



# MANNING THE RAIL

## A U.S. NAVY TRADITION

[www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil)



### FROM THE AGE OF SAIL

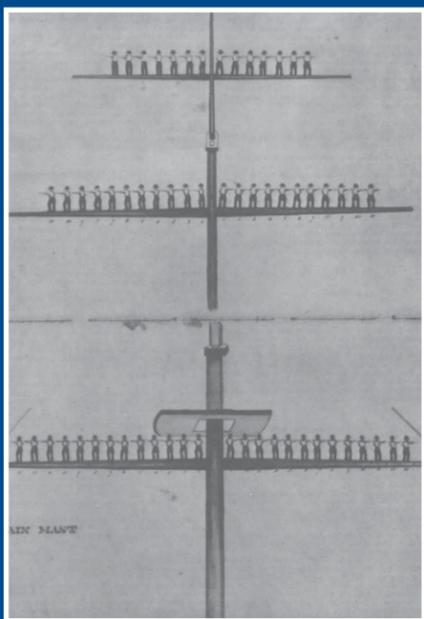
The custom of manning the rail evolves from “manning the yards” (the spars on a mast from which sails are set) and cheering the ship.

“Naval Ceremonies, Customs, and Traditions,” Mack and Connell

When a ship returned to port and approached the Lord Admiral, those on board would “presently man the ship and place every one of their companies both upon the upper and middle deck and also upon the waist and shrouds and elsewhere to the most advantage they can to make the bravest show and appear the greater number.”

Roger Marbecke's 1596 manuscript of the English Cadiz Expedition

### ADOPTED BY THE U.S. NAVY



As the tradition evolved, it became written in U.S. Naval Instruction of 1824 that “In manning the rigging for cheering, the people should be chosen for their size, to stand together or on the same ratlines, observing the space of two or three ratlines between each.”

U.S. Naval Instruction, 1824

### PASSING HONORS

Today, manning the rail is used in similar fashion in passing honors for:



- President of the United States
- Rulers of foreign nations
- Members of a reigning royal family

U.S. Naval Instruction, 1824

### MANNING THE RAIL FOR THE USS ARIZONA

Manning the rail has also become a traditional way to honor the USS Arizona Memorial when all U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Merchant Marine vessels transit Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. A ship passing the USS Arizona Memorial renders honors by sounding, “Attention,” and all hands topside render a hand salute until the ship has passed the memorial and “Carry on” is sounded.



“Naval Ceremonies, Customs, and Traditions,” Mack and Connell