has been given unprecedented access to all the main characters involved in the discovery, raising, and restoration of the Hunley. Complete with a foreword and additional commentary by Clive Cussler, *Sea of Darkness* offers new, never-before-published evidence on the cause of the Hunley's sinking, providing readers a tantalizing behind-the-scenes look inside the historic submarine.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is author Brian Hicks's follow-up to his 2002 book, *Raising The Hunley*, coauthored by Schuyler Kropf. Hicks has had access to the key players in the Hunley saga from the beginning, and is

therefore well-positioned to tell the story of its discovery and conservation. That story has been covered by many authors, and I cannot say that any one of the recent works on the Hunley stands head and shoulders above the others. For those who have been "Hunleyfied" as Hicks characterizes those fascinated by the subject, any new information is devoured and digested with relish. *Sea of Darkness* is the latest offering since Tom Chaffin's 2008 *The Hunley The Secret Hope of the Confederacy*. The past five years has likely produced much new information from the scientists at the Hunley's Warren Lasch Conservation Center, but Hick's book is not about that. Those wanting the complete story of the conservation of the sub and its contents will have to wait until one of the scientists publishes such a work. That story is a moving target, and until the conservation is complete and the Hunley is ready for its home in a North Charleston museum, we won't have the "definitive" story on the sub's physical characteristics and conservation. I found his treatment of the formation of The Friends of the Hunley to be the best part of Hick's book. This is a subject which was not well covered in previous works, and without the establishment of this booster, fund-raising organization, the Hunley's recovery and conservation would have been impossible. Hicks gives us the story on Warren Lasch and the other movers and shakers who got the job done, and it is a fascinating exposition of the personalities, motivations, and competing interests of the people behind the artifacts.

Many thanks to Spry Publishing and Press Box Publicity for the complimentary review copy. An excellent book on the story of the Hunley itself - its genesis, its early prototypes and failures; the pressure of the Union blockading fleet on Gulf and Atlantic ports still held by the Confederacy; the principals involved in its funding, construction, and testing; other unique and similar craft being developed by the Union and Confederates; the importance of keeping such projects as secret as possible; the impatience of military authorities in deploying the submarine; and - finally - it's successful sinking of the *Housatonic* in Feb 1864 and its subsequent disappearance. Parallel with the story of the history of the sub is the effort to discover and raise the submarine once found. If you've seen one of the Nat'l Geographic special featuring Robert Ballard - *Bismarck, Battle of Midway* - then you are familiar with the story structure that this book takes: alternating chapters of modern marine archaeology with chapters featuring the history of the subject. It is a comprehensive story to be sure and patiently told in over 400 pages. The writing is sharp and the story is revealed with good pacing and with chapter-ending "cliffhangers" that leave the reader wanting more. Except for a few instances (described below), the book is told evenly, without much hyperbole. Especially interesting is the discussion throughout of myths and misunderstandings that have stuck to the

Hunley story throughout the years. Resources include good use of personal interviews with modern participants, the papers of historical personalities, period newspaper accounts - and, my favorite - excerpts from letters of wartime Charleston residents commenting on the Hunley.

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