

Cotton Miller's Grandfather

A FAMILY HERO

THIS IS AN ACCOUNT OF THE CIVIL WAR SERVICE OF MY GREAT GRANDPA, JOHN BROWNLEE HEIZER OF AUGUSTA COUNTY, VIRGINIA. HE SERVED FOR THE ENTIRE WAR, APRIL OF 1861 TO APRIL OF 1865, AS A PRIVATE IN THE 5th VIRGINIA INFANTRY REGIMENT, AND WAS WITH THE REGIMENT DURING THE ENTIRE WAR EXCEPT WHILE RECUPERATING FROM A WOUND FROM SEPTEMBER, 1862 TO DECEMBER, 1862. THE HISTORY OF THE REGIMENT IS THE HISTORY OF GREAT GRANDPA'S SERVICE. I HAVE ADDED A FEW PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS. THERE IS ALSO AN OBVIOUS BIAS TOWARD THE SOUTH IN THE NARRATIVE WHICH DOES NOT REFLECT PRESENT DAY FEELINGS FOR THE YANKEES.

IT WAS APRIL, 1861. ABE LINCOLN WAS RAISING AN ARMY TO INVADE THE SOUTH BECAUSE SOME HOTHEADS HAD SHOT UP FORT SUMPTER A BIT. SOUTHERN MEN WERE JOINING LOCAL MILITIA TO PROTECT THEIR HOMES AND FAMILIES FROM THE THREATENED INVASION. GREAT GRANDPA WAS TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD WHEN HE ENLISTED ON APRIL 18, 1861. HE AND HIS BROTHER, WILLIAM, JOINED COMPANY E OF THE 5th REGIMENT.

FOR THE FIRST COUPLE OF MONTHS THE REGIMENT SPENT A LOT OF TIME TRAINING, BUT THEY DID RIDE THE TRAIN TO HARPERS FERRY IN MAY FOR A SHOW OF FORCE. THEIR FIRST REAL FIGHT CAME IN JULY OF 1861, AND GREAT GRANDPA WAS GLAD TO GET STARTED BECAUSE GENERAL THOMAS JACKSON HAD BEEN TRAINING THEM HARD, INCLUDING MANY FORCED MARCHES. THEY ENGAGED THE YANKEES AT FALLING WATERS, WEST VIRGINIA (THEN PART OF VIRGINIA) ON JULY 2, 1861, WITH INCONCLUSIVE RESULTS. THE 5th REGIMENT LOST 1 KILLED AND 7 WOUNDED.

ON JULY 21, 1861, AFTER A ONE DAY, 30 MILE MARCH, GREAT GRANDPA AND THE REST OF THE 1st BRIGADE UNDER THE COMMAND OF GEN. JACKSON WERE HOLDING A SECTION OF THE MANASSAS LINE WHEN THE MEN OF GEN. BEE'S BRIGADE BROKE AND RAN. GEN. BEE RALLIED HIS MEN BY SHOUTING, "RALLY, MEN, RALLY. LOOK, THESE VIRGINIANS STAND LIKE A STONE WALL." HE WAS REFERRING TO GREAT GRANDPA AND THE REST OF JACKSON'S 1st BRIGADE. FROM THEN ON JACKSON WAS REFERRED TO AS "STONEWALL" AND THE BRIGADE AS

CIVIL WAR - PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

THE STONEWALL BRIGADE. THE 5th REGIMENT OF THE BRIGADE LOST 11 KILLED AND 28 WOUNDED AT THE FIRST BATTLE OF MANASSAS, AKA BULL RUN.

NOTHING MUCH HAPPENED TO GREAT GRANDPA FROM THE MANASSAS BATTLE UNTIL THE FOLLOWING SPRING EXCEPT MORE TRAINING AND WINTER CAMP DUTIES. BUT ON MARCH 23, 1862, THE VALLEY CAMPAIGN BEGAN WITH STONEWALL JACKSON IN COMMAND OF THE TROOPS FIGHTING TO STOP THE YANKEES FROM INVADING THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY. AT THE BATTLE OF KERNSTOWN, NEAR WINCHESTER, JACKSON WAS OUTNUMBERED AND HAD TO FALL BACK, BUT GREAT GRANDPA AND THE REST OF THE 5th REGIMENT FELL BACK IN GOOD ORDER AND RETIRED FROM THE BATTLEFIELD DURING THE NIGHT. THE 5th REGIMENT LOST 16 KILLED AND 21 WOUNDED AT KERNSTOWN.

GREAT GRANDPA FOUGHT IN SEVERAL BATTLES DURING THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, UP (SOUTH) AND DOWN (NORTH) THE VALLEY. THEN ON JUNE 19, 1862, HE FOUGHT IN THE BATTLE OF PORT REPUBLIC, NEAR HARRISONBURG. IN THIS BATTLE, THE YANKEES WERE SOUNDLY DEFEATED AND HAD TO LEAVE THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY. AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT HAD THIS REPORT ON THE 5th REGIMENT: " HELD THEIR POSITIONS IN FACE OF SUPERIOR NUMBERS UNDER MURDEROUS FIRE OF GRAPE, SHELL AND MUSKETRY, FALLING BACK WHEN COMPLETELY OVERPOWERED, AND THEN ONLY TO BE RALLIED BY THEIR COMMANDER."

BUT THEY DIDN'T LET GREAT GRANDPA REST UP ANY. RICHMOND WAS BEING THREATENED BY THE YANKEES COMING UP THE JAMES, AND LEE NEEDED JACKSON'S VALLEY ARMY. ON JUNE 27, 1862, THE STONEWALL BRIGADE MADE A CHARGE ON A FORTIFIED HILL OUTSIDE OF RICHMOND (GAINES' FARM BATTLE). THIS IS AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE BY SAMUEL HITE: " I WAS IN THE FIGHT ON FRIDAY OF THE 27th OF JUNE. I SAW JAMES LUCAS WHEN HE GOT KILLED. HE LIVED BUT A FEW MINUTES. I DIDN'T SEE CAP RANDOLPH NOR JOHN BOWERS WHEN THEY GOT KILLED. WE WAS MAKING A CHARGE ON A BATTERY AND I TELL YOU THEY WAS POURING THE GRAPE SHOT AND THE BUMSHELLS WAS BUSTING OVER OUR HEADS AND THE MINEY BALLS WAS WHISTLING ON EVRY SIDE OF US. IT WAS THE AWFULLEST TIME THAT I EVER SAW. WE HAD TO GO ABOUT A MILE UNDER THARE FIRE. WE DIDNET FIRE UNTIL WE GOT WITHIN ABOUT 100 YARDS OF THEM.

WE LAYED ON THE BATTLE FIELD THAT NIGHT AMONGST THE DEAD AND WOUNDED. THERE WAS A YANKEY THAT WAS WOUNDED LAYING A LITTLE PIECE FROM OUR LINE. HE WAS HOLLOWING FOR A DRINK OF WATER AND I TOOK HIM A DRINK. HE WAS SHOT 2 IN BACK AND ONCE IN THE LEG. THE WOUNDED MEN WAS HOLLOWING ALL NIGHT. WHEN WE CAME IN THE BATTLE FIELD NEXT MORNING WE HAD TO WALK OVER THE DEAD AND WOUNDED. WE HAD LIVED ON CRACKERS FOR ABOUT 2 WEEKS. WE GOT ONLY 5 FOR ONE DAYS RATION AND SOMETIMES A LITTLE MEAT. WE GOT THE DEAD YANKEYS RATIONS. IT WAS CRACKERS AND PICKLED PORK AND GROUND COFFEE AND SUGAR SO WE LIVED PRETTY WELL THE NEXT DAY." THIS BATTLE WAS PART OF THE "SEVEN DAYS BATTLE" THAT DROVE THE YANKEES AWAY FROM RICHMOND. FOR THE NEXT MONTH OR SO, THEY LET GREAT GRANDPA REST UP A BIT BUT THEN SENT THE JACKSON ARMY TO FIGHT THE YANKEES AT CEDAR MOUNTAIN, CLOSE TO CULPEPER, ON AUG. 9, 1862. THE 5th REGIMENT LOST 7 KILLED AND 39 WOUNDED AT GAINES FARM, AND 4 KILLED AND 19 WOUNDED AT CEDAR MOUNTAIN.

TO PUT THE CASUALTIES IN PERSPECTIVE, THE 5th VIRGINIA INFANTRY REGIMENT STARTED IN JUNE OF 1861 WITH 608 MEN. THROUGHOUT THE WAR THE NUMBERS FLUCTUATED FROM ABOUT 600 DOWN TO 68, WITH AN AVERAGE OF ABOUT 400. THE STONEWALL BRIGADE WAS USUALLY MADE UP OF 4 REGIMENTS. THE 5th REGIMENT ALONE LOST 131 MEN KILLED AND ANOTHER 752 WOUNDED OR CAPTURED DURING THE WAR.

AUG. 28, 1862 WAS NOT A GOOD DAY FOR GREAT GRANDPA. DURING THE SECOND BATTLE OF MANASSAS, HE WAS ONE OF THE 90 MEN OF THE 5th REGIMENT THAT WERE WOUNDED. 14 WERE KILLED. THE YANKEES WERE FORCED TO RETREAT, BUT THE LOSSES ON BOTH SIDES WERE HEAVY. GREAT GRANDPA RECUPERATED FROM HIS WOUNDS UNTIL DEC. OF 1862, WHEN HE RETURNED TO DUTY. WHILE WOUNDED, HE MISSED THE BATTLE OF SHARPSBURG, WHERE THE REGIMENT HAD 16 WOUNDED.

DURING 1863, GREAT GRANDPA DID A LOT OF FIGHTING AND A LOT OF TRAVELING, MOSTLY ON FOOT. JACKSON HAD EARLIER CALLED THE STONEWALL BRIGADE HIS "FOOT CAVALRY". ON MAY 3, 1863, THEY FOUGHT AT CHANCELLORSVILLE, WEST OF FREDERICKSBURG, WHERE JACKSON WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED. ON JUNE 15, 1863, THEY ROUTED THE YANKEES AT THE 2nd BATTLE OF WINCHESTER, TAKING 6 STANDS OF

COLORS AND 900 PRISONERS. ON JULY 3, 1863, THEY ATTACKED CULPS HILL AT GETTYSBURG, PA., WITH POOR RESULTS, MUCH LIKE THE ATTACK BY PICKET'S MEN ON CEMETARY RIDGE. THE CONFEDERATES HAD MADE THIS STRIKE NORTHWARD WITH THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD STRENGTHEN THE ANTI-WAR SENTIMENT IN THE NORTH. OBVIOUSLY, IT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL.

THE CONFEDERATES THEN WITHDREW TO VIRGINIA. THE NEXT ENGAGEMENT WAS ON OCT. 27, 1863, AT BEALTON'S STATION (SOUTH OF WARRENTON) AND THE FINAL BATTLE OF THE YEAR WAS AT PAYNE'S FARM, WEST OF FREDERICKSBURG, ON NOV. 27th. GREAT GRANDPA'S REGIMENT LOST 33 KILLED AND 196 WOUNDED IN 1863. BY THE WINTER OF 1863, THE TROOPS WERE TIRED AND EVEN THE COLD, DISEASE AND MISERY OF WINTER CAMP DIDN'T SEEM SO BAD FOR A WHILE. CHURCH SERVICES WERE WELL ATTENDED.

SPRING OF 1864 CAME TO THE VALLEY AS BEAUTIFUL AS EVER, AND WITH IT THE VAIN HOPE THAT THE INVADING YANKEES WOULD GET TIRED OF KILLING AND GETTING KILLED AND GO HOME. TO SAY THE LEAST, IT TURNED OUT TO BE A BAD SPRING FOR GREAT GRANDPA. ON MAY 5, 1864, THE 5th REGIMENT AS A PART OF THE STONEWALL BRIGADE FOUGHT AT THE WILDERNESS (SEVERAL MILES WEST OF FREDERICKSBURG). THE FOLLOWING IS AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE. " WE THEN FELL BACK. THE YANKEES SEE THE ADVANTAGE. OUR LINE WAVERS. AT THIS MOMENT ABOVE THE RATTLE, GEN. WALKER SWINGING TO HIS STAND IN THE SADDLE WITH HEAD UP AND UPRAISED HAND. HIS VOICE IS HEARD TO RALLY THE STONEWALL BRIGADE. " REMEMBER YOUR NAME." THE COLORS ADVANCE IN THE FACE OF A DEADLY FIRE FROM THE YANKS; STILL THEY FLOAT." THE REGIMENT LOST 11 KILLED, 42 WOUNDED AND FOR THE FIRST TIME HAD 5 CAPTURED. BUT THE YANKEES DIDN'T GET GREAT GRANDPA.

THE WORST BATTLE OF THE WAR FOR THE 5th REGIMENT WAS ON MAY 9, 1864, AT SPOTSYLVANIA. THE STONEWALL BRIGADE WAS HOLDING PART OF THE DEFENSE LINE, LATER NAMED THE "BLOODY ANGLE". THIS IS AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT: "NO SOONER WOULD A FLAG FALL THAN ANOTHER CARRIER WHO PICKED IT UP WOULD BE SHOT OR BAYONETTED. MEN WERE SO CLOSE, THEIR HEADS WERE AT THE END OF GUN MUZZLES AS THEY SHOT EACH OTHER. WHEN AMMUNITION RAN OUT OR GOT WET,

THEY CRUSHED EACH OTHER'S SKULLS WITH GUN BUTTS." THE YANKEE TROOPS FINALLY OVERWHELMED THE CONFEDERATE DEFENDERS AND CAVED IN THE SIDES OF THE "BLOODY ANGLE". THE STONEWALL BRIGADE WAS ALMOST SURROUNDED. OVER HALF THE BRIGADE SURRENDERED, BUT GREAT GRANDPA, HIS BROTHER WILLIAM AND ABOUT 135 OTHERS RAN FOR IT AND ESCAPED TO JOIN TEMPORARILY HAYS' LOUISIANA BRIGADE. IN THIS BATTLE OF SPOTSYLVANIA, THE 5th REGIMENT LOST 13 KILLED, 12 WOUNDED AND 158 CAPTURED. BUT THE YANKEES DIDN'T GET GREAT GRANDPA.

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, AS A PATCHED-UP BRIGADE, THEY WERE MARCHED TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF RICHMOND TO DEFEND COLD HARBOR. AT THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR ON JUNE 2, 1864, GEN. GRANT FURTHER DEMONSTRATED THAT LIVES, WHETHER YANKEE OR CONFEDERATE, WERE OF LITTLE CONCERN TO HIM COMPARED WITH THE FINAL OBJECTIVE. HE LOST 5,000 MEN IN ABOUT ONE HOUR OF CHARGING THE FORTIFIED CONFEDERATE LINES AT COLD HARBOR. THEN FOR THREE DAYS HE REFUSED TO RAISE A WHITE FLAG WHICH WOULD HAVE ALLOWED HIS DEAD AND WOUNDED TO BE REMOVED FROM THE BATTLEFIELD. DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS, REPORTERS FROM THE NORTHERN NEWSPAPERS INTERVIEWED SOME OF THE YANKEE TROOPS ABOUT FURTHER ASSAULTS ON FORTIFIED POSITIONS. THE SOLDIERS STATED THAT THEY WOULD MOVE FORWARD WHEN ORDERED, BUT WHEN THE FIRING GOT HEAVY, THEY WOULD RUN BACK. THIS DECISION BY THE YANKEE SOLDIERS TURNED THE WAR INTO A SIEGE ON RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG AND ENDED WHAT LITTLE HOPE THE CONFEDERATES HAD OF WINNING THE WAR.

BUT GEN. LEE HAD OTHER WORK FOR GREAT GRANDPA. A YANKEE ARMY THAT HAD RECENTLY BURNED AND PILLAGED THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY WAS ADVANCING ON LYNCHBURG. WITH GEN. EARLY IN COMMAND, TROOPS WERE RUSHED TO LYNCHBURG BY TRAIN, ONE OF THE FEW TIMES GREAT GRANDPA GOT TO RIDE ANYWHERE. THEY ENGAGED THE YANKEES ON JUNE 18, 1864, AND CHASED THEM THROUGH SALEM AND BACK TOWARD WEST VIRGINIA. GEN. EARLY THEN TURNED NORTH AND MARCHED GREAT GRANDPA AND THE REST OF HIS ARMY TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF WASHINGTON. THIS WAS ANOTHER VAIN ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE PUBLIC OPINION IN THE NORTH TO NEGOTIATE PEACE WITH THE SOUTH. WITH YANKEE REINFORCEMENTS RUSHING IN FROM RICHMOND, GEN. EARLY HAD

TO WITHDRAW ACROSS THE POTOMAC.

THE AUTUMN OF 1864 WAS TOUGH ON GREAT GRANDPA. THE HIGH SPIRITS GENERATED BY THE ADVANCE ON WASHINGTON GAVE WAY TO DESPAIR AS THEY WERE DEFEATED AT WINCHESTER, FISHER'S HILL AND CEDAR CREEK (THE TWO LATTER CLOSE TO WINCHESTER). AT CEDAR CREEK ON OCT. 19, 1864, GREAT GRANDPA'S BROTHER, WILLIAM, WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED. THEY HAD SERVED TOGETHER IN CO. E SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR EXCEPT WHEN ONE OR THE OTHER WAS WOUNDED. GREAT GRANDPA ALSO LOST TWO OTHER BROTHERS IN THE WAR.

GREAT GRANDPA HOPED THE WAR WAS OVER FOR HIM. BUT THERE WAS STILL FIGHTING GOING ON AT PETERSBURG, SO THAT'S WHERE HE WAS SENT. GRANT WAS STEADILY PROBING THE SOUTH END OF THE CONFEDERATE LINES, SEEKING A WEAK SPOT TO BREAK THROUGH AND ENCIRCLE GEN. LEE. ON MARCH 5, 1865, THE YANKEES ATTACKED AT HATCHERS RUN IN DINWIDDIE COUNTY, WHICH IS ABOUT TWENTY MILES NORTH OF OUR HOME, BUT WERE REPULSED BY THE CONFEDERATES, INCLUDING THE STONEWALL BRIGADE. IN MARCH THE BRIGADE WAS MOVED INTO THE TRENCHES NOT FAR FROM THE CRATER, AND ON MARCH 25, 1865, PARTICIPATED IN THE LAST OFFENSIVE BY LEE'S ARMY. THEY CAPTURED FORT STEDMAN ON GRANT'S SIEGE LINE AND ADVANCED TOWARD HIS SUPPLY RAILROAD. BUT THE YANKEES COUNTER-ATTACKED AND PUSHED THE CONFEDERATES BACK TO THEIR ORIGINAL LINES. THE 5th REGIMENT LOST THEIR COLORS AND SUFFERED 2 KILLED, 8 WOUNDED AND 12 CAPTURED IN THIS ENGAGEMENT. BUT THE YANKEES DIDN'T GET GREAT GRANDPA.

A WEEK LATER, ON APRIL 1, 1865, GRANT BREACHED THE CONFEDERATE LINES AT FIVE FORKS, FORCING LEE TO WITHDRAW FROM PETERSBURG AND RICHMOND. ON THE RETREAT TO APPOMATTOX, GREAT GRANDPA'S OUTFIT PARTICIPATED IN HIS LAST BATTLE AT LOCKETT'S FARM NEAR FARMVILLE.

GREAT GRANDPA'S REGIMENTAL RECORD STATES THAT HE WAS "PAROLED APRIL 9, 1865, BUT CALLED A DESERTER ON U.S. LIST AT RICHMOND ON APRIL 10, 1865. HE WAS THE ONLY MAN OF THE 5th REGIMENT WITH THIS DESERTION AFTER BEING PAROLED NOTATION. THE OFFICIAL U. S. RECORDS SHOW HIM AS PAROLED AT APPOMATTOX. BUT I DON'T THINK THE YANKEES EVER DID GET GREAT GRANDPA. HE

PROBABLY ANSWERED THE CONFEDERATE ROLL CALL ON APRIL 9, 1865, WAITED UNTIL DARK, SLIPPED THROUGH THE YANKEE LINES AND WALKED HOME.

GREAT GRANDPA JOHN BROWNLEE HEIZER NEVER OWNED A SLAVE OR MUCH OF ANYTHING ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER. HE ENLISTED IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY TO PROTECT HIS HOME FROM THE INVADING YANKEES. HE WAS NEVER A W O L AND HE NEVER DESERTED WHILE SERVING THE ENTIRE WAR AS AN INFANTRYMAN IN THE WAR'S MOST FAMOUS BRIGADE. HE PROBABLY DID MORE ACTUAL FIGHTING THAN ANY OTHER SOLDIER IN THE CIVIL WAR. IT WAS ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD THAT HE LIVED TO HAVE DESCENDANTS, AND FOR THAT I AM MOST THANKFUL.

Marshall Brownlee Heizer gr.