

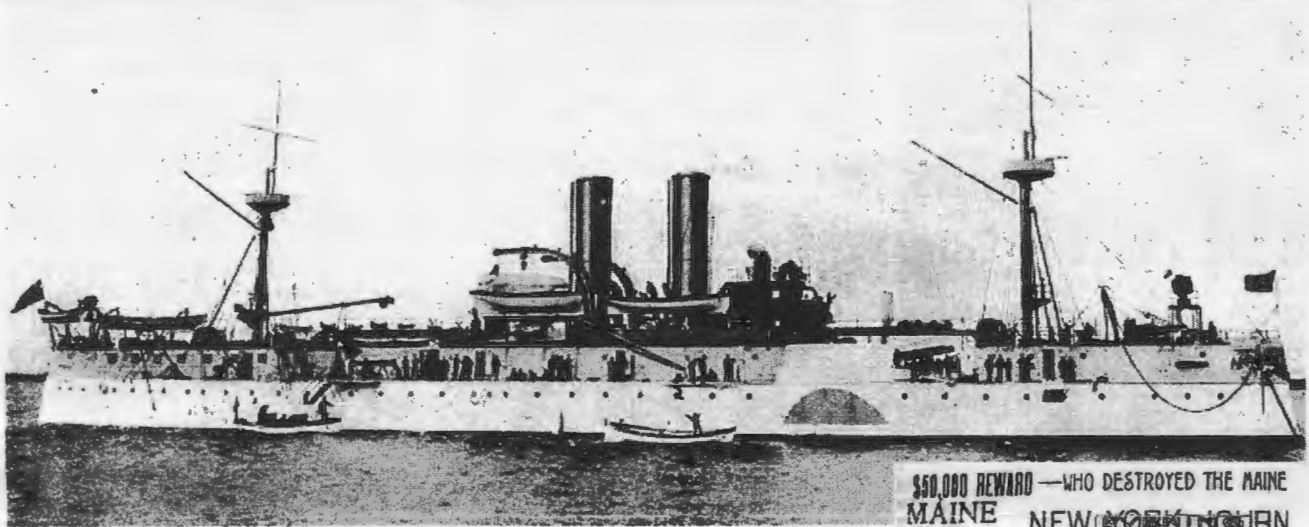


The Day Book

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January-February 1998

A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum



The Norfolk-based battleship USS Maine (BB-2/c, ex-ACR-1). She spent much of her short life in Hampton Roads and off the coast of Virginia while with the North Atlantic Squadron. Her tragic destruction in Havana, Cuba on Feb. 15, 1898 strained already bad Spanish-American relations to the breaking point. (USS Maine photo, HRNM, New York Journal cover, New York Public Library)

Maine Remembered

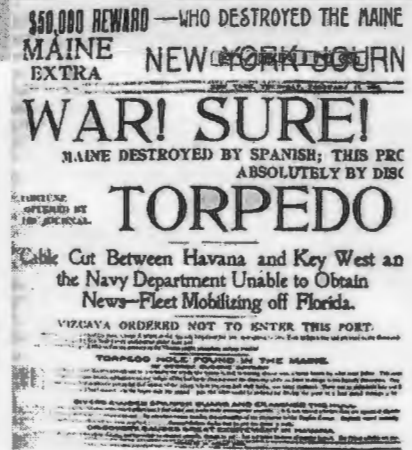
by Gordon Calhoun

There are a few events in American military history which are so traumatic and shocking that they force the public to stop whatever they are doing and take notice. These events stir the average American's emotions so much, that the public cries out for something to be done. The surprise attack on the naval station at Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Navy on Dec. 7, 1941 is the

most ready example of this type of event. The *Chesapeake-Leopard* Affair of 1807 and the German U-boat attack on the cruise ship *SS Lusitania* in 1915 are similar examples. Feb. 15 will mark the 100th anniversary of the most emotional of this type of tragedy: the explosion of the Norfolk-based battleship USS *Maine* (BB-2/c, ex-ACR-1).

The battleship is easily recognizable in pictures. With two off-center lined turrets for her main guns, two smaller guns fixed forward, and a huge ram in the front, *Maine* had a very unique design.

For a battleship, she was small as she only displaced 6,682 tons. She was equipped with 10-inch rifled guns as her main armament along with 21 smaller



guns and four torpedo tubes. For protection, she had a 12-inch thick belt made of a nickel-steel alloy around the hull, with 10-inch plates protecting the turrets, engineering plants, and ammunition magazines. Her propulsion included state-of-the-art triple expanding engines which gave her a top speed of just over 16 knots. Launched in 1893 and commissioned into the fleet in 1895, *Maine* represented the very best American technology had to offer. One part of the ship, however, had very ancient roots. Naval architects called for

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Coming Soon: HRNM's Greatest Hits

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

The fates have been kind to the museum. We received word recently that the Hampton Roads Naval Museum has received funding for two very important projects. The first project will digitize the museum's entire photograph and artwork collection onto CD-ROM. More than 5,000 photographs, blueprints, and other images will be placed on a media device that can be used by schools, cultural institutions, and individuals.

The second project is equally exciting. The museum will tackle the Battle of the Atlantic again. Our foremost goal is to become an authoritative center for anyone interested in studying the campaign. Monies have been set aside to research primary source material (such as after action reports) and to interview participants. All information will then be assembled here. In keeping with the museum's mission, research will focus on the Hampton Roads aspect. If you know any living participants of the campaign, please contact me with their

names.

All research findings will be examined for the most compelling aspects and then used as a basis for a new hands-on, interactive Battle of the Atlantic exhibit. As most of you are aware, our current mini-theater gives comprehensive coverage but the technology is somewhat passive in nature. At nine minutes, the length

The challenge we face is to offer a thoughtful, encompassing presentation that incorporates video, life stories, and even detailed statistics in a hands-on format.

turns off many younger visitors. World War II enthusiasts do not despair; the new exhibit will by no means be a slick cosmetic presentation. The challenge we face is to offer a thoughtful, encompassing presentation that incorporates video, life stories, and even detailed statistics in a hands-on format. Right now we foresee interactive stations. More information

will be forthcoming as design proceeds in the upcoming months. Both projects will be time-consuming, perhaps two to three years before final production.

To celebrate this good news, the new year, and most importantly, our generous volunteers, be sure to attend the party on Jan. 27 at the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club. Invitations have been mailed. If you have not

received one or wish to RSVP please call 322-2992.

The museum's newest exhibit "A Sailor's Best Friend: Animals and the U.S. Navy" is now open for viewing. We had a very successful media day event on Nov. 6 to officially open the exhibit. Refer to page 11 to learn more about the exhibit and the accompanying educational packet prepared for children from ages 4-10. In addition to the exhibit, we are pleased to announce a joint effort with the Norfolk chapter of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA.) See page 3 for more details.

Lastly, 1998 marks the 100th anniversary of the Spanish-American War. Over the next year, *The Day Book* will print a series of articles on events from this important conflict. While much of the fighting happened in foreign countries, many of the Naval vessels involved in the war—including the ill-fated battleship *Maine* had a very close connection to the Hampton Roads region.

My best wishes to all for a Happy New Year.

Becky



Local History. World Events.

About *The Day Book*

The Day Book is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 220 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open Mondays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

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

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Day Book* can be reached at (757) 322-2993, by fax at (757) 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://naval-station.norfolk.va.us/navy.html>. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1,200.

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Renown Military Historian to Kick off HRNM's 1998 Lecture Series

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is pleased to welcome Col. Joe Alexander, USMC (Ret.) as its first speaker for the 1998 lecture series. A well known and respected military historian, Alexander will speak about Midshipman Robert Chester Foute of the ironclad CSS *Virginia*. This talk will take place on March 5 at Norfolk Live! located inside Gate 2 on the Norfolk Naval Base.

The subject and story of Alexander's talk, Midshipman Foute, is an excellent example of what it was like to be an officer in the Confederate States Navy. Like many other southern officers, he served with bravery and honor despite the fact that the Confederate Navy was severely outgunned and outmanned. Foute also happens to be Alexander's great-great-great uncle.

Foute's career with the Confederate Navy began in earnest as a gunnery officer with *Virginia*. He was then reassigned to the Confederate mission in Europe and worked with Confederate agents trying to procure ironclads. His return to the South in 1864 was met with

one disaster after another. He arrived in Savannah just before Sherman's army arrived and fled to Charleston, where he was put in charge of scuttling the ironclad squadron there. Finally, he made his way to Richmond, only to be captured at the Battle of Sailor's Creek in 1865.


Col. Alexander has been published several times including four World War II campaign histories of the Marine Corps in the Pacific. Among his works are *A Fellowship of Valor: The Battle History of the U.S. Marines* (winner of the 1997 U.S. Naval Institute's Book Award) and *Utmost Savagery: The Three Days of Tawara*. He has also been advisor and writer for the cable channel Arts & Entertainment Network's "Biography" and "Our Century" programs, and the History Channel's upcoming documentaries on the Spanish-American War and the Marine Corps in the Pacific during World War II.

Retired from the Marine Corps after 28 years of service, Alexander served two tours in Vietnam and five years with the Fleet Marine Force. He holds degrees in history and government from the



The Hampton Roads Naval Museum welcomes nationally known military historian Col. Joe Alexander, USMC (Ret.) for a March 5 lunch and speaking engagement as its first speaker for 1998. Call (757) 322-2992 for more information.

University of North Carolina and Georgetown University.

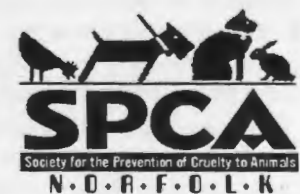
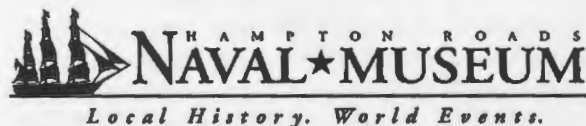
The talk will include a lunch and reservations are required. The cost of the lunch will be \$7. Please call 322-2992 for more information and reservations. 

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum and the Norfolk SPCA are proud to announce the

“Vittles for Critters”

program

In response to the museum's "The Sailor's Best Friend: Animals and the U.S. Navy" exhibit, the museum asks you to donate cans of pet food to the Norfolk SPCA. Bring your donations to the SPCA's display located at the entrance to the exhibit before March 30. Your donations will go to feed sheltered animals rescued from the streets. If you have any questions, please call the museum at 322-2987.



Portrait of a Navy Artist

Artist Henry Reuterdahl and His Paintings of the Spanish-American War

by Joe Judge

Authors and artists, journalists and journeymen headed for Cuban waters in 1898. They were out to bring back stories of American heroes and expose Spanish misrule and decadence. Among this small army was a young man from Sweden named Henry Reuterdahl. Reuterdahl developed into one of the foremost illustrators of the American Navy at the turn of the century, but his

Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. The 22-year old Reuterdahl liked the United States on first sight and decided to make his home in America.

Reuterdahl initially stayed in the western part of the country, doing illustrations for *Leslie's Weekly*, which like its competitor *Harper's Weekly*, provided Americans with news and images of the fast-growing country. But Reuterdahl had sand between his

Many paintings of the Spanish-American War and U.S. Navy ships are inaccurate. Such pictures often show ill-proportioned ships, ships in the wrong place, or make events like the battle of Santiago seem cartoonish. Reuterdahl, on the other hand, studied ships and worked hard to portray them accurately. His attention to detail is outstanding. For example, the ships in his paintings look weather-beaten, not



"Keeping the Blockade" This painting shows the North Atlantic Squadron just after it arrived off the coast of Cuba. In this particular painting are the armored cruiser USS New York (ACR-2), cruiser USS Marblehead (C-10), torpedo boat USS Cushing (TB-1), and the battleships USS Indiana (BB-1) and USS Iowa (BB-4). (HRNM photo of an 1898 painting by Henry Reuterdahl)

artistic achievement was not his only contribution to the sea service. He became part of the larger debate about what type of Navy the country should have, and in this debate he shocked the Navy at the time of one of its greatest triumphs.

Reuterdahl was never formally trained as an artist. Nevertheless, he pursued a career as an illustrator over the objections of his father, who felt that art would never provide the young man with a decent living. He was good enough to get an assignment from the Swedish magazine *Svea* to come to America and cover the World

toes. In 1897 he went to New York, as he later put it, "to draw ships, go before the mast, or starve." His interest was in the Navy, and his timing was excellent. The explosion of USS *Maine* and the subsequent plunge into war provided him an opportunity. He became a war correspondent for *Truth* magazine and also provided pictures of the conflict for *Harper's* and *Collier's Weekly*.

His work caught the attention of the public. It was dramatic. His interest in the sea gave his work authenticity and ships took on an individual character in his prints and paintings.

like they just came out of dry dock with a new paint job. His paintings also make good use of perspective, often taking the vantage point of an observer on the ship, giving the viewer a real feel of action.

Reuterdahl also tried to be complete in terms of subject matter. He painted the Battle of Santiago, but also other lesser known naval actions around Cuba and Puerto Rico. These sidelights to the most famous battle include the fire fight between Spanish shore batteries and three American warships at Cardenas harbor and the little

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discussed fight between the auxiliary cruiser USS *St. Paul* and the Spanish torpedo boat *Terror* and cruiser *Alfonso XII* off the coast of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Reuterdahl's career was now tied to the Navy. *Collier's*, whose staff he joined in 1899, sent him to Europe in 1901 to study the navies of the great powers. During this trip he met Fred T. Jane in England, the editor of the famed series of warship guides. Reuterdahl became the American editor of *Jane's Fighting Ships*.

Reuterdahl was making friends in the service also. One of these was William Sowden Sims, the brilliant, headstrong officer who carried the torch of naval reform early in the twentieth century. Sims and others felt that line officers needed to have greater administrative control over the Navy. This group felt that the solution was a general staff. (It was this debate that eventually led to the creation of the office of the Chief of Naval Operations.) In addition, the reformers were critical of current ship design and armament. Sims and his circle were not afraid of controversy. But as active




Not only are Reuterdahl's paintings of the Spanish-American War the most accurate, but also the most complete. This painting portrays the U.S. Navy auxiliary cruiser St. Paul in action against the Spanish cruiser Alfonso XII and torpedo boat Terror off the coast of San Juan, Puerto Rico on May 6, 1898. (HRNM photo of a Reuterdahl painting)

USS *Minnesota*, producing a series of watercolors for *Collier's*. Reuterdahl's best known work, an oil painting of the fleet in the Straits of Magellan, resulted from the trip. This dramatic painting is often reproduced in histories of the Navy.

Even as Reuterdahl was sketching on the *Minnesota*, he was dousing the happy glow from the fire of good publicity with a cold bucket of water. The January 1908 issue of *McClure's Magazine* contained an article called "The Needs of the Navy" by a civilian, Henry Reuterdahl. The article

changes in ship design. The debate was now in the forefront of naval affairs. Reuterdahl continued to participate with another article, "Plea for a Better Understanding of the Navy," in the March 1909 *Outlook* magazine.

Reuterdahl continued to work even as he was graying hairs in Washington. He sailed with Navy to the Mediterranean in 1913. At the outbreak of World War I, *Collier's* sent him to London as a naval correspondent. When the U.S. entered the war in 1917, Reuterdahl ended his long unofficial role for the Navy to take a commission as a reserve naval officer, working for the Navy Publicity Board. He designed recruiting posters, ship's camouflage and even huge billboards in Times Square. After the war, the Secretary of the Navy asked him to paint a series of pictures showing the service's role in the conflict. Age and ill health prevented Reuterdahl from completing the project. He died in 1925 in the beautiful city of Washington, D.C.

Reuterdahl probably provided the best summation of his work in 1921: "The keynote of the Navy is its youth and enthusiasm. This can only be translated by vigorous painting and powerful colors. The sea surges, the Navy is alert, and that cannot be transcribed for the inland onlooker except by dynamic color and strong forms." 



"Bombardment of Matanzas by the New York, Cincinnati, and Puritan, April 27, 1898." In many cases, Reuterdahl observed many of the battle scenes first hand from a Navy dispatch boat. He also used other Naval officers sketches and their accounts to help complete the painting. (HRNM photo of a Reuterdahl painting)

duty naval officers their criticism could only be so loud before a shrill whistle and call of "all hands to witness punishment" came sounding off the quarterdeck. Reuterdahl cast his lot with Sims and stepped into the fray.

In December 1907 the Navy was enjoying intense positive public attention as the "Great White Fleet" steamed out of Hampton Roads on its famous around-the-world voyage. In fact, Reuterdahl sailed with the fleet on

summarized many of Sims's opinions, including criticism of current ship design and construction, inefficiency of the naval establishment, and the need for a general staff. Like a well-placed explosive, the article produced a quick result. The Senate Naval Affairs Committee held a hearing which gave the reformers a venue for their arguments. President Theodore Roosevelt summoned a conference of Naval officers at Newport to consider

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the stern section of the ship to be built up enough so as allow *Maine* to ram an enemy vessel.

Once commissioned, *Maine* received her new crew at the naval training station in Newport, Rhode Island before setting off to her permanent home in Hampton Roads. She joined the other battleships of the North Atlantic Squadron for several different gunnery exercises off the coast of Cape Henry, VA and New England.

While *Maine* and the North Atlantic Squadron worked through their drills off the coast of Virginia, the situation in Cuba and relations between the United States and Spain were steadily growing worse. Yielding to American requests, a new, more liberal government in Spain recalled Gen. Nicolau Weyler from Cuba. The removal touched off a firestorm of protest from the general's supporters in Cuba, particularly among his soldiers. In their minds, Weyler's ironfisted counter-insurgency tactics were long overdue.



One of the most famous photographs of the battleship Maine is this Jan. 25, 1898 shot of her entering Havana harbor. The warship passes by the 350-year old San Morro castle which many sailors thought would begin firing on them at anytime. (National Archives)

To American policy makers, the recall was a first good step. To keep the positive momentum going, American and Spanish negotiators agreed to a warship exchange. The Americans would send a battleship to Havana and the Spanish would send a battleship to New York City. While in Port Royal, South Carolina, *Maine's* commanding officer Capt. Charles Sigsbee received orders to head to Norfolk for one last refit in preparation for the trip south.

It is also possible that Washington



With the armored cruiser USS Brooklyn (ACR-3) in the background, Maine's Marine contingent embark from a pier in Hampton Roads, 1897. In a calm, collective manner, Capt. Sigsbee's Marine orderly was the first to inform the captain that the battleship had exploded and was sinking. The Feb. 15 explosion killed 24 of these Marines. (National Archives)

wanted to use this "goodwill" visit to demonstrate a show of force. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, American consulate in Cuba and nephew of Gen. Robert E. Lee, expressed concerns about the safety of Americans living in Cuba and requested protection. Lee wrongly concluded that the demonstrations and disturbances

To coordinate *Maine's* arrival, Lee and Sigsbee set up a secret word system not unlike two children playing spy games in a back yard tree house. Using a dispatch boat out of Havana, Lee and Sigsbee communicated through written letters. Sigsbee soon received a message on Jan. 12 from Lee with a phrase that



Capt. Charles Sigsbee, commanding officer of the doomed battleship at the time of the explosion. He initially asked for no judgement to made against the Spanish. But, as time went on, he publicly stated that the Spanish placed an underwater mine under his vessel. (HRNM photo) indicated *Maine* should be ready to put to sea. Another riot had been started by Weyler's supporters. Once again the attacks were not directed at Americans, rather they were directed at newspapers who supported Cuban home rule. Nonetheless, Lee was a little nervous.

The final decision to send *Maine* to Havana had been decided by McKinley
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and his cabinet. The State Department telegraphed Lee that *Maine* was on its way. The directive was a complete shock to Lee. While he had signaled Sigsbee to be ready to put to sea, he had not given the final go ahead request. He first heard about *Maine's* pending arrival from a newspaper reporter who asked Lee to comment on the new American policy towards Cuba. The stunned diplomat quickly sent a telegram to Washington asking the visit to be postponed. But, he sent the message too late. The only thing he could do now was to inform the Spanish authorities that an American battleship would arrive in their waters in less than 24 hours. The equally surprised Spanish expected more preparation time than the Americans had allowed them. Some Spanish officials did not want to

Sigsbee decided not to allow sailors off the ship. If there were anti-American sentiments among the Spanish Army in Cuba, he did not want incidents to break out. Only officers were granted liberty.

Shortly after 9:30 p.m. on Feb. 15, while Sigsbee finished a letter to his wife, his battleship was rocked by two explosions. Jolted, he ran out of his cabin to see what was going on. It quickly became apparent that the explosions were very serious and this his ship was sinking. On the way up to the top deck, Sigsbee's Marine orderly calmly informed his captain of the obvious. "I have to report, sir," the Marine private said, "that the ship is blown up and is sinking." All of *Maine's* officers, except two, convened on the top deck. One of the two officers missing, Lt. Friend Jenkins, believed the

steamer picked up Sigsbee and several other sailors.

Using letterhead from *City of Washington*, Sigsbee wrote out a cable to Washington informing them of the disaster. Sigsbee requested that "public opinion should be suspended until further reports. Many Spanish officials, including representatives of General Blanco (the current governor of Cuba), are now with me and express sympathy."

Two hundred and sixty four enlisted men and two officers died in the explosion or drowned shortly thereafter. Twenty-one of the sailors from Hampton Roads were among the dead. Four sailors later died in a hospital in Key West. Two of the three cats that sailors kept as mascots were also killed. The third cat, an orange tabby named Tom, was found on a piece of shipwreck and personally saved by Wainwright. He kept Tom as his personal pet for the rest of the cat's life.

The call for calm was ignored. Newspaper publishers William Randolph Hearst and John Pulitzer had been waiting for this type of incident for years. Hearst's reporter in Havana immediately cabled New York informing his boss of the incident. Within 24 hours, all of America heard about the naval disaster in Cuba. Using new printing technology that allowed newspapers to publish large headlines and large graphic pictures with bodies flying off the ship, Hearst simultaneously published reports in the *New York*



Shown here is the gunner's gang for one of Maine's torpedo tubes. Like many U.S. Navy warships at this time, a large portion of Maine's enlisted ranks, 76 in all, was made up of recent European and Japanese immigrants. Twenty-four sailors were from the Hampton Roads region. (Naval Historical Center)

see *Maine* at all as they were suspicious that her arrival indicated Americans were going to interfere in Cuba. However, they put on a good face in public and welcomed *Maine's* pending arrival.

Maine's arrived in Havana on the afternoon of Jan. 25. The tension among the crew was high, and many sailors slept next to their guns as they had read stories of the Cuban insurrection and Spanish "treachery" over the last 30 years. Once she arrived, the State Department approved Lee's request that *Maine's* scheduled trip to New Orleans for Mardi Gras be canceled and that the battleship prepare for an extended stay in Havana.

ship to be under attack and immediately ran to his combat post where he drowned. Sigsbee instructed the remaining officers to look for survivors and then abandon ship.

Two ships, the American passenger steamer *City of Washington* and the Spanish cruiser *Alfonso XII*, quickly came to *Maine's* aid and started picking survivors out of the waters. Passengers aboard *City of Washington* had also thought that the explosion was caused by Spanish gunners who had decided to attack *Maine*. But, when pieces of *Maine's* hull almost hit the steamer, they immediately thought otherwise. The

Journal and the *Examiner* in San Francisco that an underwater mine sunk the battleship. He offered a \$50,000 reward to anyone who knew who did this dastardly deed. The reports went further by stating that while Spanish officials may be expressing sympathy, they were really paying no more than lip service. Hinting that the Spanish were planning a surprise attack to follow upon their attack on *Maine*, reports of a "mysterious warship" off the coast of New York began to surface.

Lacking any kind of policy on public statements or public affairs officers to

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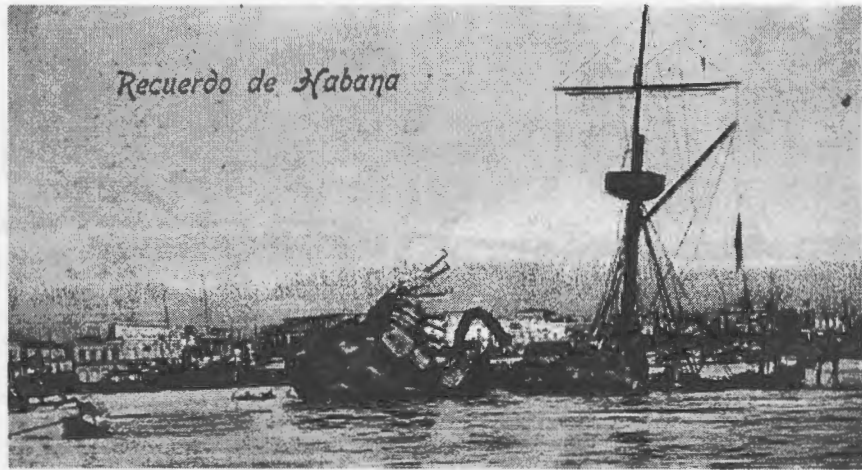
issue such statements, Naval officers and sailors talked quite freely about the incident to reporters. Advances in communications technology allowed the papers to take these opinions and fire them around the globe in mere hours, where it used to take weeks. The Navy had no bureaucratic mechanism to keep up. While Secretary of the Navy John Long issued several statements that amounted to "no comment," the freely expressed opinions by other Naval personnel resulted in daily, chaotic speculation in the papers.

The always energetic Teddy Roosevelt, who was serving as Assistant Secretary of the Navy at the time, made his opinion on *Maine* to the press very clear: the Spanish deliberately destroyed the warship. His views were made more apparent by actions soon after the explosion. While Long took a vacation to deal with the mental stress caused by the incident, Roosevelt quickly shot off an order to Commodore George Dewey in Hong Kong that the Asiatic Squadron be ready to put to sea against the Spanish.

The Navy assembled a court of inquiry to investigate the incident. Members included Capt. William Sampson, Capt. Francis Chadwick, and Lt. Cmdr. William P. Potter. Each of these officers had a very high reputation for being intelligent and forward thinking men. Sampson had served as chief of the Bureau of Ordnance and had an excellent reputation for his investigative skills, Chadwick had served as Chief of Intelligence, and Potter was put on the board for his technical expertise. The Navy chose Lt. Cmdr. Marix to serve as judge advocate as it was thought that the former executive officer of the battleship was the most qualified to lead an investigation on her destruction.

Marix should have been answering questions, not asking them. He should have been called forward to answer questions about the condition of the ship while she was in Hampton Roads. However, no conflict of interest was ever considered by the court, nor ever has been by historians for the matter.

During the hearings, Marix directed the investigation to rule out all possibilities of an accident or other form



The newly independent government of Cuba issued this post card in 1899 with the caption "Restos del Maine." The Navy would later take the remaining mast of the battleship and make it the centerpiece of a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery in 1915. (HRNM photo of a postcard from Bill Eley)

of human error. He asked Sigsbee about the quality and nature of the coal, the condition of safety equipment, and ship procedures. In all cases, Sigsbee answered that he believed everything was in working order on the night of the explosion. Marix later questioned *Maine*'s other officers and all stated that everything seemed to be normal on Feb. 15. Chief Engineer Theodore Howell, however, was an exception.

Howell stated that one of the coal

"If the vessel was struck by a torpedo, the effect would have been the busting in of her underwater plating, accompanied by a dull, muffled roar. The accidental causes may have arisen from fire, due to spontaneous combustion of coal in the bunkers." -Scientific American editorial, Feb. 26, 1898.

bunkers had been filled with coal from Newport News. This not only contradicted Sigsbee's testimony, who stated all the coal came from Key West and that none of the coal had been on board for more than two weeks, but it also lent weight to a hypothesis that the ship's coal spontaneously combusted. Spontaneous combustion of coal takes time, he stated, and *Maine* had not been in Newport News since November. When asked to comment on this, Sigsbee simply reiterated his earlier comments that he felt no heat coming from the coal bunkers, including the one in question. Satisfied with his answer, the court awaited the findings from Navy divers.

To civilian engineers the cause of the explosion was quite obviously accidental. *Scientific American*, a leading scientific and engineering journal of the 19th and

20th centuries, had followed the construction of the new steel warships and their technological wonders since their beginnings. In a Feb. 26, 1898 editorial they wrote, "If the vessel was struck by a torpedo, the effect would have been the busting in of her underwater plating, accompanied by a dull, muffled roar. The accidental causes may have arisen from fire, due to spontaneous combustion of coal in the bunkers, or from a short-circuited

electric wire. There are coal bunkers on three sides of the 10-inch magazine." Several Naval officers concurred with this view.

Unfortunately, editorials like these were shouted down by writers like Ambrose Bierce. Bierce was fire-spitting satirist and columnist for Hearst's newspapers and his investigative and semi-philosophical writings had made him nationally famous by the early 1880's. "Even when it was shown beyond the possibility of honest doubt that we were foully treacherously murdered, the President did not find it in his heart to make a suggestion about it. Silence in the presence of the dead! What would be more becoming?!"

The court called forward the divers to report on their findings. The divers

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ANIMALS

and the U.S. Navy

Now Appearing Through May 5



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reported that they had recovered the keys to the magazines and the warship's code books. They stated that they had found one part of *Maine's* keel bent upward into the hull of the ship in the shape of an inverted V. The divers could not express an opinion on how this happened. But, it was the piece of evidence the court needed. The court ruled on March 11, that the explosion had been caused by an

"Even when it was shown beyond the possibility of honest doubt that we were foully treacherously murdered, the President did not find it in his heart to make a suggestion about it. Silence in the presence of the dead! What would be more becoming?!"

-New York Journal writer and satirist Ambrose Bierce

external device, namely an underwater mine.

The court kept the report classified until President McKinley and members of Congress could review it for themselves. Once it was made public however, the expected uproar began. McKinley held off the warhawks as long as possible. Biographies and memoirs of McKinley report that the normally strong-willed President and decorated veteran of the American Civil War did not sleep well for four weeks and his overall health declined from the mental stress.

McKinley finally laid out his views in an April 11 message to Congress. He asked for Congressional authority to end


the fighting in Cuba, but he did not mention anything about *Maine*. After some debate, Congress approved his request. McKinley then signed a resolution demanding an immediate cease fire to the Cuban insurrection and independence for Cuba. The *Maine* explosion, accident or otherwise, was now ballooning into something much more than petty vengeance. It raised the

whole "Cuba question" again and it renewed the call for America to intervene in the insurrection.

Two days after the explosion, a solemn funeral was conducted through the streets of Havana. The Navy then returned the remains of the sailors back to the United States. Some of them were buried at a cemetery in Key West, but most were later laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on Dec. 17, 1899. Sixteen years later, the Navy dedicated a formal monument using one of *Maine's* masts. The monument and the graves of the sailors are located about two hundred yards behind the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In the 1970's, Adm. Hyman Rickover,

the legendary force behind the Navy's nuclear propulsion program, took an interest in the *Maine* explosion. He assembled a group of professional historians and ordnance experts to review the evidence for themselves. They came to the same conclusion that *Scientific American*, and several other officers and experts had reached in 1898. That is, they concluded that coal spontaneously combusted which in turn detonated the ammunition housed next door.

The explosion of the battleship *Maine* and the events surrounding her have all the makings of a conspiracy movie in the worst tradition of Oliver Stone. The incident and subsequent court findings gave America a reason to declare war on Spain where many similar type incidents had not provoke such a strong public reaction. The declaration of war, however, was not solely because of an urge to "Remember the Maine." Even if the incident was written off as an accident in 1898, the issues surrounding Spain, Cuba, and the United States would still be unsolved. Until either Spain granted independence, or the Cubans laid down their guns, Cuba would always remain a "problem" in the eyes of Americans. We had wrapped ourselves up so tightly in Cuban affairs that little was going to make us not get involved. The explosion of USS *Maine* was just the final insult. 



Sage Stumper Returns!

After a long absence, the Sage is happy to announce the return of his bi-monthly dose of naval history trivia. Since there is going to be a huge focus on the Spanish-American War this year, it is only fitting that we ask questions related to the topic. The Sage has two questions. Answer either one correctly and you will receive a Hampton Roads Naval Museum coffee mug. By the way, the Sage only gives out one mug to one mailing address. In other words, the Sage will still print your name if you send in the right answer but he asks that you let others receive prizes.

The Museum Sage

Question #1

The first one has two parts to it. When war was declared, the local governments demanded the formation of naval squadrons to protect the eastern seaboard. There were reports of a Spanish fleet on its way to bombard the continental United States and the locals were in a panic. The Navy formed the "Flying Squadron" to deal with this threat and based it here in Hampton Roads. The questions are:

- a) What was the name of this Spanish fleet that was allegedly going to bring death and destruction to the East Coast?
- b) What were the names of the ships in this fleet?

For Extra Credit:

- c) Why did the local cities, and the U.S. Navy for that matter, have nothing to fear from this squadron?

Question #2

In this issue's cover story on the battleship *Maine*, we mention that America's truth troops (i.e. newspaper reporters) called their readers' attentions to "a mysterious warship" off of New York City a week after the *Maine* explosion. The questions here are:

- a) What was the name of this warship?
- b) What was it doing there?

Both of these questions are a little bit difficult, especially the second one. But the Sage will say that answers can be found in any library or in past issues of *The Day Book*. The first ones to answer the questions, subject to the rules, will receive coffee mugs. The prize for the extra credit question is a copy of the museum book on the Jamestown Exposition. Good Luck! 🍀

Volunteer News & Notes

Docent Time Recognition

At the recognition party, we will hand out awards for the many hours of loyal and dedicated service the docents have provided the museum. These awards are only a small token of our deepest appreciation. The list is as follows:

1000 Hours

Bob Comet
Al Petrich
Ralph Preston
Preston Turpin
Pete Watson

500 Hours

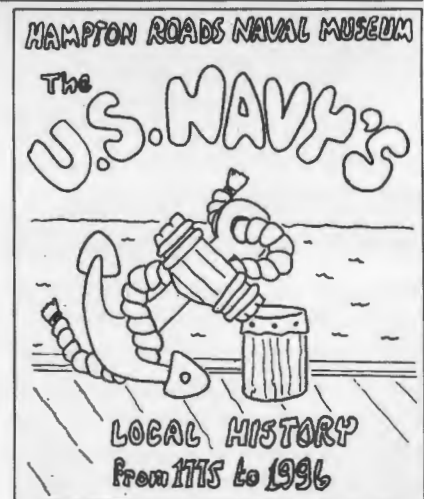
Matthew Burchfield
James Jolley
James Reid
Sally Tobin
Bill Wagner

1000 Hours

Bob Comet
Al Petrich
Ralph Preston
Preston Turpin
Pete Watson

Animals and the Navy Education Program

In the near future, docents should look for information on training classes for the education program that accompanies the "Sailor's Best Friend" exhibit. This program is targeted for school children from kindergarten to third grade. The program will use pictures, stickers and docent interaction to help kids learn about how animals serve the Navy. It should be a lot of fun.



ABC Ships

Lastly, we would like to recognize Paul Bohn for producing a museum coloring book for children. Paul drew several images of events and personalities related to the museum's exhibits. We are in the process of formatting the coloring book in preparation for publishing. We expect it to be ready for use in the very near future. 🍀

"The Sailor's Best Friend: Animals and the U.S. Navy" Now Open Through May 5

The museum's newest exhibit, "The Sailor's Best Friend: Animals and the U.S. Navy" is now up and ready for viewing. The exhibit has received a large amount of press coverage, including all three major TV stations. In addition to the regular news piece, WTKR TV-3 invited the museum to appear on "Morning Break with Kurt and Jane," their morning talk show. The exhibit will be up until May 5 and is located on the second floor of Nauticus just outside the museum. There is no admission charge. Call 322-2987 for more information.

As an accompaniment to the exhibit, the museum has an educational program for school children between the ages of 4-10 (between kindergarten and third grade.) The program is a fun and interactive set of exercises that teaches children about the ways that animals have served the Navy. If you are interested in receiving a packet with the necessary material and instructions, please contact Bob Matteson at 322-2986. 🐱



The blanket belonging to Bill IX, the Naval Academy's mascot in the 1940s, and "Hootie the Owl" highlight the exhibit's second section, "Mascots and Pets." Bill's blanket has one star on it, indicating one Navy victory over Army during his tenure. Hootie was the mascot of Naval Air Squadron VA-37 during the Vietnam War. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)



This is a milk carton from the U.S. Naval Academy milk farm in Gambrels, Maryland. A typhoid outbreak in the early part of the twentieth century threatened the nation's milk supply. To ensure a safe supply, the Navy set up its own milk farm. Bill the Goat, the Naval Academy's mascot, resides here as well. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)



The fourth section of the exhibit discusses the role of animals as symbols of valor and courage in the Navy. One of the most recognizable symbols is the "Don't Tread on Me" snake from the American Revolution. Created by South Carolina artist and patriot Christopher Gasden, the symbol was first used on a flag commanded by John Paul Jones when he took command of the frigate Alfred in 1775. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)