

ADMIRAL WILLIAM BANKS CAPERTON, U. S. NAVY, DECEASED

on 6/30/1855

Admiral Caperton, born at Spring Hill, Maury County, Tennessee, attended Spring Hill Academy before entering the United States Naval Academy from the Sixth District of Tennessee upon appointment of the Honorable W. C. Whitthorne in 1871. He was graduated from the Naval Academy in September 1875 and served the two years at sea, then required by law, before being commissioned Ensign on August 3, 1877. He subsequently progressed through the various grades to the rank of Rear Admiral on February 13, 1913. On July 19, 1916 he was designated Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet with the rank of Admiral in the Navy from the date of assuming command, July 28, 1916. Transferred to the Retired List of the Navy on June 30, 1919 he continued on active duty until November 12, 1921. He was commissioned Admiral on the Retired List to rank from June 21, 1930 (Act of June 21, 1930) and died December 21, 1941.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in September 1875, Admiral Caperton served at sea for five years, with duty aboard the USS POWHATAN, the USS CONSTELLATION, and the USS TENNESSEE. He had three years' service with the Coast and Geodetic Survey, after which he joined the OSSIPEE for service on the Asiatic Station. In April 1887, he assumed duty as Inspector of Steel at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and in November of the following year transferred to Washington, D.C. for duty as Secretary of the Steel Inspection Board. He next had brief duty in the summer of 1891 as Recorder of the Examing Board at Norfolk, Virginia.

Admiral Caperton had three years' consecutive sea duty aboard the USS MIANTONOMOH, the USS VESUVIUS, and the USS ESSEX. On February 21, 1895, he reported to the Office of Naval Intelligence, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., and following three months' duty in that office, he had instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, completing the course there on October 15, 1896. Next followed consecutive service aboard the USS BROOKLYN and during the Spanish-American War period aboard the USS MARIETTA, with service as executive officer of that vessel after the peace protocol was signed on August 12, 1898, and until October 16, 1899.

Returning to the United States, Admiral Caperton reported for duty as Inspector of Ordnance at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. to serve from December, 1899 until July, 1901, when he was ordered to duty in connection with fitting out the USS PRAIRIE. He served as her executive officer from her commissioning, August 8, 1901, until May, 1904, when he was again ordered to the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. Completing the course of instruction in October of that year, he became Inspector of the 15th Light House District at St. Louis, Missouri, and served in that capacity until April 15, 1907.

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

He assumed command of the USS DENVER on April 20, 1907 and transferred his command to the USS MAINE on July 31, 1908. Detached from that command when the MAINE was decommissioned on August 31, 1909, he proceeded to Washington, D.C. He thereafter became secretary of the Light House Board, Department of Commerce and Labor, on October 11, 1909, and served in that assignment until June 30, 1910 when he was ordered to duty in attendance upon the summer conference of officers at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. Upon completion of the conference he returned to Washington, D.C., where he was assigned duty as a member of the Naval Examining and Naval Retiring Boards.

Following duty as Commandant of the Naval Station, Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, from May, 1912 until October 1913, during which period he was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral, Admiral Caperton became Commander in Chief, Atlantic Reserve Fleet, USS ALABAMA, flagship, and after a year's service in that command, he assumed command in November, 1914 of Cruiser Squadron, Atlantic Fleet, USS WASHINGTON, flagship. During the period of this assignment, and transferring his flag to the TENNESSEE and later to the DOLPHIN, he commanded the Naval forces that intervened at Haiti in 1915-1916; was Commander, Naval Forces, Vera Cruz, in 1915, and commanded Naval Forces intervening and suppressing the Santo Domingo Revolution in 1916.

Relieved of command of Cruiser Force, Atlantic Fleet, he returned to the United States, reporting to Key West, Florida. Upon designation as Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, by the President of the United States on July 22, 1916, he proceeded to San Diego, California to assume his new duties in the rank of Admiral, and hoisted his flag in the USS PITTSBURGH. He was in charge of the patrol of the East Coast of South America which cleared southern waters of German raiders during World War I and he greatly aided in the development of good will between the U. S. and her Allies. For his services as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet during World War I, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with citation as follows:

#### Distinguished Service Medal

"For exceptionally meritorious service in a duty of great responsibility as Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet on the East Coast of South America in establishing friendly diplomatic relations with the countries of South America."

On November 1, 1918, ten days before the signing of the Armistice which officially closed hostilities between Germany and the United States, Admiral Caperton was designated by the President of the

United States as Special Representative with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to attend the ceremonies at Rio de Janeiro on November 15, 1918, incident to the inauguration of His Excellency, Dr. Francisco de Paulo Rodriguez Alves, as President of the Republic of Brazil. He was also Special Naval Delegate at the inauguration of Dr. Brun as President of Uruguay, in 1919. Detached from command of the Pacific Fleet in April, 1919, he re-reported for duty in the Office of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

On April 12, 1919, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (then Acting Secnav) authorized the following: "In view of the splendid work accomplished by Admiral Caperton, he will be relieved from present duty on April 30th, and, pending his retirement June 30th, he will be detailed to prepare a complete and detailed memorandum of his duty since being ordered to sea duty in 1915 with special reference to what he has been connected with since war was declared. This memorandum will be turned over to the historical section of the Navy. Admiral Caperton's duty since war was declared, above referred to, has been the commanding officer of the Pacific Fleet which, in conjunction with British and French fleets, cleared the Southern Atlantic of German raiders and patrolled the east coast of South America. On his flagship, USS PITTSBURGH, Admiral Caperton made courtesy visits to South American republics during the war and since the Armistice was signed. His visits were of inestimable value, as they strengthened the bonds of friendship between South American republics and the United States and promoted solidarity of relations between these countries and the Allies. Admiral Caperton was put in command of the cruiser force of the Atlantic Fleet on November 21, 1914. He has been in command of the Pacific Fleet since May 22, 1917, on which date original orders of June 7th, 1916, were amended."

Admiral Caperton was transferred to the Retired List in the rank of Rear Admiral on June 30, 1919, but continued on active temporary duty in connection with the official reception of the President Elect of Brazil, and as Naval Aide to Dr. Pessoa during his visit to the United States, and return. Upon completion of this temporary duty, he was ordered for further temporary duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and later as witness before Senate Committee on Occupation and Administration of Territories of Haitian Republic by American Forces. Relieved of all active duty, he proceeded home in November, 1921. He was commissioned Admiral on the Retired List of the Navy from June 21, 1930. (Act of June 21, 1930)

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, Admiral Caperton had the Spanish Campaign Medal (1898); the Cuban Pacification Medal; the Mexican Service Medal (USS WASHINGTON, 1914); the Haitian Campaign Medal (USS WASHINGTON, 1915); the Dominican Campaign Medal (USS DOLPHIN, 1916); and the Victory Medal, Patrol Clasp, (USS PITTSBURGH), for World War I Service. He also had the following foreign decorations: Order of the Bust of Bolivar, Third Class, by the Government of Venezuela; and the Grand Official da Ordem do Cruzeiro do Sul, by the Brazilian Government.

Admiral Caperton died on December 21, 1941, at the Navah Hospital, Newport, Rhode Island.

Admiral Caperton was a founder and honorary member of the Military Order Foreign Wars of the United States (European Commandry, Paris, 1927); an honorary life member of the Military Order Foreign Wars of the United States (Commanding General 1914-1917); and a member of the Military Order World War, Retired Officers' Association.

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