



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

October 27, 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), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ Rare Navy Documents Unveiled as Old Ironsides Marks 223rd Birthday

On Oct. 21, the [USS Constitution Museum](#) unveiled a treasure trove of rare Navy documents related to [Constitution's](#) early years. The recently acquired collection was unveiled during a virtual ceremony marking "Old Ironsides'" 223rd birthday. According to Anne Grimes—president and chief executive officer of the museum—the papers shed light on the construction and first movements of the ship that were previously not known. During the ceremony, Grimes exhibited two documents and read them for the Facebook live broadcast. One was correspondence, dated Jan. 3, 1801, written by the commander of *Constitution*, Silas Talbot, to his friend James Sever, who was the commander of *Congress*. "He is ordering his friend in command of *Congress* to sail through the waters in the Caribbean," she said. "So he's saying to another U.S. warship, let's be out there and protect our commerce—the same as what we're doing today." The collection of 150 documents originally belonged to Sever, whose ship was built about the same time as *Constitution*. For more, [read the article](#) in the *Boston Globe*.

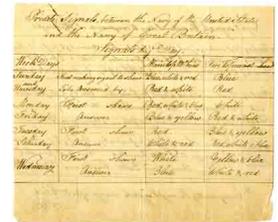


Photo Link: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/10/21/metro/rare-navy-documents-are-unveiled-old-ironsides-marks-223rd-birthday/>

★ You Never Know What You Are Going to Find

The [archivists](#) at [NHHC](#) perform a variety of different tasks. Reference archivists provide information, archival materials, and collections to the public and the fleet, but before the materials and collections are made available, they need to be processed. "In order to properly process a collection of archival materials, the processing archivist must get to know the collection's creator(s). If the collection was created by a command within the Navy, the processing archivist may need to learn the history of that command. If the collection was created by an individual or a family, it is helpful to have a good biographical sketch of the individual or the family members who helped create the materials in the collection. Knowing this history, whether it is the history of a naval ship or the history of a single person, helps the processing archivist properly organize the materials in the collection. Details also help the processing archivist prepare a richer administrative or biographical history for the collection's finding aid." One such expanded search was the life and career of Rear Adm. Harold B. "Min" Miller. A [U.S. Naval Academy](#) graduate, Miller was a pioneer [naval aviator](#) whose long career took him to many different positions and locations throughout the world. For more on Miller's life, [read the blog](#) by NHHC archivist Amanda Shaw at [The Sextant](#).

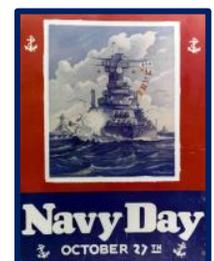


Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/10/20/you-never-know-what-youre-going-to-find/>

★ Happy Navy Day!

When it was first celebrated on Oct. 27, 1922, Navy Day was observed to focus public attention on the importance of the U.S. Navy. The date was selected because it was naval enthusiast Theodore Roosevelt's birthday. Although Navy Day was last formally observed on Oct. 27, 1949, many still celebrate it to salute all the men and women who have served in the U.S. Navy, past and present. For more, read about [Navy Day](#) at the [National Naval Aviation Museum's blog](#).

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-81000/nh-81555-kg-navy-day-poster.html>



★ National American Indian Heritage Month

Throughout the month of November, the Navy joins the nation in celebrating [National American Indian Heritage Month](#). The theme for this year's celebration is "Honoring the Past, Securing the Future," which stems from the Office of the Secretary of Defense's efforts to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of [World War II](#). American Indians have served with valor during all the nation's wars and have made important contributions to the defense of the country since 1776, when George Washington began enlisting American Indians for his Army, Navy, and Marines. For more on the [Contributions of American Indians to the U.S. Navy](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.defenseculture.mil/Human-Relations-Toolkit/Special-Observances/>

★ WWII@75: Fleet Adm. King Announces Nuclear Tests

On Oct. 27, 1945, Fleet Admiral [Ernest J. King](#) announced the Navy's plan to conduct nuclear tests on between 80 to 100 surplus ships. The tests would later be dubbed [Operation Crossroads](#). Crossroads was an atmospheric nuclear weapon test series conducted in the summer of 1946 at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The series consisted of two detonations, a low altitude test, and a shallow water test. A third test was planned but was eventually cancelled. The operation was intended to study the effects of nuclear weapons on warships, equipment, and material. These tests would provide important information on the survivability of warships in the event of nuclear war. Unlike earlier nuclear tests, a large media contingent was present for the two Crossroads detonations. Newspaper, magazine, and radio correspondents from the United States, Australia, Canada, France, the Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and Britain covered the detonations, turning these experiments into major media events.

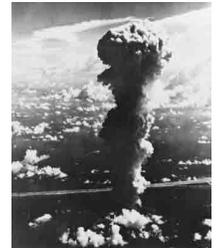


Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhsc-series/nh-series/80-G-411000/80-G-411586.html>

★ WWII@75: Franklin D. Roosevelt Commissioned

On Oct. 27, 1945, [USS Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) was commissioned at the New York Naval Shipyard with Capt. Apollo Soucek in command. The event marked the first exception to the traditional naming of fleet carriers for battles or famous ships. Soucek had earned the [Silver Star](#) for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as the executive officer onboard aircraft carrier [USS Hornet](#) during operations north of the [Santa Cruz Islands](#) in October 1942. On [Franklin D. Roosevelt's](#) maiden voyage, it sailed to the Mediterranean and from Sept. 5–9, 1946, and dropped anchor at Piraeus near Athens as a show of support for the Greek government's efforts to stem the tide of communism in the embattled country. On Sept. 30, President Harry Truman declared the permanency of the U.S. naval presence in the region, primarily to contain Soviet aggression. [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) was decommissioned April 23, 1954, and after some major refitting, was recommissioned on April 6, 1956. After years of acting as a show of force against the Soviet Union, the ship deployed in 1966 to southeast Asia waters in support of the [Vietnam War](#). The ship was decommissioned in October 1977.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g-k/80-G-K-06000/80-g-k-6611-uss-franklin-d--roosevelt--cvb-42-.html>

★ The Spanish-American War in Glass

In 2014, photo archivists from NHHC rediscovered a previous donation that contained 325 original glass plate photographs from the [Spanish-American War](#) and the Philippine-American War. The contents, based upon the inscription on the top of the two wooden boxes containing the slides, appear to have originally belonged to Douglas White, who worked for the [San Francisco Examiner](#) as a war correspondent. Most of the photographs are in black and white, although some have been hand tinted in color. About 25 percent from the collection have been digitized. To view the [Spanish-American War in glass](#), go to [NHHC's website](#). To learn more about the collection, [read the blog](#) by NHHC archivist Eden Marie Picazo at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/10/23/the-spanish-american-war-in-glass/>

★ “Crossing the Line” in the Pacific War

As we continue to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of [World War II](#), the career of Capt. Harry S. Keith is remembered. A graduate of the [U.S. Naval Academy](#) in 1923, Keith commanded several ships over the course of his career, including [USS Osage](#). The ship was commissioned on Dec. 30, 1944, and after shakedown out of Galveston, TX, provided support in a number of WWII battles in the Pacific. On June 6, 1945, *Osage* received orders to proceed to Noumea, New Caledonia. On June 10, the ship [crossed the equator](#), observing the event with appropriate ceremonies, during which time some 400 pollywogs received initiation into the realm of King Neptune. Photographs of the event are part of the Harry H. Keith personal paper collection (1921–1957), composed almost entirely of correspondence. To view the photos, [check out the blog](#) by NHHC reference archivist Michael D. Rhodes at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/10/23/crossing-the-line-in-the-pacific-war/>

★ How One of the Most Successful Submarines in U.S. Navy History Ended up Sinking Itself

In the middle of the night on Oct. 24–25, 1944, [USS Tang](#) was on its fifth [World War II](#) war patrol in the Taiwan Strait following a convoy of Japanese tankers and transports. *Tang* fired a barrage of [torpedoes](#) that sank one and crippled another. A Japanese destroyer turned to fire on *Tang*, but suddenly blew up either from *Tang*'s torpedoes or friendly fire. With just two torpedoes left, *Tang* doubled back to finish off the tanker when something went wrong. When the boat fired its last torpedo, it suddenly breached the surface and turned, heading straight for *Tang*. Twenty seconds later, the torpedo hit the [submarine's](#) aft torpedo room. It was a sad ending to such a successful submarine. *Tang* was officially credited with sinking 24 enemy ships. It earned four battle stars, and her commanding officer Lt. Cmdr. Richard O'Kane received the [Medal of Honor](#). For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-42000/nh-42273-uss-tang--ss-306-.html>

★ Preble Hall Podcast

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, Dr. Jennifer Bryan, head of Special Collections & Archives at the [U.S. Naval Academy](#), discusses records, uniquely held items, and the issues of collections in the modern era. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at the Naval Academy 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. Also loaded recently are [when the Queen of Romania visited the Naval Academy](#), [preserving Naval Academy midshipmen sacred moments and hijinks](#), and [the modern architecture of the Naval Academy](#), where Sara Phillips, architect of the U.S. Naval Academy, discusses the design and constructions of buildings in the 20th and 21st centuries.

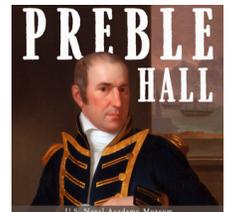


Photo Link: <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

★ Webpage of the Week

This week's Webpage of the Week is new to NHHC's website. [Explosive Ordnance Disposal](#) highlights the bravery and technical skills of this elite [Navy community](#). Prior to [World War II](#), there were no formally trained bomb or mine disposal personnel, but the need became apparent when, in 1939, the British navy dismantled the first German magnetic mine that had washed up on the shores of Shoeburyness, England. In 1941, the U.S. Naval Mine School was established at Naval Gun Factory in Washington, DC, and subsequently, the Bomb Disposal School was established. Since its establishment, EOD has played a significant role in every major conflict. Today, Navy EOD is staffed with nearly 3,000 officers and enlisted personnel who are the world's premier force for maritime mine countermeasures, counter-improvised explosive devices, weapons of mass destruction, and all other types of weaponry. For more, check out this page. It contains a short history, suggested reading, blogs, and selected imagery.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/art/exhibits/conflicts-and-operations/the-gulf-war-1990-1991--operation-desert-shield--desert-storm-/removing-iragi-speed-bumps.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Oct. 27, 1864, Lt. William B. Cushing, with his crew of 14 officers and men, took Picket Boat No. 1 upriver to Plymouth, NC, and attacked [CSS Albemarle](#), sinking her with a [torpedo](#). *Albemarle* was at berth receiving repairs from an earlier engagement. After the daring attack and subsequent sinking, *Albemarle* was raised after Union forces captured Plymouth. Following the conclusion of the [Civil War](#), the ship was towed to the Norfolk Navy Yard, arriving on April 27, 1865, where she was exhibited as a war prize.



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/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/us-people/c/cushing-william-barker-the-attack-on-css-albemarle-27-28-october-1864/nh-79932.html>