

Theodore A. Carpenter, 43rd Virginia Cavalry

Theodore A. Carpenter enlisted for one year as a private in Company L, 10th Virginia Infantry Regiment on August 5, 1863. He was enlisted by Captain Alex. N. Finks at Camp Rapidan.ⁱ Carpenter appears as present on a company muster roll dated August 31, 1863 with the note, "A recruit and bounty due." He appears as present on company muster rolls for the periods Sept. – Oct., 1863, Nov. – Dec., 1863 and Jan. – Feb., 1864. He is shown as being paid on Sept. 1 and Nov. 1, 1863 and Jan. 1, 1864. Carpenter's name appears on a clothing receipt roll for the 1st quarter, 1864, dated March 15, 1864. On a Company L muster roll for the period Apr. – Nov., 1864, Theodore A. Carpenter is listed as "Absent without leave since May 64."ⁱⁱ

Theodore A. Carpenter enlisted "for the war" as a private in Company E of the 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion at Upperville, Virginia. He was enlisted by Lieutenant Colonel John S. Mosby on July 28, 1864.ⁱⁱⁱ

No record remains today that identifies engagements, scouts, etc. in which Carpenter participated between the time of his enlistment and November 24, 1864. On that date, Thanksgiving Day, Mosby, along with approximately 60 rangers from Companies C and E including Theodore A. Carpenter, captured a group of 10 wagons approaching a Union cavalry camp located at Perkin's Mill on Opequon Creek between Winchester and Front Royal. The rangers then charged into the Union encampment which, unknown to them, was the cavalry camp of Brevet General William B. Tibbits' Brigade. They were forced to make a hasty exit after realizing their predicament. In the retreat, two rangers were captured, Frank M. Angelo and Theodore A. Carpenter. Angelo was sent to the Martinsburg jail from which he escaped that night. Carpenter would not be so fortunate.^{iv}

The fate of Theodore A. Carpenter is detailed in a post-war letter written by James J. Frazier, a member of the 14th Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment who was, on that day, located at the Perkin's Mill encampment. Frazier, a corporal in Company K of the 14th Pennsylvania, had written the letter on December 6, 1894 to ranger Samuel R. Armstrong, the two having developed a previous friendship. The letter, in part, read with reference to pursuing the retreating rangers:^v

In this dash, John Feit, of Company K, captured one of your men, a short, thick-set fellow, with plenty of plunk, who had lost his horse and could not keep up with the procession any longer. On his way back to camp with the prisoner, Feit met the Adjutant of the First West Virginia Cavalry, on his way to the front, who said to Feit, "is that one of Mosby's men?" Feit replied that he was. "You must not take any of them prisoners of war," said the Adjutant, and drawing his revolver, shot the prisoner dead. Feit became infuriated and would have shot the Adjutant if he had had a load in his pistol or any ammunition to put in it. No braver or better soldier ever wore the blue than John Feit, and to this day he feels regret for the killing of that prisoner.^{vi}

Theodore A. Carpenter was born about 1845 in Madison County, Virginia, the son of William H. Carpenter and Lucretta Berry. In 1860, the Carpenter family resided in the Locustdale P.O. area of Madison County. An older brother, James H. Carpenter, would serve in Company H, of the 7th Virginia Infantry Regiment.^{vii}

After his death, the remains of Theodore A. Carpenter were taken to nearby Winchester and interred in the Stonewall Cemetery.

Editor's Comments: A review of the service records for the 1st West Virginia Cavalry Regiment does not identify the "Adjutant" that shot and killed Theodore A. Carpenter. Richard B. Sowers served in that position from August 1863 until he was transferred to Hart's Island, New York on October 12, 1864. He reported to that location on October 15, 1864. The position of adjutant appears to have remained open "officially" until March 1, 1865 when Frank Robinson was given a commission as 1st Lieutenant and Adjutant. He had been promoted to Sergeant-Major on January 1, 1865. Someone likely served on an interim basis or temporarily as adjutant between October 12, 1864 and March 1, 1865. If that was the case, service records don't exist to identify that person.^{viii} Let us never forget the sacrifice of Theodore A. Carpenter.

- ⁱ Camp Rapidan was located on the Rapidan River near current day Graves Mill in Madison County, Va.
- ⁱⁱ National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 109, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records. Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 10th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Microfilm Series M324, Roll #490, record #297.
- ⁱⁱⁱ National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 109, War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records. Compiled Military Service Records for soldiers serving in the 43rd Virginia Cavalry Battalion, Microfilm Series M324, Roll #207, record #236.
- ^{iv} Keen, Hugh C. and Mewborn, Horace, "43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command." Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1993, pages 224-5; Williamson, James J. "Mosby's Rangers." 2nd Edition. New York, NY: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1909, pages 458-9.
- ^v Williamson, "Mosby's Rangers," pages 458-9.
- ^{vi} Ibid, page 459
- ^{vii} National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 29, 1850 Federal Census, Madison Co., Va., Series M432, Roll 958, page 91 and 1860 Federal Census, Madison Co., Va., Series M653, Roll 1360, page 50; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. International Genealogical Index, Vol. V. On-line ed. (www.familysearch.org). IGI Individual Record, "Theodore A. Carpenter"; Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. Virginia Confederate Rosters (unofficial) compiled between 1904 and 1918, On-line ed., Vol. 1, page 334.
- ^{viii} National Archives, Washington D.C. Record Group 94, Record's of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917. Compiled Military Service Records for Soldiers serving in the 1st West Virginia Cavalry Regiment. Microfilm Series M507, Roll #10, record #2161 and Roll #11, record #2419.