

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes



**BREVET MAJOR GENERAL REGIS de TROBRIAND, U.S. VOLUNTEERS
(1816 France - 1897 New York)**

**By
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Brevet Major General Regis de Trobriand

**Philippe Regis Denis de Keredern de Trobriand, Colonel and Brevet Brigadier General, U.S. Army,
and Brigadier General and Brevet Major General, U.S. Volunteers did not come into a military**

career by accident; it was his destiny. In 1385, Regis's ancestor, Miles Denys fought with Jean de Montfort who was struggling to keep the crown of Brittany. He fought well and was awarded the fiefs of Keredern and Trobriand. Miles descendants were worthy of him and for over five hundred years left records of daring and courage on land and sea as in accordance with the family motto: "brillant sur terre et sur mer" (Shining on Land and on Sea). History shows that while serving their country, the family was constantly caught up in court intrigue and shifts of government which resulted in titles and estates being granted, being confiscated, and again being granted. Islands in the South Pacific still bear the names of Trobriand and Denis.

Brother fighting brother was not limited to our Civil War--it also was true with Regis's family. During the French Revolution of 1792, Regis's father, Joseph, fled to Austria and fought there until Napoleon abolished the sentence of death against the émigrés and encouraged the men serving in foreign armies to take commissions in the army of their own country. His brother, Santiago, stayed and fought for the Republic. In at least one instance, they were on opposite sides of the battlefield. While serving under Napoleon, Regis's father and one uncle earned the rank of General and regained the family titles, Comte and Baron (which were later inherited by Regis). Another uncle, Francois, serving in the navy, earned the rank of Captain. With the birth of Regis on June 4, 1816, in Tours, France, the family now had an heir to carry on the tradition of military service to one's country.

At the age of six, Regis was inscribed as a candidate for admission among the Pages of the King (the equivalent of our academies), but history took a cruel turn, for on the eve of taking up his duties at court as page and beginning his military education, the tempest of 1830 broke out over France. Regis's father, loyal to his King, Charles X, would serve no other, especially Louis Philippe, who was considered to be responsible for the revolution. He resigned his commission and removed his family to Tours, apparently ending the military future of young Regis (whose first name of Philippe was dropped after Louis Philippe took the crown). Once again Regis's father and uncle were on opposite sides as Santiago remained in the service of Philippe. For the next ten years of his life Regis "did what every young man should do," he played, challenging and fighting in at least one duel which almost killed him; he took up the arts, primarily writing and painting and finally after the strong urging of his father, he studied, earning a degree in law.

In 1841, Regis, now a young and dashing Baron, came to New York and met Mary Mason Jones, whose family founded the Chemical Bank of New York. Marriage soon followed. The young couple traveled about Europe eventually taking up residence with the exiled Bourbon Court (the Duchess de Berry and her son, Comte de Chambord, Henri V,) in Venice. This grand court life came to an end when in 1847, at the request of his father-in-law, Regis and his family returned to New York where he engaged in literary work and started a French review.

In 1861, destiny struck and Regis's life took on a dramatic change. On the 18th of April while watching the 6th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers (the first to respond to the President's call for troops) make its passage through the streets of New York, Regis's thoughts were, "And I thought, in spite of myself, of the familiar sights of my childhood, when the French Battalions defiled before the starry epaulets of my father: and I asked myself vaguely if destiny which had deprived me in France of the heritage of his sword had not in reserve for me in America some compensation, in the ranks of these volunteers marching to fight for a cause which had immortalized Lafayette." Therefore, when the officers of the Garde Lafayette (55th Regiment, New York Volunteers), on July 21st unanimously elected him their colonel, he without hesitation accepted.

The 55th New York was sent to Washington in the early autumn and in 1862, participated in the Peninsular Campaign (Siege of Yorktown and Battle of Williamsburg) with the 4th Corps, making a good record. After this campaign, the regiment returned to Washington and was assigned to the 3rd Corps (Kearny's). In November of 1862, the 55th New York was consolidated with the 38th New York with de Trobriand as Colonel. On December 13th, he participated in the Battle of Fredericksburg with three regiments under his command; the 55th New York, 99th Pennsylvania, the

3rd Maine, and later in the day, the 57th Pennsylvania. After the Chancellorsville Campaign, he was assigned to the command of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 3rd Corps. On July 2nd, at Gettysburg, de Trobriand's Brigade was assigned by General Sickles to a position between the peach orchard and the wheat field, a position he maintained with only two regiments; the 5th Michigan and the 110 Pennsylvania, while uncovered on the right and left by the falling back of the 1st and 2nd Brigades (His reserve regiments, the 7th Maine and the 40th New York, were assigned elsewhere). Finally, after losing nearly one half of his force, he was relieved by General Zook's Brigade of the 2nd Corps. General Zook was one of the first to be killed at the place where he had relieved de Trobriand. There is now at Gettysburg an avenue named for de Trobriand and a monument commemorating the Third Brigade's actions. Also, there is a painting of this position while under attack done by de Trobriand, which was donated to the Gettysburg Museum.

After Gettysburg, the Third Brigade was involved in the Fight of Manassas Gap on July 23rd, the fight of Auburn on October 13th, and on November 7th the fight of Kelly's Ford, where the operations of the brigade opened the way for three Army Corps, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, for a general advance. For this success, general orders from headquarters conveyed the compliments of the General-in-Chief and the thanks of the President.

On November 22nd, on account of not being confirmed as Brigadier General by the Senate although recommended by all of the officers above him, de Trobriand was mustered out of service at his own request until promoted on January 5, 1864. He was now assigned to the command of the defenses and troops of New York City (1st Division, Department of the East) until ordered back to the Army of the Potomac in command of the 1st Brigade, 3rd. Division, 2nd Corps, troops formerly belonging to the 3rd Corps. With them, he served until the final days at Appomattox and on April 9, 1865, he was brevetted Major General for highly meritorious service during this campaign. He was mustered out of service January 15, 1866.

Supposing that his services would not be called for again, de Trobriand returned to France to write and publish his recollection of *Four Years With the Army of the Potomac* for the information of the French people. This publication was later translated into English. During this time of writing, de Trobriand received notice that he had been appointed to the Colonelcy of the 31st Regiment and after requesting a leave of absence to complete his work, which was granted, he reported in 1866, for duty and took command of the District of Dakota at Fort Stevenson. He was there for three years during which time he kept a diary, which again was first published in French and later translated into English. This *Diary, Military Life in Dakota*, is much prized by the Dakota historians. De Trobriand's presence in Dakota is still highly regarded. There is in the Ft. Stevenson State Park a de Trobriand Lodge, Bay, Island, and wetlands. His time there was uneventful as his mission was to keep the peace and, except for a few minor incidents, this was a common desire of all the peoples.

In 1869, he was reassigned to the command of the 13th Infantry (General Sherman's old Regiment) of the District of Montana stationed at Fort Shaw. Under this command, he was forced to deal with the hostile and murderous tribe of Piegans practically wiping out the complete tribe. This made the people of Montana happy as peace was restored to their land; however, history has not dealt too kindly with this campaign.

In 1870, the 13th (of which Captain Arthur MacArthur was a member) was ordered to proceed to Camp Douglas, Salt Lake City, Utah to deal with the trouble that seemed to be brewing with the Mormons. De Trobriand and Brigham Young maintained a mutual respect for each other, which did not sit well with the territorial politicians who could not manipulate de Trobriand during the conflict between the US courts and the Mormon people, and so he was transferred by the direct orders of President Grant, not his military superiors, to take command of the Wyoming District at Fort Steele. In fact, General Sherman, who had visited Camp Douglas, emphatically expressed his approval of all that de Trobriand had said and done. The press had a "hay day" with this removal, however. In 1871, de Trobriand took over his new command, which, like the one in the Dakotas, was also

uneventful.

In 1874, de Trobriand command was ordered to New Orleans where trouble was brewing. The trouble involved the forced removal of the duly elected Governor (Kellogg) and his government and an illegal takeover by the Louisiana Legislature. President Grant sent several regiments, including the 13th to restore Governor Kellogg. De Trobriand was given this command and on January 4, 1875, did as he was ordered, and he did it in such a way that he earned the respect of those on both sides of the conflict. De Trobriand continued to command in New Orleans until his retirement in 1879. He made this place his home, spending summers alternating between visits to one daughter in France and another on Long Island, New York at which place on the evening of the 15th of July 1897, at the age of 81, his daughter closed his eyes in death as the clock on the mantle struck nine; the last "taps" had sounded. De Trobriand, who was an Original Companion of Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), had two sons-in-law who were officers in the Union Army and he had two grandsons, two great grandsons, one great-great grandson and three great-great-great grandsons who were/are members of the MOLLUS.

Descendants of Brevet Major General Regis de Trobriand are eligible for hereditary membership in the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS - founded by Civil War officers on April 15, 1865) and the Dames of the Loyal Legion of the United States (founded in 1899 as the auxiliary to the MOLLUS). For more information on either or both organizations, please visit each organization's national website:

[Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States](#)

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