Monday Maritime Matters

Description

Albert J. Myer, born Sept 28th, 1828, grew up to be a very accomplished citizen of this United States. So much so, a ship was named after him. You see, Albert Myer began his career in the US Army as a surgeon, but later, as a Major, became the father of the US Army Signal Corps just before the Civil War began. But, if that wasnâ€™t enough, he also spawned the US Weather Bureau, which we know today as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).For those of you who were part of the Boy Scouts, you might recall the practice of â€œwig wagâ€• to send Morse code across long distances. Albert Myer was also the inventor of this form of communications. In fact, it was that specific innovation that got this Army surgeon the post to begin the Signal Corps. From Wikipedia:

> In 1858, the Army expressed interest in Myerâ€™s invention and appointed a board to examine â€œthe principles and plans of the signalling, mode of use in the field, and course to be pursued in introducing to the army.â€• Myer appeared before the board, chaired by Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, in 1859 and convinced them to authorize field testing of his invention. He conducted field tests starting in April of that year around New York Harbor. The tests were successful and Secretary of War John B. Floyd recommended to Congress that the Army adopt Myerâ€™s system and that Myer be appointed as chief signal officer. Congress approved Myerâ€™s appointment as major and chief signal officer and the Signal Corps was formed, despite opposition in the Senate by Jefferson Davis from Mississippi. Myer was sent to the Department of New Mexico for further field trials of his system in a campaign against the Navajos.

The story of the â€œwig wagâ€• systemâ€™s use, it not without its irony. Also noted in Wikipedia:

> Ironically, the first use in combat of Myerâ€™s signaling system was by Confederate Captain Edward Porter Alexander at the First Battle of Bull Run. Alexander had been a subordinate of Myerâ€™s and assisted in the New York field trials.

Following the Civil War, General Myer was then charged with setting up weather monitoring stations to warn mariners of bad weather:

> The U.S. Congress, on February 9, 1870, authorized â€œâ€¦ meteorological observations at the military stations in the interior of the continent and at other points in the states and territories of the United States, and for giving notice on the northern lakes and seaboard by telegraph and signals of the approach and force of stormsâ€•. This duty, previously conducted by the Smithsonian Institution, was assigned to General Myerâ€™s Signal Corps, due in part to his previous interests in storm telegraphy. It was the birth of the U.S. Weather Bureau, now the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
>
> Myer headed the Signal Corps from August 21, 1867, until his death of nephritis at Buffalo, New York, in 1880. He is interred in the Walden-Myer Mausoleum at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo.

default watermark

The legacy of General Myerâ€™s accomplishments are remembered by honoring him with the renaming of Ft Whipple at Arlington, VA to Ft Myer. You might have heard of it, or visited there while in DC.

The Army named a ship after General Myer, too. No, thatâ€™s not a typo. The Army has many ships, but thatâ€™s a topic for another post, another day. The ship, USNS ALBERT J MYER (T-ARC 6) was a cable laying ship.Initially completed in late 1945 as one of the NEPTUNE Class cable ships, built for the US Army, but was put up in Fleet Reserve. She was put to active use sometime in 1950 in the North West Pacific. In 1952, she was transferred to the US Navy and the Military Sealift Command for the deployment of the submarine cables for the sensor arrays of SOSUS.

The MYER remained in the service of the country until 1994, conducting cable laying and repairs before decommissioning that year. In 2005, she was broken up for scrap.

Some additional research on the ALBERT J MYER can be found here

Category

1. Army

2. Maritime Matters
3. Military
4. Military History
5. Navy

Date Created
November 26, 2007
Author
admin

default watermark