**TEDDY ROOSEVELT AND THE VOYAGE OF THE GREAT WHITE FLEET 1907-1909**

*“Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far”* President Teddy Roosevelt

**AMERICA ENTERS THE WORLD STAGE**

* Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) Harvard, NY Assembly, N.Dakota rancher, NY Police Commissioner, Asst Secretary of the Navy – then leader of Rough Riders
* 1893 Historian Frederick Jackson Turner (U of Wisc.) Thesis “The Closing of the Frontier” based on 1890 Census – US starts to look outward rather than inward isolationism
* 1898 Spanish American War-US gains Puerto Rico, Guam, Philippines (already has taken Hawaii)
* 1900 TR hero of charge on San Juan Heights (Kettle Hill) elected Governor of NY then VP on ticket with President William McKinley
* 1901 President McKinley assassinated in Buffalo, NY, TR now youngest President in US History
* 1904 TR commits US to building the Panama Canal after France fails (completed 1914)
* 1906 TR visits the Panama Canal construction, first US President to leave country during his term

**THE WORLD STAGE IS CHANGING (AND DANGEROUS)**

* 1895-95 Sino Japan War – Japan victory, Japan gets Taiwan, Penghu and Liaodong Peninsula
* 1902 Growth of Kaiser Wilhelm II German Navy has #1 Navy in world Great Britain concerned, Britain makes alliance with Japan and moves Pacific ships to Europe
* 1904-05 Russo Japan War-Japan victories on land and sea, Battle of Tsushima Russian fleet sails from Baltic 18000 miles to be destroyed by Adm Togo
* 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth ends war, wins TR Nobel Peace Prize, Japan gets Korea and Manchuria but not given the indemnities they want (they blame TR favoring Russia)
* 1906 Adm Sir John Fisher, First Sealord, creates HMS Dreadnought, revolutionary ship its large single caliber main batteries (12”) and steam turbine engines making 21 knots makes obsolete all battleships and sparks a Naval arms race that will be a cause of World War I
* 1907 Hague Convention-tries to stop Naval Arms Race created by Dreadnought but fails, now Britain, Germany, US, France and Japan will rush to build dreadnoughts to compete
* 1907 Japan US War Scare-Crisis caused by discrimination of Japanese Immigrants in SF, Calif, US fears that it could become a war, diplomacy avoids war between US and Japan

**GREAT WHITE FLEET BACKGROUND AND CONCERNS**

* Naval War College-Rainbow War Plans-War Plan Red (Britain), War Plan Black (Germany), War Plan Orange (Japan)-fear is Japanese will invade Philippines, plan calls for US fleet to cross Pacific and fight Decisive Battle near Philippines-**TR thinking about Russians, can we do it?**
* Coaling problem-US has no worldwide Coaling stations like Britain, US does not have colliers to ship coal in, Federal Law requires US Flagged ships, TR forces contracts for 38 colliers to provide the 125000 tons of coal to get from Hampton Roads Virginia to SF Calif, only 8 are US, 30 British, entire trip is supplied almost entirely by British colliers
* Congress opposes cost of voyage, TR tells them he has the funds to get fleet to Pacific, if they want it back, they must pay (they pay)
* West Coast facilities -Mare Island Navy Yard in SF is too shallow, nothing in Hawaii or San Diego, Only Puget Sound Bremerton WA has facilities for fleet

**GREAT WHITE FLEET COMPOSTION 16 BATTLESHIPS IN 4 DIVISIONS**

* Ships have white hulls so it’s called the Great White Fleet, ornate gilded scrollwork on bow with red, white and blue US National Shield in center
* FIRST DIVISION-Connecticut BB18 (Flagship), Kansas BB21 (**1905**), Louisiana BB19, Vermont BB20
* SECOND DIVISION-Georgia BB15, New Jersey BB16, Rhode Island BB17, Virginia BB13
* THIRD DIVISION-Maine BB10, Minnesota BB22, Missouri BB11, Ohio BB12
* FOURTH DIVISION-Alabama BB8, Illinois BB7, Kearsarge BB5 (**1898**), Kentucky BB6
* Adm Robley Evans in command, senior most US Navy officer, served in Civil War, severely wounded in assault on Fort Fisher 1865, in pain all the time, spends time in cabin bedridden using opium to stop the pain

**FIRST LEG HAMPTON ROADS VIRGINIA TO SF CALIF**

* Set sail 12/11 1907 with TR watching from Presidential yacht Mayflower
* 1/1908 off Brazil crossing Equator Order of King Neptune (Trusty Shellbacks & Slimy Pollywogs)
* Straights of Magellan rather than around Cape Horn because US ships not seaworthy for Cape
* SF to Puget Sound then back to SF,Fleet visit funded privately including $3000 from Japan/Amer
* Adm Evans is unfit to command and asks for replacement, Adm Charles Sperry second in US Navy seniority takes over – Seniority System is not working, average age of Admirals is 61, Captains is 58 and both are getting worse – A Navy at war will need younger commanders

P**ACIFIC LEG SF TO PHILIPPINES**

* SF to Honolulu – anchor there, Pearl Harbor is too shallow and completely undeveloped, congress in FY1908 approves $1 million for Pearl development
* Honolulu to Auckland NZ longest sea voyage 3870 nmi – NZ concerned with growing power of Japan and Japanese immigrants like SF, viewed as “Yellow Peril”
* Sydney Australia – Huge Crowd 650000 greet the fleet, questions about mother country loyalties
* Melbourne – 115 sailors desert at Sydney and Melbourne attracted by freedom and future of the country
* Manila, Philippines – suffering a Cholera Epidemic, concern also for possible Filipino Insurrectionists (Philippine Insurrection 1899-1902 had been bloody and violent)
* Yokohama, Japan – Fleet sails through typhoon on the way, Japanese very friendly and courteous, officers have lunch with Adm Togo (victor at Tsushima), some officers visit Commodore Matthew Perry monument at Kurihame for his opening Japan in 1853 – it is noted the US white ships are a better target than the gray Japanese ships are

**FINAL LEG MANILA TO HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA**

* Suez Cana/l Egypt – Great White Fleet is largest single group to go through the canal
* Gibraltar, Spain – British very friendly, bands play “For He is a Jolly Good Fellow”
* Return home 2/22/1909 after 14 month, 45000 nmi voyage around the world with no major incidents of breakdowns, greeted by TR on the Presidential yacht Mayflower who will be leaving office March 4, 1909 for President Elect William Taft

**CONCLUSIONS**

* Ships are painted gray, lattice masts installed replacing Steel Crows Nest, ornate gilded scrollwork with national shield on the bows are removed
* Bases in San Diego, SF, Pearl Harbor are developed
* TR had fought for construction of 4 Dreadnoughts, Congress approved 2 FY1908 BB28,29 and 2 in FY1909 BB30,31, he also had fought for improvements in Turrets (Flareback), armor belting (too low when fully loaded) and seaworthiness (Freeboard needed),all fights eventually won making better ships
* Japan fights with allies in WWI, they capture German islands in Marshalls, Caroline, Marianas, Palau all of which are mandated to Japan in the Versailles Treaty – they are not supposed to be militarized but Japan does – War Plan Orange would have failed with all these islands attacking ships on way to the Philippines (in WWII most will need to be taken by US invasions with high casualties)-Adm Yamamoto makes War Plan Orange a mute issue
* UNREP- US Navy Underway Replenishment key to victory in pacific war, learned with this voyage

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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