

General Robert Armstrong
September 28, 1792 – February 23, 1854

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Robert Armstrong, son of James (Trooper) Armstrong, a valiant soldier of the Revolution, was born on September 28, 1792, in Abingdon, Virginia. The family moved west and was residing in Knox County, Tennessee, by 1804. On June 9, 1814, he married Margaret Dysart Nichol, at the Hermitage where the Jacksons were living in the log cabins. (First brick Hermitage mansion built between 1819-1821). Margaret was the daughter of prominent Nashvillians Josiah & Eleanor Nichol. Margaret's parents were none too pleased with her marriage to a young army officer. Andrew Jackson wrote Josiah Nichol and invited him and his wife to dinner. In his letter of June 9th, Jackson wrote: "Armstrong is honest, he is brave, he enterprising... without a cent of property, he is worthy of any lady, of any family, of any fortune." During the Creek War, he served as Lieutenant of Artillery under Andrew Jackson and was severely wounded at the Battle of Enitachopco on June 24, 1814, while encouraging his men to save the cannon. Later he would serve on General Jackson's staff at the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815. Reconciled, Josiah Nichol gave his daughter Margaret \$10,500, on September 3, 1815. This gift was confirmed in the probate of Josiah Nichol's will in 1833. The Armstrong's first child was named Eleanor Ryburn Nichol Armstrong in honor of her grandmother.

Robert Armstrong was appointed Postmaster in Nashville by President Andrew Jackson in 1829 and served in that capacity for sixteen years. His wife Margaret died on June 29, 1834 and was buried at City Cemetery. The Post Master's office did not keep him from being commissioned in 1836 as Brigadier General of Tennessee Mounted Volunteers during the Second Seminole War in Florida. Beginning in 1845, he served for four years, under President James K. Polk, as Consul to Liverpool, England, one of the most important positions in the foreign service.

Shortly before his death in 1845, Andrew Jackson wrote a directive giving his sword, carried throughout his military career including at the Battle of New Orleans, "as a memento of my high regard for General Robert Armstrong, a gentleman, patriot and soldier." Since Armstrong was serving as Consul in Liverpool at the time, President Jackson authorized A.O.P. Nicholson to present the sword to Armstrong upon his return home. On February 23, 1854, General Armstrong died in Washington. His funeral was attended by President Pierce, his cabinet and members of Congress. His body was returned to Nashville. On January 8, 1855, the 40th anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, General Armstrong was buried at the Nashville City Cemetery. The next month, on February 26, 1855, General Armstrong's family gave his sword, the gift of Andrew Jackson, to the Congress. Today the sword is in the Smithsonian Collection.

Sources

Davidson County Marriage June 9, 1814. Robert Armstrong & Margaret Nichol
Andrew Jackson to Josiah Nichol, June 9, 1814. Andrew Jackson Papers. Library of Congress
New York Times, Obituary. Feb. 24, 1854. General Armstrong's death in Washington City
Nashville Union & American, Jan. 5 & Jan. 9 1855. Reburial of General Armstrong
Tennessee Historical Magazine, July 1919. Portrait of Gen. Armstrong & 1888 Callender article
Presentation of Andrew Jackson's Sword to Congress, Feb. 26, 1885. City Cemetery website.
City Cemetery Tombstone Inscriptions for General Robert & Mary Nichol Armstrong