

## Robert Platt

(1835 – 7 Dec 1910)

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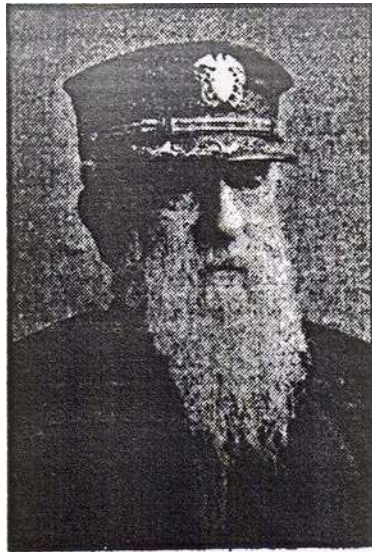
**Platt.** On Wednesday, December 7, 1910 at 4 p.m. at his residence, 411 B street northeast, Commander Robert Platt, U.S.N. retired. Funeral from St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 3d and A streets southeast at 11 o'clock a.m. Friday.

*The Evening Star, December 8, 1910, p. 16*

### **To Pay Last Honors To Commander Platt**

#### **Man Who Piloted Federal Fleet Into Charleston Harbor To Be Buried**

Funeral services for Commander Robert Platt, U.S.N., a veteran of the civil war and widely known in military circles here and throughout the country, who died late yesterday afternoon after a lingering illness following a stroke of apoplexy, will be held at his home, 411 B street northeast, tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock, Rev. G. Freeland Peter, assistant rector of Epiphany Episcopal Church, officiating. The interment will be in Congressional cemetery.



**COMMANDER ROBERT PLATT.**

Commander Platt's death occurred at his home, and his one surviving daughter, Miss Harriet Platt, was at his bedside when the end came. Owing to his advanced age, physicians had entertained little hope for his ultimate recovery from the blood clot on the brain which had resulted from the stroke of apoplexy. He had been in an almost continuous state of coma for several weeks, and had not been able to speak.

The pallbearers will include Maj. Samuel H. Walker, Andrew Braid, Frank Walley Perkins, Frank Curtis, Lyman Cushing and Benjamin Calana.

#### *Piloted Fleet Into Charleston Harbor*

In the death of Commander Platt Washington's fast thinning circle of civil war heroes loses a member whose war record was characterized as "one without precedent" by the committee on naval affairs of the Senate in 1897.

Commander Platt bore the distinction and was known as the man who piloted the Federal fleet under Admiral du Pont into Charleston harbor in April 1863, taking the first fire of the Confederate shore batteries as he pointed the way in the small pilot vessel and sticking to his wheel after a shell had demolished the pilothouse and given him a severe concussion.

Commander Platt was born in North Carolina in 1835. Coaxed from his home by the call of the sea at an early age he spent his youth and early manhood in that maritime school which has given to this country so many of its gallant sea fighters.

*The Evening Star, December 9, 1910, p. 24*

### **Commander Platt Buried**

#### **Funeral Services Held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church**

Funeral services for Commander Robert Platt, U.S.N., who died at his home, 411 B street northeast, Wednesday, were held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 3d and A streets southeast at 11 o'clock this morning, Rev. G. Freeland Peters, associate rector of Epiphany Church, officiating. Burial was in Congressional Cemetery.

The honorary pallbearers were Maj. Samuel H. Walker, Benjamin Colana, Lyman F.W. Cushing, Frank W. Perkins, John J. Gilbert, C.H. Stilling, J.B. Bailer and Frank H. Curtis.

When the civil war broke out Platt was a prosperous skipper plying along the south Atlantic coast and noted for his thorough knowledge of and familiarity with the southern coast and waters. Although greatly attached to his native state, Platt turned a deaf ear to tempting offers from agents of the Confederacy, and even the appeals of relatives and old associates were unavailing to induce him to abandon allegiance to the United States.

Some time prior to the outbreak of the war Commander Platt had been connected with the United States coast survey as first mate and executive officer of the Bibb, a small steamer in the service. His knowledge of those waters made him a valuable man to the naval forces operating against the harbors and seaport cities of the Confederacy. When the vessels of the coast survey were turned over to the revenue marine service as an auxiliary force to the navy, Platt's superior officers obtained for him an appointment as acting master and he remained on the Bibb until Admiral du Pont appointed him an acting ensign in the navy, at the same time recommending that the Navy Department give him an appointment as acting master from the same date as his commission as ensign went into effect.

When the attack on Charleston harbor was being planned there were two other pilots in Admiral du Pont's squadron of higher rank than Commander Platt. The task of piloting the fleet into the harbor was assigned to him. In a letter to the Navy Department just before the attack Admiral du Pont wrote:

"Mr. Platt has been of great service in this squadron, is an educated and thorough seaman and is, moreover, to pilot the fleet into Charleston harbor, as I have reason to believe that his knowledge of the channel exceeds that of any of the pilots we have here, and for which perilous service he has patriotically volunteered."

For his skill, coolness and intrepidity in leading the fleet into the harbor under fire of the shore batteries Commander Platt was specially commended by Admiral du Pont. In acknowledgment of his services upon that occasion he was advanced to the grade of acting master, which rank was later changed to lieutenant (junior grade).

One of the captains of the fleet in an official report to Admiral du Pont on that occasion wrote:

"I am much indebted to Mr. Robert Platt for his cool and efficient pilotage of the vessels, which he continued to direct after a ball, touching the pilothouse immediately over his head, had given him a severe concussion."

Platt remained on duty with the blockading fleet until the termination of the war, when he was again assigned to the coast survey, on application of its chief Carlisle Patterson. The last few years of his service he was in command of the United States fish commission ship Fish Hawk, performing valuable service in connection with the propagation of food fish.

When promoted from acting master to master in 1878, by a special act of Congress, Commander Platt was placed on the rolls as "not in line for promotion." In 1897, however, after thirty-three years' service in the navy, and at the age of sixty-two years, Commander (then lieutenant) Platt was advanced one grade and retired, the Senate committee on naval affairs commending his work highly and reporting the bill for his promotion promptly and with strong recommendations for its passage by the Senate.

Commander Platt, when still a young man, was married in Salem, Mass., to a Miss Harriet E. Pitts, a member of a prominent Bay state family. Mrs. Platt died in this city July, 1898, since when his daughter and he have lived alone.

Commander Platt belonged to the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, and was a member of King Solomon's Masonic Lodge of Charlestown, Mass.