



Yes, there was a Ballston man there- well, a Ballston man-to-be. J.M. Bailey was born in eastern Tennessee in 1841, moved to Arkansas, and, even though he was a “book-type” person, not the “fighting type,” he joined the Confederate troops and was at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek. His unit never actually fought and, surprisingly, he was actually envious of those who did fight. But, he witnessed the consequences of the fighting in which others in the group participated. He would actually take part in a number of battles in later times.

J. M. Bailey recalled his days as a Confederate soldier in a 1929 Schenectady Gazette article recently uncovered in some files. That article indicated that Bailey had written his memoirs which are in the possession of an Arkansas library. In those memoirs, he talked of the change from the quiet of his country home to the excitement of being on the way to war. And he spoke most proudly of the flag that flew with them, the flag of their new country, the Confederate States of America, the country that he and many others had pledged to defend.

The battles themselves were far less serene, according to his descriptions. Shells flying on all sides; smoke totally obliterating any view of what was happening; summer heat made more intense because of heavy uniforms, thirst, and too few canteens to go around.

But it got worse. When all was again quiet, it was an eerie quiet. He saw the dead everywhere; he saw faces “from which the lifeblood had ebbed away, stained.... with blood and dust....evidence that they fell on the firing line.”

And the dead were from both sides. Bailey remembered one Union soldier whom he saw dying on the field, a man with what he called the “death pallor on his face.” He could see that the man needed water and so, with great compassion as the man was from the “other” side, he held his own canteen so that the man could drink deeply, maybe the last drink he would ever have.

These were the scenes he remembered of the many battles Bailey would experience before his fighting years ended on the side that eventually lost its struggle for freedom. Wilson’s Creek was the first major conflict west of the Mississippi River. Troop strength in this battle was about 5,400 Union troops and 12,000 Confederates, not at all a small engagement. The Confederate side was victorious and, during the battle, General Nathaniel Lyon was killed, the first Union general to die in combat in the war.

But, there is more to the story. Uncovered a few years ago thanks to the records of the National Archives was a document that gives a greater glimpse into what happened to Bailey. That document, pictured here, is his “Parole of Honor,” that is, his release from a Prisoner of War camp in 1865. In that document he promises that he will never serve in the Confederate army again, never participate in any action against the United States of America again, and never render aid to enemies of the USA again. It seems that, in 1865, Bailey, with his unit, moved from Minden LA to Shreveport LA to Marshall TX, where he

and his group learned of Lee's surrender. He then went back to Shreveport as Federal troops arrived in order to surrender himself and get his "parole" papers. It doesn't seem that he was a prisoner for a very long time, at least by the way his memoirs are written.

So, how did he end up in Ballston? At some later point, he joined his relatives in Ballston, the Claude Bailey family, who started Fo'Castle Farms in Burnt Hills. He wrote his memoirs so that his grandchildren, including Claude Moore Bailey of Burnt Hills, would know what his time in the Civil War had been like. And, thus, a Confederate soldier ended up in upstate New York!