

## Ensign Worth Bagley <sup>[1]</sup>

**Ensign** Worth Bagley, a native of Raleigh, was the only U.S. Navy officer killed in action during the Spanish-American War.

Born in Raleigh in 1874, Bagley graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1895. After serving for two years on the USS *Montgomery*, *Texas*, and *Maine*, he was promoted to ensign on July 1, 1897. In November 1897 he was appointed inspector of the new torpedo boat *Winslow*. A month later he became the *Winslow's* executive officer, or second in command, under Lieutenant J. B. Bernadou.

In April 1898, the *Winslow* was mobilized with the rest of the Atlantic fleet for operations in Cuban waters. On the morning of May 11, the ship went with the *Hudson* and the *Wilmington* to force the entrance to the harbor of Cárdenas. She was fired upon by one of several Spanish gunboats, and a battle followed. The *Winslow* was soon disabled but was hauled out of range of the Spanish guns. Just as the battle ended, Ensign Bagley and four sailors were killed by a shell.

Worth Bagley's brother, David W. Bagley, served in World War I and World War II, retiring in 1947 as an Admiral.

### Worth Bagley remembered

Because he was the only naval officer killed during the war, Worth Bagley received a number of honors.

#### Naval ships

Three ships were named USS *Bagley* in his honor: Torpedo Boat No. 24, Destroyer No. 185, and DD-386. A fourth, DE-1069, was named for both Worth Bagley and his brother.

#### At the Naval Academy

In 1899, a tablet was laid in his honor in the chapel at the U.S. Naval Academy, as this article from the *Baltimore Sun Almanac* noted:

"In the chapel of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, January 22, 1899, a handsome memorial tablet was unveiled to the memory of Ensign Worth Bagley, United States Navy, the gallant <sup>[2]</sup> young officer who was the first to fall in the war with Spain. Lieut. J. B. Bernadou, who himself had a narrow escape in the same engagement, withdrew the curtain from the tablet.

"The tablet is of brass, and has a backing of antique oak. The inscriptions and ornamentations are inlaid in brass. Beneath a sword entwined by a palm is the following Inscription:

In Memory of **WORTH BAGLEY**, Ensign United States Navy,  
The First American Officer who Fell In the  
Spanish-American War. Killed on Board the Torpedoboat Winslow  
During the Bombardment at Cardenas,  
May 11, 1898.

"I have fought a good fight. I have  
finished my course. I have kept the  
faith." -- II Timothy, 4:1.

This Tablet is Erected by  
The Officers of the Atlantic Torpedoboat  
Flotilla.1

#### In poetry

Ensign Bagley was honored in at least one poem, as well: "One Country -- One Sacrifice: Ensign Worth Bagley, May 11, 1898," by Richard Watson Gilder:

In one rich drop of blood, ah, what a sea  
Of healing! Thou, sweet boy, wert first to fall  
In our new war; and thou wert southron all!  
There is no North, no South, -- remembering thee.<sup>2</sup>

- 
- <sup>1</sup>. Sun Almanac (Baltimore: A. S. Abell Company, 1899), p. 46.
  - <sup>2</sup>. Richard Watson Gilder, "One Country — One Sacrifice: Ensign Worth Bagley, May 11, 1898," *In Palestine and Other Poems* <sup>[3]</sup> [New York: The Century Co., 1898], p. 88.

**User Tags:**

[history](#) [4]

[military](#) [5]

[North Carolina](#) [6]

[North Carolina History](#) [7]

[Page](#) [8]

[soldiers](#) [9]

[Spanish-American War](#) [10]

[Students](#) [11]

[Teachers](#) [12]

[Creative Commons BY-NC-SA](#) [13]

**From:**

[ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource](#) [14]

**Authors:**

[Walbert, David](#) [15]

**Copyright Date:**

2009

**People:**



[16]

Worth Bagley

**Related Topics:**

[Spanish American War](#) [17]

**Artifacts:**



[18]

This statue of Worth Bagley stands in front of the State Capitol in Raleigh.

3 January 2018 | Walbert, David

---

**Source URL:**<https://ncpedia.org/anchor/ensign-worth-bagley>

**Links**

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/anchor/ensign-worth-bagley> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/glossary/gallant> [3] <https://books.google.com/books?id=V11o0mxds1YC&hl=en> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/military> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-5> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-6> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/page> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/soldiers> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/spanish-0> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/creative-commons> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/anchor-north> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/walbert-david-0> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/bagley-worth> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/spanish-american-war> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/media/statue-worth-bagley-raleigh>