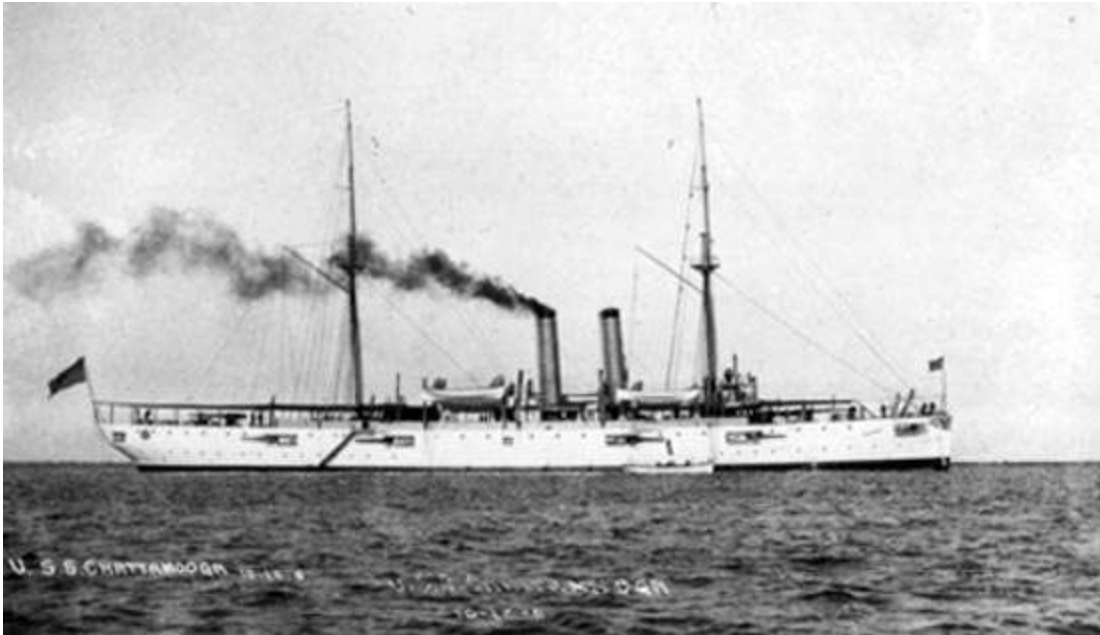


From the *USS Chattanooga* to the *USS Mahan*: U.S. Navy Ship Visits to Tallinn



When the guided missile destroyer *USS Mahan* (DDG-72) arrives in Tallinn harbor before Estonia's Victory Day celebrations, it will be the latest in a long line of U.S. Navy ships to drop anchor in Estonia. This *USS Mahan* is the fifth U.S. Navy ship to carry the name of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), a noted U.S. naval historian and theorist. The U.S. Navy launched the first destroyer named the *USS Mahan* (DD-102) towards the end of the Great War on August 4, 1918 before being commissioned on October 24, 1918.

Just a year later in early November 1919, the light cruiser *USS Chattanooga* (C-16) – one of the *USS Mahan's* contemporary vessels – became the first U.S. Navy ship to pay an official visit to the new Republic of Estonia. At the time, the *USS Chattanooga* served as the flagship of U.S. Naval Forces in European waters. This *USS Chattanooga* was the second ship of the same name: the original *USS Chattanooga* was a steamboat built in 1863 at the height of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) in order to re-supply General Ulysses S. Grant's hungry army in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The newer *USS Chattanooga* was also performing a delivery of sorts: its mission was to make sure that U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander John A. Gade (then on loan to the U.S. Department of State) made it to his new assignment as the first U.S. Commissioner to the Baltic

States.

Originally launched on March 7, 1903 and commissioned on October 11, 1904, the *USS Chattanooga* was decommissioned in on September 17, 1910 only to be re-commissioned again on April 21, 1914 before the start of the Great War for service off Mexican waters. The *USS Chattanooga* was one of six Denver-class “peace” cruisers ordered by the U.S. Navy – its five sister ships were the *USS Denver*, the *USS Des Moines*, the *USS Galveston*, the *USS Tacoma*, and the *USS Cleveland*. The *USS Chattanooga* had a crew of 339, displaced almost 3,000 metric tons, and could cruise at a maximum speed of just over 16 knots. The main weapons on this 94-meter long ship were its ten five-inch guns. Although she may not seem very impressive by today's standards, the *USS Chattanooga* would have been a reassuring presence in Tallinn harbor as the Estonian Navy of the time consisted of “a destroyer taken from the Bolsheviks and turned over by the British to the commanding admiral, a couple of tugs, and unclassified vessel, an ice-breaker, and a supply ship” according to Commissioner Gade's memoirs *All My Born Days* (1942).

After the United States entered the Great War on April 7, 1917, the *USS Chattanooga* built a distinguished service record as it performed dangerous convoy duty across the North Atlantic, protecting U.S. troop transport ships dodging German U-boats. As a former submariner, the *USS Chattanooga's* wartime commander was perfectly suited for this task. U.S. Navy Commander Arthur MacArthur III (1876-1923) also happened to be the son of Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur, Jr. (1845-1912) and the older brother of General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), who would later serve as the commander of U.S. ground forces in the Pacific during the Second World War. Commander MacArthur's reason for breaking family tradition and going to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1892 was that he apparently “didn't like to march.” For his accomplishments during the Battle of the Atlantic in command of the *USS Chattanooga*, Commander MacArthur earned the Navy Cross (the U.S. Navy's second highest award for bravery) and the Distinguished Service Medal in addition to being promoted to the rank of Captain.

By the time it reached Tallinn, Estonia (or Reval, Esthonia as it was known back then), the *USS Chattanooga* was under the command of U.S. Navy Captain Victor Kimberly (1877-1938). Captain Kimberly may well have known Captain MacArthur as both officers served on the gunboat *USS Vixen* around the time of the Spanish American War (1898). While Captain Kimberly would eventually go on to command several battleships including the *USS Maryland* and the *USS Arizona* (later sunk in the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor), back in November 1919 his assignment was to escort Commissioner Gade first to Tallinn and then to Riga.

While his ship was anchored in Tallinn, Captain Kimberly joined Commissioner Gade on a visit to the front lines near Narva on the eastern front of Estonia's War of Independence (1918-1920). This was Commissioner Gade's second visit to Estonia's front lines. During his first fact-finding mission in Spring 1919 for the American Peace Commission attending the Paris Peace talks, Lt. Commander Gade met with the commanders of all three armies fighting in an uneasy anti-Bolshevik alliance: General Johan Laidoner's Estonian Army, General Nikolai Yudenich's White Russian Army, and Colonel de Wahl's unit of the Baltic-German Land Defense forces.

After returning from his November visit to Narva, Commissioner Gade made all the necessary arrangements in Tallinn to set up his new diplomatic mission. The U.S. Government's first representative to the Baltic States then set sail on the *USS Chattanooga* for Riga which was to become his primary base of operations. With her mission in Europe accomplished, the *USS Chattanooga* proceeded on to her next assignment as the flagship of U.S. Naval Forces in the Black Sea region. After the United States withdrew from playing an active role in international affairs, the *USS Chattanooga* would be decommissioned on July 19, 1921.

Although called a destroyer, today's USS Mahan (DDG-72) carries a larger crew (350) and can travel twice as fast as the first cruiser to visit Tallinn. Displacing over 7,500 metric tons and over 150 meters long, the USS Mahan is also about twice the size of the USS Chattanooga. While it carries two twenty millimeter guns, the USS Mahan's main weapons are the arsenal of missiles in its Vertical Launch System. This Arleigh-Burke class destroyer and her 58 sister ships can also capable of supporting SH-60 Sea Hawk helicopters for anti-submarine operations. Launched on June 29, 1996 and commissioned on February 14, 1998, the USS Mahan is part of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and calls Norfolk, Virginia her home. Like every U.S. Navy ship visit dating back to the USS Chattanooga in November 1919, the USS Mahan's call this June symbolizes the many ties that bind the U.S. and Estonia together.