

**Colt Industries**



**Firearms Division**  
150 Huyshope Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06102  
203/278-8550

January 22, 1975

Mr. Robert G. Cox, M.D.  
804 S. Sycamore  
Palestine, Texas 75801

Dear Dr. Cox:

Reference is made to your letter requesting historical information on Colt New Line Revolver, serial number 5014.

Upon researching our records, we located the information listed below which describes this arm as originally shipped from the Colt factory in 1886.

Caliber:	41/c R.F.
Barrel length:	Not listed
Finish:	Nickel & Gold
Type of stocks:	Pearl
Factory engraved:	Yes
Shipped to:	Worton & Cooke
Address:	Not available
Date of shipment:	March 19, 1886
Number of same type fire- arms in this shipment:	1

We trust the information supplied above will be of interest.

Sincerely,

M. S. Huber  
Historian

MSH/ssc

*R. L. Wilson*

HISTORICAL CONSULTANT FOR COLT'S PATENT FIRE ARMS COMPANY

27 LAKEWOOD CIRCLE NORTH • MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT 06040 U.S.A. • TEL. 203 646-1648

SAMUEL COLT PRESENTS (1961)  
ARMS COLLECTION OF COLONEL COLT (1963)  
ARMY REVOLVERS & GATLING GUNS (1964)  
L. D. NIMSCHKE, FIREARMS ENGRAVER (1965)  
BAT MASTERSON, LAWMAN OF THE WEST (1966)  
THE EVOLUTION OF THE COLT (1967)  
THE RAMPANT COLT (1969)  
COLT COMMEMORATIVE FIREARMS (1969)  
THE GOLDEN SPIKE (1969)  
A. A. WHITE ENGRAVERS, INC. (1969)  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT - OUTDOORSMAN (1970)  
THE BOOK OF COLT FIREARMS (1971)  
WHALES AND WHALEMEN; SCRIMSHAW AND SCHIMSHANDERS (EDITOR, 1971)  
COLT-WINCHESTER FIREARMS ENGRAVING (1972)  
THE COLT COMMEMORATIVE (EDITOR, QUARTERLY JOURNAL)  
ANTIQUE ARMS ANNUAL (EDITOR)

June 15, 1972

Dr Robert G. Cox  
804 S. Sycamore  
Palestine, Texas 75801

Dear Bob:

I am enclosing the documenting letter and the revolver and leather holster, covering the New Line 41 caliber engraved pistol, serial #5014.

This is the scroll style currently known as "Gustave Young" of the cartridge period. The execution is excellent, with coverage on the barrel, cylinder, frame, and grip straps. It appears that holster wear has worn down the cylinder somewhat, although the engraving is quite visible.

Finish of nickel plating, with pearl grips.

I have not yet obtained the Colt factory letter; being quite busy and unable to check it out as yet by personally going into the factory. If I can find it myself, I will see that the letter is sent off to you right away. But rather than wait, here is everything else.

Price on this postpaid at \$395, complete.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



RL Wilson

*R. L. Wilson*

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WHALES AND WHALEMEN; SCRIMSHAW AND SCHIMSHANDERS (EDITOR, 1971)

June 8, 1972

De

The Colt New Line revolver which you have just purchased (serial #5014) was used by my father, James F. Havens, during his 35 years of service with the Hartford City Police Department (c. 1890-c. 1925). He carried the gun in his pocket while on duty. In those days the police had to supply their own guns, and as a result the variety of firearms was considerable.

Being a diminutive 41 caliber snubnose pocket gun, his Colt New Line was a comfortable and convenient hideaway. He liked the pearl grips and the nickel plating, the deluxe factory engraving, and the fancy hand tooled holster. You can see how the holster now form fits the gun, because of its being carried over so many years in the pocket.

Due to the small size of the gun, my father took quite a bit of ribbing from fellow officers - they used to say that the only thing he shot with it was a dead horse.

He was 6'2" tall and weighed 235 pounds; so the pistol was almost like an ornament. He told us: "I carry this gun due to regulations; but have never used it to fire, and never expect to." I remember one day at home when he pulled the pistol and holster out of his pocket and put it on the dinner table! We were all a bit shocked, as he was careful usually to keep these items away from children's hands.

As children we never touched the gun, and we never saw him load or unload it. He probably carried it empty. In those days he could rely on his fists and night stick for protection. How times have changed!

Yours sincerely,

*George F. Havens*

George F. Havens



**James Wasson as a Military Academy cadet**

“It is to be hoped that these cadets who . . . are soon to graduate and become officers of the army, will never again place themselves in any situation which may be discreditable to them or require the voice of authority to remind them of their duty as officers and gentlemen.”

Secretary of War William W. Belknap, June 187

# "Recreant to His Trust"

The Disappointing Career of Major James R. Wasson

By Roger D. Cunningham

On 8 July 1883 a new prisoner signed into the Kansas State Penitentiary at Lansing. Convict 2984 was a thirty-six-year-old man, who stood just over 5 feet, 10 inches, in height and had a light complexion, light hair, and light blue eyes. His occupation was listed as "soldier," and a later entry indicated that he had been an officer. Indeed, until five days earlier, James Robert Wasson had been a major in the United States Army. During the preceding two decades he had fought in the Civil War, graduated at the head of his West Point class, vacationed with the nation's First Family, and received a military decoration from Emperor Meiji of Japan. Who was this man and why was he about to begin an eighteen-month prison sentence?<sup>1</sup>

## Army Blue to Cadet Gray

James R. Wasson was born in western Ohio in January 1847. In 1854 his family moved to the small town of Hartford, Iowa (near Des Moines), where his father, John C. S. Wasson, worked as a merchant and postmaster. John Wasson enlisted in the Union Army in 1862 and soon became the first lieutenant of Company B, 34th Iowa Volunteer Infantry. In February 1863, shortly before his regiment participated in the Vicksburg campaign, he resigned his commission because of ill health and returned home. In January 1864 seventeen-year-old James Wasson decided that it was time for him to fight as well, so he enlisted in his father's former company and campaigned with it and with Company C of the same regiment across the deep South from Matagorda Island, Texas, to Florida. In the spring of 1864 the 34th Iowa served in the Red River campaign in central Louisiana, and in August it participated in the operations that led to the capture of Forts Gaines and Morgan, Alabama, which guarded the entrance to Mobile Bay. After serving briefly in western Florida, the regiment participated in April 1865 in the siege of Fort Blakely, Alabama, whose fall resulted in Mobile's surrender. The 34th Iowa then returned to Texas, and Private Wasson mustered out of federal service in Houston in August 1865.<sup>2</sup>



*Printed invitations to the summer dances at the Military Academy in 1870 carried the names of Frederick Grant, James Wasson, and other cadets*

James Wasson's performance as a soldier impressed his first company commander, Capt. James A. Dunagan, enough to offer to recommend him to take an examination for the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. With the war still in progress, Wasson declined his captain's offer, explaining that he would not lay down his musket until the rebellion was over. He evidently liked what he had seen of military service, however, because after returning to Iowa he secured an academy appointment from his congressman and entered West Point in 1867. Six other men who eventually graduated with him had also served in the war, including two who had already worn shoulder

straps—George B. Davis, who had been a second lieutenant in the 1st Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry, and John M. Webster, a 197th Ohio Volunteer Infantry subaltern who entered the academy in 1866 but had been "turned back" to the class of 1871.<sup>3</sup>

Since its establishment in 1802, the military academy had developed into one of the leading engineering and scientific schools in the United States. As both soldiers and civilians, its more than 2,100 graduates had helped lay the groundwork for the nation's growth. During the Civil War, hundreds of West Pointers served with distinction as officers in both the Union and Confederate Armies. Twenty-two of those who served with the Union eventually

received the Medal of Honor. Of the 977 graduates from the classes between 1833 and 1861 who were alive as the war began, almost two out of three (638) wore blue during the rebellion. Their overall performance and the domination of the U.S. Army's high command convinced the academy leaders that they had developed an effective institution.<sup>4</sup>

The war had caused West Point to abandon its short-lived five-year academic program in 1861, when it graduated two classes and restored the four-year program of studies that had been introduced by Bvt. Maj. Sylvan Thayer in 1817. A new curriculum went into effect in 1867, but mathematics (which caused most academic failure in science, and engineering courses continued to dominate, accounting for 1,125 (63 percent) of the 1,775 points used to determine a cadet's order of merit. Stricter entrance requirements applied to the classes entering West Point between 1866 and 1870 lowered the overall academic failure rate from about 30 percent to almost 50 percent during the war. Fully two-thirds of the 55 men who entered the academy with Wasson graduated, although four of them were turned back to the next class.<sup>5</sup>

Wasson's academic preparation when he entered the academy had been only that which "a little Western district school" could provide, but when he graduated in June 1871 he ranked first in his forty-one-man class's order of merit and was one of the four cadets commanding the companies that comprised the cadet battalion. For mistreating two "plebes" (freshmen) most of the first classmen (seniors) had lost all of their privileges and been confined to campus from 10 January 1871 until Secretary of War William W. Belknap finally released them from restriction in early June, just a week before graduation. Despite this episode, the *Army and Navy Journal* printed a report that called the class "one of the very best, as far as its study record was concerned, which ever graduated." It described Wasson as "a ve-



fine-looking fellow physically, being tall, well proportioned, and as straight as an arrow." One of Wasson's good friends was Frederick D. Grant, son of President Ulysses S. Grant (Class of 1843) and one of eight members of the class of 1871 who needed five years to graduate. Wasson reportedly helped Fred with his studies, thus endearing himself to the Grant family. Along with two other classmates, he and Fred were commissioned in the 4th Cavalry, which was then fighting Indians in Texas. Twenty men from the Class of 1871 entered the cavalry, while twenty-one became infantry officers."

James Wasson's military career looked promising as he left his "rock-bound highland home" for the last time. Before proceeding to his first assignment, he spent the beginning of his graduation leave at the popular seaside resort of Long Branch, New Jersey, where he vacationed with Fred Grant and the other members of the First Family at their cottage. On 23 June President Grant wrote from Long Branch to Horace Capron, his commissioner of agriculture, recommending Wasson to him. Capron, who had commanded an Illinois cavalry regiment during the Civil War, had within the previous year met and traveled around the United States with Kuroda Kiyotaka, the Japanese general whose forces had crushed the last opposition to the new reform government of the young Japanese Emperor Meiji on the northern island of Hokkaido. With President Grant's approval, Capron had contracted with the Japanese government to lead a team of experts to introduce modern agricultural and industrial practices to Hokkaido. Grant's letter discussed Capron's departure from Washington and the importance of the work he would be doing. He suggested to Capron that if he had not yet selected all of the assistants who would accompany him to Japan, he should consider Wasson. Although the recent graduate had an obligation to provide four more years of military service, the War Department had no shortage of Army officers and

each year allowed some West Pointers to resign their commissions early. As proof of Wasson's intellectual accomplishments, Grant pointed out that he had entered West Point "without any schooling after he was 16 . . . and graduated head of his class in almost every branch of studies, and very far ahead in the general average." Grant's strong endorsement, however, failed to convince Capron to employ Wasson on his four-man team."

### Japanese Interlude

President Grant nevertheless enabled Wasson to visit Japan by having the adjutant general give the new officer six months' leave beyond his

graduation leave, which would expire on 30 September; permission to draw four months' advance pay; and orders to report to Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield, who commanded the Division of the Pacific from headquarters in San Francisco. Four other recent Military Academy graduates also asked the War Department for six to twelve months' leave and permission "to go beyond the seas." First Lt. Henry H. C. Dunwoody, an 1866 West Point graduate and a fellow Iowan, sought his seven-month leave to accompany the Capron commission and "avail himself of any opening in civil engineering that may offer." Second Lt. James I. L. Jones, class of 1868, wanted to see Japan, China,



*General Grant and His Family, 1867, by William F. Cogswell, with Frederick Grant standing at center rear*

and India, and was willing to give up a year's pay to do it, while 2d Lts. Richard H. Poillon and William R. Hoag, both classmates of Wasson, wanted to see the world. On 1 August the five lieutenants, along with Capron and his commission, sailed on the monthly steamer to Japan, with Wasson bearing dispatches for Rear Adm. John Rodgers, who commanded the U.S. Navy's Asiatic Squadron from his flagship, the USS *Colorado*.<sup>8</sup>

Charles E. De Long, the American minister to Japan, reported the safe arrival of Capron's party and the five lieutenants to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish in September. Dunwoody was apparently not alone in seeking foreign employment opportunities. Letters that Fish and other American officials had provided Wasson, Dunwoody, and some of their associates convinced De Long to ignore the clause in his diplomatic instructions that he should "recommend no citizen of the United States for any position under the government to which [he was] accredited." Instead the minister chose "to aid them somewhat." Wasson, it appears, managed to arrange for future employment.<sup>9</sup>

Wasson swore his second lieutenant's oath of office in late October before the American consul in Kanagawa, just south of Tokyo, and sailed back to the United States from nearby Yokohama the following month, bearing return dispatches from Rodgers to Secretary of the Navy George M. Robeson. Wasson wrote Secretary Belknap in December to apply for another leave of absence and to tender his resignation, effective 1 July 1872. By that date each of the four lieutenants who accompanied Wasson to Japan in 1871 had returned to military duties in the United States. Dunwoody would ultimately serve six years as the Army's assistant chief signal officer and retire as a brigadier general.<sup>10</sup>

Before his resignation took effect, Wasson returned to Japan, "strongly impressed with the picture given me of the progressive movement which was

said to be going on in this country." He taught mathematics, surveying, and English for one year beginning in March 1872 at a school established by the Hokkaido Colonization Office (*Kaitakushi*) and then spent another year as surveyor-in-chief for that office. He also assisted Capron commission member A. G. Warfield in various civil engineering projects. Wasson was assisted in his surveying duties by Lt. Murray S. Day, an American naval officer on extended leave, and their services were greatly appreciated by General Kuroda, who was now the *Kaitakushi*'s deputy director. In late 1873 Kuroda sent the two Americans gifts of crepe and silk. Hokkaido (also known as Yeso or Yezo) was Japan's last undeveloped island, and more than three-fifths of the 78 foreigners employed there by the *Kaitakushi* between 1871 and 1882 were Americans. This has led one modern historian to speculate that the Japanese may have viewed Americans as best qualified for Hokkaido service owing to the United States's experience with frontier expansion and development.<sup>11</sup>

Virtually isolated until American Commodore Matthew C. Perry's 1853 visit, Japan under the young Emperor Meiji was eager to shun old-fashioned ways and catch up with the West. The Meiji government was employing hundreds of *oyatoi gaikokujin* ("hired foreigners"), who provided the necessary expertise for its modernization efforts. By 1874 there were some 500 well-paid *yatoi* (slang for "hired hands") throughout the country, a heavy majority of whom were British or French. Americans comprised about 10 percent of the total. Many of the foreigners were prominent in their fields, and their combined salaries soon exceeded 2 percent of the government's budget. Japan also sought overseas training opportunities for its citizens. In 1868 it had asked the United States for permission to send up to six students to the 23-year-old Naval Academy, and Congress agreed to the request. Five years later Junzo Matsumura became the first Japanese citizen to graduate

from Annapolis. In 1872, however, the House of Representatives, apparently more fearful of sharing the lessons of land warfare, rejected a similar Japanese request to enroll up to six students at West Point.<sup>12</sup>

In April 1874 Wasson obtained opportunity to use his military education when he was appointed as the Imperial Japanese Army's chief engineer. A month earlier Wasson had discussed transferring from the *Kaitakushi* to the Japanese Army with Charles W. LeGendre, an American adviser to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. LeGendre was a French native who had led the 51st New York Volunteer Infantry in the American Civil War, received the status of a volunteer brevet brigadier general, and served the American consul at Amoy (today Xiamen), across the Taiwan Strait from Formosa (Taiwan). Wasson had told LeGendre that he would not accept a smaller salary than he was receiving from the *Kaitakushi* and that he should receive the rank of colonel. Wasson had spent his one year as a U.S. Army second lieutenant on leave, so to establish that it was not presumptuous of him to request that rank, he asserted that the governor of Iowa had offered him a militia colonelcy before he started working in Japan. He further claimed that he had subsequently been offered an opportunity to serve the khedive of Egypt as a colonel or lieutenant colonel of engineers but had preferred to remain in Japan. Wasson's appointment as the Japanese Army's chief engineer carried the rank he sought. Wasson later maintained that he consented to the transfer from the *Kaitakushi* to the Army "because [he] hoped that in that latter place [he] would be able to render more important service than in the other," but he also probably found the financial rewards attractive—\$6,000 a year of service as a colonel, paid monthly increments, and an allowance of 1,000 yen.<sup>13</sup>

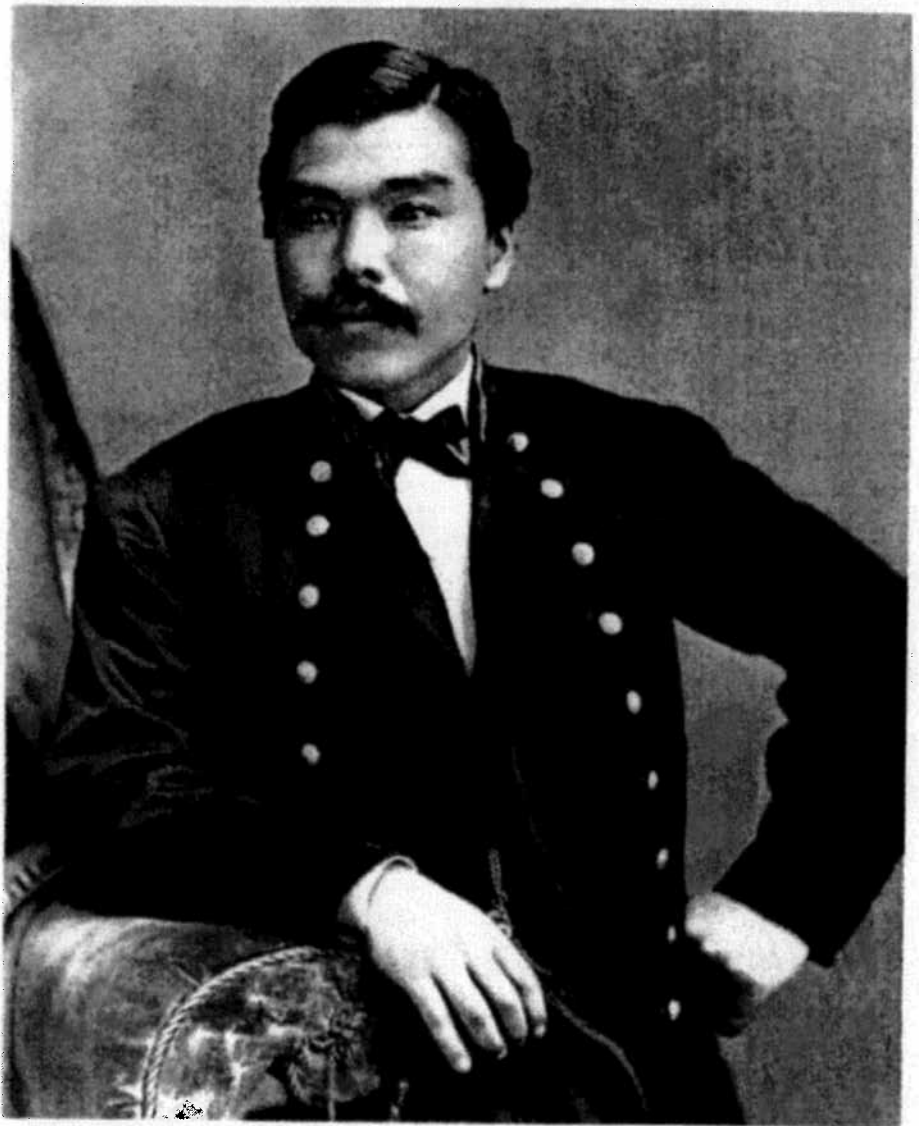
The Japanese Army was preparing to launch a punitive expedition against aborigines on the island of Formosa, much as the United States



had done seven years before, when the shipwrecked crew of the American bark *Rover* was murdered there (see sidebar). The Japanese, however, also contemplated colonizing part of the island once the area had been subdued. The Formosa Expedition of 1874, which represented Japan's first major military excursion since a disastrous foray against Korea in the late sixteenth century, involved more than 3,000 samurai from the southern island of Kyushu under the command of Lt. Gen. Saigo Tsugumichi. The operation was designed to punish Formosa's Botan tribesmen for murdering fifty-four shipwrecked fishermen from the Ryukyu Islands in December 1871. After Japan annexed the Ryukyus in 1873, Japan's military demanded the right to punish the Formosans.<sup>14</sup>

To assist their efforts, the Japanese engaged two American officers—Lt. Comdr. Douglas R. Cassel, who, during a year's leave from the Asiatic Squadron, was made a captain in the Japanese Navy; and Wasson, who "was engaged to superintend the construction of field works, should such become necessary at any time." Former Ohio Congressman John A. Bingham, the new American minister to Japan and a dedicated advocate of peace, strongly protested the Americans' involvement in the operation, as well as Japan's rental of a Pacific Mail Steamship Company vessel, the *New York*. Bingham successfully detained the ship, but Cassel and Wasson ignored the minister's protests and, after a minor delay, sailed on 27 April from Nagasaki on the *Nepaul* with an advance party of about 100 men. In a letter to LeGendre, Wasson wrote that he did not "recognize" Bingham's "right to interfere with me in this business."

During the voyage to Formosa Wasson gave signals training to a select group of officers and men, and he found that he could transmit messages in Japanese as easily as in English. The *Nepaul* stopped in Amoy to secure an interpreter and small landing boats and finally reached Formosa's Liang Kiao Bay on 6 May. Cassel assumed charge



Junzo Matsumura, an 1873 U.S. Naval Academy graduate, as a cadet midshipman

of the advance party, and he and Wasson went ashore to select a campsite suitable for 3,000 men about a mile north of the village of Sialiao. The next day Wasson took a small party of Japanese ashore to mark out the camp and trace the boundaries of fortifications, which hired locals later constructed for them.<sup>15</sup>

On 10 May 400 more Japanese troops landed on the southwestern coast of Formosa, and five days later expedition leaders met with Chief Issa, the head of the island's sixteen southern tribes. Captain Cassel assured Issa that he should not regard the Japanese as enemies because his tribes had not been involved in murdering the Ryukyuan mariners.

Cassel told him, however, that unless the Botans turned over the murderers and begged to be pardoned, the Japanese would "march into their country . . . to destroy their villages, lay their country waste and exterminate their people." Issa said that the Botans were not under his control and the Japanese could punish them as they wished.<sup>16</sup>

On 22 May General Saigo arrived with more troops. The Japanese then fought the Botans and their allies, the Kussikuts, in the Battle of Stone Door (*Shih-men*, also translated as Stone Gate). Sixteen of the aborigines were killed, and many more were wounded. The Japanese, who lost only six dead, were quite proud of their victory. Wasson observed that

"no troops could have behaved better or with greater gallantry." A week and a half later, a 1,200-man force, equally divided among three columns, attacked Stone Door again. Two of the columns destroyed the Botan and Kussikut villages, and Wasson wrote that "all that remained of these dangerous tribes were panic stricken fugitives, hiding in the mountains." After the troops returned to their camp about 3 June, active operations ceased.<sup>18</sup>

On 1 July a Chinese gunboat landed a messenger from J. J. Henderson, the new American consul at Amoy,

carrying warning letters to both Cassel and Wasson that advised them not to participate in any hostile actions against the Chinese, who were contemplating military action to support their claim to Taiwan. Later that month malaria struck the Japanese troops on Formosa, and the disease would eventually kill more than 550 of them. Wasson left the island in mid-August, however, before the epidemic reached its peak, and he recovered relatively quickly. In October Minister Bingham demanded that Wasson not return to Formosa, expressing concern that to do

so would violate American neutrality. Bingham's concerns, however, were overcome by events as Japanese and Chinese negotiators in Peking, assisted by Thomas Wade, the British minister to China, managed to settle the Sino-Japanese dispute. The two Asian powers signed an agreement at the end of October under which the Chinese tacitly acknowledged Japanese suzerainty over the Ryuk Islands and paid an indemnity, while the Japanese agreed to withdraw from Formosa, the punitive aspect of their mission accomplished. General

## Avenging the *Rover*

Japan's 1874 punitive expedition against the aborigines of Formosa had a precedent. The United States had launched a similar, though less successful, expedition seven years earlier.

In March 1867, after the crew of the American bark *Rover* was shipwrecked off the island's southern coast, local inhabitants murdered them. On 7 June Rear Adm. Henry H. Bell, commanding the U.S. Asiatic Squadron, sailed from Shanghai, China, to Formosa with two warships, the *Hartford* and the *Wyoming*. His mission, in the words of Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, was "to destroy, if possible, the lurking-places of the band of savages." Five days later, the expedition reached the Formosan port of Takao, where it added several civilians, including an interpreter and the British consul.<sup>1</sup>

On 13 June, after the two ships anchored off the southwestern coast of the island, Comdr. George E. Belknap, the *Hartford's* skipper, led a 181-man landing party of sailors and marines ashore. "The savages, dressed in clouts and their bodies painted red," Secretary Welles later reported, engaged the Americans as they marched several miles into a high range of hills, and



Lt. Comdr. Alexander S. Mackenzie,  
circa 1865

Lt. Comdr. Alexander S. Mackenzie was killed by musket fire. Although suffering greatly from the heat, the exhausted column managed to burn several native huts before returning to their ships. The fleet surgeon reported that fourteen men were "sun-struck," four dangerously so. Admiral Bell decided that there was little point in sending the force ashore again, so the next day he returned to Takao, where he buried Mackenzie in the garden of the British consulate.

On 19 June the expedition returned to Shanghai.<sup>2</sup>

Commander Mackenzie's older brother, Ranald (1840–89), also gained fame in the U.S. military. After graduating first in the West Point class of 1862, he served valiantly during the Civil War as an engineer and commander of an artillery regiment, a brigade, and a cavalry division in the Army of the Potomac, earned a brevet promotion to major general of volunteers. General Ulysses Grant "regarded Mackenzie as the most promising young officer in the army." The War Department assigned James Wasson and Frederick Grant to the 4th Cavalry, commanded by Colonel Mackenzie, when they graduated from the Military Academy in 1871. Mackenzie and his regiment would gain reputation for audacity and success in combat with Indians in the West.

### NOTES

1. *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1 December 1867 (Washington, D.C., 1867), p. 5.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56. For more details on the punitive expedition, see Roger D. Cunningham, "Avenging the *Rover*," *Pull Together*, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2003–2004), pp. 4–6.

3. Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York, 1885–86), 2: 5.

Saigo's expedition returned to Japan in early December.<sup>19</sup>

Emperor Meiji personally thanked Wasson for his contributions to the Formosa expedition and later decorated him with the newly created Order of Merit (later renamed the Order of the Rising Sun). The government also offered monetary rewards to both Wasson and Cassel. Lieutenant Day had taken over the surveying position that Wasson had held on Hokkaido, so the latter was considering other employment options as the expiration of his one-year tour of duty with the Japanese Army approached. In February 1875 Wasson informed LeGendre that, to avoid having to purchase foreign armaments, Japan should build under his supervision a small "manufactory" for arms and ammunition, capable of producing 100 rifles per day. He told LeGendre, "If I could accomplish this work[,] I could leave Japan . . . in two or three years . . . with the feeling that I had done some lasting good to my employers."<sup>20</sup>

It is not known what became of Wasson's proposal, but in October he reentered academe, joining the faculty of the Imperial University of Tokyo as a civil engineering professor. He may have met with Bvt. Maj. Gen. Emory Upton during his summer visit to Japan to study the organization of its army. Upton had graduated from West Point in 1861, performed brilliantly in the Civil War, and subsequently become the Army's premier tactician. In 1875 he was traveling around the world as the senior member of a three-officer delegation studying the armies of Asia and Europe for General William T. Sherman, the Army's commanding general. Upton had returned to West Point as commandant of cadets and instructor of tactics during Wasson's senior year, and, because the two men were acquainted, Upton would probably have sought Wasson's observations on the progress of the Japanese Army's modernization. Upton was certainly impressed with that progress, and he later remarked in his book *The Armies of Asia and Europe*, "The sudden transi-



*Medal of the Japanese Order  
of the Rising Sun*

tion of Japan from ancient to modern civilization, which will ever be the marvel of history, is nowhere more conspicuous than in the army."<sup>21</sup>

### Paymaster

In spite of his successful career in Japan, Wasson evidently missed the United States, as well as the profession of arms. As the nation celebrated its centennial, the *yatoi* reportedly called upon his friendship with Lt. Col. Fred Grant to enlist his aid in rejoining the Army as a paymaster. Fred's family connections had certainly assisted his own military career. After taking a lengthy leave in Europe until November 1872, the president's son, who had graduated thirty-seventh in his 41-man class, finally reported to the 4th Cavalry at Fort Griffin, Texas, in December of that year. No officer was supposed to be eligible for staff duty until he had served at least three years

in a line regiment, but to please First Lady Julia Grant, Lt. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, commander of the Division of the Missouri, selected her son in March 1873 to serve as his aide-de-camp. Grant's temporary promotion to field rank came with the staff position, which he held until just before he left the Army in 1881. Officers enduring lengthy assignments at isolated Western posts resented the easier and more civilized life that staff officers enjoyed, but as one major frankly admitted, the line officer tended "to look to the staff as the highest object of his ambition . . . the only outlet whereby he can ever come in contact with his countrymen, relatives and friends."<sup>22</sup>

In September 1876 President Grant appointed Wasson as an Army paymaster with the rank of major. Wasson would fill a vacancy caused by the recent death of Maj. Augustus H. Seward, son of former Secretary of State William H. Seward. When President Grant saw the notice of Major Seward's death in the newspaper, he immediately instructed his new secretary of war, James D. Cameron, to appoint Wasson to "prevent pressure for applicants for the vacant place." Grant had already earned a reputation for appointing friends to public office, and the unethical conduct of several appointees, including payoffs that led to the resignation and impeachment of Secretary of War Belknap, had embarrassed the president.<sup>23</sup>

Wasson, who had married Minister Bingham's twenty-four-year-old daughter Marie in July, accepted his major's commission in November 1876, while he was still in Japan. Bingham enclosed his son-in-law's letter of acceptance with his own missive to President Grant expressing his "grateful thanks for the appointment." The minister then wrote powerful Ohio Senator John Sherman, and five weeks later Sherman informed Bingham that the Senate had confirmed Wasson's appointment. In January 1877 Eli T. Sheppard, a former American consul in China, informed Bingham, an old family friend, that, when he met with

the president, Grant told him that "he regarded Wasson as one of the most promising young men in the country." The new major clearly had a number of very influential men looking out for his best interests.<sup>24</sup>

Wasson secured permission from the adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Edward D. Townsend, to remain at Tokyo University until the arrival of Winfield Scott Chaplin, his successor. Chaplin had graduated from West Point in 1870 and briefly remained there as an assistant instructor of artillery tactics. After serving for a year at Fort Adams, Rhode Island, he had resigned his commission a few months before Wasson did and then worked for two years as a professor of modern languages and instructor of military science at the Maine College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, now the University of Maine. Chaplin would teach civil engineering in Tokyo for eight years.<sup>25</sup>

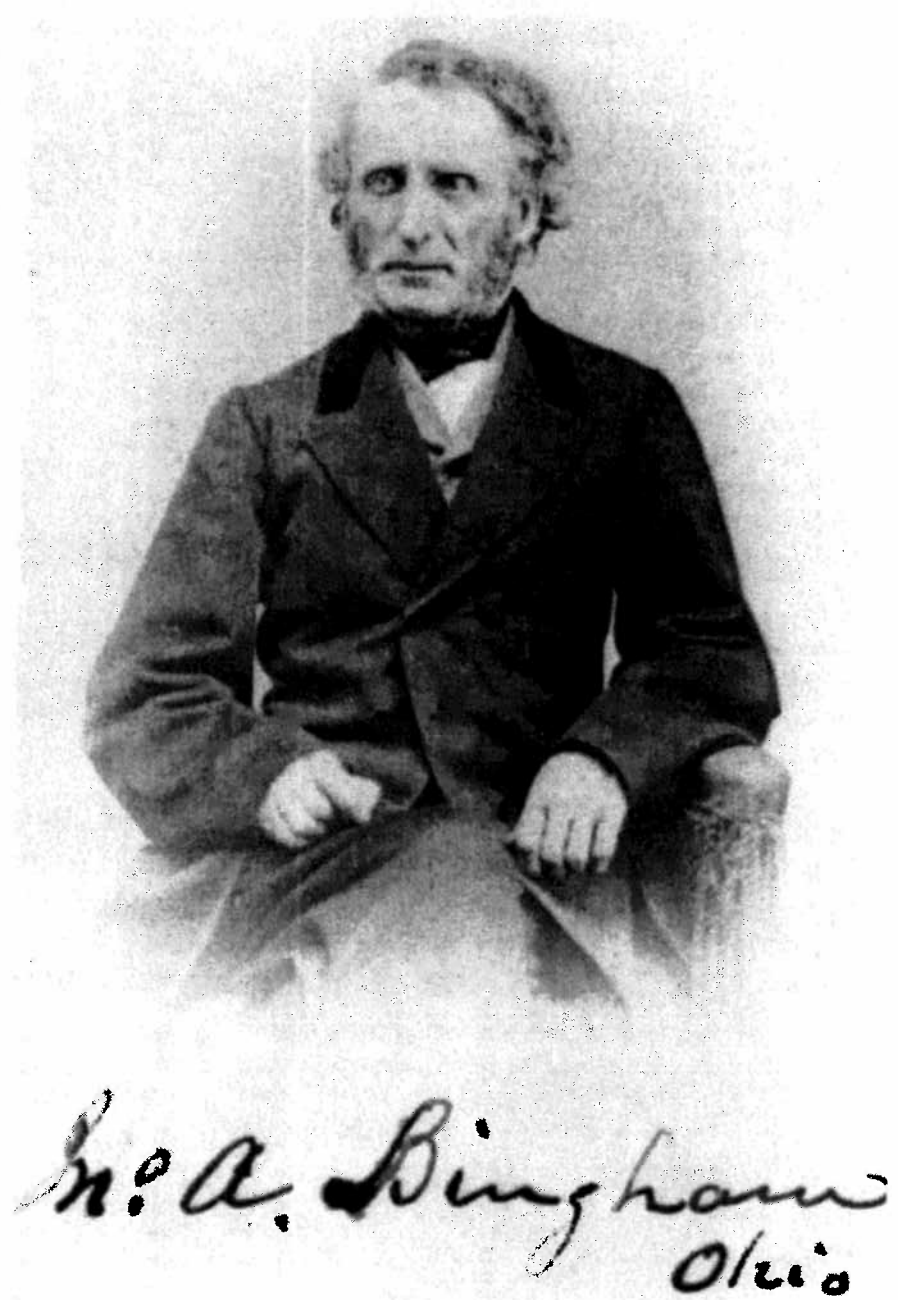
The Army's Pay Department was part of the War Department staff. Commanded by Brig. Gen. Benjamin Alvord, it was a small but rank-heavy organization that tied the Medical Department for having the greatest number of authorized majors—fifty paymasters, who were charged with disbursing military pay. Promotions came at a glacial pace for the peacetime Army's small corps of 2,151 officers, and Wasson's appointment as one of only 242 majors in the Army put him far ahead of all but one of his West Point classmates. Of the thirty-five who were still on active duty, Wasson outranked everyone but Frederick Grant. The rest of his classmates were still subalterns, and only a dozen of them had become first lieutenants. Five of them would not enjoy their first promotion until the early 1880s. Of Wasson's eighteen classmates who achieved field rank in the Army after he did, most had to wait until the late 1890s, and four did not pin on oak leaves until the next century.<sup>26</sup>

In February 1877 Paymaster General Alvord asked the adjutant general to place Wasson on temporary duty in his Washington, D.C., office. A

few months later, after Wasson had turned down a posting to Oregon that would have made it much easier for him and his wife to visit her father in Japan, the new paymaster was assigned to the Department of Texas. Soldiers were generally paid every two to three months, but the long distances in the Lone Star State caused delays of up to six months. In 1871 one paymaster left San Antonio with his clerk, eighteen soldiers, and several wagons and team-

sters and spent five weeks completing his lengthy pay circuit. Five years later three paymasters operating out of San Antonio traveled circuits that range from 343 to 1,372 miles. In 1876 \$1 million was disbursed to the 3,100 soldiers stationed in Texas, and the Army's payroll in the state continued to average more than \$1 million annually during the 1880s.<sup>27</sup>

Soldiers prior to 1879 received their meager pay in paper "greenback



*John Bingham*

that the government would not redeem in specie, and sutlers and frontier merchants commonly discounted the paper bills in relation to gold or silver coins. The fact that the politically divided 44th Congress failed to approve a military appropriation before it adjourned in March 1877 left the Army without any pay for more than four months, causing even greater financial hardships. This period was especially difficult for officers and their dependents, who were not entitled to the free rations that soldiers received, and the Wassons were no exception. In February 1878 the paymaster's uncle had the temerity to write President Rutherford B. Hayes that the officer was in "straightened circumstances" after his expensive move from Japan to the United States and wanted to secure a \$1,000 loan to see him through. The uncle also wrote that Wasson was "a noble boy" and destined "to make his mark."<sup>28</sup>

During his six years in the Department of Texas, Major Wasson was one of four or five paymasters who rotated among several stations. He was first posted to San Antonio, where his younger brother, George, became a paymaster's clerk. James and Marie's son, Robert Bingham Wasson, was born in San Antonio during the summer of 1877. In mid-1879 Major Wasson moved his base of operations to Fort Brown, an Army post located about twenty miles up the Rio Grande from the Gulf of Mexico. Rather than accompany him to this outpost, where yellow fever was a real threat, Marie and their child journeyed to Japan to live with Minister Bingham, who was quickly charmed by his little grandson. Wasson seems to have amassed considerable debt while living in Texas. After Marie shared with her father her concerns about these debts, Bingham urged Wasson to sell his costly speculative real estate investments to eliminate his indebtedness. In 1880 the paymaster returned to San Antonio, and two years later he proceeded to Galveston, a bustling port on the Gulf of Mexico with over 22,000 residents. Marie and

Robert, however, did not rejoin him.<sup>29</sup>

Service in the Lone Star State had not diminished the major's interest in Japan, where he probably hoped once again to earn additional money as a *yatoi* and thereby cure his indebtedness, as well as rejoin his wife and child. In December 1882 Wasson requested a leave of absence of up to two years so that he could accept a temporary appointment as an assistant to the chief of the survey department of the Japanese government. Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln believed that such an assignment required Congressional consent. Therefore, just before the end of the year, during the lame duck session of the 47th Congress, Representative John A. Kasson, the Iowa legislator who had appointed Wasson to West Point, tried to assist him. Kasson, an internationalist who had recently spent several years as minister to Austria-Hungary, introduced a joint resolution to authorize Wasson's absence. When Pennsylvania Congressman Samuel J. Randall, a former speaker of the House, questioned this arrangement, Kasson explained that Wasson was "one of the officers who have won credit for our Government in what they have done to cement the friendship between the two governments and peoples by developing civilization in that country [Japan]." Indiana Congressman William S. Holman nevertheless objected to the consideration of Kasson's resolution outside the regular order of business, and it progressed no further.<sup>30</sup>

To amuse himself while stationed in Galveston, Wasson liked to play poker, and by early 1883 several games had saddled him with a gambling debt of \$5,500—more than twice his annual base pay of \$2,500. The paymaster concocted a scheme to settle his gambling bill with government funds and then to cover his embezzlement by feigning a robbery while he was on a pay trip. In early May the press began to carry accounts of the crime. Wasson claimed that on 30 April, while sleeping on a train as he was traveling west from Fort Worth to Fort Davis in western Texas, a valise holding \$24,000 was stolen

from him near Sweetwater. Brig. Gen. Christopher C. Augur, commander of the Department of Texas, expressed his confidence that the robbers would be caught and the money secured.<sup>31</sup>

Major Wasson's amazing story soon unraveled, however, and on 8 May "quite a sensation was created in San Antonio," when he confessed "that the whole transaction was a fraud to cover his short accounts with the Government." General Augur immediately notified both his immediate superior, General Sheridan, and the adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Richard C. Drum, of the paymaster's fraud. Wasson was placed under arrest at departmental headquarters in San Antonio, and an officer was dispatched to Galveston to retrieve the money that he had hidden there. After reminding its readers that Wasson "had entree to the highest social circles," the *Galveston Daily News* reported that "a great deal of sympathy is expressed for the unfortunate man, who has allowed a weakness to bring disgrace upon his fair name."<sup>32</sup>

On 16 May the Department of Texas convened a general court-martial to try Major Wasson, but the trial did not begin until 28 May. The paymaster then requested a further delay until 6 June, so that witnesses could be secured to speak in his defense. On that date, he was charged with violating two Articles of War—the 60th (embezzlement) and 61st (conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman)—and section 5488 of the Revised Statutes of the United States (conversion of public money to personal use by a disbursing officer), all to the prejudice of good order and military discipline. Seemingly repentant for his crime, Wasson pleaded guilty to all charges and specifications, except for violating the 61st Article of War because the punishment for that transgression was dismissal from the service. Before the day ended, Captain Dunagan, Wasson's first company commander, and another former soldier who had served with Wasson in the 34th Iowa testified to his character.<sup>33</sup>

The next day, several civilians spoke on Wasson's behalf. Dr. M. A. Dashiell,





*Kansas State Penitentiary at Lansing, circa 1880*

a physician from his hometown, cited his "benevolent acts to his aged parents in their financial difficulty." Durham W. Stevens, who had been the secretary at the American legation in Japan from 1873 to 1882, testified that "Major Wasson's character and services were highly esteemed by all the Japanese officials and particularly the higher ones under whom he served." General Augur also testified to the paymaster's character.

On 8 and 9 June several more officers testified on Wasson's behalf, and after a weekend recess Bvt. Lt. Col. Charles M. Terrell, the department's chief paymaster, said that he had "regarded him as a thoroughly high toned and honorable gentleman." All of these accolades, the fact that his friends repaid the missing money during the trial, and Wasson's own lengthy written statement could not dissuade the members of the court from finding him guilty of all charges and specifications. On 12 June, the twelfth anniversary of the paymaster's graduation from West Point, they sentenced him to dismissal from the service of the United States and imposed a \$2,000 fine. If he could not immediately pay the fine, he was to be imprisoned at hard labor until he did. The next day, however, one member of the court reportedly changed his mind, and a new vote increased Wasson's sentence to dismissal and

eighteen months' imprisonment, with the punishment to be published in two newspapers in Galveston and nineteen in Iowa.<sup>55</sup>

On 14 June General Augur forwarded the case through his chain of command for the review of President Chester A. Arthur, with a recommendation from eight of the court's eleven members that Wasson's "excellent and honorable service" and "previous good character" entitled him to favorable consideration. In his legal review of the case, however, the judge advocate general, Brig. Gen. David G. Swain, reported to Secretary of War Lincoln that he found the proceedings, findings, and sentence "fully justified by the law and the facts." Unfortunately for Wasson, several recent cases of officer misconduct had generated a spate of bad publicity for the Army, and these incidents probably convinced Arthur that it would not be politically expedient for him to show leniency. Thus, on 26 June the president confirmed the harsher sentence. The secretary of war directed that the sentence take effect on 3 July 1883, and on that date Wasson ceased to be an officer. His confinement was to be served at the Kansas State Penitentiary at Lansing. The *Galveston Daily News* reported, "It was agreed that in view of the approaching presidential contest it would be imprudent for Mr. Arthur to exercise his

pardoning power in Wasson's favor the face of his plea of guilty."

Major Wasson received the outcome that he deserved, and although he did have a large circle of friends and relatives who supported him, few in the fourth estate expended any kind of work on his behalf. In a commentary entitled "Justice for the Army," the *Army and Navy Journal* cited new allegations that Wasson had also overcharged the government for travel and fuel and misappropriated money allocated for clerical help. The *Journal* concluded, "The prompt approval of the sentence of Major Wasson will give the Army assurance, which it very much needs just now, that the interests of the Service are to take precedence of the interests and the sympathies of individuals." The *New York Times* wrote: "Let the convicts shout and give place to better men. It is what the best interests of the military service demand. If these repeated warnings are not heeded, the morale of the army of the United States will vanish. In his annual report, Brig. Gen. William B. Rochester, the Army's paymaster general since 1882, described Wasson's misuse of public funds, observed that had resulted in his dismissal, and pointed out: "No system of accounting, however perfect, will prevent a corrupt official from proving recreant to his trust."

### Convict 2984

Wasson was not sentenced to serve his confinement at the military prison at Fort Leavenworth because it was too crowded. Established in the winter of 1874-75, the prison held 467 inmates at the end of June 1883, and General Drum reported that "increased accommodations must be provided for as far as means can be obtained." The military prison's inmates, most of whom had been confined for desertion and theft, led a bleak existence, manufacturing boxes and shoes, harnesses, brooms, chairs, and other articles for the Army, but Lansing's convicts faced an even grimmer prospect—working in the prison's mine.<sup>56</sup>

Built by convict labor, the Kansas State Penitentiary resembled a mea-



eval, red sandstone castle. It had two wings with a total of 688 cells, and within its ten-acre prison yard there were wagon, shoe, furniture, harness, and marble slab factories employing 350 convicts, whose labor was paid for by contract manufacturers. Just outside the prison's main wall was the coal mine, whose 732-foot shaft had just been completed the year before. The mine initially employed more than 100 convicts, but as economic factors caused the manufacturing firms to reduce their requirements for convict labor, additional prisoners were shifted to the mine. Three hundred convicts would be toiling underground by the end of the decade.<sup>39</sup>

Lansing was managed according to the Auburn system, named for the manner in which the New York state prison at Auburn was operated. Under this system convicts worked and dined together but returned to solitary cells at night. Behind a door made of half-inch iron-bar lattice, each cell was only four feet by seven feet by seven feet in size. Within the cell's confined space the authorities provided a bed that folded down from the wall; a chair; a small tin bucket; a washbasin, mirror, and towel; a broom; and a Bible. Prisoners wore black-and-white horizontally striped uniforms and were required to maintain absolute silence and march single file in lockstep.<sup>40</sup>

Lansing had been accepting federal felons since 1870, when Secretary of War Belknap approved Warden Henry Hopkins's request that military prisoners sentenced within the Department of the Missouri be confined in his institution. This was a profitable arrangement for the state, as the prisoners brought a per diem from the government and also furnished income-producing labor. By early 1884 there would be forty-seven military prisoners at Lansing, all but one of them enlisted men. The prisoners' sentences ranged from life for murder to only eight months for theft (the most common military

**The *New York Times* wrote: "Let the convicts step out and give place to better men. This is what the best interests of the military service demand. If these repeated warnings are not heeded, the morale of the army of the United States will vanish."**

offense); more than half of the sentences were four years or less.<sup>41</sup>

Wasson left San Antonio for Kansas on 6 July 1883, and two days later a large crowd was present when he arrived at the Leavenworth railroad station. The prisoner was still physically impressive, and a local newspaper described him as "a fine appearing man, straight as an Indian," who would be considered "an intelligent, refined and shrewd man by almost every casual observer." Wasson was accompanied by one officer, 2d Lt. George T. Bartlett of the 3d Artillery, and three "reliable"

noncommissioned officers. One of the latter was handcuffed to the prisoner's right hand, which "seemed to annoy him very much."<sup>42</sup>

A military ambulance from Fort Leavenworth then transported the five men a few miles south to Lansing. In the penitentiary's reception hall the newly appointed warden, William C. Jones, met the group and extended a special welcome to Lieutenant Bartlett, a fellow Kansan whom he had once known. Warden Jones informed Wasson: "It is not often we have a West Point cadet in prison walls, and we will try and not be too hard with you. I presume [you] will be sorry to part with your moustache?" After the prisoner replied in a "slightly tremulous" voice that he would, Warden Jones informed him that he could keep it for at least one more day.<sup>43</sup>

Before the new prisoner was escorted away for his initial processing, correctional authorities allowed a reporter from the *Leavenworth Times* to interview him. When the reporter asked Wasson what he thought of his sentence, he replied that he was resigned to his fate. When asked whether his trial had been impartial, he replied that he had no reason to complain. Wasson indicated that since his troubles had begun, his fellow officers had treated him with uniform kindness and courtesy. He also reminded the reporter that all of the money he had taken had been returned.<sup>44</sup>

The *Leavenworth Times* left no doubt in its readers' minds where it stood regarding Wasson's crime. In an editorial entitled "Give Them Their Dues," the newspaper mentioned a group of Army officers, some unnamed, who had committed various transgressions but been allowed to resign in lieu of prosecution. The *Times* opined: "There is no desire to persecute these officers who have been guilty of wrong, but justice demands that they be punished without fear or favor." It concluded that most officers were moral, honest, and true to their country, "so why not kick out and into the penitentiary those who deserve hard labor and disgrace?"<sup>45</sup>

The *New York Times* reported that

Wasson had written the Army Relief Association, to which he belonged, requesting that benefits be paid to his wife, but that the organization refused to do this. Marie and their son Robert continued to live with Minister Bingham in Japan, and, although James and Marie apparently never divorced, they seem to have remained apart for the rest of their lives. Wasson was undoubtedly relieved by the fact that his West Point education enabled him to avoid working in the prison's coal mine, where seventeen of the military prisoners toiled. The warden determined that only Wasson and two other military prisoners had "good" educations, which earned them the lighter tasks of clerking, tailoring, and "general work." Wasson's duties ultimately expanded beyond mere clerking. The *Army and Navy Register* reported that "he did very valuable work in the engineering department during his confinement in surveying coal grounds and superintending the present system of water-works at the prison." Because Wasson caused no problems, two months were subtracted from his original sentence, and he was slated to be discharged on 3 November 1884.<sup>46</sup>

About midway through Wasson's incarceration the *New York Times* reported that his friends had been "extremely active" in seeking his pardon. This process actually began two days before Wasson's court-martial adjourned, when Minister Bingham petitioned former President Grant, "relying upon [his] generous nature and [his] uniform kindness" to use his "good offices" on Wasson's behalf. Grant forwarded the letter to President Arthur, who evidently ignored it. From the end of 1883 onward, scores of other concerned citizens wrote Arthur on Wasson's behalf. These included Iowa's governor, Buren R. Sherman, and former governor Cyrus C. Carpenter (1872–76); 5 judges of the Iowa supreme court; 140 members of the Iowa General Assembly; all 4 senators and 32 congressmen from Iowa and Ohio, along with the speaker of the House and both senators from Texas;

8 of the 11 officers who had sat on Wasson's court-martial; 3 members of the Kansas State Penitentiary's Board of Directors; and Warden Jones.<sup>47</sup>

In February 1884 Lt. Joseph M. Simms of the U.S. Revenue-Marine in Galveston wrote President Arthur on behalf of eighteen petitioners who believed that Wasson was "an honest man and gentleman at heart," and that his offense "was not premeditated or the act of a man steeped in crime." Simms asked that Wasson "be restored to his former position in society and the embrace of a fond wife and family." In April Iowa Congressman Luman H. Weller forwarded to Arthur a clemency request from Wasson's sister, Minnie, who "earnestly beg[ged]" for help "in this great sorrow." Weller also alluded to a petition that Congressman Kasson had circulated and added, "I am of the opinion this is a case worthy of Executive clemency." After Wasson had been incarcerated for more than a year, a concerned Kasson wrote Secretary of War Lincoln to ask him to call the president's attention to the case.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, just before Wasson was scheduled to be released, President Arthur pardoned him. Arthur's reluctance to act on Wasson's behalf was characteristic of the caution with which he exercised his clemency powers. The president's rejection of "spoilsmanship" and support for civil service reform had angered enough members of his own party to deny him the Republican nomination for president in 1884. With no political capital to lose, he approved almost half of his clemency actions during his last year in office. On 1 November the president honored General Grant's request and the petitions he had received and pardoned Wasson. While the *Army and Navy Register* reported that this would enable the ex-paymaster's friends to try to secure his restoration to the service, it commented, "We fancy such efforts would be wasted."<sup>49</sup>

### Citizen Soldier

With his full rights of citizenship restored, Wasson returned to Des

Moines, where he attempted to start over and redeem himself. By the 1880s he had worked as a general agent for the Provident Savings Life Assurance Society of New York and then become the general manager of the Iowa Feed, Water Heater and Purification Company. His public acceptance was underscored in October 1886, when he was unanimously elected as captain of the state capital's Company A (Governor's Guard), 3d Regiment Iowa National Guard. The *Iowa State Register* reported that he was "exceedingly fitted to fill the position, both by ability and education, and will lead this flourishing organization to many victories." During the 1887 inspection of the 3d Regiment's eight companies, Wasson's unit received the high score, and it was detailed to perform escort duty during the inaugural festivities of reelected Governor William Larrabee in January 1888. The company elected a new captain in February 1889, but whether this was due to discontent with Wasson's leadership or a decision on his part to step down is unknown. Wasson failed to secure election as the Des Moines city engineer and his political affiliation apparently jinxed his attempt to become the state adjutant general. His failure to obtain the contract to grade the state capital grounds "seemed to make him despondent and he disappeared" from Iowa around 1890.<sup>50</sup>

In 1891 the *New York Times* reported that Wasson had returned to Japan and become "a prominent figure" in the Japanese Army, although he had overcome charges that he was "implicated in a revolutionary movement," an allegation which, if proven, could have cost him his life. Three years later the *Washington Post* printed a report from a friend of Wasson stating that a former major, who was then residing in Sedalia, Missouri, had been asked to return to Japan to assist the country in its war with China, which the Japanese would win decisively in fighting on the Korean peninsula. There was no evidence, however, that Wasson returned. In 1898 the former officer, then



Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military History Institute

*Brig. Gen. Frederick Grant at his desk in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1898*

a civil engineer living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, still seemed to retain a sense of military obligation, because as war with Spain loomed he sought an appointment in the volunteer force that would be raised to augment the small Regular Army. Wasson's attempt to serve failed, and in January 1899 he had the adjutant general return all of the correspondence related to his request.<sup>17</sup>

In March 1899 Congress authorized the organization of a group of volunteer regiments to augment the state and Regular Army units fighting in the Philippines. In October, when Wasson was almost fifty-three, he wrote the Army's adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Henry C. Corbin, request-

ing permission to enlist in one of these new regiments. He wanted to serve in the 46th Infantry, U.S. Volunteers, perhaps because it was commanded by Col. Walter S. Schuyler, who had graduated from West Point one year before he had. An assistant adjutant general informed the commanding officer at Washington Barracks, D.C., (today's Fort McNair) that Wasson's enlistment in the 46th was authorized, "provided he fulfill all other requirements." After it was determined that Wasson was a bit nearsighted, he was initially rejected, but the adjutant general quickly authorized a waiver of his vision problem.<sup>18</sup>

On 7 October Wasson enlisted in the 46th Infantry at Washington

Barracks, an action that delighted both his wife and her father, John Bingham. Wasson was appointed a sergeant in Company M and later became the regiment's color sergeant. The 46th sailed from San Francisco on 14 November and dropped anchor in Manila Bay a month later. In January 1900 Wasson's regiment helped seize Cavite and Batangas Provinces south of Manila from Filipino insurrectionists. The following month, while serving in Cavite Province, Wasson was reduced to private for neglect of duty as the result of a special court-martial. In September, after a spring and summer in which his regiment endured occasional guerrilla attack, Wasson was again court-martialed for being drunk and absent from reveille. He was found guilty and sentenced to forfeiture of pay. His regiment left the Philippines in April 1901.<sup>19</sup>

Among the passengers aboard the army transport ship that carried Wasson and his regiment home was Brig. Gen. Frederick Grant. Three years before, Grant had returned to uniform as colonel of the 14th New York Volunteer Infantry, and he had been quickly promoted to brigadier general. In the Philippines Grant had led the force that established American authority in Zambales and Bataan Provinces in December 1899, and he subsequently commanded a district that encompassed three provinces north and west of Manila. Perhaps the shared voyage enabled the general and Private Wasson to trade "war stories" or to reminisce about better days gone by. At the least it must have reminded Wasson how his career had diverged from that of his distinguished classmate and former friend. Wasson finally mustered out of federal service at the Presidio of San Francisco in May 1901, and an officer at that time noted that his service was "not honest and faithful. Object to reenlistment on grounds of general worthlessness." One newspaper later reported that he was mugged after he left the Presidio with his final pay.<sup>20</sup>

Wasson soon demonstrated that he was still willing to travel to foreign lands to seek his fortune. In 1902

# FROM HEIGHTS OF FAME DOWN TO THE DEPTHS

The Career of Major James  
R. Wasson.

Once Innate of Kansas  
Penitentiary.

DECORATED BY MIKADO

Friend and Protege of  
Pres. Grant.

Nobody Knows His Pres-  
ent Whereabouts.

Within the enclosure of the State prison at Lansing to spend part or perhaps all of their existence in the few acres enclosed by the iron-walled walls of cold gray and yellow stone are many stories of honor, disgrace and achievement, but none so striking and at once so pathetic as that of James R. Wasson, once a major in the United States army, and now a vagabond.

Headline of article on Wasson's disgrace in  
the Topeka Capital, 10 June 1908

Wasson went to the remote mountain silver mining works of the Batopilas Mining Company in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, where he worked as a civil and mining engineer. The manager of the company's Mexican enterprises, former District of Columbia governor Alexander R. "Boss" Shepherd, had amassed a fortune of some \$10 million over 23 years in Mexico, but Wasson lasted less than a year there. He returned to the insurance business in Chicago in 1903, and from 1904 to 1909 he worked for the Lennox Furnace Company of Marshalltown, Iowa.

Wasson successfully applied for a disability pension in 1905, the same year that his son, Robert, wed Sara C. Browne in Baltimore. Mar-

rie Wasson, now living in Cadiz, Ohio, attended the July wedding unaccompanied. Japan's ambassador, Kogoro Takahira, and the Russian ambassador, Baron Roman R. von Rosen, were both invited to the event. The former sent his regrets, perhaps to avoid unnecessary contact with the diplomat he would soon be facing at the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, peace conference that would end the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>20</sup>

From 1912 until 1920 Wasson served as an engineer for the National Soldiers Homes, moving around to branches in five states. In March 1917 he wrote President Woodrow Wilson from the home in Hampton, Virginia, to once again apply for a commission, this time in the military force that was being raised for the impending war with Germany. Given his tainted military record and the fact that he was seventy years old, Wasson's request not surprisingly fell on deaf ears, but there was still something admirable about his final attempt to serve.

Wasson also attempted to ensure his place in history. In April 1918 he donated his Order of the Rising Sun medal and the document conferring it to Iowa's secretary of state. He wished "to deposit these articles in the museum connected with the State Library at the Capitol," and even offered to pay for framing the document if it was to be placed on a wall. Three months later, the curator of the Historical Department of Iowa informed Wasson that he had all the items and proposed to add them to a case "devoted to a very interesting Chinese collection." Like so many other Wasson plans, however, this one too went awry—the donated items are missing today.<sup>21</sup>

James Robert Wasson moved from Hampton to the Iowa Soldiers' Home in Marshalltown in 1920. There his life came to an end on 17 February 1923, when he succumbed to pernicious anemia at the age of seventy-six. He was buried in the Hartford Cemetery,

probably near his parents. Marie Wasson lived for another twenty years, before dying of pneumonia in Cranford, New Jersey, where she had gone to live with her son Robert, and his wife. After pursuing a career as a mechanical engineer, Robert also died in Cranford in 1951.<sup>22</sup>

Obviously a very talented, supremely confident, and highly ambitious man who seemed to make friends easily, Wasson had clearly lacked the dedication and steadfastness that a successful military career demands. His five years as a respected and well-paid *yatoi* in Japan had spoiled him for the Spartan lifestyle that Regular Army officers routinely endured—the existence of family separations, slow promotions, and mediocre pay (in 1877 no pay at all) that one frontier officer's wife characterized as "glittering misery." Wasson's close friendship with a president's son and his marriage to a powerful diplomat's daughter all suggest that at heart he was an opportunist. His risky investments and his willingness to misappropriate public funds for his own use seem much more in tune with the ruthlessness that characterized the American business world during the Gilded Age than with the credo of selflessness and personal honor that distinguished the profession of arms.

There is no record of Wasson's final thoughts, but surely as death approached the man who had shown so much promise in his youth must have greatly regretted the dishonorable actions that had ruined not only his military career, but his life. It is on the "very fine-looking fellow" he followed Secretary Belknap's wise advice when he released the Class of 1871 from arrest: "It is to be hoped that the cadets who are soon to graduate and become officers of the army, will never again place themselves in a situation which may be discreditable to them or require the voice of authority to remind them of their duties as officers and gentlemen."<sup>23</sup>

## The West Point Class of 1871



Courtesy of the U.S. Military Academy Library

*U.S. Military Academy Class of 1871, with James Wasson, front right, seated on ground near bottom step*

Although James Wasson and one other member of the Class of 1871 were dismissed from the Army and six others resigned their commissions, Wasson's thirty-three remaining classmates either died on active duty or served in the Army until retirement. Nine of them became general officers—seven brigadier generals and two major generals. George S. Anderson, who became a brigadier general in 1911, served for six years beginning in 1891 as superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. George B. Davis, the author of several legal texts, headed the Military Academy's history department before becoming the Army's judge advocate general in 1901. He

retired as a major general ten years later. Frederick D. Grant was promoted to major general in 1906 and died in active service in 1912. Eleven other members of the class also died on active duty, including two killed in combat. Second Lt. Reid T. Stewart died in a fight with Apache Indians in Arizona Territory in 1872, and Capt. James Formance was mortally wounded leading his company in the assault on San Juan Hill in Cuba. Two other members of the class succumbed to yellow fever in Cuba after the Spanish-American War.

Ulysses G. White resigned as a second lieutenant in 1873 but in 1877 received a commission in the Navy as a civil engineer officer. He retired

as a Navy captain in 1910. Frederick Schwarka became a noted explorer. In 1878 he led a team that found in Inuit communities in Arctic Canada evidence of the ill-fated end of British explorer Sir John Franklin's 1845 expedition in search of a navigable Northwest Passage, and in the early 1880s he explored the Yukon River in Alaska. After resigning from the Army as a first lieutenant in 1885, Schwarka explored and studied parts of northern Mexico before dying in Portland, Oregon, in 1892. Thomas Mumford retired as a captain owing to a disability in 1891 but later became the Maryland National Guard's inspector general. The last surviving member of his class, he died at the age of 92 in 1941.



## The Author

**Roger D. Cunningham** is a retired Army lieutenant colonel. He served as an infantry and military police officer in the United States and Korea and as a foreign area officer in Pakistan, Egypt, and Nepal. He was the U.S. Defense Attaché in Kathmandu in 1991–92. Several of his articles have appeared in this bulletin. The most recent, "Black Artillerymen from the Civil War through World War I," appeared in the Spring 2003 issue of *Army History* (No. 58).

The author would like to thank Alan Aimone and Sheila Biles of the West Point Library; James Cheevers of the U.S. Naval Academy Museum; William J. Curtis of the Cranford (New Jersey) Historical Society; the staff of the Iowa Veterans' Home; James Knight of the Center of Military History's library; Linda Morgan of the Puskarich Public Library in Cadiz, Ohio; the special collections staff of the National Agricultural Library; the staff of the Navy Department Library; Becki Plunkett of the State Historical Society of Iowa; Fred Romanski and Mitch Yockelson of the National Archives; Sarah Sall of the Harrison County (Ohio) Genealogical Society; Hiroshi Shiraishi of Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies; and Randy Thies of the Kansas State Historical Society for their superb assistance.

## NOTES

1. Entry on convict 2984, *Convicts in the Kansas State Penitentiary, 1871–1894*, Microfilm publication MS740, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

2. Email msg, Sheila Biles, U.S. Military Academy Library, to author, 28 Aug 2003, copy in Army History files, CMH; Biography of J. C. S. Wasson from *The History of Warren County, Iowa* (Des Moines, 1879), p. 707, posted at <http://www.roanweb.com/~labing/warrent/hw1879/hw1879-70.htm>. Compiled military service records of John C. S. Wasson and James R. Wasson, 34th Iowa Volunteer Infantry, Record Group (hereafter RG) 94, Records of the Office of the Adjutant General, National Archives (hereafter NA); Civil War pension application file, John C. S. Wasson, RG 15, Records of the Veterans Administration, NA; Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, 1908), p. 1179. James Wasson transferred to Company C in November 1864.

3. Folder I, General Court-Martial of Paymaster James R. Wasson, Case QQ3901, RG 153, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), NA; Francis B. Heitman,

*Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1903), 1: 358, 1013. Davis later served as the Army's judge advocate general. He retired as a major general in 1911.

4. James L. Morrison, Jr., *The Best School in the World: West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833–1860* (Kent, Ohio, 1986), esp. pp. 133–34. Two former cadets who had not graduated and a member of the class of 1869 also later received Medals of Honor for Civil War heroism.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–48.

6. *Army and Navy Journal* 8 (24 June 1871): 717 (quotations); "West Point," *New York Times*, 11 Jan 1871; "West Point Cadets," *New York Times*, 6 Jun 1871; "West Point," *New York Times*, 13 Jan 1871; *Official Army Register for January, 1872* (Washington, 1872), p. 49; Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1: 145. In an 1875 letter Wasson claimed that, when he graduated, he was specially recommended to President Grant for a commission in the Ordnance Corps, which had last received a new graduate in 1868. See Wasson to Charles LeGendre, 19 Feb 1875, LeGendre Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Grant may have steered his son Fred and James Wasson to the 4th Cavalry because of his great respect for its commander, Col. Ranald Mackenzie.

7. John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 24 vols. to date (Carbondale, Ill., 1967–), 22: 37–38; Typescript, "Memoirs of Horace Capron," 2: 1–5, Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Md. Capron's contract also allowed him to hire a geologist, a civil engineer, and a secretary. For details on Capron, see John A. Harrison, "The Capron Mission and the Colonization of Hokkaido, 1868–1875," *Agricultural History* 25 (July 1951): 135–42.

8. Simon, *Papers of Ulysses Grant*, 22: 38; Teleg, Adjutant General (hereafter AG) to Secretary of War, 10 Jul 1871, file 2726 ACP 1879; Ltr, Jones to AG, 12 Jun 1871, file 2660 ACP 1871; Ltr, Poillon to AG, 11 Jul 1871, file 3020 ACP 1871; Ltr, Hoag to AG, 10 Jul 1871, file 3051 ACP 1871, all in RG 94, NA.

9. Ltr, De Long to Fish, 4 Sep 1871, printed in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Transmitted to Congress with the Annual Message of the President, 1871* (Washington, 1871), p. 604.

10. Ltr, Belknap to Townsend, 3 Jul 1871, Ltr, Wasson to AG, 25 Aug 1875; Ltr, Wasson to Belknap, 19 Dec 1871; Wasson's oath of office, all in file 2871 ACP 1871, RG 94, NA; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy*, 9 vols. (3d ed., Boston, 1891–1950), 3: 70, 119, 167, 174, 183; 4: 161; 5: 131.

11. Ltr, Wasson to LeGendre, 19 Feb 1875, LeGendre Papers; Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 3: 167; Ltr, Wasson and Day to Capron, 10 Dec 1873, Horace Capron Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Edward R. Beauchamp and Akira Iriye, eds., *Foreign Employees in Nineteenth Century Japan* (Boulder, 1990), pp. 72, 89–93, 229–30; Typescript, Issa Tamamura, "General Horace Capron: The Friend of Japan" (Tokyo, 1937), National Agricultural Library, Murray Day, who had graduated from Annapolis in 1866, had strong ties

to West Point through his wife, who was a daughter of Civil War Bvt. Maj. Gen. Geor S. Greene, class of 1823, and the sister of 2d Lt Francis V. Greene, class of 1870.

12. Edward R. Beauchamp, "Foreign Employees of the Meiji Period," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, 9 vols. (New York, 1983), 310–11; *U.S. Statutes at Large*, 15: 261; *Congressional Globe* 42 (42d Cong., 2d sess.): 3228; Email msg, James Cheevers, U.S. Naval Academy Museum, to author, 5 Sep 2003, copy in Army History files, CMH. Sixteen Japanese students eventually attended the Naval Academy and seven of them graduated. West Point's first international graduate (from Guatemala) was the Class of 1889. For an excellent discussion of the *gaikokujin*, see Hazel J. Jones, *Live Machine: Hired Foreigners and Meiji Japan* (Vancouver, Canada, 1980). Jones's figures for foreign employees are higher than Beauchamp's, but she agrees that Americans were the third largest group and that their numbers peaked in 1874.

13. Ltrs, Wasson to LeGendre, 11 Mar 1874; Saigo Yori-Michi to LeGendre, 1 Apr 1874; Wasson to LeGendre, 27 Apr 1874; Wasson to LeGendre, 19 Feb 1875 (quot. LeGendre Papers). In the 1870s Khedive Ism governed Egypt as viceroy to the Ottoman sultan of Turkey. Wasson's employment may have been suggested by an American soldier fortune, Charles P. Stone (USMA 1845), who served as the Egyptian Army's chief of staff from 1870 to 1883.

14. "Taiwan Expedition of 1874," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, 7: 309; Olavi K. F. "Western Views of the Japanese Expedition to Formosa in 1874," *Asian Profile* 13 (June 1985): 202; Erving F. Beauregard, "John A. Bingham: First American Minister Plenipotentiary to Japan (1873–1885)," *Journal of Asian History* (1988): 109; Leonard Gordon, "Japan's Abortive Colonial Venture in Taiwan, 1874," *Journal of Modern History* 37 (June 1965): 171–77.

15. Edward H. House, *The Japanese Expedition to Formosa* (Tokyo, 1875), p. 16 (the quote); James R. Wasson, "Untitled expedition report," Tokyo, 1875, p. 2, LeGendre Papers; Ltr, Wasson to LeGendre, 27 Apr 1874, LeGendre Papers. Author Edward House, a friend of LeGendre, actually accompanied the expedition. Douglas R. Cassel (USNA 1864) was like Wasson, a native of Ohio and a Civil War veteran, having been wounded in the 1864 Mobile Bay campaign. He also served in an 1875 American punitive expedition against Korea. Cassel died in a Philadelphia suburb in July 1875 from the effects of the malaria he contracted on Formosa.

16. Wasson, "Untitled expedition report," 2–8, 10, 12, 15, 19.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 25–29 (quotation, p. 2).

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–54 (quotation, p. 5); 67–82 (quotation, p. 82).

19. *Ibid.*, p. 102; House, *Japanese Expedition*, pp. 45, 172, 215, 217; Tyler Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia* (New York, 1922): 443; Ltr, Bingham to Terushima Munenori, Oct 1874, printed in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Transmitted to Congress with the Annual Message of the President, 1875*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1875), 2: 770.

20. "Memoirs of Horace Capron," 2: 1.



248; Ltr. Wasson to LeGendre, 19 Feb 1873. Lieutenant Day, who remained in Japan for three years, worked from the survey base line that Wasson had already established. See the obituary notice for Day in *Army and Navy Journal* 16 (4 Jan 1879), 371.

21. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 2: 774-79, 3: 167; Emory Upton, *The Armies of Asia and Europe* (New York, 1878), p. 11. Upton was in Japan from 27 August until 23 September 1875. On 7 September he wrote: "We have been treated with great kindness by all of the American residents." See Peter S. Michie, *The Life and Letters of Emory Upton* (New York, 1885), p. 312.

22. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 3: 182; Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1: 470; Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln, 1985), p. 141; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York, 1973), p. 32-33, quoting a letter of 2 April 1872 written by Maj. William R. Price of the 8th Cavalry. Years later the *Army and Navy Journal* 20 (12 May 1883): 931, reported that President Grant had named Wasson a paymaster at the behest of Lt. Col. Frederick Grant.

23. Ltr. Grant to Cameron, 12 Sep 1876, in file 2871 ACP 1871; Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1: 296; Jean Edward Smith, *Grant* (New York, 2001), pp. 468, 471, 554-55, 593-95. Secretary of War Belknap, who during the Civil War commanded the 15th Iowa Volunteer Infantry in the Vicksburg campaign and led a division in Sherman's march to the sea, had resigned in March 1876, after a House committee discovered that Belknap and his wife had over a half dozen years taken some \$20,000 in payoffs made by the contractor awarded the military trading post at Fort Sill, Indian Territory. Although the House voted unanimously to impeach Belknap several hours after he resigned, the Senate, apparently on account of that resignation, failed by five votes to achieve the two-thirds majority required for conviction. See Smith, *Grant*, pp. 593-95; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge, 1964), p. 29.

24. Erving E. Beauregard, *Bingham of the Hills: Politician and Diplomat Extraordinary* (New York, 1989), p. 156; Ltrs. Bingham to Grant, 13 Nov 1876; John Sherman to Bingham, 18 Dec 1876; Eli T. Sheppard to Bingham, 23 Jan 1877. Reel 2, microfilm edition, John A. Bingham Papers, Ohio Historical Society, originals formerly, and some currently, in the possession of Milton Ronsheim. Minister Bingham's joy in his youngest daughter's marriage was somewhat lessened by the sad news that in late June 1876 Lt. Col. George A. Custer, whom he had appointed to West Point from his southeastern Ohio district in 1857, had been killed with five companies of the 7th Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

25. Ltr. Townsend to Wasson, 29 Dec 1876, file 2871 ACP 1871; Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 3: 143-44; Email msg. Ben Proud, Special Collections, Folger Library, University of Maine, to editor, *Army History*, 27 Jan 2004, copy in *Army History* files. Chaplin's work in Tokyo seems to have been well regarded in American academic circles. He returned to the

United States in 1885 to teach civil engineering at Harvard University and subsequently served for sixteen years as chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis. See Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 6: 145.

26. *Official Army Register for 1877*, p. 262A; Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 3: 167-84, 4: 205-15, 5: 179-83.

27. Ltr. Alvord to AG, 23 Feb 1877, and Ltr. Bingham to Hayes, 21 Nov 1879, both in file 2871 ACP 1871; Thomas T. Smith, *The U.S. Army and the Texas Frontier Economy, 1845-1900* (College Station, 1999), pp. 125-27. In his letter to Hayes, Bingham requested that Wasson be transferred to California, so he could be closer to Japan. Alvord's endorsement to this request indicated that Wasson had turned down an earlier offer to be assigned in Oregon.

28. Don Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Boats and Hays: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman, 1963), pp. 127-28; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. 64-65; Ltr. G. W. Spry to Hayes, 11 Feb 1878, Rutherford B. Hayes Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Spry wrote from Carlisle, Iowa.

29. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 3: 167; *Official Register of the United States, Containing a List of Officers and Employees on the Thirtieth of June, 1879*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1879), 1: 250, showing that George Wasson was paid \$100 per month; Ltrs. Marie Wasson to John and Amanda Bingham, 4 Sep 1877, 4 Dec 1877, roll 2, and John Bingham to James Wasson, 29 Oct 1879, 16 Feb 1880, roll 5, John A. Bingham Papers, Ohio Historical Society; Bingham to Grant, 11 Jun 1883, AG Doc. file 1746, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, roll 210, Microcopy M689, NA. Ltr. Bingham to Hayes, 21 Nov 1879, referred to Marie's "failing health" as well as the danger that yellow fever posed for her and Robert. This suggests that the Wassons' initial separation was caused by health concerns rather than marital problems. Robert B. Wasson's obituary in the *New York Times*, 1 June 1951, reported that he was born at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, but that name was not adopted for the military post in San Antonio until 1890.

30. Ltr. AG to Wasson, 6 Feb 1883, in file 2871 ACP 1871; *Congressional Record* 14 (47th Cong., 2d sess.): 663 (quote).

31. General Court-Martial Orders 30, Headquarters of the Army, 27 Jun 1883 (hereafter GCMO 30, 1883), a copy of which, containing Wasson's initial report of the "robbery," is in folder 3, Court-martial case QQ3901, RG 153, NA; *Army and Navy Journal* 20 (5 May 1883): 910.

32. *Army and Navy Journal* 20 (12 May 1883): 931 (quotations in first sentence); *Galveston Daily News*, 10 May 1883; Teleg. Augur to Sheridan, 8 May 1883, and Ltr. Augur to AG, 8 May 1883, AG Doc. file 1746, roll 210, Microcopy M689, NA. All documents on roll 210, Microcopy M689, NA, are related to the Wasson case. Wasson had hidden \$18,500 in his office.

33. Folder 1, Court-martial case QQ3901.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.; Ltr. War Dept. Chief Clerk to the AG, 2 Jul 1883, AG Doc. file 1746. As an example, the *Davenport Gazette* charged the Army

\$3 to publish its notice.

36. Folder 1, Court-martial case QQ3901; GCMO 30, 1883; Rpt. Swain to Lincoln, 22 Jun 1883, AG Doc. file 1746; *Galveston Daily News*, 4 Jul 1883. General Swain did object, however, to the charge citing section 5488, noting that the 60th Article of War was "sufficiently ample to embrace every species of embezzlement." For details on two other cases of officer misconduct in 1883, see Oliver Knight, *Life and Manners in the Frontier Army* (Norman, Okla., 1978), pp. 73-74.

37. *Army and Navy Journal* 20 (30 Jun 1883): 1081; "Demoralizing the Army," *New York Times*, 12 Jul 1883; "Report of the Paymaster-General," 10 Oct 1883, in *Report of the Secretary of War*, H. Ex. Doc. 1, Pt. 2, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1883, 4 vols., 1: 633.

38. "Report of the Adjutant-General," 30 Oct 1883, in *Report of the Secretary of War*, H. Ex. Doc. 1, Pt. 2, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1: 328-29 (quote), 336.

39. Harvey R. Hougren, "The Impact of Politics and Prison Industry on the General Management of the Kansas State Penitentiary, 1883-1909," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43 (Autumn 1977): 298-300.

40. Ibid., p. 300; John N. Reynolds, *The Town Hell: A Thrilling Narrative of Life in the Kansas and Missouri Penitentiaries* (Chicago, 1890) pp. 27-28. Reynolds spent sixteen months at Lansing three years after Wasson, and the author presumes that the conditions Reynolds described are the same as those Wasson experienced.

41. Hougren, "The Impact of Politics," p. 303; Ltr. Henry Hopkins to Commanding Officer, Dept. of the Missouri and Kansas (sic), 31 Mar 1870, with an endorsement by the adjutant general stating that the secretary of war approved Lansing's designation as a military prison in May, AG Doc. file M599 1870, roll 801, Microcopy M619, NA; "Record of Military Prisoners Confined in the Kansas State Penitentiary, March 31, 1884," folder 3, Court-martial case QQ3901.

42. "Major Wasson," *Leavenworth Times*, 10 Jul 1883; Special Order 76, Department of Texas, 5 Jul 1883, roll 210, Microcopy M689, NA; Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 3: 145. Bartlett would retire as a major general and survive to be the Military Academy's oldest living graduate for over a year prior to his death in 1949.

43. *Leavenworth Times*, 10 Jul 1883.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. "Major Wasson's Audacity," *New York Times*, 25 Aug 1883; "Report of Warden, Kansas State Penitentiary, of Military Prisoners in Confinement during the Quarter Ending March 31, 1884," AG Doc. file 1612, roll 269, Microcopy M689, NA (initial quotes); *Army and Navy Register*, 8 Nov 1884, entry on convict 2984. Convicts in the Kansas State Penitentiary, 1871-1894. Kansas prisoners earned "good time" at the rate of three days per month during their first year, five days per month during their second year, and eight days per month after that. See undated memo, written prior to 26 October 1884, AG Doc. file 1746.

47. "Major Wasson Seeking Pardon," *New*

*York Times*, 12 Feb 1884; Ltr, Bingham to Grant, 11 Jun 1883, and List of Persons Recommending Pardon of James R. Wasson, Late Paymaster, U.S. Army, undated, both in AG Doc. file 1746.

48. Ltrs, Simms to Arthur, 3 Feb 1884; Minnie Wasson to Weller, 5 Apr 1884; Weller to Arthur, [Apr 1884], all in File J-504, Pardon Case Files, RG 204, Records of the Office of the Pardon Attorney, NA; Ltr, Kasson to Lincoln, 27 Jul 1884, AG Doc. file 1746. The U.S. Revenue-Marine became known as the Revenue-Cutter Service in the 1890s and in 1915 merged with the Life-Saving Service to form the Coast Guard.

49. *Army and Navy Journal* 22 (8 November 1884): 279, reporting that President Arthur granted the pardon "on the personnel solicitation" of General Grant; *Army and Navy Register*, 8 Nov 1884. Arthur's 337 clemency actions were the fewest issued by any president who served at least three years between 1861 and 1989. See the websites <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/pardonspres1.htm> and <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/images/ruck4a.gif>.

50. *Bushnell's Des Moines Directory*, 1888, p. 641; *Bushnell's Des Moines City Directory*, 1889, p. 483, 1890, p. 483; *Bushnell's Des Moines City and Polk County Directory*, 1891, p. 501; [Biennial] *Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of Iowa* (Des Moines, 1887), p. 109; *Report of the Adjutant-General of Iowa, for Biennial Period Ending 1889* (Des Moines, 1889), pp. 19, 34, 111; *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), 20 Oct 1886 (first quote); "Major Wasson's Career," *New York Times*, 22 Aug 1891 (second quote).

51. "Major Wasson's Career" (quotations); "Col. Wasson in Demand," *Washington Post*, 22 Aug 1894; Ltr, AG to Wasson, 20 Apr 1898, and Ltr, Wasson to AG, 16 Dec 1899, both in file 2871 ACP 1871.

52. Ltrs, Wasson to AG, 2 Oct 1899; Assistant AG to Commanding Officer, Washington Barracks, 2 and 5 Oct 1899, all in AG Doc. file 287449, RG 94, NA. Wasson's classmate, George S. Anderson, commanded the 38th Infantry, U.S. Volunteers.

53. Compiled Military Service Record of James R. Wasson, 46th Infantry, U.S. Volunteers, RG 94, NA; Beauregard, *Bingham of the Hills*, p. 189; Historical Sketch of the 46th Infantry, U.S. Volunteers, RG 94, NA; Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence, Kans., 2000), pp. 164-66, 168-69, 290-92.

54. *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2 vols. (1902; reprint ed., Washington, D.C., 1993), 2: 1272; Linn, *The Philippine War*, pp. 158-59, 199; *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1910), vol. 1, pt. 5, p. 135; Compiled Military Service Record of James R. Wasson, 46th Infantry, U.S. Volunteers; "From Heights of Fame Down to the Depths," *Topeka Capital*, 10 Jun 1908.

55. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 5: 177; "A. R. Shepherd Is Dead," *New York Times*, 13 Sep 1902; "Ex-Gov. Shepherd's Wealth," *New York Times*, 14 Sep 1902; "Shepherd Millions Grow," *New York Times*, 24 Oct 1902.

56. Roll 500, Microcopy T288 (General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934), NA;

*Baltimore Sun*, 13 Jul 1905; "Takahira Avon Rosen," *New York Times*, 13 Jul 1905.

57. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 6: 17; Ltr, Wasson to Wilson, 29 Mar 1917, in 1 2871 ACP 1871.

58. Ltrs, Wasson to Secretary of State, Iowa, 23 Apr 1918; curator to Wasson, 22 Apr 1918, James R. Wasson Papers, Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines; Email message, Becki Plunkett, Sr. Historical Society of Iowa, to author, 23 Dec 2003, copy in author's files.

59. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 6: 17; Email mgs, Paula Kaiser, Iowa Veterans' Hall to author, 17 Sep 2003; Biles to author, 28 Apr 2003, copies in *Army History* files, CMH; *Can. Republican*, 23 Jan 1929; undated obituary clippings for Marie and Robert Wasson from 1 *Cranford Chronicle*, Cranford (N.J.) Historic Society. Robert's obituaries in the *Cranford Chronicle* and the *New York Times*, 1 June 1957 stated that President McKinley appointed him to the Naval Academy, but the author has found no record that Robert actually enrolled there. According to John C. S. Wasson's Civil War pension application file, he died in 1897 and his wife, James Wasson's mother Julia, died in 1911. Robert Wasson's wife, Sara, died in Cranford 1967. See Email msg, Patty, Fairview Cemetery Cranford, N.J., to author, 17 Feb 2004, copy *Army History* files.

60. Michelle J. Nacy, *Members of the Regiment: Army Officers' Wives on the Western Frontier, 1865-1890* (Westport, Conn., 2000), p. 86 (quote), 99.

61. "West Point Cadets," *New York Times*, 6 Jun 1871.

## In Memoriam: Charles R. Anderson

By Joel D. Meyerson

Charles R. Anderson, a historian since 1987 at the Center of Military History, died on 24 August 2003 at his home in Springfield, Virginia, after a long battle with cancer. He was interred at Quantico National Cemetery, Virginia, with full Marine Corps honors.

Charlie was born in Elgin, Illinois, on 16 March 1943. He graduated in 1965 from Monmouth College in Monmouth, Illinois, and received a master's degree in history from Western Michigan University in 1974.

During the Vietnam War, Charlie commanded an infantry platoon in the 1st Marine Division near the Demilitarized Zone. After leaving the service, he became one of the earlier Vietnam veterans to write about his and his comrades' wartime experiences, doing so before major publishers had decided how to treat the controversial war. His forthright ac-

counts, *The Grunts* and *Vietnam: The Other War*, both published by Presidio Press, appeared in 1976 and 1982, respectively.

As a member of the Center's Histories Division, Charlie continued to write on the Vietnam War. His assigned volume in the official series *United States Army in Vietnam* was entitled "Advice and Support: The Middle Years, 1961-1965." Charlie had completed twelve of fourteen planned chapters at the time of his death. A long-time student of World War II, he also prepared seven campaign studies that the Center of Military History issued during the fiftieth anniversary of that conflict. *Day of Lightning, Years of Scorn*, Charlie's biography of Lt. Gen. Walter Short, commander of U.S. Army forces in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked on 7 December 1941, will be published in the autumn of 2004 by the Naval Institute Press.



Charles Anderson, circa 1990

Charlie is survived by his wife, Akiko, his mother Hilda, and his brother Stephen. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues and friends at the Center of Military History.

With compliments and as a  
souvenir of May & June 1883.

Edw. C. Benson

TELEPHONE 729-2155

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C. R. JORDAN M. D.

DRS. HUNTER, COX, WALKUP & JORDAN

S. SYCAMORE

EL PASO, TEXAS 79901

June 19, 1972

New Line .41 caliber, serial number 3014, arrived in good order today along with holster. Condition is excellent except for the deterioration and wear around the trigger which apparently came from long use in the holster. Thank you for sending it and the historical data from George Harren. I would appreciate the Colt factory letter to see if James Harren bought it directly from the factory or through a dealer.

Please give George Harren a ring and see if he still has his father's badge, handcuffs, night stick, and a picture of him in his uniform. I can't pay much for these extras as I feel I've paid for quite a bit of historical data already on this gun.

Enclosed is the check for \$295.

Keep me in mind if you should find other Spur trigger cartridge Colts or also Colts, Martins, Smith and Wesson, Norwich revolvers with the DeGrass pattern grips on them. I feel that the Norwich revolver grips are an infringement on the DeGrass patent as they are not of the quality as the authentic DeGrass grips. Thanks again for the gun.

Yours, truly,

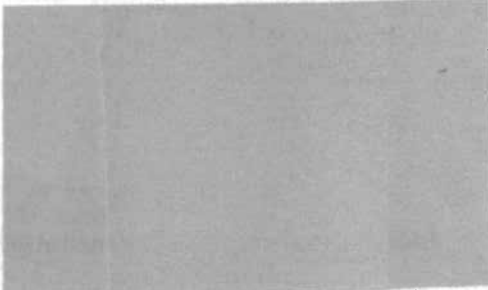
Robert G. Cox

RGC/als

*It must look like I'll get to the  
DeGrass store after all*

Robert G. Cox  
COLT COLLECTOR  
642 S. SYCAMORE  
EL PASO, TEXAS 79901  
El Paso Colt Trigger Company  
COLTS 10000

July 11, 1970



Dear Larry:

Received my Arms Gazette and want to order The Book of Colt Engravings - at the pre-publication price of \$24.95. Please autograph one for me when they are ready.

I still need the Colt Factory letter on Colt New Line 41 caliber- serial # 5014 which you promised. I know that you have been especially busy with the new book.

Sorry that I have not sent any pictures of recent Engraved New Lines.

I still have not heard where the Colt dealer presentation double casing of New Lines that was in the William Locke collection ended up. Do you know who owns it?

Keep me in mind for Engraved and Cased New Lines and also guns with the Wenzel-DeGress grips.

Enjoy seeing your articles in the magazines and hope to see and visit with you at one of the shows later this year.

Very truly yours,

Robert G. Cox

RGC:sh

C  
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