



WALTON RELATIONS

Volume 5, Issue 6

Walton County Genealogy Society

April 2014

Gone But Not Forgotten Reunion

The families of Alice Creek, New Home, and the surrounding area will hold their reunion at Southwide Baptist Church (off Coy Burgess Road in DeFuniak Springs) on Saturday, April 12, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

The Gone But Not Forgotten families are the descendants of those Walton County residents who were forced from their property in the late 1930s and early 1940s so that Eglin Air Force Base could expand its bombing ranges.

Maveen Henderson Bruner in her Dedication of the *Gone But Not Forgotten* book briefly described the sacrifices made by the families:

They were told to vacate their homes, property, farms, communities, schools, churches, families, etc., in thirty (30) days or else they would be removed and their homes bulldozed down and burned. They were not helped to relocate, and received very little money to help them relocate. Some were widows/widowers with small children.

All are welcome at the reunion. Please bring your own drinks and a covered dish to share. For more information, call 850-548-5353 or 850-897-2145.

WCGS Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet on Saturday, April 12, at 10:00 a.m. at the Walton County Heritage Museum. The public is invited.

UWF Students to Visit

History students from the University of West Florida will tour the Museum on Saturday morning, April 12. During their visit to Walton County, the students will visit other sites in DeFuniak Springs before heading down to spend the afternoon at Eden Gardens State Park in Point Washington.

We thank Dr. Brian Rucker for bringing his students to Walton County every spring and for his many efforts to keep our local history alive.

Walton County Heritage Museum

Open Tuesday - Saturday: 1:00 - 4:00 PM
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

850-951-2127

www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org
HeritageMuseum@centurylink.net

The Walton County POWs of Asboth's Raid on Marianna

By **Sam Carnley** of Bascom, Florida

In route to what historians call the "Battle of Marianna," Union Brigadier General Alexander Asboth took as prisoners of war a number of Confederate soldiers in the path of his march through Walton County in September of 1864.

On Thursday, the 22nd, his troops apprehended the Cawthon brothers, Lafayette and William, of the 15th Confederate Cavalry.¹ On leave at their Shoal River homes, mounted soldiers in blue caught them unawares, giving them no opportunity to escape.^{2 3}

At dawn the following day, Union cavalry surprised and scattered a small encampment of Confederate cavalymen at Eucheeanna. Many eluded capture, but a few did not.⁴

One report of prisoners taken at Eucheeanna identifies them as 2nd Lt. Francis M. Gordon and Privates George Baker and John Pitts, all of Co. I, 15th Confederate Cavalry; privates J. W. Brett, C. H. Parker and J. C. Thomas, of Co. I, 5th Florida Cavalry; Daniel K. McDonald of Co. C., 1st Florida Reserves; Daniel Neel of Capt. John Gillis' Company of the Walton Home Guards; and John Skipper of Captain Crosby's Company, totaling nine in all.⁵

The "Roll of Prisoners of War" documents of some of these men, however, differ with that report on the date and place of their capture. Lieutenant Gordon's "Roll" document gives Shoal River and September 22 as his place and date of capture.⁶ Private Baker's says he was captured at Marianna on September 27,⁷ as did that of Private John Pitts.⁸

As noted above, these three men and the Cawthons were members of the 15th Confederate Cavalry. None of the known accounts of the battle at Marianna mention the 15th's presence at that engagement. It is likely, therefore, that their capture took place either at Shoal River or Eucheeanna, and statements to the contrary on "Roll" documents are in error.

The first seven reported as taken at Eucheeanna, along with the Cawthon brothers, were destined for northern Confederate POW camps. It is unknown what became of Daniel Neel and John Skipper as their service records have not been found.

The men's journey north began at Asboth's Barrancas headquarters on 8 October 1864, where they embarked aboard the Steamer *Clinton* en route to New Orleans.⁹ They arrived there on the 10th and remained until forwarded to Ship Island, Mississippi,¹⁰ which received them on the 21st,¹¹ except for Lieutenant Gordon.

As an officer, the Lieutenant's destination differed from that of the enlisted men. He departed New Orleans on 12 October for Fort Lafayette, New York Harbor, where he landed on the 20th.¹² After a detention there of several weeks, he journeyed on to Fort Warren, Boston, Massachusetts Harbor. He arrived there on 21 December¹³ and remained until his release at the war's end.

Something of a "Gentlemen's" prison, Fort Warren housed captured Confederate officers and civilian political prisoners of both the north and south. Its Commandant treated his charges so humanely that he earned their deep appreciation. So much so that when his son entered active duty as a Union Army officer, the imprisoned Confederates wrote a letter for the young man to carry telling of his father's good treatment of them and to extend him the same courtesy should he fall captive to their side.¹⁴

Back at Ship Island, the group suffered the first loss of a member. On 5 November, John Pitts was reported as sick in the hospital. A subsequent report told of his death from pneumonia on 22 November and burial in grave number 33.¹⁵

Reduced to seven by Pitts' hospitalization, the remaining prisoners were forwarded from Ship Island on 5 November and received at Fort Columbus, New York Harbor, on the 16th.¹⁶ Three days later, the group, absent Daniel McDonald, rode a train from that location to New York's Confederate POW camp at Elmira.

Hospitalized upon arrival at Fort Columbus, Private McDonald remained there as a patient until 25 January 1865 when he died of apoplexy and was buried at the prison's Woodlawn Cemetery in grave number 1608.¹⁷

The first Walton County prisoner to die at Elmira was James Thomas. Succumbing on 7 December 1864 of chronic diarrhea and buried in grave number 1084,¹⁸ his burial preceded Daniel McDonald's. William Cawthon was the last of the Walton County group to die there. He expired on 26 February 1865 of febrile typhoid and was interred in grave number 1916.¹⁹ These men were among the 2,923 Confederate deaths at the prison during the 15 months it was in operation.

Before it opened in the summer of 1864, Union Army officers in charge of the prison ignored warnings that it required significant improvements to accommodate safely the number of prisoners they planned for it. They also ignored recommendations to correct potential sanitation problems with the camp's water supply. Seemingly dismissive of the concerns raised, the Army continued with plans to place as many as 10,000 men in a prison designed for half that number. That led some observers to voice the notion it was designed from the beginning not as a prison but a death camp.

That notion proved prophetic as the prison population rapidly swelled to more than 12,000 men. Spill over from barracks bursting at the seams forced upwards of four thousand men outside to live in tents during bitterly cold weather of the winter of 1864-65. Drinking water soon became contaminated with feces, making it unsanitary and ridden with intestinal disease pathogens.

Further exacerbating the health problems was the deliberate reduction in rations by the Commissary General who was a proponent of retaliating against the prisoners because of the war. The reduced rations eliminated vegetables from the prisoners' diets, leading to cases of scurvy in the hundreds.

With increasing hunger, the prisoners began eating rats and even using them as currency in trading for other supplies.

The combination of severe overcrowding, unsanitary drinking water, food deprivation induced malnutrition, scurvy, exposure to harsh winter weather, a small pox outbreak and other disease epidemics soon led to widespread illness and a rapidly rising number of deaths.

Due to the horrific conditions of the camp, the prisoners renamed it "Hellmira." With a fatality rate of nearly 25% of its 12,123 prisoners, it became known as the North's worst prison camp. Its fatality rate was only slightly less than the 29% reported for the South's Union POW camp at Andersonville, Georgia, now called the worst prison camp of the Civil War.²⁰

Of the nine men Asboth put in the POW pipeline, only five lived to return home when the war ended, an abysmal survival rate of 56% (meaning a fatality rate of 44% -- equally abysmal).

George Baker and C. H. Parker were released from Elmira in February 1865 and went directly to hospitals in Richmond, Virginia. Given furloughs in early March, they were finally able to put the horrors of Elmira behind them.^{21 22}

Baker however, found himself once again face-to-face with Asboth in Milton, Florida, the following June 16th. Forced to sign an oath of allegiance and other documents, he stated in a hand-written petition to Asboth that he was 23 years old, was from Walton County, Florida, and served in the 15th Confederate Cavalry until captured at Shoal River on 22 September 1864.²³ That revelation disagreed with the earlier mentioned report of prisoners taken at Eucheeanna on 23 September.

Lafayette Cawthon and John Brett obtained their releases from Elmira in June 1865 -- Brett's on the 19th and Cawthon's on the 23rd.^{24 25} Francis Gordon's parole from Fort Warren came on 12 June.²⁶

Cawthon and Gordon returned home to Walton County, where they spent the rest of their lives and raised large families. Cawthon descendants still live in the county. It is unknown if any of Gordon's do. No follow-up was done for the purposes of this article to determine if George Baker returned to Walton County.

Neither was there any follow-up on John Brett and C. H. Parker because they enlisted in Henry County, Alabama, and are presumed to have returned there after the War. As they did not appear to be from Walton County, their stories post-Elmira were excluded from the scope of this article.

Note: The Civil War Service Records referenced below can be accessed at www.fold3.com.

1. John L. McKinnon, *History of Walton County*, (Palmetto Books, Gainesville, Florida, 1968), p. 327.

2. L. F. Cawthon (Cawthorn), Pvt., Co. I, 15 Confed. Cav., Roll of Prisoners of War, Roll dated Headquarters District of West Florida, Barrancas, Oct. 8, 1864, Captured Marianna, Sept. 27, 1864., Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA. (Captured place/date in error, should be Shoal River, Sept. 22, 1864. See Roll dated N. Orleans, La., Oct. 12, 1864.)

3. W. J. Cawthon, Pvt., Co. I, 15 Confed. Cav., Roll of Prisoners of War, Roll dated Headquarters District of West Florida, Barrancas, Oct. 8, 1864, Captured Shoal River, Sept. 22, 1864., Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.

4. Dale Cox, *The West Florida War, Part Two, The Raid on Marianna, Eucheeanna*, (www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~fljackso/cox/WFW2.htm, 1988-89).

-
5. Dale Cox, *The West Florida War, Part Two, The Raid on Marianna, Prisoners, Eucheeanna, Florida, September 23, 1864* (www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~fljackso/cox/WFW2.htm, 1988-89).
 6. F. M. Gordon, 2 Lt., Co. I, 15 Regt. Conf. Cav., Roll of Prisoners of War, Roll dated Headquarters District of West Florida, Barrancas, Oct. 8, 1864, Captured Shoal River, Sept. 22, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 7. Geo. Baker, Pvt., Co. I, 15 Confed. Cav., Roll of Prisoners of War, Roll dated N. Orleans, La., Oct. 12, 1864, Captured Marianna, Fla., Sept. 27, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 8. J. Pitts, Priv., Capt. Amos' Co., 15 Conf. Cav., Roll of Prisoners of War, Roll dated Headquarters District of West of Florida, Barrancas, Oct. 8, 1864, Captured Marianna, Fla. Sept. 27, 1864. Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 9. Roll of Prisoners of War, Roll dated Headquarters District of West of Florida, Barrancas, Oct. 8, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 10. Roll of Prisoners of War, dated N. Orleans, La., Oct. 12, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 11. Roll of Rebel prisoners of war received at Ship Island, Miss., Oct. 21, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 12. Roll of Prisoners or War, received at Fort Lafayette, New York Harbor, October 20, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 13. Prisoners of War at Fort Warren, Mass. Dec. 21, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 14. Fort Warren Confederate Prison, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Warren_\(Massachusetts\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Warren_(Massachusetts)).
 15. Prisoners of War, at Ship Island, Miss., November 22, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 16. Roll of Prisoners of War, received at Fort Columbus, New York Harbor, from Ship Island, Miss., Nov. 16, 1864, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 17. Prisoners of War received at Elmira, N. Y. December 5, 1864, from Fort Columbus, New York Harbor, Remarks: Rec'd at Fort Columbus from Ship Island Miss., November 16, 1864, Died January 25, 1865 of Apoplexy, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 18. James C. Thomas, Pvt., Co. A., 5 Rgt. Fla. Cav., record of deceased Prisoners of War at Elmira, N. Y., Died Dec. 7, 1864, Cause of death: Chronic Diarrhea, grave No. 1084, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 19. W. J. Cawthorn, Pvt., Co. I, 15 Confed. Cav., Record of Death and Interment, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 20. Elmira Prison, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elmira_Prison
 21. G. Baker, Pvt., Co. I, 15 Conf. Cav., Appears on Register of General Hospital, Howard's Grove, Richmond, Virginia, Admitted: Feb. 22, 1865, Remarks, Furloughed March 2, 1865 - 30, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 22. C. H. Parker, Sgt. (S/B Pvt.) Co. D, 5 Rgt. Fla., Appears on Register of General Hospital, Howard's Grove, Richmond, Virginia, Mar. 1, 1865, Furloughed Mar. 8/65, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 23. G. Baker, Pvt., Co. I, 15 Regt. Con. Cav., District of West Florida, Milton, Fla., June 16th, 1865, Brig. Gen'l Asboth, The petition of...., Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 24. Jno. W. Brett, Private, 5 Fla., Oath of Allegiance, Elmira, N. Y., Released June 19, 1865, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 25. L. Cawthon, Private, 15 Con. Cav., Oath of Allegiance, Elmira, N. Y., Released June 23, 1865, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.
 26. F. M. Gordon, Lieut. 15 Confed. Cavy., Prisoners of War at Fort Warren, Mass., Released June 12, 1865, Civil War Service Records, Confederate, CSA.

©2014 Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.
www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org

Walton Relations is a publication of the Walton County Genealogy Society. Wayne Sconiers, President.
Distribution is encouraged! For more information or to submit an article, please email its editor,
Diane Merkel, at WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net or call 850-897-4505.