NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

On this day: Gen. Sherman's Son

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Sep. 20, 2011 NCR Today

On this day, a century ago, the Rev. Fr. Thomas Ewing Sherman, S. J., "son of the late Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman" was "committed to an insane asylum in San José, Cal."

The New York Times article [1] describes Fr. Sherman "as a lecturer and broad-minded man of affairs. He toured the country, speaking on economic and religious subjects.

"He served during the Spanish-American war as a chaplain of the Fourth Regiment of Missouri Volunteers, and at its close remained in the army for some time. He stirred the South several years ago when he planned to lead an army of United States troops through the Southern States over the route his father took on his famous march to the sea. Agitation arose in the press and pulpit against such a move, and he finally abandoned the plan."

General Sherman's Son: The Life of Thomas Ewing Sherman, S.J., [2] by Joseph T. Durkin, S.J., Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1959, has no search feature at Amazon or Google Books, but the book can be found in libraries [3] and is available at AbeBooks. [4]

Durkin's book got a good review in Time Magazine [5] in 1959. From that:

"Tom Sherman, born in 1856, was brought up in St. Louis and Washington amid his father's legend, but his Catholic mother, Ellen Ewing Sherman, probably had the greater influence. Tom went to Yale, studied law at St. Louis' Washington University, then abruptly informed his father that he was about to enter the Jesuit novitiate. 'He was the keystone of my Arch,' General Sherman mourned bitterly, 'and his going away lets down the whole structure with a crash.'"

"After his father's death in 1891, he seemed to rededicate himself, in a sense, to the Sherman tradition. He attended Army of the Tennessee reunions, took such tough stands on national issues ?'Socialism asks us to vote for the dishonor of our mothers'; 'The man who shoots an anarchist on sight is a public benefactor'?that his Jesuit superiors pulled him off speaking tours. In 1898 he volunteered for duty as an Army chaplain, served in Puerto Rico.

"But Father Tom, not yet 50, was wearing down fast, suffering nervous breakdowns, getting entangled in exhausting quarrels with his superiors about minutiae. In 1911 he collapsed, was put into one sanitarium after another, was treated as insane. 'Repeated confessions but no peace,' he wrote in 1913. 'No hope whatever of eternal salvation. Still my vows press on me and I will continue to obey blindly.'

He withdrew from the Society of Jesus in 1914 and spent the last decades of his life in various places in Europe and the United States, including Santa Barbara. His bouts of depression continued, but "four years before his death, he had just enough of the Sherman combativeness to fight and win a last battle for a $50-a-month Army pension that was his due for service in the War of 1898. Father Tom's entry on his pension application blank for nearest relative to be notified in case of death: his dead father, General William Tecumseh Sherman."

Finally, in 1931, Tom Sherman moved to New Orleans to live with a niece. There, just before his death in 1933, he renewed his vows as a Jesuit. He is buried in the Jesuit cemetery at Grand Coteau.

Source URL (retrieved on *05/04/2016 - 07:48*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/day-gen-shermans-son

Links:
[1] http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A07E0DA1131E233A25752C2A96F9C946096D6CF
[2] http://www.amazon.com/General-Shermans-son-Joseph-Durkin/dp/B0006AVWKG
[3] http://www.worldcat.org/title/general-shermans-son/oclc/1050699&referer=brief_results
[4] http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?an=durkin&bi=0&bx=off&ds=30&recentlyadded=
[5] http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,869105-1,00.html