

Richard Wainwright (5 Feb 1817 – 10 Aug 1862)

The National Intelligencer, August 17, 1862

Death of Commander Wainwright

U.S. Flag Ship Hartford

New Orleans, August 10, 1862

Sir: It becomes my painful duty to report the death of Commander Richard Wainwright.



Commander Wainwright was taken sick with a slight fever some two weeks ago. The fleet surgeon considered his case a slight one, and that he would soon be enabled to resume his duties; but he continued to fail in strength, which circumstance, however, gave no alarm to the fleet surgeon until three days ago, when Dr. Foltz informed me the disease of Capt. Wainwright had taken a very sudden turn for the worse, and that he thought him to be in great danger. The next day, however, he rallied, and hopes were again entertained of his life, but this morning he was evidently worse, and at 3 p.m. he expired.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant.

D.G. Farragut, Flag Officer

Com'g W.G. Blok'g Squadron

Hon. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy.

The Evening Star, August 19, 1862

Obituary

Death of Capt. Wainwright

Flagship Hartford

New Orleans, August 10, 1862--3 p.m.

My Dear Sir: It becomes my painful duty to inform you of the death of my old friend and captain, Richard Wainwright, of this ship. He has just breathed his last, and the mail closes immediately. He died of fever contracted at Vicksburg, after having exhausted his strength by hard labor.

In our numerous battles he displayed a cool courage and abilities rarely met with, and to him, more than any other, was due the salvation of the Hartford when set on fire by the rebel fire-ship under the batteries of Forts Jackson and St. Philip, on the memorable morning of the 24th of April.

His death is deeply lamented by all on board. His body will be sent home.

Respectfully, yours, in haste,

J.M. Foltz, Fleet Surgeon

Prof. A.D. Bache

The above letter announces the death of an officer whose services the country can ill spare at the present crisis, and whose place in the hearts of his family and friends no time can fill; an officer whose skill met every emergency, and whose valor shrunk from no peril; a friend whose affection never failed, and whose loyalty never faltered. The sorrowing hearts of his family can utter their grief alone to that God whose Providence has taken him to itself, and whose grace alone can support them in the affliction.

Who Was Who in American History--The Military, 1976: Marquis Who's Who, Chicago, IL

Wainwright, Richard, naval officer; b. Charlestown, Mass., Jan. 5, 1819, son of Robert Dewar and Maria (Auchmuty) W; married Sally Bache, March 1, 1849, at least 4 children including Richard (Commd). Midshipman U.S. Navy, 1831; cruised in Mediterranean 1833-36; passed midshipman, 1837, commd Lt. 1841; served on ship Vincennes in Home Squadron, 1842-45; with ship Columbia in Brazil Squadron, 1846-47; with Coast Survey 1848-56; on brig Merrimac of Pacific Squadron 1859-60; served ordnance duty at Washington (D.C.), Navy Yard, 1860-61; promoted comdr. 1861; commanded the Hartford (flagship of Flag Officer David Farragut) 1861-62. Died on board Hartford, Donaldsville, La., August 10, 1862.

Dictionary of American Biography

(Jan. 5, 1817 - Aug. 10, 1862), naval officer, was born in Charleston, Mass., the son of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Dewar and Maria Montresor (Auchmuty) Wainwright, and a descendant of Richard Wainwright who was a planter in South Carolina in the early eighteenth century. His father (1781-1841), an officer of the United States Marine Corps, is noted for suppression of a mutiny in the Massachusetts state prison in 1824, an authentic record of which for many years formed one of the standard selections in school readers. Wainwright entered the navy as a midshipman on May 11, 1831, and after some preliminary training in his profession at Norfolk made a cruise in the Mediterranean (1833-36). He prepared at the Norfolk naval school for his examination for the grade of passed midshipman, a rank to which he was promoted from June 15, 1837. After a period of service at the Washington navy yard he was ordered to duty with the United States Coast Survey. In September 1841 he was promoted lieutenant. From 1842 to 1845 he was with the Vincennes of the Home Squadron, and from 1846 to 1847 with the Columbia of the Brazil Squadron. In 1848 he returned to the Coast Survey, serving there until 1856, part of the time as commander of the J.Y. Mason. After a period of service with the Merrimack of the Pacific Squadron (1857-60), he was assigned to ordnance duty at the Washington navy yard, where he was stationed in 1861. He was promoted commander from Apr. 24 of that year. In October he commanded the sailors at Fort Ellsworth near Alexandria, and in November he conveyed a detachment of seamen to Cairo, Ill. On the last day of the year he was detached from the navy yard and ordered to command the Hartford, the flagship of Flag Officer D.G. Farragut [q.v.], preparing for service on the lower Mississippi. On Apr. 24, 1862, when the fleet passed Forts St. Philip and Jackson, the flagship was subjected to a galling fire from the forts and was set on fire by a fire raft, being with difficulty saved from the flames. On the following day, when it was steaming up the river, shots were exchanged with the batteries on shore. The flagship arrived off New Orleans much riddled, with a loss of thirteen men. Later when she passed and repassed the batteries at Vicksburg she gave a good account of herself. On July 15 below Vicksburg she engaged the enemy's ram Arkansas and suffered a loss of nine men. In all of the operations of the squadron Wainwright until the last days of July had a distinguished part. He then suffered an attack of remittent fever which proved fatal within two weeks. His death occurred on board his vessel at Donaldsville, La.

On Mar. 1, 1849, he was married to Sally Franklin Bache, a great-grand-daughter of Benjamin Franklin and a grand-daughter of Richard Bache and Alexander J. Dallas [q.v.]. Richard Wainwright [q.v.] was the eldest of his four surviving children.

[Sources: Annette Townsend, *The Auchmuty Family in Scotland and America* (1932); Record of Officers, Bureau of Navigation, 1832-63; Navy Reg., 1817-62; Pension Records, Veterans' Administration; War of the Rebellion: Official Records (Navy), vols. IV, XVIII-XIX, XXII; R.S. Collum, *Hist. of the U.S. Marine Corps* (1890); obituary in *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), Aug. 19, 1862; letter from Richard Wainwright, Jr., Sept. 22, 1933.] C.O.P.