



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

William E. Reynolds

1919-1924



William Edward Reynolds was born on 11 January 1860 in Montgomery County, MD. Reynolds served in a number of important assignments in the Coast Guard, passing successively through all grades. He was appointed a cadet in the Revenue Cutter Service on 24 May 1878 and commissioned as a third lieutenant on 17 June 1880. In 1881 he was a member of the small sled party which was sent out from the former Revenue Cutter *Corwin* to search along the northern coast of Siberia for the Arctic exploring steamer *Jeannette*. On 12 August 1881, he was at the head of the party that landed on what would be later named Wrangell Island and took possession of the island in the name of the United States. During the Spanish-American

War he commanded USRC *McLane* and served in the North Atlantic Fleet under Rear Admiral Sampson.

Several years later he was promoted to Captain on 31 January 1903. During the First World War, he was Chief of Staff, Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, CA. Shortly after the signing of the Armistice, he was ordered to duty at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, DC and was appointed Captain-Commandant with the rank of Commodore on 2 October 1919. He later became the first Coast Guard officer to become a Rear Admiral, the rank having been approved, in recognition of the Service, by Congress in the Act of 12 January 1923. He retired as Commandant of the Coast Guard on 11 January 1924.

Admiral Reynolds, having served in the Coast Guard for over 45 years, died on 25 January 1944.

Transcription of the original caption: "Capt. Wm. E. Reynolds (right) receiving his commission as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Coast Guard from Asst. Secy. Clifford of the Treasury. Adml. Reynolds, who is the Commandant of the Coast Guard, is the first officer to hold his rank. Has served with Coast Guard since 1878. Native of Md."; Photo by Harris & Ewing, dated 1923 January or February."

The Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the above photo was Edward Clifford.



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