

= Benjamin Franklin Tilley =

Benjamin Franklin Tilley (March 29 , 1848 ? March 18 , 1907) , often known as B. F. Tilley , was a career officer in the United States Navy who served from the end of the American Civil War through the Spanish ? American War . He is best remembered as the first Acting @-@ Governor of American Samoa , as well as the territory 's first Naval governor .

Tilley entered the United States Naval Academy during the height of the Civil War . Graduating after the conflict , he gradually rose through the ranks . As a lieutenant , he participated in the United States military 's crackdown against workers in the wake of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 . During the 1891 Chilean Civil War , Tilley and a small contingent of sailors and marines defended the American consulate in Santiago , Chile . As a commander during the Spanish ? American War , Tilley and his gunship , USS Newport , successfully captured two Spanish Navy ships . After the war , Tilley was made the first acting @-@ Governor of Tutuila and Manua (later called American Samoa) and set legal and administrative precedents for the new territory . Near the conclusion of his 41 years of service , he was promoted to rear admiral , but died shortly afterwards from pneumonia .

= = Early life and Naval career = =

Benjamin Franklin Tilley was born March 29 , 1848 , the sixth of nine children , in Bristol , Rhode Island . During the American Civil War , Tilley enrolled in the United States Naval Academy on September 22 , 1863 , at the age of 15 . The war forced the school to relocate from Annapolis , Maryland (then threatened by the Confederacy) to Newport , Rhode Island . In 1866 he graduated first in his class , going on to serve as a midshipman first on board USS Franklin , and then USS Frolic . Tilley spent three years serving on board Frolic , eventually being promoted to ensign . His next assignment was on board USS Lancaster , where he was promoted twice : first to master in 1870 and then to lieutenant in 1871 . From 1872 to 1875 , Tilley served on board USS Pensacola in the South Pacific . After Pensacola , he served briefly on board USS New Hampshire and then spent two years serving on USS Hartford .

= = Railroad strike of 1877 = = =

In July 1877 , a violent railroad strike began in Martinsburg , West Virginia , sparking riots in other American cities such as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia . In response , President Rutherford B. Hayes authorized the use of the military to put down the rioting . During the crisis , Tilley was temporarily transferred to USS Plymouth , sailing up the Potomac River to Washington , D.C. Military leaders feared rioters from Baltimore could travel to Washington to seize or damage vulnerable government targets . The troops defending Washington , including army , navy , and marines , were organized into a battalion of seven companies (Naval Brigade) , under the command of Captain Edward Barrett ; Tilley was placed in command of Company C. The precautions proved to be unnecessary , as the expected wave of rioters never materialized following the military 's suppression of the strikers in Baltimore . Within a short time , the riots in other cities were also quashed .

After the strike , Tilley was transferred to the flagship USS Powhatan , before requesting to take a six @-@ month leave so that he could marry . On June 6 , 1878 , Tilley married Emily Edelin Williamson , the daughter of a Navy surgeon and left with her on an extended honeymoon in Europe . On his return to duty , Tilley served in the United States Naval Academy and remained there , either in a classroom or on a training ship , until 1882 . For the next three years , Tilley served on board USS Tennessee . In 1885 , Tilley was promoted to lieutenant commander and returned to teach at the academy . During his tenure there , he was appointed head of two departments : first the Department of Astronomy , Navigation , and Surveying and then transferred to the Department of Mechanical Drawing . In September 1889 , he moved to the Washington Navy Yard to teach ordnance .

== Chilean Civil War ==

In 1890 , Tilley was transferred to San Francisco , to help test the newly @-@ built USS San Francisco and to become her executive officer . During the 1891 Chilean Civil War , San Francisco transported troops to the port of Valparaíso , from where they could move on to protect the American consulate in the capital , Santiago . When insurgents captured the city , Tilley and a force of 100 men remained to defend the consulate . After the war , Tilley returned to the naval academy as head of the astronomy and navigation department . In 1896 , he took command of USS Bancroft and sailed on an inspection tour of naval yards along the east coast of the United States . That October , he was promoted to commander . The following year , Tilley was given command of USS Newport to sail to Nicaragua to evaluate the progress of the isthmus canal commission .

== Spanish ? American War ==

On April 23 , 1898 , Spain declared war on the United States in response to American efforts to support Cuban independence . Tilley , still in command of Newport , was in the Caribbean and in the heart of the conflict area . Two days after the United States responded with its own declaration of war against Spain , on April 27 , Tilley captured the Spanish Navy 's sloop Paquete and schooner Pireno . Tilley participated in the naval blockade of Santiago de Cuba , but missed the subsequent Battle of Santiago de Cuba as Newport was refueling at Guantánamo Bay when fighting broke out . Toward the end of the war , Tilley was responsible for shelling the Cuban port of Manzanillo . Over the months of fighting , Tilley and Newport assisted in the capture of nine Spanish vessels . At the conclusion of the war , he was transferred to the Newport Naval Yard , before being given the command of USS Vicksburg in October .

== Commandant of U.S. Naval Station Tutuila ==

The United States first expressed interest in building a naval station at Pago Pago , Samoa , in 1872 at the behest of Henry A. Peirce , the United States Minister to Hawaii . A treaty to that effect was written and submitted , but it was not approved by the United States Senate . Six years later , on February 13 , 1878 , a separate treaty was ratified by the Senate that granted the Samoan government diplomatic recognition and reaffirmed permission to build a naval station in the country . Although there were no further political obstacles , funding for the station was not allocated and only a small coaling station was built on the island . Construction of the naval station did not begin until twenty years later , in 1898 , led by civilian contractors . In early 1899 , Tilley was assigned the task of overseeing the station construction and becoming its first commandant . He was also put in command of a collier , USS Abarenda , which would transport steel and coal to the construction site and to serve as the first station ship . After a long voyage , Tilley took on his new post on August 13 , 1899 .

Even before Tilley arrived in Samoa , the political situation there was shifting . The Second Samoan Civil War had recently ended , leaving the nation without a functioning central government . The United States , the United Kingdom , and Germany had competing strategic or economic interests in the region . On June 10 , 1899 , the Western powers signed the Treaty of Berlin , which partitioned Samoa in two . The eastern part , with Tutuila as its largest island , was placed under the control of the United States . The larger and historically dominant western part was given to Germany . Under this treaty , the British government relinquished its claims over the region in exchange for certain concessions from Germany . News of this arrangement did not reach Tilley and the islands until December 6 , 1899 .

After learning of the agreement , Tilley notified the local chiefs and asserted nominal United States control , but a formal decision on how the United States government would manage the territory had not yet been made . The construction of the naval base remained Tilley 's primary responsibility , and he was dispatched to pick up additional supplies and coal at Auckland , New Zealand . Less than a month after returning , on February 19 , 1900 , President William McKinley placed the

territory under the control of the United States Navy . Assistant Secretary of the Navy Charles H. Allen named Tilley commandant of United States Naval Station Tutuila with a charter to " cultivate friendly relations with the natives " .

= = Acting Governor of Tutuila = =

Tilley 's first task in his new role was to negotiate a deed of cession with the local powers to ensure a formal and peaceful transfer of control to the United States . With the partitioning of Samoa , two regional governments remained on Tutuila , which had been subordinated to a government on the western (and now German @-@ controlled) island of Upolu . Both of these governments were favorable toward the cession . The inhabitants of the island of Ta'u and the volcanic doublet of Ofu @-@ Olosega ? together known as Manu 'a ? 70 miles (110 km) to the east , were politically separate from Tutuila . On March 12 , 1900 , Tilley traveled to Ta'u to meet with the local king , Tui Manu'a Elisala . Ultimately , the king agreed to cede some sovereignty to the United States , but refused to consider full cession . The deed of cession , signed on April 17 , 1900 , listed Manu 'a as part of the United States ' new territory , but without the signature of its representative . In it , Tilley was named Acting Governor ; the territory would not have an official governor until the title was given to Governor Edmund Beardsley Underwood in 1905 . Manu 'a would not agree to sign the deed until 1904 , after negotiating concessions from the United States .

As Acting Governor , Tilley 's first acts were to impose a duty on imports to the territory , ban the sale of alcohol to the local population (but not Americans) , and forbid the sale of Samoan lands to non @-@ Samoans . On May 1 , 1900 , he proclaimed that the laws of the United States were in force in the territory , but that Samoan laws that did not conflict with U.S. law would remain in effect . He partitioned the territory into three districts , along the historical divisions implicitly acknowledged in the deed of cession : the two governments on Tutuila and the third comprising the islands of Manu 'a , which still did not regard themselves as part of the territory . Over the next year , Tilley regulated firearms , enforced mandatory registrations of births , deaths , and marriages , levied taxes , and made the sabbath a public holiday . For defense and police , Tilley created a small militia of native Samoans , called the Fita Fita Guard . The native volunteers in this force were trained at the naval station by a sergeant of the United States Marine Corps .

During Tilley 's administration problems arose because of conflicting Samoan and American laws . In one case , a native had caught and eaten a skipjack , a sacred fish which , under Samoan law , could only be eaten with the permission of a local chief . Traditional punishment decreed that the offender 's house should be burned down , his crops uprooted , and he should be exiled from the territory . The native challenged his punishment under the American legal system however , resulting in the arrest of the chief responsible for ordering the destruction of his property . In a criminal proceeding on which Tilley sat as judge , the chief was sentenced to a year of house arrest and ordered to pay compensation for the destroyed property . There were similar issues with Samoan customs not blending well with the newly introduced American political divisions in the territory . For example , although the territory 's three district governors had equal authority , they were of differing Samoan social status . This disparity made decision @-@ making more difficult and caused social tensions . Despite these problems , Tilley was well @-@ considered by the locals . On December 18 , 1900 , the local chiefs sent a letter of congratulations on the re @-@ election of President McKinley . In this letter , they said of Tilley " ... you gave us a leader , a Governor , a High Chief , whom we have learned to love and respect " .

Tilley took leave in June 1901 to return to Washington , leaving E. J. Dorn in command . Dorn subsequently had medical issues and was replaced by J. L. Jayne in October . That month an anonymous complaint was made to Assistant Secretary of the Navy Frank W. Hackett against Commandant Tilley alleging immorality and drunkenness . Almost simultaneously , Tilley was promoted to captain by President Theodore Roosevelt . Tilley returned to Samoa on November 7 , 1901 with his wife , and two days later was given a court martial . The trial lasted four days and only one witness was called for the prosecution . Ultimately , Tilley was acquitted . Despite this , Captain Uriel Sebree was appointed as commandant on November 27 , 1901 . Tilley and his wife returned to

the United States the following month .

Sebree later remarked of his predecessor that he had " great ability , kindness , tact and sound common sense " . Unlike Sebree , who was concerned that he did not have a legal mandate to govern , Tilley was not shy about enacting legislation and being the de facto leader of the territory . Although the deed of cession recognized his authority and gave him the title of Acting Governor , as far as the United States government was concerned , he was officially responsible only for the naval station . As the first naval governor , Tilley laid the groundwork for much of the future governance of the territory , which did not yet even have a formal name . The American Samoa government includes Tilley and the other pre 1905 station commandants in its list of territorial governors .

= = Later Career and Death = =

Tilley 's next assignment , in March 1902 , was as a captain of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo , California . He remained in this post for three years before being assigned to USS Iowa on January 11 , 1905 . Two years later , on February 23 , 1907 , Tilley was made commandant of League Island Naval Yard in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania . He was promoted to rear admiral the following day . Less than a month later , on March 18 , 1907 , Tilley died of pneumonia . At the end of the year , Tilley was one of 322 men and women listed by The Washington Post as " foremost in their various callings " that had died in 1907 . Tilley was survived by one son and two daughters . His son , Benjamin Franklin Tilley , Jr . , also entered the Navy and retired with the rank of lieutenant commander .