

The Last Voyage of JOHN PAUL JONES

BY S. A. WHEELER

ON A SUNNY afternoon in July 1905, a long and impressive parade passed through the center of Paris. Moving in this procession was an artillery caisson which carried a heavy oaken casket, draped with the flag of the United States. Bands played patriotic airs and stirring military marches as the long column moved at regular marching tempo. Not only was this a brilliant and impressive spectacle—it was also one of the strangest parades in military history, for it was not a funeral.

The man whose mortal remains were carried on the caisson this summer day in 1905 was John Paul Jones, dead for 113 years. His funeral had been held in the year 1792.

With the close of the American War of Independence, the services of this first great hero of the United States Navy were no longer needed at sea. He was sent on special missions to Denmark and France. Later, with the approval of his friend,



Thomas Jefferson, he accepted a flattering offer from the Empress Catherine and, with an admiral's rank, took command of a Russian squadron in the Black Sea. He had some success in battles against the Turks, but intrigue and jealousy among Catherine's officers made

his position difficult and he asked for a leave of absence. Before he could get out of Russia, he almost lost his life in a siege with pneumonia.

With a determination to regain his health and to look after personal affairs, the Admiral settled in Paris. He was already famous as an able and courageous sea fighter. His charm, his scholarly attainments and a fluent command of at least three languages added to his favor. He was sought after by members of the French court, was an advisor among the military, and a confidant of leaders in the National Assembly.

In spite of this, his final two years in Paris were not happy ones. He

was unsuccessful in collecting much of the money owed him by both the United States and Russia. His health gradually failed. The French Revolution was in full swing, and he found his many friends divided and taking sides in that great struggle.

In his last few days of life, the Admiral suffered with digestive troubles, a kidney ailment, swollen legs, and a throat disorder which made it difficult for him to speak. Friends called daily at his modest apartment until death came on July 18, 1792, just two weeks after his 45th birthday.

Funeral rites were arranged hastily. Some of his friends wanted a large funeral, but the American Minister to France, Gouverneur Morris, refused to spend either the public money of the United States or the limited funds of the deceased for anything but the bare essentials. A modest but suitable service and burial were arranged, with the bills being paid by a Paris city official. Most of the 462 francs expended went for a leaden coffin. Scores of friends, both Protestants and Catholics, attended, and burial took place in a small Paris cemetery, reserved for foreign Protestants.

Six months later, a government decree legally closed this cemetery. A few more burials were recorded until 1804, and then, with the sale of the property to private owners, earth and rock fills were made and buildings erected. As a place of burial, it was soon forgotten.

For more than 100 years, the mortal remains of the great naval commander lay in an unmarked grave in a lost cemetery.

IN THE YEAR 1899, General Horace I. Porter, U.S. Army, Retired, then the United States Ambassador to France, resolved to undertake a systematic and exhaustive search for the body of Admiral Jones. Some of his aides in the Embassy joined him, but the project was a personal venture, apart from diplomatic duties. In June 1899, they began a collection of relevant documents and historical writings. They searched the old archives of Paris, corresponded with descendants of the Admiral, collected copies of letters to and from his friends in America, France, and his native Scotland.

It was determined beyond doubt that burial had been in a leaden coffin in the old Saint Louis Cemetery in what was the very heart of Paris during the French Revolution. After 100-year-old city maps had been found and examined, the exact location of the old cemetery was determined.

Now came preparations for an almost unprecedented undertaking — the running of tunnels under privately owned buildings in the center of the French capital city. Paris officials cooperated generously, loaning the services of a skilled engineer and other technicians, together with much equipment.

On February 3, 1905, the first

shaft was sunk to a depth of 18 feet. This excavation revealed that human bodies were buried there in great numbers, layer upon layer and close together. Many of the remains showed that neither caskets nor even the most elementary forms of embalming had been used. On February 22, a leaden coffin was found, and a month later, a second one. Name plates and other identifying marks revealed the remains to be of persons other than Admiral Jones.

On March 31, a third coffin of lead was found. It was heavy and of superior workmanship, but it bore no inscription plate.

In the presence of General Porter, the engineer and several others, this third leaden coffin was pried open on April 7, 1905. From within came heavy fumes of alcohol. The body, wrapped in a white sheet and carefully packed in straw, was that of a man in a remarkable state of preservation. In his hand, the General held a copy of a gold commemorative medal, struck by order of Congress in 1787. It bore a facial profile of Admiral Jones. One look at the face of the corpse and the group in the tunnel knew their quest had met with success. Hats were removed.

The coffin and its remains were taken to the Paris School of Medicine. There work began on one of the most notable post-mortem examinations of all history. The problem at hand was to determine, beyond all doubt, the identity of

the human remains now lying on an operating room slab. After much painstaking examination, identification of the remains was adjudged complete and certain, and without one dissenting voice. The body was then laid in a new leaden coffin, which, in turn, was placed in a great oaken casket with heavy silver handles.

AS AMBASSADOR, General Porter conveyed a full report on his project to the French Government, and sent detailed dispatches to President Theodore Roosevelt. The President acted at once by issuing orders to the Navy Department. Four ships were detached from the North Atlantic Fleet, and on June 18, 1905, the "John Paul Jones Squadron" sailed from New York for Cherbourg, France.

After arrival in France, there were many ceremonies, and on July 6, the remains of Admiral Jones were formally delivered to the care of the United States Navy.

A memorial service was held at the American Church of the Holy Trinity, and then the long procession, with its flag-draped casket, passed through the streets to the Paris railway station. Five hundred bluejackets and two companies of marines marched in this parade. Admiral Jones had many times traveled from Paris to Cherbourg by horse-drawn coach. This time his body traveled in a special railway car.

With the great oaken casket safely

aboard, and after final ceremonies and exchange of salutes with the French navy, the squadron departed for home.

Arriving off the American coast, the squadron was escorted into Chesapeake Bay by seven battle-ships, and on the morning of July 23, the cruisers anchored off the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. There to greet them was the French cruiser, *Jurien de la Graviere*. The gold sword which Louis XVI of France had presented to Admiral Jones in 1780 was placed on the casket, and it was carried ashore.

On April 24, 1778, the British ship of war, *Drake*, had been captured by Jones in British waters. That date in 1906 was chosen for commemorative exercises at the Naval Academy. A special train brought President Roosevelt and other dignitaries from Washington, D.C. State governors and persons from all parts of the country, as well as hundreds of Navy officers and men, participated.

Members of Congress considered the event so important in history that a commemorative book was ordered. Personal papers and documents concerning the career of Admiral Jones were included. The texts of the addresses delivered at Annapolis were reprinted, and also the complete reports of the finding and identification of the body. The volume was entitled "John Paul Jones Commemoration" and today it is a prize item among collectors.

THE STORY of John Paul Jones did not end, however, with the impressive ceremony at Annapolis and the publication of a commemorative book. The Admiral again became a victim of official and public apathy. Plans had been made for a final resting place in a new Naval Academy Chapel. But because funds were lacking for completion of the building, there was a long delay.

By the year 1910, clamors came from American newspapers. One story related that the body of the Admiral was lying forgotten in his casket, propped up on two saw-horses behind a stairway in the Academy's Bancroft Hall! In 1912, Congress appropriated \$135,000 to complete the Chapel. General Porter was reimbursed for his personal expenditures to carry on the excavations in Paris. He promptly donated this money to the Chapel building fund.

On January 26, 1913, the great oaken casket was moved to its permanent place of rest. The inscription in the marble floor at the base of the sarcophagus reads:

JOHN PAUL JONES, 1747-1792 U. S.
NAVY, 1775-1783
HE GAVE OUR NAVY ITS EARLIEST TRA-
DITIONS OF HEROISM AND VICTORY
ERECTED BY THE CONGRESS, A.D. 1912

Today the white marble crypt beneath the Chapel dome is a shrine for both midshipmen and visitors in Annapolis. It is the most imposing, and perhaps the most significant, memorial ever created for a member of the United States Navy.



... Same Program ...

FIFTY YEARS LATER

*R. M. FOX, a leading Irish drama critic, sums up
the first fifty years of the famous Abbey Theater,
which has just celebrated its Golden Jubilee . . .*

FOR FIFTY YEARS the Abbey Theater has held its place in Dublin as the stage on which the Irish people can see themselves and their dreams. Sometimes this has led to riots and disturbances. But the theater has interpreted Ireland to the world.

Recently this theater celebrated its Golden Jubilee by presenting short plays by Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge.

Exactly the same program was given on the opening night, December 27, 1904. The recent celebration took place in the Queen's Theater, Dublin, because in July of 1951, the stage and part of the auditorium of the old Abbey were destroyed by fire.

The most amazing thing about the Abbey is that out of small and confused beginnings has come a sturdy national drama known all over the world. It was not the original intention of W. B. Yeats to have a theater in Ireland at all. He wanted a little theater somewhere in the London suburbs, where romantic drama and verse plays could be performed. About 1900, when an attempt was made to stage Irish plays in Dublin, the idea of creating an Irish drama was so weak that an English company was recruited by George Moore in London to perform such plays at the Dublin Gaiety Theater. One reason for this was the lack of Irish actors, especially as the Irish Literary Theater — as it was orig-