

History Of County

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Information and quotes for this article were taken from the "History of Henry County Commands In The Confederate States Army" by Edwin H. Rennolds, a former Henry Countian who, in 1904 compiled a history of the Army of Tennessee and Henry County soldiers who served in it. The book is owned by Joe O. Williams, 117 N. Highland St.)

The author of a "History of Henry County Commands in the Confederate States Army," Edwin H. Rennolds, served as a lieutenant in the Confederate Army and was one of few from Henry County who survived the more than 15 battles and skirmishes until the surrender in 1865.

His book, compiled in the forty years after the war and published in 1904, is dedicated to "my comrades, who left the peaceful homes and quiet firesides of Henry County, Tenn., during the Civil War... and won for their native county the title of 'the Volunteer County of the Volunteer State'."

Rennolds' regiment, the 154th Tennessee Infantry, was composed of smalltown men and boys, most notably from West Tennessee in Weakly, Obion, Henry and Carroll counties. Company F, of the 154th senior regiment, was formed in Paris a year or so before the opening of the Civil War.

It made up the nucleus of the company after hostilities broke out. The "Paris Blues" as they were called, proved to be one of the best outfits in one of the best regiments in the Confederate service.

Company F's officers were Col. Preston Smith, Lt. Col. Marcus J. Wright and Maj. Jones Genet. In one of the early battles of the war, Shiloh, the company lost eight men. It fought gallantly at Chickamauga and Mission Ridge, and, throughout all the hundred days of the Georgia campaign.

During General Hood's raid along the Western and Atlantic Railroad tracks, Company F and the 154th participated in

Sherman's communications. They later marched into Tennessee once more and charged the fortifications at Franklin. Henry Countians took part in the last battle of the war at Bentonville.

At the time before hostilities, in February of 1861, Gov. Isham G. Harris commissioned Col. Williams E. Travis to raise a regiment of cavalry.

"It being found impossible to secure suitable arms for this branch of service," the plan was changed and an infantry regiment recruited instead.

"A call was made through the columns of the 'Paris Sentinel' for all who wished to enlist in the regiment to assemble at Paris on Saturday, April 20."

"In order to arouse the military ardor of the people of the county (Henry), and thereby hasten the filling up of the ranks, Col. Travis, Lt. Col. J.D.C. Atkins (founder of The Weekly Intelligencer, now the POST-INTELLIGENCER), Maj. O. D. Edwards and other speakers, accompanied by the Paris Brass Band, made a tour of villages in the county."

A contingent was recruited and ordered to camp at Humboldt. Capt. W. D. Hallum's company joined the group at Henry Station as the troop train passed through. A week later, all were moved to Union City.

Private W. Shelly Puckett was the first to die in the regiment—he died of measles.

At a special election held June 8, 1861, the voters of the state overwhelmingly decided to separate from the U.S. and to unite with the Confederate States. At the regular election, on the first Thursday in August, Lt. Col. J.D.C. Atkins was elected to the Confederate Congress and resigned his commission. Adjutant Calvin D. Venable was elected Lt. Col. and Lt. Joseph D. Kendall of Company F was appointed adjutant.

Henry Countians, with the 154th regiment, fought in 15 major battles including Shiloh, Corinth, Perryville, Murphresboro, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Resaca, Ellsburry Ridge, Kennesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek,

Palmetto, Franklin, and Nashville.

Lt. Rennolds described many of the battles from his own memory, being an eyewitness to the death and destruction.

At the battle of Perryville, advancing on a line of 'Federals,' "Lt. J. B. Millam fell, with a severe wound in the leg, and about the same time Ensign J. B. Jones had his thigh bone broken, but did not lose his hold on the colors, but remarked: 'The bearer of our colors has fallen before this, but the flag has never gone down.' Lt. F. M. Clark took the colors, but soon handed them to Color Guard A. A. Dinwiddie, who said in reply to Jones, 'Have no fear, I will try to do my duty.'

"The regiment moved to Chickamauga. All day long the firing continued, being heaviest on our left. On the morning of the 20th, the dead strewn on the battlefield were white with the early frost and brought to our minds the fact that we were in the midst of death. . ."

At the battle of Mission Ridge, General Bragg rallied his troops saying, "Don't run boys, don't run. Here's your country, here's your general and here's your flag." A fleeing Confederate replied, "Yes, and here's your mule," as he leaped the bushes in long strides down the decline.

The battle of Resaca saw a great deal of Federal shelling. "A federal battery shelled our line. . . a shell fell into the rifle pit, where it lay sizzling and ready to explode. Lt. F. M. Clark and A. H. Lankford each grabbed at it and together threw it out of the works. It exploded before it struck the ground."

At Ellsburry Ridge. . . "James Owens and B. G. Deets were both wounded by pieces of the same ball, which struck the barrel of Owens' gun and split. They both extracted the pieces with a knife and did not leave their posts."

Amid the bloodshed, Henry Countians displayed heroism. At the battle of Lovejoy and Palmetto, Corp. A. H. Lankford volunteered to go after more ammunition after a long firefight. "He started up the slope at a pace that would have done credit to an antelope. The