

Oct 1996

CONFEDERATE OFFICER BURIED IN TRACY CITY CEMETERY

Ancestor of several well-known locals

Maude Roddy Melton

DAVID W. ELLER was a 1st Lieutenant in the Confederate forces in the War of Northern Aggression. One record indicates he may have been a Captain. He was my great grandfather, born 1836, died 1909, and is buried in the Tracy City Cemetery.

His daughter, Alice Eller, married my grandfather, John W. Berry in 1884, and their children were:

- Bessie (Elizabeth) L. (Mrs. E. W.) Cheek
- Barney Lawrence Berry
- Maude Beatrice (Mrs. Burge S.) Roddy
- Norma Leatrice Berry (twin of Maude, died in infancy)
- Florence Alma Berry (Mrs. E. B.) Wiesener

David W. Eller enlisted in the Confederate forces on May 23, 1861, at age 25, at Jefferson, Ashe County, N.C., into the 9th Regiment N.C. State Troops. It was the first cavalry regiment from the State of North Carolina. David's service record (from the National Archives, Washington, D.C.) indicates he was absent from active service in March, 1862 "on recruiting service". He had returned to his home in North Carolina and it is interesting to note that two of his recruited soldiers were his younger brothers, John Harrison, age 20, and Jesse, age 25. Just how long David remained absent from the Regiment on recruiting duty is not known, but the next "Company muster roll" in which he is recorded "present" is for November and December, 1862. We can assume, however, that he returned to duty before that time for he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant by election of members of his Company on June 23, 1862.

During the month of May, the Regiment marched/rode 400 miles to reach the Roanoke River, Virginia, to defend against the enemy ascending that river. After engaging in several battles where losses were great, on July 28, 1862, the 1st N.C. Cavalry was assigned to Wade Hampton's Brigade and remained with it the remainder of the war. The company muster roll shows that David was "absent, sick" some in September, October, November and December. Several facts in the record would indicate that he was present, even though the company muster roll is missing, for the Battle of Antietam on September 17 and 18, 1862. David's brother, Jesse, joined the regiment at Urbana, Maryland, while the Southern troopers

were on their way to that great battle which has the distinction of being known as "the bloodiest day of the Civil War". So it is believed that David Eller was present for that battle, as well as participating in J.E.B. Stuart's famous "horse raid" into Pennsylvania starting October 9.

David's "Soldiers Application for Pension", dated August 26, 1908, states that he was "wounded in the foot at Chambersburg, Pa.", showing he was on that raid when immense stocks of army stores were destroyed, and serious damage was done to train and telegraph lines. It is entirely conceivable that even though this was not a serious wound, when he returned into Virginia he went on the sick list, and appears on a weekly report of sick and wounded at General Hospital #1, Lynchburg, Va., dated November 21, 1862, and did not return to the Regiment until February, 1863. His Regiment was then encamped in Rockingham County, Virginia. In May, 1863, the great battle of Chancellorsville was fought and his cavalry unit experienced sharp clashes with the Union cavalry at Kelly's Ford and Kellysville. On June 8, 1863, General R. E. Lee had a grand review of all his cavalry on a large open plain near Brandy Station, Virginia. At early dawn on the 9th, Federal cavalry crossed the Rappahannock River and fell upon the Rebel cavalry while they were still at breakfast. There ensued the largest cavalry battle to be fought on U. S. soil during the Civil War or at any time in U. S. history.

Again from David's pension application of August 26, 1908, we learn he was wounded in the shoulder in this battle of Brandy Station. Another paper says "wound of the right chest wall over middle of clavicle bone". The wound, however, was not of a severe nature.

Following several clashes led by J.E.B. Stuart, several promotions were effected in the North Carolina Brigade and among them was the promotion of David W. Eller from 2nd Lieutenant to 1st Lieutenant. From October 17, 1863 and for the next five months, he would sign the Company muster roll as "Commanding the Company".

Several brisk cavalry clashes took place after the return of the N.C. Brigade to Lee's Army. June 28 to July 27 was a period of rest for the cavalry and David's service record states he was absent from his Regiment, "Sick", as of July 23, 1864. He was granted leave, dated August 13, 1864, but was listed present for September/October. In October and November, the Regiment crossed and recrossed the James River several times, skirmishing along the way in numerous

places, some major encounters, others being brushes with the Yankee cavalry along the lines of fortification to the southwest of Petersburg. Early in December, the North Carolina Cavalry Brigade went into winter-quarters near Belfield, Virginia, at the same time guarding General R. E. Lee's extreme right.

On December 2, 1864, David tendered his resignation and went home. On his Pension Application, August 26, 1908, in answer to the question "How did you get out of the army, where and when?" he told the pension board, "I resigned at Gordonville, Virginia, and went home, and stayed until the close of the war". Immediately questions arise as to why he resigned, and why at Gordonville, Virginia. One cannot be sure. The 1st N.C. Cavalry saw very hard service, being in one combat after another. It took its toll! From the Roster of Officers appearing in CLARK; Vol. I, P.484, we learn that of the seven Lieutenants serving in Company A during the war, one was killed, one wounded and four resigned, so David was not alone. The attrition rate among the officers was horrendous.

The question of why the resignation took place at Gordonville, Virginia is a difficult one, also. Gordonville is located northwest of Richmond, and the Regiment was in winter quarters at Belfield, which was no doubt on the Confederate line facing the Yankees, southwest of Petersburg. So the question goes unanswered.

Company records indicate some disagreement about whether he resigned, and that his resignation was not acknowledged nor accepted and therefore he was regarded as a deserter. His applications for pensions made as late as 1908 and 1909 were denied, probably on this basis of poor record keeping of the Company. He did not take the Oath of Allegiance to the U. S. Government until after he moved to Tennessee in 1866. He married Ellen Colvard, according to his pension papers, and they had three daughters and two sons. At that time, in 1908, he was living with his son, Wiley Eller. His cemetery stone in Tracy City indicates he died in 1909.

From a book, "George Michael Eller & Descendants of His in America" we learned that George, born 1723, died August 25, 1778, apparently came from the Palatinate of Germany in the first part of the 18th Century. He was the father of David W. Eller as well as several other children. The book, compiled in 1957 by James W. Hook, is in certain libraries but is now out of print. On Page 78, the above cited book says:

David W. Eller, b. 1836, Capt. in the Confederate Army, married Ellen Colvard. Family lived near Tracy City, Tennessee. He probably was the David Eller shown in the 1860 census of Ashe City, N.C., age 24, with wife, Ellen, age 27, and children Alice Eller, age 2, and Albina Eller, age 3 mos. Living in the same family was Elizabeth Eller, age 22, his sister probably.

There is an Elizabeth Eller buried in the Tracy City Cemetery. Her gravestone only shows "1905", which would likely be the year of her death.

Much of this information I have obtained from the research of Jim Harley, Byron Eller, and the late Carl Hartman, Jr., and possibly others of whom I do not know. It is heartening to know that we have such ancestors in the Tracy City Cemetery as valiant as David W. Eller. The hardships and endurance of Confederates like him can be surmised through all the copy here of his war-time experiences to defend the South we all love. Can we do less than continue to honor him and others like him? I placed a small Confederate flag on his grave on Confederate Flag Day a few months ago. I am glad I am of the lineage of David E. Eller.

{ DAVID W. ELLER, 1836-1909  
Married: Ellen Colvard, 1832-1892

↓  
Alice Eller  
m. John W. Berry

1. ↓  
Bessie (Eliz. L.) Berry  
m. Ernest Whitney Cheek (1902)  
John Wilson Cheek  
m. Sally Martin  
Mary Sue Cheek-McElroy  
Rachel Berry Cheek Smith  
Ernest Martin Cheek  
James Ernest Cheek  
m. Helen Flanagan  
James Walter Cheek (Jimmy)  
Carl & Catherine Cheek  
(twins, dec'd 1907)

2. |  
Maude Beatrice Berry  
m. Burge S. Roddy, Sr.  
Alma Irene Roddy Harper  
Maude Laurel Roddy Melton  
Burge S. Roddy, Jr.  
Helen Beryl Roddy

3. |  
Norma Leatrice Berry  
(twin of Maude, died in  
infancy).

4. |  
Florence Alma Berry  
m. Erich Bernard Walter Wiesener  
Erich, Jr.  
Alice Elizabeth Veyhl  
Carl Vernon Wiesener

5. |  
Barney Lawrence Berry

BROTHERS & SISTERS OF ALICE ELLER (MRS. DAVID)

1. Albina "Bina" Eller  
m. James N. Harley

|  
Mildred Alder  
m. Dr. George B. Alder  
George B. Alder, Jr.  
James Alder

Jessie Argo  
m. Rev. B.F. Argo  
Margaret Hazelhurst

m.  
Oscar Harley  
Edgar Harley  
Pearl Humphrey

m.  
Lou Ellen Hartman  
m. Carl Hartman  
Randall Harley  
Garnett Harley

2. |  
Mary Jane Eller Hennessee  
m. Will Hennessee  
No child.

3. |  
Fannie Belle Eller Robertson  
m. W.E. ("Ed") Robertson  
Edward  
Helen (died, infant)

4. Tom Eller  
Alice  
Earl  
Dorothy

5. Wiley Eller, m. Matty McCurdy  
Foster  
Mary (Welborn)  
Wiley (1906-07)

6. Ellen Eller (died young)

Rec'd 2/19/97

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Maude Roddy Melton  
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Chatanooga, TN 37404

Dear Mrs. Melton,

I just received your letter. Thank you for the information you shared in your newsletter. I have been researching Harley/Eller genealogy for several years but have not done much with it lately. I found quite a lot of information on the Ellers. There is a book called George Michael Eller and descendants of his in America. David Eller is included in this line. George Michael Eller came to America from Germany and died in Maryland in 1778. There is an Eller family association. I will send you an address for a contact. I also have quite a bit of information on the history of David Eller in the civil war if you are interested.

I will send a copy of a few of the family records pertaining to your line.

I would be interested in knowing more about your remembrance of Albina Eller. What was she like? Do you remember any particular stories about her?

Also do you have any pictures of Albina, her husband or her parents? I would love to get copies and would pay for any bills related to copying, postage etc. Do you have any mementos or furniture that belonged to the Harleys.

I am a physician here in San Diego. I work in the Emergency Department at Children's Hospital here in San Diego. I am married (wife Liz) and have three children. I was born and raised in Nashville Tennessee. My father Randall was a professor at Vanderbilt University until he retired. My mother is a teacher of blind children. I have a brother, Tom who is a physicist in Maryland. My sister, Lydia is married to a physician who practices in Kansas.

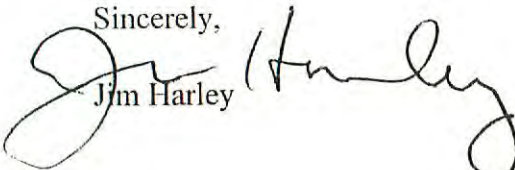
I have been to Tracy to see the cemeteries you mentioned. I was also able to see the house the Harleys lived in.

Carl Hartman was a very special person. I was very sad when he died at a relatively young age but glad we were able to do some research together over a course of a few years before he died.

I have met George Alder. He is a very nice man that has some very interesting stories to tell.

You type very well!! My mother still types her letters and prefers this to a computer. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

  
Jim Harley