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The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command, Museums Division. The museum is dedicated to the study of 234 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. HRNM was accredited by the American Association of Museum in 2008.

Call for information on the museum's and Wisconsin's hours of operations. Admission to the museum and Wisconsin is free. 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 gordon.b.calhoun@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.hrmn.navy.mil>.

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The Gold Rush of 1898:  
The Navy Hands Out  
Millions of Dollars to  
Private Industry.

**Cover Illustration:** On the cover is the finished hull of Torpedo Boat Destroyer Number 5 at the William R. Trigg Company in Richmond, Virginia. This inland shipyard was the mastermind of William Trigg, a late 19th century Richmond native and entrepreneur. After successfully running a bank and a railroad locomotive company in Richmond, Trigg decided the real money was in shipbuilding.

# New Year, New Staff, New Horizons

The Director's Column  
by Becky Poulliot

On December 5, 2008, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum was awarded the field's highest seal of approval, accreditation from the American Association of Museums. The museum is in august company. There are an estimated 17,500 museums in this nation, and approximately five per cent are accredited. The Hampton Roads Naval Museum and Chrysler Museum of Art are the only museums in Southside Hampton Roads to receive this honor from the American Association of Museums. The Norfolk Botanical Gardens was reaccredited over the summer.

Accreditation status is bestowed only upon the most distinguished museums. The status brings national recognition to



*Lee Duckworth, the museum's new director of education. (Photo by Marta Joiner)*

museums, reflecting a museum's commitment to excellence, accountability and high professional standards. It is a rigorous process involving a major investment of time and resources from all levels of the museum's organization. The accreditation process consists of seven steps and can take three to four years to complete.

The accrediting committee found the museum to be an excellent example of a military museum collaborating, and developing, good relationships with its local community.

In addition to receiving accreditation,

2009 has gotten off to a great start with the addition of two new civilian staff members. I am pleased to announce that Lee Duckworth has re-joined our team. You will undoubtedly recognize Lee as he was our operations manager for USS *Wisconsin* from 2005-2007. As the Director of Education, Lee has taken to heart the Naval History and Heritage Command's mandate to make Naval history relevant to the U.S. Navy. Lee will continue to build upon the museum's repertoire of programs and presentations for the local military. One of his immediate tasks is the creation of the 2009 luncheon lecture series for museum members and our local sailors. Go to our website, [www.hnm.navy.mil](http://www.hnm.navy.mil), to see the impressive slate of



*Katherine Renfrew, the museum's new special events coordinator and educator. (Photo by Marta Joiner)*

speakers for 2009. Or call me at 322-2990 to receive a copy of the 2009 Calendar of Events.

Lee brings a diverse and impressive background to his position. Previously, he served as the manager of pilot training for an airline, as director of education and training for the Naval Doctrine Command, and as a high school teacher for an at-sea education program. A Viet Nam and Gulf War veteran, he held command of two Navy helicopter squadrons and was the commanding officer of Naval Air Station Norfolk. He holds a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Naval



Academy and a master's in history from the University of West Florida. I am delighted to have him back on our museum team.

Katherine Renfrew, our Special Events Coordinator and Educator, has been hard at work for one month. Already, she has made our lives so much easier with her outstanding organizational skills. To date, she has consolidated the automated master calendar of the museum's activities and commitments, and has put together monthly statistics at a glance. These tasks have enabled our institution to run more efficiently. Katherine brings many years of museum experience to her position. A native of Hampton Roads, she has a bachelor of arts and masters of arts in history. Prior to coming to work as our special events coordinator, Katherine served as the Assistant Director of the Portsmouth Museums and as Curator of the MacArthur Memorial. As I write this article, she is putting together the annual volunteer awards dinner, along with our committee. This affair is March 26, and will be once again underwritten by the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation.

I do hope you will make an effort to visit us soon, and meet Lee and Katherine. If you are in a position to volunteer your time with us, we do have an array of projects, some taking very little time, that make a positive impact on our mission of sharing the history of the Navy in Hampton Roads.

*Becky*



# The Fleet Heads For Home

*This is an ongoing series about the 1907-09 voyage of the Great White Fleet as seen through the eyes of Petty Officer Elmor Stoffer. The sailor was a machinist's mate aboard the battleship USS Kansas (BB-21).*

**W**ith the visits to Japan, China, and Australia successfully accomplished, the Fleet prepared for the somewhat anti-climactic journey home via the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal. The main purpose of the cruise was now over, and the Fleet and its sailors made best speed for Hampton Roads. Stoffer's



*Shown here is Stoffer's ship USS Kansas (BB-21) in Manila Harbor during the voyage of the Great White Fleet. (Photo provided by William Stewart/www.greatwhitefleet.info)*

## *Uncle Sam's Greatest Show on Earth The Great White Fleet One Hundred Years Later*

ship, USS Kansas (BB-21) conducted a few rounds of target practice outside of Subic Bay, Philippines before heading for the Indian Ocean. En route, the ship faced an outbreak of smallpox, two major engineering casualties, and green colored turkey.

*Nov 1 Sunday [Manila, Philippines]  
Steamed out of Subic Bay a short way and anchored to have sub-caliber target practice.*

*Nov 2 Monday  
Finished sub-caliber target practice today and went back with the rest of the fleet in the evening.*

*Nov 3 Tuesday  
Moored ship and began testing all the seven and eight inch guns on the port side.*

*Nov 4 Wednesday  
Tested the four twelve-inch guns this forenoon and are getting underway at 130 to go to Manila to coal ship Arrived at Manila sometime in the evening and anchored way out in the bay.*

*Nov 5 to 18  
Coaled ship and then had to get underway every day to go out on the target range run around for a few minutes and then secure again one continual round of getting the anchor up and letting it down again. Received mail from the States on the 14th and 15th. Finished target practice on the 22nd of Nov. Also, had mine practice. Had liberty from 25th to 30th. Coaled ship 23rd and 24th, filled all bunkers.*

*Dec 1 Tuesday  
Steaming watch went on at four o'clock this morning to light fires and get steam up. We raised anchor at eight o'clock and started for Colombo. Before we reached the entrance to the bay, our feed line carried away and we had to drop out of line to repair the break, therefore we did not catch up with the fleet until the next morning. [Editor's note: By "carried away," Stoffer was politely saying that the main pipe carrying feed water into the boiler broke in half, releasing extremely hot pressurized water into the open air. This hot water would be above the 212 degree boiling point would immediately flash into steam. Additionally, since no water could enter the boiler, no steam could be released either. It was a very dangerous situation.]*

*Dec 2 to 13  
There was not anything of importance until the sixth. We passed Singapore and entered the Straits of Malacca, which took us two days to pass through. We passed a few merchant steamers on the way and on the evening of the ninth, the Georgia left us with a case of small pox aboard and sped with all haste for Colombo to put the man in the hospital. We sighted land on the evening of the twelfth and arrived in Colombo about eleven o'clock and dropped anchor inside the breakwater. We lingered outside a short time to take a pilot aboard.*

*Dec 14 Monday  
Sent liberty party ashore early this morning.*



*The Fleet conducted a second round of gunnery practice off the coast of the Philippine Islands before heading out for the Indian Ocean. Shown here are the 12-inch guns and black smoke of the USS Louisiana (BB-19). (HRNM photo)*

*Special first class only liberty party after dinner.*

**Greatest Show continued on page 4**



Colombo, Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka) was the only port in the Indian Ocean capable of handling the many needs of the Fleet, such as fixing major engineering casualties. Stoffer's ship, USS Kansas (BB-21), cracked a piston ring that required part of the engine to be taken off line. While workers fixed the ships, the local population entertained the Fleet's sailors. At left, a snake charmer and his assistant (with a dwarf mongoose on standby) woo a cobra on board Kansas. Several trains carried the sailors to the island's ancient capital of Kaudy (below at left). (Photos provided by HRNM and William Stewart/www.greatwhitefleet.info)

**Greatest Show continued from page 3**

*Dec 16 Wednesday*

*I went ashore at seven o'clock this morning and took the excursion to Kaudy, had a nice trip and there was some beautiful scenery on the way.*

*Dec 17 Thursday*

*Coaled ship all day today and nearly all night filling up all the bunkers.*

*Dec 18 Friday*

*Today is field day and everyone is busy cleaning up the ship.*

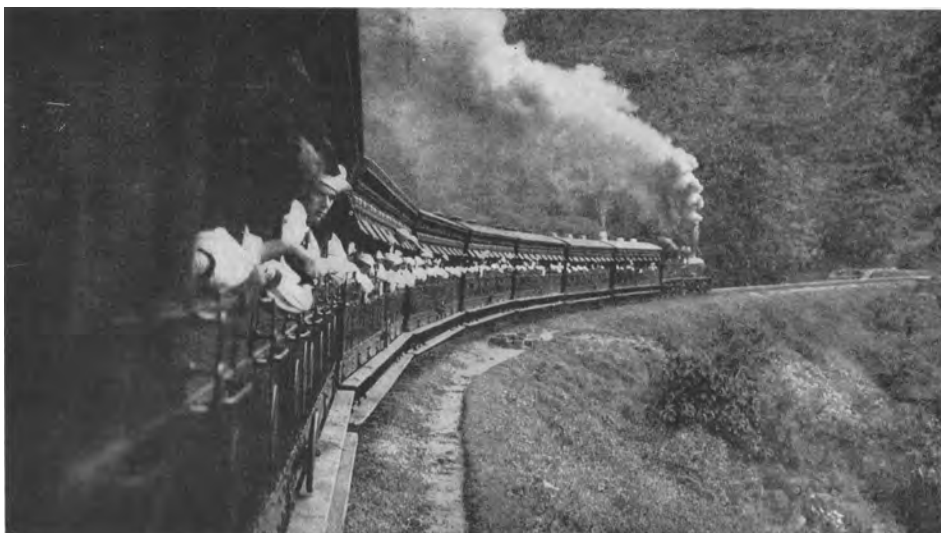
*Dec 19 Saturday*

*This is also field day and also getting ready to get under way in the morning for Port Said, Egypt.*

*Dec 20 Sunday*

*In repairing the engines at Colombo, a piston ring was found broken and had dug two deep grooves in the liner. It being the high pressure cylinder of the starboard engine, the liner had to be taken out and the cylinder cut out making a compound engine. [Editor's Note: Stoffer is making reference to the ship's engine, which normally used*

**Greatest Show continued on page 5**







The long shadow of an American battleship is cast over the Egyptian desert during the Fleet's voyage through the Suez Canal. (Photo provided by William Stewart/www.greatwhitefleet.info)

**Greatest Show continued from page 4**

three pistons in three boilers to operate.] We left this morning at six thirty, making ten and one half knots standard speed. It is a sixteen day run.

Dec. 21 Monday

All is going well and we were not any more than out of sight of land when speedy Sperry began his maneuvering. [Editor's note: "Sperry" is Admiral Charles Sperry, second commanding officer of the Fleet.]

Dec. 27-29 [Somewhere in the Indian Ocean]

The Vermont broke down and fell out of line but came back the next day. [Ate] our Christmas dinner in the Indian Ocean which consisted of turkey which had been so long in cold storage that it turned green (but it was good enough for the sailors).

[I also had] potatoes, peas, gravy, pie and cake, bread butter, coffee, two cigarettes, and a stinken [sic] cigar. I forgot the Yankee cheese. I think it was made before the Revolution. It was loud. We sighted land and entered the Gulf of Eden on the 27th passed through the Straits of Eden on the 29th.

New Years Day, Friday, 1909-[Eden, Yemen]

The Fourth Division stopped at Eden and took aboard enough coal to last them to Port Said. Passed some steamers on the 30th and 31st and at midnight, them boys began raising cain. It continued all day. One of the boys was dressed up as a girl

and he beat anything I ever seen.

Jan. 2 Saturday[Suez, Egypt]

On the second, the uniform was changed from whites to blues and on the third we arrived in Suez about eight thirty in the morning. At one o'clock in the afternoon,

the Sphinx then went back to the city and roamed around until ten o'clock, turned in and arose at 5 o'clock in order to catch the train at seven o'clock for Port Said. Arrived at said port at eleven o'clock and returned aboard ship at 1:15 P.M. Our leave expired at 2 P.M. The Connecticut, Vermont,



Sailors and Marines from the Fleet pose with their guides at the legendary Great Sphinx of Giza, with the Pyramid of Khafre in the background, after the Fleet made port in Suez, Egypt. (HRNM photo)


a party of thirty left the ship for Suez where they took the train for Cairo, Egypt arriving there about eight o'clock in the evening. Walked around until twelve then turned in at the Memphis hotel.

Jan. 4 Monday

We arose early the morning of the fourth went out and ate our breakfast and then started out to see the Pyramids and Sphinx. Had our pictures taken in front of

Kansas, Minnesota and Kentucky raised anchor at 5:45 Monday morning, Jan. 4 and proceeded to the entrance of the canal and through at five knots speed reaching Port Said at twelve o'clock at night.

Jan. 5 Tuesday [Port Said, Egypt]

All hands were broke out at 3:30 A.M. to coal ship, which lasted all day and over half the night. We put the liner in the starboard engine and repaired two pumps. 

# Building the Steel Navy on the James

## The Rocket Rise and Fall of Richmond's William R. Trigg Company

by Gordon Calhoun

When one thinks of Naval shipbuilding and Virginia, one often thinks of one of the two big shipyards in Hampton Roads: the privately-owned Newport News Shipbuilding or the publicly-owned Norfolk Naval Shipyard. But a hundred miles upstream from Hampton Roads, one man decided that his city could also build warships in the Commonwealth.

The man's name was William R. Trigg. Every city either has, or wants, a person like William Trigg, a person who loves his city so much, that he will do anything to see it succeed and grow. Trigg's city was Richmond, Virginia. Born and raised in Virginia's capital, captured by General Phillip Sheridan's troops in 1865 when he was 11 years old while attempting to flee the city, Trigg had seen Richmond recover from the late war. He rose in the business ranks to become one of the city's leading businessmen.

By 1898, Trigg had already founded a successful bank and turned a small locomotive boiler operation into the internationally known Richmond Locomotive Works. Despite the uncertainties of the overall health of the national economy, Trigg decided to start a third venture: shipbuilding. Historically, Richmond was not completely foreign to shipbuilding, as the city had built several warships for the Confederate States Navy.

Trigg had some experience working with the Navy. His locomotive business served as a subcontractor to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and provided the boilers and other engineering parts for the battleship

USS *Texas*. Additionally, his father had served as the Collector of Customs for the Port of Richmond for many decades.

But to compete with established shipyards in building ships for the "new Navy" was a risky proposition at best. Shipbuilding, especially steel hulled warships with boilers, engineering plants, weapons, and ordnance was, and still is, a very complicated process. Additionally, the politics involved in landing warship contracts in late 19th and early 20th centuries came with pitfalls.

Yards such as Newport News Shipbuilding and Philadelphia's Cramp and Sons had proven track records, as their warships were on the front page of newspapers during the Spanish-American War. In addition, several other businessmen throughout the country had the same idea as Trigg and had started their own shipbuilding businesses. "At first the idea of building warships at this city was received with skepticism not to say ridicule, especially by the seashore cities," wrote the *Richmond Dispatch*.

Trigg was not to be deterred as he saw there was money to be made in warship construction. The Navy had received authorization from Congress to build sixteen torpedo boat destroyers and twelve torpedo boats within the short time span of just eighteen months. The torpedo boats in question were each about 175 feet in length, displaced about 170 tons, carried three torpedo tubes, three 1-pounder guns, and had to be capable of at least twenty-six knots. The destroyers were to be about 250



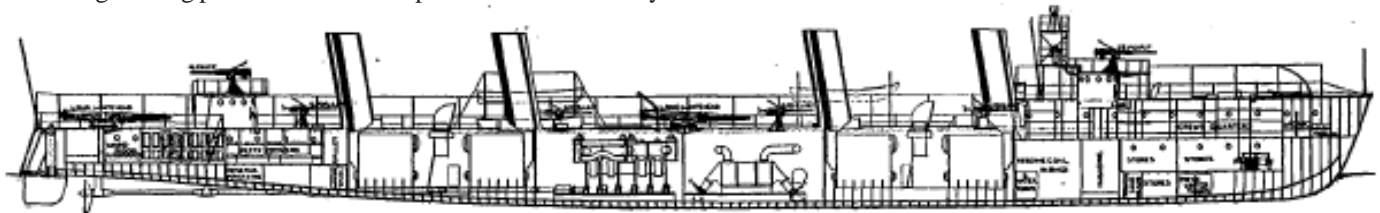
*Born, raised, and employed in Richmond, Virginia, William R. Trigg was passionate about making money and building Virginia's capital into an industrial giant. Already a successful banker and industrialist, in 1898, he turned his sights on a far riskier enterprise: shipbuilding. (Image from Richmond, Virginia: City on the James)*

feet in length, displace about 420 tons, carry two torpedoes, three 3-inch guns, and be capable of at least twenty-eight knots. The Navy gave the contractors some leeway if the contractor felt it had a better design.

Along with several other firms across the country, the Navy awarded Trigg with a contract. Specifically, Trigg was to build for the Navy three torpedo boats and two torpedo boat destroyers. There was only one problem. Trigg did not have the tools, shipyard, workers, or for that matter, an incorporated company to build ships. In its haste to expand the Fleet, the Navy awarded a contract to a phantom company.

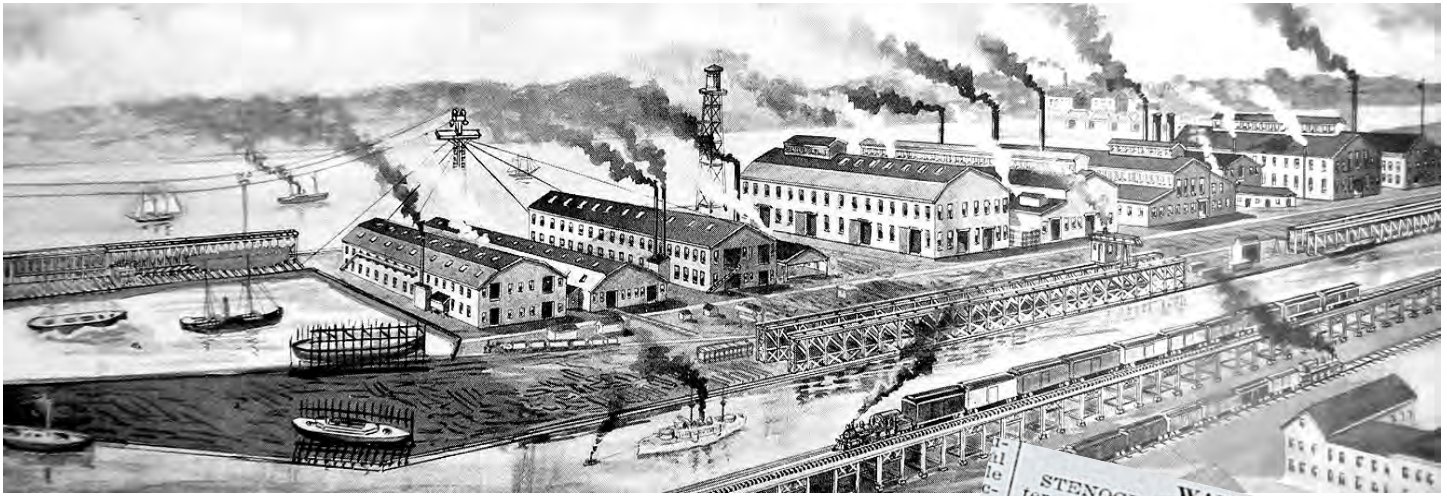
The Navy was desperate and awarded anyone who showed even the modest ability to build ships a contract (see page 13.) As a result, the Navy gave Trigg time to organize his company, raise capital, get a management team in place, and hire workers.

Trigg was up to the task. In just six weeks, he chartered his company,  
**Trigg continued on page 7**



*The U.S. Navy was late on the world scene in turning out small escort type warships meant to protect the capital ships from the perceived hazards of torpedo boats. Labeled "torpedo boat destroyers," the William R. Trigg Company received a contract to build two of this new type of warship. (Image from National Archives)*





By early 1899, just a few months after landing its first contract, the William R. Trigg Company was up and running along the James River. Clients not only included the U.S. Navy, but also the Revenue Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, and passenger ship companies. At its peak, the company employed over 2,000 workers. (1901 drawing from Richmond, Virginia: A City on the James. "Wanted" from January 27, 1900 Richmond Dispatch)

**Trigg continued from page 6**

raised \$300,000 in a public stock offering, borrowed another \$1 million from his banking network, and assembled a board of directors. Among the men on his board was Virginus Newtown, veteran of the Confederate States Navy and the Battle of Hampton Roads, and Linton T. Myers, Trigg's son-in-law. He then successfully recruited James A. Nelson, an M.I.T.-trained naval architect, away from the Navy's Bureau of Construction & Repair to be the company's lead draftsman and chief operations officer. Most importantly, he leased idle factory buildings between 19<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Street on Chappell Island where the ill-fated 1830s James and Kanawa Canal began.

By December, the William R. Trigg

Company was up and running, beginning work on the first ship, known by the Navy as Torpedo Boat Number 31, in January 1899. Work on Torpedo Boats 32 and 33 began a few weeks later. As the three ships were relatively simple and straight forward designs, workers finished the first vessel, named *Shubrick*, by October 31, 1899.

The entire city of Richmond came out to celebrate the city's return to the warship building scene since the Civil War. The event was made all the more special when President William McKinley agreed to come address the crowd. Richmond

**Trigg continued on page 8**



Torpedo boat Number 32, Thornton, rests quietly in the James River near Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad's main line after being launched by the Trigg Company (Naval History and Heritage Command photo)



Trigg Company workers take a break while working on the torpedo boat Stockton (TB-31), 1900. (Naval History and Heritage Command photo)



Trigg continued from page 7

and William Trigg had officially arrived on the national shipbuilding scene.

The weather for launch day was horrible as a torrential downpour hit the city. Newspapers wrote that it had rained so much that *Shubrick* could have been launched in downtown Richmond. Nonetheless, over 30,000 spectators descended to the James River to see their President speak. Refusing an umbrella, McKinley praised the people of Richmond for their work on the battleship *Texas*, and for their work on *Shubrick*, and then congratulated them for resurrecting the city from the ashes of the American Civil War.

After spreading accolades to Richmond, the President started his reelection campaign early and spoke at length about the state of the country. “What can be more gratifying than present conditions? The people are doing business on business principles and should be left alone...encouraged, rather than hindered in their efforts to increase the trade of their country,” the President proclaimed. The speech, according to the transcript, was received to thunderous applause.

When the President finished his speech, Carrie Shubrick stepped up to officially christen the vessel named after her distant relative with the traditional bottle of champagne. Whether she did not swing hard enough or at the wrong angle, the bottle, unfortunately, did not break. Seeing the young Shubrick in trouble, a sailor on the vessel reached down, grabbed the bottle, and broke the bottle against the hull for her. With the vessel launched, the people cheered. The crowd cheered until a steamboat full of over zealous spectators almost capsized their ship when they all



Shown here are torpedo boat destroyer number 4, Dale, and torpedo boat destroyer number 5, Decatur, nearing completion at the Richmond yard. (Naval History and Heritage Command photo)

ran to one side of it. The steamboat righted itself, but not before a few of the spectators fell into the James.

Building on the James River produced a special problem and solution for launching ships. All ships were launched into the old James & Kanawa Canal. However, the launch area was only about a hundred feet wide and eighteen feet deep. This made the traditional method of sending a ship down the ways out of the question. Most American shipyards based on rivers and the Great Lakes solved this problem by using the “broadside” method, that is, launching the ship on its side. But the canal was so small, that even a standard broadside launch would not work. Trigg’s engineers developed a system whereby the launch ways and the ship were already partially submerged in the water before it was actually sent over the side.

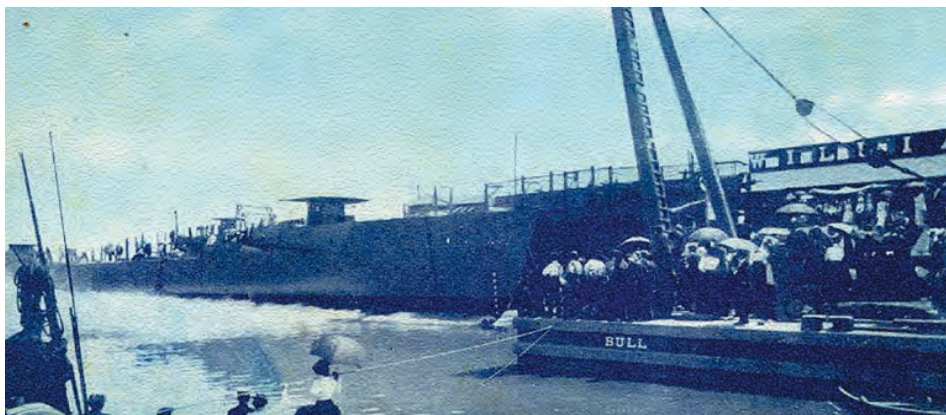
Shortly after *Shubrick*, her sister ships

*Stockton* and *Thornton* were launched a few months later. With the easy ships done, the yard moved up to bigger ones. Trigg already had the contract to build the destroyers *Dale* (Torpedo Boat Destroyer Number 4) and *Decatur* (Torpedo Boat Destroyer Number 5). Work on those two ships began before the completion of the torpedo boats. Now the ever ambitious Richmond entrepreneur had his sights on ever larger, and thus more profitable, vessels.

The next group of vessels required by the Navy was a new type of warship that would patrol the littoral waters of the West Indies and the Far East. Labeled the *Denver*-class cruiser, this “peace” cruiser, as one historian has called it, displaced about 3,200 tons and lightly armed.

This class of ship was controversial to some and a waste of money to others. Critics pointed out that the ship, as designed by the Navy was slow, too lightly armed and armored to be of use in combat. Furthermore it did not have the cruising range fitting for a ship meant to stay on station for extended periods of time. Eager to get the contract, Trigg’s designers and engineers proposed to build a ship that was three knots faster with a 10% larger coal bunker for only a very modest increase in price. *Scientific American*, a frequent critic of Naval ship design, praised Trigg’s engineers for forward thinking.

Despite fierce competition from other yards, the re-design effort along with a small price cut worked. The Navy awarded Trigg with a contract to build Cruiser **Trigg continued on page 9**



Thousands of Richmond spectators came out to watch the launching of Dale. With only a 100 feet of space to work with, the Trigg Company’s engineers perfected the art of broadside launchings. Engineers from around the world took note of the company’s innovation. (1901 postcard published by the Tom Jones Company)





Proud Trigg Company employees pose with the nearly completed Dale. By this point in the construction, the only parts missing were the ship's torpedo tubes and guns. After her construction, Dale then went to the Navy's testing grounds in the Chesapeake Bay to undergo grueling builder's trials. Normally, it took six to seven months after launching for the Navy to accept a new warship. Dale and Decatur, however, were considered such well built ships, that the Navy accepted them in two months. (Naval History and Heritage Command photo)

### Trigg continued from page 8

Number 17, to be called *Galveston*. Soon after they receiving the *Galveston* contract, the yard successfully launched *Dale*, followed by *Decatur* a few weeks later. A young lieutenant and future influential flag officer, Harry E. Yarnell was on hand to take command of *Dale*. Several thousand spectators witnessed both launchings.

The Navy was impressed with the quality of the vessels. They took all torpedo boats and destroyers built on the East Coast to a test area in the Chesapeake Bay near Annapolis. There, they ran the vessels through the series of required builder's trials, such as running the ships at full speed over a certain distance to see if they could actually make certain speed benchmarks. After the trials, the Navy would hand over a list of problems for the shipyard to fix before the vessels would be commissioned into the Fleet. Normally, for these torpedo boats and destroyers, this cycle of trial to acceptance took six to eight months. The Navy accepted Trigg's vessels in only two months.

Accolades such as these were picked up by the national press, and reporters began to take notice of Richmond's shipyard. The *New York Tribune* did a full page feature story on the yard as part of its weekend edition. "At first," the *Tribune* wrote, "there was much amused curiosity that men could have the audacity to attempt shipbuilding

so far in the interior of the South and above Tidewater. But the wisdom displayed in selecting the site has been amply vindicated and frank recognition is now given by capitalists and technical authorities."

The *Tribune* noted that Richmond was actually the perfect place to build warships as it was right next to electrical generating plants (a valuable commodity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), was a major railroad hub, and workers could work on building the ships outside year round.

The editors at *Scientific American* dispatched a reporter to Richmond to take a closer look at the yard. Being able to appreciate the innovations Trigg's engineers had made in the science and art of launching a ship, the influential science and engineering magazine praised the yard for finding a way to launch a 1,300-ton ship with only a 100 feet of space. Trigg's innovations even caught the eye of British maritime engineers.

With the *Galveston* contract in hand, along with several other building contracts for the United States Revenue Service, civilian shipping companies, and the Army, Trigg decided it was time to go head to head with the big yards. For a brief moment, Trigg considered bidding on one of the new 16,000-ton battleships, which thus far had only been built at the largest

of shipyards. He told reporters that for the moment he would pass on battleship construction in favor of a contract for a larger cruiser. In the summer of 1901, Trigg Shipbuilding formally announced a bid for the construction of one of three 9,700 ton "semi-armored" cruisers. Labeled the *St. Louis*-class by the Navy, these warships were the product of a long debate within the Department on the design and role of the next generation of light cruisers. The end result was a heavily compromised design that satisfied no one in terms of speed, protection, or armament.

The design was a secondary issue for Trigg. The larger issue he faced was infrastructure. The shipyard would have to expand and upgrade machinery in order to build one of these cruisers. He tapped his banking network and secured a second \$1 million loan from the Richmond Trust and Safety Deposit Company using the shipyard as collateral. He placed the bid, gambling that the Navy would once again give him extra time and a little leeway.

When Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long opened the contract for bid, Trigg's proposal was not well received. Not only were the upgrades not finished, Trigg's representative (possibly the younger brother Connelly Trigg) remarked to Secretary Long

**Trigg continued on page 14**

## Book Reviews

### *Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet That Defeated the Japanese Navy*

By John T. Kuehn

Reviewed by Matthew Eng

It is a common fact that the Second World War began and ended with the United States Navy. From the surprise attack on a balmy December morning at Pearl Harbor to the implementation of Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay, the men who won the war in the Pacific theater did so behind a battle hardened fleet of warships ranging from aircraft carriers to cruisers and submarines. This courageous fleet owed its success to the opinions and

John T. Kuehn. *Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet That Defeated the Japanese Navy*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008. ISBN 1-59114-448-5. \$32.95.

implementations made by the General Board of the United States Navy, the Department of the Navy's policy advisory group from 1900 to 1951, during the interwar period. Retired Navy Commander John T. Kuehn's recent work *Agents of Innovation* explores how the evolutionary, not revolutionary, change of strategic military policy of the newly installed General Board of the Navy helped create the fleet that helped defeat the Japanese Navy during the Second World War.

The 1922 Washington Naval Treaty sought to limit the fleet size of the world's major naval powers. Although the United States came out on top in terms of tonnage ratio, the Japanese pushed for the inclusion of a fortification clause, thereby halting the creation of overseas bases within the Japanese sphere of influence. As Kuehn suggests, the clause was a "fundamental root cause" of concern in an effort to protect nearly ten thousand miles of oceanic territory. How would the United States design a balanced fleet "second to none" in the absence of a presence throughout the Pacific? How would the threat posed by

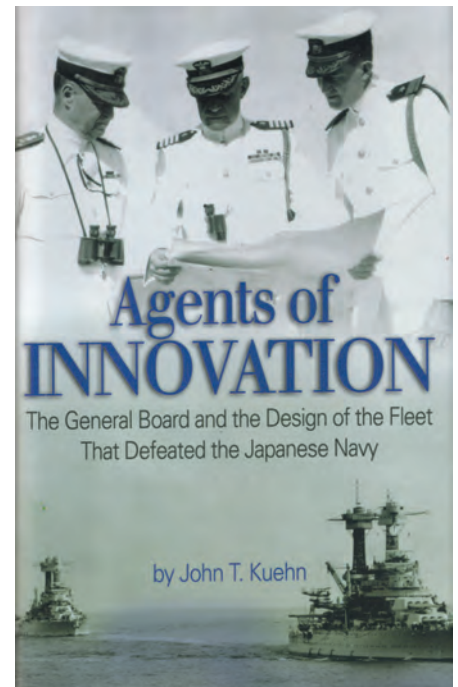
Japan and the "status quo" on fortifications ultimately aid the creation of the most powerful fleet the world has ever seen?

Kuehn credits the General Board as the architects of innovation within this concept of sea power. He argues that the new projection of sea power in the 1920s and 1930s built around the ideas of nineteenth century naval "prophet" Alfred Thayer Mahan as directly reflected by the treaty-built fleet "in a variety of innovative modernization programs and initiatives." Put bluntly, the United States was not going to hold its breath and wait for other powers, specifically the Japanese, to catch up despite their limitations and relative humiliation in 1922.

Such haste might suggest a poorly organized fleet design by the General Board. Kuehn proves these ideas false. "Although the paradigm did not change," Kuehn writes in his conclusion, "the fleet did." Hubris often characteristic of Naval officers during the interwar period found no place in the General Board's creative implementation process. Instead, collaboration between these "reactionary officers" was the true key to success of the fleet.

For example, the General Board realized the necessity of mobile bases well before the Washington Naval Treaty outlawed fortified fixed ones. Kuehn points to the variety of ships produced through the shift of focus away from a base bound to a "base independent fleet." The two main products that came out of the discussion highlighted by Kuehn were the floating dry dock and "flying deck cruiser."


Another visionary look the General Board accomplished was weaning the American Navy off battleships before many saw a more concrete reason to do so. Members of the battleship cult may find Kuehn's findings disheartening, as he explains through a step by step process why the "capital ship holiday" proved the Navy's saving grace. Indeed, Kuehn is as fresh and innovative in his argument as the General Board was during



the interwar period.

Kuehn's arguments are devoid of typical "battleship versus aircraft carrier dichotomy" saturated in scholarship today. Carriers are nonetheless included in his argument, as aviation development helped defeat an aggressor still focused on the decisive battle theory last seen at Tsushima.

*Agents of Innovation* builds upon the scant number of secondary resources surrounding the 1922 Naval Treaty in Washington, DC. The officer turned historian is not afraid to push the envelope in his writings and historical methods (see his article "We Look Stupid," *Proceedings of the Naval Institute* January 2009). Previous scholars of similar naval policy like Norman Friedman, Thomas C. Hone, and Mark D. Mandel place considerable weight on tactical, operational, individual, or strategic issues. Using the treaties and strategic developments of the General Board as his primary resource, Kuehn finds use of all principles aforementioned to write a detailed organizational history with military precision. Such focus helps readers comprehend the countless issues addressed and analyzed throughout the work.

*Agents of Innovation* is a remarkable piece of scholarship that speaks volumes to how the United States Navy is run today. Future efforts on this subject will invariably use Kuehn's work as a resource. 



## *Intrepid: The Epic Story of America's Most Legendary Warship*

By Bill White and Robert Gandt

Reviewed by Ira R. Hanna

When historians write about naval battles, they usually explain the strategy and tactics then tell what actually happened. Their narratives rarely are written to engage the reader emotionally, but just factual, well-researched facts. This book is not one of those. It is a compilation of eyewitness accounts and the stories of actual participants interspersed with short summaries of the events, mission objectives and outcomes. What it turns out to be is a thoroughly entertaining book

Bill White and Robert Gandt. *Intrepid: The Epic Story of America's Most Legendary Warship*. New York: Broadway Books, 2008. ISBN 0-76792-989-6. \$26.95.

with commercials at the end – the last two chapters and appendices that extol the virtues of the Intrepid Museum and its foundations.

Perhaps the subject of this book, the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid* (CV-11), does deserve such adulation. Whether her service should be considered epic or legendary is a conclusion that is in need of comparison with other ships. This book does not do that, nor is it probably meant to. *Intrepid* relates the heroic stories of her pilots that led to her becoming a tribute to them as an air and space museum with a family of foundations that support the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families.

She certainly was used by the Navy in several capacities over her 26 years of active service spanning the period 1943-74: attack carrier during WWII, decommissioned in 1947 and placed in reserve during the Korean conflict, modernized and recommissioned in 1954 as an ASW carrier during the Cold War, employed as the Mercury and Gemini space mission recovery ship, reverted back to attack carrier during Vietnam, and finally retired in 1974. She was then resurrected as

a Museum in 1982.

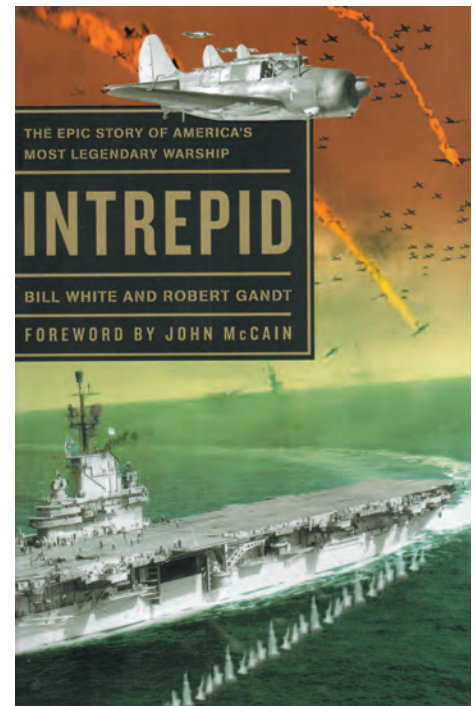
Although *Intrepid* is coauthored, it is apparent that Robert Gandt did most of the writing. Even White gives him credit in his acknowledgements at the end of the book. Gandt is a former naval aviator and author of several other well-recognized books on naval aviation, one of which was adapted for television. He knows how to write exciting narratives of dogfights during the important battles. They alone make the book worth reading.

In his effort to tell compelling stories, he did emphasize the part that *Intrepid* played in the outcome of battles, leaving out in several cases the contributions of other ships. For instance, Task Group 58.1 that included USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) was merely identified as part of the Task Group that attacked Truk, while the part *Intrepid* played was thoroughly explained. Of course, this is a book about *Intrepid*, but *Enterprise* was the most decorated ship in WWII. Some credit would have been appropriate.

The narratives could have been made more understandable by the inclusion of several more illustrations of the air and sea battles. There were only three. Although well done, they were not mentioned in the contents, and one (The Battle Of Leyte Gulf) was misplaced at the beginning of Part Two. Descriptions of “dog-fights” during Vietnam were more vivid than those of WWII and may be more appreciated by pilots.


No doubt, *Intrepid* pilots were some of the bravest and most successful of America's Naval Air Force during WWII. Many of the carrier's pilots became aces. One, in particular, Lieutenant Cecil Harris, became a double ace when he shot down four and was the highest-scoring fighter pilot on the *Intrepid*. However it was David McCampbell of *Intrepid*'s sister ship, USS *Essex* (CV-9), in his F6F Hellcat who became the leading naval ace with thirty-four confirmed victories.

However, for those who are not pilots,



there is a need to explain flight tactics such as “head-on pass” and “turning duel.” Hyperbole was used too much in several cases. Leyte Gulf, for example, was spoken of as “the greatest sea battle in history.” What about Midway, Tsushima, Trafalgar, or Salamis? Leyte Gulf is known as the “largest” sea battle, but the “greatest” is still being considered. On a positive note, Chapter 8 is an excellent, concise summary of this battle.

The authors occasionally give their commentary. Of particular note is the condemnation of the way the war in Vietnam was waged, i.e., “Targets selected by officials back in Washington who had only the vaguest sense of value versus risk.” Also, their failure to recognize or act when there was an ongoing shortage of bombs meant that missions were flown not to inflict damage as much as to “rack up” an impressive number of sorties.

The most emotional part of this book appears at the very beginning in the forward by John McCain. It is also the most erudite portion and ends with mention of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund that has furnished funds for the world's most technologically advanced rehabilitation center for amputees and burn victims. His final comment is that “of all *Intrepid*'s missions, perhaps her most important is to inspire our heroes of tomorrow.” That is what this book does and was probably meant to do. 

# The Gold Rush of 1898

Needing to Expand the Fleet in a Hurry, the Navy Hands Out Millions of Dollars of Contracts to Private Industry

“Among the numerous industry which in recent years done so much to attract attention of the world,” the *New York Tribune* wrote in 1901, “nothing has been so striking as the unprecedented development of the shipbuilding industry.” This observation came as a result of a series of curious events happening in Washington, D.C.

The United States experienced two gold rushes in the 1890s. The most famous one is the Yukon Gold Rush of 1897, when thousands of prospectors stampeded in to the Alaska Territory looking to strike it rich. They stayed for years looking in vain for the elusive gold. Thousands of miles to the southeast in Washington, D.C., a second gold rush had begun.

On the morning of August 23, 1898, men in business suits arrived at the State,



## *The Museum Sage*

Navy, and War Building (now called the Eisenhower Office Building) next door to the White House with large stacks of papers in their hands. Like the prospectors in the Alaska Territory, the businessmen hoped to make some money in tough economic times.

Like much of America, the mid to late 1890s had not been kind to the shipyards. The various economic recessions resulted in far fewer civilian ship orders. But the results of the Spanish-American War gave the Navy a new mandate and it needed more ships, fast. As a result of this accelerated schedule, the Department awarded contracts to any shipyard that demonstrated the most modest interest in building ships. Actual ability to build ships was not a

requirement.

Congress granted the Navy’s request for its largest peacetime expansion to date totaling hundreds of millions of dollars. The Navy turned away from its own facilities and handed the job for this massive project to private industry. It was every industrialists’ dream come true: war

time spending without the headaches of war time labor and materials restrictions. In other words, there was gold to be found in Congressional appropriations.

In the August 23 meeting, fourteen torpedo boat destroyers and ten torpedo boats totaling \$6.9 million were up for bid. Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long and his staff sat down with shipyard representatives to accept their applications. The Department had asked the companies to provide the Navy with two bids, one based on ship plans drawn up by the Department and one based on plans drawn up by the company, if the company felt it had a better design.

A New York City newspaper reporter sat in on the meeting and commented that the bids on the Secretary’s table measured “several feet high.” Some on the Secretary’s staff openly complained to the reporter that it would take several weeks to sift through the bids, made even more complicated by the Department’s decision to allow bidders to propose alternative designs.

Promptly at noon, Long’s staff read aloud the bids. The upstart Bath Iron Works announced it would bid for one torpedo boat at \$161,000 but was willing to give the Navy a \$1,000 per ship discount if it were awarded four contracts. Bath also bid on three destroyers at \$285,000 a ship. Columbia Iron Works in Baltimore announced it would bid for five destroyers and four torpedo boats. Its local rival, the Maryland Steel Company, offered to build four destroyers that could do thirty



Next door to the White House stood the State, Navy, and War Building (now called the Eisenhower Office Building), site of the other 1890s gold rush. Representatives from the nation’s many shipyards would periodically descend on the building to compete for the millions of dollars of contracts being awarded by the Navy. Cow not included in the bids. (Library of Congress photo)

knots, two knots over the requirement. The subject of the cover story, the William R. Trigg Company of Richmond, offered to build five destroyers at a \$50,000 per ship discount to Bath’s bid. There was a bid from the Fall River Engine Company in Massachusetts, the Gas Engine and Power

## BIDS FOR NEW WAR VESSELS

**Torpedo Boats and Destroyers to Be Built for Our Navy**

**TWENTY-EIGHT CRAFT**

**A. Williamsport Man Offers to Construct a Ship With a Speed of Forty Knots**

*This headline from the New York Herald announced the first many bidding wars by private industry for new Naval warships. (August 24, 1898 New York Herald)*

Company located in the Bronx section of New York City, the Harlan-Hollingsworth Company of Wilmington, Delaware. West Coast shipyards even travelled to Washington, D.C., specifically, Union Iron Works of San Francisco and the Wolf & Zwicker Company of Portland, Oregon.

Individual entrepreneurs tried to bid with the understanding that they would have to borrow someone else’s facility to build the

**The Museum Sage continued on page 13**





*The gold rush at Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry dock Company, 1904. Originally, the shipyard did not set out to build warships but economic downturns forced them to look for new sources of revenue. Fortunately for them, Congress allocated money for several dozen big warships. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)*

**The Museum Sage continued from page 12**

ships. One of these entrepreneurs, Richard Painton of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, boldly stated that he would build the world’s first forty knot destroyer that would use his patented twelve propeller “Painton” method of propulsion. The claim, which had a measure of truth to it (look up U.S. Patent #509,553 on the Internet), did raise some eyebrows in the room.


The staff wondered aloud why some established shipbuilders like William Cramp and Sons did not send in a bid. The staff did not comment on the absence of the Government’s own facilities: the Navy Yards. None of the six big yards (New York, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Mare Island) were allowed to submit a proposal.

In all, the Department received fourteen

bids at the meeting and in the end awarded contracts to most of the firms (Mr. Painton and his amazing flying machine was not one of them.) The Department repeated the process several more times between 1898 and 1902. Over those four years, the Navy awarded over 500,000 tons of shipbuilding contracts to private shipyards.


For many of the private companies, building steel hulled ships was simply an extension of their current business. Some companies like William Cramp and Newport News had already been building ships for years. For others, like William Trigg and the Maryland Steel Company, the companies had served as sub-contractors to other shipyards and serving as the lead contractor was just the next logical step in their business model. Maryland Steel, as the

name suggests, was exclusively a steel mill at first. William Trigg and Portland’s Wolf & Zwicker both built boilers for warships before going into the warship business itself. Herreshoff Manufacturing in Bristol, Rhode Island was already famous for building yachts that had won the America’s Cup several times. The company also built six torpedo boats.

For the most part, the Navy’s trust in private industry paid off. There were a few hiccups, most notably William Trigg’s bankruptcy. But going into the Spanish-American War, the Navy had about thirty modern warships. By the time of the sailing of the Great White Fleet in 1907 just nine years later, it had over 125 and the United States could clearly call itself a “world power.” 

**Attention Internet Nation!  
The Hampton Roads Naval Museum  
Has Expanded Its Presence on the Web**



The museum’s main website is <http://www.hrmn.navy.mil>. We have also expanded our presence on the Internet to other popular social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger. On Facebook and Twitter, you can keep up to date with the museum’s events in real time. On our blog, you can read more about the museum’s collection and events. We have future endeavours planned, so keep a watch for them! 

**Museum Web site: [www.hrmn.navy.mil](http://www.hrmn.navy.mil)**

**Blogger: [hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com](http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), look for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum “Page” and become a “fan.”**

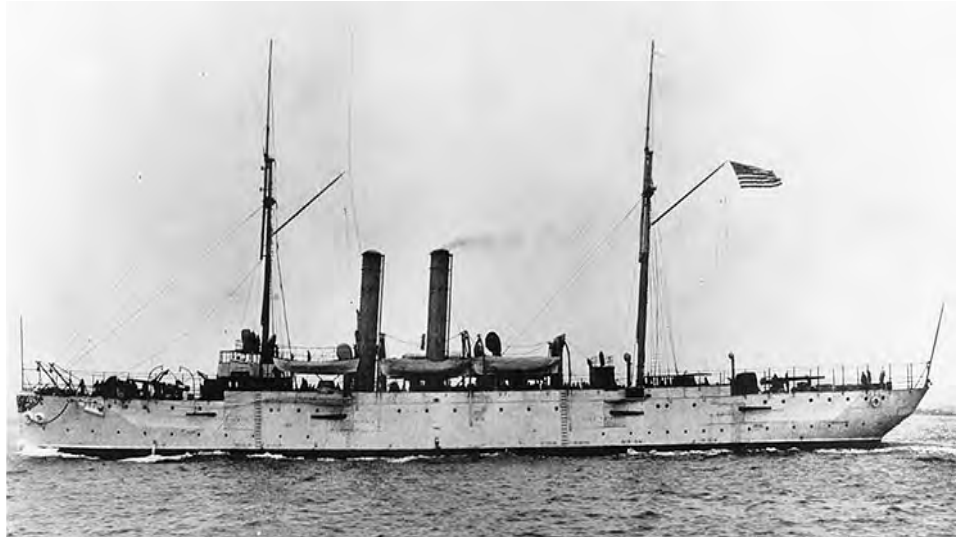
**Twitter: [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)**

**Trigg continued from page 9**

that his company would have issues placing the cruiser's 4-inch armor belt. By "placing," he was hiding the fact that the yard did not have the ability or infrastructure to work with armor plate steel. Also not helping the cause was Trigg's bid was the maximum Congress authorized, \$2.78 million. The Richmond yard did agree to build a second ship at an \$80,000 discount. Newport News Shipbuilding placed a bid as did Bath Iron Works, Neafie & Leavy, an established shipbuilder in Philadelphia, Cramp & Sons and San Francisco's Union Iron Works. The latter two placed bids, but did not send a lobbyist to explain their bids.

A few weeks later the Secretary announced his decision. Trigg gambled and lost. The Secretary awarded Cruiser Number 20, *St. Louis*, to Neafie & Leavy; Cruiser Number 21, *Milwaukee*, to Union Iron Works; and Cruiser Number 22, *Charleston*, to Newport News. With no new contracts in the pipeline, the company's fortunes began to take a serious turn for the worse.

In early 1902, William Trigg suffered a massive stroke that left him bedridden and homebound. Without Trigg's energy and leadership, the company began to collapse almost as fast as it had been built. The company succeeded in finishing two civilian ships: the *Berkeley*, a steamer built



*At the Cliff's Edge...-Labeled a "peace" cruisers by one historian, USS Galveston (C-17) was intended to be a new type of warship that would patrol the coastal waters of the Far East and the West Indies. The Trigg Company won the right to build her but went bankrupt before completion. Norfolk Naval Shipyard later finished the ship. (Naval History and Heritage Command photo)*

for the Old Dominion Steamship Company and the *Samuel P. Lapsley*, a steamer built for a Presbyterian mission team to Africa. But *Galveston* remained unfinished as did the cutter USRS *Mohawk* and a dredging barge slated for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Also around this time, the company ran into labor trouble. One of the most hotly debated issues in the nation at the time was the concept of an eight hour work day. Unions had long advocated for eight

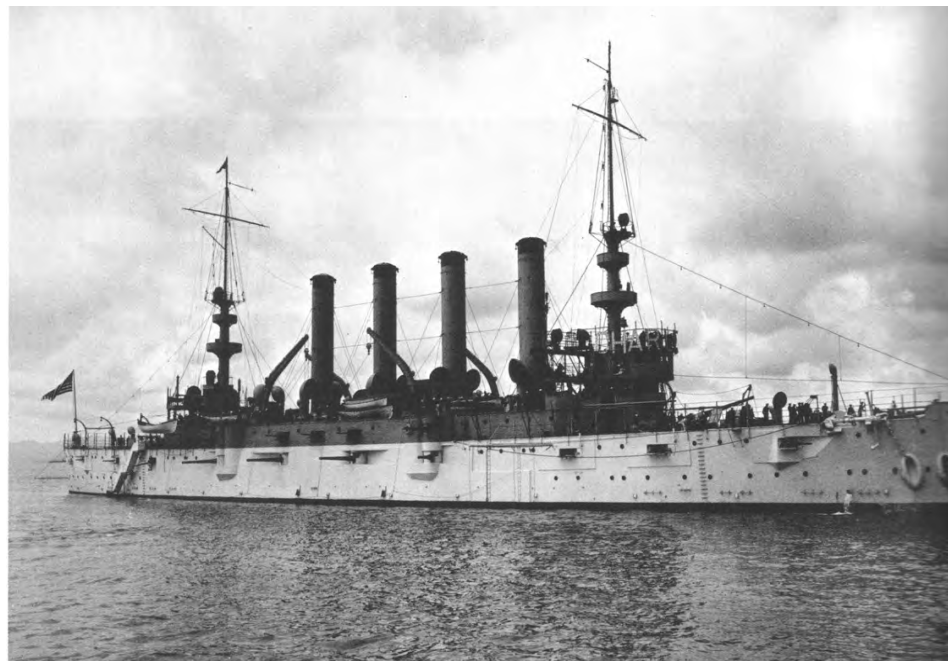
hours of work, eight hours of play, and eight hours of rest. Around the turn of the century, unions attempted to chip away at the current ten hour a day rule by supporting a bill that would require any corporation that accepted a Federal Government contract to limit its employees to eight hours of work per day.

American corporations naturally resisted any attempt by Congress to interfere in the way they conducted business and the Trigg Company was not the exception. Trigg executives wrote to Congress that it had polled its workforce and claimed none of them wanted to work only eight hours. They were happy, according to the company, to work ten hours a day. This claim was put forward by several other shipyards as well, including Newport News.

Upon reading this claim the union that represented Trigg employees, Richmond Lodge Number 10 of the International Association of Machinists, denounced the Trigg Company. "We desire to emphatically contradict any report or statement," the lodge president wrote to Congress. The bill passed, becoming the first of its kind in U.S. history.

Trigg suffered for a year before his kidneys failed and died at the age of 53. Any guidance and wisdom he had for his shipyard during this period of crisis went with him. With over \$2 million in loans and another \$2 million in outstanding stock and no new business to pay for it, the company entered a period of "receivership" when a parts supplier demanded \$2,000. When the money was not forthcoming, and other

**Trigg continued on page 15**



*...And into the Abyss-With supreme confidence that he could build any ship of any size at his Richmond yard, Trigg placed a \$2.78 million bid to build one ship of the much criticized St.Louis-class cruisers. His company took on another one million in debt to expand the yard in order to build to the 9,700-ton vessel. There were only three ships to award and the Navy gave them all to companies with the proven ability to build them. As a result of the additional debt with no new revenue to back it up and Trigg's own declining health, the company declared bankruptcy in 1903. (HRNM photo)*



**Trigg continued from page 13**

suppliers started to demand their money as well, the lawsuits started rolling in. Most of the plaintiffs demanded that the courts proclaim Trigg officially bankrupt so they could begin seizing assets and invoke collection procedures.

*Galveston* was still sitting unlaunched at the shipyard and the plaintiffs wanted the courts to seize her as collateral. President Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of the Navy William Henry Moody became concerned that the cruiser would be taken away by the banks and sold for scrap. Proclaiming that *Galveston* was the property of the U.S. Government, Moody sent two lieutenants to launch the ship and then tow her to Norfolk Naval Shipyard for completion.

One of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the shipyard saw *Galveston* being made ready to leave and immediately filed a second lawsuit asking Richmond's chancery court to order the Navy to stop any further work. The court agreed with the plaintiff and issued an injunction against the two

setting a national precedent. The fact that the Navy had already paid for two-thirds of the *Galveston* contract only made Moody more irritated at the court's action.

However, despite being one of America's foremost legal authorities (he would later become a U.S. Supreme Court justice), Moody told reporters that he would wait for an official opinion from U.S. Attorney General Philander Knox before taking action. Sensing a major federal government vs. states' rights type crisis, Knox in turn deferred judgment to President Roosevelt. Rear Admiral Francis Bowles, Chief of the Bureau for Construction & Repair, showed less patience. He told reporters that he would send a gunboat with Marines to Richmond if the courts tried to stop the Navy from launching the cruiser.

Fortunately for all, cooler heads prevailed. Attorney General Knox worked out an arrangement where Federal troops would not be returning to the former capital of the Confederacy and the ship would be launched peacefully. Specifically, Knox forced the Trigg company's trustees to declare bankruptcy and put up a bond that would ensure the company's suppliers received their final payments on the ship.

As a result of the compromise, suppliers to the shipyard allowed the ship to be launched, but did not drop their lawsuits. For the next seven years, Federal and state courts, Trigg's suppliers, the company's bankruptcy trustees, and the U.S. Department of Justice litigated several outstanding legal questions on such seemingly obvious issues as what was the definition of a manufacturing plant. At least one issue, the supremacy of the Federal government over state courts in bankruptcy proceedings, was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

As for *Galveston*, the Navy found the launch area in a less acceptable state and had to spend several weeks dredging out and repairing the canal. Finally on July 23, 1903, Miss Ella Sealey christened the vessel without incident. The Navy then moved the cruiser down to Norfolk Naval Shipyard where workers fitted her out. Officially, *Galveston* had been launched and Norfolk workers were only cleaning up the ship for commissioning purposes. Unofficially, Norfolk Naval workers were completing




*When the William R. Trigg Company went bankrupt in 1903, William R. Moody, 35th Secretary of the Navy and one of America's foremost legal scholars, moved quickly to secure the incomplete cruiser Galveston before the banks seized her. The move set off a firestorm of legal proceedings that did not end for seven years. (Naval History and Heritage Command photo)*

the construction of the ship. By the Winter 1905, *Galveston* joined the Fleet as USS *Galveston* (C-17).

*Galveston* was the last ship launched by the William R. Trigg Company. In just five years, the company built eighteen ships including six for the Navy and two for the Revenue Service before going bust. At the company's height, the national press lauded the company as a model corporation with a bright future. But the company was being driven by the energy of its founder and once he no longer ran the company, and no one else that shared his vision. The land and the buildings were later purchased by a Philadelphia industrialist for \$400,000.

As for the ships themselves, the Navy deployed the torpedo boats to Hampton Roads and Charleston, South Carolina. The destroyers served in the Philippines as part of Destroyer Flotilla Number 1. For all her flaws, *Galveston* had a very successful career as a peacetime cruiser, transport for high profile cargo (she carried John Paul Jones' body to Annapolis), convoy escort in World War I and in the Allied intervention during the Russian Civil War. Trigg's work could be seen until about the 1930s.

Today, there is no physical evidence of the William R. Trigg Company. Many of the company's buildings were demolished and much of the land today is Richmond's Great Shiplock Park. 

# U.S.S. GALVESTON WILL BE LAUNCHED

**Troops Will be Called Out if Necessary to Protect the Work.**

*Rear Admiral Francis Bowles, Chief of the Bureau of Construction and Repair, took a more aggressive approach to the lawsuits than his superiors within the Navy. He publicly threatened the Richmond banks and sub-contractors with military force. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and a compromise was worked out. (1902 New York Tribune)*

lieutenants. The injunction infuriated Moody who vigorously proclaimed that a state court had no jurisdiction over a Federal contract or a U.S. Navy warship. The Secretary privately commented that he foresaw more shipyards going bankrupt in the future and banks attempting to seize incomplete warships as collateral. He did not want a state court

# Trigg's Destroyers at Sea



*Trigg's two destroyers, Dale and Decatur, joined three other destroyers of the First Torpedo Flotilla en route to China and the Philippine Islands. The destroyers were permanently stationed in the Philippines for the next fifteen years. This painting shows the flotilla in a storm in the Mediterranean Sea en route to the Suez Canal. (Naval Art Gallery collection)*

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## In Our Next Issue...

-Petty Officer Stoffer's Last Entries

-The Great Homecoming: The U.S. Battle Fleet Arrives in Hampton Roads

-Book Reviews: *Diplomats in Blue: U.S. Naval Officers in China* and *Stalking the Red Bear: The True Story of a U.S. Cold War Submarine's Covert Operations Against the Soviet Union*