

**Brigadier-General Jacob Ammen**  
**Delivered at Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio**  
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His men lovingly called him “Uncle Jakey.” An outstanding citizen as well as a successful soldier, Jacob Ammen was best remembered by those of his time as a courageous war hero and a “man of most endearing qualities.”<sup>1</sup>

Jacob was born to David and Sarah Ammen on January 7, 1806, in Botetourt County, Virginia, near Roanoke. He spent the first ten years of his life in Virginia until his parents moved him to the small town of Levanna in Brown County, Ohio. His father opened the first printing office in the region, where Jacob learned the art of printing and helped his father publish a weekly paper called *The Benefactor*. Jacob later moved to Ripley, Ohio, and then he spent some time in West Union, Ohio. It was here that he befriended Congressman John W. Campbell, and who aided Jacob in getting an appointment to West Point Military Academy on June 27, 1827. Jacob was an average student, graduating 12<sup>th</sup> of 33 in the West Point Class of 1831. Among those in his graduating class who later became Civil War generals were Andrew A. Humphreys, William H. Emory, Horatio Van Cleve, Samuel R. Curtis, and Richard S. Ewell. He also studied alongside Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and Jefferson Davis.<sup>2</sup>

On July 1, 1831, Jacob Ammen earned the rank of Brevet Second Lieutenant of the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Artillery, and on October 1<sup>st</sup> of that year, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Mathematics at West Point. In 1832 he taught infantry tactics, but when the Nullification of 1832-1833 threatened the port of Charleston, South Carolina, he accompanied the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Artillery when it was ordered to the city to guard the harbor from possible harm. In late 1833, his outfit was reassigned to guard duty at Fort Trumbull in Connecticut. A year later, Jacob returned to West Point where he continued his assistant professorship in mathematics and experimental philosophy. He gained a great reputation at the Academy for his skill at being a draftsman. During this time he met his first wife, Caroline L. Pierce, of Troy, New York, and they were married on December 30, 1834. From this marriage, they had two children, William and Henry. Caroline died several years later, and Jacob married his second wife, Martha A. Beasley, the daughter of General Nathaniel Beasley.<sup>3</sup>

About 6 months after being promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, Jacob resigned his post at West Point on November 30, 1837. Ammen immediately accepted the position of Professor of Mathematics at Bacon College in Georgetown, Kentucky, where he taught for two years. From 1840 through 1855, he held similar professorships at various institutions throughout the United States, including Jefferson College in Mississippi, the University of Indiana at Bloomington, the college at Washington in Mississippi, and Georgetown College in Kentucky. In 1855 he moved back to Ripley, Ohio, where he established a civil engineering practice and became Superintendent of the Ripley City Schools.<sup>4</sup>

When Fort Sumter was fired upon on April 12, 1861, Jacob Ammen set his sights on war. On the night of April 16<sup>th</sup>, he organized a town meeting at a church in Ripley. It was on this occasion that he formed a home guard unit which three days later became a company of the 12<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Jacob Ammen was elected Captain of this company. While being outfitted at Camp Chase in Columbus, the regiment elected Ammen as its Lieutenant-Colonel on May 2, 1861. However, on June 22, 1861, Governor Dennison personally offered Ammen the command of the newly-formed 24<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Jacob accepted. Five days after the First Battle of Bull Run had ended, Colonel Ammen was ordered to move his regiment to the western Virginia front.<sup>5</sup>

Jacob's first engagement occurred against one of his former classmates, Robert E. Lee, at the Battle of Cheat Mountain Summit, (West) Virginia, on September 12, 1861. Ammen performed well here and at the Battle of Greenbrier River on October 3. Following his success in western Virginia, he was ordered to report to Major-General Don Carlos Buell in Louisville, Kentucky. Buell made Ammen commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division of the Army of the Ohio on November 30, 1861. His brigade spent the winter at Louisville, but soon after Union General Ulysses S. Grant's victory at Fort Donelson, the 10th Brigade was ordered to Nashville, Tennessee, to prepare for the Spring campaign soon to come.<sup>6</sup>

On March 17, 1862, Colonel Ammen was ordered to march his men from Nashville toward the formidable Union camp at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. On the eve of what would prove to be the most triumphant moment of Jacob Ammen's military career, Brigadier-General Ulysses Grant met Ammen as his men arrived in Savannah, Tennessee, just opposite Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River. In the conversation that followed, Grant said to him, "Colonel Ammen, I hardly think we will need your troops. I do not think we will have an engagement short of Corinth. Keep your men in hand at this point and I will send the boats down for you." The next day, April 6, Ammen plainly heard the boom of distant cannon on the opposite shore.<sup>7</sup>

Ammen's men were on the move by late morning. While enduring a drenching rain in complete darkness, he managed to get all of his 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade across the river to Pittsburg Landing by the late evening of April 6. In the morning, he was immediately ordered to advance, and in the desperate fighting that followed in the fields surrounding the Bloody Pond, Ammen's brigade successfully pushed the Confederate right flank through Sarah Bell's Field. The day ended with the Federal forces in possession of the Shiloh battlefield -- and "Old Jakey" Ammen a hero.<sup>8</sup>

His brigade participated in the Siege of Corinth, Mississippi, in April and May of 1862. In July, Ammen was ordered to serve upon a Court Martial headed by Brigadier-General James A. Garfield. When Garfield was ordered away from this position, Jacob was chosen to fill the vacancy. On July 16, 1862, he was commissioned Brigadier General of Volunteers for his valuable services at the Battle of Shiloh.<sup>9</sup>

In August 1862, Ammen commanded the 4<sup>th</sup> Division of Buell's army, but during the Kentucky Campaign that autumn, Jacob fell severely ill and was sent to Cincinnati to recover. He spent the rest of 1862 and nearly all of 1863 in various administrative positions, including the commands of Camp Dennison, Ohio, of Camp Nelson, Kentucky, of Camp Douglas, Illinois, and of the District of Illinois. He also served on Courts Martial in Cincinnati. It was while Ammen was performing this duty that Confederate Brigadier-General John Hunt Morgan invaded Indiana and Ohio in July 1863. Major-General Ambrose Burnside, commander of the Department of the Ohio, and Brigadier-General Jacob D. Cox, commander of the District of Ohio and the defenses of Cincinnati, placed Jacob Ammen on duty in the defense of the Queen City on July 13, 1863. Ammen commanded the Third District, which contained the 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> Wards of Cincinnati, and his headquarters were made at the Orphan Asylum. Although it appeared that Morgan might attack Cincinnati, in reality Morgan's force avoided the metropolis completely. As a result, Ammen returned to his administrative work within a few days.<sup>10</sup>

In April 1864, Ammen took charge of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee. While commanding there, he held East Tennessee for the Union with a firm grip. Besides defending against the Confederate cavalry raids made in the area during Hood's Tennessee campaign, including John Hunt Morgan's fatal raid at Greeneville in September, there were no significant military actions in East Tennessee in 1864. More often, Ammen's command confronted enemy underground activity. In particular, Ammen had to deal with Confederate suppliers disguised as Union soldiers, known to locals as "Union Shriekers." However, he studied these men well and took extra care to prevent them from doing harm to the war effort. He once stopped a major supply of Federal army goods from being handed over to Confederacy by dressing himself as a Union private, secreting himself amongst a group of the suspected perpetrators, and then catching them as they discussed their plans. This effectively ended the plot and dissuaded other such plots from forming.<sup>11</sup>

Ammen continued in the Knoxville administrative role for the rest of 1864. He exhibited a talent for organization and sending reinforcements to the field. The Union high command held a deep regard for his work, yet he realized the war was nearing its end. With this in mind, Ammen retired from military duty on January 14, 1865.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to Hamilton County, Ohio, he settled with his wife, Martha, in the Cincinnati suburb of Wyoming. He started a civil engineering office there, and in 1869, Jacob Ammen was elected to a three-year term as Surveyor and Engineer of Hamilton County. In 1872, Jacob and Martha moved to Beltsville, Maryland, where they purchased a plantation house. Ammen served on the Isthmus of Panama Commission in 1874 to help explore possible canal routes, and in the following year, President Ulysses Grant appointed him to the Board of Visitors to West Point.<sup>13</sup>

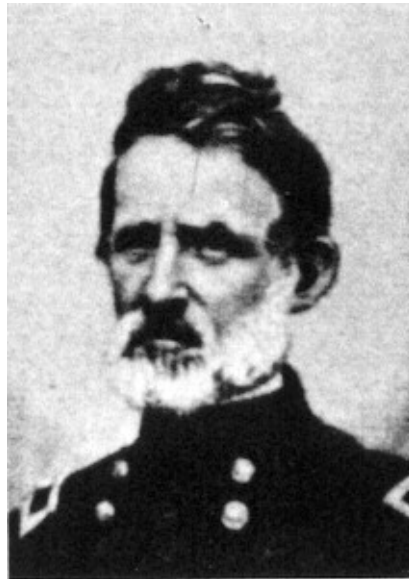
After Martha died on September 25, 1887, Jacob planned his return to his beloved state of Ohio. Having gone totally blind from cataracts, in 1890 he moved in with his son, Captain William P. Ammen, who resided in the Cincinnati suburb of Lockland. While a resident of Lockland, Jacob became a member of the Grand Army of the Republic (A.W.

Graves Post #563). Having been declared at that time the oldest living general from the Civil War, Jacob was honored by the Order of the Sons of Veterans with a nationally publicized celebration of his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 7, 1894. Governor William McKinley sent his respects to Ammen on this occasion, and hundreds of visitors attended the event. Though his health appeared normal, Ammen died of sudden heart failure one month later, on February 6, 1894. He was buried next to his parents and his second wife in Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio. “‘Uncle Jakey Ammen,’ – who, of the thousands that followed this intrepid commander through the mountains of Virginia, and over the rivers and swamps of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi, will ever forget the brave, cool-headed hero, whose gallantry has won for him a name in history that fairly gleams with honor.”<sup>14</sup>

Some persons buried in Section 51, Lot 84, Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio:<sup>15</sup>

- Brigadier-General Jacob Ammen, died of heart failure on Feb. 6, 1894
- Martha A. Ammen, second wife of Jacob Ammen, died of old age on Sep. 25, 1887
- David Ammen, father of Jacob Ammen, drowned in the Ohio River on Sep. 1, 1846
- Sarah Ammen, mother of Jacob Ammen, died of cholera on Sep. 24, 1852
- Mrs. Amanda (Ammen) Cox, sister of Jacob Ammen, died of cholera on Sep. 26, 1852

### Brigadier-General Jacob Ammen



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(From: Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1992), p. 6)



“Uncle Jakey Ammen” at Age 88.  
Drawn from a photograph taken one month prior to his death.  
(From: *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 8, 1894)

**Endnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 7, 1894; *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, February 7, 1894.
- <sup>2</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 8, 1894; Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1895), p. 901.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Union Army Illustrated*, Vol. 8 (Wilmington, North Carolina, 1998), pp. 18-19; *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 8, 1894.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; Ezra Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1992), pp. 6-7; Stewart Sifakis, *Who Was Who in the Civil War*, (New York, 1988), p. 9.
- <sup>6</sup> Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1895), p. 901.
- <sup>7</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 8, 1894.
- <sup>8</sup> Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1895), pp. 901-902; Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War*, (New York, 1997), pp. 269-276.
- <sup>9</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 8, 1894; Ezra Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1992), p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup> Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1895), p. 902; *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, July 13-14, 1863; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, July 13-14, 1863.
- <sup>11</sup> Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1895), p. 902-903.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 8, 1894; Ezra Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1992), p. 7.
- <sup>14</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, January 7-8, 1894; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 7, 1894.
- <sup>15</sup> Spring Grove Cemetery Office, *Records of Burials in Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001).

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