

For the Athenaeum Society

The Reluctant Legend

By John Lindsey Adams

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In the tongue of my people, I am called Shooting Star. I was born in March of 1768 in the area of Chillicothe, Ohio, to my father, Pukshinwa, and my mother, Methotaske. I am Shawnee. More specifically, I am Panther Clan. When I was a boy, I watched white men kill my father at the Battle of Point Pleasant. The white men had crossed onto our land in violation of treaty. I resolved then to become a warrior, as my father before me, and to be a "...fire spreading over hill and valley..." to consume the race of dark souls. In 1779, following the death of my father, our home was destroyed by Kentucky militia in reprisal for Chief Blackfish's attack on Boonesborough. At 15, I joined other Shawnee and we attacked settlers' flatboats traveling down the great Ohio River. I soon gathered my own band and caused river traffic to virtually cease. For a time I left Ohio and fought in Tennessee as part of Chickamauga raiding parties. In 1794, I returned and fought in the Battle of Fallen Timbers. We were not successful. I refused to sign the Treaty of Greenville offering peace on conditions. My principal adversary would become William Henry Harrison, along with much resistance from my own people. I traveled widely speaking with them, trying to convince them that this land belonged to all red men, no matter the tribe, and that it was not ours to sell to white men – for any price. I met with Harrison, more than once, demanding that treaties be set aside but to no avail. While traveling in the South in an effort to rally support for my confederacy, Harrison attacked my home at Tippecanoe. I was done with discussion. I allied our forces with the British in the War of 1812 that followed. We took Detroit in August of 1812. I had 400 warriors. I paraded them out of the woods and circled them back in so that the white commander, General Hull, thought I had many more men and surrendered. I sought no honor, in fact, I refused being named a British General, but the Canadians hail me a hero for my role in repelling the Americans from Canada in the War, which led to Canada's nationhood in 1867. On October 5, 1813, in the Battle of the Thames, near Moravian Town, I was killed. Most of the tribes of my

confederacy surrendered to General Harrison at Detroit. I told my people, “Live your life so that the fear of death can never enter your heart...Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and in the service of your people...”. And I passed, but seven years after my death, less than forty miles from the place of my birth, a child was born. He would be given my name, Tecumseh. He would be smart. He would be both a prolific speaker and writer. Much as me, he was not born a warrior, but he would become one.

THE RELUCTANT LEGEND

Tecumseh Sherman was born February 8, 1820, in Lancaster, Ohio, the sixth of eleven children. His father, Charles, named him Tecumseh because he was an admirer of the Shawnee Chief who earned a great reputation on both sides of the War of 1812 for his “...courage, fortitude, ambition, generosity, humanity, eloquence, military skill, leadership...and above all, patriotism and love of liberty...”. Charles Sherman served on the Ohio Supreme Court until his unexpected death in 1829. Cump was nine years old, and his mother, Mary Hoyt Sherman, could not support eleven children. A family friend, Thomas Ewing, would take Cump into his home and raise him as his own. At the time, Ewing was a member of the Ohio Bar Association and a prominent member of the Whig Party. Ewing had said that of the children he wanted the “smartest boy”. With the Ewings, Cump was baptized and given the Christian name “William” by Ewings quite religious wife, Maria. She had been surprised that he had not been baptized, as was not impressed with the name “Tecumseh”.

Ewing became a United States Senator from the State of Ohio, and had already set in motion his hopes/plans for his foster son by providing a regimented education for Cump who received an appointment to West Point at the age of sixteen, and his military career was set – sort of. At West Point, Cump would excel academically,

being one of the brightest cadets at the legendary military academy. It was, however, his penchant for a good joke and his disdain for the strict code of behavior that set him apart. In his own words, Cump would recall his days at West Point to be both enlightening and dark. He would graduate 6th in his class in 1840 as a private, just as he entered. Cump writes in his memoirs, “ At the Academy I was not considered a good soldier, for at no time was I selected for any office, but remained a private throughout the whole four years. Then, as now, neatness in dress and form, with a strict conformity to the rules, were the qualifications required for office, and I suppose I was found not to excel in any of these.” Fellow cadet and later Civil War General William Rosencrans described Sherman as “...one of the brightest and most popular fellows... a bright eyed red headed fellow, who was always prepared for a lark of any kind”.

I want to take an aside here to provide an insight I have gained from this research. It had never occurred to me how many of those officers educated at West Point during these years preceding the Civil War would, ultimately, stand beside one another or against one another. It was not a fact lost on the participants in this great tragic event.

After West Point, Cump was assigned to the 3rd U.S. Artillery in Florida in the 2nd Seminole War. He describes this a mundane existence in Florida rounding up straggler Seminole. He served in South Carolina and later Georgia where he came to know the people and land, a fact that would later prove very important to his career. While many of his fellow classmates received great experience in the Mexican-American War, Cump was stationed in California.

Being stationed in California had caused something of a conundrum. Cump has fallen in love with Ellen Ewing, one of Thomas Ewing's daughters. At the time he was 23 and she was 19. Cump had taken a four month leave of absence in order to

spend time with her and they were engaged in the Fall of 1843. Thomas Ewing had hoped that Cump would join the Corps of Engineers. Cump had chosen not to do so, and Senator Ewing did not want his daughter becoming a soldier's wife. Ellen loved Cump, but did not desire to travel about the country, and remained in Washington City (later Washington, D.C.), with her parents. Thomas Ewing was very much involved in politics and was serving as Zachery Taylor's Secretary of the Interior. Cump and Ellen married on May 1, 1850, at The Blair House, across the street from The White House. It was a very social affair attended by the President, as well as Senators Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. After the wedding, Cump served as Captain of the Subsistence Departments in St. Louis, Missouri, and New Orleans, Louisiana. He resigned his commission in 1853 having served thirteen years with honor but little distinction and seeing very little combat.

He was offered a job in San Francisco, California, as a banker and earned a reputation for being very honest, but the Gold Rush caused a severe economic downturn and he and Ellen left for Leavenworth, Kansas, where he joined his brother-in-laws, Thomas and Hugh Ewing, in the practice of law. Less than two years later, in 1859, he accepted a position as Superintendent at the Louisiana Military Academy (later L.S.U.). At the time, there was much talk regarding slavery and secession. Sherman was not as much anti-slavery as he was absolutely ideologically opposed to the notion of secession. He explained to a professor friend of his in Virginia, "You people of the South don't know what you are doing. This country will be drenched in blood, and God only knows how it will end. It is all folly, madness, a crime against civilization...Only in your spirit and determination are you prepared for war. In all else you are totally unprepared, with a bad cause to start with...If your people will but stop and think, they must see in the end that you will surely fail." When Louisiana secedes in January of 1861, he resigned his post and headed to Washington City at the request of his brother who is now Senator John Sherman of

Ohio. John Sherman actually arranges a meeting between Cump and the newly elected President Lincoln, hoping that Cump will make a push to become an officer in the inevitable forthcoming conflict. Lincoln is introduced to Cump and told that he is just up from Louisiana. Lincoln asks Cump, "How are they getting along down there?". Cump abruptly replies, "They think they are getting along swimmingly. They are preparing for war." The President replies, "Oh, well, I guess we'll manage to keep house." Cump would write in his memoirs that he was sadly disappointed and damned politicians generally.

Cump finding no place for him in Washington City, accepts a position as president of a streetcar company in St. Louis, Missouri, and signed a contract agreeing to hold the position for one year. In April of 1861, Cump is offered the Chief Clerkship of the War Department with a promise to be made Assistant Secretary of War when Congress convenes – which he declines. After witnessing a riot in St. Louis on May 10, 1861, with his son William between U.S. militia and confederate supporters, Cump corresponded with Thomas Ewing and agreed to come back if made a Colonel in the U.S. Regular Army and NOT the volunteer army that Lincoln was forming to go into combat in the South. Thomas Ewing met with Lincoln and makes this happen. Around this time, Cump writes his brother, John, telling him that he still thinks this is going to be a long war, very long, much longer than any politician thinks.

Colonel Sherman fairs pretty well leading his men at the Battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861, so well, in fact, that he is approached about assignment to Kentucky with General Robert Anderson, hero of Fort Sumter. Cump agrees, but only on the condition that he go as a subordinate, having an expressed desire to avoid leadership. In October of 1861, Cump is stationed in Louisville with General Robert Anderson. What ensues is General Anderson attempting to amass as many troops as possible in

response to the efforts of the Confederates to establish The Kentucky Line across the “neutral state”. General Anderson was older and on October 8, 1861, he published an Order that he was relinquishing his command. By strict virtue of seniority, command fell to Cump. Cump communicates furiously with the War Department reminding them of his agreement with the President that he serve in a subordinate capacity. Assurances are made that Brigadier General Buell is en route from California, so Cump continues to function as General.

It is around this time that Cump learns that Secretary of War Cameron was in St. Louis and would visit Cump in Louisville on his way back to Washington City. Cump describes in his memoirs his delight at having an opportunity to explain personally the situation faced in Kentucky, and, most assuredly hope for news regarding the command change. Secretary Cameron arrived in Jeffersonville, Indiana by train with six or seven gentlemen who turned out to be reporters. He seemed most focused on when he could leave for Cincinnati. Again, per his memoirs, Cump begged him to come over to Louisville, further explaining how bad things were. Only on learning that he could leave via rail for Cincinnati from Frankfort the next morning did the Secretary relent. Hacks were sent over and the Secretary was delivered to Cump’s room at the Galt House. The group met for most of that day. When Cump wanted to discuss military business privately, the Secretary waived him off. Cump went on to explain that to defend his part of a three hundred mile front he would need sixty thousand men; To go on the offensive would require two hundred thousand men. According to his recollection, the meeting was not one of raised voices and shouting, but was conducted in what he described as an agreeable fashion. Cump learns shortly thereafter that the discussions held in his room at the Galt House have been published in many Eastern papers and that he is being painted as “crazy, insane and mad”, moreover, that Secretary Cameron is cited as a source. As a footnote, General Thomas Wood who was present in the room at the Galt House for

what he termed “The Council of War” affirmed Cump’s recollection of the meeting – after the war. General Don Carlos Buell arrived in Louisville in the middle of November, and Cump was transferred to the Department of Missouri.

During this time, Mrs. Sherman joins Cump and he takes a twenty day leave of absence as the media continues to hound him. Cump had written Ellen, “ I am up all night...under the quiet observation of spies.” When she found him he as practically mute and convinced his life would end soon. The worst of the depression appears to have lasted for two weeks. At the request of General H.W. Halleck, Cump was seen by a physician and deemed unfit to serve and sent him home to Ohio. This was followed by two months of deep depression. Ellen and John Sherman worked diligently to rehabilitate his public image, including personally visiting President Lincoln who seemed very empathetic to Cump’s plight. This is a point worth remembering. The Union still needed him, but it was agreed that he would not serve in sole command. Six months later he returned to service.

Upon return, under the command of Major General H.W. Halleck, Cump begins to restore some balance and become familiar with the Missouri/Western Kentucky area, specifically assuming command of Paducah, Kentucky, on February 13, 1862. This assignment will prove fateful and fortuitous in that it brings Cump to be reacquainted with a man who would become a lifelong friend and confidant – Ulysses S. Grant. The two were drawn together by the Battle of Shiloh. After the Confederates attacked the unprepared Union forces, Cump and Grant struggled furiously to prevent a panicked retreat. Cump was wounded in the hand and had two horses shot from under him. Cump again performed admirably. It was after Shiloh that Cump went to see Grant whom he had heard had applied for a leave. Other than the continuing reports of Grant’s alcoholism, Grant was worn out and frustrated by Washington and what he perceived as their constant effort to hamstring him. Cump

believed that after Shiloh, they could have taken all of Mississippi had they let them and he prevailed upon Grant to remain using his own personal mental health history as an example. In July of 1863, Cump and Grant seal the first real Union military victory with the brutal siege of Vicksburg and the Meridian Campaign.

After this we witness re-birth of William Tecumseh Sherman and we see Cump engaging in the type of warfare for which he will become famous. Cump would write to Grant, “We are absolutely stripping the country of corn, cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry, everything...” regarding his operations around Jackson, Mississippi, “The wholesale destruction to which the country is now being subjected is terrible to contemplate, but it is the scourge of war.” Grant will prove to be Cump’s savior, and under his watchful eye and despite the then recent mental instability, will move through Tennessee toward Georgia. Cump would later say, “He stood by me when I was crazy, and I stood by him when he was drunk”. It is often said that Grant unleashed William Tecumseh Sherman on Georgia. The strategy of crushing the heart of the South was planned with Grant, but the specifics were left to Cump who was now in his element. Grant would credit Cump with the plan and state unerringly that he supported it and spent his efforts convincing other generals and a reluctant president that the campaign was worthwhile.

Cunningly, with his primary goal of Atlanta in mind, Cump avoided direct conflict but moved ever onward to the city – The Workshop of the Confederacy. General John Bell Hood had taken control of the Southern command of Atlanta. En route, Cump would sit down with three of his generals and conferred. He asked what John Bell Hood was like as an undergraduate at West Point. He was told that Hood was impetuous and Cump prepared for an immediate Confederate attack. Cump announced his plan of decimation to the South. He knew the prospect of attack was as much a weapon as the actual attack. Hood wrote Cump and stated, “The

unprecedented measure you propose transcends, in studied and ingenious cruelty, all acts...in the dark history of war. In the name of God and humanity, I protest.” Cump replied, “God will judge us in due time”.

In response to a letter from the Mayor of Atlanta, Sherman wrote:

Gentlemen:

... You might as well appeal against the thunder-storm as against these terrible hardships of war. They are inevitable, and the only way the people of Atlanta can hope once more to live in peace and quiet at home, is to stop the war; which can only be done by admitting that it began in error and is perpetuated in pride.

We don't want your negroes, or your horses, or your houses, or your lands, or anything you have, but we do want and will have a just obedience to the laws of the United States. That we will have, and, if it involves the destruction of your improvements, we cannot help it....

I myself have seen in Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, hundreds and thousands of women and children fleeing from your armies and desperadoes, hungry and with bleeding feet. In Memphis, Vicksburg, and Mississippi, we find thousands upon thousands of the families of rebel soldiers left on our hands, and who we could not see starve. Now that war comes home to you, you feel very different. You deprecate its horrors, but did not feel them when you sent carloads of soldiers and ammunitions, and moulded shells and shot, to carry war into Kentucky and Tennessee, to desolate the homes of hundreds and thousands of good people who only asked to live in peace at their old homes and under the Government of their inheritance....

But, my dear Sirs, when peace does come, you may call on me for any thing. Then will I share with you the last cracker, and work with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter.

Now you must go, and take with you the old and feeble, feed and nourish them, and build for them, amid quiet places, proper habitations to shield them against the weather

until the mad passions of men cool down, and allow them in peace once more to settle their old homes at Atlanta.

Yours in haste,

W. T. Sherman, Maj.-Gen., commanding

Cump took the City, placing families on trains to the North and destroying anything of potential value to the South. One quarter of Atlanta was burned. And then Cump had to wait. What he had prepared for that would be his march to the Sea having been approved by Grant, was stayed pending Lincoln's bid for re-election. Grant would later note that he would rather Cump engage Hood and the Confederate army (not for lack of coaxing by them). Finally receiving the go ahead with Lincoln's re-election and having readied his troops, 62,000 infantry and 5,500 cavalry, with 1.2 million rations, 3000 beef cattle, 2500 wagons and 17000 horses and mules, Cump (now known by his men as Uncle Billy), did what many military historians recognize as either brilliant or maniacal. He had telegraph lines cut and severed ties with supply units, headquarters, Grant AND the President and headed into enemy territory. Also missing from his entourage were any reporters.

Severing into two main columns, Cump headed East, led by General Slocum toward Augusta, and South, led by General Wright toward Macon. Cump advises Union Fleet Commander David Porter that they would arrive somewhere between Hilton Head and Savannah around Christmas. Just as they had learned en route to Vicksburg, his troops moved quickly, traveling light and living off the land. They foraged in cities, homes and farms taking all they could use and leaving nothing of benefit to the Confederacy. This was what became known as "Total War". When asked about Cump's whereabouts, a worried Lincoln replied, "We know what hole he went into, but we don't know what hole he will come out of".

Cump would reappear on December 22, 1864, having slashed and burned his way across Georgia, for the most part with little resistance, and presented the President with the Christmas gift of the City of Savannah. He had set up outside the City and announced his presence requesting surrender. As part of the recon, Cump surrounded Savannah, but purposely left open one escape route. The 10,000 troops

under the command of General William Hardee escaped under the cover of night and fog. Much needed supply ships had arrived at Savannah, and Grant, now massing troops at Gettysburg, wanted Cump and his troops to board the ships and join him there.

One often overlooked aspect of this demoralizing campaign occurred on January 16, 1865. General William Tecumseh Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15. Cump and Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton met with twenty leaders of the African American community in Savannah on January 12, 1865, on the second floor of Charles Green's mansion. The leaders were asked what THEY wanted. They were all ministers, eleven of whom had been born free. Their collective response was land. By the terms of the Order, some 400,000 acres along the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida was to be distributed to former slaves in forty acre parcels. President Lincoln approved the Order. Notably as, Sherman Land, as it was known, was distributed, Cump ordered that the Army could lend mules to the new settlers, hence, forty acres and a mule. In 1865, President Andrew Johnson would overturn Special Field Order No. 15.

Cump endeavored and ultimately prevailed upon Grant to allow him to continue his march up through the Carolinas. South Carolina would be taken by storm. There was vengeance to be had in South Carolina. The shots that started the Civil War were, after all, fired there.

The crushing effect of the march was taking its' toll, not just in the South, but on the battlefield as General Robert E. Lee refused to allow his troops to have access to newspapers knowing the demoralizing effect of news of Cump's march on his troops in Virginia. Cump would accept the surrender of Confederate General Joseph Johnston in Durham Station, North Carolina on April 14, 1865 (under letter of truce). Cump had not learned of Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865, until April 11, 1865.

In 1869, Ulysses S. Grant is elected President and he names his long time friend, Cump, Commander of the U.S. Army. Now given the responsibility of protecting the construction of the transcontinental railroad, he set about pacification of native Americans in the same way that he had taken the South. He was an

advocate of striking at the native Americans on an economic basis, the Buffalo, as well as supporting General Phillip Sheridan's adoption of tactics involving the same techniques he had used in Mississippi, Georgia and the Carolinas. By the late 1870's, the Kiowas, the Comanches, the Lakota and Cheyenne had been forced onto reservations.

Cump retired from the military in 1884, nearly fifty years after entering West Point, and remained popular. He disappointed those who encouraged him to run for President by saying, "If nominated, I will not run; if elected I will not serve." He and Ellen lived in Washington, St. Louis and New York City. He maintained his disdain for the political world, but loved to socialize. He enjoyed friendships with Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill Cody. He very much enjoyed the company of old Civil War colleagues AND foes such as Phil Sheridan and Joe Johnston. He also loved the company of attractive young women and had a reputation of being an overly enthusiastic meet and greet kisser. According to one biographer, Ellen did not seem to mind this trait. She said that the deepest conflicts in their marriage involved money, her father and their son, Tom, who became a Jesuit priest. Ellen preceded Cump in death soon after their move to New York in 1888. He was deeply grieved by her passing and was only beginning to emerge from his mourning when he caught pneumonia. William Tecumseh Sherman died on February 14, 1891, in New York City.

I subscribe to a number of history related websites. On February 10, 2015, in scanning articles I read an article entitled American Phoenix: William T. Sherman. In this one article I found my topic and a myriad of information on both Cump AND Tecumseh. My primary resources were as follows:

A First Rate Madness: Discovering Links Between Leadership & Mental Illness by Nassir Ghaemi, 2011. Point of interest, one of the other central figures in this book was none other than President Abraham Lincoln.

Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman by Robert L. OConnell, 2014.

The Memoirs of General William T. Sherman, William T. Sherman, 2014 – E Edition.

There are clearly a myriad of Kentucky connections. There is much history of how this County was affected by the Civil War. I chose the most simple. Zera and Mary Morris had eight children. James was born June 3, 1843. He died September 20, 1940. At the time of his death, he was the oldest living Civil War Veteran in Christian County. He served with the 17th Kentucky Infantry from 1862 to 1865. He was mustered out in Louisville on January 25, 1865. His regiment was one of those that marched through Georgia with Sherman.

I read many articles related to his perceived and post diagnosed depression. It's not without support, even in his own memoirs and by his own admission. There are to this day continuing references to Total War, most recently I read an article entitled Sherman In Gaza regarding Israeli warfare.

I hesitate to define the younger Cump as a failure. It seems more a matter of not succeeding than failing. Clearly, admittedly, he sought to avoid leadership, actively avoiding it, but it found him time and again. From the ashes of his depression, it appears that he accepted it, channeled it and rode it across five states. Logistically, Cump was brilliant beyond his own knowing. He was verbose. He was a prolific writer. He was manic. He was an idealist and the ironic comparisons between him and his namesake are thought provoking, if not haunting. He was a realist. He said, "War is hell", and he meant it. He brought it. He was a terror. He was human. These are the words of Chief Tecumseh:

When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with the fear of death, so that when their time comes they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again a different way. Sing your death song and die like a hero going home.