

The Day Book

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A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

Bear Down and Engage

The Battle off the Virginia Capes, September 1781

by Heather Burnett

Most naval battles are unofficially ranked by how many ships were involved and how many of them were sunk during the course of the battle.

The long term consequences of the battle usually comes in a distant third. In the summer of 1781, two fleets, one French and one British, clashed off Cape Henry, Virginia, and while no ships were sunk, the outcome of the battle still remains with us today.

In command of the French fleet was a tall, French noble by the name of Adm. François Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse. Born in 1722 in Bar, France, Adm. de Grasse received his early military training at the Gardes Maritimes School and first served with the Knights of Malta before joining the French service in 1740. When France joined the United States in the Revolutionary War, de Grasse was given command of a squadron of ships and first engaged the English forces in the West Indies in 1779-1780.

Following a prearranged plan, on

Aug. 14, 1781, de Grasse officially notified General George Washington, leader of the Continental Army, and General Rochambeau, leader of the French army in America, that he would set sail for the Chesapeake Bay and join forces with Adm. Count de Barras. At the same time, Washington and Rochambeau's troops began mobilization for their journey from the Hudson River on their way to Virginia, all the while keeping their plans secret in an attempt to surprise the British commander Lord Cornwallis and his army at Yorktown, Va.

On Aug. 25, de Barras began his journey to the Chesapeake and de Grasse, as promised, arrived in the Chesapeake with 28 ships and 3,000 troops on Aug. 30. The English were caught off guard by his presence, as they had anticipated Adm. George Rodney intercepting and defeating de Grasse in the West Indies prior to his arrival. A British fleet under Lord Thomas Graves had yet to set sail



Shown here is the victor of the Battle off the Virginia Capes, Adm. François Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse. De Grasse's victory at the battle would prove to be a decisive factor in the American War of Independence. (U.S. Navy photograph of a 1880 engraving by H.B. Hall)

from New York prior to de Grasse and de Barras' arrival. On the word that de Grasse had anchored in the Chesapeake, Grave's fleet was immediately dispatched to Cornwallis' aid.

While he was in Philadelphia, Washington received a letter indicating that de Grasse's fleet was at anchor just off the coast of Cape Henry. This news produced indescribable joy in Washington, as for the first time, he would be able to fight a land battle with

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Tis the Season...

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

Here at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, we actively seek reasons to celebrate all year round. In cooperation with the Alliance Francaise organization, the museum sponsored a reception commemorating the Battle off the Virginia Capes on Sept. 14. The guest speaker, appropriately enough, was **Capt. Alain Delbury** from the French Military Mission to the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. More on that battle, and its influence in securing American independence, can be found in the cover story of this issue.

A ribbon-cutting on Sept. 21 celebrated the opening of "Submarine Force: Past, Present and Future." On-hand for the ceremonies were **Capt. Joseph G. Henry**, Chief of Staff, Submarine Force U.S. Atlantic Fleet and **Lt. Cdmr. Charles Church** from the Submarine On-Board Training Command. New audiences, numbering in the hundreds of thousands each year, will be enlightened about the submarine service.

On Oct. 6, a temporary show opened in the museum's main galley. Entitled "George Sirian: Portrait of Survivor," this show tells the life of a 19th century Naval

warrant officer. Mr. Sirian's 46-year career in the U.S. Navy began at the age of 10. He spent three tours aboard "Old Ironsides," the frigate *Constitution*. His records have been preserved and are fascinating to examine from their descriptions of Navy life in the 1800's. More than 15 records are on display, along with items from the museum's permanent collection. Also included is a portrait of Sirian as a young boy, done by the well known New York artist C.C. Ingham. An illustration of the portrait is on page 3. "George Sirian: Portrait of a Survivor" runs through Nov. 26.

This Fall, our lecture series focused on the Civil War. **Dr. Dean Allard**, former director of the Naval Historical Center, spoke on Sept. 13 to a large audience about the innovation in Civil War technology. Dr. Allard provided details concerning ship construction, ordnance, steam propulsion and mine warfare. The development of the *Monitor*-type ironclad and the Battle of



HRNM docent Gary Abrams, in a 18-century French sailor's uniform, converses with museum director Becky Poulliot at the Alliance Francaise reception. (Photo by Ruth Murdock)

Hampton Roads were of particular interest to the local audience. On Oct. 19, the museum hosted **William A. Young**, who has adopted the character of Confederate lieutenant. His performance was authentic, transporting the audience back in time to the Battle of Gettysburg and its aftermath.

Our next speaker will be **Vice Adm. George W. Emery** who will discuss the development of the submarine force, with a special emphasis on its importance in Hampton Roads. Mark your calendar for Nov. 14; it will be a special evening. Adm. Emery's presentation will take place in the Living Sea Theater, adjacent to the museum, second floor of Nauticus at 7:00 p.m.

To wish everyone a Merry Christmas, the museum will once again be holding a Christmas dinner. This year's festivities will occur on Dec. 14 at Nauticus at 6:30 p.m. All museum friends and supporters are invited, but you must RSVP to Senior Mac no later than Dec. 8 at 444-8971, ext. 113.

Happy holidays!

Becky

About *The Day Book*

The Day Book is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 200 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Day Book's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum. The newsletter takes its name from a 19th century Norfolk newspaper.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Day Book* can be reached at 444-8971, by fax at 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1000.

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Portrait of a Survivor

The Museum Proudly Displays Artifacts From a 19th century Naval Gunner

by Joe Judge

The museum will open a window to nineteenth-century naval life this fall with an exhibit on U.S. Navy Gunner George Sirian. The exhibit features documents from Sirian's life, beginning with his appointment as acting gunner on USS *Fairfield* in 1837 to correspondence regarding pay in 1879. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a portrait of Sirian at age 10, shortly after his arrival in America, by the New York artist C.C. Ingham. George Sirian was orphaned in 1824 at age six during the Greek War of Independence. His mother placed him in a small boat to escape a massacre on the island of Psara. From the boat he witnessed his mother's death. The child was taken from the water by a U.S. warship observing the event under orders from President Monroe. The young boy probably served for two to three years on Navy ships of the Mediterranean squadron.

The first official Navy record for George Sirian records his signing on USS *Constitution*, April 8, 1827. He came to the United States with the *Constitution* in 1828, arriving in Boston where his portrait was painted by Ingham. Lt. Robert Randolph, a naval officer on the *Constitution*, took the young man to the Randolph plantation on the James River in Virginia. The Randolph family sponsored Sirian's education in New England. Later, Sirian met Navy Gunner George Marshall, also a Greek immigrant. Marshall gave Sirian instruction in naval gunnery, and became his father-in-law in 1840, when Sirian married Eleanor Marshall. The young couple established a home in Portsmouth, Virginia and had six children, four of whom lived to adulthood.


George Sirian was appointed Acting Gunner in April 1837. He served on 20 different ships and seven shore



This is a painting of George Sirian when he was 10 years old. He signed on with the frigate USS Constitution, April 8, 1827 and would go on to serve over 40 years in the U.S. Navy. (1828 portrait by C.C. Ingham. Used with permission from the lender.)

stations during 37 successive tours in the Navy. He is the only man to serve on "Old Ironsides," three separate times, including the ship's around the world cruise in 1844-46. He also had several tours of duty at the Gosport Navy Yard (now Norfolk Naval Shipyard). The Civil War was a period of separation and fear for the Sirian family. He was a gunnery instructor at the Naval Academy during the war, when that institution was relocated temporarily to Newport, Rhode Island. His family remained in Portsmouth at that time, which was Confederate territory from 1861-1862. After the war Sirian returned to Portsmouth for several tours of duty. He departed in 1872 aboard USS *Yantic* for

Japan and Hong Kong.

After over two years on the "Asiatic Station," he returned home in 1878 and retired two years later. In his long career Sirian had served in every squadron of the Navy. Sirian retired in 1880 after one of the longest (if not the longest) active-duty careers in Navy history. He died in 1891. He witnessed the growth of the Navy from a small force in the age of sail to the beginnings of its rebirth with a modern ocean-going battle fleet. This exhibit was made possible by the generosity of a great-grandson of George Sirian, one of his many descendants living around the world. 

To Protect the Several Rivers in This Colony

The Virginia State Navy of the Revolutionary War

by Joe Mosier

Col. Patrick Henry took the first steps to create the Virginia State Navy in the late fall of 1775. During the American Revolution, the patriots lacked an adequate national navy and had to depend on the individual states to provide ships. Forces under the Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore, had been staging waterborne raids in the Hampton Roads area. In an attempt to stop these raids, Henry hired a small but fast pilot boat, *Patriot*, from its Hampton owners, Latimer and Nash. Commanded by Richard Barron, *Patriot* was armed with eight swivel guns.

Capt. James Barron (Richard's brother), a merchant ship master, fitted out a second pilot boat, the *Liberty*. The boats were manned by the Minute Company of Hampton which was composed largely of local seamen. James Barron first captured two trading vessels on Dec. 22, 1775.

Over the next two weeks, the Barron brothers took a total of ten vessels suspected of aiding the loyalists. This led to an official expression of gratitude from the Virginia Convention. Moreover, the Barrons' success created support for the formation of a navy as a separate service. On Jan. 11, 1776, the Convention passed an ordinance empowering its Committee of Safety to provide armed vessels for "the greater security of the inhabitants of this colony from depredations of the enemy by water."

By and large these depredations did not come from the actions of the larger British warships in the Chesapeake such as the 44-gun HMS *Roebuck* or 28-gun *Liverpool*. After the defeat at Great Bridge in mid-

December 1775, loyalists in the Norfolk-Portsmouth area moved aboard a collection of merchant ships and Royal Navy vessels lying off Norfolk. Following that city's destruction in January 1776, Lord Dunmore was forced to feed several hundred of his followers with provisions seized by the squadron's tenders and cutter which made continual foraging raids against plantations and settlements on the Chesapeake Bay. The smaller rebel schooners and pilot boats, while useless against warships, could offer a viable defense against these loyalist raids.

"For the protection of the several rivers in this colony," the Virginia Committee of Safety began to build and buy vessels. They planned waterborne defenses for the Potomac, Rappahannock, York and James Rivers as well as the Eastern Shore and Ocracoke Inlet in North Carolina. George Mason and John Dalton were named commissioners of the Potomac River Naval Department. From Alexandria, they worked to outfit three ships and two row galleys in cooperation with the Maryland Committee of Safety. In March 1776, Marylander John Boucher assumed command of this fleet with the title of commodore. His flagship was the *American Congress* which displaced 110-tons and carried 14-guns, making it one of the largest Virginia ships of

the Revolution.

On the Rappahannock, Col. Fielding Lewis oversaw the purchase of three armed vessels and the building of two row galleys. The merchant brig *Liberty*, one of at least three ships with that name, and two row galleys were purchased for the defense of the York River. In addition to the vessels,



This is James Barron the Elder, longtime commodore of the Virginia State Navy. He was father of two future U.S. Navy commodores, James Barron and Samuel Barron. (Photo of print used with permission from the Manuscripts and Rare Book Department, Swem Library, College of William and Mary)

commanded by various Barrons at Hampton, the James was to be protected by a brig, a schooner and two galleys. On the Eastern Shore, Northampton County authorities were authorized two small vessels for local defense. Virginia's southern boundaries were to be guarded by two row galleys constructed by Christopher Calvert at South Quay on the

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Blackwater River.

By the summer of 1776, the Committee of Safety came to realize the burdensome complexities of creating and maintaining the new navy. A five-member Navy Board was set up to "superintend and direct all matters and things to the navy relating." Chief among the new board's problems was developing an infrastructure to support the fleet. Shipyards were established at Frazer's Ferry on the Mattaponi River, at Fredricksburg on the Rappahannock and near present day Toano on the Chickahominy. Loyalist Andrew Sproule's yard at Gosport came into State hands after Dunmore departed Virginia in August 1776. The Board built a ropewalk at Warwick on the James, set up magazines and appointed naval agents for each of the state's rivers.

Their best efforts, however, could not overcome the chronic shortage of cannon and skilled seaman. At the time of the Revolution, America generally and Virginia specifically, lacked the industrial base required to produce arms in quantity. Authorities were forced to rely on captured stocks, foreign purchase, and later, direct French aid. Throughout the war, Virginia ships were under-gunned. The burning of Norfolk had the effect of driving out the colony's largest source of trained seamen. Moreover, many sailors living in Virginia were foreigners who felt no particular allegiance to the revolutionary cause. The majority chose to enlist with loyalist privateers.

One result of the lack trained seamen was the state's heavy reliance on row galleys which could be operated with a higher percentage of landmen in their crews. Another technique was to transfer crewmen from ship to ship to meet momentary needs to the detriment of sailors' morale. This action together with uncertain wages and rations, led to a desertion rate among seamen of 16%, more than double that of land forces.

After the departure of Lord Dunmore's force from Norfolk to Gwin's Island in Gloucester County in

May 1776, and then to New York in August 1776, naval operations entered a lull that lasted nearly three years. Newly appointed Navy Commissioner James Maxwell continued construction and arming of Virginia vessels. Their employment, however, was limited to anti-loyalist operations, rather than in engaging the Royal Navy. Thomas Jefferson expressed his frustration on this issue to the president of the Continental Congress when he wrote,

"A British prize would be a more rare phenomenon here than a comet, because one has been seen, but the other never was."

**-Thomas Jefferson
writing about the status of
the Virginia Navy**

"a British prize would be a more rare phenomenon here than a comet, because one has been seen, but the other never was."

This quiet interval ended with a vengeance on May 8, 1779 with the arrival of a large British fleet under Commodore George Collier. Under orders to deny the resources of the Chesapeake Bay to Congress, Collier took or destroyed 137 vessels. The Gosport shipyard was demolished together with the 28-gun frigate *Virginia* being built by state authorities for the continental government. Although Collier quickly departed on May 24, the blow struck to the state had been grievous.

In the wake of Collier's raid, the Virginia State Navy underwent a complete reorganization. The Navy Board was dissolved. Its duties were taken over by a newly formed Board of War headed by James Innes. James Barron, the third Commodore of the Virginia Navy (after Boucher and his

successor on the Potomac, Walter Brooke), also served on the five-member Board. The decision was made to change from many small vessels to fewer but larger ones more able to stand up to Royal Navy ships. The legislature voted to sell two large galleys and six smaller ones. Their guns and equipment were to be retained for use on the vessels remaining on active duty. Unfortunately, this decision came at the low point of Continental naval activity. No buyers could be found for any of the galleys. To attract the seamen needed for the planned larger vessels, bounties of land were offered to those who would enlist for the duration of the war. Another irritant was removed with the promise that vessels and their crews would remain on one station.

Throughout the rest of 1779 and 1780, the Board of War worked diligently to bring the navy into a state of readiness. Some successes were achieved. The pilot boats *Liberty* and *Patriot*, in concert with the brig *Jefferson*, captured a number of loyalist privateers. But on Oct. 20, 1780, disaster struck again in the form of a fleet of fifty-four British vessels under Commodore George Gayton. Hampton, Suffolk and Portsmouth were occupied, and those Virginia ships unable to flee were taken and destroyed. Again the occupation was short. The chagrin felt by the State's navy, however, was great.

It was compounded by the appearance on Dec. 30 of a 1600-man force under the command of Gen. Benedict Arnold. After seizing much of the Hampton Roads area, Arnold did what his predecessors had not. He continued up the James River to Richmond destroying the state cannon foundry at Westham. Arnold then returned to Portsmouth without attacking the Chickahominy shipyard. Governor Jefferson made a frantic effort to ready a naval force to oppose the British. Such state ships as could be immediately fitted out were joined by privateers and merchantmen impressed into state service. In April 1781, Arnold returned up the James to

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naval superiority on his side.

The two fleets met off the coast of Cape Henry. A French frigate and British frigate had spotted each other around 9:30 a.m. and signaled their respective main fleets to quickly join them. By 2 p.m., de Grasse's fleet had weighed anchor and had its battle line formed. When the British battle line first spotted the French battle line, Graves initially kept his fleet's course, but then ordered his fleet to "come about," followed by "line ahead." By "come about" and "line ahead," Graves had his fleet turn and sail a course similar to the French fleet. Soon after putting up the "line ahead" signal flag, Graves changed his mind and put up another flag signaling the fleet to "bear down and engage." That is, he ordered his ships to begin the attack on the French. At the sight of this signal, the lead squadron under Drake began the attack. The 74-gun HMS *Shrewsbury* and the 74-gun French ship *Plunton* engaged and fired the first shots of the battle. Graves' squadron also engaged the French fleet.

Hood, however, did not immediately respond to the signal. This hesitation by Hood was the critical moment of the battle. Without Hood's squadron, the British fleet was outgunned. Why Hood did not follow the signal is of great

debate. Hood would claim after the war that the signal to "bear down and engage" was contradictory to the "line ahead" signal. Graves replied after the war that standard naval doctrine dictated that the "bear down and engage" signal overrode all other signals. A possible explanation is that Hood allowed his personal feelings for Graves to get in the way. They were both the same rank, but Graves held a very slight edge in seniority, thus Graves got to be commanding officer of the fleet and not Hood.

For whatever reason, the British had to inflict a crushing defeat on the French fleet in order to be of any help to Lord Cornwallis and his army at Yorktown. Without Hood's squadron in the fight, this would be impossible. For three hours, the fleets exchanged broadsides and by 7 p.m., the two fleets disengaged with nightfall coming. The battle caused a good deal of damage and casualties. On the British side, the 74-gun *Terrible* was burnt out and later abandoned by its crew. The 70-gun *Princessa* and 74-gun *Shrewsbury* both suffered major damage to their sails and the 74-gun *Ajax* had its hull pierced several times. In contrast, the French only had two ships with significant damage, the 74-gun *Diademe* and the 64-gun *Caton*.

Graves decided that the damage was



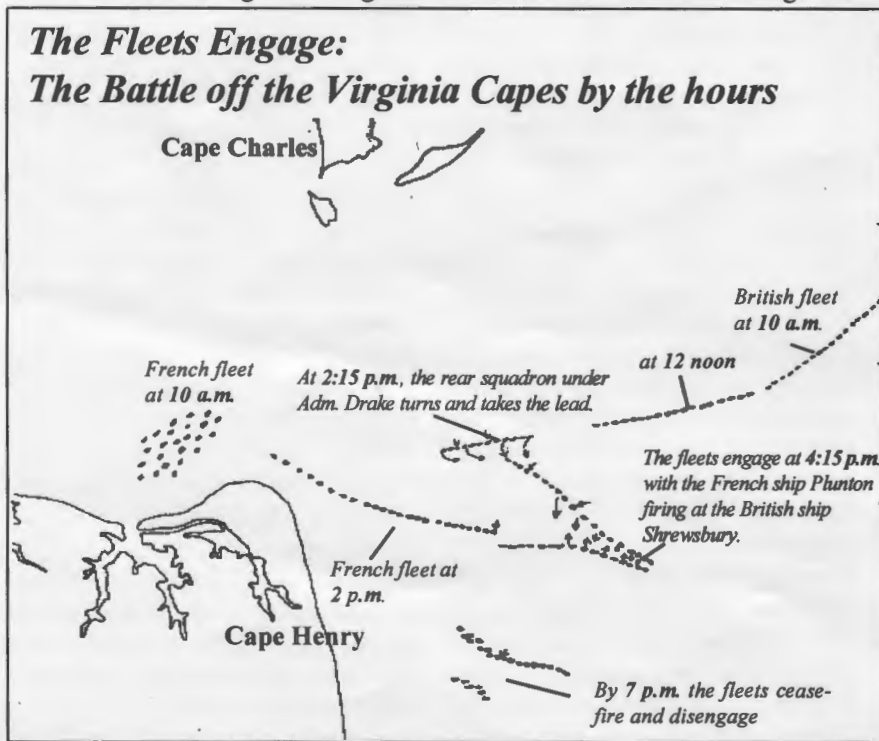
"The Right Honorable Thomas Lord Graves, Admiral of the White Fleet." Graves was the commanding officer of the British squadron. He was disliked by fellow admiral Samuel Hood and their personal conflicts cost them both the battle. (HRNM photograph of a 1801 engraving published by Bunney and Gold Co.)

too great and retreated to the British camp in New York for repairs. The British withdrawal established French naval superiority and control of the Chesapeake. "The outcome was, in fact, to be the turning point of the war, and it might be said, of the 18th century," notes historian Barbara Tuchman, "for it proved to be the enabling factor of the rebels' Yorktown campaign."

On Sept. 6, Washington headed on towards Baltimore, arriving there on Sept. 12. Meanwhile, de Barras had reached the Chesapeake on Sept. 9 to join de Grasse. Once Washington and Rochambeau arrived in the Hampton Roads area, they met with de Grasse on his 104-gun flagship *Ville de Paris* at the foot of Cape Henry. The meeting established the parameters of de Grasse's capabilities and willingness to aid both Washington and Rochambeau.

Washington feared that Cornwallis would try an escape and on the evening of Sept. 22, he did indeed make an attempt which proved unsuccessful. Using "fire ships", Cornwallis attempted to break the French blockade by burning the enemy ships. The attempt was unsuccessful as only one of the fire ships made contact with a French ship.

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Pictured here is a painting of the Battle off the Virginia Capes. The painting depicts the battle when the English squadron engaged the French squadron just as the English were bearing down. The ships shown in the painting, in order, are the French ships-of-the-line Pluton, Marseillais, Bourgogune and Réfléchi fighting with the English ships-of-the-line HMS Shrewsbury, Intrepid, Alcide and Princessa. The original painting can be seen in the museum gallery. (HRNM photograph of a 1968 V. Zveg oil painting)

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Fearing another potential encounter and under orders from the French king, de Grasse informed Washington that he was going to leave only two ships at the mouth of the Chesapeake and take the remainder of his fleet outside the mouth as to give him a better fighting position. Washington was horrified by this news as this would mean a loss of their hold on the Chesapeake, allowing Cornwallis a free passage of escape. The Marquis de Lafayette was sent immediately to de Grasse in an attempt to dissuade him from his course of action. On Sept. 25, de Grasse agreed to stay his ground and Washington readied his forces for deployment on Sept. 28.

Cornwallis was in frantic preparation to secure his perimeter. By Sept. 30, Washington had secured all routes of escape except the upper York River area which de Grasse would not agree to occupy. Cornwallis dared not try and escape by land at this time because he anticipated enemy reinforcements. He wrote to his superior, Gen. Henry Clinton, in New York that if help did not

come soon, that he feared the worst would happen.


After continuous attack by Washington's forces, Cornwallis again wrote to Clinton for help, stating that "nothing but a direct move to the York River which includes a successful naval action can save me." Cornwallis attempted to break out of the Franco-American encirclement by forcing his way across the York River on his own. His forces were repulsed and Cornwallis decided that he had enough.

At 10 a.m., Oct. 17, 1781, a messenger holding a white flag and a drummer were sent to ask for terms. Cornwallis' official surrender took place, Oct. 19, 1781.

Ironically though, following his success in helping Washington take Yorktown, de Grasse would suffer a major defeat no more than six months later at the hands of the Royal Navy. The following April, he was defeated and taken prisoner by Adm. George Rodney off the island of St. Kitts in the West Indies. Upon returning to France,

de Grasse was met with criticism on his naval command and published a defense of his actions called, *Memoire Justificatif*.

Despite his humiliating defeat at St. Kitts, to Americans, de Grasse was a national hero. His victory at the Battle off the Virginia Capes trapped a major British army at Yorktown. Once this army surrendered, the British government realized the futility of continuing the war in America.

The Society of the Cincinnati, an American order of military officers who had fought in the American Revolution, recognized de Grasse's achievement by awarding him a gold medal. Today, the U.S. Navy has recognized de Grasse's contribution to American independence by naming a *Spruance*-class destroyer the USS *Comte de Grasse* (DD-974). Adm. de Grasse died at the Chateau de Tilly, near Mantes, France, Jan. 11, 1788. 

The editor would like to thank HRNM docent Jack Robertson for his assistance with this article.



The Museum Sage

HRNM's Question & Answer Column

Editor's Note: Welcome to the premier of "The Museum Sage," the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's question & answer column. Here, we will attempt to answer any and all questions relating to the history of the U.S. Navy here in Hampton Roads, museum exhibits or anything else you can think of. If you have a question for a future column, write to the Editor of The Day Book c/o The Hampton Roads Naval Museum, 1 Waterside Drive, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607 or call (804) 444-8971. Understand that while the Museum Sage is smart, he can not answer questions like when the Chicago Cubs will win the World Series or when your next pay raise will come. So, with that said, let us get right to the questions.

Where did the name "Hampton Roads" come from?

This is one of the most hotly debated topics among the museum's volunteers and one of the most frequently asked questions by visitors. Since it is such a complex issue, the editor has asked museum docent **Preston Turpin** to write an article on the topic. It can be found on page 9 of this issue of *The Daybook*.

Why are U.S. Navy ships painted gray?

The color gray makes a ship more difficult to see at long range while out on patrol. Gray, however, is not the only color used. On occasion, the Navy will paint a ship white, to reflect the rays of the sun, if it is going to serve in the Persian Gulf for extended periods of time.

If you ever see a Canadian warship, you will notice that is painted a blue-green color to match the Arctic environment in which it patrols.

Between the 1880's and World War I, U.S. Navy ships had a "peace color" white and buff paint scheme and a "war color" slate gray scheme.

The editor made two mistakes in the last issue...

Yes, he did and now we will correct his mistakes. Museum docent **Gurley Ritter** notice that on page 7, the photo caption said that Jamie Swanson went to boot camp. Gurley pointed out that Army recruits do not go to boot camp,

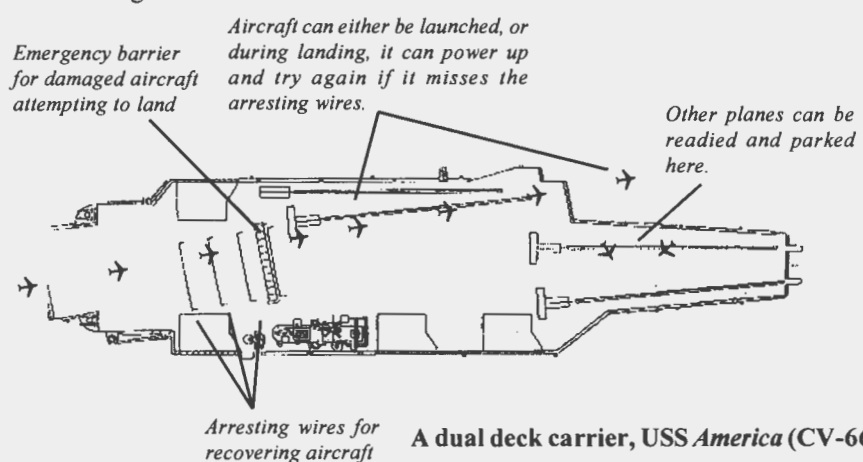
but to basic training.

The second mistake involved the article on USS *America*. It was written that *America's* bombers dropped the Than Hoa/Paul Doumer Bridge. The correct North Vietnamese name for the Paul Doumer bridge is the Long Bien bridge.

Why do carriers have angled flight decks?

The modern U.S. Navy aircraft carrier has an angled flight deck for two reasons: efficiency and safety. A carrier with an angled flight deck is more efficient because the carrier can then launch aircraft while being able to have other aircraft on deck ready for action. It is safer because if a plane misses its landing approach, it can always power up and try again with no danger of colliding with other aircraft on deck.

See the diagram below.



In the "Flying Squadron" exhibit, there is a bell from the gunboat USS Memphis (PG-7) with the year 1897 on it. Newport News Shipbuilding launched the Memphis in 1895. Why the different years?

For every ship, there are three dates assigned to it: when the keel was laid down, when the ship was finished and when it was commissioned. USS *Memphis* was laid down Aug. 9, 1894, launched Oct. 19, 1895 and finally commissioned Aug. 19, 1897.

What's coming up in the next issue of The Day Book?

Submarines will be the topic of the next issue of *The Day Book*. 🐟

The editor would like to thank HRNM docent **John Simanton** for his assistance with this article.

Would the Real Hampton Roads Please Step Forward?

by Preston Turpin

One of the most frequently asked questions by museum visitors is, "Where does the name Hampton Roads come from?"

Geographically speaking, "Hampton Roads" is the confluence of the James River, Nansemond River and Elizabeth River. It begins at Newport News Point on the north shore and Craney Island on the south shore. It ends where it joins the Chesapeake Bay at Old Point Comfort on the north shore and Willoughby Spit on the south shore.

The name Hampton Roads dates back to the days of the Jamestown colony. A group of investors put together a company known as the Virginia Company in the early part of the 1600's and operated under a charter from the King of England. One of the original, and most senior, investors was the Earl of Southampton, a gentleman by the name of Henry Wriothesley (pronounced Rizley). The company subsequently named this waterway after him. The term "road" is short for "roadstead" which is a safe harbor, hence the name "Hampton Roads." In the United States, an example of another body of water that uses the word "roads" is "Roosevelt Roads" in Puerto Rico.

The city of Hampton was established as a village in 1610 on the site of an earlier Indian village. By 1630, the Virginia Company designated it a trading post. In 1680, the Virginia Assembly upgraded it from a village to a town and designated it a port.


However, even though the city of Hampton and the Roads both were named after the Earl of Southampton, there is no legal connection between the two names. The town of Hampton then and the City of Hampton today



does not own the land underneath Hampton Roads, nor does it have any more rights to such land than Norfolk or Newport News. Under the original grant it would have been the property of the Crown. After the American Revolution, it would follow that such rights would devolve to the Commonwealth of Virginia and not any town bordering on the said roads.

Further Reading

Dabney, Virginius: Virginia: The New Dominion, Charlottesville, VA. University of Virginia Press, 1983.

The Hornbook of Virginia History, edited by Emily J. Salmon and Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr. Richmond, VA. The Library of Virginia, 1994. 

Volunteer News & Notes

by EMCS (SS) Brian "Mac"McMurtrie

A Special Thanks

The museum would like to thank the volunteers that were of assistance during two special events held in September. This includes **Joe Mosier** and **Preston Turpin**, who worked the SACLANT (Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic) event, and **Bob Tye** and **Bill Colona**, who worked the credit union event. They were great events and fun for all. Thanks to all docents for their help. A number of tours have been provided for various groups of visitors, always with good comments. We also received numerous positive comments from the great number of visitors that came to the museum.

Volunteer Interest

Oct. 3 marked the beginning of a new docent training class. It runs every Tuesday and Thursday until Nov. 30. A lot of interest was shown prior to the start of class, but attendance has been smaller than originally projected. The perspective docents are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. I welcome them to our program. For those of you

who prefer relating to groups, there are several slots open on the weekends.

Congratulations

The following docents have presently achieved, or soon will achieve, noteworthy volunteer hours. The following are recognized for volunteering a 100 hours: **Mark Sanderson**, **Luther Beck** and **Steve Belechak**.

For volunteering 200 hours, the museum recognizes **Miriam Burgess**, **Leon Chevally** and **Charlie Devine**. **Preston Turpin** (writer of the Hampton Roads article on page 9) volunteered a 100 hours this year and will soon reach the 250 hours mark.


The following are exceptional achievements: **Eleanor DiPeppe** and model builder **Bob Comet** have volunteered close to 200 hours for this year. **Eleanor DiPeppe** has volunteered 400 hours total as have **Gurley Ritter** and **Jud Hill**.

Ralph Preston has achieved the **500** hour mark as of Sept. 11, only the second docent to achieve this mark. The first to achieve 500 hours was

Hunt Lewis, who reached the 700 hour mark during the first week of October.

The editor of *The Daybook* would like to pass on his thanks to the volunteers who have contributed articles to the newsletter. They are **Joe Mosier**, **Shayne Whiting**, **Preston Turpin** and **Heather Burnett**. The editor would also like to thank **Jack Robertson** and **John Simanton** for their help in answering historical and technical questions. To those people who have been subjects of newsletter articles, special thanks to: **Jud Hill**, **Miriam Burgess**, **Harrell Forrest**, **Gurley Ritter**, **Henry Tarrall**, **Jack Robertson**, **John Simanton**, and **Charlie Devine**.

Christmas Docent Party

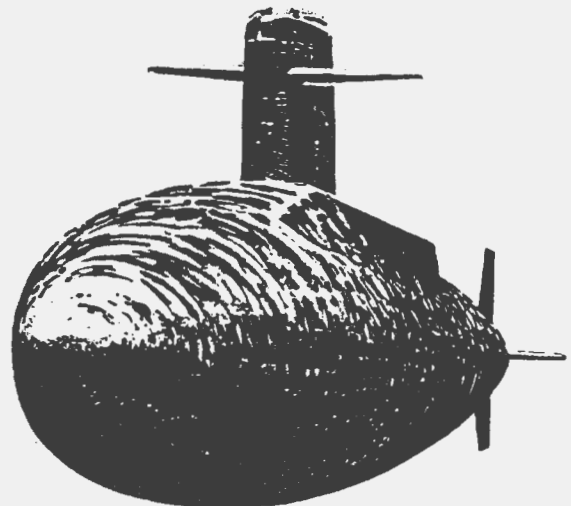
The annual Christmas docent party will be held **Dec. 14** at 6:30 p.m. As always, the party will feature great food, great fun and great speeches. Also, the museum will graduate the current docent class and give special recognition to some of our current docents. Look for more details in the mail. 

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum
lecture series presents:

"The Submarine Service in Hampton Roads"

Vice Adm. George Emery
Commander Submarine Force
U.S. Atlantic Fleet

Tuesday, November 14, 7 p.m.
Living Sea Theater



Calendar of Noteworthy Things

November

8, 1942 Operation Torch-After leaving Hampton Roads a few weeks earlier, Task Force 34 begins troop landings in Morocco. The landings mark the official opening of the long awaited "Second Front" in the European Theatre.

11, 1921 The Washington Naval Conference opens-The world naval powers open a conference aimed at limiting naval warship construction. The resulting Washington Naval Treaty has a profound impact on the Hampton Roads economy as all new battleship construction comes to a halt.

14 Vice Adm. George Emery will speak on the role of submarines. To be held in the Living Seas Theater at 7:00 p.m. See ad on preceding page for more details.

23 Thanksgiving Day-HRNM Closed.

25, 1961 The 85,000 ton carrier USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) is commissioned. It is the world's first nuclear power carrier.

November Birthdays

Harold Anten
Harry Clark
Joe Mosier
Thomas O'Connor
Pat Spear



December

2, 1799 Launching of USS Chesapeake-The 36-gun frigate *Chesapeake* is launched at the Gosport Shipyard in Norfolk. It is the fifth ship of the Navy's six original frigates.

13, 1864 The first Ft. Fisher expedition-Under the command of Gen. Ben Butler, a joint Army-Navy expedition leaves Hampton Roads in an attempt to take the Confederate fort at the entrance of the Cape Fear River. The assault is a catastrophic failure.

13 At 7:30 p.m., Living History Associates will present a "Christmas at Sea" vignette. To be held in the Living Seas Theater.

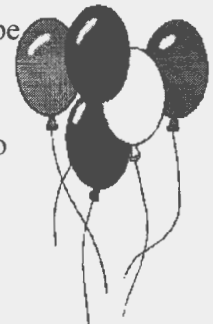
14 HRNM Christmas Party to take place at 6:30 p.m. Look for more details in the mail.

25 Christmas Day-HRNM Closed.



December Birthdays

Eleanor DiPeppe
Harrell Forrest
Richard Haney
Jenro Lambaiso
Hunt Lewis
John Maiorana
Larry Warren
Peter Zink



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remedy his earlier omission and eliminate the shipyard. Given advance warning by the *Lewis*, workers at Chickahominy burned the stores and ships they were unable to spirit away. Those vessels that could get underway proceeded upriver to Osborne's Wharf. The seven armed ships of this flotilla mounted 96 guns but had only 78 men present of their normal complement of 590.

Arnold arrived at the anchorage on the morning of April 27. Within a few hours much of the remaining strength of the Virginia Navy was burning or sunk. The only survivors were the *Nicholson*, carrying messages on the Bay, and the long-lived *Liberty*. Fortunately, Arnold

was recalled in June 1781 to lead an attack on New London, Connecticut. British forces in the Portsmouth area were ferried to Yorktown to join Cornwallis. It was during the siege there that the Virginia Navy completed its war service.

After Cornwallis' surrender, there still remained the possibility of continued hostilities. Leaders in the Assembly favored maintaining a navy but recognized the lack of money to do so. The navy was restarted, but only the old schooner *Liberty* and a newly built *Patriot* survived 1783. James Barron continued as commodore of what now amounted to a state revenue service until his death in 1787. On Aug. 1, 1789, the new United States government took over

the enforcement of trade laws, and the Virginia State Navy came to an end.

While that navy's history might seem ineffectual on its face, it did provide valuable services during the Revolution. In the best tradition of a "fleet in being" it received inordinate attention from the Royal Navy, tying up British ships that could have been better used elsewhere. It provided convoy support for Virginia merchant ships, cutting down losses to loyalist privateers. It successfully transported soldiers and cargoes throughout the Chesapeake region. It also acted as the schoolhouse for such eminent captains of the later United States Navy as Richard Dale, Samuel Barron and James Barron. 