

Miles reported to the naval commander in a letter dated July 22, 1898,

Our goal has been the port of Fajardo or Cabo de San Juan; but ... undoubtedly the enemy is informed of our purpose .... As it is recommendable not to do what the enemy expects done, I believe it convenient to ... continue immediately to Guánica, and land at Ponce, the largest city of Puerto Rico ... we will get great reinforcements that will put us in condition to continue on in any direction or to occupy other populations of the island ... the knowledge of the island and the reports obtained by Captain Whitney during his dangerous travels through the island of Puerto Rico, were in all concepts entirely exact and of great value to me.

Whitney's maps became key to the American plan for the occupation of the island of Puerto Rico. Based on the new information, General Nelson A. Miles altered his landing plans. Instead of landing in the east, in Fajardo, he decided to continue southward, landing in the port of Guánica. Brief maneuvering in Fajardo and the taking of the lighthouse there distracted the Spanish authorities, who had learned of the primary plan of the invasion through Fajardo and distributed their main defensive forces along this area and the principal port of San Juan.

Whitney's grave, placed near the Spanish-American war memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, reflects his important role in the successful occupation of Puerto Rico by the U.S. Army in 1898. The epitaph, while noting lifelong service, stresses this early and important contribution:

Henry Howard Whitney, No. 3640 Class of 1892, died on April 2, 1949 in Madison, New Jersey, at the age of 82. The 32 years of service Brigadier General Henry Howard Whitney gave to the United States Army and his country were repleat with many valorous exploits, one of which led to the successful conquest of a country and saved thousands of lives without endangering that of anyone except his own.

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Alan Sweeney

## A Splendid Little War

Participation by members of the Lackawanna (County) Historical Society, located in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in the Save Our Sculpture (SOS) initiative sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution provided the impetus for commemorating the Spanish-American War and specifically the sinking of the battleship *Maine*. We focused on restoring the city's Maine Memorial monument and on a public presentation we titled "A Splendid Little War." While conducting the SOS assessment of all sculptures and monuments in Lackawanna County, we realized that the Battleship Maine Memorial, in a local park, did not fall under the SOS project guidelines. As a commemorative work, it could not be included in the national initiative. We thought that this and other memorials were special to our local area, so we included them in a county level assessment of sculptures and monuments.

From this background, we formed the Spanish-American War Centennial Committee as a working committee of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

Made up of local historians, military history buffs, and a few collegiate history majors, the committee planned a two-part event which we felt would create an awareness for this part of American history and would result in the eventual restoration of the Maine Memorial. We planned a re-dedication of the Memorial including speakers and a re-enactment contingent. We also began a fund-raising campaign for the monument's restoration.

The first desire of the committee was to commemorate the loss of life on the night of February 15, 1898, when *Maine* sank in Cuba's Havana har-



bor. Fourteen years later, the ship was raised from the harbor and relics distributed to cities around the U.S. The city of Scranton was included in this largess. The local chapter of the Naval League, Admiral Dahlgren Section secured a port cover and a ten-inch shell from *Maine*. The artifacts were then mounted on a custom designed granite base. The shell was held in place on the monument's top section by three amphibious serpents. The port cover was affixed on the west face and the east face bore a raised seal of *Maine*. A bronze tablet was mounted on the front.

The tablet states:

This ten inch shell and bronze port cover, recovered from the wreck of the Battleship *Maine*, after having been submerged fourteen years in the waters of Havana Harbor, are here mounted as a memorial to the brave officers and seamen who lost their lives on the night of February 15, 1898 as they slept awaiting the call to duty. Presented by the U.S. Government to the Admiral Dahlgren Section, Navy League U.S. Dedicated to the City of Scranton on Memorial Day 1913.

Scranton was one of 400 communities to receive artifacts from the sunken warship, according to the May 31, 1913 *Scranton Tribune—Republican*. More than 20,000 people attended the memorial's dedication in Nay Aug Park on Memorial Day 1913. Of course, many veterans of the Civil War and the Spanish-American War were still living and active in the Grand Army of the Republic or the Military Order of the Serpent.

Our 1998 President's Day Weekend re-dedication ceremony brought out more than 100 people to Nay Aug Park. We chose Sunday, February 15th because it coincided with the date on which the *Maine* sank in 1898. Our local Marine Corps League and Naval Reserve units presented the colors and conducted the naval bell ceremony to honor the dead. This was followed by a volley of fire, then taps. Laying a wreath on the monument concluded the ceremony.

The second half of the program moved indoors to the University of Scranton. About 175 people attended this segment of the memorial program. Robert Hueston, Professor of History, presented an overview of the war from a national perspective. He supported the theory that an internal explosion caused the warship to sink. I then gave a slide presentation on the formation of the local 13th Regiment from its beginning in 1877 as the Citizens Protection Corps. The Regiment was called to active duty at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. Attached to the First Division, Second Army Corps at Mount Gretna, PA

then ordered to Camp Alger, VA, then on to Camp Meade, PA, the regiment mustered out of service on March 11, 1899, at Camp MacKenzie, GA. It was a sore disappointment to every man in the regiment not to see active service at the front.

Local historian Joseph Long presented a display of Spanish-American War artifacts and memorabilia housed at our local Grand Army of the Republic Museum. He then introduced military reenactors representing circa 1898 National Guardsmen or regular Army who explained their uniforms, arms, and accouterments to the audience. As the program drew to a close, representatives from Lackawanna County and the City of Scranton presented proclamations declaring the week of February 15, 1998 "Remember the *Maine* Week." Scranton Postmaster Timothy B. Primerano presented the organizing committee and the Lackawanna Historical Society with a framed enlargement of the "Remember the Maine" stamp scheduled for first-day-of issue the next day in Key West, FL. The monument re-dedication ceremony received extensive television news coverage. The lecture portion was written up in the Scranton newspaper.

Our purpose was not only to create awareness of the Spanish-American War, but also to bring to the forefront the need for caring for our community's public sculptures and monuments. The *Maine* Memorial has deteriorated since its creation in 1913. The granite base needs new joint compound and cleaning while the patina on the bronze plaque needs evaluation. The port cover and serpents have been painted an odd yellow-beige and the ten-inch shell is in a silver paint. The Spanish-American War Centennial Committee has adopted the monument and we have begun a grass roots fund raising project to obtain the \$2400 needed to rehabilitate the monument. School children, Scout troops, veterans organizations, service clubs, and the public have participated in contributing to this restoration project. Our hope is to raise the necessary funds to have the Battleship *Maine* Memorial restored during this centennial year. We believe that with a little work today, the monument will be around for future generations to enjoy and commemorate that "Splendid Little War."

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Photo courtesy Ella Rayburn, Curator, Steamtown NHS.