

THE ALABAMA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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Published by the
State Department
of
Archives and History

Vol. 14

Nos. 3 and 4

1952

WETUMPKA PRINTING CO.
Printers and Publishers
Wetumpka, Ala.

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EDITORIAL

This issue of ALABAMA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, consisting of Numbers 3 and 4, of Volume 14, brings the magazine up to date. The contents is extremely interesting, the subjects varied. The history of Marion, Alabama, by C. A. Townes, gives a good account of the pioneer settlement of a town that has continued to grow with emphasis upon its educational institutions.

Two articles by the W.P.A., describe historic sites in Alabama and list a great many manuments and markers that have been erected in the State. Our history immediately following the War Between the States is clearly presented in the account of the State Militia and gives readers of the present generation an astonishing insight into the confusion and the hazards of the period. Mrs. Christian's presentation of the life of the people during the War period will be completed in the next issue of the Quarterly.

Mr. Catts' description of the fear by the population of yellow fever no longer exists due to the elimination of that disease through the work of Dr. William C. Gorgas, of Alabama. Mrs. Owen's article reprinted from the Advertiser is descriptive of the great work of two Alabama women authors, Miss Zitella Cocke and Mrs. Ella Lowery Moseley.



MAJOR HENRY CHURCHILL SEMPLE

MAJOR HENRY CHURCHILL SEMPLE

By Saffold Berney

Mobile, Ala., November 24, 1922

At the breaking out of the war between the States, in the Spring of 1861, I was a boy, not quite eight years of age, going to school in Montgomery, Alabama, preparing to enter college.

At that time, Major, (then Mr.) Semple, the subject of this sketch, was a practicing lawyer at the Montgomery Bar, and had been such for about fifteen or sixteen years, coming from Williamsburg, Virginia, the state of his birth. He was then in the fortieth year of his age, having been born January 14, 1822; in the prime and vigor of life, tall, slender, active, energetic, and possessing the enthusiasm and ambition of one of his age; of scholarly attainment, having been a university graduate; of unquestionable integrity; quiet, but courteous deportment; firm and courageous, just the kind of man to make the lawyer he was and military officer he afterwards proved to be.

The City of Montgomery is situated in a well wooded and very fertile agricultural section of the State of Alabama, and its people are prosperous, educated and refined, coming as they did, principally from the other Southern States, on the Atlantic seaboard.

In 1861 the Montgomery Bar was, and still is, one of the ablest in the State. In 1861 it numbered among its members the eloquent William L. Yancey—the “Apostle of Secession”—probably the greatest orator the South ever produced, and who represented Alabama in the Senate of the Confederate States; the able and forceful Thomas H. Watts, who was Attorney General in President Davis’ cabinet, and who afterwards became Governor of Alabama; the brilliant and adroit Samuel F. Rice, whose knowledge of the law was unexcelled, and whose wit and humor illuminated all that he said and did, and whose well reasoned and clearly expressed opinions as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama are models of excellence and have been frequently cited; the learned and able George W. Stone, whose long service on the bench as circuit judge and justice and chief justice of the State of Alabama, covering a period of more than half a century, has shed luster on the juridical history of the State—he was a tower of strength and a pillar of fire in legal matters; the learned and logical Abram J. Walker, whose opinions as Chief

Justice of the State give him high rank as a jurist; William P. Chilton—profound lawyer and jurist, who afterwards became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama; that great lawyer and judge and U. S. senator, George Goldthwaite, learned and profound; Thomas J. Judge, whose knowledge of the law and sound judgment placed him in the front rank as a lawyer; John A. Elmore, a great lawyer and not excelled as an Advocate; the knightly Tennent Lomax, who fell at the head of his regiment at the Battle of Seven Pines—a lawyer of rare ability who gave promise of a brilliant future when he was stricken down; David Clopton; Daniel S. Troy, John W. A. Sanford, James H. Clanton; Marion A. Baldwin; William A. Gunter, and a number of others whom I might mention but for want of space. There were giants at that Bar in 1861.

It was with such lawyers as these that Major, (then Mr.) Semple had to measure lances, and that he so ably held his own in contests with them, in the courts, both trial and appellate is sufficient evidence of his legal ability and standing in his profession.

When Major Semple came to the Bar the Supreme Court of Alabama ranked with the ablest in the United States, and its decisions were as frequently cited by the courts of the other states as those of any court in the United States—a time unlike the present, when crowded calendars did not preclude the thoroughness of investigation and presentation by counsel, and the deliberate consideration by the court, so essential to the right decision of legal causes, and when in the absence of precedents, the judges were forced to reason out their opinions by the analogies of the common law. Such was Mr. Semple as a lawyer in 1861. I will now turn to his career as an officer in the Confederate Army.

SEMPLÉ'S BATTERY

This famous battery of field artillery, of six twelve-pounder bronze Napoleon Guns, which rendered such signal service to the Confederate cause in the war between the States, in 1861-65, was organized March 7, 1862 at Montgomery, Alabama, as the Marks'

Artillery, but was afterwards known as Semple's Battery, taking this name from its first commander, Henry Churchill Semple.

It was composed of about one hundred and fifty officers and men, the very flower of Montgomery City and County, members of the first families of the City and County, and as brave, patriotic and enthusiastic a body of men as were ever mustered into the service in any army—loyal sons of the South, who were ready to give their lives in defense of the South, as many of them did. The first commissioned officers, elected by the Company at the time of its organization, were: Henry C. Semple, the subject of this sketch, Captain; Elmore J. Fitzpatrick, First Lieutenant; John B. Scott, Second Lieutenant; Richard W. Goldthwaite, Third Lieutenant; Joseph Pollard, (the brave young officer who fell in the Battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee) Fourth Lieutenant; Dr. Robert Lide, Surgeon. I became a member of the Company at the time of its organization. The following day, March 8th, the officers and men of the battery, without guns or horses, left Montgomery for Mobile on a river steamboat, arriving at Mobile March 11, 1862, and on March 11, 1862 they were carried from Mobile, by steamboat, down the Mobile Bay to the mouth of Dog River, and up that river to what was then known as the site of the Old Dog River Cotton Factory, about five miles from the City of Mobile, where it went into camp and where it remained, drilling in squad formation and waiting for its guns and horses, until July, 1862, when, fully equipped with guns and horses, it was sent to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and became a part of General Bragg's Army. The Battery was with that army in its advance into Tennessee and Kentucky in the summer of 1862. It received its baptism of fire November 8, 1862, in the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky, fought between the forces of Bragg and Buell, losing in the battle one man killed and two wounded.

On Bragg's retreat from Kentucky, the Battery was sent, by way of Cumberland Gap, to Knoxville, Tennessee, thence down the Sequatchie Valley to Decherd, Tennessee, thence to Triume, Tennessee, where it went into camp and remained until Bragg's advance to Murfreesboro. On December 28, 1862 Bragg's Army moved forward to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the Battery form-

ing part of the army. It arrived at Murfreesboro on the night of December 28, 1862. On December 31, 1862 the Battery took part in the hotly contested battle of Murfreesboro, between the Confederate Army under Bragg and the Federal Army under Rosecrans, forming part of Cleburn's Division. The next day, January 1, 1863, the Battery was not engaged. The next day January 2, 1863, at three o'clock came the desperate and fatal charge by Breckinridge's Division, consisting of about five thousand men, on the Federal lines. Four guns out of the six belonging to the battery bore a conspicuous part in this charge, losing out of the forty-five officers and men handling the guns twenty killed and wounded, among the latter the brave Lieutenant Joseph Pollard, who was shot through an arm and a leg and who died of his wounds; losing also one gun captured and fourteen horses killed and wounded.

A boulder on the site of this charge bears this inscription:

“ On January 2, 1863, at three p. m., there were stationed on this hill 48 cannon, commanding the field across the river, and the Confederates advanced over this field, the shot and shell from these guns resulted in the loss of 1800 killed and wounded in about an hour”.

This out of about five thousand men making the charge. The river referred to is Stoney River, about two miles north of Murfreesboro, which at that time was fordable at this point. The Division was badly repulsed and driven back in disorder. Captain Semple at the time of this charge was acting as Chief of Artillery of Cleburne's Division, and the four guns which were engaged in the charge were commanded by First Lieutenant E. J. Fitzpatrick.

It was in this battle of Murfreesboro that a shell from Semple's Battery, fired at a distance of more than half a mile, killed General Rosecrans' Chief of Staff, the accomplished Austrian Officer, Lieut-Colonel Julius P. Garesche, who was riding by the General's side.

Saturday night, January 3, 1863, Bragg's Army retired to Shelbyville and Manchester, Tennessee. And in June, 1863, fell back to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Then came the bloody battle of CHICKAMAUGA in September, 1863. In this battle, said to have been the bloodiest of the war for the numbers engaged, the Battery again distinguished itself by gallant and efficient service.

Speaking of the Battery, General Cleburne, in his report of the battle, had this to say:

“ Captain Semple with his battery x x x rendered invaluable service and exhibited the highest gallantry on Saturday night. running their pieces up, as they did, within sixty yards of the enemy. In this they were ably sustained by Lieutenant Richard W. Goldthwait of Semple's Battery”.

And again in the same report, General Cleburne says:

“ Captain Semple also displayed skill and judgment as Acting Chief of Artillery, particularly in the selection of a position for his own and Douglass' Batteries on Sunday evening, which gave an oblique fire upon the enemy in his works, contributing to the success of the final charge of Polk's Brigade.”

Then came the Battle of *Missionary Ridge*, when Bragg's Army, already weakened by the losses sustained by it in the battle of Chickamauga, was reduced to almost a skeleton by the withdrawal of forces from it, sent to Knoxville and other points, was driven in disorder from the ridge. In this battle of Missionary Ridge, Cleburne's invincible division, of which the Battery was a part and which had never sustained defeat, held the right of Bragg's line, held back the advancing tide of the enemy in its front, and retired from the ridge in good order.

And then came RINGGOLD GAP, in the hills of north-western Georgia, near Ringgold Station on the Western & Atlantic Railroad, where Cleburne's Division, forming Bragg's rear guard, held back Grant's pursuing army for six hours until Bragg's retreating army had passed in safety, with its wagon trains. In this heroic defense two guns of the Battery, under the Command of Lieutenant Richard W. Goldthwait, did most effective work.

Then the retreat of the army from Dalton to Atlanta, under General Joseph E. Johnston, who had superseded General Bragg in command of the army.

And then the Battle of JONESBORO, GEORGIA, in which the Battery was engaged.

And then Hood's advance into middle Tennessee in the Fall of 1864. At this time Captain Semple, having been promoted to the rank of Major of Artillery, to rank from January 19th, 1864, and assigned to duty in defense of Mobile, Alabama, the Battery was commanded by Captain Richard W. Goldthwaite.

Then came the disastrous battles of FRANKLIN AND NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, after which the Battery was sent to re-enforce General Joseph E. Johnston in the East, going to Cammack, Georgia, and from there to Augusta, Georgia, and from Augusta it was marched a short distance into South Carolina, where it went into Camp, as the horses were too jaded to go further. While resting there and collecting horses, the Battery received news of General Lee's surrender. Ten or fifteen days after receiving the news the Battery disbanded, and the officers and men were paroled. Major Semple was paroled at Meridian, Mississippi, May 10, 1865.

So passed out of existence and into history this gallant battery, which had covered itself with glory on many hard fought battlefields, and with their paroles in their pockets, and orders for subsistence and transportation enroute, where obtainable, its heroic men and officers who, for the sake of their beloved Southland and its righteous cause, had risked and sacrificed so much, with courage and fortitude not surpassed in the annals of war;

who, without shelter of any kind, half fed, half clothed, half shod, had so willingly and uncomplainingly endured the hardships and privations of more than three years of war—the long marches over hot and dusty roads, or roads made well nigh impassable by winter rains, the toilsome marches over hills and mountains, the summer heat and the winter cold, who had often faced death on the battlefields—broken hearted at the wrecking of all their hopes, turned their faces homeward to homes many of which had been made desolate by the ravages of war, to build anew their fortunes and restore their prostrate land.

What a contrast between the battery then and when it left Montgomery in 1862 for the field of action. Where the high hopes and enthusiasm which filled the hearts of these men in 1862? All gone, and only disappointment in their place. Few, very few of them, remain on earth today, probably not a half dozen—all the others have gone to their just reward. Many of them died on the battlefield, others in the hospitals from disease; the rest, more fortunate shall I say, since the war. Will the South ever forget these men? Will the glory that is theirs ever be dimmed, or the honor that is due them ever be forgotten by the South? God forbid.



THE
HISTORY OF MARION
SKETCHES OF LIFE
In Perry County, Alabama
By S. A. Townes

“Vive La Bagatelle.”

MARION, ALABAMA

Printed by Dennis Dykous

1844



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PREFACE

More than twelve months past, I commenced, what I then designated, to be a series of numbers, giving the history of Marion, and sketches of life and adventures of old settlers, and purposed a weekly publication of them in the Marion Herald, until the thread of my story was run out. In pursuance of this determination, I wrote and published three numbers over signature of Oliver H. Perry. Business, absence, ill-health, and if the truth must out, indolence, caused me to stop at the third chapter, where, in all probability, the story on the London of Perry would have halted, for the next half century, had not the persuasion of kind friends and the temerity of the publisher of this veracious History caused me to collect, and endeavor to arrange in readable form, what is contained in the following pages. The reader will observe that many trivial events and humble individuals are occasionally dignified into what may be deemed undue importance, by those who may chance to look over these pages, and reside some distance from Marion. Should our history stray so far from home as to be read by strangers, it is hoped they will recollect it was the object of the writer to speak of matters mainly local in character. Our story is a family record for the present and future generations of Marion, and hence it has not been thought inappropriate to relate many anecdotes of persons and society, which may appear contemptible to the indifferent reader, but which, I flatter myself cannot fail to be read now, and many years hence, with much interest by the inhabitants of Marion.

In obtaining the facts contained in the following pages, I was obliged to communicate the object of my enquiries, and by that means, I necessarily became known as the writer. It would, therefore, be affectation to withhold my name from the public. This explanation, it is hoped, will be sufficient, to relieve me from the imputation of any ridiculous ambition to appear before the public as an Author; and when it is further stated that the only reward I look for or desire, is the amusement of my neighbors and friends, by the preservation of facts connected with the history of Marion, and incidents in the life of some of its first settlers; and, also to benefit ourselves by giving an extended notice, and knowledge of our religious and literary institutions,

I hope even criticism will withhold its rod, and this little book, in the circle it is intended to be read, will be received with that blindness to its faults due to good intentions.

In speaking of persons who are alive—my friends and neighbors, with whom I am in daily intercourse, I have found it difficult to use terms that should give no offence, or not convey the idea of a disposition to flatter. I trust that I may have succeeded in my wish to avoid each. When I have mentioned facts connected with particular individuals, I have spoken of them only in print, in terms of praise, as every good man would willingly speak of them in conversation, and even if my language should sometimes appear too flattering, the reader will please recollect that we live in a naughty world, and good deeds, are not so alarmingly frequent that we should be chary in over praising them.

S. A. TOWNES

Marion, Alabama, October 1, 1844.

