

HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Navy Day



Beginning in 1923, the central coast celebrated Navy Day with visits by vessels and men of the maritime service. Some undoubtedly remembered the day in 1908 when the Great White Fleet sailed in view along the coast under orders from President Theodore Roosevelt. Some even remembered the 26th president's one-hour visit from five years previous. This time, there was more than seeing the great ships. All were invited aboard!

Between Roosevelt's armada and the more personalized visits, the world had survived the Great War – World War I – and the Spanish Flu pandemic.



TR at sea. Navy Day was celebrated on Roosevelt's birthday, October 27th

Both accounted for untold millions of casualties. It all translated into the Roaring Twenties; an optimism for the future including an annual spectacle along our western horizon.

Navy Day was born in 1922 and observed on Roosevelt's birthday of October 27. While boatloads of civilians came aboard, the enlisted men – referred to as “gobs” - enjoyed local hospitality while officers were feted by the community as disarmament occupied the military dialogue.



Two navy ships, including the USS Ward (L) docked at Port San Luis c. 1920. Learn more about the Ward's heroic service [on our website](#).

Many living in the bucolic isolation of the central coast were most impressed by the educated elegance of the officers and the interaction with those under their command. Each year, the visits became an unofficial local holiday.

However, soon there was a spiral of despair with the Great Depression, world turmoil and the relentless destruction of World War II. Remembering December 7, 1941 at Pearl Harbor, the Navy would rise as a military phoenix in some of the greatest sea battles of history.

We are immensely grateful to Joe Carotenuti for writing this article. You can read more about Joe's research on Navy Day in the October 2020 edition of the Central Coast Journal, found online at www.centralcoastjournal.com

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For information or to register, [click here](#).

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TK".

Thomas Kessler
Executive Director

