

WASHINGTON NICHOLAS MASON b 9/1/1830, d 12/15/1899

Me. Editor: I have seen no memoir nor tribute of respect published in your paper to the memory of my old schoolmate, friend and comrade-in-arms whose name stands at the head of this article, so I resolve myself into a self-constituted committee of one to publish a short notice of his life and death. Perhaps I knew him better than any man now living, outside of his own immediate family. My first acquaintance with him runs back about fifty years, when I, as a lad of eight or ten years, attended school at old Horeb academy, under the tutorship of Jeremiah McCartha, who taught under the ole hickory oil regime. Washington and his older brother, Whitfield, were then young men attending the same school, and were reading Virgil. I was a barefoot boy in Webster's blue-back speller, the N Y Reader and Colburn's Mental Arithmetic. In later years, after the civil war, his three children, then and still living, went to school to me at the same old stand.

We were always good friends, and up to the war we met often in the common walks of life, he as a successful farmer, and I as a humble mechanic. In the fall of 1861 we volunteered in Winnsboro in the Company known as the Aiken Guards, first commanded by Capt. A P Irby and shortly after its organization attached to the 3rd of James Battalion of S C Infantry, and designated as Company G, being the seventh company. In this company we, with near a hundred other Fairfield boys, shared the weary march, upon the coast of our own beloved old State, in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Tenn. and many a battlefield made gory with our own blood and the blood of our comrades up to the 28th of July 1864 at New Market Heights, near Fussel's Mill, some fourteen miles below Richmond, Va. where having lost my left arm, I sheathed my sword and left him with a few ah! how few! of our old company and battalion to further combat with the superior forces of the enemy.

The subject of this sketch was a good and true soldier, and could be depended on wherever and whenever demanded. He was second sergeant of my

company, and by the vicissitudes of war was often times called upon to act as orderly sergeant, and more than once he was selected to go in command of a special detail when the emergency demanded the services of a careful, prudent and brave non-commissioned officer. Your readers had the privilege a few weeks ago of reading a communication from him about the battle of _____ Harbor 1 June 1864. It was his habit all through the war to keep a diary, part of which he delivered to me a short time before his death, and from which I hope to be able on some future occasion to give your readers some reminiscences.

He brought home after the surrender a roll of our company, from which at my request he furnished to the historical agent or commissioner appointed by the legislature, the roll now on file in the office in Columbia. Mason was one of the seventeen men of our battalion who escaped from the battle of Boonsboro or South Mountain, Md. On the afternoon of that memorable Sabbath Sept 14, 1862, after our entire command had been flanked on both sides and completely surrounded front and rear, and all the rest who went into the fight were either killed, wounded or captured. When the roll was called on the morning of the 15th, he and sixteen others were all that were left to tell the tale. His escape was almost miraculous for a Federal soldier had a bead on him, but at the flash of the gun Sergeant Mason dropped to his knees and the ball passed over him and he rose running and succeeded in evading the pursuers.

After the surrender he returned home and re-entered upon his chosen employment and lived quietly with his family on his farm, having the confidence of his family and his neighbors and was one amongst the few farmers who raised his own supplies and made cotton as a surplus crop. No wonder he succeeded! He died on Friday the 15th of December 1899 at his home in Fairfield county, the old Andrews homestead, where he had lived for many years with the good woman he married in early manhood who was before marriage Miss Sarah Andrews, who was a helpmeet to him in the true sense of the word

and he always called her by the pet name "Sallie". She preceded him only a few weeks to the other world. His death though not unexpected came as a sad blow upon his family and friends, and in some sense it was sudden. He was for many years a consistent member of Bethel Methodist Church and died in her community. He leaves besides a host of relatives and friends, two sons, Rev. E W Mason of the S C Methodist conference, Mr. Eber B Mason, and one daughter, Mrs. Hattie Brooks. He was about seventy years old.

My comrades, old Confederate veterans, do you realize how swiftly our ranks are thinning; one by one we drop out. Within about ten days or two weeks five of those with whom I was more or less familiar in the army have answered the last roll call, all members of the same brigade to which I belonged: Col. J B Davis, Mettiah Green of Columbia, Capt G W Shell, W N Mason, and Capt W H Casson of Columbia. It seems to me that as we are being thinned out, we ought to get closer and closer together. Farewell, dear comrades, who have crossed the river. We who are left cannot be far behind.

R H Jennings