

Admiral Jules James

1885 – 1957

Article courtesy of Old West End

Jules James was born in Danville, Virginia, born February 15, 1885, presumably at [939 Green Street](#) in the Old West End. A city directory shows the James family at that address in 1888.

Jules was educated at Danville Military Academy and prepared for entrance to the Naval Academy at the Virginia Military Institute. He graduated and was commissioned an ensign in 1910.

From 1912 to 1913, he served as a naval aide to President Woodrow Wilson. In 1914 he saw combat aboard the dreadnought battleship USS Florida during the Mexican revolution. Promoted to Lieutenant Commander, James escorted convoys to and from Europe aboard the armored cruiser USS Rochester during the first world war – for which he was given a letter of special commendation and, later, the French Legion of Honour.

James served as Assistant Naval Attaché to the American embassies in France, Spain, and Portugal from 1923 to 1926 when he was promoted to Commander.

At times between 1926 and 1934 James was navigator on the USS Florida, commanded the USS Edsall, served as naval aide for the Governor-General of the Philippines, attended the Naval War College, and commanded the Destroyer Division 6, Battle Force, U.S. Fleet.

In 1933 James was head of the Department of Ordnance and Gunnery at the U.S. Naval Academy where he was promoted to Captain. In 1937 he directed the fitting out of the light cruiser USS Philadelphia, which he then commanded until mid-1939. From 1939 to 1941, he served as assistant director, and briefly acting director, of the Office of Naval Intelligence.

In 1941 he commanded the newly acquired U.S. Naval Operating Base on Bermuda, where he also commanded the combined U.S. and British local defense forces. After World War II, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire for this service.

After promotion to Rear Admiral, James commanded the Sixth Naval District, headquartered at Charleston Navy Yard in Charleston, South Carolina from 1943 to 1945. There he protected the east coast and Bermuda from invasion. German submarines came close but were either captured, destroyed, or forced to turn back.

In Danville, Mayor W. E. Gardner, Sr., proclaimed October 27, 1943, to be Navy Day. A parade was held beginning at Mount Vernon Methodist Church and ending at the City Auditorium. The Parade Marshall was [F. W. Townes](#). It was reviewed by Admiral James, who also offered an address at the auditorium.

His final assignment was as commander of United States Naval Forces, Mediterranean (now the U.S. Sixth Fleet) where he was promoted to Vice Admiral, the Navy's second-highest rank, and served until retiring from active duty in 1946.

James died of a heart condition in Bethesda Naval Hospital, Maryland on March 12, 1957. While he was offered burial in Arlington National Cemetery, he turned it down saying, "I want to be buried in Danville." He is interred at Green Hill Cemetery.

Admiral Jules James was inducted into The Hall of Fame at The Danville Museum of Fine Arts in the fall of 2022.