

Sketchbook of James T. Shannon. 34 sheets of paper with graphite and ink (and some ink wash) bound between marbled covers, 34 x 51 cm., ca. 1847-1850. Signed inside front cover "Jas. T. Shannon Pittsburgh." *The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries Special Collections*

The sketchbook consists of numerous studies from prints and from nature, some of which appear to have been "drawn on-the-spot" or at least informed by eyewitness sketches (or eyewitness prints or even less likely, but possibly daguerreotypes) taken in Mexico during the U.S. War with Mexico, 1846-1848. Among the more important of these subjects are the "Castle De Peño, Mexico" (Fortaleza de San Carlos also known to Americans as the Castle of Perote), "View of Coffre de Perote from Jalapa and Quarters of the American army after the Battle of Cerro Gordo", "Burial Place of Capt. Walker who was Killed at the Battle of Huamantla on the Way to relieve the Penna. Battalion Besieged at Puebla", a street scene in San Angel near Mexico City showing the quarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment, a ruined bridge (possibly the one destroyed by Mexican guerrillas at Plan del Rio along the National Road between Mexico City and Veracruz), a Mexican "Ranche", a "Sketch of Popocattaple [sic., Popocatepetl] and the White Lady. Snow Mountains In Mexico", "A Monestary [sic.] on the Rio Dell Rain" [Rio del Plan?], a panoramic view of Puebla, "A Sketch of Vera Cruz & the Castle of San Juan De Uallo [sic., Ulua] from Fort Santiago", the Convent of Churubusco, and a second sketch of Puebla apparently related to the 1850 lithograph of the Siege of Puebla by Sarony & Major credited to Shannon. In addition there are copy sketches from prints of paintings by the renowned Italian artist Raphael of Urbino (1483-1520), figures and views of scenes in the United States and even a sketch of masonic ceremonial aprons.

In addition to the Sarony & Major lithograph of the Siege of Puebla, Shannon's Mexican War sketches are undoubtedly related to several engravings in J. Jacob Oswandel's *Notes of the Mexican War, 1846-47-48* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1885). A large lithograph of the *Castle of Perote*, probably also printed by Sarony & Major is probably also the work of Shannon. An extremely rare lithograph of *San Angel, Mexico: Quarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Penna. Regiment Volunteers...* is credited as "drawn & lithographed by L. Schulze" and printed on the "lith. press [of] H. Camp" in Philadelphia, probably between 1848 and 1856. However, the source for the original drawing may well have been Shannon. Original examples of all these works may be found in The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries Special Collections.

The artist James T. Shannon was born in Pennsylvania sometime between 1827 and 1829. Approximately four years later, on May 29, 1831, a Thomas and Catherine Shannon presented a four-year-old boy James Thomas Shannon for baptism at Old St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.<sup>i</sup> James T. enlisted as a nineteen-year-old private in Company A, First Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers at Pittsburgh on November 26, 1846 and was officially mustered in a few days later on December 16th.<sup>ii</sup> His regiment, under the command of Colonel Francis M. Wynkoop, rendezvoused with the rest of General Winfield Scott's Army at the Island of Lobos in late December and the first two months of 1847, and soon landed at Veracruz. They left the latter on April 9<sup>th</sup> and were engaged at the Battle of Cerro Gordo on the 18<sup>th</sup>. They arrived at Jalapa on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and at Perote on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Three companies were left behind to guard the castle and city of Perote, while the rest of the regiment, including Shannon's company, marched on to Puebla, where they remained behind on garrison duty, guarding supplies and sick and wounded American troops. After the rest of Scott's army had taken Mexico City, Puebla was encircled and besieged for twenty-eight days by a superior Mexican force from September 13<sup>th</sup> until October 12<sup>th</sup>, when relief finally came.<sup>iii</sup>

Shannon's company was next quartered at San Angel, just outside of Mexico City. Shannon himself spent the winter of 1847-1848 in a hospital in Mexico City. He was promoted to corporal on June 1, 1848, and was eventually discharged at Pittsburgh the next month, July 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>iv</sup> In 1850 a baker by the name of James Shannon appeared in the Pittsburgh City Directory.<sup>v</sup> However, Shannon was undoubtedly interested in developing his artistic talents, for on February 27, 1850 the Pittsburgh Daily Gazette and Advertiser noted:

"BEAUTIFUL LITHOGRAPH. – One of the finest lithographs we have ever seen was laid upon our table yesterday, by Mr. J. T. Shannon. It represents the various positions occupied by the several divisions of the American troops while engaged in mortal combat with their foes at the siege of Puebla. Mr. S. who served his country gallantly in the late Mexican War, was present, and took the sketch during the fight. We must say, that it is equally creditable to his coolness as a soldier, and his skill as a draughtsman."<sup>vi</sup>

The 1850 Census of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, taken on September 11<sup>th</sup> of that year, lists James T. Shannon, painter, age 21, born in Pennsylvania, as living with the Samuel and Ellen Paisley family.<sup>vii</sup> Shannon soon married Amanda Wright in Pitt Township on January 1, 1851. The first of their five children was born in November of that year. In 1852 a "T. J. Shannon," no doubt the same, is listed in the Pittsburgh directory as a house and sign painter. This painter, correctly listed later as James T. Shannon, lived in Pittsburgh in 1858, but earlier, in 1856, there were several people with similar names in the vicinity. By 1860 Shannon had taken up farming and had moved his family to Burrell, Indiana County, Pennsylvania.<sup>viii</sup>

On April 22, 1861, James T. Shannon enrolled in Company C, 9<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserve Volunteers (35<sup>th</sup> Infantry) and mustered into service as Captain of the regiment on July 27, 1861 at Washington, D.C. At the Battle of Second Bull Run (Manassas Junction, Virginia), on August 30, 1862, Shannon received a gunshot wound in the forehead and died a few days later on September 11<sup>th</sup> in the Presbyterian Church Hospital at Georgetown, D.C.<sup>ix</sup> He was later buried in Pittsburgh at the Allegheny Cemetery.<sup>x</sup>

-- Ben W. Huseman

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<sup>i</sup> Old St. George Methodist Episcopal Church Baptisms for 1831, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1669-2013, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, no. 13608 of 2201, available through Ancestry.com.

<sup>ii</sup> Sources for Shannon's Mexican War activities are in *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the Mexican War from Pennsylvania*, RG94, M1028, rolls 1 and 5, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Also John B. Trussell, Chief, Division of History, Pennsylvania State Archives, to Ben W. Huseman, Amon Carter Museum, October 15, 1987, also cited *Pennsylvania Archives, Sixth Series*, vol. 10, Amon Carter Museum Archives, and Martha A. Sandweiss, Rick Stewart, and Ben W. Huseman, *Eyewitness to War: Prints and Daguerreotypes of the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, and Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1989), pp. 347-350, especially note 3.

<sup>iii</sup> See Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico* (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), vol. 2, pp. 173-80, 423-27; K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), pp. 328-81. H. Judge Moore, *Scott's Campaign in Mexico* (Charleston: J. B. Nixon, 1849), pp. 212-34, contains an eyewitness account of the siege, as well as Colonel Childs's official report. Another source for the Pennsylvania regiment's activities is J. Jacob Oswald, *Notes of the Mexican War, 1846-47-48* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1885), pp. 424 *ad passim*. George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-*

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1848: *Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Combatants* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), p. 470, n. 133, note that Oswaldel may have based part of his account on an unpublished diary by Private John Kreitzer, a member of Oswaldel's company. The diary is today in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Library.

<sup>iv</sup> *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the Mexican War from Pennsylvania*, RG94, M1028, rolls 1 and 5, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>v</sup> *Eyewitness to War*, note 3.

<sup>vi</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette and Advertiser*, 27 February 1850. I am indebted to professional genealogist Tom Duncan, for this citation sent to me, Ben Huseman, Craig Shannon, and Sam Haynes, by email on 19 February 2016.

<sup>vii</sup> *1850 United States Federal Census* for Pittsburgh, Ward 9, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, 11 September 50, p. 556, dwelling 2129, lists a James T. Shannon, painter, age 21.

<sup>viii</sup> *1860 United States Federal Census* for Burrell Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania, 12 June 1860, p. 47, dwelling number 345, lists James T. Shannon (farmer, age 31) and his wife Amanda (28) with their five children.

<sup>ix</sup> E. W. Morgan to Mrs. H. C. Patton, April 14, 1932, in *U.S. Civil War Widow's Pension Files*, National Archives, RG 15, application no. 8.945, certificate no. 7.159.

<sup>x</sup> "James T. Shannon of Co. C. 9<sup>th</sup>. Res. Pa. Vol. Died Sept. 12, 1862. Aged 33 Years" inscribed on headstone, Section 3, Lot 66, Allegheny Cemetery, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, *Findagrave* Memorial 32362662.