



# The Day Book

Volume 3, Issue 2

January-February 1997

A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

## “I Was Never At Sea In So Uneasy a Ship”

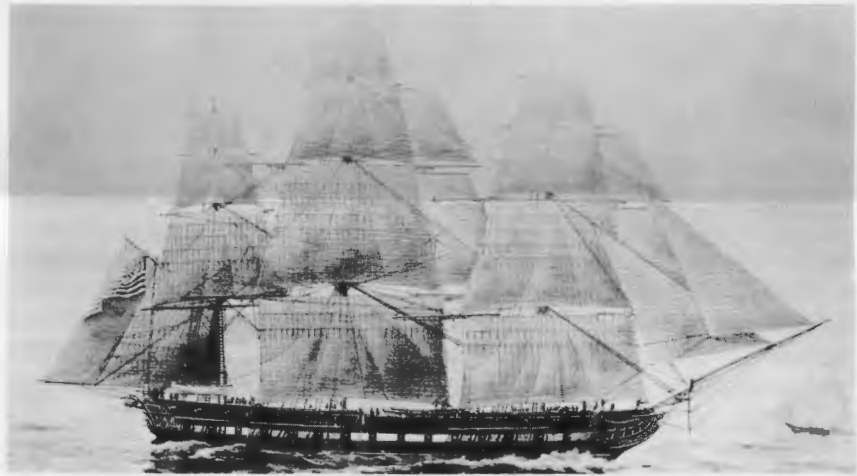
### The Trials, Misfortunes and Possible Curse of the United States Frigate *Chesapeake*

by Joe Mosier



The Norfolk-built frigate *Chesapeake* has been called by one leading historian an “odd duck.” From the refusal of the ship to go down the ways on the first attempt to launch her to her capture by HMS *Shannon* in the War of 1812, *Chesapeake* was one hard-luck ship. The calamities of the ship were paralleled by the misfortunes of her commanders.

The story of *Chesapeake* began when six frigates were authorized in 1794 for use against the Barbary regimes of North Africa. In a move to spread economic benefits, and hence political support throughout the new nation, the government decided each frigate should be built in a different locale. The Federal government leased the Virginia State Shipyard at Gosport for the purpose of constructing the *Chesapeake*. Portsmouth native Capt. Richard Dale was to superintend her



*Pictured here is the frigate USS Chesapeake during a rare period of peace and tranquillity. Completed in 1799 at the Gosport Shipyard in Portsmouth, VA, she would be captured by the British in 1813. The flag shown above the picture, “Free Trade and Sailors Rights,” flew over Chesapeake during her final battle. Six U.S. Navy captains, and one British, would lose their lives or have their naval careers come to an end because of the actions of this ship. Was she cursed? (Photo of painting provided by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum)*

building, and Norfolk merchant William Pennock was appointed as Navy Agent. By the fall of the following year, the new nation achieved peace with some of the Barbary states. With the rationale for their construction gone, Congress canceled three of the frigates including *Chesapeake*.

A new naval foe soon appeared. Revolutionary France began using the Jay Treaty signed between England and the U.S. in 1794 as an excuse to seize American merchant shipping.

President John Adams saw rapid expansion of the Navy as an absolute necessity. In August 1798, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert ordered Pennock to recommence building efforts on *Chesapeake*. Josiah Fox assumed the role of Naval Constructor at Gosport. On Dec. 10, 1798, the ship’s keel was laid. With a small work force (the number of carpenters never exceeded 20), Fox completed the ship in only 265 working days. *Chesapeake* immediately showed her contrary  
*Chesapeake continued on page 6*

#### Inside The Day Book

The Director’s Column.....	2
Preserving History.....	3
“With a Grateful Heart”.....	5
Museum Wins Awards!.....	9
Volunteer News & Notes.....	10
The Museum Sage.....	11

# A Change in Time

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

As we look forward to a number of new programs in 1997, it is imperative that the museum's focus remains on its mission: to educate the military and the public about the U.S. Navy in Hampton Roads. What could be more pertinent to that mission than the history of the world's largest naval base which happens to be here in Norfolk? On Nov. 20, 1996, architectural historian Kelly Nolte presented the lecture "A Change in Time" which discussed the changing footprint of the Base.

Her talk was warmly received by a sold-out crowd of 115 and included an in-depth look at the Base's architecture. Slides documented well known 1907 Jamestown Exposition buildings such as the familiar Admiral's Row homes and Gilbert Street's administrative buildings. More fascinating were the now forgotten buildings that once stood during the fair, such as the Negro Building, created by the first African-American architect to work for the federal government, and the Larkin pharmaceutical structure designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Turning to the Base's creation during World War I, Ms. Nolte explained the interplay between geography and land usage, emphasizing



Kelly Nolte, pictured here on the far right, gave an enlightening talk on the significance and importance of the Norfolk Naval Base's architecture on Nov. 20, 1996. (Photo by Becky Bump)

how needs dictate architectural styles.

The audience was challenged to reexamine the significance of fairly mundane structures such as the Base's pie buildings and to admire their architectural features, such as the use of natural light. All in attendance were imparted with a new appreciation of the utilitarian style of the Base's pre-1950's structures. For those of you who missed this excellent presentation, the museum has copies of an accompanying architectural brochure and Ms. Nolte's

slides and notes.

Be sure not to miss our Dunderfunk Society luncheons planned for 1997. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, "dunderfunk" refers to a dessert served aboard 18th century ships. Probably considered inedible to today's sailors, Age of Sail salts loved this biscuit and cream sauce concoction. Our museum society takes the name because every two months, naval history lovers get together to eat the best meals possible at Cracker's Cafe on 21st Street and then hear an informal presentation about an aspect of naval history.

On line for the upcoming year are topics pertaining to: Piracy and the Royal Navy in Hampton Roads during the Colonial Period, Norfolk's Moses Myers Connection with the Navy, Archaeology on the Naval Base, the Civil War's James River Squadron and the "Winds of War," how weather affects the Navy's mission and fighting capabilities. So please mark your calendars for the last Thursday, every other month, beginning January 30th. If you have suggestions for future speakers, please call me and I'll pass on the information to HRNM docent Joe Mosier who oversees the society.

*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 220 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open Mondays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Tuesdays through Sundays 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 (757) 322-2993, by fax at (757) 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~VAM/vamhome.html>. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1,200.

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# Don't Give Up the Artifact!

## Preserving Items of Historical Value

by Joe Judge

**L**ife is beautiful thing, but it comes to an end. Philosophers, poets and divines offer us consolation for this most unsolvable of all mysteries, with mixed results. The cold fact of life was summed up by one of the evil shape-changing aliens on the *X-Files* television show: everything dies. The good guy on the show, Special Agent Mulder, refused to accept despair and kept on the case against all odds. Agent Mulder would have made a good museum conservator.

While everything does decay eventually, we as keepers of our nation's history can make a difference with proper conservation procedures. And the best news is, you can try some of it at home. What follows are some comments on what conditions threaten objects and some suggestions for "preventive medicine."

All organic material is affected by its environment. This material includes paper, clothing and most of the items of family history that almost every household keeps in one form or another. For these historic materials, the primary environmental threats are temperature and humidity, and light.

### *Temperature and humidity.*

Temperature is the measure of the warmth or coldness of an object; humidity is a measure of the air's capacity to hold moisture. Historical artifacts are seriously affected by these factors. As temperature increases, chemical reactions speed. In the case of paper, for example, experiments have shown that each nine degree Fahrenheit increase nearly doubles the rate of deterioration, even if no other factors are involved. In simpler terms, the hotter the environment, the faster the decay.

The moisture that humidity



*Prints like these are the subjects in question for historic preservation. This particular print is an 1861 lithograph of the bombardment of Port Royal, S.C. To slow the onset of decay and other effects of the environment, prints like these must be matted with acid-free paper, framed and covered with ultraviolet filtered glass or plastic. (HRNM photo of an 1861 print)*

measures comes from many different sources. In southeastern Virginia, we are cursed (or blessed depending on your point of view) with moisture filled air arriving from the Gulf of Mexico. Books, wood, clothing and paper absorb this moisture, and as they do so they swell. When the moisture decreases, as it does when drier weather arrives, the objects contract. On a microscopic level they never return to the same shape, so that new surfaces are constantly being exposed to damage. Over time the object breaks down. It is important to note that the more the climate changes the worse it is for artifacts, which crave stability as much as we humans do. A museum curator will always opt for a less than optimum environment that is always stable over one that swings back and forth.

High temperature and humidity also serve the function of a huge flashing VACANCY sign to molds, insects and other unpleasant critters.

Clearly, some do like it hot, and good climate control is essential to good pest control.

What are the optimum environments and what are the best ways to obtain them? Good control of temperature and humidity are fundamental to their preservation. This need for control is the reason that museums spend so much time and effort on good heating and conditioning systems. In general, while some authorities disagree on the exact figures, it is universally accepted that a constant temperature of about 70 degrees and a relative humidity of 30-50% is necessary for proper storage of objects. In addition, stability is crucial, and the temperature should not vary more than two degrees Fahrenheit in a 24-hour period, while humidity should not vary more than five per cent for the same length of time.

Museums use monitoring devices  
*Preservation continued on page 4*

### *Preservation continued from page 3*

to measure temperature and humidity to ensure that they do not fluctuate to unacceptable levels. If too much fluctuation is discovered, steps are taken to control the environment. At home, it is generally not economically feasible to keep the temperature a steady 70 degrees year-round. However, it is possible to moderate climate changes with a little common sense.

First, turn away from those traditional storerooms of family history, the basement, the attic and the garage. Other family members often put up with the family historian as long as the Jamestown Exposition scrapbook is kept in attic. Of course, these out-of-the-way places all experience greater fluctuations in climate, since they are poorly insulated, if insulated at all. Priceless historical materials, at a minimum, should be stored in interior rooms where climate changes are minimized.

These materials also benefit from storage in a "micro-environment."

This is a fancy museum term for "climate-controlled box." Many vendors offer storage boxes free of the acidic material found in regular boxes, which is damaging to artifacts. These boxes can be made even safer by the use of silica gel, a chemical that removes moisture from the air. (It is silica gel that is placed in the small plastic bags that fall out on the floor when you purchase electronic equipment.) An acid-free box with a small amount of silica gel becomes a "micro-environment" that will resist changes in temperature and humidity.

A word of caution: the tried and true home remedy of preserving something by wrapping it very, very tightly in plastic is an invitation for moisture to build up inside that oh so carefully wrapped plastic. Artifacts, like humans, have to have some room to breathe.

### **Light**

Light is a form of energy that is still not completely understood. It can be examined in a spectrum, and

acts sometimes as a particle and other times as a wave. Whatever model we use to explain light, we should be aware of the damage that it causes. Ultraviolet light is the part of the light spectrum that is not visible, yet causes the most damage. It is the light that burns our skin at the beach in the summer, and also destroys artifacts. Ultraviolet light is present

into the twenty-first century.

At home, several options are available for controlling the light problem. Precious objects should not be placed in direct sunlight under any circumstances: leave those warm sunny places for your house plants. Works of art and family documents that are framed should always be framed with glass or acrylic that



*Three dimensional artifacts such as this model require close to perfect environmental conditions since they are made up of many different materials that must co-exist together. This particular model is of the frigate USS Chesapeake which contains a piece of wood from the original ship's timbers in the billet head of the vessel. (HRNM photo. Model gift of Edward W. Wolcott.)*

in sunlight, and is a serious problem in fluorescent light. Museums therefore avoid allowing direct sunlight to be present near any collections, and always prefer incandescent light to ultraviolet light. At one time, museums felt that controlling ultraviolet light was the end of the light problem. Now, it is clear that all light, in any form, is destructive due to its qualities as a mass of energy. A few years ago, a set of first ladies' gowns at the Smithsonian was displayed in such low light that visitors complained and wondered if the electric bill had been paid. The low light levels meant that Smithsonian curators were doing their jobs, ensuring that the fragile and delicate material would survive

filters ultraviolet light. Any reputable frame shop can provide this filtering glass, which costs more, but helps preserve artifacts. If the frame shop cannot provide or does not know about light-filtering material, then it is not reputable. Windows in the home can also be covered with film that filters ultraviolet light.

A few common sense steps to control climate and light will keep your family history healthy and happy. Members of your family yet unborn will look back and be thankful that records and works of art were protected. Proper care of our own history will allow future historians to say that "the truth is out there."<sup>14</sup>



# “With a Grateful Heart”

## Norfolk’s Gift to the Man who Defended James Barron-The Rodney Urn

by Bill Eley

Of the many naval officers who lost their careers over the frigate *Chesapeake*, Norfolk-native James Barron, jr. is one of the most famous. Barron is most well known for being court-martialed for failing to have *Chesapeake* ready for action against the British warship *Leopard*. Suspended from service, Barron left the United States in an attempt to put his misery behind him. He returned from his self-imposed exile only to engage in a duel with Capt. Stephen Decatur, in which Decatur was killed, and to face more legal problems with the Navy. Financially broke and with seemingly few friends, Barron’s life was in shambles. One man, Caesar A. Rodney, rallied to Barron’s defense and helped the Norfolk captain in his darkest hour.

Rodney was one of the country’s sharpest legal minds and had much legal experience at the highest levels. His experience included serving as one of America’s first “special prosecutors” when a Supreme Court justice was brought up on treason charges. He also served as President Thomas Jefferson’s Attorney General until 1811. When Rodney agreed to defend Barron, he had his worked cut out for him. Among civilian politicians and the elite circle of U.S. Navy captains, James Barron was looked down upon and loathed.

The 1807 *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair was the most damaging event to Barron’s career. The affair was considered to be one of the greatest humiliations the U.S. Navy had ever faced. A Court of Inquiry, assembled on board *Chesapeake* from late 1807 to early 1808, had four charges against Barron including cowardice in the face of enemy fire. The subsequent court martial found Barron guilty only on the charge of “neglecting to clear his ship for action.” For his official punishment, the Navy suspended him from service for five years. Unofficially,

however, he would be forever looked down upon by his fellow officers.

Barron headed for Denmark where he was a merchant ship captain. He returned to the United States in 1818 hoping to be reinstated as a Navy captain. He was not well received.

When he returned home, he found himself being accused of blaming President Jefferson for setting up the *Chesapeake* affair to start a war, sailing under a British shipping license while in exile and showing a lack of patriotism during the War of 1812 by not immediately returning to America when the war first broke out.

Stephen Decatur was one of many Navy captains who held the belief that Barron should never be reinstated back into the Navy. After an exchange of letters between Decatur and Barron, in which Barron tried to make his case to Decatur, the famous duel took place in Bladensburg, MD. Barron was wounded in the duel, Decatur was killed. On top of Barron’s other troubles, he now was known as the man who killed the most beloved Naval hero in America.

Barron’s attempt to be reinstated landed him in a second Court of Inquiry. This one took place in New York City in 1821. Desperately needing legal counsel, Rodney answered Barron’s plea for assistance and offered his services free of charge. Rodney gathered written testimony from some of the most famous people of the early 19th century, including Henry Clay, Andrew Jackson and John



The Rodney Commemorative Urn. Norfolk silversmith John Porter designed and manufactured Rodney’s gift on behalf of the grateful citizens of Norfolk. (Photo provided by the Chrysler Museum of Art)

Quincy Adams, to speak to Barron’s good character and his devout patriotism to the United States. Rodney’s defense was a success. The Court cleared Barron of all charges against him, although it reprimanded him for not returning to the United States sooner than he did. Rodney had tried to make the case that Barron was too poor to return home, which the Court believed was not a sufficient excuse. A reprimand, however, did not carry any punishment and the Navy granted Barron’s request to be allowed back into the service. Barron was promised an assignment, which he did not get for another four years.

The citizens of Norfolk and Portsmouth could not have been happier to see their friend Barron cleared. They made a silver urn for Rodney with a Latin inscription which read “To Caesar A. Rodney, jurist outstanding  
*Rodney continued on page 10*



Pictured here are four of the six American captains who lost their careers or lives because of Chesapeake (left to right with cause of removal in parentheses): James Lawrence (shot), Samuel Evans (went partially blind), James Barron, jr. (suspended from service) and Stephen Decatur, jr. (shot). Not shown are Samuel Barron (died of an illness contracted in the Mediterranean) and Richard V. Morris (dismissed from service). (All U.S. Navy photos of pictures by Loosing, Neagle and Stuart)

### Chesapeake continued from page 1

nature. The Dec. 3, 1799 issue of the *Norfolk Herald* reported, "Yesterday, at half past one o'clock, in the presence of a great concourse of people was safely launched into her element the United States frigate *Chesapeake*, of 44 guns, commanded by Samuel Barron, Esquire. Every preparation was made for launching this Ship the preceding day, but the tallow on her ways being frozen and the weather extremely cold...the blocks being removed from under her, she started and went only a few feet but slowly." Tradition has it, as reported in an 1896 article in the *Virginian-Pilot*, that this unfortunate beginning was even more ominous due to the death of a workman during launch.

In February 1800 the newly built 36-gun frigate *Congress*, having lost her masts on her maiden cruise, limped into Hampton Roads. Stoddert ordered Fox to stop his work on fitting out *Chesapeake* and transfer his workmen to the job of repairing *Congress*.

Capt. Thomas Truxtun, senior officer present at Norfolk, had a better idea. Never shy about assuming authority, Truxtun, acting on his own, restored priority to the work on *Chesapeake* and transferred about half of *Congress*' crew to Barron's ship. He justified his actions to the Secretary by pointing out that *Chesapeake* could be put to sea by May. Stoddert was grateful to any ship available that soon. Complaints were flowing in of French privateers along the Carolina-Georgia coast.

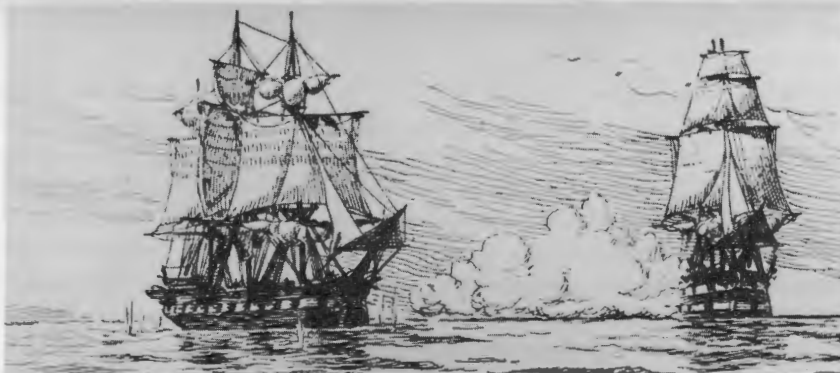
Once underway, Barron's orders were to take *Chesapeake* and patrol

south to the mouth of the St. Mary's River in Georgia (then the southern extremity of the United States). That completed, Barron was to cruise Puerto Rico returning to Norfolk no later than December when the ex-*Congress* seamen's enlistments would expire. *Chesapeake* left Hampton Roads on her first wartime cruise on May 24, 1800.

In the course of the cruise, Barron called at the English possession of St. Kitts, which was the American replenishment base in the West Indies.

worst offenders ashore in St. Thomas after they were flogged.

By January 1801 word of a treaty ending hostilities reached the West Indies and in early March, *Chesapeake* arrived back in Hampton Roads. Although her convoy and patrol duties were valuable, the ship captured only one prize during her wartime service. The Peace Establishment Act of March 3, 1801 retained *Chesapeake* in the Navy, but as a cost-cutting measure she was placed in ordinary at Gosport.



The frigate HMS Leopard fires a surprise salvo at USS Chesapeake during the most infamous event of Chesapeake's career. While the British apologized for the 1807 incident, it was not soon forgotten by the American public or by the U.S. Navy. (U.S. Navy photo)

Once in the Caribbean, Barron fell under the control of Capt. Truxtun who promptly countermanded the Navy Secretary's orders for a December return. On Oct. 23, Truxtun wrote Barron that since the enlistments of most of his men would not expire until June "it would be highly improper for you to leave this station." The response of the crew members whose enlistments were about to expire was predictable. Truxtun responded to the ensuing rebellion by ordering Barron to put the

Within two months, the Barbary state of Tripoli had declared war on the United States (see Vol. 2, Issue 6 of *The Day Book* for more information on Hampton Roads and the Barbary Pirates.) By early 1802, the ship was being prepared for service in the Mediterranean. On April 27, *Chesapeake* departed Hampton Roads as the flagship of Commodore Richard V. Morris, commander of the second expedition against the Barbary Pirates. The care

*Chesapeake continued on page 7*

*Chesapeake continued from page 6*

the frigate received while in ordinary had been bad. Four days out of Hampton Roads, the mainmast sprung and Morris was forced to complete the Atlantic crossing under jury rig. On arriving at Gibraltar, Morris wrote Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, "It certainly was a Shameful neglect in the Carpenter employed at Norfolk, not to have discovered the defect in that mast...The Ballast of the Ship is most injudiciously stowed also, my motives for supposing that to be the case is from

In early 1807, Capt. James Barron was appointed to command the Mediterranean squadron. *Chesapeake* was taken out of mothball status and moved down to Hampton Roads to finish fitting out as his flagship. Barron did little to oversee the preparations for the voyage, joining the frigate only the day before she was to sail. As *Chesapeake* passed through the Virginia Capes on June 22, she was hailed by HMS *Leopard*, a 50-gun frigate from the British squadron



*The young captain of HMS Shannon, Philip Bowes Vere Broke, was a promising commanding officer in the Royal Navy and was given the title of barron for his capture of Chesapeake. Unfortunately, even he could not escape the curse of the American frigate as he was shot and slashed across the head by a cutlass during the battle. He then suffered a nervous breakdown from which he never recovered. (U.S. Navy photo of an 1815 engraving by Blood)*



*Seamen and marines from the 38-gun frigate HMS Shannon storm and capture Chesapeake off the coast of Boston in June, 1813. During the melee, Capt. James Lawrence was shot and mortally wounded. (HRNM photo of an early 19th century engraving by Joseph Jeakes)*

her laboring. I never was at Sea in so uneasy a Ship."

Injudicious is an excellent description of Morris' performance as commodore. He seldom went to sea and even more rarely communicated with the Navy Secretary. Most of the next ten months was spent at Gibraltar, Leghorn or Malta. *Chesapeake* showed itself before Tripoli for only five days throughout this period. The rest of the time, Morris spent looking after his pregnant wife.

On April 6, 1803, the frigate, carrying men from other ships whose enlistments had expired, left Gibraltar for the United States. Capt. James Barron, Samuel's younger brother, was given command of the ship while Morris shifted his flag to the frigate *New York*. On arrival at the Washington Navy Yard on June 1, *Chesapeake* again went into ordinary.

anchored in Lynnhaven Bay. *Leopard's* captain demanded the return of three supposed British deserters believed now to be serving onboard the American ship. Barron refused to muster his men for identification and tried to stall for time as his crew was called to quarters. *Chesapeake's* manifest unreadiness for action became obvious. *Leopard* fired three broadsides into the American ship with no effectual reply. A British officer then boarded and took off four of *Chesapeake's* crew. Barron returned to Norfolk with three dead and 18 wounded including himself. In the national uproar that followed, a court martial found Barron guilty of failing to clear his ship for action and suspended him from all naval command for five years.

Command of the wounded *Chesapeake* passed to Capt. Stephen

Decatur, jr. Under Decatur's supervision, the damage to hull and rigging was quickly repaired. The damage to national prestige was not so easily fixed. On Dec. 22, 1807 Congress, at President Thomas Jefferson's suggestion, passed a retaliatory Embargo Act which prohibited any American merchant vessels from sailing to foreign ports. As violations of this ill-considered legislation grew, Jefferson authorized the use of U.S. Navy ships to enforce the embargo restrictions. In early June, Navy Secretary Robert Smith ordered Decatur to take *Chesapeake* on an enforcement patrol along Long Island Sound and the New England coast. The frigate cruised in that area from mid-July to early November with limited success before returning to Norfolk. On Feb. 11, 1809 Decatur turned over command of *Chesapeake* to Capt. Isaac Hull, who immediately took the ship to Boston to continue enforcement patrols. The embargo was repealed on March 4 and Hull was ordered to place the ship in ordinary at the Boston Navy Yard.

Given the parsimonious approach to naval expenditures taken by President James Madison's administration, it was not surprising that the outbreak of war *Chesapeake continue on page 8*



### Chesapeake continued from page 7

with England in June of 1812 found *Chesapeake* in a terrible material state. The commandant of the Boston Navy Yard felt she could be ready to cruise by October. It was not until Dec. 17 that her new commander, Capt. Samuel Evans, whose previous command was the Gosport Shipyard, was able to get under way. His orders were to patrol the Atlantic between the Cape Verde Islands and Brazil for British merchant ships.

The patrol proved largely uneventful. Evans seized three prizes (one of which



Probably *Chesapeake's* most useful function was as a grain mill. Here HRNM docent Gurley Ritter stands in front of the *Chesapeake* Mill with the current owners in Wickham, England. The British broke the ship up in 1820 where the wood was sold and used to build the mill. (Photo by Betty Ritter)

was deemed sufficiently unimportant to be burned on the spot) and sighted what may have been two British men-of-war (promptly lost in a rain storm.) *Chesapeake* returned to Boston on April 9, 1813. On May 20, Evans was relieved for health reasons by Capt. James Lawrence.

Lawrence, thirty-two and newly promoted to captain as a result of his victory over the sloop *HMS Peacock* while in command of the sloop *Hornet*, did not want the job. His wife was ill, and he pleaded to be given the 44-gun frigate *Constitution* instead, which

would have given him a few more months at home. Secretary Smith was firm, however, and ordered Lawrence to sea as soon as he was ready. Off-shore waited the 38-gun frigate, *HMS Shannon*, commanded by Capt. Philip Bowes Vere Broke. On June 1, 1813, Broke

sent a boat with a challenge to Capt. Lawrence. Broke threw down the gauntlet by ending his letter with the statement, "Choose your terms, but let us meet."

Even before the boat carrying the challenge made it ashore, lookouts announced what Broke had hoped to hear: *Chesapeake* was coming out of Presidents' Roads. The ensuing battle was short, furious and unequal from the start. Broke had commanded *Shannon* for more than six years and had the best trained crew in the Royal Navy. Lawrence, on the other hand, had only just taken over *Chesapeake*, and his men had refused to fight unless paid overdue prize money. The ensuing battle was short and furious. Less than half an hour after the opening gun, 146 men lay dead or wounded in *Chesapeake* and 85 in *Shannon*. Lawrence, mortally wounded, had uttered the famous phrase, "Don't give up the ship!" Broke survived, although he was severely wounded by a cutlass stroke that had opened his skull to the brain.

The British took their coveted prize to Halifax, Nova Scotia and, after repairs, on to England. She served in the Royal Navy until placed in ordinary in 1816. In 1820, a cooper, Mr. Holmes, bought the ship for £500. He in turn sold *Chesapeake's* timbers as building material for houses in Portsmouth, England. Her larger frames were used in the construction of *Chesapeake* Mill in nearby Wickham.

Lawrence's death was not a unique event. Of the officers who commanded *Chesapeake*, all but Isaac Hull met a precipitous end to their lives or careers. Samuel Barron became ill while serving as commodore of the Med squadron in 1804. Forced to turn over command to

John Rodgers, he returned to Hampton where he died in 1810 at the age of 45. Richard V. Morris' injudicious conduct

### **"Don't give up the ship. The Colors shall wave while I live."**

**-Capt. James Lawrence's final order to the crew of *Chesapeake* after he was mortally wounded, June, 1813.**

in command in the Med led to his recall and court-martial. He was dismissed from the service by President Jefferson on May 16, 1804. Samuel Evans had suffered a wound to the face during the Barbary Wars, which left him partially blind in his left eye. While in command of *Chesapeake* during the War of 1812, he began losing the sight of his right eye. After turning over the frigate to Lawrence, Evans was given command of the New York Navy Yard but never served at sea again. The court-martial and suspension of James Barron affected both his and Decatur's careers.

Barron was in Europe at the time of the outbreak of the War of 1812. His failure to return to the United States during that conflict put him in even lower esteem among his former comrades. The focus of Barron's resentment was Decatur who had sat on his court-martial and then superseded him in command of *Chesapeake*. The two fought a duel at Blandensburg, Maryland on March 22, 1820. Decatur was killed and Barron seriously wounded. Instead of restoring Barron's honor, the duel further estranged him from the senior officers of the Navy. He would never again command at sea, and was given command ashore only at the demand of influential Virginia politicians. (See page 5 for more on Barron's troubles.)

Only one other regular Navy ship was named *Chesapeake*: a Naval Academy training ship launched on June 30, 1899. In 1905, her commander, Capt. Schroeder, aware of the ignominious reputation of the namesake petitioned the Secretary of the Navy to have the ship's name changed. On June 15, she was renamed *Severn*. No warship since has been christened *Chesapeake*. #b



# HRNM Wins Awards in Design Competition

*Editor's note: The following is a reprint of an article which appeared in the Nov. 28, 1996 issue of The Flagship, the official Norfolk Naval Base newspaper. The editor would like to thank the editor for allowing us to reprint it.*

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum has captured a gold design award for the museum's brochure in a regional competition.

The award was part of a juried competition for the Southeastern Museums Conference, a group of 463 museums located from Virginia to


provided by **Marta Nelson**, museum exhibit designer.

The brochure is a basic information tool, designed to give the public basic information about the museum such as the subject of exhibits, location and telephone number.

"We at the museum are thrilled to win such a significant award," said Museum Director **Elizabeth Poulliot**. "Our staff had significant input to make this work and Eaves Design did a great job."

The museum also won a second silver award for their Calendar of Events brochure designed in-house by Nelson.

Judges for the competition came from Columbus State University, Challenger Space Center and the Metro Columbus Urban League. SEMC has been in existence for 45 years, helping southeastern museums with education and training. The group is one of the regional organizations for the American Association of Museums.

All of the publication winners will be featured in an article in the December issue of *Inside SEMC*, the museum's group newsletter. 

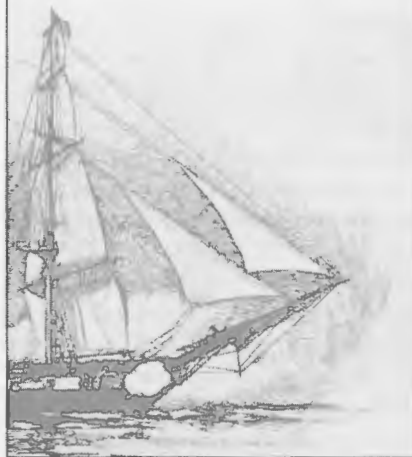


*Pictured above is the front of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's award winning brochure. This design won a gold award in the brochure category in the Southeastern Museum Conference's design competition. (Brochure designed by Deb Eaves of Eaves Design and Illustration)*

## Hampton Roads Naval Museum

### Calendar of Events

June - December 1996



*The Hampton Roads Naval Museum's award winning "Calendar of Events" brochure. (Brochure designed by Marta Nelson)*

Florida.

The museum brochure was designed by Eaves Design and Illustration, under contract to the museum.

The images on the brochure were selected by **Joe Judge**, museum curator, and design assistance was

# WANTED

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is seeking information regarding animals, pets or mascots that played a role in the Navy's history. If you have any information or photos pertaining to animals in the Navy, please contact Gordon Calhoun at (757) 322-2993.



# Volunteer News & Notes

by Jamie Swanson

**W**ell, here I go, again. By the time you read this I'll either be in Houston, TX or Somewhere-else, VA embarking on a new career.

My stay was brief but eventful. Unable to survive in the cauldron of confusion that was the Education office, I immediately reorganized. I moved the clutter lying about the office into the unused space in the cabinets after installing shelves.

With a freshly painted, reorganized office, I set about trying to correct some of the problems which had evolved over the past few months so the next Volunteer Coordinator could easily slip into the position without extra worries. I updated each individual volunteer file, verified awards, sorted through active, inactive and potential volunteer files, updated addresses and birthday lists, sifted through all the incoming and outgoing correspondence from the last 3 years, created new schedules and had an "experience" when I tackled the extensive problem of updating the volunteer hours. Fortunately, some helpful volunteers had already attempted to sort through the "hours" and therefore saved me at least another

*Rodney continued from page 5*

as much in capacity as in knowledge, when he had seen his fellow citizen, James Barron, distinguished commander in the American Navy, threatened with a cruel fate, could not endure the sight of an occurrence so unworthy...rushed to his aid, protected him and wrested him from danger. This token of regard the citizenry of Norfolk gives and dedicates with a grateful heart."

The urn is now located at the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk and is a bright

week's worth of research.

Then, it was time to Party! The Annual Holiday Party is always a blast! I enjoy celebrating the festive season with the volunteers, staff, board members and their guests. Most of all, I feel like a proud parent when the volunteers receive their award certificates. In case you missed it, here is a list of the recipients:

#### 100 Hour Certificate

David Dashiell  
Paul Bohn  
Bill Eley  
Gene Hanlin

#### 500 Hour Certificate

Bob Comet  
Eleanor DiPeppe  
Tom Duggan  
Harrell Forrest  
Jud Hill  
Preston Turpin  
Al Petrich

#### 1000 Hour Certificate

Hunt Lewis

## Congratulations!

I would like to mention the roses **Eleanor DiPeppe** received as an apology for the oversight on our part because she should have already received her 500 hour award.

Special thanks to all the members of

symbol of hope in the otherwise sad, tragic story of Capt. Barron. The urn is known as the Rodney Commemorative Urn and has been on display at the Chrysler since 1954. Made by local silversmith John Porter in 1821, the people of Norfolk presented it to Barron's close friend and legal counsel, Caesar Rodney, for coming to Barron's aid. It was with "a grateful heart" that the people of Norfolk gave Rodney the urn for clearing Barron's name and repairing his

the Speakers' Bureau who have received rave reviews. Kudos were awarded, via the museum's World Wide Web page, to **Gordon Calhoun, Jud Hill, Hunt Lewis, Al Petrich and Ralph Preston** by Major **Eric Rishel, USMC** for the special presentation they provided to his group of Marines. **Lt. Gen. Van Riper, USMC** himself wrote a special letter of thanks.

Due to a budget crunch, things are not looking great for a replacement volunteer coordinator or public relations person. Please contact Becky at 322-2990, if you are interested in helping us out.


As for some upcoming events, the ship's company of CSS *Virginia* and a contingent from the Confederate States Marine Corps will be set up in the Civil War Gallery on **Jan. 11 and Feb. 1, 1997**. We also hope to have another volunteer class in the late Winter/early Spring. So, let us know if you are aware of someone who may be interested or either in attending or assisting with the training.

### Happy Birthday to...

#### January


Kathy Sheta  
Ken Clineman  
Betty Jackson  
Preston Turpin

#### February

Gurley Ritter  
Mark Sanderson  
Charlie Devine  
Matt Lee 



wrecked reputation.

Rodney died three years later in Argentina while serving as the first ambassador to the new country. The urn was placed in Independence Hall in Philadelphia where it remained until 1946. In 1950, the museum now known as the Chrysler Museum arranged to have it returned. 

*The editor would like to thank the Chrysler Museum of Art for its cooperation and assistance with this article.*



### Sage Stumper IV Answer: The Lost Ships of the Battle of Hampton Roads

We have several winners! Jean and Gaylord Lockett of Seaford, Virginia along with museum docents Ed Cox, Preston Turpin and Hunt Lewis correctly gave the Sage the correct answers to the current sage stumper.

The question had two parts. First, name the five large wooden ships which fought on the Union side during the Battle of Hampton Roads. Second, name the five Confederate ships that came out with the ironclad CSS *Virginia*.

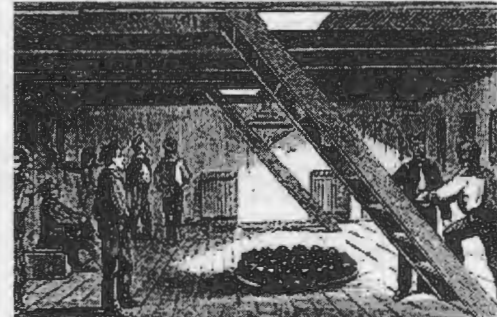
The answer is as follows: On the Union side were two 48-gun steam frigates, USS *Minnesota* and USS *Roanoke*, two sail frigates, USS *Congress* and USS *St. Lawrence*, and a sloop-of-war, USS *Cumberland*. The fate of *Minnesota*, *Cumberland* and *Congress* is well known as the latter two were destroyed by *Virginia*, and *Minnesota* ran aground. *Roanoke* and *St. Lawrence* are never mentioned in the story of the battle as they also ran aground while their tugs were trying to move them closer to the battle. Incidentally, *Roanoke* would eventually be cut down and converted into the world's first triple turreted monitor-type ironclad a year after the battle.

On the Confederate side was the 12-gun paddle wheel steamer CSS *Patrick Henry*, the one-gun tugs/tenders CSS *Teaser* and *Raleigh* and the six gun steamer CSS *Jamestown*. The first four ships were scuttled on April 4, 1865 when Confederate forces abandoned Richmond. *Jamestown* was sunk in the James River next to Drewery's Bluff, to serve as a block ship on May 15, 1862.

# The Museum Sage

## USS Monitor: Tin Can on a Shingle or Luxury Cruise Ship?

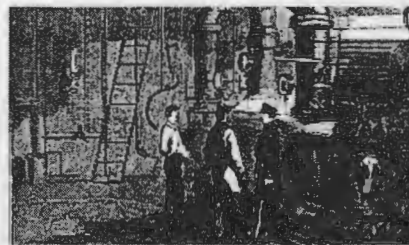
The quote "a picture tells a thousand words" is a very familiar and popular saying. But, while a picture may tell a thousand words, it also can tell a thousand lies. Below are selected engravings drawn by "special artist" Theodore Hayes of the interior of the ironclad USS *Monitor*. They appeared in the April 12, 1862 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. As with many Civil War engravings, they greatly romanticize warfare and the conditions that soldiers and sailors served under.



The Wide Spaces of the Berth Deck. Shuffle Board Anyone?



The Captain Shows Off His Luxury Suite



The Nice Clean Engine Room



Gaming Parlor or Ward Room?

## Sage Stumper V: The Lost Ships of the Gosport Shipyard

As a follow on to the last stumper, the Sage now turns your attention to the infamous event of the burning of the Gosport Shipyard in 1861. The main reason this event is so closely studied is that the Confederates were able to grab over 1,100 guns and the hull and machinery of the steam frigate USS *Merrimack*, thereby giving the local Confederate forces the resources to put up a credible defense.

The question is this: Besides *Merrimack*, what other ships were

scuttled? In addition to that question, out of the ships they captured, name the other major vessel that the Confederates commissioned besides *Merrimack*. To get you off on the right foot, remember *Cumberland*, *Pawnee* and *Yankee* were saved. If you know the answer or for details, call the Sage at (757) 322-2993. As always, the winner will receive a beautiful coffee mug with the compliments of the museum director and the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation.

-G.C.