



Memorial to Broadus West and the artifact from the USS Arizona

On December 7, 1941, Broadus West of Simpsonville, South Carolina, lost his life aboard the USS Arizona during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Born and raised in Simpsonville, West's life embodied the values of service and selflessness. In 1937, he enlisted in the United States Army as an infantry private, serving at Schofield Barracks in Honolulu. After completing his service in 1939, he returned home, only to re-enlist in the United States Navy on February 8, 1940. He was assigned to the USS Arizona.

West's military service

West's decision to rejoin the military was not made lightly. It was a critical period in history. The Axis powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—were advancing their aggressive campaigns, and the United States had begun supporting Britain through the Lend-Lease program. West deliberately and with purpose put his life on the line. The escalating conflict underscored the importance of his choice to serve, demonstrating his bravery and commitment to protecting his nation.

The date that will live in infamy

Tragically, on that fateful Sunday morning, the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor claimed over 2,400 American lives, including 1,171 sailors and marines aboard the Arizona. Broadus West was just 25 years old.

At the time of the attack, Simpsonville was a small textile town, with most residents working at Woodside Mill on Curtis Street. News of the attack reached the mainland quickly via radio bulletins and wire services, profoundly impacting the community. The West family received the devastating news while attending church at Simpsonville First Baptist. This loss was not the only contribution of the West family to the war effort; all three of Broadus's brothers also served in World War II, representing the Navy, Army, and Air Force.

Broadus West's remains were never recovered from the sunken USS Arizona. To honor his memory, his family erected a cenotaph in Simpsonville Cemetery. This marker, created before the Arizona became a central symbol of the Pearl Harbor



attack, does not mention the battleship. Years later, the Arizona Memorial was established, offering a poignant site of remembrance.

About the USS Arizona

The USS Arizona was commissioned in 1916. It served in the Atlantic Fleet but served stateside for the remainder of World War I. It later escorted President Woodrow Wilson to the Paris Peace Talks. Eventually transferred to the Pacific Fleet, the battleship became part of the buildup responding to the threat of World War II.

Eight battleships were heavily damaged during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Four of them were sunk. All but the Arizona were raised and two returned to the fleet and saw action. Some portions from the *Arizona* were salvaged and repurposed during World War II, such as turrets and guns, which were installed on other naval vessels or used in coastal artillery.

Artifacts from the USS *Arizona* have been distributed through specific programs to preserve its legacy and honor those who served aboard. More recently, the USS *Arizona* Relic Program was established to share pieces of the ship with U.S. Pacific Fleet vessels and commands. The program aimed to connect modern sailors with the ship's legacy and educate future generations about its historical significance. As part of this effort, 138 relics were carefully preserved, mounted in shipboard-safe display cases, and distributed to vessels and bases throughout the Pacific Fleet. The program is designed to ensure these relics are responsibly passed down when ships are decommissioned, preserving their historical value for generations to come

The USS Cheyenne

The artifact was part of the 1995 commissioning of the USS Cheyenne, a nuclear-powered Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine. The Cheyenne played a key role in Operation Iraqi Freedom: she fired the first shot of the war, a tomahawk missile strike. She earned her new nickname, "First to Strike." During her nine-month deployment in the Iraq War she expended her entire complement of tomahawk missiles.



When the Cheyenne was put into dry dock for nuclear refueling and a service life extension project, the artifact was returned to the US Naval History and Heritage Command.

Part of history – now part of Simpsonville

After one hundred plus years of sailing the seven seas, the relic from the USS Arizona was loaned to Simpsonville by the Department of the Navy. It became part of this memorial to Broadus West, dedicated on December 7th, 2024, the eighty-third anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

This memorial connects the community to Broadus West and the thousands of Americans who gave their lives for freedom. It serves as a tangible reminder of the sacrifices made during pivotal moments in history. Simpsonville honors Broadus West's legacy not only through this display but also in the enduring recognition of the values he stood for: bravery, service, and dedication to the ideals of liberty and justice.

Obtaining this artifact is a testament to the efforts of the following people. Simpsonville resident and amateur historian Michael Hiott, and city officials Mayor Paul Shewmaker and City Administrator Dianna Gracely.