

## **George Howver (1845-1916) of Singers Glen, VA Confederate Soldier, Civil War**

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*George Howver's tombstone in the cemetery in Singers Glen, VA. At the bottom, barely legible, is the notation "A Confederate Soldier." (Photo by SAM)*

George was born on August 13, 1845 at Mountain Valley in Rockingham County, VA. (This hamlet in the Shenandoah Valley was renamed Singers Glen in 1860.) He was the fourth of five children of the farmer John Howver (Houwer) and his wife Barbara Funk. George's maternal grandfather was the Mennonite Joseph Funk, one of the first to settle at Mountain Valley and the pioneer American music teacher who established the first Mennonite Printing Press in the country there in 1847. George was just four and 1/2 years old when his mother died. His father re-married, but it is not known when; apparently John did not have any children with Mary Good, his second wife.

On July 1, 1862, at the age of seventeen, George Howver enlisted as a private with Company H, 7th Virginia Cavalry, also known as Ashby's Cavalry. He would serve under Captain Shoup and Captain Ashby. On his military service enlistment record, George was listed as age 17; 5 ft. 8 in. tall; with a ruddy (dark) complexion, dark eyes and dark hair. His occupation was given as a farmer.

On January 29, 1864, a year and a half after George enlisted, the young man was captured by Washington Cavalry Pennsylvania Volunteers. A week later, on February 8th, George's name appeared on a list of prisoners confined at the Military Prison at Wheeling, VA (also known as Atheneum Prison). The following day, George was sent to Prison #3 at Camp Chase, near Columbus, OH. He would stay there for just over a month. On March 14, 1864, George was transferred to the prison at Ft. Delaware, in Delaware, where he remained until he was released on June 15, 1865. He had been a prisoner of war for a year and a half. His father died a few months later, in November of that year.

More than 400,000 men were taken prisoner in the course of the Civil War. There were 150 facilities that served as prisons. These were over-crowded and ill-equipped. In some places, there was no shelter other than that which the men could improvise with blankets and poles. Men lived in filthy conditions and the death rate in prison was twice that on the battlefield. Men died of malnutrition, exposure and diseases, including typhoid, typhus, malaria and smallpox. (Source: Hyslop, Steve. *Eyewitness to the Civil War: The Complete History from Secession to Reconstruction*. Ed Neil Kagan. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006. p 336.)

(Confederate.)  
*H* | **7 Cav.** | **Va.**  
*George Hoover*  
*1st Lt.*, Co. *H*, 7 Reg't Virginia Cavalry.  
 Appears on  
**Company Muster Roll**  
 of the organization named above,  
 for *March 1 to June 30, 1864*  
*not dated*  
 Enlisted:  
 When *July 1*, 186*2*  
 Where *Rockingham*  
 By whom *Capt Shoup*  
 Period *war*  
 Last paid:  
 By whom *Capt Ashby*  
 To what time *Nov 1*, 186*3*  
 Present or absent *absent*  
 Remarks: *In hands of enemy*  
*since Jan 30 1864*  
 The 7th Regiment Virginia Cavalry (also known as "Ashby's Cavalry") was originally organized in the Spring of 1861. About October 7, 1861, authority was granted to increase the size of the command. In June, 1862, the twenty-nine companies of which it was then composed were reduced to ten; ten companies having been assigned to the 12th Regiment Virginia Cavalry; seven companies organized as the 17th Battalion Virginia Cavalry; one company assigned to the 14th Regiment Virginia Cavalry as Company G, and one company became Captain John W. Carter's Battery Virginia Artillery.  
 Book mark:  
*J. Steason*  
 (642) Copyist.

George came home to find the countryside around his home in the Shenandoah Valley in ruins. The following excerpt from the above book on the Civil War gives an indication of what it must have been like: "Wanting to leave nothing to chance, Grant ordered Sheridan to lay waste to the breadbasket of the Confederacy [. . .] 'take all provisions, forage, and stock wanted for the use of your command. Such as cannot be consumed, destroy [. . .] so that the crows flying over it for the balance of this season will have to carry their provender with them'" Following orders, Sheridan marched through the valley from September 1864 to March 1865 leaving the beautiful Shenandoah countryside wasted and in flames. At one point, Sheridan reported to Grant that his army had "destroyed over 2,000 barns filled with wheat, hay, and farming implements; over 70 mills filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over 4,000 head of stock and have killed and issued to the troops not less than 3,000 sheep." Major General Sheridan is quoted as saying "'The people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with.'" (Hyslop, p 314)

George married Sarah Ellen Paulsel, daughter of David Paulsel and Elizabeth Tarflinger, on November 26, 1866. By this point George had lost both of his parents. George and Sarah had six children: Laura Ellen (1867), James Paulsel (1869), Lula Josephine (1871), Marshall Luther (1874), Ella Lillian (Nell) (1876), and Harry Lee (Hal) (1879). The oldest three children were born in Singers Glen. Sometime between 1871 and 1874, the family moved to Mansfield, Illinois. According to the U.S. Census of 1880 for Mansfield, IL, the youngest three children were born in Illinois. After the war, George returned to farming, as noted in the birth record

of his oldest child Laura Ellen. However, by the birth of his second child in 1869, he lists his occupation as carpenter. Some of the Civil War prisoners were used to construct and maintain their own shelters. George may have learned carpentry skills at this time.

(Confederate.)  
H | 7 bar | Va  
George Hoover  
Pt., Co. H, 7 Reg't Va bar  
Appears on a Descriptive Roll of  
**Prisoners of War**  
at Camp Chase, Ohio.  
Arrested:  
Where Morrifield Va  
When Jan 29, 1864.  
Received at Camp Chase, Ohio:  
When Feb 10, 1864.  
Whence Wheeling Va  
By whose order Capt Geo Over  
Description:  
Height 5 ft. 8 in.; age 17  
Eyes OK; hair OK; complexion OK  
Date of departure Mar 14, 1864.  
Remarks: Transferred to Ft  
Delaware  
Camp Chase, Ohio, Register No. 2; page 446  
Ollersby  
(639) copyist.

Apparently, George took his carpentry seriously. In 1877 he filed an application to the United States Patent Office, wherein he stated, "Be it known that I, George Howver, of Mansfield, in the county of Piatt and State of Illinois, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Weather-Strip ..."

More is learned about George in a letter written by George's granddaughter Josephine Dixon Pullen to Ann Middleton Aschenbrener (great-granddaughter of George Howver). The letter is undated but written sometime before 1980. In it, Josephine states, "The man Sarah Ellen Paulsel had intended to marry was killed in the war, so she married George. . . George Howver was a carpenter and there was a saying around Mansfield that you could tell any house that George built: same pattern. Things didn't go [well] in Illinois, or grandfather was homesick for Virginia. So, sometime late in the 1890s, he just moved out and back south to Newport News, Virginia, where he died on January 1, 1916." Josephine noted that George's oldest daughter, Laura Ellen, went down to Singers Glen to make arrangements for his funeral and to provide a headstone. On his gravestone are the words "A Confederate Soldier."

George Howver, age 54, is listed on the U.S. Census of 1900 for Newport News, VA. His occupation is listed as a carpenter. At the time he was living on 29th Street with a young couple, Oliver and Florence Beaseley.

According to his death certificate, George Howver (family name given as Hawver) died in Elizabeth City, VA on January 1, 1916, at the age

of 70. (In 1952, Elizabeth City was incorporated as the independent city of Hampton, VA.) He is buried among other Howver family members in the cemetery on the hill overlooking Singers Glen, Virginia.

Sources of information:

"Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Virginia," National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), downloaded from Fold3 on January 8, 2014; Selected Records of the War Dept Relating to Confederate P.O.W. 1861-1865, Roll 598-29 of the National Archives. Downloaded from Ancestry. com on August 23, 2010; Marriage record for "Geo

Houwer and Sallie E. Pansel,” Virginia Marriages, 1785-1940, index, Family Search.org, downloaded in 2012; George Howver’s Tombstone, Singers Glen, VA; Fretz, A. J. *A Brief History of Bishop Henry Funck and other Funk Pioneers with Biographies of their Descendants from the Earliest Available Records to the Present Time*. Mennonite Publishing Company, 1899.; U.S. Census Record of 1880 for Mansfield, IL.; Undated letter written by George's granddaughter Josephine Pullen; U.S. Census Record of 1900 for Newport News, VA; Application files, U.S. Patent Office, Letters Patent No. 190,039, dated March 23, 1877, downloaded on Jan 27 2014. Death certificate for George Hawver, Virginia Death Certificates, 1912-1987, downloaded from FamilySearch.org on December 7, 2023.

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