

SILAS WRIGHT TERRY

Round the World return to Cadiz

Ricky Dale Calhoun

The Washington *Evening Star* of March 25, 1895 reported the pending transfer of command of the cruiser *Newark*, which was then on the coast of Brazil, to Capt. John R. Bartlett. Silas Wright Terry was reassigned as captain of the recruit receiving ship *Franklin*, the same vessel that had been Admiral Farragut's flagship during the 1866-69 European cruise, at the Norfolk Navy Yard. He remained in that capacity until the cessation of combat in the Spanish-American War.

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Voyage of the Iowa

In September 1898 he was entrusted with command of the battleship *Iowa*, then undergoing repairs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Terry was a sailor of considerable fame, and numerous newspapers published feature biographies and pictures of him. He was ordered to get the battleship "in a position of readiness to make a quick dash to the Philippines" to reinforce Admiral Dewey's squadron in Manila Bay. The reason for the battleship being sent to Manila was to discourage interference by the European Great



Powers, particularly Germany.

On Oct. 12, *Iowa*, in company with the battleship *Oregon* under command of Capt. Albert S. Barker, who was the squadron commodore, the supply ship *Celtic*, and four chartered civilian colliers departed for Bahia, Brazil, on the first non-stop 16-day, 4,100-mile leg of the long voyage round South America. The colliers were laden with coal "sufficient to insure a full supply for the big battleships as well as for themselves without subjecting the fleet to the refusal of any of the South American republics (to

allow them to coal) on account of the technical state of war between the United States and Spain.”

Newspapers followed the ships’ voyage via telegraphic dispatches from their various parts of call, and published almost daily reports about their progress. After coaling at Bahia, the ships touched at Rio de Janeiro and Montevideo, Uruguay, and then steamed past the Falkland Islands in the teeth of a ferocious gale. Newspaper reports indicate that they passed through the narrow eastern entrance to the Strait of Magellan on Sunday morning, Dec. 4, 1898. It was summertime in the southern hemisphere. The ships steamed through the famous waterway to Punta Arenas, Chile, also known as Sandy Point, the southernmost town in the Americas located midway through the strait, where they anchored in the roadstead to refill their bunkers with coal from the colliers. At that point they were cut off from communications, there being no telegraph cable to Punta Arenas.

After refilling their coal bunkers from supplies carried aboard the colliers, the ships proceeded through the strait to the Pacific Ocean. A crewman aboard one of the colliers described the scenery in a letter written to the *Cayuga Chief* newspaper: “From Sandy Point to the westward, through the inside passages along the coasts of Chile and Patagonia, is a trip well worth the taking, for here in a hundred miles may be beheld scenery of unparalleled magnificence. At times our squadron will steam through a deep waterway between high, bare walls of solid rock. At others towering barren cliffs of stone will lie close aboard. Here will be seen lofty snow capped peaks and weather scarred mountains, and then will be met steel blue glaciers running from the furrowed sides of surrounding mountain chains down to the water’s edge.”

The ships touched at Valparaiso, Chile, on Dec. 16 so that Capt. Barker could communicate via cable with the Navy Department in Washington and obtain intelligence about the rapidly changing situation in the Philippines. Newspaper reports speculated that upon leaving Valparaiso the ships headed northwest toward Hawaii through the islands of French Polynesia. Others conjectured that the battleships would coal at American Samoa and then proceed directly to Manila. The ships in fact steered a course northward along the coast of South America, but far from land so that they were not seen. Their location was a mystery until Dec. 26, when they reached Callao, Peru. While the battleships were

coaling at Callao, their orders to go to the Philippines were cancelled. Terry was ordered to proceed to San Francisco, where the *Iowa* was to “remain ready for service in any emergency.”

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Washington

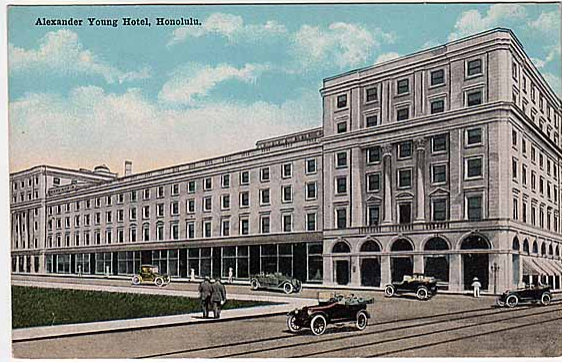
Silas Terry was promoted to rear admiral and made commandant of the Washington Navy Yard in March 1900. The *New York Tribune* published a feature length biography of him in its April 1, 1900 edition.

Terry’s promotion to rear admiral and residence in Washington placed him and his family among the nation’s elite. Admiral and Mrs. Terry were frequent guests at Washington social events, including those at the White House hosted by President and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt. Their daughter Eleanor, who was 17 years old when the family moved to Washington, became a member of the same social set as Theodore Roosevelt’s oldest daughter Alice. Newspaper society pages often named Admiral Terry’s wife Louisa among the prominent women chaperoning the notoriously rambunctious Alice Roosevelt and her friends. Admiral Terry became a trusted member of the inner circle of friends and advisors around President Roosevelt. The *New Era* of July 16, 1903 noted, “Next to Admiral Dewey, he holds the highest rank in the United States Navy.”

The August 8, 1903 edition of the *Army and Navy Journal* stated that Admiral Terry “has gone on a visit of some length to Cadiz, Ky., his birthplace.” Hopkinsville newspapers indicate that the Admiral Terry, his wife, and daughter left Washington by train on July 6, for Louisville, where they spent time with Mrs. W. B. Pace, the daughter of Henry Cornelius Burnett. They arrived in Hopkinsville on July 10. On Saturday, July 25, Silas and his brother Captain Ben Terry, who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War, attended a community reunion at the Cerulean Springs Hotel. The family then went to Paducah for a visit with Silas’ nephew Muscoe Burnett. At the conclusion of the visit, Mrs. Terry and Eleanor returned to the Washington. Admiral Terry boarded a passenger train headed west to San Francisco.

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Hawaii

Admiral Terry arrived in Honolulu, Hawaii, aboard the passenger ship *Alameda*



on August 24, 1903, and checked into the newly completed Alexander Young Hotel, where the commander of Naval Station Hawaii's living quarters were located. Travel writer C. E. Ferguson wrote in the July 1909 *Overland Monthly* that guests at the six-story, 200-room hotel were "given

all the comforts, the luxuries and essentials that the caravansaries in the leading centers of the world have to offer, and to that is added a table loaded with the dainties, the novelties

of fruit, fish, game and food compositions that are particular to the Hawaiian Islands.

... It is of brick, with a frontage of Colusa sandstone. It is ornate, and its interior is highly embellished. Its apartments are spacious and elegantly furnished, and the features that are a part of the equipment of every first-class hotel are in the Alexander



Young Hotel. Its ventilation is perfect, and all the rooms have an exposure to light and air so essential in the tropics. Water is furnished from its own artesian wells, and distilled by modern apparatus. ... Its situation is one that commands an unobstructed view of the natural beauties of the city in whose activities it is the center. Its famous roof garden, where refreshments are served, and band concerts given, and varied other entertainments that present the present and feature of island amusements, are cherished in the memory of thousands of guests."

A delegation of naval and military officers, government officials, and dignitaries greeted Admiral Terry at a reception held in the roof garden. Next day's edition of the *Hawaiian Gazette* speculated that Terry's appointment to command the naval station indicated Hawaii's increased importance in American strategic thinking. Never before

had an admiral been commander of Naval Station Hawaii. The newspaper commented, “It is probable that Admiral Terry will be given command of the Pearl Harbor Naval Station when once active operations begin there. It is said by naval officials that Pearl Harbor will be made one of the strongest fortified places in the world, and that the selection of Admiral Terry to take charge of the work is indicative of this intention on the part of the Navy Department.”

Mrs. Terry and Eleanor arrived in Honolulu in October. J. T. Mason Terry, who was then 28 years old, came to Hawaii and was employed there in some capacity, but what his job was cannot be determined from the available sources. The Hawaiian Islands were sparsely populated and undeveloped, either an unspoiled tropical oceanic paradise or a wilderness depending upon the observer’s outlook. Honolulu was a small town with an American-Victorian colonial ambiance. Its Caucasian elite composed of merchants, planters, territorial civil servants, European consuls, and American military officers and their families, along with members of Hawaii’s native royalty, carried on an active social life.

Mason and Eleanor Terry’s names appear numerous times in the Honolulu *Evening Bulletin*’s “Social Side of Life” column. Mason Terry was evidently considered one of Honolulu’s most eligible bachelors. But it was his younger sister who was the center of attention. The newspaper wrote, “Miss Eleanor Terry, the admiral’s daughter, possesses an unusual type of beauty and much wit. She is one of the most popular girls in Honolulu and is invited everywhere.” The social events included traditional Hawaiian “lū’au” swimming parties on Waikiki beach and at sites round the shores of then still undeveloped Pearl Harbor. An admiring reporter for the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* called Eleanor a “champion swimmer” and described her as “very tall, very slender, very brunette, has a lithe and graceful walk, and is daringly witty of speech.”

At that time Pearl Harbor was inaccessible to seagoing ships because of a mile-wide coral reef off its single narrow entrance. Oahu’s local business elite were eager that Pearl Harbor be opened to merchant ships and were urging the U. S. government, which acquired an 85-acre parcel of land on the harbor’s shore for a Navy dry dock and coaling station in 1901, to pay the cost of dredging a ship channel through the reef and sand bar. Dredging work was underway, but progress was slow.

The need for a naval base became apparent just before Christmas 1903. The Asiatic Squadron – battleships *Kentucky*, *Wisconsin* and *Oregon* accompanied by cruisers *New Orleans*, *Raleigh*, *Albany* and *Cincinnati* – commanded by Admiral Robley D. Evans, described as “the largest fleet of war vessels ever seen” at Honolulu, arrived from Manila. The port did not have facilities to accommodate them. The 9,000 tons of coal purchased to refuel them depleted the available stockpile. Food supplies on Oahu were so limited that the Navy had to send the hospital ship *Solace* from San Francisco with a cargo of victuals for the fleet. The *Hawaiian Gazette* speculated that should Oahu be blockaded by an enemy fleet it would be starved into submission in two weeks. The obvious solution was to build a fortified naval base at Pearl Harbor and stock it with large stores of food, coal, and other supplies.

Making Pearl Harbor usable would be difficult and expensive. During the fleet’s visit Admiral Terry took Admiral Evans and local dignitaries on a tour of Pearl Harbor in the tugboat *Iroquois*. After seeing the totally undeveloped harbor and the reef that had to be cut through, Evans concluded that it would cost “many millions of dollars” to make the harbor usable. The channel that was being excavated had several bends to avoid rock and hard coral. The bends were too sharp for an underway battleship or other large vessel to make the turn. Congress was not forthcoming with the money.

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Around the world

Admiral Terry’s tour of duty as commander of Naval Station Hawaii turned out to be little more than a Polynesian vacation with his family prior to his retirement from the



Navy on Dec. 30, 1904. The *Iroquois* ferried Admiral Terry, Louisa, and Eleanor out to the passenger liner S.S. *Manchuria* anchored in Māmala Bay on Nov. 26, 1904. Terry’s departure from Hawaii was unusual. His tour of duty as commander of the naval station did not

officially end until Dec. 25, 1904, but as reported by the Honolulu newspapers, “By special permission from the Navy Department, Admiral Terry is permitted to leave the station, before he is detached.”

More unusual still, the *Manchuria* was not going to California, but to Japan. The westerly trip home round the world was supposedly a treat for Admiral Terry’s wife and daughter arranged by President Theodore Roosevelt as compensation for the years that Silas had spent away from them at sea. During their world tour the Terrys first visited Tokyo and Shanghai, China. At Shanghai, they boarded a British Peninsular & Oriental steamship that touched briefly at Hong Kong and Singapore, passed through the Strait of Malacca, and steamed north across the Bay of Bengal to Calcutta (Kolkata), India. From Calcutta they traveled westward by train across India. Sources are silent about their time in India, but if the Terry’s followed the route prescribed by Thomas Cook’s tourist guidebooks, they traveled by way of Benares (Varanasi), Lucknow, Cawnpore, Agra, Delhi, and Jeypore to Bombay (Mumbai).

At Bombay’s Victoria Dock they boarded another British steamship that carried them across the Indian Ocean to Aden, up the Red Sea, and through the Suez Canal to Alexandria, Egypt. At Alexandria they boarded a French ship that steamed round the eastern end of the Mediterranean, touching at Jaffa, Beirut, Tripoli, Latakia, Alexandretta (İskenderun), Mersin, and Smyrna (Izmir) enroute to the Dardanelles and Constantinople. Terry took his wife and daughter on a whirlwind tour of the historic city that he had visited in 1866. The family then boarded a Russian steamer for the voyage across the Black Sea to the Crimea. Upon arrival at Sevastopol, they boarded an express train for the 1,360-mile trip north across vast snow-covered steppes and through forests via Kharkov, Kursk, and Moscow to St. Petersburg, the capital of imperial Russia. After a stay of several days in St. Petersburg, they traveled westward to the Atlantic coast through Warsaw, Vienna, and Paris. They arrived in New York aboard a French ocean liner in April 1905.

Circumstances suggest that the vacation was cover for a secret diplomatic-intelligence mission undertaken at the orders of President Roosevelt. Japanese torpedo boats began the Russo-Japanese War with a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur (Lüshun, China) on the night of Feb. 8-9, 1904. In a few minutes the Japanese put

the Russian Pacific fleet out of action. When the Terrys left Hawaii in November, the Japanese had the Russians blockaded in Port Arthur and were laying siege to the fortress. The Russian Baltic fleet composed of nine battleships commanded by Admiral Zinoviy Rozhdestvensky was steaming around Africa on its way to relieve the besieged Russian base. Port Arthur surrendered to the Japanese on Jan. 2, 1905. The Japanese sank Admiral Rozhdestvensky's fleet at the Battle of Tsushima on May 27-28, 1905. In August a peace conference mediated by Roosevelt convened at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The subsequent Treaty of Portsmouth ended the Russo-Japanese War in September 1905.

Admiral Terry and his family visited Cadiz after their return from the trip round the world. No mention of Admiral Terry being in Trigg County can be found in the *Cadiz Record*, *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, *New Era*, or the *Paducah Sun* in June 1905. However, the *Paducah Sun* of Jan. 11, 1905 reported that Admiral Terry was expected to visit relatives in Kentucky "sometime in the summer after he has completed his trip around the world."

On June 1, 1905, an unattributed, knowledgeable account of the Battle of Tsushima headlined "Russians Badly Whipped" appeared on the front page of the *Cadiz Record*. The article is very out of character for the *Cadiz Record*, which usually did not cover world news. The story appears to be an original work, not an item copied from the wire services. It is reasonable to assume that Admiral Terry was its author or the source of its information.

Admiral Terry attended a family reunion in Cadiz in 1908. The Nov. 27, 1908 *Kentucky New Era* copied an article from the *Cadiz Record*, "Admiral Silas Wright Terry, retired, of the United States Navy, reached Cadiz Tuesday afternoon, and will be here until next week on a visit to his brothers and sisters and other relatives in Cadiz and Trigg county. He reached Paducah Saturday from his home in Washington, and spent several days with his sister, Mrs. Mary Burnett, who came with him today." The article gave a lengthy recap of Terry's career and commented, "He is hale and hearty, the picture of health, and appears to be good for many years service yet."

Admiral Terry gave his daughter Eleanor in marriage to Lt. Filippo Camperio, the Italian naval attaché in Washington, on Dec. 10, 1910. The couple may have met during the Terry family's round the world trip in 1905. At that time Camperio was serving as an

observer in the Far East. The marriage produced four children: Manfredo, Luisa Maria, Terry Dalmazia, and Giulio. Between the World Wars, Filippo Camperio became an



admiral in the Italian navy. Admiral Camperio was one of the senior officers who turned against Mussolini and joined the Allies in 1943. He died in 1945. Eleanor was killed in an automobile accident near Milan, Italy, in 1960.

At the time of his daughter's wedding Admiral Terry appeared to be in good health. He unexpectedly fell ill with pneumonia eight weeks later and died on Feb. 9, 1911. His body was buried with full military honors in the Cemetery & Columbarium on the grounds of the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Newspapers throughout the United States printed his obituary. Silas Wright Terry was then

forgotten. Two U.S. Navy destroyers have been named U.S.S. *Terry*, but both ships were named for Edward Terry, another Civil War hero. Trigg County has no historical marker to memorialize its Yankee admiral.