

William Trent Russell

(11 Oct 1849 - 11 Oct 1919)

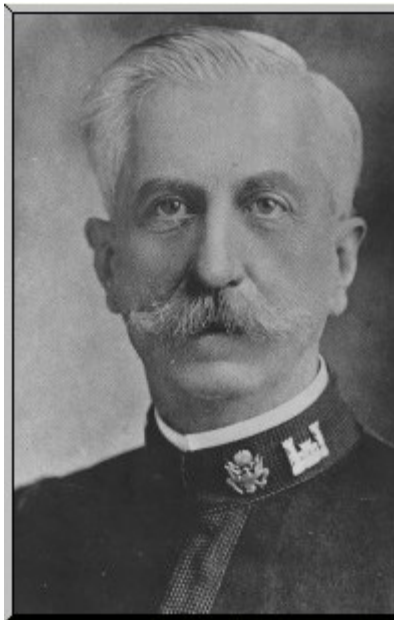
The Evening Star, June 1, 1913, p. 10

Col. Russell To Be Relieved

In view of approaching retirement, Col. William T. Russell, Corps of Engineers will shortly be relieved of his duties in the third New York district by Col. Frederic V. Abbott, now stationed at Boston. Col. John Mills stationed at Newport, R.I. will assume temporary charge of the Boston engineer district.

The Evening Star, August 12, 1913, p. 1

Russell In Charge As Head Of Bureau Succeeds Gen. Bixby as Chief of Engineers of the Army Promoted To The Rank of Brigadier General



Former Engineer Commissioner of the District Signally Honored. Retires in October

Brig. Gen. William T. Russell this morning relieved Brig. Gen. William H. Bixby at the War Department of the duties of chief of engineers of the army. There were no special ceremonies connected with the transfer of the office. Gen. Russell subscribed to the regulation oath of office and received the officials of the bureau, including all the engineer officers on duty there. These officers at the same time took official leave of Gen. Bixby, who made the introductions to the new chief. No other changes are expected to follow the induction of Gen. Russell for the reason that his incumbency will continue only until October 11 next; when he will be transferred to the retired list on account of age.

No one yet has been selected as permanent chief of engineers from that date. Col. Dan C. Kingman is next in line of promotion with Col. William M. Black, formerly Engineer Commissioner of the District second in line. Lieut. Col. William L. Sibert, one of Col. Goethals' chief assistants on the Panama canal, who stands number eighteen in the corps, has strong backing for the prospective vacancy.

Col. Goethals is eliminated from the field of possible appointees only because of the general belief that his great work on the Panama canal is to be recognized in some other way, possibly by appointment as a major general of the line.

Gen. Russell's Record

Gen. Russell is quite well known to the citizens of the District through his former service with the District government. He is from Alabama, and was graduated number two in the class of 1873, in which Gen. Bixby was the star member. The new chief of engineers reached the grade of colonel of engineers in February, 1908, and was the senior officer of that grade when promoted to his present office. He served five years with troops, part of the time in the capacity of captain of a company and instructor, and for a while as commanding officer of the Engineer School of Application in its formative stage. He also served four years (1876-80) as instructor and assistant professor of civil and military engineering at the West Point Military Academy. He was a member of the lighthouse board when it was dissolved, and

had charge of the principal lighthouse district and the lighthouse general depot, Staten Island, for five years from 1901 to 1906.

He served as assistant to the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia for one year and as Engineer Commissioner for two years (1890-1893). He was the senior member of the engineer department fortification board, and of the New York harbor line board for the past four years; a division engineer in the supervision of river and harbor districts for six years, and an active member of the Mississippi river commission for six years (1906-1912), part of the time its acting president. Most of his other service was devoted to important river and harbor work in various parts of the country.

Commended by Gen. Bixby

In retiring voluntarily four months ahead of his allotted time, Gen. Bixby made a strong and successful plea for the promotion of Col. Rossell to the vacancy. "If careful attention to duty," said Gen. Bixby, "and valuable services under all assignments of past duty are to be considered as meriting retirement as a brigadier general, I consider Col Rossell especially entitled to such reward.

"Repeatedly and almost constantly ever since his graduation he has been called upon to take charge of work requiring qualifications more than ordinary, and in all cases the response has been prompt and full, even when already burdened with more than one man's proper allowance of work.

"Considering the duties which have fallen to him, the thoroughness with which they have been performed and the less than average recompense which he has so far received from the government for the same, his promotion to brigadier general at the present time would not be more reward than the promotion of officers in the regular service at the present time to the grade of lieutenant colonel or colonel.

"His ability, efficiency and faithfulness to duty have always been such that, had he been originally assigned to the infantry or cavalry service, I feel sure that he would have been promoted several years ago to a brigadier generalship, with good chances of being considered now for a major generalship."

The Evening Star, September 24, 1913, p. 1

Col. Kingman May Head Engineers Of The Army

Brig. Gen. Rossell Will Go On Retired List In October

Secretary Garrison is authority, for the statement that a chief of engineers of the army will be appointed shortly to succeed Brig. Gen. William T. Rossell, who will be transferred to the retired list on account of age October 11. Although not officially admitted, there is good reason for the belief that Col. Dan C. Kingman, the senior colonel in the corps, may be promoted to the vacancy. . . .

Rossell. On Saturday, October 11, 1919 at his residence, New Brighton, Staten Island, Brig. Gen. William Trent Rossell, Corps of Engineers, U.S.A., aged 70 years. Funeral services at Congressional cemetery on Wednesday, October 15 at 10 a.m.

The Evening Star, October 13, 1919, p. 17

Gen. Wm. T. Rossell Dies at New Brighton

Former Engineer Commissioner of the District --

Burial to Be Made Here

Brig. Gen. William T. Rossell, U.S.A., retired former Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, and later chief of engineers of the Army, died at his home, at New Brighton, N.Y., Saturday

night on the seventieth anniversary of his birthday. His body will be brought to this city for burial in the Congressional cemetery.

Gen. Russell was from Alabama and was a star graduate of the United States Military Academy in the year of 1873. His entire service was in the Engineer Corps in which he reached the grade of brigadier general in August 1913. He was attached to the District government for four years, from November 1, 1889, first as assistant to the Engineer Commissioner and then as Engineer Commissioner. He was retired for age October 11, 1913 while holding the office of chief of engineers of the Army. In 1882 he was married to Miss Jean Graham Ellis, a daughter of Gov. A.W. Ellis of North Carolina. Three daughters and four sons survive him. A fifth son, Daves, was killed in the fighting at Verdun.

New York Times, October 13, 1919, p. 13

Dies on 70th Birthday

Gen. Russell Served in War with Four Sons, One Killed at Verdun

Brig. Gen. William Trent Russell, U.S.A. retired, died on Saturday night at his home, 7 Phelps Place, New Brighton, S.I., on the seventieth anniversary of his birth. In the late war he offered his services to the Government and was made a member of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, of which he had been President from 1909 until his retirement in 1913.

General Russell was married in 1882 to Miss Jean Graham Ellis, a daughter of former Governor John W. Ellis of North Carolina. Four of his five sons served in the world war, the youngest, Davis, being killed near Verdun.

The Evening Star, October 15, 1919, p. 7

Rites for General Russell

Retired Army Officer's Body Buried in Congressional Cemetery

Military honors marked the burial in the Congressional Cemetery today of the body of Brig. Gen. William Trent Russell, U.S.A., retired who died at New Brighton, New York, Saturday in his 70th year. The funeral party was met at the Union station by a detachment of cavalry from Ft. Myer and a detachment of engineers from Camp Humphreys.

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

Class of 1873: William T. Russell

Born Alabama. Appointed from New Jersey. Ranked 3rd of ??.
Cadet at the Military Academy, July 1, 1869, to June 13, 1873, when he was graduated and promoted in the Army to Second Lieut., Corps of Engineers.

Served: with Engineer Battalion at Willet's Point, N.Y., Oct. 1, 1873 to Aug. 28, 1876; at the Military Academy, as Assistant Professor of Engineering, Aug. 30, 1876 to Aug 28, 1880; as Assistant to Colonel Thom, Sept. 6, 1880 (leave an absence, Dec. 22, 1881 to Mar. 14, 1882), to Mar. 18, 1882, and to Colonel Gillmore, Mar., 1882 (temporarily to Capt. Post, Nov. 27, 1882, to Apr., 1883), to Aug. 7, 1884; in charge of Fts. Taylor and Jefferson, Fla., Aug 30, 1884, to Nov. 16, 1885, and Ft. Marion, Fla., Aug. 20, 1884, to Apr. 26, 1886, -- of River and Harbor Improvements and Surveys, Aug. 15, 1884, to Apr. 26, 1886, -- of levees and improvements of Third District of Mississippi River (White River to Warrenton) since May 14, 1886, and temporarily of First and Second Districts, Mar. 26 to July 7, 1888.

First Lieut., Corps of Engineers, Sept. 12, 1877.

Captain, Corps of Engineers, March 17, 1884.