



Iowa Gold Star Military Museum Newsletter

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Spring Issue 2026

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LOOK WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE MUSEUM

- Movie Nights—See Page 4
- SAVE THE DATE: Memorial Day Event; Vietnam Living History Event; and Curator In the Park
- Something HERE

THE MUSEUM WILL BE CLOSED THE FOLLOWING DATES

- Saturday, April 4th—Observance of the Easter Holiday
- Saturday, May 23rd—Preparing for Memorial Day!

OTHER HOLIDAYS/OBSERVANCES

- April 5th—Easter Sunday
- April 24th—Arbor Day
- May 10th—Mother’s Day
- May 25th—MEMORIAL DAY/MUSEUM EVENT
- May 30th & 31st—Vietnam Living History EVENT
- June 14th—Flag Day
- June 21st—Father’s Day

MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday - Friday	9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Sunday - Monday	Closed



Iowa Gold Star Military Museum
 7105 Northwest 70th Avenue
 Johnston, Iowa 50131
 Phone: (515) 252-4531

MUSEUM STAFF

State Quartermaster.....COL. (Ret.) Michael J. Harris
 Museum Director Sherrie Colbert
 Museum Curator Michael W. Vogt
 Museum Guide..... Elizabeth “Beth” Burrow

Veterans Retiree Coffee Group

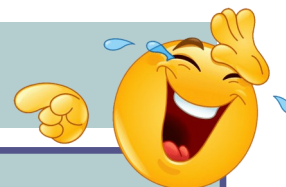
Wednesday would not be Wednesday without our Veterans Coffee Group! The smell of coffee brewing, story telling and the laughter that fills the air is tremendous! (We do have donuts!)

We would love for you to come out and participate in an informal gathering where you can build connections and share experiences with other veterans and retirees.

**Coffee starts at 0830 until about 1000.
Looking forward to meeting you!**



Just A Little Bit Funny



**April showers bring May flowers,
what do Mayflowers bring? Answer: Pilgrims**

**What do you get when you cross a tulip with a dog?
Answer: COLLIE-flower**

**What do you call it when fewer and fewer school kids go to
the playground? Answer: A RECESSION**

What bee keeps you healthy? Answer: VITAMIN BEE!

**When is the best time to buy a trampoline?
Answer: Spring time**

**I have a seat but no legs, and I travel without wheels. What
Am I? Answer: WHAT IS A CHAIR LIFT!**



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Every year, thousands of people visit the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum to learn about Iowa's heroes. The first person they see when they come through the door is a volunteer stationed at the front desk. This person will make sure each visitor leaves the museum with a greater understanding of military history and an appreciation for Iowa veterans. This is just one way our volunteers help us achieve our mission.

There are over seventy volunteers active at the Gold Star Museum, helping with everything we do. Besides manning the front desk, they work on exhibits, give tours, help run events, and maintain our collections behind the scenes. No matter where you look in the Gold Star Museum, you'll see a volunteer's impact.

If any of this interests you we encourage you to join us! Volunteering is a great and fulfilling way to give back to your community and meet new people. You can scan the QR code below to fill out a short application and get the ball rolling. You can also email elizabeth.burrow@iowa.gov to express interest and learn more.

Iowa Gold Star Military Museum
Volunteer Interest Form





Tour Season Starts NOW!

It's tour season at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum! We love seeing all the different groups visit us! With the warmer weather, the number of tour request increase. With the assistance of our wonderful museum tour guide volunteers, we are able to provide amazing experiences for veterans, people with disabilities, homeschool families, scout groups, international visitors and school or church groups. It never ceases to amaze me how any visitor can learn, explore and enjoy the IA Gold Star Military Museum! Our tours can also be adapted to concentrate on just one specific time frame or topic. Every Saturday, museum volunteer Bill Dyche handles the drop-in tours at 11:30AM with positive energy and amazing knowledge of our collections. Interested? Book a tour with Beth at Elizabeth.burrow@dpd.iowa.gov or Call Beth at 515-727-3216.

Tours: Each tour guide has their own style and things that they highlight to the group. Every time, visitors are appreciative of learning new things about our history. If you would like to become a tour guide, email Beth at Elizabeth.burrow@dpd.iowa.gov or scan the QR Code on Page 2 of this newsletter, and it will take you to the application



MOVIE NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM



Monday, 13 April

“The Russians Are Coming (1966)”

Monday, 11 May

“Tropic Thunder (2008)”

Monday, 8 June

“The Siege of Fire Base Gloria (1989)”

Movies will begin at 6:00 pm.

Bring your own snacks & clean your area before you leave.

Daughters of the American Revolution

Daughters of the American Revolution

Article by Kathy Sells
Chapter Regent

Patriots Then and Now: Celebrating America 250

The *Camp Dodge Chapter*, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), in partnership with the *Captain Peter Ankeny Society*, Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.), invites museum visitors to join us for a special display, "*Patriots Then and Now: Celebrating America 250.*"

Held in conjunction with the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum's annual Memorial Day event, this interactive display will honor the enduring legacy of the men and



women who secured American independence while connecting their sacrifice to those who have served our nation across generations.

Visitors are invited to explore engaging educational displays, including the Declaration of Independence and opportunities to learn more about the lives and contributions of America's Founding Fathers. Families will enjoy hands-on activities for children designed to introduce the story of our nation's founding in meaningful and memorable ways. Guests may take photos with life-size figures of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, bringing history to life in a unique and personal way.

Throughout the day, DAR members will share information about discovering and honoring Patriot ancestors, helping visitors connect their own family stories to the founding of our nation. As we approach the 250th anniversary of American independence, we invite you to join us in remembering the past, honoring service, and reflecting on the meaning of liberty today.

The DAR organization was founded in 1890 with the mission of promoting historic preservation, education and patriotism. To learn more about DAR go to DAR.org.

To learn more about the Camp Dodge Chapter, contact us at CampDodgeDAR@gmail.com.



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CURATOR CORNER

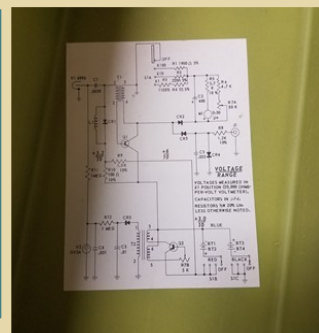
Cold War Radiological Survey Meter By Michael Vogt—Museum Curator

Following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in August 1945 the world entered the nuclear age. The development of nuclear weapons by the United States and the Soviet Union heightened Cold War tensions during the late 1950s and 1960s. The Office of Civil Defense provided emergency supplies in response to the possibility of nuclear attack. Among the museum's collections is a 1960s Electronic Radiological Survey Meter used to detect high levels of radiation.



Did You Know....

The Electronic Radiological Survey Meter contained a full electrical schematic kept inside the hollow battery cavity.



RESEARCH YOUR ANCESTRY AT THE MUSEUM

If you want to know more about your family's military history? The museum has information from the Civil War to World War I.

We have the enlistment and induction cards for Iowans from World War I and have the muster rolls and payroll records for Civil War veterans.

If you want to know more or schedule a time to meet with the curator, call 515-252-4531 or email us at: www.goldstarmuseum.iowa.gov.



The Museum Gift Shop

Looking for gifts for the military person in your life? Come visit Our Gift Shop!

We have something for everyone!



Book Review: The Mathews Men

Author: William Geroux

Reviewed by William Fanter

Mathew's Virginia is a census-designated place (CDP) and the county seat of Mathews County, Virginia located on the Chesapeake Bay. A CDP refers to a small concentration of people important only for purposes of keeping track of numbers of population. It is not an incorporated town or city constituting a governmental entity. Established around 1700, Mathews is a small, historic community known for its maritime history, shipbuilding, and "old-time" feel with no stoplights and no cops. It had a population of 525 as of the 2020 census. The Mayor would tell you it is today a maritime paradise which hosts the annual Tour de Chesapeake cycling event. Pretty good for the second smallest town in Virginia. I've never been to Mathews, neither the town, nor the county of the same name, which sits on the second peninsula, where Virginia extends out into Chesapeake Bay. I became attracted to the story of the Mathews Men by this book written by William Geroux, a reporter for the Richmond Time Dispatch for twenty-five years. It's yet another story about the extraordinary impact the Second World War had on a small community when six brothers from the same family die in the war albeit while serving on different ships and at different times. It's in the same league as the Bedford Boys of Bedford, Virginia, who lost 20 sons in the first wave at Omaha Beach. Of course, Iowa has its own loss with the Sullivan Brothers of Waterloo. These concentrated losses certainly illustrate a disparate impact of harm visited upon a community and many families during wartime.

But this book is much more than another story of extraordinary grief caused by the inequitable distribution of loss during war. It took me into the neglected and forgotten role the U.S. Merchant Marine played in winning WW II. If you are interested in the

history of that war you must read this book! Mathews County Virginia had been supplying seamen to shipping since even before the 1700s. The sons of this county are watermen, born to the sea and it's calling. "Farm, fish, or go to sea," was the mantra instilled in the boys of Mathews County. The county is a peninsula spreading deep into the Chesapeake Bay, in the shape of a tattered sail. It clings to the western shore of the Bay by a four-mile border with Gloucester County. The rest of Mathews's boundaries are tidal water. By 1941 as the war in Europe was about to explode into WW II, Mathews was an isolated, tightly knit county of about 7,500 people scattered in hamlets and tiny villages along the tidal creeks. Mathews was country. People knew each other and helped each other. The Hodges family, like the neighboring Hudgins family, raised mariners. Working the water came naturally. Children could handle boats, sail, and scull from the time they were ready for school. Young Mathews men with an urge to explore or simply nothing to lose could pack some clothes into a sea bag, present himself to a ship's captain at the dock, drop a family name, and change their lives forever. In 40 years they might retire as chief pilot on the Panama Canal.

They were bound to be ship captains not ordinary seamen. Captains became celebrities in Mathews. The family of Captain Jesse Hodges produced six extraordinary sea captains of the 14 children they reared. Some went to sea at age 14. There were about a dozen families in Mathews with a similar tradition. Gwynn's Island, also in Mathews County, was also a cradle of merchant sea captains since colonial times. In 1924 the Mathews Journal reported 24 Gwynn Islanders who were captains of Merchant Ships. The book follows the wartime lives of several Merchant Marine (MM) captains through the war as the author tells the story of the neglected Merchant Marine contributions

to victory.

Merchant mariners were civilians, sailing privately owned cargo ships from port to port around the globe. The U.S. Merchant Marine, was not a branch of the military. Many sailors joined the Merchant Marine when they were refused entry into the Navy as too young or were disqualified as 4-F (not acceptable). It was civilian and helped to build America into a global power. It always showed its true value to the country when the shooting started. Seamen from Mathews county could always get employment possessing the Mathews name. The MM was unionized and resisted consolidation with the Navy during wartime. Unions were afraid all the negotiating progress they had made in prior years would be destroyed in a merger with the Navy. Most Mathews men joined the MM when the United States was drawn into the war in 1941. They furnished a lifeline of supplies to England and then ally, Russia. This book is the story of the Merchant Marine service. It is the core of this book which provides a land lover from Iowa like me with such a fascinating education about the service of the coasters and their sons and daughters to this country. The German U-boats began to cross the Atlantic to American waters in 1942 when the hunting became so good as to justify the considerable crossing risk taken by the Admiral Donitz commanded Nazi fleet. U-boats were still primitive by today's standards but were effective in their goals preying upon a largely unprotected quarry. America was just coming into the war and most of its assets went to fighting ships not guns and butter for Allies. Factories were just getting up to wartime production, manpower was growing, and training was being implemented. We were getting better at meeting the challenges of making war.

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Book Review: The Mathews Men—CONTINUED

Author: William Geroux

Reviewed by William Fanter

Continued from page 7

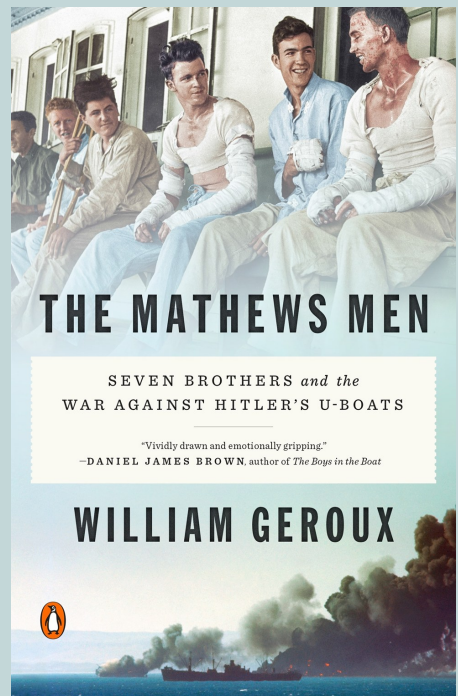
1942 was a tough year for the MM as America came up to speed with the production of escort vessels and liberty ships capable of higher speeds than the 9 knots generated by the old fleet. President Roosevelt called them Liberty Ships - big capacity haulers of the materials to make war. Initially American production took months to produce a liberty ship but by 1945 they could put one off the line in 4 days. We built over 2700 Liberty Ships in WW II. But how did we protect them from the U-boat menace? The first plan was to build them faster than the enemy could sink them. We also improved air power resistance with our fighters and bombers to interdict German scouting aircraft and torpedo bombers in the North Atlantic. The Nazi aircraft could cover thousands of miles looking for convoys and return to Norway bases for fueling and repair the same day. Our convoys grew bigger and faster and would be escorted from America to Greenland by U.S. ships and planes. But there was a problem when our escorts ran out of range. They had to return to



Greenland and Canada for fuel. British air cover could not pick up the convoys for another 600 miles leaving them vulnerable in “the gap” for 5 days enroute to England

or Russia. Moreover, America and England simply did not have the number of planes or ships to provide protection and the convoys became sitting ducks. But the tide turned in May of 1943 when Germany lost 41 subs in one month causing Admiral Donitz to withdraw a lot of U-boats from the Atlantic theater. May of 1943 was the “Stalingrad of the U-boat arm”. Germany never recovered from this crippling month. In 1942 U-boats operated freely in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Pacific and especially all along the East coast of the United States ranging down into the Caribbean around Cuba. They operated within a couple of miles of America’s eastern shore with many ships lost to torpedoes viewed by American tourists from land. The Caribbean was a particularly rich hunting ground for U-boats as they targeted oil tankers coming north from South America. Tankers were a valuable target. Numerous kills occurred just off of Jacksonville, Florida and even into the Gulf of Mexico near the mouth of the Mississippi River where tankers were heading for the refineries of Louisiana. Americans observed ships being torpedoed off Long Island. The lives of Merchant Mariners were fragile. Most ships were sunk within 15 minutes of being hit. Convoys could not slow down for rescue. Survivors had to contend with frigid waters, sharks, extended periods of raft survival at sea, and the slim odds of being found as a speck upon an enormous ocean. Until 1943 most convoys were unescorted. One source estimates that 730 merchant marine vessels were sunk in WW II. 6,800 sailors perished. Techniques for anti-submarine warfare were just being perfected. Depth charges, friendly spotter aircraft, and large, fast convoys were just emerging. The MM suffered one of the highest per capita casualty rates in the war, 1.32%, second only to the Marines. The MM death rate was twice that suffered by the Navy. General Douglas MacArthur called the merchant mariners the bravest

warriors in the conflict. There are few monuments to memorialize the service of American Merchant Mariners although America is still awakening to the incredible valor and patriotism of these sailors. A beautiful memorial was just dedicated in May 2025 to the Merchant Marine of the Pacific Theater. It was



erected by the Presidio Battle Monuments Commission in a park overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge where so many MM left for the ports of the Pacific. You can view the excellent 30 minute dedication on line where a 97 year old Merchant Mariner gave a wonderful tribute thanking the Commission for finally tolling the ship’s bell for the many lost Merchant Marines who gave their full measure. I am thankful to author, William Geroux, for correcting the oversight of neglecting long overdue recognition of the Merchant Marines. **This book would make a great movie!**



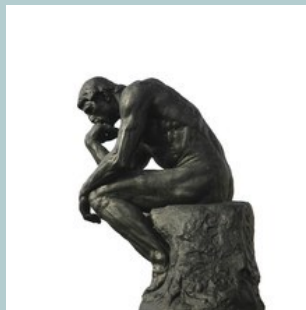
Test Your Knowledge

Famous Military Quotes

1. How many days did April have in the early Julian calendar?
2. What happened in the North Atlantic on April 14, 1912?
3. “Houston we have a problem” is a misquote from Apollo. What was really said on April 11, 1970?
4. “What happened in the Soviet Union on April 26, 1986?
5. What famous car did Ford unveil in April of 1964?
6. What began on April 19, 1775?
7. Which US president was inaugurated on April 30, 1789?
8. What famous duo began their notable travels on May 14, 1804?
9. What color was the Golden Gate Bridge when it opened on May 27, 1937?
10. What ship was torpedoed by a German submarine on May 7, 1915
11. What country did the Philippine Islands declare their independence from on June 12, 1898?

BONUS QUESTION

1. What was the name of the largest amphibious landing in history in Normandy, France on June 6, 1944?



Trivia Answers: 1. 29; 2. The sinking of the Titanic ; 3. “Houston, we’ve had a problem here”; 4. The Chernobyl nuclear explosion; 5. The Mustang; 6. The US Revolutionary War; 7. George Washington; 8. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark; 9. International Orange; 10. The Lusitania , 11. Spain; Bonus Question: D-Day