

The Civil War experience of Martin Van Buren Wood

Our member Gail Clayton called me one Saturday afternoon and said she had some documents that she wanted to share with me. We met at a restaurant in Tempe. As I started to examine the documents it became very clear to me that these were very special. Gail's Great grandfather was a private in the 22nd Illinois infantry company E. His name was Martin Van Buren Wood. The documents that Gail presented were copies of the original court martial proceedings that took place in Chattanooga Tennessee on October 10th 1863.

In this article I will attempt to tell the story of Martin V Wood and the 22nd Illinois infantry that lead up to the incident involving the court martial.

The Twenty-second Infantry Illinois Volunteers was organized at Belleville, Illinois, May 11, 1861, and was mustered into the United States service for three years, at Caseyville, Illinois, June 25, 1861, by Captain T.G. Pitcher, U.S.A.

On August 19, Colonel Dougherty, with Companies A, B, C, D and E, attacked Colonel Hunter at Charleston, MO., in the night, and drove him from his camp to the town in a hand-to-hand fight, capturing many prisoners and horses. In this engagement the Twenty-second had 1 killed and 11 wounded, including Colonel Dougherty, whose shoulder was broken with the butt of a gun, and Captain Samuel Johnson, who received a gunshot through the right leg.

April 8, 1862, expeditions to Tiptonville, under General Paine, to intercept retreating enemy from Island No. 10. Captured 4,000 prisoners, 2 Generals, and a large quantity of stores, ammunition, arms and guns.

The Regiment was engaged in the siege of Corinth, and in pursuit of the enemy two weeks, in June. The last day of the siege Captain Samuel Johnson was again wounded, receiving a gun shot through the head.

December 31, 1862, and January 1 and 2, 1863, the Regiment was engaged in the battle of Stone's River, where it lost 199 out of 342 men going into action. Lieutenant Colonel Swanwick was wounded and taken prisoner, and remained at Atlanta and Richmond (Libby) until May, 1863. It is a singular fact, that at the battle of Stone River, every horse belonging to the Regiment, including the Battery, was killed.

After the battle of Stone's River the regiment spent their time in and around Murfreesboro until they headed south and encamped in Bridgeport Alabama around the 1st of August 1863.

On the 13th of August the regiment was preparing to go on picket duty after breakfast. Private Martin V Wood was preparing his gear for the picket duty. The tents of company D&E were separated from the officers tents by a distance of 15 to 20 yards. In that space laid a fallen tree. Martin's company commander Captain Samuel G McAdams signaled Martin over and assigned him the task of chopping the tree into logs. Martin stating that he had already performed extra duty, refused the task. Captain McAdams reminded him that he was disobeying direct orders and would do as told or had a choice to be brought up on charges or accept his punishment. Martin chose the Captains punishment which entailed donning all of his gear and was to demonstrate around the officers tents.

Captain McAdams retired into his tent. After a few moments the captain emerged only to find Martin sitting down with his rifle resting against the tent. The captain reprimanded him and Martin again began his demonstration. Shortly thereafter the captain again found Martin without any gear and sitting on the ground. Captain McAdams then placed Martin under arrest and ordered him to hand over his rifle. As the captain approached Martin, he lifted the rifle, cocked it and pointed it in the chest of the captain and stated that "Not he or any other man was going to take his rifle". Captain McAdams noticed Major Samuel Johnson standing behind Martin at a short distance. The captain walked to Martins side and being distracted Major Johnson wrestled the rifle from Martin.

Martin was then marched off to the guard house where he would stay until a general court martial could be arranged.

By the end of August Union forces under General William Rosecrans had occupied Chattanooga. The campaign against confederate general Braxton Bragg was about to culminate into the Battle of Chickamauga.

The Battle of Chickamauga started on the 19th of September 1863. The 22nd Illinois was attached to the XX Corps. 3rd Division commanded by General Philp Sheridan, 3rd brigade, commanded by Colonel Luther Bradley. On the second day of fighting Martin asked that he be able to join his regiment in the battle. Regiment commander Lt.Col. Francis Swanwick approved of Martins request. The 22nd

Illinois was swept from the field on that day and scattered in chaos. Most of Martins Company was able to regroup around Snodgrass Hill and helped General George Thomas fend off the confederates until the rest of the army could retreat back into the confines of Chattanooga. The 22nd Illinois lost 135 officers and men out of an aggregate of less than 300. Major Samuel Johnson again was wounded, this time severely and Captain French was killed.

The Union army was now under Bragg's siege in Chattanooga. With supplies cut off and men reduced to half rations it was a dire situation for the army as a whole.

Yet given these circumstances, the court martial of Martin V Wood would commence. The court was assembled and would take place at the division headquarters at 9 AM, October 10th 1863.

Presiding in the court martial were

Lt. Ansel Bates. 51st Illinois infantry. Judge Advocate

Capt. Nathan Hansen. 27th Illinois infantry

Lt. Henry White. 27th Illinois infantry

Lt. John Loomis. 42nd Illinois infantry

Lt. Robert McKenzie. 22nd Illinois infantry.

Martin pleaded "Not guilty" to all four specifications against him. After the court heard all testimonies by witnesses, the court adjourned.

At 1 PM the court convened and found Martin "Guilty" on all specifications. Martin was ordered to forfeit 6 months of pay and was sentenced to 4 months of hard labor in a military prison in Nashville Tennessee. In Captain McAdams testimony he stated that Martin was a very good soldier and never disobeyed orders and was always present for duty. He also highlighted Martins bravery and conduct during the awful battle at Chickamauga. He also stated that Martin "Is a passionate man and when excited has no control of his temper".

Martin would be incarcerated in Nashville for the months of November, December of 1863 and January and February of 1864. After his prison term,

Martin rejoined his regiment which was now around the Knoxville area chasing the retreating confederate general James Longstreet.

On March 6th 1864 the 22nd Illinois marched to Cleveland Tennessee and what was left of the scanty regiment camped there until being ordered back to Chattanooga to join Sherman in the Atlanta Campaign.

The Campaign started on the 1st of May 1864. The 22nd Illinois was engaged at the battles of Resaca, Rocky Face and New Hope church, taking many more casualties. At this point the regiment was so decimated it didn't have enough men to constitute a regiment. On June 10th 1864, they were order to Springfield Illinois for muster out. On July 7th 1864, Martin mustered out of the service. What remained of the few veterans and new recruits were consolidated into the 42nd Illinois infantry.

After the war, Martin would settle in Sorento, Illinois and become a blacksmith

I have a special interest in this story because my great uncle Gilbert Shannon was in the 42nd Illinois infantry and fought in the same brigade as Martin at Stone's River, Chickamauga and the Atlanta Campaign.

Brad Cox. On behalf of Gail Clayton

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