

Brig. Gen. Jean Jacques Alfred A. Mouton (1829 – 1864)



Mouton was born on February 18, 1829, in Opelousas, Louisiana, son of former Governor of the State of Louisiana and President of the Louisiana Secession Convention, Alexandre Mouton. His grandfather, Jean Mouton, was among the Acadians exiled from Nova Scotia in 1755 and was one of the first settlers in what is today Lafayette Parish. Mouton attended West Point, Class of 1850. At the outbreak of the War Between the States, Mouton organized a company of men from the local population in Lafayette Parish and was elected Captain of the company. When the company was organized into the 18th Louisiana Infantry at Camp Moore, he was elected colonel. Mouton quickly made a reputation for himself as a strict disciplinarian and an efficient drillmaster. During the weeks before the Battle of Shiloh, the 18th Louisiana was one of the regiments called to the crossroads town of Corinth, Mississippi, for Albert Sidney Johnston's planned attack on Union forces encamped near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. At Shiloh, the 18th Louisiana and their commander received their baptism by fire with Pond's brigade when it attacked the Federal right against the divisions of Union generals Sherman and McClelland. During one of these attacks, Colonel Mouton was wounded.

Upon convalescing in Louisiana, Mouton was made interim commander of Western Louisiana and did what he could with the limited men and supplies that he had to fight off Federal attempts to move into the state. His army, attempting to protect the sugar cane farms along Bayou Lafourche, was brushed aside by Union troops at the Battle of Labadieville, which led to Union troops destroying much of the crops in that area. With the arrival of General Richard Taylor, Mouton was made a brigade commander and given the rank of brigadier general. The duo of Mouton and Taylor would prove to be one of the most efficient during the war and they, along with cavalry commander Thomas Green, would harass, confuse, frustrate, and delay Union attempts to secure the Bayou Teche region of southern Louisiana.

Mouton's leadership in his Louisiana brigade helped the Confederates undermine Union attempts to access the rich Bayou Teche region. He was a key participant in the battles of Irish Bend, Fort Bisland, Franklin, and Bayou Bourbeau, along with numerous other smaller skirmishes.

Mouton's brigade was hand-picked by General Taylor to lead the Confederate attack at the Battle of Mansfield on April 8, 1864. While leading his brigade in a charge against the Union position, Mouton was shot and killed. Historian John D. Winters reports on the battle: "On his horse, Mouton made a perfect target, and a Federal marksman dropped him from his saddle. The gallant Polignac now rode forward and took over the command. With tears of grief and rage in their eyes, the yelling men followed Polignac. They ran on through the deadly hail, determined to avenge the death of their leader. ... Mouton's division lost about one third of its total strength."

Mouton's death was lamented by General Taylor, who said, "Above all the death of the gallant Mouton affected me ... modest, unselfish, and patriotic. He showed best in action always leading his men." He was first buried on the battlefield but was moved in 1874 to St. John's Cemetery in Lafayette, Louisiana.