

Eighth in a Series—Biographies of our Ancestors

Andrew McReynolds—cousin of David and Joseph McReynolds

Gen. Andrew T. McReynolds was born in Dungannon, County Tyrone, Ireland, December 25, 1807, and maternally was a cousin of Gen. Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans and later seventh president of the United States. His grandfather was also a lawyer of consummate ability in Ireland, and had an office in Sackville street, Dublin, was for years Sheriff of Tyrone County, and lived to reach the patriarchal age of 103 years. His father was John McReynolds, also a distinguished member of the Irish bar. Great tales reached Ireland of how Cousin Andrew Jackson was climbing the ladder of professional and political fame, and the young McReynolds determined to try the new world also. Upon the death of his father, he inherited the estate, and two years later found the proceeds in gold in a carpet-bag on the way to New York. Andrew Jackson was president then, and the young man received a warm welcome. He spent but little time in the east, however, and made his way in 1833 to Detroit, which then had a population of less than 2,500. Having a natural inclination toward politics, and incited by the success of his cousin, he was elected alderman four years after his arrival in Detroit. His military record dates back to 1832, when he and a Pittsburg militia maintained peace during very perilous times during the nullification crisis in South Carolina. In 1847, he was a Democrat member of the Michigan senate, and his remarks upon the subject of the relations with Mexico were so eloquent that he attracted notice in Washington and President Polk tendered him a captaincy in the Third Dragoons. He accepted, and his record in Mexico was that of a gallant soldier. In 1848, he was promoted, by brevet, major "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contreras and Cherubusco." At the latter place, he was wounded in the left arm, which was ever afterward comparatively useless. Major McReynolds returned to Detroit and afterward became the first captain of the Montgomery Guard. In 1859, he came to Grand Rapids and entered upon the practice of law, but he had hardly settled down when the Civil War broke out and he was given carte blanche to organize a cavalry regiment anywhere. The regiment was wanted badly and the president could not wait for the governor to issue a commission. In this way Colonel McReynolds happened to be the only Colonel of Volunteers to receive a direct commission from President Lincoln during the war. He raised a regiment in New York City at once, and his gallant record in the Civil War is a matter of history. His son, B. Frank McReynolds, was also a gallant fighter in the war.

Source: Obituary of Andrew T. McReynolds as transcribed by Barb Jones, 14 February 2008.