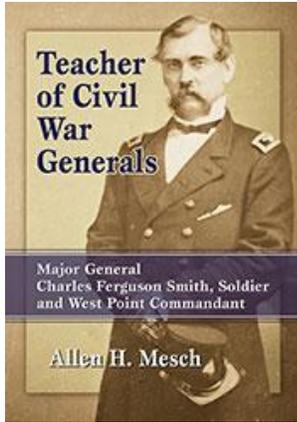


Major General Charles F. Smith - Philadelphia's Forgotten General

Teacher of Civil War Generals - Major General Charles Ferguson Smith, Soldier and West Point Commandant



From the training field at West Point to the entrenchments at Fort Donelson, Charles Ferguson Smith was the soldier's soldier. Shelby Foote said, "He was Regular Army to the shoe-soles." During his nearly forty-two year career, General Smith was a teacher, mentor, and role model for many young officers who became prominent Civil War generals. Smith served at the US Military Academy from 1829 to 1842 as Instructor of Tactics, Adjutant to the Superintendent, and Commandant of Cadets. He was respected and admired by his former students and future officers including Grant, Halleck, Longstreet, and Sherman. Grant considered "General Scott and Captain C. F. Smith, the Commandant of Cadets, as the two men most to be envied in the nation. I retained a high regard for both of them up to the day of their death."

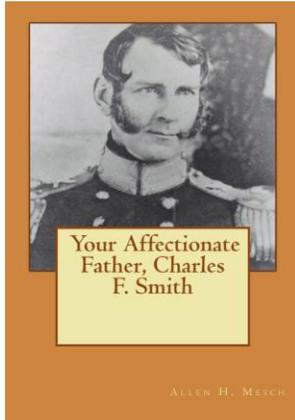
After West Point, Smith continued to serve as the beau ideal soldier and officer winning praise for his bravery and courage. He set an example to junior officers in the Mexican War leading his light battalion to victories and earning three field promotions. Smith served with Albert Johnston and other future Confederate officers in the Mormon War. At the onset of the Civil War, General Scott assigned him to the task of organizing the defenses of Washington. Smith was assigned to the Union Army's Western Department, where he served under John Fremont and Henry Halleck. He mentored his former students U. S. Grant and W. T. Sherman and counseled Lew Wallace on leadership.

His moment of glory came when he directed a charge on the Rebel works at Fort Donelson. General George Cullum portrayed Smith as "the very model of a soldier, calm, prudent, and self-poised, yet, in the hour of danger, bold almost to rashness." The capture of the Confederate rifle pits helped convince General Simon Buckner to surrender "unconditionally" the following day. The Union victory was an important turning point in the war and led to Grant's rise to fame. When communication problems occurred between Grant and Halleck, Smith led the Union advance down the Tennessee River to Pittsburg Landing.

His sudden death from infection of a severe wound on his leg deprived the Army of an outstanding officer. General William T. Sherman believed, "Had C. F. Smith lived Grant would have disappeared to history after Donelson." General Wallace, who bristled under Smith's command, later described him as "an ideal friend in my ideal soldier" and revered "the hero even as I loved the man."

This long overdue biography reveals a man who General Halleck called a "faithful officer, an excellent disciplinarian, an able commander, and a modest, courteous gentleman."

Your Affectionate Father, Charles F. Smith



General Charles Ferguson Smith was more than just an Army officer. He was a loving father and husband. From December 1855 to April 1862, Charles wrote to his daughter, Fanny Mactier Smith. Through these letters, we gain an intimate view of antebellum life in a military family. The correspondence includes unblemished observations about Charles's experiences and fatherly advice. Allen Mesch has documented this fatherly love in *Your Affectionate Father, Charles F. Smith*.

Most of the letters were written between 1855 and 1860 when Lieutenant Colonel Smith served with the Tenth Infantry Regiment in the Minnesota Territory where he led an expedition to the Red River of the North and then in the Utah Territory as an officer in the Mormon Expedition.

Mr. Mesch added numerous footnotes to explain terms, describe locations, and provide brief biographies of people referred to in Charles' correspondence. This work continues after General Smith's death with information on Smith's children and grandchildren.

About the Author

Allen Mesch is an author, educator, and historian. Allen teaches classes on the Civil War at Collin College. He has visited over 134 Civil War sites and shares his over 4,000 photographs through his web site Civil War Journeys (<http://www.civil-war-journeys.org>). Mr. Mesch writes a Civil War blog called Salient Points (<http://salient-points.blogspot.com>) and reviewed books for the *Civil War Courier*. Allen earned a masters degree from MIT and his bachelors from Clarkson University.

Please see Allen's web site, www.AllenMesch.com, for more information.

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