

Chapter 24, part 1

Samuel Franklin Jamison

Civil War Soldier

The Attack on Fort Sumter in April, 1861, the formation of the Confederate States of America and the election of a new President, Abraham Lincoln, gave deep concern to the citizens over where this contention would go from here. In many ways it also overshadowed local news of the election of Joseph Cowden as a Justice of the Peace. While all these events became the foremost conversations in almost everyone's homes and local stores, the work on the farm still had to be done. The children who were still at home, such as Samuel Franklin, his youngest brother and some of his sisters, kept the farm going especially since their father Joseph Cowden was very busy serving as Justice of the Peace with his numerous responsibilities.

Although most of Samuel Franklin's time was occupied with necessary everyday farm chores, he also found time to practice his love for wood-working. He became proficient as a "cooper" which is the title for a tradesman who makes or repairs casks, barrels and tubs. In Samuel Franklin's spare time he handmade barrels, tubs, buckets and butter churns out of wood staves and metal hoops. After he met the family's needs for such items he was able to sell extra one's to neighboring farmers to earn cash for later when he would have his own farm.

Samuel Franklin kept track of the status of the war for the next fifteen months hoping it would show progress toward an end. During that time eighty-six battles were fought. Thirty-nine of those were won by the Union. But the disturbing fact was that while only twenty-eight were won by the Confederates,

nineteen more were inconclusive. To Samuel Franklin, if battles were inconclusive it meant that the Union was unable to control the outcome in those battles which was almost as bad as losing the battle because no progress was made in those engagements toward ending the war. When you add the inconclusive number of battles to the Confederate wins, it totals forty-seven battles in which the Union didn't prevail, which is more than half the time. And what's worse, thirty-six of the battles were fought in Virginia which was too close for his liking. At this rate, the war could shift north and battles could be in Pennsylvania soon. He and his father, Joseph Cowden, had many long serious discussions about the war. They, as well as many others, believed that slavery should be abolished. At the same time, they and many others also believed that states should have the right to their sovereign laws. But they believed President Lincoln was too quick to take a hard stand and try to make a monumental and highly contentious change in morality, ideology and economy overnight which would adversely affect the whole nation. After his election, Lincoln stated "Let there be no compromise on the question of extending slavery." After taking office but before Congress was in session, Lincoln fought the war by executive orders instead of waiting for Congress or calling an emergency session. He also bypassed Congress later to pursue the "enemy" and then had to cajole his Cabinet members to see it his way. For a nation only 85 years old, still in its infancy by any standard, this would be too much to bear all at once. And it was. The U.S. military was still unprepared and not ready to take on a large scale war. The President's position unfortunately provoked many states to secede igniting a war and now Americans would be fighting and killing Americans. Instead, the matter should have been resolved with progressive, small compromises gradually over the next generation and ultimately achieve the same result without a self inflicted war. But their opinion, like that of many others, didn't account for much, especially now, deep in the midst of a war that seemed destined to escalate.

Samuel Franklin and his father didn't just discuss philosophies and strategies. They also discussed real horrors inherent with invading forces during war. They considered how devastating it would be for the township, county and state if an invading army came as far as Pennsylvania and extended itself beyond its supply lines. In that case, an enemy army of thousands would have to be fed. They would take from farms, homes and stores to satisfy their needs. And even if

they offered to pay for the livestock, flour, vegetables, water, canned goods and blankets they took, their confederate currency was no good to the victims because it had no value in the north. Families would be stripped of everything and left to forage to stay alive or become refugees in distant cities. What's more, roving bands of merciless marauders would sweep through after the army left and take anything remaining of value. And all too often they would rape and murder the victims at will and disappear with the blame falling upon the invading army which only escalated the animosities between the north and south.

Samuel Franklin believed he had no choice but to volunteer to serve for the Union in hopes that they could help keep the war out of his home state and eventually reunite all the states. His father, remembering the philosophy and tradition of his forefathers and considering the gravity of the situation, supported his son's decision. On July 30, 1862, Samuel Franklin, now 26 years old, joined to serve with many other volunteers from Lancaster County. He was mustered-in as a Private into Company "B" of the 122nd Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry on August 11, and soon dispatched by train from the City of Lancaster to Harrisburg. They were then transported with their regimental flag of a blue diamond on a white field by train to Washington D.C. as part of the defenses of the U.S. Government until September.

Soon they were attached to the Army of the Potomac. First they were shifted to Fairfax Courthouse, then to Point of Rocks, Maryland, then to Pleasant Valley, Virginia for a week until October 19. To the soldiers, this seemed to be nothing more than exercises in breaking camp, marching and making camp again. They never even heard a shot fired. Their next orders took them to Warrenton, Virginia where they camped for approximately three weeks. During this time detachments were sent on reconnaissance missions to Manassas Gap looking for Confederate movement. On November 5th and 6th, they were drawn into small skirmishes with the Confederates which exposed them to their first live fire engagements. This light duty with no casualties was deceptive to the new volunteers because it would in no way prepare them for the carnage that awaited them. Their next movement was to Falmouth, Virginia where they could begin staging for a strategic attack on the Confederate held Fredricksburg, Virginia.

General Burnside, light on large-scale battle experience and naively optimistic, was convinced that he could end the war by taking Fredricksburg then marching on to take Petersburg at which point the Confederates would surrender. His inexperience and optimism proved fatal for his army. Upon arriving at Fredricksburg, General Burnside ordered the attack on three fronts: in the city; across the fields; and across the Rappahannock River. He ordered the 122nd to protect the army's right flank against a counter attack. While the Confederate defenders were preoccupied with the attacks, he ordered another division to cross a 600 yard swampy marsh bog, considered to be impassible by the Confederates and therefore not defended. After an exhaustive struggle through muck, sometimes up to their hips, the division rallied and caught the Confederates completely by surprise routing an entire Brigade. However, when the division began running out of ammunition and no resupply or reinforcements were sent by Burnside, they were forced to withdraw and lost the ground that was gained. From the right flank Samuel Franklin witnessed men, soldiers and officers alike being cut down on all fronts for the better part of two days. With every man that fell, all he could think of was the devastating impact on each man's family. By the grace of God, the Confederates didn't try a counter attack on the right or else the 122nd would have taken the brunt and possibly have been overrun. Samuel Franklin was one of the men spared from the slaughter. Burnside ultimately withdrew all his forces from what had become one of the deadliest battles of the Civil War. The Union lost the battle with 5,000 soldiers and officers dead or wounded plus another 8,300 missing or captured. The Confederates lost 4,000 dead or wounded plus 500 missing or captured. This virtual slaughter of men on each side earned the battle a subtitle of "The Slaughter Pen."

General Burnside, in an effort to redeem himself, made another attempt at defeating Confederate General Lee. On January 20, 1863, Burnside ordered an attack around the left flank of Lee's army believing he could subdue them from that vantage point. The success of his strategy would never be known as the weather conspired against him. Unfortunately, a torrential rain storm plagued the Union's path for days with mud so deep the cannons sunk to their axles and the men, including the 122nd Regiment, were barely able to advance. The failed attempt had to be called off and became known as "The Mud March."

Samuel Franklin was to see action in one more battle, the Battle of Chancellorsville. The 122nd along with the other divisions were transferred to General Sickles on April 28. He marched his army to a point south of Fredericksburg, crossed the Rappahannock River and regrouped. Two days later, they marched 12 miles to Chancellorsville. This is where General Lee's army was encamped. Upon the Union forces arrival Lee shifted his army into the thick woods where they could take covered positions. Two days later the battle was joined. It continued for several days, first with a wave of Union soldiers, "Yankees," charging the Confederate position, then a wave of Confederate soldiers, "Rebels," charging the Union position, and sometimes the charges clashing on the field between them. As an eye witness described it in *Moore's Rebellion Record*, "In the annals of this war, there has been no greater manifestation of desperation than that shown by the rebels this Sunday morning. They came through the woods in solid mass, receiving in their faces the terrible hailstorm which burst like fury...the forty pieces of artillery... hurled in the grape and canister. The advancing column was cut up and gashed... Companies and regiments melted away, yet still they came. The enemy, as if maddened by the obstinacy of these handfuls of men, rushed up to the muzzles of the cannon, only to be swept back, leaving long lines of dead..." Samuel Franklin again witnessed horrible carnage on both sides including the irreparable loss of Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson and Union General Wipple, both of whom died on the field of battle. The only difference was that General Jackson was accidentally shot by his own men. The losses were high: the Union reported 17,000 soldiers and officers killed or wounded; the Confederates reported 13,500 soldiers and officers killed or wounded. The Union withdrew leaving the Confederates with a strategic victory holding on to their ground.

The next order for the 122nd was to escort General Wipple's body back to Washington and act as an escort at his funeral. At this juncture, the 122nd had completed its nine month service obligation and was ordered back to Harrisburg where it was honorably mustered-out of service on May 15 and 16, 1863. In spite of their valiant efforts, the war waged on and others from Pennsylvania were pressed into service for their tour of duty. Samuel Franklin and his family were relieved for his miraculous safe return home. But he would never be able to forget

the horror and slaughter of men, young and old, he witnessed firsthand. These acts caused tormenting memories and nightmares that only a soldier in war can know.