

Copied from an e-mail by Harrison Alley to Robert Stoy, 19 Dec 2008

## **Personal Journal of Owen Alley With a History of His Grandfather Robert Huey Parker**

My name is Owen Alley and my mother was Lulah Hicks Parker, the daughter of Robert Huey Parker. She was born in the Rabun County community of 'Persimmon'.

My mother died when I was sixteen years of age but I remember so distinctly her relating events of my grandfather and grandmother on many occasions. She knew that my great-grandfather had migrated from Buncombe county, North Carolina to settle in Towns county, Georgia somewhere near Hiawassee. He is buried near Hiawassee.

My grandfather married Rebecca Morgan from Towns County. The Morgan's were a prominent family there.

My grandfather, Robert Huey Parker, at the age of 27, volunteered for service in the Confederate army during the Civil War. He had responded to the call of Sumner J. Smith for volunteers. Part of Smith's plea is as follows: "Men of the Mountains! The same sanguinary and relentless foe who is visiting the cities and seaports of the Confederate States with fire, sword and devastation, is now approaching with slow but measured tread your own mountain begirted homes. Can you supinely await longer their approach? Nay: up, up, my Countrymen, and to arms! ..... We can defend our country, repel the foe, and transmit the priceless heritage of freedom to our children if we will. Failing we can but die. Death in such a struggle is glory. Submission to the Federal tyrant is infamy and slavery. Parties wishing to form a portion of my Regiment will address me at Blairsville, Union County, Georgia". Parker responded by enlisting on May 8th, 1862, in Hiawassee, GA for three years service or the war. By enlisting he was entitled to a \$50 bounty. He was to be a member of the Georgia 'Smith's Legion' in George W. Standridge's Company called 'Towns Rangers'. This unit began as the 'First Georgia Partisan Rangers' on May 21st, 1862. The name would change on July 1, 1862 to 'Smith's Legion, Georgia Partisan Rangers'. The Cavalry Battalion consisted of six companies with members raised from Union, Polk, Floyd, and Gilmer and Towns counties. It was attached to the Department of East Tennessee. In the spring of 1863, the Cavalry Battalion merged with the 6th Georgia Cavalry Regiment. Its commanders were Lieutenant Colonel John R. Hart and Major Benjamin F. Brown. Parker entered as a private and he was a private when he left Confederate service. He took a horse with him as this would be a cavalry unit and he would be given an extra forty cents a day for the use of his horse. During his service, he would lose four horses, which broke him financially.

Stationed in early July of 1862, in Dalton, Georgia, Parker's unit was ordered to Chattanooga, Tennessee. In early August he was at Camp Smith near Whitfield, Georgia. Later, that month he was assigned to quarters at Loudon, Tennessee. In early September his unit was ordered to move to Big Creek Gap to join a General Stevenson to cut off a force blockading Big Creek and Rogers Gap. In mid September

they were on the move escorting 1,800 convalescents and a money train to General E. Kirby Smith in Kentucky. An arms shipment was added to the money train. By the first of October 1862, they were ordered to proceed to Camp Dick Robinson. The time spent at these camps must have been very lonesome for family men. A letter written by Commodore D. Epps, Company F, Smith's Legion while he was stationed at Camp Smith seems particularly suited to those feelings. He writes to his wife Catherine of Union County.

Dear wife, I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well at this time and hope these few lines will come safe to your hands and find you and all the rest enjoying the same blessing. I have nothing of importance to write to you. I received your kind letter. I was glad to hear from you all and that you all was well. Catherine, I have a notion to go to Richmond to [join] Huggins Company [Co. K, 23rd GVIR from Union County]. I can get \$50 dollars to change with Van Cints' brother and I had rather be in a foot company. I want you and all the rest to write whether you are willing or not.

Catherine, I haven't drawn any bounty yet [\$50 for joining Smith's Legion] and I don't no whether I ever will or not. I don't know when we will leave here. I want you to write to me if you have had any news from Hamp Ridley and what he is doing; whether he is a wagoneer or not. For Cints is a wagoneer and I aim to have his place if I go [wagoneers were paid \$1.00 more a month than cavalry privates].

Catherine, you wrote to me to write to you about managing. You know best now. Do the best you can to make something to eat and if I can help you I will do it. I don't know when I shall get any money but when I do you shall have part of it if I live Catherine, if you can get anybody to come in my place on reasonable terms, do it. Tell mother and all the rest to write to me. I want to hear from you often. They was 3 men went home the other day to get substitutes in their place. Manuel McCoy went home to get him a substitute. If you get anybody, you come with them to the camps. I would like to see you if I could.

I had a smothering [respiratory or cardiac ailment this day was 2 weeks ago and I thought I would die but I sent for [?] and he eased me. I am well as common now. If you want to come to see me you can come to your daddy's and I will try to get 4 or 5 furloughs and come up there, If you want to come. start a letter from there and tell me when you will be there to a day, If you want to come you had better be in a hurry. Tell all my friends to write to me. Catherine, do the best you can. I must close, nothing more at present. Only remains yours truly until death God bless you.....  
Send me some of your hair

Parker's service records indicate that his unit was assigned to assist Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee and in October of 1862, participated in maneuvers that

included invading central Kentucky in hopes of separating that state from the Union. He was involved in the Battle of Perryville in early October that resulted in Bragg's retreat back into Tennessee. His Georgia Unit served under Colonel Joseph Wheeler.

2nd Cavalry Brigade

Col. Joseph Wheeler

1st Alabama - Col. William Allen

3rd Alabama - Col. James Hagan

6th Confederate - Lt. Col. James Pell

8th Confederate - Col. W. B. Wade

2nd Georgia Battalion - Maj. C.A. Waley

1st Kentucky - Maj. J. W. Caldwell

Lt. Col. James Bennett's Battalion

12th Tennessee Battalion - Maj. T. W. Adrian

6th Kentucky -

Georgia Cavalry Battalion - Lt. Col. John Hart

On the retreat back into Tennessee, Wheeler reported the following engagements:

October 8 - Perryville

October 9 - Mackelville Pike

October 10 - Danville Cross Roads

October 11 - Danville

October 16 - Mount Vernon

October 17 - Rocky Hill

October 18 - Cross Road to Big Hill

October 18 - Little Rockcastle

October 18 - Mountain-side

October 19 - Wildcat

October 20 - near Wildcat

October 21 - Pitman's Crossroads

As the Confederates retreated, pillaging ran rampant in Campbell County, Tennessee that bordered southern Kentucky. The Confederates looted and raided personal items of many of the Campbell County residents. Lands were stripped of crops and many animals killed. One witness described their behavior by writing: "They spread out in the valley and commenced devouring everything in reach, like the locust of Egypt. What they could not eat they trampled under their feet." Campbell County was located in a tactical location due to its accessibility to Cumberland Gap. This setting was much anticipated as an area for struggle between the two American armies, Union and Confederate. Campbell County by an overwhelming majority favored the Union cause. While Parker was involved in covering the retreat back into Tennessee, Federal forces in Campbell County, Tennessee captured him on December 28th, 1862. In transit to central Kentucky as a prisoner of war, he escaped only to be recaptured at Danville, Kentucky on January 2, 1863 and from there he was forwarded to Vicksburg, Mississippi by way of Cairo on January 11, 1863. He arrived at Camp Douglas, Illinois on the shores of

Lake Michigan January 27th, 1863 during one of the worst winters in that historical era. There were constant temperatures below 0 degrees and prisoners from the South came in clothing unsatisfactory for such temperatures. In addition to the lack of warm clothing, blankets were lacking. The main causes of death were listed as smallpox, fever and pneumonia. Camp Douglas was the equivalent of the Confederate's Andersonville in Georgia. This camp differed from other northern prison camps because of the high mortality rates and extreme acts of cruelty. By early 1863, when Parker arrived, there were 8,962 prisoners in the Camp with fewer than 900 guards. Over 200 prisoners were crowded into barracks averaging 70 feet by 25 feet. As the number increased, tents were erected to house them with little protection against below zero winds. It was estimated that this number of prisoners was pouring 3,000 gallons of urine daily on open earth. Huge latrines were left open, so rain-washed raw sewage into the drinking water supply. Wooden floors were removed to discourage tunneling. Rats and mice were commonplace. Food rations were restricted, partly to cut costs and partly as retaliation for Southern victories. On the day before his parole, April 5, 1863, civilian doctors called it an extermination camp drawing an unrelenting picture of wretched inmates without change of clothing, covered, with vermin trying to survive in an area reeking with filth and foul air with blankets in rags. To pass the time during his imprisonment at Camp Douglas he carved out of a gutta-percha button a lovely ring that had wonderful inlaid metal.

Existing records indicate that from late January at his arrival until July of that year, 3,932 prisoners were received. 792 prisoners died which was an alarming 20%. 63 were released as 24 escaped and 3,003 were exchanged. Parker was fortunate as on April 6th, 1863, he was one of 668 prisoners paroled in exchange for Union prisoners held in the South and was back with Company A, 6th Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Cavalry by early summer.

On September 10, 1863 he was at Peavine Creek near Chattanooga. In a report from Brigadier General John Pegram, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Division he praised the behavior of the Sixth Georgia Cavalry when he "ordered Colonel Hart to charge the enemy with two companies of his regiment. This he most gallantly did, and brought out 59 prisoners from within sight of the masses of the enemy". Two days later the 6th got into a hotly contested fight at Leet's Tan Yard in which much of the combat was hand to hand. Outnumbered and badly outgunned, the 6th Georgia and Rucker's Tennessee troops gave the enemy all they could handle.

He participated in the Battle of Chickamauga just south of Chattanooga, on September 18th through the 20th, 1863. In this Chickamauga Campaign the 6th Georgia was under the command of General Nathan Bedford Forrest Cavalry Corps. The 6th fought near the area known as Jay's Mill and had several skirmishes during Forrest's pursuit of the Union army towards Chattanooga. Another eyewitness account is related by a Federal officer, Captain David J. Jones of the First Kentucky Infantry when he wrote in his report: "After my capture I learned that one regiment of cavalry, the Sixth Georgia, under Colonel Hart, was the attacking force, but that one company of the regiment, COMPANY A, under Captain Brown, made the charge and routed our four companies". After the Chickamauga Fight the 6th Georgia participated in General James Longstreet's, East Tennessee Campaign which found Parker participating on October 20 in the battle at Philadelphia, Tennessee and on November 17 during the Siege of Knoxville. While the 6th did have a few mounted

cavalry fights, most of the Regiment's combat was on foot. In all but name, it was a mounted infantry regiment. They did it all, from cavalry raids to trench warfare. They performed every possible military function expected from both infantry and cavalry units. This versatility is why the Regiment was in so many engagements. Records show that it, or detachments of it, took part in more than 125 engagements during its career.

On the Company Muster dated February 13, 1864, Parker was listed as absent escorting a wagon train that had left November 25th, 1863. On March 22, 1864, his name appears as signature to an Oath of Allegiance to the United States in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Oath states that he is a resident of Towns County Georgia of light complexion, brown hair, gray eyes and a height of 6 foot 3 inches. He signed his Oath by a mark which indicates that he could not read or write. Having lost four horses during the war, he was broke; not only in finances but spirit as well. Even though Towns County was pro-Union, he chose to hide out in North Carolina for the rest of the war making distilled spirits for a bootlegger.

After the war ended, he returned to Towns County and along with his brother Lyhue moved to 'Persimmon' a community in northern Rabun County, Georgia near the town of Clayton. He purchased a small farm here where he and Rebecca were to rear six boys: John, Fate, Alec, Bill, Rufus and Brown along with three girls: Lulah, Margaret and Jane. Uncle John and Uncle Fate had been born in Towns County before he had volunteered for Confederate service. All the other children were born after the war in Rabun County.

My grandfather Parker had a talent for woodworking. He and his brother Lyhue made furniture for the home. He loved to work with walnut and fashioned a beautiful china cabinet with wooden latches. He constructed a table of walnut for the family and even my mother's spinning wheel. Many of the Parkers had mechanical talent and my grandfather needed only a hammer and saw to build a house.

My mother, Lulah, spoke often of her childhood days there. They lived in a log house and it was a three-mile walk to school. My grandfather made their shoes. My mother spoke of one incident where her daddy getting up to build a fire in the morning accidentally threw one of their shoes in the fire. He got out his last and tools and made a replacement shoe in time for them to go to school. Mother spoke of how they wove their own cloth to make clothes. She said that when there was a big snow, the boys would make a bird trap and catch snowbirds to eat. Mother continued this tradition of self-sufficiency. I remember as a child watching her weave cloth, knit socks, quilt and using a spinning wheel. She plucked feathers from the breasts of geese to fashion feather coverlets for our beds. She sold butter and eggs to acquire money to purchase extra treasures for me.

My grandfather Parker made extra money for his family by transporting apples, tobacco and whiskey on a two horse wagon from 'Persimmon' all the way to Athens, Georgia. One of his favorite campsites on these journeys was at a spring located just south of the present Alleys Chapel Church on Highway 197 near Clarkesville. On many occasions they would stop and spend the night here. I recall my mother telling of the time that my grandfather sold some apples to a lady. She jumped on him about worms in the apples. He replied to her, "Lady, I did not sell you the worms, I sold you the apples" and then drove away. On another occasion, my grandfather was transporting a barrel of whiskey in a covered wagon. He was stopped by revenue

officers that rolled the barrel to the back of the wagon, took an ax and knocked a hole in it and the whiskey began pouring out. Back then all wagons carried toolboxes at the front and my grandfather had a tin cup he always carried in his toolbox. Excited, he ran to the front of his wagon, got his cup and then ran to the back of the wagon and was able to catch two cups of whiskey, which he drank before the barrel was empty.

As a small child I do recall the visit of my grandmother's brother to our home where he spent the night. His name was Minter Morgan and he was a teacher or as he was called at the time "a schoolmaster" I remember vividly his blue serge suit and, particularly, how fascinated I was with his gold watch chain.

When my grandmother Rebecca died in May of 1902, my grandfather sold his farm in 'Persimmon' and purchased a farm just out of Clarkesville on Beaver Dam Creek. It was known after his death as the Bill Parker place and is presently owned by the Gordon Adams family. All of his family came with him excepting Brown who stayed in 'Persimmon' and Fate who lived in Shooting Creek, North Carolina just outside of Hiawasse. This was a close knit family with very emotional feelings for each other. I recall family singings around an old organ and the many tears that would fall at partings. Except for Brown and Fate, the entire family settled around Clarkesville just to be together. The daughter Margaret married Gil York from Persimmon who declined to move saying he could not follow the Parkers all over the country. He said he had to go where he could make a living and eventually moved to Franklin County where he grew cotton. The other boys, John, Alec, Bill and Rufus married and moved to small farms around Clarkesville. Rufus would marry Lizzy Wall.

My mother and her sister Jane lived with and cared for their aging father at the Parker home place. My father William Hamlin had been widowed in 1910, and had three small children to take care for and so began to court my mother.

Robert H. Parker was born March 14, 1835 and died February 14, 1910. On the day of his death, the area had been covered with a large snowfall and the roads were so bad that he could not be buried beside his wife in 'Persimmon'. He was buried in the Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery near Clarkesville. With the death of her father, my mother agreed to a marriage proposal from my father with two conditions. One, there had to be a flower pit prepared for winter protection of her many flowers and second, her sister Jane would become a part of the new household. My father agreed and the ceremony was performed November 1, 1911.

My Aunt Jane lived with my mother and father until 1916, when I was born. She then married Frank Ivester and lived close by in the neighborhood. I was always very special to her. She died in 1948, and is buried in the Ebenezer Methodist Church Cemetery in Hollywood, Georgia. My mother underwent surgery in Gainesville, Georgia in 1932, and died from complications after the operation. She is buried with my father in the Alleys Chapel Methodist Church Cemetery near Clarkesville, Georgia.

The narrative above was drawn from memories my mother shared with me when I was a child and I am recording them in 1985. As far as I know, there was never a family Bible.

Owen Alley

November 23, 1916 - May 2, 2002

Footnote:

On April 26, 2008, Confederate Memorial Day was commemorated in Habersham County, Georgia by the Habersham Guard Camp 716 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans along with the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The ceremonies included the unveiling of the Southern Memorial cross of Honor at the grave of Robert Huey Parker, Company A, 6th Regiment Georgia Volunteer Cavalry. Several descendents of Robert H. Parker participated.

Robert Stoy document