

Chapter 1

One of the most daunting tasks for a graduate student at the beginning of his or her program is deciding on a thesis topic. I was lucky that my topic came to me by happenstance. Throughout my career in history, I have always had a passion for military history, especially naval history. My initial thought was to try to tackle a subject related to the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis*, since my location at IUPUI would make research simpler. This ship was named after Indiana's capital and served through World War II before a Japanese submarine sank it near the end of the war in 1945. Unfortunately, naval historians have studied this story extensively and nothing short of claiming that aliens sank the ship would have produced an original interpretation.

At this point fate stepped in. My classmate, Melissa Fanning, is from the city of Vincennes, Indiana. She reminded me that this small city also had a heavy cruiser, the same type of ship as the *Indianapolis*, named after it during World War II. My curiosity was piqued. How could a small city in land-locked Indiana have a major warship named after it? As I began my research, I realized that this topic offered far more possibilities than a standard military history analysis of a warship.

Over the course of my young career, I have had the chance to discuss my passion for military history with classmates, professors, and fellow colleagues. These conversations usually are not very uplifting for me. Some colleagues consider military history a dying area, fit only for Civil War re-enactors and the History Channel. Others do not see it as relevant anymore, preferring labor or economic history. I do agree that military history needs an update, and this topic offered me a way to explore an area of military history from a different perspective. Too many military history books and topics

have become standardized into a formula. A book on a battle will include biographies of opposing generals, a description of the terrain, background on the battle in the greater scheme of the war it was a part of, and an account of the battle itself.¹ There is a trend towards writing about individual soldiers, such as Stephen Ambrose's wildly popular *Band of Brothers*, but historians need to dig a little deeper than that. I hope to accomplish this goal by investigating the story of the *Vincennes* and the greater military history of the city of Vincennes.

The United States Navy has accumulated many traditions over its two hundred year history. During the early to mid-twentieth century, one of those traditions was the naming of a type of mid-sized warship called a cruiser after cities in the United States. Ships with names such as *Chicago*, *Philadelphia*, and *New Orleans* entered service as the United States built up its Navy in preparation for World War II. Yet not all cruisers were named after well-known metropolises. One such ship was the USS *Vincennes* (CA 44), named after a small city in southwestern Indiana.² This city, known mainly for its significance during the Revolutionary War and Indiana's early history, would go on to forge a deep connection with this ship and its later sister ships. Through its construction, service, and eventual loss at the Battle of Savo Island, the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* reported on the ship to keep its readers informed on the city's namesake. The connection with the *Vincennes* did not end with its loss in World War II. The efforts of the citizens of Vincennes to remember this ship and the three other ships named *Vincennes* are good examples of public memory and civic pride. Looking at the city and the ships named

¹ I am not condemning that style at all. Those are the types of books that I personally enjoy reading. Those parts that I described are necessary in a good military history book, but other areas can also be investigated.

²The Navy uses a series of abbreviations as shorthand to describe types of ships serving in service. CA stands for heavy cruiser, CL for light cruiser, and so on.

after it provides a broader perspective on military history and an outlet for public history to become involved in military history through the lens of public memory and civic pride.

Public memory and civic pride both require definitions for the purposes of this paper. I will start with public memory and how it is applicable to Vincennes. A search of books and articles will lead a researcher to social memory, public memory, collective memory, etc. For the purposes of this paper, I will define public memory as the shared memory a population has about a specific area or topic of history, in this case the history of a specific geographic location. While this is a shared memory, as I will show later it is not spontaneous but partially the product of the attitudes and actions of local officials and leaders of the city filtered through public discourse. Vincennes is a special case as well because its specific type of public memory can be classified as “small historical city.” Similar to Civil War battlefield sites, the inhabitants of small historical cities generally rely on their city’s history as a way to set their community apart, using the past to help forge a distinctive identity in the present.

While an individual’s memory may focus on events that affected him or her personally, public memory in the case of Vincennes remembers events that affect the history of a city and what makes that city stand out. Usually the events etched into the public memory are ones that promote the greatness of the city. Public memory depends on who decides what is remembered. One area of debate for historians is the connection between events in the past and how current conditions and memories affect the interpretation of events. Maurice Halbwachs proposed that collective memory “adapts the image of ancient facts to the beliefs and the spiritual needs of the present.”³ Barry

³ Barry Schwartz, “The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory,” *Social Forces*, Volume 61, No. 2: p. 376

Schwartz, a professor emeritus at the University of Georgia and a proponent of collective memory and social psychology, disagreed because that mindset “promotes the idea that our conception of the past is entirely at the mercy of current conditions, that there is no objectivity in events.”⁴ Joanna Burke attempts to find a middle ground stating that “the chasm between memory and history is not only narrow, it is wholly imaginary in places.”⁵ While Halbwachs sees ancient history and present memory at odds with one another, Burke proposes more of a fusion of these ideas.

Vincennes is definitely a city rooted in its past. Originally a French colonial outpost, Vincennes is best known for a period in the early 1800s when it was the capital of the Indiana Territory and the recent site of a Revolutionary War battle. When a city’s most important events happened during its origins, the majority of the public memory of its citizens will reside there. Vincennes’ history is what sets it apart, making the commemoration of past events a focal point for public memory. The public memory of Vincennes does not suffer from Halbwachs’ fear of the present controlling the past, but it also does not have the fusion of current thought and history that Burke proposes. Instead, leaders, from politicians to local businessmen, in Vincennes have used its past glory to promote the current city.

At this point it is necessary to step in and explain “who” is behind the public memory of Vincennes. An easy trap to fall into is to anthropomorphize the city of Vincennes. As I will discuss in my later chapters, I am focusing on how the people of Vincennes remember the ships named after the city and George Rogers Clark, the hero of Vincennes during the Revolutionary War. The leaders of the city spearheaded the work

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Joanna Burke, “Remembering’ War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 39, No. 4 (2004) : p. 484.

to create a memorial to George Rogers Clark in 1925 and state leaders eventually embraced the project, with President Roosevelt dedicating it in 1936. The memorial to the ships named *Vincennes*, located near the George Rogers Clark Memorial on the Wabash River and completed in 1989, was also a product of local leaders. In both cases, once the leaders of the community laid the groundwork, other members of the community would support the projects, usually monetarily. These leaders were not against new interpretations of Vincennes' history as long as they dovetailed with the enriching of civic pride.

The city of Vincennes also provides an example of the process of how the leaders of a city develop its civic history and decide what should be remembered. Historian David Glassberg pointed out how “schools, museums, archives, historic sites, monuments, civic celebrations, and historic preservation legislation” can be used as tools to promote a vision of history.⁶ Leaders of a city have some control over those entities, so they can influence what is presented to the public. But then what should be remembered? One popular theme that deserves deeper investigation is a locale's cultural or historical origins. A proponent of this subject was Romanian born Mircea Eliade, who headed the University of Chicago's History of Religions department. He contended that “the most significant...part of any society's past... is its beginning.”⁷ Barry Schwartz investigated that proposal by looking at iconography at the United States Capitol building and the prevalence of scenes from the American Revolution early in the building's history. David Glassberg also pointed out the importance of origin stories that were “the

⁶ David Glassberg, “Monuments and Memories,” *American Quarterly*, Volume 43, No.1, p. 144.

⁷ Schwartz, p. 375.

myths and symbols that hold American society together.”⁸ Vincennes is one of the few areas west of the Appalachians that has a direct link to the Revolutionary War, so the power of remembering America’s origins is applicable here. While this one area is pertinent, the public history of Vincennes covered more than just its Revolutionary War past.

The origin of Vincennes is important, but Barry Schwartz provided another distinction between chronicling and commemoration. Chronicling is the “direct recording of events and their sequence.”⁹ These are the events covered in newspapers, such as the city’s *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*. While the date of a couple’s marriage is important to that family and is recorded in the paper, that is not necessarily important enough in the grand scheme of city history to be commemorated. Instead, events commemorated are “invested with an extraordinary significance and assigned a qualitatively distinct place in our conception of the past.”¹⁰ An investigation of what events are commemorated in the city of Vincennes shows what the city leaders deemed important. The George Rogers Clark Memorial dominates the landscape near the river, along with sites such as Grouseland. Grouseland was the Georgian style mansion of William Henry Harrison, built while he was governor of the Indiana Territory and finished in 1804. The National Park Service runs the George Rogers Clark Memorial now and gives the memorial a national legitimacy. Yet near the river and elsewhere in the city are memorials and plaques that commemorate the four ships named after the city. While the origins of the city are worthy of commemoration, more recent events are also remembered, an example of how civic pride can be a blending of the past and present.

⁸ Glassberg, p. 144.

⁹ Schwartz, p. 377.

¹⁰ Ibid.

There is little mention of civic pride in the plethora of sources on collective memory, social memory, etc., which overlooks an important facet of those linked topics. Civic pride is the pleasure a population has for what makes the city they live in unique or worthy of recognition. The pleasure for the city's inhabitants usually is derived from seeing the city elevated in greatness, ranging from a famous landmark to a well-known celebrity to a unique food to successful sports franchises. A glance at a gift shop in any city will reveal how merchants and city leaders wish to promote their city or how they want visitors to remember their city, usually through collectible memorabilia. Chicago has shot glasses with Willis (Sears) Tower, Navy Pier, or its professional sports teams, while Indianapolis promotes the Indy 500, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, and its sports teams. Civic pride is an important, albeit frequently overlooked, ingredient in understanding the relationship between a city and its history.

Oftentimes civic pride relates to sports. Chicago, Illinois, is a city that takes its sports very seriously. When the Chicago Bulls, led by the great Michael Jordan, won six NBA titles in the 1990s, the city was covered in jerseys for their beloved team. The success of the team gave the city national recognition and pride in itself. In 2010, the Chicago Blackhawks, the city's NHL franchise, made a run at the Stanley Cup. One sportswriter wrote "Lose yourself in this surge of civic pride, even if only for a couple of weeks."¹¹ The civic pride of the city grew and Chicagoans showed their appreciation by wearing team shirts, attending games, buying merchandise, etc. While citizens of Vincennes may not go around wearing George Rogers Clark t-shirts, civic pride plays a role in public memory, even at historic sites.

¹¹ Alex Quigley, "Hawks have spirits soaring," *Redeye* (Chicago, IL), May 18, 2010, p. 15.

Selectively remembered history is also an important ingredient of civic pride. A small city such as Vincennes does not have any professional sports teams; though Vincennes University is located there. So what are other possibilities for civic pride in a historic city? The front page of the city's website reveals one possible answer.¹² A picture of the George Rogers Clark Memorial is prominently displayed in the center of the page. Civic pride comes from what makes a city unique or gives it national recognition. In the case of Vincennes, the city's history makes it distinct.¹³ There are historic sites such as Grouseland, but nothing brings out a city's pride like martial glory and Vincennes embraces that with George Rogers Clark's victory over the British during the Revolutionary War.

Military history is a popular draw for tourists, whether to a battlefield or a museum ship. Vincennes can claim the distinction of having both a battlefield and the memory of four Navy ships named after the city. The battlefield is unique because it is the location of one of the few Midwest battles in the Revolutionary War. President Roosevelt dedicated the George Rogers Clark Memorial in 1936 and it is the most obvious source of civic pride based on military accomplishments. Yet the story of the ships named after the city offers an alternate military history that bolsters the community's identity. The fact that the name Vincennes has traveled to the Atlantic, the Pacific, and beyond is another avenue of military history that has increased civic pride.

The story of how Vincennes had four Navy ships named after it would make a fascinating military history paper, but the role civic pride and public memory drawing on the past to shape the identity of the city illustrate how public history and military history

¹² "This is Vincennes!" City of Vincennes Official Website, <http://www.vincennes.org/default.asp>.

¹³ While the focus of this paper is the history of Vincennes, I must point out that comedian Red Skelton is also from Vincennes, which is promoted on the city's website.

can intersect. Public memory is what the inhabitants of a city remember about the place in which they live. Civic pride is the positive feelings that the inhabitants of a city take in what makes their city unique or special, so the two work hand in hand with what sets a city apart. Civic pride often grows out of public memory and in turn influences what is remembered as public memory since what makes the inhabitants of a city proud usually becomes worthy of commemoration. While public memory is socially constructed, in Vincennes' case by the leaders of the city, civic pride provides an opportunity for the rest of the population to become involved. The commemoration of the four ships named after the city, especially the heavy cruiser from World War II, is an important facet in the public memory of Vincennes *because* of the civic pride created by the legacy of the ships. Connecting military history to the public memory of a city or area is one way the field of military history can keep itself up to date without becoming lost for all time in the musty confines of an archive. Public historians are the perfect professionals to show how an event such as a battle not only has a lasting mark in the history of a nation, but also changes the course of history where the battle was located. Who would have heard of Waterloo if Napoleon had not been defeated there or Gettysburg if the turning point of the Civil War had not been fought there?

The remainder of this thesis will employ Vincennes as a case study of the formation and role of public memory and civic pride drawn largely from its relationship with the George Rogers Clark Memorial and the four ships that have carried its name. Chapter 2 will give a brief history of Vincennes, focusing on the city's early history and George Roger Clark's campaigns during the Revolutionary War. These events provide the foundation of the city's civic pride and public memory, which reinforces Mircea

Eliade's argument that the beginning of a place provides the most interesting input for memory.¹⁴ The chapter will continue with the story of the first United States Navy warship to carry the name Vincennes and a description of the efforts to memorialize George Rogers Clark and the Battle of Vincennes (Fort Sackville). This campaign marked the first concrete manifestation of civic pride by the citizens. The third chapter will shift to the history of the heavy cruiser USS *Vincennes* (CA 44) and its relationship with the city. The citizens took a great deal of interest in the construction of the ship and how they could support the vessel and its crew. I will discuss the ship's career during World War II and its sinking at the Battle of Savo Island, but use that event to show the strength of civic pride through the campaign organized by leaders of the city to pass the name to another ship. The final chapter will continue the story of ships named *Vincennes* to a guided missile cruiser commissioned in 1985. This chapter will show how the ships have become embedded in the public memory of the city through museums, memorials, and rooms devoted to their history. The history of Vincennes dates back almost 300 years, so the logical first step in understanding the role public memory and civic pride have played in this city is to investigate the events that provide the foundation of civic pride the citizens have for this city.

¹⁴ Quoted in Schwartz, p. 375.

Chapter 2

At first glance, a sleepy city of 18,000 people on the banks of the Wabash River on the border of Illinois does not appear the type of place the Navy would name a ship after, let alone four. Vincennes, Indiana, represents a special case. It is not the size of the city that matters, but its historical importance, not just to Indiana, but to the United States. With its founding as a French outpost almost 300 years ago, Vincennes fills a unique niche for a Midwestern city by being occupied by European settlers for a length of time usually only matched by cities on the East Coast, Florida, and the Southwest.

Vincennes had the distinction of having the flag of three different countries fly over it during its long history, beginning as a French settlement in 1732, founded by Francois-Marie Bissot, Sieur de Vincennes. The city was an important part of France's attempt to link its port of New Orleans in the south at the mouth of the Mississippi River with its holdings in French Canada. Unfortunately for the French, this claim bumped into westward expansion of Great Britain's colonies on the east coast of North America. The French and Indian War decisively found Great Britain to be the master of North America and transferred Vincennes to the control of the British Empire in 1763.¹⁵

The government of France may have signed Vincennes over to the British, but the people of Vincennes did not notice much change at first. Frenchmen continued to serve as commandant at Post Vincennes, as it was known at the time, since the British did not have the manpower to send troops to every town right away. The first Englishman, Lieutenant John Ramsey, did not arrive until 1766, three years after the end of the war. He took a census of the population, but more importantly repaired the dilapidated fort in the town and renamed it Fort Sackville. However, the British presence in Vincennes was

¹⁵ "A Brief History of Vincennes, 1732-1779," Vincennes University, <http://rking.vinu.edu/vinbrief.htm>.

never very strong and the defense of the town was left in the hands of the French civilians, who formed the local militia.¹⁶

The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775 also brought very little change to Vincennes, at least at first. The Continental Army was busy fighting for its life out east during the first few years of the war while there were few British troops that far west, mostly centered at Fort Detroit. A young Virginia militia leader named George Rogers Clark proposed an audacious plan in 1778 to bring the war out West by capturing the British outposts there to win the Old Northwest for the rebels.

Patrick Henry, the governor of Virginia, authorized Clark on January 2, 1778, to raise several companies for the defense of Kentucky. His secret orders also commanded Clark to raid the British outposts in the Old Northwest. Clark was only 26, but already a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia militia and a well regarded leader. He gathered 150 men with him at the Falls of the Ohio on June 24, 1778, and set out for enemy territory.¹⁷

Clark's main targets were Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Vincennes. Of the three, Vincennes occupied a strategic central position and would be an important base for Clark's planned invasion of Detroit. Vincennes sits on the Wabash River on the border of what is now Illinois and Indiana. Cahokia and Kaskaskia are farther west, on the Mississippi River. Cahokia was directly across the Mississippi from St. Louis, while Kaskaskia was roughly 50 miles to the south and 180 miles to the west of Vincennes.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Robert C. Albert, *George Rogers Clark and the Winning of the Old Northwest* (Washington, DC: Office of Publication, National Park Service, 1975), p. 1-12.



Movements by Clark and Hamilton during the Northwest Campaign. From *George Rogers and the Winning of the Old Northwest* by Robert Alberts pgs. 22-23.

This campaign proved George Rogers Clark's skill in warfare in an open country.

His small army bypassed Vincennes, though it was the closest target, and continued on all

the way to Kaskaskia. The Americans achieved total surprise at Kaskaskia and captured the town and its governor without a fight the evening of July 4, 1778. After pausing to consolidate his control, he sent a platoon under Lieutenant Bowman to Cahokia, which the group successfully captured. Since he was so short of troops, Clark could not afford to send any troops towards Vincennes. This shortage did not stop him from dispatching a contingent of civilians and a priest to Vincennes with an oath of allegiance to the American government. His spies reported that there were no British troops and this proved correct. The French militia, still in charge of local defense since most British troops were deployed on the East Coast, accepted American rule and Clark sent Lieutenant Helm to formally take command. By the end of July, Clark's daring plan was successful and the Americans controlled all three towns with hardly a shot fired.¹⁸ The British could not allow this situation to continue and mustered their troops for a counterattack.

The British antagonist to George Rogers Clark was Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton, based at Detroit. Among American settlers, he was known as "Hair Buyer" for rumors that he paid Native Americans for the scalps they brought to him. His plan to strike in an easterly direction towards Fort Pitt was rudely interrupted by the news that Vincennes had fallen on August 6.¹⁹ As he was already gathering troops for a campaign, he wasted no time beginning the long journey towards Vincennes. After an arduous campaign, Hamilton and his small army arrived at Vincennes on December 17 to find Lieutenant Helm abandoned by the French militia and with only a few soldiers since

¹⁸ Lowell H. Harrison, *George Rogers Clark and the War in the West*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), p. 19-32.

¹⁹ Fort Pitt (formerly the site of Fort Duquesne during the French and Indian War) was located where modern day Pittsburgh stands and was the American counterpart in the Western theater to Detroit. Harrison, pp. 39-43.

Clark had the main force with him at Kaskaskia. For the second time in the war, Vincennes surrendered without a shot fired. Hamilton repaired the deteriorated Fort Sackville, reasserted the allegiance of the inhabitants and the French militia, and settled down for the winter to plan his campaign to oust Clark from his base in Kaskaskia in the spring.²⁰

The loss of Vincennes put George Rogers Clark into a difficult predicament, and his remaining courses of action were not appealing. If he waited for the spring, Hamilton was clearly ready to lead a campaign Clark's depleted forces were ill-equipped to deal with. A retreat back to Virginia would be an admission of defeat, though it had been a successful raid up until then. Finally, he could attack Hamilton at Vincennes and hope to catch him by surprise, but this option entailed the dangers of a cross country campaign in the middle of winter, which was almost unheard of. Most armies settled down to winter quarters and resumed the fighting in the spring, which was exactly what Governor Hamilton decided to do. There was precedent in the Revolutionary War, though, since earlier in the war George Washington managed two winter marches that resulted in victories at Trenton and Princeton, though not across the distance Clark was contemplating. Keeping in line with his bold decisions throughout the campaign, Clark chose the most aggressive option and prepared for a winter campaign to attack Hamilton in Vincennes.²¹

Lieutenant Governor Hamilton was satisfied with capturing Vincennes, so he released most of his troops for the winter and kept only 80 with him at the fort. On February 5, 1779, George Rogers Clark left Kaskaskia with 179 soldiers for his risky

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Albert, pp. 29-43.

attack. The arduous cross-country trek was made worse by a shortage of food and flooded rivers. Yet every time the soldiers seemed to have reached their breaking point, Clark was there to use his forceful personality to hold the tiny army together or some bit of good luck would lead them to food. By February 23, he had reached the outskirts of Vincennes, but then was presented with the problem of how 179 bedraggled, exhausted men with no artillery could capture a fort.²²

Instead of surprise, Clark decided to try to capture the fort through cunning. His troops captured a French inhabitant and released him into the town bearing a letter from Clark announcing his intention to attack the fort that night and that “such of you as are true citizens and willing to enjoy the liberty I bring you, to remain still in your houses,” while those loyal to the British “will instantly repair to the fort and join the hair buyer Genl [sic] and fight like men.”²³ Clark also had his army march behind a ridge of hills with banners flying and drums beating in an attempt to convince Hamilton that the American army was much larger than it actually was. With still no reaction from Hamilton, Clark took the next step and surrounded the fort, leading to a brisk firefight between his sharp-shooting troops and the British soldiers and French militia huddled behind the walls. Hamilton rejected an offer to surrender on February 24, but his situation would be getting desperate soon.²⁴

With both sides temporarily stalemated, Clark embraced a ruthless tactic to intimidate the British. During the day of the 24th, Clark’s troops captured several Native American allies of the British who had been on patrol. Clark decided that “I had now a fair opportunity [sic] to make an impression on the Indians...that Governor Hamilton

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. p. 44.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 44-50.

could not give them that protection that he had made them believe he could...[I] ordered the prisoners to be tomahawked in the face of the Garrison [sic].”²⁵ Clark ordered four Native American warriors lined up in front of the fort and executed. While cold-blooded, the action had its desired effect. Shaken by such an act, Hamilton agreed to surrender the fort the next day. When he saw Clark’s small army, he asked, “Colonel Clark, where is your army?”²⁶ Clark’s tactics completely fooled Hamilton into thinking he faced a much larger force. His actions showed Clark had a firm grasp of the psychological aspects of warfare. While Clark’s army did outnumber Hamilton’s, the advantage usually goes to the defender. Hamilton’s men were protected by the fort’s walls and were supported by artillery. Clark’s men had just made a grueling winter march and were at the very end of a tenuous supply line. Against all odds, Clark succeeded in recapturing Vincennes for good and securing the Old Northwest for America.

Following the Peace of Paris in 1783, the United States originally governed the Northwest Territory as one single Territory. After Ohio became a state in 1803, the area was known as the Indiana Territory. Immediately after the war, there was a great deal of strain between new American settlers, the old French inhabitants, and the Native Americans, eventually spilling over into open warfare in 1786 when a Native American war party besieged the American settlers before the French inhabitants convinced the war party to leave. As Fort Sackville had deteriorated, a new fort called Fort Knox was built in 1787.²⁷ The early history of Indiana focused on Vincennes and many “firsts” for the region occurred there. The federal government assigned William Henry Harrison as the

²⁵ Ibid. p. 49

²⁶ Ibid. p. 50

²⁷ Fort Sackville was renamed Fort Patrick Henry after the Virginia governor who authorized the attack on Vincennes.

first governor of the Indiana Territory, with Vincennes as the first capital. He constructed a mansion he named Grouseland in 1803-1804.²⁸ Jefferson Academy was founded in 1801 and later became Vincennes University. Reflecting the city's French heritage, the first Roman Catholic church in Indiana was built in Vincennes.²⁹ The city's influence began to wane in 1813 as the brand new state's capital moved first to Corydon and later to Indianapolis.

The Vincennes campaign was the pinnacle of George Rogers Clark's military career. He never captured Detroit, and President Washington chose General "Mad" Anthony Wayne over him in 1792 for the decisive campaign in the Northwest Indian War. By the time the War of 1812 began, he was in poor health and a new generation of military leaders eventually took over.³⁰ The city of Vincennes suffered a similar slide from the limelight. Corydon took over as the capital when Indiana was admitted as a state in 1816, before moving again in 1825 to its permanent, central location in Indianapolis.³¹ The memory of Vincennes and Fort Sackville was kept alive in the 1820s by a very unlikely source.

The new United States Navy that replaced the Continental Navy looked to the recent Revolutionary War for inspiration to name some of its first warships. The Navy immortalized the exploits of George Rogers Clark at Fort Sackville by naming a ship *Vincennes* in 1826. This first *Vincennes* was a sloop of 18 guns from the days when sail still ruled the waves. The sloop gained a well-deserved reputation as an explorer as it

²⁸The house was saved from destruction in 1908 and is now run as a house museum by the Grouseland Foundation. Harrison used the mansion as a meeting place for his talks with Tecumseh and the Prophet.

²⁹"History," City of Vincennes Official Website, (accessed 29 March 2010), <http://www.vincennes.org/content.asp?page=1&code=history>.

³⁰Harrison pp. 100-110.

³¹"General State Facts," State of Indiana Official Website, (accessed 10 April, 2011), http://www.state.in.us/core/general_facts.html.

circumnavigated the globe three times, being the first American ship to do so. In 1840, the Navy sent the *Vincennes* on an expedition to Antarctica and later unsuccessfully tried to open Japan to trade in 1846. After mainly serving as an exploration vessel, the ship ended its long career on blockade duty during the Civil War. This elderly warship of a previous age of naval warfare fought a Confederate ironclad, captured a blockade runner, and spent most of the war off the coast of Mississippi. With the massive demobilization of the Navy after the war and obsolescence of the ship in the face of steam-power, the Navy decommissioned the *Vincennes* in 1865 and it was broken up in 1867.³² It would be exactly seventy years before there would be a new *Vincennes* in the Navy.

Photo # NH 66524-KN Lithograph -- "U.S. Sloop of War Vincennes, 20 Guns"



“U.S. Sloop of War Vincennes” Lithograph published by Currier in 1845. Image NH 66524 from US Navy <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/vincenns.htm>

³² “USS *Vincennes*.” Department of the Navy. Naval Historical Center. (Accessed 8 October 2009), <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/vincenns.htm>.

The Navy Historical Center website has histories of all warships that have served in the United States Navy and can be consulted for any further information on the first three ships named *Vincennes*.

After the Navy decommissioned the first *Vincennes* in 1867, the city experienced a lack of recognition for a generation as memorializing the events of the Civil War took precedence. The only memorial to the Revolutionary War battle in Vincennes was a small marker placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1905. The actual site of the battle and Fort Sackville was gone as well, absorbed by the growing city of Vincennes.³³ As the 150th anniversary of the capture of Fort Sackville loomed in 1929, opinion leaders in the city of Vincennes made a bid for recognition of the event that secured the Old Northwest for the United States.

Any major project needs strong backing to be successful and the plan to build a memorial to George Rogers Clark had the good fortune to have influential support immediately. According to the National Park Service's official history of the site, the process began with a State Representative from Vincennes, D. Frank Culbertson. Realizing the support of the Indiana Historical Society would be crucial, he contacted Dr. Christopher Coleman, the organization's director, in 1925. The two men developed a plan to have a memorial in place by 1929, so the Indiana Historical Society created the General Clark Sesquicentennial Committee by the end of 1925. The effort gained political power when a lawyer from the Vincennes area named Ewing Emison convinced the state's Republican Party to include a plank in its party platform in 1926 supporting the memorial.³⁴ From this very local beginning for a memorial, the process would eventually grow to include the National Park Service and President Calvin Coolidge, President Franklin Roosevelt, and President Lyndon Johnson.

³³ Hal K. Rothman, *Maintaining a Legacy: An Administrative History of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park*, (National Park Service: Midwest Regional Office, 1994), pp. 16-17.

³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 17-18.

One of the main goals of the prospective George Rogers Clark memorial was to stress the importance of the events surrounding Vincennes and Fort Sackville to the history of the entire United States, an excellent example of how civic pride can influence public memory on a national scale. This site was not a simple house museum honoring a local hero; this would be a monument dedicated to a man whose campaign ensured the brand new United States would include the Old Northwest instead of being hemmed in by the Appalachians and surrounded by a hostile British Empire. While his achievement was of national significance, it was not known nationally. The committee hoped to change that. The original plan of participation reflected this hope. The city and county would purchase the site of Fort Sackville, the state would purchase any remaining land that was needed, and the federal government would pay for the memorial.³⁵ The committee envisioned a memorial, a statue of George Rogers Clark, and a museum at this early juncture. Looking for that much government involvement was ambitious, but the Committee was convinced it could be done.

The first big step was accomplished in 1928 when the state legislature passed a bill to create a George Rogers Clark Memorial Commission as a planning group. In addition to the commission, the bill authorized a levy on taxes for the support of the commission and designated \$25,000 as the prize for an architectural contest for the memorial.³⁶ With state backing and funding locked up, the commission moved on to securing federal support. With the fledgling National Park Service, created in 1916, still more interested in preserving wilderness sites than historical sites, the commission began working with Congress to secure funding for the memorial.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 19.

³⁶ Ibid. pp. 22-24.

The fight for the George Roger Clark’s memorial in Congress was taken up by Representative Will Wood (R-IN) and Senator James Watson (R-IN). They each introduced a bill into their respective legislature with the purpose of creating a memorial to George Rogers Clark. These men were both from Indiana and Republicans, so the party was fulfilling its promise to support the memorial. Their proposal during the 69th Congress incorporated a Lincoln Memorial Bridge and a Hall of Memory that would focus more on the history of the Old Northwest instead of just George Rogers Clark.

On January 18, 1927, a joint committee chaired by Republican Senator Simeon Fess, from Ohio, met to discuss the George Rogers Clark Memorial. A closer look at their deliberations shed some light on the reasoning for the memorial. The resolution declared “whereas there was never greater need than now exists for the revival of the traditions and principles which found its expression in the American war for independence” and “no adequate recognizance has been given by the Nation to the achievements of George Rogers Clark.”³⁷ The hearing called upon correspondence received by the committee as evidence for support for the memorial. Most of the support came from correcting the “forgotten” status of George Rogers Clark, often by quoting a statistics on the size of the Old Northwest to emphasize the importance of the battle. A quote from the *Vincennes Sun* focused on the opportunity for Vincennes, how the city “will be able to acquire a national importance *which otherwise would be impossible*.”³⁸ (Emphasis added) Clark’s military prowess put Vincennes back on the map. Another reason proposed for the memorial was education, with Professor Elbert Benton stressing

³⁷ US Congress, Senate Joint Resolution 139, Committee on the Library, proposed by Senator James Watson, 69th Congress, 2nd Session, 1927, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1927), p. 1.

³⁸ US Congress, *Hearing before the Joint Committee on the Library Congress of the United States on S.J. Res. 139 and H.J. Res. 307*, 69th Congress, 2nd Session, 1927, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1927), p. 58.

how it could teach the children of the recent influx of immigrants, “our other and more recent children” as he labeled them, about American history.³⁹ Unfortunately this proposal came with a staggering price tag (at the time) of \$1.3 million and Congress made no decision during that session.

Between sessions, proponents of the memorial managed to enlist the aid of the most important Republican in the country, President Calvin Coolidge. During his 5th Annual Address on December 6, 1927, President Coolidge spoke on behalf of a George Rogers Clark Memorial, saying:

February 25, 1929. is the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the capture of Fort Sackville, at Vincennes, in the State of Indiana. This eventually brought into the Union what was known as the Northwest Territory, embracing the region north of the Ohio River between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi River. This expedition was led by George Rogers Clark. His heroic character and the importance of his victory are too little known and understood. They gave us not only this Northwest Territory but by means of that the prospect of reaching the Pacific. The State of Indiana is proposing to dedicate the site of Fort Sackville as a national shrine. The Federal Government may well make some provision for the erection under its own management of a fitting memorial at that point.⁴⁰

In this speech, President Coolidge not only gave support to the Memorial, but he also embraced the national scope of the impact of George Rogers Clark. Instead of a local hero, Clark became part of the national public memory and increased the civic pride of the people of Vincennes at the same time. Another bill was proposed in the 70th Congress with a proviso for \$1.75 million. With the backing of the President, the Senate passed it unanimously on February 24, 1928. The House whittled the appropriations

³⁹ Ibid. pp. 24-25.

⁴⁰ Calvin Coolidge, "Fifth Annual Message," December 6, 1927, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29568>.

down to an even \$1 million, but President Coolidge finally signed it into law on May 23, 1928.⁴¹ With the legislation in place, the work of the memorial was ready to begin.

The Stock Market crash of 1929 made it much more difficult to obtain federal funding, but the city of Vincennes doggedly continued to work towards erecting a memorial. President Calvin Coolidge continued the active role of the Republican Party when he visited Vincennes in 1929 for the honor of pressing the button to demolish the first buildings to make way for the Memorial.⁴² On February 14, 1930, the design of the memorial was chosen by a jury and the national Commission of Fine Arts. Even as the Great Depression took hold of the country, the citizens of Vincennes and their allies scratched and clawed and to secure the \$750,000 that the House cut from the original bill passed by the Senate, through a combination of federal dollars and fundraising in Indiana.⁴³ What started as a passion among the people of a small city in southern Indiana now included help from the highest office of the country. With the funding in place, the construction of the memorial went surprisingly smoothly.

The design settled on evoked a Greek temple, with a circular rotunda supported by sixteen Doric columns, seven murals depicting Clark's story, and a larger-than-life sized bronze statue of Clark.⁴⁴ Construction officially began on September 1, 1931, with D. Frank Culbertson appropriately given the honor of turning the first shovel of dirt.⁴⁵ The memorial was completed by May 1934, and by early 1936, the workers had finished all the murals and statues.

⁴¹ Rothman, pp. 27-33

⁴² A. R. Cochran, "Construction of Memorial Began Five Years Ago," *Vincennes-Sun Commercial*, June 14, 1936, Second Edition, p. 1.

⁴³ Rothman, pp. 34-42

⁴⁴ "George Rogers Clark Memorial," "Inside the George Rogers Clark Memorial," George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, the National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/gero/historyculture/memorial.htm>, <http://www.nps.gov/gero/historyculture/inside.htm>

⁴⁵ "Construction of Memorial Began Five Years Ago," p. 1.

To cap off this amazing accomplishment, President Franklin Roosevelt traveled to Vincennes to dedicate the memorial on June 14, 1936.⁴⁶ In a letter dated June 1, 1936, Roosevelt praised George Rogers Clark, saying:

The dedication of the George Rogers Clark Memorial at Vincennes will give fitting recognition to the work of a great as well as a romantic figure in our national history. His achievement made possible the westward march of the pioneers which was to continue until the vast territory from the Allegheny Mountains to the Pacific Ocean had been brought under the American flag and opened to settlement.⁴⁷

In the published letter, President Roosevelt gave Clark credit for not only the Northwest Territory, but also opening the door to Westward Expansion. The dedication of the Memorial acted as a link to connect the public memory of the historical importance of Vincennes to the visit of the President. The result was an outpouring of civic pride in the city. The newspaper carried headlines such as “Whirl of Excitement Gives Vincennes Taste of Glory,” “City Intoxicated With Impending Dedication,” and “President Roosevelt to Deliver Address to Mammoth Throng.”⁴⁸ Local businesses, ranging from candy stores to department stores to glass companies, took out ads honoring George Rogers Clark and the city.⁴⁹ After eleven long years of work, the city of Vincennes had its memorial to George Rogers Clark and the recognition of the President of the United States.

⁴⁶ Rothman 47-53.

⁴⁷ President Franklin Roosevelt to Mr. Howard Greenleaf, Manager of *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, June 1, 1936, quoted in *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, June 14, 1936, p. 3

⁴⁸ Examples from *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, June 14, 1936, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 1-2, 9.



George Roger's Clark Memorial from Author's Collection

Unfortunately, the long fight to build the memorial was almost wasted because, as a local newspaper in 1960 put it, the memorial had become “a sort of orphan.”⁵⁰ While the memorial had support at the local, state, and federal level, who was actually in charge of the upkeep of the memorial was left vague, with the end result that the site quickly became overgrown with grass and weeds and generally ill-kept. The situation began to change on August 20, 1940, when the original commission turned over the memorial to the Indiana Department of Conservation, but the same problems with funding continued. The official Park Service history points out that while “of major importance to the founding of the American Republic but anomalous in location and management, the Clark memorial once again suffered.”⁵¹ The memorial had no amenities for visitors and was not located in an easy area to reach since Indianapolis is approximately two hours to the northeast.

⁵⁰ Rothman, p. 55.

⁵¹ Ibid. 69.

The “orphan” status of the memorial ended in 1966 when the National Park Service took over the site. US Representative Winfield Denton (Democrat) saw the sad state of the memorial, and in yet another example of cooperation between the site and the federal government he proposed a bill to add the site to the National Park Service.⁵² The National Park Service was in a period of great expansion, so this proposal had fortuitous timing. Once again, an American President would make the trip to Vincennes for the George Rogers Clark Memorial.

Representative Winfield Denton was a friend of President Lyndon Johnson and convinced him to sign the bill in person. While President Johnson was only in Vincennes for a short period of time on July 23, 1966, he made the time to give a speech to a crowd the Associated Press estimated at 18,000-20,000. Echoing President Roosevelt, President Johnson spoke on George Roger Clark’s importance, saying, “George Rogers Clark was more than just a great soldier of the Revolution. In him there blazed a courage, a tenacity, a single-minded devotion to liberty...Clark’s victory would bring an end to British power in the region.”⁵³ The visit by first President Roosevelt and later President Johnson is an excellent example of how a military history event in the past can continue to influence the public history of a location through civic pride.

The George Rogers Clark Memorial has been in good hands with the National Park Service since the organization took over its administration. The memorial now boasts a modern visitor center with small exhibits for guests to explore and encourages school groups to visit. In 2008, the Park Service initiated a \$3 million rehabilitation

⁵² “Signs National Park Bill Before Thousands Saturday in Vincennes,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 24, 1966, p. 1.

⁵³ President Lyndon Johnson, speech at signing of Denton Bill, July 23, 1966, quoted in *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 24, 1966, pp. 1, 8.

project to solve a problem with leakage on the Memorial Terrace. Superintendent Dale Phillips rededicated the site on October 3, 2009.⁵⁴ The park continues to be part of the historical backbone of Vincennes, along with Grouseland.

At one point while describing the difficulties of the George Rogers Clark Memorial as an “orphan” site, historian Hal Rothman remarked that “local people felt a continuing strong attachment to the memorial, for it suggested an ongoing national importance.”⁵⁵ Vincennes is a small city in rural Indiana, similar to hundreds of others across the country. What makes it stand above cities of similar size is its *history*. Its status as an old French outpost, the first capital of Indiana, and the site of one of the few Revolutionary War battles west of the Appalachians makes this city unique. Since it is the city’s history that sets it apart, the residents take an inordinate amount of pride in the history. This is where the city’s civic pride and public memory come into play.

The story of the George Rogers Clark Memorial is built on a foundation of civic pride and public history. The process began with a local representative named Frank Culbertson and a Vincennes-based lawyer with enormous pull named Ewing Emison. Their civic pride enabled them to first convince the state government and later the national government that the story of George Rogers Clark was worthy of commemoration and becoming part of a national public memory. Eventually, three different Presidents visited Vincennes on trips related to the George Rogers Clark Memorial. Its status in the Vincennes public history was already firmly cemented.

The George Rogers Clark National Historical Park gives the city of Vincennes national recognition. The states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and

⁵⁴ “George Rogers Clark Memorial Closed for Construction,” George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, the National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/gero/planyourvisit/closing.htm>

⁵⁵ Rothman, pp. 72.

parts of Minnesota are part of the United States thanks to the exploits of George Rogers Clark. The civic pride of the people of Vincennes caused them to embrace events or historical figures who would bring recognition to the city. George Rogers Clark was one of the best known ways and he had his own National Historical Park. However, the Navy offered another way, one that would spread the name of Vincennes much farther than the continental United States: a warship bearing the name *Vincennes*.

The sloop *Vincennes* literally brought the name Vincennes around the world as it was the first Navy ship to circumnavigate the globe and explore Antarctica. Now as the city of Vincennes was vaulted back into the national spotlight in the early 1930s, the Navy decided again to honor the city, this time with a cruiser that would take the city's name across the Atlantic, across the Pacific, and into the most desperate fighting during the dark days of the beginning of World War II. Its story became another chapter in the public memory of Vincennes.

Chapter 3

The name *Vincennes* has graced four ships to serve in the United States Navy. The naming traditions for the Navy have evolved over the years and these ships offer examples of how that system has changed. When the Navy ordered the first *Vincennes* in 1826, the only regulation was that the Secretary of Navy had the responsibility of naming ships of the Navy. The second and third ships in 1937 and 1944 followed the tradition of naming ships after cities. By the time the Navy commissioned the final *Vincennes* in 1985, the tradition changed yet again to naming *Ticonderoga*-class missile cruisers after famous battles. So while all the ships were named *Vincennes*, some were named after the city while the last one commemorated the battle in the Revolutionary War. Finally, one important naval tradition is naming ships in honor of ships lost at sea. This tradition led to the third *Vincennes*.⁵⁶

The George Rogers Clark Memorial, dedicated in 1936 with President Franklin Roosevelt in attendance, gave the city of Vincennes national recognition and soon afterwards the United States Navy honored the city in a different way. At the end of December 1933, the city of Vincennes got a Christmas present, courtesy of the United States Navy. The city newspaper reported the first rumors of a heavy cruiser being named after the city on Christmas Eve, including a picture of the cruiser *Portland*.⁵⁷ While the country was in the throes of the Depression, the Navy gained an important ally in President Roosevelt. He viewed military spending as one way to create jobs, and

⁵⁶ "Ship Naming in the United States Navy." Department of the Navy. Navy Historical Center, <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq63-1.htm>

This article gives an excellent background on Navy ship naming traditions as well as how traditions have evolved over the years.

⁵⁷ "Vincennes is Honored with New Navy Ship," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, December 24, 1933 cover page. The *Portland* was also a heavy cruiser, though of the preceding *Portland*-class instead of the *New Orleans*-class that the *Vincennes* belonged to. The ship happened to be the most recently completed heavy cruiser in the Navy.

American military leaders saw Japan's growing militarism, especially after their recent invasion of Manchuria in 1931, as a threat to American interests in the Pacific, so building up the Navy offered the double advantage of creating jobs and responding to a possible Japanese threat. President Roosevelt even set aside National Industrial Recovery Act funds for the Navy.⁵⁸ By the end of 1933, it appeared Vincennes would be next on the list of American cities with cruisers named after them.

In the days of sail, warships called frigates scouted for battle fleets and participated in commerce warfare by both attacking convoys of merchant ships and protecting their own country's convoys. Frigates could outrun ships larger than them, but had the firepower to destroy smaller ships. From the arms buildup before World War I through the early years of World War II, these same roles were fulfilled by ships called cruisers. Both ship types served as scouts and as commerce raiders and escorts.⁵⁹ Originally called armoured cruisers, eventually the classification was split into "heavy" (commonly armed with 8-inch guns and given the designation CA) and "light" (commonly armed with 6-inch guns and given the designation CL) cruisers.⁶⁰

Fears of another disastrous arms race similar to the dreadnought building craze before World War I led to the Washington Naval Conference of 1922. Since many people blamed the naval arms race between Germany and Great Britain as a cause of World War I, much of the focus was on battleships. Strict ratios were set on the capital ships (Capital ships were considered the main combatants of a fleet and consisted of battleships, battlecruisers, and later aircraft carriers) for the respective major powers and

⁵⁸ James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1956), pp. 176, 253.

⁵⁹ American cruisers were grouped under the title "Scouting Forces" in the years leading up to World War II still.

⁶⁰ M. J. Whitley, *Cruisers of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), pp. 8-11.

the navies of the world scrapped scores of obsolete battleships after the war. One loophole in this treaty was the status of cruisers, which while limited to 10,000 tons and 8-inch guns by the treaty, had *no* limits on how many could be built. Officers in the American Navy were in favor of large numbers of heavy cruisers to keep the sea lanes to the far-flung possessions of the Philippines, Guam, and American Samoa open.⁶¹ Between 1929 and 1936, the Navy commissioned sixteen heavy cruisers armed with 8-inch guns, while not building a single light cruiser in the same time frame.⁶² The London Naval Conference of 1930 sought to close the cruiser loophole. The participants of the London Conference agreed upon a ratio similar to that of the Washington Conference, though slightly more in Japan's favor, while limiting heavy cruisers to eighteen. This conference also formally divided cruisers into the categories of "light" and "heavy."⁶³ With sixteen heavy cruisers already built, the Navy could only build two more. The USS *Vincennes* became the 17th heavy cruiser.⁶⁴

The funding for the *Vincennes* ironically came from failed diplomacy. President Coolidge wanted limits placed on the building of warships and convened a conference in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1927 to work out the proper ratios between the United States, Great Britain, and Japan. The countries did not reach an agreement, so Coolidge decided a larger navy would give him a better bargaining position, leading to the Cruiser Bill of 1929 that would fund fifteen new cruisers. President Coolidge went so far as to say "our Navy, according to generally accepted standards, is deficient in cruisers," during his

⁶¹ Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 275-277.

⁶² Whitley, pp. 232-243.

⁶³ Hagan, pp. 277-280.

⁶⁴ *Jane's Fighting Ships of World War II*, (New York: Random House, 1945/46 edition, reprinted 1994), pp. 273-275 The USS *Wichita* CA 45 was the 18th and final heavy cruiser built before the war. The next wave of heavy cruisers would not be completed until 1943.

Annual Message to Congress in 1928.⁶⁵ The bill passed on 13 February 1929, but this was shortly after the Senate ratified the Kellogg-Briand Pact, renouncing war as an instrument of foreign policy.⁶⁶ Now this same Congress was questioning the need to fund more warships when the United States just agreed to stop using war as part of the national policy.⁶⁷

Republican Senator Frederick Hale of Maine was the sponsor of the Cruiser Bill, and was also the chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee. Senator Claude A. Swanson of Virginia was his main ally in defense of the bill. Swanson was the ranking Democrat on the Committee, which meant the bill had bipartisan support. The deficiency in the number of American cruisers compared to Japan and Great Britain continued to be their strongest argument. Opponents were pacifists who embraced the principles of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and people who believed the claim that it was the arms industry that pushed the country into World War I.⁶⁸ Newly elected President Herbert Hoover proved to be another strong opponent of the bill, immediately halting working on three of the first five cruisers as a gesture of goodwill to the British for the upcoming London Conference.⁶⁹ The beginning of the Great Depression just a few months after the Senate passed the Cruiser Bill put the future of the *Vincennes* in doubt.

Whereas the accession of Herbert Hoover to the presidency hurt the Navy's ambitious cruiser-building program, President Roosevelt proved to be a boon to the

⁶⁵ Calvin Coolidge, "Sixth Annual Message," December 4, 1928, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29569>.

⁶⁶ The Senate recommended ratification on 16 January 1929 and the President ratified it on 17 January 1929. "Kellogg-Briand Pact 1928," The Avalon Project, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/kbpact.htm>

⁶⁷ Hagan, pp. 273-277.

⁶⁸ "National Affairs: Cruiser Bill," *Time*, January 28, 1929, accessed from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,723566-1,00.html>

⁶⁹ "National Affairs: Curtailment and Limitation," *Time*, August 5, 1929, accessed from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,737604-2,00.html>

Navy. During World War I, he served as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and always had a keen interest in the Navy. Roosevelt, who took office in 1933, saw military spending as one way to help stimulate the economy since so many industries were involved in the building of warships and other military vehicles. While naval allocations were down, the administration was able to tap funds of the National Industrial Recovery Act to build eighty seven new warships.⁷⁰ After four years of Congressional wrangling, the *Vincennes* was finally funded for Fiscal Year 1934.

The USS *Vincennes* (CA 44) was part of the *New Orleans*-class of heavy cruisers. This class was the fourth generation of American heavy cruisers and since the *Vincennes* was the last ship completed in the class, it was one of the most modern heavy cruisers in America's fleet when World War II broke out. The *New Orleans*-class did not differ too greatly from the preceding *Portland*-class and was actually 14 feet shorter and 4 feet narrower, which was accomplished by rearranging the engineering compartments.⁷¹ The tonnage saved by shortening the ship allowed designers to create a deeper main armor belt (the line of armor that went around a ship at the waterline to protect vital machinery) and to increase the armor on the turrets so they could withstand 8-inch shells from opposing heavy cruisers. In order to save room, the ships had less capacity for fuel than previous vessels and consequently a shorter range. The *Vincennes* was one of the first American ships fitted with an emergency diesel generator that would supply power if the boilers were knocked out during combat. The secondary battery of 5-inch guns was

⁷⁰ "Vincennes is Honored With New Navy Ship," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, December 24, 1933, pages 1, 7.

⁷¹ The previous three classes were the *Pensacola*, *Northampton*, and *Portland* classes. The other cruiser named for an Indiana city to serve in the war was the USS *Indianapolis* (CA 35), a *Portland*-class heavy cruiser that was sunk at the end of the war after delivering parts of the first atomic bomb. The USS *Gary* (CL 147) was a *Worcester*-class light cruiser cancelled in August of 1945 when the war ended before the keel was even laid. Whitley's *Cruisers of World War II* provides a listing of all cruisers that served or were laid down during World War II.

moved to the forward half of the ship, abreast of the conning tower and funnels. The *Portland*-class had their secondary guns mounted aft, but otherwise the ships were outwardly similar. Finally, the ship maintained the placement of twin catapults for the scout seaplanes amidships, with the large complement of four floatplanes.⁷² While important for the ships' role as fleet scouts, the placement would have disastrous consequences for the *Vincennes* at the Battle of Savo Island.

This cruiser was the first warship to be named after the city since the Navy decommissioned the original sloop in 1865. The people of this small city of 18,000 were proud of their new ship, and the local newspaper was very active in reporting on it from the very beginning. In fact, the first article on the new cruiser date from 1933, before the keel was laid starting construction of the ship and a name assigned.⁷³ Shortly after when the ship's keel was laid, the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* ran a photograph of the event on the cover of its January 10, 1934, issue.⁷⁴ A bond formed between leaders in Vincennes and Quincy as "one of the delights of the keel-laying plans was a long distance talk between Harry E.D. Gould of the Fore River Plant, and Mayor Joseph W. Kimmell of Vincennes, Ind." which allowed the leaders of the city to stay abreast of developments with the progress of ship construction.⁷⁵ As the construction of the ship slowly progressed, the people of Vincennes became more involved.

By 1936, the cruiser *Vincennes* was a popular topic in the city as the launching of the ship drew near. Due to popular interest, the city library put out a display of pictures

⁷² Whitley, pp. 243-244.

⁷³ "Vincennes is Honored With New Navy Ship," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, December 24, 1933, p. 1.

⁷⁴ "Vincennes is Honored as Keel for New Cruiser is Laid," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, January 10, 1934, p. 1. The keel of the ship was laid January 2, 1934. The laying of the keel is the first step in building a ship.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* As part of the treaty limitations, construction of the cruisers had to spread out over the course of three years.

and a clipping book with articles donated by the mayor to keep the public informed. The librarian noted that the children of the city “evinced much interest in the project, and that they know much more about the launching of the ship than one would expect.”⁷⁶ Even the children of Vincennes were getting caught up in the civic pride of the new ship.

Civic leaders and young schoolchildren in Vincennes wanted the crew of the ship to have something from the city, so even in the midst of the Depression, citizens banded together to fundraise. A tally on May 5, 1936, showed that citizens of Vincennes raised over \$1,400, including an impressive donation of \$168.54 collected through a nickel and dime drive by schoolchildren. The paper reported this to be the single largest donation since the drive started.⁷⁷ Donations poured in from individuals, businesses, post office employees, and faculty and staff from Vincennes University. The drive was truly a citywide event. By May 15th, the fund had risen to over \$1,600. Curtis Shake wrote booklet entitled “Naval History of Vincennes” on behalf of the “Citizen’s Committee on the Participation of the City of Vincennes in the Launching of the Cruiser *Vincennes*” to give as a gift to anyone who donated to the fund.⁷⁸ The booklet celebrated the history of the previous warship and the men of Vincennes who had achieved high rank in the Navy, while also describing the heavy cruiser that was now nearing completion.⁷⁹ The money raised went towards a silver service set for the officers and radios for the enlisted men. The donation of the radios caused the officials to note that this was the first time the “‘gobs’ have been remembered.” The school children of the city used their money to

⁷⁶ “Pictures of New Cruiser Displayed at Public Library,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, May 5, 1936, p. 3.

⁷⁷ “Children Make Big Donation To Gift Fund,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, May 6, 1936, p. 1.

⁷⁸ “Fund Now \$1,600,”; and “Naval History of Vincennes’ Booklet is Now Ready for Distribution,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, May 15, 1936, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Curtis G. Shake, *A Naval History of Vincennes, Indiana*, (Vincennes: Citizens Committee on the Participation of the City of Vincennes in the Launching of the Cruiser *Vincennes*, 1936).

donate an American flag to the crew.⁸⁰ The launching of the cruiser was the culmination of the inhabitants' participation in the building of the city's namesake.

Many people in Vincennes treated the launching of the city's namesake on May 21, 1936, as a major celebration bordering on a holiday. A delegation of fifteen people traveled to Quincy, Massachusetts, to witness the launching. The group photo before they left was carried on the cover of the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, and the group even chartered a special Pullman to take them out East. Mayor Joseph Kimmel and his daughter, Virginia Kimmel, were among the travelers. Miss Kimmel had the honor of christening the ship with a bottle of champagne donated as a gift from the city of Vincennes, France. The group also was hoping to meet with President Roosevelt to deliver an invitation from Governor McNutt to the dedication of the George Rogers Clark Memorial in June of 1936.⁸¹ The actual launching of the ship turned into a celebration of Vincennes.

Similar to the creation of the George Rogers Clark Memorial, this event put Vincennes on the national map. The tradition of christening, or naming, a ship with a bottle of champagne is an old and powerful tradition in the Navy. If something went wrong with the ceremony, the ship's crew would think it was cursed. Miss Virginia Kimmel performed the deed in front of a large and distinguished audience. The acting Secretary of the Navy, Admiral William H. Stanley, and four other admirals were in attendance as representatives of the Navy. The Navy also flew in two lieutenants, Morris Westfall and Nicholas Draim, who were natives of Vincennes, to give the festivities a

⁸⁰ Gob was an informal term for enlisted seaman; Ross M. Garrigus, "Fleet Greyhound Of Navy Christened Thursday By Miss Virginia Kimmel," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, May 21, 1936, p. 1; and Shake, p. 13.

⁸¹ Ibid., "Party Leaves For Christening of New Cruiser," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, May 17, 1936, p. 1. The President did agree to be a part of the dedication.

local feel from the Navy side. In a nod to the naval tradition of Vincennes, Mrs. Albert Niblack, the widow of an admiral from Vincennes, was in attendance.⁸² The launching of the ship went smoothly, and Vincennes had a new namesake. According to the General Manager of Bethlehem Shipbuilding, the delegation from Vincennes was “the largest ever present for such an event” and that “no other city has taken such interest.”⁸³ The donations, gifts to the crew, and support at the launching were ways some people in Vincennes showed their support for the new ship. Now it would be up to the ship to give the city something to be proud of. No one could know that Miss Kimmel would be back six short years later christening another *Vincennes*.

The *Vincennes* completed its long journey that began in 1934 when its keel was laid with its commissioning on February 24, 1937. While the main roles of a cruiser were to scout and engage in commerce warfare, there are no opportunities for that in a navy during peacetime.⁸⁴ Instead, showing the flag and fleet exercises filled the time. The Navy assigned the *Vincennes* an extended shakedown cruise to Scandinavia and Europe after her commissioning. When the ship returned, it joined Cruiser Division 7 (CruDiv7) on the West Coast.⁸⁵ With war clouds looming in Europe, the ship

⁸² Albert Niblack was a native of Vincennes who eventually rose to the rank of Vice Admiral. During World War I he commanded a division of battleships and later cruisers and served as the director of Naval Intelligence in 1921. Shortly after the *Vincennes* (CA 44) was commissioned, the Navy began work on a *Gleaves*-class destroyer named the USS *Niblack* (DD 424) that was commissioned in 1940 and went on to serve in the Mediterranean during World War II. This information was also from the Navy history website.

⁸³ Garrigus *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*.

⁸⁴ Commerce warfare refers to the naval tactic of trying to destroy the enemy’s shipping and supply lines instead of fighting a battle between fleets. The French called this *guerre de course* and the term was accepted widespread. By World War II, submarines proved better suited to commerce warfare than cruisers, though the German heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper*, similarly armed to the *Vincennes*, made several commerce raiding sorties into the Atlantic with mixed results.

⁸⁵ CruDiv 7 consisted of the heavy cruisers *Wichita* (CA 45) and the sister ships *Quincy* (CA 39), *Tuscaloosa* (CA 37), and the *Vincennes*. The ships sported a green stripe to identify their unit on top of their turrets. This division represented the most modern American heavy cruisers.
<http://www.navsource.org/archives/01/articles.htm>

transferred back to the Atlantic in April 1939.⁸⁶ During this early period of the war before the United States was an official belligerent, the *Vincennes* participated in a secret mission to Casablanca during the height of the German invasion of France.

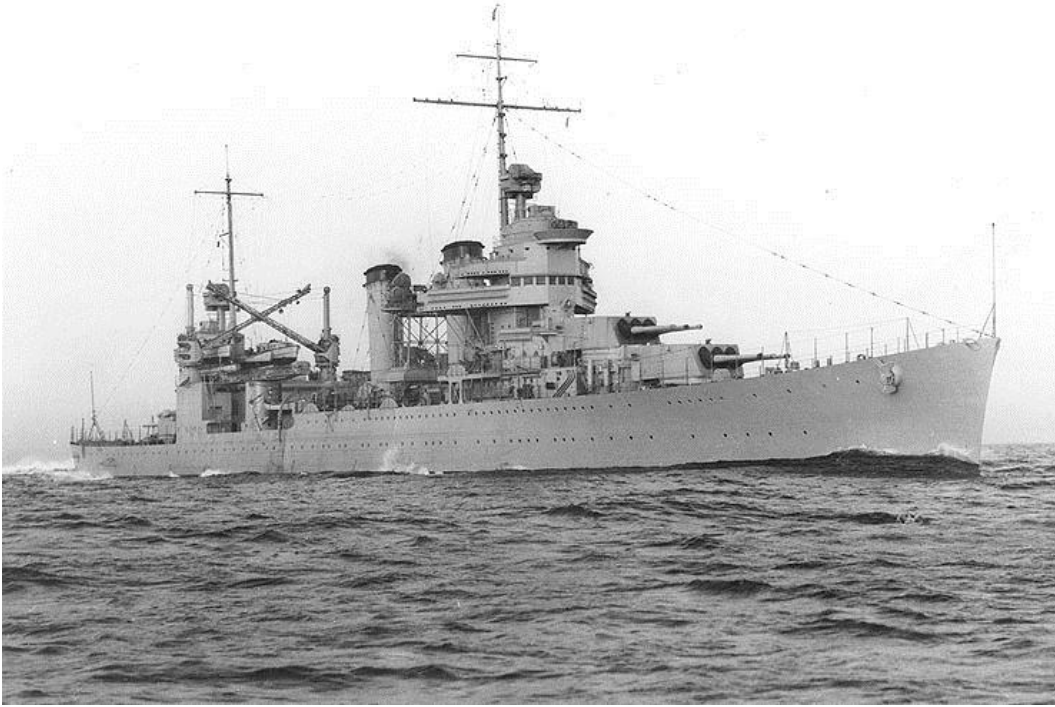
Virginia Kimmel christened the *Vincennes* with a bottle of champagne from Vincennes, France, and to continue that connection, the new vessel visited France during its shakedown cruise in 1937. In 1940, the *Vincennes* would travel to French Morocco under completely different circumstances. World War II came to France with terrible swiftness when Germany launched its invasion on May 10, 1940. In World War I, French armies held Germany at bay for four years, but in World War II, the outlook was grim after only a few weeks. This is where the *Vincennes* entered the story.

On May 28, 1940, the *Vincennes* was anchored at Hampton Roads, Virginia, with its crew scattered up and down the East Coast, when the captain received orders to cross the Atlantic as quickly as possible. Without a set destination, the ship headed out just a few hours later with an escort of two destroyers. That night, Captain Beardall obtained his first hint of the ship's destination when he was ordered to make port in the Azores. The ship arrived on June 4, but Captain Beardall found no orders waiting for them. It was not until June 6 that the situation was resolved with a command to head to the port of Casablanca in French Morocco. The answer to everyone's question was gold.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Whitley, p. 247.

⁸⁷ Rear Admiral Oscar H. Dodson, United States Navy (Retired), "Secret Rescue Mission," *Proceedings*, (December 1985), pp. 87-91.

Photo # NH 50844 USS Vincennes making 22.03 knots during trials off Rockland, Maine, 12 January 1937



USS *Vincennes* on pre-commissioning trials in 1937. Navy photo NH 50844 accessed at <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/h50000/h50844.jpg>

The speed of the Nazi assault caused the French to begin examining worst case scenarios and one question was what to do with the government's gold reserves in the still unconquered portions of France. With the British Army mauled by the Battle of France and the grueling evacuation at Dunkirk, America appeared to be the safest and most logical choice. The original plan was to send the gold to Portugal to be picked up by a US Navy ship there. However, that train would have to pass through Spain and Generalissimo Franco's political leanings toward Germany gave the French pause. Casablanca was the safest option remaining. It was still relatively close to France, and once the French ship transporting the gold reached North Africa, it would be out of the

Germans' reach. The *Vincennes* would be transformed from warship to a floating temporary branch of the National Bank of France.⁸⁸

The grand total transported by the *Vincennes* came to \$242 million in gold ingots and coins. The crew began loading the gold on June 10, 1940, under the watchful eyes of French troops. The crew handling the gold dropped only one bag out of the entire load. A greater danger than falling bags of gold was the entry of Italy into the war that same day. Luckily, the feared air raid on Casablanca never materialized. When the crew completely loaded the ship, the weight of the gold caused the bow of the ship to be down over a foot, which had to be corrected by shifting oil and water in the ship's storage tanks. Finally, the captain took the drastic step of welding the doors shut and posting armed Marines outside the doors. The ship arrived at the Brooklyn Naval Yard on June 20. The crew safely offloaded the gold and stored it at Fort Knox during the war.⁸⁹ This voyage would not be the *Vincennes*' last secret mission.

After the excitement of the transfer of gold from Casablanca, the *Vincennes* settled back into a more mundane routine. The ship participated in exercises in the Caribbean and escorted convoys across the Atlantic, including a trip to Iceland.⁹⁰ When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the *Vincennes* was at Cape Town, South Africa, escorting a convoy that would return to Trinidad.⁹¹ The *Vincennes* would stay in the Atlantic for a few more months, but with the American battle fleet

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "USS *Vincennes*," Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/ca44.htm> and "USS *Niblack*," Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/n5/niblack.htm> During the convoy to Iceland, the *Vincennes* sailed with the destroyer *Niblack*, the other Navy ship related to *Vincennes*.

⁹¹ "USS *Vincennes*," Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center, <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/ca44.htm> According to the US Navy Historical page on the *Vincennes*, the cruiser carried another shipment of gold from South Africa on this journey, but I could find no confirmation of that.

crippled after Pearl Harbor, the Navy needed all the ships it could spare in the Pacific. In March 1942, the Navy ordered the *Vincennes* to the Pacific for another mission even more spectacular and secret than transporting gold.⁹²

After the embarrassment at Pearl Harbor, the military envisioned a bold raid on the Japanese homeland to lift morale and to keep the Japanese off balance. The solution became known as the Doolittle Raid. The Navy approved a risky plan to send an aircraft carrier laden with Army B-25 bombers off the coast of Japan to launch a raid on the cities of Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya.⁹³ A raid on the heart of the Japanese Empire would achieve the military's goals. The *Vincennes* served as part of the protective screen of ships for the carrier *Hornet*, which would ferry the bombers on their journey.⁹⁴

The little fleet left San Francisco on April 1, 1942. The *Vincennes* was to provide anti-aircraft protection, act as a scout, and in the worst case scenario, defend the *Hornet* from Japanese counter attacks. The voyage was uneventful until the morning of April 18, when lookouts spotted a small Japanese patrol craft. Escorting vessels promptly sank the ship with gunfire with help from planes from the carrier *Enterprise*, but if a radio message got out, the whole mission was in danger. Admiral Halsey, the commander of the fleet, and Colonel Doolittle made the decision to launch the planes from much farther out than planned since they did not want to risk two of the Navy's carriers any further. The attack achieved complete surprise and provided a crucial morale boost early in the war. Unfortunately, participating in the Doolittle Raid caused the *Vincennes* to miss the

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Nathan Miller, *War at Sea*, (New York: Scribner, 1995), pp. 235-236.

⁹⁴ "USS *Vincennes*," <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/ca44.htm>

Battle of the Coral Sea, but the cruiser would be with the fleet for the momentum-changing Battle of Midway.⁹⁵

The *Vincennes* had been at war for over five months by April 1942, but still had yet to fire a shot in anger. The heavy cruiser would finally get its chance at the Battle of Midway. Decoded messages showed that the Japanese planned to invade Midway as part of a plan to destroy the American fleet. The *Vincennes* was once again part of the screen defending the American carriers. The battle started on June 4, 1942, with the two opposing fleets sending waves of aircraft at each other. Anti-aircraft protection was not the type of mission the *Vincennes* was designed for. The next *Vincennes* would bristle with anti-aircraft weapons, but the Navy was still grappling with the shift from surface combat to naval air combat and many ships still lacked the defensive anti-aircraft batteries needed to survive air attack. When the carrier *Yorktown* was damaged during the battle, the *Vincennes* was one of the ships sent to protect it. The battle was a decisive American victory, with four Japanese carriers sunk. The *Vincennes* returned to Pearl Harbor to prepare for America's first amphibious invasion in the Pacific.⁹⁶

The invasion of Guadalcanal put America back on the offensive, but would prove to be the last mission of the *Vincennes*. The circumstances of Pearl Harbor changed the role of cruisers. Before, they were needed for scouting and commerce warfare. Now with most of the Pacific Fleet's battleships either wrecked beyond repair in the mud of Pearl Harbor, slowly undergoing repair in dry dock, or patrolling the West Coast, it was up to the cruisers to take the frontlines. Unfortunately, cruisers did not have the firepower or armor to face Japanese battleships, which would prove fatal for several in

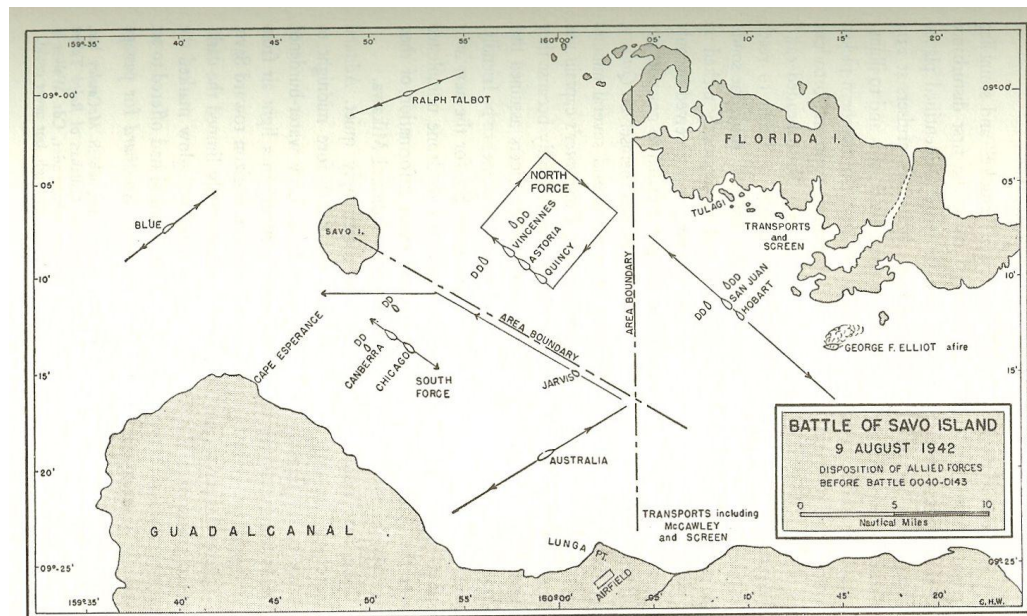
⁹⁵ Jonathan Dorris, "The Doolittle-Tokyo Expedition and Coral Sea," in *A Log of the Vincennes*, by Donald Dorris and others (Louisville: Standard Printing Company, 1947), pp. 194-201.

⁹⁶ Ibid. "Battle of Midway," pp. 216-219.

the upcoming campaign. The fleet en route to Guadalcanal only included one battleship.

⁹⁷ Cruisers like the *Vincennes* had to shoulder the burden until new battleships joined the fleet or ones damaged at Pearl Harbor were repaired.

American forces arrived off of Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942, and successfully landed the Marine invasion force. The *Vincennes* was part of the screen around the vulnerable transports while they unloaded. The first response by the Japanese was a series of air raids. The *Vincennes* used her main battery guns to disrupt the attack runs of Japanese torpedo planes along with her normal anti-aircraft guns. Planes were just one of the threats faced by the Allied fleet. The Japanese would send their fleet to contest the landings, and it would be up to the *Vincennes* to help protect the precious supply ships.⁹⁸



Allied fleet dispositions the night of the Savo Island Battle. From Samul Eliot Morison's *Struggle for Guadalcanal* pg. 33.

⁹⁷ The USS *North Carolina* (BB 55) was a newly commissioned battleship serving as part of the carrier screen. She would be damaged by a submarine torpedo a month after the invasion. The same spread of torpedoes would sink the carrier *Wasp*. This information comes from the Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-n/bb55.htm>.

⁹⁸ Jack Coggins, *The Campaign for Guadalcanal*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 35-39

Guadalcanal is a rounded off rectangle, with the northwest corner turned up and the southeast corner pointed down. The Marines landed at Lunga Point (see map above), on the northern side of the island, a little west of the middle of the island. North of the island is Florida Island. Cape Esperance is a northwestern promontory that juts from Guadalcanal into the sea. North of Cape Esperance, Savo Island sits almost exactly in between Florida Island and the cape. A chain of islands stretched to the northwest, ending in several Japanese naval bases.⁹⁹ Knowing that any Japanese attack on the supply ships would have to come either north or south of Savo Island, the Allies set up their patrols accordingly.

On the night of August 8, 1942, the crew of the *Vincennes* surely was in a good mood. First their ship participated in the Doolittle raid, then the victory at Midway, and now this successful invasion of Guadalcanal. Patrolling would be a mundane break from all the excitement. With carrier and land-based planes scouting, submarines prowling beneath the water, and radar being used widespread for one of the first times, the chances of the Japanese sneaking up on the fleet seemed remote. These comforting thoughts would soon disappear during the devastating Battle of Savo Island.

The Japanese reacted swiftly to the American landings. The air raids were only the first strike. Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, the commander of the Japanese 8th Fleet, quickly organized a striking force of five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and a lone destroyer. A swift raid could punch through the American defenses and sink the valuable transports where most of the Marines' supplies remained on board. Vice Admiral Mikawa had every reason to be confident. While the American Navy had won the carrier battles so far, the Japanese Navy was victorious in almost every surface action. His

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp. 26-27, 40, 45 all have excellent maps of the area.

crews were specifically trained for night actions and unlike American cruisers; his were armed with long range torpedoes.¹⁰⁰ The Japanese fleet headed towards Guadalcanal on August 8, 1942, but they were not unseen in their journey.

An Australian twin-engine Hudson patrol plane spotted the Japanese fleet on August 8. Unfortunately, the report the Allied commanders received was “three cruisers, three destroyers, and two seaplane tenders.” The inclusion of seaplane tenders in the report allayed fears of a raid because those types of ships would be useless in a surface action. The radio report from the plane was also delayed in reaching the appropriate authorities.¹⁰¹ This lack of information would prove to be fatal for the *Vincennes* as the ship’s commanding officer, Captain Frederick Riefkohl, was in command of one part of the Allied fleet that night.

Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley, a British officer, was in overall command of the escort forces around Guadalcanal. To protect the vulnerable transports, he set up a layered defense of patrols to prevent the Japanese from entering the sound. Two radar-equipped picket destroyers were the outer sentinels, one patrolling in a line north of Savo Island; one to the south. The heavy cruiser USS *Chicago* and the Australian heavy cruisers HMAS *Australia*, and HMAS *Canberra*, with a screen of two destroyers, formed the Southern Patrol.¹⁰² The heavy cruisers USS *Quincy*, USS *Astoria*, and USS *Vincennes*, also with a screen of two destroyers, formed the Northern Patrol. An Eastern Patrol of two light cruisers and two destroyers stayed closer to the transports and did not take part in the battle. While Crutchley was in overall command, Admiral Kelly Turner,

¹⁰⁰ Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), pp. 184-192.

¹⁰¹ Bruce Loxton, *The Shame of Savo*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 139-146.

¹⁰² Captain Bode was left in command of the Southern Group with Admiral Crutchley’s absence. HMAS stands for His/Her Majesty’s Australian Ship.

commander of the amphibious forces, called him to a conference. Crutchley decided to take his flagship, the heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia*, to the conference, depriving the Southern Force of one of its heavy cruisers. With him gone, there was no unity of command. Captain Riefkohl of the *Vincennes* was the senior commander of the Northern Force and therefore would be the officer in command of that group for the upcoming battle, but he was not aware that Admiral Crutchley was gone.¹⁰³

The lack of a chain of command proved to be a critical mistake to the Allied fleet. The ambiguity of the command structure and the lack of clear-cut instructions added to the confusion of the night. Admiral Crutchley left orders for the cruiser groups to act independently, but wanted them to support each other in case of battle.¹⁰⁴ Captain Riefkohl was the senior officer in the absence of Admiral Crutchley, but his claim was always that he never knew Crutchley was gone. As he recalled in an interview in January of 1945:

Unfortunately I did not know that Admiral Crutchley had left that evening, but he had not notified me that he was leaving, although I was the second senior officer in that area. He had notified Captain Howard Bode of the *Chicago*, I believe, but no word was passed to me.¹⁰⁵

After surviving detection by the Australian patrol plane, the Japanese fleet's luck continued as the ships were able to sneak by the destroyer *Blue*, acting as a radar picket. The Japanese fleet was coming in south of Savo Island, so Captain Bode's Southern Group would be their first victims. The American ships spotted Mikawa's floatplanes, launched from his cruisers, but assumed they were Allied aircraft. At 0136 on August 9,

¹⁰³ Coggins, pp. 42-43.

¹⁰⁴ Winston B. Lewis, "Battle of Savo Island," *Combat Narratives*, (Washington DC: Office of Naval Intelligence, 1943, reprinted 1994), p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Captain Frederick Riefkohl, "Narrative," *U.S.S. Vincennes CA 44*, (United States Navy: Recorded January 26, 1945), p. 11.

Mikawa gave the order to begin the battle with a massive torpedo attack.¹⁰⁶ Only at 0143, seven minutes after the Japanese fired their torpedoes, did the destroyer *Patterson* broadcast the message “Warning, Warning, Strange Ships Entering Harbor!” By then it was too late. Japanese floatplanes dropped flares and searchlights snapped on and caught the Allied cruisers in their glare. The *Canberra* was hit by torpedoes and accurate shellfire, reducing the proud Australian cruiser to a wreck that sank the next day. The *Chicago* was hit in the bow by a torpedo, which did little damage. Unfortunately, Captain Bode turned his ship in the wrong direction and headed *away* from the Japanese ships. Compounding his error, he did not warn the Northern Group at all. Captain Riefkohl would have no warning of the onslaught heading his way.¹⁰⁷

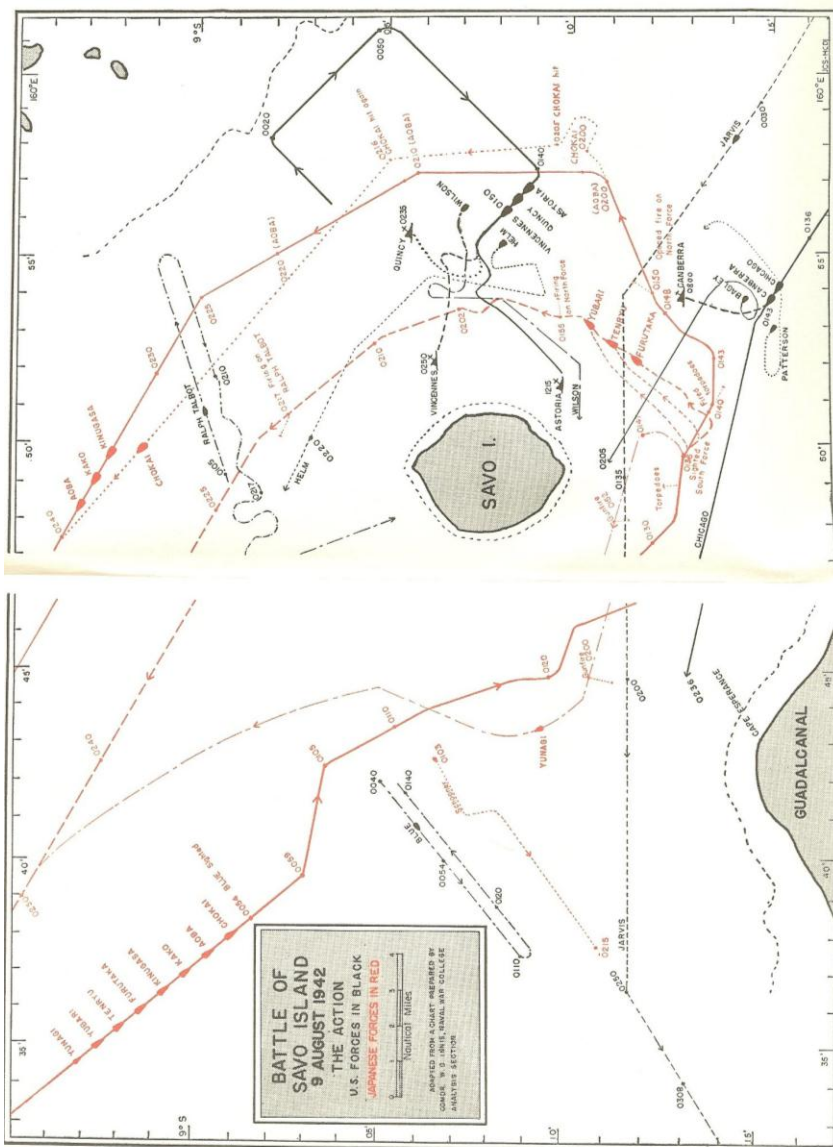
As Riefkohl pondered the bits and pieces of evidence that came his way during the night, the Japanese fleet, now split into two groups, approached undetected from astern of the Allied ships. The Northern Group was in a column, with the *Vincennes* in the lead, followed by the *Quincy* and the *Astoria*. At 0148, the Japanese started their attack on the Northern Group by launching torpedoes at the *Astoria*. The torpedoes missed, but the *Astoria* was caught by complete surprise and quickly crippled by gunfire. The Japanese proceeded up the line and attacked the *Quincy* next, hitting her with shellfire and a torpedo. One shell hit the center of the ship and set her un-launched floatplanes on fire, providing an excellent aiming point for Japanese gunners.¹⁰⁸ The *Quincy* was completely wrecked and sank at 0235, but not before her defiant guns

¹⁰⁶ All times are given in military time, using a 24 hour clock. 0136 translates to 1:36 am.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Two Ocean War*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), pp. 172-174. Please see my bibliography as there are several other books that give excellent accounts of the battle.

¹⁰⁸ Morison, pp. 174-175. This design flaw of having the highly flammable floatplanes amidships was corrected in later cruisers that had the catapults moved to the extreme stern of the ship.

managed to score hits on the *Chokai*, the Japanese flagship.¹⁰⁹ With the first two American ships out of the way, the Japanese turned their attention to the final cruiser, the *Vincennes*.



Movements of Japanese and American ships during the Battle of Savo Island. From Samuel Eliot Morison's *Struggle for Guadalcanal*, pgs. 34-35.

Captain Frederick Riefkohl of the *Vincennes* had gone to bed for only about an hour when he was woken up due to reports of flares being dropped and gunfire in the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

direction of the Southern Group. In his after-battle report, he stated that he was warned of a possible air attack in the morning and “that was the only warning that we had.”¹¹⁰ He also claimed to never have been made aware that Crutchley had left the area, leaving him the senior officer for both groups. At 0150, the Japanese fleet illuminated the American ship. Captain Riefkohl made the grievous mistake of assuming they were Allied ships and radioed “We are friendly” and even having a large American flag raised on his yardarm.¹¹¹ The Japanese were definitely not friendly, and the *Vincennes* was soon under attack.

Caught by complete surprise, the *Vincennes*, like the rest of the Allied ships that night, did not stand a chance. Almost immediately, several shells hit the ship. In Captain Riefkohl’s words, “we were heavily hit in the engine room...our planes caught on fire although there was no gas in them...our main battery control station forward was hit...the aft director was blown right off the ship.”¹¹² With damage to the engine rooms, the ship lost power and speed. The floatplanes located at the center of the ship caught on fire just as they did on the *Quincy* and provided an excellent aiming point for Japanese gunners. The damage to the main battery directors made it much more difficult to fight back. To make matters worse, around 0155, two torpedoes hit the ship, adding to the damage in the engine rooms. Despite the damage, the ship’s guns did get off several defiant salvos which scored one, possibly two hits on the cruiser *Kinugasa* before they were silenced.¹¹³ With the upper decks ablaze, its guns battered into submission, and water pouring in through shell and torpedo holes, the *Vincennes* was now more of a death

¹¹⁰ Riefkohl, p. 10.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 11.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 12.

¹¹³ Denis and Peggy Warner, *Disaster in the Pacific*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), pp. 147-149.

trap than a warship. A final humiliation occurred after 0200, when the Japanese for the second time focused searchlights on the *Vincennes*. Riefkohl, once again convinced they were American, ordered a large American flag raised, which the Japanese took for an admiral's ensign, encouraging them to redouble their fire on the *Vincennes*. Captain Riefkohl finally ordered the crew to abandon ship and the *Vincennes*, the pride of Vincennes, Indiana, sank around 0250, only one hour after the Japanese trained the first spotlights on her.¹¹⁴ During the course of the battle, 339 sailors, over one third of the crew, made the ultimate sacrifice during the brief, but brutal battle.¹¹⁵

The Battle of Savo Island remains the worst open-water defeat in United States Navy history. In a little over 40 minutes, the Japanese destroyed four heavy cruisers and damaged a heavy cruiser and two destroyers. The casualty ratio was even worse. The American and Australian Navies suffered 1023 dead and 709 wounded compared to 58 dead and 53 wounded for the Japanese.¹¹⁶ The one silver lining for the Allies was that Admiral Mikawa decided to withdraw after destroying the Allied cruisers, mainly due to his fear of air attack the following day. The Japanese fleet left the transports and their precious supplies untouched.¹¹⁷ The submarine *S-44* gained some measure of revenge for the United States Navy by sinking the Japanese heavy cruiser *Kako* as it returned to base

¹¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 152-156.

¹¹⁵ Frederick Riefkohl, "USS Vincennes-Report of Personnel on," to Chief of Naval Operations, Enclosures A (List of Officers and men KILLED in ACTION) and B (List of Officers and men MISSING in ACTION), September 3, 1942, Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University, Vincennes Collection. The casualties are usually listed as 332, but a count of the official casualty list puts it at 339.

¹¹⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, "The Struggle for Guadalcanal," *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II Volume V*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), pp. 60, 63. The Japanese losses do not include those from the cruiser *Kako*, which was sunk by an American submarine while returning to base.

¹¹⁷ Dull, pp. 190-192.

from the battle.¹¹⁸ The Navy was shocked at this defeat and launched an immediate investigation and Captain Riefkohl of the *Vincennes* would be at the center of the storm.

History has not been kind to Captain Riefkohl as the commander of a patrol group that was almost wiped out. As Bruce Loxton, author of *The Shame of Savo* and an eyewitness as a midshipman on the HMAS *Canberra*, pointed out, Riefkohl was faced with the twin problems of having the Japanese ships between him and the ships he was to defend and not being prepared for action. In such a situation, these two problems “demanded rapid resolution and he failed to come to grips with either of them.”¹¹⁹ The official historian of the United States Navy, Samuel Eliot Morison, is even harsher, declaring that Riefkohl “made about as many mistakes as a commanding officer could make.”¹²⁰ The Navy commissioned Admiral Hepburn to investigate the battle. In the self-titled Hepburn Report, he reported that “the leadership shown by Captain Riefkohl...is far from impressive.”¹²¹ Hepburn went on to criticize Riefkohl for his patrol pattern and for failing to effectively command the Northern Group as a flag officer should. After the war, Riefkohl always defended himself by saying he did not know Crutchley was away, he did not receive any warnings, and that the cruisers did succeed in their main mission by sacrificing themselves to save the transports. Whatever the Navy thought, to many of the people of *Vincennes*, Captain Riefkohl and his ship were heroes and they set about showing their civic pride all over again.

While the Japanese sank the *Vincennes* on August 9, 1942, Navy censorship did not allow news of the loss to come out until October 13, 1942. The news had to have

¹¹⁸ Whitley, p. 170.

¹¹⁹ Loxton, p. 224.

¹²⁰ Morison *Two Ocean War*, p. 176.

¹²¹ Admiral Arthur Hepburn, “Hepburn Report,” quoted in Denis and Peggy Warner, *Disaster in the Pacific*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), p. 223.

been crushing to the small city of 20,000, yet the first headlines reporting the ship's loss in Vincennes also included the hopeful phrase "Navy Promises Another U.S.S. Vincennes." The newspaper articles did not question Captain Riefkohl's tactics or question why the battle was so lopsided. The *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* portrayed the *Vincennes* and her crew as heroes. The same day the people of Vincennes received the news, an aide to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox confirmed the tradition of naming ships after vessels lost in action.¹²² Now it was up to individuals in the city to begin the drive.

With the city's namesake lost in action, a distinguished former citizen named Test Dalton made an impassioned plea to Secretary of the Navy Knox to name the next cruiser under construction the *Vincennes*. In his letter to the Secretary, he rehashed many of the old arguments for the first cruiser *Vincennes*. The city was Indiana's oldest, had a "glorious history," was home to such men as William Henry Harrison, George Rogers Clark, and two Navy admirals, Niblack and Usher. Dalton understood the strain that Knox had to be under, comparing the loss of a ship to "the death of a member of one's family," but reminded him that "every citizen of Vincennes grieves for the loss of the cruiser Vincennes." On October 23, 1942, Dalton received a reply from Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, the Chief of Naval Personnel. Jacobs had the good news that "the Secretary of the Navy has recently reassigned the name *Vincennes* to another cruiser which is under construction."¹²³ The struggle for a new *Vincennes* was not limited to Vincennes. To show their support for the lost ships, 30,000 shipyard workers at the Fore

¹²² "New Cruiser to be Launched in About a Year," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, October 13, 1942, p. 1.

¹²³ Test Dalton to Frank Knox, October 13, 1942; and Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs to Test Dalton, October 23, 1942, "Vincennes Clipping File I," Knox County Public Library Historical Collection at the McGrady-Brockman House Historical/Genealogical Research Center, Vincennes, Indiana.

River shipyard in Quincy, Massachusetts, where the *Vincennes* (CA 44) had been built, signed a petition to have the two cruisers currently under construction at their yard renamed the *Vincennes* and *Quincy*.¹²⁴ The news of the new *Vincennes* was already in the *Vincennes* newspapers by October 20. In an amazing accomplishment, the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* reported the *Vincennes* sunk on October 13 and the Navy announced a new ship named only a week later on October 20.¹²⁵

Getting the ship named was only the first step in a long process before the ship was commissioned. When the heavy cruiser *Vincennes* was built, citizens ranging from businessmen to schoolchildren donated money towards radios for the crew, a silver tea set, and some flags. Now there was an opportunity for these same citizens to donate towards the actual construction cost of the ship. On March 2, 1943, Eugene Pulliam, the Indiana War Bond Chairman, announced a campaign to sell \$22 million in war bonds in the State of Indiana to be put towards the new ship. Every county in Indiana agreed to participate and received a monthly goal. The leaders of the campaign then divided each county into regions. The city's region share was \$144,850 for the month of March 1943.¹²⁶ Full page ads in the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* called on readers to buy war bonds so "There'll Always be a VINCENNES," or to "Buy Your Share in the New U.S.S. VINCENNES!" or finally "Your Extra War Bond Says They Can't Sink an Indiana Fighting Ship!"¹²⁷ These ads were also used as posters. They made a personal

¹²⁴ *Quincy* was another cruiser sunk at the Battle of Savo Island and had been built around the same time as the *Vincennes* at the same yard. The cities of St. Paul and Flint had to wait a little longer for their ships as a result of the renaming. The new *Quincy* was a *Baltimore*-class heavy cruiser, while the new *Vincennes* was a smaller light cruiser. Information from Whitley, pp. 261, 269.

¹²⁵ "Cruiser Flint, Now Under Construction at Quincy, Is Renamed Vincennes," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, October 20, 1942, p. 1.

¹²⁶ "Launch Campaign to Sell \$22,000,000 in Bonds to Pay for New Vincennes," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, March 2, 1943, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Examples taken from the March 15 and 19, 1943 issues of the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*.

appeal to citizens of Indiana and Vincennes, making it a source of pride that there would be another *Vincennes* and encouraging people to buy “*your share*” [emphasis added] in the new ship. Vincennes and its area responded and topped the quota by bringing in \$145,631.25 for the March drive. The paper concluded the bond drive by publishing a letter from Captain Frederick Riefkohl of the lost cruiser in which he said “I was delighted...to hear that Vincennes is at the fore promoting the sale of War Bonds for a new VINCENNES. Our Vincennes was a ship of which of which we were all proud, every man jack from the Captain to the newest ‘boot.’”¹²⁸

The building of the new *Vincennes* showed how the tempo of ship construction changed in the ten years since the last *Vincennes*. The first cruiser was laid down on January 2, 1934, launched on May 21, 1936, and commissioned February 24, 1937.¹²⁹ By way of contrast, the time needed for the new *Vincennes* was less than two years from start to finish. The light cruiser *Vincennes* was laid down on March 7, 1942, launched on July 17, 1943, and commissioned January 21, 1944.¹³⁰

In 1936, a delegation of city leaders had plenty of time to plan for the launching ceremonies and the shipyard could afford to make the launching of each ship special since it happened so infrequently. The situation in 1943 was completely different. Wartime censorship limited information about ships. Shipyards were churning out ships as quickly as they could be assembled, so there was no time for the pre-war, day-long ceremonies. Yet the Navy still honored some traditions and christening, or naming, the ship was one of them. In 1936, the mayor’s daughter smashed a bottle of champagne from Vincennes, France, to name the *Vincennes*. In 1943, Nazi Germany had occupied

¹²⁸ “Cruiser Vincennes Drive Goes Over Top,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, March 30, 1943, p. 1..

¹²⁹ Whitley, p. 243.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 261.

France for over three years. Miss Virginia Kimmel was now Mrs. Virginia Osborn, but she was on hand along with the mayor, an Indiana Supreme Court judge, and another delegation from the city.¹³¹ The local paper proudly noted that Indiana raised \$2.5 million more than needed for the ship and the Navy promised the new *Vincennes* was even more powerful than the previous one.¹³²

The third *Vincennes* had a relatively short career, but was in the thick of the fighting in the Pacific during its service. The role of cruisers had changed since the last *Vincennes* was built as well. Cruisers were historically scouts for the fleet, taking over the role of frigates, and commerce raiders. In deference to changing technology, cruisers were equipped with floatplanes to expand the area they could cover. By 1944, the need for ships to act as scouts fell to obsolescence as massive carrier task forces criss-crossed the oceans and their air wings provided scouts. Radar had improved dramatically as well, allowing ships to see far over the horizon, even in dark. The role of the new *Vincennes* would center on air defense and shore bombardment.

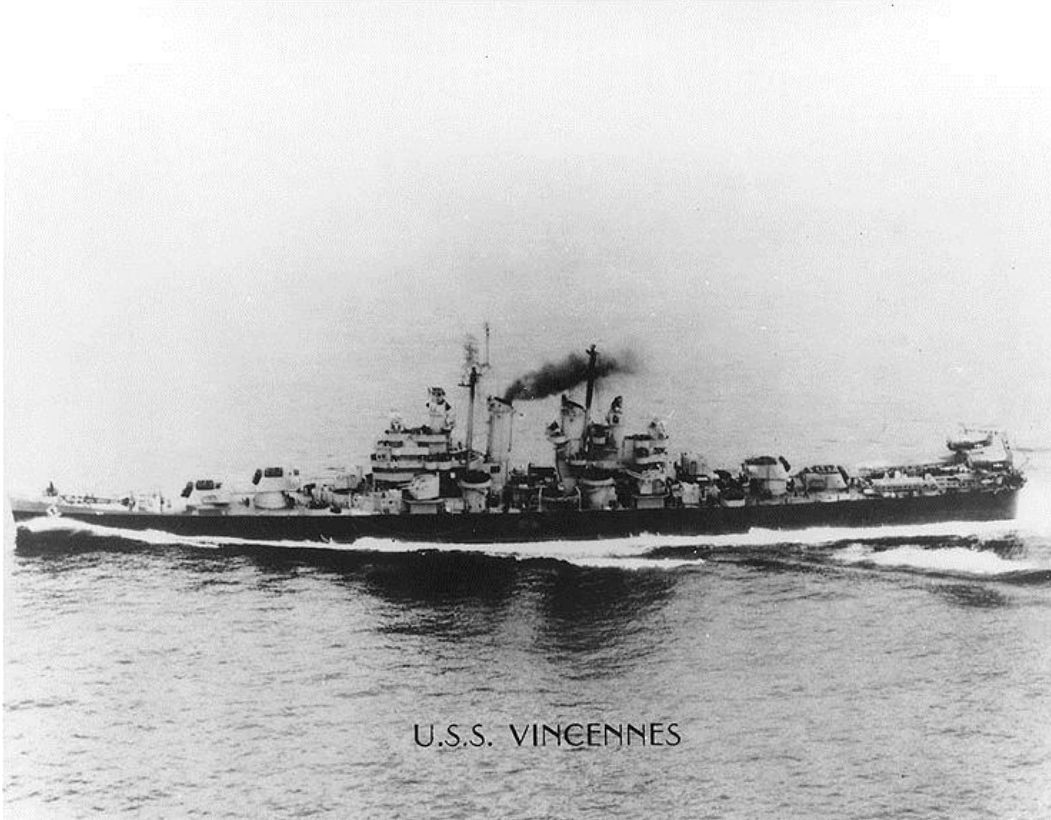
After a short shakedown cruise in the Caribbean, the *Vincennes* joined Task Force 58 in the Pacific. During 1944 the ship served in the carrier screen during the Marianas, Palaus, and Philippines campaigns. As the American forces inched closer to an invasion of Japan, the *Vincennes* was finally able to use its main battery 6-inch guns in combat to bombard industrial targets in the Japanese Home Islands and support the invasion of Okinawa in 1945. When the war ended, the cruiser participated in the “Magic Carpet”

¹³¹ Fittingly, Virginia Kimmel married a naval officer between the christening of the two *Vincennes*. “New *Vincennes* to be Launched This Saturday,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 12, 1943, p. 1.

¹³² “New Cruiser *Vincennes* Launched,” *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 18, 1943, pp. 1, 7.

program to bring soldiers home from overseas in the Pacific. Just over two years after being commissioned, the Navy decommissioned the *Vincennes* in September 1946.¹³³

Photo # NH 95308 USS Vincennes underway, circa 1945



USS *Vincennes* CL 64 US Navy image NH 95308 <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/cl64.htm>

During World War II, two different ships named after the city of Vincennes were in commission. Continuing the tradition of the original *Vincennes*, these ships served in the combat zone and carried the name *Vincennes* from Midway to Guadalcanal to the very shores of Japan. The heavy cruiser and over three hundred of her crew gave the ultimate sacrifice, while the light cruiser served until the United States achieved final

¹³³ “USS *Vincennes*.” Department of the Navy. Naval Historical Center. Accessed 12 November 2009. <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-v/cl64.htm>

victory in 1945. The people of Vincennes had to wait almost forty years for the next *Vincennes* to proudly carry the city's name. This ship would participate in a new type of war: The Cold War.

Chapter 4

Following in the footsteps of the heroism of George Rogers Clark, the two cruisers named *Vincennes* brought recognition to the city and the inhabitants responded by expressing their civic pride through gifts, media coverage, and even a war bond drive to help fund a second *Vincennes*. The Japanese sank the first ship at Guadalcanal while it defended transports and the other participated in the final campaigns in the Pacific that brought victory over Japan. The naval legacy of the *Vincennes* did not end with the scrapping of the third ship in 1967, but did enter into another lull similar to the one after the Navy decommissioned the original *Vincennes* in the mid-19th century. The founding of the Vincennes Association to give crewmembers of the heavy cruiser a chance to reconnect began in 1972. This group met annually in the city of Vincennes. The lull ended with the Navy's announcement of the 4th *Vincennes* on January 9, 1984.¹³⁴ The citizens quickly embraced this ship with the same enthusiasm they had the previous two.

The story of the fourth *Vincennes* involved citizens of Vincennes and politicians from the state. In the 1920s and 1930s, the civic leaders enlisted the help of the Republican Party and several prominent leaders in state politics to procure the funds for the George Rogers Clark Memorial. In the 1980s, the city would turn to Senator and future Vice-President, Dan Quayle, for the political clout to get another ship named after the city.

¹³⁴ "U.S.S. Vincennes Association," January 14, 1984, Vincennes University Lewis Library Vincennes Collection. In one of the quirks of US Navy ship-naming protocol, the first and last ships were named after the battle fought in the Revolutionary War, while the middle two ships were actually named for the city.

The United States Navy is very particular about the naming traditions of warships. Since the 1880s, cruisers have always been named after cities.¹³⁵ This tradition changed when the Navy announced in February 1980 that the new Aegis guided-missile cruiser class would be called the *Ticonderoga*-class.¹³⁶ While this decision altered the Navy naming convention, it still left hope for Vincennes since Ticonderoga referenced a Revolutionary War battle. The next ship announced was the *Yorktown*, another Revolutionary War battle, so the precedent was set naming the ships after battles, specifically Revolutionary War battles.¹³⁷ Armed with this evidence, leaders in Vincennes enlisted Republican Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana in 1981 to help the city have another Navy ship named *Vincennes*.¹³⁸ As he was on the Senate Armed Services Committee, the leaders of the city chose their chief advocate wisely.

According to Senator Quayle, “back in 1981 they [a delegation from Vincennes and the *Vincennes* Association] contacted me, my colleague Senator Lugar [who served in the Navy], our governor [Republican Robert Orr], the Department of the Navy and they even petitioned the President for the privilege of having this ship named the *Vincennes*.”¹³⁹ The Navy eventually agreed to name the next Aegis cruiser the *Vincennes*. Harkening back to the last two cruisers, the city leaders made sure that the christening and launching of the new ship turned into a exhibition of civic pride.

¹³⁵ The exception to this rule was the naming of armored cruisers, which were larger and more heavily armed than traditional cruisers, but still smaller than battleships. When the Navy began running out of state names, armored cruisers were renamed for cities in the state they were originally named for. “Ship Naming in the United States Navy,” Naval Historical Center, September 29, 1997, <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq63-1.htm>

¹³⁶ “USS Ticonderoga (CG 47).” Accessed 14 May 2010. <http://www.navysite.de/cg/cg47.html>

¹³⁷ This precedent continued through the *Vincennes* and the fourth ship, the *Valley Forge*, before broadening to cover battles from most major wars fought by the United States.

¹³⁸ “Remarks By Senator Dan Quayle at the Christening Ceremony of the USS Vincennes (CG-49),” Congressional Record, Vol. 130, No. 60, (May 10, 1984).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

“Lugar, Richard Green,” Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000504>

In recognition of his work on behalf of the city of Vincennes, Senator Quayle was the keynote speaker at the christening in Pascagoula, Mississippi, on April 14, 1984. As an added honor, his wife swung the champagne bottle that christened the ship. The city mayor, President of the Vincennes Association, and the publisher of the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* were also present. The people attending the ceremony provided a sampling of those who advocated for this ship on behalf of Vincennes. These were the leaders in the best position to mold the public memory of Vincennes and tap into the civic pride of its people. Mrs. Harriet Osborn made an appearance at the ceremony as a touching connection to the two cruisers from World War II. She christened the heavy cruiser as the mayor's daughter and the second to honor the memory of the first. Senator Quayle stressed the history of the three previous ships in the Navy during his speech. He ended his address by noting that "it [the new cruiser *Vincennes*] will also embody the heritage and traditions of the CA-44 and the CL-64 that served so nobly in our nation's time of trial-and whose memory and spirit have been kept alive by the *U.S.S. Vincennes* Association and the citizens of Vincennes, Indiana."¹⁴⁰ Senator Quayle was a witness to the civic pride the city had in its new ship, which would be even more evident at the commissioning ceremony on July 6, 1985.

WVUB Radio in Vincennes broadcast the commissioning of the ship live while the local television station, WVUT-TV, showed the video tape of the commissioning the following day, allowing the population of the city to watch.¹⁴¹ Many of the events at the commissioning echoed the ceremony from the launching of the heavy cruiser. A large contingent of guests, including the mayor, came from the city. In an earlier example of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ "Ceremony on the air," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 5, 1985, p. 1.

civic pride, citizens ranging from school children to businessmen raised funds, even in the midst of the Great Depression, to buy gifts for the crew of the first cruiser. The inhabitants of the city continued that tradition by giving the new cruiser a bronze commissioning plaque, a painting depicting the three previous ships and events from Vincennes history, two city flags, a flag from Vincennes University, and even a briefcase for the captain. In 1936, the people of Vincennes had purchased a silver service set for the heavy cruiser, while in 1984 the citizens gave a single silver spoon in remembrance of that first gift, along with a check for \$5,000 for the ship's welfare and recreation fund. In a return gesture, the captain of the ship presented the city with a bronze plaque of the history of the other ships and gave the president of the Vincennes Association the first boatswain's pipe used aboard the brand new ship.¹⁴²



Patch of the USS *Vincennes* (CG 49) image from <http://navysite.de/cg/cg49.html>

The ship's patch was an example of a combination of Navy history and civic history of Vincennes. The shield and crest on the ship's patch remembered the history of the previous ships and the city. A fleur-de-lis refers to the French origins of the city

¹⁴² "4th Vincennes Commissioned;" "Rainy weather fails to dampen ship celebration," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 7, 1985, pp. 1, 9.

while battlements at the top represent the fort fought over in the Revolutionary War. The patch memorialized the previous ships by references to the Arctic explorations of the first ship and eight stars symbolizing the eight Battle Stars awarded the two World War II period ships.¹⁴³

The local television, radio, and newspaper coverage expressed civic pride, while the mayor and other city leaders touched on the importance of the public memory of the two previous cruisers with the references to the gifts, presence of a party of Vincennes citizens, and even having the former Miss Virginia Kimmel present at the christening. Mayor William Rose noted that the commissioning of the *Vincennes* was “the official renewal of the partnership of the strongest Navy in the world and the finest city,” and that “the commissioning of the *Vincennes* launches a new era for our Navy and community.”¹⁴⁴ Mayor Rose connected “the strongest Navy in the world” with the city of Vincennes, showing one way the inhabitants could take pride in the ship. This connection to the Navy reinforced the preeminence of martial glory as an outlet of civic pride, similar to how the importance of George Rogers Clark was stressed by city leaders during the process to get a monument to him in Vincennes. Another outlet of civic pride came from the fact that the ship was one of the most modern and advanced in the world. The Navy also provided an example of its memory through the naming of the ship to remember previous ships with that name and the symbolism of the ship’s patch.

¹⁴³ “Welcome Aboard USS Vincennes (CG 49) Team 49,” Welcome pamphlet for visitors and crew featuring a foreword by Captain W.C. Rogers III.

¹⁴⁴ “4th Vincennes Commissioned,” July 7, 1985.



USS *Vincennes* CG 49 from <http://www.ussvincennes.org/vincennes/cg-49/index.htm>

The final *Vincennes* (CG 49) was a *Ticonderoga*-class guided missile cruiser. The Navy designed these ships around the Aegis radar system and to serve as fleet defense vessels.¹⁴⁵ While the previous three *Vincennes* used guns as their main weapons, first as broadside cannons and then later in turrets with rifled artillery, the newest *Vincennes* exchanged guns for missiles, anti-submarine torpedoes, and even helicopters. The ship was the first *Ticonderoga*-class cruiser assigned to the Pacific Fleet.¹⁴⁶

In 1988, with tensions high during the war between Iran and Iraq, the Navy ordered the ship to the Persian Gulf to protect interests there. The Aegis system made the *Vincennes* an ideal combatant in the Persian Gulf due to its ability to track multiple targets at once. This necessity was paramount after the USS *Stark* incident in 1987. An Iraqi pilot fired two missiles that struck the American frigate, killing 27 crewmen.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Aegis is an “area defence [sic] system which has two paired SPY-1A fixed antenna, electronic scanning radar...providing simultaneous surveillance, target detection and target tracking in a hemisphere over and around the ship.” “Ticonderoga Class,” *Encyclopedia of Modern Military Weapons*, ed. by Chris Bishop, (New York: Barnes and Nobles Books, 1999), pp. 401-402. This advanced radar system is mainly used to defend carrier task forces from enemy aircraft and missile raids.

¹⁴⁶ “Welcome Aboard USS *Vincennes* (CG 49) Team 49,” p. 10.

¹⁴⁷ Will and Sharon Rogers, *Storm Center: The USS *Vincennes* and Iran Air Flight 655*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), p. 4.

July 3, 1988, would be a day fraught with combat and eventually tragedy for the *Vincennes*. First, the ship engaged speedboats the captain believed to be hostile. Later, crew on watch using the ship's radar system believed an Iranian F-14 was making an attack run on the ship. Since this situation appeared to be similar to the attack on the *Stark* and the frigate USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG 58) had struck a mine just a few months earlier in April, tensions were high on the ship as there was the possibility that the *Vincennes* would soon join the ranks of damaged or even sunk American warships in the Persian Gulf.¹⁴⁸ Taking steps to defend the ship, the captain ordered two missiles launched at the aircraft and shot it down. In one of the great peacetime Navy tragedies, the plane was actually an Iran Air commercial airliner and the resulting crash killed 290 civilians.

The people of *Vincennes* continued to keep tabs on the city's namesake as it deployed to the Persian Gulf. On the day the *Vincennes* shot down the Iranian airliner, the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* ran an article quoting Captain Will Rogers as saying "the situation here is one with a relatively high level of tension."¹⁴⁹ The article also included an image of the crippled American frigate, the USS *Samuel B. Roberts*. The *Roberts* struck an Iranian mine in the Persian Gulf in April 1988 and nearly sank, which emphasized the dangers faced by the ship. The news of the downing of a civilian airliner by the *Vincennes* broke while the people of the city celebrated the 4th of July.¹⁵⁰

Civic pride is a reflection of the pleasure a population has for what makes their community unique or worthy of recognition. Up to the late 1980s, the people of

¹⁴⁸ "VINCENNES crew in good spirits during tension-filled gulf duty," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 3, 1988, p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Vincennes had the story of George Rogers Clark, the history of three Navy warships, and the honor of having one of the Navy's most advanced warships named after the city to take pride in. But this incident was different. How would the city's citizens react to the news that a ship carrying their city's name shot down a plane carrying 290 civilians?

The story about the *Vincennes* made front page headlines in the local newspaper the day after the event. While most of the comments deplored the loss of life, the majority of the quotes from the residents in the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial* supported the actions of the crew. Mayor William Rose expressed his opinion by saying "given the information the he [Captain Rogers] had, I think the captain made the right decision. It was a terrible tragedy and we all feel for the people who lost their lives. But with the situation in the Persian Gulf, we could take no chances-especially after what happened to the STARK."¹⁵¹ In addition to the support from the city's inhabitants, the paper quoted President Reagan as saying the incident happened after "proper defensive action" and Marilyn Quayle, the wife of Senator Dan Quayle and the ship's sponsor, also echoed those thoughts in a phone interview for the *Vincennes-Sun Commercial*, arguing that "when you are in a war zone and you don't respond, then things are liable to happen."¹⁵²

As the captain and the crew of the *Vincennes* dealt with the aftermath of the airliner incident, the residents of Vincennes continued to show their support. City leaders, including the mayor, members from the *Vincennes* Association, and fundraisers for the monument to the four ships, talked to the crew in a phone call arranged and moderated by Mick Berge of WAOV, the local Vincennes radio station, as the ship returned to its homeport in San Diego. The call made the crew feel "like a floating

¹⁵¹ "Captain's order was correct, poll shows," *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, July 4, 1988, p. 1.

¹⁵² "VINCENNES downs an Iranian jetliner in gulf," July 4, 1988, "Captain's order was correct, poll shows," July 4, 1988, p. 1.

extension of the community” according to the captain.¹⁵³ The president of the *Vincennes* Association and the mayor of Vincennes were on hand in person and spoke at the welcoming ceremony when the ship finally made it home.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, no matter what the public in Vincennes thought, the ship remained under a cloud. After the ship returned, Captain Roger’s family van suffered heavy damage from a pipe bomb.

The incident is now considered by experts as a textbook example of “scenario fulfillment.” A person sees what he or she want to see. In this case, the crew on watch of the *Vincennes* remembered the example of *Stark* being attacked by an Iranian aircraft and made the facts presented to them fit that scenario.¹⁵⁵ In a case before the International Court of Justice, the United States agreed to pay Iran over \$131 million in 1996.¹⁵⁶ The *Vincennes* continued to serve in the Pacific for the remainder of its career, and the Navy recently decommissioned the ship on June 29, 2005.¹⁵⁷

The guided missile cruiser *Vincennes* ushered in a new period of civic pride and public memory in Vincennes. Once again a ship called *Vincennes* carried the city’s name across the globe. With one ship in commission and the history of the previous ships to work with, local citizens began the process of permanently commemorating all four ships.

The memory of the *Vincennes* was kept alive after the light cruiser was decommissioned in 1946 by the members of the *Vincennes* Association, comprised originally of veterans of the heavy cruiser, but expanded to include veterans from all

¹⁵³ Rogers, p. 173.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 181.

¹⁵⁵ John Barry, “Sea of Lies,” *Newsweek*, July 13, 1992, <http://alt-f4.org/img/seaoflies.html>

¹⁵⁶ Settle Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, International Court of Justice, February 9, 1996, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/79/11131.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ “USS Vincennes (CG 49).” Accessed 14 November 2009. <http://navysite.de/cg/cg49.html>

three twentieth century ships. Beginning in 1973 the Association held an annual reunion in Vincennes where former crewmates could meet to reminisce about their service together over dinners and rounds of golf. The Association could have met in Florida or Arizona, but instead continued to meet in the namesake city of their ship.¹⁵⁸ This loyalty is an example of how the civic pride of the inhabitants of a city can change the crew of the city's namesake. This group was also at the forefront of early attempts to memorialize the four ships.

The most visible memorial to the four ships is located near the Wabash River, on the National Park Service grounds of the George Rogers Clark Memorial. The four sided black granite memorial sits on a circular base. Each side has a brass plaque with a depiction and the dates of service of one of the four ships.¹⁵⁹ The location near the river conveys a nautical setting fitting for a memorial to naval ships. The actual process to create the memorial was long and drawn out, but showed the commitment the *Vincennes* Association had to the memory of the four ships.

A committee of eight local men formed in 1984 to begin the process of creating a memorial on National Park Service lands. The timing was fitting as the committee had its first meeting on March 21, 1984, and the newest *Vincennes* was launched less than one month later on April 14, 1984. The committee represented a good mix of the leadership of Vincennes. The mayor of Vincennes at the time, William Rose, was on the committee. Joining him were Judge Jim Osborne, Bill Toth, the local liaison with the *Vincennes* Association, Gus Stevens from the Lewis Library at Vincennes University,

¹⁵⁸ Information compiled from *Vincennes* Association Reunion pamphlets, correspondence with Bill Toth, the local liaison for the Association when they came to Vincennes, and the *Vincennes* Association website www.ussvincennes.org.

¹⁵⁹ The plaque for the guided missile cruiser CG 49 needs to be updated to show the ship's recent decommissioning.

John Neal, the new National Park Service Superintendent for the George Rogers Clark Memorial, Bill Brooks, the editor of the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*, Dave Miller, a retired Navy captain and an attorney in Vincennes, and Bob Grumieaux, the owner of the Montgomery Construction Company and an advisor on the construction of the monument.¹⁶⁰ Each of these men had a unique position in the city that would prove useful during the memorial process.

Mayor Rose provided the connection to the city government and also had the prestige of his office. Local historians considered Judge Osborne the expert on Vincennes and military history, so he would be the best person to represent the city's history on the board.¹⁶¹ He was also a well-respected judge from the area. Bill Toth was a local veteran who served in the Army during World War II. When the *Vincennes* Association held its annual reunion in the city, Bill Toth was their local liaison and now would continue in this role for the memorial. The *Vincennes-Sun Commercial* reported on the three previous ships, so including the editor in the committee was important to keep the story in the media. These men soon learned that the task of creating a fitting memorial would not be an easy one and the National Park Service would become the first stumbling block.

Preserving warships as museums is the most popular method of creating a memorial to the ship. However, most ships that are preserved are larger battleships and aircraft carriers located on the coasts due to the difficulty in moving large ships inland. The state of South Dakota created a novel solution by building a foot high concrete

¹⁶⁰ Information from "Address List For USS Vincennes Monument Committee" from the Lewis Library and an email from Judge Jim Osborne, July 22, 2010.

¹⁶¹ When I first inquired about the *Vincennes*, Dale Phillips, the Superintendent at the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park, and Jill Larson, one of the librarians at Vincennes University, told me Judge Osborne would be an important source for local history, especially regarding the ships.

outline of the battleship USS *South Dakota*, complete with pieces of the ship rescued when it was scrapped. Other memorials follow that procedure and include ship's bells, mainmasts, or other memorabilia that was actually on the ship. Another popular object to use at memorials was a naval cannon or artillery piece. The gun did not even have to be from the ship, as long as it was from a similar time period. Finding a naval gun was the original plan the committee came up with for a memorial to the ships, but this led to their first disagreement with the National Park Service.¹⁶²

The next important step was to determine where the memorial would go. Mayor William Rose decided that the most appropriate place would be near the George Rogers Clark Memorial.¹⁶³ In order to use this ground, the committee would have to work with the National Park Service, since it controlled that land. The committee foresaw this complication and included John Neal on the committee to keep the National Park Service informed. He immediately pointed out that using a World War II piece of naval ordinance would make it very difficult to gain Park Service approval since it did not match the Revolutionary War motif of the George Rogers Clark Memorial. He proposed instead trying to find a muzzle-loading cannon of a type that would have been on the sloop *Vincennes*. That type of cannon was similar to what was used during the Revolutionary War and would be more acceptable to the Park Service.¹⁶⁴ Eventually, the committee decided to drop the gun from the memorial.

As the concept of the memorial evolved, the committee decided on a four sided monument with several walkways connecting it to the rest of the memorial area and as

¹⁶² Minutes of the USS Vincennes Monument Committee, March 21, 1984, Vincennes Collection, Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

proposed by Gus Stevens, “large linked anchor chains which are often incorporated into Civil War Naval Monuments.”¹⁶⁵ The National Park Service responded to the first monument proposal quickly and argued “should a USS Vincennes memorial be erected, we believe the design precedent of simple monuments for non-Clark connected things be followed. The inclusion of bollards and chains would not be consistent with simple design.”¹⁶⁶ The first draft of the memorial design was drawn by A.P. Myszak and designed by George Ridgway, a local architect in July 1985. The design was for a four-sided black granite pyramid that was 5 ½ feet tall. The Park Service responded in October 1986 by removing the chains, limiting the planned sidewalks to link the memorial to the pedestrian sidewalks near the streets to only one path, and shrank the Memorial to 4 ½ feet tall.¹⁶⁷ The Park Service held the upper hand over the Memorial committee because it was only with the permission of the Park Service that the memorial could be built on the grounds of the George Rogers Clark Memorial.

The struggle to get a *Vincennes* Memorial took five years of wrangling with the National Park Service and fundraising, but the memorial was dedicated on August 9, 1989, fittingly on the 47th anniversary of the heavy cruiser’s sinking at the Battle of Savo Island.¹⁶⁸ The *Vincennes* Association always met for their annual reunion around the date when the ship sank, so dedicating the Memorial on the same date showed the civic organizers understood that date’s importance in the public memory of the city.

¹⁶⁵ Minutes of the USS Vincennes Monument Committee, March 28, 1984, Vincennes Collection, Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University.

¹⁶⁶ Letter from Acting Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Midwest Region to Superintendent, George Rogers Clark, USS Vincennes Memorial, September 6, 1984. Vincennes Collection, Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University. Bollards are posts for attaching mooring lines. They can also be used for decorative purposes for a nautical theme.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Randall Pope, Acting Regional Director to Honorable Jim Osborne, October 14, 1986. Vincennes Collection, Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University.

¹⁶⁸ The Vincennes Association tended to hold its reunion near the date of the *Vincennes*’ sinking during World War II.

According to the *Vincennes-Sun Commercial*, about 500 people were in attendance, including survivors from both World War II cruisers, Captain Will Rogers, who was a recent commander of the guided missile cruiser *Vincennes*, US Senator Dan Coats, and representatives from Vice President Dan Quayle, US Senator Richard Lugar, and US Representative Francis McCloskey.¹⁶⁹ While the event did not have the scope that the dedication of the George Rogers Clark Memorial had since there was not a presidential presence, the attendance of a United States Senator, a Navy Captain, and veterans from World War II made this event important in the public history of Vincennes.

The memorial committee decided to honor all four ships named after the city, so the four sided pyramid design made the most sense. Each side has a brass plaque honoring one of the ships. The plaques display an outline of the ship and the dates the ship was in service, though the plaque for the guided missile cruiser has yet to be updated with the ship's decommissioning date. A stylized compass rose is part of the circular base of the monument, once again complementing the nautical theme. Underneath the plaque for the first *Vincennes* is a commemoration that reads:

Commemorating

The patriotism, devotion to duty, valor, energy, and seamanship of those Americans who served in the ships

U.S.S. Vincennes

Each a man-of-war, these ships of the United States Navy carried out missions which expanded global knowledge, opened avenues of international cultural and commercial exchange, expressed policies of peace and amity, and in time of conflict, defended the ideals of general liberty, personal freedom and human dignity throughout the world.

¹⁶⁹ Edward L. Sebring, "Monument to ships named Vincennes dedicated today," *Vincennes Sun Commercial*, August 9, 1989, pp. 1, 18.



Vincennes Memorial next to the Wabash River. Photograph from Author's Collection

The memorial was a tangible symbol of civic pride and expression of public memory as city leaders quite literally set the history of the four ships in stone. Civic pride and military history combined in one place, just as at the George Rogers Clark Memorial. Not only did the *Vincennes* memorial highlight the military history of the four ships, but also how the ships furthered the boundaries of science.

Public memory is not genetically implanted in the people of a city. Memorials are one way people can be taught what leaders deem important to the public memory. Glassberg argues that museums and historic sites can be tools used to promote a vision of history. Schwartz looks at the changing iconography in the Capitol to track the shifts in what artists highlighted in images. Vincennes is an example of how both of those points tie into public memory. The memorial to the ship signaled an expansion of the pantheon

of the heroes of Vincennes to include the ships while the memorial itself was a visible reminder of the naval history of the city. Judge Osborne understood the importance of memory. In remarks he made during the long process of creating the memorial, he explained that “people today have forgotten the reality of those days-how little sisters would wonder if they would ever know their big brothers as a person instead of just a photograph on the mantle.”¹⁷⁰ This memorial would help people remember, and in so doing reinforce civic pride.

The dedication of the memorial brought recognition to the city as Senator Coats, Captain Rogers, a former commander of the fourth *Vincennes*, and representatives from several other VIPs attended the event, recalling the heady days of the dedication of the George Rogers Clark Memorial, when President Roosevelt came to Vincennes. The speeches stressed that the ships deserved to be part of the city’s civic pride. Captain Rogers remarked that “it [the memorial] is also a monument to the pride, patriotism and strength of this community.”¹⁷¹ U.S. Senator Dan Coats said it was “an honor for a ship to be named *Vincennes*,” and that the city should be proud “to have its name associated with these ships.”¹⁷² Mayor Rose put it best, stating simply that the ships have always been “a source of pride for our community.”¹⁷³

By invoking the history of the four ships and creating another memorial on the National Park Service grounds, the memorial combined the elements of public memory and civic pride in one spot. The George Rogers Clark Memorial symbolized the national importance of Vincennes, so placing a memorial there tapped into those deep feelings of

¹⁷⁰ “Monument to four ships waits approval,” *Vincennes-Sun Commercial*, August 10, 1986, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ “Monument to ships named Vincennes dedicated today,” *Vincennes-Sun Commercial*, August 9, 1989, p. 1.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

civic pride. Clark was vitally important in wresting control of the Old Northwest from Great Britain and later the memorial drew President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Vincennes for the dedication. The four plaques added to the public memory of the people of the city by reminding everyone who walked by them of the long naval history of the landlocked city of Vincennes.

The memorial on the grounds of the George Rogers Clark National Historical Park is only one of several ways the memory of the ships named *Vincennes* is honored in the city. The Indiana Military Museum in Vincennes features an exhibit on the history of the ships. The Vincennes City Hall has a special “Vincennes Room.” The Lewis Historical Collection Library at Vincennes University features a small exhibit on the history of the ships, along with collections on the ships’ history. Another repository for *Vincennes* related material is the Knox County Library. Each of these sites of commemoration contributes to public memory and civic pride.

The Indiana Military Museum is located in Vincennes, Indiana, and has been in operation since 1983 in a rural part of the community. Its setting allows the museum to display several planes and artillery pieces outdoors. A large building houses the collection of smaller vehicles, uniforms, and other memorabilia. According to Judge Jim Osborne, the Chairman of the Board of the museum, the museum added an exhibit on the ships named *Vincennes* in 1985.¹⁷⁴ A corner of the main gallery contains uniforms, artifacts, and photographs from the ships. A reproduction of a poster calling for war bonds to pay for a second *Vincennes* after the first one was sunk leans against a case to remind visitors that the people of Indiana helped raise the money for a new *Vincennes*.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Judge Jim Osborne, letter to author, March 23, 2010.

¹⁷⁵ Observations from author’s visit to the Museum in May 2009.

There is a link to the Vincennes Association website on the museum's online site, showing that the museum sees this organization as one the public should know about. Through its exhibits, the museum becomes another tool for public memory in Vincennes.

After over 25 years as a volunteer-run organization that is only open a few hours a day, the Indiana Military Museum plans to move to a more permanent location. Their website proudly proclaimed the acquisition of 11 acres of land in Vincennes near the George Rogers Clark site. The new building will eventually house the artifacts inside in exhibits that will cover American military history from the Revolutionary War through the Gulf War. Judge Osborne admitted that due to the economic downturn that occurred at the end of the first decade in the 2000s, the construction of the new museum would take time. While the board at the museum mulls over various designs, Judge Osborne did say that the *Vincennes* exhibit will remain part of the museum.¹⁷⁶



USS Vincennes display at the Indiana Military Museum. Author's Collection.

¹⁷⁶ This information comes from the museum's "Future Plans" section <http://www.indianamilitarymuseum.org/futureplans.htm> and correspondence with Judge Osborne.

The seat of political power in Vincennes also contains memories of the *Vincennes*. City Hall in Vincennes houses the Vincennes Room. Similar to the exhibit at the Indiana Military Museum, the Vincennes Room displays memorabilia, paintings, and photographs of the four ships. The room is not usually open to the public.¹⁷⁷ Though the lack of access lessens the room's impact on the public memory of the city, the importance of the symbolism of dedicating an entire room at City Hall to the *Vincennes* should not be overlooked. Lori Buehlman and Dan Ravellette, staff at City Hall, did not have information on the construction of the Vincennes Room, but former Mayor Belle Kasting, though she was not Mayor at the time, reported that it opened in 1990 when the new City Hall was completed.¹⁷⁸ The former mayor also stated that models of all four ships were commissioned for the lobby of City Hall and the first one delivered by February 2010.¹⁷⁹ The silver tea set paid for by the citizens of Vincennes for the second *Vincennes* is also on loan displayed in the lobby.

Current plans call for the Vincennes Room to be moved to the new Indiana Military Museum when that is built. This move will increase access to the population.

¹⁷⁷ Observations from author's visit in May 2009. The staff in City Hall was kind enough to open the room for me and allow me to take photographs. The staff at City Hall also put me in touch with former Mayor Kasting

¹⁷⁸ Dan Ravellette, February 10, 2010, personal email to author, Belle Kasting, February 24, 2010, personal email to author.

¹⁷⁹ Belle Kasting, February 24, 2010, personal email to author.



View of Vincennes Room at Vincennes City Hall. Author's Collection

William Henry Harrison founded Vincennes University in 1801, and it is only one of two universities in the country founded by a United States president.¹⁸⁰ It is only fitting that a university with such a long association with the city of Vincennes should have its own display devoted to the history of the ships. The Byron Lewis Historical Collection Library at Vincennes University had a small area in the corner of their main reading room devoted to the ships, including a large model of the heavy cruiser from World War II. Models are an easy way to remind the public what the ship looked like in a 3-D format. A picture can be worth a thousand words, but sometimes a model can create a more intimate memory by allowing the audience a chance to walk around the ship. The library also displayed a model of one of the heavy cruiser's scout planes and

¹⁸⁰ "A Brief History," Vincennes University, Accessed 12 July, 2010, http://www.vinu.edu/cms/opencms/about/history_mission/

several pieces of personal memorabilia from the crew.¹⁸¹ Though not a professional museum display, it still does a good job of summarizing the “*Vincennes* Story.”

Memorials and information on the ships called *Vincennes* are scattered throughout Vincennes as examples of civic pride in the ships. Yet Vincennes represents only a tiny fraction of the cities that have had ships named after them. Since the United States Navy began naming cruisers after cities, there have been well over 100 cruisers.¹⁸² Yet memorials to cruisers are few and far between.¹⁸³ Not a single city preserved a cruiser in its World War II condition. The Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park saved the USS *Little Rock* (CL 92, then CLG 4) after the Navy converted the ship from its World War II condition to a more modern guided missile cruiser.¹⁸⁴ The United States Naval Shipbuilding Museum in Quincy, Massachusetts, rescued the USS *Salem* (CA 139), one of the last all gun warships commissioned in the world.¹⁸⁵

Like Vincennes, the city of Chicago has also had four namesake warships. Similar to Vincennes, one ship named *Chicago* was sunk during the Guadalcanal campaign and the city raised funds for a new ship. After the war, the Navy converted this ship into a guided missile cruiser. A group led by veteran and local attorney Harold Berc

¹⁸¹ Observations from author’s visit in September 2009. Assistant Librarian Jill Larson assisted my research and allowed me to photograph the display on the *Vincennes*.

¹⁸² It must be noted that several cities had multiple ships named after them. The 1946/1947 *Jane’s Fighting Ships* lists American cruisers up to CA-148.

¹⁸³ The Historic Naval Ship Association lists only 6 cruisers preserved worldwide, with 3 in the United States. They are the USS *Olympia* from the Spanish-American War, the USS *Little Rock*, a World War II cruiser converted to a missile cruiser, and the USS *Salem*, a heavy cruiser completed after World War II. “HNSA Ships by Type,” Historic Naval Ship Association, <http://www.hnsa.org/class.htm#CC>.

¹⁸⁴ Not all ships are able to be preserved near their namesake town. The Buffalo site was just opening when the *Little Rock* was decommissioned, so fortuitous timing allowed the leaders of this new park to get a ship that might otherwise have been scrapped. CMDR John Conjura, “How the USS Little Rock Came to be at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park,”

http://www.ussslittlerock.org/Little_Rock_in_Buffalo.html,

¹⁸⁵ “USS Salem,” Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Navy History and Heritage Command, <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s3/salem-iii.htm>, Dr. John Scholes, “The Historical Significance of USS Salem to Naval Warship Design and Construction,” http://www.us-salem.org/museum/history/design_and_construction.htm.

tried but failed to obtain the ship as a memorial. All that remains is the ship's anchor at the end of Navy Pier.¹⁸⁶ The Chicago History Museum owns a model of the first heavy cruiser from World War II, but in 2010 it was in storage and not on display.¹⁸⁷ No other memorials are in the city. Unfortunately, the memorials in Vincennes and Chicago are highlights compared to most cities.

Covering all the cities that have had ships named after them would be far too large a task for this paper, but several large Midwestern cities provided suitable examples. The city of Cleveland, Ohio, has had two cruisers and an amphibious transport dock named after the city, but no public memorials. The amphibious transport dock decommissioned in 2011.¹⁸⁸ The Western Reserve Historical Society of Ohio donated the bell from the second cruiser, which the Navy decommissioned in 1946, for use on the amphibious transport dock. In 2011, the Cleveland City Council was exploring getting it back from the Navy.¹⁸⁹ The city of Cincinnati, Ohio, is another city with four ships named after it, ranging from a Civil War gunboat to a recently retired nuclear submarine. While there are no memorials to the first three ships, the city is negotiating with the Navy to obtain the conning tower from the submarine as part of a memorial, since the Navy would not permit the entire submarine to be used as a museum.¹⁹⁰ Six naval vessels have carried the name *St. Louis*: a sloop that served in the Civil War, a gun boat that

¹⁸⁶ "U.S.S. Chicago Anchor," *Chicago War Memorials and Military Monuments*, City of Chicago, http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/portalContentItemAction.do?BV_SessionID=@@@@0403799839.1281652321@@@&BV_EngineID=ccccadeleiehiilcefecelldffhdfhk.0&contentOID=536960388&contentTypeName=COC_EDITORIAL&topChannelName=SubAgency&blockName=Chicago+War+Memorials%2FMemorials+%26+Monuments%2FI+Want+To&context=dept&channelId=0&programId=0&entityName=Chicago+War+Memorials&deptMainCategoryId=-536899635

¹⁸⁷ Observations from author's time as an intern and contractor from August 2009-July 2010.

¹⁸⁸ EM Yasmine Muhammad, "USS Cleveland Decommissions After 44 Years of Service," http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=63038

¹⁸⁹ Brian Albrecht, "City Seeks Bell From Latest USS Cleveland," February 22, 2011, http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2011/02/city_seeks_bell_from_latest_us.html

¹⁹⁰ "Piece of USS Cincinnati Could Grace Downtown Park," WLWT NBC Cincinnati, July 12, 2011, <http://www.wlwt.com/r/28519325/detail.html>

accidentally served concurrently with the sloop until it was quickly renamed, a passenger ship used as a transport, a World War I cruiser, a World War II cruiser that was at Pearl Harbor, and finally a transport that decommissioned in 1992.¹⁹¹ The Soldiers' Memorial Military Museum in St. Louis has a bell from the World War I cruiser and a wheel from one of the cruisers on display.¹⁹²

Important members of Vincennes society have made sure the four ships are remembered in their city. What sets Vincennes apart from the other cities? Vincennes does not have the Willis Tower, the St. Louis Arch, or a professional sports team. Unlike Vincennes, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis are large cities, so that a ship named after one of them is only a small part of a large history. In order to gain any national recognition, the leaders in Vincennes had to go with the city's strong suit, namely its history, especially its military history. Much as other cities will use a famous "son" or "daughter" to promote themselves, the leaders of Vincennes first tapped into the history of George Rogers Clark and then later into the legacy of the four ships named after the city.

For a small city whose only physical connection to water is the Wabash River, Vincennes has amassed an abundance of naval history. A ship named *Vincennes* circumnavigated the globe, sank under intense enemy fire at the Battle of Savo Island, was present during the last desperate battles around Japan at the end of World War II, and finally served during the end of the Cold War and beyond. The Battle of Fort Sackville during the Revolutionary War, and the city's service as the Territorial Capital in the early

¹⁹¹ "USS St. Louis, Dictionary of American Fighting Ships, Navy History and Heritage Command, <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s17-list.htm>

¹⁹² "Soldiers' Memorial Military Museum," Missouri Tourism, <http://www.missouribeautiful.com/st-louis-missouri-tourism/158-soldiers-memorial-military-museum-st-louis-missouri.html>

19th century first brought Vincennes to national attention. The effort expended to plan, promote, fund and construct the George Rogers Clark Memorial drew upon and added to public memory and civic pride. This memorial cemented the importance of military history into the public memory of Vincennes, a theme that continued with the memorial to the four ships.

The act of creating monuments in Vincennes has always attracted the movers and shakers of Vincennes and even Indiana society. The George Rogers Clark Memorial had the support of local leaders and the Republican Party in Indiana. President Coolidge pressed the button to demolish the first buildings to make way for the Memorial, President Franklin Roosevelt was present at its dedication and President Johnson was there when the National Park Service accepted stewardship of the Memorial. The loss of the heavy cruiser *Vincennes* during World War II spurred a state-wide bond drive to show “you can’t sink an Indiana Fighting Ship.” The quest to have a *Ticonderoga*-class guided missile cruiser named *Vincennes* involved Senator Lugar and Senator (later Vice President) Dan Quayle, along with the Vincennes Association. The memorial to the ships by the river enlisted the services of the city’s mayor, a local judge, and several other prominent members of the city. These men realized the importance of these ships to Vincennes and made sure future generations would remember them. This thought process is also shown in the plan to move the *Vincennes* material out of City Hall where it is difficult for the public to view it and into the new Indiana Military Museum when it is built.

What does all of this mean for the role of public history? This thesis has shown how public history and military history are connected and the role that public memory

and civic pride have bringing them together. Vincennes is an example of how the two fields can work together. Military history at sites tends to focus on the battle that happened or the ship remembered. What about how the military event affected the site? If George Rogers Clark had not decided to attack Fort Sackville, there would not be a National Park Service Memorial there for President Roosevelt to visit. The decision of the United States Navy to name several ships after Vincennes led to the city spearheading a state-wide bond drive during World War II and later enlisting the aid of powerful state politicians to have another ship named after their city. While a battle may have lasted only a day or two and a ship may have been in service for several years, their legacies live on much longer in the public memory of the people living at the site.

The analysis of the role of civic pride, public memory, and military history that this paper demonstrates can be translated to other military history sites. How has the public memory of Civil War battle sites or other cities that have had ships named after them been changed? Vincennes is an especially good example for this examination because it is a smaller city like most other Civil War sites. A similar example could be the city of Corinth, Mississippi. The city was a major railroad center during the Civil War and Union and Confederate forces fought two major battles there, in addition to the bloody Battle of Shiloh, fought nearby. This city has only 14,000 people, but the its website in 2012 reflected both public memory and a source of civic pride related to its history. A Civil War re-enactor is the narrator for the welcome video and the tagline for the city is “History is only half our story.”¹⁹³

Likewise, many ships were named after lesser known cities, such as Quincy, Astoria, and Tuscaloosa. A 5”/25 caliber gun, the mainmast from the USS *Tuscaloosa*

¹⁹³ “About Corinth,” City of Corinth, http://cityofcorinthms.com/?page_id=62

(CA 37), and a historic marker stand watch on the road leading to the University of Alabama.¹⁹⁴ As memorials to ships have proved their worth as tourist destinations, cities and states embrace military history as a source of revenue as well.

Civic pride and public memory are powerful forces in public history, but public historians have not analyzed their complementary roles together. Memory is a popular subject among academic historians, but civic pride is relatively unexamined in the scholastic world. They are two separate concepts, but can be used to promote a public history site. The roles of civic pride and public memory open up new areas of investigation for public historians.

This thesis originally came about as a question as to how a small city in Indiana got four warships named after it. Over the last several years it has grown into something much more than that. Military history, public history, civic pride, and public memory intertwine in the 18,000 strong city of Vincennes. The Battle of Fort Sackville and George Rogers Clark were the catalysts. Without this battle or the character of George Rogers Clark, Vincennes might have remained just another small American city. The importance of this event became part of the public memory of Vincennes and fueled the civic pride of its inhabitants. The unveiling of the George Rogers Clark Memorial in 1936 with President Roosevelt in attendance cemented the event in the public memory of the leaders and people of Vincennes. The actions of everyday citizens to raise money to support the crews of the ships named after the city and from its leaders to petition to have another ship named *Vincennes* are tangible examples of civic pride expressed in a military history setting. From a military history standpoint, the city is an example of how

¹⁹⁴ “USS Tuscaloosa,” The Historical Marker Database, <http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=35511>.

the connection between an event and the history of a site can enrich and tell a more complete story of a location.

The stories of the four namesake naval vessels and the legacy of George Rogers Clark, through the actions of community leaders and opinion makers, have become key components of public memory and elements powerfully reinforcing civic pride and local identity in Vincennes. The memorials by the Wabash River remind the people of Vincennes of their stories. The presence of the National Park Service gives the George Rogers Clark Memorial a national flavor. Perhaps in twenty years a visitor can see the exhibit on the ships at the new home of the Indiana Military Museum or walk aboard the museum ship *USS Vincennes*, rescued from mothballs.

Military history is a fundamental component of public memory in Vincennes. It is the element that civic leaders have embraced that distinguishes Vincennes from other cities. The story of George Rogers Clark brought national recognition to the city while the four namesake ships carried its name across the world, which in turn made military history a source of civic pride. This thesis offers an example of how military history and public history suggest an approach that produces a fusion of these two concepts to create a deeper interpretation than either could achieve on its own.

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