

Americus Vespucius Greer

By William N. Greer



Americus Vespucius Greer was one of a pair of twins born to Nathaniel and Nancy on March 4, 1832, in what would soon become Chambers County, Alabama. As a youngster in Texas, he helped on the farm then clerked in two stores and by the age of 18 was rangering as a scout under Captain James Cross.¹

In Port Sullivan, Texas, on February 8, 1854, he lost his twin, Christopher Columbus, to pneumonia — the tragic outcome of a hunting trip the week before. His twenty-second birthday, less than a month later, must have been particularly difficult to bear.

Like so many of his family, A.V. — as he was often called — was baptized into the Mormon faith in August, 1854. In 1855 he accompanied his family on the deadly trek to Utah and returned with them to Texas in 1856.

Despite his belief in the Union cause, A.V. enlisted January 16, 1862, in Company H of Young's 8th Regiment of the Texas Infantry. By July his qualities of leadership earned him an appointment as lieutenant. (For many years it was believed that his moniker "A.V." was replaced by "H" due to his service in this company. But recent research has shown he was listed as "H" in the census of July 5, 1860.) Whatever the source of the nickname, he was known as "H" the remainder of his life. In the spring of 1863, he made captain. On February 20, 1864, he resigned after having served as far away as Virginia.

H's strength of character is ably demonstrated, when with the perils of war all about him, he wrote to his brother Babe on August 24, 1862. In part, the letter reads:

I want you to take good care of what little I have left, and if I should never return I give it to you, not that I think any more of you than the rest, but it is so little that it would not be worth dividing, and I do not think that you have had an equal show with the rest. I want you to be kind and good to your mother and give heed to the counsel of those who are your superior in age and experience ... go to school when you can, try to learn and make good use of your time when about home ... and to use the figure of the poet, "live so in youth that you blush not in age."

Many years later, Gil Greer's daughter Lavina recounted how the family had worried over H's fate as the war wound down. Gil, also a captain, had returned home safely, and both Cate and Babe were home, but nothing was known of H. He had been very regular in writing, but no word had come for a long time. One evening Cate and Minty and Mammy were sitting on their porch, wondering if H had been killed, when Sallie heard their dog growling. She followed the dog to their stile (gate hardware was hard to get) and discovered H climbing over. He yelled at her to go tell her father to call off the dog (which had always disliked H). Sallie, not quite 5, did as asked and Cate, overjoyed, rushed to greet his brother.

On November 2, 1865, H married Polly Lane whose sister, Marion, had wed Gil a dozen years before. After the war, times were rough and goods so hard to purchase



that Polly's wedding dress had to be made from a window curtain.

A few years after the war, H sold the 160 acres that he had inherited from his father. It is thought that he did considerable farming on rented land a couple of miles from the Brazos. Here Polly gave birth to their first four children.

The year after Tom moved his family out west, H decided to follow. By mid-November of 1877, H and his family visited his sister Willmirth in Salt Lake City and then wintered in Wallsburg, UT with his brother Dixon. Later H would move his family near Tom's in northern Arizona and found a community he named "Amity." There, after having two more children, his beloved Polly passed away on November 28, 1882.

H was beloved by all who knew him and more than just family came to call him "Uncle H." His concern for right living and his attention to others was widely known. So highly was "Uncle H" esteemed, that upon his death on May 3, 1896, the people of Amity renamed their town "Greer."

¹ As was true with so many other men, his ranger service was as an unpaid volunteer (called militia action in most southern states) and was never official nor documented.