

"Spring Bus Tour to D.C. Naval History Sites"
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By Jay A. Graybeal

The Historical Society will sponsor its spring bus tour to several Naval historical sites in Washington on Thursday, May 23rd. The tour will depart from the Ascension Church parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Our first stop will be the Navy Yard Museum. A museum brochure notes that the Navy Museum opened in 1963 to collect, preserve, and display naval artifacts, models, documents, and fine art. Through its exhibits, the Museum chronicles the history of the United States Navy from the Revolution to the present. The exhibits commemorate the Navy's wartime heroes and battles as well as its peacetime contributions in such fields as exploration, diplomacy, space flight, navigation, and humanitarian service. Tools, equipment, and personal materials offer the visitor a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of naval customs, way of life, and contributions to society.

Located in the historic Washington Navy Yard, The Navy Museum is housed in the former Breech Mechanism Shop of the old Gun Factory. Built between 1887 and 1899, the 600-foot building was one of several shops in the Yard that produced ordnance, missile components, and electronic equipment until 1962.

Following a guided tour, we will have an hour of free time to visit the museum annex that houses exhibits on submarine history; the ex U.S.S. Barry, a 1950s destroyer; the Navy Art Gallery, which displays a selection of naval art. The group will meet at 12:00N for an all you can eat buffet lunch at the Officer's Club. At 1:00 we will have a guided tour of the Marine Corps Museum, which presents exhibits of Marine Corps history from the Revolution to the present day.

The final stop will be the restored home of Naval hero Stephen Decatur, operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A brochure for the site describes the interesting history of the property: Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who introduced classicism to American architecture, provided a "rational" design for the residence of Commodore Stephen Decatur, adulated for his victories fighting the British in the War of 1812 and pirates in the Barbary Wars. The Decaturs moved into their elegant new townhouse in 1819, but their stay was brief. On March 22, 1820, Stephen Decatur was shot in a duel and brought back to his house to die.

Grief-stricken and in debt, Susan Decatur rented the house to a series of tenants-the French, Russian and English ministers, and secretaries of state Henry Clay, Martin Van Buren and Edward Livingston. Millionaire-hotelier John Gadsby purchased the estate in 1842; on his death, the house was again tented. Louisiana Senator Judah P. Benjamin was living in the house when the Civil War broke out, and left to become Secretary of War for the Confederacy. After Benjamin's departure, Decatur House became a clothing depot for the Union Army.

In 1871, Edward F. Beale, California adventurer and diplomat, purchased Decatur House. He and his wife added such improvements as gaslights and a parquet floor featuring the Great Seal of California, and they entertained lavishly.

In 1902, the house passed to Truxtun Beale, a diplomat, whose second wife, Marie Oge Beale, made her mark as a Washington hostess. Her annual dinner for the diplomatic corps was, for many years, the

highlight of the social season. Mrs. Beale carefully preserved the house and bequeathed it to the National Trust in 1956.

Located near the White House, this National Historic Landmark has served as a social and political center in the federal city for more than 170 years. Today, visitors to this mansion step into two important epochs in American history: the ground-floor family rooms reflect the Decatur's Federal era lifestyle (1820), and the formal parlors on the second floor remain much as they were during the Beales' Victorian-era residency.

The tour will return to Westminster at 5:30 p. m. Tour fees are \$25 for Historical Society members and \$30 for non-members and include all transportation, meal and admission costs. Reservations must be made by May 17th: please call the Society at (410) 848-6494.

Photo Caption: An American battleship passes through the Panama Canal in c.1915 in this postcard view once owned by John L Schweigart. Naval historical sites will be the theme of the Historical Society's spring bus trip to Washington D.C. on Thursday, May 23rd. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection. Gift of Linda Rill, 1996.