

GEORGE DEWEY: FROM MOBILE BAY TO MANILA BAY

By

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William T. Sherman-Billy Yank Camp #65

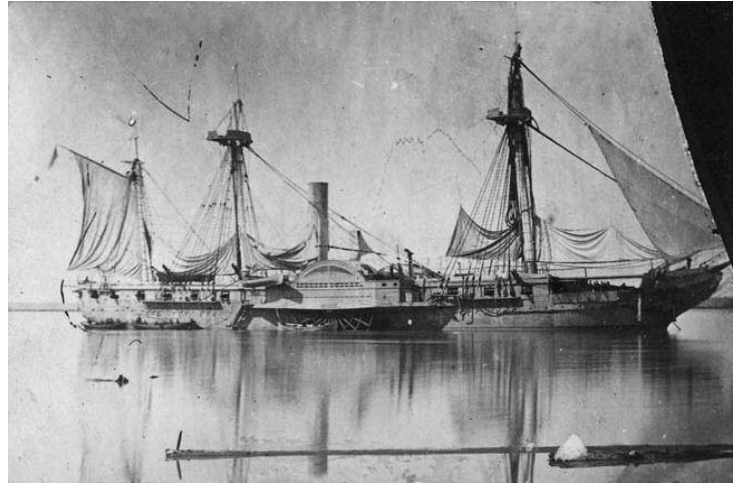
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

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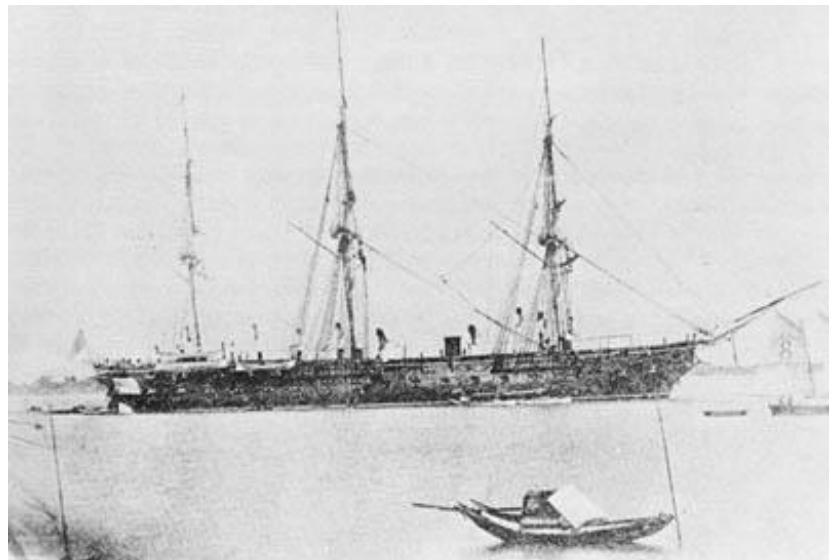
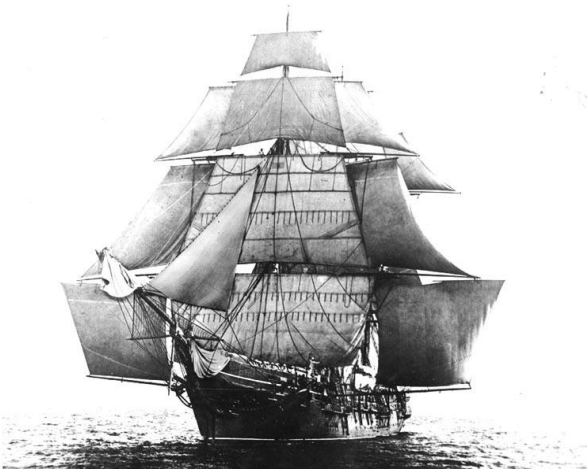
(April 1988)

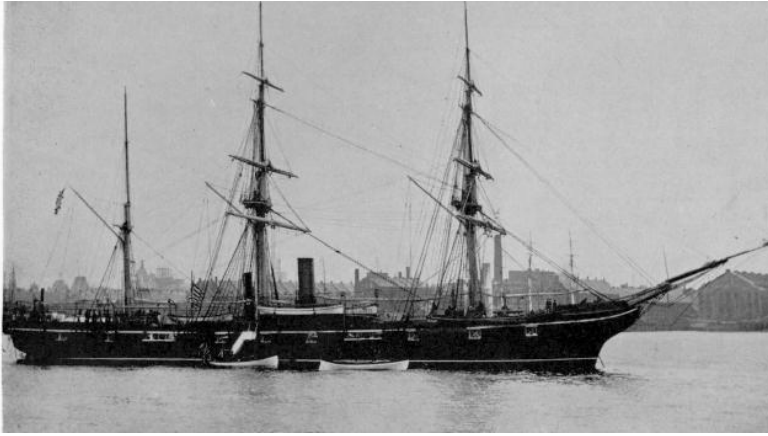
George Dewey was born in Montpelier, Vermont on December 26, 1837, the son of a prominent local physician. A mischievous, high-spirited boy, Dewey received an appointment to the Naval Academy in 1854, graduating in 1858.

After serving in the peacetime navy, Dewey was assigned to the steam frigate *Mississippi* (left), joining her in Boston on May 10, 1861, from which it sailed for blockade duty in the Gulf of Mexico. For several weeks, the *Mississippi* remained at Key West before taking up station at Mobile Bay and later in the Mississippi River, where it participated in the assault on Forts Jackson and Philip during the Battle of New Orleans on April 24-25, 1862.



In July, 1863, Dewey was made executive officer of the *Monogahela* (right), which was then serving as Admiral Farragut's flagship. He served on the Atlantic blockade as executive officer of the *Colorado* (below) on which he took part in the assault of Fort Fisher, North Carolina under Admiral David Porter in December, 1864 and January, 1865. By the end of the war, Dewey was a Lieutenant Commander, serving as the executive officer of the sloop-of war *Kearsarge* (next page) on the European Station.





After again serving in the peacetime navy, Commodore Dewey was ready for his rendezvous with destiny. On October 21, 1897, Dewey was ordered to proceed to Japan to serve as Commander-in-Chief of the Asiatic Squadron. On January 1, 1898 he boarded his flag ship, the cruiser *Olympia* (colored pictured). After the destruction of the *U.S.S. Maine* in Havana Harbor, Dewey, on orders from acting Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, assembled the Asiatic Squadron in Hong Kong and prepared for operations against the Philippines.



On April 24, 1898, word was received that the U.S. and Spain were at war. The Squadron was ordered out of Hong Kong and sailed to Manila Bay where it engaged the Spanish Fleet on May 1. Although the Spanish fleet was poorly prepared, the

guns on Corregidor and the mines in the harbor made the Spanish a formidable opponent. In seven hours of fighting the nine ships of Dewey's fleet destroyed the 11 ships of the Spanish fleet. Thereafter, the squadron accepted the surrender of the Spanish garrisons on the islands in the bay and blockaded the harbor until the arrival of the Army which captured Manila and began the suppression of the Insurrection.

After the war, Admiral of the Navy Dewey returned to a hero's reception. Initially it appeared that he would be the leading candidate for President in 1900, but his promise to *execute the laws of Congress as faithfully as I have always executed the orders of my superiors* brought his political career to an early conclusion.

Dewey remained in the navy until his death on January 16, 1917.

