

American Military History, A Tale of Two Generals: The Hero of Gettysburg G.K. Warren and His Nemesis Indian Genocide Killer Philip Sheridan

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On this Memorial Day weekend it's only appropriate that we look back in our history and pay tribute to our fallen warriors from the past. And in so doing, we can examine two West Point Civil War generals who were peers, one who saved the Union at the war's most pivotal and decisive battle of Gettysburg, and the other who represents the ruthless killer instinct that typifies our military leaders whose blind ambition for glory is driven by psychopathic pathology to the core. Meet two West Point officers who illustrate the classic contrast between leadership styles and ethics.

As the third installment in a trilogy of articles portraying West Point graduates who are our unsung fallen heroes, starting with <u>Jack Wheeler</u>, then <u>Ted Westhusing</u>, we now move back a century and a half ago to showcase the life of Gouverneur Kemble Warren.

And with so much controversy currently surrounding the US military and their commanders involved in the <u>operation Jade Helm</u> commencing a <u>month earlier than first reported in June</u>, and Commander-in-Chief Obama's <u>unprecedented purging</u> of America's top military brass during his presidency (over 200 a year and a half ago), this story from our past could not be more relevant or timely than it being showcased on Memorial Day 2015, 150 years after America's bloodiest war of them all. Indeed the timing is especially apropos as the unfolding drama within the US military ranks appears to now be an internal war covertly taking place.

Many Americans believe that the inner grumblings inside the US armed forces are at odds over the possibility of Jade Helm going live this summer with a false flag excuse for Obama to declare martial law, bringing about the unthinkable prospect of US soldiers being ordered to kill their fellow Americans. It's speculated why so many generals and admirals from America's senior military leadership were forced out of service by Obama was because they refused to participate in what could become <u>America's second civil war</u> against its own citizens. Clearly this original Civil War tale presented here personifies the age old "good versus evil" battle still raging on within our military even today.

I think it was some time during my third year at West Point that I first learned of my long lost ancestor named Gouvernour Kemble Warren, a somewhat famous West Point graduate and hero of the most important battle of the Civil War Gettysburg. As a cadet I suddenly learned that General GK Warren was my maternal grandmother's great uncle when my mother, the amateur genealogist, made the discovery researching our family history on the Warren side, the same lineage dating back to Richard Warren of Mayflower-Pilgrim-Plymouth fame. I thought it was very cool that I was walking those same pathways and hallowed ground the hero of Little Round Top once walked, whose statues adorn Gettysburg Historic

National Park as well as a park in Brooklyn. A New York Times article last year revealed that the sword on General Warren's statue at Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza Park was stolen by vandals and missing since 1960. But thanks to a New York City conservation program restoring historic monuments in the Big Apple, ol' Gouve's statue dedicated in 1896 was reunited with a new bronze sword carefully replicating his original. The more I learned about my long lost uncle, the more enthralled and intrigued I became with his remarkable, fascinating life story.

Gouverneur was born on January 8th, 1830 in a little town across the Hudson River from West Point called Cold Spring, New York. The oldest sibling of a dozen children, Gouve always had an eye out for taking care of others. The natural born leader at sixteen years of age entered the US Military Academy in 1846, graduating in 1850 second in his class of forty-four cadets. As a Second Lieutenant in the Corps of Topographical Engineers, Warren explored vast reaches of territory in the West, worked on flood prevention in the Mississippi Delta, created the first comprehensive map west of the mighty Mississippi and surveyed critical ground in preparation for the transcontinental Pacific Railroad, spanning an area from Nebraska, the Dakotas west to Montana and Wyoming.²

On the northern Plains Warren saw his first combat against the Native American tribe the Lakota Sioux. His involvement in 1855 at the Battle of Ash Hollow (also known as Battle of Blue Water or Harney's Massacre) offers a very telling account of how white Americans committed genocide against Native Americans.

A year earlier a Mormon traveling the Oregon Trail had his cow wander off from his wagon train and a Sioux warrior took it for food. At nearby Fort Laramie, Wyoming the Mormon complained to commanding officer Lt. Hugh Fleming about his "stolen" cow. The Sioux's Chief Conquering Bear offered any one of his 60 head of horses, but the Mormon turned him down, demanding \$25 cash. According to the 1851 Fort Laramie treaty, the local Indian agent responsible for handling such disputes was expected to arrive in two days. But the obstinate West Pointer Lt. Fleming (Class of 1852) took it upon himself to exercise his leadership by sending another West Point lieutenant from the Class right behind him, a 24-year old Lt. John Grattan with 29 soldiers and two small artillery pieces to the Sioux encampment.³

Lt. Grattan had just been sent West and was still awaiting permanent assignment. Despite never even encountering Sioux before, Lt. Fleming could see how the inexperienced Grattan was dying for some action, so he foolishly let the anxious hothead out to make a name for himself. And he most certainly did. On the other hand, wanting to avoid conflict, the chief pleaded to let the agent due to arrive any day handle the conflict. But Grattan insisted the guilty warrior be arrested and handed over. The Brule Sioux chief then pleaded with the Miniconjou Sioux warrior as his guest to turn himself in. When he refused, all hell broke loose, shots were fired and apparently a soldier shot Chief Conquering Bear in the back. At that point Lt. Grattan ordered his men to shoot to kill. But not before the Sioux braves in self-defense were shooting back with their bows and arrows, killing all soldiers but one mortally wounded who managed to return to Fort Laramie before succumbing.⁴

A local trader bore witness to the escalating events that clearly showed the white soldiers were the aggressors. A Lt. Colonel William Hoffman arrived at Fort Laramie in November to take command, instructed to weigh evidence in coming up with his assessment of what had

happened. Hoffman interviewed traders and soldiers who could bear witness and reviewed three reports written by Lt. Fleming. As is the case when so many West Pointers feel their career is on the line, they often lie to cover their own ass. By Lt. Fleming's third report, he was blaming it all on his dead peer Lt. Grattan, lying by stating that Fleming told Grattan explicitly not to use force, acting as though he never knew Grattan would be so aggressive in demanding the guilty Indian be detained.⁵ But Hoffman was not taken in, concluding that, "There is no doubt that Lt. Grattan left this post with a desire to have a fight with the Indians, and that he had determined to take the man at all hazards."⁶

But the only news heading eastward to eager newspaper reporters ensured that a shocked and angry nation believed that a bunch of Sioux "savages" massacred dozens of US soldiers. Still another war mongering West Pointer, then Secretary of War himself and soon to be President of the Southern Federation Jefferson Davis (Class of 1828) mischaracterized the event as "the result of a deliberately formed plan." Even after reviewing Colonel Hoffman's accurate account of the Grattan fight, Jefferson Davis wanted war, not the truth... an all too familiar American theme.

No matter how you look at it, the gross misjudgment of West Point leadership exercised by the three graduates cited here alone are responsible for starting the Indian Wars out West. Though white soldiers instigated their own demise, under false pretense, war with the Plains Indians was then launched, intermittently spanning the next several decades, further decimating North America's indigenous population. Also just to balance the good with the bad, the honest officer who filed the more truthful report, Lt. Colonel Hoffman, was also a West Pointer and classmate of another honorable grad named Robert E. Lee (Class of 1829). Hoffman was bravely willing to challenge his superiors in Washington upon realizing their agenda to simply whitewash the truth for rushing to war on a bunch of lies – what America has done to enter virtually every war it ever fights... the Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, Vietnam War, Iraq War just to name a few.

Once word spread Back East, then President Franklin Pierce ordered immediate retaliation to avenge the 1854 "Grattan Massacre," dispatching Brigadier General Harney and thirteen hundred soldiers that amounted to one tenth of the entire US Army in a preordained, punitive expedition purely out to "get even." Lieutenant GK Warren served under Harney's command as his engineering officer. General Harney left Fort Leavenworth on August 4th, 1855 uttering, "By God, I am for war – no peace!"

His bloody taste for revenge was satiated a month later on September 3rd when with 600 men he approached a band of 230 Brule Sioux encamped along the Platte River in Nebraska Territory. While Harney parleyed with Chief Little Thunder, Chief Conquering Bear's successor, the general had sent his cavalry unit the night before in a flanking position just north to block any possible escape. Before the chief even responded to Harney's demands to hand over the warriors that in self-defense had killed Grattan and his men, just as the Indians discovered the cavalry poised for attack, Harney opened fire killing 86 Indians, many defenseless women and children seeking shelter in caves along the riverbank. Harney lost only four of his soldiers and captured 70 Native Americans.¹⁰ Though numerous newspapers heralded the victory over the Sioux, there were a number of critics who called it an unjustifiable, senseless homicide against innocent women and children. The Sioux called Harney a woman killer.

Though the junior officer Lt. Warren was forced to reluctantly participate in the slaughter, his first combat experience proved overwhelmingly gut wrenching for him. He knew what happened that day was wrong. In a letter to his brother, GK described the gripping, chilling experience watching innocents being brutally cut down in front of him, stating that he felt a sense of shame and guilt that kept him up all night caring for the hapless wounded women and children. Unlike the typical military officer who views any enemy as less than human, especially the Native American "savages," Gouverneur Warren was profoundly shaken by the senseless loss of life and bloodshed.

The impact of killing other human beings gave him pause to think twice about his leadership role that would necessarily lead to the death of many others. A decade later this compassionate, humanitarian desire to save lives on the field of battle would cost him greatly in the final week of the Civil War.

Warren's pioneering exploration and land surveying out West enabled him to create the very first comprehensive map of America west of the Mississippi River. Gouverneur was quite the Renaissance man, extremely well read in science, history and classic literature. Possessing a wide array of talent, as an artist he rendered meticulous illustrations and descriptions of his travels and observations, rich in exacting, exhaustive detail scoping over half the country, carefully documenting his every challenge as a civil engineer, bridge builder and explorer often in dangerous regions with hostile tribes. Before and after the Civil War he worked extensively along the Mississippi River from its Minnesota headwaters on down south to its delta basin, building remarkably constructed bridges across America's largest river that still stand today.

Engineering talent ran in his family as his little sister Emily Warren Roebling helped finish the Brooklyn Bridge after her engineer husband took ill after his father a week into construction became disabled. The gala opening was her crowning achievement on May 24th, 1883, a year after her beloved brother died. Last year there was even a New York play running called "The Bridge" about Emily's family. Hence the Brooklyn connection led to GK's statue as one of three Civil War memorials gracing the entrance to Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Between GK's new sword on his statue making the news and his sister featured in a musical recently, my great uncle and my great aunt are still great even today.

When the Civil War broke out, Warren was an assistant professor of mathematics at our alma mater West Point. Upon promotion to lieutenant colonel, he quickly assembled and took command of a local volunteers unit that became the 5thNew York Infantry. He and his regiment fared well enough in what turned out to be the first land engagement of the Civil War, the Battle of Big Bethel in Virginia, to then be assigned as colonel and regimental commander. During the 1862 Peninsula Campaign, Warren led his troops in the Siege of Yorktown. Utilizing his engineering skills, he did reconnaissance to map attack routes up the Virginia Peninsula. He took command of the V Corps Brigade during Seven Days Battles. Sustaining a serious knee injury at Battle of Gaines' Mill, he refused to leave the battlefield for treatment. Under his command, his brigade successfully turned back a Southern division's attack at the Battle of Malvern Hill. At the Second Battle of Bull Run his troops took heavy casualties, heroically turning back a brutal assault. In September 1862 Warren became a brigadier general and led his brigade in the Battle of Fredericksburg. Major General Joseph Hooker reorganized the Army of the Potomac, appointing Warren as his chief engineer. General Warren again was commended for valuable service in the critical Battle of

Chancellorsville.15

When General Lee invaded north into Pennsylvania, it was Warren as the Army of the Potomac's chief engineer who advised General Hooker on the best routes the North should take in pursuit.

The fast rising general's greatest military achievement came on the second day at the Battle of Gettysburg when Warren realized a gap in the Union Army's flank on top of the highest point of the historic battlefield at Little Round Top. Warren's quick thinking rushed troops in defense to the hilltop arriving just in time to victoriously turn back the Confederate forces. This decisive action effectively became the turning point of the war's most significant battle that in turn became the turning point of the entire Civil War in favor of the Union Army. Up until that moment in time the North had been losing the War Between the States.

General Warren was again wounded, this time in the neck.¹⁶ After his Gettysburg heroics, Warren was quickly promoted to Major General, among the youngest to achieve that high rank at the time.

Despite repeatedly proving himself a dynamic, heroic and valuable leader in battle after battle, not everyone was won over by the young general's leadership style or military performance. Out of egotistical jealousy and cutthroat competition notoriously engrained in some West Point grads, the hot tempered five-foot five-inch Philip Sheridan (Class of 1853), a year younger than Warren, seemed to hold a personal vendetta against him. Both were near the same age, near the same height with GK an inch or two taller, and both were the shining young stars of the Civil War. Sheridan's Napoleonic complex and highly competitive, driven ambition may well have caused him to project his own insecurities onto Warren. Whatever shortcomings one possesses, if left unresolved it tends to manifest as aversive reactivity toward others who unconsciously trigger the very same unresolved issues within oneself. It's called projection and Sheridan likely had a rather heavy dose of it when it came to his rival peer Warren.

Toward the final months of the Civil War, Warren's approach and execution in battle clashed with the more aggressive, reckless style of Sheridan and Grant. Their favored strategy utilizing vastly superior numbers at the expense of inflicting enormous amounts of casualties on their own men conflicted with the more thoughtful, careful Warren who, from his very first carnage in combat with the Sioux, always considered battle strategies that optimized the odds for victory but never at the expense of human life, particularly when it was his own men. In contrast, Grant and Sheridan's MO was simply to end up with the last troops standing in a war of attrition, regardless of how many of their own soldiers paid the fatal price for their brutality.

GK's superior intelligence and finesse irritated the lesser IQ endowed Grant and Sheridan, especially when Warren made suggestions that were quickly misinterpreted as insolence questioning their authority, in the end making Warren vulnerable as their chosen enemy. At times Warren's lack of patience for others' inadequacies were viewed as condescending by those less endowed with intelligence and skill. Perhaps that was his fatal flaw, incurring others' wrath and resentment, especially when it butted against the military's rigid, authoritarian pecking order. Warren never played the politics game all that well either. Instead, as both a military leader and engineer, his focus was simply getting the job done in the most efficient manner with minimum loss of human life.

General Warren's decisive and pivotal heroics at Gettysburg turned the entire war around, in effect, saving the Union. Warren's instant fame and rapid climb up the ranks to Major General at 33 rubbed Sheridan the wrong way. Upon re-assignment under Grant to Virginia chasing down what was left of Lee's depleted army, General Sheridan had the distinct advantage in courting the favor of the North's top commander having fought earlier under General Grant on the western front. Thus, Sheridan had already secured Grant's admiration as his superior's personal young protégé.

At Petersburg, Virginia during the summer of 1864, Sheridan seized the opportunity to accuse Warren of being slow in his advance attack on the Confederacy after the North had planted and detonated a bomb in an underground mineshaft. But the reality was IX Corps stood between Warren's V Corps and the enemy that allowed the South to recover. Sheridan was already making the case, convincing his boss of Warren's so called weakness, his hesitance to engage the enemy in a timely enough manner. Even though untrue, it was an unfair cheap shot that sealed the deal.

Despite Warren's command producing successful interdiction of the Confederate's railway supply line in August and December, and his repeated competence throughout the war, the writing was on the wall. By 1865 Sheridan had already manipulated Grant into giving Sheridan permission to relieve General Warren of his command at the first sign of Warren failing to move his troops quick enough to the battle line. With the war winding down, Sheridan realized he needed to make his move if he was to eliminate his main competition for Civil War fame and glory.

A week before the war ended, it was crunch time. So just days prior to Appomattox with the war already won, General Sheridan went for Warren's jugular even as the North was wrapping up the final victorious battle of the war at Five Forks. Sheridan was waiting for Warren so he could throw a tirade and on the spot relieve General Warren of his command in the final possible hour. The conspiracy between Sheridan and Grant to ruin Warren was blatantly criminal.

To commit such grievous wrongdoing – destroying a fellow officer's career and subsequent life – Sheridan was merely acting out aggressively, getting rid of his stiffest competition. He selfishly exploited and capitalized on both his timing knowing the war would be over within days and his protégé status with his superior, using the flimsy, lame and false excuse that General Warren was too cautious and slow in coming to Sheridan's support. Sheridan's egregiously unjust transgression infamously stands out as one the most horrific examples in military history of how one West Pointer ruined the career of another West Pointer. This evil cloak and dagger tactic of course is not uncommon amongst those West Point leaders who operate immorally driven by their own blind ambition for glory, fame and power at the expense of others.

Gouverneur Warren, a less aggressive, more thoughtful, more humane and honorable man, in protest resigned his commission as a major general of volunteers on May 27th, 1865. Though he continued on active duty working in the Corps of Engineers at the permanent rank of a lowly, humiliated major, the war hero built railroads and bridges over the next seventeen years along the Mississippi River.¹⁷ Warren also improved flood zones and harbors not only in the South but the Great Lakes and Atlantic regions as well.

GK Warren struggled the rest of his entire life trying desperately to right the wrong that had

been done to him. Unfortunately timing again was not on his side as soon Grant became the eighteenth US President who of course constantly thwarted and turned down Warren's repeated requests for a court of inquiry in efforts to exonerate himself. Finally fourteen years later the same year Warren was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1879, then President Rutherford Hayes ultimately granted the fallen hero his day in court. So many years later the long and lengthy inquiry lasted more than a hundred days of heated testimony that included formidable opposition from the likes of Sheridan, Grant and General Sherman, the three most powerful military men in America. But those officers who fought alongside Warren stood by him, knowing the truth that a good man and national hero was being destroyed in the grossest travesty of justice.

According to Eric Wittenberg's book entitled *Little Phil: A Reassessment of the Civil War Leadership of General Philip H. Sheridan* (Potomac 2002), Sheridan was completely in the wrong, concluding that Warren was exactly where he should have been that fateful day:

General Warren in fact was handling dispositions of his divisions in a manner consistent with that of a corps commander, and the attack by the V Corps carried the day at Five Forks, arguably the pivotal battle in the final days against Lee's army.¹⁸

The 1880 inquest agreed that it was Sheridan who wrongly acted that day in 1865. Tragically by the time those findings were published in 1882 clearing my Uncle Gouverneur Kemble Warren, he had died just three months earlier. Even his obituary in the Philadelphia Inquirer identified what actually caused his death:

He had been confined to his bed less than one week; but for a long time, especially since the close of the recent Court of Inquiry relating to his conduct at the battle of Five Forks, he has shown signs of great mental depression, and actually died of a broken heart, although he had diseases which in time might have caused death.¹⁹

My honorable uncle felt so humiliated by his ruined career and seeming inability to right the wrong the previous 17 bitter years of his life that he opted to be buried in civilian clothes foregoing any military honors at his funeral. Maliciously, willfully destroying a brilliant man's life and career cost Sheridan absolutely nothing. In fact, a year after Warren's death, Sheridan was rewarded with the promotion as Commanding General of the US Army. In 1888 just prior to his own death, Sheridan rose to the same pinnacle his cronies Sherman and Grant had attained, the highest rank of all – General of the Army of the United States.

After America's bloodiest war, the ever-bloodthirsty Sheridan couldn't get enough, so he headed west to do his part exterminating the original Americans. There he made even more of a name for himself as the fearless Indian fighter with the infamous misquote, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." Actually after a Comanche Chief told Sheridan that he was a "good Indian," Sheridan smirked replying, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."

While a cadet at West Point, the ruthless killer Sheridan actually bayoneted a fellow cadet and rather than get rid of the psycho-killer, he was suspended a year and allowed to return to his studies at West Point to graduate near last in his class like other notables Grant and Custer. Sheridan relished in his murderous role along with his West Point buddy General

"Tecumseh" Sherman in eliminating as many Native Americans out West as their evil-doing genocide allowed. And regarding the so called "collateral damage" of murdering innocent women and children, his response:

If a village is attacked and women and children killed, the responsibility is not with the soldiers but with the people whose crimes necessitated the attack. $^{2^0}$

And those crimes were simply being born Native American. The United States rewards killers and destroys the true heroes.

This telling story of my long lost family relative epitomizes the premise of this entire presentation – how evil is so often elevated to the highest echelons of power while humility and leadership greatness too often are either overlooked or willfully destroyed. With such a promising career and life cut so short at the relatively young age of just fifty-two, GK Warren seemed destined for greatness with so much talent, leadership and humanity going for him.

Starting at West Point at just 16 years of age, Warren gave the next 36 years of his life to America. And it was nothing short of outstanding military service, engineering genius and history changing heroism, until his nemesis came along. General Warren deserved much better than what he got. An unforgivable injustice was inflicted on my uncle, despite his remarkable life and accomplishments. Due to one man's evil act, conspired and then sealed by America's first West Point President, the full potential of what Warren could have achieved and given to his country was totally crushed and will never be known.

I find this sad irony both fateful and fitting that a century later I would suddenly first learn about my great uncle as a fellow West Pointer on the verge of my own historical crossroads, trying to right yet another wrong this time being perpetrated by unscrupulous West Point officers against me as a cadet. After being railroaded out of the Academy for excessive demerits on a series of false charges due to command conspiracy, I took West Point to court for failure to allow due process of law and won, becoming the first cadet since its 1802 founding to legally beat the system. When I returned to finish my senior year, I imagined ol' Gouve was smiling down on me for my triumph despite him not living quite long enough to see his own vindication and justice.

General Warren represented the positive kind of leadership that leads by example, that demonstrates genuine care and concern for his soldiers and is always looking out for their best interest over his own. I'm both grateful and proud to have a long lost great-great-great uncle whose incredible contributions saved the Union during America's darkest hour. His brand of West Point leadership provides us with inspiration and hope that today's generals will also rise to the challenge and do what is both moral and honorable, following their sworn oath to defend and protect our Constitution, our nation and our people no matter what during America's latest dark hour.

Notes

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