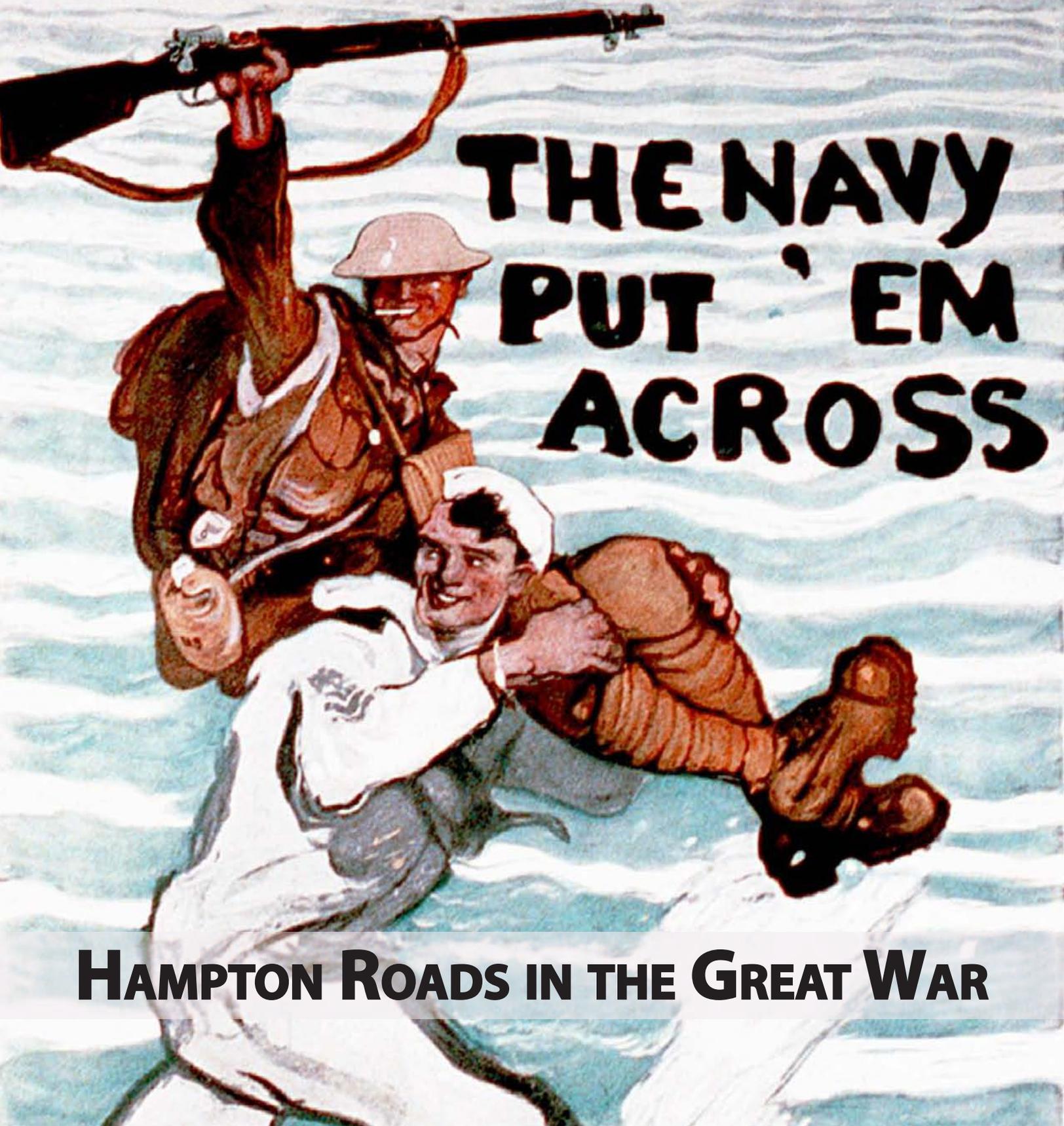


# THE DAYBOOK

A PUBLICATION OF THE HAMPTON ROADS NAVAL MUSEUM

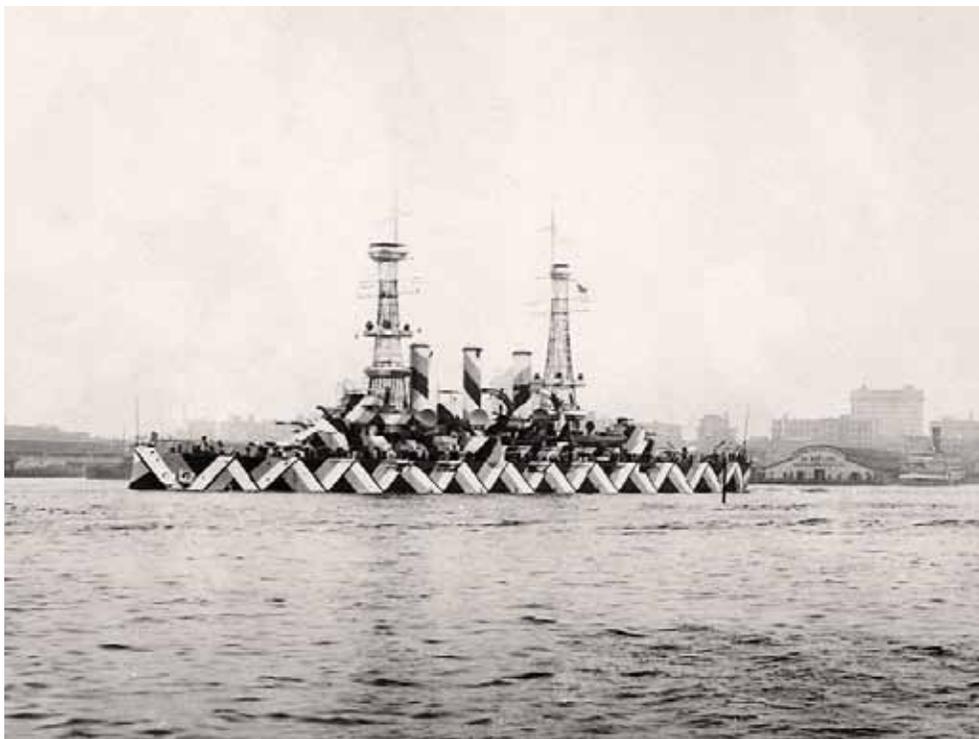
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 4



**THE NAVY  
PUT 'EM  
ACROSS**

**HAMPTON ROADS IN THE GREAT WAR**

The year 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War. Officially, the United States did not enter the war until April 1917, but the outbreak of fighting in Europe prompted a surge in naval expansion. President Woodrow Wilson boasted that the United States would put to sea a fleet “second to none.” With that boast in mind, this issue of *The Daybook* focuses on Hampton Roads’ participation in the Great War by examining the activities of the U.S. Navy from 1914-1918. Staff members and interns at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum contributed to this first installment of our World War I commemoration, which is meant to



*USS Nebraska (BB 14) in Norfolk, April 1918. Note the camouflage paint scheme, called “dazzle.”*

offer an overview of the war’s effect on the Hampton Roads region. Special thanks goes to Old Dominion University’s graduate student and HRNM’s summer intern, Wesley Jones, for his outstanding feature article.

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The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command ([www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil)). The museum is dedicated to the study of 237 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. HRNM was accredited by the American Association of Museums in 2008.

*The Daybook*'s purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum-related events. It is written by staff and volunteers.

Direct questions or comments to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at 757-322-2993, by fax at 757-445-1867, e-mail at [hnavalmuseum@navy.mil](mailto:hnavalmuseum@navy.mil) or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum is on the World Wide Web at <http://www.hrnm.navy.mil>.

*The Daybook* is published quarterly. To subscribe, contact the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation at 757-445-9932 or visit <http://www.hrnhf.org>. To learn more about the naval side of the Civil War, visit [www.civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com](http://www.civilwarnavy150.blogspot.com).

# GERMAN RAIDERS IN HAMPTON ROADS

BY ELIJAH PALMER

In the spring of 1915, two German commerce raiders came to Hampton Roads for repairs. *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* arrived in March, and *Kronprinz Wilhelm* arrived in April. At the beginning of hostilities in 1914, the passenger liner *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* was in Germany's colony in Tsingtao, China, where the German navy armed the ship with guns and men. Vice Admiral Graf von Spee ordered it to attack allied merchant ships, which it did for the next seven months in the South Pacific and Atlantic Oceans before seeking refuge in the neutral port of Hampton Roads.

The other ship, *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, was a passenger liner before the war. It was commissioned into the German navy in August 1914 and rendezvoused with a German naval vessel in the Atlantic, where it gained guns and some crew. Preparations for re-arming the ship were cut short, however, due to the



*Prinz Eitel Friedrich in Hampton Roads, spring 1915. (HRNM image)*

appearance of British naval ships in the vicinity. After a brief stop at the Azores, the ship headed to Brazil, completing its refit by early September. *Kronprinz Wilhelm* operated off the east coast of South America for six months, but low coal supplies and poor health conditions caused the ship to stop at Hampton Roads.

Between them, *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* and *Kronprinz Wilhelm* had taken over two dozen prizes and represented an obstacle to Anglo-American relations. The British wanted the crews arrested for piracy, while the United States wanted to remain neutral. Hoping to take advantage of Woodrow Wilson's call for neutrality, the German navy chose to allow the ships and their crews to be interned by the U.S. government. The U.S. Navy moved them from Newport News, where the ships had gone for repairs, to Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth.

The German ships and sailors became popular local attractions, as news of their cruises had been well-reported by the American press. Because they were not technically prisoners of war, the crews (numbering close to six hundred men) had a fair amount of freedom and were able to go out into the community and even travel to other regions; however, the sailors were confined to the naval yard after the escape of several officers in October 1915.

After months of internment, the German sailors constructed nearly fifty buildings, forming what the locals called the "German Village." The Germans called it "Eitel Wilhelm,"



*Officers and crew of Kronprinz Wilhelm in Newport News, April 1915. (HRNM image)*



*The German Village with the ships in the background. (HRNM image)*

combining the names of the two ships. They built the structures out of scrap material from the naval yard and from their ships. The sailors charged 10 cents for admission, which went to the German Red Cross, and they also sold food and souvenirs. The site was quite popular, bringing in tourists from all along the East Coast.

The German Village lasted until August 1916, when the Navy made plans to increase the size of the fleet in preparation for the United States' eventual entry into the war. The Norfolk Naval Shipyard planned new dry docks, and these plans necessitated the destruction of the village; it ceased to exist by the end of the summer. In September 1916, the Navy transferred the ships and sailors to Philadelphia. When the United States entered the Great War, the crews went to a prisoner of war camp in Georgia and the ships were pressed into service as troop transports. Together, the two ships transported thousands of troops of the American Expeditionary Forces to the war in Europe and back home again. In June 1918 on the voyage from Brest to New York, USS *Von Steuben* encountered seven small boats under sail on the port bow and, more dramatically, the periscope of German *U-151*, the source of the torpedo bearing down upon USS *Von Steuben*. The ship avoided the torpedo and delivered a desultory depth-charge barrage, which subjected the submarine to a severe shaking. Unfortunately the transport ship left the seven small boats, survivors of the sunken British steamer *Dwinsk*, in fear that they were simply decoys. The boats seemed uninhabited because the master of the *Dwinsk* ordered his people to lie low so that other Allied ships would not be drawn into the waiting U-boat's trap. Fortunately, he and his men were saved eventually.



*Kronprinz Wilhelm was renamed USS Von Steuben. The Navy repainted this ship with a camouflage scheme. (NHHHC image)*



*Locals and sailors on the Kronprinz Wilhelm at Norfolk Naval Shipyard. (HRNM image)*

# *The most desirable property I have ever seen:*



## The Development of Naval Station Norfolk

by Laura Orr

*This postcard shows tourists visiting several of the state-funded buildings created for the Jamestown Exposition in 1907. Most of these buildings still remain on Naval Station Norfolk, and are used today as the official residences for senior military commanders. (HRNM image)*

In 1907, the nation paused to commemorate the tercentennial of the landing at Jamestown. Virginia celebrated with a large world's fair in Norfolk known as the Jamestown Exposition. After the Exposition closed, Norfolk residents attempted to convince private investors to develop the site commercially, but when that did not work, they focused their attention on the Department of the Navy. Theodore Wool, Norfolk attorney and General Counsel to the Jamestown Exposition Company, became the leading advocate for the Navy taking over this land because he was trying to recoup some of the monetary losses incurred by the Exposition. In his pamphlet "Reasons," Wool listed several reasons why Norfolk would make a perfect naval base, including:

- The Chesapeake and Willoughby Bays were typically ice-free and had deep anchorages for ships
- Plenty of additional adjacent land was available for expansion as needed
- Virginia's climate was mild enough to support year-round military operations
- Railroad and maritime transportation networks already existed, put in place by the Jamestown Exposition

Congressional leaders heard Wool's arguments, and in 1908 they introduced a bill appropriating \$1 million for the purchase of the old Jamestown Exposition property. The bill died in committee, as the Appropriations Committee chairman allegedly told Assistant Secretary of the Navy Truman Newberry that he would fund only one of two projects: purchase of the Jamestown Exposition property, or purchase of a new coal ship. Assistant Secretary of the

Navy Truman Newberry chose the coal ship. It seemed like a loss for Norfolk, but Theodore Wool did not let up. He continued to persuade the United States government of the importance of the Exposition site. Seven years later, in September 1915, he received a letter from Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels that stated, "The desirability of this tract of land for a naval training station and other purposes connected with the Navy is unquestioned, but at this time there are so many more pressing needs...that the Department does not consider it either desirable or possible to appeal to Congress...to take any action in this matter." It seemed that Daniels had halted Norfolk's



*Note the dilapidated condition of the waterfront in 1917 when the Navy purchased the property to establish Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads. This would be quickly remedied as the Navy erected buildings for its sailors and piers for its ships. (HRNM image)*

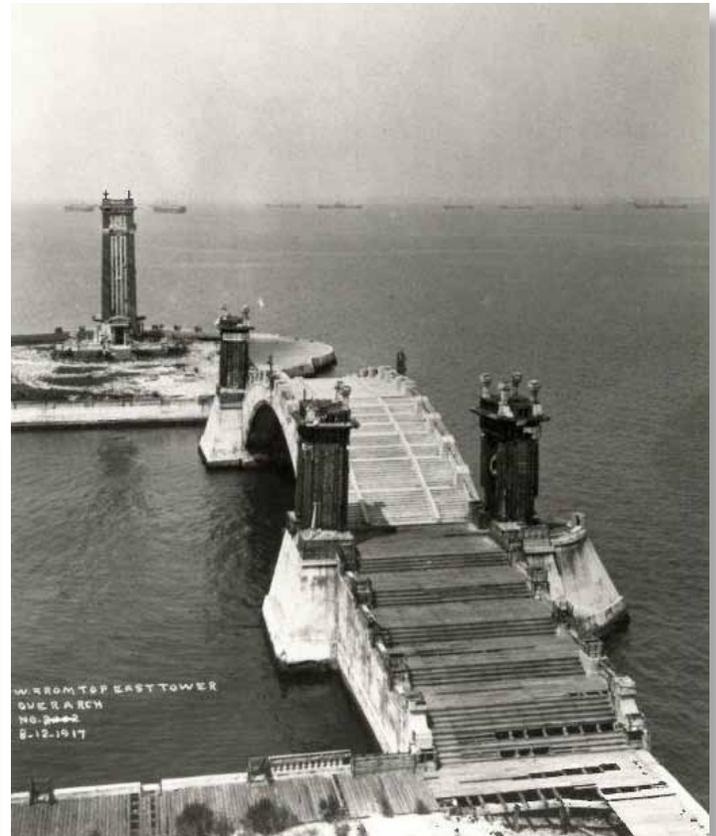
boosterism, but less than two years later the United States entered a world war, causing Daniels to alter his opinion. On April 7, 1917—one day after the United States officially entered the First World War—Theodore Wool received a call from Daniels about the Jamestown Exposition property. As both a matter of national security and to train troops for the war, the nation needed this naval base at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Ten days later, Daniels asked Congress to appropriate \$3 million to acquire the land and equipment to open and operate what they would call “Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads.” (The name changed to Naval Station Norfolk in 1945.) Two months later, in June 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the appropriations bill, and thus, the Navy acquired 474 acres of land to begin its new naval base.

able-bodied men from Norfolk had joined the military or had left to work in wartime industries in other states. In the end, the Navy Department imported labor from other areas of the country, including Minnesota, Kansas,



*It took only a few months after the government's purchase of the land for sailors to move into Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads. This image from 1917 shows temporary structures built near the water. Note all the empty land in the background of the image - it did not remain this way for very long. (HRNM image)*

On July 4, 1917, construction on the initial barracks began, and only three months later, the first 1,400 sailors marched to NOB Hampton Roads to start their training. Within thirty days, the Navy constructed housing, utilities, mess halls, and road systems for 7,500 men. By November 1918, the Navy had stationed over 34,000 enlisted men at the base. It was an amazing achievement, but not without its problems: the city of Norfolk was not prepared for the massive numbers of men who came with the construction of the base, and the sudden population surge overtaxed Norfolk's transportation and utilities. Most troublesome, however, the city lacked the requisite labor, as many



*The ornate concrete bridge in this image was built for the Jamestown Exposition. An earlier photo of the same site reads, “The best entrance to the Exposition is not through the main gate at the southern end of the grounds, but under this arch.” The Navy removed the bridge in the 1940s so ships could pass through the area. (HRNM image)*



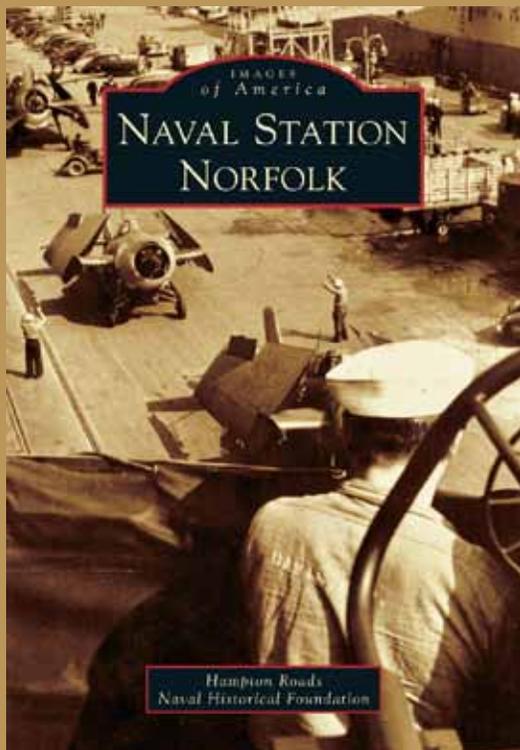
*Naval Operating Base Hampton Roads on Sewells Point, Norfolk, as seen in 1918. After purchasing the initial 474 acres of land, the Navy began dredging and filling to create additional land for naval activities. In this image, the Pine Beach Hotel is on the waterfront along with large supply buildings. (HRNM image)*

Texas, and Kentucky. Additionally, the Navy resorted to using enlisted sailors to take part in the necessary construction projects.

It did not help that, from July 1917 through January 1918, Norfolk experienced record-breaking summer heat and record-breaking cold during the winter. When two workmen died from sunstroke in August, some of the crews stopped work until the weather cooled off. The winter of 1917-1918 was the worst in fifty-seven years, bringing work to a standstill. The influenza epidemic of 1918 caused another problem, inflicting 175 deaths at the naval base and slowing construction. But, with all of these setbacks, only four months after the armistice in November 1918, the new naval base reached 90% completion of its initial blueprint. In the years following World War I, the Navy added

land through filling and dredging, purchased additional land, and stationed additional sailors there. Today, Naval Station Norfolk is the largest naval base in the world. It was as Assistant Secretary of the Navy Truman Newberry reported to Congress:

*"From my knowledge of Navy yards and needs of the Navy, I think [this] is the most desirable property I have seen."*



If you are interested in Naval Station Norfolk and its (almost) 100-year history, you will enjoy "Naval Station Norfolk," part of the pictorial history series by Arcadia Publishing. "From Humble Beginning to Largest Naval Complex in the World" – thus a 1967 headline summed up the Naval Station's first 50 years of growth. Even after another 50 years, the statement remains a valuable summary for the growth of the Sewells Point naval complex. The book traces this history through almost 200 photographs from the archives of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. Highlights include the early efforts needed to create a naval station overnight from marshy ground and a deserted fair site. Also included are Navy activities and naval life in two World Wars, and the subsequent Cold War. The *Newport News Daily Press* review of this book offered this opinion: "If you have served on the base, know someone who has or simply lives nearby, this is the kind of book that makes for great gifts for birthdays and holidays."

You can purchase your copy at the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation's gift shop at 9079 Hampton Blvd, Norfolk, Virginia; or order it online at [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

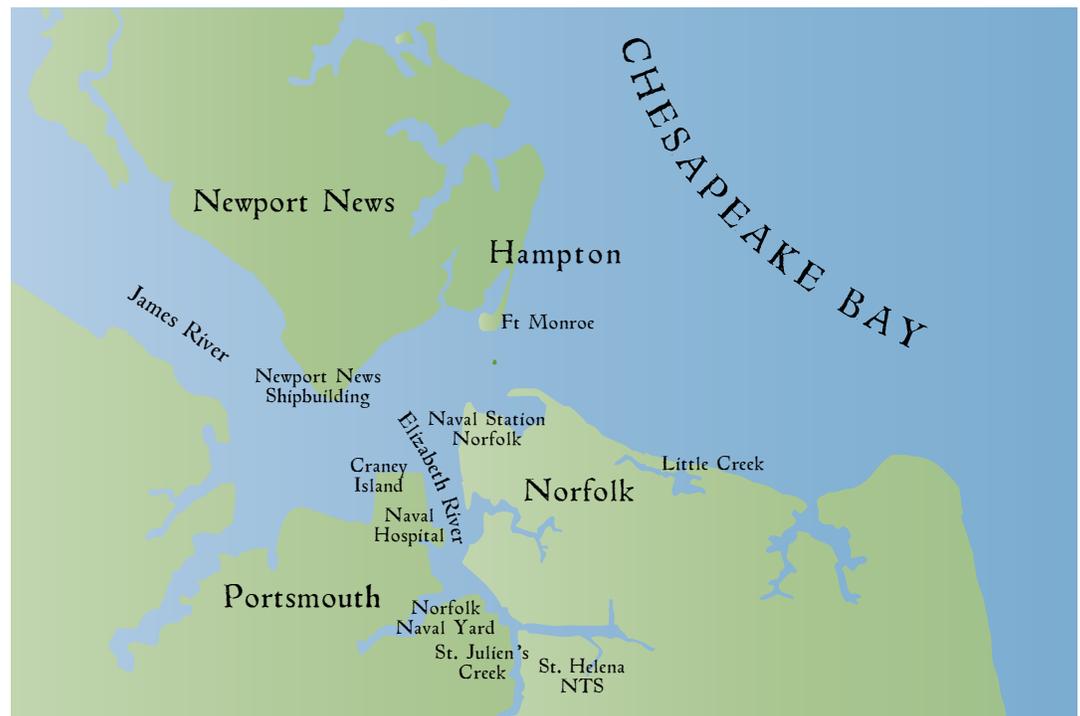
# UNCEASING PREPARATION: THE WORLD WAR I NAVY IN HAMPTON ROADS

BY WESLEY JONES

In December 1917, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels highlighted the philosophy which propelled the United States Navy forward in its wartime mission. His annual report explained, “The best way to secure enduring peace is to prepare unceasingly, night and day, for the winning of the war, whether it be long or short.” This philosophy certainly characterized naval activity in Hampton Roads during 1917 and 1918. The Navy’s dramatic expansion in the region, including the establishment of a Naval Operating Base and a Naval Air Station, influenced the life and growth of the communities in Hampton Roads. For the nation, however, the naval installations and ports of Hampton Roads formed the backbone of a growing and complex web of activity which made it possible for the United States to build successfully and mobilize a massive naval force, control the coast and sea, and transport troops and much needed supplies to the European theater of operations.

Unceasing preparation was the order of the day at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard (located in Portsmouth, Virginia) and the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company. These two sites, one a long-time government naval installation and the other a privately owned shipyard, contributed much to the Navy’s capacity to build, repair, and convert the ships needed for its wartime mission. Even before the United States’ involvement in the war, naval expansion had brought substantial Congressional appropriations to the Naval Shipyard, which in turn led to several wartime improvement projects. More importantly, the Naval Shipyard continued to serve in its traditional role as a home for repairing the ships of the Atlantic Fleet.

On the other side of Hampton Roads, Newport News Shipbuilding became a hub for new naval construction. During 1917, the company’s civilian workforce consisted of more than 7,000 employees, and during the course of the war and the year following the armistice, the workforce continued to expand. The shipyard was involved in building a wide variety of vessels for naval use and was also an important site for naval repairs. Of particular note was the handful of destroyers that were constructed before the end of the war. In order to respond to the threat of German U-boats, the Navy halted construction on most



*The map above shows the naval installations discussed in this article. (Illustration by Marta Joiner)*

of its large battleships, and instead, it turned its attention to a building program centered on destroyers. For Newport News Shipbuilding, this demand for destroyers culminated in Liberty Launching Day on July 4, 1918. This incredible patriotic event involved more than 9,000 people, and resulted in launching the destroyers *Abbot*, *Thomas*, and *Haraden*.

Yet the work of the shipyards was only one facet of the Navy’s growing influence in Hampton Roads. From the beginning of the war, the region also became a focal point of naval instruction. St. Helena Training Station, which



*This image shows Dry Dock No. 4, with battleship Wisconsin (BB 9), at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in May 1919. Battleship Nevada (BB 36) is to the left in Dry Dock No.3. The German Village was demolished to make space for the construction of Dry Dock No. 4 and other improvements to service the Atlantic Fleet. Note that the shipyard is named “Norfolk Naval Shipyard,” although it is physically located in Portsmouth, Virginia. (HRNM image)*

had been founded in 1908 along the Elizabeth River in Norfolk’s Berkley section, was one of four nationwide naval training stations. As such, its activities expanded quickly, and consequently, St. Helena’s population of trainees swelled to troublesome levels. The training station had originally been built for a population of 500 men. Ultimately, tent housing flourished when several thousand recruits were sent to the station during the opening months of the war.

Even as it was coping with this influx of recruits, St. Helena performed vital functions for the Navy.

Germany’s unrestricted submarine campaign, which targeted merchant shipping, compelled the Navy to provide gun crews to arm merchant ships. St. Helena was an immediate source of personnel. The station’s largest section, Camp Lawrence, was dedicated to training guard crews for these merchant vessels. Additionally, two more camps within the station prepared recruits for a range of other duties. For example, Camp Farragut provided tradesmen with training for “general detail,” while Camp Perry even contained a musician’s school.



*Even before the war began, St. Helena Training Station served as a home for naval recruits. In this photograph, sailors gathered in May 1915 for a sham battle at the training station. (NHHHC image)*

St. Helena, however, was only a temporary wartime home for naval recruits in training, as it was soon eclipsed by the construction of a permanent Naval Operating Base at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition site. The Naval Operating Base became functional in October 1917, and began to take over St. Helena's role as a training station, successfully training over 17,000 recruits in its initial six months.

Indeed, the base's size and manpower indicated how vital the installation had become for the rapidly expanding Navy Department. Its creation resulted from the increasing need in Hampton Roads for a concentrated and comprehensive support system that could meet the demands of a modern navy; a basic training station, such as St. Helena, was inadequate for this purpose. In its place, the continual wartime construction at the naval base produced an operating site, which included a naval air station, training schools for everything from radio and electricity to hospital service, and an anchorage for the Navy's many vessels.

By any measure, the new Naval Operating Base was the capstone to all naval activity in Hampton Roads during World War I. The Fifth Naval District, commanded by Rear Admiral Walter McLean, was headquartered at the base and consequently was the central location for coordinating naval activity in Maryland, southeastern Virginia, and northern North Carolina. At the same time, the base's broader meaning to the American war effort was profound. Together with Norfolk Naval Shipyard and Newport News Shipbuilding, the base was the focus of national naval mobilization. Secretary Daniels' vision of unceasing preparation to win the peace was faithfully executed in the ever-expanding wartime activities which were encompassed within the base.

It should be noted that unceasing preparation for success in World War I was not limited to building ships



*St. Helena was home to diverse training activities but discontinued much of its operation after the Navy opened its Naval Operating Base. In this image, sailors at St. Helena take part in a boat drill. (HRNM image)*

and training sailors. St. Julien's Creek Naval Ammunition Depot, which had been established as a naval magazine in the late-1890s, is evidence of this fact. Besides the normal activities of supplying and storing naval ordnance, the site was most notable for its mine-loading plant. Thanks largely to this single plant, the U.S. Navy was able to deploy over 70,000 mines in the North Sea in a coordinated American-British effort to halt German U-boat transits into the Atlantic.

The success of the mine-loading plant is noteworthy because it represented an immense effort in an exceedingly short period of time. The plant was designed for "receiving, loading, and shipping 1,000 mine cases a day," and had to be built from scratch. That process alone required great perseverance. After construction began in October 1917, Commander Kirby Smith of the Civil Engineer Corps had to work through both a shortage of labor and an extraordinarily harsh winter in order to complete the plant by March 1918.

Once the plant was operational, the work had just begun. Commander W. L. Pryor, who commanded



*Taking part in a parade to drum up support for a liberty loan campaign, sailors gathered for a photograph at St. Helena. Parades were a common way in*

St. Julien's Creek, oversaw approximately 400 Navy personnel as they safely handled more than 22,000,000 pounds of explosive and loaded 73,000 mines for use in the war. Apparently, the local authorities were wary of the danger that the mines posed to their community. Even though many of the mines' components were loaded at a pier located closer to Portsmouth and Norfolk, locals protested so vigorously that Pryor altered the loading procedures. Now, explosive-laden mine cases were loaded directly to ships from the plant at St. Julien's. The activity at St. Julien's, like the feverish activity elsewhere in Hampton Roads, made it possible for the Navy to successfully contribute to the Allied naval effort.

Of course, there were other ways to contribute to the naval effort, ways that mattered much more to the Navy in Hampton Roads than to the Allies in Europe. As the Navy's presence grew in the region, one vital institution was the Naval Hospital located in Portsmouth. Wartime changes compelled the hospital to expand rapidly. On the whole, it was a grim location. A few thousand sailors contracted the infamous Spanish flu after it hit the Naval Operating Base in September 1918, and nearly two hundred of them died. Other illnesses proved troublesome as well. Measles and mumps became a problem during the early mobilization period, as recruits came to Hampton Roads from throughout the nation. Overall, the hospital was a place of healing which served around 25,000 patients during the war years of 1917 and 1918. In its own way, it was contributing to the Navy's mission of unceasing preparation in Hampton Roads.

The Navy had to accomplish more than preparation. Invasion represented a real threat, so the new Operating Base made certain it secured the waters of Hampton Roads

and regularly patrolled the Atlantic coast. The Naval Air Station, located at Sewells Point alongside the rest of the Naval Operating Base, was important for this latter duty. Starting in August 1917, naval aviation students and their instructors took up residence at the site, and by August 1918 the site was designated Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads, an independent command headed by Lieutenant Commander Patrick N. L. Bellinger. Every day, planes soared into the sky, keeping watch for enemy vessels.

Much like the Naval Operating Base, the air station became home to a variety of activities. It housed seven aviation departments, including a dirigible and balloon school, a flight school, and a school for mechanics and quartermasters. But the station was more than a training site. In 1917 and 1918 it became the primary facility for anti-U-boat warfare. In the latter year, seven *Deutschland*-class U-boats laid mines at strategic locations off the coast of North America that stretched from Newfoundland to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. These mines produced deadly results, most poignantly when a mine sank the armored cruiser USS *San Diego* off the coast of Long Island. To combat the U-boat threat, planes based at Norfolk's air station went on daily patrols, covering hundreds of miles up and down the Atlantic coast. These missions, though only a small part of the air station's activity, were perhaps its greatest contribution to the Navy's efforts in Hampton Roads, as the naval and commercial activity of the region's ports were a tempting target for U-boats.

Naval authorities were not strictly reliant on these air patrols for securing Hampton Roads and the waters surrounding the Fifth Naval District. After the war began, the United States Coast Guard began to operate under the Navy's authority. The Coast Guard served Hampton Roads in two important ways. First, Coast Guard Captain James G. Ballinger, working under the supervision of the



*which the sailors joined forces with local civilians to bolster the war effort. (Library of Congress image)*

Fifth Naval District's commandant, utilized harbor cutters to safeguard the ammunition loading sites and other port locations. Second, the Coast Guard controlled the passage of all vessels into the area by patrolling anti-submarine nets which stretched for miles across the opening to the Chesapeake Bay. As a result, the great mobilization and commercial activities of Hampton Roads were shielded from any potential seaborne interference.

The coastal and port security measures, whether actually needed or not, represented an appropriate and worthwhile use of naval resources as the lifeblood of the American and Allied war effort flowed through Hampton Roads. On May 24, 1917, the first transatlantic convoy of World War I departed Hampton Roads, and the region joined New York as one of only two U.S. locations

for gathering convoys of supply and troop-laden ships destined for European waters. Performing a vital wartime function, the convoy system brought ships together under armed escort and decreased the possibility of U-boats attacking ships on the open ocean. The U.S. Navy joined its British allies in supplying armed escorts for the convoys, and Hampton Roads became a key site for securing the sea against the predations of U-boats.

To be sure, the shipbuilding, naval training, and mine-loading efforts that occurred in Hampton Roads were important, but also critical was the Navy's ability to cooperate with other agencies in prosecuting the war. One primary example of cooperative naval activity was the Naval Overseas Transportation Service (N.O.T.S.), created by the U.S. Navy Department in early January



*Here, sailors gather in front of the barracks at Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads. (HRNM image)*

1918. Consisting of various cargo ships, controlled and crewed by Navy personnel, N.O.T.S. transported around 6,000,000 tons of food, fuel, and supplies for the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army, the Allies, and the U.S. Shipping Board.

As a location for N.O.T.S. activity, Hampton Roads was exceeded in importance only by the port of New York. Most importantly, the service succeeded in channeling the material power of Hampton Roads. As early as 1900, Norfolk had become the world's most active coaling port, and during the war, N.O.T.S. naval colliers loaded hundreds of thousands of tons of coal. At the same time, the St. Julien's Creek mine-loading effort was also reliant on the N.O.T.S. operation; once the mines were filled with explosive, N.O.T.S. vessels arrived to carry them and the other mine components. In addition to these successes, the Navy utilized N.O.T.S. to supply Army operations. During a two-month stretch near the end of the war, N.O.T.S. vessels carried 15,000 animals for Army use, and the service also shipped thousands of tons of other Army supplies from Hampton Roads.

Naval cooperation with the Army was not limited to the realm of shipping. As a port of embarkation, Hampton Roads was an outlet for the nation's military might. The Army established four staging camps in Newport News, and during the war, these camps dispatched overseas more than 261,000 U.S. troops. These troops were part of a much larger wave of forces that exacted a great share of the U.S. Navy's time and resources. At the end of the war, Secretary Daniels reported that nearly 925,000 U.S. troops serving in Europe had crossed the Atlantic in convoys protected by the U.S. Navy.

This troop-transporting mission undoubtedly influenced the outcome of the war. In light of the fact that the German army was racing to defeat the Allies before U.S. troops could arrive on the Western Front, historian Jerry Jones deemed transportation "the most important contribution of the U.S. Navy" during the worldwide conflict. Indeed, the job of getting the American Expeditionary Force to Europe was so urgent that British ships carried more than 1,000,000 American doughboys. It should not be forgotten that the U.S. Navy's growing activity and new Hampton Roads installations did not simply affect the national and international war effort; they deeply influenced life in local cities in the region. Scholars of mobilization have generated a common narrative: wartime produces dual changes, bringing both prosperity and hardship to a

mobilizing region. Hampton Roads was no different. In concert with economic changes, the demographic character of Hampton Roads shifted almost overnight; ceaseless construction of ships and installations caused an explosion in the population of Norfolk, where nearly 50,000 people flocked to the city between 1916 and 1918. In turn, the national government's expansion in the area, largely in the form of the U.S. Navy's growth, created serious problems in urban infrastructure and housing.

The sailors' presence in Hampton Roads facilitated a charged wartime atmosphere. For example, sailors from St. Helena put on weekly parades in Norfolk to create an atmosphere that would promote enlistment among the local men. At the same time, residents of Norfolk found that the sailors gave them opportunities to express their patriotism. Local organizations and institutions dedicated themselves to a wide range of camp services, which included everything from collecting reading material for sailors to running military clubs.

The war's influence on the Navy and the communities of the region was not limited to a few years of wartime growth. Instead, the war's legacy stretched through time, shaping even the present. Highlighted by the creation of the U.S. Navy's permanent presence at the Naval Operating Base and the Naval Air Station, World War I was a turning point that created a lasting and increasingly important relationship between Hampton Roads and the Navy. Before the war, Norfolk had merely been "a stopping place" for sailors, but as scholar Theodore Curtin put it, U.S. involvement in the war created a "marriage" between the city and the Navy. Simply put, the First World War transformed Hampton Roads' history as no other event before or since.

The war's long-term historical influence should not overshadow the fact that Hampton Roads became central to every aspect of the Navy's wartime mission. During the first year of U.S. involvement, Secretary Daniels described the Navy's record as "one of increasing power, of developing resourcefulness, and of cooperative achievement." Much of that successful record stemmed from the web of activity that formed in Hampton Roads in response to the Navy's urgent need to mobilize. The Navy built on the foundation it had already laid in the region, constructing a valuable new home for its sailors and ships. It is difficult to imagine how the U.S. could have thrown its full weight into the war more quickly than it did. Truly, it was a region of unceasing preparation.

# "But Why Not Join the Navy?"

## Yeomen (F) in the Great War

By CDR Colette Grail

Prior to the United States entering World War I, the Naval Act of 1916 introduced an expansive plan to create a "Big Navy," with ten battleships, six *Lexington*-class battlecruisers, ten *Omaha*-class scout cruisers, fifty *Wickes*-class destroyers, and numerous smaller vessels, all to be built over the next three years. But as tensions rose across the Atlantic, the Navy Department asked for an order to increase its roster of able-bodied seamen. Not only did it require personnel to operate the newly built ships, but it needed to augment the land-based, administrative forces. In response, Congress passed the Naval Reserve Act of 1916. Worrying that an all-male recruitment drive would not fill the manpower demands of the Navy with the necessary speed, Secretary Josephus Daniels asked his staff, "Is there any law that says a yeoman must be a man?" After considering the question, his staff answered, "no." The Naval Reserve Act used the term "Yeoman," which Daniels interpreted as being purposefully or conveniently non-gender-specific.

Convinced that the new act allowed him to recruit women into the ranks of the Naval Reserve, Daniels authorized the enlistment of "Yeomen (F)," thus setting the stage for the Navy's historic first surge of female sailors. By the end of World War I, more than 11,000 women had answered the call.

Joining the Navy was a unique and groundbreaking experience for the women who became the first female yeomen. Embodying the Navy tradition of patriotism and adventure, the Yeomen (F) often left wary families to take on unknown circumstances in order to support themselves. Estelle Kemper left her family in Richmond, Virginia, passionate to do her part for the war effort. She traveled to Washington, D.C., a city her father considered to be dangerous and where she should "expect to be insulted on every street-corner." Upon Kemper's arrival in Washington, an enlisted friend of the family arranged to greet her at the train station. Prior to leaving home, she had planned on taking a civilian position at

*This image shows the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation reviewing Yeomen (F) in Washington, D.C., in 1919. (Library of Congress image)*



the Army Military Intelligence division. The friend who greeted her at the station instead zealously campaigned for her to join the Navy. Recently graduated from college and on her own, she asked herself, “But why not join the Navy?” And, once deciding her future, the change was swift. As Kemper remembered, “The process of joining up (if a girl) was simple and speedy: first, an interview by a chief clerk, and then a physical exam at the Naval Hospital, an oath of allegiance and, presto, one was a ‘Yeoman (F),’ signed up for four years.” Her mother wailed, “Oh...can you get out?” Truly, Kemper and all of the other Yeoman (F)s had embarked on an undertaking with little public support.

One of the trademarks of the Yeoman (F) was the uniform – a jacket with matching skirt, topped with a wide-brimmed hat. Yeomen (F)s wore their rank insignia on their left sleeves and ribbon inscriptions variously denoted “U.S. Navy” or “U.S. Naval Reserve.” In truth, the uniforms varied from base to base because the Navy made no preparations to supply the Yeomen (F) with women’s uniforms. Each female recruit had to buy or make her own. Actual regulations defining the women’s uniform as standard issue did not come until 1919.

In addition to getting used to these new uniforms, Yeomen (F) faced challenges with their living quarters. Few bases prepared separate barracks for them. Hastily, the construction battalions began building female dormitories, but in the meantime, some Yeomen (F) had to stay with family or friends. Others sought room and board at the YWCA.

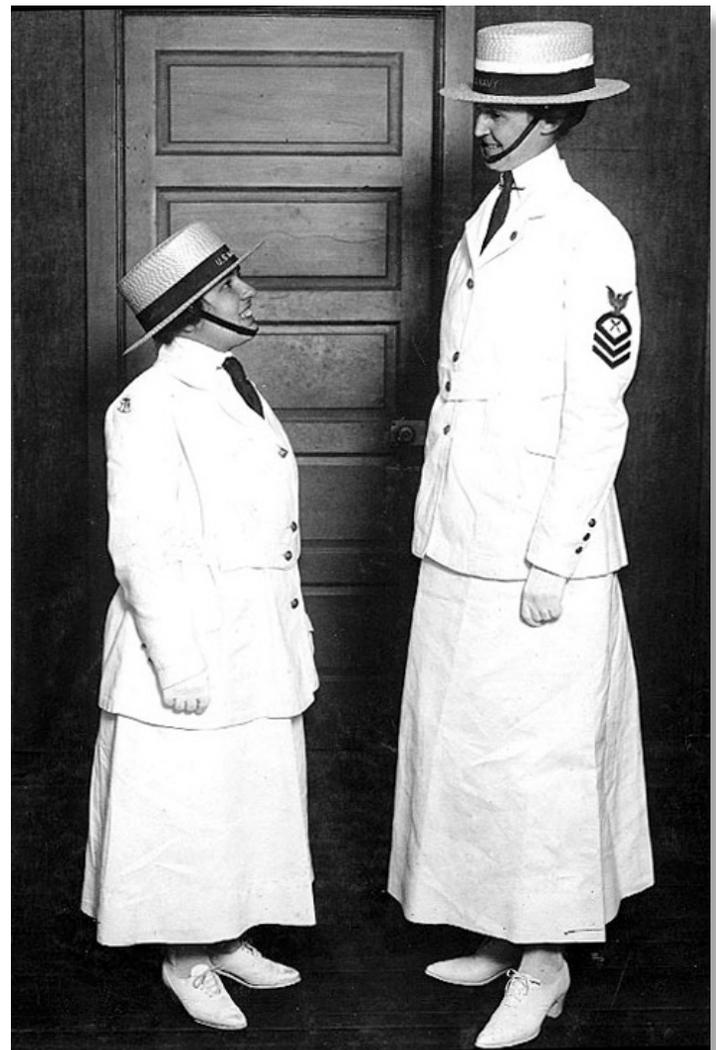
When it came to the job, Yeomen (F) filled administrative roles whenever possible, with little professional background and absolutely no military drilling or training. As Kemper related, “My Chief Clerk was friendly and pleasant. He may have guessed that I had never been inside a real office in my life, for girls trained in business routines were even scarcer in those days than girl college graduates.” By the end of World War I, the Yeomen (F) had served in a variety of positions: mechanics, truck drivers, cryptographers, telephone operators, and munitions makers.

At the end of the war, Yeomen (F) were some of the last to leave service, as the Navy retained them to process those returning from overseas. No Yeoman (F) served beyond 1921, but all of them earned full veterans’ benefits and military preference to obtain civil service ratings for jobs in the federal service. Moreover, they felt a sense

of citizenship, having participated in one of the greatest wars the world had ever seen. One of them recollected:

The only distinction I won as a grounded Navy enlistee came after the Armistice in 1918. Every member of the services was issued a medal on a rainbow ribbon. This “Victory medal” was “general issue,” but the then Secretary of the Navy personally presented mine to me, with the conventional kiss on each cheek. A little French, to be sure, but a very satisfactory honor!

The Yeomen (F) experienced an awkward and temporary integration into the U.S. Navy, but their success signaled the portents of a multi-gendered fleet.



*This image shows Yeoman (F) Eloise Fort (left) and Chief Yeoman (F) Lassie Kelly, and was taken in New York City, May 1919. Fort and Kelly were part of a contingent of 250 Yeomen (F) who were sent to New York from Washington, D.C., to take part in the Victory Loan drive. Note the typical Yeoman (F) uniform worn by both women. (NHHC image)*

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *To Crown the Waves: The Great Navies of the First World War*

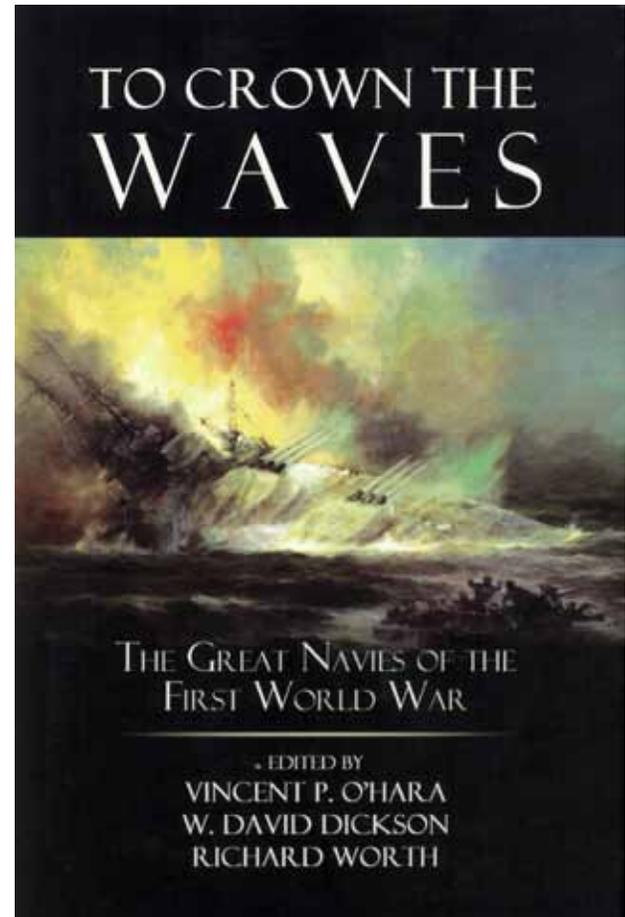
Edited by Vincent P. O'Hara, W. David Dickson, and Richard Worth

Reviewed by Elijah Palmer

*To Crown the Waves* offers a fresh approach to the history of the Great War by examining all of the major combative navies in a single volume. Like the editors' previous book on the navies of World War II, *On Seas Contested*, this book's chapters focus on the navies one nation at a time. O'Hara, Dickson, and Worth profile the fleets of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, and the United States. Every chapter follows the same basic format: "Backstory," "Organization," "The Ways of War," and "War Experience and Evolution." The editors point out that each navy dealt with problems that arose in a war that brought on rapid changes in technology and strategy. They believe that each navy had a "unique personality" based on ship types, doctrines, training, personnel, geography, and goals. This book closely examines the interplay of these forces.

In attempting to fit surveys of all seven navies into one introductory book, the editors have completed an admirable task. The book's strength is its organization, which allows readers to examine naval development in a comparative framework. However, not all chapters and sections are equal in quality. For example, the "Administration" section in the Great Britain chapter covers two pages, and in the Italy chapter it forms only a single paragraph. Also, in some chapters it is obvious that English is not the author's first language, made clear by the unwieldy syntax. The editors could have done more to alleviate this issue.

Chapter by chapter, the "Backstory" and "War Experience" sections tended to offer the strongest analyses, with straightforward, excellent summaries. However, the book lacked extensive coverage of battles, and many sections suffered from an overflow of technical detail. A case in point is the subcategory "Ships/Weapons" in the Austro-Hungarian chapter; it is three pages long and primarily filled with ship names and technical numbers. The Russian section, by contrast, put all the technical details into three separate tables. The editors wanted *To Crown the Waves* to be an introductory survey, but it is too dense to serve capably in this capacity. Instead, its most effective use is as a reference guide.



The book's shortage of maps is a significant weakness. Each chapter is accorded only one small map highlighting the naval bases of each country, making this book unappealing to an introductory reader. More appalling, the maps do not mark down some critical geographic features discussed by the essays. For example, the maps fail to note such locations as the Kiel Canal, the Dardanelles, and the battles of Dogger Bank and Jutland. The book does not even contain a complete map of Europe, which seems shortsighted given that five-sevenths of the book focuses on European fleets.

The editors of the book wanted to explain "why these seven navies fought the way they did." In that, they accomplished their main goal, showing how each navy differed from the others. However, as an easily-readable introduction, *To Crown the Waves* stumbles. It is a valuable reference book, but it is not a survey for the average reader.

## *Crisis at Sea: The United States Navy in European Waters in World War I*

By William N. Still, Jr., University of Florida Press, Gainesville, FL, 2006.

Reviewed by Laura Orr

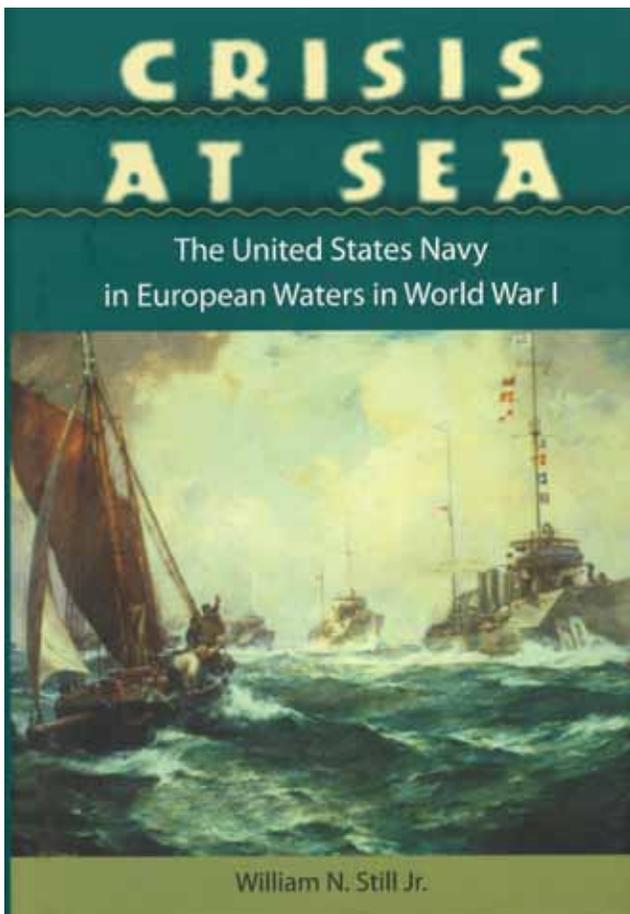
William Still's *Crisis at Sea* offers a well-written, well-researched survey of the United States Navy's activities in Europe during the Great War. His comprehensive study covers many subjects, including—but not limited to—the actions of U.S. ships assigned to convoy escort duty; the hunting of German and Austro-Hungarian U-boats; the creation of U.S. naval facilities in Europe; the leadership qualities displayed by U.S. naval commanders; the laying of the North Sea Mine Barrage; and the day-to-day lives of Great War sailors. Most readers will know that the United States Navy did not fight in many battles,

and thus he needed to be thorough. He spends much of his energy focusing on naval politics and international relations, two long-neglected subtopics.

Still developed a masterful narrative with vivid anecdotes, humanizing the forgotten sailors of the Great War. For example, readers will be captivated by the story of USS *Jacob Jones*, a destroyer sunk in 1917 by German submarine *U-53*. Lieutenant Stanton Kalk died after waiting seventeen hours for the rescue ships to arrive. As Still described, the account of one sailor aboard a rescue ship reported, “Just before he died he partially regained consciousness and asked if anyone could see the Statue of Liberty.” Still's book is replete with similar stories that make the combat of Great War naval action come to life.

Characteristically, Still's narrative is driven by personality; the reader gets a healthy dose of biographical history of the various admirals. Rear Admiral Hugh Rodman, commander of the American battleships that joined the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow, off of the United Kingdom, possessed colorful wit and a strong personality. For instance, in 1917 Rodman signaled, “have lost *Delaware*” (a ship that had momentarily become separated from the fleet). A British admiral signaled back, “Hope she is not sunk,” to which Rodman replied, “No, just mislaid.” Still makes an effort to insert interesting vignettes like this one to emphasize the fact that key decisions were rendered by men and women, not by the impersonal force of technology.

That being said, this is not a book for the faint-hearted. It is a daunting read, one that requires plenty of memorization. Also, despite his attempt to emphasize the Navy's role, Still remains critical of the Navy's leadership. For instance, he points out that the Navy learned few lessons from the Great War. Foolishly, when entering the Second World War, the admirals failed to use convoys during the opening months of the Battle of the Atlantic, even though World War I proved that convoying was an essential tactic. Still never explains why post-war Naval leaders failed to study the Great War, but his massive tome achieves a remarkable victory: at last, the United States Navy's Great War is remembered.



yet Still's narrative runs on for a whopping 517 pages. The length hints at Still's thesis: although the U.S. Navy did not earn everlasting fame during the Great War, its contributions (listed above) were essential in helping the Allies secure victory. The U.S. Navy's duties were hardly glamorous, but nineteen months of war kept it busy. Further, Still's work is the only decent single-volume history about the United States Navy in the Great War,