

THE INFLUENCE OF CAPTAIN ALFRED THAYER MAHAN UPON  
THE UNITED STATES NAVY THROUGH THE UNITED  
STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE'S PROCEEDINGS

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Military History

by

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## ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF CAPTAIN ALFRED THAYER MAHAN UPON THE UNITED STATES NAVY THROUGH THE UNITED STATES NAVAL INSTITUTE'S PROCEEDINGS, by LCDR Mark William Wever, U.S. Navy, 115 pages.

Nearly a century after his death, the influence of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan continues to fuel debate, discussion and research. As a prolific author, Mahan used the print media, the dominant form of communication in the early twentieth century, to influence the American public, government and the United States Navy. Although many studies have addressed his influence upon a specific topic, none have examined his influence through a single print media outlet. This study focuses on Mahan's use of the United States Naval Institute's magazine, *Proceedings*, from 1900-1914. An examination of Mahan's childhood, naval career and literary work provides the backdrop required to evaluate his influence upon the Navy through *Proceedings*. This study reveals that Mahan, a United States Naval Institute member, seldom used *Proceedings*, and therefore, limited his overall influence upon the Navy through the premiere naval magazine.

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## ACRONYMS

CARL	Combined Arms Research Library
LLS	Lawrence Literary Society
NIP	Naval Institute Press
NYNY	Navy Yard New York
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
USNI	United States Naval Institute
USS	United States Ship

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events.<sup>1</sup>

— Robert F. Kennedy, “Day of Affirmation Speech”

Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan is one of those rare individuals whose career, nearly 100 years after his death, continues to stir debate about his relevance and influence on the United States Navy. Most of the veterans who author books tend to do so about their unique experiences, they rarely inspire others to analyze their accomplishments or debate their influence.<sup>2</sup> As a seasoned author and Navy veteran, Mahan continues to be influential and relevant today.

Despite his father’s initial advice against it, Mahan served in the Navy for 40 years. He witnessed the transition from sail to steam power, wood to steel hulls and ignorance to adoption of the art of war as an integral requirement for naval officers.<sup>3</sup> Although Mahan endured significant Navy organizational and technological changes, he promoted the Navy’s study of the art of war.<sup>4</sup> As president of the United States Naval

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<sup>1</sup>Robert F. Kennedy, “Day of Affirmation Speech,” <http://www.theconversation.org/archive/eulogy.html> (accessed 14 May 2013).

<sup>2</sup>Mark Owens, *No Easy Day: The Autobiography of a Navy Seal* (New York: Penguin Group Inc, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *From Sail to Steam: Recollections of Naval Life* (New York: Harpers and Brothers Publishers, 1907), xiv.

<sup>4</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Address of Captain A. T. Mahan, U. S. Navy, President of the U.S. Naval War College, At the Opening of the Fourth Annual Session of the College, August 6, 1888,” *Proceedings* 47, no. 4 (1888): 621-639.

War College, he developed lectures on naval history, strategy and tactics. His lecture notes, published in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783* (hereafter *Sea Power*) influenced the Navy and a broader audience.<sup>5</sup> Despite the initial struggles to get it published, the release of Mahan's first *Sea Power* book was particularly timely as it drew attention and brought acclaim to both Mahan and the College. Senior members of the Navy believed the War College's curriculum was post-graduate in nature and did not require a separate institution. They believed activities of the War College could be absorbed by the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. The decision to close the War College was nearly finalized when Hilary A. Herbert, Secretary of the Navy, read *Sea Power* and visited the War College. After reading *Sea Power*, and seeing the War College firsthand, Herbert changed his mind.<sup>6</sup> The notoriety Mahan received from *Sea Power* was vastly different between naval officers and civilians. Some naval officers did not appreciate Mahan's literary work; they tried to delay or derail it. Magazine editors, on the other hand, understood Mahan's unique analytical and literary skills, and pursued him as an author. He established literary agreements with various magazine editors who requested Mahan to author articles on naval-related topics, international relations and imperialism. After his retirement from the Navy in 1896, Mahan served in a variety of capacities including guest lecturer at the War College, member of the Naval War Board during the Spanish-American War, delegate to the

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<sup>5</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1890).

<sup>6</sup>Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan: Volume II, 1890-1901* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 141-143; Mahan letter to Deldie, 24 August 1893.

inaugural Hague Peace Conference, president of the American Historical Association, and member of several Navy commissions and committees.<sup>7</sup> Even after his retirement, Mahan served the Navy and other entities in a variety of positions for an additional 16 years; 12 years into his retirement, in 1906, he was promoted to Rear Admiral.

The historical influence of Mahan upon the United States and other countries is well documented. Many of the books Mahan authored were translated into other languages such as Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish and Swedish.<sup>8</sup> Notable military leaders around the world were influenced by Mahan's books including Chiang Kai-shek, who wrote the forewords for two Taiwanese translations of Mahan's, *Naval Strategy Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operations on Land*.<sup>9</sup> Japan acknowledged Mahan's influence in an 1897 letter from the Oriental Association of Tokyo:

'Tis the greatest honor of mine to inform you that your valuable work on *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* is lately translated by the Club of Naval Officers. . . . Translation of your valuable book we adopted as one of our honorable transactions. Our purpose was, indeed, to give our countrymen the knowledge of naval affairs, at present the most important knowledge in this part of the world. The facts show that our humble purpose is realised [sic]. The Japanese edition of your valuable work attracted the attention of our public, the Naval and Military Colleges have adopted it as their textbook.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Charles Carlisle Taylor, *The Life of Admiral Mahan: Naval Philosopher* (London: John Murray, 1920), 343.

<sup>8</sup>John D. Hattendorf and Lynn D. Hattendorf, *A Bibliography of the Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1986), 15-18, 21-25, 28-29.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>10</sup>Taylor, *The Life of Admiral Mahan*, 114.

A friend of Mahan's, Captain William H. Henderson of the British Navy, credited him with reviving interest in the Royal Navy and the corresponding increase in British naval expenditures in 1894.<sup>11</sup> Mahan's influence rippled around the globe.

People today are influenced by Mahan's literary work. In 1902, Leopold J. Maxse, Editor of the *National Review*, which was published in London, asked Mahan to analyze the Persian Gulf region and write an article.<sup>12</sup> Mahan accepted Maxse's literary request and authored "The Persian Gulf and International Relations" and in the process, coined a phrase that is ubiquitous today, "The middle East, if I may adopt a term which I have not seen."<sup>13</sup> Mahan conceived the geographical reference, now common throughout the world, to describe the area he sailed around in 1867 aboard the USS *Iroquois*.

Michael B. Oren, the author of *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* wrote, "For centuries, Westerners had referred to the Muslim-ruled lands between Fez and Kabul, Baghdad and Belgrade, as the Orient or, more simply, the East."<sup>14</sup> As Oren stated in his book, "Mahan emphasized the connection between great-power status and the control of international trade by massive armies."<sup>15</sup> Few people create terms that are universally adopted on an international scale. Mahan understood the

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<sup>11</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 254-255; Mahan letter to Deldie, 31 March 1894.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan: Volume III, 1902-1914* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 11-12; Mahan letter to Maxse, 21 February 1902.

<sup>13</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations Naval and Political* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 237.

<sup>14</sup>Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: American in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1955), 307.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

strategic importance of the region, and gave it a precise name. This precise name “Middle East,” is used universally today.

Mahan’s professional pedigree and extensive naval experience provided him a unique perspective of the world. The triad of people who influenced the young Mahan consisted of his father, mother, and uncle. Mahan’s father, Dennis Hart Mahan, was the top graduate of the United States Military Academy, West Point class of 1824.<sup>16</sup> In addition to creating a structured, academic environment, the elder Mahan modeled Christian values, complementing the strong, stable Christian influence of Mahan’s mother, Mary Helena Okill Mahan, provided for the family. Mahan shared his mother’s prayers about his life with a friend when he wrote, “Mother often told me before I entered the service, that, from the time I was born she had dedicated me to God’s service, and that it had been the prayer of her life since.”<sup>17</sup> Mahan’s uncle, the Reverend Milo Mahan, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the New York General Theological Seminary, was also a strong Christian influence in his life. Mahan lived with his uncle before he joined the Navy. Over the years, these three influential family members created the structured academic and Christian environment in which Mahan was raised.<sup>18</sup> Years later, Mahan reflected upon his privileged youth and called it, “inherited aptitude.”<sup>19</sup> Mahan’s

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<sup>16</sup>Taylor, 4.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan: Volume I, 1847-1889* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1975), 10-14; Mahan letter to Ashe, 30 October 1858.

<sup>18</sup>Taylor, 4.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1977), 2.

inherited academic aptitude helped him graduate second in his Naval Academy class of 1859.

The physical isolation Mahan experienced as a youth at West Point foreshadowed his later sea service deployments. Mahan served aboard a variety of ships, but nearly every port he visited had one thing in common, the British. The sea duty Mahan performed gave him a broad perspective on the world, one that could not be attained or understood through books. In Mahan's era, the captain of a ship was also a diplomat. During his sea service, Mahan interacted with foreigners and naval officers from foreign navies, and was exposed to different cultural, diplomatic, and maritime interplay that were later woven into his literary masterpieces. A biographer of Mahan, Charles Carlisle Taylor, captured this thought, "The practical knowledge thus gained was of priceless value to him twenty years later in analyzing the details of the strategy and tactics employed by Nelson and other famous commanders in the great naval battles of the world."<sup>20</sup> The potent combination of pedigree and international experience laid the groundwork for Mahan's literary and analytical skills to flourish.

Mahan understood and appreciated the power of the written word. As a boy, he delighted in reading sea stories from naval officers who were published in *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine*.<sup>21</sup> Reading magazines and books helped Mahan to depart the secluded Military Academy and travel the world. Years later, as an experienced naval officer, Mahan frequently wrote to his family. He relied on correspondence from home, especially his wife, Ellen Evans Mahan or Deldie, for

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<sup>20</sup>Taylor, 10.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 5.

encouragement and strength during challenging times.<sup>22</sup> In 1895, after 39 years of military service and multiple sea tours, Mahan still leaned on letters from home for morale support. He wrote Deldie from the USS *Chicago*, anxious for news about their bedridden son Lyle, “You don’t know what a deprivation your failure to write has been to me under these conditions, nor can I account for it except by supposing you so preoccupied with Lyle, for I have too often charged you not to stop writing.”<sup>23</sup> Letters from family members and friends, helped Mahan during stressful times. Two of Mahan’s friends, whom he wrote regularly, were Rear Admiral Stephen Bleecker Luce and Samuel A. Ashe. Although he met them in the Navy, Luce at a United States Naval Institute meeting and Ashe at the Naval Academy, the contents of his letters to them were very different.<sup>24</sup> Mahan wrote Luce about professional matters; he wrote Ashe about personal and political matters. Mahan suffered the loss of his father to suicide in 1871.<sup>25</sup> This tragedy may have pushed Mahan to seek Luce as a mentor. As a trusted friend who shared the same professional development ideas about naval officers, Luce became Mahan’s confidante on professional matters. The influence of Luce upon Mahan was significant, and the bulk of it was the result of and reflected by, their correspondence. Mahan’s personal experience with the written word changed his life.

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<sup>22</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 405; Mahan letter to Deldie, 24 February 1895.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 407-408; Mahan letter to Deldie, 4 March 1895.

<sup>24</sup>William D. Puleston, *Mahan: The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, U.S.N.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1939), 59.

<sup>25</sup>Seager, 89.

The written correspondence Mahan amassed reveals interesting details, helpful clues, and broad insights into his personal and professional relationships. Robert Seager II estimated that “Mahan wrote more than 10,000 letters during his lifetime,” of which 2,900 have survived.<sup>26</sup> The surviving letters represent correspondence Mahan mailed to others, which discloses only half of the dialogue. While the exact contents of the personal correspondence Mahan received remains unknown, the essence of the letters can be discerned through Mahan’s written responses, which also provide details about the 7,100 letters he wrote that did not survive. The genesis behind the books, and magazine and newspaper articles Mahan authored are explained in great detail within the surviving letters.

Critics and supporters of Mahan owe a debt of gratitude to the individuals who influenced the topics on which Mahan wrote. The *Sea Power* book series was the direct result of Luce’s invitation to Mahan to chair the History Department of the War College.<sup>27</sup> In the process of developing the War College lectures, Mahan realized the need for textbooks on the topics he had studied. He captured this sentiment in a letter to Benjamin F. Tracy, Secretary of the Navy, when he wrote, “The professional success my own book has had, in England and here, is due less to its own merit than to the utter barrenness of naval literature bearing on the Art of Naval War.”<sup>28</sup> The humility in which Mahan addressed the book’s success was admirable and reflected his realization that another person deserved credit. In a letter to Luce, Mahan acknowledged the important

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<sup>26</sup>Seager, 1.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>28</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 40-41; Mahan letter to Tracy, 14 March 1891.



role he played in the development of the *Sea Power* book, “Whatever usefulness the book may be found to have, the merit is ultimately due to yourself, but for whose initiation it would never have been undertaken.”<sup>29</sup> The success of *Sea Power* catapulted Mahan into the literary spotlight. Magazine editors noticed his work and pursued his analytical and literary skills for their print media outlets. In an 1890 letter, Mahan informed Horace E. Scudder, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, that he would need to be compensated at the “usual rate” because with all the competing demands on him he was unable “to do any purely volunteer work.”<sup>30</sup> Mahan’s literary work evolved into a second career, which provided his family a revenue stream they would need after his upcoming retirement from the Navy. Despite the many opportunities to be a paid pundit, Mahan was overwhelmed with requests for articles and book reviews to the point of having to decline literary offers. In an 1894 letter to Deldie he shared his frustration with having to decline literary work, “I have now so many requests for articles it is tantalizing to be unable to comply.”<sup>31</sup> Many of Mahan’s published books and magazine articles were the result of prompts by an external source, a publisher or editor. The topic ideas book publishers and magazine editors requested helped Mahan author 20 books and 161 magazine articles.<sup>32</sup>

The collection of literary work Mahan authored provides an incredible repository for research and analysis. Mahan wrote on a wide range of topics including naval history,

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<sup>29</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 9-10; Mahan letter to Luce, 7 May 1890.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 26; Mahan letter to Scudder, 26 September 1890.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 355; Mahan letter to Deldie, 1 November 1894.

<sup>32</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 9,12, 18, 20, 23-24, 32, 34, 35, 37-39, 41, 43, 45-46, 48-49, 51.

naval strategy, naval tactics, naval administration, naval biographies, professional development, imperialism, Christianity, and international relations. The range of topics available to an aspiring researcher who is studying Mahan is vast. Mahan's extensive body of literary work, for all practical purposes, prompts both debate and analysis regarding his relevance and influence. Many writers have debated Mahan's influence, but none have researched his influence on the Navy through a specific print media outlet, such as the United States Naval Institute's magazine, *Proceedings*.

The study involved determining what Mahan published in *Proceedings*, as well as background information about Mahan and his interactions with the Naval Institute. The first chapter introduces the research, and addresses research conducted by other scholars investigating Mahan and his theories. The next chapter provides background information on Mahan to provide the reader with an understanding of the factors that influenced him and his corresponding 35-year literary career. Chapter 3 covers Mahan's four-decade long military career, and his interactions with and influence upon the Navy. The fourth chapter focuses on Mahan's literary interactions with the Naval Institute with detailed information about what he published in *Proceedings*. The fifth and final chapter contains a summary of Mahan's influence upon the Navy through *Proceedings* from 1900-1914, and potential reasons for his reluctance to publish with the Naval Institute. This chapter also includes possible topics for further study.

#### Primary Research Question

Mahan was an influential Naval Officer. The purpose of this thesis is to examine his influence upon the Navy. What was the influence of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan on

the United States Navy from 1900-1914 through the United States Naval Institute magazine *Proceedings*?

### Secondary Questions

A study of Mahan's influence upon the Navy provokes a few secondary study questions. What was the mission of the United States Naval Institute at the time Mahan was writing? Who constituted the readership of *Proceedings*? What was Mahan's personal and professional affiliation or involvement with the United States Naval Institute?

### Delimitations

Due to Mahan's broad use of the print media, it was necessary to narrow the scope of the study. Mahan published books with a variety of publishers and articles in many different magazines and newspapers. The first task was to reduce the print media outlets under investigation to streamline the research; *Proceedings* was the logical choice. The Naval Institute's mission, to advance knowledge in the Navy, made analyzing *Proceedings* for Mahan's influence straightforward.<sup>33</sup> The second task required narrowing the period under examination. Since the Naval Institute began publishing *Proceedings* in 1873, the volume of material addressing Mahan is extensive. This study covers the period 1900 to 1914, the bulk of Mahan's post-Navy retirement years, and the period of time when two-thirds of his magazine articles, 110 out of 161, were published.

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<sup>33</sup>R. Daveluy, "A Study of Naval Strategy," *Proceedings* 36, no. 2 (1910): 391-428.

## Historiography

Mahan's literary collection is large and invites exploration; hence there is plenty of research on his life and views. The literature he wrote, in addition to his personal correspondence, provides the largest repository of primary source documents. The secondary source documents necessary for an informed study comprise the literary products that examined, evaluated or interpreted Mahan. The volume of primary and secondary source documents available on Mahan provides sufficient material for an examination of his influence upon the Navy through *Proceedings*.

Mahan's personal correspondence and autobiography revealed detailed information about his daily life. These primary source documents highlight the peaks and valleys of Mahan's life. His autobiography, *From Sail to Steam: Recollections of Naval Life*, contained a special section where he responded to a reader's request.<sup>34</sup> One of the rich primary sources of personal information on Mahan originated from the curiosity of a reader. A reader of *Harper's Magazine*, which published Mahan, asked for more information about his youth. Mahan, aspiring to respond to all personal correspondence, added the section "Introducing Myself" to *From Sail to Steam*. The special insert provided thorough background information about Mahan's family and childhood until age 16, "I entered the Naval Academy, as an 'acting midshipman,' September 30, 1856."<sup>35</sup> Biographical tidbits such as this help us understand Mahan the man versus the naval officer.

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<sup>34</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, ix.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

The most extensive collection of primary sources on Mahan is his surviving correspondence, nearly 3,000 letters. Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire preserved Mahan's letters and papers in three volumes, *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*. The volumes, spanning 1847-1889, 1890-1901 and 1902-1914, preserved a portion of Mahan's letters. There are two reasons for the small collection of letters preserved in *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan*. First, most letters did not survive. Second, of the letters that did survive, the contents of some of them were so mundane that they were deemed unimportant. The authors address this matter in the preface of the first volume, "routine letters, reports, returns, and official forms written or signed by Mahan have been omitted, but a list of such omissions, indicating the recipient, date, repository, and general subject matter of each document has been supplied. Transcripts of court-martial in which Mahan participated have also been omitted."<sup>36</sup> While Seager and Maguire prioritized Mahan's letters and papers, and omitted routine items that addressed legal matters, their three volumes "comprise a representative sampling" of Mahan's personal correspondence and papers.<sup>37</sup> The three, partially sanitized, volumes of letters and papers of Mahan provide candid insights into Mahan's personality, motivation and character.

Another set of primary sources is the vast collection of magazine articles Mahan authored. Mahan wrote articles on numerous topics that included military education, military history, military leaders, military preparedness and international relations. His articles were published in *American Historical Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Century*

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<sup>36</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, vii.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

*Magazine, Colliers Weekly, The Forum, Harper's Monthly, Harper's Weekly, The Independent, International Monthly, Leslie's Weekly, McClure's Magazine, National Review, North American Review, Proceedings, Scribner's Magazine, Scientific American, World's Work and Living Age.*<sup>38</sup> Mahan's surviving letters detail the negotiations and genesis, of many of his published magazine articles. In some of his letters, Mahan debated the merits of a magazine article title, but in the end deferred to the editor's expertise. His surviving letters also document his attention to detail; Mahan proofed magazine articles and commented on their layout and use of photographs. Mahan worked hard to get quality magazine articles published, and he occasionally attempted to choreograph their release to coincide with a future book.

The literary work of Mahan's that was published in *Proceedings* constitutes the central, primary source of data for this study. In 1879, *Proceedings* published Mahan's first essay, "Naval Education," and in 1909 it published Mahan's address embedded within "The Ceremonies at the Unveiling of the Sampson Memorial Window in the Naval Academy Chapel" article. During the intervening years, *Proceedings* published material with Mahan's consent, without his consent, and from many other authors who referenced, critiqued or quoted Mahan. *Proceedings* published a total of eight of Mahan's works during his 35-year literary career.

No literature review of Mahan is complete without mentioning his books and specifically, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783.*<sup>39</sup> This classic book launched Mahan's literary career, and set the tone for the *Sea Power* series, which

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<sup>38</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 65-81.

<sup>39</sup>Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History.*

established him as a serious historian and strategist. The majority of the books Mahan authored addressed military topics except one, *The Harvest Within: Thoughts on the life of the Christian*.<sup>40</sup> Mahan repackaged many of his books in order to publish them as a series of articles in magazines and vice versa. The books Mahan authored provide a wealth of information on naval strategy, tactics and history.

For this study, the best secondary source of information on Mahan's literary collection was *A Bibliography of the Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan*.<sup>41</sup> In the book, John and Lynn Hattendorf provide an exhaustive list of books, journal and magazine articles, newspaper contributions, and pamphlets, including translations, of Mahan's work. The bibliography snapped a panoramic picture of Mahan's literary career that captured the intricate relationships between published books and articles. Many of the publishing agreements Mahan made with magazine editors allowed him to retain ownership rights of the material for later publishing in book form. As a result of his savvy negotiations, 15 of Mahan's 20 published books were either in whole or part, reprinted individually as magazine articles in addition to their book releases.<sup>42</sup> The publishing arrangements Mahan choreographed expanded his literary income without much additional effort. Mahan was paid to repackage his literary material for different print media formats. Besides capturing the interplay between books and magazine articles, the bibliography also lists the dates when Mahan's material was published. Understanding the dates when

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<sup>40</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Harvest Within: Thoughts on the Life of the Christian* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1909).

<sup>41</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 9-81.

Mahan's material was published and with whom, provides clarity on his large literary collection.

Three biographies of Mahan provide detailed information about his personal and professional life, including his literary works. The biographies authored by Charles Carlisle Taylor (1920), William D. Puleston (1939) and Robert Seager II (1977) are thorough secondary sources of information about Mahan, each with a slightly different perspective. Taylor, the late British Vice-Consul at New York, authored an adoring biography of Mahan entitled *The Life of Admiral Mahan: Naval Philosopher*.<sup>43</sup> While it was published within six years of Mahan's death, Taylor's unprecedented access to Mahan's family streamlined his research. Taylor wrote his biography from a uniquely British perspective; he never attempted to mask his personal bias in favor of Mahan, "for an American who by force of character overcame well-nigh insuperable obstacles and, as the result of years of strenuous work and skillful application of his superb mental powers, earned for himself in the eyes of the world the biggest distinction yet accorded a naval philosopher."<sup>44</sup> Twenty-five years after Mahan's death, Puleston, a Captain serving in the UNITED STATES Navy, wrote a biography of Mahan from the other side of the Atlantic, "there is room for another account of Mahan which will demonstrate that his message was primarily intended for the American people."<sup>45</sup> The biography Puleston wrote contains more details about Mahan's service in the Navy, and the tension that occurred during a four-decade long career than Taylor's, and does not idolize Mahan.

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<sup>43</sup>Taylor.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., vii.

<sup>45</sup>Puleston, v.



Seager wrote the most recent biography reviewed is this study with the understanding that it “is not, and could not be, a definitive biography . . . not when some 70 per cent to 75 per cent of his personal and professional letters remain secreted in various attics or archives or have been destroyed.”<sup>46</sup>

Seager, who coauthored the three-volume *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan* series, clearly conducted the most thorough research of the three biographers. Although written 63 years after Mahan’s death, it surpasses the two aforementioned biographies in terms of scope, content and objectivity. Seager’s biography provided extensive details about Mahan’s character, seamanship and interpersonal relationships that helped reduce the author’s bias during the study. The cluster of biographies provided spectacular vantage points from which to evaluate Mahan’s literary career and influence upon the Navy.

Some secondary source documents highlight a growing trend by military officers and scholars who have discovered the merits of Mahan’s sea power methodology. A small group of Air Force officers and enthusiasts realized the Air Force’s need for a Mahan equivalent within their ranks. In 1997, *Proceedings* published an article that lobbied for a “Space Power” Mahan; Mahan’s influence upon the Air Force has been climbing ever since.<sup>47</sup> The portability of Mahan’s sea power methodology to other domains was realized by a few Air Force supporters. In 2003, Walter J. Boyne, retired United States Air Force colonel and historian, published *The Influence of Air Power upon*

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<sup>46</sup>Seager, xi.

<sup>47</sup>Kenneth Roy, “Ship Killers from low Earth Orbit,” *Proceedings* 123, no. 10 (1997): 40-43.

*History*.<sup>48</sup> Besides the embedded tribute to Mahan in the book's title, Boyne used Mahan's sea power criteria to develop and assess analogous criteria in order to evaluate the influence of air power. In 2006, *Proceedings* published a book review of *Why Air Forces Fail: The Anatomy of Defeat*.<sup>49</sup> The review evaluated the work of two aviation historians and their utilization of Mahan's sea power criteria to assess Air Force failures. In 2012, James R. Holmes, Naval War College associate professor and defense analyst, published *Air Power Meets Alfred Thayer Mahan*. Holmes echoed the growing chorus of Air Force supporters, "sea power evangelist Alfred Thayer Mahan is the natural strategic theorist of air power."<sup>50</sup> In 2013, Major Kris E. Barcomb, Cyberspace Strategist for the United States Air Force, acknowledged the utility in applying Mahan's sea power criteria to yet another domain, "We can learn a great deal from Mahan's methodology for delineating and prioritizing the sea domain into actionable items. Thus, this article identifies strategic categories in cyberspace by adopting Mahan's approach."<sup>51</sup> Mahan's popularity within the Air Force continued to climb as more individuals realized the broad application of his sea power methodology to their domains.

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<sup>48</sup>Walter Boyne, *The Influence of Air Power Upon History* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc, 2003).

<sup>49</sup>Richard R. Muller, "Why Air Forces Fail: The Anatomy of Defeat," *Proceedings* 132, no. 6 (2006): 81-2.

<sup>50</sup>Harry Levins, "Historian Champions Air Power from Balloons to 'Smart' Bombs," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 3 August 2003, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/402321577?accountid=28992> (accessed 6 September 2012).

<sup>51</sup>Kris E. Barcomb, "From Sea Power to Cyber Power," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (2013): 78-83.

While key people in the Air Force acknowledged Mahan's relevance, a growing number of active and retired Navy personnel questioned Mahan's relevance. In 2003, John Byron, retired United States Navy captain and former National War College instructor wrote "A New Navy for a New World." In the *Proceedings* article Byron concluded that, "Alfred Thayer Mahan is dead. We have no fleets to fight."<sup>52</sup> Byron did not view Mahan's sea power methodology as portable or relevant. He postulated that since the United States owned the oceans, the only requirement was the ability to reconstitute sea control quicker than an enemy.<sup>53</sup> In 2009, Captain R. B. Watts, United States Coast Guard, National War College instructor and Ph.D. candidate at the Royal Military College of Canada, authored the provocatively titled essay, "The End of Sea Power." Watts openly accused the Navy of clinging to Mahan's "century-old world view" and "relying almost exclusively on a vision of frozen history."<sup>54</sup> Watts believed the Navy's focus on large fleets and decisive battles hampered its ability to develop future missions. Another debate that continues within Navy circles is Mahan's views toward battleship construction. In May 2013, Lieutenant Commander Benjamin Armstrong used Mahan's June 1906 essay, "Reflections, Historic and Other, Suggested by the Battle of the Japan Sea" and Lieutenant Commander William Sims' December 1906 response, "The Inherent Tactical Qualities of All-Big-Gun, One Calibre [sic] Battleships," as an example of the type of debate encouraged by the Naval Institute. In his article, "Now

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<sup>52</sup>John Byron, "A New Navy for a New World," *Proceedings* 129, no. 3 (2003): 86-8, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/205975621?accountid=28992> (accessed 6 September 2012).

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>R. B. Watts, "The End of Sea Power," *Proceedings* 135, no. 9 (2009): 40-44.

Hear This—‘If we are to Remain a World Power,’” Armstrong announced Sims as the winner of the debate by portraying Mahan as an advocate of “smaller and more numerous ships with mixed batteries of different calibers.”<sup>55</sup> Opinions about Mahan’s views are numerous, and continue to be vigorously debated within the pages of *Proceedings* and other magazines. Despite a healthy debate between naval enthusiasts about Mahan’s theories and relevance, and a few calling for Mahan to be read his last rites, one historian approached the discussion from a new angle.

Debating the relevance of Mahan’s theories in the 21st century is one issue, striking him from the naval strategy debate, as one secondary source had done, is another matter. In 2009, Barrett Tillman, historian, writer and speaker, published “Fear and Loathing in the Post-Naval Era,” in *Proceedings*.<sup>56</sup> In the article, Tillman echoed Watts’ sentiment about the era of large fleets being over. While his commentary was not inflammatory, he neglected to reference Mahan. Thomas A. Davis, retired United States Navy captain, noticed the encrypted message buried within Tillman’s five-page naval strategy essay. It never mentioned the father of United States naval strategy, Mahan.<sup>57</sup> The message Tillman communicated was Mahan is dead, buried and forgotten. Davis defended Mahan when he wrote, “Mahan and many others have exhaustively addressed the questions and issues that Tillman raises, such as the need for a peacetime and wartime

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<sup>55</sup>Benjamin Armstrong, “Now Hear This—‘If we are to Remain a World Power,’” *Proceedings* 139, no. 5 (2013): 323.

<sup>56</sup>Barrett Tillman, “Fear and Loathing in the Post-Naval Era,” *Proceedings* 135, no. 6 (2009): 16-21.

<sup>57</sup>Thomas A. Davis, “Comment and Discussion,” *Proceedings* 135, no. 7 (2009): 6, 7, 80-82, 84, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/205990719?accountid=28992> (accessed 6 September 2012).

Navy, in addition to associated political and economic issues.”<sup>58</sup> The debate about Mahan’s relevance within the military continues.

While some secondary sources dispute Mahan’s relevance upon the United States Navy, others have taken a different track and attacked his international appeal. David Ignatius, *Washington Post* columnist, published an article in 2011 that questioned Mahan’s relevance in China. While he acknowledged the ongoing debate between Chinese defense analysts on Mahanian doctrine, Ignatius highlighted the views of a Dingli Shen, Fudan University instructor and defense analyst. Shen and Watts share the same views, “Mahan is outdated.”<sup>59</sup> Shen spoke at a 2010 defense talk on the future of warfare, and his focus was clearly on advanced technology, “With a laser weapon fired from space, any ship will be burned.”<sup>60</sup> Some nations who once embraced Mahanian principles have now joined the chorus of people questioning his relevancy.

Not all secondary sources of information have examined Mahan and pronounced him dead. In 2011, John T. Kuehn, retired United States Navy commander and United States Army Command and General Staff College, Professor of Military History, reminded historians and naval enthusiasts that, “Mahan’s later writings are filled with skepticism about naval plans that rely on technological innovations without considering

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<sup>58</sup>Davis, 6, 7, 80-82, 84.

<sup>59</sup>David Ignatius, “Warfare of the Future Conjures Buck Rogers,” *The Herald*, 2 January 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/821937175?accountid=28992> (accessed 21 December 2012).

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

strategic political contexts, organizational factors, and doctrinal frameworks.”<sup>61</sup> Mahan viewed the global commons from a unique perspective, a broad perspective, and he cautioned others about relying too heavily on technology, words that remain relevant today. In 2003, David Adams reminded *Proceedings* readers of Mahan’s assessment of China, “If the advantage to us is great of a China open to commerce, the danger to us and to her is infinitely greater of a China enriched and strengthened by the material advantages we have to offer, but uncontrolled in the use of them,” and the implications, “Mahan’s worst fears are coming true.”<sup>62</sup> The many assessments made by Mahan on a variety of topics, are best viewed individually, vice clustered together and stamped irrelevant. Kuehn understands the depth and breadth of Mahan’s relevance, “it is too early to bury Mahan.” To paraphrase Mark Twain, “The reports of Mahan’s death are greatly exaggerated.” Several secondary sources concur with the restatement of Twain’s phrase, and some are advocating for Mahan to be revisited.

A generalized consensus proposes that technological changes in the last 100 years have changed warfare, but the ebb and flow of international commerce remains nearly the same. Michael J. Robertson’s “Sea Control Remains Critical,” contribution to *Proceedings*, called for Mahan to be reconsidered. Robertson referenced Mahan, and other individuals from his era, when he stated, “It is time to return to the study of these

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<sup>61</sup>John T. Kuehn, “Is Mahan Dead?” *Historically Speaking* 12, no. 1 (2011): 30-32.

<sup>62</sup>David A. Adams, “Managing China’s Transition,” *Proceedings* 129, no. 7 (2003): 50.

classic authors, and reflect on what they have to teach us.”<sup>63</sup> Other naval enthusiasts have joined Robertson’s proposal to revisit Mahan. John D. Dotson, Lieutenant Commander United States, argued in *Proceedings* that Mahan’s legacy is worth reconsidering. He acknowledged that a few of Mahan’s principles were outdated, but that “some of his underlying strategic principles, such as the importance of safeguarding the sea lanes of maritime trade, hold true today.”<sup>64</sup> Another proponent of returning to Mahan is Harlan Ullman, retired United States Navy captain and senior policy analyst. In his attention-getting article in *Proceedings*, “Turning Mahan on his Head,” Ullman discussed the difficulty in rating sea power in the 21st century, and the additional variables of “perceptions, ideologies, and ideas.”<sup>65</sup> While a critic of Mahan, Ullman called for a reexamination of Mahanian theories before their application to naval forces, “From this excursion on the impact of history, to return to Mahan, our best naval minds need to examine how sea power and naval forces can indeed be used to influence history.”<sup>66</sup>

Three books provided quality secondary sources of information on Mahan’s naval strategy. In the book *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Philip A. Crowl, former head of the strategy department at the Naval War College, critiqued Mahan and sea power. After opening with a condensed biography of Mahan, Crowl addressed sea power, and more

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<sup>63</sup>Michael J. Robertson, “Sea Control Remains Critical,” *Proceedings* 123, no. 4 (1997): 64-68.

<sup>64</sup>John D. Dotson, “Look to the 30/105 Zone for a New Naval Strategy,” *Proceedings* 133, no. 5 (2007): 64-68.

<sup>65</sup>Harlan Ullman, “Turning Mahan On His Head,” *Proceedings* 132, no. 7 (2006): 12.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

importantly, the fact that Mahan “neglected to define it to any degree of precision.”<sup>67</sup> Crowl highlighted the ambiguity of Mahan’s definition of sea power and the two principal meanings that Mahan promoted. He also asserted that Mahan was not interested in “scientific objectivity,” because he succumbed to “what David Hackett Fischer calls ‘the reductive fallacy [that] reduces complexity to simplicity, or diversity to uniformity.’”<sup>68</sup> Jon Tetsuro Sumida attempted to synthesize Mahan’s main points in his 1997 book, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered*. Sumida concluded, “Reading every page of his numerous, long books required enormous time,” but his research paid dividends in that he succinctly captured the essence of Mahan’s strategy.<sup>69</sup> Geoffrey Till paid his respects to Mahan by opening *Seapower* with, “Mahan was a realist,” and then analyzed Mahan’s sea power principles and their relevance, and irrelevance, to the 21st century.<sup>70</sup> The scholarship of these authors provides detailed secondary sources of information on Mahan and reinforces the current debates that suggest Mahan remains just as influential today as ever.

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<sup>67</sup>Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 451.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 454.

<sup>69</sup>Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 2.

<sup>70</sup>Geoffrey Till, *Seapower, A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), 1.



## Methodology

The large and expanding collection of literary work that addresses the influence of Mahan, or his relevance to today, is significant. Adding Mahan's literary work to the list of reading material available increases it substantially. This study was narrowed to one print media source, *Proceedings* magazine. *Proceedings* was the premiere print media outlet for Mahan to influence the Navy, which coincided with the mission of Naval Institute. An examination of the articles *Proceedings* published by Mahan, and other authors who referenced, quoted or debated Mahanian principles, provided the central primary sources of data for the study. With a print media outlet chosen, the period of time under review was decided, 1900-1914. After a general review of the resources available at the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), a period of intense research commenced. The CARL retains microfilm of *Proceedings* from 1874 until the present. Microfilm was ordered for the period 1890-1914, with the earlier decade included to provide historical content. The research librarians at the CARL provided the microfilm and training necessary to review it. The overall quality of the CARL archive holdings of *Proceedings* is very good. A few of the microfilm reels are missing the "Table of Contents" and cover pages for individual issues. The omitted material only temporarily affected the research and cataloguing of data. A few of the *Proceedings* issues were so dark that the contrast adjustments provided no relief for quality reading. The research continued with an examination of Mahan, his literary work, and interactions with print media outlets. This expanded research helped to develop the key literary relationships in Mahan's life, and allowed for an examination of his influence on the Navy through *Proceedings*.

## CHAPTER 2

### FORMING ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.<sup>71</sup>

— Vernon Sanders Law, “The Quotations Page”

Mahan’s journey from isolated boyhood at West Point to distinguished naval historian and strategist was influenced by his unique upbringing. An examination of Mahan’s formative years exposes the influences that shaped and molded him to become a successful naval officer and author. Mahan alluded to his privileged upbringing in *From Sail to Steam*, “Having grown up myself so far amid abundant opportunity, and been carefully looked after.”<sup>72</sup> The high expectations held by his parents, his unique childhood experiences and his adventuresome teenage years all contributed to his future success.

Alfred Thayer Mahan was born on 27 September 1840 to Dennis Hart Mahan and Mary Helena Okill Mahan.<sup>73</sup> He received the middle name Thayer from Colonel Sylvanus Thayer, Superintendent of the Military Academy who his father worked for and admired. Mahan’s name would always remind him of his family’s military heritage and connection to West Point. Mahan and his five siblings grew up at the United States Military Academy, an atypical environment. They lived in assigned housing that was

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<sup>71</sup>Michael Moncur, “Quotations by Author, Vern Sanders Law,” The Quotations Page, [http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Vernon\\_Sanders\\_Law/](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Vernon_Sanders_Law/) (accessed 23 April 2013).

<sup>72</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 71.

<sup>73</sup>Naval History and Heritage Command, “Biographies in Naval History, Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, US Navy,” [http://www.history.navy.mil/bios/mahan\\_alfred.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/bios/mahan_alfred.htm) (accessed 28 December 2012).

suitable for a Professor of Civil and Military Engineering.<sup>74</sup> As Puleston wrote, “he could not, during the impressionable years between eight and twelve, have escaped noticing the outdoor routine, the guard mounting, section calls, squad and battalion drills that followed in such regular succession, or missed the artillery drills or maneuvers of cavalry on the plain.”<sup>75</sup> Mahan was surrounded by military training, discussions, discipline and books. His father brought books home from the Academy library that he felt were “entertaining and suitable” for his children.<sup>76</sup> Unlike most households in the mid-19th century, the Mahan household contained maps. Mahan referred to them in letters home, and wrote his mother in 1868 during a cruise to Japan, “I don’t know whether you will find Hiogo on the map, but it is distant about twelve miles from Ohosaka.”<sup>77</sup> In this structured, academic setting, Mahan fell in love with reading. Years later in his autobiography, he fondly recalled spending “many of those happy hours that only childhood knows poring over the back numbers of a British service periodical, which began its career in 1828, with the title *Colburn’s United Service Magazine*.”<sup>78</sup> Mahan enjoyed nautical stories such as *Leaves from my Log Book*, and some postulated that the sea stories influenced him to later join the Navy.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Puleston, 11-12.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>77</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 119; Mahan letter to Mary Helena Okill Mahan, 2 January 1868.

<sup>78</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, v.

<sup>79</sup>Puleston, 15.

Dennis Hart Mahan's parents immigrated to the United States from Ireland early in the 19th century. Dennis was born in 1802, and his family moved to Norfolk, Virginia where he spent his youth and developed a fondness for the South.<sup>80</sup> As a teenager, Congressman Thomas Newton and Dr. Robert Archer became aware of Dennis's academic potential and helped him gain an appointment to the Military Academy. He secured an academy appointment without the aid of his father or family, a feat his son Alfred would duplicate years later. Dennis left Norfolk in 1820 for West Point. He excelled at West Point, and in a highly unusual turn of events, was appointed to the position of "Acting Assistant Professor of Mathematics," where he taught mathematics in addition to his regular student course load.<sup>81</sup> A year after his graduation, and still employed as an assistant professor, Dennis received orders to "study public engineering works and military institutions" in Europe.<sup>82</sup> Dennis spoke fluent French, which eased his transition to France where he lived for four years. In France he attended the "French School of Application for Artillery and Engineering at Metz," and also examined military fortification and emplacements in the field.<sup>83</sup> During his European trip, he took copious field notes before he returned to teach at the Academy.

In an eerie foreshadowing of what his son Alfred would later duplicate, Dennis revised his field notes and produced lectures for the Military Academy. He realized the

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<sup>80</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, x.

<sup>81</sup>Puleston, 5.

<sup>82</sup>National Park Service, "Civil War Defenses of Washington, Dennis Hart Mahan," <http://www.nps.gov/cwdw/historyculture/dennis-hart-mahan.htm> (accessed 21 January 2013).

<sup>83</sup>Puleston, 6-7.

value of his lecture notes and published field fortification and civil engineering pamphlets. Over time, he refined his lecture notes and published his first book, *Complete Treatise on Field Fortifications*.<sup>84</sup> Professor Mahan needed textbooks. He refined his lecture notes and published three additional books, *Elementary Treatise on Advance-Guard, Out-Post, and Detachment Service of Troops* (1847), *Summary on the Cause of Permanent Fortifications and of the Attack and Defense of Permanent Works* (1850) and the two-volume *An Elementary Course of Military Engineering* (1866-67).<sup>85</sup> Since he was an adolescent at the time, Alfred was surely aware of his father's book publishing activity, as were others at the Academy. General George Washington Cullum, a fellow engineering instructor, described Professor Mahan as having "power of analysis sharpened by critical study and laborious research' which, when applied 'to the consideration of a siege, a battle, or a campaign,' changed 'what appeared to be a complex jumble of chance events into a striking illustration of the true principles of tactics and strategy.'"<sup>86</sup> Cullum's description of Professor Mahan's analytical skills provides evidence that the elder Mahan, either through heredity or instruction, influenced his first-born son.

Dennis's military service, foreign travel, personal contacts, academic career and authorship foreshadowed many of the traits Alfred would prominently display as an adult. Alfred, at age 67, reflecting on his father, commented in *From Sail to Steam*, "I have never known a man of more strict and lofty military ideas. The spirit of the

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<sup>84</sup>Puleston, 9.

<sup>85</sup>National Park Service.

<sup>86</sup>Puleston, 8.

profession was strong in him, though he cared little for its pride, pomp, and circumstance.”<sup>87</sup> Mahan respected his father, appreciated his military intellect, and was undoubtedly influenced by him in profound ways.

While Dennis set the academic tone in the home, Mary’s more extroverted personality modeled Christianity. Thirteen years younger than her husband, Mary’s outgoing nature energized the family and buffered Professor Mahan so he could focus on intellectual pursuits, like writing books. Puleston wrote that “Mrs. Mahan was a Bible student and a fundamentalist.”<sup>88</sup> The family prayed daily before breakfast, and her prayers dedicating Mahan to God’s service highlight the Christian influence she had upon her son, giving him a glimpse of true servant leadership. Mahan mentioned his mother in *From Sail to Steam*, “I remember her well, and though she lived to be seventy-three, she had up to the last a vivacity and keen enjoyment of life.”<sup>89</sup> Mary’s involvement in her oldest son’s life was epitomized by one of her visits to Annapolis. While there, she met Captain Thomas Tingey Craven, Commandant of Midshipman and discussed her son’s progress. She asked Craven if he was pleased with Mahan’s performance aboard ship, he responded, “Exceedingly pleased.”<sup>90</sup> Despite caring for an invalid daughter and young children, Mary wrote Mahan frequently when he attended the Naval Academy and after

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<sup>87</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, xi.

<sup>88</sup>Puleston, 15.

<sup>89</sup>Mahan, xii.

<sup>90</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 17-20; Mahan letter to Ashe, 12 November 1858.

he went to sea.<sup>91</sup> None of her correspondence survived, but Mahan's handwritten letters to her described his personal struggles and temptations. In May of 1867, Mahan wrote his mother from the USS *Iroquois*, "The swearing etc. is very offensive and very wanton on board here, and I sometimes feel inclined to attempt the strong hand with it-but I hesitate: the step would be very full of personal annoyance-not only an unpopular step but one difficult to carry out. I should need to be very sure of Divine guidance."<sup>92</sup> Mahan learned humility from his parents, and he displayed the virtue often as an adult. In a 1 June 1893 letter to Washington I. Chambers, Editor of the *New York Times*, Mahan responded to an article that attacked the War College. In his rebuttal, Mahan showed humility in his unwillingness to tout his own literary success, "one of your strongest arguments is that the College has produced, directly, one of the first, if not the first, authority on naval warfare in English, if not in any language. I cannot say this, but plenty have said it of me."<sup>93</sup> In a letter to Deldie, nearly a year later, Mahan shared his concern that the praise and adoration he received from his books would go to his head and become something he craved, "I am weary and frightened lest by chance this headlong whirl of excitement and movement should carry me off my feet and in any way become necessary to me."<sup>94</sup> Mahan's parents were actively involved in his academic, spiritual and character formation, setting the stage for his high moral standards and humble nature.

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<sup>91</sup>United States Naval Academy, "Admissions, About USNA," <http://www.usna.edu/admissions/aboutusna.htm> (accessed 1 January 2013).

<sup>92</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 100-101; Mahan letter to Mary Helena Okill Mahan, 3 May 1867.

<sup>93</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 108-109; Mahan letter to Chambers, 1 June 1893.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 274-276; Mahan letter to Deldie, 22 May 1894.

Mahan's early childhood at West Point was marked by isolation, innocence and discovery. Steamboats from the Hudson River were the only transportation route to the Military Academy until 1850. The steamboats provided transportation, but they did not arouse Mahan's interest like other vessels, "The interested curiosity concerning all things naval which possessed me, and held me enthralled by the mere sight of an occasional square-rigged vessel, such as at rare intervals passed our home on the Hudson, fifty miles from the sea."<sup>95</sup> River access to West Point was problematic during the winter months when it froze over. The construction of a railroad line along the east bank of the Hudson provided a more durable route to access the Military Academy. One of Mahan's earliest memories was racing across the Military Academy grounds to see his first train.<sup>96</sup> Another childhood memory provides evidence of the sheltered environment in which Mahan was raised. A detachment of soldiers, who recently returned home from the War with Mexico, fell into a formation for an inspection. Mahan witnessed the troop inspection and noticed "One of the men had grown a full beard, a sight to me then as novel as the railroad, and I announced it at home as a most interesting fact. I had as yet seen only clean-shaven faces."<sup>97</sup> The protective environment Mahan experienced at West Point continued when his father sent him to boarding school near Hagerstown, Maryland.

Mahan's teen years were focused on education. At age 12, Mahan attended the St. James School in Maryland. After two years at St. James, his father, dissatisfied with his

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<sup>95</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 71.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*



son's grades in mathematics, pulled him from the school.<sup>98</sup> Mahan returned home to West Point and enrolled in Columbia College. At 14, Mahan moved to New York City to live with his Uncle, Milo Mahan, and attend Columbia. At Columbia Mahan joined the campus literary club, the Philolexian Society.<sup>99</sup> Mahan's membership in the Philolexian Society continued to foster his appreciation for literature and foreshadowed his future writing, but an equally important influence upon Mahan during this time was his Uncle Milo.

Milo Mahan was a strong spiritual and moral influence upon his nephew. Reverend Mahan was the Professor of Ecclesiastical History at General Theological Seminary in New York City.<sup>100</sup> Milo, like his brother Dennis, was a scholar and author whose academic abilities and perseverance translated into success. Years earlier, at St. Paul's School in Flushing, New York, Milo's intellectual capacity was noticed by the Reverend William A. Muhlenberg "The first, intellectually, of all my pupils, he owed the distinction he attained but little to his education with me. It was all in himself, and it would have come forth anywhere, in one field or another."<sup>101</sup> Milo, as his stepbrother Dennis had done, distinguished himself in academic settings and authored books. While lecturing at the seminary Dr. Mahan realized the church textbooks were no more than "an assembly of facts," and he offered to write a robust narrative of the first seven centuries

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<sup>98</sup>Naval History and Heritage Command.

<sup>99</sup>Columbia 250, "C250 Celebrates Columbians Ahead of their Time, Alfred Thayer Mahan," Columbia University, [http://c250.columbia.edu/c250\\_celebrates/remarkable\\_columbians/alfred\\_thayer\\_mahan.html](http://c250.columbia.edu/c250_celebrates/remarkable_columbians/alfred_thayer_mahan.html) (accessed 28 December 2012).

<sup>100</sup>Paret, 445.

<sup>101</sup>Puleston, 9.

of church history.<sup>102</sup> In 1860, Reverend Mahan published *A Church History of the First Three Centuries, from the Thirtieth to the Three Hundred and Twenty-Third Year of the Christian Era* and several other books.<sup>103</sup> The intellectual and spiritual coaching Mahan received from Uncle Milo during his adolescent years, likely had a great impact in his adult years. Robert Seager II assessed that Mahan “derived a love of history, a sense of order in history, some notion of historiographical technique, and an appreciation of the highly introspective Salvationist theology of Anglo-Catholicism” from his uncle.<sup>104</sup>

The academic experiences at boarding school and college gave Mahan additional career choices to consider, but in the end he chose the military. Mahan decided to join the Navy and attend the Naval Academy. The exact reason or reasons for his decision remain unknown, but Puleston speculated that Mahan made the choice sometime during the four-year period between St. James and Columbia.<sup>105</sup> This assessment is reasonable since Mahan was away from the influence of his father, and exposed to other people and experiences. The elder Mahan disagreed with his son’s decision and argued against it. Mahan captured his father’s reaction in *From Sail to Steam*, “I do not remember all his arguments, but he told me he thought me much less fit for a military than for a civil profession, having watched me carefully.”<sup>106</sup> In considering his military options, Mahan

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<sup>102</sup>Puleston, 16.

<sup>103</sup>Chest of Books.com, “The American Cyclopaedia, Mahan,” StratosSphere, <http://chestofbooks.com/reference/American-Cyclopaedia-7/Mahan.html#.UXaiWErF-So> (accessed 23 April 2013).

<sup>104</sup>Seager, 10.

<sup>105</sup>Puleston, 17.

<sup>106</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, xiv.

likely understood the repercussions of entering the United States Army, and forever living in his father's shadow. The decision to enter the Navy allowed Mahan the chance to make a career for himself, one that was free from family influence and pressure. Although he disagreed with his son's decision, his father gave him the freedom to pursue his own career. The environment fostered by his father created the ideal conditions for Mahan's career choice.<sup>107</sup> Over the years, Mahan read literature and attended school, all the while learning about the world; joining the Navy provided him the opportunity to experience it firsthand.

Mahan needed an appointment letter to enter the Naval Academy. Little did Mahan know, his pursuit of an appointment to the Naval Academy would be an education in and of itself.<sup>108</sup> Congressional representatives were the gatekeepers who controlled access to the academies. While Professor Mahan said he would not actively assist his son in securing an appointment, he provided the financial support his son needed to visit Washington, D.C. and lobby for his career. Before he left, his father gave him a few personal letters to deliver to friends in Washington. Mahan hand carried letters to Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, and James Watson Webb, a prominent player in New York journalism and politics.<sup>109</sup> During Mahan's life, as now, most teenagers did not have parents who considered the Secretary of War (Defense) as a close, personal friend. Taylor described the correspondence Mahan brought to Washington as "letters of

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<sup>107</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, xiv.

<sup>108</sup>United States Naval Academy.

<sup>109</sup>Taylor, 5.

introduction.”<sup>110</sup> Whether the personal letters were meant to influence the recipients to support Mahan’s Naval Academy pursuit is unknown; the exact contents of the letters remain a mystery. As he prepared for the trip, Mahan was reminded of the power of written correspondence, both in the personal letters he would carry and the appointment letter he pursued.

In January of 1856, at the tender age of 15, Mahan set out for Washington.<sup>111</sup> His daunting mission, a congressional appointment to the Naval Academy, was no small feat for a teenager traveling alone to the nation’s capital in the dead of winter. As he later reflected upon the trip, Mahan wrote, “As I think of my age, and more than usual diffidence, and of my mission, to win the favor of a politician who had constituents to reward, whereas to all my family practical politics were as foreign as Sanskrit, I know not whether the situation were more comical or pathetic.”<sup>112</sup> If Mahan had understood the magnitude of his request at the time, then it is quite likely he never would have made the trek. As it turned out, he would never forget his weeklong adventure in Washington, “as I suppose a man overboard remembers the incidents of that experience.”<sup>113</sup> One of the reasons the trip was challenging for Mahan was his reserved personality. He was awkward during his meeting with Congressman Ambrose S. Murray, representative for the West Point district. The contrast between the shy, aspiring teenager and the prominent politician was obvious, but unspoken. During the trip, Mahan enjoyed breakfast one

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<sup>110</sup>Taylor, 5.

<sup>111</sup>Puleston, 17.

<sup>112</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, xiv.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, xv.

morning at the home of Webb, one of his father's friends. Mahan delivered the letter to Webb that his father wrote, and learned that Webb spoke favorably about him to others. In the midst of his meetings, he became aware of an undercurrent of influence that preceded his Washington trip; his father provided more help than just financial assistance. Mahan also had a letter to deliver to the Secretary of War, who received him cordially. During their meeting, Davis outlined a plan to resolve Mahan's appointment request. Davis authorized Mahan to tell Congressman Murray that if he nominated Mahan for an appointment to the Naval Academy, then the Secretary of War would influence President Franklin Pierce to nominate someone from his West Point district as the presidential appointment to the Military Academy.<sup>114</sup> After their meeting, Davis personally introduced Mahan to James C. Dobbin, the Secretary of the Navy. The introduction puzzled Mahan because he knew the Secretary of the Navy had no bearing on his objective.<sup>115</sup> The trip was the tipping point for Mahan; he crossed the threshold from boyhood to manhood. His father attempted to persuade him to consider a civilian career, but Mahan, in a pivotal juncture of his young life, stood up for himself and charted his own course. Throughout the trip, Mahan was frequently reminded of the influence his shy, reserved father wielded within the highest echelons of the government, and the importance of correspondence.

In April of 1856, Mahan received a letter from Congressman Murray.<sup>116</sup> With the stroke of pen, Mahan's life had forever changed. He entered the Naval Academy as an

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<sup>114</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, xiv.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>116</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 2; Mahan letter to Murray, 14 January 1856.

“acting midshipman” three days after he turned 16.<sup>117</sup> The unique circumstances that threaded their way through Mahan’s life continued in his appointment to the Naval Academy. His two years at Columbia College allowed him to skip a year, “He was placed directly in the third (sophomore) class,” joining a class that had already completed a year of training.<sup>118</sup> Mahan’s appointment remains the only time in the history of the Naval Academy when an appointee started their career as an “acting midshipman.” The exclusive appointment Mahan received to the Naval Academy encapsulated the unique preparations he experienced, and foreshadowed his future contributions to the Navy.

The information discussed here provided a holistic view of the people and events that influenced the young Mahan. His family influenced his character and academic development, upon which Mahan would later construct a lengthy military and literary career. The importance of Mahan’s military career, and his affinity, or lack thereof, toward the Navy, would affect his decisions about where and when his material was published.

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<sup>117</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, xvi.

<sup>118</sup>Seager, 12.

## CHAPTER 3

### MAHAN'S INFLUENCE UPON THE NAVY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

I will, therefore, in conclusion only say to any of you who may not have yet have read Captain Mahan's books, read them; to those who have read them, read them again; read them a third time; for in them you will find the best exposition of the blunders and the glories of our forefathers, the best explanation of the influence of Sea Power.<sup>119</sup>

— Professor J. K. Laughton in Taylor,  
*The Life of Admiral Mahan: Naval Philosopher*

In 1856, Mahan entered the Naval Academy as an acting midshipman, which vaulted him past the plebe class already in session. Entering an already established class was difficult at first, but Mahan rose above the challenges and made friends. One of his friends was Samuel A. Ashe, who later left the Academy, but not before they established a lifelong friendship. In 1919, Ashe wrote *Memories of Annapolis* and fondly recalled Mahan as “the most intellectual man I have ever known. He had not only a remarkable memory, but also capacity to comprehend, and clarity of perception that rendered him distinguished among men of intelligence.”<sup>120</sup> In 1858, Mahan joined the Academy's newly established Lawrence Literary Society.<sup>121</sup> Limited information is available about the Lawrence Literary Society, which was “named after Captain James Lawrence, whose dying words, ‘Don't give up the ship,’ are so well known.”<sup>122</sup> Although the Lawrence

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<sup>119</sup>Taylor, vi.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>121</sup>Edward Chauncey Marshall, *History of the United States Naval Academy*, [http://archive.org/stream/historyofuniteds00mars/historyofuniteds00mars\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/historyofuniteds00mars/historyofuniteds00mars_djvu.txt) (accessed 1 January 2013).

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

Literary Society was founded in 1858, precise details about the founding members, or if Mahan played a role, remain unknown, but the group folded within a few years due to lack of interest. During the summer of 1858, Mahan eerily predicted his future to Ashe when he wrote, “the day for gaining distinction through feats of personal daring, as in the case of Decatur, was passed, but that he proposed to win renown in his profession through intellectual performance.”<sup>123</sup> Mahan was a bright, talented young man, but he squandered the opportunity to live up to the academic portion of his prediction. He enjoyed recreational reading to the point that it degraded his academic performance. Partial to fiction, Mahan resorted to self-imposed reading limits in his periodic attempts to improve his grades. Puleston wrote, “he allowed himself a minimum of one novel per week.”<sup>124</sup> In 1859, with conflict between northern and southern states rumbling in the background, he graduated second in his class of twenty.<sup>125</sup>

After graduation, Mahan received orders to the USS *Congress*. Commissioned in 1842, the *Congress*, a frigate, carried twenty-five guns per broadside and a crew just over 500.<sup>126</sup> Mahan thought her a “magnificent ship” that “represented the culmination of the sail era.”<sup>127</sup> *Congress* provided Mahan the perfect environment to recall the sea stories he enjoyed as a child, and experience sail powered ships like the naval officers he would

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<sup>123</sup>Taylor, 9.

<sup>124</sup>Puleston, 21.

<sup>125</sup>Naval History and Heritage Command.

<sup>126</sup>Navy Historical Center, “Online Library of Selected Images: U.S. Navy Ships, USS *Congress* (1842-1862),” <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-c/congres4.htm> (accessed 13 May 2013).

<sup>127</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 105.



later critique. Mahan served as the aide for Commodore Joshua Sands, amongst other duties, as the ship sailed for the Brazil Station.<sup>128</sup> While there was little tangible work to do on the Brazil Station “except to cruise between Rio de Janeiro and Montevideo, stopping occasionally at some ports between,” the cruise provided Mahan and the crew exotic port calls and a natural lull before the Civil War.<sup>129</sup>

The Civil War introduced Mahan to blockade duty. As the *Congress* sailed home, news of the expanding conflict permeated the ship. With naval forces blockading the South, the North suffered a strategic setback when the Confederate Navy implemented a commerce raiding strategy using ships like the CSS *Sumter*. The *Sumter* successfully ran a blockade at the mouth of Mississippi, and captured her first prize, the USS *Golden Rocket*.<sup>130</sup> Word of the *Sumter*'s success in the Gulf of Mexico led to criticism of the Union Navy, which Mahan resented. In the fall of 1861, Mahan joined the USS *James Adger*. The *Adger*, a passenger-steamer purchased by the government and hastily retrofitted into a Navy ship for blockade duty, provided Mahan the environment to craft ideas for strengthening future blockades.<sup>131</sup> Mahan evaluated the Union's strategy and determined there were too few ships to conduct effective blockades; the answer was decoy or mystery ships. At age 21, Mahan wrote Captain Gustavus V. Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy:

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<sup>128</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 104.

<sup>129</sup>Puleston, 29.

<sup>130</sup>Charles M. Robinson III, *Shark of the Confederacy: The Story of the CSS Alabama*, <http://personal.tcu.edu/swoodworth/Robinson-SOTC.htm> (accessed 26 April 2013).

<sup>131</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 156.

The ravages of the pirate *Sumter* have reached a pitch that, if long continued, will cast an undeserved stigma upon the Navy. Her speed on the cruising ground she has chosen will always enable her to obtain the twenty-four hours shelter granted by neutral powers, and thus a chance of escape by night, which can only be prevented by surrounding her with a chain of vessels more numerous than our small Navy and extended blockaded coast can at present allow us to devote to this object.

Can she not be decoyed under fire, or even boarded? . . . I have thought that a sailing vessel, such as one of the lately confiscated rebel vessels, might be equipped with a heavy pivot gun, and a light hours built over it, such as are often seen in merchant ships, and which could not excite suspicion.<sup>132</sup>

Mahan's suggestion embodied his Civil War contributions, and although the Navy never acted upon it, the experience was not a total loss for Mahan. The analytical process he demonstrated, and his letter to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, displayed his increased reasoning skills and self-confidence.

After the *Adger*, Mahan performed months of blockade duty aboard a series of ships, which was interrupted by a timely set of orders to the Naval Academy. The Navy transferred Mahan from the *Adger* to the USS *Pocahontas*, a steam corvette, for service with the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron.<sup>133</sup> After the *Pocahontas*, the Navy ordered Mahan to the relocated Naval Academy in Newport, Rhode Island. As a result of the Civil War, the Academy was moved north, and expanded to train more midshipmen. Captain George S. Blake, Superintendent of the repositioned Academy, knew Mahan from Annapolis and assigned him to the Department of Seamanship. Lieutenant

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<sup>132</sup>Taylor, 15-16. It is now commonly recognized that Fox served as a sort of de facto first Chief of Naval Operations, since Lincoln created this post for the former Navy commander in order to allow Gideon Welles more time for policy and administration. See Ari Hogenboom, *Gustavus Vasa Fox of the Union Navy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), ix.

<sup>133</sup>Taylor, 15.

Commander Stephen B. Luce headed the Department of Seamanship, and Mahan's encounter with Luce "began his first close association with the officer who was to point him toward the path of his later years."<sup>134</sup> At the end of eight months of training, Mahan boarded the USS *Macedonian* as Luce's executive officer for a summer training cruise to Europe. The *Macedonian* reunited Mahan with Lieutenant William T. Sampson, "a favorite of Mahan's when they were midshipmen at the Academy."<sup>135</sup> The cruise was a success for Mahan; he met Luce's high standards. Shortly after the *Macedonian* returned home, Mahan reported to the USS *Seminole*, a steam corvette supply vessel with orders to conduct West Gulf blockading duty off the coast of Texas. Mahan performed the tedious task. "Day after day, day after day, we lay inactive-roll, roll; not wholly ineffective, I suppose, for our presence stopped blockade running."<sup>136</sup> The blockade duty Mahan performed during the Civil War provided him experience with a variety of ships and naval officers.

In May 1864, Mahan received orders to return to the *Adger* for duty with the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron located at Port Royal, South Carolina. A few months later, he received temporary orders to command his first vessel, the double-ended, side-wheel steamer USS *Cimarron*.<sup>137</sup> When his temporary command of the *Cimarron* ended, Mahan received an appointment as the ordinance officer for the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron. His assignment to the squadron's staff provided him

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<sup>134</sup>Puleston, 35.

<sup>135</sup>Seager, 38.

<sup>136</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 188.

<sup>137</sup>Seager, 41.

visibility of the entire south Atlantic coast naval operation. Mahan's assignment gave him a front row seat at the victory celebrations that marked "the capture of Savannah in December of 1864 and on the surrender of Charleston in April 1865, and to meet and greet the commanders of Sherman's March to the Sea, several of whom studied under his father at West Point and inquired after 'Old Dennis.'"<sup>138</sup> With the Civil War over, Mahan's career shifted focus.

As the Navy contracted after the Civil War, Mahan continued to gain experience and rank. In the summer of 1865, Mahan was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and assigned as the executive officer of the USS *Muscoota*, "a double-ended, schooner-rigged, paddle steamer."<sup>139</sup> The *Muscoota* served in the western Gulf of Mexico with the mission to "uphold the recently rediscovered Monroe Doctrine by persuading the Emperor Maximilian and his French army of occupation to leave Mexico."<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, a fever spread through the ship's crew and prematurely shortened the *Muscoota's* deployment. Mahan escaped the fever and, after taking leave at West Point, received orders for temporary duty at the Washington Navy Yard. After a year of ordnance duty in Washington, Mahan was "ordered for duty as the executive officer" of the USS *Iroquois*.

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<sup>138</sup>Seager, 42.

<sup>139</sup>Naval Historical Center, "USS *Muscoota*," <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-m/muscoota.htm> (accessed 29 April 2013).

<sup>140</sup>Seager, 42.

Mahan reported for duty aboard the *Iroquois* on 1 January 1867.<sup>141</sup> The *Iroquois*, a steam sloop, sailed to China “via the West Indies, Brazil, South Africa, Madagascar, Comoro Islands, Persian Gulf, India, Singapore, and Hong Kong.”<sup>142</sup> Captain Earl English, a seasoned naval officer, commanded the *Iroquois*. The cruise marked Mahan’s first trip to Asia, and highlighted the stress and loneliness he felt during long deployments. Mahan suffered from bouts of depression, and his demeanor toward members of the wardroom and enlisted personnel, sealed his isolation. Seager wrote, “It is well that Mahan maintained his friendship with Ashe by mail since it is clear from his journal that he made no close friends in the *Iroquois*.”<sup>143</sup> Mahan frequently retired to his cabin to read, study and journal with his “secular reading centered on history, particularly the works of John Lothrop Motley, Leopold von Ranke, and Francois Pierre Guillaume Guizot.”<sup>144</sup> Mahan sought refuge in books and personal correspondence, which paid immediate dividends in helping him cope aboard the *Iroquois*, and future dividends when he immersed himself in writing.

Mahan commanded two ships on the Asiatic Station before returning stateside. The Navy ordered Captain English to command the USS *Piscatagua*; Mahan took temporary command of the *Iroquois*-his first experience commanding a ship.<sup>145</sup> In July 1869, Mahan took temporary command of the USS *Aroostook*, a gunboat. After a few

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<sup>141</sup>Taylor, 18.

<sup>142</sup>Puleston, 41.

<sup>143</sup>Seager, 56.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>145</sup>Puleston, 45.

months of commanding the *Aroostook*, Mahan requested six months of convalescent leave on his return trip home from the Asiatic Station. All the blockade duty, cruises and deployments began to weigh on Mahan. Puleston wrote, “He arrived at West Point toward the end of May 1870, having served afloat continuously since his graduation in 1859, except for eight months at the Naval Academy in 1862.”<sup>146</sup> The stress of nearly a decade of sea service had taken its toll and Mahan needed a break.

The Navy approved Mahan’s request to travel home “by Suez to Europe, instead of by the usual route to San Francisco.”<sup>147</sup> The return trip through Europe afforded him the opportunity to make crucial observations about the flow of commerce in and through the region. The circuitous route Mahan took home brought him through India, from Calcutta to Bombay, the Suez Canal, and included stops in Rome, Nice, Paris and London. Puleston chronicled the importance of Mahan’s roundabout itinerary, “The most vivid impression he brought home was the ubiquitousness of the British Red Coats . . . the development of India . . . whose railway from Calcutta to Bombay was completed only one year after our own trans-Continental line. The recently opened Suez Canal . . . actual pictures of world commerce.”<sup>148</sup> During the trip home, Mahan experienced British sea power firsthand in addition to the expansion of sea lines of communications.

In May 1870, after years at sea and a serpentine trip from Asia through Europe, Mahan departed Liverpool for New York aboard the British steamer *Russia*. Homeward bound, Mahan met Grace Evans, the Aunt of Miss Ellen Lyle Evans, aboard the

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<sup>146</sup>Puleston, 47.

<sup>147</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 263-264.

<sup>148</sup>Puleston, 48.

*Russia*.<sup>149</sup> Mahan returned home and reported for duty at the New York Navy Yard (NYNY). He was excited to experience shore duty and meet Ellen; Grace did not disappoint Mahan as she introduced them in the summer of 1870. A few months later, in September of 1870, Mahan's uncle Milo died. Ashe sent Mahan a sympathy note to which Mahan responded, "You do my Uncle no more than justice in your surmise as to the loss he has been to us and the Church . . . For myself, I am quite at a loss to know to whom to turn for the advice and information that I used to get from him, in matters of theological rather than religious interest."<sup>150</sup> Mahan loved and respected "his uncle, his pastor, and kinsman," his family was important to him.<sup>151</sup>

In February of 1871, Mahan received orders to the *Worcester*. The *Worcester*, a steam merchant ship, was contracted by the Navy to move humanitarian supplies to the French who were suffering because of the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>152</sup> During the voyage a boiler tube burst and instantly killed four men and severely scalded seven others, which was compounded "when the *Worcester* arrived in Plymouth on April 4 the revolt in Paris had begun, and it was learned that the people in the provinces did not lack food but needed farming utensils and livestock."<sup>153</sup> Mahan surely noticed the Navy's capital resource shortfall and poor planning during the humanitarian operation, especially since it resulted in the death of four crewmembers. There is good reason to suspect the *Worcester*

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<sup>149</sup>Seager, 83.

<sup>150</sup>Puleston, 48-49.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>152</sup>Seager, 86.

<sup>153</sup>Puleston, 49.

experience eroded Mahan's confidence in the Navy. For him, the only consolation during the voyage was his correspondence with Ellen.

The early 1870s were a period of dramatic change for Mahan. He returned stateside aboard the *Worcester* and continued his courtship of Ellie, which was briefly interrupted when tragedy struck the Mahan family. On 16 September 1871, Dennis Hart Mahan committed suicide.<sup>154</sup> Mahan was devastated; he wondered if mental illness ran in the family. Within a year, Mahan lost the two most influential male role models in his life, his father and Uncle Milo. As Mahan settled his father's estate, and relocated his mother and two sisters to live with family in New Jersey, he awaited word from another influential male in his life, Mr. Manlius Evans. Mr. Evans viewed Mahan's naval service in a different light. He was not impressed with the forced separations his daughter would endure when Mahan went to sea. Despite his misgivings, Manlius reluctantly consented to their marriage in early May 1872.<sup>155</sup> On 11 June 1872, Mahan and Ellen, or Deldie as Mahan called her, were married. In what turned out to be an excellent honeymoon present, the Navy promoted Mahan to commander in November 1872.

A month after his promotion, Mahan received orders to command the USS *Wasp*. The *Wasp*, formerly the British ship *Emma Henry*, was a side-wheel steamer captured during a Civil War blockade run. The Navy purchased the *Emma Henry* and renamed her the *Wasp*.<sup>156</sup> Mahan's orders to the South Atlantic Station were very timely. The South Atlantic Station allowed accompanied tours for naval officers, thus Deldie could join

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<sup>154</sup>Puleston, 51.

<sup>155</sup>Seager, 89.

<sup>156</sup>Taylor, 343.



him. His father-in-law's fears were delayed, at least temporarily. They boarded the British steam packet *Douro* on 23 December 1872 and arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay in February of 1873.<sup>157</sup> Mahan's two years of sea service aboard the *Wasp* were the best of his career, and for good reason; Deldie was nearby.

Although Mahan enjoyed his service with the South Atlantic Station, there were challenges during his two-year tour. Charting operations, which involved surveying coastlines and coastal waters, were dicey. The *Wasp* occasionally hit submerged rocks and reefs or ran aground. Another problem that degraded the *Wasp's* performance was crew turnover. Mahan found it difficult to retain "competent engineering personnel at near-starvation wages."<sup>158</sup> Faced with an ongoing personnel shortage, and wanting to provide a long-term solution, Mahan wrote William Reynolds, Chief of the Bureau of Equipment and Recruiting, and requested men from the States with three-year enlistments.<sup>159</sup> Mahan experienced the futility in training men with one-year service obligations; his turnover and desertion rates were high among the predominantly foreign-born crewmembers. Mahan attempted to influence the Navy's enlistment policy, but to no avail. He understood the increasing complexity associated with steam powered ships, and the corresponding need for a properly trained crew. The personnel readiness challenges Mahan experienced aboard the *Wasp* most likely contributed to his later essay submission to *Proceedings*, "Naval Education."

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<sup>157</sup>Seager, 90.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>159</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 379; Mahan letter to Reynolds, 15 April 1873.

The pursuit of enlistment changes and improved skill levels of crewmembers foreshadowed the next phase of Mahan's military career, naval reformer. On 2 January 1875, Commander William A. Kirkland relieved Mahan of command of the *Wasp*. In a move that was reminiscent of his trip home from the Asiatic Station, Mahan took leave in Europe before returning home in May of 1875. During his acclimation to life in the States, he "became appalled at what he observed, heard, and read about events taking place in the United States . . . The Navy Department, under the incompetent Secretary George M. Robeson, was permeated with corruption, scandal, and pork-barrel political influence."<sup>160</sup> In September 1875, amidst news reports of chicanery within the Navy Department, Mahan received orders to the Boston Navy Yard. He reported for duty and came into direct contact with navy yard administration corruption.<sup>161</sup> Mahan, having served years aboard substandard Navy ships, contracted Navy ships and the associated challenges of assembling competent crews, could not ignore waste, fraud or abuse ashore. In the beginning phase of his crusade to end corruption at the Boston Navy Yard, Mahan joined the United States Naval Institute. It is quite possible he viewed the Institute as a means to advance both "the Navy and the naval profession."<sup>162</sup> In a letter dated 27 December 1875, Mahan told Ashe "There is little doubt that the Navy is rapidly getting into a most deplorable condition, and that the fault lies largely with our present Secretary."<sup>163</sup> Ashe introduced Mahan to Senator Augustus Summerfield Merrimon of

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<sup>160</sup>Seager, 103.

<sup>161</sup>Puleston, 54

<sup>162</sup>Seager, 104.

<sup>163</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 436-439; Mahan letter to Ashe, 27 December 1875.

North Carolina. Merrimon, Ashe's law partner, "suggested that Mahan might write a position paper on the 'necessities of the Navy.'" <sup>164</sup> As a professional naval officer and Christian, Mahan could not ignore his responsibility to address the Navy's breach of trust. He passed on the position paper idea but conducted a covert letter writing campaign to expose the sins of George Maxwell Robeson, Secretary of the Navy and Mr. Isaiah Hanscom, Chief of the Bureau of Construction. In a February 1876 letter to Ashe, Mahan shared his disgust with the corruption:

I send you the slip from the Boston Herald today-with the accounts of the conduct of Mr. Isaiah Hanscom . . . You will see instantly how utterly unfit such a man is to hold money for distribution in any way. To my mind the body that holds the purse strings ought to say that man must come out of his position-if any money is to be appropriated this year for construction or repair of vessels. I doubt whether they might not well go further and insist upon the retirement of Mr. Robeson who must have known of Hanscom's culpability long ago. This scoundrel Hanscom is said to have the greatest influence with Robeson. You can understand the bitterness of indignation with which I regard men by whose corrupt misuse of the means placed at their disposal have brought our Service, still upright in its integrity, in bad odor with our people. <sup>165</sup>

Only a couple of Mahan's letters from this period survived, but it is clear Mahan understood his whistleblowing activity jeopardized his career, despite the risk.

Representative Washington C. Whitthorne, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs invited Mahan to "respond in writing to certain questions on the state of the Navy posed by the House Committee on Naval Affairs." <sup>166</sup> In a lengthy reply that was both courageous and naïve, Mahan outlined the need for naval reform but undermined his position by personally attacking Robeson. Mahan wrote, "The tendency of the present

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<sup>164</sup>Seager, 103.

<sup>165</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 442-443; Mahan letter to Ashe, 1 February 1876.

<sup>166</sup>Seager, 109.

administration has been to condone offenses of commanding officers, and provide against abuses of general orders. It is the policy of a weak man.”<sup>167</sup> Mahan’s sharp criticism of Robeson makes it undoubtedly clear he assumed his testimony would remain confidential, however, that was not the case. If Mahan had simply responded directly to Whitthorne’s list of questions and not waged a personal attack on the Secretary of the Navy, there is the possibility that the fallout from the investigation would have affected Mahan differently. There is a good chance Mahan learned the important lesson of not straying from the script during his attempt to influence reform in the Navy. The experience likely shaped his future interactions with magazine editors allowing them to propose article topics they wanted addressed.

Robeson survived the House Committee on Naval Affairs investigation and soon implemented steep cuts to naval appropriations. The Navy’s austerity measures reduced the number of naval officers serving on active duty. This decision did not surprise Mahan and neither did his future furlough, “the smallness of the appropriation for the pay of the Navy, a number of officers will be relieved from duty and put on waiting orders-and that I will be among them.”<sup>168</sup> Mahan’s attempt to influence reform within the Navy had backfired; instead of Robeson leaving his position, Mahan was temporarily ousted. The Navy furloughed Mahan in the summer of 1876. In a bid to stretch his family’s income, Mahan moved his family to France. The physical separation from the Navy helped Mahan cope with his failed attempt to influence reform. While in France, Mahan

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<sup>167</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 443-450; Mahan letter to Whitthorne, 21 March 1876.

<sup>168</sup>*Ibid.*, 456-457; Mahan letter to Ashe, 23 July 1876.

searched desperately for active duty assignments. In the summer of 1877, he received three-year orders to chair the Ordnance Department at the Naval Academy. His family moved back to the States and “settled into the comfortable routine of a Naval Academy officer-instructor with not much to do.”<sup>169</sup> Mahan eased back into the Navy as an instructor at the Naval Academy. His academic schedule and proximity to the Naval Institute, allowed him to become more involved with the floundering organization.

In 1877, the Naval Institute struggled to retain members and relevance. A group of naval officers had founded the Institute four years earlier in 1873. The Naval Institute, collocated with the Naval Academy in Annapolis, naturally promoted its stated vision of “advancing professional and scientific knowledge in the Navy.”<sup>170</sup> A year after its founding, the Naval Institute began publishing the notes from its periodic meetings and the result was the periodical, *Proceedings*. As a member of the Institute, reader of *Proceedings*, and meeting participant, Mahan understood the challenges, waning interest and sagging membership the Institute faced in 1877. The Institute sponsored an essay contest in 1878 to renew interest in its mission. Mahan acknowledged the reason behind the essay contest when he wrote, “the Institute was growing feeble [and] we determined as a last resort to offer a money prize for an Essay on the subject of Naval Education.”<sup>171</sup> The inaugural essay topic was “Naval Education for Officers and Men” and the Institute

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<sup>169</sup>Seager, 113.

<sup>170</sup>Harrington Emerson, “Efficiency as a Basis of Organization and Wages,” *Proceedings* 128, no. 4 (1908): 1207-1252.

<sup>171</sup>Seager, 120.

received 10 essay submissions, including one from Mahan. The essay contest turned out to be the perfect tide to keep the Naval Institute afloat.

In the essay entitled “Naval Education,” Mahan addressed the human capital resource of the Navy. At 38, with years of sea service experience interspersed with various shore duty billets, including two tours at the Naval Academy, Mahan understood the challenges of educating naval officers and enlisted men. He felt naval officers needed moral power, physical vigor and knowledge, and acknowledged that “distinguished academical standing conveys no necessary promise of professional excellence; while on the other hand very admirable naval aptitude is shown in many cases by men, intelligence indeed, but not students.”<sup>172</sup> His essay also included three cognitive requirements for “English studies, Naval Tactics and Foreign Languages” for officers.<sup>173</sup> Mahan’s experience aboard the *Wasp*, and other ships, had made it abundantly clear that naval officers needed language skills to facilitate their diplomatic missions as well as interact with foreign naval officers and enlisted crewmembers. He declined the opportunity to expand the essay’s scope when he wrote “About Naval Tactics I shall here say nothing.”<sup>174</sup> It is very possible Mahan recalled the Whitthorne letter when he authored the essay, and decided not to stray off topic. Interestingly, within a few years, the Navy would approach him and request he address naval tactics.

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<sup>172</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Naval Education for Officers and Men* (Annapolis, MD: Proceedings 5, 1879), 353.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*

The late 1870s and early 1880s provided Mahan a respite from sea service, and more opportunities to influence the Navy. After three years at the Naval Academy, Mahan received orders for his second tour at the NYNY.<sup>175</sup> Duty at the NYNY was not glamorous, but it afforded Mahan time with Deldie and his growing family. Mahan spent the next three years “studiously investigating ways and means for the Navy to do its business more efficiently and economically. He had witnessed firsthand the waste and inefficiency at the Boston Navy Yard during the Robeson administration of the Navy Department, and he was determined that such sloppiness would not be repeated at Brooklyn.”<sup>176</sup> A topic Mahan investigated was the glut of young naval officers and their grim prospects for future promotion. It is unknown if the Navy asked Mahan to investigate the promotion issue, or whether he took it upon himself to investigate the matter, but it ended similar to his other investigative forays, this time with a letter to the Secretary of the Navy. On 20 April 1881, Mahan wrote William H. Hunt, Secretary of the Navy to “ask your permission to lay before you certain facts and figures, derived from the Navy Register, which indicate an existing and rapidly increasing evil.”<sup>177</sup> In the letter Mahan compared officer promotion rates in the United States Navy with those of the Royal Navy and highlighted the disparity between the two systems. Mahan realized that “most of these young men could never hope to reach the rank of commander.”<sup>178</sup> While

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<sup>175</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 483; Mahan letter to Whiting, 9 July 1880.

<sup>176</sup>Seager, 128.

<sup>177</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 496; Mahan letter to Hunt, 20 April 1881.

<sup>178</sup>Seager, 131.

the letter was most likely Mahan's attempt to influence naval officer promotion rates with the Navy, it did not contain a recommendation.

As the Navigation Officer of the NYNY, Mahan immersed himself in the testing, evaluation and installation of navigation equipment. He tested various lantern designs, lantern fuels and hand versus machine-sewn flags and pennants. Mahan conducted his research with a consistent focus on efficiency; he was cognizant of electricity's anticipated impact upon the Navy. On 30 November 1881, Mahan wrote George H. Cooper, Commandant of the NYNY, and suggested the Navy purchase books on the subject of electricity. Mahan wanted these books in each ship's library because "An officer wishing information on any point must now depend, as far as the ships resources go, upon Cyclopedias and the *Scientific Dictionary*. It is evident that the expense of keeping abreast of the times in this rapidly developing science will be very great, if done by renewing these voluminous books. A special work would be more thorough and cheaper."<sup>179</sup> Mahan strived to be a good steward of taxpayer resources, and ensured the Navy had the latest relevant reference material available. After Cooper exchanged correspondence with Admiral John G. Walker, Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, he directed Mahan to recommend "a book on Electricity for the library of ships."<sup>180</sup> Showing the depth of his growing analytical skills, Mahan "depended upon the opinion of others" and selected a book in which "The style and explanations are singularly clear, the plates numerous and easily understood. The treatment is but slightly mathematical, and

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<sup>179</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 506-507. Mahan letter to Cooper, 30 November 1881.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, 518-520; Mahan letter to Cooper, 16 March 1882.



such mathematics as there is, is of a simple character.”<sup>181</sup> Mahan recommended the Navy purchase *Physical Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* by James Edward Henry Gordon, and the companion book, *Electricity and Magnetism* by A.P. Deschanel.<sup>182</sup> The book recommendations revealed Mahan’s appreciation for pertinent literature and sources for particular problems and portended his future as a historian and author.

While Mahan recommended books to the Navy, Charles Scribner’s Sons requested he write “a short history of the naval operations in the Civil War.”<sup>183</sup> Charles Scribner’s Sons contacted military officers and academics in order to locate authors for a comprehensive 16-volume book series on Army and Navy operations in the Civil War. In late 1882, they asked Mahan to author a section of the three-part “The Navy in the Civil War” series; Mahan agreed. The introductory volume to the Navy series, *The Blockade and the Cruisers*, was authored by James Russell Soley, Professor at the Naval Academy.<sup>184</sup> Rear Admiral David Ammen, a founding member of the Naval Institute, authored the second book in the series, *The Atlantic Coast*.<sup>185</sup> Commander Mahan’s *The Gulf and Inland Waters*, his first book, rounded out the Navy series, and was simultaneously the last book of the 16-volume set.<sup>186</sup> The project allowed Mahan to profit

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<sup>181</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 518-520; Mahan letter to Cooper, 16 March 1882.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup>Taylor, 23.

<sup>184</sup>James Russell Soley, *The Blockade and the Cruisers* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1883).

<sup>185</sup>David Ammen, *The Atlantic Coast* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1883).

<sup>186</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1883).

from his Civil War blockade duty, but it was a challenging experience for Mahan. On 6 July 1883, Mahan shared his struggle to finish the book with Ashe:

The proposal was made to me first before Christmas and the work was to be done by first suggestion on April 10th. To this time I demurred seriously and in the more formal offer the proposition was that the greater part should be finished by Apr. 10, and the whole by May 1st the latest date they could name. As I wanted the money I consented with great misgivings as to whether I could do justice to the subject.<sup>187</sup>

Despite his personal experience with the subject matter, Mahan doubted his ability to properly address the topic; but, in the end, the book was a literary success.

Mahan received praise for the book in letters from across the country, including the Navy. A letter from Soley, who wrote *The Blockade and the Cruisers*, that stated “everybody here speaks highly of it and seems to be thoroughly pleased with it.”<sup>188</sup>

Citizens, and the Navy, praised Mahan’s first book, which netted him \$600 (\$14,200 in 2012 dollars).<sup>189</sup> The work Mahan performed at the NYNY library is further evidence of his appreciation of literature. When he researched the library’s holdings for books on electricity, Mahan realized “No copy of the U.S. Naval Institute’s *Proceedings* had been received at the yard since 1877, and the professional library there was wholly inadequate.”<sup>190</sup> Mahan singled out the missing issues of *Proceedings* because he valued the publication and desired to correct the deficiency. Mahan worked hard to remedy the library’s inadequacies by ordering books, restocking shelves and restarting magazine

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<sup>187</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 554; Mahan letter to Ashe, 6 July 1883.

<sup>188</sup>Seager, 137.

<sup>189</sup>MeasuringWorth, “Measuring Worth,” <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php> (accessed 15 March 2013).

<sup>190</sup>Seager, 131.

subscriptions. On 11 June 1883, Mahan wrote John H. Upshur, who relieved Cooper as Commandant of the NYNY, “to acknowledge the receipt, from Messrs Scribner and Welford, New York of the following mentioned books in good order.”<sup>191</sup> Mahan slowly improved the quality of the library, and found some time for recreational reading of his own. He read William Francis Patrick Napier’s *History of the War in the Peninsula*. In his autobiography Mahan commented on the book, “During my last tour of shore duty I had read carefully Napier’s *Peninsular War*, and had found myself in a new world of thought, keenly interested and appreciative, less of the brilliant narrative-though that few can fail to enjoy-than of the military sequences of cause and effect.”<sup>192</sup> It is unknown if the library work Mahan performed was part of his official duties or if he voluntarily performed the tasks; regardless, his actions at the library were a natural extension of his appreciation for literature.

The launching of Mahan’s literary career coincided with his service aboard the USS *Wachusett*. In August 1883, he received orders to command the *Wachusett*, a steam sloop-of-war (a wooden sailing ship with steam engine backup) that cruised “between Ecuador, Peru, and Chile” in order “to protect the lives and interests of American citizens in those turbulent areas.”<sup>193</sup> The orders to the *Wachusett* represented his first extended absence from his family in 11 years. While at sea he received a momentous correspondence. On 22 July 1884, Commodore Luce-the founder of the new Naval War

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<sup>191</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 552; Mahan letter to Upshur, 11 June 1883.

<sup>192</sup>Mahan, *From Sail to Steam*, 273.

<sup>193</sup>Puleston, 66.

College-wrote Mahan and invited him to join the faculty of the College.<sup>194</sup> Luce's invitation was probably based on their prior service together aboard the *Macedonian*, and membership in the Naval Institute. Puleston described their Naval Institute interactions as, "he [Mahan] had the opportunity of discussing professional subjects with progressive officers like Luce and Sampson."<sup>195</sup> Some of the acquaintances Mahan made through the Naval Institute became lifelong friends, as evidenced in his relationship with Luce and Sampson.

Luce's letter outlined his vision for the College and expectations of Mahan. He asked Mahan to teach naval strategy, tactics, and history. Mahan, excited at the prospect of shore duty near his family, enthusiastically accepted Luce's offer. He wrote, "I should like the position, like it probably very much."<sup>196</sup> Mahan's opportunity to influence the quality of naval officer education had arrived. While he was excited at the prospect of teaching, he shared some misgivings with Luce stating, "I do not on questioning myself find that I now have the special accurate knowledge that I should think necessary. I fear you give me credit for knowing more than I do, and having given a special attention to the subject which I have not."<sup>197</sup> While he doubted his ability to teach naval officers and instill in them the qualities required for their success, the topic of his award-winning *Proceedings* essay, he commenced researching the topics Luce recommended. In November 1884, Mahan took leave from the *Wachusett* in Lima, Peru. In Lima he found

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<sup>194</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 577-578; Mahan letter to Luce, 4 September 1884.

<sup>195</sup>Puleston, 59.

<sup>196</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 577-578; Mahan letter to Luce, 4 September 1884.

<sup>197</sup>*Ibid.*

a familiar environment, a small library within an English Club. At the library, Mahan read Theodor Mommsen's *The History of Rome*, which he attributed to providing him the vision for sea power.<sup>198</sup> Despite access to *The History of Rome* and other books, Mahan struggled to prepare lecture notes. On 2 February 1886, Mahan shared his frustration with Ashe:

Among these I have had assigned to me the subject of Naval Strategy and Tactics involving of course to a considerable extent Naval History as affording lessons. The subject is a very broad one, but its greatest difficulty lies in the fact that all naval history hitherto has been made by ships and weapons of a kind wholly different from those now in use. How to view the lessons of the past so as to mould them into lessons for the future, under such differing conditions, is the nut I have to crack.<sup>199</sup>

In a situation reminiscent of the time before he finished his first book, Mahan felt the pressure and stress of a deadline imposed by an external source. However, it worked out through a series of fortuitous events, which stretched Mahan's lecture preparation time out to nearly two years.

Commodore Stephen Bleecker Luce had worked tirelessly to establish the Navy War College. He succeeded in 1884 when William E. Chandler, Secretary of the Navy, signed General Order 325 establishing the College. Two excerpts from the order summarize its most salient points: "A college is hereby established for an advanced course of professional study for naval officers, to be known as the Naval War College" and, "Commodore S. B. Luce has been assigned to duty as president of the college."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup>Seager, 145.

<sup>199</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 624-625; Mahan letter to Ashe, 2 February 1886.

<sup>200</sup>William E. Chandler, "General Order, No. 325," U.S. Naval War College, <http://usnwc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=73030> (accessed 16 February 2013).

Luce's dream became a reality and he was directed to create the institution. His next challenge involved assembling a faculty in which he invited service members from all branches of the military, and civilians, to join.<sup>201</sup>

In the interim period between Mahan's release from the *Wachusett* and his reporting for duty at the College, Mahan and Luce exchanged frequent correspondence. Their letters covered a range of topics from book recommendations for the College library to periodic updates on his lecture preparation progress. The mundane librarian work Mahan completed at the NYNY prepared him to evaluate and recommend books for the new College library. On 7 April 1886, Mahan updated Luce with his plans to "leave May to give to such reading as the Lyceum in N.Y. may afford me-principally U.S. [Naval] Institute papers."<sup>202</sup> Mahan spent his down time in libraries, and in 1886, his personal reading list included *Proceedings*. Surrounded by books, and exchanging correspondence with Luce, enhanced Mahan's confidence in his ability to teach. Luce provided him wise counsel and helped him transition to the nascent College.

The Navy ordered Luce to command the North Atlantic Squadron and detached him from the College on 18 June 1886.<sup>203</sup> Luce's orders dramatically changed the dynamics of Mahan's assignment to the College. Once the news of Luce's departure reached Mahan, "he went immediately to Newport to consult with his mentor and it was

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<sup>201</sup>John T. Kuehn, "The Martial Spirit-Naval Style: The Naval Reform Movement and the Establishment of the General Board of the Navy, 1873-1900," *The Northern Mariner/le marin du nord* 22, no. 2 (April 2012): 128.

<sup>202</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 626-627; Mahan letter to Luce, 7 April 1886.

<sup>203</sup>Caspar F. Goodrich, *Stephen Bleecker Luce, Rear Admiral, United States Navy: A Tribute* (New York: The Naval History Society, 1919), 12.

arranged between them that Mahan would succeed Luce as president of the college.”<sup>204</sup> Mahan reported for duty in August 1886 as both an instructor and president of the institution. Any trepidation he felt in teaching at the College soon faded when he realized the College’s survival was at stake. Luce successfully campaigned to create the College, but Mahan would battle repeated efforts for its closure. On 3 October 1886, Mahan shared the challenges he faced with Ashe, “We have been good embarrassed by the opposition which every new undertaking encounters in the Navy, if not in every sphere of life; an opposition which being transmitted effectually to Congress hampered the appropriations to the extent of not even preserving adequately the building.”<sup>205</sup> It is unclear if Mahan was aware of the challenges the College faced prior to his arrival, but there is no doubt he understood the severity once he took his new position as president.

The greatest opposition the College faced resided in the Navy. Mahan soon learned the identity of those who opposed the Institution. William C. Whitney, Secretary of the Navy, worked to marginalize the College. On 1 August 1888, the Navy Department ordered Mahan to shorten the period of instruction to three months.<sup>206</sup> Mahan felt the walls of the College closing in on him and wrote Ashe on 10 August 1888 “the Secy. of the Navy went down to the Capitol, and by his personal influence, accompanied by a threat of what he would do if his wishes were not complied with, had such amendments introduced as will I think defeat the entire purposes of the College.”<sup>207</sup> A

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<sup>204</sup>Seager, 176.

<sup>205</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 635-636; Mahan letter to Ashe, 3 October 1886.

<sup>206</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 653; Mahan letter to Ashe, 3 October 1886.

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*, 653-655.

few months later Whitney “marched into the Senate Appropriations Committee and suggested amendments to the House legislation” and recommended “for reasons of economy and administrative efficiency, that the War College and the Torpedo Station be consolidated . . . under the command of the officer in charge of the Torpedo Station.”<sup>208</sup> In another bid to weaken the College, on 30 November 1888, Whitney ordered Mahan to chair the Commission for Selecting a Site for a Navy Yard upon the N.W. Coast, thus temporarily removing Mahan, the Institution’s most vocal proponent, from the College. Within four months, Whitney condensed the College’s period of instruction, moved and subjugated it to the Torpedo School and displaced its most ardent supporter.

Another strong opponent of the College was Captain Francis M. Ramsay, Superintendent of the Naval Academy from 1881 to 1886. Ramsay viewed the mission of the College as duplicative and undermined it subtly. In a letter to Luce dated 31 May 1886, Mahan described the book and magazine resources he attempted to obtain, and the opposition he faced, “Ramsay declined when I saw him last October-it is a pity but only an inconvenience, not a disaster.”<sup>209</sup> Six years later, with Mahan in his second term as president, Ramsay renewed his opposition, but this time as Mahan’s immediate supervisor, Chief of the Bureau of Navigation. Ramsay leveraged his position to extend the construction timeline for the College building and ordered Mahan to court-martial duty assignments that required him to travel to Richmond, Virginia and San Francisco, California. Ramsey tried to disrupt, delay or deter Mahan and activities at the College through the introduction of administrative obstacles that he could easily mask as official

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<sup>208</sup>Seager, 182.

<sup>209</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 632-634; Mahan letter to Luce, 31 May 1886.



business. On 8 September 1887, Mahan informed Ashe about the increased political opposition, “Unhappily there has been an amount of opposition, active, which succeeded in killing all appropriation in the House of Representatives last year, by a narrow majority of 85 to 81.”<sup>210</sup> There is evidence to suggest Ramsay and Whitney sought to influence the opinion of Hilary A. Herbert, Chairman of the Naval Committee, about the College. Mahan felt that Herbert provided, “sustained and strenuous opposition” to the College, and he understood the magnitude of Herbert’s opposition and the potential long-term consequences to the Institution.<sup>211</sup>

In the midst of chairing the site selection commission and fighting for the College’s survival, Mahan contacted Charles Scribner’s Sons about publishing his lecture notes as a book. The College needed textbooks so Mahan contacted the publisher of his first book, *The Gulf and Inland Waters*.<sup>212</sup> On 4 September 1888, Mahan wrote Charles Scribner’s Sons:

While lecturing at this institution during the past two years I have accumulated the text for a work, whose general scope is the bearing of naval power upon the general course of History in Western Europe and America between the years 1660 and 1783, the end of the American Revolution. It carries along a general thread of the history of the times, with a view to eliciting the effect of naval and commercial power events; the treatment of naval affairs proper being not an exhaustive account of all the happened, but rather a selection of such campaigns and battles as have a tactical or strategic value, and so afford an opportunity for pointing a lesson.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>Ibid., 641-642; Mahan letter to Ashe, 8 September 1887.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid., 652.

<sup>212</sup>Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters*.

<sup>213</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 657-658; Mahan letter to Charles Scribner’s Sons, 4 September 1888.

They reviewed Mahan's manuscript, but rejected it "on the grounds that it was far too technical and specialized to appeal to most readers."<sup>214</sup> The rejection letter discouraged Mahan, who was busy fighting to keep the College doors open, and now he would have to expend additional effort to secure textbooks for the Institution. Deldie and Luce continued to encourage him to seek a publisher for his book.

Nearly a year after the rejection letter, Mahan resumed his search for a publisher. Unfortunately, the results were the same, and the disappointment of repeated rejections affected Mahan. On 21 September 1889, Mahan shared his growing despair with Luce, "With these efforts I purpose giving up the effort."<sup>215</sup> Mahan understood the importance of his lecture notes, and their value to the College, but his disappointment was likely compounded by thoughts of his father and uncle, who were both successful authors. As Mahan was questioning whether he should continue to pursue a publisher, a friend came to the rescue. Soley, who like Mahan, published a volume of *The Navy in the Civil War* series, had a contact at Little, Brown and Company of Boston.<sup>216</sup> Little, Brown and Company reviewed the anthology in October 1889, with sea power's quiet, unassuming presence threaded throughout the book, and requested an additional chapter to summarize his analysis. The introductory chapter of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783* continues to stimulate debate among its readers.<sup>217</sup> With the long overdue

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<sup>214</sup>Seager, 192.

<sup>215</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 707-708; Mahan letter to Luce, 21 September 1889.

<sup>216</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 711-713; Mahan letter to Luce, 7 October 1889.

<sup>217</sup>Seager, 205.

partnership established between author and publisher, Mahan and Little Brown and Company settled in and eventually published 15 of Mahan's 20 books, including the second in the *Sea Power* series, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire: 1793-1812*.<sup>218</sup>

After nearly three years of special duty with the Bureau of Navigation, Mahan returned to the College as its president on 23 February 1892. Benjamin F. Tracy, Secretary of the Navy, instructed Ramsay "to order Mahan to duty as president of the Naval War College."<sup>219</sup> Mahan returned to the College and promptly began preparations for the next class. He ordered books and journals for the library, especially 12 copies of *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, which he condescendingly described to Ramsay as "a really useful book of reference for the College purposes."<sup>220</sup> Mahan enjoyed restocking library shelves, but it was different this time, he knew the book's author. Mahan's retirement was only four years away, when he settled into life at Newport completely unaware of Ramsay's plot to avenge. Rumors circulated around the College that Mahan would be ordered to sea. Faced with the possibility of two years of sea service, Mahan scrambled to address the issue, and in so doing, enlisted the help of friends. Theodore Roosevelt and others, appealed to Herbert and Ramsay on Mahan's behalf. They asked for Mahan to remain on extended shore duty to enable his writing. Ramsey responded, "It is not the business of naval officers to write books." Sensing the urgency of the matter, Mahan succumbed to pleading his case directly to Ramsey, "I

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<sup>218</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf.

<sup>219</sup>Seager, 242.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid., 242-243.

become liable to sea service for a period of two years. I apprehend that at my age-53-such a diversion is not merely a loss of two years of fruitful effort, invaluable at any age and especially in the later prime of life, but that also the consequent entire interruption of my line of thought may prove to be final.”<sup>221</sup> On 11 May 1893, less than two months after his personal appeal to Ramsey, Mahan assumed command of the USS *Chicago*. On 22 May 1893, Mahan shared his frustration with Luce:

The lack of recognition in our own country-either official or journalistic-has been painful; not to my vanity for that has been more than filled by the superabundant tribute from all quarters in England, but as showing the indifference to service matters among our people.

I am not very sanguine about my possible resumption of work. I propose it indeed-but the failure of momentum, the fading of prestige in this age of rapidly changing impressions are all against it. Our own navy-by its representatives Herbert and Ramsey-has rejected both me and my work, for I cannot but think that an adequate professional opinion would have changed the issue.<sup>222</sup>

Mahan could no longer hide his disappointment with Ramsey. In the two surviving letters he wrote Ramsey in April and May of 1893, Mahan omitted any of the customary salutations he used in previous letters to Ramsay including: Commodore, My Dear Commodore, or Sir.<sup>223</sup> In a letter to Deldie, Mahan shared his awareness of Ramsay’s plot for revenge, “Ramsey will do me all the harm he can-not of conscious malice but because he looks upon me as one to be disciplined. I represent a movement with which he

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<sup>221</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 98; Mahan letter to Ramsay, 17 March 1893.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid., 105; Mahan letter to Luce, 22 May 1893.

<sup>223</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 102-103; Mahan letter to Ramsay, 18 April and Mahan letter to Ramsay, 11 May 1893.

has no sympathy.”<sup>224</sup> Unknown to Mahan, the orders to the *Chicago* were just the beginning of the stress he would experience during the two-year cruise.

Mahan took command of the *Chicago* on 11 May 1893. The *Chicago*, a steam powered steel cruiser with sail backup, also served as the European Station flagship. When Admiral Henry Erben reported for duty “and hoisted his broad pennant as commander of the station,” it signaled rough seas ahead for Mahan.<sup>225</sup> Early in the deployment, Mahan’s interactions with Erben were pleasant, but they degraded over time. In January 1894, Erben overruled a Mahan court-martial decision and “mitigated a sentence passed to an apprentice seaman, J. J. Kelly.”<sup>226</sup> The incident troubled Mahan to the point that he wrote Herbert, Secretary of the Navy. Two weeks after the court martial incident, Mahan received a fitness report from Erben that rated his “Professional ability” and “Attention to duty,” as tolerable.<sup>227</sup> Erben explained the “Tolerable” rating in the report:

Regarding my answer “Tolerable” to question No. 1-I state herewith that Capt. Mahan always appears to advantage to the service in all that does not appertain to ship life or matters, but in this particular he is lacking in interest, as he has frankly admitted to me. His interests are entirely outside the service, for which, I am satisfied, he cares but little, and is therefore not a good naval officer. He is not at all observant regarding officers tending to the ship’s general welfare or appearance, nor does he inspire or suggest anything in this connection. In fact, the first few weeks of the cruise she was positively discreditable. In fact, Capt.

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<sup>224</sup>Ibid., 162-163; Mahan letter to Deldie, 11 October 1893.

<sup>225</sup>Seager, 255.

<sup>226</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 208-210; Mahan letter to the Department of the Navy, 13 January 1894.

<sup>227</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 210-212; Mahan letter to Deldie, 22 January 1894.

Mahan's interests lie wholly in the direction of literary work, and in no way connected with the service.<sup>228</sup>

Blindsided by Erben and distressed about his fitness report, Mahan submitted a statement to Herbert to refute the evaluation. He also began the arduous process of documenting every encounter with Erben. Mahan became obsessed with maintaining a perfect ship in order to remove the possibility of any future criticism of his performance as a naval officer. Over time, Mahan realized Erben's issue was probably professional jealousy and not Mahan's performance. Writing Deldie, Mahan shared his observation, "There seems to have arisen in all minds a feeling that jealousy, conscious or unconscious, prompted Erben's action."<sup>229</sup> Knowing Erben was jealous of the attention he received in England and throughout Europe, did little to ease Mahan's stress. He was essentially a hostage aboard the *Chicago*, with port calls his only form of escape. On European soil he was lauded for his literary skills and insights, received honorary degrees and was toasted at formal dinner parties and governmental functions. In contrast, aboard the *Chicago* he was castigated for his literary passion, micromanaged and undermined. The weight of the persecution Mahan experienced aboard the *Chicago* was captured in a letter he wrote Deldie on 23 February 1894, "I promise myself, if I can ever get rid of my naval shackles, to take up that line of life-advocating one true policy by article writing."<sup>230</sup> Erben, like Ramsey, contributed to Mahan's frustration with the Navy, there

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<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid., 239-241; Mahan letter to Deldie, 4 March 1894.

<sup>230</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 234-235; Mahan letter to Deldie, 23 February 1894.

was one bright spot during the European cruise, a letter Mahan received about the College's future.

In 1893, Mahan's *Sea Power* books unexpectedly influenced the Navy. Secretary of the Navy Herbert had planned an "inspection tour of all Newport's training facilities in early August 1893."<sup>231</sup> The underlying reason for the Secretary's trip, abolishing the College, spread among members of the Navy. The real reason for the trip had reached the College. While Herbert traveled to Narragansett Bay aboard the USS *Dolphin*, the ship's captain, Lieutenant Benjamin H. Buckingham, convinced him to read *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire: 1793-1812*.<sup>232</sup> After reading Mahan's third book, Herbert "decided to continue the Naval War College on a permanent basis."<sup>233</sup> In the end, the lecture notes Mahan compiled for instruction at the College, saved the Institution. Puleston captured the importance of Herbert's decision when he wrote, "It is significant that the Navy is indebted to civilian Secretaries for the establishment of the Naval Academy and the preservation of the Naval War College."<sup>234</sup> It is also significant to acknowledge the contributions of Mahan in preserving the College. The Naval War College, in its 129th year, remains the oldest institution of its kind in the world. Institutions that last have lasting effects.

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<sup>231</sup>Seager, 273.

<sup>232</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire: 1793-1812* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1893).

<sup>233</sup>Seager, 273.

<sup>234</sup>Puleston, 115.

In late March 1895, after nearly two years aboard the *Chicago*, Mahan returned to the NYNY. As he prepared for the decommissioning of the *Chicago*, he received orders from Ramsey. In two surviving letters to Ramsey, neither of which contained salutations, Mahan informed the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation of his detachment from the *Chicago* and appointment to “special temporary duty in connection with the Naval War College and Torpedo School.”<sup>235</sup> Back on solid ground, Mahan returned to lecturing at the College. He also responded to article requests from editors of the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Century Magazine*, *Forum* and others. Mahan was a hot literary commodity and shore duty provided him the perfect environment in which to write. The only major change on Mahan’s horizon was retirement.

After 40 years of active duty service, Mahan retired from the Navy on 17 November 1896.<sup>236</sup> Unlike the fanfare and royal treatment he received in Europe during his *Chicago* cruise, there was no special gathering to commemorate his retirement until after it became publicly known through a newspaper announcement. Whitney, a former Secretary of the Navy, read the retirement notice and asked Mahan to name a date to “meet some gentlemen at dinner with him.”<sup>237</sup> On 3 December 1896, Whitney hosted a dinner party for Mahan. In an interesting juxtaposition, 40 years earlier, Mahan had lobbied civilian leaders and political representatives for an appointment to the Naval Academy; now a former civilian leader, flanked by other Secretaries of the Navy and local politicians, gathered to close the chapter on Mahan’s Navy career. The next chapter

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<sup>235</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 414; Mahan letter to Ramsay, 7 May 1895.

<sup>236</sup>Puleston, 171.

<sup>237</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 473-474; Mahan letter to Luce, 5 December 1896.



of Mahan's life involved magazines. In November 1896, just prior to his retirement, Mahan shared his vision with Ashe, "I have here an opening for magazine writing; and I own to a wish to run the remainder of my course as a literary man, taking an active interest in the State, Church, and social movements about me."<sup>238</sup>

Mahan's retirement from the Navy was timely. His many years of sea service, and stressful memories of Ramsay and Erben, wore him down and hindered his writing. In retirement, Mahan could pursue his passion, writing articles. The biggest decision before him was who to write for, and which topic to accept.

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<sup>238</sup>Ibid., 470-471; Mahan letter to Ashe, 7 November 1896.

## CHAPTER 4

### MAHAN'S INFLUENCE IN PRINT (1900-1914)

The previous chapter established Mahan's 19th century influence upon the Navy. This chapter addresses his influence upon the Navy through the print media, and more specifically, *Proceedings*. There were many magazine publishing options available to Mahan at the turn of the century. The decisions he made to disseminate his literary work reflected hidden issues, which required a more indepth examination.

Mahan's reputation as a historian and author were well established by 1900. He had been retired for four years and was free to pursue his passion, writing.<sup>239</sup> At 59, Mahan had published seven books, 43 newspaper articles and 51 magazine articles—roughly a third of the total 20 books, 109 newspaper articles and 161 magazine articles he would ultimately produce.<sup>240</sup> Mahan's strong analytical and writing skills were known to many within the print media, which was the dominant form of communication.

Over the years, magazine editors approached Mahan and asked for articles on political and military topics. Horace E. Scudder of *The Atlantic Monthly* suggested Mahan write about American isolationism. Mahan authored "The United States Looking Outward."<sup>241</sup> An editor from *The Forum* asked Mahan to write about "the Hawaii question."<sup>242</sup> Mahan wrote, "Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power."<sup>243</sup> Robert U. Johnson,

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<sup>239</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 409; Mahan letter to Scudder, 25 March 1895.

<sup>240</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 9-34, 65-70, 83-95.

<sup>241</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1890): 816-824.

<sup>242</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 94; Mahan letter to Scudder, 3 February 1893.

associate editor of *Century Magazine* asked Mahan to address the Yalu conflict. Mahan penned “Lessons from the Yalu Fight.”<sup>244</sup> Mahan was a hot commodity in the literary community. Editors from international magazines sought Mahan’s literary work as well. J.B. Sterling, editor of the *Journal*, a publication of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), invited Mahan to write for the British periodical. Mahan accepted the request and authored “Blockade in Relation to Naval Strategy.” *Proceedings* later reprinted the article after having secured permission from the RUSI.<sup>245</sup> Mahan’s popularity in the print media skyrocketed as his interactions with magazine editors increased and the article topics broadened. He wrote Theodore Roosevelt, “editors of leading magazines are now seeking from me articles on questions of naval policy.”<sup>246</sup> Mahan understood the influence he wielded with his pen, and was content to wait for magazine editors to request articles.

Over time, Mahan developed a simple process to publish articles in magazines. He believed that magazine editors understood the reading preferences of their audiences better than anyone else, including himself, so he deferred to their expertise. Mahan acknowledged this belief in a letter to Scudder, “I entirely adopt your views as to the direction of my future efforts; and were I assured of freedom of course, would ask suggestions now as (to) more particular details of reading and thought upon public

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<sup>243</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 66.

<sup>244</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 415; Mahan letter to Johnson, 14 May 1895.

<sup>245</sup>*Ibid.*, 274-276; Mahan letter to Deldie, 22 May 1894.

<sup>246</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 96.

matters connected with my own line of thought.”<sup>247</sup> In addition to deferring to the opinion of magazine editors, he also pressed them for article topics. He wrote Scudder, “I have not in my mind at this moment any subject for an article, but in case any occurs to you as falling in my line of thought I shall be very glad to hear of it.”<sup>248</sup> Editors fed Mahan article topics, but he ultimately retained the right to dictate his workload and pursuits. This arrangement worked well because it allowed Mahan the freedom to write without the stress of publisher deadlines. In a letter to Scudder he confided, “*The Forum* asked me yesterday for an article on the Hawaii question, which, although the notice was short—a week only—I consented to attempt. They intend it for their March number, and, if worth having it at all, should probably appear quickly; but I own to a general constitutional aversion to such hurry.”<sup>249</sup> Many of Mahan’s surviving letters document his detailed interactions with editors and his growing confidence in his literary skills. He wrote Scudder, “I am persuaded that the navy—and I may even say the country—needs a voice to speak constantly of our external interests in matters touching the navy, and perhaps also maritime matters generally.”<sup>250</sup> With help from magazine editors, Mahan established the means by which he could influence the Navy, the print media.

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<sup>247</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 94; Mahan letter to Scudder, 3 February 1893.

<sup>248</sup>*Ibid.*, 44; Mahan letter to Scudder, 21 April 1891.

<sup>249</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 66.

<sup>250</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 85-86; Mahan letter to Scudder, 22 November 1892.

For many reasons, the Naval Institute was the perfect media outlet for Mahan to influence the Navy. First, Mahan's peers were members of the Naval Institute.<sup>251</sup> None of the other contemporary magazines that published Mahan's work contained a similar peer group audience. Most Naval Institute members were active or retired members of the United States Navy, United States Marine Corps and United States Coast Guard.<sup>252</sup> Mahan knew more about the readership of *Proceedings* than of any other publication. In fact, Luce was a member of the Naval Institute as was Mahan's younger brother Dennis. Second, *Proceedings* was the premier naval military journal at the time, and one of the few military publications in the United States. Essays published in *Proceedings* would be read by naval officers and enthusiasts throughout the Navy, and could potentially affect, not only personnel within the Navy, but also politicians and civilian leaders who made decisions about the Navy. An excerpt from *Proceedings* highlighted the Naval Institute's influence upon the government:

Within the past year naval officers have been invited to give their views on naval personnel to a committee of Congress. In this way, and also through the medium of articles and comments printed in the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, officers have given expression to a variety of opinions as to measures which should be taken to improve the efficiency of the commissioned personnel.<sup>253</sup>

If Mahan wanted to communicate a message to the Navy, or the government,

*Proceedings* offered the most direct route.

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<sup>251</sup>United States Naval Institute, "List of Members," *Proceedings* Appendix (1891): xiv-xv.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid.

<sup>253</sup>T. W. Kinkaid, "Une Chose A La Fois," *Proceedings* 154, no. 6 (1914): 1753-54.

Third, the Naval Institute was a powerful clearinghouse for naval-related information. The *Proceedings* format naturally lent itself to both promoting and refining the information it disseminated. Most issues of *Proceedings* contained essays, discussion comments, professional notes, book notices, book reviews, Naval Institute administrative information and advertisements. Active duty naval officers, who comprised the bulk of the Naval Institute, authored most of the essays, but *Proceedings* also published material from civilian academics, foreign military officers and reprinted articles from other journals.<sup>254</sup> The Naval Institute strived to improve the quality of the content in *Proceedings*. Its goal was for readers to analyze published essays and provide constructive feedback in order to improve the overall analytical quality of the topics addressed. *Proceedings* published feedback in the “Discussion” section. The forum promoted dialogue between reader and author, a natural literary environment for someone like Mahan who frequently wrote letters to newspaper editors.<sup>255</sup> A less dynamic feature of *Proceedings* was the “Professional Notes” section that disseminated worldwide naval order of battle data and information from other periodicals that dealt with relevant naval topics.<sup>256</sup> The Naval Institute succeeded in its quest to accumulate a broad range of naval information, and could no longer publish it all in each issue; thus, it published this disclaimer, “Note—Lack of space limits the scope of these references. Upon application, Members of the Institute, who wish to investigate further, any naval or military topic, will

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<sup>254</sup>Charles F. Munroe, “Some Modern Developments in Methods of Testing Explosives,” *Proceedings* 135, no. 3 (1910): 805-823.

<sup>255</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. III*, 453-454; Mahan letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*, 2 April 1912.

<sup>256</sup>United States Naval Institute, “Books,” *Proceedings* 35, no. 4 (1909): 1316.

be supplied with fuller references to current periodicals published in both the United States and foreign countries.”<sup>257</sup> *Proceedings* was the essential periodical on naval matters because of the depth and breadth of information it disseminated.

The Naval Institute consistently worked to remain a relevant voice on naval matters within the United States. The pages of *Proceedings* proclaimed its mission “to make the pages of the *Proceedings* necessary to every naval officer if he wishes to keep up with his profession—not only War College Extension and Post-Graduate work appear in the *Proceedings*, but the Institute offers its services as a bureau of information on professional questions.”<sup>258</sup> The Institute solicited input from its members on the topics they wanted addressed within the pages of *Proceedings*. It remains a possibility, however remote, that a Naval Institute member may have requested *Proceedings* publish more of Mahan’s literature. Another way the Naval Institute informed its membership of the latest relevant books was via the publishing of book notices and book reviews. *Proceedings* published book notices to announce new books on the market, and reviews to summarize their contents. The next logical step for the organization was to become a book publisher. In 1898, the Naval Institute Board of Control established the Naval Institute Press (NIP). The NIP published books from domestic as well as foreign authors. In 1909, the NIP published *War on the Sea* by Captain Gabriel Darrieus of the French Navy.<sup>259</sup> The NIP

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<sup>257</sup>United States Naval Institute, “Current Naval and Professional Papers,” *Proceedings* 152, no. 4 (1914): 1263.

<sup>258</sup>United States Naval Institute, “Minutes of the Annual Meeting, October 10, 1913,” *Proceedings* 148, no. 4 (1913): 1781-1786.

<sup>259</sup>United States Naval Institute, “Books,” 1316-1325.

expanded the publishing activity of the Institute, which worked well since its members were a natural audience for naval-related books.

As a Naval Institute member, Mahan was likely well aware of the organization's interest in books. Mahan surely knew of the NIP's existence, however, there is no evidence to suggest he ever considered using it after it was established to publish any of the 14 books he authored. In 1890, when Mahan published his breakout book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660-1783*, *Proceedings* published two book notices on *Practical Marine Surveying* and *American Railroad Bridges*.<sup>260</sup> In the same year, *Proceedings* published three book reviews including *Submarine Mines in Relation to War*, *Architecture Navale-Theorie Du Navire*, and *Hand-Book of Problems in Exterior Ballistics*.<sup>261</sup> In 1897, presumably bowing to the growing chorus of praise heaped on Mahan for the book *Life of Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain*, *Proceedings* published its only book notice and review of Mahan's work: "In view of the many excellent reviews of this latest work of Captain A. T. Mahan, United States Navy, which have appeared at home and abroad, the following one, taken at Random and which appeared in the *Spectator* of 17 April 1897, is republished."<sup>262</sup> The publishing battle lines were drawn; Mahan did not use the NIP to publish his books, and *Proceedings* recycled a

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<sup>260</sup>United States Naval Institute, "Book Notices," *Proceedings* 52, no. 1 (1890): 181.

<sup>261</sup>United States Naval Institute, "Reviews," *Proceedings* 55, no. 4 (1890): 599-601.

<sup>262</sup>United States Naval Institute, "Book Notices and Reviews, Mahan's Life of Nelson," *Proceedings* 82, no. 2 (1897): 393-395.



book review from another publisher in order to publish their one and only book notice on Mahan.

Lastly, the Naval Institute and Navy shared common roots. The organizations were natural partners. They drew from the same labor pool, and were collocated at Annapolis. The Naval Institute's mission further entwined the two entities, "the advancement of professional, literary, and scientific knowledge in the Navy." The essays published in *Proceedings* provided clear evidence that the Naval Institute focused its literary attention on matters relevant to the Navy, which Mahan was familiar with and drawn toward. Essay titles such as "The Elements of Fleet Tactics," "Naval Efficiency and Command of the Sea," "The Fleet," and countless others, addressed topics important to Mahan. For these six reasons, *Proceedings* could have offered Mahan the optimum print media outlet to influence the Navy.

Mahan and the Naval Institute seemed destined to work together. Mahan joined the Naval Institute in 1875, nearly halfway through his career, and just two years after the organization was founded.<sup>263</sup> In 1878, he participated in the Naval Institute's inaugural essay contest and won Second Honorable Mention, third prize, for the essay "Naval Education."<sup>264</sup> Mahan's award winning essay, his first published piece in *Proceedings*, positioned him for a future literary partnership with the Naval Institute.

There were two ways Mahan's writing could influence the Navy through *Proceedings*. The first was the direct approach and involved Mahan submitting essays or discussion comments in response to another author's essay. In the period 1900 to 1914,

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<sup>263</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 436; Mahan letter to Chandler, 2 October 1875.

<sup>264</sup>Puleston, 57.

Mahan published the essay “Reflections, Historic and Other, Suggested by the Battle of the Japan Sea” in *Proceedings*.<sup>265</sup> Despite being published in multiple magazines, he only submitted three literary works to *Proceedings* for publication during his 35-year career. If Mahan was not interested in publishing his articles directly in *Proceedings*, then he could have made other arrangements to disseminate his literary work through the Naval Institute. When he interacted with magazine editors, Mahan could have arranged for articles to be reprinted in *Proceedings* months after their original publication dates in other magazines. This option would have required more coordination on Mahan’s part, but undoubtedly would have been offset by the increased publicity and promotion in *Proceedings*. There is no record of *Proceedings* reprinting any of Mahan’s articles from 1900 to 1914, with his authorization. However, *Proceedings* reprinted Mahan’s 1895 article, “Blockade in Relation to Naval Strategy,” after they received permission from the RUSI, who originally asked Mahan for the article.<sup>266</sup> Sadly, the reprinted article foreshadowed the Naval Institute’s pattern of publishing Mahan’s literary pieces without his consent. It is unknown if Mahan disapproved of the method by which *Proceedings* gained permission to reprint his article; however, another possible source of friction may have been their process for publishing articles. The informal arrangement Mahan enjoyed with the editors of *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Forum*, *Century Magazine* and others, embodied the exact opposite of what he encountered with *Proceedings*, except for the essay contest. Magazine editors typically pushed article topics to Mahan, while

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<sup>265</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Reflections, Historic and Other, Suggested by the Battle of the Japan Sea,” *Proceedings* 32, no. 2 (June 1906): 447-471.

<sup>266</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Blockade in Relation to Naval Strategy,” *Proceedings* 73, no. 1 (1895): 851-866.

*Proceedings* generally pulled essays from its members. The painful memory of his 21 March 1876, letter to Representative Whitthorne, where he strayed from the list of questions and personally attacked Secretary of the Navy Robeson, may have influenced Mahan to limit his writing to suggested article topics vice pursuing his own agenda.<sup>267</sup> The differences between the two operating approaches could have caused friction between Mahan and *Proceedings*, thus hampering their ability to work together to influence the Navy.

The indirect approach was another way for Mahan to influence the Navy. If *Proceedings* published essays, books or discussions from authors sympathetic to Mahan, or literature that referenced his published works or military service, then he could be credited with influencing the Navy through *Proceedings*. The issues of *Proceedings* that were published from 1900 to 1914 contain numerous references to Mahan.<sup>268</sup> Much of his literary work was mentioned or referenced in either essays or follow up discussions. The Naval Institute's prize winning essay for 1910, "The Merchant Marine and the Navy," referenced *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660-1783*, and quoted Mahan.<sup>269</sup> The 1914 essay prize winner also referenced and quoted Mahan. In "The Great Lesson From Nelson for To-Day," Lieutenant Commander D. W. Knox referenced *The Life of*

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<sup>267</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 443-450; Mahan letter to Whitthorne, 21 March 1876.

<sup>268</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 34-53, 70-81.

<sup>269</sup>T. G. Roberts, "The Merchant Marine and the Navy," *Proceedings* 133. no. 1 (1910): 1-39.

*Nelson: The Embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain.*<sup>270</sup> A Naval Academy instructor published “The Battle of Lake Champlain,” and referenced *Sea Power in Its Relations to the War of 1812.*<sup>271</sup> In the essay, “Organization: An Essay on Fundamental Principles, G. S. Radford quotes heavily from Mahan’s *Naval Administration and Warfare.*<sup>272</sup> Indirectly, most of Mahan’s books were referenced or quoted within the pages of *Proceedings*. Nearly every issue of *Proceedings* published between 1900 and 1914 contained a quote from, or reference to Mahan, including at least five Naval Institute General Prize Essay Contest winners.

An 1889 incident between Mahan and Lieutenant Charles R. Miles, Secretary of the Naval Institute, may explain Mahan’s limited interactions with *Proceedings*. Miles asked Mahan for permission to publish lectures from the College in *Proceedings.*<sup>273</sup> The request, one of several Mahan received over the years, urged him to consider reaching a broader audience through *Proceedings*. While Mahan was accustomed to editors requesting articles, the request from Miles was different, and the timing poor. Whether Miles realized it or not, Mahan was in the midst of a bureaucratic fight to preserve the College. He likely viewed Miles’ request as another attempt to undermine the Institution. On 27 November 1888, Mahan wrote Miles:

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<sup>270</sup>D. W. Knox, “The Great Lesson from Nelson for To-Day,” *Proceedings* 150, no. 2 (1914): 297-318.

<sup>271</sup>H. C. Washburn, “The Battle of Lake Champlain,” *Proceedings* 153, no. 5 (1914): 1365-1386.

<sup>272</sup>G. S. Radford, “Organization: An Essay on Fundamental Principles, with Special Reference to the Navy,” *Proceedings* 148, no. 4 (1913): 1683-1718.

<sup>273</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. I*, 666-669; Mahan letter to Miles, 22 November 1888.

I have already drawn attention, in a paper which has been published in the *Proceedings* of the Institute, to the fact that the naval officer, sympathizing therein with the tendency of the age, is interesting himself far more in the development of material than in the art of fighting, which is nevertheless his proper business. It is therefore unnecessary now to say about this evident truth much more than this: that if the instruction of the War College is printed in the *Proceedings* on an equal footing, as of course it must be, with the mass of matter dealing with all sorts of mechanical and physical problems, it will be swamped by them—it will receive rare and desultory attention.<sup>274</sup>

In the letter, Mahan outlined several reasons why publishing lecture notes in *Proceedings* detracted from the College's mission. Mahan closed the private letter with, "It is for these reasons, and not from any illiberal wish to monopolize advantages, that the publications of the lectures of the College has, as a rule, been discouraged."<sup>275</sup> There was no reason for Mahan to think his personal reply would be treated any differently than his previous responses to the Naval Institute. It is unknown if Mahan authorized the Naval Institute to publish his personal correspondence, but there is anecdotal evidence from a similar situation that might shed light on Mahan's reaction to the matter. On 3 January 1902, Mahan wrote Hamilton Holt, managing editor of *The Independent*, about his conduct when his magazine published his private remark. Mahan wrote, "My dear Sir: A Letter from Mr. George, of the *Baltimore American*, received this morning, is my first information of your having published in the current *Independent* my name in connection with a remark made by me in a private letter to you."<sup>276</sup> Mahan had declined to write for *The Independent* and Holt responded by publishing Mahan's personal correspondence.

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<sup>274</sup>Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Letter of Captain A.T. Mahan, U.S.N.," *Proceedings* 48, no. 1 (1889): 57-60.

<sup>275</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. III*, 1-2; Mahan letter to Holt, 3 January 1902.

Mahan's experiences with Holt and Miles were very similar. After he declined to write for *The Independent* and share lectures notes with *Proceedings*, the end results were the same, they both published his private correspondence. Naturally, Mahan assumed his personal correspondence to Holt would remain private. Mahan's frustration with Holt's breach of privacy was captured in the closing lines of his letter to Holt:

My Letter on its main subject was in direct reply to one from you on a business proposition. In declining it tentatively, I mentioned one reason which would make declination final. Certainly, if a man cannot enter into correspondence with an editor without security that his name & words will not be published, without first consulting him, there will quickly be an end of all confidence and with it of the editor's business. True, I did not mark the letter confidential. I would as soon have thought of locking up my letters if I happened to leave you in the room. To avoid further misunderstanding, I will say that I consider that letter private, and never till today had any suspicion it would be otherwise regarded. If its contents reach the public, it will be because you see fit to disregard the implied confidence with which I wrote.<sup>277</sup>

Mahan's response to Holt's breach of privacy lends credence to the notion that his literary relationship with *Proceedings* ended, or at the very least was strained, after the Naval Institute published his private correspondence. Mahan's last letter to Holt explained how serious Mahan regarded the matter, "What I said was, (as I remember) that I considered you had seriously misled your readers, and that unless you corrected your statements, it would affect my action, which *is* under my control, to the extent that I could not associate my name with the *Independent* by writing for it."<sup>278</sup> Mahan never published in *The Independent* after the incident; he severed all literary ties, which may help explain Mahan's shy pen and reluctance to publish in *Proceedings* after 1889. Seager alluded to this situation in his biography, "For the institute he did little more than

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<sup>277</sup>Ibid.

<sup>278</sup>Ibid., 3; Mahan letter to Holt, 6 January 1902.

pay his annual dues and let it go at that. At one point he considered dropping his membership. He was also more interested in the historical publications of the British Navy Records Society than he was in the Naval Institute and its ordnance-oriented *Proceedings*.<sup>279</sup> There is ample evidence to support Seager's claim that Mahan's working relationship with the Naval Institute was compromised but, unfortunately, it occurred at precisely the time when Mahan's literary career was about to explode.

The breach between Mahan and the Naval Institute stunted several promising partnerships. First and foremost, it damaged Mahan's personal relationship with the Naval Institute. Mahan's magazine article and newspaper contribution totals highlight the disparity between what *Proceedings* published and other print media outlets. Of the 270 magazine and newspaper items Mahan authored, *Proceedings* published eight of Mahan's total or approximately three percent.<sup>280</sup> This tally includes the single "discussion" comment Mahan submitted to *Proceedings* in 1890, which is included here in its entirety:

I have only to express my entire concurrence in the general tenor of this admirable paper, and in the principles of naval policy adopted in it. Such being the case, having nothing to criticize and little I should care to add, I would have said nothing, were it not that the matter is so important to the country and to the service that it is desirable to re-enforce the paper by as large a consensus of professional opinion as can be obtained.

It is much to be hoped that the whole question of dependence upon swift cruisers and commerce destroying, as a principal mode of warfare, may be more seriously considered than it has been by the navy. If I am right in my opinion, which I understand to be that of Admiral Luce as well, that a war against an enemy's commerce is an utterly insufficient instrument, regarded as the main operation of war, though doubtless valuable as a secondary operation, the United States and its people are committed to an erroneous and disastrous policy. No harm has been done in building the new cruisers, for ships of that kind are wanted; but great

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<sup>279</sup>Seager, 440.

<sup>280</sup>Hattendorf and Hattendorf, 65-81, 83-95.

harm has been done by the loss of so many years in which have not been built any battle-ships, which are undoubtedly the real strength of a navy.<sup>281</sup>

It is important to recognize that Mahan’s single written comment to a *Proceedings* essay was for an essay authored by his friend, Admiral Luce.<sup>282</sup> Mahan’s response to “Our Future Navy” contained both accolades for Luce and advocacy for his proposed future naval policy.

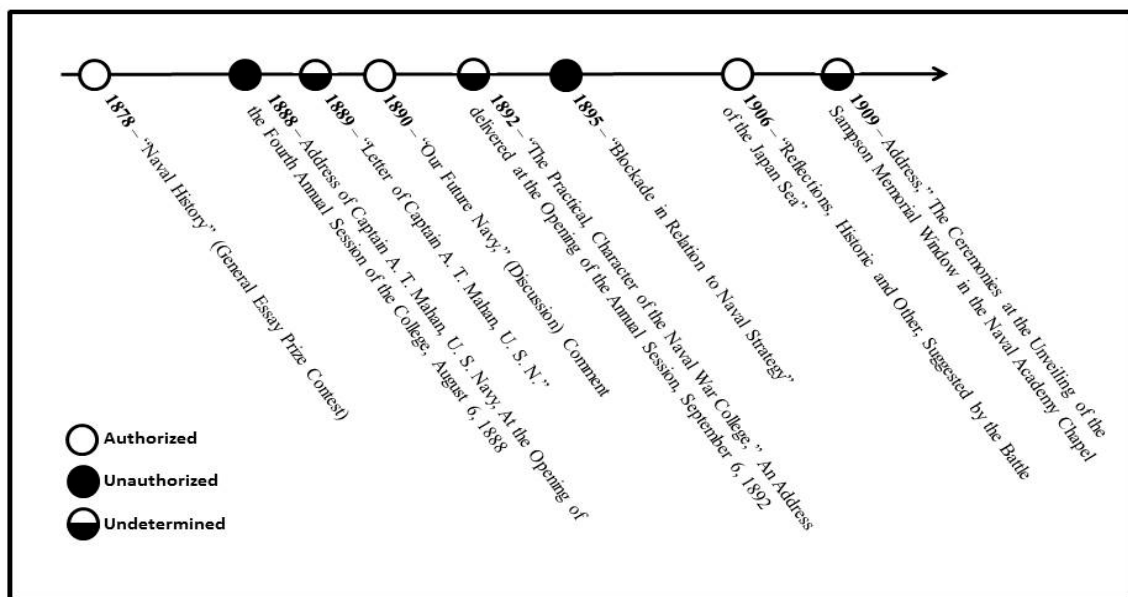


Figure 1. An Analysis of Mahan’s Literary Pieces Published in *Proceedings*

Source: Created by author.

An analysis of the eight Mahan authored products published by *Proceedings* reveals clues about the interplay between Mahan and the Naval Institute. The Institute published Mahan’s award winning essay in 1879; two opening addresses to the War

<sup>281</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Discussion,” *Proceedings* 51, no. 4 (1889): 554.

<sup>282</sup> Stephen B. Luce, “Our Future Navy,” *Proceedings* 51, no. 4 (1889): 541-552.



College in 1888 and 1892; a private letter to Miles in 1889; a comment to Luce's "Our Future Navy" essay in 1890; the "Blockade in Relation to Naval Strategy" article reprinted in 1895; the "Reflections, Historic and Other, Suggested by the Battle of the Japan Sea" essay in 1906; and the address at the dedication ceremony for Admiral William Thomas Sampson memorial window in 1909.<sup>283</sup> Of the eight documents *Proceedings* published, only three were authorized by Mahan for publication—only three authorized pieces in a literary career that spanned 35 years (see figure-1).

In a literary career that spanned 35 years, Mahan authorized the Naval Institute to publish three literary pieces (see figure-1). The infrequency with which Mahan authorized *Proceedings* to publish his literature, considering the potential there was for him to promote his other literary works, is shocking. Mahan's single discussion comment is also surprising, especially given his propensity to debate naval matters in other print media outlets such as newspapers.

Mahan did not authorize *Proceedings* to publish two of the eight documents they published (see figure-1). The contents of Mahan's 1888 opening address to the fourth annual session of the Naval War College make it abundantly clear why it was not meant for wider distribution or publication.<sup>284</sup> In the address Mahan discussed the challenges the College faced and the parties who opposed it. He mentioned the refusal of Congress to appropriate funds for the College; the distinguished officers "who have extended their cordial approval and sympathy to the College," but were unable to provide an opening

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<sup>283</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Ceremonies at the Unveiling of the Sampson Memorial Window in the Naval Academy Chapel," *Proceedings* 129, no. 1 (1909): 267-282.

<sup>284</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Necessities and Objects of a Naval War College," *Proceedings* 47, no. 4 (1888): 621-639.

address; competition and opposition from the Naval Academy; and the Navy's myopic view on the study of the art of war.<sup>285</sup> Mahan also criticized the literary content of *Proceedings*, "Look at the Navy Register; how many are the officers who are working at the art of war? Consult the index of the publications of our Naval Institute; what proportion do articles on waging war bear to those on mechanical or physical progress in naval material?"<sup>286</sup> While Mahan most likely believed the College and Naval Institute were both interested in improving the Navy, his ability to partner with them was compromised. While the Naval Institute was empty handed from previous attempts to gain access to lectures notes from the College, they jumped on the chance to publish his opening remarks, albeit without his permission.<sup>287</sup> Mahan commented on *Proceedings'* unauthorized publishing of his address in his 1892 opening remarks to the student body, "Had that address then gone no further, it might now, after the lapse of four years, have been resurrected like the sermon from the proverbial barrel and done duty again: but having incautiously been allowed to pass into print, and somewhat widely distributed within the service, this resource is not now open to me."<sup>288</sup> Mahan never intended for *Proceedings* to publish his 1888 opening address to the College. Had he known his remarks would be published in *Proceedings*, Mahan most likely would have altered his speech. While *Proceedings* published Mahan's 1892 address, there is no evidence to support whether he authorized it or not. The likelihood that Mahan would consent to

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<sup>285</sup>Ibid.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid.

<sup>287</sup>Mahan, "Letter of Captain A.T. Mahan, U.S.N.," 57-60.

<sup>288</sup>Mahan, "The Necessities and Objects of a Naval War College," 621-639.

*Proceedings* publishing his 1892 address, after they published the 1888 address without his permission, is low. The other document *Proceedings* published without Mahan's consent was "Blockade in Relation to Naval Strategy."<sup>289</sup> *Proceedings*, for reasons unknown, circumvented Mahan and requested reprint permission from the RUSI. There is no evidence to suggest *Proceedings* ever asked Mahan directly for permission to publish the article, but it is interesting to note that the article was one the RUSI specifically asked Mahan to author.

The last group of documents *Proceedings* published by Mahan are those which cannot be accounted for as either authorized or unauthorized for publication (see figure-1). Mahan may have authorized the Naval Institute to publish his private letter, knowing its publication would end their periodic requests, or their treatment of his private letter may have shocked him. The fact that Luce was president of the Naval Institute at the time *Proceedings* published Mahan's personal correspondence adds a twist to the situation, but provides no additional evidence to support a claim either way.<sup>290</sup> It is highly unlikely Luce authorized the publishing of Mahan's letter; he may simply not have been involved in that level of decision making at the Naval Institute. Luce would not have intentionally undermined the College he worked so hard to create, or a close friend he mentioned throughout the years. It is possible that since Mahan did not provide lecture notes to *Proceedings*, the Naval Institute, out of desperation, published Mahan without his consent. The other two documents, whose status remains undetermined, are the addresses Mahan presented at the 1892 opening of the College and the 1909 unveiling of a

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<sup>289</sup>Mahan, "Blockade in Relation to Naval Strategy," 851-866.

<sup>290</sup>United States Naval Institute, "List of Members," xiv-xv.

memorial window to honor Admiral Sampson. There is insufficient evidence to determine if Mahan authorized the publication of any of these three pieces.

Between 1884 and 1895 the relationship between the Naval War College and Naval Institute was strained. Mahan served as the president of the College from 1886 to 1889 and 1892 to 1893; as president, he focused his attention toward ensuring the Institution's survival. His personal struggles with the Naval Institute, and *Proceedings*, carried over to the College's professional interactions with it. The College's prohibition on publishing lecture notes in *Proceedings* was not lost on members of the Navy.

Lieutenant Commander Harry Yarnell addressed the issue in *Proceedings*:

(c) Failure on the part of the War College to advertise its aims and methods to the service, and to disseminate information. It is a peculiar fact that while the United States was the first to establish a Naval War College, and to produce an author whose works on naval warfare are used as text-books in foreign navies, other nations have profited more from the example and teachings than our own.<sup>291</sup>

While Mahan's decision to protect the College was understandable, imposing a personal media blackout on *Proceedings* was shortsighted. The opportunity cost of Mahan's decision became evident when *Proceedings* published material from the College after Mahan completed his tour as president. The timing of the thaw in relations between the College and Naval Institute coincided with the College's existence being no longer in doubt, and Mahan no longer at the helm. In 1896, *Proceedings* published an opening address to the College by Hilary A. Herbert, Secretary of the Navy. In his address, "The Sea and Sea Power as a Factor in the History of the United States," Herbert confessed that he once thought the College was focused on post-graduate courses which were better

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<sup>291</sup>Harry E. Yarnell, "The Greatest Need of the Atlantic Fleet," *Proceedings* 145, no. 1 (1913): 1-40.

suited for the Naval Academy.<sup>292</sup> After 1900, the quarterly issues of *Proceedings* included a footnote seldom seen before, “Published by permission of Naval War College.”<sup>293</sup> The possibility exists that the organizational bylines *Proceedings* published after 1900 were the direct result of their spat with Mahan. In 1900, *Proceedings* published the opening address by the Honorable Frank W. Hackett, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and the essay “An Account of Some Past Military and Naval Operations Directed Against Porto [sic] Rico and Cuba” from Captain C. H. Stockton, President of the Naval War College.<sup>294</sup> In 1900, *Proceedings* published two College related items within a single issue. Years later, *Proceedings* published the lecture presented by Charles M. Bakewell, Professor of Philosophy at Yale University, during the 1913 Summer Conference.<sup>295</sup> The evidence continued to mount that the College and Naval Institute were working together to influence the Navy. The “Secretary’s Notes” section of a 1914 issue of *Proceedings* signaled the change, “Attention is invited to the following articles which have appeared in the pages of the *Proceedings* during the past two years; they treat of subjects which closely concern Naval War College work; a perusal of them should

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<sup>292</sup>Hilary A. Herbert, “The Sea and Sea Power as a Factor in the History of the United States,” *Proceedings* 79, no. 3 (1896): 561-575.

<sup>293</sup>Asa Walker, “Combined Maritime Operations,” *Proceedings* 93, no. 1 (1900): 143-155.

<sup>294</sup>C. H. Stockton, “An Account of Some Past Military and Naval Operations Directed Against Porto Rico and Cuba,” *Proceedings* 95, no. 3 (1900): 457-476.

<sup>295</sup>Charles M. Bakewell, “Moral Training in Preparation for War,” *Proceedings* 149, no. 1 (1913): 157-176.

prove profitable.”<sup>296</sup> The restored relationship between the two institutions expanded the College material published in *Proceedings*.

Mahan limited his ability to influence the Navy through *Proceedings* from 1900 to 1914. Despite their strained relationship, *Proceedings* continued to publish articles that not only contained material of professional interest to Mahan, but also recognized his literary contributions and praised his analytical skills. Lieutenant Commander D. W. Knox examined Lord Nelson, a favorite topic of Mahan’s, in his 1914 prize-winning essay, “The Great Lesson from Nelson for To-Day.”<sup>297</sup> Knox’s historical examination of Lord Nelson elicited no response from Mahan, who had authored the seminal biography of Lord Nelson. Another essay in *Proceedings* appeared to solicit a response from Mahan. In, “A New Type of Battleship,” Lieutenant Matt H. Signor wrote:

The Naval Institute seems to offer the most valuable means for service discussions, and it would be conducive to increased influence if the criticism of the various papers published were more general and more rigorous. Adverse criticism seldom finds its way to the place where it can do the most good. “Everybody is wiser than anybody,” and the more opinions are carefully presented, the greater the chance of the final movement being in the right direction.<sup>298</sup>

Whether *Proceedings* intentionally sought to publish essays with the intent of coaxing a response from Mahan is unknown, but however enticing the essay topics, Mahan’s pen remained silent. *Proceedings* also published essays that praised Mahan, including Captain French E. Chadwick’s 1902 opening address to the College, “It was the great mind of

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<sup>296</sup>United States Naval Institute, “Secretary’s Notes,” *Proceedings* 150, no. 2 (1914): vii-x.

<sup>297</sup>Knox, 297-318.

<sup>298</sup>Matt H. Signor, “A New Type of Battleship,” *Proceedings* 101, no. 1 (1902): 1-20.

Mahan which accomplished this revolution, giving sea power its logical supremacy in the minds of men which we can now all see it has always had in actuality.”<sup>299</sup> Mahan remained silent despite *Proceedings* publishing tempting essays and regular discussion comments that affirmed his intellectual capacity.

In the 14-year period under examination, it is obvious Mahan limited his literary interactions with *Proceedings*. Despite an active pen, Mahan was content to publish magazine articles and books with nearly any publisher but the Naval Institute, which begs the question, why? What happened between Mahan and the Naval Institute to cause the most prolific naval author of the time to forego publishing in the premiere naval magazine within the United States? There is no mention of the matter in Mahan’s surviving correspondence or autobiography, or any of the biographies written on Mahan. While the origin of their dysfunctional relationship remains a mystery, the next and final chapter will address Mahan’s influence upon the Navy, through his limited encounters with *Proceedings*.

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<sup>299</sup>French E. Chadwick, “Opening Address Delivered by the President of War College, June 4, 1902,” *Proceedings* 102, no. 2 (1902): 251-263.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

There are some men who lift the age they inhabit, till all men walk on higher ground in that lifetime.<sup>300</sup>

— Maxwell Anderson, “The Quotations Page”

If Mahan was accused of influencing the Navy through *Proceedings*, from 1900-1914, there would only be circumstantial evidence for prosecution. Mahan had the means, he authored naval-related literature; the motive, he realized the nation needed “a voice to speak constantly of our external interests in matters touching the navy,” and the opportunity, he was a member of the Naval Institute.<sup>301</sup> Yet, America’s leading naval author in the early 20th century managed to only publish a single essay in *Proceedings* from 1900 to 1914. While his limited literary interaction with *Proceedings* raises other issues, the question of Mahan’s influence upon the Navy through *Proceedings* remains. Despite his meager publishing totals with the Naval Institute, Mahan’s principles and writings continued to grace the pages of *Proceedings*. Most quarterly issues of *Proceedings* contained an essay that referenced, quoted or analyzed a Mahanian principle or literary product. The fact that Mahan’s pen remained silent did not mean the pens of fellow naval officers could not promote, debate and write about his sea power principles and historical analysis.

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<sup>300</sup>Michael Moncur, “Classic Quotes, Maxwell Anderson, Valley Forge, Act II, Scene ii, 1937,” The Quotations Page, <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/41359.html> (accessed 14 May 2013).

<sup>301</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 85-86; Mahan letter to Scudder, 22 November 1892.



Mahan's direct influence upon the Navy through *Proceedings* was minimal, but his indirect influence was profound. His "Reflections, Historic and Other, Suggested by the Battle of the Japan Sea" essay, published by *Proceedings* in 1906, addressed several important issues within the Navy. Mahan dissected the naval battle between Japan and Russia as a precursor to addressing battleship construction. He weighed in on the debate between greater speeds or enhanced fighting power, and in true Mahan style, proposed something neither side seemed to consider, that "in every class of naval vessel there should first of all, and first and last, throughout her design, be the recognition of her purpose in war."<sup>302</sup> His insight, seconded by Captain Richard Wainwright in his "A Further Argument for the Big Ship" essay, illustrated the pervasive nature of Mahan's theories in *Proceedings*.<sup>303</sup> Many of the Naval Institute's essay contest winners from 1900-1914 drew inspiration from, or referenced Mahanian principles in their work. The scarcity of Mahan's essays in *Proceedings* did not equate to a scarcity of his principles, beliefs or writings, it just meant his influence occurred via proxy.

The findings of this study suggest Mahan intentionally restricted the material he published in *Proceedings*. There are several possible explanations for Mahan's decision to avoid *Proceedings*. One reason could be Mahan's frustration with the Navy, and by extension, the Naval Institute. At great personal cost, Mahan attempted to improve the Navy's understanding of the art of war, but the fiercest obstacles Mahan encountered were in the Navy. He also felt the Navy hindered his literary aspirations and devalued the

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<sup>302</sup>Mahan, "Reflections, Historic and Other, Suggested by the Battle of the Japan Sea," 447-471.

<sup>303</sup>Richard Wainwright, "A Further Argument for the Big Ship," *Proceedings* 119, no. 3 (1906): 1057-1063.

work he performed.<sup>304</sup> Mahan's last decade of service in the Navy was stressful, unpleasant and discouraging. Mahan felt the Naval Institute focused too much on ordnance matters and too little on naval warfare. Another reason for his publishing drought could be the Naval Institute's decision to publish his private correspondence. Mahan never worked with *The Independent* after their editor published his private correspondence. A third possibility is that Mahan was already well connected with important personnel within the Navy, so attempting to reach them through *Proceedings* was unnecessary. Mahan's decision could also be the result of a mixture of all three of these suggested possibilities. Ultimately, the only way to learn the reason behind Mahan's limited interactions with *Proceedings* is through additional research.

While this study analyzed a specific print media outlet and Mahan's influence upon the Navy through it, there are two specific questions that remain unanswered. What caused the rift between Mahan and the Naval Institute? The answer to this question would give great insight to this study, and maybe other studies. This study uncovered another question. What caused the rift between Mahan and Ramsay? The animosity between the two naval officers was conspicuous, but the source of the tension remains unknown. The enduring tension about Mahan's influence and relevance is another possible area for future research. A topic that surfaced as a result of this study is the influence of magazine editors upon Mahan and the subjects he analyzed. As this thesis highlights, magazine editors played a pivotal role in Mahan's literary efforts. A thorough examination of Mahan's interactions with print media editors could aid in understanding the depth and breadth of naval-related issues he addressed and spotlight areas he declined

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<sup>304</sup>Puleston, 82.

or neglected. Another possible research topic is the application of Mahanian sea power methodology to other domains such as Cyber Warfare. An international topic, with the possibility of benefitting historical military research, is the influence of the Royal Navy upon Mahan. An examination of the influence of a foreign navy upon the father of American strategy and tactics would entail many facets of Mahan's life and literary work. Expanding the scope of some of the aforementioned research topics would also address Mahan's relevance to the 21st century. A detailed analysis of Mahan's books could also produce additional topics in which his relevance was either forgotten or never realized.

In the final analysis, Mahan's interactions with the Navy, and by extension, the Naval Institute, were compromised; he did not trust either organization. Ramsey worked to dismantle the College; Erben worked to discredit Mahan. Ramsay injected countless administrative hurdles into Mahan's professional life to wear him down and attack the College. Erben attacked Mahan personally through a fitness report that described Mahan as, "not a good naval officer."<sup>305</sup> The Naval Institute, populated with Navy personnel, and having published Mahan's material without his consent, was simply another entity that Mahan chose to avoid. For Mahan, the Naval Institute and the Navy were inseparable: neither entity respected him nor had earned his respect.

In summary, Mahan's direct influence upon the Navy through *Proceedings* from 1900 to 1914 was minimal. Other than a single essay, the bulk of the material *Proceedings* published on Mahan was from authors who referenced, quoted or debated Mahan's sea power principles or historical analysis. He influenced the topics the Navy debated through proxy authors in *Proceedings*. Despite serious issues with the Naval

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<sup>305</sup>Seager and Maguire, *Vol. II*, 210-212; Mahan letter to Deldie, 22 January 1894.

Institute and Navy, Mahan maintained his composure and honored his father's advice, "Stand up to your work bravely, My Dear Boy, and always in the tone of a high-minded honourable Christian gentleman, and then let the consequences take care of themselves. Your own reputation will be unsullied."<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>306</sup>Taylor, 2.

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