GORDON GRANGER
GENERAL IN THE CIVIL WAR
From Wayne County, New York

Presented to the Wayne County Museum, by Martha C. White
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GENERAL GORDON GRANGER

Sketch of His Early Life

By Gamaliel Case, in Phelps Citizen

Mr. Editor:—In compliance with your request I transmit the following, concerning the late General Gordon Granger, after whom the G. A. R. boys of your section saw fit to name your Post. Allowing me to be a judge I must say your selection for a worthy name, was well chosen—he was a brave patriot whom all delighted to honor:

General Gordon Granger was the son of Salius Granger, who was the son of Major Elihu Granger, who was sent out from Phelps to Black Rock in the war of 1812. His mother's name was Katy Taylor, of Phelps. (Old Mrs. Vandervort, widow of Thomas Vandervort, says she was one of the best persons she ever knew.) Gordon Granger was born in Nov., 1821, in or near the village of Joy, in the town of Sodus, Wayne county, N. Y., where his parents had moved while it was nearly a wilderness. His father and mother were both members of the Methodist church, and his mother watched over her noble first born with much care and tenderness. While he was yet of tender age, his dear mother died at the birth of his sister, Mrs. C. Burtis, of Oaks Corners. His tender father sent him to Phelps, to his grandfathers, Major Elihu Granger, where he lived while attending school. Being of active mind and having a remarkably retentive memory, he learned very fast. His father then sent him to the district school, and from thence to the Marion academy, where, after studious application and some extra review in his studies at Sodus, he passed a good examination in 1840 and was awarded a certificate to teach and began at once to teach the district school in what is now known as the Pre-emption district.

In the following Spring Judge Byram Green, of Sodus, was appointed on the examination committee for the military academy at West Point. Judge Green, on his returning home from West Point, brought me a pamphlet in which were set forth the rules and requirements concerning entering that great military school. As I had become much interested in young Gordon Granger while boarding with us in his preparing to teach, I gave him the West Point pamphlet. He at once determined to get the cadet appointment of his district and sought my influence in that direction. I immediately introduced him to Judge Green, who, together with Orin Archer, his former teacher at Marion, recommended him to Theron M. Strong, of Palmyra, then member of Congress, who at once set about it and procured for him the appointment. He reported at the academy and passed a good examination. I remember his remarking to me on his return, after passing the examination: "I have got back alive."

While he was a student in the Marion academy he experienced religion at a revival, but not being quite satisfied that baptism by immersion was required, he did not then assume a church relationship. But soon after his return home from West Point, after finishing his course and graduating, he came to my house, said he was now ready to be baptised and unite with the church, and
asked me if I thought the minister would baptise him. Answering him in the affirmative, we went to the Sanetall school-house appointment, where, at the close of the religious services, the fine looking young West Point graduate presented himself to the pastor, Rev. John Shaw, who led him into the clear running water, kneeling down, applied the water with the hands to his head in holy baptism.

After a visit among his friends he reported for duty and was stationed at Detroit. There he became acquainted with a young French lady, accompanied by her mother, of aristocratic birth, who were visiting in this country. Finally he became betrothed to the young lady, and after her return to France, they kept up a regular correspondence. His service moved him from place to place, but all the while he was faithful to his French sweetheart.

Then came the Mexican war and Gordon Granger was sent to the front. At one time, in a daring feat, he was suddenly surrounded by a posse of Mexican troops who felt sure of his capture, but just at that moment (as he wrote me) he drew his saber, and cutting right and left with all his strength, made his way out and escaped, believing that more than one of his combatants lost his head in the melee. For this dexterous act he was promoted.

After the Mexican war he was sent with the overland military train to Oregon, and returned by the way of Panama back to Washington. Soon after his return he appeared before General Scott, and in a neat little speech asked for a leave of absence and an appropriation with which to go to the Paris Exposition for improvements in the War Department.

General Scott granted him the furlough. True, his plan was also to claim his affianced and bring her home with him. But, alas! the aristocracy of the royal family, to his great surprise, and yet greater to his disappointment at finding that the mother, too, as well, would not permit her daughter to marry an officer if he had not wealth.

The situation was trying—their love passionately fervent, they saw no happiness, separated—there was no hope for a reconciliation. Finally, the daughter proposed an elopement, but to this proposition, as an officer of honor in the United States service, he could not consent. His lady love became frantic, while he was completely overwhelmed with the condition of things.

He returned to America with a sad heart, reported to General Scott, was assigned to service and buried himself in the faithful discharge of his duties. No correspondence was kept up with the French parties.

After a term of years, one day when at his post there came a line to him to come to a certain house. As he arrived, to his
great astonishment, who should he meet but that mother accompanied by her daughter, a maniac. The mother had visited the Secretary of War and ascertained where Officer Granger was, and she sought him in the hope that possibly if her daughter could see him his presence and society would restore her to reason. But, O, the horrors of that meeting! She whom his heart idolized was a hopeless maniac--too late, too late--she knew him not. The mother's last hope then gave way, and the scene was harrowing in the extreme. She realized in the bitterest pangs of remorse what her opposition had wrought, and with a heart utterly crushed returned to France with her hopelessly insane daughter. I don't know that General Granger ever heard from the mother afterwards.

General Granger was a Democrat, as nearly all the Grangers were--Jefferson, Jackson Republican--Democrat, not a Federal, a war Democrat, not a pro-slavery Democrat. His war history in the late Rebellion is too well known and familiar for me to incorporate here. It was noble, and he was ever a true soldier, and never dishonored the good name of the Grangers.

After the war he finally married. His death came sudden while at his post of duty at Santa Fe, New Mexico, Jan. 2, 1876, being ill but three hours.
Naj.-Gen. Gordon Granger was appointed to West Point from his district in New York, and was graduated in the class of 1845. He was at once commissioned a brevet second lieutenant in the Second Infantry, and the next year transferred to the mounted rifles, a regiment organized to protect the overland trail to Oregon. At the beginning of the Mexican war he accompanied this regiment to Mexico. The horses were all lost in the gulf during transit, and the regiment was ordered to serve on foot. From Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico Lieut. Granger was in every battle, and always distinguished for his coolness and courage. At Carro Gordillo, Contreras, and the assault on Chapultepec he was conspicuous for his gallant conduct, and was highly complimented in the reports. He was brevetted a captain for his gallant conduct at Chapultepec. After the war he served with the regiment in Oregon, Texas, and New Mexico until the secession troubles began, much of the time being in active service against the Indians, who were especially troublesome. During this time he visited Europe, where he staid a year.

In 1861 he was on sick leave in New York, but reported for duty as soon as the first gun was fired, and for a time served with McClellan in Ohio, organizing troops for service. In June he reported at Fort Leavenworth with recruits for the field, and there remained as adjutant-general of the forces collected to repel Gen. Price. From Leavenworth to Wilson's Creek, Gen. Granger was assistant adjutant-general to Maj. Sturgis, in command of the right wing of Gen. Lyon's army. In September, 1861, he was commissioned colonel of the Second Michigan Cavalry, and brigadier-general in March, 1862. He took a prominent part in the operations of Gen. Pope's army about New Madrid and Island No. 10, and afterward about Corinth. He was in command at Franklin, Tenn., until June, 1863, when he commanded the force that during Gen. Rosecrans's advance so summarily threw Wheeler's cavalry into the Duck River near Shelbyville on 27 June.

Possibly the most important and brilliant event of his life was his timely relief of General Thomas at the battle of Chickamauga in 1863. The story was well told at the time in the New York Herald: "Gen. Thomas, near the center of the army, was engaged about one o'clock sitting on his horse in the hollow of a ridge in an open field behind Marker's brigade, busy watching a heavy cloud of dust in his rear, in such a direction that it might be Gen. Granger with reinforcements, or it might be the enemy. It cast a cloud over his spirits, which was plainly visible to one who observed him, as I confess I did that day, with ever-increasing admiration. The truth is, that Gen. Thomas at one o'clock p.m., on the last day of this battle had no disposition to fight any more, and feared the result of the next rebel attack. And so he watched with natural anxiety the
development of the cloud of dust, which was then no more than a mile distant. If it dissolved to reveal friends, then they would be welcome; for at this hour fresh friends were all that was needed. If it disclosed the enemy, then the day was lost, and it became the duty of those who formed the 'last square' on this battle-field to throw into the teeth of the victorious enemy a defiance as grandly contemptuous as that of Cambronne, and die. There was no escape if the troops moving were the cavalry of the enemy.

"Take my glass, some one of you whose horse stands steady. Tell me what you see!"

"In the dust that emerged, thick as the clouds that precede the storm, nothing could be distinguished but a moving mass of men, but it was seen that they were infantry. This information made Thomas breathe more freely. If infantry, it was much more likely to be Granger than the enemy. At this moment a tall officer, with the yellow strap of a captain of cavalry, presented himself to Gen. Thomas.

"General, he said, 'I am cut off from Gen. Negley, and cannot find him. I beg leave to report to you for duty, sir, of any character.'"

"Capt. Johnson," said the General to the speaker (Capt. Johnson, Second Indiana Cavalry, inspector-general on Gen. Negley's staff), ride over there, and report to me who and what that force is!

"In an instant Johnson was gone--gone upon a mission which proved itself to be a more dangerous one than any of us supposed. As he emerged slowly from a dense foliage of willows growing about a narrow stream in the rear we heard the report of several rifles, and saw him halt for a second, and then, dashing spurs to his horse, disappear in a thick wood in the direction of the coming mass of troops still enveloped in clouds of dust. In a few minutes he again emerged from this timber, and following him came the red, white, and blue crescent-shaped battle-flag of Gordon Granger. We had wished for night, and it was Blucher who had come to us. At a quarter past one, Steedman first, and Gordon Granger afterward, had wrung the hand of the statue Thomas, who had gone all through the terrible scenes of the last two days' battle to be melted and moved at this hour. As Granger came up I felt that from the face of the heavens a great cloud had passed, and the sun was shining once more upon us as with the same benign rays of former victories."

Gen. Rosecrans says that Gen. Thomas, who never flattered mortal man, said to him in Gen. Granger's presence after the battle of Chickamauga, "General, this is the man that saved me."

In the reorganization of the Army of the Cumberland Gen. Granger was assigned to the command of the Fourth Corps. Gen. Wood's and Gen. Sheridan's divisions of that corps were distinguished for the part they took in the battle of Missionary Ridge. Early in 1864 he was relieved from command of this corps and proceeded East.

In July of that year he reported in person to the commanding officer at New Orleans, and was sent in command of the expedition to Mobile Bay. Here the navy under Farragut joined him, and the siege of Mobile began. Granger invested and took Fort Gaines with
all its force. Soon afterward Fort Morgan surrendered. Gen. Granger here proposed a movement which, had it been followed, would, as subsequently discovered facts showed, have caused the immediate surrender of Mobile. But he was overruled by his superior officer, and the long and bloody siege of the city followed. He moved his troops, now formed into the Thirteenth Army Corps, to the east side of the bay, and Spanish Fort was invested. After a long siege this was taken and the road opened into Mobile. Gen. Granger at once started his troops for the city, and taking himself a small steamboat steamed directly for the wharves. The inhabitants, knowing the bay to be filled with torpedoes, watched to see the boat go up, and as it touched the dock he was asked why he escaped. He answered quietly, "I had the fellow who planted the torpedoes in the pilot house."

The war having closed, Gen. Granger proceeded to Texas, and in June, 1865, assumed command at Galveston. Thence his headquarters were removed to Houston, where he made himself accessible to all, and lent counsel and assistance in the transition from slave to free labor. That critical period was passed without disturbance, which was flattering to his wisdom and prudence. The length of his stay in Texas was two months; the provisional government was established in August, and Gen. Mower arrived to relieve Granger. He then served in Tennessee and New Mexico, and while colonel of the Fifteenth United States Infantry, died suddenly at Santa Fe, N.M., of apoplexy, on the evening of the 10 Jan., 1876.

Gen. Granger was a natural soldier. He knew not fear; he did not fight for glory or rank, but from the pure love of it. To his men he was kind and considerate, never asking them to go where he was unwilling to lead, and thus securing their love and unbounded respect. After the war he became a communicant of the Episcopal Church, and was extremely devout. The quietness of army life after the bustle of active war led him to idleness and apathy. It needed the boom of cannon to arouse Gordon Granger; then he became a great soldier, with a quick eye to measure the possibilities of the battlefield, and a will to carry out the most daring plan. He left a name and a record of which all who bear the same name can well be proud.