

## Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1917) served as the College's second president in 1886–1889 and as its fourth president in 1892–1893. In 1885, Admiral Luce chose Mahan to be the Naval War College's first instructor in naval history and tactics. The lectures he delivered at the Naval War College in 1886 and 1887 were eventually published as *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890). In 1892, he returned with a new set of lectures to deliver: *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793–1805* (1892). These books were the first that drew international attention to the College. Later, he returned to lecture between 1895 and 1912.

In 1935, the Navy Department agreed to name the College's previously unnamed library building in honor of Mahan. With the addition of a large reading room in 1938, the only thing that was lacking was a portrait of Mahan to be the focal point of the Rotunda. In 1939, the president of the College Rear

Admiral Charles Snyder started a subscription campaign to fund the portrait. Following the observance of the centenary of Mahan's birth in September 1940, Snyder's successor, Rear Admiral Edward Kalbfus, made a direct appeal to the nearly 1,400 living graduates of the College, asking each to contribute one dollar.

The appeal to graduates was successful and the College commissioned the artist Alexander James (1890–1946), the son of Harvard philosophy professor William James and nephew of the novelist Henry James, to do the portrait. James used photographs of Mahan and a specially made rear admiral's uniform from the 1906 period to paint the work.

PRESIDENT, 22 JUNE 1886–12 JANUARY 1889  
and 22 JULY 1892–10 MAY 1893

Oil on Canvas  
Alexander James, 1945  
Ac. 1976.30.01

