

**TERRY, Alfred Howe** (b. Hartford, CT, November 10, 1827; d. New Haven, Ct, December 16, 1890), professional soldier.

Born into a Connecticut family that could trace its New England lineage back to the middle of the seventeenth century, Alfred Terry was one of ten children of a prosperous merchant and book dealer. Moving with his parents from Hartford to New Haven in 1831, he considered the latter city to be his home for the remainder of his life. Educated in New Haven's public schools, he entered the

curriculum, Terry applied directly for admission to the state bar in 1849. Upon being accepted to practice, he left Yale without graduating, never to return. For the next twelve years he labored diligently but unsuccessfully to make a career as a trial lawyer. To occupy the time between cases he accepted positions in legal administration, becoming city clerk in 1850 and clerk of the county superior court in 1854. Still unfulfilled, Terry took up the study of military history and science as a hobby. Joining the New Haven Grays militia company in 1849, he rose to the rank of major by 1855.

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Terry was commissioned colonel of the Second Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, a militia regiment obligated to serve for ninety days. He led the regiment at First Bull Run, where it was part of E. D. Keyes's brigade. When the Second Connecticut mustered out of service in August, Terry recruited a three-year regiment, the Seventh Connecticut Infantry and became its colonel. In November 1861 the Seventh Connecticut became part of the Union expedition that seized Port Royal Sound and Hilton Head, South Carolina. Terry remained at Hilton Head until mid-December, using the time to train his unit to a high state of efficiency. At the end of the year he took his regiment south to Tybee Island, Georgia, to join the forces besieging Fort Pulaski. Upon the surrender of the fort in April 1862, Terry became its new commander. His promotion to brigadier general of volunteers followed before the end of the month.

By late summer of 1862 Terry had risen to command the several thousand Union troops at Hilton Head. During the year that he spent on Hilton Head administrative matters occupied most of his time, although he did lead a brigade during the abortive Federal raid on the Charleston and Savannah Railroad at Pocotaligo, South Carolina, in October 1862. Finally, in the summer of 1863 Terry's troops became involved in Major General Quincy Gillmore's campaign against Charleston, South Carolina. When Gillmore launched an expedition to seize Morris Island in July, Terry led a small force to nearby James Island to divert Confederate attention. The diversion was successful, with Federal forces gaining a permanent lodgment on Morris Island. Following two unsuccessful assaults on Confederate fortifications at the north end of the island, Gillmore reorganized his command and began siege operations. In the reorganization Terry became commander of the division of Federal troops on Morris Island. The Confederates abandoned Morris Island in September, but Gillmore and Terry were unable to make further inroads in Charleston's defenses.

Terry remained in the Department of the South as a district commander until April 1864, when he led the advance elements of Gillmore's troops to the Virginia theater of operations. There he assumed command of the First Division, X Corps, which he became part of Major General Benjamin Butler's\* Army of the James. Terry led his division in Butler's Bermuda Hundred Campaign of May-June, 1864, taking part in minor actions at Chester Station and Wooldridge's Hill, and the major battle of Drewry's Bluff. At the conclusion of the latter battle on May

16, 1864, Terry played a conspicuous role in covering the retreat of the defeated Army of the James to its Bermuda Hundred base. He continued to command his division in operations around Bermuda Hundred, Petersburg, and Richmond until October 1864, taking part in several sharp actions in front of the Richmond defenses. He assumed command of the X Corps for several months late in the year, and on one occasion briefly led the Army of the James during Butler's absence. He had been promoted to major general of volunteers by brevet in August, but administrative irregularities prevented the new rank from taking effect until the end of the year.

In a reorganization of the Army of the James in December 1864 Terry's command became the First Division of the XXIV Corps. Uninvolved in the abortive first attempt to seize Fort Fisher, which protected the blockade-runner haven of Wilmington, North Carolina, Terry commanded the second expedition to Fort Fisher in January 1865. Working closely with the navy, he formulated and successfully executed a model plan which resulted in the surrender of Fort Fisher to his troops on January 15, 1865. For this service he received the thanks of Congress and promotion to the rank of brigadier general in the regular army. He finished the war by leading his troops inland from Wilmington in March, ultimately uniting them with William Tecumseh Sherman's army in central North Carolina.

Mustered out of the volunteer service in 1866 as a major general, Terry chose to remain in the regular army. In the immediate postwar period, he briefly commanded the Department of Virginia before going west to command the Department of Dakota. In 1869 he was transferred to the Department of the South, where he firmly but carefully used military force to eliminate domestic turmoil and restore order in Georgia. After more than three years in Georgia he again assumed command of the Department of Dakota. In the summer of 1876 he took the field in overall command of the expedition against the Sioux that culminated in the loss of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer\* and five companies of the Seventh Cavalry. Although controversy has swirled around Terry's orders to Custer ever since, Terry refused to defend himself or castigate Custer publicly. He remained in command of the Department of Dakota until 1886, when he was promoted to major general and given command of the Division of the Missouri. By this time seriously ill, Terry spent most of the following year on sick leave. Forced into retirement in 1888 by the state of his health, he returned to New Haven, Connecticut, where he died of Bright's disease on December 16, 1890.

Alfred Terry was one of the preeminent non-West Point officers in the American army of the nineteenth century. Trained in the legal profession, he gained his military knowledge primarily by private study. This knowledge, coupled with his innate intelligence, permitted him to perform creditably as a field officer from the very beginning of the Civil War. His regimental commands, especially the Seventh Connecticut Infantry, were models of efficiency. Many other vol-

unteer officers, however, could claim as much for themselves. As the war progressed, Terry began to rise from the crowd as he held successively more important commands. He proved as adept at administration of a district as he did in leading a division in the field. On several occasions he was given temporary command of an army corps, and at one point in the conflict he commanded an army. Recognition of his abilities by his superiors eventually led to his assignment to lead the second Fort Fisher expedition, an important independent command.

Terry's rise was due not to political favoritism but to pure ability and an exceptional personality. He proved able to work in harmony with such disparate superiors as West Point-trained Quincy Gillmore and political general Benjamin Butler. As his success against Fort Fisher showed, he was also able to develop a productive working relationship with the irascible David Porter\* of the navy. This ability to deal with others firmly and forthrightly but without rancor or partisanship was also displayed during his difficult tenure in Georgia in the Reconstruction period. His refusal to engage in public debate during the controversy over his orders to Custer provides further evidence of the strength of his character.

Alfred Terry's significance in American military history rests on two foundations. First, his activities as operational commander and military administrator in both war and peace and models of their kind. His campaign against Fort Fisher and his administration of Georgia during Reconstruction represent the twin highlights of his service to the nation. Second, and more important, Terry proved by the force of his own example that formal military education was not required for a successful military career in the nineteenth century. His career showed that a good mind, a strong character, and a willingness to learn from experience could overcome the lack of West Point training. He thus epitomized the ideal nineteenth century volunteer officer—a volunteer so competent in his adopted profession that he could make the transition to the regular army without visible difficulty or opposition.

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