

WILLIAM HENRY HAMNER

COLONEL WILLIAM HENRY HAMNER, U. S. A., (retired), Los Angeles, California, was born at Clarksville, Virginia, April 22, 1838. His father was George Hamner, a prominent plantation owner and tobacco grower of his district, and his mother was Elizabeth (Red) Hamner. He was married at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1860, while in active service at that post, to a widow, Mrs. E. T. Brown, a highly accomplished woman. She has followed Colonel Hamner on many of his military expeditions during his forty-four years of active service and during the early part of the Civil War, when Colonel Hamner was stationed at Morris Island, following the evacuation of Fort Sumter, she was under fire. Mrs. Hamner has shared his dangers and triumphs in a manner becoming the wife of a soldier and today is his constant companion.

Colonel Hamner spent his boyhood days on his father's plantation and was educated in the common schools of his home district. At the age of seventeen years, being fired by stores of fights with the Indians in the far West, he determined to become a soldier and in 1856, enlisted at Fort Moultrie. He had not been in service long when he was ordered South with a detachment of soldiers in pursuit of Billy Bow-legs, the celebrated Seminole Indian. For two years this war raged in the wilds of Florida and in 1858, the Indians negotiated with the Government and peace was declared.

His next station was at Fort Moultrie, where Colonel Hamner remained until the outbreak of the Civil War. Shortly before Fort Sumter was fired on, fearing that they would be unsafe in their quarters, the entire garrison evacuated Fort Moultrie and moved to Sumter, which was more strongly fortified. Colonel Hamner saw the first shell fired on his fort, and was one of the last to depart from the fort when all hope had been lost. On April 14, 1861, when the fire in the fort was near the powder magazines, it was determined that the Union soldiers should evacuate Sumter. As Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, Colonel Hamner was the one who pulled down the American flag as the Union soldiers moved out of that historic fort and made their way to the steamer "Isabell," anchored off Fort Sumter, where they remained over night. On the following day Colonel Hamner took passage on the transport "Baltic" for New York.

On October 17, 1861, shortly after his arrival in the north, he joined a Rhode Island regiment at Fortress Monroe. He saw active fighting during the remainder of the war, being stationed at times on Morris Island. After General Sherman had marched to the sea and had made the Charleston coast secure, Colonel Hamner was among that small body of soldiers which mounted the ruins of what was formerly Fort Sumter, and on April 14, 1865, raised the Stars and Stripes over the same fortress from which it had been lowered just four years before.

During the period of reconstruction he was stationed at Baton Rouge, La., where he remained until 1869. At that time he was moved to the frontier, on Devil's Lake, Dakota Territory, where skirmishes with Sitting Bull's Sioux Indians were not infrequent. In May, 1870, he was stationed at Fort Ripley, Minnesota, another dangerous Indian country, where he remained until 1877. After a few months spent at Fort Snelling,

Minnesota, he was transferred still farther to the West, to Fort Brown, Texas, at which place he arrived on Christmas Day, 1877. He remained in Texas, his work being particularly with the southwestern border Indians, until 1881, at that time being transferred to Fort Gibson, Indian Territory. In 1885 he was made executive officer at the Fort Leavenworth Military Prison in Kansas, continuing in that capacity up to 1888.

His next station was at Fort Assiniboine, Montana, where he served for five years. In 1893 he was stationed at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, being promoted at that place to the position of Major and Paymaster. He was later stationed at Fort Brown, Texas, from which post he was transferred to Albuquerque, New Mexico, leaving that fort in 1897 for Omaha, Nebraska.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American war, Colonel Hamner sought active service and was moved to Tampa, Florida, where the Government was mobilizing troops. He served in an active capacity at that station until the Cuban troubles had ceased to worry the War Department and then returned to Omaha.

Colonel Hamner has passed through the stages of Private, Lieutenant, Captain, and retired January 1, 1900, as a Major. Later, by an act of Congress, he was advanced to the grade of Lieutenant Colonel. He has to his credit forty-four years of active service in the Army; has fought through two wars, served in many States of the Union, and has been awarded medals for various meritorious acts. Since his retirement he has resided at Omaha, Nebraska; Portland, Oregon, and Los Angeles, California, where he lives at present. He is a member of the Loyal Legion and a Mason.