



A Sailor's Log: Water-Tender Frederick T. Wilson, USN, on Asiatic Station, 1899-1901

James Reckner

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A Sailor's Log: Water-Tender Frederick T. Wilson, USN, on Asiatic Station, 1899-1901 James Reckner Frederick T. Wilson was an engineer who carried the rank of first-class petty officer and served on one of the Navy's first modern battleships, the USS Oregon, at the turn of the twentieth century. The need for a U.S. naval fleet in the Pacific and East Asia was created by the acquisition of Guam and the Philippines from Spain and annexation of Hawaii as territory. The deployment of a significant naval force to the Asiatic Station following the victory at Manila Bay in 1898 brought Wilson there aboard the USS New Orleans. Wilson participated in relief of the legations in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. ON his way to the Pacific theater, fate intervened when his ship ran aground on an uncharted reef in the Gulf of Pechili and was sent to Japan for repairs. A Sailor's Log is Petty Officer Wilson's record of this cruise; his assignment on the Asiatic Station, including stops at Nagasaki, Kure, Japan, Woosung, China, Shanghai, and Hong Kong; and his return to the United States in September 1901. Wilson offers a rare uncensored picture of enlisted life, with descriptions of bar girls and waterfront establishments that catered to the needs of American bluejackets, as well as observations on world events during imperialism. Wilson also discusses one of the great yet largely ignored issues of the turn-of-the-century U.S. Navy; the failure of naval officers to provide the quality leadership necessary to ensure the operation of efficient, effective warships. A Sailor's Log is a detailed and insightful account of life in the Asiatic Fleet that enriches our understanding of U.S. Navy life a century ago.

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