

# WAR OF THE DANCING MOUSE

THE GALLANT CAREER OF THE USS EDSALL, HER DARING CAPTAIN, THE JAPANESE EXECUTION OF THE SURVIVING CREW, AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE SUNKEN DESTROYER

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**U**SS *Edsall* (DD-219) was one of 156 *Clemson*-class "flush deck" (or "four-piper") destroyers authorized in 1917 and designed as battle fleet escorts to counter the German torpedo-boat threat of World War I. It was the largest shipbuilding program in US Navy history until the *Fletcher*-class destroyers in World War II. However, none of the *Clemson*-class destroyers were completed in time to participate in the war for which they were built. *Edsall* was laid down in September 1919 and commissioned on 26 November 1920.

*Edsall* was named after Seaman Norman Eckley Edsall, of the protected cruiser USS *Philadelphia* (C-4), who was killed in an ambush by Samoan warriors on 1 April 1899 while attempting to carry badly wounded Lt. Philip Van Horne Lansdale to safety. Ensign John R. Monaghan refused to leave Lansdale, and both were killed by pursuing Samoan natives. Edsall, Lansdale, and Monaghan would have multiple ships named in their honor.

*Edsall* was 1190 tons and 314 feet in length. She had two geared turbines with twin shafts and screws, capable of a very respectable 35 knots. She was armed with four single 4-inch/50-caliber guns (one forward, one amidships starboard, one amidships port, and one aft). She had one 3-inch/23-caliber anti-

aircraft gun. She had four triple-tube 21-inch torpedo mounts (two mounts per side) with twelve Mark 8 torpedoes (no reloads). Due to experience countering German U-Boats during the war, the design was modified during construction to include two depth charge tracks on the stern, and a Y-gun depth charge projector forward of the after deck house, but she was still optimized to defend battleships. Her anti-aircraft armament would be increased with the addition of .50-caliber and .30-caliber machine guns over time. Her armament in 1941 was essentially the same as in 1920.

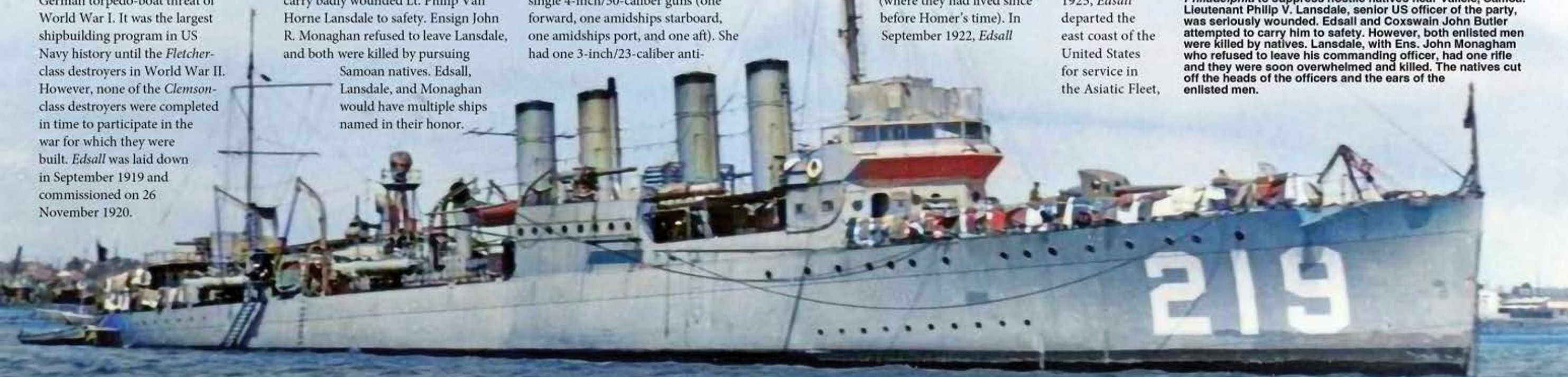
Despite missing the Great War, *Edsall* had an eventful early career. She deployed to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea in 1922 just as the civil war between the Communists and White Russians raged. During this deployment, war broke out between Greece and Turkey as the Turks expelled the Anatolian Greeks from the west coast of Turkey (where they had lived since before Homer's time). In September 1922, *Edsall*

evacuated 607 Greek refugees to Salonika, Greece, after they were evicted from Izmir, Turkey. *Edsall* acted as flagship for US Navy forces protecting American lives and property on the coast of Turkey and evacuating additional Greek refugees. During the deployment, *Edsall* conducted show-the-flag port visits to Turkey, Bulgaria, Russia, Greece, Egypt, Palestine Mandate, Syria, Tunisia, Dalmatia, and Italy, before arriving in Boston for overhaul in July 1924.

In January 1925, *Edsall* departed the east coast of the United States for service in the Asiatic Fleet,



The ship was named for Norman Eckley Thurston Edsall. He enlisted in the US Navy on 27 June 1898 to participate in the Spanish-American War. Ordinary Seaman Edsall went ashore with a landing party on 1 April 1899 from the cruiser *Philadelphia* to suppress hostile natives near Vailele, Samoa. Lieutenant Philip V. Lansdale, senior US officer of the party, was seriously wounded. Edsall and Coxswain John Butler attempted to carry him to safety. However, both enlisted men were killed by natives. Lansdale, with Ens. John Monaghan who refused to leave his commanding officer, had one rifle and they were soon overwhelmed and killed. The natives cut off the heads of the officers and the ears of the enlisted men.



Colorized postcard image of USS *Edsall* (DD-219)