

## THE ORDEAL OF EBEN SCRIBNER

By C. Scribner

The following history has been taken from a book written by Edwin E. Marvin called A History of the Fifth Regiment, Infantry, Connecticut Volunteers and the Civil War Military Service and Pension Records of my Great Grandfather Eben Scribner. I was able to obtain these records by writing to: General Reference Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D. C.

At the age of 21, in September of 1861, Eben left Wilton, Connecticut to serve in the Civil War. He enlisted at Norwalk, Connecticut and was mustered into G Company Fifth Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers. The Fifth was originally organized by Samuel Colt, inventor of Colt's Revolving Rifles, but was disbanded because the men refused to become regulars and was immediately reorganized as the Fifth volunteers. Eben joined the regiment in Sandy Hook, Maryland, opposite Harpers Ferry, Virginia, where it was, at that time, engaged in picketing and guarding along the Potomac River.

Enlisting with Eben on that same day was his cousin Charles B. Scribner also of Wilton. Both were assigned to Company G. Charles became ill and died on March 2, 1862. Company history tells of two men being buried at Williamsport, Maryland on this date. It also tells of the severe winter conditions causing "suffering and depletion of the ranks, with the men breaking down from cold and exposure". Company medical records show that Charles was in the Brigade Hospital at Hancock, Maryland on February 19, 1862. The cause of death was typhoid fever. He was 18 years old.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> the regiment crossed the Potomac River to make an advance on Winchester, Virginia and participated in its capture and occupation by Union Forces. After participating in the early skirmishes and engagements in Virginia, Eben became quite sick and was sent to a hospital in Winchester. His illness was diagnosed as Debilita Typhoid. This type of Typhoid is known to be a very confining disease requiring hospitalization and expert nursing care. Because of the typhoid epidemic and the many wounded the hospital was filled up and hotels were utilized to handle the over-flow. In fact, Eben was in one such hotel, the Union Hotel, 3<sup>rd</sup> story, room 38. Winchester changed hands many times during the Civil War and it wasn't long before it was re-captured by the Confederates under General Stonewall Jackson. All patients became prisoners-of-war, but were paroled by Jackson shortly thereafter. Eben was listed on a prisoner-of-war memorandum dated June 22, 1862. This document further states he was sent to a General Hospital in Frederick, Maryland on June 28. Assuming that General Jackson and the Confederates had the same problem with sick and wounded might explain the reason for the paroles. Company muster records show him sick in the hospital from late June to October. From October 31 until the end of December 1862 he was in a convalescent camp near Alexandria, Virginia. Here he was well enough to be detailed to guard duty.

Eben was with the regiment while it was encamped near Stafford Court House, Virginia and during the engagements at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and in pursuit of

General Lee into Virginia. The Fifth stopped at Warrenton, Virginia where they received orders to move out under General Hooker and join the Department of the Cumberland in Cowan, Tennessee.

While in Tennessee, when they were not guarding the railroad, they were kept busy building log shanties and generally improving their campsites. Or they would be out chasing rebel cavalry and guerillas. In the meantime they were being encouraged to re-enlist and were offered a two-month furlough and a \$300 State Bounty for each man. The men re-enlisted in "goodly numbers" in early January of 1864. Eben took the offer, furloughed with his unit, returned to Connecticut and married Lucy Jane Cogswell of Pound Ridge, N. Y.

Upon his return the regiment was soon involved in the engagements in Georgia that led to the historic siege of Atlanta. Eben was wounded at Peach Tree Creek on July 20, 1864. He was hit by a gunshot (Minnie ball) that "entered close to the right ear, lodged near the top of his head and worked down and out his neck." Almost simultaneously he was wounded in the left foot from a shell causing fractures of the metatarsal bones. An indication of how severely he was wounded is the fact that he was listed "killed in Action" on a Casualty Sheet dated that same day. After getting his wounds dressed in the field Eben was sent to a hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where his wounds were again attended. After about three weeks he was moved to a hospital in Nashville, Tennessee where he stayed another few weeks before being transferred to the Brown U.S.A. General Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. He stayed in Louisville until late March 1865. His next stop was the Knight U.S.A. General Hospital in New Haven, Connecticut. From here he received a Disability Discharge, June 23, 1865. After his discharge Eben returned to Wilton and his bride Lucy Jane. His wounds were to bother him the rest of his life and were the cause of his early demise. The head wounds caused violent headaches and left him partially deaf in the right ear. The foot wound left him with a permanent limp.

Seven days after being discharged, Eben applied for an Invalid Pension. He appeared before Probate Judge, James Nichols, in Hartford where he submitted a Form of Declaration for an Invalid Army Pension. Because Eben was without a formal education and had to sign all documents with a "+" he authorized Charles J. Preston of Hartford to procure the pension to which he was entitled under an act of Congress, approved July 14, 1862. Mr. Preston was further authorized to receive any certificate in favor of the application. Eben submitted another application on March 7, 1868, indicating that no action was taken on the original. Here again, he personally appeared before a Judge of Probate, the Honorable Hiram K. Scott of the Ridgefield District and authorized Danbury Attorney, William T. Barnum, to "prosecute his claim" for pension. On this application his occupation was listed as "not anything" because his condition was becoming considerably worse. He was unable to do manual labor of any kind except for a few small gardening chores. It is unknown what medication was available then but family lore says he would rub on horse liniment to help relieve the headache pain. On June 2, 1869 the Federal Commissioner of Pensions received a letter of confirmation from the Adjutant General in Washington DC. Even then the application was not approved until

1870 and only after he produced letters from two company G Corporals who had been with him when he was wounded. One Corporal stated "he was near him at the moment he was shot and removed him from the line of battle."

Sometime in 1870 the family moved to Lewisboro, New York. In 1873, while still in Lewisboro, Eben submitted a Soldier's Claim for an increase in pension. His headaches were becoming more frequent and his overall health was deteriorating to the point where "he was unfit for labor of the lightest kind." It is not known if the increase was approved. They moved back to Wilton sometime before 1877 and on June 4, 1878 Eben passed away after thirteen years of suffering. He is buried at the Zion Hill Methodist Church Cemetery in Wilton.

Lucy Jane applied for a Widows Pension in December of 1878. She was required to show proof of the birth of her children and of her marriage to Eben in order to be eligible for the pension that was approved for \$18.00 per month. All children were covered until 16 years of age. The pension increased as the years passed because she was receiving \$50.00 per month at the time of her death on November 14, 1929. In the later years of her life she lived with her son Arthur and his wife on Olmstead Hill Rd. in Wilton. Arthur was appointed Executor of her last Will and Testament admitted to Probate in the Probate Court in Norwalk. She was buried with her husband at Zion's Hill.