

CW/VFM-73: Alfred Pleasonton

Pleasanton graduated from West Point in 1844, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the 1st US Dragoons, which was first stationed at Fort Atkinson in Iowa. He fought in the Mexican-American War as part of the 2nd Dragoons, and received a brevet promotion to 1st lieutenant for gallantry in the Battle of Palo Alto and the Battle of Resaca de la Palma in 1846. After the war, he served as regimental adjutant and was promoted to captain in 1855.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Pleasanton remained stationed in Washington, D.C with the 2nd Dragoons. He was not promoted as quickly as some of his comrades, and thus was only a major by 1862. He fought in the Peninsula Campaign without much notice paid to him until he was promoted to brigadier general on July 16th, 1862. He assumed division command of the cavalry on September 2nd, only to be wounded fifteen days later by an artillery shell at Antietam (9/17/1862). He was upset that his actions did not culminate in a promotion.

Continuing to be ever ambitious, he convinced Hooker to vouch for his actions at Chancellorsville (5/1-3/1863). This led to his promotion to major general on June 22nd, 1863. The first battle that he fought in his new position was at Gettysburg (7/1-3/1863). He led the cavalry forces at the Battle of Brandy Station, which was the largest cavalry battle of the war. However, during the infantry battle, he was not an asset to Meade as he could hardly tell him the position of the enemy; and in 1864 he was transferred to the Trans-Mississippi Theater.

In 1868, due to tension with other cavalry officers, Pleasanton resigned his commission and was placed on the Army's retired list as a major in 1888. After his resignation, he worked for the Bureau of Internal Revenue (the present day IRS) until he was asked to resign. He died in his sleep in 1897 and is buried in the Congressional Cemetery.

Telegraph from Pleasanton to General Ingalls:

6/26/1863- This telegraph was sent to inform Ingalls of Buford's need of a good quartermaster.

Typed copy: 1pp.

Original document: 1pp.

Photograph of Pleasonton and Custer:
Original document: 1pp.

List of Pleasonton's Promotions and Service:

Major General of Volunteers-1863
West Point
Served in Mexican War
Promoted to 1st lieutenant-1849
Promoted to Captain-1855
Promoted to Major of the 2nd Cavalry-1862
Served through the Peninsula Campaign
Commanded division of cavalry of Army of Potomac
Brevet Lieutenant Colonel and Brigadier General
Commander in Chief of Cavalry at Gettysburg
Defeated at Gettysburg, price is Missouri-1864

Original document: 1pp.

Keywords: Union – East; Papers - Military; Army – Infantry; Soldiers – Generals

Location: Civil War Vertical File Manuscripts, Special Collections & College Archives,
Musselman Library at Gettysburg College.

See also: [Civil War Sources in Special Collections](#)