

William Lewis Maury – Maury Island named for him in May 1841

William Lewis Maury was born October 13, 1813 and died November 27, 1878.



William Lewis Maury courtesy of the U.S. Naval Academy

He was born in Virginia, the son of William Grymes Maury and Ann Hoomes Woolfolk, and became a Midshipman in 1829. His career as a mid-shipman and lieutenant was marked by his service in the American Exploring Expedition between 1838 and 1842 where he served on three ships, the *Vincennes*, *Peacock*, and *Porpoise* and was commissioned Lieutenant on February 26, 1841. It was during the Exploring Expedition's survey of Puget Sound that Commodore Wilkes named Maury Island after William Maury. Maury continued in Navy service serving on the Navy Efficiency Board in 1855 where he helped protect his uncle Matthew Fontaine Maury from being dismissed; and serving as a member of the Japanese Treaty Commission in 1860.

With the beginning of the Civil War, Maury resigned his U.S. Navy commission on April 20, 1861, and on June 10, 1861 was commissioned a Lieutenant in the Confederate States Navy. He was initially assigned to a coast defense battery at Sewell's Point, Virginia. His talent for coastline defense was recognized early on and he was reassigned to the Confederate Torpedo Service. Serving first at Wilmington Station and Charlotte, North Carolina, he was soon transferred to Charleston Station.

William Maury was promoted to First Lieutenant in command of the *C.S.S. Tuscaloosa* in 1862-63.



CSS Tuscaloos class Ironclad courtesy of the Civil War Museum

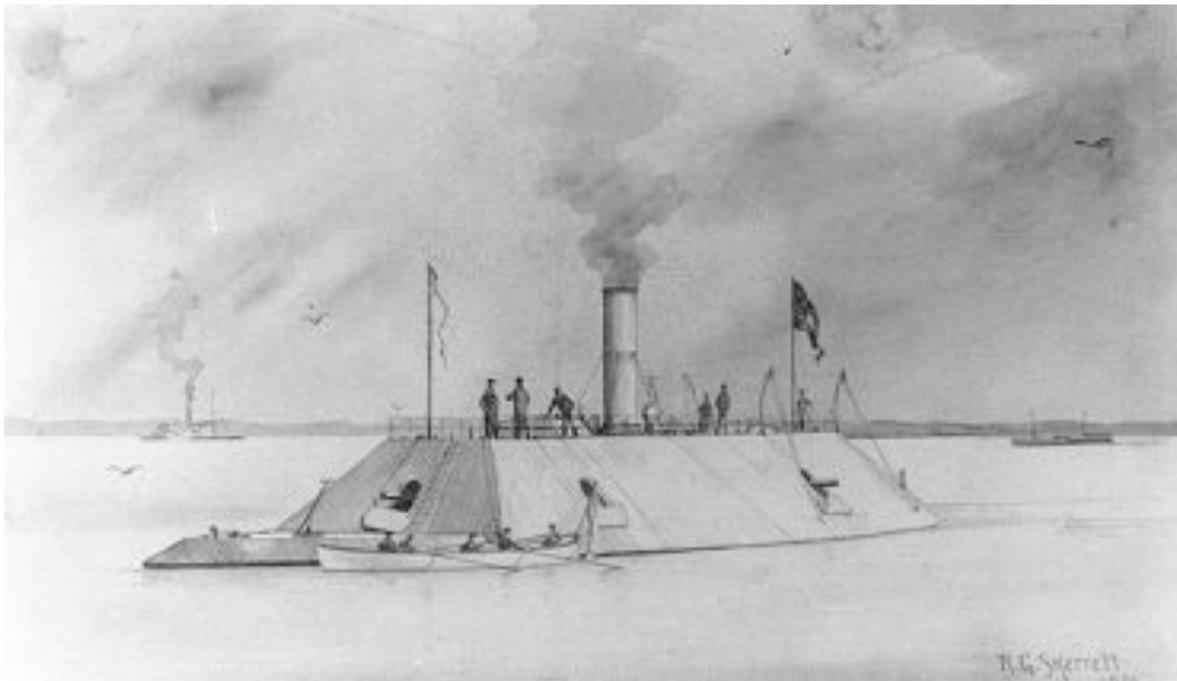
While Lewis was serving in Charleston, his cousin, renowned Oceanographer Matthew Fontaine Maury, under the authority of the Confederate States Secretary of the Navy, was dispatched to Europe on a secret mission. Arriving in Liverpool on November 23, 1862, Maury secretly began searching for a vessel that would be suitable for conversion to a Confederate Raider. Utilizing old friendships forged during his service in the U.S. Navy, Maury was able to purchase the *Japan*, which was under construction by Denny Brothers in Dumbarton, Scotland. The *Japan* sailed out of the Clyde River as a merchant vessel on April 1, 1863. At a prearranged rendezvous off the coast of Brest, the *Japan* met with the *Alar*, a small merchant vessel that was carrying arms and ammunition to outfit the *Japan* as a raider, as well as the Captain William Lewis Maury, with whom Matthew Fontaine Maury had served in the U.S. Navy and more recently in the Confederate Torpedo Department. After much labor, Commander William Lewis Maury transformed the *Japan* into a Confederate Cruiser and rechristened her the *C.S.S. Georgia*.



Confederate Raider C.S.S. Georgia courtesy of U.S. Naval Academy

C.S.S. Georgia was a screw-steamer with sail auxiliary and mounted two 100 pounders, two 24 pounders, and one 32 pounder. Leaving the coast of France on the 9th of April 1863, the *Georgia* cruised the North and South Atlantic in search of United States vessels, capturing or destroying \$431,270.00 worth of United States shipping over the next seven months. After sailing the seas for seven months and taking numerous prizes, the *Georgia* was in need of maintenance. Cherbourg, France was a welcome harbor when the *Georgia* arrived on October 28, 1863. Though officially neutral, the people of Cherbourg welcomed the Confederate Raiders as celebrities. The *Georgia's* Captain, William Maury, had been ill since leaving the Cape of Good Hope in late August; he had also learned that his family had become refugees. The *Georgia* remained in Cherbourg for the next several months while being refitted. January 19, 1864 Maury was relieved of his command at his own request, citing his continued ill health.

In late 1864 Commander Maury took command of the ironclad *C.S.S. North Carolina* which stood guard duty at the mouth of the Cape Fear River in North Carolina waters. The *North Carolina* sank in 1864, her hull riddled with tournedos.



Drawing of C.S.S. North Carolina courtesy R.G. Skerret

He was in Richmond, Virginia after the War, and met with General Robert E. Lee to discuss repatriation of former Confederate officers.



Captain William Lewis Maury about 1864

William Lewis Maury died on November 27, 1878.

Source:

Anne Fontaine Maury, Editor. *Intimate Virginiana: A Century of Maury Travels by Land and Sea*. Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, Publishers. 1941:

Brian Nilsson, Librarian, The Fontaine/Maury Society