

July

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San Diego Chapter Sons of the American Revolution Monthly Digest



July 4th Weekend

We had a very busy 4th of July weekend with the Coronado 4th of July Parade along with our manned display at the House of Spain. The following two days our displays were up at both the House of USA and House of Spain in Balboa Park.



Upper left and right, Andrew Fagen, Duncan Campbell, Peter Fagen, Michael Hirman and Rob Welch. Upper right, some of the crowd along the parade route.

Local news outlets reported a crowd of over 100,000 people! The lengthy route was packed on both sides of Orange Ave. from near the Ferry Landing to near the Hotel Del.

There was also an information table in front of the House of Spain and the following days the popup was added for our display at the House of USA.



Bennington Memorial

On Saturday, 19 July 2025, Compatriot Rob Welch laid a wreath on behalf of the AZSSAR during the memorial service honoring the 65 sailors who lost their lives during the tragic explosion and fire aboard the USS Bennington on the 21 July 1905. Floral wreaths were also presented by other participating organizations including CASSAR, DAR, SUVCW, and DUVCW.

The welcome was done by Kathleen Winchester, President of the Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War. Invocation and Benediction was done by Michelle Johnson, DAR/San Diego Past Regent. The feature speaker was Clay Hoffman, Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War. Clay's presentation was entitled *"Remembering the Bennington and Honoring Paymaster Clerk, Henry Otto Metius, USN"*. At age 60, Henry, now a Paymaster Officer, was the oldest sailor to die of wounds caused by the explosion. He had served in the Navy and Marines for over 41 years, yet his widow was not intitled to have a pension at the time of his death.

Color Guard and Musket 3 Volley Salute was by CASSAR/San Diego Chapter. Taps was performed by Fred Hall, Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War. Closing remarks were made by CASSAR/San Diego Chapter President Jim McAdory. In addition to the wreath presentations, American Flags and carnations were placed on each individual sailor's gravestone.

The USS Bennington (PG-4) was the first US warship named after the Revolutionary War "Battle of Bennington" which occurred on 16 August 1777 near Bennington, Vermont. It was constructed in the 19th century and served through the early 20th century. The gunboat operated along the coasts of North and South America, with frequent visits to Hawaii. The Bennington also participated in the Philippine Insurrection from 1899 to 1901.

On the morning of July 21, 1905, the ship suffered an explosion due to a ruptured boiler off the coast of San Diego, California. This resulted in fire, seawater, and scalding steam to infiltrate the vessel. The explosion almost immediately killed 33 men while injuring others. The boiler explosion ultimately resulted in the deaths of 65 crew members and injured numerous others.

The boiler explosion onboard the USS Bennington had a significant impact on the U.S. Navy. An investigation led to the revision of Naval safety regulations to include more rigorous boiler inspections and maintenance. In addition, boiler construction for ships were also improved which significantly improved the safety of future crew members onboard U.S. Naval ships.

