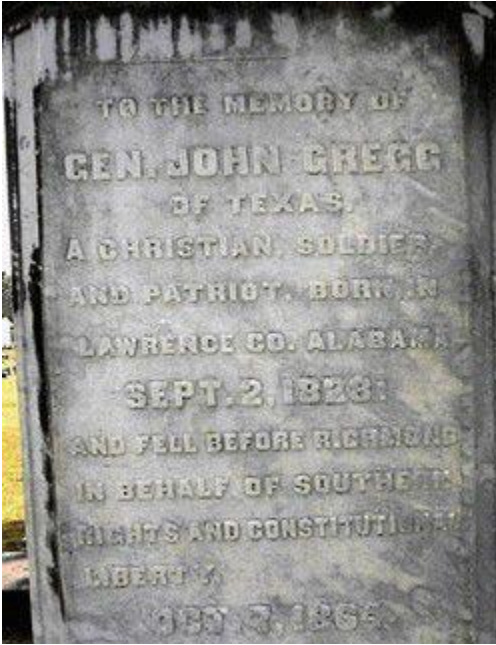


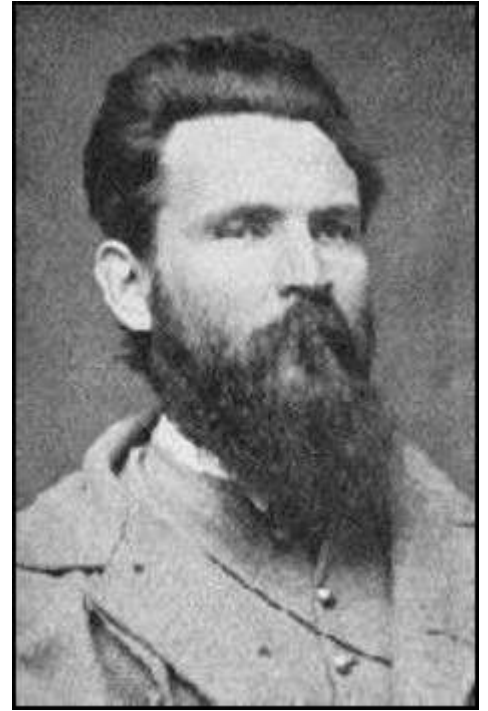
Gregg's Grave Marker Reveals a Fine Balance

By James A. Marples

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Gen. John Gregg's grave marker



General John Gregg

Back when the town of Longview was founded in 1870, it was actually part of Upshur County. Only in 1873 was Gregg County carved out of Upshur and Rusk counties. The governor was so indifferent about the matter that the Legislature's bill became law without his signature.

Our Gregg County was named after Brigadier Gen. John Gregg, who served and died on the battlefield for the C.S.A. That was the common nomenclature for the Confederate States of America.

It is interesting that Gen. Gregg was born Sept. 28, 1828, in Lawrence County, Alabama, and died Oct. 7, 1864, on a battlefield near Richmond, Virginia. His wife even scrambled through enemy lines to retrieve his body. A further unique geographical twist, Gregg was buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Aberdeen, Mississippi.

Gen. Gregg was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge as well as the Masonic Lodge. Each are separate yet both fraternal orders often had cemeteries for deceased members and their families.

Gregg died in action on a Virginia battlefield at the young age of 36. In his short lifetime, although he was barely in Texas hardly at all, he was commissioned a "Deputy from Texas to the Confederate States of America." Gen. Gregg is known to have visited Austin, but more than likely he traveled the well-known pathway via Nacogdoches and on westward to Austin.

Of particular interest to Longview residents in this year of 2020 is Gregg's grave marker. As noted, he is buried in Mississippi. What I find fascinating is that he died before the War Between The States had ended, and his marker provides a clear, unfiltered view into the mindset of combat participants in their justification for war. This cannot be contorted by modern "revisionist historians." And it speaks volumes.

It says:

“To the memory of Gen. John Gregg of Texas. A Christian Soldier and Patriot. Born in Lawrence County, Alabama. Sept. 2, 1828: and Fell Before Richmond In Behalf of Southern Rights and Constitutional Liberty. Oct. 7, 1864.”

Modern commentators and pundits often debate federalism versus states rights as the war’s impetus. Detractors maintain that “states rights” was code-language for slavery. No, it was not.

Many people then and now believe in both types of governance. Elements such as “promoting the national defense,” securing a basic (and nearly uniform standard of public education from Kindergarten through 12th grade should be similar in all 50 States. The Constitution provides for creation of “Post Offices and Post Roads.” Other roads were serviced when funds were available.

The U.S. Congress was charged solely to mint gold coin or silver coin as the only form of legal tender (money) for payment of debts. The reason was to enable people in one state to readily accept that uniform currency as a medium of exchange and not rely on haphazard barter or tokens.

Conversely, states rights involves the various states to not have the yoke of mandates placed on them that may not be appropriate or applicable. For instance, Nebraska or Kansas may sell fishing and pheasant-hunting licenses whereas Florida may have different regulations.

Some areas of legislation affect all 50 U.S. states (such as uniform postage on U.S. mail), yet states need freedom on tweaking/modifying or omitting any regulations that aren’t applicable to conditions in that area.

Revisionist historians want to tar and feather states rights. Yet, that phrase doesn’t necessarily always involve slavery or the prohibition thereof. Various states are free to designate their own regulations and laws.

Furthermore, the 10th Amendment to the Constitution was intended to be a firewall bridging a type of truce between the two philosophies. In essence, it says: Anything not specifically enumerated in the U.S. Constitution, nor prohibited by the various State Constitutions and laws are reserved and held as a “right” held by the “the people” (the citizens at-large) themselves.

Men fought valiantly in the civil war. Gen. Gregg’s legacy may be that both federal rights and states rights are legitimate, and must balance in harmony.

— *James A. Marples, a Longview resident, is a regular contributor to the Saturday Forum.*