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Abstract

On February 23, 1818 Jeremy Francis Gilmer was born. He went to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He served in the United States Army from 1840 until 1861 when he resigned to join the Confederate States of America Army. He rose to the rank of Major General by the end of the War Between the States. After 1865 he became involved in many organizations in Savannah. He died at the age of 65 on December 1, 1883.
Early Life

Jeremy Francis Gilmer was born on February 23, 1818, in Guilford County, North Carolina¹. His parents were Captain Robert Shaw Gilmer² and Anna Forbes Gilmer³. Jeremy received his grade school education in private schools⁴. He entered West Point Military Academy in 1835 and graduated fourth in his class in 1839⁵. Upon graduating, Jeremy was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Corps of Engineers⁶. He served for one year, from 1839 until 1840, as an assistant professor of engineering at West Point⁷.

¹ Evans, Confederate Military History V North Carolina, (Atlanta, Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 309.
² A career officer in the U.S. Army.
⁵ Ibid.
⁷ 15th Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the U. S. M. A. at West Point, 78.
The U. S. military service of Jeremy Gilmer started at Fort Schuyler, New York. This fort, which he helped build, was built to protect the New York Harbor. Upon its completion in 1844, Gilmer was then sent to Washington D. C. where he served as assistant to the Chief Engineer. He was promoted to First Lieutenant on December 29, 1845. During the Mexican War, he served as Chief Engineer of the Army of the West. He served as Chief Engineer in the building of Fort Marcy at Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1848, he surveyed battlefields around Mexico City, and he was in charge of repairs to Fort Madison and Fort Washington in Maryland. Later in the year, he was sent to Savannah, Georgia to help in the construction of Forts Pulaski and Jackson.

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9 Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. M. A. at West Point, New York, number 989.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Evans, Confederate Military History V North Carolina, 310.

13 Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. M. A. at West Point, number 989.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
the next four to five years, he travelled around the South to help survey and improve rivers and repair forts\textsuperscript{16}.

On July 1, 1853, Jeremy Gilmer was promoted to Captain, Corps of Engineers\textsuperscript{17}. From 1853 until 1859, he stayed in the South to work on forts and rivers\textsuperscript{18}. In mid 1859, he was ordered to San Francisco, California to take charge at Fort Point and Lime Point Bluff\textsuperscript{19}. On June 29, 1861, Jeremy Gilmer resigned his commission with the United States Army after twenty-one years of service to join the Confederate States Army\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Wakelyn, Jon L. Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy, 202.

\textsuperscript{19} Scott, Robert N. War of Rebellion, (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1891)

\textsuperscript{20} Evans, Confederate Military History V North Carolina, 310.
In September of 1861, Jeremy Gilmer was commissioned as a major of Engineers in the Confederate States Army. His first assignment was Chief of Engineers on the staff of General Albert Sidney Johnson. He was with General Johnson at the Battle of Shiloh where General Johnson was killed the first day, and late on the second day Gilmer, himself, was wounded. Gilmer was present at Fort Henry at its surrender but he escaped capture.

Throughout the war, Jeremy Gilmer travelled around the South to help build up the defensive strength of the forts, work on rivers and railroads, and fortify the defenses of certain cities. He served military interests in the following cities: Mobile, Alabama; Wilmington, North Carolina; Fort Donelson, Nashville, Tennessee; and Vicksburg, Mississippi.

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21 *Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the U. S. M. A. at West Point,* 79.

22 Ibid.


24 Ibid.


28 Ibid. *Series I, Volume 29,* part 2, 635.
Tennessee"; Fort Henry, Tennessee"; Clarksville, Tennessee"; Nashville, Tennessee"; Andersonville, Georgia"; and Charleston, South Carolina".

In 1861, Gilmer was a Major and Chief Engineer of the Western department of the C.S.A.". He stayed in the Tennessee area during this time. In April of 1862, he was promoted to Colonel" and was still Chief Engineer of the Western Department. In August of 1862, he became Chief Engineer of the Army of Northern Virginia". In October of 1862, he became Chief of the Engineering Bureau". On August 31, 1863, Gilmer became Major General and second in command of the Provisional Army". In September of 1863, he was a member of the Senior Board of Officers". During 1863 and 1864, he remained in Georgia and South Carolina. In 1865, he was ordered

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29 Ibid. Series I, Volume 4, 514.
30 Sifakis, Stewart, Facts on File, 106.
31 Scott, War of Rebellion, Series I, Volume 7, 709.
32 Ibid. 724.
33 Ibid. Series II, Volume 7, 754.
34 Evans, Confederate Military History Volume VI South Carolina, 246.
35 Scott, War of Rebellion, Series I, Volume 7, 710.
37 Ibid. Series I, Volume 12, Part III, 944.
38 Ibid. Series I, Volume 10, 743.
40 Ibid. 366.
back to Richmond to resume his duties as Chief of the Engineering Bureau, where he remained until the evacuation of Richmond. The service of Jeremy Gilmer to the Confederate States Army helped those who served under him and those who made use of the results of his labors and skills.

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41 Evans, Confederate Military History, Volume V North Carolina, 310.

Social life

The social life of Jeremy Gilmer was just as impressive as his military career. He met Louisa Fredricka Alexander, and they were married on December 18, 1850\(^4\). They had two children, Louisa porter Gilmer\(^4\), born September 3, 1852\(^4\), and Henry H. Gilmer\(^5\), born November 7, 1854\(^7\). Jeremy Gilmer was a man of good standing in the Savannah community\(^8\). He was a member of a committee to erect a memorial to the Confederate soldiers\(^9\). He was a man who worked to better his community by being a member of the Auxiliary Sanitary Association\(^9\), the Sanitation Committee\(^9\), and the Commission of Drainage\(^2\).

\(^4\) Adam L. Alexander, Dates of important happenings, 1777-1855, Sarah Alexander Cunningham Collection, Number 194, Georgia Historic Society, 501 Whitaker Street, Savannah Georgia, 31401.

\(^4\) J. F. Minis, Court Document, 1914, Will of Jeremy F. Gilmer, Chatham County Probate Court Records.

\(^4\) Cemetery lots 662-663 Laurel Grove Cemetery.

\(^4\) J. F. Minis, Court Document, 1914, Will of Jeremy F. Gilmer, Chatham County Probate Court Records.

\(^4\) Cemetery lots 662-663, Laurel Grove Cemetery.

\(^4\) Georgia Historical Quarterly, Volume 20, 156.

\(^4\) Savannah Morning News, 7 March 1874, pg 3 columns 4 and 5.

\(^4\) Savannah Morning News, 15 December 1881, Pg 4 Columns 3 and 4.

\(^4\) Savannah Morning News, 29 December 1881, pg 4 column 2

\(^4\) Savannah Morning News, 15 March 1877, Pg 3 Column 3

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Gilmer was also involved in the Jockey Club\textsuperscript{53}, he was the vice president of the Savannah Port Society\textsuperscript{54}, and he was a member of the Southern Historical Society\textsuperscript{55}. His social life was very busy but so was his business life.

Jeremy Gilmer was President of Savannah Gas Light Company from 1865-1883\textsuperscript{56}. He was a director of the Central Railroad and Banking Company\textsuperscript{57}, a director of the Ogeechee Canal Company\textsuperscript{58}, and a member of the Oceana Steamship Company\textsuperscript{59}. He was a member of the Wallace Cumming and Company Law Firm\textsuperscript{60}.

Gilmer also invested in real estate. He owned his residence at Bull and State Streets which was the western half of Lot 7 and the eastern half of Lot 8, Percival Ward\textsuperscript{61}. In 1889, his wife gained the eastern half of Lot 7 and all of Lot 6, Percival Ward\textsuperscript{62}.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Savannah Morning News}, 3 January 1883, Page 4 column 1
\item \textit{Savannah Morning News}, 23 April, 1883 pg3 column 2.
\item \textit{Savannah Morning News}, 16 November 1882, pg 4, column 3.
\item Thos. H. Harden, "In Memoriam," Savannah Morning News, 28 December 1883, pg 4 column 5.
\item \textit{Daily News Herald}, 7 Jan. 1868, pg 1 column 1.
\item \textit{Savannah Morning News}, 14 Jan. 1873, pg 3, column 1.
\item \textit{Ibid}, 27 Oct. 1874, pg 3 column 4.
\item Savannah City Directory, 1871.
\item Chatham County Superior Court Deed 4G, folio 11.
\item Chatham County Superior Court Deed 6Q, folio 244.
\end{enumerate}
The house of Jeremy Gilmer is highlighted.
He bought lot 16\textsuperscript{3} and lot 21\textsuperscript{4} Mercer Ward at public outcry. These lots were redeemed by one Mary Robertson\textsuperscript{6} within a year of Gilmer’s purchase. Jeremy bought lot 5 and lot 23 of Screven Ward from William Bulloch\textsuperscript{6}. These lots were sold back to William Bulloch by a promissory note. The note was paid off on April 20, 1884. Gilmer did not seem to make much money in the land deals, but it looks as if his purpose for getting involved was to help these people out of a hard time.

Gilmer was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Independent Presbyterian Church from 1873 to 1876\textsuperscript{9}. He was chairman of this board from 1874 to 1876\textsuperscript{10}. He was also a pew renter\textsuperscript{11}. Gilmer was a man who lived the Christian life seven days a week\textsuperscript{12}. He became disabled after being thrown from his horse while performing his voluntary work on the Drainage Commission\textsuperscript{7}. After this accident, he continued to fulfill his duties until his

\textsuperscript{3} Chatham County Superior Court Deed 4X, folio 32
\textsuperscript{4} Chatham County Superior Court Deed 4X, folio 36.
\textsuperscript{5} Chatham County Superior Court Deed 4X, folio 162.
\textsuperscript{6} Chatham County Superior Court Deed 4Q, folio 426.
\textsuperscript{7} Independent Presbyterian Church Records (GA Historical Society: Microfilm).
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10} 15th Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, 80.
\textsuperscript{11} Savannah Morning News, 23 Dec. 1883, pg 4 column 5.
untimely death on Saturday, December 1, 1883. He died leaving a wife of 33 years, a daughter age 31 and a son age 29. His daughter, Louisa Porter Gilmer, married J. Florance Minis and had no children before her death in November 16, 1921. Gilmer's son, Henry H. Gilmer, never married and died on November 1, 1919. Louisa Fredricka Gilmer, Jeremy's wife, died in 1895.

The impact Jeremy Francis Gilmer had on his friends, family, and fellow citizens was shown when on Monday, December 3, 1883, General Henry R. Jackson moved for an adjournment of Chatham County Superior Court in memory of Jeremy Francis Gilmer. General Jackson stated the following:

"May it please Your Honor:

I rise to call attention to the fact that the funeral of General Gilmer is announced for 11 o'clock this morning, and to move an adjournment of this Court for the day. First, to pay honor to the memory of the distinguished dead; secondly, to give to those of its members who may desire to do so, an opportunity of attending the funeral services. Of course, I am aware, that, as a general rule, Courts thus manifest respect only for the memory of those who during life were personally connected with the public.

Ibid.

Cemetery lot 682 Laurel Grove Cemetery.

Ibid.

Ibid.

15th Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, 80 and 81.
administration of justice; but to all general rules there must be exceptions, and I submit to Your Honor that the present occasion suggests an exception. It rarely occurs that the death of an individual can so generally agitate the bosom of a community. Needless for me to refer to the high positions which, during a long career of public service, General Gilmer filled so ably; they are familiar to us all. But we are yet more intimate with the history of his later years; with his life as a citizen—full, as he ever was, and to the last, of public spirit, devoted to the practical interest of this community in whose zealous and efficient service he suffered so grievously; as he was singularly tenacious of his own convictions of public duty and unshakable in his resolve to maintain, under all circumstances, what he believed to be the right. These characteristics naturally gave to his private, the same features which had distinguished his military career, making him, what he was, the incorruptible and invaluable citizen, the courteous and consummate gentleman, leaving behind him a memory which may be fairly assimilated to that of the Chevalier Bayard—the man 'sans peur et sans reproche'.

It is natural that all of us should wish to pay to such a memory every possible honor. Nay! This is required of us all by a decent regard for the community in which we live—the community he so signally served, and in serving so highly adorned."

Thus did the Bench and Bar give voice to the feelings and
sentiments of his friends, his neighbors, and his fellow citizens."
Epilogue

Jeremy Gilmer lived a remarkable life dedicated to the service of his family, his country, and his community; however, there is still more to be discovered about his early life and his family history. Further research on Gilmer could be found in the court records of Guilford County, North Carolina, and the archives of the cities he was stationed at during his military career. I think that much more could be found out with more time and visiting more cities he was in.
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