

A MONUMENT TO
ABRAHAM LINCOLN



ARTICLE.

Written for the Biography.

No.4, Vol.9.

SUBJECT.

Life of General George S. Greene.

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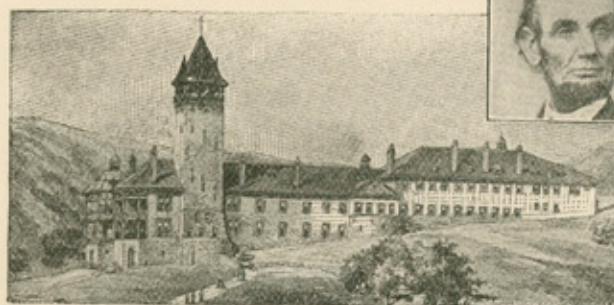
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Burlington, Vt., _____ 1900.

*Set this
one down
- Pick and
mail to
General
Howard
at
Burlington
Vermont.*

Major General George S. Greene.

No 327 - Class of 1823
died Jan. 28, 1899. at Morristown, New Jersey. aged 98.

Seven years before the writer of this sketch was born George S. Greene graduated from the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. He had completed the full term of four years so that his military history really commenced but five years after the close of our second war with England.

He was born in Apponaug, Rhode Island, May 6, 1801 and after a life greatly distinguished and replete with usefulness to his fellow beings
1899
on January 30 he was gathered to his fathers like a ripened richly laden sheaf, cradled by the Great Reaper for the final harvest. His companions, after the funeral services in the Episcopal church, followed the casket with the body from which the spirit had fled from his residence in Morristown, New Jersey to New York and sent the same on to Apponaug, Rhode Island, two or three miles from East Greenwich, where his near relatives and friends gave to the remains a proper sepulture.

Though he had graduated second in his class, he went probably from choice, directly into the Artillery. The vacancies were so few in 1823 that Greene was obliged, like so many others who have waited at the door of promotion, to content himself at first with a brevet 2nd Lieutenantcy in the First Artillery. Yet that one day, July 1st, had not ended before he passed to the next step and became a full-fledged Second Lieuten

ant in the Third Artillery.

It was the usual custom to let young men to go out into the army for a few years to get a separation from cadet-life before bringing them back as instructors. Grene, however, was a remarkable exception. The following September 1823 found him not only a teacher of mathematics but an assistant professor. Those of us who knew him in after years could see the wisdom of a detail like his. He was strong, manly and dignified, as well as scholarly, abundantly able at 22 years of age to govern his classes as well as to teach them.

He was chosen for a more practical work the next year in an Army Artillery School then held at Fort Monroe, but returned at the end of it to his assistant professorship of mathematics at West Point which he continued to fill for about two years with such acceptance that the War Department gave him the honored place of Principal Assistant in Engineering. His tour of four years on detached duty being finished, he began his chequered army career,—on ordnance duty at different times; then in garrisons, as at Fort Wolcott, R. I., Fort Sullivan, Me., Fort Independence, Mass. His varied duties and his studies, enough to supply all his days usefully in the public service, were continued unremittingly up to September 1835, when he was granted a year's leave of absence.

At the close of this leave Lieutenant Greene (1st Lieut. Third Artillery since May 1829 i.e. for seven years) left the Army and took up the

profession of his choice for which no man was better fitted, namely that of Civil Engineer. For twenty-five busy years he planned every sort of engineering contrivance, supervised and helped out their construction-as engineer in charge or consulting engineer. The States where he left his mark and acquired distinction were numerous; as Maine, Mass., New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and Maryland, to say nothing of ~~these~~ those reached by papers which resulted from abundant consultations.

His engineering works before the Civil War are too abundant even to hint at in a sketch like this. Another eminent and most able engineer says of George S. Greene: "He was always most thorough in all his work", a fine record of duty-well-done is it not? The Great Master must say: "Well done".

The Civil War came in 1861. It found our distinguished comrade the engineer in charge of the Croton Water Works' extension and of the Croton Reservoir of Central Park. Think of it. His plans and executions are simply gigantic"100 acre-storage-reservoir" extending from 86th to 90th streets, and from Fifth to Eighth avenues of which New York is proud, holding 1,000,000,000 gallons of water! Again notice the strength strength of the man who gives that Boyd's-Corner Storage- a Reservoir where you can find a solid construction,-80 feet granite and concrete of masonry for a dam safe and sure up there in Putnam County, to hold back & pile up in storage and ceaselessly supply the unthinking millions with pure life-giving Croton water!

profession of his choice for which he had been fitted, namely that
of Civil Engineer. For twenty-five years he devoted every hour of
his life to the study of his profession, and he had not only
acquired an extensive knowledge of the subject, but he had also
acquired an extensive knowledge of the practical application of his
knowledge. He had not only acquired an extensive knowledge of the
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extensive knowledge of the theoretical application of his knowledge.

Greene did not hurry off; but as the war was on and promised to be a long one he, healthful and strong did not let his 61 years long detain him from the front. The Governor of New York was glad to give him the Colonelcy of the 60th New York Volunteers. He took command the 18th of January 1862. That new regiment was well employed for over three months in guarding the northern approaches to Washington. I can understand how drill day by day, discipline, camping, watching and skirmishing prepared his troops for the closer work near at hand. The preparation brought its reward, for the colonel received promotion to the next grade, becoming April 28th, 1862 a Brigadier General of Volunteers and passed over the Potomac with his brigade and began veritable battling in the famous Shennandoah Valley.

He is mentioned very soon as a participant in the skirmishes and action of Winchester, West Virginia; and afterward at different places where the struggle was hardest including the terrific engagement at Cedar Mountain, August 9, 1862. The great battle of Antietam, which ended September 17, 1862, found Gen. Greene commanding a division under a new organization, Mansfield's Corps. His division after Mansfield's death was just to the left of mine holding an important point. In support of batteries and in a bold advance his regiments performed well their part. As usual the general made himself felt throughout his division and when compelled at last to retire from the front woods to a second line was the last to make the retrograde, and did so without his men losing

heart. Quite up to October 1862 he held his division on the defensive at Harper's Ferry. The dreadful field of Antietam caused an immense amount of sickness. It was hard to bury the dead and to get rid of the stench from the large number of horses which were killed in the battle. There was not breeze enough to carry off the poisonous gases and infecte infected air so that many of our best officers became ill before or soon after reaching Harper's Ferry. Gen. Greene had his turn and took a sick leave for twenty days. He had returned, however, to bear his part from November 1, 1862 to April 26, 1863 in the remarkable operations of the Shennandoah Valley. At last after the varrying fortunes of his commander he passed to the Twelfth Army Corps, leading a brigade most acceptably in the battle of Chancellorsville, repelling assaults and taking a battle-flag from the enemy. When Gen. Geary was taken ill, losing for a time his speech Gen. Greene took the division. He himself writes: "The officers and men of my command behaved with great coolness and gallantry whenever they have been under fire, and have displayed great patience and endurance &c". This is a good description of the observing general, with patience and unending fortitude he ever exhibited coolness in action.

He had his best record at Gettysburg. In that battle there were five remarkable epochs, that were crises never to be forgotten, viz:

of

1st. The meeting of a larger force by the heady column of our right wing under Gen. John F. Reynolds;

2nd. The taking and holding of Cemetery field;

- 3rd. The advance and support of Sickles' 3rd Corps the second day;
- 4th. The holding of our right in the last attacks of that day; and
- 5th. Picket's final assault the third day.

Gen. Greene again in command of his brigade aided materially in the 2nd crisis. At my request the 2nd Division of the 12th Corps with Greene's brigade as a part went in the nick of time to our left "in front of the Taney-town road", just as Gen. Lee was balancing in his mind the pros. and cons. for another attack. His comment is of record: "The enemy (i.e. our ~~one~~ right wing) had taken a strong position and not knowing the **strength** of his force, I decided to postpone ~~the attack~~ further attack until the next day". Greene with his comrades having taken that strong and conspicuous front modestly remarks: "~~There were no incidents to note on this day.~~" But some of us were glad enough that his men were there.

But Greene's opportunity came the next day. Early in the morning he went to the right of Wadsworth whose division held Culp's Hill-Rock Creek in his front, 200 to 400 yards off; the ground intervening "covered with heavy growth" x x x "with large ledges of rock projecting above the surface". "Logs, cordwood, stones and earth" were immediately used for barricades.

"The value of this defense", Greene says, "was shown in our subsequent operations by our small loss compared with that of the enemy during the continuous attacks by a vastly superior force". Towards evening the 12th Corps was sent over to Sickles', all except Greene's brigade, and he was ordered to take care of the whole right thus vacated. That

he did without protest, though his skirmishers had long since met those of the Confederate commanders whose line passed beyond his eastward more than 400 yards. He had received orders, we have said, to fill the vacancy with his brigade detachment. He proceeded to comply, ^{one} other, ^{the} "California regiment" under Col. Smith, came to extend his line altogether too short. His whole front was fiercely assailed, the conflict commencing between 6 and 7 p.m.; four terrible charges, such as Stonewall Jackson's old corps always made, took place in the next two hours. Now here comes Greene's coolness and skill. As the Confederates outflanked his right in the woods, he threw back his own lines till they were nearly perpendicular to the first line formed, while he held firmly to Wadsworth's right, this always, as he writes, "presenting his front to the enemy in their new position".

The California Regiment sent to his right was unaccountably withdrawn by somebody's mistake. This suicidal act startled Gen. Greene. He instantly called for help from Wadsworth and from me; Wadsworth rushed over three small regiments of Wisconsin and New York men 355 in all; while I sent from the 11th Corps three more of Ohio, Illinois and New York veterans under the immediate charge of a staff officer.

The gallant defense continued till Slocum's 12th Corps about 10 p.m. returning, put in appearance. Then the crisis, thanks to our cool headed, indomitable commander, Gen. Greene, had passed. The supply trains along the Baltimore Pike and the entire exposed plateau and ravines in the rear of Meade's army were again safe for quiet parks and

bivouacs! The further story of Gettysburg and of Lee's retreat and of Slocum and Howard taking their corps to the Army of the Cumberland, is part of settled history. Greene clung to his favorite brigade till the night of October 28th 1863. He held the left of Gen. Geary's division line there at Wauhatchee about ten miles from Chattanooga, Tenn. It was a dreadful night engagement by Confederate Stevenson's division against Geary's, not unlike that of Gettysburg the 2nd of the preceeding July. My command was encamped three miles away; with an escort of Cavalry I skirted a range of foot hills opposite and west of Lookout, and came upon Geary just as he had repulsed the confederates. Gen. Greene met me, his head seemingly bound with a napkin, and extended his hand. A bullet had passed through his face carrying away some of his teeth, so that he was unable to speak to me, but he showed me the way to Geary who was beside his slain son, hardly realizing in his keen sorrow what a victory he had just won.

Gen. Greene had a leave of only one month and 11 days for the healing of his wound when he again went on duty. He was with his corps throughout the spring of 1865 in North Carolina and in all our movements under Sherman to Goldsboro and Richmond, and on to Washington, D.C. for the great review.

Gen. Greene's services were so much appreciated that the government awarded him the brevet of Major General and retained him in service with his rank unchanged until April 30, 1866, always being placed upon important duty. His civil history was then quickly resumed.

On the Croton water works in one important capacity or another, for example, Superintendent of the Croton Extension; Chief Engineer and Commissioner of the Aqueduct Board of New York; Assistant Engineer Department of Public Works; and Engineer for Surveys and Plans and Estimates for a central underground railway for New York city.

Now we find him again as the chief engineer at Washington, D.C. devising a sewerage system for that city and at the same time retained as consulting engineer for communications over the Harlem River and other important constructions; next he has the position of engineer to pass upon the plans and completion of an elevated railway for New York; as a part of the engineer commission for testing of New York water meters and at the same time the engineer to supervise surveys and estimates of the projected ship canal from Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence river. This was in 1873. The enterprise so much interested Gen. Greene that he talked of it when he was ninety-six years old with a remarkable retention of memory, exhibiting clear-cut and scientific knowledge.

I need not mention any more of the works with which our beloved friend was connected. They embrace water works as far northward as the Lakes, sewerage in his native State and topographical details of plans and drawings always tasteful and complete for public parks. I will simply remark that his responsive labors were continued till about ten years before his decease. During that ten years there was no infirmity except a deafness which required from his visitors somewhat careful and clear enunciation.

He enjoyed the fellowship of his veteran comrades till the last. Gen. Greene was a faithful Christian man, beloved and trusted in his church. His address to the Cadets in 1881 when I was superintendent was admirable in every respect. It showed that he himself was high toned in every sentiment of his heart, a Christian gentleman; every word of his utterance on that occasion his true and noble life emphasized.

The sons of Gen. Greene were very properly his joy and pride. Their record in public and private life is every day honoring the distinguished ancestry and the noble father of whom we are writing. In public functions and in private business they are already well known and justly appreciated. It will be difficult, however, for either of them to leave a brighter page in the history of their country, or one more replete with modest worth and abundant achievements than their father, General George S. Greene.

When I think of him, of his ninety-seven years, and his long service which he himself never exploited, but always made thorough and satisfactory, I say to myself, "there is no distinction after all that may be said above him, a man indeed, sans peur et sans reproche."

New York June 3, 1899.

O. O. Howard
Major-Gen U. S. Army
(Retired)

