



# **The Extraordinary Life of Charles Pomeroy Stone: Soldier, Surveyor, Pasha, Engineer**

*Blaine Lamb*

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# The Extraordinary Life of Charles Pomeroy Stone: Soldier, Surveyor, Pasha, Engineer

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Civil War Hero and Scapegoat, Surveyor of Mexico, General of the Egyptian Army, and Builder of the Statue of Liberty's Pedestal

In the winter of 1861, as the secession crisis came to a head, an obscure military engineer, Charles Pomeroy Stone, emerged as the rallying point for the defense of Washington, D.C. against rebel attack. He was protector of the newly elected president and right-hand man of the army's commanding general, General Winfield Scott, under whom he had served with distinction during the Mexican–American War.

Nevertheless, within a year, this same hero sat in a military prison accused of incompetence and possible treason.

Like other Union officers, Stone had the misfortune to run afoul of radical politicians in the nation's capital who sought to control the war effort by undermining the professional military establishment. Their weapon, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, applied a litmus test of commitment to abolition, loyalty to the Republican Party and battlefield success for the retention and promotion of army commanders. Stone, a Democrat who did not see the conflict as a crusade against slavery, and who lost his only battle, failed on all counts.

Readers of Civil War history know Stone best for his mistreatment at the hands of the Joint Committee. When his name appears, it is almost always in connection with the battle at Ball's Bluff, Virginia, during which a close associate of Lincoln's was killed, and its aftermath. His story, however, goes far beyond that engagement. In *The Extraordinary Life of Charles Pomeroy Stone: Soldier, Surveyor, Pasha, Engineer* that ranges from the Halls of Montezuma to Gold Rush California, and from the pyramids of Egypt to the foot of the Statue of Liberty, historian Blaine Lamb brings to light the many facets of Stone's remarkable life and career. He weaves into the narrative such characters as Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, Abraham Lincoln, Winfield Scott, Alexander von Humboldt, Thaddeus Lowe, Chinese Gordon, Khedive Ismail, and Frederic Auguste Bartholdi. But the center of this tale of nineteenth-century adventure, exploration, war, and intrigue remains Stone himself, a man of honor, steadfast loyalty, and tragic innocence.

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