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USS *Monitor*'s Turret Tank Drained for the First Time in Years

The Drained Tank Provides Rare Opportunity to View the Turret Up Close

NEWPORT NEWS, Va — The tank that holds the iconic revolving gun turret from the ironclad warship USS *Monitor* is drained for the first time since 2019 while undergoing conservation at [The Mariners' Museum and Park](#). The tank will remain drained through the first week in March so that Mariners' conservators can assess the progress of its treatment. The turret is typically underwater, and the public's ability to see it is limited. However, through March 8, visitors will have a rare opportunity to get an unobstructed, close-up view of the historical artifact.

Monitor's turret has been an object of intrigue for decades. The first of its kind to be used in combat, the 115-ton revolving gun turret represents a major technological advancement that changed the course of naval warfare. The turret spent nearly 140 years on the ocean floor after the ironclad tragically sank in an 1862 storm off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

The warship's wreckage was discovered in 1973 and designated as the nation's first National Marine Sanctuary in 1975 under the management of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In 1987, The Mariners' Museum and Park was selected by NOAA to be the principal repository for recovered USS *Monitor*-related materials, establishing what has become an incredible 38-year partnership.

The turret was raised from the Atlantic Ocean in August 2002, through the collective expertise of divers, archaeologists, engineers, the US Navy, NOAA, Mariners' personnel, and countless others. Once recovered, the massive artifact was transferred to The Mariners' via barge, launching a conservation journey that continues today.

The primary goal of the conservation treatment is to remove corrosion-inducing ocean salts before the artifact can be dried and put on display. To achieve this, the turret is submerged in 90,000 gallons of an alkaline solution. Periodically, this solution needs to be changed; a multi-step process that results in the addition of 7,500 pounds of sodium hydroxide to the tank.

Presently, while the turret tank is empty of solution, The Mariners' Conservation Team is visually inspecting the massive artifact to evaluate its treatment progress. The draining also presents an opportunity to advance the planning process for flipping the turret, which is expected to take place in the future. The turret has been upside down since its discovery.

Mariners' Director of Conservation Will Hoffman is deeply affected by his involvement in the turret's conservation: "Every time we drain the tank, the turret remains as impressive as the first time I saw it! To be able to see its scale and know the impact that it had on world history makes being part of its conservation and preservation both extremely rewarding and humbling."

The best time to see the drained turret tank will be during The Mariners' annual [Battle of Hampton Roads Commemoration Day](#) on **March 8 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** The tank will remain empty during the event, and the Museum will hold a Wet Lab Open House for visitors to see the turret up close before it is submerged again. The draining coincides with the 50th anniversary of the *Monitor* wreckage site's designation as a National Marine Sanctuary.

Media interested in interviews about USS *Monitor* conservation should contact Senior Director of Advancement Sabrina Y. Jones at sjones@MarinersMuseum.org.

The Mariners' Museum and Park connects people to the world's waters because through the water – through our shared maritime heritage – we are connected to one another. The organization is an educational, private 501(c)(3) nonprofit institution accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and preserves and interprets maritime history through an international collection of ship models, figureheads, paintings, and other maritime artifacts. The Mariners' Museum® is home to the USS *Monitor* Center, and is surrounded by the 550-acre Mariners' Park, the largest privately owned and maintained park that is free and open to the public in North America. The Mariners' Museum Library is the largest maritime library in the Western hemisphere. Because of the Museum's world-class collection and its reputation for high-level exhibits and programs, in 1998, the U.S. Congress designated The Mariners' Museum as one of only two maritime museums that comprise America's National Maritime Museum. The Museum galleries are open to the general public with \$1 admission, and the Mariners' team will continue to offer FREE virtual programs for those who prefer to engage online with us or through our social media platforms and blog posts. The Mariners' Park and Noland Trail is open for daily use. For additional information, visit MarinersMuseum.org, call (757) 596-2222 or write to The Mariners' Museum, 100 Museum Drive, Newport News, VA 23606.

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