

I would like to share some interesting stories and facts that relate to the Battle of Franklin that was fought on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1864.

This story is mainly about the 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio infantry regiment. My great uncle Joseph A Robinson was attached to this regiment in company B.

Prior to the Battle of Franklin, the 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio was engaged in the Atlanta Campaign and fought in nearly all of the battles leading to the siege of Atlanta. They were attached to the XX111 Corps commanded by MG John Schofield, third division commanded by BG Jacob Cox, 1<sup>st</sup> brigade commanded by Col. James W Reilly and company commander Col. Oscar W Sterhl.

After the Battle of Atlanta, General Sherman began a chase of Confederate General John Bell Hood who was heading west through Georgia and into Alabama. Sherman stopped his pursuit of Hood so he could concentrate on his main objective of marching to Savannah. Sherman ordered General Schofield to shadow Hood and keep him in check until he could link up with General George Thomas in Nashville.

Hoods objective was to cut off Sherman's supply line that ran from Nashville to Chattanooga. He also hoped to destroy Schofield's army before he could be reinforced by Thomas's army.

The confederate and union armies first clashed at Columbia Tennessee on November 24<sup>th</sup>. Schofield outnumbered, retreated north to Spring Hill. Hood was in hot pursuit and had outflanked Schofield. On the night of November 29<sup>th</sup>, Schofield was able sneak his entire army past the confederates who were encamped all around them. In the morning after learning of Schofield's escape, Hood was furious and blamed all of his officers, he blamed everyone but himself.

Schofield's army arrived in Franklin at 4:30 am on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. His original plan was to march to Nashville and buy some time until Thomas's arrival from Knoxville. This plan was thwarted because the bridges across the Harpeth River were destroyed. Schofield put his engineering group to work building pontoon bridges.

This would mean the Corps would have to build breastworks on the edge of town in a semi arc stretching about 2 miles. The 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio was positioned just east of the Columbia turnpike near the cotton gin. The 104<sup>th</sup> proceeded to dismantle the cotton gin and used the exterior boards to fortify their entrenchments. Also in the cotton gin were farm implements such as shovels, rakes and axes which they used to dig with. BG George Wagner and two of his brigades of Col. Lane and Col. Conrad were positioned outside of town on Winstead Hill to deter Hood's advancing army and buying time for the works to be completed. Col. Emerson Opdycke of the 1<sup>st</sup> brigade refused to let his men be exposed out front to the mercy of the superior number of the confederates and moved his men to the rear of the breastworks and in a reserve status. He would soon distinguish himself by leading his men by charging into the confederate lines that had pushed as far as the Carter house.

Wagner and his brigades were soon hit by Hood and driven back to the Union front. Problem was the rebels were literally right on their heels and they poured into the front line with the retreating Yankees. The 100<sup>th</sup> Ohio and the 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio had to hold their fire so as not to shoot their own men.

They were forced back nearly 600 yards before they could regroup and with the addition of the 12<sup>th</sup> Kentucky and the 8<sup>th</sup> Tennessee they were able to push the rebels back. Wave after wave of rebel troops continued to enter the breastworks and it became a bloody hand to hand combat situation. They were fighting with the shovels, rakes and axes that were left in the trenches. There were many reports that they even resorted to biting each other. By late afternoon when the confederates retreated out of the breastworks, it was a scene of pure horror. Bodies were piled up as high as 6 to 8 feet.

6 members of the 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio would receive Medals of Honor in this battle. All cited for capturing confederate flags. An interesting battlefield report written by Col. Frank Atwater of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Illinois of Conrad's brigade claims that his men had captured the flags and were ordered by Col. Oscar Sterhl commander of Joseph's company to hand them over. The 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio went into the battle with an aggregate of 54 men. When the battle was over 51 men were either killed, wounded or missing. My great uncle Joseph was pretty beat up but managed to survive this slaughter.

The 104<sup>th</sup> Ohio had a dog mascot named Harvey that belonged to Lt. D.N. Stearn. His dog tag read "I am Lieutenant D.N Stearn's dog. Who's dog are you". Harvey was wounded and captured at Kennesaw Mountain. He was later returned under a flag of truce. Harvey was again wounded at Franklin but survived his wounds. Harvey went on to travel with the 104<sup>th</sup> to the Carolina campaign. Somewhere in North Carolina, Harvey was lost and never seen again.

As for my great uncle Joseph Robinson? When Schofield's Corps was ordered to Washington D.C. to help in Sherman's Carolina campaign they left Nashville on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1865 and went by boat on the Ohio River to Cincinnati. From there they marched to Grafton Virginia (Now W. Virginia). From there they rode the railroad to Washington D.C arriving at 1pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January. Joseph died in Judiciary Square General hospital of typhoid fever on that very day of arrival. His records state that in his possession was a pocket book and a gold pen. Obviously he was writing. No one from the family was able to retrieve this pocket book.

Thank You Brad Cox.

