

Anchors Aweigh

US Naval Academy

When the founders of the United States Naval Academy (USNA) were looking for a suitable location, it was reported that then



Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft decided to move the naval school to "the healthy and secluded" location of Annapolis in order to rescue midshipmen from "the temptations and distractions that necessarily connect with a large and populous city." The Philadelphia Naval Asylum School was its predecessor. Four of the original seven faculty members came from Philadelphia. Other small naval schools in New York City, Norfolk, Va., and Boston, Mass. also existed in the early days of the United States.

The United States Navy was born during the American Revolution when the need for a naval force to match the Royal Navy became clear. But during the period immediately following the Revolution, the Continental Navy was demobilized in 1785 by an economy-minded Congress.

The dormancy of American sea power lasted barely a decade when, in 1794, President George Washington persuaded the Congress to authorize a new naval force to combat the growing menace of piracy on the high seas.

The first vessels of the new U.S. Navy were launched in 1797; among them were the *United States*, the *Constellation*, and the *Constitution*. In 1825, President John Quincy Adams urged Congress to establish a Naval Academy "for the formation of scientific and accomplished officers." His proposal, however, was not acted upon until 20 years later.

On September 13, 1842, the American Brig *Somers* set sail from the Brooklyn Navy Yard on one of the most significant cruises in American naval history. It was a school ship for the training of teenage naval apprentice volunteers who would hopefully be inspired to make the Navy a career.

However, discipline deteriorated on the *Somers*, and it was determined by a court of inquiry aboard ship that Midshipman Philip Spencer and his two chief confederates, Boatswains Mate Samuel Cromwell and Seaman Elisha Small, were guilty of a "determined attempt to commit a mutiny."

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The three were hanged at the yardarm and the incident cast doubt over the wisdom of sending midshipmen directly aboard ship to learn by doing. News of the Somers mutiny shocked the country.

Through the efforts of the Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, the Naval School was established without Congressional funding, at a 10-acre Army post named Fort Severn in Annapolis, Maryland, on October 10, 1845, with a class of 50 midshipmen and seven professors. The curriculum included mathematics and navigation, gunnery and steam, chemistry, English, natural philosophy, and French.

In 1850 the Naval School became the United States Naval Academy. A new curriculum went into effect requiring midshipmen to study at the Academy for four years and to train aboard ships each summer. That format is the basis of a far more advanced and sophisticated curriculum at the Naval Academy today. As the U.S. Navy grew over the years, the Academy expanded. The campus of 10 acres increased to 338. The original student body of 50 midshipmen grew to a brigade size of 4,000. Modern granite buildings replaced the old wooden structures of Fort Severn.

Congress authorized the Naval Academy to begin awarding Bachelor of Science degrees in 1933. The Academy later replaced a fixed curriculum taken by all midshipmen with the present core curriculum plus 18 major fields of study, a wide variety of elective courses and advanced study and research opportunities.

Since then, the development of the United States Naval Academy has reflected the history of the country. As America has changed culturally and technologically so has the Naval Academy. In just a few decades, the Navy moved from a fleet of sail and steam-powered ships to a high-tech fleet with nuclear-powered submarines and surface ships and supersonic aircraft. The academy has changed, too, giving midshipmen state-of-the-art academic and professional training they need to be effective naval officers in their future careers.

The Naval Academy first accepted women as midshipmen in 1976, when Congress authorized the admission of women to all the service academies. Women comprise over 20 percent of entering plebes --or freshmen-- and they pursue the same academic and professional training as do their male classmates.

(Text and Image Sources: <https://www.usna.edu/USNAHistory/index.php>)

Naval Academy Chapel



The historic Brigade of Midshipmen Chapel at the center of the Yard – and its landmark dome – are symbolic of the vital role that moral and spiritual guidance plays in the development of Midshipmen into naval officers.

The Chapel was built in two sections. Ernest Flagg designed the original section, which accommodates 1,600, in the

shape of a Greek cross with four equal transepts. Admiral George Dewey laid the cornerstone in 1904; construction was completed in 1908. The Nave was added in 1939-40. It changed the Chapel shape to that of a Latin cross and increased the capacity to 2,500.

The iconic dome and architecture of the USNA Main Chapel is a famous fixture in the Annapolis skyline. Standing as a focal landmark in the area, the Chapel remains a point of reference for Midshipmen, alumni, and Annapolis visitors.

The Chapel is a non-denominational Christian chapel. Sunday morning protestant and catholic services are open to the public. The Jewish Chapel, attached to Mitscher Hall, has services on Friday evening and is open to the public. Midshipmen are not required to attend Chapel services. Many attend services in town.

The Commodore Levy Center and Jewish Chapel combines the aesthetics of Ancient Israel, the nobility of sea service, and the sacred experience of faith in the fabric of its architecture. Together with 7 other smaller chapels and prayer spaces, the Naval Academy Chaplain Center provides and facilitates for the religious needs of the 4500-strong Brigade of Midshipmen and its faculty and staff.

The daily work of delivering religious ministry at the Academy is accomplished by a dedicated team of experienced active-duty Navy chaplains, Religious Program Specialists, civilian employees, and volunteers led by Senior Chaplain CAPT Maurice Buford.

(Text and Image Sources: <https://www.usna.edu/Chaplains/index.php>, <https://www.visitannapolis.org/listing/u-s-naval-academy-chapel/8052/>)

Bancroft Hall



In 1895, businessman Robert Means Thompson (USNA, Class of 1868), directed the renowned architect Ernest Flagg to develop a master plan for an extensively improved Naval Academy. A student of the Beaux Arts style of architecture, Flagg created a plan that emphasized "precise axial symmetry," "hierarchy of importance," and "organizational rank." Flagg employed five major design elements, consisting of a quadrangle

(Stribling Walk) bordered on all sides by a dormitory (Bancroft Hall) opposite of the academic buildings (Mahan, Sampson, and Carter Halls), a Chapel, and a boat basin (which has since been filled for the construction of Michelson and Chauvenet Halls . . .).

Bancroft Hall (named for Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, founder of the Naval Academy) is the home to the Brigade of Midshipmen. With 1,639 dorm rooms and 4,663 beds, Bancroft Hall is considered the largest single college dormitory in the world. The building encompasses 33 acres of floor space and has 4.8 miles of corridors (referred to as "passageways").

Bancroft Hall is comprised of a center section/rotunda to which eight wings are attached. Construction of the first two wings and the center section (Wings 3 and 4) began in 1906 and was completed in 1908. As America's global influence grew in the aftermath of the Great War, so did the Naval Academy. Construction of two additional wings (Wings 5 and 6) occurred from 1918 to 1921. As America's influence continued to grow in the years leading up to the Second World War, Bancroft Hall was again expanded with the completion of Wings 1 and 2 in 1941. Finally, in 1961, Wings 7 and 8 were finished, bringing Bancroft Hall, affectionately known as "Mother B" to Midshipmen and alumni, to her final size.

Midshipmen eat their meals in King Hall (completed in 1953). King Hall is a truly amazing facility, able to serve 4,500 meals at one sitting in less than 10 minutes (13,500 meals served daily!). Mitscher Hall, completed in 1968, contains a theater/auditorium and a small chapel for religious services - the Laboon Center, named for Captain John Laboon, a Catholic Chaplain who heroically served with Marines during the Vietnam War. In 2005, the Uriah P. Levy Center was added to Mitscher Hall. The Levy Center includes a Synagogue, conference rooms, and the Honor Court.

(Text and Image Sources: https://www.usna.edu/CommandantFacilities/Bancroft_Hall_History.php, <https://go.navyonline.com/blog/bancroft-hall-the-place-they-call-home>)

Herndon Monument



The Herndon Monument is named for Commander William Lewis Herndon, 1813-1857, who possessed the qualities of discipline, teamwork and courage. In command of the SS Central America and home-bound with gold-seekers from California, the ship encountered a three-day hurricane off the coast of North Carolina. Herndon went down with

his ship after a gallant effort to save it, its sailors and passengers. A monument was erected on the Yard in his honor shortly after his death.

The Herndon Monument Climb is the traditional culmination of plebe year at the Naval Academy. Demonstrating the teamwork and perseverance they have learned during their first year at the academy, the plebes build a human pyramid to remove the “dixie cup” hat at the top of the vegetable shortening-covered monument and replace it with an upperclassman’s hat. After successfully completing the Herndon climb, the freshmen are no longer called plebes but “fourth class midshipmen.”

On the day of the Herndon Climb plebes are required to remove their shoes prior to the starting the climb. Over the years, thousands of these athletic shoes have been donated by the plebe classes to various charities through the Midshipman Action Group.



(Text and image sources: <https://www.capitalgazette.com/2021/08/22/class-of-2023-herndon-monument-climb-photos/>, <https://navalacademytourism.com/blog/herndon-monument/>, https://www.usna.edu/PAO/faq_pages/herndon.php)

Naval Academy Club

This institution was born in 1906, as the “New Academy” of Ernest Flagg’s vision came to life. It opened its doors at its present location on Truxtun Road, a beautiful example of the elegant Beaux-Arts architecture that had begun to grace the Yard. Called the Naval Academy Officers Club, it also went by “O Club” or simply “The Club.” The present location

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has remained intact since its founding and much in its same capacity. The lower level has always played host to dining and entertainment options. This social club brought together naval officers for exciting domino and card games, celebrations of sporting events, strategizing about current events and rousing conversation and comradery.

In the early portion of the 20th century, the lower deck of the Naval Academy Club also hosted a bowling alley. Jim Cheevers (the retired associate director, senior curator and self-proclaimed “relic” of the USNA Museum in Preble Hall) recalls meeting George Belt, who remembered fondly his days of



setting pins in the bowling alley in the 1940s. After a renovation to convert the space to a restaurant, the cozy dining establishment was named The Alley Restaurant in honor of the old bowling alley. An old bowling sign hanging at the bar entrance gamely commemorates the foul line.

Cheevers joined the Naval Academy O Club in 1967. In those days, military officers and civilians of GS7 rank or above could become members. He was excited to be a part of this social club, and he and his friends would head to the lower deck for happy hour to play shuffleboard, relax at the bar and take a spin on the dance floor. He recalls with a laugh the bartender would hold a spot for his friend, Leann, with a martini glass filled to the brim with water and an olive, just to her liking. “Leann and I loved the staff; the people were so nice, and I liked the ambience,” he says.

While the lower level was more informal, the first deck of the Club has always featured expansive and beautifully appointed dining areas that frequently hosted lunch and dinner. On Sunday mornings, these rooms were packed after the Catholic, non-denominational and Protestant services at the Chapels on the Yard, the Club was the place for brunch.

As times changed, Naval Academy Club membership evolved too. In 1976, the Academy welcomed its first class of female midshipmen, and the Club welcomed women to its membership. More recently, Naval Academy Club membership has opened to eligible civilians.

(Text and image sources: <https://navalacademytourism.com/blog/naval-academy-club-history>, <https://www.navalacademyclub.com/membership>)

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Preble Hall

The U.S. Naval Academy Museum is a treasure hiding in plain view in the midst of the Yard. While over 100,000 people pass through this history-filled Annapolis naval museum every year, there are still many more who don't know about its wonders. Since the USNA was founded in 1845, the museum has been amassing artifacts from the heights and hulls of naval and Naval Academy history. When the current building was completed in 1939, it became the repository for these fascinating treasures.



Preble Hall, where the museum makes its home, was named for Commodore Edward Preble, commander of the American fleet during the Tripolitan War. Across its two decks, you'll find a bevy of historic flags, ship models, prints, paintings, uniforms, firearms, edged weapons, medals, rare books, manuscripts, photographs, ship instruments, personal memorabilia, and more. These artifacts pay homage to the tremendous breadth of the history of sea power, the long and fascinating development of the U.S. Navy, and the USNA's own work in building officers that capably lead our future Navy and Marine Corps on their brave missions.

The museum itself has a mission "to collect, preserve and exhibit the physical heritage of the U.S. Navy and the Naval Academy to educate midshipmen, demonstrate to the public the contributions of Naval Academy graduates and motivate in young people the desire to attend the Naval Academy." To this end, you'll find artifacts from naval officers, objects that represent leadership and items that reflect the achievements of USNA alumni.

(Text and Image Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Preble_Hall, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=114825>, <https://navalacademytourism.com/blog/treasure-hunt-in-preble-hall-naval-academy-museum>)