

GENEALOGICAL  
AND  
PERSONAL HISTORY  
OF  
Western Pennsylvania

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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General Alexander Hays was born at Franklin, Venango HAYS county, Pennsylvania, July 8, 1819. He was the fifth child and the fourth son of Samuel and Agnes (Broadfoot) Hays. This worthy couple had six children, viz.: Eleanor, John Broadfoot, David Brown, Samuel B., Alexander (the subject of this memoir), and James P. Mrs. Agnes Hays, the mother of these children, died in November, 1839. Samuel Hays, the father, died at his home in Franklin, July 6, 1868, in his eighty-fifth year. Samuel Hays, known in his home community as General Hays from his commission and service as such in the early Pennsylvania militia, was a man of high standing. Born in county Donegal, Ireland, September 10, 1783; at the age of seven, with his mother, Mrs. Eleanor Hays, he emigrated to the United States and located in Venango county, Pennsylvania, then an almost unbroken forest just opening to settlement. Eleanor Hays died in 1822. General Samuel Hays served as treasurer and sheriff of Venango county and in both branches of the general assembly of Pennsylvania, and was elected to the twenty-eighth congress of the United States, entering that body in 1843. He later served as United States marshal for the Western District of Pennsylvania, and was associate judge of Venango county, and all these positions he filled with honor and integrity.

On his maternal side Alexander Hays was of Scotch lineage, the Broadfoot family having come to Pennsylvania early in the last century, and they, too, found a home in its northwestern corner. The family name is chiefly known and localized in Wigtonshire, though frequently met with in other parts of Scotland. The Broadfoots were a numerous family that came from a distinguished Scotch ancestry, of which they were very proud.

Alexander Hays received a common school education in his native town, and later entered Allegheny College at Meadville. Subsequently he received an appointment as cadet in the Military Academy at West Point, where he graduated in 1844, and where he had been the fellow student of U. S. Grant and Winfield S. Hancock. Immediately on leaving West Point he was assigned to duty, with the brevet of second lieutenant, in the Fourth Infantry, to which U. S. Grant also belonged. The Mexican war breaking

out about this time, his regiment was among the first to advance upon the enemy's territory, and in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Lieutenant Hays captured, in connection with Lieutenant Woods, likewise a Pennsylvanian, the first gun wrested from the enemy. In this engagement he received a wound in the leg, and in recognition of his gallantry in these actions he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant, and transferred to the Eighth Infantry. His wound unfitting him for active duty, he was sent on recruiting service to Western Pennsylvania, where he soon enlisted a battalion of five hundred men from the hardy pioneers of that region, and rejoined the army at Vera Cruz, participating in all the engagements until the end of the Mexican war. His list of battles numbered twenty, ending at Zacultapan.

On the restoration of peace, Lieutenant Hays resigned his commission in the army and engaged in civil pursuits. His education at West Point made him a skilled engineer, and the country just then awakening to the importance of railroad construction, had need of his services. While engaged on an extensive work in bridge engineering for the Allegheny Valley Railroad, Fort Sumter was fired on. Without waiting to finish his work, he laid it aside, saying to his wife as he did so, "That kind of work is now ended. My country calls, and I must hasten to the field." He enlisted in a militia company in Pittsburgh, known as the City Guard, of which he was chosen captain. This company became part of the Twelfth Regiment, for the three months' service, and Captain Hays was commissioned major. In the summer of 1861 he was appointed captain of the Sixteenth United States Infantry; at the close of the term of service of the Twelfth he returned home, and at once set about recruiting a regiment for the war. His companions of the old "City Guard" whom he had converted into real soldiers, followed him, and his regiment was designated the Sixty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers, Major Hays being commissioned colonel. Its history is bright with laurels, and red with the blood of its decimated ranks. In a severe engagement at Second Bull Run, Colonel Hays, in leading his men up an embankment occupied by the enemy, was shot in the leg, and that limb badly shattered. His services in this and subsequent actions did not pass without recognition from the government. He was appointed and confirmed brigadier-general of volunteers, and lieutenant-colonel in the regular army.

Before General Hays had entirely recovered from his wound he was assigned to the command of the Third Brigade of Casey's Division, Twenty-second Corps, in charge of the defenses before and around Washington. During this time he was preparing his brigade for the eventful days of July, 1863, when the Fourth of '76 was re-endeared to our heart's affection, in the new baptism of blood and tears. On the third day of the battle of Gettysburg, General Hays, commanding the Third Division of the Second Army Corps, finds himself opposed to General Pickett and others of General Hays' classmates at West Point, and comrades of the Mexican war,

had been cannonading the opposing lines for some time without effect; then moves his troops across the field, thinking, no doubt, that his veterans will drive these raw militia like chaff before the wind. But they meet General Hays and his veterans; he has put fight into them. He restrains himself and his men until the enemy is at close quarters. Then the word is "Up and at them!" His rapid, well-directed volleys sent the column reeling in confusion back upon its rear and center. A hurricane, charged with lead and fire and death consumes them. The battle was won. This was the decisive charge, and General Hays was a hero among the heroes of Gettysburg. He takes from the enemy that day twenty-two regimental banners or battle flags, three thousand stand of arms, and captures about twice the number of his command. Out of sixteen mounted orderlies he has but two left. He has lost all of his colonels; lieutenant-colonels command brigades; lieutenants command regiments. Two of his horses are killed under him; his entire staff is unhorsed. Their steeds lie dead where they fell, or are in their last agonies.

A correspondent of a Buffalo newspaper, himself a soldier, and who was upon that fatal hill when the battle was at its height, beholding the deeds of valor of this brave leader, and his fearlessness when the very air seemed freighted with danger, thus described him:

I wish you could have seen the picture, just at the close of last Friday's battle, on the left of our centre, of which his splendid figure formed a prominent part. Our little brigade, which had been lying on Cemetery Hill, was ordered over to the position that was so valiantly but unsuccessfully charged by Pettigrew's rebel division. We hurried there through a storm of shot and shell, but only arrived in time to see the grand finale, the tableau vivants, and, alas, morants, at the close of the drama. The enemy's batteries were still playing briskly, and their sharpshooters kept up a lively fire, but their infantry, slain and wounded and routed, were pouring, prisoners, into our lines throughout their whole extent. Then enter Alexander Hays, brigadier-general United States Army, the brave American soldier. Six feet or more in height, erect and smiling, lightly holding in hand his horse—the third within an hour, a noble animal, his flanks be-spattered with blood, he seized a captured rebel flag, handing one to each of his aides, David Shields and George P. Corts, all three dashing along in front of our division line, trailing ignominiously in the dust the enemy's flags, now rushing out in the open field, a mark for a hundred sharpshooters, but never touched, now quietly cantering back to our lines to be welcomed with a storm of cheers. I reckon him the grandest view of my life. I bar not Niagara. It was the arch spirit of glorious Victory triumphing wildly over the fallen foe. It is not my good fortune to be personally acquainted with this General Alexander Hays, but I wish everyone, as far as I can effect it, to honor him as the bravest of soldiers, and love him as the best-hearted of men. A true chevalier he must be, *sans peur et sans reproche*. It seems miraculous that General Hays escaped unharmed.

The character of General Hays was manifested in the letter acknowledging the receipt of a magnificent sword, presented him by the citizens of Pittsburgh, a few months after the battle of Gettysburg, in which he says:

When the rebellion broke upon us like a tornado, in the desecration of our flag at Sumter, I took oath never to sheath my sword until honorable peace should restore us to one glorious Union.

General Walker, in his "History of the Second Army Corps," thus speaks of General Hays at Gettysburg:

Here was to be seen the new division commander, General Alexander Hays, with his staff and his flag following him, dashing along the skirmish line, inciting his men to renewed activity, in the eye of both armies. Such demonstrations which, with General Hays, were of frequent occurrence, were likely to give the impression

that he was a mere hot-headed fighter; whereas, in fact, his extraordinary vivacity in battle was united with a soundness of judgment and firmness of temper which made him one of the most useful officers in the service.

Of the Confederate battle flags captured, General Hancock's official report of the battle of Gettysburg is quoted: "There were undoubtedly thirty-three colors captured." Of these General Alexander Hays' command, the Third Division of the Second Army Corps, captured twenty-two. In all the subsequent battles of the Army of the Potomac, General Hays took an active part, with no less honors than he received at Gettysburg. On the first day of May, 1864, the Army of the Potomac marched into the Wilderness. Here was fought one of the most desperate battles of the war. On the 5th of May, General Hays, then in command of the survivors of Kearney's old division of heroes, occupying the key to Grant's position, was shot through the head, not dying for three hours, so wonderful was his vitality. Of his death a few of the reports of officers who witnessed the battle are quoted:

In General Hancock's official report of the battle of the Wilderness, he says:

General Alexander Hays, that dauntless soldier, whose intrepid and chivalric bearing on so many battlefields had won for him the highest renown, was killed at the head of his command.

General Grant, in his Personal Memoirs, speaking of the death of his old classmate, says:

One of our most gallant commanders, General Alexander Hays, was killed. I had been with him at West Point, and had served with him through the Mexican war. He was a most gallant officer, ready to lead his command wherever ordered. With him it was 'Come, boys,' not 'Go.'

The death of General Hays is thus described by General Walker, in his History of the Second Army Corps:

The losses had been heavy. Among the killed of that afternoon was General Alexander Hays. At Gettysburg, at Bristoe, at Mine Run, at Morton's Ford, this devoted officer rode, with his staff and flag behind him, the mark of a thousand riflemen, the admiration of the two armies, only to fall in a tangled wilderness, where scarce a regiment could note his person, and derive inspiration from his courage and martial enthusiasm. All the peculiar advantages of the Army of the Potomac were sacrificed in this jungle-fighting into which they were called to engage. Of what use here was the tactical skill and perfection of form; of what use here the example and the personal influence of a Hays or a Hancock?

In his "Campaigning with Grant," General Horace Porter says:

The fighting had become exceedingly severe on that part of the field. General Alexander Hays, one of the most gallant officers in the service, commanding one of Hancock's divisions, finding that his line had broken, rushed forward to reorganize his troops, and was instantly killed. \* \* \* After remaining some time with Hancock's men, I returned to headquarters to report the situation to the general-in-chief, and carry to him the sad intelligence of Hays' death. General Grant was by no means a demonstrative man, but upon learning the intelligence I brought, he was visibly affected. He was seated upon the ground with his back against a tree, still whittling pine sticks. He sat for a time without uttering a word, and then, speaking in a low voice, and pausing between the sentences, said "Hays and I were cadets together for three years. We served for a time in the same regiment in the Mexican war. He was a noble man and a gallant officer. I am not surprised that he met his death at the head of his troops; it was just like him. He was a man who would never follow, but would always lead in battle."

What more fitting tribute could be paid the memory of General Hays than that in the formal official report of his death:

The fighting became very fierce at once, the lines of battle being very close, the musketry continuous and deadly along the whole line. General Alexander Hays, an officer of distinguished gallantry, was killed at the head of his command.

The thoughts and feelings of General Hays just before entering upon that desperate conflict in the Wilderness, where he lost his life, were expressed in a letter written upon the morning on which the march commenced:

This morning was beautiful, for  
Lightly and brightly shone the sun,  
As if the morn was a jocund one.

Although we were anticipating to march at 8 o'clock, it might have been an appropriate harbinger of the regeneration of mankind; but it only brought to remembrance, through the throats of many bugles, that duty enjoined upon each one, perhaps, before the setting sun, to lay down his life for his country.

The body of General Hays was brought to Pittsburgh and buried from the First Presbyterian Church with all the honors of war. Business was suspended and the city paid homage to the memory of one loved and admired by all. Soon after the close of the war a movement was inaugurated by the soldiers of General Hays' command to erect a memorial to his memory. In a short time sufficient funds had been collected to erect the monument which today marks his resting place. Other memorials have been erected to the memory of General Hays as follows: The monument in the public square in Franklin, Pennsylvania, his native place; that marking the spot where he fell in the Wilderness, Virginia; the bronze tablet placed by the city of Franklin in Cullom Memorial Hall, West Point; Victory Monument, West Point, and the magnificent Hays monument erected by the state of Pennsylvania on the site of the general's position on the Gettysburg battlefield. Two histories of Alexander Hays have been published: "Under the Red Patch," by Gilbert A. Hays, and "Life and Letters of Alexander Hays," by George T. Fleming and Gilbert A. Hays.

The following is a list of battles in which General Hays participated: Mexican War—Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Santa Fe, Pasco de Orejas, National Bridge, Huamantla, El Penal, Pueblo, Atlixco, San Augustin de la Palma, Tehuacan, Galaxca, Flaxcala, Orizaba Cordova, Tulancingo, Zacultapan. Rebellion—1861-1865—Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, Peach Orchard, White Oak Swamp, Glendale, Malvern, Bristoe (August, 1862), Bull Run, Groveton, Gettysburg, Auburn, Bristoe (October, 1863), Locust Grove, Mine Run Expedition, Morton's Ford and the Wilderness.

Alexander Hays and Annie Adams McFadden, daughter of John B. McFadden, of Pittsburgh, were married February 19, 1846. Of this union there were nine children: Agnes Milnor, John McF., died in infancy; Alden F., Rachel McF., Gilbert A., Allan N., died in infancy; Martha A., Alfred P., James M. Agnes Milnor Hays married George A. Gormly: children: Eleanor A., Samuel, Mary A., Edwin, died in infancy. Alden Farrelly Hays married (first) Lizzie Stucke, who died September 9, 1886, with her infant daughter; married (second) Augusta Ulrich, who died December 20, 1894, with her infant daughter; children: Martha A., James Byers, George A. Rachel McFadden Hays married John S. Sullivan; chil-

dren: Anne Eleanor, John S. Jr., died in infancy, and Alex. H. Gilbert Adams Hays married Sarah Fleming; children: Alexander, Fredericka F., Davis S., George F., Joseph Fleming, Gilbert McF., died in infancy; James M., John Alden, died young, and Elizabeth F. Martha Alden Hays married Robert Bruce Black; children: Alexander H., Margaret R., and Agnes A. Alfred Pearson Hays married (first) Mary Isabella Harper; she died October 31, 1895; married (second) Rachel E. Allen; one son, Alexander B. James McFadden Hays married Olive Byers; children: Frances Byers and Alden F.

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