

NEWS



THE
MARINERS'
MUSEUM

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Contacts: The Mariners' Museum, Justin Lyons
(757) 591-7738 or pr@mariner.org
NOAA, Michelle Fox
(757) 591-7352 or michelle.fox@noaa.gov

POCKET KNIVES, WOOL COAT, KEY, COINS, AND SILVERWARE SOME OF MANY ARTIFACTS RECOVERED DURING EXCAVATION INSIDE *MONITOR'S* TURRET

Archaeologists and conservators from Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and The Mariners' Museum have recovered a wide array of artifacts that range from clothing to cannon parts after weeks of digging through more than four feet of 140-year-old silt that filled the USS *Monitor* gun turret. The Civil War gun turret was recovered from the bottom of NOAA's *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary on Aug. 5, 2002, during a 41-day expedition that brought the turret to The Mariners' Museum for further excavation and conservation.

"The objects we are recovering, along with their locations within the turret, provide more insight into the sequence of events that occurred the night the *Monitor* sank," said John Broadwater, manager of NOAA's *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary and director of the turret excavation. "Over the next few months, we will complete the excavation, then remove the two 11-inch Dahlgren guns and their carriages from within the turret."

As the excavation team of NOAA and Museum archaeologists, scientists and conservators painstakingly searched the depths of the turret for artifacts, they recovered the skeletons of two *Monitor* sailors buried in the silt. The remains, originally discovered during the recovery expedition, were carefully removed and were sent to the Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, where scientists hope to identify each individual.

Since excavation efforts began in early August, archaeologists have discovered a number of artifacts that tell the human side of the *Monitor's* story in its legendary battle with the CSS *Virginia* on March 9, 1862. Some of the artifacts recovered include three silver spoons, a silver fork, two bone or ivory knife handles, fragments of a wool overcoat, a key, coins, a variety of uniform buttons, a hard

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rubber Goodyear comb, a gold ring, three shoes, one boot, fragments of a wooden cabinet and cannon implements such as worms, a sponge, rammers, brass and wooden blocks, and coal.

“The artifacts we are finding in the turret have been absolutely amazing,” said The Mariners’ Museum Conservator Wayne Lusardi. “We are literally digging through an inverted time capsule from 1862. These artifacts are slowly revealing to us and the world what life was like on one of the most historic naval vessels in this country’s history.”

The turret joins hundreds of other artifacts recovered from the *Monitor*, which are undergoing conservation at The Mariners’ Museum. The vessel’s engine, condenser, propeller, and propeller shaft are now on exhibit within the Museum’s *Monitor* Conservation Area. The turret is expected to take 12 to 15 years to conserve.

In 1987, The Mariners’ Museum was designated by the federal government as the custodian of the artifacts and archives of the USS *Monitor*. As custodian, The Mariners’ Museum is charged with housing artifacts and providing conservation, interpretation and education. These efforts will be greatly enhanced in 2007 when The Mariners’ Museum, in collaboration with NOAA, will open a new \$30 million USS *Monitor* Center. The USS *Monitor* Center will be home to the priceless artifacts recovered from the historic ship and a worldwide resource for exhibitions, conservation, research and education related to the *Monitor* and the larger story of the naval history of the Civil War.

More information about the sanctuary and its ongoing recovery efforts can be found online at <http://monitor.noaa.gov>. Information about the history of the *Monitor* and conservation and exhibition of the vessel’s artifacts and archives can be found online at <http://www.monitorcenter.org>.

NOAA’s National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) seeks to increase the public awareness of America’s maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, 13 national marine sanctuaries encompass more than 18,000 square miles of America’s ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources. In addition, the NMSP is now conducting a sanctuary designation process to incorporate the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve into the national sanctuary system. The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve would bring the total to 14.

NOAA’s National Ocean Service (NOS) manages the National Marine Sanctuary Program and is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving, and restoring the nation’s coasts and oceans. NOS balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats, and mitigating coastal hazards. To learn more about NOAA Ocean Service and NOAA’s National Marine Sanctuary Program, please visit <http://www.nos.noaa.gov>.

The Mariners’ Museum, an educational, non-profit institution accredited by the American Association of Museums, preserves and interprets maritime history through an international collection of ship models, figureheads, paintings and other maritime artifacts. The Museum is open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily. Closed Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. For information, call (757) 596-2222 or (800) 581-7245, or write to The Mariners’ Museum, 100 Museum Drive, Newport News, Va. 23606. The Museum can be reached on the World Wide Web at www.mariner.org.