

= USS Bennington (PG @-@ 4) =

USS Bennington (Gunboat No. 4 / PG @-@ 43) was a member of the Yorktown class of steel @-@ hulled , twin @-@ screw gunboats in the United States Navy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries . She was the first U.S. Navy ship named in honor of the town of Bennington , Vermont , site of the Battle of Bennington in the American Revolutionary War .

The contract to build Bennington was awarded to N. F. Palmer & Co. of Philadelphia in November 1887 . Her hull was subcontracted to the Delaware River Iron Shipbuilding & Engine Works which laid down Bennington 's keel in June 1888 . Bennington was launched in June 1890 . She was just over 244 feet (74 m) long and 36 feet (11 m) abeam and displaced 1 @,@ 710 long tons (1 @,@ 740 t) . She was equipped with two steam engines which were supplemented with three schooner @-@ rigged masts . The ship 's main battery consisted of six 6 @-@ inch (15 @.@ 2 cm) guns and was augmented by an assortment of smaller caliber guns .

After her June 1891 commissioning , Bennington was attached to the Squadron of Evolution and for its cruise to South America . The gunboat made two Mediterranean tours between 1892 and 1894 , after which she was assigned to the duties in the Pacific . She sailed the Pacific coasts of North and Central America and spent time in the Hawaiian Islands to protect American interests there . On her way to support United States Army operations of the Philippine ? American War , Bennington claimed Wake Island for the United States . After two years in the Philippines , she returned to the United States and was decommissioned for 18 months of repairs and refitting . After her March 1903 re @-@ commissioning , most of the next two years were spent patrolling the Pacific coasts of North and South America .

On 21 July 1905 at San Diego , California , Bennington suffered a boiler explosion , that killed 66 men and injured nearly everyone else on board . Shortly after the explosion , a tug beached the ship to prevent her from sinking . Eleven men were awarded the Medal of Honor for " extraordinary heroism " in the aftermath of the explosion . After Bennington was refloated , the damage was deemed too extensive to repair and the ship was decommissioned in September . The ship was sold for scrap in 1910 , but instead served as a water barge for the Matson Line at Honolulu from 1912 . In 1924 , the former Bennington was scuttled off the coast of Oahu .

= = Design and construction = =

The Yorktown class gunboats ? unofficially considered third @-@ class cruisers ? were the product of a United States Navy design attempt to produce compact ships with good seakeeping abilities and , yet , able to carry a heavy battery . Bennington was authorized in the 1888 fiscal year , and the contract for her construction was awarded to N. F. Palmer & Co. of Chester , Pennsylvania . The hull for Bennington was subcontracted to the Delaware River Iron Shipbuilding & Engine Works and built to the Navy 's Bureau of Construction and Repair design . The mechanical design was patterned after the layout for her older sister ship Yorktown developed by William Cramp & Sons .

Bennington 's keel was laid down in June 1888 , and the ship was launched on 3 June 1890 , sponsored by Anne Aston , the daughter of Rear Admiral Ralph Aston , Chief Engineer of the U.S. Navy .

= = = Layout = = =

As built , Bennington was 244 feet 5 inches (74 @.@ 50 m) in length and 36 feet (11 m) abeam . Her steel hull had an average draft of 14 feet (4 m) , which was expected to give her the ability to escape from larger ships into shallow water . At the waterline was a turtleback deck of ? -inch (9 @.@ 5 mm) steel that formed a watertight seal over the lower spaces . The deck had a crown at the level of the waterline and curved downwards to 3 feet (0 @.@ 9 m) below the waterline at the sides of the ship . Below this armored deck were twelve compartments separated by watertight bulkheads ; the spaces above were equipped with watertight doors intended to be closed during battle .

Above the armored deck , Bennington had forecastle and poop decks with an open gun deck that spanned the length of the ship between them . The conning tower was located forward on the forecastle deck and was oval @-@ shaped to deflect shot . It was outfitted with a steam @-@ powered Ship 's wheel , an engine order telegraph , and speaking tubes ; it was protected by 2 inches (51 mm) of steel armor plate .

= = = Propulsion = = =

Bennington was powered by two triple @-@ expansion steam engines which each drove one of the pair of 10 @. @ 5 @-@ foot (3 @. @ 2 m) , three @-@ bladed screw propellers . The cylinders of each engine were 22 , 31 , and 51 inches (56 , 79 , and 130 cm) in diameter and had a 30 @-@ inch (76 cm) stroke . Each engine was rated at 3 @, @ 400 indicated horsepower (2 @, @ 500 kW) and together were designed to move the ship at 16 knots (30 km / h) , though the ship exceeded that in her trials , topping out at 17 @. @ 5 knots (32 @. @ 4 km / h) .

The engines , situated in separate watertight compartments , were each fed by a pair of coal @-@ fired boilers . Each boiler was horizontally mounted and was 9 feet 6 inches (2 @. @ 90 m) in diameter and 17 feet 6 inches (5 @. @ 33 m) in length with a total grate area of 220 square inches (1 @, @ 400 cm²) . Bennington 's coal bunkers could carry up to 400 long tons (410 t) of fuel , and were shielded from " shot and shell " . At a near top @-@ speed of 16 knots , the ship could cover 2 @, @ 800 nautical miles (5 @, @ 200 km) in 6 ½ days ; at the more economical speed of 8 knots (15 km / h) she could cruise 12 @, @ 000 nautical miles (22 @, @ 000 km) over 62 days .

To supplement her steam power plant , Bennington was built with three masts that were schooner @-@ rigged . She had a total sail area of 6 @, @ 300 square feet (590 m²) . The steam and sail combination was expected to allow Bennington to remain at sea for months at a time during wartime .

= = = Armament = = =

Bennington 's main battery consisted of six 6 @-@ inch (152 mm) / 30 caliber Mark 3 guns , with each gun weighing in excess of 11 @, @ 000 pounds (5 @, @ 000 kg) . Two were mounted on the forecastle deck , two on the poop deck , and the other pair amidships on the gun deck . The two guns on the gun deck were mounted 10 feet (3 @. @ 0 m) above the waterline , while the other four were 18 feet (5 @. @ 5 m) above . The guns fired 105 @-@ pound (48 kg) armor @-@ piercing projectiles with a propellant charge weighing 18 @. @ 8 pounds (8 @. @ 5 kg) at 1 @, @ 950 feet per second (590 m / s) . At an elevation of 30 @. @ 2 ° , the guns had a range of 18 @, @ 000 yards (16 @, @ 000 m) . Each gun was shielded with steel plating 3 inches (76 mm) thick .

Bennington 's secondary battery consisted of four 6 @-@ pounder (57 mm (2 @. @ 24 in)) guns , and four 1 @-@ pounder (37 mm (1 @. @ 46 in)) guns . Both were based on designs of the French arms company Hotchkiss . According to a 1902 Bureau of Ordnance publication , an armor @-@ piercing round fired from a 6 @-@ pounder gun could penetrate 2 inches (51 mm) of armor at a distance of 1 @, @ 000 yards (910 m) .

= = Early career = =

USS Bennington (Gunboat No. 4) was commissioned at the New York Navy Yard on 20 June 1891 under the command of Commander Royal B. Bradford . As one of the first steel @-@ hulled gunboats of the " New Navy " , Bennington was assigned to the Squadron of Evolution , a unit made up entirely of " New Navy " ships that was established to test and perfect tactics and doctrine developed at the Naval War College . In addition to operating as the first tactical fleet of the U.S. Navy , the squadron performed the secondary mission of cruising to foreign ports to demonstrate to the world the types of modern ships the United States was capable of building . In that latter role , Bennington and the rest of the squadron departed New York on 19 November 1891 for the unit 's cruise to Brazil .

On 5 May 1892 , Bennington was transferred to the South Atlantic Squadron and cruised South American waters until 19 July . Setting out from Bahia , Brazil , the gunboat visited Spanish and Italian ports during the 400th anniversary celebration of Columbus ' voyage to the western hemisphere . She concluded the European portion of those festivities on 18 February 1893 when she departed Cadiz , with a replica of Columbus ' s caravel Pinta in tow for Cuba . After stops in the Canary Islands , the Netherlands West Indies , and Havana , the gunboat arrived back in the United States at Hampton Roads , Virginia , on 26 March .

Following participation in the 1893 International Naval Review at Hampton Roads , Bennington moved north for operations along the coast of New England before beginning preparations for foreign service . To this end , she entered the New York Navy Yard on 24 May and remained there until 6 August . The ship departed New York on the 6th and arrived in Lisbon on the 18th . She cruised the Mediterranean , visiting various ports along its shores , for the next six months . In February 1894 , orders arrived sending her to the Pacific . On the 18th , the gunboat transited the Strait of Gibraltar and headed back across the Atlantic . After steaming around Cape Horn and stopping at several Latin American ports , the warship finally arrived at the Mare Island Navy Yard on 30 April .

= = Pacific Duty = =

Bennington served In the Pacific for a little more than four years . For the most part , her duty consisted of cruising along the west coast protecting American interests in Latin America during the numerous political upheavals that occurred at that time in Central and South America . In addition , she made two extended cruises to the Hawaiian Islands . The first came after a group of pro @-@ royalists attempted in January 1895 to stage a counter coup against the provisional government of the islands . Bennington departed Mare Island on 28 May , arrived at Honolulu on 5 June , and spent the next nine months protecting American interests in the islands . On 5 March 1896 , she departed Honolulu , bound for San Francisco where she arrived on 16 March . The following day , the warship entered the Mare Island Navy Yard for five months of repairs .

On 8 August , she resumed cruises along the west coast . That employment lasted a year and a week . On 14 August 1897 , Bennington headed back to Hawaii . She arrived in Lahaina Roads on 27 September and reached Honolulu on the 30th . Except for a six @-@ day cruise back to Lahaina in March 1898 , the gunboat remained at Honolulu for just over nine months .

At the outbreak of the Spanish ? American War , Bennington was in Hawaiian waters . After spending the first two months of the war in the Hawaiian Islands , she departed Honolulu on 16 June and steamed to the west coast of the United States . The warship arrived in San Francisco on 26 June and patrolled the California coast for the remainder of hostilities . On 18 September , Bennington stood out of San Francisco on her way ultimately to the Philippines . She arrived in Hawaii on 27 September and devoted a little over three months to operations in nearby waters . On 7 January 1899 , she resumed her voyage west . Ten days out of Honolulu , she stopped at Wake Island . There Commander Edward D. Taussig , Bennington ' s commander , under direct orders from President William McKinley claimed the atoll for the United States , despite protests from Germany (which considered the island group a part of its claim of the Marshall Islands) . Wake eventually became an important link in the Honolulu ? Manila trans @-@ Pacific cable . Bennington later made a stop at San Luis d 'Apra , Guam , from 23 January to 15 February where Commander (later Rear Admiral) Taussig accepted the relinquishment of Guam from her Spanish colonial governor . Taussig briefly served as the first naval governor of Guam and established a native ruling council , before continuing on to Manila where Bennington arrived on 22 February .

= = Philippine ? American War = =

For a little more than two years after her February 1899 arrival , Bennington served in the Philippine Islands in support of the Army ' s campaigns during the Philippine ? American War . For the most part , her service in the islands consisted of patrol and escort duty ? preventing rebel movement and

stopping the importation of arms , as well as seeing American troops and supplies safely between the islands . Occasionally , Bennington did see action . On 10 September , she shelled a fort near Legaspi on the southeastern coast of Luzon . Two days later , she captured and destroyed the insurgent vessel Parao . Between 7 and 9 November , the warship supported an Army landing at San Fabian on the shores of Lingayen Gulf in northwestern Luzon . The gunboat began a four @-@ month assignment as station ship at Cebu on 26 November and concluded that duty on 19 March 1900 .

After visiting Cavite on Luzon , the gunboat headed for Japan on 3 April and underwent repairs there from 9 April to 19 May before heading back to the Philippines . The warship arrived at Cavite on 27 May and resumed patrols on 3 June . She spent another seven months conducting patrols in the Philippines and supporting the Army ' s operations in the island chain . On 3 January 1901 , she departed Cavite and shaped a course for Hong Kong . The gunboat arrived in that British colony on the 6th and began over six months of repairs . At the completion of that work , she departed Hong Kong on 25 June . After a visit to Shanghai , the warship headed back to the United States in July and arrived at the Mare Island Navy Yard on 19 August . She was decommissioned there on 5 September 1901 .

While she was out of commission at Mare Island , Bennington was refitted . A pilothouse that had been added on top of her bridge and a spotlight platform on her bow ? both added in 1893 ? 94 ? were removed . Bennington ' s mainmast was also removed , leaving her as a two @-@ mast rig . In addition , two tall ventilation cowls were added immediately behind the bridge . After 18 months of inactivity , Bennington was recommissioned on 2 March 1903 under the command of Commander Chauncey Thomas .

Over the next 27 months , Bennington cruised in the eastern Pacific along the coasts of North and South America . The warship visited Alaskan ports in the summer of 1903 and the coast of Central America the following fall and winter . In May 1904 , she steamed to Hawaii and then proceeded to the Aleutians in June . The winter of 1904 and 1905 saw her voyage south for visits to Pacific ports in Central and South America . In February 1905 , she departed San Francisco for a two @-@ month cruise to the Hawaiian Islands , returning to San Diego on 19 July , after a difficult 17 @-@ day voyage .

= = Boiler explosion = =

On the morning of 21 July 1905 , Bennington ' s crew was preparing her to sail to the aid of the monitor Wyoming which had broken down and was in need of a tow . After her crew had finished the difficult task of coaling the ship that morning , most of them were belowdecks cleaning themselves from the dirty job . Unbeknownst to anyone on board , three problems with one of Bennington ' s boilers ? oily feed water , an improperly closed steam valve , and a faulty steam gauge ? were conspiring against them . At about 10 : 30 , excessive steam pressure in the boiler resulted in a boiler explosion that rocked the ship , sending men and equipment flying into the air . The escaping steam sprayed through the living compartments and decks . The explosion opened Bennington ' s hull to the sea , and she began to list to starboard . Quick actions by the tug Santa Fe ? taking Bennington under tow and beaching her ? almost certainly saved the gunboat from sinking .

The combination of the explosion and the scalding steam killed a number of men outright and left others mortally wounded ; the final death toll was one officer and sixty @-@ five men , making it one of the U.S. Navy ' s worst peacetime disasters . Nearly all of the forty @-@ six who survived had an injury of some sort ; eleven of the survivors were awarded the Medal of Honor for " extraordinary heroism displayed at the time of the explosion " . One of the survivors was John Henry Turpin , who had also survived the explosion of Maine in Havana in February 1898 and was , reportedly , the only man to survive both explosions . The sheer number of casualties ? the death toll exceeded the U.S. Navy ' s death toll for the entirety of the Spanish ? American War ? overwhelmed San Diego ' s medical facilities , and many burn victims had to be cared for in makeshift facilities tended by volunteers .

The number of dead also taxed the morticians in San Diego , who were hard @-@ pressed to

prepare all of the victims for burial . On 23 July , two days after the explosion , the majority of those killed were buried in the cemetery at Fort Rosecrans . The victims are commemorated by the USS Bennington Monument , a 60 @-@ foot (18 m) granite obelisk dedicated in the cemetery on 7 January 1908 .

In spite of rumors of misconduct by Bennington 's engineering crewmen , an official investigation concluded that the explosion was not due to negligence on the part of the crew .

= = = List of Medal of Honor recipients from explosion = = =

The eleven men who were awarded the Medal of Honor for " extraordinary heroism displayed at the time of the explosion " were :

Edward William Boers , Seaman

George F. Brock , Carpenter 's Mate Second Class

Raymond E. Davis , Quartermaster Third Class

John J. Clausey , Chief Gunner 's Mate

Willie Cronan , Boatswain 's Mate (retired as Lieutenant Commander (O @-@ 4) during World War II)

Emil Fredericksen , Watertender

Rade Grbitch , Seaman

Frank E. Hill , Ship 's Cook First Class

Oscar Frederick Nelson , Machinist 's Mate First Class

Otto Diller Schmidt , Seaman

William Sidney Shacklette , Hospital Steward

= = Disposition = =

After the explosion , Bennington was refloated and towed to the Mare Island Navy Yard . Because of the extent of the damages and the age of the ship , Bennington was not repaired but was instead decommissioned on 31 October 1905 . After five years of inactivity , Bennington was struck from the Naval Vessel Register on 10 September 1910 and sold for scrap on 14 November . Bennington was not scrapped but was purchased in 1913 by the Matson Line for use as a molasses barge . She was towed to Honolulu and remained in use there from 1913 until 1924 , when she was scuttled off Oahu .

= = Campaigns = =