

Maj. Gen. Henry Washington Benham

(1813 - 1 Jun 1884)

The New York Times, June 2, 1884

The Death List of a Day

A Union and a Confederate General Dead

Major Benham's Brilliant Military Career--The Career of Gen. Mansfield Lovell

Major-Gen. Henry W. Benham.

Brevet Major-Gen. Henry W. Benham, formerly of the Corps of Engineers, United States Army, died yesterday at his later residence, No. 104 East Thirty-sixth street. His death was due to a complication of disorders, although up to within a week past he had been able to go about. He was surrounded in his last moments by Mrs. Benham and their two daughters, but his son, Lieut. Benham, is at present on duty in Washington Territory.



Gen. Benham was born in Connecticut. He entered the military Academy at West Point, July 1, 1833 and was graduated July 1, 1837. He was immediately promoted to the rank of Brevet Second Lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. In that rank he served as assistant engineer in the work of improvement on the Savannah River during the years 1837 and 1838. On July 7, 1838, he was promoted to the grade of First Lieutenant in the Engineer Corps, and from 1839 till 1844 he served as superintending engineer of the repairs of Fort Marion and of the sea wall at St. Augustine, Fla. In 1844 and 1845 he was engaged on the repairs of the defenses of Annapolis Harbor, and in 1845 returned to the work on the sea wall at St. Augustine, where he remained till 1846. During a part of 1845, however, he was engaged on repairs at Fort Mifflin, Penn., and at Fort McHenry, Maryland, and during parts of 1846 and 1847 he worked on the repairs of Forts Madison and Washington, Maryland. In 1847 and 1848 he fought in the war with Mexico. He was engaged in the battle of Buena Vista, Feb. 22 and 23, 1847, and on Feb. 23 was brevetted Captain for gallant and meritorious services in that battle. In 1848 and 1849 he was engaged as assistant engineer in the repairs of the defenses in the harbor of this city, and on May 24, 1848 was promoted to the rank of Captain in the Engineer Corps. From 1849 to 1852 he acted as superintending engineer of the construction of the sea wall for the protection of Great Brewster Island, Boston Harbor. In 1852 he superintended the building of the buffalo light house, and in part of the same year and part of 1853 superintended the construction of the navy-yard of Washington.

In 1853 Capt. Benham was assistant in charge of the United States Coast Survey office at Washington, and was in Europe on duty connected therewith from March 29 to Nov. 1. He was promoted to the rank of Major in the Ninth Infantry, March 3, 1855, but declined. In 1856 and 1857 he was superintending engineer of the building of Forts Winthrop and Independence, Boston Harbor. In 1858 he superintended the survey of the site for a fort at Clark's Point, New Bedford and the repairs of Fort Adams, Newport, R.I., in 1857 and 1858. He had charge of the building of the fort at Sandy Hook, N.J., from 1858 to 1861, and of the Potomac Aqueduct in 1860. He was a member of the special board of engineers for modifying the Sandy Hook fort in 1860, and was engineer of the Quarantine Commissioners of this port in 1859 and 1860. He served in the war of the rebellion from 1861 to 1866. He was on the staff of Brig. Gen. T.A. Morris as Engineer of the Department of the Ohio, and was present

at Laurel Hill, July 6 to 11, 1861. He was brevetted Colonel for gallant conduct at the battle of Garrick's Ford, Virginia, July 13, 1861, and was in command of the engaged troops on that day. On Aug. 6, 1861, he became a Major in the Corps of Engineers, and on Aug. 13 was made a Brigadier General in the volunteers. He commanded his brigade at New Creek, Aug. 16, 1861 and was engaged in the action at Camifex Ferry, Sept. 10, and the pursuit of the rebel forces from Cotton Hill to Raleigh County, Va., Nov. 12 to 16.

In 1862 he was successively engaged as superintending engineer of the fortifications in Boston Harbor and as commander of the Northern District of the Department of the South, being present at Tybee Island, Georgia, during the bombardment and capture of Fort Pulaski, and at the attack on Secessionville, James Island, S.C. He was superintendent of the construction of the fortifications of Portsmouth Harbor from Sept. 8, 1862 to Feb. 28, 1863, and was in command of the engineer brigade of the Army of the Potomac from April 29 to May 5, 1863, engaged in superintending the throwing of pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock for the passage and retreat of the army at Chancellorsville. During this time he was made Lieutenant Colonel of the Corps of Engineers. He was engaged in building pontoons at Franklin's Crossing in the face of the enemy June 5, 1863, on the Potomac at Edward's Ferry June 21, was in command of the pontoon depot at Washington from July 1863 to May 1864, and was in command of the engineer brigade from June 1864 to June 15, 1865, being engaged in superintending the laying of a pontoon bridge 2,200 feet long across the James River at Fort Powhatan, June 15, 1864. He constructed and commanded the defenses at City Point, Va., in October, 1864, and on March 13, 1865, was brevetted Brigadier-General for gallant services in the campaign terminating with the surrender of Lee. On the same day he was promoted to the rank of Major-General of the United States Army. He was mustered out of the volunteer service on Jan. 15, 1866.

On March 7, 1867, he was made a Colonel in the Corps of Engineers, and was engaged on works at Plymouth, Salem, Marblehead, Gloucester, and Boston. From Oct. 15, 1869, till July 30, 1877, he was engaged on work on Long Island Head. Subsequent to 1877 he was for some years in charge of Fort Montgomery, this harbor, and also the defenses of the harbor, except at the eastern entrance and on Staten Island. In October 1877, he became a member of the board for the examination of engineers for promotion. His retirement took place June 30, 1882.

The Evening Star, June 2, 1884

Death of Major General Benham

Brevet Major General Henry W. Benham, formerly of the corps of engineers, U.S.A., died yesterday at his late residence, No. 104 East 36th street, New York city. He was attended in his last moments by Mrs. Benham and their two daughters, but his son, Lieut. Benham, is at present on duty in Washington territory. Gen. Benham was born in Connecticut. He served in the Mexican war, and in 1853 was assistant in charge of the United States Coast Survey office, in this city. He constructed and commanded the defenses at City Point, Va., in October, 1864, and on March 13, 1865, was brevetted brigadier general for gallant services in the campaign terminating with the surrender of Lee. On the same date he was promoted to the rank of major general of the United States army.

The Evening Star, June 21, 1884

The Late Gen. Benham

Arrival of His Remains--Distinguished Soldiers And Citizens Meet Them--Interment At Congressional Cemetery

The remains of the late Gen. Benham, who died in New York city on the 1st instant, aged 71 years were brought here this morning, arriving at the Baltimore and Potomac depot at 6:05 o'clock accompanied by

Capt. Egbert and Lieut. Benham, son of the deceased. The funeral services took place in New York a few days after his death and Rev. E. Everett Hale, in the course of his remarks, paid an eloquent tribute to his memory. The remains were in a heavy oak case, on which was the flag of the engineer corps, and also one of the flags used by the engineer brigade of the Army of the Potomac, which Gen. Benham commanded during the war, as also some floral ornaments. The remains were received by Mr. E.M. Boteler, the undertaker and rested in the baggage room till 9 1/2 o'clock. At that hour Generals Newton, Meigs, Wright, McComb, Colonel Wilson and Admiral Rogers, who acted as pall-bearers. Gen. Robinson, Col. Casey, Col. Hains, Capt. Adams, Capt. Hoxie, Capt. Greene, Maj. G.A. Armes assembled with several citizens, who knew Gen. Benham when he had charge of the Washington aqueduct, and when he commanded the engineer camp near the Navy Yard during the war. Rev. J.W. Clark, of St. James' Episcopal church, was present, and about 10 o'clock the cortege was formed and the remains were taken to the Congressional cemetery, where the interment was made, Rev. Mr. Clark officiating.

Lt. of Engineers 1837. Bvt. Capt. for gallantry at Buena Vista, Mexico (1847), Bvt. Col. for gallantry at Garis Ford, VA (1861), Brig. Gen. & Maj. Genl. of Vol., Bvt. Brig. Gen., Bvt. Maj. Genl. for gallantry & meritorious service during the Civil War (1865).

Cullum, The Biographical Register of the U.S. Military Academy

Class of 1837: Henry W. Benham

Born and appointed, Connecticut., Ranked 1st of 50

Cadet at the Military Academy, July 1, 1833, to July 1, 1837, when he was graduated and promoted in the Army to Bvt. 2d Lieut., Corps of Engineers, July 1, 1837.

Served as Asst. Engineer on Improvement of Savannah River, Ga., 1837-38; as Superintending Engineer of the repairs of Ft. Marion, and of St. Augustine Sea-wall, Fla., 1839-44, -- of repairs of the defenses of Annapolis Harbor, Md., 1844-45, -- of repairs of St. Augustine Sea-wall, Fla., 1845, 1845-46, -- of repairs of Ft. Mifflin, Pa., and Ft. McHenry, Md., 1845, --and of repairs of Fts. Madison and Washington, Md., 1846-47; in the War with Mexico, 1847-48, being engaged in the Battle of Buena Vista, Feb. 21-23, 1847, where he was wounded; as Asst. Engineer in the repairs of the defenses of New York harbor, 1848-49; as Superintending Engineer of the construction of the Sea-wall for the protection of Great Brewster Island, Boston harbor, Mass., 1849-52, -- of building Buffalo Light-house, N.Y., 1852, -- and of Washington Navy Yard, D.C. 1852-53; as Asst. in charge of the U.S. Coast Survey Office at Washington, D.C., and on duty in Europe connected therewith, Mar. 29, 1853 to Nov. 1, 1856; as Superintending Engineer of the building of Fts. Winthrop and Independence, Boston harbor, Mass., 1856-57, -- of Survey of site for fort at Clark's Point, New Bedford harbor, Mass., and repairs of Ft. Adams, Newport Harbor, R.I., 1857-58, -- of building Sandy Hook Fort, N.J. 1858-61, --and of Potomac Aqueduct, 1860; as Member of Special Board of Engineers for modifying plans of Sandy Hook Fort, N.J., 1860; and as Engineer of the Quarantine Commissioners of New York harbor, 1859-60.

Served during the Rebellion of the Seceding States, 1861-66; as Chief Engineer of the Department of the Ohio, May 14 to July 22, 1861, being engaged on the Staff of Brig.-General T.A. Morris in Military operations in Western Virginia, at Laurel Hill, July 6-11, 1861, --and Combat of Carrick's Ford, in command of the engaged troops, July 13, 1861; as Acting Inspector-General, Department of the Ohio, August 5-16; in Western Virginia Campaign, Aug.-Nov., 1861, in command of brigade at New Creek, Aug. 16, 1861, --Action at Carnifex Ferry, Sept. 10, 1861, --and pursuit of Rebels from Cotton Hill to Raleigh County, Va., Nov. 12-16, 1861; as Superintending Engineer of the fortifications of Boston harbor, Mass., March 8-20, 1862; in command of the Northern District of the Department of the South, March 21 to June 21, 1862, being present at Tybee Island, Ga., during the Bombardment and Capture of Ft. Pulaski, April 10-11, 1862, --and engaged in command, at the Attack on Secessionville, James Island, S.C., June 16, 1862; as Superintending Engineer of the construction of the fortifications of Portsmouth harbor,

N.H., Sept. 8, 1862 to Feb. 28, 1863; in command of Engineer Brigade (Army of the Potomac), being engaged in superintending the throwing of Pontoon Bridges across the Rappahannock, for the passage and retreat of the Army at Chancellorsville, Apr. 29-May 5, 1863, and at Franklin's Crossing, in face of the enemy, June 5, 1863, --and over the Potomac at Edwards Ferry, June 21, 1863; in command of Pontoon Depot at Washington, D.C., July 1863 to May 1864; in command of Engineer Brigade, June 1864 to June 8, 1865, being engaged in superintending the laying of a pontoon bridge across the James River at Ft. Powhatan (two thousand two hundred feet long), June 15, 1864, --in the construction and command of the Defenses of City Point, Va., Oct. 1864 to April 2, 1865, --in holding the captured lines at Petersburg, April 2, 1865, --in repairing bridges across the Appomattox and Staunton Rivers, April 3-23, 1865, --and on March to Washington, D.C., May-June, 1865; and as Member of the Board of Engineers, June 20, 1865 to May 18, 1867, to carry out in detail the modifications of the defenses in the vicinity of Boston, Mass., as proposed by the Board of Jan. 27, 1864.

Served as Superintending Engineer of the construction of the Defenses of Boston Harbor, Mass. (Ft. Winthrop, from June 17, 1865, --Ft. Independence, from Nov. 13, 1865, --Ft. Warren, from April 9, 1867, --and Works on Long Island Head, from Oct. 25, 1869), to July 30, 1877, --of Provincetown Harbor Defenses, Mass., Jan. 20, 1866 to Feb. 4, 1870, --in charge of Boston Harbor Sea-walls, May 19, 1866 to Apr. 1, 1873, --and of Ft. Montgomery, N.Y., and the Defenses of New York Harbor (except at eastern entrance and on Staten Island), July 30, 1877 to June 30, 1882; and as Member of Board for the examination of Engineer Officers for Promotion, Oct., 1877.

Retired from Active Service, June 30, 1882, he being over 64 years of age. Died June 1, 1884 at New York City, aged 71.

Ranks:

1st Lieut., Corps of Engineers, July 7, 1838
Bvt. Capt., Feb. 23, 1847 for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battle of Buena Vista, Mexico
Captain, Corps of Engineers, May 24, 1848
Major, 9th Infantry, Mar. 3, 1855; Declined
Bvt. Colonel, July 13, 1861, for gallant and meritorious services at the Battle of Carrick's Ford, Va.
Major, Corps of Engineers, August 6, 1861
Brig. General, U.S. Volunteers, August 13, 1861
Lieut. Colonel, Corps of Engineers, March 3, 1863
Bvt. Brig. General, U.S. Army, March 13, 1865 for gallant and meritorious services in the campaign terminating with the surrender of the insurgent army under General R.E. Lee
Bvt. Maj. General, U.S. Volunteers, March 13, 1865 for faithful services during the rebellion
Bvt. Maj. General, U.S. Army, March 13, 1865, for gallant and meritorious services during the rebellion
Mustered out of Volunteer Service, January 15, 1866
Colonel, Corps of Engineers, March 7, 1867