

= Johnston de Peyster =

Johnston Livingston de Peyster (June 14 , 1846 ? May 27 , 1903) was a soldier in the Union Army during the American Civil War and later a member of the New York State Assembly from Dutchess County , New York . The son of a wealthy old Dutchess County family , de Peyster joined the Union Army at the age of eighteen . He saw service in the eastern theater , and is best remembered for raising the first Union flag over the Confederate capitol of Richmond , Virginia , after its fall in 1865 .

After the war , de Peyster served overseas as a dignitary . When he returned to the United States , he ran for office and was elected to the State Assembly . His father disagreed with many of his political positions , and they eventually stopped speaking to each other . In 1900 , the family feud culminated in a race for the office of Mayor of their native town , father running against son . After defeating his father , who owned the town hall , he was forced to move the Mayor 's office to a new building . He died in 1903 , survived by his three daughters .

= = Early career = =

De Peyster was born in Tivoli , New York at his family 's estate . He was a member of the wealthy de Peyster family of New York , son of Major General John Watts de Peyster and brother of Brigadier General John Watts de Peyster Jr . He was also a second cousin of Maj. Gen. Philip Kearny , and his great @-@ great @-@ great @-@ grandfather was Abraham de Peyster , an early Mayor of New York City , whose father was Johannes de Peyster , a wealthy merchant .

At the start of the war in 1861 , Johnston was fifteen years old and attending Highland Military College in Newburg , New York . He remained in school through 1862 , but then left to raise a company for a regiment being organized in New York . De Peyster 's father paid ten @-@ dollar bounties to the men who signed the muster roll of his company . He was not able to assume command because of his age , and his family also felt he was too young for service . However , in the winter of 1863 , he threatened to travel to Washington , D.C. and stand for examination for an officership with a colored regiment .

In 1864 , at the age of eighteen , his family allowed him to join the Union Army as a second lieutenant . He was assigned to Company H of the 13th New York Heavy Artillery Regiment , assigned to the third division of XVIII Corps , Army of the James , commanded by Brig. Gen. Edward Winslow Hinks . The division was part of Major General Benjamin Butler 's disastrous Bermuda Hundred Campaign and was engaged at Swift Creek on May 9 . It was left behind at Bermuda Hundred while the first and second divisions traveled to join Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant at Cold Harbor with two divisions from the X Corps . He was stationed at Fort O 'Rourke located in Norfolk , Virginia where he contracted a fever and was sent home for six months , missing the unit 's heaviest engagements at the Siege of Petersburg and the second battle of Fair Oaks . The illness he contracted would plague him for the next eighteen years .

= = Richmond = =

Upon his return , he joined the staff of Brigadier General George F. Shepley , commanding the military district of Norfolk . When General Shepley was assigned as Chief of Staff to the XXV Corps commanded by Major General Godfrey Weitzel , de Peyster became an aide to Weitzel , and eventually his Chief of Staff . The unit de Peyster had originally joined , the 13th New York , was also assigned in the XXV Corps . He is credited with raising the first Union flag over the Confederate capitol of Richmond , Virginia after its fall . The flag was the same one that had been raised over the city of New Orleans , Louisiana after its fall . Shepley had been the military Governor of New Orleans , and later the State of Louisiana while it flew there .

Initially , de Peyster had been selected to lead an assault on the breastworks outside the city , however the night before the assault he noticed the city aflame from a signal tower and informed General Weitzel . The men of the corps then entered the city unmolested . Admiral David Farragut later claimed that de Peyster was due as much credit as he would have received had he actually

taken the city by storming it , because doing it without bloodshed still carried the same intent .

There was some dispute over who raised the first " flag " over the capitol in Richmond after it was learned that a Maj. A.H. Stevens had raised a guidon two hours before de Peyster hoisted the national flag , Ulysses S. Grant eventually declared that de Peyster should receive the credit because a guidon was not really a flag . Despite this , de Peyster 's father , a military critic , was highly derogatory when writing about Grant and his achievements . The young lieutenant reflected on the incident in a letter to his mother :

Headquarters , Army of the James

Richmond , April 3 , 1865 .

My dearest mother , ? This morning , about four o 'clock , I was got up , just one hour after I retired , with the information that at six we were going to Richmond . At six we started . The rebels had gone at three , along a road strewn with all the munitions of war . Richmond was reached , but the barbarous South had consigned it to flames . The roar of the bursting shells was terrific .

Arriving at the capitol , I sprang from my horse , first unbuckling the stars and stripes , a large flag I had on the front of my saddle . With Captain Langdon , chief of artillery , I rushed up to the roof . Together we hoisted the first large flag over Richmond , and on the peak of the roof drank to its success .

In the capitol I found four flags ? three rebel , one ours . I presented them all , as the conqueror , to General Weitzel . I have fulfilled my bet , and put the first large flag over Richmond . I found two small guidons , took them down , and returned them to the Fourth Massachusetts Cavalry , where they belonged . I write from Jeff . Davis 's private room . . .

I remain ever your affection son ,

" JOHNSTON "

For this act , he received a brevet promotion to lieutenant colonel of volunteers , " for gallant and meritorious conduct , and for hoisting the first real American flag over Richmond , Va . , after its capture by the Union forces , April 3 , 1865 , and as a testimonial of the zeal , fidelity , and courage with which he had maintained the honor of the State of New York in her efforts to enforce the laws of the United States , supremacy of the constitution , and a republican form of government " . Shortly thereafter , he received another brevet promotion to colonel , although this order did not mention the flag raising incident . He opted not to go with General Weitzel and the XXV Corps to Texas , but instead resigned in June 1865 . He thereafter was associated with Samuel W. Crawford in an unofficial capacity .

= = Later life = =

After the war he returned to Tivoli , New York and was active in the American Archaeological Association and the New York Yacht Club . He also joined the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States and the General Society of Colonial Wars .

He was an attaché to Daniel Sickles when the former general was appointed Minister to Spain by President Grant . He was married to Annie Toler and had three daughters .

He was elected to the New York State Assembly from Dutchess county in 1889 and reelected for a second term . He then served as Mayor of his native village of Tivoli @-@ on @-@ Hudson for several terms , and President of the New York Society Library . He was active in philanthropy , and made numerous donations to libraries and historical societies .

Although he shared interests in both philanthropy and military affairs with his father , they eventually had a falling out while Johnston served as a State Assemblyman , and was bitterly opposed by his father in a vote on the 1889 World 's Fair Bill . The feud became so heated that while Johnston was Mayor of Tivoli , his father , who owned the building where the town government met , barred his son from entering the building . The village government was forced to move to another building and remained there until 1894 , when they finally returned to de Peyster 's building . Another incident occurred and was reported in the press when Johnston 's mother fell ill , and he visited her at the de Peyster family home and was violently assaulted by his father . The father went so far as to run against his son for Mayor of Tivoli in 1900 , but was defeated in the general election . He died in

1903 , predeceasing his father as did all of his siblings .