

REDEFINING HOW RESOURCES UNCOVER THE PAST: THE  
EVALUATION OF INTERPRETIVE METHODOLOGIES AND OBJECTIVES AT  
MILITARY SITES AND MUSEUMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AT  
BATTLESHIP MEMORIAL PARK IN MOBILE, AL

A CREATIVE PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

JULY 2013

For the brave men and women to whom

Battleship Memorial Park

is dedicated

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World War II is perhaps the most studied era in modern history and rightfully so, it polarized the entirety of the civilized world. Its conclusion created nations and left others in ruin. The United States of America was no exception; our entry into the war had far-reaching ramifications, the effects of which are still being felt today. Such a galvanizing event had not been experienced in America since the Civil War, which pitted brother against brother and father against son. The Civil War remains at the forefront of American consciousness due in part to the numerous battlefields and interpretive sites dedicated to its remembrance. For Americans, World War II created a unique situation, in that the entirety of the conflict was fought outside our boundaries, leaving us to question how we experience and commemorate the event that had such a profound effect on how we currently conduct our lives. With the absence of readily available and easily accessible battlefields, like those of the Civil War, the only tangible elements of World War II are its relics. There is perhaps no greater remaining example, both figuratively and literally, than the battleship. Though it was the aircraft carrier that changed the face of naval warfare and the splitting of the atom brought the war to its conclusion, the battleship still holds a reverential place in the hearts of the American people.

From the dawn of sea warfare, a nation's might was tied to its capital ships; the country with the largest fleet ruled the seas, its flagship striking fear into the opposition. The development of the aircraft carrier brought a swift conclusion to the reign of the battleship; Europe's most feared battleship, Germany's *Bismarck*, was crippled by prop-driven aircraft launched from the British aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*. Despite being replaced by the aircraft carrier as a navy's principal ship, its intrinsic value was not so easily dispatched. Following the conclusion of the war, the vast majority of America's naval might was decommissioned, mothballed and eventually slated to be scrapped. Those that escaped destruction would go on to

serve in many forms, some like the *USS Missouri* would continue to serve the American People in times of war. Others like the *USS Alabama*, would provide an equally important service to the American people; they would help us remember. They would serve as our connections, first hand accounts, to World War II and the men who sacrificed and died to maintain our freedoms.

Stepping onto these leviathans takes the visitor back in time, perhaps due to the sheer size of the vessels or their awe-inspiring firepower, but nothing catches the attention of the young and old alike and fosters a connection that no far off battlefield could.

The *USS Alabama*, a South Dakota Class Battleship, was among those scheduled to be scrapped in the early 1960s. It was through the effort of the citizens of Alabama that the battleship would be saved and turned into a museum ship as well as a memorial to those who served on the ship and for all Alabamians who served in World War II. The *Alabama* would lay anchor for the final time in Mobile, Alabama, at what would become Battleship Memorial Park (BMP). There are only a handful of museum ships in operation and of those, few have the added historical elements of BMP. Aside from the *USS Alabama*, the park added to its collection the *USS Drum*, a World War II era Gato-class submarine. In addition, there are over 30 historic aircraft and military vehicles. The park, though owned by the state of Alabama, functions as a private entity, receiving no public funds. Overseeing the park is the USS Alabama Battleship Commission comprised of 18 members chosen by the governor. Current funding is gathered through donations and the park's admission fees. The lack of public funding is quite obvious throughout the park, especially aboard the *Alabama*. The salt air and harsh sun ravage the vessel, creating the need for continuous maintenance both inside and out, not to mention the damage created by the thousands of visitors that cross the gangplank each year. The numerous military vehicles strewn around the park will face inevitable decay if left in their current states. It is quite

easy to be on the outside looking in and point out failures without regard to the current struggles facing the commission and staff. The question becomes where should they focus their limited time and resources? What will have the greatest impact? To that end, it is important to identify the changes that will have the greatest impact with the least investment possible. There are many aspects of operations at BMP that can be studied and improved upon, from advertising to preventative maintenance. For the purposes of this study, the interpretation of the site and its resources will be reviewed, culminating in a series of proposals organized for maximum impact and ease of implementation. A site's interpretive plan can have far reaching repercussions and unlock untapped potential. A good interpretive strategy in most cases results in success, while the opposite rings true. In the case of BMP, particularly due to its private status, better interpretation of the resources at its disposal can result in an increase of patronage and the additional funding that comes along with them. So while site interpretation may not be at the forefront of the master plan for BMP, its impact would be felt in every aspect of the park's functions. Through examining how successful military parks and museums interpret their resources, it can be deduced what modifications and additions will be applicable at BMP to create a higher quality visitor experience.

## Methodology

The majority of information will come from examining successful military parks and museums to see what types of interpretation and funding sources will be effective at Battleship Memorial Park. The following lists the resources I will use for case studies:

1. The Battleship North Carolina in North Carolina, a successful military park with the same types of resources as Battleship Memorial Park.
2. The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, how they work to restore and interpret the aircraft and their significance.
3. The National World War II Museum in New Orleans, use of several interpretation techniques to create a wildly successful visitor experience.

I will also look at a museum with resources specific to Alabama and examine how it interprets within the scope of the overall history of the state:

4. Vulcan Park and Museum, how it integrates the story of the Vulcan with the Steel industry in Birmingham, juxtaposed against the history of Alabama.

I will use the information gathered in each resource and examine its relevance to Battleship Memorial Park and its interpretive goals, the history of the interpreted wars and resources, but also on a more specific level, Alabamians and their contributions to war efforts over time. I am confident the data will provide answers to the previously posed questions of significance and interpretation. There will be a clear method for deducing significance with regards to the innovation of the resource itself and its significance of use. Moreover, a framework will be created for interpreting these historic pieces in their respective areas of significance. I will apply the aforementioned methods to create a model plan that Battleship Memorial Park can adopt going forward. Such a plan will be broken up into varying degrees of importance, creating a formula for decision makers to follow, allowing for an efficient implementation process.

Subsequent recommendations will be categorized in order of most to least important and greatest to least impact.

## Literature Review

Grier, Peter. 2012. "Big Plans for the Air Force Museum." *Air Force Magazine* 95, no. 2: 62-69.

In his article "Big Plans for the Air Force Museum," Grier discusses the future expansion of the National Air Force Museum located in Dayton, Ohio. Already stewards of the world's largest collection of military aircraft, in early 2012, the Air Force Museum Foundation was in the process of expansion. Formed in 1960, the Foundation has focused on providing access to the nations most significant aircraft. Though the collection encompasses aircraft from the 1909 Wright Military Flyer to only recently declassified spy satellites, each period is presented within its era of context and overall place aviation history. The museum has gone through several expansions, each carefully designed with regard to quality of presentation and cohesion within the master plan for the museum. While the blueprint for the museum contains the obvious preservation of their irreplaceable artifacts, its true purpose is to teach the general public about the aircraft; their technologies, innovations, roles played and the men and women who were involved in their creation and operation.

The National Air Force Museum is in a state of prosperity, it can be easily attributed to their collection of priceless aircraft, but it is in actuality due to the forethought of the Air Force Museum Foundation. Each stage of expansion has been planned to the very last detail. It is easy to simply add to their collection, just like Battleship Memorial Park, but the success is in the details. At BMP, the collection of military vehicles and aircraft are haphazardly displayed, with no unifying theme, no way for the visitor understand the purpose of the resource, historical context and its overall importance to the site. Each hangar at the National Air Force Museum has a theme and within that theme, an order, making it very easy for the general public to grasp why

the aircraft is important in and of itself as well as the roll it played within the period of interpretation.

Cutler, Thomas J. 2011. "Keeping Floating Museums Afloat." *Naval History* 25, no. 4: 52-58.

Retired sailor Thomas Cutler provides an unabashed and emotional critique on the premise of preserving ships as museums. As a former sailor, he acknowledges that he has a special connection to ships, potentially creating a conflict of interest. Rather, in spite of his prenotions, Cutler provides an objective and concise assessment on the advantages and pitfalls of the museum ship model. Cutler argues the positives associated with museum ships outweigh the negatives, however, there are many mitigating factors. To support his argument, Clark compares two existing museum ships, the failing *USS Olympia* and successful *USS Midway*, examining the root causes of their current conditions.

Clark begins by providing reasons why ships should be maintained. The most obvious of which is the unique interpretation possibilities. In most cases there are only a handful of similar resources available. In the case of the *Olympia*, a survivor of the Spanish-American War, it is the only ship of its kind in existence. While pieces in a museum can tell the same story, ships provide a tangible link to the past and an emotional link to the men who served aboard them. It is nearly impossible to connect to the past in a traditional museum setting in the same way possible on a ship itself, Clark refers to this as the "immersion factor." The biggest difficulty in the logic of preserving a ship for museum purposes is the same as in any other preservation field, funding. Due mostly to their materials and environment, steel and salt water, funding required in maintaining a ship greatly exceeds that of a historic structure. As Clark points out, overhauling the extremely deteriorated *Olympia* would cost in the range of \$20 million. The staggering figure

is directly related to inadequate funding stemming from poor attendance and mismanagement, resulting in a lack of preventative maintenance.

Next, Clark examines the causes associated with the *Olympia*'s poor funding and in turn, the success of the *USS Midway*. Thinking outside the box, Clark focuses on reasons not typically addressed when discussing the solvency of a museum ship. First is the historical significance of the ship. While the *Olympia* as a resource is arguably more significant, the *Midway*, the world's largest floating museum, resonates as a symbol of the new Navy. The majority of Americans do not know why America was involved in the Spanish –American War, let alone the role of the *Olympia*. The question of significance also raises the issue of which ships to preserve. Much like historic structures, not all merit preservation. It is necessary to consider the future potential for success, due to the cost involved in maintaining the ship. Next the question of location is introduced. A ship's success can be attributed to something as simple as the number of days the weather is favorable for visitation. Unsurprisingly, the *Midway*, located in sunny San Diego, is going to not only be open more days throughout the year, but it also has a larger group of potential visitors to pull from. The ship's overall size and design also plays a key factor, the *Midway* can handle many more visitors than the *Olympia* and it also provides more opportunities for interpretation. Lastly, new funding opportunities have to be explored to supplement ticket sales, including governmental and philanthropic assistance.

It is quite easy to see why the Navy is very selective in who receives decommissioned ships to serve as museums. There are many factors involved in maintaining a ship for museum purposes that most do not realize. Clark examines many aspects important for a successful museum ship not related to interpretation. It is evident that regardless of the various explanatory

factors presented, a lack of funding can sink a museum ship just getting starting or long established.

Tannenbaum, Fred. 2012. "Museum-Ship Success Factors." *Naval History* 26, no. 4: 9.

Picking up where Thomas Cutler left off in "*Keeping Floating Museums Afloat*," Fred Tannenbaum addresses several issues he finds more pertinent than the impact of location, weather and size can have upon the success of museum ships. A Philadelphian with vested interest in the *USS Olympia*, Tannenbaum has seen first hand the issues created by poor management within the structure of museum ship organizations. Any of the positives afforded by location, weather, size and funding can be ruined by organization's lacking "vision, professionalism, accepted business and fiscal practices." Tannenbaum uses the aforementioned areas to provide steps in the positive direction for new and struggling historic ship organizations. While the recommendations are his opinion, not necessarily backed by figures like Cutlers, all are based in popular theory.

Beginning with the museum's vision or mission, it is vital that the museum operators know not only the history of their ship, but also how that history fits into the overall narrative and site context. If the staff does not know these things, how can they be expected to accurately tell the ship's story to the public? Tannenbaum also draws attention to the fact that not all visitors to the ship are military aficionados and as such, it is important to provide a narrative relatable to all. Next, he addresses the need for professionalism. While many people can have a connection to a ship, hence their desire to preserve and interpret it to the general public, in most cases they have no idea what to do once taking possession. It takes historians and museum professionals along side those passionate about the ship to be able to accurately present it to the

public. As presented by Cutler, funding is a fundamental part of maintaining a museum ship. With little funding to go around, it is important to be financially and fiscally responsible. The *Olympia* fell victim to misappropriation of funds she needed to remain afloat, having \$1.5 million earmarked for maintenance embezzled by those entrusted with her care. Financial impropriety can have many negative effects, from the obvious loss of much needed maintenance funds to a loss of trust by potential donors and those previously established. Fiscal responsibility coupled with long-term preservation goals creates the opportunity for the best use of resources.

As his article follows in the same vein as Clark's, the take-away from Tannenbaum's article is fairly similar. Where it differs is Tannenbaum's recommendations are applicable at current museum ships, where selecting a new climate is not really an option. Though his recommendations can be viewed as obvious, they are certainly anything but as is evidenced with the impropriety at the *Olympia*. The implementation of Tannenbaum's concepts can have a greater affect upon the success of a museum ship than the ship's location or size.

Dudley, William S. 2012. "A Museum Reborn." *Naval History* 26, no 1: 46-51.

Closed from 2007 to 2009, the Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis, MD, underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation. Plagued with a massive collection of unorganized materials, it took the staff along side contracted design and production firms to organize and interpret the collection. Made collection comprised artifacts, art, historical panels placed inside display tables and cases with no chronological or contextual organizational theme. The museum's newly designed exhibit hall covers 17 topics and a temporary exhibit space that will house the museum's artifacts not on permanent display. The scope of the museum's exhibits span from the American Revolution to present day.

Previously without a unifying theme, the narrative now ties the museum's resources together through focusing on the Academy's graduates and their contributions throughout times of war and peace. Tours of the exhibit space can be taken chronologically through time or by jumping to each of the 17 exhibit spaces, which provide contextual information allowing the exhibit to be understood without seeing the previous exhibit. The exhibits in question focus on major technological advancements, significant battles, important figures and general information on the period in question. For example, at the center of the Academy exhibit, which focuses on the contributions of the Naval Academy, is a case dedicated to Midshipman Paul Reason, the Academy's first African American graduate. Elsewhere are exhibits on women at the Academy, further concentrating upon the often-overlooked groups in historical interpretation. In addition to artifacts, oral histories and personal effects, the museum now employs dioramas, models, interactive exhibits and multimedia to connect to the visitor.

Despite the vast improvements over the previous iteration of the museum, Dudley Williams points out that the museum is not complete in its current state. Although artifacts abound on earlier periods in the Academy's history, more recent events, like the Desert Storm and Shield operations and the war on terror are missing artifacts and personal connections. While Williams decries the apparent lack of attention, perhaps the museum's curators left this section lacking complete interpretation for a reason. Being as the war on terror is ongoing and truths about other recent operations are still coming to light, it is important to make sure enough time has passed to allow for an impartial interpretation of events. Through intensive work and the inclusion of multiple parties, the Naval Academy Museum has created an objective museum experience wholly accessible to all guests.

## **Introduction to Battleship Memorial Park**

Before exploring the military sites selected as case studies and their potential contributions, it is important to first acquire knowledge of Battleship Memorial Park (BMP) and its resources, in order to provide context to the reader. In this way, it is possible to visualize BMP and juxtapose its current state with that of the case studies.

Following World War I, five of the world's preeminent powers, the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan met in Washington, D.C. to deliberate the issue of naval proliferation. Their compromise would be known as the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 (WNT). The WNT placed a ten year moratorium on the construction of capital ships (excluding the two *West Virginia* class battleships already under construction), limited the main armament caliber to no larger than 16 inches, restricted the displacement of capital ships to a maximum of 35,000 tons as well as overall tonnage of battleships to a predetermined ratio of 5-5-3-1.75-1.75 or 525,000(US):525,000(GBR):315,000(JPN):175,00(FRA):175,00(ITA) tons respectively.<sup>1</sup> The treaty would have far reaching implications on not only World War II, but also the future of naval warfare. Japan would harbor ill feelings over the restriction of their naval might in relation to the United States and Great Britain; they would be unable to maintain their imperialist notions due to the loss of sea power as well as being greatly out-gunned in any future all-out naval engagements. Due to these intentional slights by the US and Great Britain, Japan would opt out of the treaty in 1934. Japan's withdrawal enabled the US, Great Britain and France to invoke the escalation clause, which increased the allowable displacement tonnage by 10,000, though the increase would not take effect until 1938.<sup>2</sup> Due to the change in tonnage, the design of the *Iowa* class battleship would make it the largest in the American fleet, surpassing the *North Carolina* and *South Dakota* classes. The WNT also affected the evolution of naval warfare in that many of

the hulls of unfinished capital ships would be converted into aircraft carriers, which as previously mentioned, brought an end to the reign of the battleship.

It was under the constraints of the WNT that the *USS Alabama* was designed. Thought was also given to size in relation to the Panama Canal. This applied more to the design of the larger *Iowa* class, but it was a consideration nonetheless. The *South Dakota* class of battleship, which included the *South Dakota*, *Indiana*, *Massachusetts* and *Alabama*, sought to improve upon the deficiencies of the previous *North Carolina* class of battleships. Work began on the design of the *South Dakota* class in 1937, it sought to rectify the inadequacies of the previous class, with most of the focus spent on upgrading the ship's protective armor.<sup>3</sup> The three aforementioned battleship classes were referred to as "fast battleships," due to the combination of their armor, armament and speed. The fast battleship *USS Alabama*, hull classification BB-60, was laid down in February of 1940, launched two years later and finally commissioned on August 16, 1942; she would push the limits of the WNT: displacing 35,000 tons, stretching 680 feet from bow to stern and 108 feet port to starboard at its widest point, reaching a top speed of 27.5 knots, armed with nine 16-inch guns, twenty 5-inch guns, twenty-four 40mm guns and twenty-two 20mm guns.<sup>4</sup> Following shakedown and training cruises, the *Alabama* was deployed to the Atlantic Theatre of operations along with her sister ship the *South Dakota*.

Though the *Alabama* would spend the bulk of her illustrious career in the Pacific Theatre, her first mission was to join up with the Royal Navy Home Fleet and along with the *South Dakota*, provide protection from the German Bismarck class battleship *Tirpitz* as well as draw attention away from the allied landing at Sicily.<sup>5</sup> Once in the Pacific, the *Alabama* joined the naval operations already in place. Contrary to the popular belief held by American and Japanese naval high command, there was never a singular decisive naval battle fought by surface ships,

the victor of which would control the Pacific. Rather, aircraft carriers and their aircraft changed the way the navies waged war. Due to this change in doctrine, the *Alabama* and her counterparts were never able to fully reach their potential as capital ships. Instead they would patrol enemy shipping lanes, serve as escorts and screens for carrier battle groups, provide anti-aircraft fire, support amphibious landings and bombard land targets.<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that the *Alabama* did not serve with distinction. Her radar was the first to detect enemy aircraft in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, at the then unheard of range of 190 miles. The discovery set in motion what became known as the “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.” American fighters and anti-aircraft gunners destroyed over 400 Japanese aircraft, while suffering minimal losses.<sup>7</sup> She attained nine battle stars for her role on the Pacific campaign. The *Alabama* was termed the “Lucky A” by the men who served aboard her, as none were killed as a result of enemy fire.<sup>8</sup> Following the surrender of the Japanese on August 15, 1945, the *Alabama* returned to the United States where she was decommissioned and added to the Pacific Reserve Fleet in January of 1947.<sup>9</sup>

Just as she did during her naval career, the *Alabama* was able to escape destruction in 1962, when she was slated to be scrapped along with many other World War II veterans no longer on the naval register. The USS Alabama Battleship Commission, comprised of 18 members, was formed by the state legislature in 1963, after hearing about the impending destruction of their namesake battleship. The commission and citizens of Alabama, with the help of professional fund-raisers, succeeded in raising the nearly \$1 million needed to bring the *Alabama* home. The Navy donated the ship to the non-profit commission in 1964, the money raised was needed to finance the nearly 6,000 mile trip from Puget Sound, WA, to Mobile, AL, which to this date, is still the longest non-military ton/mile tow in history.<sup>10</sup> The *Alabama* was dedicated January 9, 1965, 18 years to the day that she last sailed under her own power. In her

final resting place, the *Alabama* would serve as a memorial to those who served upon her and the brave Alabamians who fought and died during the Second World War.

The *Alabama* would not remain alone for long; in 1969 she would be joined by another World War II veteran, the *Gato* class diesel submarine, *USS Drum*. Commissioned in November of 1941, the *Drum* sailed the first of her 13 missions in April of the next year. In all, the *Drum* earned 12 battle stars, credited with sinking 15 ships and 80,580 tons of enemy shipping.<sup>11</sup> Unlike her new battleship neighbor, the *Drum* was a part of a burgeoning branch of Naval warfare. Though militarized submersibles can be traced back to the Revolutionary War and were pioneered during World War I, it was not until World War II, as technology progressed, that the submarine was employed in earnest as a military asset. The *Drum* serves to memorialize those who served in the submarine service.

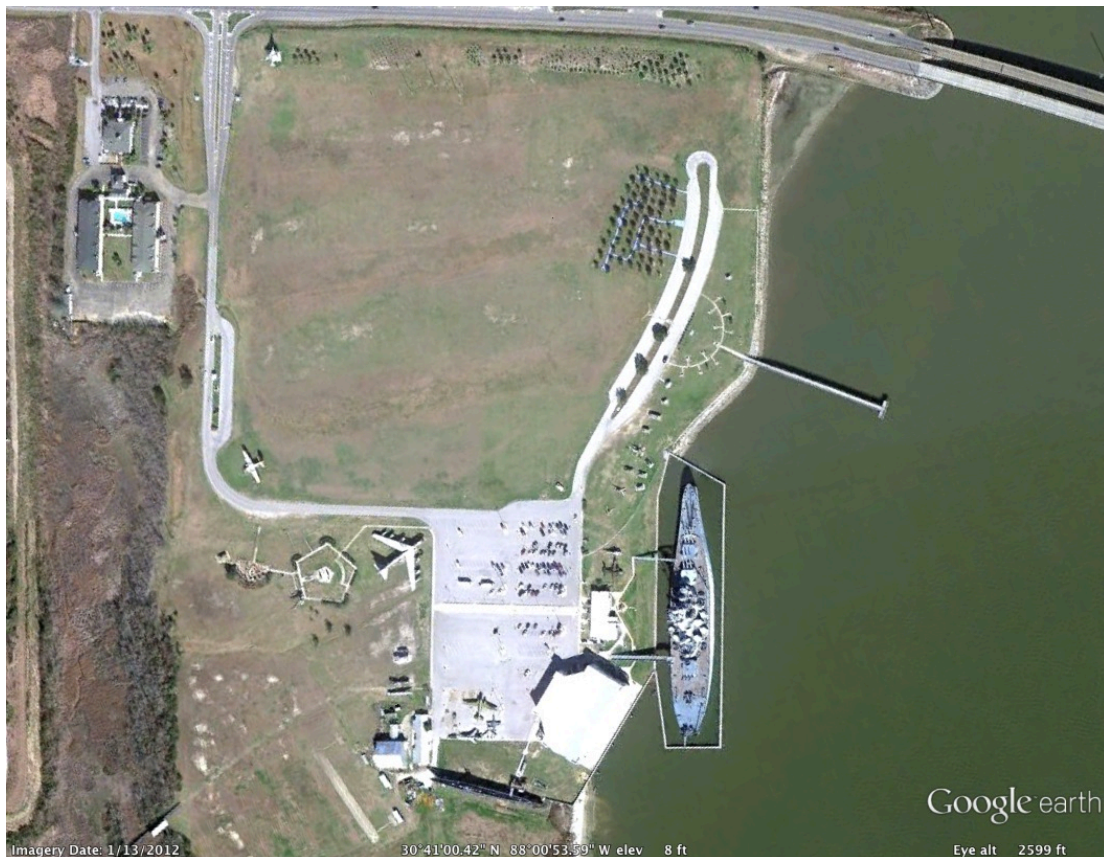
In addition to the impressive assets of the *Alabama* and *Drum*, BMP has acquired numerous other military resources. The Medal of Honor Aircraft Pavilion (MoH), which serves as a memorial to the 29 Alabama Medal of Honor recipients, houses the majority of the park's historic aircraft collection. Ranging from Pre-World War II to present, the aircraft are either owned by the park or on loan. They are as follows:<sup>12</sup>

- OS2U Kingfisher
- B-25J Mitchell
- F-86I Sabre
- F9F-5P Panther
- F-4C Phantom
- F4U Corsair
- MiG 17 A Fresco
- B-52D Stratofortress
- F-16A(GF) Falcon
- F-15A Eagle
- F/A-18 Hornet (Snake 407)
- SH-2F Seasprite
- SH-60B Seahawk
- HH-52A Sea Guardian
- P-51D Mustang (Tuskegee Airman)
- C-47D Sky Train
- CH-21 Workhorse
- A-4L Skyhawk
- F-105B-IRE Thunderchief
- A-6 Intruder
- UH-1H Huey
- A-12 Blackbird (CIA)
- Arsenal Redstone ICBM
- VH-1N Huey (Presidential Fleet HMX-1)
- F-14 Tomcat
- YF-17 (P/F18) Prototype AC 1002
- HU-16E Albatross (USCG)

The collection of military equipment, which also spans several decades, includes the following highlighted items:<sup>13</sup>

- M2A2 French 75mm Field Piece
- M48A1 Patton Tank
- LVTP5AI Amphibious Tractor
- M42A1 Duster Tank
- M-60A1 Tank
- M26 Pershing
- PBT Gun Boat (Vietnam Era)
- AG330-N Buick StartCart
- 155 mm Field Piece
- Armored Personnel Carrier
- M1A1 20mm AA Gun
- T-55 Russian/Iraqi Tank
- M4 Sherman Tank
- Four 5" 38 cal. Gun Mounts
- M38 Willys CJ63A Jeep

There are two remaining memorials, each privately funded by Alabama Korean and Vietnam veterans groups, each honoring Alabamians who fought and died in each conflict. Rounding out the 175 acre park is the gift shop, which serves as the entrance to the *Alabama, Drum* and pavilion, a south pacific themed picnic area, fishing pier and a large open expanse of undeveloped land. See figure 1 for current park arrangement:



## Current Battleship Memorial Park Interpretation

Now that we are familiar with the resources at BMP, it is possible to objectively assess how and in what ways they are interpreted and presented to the public. That being said, the term objective is relative. All historical sites, particularly those that commemorate events such as World War II, where there were ideological and tangible winners or losers, maintain varying degrees of interpretation of the same event. Each site will tell a different version of the same story, providing alternate views altogether. Thus a site must be mindful of the narrative they are presenting to the public, each resource and how it fits into the overall narrative must be viewed through an impartial lens to allow for the visitor to draw their own conclusions. In this way, the resources at BMP will be judged on their merits and manner of conveyance alone, not necessarily the version of events being told. Also, it is important to note that these are one person's assessment as to the deficiencies of the site.

The park itself has an awe-inspiring presence, due solely to the *Alabama*. Just as she did 70 years ago, the sheer size of the ship immediately draws one's attention and respect. Situated just outside the city center of Mobile at the entrance to the bay and right alongside Interstate 10, it is nearly impossible to enter or exit



Figure 2: View of the Alabama entering the park.

Mobile without being greeted by the World War II behemoth. As you pull off Battleship Parkway and onto the entrance drive, you are greeted by a Vietnam Era F-4 Phantom perched atop the park's sign. After paying to park, the visitor is immediately inundated with various aircraft, tanks, artillery and of course the *Alabama* and *Drum*. Needless to say, the park is in a prime location and has a curb appeal rivaled only by the remaining battleships being used for the same purpose as the *Alabama*.

As it is by far BMP's most significant resource, the *Alabama* is the natural stepping off point for the visitor. The tour of *Alabama*, *Drum* and the Medal of Honor (MoH) Pavilion begins at the gift shop, where the visitor pays admission and receives their tour materials: a four-page bulleted self-guided tour pamphlet. Upon exiting the gift shop, the visitor comes face to face



Figure 2: View upon exiting gift shop

with the *Alabama* and it is here that the greatest opportunity of interpretation is overlooked. The assumption is made that every visitor knows the context surrounding the battleship, what were the causes of World War II, why

the United States become involved, why is the *Alabama* important, just to name a few. From there you walk up the gangway and once aboard the ship, you are on your own. There are no employees, docents or volunteers. The lack of staff presence is quite apparent as you tour the ship; there are spots of vandalism and a steady stream of visitors climbing in and on things they

should not. The ship herself is in need of maintenance; the paint is faded, chipped, peeling and cracked, exposing her steel to the harsh salt air. The teak decking is also in a state of disrepair, the bad sections removed and covered with steel patches. The current state of the steel hull is one of the bright spots on the ship. In 2002, at the cost of over \$4 million, a watertight cofferdam was constructed, allowing for water to be pumped out and the hull repaired.<sup>14</sup> You can wander around the deck, experience the inner workings of the 16-inch turrets, explore the five-inch and anti-aircraft guns. Right off the main deck you can begin any one of the three self-guided tours:

Yellow-which comprises the main deck and up eight levels to the aerological office and the secondary conning

station ; Green-the second deck, made up mostly of the vital weapons, combat, command and mechanical areas and Red-which contains the crew berthing

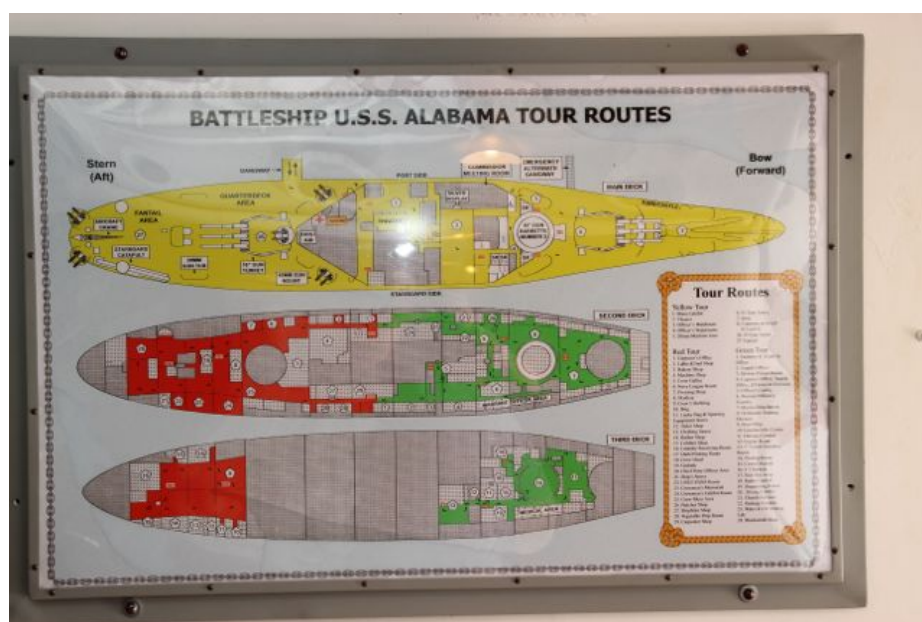


Figure 3: Tour placard located throughout the ship

areas, amenities and the crewman's memorial. While there are various displays, models, informational signage and period rooms, they are all static aside from the battleship theatre. The main exhibit located on the main deck (yellow tour) contains multiple display cases that span the construction of the ship, its service in the Pacific, other Alabama namesake ships, Battleship Memorial Park, the Civil War and Pearl Harbor. Aside from the key displays there are many others that contain various knick-

knacks and World War II related pieces. They seem haphazardly placed and in most cases devoid of explanation. Again, while they do provide pertinent information, there is no connection created with the *Alabama* and the sailors that served aboard her. The current interpretive strategies make it difficult to place yourself in the shoes of any one sailor and really connect on a personal level. There are no interactive exhibits, no in-depth guided tours available. There are also several empty berths that are not interpreted, creating the possibility for other uses. Apart from the main exhibit, there really is no effort made to shed light upon other ships carrying the Alabama name or important to the state for one reason or another. The beauty of the ship though is the ability to see so much of the ship that other comparable resources do not allow.

Upon disembarking the *Alabama*, you next travel to the Medal of Honor Pavilion, as you have to go through it to reach the *Drum*. Once inside the Pavilion, you are introduced to a wide array of military

aircraft, dating from a P-51D Mustang, painted to resemble those flown by the Tuskegee Airman, to the modern F-15A Eagle and F-16A Falcon. For the most part, the aircraft have a



Figure 4: Exterior view of Medal of Honor Pavilion

connection to the state, others, like the SR-71, are significant due to their technologies alone.

Each aircraft and the PTB boat, which is also stored here, are complete with interpretive signage,



Figure 5: MiG 17 lacking interpretive signage, chained in place. Indicative of resources located outside of MoH Pavilion

however, there is no timeline, no context, and no method of presentation. The educated visitor may think that the resources are simply on site because they were available, not because they are important to

the site's narrative. A flight simulator and photo booth round out the Pavilion. As you finish your self-guided tour through the Pavilion, you are led outside to the *Drum*, along the way you pass MiG, in poor shape simply chained to the ground, lacking any signage. The *Drum* is currently being restored and once inside you immediately get a sense of the cramped life onboard a submarine. The self-guided tour here is mostly adequate, as space is at a premium and there is no room for any staff. Again, like the *Alabama*, a connection on the personal level is missing, as is the context for the sub, there is nothing explaining the progression of the technology and the role it played and continues to play.

The *Drum* is the last stop on the self-guided tour. From here the visitor exits the park through the gift shop, that is unless it has already closed as it does not operate at the same hours as the rest of the park. Once outside the visitor still has many things to see. There are many more aircraft displayed around the park along with the tanks and artillery. Few, if any, include interpretative signage and again, any reason as to the way they are important and belong at BMP.

Rounding out the park are the Korean and Vietnam War memorials, both of which are very well designed and maintained by their respective veterans organizations. Neither memorial is in any way integrated with the other memorials at the park.

Overall, aside from the resources outside, the military resources are fairly well interpreted and described on a singular basis. It is the overall context for all the resources and a connection on the personal level that are immensely lacking. All visitors, the average and the educated alike, would benefit greatly from expanded interpretive exhibits and programming in conjunction with a unifying theme for the entirety of the park, with each specific era and resource explained within the overall theme and its period of relevance.



Figure 6: Vehicles lined up, lacking signage, in varying states of deterioration.

## **Case Studies**

With a basic understanding of the resources in place at Battleship Memorial Park (BMP), it is now possible to examine the way in which they are presented and interpreted to the public. In this way it is feasible to see flaws in the current methods and how they can be corrected. The best way to accomplish this is by first evaluating the following case studies, analyzing the information gleaned and examining possible replication at BMP. In the following section, I will introduce four examples of museums with similar resources to those at BMP and one with resources specific to Alabama. At each site, I will extrapolate important aspects of interpretation and resource management, among other things. There are numerous sites across the country that merit examination, but the sites selected have certain aspects that pertain to the collection at BMP. The USS North Carolina is structured much like BMP, with a commission selected by North Carolina's governor and more importantly, it's privately funded. The National Museum of the US Air Force displays various aircraft from many distinct periods of aviation history. Whatever the connection each site has to BMP, they are successful in many areas and deficient in others. It is my intention to collect the finest concepts from each site, selecting those that will fit into the overall plan for BMP, while at the same time sifting through those that may be successful at other sites, but not applicable here.

### **National Museum of the US Air Force**

What began in 1923 as a collection of aircraft for intelligence purposes, the National Museum of the US Air Force (NMUSAF), located in Dayton, Ohio, is now the steward of the world's largest collection of aircraft.<sup>15</sup> Despite its rich heritage in flight, the NMUSAF's location in Dayton, Ohio, is not ideal due to the absence of other family attractions. However, due to its national appeal, museum visitation does not suffer. The museum's operational and maintenance

budgets are fulfilled by Air Force appropriations, but it is through the diligent work of the Air Force Museum Foundation (AFMF) that the NMUSAF is able offer a high quality visitor experience. Founded in 1960, the AFMF's mission is to help advance awareness and educate Americans on the contributions of the Air Force and aviation as a whole. It is due to the combined effort of the AFMF, who solicited donations from a variety of sources and an Air Force in-service drive, that the \$6.5 million was raised for the state of the art facility dedicated in 1971.<sup>16</sup> In the 42 years since the construction of the first wing, the AFMF has fostered the construction of two more wings, a 500-seat IMAX theatre, atrium and renovations to the café and gift shop. Currently, they are in the midst of a \$47 million fund raising campaign to add a fourth wing, with \$38 million already promised.<sup>17</sup>

The collection on display at the NMUSAF is unrivaled in terms of size, scope and diversity. Historically, due in part to federal funding and recognition on a national scale, capital has been of no concern, as is not the case at BMP. As such, the aircraft and related artifacts have been very well maintained and interpreted with many diverse strategies, as well as many programs and events available to the public. However, as of April 2013, the NMUSAF has had to cope with a loss of funding as part of budget reduction requirements imposed by the sequestration of Department of Defense spending. In response to the budgetary constraints, the NMUSAF halted nonessential maintenance, closed several auxiliary hangars including the wildly popular Research and Development and Presidential collections and cancelled several of their guest lecture series, behind the scenes tours and summer camps.<sup>18</sup> Regardless of the potential for future changes, the model presented by the NMUSAF contains numerous interpretative concepts and complementary exhibits applicable at BMP. Without first providing the historical context of flight, the USAF's history would be incomplete for the visitor. It would be akin to reading a

book beginning at the middle, so much of the story is lost. Interpreting the events of one particular point in time is a difficult undertaking, let alone the entire history of a specific organization or topic, however the NMUSAF is successful. Beginning with the concept of manned flight and progressing to spy satellites only recently declassified, it is within this context that the narrative of the birth and evolution of the USAF is articulated.

The main complex, made up of three interconnected hangars contains the bulk of the museum's exhibits, with many others located throughout the museum grounds. The first of such is the Air Park, which serves to welcome visitors to the NMUSAF. The park contains several of the collection's largest aircraft, Peacekeeper (ICBM) Rail Garrison Rail Road Car, as well as replica World War II control tower and Nissen Huts. The aircraft on display here were slated to be relocated to the fourth hangar upon its completion.<sup>19</sup> The Air Park, despite its incongruous collection spanning several decades and uses, the accompaniment of interpretive signage and grouping, combined with the other resources, a family friendly playground and picnic area, create a relatively stand-alone exhibit. Also outside the main structure, directly adjacent to the entrance walkway, is the Memorial Park. What began in 1972 as a singular memorial to prisoners of war and those missing in action during the Vietnam War, has grown into over 500 memorials to various armed forces groups.<sup>20</sup> The park is beautifully landscaped and cultivated, creating an inviting and solemn place to reflect upon those to whom the memorials are dedicated. The remaining external exhibits are housed in auxiliary hangars and had previously been available to tour prior to the budget constraints imposed by the sequester, though they were only accessible by shuttle bus. The Presidential and Research & Development collections, which house many unique resources such as JFK's Air Force One and the only remaining XB-70 Valkyrie, the strategic bomber capable of speeds 3 times the speed of sound, could be toured

daily before the cuts. The museum's restoration projects, like the famous B-17 *Memphis Belle*, were also available to be viewed as part of the "behind the scenes" tour available every Friday, again until the recent loss of federal funding. The closing of both these popular exhibits to the general public was not well received, though the decision was made with the longer-term preservation of the entire collection in mind. It was announced on May 22, 2013, that the planned fourth hanger would come to house the Presidential and R & D collections, altering the previous plans for the building, which included the Presidential collection, several aircraft from the Air Park and currently still in service. Though this news comes as the NMUSAF is coping with the constraints of the budgetary reduction, the AFMF is confident that it will be able to raise the remaining funds necessary to begin construction on the addition in 2014.<sup>21</sup>

The main museum complex houses the majority of the museum's massive collection, currently made up of three hangars laid out sequentially, each broken up into galleries organized by period of significance. The main entrance opens up into the atrium, which provides access to the IMAX theatre, gift shop and Valkyrie Café. Rounding out the first hangar is the Early Years Gallery, Air Power (World War II) Gallery and Kettering Hall exhibits. As the name suggests, the Early Years Gallery contains resources pertaining to the history of manned flight in the United States, with emphasis on military application. The gallery opens with ballooning in the Civil War and the winged flight of the Wright Brothers and progresses to World War I and the buildup for World War II. The hallway between the two exhibits contains its own exhibit on the Holocaust. The Gallery houses the World War II collection, beginning with the outbreak of war, covering both theaters, the increased importance of air support and ending with the *Bockscar*, the B-29 that dropped the Fat Man atomic bomb on Nagasaki, bringing an end to hostilities. Kettering Hall features several special exhibits spanning multiple time periods, most notably the

exhibit on Bob Hope and his contributions to service men and women spanning 50 years. Following the natural progression the museum leads to the next hangar, which houses the Southeast Asia War Gallery. The gallery spans the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, airborne innovations and massive bombing campaigns. Like the connecting hallway between the Early Years and World War II Galleries, the hallway connecting the Southeast Asia and Cold War Galleries contains an independent exhibit focused on the Berlin Wall, East and West Germany and the aid provided by Western powers. The last hangar contains the Cold War Gallery, a collection of aircraft and technologies pioneered during the Cold War and still in use today. Connected to the hanger is the Missile & Space Gallery. Added in 2004, the collection comprises some of the museum's smaller artifacts from its much larger space collection, including the Apollo 15 command module and several intercontinental ballistic missiles from the Titan and Jupiter programs. The resources on display in each Gallery are substantial and it would be counter productive to review each individually as the sheer amount of information would distract from the intended purpose. Rather I will discuss overall techniques and themes, provide specific examples and analyze distinctive exhibits.

The NMUSAF's master plan centers on the education of younger generations, both in aviation history and on the USAF, as special attention is given to school and youth groups. There are a variety of programing and resources available to complement curriculum, guided tours and activities. There are two tour options available for walk-in visitors, self guided, with the option to use the audible podcast tour or Heritage tours, free guided tours offered at 1:30 on weekdays, with an additional offering on the weekends at 10:30.<sup>22</sup> The main complex is organized chronologically so that the average visitor can begin at the Early Years collection and progress through to the Missile and Space collection, all the while comprehending the major aspects and

contributions of flight and the USAF. The historical narrative of the NMUSAF utilizes several types of histories, from military history and oral histories to the far less used minority and women's histories. The museum does not reinvent the interpretive process to express its narrative. Its galleries employ a wide variety of current interpretative strategies to illuminate their resources and connect with the visitor on many levels, including interpretative signage, dioramas, models, as well as multimedia, static and hands-on displays. Though it is the main collection and unique resources that draw in crowds, as is the case in all museums, it is the interdependent exhibits that complete the compelling story on display at the NMUSAF.

Intertwined among the four galleries are the multiple exhibits that tell the ancillary histories of minorities and women, those most often ignored by mainstream history. In their appropriate locations within the history of the USAF, the museum outlines the contributions of women and minorities, particularly African Americans, during a period of our nation's history when both groups were marginalized. In order to tell these histories, as well as numerous others with the greatest degree of impact, the NMUSAF makes use of personal objects and oral histories.

Whether it is the violin of a World War I pilot or the recounting of what it was like to reside at the Hanoi Hilton in Vietnam, the personal stories coupled with visual displays bring history to life. In addition to connecting on a personal level, there are countless exhibits that allow the visitor to experience aspects of aviation history in ways that are unforgettable. At critical periods or events in aviation and USAF history, like Operation Rolling Thunder in Vietnam or the use of atomic weapons in Japan, there are monitors showing first-hand footage, never before seen by the average visitor. The younger visitors are drawn to the hands-on exhibits, most noticeably the cockpits of several aircraft or the walkthrough of the fuselage of *Command Decision*, a Korean War era B-29. In each gallery the usage of interpretive signage is well thought out and contains

vast amounts of information intermixed with small-scale artifacts pertinent not only to the resources, but also the context of the entire gallery within the overall narrative of the museum.

Overall, the NMUSAF provides a complete historical narrative of both American aviation and the USAF. This is achieved through numerous interpretive strategies and types of history. The museum should be applauded for its inclusion of marginalized groups in its narrative. Part of its success can also be attributed to its national profile and funding, both federally and privately, that many other memorials and museums cannot match. That being said, many of the ideas cultivated at the NMUSAF, from interpretation and presentation to preservation, can be transplanted to Battleship Memorial Park.

### **Battleship North Carolina**

Commissioned in 1941, the North Carolina class of battleships, comprising the *North Carolina* and her sister ship the *Washington*, preceded the South Dakota class. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Washington Treaty, the battleships of both classes were very similar in design and armament. There are subtle differences in overall designs, particularly in the ships' superstructures and overall size. Even though their displacements only differ 1,500 tons, the *Alabama* is 50 feet shorter than the *North Carolina*. This was done to allow for thicker armor while still staying within displacement limitations. Due to the subtle differences between the ships, interpretation of the ships as tangible objects is comparable, it is their narratives that are distinctive.

Moored in Wilmington, North Carolina state's namesake battleship, *USS North Carolina* rests as a memorial to those North Carolinians who fought and died during World War II. Following the same path from war ship to museum ship as the *Alabama*, the *North Carolina* was set to be scrapped in 1958. The state's citizens banded together to create the Save our Ship fund

to raise the money necessary to save the ship and transport her to back to North Carolina.<sup>23</sup> Dedicated in 1962, three years prior to the *Alabama*, the *North Carolina* remains as one of the eight battleships currently on display in the United States. The memorial receives no state funding and is managed by a group of 18 members most likely providing the inspiration for the BMP's organizational structure. Unlike BMP, the *North Carolina* memorial has not added any additional resources to the ship. While some may regard the lack of complementary resources as a lost opportunity, it in fact means the focus can remain solely upon the *North Carolina*. This singular focus allows for innovative concepts and interpretive approaches that are relevant aboard the *Alabama*.

Positioned just across the Cape Fear River from downtown Wilmington and vibrantly painted in her wartime camouflage colors, the *North Carolina* is a spectacle to behold. Aside from eroded sections of her hull at the waterline, currently under repair, the *North Carolina* is well preserved. She had the entirety of her teak decking replaced in 2001.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the BMP, which has numerous resources to maintain, the *North Carolina* is the sole focus of staff and volunteers. As such, all time, energy and funding is directed at the ship. As the *North Carolina* was never intended to last forever, maintaining the ship is a constant activity. Along with the maintenance and museum staff, volunteers assist in the overall preservation of the ship, completing projects like: repairing telephones, polishing brass, chipping and painting, refurbishing lighting fixtures and more.<sup>25</sup> Volunteers, comprised of the Friends of the Battleship and the USS North Carolina Battleship Association, former crewmen and their families, are also relied upon to help facilitate the memorial's interpretive programming.

Much like the *Alabama*, the tour of the *North Carolina* is self-guided, but the similarities end there. Prior to starting the tour, the visitor begins with an orientation video and exhibit hall

summarizing the importance of the battleship and providing context prior to boarding the ship. Once on the ship you can follow the tour of the nine viewable levels or simply walk at your leisure. There are multiple interpretive techniques used to connect with the visitor aside from the static history of the ship itself. Interpretative signage is located throughout the ship that takes advantage of photos, cartoons, illustrations, text, and oral histories. This has the intent of not only educating the public but also in fostering a personal connection. To provide insight into how the ship looked when in service each section contains period-restored rooms.

In addition to the static displays, the *North Carolina's* volunteers aid in further connecting the ship to the visitor. On any given day they serve as docents located throughout the *North Carolina* and on previously scheduled days, the volunteers also take part in Battleship 101 and Battleship Alive. During Battleship 101 volunteers are stationed throughout the ship to engage visitors in specific subjects and areas including: gunnery, radar, sickbay, galley, engineering and daily shipboard life.<sup>26</sup> Battleship Alive follows the same basic tenets of Battleship 101, but with one key difference, the volunteers are dressed in period clothing. Ranging from sailors portraying their daily routines aboard a war ship to what it was like for women on the home front, they remain in character throughout the day, providing an unforgettable interpretive experience.<sup>27</sup> Expert volunteers teamed with staff lead the *North Carolina's* remaining behind the scenes, in-depth educational programming. Focusing on the ship's vital systems, the Firepower, Power Plant and Design & Damage Control programs provide an all-day immersive experience that allows the visitor access to sections not allowed on the regular tour, hands-on participation and lectures on the subject at hand.<sup>28</sup> The programs are for adults and cost an additional fee.

In addition to the immersive programs, the Hidden Battleship and Behind the Hatch programs take visitors on tours of the ship not accessible on the self-guided tour. There is an additional fee charged for the programs. The memorial also offers custom programming for corporations as well as military and ROTC groups. In order to meet the needs of all visitors, the Back Porch tour affords those with accessibility issues the chance to experience the *North Carolina*, with a guided tour of the exhibit hall and a discussion on the ship's observation deck.<sup>29</sup> To further entice visitors who may not normally visit a battleship, the memorial conducts numerous holiday events from the Fourth of July to Easter. The staff of the *North Carolina* takes advantage of current social media outlets with a blog, website, Facebook and twitter accounts, aimed at reaching younger generations. According to Kim Sincox, the Museum Services Coordinator, there are several more in-depth programs and behind the scenes tours currently in planning stages to add to those already in place.

The *North Carolina* is a shining example of what is obtainable if you have a dedicated group of people all working towards the same goal. The combined efforts of the volunteers and the staff have created a visitor experience that is both highly educational and exciting. Their use of traditional interpretive devices interlaced with costumed docents allows for connection on a personal level, bringing history to life. All of the interpretive strategies and programs can be replicated at BMP and aboard the *Alabama*. Beginning with the orientation video and exhibit hall to provide context for the site and then implementing new programming would make a dramatic difference in both visitation and funding opportunities. That being said, the additional resources at BMP will make it difficult to make focus solely on the *Alabama*, the first step must be the creation of a volunteer group that can help foster in a new era at BMP.

## **The National World War II Museum**

The National World War II Museum (NWWM), formerly known as the National D-day Museum, is located in New Orleans, Louisiana, due to the city's association with the Higgins boat, an amphibious landing craft that played a pivotal role in the D-day landings on Normandy's beaches. Launched in 2000 and renamed in 2003 when Congress designated it the Nation's World War II Museum, it centers on the role of the United States in World War II.<sup>30</sup> Prior to his death, noted historian Stephen Ambrose was the driving force in establishing the museum to commemorate the American sacrifices on D-day and the days that followed. The NWWM is currently in the midst of a \$300 million expansion that began in 2006. Funded by a capital campaign and congressional capital, with endowments sought for the future, the expansion was necessary to expand upon the D-day programming already in place. Once completed the NWWM will house one of the world's finest military museums, both in terms of size and presentation. As the National museum of the most decisive period in American history, the NWWM's resource pool unmatched, many of the concepts presented will be difficult to replicate at BMP in its current financial state. The goal is to examine one of the foremost leaders in military museum presentation and examine their interpretative approaches.

Tours of the museum are self-guided, taking on average 3 hours to complete. There is also the option for purchase of an accompaniment application for smartphones and iPods. For \$0.99, the app provides; maps, exhibit information, access to additional historical materials and more.<sup>31</sup> The NWWM's narrative is to provide a connection to the men and woman who defined World War II. They achieve this through extensive oral histories and personal effects combined with artifacts, photographs and cutting edge multimedia. The tour commences with the museum's first building, the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion. The visual experience begins in the

atrium, which houses multiple aircraft and vehicles, including the Higgins Boat. From there the visitor enters into the Home Front Gallery, which provides context and introduces the museum's narrative. The gallery focuses on the United States prior to the onset of World War II, America's eventual involvement and commitment to the war effort. Special attention is given to the contributions of women and minorities. Next, both D-day and Pacific Galleries go into great depth on both campaigns, from the tough decisions of D-day to the racism and brutality of the Pacific theatre.<sup>32</sup> The precursory D-day Planning Gallery provides insight into selection of the beaches of Normandy, the equipment used by both sides and with the help of visual displays, the sheer size of the invasion. Following a chronological progression, the D-day Beaches Gallery picks up where the Planning Gallery ends with the invasion of Normandy. The gallery is split up into sections for each of the five beach landing zones and the various incursions prior to the invasion. Concluding with an examination at the gains and losses by both sides, the gallery brings the entirety of the conflict down to a personal level through the use of personal stories and effects. Drawing on the same personal accounts, the Pacific D-days Gallery take the visitor through island hopping campaigns of the Pacific Theater, beginning at Pearl Harbor and ending with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Rounding out the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion is the Special Exhibits Gallery. The gallery houses nationally and internationally relevant rotating exhibits that complement the stationary galleries or broach subjects not mentioned elsewhere. Exhibits range from POW experiences in Germany and Bob Hope's contributions to military servicemen and woman to artifacts maintained by the museum usually not on display.<sup>33</sup>

Through the combined funding of the capital campaign, federal grant and a \$15 million gift from Boeing, the US Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center was erected. The first of the three new pavilions to be completed as part of the museum's expansion, the US Freedom

Pavilion combines oral histories with innovative multimedia exhibits to create a poignant educational experience. The Freedom Pavilion provides the traditional museum experience, through the display of military artifacts, in this case excellently restored aircraft and vehicles. Though these artifacts themselves are illuminating, they do not engage the visitor beyond visual comprehension. To reach the visitor on a more personal, emotional level the several unique exhibits exist. The *Final Mission: The USS Tang Submarine Experience*, part simulator, part theater, gives the visitor an opportunity to experience wartime conditions on a World War II diesel submarine.<sup>34</sup> Following the final mission of the *USS Tang*, the hands-on experience is open to 27 guests at a time, each with a specific job onboard the submarine. To add another layer to the experience, the guest takes the place of the actual submariner, finding out at the end if they survived the final mission. Further connecting the visitor to the past is the *What Would You Do* interactive exhibit. Set up for 36 visitors, each is given a scenario with strategic, moral and ethical significance faced by World War II participants.<sup>35</sup> Through this exhibit the visitor is able to experience first hand the everyday life or death decisions that someone just like them would have had to make with real consequences. The remaining exhibits use multimedia to connect to the visitor. The Arsenal of Democracy exhibit displays never before seen footage and photographs from Boeing's archives on a 31-foot high definition screen. The Service & Sacrifice exhibit and Laborde Services Gallery employ touchscreens and oral histories to educate visitors on various aspects, from World War II veterans who went on to serve the United States in many different aspects outside the military, to Medal of Honor recipients and their stories.<sup>36</sup>

In their continued effort to preserve World War II artifacts for future generations, the NWWM conservation staff works to restore such pieces in the John E. Kushner Restoration Pavilion. The pavilion features a glass façade to provide visitors with an inside look at current

restoration projects including boats, vehicles, weapons and military equipment used by the allies.<sup>37</sup> Two pavilions are currently under construction as part of the expansion. The Campaigns of Courage: European and Pacific Theaters, will follow both theaters of war from beginning to end, employing many of the same interpretive techniques currently in use. Highlighting the interpretation strategy of the pavilion is a dog tag experience, giving the guest an opportunity to follow a participant in the war, with the ability to track their movements throughout the conflict, fostering an extreme connection on a personal level.<sup>38</sup> The Liberation Pavilion will focus on the final days of the war, from V-day and the liberation of Nazi death camps to the war conclusion and its far-reaching aftermath, the effects of which are still felt today. In addition to the exhibit pavilions, the NWWM has many other supporting features. As part of the expansion, the Solomon Victory Theater and Stage Door Cantina were constructed. The 250-seat 4-D Solomon Victory Theater is currently showing Tom Hanks' award winning documentary *Beyond All Boundaries*, while the Stage Door Cantina features live performances, mostly reminiscent of those on USO tours, both of which help draw in crowds that may not have previously been interested in visiting the museum.<sup>39</sup> The museum also features a 1940s themed restaurant and soda shop. Additional structures and accents are also planned to add to the 1940s theme, from a railroad depot to lighting fixtures.<sup>40</sup>

The NWWM also provides continued learning opportunities for children and adults. Public programming includes guest lectures and relevant film screenings, among other unique programs available on the museum's website. War-gaming, re-enactments of battles fought and even some not, are also held at the museum. Educational programming is also available to teachers to help prepare students for a trip to the museum and allow them to get the most out of the experience. Perhaps the most intriguing programming opportunity offered by the museum is

guided travel tours on location at European and Pacific battlefields. The tours are led by renowned historians, authors and military specialists and give travelers behind the scenes tours of sites that are typically unavailable.<sup>41</sup>

As stated, the NWWM's galleries rely heavily upon personal connections by using oral histories, personal effects and modern technologies to show what the war was like on the individual level. However, care is taken to fit the personal narrative into the overall significance of each battle and the war as a whole. Much like the National Museum of the Air Force, due to its national relevancy, the NWWM will be successful no matter its location, though unlike Dayton, New Orleans is a popular travel destination. The exhibits on display and the interpretive strategies are some of the newest and greatest and if the funding was available, would fit nicely at BMP. The NWWM focuses solely upon the American contributions to World War II and while it is understandable, being the national World War II Museum, it seems as though much in the way of overall educational possibilities is lost, not to mention the site is glaringly celebratory in nature. While it is true that the United States had a profound impact on the war, both before and after our official entrance to the conflict, it can also be said the Soviet war machine would have defeated Hitler and the Nazis regardless of how D-day developed. While it is important to record and maintain this important aspect of our history as Americans, it must also be a priority to provide a complete history for future generations. There is much to take away from the NWWM museum both in terms of interpretive strategies as well as the type of history that BMP needs to portray and that is a complete, unabashed history.

### **The Vulcan Park and Museum**

The three previous case sites examined were connected to Battleship Memorial Park through similar resources and narrative. The Vulcan Park and Museum (VPM) does not share the

same characteristics. Rather, its narrative contains the history of the Vulcan as it pertains to the history of Birmingham, AL and the history of the state its self. This is where the parallels between VPM and BMP arise. BMP is a memorial to Alabamians and as such, it is important that the site's narrative contain the history of its namesake state as it pertains to BMP. The types interpretive strategies used at VPM have been covered in the previous case studies, so while they will be mentioned here, we will be looking in detail at the overall context of the site as it pertains to the history of Alabama.

Named for the Roman god of fire and Hephaestus, the blacksmith of the gods in Greek mythology, the Vulcan was commissioned by the city of Birmingham to showcase the burgeoning city's industrial might at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904. Designed by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Moretti, the statue signifies Birmingham's iron ore stores and steel manufacturing ability. The statue was so large that it had to be modeled in two halves and constructed at an empty church in New Jersey. Cast by the Birmingham Steel and Iron Company, the 21 individual pieces that form the statue were then sent back to Moretti for assembly in St Louis.<sup>42</sup> It was then and currently still is, the largest cast iron statue in the world standing at 56 feet, the Vulcan was a popular attraction at the exposition, winning several awards. After returning to Alabama, the statue languished as no decision could be made on a permanent home. After 30 years incorrectly assembled at the state fairgrounds, the Vulcan was relocated to its current home overlooking Birmingham atop Red Mountain.<sup>43</sup> In the years following the move, the statue fell into a state of disrepair. Following the discovery of unsafe structural cracks in 1999, the statue was removed from display for repairs. The nonprofit Vulcan Park Foundation was formed at the same time to raise funds for the restoration and still exists to serve the needs of the park. Due to the extensive damage, some sections could not be repaired

and had to be recast using original drawings from Moretti to ensure accuracy.<sup>44</sup> The complete restoration took four years; with the Vulcan returning to his perch high above the city in 2003. During the restoration, the Vulcan Center Museum was constructed and the park's grounds updated.

Located high above the city, the Vulcan beckons visitors to climb the stairs of its pedestal and experience the Vulcan Center Museum. The Vulcan Center Museum (VCM) employs many of the interpretation techniques previously examined, interpretive signage, interactive exhibits and video screens, artifacts and static displays. What makes the VCM distinctive is its melding of the state's, city's and statue's histories. As the visitor enters the VCM, they begin their self-guided tour with the materials and people that built Birmingham, coal, limestone, iron ore and the various men who provided cheap labor: minorities, prisoners and the poor. From there the visitor follows a chronological timeline from the industrialization of Birmingham to construction of the Vulcan. Among the collection of Vulcan artifacts is a scale replica of the statue's foot, giving the visitor a sense of the sheer size of the 56 foot statue. The next exhibit uses the stories of Alabamians to display the depths of the great depression, which hit Birmingham particularly hard and the prosperous period that followed as the city's foundries played a major role in the ensuing war effort. Next the museum tackles the sensitive topic of Jim Crow laws, segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. The interpretation is direct and to the point, with many photos and oral histories on the shameful period in Alabama's history. The museum concludes with the triumphs of Alabama and Birmingham, with the focus on the Vulcan leading the way into the future as a continued beacon of hope and prosperity. A special exhibit hall is also included in the confines of the VCM, which houses exhibits pertinent to the museum's narrative, most recently focusing on the Negro Leagues (baseball) of the 1930s and 40s. The VCM caters to school

groups, providing hands on educational experiences through programming, guided tours and teacher's resources. Outreach programs for the general public exist as well as enrichment activities, lectures and history days, where staff collects oral histories and artifacts.<sup>45</sup> Special events are also held throughout the year on the park grounds, with the most popular being the Thunder on the Mountain Fourth of July fireworks display.

Though relatively small, the Vulcan Park has a large impact on the Birmingham community. Privately owned and operated, the park relies on the donations of time and money to survive, much like BMP. Through its investment in the community, the park has a large pool of donors and volunteers, both at the private and corporate levels. The VCM also does a great job of interpreting multiple time periods and connecting seemingly unrelated historical narratives to create a complete educational experience. It is important for BMP to address the overall narrative of Alabama within the context of the park's narrative. While it may not be relevant to discuss all aspects of segregation and the Civil Rights movement, it would certainly be beneficial to include exhibits detailing the Tuskegee Airman or the experiences of African American soldiers returning home to Alabama following the war. It would also serve BMP going forward to invest in the Mobile Bay area; in return the citizens will invest in the park.

## **Recommendations for Battleship Memorial Park**

In the following section I will use the information gathered from the case studies to provide recommendations for potential additions and alterations to Battleship Memorial Park. The recommendations will be broken down into two categories, interpretation and funding. Each category will then be organized from most to least feasible, taking into consideration cost and overall impact on the site. Not knowing actual budgetary figures for BMP, educated suppositions must be made as to what exactly is feasible. BMP's staff is continually looking at ways to improve upon many of the deficiencies that have been previously illuminated and through their own research, they have a list of additions to the park that meets the needs they perceive to be the greatest at this time. Being that these are their viewpoints and maintain the best chance for completion, it is a logical starting point. It is not my contention that I am more knowledgeable than the staff currently in place, nor are my concepts necessarily new to BMP, rather, I simply want to build upon the list provided by BMP.

### ***Current Objectives (Provided by Battleship Memorial Park Director Bill Tunnell)***

As per Bill Tunnell, these are not in order of priority, nor are there dollar amounts attached, as they are not currently to that stage of planning:

1. Permanently installed storm protection doors/shutters for Aircraft Pavilion and gift shop;
2. Automatic yard sprinkling system around gift shop area;
3. New exterior security system to tie into existing system to cover 175-acre park;
4. Expansion of Aircraft Pavilion with 26,000 sqft. state of art educational center, new ticket office, theater, snack bar and outdoor dining overlooking Mobile Bay;
5. Installation of waterline bulkhead surrounding park to stabilize gradual ground shifts;
6. Anchor and chain perimeter fencing to circle the park to match existing anchor & chain;
7. Wi-Fi installation inside battleship and submarine to enable proposed smartphone tour

guide application;

8. Battleship exterior repaint job from the waterline to the top light;
9. Submarine exterior hull repair and paint;
10. New entrance into Park down east side of Park, with existing drive used as exit;
11. New gift shop built near front of Park for new entrance;
12. New free-standing "name" restaurant to be located near new gift shop to attract national market, and
13. Replace teak decking aboard battleship.

All of the ideas proposed by BMP's staff are quite valid and address needs that the park obviously has, though it is very easy to rank them in order of importance and impact. The restoration and maintenance of the park's resources should take precedence, after all they are what draw in the visitors. The *Alabama's* deck and paint should be top priority as she is not only the principal attraction, but also the most significant and irreplaceable resource at the park. That being said, the repairs to the ship will be expensive, but it is my contention that it is the best investment BMP can make, delivering the greatest long-term impact. In 2009, the *USS Missouri* underwent an \$18 million restoration that focused on hull and exterior corrosion, paint, teak decking, HVAC, plumbing, sewage and electrical systems.<sup>46</sup> The *Missouri* saw active service until 1992, during that time she was maintained by the Navy. In contrast to the *Missouri*, aside from the major hull repairs completed in 2002, the *Alabama* has gone an additional 60 years without a comprehensive overhaul; as such, the issues aboard the *Missouri* likely paled in comparison to those currently found on the *Alabama*. A major funding drive would have to be implemented, acquiring funding from numerous sources to pay for the restoration; the fund should remain separate from all other park projects so there is no confusion as to where contributions are being used and funding can still be used to meet other needs. BMP could look

to the *North Carolina's* Generations campaign, responsible for funding the current hull repairs and construction of a cofferdam system, as an example. The *Drum's* restoration is currently in progress, with repairs to the external hull replacing extremely corroded tail sections of the submarine.

Next on the list is the installation of Wi-Fi to allow for the implementation of the “smartphone tour guide application.” The majority of the cost on the Wi-Fi and tour application will most assuredly be spent on the development of the unique tour guide application, though this begins to address the portion of interpretation issues that are prevalent throughout the park and will be discussed in a later section. Included in this is the proposed expansion of the Aircraft Pavilion with a 26,000 sqft. state of the art educational center, new ticket office, theater, snack bar and outdoor dining facility. The expansion meets multiple needs, with the education facility being the most appealing of the proposed additions, while the others would serve to create a complete experience, rather than just a museum and memorial. It would add to the park’s appeal as an all-inclusive destination. Despite meeting multiple needs, the expansion is quite a large undertaking and should be postponed until the repairs to the *Alabama* are funded; as with most capital building projects, only one should be undertaken at a time. The same can be said for the new gift shop. It seems rather curious to install storm protection for the pavilion and current gift shop, particularly if the pavilion will undergo alterations and the gift shop is being replaced altogether. Rather than adding a nationally recognized restaurant at the park’s proposed new entrance, the park should attempt to work with existing restaurants. BMP is surrounded by numerous restaurants that not only provide some of the regions best fresh seafood, but also serve to draw in more tourists as they add to the overall appeal of the bay area and the park by default. Aside from the bulkhead surrounding the park, which would serve to maintain the grounds for

future generations, the remaining objectives, like the sprinkler system and anchor and chain fencing, seem trivial, especially when compared to the park's other deficiencies.

### ***Interpretation***

The following are recommendations to address the interpretation of resources and events at BMP, listed in order of immediate impact and potential cost to the park:

#### *Park Wide:*

1. Additional structure upon leaving current gift shop or potentially reuse the space currently occupied by the gift shop once new gift shop is constructed to provide space for contextual information as part of the overall narrative;
2. All-encompassing tour of the park's resources;
3. Creation of programming for school groups and adults;
4. Organizational strategy for aircraft and other military vehicles not included in Aircraft Pavilion collection, and
5. Additional staff and/or volunteers located in various locations around the park.

As is evidenced in each of the case studies, a comprehensive narrative supported by a chosen interpretive plan is critical for success. While the narrative at Battleship Memorial Park (BMP) is not clearly defined, it does exist. The park is missing a vehicle in which to not only introduce the narrative, but also clearly define it for the visitor. Currently, there is no contextual information, no introduction to the park, nothing to explain to the visitor why they should care about the information and artifacts they are about to experience. In order to properly introduce the park's resources and narrative, an introductory space must be created. If we are to follow the proposed plans for a new gift shop, the current gift shop can be reused as the introductory exhibit space. Following the current park layout, an additional exhibit space would need to be constructed at the exit of the gift shop. Following the proposed plan, the existing structure

provides enough space to welcome the visitor, establish context and present interpretive strategies. In its current iteration, the visitor exits the gift shop and is instantly introduced to the *Alabama*. With its gargantuan size and 1940's cutting edge technologies, the ship presents an account of naval history as well as the progression of military weapons and technology. What is neglected is the overall history of World War II and the *Alabama*'s place within the narrative. Moreover, there is no connection on a personal and emotional level to the men who served aboard the ship, to whom the ship serves as a memorial. This new exhibit space will begin with contextual information about the issues leading up to the American involvement into the war, with a focus upon the Pacific Theater as it is most relevant to the park's resources. It is also important to discuss the home front and the gearing up of manufacturing, particularly as it pertains to the shipbuilding and the reconstruction of the Pacific Fleet destroyed at Pearl Harbor. Attention should also be given to the terms under which the *Alabama* was designed and built, the Washington Naval Treaty. Multiple interpretive strategies would be relevant here, interpretive signage,

interactive and static multimedia displays, artifacts and oral histories. Much like the Vulcan Museum, the information provided should



Figure 7: Rear of gift shop from the *Alabama*, notice space at far right of photo for potential museum space.

have a direct link to Alabamians, their thoughts, feelings and actions. Lastly, prior to exiting the exhibit hall, in the attempt to foster a personal connection, each visitor should be enlisted as a sailor aboard the *Alabama*. The newly enlisted sailor will be given the name, rank and job of an actual sailor that served on the ship, providing the unique opportunity to experience daily life aboard the *Alabama* during war. If the latter plan is followed and the gift shop is not relocated, an addition to the gift shop will be constructed. The new space would not allow for the depth of the aforementioned exhibit hall, but it could provide a basic understanding and context for the ship. Once onboard, the remaining sections of the exhibit could be assembled.

In addition to the contextual exhibit hall, the park's current tour options also need to be revamped. The current four-page self-guided tour pamphlet provides directions and a small amount of information for the *Alabama* and *Drum*; the remainder of the park's resources are ignored. At the very least the current tour guide needs to be updated to include the aircraft pavilion, aircraft, vehicles and memorials. Due to the overall lack of interpretation aboard the ship and around the park, an in-depth guide providing facts, figures and stories would be beneficial. Plans to add Wi-Fi and a tour application would not only provide a better tour experience, but also appeal to younger generations that have grown to expect new technologies. Additionally, guided tours available at predetermined times or by appointment for the general public and students would assist in the overall interpretive process. Taking inspiration from the *North Carolina*, guided tours that provide new access or focused topics would not only add to the visitor experience and educational programming, but also add much needed funding by charging additional fees.

Educational programming at BMP is nonexistent and as such would have to be built from the ground up, using the case studies as a guide. The recommendations here are contingent upon

an increase in staff and the creation of a volunteer group, without them there is no programming. Currently, information is available to prepare for teachers bringing their students to the park, though it consists of activities such as a scavenger hunt and crossword puzzle rather than actual precursory lesson plans. There is also no attempt to link the education options of the park with the popular STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education or state educational standards. The objective of STEM programming is to attract young Americans to the sciences and technologies fields, resulting with America becoming more competitive in the global market. A growing number of similar sites, including the National Museum of the United States Air Force and the *North Carolina*, have added STEM programming. At all the sites reviewed, school groups are given the option for guided tours and programming correlating with current curriculum; BMP has no such options, only the same self-guided tour available to the general public. The first step is to create a guided tour of the park led by staff or expert volunteers. Additionally, corresponding hands-on lessons, lectures and programs related to the exhibits and themes presented need to be created. STEM should be used as a resource to ensure the programs are relevant and meet the requirements of today's classrooms. With the vast array of resources, aircraft and ships onsite the possibilities are endless, from the science behind flight, the mathematics used in firing the *Alabama's* 2,700 pound projectiles 21 miles with deadly accuracy or the engineering required to safely submerge a submarine and return it back to the surface. Additionally, continuing education for adults must be created. While specialized programming onboard the *Alabama* will be examined later, there are many other programming features available to get adults involved in the education process. For example, lecture series on a wide variety of topics relevant to the park's narrative and resources, military movies on the battleship's fantail, model building and War Gaming. Volunteer veterans could provide first

hand tours and experiences aboard the *Alabama*, the *Drum* and inside the pavilion. In addition to educational programming, a number of family style programs would be beneficial. The park currently holds an annual Fourth of July celebration. To borrow from the *North Carolina*, a Halloween haunted battleship or Easter egg hunt could easily be added. Currently, there is no one on staff to handle education and programming needs.

Aside from the *Alabama*, *Drum* and aircraft pavilion, the park's remaining resources are scattered throughout the park, with no noticeable organizational structure. It may be difficult to relocate or rearrange some of the larger pieces, like the stationary B-52. All are in need of proper interpretive signage. Those that are movable should be relocated to a more prominent place and arranged either chronologically or by period of use. Many of the aircraft and vehicles are on loan from various branches of the military and museums; despite their contributions, which is nominal due to their current state of interpretation, thought should be given to returning them to their owners. Each piece is in some stage of deterioration and without the funding to maintain the park's principle resources, these most certainly fall by the wayside and could be better cared for and enjoyed elsewhere. While the previous suggestion may be viewed as extreme, changes must be made in order to create a better overall experience at BMP and simply having aircraft and vehicles because you can, is not valid, especially if they do not fit into the park's overall plan.

The last recommendation, while certainly necessary, is the most difficult to enact at BMP; the addition of staff and volunteers. If funding were available, the park would most assuredly have a larger staff presence. As will be discussed in later sections, there are existing concepts not in use that could potentially provide more funding for employees. Additional staff would allow for more programming, tours, supervision of resources and overall better visitor experience. They would also add a face to a relatively faceless organization, at least publicly,

creating the potential for visitors to donate money. The more obtainable goal at this stage is the addition of volunteers, using the *North Carolina's* volunteer model as a guide. The *North Carolina* maintains multiple volunteer groups, the Friends of the Battleship and the USS North Carolina Battleship Association comprised of former crewmen and their families. Both groups are involved in maintaining the ship, leading and assisting with programming and work to raise awareness. BMP could easily replicate the volunteer groups, filling multiple needs on board the ship and elsewhere throughout the park. For example, Mobile has a multitude ship yards, creating the potential for active and retired shipwrights to volunteer their free time to maintain the *Alabama* and *Drum*. The difficulty arises in creating these groups and filling their rosters with knowledgeable people, not just those who want access to a battleship. The addition of an experienced volunteer coordinator to the staff would make the creation of volunteer groups as seamless as possible.

*USS Alabama:*

1. Update current interpretive displays and add new exhibits, taking advantage of new interpretive strategies;
2. New *Alabama* specific programming, and
3. Accurately return ship to its period of greatest significance.

The interpretive strategies currently employed at BMP, while informative in most cases, are outdated. Aside from the short video inside the main exhibit hall detailing the highlights of the ship, the remaining interpretive displays are all static. The main deck is inundated with placards in various locations, explaining the uses of various weapons and technologies. While this would normally be a positive aspect, the signage is repetitive, offering no new information at each location. Below deck, berths, workstations and other compartments are restored and interpreted



Above-Figure 8: Entrance to main exhibit hall, notice rust at bottom right and patches to deck on bottom left. Below-Figure 9: Two of the display cases in the main exhibit hall.

as they would have looked when the ship was in use.

The main exhibit hall located just off the weather deck contains the largest collection of exhibits and information.

Enclosed in glass cases is

information pertaining to the ship's construction,

commissioning and service record. There are additional cases containing information about the creation of the park, other ships carrying the Alabama name, the Civil War and the attack on Pearl Harbor. In all, a total of nine cases house the majority of interpretive material aboard the

ship. For many reasons, the current layout can be improved upon. The first being that there is plenty of space on board the ship to spread out these



exhibits; there are numerous berthing areas and rooms completely devoid of interpretive material. Moving the exhibits would provide for a comprehensive analysis of each topic. For example, the 4x12 glass case pertaining to the Civil War only provides information on the Battle of Mobile Bay, nothing on the lead up to the battle of the war itself. It is impossible to fully explain the intricacies of the Civil War, the role Alabama played and the evolution of the US and CSA navies. One hundred and fifty years later, the Civil War is still an important part of southern culture; as such, it is odd that the state's foremost military site does not put forth a greater effort to explain this period in Alabama's history. It could be argued the Civil War is not part of the overall narrative of the park; however, through the exhibits on the Battle of Mobile Bay, previous ships to carry the Alabama name and replica of the submarine *H.L. Hunley*, I would argue that the park has already included the Civil War as part of the narrative, it is not interpreted in depth. Of the remaining exhibits, the Pearl Harbor case can be removed, its information and artifacts relocated to the proposed introductory exhibit. The exhibit on namesake ships can be relocated as

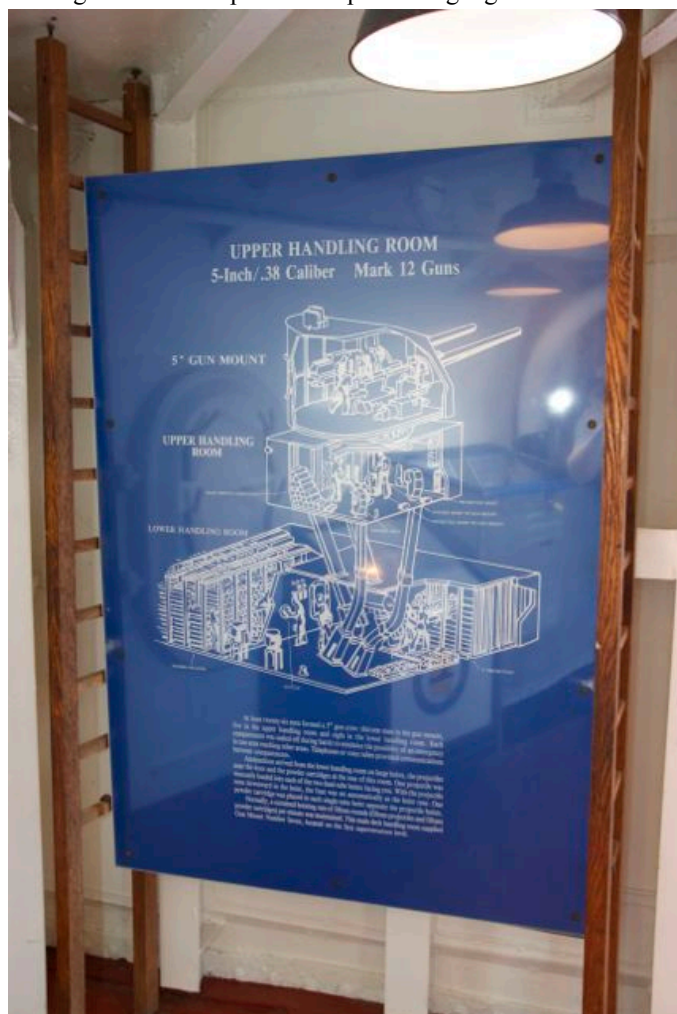
Figure 10: Continuation of main exhibit hall

well, being as the ships span multiple periods, further interpretation is needed. A location below decks, perhaps taking over the room currently occupied by the *USS Evans* exhibit



would be logical. The *Evans* was one of seven Fletcher Class destroyers constructed in Mobile, the exhibit could be added to the proposed exhibit on the home front and war efforts of Alabamians. The exhibits on the *Alabama* and the park would be the only remaining exhibits left in the main exhibit area onboard the ship. In each exhibit, the cases should be done away with and current interpretation strategies employed. The cases are closed off and the materials inside are difficult to read, making it impossible to really connect to the ship and its men. The ships main exhibits should be expanded to include detailed contextual information. For example, the exhibits on the *Alabama's* service during the war should illuminate the changes in naval warfare that relegated the battleship to its support role. To improve the current interpretive approaches

Figure 11: Example of interpretive signage.



onboard the ship, new strategies must be implemented. To add to the personal connection begun with the enlistment into the *Alabama's* crew, oral histories and personal effects should be prominently displayed. In the main exhibit hall there are already several cases with personal effects from sailors, but currently no interpretation, no real connection to the men that owned them. Veterans and their family members can be contacted for additional stories, artifacts and personal effects. Oral histories, as used extensively in all of the case studies, would be a

welcomed addition throughout the ship. The restored compartments would benefit the most from the addition of personal stories, especially if they are connected to the identities of the sailors the visitor assumes as part of the enlistment program. Currently, when visiting spaces like the engine room or bowels of the 16” turrets, it is impossible to fully understand what it was like to serve in these areas, the oppressive heat of the engine room or the precarious job of moving the ships 2,700-pound projectiles and powder-filled blast bags. The histories of the men who served in these areas could bridge the gap between the tangible and abstract histories of the ship.

Additionally, visitors will be able to go into the berthing area and post of the sailor they are enlisted as, further fostering a connection to men and ship. In places where there is only interpretive signage, like the handling room of the 5” turret, multimedia strategies can be employed. Something as simple as a video showing the actual working of the turret and how the men in the handling room keep the turret in use during battle, the process can be replicated in other sections throughout the ship, especially in the ever-popular 16” turrets. Many of the areas included on the ships tour are already hands on, the visitor can climb up into the 16” turrets or sit in the seat of the 40mm guns, this is one area that would be difficult to improve upon as these areas are part of the ship and their preservation must also be considered. Lastly, a special exhibit space should be created to showcase exhibits relevant to not only the park, but also issues pertaining to the state. Aside from the Tuskegee Airman P-51

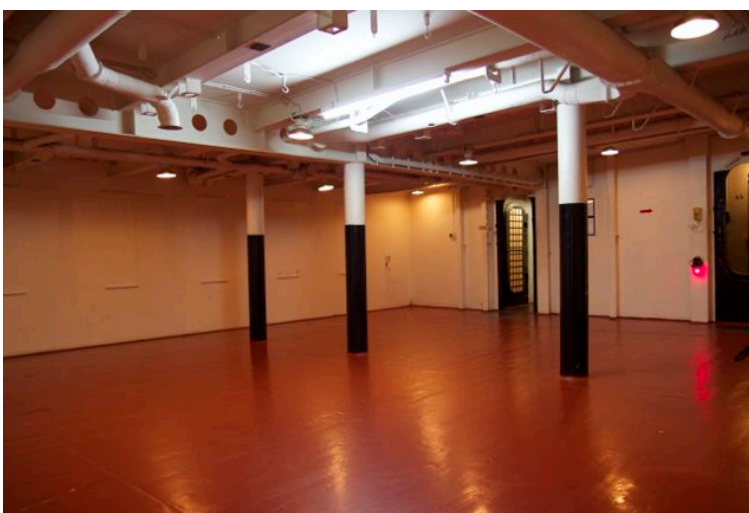


Figure 12: One of the many empty berthing's and compartments available for one or more special exhibits.

Mustang located in the aircraft pavilion, women and minority histories are largely ignored. This space could be used to illuminate African Americans in the Navy, their contributions and the return to the racist south after the war. The same concept can be applied to women's histories. Other exhibits encompassing other aspects of military history would be relevant as well, such as the most successful Civil War raider *CSS Alabama* and its famous Captain Raphael Sims. The special exhibit space would also provide the opportunity to evaluate the success of the temporary exhibits for conversion into permanent exhibits. The tour of the *Alabama* would culminate at the crewmen's memorial, giving the visitors the opportunity to find their sailor among the list of sailors who served aboard the *Alabama*.



Figure 13: *Alabama*'s crewmen memorial, the proposed ending point on the new tour.

As the park's greatest asset, the *Alabama* provides many unique opportunities for programming in addition to those already discussed. Current *Alabama* specific programming is relegated to overnight sleepovers solely available to Scout groups. To again gain inspiration from the *North Carolina* there is a bevy of education opportunities for both the young and old aboard the *Alabama*. Just as with the park programming recommendations, additional staff and volunteers will be necessary aboard the *Alabama*. One of the greatest ideas gleaned from the *North Carolina* is Battleship Alive, where history becomes real aboard the ship by way of period actors, it can be rather straightforwardly reproduced aboard the *Alabama*, making an immediate impact. Behind the scenes tours and programs led by staff and knowledgeable volunteers at an additional cost would help with funding. Tours would take visitors to sections of the ship not currently accessible to the general public. Programming would be in-depth and seek to educate visitors on technologies and ship systems, then give them the opportunity for hands-on experiences. For example, a day program could focus on *Alabama's* propulsion system. The program would be led by staff or ideally, an experienced naval veteran, the day would consist of lectures, culminating in a behind the scenes, hands-on examination of the ship's propulsion systems. Obviously, the target group for such a program is very specific, as such they would be required to preregister and age limits would be enforced. The main deck of the *Alabama* is handicap accessible, allowing for the creation of a guided tour that takes the visitors around the main deck and then a discussion allowing for a question and answer period. As new programs are introduced, they will be evaluated and if deemed successful will be added to the rotation of available programs. The key is to find what works and provide variety to appeal to as many potential visitors as possible.

As part of the overall interpretation of the *Alabama*, it is important to return the ship to the most accurate state possible. Much like one would with an historic structure, the decision must be made as to what period of history is portrayed. Typically the period selected is that of the greatest significance, for the *Alabama* it is her World War II service. In the case of historic structures, additions to the structure over time also become significant, making it difficult, if not impossible to interpret a specific period. As the *Alabama* remains her integrity from World War II, with only minor alterations, it is easy to determine what period can be interpreted. As such, she should be returned to the state at which she was during the war. While the ship must remain accessible to the general public, certain changes can be made. The first of which is the ship's paint scheme. Currently, the *Alabama* is coated in her peacetime grey, but during her time in service she was painted with a unique camouflage scheme. Already in dire need of new paint, it would be possible to repaint her in her wartime shades of blue, white and grey. In addition to her paint, the reconnaissance plane, an OSU2 Kingfisher seaplane should again sit upon its catapult at the fantail. The aircraft is currently located inside the aircraft pavilion; the interpretation of the aircraft and ship would be enhanced greatly by the move. Though seemingly inconsequential, tables and chairs used during special events litter the deck. They can easily be relocated out of site to help perpetuate the idea that the mighty *Alabama* could at any point weigh her anchors and sail off into battle.

*USS Drum:*

1. Change access point to the submarine to *Alabama* from the aircraft pavilion;
2. The addition of museum space prior to entering the submarine to provide context and make use of the *Hunley*, and
3. Interpretation possibilities onboard the *Drum*.

The natural progression of the park's narrative dictates that the *Drum* should be viewed immediately following the tour of the *Alabama*, being that both are veterans of World War II and their histories intersect. Currently access to the *Drum* is gained through the Aircraft pavilion, interrupting the natural flow of the tour. Just after disembarking the battleship on the way to the aircraft pavilion, to the left are several granite memorials dedicated to the World War II

submarine service, on the right is the entrance to the pavilion. If you continue to the left along the seawall, you come to the backside of the *Drum*. If the submarine memorials are also taken into



account it makes more sense to follow the seawall to the submarine. Only half of the proposed path is paved, to finish the path, the defunct brick program, where visitors can purchase a personalized brick in memoriam, can be reinstated.

Above-Figure 14: The *USS Drum*, located behind the MoH Pavilion.  
Below-Figure 15: The *Hunley* replica, lacking any interpretive signage.



Due to the tight quarters on board the submarine, the current interpretation of the *Drum* is satisfactory. Much like the *Alabama* there is no context provided. Making matters worse is the placement of the Civil War submarine replica, the *H.L. Hunley* located adjacent to the *Drum*, devoid of any interpretive signage. The average visitor will have no idea what the *Hunley* is and why it is significant. Following the previously suggested path along the seawall around the pavilion, there is space prior to reaching the submarine available for the construction of an exhibit hall. In order to keep costs down, the structure will not be overly large, possibly constructed out of prefabricated materials, for example a Nissen hut, its very shape hurricane resilient. The newly constructed exhibit space will provide an introduction to the history of militarized submersibles in America, beginning with the Revolutionary War leading to World War II and the diesel submarine. Special attention will be given to the Civil War and the *Hunley*, due to the significance of the conflict and construction location of Mobile. Upon leaving the submarine museum, the visitor will have a greater understanding of the history of submarines, their technologies and

the brave men that  
serve onboard them.

For the same  
reasons that necessitate  
the addition of an  
exhibit space, it is  
difficult to add to the  
interpretation already  
aboard the submarine,

Figure 16: View of proposed new path to the *Drum* along the seawall.



which currently consists of signage. The submarine itself is quite effective in conveying what it was like to serve aboard a diesel submarine. Every aspect of the submarine is viewable, giving the visitor a first hand account of the cramped quarters afforded to the 72 men that served aboard her. The easiest and most effective strategy would be the addition of recorded oral histories located on screens throughout the submarine, that being said space is at such a premium that a visitor stopping to watch the screen or read an account would hold up everyone else on board. As such, the interpretation should be left in the proposed exhibit space. To combat congestion, visitors should only be allowed onboard in 10-15 person intervals, so that everyone has the ability to take their time and explore every nook and cranny; though a great number of visitors on board at one time would accurately portray the cramped lifestyle of a submariner.

*Medal of Honor Pavilion:*

1. Organize resources by period of significance and tie into park's narrative.

The Medal of Honor Pavilion serves to honor Alabama's 29 Medal of Honor recipients and 9,583 citizens who have perished in the service of their country since World War I.<sup>47</sup> If not for the title, the visitor would never know the pavilion served any purpose other than to house multiple aircraft and other vehicles. As mentioned previously, it's as if the resources are simply on site because they were available,

not because they are important to the site's narrative. Even though the encompassing theme of the park is the fact that it serves as a memorial park, it is hard to justify the addition of the resources in

Figure 17: Interior of MoH Pavilion.



this building. Aside from the two World War II era aircraft on display, the pavilion's resources in their current configuration do not fit into the narrative presented thus far. In order to tie the pavilion and its resources into the park's narrative as a memorial in actuality, not just name, the entirety of the building must be redesigned. The men and women whose names are hidden on the back wall of the pavilion should be the focal point of interpretation, the resources should tell the story of the brave Alabamians, just as the *Alabama* and *Drum* tell the story of their sailors. Currently, the 11 aircraft, 2 helicopters, 2 vehicles and 1 boat are not organized in any recognizable pattern. For example, a jet-powered aircraft still in use today sits next to a prop-driven aircraft from World War II. Starting from scratch, the plaques honoring the Medal of Honor recipients and the names of those who perished should be removed from their place hidden on the back wall of the pavilion. Next the resources should be arranged sequentially from



Figure 18: Example of interpretive signage, notice the absence of uniformity.

their period of significance, beginning in World War II and ending with the aircraft still in use. The resources would retain their interpretive signage, which include oral histories, technical

information and useful facts, though it would be beneficial to revise the displays to create a unified presentation. Lastly, each period of significance would be defined by the Alabamians that

served and died in each conflict, their name at the beginning of each section combined with contextual information on the period in question. In this way, the pavilion truly serves as a memorial, with those who sacrificed at the forefront and the resources there to serve as story pieces.

*Remaining Resources:*

As mentioned previously, the remaining aircraft and vehicles strewn throughout the park create several difficulties. They can be arranged just as the resources in the pavilion, sequentially based upon period of significance, with each period clearly defined through interpretive signage. Information explaining the resource and its technologies would also be included within the interpretive plan. However, even after the reorganization, it would still be difficult to fit the resources into the overall narrative, as they are not tied to any memorial. The best plan of action would be to establish the newly organized resources into a new memorial, such as a memorial to



Figure 19: View of vehicles from the *Alabama*, notice large open area in background currently not in use.

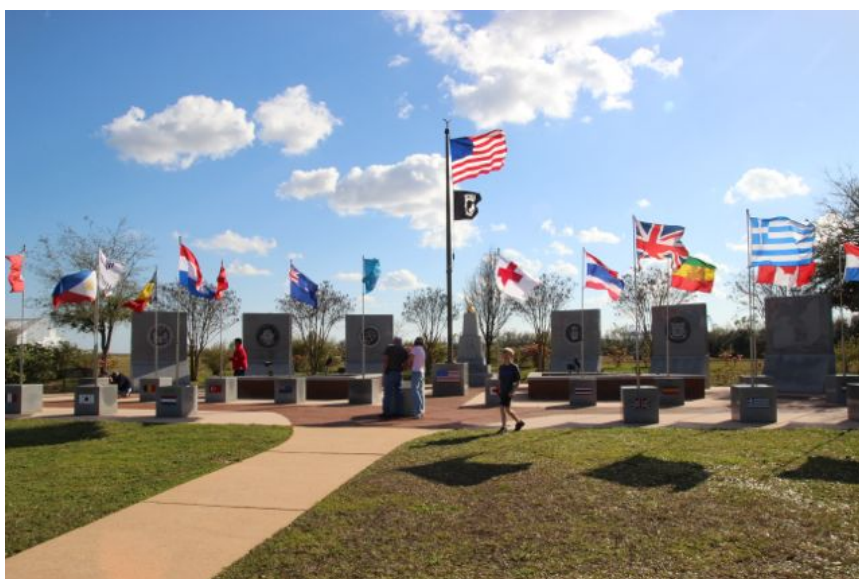
Alabamians who served in the mobile infantry or another related field. Better yet, a corporate sponsor could be located to create a memorial, which would also solve the issue of funding for preserving the

vehicles. Serious thought should be given to the prospect of returning the vehicles to their owners for proper preservation. The two independent Vietnam and Korean memorials fit very well into the park's narrative. Additionally, they are very well maintained and once included in the park tour guide, will see better visitation.

### ***Funding***

As has been painfully evident throughout this exercise, Battleship

Memorial Park is woefully underfunded. Due mostly to its status as a nonprofit and the considerable costs in maintaining the vast number of resources currently on display, the park has to find other sources of income. The current combination of entry fees and donations is not generating the necessary capital, as such the information taken from the sites examined as case studies are also useful in this application. New programming previously discussed would also



Above-Figure 20: Vietnam War Memorial. Below- Figure 21: Korean War Memorial

serve to raise funding and awareness. The park also offers a membership program, with each level of membership offering a select set of incentives.

Battleship Memorial Park currently rents out sections of the battleship and the pavilion for special events and military reunions. While the concept does help generate additional money, the park has no control over when they are rented out, as such special events need to be planned and held by the park. A Fourth of July fireworks display is the only special event regularly held by the park. There have previously been other events to raise funding, like a marathon, one of which is currently still held each year at the *North Carolina*. The park itself has plenty of space to allow for numerous events ranging from concerts to drive-in movies. Even something as small as car or trade shows in the park's expansive open field would serve to gain publicity, foot traffic and gather the attention of people who would usually have no interest in visiting the park.

In the past, BMP has undergone capital funding campaigns to fund major projects, like the installation of the cofferdam system and repairs to the hull. The current needs of the *Alabama* warrant the creation of another capital campaign, with corporate partnerships providing the majority of funds. Additionally, the park can add corporate sponsors by selling the naming rights to various sections around the park, like the proposed vehicle park or the pavilion, for example, The Medal of Honor Pavilion presented by Alabama Power. Some might say selling naming rights would be insensitive, I would argue that it would ensure that the memories of brave Alabamians are closer to being preserved for the future. Endowments to provide for the future of the site should be sought from affluent donors. It is also important to appeal to the average citizen who cannot afford to make major contributions or leave endowments; the previously mentioned brick and membership programs meet those needs.

Collaboration with the State and local businesses would also help to generate additional funding and visitation. The *North Carolina* now has a specialty plate available through the state of North Carolina, with \$20 contributed to the site for every plate purchased.<sup>48</sup> BMP's operational structure is set up similarly to the *North Carolina*, making it possible to also acquire the rights to a license plate. The park should also attempt to collaborate with similar businesses to create visitor packages. The Gulf Coast Exploreum, a science center in downtown Mobile would make an excellent choice. Visitors at either site could purchase entry into both for a discounted price. For the military tourist, a package that includes the access to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans and the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola and BMP would be desirable.

The aforementioned funding ideas are just a select few that if pursued, could really make a difference in funding at BMP. With additional funding, more staff could be hired to fulfill many of the previously discussed ideas. The proposed overhaul of the park's interpretation and education strategies would serve to create a better visitor experience, generating new and repeat visitors. A thorough preservation strategy could then be implemented to allow for the continued preservation of the park's resources. Currently it is not feasible to create such a plan, especially when it would be more cost effective, not to mention better for the park's major resources, to return or mothball many of the smaller vehicle.

## Conclusion

Through its unparalleled collection of historic military resources, Battleship Memorial Park provides an experience that connects the visitor to the past in a very distinctive way. Immediately upon entering the park, the visitor is greeted by the *USS Alabama* and the *USS Drum* as well as a bevy of other military aircraft and vehicles. It is not these relics from a time gone past that make the park unique, rather it is the story or narrative in which they play a supporting role. It is not to say they are not important, but if not for the men who served on and in them, they would simply be empty pieces of steel. It is the history of those men that brings the narrative to life at Battleship Memorial Park. Each resource serves as a memorial to the brave men and women of Alabama who fought and died for the freedoms America holds dear. The *Alabama* and *Drum* also function as memorials to their numerous crewmen, who served aboard the vessels during World War II.

The park does many things well, but as this exercise revealed, there is always room for improvement. Many issues plague the park especially with regards to the interpretation of their resources and funding. The park's resources, the *Alabama* in particular, are in need of maintenance and in some cases extensive restoration. This examination focuses upon interpretation strategies and funding issues, a survey of the park's preservation procedures is also needed, but it would require an entire study in and of itself. While a wholesale preservation plan would be difficult at this juncture; the aforementioned recommendations can be the starting point. It is my hope that the analysis of the park will help to alleviate some of the funding complications through providing an improved visitor experience, through which park visitation will increase and conversely, so will funding. Though my recommendations are listed in what I feel is most to least cost effective, I am aware that I do not fully understand exactly what the park

can and cannot afford. It is up to the staff at Battleship Memorial Park to review my recommendations and adopt those that are not only affordable, but also what they feel fits into their overall direction for the park.

The resources on display at Battleship Memorial Park are significant not just to the people of Alabama, but the nation as a whole. As such it is imperative that they be maintained and their histories and that of their sailors be accurately portrayed. It is up to us as Americans to provide the guardians of our national histories with as much help as possible, both monetarily and in making sure they continue to honor our forebears. From time to time it is imperative that we question the job that they are doing, not out of malice, but in the endeavor to always better ourselves. For if we do not maintain a record of our past, it is very possible that it may be forgotten. If there is any one relic of that past that can remain as an unwavering reminder, it is the battleship.



Figure 22: View of the *Alabama* from the bow.

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