

The diary I have was written by William Edward McCoy, Co. A 5th Ga "The Clinch Rifles". His life story is very fascinating. He was born in Augusta GA November 14, 1840. He and his younger brother Charlie joined the local militia unit the Clinch Rifles. This unit later became Co A of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ga regiment and was sent to Pensacola FL to Camp Stevens. This is where he started his diary. They took part in the Battle of Santa Rosa, William was even personally mentioned in the newspaper article about the battle. The 5<sup>th</sup> Ga was part of Jackson's Brigade, Gen John King Jackson was also from Augusta Ga. They were involved in several battles in the Mississippi Tennessee Theater. The diary specifically mentions the battles of Farmington and Stones River. After the battle of Stones River he for some unknown reason stopped writing in this diary. I do know that afterwards he was transferred to the Quartermaster Corps so maybe he started a different one, but he obviously kept this one because he gave it as a gift to someone later in life, writing several pages in the back of it with his own advice on how to live a happy life.

After the war his story gets even more interesting. He came back to Augusta and became a clerk for the Graniteville Company. The Owner, James Gregg was murdered by a former employee, a story which was made into a motion picture, The Gardner's Son. William served his boss one last time as pall bearer. Not terribly long after this William married Mr. Gregg's widow, Catherine Hammond Gregg. She was the daughter of SC Senator and former Gov. James Henry Hammond. He was the embodiment of all that was evil with the slave holding aristocracy. He is well known to have ruined the lives of several young ladies. He also kept several slaves as his mistresses and even one of their own daughters. Whatever young Catherine's troubles as a child, they were worse as an adult. By the time she married William she was already hopelessly addicted to opium. William moved away with her to New York for a while but eventually returned to Augusta to try his hand at running his own cotton mill.

He purchased a small manufacturing firm on the Savannah River and built it up into the largest cotton waist mill in the Southeast. In post-Civil War Georgia it was not accepted to hire black workers. The newly freed slaves had great difficulty finding gainful employment. William opened what would become Riverside Mills in an area of Augusta known as Springfield Village. Springfield was a free black community that dated back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Springfield Baptist church still operates and is the oldest black church still in operation in the US. Well William went against the norm and only hired black workers. Whether this was a case of altruism or economics is beside the point, an entire community who could not get jobs one day could the next because of what William McCoy had done. Riverside Mills was the first major company in Georgia to offer jobs to blacks after the Civil War.

William went on to live a long successful life. Catherine passed away in her early forties. William had her buried beside her first husband James. Her marble statue gravestone is one of the most beautiful in all of Augusta's Magnolia Cemetery. He later remarried, this time to another widow from Pennsylvania. She had children from her previous marriage but William never had any of his own. He moved to a large house on Walton Way that is still standing. The Beautiful two story wood home was recently offered for sale at one million dollars. William passed away from pneumonia November 17, 1919, just three days after his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is buried in Summerville Cemetery, a few blocks from his home, alongside his brother Charlie and two of his nieces. He had lived a long and successful life, becoming president, owner, or serving on the board of directors of many successful business in Augusta Ga.

The story of how his diary was found is equally interesting. I was working as a manager for the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame, a 17 acre botanical garden built on the site of Riverside Mills. I was also going to school finishing my BA in History. My specialty was local history. I had been studying the Clinch Rifles for

a while when I found a Re-enactment group out of Osip Austria that portrayed the Clinch Rifles. I had heard that Civil War re-enacting was popular in Europe but I could not believe these guys could focus on this small militia unit from Augusta Ga. I got in contact with the commander of the Austrian group. As it turns out he was fascinated by the Cinch Rifles. He was immediately drawn to me because of my location and my access to the original Clinch Rifles minutes book and uniform. We became friends talking back and forth on the internet for some time. One day he sent me a message saying that he heard about a guy in Croatia that collected diaries and that he had one from a member of the Clinch Rifles. I got in contact with the guy and he told me yes he did and he even sent me scans of some of the pages. Eventually I negotiated a price and brought William's Diary back to Augusta.

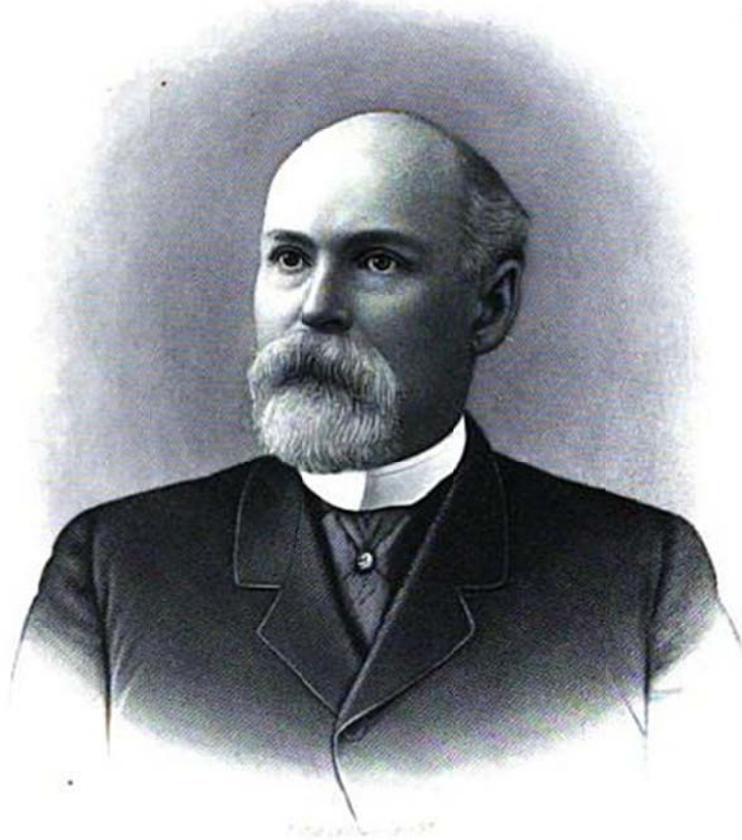
I had never heard of William McCoy at the time. His story had been all but lost to time. I began researching him and it was almost as if he were reaching out to me. Now, not being one prone to sensationalism but this case was extraordinary. Not only had I been working everyday on the site of his former mill I had spent time in the Georgia Regents University archives going through many of his old work papers trying to find his water access points through the city levee. Later, while at a Civil War antique show at Chickamauga, my wife was walking around asking the vendors if they had anything from William McCoy. Embarrassed, I told her to stop. This guy was a private in an army of hundreds of thousands of men. The odds of these vendors having something from him were astronomical. She went on undeterred by my negativism. When she came to a vendor selling old post cards, he probably had 50,000 of them, he told her he didn't know of a William McCoy but he did have a box with some stuff from Augusta. Well wouldn't you know it she found a stack of postcards from William and his family. Years later while in Grad School I was telling an assistant in the archives about the diary and she wanted to see it. I told her there were some scans available online of a few pages. I tried to find them for her and typed in William E. McCoy as I had done a thousand times before into the old Google search bar but this time I saw something different. I saw a google book reference quoting a source as William E McCoy collection PLDU. I immediately got excited and looked up what PLDU was. Perkins library Duke University had in their archives a stash of letters written by a young Confederate Soldier named William E McCoy. I called them and they agreed to scan them for me, I would have walked up to Raleigh if need be. I received the letters by email and they were wonderful. They coincide perfectly with the pages in the diary.

Well sorry to be so long winded but I get excited telling this story. I hope to put William's story into a book at some point. He lived a fascinating life. I will include the passages from the diary that involve your area. I also have scans of the original pages I can send you later.

Thanks for your interest,

Erich Frazier

Augusta Historian



*W. Henry*



Tuesday Dec 2nd 1862

Train due yesterday at 1 o'clock did not arrive till 9 o'clock last night on Board of which was Miss Jones & Bro. Miss J is sister in law of A. L. Deming?. They had to sit up all night under a shed it raining without any fire. Had we known it, we would have given up our tent. This morning they warmed by our fire and I escorted Miss J to the Boat. I will write to Mollie Swear(?) ??? today.

Thursday Dec 11th 1862

Genl Jos E Johnston & staff passed down the road this morning.

Friday Dec 12th 1862

Pres't Davis passed up the road this A.M. He proceeded unaccompanied. A salute was fired by Pritchards Battery. Also Father came on the down train. He had been sick and was even then very [far from well](?)

Dec 12/62 Cont'd

I crossed the river with him & procured a seat. If nothing happens he will arrive at home Sunday morning.

Dec 27/62

Left Bridgeport for Murfreesboro through kindness Capt O.C. Myers a2m(?). The Regiment were transported in open stock cars while the Horses belonging to he staff were put in good Box cars.

Sunday Dec 28/62

Marched out and formed(?) line Battle extreme right of Reserve Corps.

Tuesday Dec 30th

Bivouacked last night in an open field just off Lebanon Pike 2 miles from town. Rained nearly all night. All day yesterday there was considerable skirmishing on left. This morning it has approached to center. Considerable cannonading going on.

Wednesday Dec 31/62

Changed our position several times moving on the right. About noon we were ordered to center.

Moved there at a double quick to that post and were ordered to charge a Battery of 12 guns.

Made charges but being unsupported had to fall back losing 2 killed, ??? & Morgan, & 5 wounded, Steed, ??? Walton, Holt, Milner & Miller. Fighting about 1 1/2 hours, I es-

[Dec 31, 1862 continued]

caped with a slight scratch on the neck caused from a fragment of shell. After fighting we moved back to rear about 3/4 miles and slept for the night.

Thursday Jany 1/63

Rested all day on the ground we occupied last night. I walked out to the field where Genl Rains was killed & in one place I counted 27 dead Federals.

Friday Jany 2/63

Early this morning we were ordered to the left to support Gen Claibourne. Laid on our arms all day. Very heavy fighting going on the Right & considerable skirmishing in our front. One time(?) our pickets drove in the yankee pickets.

Saturday Jany 3/63

Last night about 12 o'clock we were ordered to move away as quick and quietly as possible. We marched about 2 1/2 miles down the pike and formed line battle. Raining very hard. I was almost

frozen. After a good deal of trouble we succeeded in starting a fire. We remained in this place (just where the railroad crosses Stone River) until 8 o'clock, when we moved up on the Right. Here again we were put to a good deal of trouble making fires, it still raining. We remained very quiet all day but just about dark(?) the enemy commenced shelling our camps. When our battery oppened on them 3 different brigades at 3 different times(?) charged it & were [runs off page]

[Jan 3, 1863 continued]

times repulsed. The firing continued about 2 hours and finally ceased except occasionally stray shots.

Sunday Jany 4th 1863

This morning about 2 o'clock we commenced our retreat. We marched to Murfreesboro & took the Manchester pike & marched steadily on. About daylight one of the Riders of Washington Artillery let me take his place. My feet were blistered very badly. I then had a ride until we stopped for the night. 1st night we camped 15 miles from Murfreesboro.

Monday Jany 5/63

Still on march. Passed through Beach Grove & camped for the night at Manchester.

Tuesday Jany 6/63

My feet being very sore from blisters the Doct(?) excused me from marching. The sick squad staid in Manchester all day till dark when we took the cars & proceeded to Estell Springs where we spent the night.

Wednesday Jany 7/63

Took the top of a hospital car and after waiting all day till 5 o'clock in the evening at Cowan(?) proceeded to Bridgeport where we arrived about 9 o'clock at nigh