

The Day Book

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A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum



"The Flying Squadron-Early Morning at Hampton Roads"-From Left to Right: Battleship Texas, Armored Cruiser Brooklyn, Armored Cruiser Minneapolis, Protected Cruiser Columbia, Battleship Massachusetts. (HRNM photograph of 1898 Harper's Weekly engraving. Drawn by Carlton T. Chapman)

A Splendid Little Squadron Hampton Roads and the Spanish-American War

by Joe Mosier

In early 1898, Hampton Roads was gripped by the expectation of war with Spain. For three years, rebels in Cuba had fought against repressive Spanish rule with casualties in the scores of thousands. American property investment in Cuba exceeded \$50 million. Annual trade between the U.S. and the Spanish colony reached \$100 million. On New Year's

Day 1898, riots in Havana threatened American citizens and property. The battleship USS *Maine*, normally homeported in Norfolk, was sent on a "goodwill visit" by Navy Secretary John D. Long. After twenty days tied to a mooring buoy in Havana harbor, the *Maine* exploded during the night of Feb. 15. The nation was shocked by the deaths of 260 American sailors.

Even as the official Navy Board of Inquiry worked to discover the cause of the explosion, Congress on March 8, 1898, passed an emergency defense spending bill. Ultimately, \$57 million would be appropriated for the Navy that year. Since warships take time to build, the Navy Department met immediate needs by buying new, but excess, ships from Brazil and England.

Ninety-seven merchantmen were purchased for use as auxiliary cruisers, gunboats and colliers. An additional 21 vessels were taken from the Revenue Service and U.S. Fisheries Commission. In total, 128 ships were added to the fleet. All of these units required transformation into warships. This meant a tremendous increase in the work force of Hampton Roads shipyards.

The Board of Inquiry reported on March 25 its belief that the *Maine* had sunk as a result of the deliberate explosion of a mine. The furious response of a hawkish national press assured the inevitability of war with Spain. The formal declaration came on

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Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

A new year: a time to reflect on the past and to look forward to new ventures. During the next month, I will spend considerable time preparing the museum's long range plan for the next five years. It seems inconceivable to believe what has been done since I arrived in 1989. Our organization has relocated into exhibition space that is two times larger, we've tripled our staff and, most importantly, we now have over 70 volunteers and have implemented an active educational program.

In looking ahead, there is plenty of work remaining. Foremost is museum accreditation under professional standards set by the American Association of Museums. This process normally takes two years. During the first year, our institution will undertake a self-study of how we fare in the four areas of museum functions: research, collection, preservation and interpretation. At the end of that year, a small group of peers from the field will evaluate the museum. Deficiencies are noted and the institution is given a year to correct any problems. Museum accreditation is similar to that found in other academic organizations. When the Hampton Roads Naval Museum receives its accreditation it will become the first Navy museum outside Washington D.C. to undergo this process.

What better topic with which to begin 1995 than the Flying Squadron and the Spanish-American War. The battleship USS *Maine* embarked in January 1898 en route to Cuba, not realizing that the U.S. Navy was on the cusp of reinventing itself as a world power. "The Splendid Little War" demonstrated to all that a new age had begun for America, and the U.S. Navy was an integral partner in its expansion.

Becky

About the Day Book

The *Day Book* is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 200 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

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

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. The *Day Book* can be reached at 444-8971, by fax at 445-1867, or write *Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA, 23511-1607. The *Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1000.




Officers of the Minnesota Militia on board the USS *Gopher* (ex-USS *Fern*) in 1906. (Naval Historical Center Photo)

The Citizens' Navy State Militias at Sea

by Joe Mosier

Many of the naval personnel in the Hampton Roads area during the Spanish-American War were members of the Naval Militia. The Naval Militia was a fifty-year experiment in augmenting the regular Navy. Training civilian volunteers, in part at state expense, kept down Navy manpower costs. Starting with Massachusetts in 1888, various states added naval branches to their militia establishments. Congress first supported this non-regular component in 1891 with an appropriation of \$25,000 for arms and uniforms.

In 1898, 4200 men were mustered in from naval militia organizations. This made up 16 percent of the total effort for the Spanish-American War. They came from 15 states, mostly on the two coasts and the Great Lakes region. Some states provided whole crews including officers for ships such as the *Prairie*, *Yankee*, *Dixie* and *Yosemite*. Other states like Illinois were willing to have their men distributed among the fleet.

After the war, the Naval Militia movement continued to grow, reaching 19 states in all. In 1914, the Navy Department was given the same responsibility for state naval militias as the War Department had for the National Guard. The importance of militias diminished during World War I as a true Naval Reserve was established and refined. By 1925, to be eligible for Federal assistance, 95 percent of the men of a naval militia had to be enrolled in the Naval Reserve. With this, interest in the naval militia declined, and by 1938, most organizations were disbanded or existed in name only. 

Portraying the Steel Navy

by Joe Judge




The battleship USS Kearsarge underway, 1898 (HRNM photo of Korner & Hayes lithograph)

The condition of the Navy demands the prompt and earnest attention of Congress. Unless some action be had in its behalf it must soon dwindle into insignificance." This alarming quote from the Secretary of the Navy in 1881 reflected the dismal state of the post-Civil War Navy. Fortunately, action was forthcoming from Congress and a new generation of naval leaders. The steel fleet reflected the new role of the United States in world politics. New technology and a war made the Navy popular to an unusual degree. A series of visual images in the museum's collection reflect a time when the public was fascinated with battleships and the men who sailed them.

In America, ship portraits were already popular. Print making companies such as Currier and Ives and Endicott & Co. issued portraits of ships to great success. Print makers quickly turned to the new steel Navy ships as suitable subjects. The museum collection contains a series of color lithographs by Koerner & Hayes which are good examples of new ships presented in an old way. These prints are works of art in their own right, and they also illustrate some basic public attitudes about the Navy. One of the prints, the image of the battleship *Kearsarge*, continues a tradition of ship portraiture. The focus of the print is on the ship, which travels untroubled through the water. Although the hull may be steel, the composition of this print looks back to heroic

naval portraits, to the days of "wooden ships and iron men." The same visual treatment and attitude could easily be applied to the *Constitution*, or any other of the famous frigates. For the viewing public, the message was reassuring. The best traditions of naval service represented by John Paul Jones, Stephen Decatur, David Farragut and David Porter had not died off. New technology was still harnessed to American skill and bravery.

The new ships could fit into the great tradition of naval portraiture. Nevertheless, photography better delivered other qualities that the public demanded from naval subjects such as accuracy and immediacy. Photographers used clumsy equipment and flash powder to reveal the inner life of ships, and portraits of the their crews. The museum has numerous examples of the photographers' art, copied from the collections of the Naval Historical Center and the National Archives. The camera brought the people of the Navy to life, such as the portrait of two sailors on USS *Charleston*. Their casual pose against the backdrop of a six-inch gun is an eloquent and more democratic departure from the heroic naval portrait. Photographs like this had been made during the Civil War, but by the time of the steel Navy the sheer amount of photographic work provided a much fuller picture of naval life.

We are left with two art forms, one old and one new, that illuminate the new steel Navy. Is there a unifying element in these photographs and prints? Perhaps in their peacefulness which is striking enough for a Navy entering the turbulent 20th century. 



U.S. Navy sailors O.S. J.A. York and O.S. James B. Dofflemeyer of the cruiser USS Charleston, May 9, 1909. (U.S. Navy Historical Center Photo)

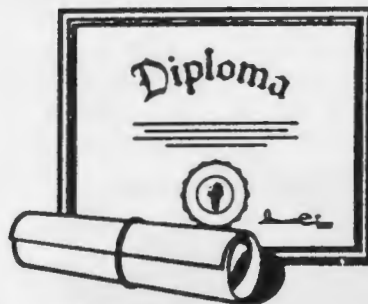
News and Notes for Volunteers

by Jamie Swanson

New Club Members

I hope everyone enjoyed the second annual holiday party. I would like to personally thank the newest members of the 100 hour club: **Harold Anten, Gary Abrams, Preston Turpin, Ken Wiley, Joe Curtis, Charles Devine, Bob Comet, John Maiorana, Jack Walters and Jim Miles.** In addition, a very special thanks should be extended to **Gurley Ritter** and **Hunt Lewis** who both have contributed over 250 volunteer hours to the museum.

I would like to apologize to **Preston Turpin**, who should have received the 100 hour awards at the Second Annual holiday party.



Class of December '94

The most recent class was a success. There were only about 15 in the class, but they stuck with it and graduated at the holiday party. You may have noticed some of these new names on the December schedule. As you might expect, many are still unsure of themselves. For that reason, I have intentionally tried to put them on shifts where they can receive the most guidance during the busier days. Please extend to them your experience and confidence.



On to a New Year

I anticipate January may be a quiet month; so I intend to schedule one docent in the morning and one in the afternoon. Other docents will be called in on an as needed basis. However, don't get bored. Don't be idle. If your name does not appear on the schedule for a particular day and you still want to come in, please feel free to do so and make sure you log-in in the log book so you can receive credit. I would encourage everyone to use the quieter months as an excellent opportunity for research. Also, we are currently soliciting civic groups to tour the museum. If you have any ideas please contact us.



HRNM docent Bob Gladu, Jr. and his daughter Alex at the second annual holiday party. (Photo by Bob Matteson)

A New Interpreters Class

The interpreter program is off to a good start. A few people have already worked the exhibit area in period clothing and several more are anxiously awaiting the arrival of their uniforms.

You might wonder why we're starting another interpreter course when there are people who are still waiting to function as interpreters after completing last year's training. The reasons are really simple. First, people can never learn enough, and second, people get rusty when they can not utilize what they've been taught. So in February, a second interpreter's course will begin. The course will once again be presented by Living History Associates. Any of our docents wishing to attend are welcome. If you have not already taken the course you are missing one of the rewarding parts of being a docent. Let's have a good turn out for this one.



A Note From Public Relations

Word of mouth is the most important and effective means of promoting our museum. As mentioned above, we are anticipating a decrease in visitation. Your personal endorsement of this museum is highly valued. The next time you go to dinner with friends, attend church or your civic association meetings, recommend they visit our museum. Remind your friends that the museum is free and open daily, even when Nauticus is closed. Discuss your favorite exhibits and exciting upcoming events listed in the calendar of events section on page seven.



Hampton Roads Naval Museum Lecture Series

January 7 & 8

The Ship's Company of the *CSS Virginia* - a live historical interpretation of Confederate and Federal sailors. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the HRNM Civil War gallery.

January 25

Dr. William Dudley, Senior Historian at the Naval Historical Center, will give a presentation on the "*Chesapeake Affair*." 7:00 p.m. in the Nauticus Living Sea Theater.

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April 25. America's first act was the blockade of Havana by ships of the North Atlantic Squadron under Rear Adm. William T. Sampson. The Spanish responded with the departure of a six-ship squadron under Adm. Pascual Cervera from the Cape Verde Islands. When news of Cervera's westward sailing came through, panic hit the East Coast. The transfer of ships to Key West, Fla., had left seaboard cities feeling naked and defenseless. People were less concerned with strategies of distant power projection than the possibility of Spanish shells coming through their front windows.

To allay public fears, Secretary Long was forced to divide his Atlantic ships into four elements. The majority of U.S. ships were assigned to Sampson's squadron at Key West. The Auxiliary Naval Force or "Mosquito Fleet," commanded by Rear Adm. Henry Erben and manned by the Naval Militia, consisted of 41 decrepit monitors and a collection of yachts and tugs. Largely created because of political pressure, it provided local defense for the eastern seaboard. To protect coastal shipping, the Northern Patrol Squadron was organized under Commodore John A. Howell. Composed of under-gunned but fast vessels, it operated from Norfolk with responsibility for the area north of the Delaware Capes.



The USS Maine and her last commander, Capt. Charles D. Sigsbee. (HRNM photo of Harper's Weekly lithograph)

Since neither the Mosquito Fleet nor the Northern Patrol Squadron offered a serious threat to Spanish armored cruisers, the so-called Flying Squadron under Commodore Winfield Schley was formed in Hampton Roads. It consisted of the battleships *Massachusetts* and *Texas*, the armored cruiser *Brooklyn*, the protected cruisers *Columbia* and *Minneapolis* and the auxiliary cruiser *New Orleans*. Originally the squadron was anchored off Newport News, but later moved to a spot off Fort Monroe to be available more rapidly should the Spanish threaten Hampton Roads.

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In House Education Notes: The Quick Tour

by Bob Matteson

Several of our docents, including one of our newest graduates, recently conducted 20 minute tours for nearly 200 high school students. Six docents showed off the museum to the group from Williamsburg's Walsingham Academy. "It's a lot of fun when you're super active," said **Gurley Ritter**, one of the museum's most experienced docents. "These kids with their high level of interest were like a breath of fresh air," he said. A new docent, **Ed Cox** said "We had

an early onslaught of students... I guess I'll earn my badge this month."

Both docents benefited from the museum's training for 20-minute tours. "I believe the docents as a group should place more emphasis on the 20 minute tour," Ritter stated. He also noted that it was impossible to fit everything into a 20 minute tour, and that docents need to realize this limitation. "We need to adapt," he said.

The 20 minute tour focuses on selected significant artifacts in the

gallery, and introduces the visitor to the main themes of the museum's exhibits. It is ideal for groups or individuals who are on a tight schedule. An ideal 20-minute tour leaves a visitor with a feeling that he or she understands the purpose of the museum and with a desire to know more. Several of our docents have become masters of this fine art - the quick tour! 🚢



Sailor's wife reading her husband's letters in the Christmas vignette. (Photo by Bob Matteson)

Christmas at Sea

On Dec. 10, 1994, 69 people attended a HRNM sponsored Christmas Civil War vignette. The vignette was a living history representation and explanation of life in an earlier time between a man away at sea and his wife at home. The period was the winter of 1862 to early 1863. The sailor was a Union Navy petty officer on blockade duty, while his wife was living with relatives in Philadelphia. The couple made alternating appearances before the

audience and shared aloud letters received from the other. In this way the audience was able to gain some insights about wartime personal sacrifices, the nature of the Union Naval Blockade, new roles for women at home and the celebration of Christmas at sea and on land.

Although the sailor and his wife were fictional composite characters, their representative story is told through quotes from period letters, diaries, newspapers, hymns and naval memoirs. Recorded period music played briefly between each letter. 🚢

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As an additional defense measure, an electrically controlled mine field was laid between Fort Monroe and Fort Wool. Naval militia-manned guard boats guided traffic through these defenses. Once Cervera's squadron was sighted in the Caribbean, the Flying Squadron departed for Cuban waters leaving *New Orleans* behind to guard the harbor. The squadron played a large role in the destruction of the Spanish fleet off Santiago, Cuba, on July 3.

The Spanish-American conflict was indeed a "Splendid Little War." It lasted only 113 days and left the United States with a sizable overseas empire. It had lasting effects for Hampton Roads as well. The Naval Appropriations Act of 1898 was followed with yet more orders for new warships. Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry-Dock Company and the Norfolk Naval Shipyard continued to grow and the local economy prospered. To man the new ships the Navy's authorized manpower grew from 11,750 in 1898 to 37,000

in 1908. To help train them, the Saint Helena Naval Training Station was established in the Berkley area of Norfolk in 1902. More and more, the Navy became unalterably intertwined with life in Hampton Roads. 🚢

Further Reading

Beach, Edward L. *The United States Navy: 200 Years*. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1986.

Herrick, Walter R., Jr. *The American Naval Revolution*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1966.

Long, John D. *The New American Navy*. New York: The Outlook Press, 1903.

Calendar of Events

January

1 HRNM closed.

2, 1942 The German navy begins U-Boat operations in American coastal waters with Operation *Drumbeat*.

7-8 The Ship's Company of the CSS *Virginia* will give a live historical interpretation of Confederate and Federal sailors. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the HRNM Civil War gallery.

13-15, 1865 A combined force of Union warships, army soldiers and sailors assault and capture Ft. Fisher near Wilmington, N.C.



Adm. David Porter's squadron bombarding Ft. Fisher on the first day of the assault, Jan. 13, 1865. (HRNM photo of Harper's Weekly engraving)

17, 1898 The South Atlantic Squadron is ordered into Cuban waters. The Flying Squadron, which was based in Hampton Roads, joins with it later.

25 Dr. William Dudley, Senior Historian at the Naval Historical Center, will give a presentation on the "*Chesapeake Affair*." 7:00 p.m. in the Nauticus Theater.

January Birthdays

Shayne Whiting
Joseph Lowery
Kathy Sheta
Ken Clineman
Ben Mosteirin
Betty Jackson
Preston Turpin



February

4, 1959 USS *Enterprise*'s keel laid down at Newport News Shipbuilding. *Enterprise* is the first aircraft carrier to use nuclear propulsion.

15, 1898 USS *Maine* blows up in Havana harbor.

17, 1862 The CSS *Virginia* is commissioned at the Gosport shipyard in Portsmouth, Va.

22, 1909 The 16 battleships of the Great White Fleet arrive in Hampton Roads after a two year voyage around the world.



Feb. 13, 1909 issue of Judge magazine announcing the return of the Great White Fleet. (HRNM photo)

25, 1862 First turreted warship, USS *Monitor*, is commissioned.

25, 1933 USS *Ranger* (CV-4) is commissioned. *Ranger* is the U.S. Navy's first aircraft carrier built from the keel up.

February Birthdays

Gurley Ritter
Lester Wicks
Mark Sanderson
Charles Devine

