THE DAYBOOK

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NAVAL MUSEUM

Local History. World Events.

About The Daybook *and the Museum*

The Daybook is an unofficial 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. Book reviews are solely the opinion of the reviewer.

The HRNM is operated and funded by Commander, Navy Region, Mid-Atlantic. The museum is dedicated to the study of 225 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. It is also responsible for the historic interpretation of the battleship *Wisconsin*.

Call for information on the museum's and *Wisconsin's* hours of operations. Admission to the museum and *Wisconsin* is free. *The Daybook'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.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at 757-322-2993, by fax at 757-445-1867, e-mail at ghealhoun@nmcmail.navy.mil, or write *The Daybook*, 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://www.hrnm.navy.mil.

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Rear Admiral Stephen A. Turcotte
Commander, Navy Region, Mid-Atlantic

HRNM Staff

Director
Becky Pouillon
Curator
Joe Judge
Exhibits Specialist
Marta Nelson
Museum Tech./Librarian
Ofelia Elbo
***Editor of* The Daybook**
Gordon Calhoun
Architectural Historian
Michael Taylor
***Battleship* Wisconsin**
Operations Manager
Captain Mary Mosier, USN (Ret.)
Education Specialist
Odean Vanthul
Special Events/Education
Kathryn Shaffner
Volunteer Coordinator
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Public Relations
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NCC(SW) Lisa Robinson
Ceremonies/Graphic Design
LI2 (SW) S. Clay Hiskens
Education/LPO
ABE1 (AW) James Capasso
Director, HRNHF
Rear Admiral Byron Tobin, USN (Ret.)

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Cover Illustration: After the "difficulties" in Mexico and a much needed rest period at the Charlestown Navy Yard, the Navy assigned *Cumberland* to the Mediterranean Squadron to look after American interests. The cover illustration shows the "Flagship" throwing a party while at anchor in La Spezia, Kingdom of Sardinia and it is symbolic of the relatively easy cruises the frigate had from the early to mid 1850s.

A Museum in Motion

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

By the time you receive this issue, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum will be experiencing its peak visitation period, with lots of families and sunburned tourists. Throw in the new programs that are currently in the works, and 2005 promises to be an exciting year.

In the midst of this motion is our new educator Odean VantHul. Odean is one of the Navy's own. He retired after twenty-three years as a senior chief. His military career included service on board ships ranging from cruisers to hydrofoils and he was a Craftmaster of hovercraft. Shore duty included eleven years as an instructor teaching naval personnel how to use cruise missiles and operate hovercraft. After retiring from the Navy, Odean put this instructional experience to work in the museum field. He was an educator for the Virginia Children's Museum in Portsmouth and for the past several years has ably served Nauticus, also as an educator.

Odean is a dynamo. His hands-on approach and enthusiasm are infectious. For example, he has recharged our Speakers' Bureau. Last year there were nineteen occasions where staff and volunteers went out into the community to share information about the museum or to present material on some aspect of naval history. We reached 833 people in 2004, not a bad number, but one that Odean and the rest of our crew here would love to see increase. Recently, Odean called a organizational meeting to brainstorm how to improve our community outreach. Now here is a good place for me to make the plug. Please, if you are reading this article and have the gift of gab, consider joining our Speakers' Bureau. We will arm you with the equipment you need, assist in deciding on topics and even go with you on one of your initial outings. Talks can range from an overview of the museum, to the history of USS *Wisconsin,* or to a specific area of interest that you may have in naval history, such as the Civil War's Battle of the Ironclads. Normally, groups want a speaker's presentation to run twenty minutes, but talks can range up to one hour. Our Speakers' Bureau team will be meeting soon to receive Power Point training, since slide projectors are going the way of the dinosaur. So, give Odean a call at 322-2992 and enlist!

Our newest staff member Odean VantHul, who has taken over as the museum's education specialist. (Photo by Marta Nelson)

Odean will also be responsible for overseeing a group of part-time educators this summer. These interns will assist both Odean and Kathryn Shaffner in several new educational endeavors such as first and third person reenacting, "Family Fun" events, and guiding tours on the ship and in the gallery. Make a point to attend one of these new programs this summer.

The last educational innovation that is reaching fruition is our architectural heritage program's website. We have overhauled its design to make it more attractive and user friendly. These changes have brought the Navy's historic structures in Hampton Roads to life. See for yourself by going to our website, www.hrnm.navy.mil, and click on the architectural heritage program button.

Enjoy your summer,

Becky

Moving?
Change of Command?
New Subscriber?

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Hampton Roads Naval Museum
Daybook Editor
One Waterside Drive Ste 248
Norfolk, VA 23510-1607
or e-mail to gbcalhoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil

HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL★MUSEUM
Local History. World Events.

Museum Launches New Education Programs

Our education staff members certainly have been busy spreading the news that HRNM has superb SOL-based programs, teacher workshops and opportunities to augment current curriculum. Kathryn Shaffner and Odean VantHul recently met with Social Studies curriculum managers from Newport News, Chesapeake, Suffolk and Portsmouth. These get togethers allowed our staff to provide information about HRNM offerings like field trips and outreach, and at the same time, to get feedback on what educators need. The meetings have been very successful and are netting new markets. Odean and Kathryn have been invited back to meet with district lead teachers to plan on concrete ways to use HRNM.

Another obvious educational priority is to reach active duty Navy—to inform our military about their heritage. Odean is developing a General Military Training (GMT) program to bring to all the Hampton Roads Naval stations. He has contacted the local Command Master Chiefs to get their input, and already has a pilot GMT course which he will present at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital. This GMT course is very interactive (no nodding off expected) and is a take off on the television show *Jeopardy*. So stay tuned, and we'll let you know how GMT is being received.

Odean has also contacted the Naval Leadership (NAVLEAD) schools with the goal to incorporate HRNM into their curriculum, specifically in the Naval Leadership courses. Kathryn is working on the future Navy by opening HRNM to visiting Navy Junior ROTC (NJROTC) groups. This year we have seen a marked increase in the number of NJROTC visits. The museum staff feel it is important to give these young men and women a sense of pride in their Navy's history. Thus far, we are receiving positive feedback from the groups.

Plans are also underway to make USS *Wisconsin's* education room a place of adventure for young and old alike this summer. With the help of summer interns, HRNM will offer games and interactive lessons for children of all ages. This wonderful program would not have been possible without the financial support of Global Associates. Marta Nelson, our exhibits specialist, is transforming this former office space into a visitor friendly area.

For more information on the museum education programs, or to get involved, call Odean at 322-2990 or Kathryn at 322-3108. All programs are free of charge to the public.

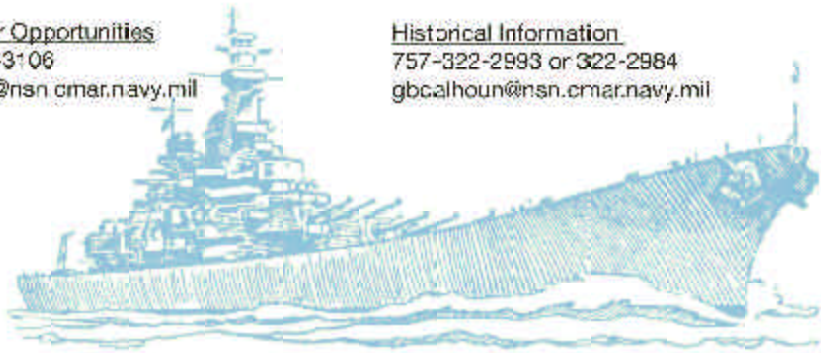
Wisconsin Visitor Information

General Information
757-322-2987
www.hrnm.navy.mil

Volunteer Opportunities
757-322-3106
tdandes@nsn.cmar.navy.mil

Honor and Ceremonies
757-322-2988
schoskins@nsn.cmar.navy.mil

Historical Information
757-322-2993 or 322-2984
gbcalhoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil



Nauticus' *Wisconsin* Exhibits
757-664-1000
www.nauticus.org
shelia.harrison@norfolk.gov

Wisconsin Project Partners
Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation
www.hrnhf.org

USS *Wisconsin* Association
www.usswisconsin.org

Battleship *Wisconsin* Foundation
www.battleshipwisconsin.org

These two color pictures of Wisconsin*'s ship's company inspection at sea were taken by photographers from the* Milwaukee Journal *and appeared in the newspaper's October 29, 1944 edition. (Photos by* Milwaukee Journal*)*

The Eugene Kohn *Wisconsin* Collection

Historians and curators sure do love collectors, especially when we find out that the collectors kept everything they ever owned. We, however, are even happier when a person was a part of an historical moment or place. Eugene Kohn is one such person that the Hampton Roads Naval Museum will be forever indebted. Kohn served as the public affairs officer and postal officer for USS *Wisconsin* during World War II. Among his many responsibilities, the Yale-educated officer was in charge of *The Badger*, the ship's newsletter, getting programs assembled for special events, and press liaison.

We had thought we had seen it all before Mr. Kohn recently donated his collection of papers and items to the museum. World War II material for the battleship is getting increasingly hard to come by. Fortunately, Mr. Kohn kept every single special event program, several photos, never before seen, and many other personal documents and effects from his time in the U.S. Navy. On pages 4 and 5 are just a small sample of what he donated.

Eugene Kohn as drawn by one of the ship's staff artists

The Captain and Officers
cordially invite you to be present at the ceremonies
attendant to the commissioning of the
United States Ship Wisconsin
Sunday the seventh of April
one thousand, nine hundred and forty four
at half after twelve o'clock
Navy Yard Philadelphia

By order
The Prospective Commanding Officer
United States Ship Wisconsin

Eugene Kohn as an ensign with Captain Earl Stone (center), Wisconsin *'s first commanding officer, and Rear Admiral Donald Beary (right), Commander Fleet Operational Training Command, on board* Wisconsin *during the admiral's inspection of the ship, August 1944.*

"Grand Ball Held Aboard USS Cumberland, La Spezia" This pleasant scene took place in La Spezia, Kingdom of Sardinia, which was serving as the U.S. Navy's Mediterranean Squadron's new overseas naval station after being evicted from Port Mahon. (1855 engraving by Pierce)

The Flagship's Roman Holiday

USS *Cumberland*'s 1850s Mediterranean Cruises

by Gordon Calhoun

After returning from her second tour in the Mexican War, USS *Cumberland* headed to New York City and its navy yard for a major overhaul. After spending over a year in the yards, the Navy recommissioned the frigate on July 19, 1849. The Department soon after assigned her for duty in the all important Mediterranean Squadron. U.S. Naval operations in the Mediterranean Sea continued to be among the most vital, and sought after, of all overseas assignments. The assignment had taken on new meaning since the frigate's first deployment to the region in the mid-1840s. American merchants armed with bigger ships were taking their flags and cargoes to Europe in greater numbers. American missionaries were also busy exporting their various brands of Christianity back to the Old Country.

This growing American involvement, however, was threatened by increasingly violent events. Nationalist movements swept the continent causing significant turmoil, particuarly Giuseppe Garibaldi's nationalist movement and his war against foreign powers and Pope Pius IX in Italy. Adding to this, problems were brewing in the Ottoman Empire and in newly independent Greece. Officially, the United States was neutral in all of the conflicts and the squadron's mission was to ensure that neutrality was maintained.

The frigate departed New York on August 11 under the command of the somewhat temperamental Captain William K. Latimer. Helping him run the ship were four lieutenants and several passed midshipmen and midshipmen. On Latimer's staff were four future flag officers: Lieutenant Charles Steedman, Lieutenant George Chapman, Acting Master (a 19th century warrant officer rank) John M. B.

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This is part four of an ongoing series about the flagship and symbol for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, the frigate/sloop-of-war USS Cumberland. *The museum is the only official repository for artifacts from the ship, which was sunk by the ironclad CSS* Virginia *on March 8, 1862.*

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Part 3-Cumberland in Mexico (Operations in the Mexican War)
Part 4-The Flagship's Roman Holiday (Second Cruise to the Mediterranean)
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Part 6-Rebuilding a Classic (Conversion to the Sloop-of-War)
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Part 8-Death with Honor (Battle of Hampton Roads)
Part 9-The Flagship at Rest (Rediscovery and Recovery)

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Click, and Northampton County, Virginia-native Passed Midshipman John Upshur. Also assisting Latimer with day to day operations of the ship were his own personal civilian staff members since Latimer paid their wages out of his own pocket. The staff included a personal steward, a cook, and Robert Rogers as his personal secretary and administrative assistant.

Cumberland joined a squadron that contained the razeed ship-of-the-line *Independence*, the steam frigate *Mississippi*, the frigate *Constitution*, which was on her last cruise to the Mediterranean in her historic fifty plus year career, the sloop *Jamestown*, and the store ship *Lexington*. The squadron commodore William C. Morgan chose the larger *Independence* as his flagship, marking a rare time in *Cumberland*'s history that she was not the flagship of the squadron.

It took a little over a month for the frigate to cross the Atlantic and arrive at the British colony/naval base of Gibraltar on September 13. The frigate could not, however, spend any more time in Gibraltar than necessary. Garibaldi had recently returned from his exile in New York City and was in Rome defending the newly (and shortly lived) formed "Roman Republic" after Pope Pius fled the city. But foreign forces, such as French and Austrian armies, were marching on Rome to retake the city on behalf of the Pontif. In addition to that war, independent-minded Sicilians revolted against their oppressive Neapolitan ruler King Ferdinand II.

For *Cumberland*, it meant spending most of the rest of 1849 in Italian ports to ensure American neutrality. From Gibraltar, the frigate travelled to the grand harbor of Naples and then to the Squadron's new naval station in La Spezia on the mainland part of the Kingdom of Sardinia. The frigate soon returned to Naples and then to Messina in Sicily for winter quarters in order to ride out the seasonal storms and to keep watch over events in Sicily. A recent bombardment of the port of Palermo by Ferdinand's forces was so infamous that the Neapolitan monarch earned the nickname "King Bomba."

With the spring weather, the frigate began a seventy day tour along the southern and eastern coast of Italy. Most of the time was spent in Naples and then to the eastern Italian cities of Ancona, Austrian-controlled Trieste on the northern end of the Adriatic Sea, and Brindisi in the southeast.

During this part of cruise, a seemingly minor misunderstanding exploded into a major incident between the officers of the ship. On the morning of May 27, while the frigate was en route to Ancona, Latimer summoned his personal secretary Robert Rogers to have some letters composed. When summoned, Rogers was busy using the ship's account book to reconcile Latimer's expenses with the ship's accounts. Latimer's Marine guard interrupted the meeting to announce that the ship's purser Joseph Bryan wanted the account book back from Rogers.

Latimer told the Marine to tell Bryan to wait. The Marine returned a few minutes later to state that "Mr. Bryan wants his book now." A flustered Latimer issued a stern order back to the Marine to be left alone. Annoyed by the rejection, Bryan later confronted Rogers personally about the book, which turned into a shouting match. Latimer had to personally intervene in the matter to settle the dispute. Now in front of his commanding officer, Bryan claimed that he was not annoyed and that the Marine had told him something that set him off, which was not believed by anyone. Latimer lectured Bryan and the matter was dropped.

During the 1840s and 50s, the United States experience a decade of relative peace in foreign affairs. However, the decade was one of violence for Europe. In Italy, where nationalist movements led by Giuseppe Garibaldi (shown above on horse back) waged war against the Church and foreign powers. Cumberland *spent much of her time protecting America's neutrality in Italy and around the Aegean Sea. (1855 engraving by the* London Daily News*)*

It would not be the last time Latimer grew impatient with his staff. Later on in the cruise, he allegedly assaulted his cabin steward by punching him in the face. Fortunately, Bryan and the Marine on duty at the time later testified that Latimer was innocent of the crime.

In another case of indiscretion, Latimer had a serious dispute with his officers over the use of small boats. Latimer gave an order that no boat was to come along the

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Four of Cumberland*'s division officers from the 1849-1851 cruise were destined for flag rank. Charles Steedman, on the left, went on to command USS* Ticonderoga *in the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron and made admiral in 1880. Northampton County, Virginia native John Upshur, center, later saw action in several engagements along the East Coast during the Civil War and made admiral in 1885. John M. B. Click served as the ship's sailing master and became quite the prolific blockade enforcer during the Civil War. George Chapman, lower right as a midshipman, would resign from the service, but later joined the Indiana Cavalry and served with Phillip Sherdian as a major-general (upper right).*

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starboard side of the frigate. His officers did not see why this was an issue and asked for an explanation. The issue exploded into a series of letters, written for the record, back and forth between the two sides.

Otherwise, the officers, Latimer in particular, took it quite easy during the Adriatic patrol. Rogers' expense book showed that Latimer took off for seven days in side trips to Verona and Venice when the ship made port in Trieste.

With issues in Italy somewhat settled, territories within the Ottoman Empire had to be watched. The frigate left Brindisi for a two week trip across the Mediterranean to the city of Beirut. Arriving in early July 1850, the ship anchored in one of the great cities of the Middle East and found two other warships in port: a Turkish sloop-of-war and the French brig *Mercure*. The French warship was received with high honors from the American frigate as it had recently received a gold medal from Congress in thanks for saving shipwrecked American sailors during the late war with Mexico. Both ships sent over groups of officers to the American ship for a "visit of civility" as one officer described it.

The American warship continued to receive other dignitaries, as a parade of diplomats arrived including the British ambassador one day, the Prussian ambassador the next, and then the American vice-counsel the day after that. Each time the crew cleaned up the ship, broke out the flag of the visiting party's nation on the forecastle, and mustered for inspection.

Discipline during this time period began to deteriorate and crew members committed various acts of mischief and serious crimes. A sample of the punishment included Latimer stripping two of his petty officers of their rate, and had one of them flogged twelve times for raiding the ship's liquor locker, getting drunk, and for disorderly conduct. Another sailor was flogged twelve times for being "noisy and troublesome." Age was no protection from the cats, as an underaged sailor was flogged eight times for stealing another sailor's hat. Age did provide some protection for younger sailors from older sailors as a landsman found out when he was flogged twelve times "for circulating infamous, obscene, and disgusting refronts" against a ship's boy. For this same landsman, twelve times apparently was not enough as he received twelve more lashes two days later when he shouted obscenities to both his division officer and petty officer.

After the port call to Beirut and Tripoli, the frigate sailed for the ancient port city of Jaffa. After an official visit to the ship from the Turkish governor, Latimer arranged for liberty and field trips to Jerusalem for his well behaved sailors.

Shortly after the last shore party returned to the ship on August 1, the ship left port for Alexandria. Ship chaplain Rev. Addision Searle took ill and died suddenly. Adding some insult to the death, when the chaplain's coffin was put over the side to be buried at sea the carpenters did not weigh the coffin down enough, and it did not sink. Latimer had to have *Cumberland* turn around, send a boat crew over to retrieve the coffin and add more weight.

Unsure of the illness and with a few other sailors also on the sick list, the ship's surgeon ordered the quarantine flag to be flown as the ship entered the harbor of Alexandria. While in Alexandria, the ship received word that President Zachary Taylor had died in office six weeks earlier. Latimer ordered the flag to be flown at half-mast with a gun to be fired every 15 minutes throughout the day.

The ship left Alexandria in mid-August and sailed back to La Spezia to rendezvous with the rest of the squadron. Arriving at the naval station a few weeks later, Latimer had the crew break out the soap to scrub the ship down. For the next two weeks, the crew repainted the ship and the officer's cabin, whitewashed the deck, repaired damage caused to the guns during various battle drills, and did some much needed laundry. The ship's carpenters ordered and received several hundred boards of ash wood and pine and several gallons of boiled linseed oil to make repairs to the deck and hull.

While *Cumberland*'s sailors cleaned and sanitized their ship, the remaining ships of the Mediterranean Squadron returned from their respective assignments to rest their crews and repair their vessels. It was also a time for Commodore Morgan to find

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Three officers from the 1849 cruise would later "go South" in 1861. Shown here is John Dunnington who had a dual rank during the Civil War: a colonel in the Confederate Army and a lieutenant in the Confederate Navy. He would later serve as commanding officer of the ironclad CSS Virginia II *at the 1864 Battle of Trent's Reach. (Photo provided by the Museum of the Confederacy)*

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out what his squadron had been up to for the last five months and to catch up on naval justice. Latimer referred several cases to him that the captain believed deserved more punishment that he could legally dispense.

Of the most serious crimes happened during this stand down. Six sailors commandeered one of *Cumberland*'s small boats and rowed for shore attempting to desert. The frigate's Marines rowed after them in their own boat and caught them. The six men were court-martialled and dismissed from the service. All six were confined in the store ship *Lexington* , which was heading home early.

Two more sailors attempted to desert a month later, but were also caught and confined. During the court-martial, Commodore Morgan overruled Latimer and released one of the accused sailors. As one might expect, the short-tempered Latimer was furious. In a rare case, the captain had recorded in the ship's log exactly what he personally thought of the sailor and how the sailor should be punished.

With *Lexington* heading home, some of *Cumberland'*s division and junior officers went home with it. New officers checked on board including Lieutenant William Sharp, a future Confederate Naval officer who would serve in various East Coast commands in the Civil War, two passed midshipmen, and a new Marine officer.

The squadron as a whole left La Spezia in November for Naples, where it made winter quarters. The squadron remained there until spring until ordered home in April 1851. *Cumberland* sailed in company with *Independence* to Cadiz. The two ships stopped in the Spanish port where Latimer picked up more wine and souvenirs. *Independence* stayed behind and *Cumberland* sailed home to Boston.

As soon as the frigate arrived in Boston, Latimer received word that the Secretary of the Navy wanted to speak to him personally about the incidents on the cruise. The frigate was decommissioned and laid up at Charlestown Navy Yard for several months in preparation for a return cruise to the Mediterranean.

For this third tour, the Department chose Commodore Silas Stringham to oversee the Squadron. In turn, he selected *Cumberland* to be his flagship and broke out his pennant on April 28, 1852. He would command a four-ship squadron that also included the steam frigate *San Jacinto* and the sloops *St. Louis* and *Levant*.

Running the day-to-day operations was Commander Louis Malesherbes Goldsborough, familiar to many for his future position as an early commandant of the U.S. Naval Academy and for his role in early Civil War operations. He received the post as *Cumberland*'s sixth commanding officer. Among his division officers were: Henry Augustus Wise, cousin of Virginia governor and U.S. Senator Henry Alexander Wise; J. Blakely Creighton, who would later serve an important role as assistant chief of the Bureau of Ordinance; Edward Barrett, who would later serve as commanding officer of the monitor USS *Catskill* during the siege of Charleston; and John L. Worden, most well known for his position as commanding officer of USS *Monitor.*

The ship began loading up both supplies and new recruits for its scheduled two year cruise to the Mediterranean in late April. The receiving ship/ship-of-the-line *Ohio* sent over a trickle of new sailors over a period of two weeks to help fill in manpower gaps aboard the Flagship. In addition to ship supplies, non-military stores came on board as well. Among these stores, in its continuing role as an arm of the Department of State, *Cumberland*'s sailors loaded several packages and official letters for the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.

Goldsborough deemed the ship ready by mid-May and the frigate left Boston and

Louis Malesherbes Goldsborough, shown here as a flag officer, served as Cumberland*'s sixth commanding officer in 1852. Goldsborough is most well known for being one of the early commandants of the U.S. Naval Academy and for his service during the American Civil War. (Naval Historical Center photo)*

sailed for Gibraltar on May 17, 1852. She arrived in the British colony on June 8, saluted the British flag, and received the American ambassador for consultations with Stringham.

Left behind in Boston were the cat-o-nine tails. This cruise was the first cruise since Congress had outlawed flogging after intense lobbying by military judicial reform advocates. The captain could now only shackle and confine sailors deemed unruly or otherwise out of line with Naval regulations. The first case aboard *Cumberland* of the kinder and gentler Navy occurred while in Gibraltar. On June 9, Goldsborough found a sailor guilty of "treating an officer with contempt," which more than likely would have resulted in twelve lashes with the cats under the old system. Under the new system, the sailor was shackled in double irons and confined in the ship's brig for a few days.

The Flagship continued into the Mediterranean, sailing north of Minorca, and arriving at La Spezia on June 18. *San Jacinto* arrived at La Spezia a day later. The two ships spent a week resupplying before sailing south to Sicily and Naples where violence between nationalist and anti-nationalist forces continued.

The two ships spent about five days between the two ports. On the Fourth of July, *Cumberland* fired off a 21-gun salute before putting the crew to work by flushing out the ship's watertanks and replacing the

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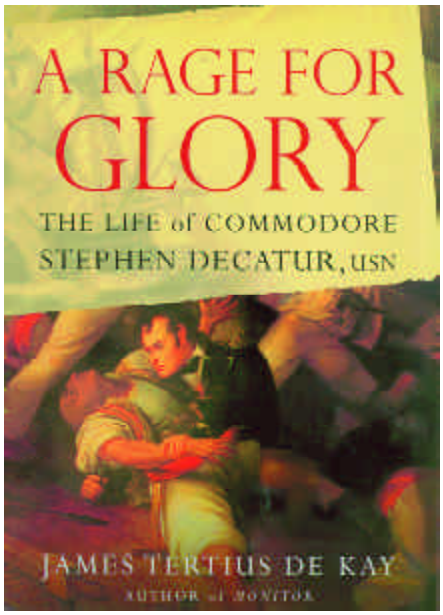
Book Reviews

A Rage for Glory: The Life of Commodore Stephen Decatur, USN
by James Tertius de Kay

Stephen Decatur: A Life Most Bold and Daring (Library of Naval Biography Series)
by Spencer Tucker
Reviewed by Joe Mosier



Stephen Decatur, Junior, was one of 19th Century America's greatest heroes. The proof of this statement lies in any gazetteer or road map. Some 22 cities, townships or counties bear his name. His fame rested on his actions during three wars. Son of one of the first U.S. Navy captains, Decatur was warranted a midshipman on board the frigate *United States* in 1798. He learned his trade fighting the French in the West Indies during the so-called Quasi-War.

James Tertius de Kay. *Rage for Glory: The Life of Commodore Stephen Decatur, USN*. New York: The Free Press, 2003. ISBN 0-74324-245-9. $25.00.

After that war ended in 1801, the United States engaged in a conflict with the Barbary States on the north coast of Africa. When the frigate *Philadelphia* (which had been commanded by his father) ran aground and was captured, Decatur volunteered to enter the harbor of Tripoli and retake or burn the ship. This successful raid resulted in Decatur's promotion to the rank of captain at the age of twenty-five and placed his name before the American public. He again displayed his personal courage in gunboat actions before Tripoli in August 1804.

During the War of 1812, Decatur, now commanding U. S. frigate *United States*, buoyed American spirits with his capture of the British frigate *Macedonian*. Although he himself was captured in January 1815 while commanding USS *President*, the reports of his ferocious actions in this defeat did little to diminish his standing with an adoring public.

Eager to remove what he saw as a stain on his record, Decatur demanded from the Secretary of the Navy the opportunity to lead a punitive foray against the Barbary States which had taken advantage of the late war to seize American shipping in the Mediterranean. In less than three months from the time of his departure, Decatur had managed to cow the rulers of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli into accepting treaties encompassing all of the American demands.

Appointed to the Board of Naval Commissioners in December 1815, Decatur was at the peak of his naval career. He and his wife Susan Wheeler Decatur were likewise at the top of Washington society. An increasingly contemptuous exchange of letters with Captain James Barron led to a call to the field of honor. This meeting was fostered by their seconds, both also naval captains acting from personal antagonism. On March 22, 1820, Stephen Decatur died as a result of the wound he received in the duel held in Bladensburg, Maryland. He was only forty-one years old. His funeral was attended by virtually everyone one of importance in the nation's capital.

Despite his contemporary iconic status, Decatur's fame suffered a continual decline during the century and a half following his death. No significant biography of Commodore Decatur had appeared since the 1930's. Now two authors, James Tertius de Kay and Spencer C. Tucker, have turned their attention to him in the last year. Both have already written significant works on the navy in which Decatur served. De Kay's *Chronicles of the Frigate* Macedonian (1995) traced the career of a ship Decatur captured in the War of 1812. Tucker authored two studies on the early U.S. Navy, *Arming the Fleet* (1989) and *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy* (1993), and co-authored a third, *Injured Honor: The* Chesapeake – Leopard *Affair* (1996).

Both new biographies have used a detail from Dennis Malone Carter's "Decatur Boarding the Tripolitan Gunboat" for their cover art. This choice provides an unintended metaphor for the prime difference in the two works. The cover for de Kay's *A Rage for Glory* features a tight shot of the struggle between Decatur and the Tripolitan captain while that of Tucker's *Stephen Decatur* uses a broader view with more of the background displayed. Likewise, de Kay's biography concentrates more specifically on Decatur and Tucker offers less a life of Decatur than a history of the early U. S. Navy with Decatur as its focal point. The resulting difference in view point leads to strengths and weaknesses peculiar to each book.

Rage for Glory: The Life of Commodore Stephen Decatur, USN is, in format, a more traditional biography although generally lacking in the hagiographic overtones of earlier works on Decatur. The book reads extremely well. It is a spirited recounting of both the man and the three wars he fought. However, in emphasizing Decatur's

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overweening desire for fame and admiration from his peers, de Kay sometimes describes motivations in Decatur's acts that can not be confirmed from contemporary sources particularly given that Decatur was a reluctant wordsmith from whom little personal as opposed to professional correspondence remains. Like those earlier biographers, de Kay has provided only the barest of annotation. There are no footnotes per se and the reader interested in further exploring Decatur's career will be hard pressed to use *Rage* as a departure point. Also de Kay's book lacks both maps and illustrations.

Stephen Decatur: A Life Most Daring and Bold is the latest work in the Naval Institute's Library of Naval Biography. Dr. Tucker was for many years a professor at Texas Christian University and later Virginia Military Institute. He has produced a scholarly book that is more restrained in its language and assumptions than de Kay's work. As in his previous works on the period, Tucker covers his material thoroughly and gracefully. The reader will find a cornucopia of details about trends in the development and turning points in the history of the U. S. Navy during the years Decatur served. *Stephen Decatur* contains twenty-four pages of footnotes, a seven-page glossary of nautical terms, maps and illustrations. It is the kind of robust scholarly work that this reviewer loves.

Spencer Tucker. *Stephen Decatur: A Life Most Bold and Daring*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004. ISBN 1-5575-0999-9. $32.95.

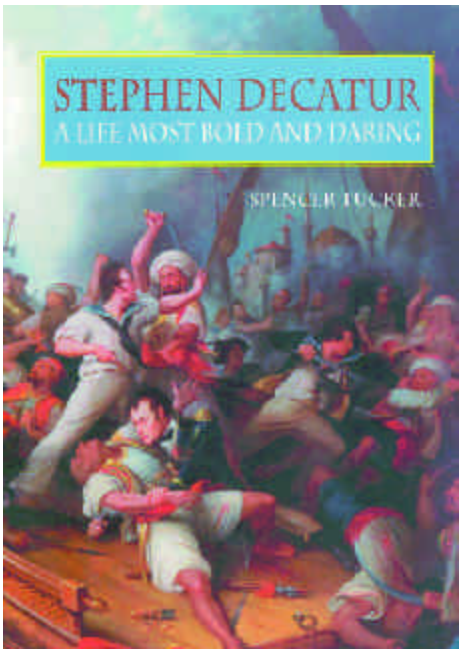
To illustrate the differences between the two books, consider the way in which each author deals with Decatur's marriage to Susan Wheeler.

On his return from the Mediterranean in 1806, Decatur met and married the talented and beautiful young daughter of a leading Norfolk merchant. Tucker covers the events in a single paragraph. Six pages are used by de Kay to describe the couple's meeting and wedding. The incident is important to a deeper understanding of Decatur's life. Marrying Susan not only resulted in important emotional support for the young captain; it also resulted in a dramatic impact on his relationship with the man who would later kill him. James Barron had been Midshipman Decatur's superior on board *United States* and an important early mentor. De Kay writes that their friendship ended when Barron made an indelicate remark about Decatur's supposed fiancée back in Philadelphia, when he encountered the two walking one day in Norfolk.

The original source of this narrative is Barron himself in a memorandum of the duel which he wrote years later. A more likely explanation for the cooling of the friendship lies in a tale passed down in Norfolk that Barron had strenuously cautioned Decatur against the marriage due to Susan Wheeler's status as a bastard child. Whichever version is true, it is an important element in understanding Decatur's motivations vis-à-vis Barron.

There is an elephant in the middle of the room towards which each author has made but the briefest of glances. The late Dr. W. M. P. Dunne had spent several years researching Stephen Decatur's life. Unfortunately for naval enthusiasts, Bill died before completing what undoubtedly would have been the definitive Decatur biography. Both de Kay and Tucker reference Dunne's work, but both disclaim using the fruits of his research in their own efforts. While working at the Decatur House in Washington, D.C., this reviewer did some legwork for Dunne at the National Archives and the Naval Historical Center. Bill in turn was generous in sharing the fruits of his own research.

To show how much Bill Dunne's research would have expanded our knowledge, one need only to look at two errors that occur in the first page of the first chapter of *Stephen Decatur*. Tucker writes that Decatur's grandfather Etienne Decatur was a French naval lieutenant from La Rochelle. In fact, he was a former privateer who had been born in a portion of modern-day Italy controlled by the French. Per Tucker, Decatur's father married Ann Pine of Philadelphia. She was in fact from the



Cape May area of New Jersey but visiting her uncle in Philadelphia. While neither of these facts is central to the life of Decatur, they present small examples of the truly in-depth research that Bill Dunne would have given us. It remains my hope that his heirs will offer the opportunity to have his great work finished and published.

Until that time, the reader interested in the foremost naval hero of the early national period will do well to read either (indeed both) of the works offered. For Hampton Roads readers Decatur is a figure of great local significance. He served as the First Lieutenant of the brig *Norfolk*, married the mayor's daughter, commanded naval forces stationed at Norfolk and once lived in the Freemason area of the city. This reviewer suggests starting with Tucker for an overview of the navy and times in which Decatur served. Move on to de Kay for a fuller exposition on the character of Decatur and the manner in which that character caused him to lead his life and meet his death.

Answering a Few Charges

The previous issue of *The Daybook*, specifically the article on St. Juliens Creek Annex, raised some eyebrows and demands for corrections. The Sage is here to provide swift justice to his readers.

Charge #1: The most glaring one of course is that the 20mm guns were Oerlikon not Okerlins and the 40mm guns were Bofors and not Boffers. The Editor should have known better. **Verdict: Guilty as charged**.

Charge #2: As to the substance of the

The Museum Sage

article, it was mentioned that the Annex was served by the "Virginia Railway Company." An objection has been voiced that there was no such railroad. The objector believed we were referring to the famous Virginian Railroad that shipped large amounts of coal from the mines in western Virginia to Norfolk (now part of the Norfolk Southern system) in the early part of the 20th century.

One of our major sources for the article was an official 1942 publication about America's Naval facilities written by the Bureau of Yards and Docks that referred to the railroad as the "Virginia Railway Company." The Bureau of Yards and Docks got its information from a Norfolk County deed book, which records the official land transfer as the "Virginia Railway Company." There was another railroad mentioned called the Virginia and South Belt Line. Same answer, that's what appeared in the deed book. More than likely it is an issue of official history vs. popular history. Perhaps the general public knew the company by one name, but lawyers and government officials knew it as another. **Verdict: Not Guilty**

Charge #3: There were a few objections to the article that it went into great, mind numbing detail about seemingly petty objects on St. Juliens Creek Annex. One example was the lightning rod system. All The Sage can say is that what is boring to one person, another person finds absolutely fascinating. This is why yard sales exist: to sell items that one person finds boring to another person who finds the object so fascinating that he/she is willing to spend money to get his/her hands on it. The Sage personally found the Annex's Lightning Rod Protection System to be among one of the most unique items on America's military bases.

Furthermore, at the risk of incurring the wrath of historiography professors worldwide, the Sage defines history as the sum of what we as humans have done, including what we have built. It is in NOT based on a scale of one to ten on how interesting an event, person, or object is rated. "Boring" is a common objection about *Daybook* articles especially if there is no combat in the article. The Navy is an institution that attempts to preserve the peace and go to war only when necessary. So most of our glorious institution's history is a peaceful one. Nonetheless, the peace history is just as interesting as the war history. **Verdict: Not Guilty**

Was St. Juliens served by the Virginian Railway or the Virginia Railway Company? How about both?

A picture of St. Juliens Creek Annex's lightning rod system. Boring? To some, yes, but to others it is fascinating. More importantly, the interest value is not nearly as important as its interpretive value.

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stale water with 6,000 gallons of fresh water.

That same day, Stringham received a note from the American ambassador in Constantinople, George Perkins Marsh, that there was an serious issue in Greece involving an American missionary and his family. Thinking that American Christians were being harassed by Turkish Muslims, Stringham ordered *Cumberland* to prepare for battle and to make immediate sail for Athens.

Arriving on July 17, Stringham was shocked to find out that it was not Muslims who were harassing Reverend Dr. Jonas King and his family, but rather a group of zealot Greek Orthodox priests who resented King's American brand of Christianity. The priests had arrested Dr. King, accused him of vile sexual activity, and demanded he be expelled. This arrest was just one of a slew of arrests suffered by Dr. King at the hands of his Greek Orthodox counterparts over a period of several years.

Orange County, New York native Silas Stringham chose Cumberland *as his flagship when he assumed control of the Mediterranean Squadron in 1852. Stringham served the Navy for sixty-five years and was a veteran of several actions including the 1811* President/Little Belt *incident and the 1861 Cape Hatteras campaign. He also participated in capturing five pirate and slave ships in the 1820s.*

Most famous for his position as commanding officer of USS Monitor *during the second day of the Battle of Hampton Roads, John L. Worden served as a division officer during* Cumberland*'s third cruise to the Mediterranean. (Naval Historical Center photo)*

News that *Cumberland* was in the area and coming to King's defense created a minor ground swell of American patriotism. An American newspaper reporter on the scene proudly reported to readers back home that the Greek government "seemed to be disposed to draw back from its execution, probably from fear of giving offence [*sic*] to the Government of the United States...we think, that the ordering of the Cumberland frigate into the Mediterranean, and which is now on her way, has something to do with this matter."

The situation, however, was somewhat more complex than the reporter might have believed. Stringham met with Ambassador Marsh and Dr. King aboard the frigate and later accompanied Marsh to meet with the Greek monarch King Otto and his government on shore to work out a solution. Seeking international support, Stringham also met with French naval officers aboard the brand new French 80-gun ship-of-the-line *Charlemagne*, and Russian officers aboard a Russian brig anchored nearby. Stringham and Ambassador Marsh were able to prevent further harassment to Dr. King and he stayed in Greece until his death in 1867. However, Stringham and Marsh could not immediately retrieve property that had been taken away from King.

During the negotiations, a storm came upon the international fleet and drove the French frigate *Pandone* from her anchor. High winds slammed the French warship into *Cumberland* damaging the American ship's flying jib and the boom. Repairs only took a few days and the Flagship was soon ready for action.

Later in the week, a Greek naval officer appeared on board notifying the ship's officers that Otto and his wife were departing for Otto's birthplace in Bavaria. Despite the lack of cooperation from Otto over the American missionary issue, Stringham and Goldsborough put on a happy face and ordered the ship's company to man the riggings. As the Greek royal family passed by, *Cumberland* shot off a 21-gun salute with three cheers from the crew.

Continuing the diplomatic service, a few days later, a Neapolitan naval officer notified Goldsborough that the Neapolitan queen's birthday was coming up and wished that the American flagship would give proper honors. Goldsborough complied as did ships of other nations.

When Stringham and American diplomats attempted to negotiate a solution over the harassment of American missionaries by Greek Orthodox priests, they talked with King Otto. The king was uncooperative and negotiations lasted years. Nonetheless, the Flagship rendered him every diplomatic honor when his ship passed by the frigate. A Bavarian prince by birth, Otto was not a popular ruler and the Greeks eventually expelled him in 1862.

While in port, Lieutenant Francis B. Renshaw checked on board. A Pennsylvania native, he would later resign his commission and command CSS *Jackson* and later commanded part of the defenses of Mobile in 1864.

Later on, Commander George Upshur, captain of *Levant* and younger brother of the deceased Secretary of the Navy Albe Parker, died in La Spezia. To fill in this gap, Stringham transferred Goldsborough to *Levant* and temporarily promoted his flag aide Commander Charles C. Turner as the

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seventh commanding officer of the flagship.

The beginning of the new year, 1853, found *Cumberland* and her crew on a return trip to the Aegean Sea. *Cumberland* made sail for Constantinople. Marsh had received instructions from the new U.S. Secretary of State to demand from the Greeks that Dr. King be given back his land. *Cumberland* retrieved Marsh in March 1853 and ferried him to Athens. At first the talks went as before. Eventually, however, Otto released the seized property and returned it to the Americans.

The new year also found *Cumberland* with a new captain. Pennsylvania native Commander Andrew Harwood relieved Turner on New Year's Day 1853 and became the frigate's eighth commanding officer on what would be his last sea command.

As *Cumberland* help settled the dispute in Greece, a major international crisis was brewing in the region. Demands and threats between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire led to an ultimatum from the Russians to recognize certain claims by the Turks or else war would be declared. Fearing Russian dominance in the region, the British and French began moving warships, troops, and war supplies into the Bosporus.

The move towards a major European war caused many American merchants and missionaries to become quite nervous. Among their worries was a Russian assault on Constantinople. An American newspaper reporter commented to his readers that he did not feel the great city could withstand a major attack and that "By tomorrow morning we may be forewarned of a bombardment and have to leave within 24 hours."

But among the British, French, and Turkish-flagged warships, the reporter saw a glimmer of hope sailing up towards the city, "Amid these scenes came the U.S. Frigate Cumberland and our eyes were made glad with the waving of the Star and Stripes in the Golden Horn."

Cumberland sailed up the Golden Horn

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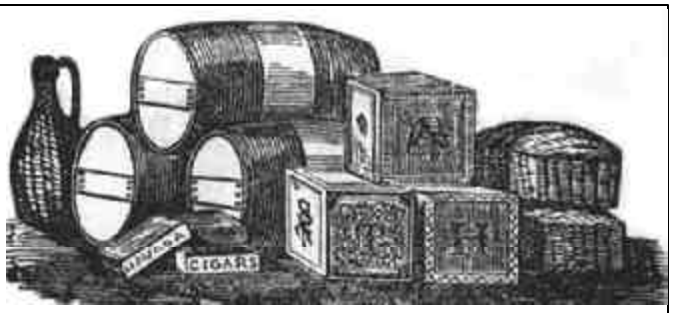
Pennsylvania native Andrew Harwood took command on New Year's Day, 1853 and served as Cumberland*'s eighth commanding officer.* Cumberland *was his last sea duty assignment and served the next twenty years in various shore duties including commandant of the Washington Navy Yard, chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, and as the Navy's Judge Advocate General. (Naval Historical Center photo)*

A Peek at the Captain's Personal Storeroom



When *Cumberland* arrived in Boston on June 15, 1851, Captain Latimer had to make a hasty departure for Washington, D.C. to discuss a few matters with the Secretary of the Navy. The captain left many personal items on the ship and made repeated demands on his overworked clerk Robert Rogers, who was still on the ship in Boston, to handle these items. Latimer wanted many of the objects packed up and sent to his home in Baltimore. Some, however, Latimer told Rogers to either give to the crew or throw overboard. The resulting list gives us an interesting glimpse at the kind of luxury goods a senior officer possessed and collected while on cruise:

-A black silk hat and two straw hats

-Boxes of Bohemian colored glass

-German silverware and tablecloths

-The captain's bedspread, pillows, rugs, and sheets

-Two pistols and a cutlass (returned to the Navy)

-A cask of Madeira wine (from the Portuguese island of Madeira, very popular among 18th and 19th century Americans)

-Ten bottles of "very choice" sherry wine purchased in Cadiz, Spain

-Three gallons of whiskey (returned to the ship's paymaster)

-A box of bottles containing Bay Rum

-A demijohn (a wicker covered bottle, see left side of picture) of brandy worth $31. (later dropped and smashed by a shipping agent)

-A demijohn of cherry bounce (mashed cherries and brown sugar mixed with rum or brandy, a favorite of Martha Washington.) Latimer wanted it quickly secured "otherwise the crew may yet get hold of [it]...get drunk & make trouble"

-Several bottles of Spanish olives

-Several pounds of corned beef, flour, "Indian meal" (corn flour), and a whole pig (Latimer gave it all away as a gift to his crew)

-Five pounds of green tea (returned to the ship's paymaster)

-Several pounds of cherries (for the bounce; Rogers threw them overboard)

-A few live birds, more than likely exotic tropical birds such as parrots or macaws, their cages, and bird seed (Latimer loved his birds more than anything else and gave detailed instructions for their care.)

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(a name for the lower part of the strait that separates Europe from Asia) in late June 1853. Stringham, Harwood, and the officers of the ship met with Americans to see if they needed any assistance. During one of the meetings, Stringham was asked about a possible Russian attack and the defenses of Constantinople. In either what was a major boast of *Cumberland*'s fighting abilities or a sharp critique of the Turks, Stringham claimed that "he could burn and take Constantinople with his ship alone in 24 hours."

Stringham and Harwood also hosted the Armenian Mission, a group of Armenian and American missionaries that sought to spread Christianity in Turkey and Armenia. Among the guests was Nathan Benjamin, a nationally-known American missionary who devoted his life to spreading the Gospel in the region.

Eventually, the anti-Russian forces took the offensive and ended the immediate threat to Constantinople. With the danger level to Americans lowered, *Cumberland* and *Levant* sailed back to Italy for rest and repairs in the later part of 1853. USS *Saranac* rendezvoused with the squadron and replaced *San Jacinto* as the squadron's lone steam powered warship

The ship returned to "Roman Holiday" status in 1854 as the frigate had a very relaxed schedule. Much of the year was spent in friendly Italian ports such as La Spezia, Naples, and Genoa with the occasional trip to Toulon, France. The officers and enlisted alike spent much time on liberty with the occasional work party working on repainting or repairing the deck. In what was symbolic of this part of the cruise, a grand party/ball was held on board the ship with a senior officer from the Neapolitan Navy in attendance.

The relaxed operations schedule unfortunately translated into greater discipline problems among the enlisted ranks, and the expression "idle hands do the Devil's work" was truer than ever. When *Cumberland* anchored in port, an average of two to three incidents a day required Harwood's attention, such as fighting, sleeping on watch, being drunk on watch, and showing contempt for officers, compared to almost zero incidents while the ship was underway at sea.

In one incident, three sailors attempted to desert in Messina. All three were caught and brought before Stringham for court-martial. For two of the sailors, Stringham docked their pay. For one sailor, Stringham gave a very unusual and yet more cruel punishment. Stringham ordered the sailor's entire pay for the cruise (over two year's pay) be docked, that he be sent home in shackles on the next available ship, "disgracefully discharged," and then be forced to reenlist in the Navy at a substantially reduced pay rate. The sailor probably wished for the cats.

Stringham and Harwood had to deal with other ships' problems as well. The skipper of the American merchant barque *Margaret* complained to Harwood that his 1st and 2nd officers refused to serve. As a kind gesture, Harwood discharged two of his own sailors, including a quartermaster petty officer, to serve as replacements.

A few hours later, *Margaret*'s skipper raised an upside down National ensign, signalling the ship was in distress. Harwood sent over a detachment to the barque and discovered that the 1st and 2nd officers had become unruly since being replaced. *Cumberland*'s detachment restored order and escorted the 1st officer to shore.

By 1855, even the relaxed schedule began to take its toll and the ship's company was beginning to grumble. *Cumberland*'s relief was way overdue and no word had come from home providing an explanation. Stringham had the frigate at anchor in La Spezia in January 1855 and waited four months, by which time the frigate had been at sea for over three years.

On May 4, an official letter from Secretary of the Navy James Dobbin arrived for Stringham. In a very apologetic tone, Dobbin explained to the commodore that the reason *Cumberland* had not been relieved was due to a chronic shortfall in new recruits and Dobbin had not been able to assemble a crew for a proper relief. Unfamiliar with both the current situation in the Mediterranean and the current morale of the ship's company, Dobbin left it up to Stringham whether he wished to stay on station or come home.

Stringham assembled the ship's company at 2:30 that afternoon and read the Secretary's letter aloud. In a somewhat surprising example of democracy in the Navy, Stringham asked the ship's company if they wanted to head home. Officially, the log recorded the words "the crew responded in the affirmative," but one can imagine they gave a more enthusiastic response.

Two days later, the frigate weighed anchor and headed for Boston. Six weeks later, she arrived at the Charlestown Navy Yard. The frigate was then decommissioned in preparation for a major overhaul.

This third cruise to the Mediterranean was the longest, but the most peaceful. The Flagship would need her rest as more difficult operations were coming in the days and months ahead.

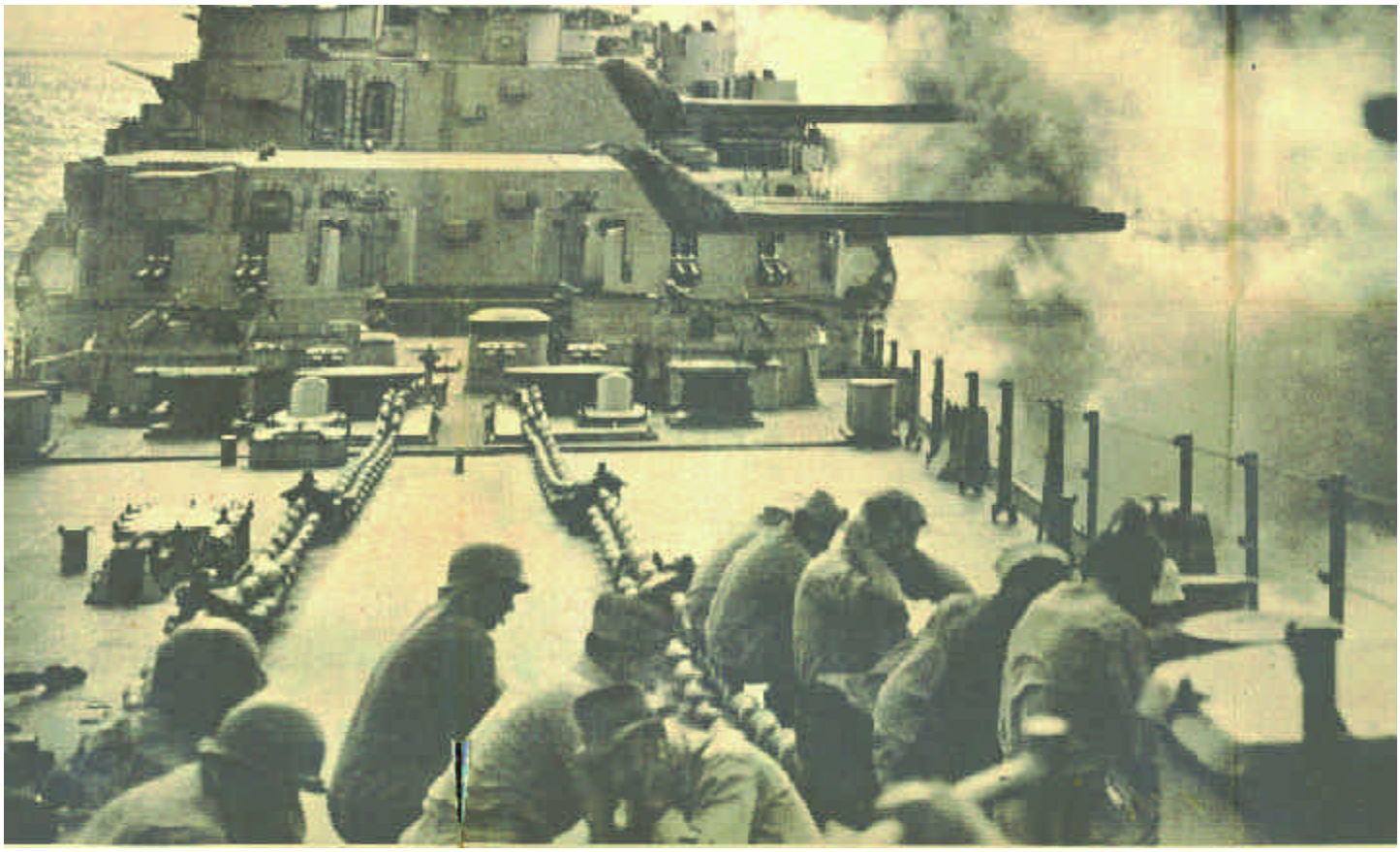
"Amid these scenes came the U.S. Frigate Cumberland and our eyes were made glad with the waving of the Stars and Stripes in the Golden Horn."

-A nervous, but reassured, American newspaper reporter writing from Constantinople in 1853 as British and French forces arrived in large numbers in preparation for the coming war with Russia

"Commodore asked the crew if they wish to stay or go home."

-USS *Cumberland* Deck Log, May 4, 1855, recording a rare case of democracy in the Navy. The ship's company had been at sea for over three years. They chose home.

Dress Rehearsal



With the deck crew, journalists, and civilian engineers on the forecastle, Wisconsin *unleashes the guns of Turrets No. 1 and No. 2 during her 1944 shakedown cruise. (Photo by the* Milwaukee Journal*)*

In The Next Issue...

Flagship of the Africa Squadron:
Cumberland and the Slave Trade Patrols

✍ Book Reviews: *Kimmel, Short, and Pearl Harbor* and *Sailors in the Holy Land: The 1848 Expedition to the Dead Sea and the Search for Sodom and Gomorrah*