

## Colonel Frederick Wilhelm Victor BleeS ~ March 30, 1860 - September 8, 1906

Colonel Frederick BleeS has the distinction of being one of the few well-known Maconites from our history who still has descendants living here today.

Colonel BleeS's full name was Frederick Wilhelm Victor BleeS, and he was born in Aix-La-Chapelle, Prussia (now Aachen, Germany) on March 30, 1860. He was educated in the excellent schools of his native country, and was graduated with honors from the Imperial Lyceum at Metz, Germany, in 1878, at the age of 18. One year later, he graduated from the Royal Prussian Military School of Cassel, entered the Prussian Army and was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the 81st Royal Prussian Infantry, and served for two years.

In 1880 and 1881 he pursued graduate studies in music and the classics at the Universities of Heidelberg and Wurzburg and won academic honors. He came to the United States in 1881 at the age of 21, and later that same year became a naturalized U.S. citizen on December 21, 1881.

Between 1881 and 1890 he lived in New York City; Jackson, Mississippi; and Monroe, Louisiana. While in



New York, he worked for a time for his uncle, Richard BleeS, who manufactured BleeS Sewing Machines. While in Monroe, Louisiana he met and married Mary Virginia Staples in 1886.



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In 1890 he moved to Davenport, Iowa, where he was Commandant of Cadets at Griswold College and also was made lieutenant colonel of the Iowa National Guard, and was appointed aide-de-camp on the staff of Iowa Governor Horace Boies, eventually advancing to the rank of Colonel.

In 1892 he moved to Macon, Missouri, and became the headmaster and superintendent of the Saint James Military Academy.

After receiving a large inheritance upon the deaths of his parents, in 1899 he founded and built in Macon, Missouri the BleeS Military Academy, which was considered to be among the very best military educational institutions in the country at the time. With his interest and background in the military, it became his pride and joy, and was the pinnacle of all his accomplishments.

Also in 1899 he was offered the Republican nomination for Congress, but declined it because he did not want to be taken away from Macon and his Academy. He was the head of the Academy until his death on September 8, 1906. He and his wife had five children, Frederick James (1887-1951), Alvin Wolcott (1890-1945), William Albert (1892-1979), Anne Marie (1893-1976), and Mary Elise (1894-1936).

Some of his accomplishments while living in Macon included:

- Much of the credit needs to be given to Colonel Bles for the paved streets and sewers of Macon.
- He founded or co-founded many enterprises in Macon that provided employment for many of the citizens, including the Macon Shear Company, The Bles-McVicker Carriage Works, the First National Bank, the Macon Citizen Printing Company, the Jefferson Hotel, and the Bles Theater
- He made Macon famous when he purchased the very first electric automobile made by Studebaker in 1902 (By the way, Thomas Edison purchased the second one)
- He will be long remembered with admiration for the founding and operation of the superior Bles Military Academy in 1899

