

National Museum
of the American
Sailor
February 2023
Newsletter

Trivia question: What little-known war turns 125 years old in 2023? If you said the Spanish American War, give yourself a pat on the back! The "splendid little war" may have been brief, but it had long lasting implications for the United States' role on the world stage. As museum staff dive into researching the Spanish American War era for our next permanent exhibit, you can get a sneak peak at the topic with this month's newsletter. Discover a steward who served aboard the USS *Maine*, come hear Teddy Roosevelt speak, and enjoy a blog post from the museum's director about race in the Spanish American War.

It has been a splendid little war, begun with the highest motives, carried on with magnificent intelligence and spirit, favored by that fortune which loves the brave.

- JOHN HAY, SECRETARY OF STATE, 1898

Sailor Spotlight: Steward John R. Bell



By the late nineteenth century, Black sailors had limited opportunities in the Navy. Most Black sailors, including John R. Bell served as stewards, working in the mess or attending to the needs of white officers. Not much is known about Bell's early life, but he grew up in Alexandria, VA and by the 1870s was a sailor in the U.S. Navy. Bell served aboard the USS *St. Louis* and the USS *Lancaster* before he was transferred to the USS *Maine* as steward to Captain Charles Sigsbee. Bell was aboard the *Maine* when she exploded in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898. Sadly, he perished that day and his body was never recovered. Bell's death was a blow to Sigsbee and Bell's shipmates. The ship's chaplain later remarked that "more requests concerning the welfare of John Bell came to him than concerning any other crewmen," a true testament to Bell's character.

SeaPerch Registration Now Open

Do you have a middle school or high school student who loves building robots? Now's their chance to compete in the Navy Great Lakes Regional SeaPerch competition. Teams of students build remote operated vehicles and then put them to the test. [Find out more.](#)



EDUCATION
AND EVENTS

Ready to compete? [Register today.](#)

Upcoming Events



An Afternoon with Theodore Roosevelt Saturday, February 11 at 1:00 PM

Before he was President, Theodore Roosevelt made a name for himself in the Spanish American War as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and as a Rough Rider. Join actor Adam Lindquist for a first-person performance about Roosevelt's experiences during the war.

Doing Both: Pageant Queen and Navy LT Friday, April 14 at 6:30 PM

What does a former pageant queen and current social media influencer have in common with a Navy officer? Turns out, everything!

LT Kellie Sbrocchi gives an inspirational talk about how she does it all, serving as a mentor and leader for a 21st century Navy.



**New
Date!**

Blog Post: The Diverse Faces of the Spanish American War

By the Spanish American War, both the Army and Navy began to limit opportunities for Black Americans. In spite of the limitations, Black sailors and soldiers fought gallantly and found their own places in the history books. From the Buffalo Soldiers to the sailors aboard the USS *Maine*, Black service members forged a path for

representation in the armed forces.

Museum director Jennifer S. explores the experiences of Black sailors during the Spanish American War in this month's blog post.

[Read the blog on Sailor's Attic](#)

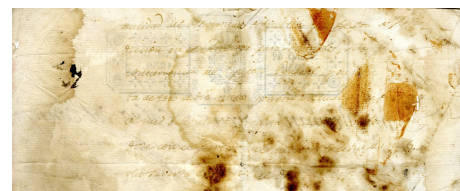


COLLECTIONS
AND
RESEARCH

Artifact Spotlight: Diary, 1899 - 1901 and Photograph, ca. 1899

Diaries are a staff favorite artifact here at NMAS. These first-person accounts offer some of the best insights into sailors' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Private Ernest Dieball's 1899-1901 diary is a fascinating, detailed account of his time with the Ohio Naval Battalion during the Philippine-American War. The Philippine-American War, or the Philippine Insurrection, was a direct result of American annexation of the Philippines at the close of the Spanish American War.

Dieball's nineteen-month account details his time in Gibraltar, Malta, Singapore, and of course, the Philippines. He describes sightseeing, the Crossing the Line ceremony, participating in battle, and the devastation wrought by war. Dieball's account is a peek into the daily life of sailor, showcasing a wide array of human experiences.



Research Mode, Activate!

It may seem like there's nonstop action in the Exhibits department as the team worked fast and furious over the last few years to make major updates to the museum. Those updates continue, but are currently more of a behind-the-scenes kind of action. So how does a museum prepare for a new exhibit?

It all starts with research. This year, the team is turning their attention to a new permanent exhibit, continuing the chronological look at enlisted sailors, from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of World War I. Within this timeframe is the Spanish American War, the establishment of Naval Station Great Lakes, the Great White Fleet, and the rise of the "New Navy" of steel and steam.

To explore all of those topics, the team is sifting through the archives, both at NMAS and at other institutions, to understand the details of these events. Most importantly, we're looking for the voices of individual enlisted sailors. Diaries, letters, memoirs, and logbooks are all among the primary source materials that give a human touch to events of the past. As we sift through and digest all of this material, slowly the overall story begins to show itself, guiding the team toward a narrative and providing inspiration for how we can share the story with you. Stay tuned as this project progresses over 2023.

EXHIBITS

NMAS Volunteer Award Opportunities

Did you know that you can receive awards just for being an active volunteer with the National Museum of the American Sailor? You read that right! All volunteers are eligible to be submitted for the Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) and Active Duty volunteers can gain hours towards the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal (MOVSM). Reach out to us today to start earning those hours!

VOLUNTEERS AND OUTREACH



**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
THE AMERICAN SAILOR**

WE ARE RECRUITING NEW VOLUNTEERS!

**SATURDAY
OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE!**

Help us tell the story of the United States Navy's enlisted sailor! The National Museum of the American Sailor has a wide variety of positions available to volunteers. There are several new and exciting volunteer opportunities. We're currently in need of volunteers to help as:

- Exhibits and Facilities Assistant
- Front Desk Greeter(s)

INTERESTED IN COMING ABOARD?

**REACH OUT TO US AT:
(847) 688-3154 X215 OR
NHHC_NMAS@US.NAVY.MIL**

