On the highest point of the battered dust heap that was the still untaken fortress of Sumter, the Confederate photographer, Cook, planted his camera on September 8, 1863, and took the first photograph of ironclads in action—the monitors Weehawken, Montauk and Passaic, as they were actually firing on the Confederate batteries at Fort Moultrie. The three low-freeboarded vessels, lying almost bows-on, at the distance of nearly two miles, look like great iron buoys in the channel, but the smoke from their heavy guns is drifting over the water, and the flames can almost be seen leaping from the turret ports. Although Fort Moultrie was the aim of their gunners, Cook, with his head under the dark cloth, saw on the ground glass a shell passing within a few feet of him. Another shell knocked one of his plate-holders off the parapet into the water, and the men had to fish it out for him. He got his picture of the scene drawn upon the fort and the fire of all the fort's guns on the monitors. Fortunately, this has been preserved, and it is a fitting record of a daring photographic exploit in a war that such a daring photographic feat was rare.

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