

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes

***THE VERMONT BOY WHO VOLUNTEERED IN 1861, SERVED BRAVELY,
WAS WOUNDED GRIEVOUSLY, AND DIED FOR THE UNION
(Eulogy of General T.E.G. Ransom Given Before Ransom Post No. 131
Grand Army of the Republic, St. Louis, Missouri, June 20, 1884)***



Brigadier General T.E.G. Ransom

By
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COMRADES: When in November last I came from Washington to St. Louis to make this my final home I was invited by several of the posts of the Grand Army of the Republic to join them, but learning that some of my neighbors intended to form a new post more convenient to my residence, I concluded to unite with it. The name of this new post had not yet been determined, and having on the Walls of my private office a portrait or likeness of Brigadier General T.E.G. Ransom, whose name was vacant in the roster of this department, I suggested his name as an appropriate one, and offered

to present the portrait to typify the man. The members adopted the name, and have since concluded to enlarge the portrait so as more conspicuously to display the features of him who is patronym of this post and it is but right that I who knew him in life and have thus been instrumental in perpetuating his name, should demonstrate the wisdom of our choice.

The Ransoms are a Vermont family. The ancestors were of that race called the *Green Mountain Boys* who were with Stark at Ticonderoga and with Montgomery, at Quebec in the old French war of 1756, and in our Revolutionary war of 1776 - a hardy bold race of men, suited to the times in which they lived. The father or our namesake was Truman B. Ransom, born at Woodstock, Vermont, in 1803. Left an orphan early in life, he had to struggle for the means of subsistence like most of the boys of that period. Yet, by industry and thrift, he managed to acquire a good education and started forth to carve out his own career in the world. He first taught mathematics in a school at Middletown, Connecticut; then was employed to survey the Connecticut River, and afterward was engaged as a teacher at a military school in New Jersey; again at Fayetteville, North Carolina, and at Washington Georgia. At Pensacola, Florida, he was Professor of mathematics in the United States Navy. He was afterward employed as Chief Engineer on the public works of Illinois, and finally drifted back almost to the point whence he had started, Norwich, Vermont where he became the Principal of Captain Alden Partridge's military school, then, as since, an academy of great renown. This military school at one time almost rivaled the National Military Academy at West Point, and there many a man who afterward became famous in the Mexican War and Civil War first drank in the inspiration of patriotism and learned the lessons of the art of war, which enabled him, out of unorganized masses of men, to make compact companies, regiments, and brigades of soldiers, to act as a single body in the great game of war. I have been at Norwich which is situated on the western bank of the beautiful Connecticut River, directly opposite the venerable University of Dartmouth, and believe that such picturesque surroundings make an impression on the mind which purifies and imbues with an exalted love of nature and of one's country. It was here on November 29, 1834, that our hero, Thomas Edwin Greenfield Ransom, was born, and it was here that he spent his boyhood. His father was at the time Principal of the military school, and it was but natural that the child should catch the spirit of the father and reflect the genius of the place. The father was universally regarded as the best educated scholar in the military branches of knowledge in all New England, if not in the United States. His neighbors and associates record of him that he was not only learned in books, but in form, bearing and manner was a knightly gentleman and soldier. When in 1848 the Mexican war occurred, and the small regular army of that day was found insufficient to invade Mexico and conquer peace, the Congress of the United States decreed an increase of the regular army by 10 new regiments in addition to the volunteers who had offered their services. The Ninth regulars was assigned to New England, and by universal consent, Truman B. Ransom was pointed out as the best man to command it. He volunteered at once, and was appointed its Lieutenant-Colonel, the Colonel being the Hon. Frank Pierce, of New Hampshire a gentleman of great political prominence who in March 1847, was made Brigadier-General and became afterward President of the United States.

Ransom succeeded him in command; was commissioned Colonel April 9, 1847, and on him devolved all the labor and details of organization and preparation. This regiment was assembled at Fort Adams, Rhode Island; was there completely equipped and in due time embarked and sailed for Vera Cruz to join the army then under command of General Scott.

It participated in all the battles of that most romantic and captivating campaign from Puebla to the city of Mexico but on September 13, 1847, in the last assault on the Castle of Chapultepec, in sight of the city, Colonel Ransom was killed at the head of his regiment in the 45th year of his age. Of him Adj.-Gen. Drum, of the regular army, writes me from Washington, under recent date: *I was a subaltern officer in Truman B. Ransom's regiment, the Ninth Infantry, and was standing by his side when he fell at Chapultepec. He was by all odds the most brilliant man under fire I have ever seen.* His body was sent to his beautiful home at Norwich, Vermont, where on the 22nd of February 1848, it was buried with all the honors due a gallant soldier and much beloved fellow citizen and there his

body now remains.

Such was the father of our General Ransom, who was at the time a mere lad of 14 years, hardly capable of appreciating the loss of such a father. The mother was living but was overtaxed with the care and maintenance of a large family. Who will do justice to the privations, labor, and distress of the poor women, who, deprived of their natural guardians, had to struggle with poverty to provide food, clothing, and education for lusty boys thus left by a Government which took the lives of the fathers and stopped their pay before their bodies were fairly cold in death. But this poor, unselfish lady struggled on and gave to the regular army another son. Dunbar, and to us of the Army of the West, her youngest and fairest and most beloved son, Thomas, whose portrait we now see before us.

As soon as he reached manhood he left his beautiful New-England home for the then far off Chicago, where he embarked in civil business with varied fortune, till the grumbling and roaring of the coming storm awakened in him the early inspirations of his childhood. Hearing that his country was in danger, he waited for, no draft or bounties, but enlisted on the 30th of April 1861, in Company E, Eleventh Illinois Infantry, and was at once elected Captain of his company. As soon as the companies of the regiment had assembled, on the 3rd day of May of the same year, he was elected Major, and went with his regiment to the capital of his State (Springfield,) and on to Cairo and Bird's Point. Here on the 30th of July, the three months for which the regiment had been enlisted expired, and it re-enlisted for three years:

Ransom was elected Lieutenant-Colonel, and subsequently, on the 15th of February 1862 when his Colonel W.H.L. Wallace, was made Brigadier-General, he (Ransom) became the Colonel of the Eleventh Illinois Infantry. In November of the same year he was himself made a Brigadier, and was brevetted a Major-General in September 1864.

In command of that gallant, heroic regiment, the Eleventh Illinois, Ransom shared in every engagement with General Grant about Cairo, and at Forts Henry and Donelson, at Shiloh and Corinth, and, as Brigadier-General, he was with us at Oxford and Vicksburg. He was wounded in Southeast Missouri on the 19th of August 1861; at Donelson February 10, 1862 and again at Shiloh April 6, 1862. To follow his personal history, I would have to record anew all the battles, marches, and labors of the armies of the Union which resulted in the capture of Vicksburg and the opening of Mississippi River to free navigation which I regard as the most important and conclusive event of the whole Civil War. It was during the siege of Vicksburg that I first noticed this young man, who commanded a brigade in McPherson's Corps. The Seventeenth Illinois Brigade was on the extreme right of that corps which brought him in contact with the left of my own command, the Fifteenth Corps. His appearance was almost boyish, with blonde hair, blue eyes, a fair complexion,, and though of slender form, he had the bearing of a gallant soldier. War is the supreme test of manhood, and an hour, a minute sometimes, reveals the spirit which is in the man; the grasp of the hand the flash of the eye, the unspoken word which trembles on the lips, the supreme moment of battle tell more than a volume can record. I saw Ransom during the assault of the 22nd of May 1863 - saw his brigade dash against those battlements to be hurled back because the time was not yet ripe - and I then marked him as of the kind of whom heroes were made.

After the capture of Vicksburg, Ransom was switched off to Louisiana and Texas, carrying with him the dash, courage, and enthusiasm which marked every action of his life. In the Banks expedition up Red River, early in 1864, he commanded two divisions of the Thirteenth Corps and at Sabine Crossroads, April 8, on the skirmish line, he was again wounded - for the fourth time and so severely that he was sent to the rear, and had to return to Chicago for treatment. But so impatient was he to do his full share of work that he applied for duty, and was ordered to report to me in Georgia. This was on the 8th day of August, in the midsummer of 1864, when we were pushing operations with vindictive earnestness against the city of Atlanta.

I hailed his coming as that of a kindred spirit to assist us in the work yet to be done as signed him to

duty with the Army of the Tennessee, with which he had formerly been connected, and he fell to the command of the Fourth Division of the Sixteenth Corps, then commanded by General G.M. Dodge. Shortly afterward - namely, on the 20th of August - General Dodge himself received a disabling wound, which compelled him to leave, and the command of that corps devolved on the youthful General Ransom, who commanded it at the battle of Jonesborough at the capture of the city of Atlanta.

Here occurred a pause in our operations and I began the changes incident to the last and final campaign of the war. There were only two divisions of the Sixteenth Corps with us at Atlanta and I determined to break up that corps and to distribute its two divisions to the other corps of the Army of the Tennessee, the 15th and 17th. By this change Ransom's division became the 1st of the 17th Corps, and as General Blair also took a leave of absence, the command of the 17th Corps fell on General Ransom. We were lying in Atlanta seemingly passive but really waiting for the enemy to take the initiative after the (to him) disastrous campaign of that year. Late in September, Hood began his movement. On the last of October General Ransom, though unwell, personally conducted a reconnaissance toward Fairtown to observe the movement of our antagonist, and discovered that Hood's whole army had crossed the Chattahoochee westward conclusive of his intention to attack our line of communications, which compelled us to counter-work. Leaving one corps in Atlanta, I turned back with the other four and rapidly marched to Marietta, Kenesaw, Altoona, Kingston, Rome, and Resaca, over the very ground which he had fought for the previous Summer, and did not pause till Hood's whole army had caromed off to the west toward Decatur and Florence. It was day and night work. We had no tents or the ordinary comforts of even camp life. Generals and private soldiers alike slept on the bare ground and ate the same food. This was no place for a sick man, but it was the crisis of the war, and human life was accounted as little in comparison with the mighty issues at stake.

Pausing for a few days at Gaylesville I learned that General Ransom was very sick and accompanied by my chief surgeon (John Moore, of the regular army, and one of the most kindly, genial intelligent, and skillful of physicians), I rode to the camp of the Seventeenth Corps, and found General Ransom in a negro cabin. He lay on a rude improvised bed, tried to be cheerful, and insisted that he was *all right. or would be in day or so*, but I noticed that his hand was dry feverish, his forehead cold hand clammy, and the pupils of his eyes distended just as I had noticed in my own son Willie a few days before his death. Dr Moore asked a few questions of his attendants and gave some general directions when he left. Outside the cabin I asked the doctor what he thought. He said little, but I read in his face that Ransom's time on earth was short. Time was then so important that the movements already ordered must go on; part of that army was ordered back to Chattanooga and Nashville and part to Atlanta and Savannah. The Seventeenth Corps formed an essential quota of the latter column, and as General Ransom could not mount his horse he was carried toward Rome, the nearest point for a railroad, in a litter. He was attended by his personal staff. The litter was carried by four men at a time, and these four were relieved every hour by a fresh set. This was on the 28th of October 1864, and I started from Gaylesville for Rome the next day, and overlook the cortege on the road. The men had constructed a sort of canopy to screen his face from the sun, and as my party approached they set the litter down in the road. Dr. Moore and I alighted and again examined Ransom. There was little change since our previous visit. He certainly had a perfect memory and full consciousness of all that was passing. I remember to have joked him at traveling in a style of oriental luxury in his palanquin, while we had to jog along on tired horses. He smiled and made some pleasant reply, and we remounted and rode on.

The next morning the party reached Rome, carrying the dead body of General Ransom. They reported that he had died shortly after we had passed him in the afternoon of the 29th day of October 1864. Observing fatal symptoms; his kind attendants carried him to a farmhouse by the roadside and there lying on a bed, he said: *As a soldier I have tried to do my duty. I do not claim that all I have done was owing to patriotism alone, though I believe I have as much of that as most men. Patriotism and inclination have led me the same way to do all in my power for my country.*

Yes Ransom, though you had not reached your thirtieth birthday, you have done a man's full share of work on this earth. You might have reached your *threescore years and ten* and have done no more. I wish you could have gone on with us to Savannah, Goldsborough, and Washington City. Still more, that you could have been with us at our many social meetings at Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis for which you were so brilliantly qualified but it was otherwise decreed that you, Dan McCook, Barker, McPherson, Joe Mower, and a host of other young and gallant fellows should go ahead to prepare the way for us who may lag a few years superfluous on the stage of life, but when we do inset the interval will seem as but a short day.

From Rome, Georgia, we sent the body of General Ransom to his home at Chicago, where it is now buried. The Society of the Army of the Tennessee, rich in noble intentions, but poor in purse, has decreed a monument, but I fear that no marble marks the spot where his body lies. For this I care not; better let the dust return to dust, and leave us who are living witnesses to testify so that the young and rising generation may drink the inspiration of patriotism from the fountain of pure sacrifice of such a life as I have endeavored to portray.

The Civil War - its alarms, tolls, labors, battles, and sacrifices are fast passing out of the memories of the living; it is to the interest of some that they should be buried in oblivion forever, and it may be wise that in public we should relegate the past to the province of history, but among ourselves we can not, we should not, forget. We know that in republics the greatest danger comes from within, and not from without, and we who felt the pelting of the pitiless storm, who endured the tribulations and anxieties of four long, years of civil war, and saw perish at our sides thousands of bright, fair youth like our hero of tonight, should so paint the hardships and cruelties of war that others may not be tempted by selfish ambition, plausible pretense, and false issues to create a pretext for another, but when war does come there is only one way to meet it, and that is with the sword and musket, as Ransom did in 1861!

The Grand Army of the Republic proclaims as its fundamental creed *Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty*, - malice toward none, charity for all. We canonize no living man, but our dead heroes are the jewels in our imperial crown of glory, whose dazzling effulgence will kindle the spark of patriotism in the hearts of the next generation. We admire courage, manliness, and skill, even if opposed to us, and to such of our former enemies as have shown by their deeds - a willingness to embark with us on the great ocean of the future we concede perfect equality, an ardent friendship, a welcome to our campfires and a share in the charitable retreats established by Government for distress occasioned by the war; but we are human, and for one generation at least must prefer our own heroes, of which we have an abundance, and the privilege of retaining a suspicion of those men who did not fight, but from their places of safety stirred up sedition and conspiracy and fanned the flames of bitter discord which blinded the judgment of those who had a right to look to their leaders for the truth. Happily these are now nearly all gone, and the day seems near at hand when every intelligent man in America will recognize the holy cause for which we fought and for which so many of our brightest and best youth so freely and so nobly gave their lives.

Of these, I could name hundreds who fell under my own personal observation, but my office tonight is only to demonstrate that General T.E.G. Ransom, whose name we bear and whose portrait is now exhibited before us, is a conspicuous example. In his own language, looking death in the face, far from home, he was content to die, because he had done a man's full work on earth, and because every motive and instinct of his nature had impelled him to the duties of a soldier and patriot.

Our country has boundless plains and fertile valleys it has cities towns, villages, and farms teeming with a busy, industrious people intent on their own schemes of life. It possesses every thing which is deemed necessary for a great empire, and we claim that it can now turn to a long array of heroes of which any civilized people on earth would be proud. We, their living comrades who shared in their dangers and privations, must see that their memories are kept bright, and that the cause for which they so nobly gave their lives is not obscured by false doctrine or perverted history.

Comrades of Ransom Post No. 131, Department of Missouri, Grand Army of the Republic, I hope that I have made plain that we have secured a name and title that do us honor, and that we should make it our life's work to perpetuate the fame of our patronym, General Ransom, son of a knightly father who was killed in battle, and who himself died of wounds and exposure in the field of duty, the type of a class of youthful heroes that do honor to our country and to humanity.

Source:

Sherman, General W.T. 1884. *The Vermont Boy Who Volunteered in 1861, Served Bravely, was Wounded Grievously, and Died for the Union, Eulogy of General T.R.G. Ransom given before Ransom Post No. 131, Grand Army of the Republic, St. Louis, Missouri, June 20, 1884.* Washington National Tribune, June 1884.

Note, see also:

[Tredway, Lt. J. 1864.](#) *Eyewitness Account of the Events Leading up to and Including Brigadier General T.E.G. Ransom's Death at the Berryhill House, Rome, Georgia, October 28, 1864, Correspondence to Mrs. Ransom, The Norwich Historical Society, Vermont.*

