

Edward William Boers



Born	March 10, 1884 Cincinnati, Ohio
Died	April 2, 1929 (aged 45)
Place of burial	Vine Street Hill Cemetery Cincinnati, Ohio
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Navy
Rank	Seaman
Unit	USS <i>Bennington</i> (PG-4)
Awards	Medal of Honor

Edward William Boers (March 10, 1884 – April 2, 1929) was a seaman serving in the United States Navy who received the Medal of Honor for bravery.

Boers was born March 10, 1884 in Cincinnati, Ohio and after joining the navy from Kentucky was stationed aboard the USS *Bennington* (PG-4) as a seaman.

USS *Bennington* (Gunboat No. 4/PG-43) was a member of the *Yorktown* class of steel-hulled, twin-screw gunboats in the United States Navy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She was the first U.S. Navy ship named in honor of the town of Bennington, Vermont, site of the Battle of Bennington in the American Revolutionary War.

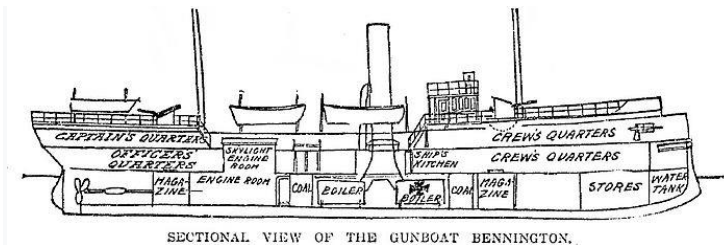
On the morning of 21 July 1905, *Bennington's* crew was preparing her to sail to the aid of the monitor *Wyoming* which had broken down and was in need of a tow. After her crew had finished the difficult task of coaling the ship that morning, most of them were below decks cleaning themselves from the dirty job. Unbeknownst to anyone on board, three problems with one of *Bennington's* boilers – oily feed water, an improperly closed steam valve, and a faulty steam gauge – were conspiring against them. At about 10:30, excessive steam pressure in the boiler resulted in a boiler explosion that rocked the ship, sending men and equipment flying into the air. The escaping steam sprayed through the living compartments and decks. The explosion opened *Bennington's* hull to the sea, and she began to list to starboard. Quick actions by the tug *Santa Fe* — taking *Bennington* under tow and beaching her – almost certainly saved the gunboat from sinking.

The combination of the explosion and the scalding steam killed a number of men outright and left others mortally wounded; the final death toll was one officer and sixty-five men, making it one of the U.S. Navy's worst peacetime disasters. Nearly all of the forty-six who survived had an injury of some sort; eleven of the survivors were awarded the Medal of Honor for "extraordinary heroism displayed at the time of the explosion". One of the survivors was John Henry Turpin, who had also survived the explosion of *Maine* in Havana in February 1898 and was, reportedly, the only man to

survive both explosions. The sheer number of casualties – the death toll exceeded the U.S. Navy's death toll for the entirety of the Spanish–American War – overwhelmed San Diego's medical facilities, and many burn victims had to be cared for in makeshift facilities tended by volunteers.



In spite of rumors of misconduct by *Bennington's* engineering crewmen, an official investigation concluded that the explosion was not due to negligence on the part of the crew.



For his actions, Boers received the Medal of Honor on January 5, 1906.



The back of Edward Boers Medal of Honor

He died April 2, 1929 and is buried in Vine Street Hill Cemetery Cincinnati, Ohio.

Rank and organization: Seaman, U.S. Navy. Born: 10 March 1884, Cincinnati, Ohio. Accredited to: Kentucky. G.O. No.: 13, 5 January 1906.

Citation

On board the U.S.S. Bennington, 21 July 1905. Following the explosion of a boiler of that vessel, Boers displayed extraordinary heroism in the resulting action.