

Christian Hilliard Scitzs – Civil War Soldier

I will write more about Christian's family and life in a later post, but for this post I am only writing about Christian's Civil War service. Who is Christian to our family? Christian and his wife (Sarah Ann White) were the parents of Elmira Scitzs, who married Groves Benjamin Sharp. Groves B. and Elmira were the parents of Groves Hilliard Sharp, who married Bertha Amelia Sharp. Grove H. and Bertha were the parents of Barney Hilliard Sharp, who married Katherine Alma Lee Lewis. Barney and Alma were the parents of Mary Lillis, Lewis Sharp, Jeri Kirkland, and Shirley Sharp. And I think we all know who they are!

Christian Hilliard Scitzs was a Confederate Soldier during the Civil War in the 20th Regiment of the Mississippi Infantry, Company I. He was a Private throughout the war. From the National Park Service [1]:

20th Infantry Regiment was organized during the late summer of 1861 with men from Bolivar, Monroe, Noxubee, Adams, Scott, Carroll, and Newton counties. The unit moved to Virginia, then Tennessee where in February, 1862, it was captured at Fort Donelson. In this engagement it lost 19 killed of the 31 officers and 469 men present. The regiment was exchanged and assigned to Tilghman's and J. Adams' Brigade, Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. For a time it served in the Vicksburg area, then transferred to the Army of Tennessee. Placed in J. Adams' and Lowry's Brigade, the 20th was involved in the Atlanta and Tennessee Campaigns and ended the war in North Carolina. Only a remnant surrendered on April 26, 1865. Its commanders were Colonels William N. Brown and D.R. Russell; Lieutenant Colonels D.H. Maury, Horace H. Miller, and Walter A. Rorer; and Majors William M. Chatfield, Thomas B. Graham, and C.K. Massey.

This regiment:

- Fought on 16 Feb 1862 at Fort Donelson, TN.
- Fought on 6 Apr 1862 at Shiloh, TN.
- Fought on 2 Dec 1862 at Oxford, MS.
- Fought on 4 Jun 1863 at Mechanicsburg, MS.
- Fought on 2 Jul 1864 at Kenesaw Mountain, GA.
- Fought on 20 Jul 1864 at Peach Tree Creek, GA.
- Fought on 23 Jul 1864 at Atlanta, GA.
- Fought on 30 Nov 1864 at Franklin, TN.
- Fought on 28 Dec 1864 at Egypt Station, MS.

In the records (that exist) of Christian Hilliard Scitzs' Civil War service, we see that Christian enlisted December 9, 1862 (so he did not fight at the battles of Fort Donelson, TN; Shiloh, TN; or Oxford, MS). He enlisted at Enterprise, MS (SSW of Meridian, MS) for a period of 3 years.

[John note from Wikipedia [2]: When the Civil War started in April 1861 with the attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, many young white males from the Confederacy enlisted for a period of 1 year, as the Confederacy thought the war would be won by the South in short order. However,

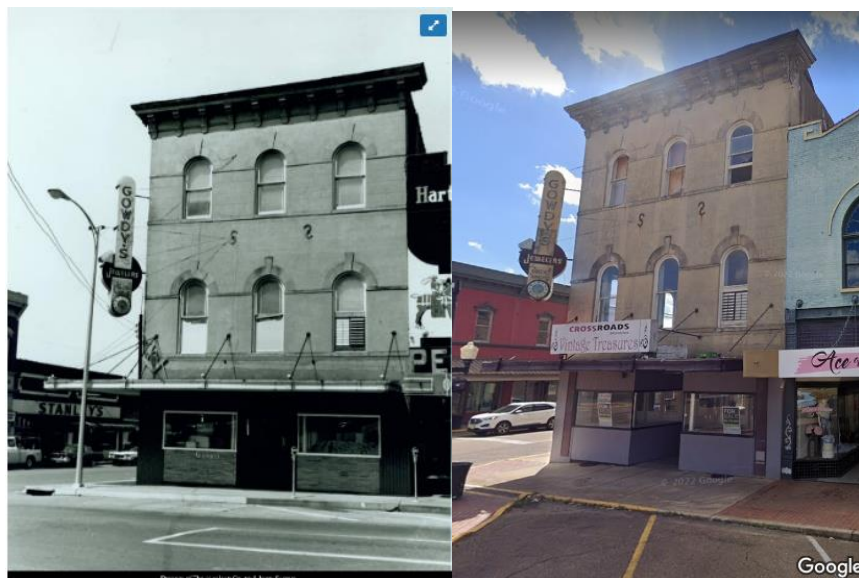
by December 1861 with the end of the war nowhere in sight, the Confederacy faced a loss of 148 regiments (half the Army) in March. The Confederate Congress tried to encourage voluntary re-enlistment by offering bounties, furloughs, etc., but it didn't work. So in April 1862, all white men, ages 18 to 35, were required to serve for a period of 3 years. The men whose enlistments were supposed to be up in April 1862 were automatically re-enlisted for another year. Draft quotas were established for all of the Confederate States. On September 27, 1862, the upper age limit for service was extended to 45 years old. On February 17, 1864, age limits were extended again to all white men ages 17 to 50, and the length of the enlistment was extended to "the length of the war". Those men 17 and 18 were not required to serve outside of their state, and were meant to constitute a state defense reserve.]

In April 1862, Christian was 37 so he was not required to enlist at that time. However, when the upper age limit was extended to 45 years old, he was swept up and required to enlist and that enlistment covered to the end of the Civil War.

During March and April of 1863, he was listed as "Present" in Company I, but hadn't been paid since his Enlistment Pay.

During May and June of 1863, he is listed as "Absent" having been "send to Canton Hospital May 16, 1863". There is some interesting information here [3] on the Canton Hospital. The Canton Hospital was created after the Battle of Shiloh, when many Confederate wounded were put into railroad boxcars and shipped south, and there was a major railroad junction in Canton (the "Mississippi Central Railroad," and the "New Orleans, Great Northern and Jackson Railroad").

Dr. Alphonso Thomas Semmes operated a small hospital in a large storage room in the Masonic Lodge in Canton - (see pictures below – the left picture is older and shows the Masonic Symbol on the left side just above the awning below the Gowdy's Jewlers sign and the right picture is much more recent and the Masonic Symbol is now missing).



It was just a little before this date that several skirmishes in central MS around Edwards, Bolton, Mechanicsburg and the Battle of Raymond were fought prior to the Siege of Vicksburg starting. Elements of the 20th Mississippi Infantry were involved in those battles and skirmishes and it may be that Christian Hilliard was injured then. Here's [4] some interesting information about some of the skirmishes the 20th Mississippi Infantry was involved in about this same time. The 20th was also involved in battles at Mechanicsburg, MS on June 4th, 1863, so that could also be a source of Christian's injury.

During July and August of 1863, he is still listed as "Absent" having been "send to Canton Hospital May 16, 1863". During September and October of 1863, he is still listed as "Absent", but the reason is now "Detailed in Pioneer Corps service October 25, 1863".

From Civil War Talk [5]:

The Pioneer "Corps" was a large company-sized unit generally consisting of from 50-75 men, commanded by one or two junior officers, which was typically (in the eastern theater) attached to the staff of each division (CSA) or brigade (USA). Subordinate regiments would be called upon to contribute one or more men to the Pioneer detail. Unarmed but equipped with axes, picks, shovels, spades and saws, which were carried in a wagon dedicated for their use, they performed a variety of duties in support of the combatants, including:

- removal of fences and other obstructions in the path of advancing troops.*
- construction or repair of bridges and entrenchments.*
- cutting of roads through woods for the passage of artillery.*
- building of pontoon boats.*
- collection of abandoned small arms and accouterments (on behalf of the ordnance department).*
- assisting the wounded off the battlefield.*
- burial of the dead on the field or near the hospitals.*

Usually posted safely toward the rear, the Pioneers were called to the very front when approaching the enemy, to level fences to enable the rapid deployment of troops and artillery. At Gettysburg, a group of Union Pioneers was sent out to a farmhouse and outbuildings between the lines with orders to burn it at a given signal, but the Confederates advanced too quickly and they were all taken captive, although a prompt counterattack soon freed them. If the Pioneers were not otherwise gainfully employed, they might be sent back to their respective units to provide extra manpower. Or, they might be overlooked and remain idle, as was the case with Major General Ed Johnson's Pioneers at Gettysburg. While his comrades were being shot down on Culp's Hill, Private John O. Casler of the 33rd Virginia reports that he and his fellow Pioneers had a "good time" feasting on food confiscated from an abandoned house behind the lines, which they managed to accidentally burn down.

With regard to the dead, the Pioneers separated friend from foe and placed the bodies in rows to be buried in long trenches, ideally 7 feet wide and 4-5 feet deep. One squad of a dozen Pioneers

managed to bury 29 dead within a day. If the dead were especially plentiful, they might be assisted in this task by the Provost Guard or additional details from the regiments.

So Christian's injuries may have prevented him from being a soldier, but he could still support the fighting men in more of an "engineering" capacity. For November and December 1863 and in July and August 1864, he is still in the Pioneer Corps, so that's probably where he finished the Civil War. I don't have any more Service Records for Christian. It is interesting that his enlistment period for the July and August 1864 Service Record shows that his enlistment period no longer says "3 years" but "War". As I mentioned earlier, on February 17, 1864, the length of the enlistment was extended to "the length of the war".

And that is all I have been able to find about Christian Hilliard Scitzs' Civil War service.

Links:

- [1] - <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battle-units-detail.htm?battleUnitCode=CMS0020RI>
- [2] - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_Conscription_Acts_1862%E2%80%931864
- [3] - <https://msgw.org/madison/Canton/index.htm>
- [4] - <https://mississippiconfederates.wordpress.com/2013/07/21/a-body-of-wild-riders-the-20th-mississippi-infantry-mounted/>
- [5] - <https://civilwartalk.com/threads/support-services-pioneers.112655/#post-1105211>