

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes



**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER MOSES SHERWOOD STUYVESANT, U.S. NAVY
(1841 Indiana - 1906 Missouri)
Original Member of the Missouri Commandery
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States**

**By
Douglas Niermeyer, Commander, Missouri Commandery
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States
momollus@sbcglobal.net
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Moses Sherwood Stuyvesant was born at Mt. Vernon, Indiana, August 17, 1841. While attending the high school at Cincinnati, Ohio, to which place he, with his parents had moved, he was appointed to the Naval Academy in August, 1856, the appointment coming through the Honorable J. Scott

Harrison, then Congressman, who in notifying young Stuyvesant of his appointment, wrote him: "You are indebted for this appointment alone to your standing as a scholar and a gentleman. Continue to maintain this character in the school to which you are appointed. If you hope to become a distinguished officer, you must be a student, and to be respected by your brother officers, you must be a gentleman." Stuyvesant observed this precept not only during his naval career, but throughout his life.

On June 15, 1860, being in his 19th year, he graduated from Annapolis and served as Midshipman, first on the U.S.S. *Paunee*, then on the *Powhatan*, cruising in the latter in the Gulf of Mexico. He was then transferred to the U.S.S. *Cumberland*, then in those waters, being appointed aide to Commodore George J. Pendergrast, the *Cumberland* being his flagship. In this capacity Stuyvesant rendered valuable service as he spoke Spanish fluently, in interpreting between his Commodore and President Jaurez, then ruling in that Republic and at the beginning of the troubles which culminated, first in the Maximillian-French venture and then in the firm establishment of Jaurez and in freeing our sister Republic from foreign invasion.

Still with the *Cumberland* when our troubles broke out, he was Midshipman on her when early in March, 1861, she reached Norfolk, Virginia. While there, the Navy Yard was partly destroyed and abandoned, and the *Cumberland* was placed on blockade duty, and took part in the capture of Forts Hatteras and Clark.

Writing of this last, Stuyvesant calls attention to the fact that "it was probably the last fight in which a ship was handled under sail. All other vessels present were steamships, and the older officers must have enjoyed observing the old time frigate *Cumberland*, as she worked into position every morning and ran off shore at night for an offing under sail."

In September 1861, Stuyvesant still a Midshipman on the *Cumberland*, went with her to Newport News and on September 19, 1861, was promoted to the rank of Master.

On March 8, 1862, this old frigate *Cumberland* and her officers and men made history. Shot to pieces by the powerful guns of the ironclad *Merrimac* (formerly known as the *Virginia*), the old wooden frigate went down, fighting to the last, "The Flag" flying. In this action, Stuyvesant, a youth of 20 years, bore a gallant and conspicuous part and it is claimed for him, that, when the question arose as to whether the flag should be taken down and borne away from the sinking vessel by her commander and crew, that Stuyvesant was the man who said: "No, the ship will sink in fifteen minutes, and she will look a d-d sight better with her flag up." Though wounded in the arm he commanded two crews of survivors who manned land guns during the next day's battle between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*. As a Companion of the MOLLUS he later wrote a MOLLUS War Paper on the experience entitled [HOW THE CUMBERLAND WENT DOWN](#).

For his conduct in that engagement, he was, in July 1862, and while in his 21st year, made a Lieutenant. In September 1862, in the U.S. Steam Sloop *Housatonic*, he was of the blockading fleet off Charleston, part of the time in command of the Gunboat *Marblehead*. With incredible ill luck, this survivor of the first ship sunk by an ironclad also became a survivor of the first ship sunk by a submarine as in early 1864, the *Housatonic*, laying outside Charleston in 1864 when the CSS *Hunley* paddled out and sent her to the bottom. He was then assigned to the Monitor *Weehawken* on which latter he rendered distinguished service. This was his first experience with a Monitor and it seems to have been congenial, for to the end of his life, he had great confidence in the Monitor as a type of an effective fighting ship - not many years ago writing an able paper in support of his views which was read in Congress and published as a public document. The *Weehawken* sank at her anchors while off Charleston, Stuyvesant being the last to leave her.

His next duty was on the U.S. Steam Frigate *Minnesota*, then in Hampton Roads, Virginia, and he was with her in both attacks on Fort Fisher in December 1864 and January 1865. He received special

mention for his conduct on these occasions. Ironically back on March 8, 1862, the *Minnesota* earlier had also been involved in the battle with the *Merrimac* and sank as the *Cumberland* did while he was in command of that ship.

In 1866, he was assigned to the double turreted U.S. Steamer *Miantonomah*, and, as her Commander, he then having the rank of Lieutenant-Commander, to which he was promoted in April 1866, then being in his 26th year, he made with her the memorable cruise across the Atlantic and through the North Sea, the Baltic and then through the Mediterranean, in 1866 and 1867.

In 1868, he was ordered to join the *Wateree*, then at Callao, Peru, and while at Arica, Peru, on August 13, 1868, was Executive Officer when in the great earthquake and following tidal wave that occurred at that time, the *Wateree* was carried on land about three miles north of Arica and landed high and dry at that point about 1200 feet east of and 15 feet above high water mark, where she still rests.

In December 1868, he resigned from the Navy; then studied law, settled in California, removed to Iowa, where he practiced for a few years, and then, giving up that profession, he removed to St. Louis and engaged in business. He became an original Member of the Missouri Commandery of MOLLUS, Insignia Number 4685 and was a member of it's Singing School. He died in St. Louis, January 15, 1906. At least one of his descendants, his son William Crowninshield Stuyvesant was a Hereditary Companion of Missouri Commandery, Insignia Number 9720, as well.

In all his service he won the warm commendation of his commanders; in all his life he was a gentleman, kind, courteous, but very reserved. Writing of his life at the Academy, Stuyvesant said: "I might say that there was no hazing at Annapolis in my day; a midshipman who would permit personal indignities, would have been considered a coward and unfit for the Naval service." A man of deep convictions, of high sense of duty, he was into intolerant, almost to an extreme, of all shams. Brave always, no less in meeting the vicisitudes of life than in war, with a mind cultivated and enriched by reading and by study, a Christian in the best and highest sense of the term, he has left his name and his services and his memory as his contribution, as one of the children of our Republic, to the glory of our Nation and towards placing her among the great nations of the earth.

On April 15, 1864, Companion Stuyvesant was married to Miss Daisy Crowninshield, Chaplain Moses B. Chase, U.S. Navy, performing the ceremony.

Children:

- 1) William Crowninshield Stuyvesant, Hereditary Companion of the Missouri Commandery, Insignia Number 9720, Died unmarried October 5, 1894.
- 2) (male) Stuyvesant, Died in infancy.
- 3) (female) Stuyvesant, marroed W.A. Denvir, living in 1906.

Sources:

- (1) Photograph: Missouri Commandery of MOLLUS Photograph collection (Located at the Missouri State Historical Society Library and Archives, St. Louis, Missouri)
- (2) In Memoriam #311, Moses Sherwood Stuyvesant, Died January 15, 1906, St. Louis, Lt. Commander, USN
- (3) Biographical Sketches of Contributors, MOLLUS, c1995 by Broadfoot p.287
- (4) Membership Records of the Missouri Commandery of MOLLUS
- (5) Missouri Commandery, MOLLUS. 1892. Sketches of War History, 1861-1865. War Papers and Personal Reminiscences 1861-1865. Read before the Commandery of the State of Missouri, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. Beckett and Co., St. Louis, Missouri. Volume 1, pp.204-210

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