

## **The History of Shinnston During the Civil War**

*When the Civil War erupted, the majority of Shinnston's people strongly supported the Union.*

by Jack Sandy Anderson

When the Civil War erupted in April, 1861, the majority of Shinnston's people strongly supported the Union. Slavery had never been popular in the town, and nearly all citizens believed primary allegiance was owed to the nation and not to Virginia.

Many men from the town and nearby countryside served in the Union Army, some with great valor. Several served in the 12th Regiment of WV Infantry Volunteers. Among them were James W. Moffatt (Captain of Company G), Van B. Hall, Dexter Shinn, John O. Martin, Benjamin Wright, Armstead Ashcraft, Rolley Jackson, Benjamin Heldreth, Fielding Crim, Zebedee Wright, William E. L. Harbert, David S. Ebert (who died at Annapolis, MD, on October 28, 1864), Henry R. McCord, Joseph B. Harrison, Samuel Benton Davis, Elam F. Pigott, Quillen H. Shinn, John W. Carder, Silas Stark, Charles A. Reeder (who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor), John M. Fortney, Marcene J. D. Nay and Presley Drain. Organized at Wheeling in August, 1862, the regiment participated in numerous battles and engagements in the Valley of Virginia.

Another military unit to which belonged a number of area men was the 3rd Regiment of WV Infantry Volunteers. It was organized at Clarksburg in July, 1861, by Col. David Hewes and became, on January 26, 1864, the 6th Regiment of the WV Cavalry, by order of the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton. It was in various battles that included the Second Battle of Bull Run, fought on August 29 and 30, 1862.

In this regiment served my great-grandfather, Moses Allen Sandy, and his brother, Newton Busby Sandy (both of whom were wounded), and their future brother-in-law, Rezin Lorenza Stealey. Others known to have been in this regiment were Oliver Nay (who died in December, 1864, from the treatment he received as a prisoner of war), Frederick A. Stoy, Joshua Nelson Shinn, James P. McGee (who was killed at Cumberland, MD, on December 9, 1864), William H. Martin, Elias Stark, Elisha M. Martin, Uriah Tucker, Jeremiah W. Hess, Benjamin A. Reeder, Perry G. Stealey, David Wright, Napoleon Sturm, George J. Maulsby, Oliver W. Shinn, George W. Harrison, Albert Irving Shinn and Bart Clark. The last named was a son of the town's early ferryman and cabinetmaker, Eugenius Clark, and after the war was a well-known miller and carpenter.

Two of the regiment's officers, Henry Haymond and Nathan Goff, Jr., who were first cousins, in later life became distinguished Clarksburg citizens. Mr. Haymond held various positions of trust and responsibility and wrote a history of Harrison County that was published in 1910. Mr. Goff rendered valuable service to the state and nation as a Federal judge, Secretary of the Navy under President Rutherford B. Hayes, member of the United States House of Representatives, and a United States Senator.

Bart Clark's brother, Leonard Clark, was an officer in Company E of the 3rd Regiment of the WV Volunteer Cavalry and was killed in action in August, 1864. In the same company served Timothy Roane, also an officer, who married the Clark brothers' sister, Martha Ann, and Samuel Harrison, a young man from Enterprise. Soldiers of Company E fought the Confederates near the Maulsby Covered Bridge during Jones' Raid. In Company L of this regiment served Peter Crim, Hiram J. Fortney, William Knox, and Woolman Reeder, who died in a Maryland hospital on March 23, 1865, just nine days after entering the army. William Knox's brother, John Marshall Knox, was also a Union soldier; the two brothers were Shinnston potters.

Area men served, too, in the 14 Regiment of the WV Infantry Volunteers. Some of them were George Franklin Randall (a life-size statue of him in uniform stands by his grave in the Shinnston Cemetery), Jess Tyler Sturm, Lewis Nay, George W. Hess, Nathan Wright, Franklin Robinson, Levi Brown, Caleb Moore, Daniel Moore, Silas Nay, Robert Nelson Hess, and Norman Greenbury Randall. A son of Peter and Orpha (Sandy) Hess, of Harter Hill, Robert Nelson Hess served as a lieutenant and was killed at Fisher's Hill, VA on September 20, 1864. In his later years Jesse Tyler Sturm wrote a fascinating account of his Civil War experiences that included information about Lt. Hess's death; after the war he married Lt. Hess's sister, Lavinie Jane Hess, and settled in Kansas.

One of the area's last surviving Civil War soldiers was David Heldreth (1844-1932), who served in the 17th Regiment of the WV Infantry. He lived at the mouth of Bice's Run after the war and for years was a leading Bingamon citizen. He has many descendants living today, including my good friend and fellow-lover of the past, Julian Matheny, who is his great-grandson.

Lorenzo Dow Martin (1847-1926), another of my great-grandfathers and Mr. Heldreth's life-long friend, was a member of the 6th Regiment of the WV Infantry, enlisting on September 5, 1864, when he was seventeen; his Pine Bluff home is now my residence. Among the other men in his regiment were Joshua Odle (O'Dell), William Heflin, Elias Martin, Daniel Cunningham, John Tichenor (whose daughter, Millie Elizabeth, he married in 1870, George Tichenor (John's oldest child), and Harrison M. Nay.

Jacob W. Bice (1846-1928), whose sister, Mary Ellen Bice, was Mr. Heldreth's wife, belonged to the 7th Regiment of the WV Infantry. In this regiment served Benjamin Franklin Anderson (1847-1930), my great-uncle and grandfather of Attorney Jackson L. Anderson and A. J. "Pete" Anderson; he became one of Shinnston's outstanding men and served as its mayor in the early 1900's. His father, Robert Rose Anderson (1824-1902), was also a Union soldier, serving in Company F of the 12th Regiment of WV Infantry Volunteers. Another member of the 7th Regiment of WV Infantry Volunteers was Jesse Flowers Sturm (1834-1930), who later served in both the House of Delegates and the State Senate; he was the grandfather of Harvey Channing Fortney, a noted local historian and a long-time Worthington postmaster.

Two local men, Asa Jonathan Shinn and Eli Koon, both of whom were widely-known in their time, rendered service to the Union, although I do not know the military units to which they belonged. Mr. Shinn was a cabinetmaker whose furniture, especially his inlaid chests, is now highly prized by collectors; he spent his last years in Wyatt, where he died in 1885. Mr. Koon had various business interests, including a jewelry store in the long-ago town, and in the 1870's taught school. His only child to reach maturity (Savilla Koon) married Albert Arthur Shinn and has several descendants presently living in Harrison County.

Shinnston's first band, which old-timers usually referred to as the Stoy Band, was organized in the 1850's by William H. Stoy, who directed it and arranged the music to suit each member so cleverly that advanced and beginning musicians could play together. Its membership included his brother, Frederick A. Stoy, William Henry Fleming, Van B. Hall (Brother of Granville Davisson Hall, author of "*Daughter of the Elm*") Levi C. Shinn, Leroy Frederick Fortney, "Jack" Janes, David Edgar Foreman, and William Knox. There is a tradition that the band served in a Union regimental band during the Civil War and that Solomon S. Fleming paid for uniforms and any needed musical instruments. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this tradition, but do know that Mr. Fleming's son, William Henry Fleming (1842-1920), served for seven months in the 3rd WV Regimental Band.

I own a letter written on patriotic stationery (depicting Col. Elmer Ellsworth and two American flags) that he sent to his mother from Clarksburg on September 20 (no year given). In it he wrote "...this morning when we were at dress parade the Adjutant told us that tomorrow morning we were to start for our Regiment which is near Beverly. I think we will get there without any difficulty as there is fifty soldiers to go with us and two or three wagons..." It is a matter of record that some members of the Stoy Band did render active service in the Union Army... for example Van. B. Hall, Frederick A. Stoy and William Knox.

Several area men who for one reason or another could not or would not serve in the Union Army enrolled in the Home Guard, an organization dedicated to protecting the area from Confederate raids and treasonous activities of Confederate sympathizers. As time went by, certain members were accused of using the Home Guard as a cover for committing acts against Confederate sympathizers, whether real or imagined, for personal reasons. Thus, it acquired a bad reputation and was regarded with contempt by many people. However, the Home Guard contained numerous fine men whose motives were beyond question; and the organization did render important service in helping to protect the West Fork Valley during a dangerous and unsettled time.

One of the local families that had divided loyalties was the Riblett family. Daniel A. Riblett (1823-1912) fought for the Union, serving in Company B of the 6th Regiment of the WV Cavalry; he later was a miller whose mill was located on Shinn's Run a few miles from town. His brother, George Jackson Riblett (1828-1918), gave his allegiance to the Confederacy and served in Company B of the 20th Regiment of the Virginia Cavalry. He, too, was a miller and owned and operated the Shinnston mill that stood near the mouth of Shinn's Run; in addition, he was a master gunsmith and a very competent blacksmith. Mrs. Cerelle Riblett Gregg, of Sarasota, Florida, is his granddaughter.

My father, Russell Lowell Anderson (1884-1968), was the product of a marriage between Union and Confederate families. His father was the son and brother of Union soldiers, while his mother was the daughter, granddaughter, and niece of Confederate soldiers. As a girl living on her grandfather's farm near Worthington, she hated the Union, for her beloved collie dog was shot and killed by a Union soldier, one of several in a detachment that had come to the farm hoping to arrest her grandfather and his son. They were serving in the Confederate Army, and someone in the neighborhood had informed the Union soldiers that they had come home for a visit. (They had been home, but had left before the Union soldiers arrived.) My grandmother's hatred no doubt faded away when she married into a Union family. Sometimes when my mother (the granddaughter of two Union soldiers) thought my father was being too stubborn or contrary, she would chide him by saying: "Now, Russ, quit letting your Rebel blood show!"

Early in the war occurred the "affair at Righter's." Peter B. Righter, whose father (John Righter) had been one of the town's first trustees when it officially came into existence in 1818, was a well-to-do farmer living on Coon's Run near the intersection of the Enterprise and Coon's Run roads. Located in Marion County but only a short distance from the Harrison county line, the Righter farm was being used as a meeting-place for Confederate sympathizers, and as a recruiting station for the Confederacy under the direction of one of the Righter sons, John, usually referred to as Captain John because of the rank he held in the Confederate Army.

Union forces at Mannington were informed of the "Rebel nest," and on June 21, 1861, a detachment of soldiers commanded by Lt. (later Capt.) Cabel came from Mannington by way of Hessville (near present Wyatt) to arrest the Righters and other Confederates that might be found at the farm. Quillen H. Shinn, then a sixteen-year old youth, was an eye-witness and years later wrote the following account:

"I was working on a farm four miles east of Shinnston. The man who hired me to hoe his corn was a strong Abolitionist, McCord by name, who had come from the Shenandoah Valley. Adjoining his farm was that of Peter B. Righter, a noted Secessionist. When the soldiers first poured into our state from Ohio and Indiana, this man gathered and arranged the tenants on his place and the neighbors who were in sympathy, and prepared to make resistance.

"A small detachment of Union soldiers arrived at midnight. We were all awakened. Lt. Cabel urges the Abolitionist for whom I work to accompany them. He mounts his horse to reconnoiter; is fired upon; returns; leads the soldiers over to the place and as they near the house of Righter, the latter opens fire. One of our guides and several soldiers fall. The rest retreat."

"Next day I stand picket on the hill watching until reinforcements come. Soon the home of Righter and all his buildings are in flames. Meanwhile, rifle balls whistle down over our heads from the woods above. One man descends on horse back, utters defiance, attempts to escape, but in an instant falls dead, pierced by a dozen balls."

Capt. John Righter (1829-1911) succeeded in escaping and then waged a kind of guerilla warfare, harassing Union forces and appropriating horses for the Confederacy. In 1864 he was captured on Rock Camp Run in Harrison County and sent to a prison in Wheeling. After the war he and his father (who had been imprisoned and then exiled to Highland County, Virginia) were paroled by the Federal government and returned to the Coon's Run area; both men once again prospered and became highly-respected citizens. Capt. John and his wife (Ann Manley) are buried in the Martin Cemetery near Marion County's Industrial Park.

Asbury P. Sturm (1827-1906) was another area man who fought for the Confederacy. He served in the Confederate Army and saw action in the Valley of Virginia. He also participated in Jones' Raid and afterward was sued by persons who held him responsible for taking horses, grain, and other valuables. Judgments were rendered against him, and his land was sold to pay them. Later, however, due to a ruling of the Supreme Court and some complicated legal maneuvering, his land was returned to him. Mr. Sturm lived at Prospect Valley in a two-story house that stood directly below the church. A preacher and a presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, he was among northern Harrison County's most respected men during his later life.

Because of his Confederate sympathies, John H. Hardesty (1837-1918), who lived on a farm across from the West Fork River from Bingamon Junction, was arrested and sent to Camp Chase, a Federal prison at Columbus, Ohio, where many hundreds of Confederate sympathizers and captured Confederate soldiers were confined. Letters he wrote home and a cane and a box he made while there to help pass the time are still cherished by family members.

Guerrilla warfare incidents plagued the West Fork Valley throughout the war and caused bitterness that lasted for years. On December 16, 1864, Henry Swiger, a staunch Unionist, was murdered in his Adamsville home by Confederates posing as robbers. In retaliation, John Short, a Confederate sympathizer, was killed the next day at Enterprise by Home Guard members who had arrested him at his brother-in-law's farm on Laurel Run. Children of Mr. Swiger and of Mr. Short lived in Shinnston during their adult years and were among the town's most prominent residents. Other incidents also resulted in the deaths of area men that included William Russell and Samuel Vinceni, who in early 1865 were killed on Booth's Creek at or near the intersection of the Manley Chapel and Monongah-Eldora roads.

The older of Henry Swiger's two sons, John Blackburn Swiger (1846-1907), joined the Union Army after his father's death, serving in Company L of the 1st Regiment of the WV Cavalry Volunteers. I have a tin-type of him in his uniform and had it reproduced for my book, *Other Days*. His children to reach maturity were Muta U. Swiger, a pioneer photographer and owner of the town's best-known jewelry store for years; and Minnie Swiger, wife of Charles L. Harmer.

On April 30, 1863, Shinnston was invaded by hundreds of Confederate soldiers in what has long been called Jones's Raid, a daring military venture launched by the Confederacy to disrupt transportation and communication lines in parts of what was then Western Virginia, gain new recruits, appropriate food supplies and livestock (particularly horses), and halt the movement to create a new state from the counties of Western Virginia. The day before Fairmont had been invaded; and the strategically important railroad bridge across the Monongahela River had been destroyed.

After camping overnight at what is now Thoburn or the West Side of Monongah, the confederates proceeded up the West Fork Valley on their way to attack Clarksburg. Led by Gen. William E. Jones, they were well-disciplined and, with few exceptions, conducted themselves in a military manner. Foraging parties were sent out into the surrounding countryside, while the main force entered the town with no resistance.

Aware of the approaching invasion, many local people were able to hide valuables such as prized livestock, guns, and hard-to-replace food supplies. Nevertheless, the Confederates added substantially to their growing hoard of desired items. Solomon S. Fleming's store on lower Main Street was stripped bare, for the Confederates had been informed of Mr. Fleming's Unionist zeal and his involvement in plans to form a new state.

From the town the Confederates continued on the turnpike toward Clarksburg. Passing through the Maultsby Covered Bridge at present Gypsy, they reached the junction of Lambert's Run and the West Fork River when they encountered about 60 Union cavalymen led by Capt. Lot Bowen. This caused them to retreat back toward the bridge. In its vicinity they were overtaken by the cavalry; and a skirmish occurred that claimed the lives of a Union soldier, James W. Custer, and at least one confederate, Peter Armstrong. Seeing they were greatly outnumbered, Capt. Bowen and his men returned to Clarksburg.

The skirmish resulted in Gen. Jones abandoning his plan to attack Clarksburg. Instead, he and his soldiers marched up Simpson Creek to Bridgeport. From there they headed southward to unite with a Confederate force commanded by Gen. John D. Imboden.

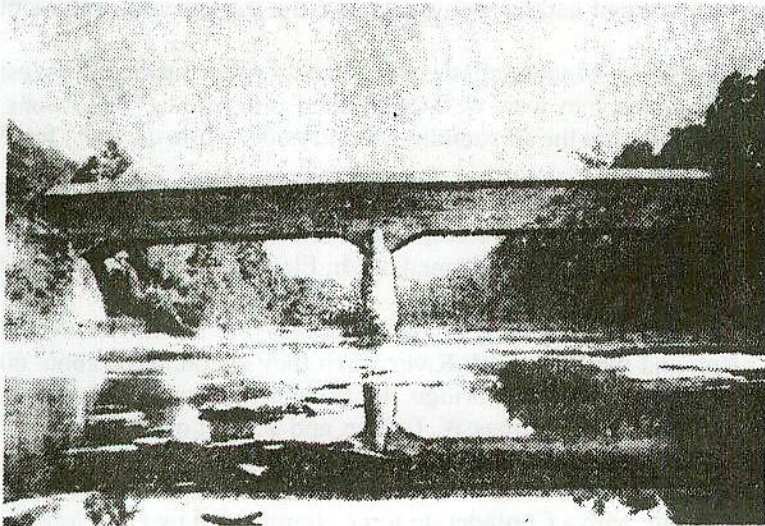
Soon after the invasion, Confederate sympathizers suspected of telling the Confederate soldiers about hidden horses and other hidden valuables and of helping them in other ways were interrogated by Union authorities. Nearly all the suspected persons were innocent; however, a few were arrested and imprisoned. Among them were Nathaniel Barnes and his son, Thomas James, who lived in what is today East Shinnston; they were sent to Camp Chase, where both contracted disease and died.

The end of the Civil War in April, 1865, brought joy to the town. Men returned home from the Union and Confederate Armies to become civilians again. Bitterness lingered on but eventually disappeared as former enemies became friends in a nation that the war had made, in truth, the United States of America.



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*Maulsby Covered Bridge at Gypsy. Near it occurred a Civil War skirmish on April 30, 1863.*



*Captain John Righter, an officer in the Confederate Army.*