



**FIRST DEFENDER & POTTSVILLE NATIVE
HELPED CAPTURE FORT FISHER**



US ARMY SIGNAL CORP

**FIRST DEFENDER
AND
POTTSVILLE NATIVE HELPED CAPTURE FORT FISHER
DURING THE CIVIL WAR.**

**ALONG WITH REAR
ADMIRAL PORTER AND PRESIDENT LINCOLN
OCCUPIES CONFEDERATE JEFFERSON DAVIS'S MANSION.**

MAJOR WILLIAM W. CLEMENS

Major William W. Clemens died Saturday June 2, 1894 at the home of his mother in Pottsville. Major Clemens was a brave soldier and won high recognition for his service to the country. Major Clemens was born and raised in Pottsville he was 56 at the time of his death. His father was one of the early settlers of Pottsville, William attended all the Pottsville schools and was a graduate of the West Chester Academy. Major Clemens who at the time of the civil war was living in Minersville and joined the Washington Artillerists as a private marched with the First Defenders to Washington.

He then joined the 25th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment as a private in Company H. After the muster out of the 25th on 7-23-61 Clemens enlisted in the 129th a nine-month regiment under the command of Col. Jacob Frick on July 21, 1862. He enlisted as the First Lieutenant of Company A formed in Minersville under Captain George J. Lawrence. The 129th in its short career fought in two hard battles, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

During the battle of Fredericksburg Clemens and his men made the charge up Marye's Heights with Humphries Division. Company A would suffer the loss of Captain George J. Lawrence, John M. Jones, John Nicholas, and Thomas Millington, and many more wounded.

Clemens saw Captain Lawrence fall and detailed a man to carry the body to the rear. Where Captain Lawrence would later die from his wounds. After Lawrence's death Lieutenant Clemens was made commander of Company A.

An event that Major Clemens is famous for is his appointment as Chief Signal Officer to Rear Admiral Porter in the two attacks on Fort Fisher in January of 1865. Fort Fisher controlled the entrance to Wilmington, N.C. and Major Clemens as Chief Signal Officer, commanded the fleet which made the sea attack, also he signaled for the advance of the land attack, the result of which was the fall of Fort Fisher.

Major Clemens was highly recommended for his valor and dauntless courage displayed in his successful attack on Fort Fisher by Rear Admiral David D. Porter. Because of his actions he was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Soon after the capture of Fort Fisher, Richmond was taken and Rear Admiral Porter as a mark of esteem and regard invited Clemens to accompany him with President Lincoln on a trip up the James River to the capitol of the confederacy where they occupied the mansion deserted by Jefferson Davis.

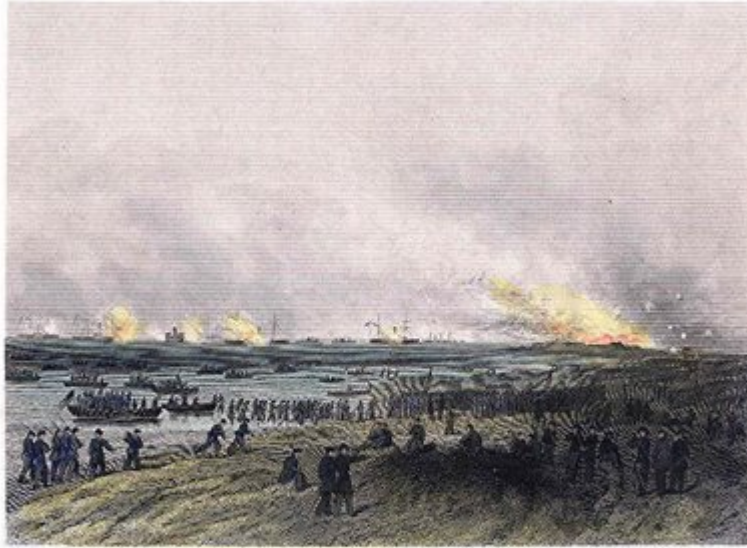
CONGRESS GAVE HIM A VOTE OF THANKS AND REAR ADMIRAL PORTER ACKNOWLEDGES HIS BRAVERY.

Congress honored Major Clemens with a vote of thanks for his bravery, and he was appointed by the Secretary of War Second Lieutenant, and was stationed at San Antonio. He had charge of all the government stores, and was subsequently promoted First Lieutenant of the 31st Infantry at Fort Garland, Colorado. From this he was transferred to the Fiftieth Infantry and served until his resignation in 1870 when he went to work for the Coal And Iron Company.

He became manager of the financial department of Bines & Sheaf, coal agents of the C&I. He remained with them until about 1880 and then became a bookkeeper for the Lehigh Valley Coal Company. He resigned this position in 1891 owing to illness and resided in Pottsville for his last few years.

President Lincoln enters Richmond, VA—under escort of Rear Adm. Porter, a dozen armed sailors, and three aides (Capt. Penrose, Lincoln's military aide, Capt. Adams of the Navy, and Lt Clemens of the Signal Corps). Lincoln had been aboard USS Malvern but, when obstructions blocked her path, transferred with the admiral to Porter's barge. Landing one block above Libby Prison, Porter left two sailors to guard the launch and formed the remaining ten into a guard, six in front and four behind. Porter reported to Secretary Welles, "We found that the rebel rams and gunboats had all been blown up, with the exception of an unfinished ram, the Texas, and a small tug gun-boat, the Beaufort, mounting one gun. The ships destroyed included the 4 gun ironclads Virginia No. 2, Richmond, and Fredericksburg; wooden ships Nansemond, 2 guns; Hampton, 2 guns; Roanoke, 1 gun; Torpedo, Shrapnel, and school-ship Patrick Henry."

Major Clemens' Award



NORTH ATLANTIC SQUADRON, U. S. FLAGSHIP MALVERN, OFF FORT FISHER, JANUARY 17, 1865.

SIR:

Second Lieutenant W. W. Clemens, U.S. Signal Corps, was detailed, at my request, for a signal officer by the chief of that corps, to serve as signal officer on my staff. Mr. Clemens has taught the army code to at least one of the regular officers on board each ship that had them, which has enabled me often to communicate when naval signals would have been of no avail.

In addition, his services have been to me of the utmost importance; thoroughly collected and competent at all times and under any circumstances; gentlemanly in his deportment, intelligent, always ready and cheerful.

I hope you will at least send a copy of this to the honorable Secretary of War, that it may be placed on file as a slight evidence of my appreciation of him as an officer and gentleman.

Through Mr. Clemens I was in constant communication with General Terry, even during the assault on Fort Fisher, and was enabled to direct the fire of the New Ironsides to the traverses occupied by the enemy without fear of hurting our own people from my complete reliance on him.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DAVID D. PORTER,

Rear-Admiral.

HON. GIDEON WELLES,

Secretary of the Navy.