

GENERAL SOOY-SMITH'S LONG AND USEFUL CAREER AN INSPIRATION TO THE YOUTH OF AMERICA

Story of Medford's Most Famous War Hero and Engineer, Who began Life as a Poor Boy, Earned His Way Through College.

Perhaps the most famous citizen now resident of Jackson county, certainly the most famous warrior, is General William Sooy Smith, commander of cavalry in Grant's Vicksburg campaign and hero of many battles, now living upon his orchard home near Medford.

General Sooy-Smith is in his 83rd year, still vigorous and a commanding figure. In his behalf, Senator Chamberlain introduced at the present session of congress, a bill to restore him to his rank in the army—a deserved recognition of his brilliant services to his country.

In addition to his army record, General Sooy-Smith has an enviable record as an engineer, having designed and built the first steel bridge at Niagara, the Savannah, Georgia, six bridges across the Missouri river, two across the Mississippi, two across the Ohio, and many others, small and large, throughout the country, and built the first 160 feet of the Hudson river tunnel at New York and developed the pneumatic process for sub-aqueous constructions. He first devised the methods in vogue for laying the foundations of Chicago skyscrapers and aid in the development of steel buildings.

Born in Ohio

General Wm. Sooy-Smith was born at Tarlton, Pickaway county, Ohio, July 22, 1830. He received an excellent common school education in the school of that village which was an exceptionally good one, taught by a very fine teacher; and stood first in his class when he completed his course at the age of fourteen. He had an ardent desire for a collegiate education; in which he was encouraged by his father, who was unable to supply him with the money necessary for procuring it.

At the close of a conversation with his father on the subject, the latter took a quarter of a dollar from his pocket, and handing it to young Sooy-Smith, said:

"Take this, which is all the money I have. I give you my blessing with it, and hope that you will be able to work your own way through col-

General William Sooy-Smith



lege; and get the education which you and I so ardently desire."

Story of Early Struggle

Speaking of the incident, General Sooy-Smith says: "I thanked him from the bottom of my heart, and set out for Athens, the seat of the Ohio university. I had a married brother living there and made my way to his house, where I remained until I got additional preparation in an excellent school, and then got appointed as janitor at the university and took care of its three large buildings and its campus of ten acres, with its trees and gravelled walks; and made the fires in the recitation rooms, carrying the coal

up three pairs of stairs during the winter time.

"For these services I received eight cents per hour of actual work, and my room rent and tuition. In this way I worked my way through and had fifty dollars saved when I graduated at the head of my class.

Goes to West Point

"Just then the cadet who had represented our congressional district at West Point came home to die of consumption, and urged me to apply for an appointment as cadet to take his place, which I did. Our congressman, the Hon. Samuel F. Winton, gave me the appointment in preference to the sons and relatives

of his strongest political friends, after carefully examining the claims of all applicants, saying:

"Young man, I give you this appointment, now make a man of yourself."

"I assured him that I would do my best, as the tears of gratitude filled my eyes. And the satisfaction with which I sent him our cadet register from year to year, showing my place in the first five of our class, who were to be placed in the staff corps, can be better imagined than expressed.

Resigns Army Commission

"After graduating at West Point, I served in the regular army for two years; and then finding army life in time of peace idle and unpromising, I took the advice of my superior officers and resigned my commission, taught a select school for two years in Buffalo, New York, and then entered the profession of civil engineer and followed it for fifty years with most gratifying success, as shown in the following detailed account of my works, which is given not in the spirit of boasting but in the hope that it may stimulate all the young men who may peruse it, to do likewise or better if they can.

"Then let us be up and doing
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."

Engineering Exploits

In 1857 he made the first surveys for the International bridge, across the Niagara river, and was also employed by the city of Buffalo as an expert, to examine the bridge plans that were submitted.

About 1858 Gen. Smith removed to Trenton, N. J., having been elected engineer and secretary of the locomotive works in that city, then the chief iron bridge manufactory in America. While here, the civil war developed, and he was immediately sought for and commissioned colonel of the Ohio volunteers, as before mentioned. Previous to leaving the Trenton Iron Works, General Sooy-Smith had done important work for his firm in Cuba and also constructed an iron bridge across the river at Savannah, for the Savannah & Charleston Railway company, in which he sunk cylinders pneumatically, which was a novel improvement.

From the time that he re-entered the army, Gen. Sooy-Smith was steadily advanced. His part in the West Virginia campaign was an active one and he was present at Shiloh and Perryville.

An All Round Genius

General Sooy-Smith had served on numerous engineering commissions, both for government and private concerns and he was a leader in urg-

ing the government to create a board to test American metals and was a member of such a board for three years.

As an inventor and author General Sooy-Smith has also demonstrated his cleverness. He invented the first pneumatic caisson ever constructed and designed and introduced successfully a new system of fireproof building.

As an author, General Sooy-Smith is well known, although he has confined himself to reports and professional papers. His brochure entitled "The Hudson River Tunnel," was read on October 5, 1881, before the

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