

Reminiscences of Vicksburg: The Writings of Charles M. Ferguson, 52nd  
Georgia Infantry, Company D

**REMINISCENCES OF VICKSBURG:**  
**The Writings of**  
**Charles M. Ferguson,**  
**52<sup>nd</sup> Georgia Infantry, Company D**

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**Dedication**

**This Reminiscence is dedicated to all the Confederate Soldiers who were present during the battles and siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi. It is also dedicated to those at home who had loved ones there. For the remainder of their lives, all these people would suffer because of the events that took place during this time.**

**Sandra Ferguson Lamb  
Woodstock, GA  
April 2005**



## Foreward

In 2003, I undertook the task of transcribing the Civil War letters of Colonel John B. Magruder, who commanded the 57<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry until his death at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. I felt a need to do that for my own edification as my great, great, great-grandfather (Pvt. William Alfred Ward) had fought in that unit and was also killed during the infamous "Pickett's Charge." I approached the task of transcribing these letters in much the same way as I transcribed those: "with much fear and trepidation."

Please note that Charles Ferguson did not have "chapter headings" in his original transcription. I added those to give a sense of the chronological order of events, and to help in locating those events in the Table of Contents.

Finally, to read the words of these soldiers, and all the many hardships that they endured is, indeed, a humbling experience. May you find a common bond with Charles Milligan Ferguson as you read these "Reminiscences of Vicksburg," and may you have a renewed appreciation for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their beliefs.

Vicki Ward Frey  
Kennesaw, GA  
April 2005



### **Biographical Background**

**Charles Milligan Ferguson, the son of John Luther and Frances Head Ferguson, was born in 1842 in Dahlonega, Lumpkin County, Georgia. Except for the war years, he lived out his entire life there. After the War, he would return to marry and father ten children. His Reminiscence was recorded about 1910. He died in 1927.**

**Charles enlisted on March 4, 1862, in Company D, 52<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Georgia Infantry ("Boyd's Guards") in Dahlonega, Lumpkin County, Georgia. After Vicksburg, he received a 30 – day furlough and was later ordered to duty in Northwest Georgia. He later fought at Dalton, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kennesaw Mountain, and Atlanta, Georgia. While his unit retreated through the Carolinas, Charles began a sick leave in February 1865 at Columbus, Georgia. He was never able to return to his command as they surrendered at Greensboro, North Carolina, on April 26, 1865.**

## The Journey to Vicksburg

Murfreesboro, Tenn., Dec. the 12<sup>th</sup>, 1862, our Regiment having [received] orders to go to Vicksburg we bid farewell to the fertile soil the lovely Tennessee where the 52<sup>nd</sup> Ga. Volunteers one day had [a] wrestling match to see who was the best wrestler, when J.F. Head [won] the championship belt and where Bud Shoap saw some Yankees hide a barrel of whiskey across the river one day and his mouth got to watering so for some of it that that night he stripped off his clothes and hung a canteen around his neck and swam the river where it was sixty yards wide and got a canteen full of it to quench his thirst.

When everything was ready we boarded the train for Vicksburg glad to [get] such a long free ride after so much hard marching into Kentucky and back to where we took the train, must have been near 400 miles.

As we passed down the Western and Atlantia railroad through out dear old home State how said it was to think we could not go by and see those we loved and longed to see, and from whom the new battlefield to which we were going would carry us further away

And had we known what was in store for us at Vicksburg it seems to me now that lots of the soldiers would have deserted. When we [reached] Atlanta we boarded and old freight train for soldiers had to be transferred on freight boxes like cattle very often. As the train moved towards West Point [Georgia] it seemed to me we were just about flying. Once in a while I could hear the wheel of the car touch the track. The engineer must have been drunk or behind time. After reaching West Point we stopped awhile and had time to see the town fairly well. [We moved] on through Alabama amid new scenes and one part of our



party that knew how to capture it by three men getting on each [part] of it and running their arms under it and carrying it very easy [as] you would carry a sick baby out of the bank. I did not see this [ ] heard it. After we stayed long enough to see the beautiful bay of Mobile we again boarded the train that night we reached Meridian, Mississippi, where we stayed all night. There was a box car loaded with sugar and there was a detail from the Regiment to guard it. Some of the boys found it out and after dark went to the guard, who suffered them to lay in a small supply. From here we went on to Jackson, the capitol of the State. That was rather small to be the capitol city. Here we waited for awhile for a train that was due from Vicksburg. The train did not come as was expected. After awhile we decided to go on and risk a collision. Col. Phillips told the engineer to run slow and keep a close lookout.

### **The Arrival at Vicksburg**

As good luck would have it the Vicksburg train did not start till we run through, where for the first time in life we beheld the great Mississippi River, the longest river with the Missouri in the world. The river was 1 ¼ miles wide. As I looked across the broad waters of the great river I beheld the beautiful fertile lands of Louisiana on the southwest side of the river that for ages and ages has been growing richer and richer as all of the Rocky Mountain slopes have been puring down their golden sands and rich sediments and all of the great tributaries of the Mississippi from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachain Mountains that drain the great basin of the Missippe that has for ages



depositing its rich sediments of fertility upon the level land [of] the lower Mississippi for century after century until the richness and great depth of the soil is perhaps unknown, until they have the rich soil upon which to make sugar enough to sweeten every sour man and woman in the United States, to say nothing of the maple and beet sugar that is made to sweeten up the taste of the human race, but what a consolation that in this southland of ours we have so many fair daughters that look so sweet they capture the heart of man. I cant help but think what great changes time does bring about. In 1863 the Mississippi that flowed right at the edge of Vicksburg has since cut its way through the canal that Gen. Grant started to cut in order to turn the river away from Vicksburg and where that great volume of water one and one fourth of a mile wide ran in 1863 is now all grown up in willows that if still standing are large enough for saw logs. To stand upon the banks of the great Mississippi and think of the multiplied millions of cubic yards of water that has in all past time been emptied into the Gulf it would seem that the Atlantic would have overflowed if it had not have been that the Great Creator of all things had ordained otherwise, as Solomon has so beautifully explained it in Ecclesiastes where he said all the rivers run into the sea yet is the sea not full; from when the rivers come thither they return again back to the fountain head of the streams, To water every living thing that grows out of the ground and all creeping things and fowls of the air to make glad the heart

What a wonderful God is our God. Well after our look at [the river] we overlooked the town on the hill side that sloped up from the river in a terrace form. The most of the town was on the first flat. The hill rose above that some what steeper and more broken. Up the main street near the top of the hill was a high bank that some citizen had dug out a room in the side of the hill and fitted up a room in which to stay in time of battle. The town was not located in a pretty place by any means for a town. There was one other thing that attracted the attention of the soldiers. Just below the depot there was about one third of an acre that was covered in hogsheads of sugar [that] they kept a gurado at. That did not make any difference. Some of us loved sugar and we laid in a supply enough to have lasted through the siege if the mules had not eat it up. We did not think we were in much danger as Grant's army was on the opposite side of the river. While walking through the town a man said to me "You had better watch out. The batteries sometimes send their cannon balls up this street to let us know they are there." For the purpose of warfare Gen. Grant, the coming hero of the North had a large flat boat built up the river upon which he mounted some large mortars --- pieces of artillery --- from which to shell our army. From then on to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we had not been here long till our regiment was ordered up northwest of the town. The Union soldiers were on our side of the river at a place they called Chickasaw. By a part of our regiment was thrown out as a picket line the Yankees charged and drove in our pickett. It was said T.L. Parks



[came] running in to where the rest of the regiment was saying as he [came] "Thomas L. Parks, don't shoot." He was afraid his own men would [shoot] him. The Yankees soon fell back. They were only exploring [the] land above Vicksburg to see if Grant could get his army through [above] Vicksburg. While we were here Kye Woody and Pinkney Fortner got into a little row when Kye Woody tore his shirt and Joel Shed got out his knife and was going to cut Kye Woody when some of the men interfered and stopped it. The winter was warm and during the winter we had good health. After awhile our wagon train came and I went to the wagons where I remained on up to the surrender. One day I went up in town to where Uncle John Dodd was detailed at the livery stable to drive an ambulance and help take care of the horses. He wasn't well. I noticed he looked very bed and feverish. The next morning he was broken out with the small pox. After this we had several cases, which were sent to the small pox hospital upon the north side of the town. After awhile Uncle Thomas Cooper came all the way from Lumpkin County, Georgia, to Vicksburg to bring some supplies to the soldiers who were from Lumpkin County, Ga. The move I learned was gotten up by A.G. Wimpy, and the citizens of the county. The things sent us was bed clothes and provisions, the very things we needed sent by the dear home folks which made us appreciate them all the more. My own dear sainted mother sent me a new suit of jeans clothes which I greatly appreciated, that was made by her own labor. As I write the above and think back in spite of all I can do the tears will come in my eyes. By this time Uncle John Dodd had got nearly well of the small Pox. Me and Uncle Thomas Cooper went to the hospital and called Uncle John Dodd out to the fence and had a long talk with him and neither of us got



the small pox, as good luck would have it. In the meantime [we] had good breastworks thrown up all around Vicksburg as they had fears of an attack in the rear, taking care to keep a [ ] of the army near the river to see that no boats of the Union side passed or landed troops. General Grant had carefully surveyed the whole situation and had found out that the country above Vicksburg was so rough and too many bayous to move an army that way, so in order to be successful he would have to send some gun boats down the river apast Vicksburg to transport his army across the Mississippi. Our army had a few pieces of heavy artillery. Just below the town they had one large piece they called old "whistling Dick" which was commanded by Capt. C.W. Macon, --- and by the way, he knew how to command a battery. When "Old Whistling Dick" was fired the balls would seem to crack and fry, squeal, squeak and whistle and make such a fuss as they went through the air that they gave it the name of whistling Dick. General Grant found out that the canal he started would be too big and long a job and the fall of Vicksburg would be a long ways off, so that he began to send his gun boats down the river in order to pass the town and battery. The first that came down "Old Whistling Dick" sent a ball through the fore part which made the fore part sink first and as it went down the rear part was sticking up. How the boys on the hill did yell while the Union soldiers were jumping in the river and swimming to the shore. I do not know whether any were drowned or not. All this time our army was being shelled by the mortars and small artillery day and night a part of the time. As the large mortar shells would pass over of



[     ] we could see the fuse burning every time they would revolve  
 [     ] would burst up in the air. Some of the pieces would fly down  
 [     ] and some upward, which would cause a considerable difference  
 [     ] the time of each piece falling to the ground. There were not as  
 many killed by the shells as you would suppose.

Grant wasn't satisfied. He saw he was obliged to have some gunboats below Vicksburg. After a while he succeeded in having two gun boats pass our batteries safe. By this time spring has opened up and men began to get sick. Chronic diarrhea set in again, which was prevalent in the army and from which so many died the first two years of the war. I carefully surveyed the situation between the North and South. My humble conviction was that the South could not cope with the North as the North had every advantage over the South. So I sat down one day and wrote my father to spend what Confederate Money I had at home as I was satisfied the Southern Confederacy would fail in the end. I have always wished I had kept my letters that were written home. It would have helped me now in various ways. While our regiment was camped in rear of the river batteries on a small stream Col. Phillips told Capt. Woodward to drill the regiment one day. They went to the drill ground which was nearby and when they got there Captain Asbury being senior Captain, contended he had the right to drill the regiment. One word brought one another till they got into a fight with their swords, when Capt. Woodward came near killing Capt. Asbury, who was threatened with lockjaw for several days.

Near thim time Leiutenant Earve Martin of Co. G told how he served one of his Company by the name of Garrett. Garrett had got to stealing his shugar

[ ] and Lieutenant Martin went to the company headquarters and reported that one of his men was stealing shugar and Major Moore said I will fix him and he gave the Lieutenant some Epicac and he went back and put it on the shugar. That night Garrett came and taken a good dose of epicac and shugar might after a while he got so sick on the epicac that Lieutenant Martin said it liked to have turned Garrett wrong side outward and the Lieutenant said to Garrett did you steel my shugar and Garrett said yes. But he never will a gain. The Lieutenant would tell it and laugh hearty while we were in camp.

### The Battle of Baker's Creek

[ ] by this time Gen. Grant had succeeded [in] landing his forces on the North Side of [the] Mississippi River and began his march on our rear our army of about 30,000 men was marched out the big Black Road to give him battle at Bakers Creek where our army was formed in Line of Battel and Threw up breast works to give our army all the protection we could as Grant had ben Reinforced by Gen. Shermans army which no doubt gave him 4 or 5 men to our one Gen Grant mooved his army up in front of our Line of Battel and began to make all nessesary preparations for the Battel by Massing his army Some 8 or Ten Lines of battle deep when all things was reddy the command was given move forward and the great battel began with all of its fury by booth armeys it seamed that Grants plan of attack was to take our Line of breast works by storm as he had a much Larger force than we had his front Line was ordered to fire Lie down and reload thir guns while the Line in rear of them was to march a past them fire and Lie down and reload thir guns and So own till all of them had fired and in that way



[his] whole army was continually advancing [toward] our Line and all  
 the time firing on [our] men without any intermission [between] the  
 firing un till they kept up a continual roar all the time the battel Lasted  
 So that if a man had ben a [asleep] and sudently woke up and had not  
 known that the great battel was going on he could have easley imagined  
 I hear the noise of the host of hell and the Noise of many waters and that  
 all of the thunder bolts of heaven had come down and joined in the  
 awful roar of the battel as Grants army kept moving on our Line of  
 Battel when both sides were firing on each other just as fast as they  
 could with small arms and artillery that made the [ ] ring with  
 such a roar as I never hard in no other Battel during the war as the Tow  
 armeys came to gether in the death strugel for the victory or death to  
 many of the nobel and brave who fell in the battel that day a midst the  
 Butiful flowers of the evergreen Magnolias of the Mississippi where Capt.  
 Boyd fell while urgin his men Saying Give it to them boys and many  
 others had fallen in battel

[ ] as Grant many Lines of Battel ran up on our Line and Coln C.D. Phillips had his pistol in his hand trying to kill all he could about the time the federals broke our Line when Some Ran out and Some had to surrender after Col. C.D. Phillips and others of the Regament had surrendered the federals said to them doubel quick Col C.D. Phillips said you can kill me but you cant make me run as [Thomas?] Hester ran out he carried the [Battle Rod?] of our Battery that was captured and broke it over a tree to keep the federal from using our Battery on us I do not know how many men was kill[-ed] if our men aimed their guns well Grants many Lines of Battel must have fogt heavy as we Leave the battel field on the retreat our Ordinance wagon had not gone far till it stove up in the mud when the mule was cut Loose and the wagon Left with all of my cloths and the teamster I wasn't well at the time if I had not on a mule I do not think I would have got out it is bad a nuff to face the enemy but it is more scearis to



[have] to turn your back on them in a retreat [and] then is when a man  
 get sceared as we move towards Vicksburg we don't see verry many  
 men on the retreat and we think from the nois of the days battel they  
 are a bout all killed and the Southern armey had Lost the battle that  
 was of great importance to the South and Left hear dead to be beariad  
 by the federals perhaps to be placed sid by sid the Soldiers who wore the  
 Blue and those who wore the gray to sleep the Long sleep of death and  
 never hear the Noise of Battel again while the Storms of the rolling  
 years pass over thir silent abode both winter and summer the Breeses  
 may Pass over and the birds may Sing thir Sweet songs the Summer  
 zephyrs may glow with heat that cause the Butiful flowers of Read white  
 and Blue to bloom with all of the coulors of flags under which they had  
 marched in to the Battel in which they had fallen in defence of what  
 they thought to be right and the Summer thunders may roar Like the  
 Battel of May the 17, 1863 [ ] yet they sleep on undisturbed they  
 hear [ ] the heavy Peals of thunder that make [ ] Heavenly  
 welkin Ring and Reecho the sound



[ ] but I am so glad that the sleep of death [is] not forever but the time is coming [when] all that are in the grave Shall hear the voice of the Son of God and Shall come forth unto the Reserechon of Life in thinking over the Battel of the wester Armey thar was no battel fought that came anyways near equaling the Battel of Bakers Creck for the Same Length of time in heavy firing of small arms it may be true that thar was as many men engaged in other battel and as many Shot fired but not in the same Length of time and in so small a compass other battles coverd more ground and was Longer Lines of battel Just think for a moment when 8 or 10 Lines of Battel are advancing and firing all the time Line after Line passing each other while the Line just be hind the Line that has just fired thir guns is reloading thir guns and you can draw some idie of the great noise of the Battel I dout if Gen. Grant ever maneuver his armey with as great Skill as he did that day and what could the Suthern armey do but fall Back or surrender had they ben abel to drive back the front Line [ ] was other lines Just in the thir reare [ ] take thir place and Grant had two many [ ] for ouer armey to engage in a [hand]

to hand fight. If Grant had have known the Contry well and devided his army and got in our rear it would Seam that he could have captured the most of our army and Saved the Long Seage of Vicksburg but he had no Stone wall Jackson to Send a round in the reare on that day Gen. Sherman proved after words to be a great General on a flank move and Some of General Lee great victorys over the federal in [Virginia] was Largly due to Stonewall Jackson attact in the rear as thir is nothing more demarolizing to an army than to be attacted both in front and rear and could Grant have captured our army on the 17 day of May whith out any more Loss of Life it would have ben better for us as we Lost many men in the Seage by retreating in to Vicksburg where all of us had to suffer untold hardships for forty Seven days in Co. C thar was an Irishman they said when the regiment got in a hand fight and the bullets came to thick he would run out [and] one day he [started?] to run and Capt. Asberry said to him [Stop!?] or I will shoot you the Irishman said shoot and [ ] what is one bullet to a basket full I do [ ] all they tell on my irish cousen and [ ] although that [ ]



of the battle must have made it so dark they could not see our men well enough to take good aim amid the excitement of battle...

### **The Siege of 47 Days**

In Vicksburg one day a piece cut the windpipe of a soldier and at once destroyed the organ of speech, so that he was never able to speak again. He made a motion for paper and pen and wrote his dear home folks of his dying condition. His name I think was [ ] and he belonged to Co. F from Fanin County. Some of the Regiment since the war has said he lived seven weeks after he was wounded. What a consolation it must have been to him, to be able to communicate his dying words to his family, whom he would see no more in this world, but by the simple art of writing he was able to tell them all things that he wanted them to do and gave them such direction as he thought would be best for them...

It was said that General Lowring's Division cut its way through some part of Grant's army and made its way to the open country, here they escaped the horrors of the 47 day siege. As quick as Grant's army could get in position around Vicksburg their batteries across the river and all around the town opened fire on our breastworks, while the small arms did what they could to kill every man who put his head above the breast work. From that on the mortar shells, the gunboat shells, the field artillery and the small arms from about every point of the compass continued to send into our army the missiles of Death, till the chances of life looked slim indeed, and I thought to myself that what some of our Souther[n] hot heads said was not true. In order to hurry off the young men to the war so they could stay at home, said that they would drink all the blood that was shed. They said one southern man could whip ten Yankees. That the Yankees could not fight. One man who went to California told of a Northern man who fired a pistol and held it so loose in his hand that the pistol flew up and knocked his head nearly off or killed him, I have forgotten which. Had the men been on the different battle fields they would have found out that what they had said was not the truth. While the Southern soldiers were



brave and did many heroic deeds during the war, they were not all the men in the world that could fight. Soon after the siege began I took sick with something like fever. The doctor's had me put in the magazine, a safe place but a rather dark place for a sick man, with but little bedding and only one suit of clothes and not anything to eat that was pleasing to the appetite, but thanks to M.R. Harper the assistant surgeon of the regiment who came every day to see me and generally brought a bottle of whiskey or brandy and ordered me to drink some, but always carried the bottle back with him. I have always thought that was one of the times in my life that I really needed something to stimulate me. There was no other time before the siege set in when I had a bad spell of colic one day that I needed it, for I was suffering. My good friend Balis Moore went to the Doctor and told him if I did not get relief I would die. He soon came back with a half pint of brandy and told me to drink a plenty of it & did so and in five minutes I was easy. That was all the whiskey I saw while in Mississippi. Thanks to a kind Providence and human [human] agencies I was soon better and able to walk around and come out of the magazine and hear the cannon balls pass over and Minnie balls, too.

There was a large branch that ran near the magazine with a strip of bottom land on it. The magazine was at the foot of a hill on the west side of the branch. The mouth of the magazine was towards Grant's army, so that all the balls that came over our breastworks would be liable to fall in that section. Near this time one of the regiment got his leg broke by a spent Minnie ball and the doctors took his leg off. Our regiment was held in reserve near the same place as for the Baker Creek Fight and was camped on the opposite side of the branch from where I was in plain view and after the siege began I often sat around the magazine and saw cannon balls



that had hit our breastworks on the top of the hill come bouncing down the hill through our regiment, taking 40 feet at a bound. You could see them plain as they were nearly spend and yet if they had hit any one they would have killed them. There were some wagons that stayed just below the regiment. One day while Mr. McAfee, a wagoner was lying in his wagon, a stray Minnie ball struck him in the breast and killed him, so if you were behind the hill you were not safe ... It may be supposed that the Minnie ball may have struck the underside of alimb upon the hill and turned down and yet come with force enough to kill a man, though he was behind the hills which were of considerable hight. So, that in all our army there was no place that was safe. Some of our men cut holes in the side of the hills where they could go in time of heavy cannonading. Maberry Kerns had him one. One day several of the boys were talking about the war and said it would soon be over and we would all get to go home. About that time there came a cannon ball just over where they were sitting, which seemed to say "Shoo, shoo, where are you, Where are you, Mabe Kerns." Kerns said "Jemima, God, did you ever see the like shooting holes in the air and knocking the bottom out of the Mississippi." He said our children will be fighting in this war and into his hole he went like a bull frog into a pond of water. Kerns did not have much education. He always made his dictionary. As he was going on in his talk one day he was talking about the Yankees. He said "the damn obstropulous rascals ought to be killed: but he was so afraid of bullets he wasn't apt to kill any of them. Finally the Captain sent him home as he was somewhat old then.

As the siege progressed day by day some were dying and being killed around the line so that we could safely say that dangers stand thick through all the ground of the besieged city and men's chances to live hung in doubt one day. Lewis Brady went to the spring to get water and was wounded by a stray ball and would have bled to death had not the blood been stopped

[Beginning of handwritten notes inserted here]

& Lewis Brady tride to get some of the other boy to go to the spring it was in the hot days of June and the spring was between our breastworks and the federal Line of Battel and in plain view of the federals Line. Some of the boys tride to keep Lewis from going they told him the federals will kill you Lewis said they wont shoot as good a union man as I am but while near the Spring he got shot in the leg and [called] back he was shot and Lafayet Rider and Joe Elrod went and brough him back to our Line where he could be ceard for & his wound Dressed he would have wayed near 200 lbs although Lewis Brady was fighin to desolve the union and made a faithful Soldier he went in to the war loving the union and no doubt but he loved it to the end of the war and was often heard to espress his Love for the union and at another time thar was a Lot of the company that was Reporting Sick ever morning and Lewis thought it was putting too much duty on him and he said in the morning he will report Sick to



So the next morning when the boys started to the doctors quarters to be excused Lewis Brady went marching up to the Doctors quarters with the [Reg.] and after the Doctor had examined several of the boys excused them from duty he said Well Lewis what is the matter with you this morning and Lewis said not a damed thing or good as to say thar isn't any thing much the matter with those you have excused the doctor was so bad taken down he never said a word but just gave Lewis Brady a hard look for I gess that he thought Lewis was a [ ?] right and thar wasn't much the matter with the boys only they was sick of war and home sick and the poor fellows had a nuff to make them and know doubt but some of them was really sick I had forgot to say that while Lafayett Rider and Joe Elrod was bringing Lewis Brady from the spring where he was wounded that the federal soldier never fired a single shot but acted the [ ] and showed mercy and while Lewis Brady is dead now I belive that if the federal Soldier had have known what good union man Lewis Brady was that he would not have fired the shot that wounded him on that hot June day and if still Living and now all of the circumstances that we would be sorry he fired his gun

that day and while Lewis Brady was a good soldier he has gone where he will never have to bivouac no more on the hills of Earth between two contending armies. After the fall of Vicksburg and our Regiment went back Lewis Brady deserted back and our officers told Lewis we have got you where we want you and threatened to shoot Lewis to scare him I Recon but Lewis was not the scary kind He told them to shoot and bedamed Lewis said he once loaded his gun to kill the captan whin they went into a battel but the capt got in a gulley where he could not see him. Lewis finally went a cross the Line and joined the federal army. Lewis Brady loved the union like the man loved his sweat heart. Just because he could not help it --- it was innate principal.

[End of handwritten notes inserted between lines]

While all these things were going on our rations were getting scarcer every day. Our commissary was upon the hill just above us. A man by the name of Henderson said to me one night "Let's go and get some meat." We went and slipped in and got a shoulder of meat. Of course we fared better while that lasted. When it was about gone Henderson said "Let's go and see if we can get some more meat." That night the commissary man found us out and said to Henderson "Get out of here." Henderson just laughed at him. That was the last time we tried it during the siege, although there was lots of the time after that we were hungry enough to steal meat if we could. The beef we got wasn't fit to eat. It was so poor that a whole beef cooked at once would not have had one eye of tallow on the water in which it was cooked. The boys said they had to prop them up and help them up to kill them. Not only were rations in very small quantities and poor quality but water got scarce through the hot and dry weather of June and we had to dig wells along at the foot of the hills. We only had to go about 4 feet to find water. We had no ropes or windlasses to draw it. All we had to do was to cut a stick that had a limb on it, cut off the limb, hang on the bucket and dip it out that way for drinking purposes and for what little cooking we had to do, and that



wasn't much. All this time the union Forces never forgot to keep sending shot and shells into our almost starved army, where disease and death reigned, for our army for want of food and good water was fast getting sick and many died... Some of our officers said Jeff Davis would send relief but the relief never came. Near the surrender I never saw the like how our men were taking the erysipelas\*. I do not see how it was possible for as many to live as did. The filth of the army that came down the branch and settled along in the low places caused the flies to blow the banks of the branch and the magots were working the banks in places. General Pemberton ought to have had the good sense to have surrendered before he did. It was God's blessing that we had to surrender for if we had had provisions and held out longer about all of our men would have died from diseases. About two days before the surrender they killed some old mules and issued them to the men. Hunger drove them to eat it. While it was cooking it smelled like an old saddle balnket. I wasn't well any way and I never tasted the mule beef but lots of the soldiers did. I reckon it was Thomas Osborn's and James Woody's mules they killed. They were both teamsters during the latter part of the siege. They would carry their mules down near the river where there was some grass that had not been eaten up by the stock. It was in view of the Union batteries on the west side of the river. Sometimes the Union batteries would begin to shell Woody and Osborn and here they would come running into camp puffing and blowing like a pair of bellows, scared nearly to death. No wonder, it was enough to scare any two men. I guess the Union Soldiers had a big laugh over it but Woody and Osborn did not have breath nor time to

*\*Erysipelas – an acute infectious skin disease with local inflammation caused by streptococcus germs.*

laugh either...

So by this time of the siege our means of support was about exhausted and every living soldier had learned that war was cruel and Gen. Sherman said "War is Hell," so if hell is no worse than the siege of Vicksburg I would advise every body to live right and be sure not to go there.

### The Surrender

This brings me to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, 1863, when arrangements were being made to surrender. The next day the memorable 4<sup>th</sup> of July some of our officers were mad. They said Pemberton had sold out and why could he not surrender some other day than the fourth of July. So early on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July while the flag was hoisted the terms of the surrender was agreed upon the souther[n] soldiers laid down ther arms with said hearts, no doubt, with many of them at least, and Grant's victorious army came marching into Vicksburg and Grant had rations issued to the hungry Southern soldiers very soon. The southern soldiers and the northern soldiers mixed up and talked and cracked jokes at each other like friends and that they were glad to see each other and that the siege with all of its horrors was over and there would be at least a short time of rest for both armies. Very soon the northern stores were opened up all over Vicksburg and all the Southern boys that had anything began to trade with the storekeepers for something to eat in the shape of smoked heron, etc. I traded a five dollar counterfeit Confederate bill which on the homeward march I gave for a pone of corn bread, and it wasn't a large pone either. So we stayed for a day or two longer. The terms of the surrender was such that we could go home by an exchange of as many Union soldiers as surrendered at Vicksburg. When all things



are arranged and Grant issued us three [I now think it was 10 days rations] days rations we turned our backs to the great Mississippi and the ill fated Vicksburg and turned our faces towards that dear home we hadn't seen since we went to the war.

### The Journey Home

The saddest thing was to leave behind us so many of our noble dead and some that were so sick that they could not come with us that were to die there and on the way home. Our first days march brought us out on Big Black\* where we camped for the night. After we laid down and was asleep some of the Union cavalry was camped near by in the night some of their horses got loose and came charging through the camp. A whole lot of the boys arose hollowing and one poor fellow was so frightened that he died from the excitement. It was supposed that he had heart trouble. The next day we moved as best we could but some were in bad health and really were not able to go very far in a day, although we were journeying homeward. I don't suppose I would have weighed more than eighty pounds when at Vicksburg in the winter I weighed 141 pounds. We had to march 150 miles to a point on the railroad between Mobile, Ala. and Meridian, Miss. After we had gone perhaps half of the way I took bloody [ ] from being weak and over marching but Dr. N. F. Howard gave me some medicine that soon brought me all right so that I could keep traveling. As we were going through the piney woods one day several of us sat down to rest and Wm. Cain one of my regiment pulled off his knapsack and began to throw away some things to keep from carrying them. He had a fine razor. He said "Do any of you want it, I am going to throw it away". I said give it to me. It had shaved many of the 52 Ga. Regiment. Today I would not take three dollars [for it].

*\*Big Black River*

After several hard days marching we reached the rail road and took the train for Atlanta over the same road we had travelled in December before. When we reached Atlanta me and A. L. Wimpey started in the direction of Dahlonga together, every man choosing his travelling companion on the way. One day we managed to get a man to bring us on eight or ten miles, which gave us a rest. How well I remember when we came in sight of the Blue Ridge and the joyful thought came into my mind that I would soon be at the dear old home and see the dear home folks once again... So we did rejoice and give thanks that our lives had been spared and we were so near our homes and loved one[s]. As we neared Dahlonga while going up Brick Yard Hill we saw two women coming to meet us. When they came up it was Aunt Martha Kelley and Mary Collins, each one had a husband in our regiment. We were sorry to tell them that their husbands were not coming then for we left E. H. Collins in Vicksburg too sick to come and E. S. Kelley was captured at Baker's Creek. On we hurried towards home anxious to see the dear father and mother who no doubt had shed many tears and offered many prayers for their boy, and how glad I was to see them all once more, brothers and sisters and neighbors and rest at home where I could not hear the noise of war nor see men suffer on account of the



cruel war at least for a while. We hadn't been home very long until the sad news came that E. H. Collins and John Pierce were dead and their wives left widows. Both men had married daughters of T. H. Wimpey. A neighbor who lived near by John Pierce was left at Vicksburg to wait on the sick we left behind. The poor fellow was [well] and hearty. He started for home and was riding on top of a car box. He got knocked off or fell off and was killed. E. S. Kelley was exchanged near Richmond, Va. And walked all the way home from there. After being at home a while my health began to improve. The [Freestone] water cured my chronic diarrheah. Many of us owe our lives to the fall of Vicksburg for if we had staid there much longer we would have died. Many a poor sick man who died in the army with chronic diarrheah would have got well if our officers had furlowed them in time and sent them home. After we surrendered at Vicksburg in our talk with the Union Soldiers they said they did not care anything about the slave question but they was fighting for the Union. What was the great cry among Grant's army, was to preseve the Union, and if some of the good nations of earth were to attack us we would be better able to defend our selvs while some claim that under the constitution we had a right to seceed be that as it may I have always thought it would have been better for the South if they never had seceeded from the Union and all the South [Southerners] believe that if we had staid in the union that the great Lincoln would have [preserved] our rights

I have tried to tell you some of the horrors [of the] Seage at Vicksburg but no tongue can tell it [or how] bad as it really was if you had a true picture of the haggard and imaciated form of many of the Soldiers who from disease and hard living you would then have a better idea of what they had to endure all those long weary days that they stood in doubt between death and life wondering in their minds if deliverance will ever come and will the darke cloud of war ever pass over and will [they] ever be free again in the suney South that we loved so well be [because] it were our homes while we was thus suffering both in body and mind.



**PAROLE PAPER OF CHARLES M. FERGUSON****Vicksburg, Mississippi****July 7, 1863****To all whom it may concern know ye that**

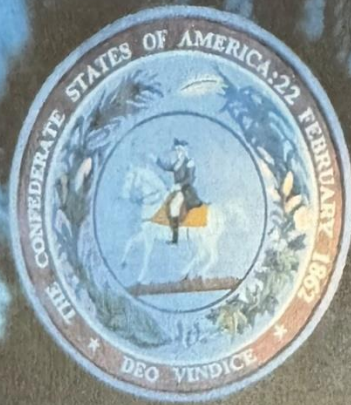
**I, Charles Ferguson, Ordnance Sergeant of Co. D, 52<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, GA Volunteers, C.S.A., being a prisoner of war in the hands of the United States forces by virtue of the capitulation of the City of Vicksburg and its garrisons, by Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, C.S.A. commanding, on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1863, do in pursuance of The terms of said capitulation, give this my solemn parole under oath: That I will not take up arms again against the United States nor serve in any military police or constabulary force of any fort, garrison or field work held by the Confederate States of America against the U.S. of America, or as guard of prisons, depots or stores nor discharge any duties usually performed by officers of soldiers against the United States of America until duly exchanged by the proper authorities.**

**Charles M. Ferguson**

**Sworn at Vicksburg, Mississippi, 7 July 1863**

**Major John C. Fry, parolling officer  
25<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Ohio Volunteers**





## ARMY OF TENNESSEE C.S.A.

March 4, 1862

Company C, 52nd Regiment  
Georgia Volunteer Infantry  
C.S.A.

March 4, 1862

Company D, 52nd Regiment  
Georgia Volunteer Infantry  
C.S.A.  
"Boyd's Guards"

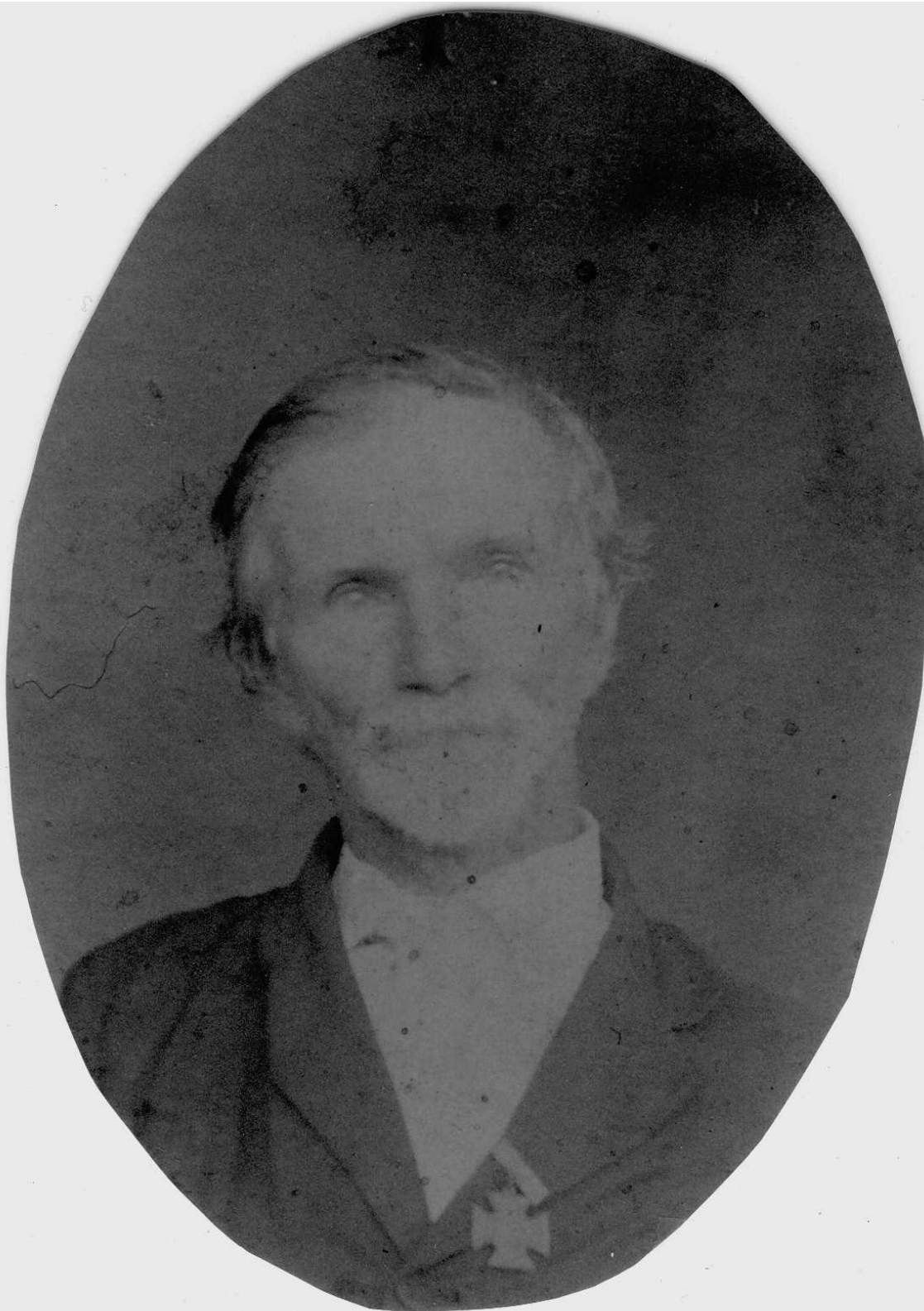
May 21, 1862

Company F, 65th Regiment  
Georgia Volunteer Infantry  
C.S.A.

March 4, 1864

Company E, 11th Regiment  
30th Georgia Cavalry Battalion  
C.S.A.  
"Lumpkin Guards"





Charles Milligan Ferguson



**Ranked Lt to Rt (Col. Price on to Privates) Ord. Sgt. Ferguson 4<sup>th</sup> from Left**