

HISTORY
OF THE
COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND,
PENNSYLVANIA,
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF MANY OF ITS
PIONEERS AND PROMINENT MEN.

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COMMODORE JOHN BONNETT MARCHAND

was born on the 27th day of August, 1808, on the banks of the Sewickley, in Hempfield township, Westmoreland Co., Pa., on a farm located by his grandfather, Dr. David Marchand, in 1770, nine miles from Greensburg. His father, Dr. D. Marchand, was elected prothonotary of the courts in 1823, and at the age of fifteen years young Marchand entered the office as clerk.

In December, 1828, he went to Philadelphia, and entered the United States navy. His appointment being dated in May previous, was sent to Greene County in mistake, thus causing the delay. In 1837 he was promoted to master, immediately after which he was put in charge of the expedition sent to survey the Savannah River. On the 15th of September, 1841, he was put in command of the schooner "Van Buren," and on the 3d of September sailed from Baltimore to operate against the Seminole Indians in Florida. In this war he took a conspicuous part, and was frequently exposed to great danger in the swamps and bayous. On July 8, 1842, the Indian war being then over, he sailed from Indian Keys for the North. From this date on until 1843 his services were varied, the greater portion of the time being spent on board ship. On the 4th of May, 1843, he sailed from Hamp-

ton Roads in the U. S. S. "Brandywine" for a cruise in the East Indies, but before completing this duty he received orders from the Navy Department to make a cruise of the world, and immediately sailed in pursuance thereof, in which expedition he visited many places of interest, and professionally examined the waters of the European and Asiatic seas. He returned to the United States Sept. 17, 1845, which he touched at Norfolk, Va., having completed the circuit of the globe. On the 25th of November, 1846, war having been declared against Mexico, he sailed in the ship "Ohio" to join the American squadron in the Gulf of Mexico. He participated in the celebrated action in which the American ships of war bombarded the Castle of San Juan de Ulloa, under the cover of the fire of which the army of Scott debarked at Vera Cruz. On the 29th of March, 1847, Vera Cruz surrendered, and possession was taken of the city and fortifications by the Americans.

From the close of the Mexican war till the beginning of the civil war, the country being at peace, the professional life of Commodore Marchand was not varied from ordinary routine duty. He was engaged in the interim in visiting foreign courts and performing duty abroad. On Dec. 15, 1858, he left New York to join the Paraguay expedition in command of the "Memphis," returning to the United States the following spring.

At the outbreak of the civil war he was on light-house duty in Detroit. During this time an incident occurred which illustrates the devotion he had for the profession which he had chosen from among all others, the navy. While here he was offered the command of a Michigan regiment, which he refused to accept, though he gratefully acknowledged the honor conferred upon him, but he made application at once to the Department for immediate sea duty. He was given the "James Adger," and put in command of the blockade naval forces at Charleston and Georgetown, S. C. On the 16th May, 1862, he was wounded off the mouth of the Stone River. On the 24th of October following he was ordered to command the "Lackawanna," and in February following reported for blockade duty off Mobile. From this time until the 5th of August, 1864, the date of the battle of Mobile Bay, he was engaged in blockade duty, during which time he captured many of the vessels engaged in assisting the Confederates, among them being the British steamer "Neptune" and the rebel steamer "Planter."

We will now turn to the battle of Mobile Bay, which can best be described in the commodore's own words, which I copy from his journal:

"On the 5th of August, 1864, the vessels took position alongside, and lashed to each other as required. The 'Lackawanna,' with the 'Seminole,' was in the centre of line of battle. Fort Morgan opened fire upon us first, and the rebel boats 'Tennessee,' 'Morgan,' 'Gaines,' and 'Selma,' inside of the bay, raked

our vessels with shot and shell. It was a magnificent sight, every vessel with ensigns at their mastheads and peaks, the shot and shell flying through the air with their piping sound, the dense volumes of smoke from the guns sometimes hiding the nearest ships, then floating away towards the forts, and the loud cheers of all hands. Although shot and shell were flying around none struck the 'Lackawanna's' hull, doing serious injury, till we were within four or five hundred yards of Fort Morgan, when a heavy, elongated shot from the fort passed through the ship's side, killing and wounding sixteen men at the 150-pound rifle, when it carried away two stanchions of the taffrail, passed through the foremast, and carried away the head of the sheet-cable bits, and then passing through the other side of the ship fell into the water. Blood and mangled human remains for a time impeded the working of the 150-pounder. The firing of shells from our fleet was so continuous that the enemy were driven away from their guns. At 8.30 o'clock A.M. our fleet had passed beyond the range of the guns of Fort Morgan, when the ram 'Tennessee' was seen approaching. The admiral made signal to the 'Monongahela,' as being nearest, to run her down, and instantly the same was made to me. The 'Monongahela' struck her angularly near the stern and glanced away. I was more fortunate, striking her at right angles to her keel. The concussion was tremendous, and we rebounded, but soon after drifted against her broadside to broadside, head and stern, when our marines and some of the crew, with muskets and revolvers, opened fire into her ports, preventing the reloading of their guns, which had been fired into our bows when almost touching, exploding two shells, and sending one solid shot into her berth-deck, killing and wounding many of the powder division and the already wounded.

"In ramming the 'Tennessee' we had done her no perceptible injury except demoralizing her crew, but our stern was cut and crushed far back of the plank ends.

"Our guns had been pivoted on the opposite side, in anticipation of swinging head and head, so that but one ix. gun could be sufficiently depressed to bear upon the 'Tennessee,' which was fired nearly into one of the ports, causing the port shutter to jam, becoming useless during the remainder of the engagement. We then separated in different directions by her going ahead, and we having nothing to hold on by, I ordered the helm hard over, to bring the ship around to make another attempt at ramming the 'Tennessee,' but our great length and the shoalness of the water, which sometimes was not more than a foot under the keel, prevented our turning rapidly, and in going around we collided with the flag-ship, the 'Hartford,' knocking two of her quarter-deck ports into one, although every effort was made on my part, by backing the engine, to prevent the occurrence. We sustained no injury by the collision. As

soon as we cleared the 'Hartford' I again started to run down the 'Tennessee,' but before reaching her she had hauled down her flag, hoisted a white one, and surrendered to the fleet, which had by that time gotten around her."

Thus closed one of the hardest-fought naval engagements of which the annals of America contain record.

On the 28th of November, 1864, he resigned command of the "Lackawanna," and arrived at Hampton Roads Dec. 11, 1864. On July 11, 1865, he was ordered to the Philadelphia Navy-Yard as executive officer, and on the 25th of July, 1866, was promoted to commodore for meritorious services, and put in command of the navy-yard at Philadelphia.

On the 27th of August, 1870, he was placed on the retired list, under the longevity law. The *Army and Navy Journal*, commenting on his retirement, says, "The operation of a general law only by a few weeks deprived him of the highest rank in his profession."

He died April 13, 1875, at his residence in Carlisle, Pa., and is buried in Ashland Cemetery.

In stature he was five feet nine inches in height, being stout, but not corpulent, and always wearing a clean-shaved face. When in active service he wore his uniform only when absolutely necessary, but after he was retired it was never seen. A correspondent writes, "It is said of him by those who sailed with him that no profane word was ever heard from his lips;" and when on shipboard and without a chaplain he always read the Episcopal service every Sunday to his crew.

At the age of forty-eight years he married Margaret Donaldson Thornton, daughter of Paymaster Francis A. Thornton, U.S.N.