

REMINISCENCE OF THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES.

As told by Philip Hodnett Harralson, 1851 - 1912

I was born in Caswell County, North Carolina, in 1851, being about 10 years old when the War between the States began.

Several of my brothers went into the Confederate Army soon after the war began. The local Company drilled at Dr. Anderson's where Anderson High School is now. One of my brothers, Madison, was soon discharged on account of defective hearing and came home. Another of my brothers, Williamson, was on the Confederate "Merrimac" in the fighting around Norfolk, Va. He lost an arm during the fight with the Yankee "Monitor". A Yankee shell hit a chain on the "Merrimac" and threw the chain against Williamson's arm, tearing it off. He lived several years after the war was over.

During the latter part of the war the conscription age was reduced to boys 16 years old. Some of the neighbors had a grudge against us and advised the officials, so the day my brother Morgan was 16 years old they came out and got him.

One morning shortly after the surrender a couple of Yankee soldiers with their guns came to our house. This was before my brothers had gotten back from the army and there was no one at home except myself and the younger children. These Yankees were evidently stragglers. The weather was mild, being April, and the Yankees were sitting in the yard while my sisters were ostensibly preparing some food for them. I got on a horse with a sack of corn as if I was going to the mill. I notified some of the neighbors who were at home. In a short time the neighbors began to come to our house. Each one would go out on the porch where the Yankees could see them, lean their guns against the house and wash their hands. The result, of course, was that the Yankees soon left without causing any trouble.

While the siege at Petersburg, Va., was going on, all of our neighbors joined in getting up some food to send the boys in the Company from our neighborhood. They got up over a carload of supplies, such as corn meal, some flour, apples, etc. They sent me along with the supplies. It was the furthest that I had ever been away from home.

The train got into Petersburg at night. I got up on a box and called out the Company, Regiment, Brigade, Division, that our boys were in. A man from the Company answered and helped me get the stuff onto a wagon. I went out to the breastworks at Petersburg with the supplies. I knew most of the local boys in the Company and they let me stay there for several weeks.

They gave me a military cap of which I was very proud. However, I think it was the first or second night there came a heavy rain and the red dirt bank of the tent where I was sleeping caved in and caught my cap, ruining it.

One of the local boys had a beard of which he was very proud. The Company begged him to shave it off, so finally he consented. The Company barber shaved off one side and then laid his razor down to get some more soap. By prearrangement some one reached under the tent and took the razor. The barber said he could not do anything and let the man out with one side of his beard shaved off. It was some time before they let him take off the other side.

When a soldier would discover a rabbit back of the Confederate breastworks, he would call all the others who were off duty. They would form a circle around the rabbit's hiding place, and then a fast runner would get in the circle and catch the rabbit. Billy Corbett from our neighborhood was small but very fast and good on the work.

The Confederate and Yankee breastworks were very close together at some points and further apart at others. Where our Company was stationed they were not so close. However, if you put a cap on a stick and raised it above the breastworks a Yankee sharpshooter would send a bullet through it. Our sharpshooters were watching the Yankee breastworks the same way.

My brother had told me that whenever the Yankees came charging over, for me to run down the hill in our rear and get out of the way. One morning early I heard considerable shooting and shouts that the Yankees were coming. I immediately started down the hill to the rear. However, the ground had become covered with ice and I proceeded to fall and roll down the hill. At the bottom I got in the creek bed and continued to run for a few minutes until I heard the shooting stop. When I got back to our Company I was the only one who had been hurt.

About the worst thing I saw while there was the shooting of three deserters. They had been tried and found guilty and were being kept in a log jail in our rear. When we got there a big circle of men had been formed around the place of execution. They soon led the prisoners out and marched them with the drums rolling over against a bank, where they were lined up and shot.

I was there when the famous Crator was blown up. Our Engineers knew that the Yankees had dug a mine from their side over under our breastworks. They knew where it was and had prepared another set of breastworks a little further back. Our officers did not know just when the Yankees would blow it up, however. It was blown up early one morning and the Yankees proceeded to rush a lot of negro soldiers into the opening. The Confederates in the previously prepared second line opened up a very heavy fire on the negroes and soon had the hole almost full of dead and wounded negroes. Those not wounded or killed retreated back to the Yankee lines.

After the war we were like everybody else. We had nothing. All of my fathers's slaves were gone. We could not get coffee. As a substitute we parched corn and used that. We did not have any money to buy things with even if they could be bought. We could not get any sugar. We raised sorghum and made sorghum syrup. We used that for sugar, calling it "long sweetening". We could not get any salt, so vitally needed. We would dig up the dir floor of the meat house and get some salt from that.