

## Tour Outline

### ***Healthcare Aboard USS Olympia: 1895 - 1922***

By Erika Acuña

#### **Abstract:**

This tour of USS *Olympia* explores her role as a U.S. Navy warship during a period of modernization and overseas expansion, highlighting medicine as a tool for sustaining naval strength. Beginning with an overview of *Olympia*'s history and the broader context of naval growth and medical professionalization, the tour traces the challenges unique to steamships and the evolving roles of medical staff. Stops 2-4 discuss the transformation of naval medicine at the turn of the century, including germ theory, anesthesia, aseptic surgery, treatment of heat-related illness, the transition from miasma theory to germ theory and the continued importance of preventive medicine during this transition. Tropical medicine as a new discipline arising in the 1890s is discussed, its attraction for Navy physicians, its discoveries and developments, as well as its complicated legacy. Subsequent stops discuss common illnesses, injuries and treatments, the ship's dispensary and surgical tools, crew facilities, and the sick bay where diseases such as typhus were managed. The tour concludes in the galley, with a discussion of advances in food science, nutrition, ration reform and the importance of exercise. Together these topics present *Olympia* as a microcosm of Progressive era naval medicine, demonstrating how science, public health, and hygiene were essential to sustaining America's expanding naval power.

#### **Stop 1: Senior Officer's Staterooms**

1. Background
  - *Olympia*'s service history
  - Progressive Era impact
  - New Navy growth
  - Shipboard medical challenges
  - Tropical disease and public health
  - Public health and support of military personnel abroad
  - Medical personnel on ships
  
2. Key changes throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century

3. Medical staff on USS *Olympia*
4. Medical officers duties and pay
5. Enlisted medical personnel

## **Stop 2: Senior Officer's Wardroom**

1. Major advancement in medicine at the turn of the century
2. Germ theory, safer surgeries, improved mitigation of the spread of disease, improved diagnostics, vaccination, fumigation protocols
3. Wardroom table used for surgery
4. Preparation for surgery
5. Administration of anesthesia
6. Amputation tools
7. Operation process

## **Stop 3: Engine Room Hatch**

1. Steam technology and heat-related illness
2. Heat exhaustion case on USS *Olympia*

## **Stop 4: Crew's Quarters**

1. Miasma to microbes
2. Influential figures of naval hygiene
3. Preventive innovation
4. Military culture
5. Ventilation on ships
6. Rise of laboratory science in addressing public health
7. Cleanliness at sea
8. Swabbing the deck
9. Disinfection methods

## **Stop 5: Crew's Quarters to Scuttlebutt**

1. Water distillation
2. Bathing
3. Waterborne illnesses
4. Tropical medicine
5. Common injuries and treatments

## **Stop 6: Dispensary**

1. Standardization of drugs in the Navy
2. Ships pharmacy
3. Medicines

### **Stop 7: Surgery**

1. Antiseptics to aseptics
2. Tools in the surgery

### **Stop 8 Crew's Head/Laundry**

1. Crew's head (water closet)
2. Laundry

### **Stop 9 Sick Bay**

1. Description of sick bay
2. Smallpox
3. Typhus

### **Stop 10 Galley**

1. Food science and nutrition
2. Advances in food preparation
3. Navy rations and reforms
4. 1902 daily ration
5. Exercise

### **Sources:**

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