

Remember the Maine

By: Will Johnson

The battle cry for the Spanish American War which started in 1898 was "Remember the Maine".

The United States warship by that name had entered Havana harbor on January 25th, 1898. On February 15th, at 9.40 pm an explosion ripped the Maine apart. Only 88 men out of a complement of 26 officers and 328 sailors and marines had survived. All 22 black sailors on board died among them the star pitcher, William Lambert.

This incident led to the Spanish American War in which the United States ended up with Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines as conquests of war and lingering doubts as to whether the Maine had been sacrificed for political purposes to gain more territory for the United States. The newspapers of the day questioned the official report from the Navy about the sinking of the battleship.

The victims were later buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C.

The Mast of the Maine forms the centerpiece of the monument to the victims of the Maine. On a visit to that former plantation of General Robert E. Lee, I saw the monument. On the monument I saw the name of Charles F. Hassell and took a photo of the section of the monument with that name on it. Interestingly enough the thought crossed my mind: "I wonder if he has any Saba connection?" On my return to Saba I wrote about the trip in my newspaper the "Saba Herald". Some old timers came forward, and told me that he was a brother of Isaac Hassell from "Over-the-Peak" and that he was an uncle of Fred Hassell and Ferius Hassell. Some years later Mr. Lenny Hassell who was married to Nan (Joanna Johnson) sent me documents which he had obtained from the Navy Department. All of these documents were relating to the death of Charles F. Hassell, as well as to the subsequent pension of \$12.- per month which his mother Johannah used to receive from the United States government. The House Over-the-Peak, known as "Isaac's House" was actually built from the money Johannah received when her pension was regulated. In those days a carpenter would build a good size house for \$30.—and for a large wooden house \$120.—Not per day mind you. He built the entire house for that price with his handsaw and hammer. And delivered the house in six weeks.

The report of death contains the following information, which should be of interest to our readers.
Name of deceased: Charles Ferius Hassell.

Born on Saba, July 1st, 1863 (the same day as the emancipation of the slaves. A freedom child, he later lost his life in an event which caused the Spanish-American war). Rank: Gunners Mate, 3rd class. Date of death February 15th, 1898. Place of death: Havana. Cause of death: Asphyxia ex submersion. The document states further: "I hereby certify that Charles F. Hasell, Gunners Mate 3rd class, U.S. Navy, died while attached to the U.S.S. "Maine". Death occurred in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, on the night of February 15th, 1898, as the result of an explosion and the sinking of the U.S.S. "Maine". Record of deceased: Naïve of Saba, West Indies, Age 34 years, 7 months, Height 5 feet 10

THOMAS J. HARTY

COAL PASSER

CHARLES F. BASSELL

UNDECK PAKE, THIRD CLASS

CHARLES HAUCK

LANDSMAN

HOWARD B. HAWKINS

ORDINARY SEAMAN

ALBERT B. HENNEKES

GUNNERS MATE, SECOND CLASS

BENJAMIN H. HERRIMAN

APPRENTICE, FIRST CLASS

ALFRED J. HOLLAND

CORPORAL

GUSTAV HOLM

BOATSWAIN'S MATE, SECOND CLASS

FREDERICK C. HOLZER

ORDINARY SEAMAN

WILLIAM J. HORN

FIREMAN, FIRST CLASS

