



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

March 3, 2020



Compiled by Brent Hunt, Naval History and Heritage Command's Communication and Outreach Division

Welcome to *Navy History Matters*—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website ([history.navy.mil](http://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ Museum Bores Gun of *Monitor*, Takes Major Step Toward Displaying

A pair of 8-ton Dahlgren guns—once in the rotating turret of the famed [Civil War](#) ironclad [Monitor](#)—has been in a chemical bath at the [Mariners' Museum](#) in Newport News, VA, for several years. On Feb. 25, conservationists finally got their first chance to put a one-of-a-kind drill to the innards of one of the two guns from *Monitor*, clearing out the silt, coal, and other debris that have accumulated over the past several years. This week, they are scheduled to drill the second gun. Once the work is finished, conservationists will be able to see how much salt remains in the metal and start the process of chemically removing it. Clearing the physical contents of the guns is the last major mechanical step in their conservation. It will enable the museum staff to establish a timeline for putting the guns on display. “We take years to prepare for (a few hours) of operation,” said Will Hoffman, the museum’s director of conservation. “We only get one shot, so the alignment has to be just right.” For more, [read the article](#) in *The Virginian-Pilot*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.pilotonline.com/history/dp-nw-monitor-ironclad-gun-boring-mariners-museum-20200226-ksisfig4uzdxdgdqsnvimjm7jq-story.html>

## ★ WWII@75: George E. Wahlen

On March 3, 1945, during the [Battle for Iwo Jima](#), Pharmacist's Mate Second Class [George Edward Wahlen](#), despite injuries that left him in agonizing pain, remained on the battlefield to aid his fighting comrades. At one point, he spotted a fallen Marine, advanced forward of the front lines, and then carried him back to safety despite heavy enemy fire. When an adjacent platoon suffered heavy casualties, he heroically ignored the continuous pounding of heavy mortars and treated 14 casualties before returning to his platoon. After being wounded again and not being able to walk, he crawled 50 yards to administer first aid to another fallen fighter. Wahlen's extraordinary self-sacrifice was a constant inspiration to the men of his company during the fight. On Oct. 5, 1945, President Harry S. Truman presented Wahlen with the [Medal of Honor](#). After [World War II](#), Wahlen earned a commission in the U.S. Army, serving in combat during the [Korean](#) and [Vietnam](#) Wars.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/w/wahlen-george-e/80-g-701151.html>

## ★ WWII@75: Jack Williams

On March 3, 1945, during the [Battle for Iwo Jima](#), Pharmacist's Mate Third Class [Jack Williams](#) moved forward of the front lines under heavy enemy small arms fire to assist a Marine wounded during a fierce hand grenade battle. After reaching the Marine, Williams dragged him to a shallow depression, used his own body as a shield, and administered first aid. While rendering aid, he was struck by enemy fire in the abdomen and three times in the groin. Momentarily stunned, Williams continued to render aid. Unaware of his own urgent need for medical attention, Williams remained in the fire-swept area to care for another Marine casualty. Bleeding profusely and in agonizing pain, Williams made his way to the rear. On his way back, a sniper bullet hit Williams, causing him to collapse. He succumbed to his injuries later that day. Williams received the [Medal of Honor](#) posthumously for his extraordinary heroism. [USS Jack Williams](#) honored the [World War II](#) hero.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/w/williams-jack/nh-84958-a.html>

### ★ WWII@75: Phyllis Dailey

On March 8, 1945, 75 years ago, Phyllis Dailey of New York City became the first [African-American](#) ensign in the [Navy Nurse Corps](#). She went on to serve at the Naval Dispensary at Boston, MA. [First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt](#) was a well-known proponent of the change. She put pressure on the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), and SPARS (the women's component of the Coast Guard) to follow suit. Soon after Dailey was sworn-in, Edith Mazie Devoe, of Washington, DC, joined the Navy Nurse Corps. She had the distinction of becoming the [first African-American nurse](#) in the regular Navy in January 1948, and in 1950, became the first African-American Navy nurse to serve outside the continental United States at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii. For more on [women in the U.S. Navy](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.womenofwwii.com/navy/navy-nurses/new-navy-nurses-get-commissioned-in-new-york/>

### ★ Navy Christens Littoral Combat Ship *Cooperstown*

The Navy christened its newest Freedom-variant combat ship, the future USS *Cooperstown*, during a ceremony held at Marinette, WI, Feb. 29. "The christening of the future USS *Cooperstown* marks an important step toward this great ship's entry into the fleet," said Acting Secretary of the Navy [Thomas Modly](#). "The dedication and skilled work of everyone involved in the building of this ship has ensured that it will represent the great city of Cooperstown and serve our Navy and Marine Corps team for decades to come." The ship is the first named in honor of Cooperstown, NY—home to Major League Baseball's [Hall of Fame](#). *Cooperstown* honors the 64 veterans who are members of the hall of fame and who served in conflicts ranging from the [Civil War](#) through the [Korean War](#). For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#). For more on [Navy athletics](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.cbs58.com/news/littoral-combat-ship-future-uss-cooperstown-celebrates-christening-in-marinette>

### ★ USS *Dewey* Commissioned—10 Years Ago

On March 6, 2010, [USS Dewey](#) was commissioned at Seal Beach, CA. The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer was named after former Admiral of the Navy [George Dewey](#), hero of the Battle of Manila Bay during the [Spanish-American War](#). The ship is the third to be named after Dewey. The [first Dewey](#) was commissioned on Oct. 4, 1934. She participated in most of the major Pacific battles during [World War II](#), earning 13 battle stars for her service. The [second Dewey](#) was commissioned on Dec. 7, 1959, with Commander [Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr.](#) in command. The newest *Dewey* made her maiden deployment to the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, Arabian Gulf, and Mediterranean where the crew carried out maritime interception, [counter piracy](#), and counter-narcotics operations, July 29, 2011–Feb. 28, 2012.



**Photo Link:** [https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/945/28170383428\\_602681e542\\_b.jpg](https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/945/28170383428_602681e542_b.jpg)

### ★ Office of Naval Records and Library Established

On March 4, 1915, the appropriations for the Navy Department Library and the Office of Naval Records were combined, and a new office was established known as the [Office of Naval Records and Library](#). [World War I](#) was the transition point for the office, moving from an era of custodianship and primary concern with records of the past to a period of active selection, collection, and classification of data on current naval operations. During the "Great War," the library was the mecca for news correspondents and others utilizing its reference facilities for information on treaties, international law, and subjects related to the war. A great many ranking naval officers, allied officials, and members of the government were also frequent visitors.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-02000/NH-2374.html>

### ★ Navy Authorized to Accept Donations

On March 4, 1937, congressional legislation authorized the Secretary of the Navy to [accept donations](#) for the benefit of the Office of Naval Records and Library, its collection, or its services. Today, NHHC headquarters collecting entities consist of six branches. Each branch specializes in its own distinct collection specialty with its own policies for managing respective collections. The collecting branches include [Archives](#), [Art](#), [Curator](#), [Photo Archives](#), [Library](#), and [Underwater Archaeology](#). The [ten museums](#) that are a part of NHHC are separate collecting entities with their own policies and needs. For more on [donating materials](#), visit [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/news-and-events/news/2019/scorpion-artifact-article.html>

### ★ Extensive Collection Arrived at David Taylor Model Basin

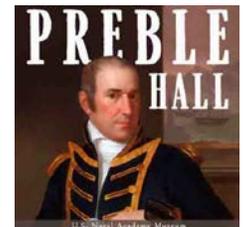
On March 7, 1942, the first examples of the Bureau of Ships' extensive ship model collection arrived at the David Taylor Model Basin outside Washington, DC, for protection against a possible enemy attack during [World War II](#). The models were among 1,900 in the Navy Ship Model Program, still located at the David Taylor Model Basin. The Navy began building models of new ships in 1883. After 1883, models were usually constructed for one ship in each new class—if the class was significantly different from previous classes. NHHC and the [Curator of Ship Models](#) cooperate closely, sharing the collection—which has grown to about 3,000—with the fleet and the American public. The [National Museum of the U.S. Navy](#) displays the largest number of the models.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/museums/nmusn/explore/exhibits/in-harms-way-us-navy-wwii-pacific-theater.html>

### ★ Collections at U.S. Navy's Oldest Museum

In the [latest naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, [U.S. Naval Academy Museum](#) (USNAM) managing director Charles Swift and senior curator Tracie Logan discuss the history of Preble Hall at the Naval Academy, the major collections, and what museums consider when people offer items. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at the USNAM in Annapolis, MD, interviews historians, practitioners, military personnel, and other experts on a variety of naval history topics from ancient history to more current events.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

### ★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

This week's Webpage of the Week is a new entry on NHHC's [DANFS](#) index. Named in honor of [Medal of Honor](#) and [Navy Cross](#) recipient Admiral [Frank J. Fletcher](#), who led naval forces during the [Battle of the Coral Sea](#), [Battle of Midway](#), and the [Guadalcanal-Tulagi landings](#), [USS Fletcher](#) was commissioned on July 21, 1980. On her maiden voyage to the Western Pacific, *Fletcher* steamed with elements of the Republic of Korea navy during Operation Team Spirit and [crossed the equator](#), allowing all crewmembers to earn the title "Golden Shellback." On May 3–5, 1988, *Fletcher* earned the Humanitarian Service Medal for rescuing fishing vessel *JoAnn*, which had been adrift at sea for 10 days. In the spring of 2003, *Fletcher* received orders to support [Operation Iraqi Freedom](#), where they fired nearly 20 Tomahawk missiles before returning to homeport. Under Operation Sea Swamp, *Fletcher* spent 17 months in the Fifth Fleet operating area, providing support for Iraqi Freedom and [Enduring Freedom](#). NHHC historian Guy Nasuti authored the history.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-96000/NH-96841-KN.html>

## ★ Today in Naval History

On March 3, 1915, the [Office of Chief of Naval Operations](#) (CNO) was established with Adm. [William S. Benson](#) named as the first CNO. Creation of the office marked the culmination of a well-defined and long-recognized need in the Navy Department. As early as 1798, Commodore [John Barry](#) proposed a board of naval officers be named to assist the [Secretary of the Navy](#). Growth of the Navy during the [War of 1812](#) gave Barry's recommendations substance. In 1815, a Board of Navy Commissioners was formed, composed of three naval captains appointed by the president to assist the secretary. Found to be too slow to act and lacking individual responsibility, the board was abandoned for a bureau structure of administration in 1842. In 1904, Navy Secretary [William H. Moody](#) told members of the Naval Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives that he needed a senior uniformed advisor. On March 3, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed a congressional enactment that provided for a CNO "who shall be an officer on the active list of the Navy appointed by the President...."



*For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.*

**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/chiefs-of-naval-operations/admiral-william-s--benson.html>