



Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863, Conyers, Ga.

GEN. JOE'S DISPATCH



Volume 8, Issue 2

June, 2012

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Coming Events

June 8 - 10, 2012 - **2012 Georgia Division Reunion** - Charter House Inn, Bainbridge, Georgia.

June 12, 2010 - **Regular Meeting of Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863** - Masonic Lodge, Conyers, Georgia

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"Douglas the Camel"

By: Compatriot Gene Wade



While researching the military records of Private Silas B. Forrester, 43rd Mississippi Infantry, one of the Confederate soldiers buried in the Covington, Georgia Confederate Cemetery, I encountered several references to the "Camel Regiment" and how the the 43rd Mississippi Infantry Regiment had a unit camel called "Douglas". This was too good of an unusual story not to check out so numerous resources were checked and below is a synopsis of that research:

Most people are aware of an experiment in 1855 when then the United States Secretary of War Jefferson Davis approved testing the use of camels as pack animals in the arid southwest. The first of almost one hundred camels started arriving from Tunisia in 1856 at what became Camp Verde, Texas. Col. Robert E. Lee, who was in command of that area in the southwest, was charged with protecting the citizenry, and now camels, from the Indians. It is said that Col Lee used some of these camels in his travels through some of the Texas deserts. The camels were superior to horses and mules in terms of strength and were reported able to carry more than twice what a pack horse or mule could carry, they could travel faster and needed little water.

Unfortunately, the camels were also considered mean, coughed up and spit foul smelling chunks of food at the humans who offended them and made terrible groans and roars that terrified horses, mules and cattle. The camel handlers were more accustomed to more conventional livestock so did not like the camels or their peculiar habits. The tests at Camp Verde, Texas was considered a failure by 1860 largely because the human handlers liked horses better. Many of the camels were then sold or released to defend for themselves.

When the War Between the States started in 1864, Camp Verde and the remaining camels were captured by the Confederates. Some of the camels were used by the Confederates to transport cotton to exchange for salt at the Kingsville, Texas salt lakes. When the war ended, Union forces recaptured the remaining camels and with the experiment ended, sold off the camels to circuses, mines, zoos and to individuals. Many camels were simply released into the desert to join those who had earlier wandered off on their own. Some of the camels were left in California after an expeditionary trip there (Beale Expedition) about 1857. During the Beale Expedition, the camels even participated in a charge against hostile Mojave Indians. There were reports of people encountering camels in the deserts as late as 1890.

There are some who believe that Douglas the camel of the 43rd Mississippi, was one of the origi-

nal Arabian camels imported to Texas soon after 1856 or their off-spring that were brought to Mississippi but is also possible that Douglas the camel was one of the camels known to have been imported directly into Mississippi to use on plantations. We can only speculate the origin of Douglas.

Old Douglas was given to Col. William Moore by a Lieutenant William Hargrove of Company B of the 43rd Mississippi Infantry. Douglas was put to use either carrying the baggage of the officer's mess or carrying the instruments of the regimental band. Since the horses of the regiment were afraid of Douglas, the driver was instructed to stop just outside the camp when the regiment halted. But in a forced march toward Iuka, Mississippi, the command had halted just after dark and Douglas and his driver got into the line of march before he knew it. The result was that a frightened horse made a break with a fence rail still attached to his halter, and running through the camp, he stampeded men and animals in every direction. Many men took to trees or any other protection they could find and the panic spread through much of the brigade. Many men and horses were badly hurt. Eventually, the horses became accustomed to Douglas and largely accepted him in their midst.

Douglas' keeper initially chained Douglas to a nearby fence or tree to keep him from wandering off



Our Commanders Comments

By: Commander J. H. Underwood



Compatriots;

I would like to remind you that our next meeting is Tuesday, June 12, 2012, 7:30 pm at the Masonic Lodge in Conyers. Our guest speaker will be the Rev. Jim Cabaniss from

Confederate Memorial Camp 1432 in Stone Mountain. Most of you know Jim but for those who don't I have included the article below with a short biography of him.

Rev. Cabaniss will present a program on the history of two old guns in his personal family collection. Thank you Jim for taking the time to share this history with us.

At our last meeting on April 8, 2012 I had the pleasure of inducting two new members to our ranks. They are James C. (Jimmy) Chappell (left), friend of 1st Lt. Commander Tommy Cook, and Garrett Dean Doby (right), nephew of Camp Webmaster Hal Doby. I hope you will all join me in



welcoming compatriots Chappell and Doby to Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863 and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. It is always a good day when we can increase our ranks. Thank you 1st Lt. Commander

Tommy Cook and Webmaster Hal Doby for recruiting these new members.

This is a good example of the easiest way increase our ranks so please invite your friends or relatives to a meeting and give them an application. In many cases they are just waiting for someone to ask them to join.

On June 8th I will be on my way to Bainbridge, Georgia to attend the 115th Annual Georgia Division Reunion. It is possible to register as late as 9:00 am on Saturday so if anyone else can make the trip we could use two more delegates. This years reunion is sponsored by the Decatur Grays Camp #1689, John Fisher, Commander. I look forward to my trip to Bainbridge and attending my fourth Georgia Division Reunion. I will give a report on the actions taken and election results at our June meeting.

As always, for the cause;

J. H. Underwood

Commander.



Rev. James R. Cabaniss to speak at our June meeting.

By Commander J. H. Underwood and Rev. James R. Cabaniss



Rev. James Cabaniss will be guest speaker at our regular meeting on June 12th. Jim will tell us the history of two old guns in his personal family collection and will have the guns on hand for viewing. I know we will all enjoy his presentation. Here is a brief biography on Rev. Cabaniss.

“Jim Cabaniss, born March 11, 1957, Florence, Alabama, graduate of Central High School, Florence. Attended Auburn University School of Engineering.

A 1979 graduate of The University of North Alabama, with a B.S. in history.

A 1991 graduate of Emory University, Masters of Divinity.

Ordained elder in the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

From 1989 –2009 served a number of churches in the metro Atlanta area.

Married to lovely wife Ruth for 32 years (puts

up with all my hobbies.)

Daughter Rachel, UGA Graduate and a copy editor of a book company.

Son Nathan, Reinhardt College Graduate, and a recent Telly Award Winner and currently working on his intern with Gwinnett TV.

Currently, I live in Lawrenceville, GA at 478 Dogwood Drive.

Been a member of SCV since 1977, a member of MOSB since 1978.

Have 32 direct and collateral Confederate ancestors.

Jim is currently the Georgia Division Chaplain of the Military Order of the Stars and Bars.

Jim is a member of SCV Camp #1432 The Confederate Memorial Camp, Stone Mountain, GA. His membership is 11,370. He is also a member of the Gen. John B. Gordon Chapter MOS&B, Atlanta, GA General Society #1580. His membership 1580. He is also

the Georgia Society Chaplain for 2010.

Direct descendant of Charlemagne, 43rd generation.

In 1987 Jim edited “ The Civil War Letters and Journals of Serg. Washington M. Ives, CSA”, which is now in the third addition.

Jim is currently working on a second book on how the Christian faith affected the common soldier of the Confederacy, the last year of the war.

Former State chess champion in “my class.”

My hobbies are golfing, collecting antique chess sets, tournament chess, collecting “war of northern aggression relics,” chaplain material and old books.

I have a dawg named Wally who is 10 years old ½ chow and ½ Pomeranian!”

Thank you Jim!!



The Confederate Cemeteries of Covington and Oxford (22nd & 23rd Soldiers in the series)

Continuing Project by Compatriot Gene Wade



Headstone at Covington Shows:

W. D. DARKHAM
2nd FL

Actual:
WILLIAM DURHAM
CO. D, 3rd FLORIDA
INFANTRY



This soldier enlisted at age eighteen as a private on September 1st, 1862 at Tallahassee, Florida in the 3rd Regiment, Florida Infantry. The unit was formally organized at Pensacola, Florida in July, 1861. The unit served in the Pensacola area and then moved to Mobile, Alabama for a short time before being sent north to fight in the battle at Perryville, Kentucky in October 1862. The 3rd Florida participated in the campaigns at Murfreesboro, Tennessee in December 1862, the Vicksburg campaign in May-July 1863, and Chickmauga, Georgia in September 1863. After Chickmauga, the 3rd Florida fought at Missionary Ridge and after the retreat, fought in the battles of New Hope Church, Ezra Church and the Atlanta siege.

Private Durham spent five days in the hospital at Tunnel Hill, Georgia (May 22-26, 1863) for Dibilitus (general weakness). He also entered the Medical College Hospital at Atlanta in December 1863 for some unknown reason. Here, he was found to be in great need of clothing because special re-

quisitions by this hospital in January 1864 on his behalf were for shoes, a shirt, a blanket, drawers and a hat and bore the notation that "He is destitute of the above articles and much in need of it". Records do not indicate when he returned to his unit but he is presumed to have done so. The only other record for Private William Durham is the report from Hill Hospital at Covington, Georgia that he died on July 18, 1864. The cause of death was not listed. He left behind \$100. and "sundries". He was likely not even twenty years old when he died.

Genealogical information is sparse. It is known that William Durham's parents were Alladin and Mary Durham. The census records for Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia, indicate that by 1850, Mary Durham was a widow with seven children, James age 16, Henry age 15, Mary age 12, William age 10, Dawson age 5, Alady age 3 and Josiah -age unknown. The mother, Mary, evidently died before 1860 because the 1860 census for Wakulla, Florida shows children Mary, William, Dawson, Martha and Josiah are now living with her sister Nancy and her husband E. W. Bostick.

Private William Durham's older brother Henry Durham served in the 5th Battalion, Florida Cavalry and was surrendered at war's end. His brother Dawson Durham, only age 16 when the war started in 1861, also served in Company D of the 3rd Florida Infantry (same as William) likely joined the 3rd Florida in 1864 when he turned 18. Pri-

vate Dawson Durham was captured in Tennessee on December 4, 1864 and sent to Camp Chase (Columbus) Ohio where he died on January 31, 1865. Like William, Dawson was likely only nineteen when he died.

NOTE:

The actual identification of this soldier was quite difficult because of the differences in the spelling of the name and the unit number but since there was not a single Confederate soldier with the name of Darkham, an extensive search of similar names was done. There being no typewriters in those days, handwriting is not always readable and names were often spelled phonetically. No Florida unit designated as the "2nd" was known to fight anywhere in northern Georgia. That the service record for William Durham shows that he died at Hill Hospital, Covington, GA helps confirm his actual identity.

Headstone (Covington)
J. J. GILL
COMPANY G

Actually:
JEFFERSON J. GILL
COMPANY G
15th ARKANSAS INFANTRY



This soldier enlisted July 23, 1861 for one year as a private in Company F, 1st Regiment,



"Douglas the Camel"

By: Compatriot Gene Wade (Continued from page 1.)



but Douglas would sit back and snap any kind of chain and then to proceed to graze at his leisure. It was soon found best just to leave Douglas unrestrained and he would stay in the area. When it was time to load up Old Douglas, all they had to do was to lead Douglas to his stack of cargo and announce "Pushay, Douglas" and he would gracefully drop to his knees and remain so till his load was adjusted and he was told to get up. His long, swinging gait was soon familiar with the entire command and the 43rd was soon called the "Camel Regiment".

Old Douglas was with the 43rd Mississippi during the battle of Vicksburg. Union sharpshooters were ordered to use long range

rifles to kill poor Old Douglas, and they did. These Union sharpshooters stood out of range and taunted the men of the 43rd about their dead camel. Enraged, sharpshooters of the 43rd Mississippi were brought forward and the yankee "assassins" were themselves eliminated. Old Douglas was avenged! Starvation was rampant among the Confederate defenders of Vicksburg so it is assumed that Douglas was eaten. Letters from Union soldiers indicate that after the battle, the bones of Douglas were found and many were carved into souvenir curios. The passing of Old Douglas was lamented by the men of the 43rd Mississippi even though many of them had earlier held the camel in disdain. One old soldier of the 43rd said, "Douglas was a faith-

ful, patient animal and his service merits mention", and another called Douglas "a well-beloved mascot".

Today, Douglas has his own marker in the Confederate Section of Vicksburg's Cedar Hill Cemetery.



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We're on the Web!

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The Confederate Cemeteries of Covington and Oxford (22nd & 23rd Soldiers in the series)

Continuing Project by Compatriot Gene Wade



Arkansas Infantry at Pitman's Ferry, Arkansas. This regiment started out as Col Patrick Ronayne Cleburne's 1st Regiment, Arkansas State Troops in May 1861. (It is noteworthy to mention that this Col Patrick Cleburne became the famed General Patrick Cleburne who was eventually killed at Franklin, Tennessee). This regiment started out as the 1st Arkansas Infantry but the Confederate War Department soon realized that there was already a 1st Arkansas Infantry so Col Cleburne's regiment was re-designated as the 15th Arkansas Infantry. Private Gill's company was soon re-designated as Company G.

During the time that Private Gill was a member, the 15th Arkansas Infantry fought at the battles of Shiloh, Tennessee, the battles of Richmond and Perryville, Kentucky, the Tullahoma Tennessee Campaign, Chicamaugua, Georgia, the Siege of Chattanooga, the battles of Ringgold Gap, Dalton, Resaca and the battle of New Hope Church before Private Gill was wounded at Kennesaw Mountain. It is obvious that Private Jefferson J. Gill was a seasoned Confederate soldier that saw more than his share of combat.

Private Gill re-enlisted at Corinth, Mississippi on May 8, 1862 for two years or the end of the war. His service records show him absent sick in a Chattanooga, Tennessee hospital for a short time in Nov/Dec 1862 and then in an Atlanta hospital in January 1863. He is shown present for duty from December to February 1864 but the next muster roll shows that he was "absent hospital, wounded Kennesaw Mountain". His service record shows that he died at the consolidated hospital (Hill Hospital) at Covington, GA. on January 13, 1864. This record shows he left "sundries" and \$3.25. The actual hospital record shows he died of *Vulnus sclopticum* (gunshot wound) and left behind "1 knapsack, 1 pr pants, 1 hat and \$3.25 in Confederate money). I guess we must presume that the dead buried at Covington were of necessity stripped of their clothing. There are likely few Confederate soldiers who saw more combat that Private Jefferson J. Gill

It is unfortunate that the family of this soldier cannot be definitively identified. It has

not been determined how old this soldier was or if he was married, or who his parents were, because no published family genealogy research can be matched to this soldier. How sad that this brave soldier seems to have left no family behind, except for us SCV members, who recognize his brave service. We should never forget the sacrifice of Confederate soldiers such as Private Jefferson J. Gill.



**Confederate Memorial Wall
Covington Georgia**