

Museum spotlight, July 2021: Rob Gillette's saber



William Gillette was the youngest of six children. In 1862, his brother Rob joined the U.S. Army and earned his commission as a captain of Company K, 14th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. His unit fought at Antietam and he then marched his troops to Harpers Ferry, Virginia. There, Robert became critically ill and returned home, resigning his commission. Once recovered, he joined the U.S. Navy, serving as the assistant paymaster aboard the USS *Gettysburg*. In January of 1865, his ship participated in the Battle at Fort Fisher, North Carolina. The day after the battle was won, on January 16, 1865, he went ashore to inspect the fort. At that time, a couple of sailors, inebriated after the previous night's victory, accidentally walked into an unguarded munitions magazine with flaming torches. Rob Gillette was immediately killed in the explosion along with dozens of his fellow servicemen.

Rob is buried with his family at the Riverside Cemetery in Farmington, Connecticut. This is his saber, manufactured for the U.S. Navy by Tiffany & Co. The saber was sent to Sophia Stoddard, who was Robert's fiancée. Sophia married and later divorced Edward Gillette, William's and Robert's brother. Upon her death, Sophia's daughter, Elizabeth Ives "Ivy" Gillette, sent Robert's belongings to William. Robert's picture, officer's uniform and the saber are on display in the third floor of Gillette Castle.

