



William “The Colonel” Jay

By Andrew Mikolajczyk



The Colonel

- Grandson of Chief Justice John Jay and son of William Jay
- Both men publicly opposed slavery, the tradition lived on with the Colonel
- Represented the ancestry by helping rid the Nation of slaves once and for all

Prominent Family

- The Colonel witnessed the abolition of the thirteenth amendment
- Talking about his family, “I was brought up in the atmosphere of the Chief Justice. My grandfather, and my father, and indeed the whole family, were saturated with it very naturally.”
- Colonel William Jay was the only male heir to his family’s Bedford estate
- Grew up spending his summers in the Westchester farm house and winters at the family’s Manhattan residence

Education

- William followed in the footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great grandfather by going into the family career of law
- Honored the tradition of the family by attending college at Columbia University in 1855
- After his 4 years he enrolled in Columbia Law School in 1859
- The Colonel's studies were interrupted by the start of the American Civil War



Civil War Service

- Spring 1861 William Jay volunteered to be the aide to General John E Wool
- General Monroe swiftly and decisively occupied Fort Monroe in Virginia, which overlooked the Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads
- The “Jay” name is synonymous with success and state servitude, as evident in President Abraham Lincoln promotion of the Colonel to Captain after only a year in the Army

Letters Home

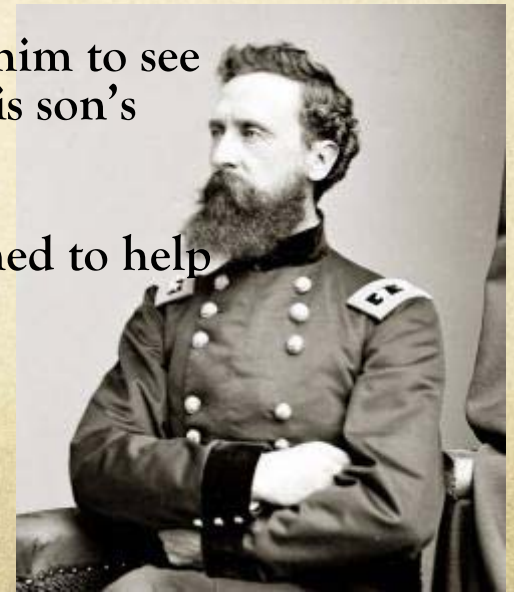
- As with all men in the Union Army, William wrote home as much as he could
- He describes Fort Monroe, “it is the most monotonous place I have ever been... this place is the dullest hole I was ever in... we constantly hope for an attack or something to cheer us.”
- His other letters home included descriptions of meals with the general and horse riding around the camp

Letters Home (cont.)

- Other letters included requests for desired goods he wanted such as his horse, his servant, his cigar collection, bottles of wine, and articles of clothing that would better fit the environment of Fort Monroe
- Also in his letters were opinions of what was going on around him including, “I declare that the men who resisted the draft during the riots in New York be shot.”
- His opinions on the executions of five deserters, “The affair was creditavery ble gone through with... arrangements were admirable.”

Loyal to the Cause

- William had a lot of loyalty to his fellow soldiers
- When the war picked up his family insisted on trying to get him to resign, which he would have no part of
- He was extremely loyal to General George Sykes, asking his father to visit him because the General got transferred to Kansas, “Please go and see General Sykes if you have time and give him my best love. They have insulted him by ordering him to Kansas...”
- William’s letters kept asking his parents to push for him to see more action but his father had direct influence on his son’s assignments, to make them less dangerous
- Requested position in artillery but instead was assigned to help General John E. Wool



Positions of Power

- Served alongside General George G. Meade during the battle of Chancellorsville
- Shadowed General Sykes at Gettysburg where he would cross the Rapidan and accept the surrender of General Robert E. Lee
- His thoughts on battles he participated in, “The newspapers are making fools of themselves, everybody else, and exaggerating most absurdly the extent of Lee’s repulse. We worsted him certainly in the fighting taking it all together, but he is not by any means in full retreat as yet... The papers seem to give all the credit of the campaign to Grant which is an immense mistake. He looks on and puts in his oar occasionally I suppose, but General Meade commands the army...”

Positions of Power (cont.)

- In 1864 he was promoted from Captain to Major by President Lincoln and in 1865 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel by President Andrew Johnson
- The Colonel resigned in 1865 with Major General Meade approving the Colonel's resignation, "I deem it due to this officer's distinguished services to express officially my approbation of his gallantry and zeal, and the intelligence he has ever displayed since being under my command."

The Colonel, The Lawyer

- After the war, the Colonel went back to law school and was admitted to the New York State bar in 1869
- First firm he joined was originally called, “Van Winkle, Candler & Jay”
- Once he became a prominent member of the firm, it was renamed to “Candler & Jay”
- This partnership created a long term friendship
- William personally oversaw the finalizing of wills, trusts, and estates for the company and he helped acquire the role of consul to the United States Trust Company

Other Jobs

- President of the New York Coaching Club for 20 years
- Vice President of the New York Herald Company
- Director of the Valley Farm Company
- Director of the Manhattan Storage and Warehouse
- Director of the New York Cab Company

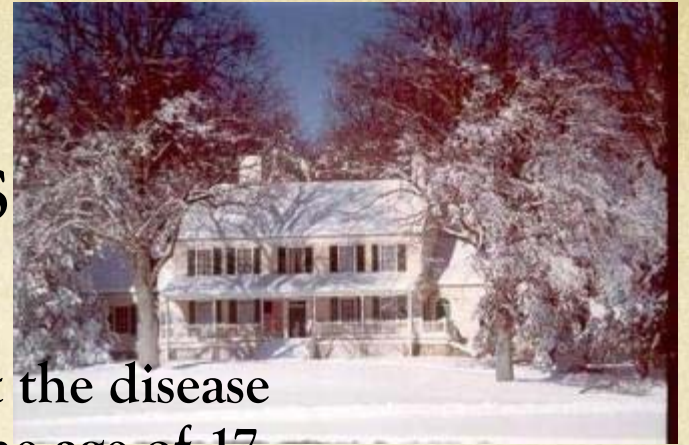




Hobbies and Interests

- Big fan of horses, President of New York Coaching Club is his proudest achievement
- Was a religious man, senior warden and clerk of the Trinity Church
- He spent a great deal of his time helping feed the poor with Trinity Church on Fulton Street
- He was the trustee to an orphanage
- Member of City Century, the Knickerbocker Clubs, The New York Historical Society, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Sons of the Revolution
- President of the Huguenot Society in New Rochelle

Later Years



- William's oldest daughter Julia caught the disease diphtheria while abroad and died at the age of 17
- The Colonel's youngest daughter, Julia, died at a year and a half of diphtheria
- In 1896 William, his wife Lucy, and daughter Eleanor moved into his family's Bedford estate
- Eleanor was left the soul heir of the family's belongings
- March 28th 1915 Colonel William Jay passed away in his sleep while traveling in Virginia

Bibliography

- McLean, Jennifer. *The Jays of Bedford: the story of five generations of the Jay family who lived in the John Jay Homestead*. New York: Friends of John Jay Homestead, 1984.
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