General Rawles Tells Stories of West Point's Famous Class of '61

45 Young Lieutenants, Graduates All, Went Into the Civil War, Some With the Confederate Army--- Many Whose Youthful Autographs Are Shown Here Won Lasting Fame --Others Went to Quick Heroic Death

BRIGADIER GENERAL JACOB B. RAWLES

THERE are several retired army officers living in San Francisco whose experiences have crowded the years of their services with many striking anecdotes, grave, gay and out of the ordinary. Many of these veterans have to be made to talk. The making comes after by a certain ingratiation, on the part of an interviewer, into the very spirit of their past experiences, and that has been the case with what has been gleaned from General Jacob B. Rawles, formerly in command of the Presidio and the artillery defenses of San Francisco harbor, and one of the many who has been beguiled by the attractions of this fair city to make it his permanent abode.

In his den at his home on Green street, within hearing distance of the bugle calls at the Presidio, hangs a large framed cardboard, upon which, scattered like many visiting cards, in artistic arrangement are the original autographs of his classmates, of those cadets who were in one of the two five year courses at West Point, and graduated May 6, 1861.

It was the halo of these names of nearly 50 years ago—some of them since famous in the country's history—that broke the spell of his reticence and induced him to venture into a charmingly reminiscent field.

A NOTED CLASS

"You see," he said, "my class was one of two ordered to take a five year course; mine, I believe, the only one completing the full five years. When James Buchanan was president and Jeff Davis secretary of war the latter introduced the five year innovation. Congress investigated the matter and Senator Foote of Vermont and others I cannot recall had the courses restored to four years. We, however, of the five year course who entered in 1856 graduated May 6, 1861, a month after Fort Sumter was bombarded, and the following July the class, who would have been graduated later, were rushed through on account of the great war that had just begun.

"It was a peculiar coincidence that I should have begun my service with the Third artillery as a second lieutenant; should have been ordered to California, and, after a transfer to the Fifth, Fourth and First artillery, should end my service of 42 years by being again assigned to the Third (as its last colonel) and again ordered to California. In other words, I began at the bottom in point of rank in the Third and ended at the top, both times being ordered to California. The regimental organizations were changed after my service as colonel, and the Third is now organized as a corps of coast artillery. The first time I was ordered here I didn't come, being transferred to the Fifth artillery, in which regiment I served during the civil war and for years afterward. But when I did come to California, some 12 years ago, it was to stay, for I was retired five years later in 1903, and will probably make San Francisco my home for the remainder of my days.

"Out of my class of over 60 who started that course 45 graduated, most of the derelicts being southerners who went home before graduation.

"Of the 50, whose signatures are here, nearly all of whom fought on one side or the other in the great rebellion, only a single dozen of us are left to answer the daily reveille, the others having all heard the last taps and gone to the eternal encampment, where war no longer sounds its rude alarm.

"Out of that 50, 11 fought with the confederacy, all the rest being in the federal armies; eight were killed in battle or died soon after of wounds, some 30 have died since the war, two passing away soon after its close.

"Of the dozen men now living three were major generals of volunteers, six are now retired brigadier generals, three were awarded medals of honor for gallantry, two were captains, and only one of the dozen went out of the service before the close of the civil war.

"There are some distinguished men in that class, some on one side, some on the other. Seven became major generals, eleven brigadier generals, six colonels, nine lieutenant colonels and many majors and captains.

"The living are Adelbert Ames, provisional governor of Mississippi during the reconstruction, major general of volunteers, and awarded a medal by congress for gallantry. The brigadier generals retired are John I. Rodgers, Henry C. Hasbrauck, J. Ford Kent, Adelbert R. Buffington, John W. Barlow and myself; Henry A. du Pont, a lieutenant colonel, now United States senator from Delaware; Eugene Beauharnais Beaumont, major general of volunteers, both awarded medals of honor; Wright Rives, a captain and brevet lieutenant colonel; Leroy L. Janes, captain, and one other whom I have not heard from in so long a time I don't know where he is to be found.

KILPATRICK AS A PAINTER

"Judson Kilpatrick, the great union cavalry leader of New Jersey, became a major general, and who is too well known to need mention, wrote his autograph there. He was full of vim at the Point, and he became a spirited leader afterward. Kilpatrick was in love before he graduated and had a New York artist paint some handsome pictures which he presented to his artistic fiancee. I don't know how true it was but the cadets used to tease him about it, claiming he led the lady to believe that they were the products of his own genius. At any rate, Kilpatrick could paint things red for the confederates. Kilpatrick's name will live by the side of the greatest of our fighters of that period.

TWO GREAT COUNTRYMEN

"The boldest signature there is of Thomas L. Rosser of Carthage, Tex., who became one of the ablest cavalrymen in the confederate army, rising to the rank of major general. He was an aggressive fighter, and among other things whipped Banks in the Shenandoah valley, being under Early, and part of the time himself in command. After the war Custer, who graduated in the July class after mine, the dashing, dauntless Custer, who swore at minie balls when they buzzed about him, helped Rosser obtain an important position on the corps of engineers in the construction of the Northern Pacific railroad. Rosser died only recently."

DU PONT LED THE CLASSS

"Opposite Kilpatrick's name is that of Henry A. du Pont, who graduated at the head of his class. Du Pont was brevetted a lieutenant colonel for distinguished services at Cedar creek, Virginia, and awarded a medal of honor for the same, being chief of artillery of the army of West Virginia.

"He resigned in '75 and later has been a United States senator from Delaware. He knew how to burn powder when it was needed, and he knows now how to make it, for you have heard of the Du Ponts, haven't you?

"Guy V. Henry wrote a clear legible hand. Another medal of honor man. He led the assault of his brigade at Cold harbor in June, '64, and had two horses shot under him, being then a brigadier general of volunteers, and in 1890 obtained that rank in the regular army for gallantry in action at Rosebud creek, Montana, during one of the campaigns against the Indians, where he was severely wounded. A natural born soldier was Henry, and a fighter. I think his father was in the service before him."

"We had another Henry in our class, Mathias W. There is his signature. His nickname was 'Pealeg' Henry. He was from Kentucky. He continued in the service till August after graduating, then resigned, went south and became a major of artillery in the confederate army.

"Here is the name of Emory Upton, a brave, gallant soldier, brevetted and promoted time and again. He wrote the tactics so long used after the war. He became a major general, both brevet, and of volunteers. He was a colonel in the regular army and stationed here at the Presidio when he died. Upton was from Batavia, N. Y. He was the center of an exciting incident at West Point in the fall of 1860, during the presidential campaign. Lincoln, Douglas, Breckinridge and Bell were all candidates and the cadets arranged for a straw vote, each cadet depositing his ballot secretly in a box in a long shed near the quarters. The balloting was generally secret, for several reasons. There were a good many southern boys at the academy and many northerners had southern roommates, whose friendship they held in high regard, and as the feeling was very intense throughout the country, before the impending crisis of that four years of fratricidal warfare, our personal opinions were more or less guarded. Upton was a bold fellow and thoroughly radical in his views. He had attended Oberlin college before the war and was not liked by the southerners. Crossing the campus on the way to deposit his ballot, he waved it above his head, shouting, 'I'm going to vote for Abraham Lincoln, and I don't give a rap who knows it!' His declaration was the signal for a fight, several southerners immediately taunting him, and one fellow named Gibbs of South Carolina going so far as to insinuate that Upton had been a roommate of a negro at Oberlin. The lie was passed and the fun began, one of our classmates, I think it was Charlie Campbell, though himself a southerner, standing by Upton to the extent of insisting on fair play. A victory for one side or the other would have only engendered bitterness, and before anything serious happened cooler heads put a stop to the fight. Campbell, by the way, was from Missouri, and left a month after graduation, becoming a major of infantry in a southern regiment from that state. I have no record of his death, and he may still be alive, in which case he would add one more to the dozen survivors.

THE CLASS ARRESTED AS REBELS

"A laughable incident happened to my class after graduation. We all went to New York on the way to Washington, got our uniforms and were bedecked with red, white and blue ribbons galore. The old saying is 'Everything is fair in love and war,' but Cupid did me a favor at the time that saved me from the joke that happened to the rest of my class, and proved that love sometimes can beat war at any kind of a game. After the class left New York for Washington, some one, who evidently knew little about us, sent a telegram to the Philadelphia authorities to intercept us, as we were a crowd of dreadful, fire eating rebels going south to fight in the southern army. The result was the entire class was met at the old ferry in Philadelphia by a squad of policemen and arrested—all but me. I had stopped over at New Brunswick, N. J., to see a certain lady, who has been my sweetheart ever since, now nearly 50 years."

The general's eyes brightened as he looked over at his wife, whose hair is now white as snow.

A SOUTHERNER'S EMBARRASSMENT

"The Philadelphians soon found out their mistake and in place of yawning prison doors the cadets were soon being borne along like triumphant heroes. They were given a banquet and sent rejoicing on to Washington. I had caught up with them and we were warmly received at the capital and attended a reception given by President Lincoln, with whom we all shook hands. Some of the southern boys were with us, having graduated, and the discipline of West Point life having not been sufficiently shaken off for them to take such a pronounced stand as did Pelham. I remember one poor fellow turned to us and exchaimed, 'My God! what would my father say if he knew I was here at Lincoln's reception!' He afterward resigned and went south to cast his lot with the lost cause.

GETTYSBURG LEFT ITS MARK

"There were lots of just as deserving and some equally as distinguished in that class as any I have mentioned. There was Malbone F. Watson of Catskill, N. Y., whose name is next to Pelham's. Watson was brevetted a major and lost a leg at Gettysburg. His wife came on to the field of battle and helped dress his wound. His daughter called on us years afterward in Washington.

"Another Gettysburg hero was Charles E. Hazlett of Zanesville, O., whose large signature is recorded. Charles Hazlett was kneeling over the dying form of General Stephen Weed at Gettysburg on July 2, taking Weed's last words, when a bullet struck him in the forehead, killing him instantly.

DRILLING IN DISHABILLE

"After our class had reached Washington we were brought before old General Winfield Scott, and as the troops from all over the north were pouring into the capital in response to Lincoln's first call for 75,000 men many of us were detailed as instructors. I drilled the famous Sixty-ninth New York, an Irish regiment, also the Second Connecticut and the Sixth Maine. The latter regiment having come from a comparatively cold country, found the heat in Washington in June excessive. I remember an amusing thing that happened while I was drilling those Maine fellows. One day it was exceptionally warm and I went out to instruct one of the companies. As I drew near I was astonished at the amazing attire in which they were arrayed, and could not help but wonder where the company had procured such a seemingly airy outfit. Could it be possible that they had gone crazy. Nowadays it might have been called a case of pajamas. When I began to see through the unusual uniform the captain or first sergeant, I forget which, stepped up and said, 'Lieutenant, bein' as it was so tarnashun hot I calc'lated you wouldn't mind if I jest let the fellahs come aout to drill in their shirt sleeves and withaout bein' pestered with theah trousahs.' Perhaps you can imagine the ludicrous spectacle. They were great big, tall, rawboned men, 70 of them, lined up at attention, dressed only in cap, shirt and undergarments. Well, I put them through the manual as they were, but I conveyed to the officer in command somewhat impressively that such costumes were more fitted for the privacy of the barrack room than for dress parade. A green lot of fellows they were, more fired, however, with a desire to preserve the union than to preserve the amenities of ordinary conventionality or military regulations.

CANNON WHEEL PUNISHMENT

"After being on recruiting service and later regimental quartermaster of the Fifth artillery, I was finally assigned to Battery G and sent with the Banks expedition under sealed orders, sailing with my battery on the Jennie Beals, a clipper ship, on December 9, 1862. Our destination was New Orleans. Some stringent measures had to be resorted to sometimes to maintain authority and discipline. I always avoided harsh measures when possible, but I remember an incident, on account of its sequel, which happened in New Orleans. The union forces had occupied the city under General Benjamin F. Butler, whose daughter, by the way, married General Ames. Ames commanded the gallant Griffin's battery, D of the Fifth, which I afterward commanded. Banks relieved Butler, and for various reasons, besides those that are obvious to the average person, the best of discipline was ever demanded and desired. We were on our honor in that old southern city to maintain ourselves like gentlemen, officer and soldier alike. I was greatly exasperated and annoyed by some in my command who had disgraced their uniforms, and for punishment had them tied to cannon wheels until their conduct was greatly altered for the better. Time slipped away, and some 20 years afterward, one day as I stepped out of a barber's chair, a man spoke to me, saying, 'Excuse me, but is your name Rawles—Major Rawles?' I told him it was. Said he: 'Are you the same officer who as a little first lieutenant tied some men to cannon wheels in New Orleans?' I said that I was. 'Well,' he continued, 'I want to shake hands with you. I was one of those fellows, one of those lawless devils, and you did just right. Since then I have learned how to become a soldier.' He proved to be an old service man, who had, as he said, learned to be a soldier.

"Speaking of Ames, there was a good soldier. He was brevetted a major general for gallantry at Bull Run in '61, where he was severely wounded while in command of a section of that same Griffin's battery. He also held the rank of major general of volunteers for distinguished service at the capture of Fort Fisher, North Carolina. Ames was another medal of honor man. He resigned in 1870.

THE PICAYUNE'S PASQUINADE

"The New Orleans Picayune perpetrated as clever a piece of wit in the form of a verse of four lines as was printed during the war, and was appreciated alike by the Yankees and the southerners. In fact, I think we officers who saw a campaign that should have been successful end in disaster, through incompetency, appreciated the rebels' lampoon on General Nathan P. Banks more than the people of Louisiana. The Red river campaign was undertaken by Banks, and history has recorded its dismal failure. I could tell you much about that campaign, and I think I voice the opinion of the majority of the officers who participated in it when I say it was a needless failure, due to the incompetency of our commander. The Red river was sometimes quite navigable, and Banks used some 30 river steamers to transport supplies from New Orleans to Grand Ecare, the base of operations, about 60 miles above Alexandria. When the waters receded, which was before the steamers were ordered back to New Orleans, Banks found himself with the transports stranded. We had seen some severe fighting, such as the battle of Sabine Cross Roads or, as the confederates called it, the battle of Mansfield. I lost two guns, caissons, battery wagons and some 16 head of mules and was ordered to proceed to New Orleans and get the proper equipment to replace the loss. Defeat and disaster had attended the campaign, but we had accomplished something, notwithstanding, shutting off the enemy's meat supply from Texas. While in a quandary as to what to do to get the stranded flotilla down the Red river, General Joseph Bailey of Ohio, acting engineer of that army corps, the Nineteenth, came forward and told Banks that if he would let him have 3,000 men and axes he would get the boats out in a hurry. The offer was accepted. Bailey went to work and built a jetty on each side of the river, filling in with trees and completing them with rock and earth, leaving an opening sufficiently large for the passage of the boats. The river thus dammed at its lower falls soon rose sufficiently to enable the floating of the entire fleet, which was got out and saved. After all that had happened, which later ended in Banks being relieved, the Picayune's satirist thus broke into verse:

"'Tis said that Banks has grown profane,
For once he dammed Red river,
But in revenge that sluggish stream
Has damned old Banks forever.

"The Yankees got a good deal of damning in that neck o' the woods in those days, but that satire was a morsel that most of us enjoyed."

GENERAL RAWLES' RECORD

JACOB B. RAWLES, brigadier general, United States army, retired, was born in Romeo, Mich., August 4, 1839; appointed to West Point military academy May 6, 1856; graduated May 6, 1861. His appointment was signed by Jefferson Davis, then secretary of war, and his commission as second lieutenant bears the signature of Abraham Lincoln, then just entered on his first term as president. He was promoted first lieutenant May 14, 1861, and served during the civil war and continuously thereafter, a period of 42 years, till his retirement in 1903. From drilling volunteers, recruiting and serving as regimental quartermaster of the Fifth United States artillery during its organization, he went south with Battery G of that regiment December 9, 1862, sailing under sealed orders on the clipper ship Jennie Beals with the Bank's expedition, landing in New Orleans. Was in the advance guard of the attack on and siege of Port Hudson, the first engagement being the battle of Plain store, and took part in the continuous heavy fighting till the surrender of that port, July 8, 1863, including engagements from Baton Rouge to that place, for which he was brevetted captain for "gallant and meritorious service" on the day of surrender. Remained at Port Hudson several weeks after its fall, engaged in dismantling fortifications. Wintered in New Orleans 1863-64. In the spring of 1864 accompanied the army of the gulf and Red river campaign, attached to the cavalry division, mounted as horse artillery and in the advance guard. Participated in the actions of Henderson's hill, Wilson's farm, Crump's corners and the battle of Sabine crossroads, or, as called by the confederates, the battle of Mansfield; also in most of the cavalry skirmishes during the march, till the retreat of the army to New Orleans in the summer of 1864. Took part in the bombardment and siege of Fort Morgan, Mobile bay, and after its surrender was transferred to the Fifth corps of the army of the Potomac, in command of Batteries G and D, then consolidated. In winter quarters 1864-65 at Fort Mansfield, adjacent to the Weldon railroad, on the line of defense. In the spring of 1865 participated in most of the actions, skirmishes and battles of the Fifth corps against Lee's army, including operations at Petersburg, Va., and until Lee's surrender. Again brevetted for gallantry to rank of major April 9, 1865, for services in the army of the Potomac.

Serving some 15 different stations since the civil war, General Rawles had yellow fever at Key West in 1867, and being stationed there again in 1879, he saved the command from the dreaded disease by removal to Tampa, Fla. He was several years at Fort Warren, Boston harbor, historic as the prison during the war for Mason and Slidell and other noted prisoners. He was sent to Fort Douglas, Utah, to enforce the Edmunds law against the Mormons in 1885, and during the Spanish-American war fortified Charleston harbor, South Carolina, coming to San Francisco harbor in the fall of 1898, and serving here until his retirement for age in 1903.