

Ferdinand Hoover (1835-1863) of Darke County, Ohio Union Soldier in the Civil War

Killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863

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Battle of Chickamauga; Lithograph by Kurz and Allison, 1890 (PD)

On October 7, 1861, Ferdinand Hoover of Greenville Township in Darke County, Ohio joined the Union Army. The twenty-six-year-old emigrant from Germany served as a corporal in Company G, 40th Infantry Regiment of Ohio. He spent nearly two years with the regiment. On September 20, 1863, he died in the fierce fighting at Chickamauga in northern Georgia.

The Battle of Chickamauga, fought September 18-20, 1863 was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. Chickamauga, Georgia is located about fifteen miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee. At stake was Chattanooga's railway center, which provided a gateway to the Confederate South. Some 58,000 Union soldiers, under the direction of General William Rosecrans, clashed with the Confederate army of General Braxton Bragg, numbering 66,000 troops. On September 18, 1863, General Bragg ordered his troops to set up a defensive position at Chickamauga Creek in an effort to thwart the Union army's drive to control Chattanooga.



*F. G. Hoover
Corporal, Company G 40th Regiment
Signature on letter from camp,
dated February 21, 1863*

Combat began in the early hours of September 19 at Jay's Mill and spread south for four miles. Fighting was brutal, often involving hand-to-hand combat. Fighting continued through September 20 when, at the end of two days of battle, Federal troops were forced to retreat. Counting both sides, there were some 34,000 dead or wounded, making it one of the more costly battles of the war. It was a short-lived victory for the Confederates. By the end of November, 1863, reinforced Union troops were able to break through Confederate lines to control Chattanooga and nearly all of Tennessee. In the spring of 1864, General Sherman used Chattanooga as his base and starting point for his famous march to Atlanta and to the sea. The Chickamauga Battlefield was the scene of the last major Confederate victory of the Civil War. In 1890, the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park was created to preserve and commemorate these battlefields. This was the nation's first military park.

Ferdinand wrote frequently to his wife from camp. Some fifty letters have survived. While Ferdinand clearly missed family and home, he was committed to serving his country. In a letter written from Camp Chase, dated November 1, 1861, he wrote *"I am in a good caus (cause) and if it is God's will that I die on the field of battle, you must tell our children that it was for their future good."*

Ferdinand was born in 1835 in Württemberg, Germany and immigrated to the United States about 1845. In the U.S. census of 1850 for Darke County, Ohio, Ferdinand is listed as a 15-year-old "manufacturer" living in the household of the Akins family in Greenville Township. On May 1, 1856, Ferdinand married Mary Cole Wintermute. The couple settled on a farm and had three boys, two of whom died as young children. After his death, Mary C. Hoover was entitled to receive a widow's pension of \$8 per month. On September 13, 1866, she forfeited the pension when she married Ferdinand's brother, John C. Hoover, who had served as a private with Company G, 40th Infantry Regiment of Ohio (the same company and regiment as Ferdinand) and had been wounded at the Battle of Chickamauga. John and Mary had two children: Charles and John. Their life together was short. John C. Hoover died two years later, in 1868, leaving Mary widowed a second time with three young children to raise. William A. Hoover, born on January 7, 1861 and the only child of Ferdinand to survive, married Laura Ellen Howver in Mansfield, IL in 1888. She was the daughter of George Howver, a Confederate soldier from Singers Glen, Virginia, who had moved north with his wife and children after the war.

Ferdinand Hoover was the son of Johann (John) F. and Dorothea Huber (Hoover) and grandson of Ferdinand Huber (born about 1778) and his wife Catherine Scheahinger (born about 1783).

Ferdinand's grandfather emigrated from Württemberg, Germany to the United States with five adult sons and their families in the mid-1840s. In addition to Ferdinand's father, Johann F., the other sons were Johann George, Ferdinand, Jacob Frederick, and Johann Theodore Andrew (Capt. J.T.A. Hoover). All established themselves on farms in Greenville, Darke County, Ohio, and appear there in the U.S. Census of 1850.

Putting together this family has been challenging because of the various names used on census records and other public documents. The men alternated between Huber and the English version Hoover for their surname. The families appear to have followed traditional German naming patterns. Most had two Christian names: sometimes they used one name, sometimes the other. Sometimes they used the English versions of their German names: John, instead of Johann. Or they simply used initials. Compounding the difficulties, the men often used the same Christian names in naming their children.

Sources of information for Ferdinand Hoover: *Roster of Ohio Troops, Fortieth Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (p154); U.S. Census records of 1850 and 1860 for Greenville Township, Darke Co., OH; Marriage record, Darke Co. Courthouse; Pension application and obituary for Mary Cole Wintermute (Ferdinand's wife); Passport application for William Hoover (Ferdinand's son); Unpublished letters written by Ferdinand to his wife Mary during his service as a Union soldier (some fifty letters generously shared by Julie Owens, another descendant of Ferdinand Hoover).

Source of information on Ferdinand's grandfather comes from the biographical sketch of Ferdinand's uncle, Capt. John T. A. Hoover included in the *Portrait and Biographical Album of Otoe and Cass Counties, Nebraska* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers. 1889). Ferdinand's grandfather, father and uncles are also found in the U.S. Census records for Greenville Township, Darke Co., Ohio. Two of his uncles, Capt. John T. A. Hoover and Jacob Frederick moved to Louisville, Cass Co., Nebraska and are found in the U.S. census records for that town, beginning in 1870.

Sources for the Battle of Chickamauga: The American Civil War. Web. 10 July 2007; Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. National Park Service Web. 10 July 2007.

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