

Lieutenant Edward Carrington

Edward Carrington, the son of Edward and Ann Terry Carrington, was born in Hartford, February 15th 1838. As a child, he possessed marked individuality, and early exhibited many of the traits of character that afterwards distinguished him. At an early age he came to Colebrook with his parents, but eventually entered the preparatory school at East Windsor, where he excelled in scholarship and was chosen valedictorian of his class.

In the autumn of 1855 he entered Yale College, and through his college years was considered a young man of rare intellectual endowment; was exceedingly popular with his classmates, and also in literary and social fields was considered the leading man in his class. It is said that a noted educator with Yale University for a period of 40 years once said that Ned Carrington was the most promising student met during that period. The late judge George M. Carrington of Winsted referred to him as being the most remarkable young man he ever met.

Edward graduated from Yale, class of 1859, with honors, and was chosen valedictorian of his class. The valedictory address was of such outstanding excellence it was published in pamphlet form and could be found for many years in several libraries in Connecticut and adjoining states.

After a year spent teaching, Edward entered Columbia College law school, and graduated from that institution, LL.B. in May 1862. While there, he won new laurels, gaining the highest prize for a legal essay and once more being chosen valedictorian of his class.

Professor Theodore W. Dwight of Columbia law school said of him: "Although I have familiarly known many thousands of young men coming from all parts of the country, I have never been acquainted with one who has so much impressed me by his native gifts as he."

Immediately following graduation, he commenced the practice of law in a New York City firm. Upon hearing of the death of a close friend and classmate, who fell in the service of the nation, he enlisted October 15th 1862 in the 143rd Regiment, New York Infantry, and was commissioned second lieutenant. He was soon promoted to first lieutenant, and on April 24th 1863, was detached from his regiment and appointed aide-de-camp on the staff of Major-General James Wadsworth, commanding the first division of the First Army corps.

In the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, Lt. Carrington served with distinction, especially at Gettysburg, where his horse was killed under him. In the report submitted by his commanding officer following the battles, he received well-deserved recognition for his gallantry in action.

When Gen. Wadsworth was temporarily retired from active duty, his able aid-de-camp was assigned to the staff of Brigadier-General John Newton, and served with him in all the battles leading to the capture of Atlanta. At Kennesaw Mountain every member of General Newton's staff was wounded except Lt. Carrington, who seemed to bear a charmed life. When Gen. Newton was ordered to Key West, Lt. Carrington accompanied him, and was appointed assistant judge of the provost court, an assignment for which he was well qualified due to an extensive knowledge of military law and practice.

During a respite from active duty, with three companions, he visited Cuba; which change proved a happy incident in contrast to strenuous active service.

On returning to Key West, it was found that Gen. Newton had departed on an expedition to St. Marks. [This town is south of Tallahassee, on the Gulf Coast.] While not under orders from his commanding officer to follow, he did so from choice, and March 6th 1865, participated in the battle of Natural Bridge. On that fatal day he rode along the line of fire with Gen. Newton as an encouragement to battle-weary and outnumbered troops. [These were mostly black troops, members of the 2nd and 99th U, S. Colored. 22 died in the battle, 46 were wounded.] Later in the battle, while leading a desperate charge, a hissing bullet sang his sudden requiem, and he fell from his horse mortally wounded. Soon after, in the presence of Gen. Newton and several members of his staff, he passed from the field of conflict to a realm of peaceful rest.

When the body of Lieutenant Carrington arrived in Colebrook for internment in the family plot in the Center Cemetery, funeral services were held November 21st 1866, where Henry Hopkins, an intimate friend of the deceased, delivered the funeral eulogy. The large number assembled was a testimonial of the esteem and popularity of Ned Carrington in his hometown. Also came sorrowing friends from New York, New Haven, Hartford and nearby towns. The universal expression of sadness by those present seemed to bear witness that a part of the sorrow was theirs to endure.

Doubtless some of those present remembered the address given at a flag raising in 1861, when he said in part: "Proclamations will not save the union; arguments won't do it. The man who talks of nothing but peace while 185,000 bayonets are frowning ruin on our capitol and threatening to rend the flag of our glory into shreds, talks madness. There is only one way for us. Awful as war is, horrible as civil war is, we must fight."

Dr. Hopkins paid such tribute to the deceased as only a friend can pay to a friend. In closing, he said: "For my part, I acknowledge myself called to double duty for the friend whose life my own was mingled, and as I read the inscription – aged 27 – I feel that I have not only my work to do in life, but his also."

Dr. Leonard Bacon of New Haven and Rev. Dean from Sandisfield, Mass., late Captain in the Second Connecticut artillery, participated in the service. Following the service as the long funeral cortege wended its way to the cemetery on the hillside, the church bell seemed to toll with a new significance. Major-General John Newton, arriving in Winsted by the noon train, failed to reach Colebrook in time for the funeral service, but passed the evening with the Carrington family.

After the committal service, and the farewell bugle notes died away among the echoes, all that was mortal of Ned Carrington was returned to "Mother Earth", and the throng of relatives and friends in a spirit of mingled sadness and sorrow departed from the "silent city".

We are now beginning our journey into the twenty-first century, and although more than 140 years have passed since the death of Edward Carrington, his loss has not diminished; in fact it becomes magnified when we consider what might have been had he not fallen on the battlefield at the age of 27. Surely the potential was there for him to have been a member of the Supreme Court or even president of the country he loved so well. We will never know, but however his life might have unfolded under normal conditions, the loss to society had to have been incalculable.

Historic Bytes

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