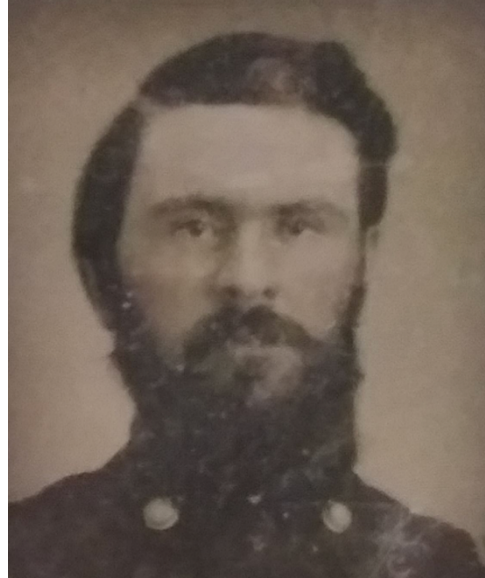


National Patriotic Instruction
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

December 2024

“A Talented Boy–A Brave Soldier–An Uncompromising Patriot”

William S. Brooks fought as a Private with the 1st Iowa Infantry at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek. At the end of his 90-day enlistment he joined the 19th Iowa Infantry as 1st Lieutenant, and fought at the Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas on December 7, 1862. He was severely wounded at the latter and the following is his recollection of the experience:



“The fight was most determined, and the slaughter immense. I was struck at four o’clock P. M., while we were being driven back from a too far advanced position. We were outflanked, and had to run three hundred yards over open ground, and exposed to a murderous fire from the right, left, and center, or rear. Here we lost our Lieutenant-Colonel McFarland. We lost one half our regiment, and in company D more than half our effective men. I was hit at the commencement of the retreat, and was near being captured, as I could not run. When more than half way to our battery, our color-sergeant fell, and I received the colors. The pursuing rebel Colonel shouted: ‘Blast them, take their colors!’ This enraged me, and I hallooed back, ‘You can’t do it.’ The cowardly scoundrels did not dare to close on me, but let go a volley, which left nine holes in the flag, and eighteen in my clothes. Four bullets passed through the cuff of my shirt sleeve, but they could not wound the hand that held the ‘Old Flag.’”

Brooks was eventually promoted to Colonel of the 56th U.S. Colored Infantry. On the morning of July 26, 1864, at Big Creek, near Helena, Arkansas, Colonel Brooks and his men were attacked by overwhelming numbers, surrounded, and pressed on three sides. Colonel Brooks, while mounted, was holding and encouraging his men when he fell, mortally wounded. He was just 24 years old.

The sentiments expressed in his obituary, from which the title of this article was taken, could have been written about any number of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. It says, in part:

“May his name never be erased from the memories of patriotism and Christians, for he died nobly in a holy cause, battling for the highest and purist principles of Government.”

“Fighting that we might call this land our land, and breathe the air of freedom, the inspiration of liberty, not for ourselves only, but for future generations.”

Lest we forget.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Tad D. Campbell, PCinC
National Patriotic Instructor