REMINISCENCES

1861 1865

LAWSON HARRILL,
Captain Company I, 56th Regiment
North Carolina Troops.

GENERAL M. W. RANSOM'S BRIGADE.

1910
BRADY, THE PRINTER
STATESVILLE, N. C.
A WORD PERSONAL.

Houses HARRILL, my great-grandfather, was born in Virginia. He married Francis Street, moved to North Carolina, and settled on Beaver Dam Creek, in what is now Cleveland county. Here they raised a large family—five sons and several daughters. Their son Samuel, born June 19, 1772, was my grandfather.

 Tradition has it that Houses HARRILL served in the Revolutionary war. If so, he was probably in a Virginia Regiment. He represented Rutherford county in the Legislature of 1804.

Samuel HARRILL was married about 1799 to Susannah Hamrick. They lived on Sandy Run Creek in Rutherford county, and were the parents of six sons and five daughters. Their fourth son, Amos, was my father.

My maternal great-grandfather James Lee, and his wife, Mary Chisholm, were raised in Virginia. He was connected with the family from which General Lee descended.

At the beginning of the Revolution he was living in Tryon county, now Rutherford county, North Carolina. He fought at King's Mountain and Cowpens. Being severely wounded at Cowpens, he was carried to his home 12 or 15 miles distant.
While on furlough he received a letter from General Pickens commending his bravery in that battle.

CASSANDRA or "CASSIE LEE," his daughter, married WILLIAM BAXTER, and their daughter, ELIZABETH, my mother, married AMOS HARRILL, March 30, 1837.

I am the eldest of fifteen children and was born February 17, 1838. WILLIAM BAXTER, the second child died in infancy.

My boyhood days were spent in Rutherford county, where I attended the common schools. Webster's blue back was a text book and boys were taught to spell. I learned to do all kinds of farm work, and also that fish would bite on Sunday.

My life was uneventful until my twentieth year. At that time my brothers and sisters were attacked with a malignant form of scarlet fever. On February 22, 1858, Susan, one of my twin sisters died. Though only eleven years of age, she seemed to realize that she could not live and selected a place for her burial. Baity died February 27; Esther, 28; Sarah, March 3; and Priscilla, March 14.

I regard this great affliction as the turning point in my life. I realized that I was without a hope of that happy existence beyond the grave. I was in a state of unrest and anxiety until May 31st. It was customary in those days to preach funerals some time after death and burial. At the services in
memory of my brother and four sisters, while my uncle, William Harrill, was preaching, I was converted.

The same year, 1858, I commenced the study of medicine under Dr. O. P. Gardner. I entered Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, in October, 1859. Here I became aware of the intense animosity existing between the North and South.

My first experience in political excitement was at the time of the John Brown raid at Harper’s Ferry. The bitterness increased during 1860. March 9, 1861, I graduated in medicine and returned to my home.

BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

On the 13th of April, 1861, I arrived in Charleston, S. C., and the next day saw the United States flag lowered at Fort Sumter. From Spartanburg I had traveled with a number of South Carolina Volunteers, who were in a state of great excitement. The firing had ceased before we reached the city and the surrender took place next day.

When I returned to Rutherford county, I made and raised the first secession flag in the county. In a few days Lincoln’s proclamation calling for troops to coerce the States that had already seceded was the topic discussed at every fireside. It was the general opinion that North Carolina would secede.
Governor Ellis called the Legislature to meet May 1. In the meantime volunteer companies were being organized all over the State.

My brother Amos and I joined the first one to leave our county. My brothers George and John joined one which was formed later. Our company was organized and drilled for several days at the place where Forest City now stands. My cousin, H. D. Lee, grandson of James Lee, was elected Captain. On May 1, we left for Raleigh. We marched to Lincolnton (our nearest R. R. station) took a freight train and reached Raleigh May 3rd, or 4th, where we found the greatest excitement, troops being sent to the front and regiments being organized, as the Legislature had authorized the Governor to raise ten regiments before the meeting of the State Convention. Our company was placed in the 6th Regiment Volunteers, North Carolina Troops. We camped at the old quarry, where the stone used in building the capital was taken. We spent most of the time in drilling. Here I learned the manual of arms.

My uncle Micajah Durham, father of Plato Durham, was a delegate to the State Convention. He took me into the Capital, shared his seat with me, hence I was present when the ordinance of secession was passed on the twentieth of May, 1861.

To avoid confusion, the numbers of the volun-
teer regiments were changed, and my company was assigned to the 16th Regiment, being Company D. Stephen Lee, of Asheville, was our Colonel.

July 5th, 1861, we left Raleigh, arrived in Richmond on the 6th and in a few days were ordered to what is now West Virginia, to re-inforce General Garnett, who was killed before we could reach him.

My first experience in marching in battle array was from Staunton, Va., across the Alleghanies to Valley Mt., at the head of Tygart’s River. I was wearing a pair of Oxford ties. Blisters were numerous.

While we were in camp at Valley Mt., our regiment was visited with an epidemic of measles terminating in many cases, on account of unavoidable exposure, in rapid pneumonia, or followed by typhoid fever.

There were no experienced nurses, no suitable food, no competent cooks and a scant supply of medicines. The Surgeon and Assistant-Surgeon were sick and Dr. J. L. Rucker and I, both privates, were detailed for medical services. We did what we could, but the great number of the sick (at one time amounting to several hundred) overwhemed us. Disease caused greater mortality among us than any battle of the war.

September 23rd, we were ordered to advance on the position of the enemy. There was skirmish-
ing for a day or two. Here I saw my first dead Federal soldier. On our return our command halted. I was sick and had permission to leave the regiment. In going to the rear I met General R. E. Lee, riding alone. He made inquiries about a certain Tennessee Regiment, then said, "you look sick, go as far as you can. I am going to order these troops to retire and you will be exposed to capture." I kept going until exhausted, when I spent the rest of the night on the grass in a mountain meadow.

About October 1, the troops were withdrawn from Valley Mt. It had been raining almost daily for weeks and all streams were raging. We had great difficulty in crossing a river. The current was so strong that one man could not stand in it, but they gripped each other and crossed in groups. In a few days I was detailed to take charge of a train of wagons and convey more than fifty typhoid fever patients to the hospital at Rock Bridge Alum Springs, 50 or 60 miles away.

Here I assisted in treating the sick, until I was attacked with jaundice. When I recovered I was placed in charge of a ward in the hospital. Soon after, I took charge of the Dispensary, where I remained until December, when I rejoined my regiment near the Potomac river, east of Manassas. We spent the winter here and suffered many hardships.
While here I heard of the death of my brother George, in the hospital at Goldsboro, N. C. He was in his twentieth year. He had been in service only a few months.

In March, 1862, with First Lieutenant Kilpatrick, I was detailed to return to Rutherford county to enlist recruits. We raised about 75 men, and rejoined our regiment at Fredricksburg, Va. Here, on April 7, we organized a new company, with J. W. Kilpatrick, Captain, and L. Harrill, First Lieutenant. This new company, "N" was attached to the 16th Regiment, making 13 companies in that regiment. This company was mainly new men with a few transfers from Company D.

In a few days we left for Ashland, Va., and on to Yorktown. Here we were exposed to fire from the Federal gunboats. A shell from one struck our breastworks and threw dirt over me.

The retreat from Yorktown to Richmond, began on May 4, and our march was made over roads almost knee deep in mud. At Williamsburg there was a hard fought battle, but our regiment was not engaged. On this retreat I saw our Commander, Gen. Jos. E. Johnson, for the first time. After one hard day's march, we made our supper on corn taken from the hungry mules and parched.

We remained in the vicinity of Richmond until May 30, when we marched toward Mechanicsville.
May 31, we went to Seven Pines at double quick. Firing in our front warned us that we were to enter our first battle, and the roadside was lined with playing cards, which the men cast aside not wishing to carry them into the fight. We were under command of that dauntless old hero, Gen. Wade Hampton, who rode quietly along the line saying, "Do not fire a shot until you feel the enemy on your bayonets." We lost our Captain, J. W. Kilpatrick, and W. A. Brooks, A. K. Lynch, A. R. Sorrels and J. G. Price. The latter, our drummer, went voluntarily into battle. A number of our men were wounded. After the battle we had a supper of pork and beans from kettles on the camp fires of a Pennsylvania Regiment, "The Bucktail Rangers."

I was promoted to Captain and served as such until the close of the war. At Seven Pines, General Johnson was wounded, and General Lee became Commander. Early next morning he rode by my company on old "Traveller."

We remained in this locality until June 19, when I was ordered to report with my company at Camp Mangum, Raleigh, N. C. Here our company was transferred to the 56th Regiment, North Carolina Troops and became Company I. Ours was the only company in this regiment that had seen active service. This was our first opportunity for drilling,
as heretofore we had been too close to the enemy. Col. H. B. Watson inspected the company July 1, 1862, and made this report:—"Discipline: Good. Instruction: Very deficient. Military Appearance: Good. Arms: Mixed but serviceable. Accoutrements: Good. Knapsacks: Worthless. Clothing: Deficient." We drilled every day and soon felt that as skirmishers we were the best in the regiment. (For account of the formation of this company and its transfer see North Carolina Regiments, Vol. III, page 316.)

Aug. 8, 1862, the 56th was ordered to Goldsboro. The next three months were spent marching and counter-marching between Goldsboro, Warsaw, Magnolia, Wilmington, the seacoast, Tarboro, etc. We took one trip in the rain on flat cars. Smoke from rich pine wood used in the engine blew full upon us. When we reached camp where soap and water were scarce, we had no change of clothing. The figure, size, or roll call revealed a man's identity. East of Tarboro, on November 4th, Vance, our recently elected Governor, visited us. He was wearing a high silk hat and was greeted with "Come out of that hat! We know you are in there because we see your feet sticking out." Vance enjoyed the joke as much as the men.

November 5, expected attack from General Foster—had skirmishing. November 6th, had pursued
enemy to Hamilton, N. C. Next day we had several inches of snow. I was unwilling for the half dozen barefooted men to March through it, and with difficulty secured a wagon for them. On November 15th, we crossed Roanoke River at Hill’s Ferry, near Palmyra. We marched through Bertie county to Murfreesboro. We were escorted through the town by Colonel Wheeler (author of North Carolina History) and his cavalry. November 19th, crossed the Nottaway River, marched to Franklin, Va., and 6 miles beyond. We were without food. I failed to secure any supplies from the commissary but was invited to sup with my Colonel, which I declined to do. We remained at Franklin, Va., for several weeks.

December 8th. A detachment from my company under Lieutenant Sweezy, who never saw anything too big for him to fight, attacked a small gunboat in Blackwater River and forced it to withdraw. My men being on a bluff had the advantage.

January 17, 1863. Returned to Goldsboro N. C., and were ordered to the front on picket duty at Magnolia. January 20th, went to Keenansville. Here the Brigade of General M. W. Ransom was formed by placing 24th, 25th, 35th, 49th and 56th Regiments under his command. February 22nd. Ordered to Wilmington, thence to Old Topsail Sound (Feb. 24) where we drilled until March 23.
when we started to Kinston, arriving April 1. April 17th we crossed Neuse River and by the 19th reached Wise's Fork, where we lay in line of battle. At this time the Federals were occupying Newbern.

April 24th, Company's I, E and G, all under my command, were ordered to Gum Swamp, ten miles east of Kinston. On the 28th we were attacked by four regiments, at least 1600 men, while my force was 165. We held our position on the east side of the swamp for about two hours, then crossed to the west side and fought until darkness closed the battle. We lost one officer, Lieutenant Lutterloh, and three men killed. Enemy's loss, ten killed and eighteen wounded. Next morning Adjutant E. J. Hale wrote an account of the skirmish and published it in the Fayetteville Observer. He says, "Capt. Harrill, Company I, commanded during the first of the fight and until the arrival of Colonel Faison. He is certainly one of the coolest men I ever saw, and all award him praise for the admirable handling of his little force while in command. * * * *. Our officers and men behaved most admirably, not one leaving his post or straggling in any way * * * *. The force of the enemy in our front consisted of six regiments of infantry and a squadron of cavalry." (For another account see North Carolina Regiments, Vol. III, page 323.)
We remained near Wise's Fork, until May 21, when my company was again on picket duty, one mile south of the railroad at a crossing of Gum Swamp. During the night the enemy passed in rear of my position and attacked our regiment where the first battle of Gum Swamp was fought. After the battle I withdrew my company, crossed the enemy's trail through the swamp, and after hours of wandering joined our regiment at Wise's Fork. About half of the regiment was captured. Company I did not lose a man.

At this time the enemy was threatening Richmond from both sides of James River. To meet emergencies our brigade was moved rapidly from place to place. May 28, to Petersburg; 29, Richmond; June 2, Petersburg; June 13, Drewry's Bluff; 17, Petersburg; 21, Halfway House. June 26, we had a night march to Seven Pines to meet a column of the enemy coming from the WhiteHouse. June 2, we met a large force of Federals, partly new recruits, near Bottom's Bridge and had the longest running fight that I saw during the war. We advanced eight or ten miles rapidly, often at double quick, but the enemy outran us to the shelter of their gunboat on York River.

July 11th, we were at Petersburg; 28th, Weldon, N. C.; Aug. 1st, Garysburg, N. C.; Aug. 12th, Halifax; 13th, Hamilton; 16th ordered back to Garysburg.
About the last of August, '63, my company with others, was ordered to Wilkes county, North Carolina, to break up the gang of deserters and lawless characters, whose refuge was in the mountains. We arrested large numbers and sent them to the army. These men were from several States.

My company was in Wilkes, Ashe, Alleghany and Randolph counties until January 1, 1864, when the regiment was assembled at Goldsboro, where we drilled until ordered to Kinston, about the 28th. 29th and 31st we advanced toward Newbern. February 1st, moved at 2 a. m., and captured an outpost on Bachelor's Creek, my company on skirmish line took several prisoners. One man, hidden in the grass, threw up his hands as we came near. James Nelom was in the act of shooting him when I struck down the gun with my sword. We made a rush for the railroad bridge hoping to cut off the enemy but failed, then closed in around Newbern and spent the day in sight of their fortifications, then were sent back to Kinston.

February 7th, sent to Weldon by train; 26th, to Franklin, Va.; March 9th, to Suffolk, where we captured a number of prisoners and returned to Franklin; 12th, by train to Weldon. We then camped at Garysburg for drilling, also muster, and inspection for January and February, by Colonel Faison. Here I had my first experience in drilling
a regiment. We left for Tarboro April 14th, and next day the march to Plymouth began. The 49th Regiment being absent on special duty, the 8th Regiment was placed in Ransom's Brigade until its return.

**BATTLE OF PLYMOUTH.**

We reached the vicinity of Plymouth on Sunday, April 17th. Brigadier Gen. R. F. Hoke, commanded this expedition. Under him were his own brigade, Colonel Lewis, Commanding, Kemper's Virginia Brigade; General M. W. Ransom's Brigade; Deering's Cavalry, Branch's and other Artillery.

The engagement began Sunday evening, the enemy opening fire with artillery. My company was deployed as skirmishers on the Washington Road and drove the Yankee skirmishers within their breastworks.

April 18th. The position of my command was changed to the south front of the enemy's fortifications. About 5 P. M. a Staff Officer rode up to our Commander with General Ransom's compliments, and said, "Send me Capt. Harrill's Company." We were sent forward to engage the enemy's pickets and drove them in. The Yankee Artillery opened fire, and we sheltered behind stumps and logs, as best we could, to avoid the heavy shower of grape shot hurled at us. We lay down and all
the artillery on both sides opened fire, the shot and shell passing over us. The artillery duel is described in North Carolina History, Vol. V, page 179, as follows: "The action commenced about sunset. The night being perfectly clear with a full moon, every object was visible. The sight was magnificent. The screaming, hissing shells, meeting and passing each other through the sulphurous air, appeared like blazing comets with their burning fuses and would burst with frightful noise, scattering their fragrant as thick as hail."

April 19th. Our position was changed several times. At dark we marched to east of Plymouth. About midnight we reached Conaby Creek where the bridge had been destroyed by the enemy. We crossed the creek on pontoon bridge and took position in an open field in front of strong fortifications.

April 20th. We advanced on the town at daylight. My company was ordered to keep close to the river, as sharpshooters, without regard to the movements of the regiment.

We crossed a swamp through water hip-deep, advanced through yards and gardens, to the crossing of Jefferson Street, where we came into range of heavy infantry fire. T. R. Campbell, Sam'l Green, J. P. Philbeck, H. W. Price, R. H. Wall, and Housen Harrill were wounded. The latter still carries a minnie-ball in his leg as a souvenir. William
Daves, Co. I, color guard (with the regiment) was instantly killed.

Advancing, we reached Battery Worth, fired into the open rear door, whereupon the occupants surrendered. Taking the prisoners with us we turned to the left. About 75 yards in that direction brought us in rear of the right wing of the enemy's fortifications, full of Federal soldiers, who promptly surrendered. We marched our prisoners (double our own number) into the west end of Water Street and required them to sit or lie down. Thus we had opened the way for Lewis' men to enter the town from the west side without firing a shot.

The quotations given below bear upon this engagement and the part taken by my men. North Carolina Regiments, Vol. 5, page 188: “Company I of the 56th., under Captain Harrill, was sent in advance of the regiment with orders to keep along the river and was thus the first company to enter the town, [italics mine] and about sunrise captured 20 artilleryists who were serving the 200 pound gun intended for the ‘Albemarle,’ which was proceeding up the river with our line and secured Captain Cook from further opposition of any moment.”

"The part assigned to Harrill's men under their fearless leader had been effectually accomplished. Through water hip deep they crossed the canal and swamp and keeping near the river, passing around houses and bursting through garden and yard fences, they reached the rear of Battery Worth, containing the 200 pounder specialty provided to anticipate the coming of our iron clad "Albemarle." One volley was sufficient. The white flag was run up and the battery with some twenty artillery men surrendered to him. Taking the prisoners with them from this battery on the river they immediately charged to their left and thus struck in the flank and rear the right section of the enemy's line of battle occupying the breastworks here on Water Street facing up the river. His demand to surrender was promptly complied with and while Harrill here gathered in his prisoners largely outnumbering his own rank and file, Lewis' men, who had held the attention of the enemy in their front, came in at a double quick over the cause-way leading through the swamp on the west of Plymouth, passed Harrill's position and joined Graham's detachment."

General Wessels, commander of the United States forces, says: "At daylight the following day, 20th of April, while my right and front was seriously threatened, the enemy advanced rapidly against
my left, assaulting and carrying the line in that quarter, penetrating the town along the river and capturing Battery Worth.”

Fort Worth was captured by my company alone. No other part of the regiment nearer than 300 or 400 yards. Near the Fort we captured a hospital tent and I placed a guard over it until the drugs could be turned over to our Medical Department. We also captured a lot of clothing and provisions. Jonathan Mooney came out of a tent with a large ham on his bayonet. After the battle we had a feast of fried ham and other good things—had genuine coffee with sugar in it. C. P. Tanner, one of the first to enter Plymouth and Battery Worth was almost barefooted. He asked permission to search the tents for shoes and soon came back with a good pair on his feet. Gen. Hoke’s success in this battle made him a Major General.

General Wessel’s official report says: “The killed, wounded and missing was 127 officers and 2,707 men, besides 3000 stand of small arms, 20 pieces of artillery and a large quantity of other supplies.” Ransom’s Brigade lost killed 62, wounded 414.

April 25th. Marched to Washington, N. C.; 26th, closed around the town prepared to attack. During the night the enemy withdrew toward Newbern. From April 28th, to May 3rd, we were at Greenville. May 5th, crossed the Neuse on pon-
toon, crossed the Trent at Pollocksville, and advanced to the railroad 10 miles below Newbern where we were shelled from gunboats in Neuse River. May 6th. By forced march to Kinston. Off for Petersburg, by rail, May 9th. Several miles of road between Weldon and Petersburg had been destroyed by Federal Cavalry. We marched by burning cross ties to Stony Creek, Va., where train was in readiness and we were rushed to Petersburg. Heard firing across the Appomattox, the enemy being within one mile of the town and held in check by a few companies of Confederates with the old men and boys of Petersburg. Women and children were on the streets, wringing their hands and crying. As we rushed through the town they handed us lunches of cold bread and whatever they could find. One lady gave a hat to my brother, Amos, who had lost his when on the train. He wore the hat until he was killed not quite two weeks later. We reached Petersburg just in time to prevent its capture.

May 11th. Moved to "Half Way House" between Petersburg and Richmond, where my company was placed on skirmish line in an open field on the crest of a ridge with a line of battle opposed. Under orders we retired across Proctor's Creek, skirmished, and held our position until dark. May 12th Occupied breastworks west of the railroad. We
were attacked by skirmishers in front and surprised by line of battle in rear. My company occupied an angle in our breastworks which had been prepared for artillery. When attacked from the rear we jumped over and occupied the other side of our breastworks. This angle was nearest the enemy's line of battle and but for our stubborn resistance a considerable portion of Ransom's Brigade would have been captured. Company I was complimented for the determined and successful stand made at this point.

Private George Griffin sat on the breastworks smoking when the battle commenced. He remained there and when he finished smoking coolly knocked the ashes from his pipe and put it into his pocket.

Private Thomas Owens, who from exposure, had lost his voice—Aphonia—a year previous, was struck by a ball directly over the heart. He immediately called out "Captain, I'm shot." He recovered voice and health, and is still living. The ball, having struck a rib, passed around the body and was taken from the back.

When ordered to withdraw, my company was among the rear guard and fell back in perfect order. The gallant Cicero Durham, of the 49th, was killed here. Skirmishing continued May 13th, 14th and 15th, and General Ransom was severely
wounded. May 16th, a general engagement was brought on by our Commander, General Beauregard. We were on a turnpike directly behind the Washington Artillery of New Orleans, in a dangerous situation, though not actually engaged. Many prisoners were captured and Butler was "bottled" at Burmuda Hundreds as a result of this battle.

WARE BOTTOM CHURCH BATTLE.

At this place, for some unknown reason, five companies were sent forward in the face of the enemy, without support on either flank. Result: Company I lost Corporal W. C. Beam, the tallest man in the regiment, Sergeant Amos Harrill, Privates George Griffin and the brothers, Jack and Joe Tessenear, killed, and 12 wounded. I reported to the first field officer to be found in the trap, Major John W. Graham, that all would be killed if we remained. He ordered us to retire. My brother, mortally wounded, was placed on a blanket and three men helped me carry him out to the Ambulance Corps. When I could leave the command I found him slowly dying in the Field Hospital. We buried him in a private graveyard. Thirty years later I visited the spot and found the grave which has since been marked.

We spent about a month erecting fortifications between Drewry’s Bluff and Petersburg, then went
to the north side of James River. From thence on the night of June 16th, we were hurried to Petersburg (20 miles) where we arrived at daylight and were sent to meet the advance of Grant's army, then ready to enter the town. We were under fire nearly all day. A stray shot exploded the cartridge box of Martin Price and badly singed his hands, face, hair and whiskers.

Part of the Confederate lines had been captured. Ransom's and Clingman's North Carolina Brigades were ordered to recapture them on the night of June 17th. It was about 10 o'clock and a full noon shed its soft, mellow light upon us. Facing a recently victorious army we expected hot work. The command "Forward" was given. The two brigades rushed in to the old lines and met stubborn resistance, some of the enemy, refusing to surrender, were clubbed or bayoneted. The men of Company I, secured guns and ammunition. On some of these Springfield rifles were carved fish, snakes, turtles, etc., the work of Minnesota Indians whom we fought by moonlight. These guns were highly prized and carried by my men to the close of the war.

In this battle my brother, John, was seriously wounded. Three inches of bone was removed from his right shoulder. I afterwards found him in a crowded hospital with the wound neglected and in
bad condition. I violated the hospital regulations and removed him to the home of a Mrs. Griffin, where he had good attention. He received furlough but was never able to return. He lived about twenty-five years but finally died from the effects of the wound.

June 18th, about 3 a.m., Company I was ordered to deploy as skirmishers, cover the space occupied by the 56th regiment and hold the line until the enemy could be seen in front.

The balance of the regiment withdrew nearer to Petersburg where they commenced digging on a new line of defense as none but soldiers expecting attack could do. At daylight after seeing the field in front almost covered with living and dead blue coats, the company retired to a piece of woodland, then to a railroad embankment in an open field where we awaited developments. First we were attacked by skirmishers and repulsed them. Next came a line of battle. We retired under hot fire to the new line. In entering, I attempted to pass between two pieces of our artillery. In their anxiety our gunners fired before I passed the muzzles. I was knocked by concussion to my knees and managed to crawl within our lines. I did not leave my post until I saw the enemy's desperate charge repulsed with heavy loss, though the severe shock rendered me unfit for duty for several days.
On this day Captain F. N. Roberts, the last remaining commissioned officer of Company B, was killed. Lieutenant Joseph M. Walker of my Company was detailed to command Company B, and acted as its Captain until March 25th, 1865, when a large part of both companies were captured.

Until July 30th, we were in this line. The two armies were in some places not more than 200 or 300 yards apart. Sharpshooters on both sides were on the lookout and it was dangerous to raise the head above the breastworks.

Our rations were scant. Part of the meat was Nassau bacon from Governor Vance's blockade runner "Advance." It was yellow with age and nearly all grease, but hungry men could eat it.

It was rumored that the Federals were tunnelling under our lines. We failed to locate the spot.

About July 20th, being the senior officer present for duty, I took command of the 56th regiment and served as Colonel for several weeks.

THE CRATER.

On the crest of a ridge 1 mile east of Petersburg, stood Pegram's Battery, commanding the Federal line for more than a mile, which induced the Federals to destroy it in the hope of rushing through the gap and capturing Petersburg. 150 yards north of this battery a small stream flowed northeast
through our line. The same distance south the Jerusalem road led southeast. To the west was a Confederate mortar battery on higher ground. Ransom's Brigade was north of Pegram's Battery. On our right was Elliott's South Carolina Brigade which extended southward beyond Pegram's Battery.

While lying on a piece of oil-cloth, I was awakened on the morning of July 30th, by the terrific explosion, and a rocking, trembling motion of the earth. Instantly our men sprang to their guns, without adjusting their scanty garments, and in two minutes were ready for the terrible ordeal before them.

Two hundred pieces of Federal artillery opened fire immediately after the explosion, which had destroyed the battery, killed the men sleeping near and blown up the earth, forming a crater forty yards long, twenty-five yards wide and about thirty feet deep. Three divisions of Federal soldiers (one colored troops) rushed into the breach with an open road to Petersburg. Instead of pressing forward, they dallied half an hour while the Confederate army took active measures to meet the enemy.

Ransom's Brigade, fortunately sheltered by the bank of the stream, moved rapidly to the right at an angle of about 45° from the earthworks. A movement to the left at about the same angle brought
the South Carolina Troops into position along the Jerusalem road.

In their new position, so hastily taken, these two brigades met and repulsed the terrible onslaught of the enemy. Several assaults were made. If the Federals moved south or southwest they were met by the South Carolinians. If north or northwest, Ransom's Tar Heels blocked the way. If they advanced toward Petersburg, they were on top of the ridge under a deadly cross fire from both lines. Meanwhile the mortar battery and other artillery threw shells into the huddled mass of Federal troops with fearful havoc. After the battle had been raging for two or more hours, the Federals commenced breaking to the rear singly and in squads. This brought them within range of cross-fire from Confederates still occupying the old lines and many were cut down.

About nine or ten o'clock General Mahone arrived with re-inforcements and a general charge was ordered. With a yell and bayonet charge the Confederates swept everything before them and re-established the lines. There was a truce for the burial of the dead and hundreds of bodies were thrown into the great chasm and covered with dirt.

An extract from North Carolina Regiments, Volume III, page 372, is here given:
"The fifty-sixth under Captains Lawson Harrill, acting Colonel and R. D. Graham, acting Lieutenant Colonel deploy in single file and move up the line to the right to meet any demonstration in their front, contributing by their steady fire materially to hold the enemy in check while a forlorn hope is being organized for a counter charge. It was sure death for one of the Yankees to even start to the rear from this north side of the Crater."

After the battle I visited the Crater where hundreds of dead Federal soldiers, both white and black lay "piled and crossed and packed upon each other," the most horrible sight I ever witnessed. This battle cost the enemy thousands of men and was a great failure on their part.

August 15th, we exploded a mine under the enemy's line but gained nothing thereby. I was still in command of the regiment, had a close call from the explosion of a mortar shell.

**BATTLE ON WELDON RAILROAD.**

August 21st. Our regiment with others attempted to drive the enemy from a fortified position on the Weldon railroad, but failed. Company I lost Lieutenant Sweezy, John Murray and Rufus Davis, killed—several wounded. I was sick and not with my company in battle, the only time during my service as captain. Captain R. D. Graham
commanded regiment. Major John W. Graham returned from furlough August 25th, and I was relieved of command of regiment.

General Wade Hampton in a cavalry raid in the rear of Grant’s army captured 1800 fine beef cattle. I saw them driven into west Petersburg and all enjoyed the feast, which followed.

September, October, November and December, 1864, and January and February, '65, were spent in the trenches east of Petersburg, always exposed to sharpshooters. Lieutenant L. M. Lynch was killed by a sharpshooter.

During the long siege from June 18th, 1864, to April, 1865, the men lived underground in “bomb-proofs,” scantily clothed, almost barefooted and half starved. They would eat anything. I was invited to a “squirrel dinner” made of wharf rats.

About the middle of March, the 56th was sent six or eight miles southwest of Petersburg, the first time in about nine months that we had been from under fire. This rest, which was greatly enjoyed by the men, was of short duration. On the evening of March 24th, we received marching orders and by daylight were in our old place east of Petersburg.

HARE'S HILL OR FORT STEADMAN.

The Federals occupied a strongly fortified position in front of which was a stockade of poles,
placed at an angle of 45° and bound together with wire. General Ransom, in command of two brigades, formed a line of battle to attack. Standing on the Confederate breastworks he called me by name and pointing to a pine tree in the Federal lines said, "Take your company in at that tree." The balance of the regiment was to follow us. We reached the stockade and with our bayonets untwisted and broke the wires, removed timbers and made a gap through which we passed, one or two men at a time. The shot from the enemy went over our heads as it was too dark for them to see us. We made a rush and went over the Federal lines followed closely by the balance of the regiment. The enemy, after being driven out brought up re-enforcements, made two separate charges and were repulsed. I then received an order from General Ransom to hold a certain traverse, a cross section of breastworks, in defending which I was captured with about twenty of my men. I give extracts from the description of this battle by Captain R. D. Graham. North Carolina Regiments, Vol. III, pages 390, 391, 392:

"Captain L. Harrill, in command of Company I and Lieutenant Chas. M. Payne, of Company K, now move briskly over the line with the skirmishers, and on their heels follows our line of battle. The position is
ours before the enemy is ready for the work of the day * *. The morning wore on, with the enemy paying us their respects both with infantry and distant artillery on the left, and shelling from a point to our right * * * *. Company I was on the extreme left of that part of the lines held by the Confederates, and after the battle had been raging for some time, Captain Harrill received an order from General Ransom with his compliments, saying "The traverse there must be held." The defense of this traverse for a time checked the enemy rushing along their main line to enfilade the regiment. About nine or ten o'clock, as the regiment was withdrawing last from the field, the enemy made another desperate charge in front and at the same time the second Michigan regiment rushed along the main line and captured Captain Harrill and about twenty men of the company." J. C. Gross and Thomas Robbins were killed. Remnants of the two companies, I and B, escaped and under First Lieutenant J. M. Walker, Second Lieutenant P. H. Gross and (uncommissioned) Third Lieutenant C. P. Tanner, continued with the regiment.

Access to the diary of C. P. Tanner, well known as one of the bravest men in Company I, enables me to follow their movements to Five Forks,—March 26th, spent in making new fortifications,
worked nearly all night,—at sunrise moved back to old quarters. 28th. Skirmishing at Burgess’ Mill, on Hatcher’s Run. 29th. Marched through cold rain parallel with Federal troops. Repulsed, without loss, several attacks of cavalry. Remained in camp next day and on the 31st advanced toward Dinwiddie C. H., had skirmishing at Richardson’s Run and lay in line of battle all night.

April 1st. Continued march expecting attack. Men anxious for battle. After some skirmishing marched back toward Five Forks and found themselves almost surrounded and cut off. Roads impassable, marched through woods and fields, abandoned ambulances in the mud. Rations that night, for desperately hungry men, was a chunk of corn bread.

A few moments after arriving at Five Forks they were attacked and repulsed several charges. At last they were surrounded, attacked in front and rear and forced to surrender. General Ransom was taken from under his horse and with a few men managed to escape, but the regiment was reduced to one company’s strength. Lieutenants Walker and Tanner were captured. Lieutenant Gross escaped and with J. D. Jones, J. G. Horton, W. R. Smart, O. D. Price, G. L. Lovelace, R. H. Wall, and Jonas Womack, answered roll call at Appomattox. Only eight men left of one hundred and forty-six.
PRISONER.

The battle of Hare's Hill ended my active service in the Confederate Army. When I saw we would be captured, I hid my sword in the leaves. I received courteous treatment from my captor, Major ____________ of the 2nd Michigan Regiment, who was a Mason. I was taken by rail to City Point, thence to Fortress Munroe and Washington, by boat. On the boat an old gentleman in citizens clothes made himself known to me as a Mason, and invited me to dine with him. The guard refused. The gentleman then asked if I had any Confederate money. I handed him a bill and he gave me a greenback bill in exchange. I used this money in buying food.

I was taken to Old Capitol Prison in Washington. All windows facing the street had been brick-ed up, and light entered from an inner court of the prison.

I was transferred to Fort Delaware, on an island in the Delaware river, not many days before Lincoln's assassination, after which, double guards (some of them negro troops) were placed around the prison. We were not allowed to assemble in groups, and when exercising in the yard, were not allowed to stop to speak to anyone.

Our food supply was limited. The worst feature
of the bean soup was the number of flies in it. Fortunately, I was able to purchase soome food. My uncle, Judge John Baxter, of Knoxville, Tenn., sent me a check for $50.00, on which I paid $6.00 exchange. Balance given me only in small sums to prevent me from buying my way out of prison. Col. Frank Coxe, sent me a check for $10.00. It failed to reach me, though some one cashed it.

After I had been at Fort Delaware about a month circulars were given to the prisoners, offering us freedom if we would take the oath of allegiance. Less than a dozen of the 1200 officers imprisoned here took the oath.

**RELEASE FROM PRISON.**

I remained in prison until June 19th, when I was required to hold up my right hand while the oath was read to me, therefore I did not regard it as binding.

Twenty-five North Carolinians left in a squad. I was made captain and went to the Army Headquarters in Philadelphia, where a party pass was given me good to Salisbury, N. C. While standing here in my ragged, dirty prison clothing, I was recognized by the carrier who delivered my mail when I was a student at Jefferson Medical College, four years before. He furnished me a long linen duster which covered my rags. I went to call on
my former landlady, Miss Susan Roberts, and found she had sent a bundle of clothing to the prison for me. The package did not reach me.

With the squad I went by rail to Baltimore, then on a miserably dirty cattle transport to Norfolk, where we were placed on a better boat and went up the James river to Richmond, thence by rail to Salisbury, where we separated. I told the inn keeper, Mr. Alex Buis, that I had no money. He gave me lodging and breakfast. As I was leaving and thanking him for his kindness, a stranger handed me a two-dollar bill and urged me to accept it. I paid my bill, took my friend's name, and one year later, was enabled to return the money. With 75 cents in my pocket I boarded the train. I told the conductor my circumstances and he did not ask me for a ticket. At Catawba Station I left the train, took dinner with my brother-in-law, J. M. Lewis, and started for Wilkes county, on an old, worn-out mule.

I spent the night with a man who was expecting his son home from the army, paid him 75 cents, and reached home without a cent.
HOME.

I found the family of my father-in-law almost in need, as Stoneman had passed through some weeks previous and almost stripped the country.

There were seven in the family to be fed, besides ten or twelve negroes who were shrewd enough not to leave their old master. Our food was mainly corn bread and pork from a litter of pigs, three months old, which we butchered one by one and ate half of one in a day. This fare seemed sumptuous to the three returned soldiers.

About July I visited my parents in Rutherford county and found I had left with them $3.50 in silver—now my entire estate. I returned to Wilkes where I practiced medicine and farmed for several hard years of the

RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD.

The State was without a currency. Everything was in confusion and uncertainty. There were no schools and no mail facilities. We had to send fourteen miles to Wilkesboro for mail.

Designing men organized the negroes into "Loyal Leagues" or "Red Strings," the badge being anything red worn anywhere about the person. One meeting place was about half a mile from my home. The meetings were boisterous, noise continuing
nearly all night. Fences were thrown down so stock could destroy the crops.

At this time Hon. Josiah Turner had an appointment to speak in Wilksboro and a threat was made that he would not be allowed to do so. A message was sent to the old soldiers and on the appointed day they were present prepared for business. The leaders of the Red Strings were notified that they would be held personally responsible for the slightest disturbance and would be the first to suffer. It proved to be a quiet day.

I was disfranchised by the authorities, the leaders of the League, upon the ground that, before the war, I was deputy postmaster at a little country postoffice, which perhaps paid to the principal ten or twelve dollars a year, the true reason being the fact that they could not control my vote.

Such conditions led to the organization of the Ku Klux Klan who soon brought about a very different state of affairs. I was not a member but knew something of their movements.

In 1870, I moved to Abilene, Kansas, where I found there was a law disfranchising any one who had served in the Confederate army. My ballot was challenged at the first election. I was then told that I would be allowed to vote if I could say I had been drafted, or had entered the Confederate army under compulsion. I replied "I went into
the army voluntarily and under like circumstances would act in the same way." During the next session of the Legislature an act was passed making me a citizen of the State of Kansas. I was no longer a man without a country.

ROSTER OF COMPANY I,

56th Regiment, North Carolina Troops.
1861—1865


Calton, John W. Enlisted March 26, 1862. Orderly Sergeant.


Harrill, Amos. Enlisted May 1, 1861, Company D, 16th Regiment. Transferred to Company I. Sergeant. Mortally wounded at Ware Bottom Church, May 20, 1864. Died, May 21, 1864.

Beam, W. C. L. Corporal. Enlisted March 19, 1862. Killed at Ware Bottom Church, May 20, 1864.

Lynch, W. L. Corporal. Enlisted March 18, 1862.


Price, Oliver D. Fifer. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Cook and Nurse at invalid camp during seige of Petersburg, 1864 and 1865. Living.

PRIVATES.

Atkinson, J. M. Enlisted.

Biggerstaff, G. W. Enlisted May 2, 1861, Company D, 16th. Transferred April 7, 1862.

Biggerstaff, I. N. Enlisted March 20, 1862. Living.


Bridges, A. W. Enlisted March 4, 1862. Wounded.


Baber, ———

Bailey, Riley.
Bailey, John.

Canipe, John W. Enlisted March 17, 1862. Wounded.


Campbell, J. P. Enlisted November 11, 1863. Wounded.

Campbell, Thos. Enlisted April 10, 1864. Wounded.

Dameron, T. G. Enlisted March 21, 1862.

Dameron, Wm. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Died at Wilmington, March, 1863.


Davis, J. L. Enlisted.

Deck, G. W. Enlisted March 21, 1862.

DePriest, J. G. B. Enlisted March 21, 1862.

Dobbins, Nehemiah. Enlisted 1863.
Franklin, J. P.    July 8, 1862.    Died in hospital.


Freeman, Dock.    Enlisted.

Goforth, J. H.    Enlisted July 8, 1862.

Goforth, Thomas.    Enlisted.

Griffin, George.    Enlisted March 21, 1862.    Killed May 20, 1864, Ware Bottom Church.

Green, L. M.    Enlisted July 8, 1862.    Died in hospital.

Green, Samuel.    Enlisted July 8, 1862.

Green, William.    Enlisted July 8, 1862.


Hanks, E. F.    Enlisted ————Transferred to Company A, 56th Regiment.
Harrill, Housen. Enlisted May 1, 1861, Company D, 16th, transferred to Company I. Wounded.


Henson, J. C. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Severely wounded. Nose split open, two front teeth, portion of bone and ball all caught in mouth.

Hollifield, H. C. Enlisted July 5, 1862.


Horton, D. M. Enlisted March 15, 1862. Lost left arm August 21, 1864.


Horton, W. T. Enlisted July 8, 1862. Killed near Petersburg, August 21, 1864.


Hitchings, Reuben. Enlisted March 20, 1862. Died in hospital May 1, 1862.


Huntsinger, Wm. Enlisted March 20, 1862.

Jones, J. D. Enlisted March 12, 1862. Wounded.

King, Spencer. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Died in hospital June 20, 1862.

King, Wm. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Died in hospital June 1, 1862.


Lynch, Hyman. Enlisted.

Lovelace, G. L. C. Enlisted February 19, 1863.

Melton, Samuel. Enlisted.

Melton, Joseph. Enlisted.

Melton, J. S. Enlisted March 15, 1862.

Michael, James M. Enlisted July 8, 1862.

Moxley, Thos. Enlisted October, 1863.

Mooney, David. Enlisted March 21, 1862.
Mooney, E. D.  Enlisted October 14, 1862. Lost left arm August 21, 1864.


Mooney, M. O.  Enlisted March 15, 1862.


Murray, John W.  Enlisted July 8, 1862. Killed August 21, 1864.

Nelon, James R.  Enlisted March 20, 1862.


Padgett, Craton.  Enlisted March 21, 1862. Wounded.

Padgett, J. L.  Enlisted July 8, 1862. Wounded.

Padgett, Landrum.  Enlisted April 6, 1864.


Price, F. J. Enlisted July 10, 1862.


Price, John M. Enlisted April 1, 1863. Wounded.

Price, John R. Enlisted March 21, 1862.

Price, T. F. Enlisted July 8, 1862.


Price, R. S. Enlisted July 8, 1862.

Robbins, P. L. Enlisted July 8, 1862.


Smith, C. C. Enlisted May 1, 1861, Company D, 16th. Transferred April 7, 1862.
Spake, George. Enlisted March 21, 1862.
Smart, D. P. Enlisted February 12, 1863. Wounded.
Sparks, W. A. Enlisted April 14, 1863.
Smart, Wm. R. Enlisted 1863.
Spurlin, George W. Enlisted April 7, 1862. Died from wound.
Sweezy, T. J. Enlisted March 15, 1862.
Sweezy, J. W. Enlisted July 8, 1862.
Towry, John P. Enlisted March 21, 1862.
Towry, L. M. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Discharged.
Tessenear, Jackson. Enlisted February 12, 1863. Killed May 20, 1864, at Ware Bottom Church.
Tessenear, Joseph. Enlisted February 12, 1863. Killed May 20, 1864, at Ware Bottom Church.
Wall, E. H. Enlisted March 21, 1862.
Wall, Riley H. Enlisted March 21, 1862. Wounded.
Walker, J. B. Enlisted.
Webb, R. A. Enlisted July 5, 1862.
Weast, M. G. Enlisted July 8, 1861. Died in hospital.
Wells, John. Enlisted October 1, 1862.
Whitaker, Z. B. Enlisted July 5, 1862.
Whitaker, I. H. Enlisted July 5, 1862.
Whitaker, R. D. Enlisted July 5, 1862.
Womack, Jonas. Enlisted July 5, 1862.

Total number of officers and men, - 146
Killed and mortally wounded on battle fields, - 25
Died from disease, - 28
Severely wounded but recovered, - 25
Discharged for disability, - 5

A large number of slight wounds, not serious enough to require hospital treatment not reported. Very few escaped without any wound.
CONCLUSION.

These reminiscences are published for the purpose of placing certain historical facts in better shape for preservation. The first person is used not from egotism, but because the facts can be better told in that way.

The record of each man of my Company is from Muster Rolls, in my possession, made when events were fresh in mind. The long list of killed and severely wounded, without enumerating the many slight wounds, is proof that Company I was at the front and on the firing line. Its record was made possible by the bravery and devotion of the privates, "the men behind the guns," during the three years of its existence.

To the memory of the twenty-five members of the Company who went to their death on the battlefield;
To the twenty-eight others, who from exposure, sickened and died;
To those who have since passed away;
To the twenty-five others, who suffered from severe wounds, but lived with shattered health;
To all the living, true and tried, now old men, this imperfect recital of our dangers and trials, is affectionately dedicated.

When the final roll call is made, may each be prepared to "pass over the river and rest under the shade of the trees," is the wish of your old comrade,

L. HARRILL.