

William M. Graham

(- 8 Sep 1847)

The National Intelligencer, October 25, 1847

From the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin

Among the officers who it appears were lost to their country in the recent assault upon the city of Mexico was the gallant Lieutenant Colonel William Montrose Graham, of the 11th Regiment United States Infantry. Col. Graham was about forty-seven years of age, and was a brave soldier. He entered at the West Point Military Academy in 1813, and graduated in 1817 as 3d lieutenant of artillery. Another brother, James D. Graham, of the Topographical Engineers, one of the most scientific, accomplished, and valuable officers in the service, entered and graduated the same year. They were the sons of Doctor William Graham, of Prince William county, Virginia, who served (as did also others of the family with distinction as officers) in the Revolutionary struggle. Col. Graham, whose fall we are now noticing, was, soon after he graduated at West Point, selected by his commander (General Jackson) to perform some arduous and responsible duties among the Southwestern Indians, which he did so satisfactorily that he was highly complimented by the General. Having been transferred to the 4th Regiment of Infantry, under Col. Clinch, which was in Florida, he joined it, and was placed in command of Fort King, for a long time in the very heart of the troublesome Micosakies.

The writer of this notice knew him well during that period, and can bear full testimony to his possession of all the qualities that ennoble a gentleman and a soldier. He was in Florida in 1835, when the Seminole war broke out, and bore the brunt of the first battle at the Withlacoochee, where his gallant final charge upon the Indians with the bayonet dispersed the savages and aided greatly in securing the victory. Col. Clinch, in his official report, spoke in the highest terms of the conduct of Col. (then Capt.) Graham. He fell in that charge with two severe wounds from the Indian rifles, (one received early in the fight,) and his brother (Lieut. Campbell Graham, of the Artillery, now Captain of Topographical Engineers) also received at the same time two severe wounds, at first believed to be mortal, but from which he recovered after a long time. Throughout the whole of the Florida war "the Grahams" were distinguished for their intrepidity and soldierly conduct. Col. Graham was in every battle on the peninsula of much note, and at Okechubbee he gallantly led one wing of his regiment, and was complimented in the dispatches of his Colonel.

His brother, Brevet Major Lawrence Pike Graham, of the 2d Dragoons, also served in Florida with great credit as a young lieutenant in Twigg's regiment, and was severely wounded in 1840, while scouting in the night, being fired upon by a party of militia by mistake. He is the same officer who was brevetted by the President and Senate a major for the gallant charge at Resaca de la Palma, with May, Inge, and others of the Dragoons. Lieut. Col. Graham was distinguished at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, where he was with the 4th Regiment of Infantry, to which he then belonged. At Monterey he was selected by Gen. Taylor to lead his regiment to the assault, and it was for his daring and chivalrous gallantry on those occasions, and especially that so signally displayed at Monterey, that he was selected as Lieut. Colonel on the 11th, one of the new regiments, by the President and Senate. He was not at Buena Vista, having been ordered to join Gen. Scott but at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, and Churubusco, he bore a prominent part in the conflicts, and won his share of the glory of those brilliant achievements.

The particulars of his fall are not yet known but that he fell as became a soldier his past career furnishes sure testimony to all who knew him. He is mourned by numerous friends who appreciated his worth, and in whose hearts his memory is embalmed. A grateful country will not forget his services. Among all his fine military qualities none were more conspicuous than the generosity of his heart and

his kind devotion to the comfort of those under his command. These endeared him to his soldiers, and many a tear will be shed for his loss by men of the stoutest hearts who served in the ranks under him, and experienced his kindness and benevolence.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, January 24, 1848

Funeral Obsequies of Col. Wm. M. Graham

The funeral obsequies of the late Col. William M. Graham, whose remains had reached here from Mexico, were celebrated, on Saturday, at St. John's Church, in this city, with impressive solemnity. The Body having been brought from the lodgings of his relatives, where it had been temporarily deposited on its arrival in the city, to the portals of the Church, it was there received by the Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Pyne, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. French, who preceded the coffin, followed by the mourning relatives of the deceased up the central aisle of the building to the altar, immediately in front of which it was deposited, and the beautiful and solemn Funeral Service prescribed by the Episcopal ritual was pronounced over the remains in the midst of a crowded audience of Ladies, Officers of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, Members of Congress, and Citizens. The President of the United States (Polk) and his Cabinet were also present, and the Senators and Representatives from Virginia and Florida attended as mourners.

Mr. Pyne then stated that he had been led to expect the presence of an eminent person (understood to be Mr. Dallas) who was to deliver an address on this melancholy occasion, but, as he had been prevented by unavoidable circumstances from giving his attendance, Mr. P. was happy to have it in his power to state, from the highest sources of information, some of the prominent facts in the history of the illustrious dead. He then proceeded to read a written memoir, which he said had been hastily drawn up, but which was evidently compiled from a long and intimate knowledge of Col. Graham's character and military career the whole course of which it traced out from his birth, in February, 1798, to his fall at Molino del Rey, before the city of Mexico, on the 8th of September last. While leading his regiment to this tremendous and daring assault Col. Graham received ten wounds, three of which were mortal, and he expired on the field a few minutes after receiving them. His last words, while reclining wounded on the ground, were, "Charge on the enemy--charge!" And then he lay quietly down and breathed his last. The paper related the history of his early youth, his original penchant for the Navy, and the subsequent change in the object of his ambition which led to his entrance as a Cadet at West Point, and his subsequent distinguished course as a gallant and chivalrous officer. His military service in Florida was adverted to, in which he occupied the exposed and delicate position of a command upon the frontier, between the White and Indian population, shortly before the breaking out of the Seminole war. His first battle, after the actual commencement of that war, was that of the Withlacoochie, and he continued actively engaged in the service till the close of that protracted and sanguinary struggle. The paper then went on to give an account of his services in Mexico, where he shared in every splendid victory of our arms, save that only at Buena Vista, at which it was not his lot to be present, for the reason that he was then attached to the forces which were preparing for the siege of Vera Cruz. It closed with a high, but doubtless a merited eulogy, on his military and his private character.

The Rev. Pastor observed that he had not hesitated to read this memoir, even in that house of God, because he was willing to have it recognized that a soldier, falling in the faithful discharge of his duty, was as much an object of admiration to the Christian Church as any other man, who died in the performance of the duty of his station in society. He related several incidents in the life of the deceased illustrative of his magnanimity, and his habitual readiness to postpone his own wishes and his personal comfort to those of others. He was accustomed to vacate his own tent and surrender it to his sick soldiers, on whom he waited with assiduous tenderness and he reaped the beautiful reward of this disinterestedness in the ardent attachment of his command. An affecting proof of this was exhibited by

them when he fell. Amidst the promiscuous slaughter of officers and soldiers which took place under the Mexican batteries, the soldiers of Col. Graham braved every danger to rescue his bleeding body from piles of others by which it was surrounded, and to give it burial in the private grounds of the Spanish Consul owing to which act of love in death it was that those remains now lay in the midst of a Christian sanctuary and received the rites of Christian sepulture.

With one more anecdote illustrative of the same trait of character Mr. P. closed his account, and that was, his unwillingness when a young Lieutenant to exchange the active service of his profession in the field for a birth at New Orleans connected with the Commissariat, which would have been much more lucrative. But, when that birth was about to become vacant from the desire of its incumbent to withdraw, with his family, from the dangers of the epidemic then prevailing, Col. Graham, on learning the fact, waived his former scruples, sacrificed his personal wishes, and accepted the post to accommodate the anxious wishes of a brother officer, in consequence of which he suffered an attack of yellow fever that well-nigh cost him his life.

His address was concluded by some reflections appropriate to the occasion and particularly by the desire, that, while all thus readily united in honoring the dead who had lost their life in faithfully serving the country, an equal readiness would be shown to appreciate the services of those now in the field who willingly exposed themselves to a like peril and that, in awarding them that meet of fame they were so dearly earning, no miserable reservations, either on the one side or the other, no poor desire to annoy the high or the low, would be suffered to sully and to mar the expressions of a Nation's gratitude.

The procession then left the Church in the same order in which they had entered it, and moved, preceded by the Military, and amidst mournful music and the tolling of the Church bell, towards the Congressional Cemetery, where these honored remains were to find their last earthly resting place, in the family burial ground of a surviving and devoted brother.

Source ??

Graham, William Montrose, soldier, was born in Prince William county, Va., Feb. 11, 1798, son of William and Mary (Campbell) Graham grandson of John Graham, who came from Sterling, Scotland, to Virginia in 1736, and great grandson of Dr. William Cocke, who came from England as King's council to Williamsburg, Va., in 1681. His father, William Graham, served as surgeon's mate of the 2d Virginia regiment in the Revolutionary war, from March, 1777, to September, 1778. William Montrose saw his first active service in the battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, and for his gallant conduct in that battle was appointed a cadet in the U.S. military academy, June 11, 1813, whence he was graduated, July 17, 1817, as lieutenant of artillery. He was promoted 1st lieutenant, Aug. 11, 1819, served in garrison and on commissary duty in Louisiana and Florida, 1820-29, and was brevetted captain, Aug. 11, 1829 for faithful service. He was promoted captain, April 4, 1832, and served in the war against the Seminole Indians, 1835-38 and 1841-42, being twice severely wounded. He was brevetted major, Dec. 31, 1835, for gallantry and good conduct at Withlacoochee, where he received the wounds above mentioned. He was on frontier duty at Fort Scott, Kan., 1842-45 in military occupation of Texas, 1845-46, and served in the war with Mexico, 1846-48, participating in the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey, the siege of Vera Cruz, and the battles of Churubusco and Molino del Rey. He was promoted major, 2d infantry, Feb. 16, 1847, and lieutenant colonel, 11th infantry, in April 1847. He was killed in an assault on the enemy's works at the battle of Molino del Rey, Sept. 8, 1847.

Cullum, The Biographical Register of the U.S. Military Academy

Class of 1817: **William M. Graham**. Not Ranked (164th to graduate from the Academy)

Born Virginia, appointed D.C.

Cadet at the Military Academy, June 11, 1813 to July 17, 1817, when he was graduated and promoted in the Army to 3d Lieut., Corps of Artillery and 2d Lieut., Corps of Artillery, Sept. 30, 1817.

Served: On Recruiting service, 1818-19, in constructing a military Road through Mississippi 1819-20 in garrison at the Bay of St. Louis, La., 1820-21, and at Pensacola, Fla., 1821-22. On Recruiting service, 1822-24 on Commissary duty at New Orleans, La., 1824-25 on leave of absence, 1825-27 in garrison at Cantonment Clinch, Fla., 1827-28 and Ft. Brooke, Fla., 1828-29. In Superintending repairs of Military Road from Ft. Brooke to the Seminole Agency, Fla., 1829-30, in garrison at Ft. Brooke, Fla., 1830-32 and Ft. King, Fla., 1832-35. In the Florida War against the Seminole Indians, 1835-1838 being engaged in the Combat of Withlacoochee, Fla., Dec. 31, 1835, where he was severely wounded (twice), Combat of Oloklikaha, March 31, 1836, and Battle of Okee-cho-bee, Dec. 25, 1837. On Recruiting service 1838-40 in the Florida War, 1840 on frontier duty at Ft. Gibson, I.T., 1840-41 in Florida War against the Seminole Indians, 1841-42, being engaged in the Rout of Halleck Tustennuggee's Band in the Big Hammock of Pilakikaha, April 19, 1842 on frontier duty at Ft. Scott, Kan., 1842-45 in Military Occupation of Texas, 1845-46 in the War with Mexico, 1846-48, being engaged in the Battle of Palo Alto, May 8, 1846, Battle of Resaca-de-la-Palma, May 9, 1846, Battle of Monterey, Sept. 21-23, 1846. Engaged in siege of Vera Cruz, March 9-29, 1847, Battle of Contreras, Aug. 19-20, 1847, Battle of Churubusco, Aug. 20, 1847, Battle of Molino del Rey, Sept. 8, 1847, where, with conspicuous gallantry in an assault of the enemy's works he was killed Sept. 8, 1847, aged 49. [Although twice wounded, he continued to act with his habitual energy and daring, until eight more bullets had pierced him, and his horse had received five, when, dismounting amid a shower of bullets (apparently aimed at him), he composedly as on parade, with his dying breath, shouted to his men: "Charge on those fellows—charge."]

Ranks:

3d Lieut., Corps of Artillery, July 17, 1817

2d Lieut., Corps of Artillery, Sept. 30, 1817

1st Lieut., Corps of Artillery, August 11, 1819

Transferred to 8th Infantry, Oct. 20, 1820

1st Lieut., 4th Infantry in reorganization of Army, June 1, 1821

Bvt. Captain, Aug. 11, 1829 for faithful service 10 years in one grade

Captain, 4th Infantry, April 4, 1832

Bvt. Major, Dec. 31, 1835 for gallantry and good conduct at Withlacoochee, Fla.

Major, 2d Infantry, February 16, 1847

Lieut. Colonel, 11th Infantry, April 9, 1847