

OLDEST SHIP IN THE U. S. NAVY.

It having been ascertained that the "Lancaster" could be utilized in the American-Spanish war, she was placed in commission, and Commander Thos. Perry, U. S. N., was ordered to take her south. A few years ago the old war ship had been converted into a gunnery training ship and armed with ten 5-inch rapid fire guns. When hostilities began in the recent war the navy was short of guns for the auxiliary cruisers and one by one the guns had been taken from the "Lancaster" and other "Civil War reminders" until the former had but two old converted muzzle-loading 20-pound Parrots, relics of the Civil War, and these were generally used as a saluting battery. In addition to these the "Lancaster" was given two small 6-pounders of the Hotchkiss type, which were mounted one on each broadside and were intended for use in case of an attack from torpedo boats.

Thus equipped the old "Lancaster" sailed from the Boston navy yard on Thursday, May 19, at a time when several Spanish gunboats had been seen off the New England coast and Cervera's fleet had been bobbing around promiscuously. There was a crew of 250 on board the "Lancaster" and of these only twelve were trained hands. The old "Lancaster" made the fourteen-hundred mile trip from Boston to Key West safely and was subsequently used as a transport ship in conveying our "soldier boys" to Santiago, Cuba, and to-day lies safely moored in the harbor at Key West.

Few, if any, of my hearers are aware of the fact that the "Lancaster" is the

oldest ship in the United States navy and that the cruiser was constructed over forty years ago and was a sister vessel of Farragut's flagship "Hartford," and that this battle-scarred veteran of the Civil War was named after Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and was christened by a young woman of Lancaster, Harriet Lane, mistress of the White House, and niece of President James Buchanan. This is the case and an examination of the files of the local and Philadelphia newspapers for the year 1858 establishes that fact, the "Lancaster" having been christened on October 20 of that year.

The Lancaster Intelligencer of October 26, 1858, states, quoting from the Philadelphia Press, that "Miss Harriet Lane broke a bottle of wine on her bow. The wine used was made from the native grape of Lancaster county, and it was brought to Philadelphia by his Honor, Thomas H. Burrowes, Mayor of Lancaster, at the request of the venerable Commodore Stewart."

The Evening Express of October 21, 1858, contains a lengthy account of the launching and naming of the ship, on Wednesday, October 20, 1858, near noon, and among other things mentions, "Just as the ship touched the water Miss Lane broke a bottle of Conestoga water over her bows and formally named her the 'Lancaster. Although she will only carry 18 guns, she is pierced for 32." The Express suggested that a painting of Lancaster be gotten up and placed in the new vessel. "Among the guests were Hon. James Buchanan, President of the United States; Hon. Thomas H. Burrowes, Mayor of Lancaster, who, in accordance with Commodore Stewart's suggestion, took down the bottle of Conestoga water with which the ceremony of naming the ship was to be performed. The receiving ship 'Princeton' lay off in the river and

was gayly decorated for the occasion. The frigate 'Congress' had been fitted up with seats for the ladies."

The launching took place from the Philadelphia Navy Yard. The naval sloop of war "Lancaster" registered 2,250 tons; was 273 feet one inch in length over all; spar deck, 253 feet; beam, 46 feet; she carries 18 nine-inch guns and 2 eleven-inch guns; when full rigged will cost \$700,000. Over 2,000 people witnessed the launch, which took place at 11:45 a. m. The "Congress" was moored alongside of the "Lancaster." The Express further observes "Miss Lane was the 'observed of all observers.' She was tastefully dressed in a blue brocade dress, with white bonnet trimmed with feathers. The general remark was that she was a decidedly interesting looking lady."

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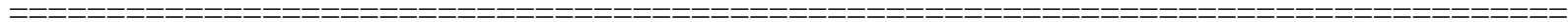
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