

## AMIEL WEEKS WHIPPLE

By Francis R. Stoddard\*

### INTRODUCTION

*The Oklahoma Historical Society has recently received one of its finest collections of historical material: the original journals, manuscripts, drawings, paintings, maps, charts, and other data preserved by General A. W. Whipple, relating to the Mexican Boundary Survey in 1851, and the Pacific Railroad Survey that was made through Oklahoma in 1853. The donors of this valuable gift to the Historical Society are Professor William Whipple, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Colonel Sherburne Whipple, Asheville, North Carolina; Mrs. Arthur M. Collens, Hartford, Connecticut; and Mrs. Francis R. Stoddard, New York, New York.*

Editor

Amiel Weeks Whipple was born on October 21, 1817. He was a son of David Whipple who at one time kept an inn in Concord, Massachusetts. His mother, Abigail Pepper, was a daughter of Joseph Pepper, Lieutenant in the Revolution. Through her, he was descended from Thomas Prence, Governor of Plymouth Colony, whose wife, Patience, was daughter of the beloved religious leader of the Pilgrims, Elder William Brewster.

Whipple attended the Concord schools and entered Amherst College in 1836, from where he was appointed to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point by the Honorable Samuel Hoar on July 1, 1837. He graduated fifth in his class on June 22, 1841. Upon graduation he was commissioned and assigned to the First Artillery as of July 1, 1841, because probably no vacancy existed in the engineers. Before joining his artillery regiment upon completion of his graduation leave of absence, he was transferred as of

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\* Colonel Francis Russell Stoddard, native of Boston, Massachusetts, attorney (partner in law firm of Hamlin, Hubbell, Davis, Hunt and Farley of New York City), married Eleanor Sherburne Whipple. He was a member of New York State Assembly (1912-15), and widely known in New York and New Jersey state banking and insurance departments, is arbitrator, Greater New York, for fidelity and surety companies of U. S. and for casualty companies. He is a veteran of the Spanish-American War, the Mexican Border War, World War I (Maj. 17th Div., U. S. Army); became Colonel commanding 533d C.A. (1923-35); and served as Military Aide of Mayor La Guardia during World War II. He is an active member of leading American genealogical societies (Sons of the Revolution, Society of Mayflower Descendants—ex-gov. and gov. gen. soc.—, Order of Cincinnati, etc.), and of Masonic Order and American Legion. He is the author of *The Stoddard Family* (1912), *War Time In France* (1918), *The Pilgrims* (1935), *The History of Acquisition Cost in the State of New York* (1944), and numerous technical articles on insurance. —*Who's Who in America*, Vol. 26 (Chicago, 1950).—Ed.

September 28, 1841, to the Topographical Engineers and was appointed Assistant Topographical Engineer on work in Patapsco River, Maryland. From 1841 winter to 1842, he was on military reconnaissance duty near New Orleans, Louisiana. From 1842 to 1844 he was engaged in the survey of the harbor of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where through the offices of an army friend stationed at Fort Constitution at the entrance of the harbor, he was presented to Miss Eleanor Mary Sherburne, whom he married at Portsmouth on September 12, 1843. Her father, Col. John Nathaniel Sherburne, had commanded a regiment in the war of 1812, was a representative in the legislature, and was then Navy Agent of the Port. His wife was connected with most of the old Portsmouth families. She was descended from Governor Thomas Dudley of Massachusetts Colony, Governor Theophilus Eaton of New Haven Colony and Governor John Wentworth of New Hampshire Colony. Her family lived in the historic Warner house, which is mentioned later. She was a great grand-daughter of Captain John Blunt who guided General Washington through the ice and storm across the Delaware River on the night before the Battle of Trenton.

From 1844 to 1849, Lieutenant Whipple had special charge of the instrumental work of the Northeastern Boundary Survey. From 1849 to 1853, he was assistant with the Mexican Boundary Survey. The Chief Topographical Engineer was unable to do the work most of which was done by Whipple. Meanwhile he was promoted to First Lieutenant on April 24, 1851. Upon the completion of his Mexican Boundary report, he was assigned to the command of the Pacific Railroad Survey for which Congress had made necessary appropriations. His party started from Fort Smith, Arkansas, and the line pursued carried it through an almost unknown section of the country, including the region south of the Arkansas and Canadian rivers in present Oklahoma and on west to the Pacific Coast at San Diego.

The route passed through territory occupied by powerful Indian tribes, but was accomplished without serious mishap. His report, published by the Government, attracted great attention both in this country and in Europe. Baron Alexander von Humbolt was particularly interested in it and corresponded with Lieutenant Whipple very voluminously and for several years. Whipple had been promoted to Captain on July 1, 1855. On completion of his Pacific route survey report, he was ordered to take station at Detroit, Michigan, where he was placed in charge of the 10th Light-House district of the upper and lower lakes and the improvement of the waterways over ship channel over St. Clair flat and through Lake George and St. Mary's River, Michigan, within the territory that extended from Lake Superior to Ogdensburg on the Saint Lawrence River. He was engaged in this work when the Southern Confederacy undertook to secede from the Union. Captain Whipple was im-

mediately ordered to report to the Chief of Topographical Engineers in Washington. There was then a dearth of maps giving any but the most meagre of information concerning the State of Virginia, and to him as Chief of Topographical Engineers of the defenses of Washington, South of the Potomac, was entrusted the very trying and responsible duty of making armed reconnaissances to collect the topographical details required. It was hazardous work in a country thickly wooded in places, where small bodies of men could be concealed with absolute impunity; and the first skirmishes of the war, such as that at Fairfax Court House, were fought during its continuance. The work, however, was successfully and very quickly done, and reliable maps were soon in possession of the Union commanders. Captain Whipple, thereafter, became Chief Topographical Engineer on the staff of General McDowell, Commander of the Army of the Potomac. He participated in the battle of Bull Run or Manassas on July 21, 1861, for which service he later was awarded a posthumous brevet for gallantry in action. From July 25, 1861, to March 13, 1862, he was with a division engaged in the defence of Washington, then constantly threatened with attack. On December 26, 1861, President Lincoln signed his commission of major to date from September 9, 1861. From March 13, 1862, to April 2, 1862, he served with the First Army Corps. From the latter date to September 8, 1862, he commanded a brigade in the defences of Washington, having been commissioned a Brigadier General of Volunteers as of April 14, 1862, and thereafter he commanded a division until October 10, 1862.

The headquarters of General Whipple were the former residence of General Robert E. Lee at Arlington. The house had been deserted by the Lee family, but many of the family slaves were left behind who were hoping for the return of their very kind master. With untiring energy and skill, General Whipple added to and improved the fortifications which extended from Chain Bridge above the City of Georgetown to Alexandria. President Lincoln frequently drove over from the White House and after a simple lunch and a glass of lemonade, he rode to attend the review of a regiment or to visit one of the forts. On these occasions the President, drawing the General's two sons to him and with an arm about each, would listen attentively to the General.

Not content with defending Washington, Whipple applied for service in the field. On October 10, 1862, he took command of the 3rd Division of the III Army Corps, and from December 13 to 15, 1862, he participated in the Battle of Fredericksburg, for which service he was later breveted again posthumously for gallantry in action. It was while Whipple was in the Army of the Potomac that one of the Corp Commanders gave a dinner in honor of President Lincoln. The latter asked that his friend, General Whipple, be seated beside him, which was done.

At the Battle of Chancellorsville, which began on May 2, 1863, the III Army Corps attacked and separated General Lee from General "Stonewall" Jackson. The latter continued and next morning attacked the XI Army Corps, which gave way causing Whipple's division to be attacked from both front and rear. Jackson was killed opposite Whipple's men who held their ground at all points. On May 4, 1863, while near a battery directing construction of some earth works near the apex of the salient which extended into the Confederate lines, Whipple was mortally wounded by a sharpshooter. The bullet passed through his belt and stomach and came out of the small of his back close to the spinal column. The General was taken to Washington where he never regained consciousness. Just prior to death, President Lincoln caused him to be commissioned a Major General of Volunteers. He also eventually received posthumously additional brevets for gallantry in action at Chancellorsville and for gallantry and meritorious services during the whole war.

Whipple died in Washington on May 7, 1863. President Lincoln attended his funeral and said that he was there as a friend of the family and not as President of the United States. The President not only gave his autographed photograph to the widow but he gave a Presidential appointment to the older son of his friend. After Lincoln was assassinated, there was found on his desk a note asking his successor, if anything happened to him, to appoint the younger son of General Whipple to Annapolis. This was duly done by President Andrew Johnson. When the fort now called Fort Myer was built, it was named Fort Whipple. Fort Whipple, Arizona, is also named in his honor.

General Whipple had saved much of the material which concerned his explorations. Certain of his diaries in his own handwriting he gave to his son. The remainder, including his books and all his sketches, surveys and other data connected with the Pacific Railroad route exploration, was placed in three trunks which were stored in the old Warner House in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where his wife had lived. During recent years, descendants of his wife's family sold the house to a group who have since maintained it as a museum. The trunks with the General's name on them were found in the attic and were returned to one of General Whipple's granddaughters who, in agreement with her sister and brothers, donated the Pacific Railroad route exploration and the Mexican boundary survey material including the diaries to the Oklahoma Historical Society.

General Whipple had four children. The oldest, Elizabeth Sherburne Whipple, was wife of Colonel Robert W. Huntington, who commanded the marines that were the first to land at Guantanamo, Cuba, in the Santiago Campaign of our war with Spain. Of twin boys, his son, Charles William Whipple, survived infancy. The

latter was appointed to West Point by President Lincoln as already stated and, after graduating in 1868, entered the Ordnance Department of the Army. He was Chief Ordnance Officer and later Inspector General of the expedition to the Philippines led by General Merritt in our war with Spain. He eventually died from the effects of that service. One of his fondest memories was being with Abraham Lincoln when the latter visited his father in the fortifications of Washington during the Civil War. The General's youngest son, David Whipple, was appointed to Annapolis by President Johnson and entered the Marine Corps. While stationed at Dry Tortugas, yellow fever swept the garrison and the soldiers were sometimes found dead on post. He was ordered away but refused to go because some of his men were to stay. He stayed and died with his men.

The General's son, Colonel Charles William Whipple, had five children. The oldest, Walter Jones Whipple, is deceased. The next, William Whipple, has been a Professor at Louisiana State University. He has several children among whom Walter Jones Whipple graduated from Annapolis and was Captain in the Navy on the staff of Admiral Halsey; William Whipple graduated from West Point and was Colonel on the staff of General Eisenhower; and John Randolph Whipple was Captain of Engineers all in the Second World War.

Charles William Whipple's son, Colonel Sherburne Whipple, graduated from West Point and served against Moros in the Philippines. For services at the front in World War I, he received the Distinguished Service Medal and the French Legion d'Honneur. His son, Colonel Sherburne Whipple, Jr., graduated from West Point and commanded tanks in the thick of the fighting in the Second World War. His daughter, Sarah Bailey Whipple, and her husband, Colonel Lang, were at Pearl Harbor when Japan attacked.

Colonel Charles William Whipple's daughter, Annette Bailey Whipple, is wife of Arthur Morris Collens, Chairman of the Board of the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company in Hartford, Connecticut. Their son, William Leete Collens, was Lieutenant in the Navy stationed on a munitions vessel in the Pacific during the Second World War.

Colonel Charles William Whipple's youngest child, Eleanor Sherburne Whipple, is Mrs. Francis Russell Stoddard. Her husband, Colonel Stoddard, served in our war with Spain, on the Mexican Border and the First World War. Her older son, Howland Bradford Stoddard, was Inspector General of the 35th Division in Germany, after being an Inspector General of the Fifteenth Army, during the World War II. Her younger son, Dudley Wentworth Stoddard, served as a combat infantryman in the 8th Division which led the attack on Cologne, Germany, during World War II. While on the attack near the outskirts of that city, he was shot, but eventually recovered from his wounds. It was he who brought the Whipple material to Oklahoma.