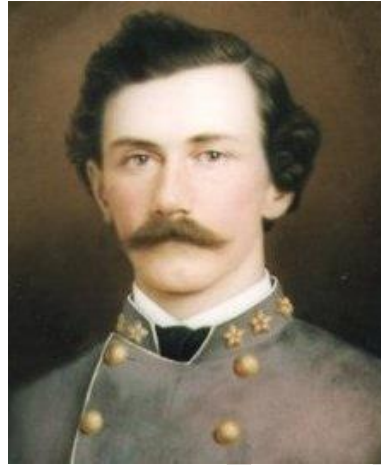


## Cranford's Rebel Colonel

*by Steven Glazer*



More than 70 Cranford residents served during the American Civil War, almost all in the Union army or navy. However, there was one who stood with the Confederacy. He ultimately left an indelible mark on the entire country before his untimely death on foreign soil in the arms of his wife and daughter.

Samuel Henry Lockett was born on July 6, 1837, in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, but as an infant moved to Marion, Alabama. His family prospered there, acquiring numerous slaves.

At age 16 young Lockett received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, graduating second in the class of 1859. He was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers and, in view of his high standing, immediately assigned to the Academy as an assistant professor. In 1860 he reported for engineering duty in the South, where he excelled in the construction of several forts. Lieutenant Lockett seemed destined for a brilliant career in the United States Army.

However, in January 1861 Alabama seceded from the Union. Within several weeks Lockett resigned his federal commission to stand with his native state in the impending national conflict. He was commissioned into the Confederate engineering corps and performed distinguished duty at the battle of Shiloh early in the Civil War.

In 1862 and 1863, Major Lockett was responsible for the design and construction of the defenses of Vicksburg, the key Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River. Its capture was vital to Abraham Lincoln's plan for isolating the South and blocking its internal lines of communication. Lockett's fortifications were instrumental in denying General U.S. Grant the Rebel prize for the better part of a year. Starving and without recourse, the fortress city finally surrendered on Independence Day of 1863.

Upon the fall of Vicksburg, Lockett was taken prisoner, but soon paroled and exchanged. He thereafter became chief engineer of the Confederate army in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana,

where he played a prominent role through the remainder of the Civil War. Colonel Lockett finally surrendered in late May 1865 -- almost two months after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox -- making him one of the last Confederate officers in the field to concede defeat. Few in the South fought as long and as hard.

After the war, Lockett returned to his home in Alabama, where he resided with his wife Cornelia, a native of West Point whom he had married soon after graduation. Lockett taught engineering and mathematics at several colleges, including Louisiana State University. However, professorships apparently failed to provide sufficient support for his growing family. He also may well have missed the excitement of active service in the field. In 1875 he accepted an appointment as colonel in the Egyptian army, serving with distinction in several expeditions in North Africa. About two years later he returned to America to teach at the University of Tennessee.



In 1883 a fellow West Point graduate invited Lockett to be his principal engineer on the construction of the elaborate pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. It is an exquisite piece of historical irony that a Rebel officer who spent more than four years of his life attempting to tear apart the Union would less than twenty years later design the foundation for its most enduring symbol. It was about the time of Lockett's project in New York harbor that he moved to Cranford, presumably to be nearer his work. The New Jersey State census of 1885 shows Lockett and Cornelia, along with their five children and other relatives, by then living in Cranford.

Although records are sparse, the Southerners seemed to integrate well into the fabric of Cranford. The two Lockett boys -- Henry Watkins and his younger brother, Samuel Hobart -- both competed in Cranford's first regatta on the Rahway River on Saturday, July 31, 1886. Sixteen-year-old Samuel was among the high-society boys who raced 100 yards over a swimming course beginning at his father's dock. He lost. Eighteen-year-old Henry fared better. He easily won the canoe race. The family did have a setback later that year when "Samuel H. Lockett" -- either father or son -- was struck in town on November 10 by an engine of the Central Railroad, resulting in a broken shoulder and several cracked ribs. Such accidents were not uncommon in early Cranford.

The Lockett brothers completed high school in Cranford, and lived in town while studying engineering at Rutgers College in New Brunswick. Like their father, Henry and Samuel performed well and graduated high in their respective classes of 1888 and 1890. They would go on to successful engineering careers. During much of this period in the 1880s, Colonel Lockett designed numerous municipal waterworks throughout the United States, having completed his work on the Statue of Liberty.

As a former Confederate officer, Lockett sometimes found it difficult to secure suitable employment, especially in the North. Beginning in 1888, he worked on various construction projects in South America, including railroads and waterworks. It was while working on the latter in Colombia that he suddenly became ill, dying in Bogota on October 12, 1891, with devoted wife Cornelia and their youngest daughter at his side. His remains are believed to still lie in that capital city.

By the time of Lockett's untimely death at age 54 in South America and the brothers' graduation from Rutgers, the family perhaps no longer resided in Cranford, without a need of a large residence in town. It wasn't until the turn of the century that comprehensive directories would be published. By then the family is not listed. Nevertheless, their ties to Cranford remained strong for some years. The *Cranford Chronicle* in the summer of 1894 twice mentions them. Samuel and a sister attended a "brilliant mid-summer social event" in Hampton Hall in July for the town's "society folk." And in September, Henry was reported visiting in Cranford, while sister Etta played in a local tennis tournament.

Lockett's loving wife Cornelia, who usually accompanied him everywhere he traveled, died in 1912 in East Orange, N.J., on her husband's 75th birthday. She is buried in nearby Rosedale Cemetery in Orange. Although separated in death, her grave includes a cenotaph to "Col. Samuel H. Lockett." And eldest son Henry, who served as an officer in the United States Army during World War I, died in a nursing home in New Jersey in 1949. His obituary in *The New York Times* concludes saying he was "a son of Col. S. H. Lockett, engineer, who built the foundation for the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor."