

January 9, 2016

Mr. Jim Lewis
Park Ranger
Stones River National Battlefield
3501 Old Nashville Highway
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37129

Dear Jim,

During the Living History on January 2-3, I shared with you that I had found the original 8th Tennessee CSA Regimental flag, located in Nashville. I am attaching a picture of that flag taken in 2014.

As we discussed, information on the 8th Tennessee is difficult at best to "cobble" together, but some sources are available. I am including below the history of one of my 8th Tennessee ancestors that fought at Stones River.

N.M. Bearden was a captain in the 8th Tennessee at the battle of Stones River. His father Alfred kept a diary in a farm ledger of the experiences he encountered in Murfreesboro caring for his son following the battle. These events have been included in countless magazines and books, some you may know would be "Call Forth the Mighty Men", by Dr. Bob Womack of MTSU as well as the article written by the Murfreesboro Post during the Stones River 150th celebration. Interestingly enough, my ancestor died in a room located in the older home which is a part of their location in town.

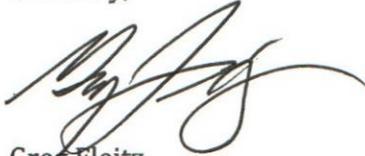
Napoleon Monroe Bearden was born in 1837 in Marshall County Tennessee. He attended Burritt College located in Van Buren County Tennessee. In May of 1861, he volunteered for service in the Confederate Army (picture attached). First Lieutenant originally, he was made Captain in the reorganization of the armies that took place in early 1862. Captain N. Monroe Bearden was wounded at the Battle of Stones River as the 8th Tennessee made its assault in the late morning of December 31st. References made in the Thomas Head book "Campaigns and Battles of the Sixteenth Regiment" indicate that Monroe was wounded by a cannon projectile explosion along with several others from his regiment. Letters written by a brother in law who was a member of the 8th Tennessee states that Monroe was wounded in the right thigh. His father Alfred, was made aware of his son's wounding two days after the battles end and quickly made his way to Murfreesboro to find his wounded son. His wife and daughter followed soon thereafter. Alfred, as stated in his diary, watched as the Confederates evacuated the city, and the Union Army began its occupation. For the next two weeks, his family nursed Monroe, but by January 20th, it became apparent that his condition had become quite serious. Alfred wrote in his diary "*Monroe much worse, I lost all hope of his recovery. O God, who could describe my feelings just to think of giving up my dear boy, the very one whose manly form I expected to lean on in old age. About 11 or 12 O.C., I told my dear boy that he was doomed to die; he said that he was not aware of it. Asked how long he had to live - I told him that I did not know that death was not on him at that time - he seemed perfectly resigned to his fate, O God, this is the hardest trial of my life.*" For the next 2 days, Monroe's condition changed little as the family and doctors tried to save him. On January 22, Alfred's diary read "*4 O.C. PM died in the north room of Mr. Tomkins residence Murfreesboro Tenn. Capt. Napoleon Monroe Bearden Capt. of Co. E 8th Regiment Tenn. Volunteers.... Bought a burial casket of Lewis and Brown for \$120.00 in which Mr. Brown placed and sealed him in late afternoon.*" Family history tells of issues getting Monroe's body through enemy lines following his death. One story claims that Monroe's brother Matt Bearden brought a load of clocks to Murfreesboro so that the casket could be hidden in the wagon. Whatever happened, Alfred was back in Fayetteville by January 30th, since on that date he sold corn to the Confederate Army and signed the bill of sale.

Due to weather conditions, the construction of the burial vault was not completed until early March. On the 12th day of March, 1863, Alfred recorded the following in his diary "*about 2 OC PM deposited the casket containing the remains of my dear son, N.M. Bearden in a vault prepared for its reception in my garden. A large crowd of our friends and neighbors being present. He was in a wonderful state of preservation taking into consideration the length of time since his death. Brothers and sisters, the recollections of the day are burned in my feelings.*"

Captain Bearden's sword was lost on the battlefield. I am also attaching the story of how the sword was recovered, as told at a UDC event by the wife of Monroe's brother Matt. Today, the sword is at the archives of the University of the South. Following our restoration of the family cemetery, the University brought the sword back to the cemetery for a dedication ceremony we held in 2011.

Jim, thanks for letting me indulge you in a portion of my family's history. Stones River will always have a special place in our hearts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Fleitz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Fleitz
8th - 16th Tennessee CSA Reenactors
fleitzg@bellsouth.net

A Paper read by invitation at a meeting of the U.D.C.,
in Fayetteville, Tennessee by Mrs. Susan W. Bearden, 1923.

This sword belonged to Captain Napoleon Montee Bearden of the 8th Tennessee. It was found on the battle field at Murfreesboro and carried south by a soldier. Captain Bearden had the sword in his hand, giving orders, when he was wounded by two balls. The dents on the scabbard testify to it. His father, mother and sister, Adelia, went to him and remained with him till his death. His remains were brought to their home on the Athens road 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Fayetteville. They were in metallic case and were kept in the old home eight weeks before burial. His grave or vault was fixed two or three times before it gave satisfaction, as it was hard to get materials and workmen at that time. Someone slept in an adjoining room at night and stayed near him in the day.

After the army moved south, his brother-in-law, Mr. Robinson Brown heard a soldier friend inquiring about a scabbard for a sword he had found. He recognized it as his Captain's and told him to look on the handle and he would find "N.M. Bearden" carved with his knife. He handed it to him and it was placed with his belongings in his camp chest. While riding on the train from Atlanta to Griffin, Georgia, he was wounded by a sharp-shooter and carried to a good lady's home where he died and was buried in her garden. She kept his camp chest, and when his remains were brought home by friends and buried in the same plat as Captain Bearden's, the family plat, the sword was found in his chest and a letter, telling when and how it came into his possession. It was kept by his father and mother until their death, then handed down to the oldest son, and lastly to Mr. Matt M. Bearden; now it is in my care for

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my two boys, Thomas and Ellis Miller Bearden. We all prize it so much. Many soldiers say that they have never seen one with the Confederate Seal on it.

Mrs. Susan Woods Bearden.

Copied by
Ellis Miller Bearden,
Warrenton, Va.
April 21st, 1930.

