



Brown County Journal

March. 15, 2016

Events:

Brown County Historical
Society Dinner Meeting
April 4

Brown County
Genealogical Society
Meeting
April 14

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Rhonda A. Dunn

The Civil War Journal of John M. Laurie Part 2

This Journal continues on with the story of John M. Laurie who was an ordinary citizen that was put in extraordinary circumstances. He was born about 1839 in Pennsylvania. As with many of our immigrants from Ohio he arrived here in Brown County after the Civil War. John served in the Ohio Volunteers - Sept. 28, 1861 to Oct. 12, 1864 Company F 34th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteers Infantry - Chapmanville, West Virginia. From his obituary it says that he served three years in the Civil War, marched with Sherman from Atlanta to the sea, and for a number of months endured horrors as a prisoner of war at Libby and Belle Isle. He was discharged at Columbus, Ohio.

After his service, he moved to Booneville, Missouri for a time. He moved his family to Indiana about 1875 and resided at R.R.1, Mt. Liberty, Indiana near the Brown and Bartholomew county line.

John Laurie married Elizabeth Little in Missouri in 1867 and they had six children: Grant, Maud, Frank, Clyde, Mary, Albert "Bert", and Annie. Some of you may remember Albert Laurie who was the animal caretaker at the Brown County State Park. He was the recipient of the following document written by his father. Known as "Bert" Laurie, he farmed and lived on Spearsville Road outside of Beanblossom for many years until his death in 1962. He and his family are buried in the Henderson Cemetery in Gnawbone.

The original document details a fascinating historical report about the Civil War and the engagements that John Laurie encountered. Please note, the memoranda is copied verbatim as taken from the original hand-written copy. This is a transcription of his journal kept while on the march.

JOURNAL - MEMORANDA NO. 3

Near Salt Sulphur Springs, May 14th

Here we caught up with Crook's Division at last. We left Christiansburg yesterday morning, passed thro Blackburg and took dinner about two miles this side of the town. We began the ascent of what the people here call Salt Pond Mountain. We had got near the top and the road went thro a gap about a mile ahead of us. When we were slightly surprised by a shell plunging into our Column going thro a horse in the next Co. to mine. There was some confusion at first, but things was soon in order. My Regt. was dismounted and deployed as skirmishers on the right of the road. The 2nd Va. Cav. on the left. We moved forward engaged in the Reble skirmishers, found out that Mudwall Jackson had slipped into the gap with two pieces of artillery after Crook had left. There was not more than two thirds of my Reg. in line, no amunition and the ramrods were so rusted in some of the Guns that they could not be pulled out. The powder in the guns had turned to mush. I had to unscrew the nipple of my gun and pick powder into the chamber before I could get the bullet out of the gun. There was not more than seventy-five of us that could use their guns.

The Rebles didn't seem to offer much resistance and they began to retreat as soon as we attacked them. Everything was going too swimmingly when we were surprised by hearing the recall sounded. We fell back towards our horses. The Rebs didn't attempt to follow. About half way back I got my horse from a 2nd Va. Cavalryman that had rode him to the front. It saved me a long tramp as our horses had been taken back about four miles. After we got back to our horses, a Division of cartridges was made so as to give as many men as possible twenty rounds. That left about sixty of us. The rest were sent to lead horses and we were left to guard the rear. The Column had taken to the right and was crossing the mountain to the right of the Gap. After crossing the first mountain we were ordered to mount our horses. At dark we began to climb the main mountain. It was daylight before we got over it. Some of the boys were seriously hurt in coming down. The night was dark and rainy. The mountain so steep and no road, we had to catch hold of the horses tail in front of us so as to be guided on the path. We traveled all day today over roads that Crooks division and train had went over and the mud was almost knee deep to our horses. Tonight we are camped on a mountain just inside of Crooks pickets.



John M. Laurie

My feet has swelled and gave me so much pain today and this evening that I had to cut my boots off my feet. Lost two horses and one man by drowning. Rainy and disagreeable tonight.

Union, May 15th

Passed thro the Salt Sulphur Springs today and camped about a mile from the pretty town of Union. Went over and seen the footpads of our Regt. but the best of all is we have had almost a whole days rest. My feet is swelled a good deal, but they do not pain me any.

Union, May 16th

Crooks Division left this morning and we moved about half a mile from our camp to a commanding position and camped for the night. My squadron is on camp guard tonight.

Union, May 17th

After coming off guard this morning, we were sent out on picket the other side of Union. We have been foraging thro town today and raised some sugar, bacon, flour and cornbread, also some milk.

Lewisburg, May 18th

Left Union this morning and camped here about five oclock this evening. Nothing of any interest happened on the march. My horse got lame and I thought at one time that I would have to walk and lead him. But he carried me through. I think he will get over it.

Lewisburg, May 19th

We have been here all day resting. The boys has been foraging on their own hook and the result is that we have plenty of flour, meal, bacon, maple sugar, molasses and honey, besides plenty of corn for our horses.

Bungers Mills, May 20th

Left Lewisburg this morning and camped here about ten oclock. The dismounted boys of our Regt. joined us today. They marched from Meadow Bluffs where they left Crooks Division encamped. Bungers Mills are about four miles and a half from Lewisburg.

Bungers Mills, May 21st

Drew plenty of rations today. The first we have drawn since we were at Logan Court House on the 4th Inst. From present appearances we will have a few days rest. We are badly in need of clothing and shoes. My feet are still swelled but they do not pain me any.

Bungers Mills, May 22nd

Went over to Aunt Rody today and got a quart of "soft sope" washed my clothes, then myself. The

consequence is that I feel considerably better. We have no grain for our horses and we give them four hours grazing each day. The pasture land about here is very good. The people around here are not very sorry at our presence as they had been notified to be at Lewisburg on the 18th when they would be conscripted. But we have cleaned them out in the eating line.

Bungers Mills, May 31st

I was detailed for Provost Guard today. Hope that I will have easier times than when with my Co. The Co. of cavalry that was Duffie's bodyguard has been returned to their Regt. and now ten orderlies and ten provost guards form his guard.

Bungers Mills, June 2nd

Arrested a citizen today charged with murdering one of our boys last Nov. His own story as he told me is this. The soldier came to his house in advance of the column and went to plundering. Then he went to a neighbors and borrowed a pistol. When he came back the soldier was ransacking a trunk upstairs. He went up to where the soldier was. His wife, a little girl, and a school mistress was in the room. The little girl called the soldier's attention towards a box in another part of the room. When the soldier turned his back to go, the citizen attempted to shoot but the citizen clinched with him. He said that his wife and school mistress helped him and during the tussle the pistol went off. He didn't know which one and he seen that the soldier



Libby Prison, Richmond, Virginia

was wounded. With the help of the school mistress, he dragged him downstairs and out in the yard. He said that he asked the women if he should do any more to him. They said no to let him alone. But the soldier asked him to put him (the soldier) out of his misery. Then he took an ax and hit him in the head with it, covered the body up with straw untill the Column passed. Then threw the body in an old well and threw stones upon it. An old Ducky informed on him and the body has been found. I would not like to be in that citizen's skin. I am much mistaken if he don't's stretch hemp.

MEMORANDA NO. 4

White Sulphur Springs, June 3rd, 1864

Left Bungers Mills this morning. Marched slowly until we reached this famous watering place. The fashionable resort of the wealthy during the summer months. It is the most beautiful place I ever seen.

Near Callahans Station, June 4th, 1864

Left White Sulphur Springs this morning about eight o'clock. The roads are in most excellent condition. Passed the graves of some of Crook's men that had been bushwhacked. Among them that of Sert. Frith. A first-rate man and soldier. He belonged to Company D of 34th Reg. And at the time of his death was serving as scout in Capt Blayers Company. It has rained all afternoon and raining yet. I have been on guard at the Well. Anything but a nice job when water is scarce.

Warm Sulphur Springs, June 4th

Here we are camped at another watering place similar to the White Sulphur Springs. Took a bath this evening and felt better after riding through the dust all day. Captured two prisoners here, one of them belongs to General J.E.B. Stuart's Signal Corps. He was here for his health. One of our boys belonging to Co. B 34th Regt. Who had volunteered to serve as scout with those belonging to Averill and known as the Jesse Scouts was killed by a bushwhacker. Just before we camped we passed through the pretty village of Germantown. This is not as pretty a place as the White Sulphur Springs. All the hotels at this place have been used by the Rebs for hospital purposes. One of the men belonging to Averill's command and wounded at Droop Mountain last November was in the hospital when we got here.



Near Goshen Station, June 6th

Came onto the Virginia Central Railroad at Hillsboro and took dinner. We have kept along the Rail Road all afternoon. So far the Rebs have not made a stand. But we expect to find them in either Buffalo or Pond Gap. Genl Crook is ahead of us tearing up the track and burning bridges. Pick up a wandering Reb once in a while.

Near Middlebrook, June 7th

Today we crossed North Mountain through Pond Gap. Buffalo was blockaded so that it was impossible to pass through it. Have not seen the Rebs yet. Hear from the citizens that Hunter whipped the Rebs at Port Republic and entered Staunton yesterday 12 o'clock. We were half an hour too late to intercept a part of the Rebs that retreated this way. Passed through the village of Gummerdean, found plenty of flour,

meat, whiskey and applejack. Plent of it at Headquarters. Got my canteen full. Was on guard till 12 oclock tonight 12 miles from here to Staunton.

Staunton, June 8th

Arrived here today at 12 oclock. Hunter Command is here. Staunton is the largest place we have yet seen. A tolerable nice place.

Staunton, June 9th

I got a pass today and went to town. Seen a couple of large guns that the Rebs had abandoned on their retreat. The Depot and some other buildings were burned and they are now blowing up the RailRoad bridges. Hearing that the 29th OV was here, I went and seen George Raab. Had a long talk with him. Hunter's Command captured nine hundred and sixty prisoners during the fight and retreat of the Rebs.

Near Brownsburg, June 10th

Left Staunton this morning and camped here for the night. We were dismounted once for a fight, but the Rebs retreated. I was returned to my company this morning. My Regt. Having been assigned to another Brigade and Genl Duffie to the command of another Division. My Regt. Was in the 1st Brigade 1st Cavalry Division, Duffie commanding our Brigade. Now we are in the 2nd Brigade 1st Division. Our Brigade is commanded by Col. Oley of the 7th Va. Cav. Genl Duffie commanded the 2nd Division. Averill the 1st Division.

Lexington, June 11th

Arrived here about three oclock this afternoon. Just before getting to town my brigade was dismounted and deployed as skirmishers. We moved thro the woods untill we came in sight of the town. When we halted untill the skirmishers on the right of Genl Crook's D8ivision of Infantry came up. While waiting for them we could see the Reb Cavalry going out of town. Our boys almost beged Col Oley to let us go for them. But he told us that his orders was to come to the edge of the woods and remain there until further orders. IT wasn't long before our Artillery opened on the Reb Cavalry and sent them out of town in a hurry. One man of Brigade belonging to the 7th Va. Cav. Was dangerously wounded by a skirmisher of the 12th Ohio. Their bullets whistled around us right merrily for a while untill they found out their mistake. it's a wonder that more of us were not hurt. The town surrendered just before we entered it. The citizen that killed one of our boys was hang near Brownsburg this morning. Stonewall Jackson is burried here. A small flagstaff marks his resting place. Passed thro Rockbridge Springs.

Lexington, June 12th

Rested here all day. There is some very beautifull farms and residences. We begin to realize that we

are in the famous valley of Virginia.

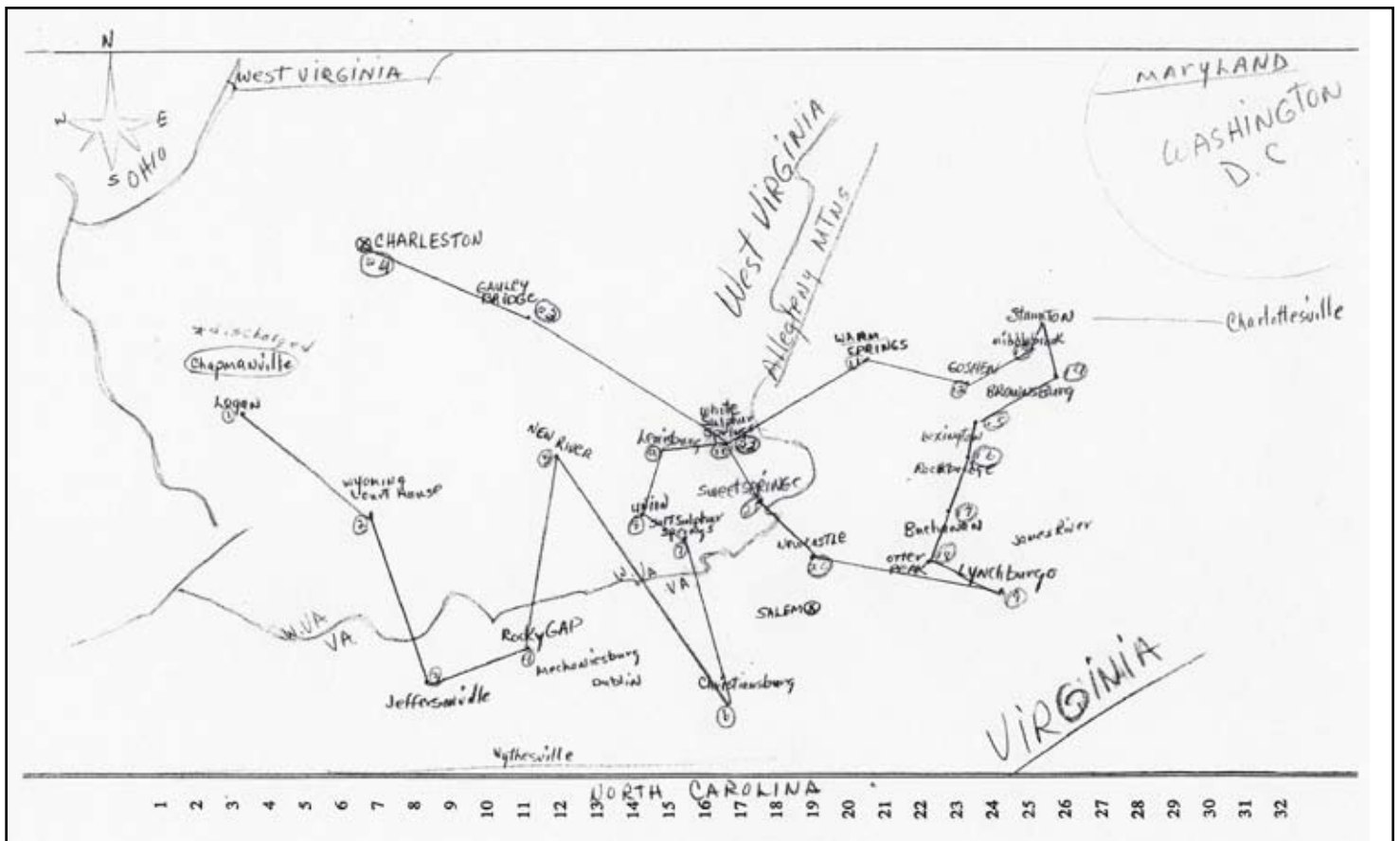
Buchanan, June 13th

Left Lexington early this morning. Had some skirmishing. The Rebs burned the bridge over the James River. There was about one brigade of cavalry and a Regt. Of Reble Infantry on the opposite side of the river when we got here. But our artillery started them slightly in a hurry. Last evening a small detail out of our brigade was sent out about seven miles from Lexington and burnt an iron furnace they manufactured shot and shell. We also discovered about one thousand bushels of corn we brought in all that our horses could carry. We didn't get back till near one o'clock this morning.

Buchanan, June 14th

Rested here today. The Infantry came up this evening. A spy was shot today. Had a good bath in the "Jeems" Rivers. One of our boys found a dispatch addressed to Major Genl Breckinridge at Rock-Fish Gap informing him that we have thirty five pieces of artillery.

(John M. Laurie's Journals go on for many more pages, these can be found at the Brown County Historical Society Archives.)



John M. Laurie's march according to his journal entries.