

# This Day in History... October 9, 1839

## Birth of Winfield Schley

Winfield Scott Schley was born on October 9, 1839, near Frederick, Maryland. He served with distinction in the Civil War and Spanish-American War, most notably claiming victory at the Battle of Santiago.

Schley grew up on his family farm, Richfields and went on to attend the US Naval Academy. After graduating in 1860, he served as midshipman aboard the *Niagara* on missions to China and Japan.

Returning to the US in 1861 with the Civil War in progress, Schley was promoted to master aboard the *Potomac* with the Western Gulf Squadron. He went on to serve on the gunboat *Winona* and the sloops *Monongahela* and *Richmond*. Schley was promoted to lieutenant and participated in the siege of Port Hudson, a Confederate-held port in Louisiana.



*The 1863 Siege of Port Hudson was part of the Vicksburg Campaign.*

Schley returned to the US Naval Academy from 1872 to 1875, serving as head of the department of modern languages. He went on to serve in Europe and Africa before taking command of the *Essex* in the South Atlantic, where he helped to save a shipwrecked crew. Schley served as inspector of the Second Lighthouse District from 1879 to 1883. In 1884, Schley led a mission to the Arctic to rescue Adolphus Greely and his crew who had been stranded there for three years. And in 1891, he commanded the ship that transported ironclad ship designer John Ericsson's remains to Sweden.



*Schley participated in the first US military action in Korea in 1871.*



*Schley served with the Lighthouse Bureau twice, including a stint as chairman of the Lighthouse Board.*

In 1864, Schley was transferred to the Pacific Squadron to serve as executive officer aboard the gunboat *Waterloo*. His crew helped to stop an uprising of Chinese in the Chinha Islands. He also traveled to El Salvador during a revolution there. Schley returned to the US and taught at the US Naval Academy from 1866 to 1869. He was then sent to the Asiatic Station to serve on the screw sloop *Benicia*. Schley took part in the US expedition to Korea in 1871, the first US military action in that country. It had been in support of a diplomatic mission to open trade and learn of the fate of a ship that had gone missing near Korea a few years earlier.



*Stamp pictures Schley, George Dewey, and William Sampson, with whom he had a long-lasting feud after the Battle of Santiago.*



*Schley taught at the US Naval Academy twice during his career.*

Schley was transferred to the Lighthouse Bureau for a second time in 1892. He was then promoted to commodore in 1898 and given command of the Flying Squadron in the Spanish-American War. He served under Rear Admiral William T. Sampson on a mission to capture Admiral Pascual Cervera y Topete's Spanish Squadron. On May 29, 1898, Admiral Cervera's squadron was spotted moving into Santiago harbor. The harbor was blockaded to prevent Cervera's escape.

On the morning of July 3, Sampson went ashore to meet with another commander and left Schley in charge. Coincidentally, this was the day Cervera chose to try to break out of the harbor. Under Schley's command, Sampson's men met and destroyed the Spanish fleet. The following day, as America celebrated Independence Day, Sampson sent his famous message, "The Fleet under my command offers the nation as a Fourth of July present, the whole of Cervera's Fleet." There was no mention of Schley's leadership in Sampson's declaration of victory, which led to disputes for years to come. However, Schley was considered by many to be a hero of that battle and the war.

Schley was promoted to rear admiral in 1899 and given command of the South Atlantic Squadron. He retired from the Navy in 1901 and published an autobiography in 1904, *Forty-Five Years under the Flag*. He died on October 2, 1911. Streets in Baltimore and Washington, DC are named after Schley, as is Schley, Minnesota. He was also the namesake of a World War I-era destroyer warship and a cocktail, the Admiral Schley.



*After 2 previous attempts failed, Schley led the successful rescue of Greely's expedition in 1884.*

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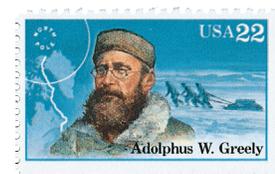


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