

YOUNG REBELS KILLED ON WAY HOME AFTER WAR

By Paul Oldham

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

28 October 1979, Giles County Historical Society Bulletin

Pg. 3

They enlisted as 18-year-old recruits in the Confederate Army at Pulaski in September 1861, went together through half a dozen major battles to the surrender in May 1865 and finally ended in lonely graves on the Putnam-Smith County line, away from home and family.

Uriah R. Gillihan and T. W. Phillips, both privates in the 28th Tennessee Infantry of the Confederate Army, had been neighbors and had fished and hunted on Richland Creek and Elk River and in the hills of Giles County.

They has spent time together in school learning to read, write and cipher. They had gone courting together. They swapped farm work. They rode mules and horses along the roads and hills and enjoyed the sweetness of youth.

They had their war heroes - Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett, Sam Houston - and were loyal to the Southland. When Tennessee joined the Confederacy, these young men were anxious for the glory of war and, believing the war would be of short duration, signed up with the men in gray and became "Rebels", part of the 28th Tennessee Infantry formally organized on September 7, 1861. They trained at Camp Zollicoffer in Overton County.

Decked out in new Confederate uniforms with muskets, side arms and new overcoats from the textile mills of Charleston, South Carolina and anxious to "get at those Yankees," these fresh recruits marched off to their first actual battle with General Felix Zollicoffer at Mill Springs, KY.

On December 22, 1861, Zollicoffer's forces were defeated and put in complete disarray. They fell back in retreat with Zollicoffer dead in a fence corner after he, being very near-sighted, rode far ahead of his troops behind federal lines. When he turned to give an order, a Union officer shot him, and Zollicoffer died in a rock fence corner a short time later from loss of blood.

When news came of the general's death, his raw troops fell into complete unorganized retreat, finally failing all the way back to Gainesboro and Chestnut Mound. Many of the men were so disillusioned they went home-some became guerillas.

Young soldiers Gillihan and Phillips stayed in the army and, a year later, were in the battle of Murfreesboro in December 1862.

They were then sent to Jackson, MS.

In May 1864, these men were with Col. S. S. Stanton of Gainesboro in the battle of Resaco, GA, where Stanton caught a Yankee shot and died of the wound.

On September 19-20, 1864, they were in the battle of Chickamauga. On November 20, 1864, they were in the battle of Franklin, TN.

In March 1865 they were in the battle of Smithfield, NC, and were present at Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's surrender at Greensboro, NC on May 1, 1865, at the time, part of the Fourth Consolidate Tennessee Infantry.

The surrender and parole terms called for them to give up their weapons and return home and not take up arms against the government again.

So, with ragged gray uniforms, knapsack baggage, almost barefoot and unarmed, the two men started the long journey home, hungry and tired, to start life over.

They were hoping to help their families get back to farming.

It was a long way on foot from Greensboro by way of Knoxville to Kingston and down the Walton Road, especially when you traveled mostly at night for fear of being caught by Union bushwhackers and guerillas who still operated.

It was mid-May when former Privates Phillips and Gillihan reached the home of Dr. Ned Burton, a physician, on the Walton Road east of Chestnut Mound. They had walked all night, and as it began to get light, stopped for breakfast, hoping to sleep in the barn during the day and then to move on after dark again.

Dr. Burton welcomed them for breakfast, being a Southern sympathizer himself. They asked to sleep in the barn but he declined for fear of the Union guerilla discovering them and harming not only the soldiers but him and his family for aiding Rebels.

But he told the two travelers that he had an unoccupied cabin about two miles away in the head of a hollow, away from main roads, where they might go and sleep through the day.

They accepted his offer and guided by Dr. Burton's son and a former Burton slave named Willis, they went to the cabin before it was good daylight and bedded down for a day's rest.

But the Union grapevine was too sharp for Dr. Burton, and the Rebels were discovered by a group of 14 Union guerillas who had been appointed Home Guards by the Union judge at Carthage after civil law was suspended and military law declared.

The Home Guard surrounded the house and ordered the men out with their hands up. Their hands were immediately bound behind them and they were marched over the hill for a little Yankee fun.

Guy Boyd, who lives near Buffalo Valley, recalls his grandfather, Lewis Fletcher, who was then 13 years old, telling of seeing the Home Guards come riding by their place on horseback, marching the former Rebel soldiers in front of them, prodding them with bayonets and a black snake whip.

After finishing showing the Rebels off, the Union men tied them to trees and used the two for target practice despite their crying and begging for mercy.

After shooting all the cared to, the Home Guards rode off, whooping it up and firing into the air.

The lifeless, bullet-riddled bodies of the former Confederate soldiers were still tied to the trees.

Late in the afternoon, Dr. Burton sent Willis and his son back for the two men. But they found the house empty and the signs of several horses, leading them to guess the outcome.

In the meantime, the Home Guards rode by to advise Dr. Burton not to be feeding Rebels and keeping them in his house.

Dr. Burton sent Willis, another slave and his son with a cart drawn by a yoke of oxen to get the two Rebel bodies and bring them back to his house.

Dr. Burton's son secured Lewis Fletcher and his uncle, an old man, to help them with the burial.

They took the two lifeless forms to a spot some one-fourth of a mile down the hollow now known as the Willis Hollow (for the former slave who later lived in the same house the men hid in) or the Tom Hollow in the St. Mary's community right at the Smith and Putnam County line.



(LONELY GRAVES – Guy Boyd of Rt. 1, Buffalo Valley, points with his walking cane to the rock wall that his grandfather Lewis Fletcher helped build around the graves of two Confederate soldiers killed on their way home to Pulaski from the Civil War in May 1865. The burial place is located in isolated Willis Hollow in the St. Mary's community at the Putnam and Smith County line. (Staff Photo by Jim Heard)

In the hollow on a hillside a few feet north of the wagon road, they dug two graves where they buried the two Rebels wrapped in blankets - - no caskets.

Then for one week, the Fletchers, the two former slaves and Dr. Burton's son worked in building a rock enclosure for those graves.

The field rock was broken, cut, chipped and built into a wall under the watchful eye of Dr. Burton.

So remorseful was Dr. Burton for having sent the two to their death while trying to help them that he kept the graves decorated with flowers and cleaned off as long as he lived.

Today, nearly 110 years after their burial the stone wall is still straight and nearly plumb on the lower side, though the enclosure has been filled-in with other rocks, dirt, leaves and bushes growing on the graves.

The grave markers that once stood at the head of the graves are gone.

Only chimney rocks remain of the house where they hid. Gone are all of the other three houses that once stood in the hollow.

Edgar Ballard lived at the mouth of the hollow where he farms 56 acres. The grave site is probably a mile and a half from the Ballard home and that far to the closest house in any other direction.

The land where the young Rebels were buried is owned by Hubert Bennett (not the Cookeville Bennets). Livestock graze near the graves and along the mountain creek that flows 30 yards from the graves. Mostly the hollow is inhabited by wild life, raccoons, groundhogs and foxes.

Ballard and Boyd served as guides to photographer Jim Heard and me. They are both in their 60's. They both said, "We wanted you to do a story on these men because when a few of the people our age are gone, no one will know what this rock enclosure is."

They expressed hope that the Daughter of the Confederacy or another historical group might see fit to mark the graves and record who is buried there for posterity to know their story.

Boyd said it was an often-lamented fact that no one related to the boys ever visited their graves, so far as he knew.

So the loneliness of the final resting place of two young men is perhaps exceeded only by the sadness of the tragedy that befell them after so much danger in open warfare, killed on the way home to lives of peace.

While most of the world neither knows or cares about the two graves, Dr. Burton cared, the former slave Willis Burton cared as long as he lived and Guy Boyd and Edgar Ballard care.

Note: Guy Boyd was the s/o Muncey Boyd & Cora Fletcher. Muncy Boyd was the s/o Lafayette "Fate" Boyd. Guy Fletcher Boyd md Gertrude Snow. Guy Fletcher Boyd died 16 October 1984.

Gertrude Snow Boyd Obt.

COOKEVILLE -- Graveside services for **Gertrude Snow Boyd**, 95, of Buffalo Valley, will be held at 10 a.m. Tuesday, March 14, at Cookeville City Cemetery.

The family will receive friends from 4-6 p.m. today, Monday, March 13, in the Carthage Chapel of Bass Funeral Homes.

Mrs. Boyd died Saturday, March 11, 2006, in Smith County Health Care Center in Carthage.

She was born July 13, 1910, in Harriman to the late John and Alpha Snow.

Mrs. Boyd was a graduate of Tennessee Tech. She was a member of Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church in Gentry.

Her family includes a daughter, Muncy Boyd McKinney of Buffalo Valley; a son, James S. F. Boyd of Nashville; a brother, Robert L. Snow of Johnson City; a sister, Thelma Holmes of Melbourne, Fla.; two grandchildren, Lisa McKinney Taylor and Glenda McKinney; and two great-grandchildren, David Wilensky and Ava McKinney Taylor.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by **her husband, Guy Fletcher Boyd** (who died Oct. 16, 1984), and five brothers and sisters, Lloyd, Theodore, Leslie, Myrtle and Betty Snow.

Bro. Bill Cowan will officiate at the services.

Published March 13, 2006 10:26 AM CST: Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

<http://www.ajlambert.com>