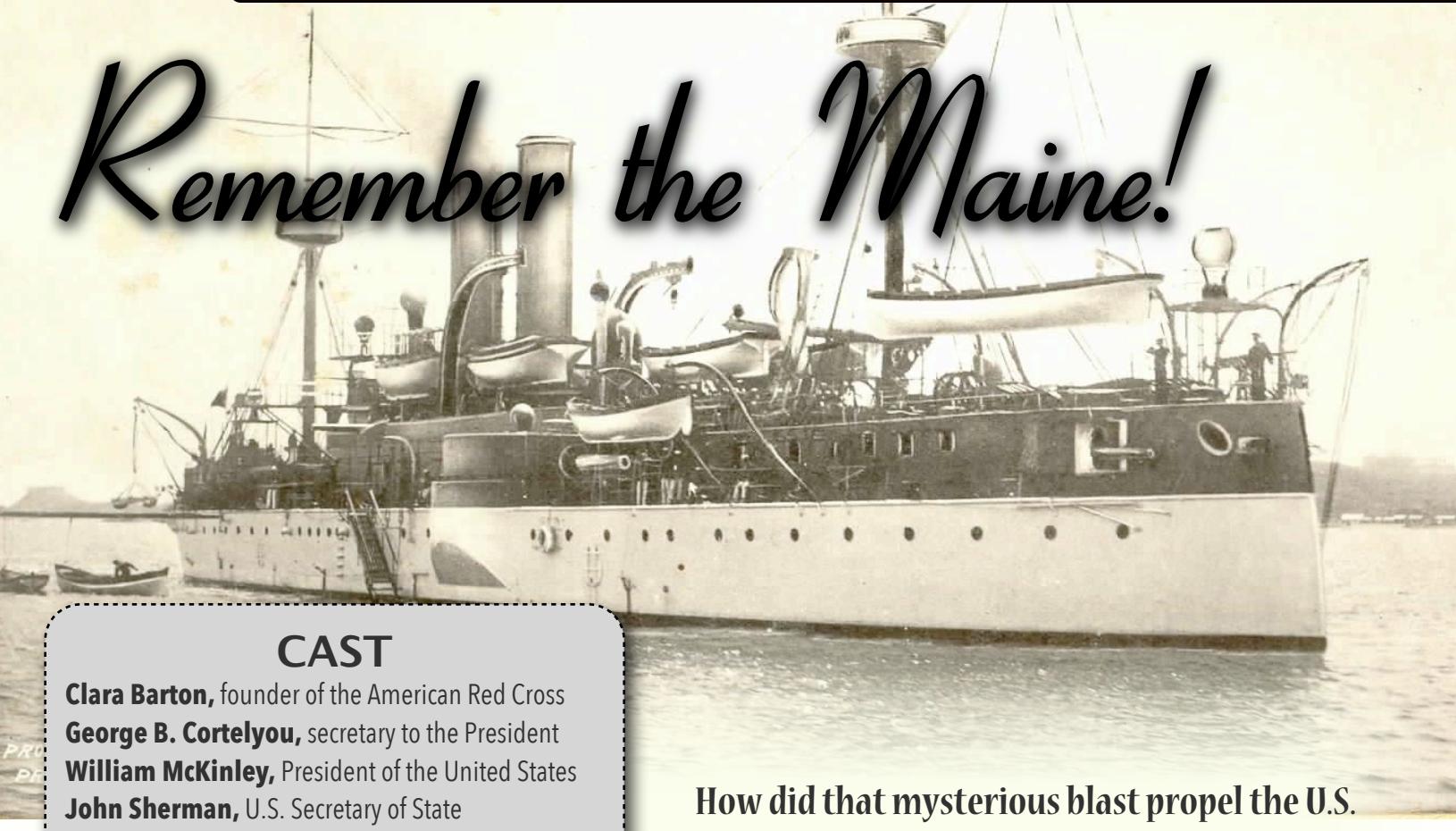


# Remember the Maine!



## CAST

**Clara Barton**, founder of the American Red Cross

**George B. Cortelyou**, secretary to the President

**William McKinley**, President of the United States

**John Sherman**, U.S. Secretary of State

\***Richard Briggs**, U.S. Navy seaman

\***Mark Daniels**, U.S. Navy gunner's mate

**Richard Wainwright**, lieutenant-commander and executive officer of the Maine

**Charles Dwight Sigsbee**, captain of the Maine

**John Hood**, lieutenant on the Maine

**John Blandin**, lieutenant on the Maine

**George Blow**, lieutenant on the Maine

**Friend Jenkins**, Naval Intelligence lieutenant assigned to the Maine

\***Robert Malone**, U.S. Navy seaman

\***Davis Jackson**, U.S. Navy petty officer

**Voices**, from a boat

\***Harry Brown**, U.S. Navy seaman

**William Anthony**, U.S. Marine Corps private

**John Lane**, editor of the New York Journal

**William Randolph Hearst**, publisher of the New York Journal

\***Narrators A-E**

\*Fictional character; all others were real people.

## How did that mysterious blast propel the U.S. into war with Spain?

From 1492 until the late 1890s, Cuba was ruled by Spain. Spanish rule was often harsh, and there were several revolts.

In 1895, another revolt broke out and, this time, Americans took notice of it. Several U.S. newspapers, including the New York Journal and the New York World, sent reporters to Cuba. The papers' owners played up the violence there, hoping to sell more papers. Among their readers, sympathy grew for the Cubans who were rebelling against Spanish rule.

In Cuba, Spanish Governor General Valeriano Weyler gave reporters much to write about. Hoping to deprive the rebels of support from the people, Weyler had men, women, and children rounded up from the countryside and put in camps. Conditions in those camps were terrible: Thousands of people died of starvation and disease. By 1897, many Americans wanted Cuba free of Spanish rule, even if it meant sending in U.S. troops to fight. President William McKinley, however, hoped to avoid war.

## Scene One

**Narrator A:** On a warm day in July, 1897, an elderly woman enters the White House. She approaches George Cortelyou, the President's secretary.

**Clara Barton:** Young man, would you kindly tell President McKinley that Clara Barton wishes to see him?

**George B. Cortelyou:** I'm sorry, Miss Barton, but the President is meeting with the Secretary of State.

**Narrator A:** Just then, a door opens and two men come through it.

**President William McKinley:** Miss Barton! I thought I heard your voice.

**Barton:** Mr. President, I've come to talk about the terrible suffering of women and children in Cuba. We must take some action to save people there.

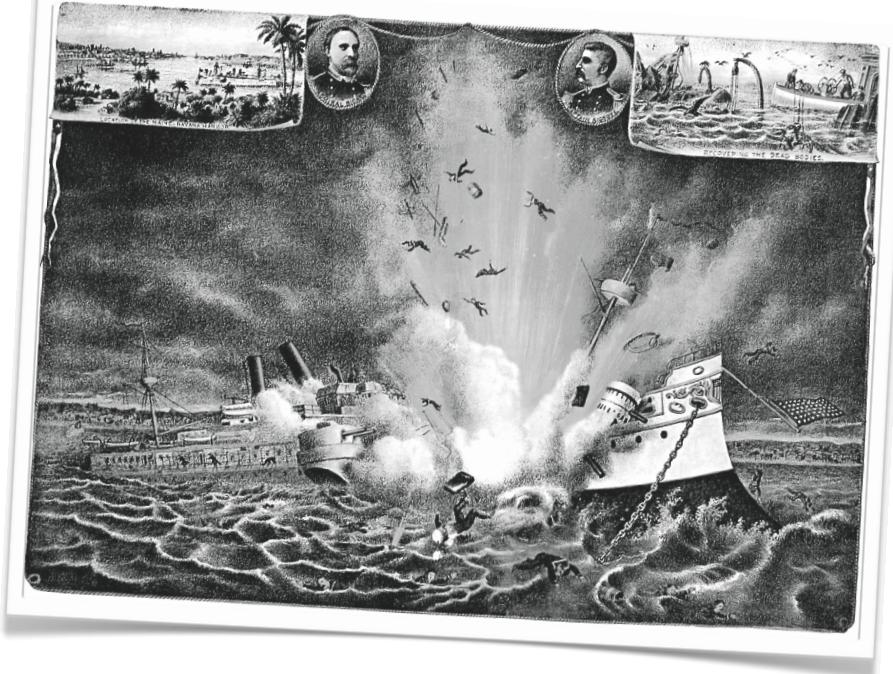
**McKinley:** You are right — the people in the camps need help. But at the same time, I want to avoid war. Spain has agreed to pull Weyler out of office and to offer Cuba some home rule. But I'm afraid that may not be enough to satisfy the American public.

**John Shopman:** As you know, our leading newspapers have been fiercely anti-Spanish. As a result, Spanish officials are upset and likely to refuse help from our government.

**McKinley:** But they might allow your American Red Cross to help the people in those camps. You and your organization are well known and respected.

**Sherman:** If you were to take aid to Cuba, the Spanish officials there could not turn you down.

**Barton:** I'm an old woman. But it may be the best way to get food and medicine to suffering Cubans.



## Sherman:

It may also prevent a war.

**McKinley:** Members of Congress and U.S. newspapers are spoiling for a fight. If you can help the Cubans, and we can convince Spain to change its policies, we may cool this war fever.

**Barton:** Of course I'll go!

## Scene Two

**Narrator B:** Riots break out in Cuba, so McKinley decides to send the battleship Maine there to protect American lives. The ship pulls into the harbor on January 25, 1898, with its crew at battle stations.

**Richard Briggs** (looking at the Spanish coastal guns): Do you think they'll fire? Or attack after we've anchored?

**Mark Daniels:** Don't be stupid. Those Spaniards don't want to fight the U.S. We'd squash them.

**Narrator B:** Once the Maine is safely anchored, Captain Charles Dwight Sigsbee goes ashore to pay his respects to Spanish officials. When he returns, he meets with his officers.

**Richard Wainwright:** How did it go, sir?

**Charles Dwight Sigsbee:** They were polite, but not very welcoming.

**John Hood:** So there is nothing to worry about, sir?

**Sigsbee:** I wouldn't say that. We might be attacked by Spanish hotheads.

**John Blandin:** What would be the greatest threat?

**Sigsbee:** Mines, Mr. Blandin, mines! How can we deal with this threat?

**George Blow:** At night, we can mount an armed quarter watch — one out of every four men — on deck, sir. We can also have boats patrol around the ship at irregular intervals, to make sure no enemy can get too close.

**Sigsbee:** What does Naval Intelligence have to say, Jenkins?

**Friend Jenkins:** We have some friendly contacts ashore. They'll tell us if anyone tries to place mines anywhere near the Maine.

**Blandin:** Will there be shore leave for the men, sir?

**Sigsbee:** No. They might be waylaid or drawn into fights. Officers may go ashore on official business only.

### Scene Three

**Narrator C:** After a few weeks in Havana harbor, the Maine's crew is restless. On Sunday, February 13, three of the men are standing watch.

**Robert Malone:** This place stinks. No shore leave! All we get is guard duty.

**Davis Jackson:** Hush! Here comes our cheering section.

**Narrator C:** A small boat approaches, packed with young men who are shouting and waving Spanish flags.

**Voices (from the boat):** Death to the Yankee pigs! Death to the Yankee pigs! Death to the Yankee pigs!

**Malone (gripping his rifle tighter):** I'll give them death if they get too close.

**Jackson:** At ease, Malone. They're just trying to rattle our chains.

**Harry Brown:** I thought that Cubans were supposed to like us.

**Jackson:** Most Cubans do like us. Those yahoos are Spaniards.

**Brown:** My folks' letters tell me what papers back home are saying. From their end, it looks like war any day. Malone: Come on, how bad can it be? Hey, here comes the captain's boat, bringing Clara Barton for lunch. Brown: Clara Barton? She's the "angel of mercy" who saved my grandpa's life when he was wounded fighting in the Civil War!

**Jackson:** She nursed my uncle, too — and he fought on the other side. Narrator C: At lunch, Barton tells Sigsbee how the Red Cross is reducing death and suffering in the camps. Some Spanish officials, she says, are very helpful. This reassures Sigsbee, who believes that the Maine is out of danger.

### Scene Four

**Narrator D:** Two days later, February 15, Sigsbee is in his cabin writing letters home, when a great explosion rocks the ship. The electric lights go out. Sigsbee is deafened and slammed to the floor. A second explosion sends bits of metal and wood raining down on him. Smoke billows into the cabin. He gropes his way to a passage, where he bumps into Private Anthony.



**William Anthony:** Is that you Captain Sigsbee, sir? We're sinking!

**Sigsbee:** Let's get to the main deck!

**Narrator D:** Once on the main deck, they see a scene of great destruction. One of the ship's two big smokestacks is in the water. Flames are roaring out of the central part of the ship, and water is gushing over the foredeck. They scramble up to the poop deck, where they find some other crew members.

**Sigsbee:** Where's Wainwright?

**Blandin:** Checking on the damage, sir! Here he comes.

**Wainwright:** It's bad! The forward crew quarters are under water. The pumps and fire-fighting equipment won't work. But we've got most of the wounded in lifeboats on the water.

**Blow:** Help is on the way from a Spanish cruiser and a passenger ship, the City of Washington.

**Sigsbee:** Abandon ship! Now!

**Blandin:** Aren't you coming, sir?

**Sigsbee:** No! While any part of the poop is above water, my place is here.

**Wainwright:** But sir! Any second now, the flames will reach our ammunition stores. When that happens, this ship will blow sky high!

**Sigsbee:** Go!

**Narrator D:** Sigsbee and his dog are the last to leave. A rowboat from the City of Washington picks them up. Sigsbee sends a cable to John Davis Long, Secretary of the Navy: "Maine destroyed ...

probably by mine, perhaps by accident." Explosions rock Havana harbor all night long.

## Scene Five

**Narrator E:** The next evening, the phone rings in the offices of the New York Journal newspaper.

**John Lane (grabbing the phone):** Hello?

**William Randolph Hearst** (on the other end of the line): I just got home and found a message to call you immediately. What's wrong?

**Lane:** The U.S. battleship Maine has exploded in Havana harbor.

**Hearst:** Good heavens! Where have you put the story?

**Lane:** On the front page, along with the other big stories of the day.

**Hearst:** There is no other big story! Hold the presses. I'm coming to write it myself. This means war!

**Narrator E:** Hearst rushes over to the Journal office.

**Hearst:** Okay, here's our headline: "*THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WARSHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY.*"

**Lane:** Mr. Hearst, we can't say that!

**Hearst:** Why can't we?

**Lane:** Because we don't know what caused the explosion. Some people say that it could have been an accident. Think about it: the last thing the Spaniards want is war.

**Hearst:** Balderdash! Once our paper comes out, every red-blooded American will blame Spain. This will sell a lot of newspapers.

Spain's defeat brought about the end of its empire. In the peace treaty, Spain gave Cuba its freedom. U.S. forces withdrew in 1902, but the U.S. still occupies a naval base in Cuba at Guantánamo (gwan-TAHnuh-moe) Bay.

Spain ceded (gave ownership) of the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island to the U.S. The Philippines is now independent, but Puerto Rico, Guam, and Wake Island remain U.S. possessions. Many Americans disliked their country's new role as a colonial power, ruling foreign lands. But there was no question that the U.S. had become a world power.

## *Afterword*

Joseph Pulitzer's paper, the New York World, also blamed Spain for the loss of the Maine and the deaths of 266 crewmen. So did many other newspapers. "Remember the Maine!" became a popular rallying cry.

Despite the public outcry, President McKinley opposed war with Spain. The Spanish insisted that an accident on board the Maine had caused the explosion. But when an official report blamed it on a mine, McKinley saw no choice. He asked Congress to declare war; it did so on April 25, 1898.

The Spanish-American War lasted only three months. In the first battle, on May 1, 1898, U.S. Commodore George Dewey led six ships into Manila Bay in the Philippines and destroyed a Spanish fleet of 10 ships. In the war's final battle, on July 3, the U.S. Navy wiped out a Spanish fleet near Santiago de Cuba. U.S. forces landed in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. More soldiers died from bad food, water, and disease than from combat.

## *Your Turn! Think About It*

1. If no one knew what caused the explosion on the Maine, why did the U.S. go to war with Spain?
2. What role did newspapers play in the Spanish-American War?
3. How did the war help make the U.S. a world power?