

Contemporary photography and text create a portrait of men at work. Discussions of how pressure chambers prevented sandhogs from getting the bends are accompanied with images of them emerging from the chambers. Streets were peeled back and trenches dug while teams performed cut-and-cover work in traffic, their hats seen just below grade. Throughout *Steel, Stone, and Backbone*, the effects of construction on the city are highlighted, with pictures of buildings shored up with makeshift wooden scaffolding, including a building with a sign announcing "Business Going on as Usual."

The benefits of such dangerous work seem paltry—day laborer wages in 1915 were \$1.50 to \$2.50 per day—compared to the \$4.81 per day average of 1920. However, for a largely immigrant or migrant population lacking options, the opportunities outweighed the risks. Adjacent to a life-size cutout of a man with a shovel is a sign listing the prices of sundry items and services: an apple was 1¢, a haircut 25¢, a hat \$1.

The end of the exhibit illustrates the influence of the subway on the overall development of New York. When City Hall station opened October 27, 1904, people are shown hopping on the subway cars heading off to work and entertainment. The outer boroughs opened up to development and became accessible to the business centers of the city. The exhibit shows that the subway was integral to the city's growth.

The impact of the subway system extends beyond its speed and convenience. The system inspired music such as "Take the 'A' Train" and co-starred in memorable movies such as "On the Town." The subway defines New York and New Yorkers. *Steel, Stone, and Backbone* uses social and industrial history to provide interpretive insight while attaching human faces to an engineering feat that has become a cultural icon.

Brian D. Joyner
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Ironclad Evidence: Stories from the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia

The Mariners' Museum, Newport News, VA.
Curator: Anna Holloway

March 5, 2004-2005

From the moment the telegraphs began to clatter with news of the Civil War-ironclad duel in Hampton Roads, Virginia, on March 9, 1862, there began a non-stop river of ink written on the ships, the crews, the battle, and its influence on the course of naval architecture and war at sea. Why would the Mariners' Museum devote over 3,000 square feet to retelling a story that has been retold almost every year for the last 140 years?

The museum and its partners are now committed to establishing a \$30 million *USS Monitor Center* dedicated to the display and interpretation of the history of the *USS Monitor* and the 50-plus *Monitor*-type ironclads after the Battle of Hampton Roads. *Ironclad Evidence: Stories from the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia*, is the Mariners' Museum's first large-scale exhibit dedicated solely to that pivotal naval engagement in 1862. It ties the museum's previous *Monitor* artifact displays with the opening of the center's 40,000 square-foot exhibition and conservation wing in 2007.

The exhibit is divided into four broad themes that examine ship construction, life on board, the battle, and the subsequent loss of both the *Monitor* and the *Virginia*. Through original ship drawings, artwork, models, and personal accoutrements and correspondence, the curator tells the stories of the combatants. Unfortunately, little of the *Virginia* has survived—a piece of iron plate here, some wood fragments there, and more than enough artifacts with dubious provenance—only 5 of the 40 ship-related artifacts are from the *Virginia*.

The *Monitor*'s anchor at the exhibit's entrance is the herald of what follows. The most interesting



The USS Monitor crew represented a cross section of the seafaring community. Many were foreign-born sailors, some had little maritime training; others were former slaves. Despite this diversity, all labored together to give the USS Monitor a place in history when it battled with the CSS Virginia and marked the first instance in maritime history that two ironclad ships waged war. (Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum)



The anchor and anchor chain from the USS Monitor are displayed together at the entrance to the Ironclad Evidence exhibit. (Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum)

objects on display are a large section of iron deck-plate, available to satisfy tactile urges, and the red-lens signal lantern hoisted as the distress call of the sinking *Monitor*. During my turn through the exhibit, it seemed that the two small, working models of naval engineer John Ericsson's side-lever main engine and turret-rotating machinery elicited the most excitement from the young visitors.

Indeed, what animates this exhibit is the fact that only a short walk from these working models are the conservation tanks that hold the ship's main engine and turret. When out of conservation, the turret (with guns) and main engine, the innovative

essence of the *Monitor*, will be the centerpieces of the *USS Monitor Center*. Although it will be many years before our children and grandchildren see these pieces in a dry environment, the painstaking and fascinating process of their preservation will become a part of the story of the *Monitor*.

The Mariners' Museum was founded in 1930 with a mandate to preserve and interpret the "culture of the sea and its tributaries, its conquest by man, and its influence on civilization." It is one of the largest maritime museums in the world, and in 1998 Congress designated the Mariners' Museum and South Street Seaport Museum in New York as America's National Maritime Museum. This alliance enables the two institutions to share collections, exhibits, educational services, publications, and other endeavors.

In 1987, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) selected the Mariners' Museum as the custodian for the *USS Monitor* archives and artifacts. Since that time the museum, NOAA, and the U.S. Navy have worked to recover and conserve the largest collection of *Monitor*-related artifacts in the world.

Ironclad Evidence offers a glimpse of a significant event in military history and the future interpretation and conservation center that will be anchored, literally and figuratively, by the archeological artifacts. Modern technology allows us to explore, recover, and preserve artifacts and occasionally entire ships from great ocean depths. Museum curators have expanded the way that museums present the history of seafaring and war at sea and educate not only through artworks, models, and manuscripts, but also with the tangible evidence of the vessels and crews. Into our understanding and appreciation of artistic technique, folkways, and philosophical musings on war and peace, curators weave archeology, architecture, engineering, chemistry, and even a little alchemy.

Ironclad Evidence uses all of these disciplines effectively in the stories it tells and the evidence it offers. But the exhibit's greatest accomplishment, perhaps, is the glimpse it provides of the new center for research, interpretation, and exhibition dedicated to one of the pivotal points in the history of modern warfare.

W. Wilson West, Jr.
Toronto, Canada

*Ours to Fight For: American Jews
in the Second World War*

Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial
to the Holocaust, New York, NY. Project Director:
Louis D. Levine; Curator: Bonnie Gurewitsch

November 11, 2003–December 2005

Told almost entirely through the voices of American servicemen, *Ours to Fight For: American Jews in the Second World War* explores the story of Jewish participation in World War II. While the experience of American soldiers during World War II has been widely treated in recent years, little has been done on the experience of Jewish Americans in the war effort, both on and off the battlefield. The Museum of Jewish Heritage, dedicated to the history of the Jewish people throughout the 20th century, is an appropriate venue for this topic.

During World War II, 550,000 Jews served in all branches of the United States armed forces; 40,000 were wounded and 11,000 lost their lives. The exhibit team understood the importance of making personal connections to the individuals behind these statistics, bringing the potentially intimidating narrative to life. This was achieved by focusing on personal details through quotes, audio- and videotaped oral histories, and roughly 450 personal artifacts.



The transition from civilian to military life is demonstrated through the change in clothing and personal effects in *Ours to Fight For*, with commentary by former New York City mayor Ed Koch. (Courtesy of the Museum of Jewish Heritage)



Kiosks provide visitors with a place to record memories of World War II or impressions of the exhibit and leave pictures related to the Jewish war effort. (Courtesy of the Museum of Jewish Heritage)

Most impressive and unusual for a museum exhibition was the lack of interpretive text accompanying the narratives. The label text was almost entirely based on interviews with about 450 veterans. The exhibit developers allowed visitors to simply read or listen to first-person accounts.

The show is divided into several themes: Combat on Land, Combat at Sea, Combat in the Air, Prisoners of War, Behind the Lines, Homefront Theater, The Final Months, and Other Voices. It begins with the attack on Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt's decision to enter the war, interpreted through film and still photography. The wall text, one of the very few curatorial labels, explains the exhibit—

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