

George Washington Williams

Ohio 6th Volunteer Cavalry

My Life for My Country

by Carole Babyak

George W. Williams was born in March 1836 in **Howland Township**, son of **Joseph and Melinda Williams**, Howland-Springs Rd. On the 1860 Census his occupation was listed as a Sawyer. His father Joseph was a carpenter-farmer so George probably helped saw wood with his father. He entered service in the **6th Ohio Vol. Cav. in Co. G. (Capt. Richart's)** on November 31, 1861, enlisting for 3 years service. He was appointed Corporal on Feb. 25, 1862. Ladies of Warren presented the Ohio 6th a flag on Jan 23, 1862. They guarded "secesh" prisoners of war at Camp Chase, Columbus then in May 1862 went to Virginia, after General "Stonewall" Jackson. In the Rappahannock Valley of Virginia they were under fire for 14 days and the horses were not unsaddled for days. They took part in the **2nd Battle of Bull Run or Manassas** in Virginia, August 29, 1862. In early October, 1862 they were patrolling the old Manassas battle field, where rain had washed dirt away from shallow graves revealing bones of soldiers slain in that battle. They fought at **Kelly's Ford**, VA, early May, 1863 was with **Stoneman's Raid** which went close to Richmond, VA. Saw action at **Brandy Station**, June 6, 1863, **Stevensburg** on June 9th, **Aldie** on June 17th, and **Middlesburg, Upperville** on June 21st all in Virginia. These Cavalry skirmishes were included in what is called the Gettysburg Campaign. After Gettysburg the Ohio 6th Cavalry chased the retreating "rebs" south. For the Gettysburg Campaign the Ohio 6th was included in the Cavalry Corp. of the Army of the Potomac, Lt.-Col. William Stedman commander. (1) September 1, 1863 George and 21 other troopers were **captured at Barber's Cross Roads, VA**. He was sent to **Belle Isle prison camp**, an island on the James River in Richmond, Virginia. (2) An article in the Wed. Dec 23, 1863 Western Reserve Chronicle entitled Starving of Prisoners of War at Richmond tells the story after George's capture. In the article it is stated that **Frank L. Shaffer** was wounded and later died. **Shannon Harmon** was missing and never accounted for. Both men were from Warren. At Belle Isle fellow prisoners took George's blankets and clothing. Quarter rations were given to the prisoners; this was reduced to 1/8th ration. At first the prisoners had tents but the tents were taken from them, leaving them exposed to the cold, rain and snow. He was paroled and sent to Annapolis, MD arriving November 18, 1863 and immediately sent to the hospital. On the 27th of the month he wrote his family giving these details and saying that he thought he would recover. He died on the evening that he sent the letter, the hospital nurse wrote the family of his death. (3) The Western Reserve Chronicle article is dated Dec. 23, 1863, so the actual date of death has to be **Nov. 27, 1863** and not Dec. 27, 1863 as some other military papers indicate. Records from the National Archives state he was paroled at Richmond on Nov. 16, 1863 also on this "War Dept. Notation" his death was listed as Nov. 27, 1863. In the "Company Descriptive Book" his age was listed as 26 years, he was 5 foot 7 inches tall with blue eyes and brown hair, his death is indicated as Dec. 27, 1863. The "Hospital Muster Roll" states he died on Nov. 27, 1863 of chronic diarrhea. (4) This probably affected more Civil War soldiers and killed them than records indicate. Contaminated food and water and undernourished, wounded men combined for a lethal condition.

Before George was captured, his dad, Joseph was killed on June 11, 1863 from an accident. The family stayed together. At this time it was not uncommon for children to be raised by neighbors or relatives if the mother could not care for them. William T. Sherman was raised by a neighbor when his father passed away. (5) George's brother, **John Seely Williams** lived on the family farm, naming his son after his brother. This **George Washington Williams** is the father of **Roy P. Williams**. George's story was not "handed down" in the family, the memory perhaps too painful. (6) The Ohio 6th Cavalry had the honor of seeing General Lee surrender his army to General Grant at Appomattox

Court House on April 9, 1865. Trooper George Williams was brought back home to Howland at **Seely Cemetery** where his gravestone can be seen today. Ohio 6th Volunteer Cavalry, Co. G is curved across the top. Crossed swords on the stone are the symbol of the Cavalry, also included is laurel, ribbons and the words "*My Life for My Country.*"

Sources:

- (1) *The Cavalry at Gettysburg*, Edward G. Longacre, U. Of Nebraska Press, Bison Book Printing, 1993. P. 81, 82, 92, 106, 122, 126, 127. *Better a Patriot Soldier's Grave* 6th O. V. C., William G Burnett (self-published), 1982. p 6, 14, 16.
- (2) Burnett, p 30-31, *Military Records of George Washington Williams*, National Archives and Records Adm., Washington, DC
- (3) *Western Reserve Chronicle*, December 23, 1863, Special thanks to Wendell Lauth for this copy
- (4) *Military Records*
- (5) *Sherman a Soldier's Passion for Order*, John F. Marszalek, The Free Press, Div of Macmillan, Inc. 1993, p 6
- (6) *Family Genealogy*, Roy P. Williams of McAllen, Texas Submitted by Carole Lynn Johnson-Babyak, 879 Howland-Wilson Rd SE, Warren, OH 44484