

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes



**MAJOR JOHN WESLEY EMERSON, 47TH MISSOURI INFANTRY USV
(1832 Massachusetts - 1899 Missouri)
Original Member of the Missouri Commandery
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States**

**By
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John Wesley Emerson was born July 26, 1832 in Pepperell, Massachusetts; the son of William and Rosannah Ellen (Young) Emerson. In his youth he worked his way through Iron City College, in

Pennsylvania, and later graduated from the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor. He began the study of law with William M. Moffatt, a noted lawyer of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and was admitted to the bar after coming to Missouri in 1857. He then began the practice of his profession at Ironton, the county seat of Iron County, and from that time until his death was an honored member of the bar of that place, attaining well merited distinction as a lawyer.

At the beginning of the Civil War, he espoused the cause of the Union and shortly thereafter entered the military service. His first position was as Volunteer Aid on the staff of General Nelson, and while serving as such was wounded at the battle of Richmond, Kentucky. In 1863, he was commissioned by Hamilton R. Gamble, the then Governor of Missouri, Colonel in the 68th Regiment Enrolled Missouri Militia and served in that capacity until the regiment was mustered out of the service. In 1864, he enlisted as a private soldier in the 47th Regiment Missouri Volunteer Infantry. He was shortly thereafter appointed and commissioned Major of that regiment and participated in the battle of Pilot Knob in the autumn of that year, and was engaged in several engagements in the state of Missouri. In October of that year, he was ordered by General Rosecrans to reopen to traffic the Iron Mountain Railroad from St. Louis to Pilot Knob; while engaged in this duty he was again wounded. He was shortly afterwards ordered with his regiment to re-enforce General Thomas, at Nashville, Tennessee. His regiment participated in the pursuit of General Hood and his command as far as the state of Alabama and during the time captured more than 1000 prisoners. Major Emerson was in command of the regiment the last four months of its service, and until it was mustered out at the close of the war. His leadership won him encomiums both of his superior officers and the men who served under him by his soldierly conduct, his devotion to duty, and his ability as an officer. He was an intelligent, capable, and faithful soldier and rendered the government valuable service. He was modest and retiring in his manner and enjoyed the confidence and respect of his superior officers, among whom was General U.S. Grant, at one time his immediate commander.

After the close of the war, Major Emerson resumed the practice of law at Ironton, and so continued until he was chosen Judge of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Court. In this position, he distinguished himself as an able and impartial Judge and administered the law to the rich and the poor alike, and without fear of or favor to any. A good lawyer himself, he was well equipped to discharge the duties of the office, and the gentleness of his nature and the gentlemanly way in which he treated all whose business brought them in contact with him, endeared him to all.

His fondness for his profession, his love of literature, and the freedom of private life caused him to resign the judgeship, and at different times he declined congressional nominations which he was solicited to accept. A profound thinker and a forcible speaker, his nature was at the same time poetic, and he was the author of several poems, charming alike in sentiment and meter.

After leaving the bench, he was appointed by President Cleveland to the position of United States Marshal for the Eastern District of Missouri. He served in this capacity for four years, and it is detracting nothing from others to say that that office was never filled more acceptably to bench, bar, and the people generally than when Major Emerson held that office. Under all circumstances, he discharged his duties ably and filled the full measure of requirements.

In 1890, Emerson became associated with two resourceful Scottish orphans, Alexander and Charles Meston, who had ideas to develop a stream of electrical and mechanical devices. In the fall of that same year, John Wesley Emerson provided \$50,000 start-up capital and lent his name to a new corporation creating the "Emerson Electric Manufacturing Company", and served as the company's first President from 1890 to 1892. That time was a prosperous and heady time for the U.S. economy, St. Louis, and the fledgling electrical industry. One of the fastest-growing industries in the booming economy was electrical equipment, a business segment that quadrupled in size between 1880 and 1890, and doubled again by 1900. In 1892, Judge Emerson retired, selling his interest to Herbert L. Parker, a former railroad executive, who became President of the company. Emerson Electric continued to evolve through the decades and today Emerson (New York Stock Exchange: EMR) is a

\$17 billion corporation in 2005 consisting of 60+ industry-leading divisions are aligned under unique Emerson Brands. It has developed into a global corporation that brings together technology and engineering to provide innovative solutions for our customers in a wide range of industrial, commercial, and consumer markets. The Emerson Corporate and United States Headquarters resides in St. Louis, Missouri. Additional information can be found at [Emerson Electric Corporate Homepage](#).

In later years, John Wesley Emerson took a deep interest in reviewing the history of the war. He became a very active member of the Missouri Commandery of Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (Insignia No.06090) and during the last three years of his life he wrote a history of General Grant's campaign in the Mississippi Valley. He was always a ready and pleasing writer, and prepared, in the course of his active life, many essays and delivered many addresses at college commencements and on other occasions, which received the high commendation of the most cultivated and scholarly people. His refined tastes and love of nature's charms are evidenced in his home, situated in the lovely Arcadia Valley, and commanding a view of the scenery of the Ozarks, the spot being historically interesting by reason of the fact that General Grant was encamped here when he received his commission as a brigadier general. Surrounded by well kept grounds and park-like attractions, this home is one of the most beautiful in the state of Missouri. Affiliating with the Democratic party, he wielded large influence in its councils in Missouri for years, and sat as a delegate in many conventions, from county to national gatherings, of that great political organization.

On September 12, 1855, Judge Emerson married Miss Sarah Maria Young, in Oswego, New York, who is descended from the Young and Elsworth families of Revolutionary fame. After a very full and productive life, John Wesley Emerson passed away June 20, 1899 in his beloved Ironton, Missouri. In every sense of the word he was a good citizen, faithful, and true to every obligation, and his death is a great loss, not only to those of his immediate family and of the Commandery but to the State as well.

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Sources:

- 1) Missouri Commandery of the MOLLUS, Circular No. 195, November 4, 1899.
- 2) Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri by Conard Vol.3, c1901, p.377-378.
- 3) Emerson Electric Co., A Century of Manufacturing, 1890-1990, c1990, P.6.
- 2) Membership Records of the Missouri Commandery of the MOLLUS.

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