

The War Comes to Wolf Bayou

In the beginning of the conflict between the states most of the people in this area went about their business as usual. Since most of them had migrated from southern states they were in touch with relatives "back home" where the war was more active and news of the fighting filtered into the area and interest began to build as the war effort moved on.

When the call for volunteers came in 1861 several young men from our area answered by going to Batesville or Jacksonport to enlist. They felt they had a duty to protect Arkansas from the invading "Yankees" as the threat of attack seemed imminent. Sometimes a group of men in a community would enlist a whole company. One of these men was E.N. Floyd who lived down toward the Floral community (the post office was then Pleasant Plains) some twelve miles from Wolf Bayou. He traveled throughout our area enlisting men to serve. On July 17, 1861 he took his company to Jacksonport and it became official. Many thought a few months would finish this war for good and everyone would be home to harvest the crops they had planted earlier.

Not everyone in this company was from our community but many of them are relatives so I have listed them. They are:

E.N. Floyd, Captain

J.H. Moore, 1st Lt.

H.L. Ward, 2nd Lt.

Thos. A.M. Ellis, 3rd Lt.

A.J. Chilcutt, 1st Sgt.

John R. Berry, 2nd Sgt.

Thos. G. Sharp, 3rd Sgt.

J.A. Blount, 4th Sgt.

Samuel Johnson, 1st Cpt.

S.A. Floyd, 2nd Cpl.

Howell H. Moore, 3rd Cpl.
Joshua T. Patton, 4th Cpl.
William Barker
Berry E. Benson
Moses J. Berry
Helick Bohannon
William B. Carter
Alexander Carroll
Jonathan Coleman
Wesley A. Curtis
William S. Curtis
Thos. R. Davis
T.G. Gilmore
S.H. Glenn
William T. Glenn
William Gillam
Silas G. Grooms
William G. Griffin
John R. Hammett
Jas A. Herron
Jas. R. Herron
Marcus G. Herron
F.B. Higginbotham
Brance Hutson
Elmore D. Jeffrey
John W. Kennedy
Robert M. Kingston
John L. Lacy
F.D. Lewis
Steven C. Mann
James Matherly
Eli B. Matthews
Jesse A. Mauldin
H.T. Mauldin
Samuel W. McBride
Isaac McCarver
John McCormick

Nicholas Mize
Jas. A. Moody
John W. Murphy
John Myers
A.M. Neeld
Robert E. Neeld
Geo. T. Pearce
Chas. B. Perry
Wilson H. Rackley
Joseph Reed
Mitchell Reed
Samuel Richards
James L. Roach
John Roach
B.G. Sherman
E. Shewmake
Thos. J. Shewmake
Eli W. Stone
James B. Taylor
Frank Tidwell
John Tidwell
H.C. Ward
H.N. Webb
John C. Williams
Jas. R. Wright

Illness killed more than the fighting did and when a company was reduced drastically in number the remaining men were sent to new companies. You will find many of them serving in several different regiments throughout the war. I could not determine how many lost their lives either to illness or injury. Only their families would know after all these years. some just never returned.

A number of people felt loyal to the Union although Confederate sympathy was by far the majority. Slavery was not the real reason for our participation in the war because most

of the families had never had a slave. Most just felt a southern government could rule on southern interests , mostly agriculture, far better than a government so far away as to be almost foreign who had northern industrial interests uppermost in mind. There were many politicians who encouraged this way of thinking and used it to their advantage as well as stirring up a rebellion. Most Southerners felt they were more capable of making decisions than they were given credit for. We know now that this country could not have survived separation but the idea had appealed to many at that time.

Records of this War, especially in Arkansas, are very sketchy and details of companies, where they went, who was injured or killed are almost impossible to find. Most of what we know has been handed down through stories from one generation to the next. We all remember someone who had a story about the Civil War.

As the companies were organized and filled the young men and a few older ones left home with anticipation and excitement at the thought of real combat. They felt they would soon put an end to Yankee interference for good.

As the war went on it became more difficult to raise the needed volunteers for additional companies. By now the enlisted men who had left home for just a short time had been gone far longer than they intended and had been sent to faraway places like Tennessee where very intense fighting was going on. Supplies were not as plentiful as they should be and most were getting very homesick. Some deserted after awhile and refused to go back. Some families in our area hid their young men so they wouldn't have to go.

In June of 1862 the conscription Act was put into force saying all able-bodied men had to serve in military duty either for the Confederate or Union army. A number of men volunteered along with their neighbors for the time had come when you didn't have a choice. If you didn't join and were found at

home you were put into a company not of your choosing and more than likely a Union company. If you resisted you could be shot on the spot.

At this time Batesville was occupied by the Union Army and a number of people switched their loyalty to the Union thinking they would fare better by being sympathetic to them. Many thought they could remain neutral and after the Conscription Act began to panic. Some slipped into Missouri early and others were turned back at the state line by Confederate picket lines. (A few from our area did go to Missouri for a short time.) Several Wolf Bayou men served in the Union Army and it is thought that they were forced to since many of them deserted at the first chance and joined Confederate forces.

Wolf Bayou was on the main road between Batesville and Clinton and about twenty five miles from Batesville. The road was widely used by military personnel of both sides so skirmishes were almost certain to happen and people living along this road were getting very edgy. Almost all the families had half-grown boys at home and occasionally a boy of fourteen would be pressed into service.

Foraging parties of both armies scoured the countryside for about sixty-five miles radius from Batesville searching for forage for animals and foodstuff for soldiers. People in our area tried to hide livestock and supplies in the woods for safekeeping but with little success. There were soldiers who knew the area, even the most remote spots.

In 1863 bands of guerilla soldiers began to form, mostly to protect the people left at home from foraging soldiers, mostly Union. The Conscription Act was not being enforced effectively and leaders from both sides recruited men from each community to report all those who were not serving. The guerilla bands took exception to this also vowing to protect their communities. A small skirmish near Crossroads, now Drasco, and another one near Devil's Fork involved soldiers

and guerillas. They were effective in getting the Union Army out of Batesville by raiding the foraging parties so often that supplies got critically short and the army was forced to move on.

In the summer of 1864 some 4,000 soldiers, both Union and confederate, occupied Batesville which was again under the Union forces. Foraging practices were again the prime concern of the people living in our area. Guerilla bands had also recruited undesirable members and they had sometimes turned to stealing supplies from their neighbors selling them to the armies for enormous profits. They also turned in information on injured soldiers at home and any other information that could earn them profit. Many times they worked both sides of the war. They began to make their own rules and some communities really were terrorized by them. Wolf Bayou had an incident or two, very minor compared to other areas in the county.

Other soldiers serving military duty were:

Abner Chastain

Joseph Chastain

G.W. Cannon

John A. Knight

Leroy F. Knight

Martin V. Knight

John R. Lacy

W.C. Lindsey

Calvin Chastain

W.J. Cannon

G.W. Davis

J. Martin

W.C. Lindsey

Daniel S. Martin

J.T. Parten

J. Stewart

Wyatt Davis
Calvin J. Fuller
David Glenn
Sam Stewart
James A. Stone
A.H.S. Tidwell
James A. West
R.D. West

In an interview with Calvin Chastain in 1908 a Newport reporter asked him to relate an experience he remembered during the Civil War and he told them that he was in General Price's raid through Missouri, and in a battle near Kansas City he says the federals were getting the best of them when they got orders to retreat. He had been detailed to supply ammunition and was riding a small animal, and had it pretty well loaded down, and was riding behind the company, presenting a clear target for the enemy. The bullets whistled by him like hail. When the battle was over he was asked what he thought while he was being shot at and he replied, "I thought if my time had come to die I would be killed, if not, I would live".

Another interesting story that has been handed down about the war is of another native son, Isaac Cannon. He was twenty-two years old when the Conscription Act forced able bodied men to take one side or the other and serve in the army. Isaac was determined he would not be forced to take either side. He was an accomplished hunter and woodsman, and decided to hide in the remote and unsettled area on the forks of Big Creek just a few miles from his home. He, like many other people in the area, thought the War would only last a few months at the most. He loaded a few provisions, his dog, a hunting knife and a gun and went into hiding. He knew the country well and figured he could survive quite well for a long time if he had to.

One day when Isaac and his dog were hunting squirrel a big

bear surprised him. The dog jumped the bear and the fight was on. Isaac could tell the bear was winning the fight and about to kill his dog so he took his knife and jumped onto the bear's back while the dog held its attention . He stuck the knife in the bears neck cutting the jugular vein then jumped off and ran as fast as he could. The fight stopped and the bear lumbered down the hill a few hundred yards and then stopped in his tracks. He was dead.

The man and his dog enjoyed that bear meat. It was a welcome change from the squirrel and rabbit they had been living on. No one remembers how long Isaac Cannon stayed in the woods . One member of his family says he did fight in the war.

In May 1865 a surrender of all Confederate forces in Arkansas was effected and in June 1865 all Confederate soldiers, considered to be prisoners of war, were to be paroled at Jacksonport. A parole was a necessary end or the soldier would be forever considered an enemy of the united States. Col. C.W. Davis of the United States Army paroled the prisoners and supplied enough rations of sugar, salt, coffee, vinegar and hard bread to last each man a day and a half.

At Jacksonport that day the last organized force of the Confederacy was disbanded and many were paroled. A large number of men refused to surrender and many were never paroled. The War was discussed and replayed for several decades and for some it never ended.

Now the ragged remnants of humanity were free to go back to their homes and families. our area had been devastated not by fighting but by foraging and the lack of manpower to make crops. Farms had been neglected and everything was in very short supply. There was no other choice but to start over.

The South had been beaten, the economy was in shambles but we were not in the condition that our friends and relatives in Tennessee, Kentucky and the Carolinas were and the people here

began to tell of all that was available here to anyone who needed a new start. Good land was cheap and a hardworking family could get back on their feet in no time at all.