THE
DAYBOOK®

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2

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Cover Illustration: Hampton Roads is celebrated for being the birthplace of Naval aviation. But, one-time demonstrations do not make an institution. When the Navy purchased the land at Sewells Point in 1917 and started Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads, it also established an aviation base. Its first commanding officer was P.N.L. Bellinger, a man who was well versed in all aspects of Naval warfare. Not only did he effectively manage the air station during his tenure, but he also established Naval aviation as a serious branch of service while during his tenure.

HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL MUSEUM
Local History. World Events.

About The Daybook® *and the Museum*

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The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command, Museums Division. The museum is dedicated to the study of 235 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. HRNM was accredited by the American Association of Museums in 2008.

The Daybook's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by staff and volunteers.

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NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

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Modern Piracy

The Director's Column
by Becky Poulliot

On October 13, Admiral J.C. Harvey, Jr., the Commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, celebrated the Navy's 234th birthday onboard USS *Wisconsin* (BB-64). Admiral Harvey reminded the audience that the Navy works for American security every day, all over the world, from the remotest waterways to Iraq and Afghanistan. The museum is currently highlighting one of the Navy's most dangerous jobs: deterring piracy, especially in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of eastern Africa. Recently, we joined with Nauticus to produce an exhibit about modern piracy.

This topical display is an adjunct to a National Geographic exhibit, called *Real Pirates*, that focuses on pirates of old – to be specific, the pirate ship *Whydah* that sank off the coast of Cape Cod nearly 300 years ago. The staff of Nauticus approached HRNM with the hope that the Navy's twenty-first century efforts could be featured as well.

Discussions about the exhibit focused on the spectacular rescue of merchant captain Richard Phillips, whose ship the *Maersk Alabama* was subject to a highjacking attempt by Somali pirates. The drama unfolded in one of the merchant ship's lifeboats. The lifeboat, intended for permanent exhibit at the SEAL museum in Florida, was made available for loan. In addition, the USS *Bainbridge* (DDG-96) donated the R.O.V. used by the ship to monitor *Maersk Alabama* during the incident.

Modern Terror on the High Seas opened along with *Real Pirates* on November 23, and runs through April 4, 2010 at the Half Moone Cruise Terminal and Celebration Center. Come see it and salute the modern Navy and its mission of keeping the sea lanes safe.

Becky

Shown above is a team from USS Boxer *(LHD-4) boarding the lifeboat from* Maersk Alabama *shortly after the successful rescue operation. The lifeboat is on display as part of an exhibit on modern piracy that accompanies the* Real Pirates *exhibit at Nauticus' Half Moone Cruise Terminal and Celebration Center. It runs thought April 4. (U.S. Navy photo)*

Boarding teams from the Norfolk-based USS Vella Gulf *(CG-72) apprehend suspected pirates off the Somalia coast. (U.S. Navy photo)*

Attention Internet Nation!
The Hampton Roads Naval Museum Has Expanded Its Presence on the Web

The museum's main website is http://www.hrnm.navy.mil. We also have expanded our presence on the Internet to other popular social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger. On Facebook and Twitter, you can keep up to date with the museum's events in real time. On our blog, you can read more about the museum's collection and events. We have future endeavors planned, so keep a watch for them!

Museum Web site: www.hrnm.navy.mil

Blogger: hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com, look for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum "Page" and become a "fan."

Twitter: www.twitter.com/hrnm

With the arrival of Commodore David Porter (shown at right) the West Indies Squadron escalated its assaults on the pirates. Shown here is a raid by the schooner Porpoise *on a pirate haven near Matanzas, Cuba. The raid resulted in the capture or destruction of seven pirate vessels. (1890 drawing by William Bainbridge Hoff. Image of Porter provided by the Naval History and Heritage Command)*

Porter Takes Charge

The U.S. Navy Escalates Its Operations

by Joseph Mosier

Commodore David Porter sailed from New York on February 14, 1823 to assume command of the United States Navy's West Indies Squadron. He relieved James Biddle and became the second commander of the unit charged with fighting piracy in the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. This maritime lawlessness resulted from the absence of state power in the area. Spain's control of her American colonies had slipped during the Napoleonic Wars. Rebelling states which fought to remove Spanish rule lacked the strength or the willingness to suppress terror on the seas.

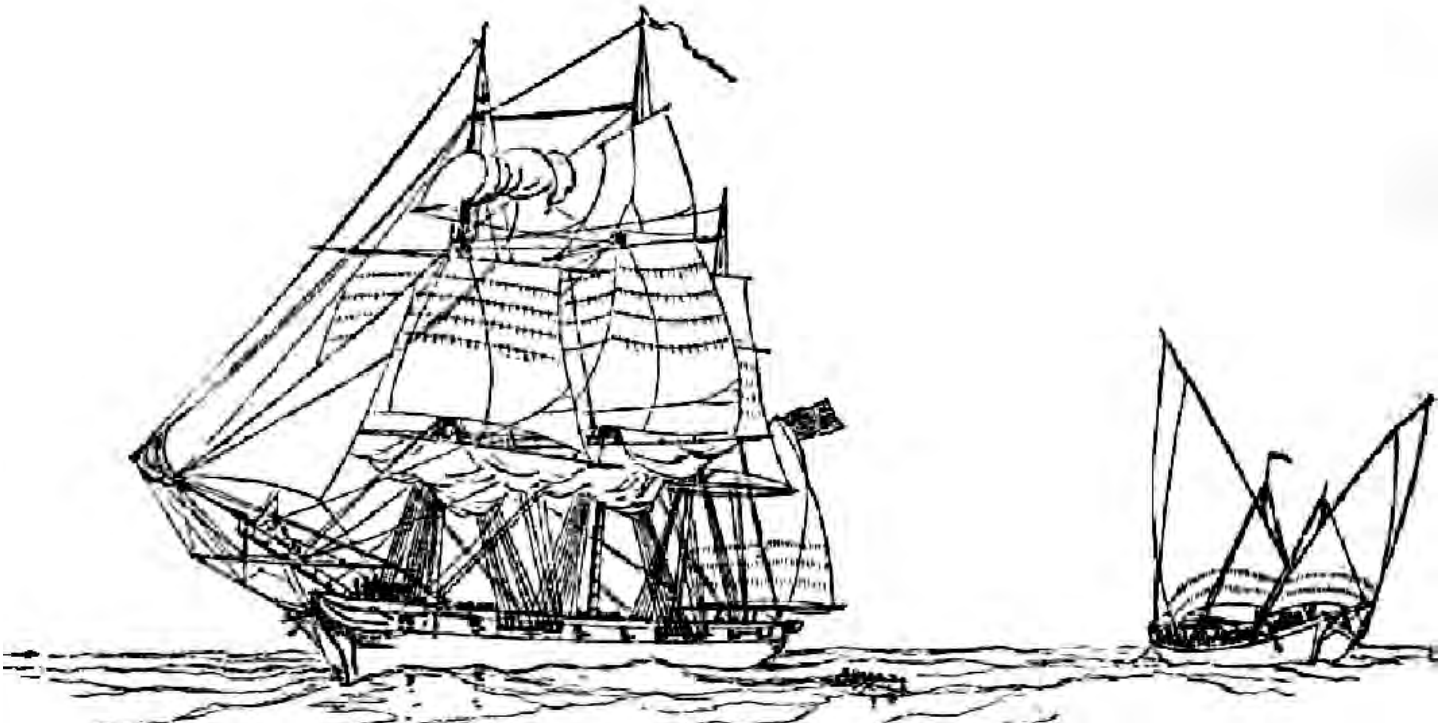
Fighting Terror on the High Seas

The U.S. Navy's War Against the West Indies Pirates

Commodore Biddle's squadron had been the largest in the Navy, but it was badly constituted. Composed of larger frigates and sloops, it proved effective against pirates operating on the open sea, but failed badly against those who scrambled out of coves and marshes to attack shipping close to shore. In response to Biddle's suggestion, the Navy Department fitted out Porter with ten Chesapeake Bay schooners, five shallow-draft barges and the steam galliot *Sea Gull* (a former Long Island Sound steamboat). The three-week passage from New York to St. Thomas in the then Danish Virgin Islands pointed out the limitations of these newly purchased vessels. As Porter wrote Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson "It would be unjust of me if I did not say that every officer and man under my command enters with the utmost alacrity and zeal into the severe duties which this novel service imposes on them; and although most of them have scarcely put their feet on shore from their cramped vessels since they have left the United States, although they have suffered all that men could suffer crossing the Gulf Stream in heavy gales in open boats, still not a murmur has been heard from anyone." It must have been cramped indeed, for in the same letter Porter asked the Secretary to dispatch a new and more commodious flagship (preferably one with a poop deck) so that his presence would not cause so much inconvenience for the crew of the *Sea Gull*.

Porter and his ships reached St. Thomas on March 3, 1823. *Sea Gull* amazed the locals who had never seen a steamboat when she traversed the length of the harbor against the wind without sails. When the excitement died down, Porter began his diplomatic efforts with a visit to the Danish governor. Next, it was a short passage across to San

Pirates continued on page 4



The sloop USS Peacock *seized a lateen-rigged felucca on April 16, 1823 off the coast of Cuba. A small vessel like a felucca (typically only found in the Mediterranean) was typical of the small craft used by most pirates. Many of the desperate men who turned to piracy often had legitimate jobs such as fishing, but took to the open waters in small crafts in search of quick money. (1890 engraving by William Bainbridge Hoff)*

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Juan, Puerto Rico to exchange courtesies with Spanish Captain General Miguel de la Torre. Porter sent Lieutenant William H. Cocke, commanding United States Schooner *Fox* into San Juan harbor to open talks. As *Fox* approached, the guns of the main fort opened up. The first shot fell short but the second hit the schooner, killing Cocke.

Porter demanded an explanation. Torre wrote that he had been out of town at the time of the incident and that he had left orders with the commander of the fort not to let foreign vessels enter during his absence. It was all just a terrible accident. The gunners were trying to miss by firing high over the schooner, but apparently their aim was not too good. Porter was disinclined to believe this explanation, but withheld his anger for diplomacy's sake. The death of Cocke did have one good side effect. Torre backed off on his harassment of American shipping and swore he would no longer issue letters-of-marque for privateers.

The squadron then turned west to Matanzas on the north coast of Cuba. After sending a letter to the Captain General of Cuba, Porter divided his ships into two flotillas. One operated north of the island chain of Cuba, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico and the other south of it. Porter himself sailed to Thompson's Island (modern day Key West) to direct the construction of new facilities. A yellow fever epidemic the previous year pointed out the shortcomings of the existing hospital. A midshipman who had observed "our hastily erected and scantily furnished hospital" in 1822, also wrote "He alone, who has laid on a rude pallet in a ward of this hospital crowded with the victims of a malignant disease, can realize the horrors of such a state." The deaths of so many had shocked the Navy into action.

At sea, successes began to mount. The pilot-boat schooner *Pilot* had sailed from Norfolk with mail for the squadron. The pirate chief Domingo seized *Pilot* near Matanzas. He disdainfully returned the Navy's mail and added a note saying, "You are a gallant group of fellows, and I have no wish to keep your letters from you but I will retain the miniature of Lieutenant G[ardner]'s wife, in case I shall meet the original. I think if she looks like the picture, I will make love to her." Porter was not amused by Domingo's gallantry. He dispatched a flotilla under the command of Master Commandant Stephen Cassin to capture the pirate. On April 8, two schooners *Wild Cat* and *Beagle* fell in with Domingo. After a day-long chase, *Pilot* was boarded and taken. All of her crew were killed except Domingo and two others who managed to swim to shore. The *Pilot* (which Porter considered a "remarkable sailer") was confiscated for use by the squadron.

Cassin, in the sloop-of-war *Peacock*, took his division of ships on a cruise along the north coast of Cuba. Near Cayo Blanco, they found the remains of vessels burned a short time before by the pirates. Three piratical schooners were burned at Rio Palmas. Pirate camps to the leeward of Bahia Honda and inside the Colorados Reef were destroyed. On April 16, Cassin captured a schooner and a "very fine" felucca off Colorados before arriving at Cape San Antonio (the western extremity of Cuba) on April 21. More good news came with the arrival of the new Captain General of Cuba, Francisco Dionisio Vives, who seemed more inclined to cooperate with the Americans than had his predecessor. Porter optimistically wrote the Navy Secretary on May 22, 1823, "I have the honor to inform you that not a single piratical act has been committed on the coast of Cuba since I organized and arranged my forces."

Like most such declarations, Porter's optimism proved premature. Given the hit and run nature of littoral piracy, it proved nearly impossible to single out the pirates

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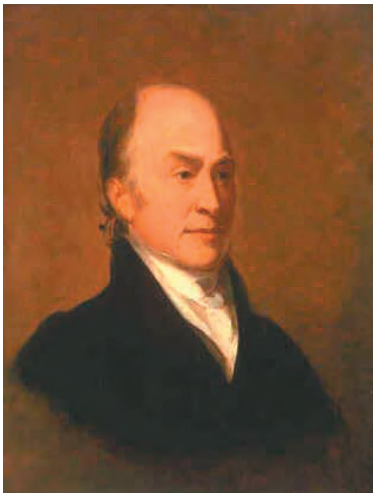

President James Monroe and his Secretary of State John Quincy Adams formed a policy of noninterference by European powers in the Western Hemisphere. The often cited "Monroe Doctrine" unfortunately also extended to American forces and limited their operations in existing European colonies. Porter's actions exasperated both men. (Images provided by the Library of Congress)

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from the rest of the population. As Porter himself had written Secretary Thompson, "Nor can I conceive how we shall ever be able to detect them, for they are one day fishermen, another droguers, wood-cutters, salt gatherers, or pirates, as best suits them."

Porter's responsibilities were also not limited to Cuba. Lieutenant Francis H. Gregory, commanding U.S. Schooner *Grampus*, was a hold-over from the squadron under Commodore Biddle. Gregory had convoyed merchant ships from New Orleans to Vera Cruz, Mexico. At Campeachy, Gregory was inundated with reports of piracies committed on American vessels along the Yucatan coast. In one example, a canoe full of pirates attacked the American schooner *Shibboleth* of New York at night. After killing those on watch, the pirates locked the rest of the crew in the forecastle, spiked the hatch and covered it with a ton of logwood and set the vessel on fire. *Grampus* arrived just in time to save those trapped.

Now settled at Key West, Porter again lobbied the Navy Department for a larger flagship. He wrote Secretary Thompson on May 22, 1823, "The principal thing wanted is a large vessel and the aid and comforts which she would afford. At present I have no place to shelter me but the awning of this small vessel [*Sea Gull*]. I cannot obtain hands enough for my use to man a boat. I have no comforts whatever, and I feel my health gradually sinking. I would be the last to complain without cause, but the rainy and sickly season is now coming on, and I would fail in my duty were I not to acquaint you with our true situation."

Porter was prescient as to the sickly season. A wave of yellow fever hit Key West in August. Porter was among those taken ill. After lingering near death for several days, the commodore recovered enough to sail for the States aboard *Sea Gull*. After a forty-three day voyage with stops at St. Marks and Savannah, the tiny flagship arrived in Washington on October 26. Conditions at Key West, despite Porter's efforts at improvement, were proving to be as lethal as in previous years. Of the twenty-three officers stricken with fever in 1823, twenty-one died.

By the time of Porter's arrival, Smith Thompson had been elevated to the U.S. Supreme Court, and in his place Samuel Southard of New Jersey became Secretary of the Navy. Southard responded to the medical emergency. The Secretary ordered Commodore John Rodgers, then President of the Board of Naval Commissioners, to proceed in the schooner *Shark* from New York to Thompson's Island. Rodgers was to take along three Naval surgeons. The doctors were to help the squadron's surgeon Thomas Williamson and investigate the cause of the fever. Rodgers was tasked with deciding if the Key West base should be abandoned in favor of a more northern site.

After a seventeen day passage, Rodgers and his party arrived at Key West on October 23. The surgeons did not find the disease attributable to any one cause, but rather a whole host of causes: bad water, miasma arising from brackish ponds, the exposure of those of "northern constitution" to tropical weather, the fatigue brought on by constant duty in small boats, "irregular and intemperate habits," and the continued annoyance of mosquitoes and sand flies. The fifty-nine men remaining on the sick list were shipped to Norfolk.

Rodgers himself did not find Key West all that different from the West Indies generally. In his words, "Its air is perhaps less salubrious than some, but more so than others." Given its strategic position and excellent harbor, however, the island was indispensable as a base to fight piracy. As Rodgers put it, Key West was "too important an object in a political and commercial point of view to be suffered to remain unoccupied and discarded." Rodgers and his train of surgeons departed the island on November 2 and arrived back in Hampton Roads two weeks later.

Southard reached two decisions based on Rodger's fact-finding trip. Dismayed by what he saw as the unprofessional nature of Navy medicine, he worked throughout the remainder of his tenure to increase the quality of medical care in the service. Another outcome of the event was the decision to relocate the headquarters of the West Indies Squadron to Pensacola, although this did not occur until 1826.

Samuel Southard became the seventh Secretary of the Navy. He is rated as the most effective of his era. Although friendly with his peers, he could be tactless with subordinates. (Image provide by the Naval History and Heritage Command)

A couple of months in the cool weather of Washington and the warm embrace of his family were sufficient to restore Porter's health. He was delighted when Secretary Southard gave him U.S. Frigate *John Adams* as his flagship. To help fill up the roomier

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"You are a gallant group of fellows, and I have no wish to keep your letters from you but I will retain the miniature of Lieutenant G[ardner]'s wife, in case I shall meet the original. I think if she looks like the picture, I will make love to her."

-Letter from the pirate chief Domingo to Commodore David Porter. Domingo's ship was later found and captured, though Domingo himself escaped.

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vessel, Southard also allowed Porter to take his wife Evalina along for the voyage. Thus, *John Adams* with Porter's wife, five children, and a retinue of servants sailed on December 10, 1823 from Washington for Norfolk. There she sat for a couple of months, while Porter conducted a vindictive court-martial against Lieutenant Beverley Kennon who had criticized the commodore's action in releasing a Spanish ship Kennon had seized.

Moses Myers, Dutch Vice Consul in Norfolk, wrote the Dutch Foreign Ministry on February 11, 1824, "The small squadron under command of Commodore Porter have all sail'd for their stations near the Island of Cuba except a sloop of war of 20 guns the *John Adams* & the *Sea Gull* galliot detained in consequence of a Court Martial on a Young Officer, a 1st Lieutenant, against whom Commodore Porter has preferred some charges of very little consequence compared to the detention of those Vessels & his presence required in the West Indies against the Pirates. I presume the Court will not rise for ten or 15 days to come."

Kennon was "fully acquitted" on February 24. Myers was not alone in his dismay at the unnecessary delay. Southard's third circular on assuming office the previous September had been a request that such trivial legal proceedings be curtailed. They tended to take up too much time and created too much bad press for the service. Southard wrote a letter to Porter in late March, reminding the commodore of his previous thoughts on the matter. He regretted the fact that the court-martial had "excited" the nation. Porter was not scoring points with his new boss.

The squadron was not completely idle in Porter's illness and absence. The barges *Gallinipper* and *Musquito* under the command of Lieutenant William H. Watson cruised east of Matanzas. In Cardenas Bay, they spotted a topsail schooner which proved to be the *Catilina* commanded by a notorious pirate Diaboleto. The schooner was a better sailer than either of the barges, but they managed to drive her and an accompanying launch toward the village of Siguapa. There the Americans engaged the pirates, seizing the two vessels and killing forty pirates, including Diaboleto, while capturing another forty. In a 19th Century precursor to "rendition," those captured were turned over to the Royal Navy West Indies Squadron. There was little likelihood the pirates would be tried by the Spanish. American courts had not proved particularly harsh in their treatment of those accused of piracy. Most were acquitted or, if convicted, frequently had their sentences reduced. The British were made of sterner stuff. The forty captured men were taken to Kingston, Jamaica where they were tried, convicted, and hanged.

Commodore Porter had sailed from Norfolk on February 18, 1824 (six days before the outcome of Kennon's trial was announced). When *John Adams* first reached the West Indies, Porter cruised about looking for pirates off St. Bartholomew, St. Kitts, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and Jamaica. None were to be found. Porter proceeded to Key West to continue his work improving facilities there. He worried constantly about the reappearance of yellow fever. His medical staff was down to a single surgeon, Thomas Williamson. Unfourantely, yellow fever again invaded, and by early June both Porter and Surgeon Williamson were again sick. Evalina Porter tended her husband as well as she could. When he finally showed signs of recovery, she quickly bundled him and the rest of her family aboard *Sea Gull* and the erstwhile flagship sailed for Washington.

This romanticized view of a U.S. Navy raid on a pirate den comes courtesy of the classic 1837 work The Pirate's Own Book. *Such raids were the dirty, but necessary aspect of hunting pirates as they often hid on shore to avoid the superior firepower of American and European warships. (Engraving from* The Pirates Own Book or Authentic Tales of Bloody Adventure*)*

Sea Gull stopped at Matanzas to take on coal. There Porter ordered the schooner *Wild Cat* ahead to inform the Department that he had again quit his station for reasons of health. Unfortunately for his

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This grim expression comes from Surgeon Thomas Williamson. After surviving two bouts with yellow fever while at Key West, he commanded the Portsmouth Naval Hospital in 1830. Diseases caused the death rate among sailors to be the highest in U.S. Naval history. (Image provided by the Portsmouth Naval Medical Center)

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relations with the administration, *Sea Gull* proved her value in calm airs. The trip to Washington took only nine days. Porter arrived in the capital on June 24, before the dispatch announcing his departure from Key West. When President James Monroe learned Porter was walking the streets of Washington, he asked Secretary Southard if he had been recalled. Southard's negative response infuriated the President. Did Porter feel he was not bound by the authority of the executive department? Eventually, Porter's original dispatch arrived, and Monroe was mollified. Unfortunately, the affair left a bad impression with both Southard and the President.

The squadron's third commanding officer was Commodore Lewis Warrington. Originally from Williamsburg, Virginia, Warrington came to the squadron with an impressive resume that included high seas combat during the War of 1812. He is buried in Norfolk. (1890 sketch by William Bainbridge Hoff)

Things got worse as Porter spent the summer not so much convalescing as carousing. He became a regular visitor at social events such as the grand ball honoring the Marquis de la Fayette. He seemed to feel that his mansion on Meridian Hill, a mile from the White House, would work as well as Key West as the headquarters of the West Indies Squadron. Others did not share his view. Dutch Consul Myers in Norfolk wrote on August 18, 1824, "Since the return of Commodore Porter, the Pirates in & about the Islands of Cuba & Porto Rico, have shown themselves again & done considerable mischief to British, French, Spanish & American Vessells." This observation was echoed by the U.S. Consul in Havana and the Consular Agent in Puerto Rico. By early October, Secretary Southard had enough. He wrote Porter, "It is deemed expedient by the Executive that you proceed as speedily as possible to your station." Instead of a cheery "Aye, aye," Porter responded with petulance. Why should he have to go back now rather than wait until his new flagship, USS *Constellation*, was ready? Porter exacerbated the conflict by trying to go over Southard's head to the President. Monroe "deemed it improper to reply."

In late October 1824, Porter again sailed on *John Adams* for the West Indies – without his family this time. Shortly after his arrival at St. Thomas, the commodore was briefed by Lieutenant Charles T. Platt, commanding officer of the schooner *Beagle*, on an incident that occurred in Porter's absence. U.S. Consul Stephen Cabot in St. Thomas had complained to Platt that goods had been stolen from his warehouse and taken in his belief to the town of Fajardo on the east cost of Puerto Rico some forty miles away. Platt decided to investigate taking along another lieutenant and Cabot's clerk. Since it was not strictly a military affair, Platt traveled in civilian clothes. While he was initially received graciously in Fajardo, things got sticky when the local authorities learned the subject of his visit. He was placed under guard until his identity papers could be retrieved from the ship. Platt and his party were led out of town while being hissed at "by the ruff scruff of the place."

Porter was enraged by the story, and on November 14 invaded the island with a force of 200 sailors and Marines. Cannons at a shore front battery were spiked. A messenger was sent into Fajardo demanding the town fathers show themselves and apologize or the town would be destroyed. The mayor and the captain of the port quickly came forward with profuse apologies to Lieutenant Platt who announced his honor satisfied. Porter *et al* turned around and marched back down the hill. Time of the event – less than three hours.

The commodore wrote of the affair to Washington. He was worried that Southard and Monroe might feel that he <u>under</u> reacted. In retrospect, he felt he probably should have upheld American honor by razing the place. The commodore was disabused of this notion when he received a letter from Southard dated December 27, 1824. Porter was to return "without unnecessary delay" to Washington together with Lieutenant Platt and others involved for a full investigation.

Porter had unwittingly run afoul of the Monroe Doctrine. Concerned that reactionary European states would attempt to reassert Spain's power or use its absence to carve out new colonies in the Western Hemisphere, Monroe had announced a new American response in a December 1823 message to Congress. America would not accept European incursions. On the other hand, the U.S. would not interfere in existing colonies in the Americas. Secretary of State and soon-to-be President John Quincy Adams stated, "Porter's descent on Porto Rico was a direct, hostile invasion of the island, utterly unjustifiable." A Court of Inquiry sat on May 2, 1825 with Captain Isaac Chauncey presiding. Porter was still convinced he was in the right and tried to meet with Monroe and Adams to sway them. With Southard, he took a stronger approach writing increasingly strident and infuriating letters to the Navy Secretary. The end result was that an additional charge of insubordination was added to the charges against the commodore. On May 9, the court of inquiry cleared Porter of one lesser

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P.N.L. Bellinger and the Early Days of Naval Air Station Norfolk

by Ira R. Hanna

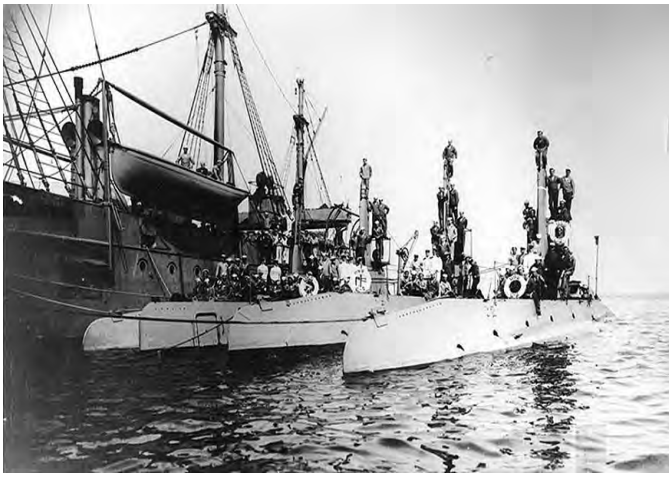
Patrick Neison Lynch Bellinger, shown here as a lieutenant commander, was one of the Navy's early aviators and advocates for Naval aviation. He began his career in the aviation branch in earnest here in Hampton Roads (Photo provided by the Library of Congress)

Many know that the first flight off of a ship took place here in Hampton Roads. What many people do not know is that the region was largely responsible for the creation and growth of the Naval aviation branch. Naval aviation had many skeptics in the early years of flying, and took several inspired and wise men to convince skeptics that it was worth supporting.

One of these wise and inspired men was Patrick Neison Lynch Bellinger, who often went by the name P.N.L. Bellinger. A versatile Naval officer, Bellinger served in the surface and submarine warfare communities before finding his true passion in Naval aviation. During his forty years of Naval service from 1907 to 1947, only a few times did his name appear in the headlines of newspapers. Nor was he mentioned very often in magazines or on radio or television news broadcasts. On the other hand, the public in Hampton Roads, Virginia, should recall him every time it hears the sound of Naval aircraft flying overhead. If not for Bellinger's foresight and perseverance in the development of Naval aircraft and their integration into the fleet, those aircraft may not have become one of the most powerful weapons in the Navy.

How did this southern country boy from Cheraw, South Carolina, become such an important part of the development and growth of naval aviation in general, specifically, in Hampton Roads? Although it was his home, he hardly ever spoke of it. As his wife, Elsie remarked, "It was CheRAW! when you arrived and HurRAW!! when you left." Born October 8, 1885, he was raised by his maternal aunt when his mother and sister died a few years after his birth. He was educated in local public schools, and in 1902 he enrolled in Clemson College as an electrical engineering student. Later that year, he got his father's permission to leave Clemson to study for the Naval Academy's entrance exam. He received a Congressional appointment and entered the class of 1907 on June 22, 1903. As a plebe (freshman), he weighed only 116 pounds and stood five feet, ten inches tall. Even so, he was cajoled into athletics by an upper classman and

Bellinger continued on page 9



Bellinger's early experience as a Naval officer in Hampton Roads was not as an aviator. He was first a junior officer on board locally based surface warships such as the battleship USS South Carolina *(BB-26) (shown at left recoaling from USS* Cyclops *(AC-4) off the Virginia Capes). The Navy then assigned him to work for a Lieutenant Chester Nimitz and the submarine USS* Bonita *(SS-15) pictured right at the N.O.B. Hampton Roads' piers alongside USS* Severn *(ex-*Chesapeake*).) (Photos provided by the Naval History and Heritage Command)*

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became an excellent boxer. He credited this with putting him in good enough physical and mental shape to be accepted for aviation nine years later.

At the Academy, Bellinger was influenced by several of his instructors. The most important was Thomas T. Craven (mathematics and navigation). Another was Ernest J. King (ordnance and gunnery), a future Chief of Naval Operations, who Bellinger later served as King's Deputy for Naval Air during World War II. Joseph M. Reeves (physics and chemistry), who later pioneered the development of aircraft carriers, provided Bellinger with a wider view of the uses of aircraft. He served with Reeves as his aviation aide when he was Commander of the Battle Fleet during the 1920's.

Upon graduation from the Academy, Bellinger was assigned as a passed midshipman to the USS *Vermont* (BB-20), part of the Great White Fleet that departed Norfolk in 1907 and went around the world to show the might of the U.S. Navy. When the fleet reached Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), after he had received exemplary fitness reports from *Vermont's* captain, he transferred to USS *Wisconsin* (BB-9). He completed the voyage on that ship and arrived back in Hampton Roads on February 22, 1909. On March 6, when *Wisconsin* was sent to Portsmouth, New Hampshire for repairs, Bellinger and six other "student officers" were transferred to the cruiser *Montgomery* (C-9) based in Norfolk. It served as an experimental torpedo ship and this excited him. He watched the gunners' actions so closely that during one high-pressure run, a piece of metal flew up and hit him on the head. If it had hit him just inches lower, it would have killed him. This was one many instances throughout Bellinger's lifetime that luck had a hand in his success.

One day, after watching the loading and firing of torpedoes, the student officers became bored and began to play roulette games during the shots. Bellinger happened to leave the game and go on deck for some fresh air. Before he could return, he heard his name being called loudly. He wondered what trouble he was in, but Strauss merely informed him that the Navy Department had directed him to nominate two ensigns from the class of 1907 to send to the Navy's first dreadnoughts USS *Michigan* (BB-27) and *South Carolina* (BB-26). Strauss said "In looking around, I find you are the only one of your class on the job, so you may have the pick." Of course, Bellinger chose *South Carolina* temporarily located in Norfolk. He later noted, "It certainly pays to be in the right spot at the right time."

Many of the aviation instructors that worked for Bellinger (pictured in the front row, center) at N.A.S. Norfolk were reserve aviation officers from the Princeton Naval Unit of Princeton University. The Navy later transferred some of these instructors to France to set up naval air stations for the war. (HRNM photo)

In the meantime, northern European countries had expressed displeasure that the Great White Fleet had not visited their ports. To redeem this slight, in November 1910 the Navy sent *South Carolina* to visit ports in France and England. After returning to Norfolk in January 1911, she was sent again to ports in Denmark, Sweden, Russia, and Kiel, Germany. While in Kiel, Bellinger saw a plane fly over the harbor and decided that he wanted to look further into aviation.

Bellinger's assignment on *South Carolina* was as assistant gunnery officer to his former Academy professor Thomas Craven. After much pleading, he convinced Craven to assign him command of one of the four 12-inch gun turrets. By holding extra practices, he had his turret crew ready for the Fleet Gunnery Championship held in March 1910 off the Virginia Capes. His guns made hits 88.5 percent of the time on a towed target in record time. This enabled *South Carolina* to win the Fleet Gunnery Trophy (plaque located in the Hampton Roads Naval Museum). This was instrumental in Craven being ordered to head the Navy's Office of Fleet Gunnery Training. The principle of teamwork and delegation of authority that Bellinger learned aboard *South Carolina* stayed with him the rest of his life. The prize money, forbidden for officers to receive, went to his turret crew. Then, without his knowledge, they bought him an ornate gold watch and presented it to him. He was very proud of it, and forty-six years later he sent it to his grandson, who was named after him.

Before Craven left the ship in late 1911, he asked Bellinger if there was anything he could do for him in Washington. He replied that he had requested aviation duty from Lieutenant Theodore "Spuds" Ellyson, Naval Aviator #1, and would appreciate Craven's recommendation. To further prove he was sincere about aviation, he also requested submarine duty so he could learn about gasoline engines that were similar to aircraft engines. In January 1912, he received orders to submarine duty and reported to the Submarine Flotilla Commander in Norfolk. Bellinger later would serve on Nimitz's staff during World War II and plan the air strategy for the Battle of Midway.

After five months of training, Lieutenant Junior Grade Bellinger was given command of USS *Bonita* (SS-15), a training boat that

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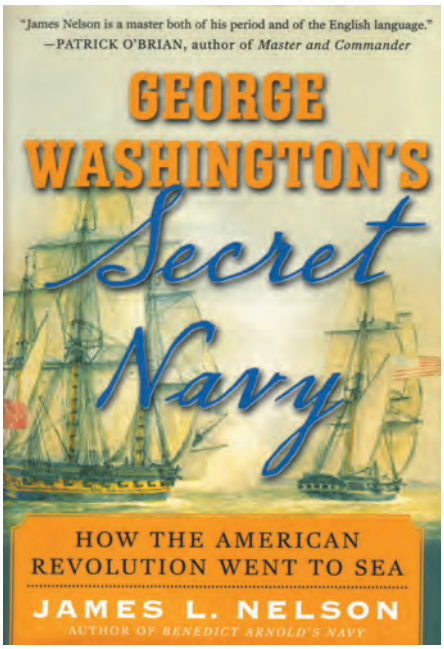
Book Reviews

George Washington's Secret Navy
How the American Revolution Went to Sea
By James L. Nelson
Reviewed by Katherine Renfrew



"The countryside is foreign to him but charming, lovely in its summer greens. He rides down the muddy road from his headquarters in Cambridge to the most prominent of the American defenses on Prospect Hill, about a mile away." Thus, begins this novel-like saga of George Washington, America's first commander-in-chief, and his commitment to provide supplies for his men by secretly outfitting a small fleet of ships.

George Washington's Secret Navy:

James L. Nelson. *George Washington's Secret Navy: How the American Revolution Went to Sea.* New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 2008. ISBN 0-07149-389-1. $14.95.

How the American Revolution went to Sea, written by James L. Nelson explores a brief, but significant episode in American history when Washington began his command of the new Continental army in the early stages of the American Revolution. Upon arriving in Boston in the summer of 1775, he found his army in a miserable state, lacking supplies and material, while the entrenched British, well trained and disciplined, were receiving supplies from the British Navy sailing in and out of the Boston ports. Washington soon realized the only way he could combat the vast differences between the British and Continental Army was to form a Navy. He put his plan into action by enlisting the help of John Glover, a wealthy New England merchant and owner of a small schooner *Hannah.* The schooner was armed and sent out to capture British ships. Washington purposely withheld his plan and subsequent actions from the Continental Congress for more than two months knowing that they would not approve a Navy.

As other longboats, sloops and schooners were gradually outfitted to join *Hannah*, the Second Continental Congress reconvened in September 1776 after a two and half month recess. Rhode Island requested Congress to approve a Navy for the United Colonies. The request was tabled, but in October the request was revisited and "a most animated opposition and debate arose." John Adams, Silas Deane, and John Langdon were nominated to form a plan of action. After a very heated debate, the committee convinced Congress of the necessity for a Navy, and a resolution was passed to arm several vessels to capture British ships and stop the supply line. At the same time, Washington wrote Congress telling them that he had already outfitted three vessels.

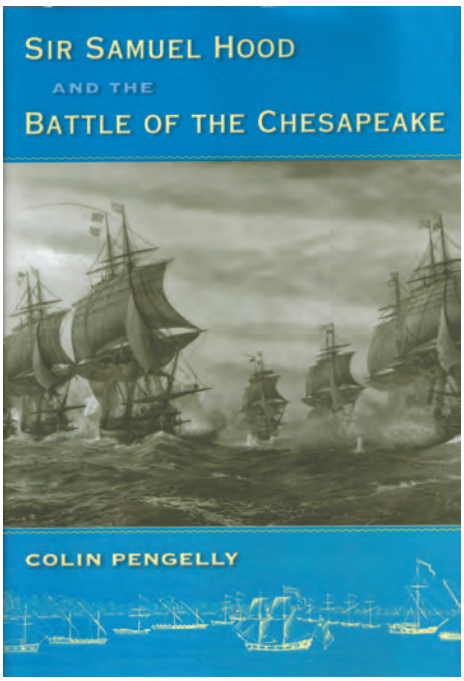
Nelson sums up his study by suggesting that even though Washington's time in Boston was very brief, the impact of his actions were both significant and far reaching. There were now countless armed American vessels patrolling the New England coast included Washington's five remaining schooners, *Hancock, Franklin, Lee, Warren,* and *Lynch.* An effort to institute procedures on how to run the fleet, such as appointing agents and establishing prize courts to support them, had begun. The British had also evacuated Boston, but just as important "it struck the empire at its economic base" by depriving revenue from the British merchant class, drove up insurance rates, and overall caused dissatisfaction over the war in London. In addition, Washington's plan to outfit several vessels made it obvious that a Continental Navy was imperative to the success of the war, thereby making way for an American Navy.

The narrative is well documented and includes extensive endnotes for each chapter, a bibliography and index. Both primary and secondary sources add valuable details, however it is the primary sources which include the personal papers of John Adams and George Washington among others; and diaries, journals and letters as well as ship journals that truly bring the story to life. He convincingly weaves the characters personal words, gleaned from those primary documents, with fact. It gives the reader keen insight into the character of George Washington, John Adams and other lesser known men like John Glover and Joseph Reid.

According to Nelson, several men became Naval heroes during this time, but are now forgotten. One example was John Manley, a citizen of Beverly, Massachusetts who was an officer in the Continental Army, but took up privateering and became "the most successful sea raider of all." Nelson states, he was "America's first naval hero and one of the first men to be made famous by the American Revolution." Nelson also examines British viewpoints as well. A look at several of the key British figures such as General Thomas Gage, Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, King George, and several British Captains reveal the British perspective during the early days of the conflict. In addition, maps, illustrations and modern photographs add interest to the book.

George Washington's Secret Navy is a dramatic and fact-filled story, and presents a meaningful and worthwhile glimpse into the past when George Washington and a few citizens freed the New England coast from the British and changed the course of the American Revolution. The blow-by-blow ship actions and courageous deeds of these early colonials will spark the imagination and transport the reader back through time to the beginnings of the American Navy.

Sir Samuel Hood and the Battle of the Chesapeake
By Colin Pengelly
Reviewed by Howard Sandefer



The Battle of the Chesapeake, as it is known in the Royal Navy, was fought on September 5, 1781. Known as the Battle of the Virginia Capes in the United States, the battle was a tactical draw between the Royal Navy and the French Navy. However it was a major strategic defeat for the British, as it prevented the Royal Navy from rescuing Lord Cornwallis and his army from George Washington's and Rochambeau's forces at Yorktown. History has advanced several reasons why the battle was a tactical draw, and several of these theories point to Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, one of the fleet's three admirals, in one way or another.

Collin Pengelly. *Sir Samuel Hood and the Battle of the Chesapeake.* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009. ISBN 0-81303-313-6. $69.95.

The conventional answer to why the British lost is that the British fleet failed to properly engage the French. Specifically, the rear van of the fleet commanded by Hood did not engage the French until very late into the fighting. Already outnumbered on paper, Hood's failure to execute made victory impossible. Pengelly evaluated several theories for Hood's lack of action, and provided an excellent analysis.

One of the theories offered was Hood's belief that he should have been the senior commander at the battle and not Admiral Sir Thomas Graves. In other words, Hood purposely sabotaged Graves out of spite. The author does not find this suggestion creditable, given Hood's aggressiveness in other actions throughout his career, and his reverence for duty well performed. The 1782 Battles of St. Kitts and The Saintes displayed the aggressiveness and ability of Hood.

Another theory, and one favored by the author, is that there was a lack of joint operational experience among the three British squadrons. Two disparate squadrons were joined just prior to the battle. Admiral Mariot Arbuthnot commanded Graves' squadron until less than two months prior to the concentration of ships for battle. This squadron was used to more liberal interpretation of signals during battle maneuvering, and was based in New York. Admiral Lord George Rodney, who commanded the Caribbean squadron, turned over command of his squadron to Hood before it headed north to join up with Graves. Rodney required strict interpretation of his signals. Pengelly suggests that this explanation is the most likely, given the character of the officers involved.

The author points out that the lack of preparations, and subsequent tactical surprise gained on Admiral DeGrasse's forces, equalled a grand missed opportunity. The initial situation was such that Graves could have been the Lord Edward Hawke of the American War, had he imitated Hawke's maneuver at the 1759 Battle of Quiberon Bay. Graves only had to signal "General Chase" while the French were coming out of Chesapeake Bay. He had the opportunity to defeat the French van in detail.

The work paints a detailed picture of the Battle of the Chesapeake, illustrating the difference in interpretation of the signals flown by Admiral Graves. The rear admiral commanding the van, Rear Admiral Frances Drake, obeyed the signal to close with the enemy and ignored the line ahead signal. Drake's one error was to turn his column in sequence as he closed with the French van, exposing his lead ships to a severe mauling. He did, however, maneuver to engage. Hood, on the other hand, kept his column in a strict line ahead, and did not attempt to close with the French line. He constantly maintained that the signal for line ahead took precedence over the signal to engage.

There are three minor complaints that are common to such books written by British authors. Charts of the Caribbean and English Channel would be beneficial, especially when discussing the campaigns leading up to the battle. Second, the author was redundant in some areas, such as the lack of maintenance of the ships in the assigned fleets, and Hood's difficulties with army officers and several of his contemporary naval officers. Finally, the differences in the English language between the two nations and the difference in measurements can cause some difficulty for the reader in the U. S. For example, the author liberally shifts between leagues, miles, yards, and cables.

The book does not end with either the Battle of the Chesapeake or the surrender at Yorktown. The author continues to detail the Battles of St. Kitts and The Saintes, where the aggressiveness and ability of Hood were exemplified. The sea war continued into 1783, and then a brief interruption occurred until 1793 when the Revolution in France spread to the sea. The war continued into the 19th century. Hood became one of the premier combat admirals in the Royal Navy during this period, influencing future British heroes Horatio Nelson and Cuthbert Collingwood. The period in which he served was a very intense era of naval combat, and it allowed for more practice for the commanders involved, but there had to be some native talent to be developed. Hood had the native talent.

Shown here are the aviators and student aviators that flew under Bellinger's careful instruction at N.A.S. Norfolk during World War I. Bellinger is in the center of the photo (with the the first Secretary of Defense in 1945. Students from other Allied nations such as France and Great Britain participated in the program. (HRNM photo)

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had been recommissioned as *C-4*. As fate would have it, his first orders were to sail to Greenbury Point Aviation Experimental Camp (the first in the Navy) across the Severn River from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. There, he was to take part in a test to see if submarines could be located underwater from the air. What he saw convinced him of the usefulness of aircraft to the Fleet. He also discovered that Naval aviation was treated as an unwanted stepchild by the "big gun" admirals and starved for equipment and personnel. Many senior officers believed that aviation's growth would challenge the supremacy of battleships, an attitude that Bellinger fought against for the rest of his career.

N.A.S. Norfolk in 1918 was a small, but growing operation. In the upper right hand corner can be seen the large hanger meant for dirigibles and in the center are the Government Piers left over from the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. The walls out in the water are the beginnings of the reclaiming operation. Eventually, the entire area inside the walls would be filled in and used to expand the air station and the Operating Base. (HRNM photo)

At Annapolis in October 1912, he had permission to fly as an observer on a test flight. The flight was piloted by John Towers, a classmate of Bellinger and Naval Aviator #2, who offered to take him up in a Curtiss A-2. Towers knew that Bellinger was skeptical about aviation, especially when an A-2 crashed the day before they were to make the flight.

Still, Towers persuaded Bellinger to take a flight with Victor Herbster (Naval Aviator #4) in a Wright biplane with twin floats. Pilot and observer sat side by side on seats mounted on the lower wing. There were no safety straps and only a wooden outrigger to prevent sliding during a steep glide. Bellinger was concerned with personal safety on planes and wondered if he really wanted to fly. Yet, he later confessed in an oral history interview that he "felt exhilaration, danger, strangeness, and certainly fear, when perched on the edge of a wing, dangled our feet down to a bar on a pontoon, and hunched and prayed our wobbly little seaplane would lift up off the water."

In early November, Bellinger visited Ellyson at the Washington Navy Yard. He asked Bellinger if he had received aviation duty orders. When he said he had not, Ellyson suggested that he see the detail officer of the Navy Department immediately. The officer told him that a clerk had erred and issued the orders to Ensign William Billingsley. Billingsley had not asked for aviation but had accepted anyway and already was being trained.

Downhearted and disgusted with the Navy bureaucracy, Bellinger was losing his inclination to be an aviator and returned to Annapolis. Even so, he went on a second flight with Towers and was "thrilled with the first hope" that he might become a naval pilot. On November 26, 1912, he received orders that detached him from command of *C-4* and directed him to report to Towers at Greenbury Point for aviation training duty. He was cautiously elated, but very pleased to have Towers as his instructor.

In just a few short months, Bellinger was fully qualified as a Naval flying officer. Because of severe weather conditions during the winter in Annapolis, in early January 1913, the pilot training school was sent to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to train with the fleet. At that time, Captain Washington Irving Chambers, Director of Naval Aviation, for whom the airfield at Naval Station Norfolk is named, encouraged the few Naval aviators under his authority

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e "X" over his head) standing next to a British naval officer. Among Bellinger's students was James Forrestal who later became the forty-seventh Secretary of the Navy in 1944 and

Bellinger continued from page 12

to try to influence surface and submarine officers to accept aircraft as useful to the fleet. On one of his flights, Bellinger was able to see a submarine in deep water and to spot mine fields. During war games, he invariably discovered the approaching "hostile" fleet at a great distance which impressed the fleet commanders. To further comply with Chambers' request, the young pilots gave more than 200 fleet officers flights without incident. This produced positive press throughout the fleet. It began a change of mind in the "big gun" senior officers toward the integration of Naval aviation into the fleet.

As one of the first Naval aviators, Bellinger (designated Naval Aviator #8) was used to test innovations in aircraft design, construction and instrumentation. In May 1913, Bellinger, Holden C. Richardson (Naval Aviator #13), a naval aircraft, and an engineer were sent to the Burgess Aircraft Manufacturing Company plant in Marblehead, Massachusetts, to test a new flying boat. They found it to be satisfactory and it was shipped to Annapolis. When they returned to Greenbury Point, Bellinger was ordered to go with 20-year old Lawrence "Gyro" Sperry to the Curtiss aircraft plant at Hammondsport, New York, to test a gyroscopic stabilizer system invented by his father, Elmer A. Sperry. Meanwhile, on June 13 his chief mechanic told Bellinger that his plane's engine was working well and that it was a fine day to set a new altitude record with the Curtiss A-3. Since he was eager to better Herbster's record of 4,450 feet, Bellinger flew off in exceptionally smooth air and climbed in ever wider turns until the plane suddenly seemed to wallow and his right wing dipped. He instinctively shoved the controls forward and was soon in a smooth glide. He stalled the plane, first ever for a Navy pilot, and recovered perfectly. In any event, he reached 7,200 feet, an altitude record that lasted for two years.

Before Bellinger went to Hammondsport, Elmer Sperry requested that he come to his factory in Brooklyn, New York. There "Gyro" Sperry explained the principle of the gyroscopic stabilizer. He did not tell Bellinger that two U.S. Army pilots already had crashed and died using his "contraption." It apparently did not matter since Bellinger conducted over fifty trials in all kinds of weather and found the stabilizer to have too many problems for use on Navy planes. But he did make several suggestions that eventually helped Sperry to perfect what eventually became the autopilot.

In 1914, Lieutenant Commander Henry C. Mustin (Naval Aviator #11), with the now Lieutenant Bellinger opened the first naval aviation training station in Pensacola, Florida. During his time there, he met Elsie Mackeown, a cousin of Mustin's wife. They were married on July 24, 1915. Perhaps to extend their honeymoon at the Chamberlain Hotel at Old Point Comfort in Hampton Roads, Mustin gave Bellinger the task to observe from his plane the fall of experimental mortar shots fired by the Army at Fort Monroe, situated near the hotel.

In early 1915, Bellinger and Mustin took the outdated battleship *Mississippi* (BB-23) from Pensacola to Norfolk where it would be turned over to a Greek crew. Thirty miles away from Chesapeake Bay, Bellinger's flying boat was lowered into the ocean and he was given an official letter to be mailed. He took off and in a

One of the early landmarks of N.A.S. Norfolk was the giant hanger the Navy built to house its lighter-than-air crafts. (HRNM photo)

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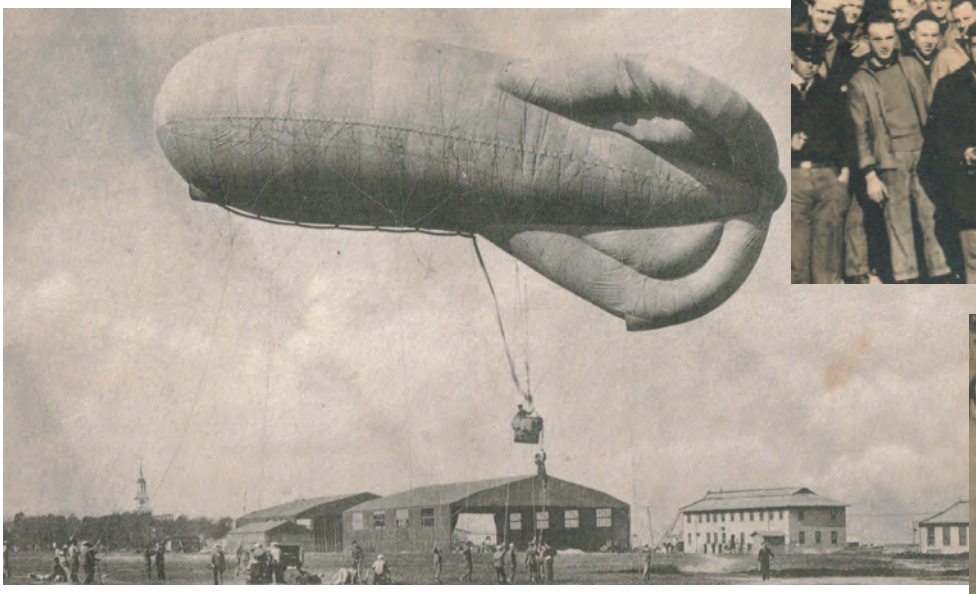

One of the primary functions of N.A.S. Norfolk in World War I was to serve as an operational and experimental station for the Navy's lighter-than-air vessels. With the Pennsylvania Building in the background, ground crews hold a kite balloon in place while the aviators ascend to the basket. At right are portraits of the sailors who served as the ground crews for the kite balloons and non-rigid dirigibles. (Photos provided by the author)

Bellinger continued from page 13

few minutes landed on a sandy beach near Old Point Comfort and mailed the letter at the nearest Post Office. It was the first time a Naval aircraft was used as a mail plane in the United States. Bellinger later established daily mail service for military correspondence from Naval Operating Base (N.O.B.) Hampton Roads to Washington, D.C.

In September 1917, Bellinger was assigned as the first commanding officer of Naval Air Station Norfolk. The station was built at Sewells Point on the grounds of the former Jamestown Exposition to the east of the equally new N.O.B. Hampton Roads. In the beginning, when any of his seven seaplanes needed repair, they were housed in six canvas hangers on the sandy shore of Discovery Landing in the Grand Basin between the two 1,000-foot Government Piers. When operational but not in use, the planes were staked in the water. During his first six months in Norfolk, Bellinger saw the station facilities increase exponentially. This included two aircraft repair buildings, three two-story barracks, a mess hall that accommodated 450 men, a blimp hangar, and a landing field for general use. There, he supervised the instruction of many regular and reserve Navy pilots, some of whom became leaders in government and business, as well as the Navy.

This was the mascot of N.A.S. Norfolk, a black bear named Whiskey. Local Naval aviators rescued him from the Great Dismal Swamp. He is being fed his favorite treat (a Hershey's Almond Chocolate Bar) by YNC Ralph Hanna (the author's father). Chief Hanna served as Bellinger's chief administration assistant. (Photo provided by the author)

One of his students was James Forrestal, who was a member of the Princeton Naval Reserve Flying Corps. In 1940, Forrestal was Under Secretary of the Navy for Air. On their way to Forrestal's office to receive last minute instructions before Bellinger reported as commander of Naval aviation in Hawaii, Bellinger had been reminded that Forrestal had been under his command at Norfolk in 1918. When they got to the office, Forrestal began by saying, "Bellinger, the last time I saw you at Norfolk, you called me into your office, scared the daylights out of me, and gave me Hell for stunting a plane that shouldn't have been stunted." Bellinger did not remember Forrestal and later said that "After all, I had chewed out a lot of ensigns in my time."

During World War I while Bellinger was commanding officer of N.A.S. Norfolk, he trained more pilots than any other station, including Pensacola – 662 or approximately forty percent of the total of 1,656 Naval aviators. Student pilots were given about 400 minutes of flying instruction in Curtiss trainers. Upon completion, they soloed for

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Accidents in the early days of Naval aviation were common and N.A.S. Norfolk was not immune. In 1918, a kite balloon snagged an overhead power line and exploded, setting off a major inferno. It burned down the base's large balloon hanger. Chief Hanna can be seen at the extreme left with the base payroll tucked safely underneath his arm. (HRNM photo).

Bellinger continued from page 14

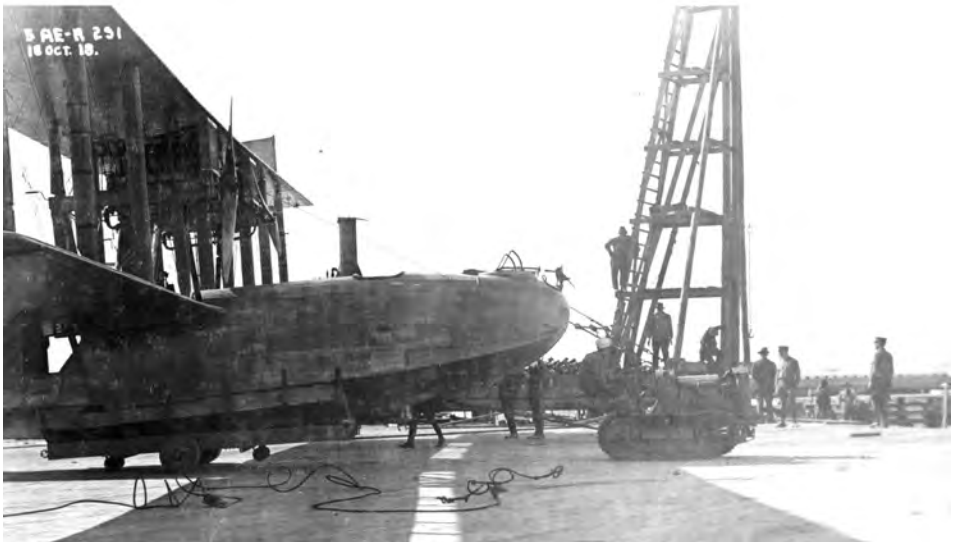
five hours in Navy flying boats and then shifted to the larger N-9 Seaplanes. This was a very short training time compared to what Naval pilots receive today, but apparently very effective. Many became "aces" in Europe by shooting down at least three enemy aircraft.

Some young reserve Naval officers who trained here brought their wives along with them. Since most of them were from families well-known through business contacts in the Hampton Roads area, their wives often were invited to spend afternoons at the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club, not too far from the base. Since the engines of Navy planes were notoriously unreliable, pilots often had to make emergency landings in rough water or ploughed fields. Crashes occurred at least every other day. In one instance, it was reported in the local newspaper that a young pilot flew over the Country Club in order to signal his wife to prepare his dinner by throwing a weighted message onto the lawn. Unfortunately, in doing so, he lost control of the aircraft momentarily, but regained enough power to land in a nearby field. Although unharmed, but severely shaken, he was rescued by Club members and taken back to the Club to recuperate. After which, being fully recovered and well fortified, he took off with rousing cheers from the Club patrons and returned to base. It was not reported what happened to the lucky pilot when he reported to his commanding officer, but knowing Bellinger, it probably would not be printable.

Also during the war, an entire Massachusetts Institute of Technology class was sent to the base to be trained as aircraft mechanics, carpenters, and other general aviation work. Experiments were conducted on aircraft design, instrumentation and launching by catapult. This was done in combination with patrolling for German submarines from the Chesapeake Bay to Wilmington, North Carolina. Bellinger took these responsibilities very seriously, but they were not the only ones that he worried about. Several years before, during the Mexican intervention of 1914, he had the dubious distinction of being pilot of the first naval aircraft to be damaged by hostile fire. He knew from experience that Naval aircraft had little or no armament. They were also underpowered and effective launch and recover mechanisms for the new heavier aircraft had yet to be developed.

During those early developmental years, the Navy had not accounted in its budget for the loss of aircraft due to accidents, due either to pilot error or design flaws. Therefore, when crashes occurred, Bellinger ordered that the pilot's responsibility beyond his own survival was the rescue of the most expensive part of the plane, the Delco Magneto. An example occurred on October 23, 1917, when Ensign Henry P. Davison, USNRF, gave a large H-16 Curtiss seaplane a test flight and crashed it while attempting an outside loop. The plane stalled and went down near the Rip Raps on Fort Wool. Fortunately, Davison was unharmed and saved the magneto, for which he was warmly congratulated by Bellinger. Later, Davison became a decorated pilot in WWI and his brother, F. Trubee Davison, who also trained at N.A.S. Norfolk, was Assistant Secretary for War (Air) during WWII.

Editor's note: This article includes published research from the late Palo E. Colleta, professor of history at the United States Naval Academy. The author was one of Colleta's students. Part 2 of the article will appear in the next issue.



A sailor on a tractor taxis a Curtis NC-4 flying boat to the water for a patrol mission over Hampton Roads during World War I. (HRNM photo).

One of the more wanted pirates in the West Indies was an American who went by the name Charles Gibbs (center). His real name was James Jeffers and he falsely claimed honorable service aboard the sloop USS Hornet *and frigate USS* Chesapeake *during the War of 1812. He fled from a raid conducted by the company of USS* Enterprise*, but was later turned in by a mutinous crew. A New York court convicted him of murder and executed him in 1831. (Engraving from* The Pirates Own Book or Authentic Tales of Bloody Adventure*)*

Pirates continued from page 7

charge but recommended he be tried by court martial.

Captain James Barron presided over Porter's court, which convened on July 7. At issue were two charges: disobedience of orders and insubordinate conduct. The court sat for five weeks before the findings were sent to President Adams on August 13. Porter was found guilty of both charges. He was to be suspended from active service for six months, but retain all pay and allowances. On the 19th, Adams wrote to Porter saying he had approved the punishment. Porter again expressed outrage and resigned from the U.S. Navy. He went on to become Admiral of the Mexican Navy.

When Porter had first been recalled after Fajardo, Southard selected Captain Lewis Warrington as his replacement. The Williamsburg-born Warrington had made his name in the War of 1812 when, in command of USS *Peacock*, captured HM Brig *Epervier* off the coast of Florida. Warrington was ashore in command of the Gosport Navy Yard at the time of his elevation. Proceeding south in his flagship *Constellation*, the new commodore quickly proved himself to be the "active, systematic and enterprising officer" that the Navy Secretary felt him to be. Warrington's relations with both the Spanish colonial government and the Royal Navy West India Squadron were cordial and supportive. In March 1825, Lieutenant John D. Sloat from the schooner *Grampus* used two small merchant vessels as decoy ships in the channel between St Thomas and Puerto Rico. The ruse worked and a pirate sloop captained by the notorious Cofrecina was driven onshore. Spanish authorities tried and executed the captured pirates, a markedly different response from the Puerto Ricans who previously were likely to turn a blind eye. Also that month, *Sea Gull* was used to tow boats from the British frigate *Dartmouth* into position to attack a secluded pirate camp. Eight buccaneers were killed and nineteen captured. Their base was razed.

By the end of the summer of 1825, Warrington was able to write the Navy Department that piracy seemed to have disappeared along the coasts of Cuba and Puerto Rico. *Niles Weekly Register*, a Baltimore-based but nationally-read newspaper, wrote the squadron under Warrington had "not made much noise, but silently stopped piracy, by vigilance". In 1826, the West Indies Squadron's area of responsibility continued to remain quiet. Pervasive maritime lawlessness appeared at an end in the Caribbean, and Warrington accomplished it without the drama of the previous commander.

Command of the squadron passed from Warrington to Charles Ridgley (1827–1829) and Jesse D. Elliot (1829–1832). In the 1830's, the squadron maintained a blockade and supply boat crews during the Seminole Wars. In 1841, the West Indies Squadron was absorbed into the newly created Home Squadron. During the period of its peak activity the squadron was not a plumb assignment. It suffered the highest mortality rate of any U.S. Naval force before or since, in war or peace. An officer or sailor was more likely to end up dead at Thompson's Island than off Okinawa or in the river deltas of Vietnam.

In Our Next Issue...

-Yorktown's Big Bang

-P.N.L. Bellinger's and N.A.S. Norfolk in World War II

-Book Reviews: *Flotilla: the Patuxent Naval Campaign in the War of 1812* and *The Development of Mobile Logistic Support*