

TOWARDS A CITIZEN SAILOR: THE HISTORY OF
THE NAVAL MILITIA MOVEMENT, 1888-1898

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TOWARDS A CITIZEN SAILOR: THE HISTORY OF
THE NAVAL MILITIA MOVEMENT, 1888-1898

At nine o'clock on the night of February 9, 1888, Lieutenant Commander Leonard Chenery convened the regular meeting of the New York Branch of the Naval Institute. The mere fact that the meeting was held at the more accessible clubhouse of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club, rather than at the navy yard across the East river, hinted that this meeting was different. The Naval Institute, a product of the late nineteenth century naval revival in America, was a small group of naval enthusiasts, consisting mainly of active and retired officers. On this night, however, there assembled a large divergent number of people, representing much of the commercial, maritime and professional community of New York City. These people came to express their views on a subject of "popular interest and national importance"; they had come to urge the establishment of a naval reserve. While few agreed on the actual form this reserve should take, some arguing for a state controlled "militia," others for a national "reserve," all agreed that the United States Navy was greatly inferior to the fleets of its many rivals, and that it was imperative to have a system of increasing the number of ships and men in time of war. This meeting did not, by itself, produce any reserve or militia legislation, but it reflected the varied naval, commercial and social interests generating pressure on both the national and state levels. One month later, Massachusetts, by passing the nation's first Naval Militia bill, broke with the past, and began a thirty year movement, lasting until 1918, designed to bring the navy into the mainstream of the American military tradition; a movement to create the ideal of a citizen sailor.¹

Traditionally, the American navy relied on the commercial maritime

industry of the country to augment its strength in wartime. The lack of any real "national" navy in 1775, forced the Grand Congress of America to resolve that "each Colony at their own expense, make such Provision by armed vessels or otherwise,for the protection of their Harbours and Navigation on the Sea-Coasts, against all unlawful Invasions, Attacks and Depredations...."²

The Colonies would either issue Letters of Marque, or build or rent their own vessels. Massachusetts, one of the better prepared Colonies, early assembled a reserve list of sorts, on which were the names of men willing to serve in the Continental and Massachusetts navies, or as privateersmen.³

Despite such precautions, recruiting of sailors became a major problem.

After the first year of war, Continental naval officers could no longer literally drum up a crew, nor could the state navies meet their manpower needs.⁴ Recruiters commonly complained that the problem was due "to a large number of seamen being in the Continental Army, and to several privateers out on Cruises."⁵ Finally, the Continental Congress issued a bounty of eight dollars to the owner of any vessel who would bring back able seamen "over and above the number said vessel carried out."⁶ Actually, not enough shipowners were anxious to give up their commercial pursuits to fight a war except as privateersmen. The seamen available for duty preferred the laxer discipline and more frequent prize shares of a privateer, to life on a man of war.

In spite of its failure in the Revolution, the United States continued to assume that the merchant marine and other maritime industries, such as commercial fisheries, could provide adequate volunteer manpower in time of war. On March 18, 1786, Secretary of War Henry Knox issued "A Plan for the General Arrangement of the Militia of the United States," in which he made

provision for the navy with the suggestion that all mariners be registered in two classes, based on age.⁷ A few years later, Thomas Jefferson came very close to organizing a reserve of seamen. He communicated with several people about forming a "naval militia" to man his proposed gunboat fleet in wartime. These maritime minute men would also "be called on for tours of duty in defense of the harbors where they shall happen to be...."⁸ None of these plans for either an unorganized or organized reserve were carried out, despite the fact that the American merchant marine was rapidly becoming one of the world's largest. The small American navy, heavily committed to the peacetime roles of protecting commerce, chasing slavers or furthering scientific knowledge was not allowed the luxury of thinking in terms of large planned wartime mobilizations. In the wars with Great Britain and Mexico, there was no serious manpower shortage only because of the limited nature of the navy's wartime expansion.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the navy numbered some 1,000 officers and 7,500 enlisted men, with no naval reserve other than the large, but unorganized merchant fleet. In the course of the War, the navy purchased or built 626 vessels, and expanded to some 6,000 officers and 45,000 enlisted men. The ship quotas were met, if slowly, but there simply were too few experienced volunteers to man them. The navy thought it could enlist seamen individually from the merchant marine, which was just beginning to decline from its peak of strength in the fifties. The change from sail to steam, which favored the greater industrial capacity of Britain, along with poorly administered subsidies and lack of planning by the United States, were long term factors influencing this decline. In the short run, the fear of Confederate commerce raiders soon forced most owners to either seek flags of

convenience or to keep their ships rotting in port. Although this left a number of officers and seamen unemployed, they did not all readily join the navy. The high wages given by the remaining active merchantmen skimmed off many of the best seamen, and the combination of high bounties and later, the draft, took large numbers into the army.

By 1863, the navy, which could not give bounties to what seamen were available, faced a crisis. The Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, declared that "we need at least 5,000 of the sailors who have been enlisted by high bounties and the causes alluded to into the army. They are experts, can discharge seamen's duty; landsmen cannot fill their place."⁹ The draft was a near disaster for the navy, since the army not only took merchant seamen, but active naval personnel as well. Welles had to personally ask Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to release so many men already enlisted in the navy. Finally, on August 26, 1864, after Abraham Lincoln ordered Stanton to deliver the required men to the navy, the crisis eased. Only in the last year of the War did large numbers of recruits, wishing to avoid the draft, desire the less dangerous life afloat.¹⁰

The Naval Militia organizations that emerged at the end of the century to break the traditional reliance on the merchant marine were not the products of this wartime crisis, or any that followed, but, in many ways, were products of their age, an age of specialization where men organized to bring order out of a society changed by a rapid growth of industry and wealth.¹¹ The richest growth of organizations of all sorts took place in the cities where the increased wealth allowed the upper and middle classes more time. It was these people, rather than the better known union organizers and reformers, who founded the greatest number of organizations. They ranged

from the purely social Prudent Patricians of Pompeii, to the more functional New York Society for the Prevention of Crime. One hundred and twenty-four new secret societies were formed between 1880 and 1890, and one hundred and thirty-six more were added before 1896. Patriotism too had to be organized, and the late eighties and nineties produced the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Order of Indian Wars, and the Society of Mayflower Descendants. The Naval Militia recruited its manpower mainly from this urban middle class, and most enlisted for the same patriotic and social reasons that they joined other groups.

Beginning in the seventies, two movements set the background for the formation of a naval reserve force. The National Guard began to move into the headlines as it increasingly became involved in the labor troubles of the period. These activities helped to underscore the continuing debate over the dual role of the Guard as a military reserve and a state policing force. On the one hand, many local politicians and businessmen saw the Guard's function as a protector of property, and supported locally controlled units able to quickly respond to the governor's call. The other extreme was represented by Emory Upton, who wished for an abolition of state control and proposed a federal reserve of "National Volunteers" on the Prussian model, with skeleton units that could be expanded in case of war. Most army and Guard officers, however, recognized the realities of the American military tradition and concentrated their energies on making the existing Guard more efficient in performing all its duties. Perhaps the most significant act was the formation of the National Guard Association by Guard officers under General Dabney Maury in 1877. Through their efforts and those of other reformers, the Federal government took the first concrete act in three-quarters

of a century to increase the efficiency of the National Guard with the passage of Secretary of War William C. Endicott's act of February 12, 1887, doubling the annual Guard appropriations to \$400,000. Despite the reforming zeal and the current glorification of the citizen soldier best espoused by John A. Logan's Volunteer Soldier of America, the Guard never became as popular as it should have, considering its importance as a political and social institution. Before the war with Spain, the Guard of the 1890's was smaller in proportion to the population than it had been prior to the Civil War, due mainly to the unpopularity of its policing role.¹²

The reform impetus also struck the navy and brought a long awaited "revival." Led by Commodore Stephen B. Luce stationed at the new Naval War College, which he founded, many of the younger officers, like Lieutenant Charles Belknap, saw the need for a more modern navy over ten years before Alfred Thayer Mahan rationalized this need in terms of command of the sea. This reform movement too was organized by the creation of the Naval Institute in 1873, to promote the "advancement of professional and scientific knowledge in the navy." Several factors led to renewed government interest in a strong navy, not the least of which was an average national surplus of \$100,000,000 a year from 1881 to 1889. President James A. Garfield and his Secretary of State, James G. Blaine took an active interest in foreign affairs, noting with alarm both the naval threat of Chile, and the threat to the Monroe Doctrine caused by a proposed isthmian canal under European control. The responsibility for planning the new navy fell upon the capable heads of Garfield's Secretary of the Navy, William H. Hunt, and his successor, William E. Chandler. The first ships of the new navy, the "ABC" cruisers, were laid down in 1883, and by the last year of the decade, Congress

had authorized thirty additional vessels ranging from tugs to battleships.

Despite the navy's increase in size and technological efficiency in the eighties, that service was more reluctant to depart from the traditional wartime policy of "coast-defense and commerce raiding." As was the case earlier, the navy also justified its peacetime existence by protecting American commercial interests overseas. To this end, naval officers, young and old, advocated a larger merchant marine, financed by government subsidies. An expanded commerce would require a larger peacetime navy of modern cruisers to protect it, and, in case of a major war, would provide a larger reserve for the navy. This idea remained essentially unchanged by the naval revival of the eighties and early nineties, and lasted until World War I when it became apparent to all that the merchant marine had an important role of its own to play in modern war, and could not provide the required men and ships to the navy.¹³

Navy support, however, could not stop the post Civil War decline of the merchant marine, which, along with the increasingly large percentage of foreigners in that service, rendered the possibility of any wartime expansion nil. The fact that the larger new navy merely increased the reserve manpower problem was recognized by Commodore James G. Walker, who, in 1888, declared that "rapid mobilization may be said to be the leading naval question of the day," and that "to the readiness of ships and guns must be joined an equal readiness of trained men to make any system of mobilization complete and effective."¹⁴ In the same year that saw the passage of the first Naval Militia bill, the Vice-President of the New York branch of the Naval Institute, Captain Augustus P. Cooke, noted that "in the early days of smoothbores and sails before steam and the telegraph were known, it might have been safe

enough to defer the moment of preparation to the season of actual hostilities; but our national armaments should now be kept ready and manned."¹⁵

The shipping industry jumped on the preparedness bandwagon early, arguing that the real need was for a reserve of ships alone. These arguments were nothing new, but were the same ones used by Edward Knight Collins during his successful quest for steamship subsidies in the thirties and forties. The most aggressive contemporary spokesman for this point of view was John Roach, an Irish immigrant who rose to national fame, as the builder of the "ABC" cruisers. In an 1881 article for North American Review, entitled "A Militia for the Sea," Roach proposed an ambitious plan for a fleet of one hundred ships which would earn \$70,000,000 per year in the commerce trade, and could within thirty days, be converted into warships with the addition of a prepared belt of steel armor. Unfortunately, Roach does not explain who would man these ships, and, in fact, naively suggests "that our want has never been for trained, brave and efficient men, whether in command or in the ranks."¹⁶ No naval expert seriously saw the reserve problem in terms of ships alone, but the idea of combining a reserve of ships with one of men had a strong following in many circles, even on Capitol Hill, since it was apparent that the passage of any such bill, with the necessary subsidies, would give a tremendous boost to the maritime segment of the economy. The subsidy argument, however, raised equally strong opposition, and the provision for a reserve of ships, incorporated into Senator Washington C. Whitthorne's first naval reserve bills insured their defeat.

While agreeing on the need for ship subsidies, the naval establishment generally recognized the futility of relying exclusively on an unorganized

merchant marine for a voluntary supply of seamen. Noting their temperament, the Admiral of the Navy, old David Dixon Porter, concluded that large numbers of seamen would volunteer only if the enemy had a sizeable commerce from which a fair share of prize money might be gleaned.¹⁷ Most reserve schemes proposed by active and retired officers in the eighties sought to organize, in some fashion, the seafaring classes of the nation, and to add retired officers and men to the reserve pool. Gradually, there emerged two different schools of thought, one advocating a national organized reserve of individuals under the direct control of the Secretary of the Navy and the President, and the other advocating a state militia controlled only by the governor and existing in organized units like the National Guard.¹⁸

Most naval officers, ranging from Porter, and the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, J. G. Walker, to younger men like John C. Soley and Augustus Cooke preferred a national reserve.¹⁹ John Codman Soley, who was to have a distinguished career as a naval officer, diplomat, Naval Militia officer and scientist made the point that in a national reserve system, enrollment should be mandatory for those "who by protection, by previous education and benefits [ex Naval Academy graduates,] or on account of special protection [merchant mariners and fishermen] owe their service primarily to the general government...."²⁰ A. P. Cooke stressed the superiority of a national reserve over a state militia by pointing out that "in all our wars the main reliance of the nation has been on national volunteers." In addition, since few states now have good National Guards, then few would likely maintain good naval units.²¹ The militia advocates like Lieutenant Jacob W. Miller, a retired Annapolis graduate, felt that state and local organizations were more in keeping with the American military tradition and the idea of state's

rights. "In forming a National Naval Reserve, the traditions hostile to centralizing armed forces may feel outraged and the scheme may become unpopular." State organizations would create "a praise-worthy rivalry between the commonwealths," and would contribute to the development of maritime interest on the seaboard and lakes.²² The militia advocates furthermore stressed the importance of public interest, noting that "the Navy had drifted away from all touch with the great body of the people of the country," and suggested that a militia would close that gap.²³

Aside from the maritime and naval establishments, there was a third group supporting the idea of a reserve or militia, the yachtsmen. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Yacht clubs became important social organizations on the east coast for the wealthy and near wealthy. This group held the old idea that "the struggle with wind and wave braces mens' nerves, hardens the sinews, broadens the character, and begets in the citizen a wider national sentiment...."²⁴ Jacob W. Miller, himself a yachtsman, emphasized the reserve potential of such a large body of amateur sailors ready and anxious to foster a renewed seapower.²⁵ While most yachtsmen were sincere in their efforts to help the navy, a few were more interested in the social prestige attached to a militia or reserve. One such character was Mr. J. Frederick Tams, the Fleet Captain of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club (S.C.Y.C.). This gentleman suggested that inducement to enter a militia or reserve should be in the nature of proper positions and promotions.²⁶ Lt. Sidney A. Staunton of the regular navy bore down hard on these S.C.Y.C. members in the Naval Institute Proceedings of 1889. "Titles, uniforms, a distinguishing flag for their

yachts, and immunity from certain Treasury regulations were suggested; but the painstaking laborious and methodical details of organization and drill which are indispensable to the training of men for the demands of modern warfare did not enter sufficiently into their plan."²⁷

On February 17, 1887, Senator Washington Curran Whitthorne of Tennessee properly "launched" the Naval Reserve and Naval Militia Movement by introducing a bill "to create a Naval Reserve of auxiliary cruisers, officers and men from the Mercantile Marine of the United States." Whitthorne's successful career spanned half a century as a lawyer, Confederate officer, and long time Senator and Representative. His interest in the navy may date from his early years when Whitthorne studied law under James K. Polk, the father of the Naval Academy. Elected to Congress in 1870, Whitthorne served as Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee for several years before his removal to the Senate in 1883.²⁸ The background behind the introduction of the bill is very obscure, and there is no hint of whose ideas prompted it. The Senator may have conceived the idea from his experience on the Naval Affairs Committee, although he mentioned the reserve only once, calling it his "pet measure" in an 1888 letter.²⁹ The new Democratic administration of Stephen Grover Cleveland no doubt presented Whitthorne with a good opportunity for this reform legislation, as the Secretary of the Navy, William C. Whitney, was committed to the modernization of the navy, having censured the Republicans for keeping that service in a state of obsolescence since the Civil War.

The inclusion of subsidies for reserve ships was an outright appeal to the maritime industries, a fact that Whitthorne freely acknowledged in his Senate report on the bill. He emphasized, however, that the primary

object and purpose of the bill was to increase naval strength, and only secondarily to aid in the development of the merchant marine. Nevertheless, the clear hand of the shipping industry was evident in the report, which ended with the text of a resolution of the American Shipping and Industrial League supporting the bill.³⁰ The first try a failure, Whitthorne introduced a similar bill in 1888, again calling for both a trained reserve of men, and a subsidized reserve of ships. Petitions for the establishment of a reserve system flowed into the fiftieth Congress from boards of trade and chambers of commerce of all the major Lake cities from Buffalo to Duluth, and from many east and Gulf ports as well.³¹ Despite a plea from Secretary Whitney that the legislation should be looked at as a boon to the navy rather than to the ship owners, Congress would simply not pay for the merchant marine.³² The United States had discontinued subsidies before the Civil War, because of bad planning and administration, and was not yet ready to reintroduce them although the decline of the American merchant marine after the War was in part due to its inability to compete with subsidized foreign vessels. Subsidies were formally reintroduced in the Frye-Farquar bounty bill of 1890, and the Merchant Marine Act of 1891, but this precedent came too late to save Whitthorne's reserve and militia plans.³³

Meanwhile, the Navy Department, beginning in 1887, actively campaigned for Whitthorne's bills. In that year, the Office of Naval Intelligence surveyed the existing European reserve systems and published the results, causing the Department to formulate "a general plan for a similar organization to meet the requirements and conditions of our own institutions."³⁴ In the summer of 1888, the Naval War College offered a course

entitled "Naval Reserves and the Recruiting of Men for the Navy," two years before the first Naval Militia unit mustered.³⁵ After the failure of Congress to pass the Whitthorne bills, the navy realized that "if you have the Naval Reserve wait for commerce, or make it in any way dependent on commerce, you will have no reserve."³⁶ Secretary Whitney's successor, Benjamin F. Tracy, ignored ship subsidies, and actually endorsed the development of a militia of trained men, since the cost "lies only in arms and equipment for training. The remainder of the expense is voluntarily borne by the State."³⁷

Although Whitthorne and the navy failed to get a national organization, their efforts stimulated a great deal of activity on the state and local level, where the real action took place. In Boston, Mr. E. B. McClellan and John C. Soley, supported by their fellow members of the Dorchester Yacht Club, took the matter straight to Beacon Hill, winning a number of influential friends, among them Adjutant General Samuel Dalton of the Massachusetts National Guard. The Massachusetts constitution already technically allowed for a Naval Militia by making the Governor "Captain General, Commander in Chief and Admiral of the land and sea forces of the State," but a formal bill was passed anyway on March 17, 1888, for the establishment of a Naval Battalion of Volunteers.³⁸ In New York, the story was much the same, but the naval officers and yachtsmen there were soon joined by the Board of Trade and Transportation headed by the powerful Aaron Vanderbilt of the Ward Steamship Line. Advised by a number of prominent national figures like Admiral Porter, and John McAllister Schofield, the Commanding General of the Army, Vanderbilt and other militia supporters persuaded New York to pass its own Naval Militia act in the summer of 1889,

despite the objections of the governor who felt that naval defense was the province of the federal government.³⁹

The passage of legislation did not immediately result in the formation of the units themselves, for a variety of reasons. Besides the obvious reluctance of the early states to appropriate much money, there were a number of people who began to raise serious objections. The question of whether the developments in naval technology in the last thirty years had rendered any civilian sailor who had not devoted his lifetime to naval studies obsolete, was raised.⁴⁰ Some naval officers were jealous of the privileges of temporary rank afforded reserves in wartime, while others seriously feared that the Naval Militia might get too much attention to the detriment of more vital matters like battleship building.⁴¹ Curiously, some of the strongest opposition to the Naval Militia came from the National Guard, especially in New York, where the Adjutant General of that state felt that the Naval Militia would compound the problem many Guard units already had in meeting their own quotas and expenses.⁴² Guard hostility, however, was not universal, and the situation varied from state to state. Adjutant General Samuel Dalton of the Massachusetts National Guard helped to sponsor the Naval Militia legislation in his state, and he saw in that organization a genuine opportunity to increase the defenses of the United States.

The first real muster of a Naval Militia unit took place in the Old State House in Boston, on the night of February 28, 1890. There, one hundred and seventy-two men formed up the Massachusetts Battalion, consisting of four companies and a staff, under the command of an already familiar figure to militia supporters, John Codman Soley. The New York Battalion got going in March of 1890 with Jacob W. Miller at the helm, although a "provisional unit" had existed as early as October of the preceding year.

The New York unit got help in January of 1890 with the setting up of a Naval Reserve Association, a forerunner of the later Naval Militia Association, designed "for the purpose of pushing naval-reserve matters."⁴³ The organization consisted of a number of prominent yachtsmen including Theodore C. Zerega. August Belmont Jr., a member of that famous New York family whose interest in naval matters dates back to their relationship with Matthew Calbraith Perry, and Herbert L. Satterlee, who would become better known as a future founder of the Navy League of the United States, were both members of the Association. Upon the New York unit's muster, in June of 1891, the Naval Reserve Association raised some \$5,000 for a summer exercise by getting donations from several wealthy citizens, including J. Pierpont Morgan.⁴⁴ Over the next few years, several other states, mostly in the east and Great Lakes region, followed with units of their own.

These first units organized along the lines of a National Guard unit, since, in many of the states, the Naval Militia was theoretically part of the Guard, although the latter seldom exercised any real control over it. In Massachusetts, for example, Lieutenant Commander Soley only issued periodic reports on his unit's activities to the Adjutant General. Indeed, throughout its entire existence, the Naval Militia never became an important arm of state government. Used in only minor riot or disaster duty, the Militia could not, because of its very nature, come close to playing any major role in maintaining domestic order.⁴⁵ A real debate soon developed over the object of the Naval Militia, and the duties it would perform. A Militia officer named W. H. Stayton saw three distinct schools of thought form soon after the setting up of the first units. A number of people, mostly outside the Militia, felt that the units should be trained as infantrymen since they would normally supplement the National Guard in riot and

studies duty

strike duty. Others felt that the primary purpose of the Militia was to train blue-jackets capable of going to sea with the Fleet in time of war. The third and intermediate school decided that "by fitting ourselves for coast and harbor defense, we would be prepared to render the best service, both to the states and to the national authorities."⁴⁶

Throughout the first decade of its existence, the Naval Militias were partially trained to meet all of their possible duties, although attempts were made to standardize training. Until the Spanish-American War, coast and harbor defense duty came to be accepted as the most likely wartime function of the Militia, for two reasons. In the first place, few Militia units had many seamen at all, and the only vessels available for extensive training were small craft. Secondly, the idea of a local defense force coincided with Navy Department thinking until the eve of the War. Secretary Tracy, for example, envisioned the "harbor defense ship" as "the rallying point, the armory, the drill hall, the parade ground, and the naval school of those young men who have shown such spirit and earnestness in the organization of the naval militias."⁴⁷ At the same time, Tracy and others expounded the idea that a part of the Militia might consist of technical specialists, such as electricians. The new navy possessed only a few real experts of its own, and a body of trained professionals would be invaluable.⁴⁸ Many units actively recruited mechanics, electricians and other technical specialists. The Rhode Island Naval Militia became a torpedo unit and frequently trained at the navy's torpedo school on Coaster's Island near Newport.

After the defeat of the Whitthorne bills, the Navy Department continued to press for a national reserve of ships and men, but quickly learned to live with a militia. The Militia, inadequate as it was, (being

under the command of the Governors and not the Department) did provide a reserve of sorts, and, in 1890, few militiamen showed any hostility to professional guidance. Secretary Tracy, soon after the first musters, began loaning old ships such as the Civil War veterans Minnesota and Wabash for service as armories and headquarters. The Secretary of the Navy began to acquire some real control over the activities of the Militia on March 2, 1891, when Congress passed the first annual appropriation of \$25,000 for the "arming and equipping of the Naval Militia." This money was not given to the States, but to the Secretary, to distribute as he saw fit. The Department worked out a system, whereby the Governors of each State submitted a list of the number of uniformed militiamen to the Secretary, who would proportionally divide up the money according to the size of each State's unit.⁴⁹ To encourage training, \$5,000 of the 1892 appropriation was set aside as an extra bonus for those Militia units which drilled on a Man-of-War for four days.⁵⁰ In 1894, upon the advice of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, William McAdoo, newly established units began to get preferential treatment. McAdoo argued that "under the present regulations, it is impossible to promptly and properly arm and equip newly organized forces, especially when they are small..." He further suggested that the older and larger units should receive only enough money "to enable them to purchase ammunition for target practice, and to replace such arms and equipments as may be worn out or injured in service."⁵¹ The increasing size of the Militia soon strained federal funds, and by 1896, Congress had to increase the appropriation to \$50,000 where it remained through the turn of the century.

While federal appropriations did not entirely subvert the principle of state control, they went a long way in making the Naval Militia different

from the National Guard. They reaffirmed the intentions of John C. Soley and other founders, that the primary function of the Naval Militia was to serve the needs of the navy rather than those of the state governments. Although signs of mutual resentment showed up even before the War with Spain, relations between the navy and the Naval Militia were, on the whole, much closer and more cordial than those between the army and the National Guard. In many ways, the militiamen had no choice, for it soon became apparent that the Militia had no inherent value except as a reserve for the navy. Few states would, or could tolerate such a marginally valuable organization without the federal appropriations.

From 1891 to the Spanish conflict, the Naval Militia expanded steadily, increasing from 1149 men in that first year, to 4,157 in 1897. The first units developed in the Northeast, but there was a surprisingly strong showing on the Great Lakes, and on the West Coast, where California had a large unit. Only the southern states responded slowly, with Florida, Virginia and the District of Columbia not mustering units until just before the Spanish-American War. By 1898, fifteen states had Militias. A Naval Militia Association, consisting of the senior officers from most of the established units came into being in order to help the multiplying number of organizations attain some uniformity "in matters of organization, drill and equipment."⁵² As had the Naval Reserve Association before it, this new group soon became a spokesman and lobby for the Militia. An increasing number of old coast defense monitors were lent to the Militia for training, and in the summer of 1892, the navy began the annual practice of training militiamen with short summer cruises on naval warships. Also in that year, a number of militiamen from Massachusetts and Rhode Island went for training to the torpedo school at Newport, and selected officers began attending the

Naval War College in 1896. The summer cruises were the backbone of the training routine as far as the navy was concerned, and were supervised by professional officers who not only instructed each of the state units, but issued comprehensive reports on their progress as well.

In 1895, Lieutenant Albert P. Niblack, better known for his service in the first World War, took over the job of looking after the Naval Militia for Assistant Secretary McAdoo. Niblack tried to remedy the Militia's defects as he saw them. He emphasized uniformity by urging the withholding of \$1,000 of the \$25,000 appropriation for textbooks of instruction. Next, he argued that state laws should be uniform, along with the "outfits and requirements of the divisions of the Naval Militia." As regards funds, Niblack argued against doling out more than half of the appropriation on the basis of size, and suggested that the other half should go to those units newly formed. Niblack noted the need for more basic reforms, since "there has been considerable diminution of enthusiasm in the older Naval Militia organizations, due largely to uncertainty as to the real purpose and aim of the naval-militia movement."⁵³ The more thoughtful people in both the navy and the Militia had always assumed that coast and harbor defense was the most logical objective, yet this was not officially proclaimed, and training was haphazard at best. Even some of the naval officers assigned to grade the Militia's summer exercises disagreed with their Department. The lieutenants who reported on the Massachusetts unit in 1894, for example, found that the officers and men of the Militia believed that coast defense would be their most useful function, "but as the navy has never yet allowed itself to be kept off the high seas in time of war, the naval brigade, by confining their sphere of action to harbors,

would greatly limit their usefulness to the National government."⁵⁴

Acting upon his own recommendations, Niblack, with McAdoo and Captain H. C. Taylor of the Naval War College set out to uniformly urge the Naval Militia units to train as local defense forces, and to at least temporarily ignore other potential duties. Addressing the New York Naval Militia, Taylor argued that "other fields of work may seem to you for a moment more distinguished, and fighting on the high seas to offer, perhaps, more opportunity for personal ambition, this is not correct." He went on to say that "your great work will be as an auxiliary corps for the defense of the interior waters of our coast."⁵⁵ The War College also studied the problem in the midnineties, and came to the same conclusion, that the Naval Militia was best suited for local defense purposes.⁵⁶ This brief attempt at standardization failed because it was not carried through by McAdoo's successor in 1897, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt brought no basic change in plans, but he was reluctant to force the divergent units to conform with his predecessor's plans. Furthermore, Roosevelt lent indirect support to alternative duties by suggesting on his first tour of inspection of the Militia, that "the best trained bodies could be used immediately on board the regular ships of war..."⁵⁷ The seed of this old idea, suppressed by McAdoo, Niblack and Taylor, would blossom the following spring, when, in the panic of war, the navy discovered once again that it needed men to man its ships.

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Naval Militiamen, from the beginning, always considered themselves a cut above National Guardsmen. This feeling of selectness was no doubt due to both the small size of the units when compared to the National Guard,

and to the traditional "elite" attitude held by the navy. Everett B. Mero frequently talked about the idea held by his fellow Militiamen that their organization stood on a higher plane and had a higher purpose than the land militia. "Great care is also taken to enlist only a desirable class of young men in the ranks, and most of them have a high social position."⁵⁸ Indeed, the Militia often had to fight against the stigma of being considered "a picturesque body of gentlemen's sons."⁵⁹ In reality, the Militia was a rather middle class organization, with some wealthy people in it. Annapolis graduates commanded most of the units, and the vast majority of officers had some military or naval experience. Unlike some National Guard units which were overrun with aged Civil War veterans, most of the important Militia officers were young. Soley was only forty-five when he assumed command of the Massachusetts unit, and his successor, John W. Weeks, was a man still in his thirties who went on to become a successful politician and rose to the post of Secretary of War under Warren G. Harding.

The officers came from all walks of life, but they had much in common. A good number were well known yachting enthusiasts, like Theodore C. Zerega, a senior ensign of the New York battalion, who was known "from Sandy Hook to Marblehead Neck as one of the smartest amateur sailors that ever twiddled a tiller."⁶⁰ Dana Greene, the son of the man that took the Monitor into battle with the Merrimac, was a first rate electrical engineer associated with General Electric. An ex-naval lieutenant, Greene had worked with Bradley Fiske when that officer was conducting electrical experiments on the cruiser Atlanta.⁶¹ In keeping with tradition, Militia officers were elected, but many units required that they pass a comprehensive examination. A rich manufacturer named Truman Newberry, who later became Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of the Navy, remained at the bottom rank of landsman

for a full year in the Michigan battalion, until he qualified for promotion. Enlisted personnel came mainly from the lower middle classes. Militia units from the larger cities, such as Boston and New York recruited mostly clerks, with a few mechanics and other tradesmen. Other battalions, like Rhode Island, specializing in torpedoes, acquired engineers, machinists, boiler-makers, electricians, steamfitters and carpenters. Ironically, seamen comprised the class least represented. In 1894, for example, Massachusetts reported that "as far as could be learned," there were no mariners in the organization.⁶²

Life in the Naval Militia consisted of weekly drills, supplemented by one or more summer exercises, usually done in conjunction with regular naval units. Lieutenant Commander W. H. Stayton believed that the wider variety of drills employed by the Naval Militia, when compared to the National Guard, was an incentive for enlistment.⁶³ As a typical example, the original Massachusetts battalion was quartered at the South Armory, which it shared with the First National Guard regiment. Winter drill was on Tuesday evening, and the men exercised on a whaleboat with a howitzer, or with a full sized mock six inch rifle enclosed in a wooden prop resembling the side of a ship. The traditional ceremonies and infantry drills accompanied the training. In May, the battalion met on Saturday afternoon for small boat exercises on the Charles River. The summer training, under navy supervision, was the great annual adventure. Not only would the men fire the big guns, but most enjoyed the vacation. At the summer encampment on Lovells Island in Boston harbor, where the Massachusetts unit trained with the monitor Passaic, several men brought servants, while the battalion itself hired thirty cooks, waiters and scullery men to do the menial chores. When the battalion came under fire for preparing a cuisine of considerably

higher quality than navy rations, Lieutenant Commander Soley pointed out that his men "are not accustomed to such food [navy rations], and if it was attempted, their stomachs would be so upset that they would not be capable of doing nearly as much work."⁶⁴ The training routine varied slightly, depending on the size and facilities available to each unit. New York militiamen spent a lot of time on the water. Their organization stressed reconnaissance work in small boats, and the men knew the waters of New York harbor and Long Island Sound intimately. On these trips, the officers were "instructed to see that the trip is made both enjoyable and instructive," and every man got a trick at the tiller.⁶⁵ In addition, most New York exercises ended in boat races which were a real delight to those yachtsmen in the group, especially when the competition was a regular navy cutter.

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The Spanish-American War provided the first true test of the Naval Militia. The nervous excitement that took hold of the Country sent a flood of volunteers into all the services, but the navy more than anyone realized that only trained men were useful. The only trained reserves available, of course, were the Naval Militia of the several states.⁶⁶ Despite this, the Navy Department soon discovered that neither it nor the President had legal authority to call up the Militia who were responsible only to the Governors of their respective states. Beginning in late March, 1898, the navy began to ask various Governors on the east coast to detail some of their men to man reactivated coast defense monitors. On May 26, Congress allowed the Chief of the Auxiliary Naval Force, Commander John R. Bartlett, upon the consent of the Governor, to "muster into the said force, the whole or any part of the organizations of the Naval militia of any State..."⁶⁷

The Governors responded by granting their militiamen leaves of absence from their units, so that the Federal government could enlist them. Navy Department policy was to place all naval forces on exactly the same basis, and it opposed the enrollment of whole Militia organizations. As was the case with National Guard units such as New York's Seventh Regiment, opposition arose immediately.⁶⁸ On April 24, the Massachusetts battalion received orders to report for duty. Upon the unit's arrival in New York the next day, the men mutinied when they found out that the navy was going to take them as individuals. They had understood that they were to volunteer for service as an organization and retain their own officers.⁶⁹ The militiamen calmed down only after their Commander, John W. Weeks, went to Washington and exacted a promise from the Navy Department that his command would, in practice, be kept together.⁷⁰ This episode is particularly significant in showing the close relationship existing between the Navy Department and the senior Militia officers who were well known in Washington. Weeks, and no doubt the other Commanding officers, could sit down with the policy makers in the navy, and quickly work out a compromise that would be reasonably accepted by all concerned.

Relying on the earlier War College proposals, the navy directed Commander, later Admiral Horace Erben to prepare for the formation of a "mosquito flotilla," manned by captains and crews from the Naval Militia.⁷¹ Even before the war broke out, many militiamen already manned or were preparing to man numerous coast defense and patrol vessels.⁷² This "flotilla," designated on May 26 as the United States Auxiliary Naval Force, was later placed under Commander Bartlett, who took as his aide, the young and knowledgeable Naval Militia officer, Herbert L. Satterlee. Leaning on Satterlee's

recommendations, Bartlett appointed some senior Militia officers to command coast defense districts.⁷³ The Naval Militia provided some 263 officers and 3,832 enlisted men to the navy in the war, which was more than the total strength of the Militia as of January 1898.⁷⁴ About half of these men made up the Coast Signal Service, and spent many monotonous hours on remote beaches watching for ships that would never come.

After the Maine disaster, the navy began expanding the fleet. Soon it found, in the words of Admiral Erban, that it had "lots of ships and no men. That's God's truth. There are ships in the squadron at Key West from 100 to 200 men short."⁷⁵ Militiamen were assigned as individuals to many ships in the navy, including battleships, to fill vacancies. In addition, the navy remembered the reports of Roosevelt and asked the best Naval Militia battalions from Massachusetts, New York, Michigan, and Maryland, to man four 6,000 ton auxiliary cruisers, the Prairie, Yankee, Yosemite, and Dixie respectively.⁷⁶ Only the Captain, Executive officer, and Navigator were regular naval personnel. Although adequately trained only for coast defense work, most Militiamen saw in this assignment a chance to see action and prove themselves.⁷⁷ The cruisers spent most of their time on blockade duty off the coast of Cuba, bombarding Spanish batteries and experiencing occasional adventures. One night the Yankee singlehandedly dashed through what the crew thought was Cervera's fleet, only to find out later that the ships were General William R. Shafter's troops transports.⁷⁸ While the Yankee, the New York ship, got the headlines, the Yosemite and Dixie also performed yeoman service off Puerto Rico. On June 28, the former destroyed the Spanish merchantman Antonio Lopez, and drove off two enemy cruisers at the same time. A month later, the Dixie, under Commander C. H. Davis,

sailed into Ponce harbor, demanded, and got the surrender of the city.

The Naval Militia, on the whole, got on suprisingly well with the regulars, especially when integrated into regular crews. There were some rumblings of trouble, especially on the Yosemite, where the Michigan unit became so dissatisfied with their regular officers that they applied for an early discharge in August, until several prominent Michigan men persuaded them to withdraw the request.⁷⁹ Minor disciplinary problems arose on the Yankee also, but these incidents of friction and name calling, usually involving the Executive officer, First Lieutenant John Hubbard, were soon forgotten by most militiamen. In fact, the commemorative volume, The U.S.S. Yankee on the Cuban Blockade 1898, published in 1928 by members of the Yankee's crew, was dedicated to both Captain William H. Browson, and to Hubbard. After the Spanish War, both men eventually rose to the rank of Rear Admiral, Browson heading the Bureau of Navigation, and Hubbard commanding the Asiatic fleet. Aside from these inevitable minor incidents, the Naval Militia did not share the bad experiences of the National Guard, and brought back no wild tales of misery, maltreatment or incompetence. The Yankee's young doctor, Henry C. Rowland humorously summed up the experience, by reporting that "our tummies had shrunk and toughened, able to coil round a ship's biscuit and extract the last calories there from and we had cut off six inches from the end of our belts, or would have, if we had worn them."⁸⁰

Although the Militia performed fairly well in their unfamiliar role as deep sea sailors, the navy used the war experience to plead once more for a national reserve. Secretary John D. Long advocated a reserve made up from those who had served in the navy in the recent war, and from the various

seafaring classes, to be maintained by Federal appropriations and to be subject to the call of the National Government in time of war.⁸¹ On the other hand, the navy did not wish to abolish the Militia, but to return the organization to its pre-war role of manning coast and harbor defenses. W. H. Southerland, who ran the Office of Naval Militia in 1900, did not consider it "either safe or wise to take these men into the regular service immediately upon the outbreak of war, as a separate ship's company, under their own officers....," in spite of the experience of 1898.⁸²

The Spanish American War was the highpoint and climax of the Naval Militia Movement. The Militiamen had proved, at least in their eyes, their worth to the country and to the navy. Even the Militia's most persistent critics acknowledged their value as a coast defense organization. After ten years of existence, the Naval Militia had not brought the navy into the mainstream of the American military tradition, but it came closer to fulfilling the ideals of that tradition than any other organization before or since. Because the navy, due to its technological nature, would never rely on citizen sailors for more than auxiliary functions, the Militia's value was, more often than not, moral. The idea of the Militia serving as a connecting link between the navy and the people and upholding the American tradition of decentralized and local control, became, after the war with Spain, the chief justification for the Militia's existence. At the annual meeting of the Naval Militia Association in 1904, Jacob W. Miller expressed this common belief. "Outside of any special fitness that the Naval Militia may have had to man ships, I think it has done a great work in creating between the navy and the people that reciprocal feeling which did not exist in the old navy."⁸³

From its beginnings, and on in to the twentieth century, the Naval Militia was unique in that it held a dual and paradoxical view of itself. Dedicated to the ideal of the citizen soldier, it nevertheless felt a certain selectness, in many ways the same "elite" feeling cherished by the navy. Unlike the National Guard, the Militia seldom felt threatened by the regular services, and wholeheartedly subscribed to the theory that its primary duty was to help the navy in time of war. The first stepchild of the Naval Militia was the Navy League of the United States, which would lead the fight for preparedness through World War I. The League had its real beginnings in the wardroom of the New Hampshire, the headquarters ship of the New York Naval Militia. Herbert L. Satterlee later rose to an important position on the policy making executive committee of the League.⁸⁴ Ultimately, of course, the technical nature of sea warfare doomed the Militia, despite the belated application of the Dick Act, embodying the principle of Federal control, to the Militia in 1914. With the establishment of the modern Naval Reserve in 1915, the Navy Department saw little future need for citizen sailors not under their direct control. The Naval Militia could not survive without Federal appropriations, because in thirty years of existence, from 1888 to 1918, it never demonstrated to the states any political advantage in maintaining seagoing National Guardsmen.

Notes

¹See the United States Naval Institute Proceedings (hereafter cited as Proceedings), XIV (1888), 169, for a record of the speeches at this meeting. Jacob W. Miller and John Codman Soley, who would later become commanding officers of the New York and Massachusetts Naval Militia battalions, both attended this meeting and offered their ideas.

²Naval Documents of the American Revolution, ed. William Bell Clark (Washington, D.C., 1964), II, 370.

³Clark, III, 1263.

⁴See the Autobiography of Joshua Barney, partly reproduced in Clark, III, 1263.

⁵Clark, IV, 63.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Joseph C. Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon, American Military Policy (Harrisburg, P.A., 1961), p. 267.

⁸See Jefferson's Seventh Annual Message to Congress, in The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents 1790-1966, ed. Fred L. Israel (New York, 1967), I, 92. Also, Jefferson's letters to John Jay, January 9, 1787, in the Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. H. A. Washington (Washington, D.C., 1853), II, 91, and to General Smith, July 30, 1807, V, 147.

⁹Gideon Welles, The Diary of Gideon Welles, ed. Howard K. Beale (New York, 1960), I, 498.

¹⁰Welles, II, 498.

¹¹For a discussion of this age, see Robert H. Wiebe's The Search for Order: 1877-1920 (New York, 1967). Arthur M. Schlesinger's classic The Rise of the City 1878-1898 (New York, 1933) covers the social history in more detail.

¹²Major General Jim Dan Hill's The Minute Man in Peace and War : A History of the National Guard (Harrisburg, 1964) presents the latest interpretation of the National Guard's involvement in labor troubles, and differs significantly from the summary given by William H. Riker in Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy (Washington, D.C., 1957). Emory Upton's ideas are described, in part, on pages 101-102 of Stephen E. Ambrose's Upton and the Army (Baton Rouge, 1964).

¹³The background of the naval revival is discussed in Harold and Margaret Sprout's The Rise of American Naval Power 1776-1918 (Princeton, 1967), especially on pages 183-201. The interest of the navy in commercial expansion is discussed in Walter R. Herrick's The American Naval Revolution (Baton Rouge, 1966), p. 5, and in Peter D. Karsten's unpublished dissertation, The Naval Aristocracy: United States Naval Officers From the 1840's to the 1920's: Mahan's Messmates, pp. 164-166 and 205-210. Charles Belknap presents the views of the younger naval reformers in his prize-winning article in the Naval Institute's Proceedings entitled "Naval Policy of the United States," VI (1880), 375-391. Protection of commerce is mentioned on page 379.

¹⁴Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy (hereafter cited as Annual Report) (Washington, 1888), p. 85.

¹⁵A. P. Cooke, "Our Naval Reserve and the Necessity for its Organization," Proceedings, XIV (1888), 175.

¹⁶John Roach, "A Militia for the Sea," North American Review, CXXXIII (1881), 186-187.

¹⁷Annual Report (1887), p. 44.

¹⁸The terms "reserve" and "militia" were used haphazardly until 1915 when the first true national reserve was formed. Before this time, the Naval Militia was frequently called the "reserves." According to Mr. Park Benjamin, an Annapolis graduate, class of 1867, the first attempt to form a civilian reserve of sorts occurred in 1873 when a group of ex-naval officers met in New York with such an intention. Although they communicated their plan to the Secretary of the Navy, no action was taken. Proceedings, XIV (1888), 209.

¹⁹Admiral Porter and Commodore Walker gave their suggestions in the Annual Report (1887), pp. 44, 148-149. Rear Admiral Daniel Ammen also had reserve ideas in his article in the Proceedings, entitled "The Purpose of a Navy, and the Best Method of Rendering it Efficient," VI (1878), 119-132.

²⁰John C. Soley, "Naval Reserve and Naval Militia," Proceedings, XVII (1891), 475. Lieutenant Commander John Codman Soley, an 1861 Harvard graduate, served in the navy during the Civil War as flag lieutenant to Admiral Worden. After the war he was naval attache in Berlin and Paris where he saw the European reserve organizations at first hand. As a retired officer he became Plenipotentiary to Santo Domingo and organized the Massachusetts Naval Militia. Soley is best known as a scientist, with several works on oceanography and astronomy to his credit. In the later years of his life he directed construction of the Holland, the first modern submarine, and ran the Naval Hydrographic Office at New Orleans. See his obituary in the Boston Evening Transcript, August 19, 1926.

²¹Cooke, 177.

²²Ibid.

²³E. B. Mero, "Our Sailor Soldiers: The Story of the Naval Militia Movement," Outing, XXII (1893), 339-340.

²⁴Jacob W. Miller, "A Naval Militia and a Naval Reserve," The Forum, XII (October, 1891), 282.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶See the comment of Mr. J. Frederick Tams, Proceedings, XIV (1888), 208.

²⁷Sidney A. Staunton, "Naval Reserves and the Recruiting and Training of Men," Proceedings, XV (1889), 14.

²⁸A biographical form obtained from the Tennessee Historical Society provided most of the background information on Senator Whitthorne, although his close connection with President Polk was pointed out in a letter to the author by the historian of Maury County, Tennessee, Mrs. Jill K. Garret. Besides studying law under Polk, Whitthorne married the President's first cousin, Jane Campbell, in 1848. The family claims that the Senator was a law partner of Polk.

²⁹Whitthorne to Claybrooke, June 9, 1888, Claybrooke Collection, Tennessee Historical Society. The author also searched through the local political paper, the Maury Democrat, from 1880-1891 and found no mention of Whitthorne's "pet measure."

³⁰Senate Report 1987, 49th Congress, 2nd Session.

³¹See the Congressional Record, 50th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 285, 783, 784, 822, 1040, 1175, 1357, 2nd Session, pp. 105, 255, 1963.

³²House Report 2735, 50th Congress, 1st Session.

³³For a discussion of the subsidy problem, see John G. B. Hutchins, The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy 1789-1914 (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), pp. 533-534.

³⁴Annual Report (1890), p. 29. The survey of European reserves was published by the Office of Naval Intelligence, and entitled Naval Reserves, Training, and Material, General Information Series VII (Washington, 1888).

³⁵Proceedings, XIV, 639.

³⁶These are the words of John C. Soley spoken in 1888. See the Proceedings, XIV, 191.

³⁷Annual Report (1890), p. 29.

³⁸For bits and pieces of the story, see John C. Soley, 469, and E. B. Mero, 336.

³⁹New York Times, December 4, 1888, June 25, 1889, and July 19, 1891.

⁴⁰Miller, 266.

⁴¹Proceedings, XIV, 220.

⁴²Miller, 267; New York Times, January 17, 1890.

⁴³New York Times, July 19, 1891.

⁴⁴Miller's brother, George MacCulloch Miller was a personal friend of J. Pierpont Morgan, who was also known to other militiamen. When asked to subscribe to the expenses for the cruise, Morgan promptly wrote a check for \$1,000. See the story in Herbert L. Satterlee's J. Pierpont Morgan (New York, 1939), p. 259.

⁴⁵The Naval Militia was sometimes called out for civil emergencies such as riots and natural disasters, but, in these instances it merely supplemented the more numerous National Guardsmen. A notable exception occurred in 1905 when Mississippi and Louisiana went to "war" over a yellow fever quarantine imposed by Mississippi. When Louisiana fishing boats began to be seized in the waters of their own state by Mississippi quarantine boats, the Governor called out the Louisiana Naval Militia which promptly drove away or captured the Mississippi boats. For the story, see the New York Times, August 4 and 5, 1905. This incident, of course, was quite unique, and did not prove the Militia's value to the states.

⁴⁶All of these arguments are found in W. H. Stayton, "The Naval Militia," Outing, XXVII, 398.

⁴⁷Annual Report, 1890, p. 41.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁹The navy demanded that the men be uniformed, thereby proving that the states were providing some funds of their own. If the state unit was not properly uniformed, then half the allotment would be withheld. New York Times, February 4, 1894, 17.

⁵⁰Annual Report, 1892, p. 44.

⁵¹Annual Report, 1894, p. 88.

⁵²W. H. Stayton, 397.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Annual Report, 1894, p. 93.

⁵⁵W. H. Stayton, 400.

⁵⁶New York Times, April 29, 1897.

⁵⁷New York Times, August 8, 1897.

⁵⁸E. B. Mero, 341.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰New York Times, July 19, 1891.

⁶¹Bradley A. Fiske, From Midshipman to Rear Admiral (New York, 1919), p. 100.

⁶²Annual Report, 1894, p. 92.

⁶³W. H. Stayton, p. 395.

⁶⁴J. C. Soley, p. 48. Also see the Annual Report, 1894, p. 91.

⁶⁵W. H. Stayton, p. 395.

⁶⁶Annual Report, 1898, p. 19.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 106.

⁶⁸There was some question as to whether or not the Naval Militia, under the Militia Act of 1792 could be assigned to ships that would serve on foreign station. This argument never became a major point of controversy, however. See the New York Times for April 16, 1898. The people involved in this were apparently ignorant of the Supreme Court decision of 1827, *Martin versus Mott*, which ruled that the militia may go outside the boundaries of the United States.

⁶⁹New York Times, April 25, 1898.

⁷⁰New York Times, April 28, 1898.

⁷¹Annual Report, 1898, p. 106. Also see John D. Long's The New American Navy (New York, 1903), p. 160.

⁷²There was a great fear that Cervera's fleet would swoop out of the Atlantic and attack cities and towns all along the coast. Theodore Roosevelt, in a 1911 letter to Alfred T. Mahan, related how Maine's senators Eugene Hale and Tom Reed forced the President to send them a monitor with 21 New Jersey Naval Militiamen on board. Roosevelt, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, noted that "it would have been useless against any war vessel more

modern than one of Hamilcar's galleys." The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, ed. Elting E. Morison, VII, 299.

⁷³Annual Report, 1898, p. 113. Jacob W. Miller commanded the Third district from Newport R.I. to Seabright N.J., and J. S. Muckle the commander of the Pennsylvania Naval Militia, headed the Fourth district from Seabright to Metomkin Inlet, Virginia.

⁷⁴The Naval Militia did a much better job supplying men than did the National Guard. As of May 16, only 50% of the original Guardsmen had enlisted, and the Adjutant General called the National Guard a failure. See the New York Times, May 17, 1898. Of course, the overall size of the overall size of the Militia was small, and as of January, 1898, the strength of the Militia was only 200 officers and 3703 enlisted men.

⁷⁵From an Aldine Club dinner address, New York Times, March 30, 1898.

⁷⁶Annual Report, 1898, p. 109.

⁷⁷See the New York Times for April 27, 1898, for the comments of at least one bitter Massachusetts Militiaman.

⁷⁸For the story of the Yosemite, see Jim Dan Hill's The Minute Man in Peace and War (Harrisburg, 1964), p. 143. The Dixie's actions are detailed in the appendix to the report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, Annual Report, 1898, pp. 216-217.

⁷⁹New York Times, August 30, 1898, September 4, 1898, and August 7, 1898.

⁸⁰The U.S.S. Yankee on the Cuban Blockade 1898, ed. The U.S.S. Yankee Book Committee (New York, 1928) p. 20.

⁸¹Annual Report, 1898, p. 53.

⁸²Annual Report, 1900, p. 91.

⁸³Senate Document 265, 58th Congress, 2nd Session.

⁸⁴Armin Rappaport, The Navy League of the United States (Detroit, 1962), p. 3, 43.

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TOWARDS A CITIZEN SAILOR: THE HISTORY OF
THE NAVAL MILITIA MOVEMENT, 1888-1898

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Until the end of the nineteenth century, the United States Navy relied on the commercial maritime industry of the country to augment its strength in wartime. Although hard pressed in the Civil War, no wartime crisis arose to change this policy. Rather, the Naval Militia organizations created in the late 80's and the 90's came about from diverse military, social and economic reasons.

At the foundation of the Naval Militia lay the late nineteenth century trend towards organizing society. This penchant for organization became especially apparent in the urban areas where the Naval Militia took its place alongside the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Society of Mayflower Descendants as a patriotic and social group. In addition, the increased interest in improving the National Guard, and the birth of the "new navy" provided a specific context for reform.

In response to these factors, especially the naval revival of the eighties, the navy pressed its traditional plea for a subsidized reserve of ships and men from the merchant marine. Although supported by the shipping industry, this old plan, embodied in Senator Whitthorne's naval reserve bill of 1887, failed. The failure, however, stimulated action on the state level, where local businessmen, retired officers, and determined groups of yachtsmen spearheaded a drive for a reserve of men controlled by the state, a Naval Militia. Massachusetts passed the first Militia bill in 1888, with New York and several other states to follow in the next few years.

The Navy Department, while continuing to press for a federally controlled reserve, did acquire some real power over the Militia in 1891 with the passage of Congressional appropriations. These funds became the lifeblood of the Naval Militia since it became readily apparent that the Militia

had no real political value for the states. The 1890's also brought standardization of sorts to the Militia, generally directed through the Department's Office of Naval Militia. Gradually, and despite some confusion and controversy, the Militia prepared itself for a coast and harbor defense role in case of war.

When war came in 1898, the navy had less trouble with the Militia than the army had with the National Guard, because the small size of the former, and its dependence on navy appropriations made close cooperation imperative. Some friction occurred between regulars and militiamen, but there were no major incidents, and the latter viewed their service as a success, although the navy used the wartime experience to push their case for a federal reserve.

With the establishment of such a reserve in 1915, the Naval Militia withered on the vine, ending a thirty year attempt to bring to the navy the American ideals of decentralized control extended over a volunteer civilian fighting force.