

CIVIL WAR TALES
VOLUME I

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GARY C. WALKER



PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

GRETNA 2008

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First published by A & W Enterprise, 1992
Published by arrangement with the author by
Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 2008

First printing, 1992
First Pelican edition, 2008

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Printed in the United States of America
Published by Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.
1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, Louisiana 70053

To the mother of the bride, Mildred Ratcliffe Adams

*Thank you, beautiful wife and bride, Sue A. Walker, for
the many hours you spent preparing the manuscript*

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INTRODUCTION

Storytelling is as old as mankind. Many Biblical experts believe that parts of the Bible are stories that have been told and retold, maybe through several generations., before being recorded in print.

I have chosen to record some stories related to the Civil War (or War Between the States, if you prefer) for several reasons. The foremost of these is that the stories were not being repeated. These precious accounts are being lost to history, and America's culture is diminished with each loss. I have recorded some tales so that they will not perish.

The reason these family tales are not being retold is largely the result of the advent of mass public communication. With the general public's acceptance of radio, people became listeners to a disembodied voice. When television followed, social intercourse fell to an even lower level. Today, when families gather, they don't talk; they turn on the tube and stare.

This has had a profound effect on our entire society. Those of the older generation were once revered as storehouses of knowledge and wisdom and as the keepers of family history. Now, with society's disregard for its own history, those who could share and pass on the wealth of stories are called elderly and are viewed increasingly as burdens, not blessings. Their perceived worth to their families and to society has been greatly reduced, just as our appreciation for our past has decreased.

Not only have older people been affected; we all have lost.

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There is less family pride. One last name is as good as another when there is no history behind that name, when there are no tales of past glories and accomplishments. When I was young, I was admonished: "Never do anything that would tarnish the family name, because the family name is important and stands for honorable behavior."

Perhaps part of the root cause of juvenile delinquency can be traced to the loss of family history. If the name stands for nothing, there is nothing for the child to uphold. One more link that held society together is going and, in some cases, completely gone.

I suffer no delusions that this book will reverse recent societal trends, that families will turn off the radio and television and talk of family history, that society will usher in the return of traditional values and cure all its ills. But maybe the reader will stop to think of what is being lost and will do his part to try and prevent it from happening.

Most of this book is based on oral information, although much is supplemented by written accounts. In most of the stories, the original storyteller is dead. The stories have been told and retold, and some inaccuracies have naturally occurred. I did conduct research in an attempt to verify and clarify some facts, but some information related to the stories is beyond my ability to research for accuracy.

As I researched this book, I interviewed numerous people, and I was amazed at the findings. Two things in particular took me by surprise. We hear so much about the mobility of American society that I was struck by the fact that the majority of the people I interviewed live within one hundred miles of the place where their ancestors lived between the years 1861 and 1865. Admittedly, this may be a very biased section of the

population. Perhaps those who love their historical roots are not as mobile as society in general. Because I collected stories of those who live relatively close to my own home in Virginia, this book contains somewhat more stories about Southern ancestors than Northern ones. Approximately 60 percent of the battles waged during the war occurred in the state of Virginia. At least that percent of the stories in my book also took place in Virginia; therefore, if I have not included a state name after a location, the reader may assume that that place exists within Virginia's borders. There was no scheme to write this book with a pro-Southern slant. Rather, I was attempting to collect interesting tales and to present them with as little author bias as possible. All of the stories have the war as their base, but some have more modern settings because this was a war that has never truly ended.

The second thing that shocked me was the very brevity in some cases of the accounts that remain. The war of 1861 was America's largest, most devastating conflict, but all that some people can recall of their ancestors and their involvement in the war can be easily summarized in four sentences. It almost brings tears to my eyes to know that only four sentences remain from those who lived, fought, and died during those extraordinary times.

I would like to thank each person who gave so freely of his time as I researched this book, and that includes those who provided stories that were not chosen for publication. Those I interviewed gave me information, both oral and written, and some supplied me with artwork or photographs or allowed me to take my own photographs. I credit the source of the information at the end of each story. I combined their material with my research and knowledge of history to create the stories I

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present here. Sometimes the information they gave me had to be changed to conform to proven fact.

I use the language or expressions of the times or share the words of the storyteller in an attempt to convey the mood of the period and capture the emotion of the storyteller. Sometimes the slant of the story was changed in order to make the story more interesting. I hope the people who granted me the interview will be pleased with my work. I hope none will be offended.

In several stories the participant(s) or the sources are not named. There are reasons for this. Some stories are about deserters or wrongdoers, and the source of the information requested that the last names be deleted in order to avoid embarrassment over the deeds of their ancestors. Some people gave me information on family histories that were not their family's own. Because some of the information was negative, they requested that no family names be given. Some people so highly cherish their privacy that they do not wish their names given. Some people have relics or keepsakes that they value greatly, and they did not wish to have their names in print.

Still others said they would welcome communication from others who share a common interest and provided their names. If you wish to correspond with one of these persons, simply send a letter to that person in care of Gary Walker to Pelican Publishing Company at 1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, Louisiana, 70053, and I will forward that letter to that person.

In some cases, the story is followed by more than one name. This is my way of thanking those who helped me with their expert knowledge. Without such help, some stories could not be told.

I hope that the pages that follow will bring both great joy and

great sadness to the reader. I hope that you will be entertained; but, most of all, I hope that by the end of the book you will have a greater understanding and appreciation for our history.

As with my other books, I have greatly enjoyed writing this for you. I hope this book too will light another candle in the darkness to help everyone to understand and better appreciate the deeds of our forbearers.