

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS

They Went to War: Grinnellians in the War Between the States

By Dann Hayes^(a)

This particular Alabama spring day was probably not much different than most. Men in both armies had lived, and died, on similar days during the past four years of war. The soldiers of the 4th Iowa Cavalry were no different, as they prepared to attack Confederate positions near Selma, Alabama. Most likely they just hoped they would live to see another day.

Captain Russell E. Jones wasn't any different, especially since he had seen his share of the war. He had enlisted as a private in Company E, 4th Iowa Cavalry on November 28, 1861, during the opening days of the War Between the States. According to written accounts in the Grinnell College archives, he had "managed to conceal a defective eye, enlisted, and [by 1864 had] become a captain."

Prior to his enlistment he was a student at Iowa College in Grinnell, Iowa. A member of the freshman class of 1861-1862, Jones was listed in the catalog as a student in the English and preparatory department. And on this second day of April 1865, his thoughts might have been returning to Iowa. Just the day before, Confederate General Robert E. Lee had been forced to evacuate the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia, following the battle of Five Forks. Most of the 12,000 or so men getting ready to attack Selma, including Company I, 4th Iowa Cavalry, could see that the end of the war was nearing.

That included Jones, 21, who had been with the unit from the date of its inception. He was at the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in 1862, and in 1863 he was in Mississippi as his unit supported the Union advance on Vicksburg, the Gibraltar of the Mississippi River. Following engagements in June 1864 at Brice's Cross Roads, and the Missouri campaign of 1864 that ended the Confederate attempt to retake Missouri, Jones and the 4th Iowa Cavalry found themselves near Selma, Alabama, on this spring day in 1865. Fate, though, was not going to be kind to Jones. This attack on Selma was to be his last. He was killed leading his troops in the last days of the war.

"He fought heroically through the war," *The Des Moines Daily News* reported on December 29, 1896, "but in one of the [last] battles he [was] struck in the forehead by a ball and his noble life paid the forfeit."

According to information gleaned from Grinnell College archives, he is reported to be buried in the National Cemetery at Marietta, Georgia, in Section K, Grave T. But cemetery records indicate no one

there with the name Russell E. Jones or Eugene R. Jones. However, he is listed in the company records.

"On April 2d, companies I, F and L, under command of Major Woods, led the advance at Selma, and charged the enemy at his outer works and drove him into his inner line of works, which they also charged and captured, together with a large number of prisoners and five pieces of artillery," reads the historical sketch of the Fourth Regiment Iowa Volunteer Cavalry. "In this charge Captain Eugene R. Jones [Russell E. Jones] of Company I was killed."

Jones is joined by at least 10 other Grinnell College students who died in the War Between the States. On a plaque in Herrick Chapel are the names of the men who fell.

Benjamin F. Cassidy (Cassady), 18, was born in Iowa. Cassidy was a classmate of Jones, also a student in the English and preparatory department at Iowa College in 1860-1861. He enlisted in Co. C, 28th Iowa Infantry on Aug. 2, 1862. He was killed at Champion Hill, Mississippi, on May 16, 1863. He was killed "by a ball entering his left breast," according to a letter written by Cassidy's father to Leonard F. Parker, the principal of the college.

The Battle of Champion Hill was one of the many battles included in the campaign around Vicksburg. During the battle, Champion Hill changed hands three times, resulting in 2,441 casualties, including 410 Union soldiers killed. Confederate casualties were estimated at 3,851, including 381 killed.

Thomas Henry Craver, 19, had enlisted on January 5, 1864. A member of the junior class of 1863-1864 at Iowa College, Craver was also in the English and Preparatory Department. Mustered into Company E, 4th Iowa Cavalry on the same day he enlisted, Craver died just four months later. He caught typhoid fever and died on May 17, 1864. He was buried in what was called the Mississippi River National Cemetery, but was reinterred and reburied in the Memphis National Cemetery, Section A, Grave 1967.

Benjamin F. Holland, 22, was born in Ohio, and listed Montezuma as his home in the Iowa College catalog. He, too, was a classmate of Captain Jones, as he was in the English and Preparatory Department of 1860-1861. On October 4, 1861, he enlisted as a private in Company E, 3rd Iowa Cavalry. He fell just eight months later. Official records show that Holland died "of wounds received in battle on the 29th day of July 1862, at Moore's Mill, Missouri."

In a report filed by Col. Odon Guitar, Ninth Missouri Cavalry (Militia), "The following is a summary of our loss [at Moore's Mill]: Third Cavalry, killed 2, wounded 24 ... total, 13 killed and 55 wounded. We lost 22 horses killed, belonging almost entirely to the Third Iowa Cavalry."

James Edward Ellis, age 24, was in the Classical course senior class of 1864-1865 at Iowa College according to the catalog. He was mustered into service on June 10, 1864 as a fifth corporal in Co. B, 46th Iowa Infantry. Just two months later he died of intermittent fever in Memphis, Tennessee, on August 16, 1864.

Francis E. (W) Ford, 18, enlisted May 21, 1864, and was mustered in as a private in Company B, 46th Iowa Infantry on June 10, 1864. He was mustered out on September 23, 1864 in Davenport, Iowa at the "expiration of term of service." He died two months later on November 27, 1864 in Grinnell. He is buried at the Grinnell Hazelwood cemetery.

James T. Loring, 18, "was mustered into U.S. service on the 14th day of September 1864," according to records from the state of Iowa Adjutant General's Office. A private in Company F, 12th Iowa Infantry, he was killed just three months later on December 16, 1864, the second day of the battle of Nashville, Tennessee.

In a letter to Parker from Loring's family, his mother states, "It was on the second day of that bloody fight [and] while moving in the last [and] decisive charge he fell, pierced through the left breast by a grape shot. "... he was buried under an apple tree ... about five miles South of Nashville ... about 30 days after his death, [I] found his remains buried and well preserved wrapped in his soldiers blanket," she continues. "I brought them home to Manchester ... All that was left of our dear son now lies buried in the cemetery at Manchester."

Of the 50,000 to 55,000 Union troops taking part in the battle, there were 3,061 casualties, including 387 soldiers killed. Confederate casualties of the estimated 30,000 troops are approximately 1,500, with another 4,500 captured.

Joseph H. Shenkland, 19, a native of Indiana, joined Company G, 14th Iowa Infantry on November 2, 1861 as a corporal. Promoted to first sergeant on January 5, 1862, and second lieutenant on January 7, 1863, Shenkland was one of 150 troops killed during the battle of Pleasant Hill, Louisiana. Part of a Federal expedition to strike deep into Confederate territory in Louisiana, Union troops were defeated in the Battle of Sabine Crossroads on April 8. The skirmishing at Pleasant Hill the next day ended the fighting in the area.

Samuel C. Thompson, 21, lived in Grinnell but was a native of Ohio. He enlisted in Company B, 2nd Iowa Cavalry on September 2, 1864, and died on April 7, 1865 at Eastport, Mississippi of disease. He was originally buried near Eastport, but was reinterred to Shiloh National Cemetery, Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, Section I, Grave 3118.

Albert W. Hobbs, 19, joined Company B, 11th Iowa Infantry. He died April 25, 1863 in St. Louis, Missouri and is buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis, Missouri, Section 2, Grave 6975.

James W. Dowd, Company I, 112th Illinois Infantry, died at Camp Sumter, otherwise known as Andersonville Prison, about October 1864. No records of Dowd can be found in the Grinnell College archives, although it has been confirmed that Dowd served with the 112th Illinois Infantry and was at Camp Sumter.

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