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**Last Full Measure –Franklin
Buchanan, Man Without A Country**

Lead: For 400 years service men and women have fought to carve out and defend freedom and the civilization we know as America. This series on *A Moment in Time* is devoted to the memory of those warriors, whose devotion gave, in the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg, *the last full measure*.

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The Civil War brought the naval career of Franklin Buchanan to an abrupt halt. In the annals of the

United States Navy, the service of few officers equal in luster to that of Franklin Buchanan. A native of Maryland, he went to sea when he was fourteen years old. When the Southern states seceded in 1861 the sixty-year-old Buchanan already had a distinguished and memorable career. He planned the organization of the United States Military Academy and from 1845 served as its first superintendent. He was executive commander of the Navy's first major steam-powered warship, the Mississippi, and commanded the flagship of Commodore Oliver C. Perry in the 1853 expedition to Japan. On that voyage Buchanan acted as chief negotiator in the talks that helped open Japan to Western

commerce. At the outbreak of hostilities before the Civil War he was in charge of the Washington Navy Yard and watched with apprehension the departure for Confederate service officers at whose side he had served for decades.

Buchanan knew his future course would be closely tied to that of his native Maryland and for a time in the spring of 1861 it appeared as though Maryland would join the ranks of those states departing the Union. In anticipation, Buchanan resigned and in a moving farewell turned over his command and left the Navy.

However, Maryland did not secede and, naively, Buchanan tried to take his resignation back but was refused.

This vacillation made him appear indecisive and disloyal to Union officials who declined to re-appoint him. Embittered by this abrupt termination he retired to his estate in Maryland, but by September he could stand the inaction no longer. He crossed into Virginia and, despite the misgivings of some Confederate leaders suspicious of his attempt to rejoin the Union Navy, became the senior admiral in the Confederate Navy. In this capacity he commanded the ironclad Virginia and was wounded in its first engagement with Union ships. As such he was not present on the next day in the Virginia's climactic encounter with the USS Monitor. Later, Buchanan supervised the construction of the

ironclad CSS Tennessee and commanded it in the Battle of Mobile Bay in the summer of 1864. His defeat and capture put him out of the war. Buchanan died in 1874, an excellent leader in action, but one who little understood the emotions at work in a nation at war with itself.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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Still, William N. *Iron Afloat: The Story of the Confederate Armorclads*. Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971.