



Contents

Freedom Park Vandalism..... 1

NEWS AROUND THE FLEET

Buffalo Naval Park Book..... 2

Tour the *American Victory*..... 2

Mannert L. Able Found..... 3

Daytona Ship Models..... 4

Royal Navy Museum Flag..... 4

Experimental Sub Found..... 5

National Maritime Time MSC..... 5

Illegal Chinese Salvage..... 6

Orleck Reopens in Jacksonville..... 7

Back Matter..... 8

Freedom Park Historic Wartime Aircraft Vandalized



The Parks Department said the vandalism sheds a poor light on this site listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Freedom Park)

"Talk about the number of incidents that we've had down here, since 2013, this is a 1,035-item folder of photos we have from the security cameras."

Dennis Bryers
City of Omaha
Parks Department

Longtime volunteers at Freedom Park in Omaha are frustrated with vandals taking aim at historical pieces in the park.

They describe a "running" police report of incidents where naval equipment is tagged with graffiti, torn apart, or broken.

In a place you might not expect, a field near the airport off Freedom Park Road, sits a United States naval museum.

A variety of pieces sit waiting to welcome visitors to see history firsthand.

Its location also attracts vandals.

"A lot of times just writing on stuff. There's been some damaging of equipment, people trying to take metal components, looking for copper, you know, copper's a big thing. We've had windows broken out of helicopters, people

climb the ship at night," said Dennis Bryers, with the city of Omaha Parks Department.

Most recently, Freedom Park's two Cold War aircraft became the target of a group of teens.

"They were just writing it. We think it was with nail polish because we found a nail polish top on the ground, but they were just writing on the sides," Bryers said.

The Parks Department said it sheds a poor light on this site listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Especially since most items are on loan and can be taken back if not properly taken care of.

The park is largely taken care of by volunteers. That means that cleanup often falls on them.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

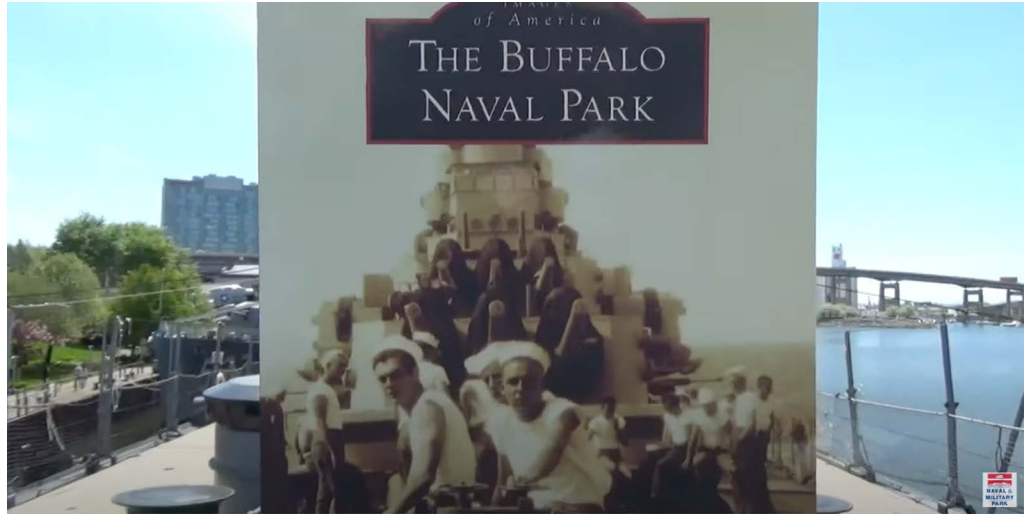
News Around the Fleet

■ NEH Announces \$35.6 Million in Grants

"Images of America: The Buffalo Naval Park" written by Shane Stephenson, Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park Curator and Director of Museum Collections is now available for purchase on their website and in their gift shop!

Shane spent six months of 2022 during the Pandemic working on this historic picture book for the Naval Park. The book was originally published on May 15, 2023.

The book includes over 180 historic images of the Naval Park, USS *The Sullivans*, USS *Little Rock*, USS *Croaker*, and the men and women from Buffalo and Western New York who displayed courage, merit, and selflessness during times of war.



[ORDER YOURS HERE](#)

■ Tour the *American Victory* Ship & Museum

Inside the hull of the *American Victory*, you can find the ship's Chaplain Gary Brooks. On most days, he's giving a tour or relaying the stories he has about this iconic ship that once sailed during World War II.

Brooks witnessed the day the ship arrived and docked in Tampa Bay in September 1999. He offered his expertise as a docent and he's been here sharing the story of the ship ever since.

"Prior to this, I was actually a docent on a Russian submarine here in St. Petersburg, so I came into this job with a bit of experience," Brooks said.

Twenty-three years later and Brooks is still walking the halls



and telling stories of the *American Victory*. The ship served in the Pacific Theater of Operations during the last months of World War II, and in both the Korean War and Vietnam War.

It's now a museum where guests can explore inside the ship and learn about its impressive history.

[VIDEO \(Bay News9 Tampa\)](#)

■ USS *Mannert L. Abele* Found off Japanese Coast

A U.S. Navy destroyer that was sunk during World War II, claiming the lives of 84 American sailors, has been found off the coast of Japan, officials have confirmed.

The Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) announced Thursday that it authenticated the wreckage of USS *Mannert L. Abele* in waters near Okinawa.

"*Mannert L. Abele* is the final resting place for 84 American Sailors who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of their country," NHHC Director Samuel J. Cox - a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral -- said in a statement.

The Navy agency said its "Underwater Archaeology Branch used information provided by Tim Taylor, an ocean explorer and CEO of Tiburon Subsea, and Taylor's 'Lost 52 Project' team to confirm the identity of *Mannert L. Abele*."

"My deepest thanks and congratulations to Tim Taylor and his team for discovering this wreck site," Cox added. "Its discovery allows some closure to the families of those lost, and provides us all another opportunity to remember and honor them."

The Navy said on April 12, 1945, USS *Mannert L. Abele* became "the first U.S. Navy vessel sunk by the human-guided kamikaze bomb."

The ship was operating that day 75 miles off the northern coast of Okinawa "when enemy aircraft appeared on radar," according to the NHHC.

"*Mannert L. Abele* engaged with, and damaged multiple enemy aircraft, until eventually an aircraft managed to crash abreast of the after fireroom on the starboard side, penetrating the after-engine room," it said. "A minute later, the ship was hit at the waterline by a Yokosuka MXY-7 Ohka (Cherry Blossom) rocket-powered human-guided bomb, and the resulting explosion caused the ship's bow and stern to buckle rapidly."



USS *Mannert L. Abele* (DD 733) is seen in waters off the Boston Navy Yard in Massachusetts on Aug. 1, 1944. (U.S. Navy/Bureau of Ships Collection in the U.S. National Archives)



A captured Japanese Yokosuka MXY7 Ohka Model 11 suicide attack weapon (U.S. National Archives)

Footage of the Discovery (Lost 52 Project)



The wreck was reportedly found by Taylor's "Lost 52 Project" team in December last year.

"This discovery is very personal to Mr. Taylor. His father served in the Navy as part of the lead invasion force in the Battle of Okinawa and he witnessed the Kamikaze firsthand when one plowed into his ship the USS *Telfair*," the team's website says.

USS *Mannert L. Abele* - which launched about a year prior to its sinking -- got its name from the Navy lieutenant commander who was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, in July 1903.

Lt. Cmdr. Abele assumed

leadership of the submarine USS *Grunion*, which came under attack in waters near Kiska, Alaska, in July 1942 "from three unidentified Japanese vessels," according to the NHHC.

"Firing a spread of torpedoes at her tormentors, *Grunion* allegedly sank all three," it said, noting Abele received a Navy Cross citation for his actions.

That submarine then vanished the following month until Taylor's team found it in 2007 using "information gathered by Abele's sons Brad, Bruce, and John, during a four-year investigation into the loss of their father's boat," the NHHC also said.

■ Daytona Museum Gets Six Ship Models

The Veterans Museum and Education Center at 302 Vermont Ave. in Daytona Beach has an outstanding display of U.S. Navy ship models thanks to the generosity of the Michael McGuirk family.

Mr. McGuirk died last year and the family donated six models to the museum, including an eight-foot model of the USS *New Jersey*, a nine-foot model of the *Bismarck* German battleship, two five-foot Civil War ships -- the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac* (CSS *Virginia*), the USS *Mazama* (AE 9) Liberty ship and the *Catahoula Parish* (LST 528). Mr. McGuirk had already donated two nine-foot carrier models, the *Essex* and the *Lexington*, to the Veterans Museum before his death.

Victoria McGuirk said her husband was an avid member of the Port Orange Ship Modeling Club for many years. He usually stole the show at regattas when the club would launch their models into the water, because almost all of Mr. McGuirk's ships were equipped with a motorcycle battery, which propelled them through the water.

The museum displays a plaque honoring Mr. McGuirk that states "Veterans Museum and Education Center would like to acknowledge the most generous donation of Mike McGuirk and his family. Mike was a true patriot because he loved all things to honor our servicemen."

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)



Victoria McGuirk and Bruce Russotto, inventory manager of the Veterans Museum and Education Center in Daytona Beach, stand next to the nine-foot Navy carrier models the McGuirk family donated. (Dean Vanderbleek)

■ Royal Navy Museum Buys Sledge Flag of Explorer

A Sledge flag that once belonged to explorer and 'proud Irishman' Henry Kellett has been bought by the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN).

In March, the museum launched a bid to raise £120,000 to buy the flag to ensure it stayed in Britain rather than fall into the hands of a private collector.

The flag was owned by Vice-Admiral Kellett from Co. Tipperary and was flown during his 1852 expedition to find the lost ships of Captain John Franklin – HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*.

Featuring details representing his Irish heritage, Kellett's flag is now set to go on display at various locations, including Belfast.

"Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Kellett's sledge flag and Franklin's expedition represent courage and fortitude in the face of adversity – core elements of our national identity that echo through our history," said Professor Dominic Tweddle, Director General of the NMRN.

"They also reflect the British and global obsession with finding and navigating the Northwest Passage, as well as the Royal Navy's role in expedition and exploration from Captain Cook to Darwin and HMS *Beagle*, to HMS *Challenger* in 1872, and continuing today with HMS *Protector* – the ice patrol ship in Antarctica and the Southern Hemisphere.

"The Kellett flag will be displayed in Belfast,



Hartlepool and Portsmouth as part of an exhibition featuring artefacts from *Erebus* that are being transferred to the National Museum of the Royal Navy by Canada National Parks.

"The National Museum is proud to have stepped forward to save the Kellett flag from being exported overseas and to continue our work linking navy to nation."

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

■ Divers Find Wreckage of Experimental Submarine

Divers in Connecticut have discovered the wreckage of an experimental submarine built in 1907 and later scuttled in the Long Island Sound.

The Defender, a 92ft craft, was found on Sunday by a team led by Richard Simon, a commercial diver from Coventry, Connecticut.

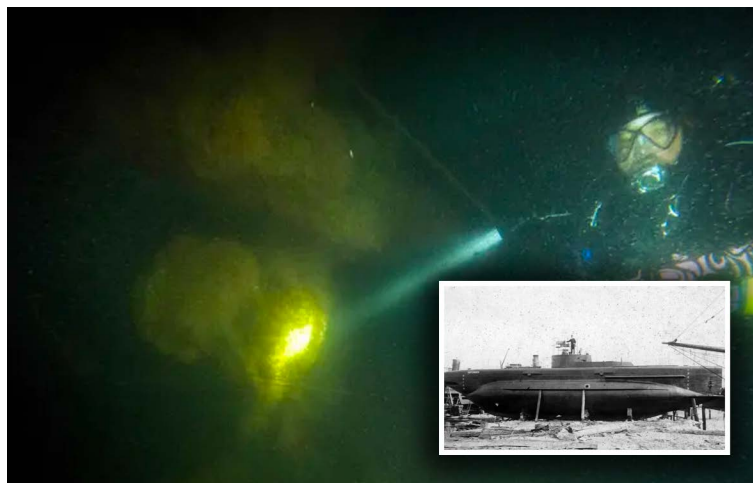
Simon said he had been interested in the story of the Defender for years. He spent months going over known sonar and underwater mapping surveys, as well as government documents obtained under the Freedom of Information

Act, to identify any anomaly that fit the size of the submarine.

"A submarine has a very distinct shape," he said. "It needs to be 100ft long and 13ft in diameter. So I made a list of everything that was that long and there was one target on that list."

Simon then assembled a group of top wreck divers. Poor tidal conditions forced them to abandon an attempt last Friday. They returned on Sunday and discovered the Defender on the bottom, more than 150ft down, off the coast of Old Saybrook.

"It was legitimately



hiding in plain sight," he said. "It's on the charts. It's known about in Long Island Sound, just no one knew what it was."

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

■ National Maritime Day Celebration for the MSC

Military Sealift Command (MSC) hosted a National Maritime Day celebration aboard hospital ship USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20), May 22, honoring United States Merchant Mariners.

The event commenced with remarks from Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, MSC Commander, and featured keynote speaker Mr. Dave Yoho, World War II Merchant Marine Veteran.

"The Department of Defense depends on the Merchant Marine to support 90 percent of our sealift requirements in national emergency, crisis or conflict," said Wettlaufer. "Long serving as our nation's 'fourth arm of defense,' American mariners bravely faced combatants and pirates, pandemics and natural disasters. They answer

the call to serve their fellow Americans in ways and in places many of our fellow citizens don't know about."

"Today, and every day, we honor our American mariners, especially our MSC Civil Service Mariners, past and present, courageous women and men who serve our nation."

In 1944, Yoho enlisted in the United States Merchant Marines at just 16 years old. He was assigned to a T/2 Tanker ship, often referred to as a fleet oiler, which was sent to the South Pacific during World War II.

There was a great wave of patriotism after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which inspired thousands to join the United States Merchant Marines. These mariners would become a part of the



*Mr. Dave Yoho, U.S. Merchant Marine and World War II Veteran, is piped aboard during a National Maritime Day ceremony aboard USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20) May 22, 2023. (USN Photo/Ryan Carter)*

250 thousand who served during World War II, said Yoho.

"They moved 15 million tons of goods to Europe and the United Kingdom, eight million tons of goods to

the Mediterranean, 13 million tons of goods to the Pacific Ocean, and five million tons to Russia."

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

■ Royal Navy Concerned by Illegal Chinese Salvage

An illegal Chinese salvage operation is raiding two United Kingdom World War II warship wrecks off the coast of Malaysia for scrap steel, aluminum and brass fittings, prompting a statement of concern from the Royal Navy, USNI News has learned.

Chuan Hong 68 used a large dredging crane to pluck scrap from the wrecks of battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* (52) and battlecruiser *HMS Repulse*, according to local press reports. Both were sunk on Dec. 10, 1941, days after Pearl Harbor, by Japanese bombers, resulting in the loss of 840 sailors.

Professional diver Hazz Zain flagged the illicit commercial operation to local authorities after local fisherman spotted the dredger over the wreck sites, reported the *New Straits Times* in May.

The illegal salvage has thrown a sharp spotlight on how vulnerable historic heritage sites are to thieves intent on plundering war graves, the director general of the Museum of the Royal Navy said in a statement.

"What we need is a management strategy for the underwater naval heritage so that we can better protect or commemorate these ships. That may include targeted retrieval of objects," Dominic Tweddle said.

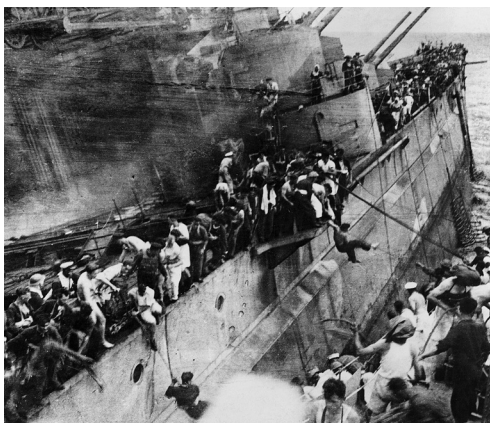
"If resourced correctly, the existing Royal Navy loss list can be enhanced to be a vital tool to begin to understand, research and manage over 5,000 wrecks before they are lost forever."

The wreckage site is in the extended economic zone of Malaysia. Authorities there told news organizations they are investigating the reported looting of the two ships and the discovery of material in a beachside scrap yard that could have been from them.

The battleship is resting upside down in 223 feet of water near Kuantan in the South China Sea. The wreckage of the



Illegal salvage earlier this year over the suspected site (Photo via New Straits Times)



Sailors of HMS Prince of Wales abandoning ship to the destroyer HMS Express (Imperial War Museum Photo)

battlecruiser is several miles away.

News reports from the U.K. and Australia say salvage vessel *Chuan Hong 68* was dredging with a deep-reach crane for the "high-quality steel" used to build the two warships. The steel could be smelted for other uses. The value comes from the steel's production before the use of nuclear weapons and testing and is important for use in manufacturing some scientific and medical equipment.

The salvage vessel has been operating in the region since early this year, news agencies reported.

British news organization have often reported about previous illegal dredging of this site and others for steel, copper and specially manufactured propellers. For example, *The Guardian* reported six years ago that at least 40 vessels have been destroyed in these operations.

"What we need is a management strategy for the underwater naval heritage so that we can better protect or commemorate these ships."

Dominic Tweddle
Director-General
National Museum of the Royal Navy

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

■ Orleck Reopened in Permanent Jacksonville Home

Jacksonville's resident warship is once again ready for visitors.

The USS *Orleck*, which earned the nickname "The Grey Ghost of the Vietnam Coast" by firing more rounds in support of ground troops than any ship in the Navy, officially opened for visitors in its permanent berth in the St. Johns River, just off Bay Street across from the Duval County Jail. A "soft opening" is planned for Wednesday and Thursday.

The *Orleck*, a *Gearing-Class* destroyer that was built in Texas and launched in May of 1945, arrived in Jacksonville more than a year ago but spent most of that time in a temporary berth in front of the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront. It moved downriver in April to its long-term home, alongside city-owned Pier One.

A temporary building that houses air-conditioned restrooms and a ticket office now stands behind the historic Catherine Street Fire Station building that was moved in March from Metropolitan Park. The city has plans to build a park that will incorporate the *Orleck* and a new visitor's center, the fire station and a relocated Museum of Science and History.

The ship sits alongside a large concrete pier, but the pier is not publicly accessible. A wooden ramp now winds its way from the ground to an aluminum gangway leading to the stern of the ship, where visitors are confronted by a pair of the ship's big guns that once took 14 men to operate. The ramp is wheelchair-accessible, but parts of the ship are not.

The ship is the centerpiece of the new Jacksonville Naval Museum. It will be open for public tours from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Jim Webb, executive director of the Jacksonville Naval Museum, said tens of thousands of people have toured the ship since it arrived in Jacksonville, but exact numbers aren't available because the museum couldn't charge admission. While berthed near the Hyatt, the ship sat over state-owned land, which meant the museum could only accept donations. The new site is city-owned, so tickets will now be sold.

"I've learned all about submerged land leases," Webb said.

Admission to the *Orleck* is \$15 for adults, \$13 for veterans and seniors, \$10 for ages 10-17 and \$5 for ages 6-11. Active duty military in uniform are admitted free; admission for active duty military out of uniform is \$7.50.

The ship is being transformed into a museum of the U.S. Navy's role in the Cold War, and Vietnam in particular. Webb said the *Orleck* was once armed with tactical nuclear depth charges that would have blown a mile-wide hole in the water but were never deployed. A tiny drone anti-submarine helicopter sits on a deck near the ship's stern, but Webb said plans call for it to be moved to an interior hangar



Now at its new home at 610 E. Bay St. in Jacksonville's shipyards (Florida Times-Union)



Among the Orleck's features is its 5-inch, 38-caliber gun turret on the ship's stern (Florida Times-Union)

that, at some point, was converted to a mess hall.

Most of the compartments on the main deck – "officers' country" – are accessible to the public while work continues on others. The ship's store, which once sold cigarettes and essentials to the crew, is now a gift shop selling memorabilia and T-shirts. Visitors can also visit the ship's mess, pharmacy and bridge.

Crews are working on the enlisted berthing areas, where the crew once slept. The spaces have low ceilings and bunks that hang by chains. They will eventually be used for overnight trips by Scouts and other youth groups.

The *Orleck* has already hosted at least three weddings and a marriage-vow renewal ceremony, plus a steady stream of military retirement ceremonies and Chamber of Commerce mixers. "We've probably had private events every day since moving here in April," Webb said.



Historic Naval Ships Association

To Support the Preservation of Historic Naval Vessels &
To Honor Those Who Serve at Sea

Ryan Szimanski
Executive Director

100 Clinton Street
Camden, NJ 08103

443-564-3823
ExecutiveDirector@
HNSA.org

Layout: Matthew T. Eng

Janet Cobb
USS Alabama
President

Steve Banta
USS Lexington
Vice-President

John Elliker
Treasurer

Chuck Merkel
Pacific Submarine Museum
Secretary