

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes



**REAR ADMIRAL STEPHEN BLEECKER LUCE SR., USN
(1827 New York - 1917 Rhode Island)
Founder and First Superintendent of the Naval War College (1884-1886)
Insignia Number 13113, Original Member of the New York Commandery
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States**

**By
Douglas Niermeyer, Past Commander-in-Chief
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States
momollus@sbcglobal.net
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Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce

Oil on canvas, 54" x 40", by Alexander James (1890-1946) after E.P. Vinton.
Painting in the U.S. Naval Academy Museum Collection. Gift of Stephen B. Luce, 1938.
U.S. Navy Photograph KN-711.

Stephen Bleecker Luce Sr. was born on March 25, 1827 in Albany, New York, one of three children born to Vinal and Charlotte Bleecker. Stephen would become one of the Navy's outstanding officers in many fields, including strategy, seamanship, education, and professional development.

Stephen Bleecker Luce Sr entered the Navy in October 19, 1841 as a Midshipman and during the next seven years served in the frigate *Congress* and ships of the line *North Carolina* and *Columbus* upon which he circumnavigated the globe and served on the coast of California during the Mexican War, 1846-1847. Following graduation as a member of the U.S. Naval Academy's Class of 1847 and promotion to Passed Midshipman in 1848, he served at the Academy until mid-1849. Luce spent the first half of the 1850s serving in the sloop-of-war *Vandalia* in the Pacific, on astronomical duty in Washington, D.C., and as an officer of the steamer *Vixen*. Attaining the rank of Lieutenant in 1855, he was employed on coast survey work 1854-57 and served in the sloop-of-war *Jamestown* during the rest of the decade. He was promoted Lieutenant September 16, 1855.

Lieutenant Luce began another Naval Academy tour in May 1860 as an assistant instructor. Shortly before the firing on Fort Sumter, he was detailed as Third Lieutenant of the steam frigate *Wabash* and was attached to the blockading squadron off the coast of South Carolina, 1861, and participated in the battle of Port Royal, November 13, 1861. He was ordered back at the Naval Academy on January 10, 1862 to serve as head of the Department of Seamanship. While there, he prepared one of

the first seamanship textbooks used by the academy. He was promoted to Lieutenant Commander on July 16, 1862 and continued to served at the Naval Academy until 1863. He then commanded the *Nantucket*, *Sonoma*, *Canandaigua*, and *Pontiac* of the North Atlantic blockading squadron, 1863-1865, and during this time engaged with the Confederate Forts Sumter, Moultrie, and Battery Marshall. He reported to General Sheraton at Savannah, Georgia, for duty in connection with the Army, December, 1864, and with the *Pontiac*, he guarded the pontoon bridge at Sister's Ferry on the Savannah, while General Slocum's division crossed into South Carolina. He was ordered to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, in September 1865, and relieved Commodore Fairfax as Commandant of Midshipmen in October 1865.

After the war, Luce organized the Navy's apprentice training program to prepare seamen and petty officers for fleet duty and served as the Naval Academy's Commandant of Midshipmen from October 1865 to June 1868. He was commissioned Commander, July 25, 1866 and commanded the practice squadrons of the Naval Academy. He then returned to sea as commanding officer of the gunboat *Mohongo*, in the Pacific, and steam sloop *Juniata* in the Mediterranean Sea, 1866-1872. Promoted to Captain on December 28, 1872, Luce served at the Boston Navy Yard until the autumn of 1875. He then commanded the steam sloop *Hartford*, flagship of the North Atlantic squadron, in November, 1875 and served as such until August 1877. His later career was heavily involved with educational affairs, initially as Inspector of Training Ships 1877-1878, then in command of the training ship *Minnesota* 1878-1881, and promoted Commodore, November 25, 1881. As Commodore he commanded the U.S. Training Squadron from 1881 to 1884. He served as President of the Commission on the sale of Navy yards in 1882 and later ordered to the command of the North Atlantic squadron as acting Rear-Admiral, July 26, 1884.



Naval War College Museum
Newport, Rhode Island

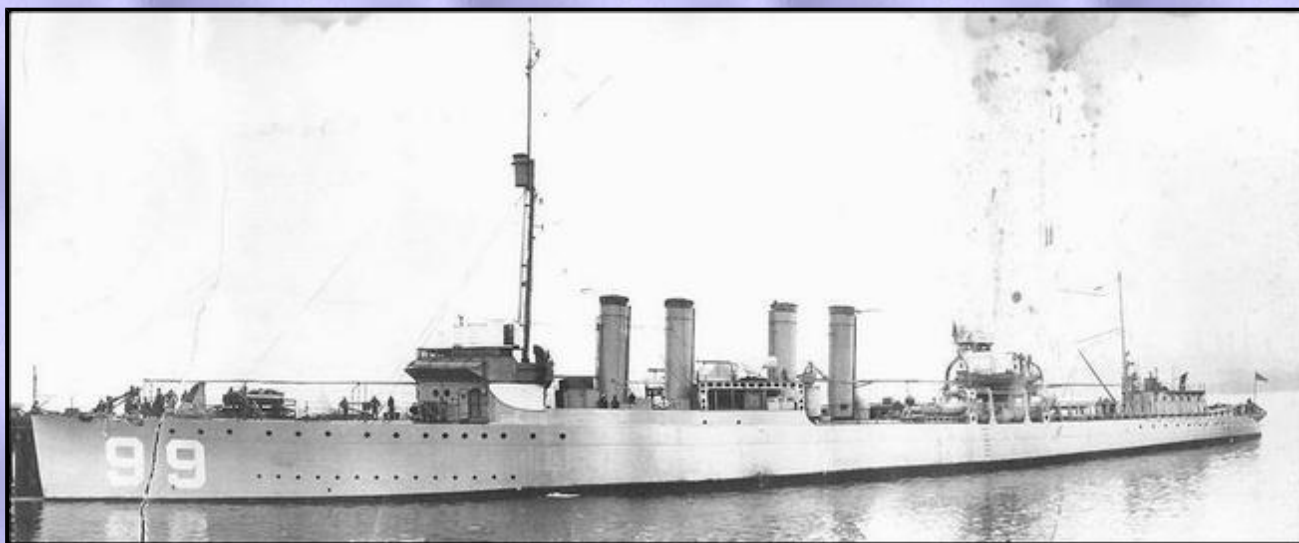
He strongly advocated higher education for the Navy's officers and, as a Commodore and Rear Admiral, Luce's urgings and exhaustive reports, he help create the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, which was established October 6, 1884. He served as it's First Superintendent from 1884 to 1886. Luce set a course for the Naval War College that endures to this day and Luce Hall is named in his honor. Displaying an appreciation for the interrelationship of naval power, technology, and international politics uncommon in naval officers of his time, he mused, "*Fancy a university man aspiring to the honors of the legal profession and ignoring the law school and the science of law. . . . It must strike anyone who thinks about it as extraordinary that we members of the profession of arms should never have undertaken the study of our real business.*" He also was instrumental in starting the U.S. Naval Institute and its publication, *Proceedings*.

He was promoted Rear-Admiral, October 5, 1885, commanded the naval forces of the North Atlantic station, 1886-1889. He was placed on the retired list on March 25, 1889. He was Commissioner-General to the quadro-centennial of the Columbian Exposition at Madrid in 1892. On March 1, 1893, the Queen Regent of Spain conferred on him the Grand Cross of Naval Merit with the white distinctive mark, for services as delegate to the exposition. Returning to the War College in 1901, he served as President of the Naval Academy's Board of Visitors and on special duty at the War College. He also was an Associate Editor of Johnson's *Universal Encyclopedia*, a member of the editorial staff of the *Standard Dictionary*, and the author of *Seamanship* (1863), a text-book used at the Naval academy. He also published under the title of *Naval Songs* (1883), a collection of original, selected, and

traditional sea songs, which included the music, and contributed extensively to the then current literature.

Luce was married on December 7, 1854 to Eliza Henley, daughter of Commodore John Dandridge Henley, U.S. Navy, and a great-niece of Martha Washington. She was born in 1829 and they had three children: Henley, Caroline, and Stephen Bleacher Jr. Luce was elected an original companion of the New York Commandery of MOLLUS, Insignia No. 13113, and was an active member the rest of his life. Rear-Admiral Luce died at Newport, Rhode Island, on July 28, 1917.

The Navy has named three ships in honor of Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce: *USS Luce* (Destroyer #99, later DM-4), 1918-1936; *USS Luce* (DD-522), 1943-1945; and *USS Luce* (DLG-7 later DDG-38), 1961-1995.



USS Luce (Destroyer #99, later DM-4), 1918-1936

At the Boston Navy Yard, Charlestown, Massachusetts, Circa spring 1921.

Photographed by H.J. Darley, 46 Water Street, Charlestown, Massachusetts.

This ship still wears its former destroyer bow number, but has had its torpedo tubes removed and replaced with mine tracks running along each side to the stern from just aft of Number Four Smokestack.

The original print bears a hand-written note referring to a Commandant, Boston Navy Yard letter of May 11, 1921.

U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph NH 103190.

The *USS Luce*, a 1060-ton Little class destroyer, was built at Quincy, Massachusetts. It was commissioned in September 1918 and spent the rest of World War I on convoy escort and anti-submarine patrol service in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. During the months that followed the November 11, 1918 Armistice, the *USS Luce* operated in the Adriatic, Aegean, eastern Mediterranean and Black seas. The ship returned to the United States in July 1919 and in March 1920 was reclassified as a light minelayer, being formally designated DM-4 in July of that year. The *USS Luce* spent the next two years serving along the Atlantic Coast and in the Caribbean. The *USS Luce* was decommissioned in June 1922 and was laid up at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. The ship briefly resumed commissioned service between March 1930 and January 1931. Following another five years in "red lead row", the *USS Luce* was stricken from the list of Navy ships in January 1936 and sold for scrapping in September of that year.



***USS Luce*(DD-522), 1943-1945**

Photographed in 1944, while wearing Camouflage Measure 32, Design 18D.

U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph NH 51451

The *USS Luce*, a 2030-ton Fletcher class destroyer built at Staten Island, New York, was commissioned in June 1943. It went to the Pacific in the fall and from November 1943 into August 1944 operated in the Alaskan and Aleutian Islands area. On February 3-4, and in June 1944, the *USS Luce* participated in three bombardments of Japanese facilities in the Kurile Islands. Later in the year, the destroyer went to the south Pacific and in October took part in the invasion of Leyte. The *USS Luce* was employed on escort and patrol missions in the Admiralty Islands and off New Guinea for the rest of 1944.

In January 1945, the *USS Luce* took part in amphibious landings at Lingayen Gulf and San Antonio, Leyte. The destroyer was part of the vast fleet that supported the invasion of Okinawa in late March and was then stationed off that islands as a radar picket to warn of incoming Japanese air raids. While performing this duty on May 4, 1944, the *USS Luce* was attacked by several suicide attack planes. Damaged by the bomb of one Kamikaze, the *USS Luce* was struck amidships by a second and rapidly sank. Nearly 150 of her crew were lost.



USS Luce (DLG-7, later DDG-38), 1961-1995
Photos Courtesy of *USS Luce* Reunion Website



USS Luce (DLG-7, later DDG-38), 1961-1995

Photos Courtesy of *USS Luce* Reunion Website

The third *USS Luce* (DLG-7) was laid down by Bethlehem Steel Company, Quincy, Massachusetts, October 1, 1957; launched December 11, 1958; sponsored by Mrs. Felix B. Stump; and commissioned May 20, 1961, Commander David H. Bagley in command.

The *USS Luce* departed Mayport, Florida on a shakedown cruise February 14, 1962. The *USS Luce* spent the month of April with the 6th Fleet in the ship's first task force operations and returned home May 11 where Captain H.J. Ereckson, Commander Destroyer Division 84, made the *USS Luce* his flagship. The *USS Luce* departed August 3 to rejoin the 6th Fleet, en route participating in NATO exercises Riptide III with units of the British and French Navies. During the next seven months, the *USS Luce* joined in three major NATO exercises before returning home March 2, 1963. During the spring and early summer, the frigate conducted missile tests, trained midshipmen, and engaged in independent exercises along the Atlantic coast.

On August 20, 1963, the *USS Luce* steamed to the Caribbean for independent air, surface, and shore bombardment firings and returned Mayport September 4, 1963. The ship joined Task Force 23 for intensive ASW and AA exercises 28 October 28 and after a short operation with the *USS Enterprise* (CVA(N)-65) was back in Mayport for tender availability. On February 8, 1964, the *USS Luce* again joined the 6th Fleet, and was called upon to stand guard for three weeks near the trouble-ridden island of Cyprus to evacuate American citizens if necessary. The *USS Luce* hosted the Secretary of the Navy and Commander 6th Fleet April 24 for a missile firing demonstration, and then escorted *Shangri-La* (CVA-38) on a high-speed Atlantic crossing to Mayport. In July, the ship steamed to New

York City to participate in operation "Sail" with a regatta of sailing craft from all over the world. The USS Luce returned to Mayport after a four month overhaul January 28, 1965. The frigate had won both the Engineering and Battle Efficiency "E"s during 1964.

The *USS Luce* returned to the Caribbean for intensive refresher training in March 1965. On April 29, the ship embarked a company of marines at Guantanamo Bay and proceeded to the troubled Dominican Republic April 30. The *USS Luce* patrolled the coast of the politically disturbed island until May 8. It returned to the Mediterranean in June for four months of operations with units of the Spanish, French, Greek, and Italian Navies. In September, the *USS Luce* operated with the *USS Correy* (DD-817) in the Black Sea, and returned to the Mediterranean late in 1965. The ship arrived Mayport November 6 and embarked Commander Destroyer Squadron 8. In December, the *USS Luce* engaged in missile firing and after a brief time in port in 1966 continued testing and improving missile techniques and carrying out the fleet's widespread peacekeeping activities which guard the free world. On June 13, 1966, the *USS Luce* got underway for deployment with the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean. After participating in various exercises with United States and other Allied ships, and representing the United States at two international trade fairs, the *USS Luce* returned to Mayport on October 26. The first half of 1967 saw the *USS Luce* operating again with the 2nd Fleet in the Atlantic and Caribbean, and participating in a midshipmen training cruise in June. On August 7, the *USS Luce* began a regular overhaul at the U.S. Naval Shipyard, Charleston, South Carolina. It continued in overhaul until early 1968, then operated locally and in the Caribbean until departing Mayport September 14 for the Persian Gulf, sailing via Recife, Brazil, and various ports along the west and east coasts of Africa. The ship arrived at Bahrein October 29 and continued to stand watch over the troubled Middle East into 1969.

In 1970, the *USS Luce* was decommissioned for an extensive conversion as part of the Navy's anti-air warfare modernization program. It received new radar, electronics equipment, missile systems modifications, and installation of the Naval Tactical Data System enabling the ship to exchange operational information by computer-to-computer radio links with similarly equipped ships and aircraft.

The *USS Luce* was recommissioned May 22, 1971. The ship was further modified during a yard period from November 1976 to November 1977, and completed a yearlong overhaul at Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in early 1983. The ship was then homeported in Mayport, Florida, where it was the permanent flagship of Commander Destroyer Squadron No. 12 until decommissioning on April 1, 1991. The *USS Luce* (DLG-7, DDG-38) was moved from its mothball berth at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard to Metro Marines facilities for salvage in 2004.

Descendants of Rear-Admiral Stephen Blecker Luce and descendants of his siblings are eligible for hereditary membership in the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS - founded by Civil War officers on April 15, 1865) and the Dames of the Loyal Legion of the United States (founded in 1899 as the auxiliary to the MOLLUS). For more information on either or both organizations, please visit each organization's national website:

[Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States](#)

[Dames of the Loyal Legion of the United States](#)

Visit the Homepage of the
[Rhode Island Commandery, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States](#)

Sources:

- 1) Membership Records of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States.
- 2) Herringshaw's Encyclopedia of American Biography of the Nineteenth Century, page 603.
- 3) The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans: Volume VII, page 56.
- 4) Naval War College Museum, Newport, Rhode Island (see <http://www.nwc.navy.mil>)
- 5) Naval Historical Center: Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, USN (see <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/pers-us/uspers-l/sb-luce.htm>)
- 6) Naval Historical Center: USS Luce (DM-4, formerly DD-99) (see <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-l/dd99.htm>)
- 7) Naval Historical Center: USS Luce (DD-522) (see <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-l/dd522.htm>)
- 8) USS Luce (DLG-7, later DDG-38) Reunion website (see <http://www.ussluce.org/>)
- 9) Navy Times article on the USS Luce (DLG-7, later DDG-38)

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