

## James Harvey Hook

(16 Jun 1791 - 30 Nov 1841)

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**Hook.** At his residence in this city, on Tuesday, November 30th, Lieutenant Colonel James H. Hook, Assistant Commissary General of Subsistence U.S. Army.

By this dispensation the Army has lost an undeviating and sympathizing advocate, the poor and distressed an untiring friend, and one in whom the kindlier feelings of our nature centered in an eminent degree. Upon his immediate family connections, and in a more especial degree his bereaved widow, will this blow fall with accumulated weight. May the balm of consolation be theirs! His Funeral will take place from his late residence, corner of F and 21st streets, at 11 o'clock, on Thursday morning, the 2d of December.

*National Intelligencer, December 9, 1841*

### **The Late Colonel Hook**

Messrs. Editors: Your short but comprehensive and appropriate obituary notice of our estimable friend, Col. J.H. Hook, did but justice to his merits. An acquaintance with him for twenty-five years and upwards justifies me in endorsing, to the fullest extent, your panegyric: "The Army has lost an undeviating and sympathizing advocate, and one in whom the kindlier feeling of our nature centered in an eminent degree."

The opening of our "second war of Independence" found him a youth actively engaged in business, for which he was well qualified by education and the habits of industry which he acquired from his kind parents. But he "had heard of battles, and he longed to follow to the field." He joined one of the oldest and most respectable volunteer companies in the city of Baltimore, of which he was a valuable and conspicuous member, and with which he maintained a connection to the day of his death, alike honored and conferring honor on a company which can boast of members as distinguished and honorable as any characters in our country. But the operations of a volunteer company were too limited to give scope to the patriotism which swelled his bosom. On the 20th May, 1813, he obtained the commission of Captain in the 38th Regiment of Infantry, and soon distinguished himself as an active efficient officer and a good disciplinarian, enjoying the full confidence of his Colonel, and the respect and affection of every man in his company; for, though he requested that "every man should do his duty," such was his kindness towards his soldiers, when there was occasion for its manifestation, that none could resist its effects. He served with distinguished ability on the seaboard of Maryland and Virginia, where his regiment was stationed. On the organization of the peace establishment he was retained in service, and arranged to the 4th regiment of Infantry, under the command of Col. King, a rigid disciplinarian. Here, too, he acquired reputation on account of the discipline and handsome appearance of his company, which frequently bore off the palm on parades and inspections. In consequence of hostile movements on the part of the Creek Indians, in conjunction with the Seminoles, a part of the 4th regiment, under command of the gallant Lieut. Col. (now General) Clinch, was ordered to the frontier of Georgia, thence to Florida. Capt. Hook was placed in command of Fort Hawkins--the frontier post of Georgia. Here it was his misfortune to come into collision with a Staff Major--a highly talented and chivalrous officer, but a duelist. Capt. Hook, though by nature and education a most courteous and pacific gentleman, incapable of offending any person intentionally, and, moreover, in principle opposed to dueling, was constrained, in defense of his honor, to meet him in single combat. Believing that his antagonist wished to bully him, he determined, in defiance of the advice and entreaties of his friends, to accept of any terms that might be proposed. Perhaps, in the annals of dueling, more sanguinary terms were never

proposed and accepted than those under which they fought: "horresco referens!" both were wounded; Capt. Hook most dangerously: the ball of his antagonist having passed through the lungs, injuring the spine and producing paralysis of his lower extremities. After a long, tedious, painful confinement, he recovered his general health, but was maimed for life, and his handsome, graceful form, alike suited to the drawing room and the campus martins, required the support of his crutch or his horse. If dueling be justifiable under any circumstances, it was so in his case. If it can add a sprig to the laurels due to valorous achievements, he deserved a wreath which will flourish amidst the fruits of ages and the decline of chivalry; for few men have had more cause to engage in a duel--none ever sustained his cause better. But we are no advocates of dueling. Would to Heaven the practice had been abolished long before this event, which is a necessary part of this brief history of our friend.

So soon as Capt. Hook was capable of locomotion, he reported himself to headquarters for such duty as his condition would enable him to perform. Fortunately, the veteran Gen. Gibson was at the head of the Subsistence Department, who knowing Capt. Hook's services and capacity was pleased to introduce him into his office where he was soon made commissary and subsequently Assistant Commissary General. The General could not have made a better selection from the whole Army. To much experience in military affairs, Col. Hook added prompt and decided action, with the blandest and most conciliating manners, which have acquired for him the esteem and respect of all who have had business with the Department. To his superior officers, he ever showed proper respect and deference--to his inferiors, he was polite, affable, and accessible; considering every one holding office under him under his protection so long as he conducted himself with propriety, or even with a disposition to do right.

But his good offices were not confined to his own corps. There is not a branch of the service which was not fostered by him; he has been the bold and avowed advocate of every measure that he believed calculated to render the Army efficient and respectable, and as strongly opposed to everything which he thought would be injurious to it. His position at Washington has enabled him to render many and important services to officers on distant stations, by attending to their business in the several Departments, and preventing or removing erroneous impressions relating to them, and by a variety of kind services which none but those conversant with military affairs can appreciate. In the management of all such matters he had a peculiar tact, which his unbounded hospitality and handsome address enabled him to exercise most advantageously to those requiring his aid. The general officer and the lowest subaltern were alike participants of his generous hospitality and kind services. But he did not stop here. He descended to the ranks of the Army in search of worthy objects of attention and charity, as will be attested by the records of every office in the War Department, but especially by those in the Pension Office, where his exertions have been the means of raising from poverty and starvation many deserving families; and have sometimes, with better fortune than my Uncle Toby's, caused him who thought he could never march again, to throw away his crutch, and march firmly to the field of honor and glory.

But we should do injustice to the character of our friend if our notice of his benefactions and charities were confined to the Army. Go to the abodes of poverty and distress in his vicinity, converse with the widows and orphans whom you will meet in the streets, and they will thrill you with their affecting descriptions of his delicate attentions and tender charities towards them. Go to the charitable and benevolent institutions at home and abroad, and you will find fresh evidences of his benevolent exertions.

Nor were his virtues less conspicuous in his domestic relations. It was here that "the kindlier feelings of our nature" were manifested "in an eminent degree." Here, after the toil and pain which attended his

efforts to render service to his country and his fellow man, he found that consummate happiness to which he had ever looked with anxious hope. As a husband, son, brother, uncle, and master, no man was more loved, esteemed, and honored; none deserved more to be so, both by his own relatives and those of his beloved, affectionate, and exemplary wife. If our tears flow for the loss of our friend, how severe must be the anguish of those who have lost in him at once a friend, relation, and benefactor! Let us mingle our sympathies with theirs, and hope for those consolations which the consciousness of a well-spent life alone can afford. To them and to us there is consolation in knowing that, before his death, he expressed a firm conviction of the truth of religion, and a determination to be governed by her valuable precepts.

In closing this very hasty and imperfect account of the merits of our friend, we would not have it believed that we thought him perfect. Far from it: amiable and estimable as he was, he had also his weaknesses--foibles they may be called. But amid such a galaxy of virtues we pause not to observe the "musicae volitantes" which hover around.

Oh friend! Forever loved, forever dear!  
What fruitless tears have bathed thy honor'd bier!  
What sighs re-echo'd to thy parting breath,  
Whilst thou wast struggling in the pangs of death!  
Could tears retard the tyrant in his course,  
Cold sighs avert his dart's relentless force,  
Thou still had'st liv'd to bless my aching sight,  
Thy comrade's honor and thy friend's delight.

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Heitman: Born Maryland, appointed from Maryland. Ensign 5th Infantry, April 30, 1812; 2d Lt., Sept. 1, 1812; Capt. 38th Infantry, May 20, 1813; Honorably discharged June 15, 1815; Reinstated Dec. 2, 1815 in 4th Infantry Major C.S., March 10, 1829; Lt. Col. A.C.G.S., July 7, 1838; Brvt. Major, May 20, 1823 for 10 years faithful service in one grade; died Nov. 30, 1841.