

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Photos from the Past

Charles Helfrich

At the age of 40, while living in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, Charles Helfrich enlisted as Lieutenant 2nd Class on February 18, 1865 and received his commission in Company G, 74th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment Volunteers. According to pension records, *...the rolls show him present except as follows...April 3 of '65 - A prisoner of war in the hands of the enemy since Mar. 3 of '65. Pris. of War records show him captd. at Green Spring Run, VA Mar. 3 of '65, escaped and reached Union lines at Lynchburg, VA, Apr. 13 '65; returned from leave of absence & assigned to duty at Camp Parole, MD. May 9, '65; sent to Harrisburg, PA in charge of exchanged prisoners May 18, '65.* He was discharged by General Order May 15, 1865.

The circumstances around his capture were brought to light in Roger U. Delauter's book, *McNeill's Rangers*, Lynchburg, Virginia, H.E. Howard, Inc., 1986, 2nd Edition, Pg. 106, and read as follows:

In the late evening of March 30, McNeill's [Partisan] Rangers made their last attack on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. A small party of railroad repairmen was just completing its day's work when its members were captured some three miles east of the Patterson Creek Depot. The partisans ordered their captives to remove several inside rails just beyond a sharp curve. Shortly before 7 p.m. a westbound passenger train approached the rebels' trap. Premature firing alerted the engineer to his danger but not even the instantaneous application of the brakes could halt the train in time to avoid disaster. To the sound of screaming brakes and escaping steam the locomotive and two cars jumped the tracks and tumbled into the railroad embankment. Less than twenty minutes after derailing the train the partisans seized two Federal captains and two lieutenants and rode off into the night.

After the war, Charles and his family moved to New York City, where he was a commission merchant until his death on April 16, 1899 at the age of 74. He was buried at the Cedar Grove Cemetery in Flushing, Queens, New York. After his death, Charles' wife, Amelia, applied for a widow's pension but was denied it because he had not served the requisite 90 days, only 87. Photograph and information submitted by Charles Helfrich's great-great-great grandson, [David Helfrich](#).



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