



The Day Book

Volume 4, Issue 4

May-June 1998

A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

The Adventures of the Other Merrimac

by Bill Eley

The ships of the Hampton Roads-based Flying Squadron were in large part very respectable and majestic ships. For example, the battleship *Massachusetts* mounted powerful 13-inch guns and the armored cruiser *Brooklyn* earned high praise for its design. The converted yacht *Scorpion*, the squadron's smallest ship, had a majestic feel to it since it once belonged to a millionaire tycoon. The squadron has even been labeled "romantic" by some Naval historians.

100th Anniversary

The Spanish American War 1898-1998

There was one exception, the squadron's coal collier USS *Merrimac*. There was nothing romantic about *Merrimac*'s outward appearance or design (this *Merrimac* is consistently spelled without a "k.") Coal colliers were the pack mules of the old Steel Navy as they hauled much needed coal for warships underway. But, during the Spanish-American War, this "mule" ship was the key player in the most gallant Naval raid of the war. Like Hampton Roads' more famous Civil *Merrimac continued on page 6*



The ugly mule of the "romantic" Flying Squadron, the coal collier USS *Merrimac* (consistently spelled without the "k"), is pictured here off the coast of Cuba during the Spanish-American War. To her left is the Norfolk-built and based battleship USS *Texas*. (Naval Historical Center photo of an 1898 print)

Museum Opens New Exhibit on the Spanish-American War

by Joe Judge

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum celebrates the centennial of the Spanish-American War with the opening of "*Cuba Libre: The Spanish-American War in the Caribbean*." The exhibit examines the war in the Caribbean, focusing on the actions of the American Navy in 1898 and the drive to liberate Cuba from the Spanish. The display features artwork, photographs, artifacts and ship models and is the largest

temporary exhibit attempted since the museum relocated to Nauticus in 1994. The exhibit is called "*Cuba Libre*" ("Free Cuba") to let visitors know that the theme is the Atlantic campaign, and to remind them of the pre-eminent place of Cuba in the politics of the time.

The exhibit begins with an examination of the volatile situation in Cuba in 1898, a bloody rebellion that made Spain's colony front page news in

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The Spanish-American Walk

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

On May 11, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum opens the Spanish-American War show "Cuba Libre: The Spanish-American War in the Caribbean," our museum's most ambitious temporary exhibit to date. The display showcases more than 50 items. Many artifacts have never been viewed by the public such as Alexander Stewart's oil painting of the battleship *Maine* and the ship's jack salvaged by a Navy diver after the *Maine* exploded. See the front page article for more information on this exhibit.

Cuba Libre focuses on the Caribbean theater of the war. Several blocks away on Norfolk's City Hall Avenue, the MacArthur Memorial Museum is showing "Pacific Empire: The United States in the Philippines," which describes the war events in the Pacific. These two displays do not result from coincidence, but from long term planning, with each institution pooling resources and focusing on its respective strengths. Staff members have collaborated on posters and guides advertising both displays. This unusual

joint exhibit allows visitors to literally walk through the Spanish-American War. Both institutions should profit by an increased exposure, visitation, and certainly a more in-depth presentation of a war whose consequences are still being felt. The MacArthur Memorial is operated by the City of Norfolk and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (757) 441-2965 for more information. Admission to both exhibits is free.

On May 14, the museum hosts a special Media Day for *Cuba Libre* in the morning followed by a luncheon presentation by the Living History

Associates. Go back to the February 15 day in 1898 when the *Maine* exploded and talk to the journalist who wrote about the disaster. The Living History Associates is a company comprised of historical interpreters whose first person accounts are expressive and authentic. Don't miss out! Call for reservations at 322-2992. The event is being held at 11:30 a.m. at the Norfolk Naval Station's Pier 26. Cost for the



Spanish-American War Centennial Exhibits

NAVAL MUSEUM

"Cuba Libre: The Spanish-American War in the Caribbean"

An exhibit portraying the U.S. Navy and its drive to liberate Cuba. The display is at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum from May 11 to November 15, 1998. Exhibit is free. Call (757) 322-2992 for additional information.

MacArthur Memorial

"Pacific Empire: The United States in the Philippines 1898-1902"

An exhibit commemorating the rise of the United States as a Pacific power and the acquisition of the Philippines is currently on display at the MacArthur Memorial until April 2, 1999. Exhibit is free. Call (757) 441-2965 for additional information.

luncheon is \$8.

Another cooperative museum effort comes to fruition on May 18, International Museum Day, when our very first international intern arrives. Ms. Berangere Malvey comes from Marseilles, France where she is enrolled in office management curriculum at the Lycee Technique Prive Jeanne Perrimond. She will work directly with me on several projects including docent work. I may be calling on volunteers to assist Berangere in learning about our regional naval history. Berangere's internship lasts until June 26, so please stop in and say hello.

Also say hello to the museum's newest Leading Petty Officer 1st Class Fire Control Technician (Surface Warfare) Mike Rosa. FC1 Rosa is a fifteen year veteran of the Navy and a native of New Jersey. His previous assignments have included serving aboard the destroyers USS *Stump* (DD-978) and *Preble* (DDG-46), the cruiser *Joseph Daniels* (CG-27), as well as serving as an instructor at Dam Neck Fleet Training Center.

As the exhibit "The Sailor's Best Friend: Animals in the U.S. Navy" closes, I want to say a special thank you to all of the contributors who donated to the joint HRNM/Norfolk SPCA "Vittles for Critters."

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, e-mail at bapoulliot@cmr.navy.mil, 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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The Cable Cutting Expedition

The Norfolk-based gunboat *USS Nashville* participates in a gallant attempt to cut Spain's communications from Cuba

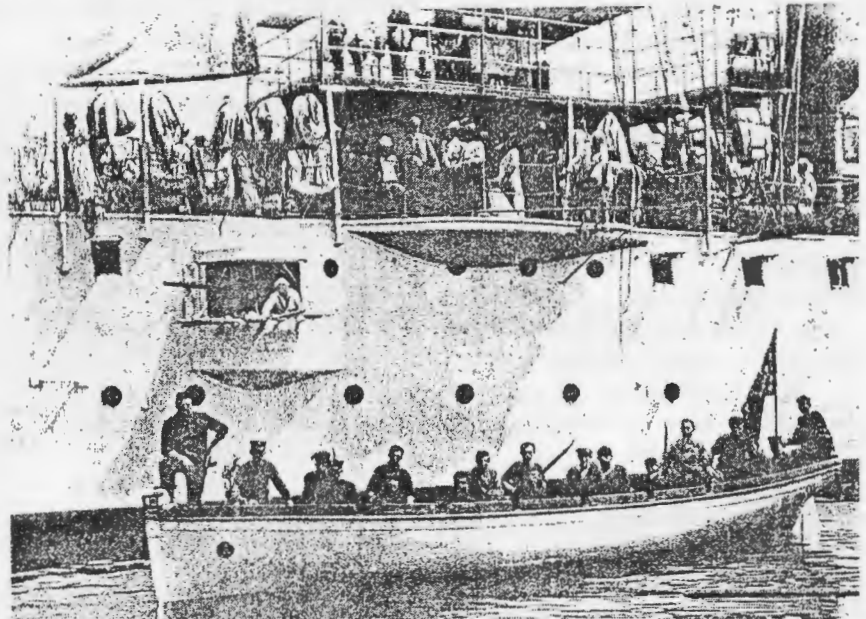
by Janet Beauvais

On May 11, 1898, the United States Navy initiated a cable cutting expedition off of Cienfuegos, Cuba. The cruiser *USS Marblehead* (C-11) and the Hampton Roads-built and-based gunboat *USS Nashville* (PG-7) were the two lead boats of the exercise. Their purpose was to destroy the lines of communication between the Spanish forces in Cuba and Spain. Long distance communications in 1898 ran through a series of

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underwater cables, and American military planners had decided early on that they had to be cut.

The one set of cables that ran of Cienfuegos had two purposes, the first being that it connected this small town in the south central part of Cuba to Havana. The second purpose was the connection from Cuba back to Spain. *Marblehead* was a small unarmored, steel hulled, cruiser. This ship was used mainly during peace time efforts overseas. Built at the City Point



A boat of some of the surviving Navy and Marine members of the Cienfuegos cable cutting expedition pose for a photograph in front of *USS Nashville* (PG-7) shortly after war ended. The Marine sharpshooter in the middle of the boat is holding a 6mm Navy Lee rifle. The rifle was not a very successful weapon and procurement halted soon after the war. (Naval Historical Center photograph)

Ironworks in Boston, she was equipped with nine five-inch guns and six six-inch guns. Her partner in this mission was the *Nashville*. *Nashville* was built by Newport News Shipbuilding in 1896 and commissioned and based at the Norfolk Navy Yard in 1897. The steel hull patrol gunboat was the first warship ever built by Newport News. The shallow drafted

gunboat was built for service in the coastal regions of the world (namely the rivers of China) and was the perfect ship for this type of mission.

The plan for this raid was to use the warships' two sail boats and two steam launches to sail close to shore, grapple the cables, and then cut them using hacksaws. *Marblehead* and *Nashville* would provide cover fire. The four smaller boats were armed with one pounder rapid fire guns and Colt Automatic Guns. Lt. Winslow was in charge of the *Nashville*'s boats while Lt. Anderson was in charge of the *Marblehead*'s boats. *Nashville* was the main source of arsenal in the expedition. Serving as Winslow's executive officer on this raid was a veteran lieutenant named Arthur C. Dillingham. (Twenty years later Dillingham would become the first admiral of the new Norfolk Naval Base and would serve as Norfolk's City Manager in the early 1920's.) A call for volunteers to man the four small boats went out. Hundreds of men responded, though only sixty were needed. Among the 60, 12 Marines sharpshooters were selected to provide cover fire in addition

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The Newport News-built and Norfolk-based patrol gunboat *USS Nashville* (PG-7) shown here at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard shortly before the *Maine* exploded. The gunboat was the first warship ever built by Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry-dock Company. (January 1898 Naval Historical Center photograph)

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America. And "front page news" was a term with impact in the 1890's when "yellow journalists" like William Randolph Hearst thundered their views with huge headlines. A reproduction of a *New York Journal* front page gives the flavor of this style. The newspaper, which trumpets the destruction of the Hampton Roads-based battleship USS *Maine*, is a fitting introduction to the next section of the exhibit, highlighting one of the most famous warships and famous events in American history.

The second class battleship *Maine* exploded into immortality on February 15, 1898. Her distinctive design, and yes, unusual beauty will be represented by the builder's model of the ship. This model, on loan from the US Navy's curator of models, has been exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. for many years. The museum has also borrowed a beautiful painting of the ship by the well-known maritime artist A.C. Stuart. The painting, Stuart's last, was in private hands on Maryland's Eastern Shore for most of this century until purchased by the Navy Art Collection earlier this year. Our "Cuba Libre" exhibit will mark its first-ever public viewing. The last item in a stellar trio of *Maine*-related artifacts is the jack of the ship, recovered from the wreck by a civilian diver assigned to the investigation after the blast. This jack is also being placed on view for the first time.

These three reminders of the great ship will be joined by smaller commemorative items such as a spoon, a plate, and two candy dishes that show the intense public feeling that the explosion generated.

Even Americans with little sense of history can find their jaded gray cells prompted by miniature sparks when hearing the phrase, "Remember the Maine!" However, the Spanish-American War did not begin or end with the unfortunate explosion. War was not declared until April 22, although Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt and others had begun to prepare long before. One part of this preparation came home in a big way to residents of Hampton Roads when the

Navy stationed a "Flying Squadron" of ships here during the early stages of the war. *Harper's Weekly* prints give a flavor of Norfolk life at the time. This section of the exhibit features the second ship model, USS *Brooklyn*, the flagship of the squadron, renowned as "the Bulldog of the Fleet."

Once Congress authorized the President to use the Armed Forces (a Constitutional requirement almost

making her famous dash from the West Coast to the Caribbean. The U.S. Naval Historical Center, a generous source of many artifacts on exhibit here, has loaned a flag from this ship for the exhibit. As with each section of the exhibit, photographs obtained from the National Archives and the Naval Historical Center supplement artwork and artifacts.

The war took a more dramatic turn as

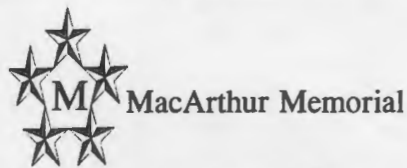
Spanish-American War Centennial Exhibits

There are two exhibits on the Spanish-American War currently on display in downtown Norfolk. Admission is free to both museums.

"Cuba Libre: The Spanish-American War in the Caribbean," an exhibit about the U.S. Navy and the drive to liberate Cuba, is on display at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum from May 11 to Nov. 15, 1998. Call 757-322-2987 for more information.



"Pacific Empire: The United States in the Philippines, 1898-1902," an exhibit on America's Rise in the Pacific, is currently on display at the MacArthur Memorial until April 2, 1999. Call 757-441-2965 for more information.

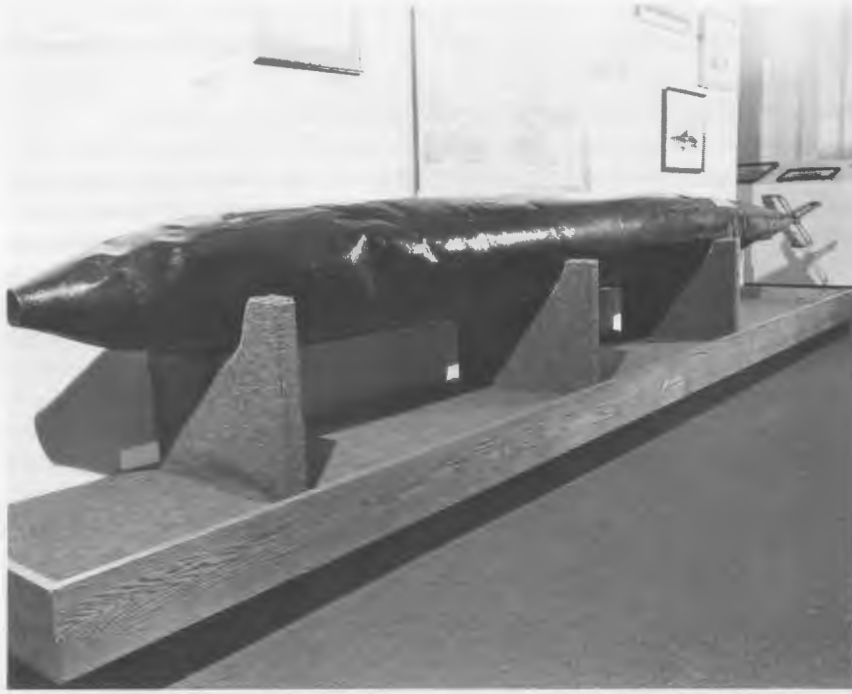


forgotten in the days of the 'imperial presidency'), the Navy took up blockading stations off Cuba. The exhibit turns to the famous illustrator and correspondent Henry Reuter Dahl to portray these early days of the war. Reuter Dahl's illustrations for *Collier's Magazine* in this section are colorful, dynamic portrayals by an eye witness to history (see "Portrait of a Naval Artist," Vol. 4 Issue 2 of *The Day Book* for more information on Reuter Dahl.)

Another drama was unfolding at this time, as the battleship *Oregon* was

the Spanish fleet headed for the Caribbean and eventually made port at Santiago de Cuba. U.S. Marines then landed at Guantanamo Bay, and the Navy conceived a daring plan to sink the collier *Merrimac* in the Santiago harbor. All these events are remembered in "Cuba Libre." Lt. Richmond P. Hobson, the daring leader of the *Merrimac* expedition, is featured on a souvenir portrait issued by an American soap company, a striking example of the patriotism of the time.

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One of the centerpiece artifacts on display for the museum's Spanish-American War exhibit is this torpedo taken off the Spanish armored cruiser *Vizcaya*. Other notable artifacts include the jack from the battleship *Maine*, a painting of the battleship by noted maritime artist A.C. Stuart, and several prints by artist and naval commentator Henry Reutherdahl. (HRNM photo)

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The most striking artifact in the exhibit is the centerpiece of the next section on the battle of Santiago. A fifteen foot Spanish torpedo from the cruiser *Vizcaya* introduces the visitor not only to the battle but to the relatively new torpedo technology that both fleets utilized. The Spanish fleet of Admiral Cervera was destroyed in one afternoon outside Santiago, as the somber photographs of burning ships attest. Viewers will also see portraits of American Naval commanders Commodore Schley and Rear Adm. Sampson and learn about their unfortunate post-war dispute over credit for the victory.

While the admirals warred, bluejackets celebrated. The exhibit recalls the American sailor with the uniform of Nils Nilsen, a 3rd class petty officer aboard the Hampton Roads-stationed cruiser *USS New Orleans*. This uniform, on loan from the Naval Historical Center, is joined by a portrait of an African-American sailor, Thomas Boyd. These two men and thousands like them were in the Navy at the time of great change in the sea service.

Artifacts for "Cuba Libre" have been assembled from generous local lenders

as well as the institutions mentioned above. The exhibit, which opens on May 11, runs through November 15. The hot Norfolk summer will be a perfect time for visitors to step inside the cool museum and travel back in time to 100 years ago and see when America gained an empire.



Shortly after the battleship *Maine* exploded, corporate America turned out thousands of commemorative items reminding people to "Remember the Maine!" This plate and several other commemorative items are a part of the *Maine* section of the exhibit. (HRNM photo by Joe Judge)

And perhaps return home to a cool "Cuba Libres" made with dark rum, cola, and lime juice.

For those readers who are interested in knowing what happened in the other half of the war, the MacArthur Memorial has produced an exhibit entitled "Pacific Empire: The United States in the Philippines, 1898-1902." This exhibit looks at the American victory and takeover of the Philippine Islands from the Spanish.

The exhibit discusses the dramatic Battle of Manila Bay, in which one of the first steel ships ever built by the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, *USS Raleigh* (C-8) participated, the victory over Spanish land forces, and the subsequent insurrection by Filipino guerillas. In many ways, the MacArthur legacy begins during this time period as Arthur MacArthur, Douglas' father, was the commanding general of American forces which occupied the islands.

Admission to both exhibits is free and both are located in downtown Norfolk within walking distance of each other. Call (757) 322-2987 for more information on the Hampton Roads Naval Museum exhibit and accompanying educational material and (757) 441-2965 for more information on the MacArthur Memorial's exhibit. 🚢

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War-era *Merrimack*, her actions produced some of the Navy's most famous heroes.

Merrimac was originally built as *Salvage* in New Castle, England in 1894. The Navy purchased and rebuilt her in the early part of Spring, 1898 and commissioned her into the fleet on April 11. The collier was then attached to the Flying Squadron here in Hampton Roads. She displaced 3,300 tons, was 323 feet long, and had no armament. Like the Civil War *Merrimack*, she had a notoriously unreliable engineering plant which limited her speed and mobility.

The warships of the Flying Squadron, less *Merrimac*, left Hampton Roads headed for Cuba on May 11, based on reports that the Spanish squadron had been spotted in the Caribbean. The squadron joined in the hunt for the Spanish ships and ultimately stationed themselves off the

taken its toll on several ships. Cervera's greatest advantage was the well protected, narrow entrance to Santiago harbor. Once the placement of Cervera's squadron was confirmed, both squadrons began to assemble off of Santiago to set up a blockade.

The entrance to Santiago had numerous fortifications including the huge stone Morro Castle. In addition, the channel was lined with mines that could be set off by an electrical circuit from shore. Sampson was under strict instructions not to lose any of his capital ships to Spanish forts. This automatically ruled out any direct Naval assault on Santiago, a decision that angered U.S. Army commanders during their advance on the city, and limited the fleet to long range bombardment of the forts throughout the war.

Sampson also feared the approaching hurricane season might

as the "*Merrimac* Affair," which produced one of the most dramatic events of the war.

Credit for the scheme to sink the *Merrimac* has been given to Sampson and a young naval constructor named Richmond Hobson, who was selected to work out the details. The *Merrimac* was considered the least useful member of the fleet because of her frequent machinery breakdowns. Hobson made meticulous plans for his mission. Along the portside of the ship, 78 pound explosive charges, filled with gunpowder, were affixed to the outer part of the hull, a few feet below the waterline and at 30 feet intervals. The ship's four anchors were positioned on the ship so all could be dropped simultaneously. At the right moment, according to Hobson's plan, the charges would be set off with an electrical circuit, two men with sledgehammers would open all of the sea valves, and all the cargo doors would be opened.

Hobson asked for command of the ship for this exploit and for a few volunteers from the fleet. Sampson granted his request. The appointment angered some line officers as Hobson was normally not eligible to command at sea as a naval constructor. He was an intelligent person and had graduated first in his class in 1889 at the Naval Academy. But, he lacked experience as he had never commanded a ship in his entire Naval career.

Merrimac's commanding officer, Cmdr. James M. Miller, felt particularly snubbed as he expected the honor of taking his ship to its final resting place. He sent a petition to Sampson, citing both Naval regulations and traditions, in an attempt to get his superior to change his mind. The petition almost had Sampson persuaded, but in the end Sampson stuck by his favorite junior officer. Officially, the admiral believed that since Hobson had worked out the details and oversaw *Merrimac*'s preparations, Miller would not be able to execute the plan correctly. Unofficially, Sampson simply liked

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Once the Navy purchased *Merrimac*, they converted her at the New York Navy Yard. They then brought her down to Hampton Roads and assigned her to the Flying Squadron. The collier is pictured here at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard on April 23, 1898. (Naval Historical Center photograph)

town of Cienfuegos. *Merrimac*, which earlier had been detached from the squadron, rejoined them on May 20.

After a clever game of hide-and-seek, the Spanish squadron under the commander Adm. Pascual Cervera slipped past both the Flying Squadron and the North Atlantic Squadron and into the harbor of Santiago, Cuba on May 19. Cervera's situation was desperate. The squadron badly needed coal and the journey from Spain had

drive his ships away from the harbor. He therefore decided to bottle up the entrance by sinking a vessel across the narrow entrance of the bay. A single wreck lying in the middle of the channel could keep a large warship from passing, and a few monitors or cruisers could prevent the Spanish from removing the wreck. Sampson saw a way to replace the blockade with a single collier like a cork in a bottle. The attempt to block the channel is known

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Hobson more than Miller.

Among the enlisted ranks, practically every man on a ship in the American fleet responded to the call for volunteers. "Many wept and begged for the privilege," one report noted. However, only seven men were needed. Aboard the battleship *Iowa*, all 34 officers and 646 enlisted men volunteered. Coxswain J.E. Murphy was chosen by way of a coin toss. The other five chosen were Coxswain Osborn Deignan, Machinist's Mate George Phillips, and Water Tender John Kelly, all from the *Merrimac*, Gunner's Mate George Charette from the *New York*, and Seaman Daniel Montague from the *Brooklyn*. When the volunteers were put aboard the collier, there were eight men instead of seven. Danish-born Coxswain Randolph Clausen from the *New York* wanted to participate so badly that he concealed himself aboard the collier during *Merrimac's* preparations.

The combined American fleet assembled off of Santiago on June 1. The *Merrimac's* attempt was scheduled for twilight before dawn of the next day. Sampson called off this attempt, over Hobson's objections, because he felt it had become too light. A second attempt was scheduled two days later. *Merrimac* began her run about 8 p.m. yards from the harbor's entrance at 3 a.m. As the Spanish forts had been alerted, shelling began from the shore. Only a few shots fired at the collier struck home, but that was enough to disable the rudder, some firing circuits, and the stern anchor.

Hobson ordered the other charges detonated, but they failed to go off, after Spanish fire had cut the wires. The Spanish detonated a mine close to the ship, but it only shook the ship. The unfamiliar crew was not able to reverse *Merrimac's* engines, the bow anchor chain parted, and a second Spanish mine detonated under the bow. The ship sank parallel, not across the channel as planned. *New York* moved in to await the heroes. All night a rescue party using the cruiser's launch kept watch. At dawn, the launch ran across the entrance under fire of

batteries to look for survivors. "No man came out of that harbor alive," was the report Sampson received.

Merrimac had settled to the bottom within minutes, with the upper works just above the surface of the water. The whole affair had taken little more than a half-hour to complete. Hobson and his men were rescued by none other than Adm. Cervera himself, who came out in a boat crying "héroe valiente!" He kissed Hobson on the head and declared that men of such gallant deeds should not be mourned by their comrades. Under a flag of truce,

Cervera sent a messenger to Adm. Sampson to inform him that the eight heroes were honored prisoners of war. The messenger somewhat happily reported to Sampson that *Merrimac* did not block the channel. The rush of the tide sank the shattered hull of the collier before she could sink squarely across the channel.

It was a month before the men of the *Merrimac* were exchanged, and during their imprisonment they were treated with great kindness and respect. They were permitted to receive
Merrimac continued on page 8



The scuttling took place on the night of June 3, 1898. While Adm. Sampson only needed seven men, he received hundreds of eager volunteers to take charge of *Merrimac*. From upper left to bottom right is Lt. Richmond Hobson, Randolph Clausen (the stowaway), Osborn W. Deignan, Francis Kelly, J.E. Murphy, Daniel Montague, George Phillips, and George Charette. *Merrimac's* commanding officer Cmdr. Miller was snubbed by Sampson and left out of the expedition. (Naval Historical Center photograph of a 1907 print)

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money and food from the American ships. The Navy generously rewarded all eight members of the expedition. At the suggestion of Sampson, who asked Secretary of the Navy John D. Long to "offer a suitable professional reward to Mr. Hobson and his companions," President William McKinley promoted Hobson straight to captain and all the enlisted men received warrant officer commissions.

Sampson proudly wrote, "I can not myself too earnestly express my appreciation of the conduct of Mr. Hobson and his gallant crew. I venture to say that a more brave and daring thing has not been done since Cushing blew up the *Albemarle*." Sampson's latter reference was to Lt. Cushing's 1864 raid which successfully sunk the

The best evaluation of the event was put forth by Naval Cadet Thomas Powell, who commanded the launch waiting to pick up the crew after the expedition. He commented that Hobson did not need to sink the Merrimac as "the Spanish sunk it for him."


of the crew to handle the *Merrimac* caused the ship to sink in the wrong place. The entire effort was wasted." Even Beach, however, had to admit that "despite the failure, Hobson became a national hero in a nation hungry for heroes."

It is probable that the same newspapers which helped start the war, glorified the crew of the *Merrimac* more than was warranted. A more realistic and probably the best evaluation of the event was put forth by Naval Cadet Thomas

gesture. One senior Spanish army officer had said before the battle "If we should lose without fighting, the moral effect would be terrible, both in Spain and abroad."

Some analysts have suggested that Cervera might have had better luck had he made his dash for freedom at night rather in broad daylight. Cervera had thought about a night sortie, but decided against it because he feared he would not be able to negotiate the narrow and treacherous channel in the dark while being blinded by the American searchlights and trying to avoid *Merrimac*. As a result, his squadron came out on the morning of July 3 and was destroyed by the afternoon.

Hobson retained his hero status long after the war ended. While at the Metropolitan Opera House one night, someone recognized him and called out his name. The crowd immediately demanded Hobson get up on stage and tell his story. Hobson resigned his commission soon after the war. In 1907, he was elected to Congress. He spent much of his time in Washington promoting the cause of the Navy. He also launched a personal crusade for the prohibition of alcohol. Big business jumped at the chance to use his celebrity status by turning out products with his face on the front. The N.K. Fairbank Company, for example, produced a trading card with Hobson's picture on the front and an advertisement for "Fairbank's Fairy Soap" on the back. Congress awarded him and his crew the Medal of Honor shortly before he died in 1937.

As for the Flying Squadron's expendable collier, salvage teams tasked with cleaning up the wreckage in and around Santiago raised her soon after the war and subsequently scrapped her. *Merrimac* would be the only American ship lost during the war. 



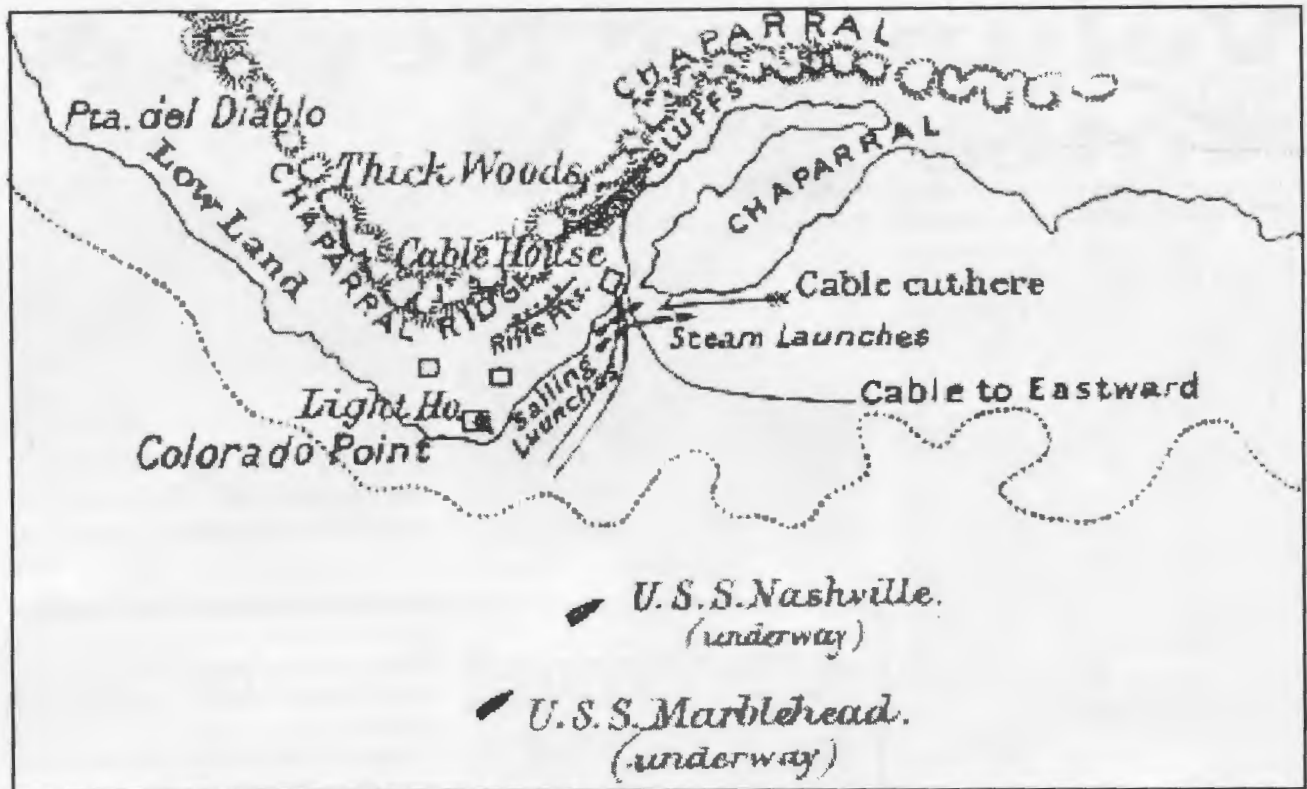
Pictured here is the wreck of the Merrimac in the channel leading to Santiago harbor. While the wreck did not serve as intended, it did deter Cervera from leading a night sortie, making it easier for the U.S. squadron to destroy it on July 3. Ironically, the Spanish also tried to block the channel when they sank the cruiser Reina Mercedes. They were equally unsuccessful as the battleships Texas and Massachusetts damaged her before she could be sunk correctly. (1898 Naval Historical Center photograph)

ironclad CSS *Albemarle* in North Carolina.

Modern day historians have not been so kind to Hobson. In stark contrast to Sampson's reasoning for choosing Hobson over Miller, Naval historian Ned Beach commented that "No one could be better suited to cope with the old ship's peculiarities than her own skipper (i.e. Cmdr. Miller) and crew. Yet, Hobson's inexperience and inability

Powell, who commanded the launch waiting to pick up the crew after the expedition. He commented that Hobson did not need to sink the *Merrimac* as "the Spanish sunk it for him."

Merrimac's scuttling, however, did achieve something. Under intense pressure from his superiors, Adm. Cervera and his squadron of six ships came out of Santiago harbor on July 3 in what he knew would be a suicidal



USS Nashville's commanding officer produced this map of the Cienfuegos cable-cutting expedition. Nashville and Marblehead bombarded the cable house while the steam and sail launches went in to try to cut the cables.

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to the launches' weapons. The ships' carpenters and blacksmiths were assigned to help cut the cables.

The expedition got started at 6:30 a.m. While the four smaller boats cut the cables, *Nashville* and *Marblehead* maintained a steady stream of fire on the enemy. At first, after the enemy had been forced from their post, the boats did not experience too much in return fire. The gunboat's and cruiser's bombardment forced the posted Spanish infantry and cavalry forces from their positions around the cable house. The cable house was then destroyed by the warships' gun fire. After the Spanish had been forced from their post, the four smaller boats moved in, grappled the cables that led to the south and west.

Noticing that the enemy had taken shelter in a lighthouse and were firing upon them, *Nashville* and *Marblehead* destroyed it. This caused great concern, since they had been ordered not to destroy the lighthouse. Once found, the cables were reeled in and grappled by the steam launches. The cables themselves were six-inches in diameter but were protected with armored and thick insulation. Ground swells and rough seas caused

additional difficulties. It took over three hours to cut two of the cables. After the cutting, the cables were to be dragged into deep water, cutting off as much as possible of the end. Before casting off the ends, the insulation of the cables were to be punctured 20 to 30 feet from the end with sharp pointed instruments and hacksaws. The third and final cable had been successfully hoisted out of the water, but Lt. Anderson decided that enemy fire was too great to risk taking the time to cut it. He ordered the cable to be dropped and for the boats to return to their ships.

Despite the effective shore bombardment, some members of the Spanish garrison stuck around and fired on the American boats with rifles and a machine-gun. The Marine sharpshooters, using 6mm Navy Lee Rifles, and boat gun crews returned their fire. The Americans were frustrated by the fact that the Spanish were using German-made Mauser rifles which used a smokeless powder making it difficult to track a target. It would be a problem faced by American forces everywhere throughout the Spanish-American War. The result of the expedition was very positive. Two

of the cables lines had been cut with a minimum of casualties.

Many of the volunteers had been hurt. Most had been shot in the arms or legs while trying to cut the cables. Others, not so lucky, were shot in the chest, jaw, and head. Six men in all died and five were severely wounded. In reports sent back to the United States, lists of such men were given along with the status of whether or not their injuries were deemed fatal.

It is worth noting that one of the commanders of the mission sent back highly complimentary message about the volunteer's work. He proudly wrote, "They worked intelligently and cheerfully at the exhausting labor of picking up and cutting the heavy cables, and, when under a heavy fire and the crew badly wounded, continued to work, without confusion, until ordered to stop." He made sure his men were more than adequately rewarded for their work. Fifty-four Congressional Medals of Honor were issued, one for each surviving member of the expedition. Even for the Spanish-American War, this was a bit too liberal and even a bit

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Volunteer News & Notes

Field Trip to Halifax

There has been some interest expressed in taking a docent field trip to Halifax, North Carolina. We are looking to go on **July 21** and Bob is asking any interested volunteers to sign up by **July 7**. Call him at 322-2986 if you want to go or want more information.

Halifax is a town with several 18th and 19th century buildings including an 1808 plantation house, a 1760 merchant's house, a 1838 jail, and the Montford Archaeological Museum. The town's most prominent claim to fame is the "Halifax Resolves," the first declaration of independence document produced by any city in the Thirteen Colonies.

Next Docent Meeting

Thank you to those who attended the last meeting at the Mariner's Museum. We most certainly hope you enjoyed their exhibit on *RMS Titanic*. The next docent meeting will take place on **July 9 at 10 a.m.** We will meet at the MacArthur Memorial to see their Spanish-American War exhibit "Pacific Empire: The United States in the Philippines." Hope to see you there.

Spanish-American War Exhibit Training


On April 20 we held a training session for the museum's Spanish-American War exhibit. This training

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ridiculous. On the same day this raid was conducted, the raid on Cardenas (see last issue of *The Day Book*) occurred and resulted in only three Medals of Honor. No other action in American military history would yield so many Medals of Honor for such a high percentage of its participants. The liberal issuing of the medal was certainly not because the expedition's commanding officer was an easy going person. A month later, he was the commanding officer of the Marine

session was an orientation on both exhibit and the education program for sixth graders. For those of you who could not make it, we will be holding a second session on **May 18**. It is important you become familiar with the material. For weekend docents, Gordon will provide the necessary material and information on the weekends that he works.

Summer Picnic

The 5th Annual Cookout is set for Thursday evening, **June 11** at the open air Nauticus Celebration Pavilion. Be on the lookout for an information flyer. All of the previous events were proven to be quite successful. Having gained experience in planning, we are sure this one will be the best yet. Mark your calendar now. 

Upcoming Events


May 11-Cuba Libre, the museum's new Spanish-American War exhibit opens. Jones, USMCR "Return to Iwo Jima." 12:30 p.m., Nauticus Conference Room.

May 14-Living History Associates presents "The Splendid Little War" at 11:30 a.m. at Norfolk Naval Station's Pier 26. **July 16-FBI Special Agent Robert Hunter** talks about the Walker spy ring. 11:30 a.m. at Norfolk Naval Station's Pier 26.

June 29-Dunderfunk Society, Lt. Col. Charles Call 322-2992 to make reservations.

landing at Guantanamo Bay. He publicly scorned the commanding officer of the battalion when the Marine lieutenant colonel suggested that his men might need to withdraw from their positions.

How important was this expedition to the Spanish-American War? The expedition must have been a huge moral boost, but was the expedition itself a vital element? The raid was one of the first actions of the war and newspapers back home published

glowing reports of American bravery. The success of the mission itself is less certain, especially in light of the fact that the third cable was dropped uncut. Since the cable house on shore was destroyed, the officers on the scene concluded, maybe somewhat too optimistically, that communications had been cut and declared the mission a total success. We must leave the results of the raid with somewhat of an open-ended conclusion. 



Sage Stumper VIII: Do You Accept Visa? The Navy Goes Shopping for Ships

The Sage asked in the last issue to name some of the larger and more important ships purchased or leased by the Navy for the Spanish-American War. The Sage congratulates Hunt Lewis for giving the correct response. The answer is as follows:

During the mid-1890's, some planners within the Navy still believed in a commerce raiding doctrine as the best way to fight a naval war (as opposed to the new Mahanian doctrine of sea control.) As a result, the Navy convinced Congress to subsidize the construction of several passenger ships that could be converted to fast cruisers

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in time of war. The four biggest ones, and the answer to the first question, were *St. Paul*, *St. Louis*, *City of New York* (renamed *Harvard* for the war), and *City of Paris* (renamed *Yale*).

The Navy leased the four passenger steam ships from the International Navigation Company just before war was declared on Spain in April. The company charged the Navy a premium price of \$2,500 a day for the right to use them. For comparison purposes, a chief gunner's mate received \$80 a month. The U.S. Government spent around \$1.2 million for the four ships before they were returned on Sept. 2, 1898.

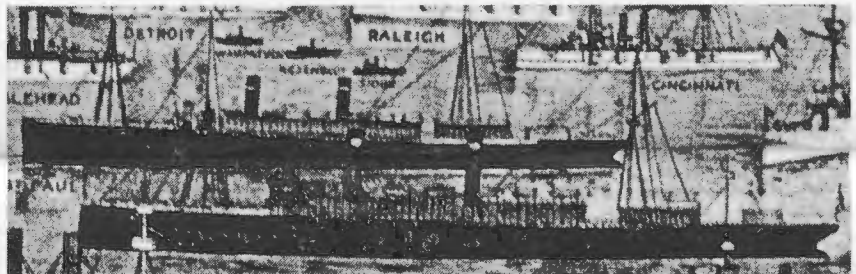
The Government got its money's worth for these "auxiliary cruisers." Their qualities as for-profit passenger ships made them excellent scout

The Museum Sage

cruisers. They had very good speed (each around 21-knots) and very good endurance. They each displaced around 14,000 tons and were around 550 feet in length, making them the largest warships in the fleet. The battleship USS *Iowa* (BB-4) was around 330 feet and displaced only 11,000 tons. They performed valuable scouting patrols in the Lesser Antilles and were the first to spot Cervera's squadron. After Cervera's squadron had been spotted, the ships were given other various assignments around Cuba and Puerto Rico. The most notable operations were *St. Paul* engaging the torpedo boat *Terror* and the unprotected cruiser *Isabel II* off the coast of San Jan, Puerto Rico and *St.*

United States successfully negotiated with Brazil to purchase both ships. Negotiations on *Abreu* ran too long, however, and she never left England before war was declared. As a result, the English were forced to keep the ship in port as not to violate neutrality laws. *Amazonas*, on the other hand, became *New Orleans* and was assigned to the Flying Squadron. Americans sailors had some difficulty operating the ship at first as many of the instructions and identifying name plates were still in Portuguese. Of all the foreign built warships purchased, *New Orleans* was the most successful.

The merchant ship *Buffalo* also had a Brazilian connection. Newport News Shipbuilding originally built *Buffalo* as



Louis cutting the underwater telegraph cables that ran out of Santiago.

In addition to the four large ships, the Navy also leased or outright bought several smaller freighters and converted them to auxiliary cruisers and troop transports. Four of them originated at Newport News Shipbuilding, back in the days when civilian shipping was Newport News' core business.

The second part of the question was to name the warships and merchant vessels purchased overseas by the Navy for the war. The answer is the protected cruisers *New Orleans* (ex-*Amazonas*), *Albany* (ex-*Almirante Abreu*), *Buffalo* (ex-*El Cid*, ex-*Nictheroy*), the gunboat *Topeka* (ex-*Dioggenous*), and the torpedo boat *Somers*.

For three of the ships, once again the Navy tapped Brazil. *Amazonas* and *Almirante Abreu* were English-built cruisers on their way to Brazil. The

The auxiliary cruisers/passenger ships *St. Paul* and *St. Louis*. The Navy paid a premium rate to lease them on top of an earlier construction subsidy. But, the money was well spent. *St. Paul* was for a short time attached to the Flying Squadron here in Hampton Roads. (HRNM photo of an 1898 print by C.A. Musselman)

the freighter *El Cid* for Huntington's Pacific Southern Company. He in turn sold it to Brazil where it was renamed *Nictheroy*. The Brazilian government armed the ship with a pneumatic dynamite gun during its successful suppression of the rebellious Brazilian Navy. She did accompany the battleship *Oregon* during the battleship's trip up the east side of South America, but missed the rest of the war due to mechanical difficulties.

Topeka and *Somers*, purchased in Europe, also missed the war due to mechanical difficulties and neutrality laws. In all, the Navy added 19 ships in a very short time period for the war effort. 