

John Robert Hall History

Reminiscences of The War

As told to Sara Orum Hall

For the Midway Guards Chapter

The Daughters of the Confederacy

By John Robert Hall

1844 - 1939

Midway, Alabama

Company C was organized in 1862. Most of the men were from the Midway vicinity: Enon, Cotton Valley, Creek Stand, Spring Hill, Glenville. All were from Barbour, Macon, and Russell Counties. Bullock County was later carved from these three counties. The first group of young men who drilled on the drill ground in front of the Baptist Church, The Midway Guards, had tendered their services to Governor Shorter in the spring [sic] of 1861, and had been incorporated into the Army of Northern Virginia. Ours was a younger group.

We were sent first to Clayton, then to Auburn in April, where we remained until July. Then we were transferred to Tupelo Mississippi. Our first captain was a decrepit old whiteheaded [sic] preacher. He made a speech at Enon as we were going, promised the ladies that if they ever saw a live Yankee it would be after said Yankee had marched over his dead body. He went to Tupelo with us; did not stay more than a week before he resigned and came home a wiser man. A lot of us got wiser soon, but we could not resign.

We remained in Tupelo until August, when we were moved on to Chattanooga, from there on into Tennessee and Kentucky. We were classified as Companies C and E, 45th Alabama Regiment, Lowery's [sic] Brigade, Cleburn's [sic] Division, Hardie's Corps. After reaching Bardstown, Kentucky, we turned back towards Knoxville and had our first fight at Perryville. We lost. Web Vaughn, [unreadable] Company C and Billy Baker of Company E were carried prisoners to Louisville and held although we had our parolees waiting to be exchanged. One Sunday morning we were put in boats for the prison camp, Chase, across the Ohio River. We reached a place called Horseshoe Bend and were told to walk across this bend and reenter the boats around on the other side. This was in a rich bottom planted in corn, the thickest you ever saw, three stalks to a hill and very high. We stepped out into this corn and waited for the rest to pass on by. The scheme worked.

We were in Kentucky. Our first stop was in a village at the home of a rebel who had lost a son. He told us how to go and whom to stop with. We were taken in and no charges made all the way as we travelled on foot by Nashville, Franklin and Huntsville to Montevallo. From here we went by rail to Selma, then by boat to Montgomery, by rail to

Tuskegee where we had dinner with Colonel Abercrombie and left about dark for home on foot.

We stayed at home about a month, then rejoined our Company just after the battle of Murfreesboro. Had to enter a parole camp and await exchange. We were retrained at Shelbyville. Went into winter quarters, 1863. General Rosecrans moved to Chattanooga and we were in the battle of Chickamauga. General Bragg won the day, drove us to Missionary Ridge. We were repulsed and retreated with great loss into Tennessee.

Just after the battle of Chattanooga we met Captain Noah B. Feagin of the 15th Alabama, Army of Virginia. He had been rushed to reinforce us on the battlefield. Noah told us of the fighting in Virginia. He said, "When we charge and give the Rebel Yell the Yankees run, but when they charge and fire it is our time to run." Many Alabama men fought and many fell in these great Tennessee battles, called from the valleys of Virginia.

In 1864 winter quarters were in Dalton, Georgia, spent in drilling and watching Sherman. The first battle with Sherman in his march through Georgia was at Resaca, Georgia. We were repulsed by his immense army. We were a small force, fighting in the day and running at night. On Sherman marched toward Rome and Atlanta. The Battle of Atlanta was fought on July 20. Joseph E. Johnson was relieved because he tried to save his men, and Fighting General Hood was put in command. Fighting continued July 21st and 22nd, at Peachtree Creek Frank Hall lost his arm. The Confederates retreated toward Macon, and Sherman burned Atlanta. Hood started for Tennessee, hoping to draw Sherman back, but Sherman continued his march of desolation to the sea.

After Atlanta Hood continued toward Nashville. One of the bloodiest battles of Company C was at Spring Hill in the Tennessee River Valley. Breastworks were reenforced by heavy timbers torn from a big gin house, with loopholes cut in them to shoot through. We went into this battle with the band playing Dixie.

The Yankees fell back to Nashville. We had had our lesson, so began fighting from behind trees. General Lowery lectured his men about this, but one big fellow answered him, "General, you have made your peace with God and we haven't."

If we were beaten at Franklin we were murdered at Nashville. During all this recital Mr. Hall had remained calm, but when he came to the battle of Nashville the memory of those scenes of terror were too much for him. He burst into tears and said, "My Child, it was too awful to live through. There was not another battle during the war that equalled it for butchery."

After this his beloved Company C was shattered in nerve and in body. Their General retreated to Florence, Alabama, then to Corinth, Mississippi. From here they were called back to North Carolina to help stop Sherman again. They passed through Montgomery on cars to Greensboro, North Carolina. (Or is this Greenville, South Carolina?) to help stop Sherman. They had joined Joseph E. Johnson once more and were on the Virginia

line when the end came. They surrendered by stacking arms and marshalling artillery to Sherman.

Then came the weary homeward journey. They walked all the way to Augusta. From there rode on cars to Guerryton, Alabama, not more than thirty miles from home.

D. Stollenwerck once asked Mr. Hall if the soldiers were not brokenhearted when they reached home. To my surprise he replied, "No, indeed. I was so happy to be alive that I danced more that year than I ever have before or since!"