

Lt. Col. Lyman Greene's Papers To Open Soon At Army History Institute

By Kathryn Jorgensen

CARLISLE, Pa. — An archive of more than 200 items belonging to Bvt. Lt. Col. Jacob Lyman Greene, Gen. George A. Custer's adjutant general, will soon be available to researchers at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center's Military History Institute in Carlisle.

Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual) of Springfield, Mass., donated the collection, which the Army center's senior historian Richard Sommers calls "a very significant acquisition," in late May.

Since then staff at the library and archives has been cataloging 11 boxes of papers. Sommers says they contained a few artifacts, photographs and newspapers clippings, but most were documents from 1865-1866. They will be ready for public review in mid-November.

Despite serious illnesses and

early retirement from his military service, Greene survived the Civil War and became the fifth president of Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company, which became a part of MassMutual in 1996.

A trunk filled with his papers that was left behind at Connecticut Mutual contained letters, commissions, court-martial documents, Greene's commission to captain signed by Abraham Lincoln and a splinter of wood from his bunk at Libby Prison. A MassMutual spokesman valued the collection at \$800,000.

Sommers says the papers were on loan to the University of Hartford at one time, then went back to the insurance company where they were forgotten.

"Recently in going through the corporate archives they found them and in civic mindedness and public

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spiritedness MassMutual recognized they could benefit people who study this history, but most researchers wouldn't think to contact a corporate archives, so they offered them to us," he says.

Greene was a native of North Waterford, Maine, and a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School. He died in Hartford, Conn., in March 1905 at age 67.

He served in the 7th Michigan Infantry in 1861 and mustered out in early 1862 before the start of the Peninsula Campaign because of ill health, according to Sommers.

Greene returned to the military in the summer of 1863, briefly as captain of the 6th Michigan Cavalry, then mustered as captain and assistant adjutant in the U.S. Volunteers. He was assigned to duty with Custer and remained with him until he mustered out on March 20, 1866.

Besides being Custer's adjutant, Greene was a friend and was best man at Custer's 1864 wedding to Elizabeth "Libbie" Bacon.

Greene was among the prisoners captured at the Battle of Trevilian Station on June 11, 1864. Sommers says he was released on Dec. 10, but not formally exchanged until spring 1865.

He stayed in the army. Documents from occupation duty in Louisiana and Texas are a strong part of the collection and should interest researchers.

"It's a new area or an area that receives much less attention than the war itself," says Sommers.

"There was a lot of dissension in the Union Army then because we had won the war, which the soldiers enlisted to fight, and they didn't want to be kept in service to go fight Indians or the French in

Mexico or even serve occupation duty. There were a lot of discipline problems that Custer had to deal with."

He expects students of business history will be interested in the documents related to Greene's business experience in New England in the late 19th century.

Sommers says some 300,000 of the institute's 15 million holdings have been digitized. The collection includes manuscripts, 100,000 Civil War photographs, and books on the Civil War. "This Greene donation reinforces one of our great areas of strength," he says.

"We're the army's public library for military history. We're a great research archives and library." Researchers from all over the world visit. The only requirement for access in the research or reading room is personal identification.

Visitors are welcome Monday through Friday. The institute is closed on federal holidays and weekends. For information call (717) 245-3971 or visit www.USAHEC.org

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