Today in History - June 10

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Today's Stories: **Guantánamo Bay** | **Mrs. Abby Fisher**

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Guantánamo Bay

On **June 10**, 1898, U.S. Marines landed at Guantánamo Bay. For the next month, American troops fought a land war in Cuba that resulted in the end of Spanish colonial rule in the Western Hemisphere. Cuban rebels had gained the sympathy of the American public while the explosion and sinking of the *U.S.S. Maine*, widely blamed on the Spanish despite the absence of conclusive evidence, further boosted American nationalistic fervor.

Panoramic View of Havana, showing the entrance to the harbor and inner harbor... K.A.C. Smith, c1898. Panoramic Photographs. Prints & Photographs Division

Hoisting the Flag at Guantánamo, June 12, 1898. Edward H. Hart, photographer, [between 1898 and 1903]. Detroit Publishing Company. Prints & Photographs Division

Popular demand for intervention in the Cuban-Spanish conflict led Congress to pass resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Spanish armed forces from Cuba, authorizing U.S. aid to effect this, and promising American support for Cuban self-rule. Spain declared war against the United States on April 24, 1898, and the United States promptly replied with a counter-declaration.

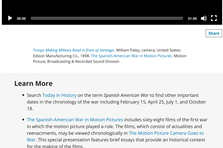
Spanish Prisoners on board other Alameda, Guantánamo, June 14, 1898. Edward H. Hart, photographer, [between1898 and 1903]. Detroit Publishing Company. Prints & Photographs Division

While Spain was unprepared to sustain a war in its distant territories, America was ready and eager to show off its military strength. The navy, under Admiral George Dewey's command, easily broke Spanish control of the Philippine Islands in an engagement at Manila Bay on May 1. American attention then turned to the liberation of Cuba.

On July 11, just five weeks after the landing at Guantánamo Bay, the Spanish forces under Admiral Pascual Cervera surrendered at Santiago. In the Treaty of Paris of 1898, the United States gained sovereignty of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Spain lost its colonial empire, and the United States emerged with greater influence on international affairs and an increased sense of national pride.

Troops making military road in front of Santiago

U.S. troops making military road in Santiago, 1898.



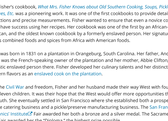
Troops Making Military Road in front of Santiago. William Paley, camera; United States: Edison Manufacturing Co. 1898. The Spanish-American War in Motion Pictures. Motion Picture, Broadcasting & Recorded Sound Division

Learn More

- Search Today in History on the term *Spanish-American War* to find other important dates in the chronology of the war including February 15, April 25, July 1, and October 18.
- The Spanish-American War in Motion Pictures includes sixty-eight films of the first war in which the motion picture played a role. The films, which consist of actualities and reenactments, may be viewed chronologically in The Motion Picture Camera Goes to War. This special presentation features brief essays that provide an historical context for the making of the films.
- The Spanish-American War was extensively documented in newspapers as well. Search the Library's database of historic newspapers, Chronicling America to follow the action. Use the specially created *Topics in Chronicling America* features to focus on the important dates and events of this conflict:
  - Sinking of the Maine
  - Spanish American War
  - Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders
- The World of 1898, presented by the Library's Hispanic Division, provides resources and documents about the Spanish-American War, including an overview essay and a chronology of the war.
- Search on *Guantanamo* in Detroit Publishing Company for more photographs of the 1898 conflict. Absent the U.S.S. *Texas*, for example, see a Spanish-mine taken up in Guantanamo Bay.
- Search on *Guantanamo* in Panoramic Photographs to view pictures of the U.S. Marines, still encamped at Guantánamo Bay in 1911.
- Explore a Guide to the Spanish-American War to identify resources from across the Library and selected external web sites related to this topic.

Mrs. Abby Fisher

On **June 10**, 2003, The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation in Dearborn, Michigan, opened a lunch-style restaurant, *Mrs. Fisher's Southern Cooking*. This restaurant was created and named in honor of Abby Fisher who made a remarkable journey from enslaved plantation cook to upscale caterer and cookbook author after migrating West to California.



Mrs. Fisher's Southern Cooking. Courtesy of The Henry Ford Museum

Abby Fisher's cookbook, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, Etc.* was a pioneering work. It was one of the first cookbooks to provide detailed instructions and precise measurements. Fisher wanted to ensure that even a novice cook would have success using her recipes. Her cookbook was one of the first by an African-American, and the first known cookbook by a formerly enslaved person. Her signature recipes combined foods and spices from Africa with American foods.

Fisher was born in 1831 on a plantation in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Her father, Andrew James, was the French-speaking owner of the plantation and her mother, Abbie Gillins, a domestic enslaved person there. Fisher developed her culinary talents and her distinctive southern flavors as an enslaved cook on the plantation.

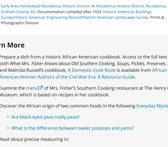
After the Civil War and freedom, Fisher and her husband made their way West with four of their eleven children. It was their hope that the West would offer more opportunities than the South. She eventually settled in San Francisco where she established both a prosperous upscale catering business and a pickle/preserve manufacturing business. The San Francisco Mechanics' Institute of Fair awarded her both a bronze and a silver medal. The Sacramento State Fair awarded her the "Diploma," the highest prize possible.

Mrs. Fisher never learned to read or write. In spite of this, she was commissioned by the Women's Institute of San Francisco and Oakland to compile her recipes. With the support and encouragement of her clients and friends, she dictated her recipes. Her cookbook was published by the Women's Co-operative Printing Union. It contains 160 recipes. Included are familiar favorites: sweet potato pie, lemon sherbet, fried chicken and corn bread. African-inspired dishes: corn fritters, black-eyed peas, okra gumbo, and jambalaya; and others that reflect a time gone by: green turtle, mock turtle, terrapin stew and calf's head. Mrs. Fisher also provides recipes to improve health, examples include: Blackberry Syrup for Dysentery in Children; Tonic Bitters to strengthen and produce appetite; and Pap for Infant Diet.

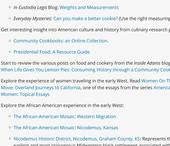
WHAT MRS. FISHER KNOWS
ABOUT
Old Southern Cooking,
SOUPS, PICKLES, PRESERVES, ETC.
Awarded Two Medals at the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute Fair, 1880, for best Pickles and Sauces and Preserves and Jellies.
PUBLISHED AT THE WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE PRINTING OFFICE.
SAN FRANCISCO:
PRESS OF THE WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE PRINTING OFFICE, 1881.

What Mrs. Fisher knows about old southern cooking, soups, pickles, preserves, etc., by Mrs. Abby Fisher. San Francisco: Women's Cooperative Printing Office, 1881. Rare Book Selections, Rare Book & Special Collections Division

Mrs. Fisher passed away between the 1910 and the 1920 census. But thanks to her ingenuity and spirit, we know of her extraordinary journey from an enslaved cook to a free, prize winning, successful entrepreneur and author. Her life reminds us of the many enslaved people who traveled West as free people. They created all Black towns or settled in existing communities and became important contributing citizens. Unfortunately, their experiences are often omitted from traditional stories of how the West was settled.



1885: Washington Street Showing First Stone Church and Williams General Store Nicodemus. Historic District, Nicodemus Historic District, Nicodemus, Graham County, KS. Documentation completed after 1933. Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey. Prints & Photographs Division



Early Area Homestead-Nicodemus Historic District, W. Nicodemus Historic District, Nicodemus, Graham County, KS. Documentation compiled after 1933. Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey. Prints & Photographs Division

Learn More

- Prepare a dish from a historic African American cookbook. Access to the full text of both *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, Etc.* and Malinda Russell's cookbook, A Domestic Cook Book is available from African American Women Authors of the Civil War Era: A Resource Guide.
- Examine the menu of Mrs. Fisher's Southern Cooking restaurant at The Henry Ford Museum, which is based on recipes in her cookbook.
- Discover the African origin of two common foods in the following Everyday Mysteries:
  - Are black-eyed peas really peas?
  - What is the difference between sweet potatoes and yams?
- Read about precise measuring in:
  - *In Custodia Legis* Blog: Weights and Measurements
  - *Everyday Mysteries*: Can you make a better cookie? (Use the right measuring tools)
- Get interesting insight into American culture and history from culinary research guides:
  - Community Cookbooks: an Online Collection.
  - Presidential Food: A Resource Guide
- Start to review the various posts on food and cookery from the Inside Adams blog with When Life Gives You Lemon Peel: Consuming History through a Community Cookbook.
- Explore the experience of women traveling in the early West. Read Women On The Move: Overland Journeys to California, one of the essays from the series American Women: Topical Essays
- Explore the African American experience in the early West:
  - The African-American Mosaic: Western Migration
  - The African-American Mosaic: Nicodemus, Kansas
  - Nicodemus Historic District, Nicodemus, Graham County, KS: Represents the earliest and most prosperous Midwestern black settlement associated with the massive westward migration of former slaves out the south during Reconstruction.
  - From the presentation Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History see Moving North, Heading West
  - Westward Expansion: Encounters at a Cultural Crossroads

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