

## **Corporal Robert E. McCormick, Company H, 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry**

For almost a century the only thing that marked Corporal Robert E. McCormick's grave was a small mountain rock. There was nothing else near the small boulder to help identify the person buried underneath it. However, the identity of that person buried beneath that rock was known, but only by a few relatives in the McCormick family that lived in Fauquier County, Virginia.

It was Evelyn Payne Mallory, the granddaughter of Corporal McCormick who stated to the author, "My mother told me that Robert McCormick, my grandfather, is buried right here." When the relatives of the McCormick family found out that Corporal McCormick was a gallant Confederate soldier, who had served with the Black Horse Troop or Company H, Fourth Virginia Cavalry, and that he had lost his leg in combat, a decision was made to hold a special memorial ceremony dedicating a flat military granite marker that was obtained from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to mark his gravesite. That marker would for once and forever identify the final resting place of that former Confederate veteran for future researchers and relatives.

So, at 10 p.m., on October 5, 1996, on a blustery cool day, the memorial marker was dedicated and placed at the old Payne family cemetery. The family cemetery, which is located off Conde Road, between the towns of Marshall and Warrenton in Fauquier County, is situated behind the old Payne family barn that was converted into a nice home by Paul and Suzanne Ashby. It is also important to note that Paul Ashby is the great-great grandson of Corporal McCormick, so they graciously allowed the ceremony to be conducted on their land for this most important occasion.

Numerous descendants attended the event, people dressed up in period dress, as well as re-enactors representing the Forty-second Virginia Infantry. Also, in attendance were members of two United Daughters of the Confederacy camps from Fauquier County, including a representative from the media.

The author, also a great-great grandson, welcomed all the visitors and provided the introduction. Mrs. John M. Cheatwood, President, Black Horse Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, provided the marker dedication and then the author provided a brief history of Corporal McCormick's life and military service. Paul and Suzanne Ashby laid a beautiful wreath at Corporal McCormick's grave and the members of the Forty-second Virginia Infantry fired three volleys and the ceremony ended solemnly with the playing of taps by two young ladies from Warrenton.

After the ceremony, everyone lingered about taking pictures of the new tombstone and visited with relatives and friends in attendance. In addition, the Ashby's provided food and drinks for the event. Everyone in attendance that day felt like they had been a part of history. The memorial dedication ceremony was a huge success.

So who was Robert McCormick and what did he do that was so unique to create a special memorial service dedicated in his honor? To answer that very important question, the story I am about to tell is about a Virginian who rallied to the call of his mother state when war was declared against an invading army; a man who was a combat veteran; a man who was a prisoner of war; a man who was wounded in battle and lost his leg; a man who came home after the war to start a new beginning. This is his story.

Robert E. McCormick was born around 1825 in Fauquier County, Virginia. His parents were Thomas and Frances McCormick. Before the war, Robert E. McCormick was a farmer in Fauquier County.

During the War Between the States, Robert enlisted in Company H (formerly Robert Randolph's Company or the Black Horse Troop), Fourth Virginia Cavalry, as a Third Corporal on April 25, 1861. Lieutenant Robert Lee Randolph in Warrenton, Virginia swore him in for a 12-month period. Confederate records state Robert was 5 foot, 11 inches tall, had a swarthy complexion, black hair, grey eyes and was 33 years old at enlistment. He was a middle aged man, not a young youth at the outbreak of the war.

Robert also had two brothers who served in the Confederacy. William and Joseph McCormick both joined Brooke's Artillery Company. Three brothers served in the Confederate States of America from the McCormick family.

On July 21, 1861, the Black Horse Troop was involved in the first battle of Manassas. After that battle, President Jefferson Davis called the Black Horse Troop the "Bravest of the Brave" due to their gallant service that day.

On October 4, 1861, the Black Horse Troop was involved in a small skirmish at Pohick Church with Union Infantry. Captain Randolph's horse was shot out from under him. Fortunately, there were no casualties, and the Black Horse Troop made their escape down Telegraph Road, which would be Lorton Road today.

On May 28, 1862, he was captured by Union forces at Hanover Court House (which is near Ashland and just outside of Richmond, Virginia). It is also possible he was actually captured on May 27th, when a major engagement occurred at Hanover Court House. On June 9, 1862, he was transferred to Fort Delaware, Delaware until he was exchanged at Aikens Landing, Virginia on August 5, 1862. So Corporal McCormick missed out on Stuart's ride around McClellan on June 12, 1862.

On October 11, 1863, Corporal Robert McCormick was wounded in the leg by a shell fragment that blew off his left foot. This unfortunate incident occurred near Stevensburg, at Raccoon Ford, in Culpeper County, Virginia. Surgeon Owen would later amputate his leg four inches below the knee. The wound permanently disabled him. He spent his convalescence at the Confederate States of America (C.S.A.) General Hospital, located in Charlottesville, Virginia. In 1864, he requested from the Confederate government a prosthetic leg. Records located at the Heritage House in Marshall, Virginia also list him as a Sergeant. It is possible he was promoted after his injury. There are no other annotations in his military record.

The Fourth Virginia Cavalry's chain of command was the Second Brigade, Cavalry Corps, Army of Northern Virginia. The Commander of the Cavalry for the Army of Northern Virginia was General Jeb Stuart.

The Commanders of the Fourth Cavalry were Colonel William C. Wickham, Colonel T.T. Munford, General Fitz Lee and General Rosser. The Fourth Virginia Cavalry was involved in the first battle of Manassas (July 21, 1861), Ellison's Mill, New Bridge and Mechanicsville (detachment) (May 23-24, 1862), Hanover Court House (where Corporal Robert McCormick was captured) (May 27, 1862), Second Bull Run (August 28-30, 1862), South Mountain (September 14, 1862), Antietam (September 17, 1862), Mountville, Virginia (October 31, 1862), Kelly's Ford (where Major John Pelham was killed), (March 17, 1863), Chancellorsville (May 1-4, 1863), Brandy Station (the greatest cavalry engagement during the Civil War), (June 9, 1863), Aldie (June 17, 1863), Middleburg (June 19, 1863), Westminster, Maryland (June 29, 1863), Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (July 1-3, 1863), and the Bristoe Campaign (this is where Corporal McCormick lost his leg), (October 1863).

As noted above, Robert McCormick's unit participated in most of the significant and major battles that occurred between the North and South.

According to the Warrenton True Index newspaper Robert McCormick was elected as the Superintendent for the Poor in Warrenton, Virginia on September 1, 1866. As a matter of fact, the two other individuals who were running for the same position, stepped aside so "the gallant soldier" could have the position.

Sometime after the war, Robert married Martha (maiden name unknown) and had one child named James. Unfortunately, both Martha and James died in 1869.

On August 11, 1870, he married Jane Fewell Robinson in Fauquier County. James K. Hubard married them. The marriage license listed Robert's age as 40 and listed Jane as 25. At the time of the wedding, Jane was the widow of Alpheus Robinson, who served with Company H, Sixth Virginia Cavalry who died from pleurisy. Jane had three children from her first marriage.

On September 20, 1870, Mr. McCormick paid \$308.65 to E.P. Tayloe for 97 acres of land near Carter's Run in Fauquier County. It was on this farm that Robert and Jane raised eight of their own children and three children from Jane's first marriage.

On June 27, 1887, McCormick received \$60 by an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia of 1885-6, making an appropriation to maimed and disabled soldiers and marines.

On May 16, 1890, Robert attended the Black Horse Troop reunion in Warrenton, Virginia at General William Fitz Hugh Payne's house. This reunion was organized to bring together all the surviving members of the Black Horse Troop in order to attend the unveiling of General Robert E. Lee's statue in Richmond, Virginia. Two photographs were taken at the reunion. After the war, Robert was an active member of the Black Horse Confederate Veterans Camp in Warrenton. In 1897, Robert was elected the Commander to the Black Horse Camp for a one-year term. Robert was still attending camp meetings as an active member right before his death. We know that he attended one meeting just one month before he died.

A copy of Robert McCormick's will and the McCormick family Bible indicates he died October 17, 1900 and left 97 acres of farm land to his children and stepchildren. His approximate age at death was 75. Unfortunately, no one in the family provided a tombstone with his name on it. That problem has now finally been resolved.

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