

## Alfred Pleasonton

(7 Jun 1824 - 17 Feb 1897)

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**Pleasanton.** On Wednesday, February 17, 1897 at 3:15 a.m. at his residence No. 1301 E street northwest, General Alfred Pleasanton in the 74th year of his age. Funeral services will be held at St. Johns Episcopal Church at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, February 19.

*The Evening Star, Wednesday, February 17, 1897*

### **Gen. Pleasanton**

#### **The Distinguished Cavalry Leader Died This Morning**

#### **Sketch of His Long Military Career**

#### **Lived as a Hermit During the Later Years of His Life**

#### **Some Incidents In His Life**

Gen. Alfred Pleasanton, the famous Union cavalry leader, and whose name is indelibly associated with the military glory of the Union from the days when he was a subaltern in the Seminole war to the

Gen. Alfred Pleasanton. (NWDNS-111-B-4481)



surrender at Appomatox, died at 3 o'clock this morning of grip, complicated with dropsy, at his apartments in the Greason House, corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and E streets northwest. There were at his side when the end came his faithful colored nurse, Henrietta Rowan, and his private secretary, Mr. John Murphy.

#### *A Hermit for Years*

Gen. Pleasanton had lived at the Greason House for over twenty years, and eight years ago secluded himself in his rooms and never left them. Only a few of his old and intimate friends were ever admitted to his presence and he was almost as much a hermit as if he was on a lonely island in mid-ocean. No one ever knew the reason why Pleasanton immured himself within four walls. He had led up to the time his strange fancy struck him a life of conviviality and good fellowship. For years he never slept save when the sun was shining, spending his entire nights in the company of the men about town who dropped in at

Charlie Godfrey's place, on 13th street, next to the corner of 19 street, where Johnson's saloon is situated. Godfrey, the proprietor, was Pleasanton's boon companion, and there was always a group of interested listeners around them eager to hear the remarkable reminiscences of which both men were masters. When Godfrey sold out to Tim Sullivan, Pleasanton transferred his companionship to him, and until Sullivan's death two years ago, the intimacy continued, Sullivan attending to the general's affairs and being one of the very few who ever say him.

#### *Acts of Charity*

At this time Gen. Pleasanton was not well off in a worldly sense, and lived on an allowance from his family. Three or four years ago, however, he came into a very handsome competency by the death of a brother and two sisters, but in no wise changed his mode of life. He began, however, to devote himself

to acts of charity, and his sole occupation was in aiding needy persons whom he could assist. No publicity was ever given to his acts of kindness, and the only time his name has appeared in print in such connection was a couple of weeks ago, when in the published list of subscribers to a charitable fund was "Alfred Pleasonton, \$50."

His only visitor in the recent past was the wife of Gen. Gibson of the army, who was his devoted friend. On his seventy-third birthday, which fell on the 7th of January last, Mrs. Gibson brought him a bunch of flowers, and he was overjoyed at this sweet remembrance of the anniversary.

The faded remnants of the flowers were on the table in the room where he died this morning. Once in a while he would see some old comrade from a distance, but to all others, except those mentioned and the members of the Greason family, to whom he was devotedly attached, he denied himself. His seclusion did not sour him in his intercourse with those dear to him. He was usually bright and entertaining, and never wearied talking over his army experiences, being especially fond of reciting those with humorous taint. His fund of personal stories about the famous men he had served with was immense, and of them all he seemed to regard Harney of the 2d Dragoons as the best soldier and the best friend he ever knew.

#### *A Characteristic Incident*

If there was one thing that Pleasonton hated worse than another it was to hear some one revile the men of the south for the part they took in the rebellion. He had fought them as hard as any one, and, while not admitting the right or justice of their course, had learned to respect their bravery and honor and their courage. One night in Godfrey's saloon, or early one morning, for it was an "all night" house, a man came in and proceeded to attack the character and courage of the southern soldiers. Pleasonton looked at him and gave a start of recognition. Arising from his chair he asked if the man knew him. The stranger said he did not. "I am Alfred Pleasonton," responded the general. "I had you drummed out of my camp for cowardice before Antietam. Get out of this place, sir." The man hung his head and hurried out.

Gen. Pleasonton has been in poor health for several years, and Henrietta Rowan had been his faithful nurse ever since Miss Alice Greason, who had attended him like a daughter, married Mr. James McCready, six years ago. His ear drums had been shattered by a cannon explosion during the war, and caused him great pain, so that his head and ears had to be dressed each night with a soothing ointment.

#### *His Last Illness*

About four weeks ago in removing the ointment he was chilled, and caught a severe cold, which developed into the grip. He had no physician, but on his condition growing worse, Dr. Lincoln was called in. The disease, coupled with dropsy, could not be overcome, however, and yesterday he passed a very bad day. He was quiet during the evening, however, and there were hopes that he was getting better. He went to sleep about 2 o'clock, and passed away peacefully in his slumber an hour later. Mr. Murphy telegraphed this morning to the nephews and nieces of the dead man and the arrangements for the funeral will be made when they are heard from.

Gen. Pleasonton was a man of strong religious convictions and Sunday night talked for a long time with his colored nurse, a woman of admirable qualities and an unusually bright mind for one in her position, over his faith in the Almighty and his gratitude for all His mercy. He expressed his conviction that his end was near and seemed happy to think his sufferings would be soon over.

#### *Regret at the War Department*

Adjutant General Ruggies was officially informed of the death of the great cavalry leader this morning by Major Guest, his grandnephew, and the news spread rapidly through the War Department.

General regret was expressed and many of the older officers gave personal testimony to the gallant services performed by General Pleasonton during the war. Although he was brevetted major general for particularly meritorious services, General Pleasonton was but a major on the retired list at the time of his death. It is not usual to accord military honors at the funeral of an officer on the retired list except it is expressly requested by the family, and the same course will be followed in the case of General Pleasonton. In case those having charge of his funeral arrangements request it, the department will provide a military escort and pay the usual military honors at the grave.

#### *His Long and Brilliant Career*

Gen. Alfred Pleasonton was born in this city June 7, 1824. He was graduated at the United States Military Academy in 1844, served in the Mexican war and was brevetted first lieutenant for "gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma." He subsequently was on frontier duty with his company, and was commissioned first lieutenant in 1849, and captain in 1855. He was acting assistant adjutant general to Gen. William S. Harney during the Sioux expedition, and his adjutant general from 1856 until 1860 in the campaign against the Seminoles in Florida, and the operations in Kansas, Oregon and Washington. He commanded his regiment in its march from Utah to Washington in the autumn of 1861, was commissioned major of the 2d Cavalry in February, 1862, served through the Virginia peninsular campaign, became brigadier general of volunteers in July of that year, and commanded the division of cavalry of the Army of the Potomac that followed Lee's invading army into Maryland. He was engaged at Boonesborough, South Mountain, Antietam and the subsequent pursuit, engaged the enemy frequently at Fredericksburg, and stayed the further advance of the enemy at Chancellorsville, May 2, when Jackson's confederate corps was coming down the right flank of Hooker's army, and had already routed Howard's corps. Gen. Pleasonton, by his quick and skillful action, saved the army from a serious disaster. Ordering the 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry to charge boldly into the woods, in the face of the advancing host, he delayed Jackson's progress a few minutes--just long enough to throw into position all the artillery that was within reach. He ordered the guns loaded with grape and canister, and, depressed enough to make the shot strike the ground, half way between their line and the edge of the woods. When the confederate column emerged it met such a storm of iron as no troops could pass through. About this time Jackson fell, and before any new maneuvers could be undertaken darkness put an end to the day's work. He received the brevet of lieutenant colonel for Antietam in 1862, was promoted major general of volunteers in June 1863, participated in the many actions that preceded the battle of Gettysburg, was commander-in-chief of cavalry in that action, and was brevetted colonel 2d of July 1863. He was transferred to Missouri in 1864, drove the forces under Gen. Sterling Price from the state, and in March, 1865, was brevetted brigadier general in the United States army for gallant and meritorious conduct in that campaign and major general for services throughout the civil war. He resigned in 1868, was United States collector of revenue for several years, and subsequently president of the Terre Haute and Cincinnati railroad. In May, 1888 he was placed on the retired list with the ranks of colonel, United States army.

(Source ?)

Army officer. Born in Washington, D.C., on June 7, 1824, Pleasonton graduated from West Point in 1844 and was commissioned in the 2nd Dragoons. He served in the Mexican War, winning a brevet to first lieutenant at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, May 8-9, 1846. He was promoted to first lieutenant in September 1849, while serving on the frontier, and to captain in March 1855. He was on the staff of Col. William S. Harney from 1855, taking part in numerous Indian campaigns. In September 1861 he commanded his regiment, the 2nd Cavalry, in a march from Utah to Washington, D.C. He was promoted to major in February 1862, and after brilliant service in the Peninsula campaign he was appointed

brigadier general of volunteers in July. He commanded a division of cavalry in the Maryland campaign, taking part in the battles at South Mountain, September 14, Antietam (Sharpsburg), where he was brevetted lieutenant colonel of regulars, September 17, and Fredericksburg, December 13. At Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, he organized a cavalry and artillery defense that slowed Gen. Thomas J. Jackson's charge after his initial success over Gen. Oliver O. Howard's corps, enough to prevent an utter rout of the Army of the Potomac. On June 9, while reconnoitering Gen. Robert E. Lee's movements, he surprised Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's Confederate cavalry at Brandy Station, Virginia, and fought to a draw, largely with saber, one of the war's few mounted battles. Later in the month he was promoted to major general of volunteers, and at Gettysburg, July 1-3, he was in command of all the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac and won a brevet to colonel of regulars. Early in 1864 Pleasonton was transferred to Missouri, where in October he met the third invasion of the state by Gen. Sterling Price. He successfully defended the capital, Jefferson City, on October 8 and then joined his 6500 men with Gen. Samuel R. Curtis's 15,000 in the battle of Westport, actually a series of engagements around Kansas City. Pleasonton defeated a Confederate division at the Big Blue River on October 23 and two days later routed the remainder of Price's army at the Marais des Cygnes River in Kansas. In March 1865 Pleasonton was brevetted brigadier and major general; but reversion to permanent rank after the war placed him under former subordinates, and he resigned from the army in January 1868. During 1869-1870 he was a collector of internal revenue in New York, and in December 1870 he became commissioner of internal revenue. He lost that post in 1871, and from 1872 to 1874 he was president of the Cincinnati & Terre Haute Railway. In October 1888 he was placed on the army retired list as a major. He died in Washington, D.C., on February 17, 1897.

*Cullum, Biographical Register of U.S. Military Academy*

**Class of 1844: Alfred Pleasonton**

Born and appointed from D.C. (Ranked 7th of 25)

Cadet at the Military Academy, Sept. 1, 1840 to July 1, 1844, when he was graduated and promoted in the Army to Bvt. 2d Lieut., 1st Dragoons, July 1, 1844.

Served: on frontier duty at Ft. Atkinson, Ia., 1844-45,--Lac-que-parle, Minn., 1845,--and Ft. Atkinson, Ia., 1845; in Military Occupation of Texas, 1846; in the War with Mexico, 1846, 1847-8, being engaged in the Battle of Palo Alto, May 8, 1846,--and Resaca-de-la-Palma, May 9, 1846; on frontier duty at Santa Fe, N.M., 1848-49,--scouting, 1852 being engaged against the Apache Indians in a skirmish near the Laguna on the Jornada del Muerto, N.M., Jan. 25, 1852; on Recruiting service, 1852-53; on frontier duty as Adjutant, 2d Dragoons, July 1, 1854 to March 3, 1855,--Austin Tex., 1854,--Ft. Chadbourne, Tex., 1854,--Ft. Leavenworth, Kan., 1855,--and on Sioux Expedition, 1855-56, as Acting Asst. Adjutant-General, Nov. 7, 1855 to July 27, 1856; in Florida hostilities, 1856-57, as Acting Asst. Adjutant-General of the Department of Florida; in quelling Kansas Disturbances, 1857-58,--as Acting Asst. Adjutant-General of the Department of Oregon, Oct. 27, 1858 to July 5, 1860.

*Served during the Rebellion* of the Seceding States, 1861-66; in organizing Volunteers, at Wilmington, Del., April 1861; in the Department of Utah, June to Aug. 1861, in command of Regiment, which he marched to Washington, D.C., Sept. to Oct. 1861; in the Defenses of Washington, D.C., Nov. 1861 to March 1862; in the Virginia Peninsular Campaign (Army of the Potomac) March to Aug., 1862, being engaged in the Siege of Yorktown, April 5 to May 4, 1862,--in the Seven Days' Operations before Richmond, June 26 to July 2, 1862,--and in covering the withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac to Yorktown, Aug. 18-19, 1862; in the Maryland Campaign (Army of the Potomac), in command of advance Cavalry Division, being engaged in driving the enemy from Poolsville, Sept. 8, 1862, from Barnesville and Sugarloaf Mountain, Sept. 9-11, 1862, from Frederick City, and through Cactochin Pass, Sept. 12, 1862,--Battle of South Mountain, Sept. 14, 1862,--skirmish of Boonsborough, Sept. 15, 1862,--Battle of

Antietam, Sept. 17, 1862, --skirmish of Shepherdstown, Va., Sept. 19, and at Martinsburg, Va., Oct. 1, 1862,--Pursuit of Stuart's Cavalry, and skirmish at the mouth of the Monocacy, Oct. 12, 1862,--in pursuit of, and constantly harassing the enemy's cavalry to Warrenton Va., Oct.-Nov., 1862,--and in covering the rear of the Army on the march to Fredericksburg, Nov. 18, 1862; in the Rappahannock Campaign (Army of the Potomac), Dec. 1862 to June 1863, being engaged in the Battle of Fredericksburg, Dec. 13, 1862,--and Battle of Chancellorsville, May 2-3, 1863; in command of Cavalry Corps, Army of Potomac, June 7, 1863 to Mar. 26, 1864; in the Pennsylvania Campaign, June-July, 1863, being in command at the Combat of Beverly Ford, Va., June 9, 1863,--Skirmishes at Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville, Va., June 17-21, 1863,--Battle of Gettysburg, Pa., July 1-3, 1863,--and pursuit of the enemy to Warrenton, Va., July 1863; in Operations in Central Virginia, being engaged in the capture of Culpepper C.H., Va., Sept. 1863,--and in command at the Action of Brandy Station, Va., Oct. 11, 1863; in the Department of the Missouri, Mar. 23, 1864 to Feb. 13, 1866, being engaged in the Defense of Jefferson City, Va., Oct. 8, 1864,--and in command of the Cavalry pursuing the Rebels under General Price towards Ft. Scott, Kan., and, after harassing him in several skirmishes, finally routed him at the Battle of Marais des Cygnes, Oct. 25, 1864.

Mustered out of volunteer service, Jan. 15, 1866. Served on leave of absence, Feb. 15, 1866 to Jan. 1, 1868. Resigned, Jan. 1, 1868. Re-appointed by Act of Congress, Major, U.S. Army, Oct. 23, 1888, on the retired list.

*Civil History:* U.S. Collector of Internal Revenue, 1869-70, and Commissioner, 1870-71. President of the Terre Haute and Cincinnati Railroad, Sept. 21, 1871, to --

(Died poor and a virtual hermit in his apartment, Washington, D.C., Feb. 17, 1897)

Rank:

Bvt. 2d Lieut., 1st Dragoons, July 1, 1841

2d Lieut., 2d Dragoons, Nov. 3, 1845

Bvt. 1st Lieut., May 9, 1846 for gallant and meritorious conduct in the Battles of Palo Alto and Resaca-de-la-Palma, Tex.

1st Lieut., 2d Dragoons, Sept. 30, 1849

Captain, 2d Dragoons, March 3, 1855; 2d Cavalry, Aug. 3, 1861

Major, 2d Cavalry, Feb. 15, 1862

Brig.-General, U.S. Volunteers, July 16, 1862

Bvt. Lieut.-Col., Sept. 17, 1862 for gallant and meritorious services at the Battle of Antietam, Md.

Major-General, U.S. Volunteers, June 22, 1863

Bvt.-Colonel, July 2, 1863, for gallant and meritorious services at the Battle of Gettysburg, Pa.

Bvt. Brig.-General, U.S. Army, Mar. 13, 1865 for gallant and meritorious services during the campaign against the insurgent forces under the rebel General Price, in Missouri

Bvt. Maj.-General, U.S. Army, March 13, 1865 for gallant and meritorious services in the field during the rebellion

Lieut.-Colonel, 20th Infantry, July 28, 1866; Declined

Major, U.S. Army, Oct. 23, 1888 (on retired list)