

Soldier and Prisoner

A Case Study Using the Published Official Records of the Civil War



Diane Florence Gravel, CGSM
DIANEGRAVEL.COM
© 2015

The Setting

By 1860, with tensions escalating between the north and south, war was imminent, and Atlanta began to prepare for the worst.¹ The ensuing events must have been quite dramatic for young William. On 10 December 1860, a secession meeting was held in Atlanta, followed by a torchlight procession and speeches.² Five days later, another secession meeting was held, and an Executive Committee was appointed, which included A. Leyden and William Barnes,³ names which would take on great significance in William's life in the years to come. Five days later, on 20 December, South Carolina seceded. The secession was celebrated in Atlanta on the 22nd of December by a great meeting and another torchlight procession. A 15-gun salute took place at sunrise, and at 2:00 p.m., another 100 guns were fired by the Atlanta Grays.⁴ Imagine these events through the eyes of a 17 year old!

The following month, on 19 January 1861, Georgia seceded from the Union.⁵ Each day, the war grew closer to home, and the need for soldiers more desperate. Although it is not known

¹ *Official History of Fulton County*, pp. 92-93.

² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

how many of William's brothers enlisted in the CSA during that first year, on 27 February 1862, his good friend Thomas Hooper⁶ enlisted in Leyden's 9th Georgia Artillery.⁷

The Confederacy was struggling. On 11 April 1862, their troops were forced to surrender Fort Pulaski at the Georgia coast.⁸ The "Military Department of the South," comprised of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, declared themselves no longer under the protection of the United States of America, and took up arms against the Union, resulting in a declaration of martial law on 25 April 1862. As a consequence of that action, on 9 May, by virtue of General Order No. 11, the Union declared all slaves in the three states forever free.⁹ Savannah was threatened, and Confederate Major-General Pemberton was recommending that martial law be imposed there. Additional troops were being sent to Atlanta.¹⁰

The Confederate Soldier

There was no escaping the urgency, and on 14 May 1862, William, a rather small man of 5'6",¹¹ joined his friend Thomas and enlisted in Captain William Barnes' Battery of the 9th Battalion Georgia Artillery under the command of Major A. Leyden.¹²

To the north, the people of Kentucky were torn between the Union and the Confederacy. The Union had issued an order to the families of all men in Confederate service, or who intended to live in the Confederate States, to leave Kentucky by 1 September 1862, or risk being expelled or imprisoned. Females were already being imprisoned there. In mid-August 1862, CSA Brigadier General Humphrey Marshall was gathering forces in Abingdon, Virginia, where he awaited the arrival of Leyden's battalion from Georgia.¹³

On 29 December 1862, General Marshall received word that 4,000 Union cavalry were within 45 miles of Bristol, Virginia. He ordered batteries at Wytheville to Abingdon, and ordered Lieutenant-Colonel M.T. Pryor of the 4th Kentucky Cavalry to dispatch a mounted courier to Major Leyden at Jeffersonville. Leyden was ordered to take his battalion to Saltville without

⁶ "History of Mayson's M.E. Church, South," 4th page; flyer currently in the possession of Diane Florence Gravel. Compiled Confederate Military Service Record for William H. Knight, Co. A, 9th Battalion Georgia Artillery; War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109; National Archives, Washington, D.C.. Confederate Compiled Military Record for Thomas Hooper, Co. A, 9th Battalion Georgia Artillery; War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109; National Archives, Washington, D.C. Fulton County Confederate Pension Rolls, Civil War Pension Application File, William H. Knight and Mary E. Knight, widow; microfilm no. 0323722, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁷ Compiled Military Service Record, Thomas Hooper.

⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*; Series I, Vol. 6, Q.A. Gillmore report (11 April 1862) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), p. 139; digital images, *Making of America*, Cornell University (<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/moawar/waro.html> : accessed 6 April 2015).

⁹ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 14, p. 341, General Orders, No. 11 (9 May 1862).

¹⁰ Series I, Vol. 14, p. 502, Pemberton report (14 May 1862).

¹¹ Compiled Confederate Military Record, William H. Knight.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 16, Part II, p. 765, H. Marshall report (19 August 1862).

delay, and to prepare to defend the salt works.¹⁴ On 1 February 1863, CSA Adjutant General W.B. Myers warned Leyden of a potential large-scale attack from Kentucky on the salt works. Myers advised Leyden that General Jones had directed Major General John B. Floyd, a commander in the area, to communicate with Leyden at first advance, telling them where to proceed to defend the salt works.¹⁵

In August 1863, CSA Brigadier General John Frazer assumed command of the troops at Cumberland Gap, the point where Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee meet, critical to the protection of East Tennessee.¹⁶ His troops included Kain's Artillery and the Sixty-second North Carolina Infantry, which had belonged to General Gracie's brigade. Gracie later told Frazer he had been trying to get rid of the troops for some time. This reassignment of troops was the first in a series of misfortunes contributing to the eventual disaster at Cumberland Gap.¹⁷

On 21 August 1863, General Frazer received orders from General Buckner to hold the Gap. In the event the Union forces broke through, Buckner promised to protect him from the rear.¹⁸

To understand the fall of the Gap, it is helpful to examine the nature and character of the troops. The Sixty-second North Carolina regiment from General Gracie, consisted of about 450 men. It was described by Frazer as very indifferent, badly disciplined, and badly drilled, without leadership. The colonel was absent, soon after resigned and became an open advocate for reunion. One captain had been arrested for distributing papers hostile to the Confederacy. But no one could have known the disastrous effect this regiment would have on the defense of the Gap.¹⁹

The Sixty-fourth North Carolina Regiment was small, reduced by desertions. Their colonel and lieutenant-colonel had left in disgrace for dishonorable conduct. The major left in command had been suspended for incompetence. But Frazer was forced to restore him to command, as there was no one else any better qualified.²⁰

The Fifty-fifth Georgia Regiment consisted of about 500 men, and was considered by Frazer as the best regiment for discipline and efficiency. However, the men did ride their colonel on a rail, which he never resented, but on promising better behavior was allowed to resume his command.²¹

In describing the Barnes' battery (William's unit) and Slemph's Virginia regiment, Frazer said he believed the two batteries of artillery would have done good service, but they had no experience in firing or in actual service.²² Frazer's concern about the character of the troops at Cumberland Gap did *not* extend to the Barnes battery.

¹⁴ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 20, Part I, p. 106, H. Marshall report (31 January 1863).

¹⁵ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 25, Part II, p. 604, W.B. Myers to A. Leyden (1 February 1863).

¹⁶ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part II, p. 610, Frazer report (27 November 1864).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 611.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 608.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

About 27 August 1863, the Barnes battery joined Frazer at Cumberland Gap. They, along with Kain's North Carolina battery, constituted the entire artillery force available for combat. Slemp's Virginia regiment (infantry) joined the forces a few days before the battle.²³

On 30 August, Buckner directed Frazer to evacuate the gap with all speed, to burn and destroy everything that could not be transported, and report to Abingdon, Virginia, 125 miles away. But Frazer, believing the Union troops would attack only from the Kentucky side, thought the order might be some kind of trick by the enemy. He telegraphed in cipher to Buckner that he felt he could hold the Gap, and asked if he should still evacuate.²⁴

On 31 August, Buckner rescinded his previous order and again instructed Frazer to hold the Gap. The troops prepared for a vigorous defense.²⁵ But two regiments ordered there as reinforcement joined Buckner's forces by mistake.²⁶ Now Frazer was short of the troops necessary to mount a defense.

Three public roads united the Gap -- one from Virginia, one from Kentucky, the other from Tennessee. But the character of the land permitted the enemy to approach from many spaces between the roads, and Frazer's troops were thinly spread. Ravines and depressions allowed the enemy to approach undetected under cover of darkness or heavy fog, a frequent hindrance.²⁷ The fogs greatly demoralized the men, who were unaccustomed to service and had never been in action.²⁸

Ammunition was limited because of the deficient construction of the magazine before Frazer had assumed command. Leaks had rendered most of the ammunition useless. Frazer made repeated requests for ammunition and was told a supply would be sent by train to Morristown, about 40 miles away. Upon sending a wagon train to receive the supply, no ammunition was found on the train. The empty wagons returned to the Gap on the 4th of September.²⁹ Now the troops were short of men and ammunition.

The soldiers needed water, and planned to bring the water up from a spring about 300 yards away. But after an ineffectual attempt, the quartermaster and engineer advised the plan could not be carried out. No more than a day's water supply could be stored at the Gap. The oxen carrying the water broke down from lack of food. Farmers in the area did not support the rebel cause and refused to provide nourishment or support in any way.³⁰ Now they faced a shortage of men, ammunition, and water.

²³ Ibid, 611-12.

²⁴ Ibid, 608-9.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 610.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 609.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 610.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 609.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 610.

Federal forces under General Burnside had entered East Tennessee and taken possession of Knoxville on or about 2 September 1863.³¹ Frazer was soon informed that a heavy force had started toward the Gap from Knoxville, and that a large force was also approaching from Kentucky. He did not believe the Knoxville forces would reach the Gap without first being engaged by Buckner's forces, as promised.³²

On 6 September, a scout sent to Knoxville reported that he was unable to ascertain the force of the Union troops, but believed it to be very strong. Frazer ordered him to stay in communication, but heard nothing more until the afternoon of 9 September, when it was too late.³³

As darkness approached on the sixth of September, three commissioned officers and 125 men from the two North Carolina regiments were posted to defend a nearby mill, the only source of flour for the troops. Without the mill, the Gap could not be held for long. But again, misfortune prevailed. Lieutenant Hamilton Wilkins reported what happened as the enemy approached.

About midnight the enemy sent a force of 100 men to burn the mill. They advanced and fired a volley. The men left there to defend this mill were completely panic stricken, breaking and running up the mountain through the gap . . . and reported the whole Yankee army advancing. Some of them fired off their guns -- most probably in the air. Many of them left guns, blankets, and everything else behind in their disgraceful flight. One man was wounded, and he shot by his comrades. So much for the troops.³⁴

On 7 September, now without the mill, Frazer's troops were positioned to defend the Gap, the only area in East Tennessee by that time not in possession of the Union. Generals Burnside and Rosecrans were joining forces to attack from the Tennessee side. At the same time, Col. John DeCourcy prepared to attack from the Kentucky side. Soon, General Shackelford, upon reaching the Virginia side of the Gap, was confident in his advantage.³⁵ He sent word to Frazer that Union forces surrounded the rebels, and demanded unconditional surrender by 3:00 that afternoon, "to save the effusion of blood and the unnecessary loss of life." Frazer declined.³⁶

On the foggy morning of the eighth of September, DeCourcy again demanded surrender. Frazer replied, inquiring as to the number of his troops. DeCourcy responded that if the Gap were not surrendered, he would open fire at midnight.³⁷

Frazer assembled his regimental commanders and some of the staff, "not as a council, for I did not think I could get any reliable information or advice from them, and did not take their notes as to what should be done, but explained to them our situation . . ." They returned to their posts with the understanding that General Buckner would soon relieve them. Frazer sensed such a lack of discipline and morale in the Sixty-second North Carolina Regiment whenever the

³¹ Ibid, p. 608.

³² Ibid, p. 612.

³³ Ibid, p. 612.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 630.

³⁵ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part III, pp. 433-435.

³⁶ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part II, p. 617, Shackelford-Frazer exchange of correspondence (7 September 1863).

³⁷ Ibid, p. 613.

enemy threatened an attack, that he ordered an officer and 17 picked men to join it, "with a view to infuse some better spirit among the men."³⁸

The next day, Burnside got reinforcements on the Tennessee side, and as commander-in-chief of all Union East Tennessee troops, demanded that Frazer surrender. It was at this time that Frazer, completely surprised by Burnside's appearance at the Gap, learned that Buckner had retreated to Chattanooga. Their protection was gone.³⁹

Early on the 9th of September, Frazer again advised his command he was still waiting on ammunition.⁴⁰ Little did he know that DeCourcy was feeling equally vulnerable and feared disaster.⁴¹ Just two days before, DeCourcy had reported:

What is to be done? My men will begin to get sick before many hours for want of bread. Little corn here, and I have only ammunition enough to bluster with and persuade the enemy to evacuate or capitulate if he be so inclined, but I cannot make a serious attack. If the enemy is disposed and strong enough to resist, I do not intend to retire until compelled, but the commissary and quartermasters have put a retreat on my cards.⁴²

About 3:00 p.m. on the 9th, Frazer received a dispatch from the commander at Abingdon directing him not to give up without a stubborn resistance, that he would send an additional force, and that he could rely on anything his courier would communicate. So Frazer asked the courier if there were any troops in Abingdon, if they were aware of Buckner's retreat, and whether they knew of General Burnside's advance. The courier replied that there were no troops, and they knew nothing of the recent developments in East Tennessee or of Buckner's retreat.⁴³ They were surrounded with no reinforcements.

It was on that day, 9 September 1863, shortly after 3:00 p.m., that Cumberland Gap was surrendered without a fight.⁴⁴ Lieutenant P. D. Hunter described the surrender in a report from Stuart Hospital on 24 March 1865.

The enemy opened on the gap with two pieces of artillery, firing over the heads of the pickets. Their artillery fire was replied to by two mountain howitzers, manned by some of the Leyden Artillery, and with considerable spirit. Some of our men were wounded, and 2 of the Yankees killed. I believe this was all which transpired during that night.

Next morning the commander of our batteries opened fire on the enemy as soon as he could see them, but after having fired two shots he was ordered to cease, so he told me. The day was passed in sending to and receiving flags of truce from the Yankees. The horses belonging to the two batteries having been sent away, and the Yankees being on both sides of us, the opinion of nearly every one was that we would very shortly be engaged in battle. All I men with, officers as well as men, were expecting a fight. Those who were not ready were preparing themselves. I issued 100 rounds of small-arms

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part III, p. 503.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 435.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part II, p. 614.

⁴⁴ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part III, p. 501.

ammunition and 200 rounds to each piece of artillery, by order. Those who were not provided with small-arms came and provided themselves.

At the time of surrender I was issuing arms to a regiment, in which there was a number of men recently returned from sick furlough. All of this regiment said, 'We are anxious for the fight to commence, and hope there will be no more flags of truce.' *When information was received, that the place had been surrendered some of the men broke their muskets, others burned their regimental flags, and others again clothing, books, and other articles which they thought might prove valuable or serviceable to the Yankees. I have never witnessed greater disappointment and chagrin than the men evinced upon being informed of the surrender; many of them actually wept.*⁴⁵
[Emphasis added]

At the time of the surrender, Barnes' battery of the Leyden Artillery lost two 6-pounder smoothbore guns, iron, and two 12-pounder howitzers, iron, with the carriages and caissons, and 800 rounds of ammunition.⁴⁶

Frazer anguished over the surrender. In his report near the end of the war, accompanied by supporting statements from the engineer and other officers present at the Gap, he attempted to explain the unconditional surrender.

The character, confidence, and condition of the troops hastily collected to defend the gap were such as to justify no hope of a successful defense against an equal number of the enemy, much less such an overwhelming force as threatened the position in front and rear . . . I might have made some reputation for desperate courage, but so selfish a consideration at so great a sacrifice of life forbade me to entertain so rash a design and to prefer a Northern prison to the self-reproaches of a wounded conscience. I accordingly, acting from a sense of duty, decided to surrender on the 9th.⁴⁷

William Knight, now 20 years old, and his friend Thomas Hooper were among the 2,000 soldiers captured by the Union that day,⁴⁸ and sent to the military prison at Louisville, Kentucky, where they remained before being transferred to Camp Douglas in Chicago.⁴⁹

The Prisoner

After a brief stay in Louisville, William and Thomas arrived at Camp Douglas on 26 September 1863. Conditions at the camp were abysmal. In a report dated 1 October 1863 to the U.S. Commissary-General of Prisoners, Camp Douglas' commanding officer, Charles DeLand wrote,

There is a bad spirit among the prisoners. They have the idea that it would be a great thing for the confederacy for them to escape, and they are talking about it being their duty to make the attempt . . . I have little doubt it will be only a question of time for them to make a revolt.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 30, Part II, p. 633.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 634.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 612.

⁴⁸ Compiled Military Record, William H. Knight.

⁴⁹ Compiled Military Record, Thomas Hooper.

⁵⁰ *Official Records*, Series II, Vol. 4, p. 333.

William made every possible attempt to escape.⁵¹ The punishments were severe.

An inspection report dated 9 October 1863, shortly after William's arrival, disclosed dreadful conditions at the camp. The report described the "place of close confinement," or dungeon, as utterly unfit for its purpose. It was a close room about 18 feet square, lighted by one closely barred window. The floor lay directly on the ground, and was constantly damp. A sink occupied one corner, the stench from which was intolerable. At the time of inspection it confined 24 prisoners, the offense of all being attempts to escape. The place might have been sufficient for 3-4 prisoners, but for the number then confined there, it was inhuman. The inspector remained but a few seconds and was glad to get out, feeling sick and faint.⁵² Given William's attempts to escape,⁵³ it is likely he spent some time in the dungeon.

Reports of neglect and abuse led to many inspections of the camp over the next two years. The inspection in October 1863 found only three hydrants providing water for 6,085 prisoners, in a camp sufficient for 4,500. Discipline was lax. Duties were not assigned to the inmates, but many volunteered to work. Tents (or huts) were found "utterly insufficient" upon inspection. All were in need of repair, all without doors, and hardly a window among them. Much of the flooring and siding had been removed, and the open fireplaces in the cookhouses were in dilapidated condition. Although rations were abundant and good for the guards and hospital, that was not the case for the prisoners. Plenty of vegetables were provided for those who were hospitalized, but only potatoes were given to the prisoners.⁵⁴

The men were generally filthy, but "would be cleanly if they could." Clothing supplies were sparse, although some had received a few items from friends. The Quartermaster's Department supplied a significant quantity of clothing to be used at the camp, but because it was U.S. Army clothing, it was not distributed to the prisoners for fear they would use it to escape. The camp was plagued with rain and high winds. Very few of the barracks were heated. About 1200 prisoners had no blankets, and because of the lack of adequate clothing throughout the camp, the prisoners suffered greatly from the cold.⁵⁵

By mid-November 1863, the water hydrants were completed and conditions seemed to be improving.⁵⁶ But on the third of December, the successful escape of over one hundred prisoners would lead to drastic measures to prevent future escapes.⁵⁷

The night was dark and foggy, and the guards could see no more than ten feet. The prisoners had tunneled from the barracks to the outside fence and, because the guards could not see more than ten feet, were able to escape undetected.⁵⁸

⁵¹ William H. Knight and Mary E. Knight, widow, Civil War Pension Application File.

⁵² *Official Records*, Series II, Vol. 6, pp. 372-374, Medical Inspector A.M. Clark report (9 October 1863).

⁵³ William H. Knight and Mary E. Knight, widow, Civil War Pension Application File.

⁵⁴ *Official Records*, Series II, Vol. 6, pp. 372-374, Medical Inspector A.M. Clark report (9 October 1863).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 635.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 637.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 637-638.

This was the eighth escape attempt by tunneling, and resulted in all floors being removed from the barracks. Although prison officials acknowledged the inevitable increase in sickness and mortality, the action was considered necessary.⁵⁹ Eventually, the floors which had been removed were replaced with sand, making escape virtually impossible.⁶⁰

The escape triggered a full investigation into the security of the camp, probing into how 100 prisoners could escape with frequent patrols on both sides of fence.⁶¹ As a consequence, by the end of December, General DeLand, the commander of Camp Douglas, was replaced by Brigadier General Orme.⁶²

On taking command, Orme found abuses in commissary supplies, particularly in the distribution of beef to the prisoners. He surveyed the rebel sergeants in command of each squad of prisoners, including Barnes' Battery. W. W. Compton, on behalf of Barnes' Battery, described conditions for the 50-man unit. When asked how much clothing the squad had received since its arrival at the camp, he reported that among the entire squad, only 13 pair shoes, 3 shirts, 7 blankets, 10 paid drawers, 1 jacket, and 8 pair of socks had been distributed. He reported the prisoners were consistently shorted in the measurements of beef, and generally received only neck and shank parts. This complaint was consistent among all the rebel officers surveyed, and the subsequent investigation led to the court-martial of Col. DeLand.⁶³

By mid-January 1864, the prisoners were feeling the full effect of having the floors removed from the barracks. The marshy soil created a mass of mud and filth, and a haven for the spread of disease. Between 125 and 150 men were crowded into the buildings, which were only 100 feet by 30 feet. The men were mostly in a filthy and disgusting state and swarming with vermin. Although diarrhea was the most prevalent disease among the prisoners, measles, mumps, pneumonia, epidemic catarrh, and other respiratory diseases were all on the rise.⁶⁴

Within a few weeks, more disease invaded the camp, among them typho-malarial and malarial fevers, as well as smallpox. The wet, muddy floors were considered a primary factor in the rise in disease. Camp officials recommended the barracks be raised on posts two or three feet high, so as to afford a clear view beneath them and allow the prisoners the advantage of a floor.⁶⁵ Pictures of Camp Douglas today show that this recommendation was ultimately approved, but it is unknown precisely when the barracks were raised.⁶⁶

By July 1864, an inspection of the prison showed an astonishing change for the better. The rate of disease was declining, but the decline was only temporary. By fall, disease was on the rise again. The death toll, only 34 in June, shot to 123 in September. Prison officials attributed the rise to three causes: (1) a large proportion of prisoners had been confined for more than a year,

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 638.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 861.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 638.

⁶² Ibid, p. 778.

⁶³ Ibid, pp. 778-791.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 849-850.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. 909-910.

⁶⁶ Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation, Gallery, "Camp Douglas Etching-1864;" digital image, Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation (www.campdouglas.org/gallery : accessed 30 March 2015), image 5 of 46.

doubtless contributing largely to depression and disease; (2) the lack of a competent chief medical officer; and (3) poor diet.⁶⁷ By Christmas, the number of smallpox cases steadily began to decrease.⁶⁸

A report dated 3 March 1865 of a Joint Select Committee⁶⁹ appointed to investigate the condition and treatment of prisoners of war revealed additional atrocities at Camp Douglas. Prisoners in large numbers were put into "condemned camps," where smallpox prevailed, and speedily contracted the loathsome disease. As many as forty new cases appeared daily among them. Even the Union officers who guarded them protested against this unnatural atrocity.⁷⁰

The Committee also reported that prisoners were compelled to ride a plank only four inches wide, called "Morgan's horse," to sit down with their naked bodies in the snow for ten or fifteen minutes, and were subjected to the ignominy of stripes from the belts of the guards.⁷¹ But the war was nearing an end.

On 8 April 1865, the Confederate States Army, including the remainder of the Leyden Artillery, surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia.⁷² The war was finally over.

Release of the prisoners took time. On 4 May 1865, William's friend, Thomas Hooper, was transferred to New Orleans in a prisoner exchange. But William remained at Camp Douglas another month until his discharge on 16 June.⁷³

Although his compiled military service record shows that William "signed" an Oath of Allegiance to the United States, it also indicates he "signs by mark."⁷⁴ Census records show that he and his family could read and write.⁷⁵ Also, the inventory of his father's estate in 1863 included many books.⁷⁶ It is unlikely that he signed his name by mark. One can merely speculate on the moment that William H. Knight put pen to paper and "signed" that Oath of Allegiance.

⁶⁷ *Official Records*, Series II, Vol. 7, pp. 954-955.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1275.

⁶⁹ *Official Records*, Series II, Vol. 8, pp. 347-348.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² William H. Knight and Mary E. Knight, widow, Civil War Pension Application File.

⁷³ Compiled Military Record for William H. Knight.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Nathaniel Knight household, 1850 U.S. Census (population), Georgia, DeKalb County, Stones Dist., p. 157, nos. 2/2, National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, roll 67. Nathan Knight household, 1860 U.S. Census (population), Georgia, Fulton County, Stones Dist., p. 976, nos. 1849/1954, National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, roll 122. William H. Knight household, 1870 U.S. Census (population), Georgia, Fulton Co., Atlanta post office, p. 509, nos. 1901/1851, National Archives Microfilm Publication M593, roll 151.

⁷⁶ Fulton County (Georgia) Court of Ordinary: Inventories & Appraisements, Bills of Sale, Book A: 504-505, Appraisalment of the Estate of N. Knight, deceased; digital image, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 30 March 2015), image 275 of 301.