George Farragut Biography

Gautier's George Farragut is best known as the father of David Farragut, the famous Civil War admiral but he's a historic figure in his own right. Let me mention some of the highlights.

He was active in the American Revolution. The Spanish island of Minorca where he was born and raised was then occupied by Great Britain from which he learned to speak English. But his resentment of Britain's occupation motivated him to take up the cause of the American Colonies. In 1776 at 21 years of age, he came to South Carolina and in 1778 was made a Lieutenant in the newly formed South Carolina Navy. He fought naval battles against the British at Savannah, Georgia and at Charleston, SC. His naval career was interrupted when his right arm was shattered by a musket ball. Making his way to General Marion's headquarters, he served as a volunteer in the Battle of Cowpens after which he was appointed by the North Carolina governor as a Captain of Cavalry. He raised a company of volunteers which followed and harassed British General Cornwallis as he retreated to Yorktown where the war ended with his surrender in 1781.

After the war, he made his living as a mariner until 1792 when Governor Blount of Tennessee territory appointed him a major of militia assigned to the Knoxville area for the protection of settlers.

With Spain losing its grip on the gulf coast in 1807, President Jefferson appointed Spanish speaking Farragut as a Sailing Master in charge of a gunboat based in New Orleans to patrol the Gulf Coast. The next year his wife died of yellow fever and the children's care was taken on by others since Farragut had to be away on patrol. In 1809, while the area was still under Spanish control, he bought a large tract of land around the present I-10 Rest Stop in Gautier, and settled there. While still in the Navy he was appointed by the Louisiana territorial governor to be Justice of the peace for the parish of Pascagoula. He held this post until the coast became a part of Mississippi Territory in 1812.

Farragut was a friend of Andrew Jackson. They were both military men who had lived in Tennessee territory at the same time. Jackson kept Farragut's letters. Some of them have been reprinted in the Commission's history book, which by the way, is available for reading or buying at our local library. Some have thought that Farragut was with Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans, but one of these letters has Farragut apologizing to Jackson for not being with him because of other duties.

Farragut continued serving in the U S Navy until 1814 when he was dismissed after the Navy received a letter from Edwin Lewis, A E Lewis's father, complaining that Farragut was drawing Navy pay while performing no naval duties. Farragut pleaded, without results, for reinstatement citing his long history of service to the United States. His separation from service, with loss of pay, broke his heart as well as his bank account. He was raising children of 5, 6, & 7 at the time. He died in 1817, a few months before Mississippi was admitted to statehood.

There is an interesting sidelight to the George Farragut story. Histories have been written claiming that Admiral David Farragut spent his boyhood years in Gautier. Apparently this was believed because his father lived in Gautier during several years of David's boyhood. The fact is, however, that David never lived in Gautier with his father. The family lived in New Orleans until David's mother died in 1808 and the children were quickly farmed out to others because his father had to continue his patrol duties along the gulf coast. David quickly moved in with Commander Porter and never returned to live with his father. This is confirmed by a letter in David's own handwriting as well as other documents.

George Farragut has an honored and well earned place in history as a man of extraordinary accomplishments, dedication to duty, courage, and spirit of adventure. We can be proud to have him as one of ours.