



PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS



Just a Little Bit of History:

Interview with Brady Steece, Company H, 91st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, USA.^(a)

Brady Steece wears a buckshot in his arm. It was planted there one hot July afternoon, down in Virginia, near Winchester. He didn't like it at the time, but now he is proud of his little burden. It has become a part of himself, and he doesn't know its there.

Some time, however, we think that when Brady hurrahs for Blaine, it is because he imagines that buckshot get uneasy and rolls about. *Tell us about it*, said the REGISTER reporter, the other day, as he observed Mr. Steece leaning against a big box of dry goods just received from New York. *Oh*, said Brady, *it wasn't much but it might have been grapeshot as well as buckshot, for some of the boys took grape on the terrible day and fell to rise no more.*

I belonged to Company H of the 91st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Capt. Crossley, commanding. Our regiment was brigaded with the 14th and the 9th Virginia regiments and the 12th Ohio. Colonel Duval was our brigade commander. We had twelve pieces of artillery, a squadron of cavalry, the whole force, about 2,000 men being under General Averill. We left Martinsburg early in the morning and marched towards Winchester, but had no got far when our advance ran into rebel cavalry, but a regiment thrown into line of battle quickly put the rebel forces on the move. Thus a half dozen times our march arrested, until we got within four or five miles of Winchester. Then, the usual demonstrations didn't seem to impress the rebel force gathered in a skirt of woods just in front. It was soon ascertained that the rebs meant fight, and that some ugly work was at hand; so our brigade was thrown into line of battle and moved forward under cover of a gentle slope, where we waited developments.

In the meantime our artillery was brought up and ranged along a little raise just to our rear. The artillery dual began and for a while it was hot. The shells came in both directions over our heads, and I believe we made little dents in the earth trying to scrooch as low as possible. After thus being subjected to the noise of shells for some minutes, the time arrived to move forward. The woods in which the rebs were posted was about 300 yards ahead of us. Between us and them was clear ground. The first move was that of a squadron of cavalry, from our left, that charged out bravely on the reb right, with the purpose of turning it. But when they arrived within a couple hundred feet of the woods, they came back pell-mell, hurry-scurry, for dear life. If at hat moment the rebs had charged us, the fate of the day might have been decidedly different. But they didn't, and that gave us the chance to charge, which was immediately sounded, and forward we went.

Had we known the force that was in front of us, we might have been badly whipped, for the fact would have moderated our dash considerably, but ignorance was bliss, and in we went to chew up the rebs. Our line was stretched perpendicular to the road; the 14th on our left and the 9th Virginia and 12th Ohio to our right. Our company happened to span the pike, which proved to be a great point of danger.

As we advanced, the artillery played its terrible tune. Our progress was at first moderated, until we came within good gun range, and the reb muskets opened on us, then the charge was sounded and forward we went. Well, now, look here; you don't expect me to describe that charge! If you do it will take a Webster's Unabridged and several hours to do it. I've been told that right where we were, was the hottest five minutes of the war, and I believe it. Yes sir, it rained balls. I could see them make puffs in the dust of the road like the big drops that begin a summer shower. The rebs had four guns right in the road, down which we were charging, and they let loose with canister. But our boys didn't falter; on they went with the line. Keeping up their battle front, though the way it was strewn with dead and wounded of Company H. What was left of our company kept up the charge, and actually some of our boys clubbed the reb gunners right at their battery. But I didn't get that far. I met with a circumstance on the way. Although it was only buckshot, I thought it was a cannonball gone right through me. At any rate my musket dropped right out of my hand. As I stumbled to the roadside the sight was heartrending. There lay Day and Steel and Bruce and Hite and Wilkins and others of the boys, killed and wounded. The shower of balls and shriek of shells kept up; and even then, we didn't know but what those who were not killed would be captured. But I soon saw differently, and not withstanding my pain, I was ready to yell; for as I sat beside one of our wounded I saw a long line of reb prisoners being brought in, and then I felt pretty safe.

Well, we whipped the rebs, and it was a mystery. They had 6000 men in good position and we had not over 2,000, and charged across an open field. I think it was only impudence and dash that conquered. Anyhow, we captured their guns and drove them into Winchester. My company went into the fight with 42 and came out with 11 men under the command of 5th Sergeant Albert Campbell. It was there Major Crossley, formerly County Treasurer, lost his right arm, and which finally took his life. Eleven of our boys were killed there and twenty wounded. It about blotted out Company H. That night I joined the ambulance train for Martinsburg, and then two days after was taken to Claryville, just in time to escape old Jubal Early, who came up the valley driving our boys before him.

(a) Having been a camp Patriotic Instructor, I know how hard it is to find interesting topics for camp meetings. Over the past year I have compiled 200 stories/bios of Civil War Veterans from Ohio. The first series is from the 1886 Ironton, Ohio REGISTER and is re-printed with the permission of Martha Kounse and Sharon M. Kouns, webowners of lawrencountyohio.com website. The REGISTER produced 91 articles under the heading of Narrow Escapes, (one a week for 91 weeks) by interviewing Civil War Veterans from their area. This article appeared November 17, 1887.

Submitted by:
Donald E. Darby
National Patriotic Instructor
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
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