

The Flagship USS Alliance

by Lynne Belluscio

We recently received a painting from the estate of Seely Pratt. He had told me a long time ago that it was meant to come to the Historical Society. He had bought it many years ago at an auction in Clifton Springs. The painting is supposed to be the flagship of Admiral William Edgar LeRoy.

As it turned out, the auction was the estate of Cornelia LeRoy, the granddaughter of Admiral William Edgar LeRoy. William was the nephew of Jacob LeRoy (who lived in LeRoy House). William was the son of Jacob's brother, Herman and was born on March 24, 1818, in Pelham, New York.

When he was just fourteen he became a midshipman and served aboard the *Delaware* and the *Ohio* in the Mediterranean. He also saw service aboard the *Constitution* in the Pacific. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1843. During the Civil War, he served under Admiral David Farragut at the battle of Mobile Bay. When floating mines, known as torpedoes, destroyed the Federal ship *Tecumseh*, Farragut exclaimed "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" Commander LeRoy, ordered his ship, the *Ossipee* to ram the iron-clad *Tennessee* and accepted the surrender of its captain.

After the war, Farragut became the Admiral of the European Squadron. LeRoy served as Captain under Farragut from 1867 to 1868, and continued with the European squadron after Farragut's retirement.

LeRoy was promoted to Commodore in 1870 and Rear Admiral in 1874. His flagship was the *USS Trenton*, a 3900 ton frigate, built at the New York Navy Yard and commissioned in February 1877. It was the largest warship built for the Navy after the Civil War, before the introduction of steel ships in 1883. But I pulled up pictures of the *Trenton* from the Naval History site and the

painting didn't look at all like the *Trenton*. So I Googled more Navy history and discovered that in 1877 the *USS Alliance*



sailed from Hampton Roads for the European Squadron, which at that time was commanded by Rear Admiral Lorimer Worden (best known for his role in the battle between the *Monitor* and the *CSS Virginia* during the Civil War.) "Once more back in the Eastern Mediterranean, *Alliance* became flagship for Rear Admiral William E. LeRoy (who had relieved Worden as commander of the European Squadron) in early March (1878), the admiral transferring his flag from the *Trenton*. *Alliance* then sailed for the Pireaus, Greece - - - " And so I have become to believe that the painting is of the *Alliance*.

This was the second ship in the American Navy with this name. It was "laid down" as the *Huron* - a screw gunboat of the third rate - in 1873 at the Norfolk Navy Yard and launched on March 8, 1875 but soon after launching, before the ship joined the fleet, she was renamed *Alliance*. She was commissioned on January 18, 1877 before joining the European Squadron.

The painting shows the ship at anchor in the harbor in Naples, Italy, so I was interested in seeing if I could find information about when she might have been in

Italy. I discovered that soon after Admiral LeRoy was transferred to the *Alliance*, General Ulysses Grant visited the ship on his

December 10, 1888. His funeral was described in the *New York Times*: The service was held at the Church of the Transfiguration in

East Twenty-ninth Street. "It was the Admiral's wish that the services should be of as simple a character as possible and there were accordingly no pall bearers nor any flowers, with the exception of a small pillow of violets, a wreath of white roses and a few palm leaves which rested on the casket.

Attending the service was Loyall Farragut, the son of Admiral David Farragut. The William Edgar LeRoy

was buried in the family vault in Tarrytown, near Pelham where he was born.

In the collection of the LeRoy Historical Society is the Admiral's flags, presented by Mrs. C. Brown, a LeRoy descendant. Six years ago, a miniature portrait of the Admiral was offered to the Historical Society, but it was out of our budget, however we were able to obtain a very good scanned copy for our files. (See *LeRoy Pennysaver*, April 15, 2002.)


world tour. His visit was followed by the King and Queen of Greece who after inspecting the flagship, "remained a considerable time on board." Soon the *Alliance* sailed for Messina and Naples, Italy on the 28th of March 1878.

As far as I can determine, the Navy does not have a picture or painting of the *Alliance*. Rear Admiral LeRoy remained in the Navy until 1884 and retired and moved to Newport, Rhode Island. He was often referred to as the "Chesterfield of the Navy." He died in New York City on

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