

Heman F Dawson Obituary

Old Soldier Sleeps Well at Oakwood

Heman F. Dawson was born on Christmas Day, 1841, at Blenheim, Canada. He came to Michigan at the age of eight and settled with his parents on a farm in Keene township. When the Civil War began in 1861 he was a boy of 19 years. At that age he enlisted in the first regiment of Michigan Lancers, serving in that regiment until August, 1862, when the regiment was disbanded. He enlisted again as a sergeant in Company B, 21st Michigan Volunteer Infantry and served with this regiment until the close of the war, his entire service amounting to 3 years and 4 months.

The Twenty-first Michigan Volunteers to which Mr. Dawson belonged was organized at Camp Segiel, Ionia. He was engaged with his regiment in much hard service. He fought in the battles of Perryville, Stone [sic] River and Chickamauga. He was in Sherman's great march to Atlanta and the sea, taking part in the siege of Savannah and the battle of Bentonville, N.C., in which battle he was wounded. Many of the men went into the battle of Chickamauga barefooted and with tattered clothing. The fighting was severe. Their colonel was taken prisoner and their lieutenant colonel was killed. He witnessed the famous battle of Lookout Mountain, and for three months his regiment was camped on the top of this mountain. From Savannah he marched with Sherman's army through the Carolinas to Richmond, and then on to Washington and participated in the Grand Review. When discharged he ranked first sergeant of his company. All this was more than sixty years ago. It is but a sketch of honorable and patriotic service and does not convey to our minds today the weariness and hardship and danger of the soldier's life, the long marches, the lonely vigils on picket duty, the hard warfare and exposure to all sorts of weather, the terror and awfulness of battle which this man and his comrades endured.

Mr. Dawson came home from the war and nearly the entire balance of his life has been lived here in Lowell. In September, 1862, while home from the war, he was married to Miss Cynthia Elson of Keene. To them were born three children, two of whom survive: Herbert Dawson of Lowell and Mrs. Lessie Stuart of Grand Rapids. The mother died in 1869, several years after their marriage. Ten years later he married Mrs. Anna Howk, who passed away July 23, 1923.

Mr. Dawson's death, occurring suddenly Thursday morning last, has removed from our midst a noble Christian gentleman whose long and honorable life of more than 87 years was filled with good. He was a member of the First Methodist church of Lowell for 35 years. He will be missed by his old comrades of the Grand Army and by his many friends. He is survived by two sisters, Mrs. Emma Austin and Mrs. Mary Moore and his two children already mentioned.

The funeral service was held from his late home in Lowell, Saturday afternoon, May 11, Rev. A. T. Cartland, assisted by Rev. Earl Stevens, officiating. Burial was in Oakwood cemetery with military honors under the auspices of the American Legion.

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Information on Henry F. Dawson

He fought at Perryville which took place 10-8-1862 in Kentucky. In the summer and fall of 1862 Kentucky experienced one of the worst droughts on record, and soldiers suffered severely from heat, stifling dust, and poor water as they maneuvered across the state... Darkness and exhaustion halted the battle, the largest fought in Kentucky during the war. The Union army had 845 killed and 2,851 wounded; the Confederates losses were 510 killed and 2,635 wounded. Wounded soldiers cried out for water during the night as weary surgeons operated to save as many as possible of the wounded.

He was wounded in the battle of Bentonville North Carolina. That battle was an attempt by the Confederates to slow Sherman and his 60,000 troops down. It cost the Confederates 240 killed, 1,700 wounded and 1,500 missing. The Union army's casualties were 194 killed, 1,112 wounded and 221 missing. Confederate General Johnston's message to Lee was clear as he wrote on March 23 "I can do no more than annoy him."

Now to head for the last on [sic] in this section lot 7 where you will find Lester C. Hildreth

Soldier writes about Murfreesboro battle

In recognition of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the Reminder has reprinted articles and letters that Barry County residents may have read in the Hastings Banner 150 years ago. Due to the absence of personal letters in early 1863, combined with the impact of the Battle of Stones River, the Reminder is deviating somewhat from its practice of reprinting articles that ran the same week or month, 150 years ago. References to and reports from the battle of Murfreesboro, Tenn., appeared frequently in the Banner the first few months of 1863.

Known today as the Battle of Stones River, the three-day battle took place about 35 miles southeast of Nashville Dec. 31, 1862, to Jan. 1, 1863. Although the number of total casualties varies among records, experts rate it among the 10 bloodiest battles of the U.S. Civil War. The Union suffered more casualties than Confederates – more than 23,000 men killed between the two sides – however, the battle was considered a victory for the north.

The following excerpt was printed in the Feb. 18, 1863 Hastings Banner:

Extract from a Private Letter Relative to the Battle of Murfreesboro

I have not heard from the 21st since the battle. I was taken prisoner on Wednesday. Tuesday was employed in skirmishing. On Wednesday the ball was opened by our right and center.

Our brigade was on the right in Sheridan's division, cannon in our rear; the enemies in our front, so that we got the music of the shells from both sides. After a few minutes of cannonading, then came the fun.

A whole division of the rebels made their appearance in front of ours, when we poured into them one good volley from all hands, which was immediately answered imagined from a whole forest falling to the earth nearly at once. After the first volley, the sounds of the others are more disconnected, something like a storm approaching. On the right it was one incessant roar all day. It seemed strange to me that in such a storm of bullets, no more killed and wounded than really are.

The rebels outnumbering us and Johnson selling his division, they flanked us; therefore being exposed to two fires, we had to retreat and the first thing I knew, the boys said we were prisoners. And sure enough we were, for the rebels were thick as bees around us. I don't think I should been taken prisoner if I had [end of text]

[Captioned on the right] "Oh such a site on the battlefield; I can't describe it. Men with their limbs shot off and their bodies mutilated in every way." Leslie Mosely Co. C 21st Michigan

[photo at top of page of 21st Michigan with the caption: This photo of the 21st Michigan infantry was supposedly taken in the Murfreesboro era about 1863 (Photo courtesy of Stones River National Battlefield)]