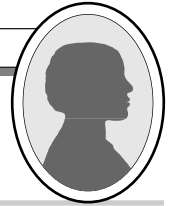


BIOGRAPHY



General P. G. T. Beauregard

“General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard was as flamboyant by nature as by name,” renowned southern historian Shelby Foote has written. He describes the southern general as “having bloodhound eyes and his hair brushed forward in lovelocks at the temples.” History remembers Beauregard as the man who ordered the first shots of the Civil War to be fired.

As you read, think about why one biographer called Beauregard “Napoleon in Gray.”

P.G.T. Beauregard was born to Creole parents—descendants of early French settlers of Louisiana—near New Orleans in 1818, fifteen years after France had sold Louisiana to the United States. Raised as a Frenchman, young Pierre attended a private school where classes were taught only in French. It is thought that he did not learn English until he was 12. A year earlier, he had been sent North to study at a New York City school run by two brothers who had been officers in Napoleon’s army. Pierre was fascinated by tales of their experiences, and he soon found both a hero—Napoleon—and a profession—the army.

At age 16, Beauregard entered West Point, where he made a distinguished record as a cadet. His favorite teacher there was his artillery instructor—Robert Anderson—the man who would later be in command of Fort Sumter when Beauregard opened fire on it. In 1838 the young Creole graduated with a commission as a second lieutenant. His military career had begun.

Beauregard spent his first years in the military with the Army Engineers, building fortifications in the South. During this time he displayed a hot-headedness that brought him to the brink of a duel on at least one occasion. But this was hardly the life of military glory he had dreamed of. Then, in 1846, the United States went to war with Mexico,

and the young lieutenant saw action in several battles. His advice on attacking Chapultepec, which led to the fall of Mexico City, was greatly appreciated by General Winfield Scott, and Beauregard received a temporary promotion to major.

In November 1860, with war clouds on the horizon, Beauregard was appointed superintendent of West Point. On his way there, he stopped off in Washington, D.C., and told an army general that if Louisiana seceded from the Union and war began, he would resign as superintendent and return to Louisiana. That is just what he did. Less than a week after taking office at West Point, he resigned from the army, returned home, and accepted a commission as general in the Confederate army.

General P.G.T. Beauregard was appointed Confederate commander at Charleston, South Carolina. There on that fateful day in April 1861, he ordered his men to fire on Fort Sumter and his old teacher, Robert Anderson. Beauregard served in many of the memorable battles of the Civil War—Bull Run (Manassas), Shiloh, Charleston, Petersburg. He never reached the heights of his hero Napoleon—history remembers him as “a good general but not a great one.” However, he did grow rich after the Civil War, a feat few of his fellow Confederate generals accomplished. He died in 1893.

Questions to Think About

1. What signs of flamboyant behavior did Beauregard exhibit?
2. Why is it ironic that Beauregard ordered the firing on Fort Sumter?
3. **Recognizing Cause and Effect** What effects did Beauregard’s hero-worship of Napoleon have on his life?