

A Scott County Woman's Fight for Survival

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Growing up in a little place known as Waters Buffalo Creek, a girl named Julia Marcum was living a normal life of farming, until one horrible night changed her life forever. What event changed her life? What was so horrible about it? How did she go from living a peaceful farm life to becoming the first woman ever to be a full member of the Grand Army of the Republic?

Hiram C. Marcum made a living by being an honest farmer. He stood for America's freedom and perfect laws, but the consequences of his decision would almost prove fatal not only for him, but for his family, as well.

Marcum's decision was to fight alongside the Union Army, not for the Confederacy. In making this decision he never thought of the consequences that would follow. On the day of September 7, 1861, a Confederate brigade of soldiers came to Waters Buffalo Creek in search for Hiram C. Marcum for being a Union soldier on the Confederacy side; however, he wasn't at home. He decided he would hide out in the barn until the soldier left. The soldiers figured that he was somewhere close because no man would leave his family to die. So, on the night of September 7, 1861, the Confederate brigade broke into the Marcum home, destroying everything in sight. One soldier chased his daughter Didama up the stairs, where he grabbed her by the ankle and told her if she didn't cooperate that he would cut her throat and burn the house down. Didama screamed for help. Hiram heard his daughters yelling for help. Julia Marcum, the oldest sister, took it in her own hands to help her sister. She grabbed an axe from the corner and headed upstairs. The soldier saw her coming and started slashing at her with his bayonet; she dodged one of his attempts and chopped him directly in the chest like she was chopping wood. He reached for his gun and stabbed it into her forehead, poking out her left eye and shooting her third finger off. Hiram came running through the house as the gun was falling and shot the soldier in the shoulder where he fell dead.



Figure 1 Julia Marcum

Julia was knocked unconscious for some time. Her brother, Clayburn, went out to get someone to come to her assistance. Along the way he found the horse that the soldier had ridden and rode to several houses begging for help, but he only found one person to help, a Mrs. Taylor.

The next day the Marcums got a surprise visit by Captain Gordon of the Confederate army. Once he saw Julia's condition he sent a soldier back to their camp to get doctors to dress her wounds. They doctored her as much as humanly possible.

Three months later, the Marcum family had more troops come to their house. This time they killed her cousin who was a Union soldier. The army drove them away from their home. They traveled through snow and mountains to Casey County, Kentucky, where they lived for some time.

Hiram Marcum decided to join the federal army on Sherman's "March to the Sea." He got as far as Nashville, where he died from smallpox. He is buried there in the National Cemetery where he lies with thousands of his comrades.

When the war closed, Julia Marcum settled in Williamsburg, Kentucky, for a career of school teaching, but was unable to do so due to her war injuries. Because of her injuries, Congress decided to grant her a pension of thirty dollars per month, which later changed to forty dollars per month in September 1922. They also honored her for being the first woman of the Grand Army of the Republic for her heroic deeds.