



Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



"REMEMBER THE 'MAINE,' TO HELL WITH SPAIN!"

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KEY WEST --- The people who lived in this remote Florida Keys capital had a front row seat for the brief but violent Spanish-American War near the turn of the century. And there are many memories of that conflict existing here today.

The final straw that broke relations between the U.S. and Spain during the Cuban struggle for independence was the sinking of the battleship, "The USS Maine." She was blown up in Havana harbor on Feb. 15, 1898. Spain sought arbitration over responsibility but the American public, inflamed by a noisy metropolitan press, called for war. It is said that William Randolph Hearst's coverage of the Maine sinking "still stands as the orgasmic acme of ruthless, truthless newspaper jingoism."

The Maine and her crew had spent much time in Key West. Townsfolk gave them a big party the night before they sailed for Fort Jefferson and Havana. The shocking news of her sinking reached here by motor launch, and Key West became the news center of the nation as reporters flocked here to get near the war action. About 50 of the Maine sailors were rushed to the hospital here, where they died. They're buried in an enclosed area of the Key Vest Cemetery. A monument of a sailor was erected by local citizens to honor the lads. Yearly services are held in their memory. One of the turrets from the Maine is displayed at the corner of Southard and Margaret streets.

