VIRGINIA'S CONFEDERATE 'STATE LINE' REGIMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COAL INDUSTRY IN SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA AND EASTERN KENTUCKY

Copyright and All Rights Reserved
Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr.
Big Stone Gap, Virginia
September 2020

PREFACE

History twists and turns through human existence in strange and unpredictable ways. Such is the case involving Virginia's Confederate 'State Line' Regiment. Poorly documented in its period records, never defined in writing nor in law, its purpose never officially admitted, and whose activities were reconstructed mainly from the memoirs of its veterans who had every incentive to obfuscate its reality, it nevertheless was the eye of the needle through which much of our history and present circumstances were threaded. What follows is amorphous and contentious, and certainly inadequately relates its story. It is just simply the best that likely can ever be done to a subject that defines, as well as any other, who we are and how we got to be this way.

GEOGRAPHY

The course of the Civil War in western Virginia was dominated by the reality that it was in the Mississippi River drainage system. This reality had torn at Virginia ever since the French and Indian War. Its access to the outside world was this waterway. The Alleghany Mountains to the east effectively blocked access directly to the Atlantic Ocean. Even without the mounting stress of the pending Civil War Kentucky had broken away from Virginia, and what is now West Virginia was threatening to do so. Tennessee had broken away from North Carolina, and the Virginia counties west of the New River were shipping iron, salt, and commodities down the Tennessee River. These western areas could not sustain themselves economically without access to the Mississippi. There is an area within the triangle formed by Jenkins, Kentucky; Whitesburg, Kentucky; and Norton, Virginia where three mountains come together – Black Mountain, Pine Mountain, and Indian Mountain. The valleys lying between them contain the origins of the heads of the Tennessee River, the Big Sandy River, the Kentucky River, and the Cumberland River. Migration and commerce travelled these waterways to the Mississippi. The new steam boats facilitated this process. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had pulled much of the traffic of current West Virginia away from Richmond and Alexandria to Baltimore in Maryland.

Of special interest to this story is the lie of the Cumberland River. Beginning near Eola, Kentucky it runs along the northwestern side of Black Mountain, whose crest is the border between Kentucky and Virginia. It turns west into Tennessee, where Nashville sets astride of it. It then turns north and empties into the Ohio a few miles upstream from the mouth of the

Tennessee River near Paduka, itself only a short ways from where the Ohio empties into the Mississippi.

The western tip of Virginia is very thin. Seven of the ten westernmost counties touch the neighboring states. The Whig political party was very active in this region, and its main platform was to strengthen economic and political ties with the Mississippi Valley. Even the national Democratic Party was split into Northern and Southern factions over populism, having little to do with the issue of slavery.

THE PEOPLE

The Appalachian area is populated with significant numbers of descendants of German pietists who were opposed to slavery. There is also a large group of people whose ancestors were of Spanish Berber origin known for their barbarism, as well as an American Indian culture which embraced terror as a methodology of warfare. A tradition of 'an eye for an eye', and of familial and group loyalty is part of the culture. Western Kentucky was a plantation culture, but the mountainous eastern part had few slaves.

THE UGLY WAR

Kentucky and present West Virginia were soon occupied by Federal troops, who overrode those area's secession ordnances, and set up military puppet governments. This circumstance alienated many people. Loyalties were conflicted. Many people thought that it was someone else's war, and just wanted to be left alone. The people were largely hunter gathers, but the once plentiful big game was largely gone. Food was often scarce. Certainly there was not enough to support the population plus foraging troops.

Nevertheless, at its beginning many patriotic men on both sides rushed off to join the military units of both North and South. ProUnion abolitionists soon began 'night riding', which was the local term for the burning of barns of their neighbors who were in opposing camps. A lost barn not only consumed food, but also tools and supplies needed by families to feed themselves. The loss of a barn would condemn a family to starvation for years to come. There were no secrets in the region. Such activities called for retribution. It was acceptable to exact retribution on innocent family members. Men found it necessary to form groups for self protection, and to hide in the mountains. Executions were frequently associated with mutilations. The absent labor force exacerbated the food shortage. Theft of food and of bedding became commonplace. Abductions as a method of recruitment became common. The hiding of horses in the mountains became a requirement for survival.

These roving bands were often either proUnion or Pro Secession, but often where just groups seeking to avoid service in either army. This practice was called 'scouting out'. These groups often would change sides just to avoid death. In fact, neither Union nor Confederate

government could exercise control over these bands. They would not respond to orders to come out of the mountains and to join the fight with the armies in the field. The Confederate government in Richmond sent out an investigator, who returned and reported that these men were just "murderers and thieves". It, therefore, became the practice of both armies to execute such men if they could be caught. The Confederate army had a special unit dedicated entirely to enforcing the draft law in the border country. They were named after their commanding officer, and were called "Witcher's Boys".(1-9)

THE STATE LINE

Both the Union and Confederate governments sought to protect their own partisans from execution, and began to assign these units official military designations. This subterfuge meant that these men, when captured, would be treated as prisoners of war, instead of being shot or hanged on the spot. It also meant that the contemporary records of their existence are fragmentary and confusing. Their habit of splintering and of then recombining, and of changing sides left an ambiguous trail of unit designations. Most of this 'information' was compiled long after the war when these men were seeking either military pensions, or a cover story to tell their grandchildren of 'what they had done during the War'. We will try to piece it all together, but warn the reader ahead of time that the information is suspect at its best.

GEN. JOHN BELL FLOYD

When the Confederate government sought someone to head this effort to shield its partisan rangers (or if one prefers, bushwhacking units) from execution, they chose John B. Floyd. Born in Blacksburg of a FFV family, he settled in Washington County, Virginia as a lawyer. He became Governor of Virginia. He served as Secretary of War under President Buchanan. With secession looming he moved large quantities of arms to US army garrisons located in the South, where they were confiscated by the Confederate army. After secession he became a Brigadier General in the Confederate Army. Floyd began negotiations with the leaders of the various bands of partisan rangers. Perhaps the best known is Nathaniel McClure Menefee. Floyd promised Menefee political cover and his own independence from the Confederate army. Menefee was from Lincoln County, Kentucky. His area of special interest was the upper reaches of the Big Sandy River, which lie in current West Virginia, Kentucky, and Virginia. He was jailed by the Confederate government for murder, but escaped jail. He captured Pikeville, Ky. on his own behalf. All in all, he recruited 13 companies of bushwhackers into the Virginia State Line, which was the fraudulent cover name for the reputed 'Confederate' unit headed by Floyd. Neither the existence of this unit, nor Floyd's command of it, are to be found in wartime Confederate records, except those developed after the war by researchers, but now included in

the records of the National Park Service, and by the Virginia Department of Confederate Military Records (Series II: Unite Records, 1861-1993 (bulk 1861-1865, 1884, 1900-1918). Accession 27684). The State Line never gathered itself to fight as a unit. It existed only on paper. Pendleton in his History of Tazewell County and Southwest Virginia candidly observed that when the Confederate government rescinded its exemption from the draft of members of the State Line "the men scattered". He further opined that "the sole result of this organization was the dissemination of numerous empty military titles."

When the war broke out the South placed forts at the mouths of the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers to guard against Union invasion into the central core of the Confederacy. Fort Donelson was the name of the one at the mouth of the Cumberland. John B. Floyd was placed in command. He had under his command several respectable units of the Confederate Army. He also had an assortment of independent units of the State Line, all of whom seemed to have been there in their own behalf, and not as detachments of the functionally nonexistent State Line Regiment. The designations of these units are fluid.

CAPT. JOHN PERRY CHASE

Some of the better documented units that had been covered at one time or another under the umbrella of the Virginia State Line are as follows:

A – The Fourth Virginia Regiment – John P. Chase came to Holly Creek (Clintwood, Virginia – then part of Wise Co., now in Dickenson County) from Tennessee in 1854 to work on the farm of John Mullins. Chase later bought part of that farm. Under the auspices of Menefee he recruited and led Company C of the 4th Virginia Regiment in the State Line, which is described variously as a cavalry unit, and one that was mixed infantry and cavalry. The men "scattered" and were absorbed by various other units after the capture of Fort Donelson. Chase's fate during the last part of the war is obscure. After the war he was in the House of Delegates for two terms, and was a founder of the Clintwood Methodist Church.

B – The 36th Regiment of the Virginia State Line was recruited from the Kanawha Valley around Charleston, West Virginia. It was at Fort Donelson, but escaped. They fought at Cloyd's Mountain, and in the last battle in the Shenandoah, the Battle of Piedmont, under Generals Imboden and of Grumble Jones. Most of these troops were from Washington Co., Va. Even though the term "Virginia State Line" is attached to them, there is no record of their having been a bushwhacking outfit.

C – The 3rd Regiment Virginia State Line – formed after the loss of Fort Donelson largely from the counties between Parkersburg and Morganton from preexisting units. The original configuration was largely captured at Fort Donelson. Later in the war after the breakup of the State Line, many of these troops joined the 19th Virginia Cav.

D – The 2nd Regiment of the Virginia State Line formed after the Battle of Fort Donelson mostly from current Dickenson, Wise, Russell, and Buchanan Counties of Virginia, but also contained some men from Pike Co. Kentucky and some from West Virginia. It was a cavalry unit, and is poorly documented in official period records. Most of the information came from Sutherland's book compiled long after the war from the statements of the veterans and their families. They seem to have functioned exclusively as a local guerrilla group, and disbanded early in the war. Their former members can be found everywhere from Union prisons to numerous Confederate units to membership in the Union army in Ohio. Many wound up in the Camp Douglas prison camp, but likely had been picked up by Union troops in local border fighting, such as one of the three Union invasions of Wise County via Pound Gap. Evidence of skullduggery at Camp Douglas with some of these prisoners of the State Line exists. Some, but not all, of the State Line prisoners there were 'exchanged', reputedly for Union prisoners held by Confederates. However, there are no records of any Confederate prisoners from Camp Douglas reappearing in the Confederate Armies, nor of any Union prisoners of the Confederates reappearing in the Union ranks as the result of such an exchange at Camp Douglas. There are, however, records of Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas, and who were from communities occupied by Union troops, such as West Virginia and Kentucky, who appeared in the ranks of 'Gavlanized Yankees'. Such men took an oath of allegiance to the Union, and were inducted into the Union Army. They were commonly sent out West to fight Indians, or did administrative duties in army camps in Ohio. Occasionally they did engage in combat against Confederate troops. Late in the war such a program existed at Knoxville, Tennessee, another region where the Union desired to cultivate political traction. The 'prisoner of war exchange' operation at Camp Douglas seems to have been a cover for such a process there.(10-16)

BATTLE OF FORT DONELSON

The war was less than a year old when, in Feb. 1862 Grant moved first against Fort Henry that guarded the mouth of the Tennessee River, and then against Fort Donelson that guarded the mouth of the Cumberland River. The fort was designed to defend against naval attack from the river, and not against infantry. With considerable Federal infantry ashore only 12 miles away at the defeated Fort Henry, Fort Donelson found itself attacked both by Federal gun boats, and large infantry formations. Initial Confederate infantry counter attacks were unsuccessful because of loss of nerve by commanding General John B. Floyd. Then flooding closed the road away from the fort to all but cavalry. General Floyd, after turning over command to his third in command, General Buckner, fled on the last steam boat out, taking many of his Virginia State Line associated troops with him. His second in command, General Pillow, escaped in a rowboat. Lt. Col. Nathan Bedford Forrest took his cavalry out through the flooded road. It is not recorded, but given how many of the State Line troops escaped, and given the limited capacity of Floyds' steam boat to

carry horses, it would seem likely that many of the State Line Cavalry escaped with Forrest. On Feb. 16, 1862 Buckner surrendered 12,392 Confederate troops. Given the confusion no one will ever know how many of the Virginia State Line associated troops were among these. All the prisoners were sent to Camp Douglas, the prisoner of war camp at Chicago. We will never know how many of these were 'exchanged', or surreptitiously turned into Gavlanized Yankees, nor how many died in captivity.(17)

CAMP DOUGLAS

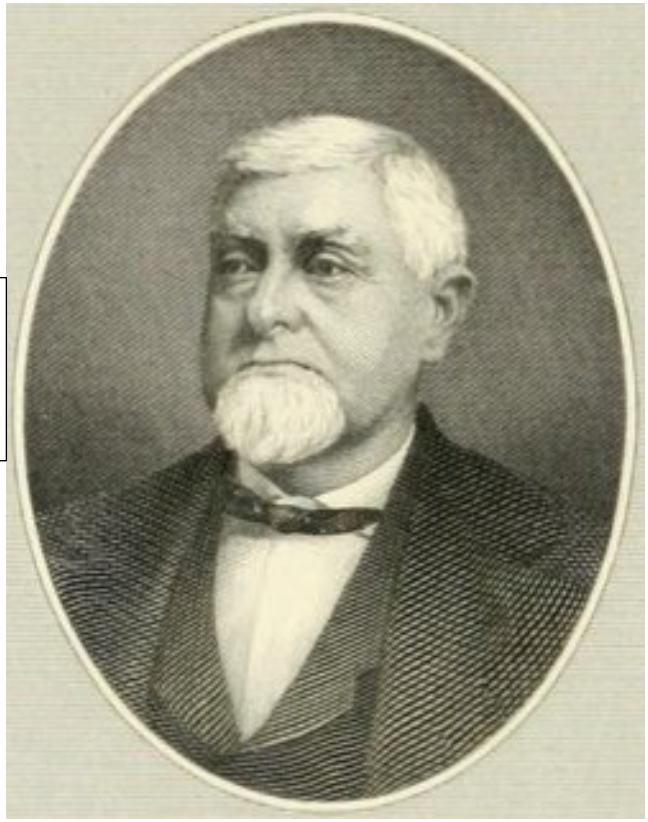
The largest Union prisoner of war prison for Confederate captives was Camp Douglas at present Chicago. It had the largest total number of Confederate deaths, but as a percentage the camp at Elmire, New York was much higher. Like other camps, both North and South, it was purposefully built into a swamp so as to facilitate sewage disposal. This was well before it became known that germs caused disease, and diarrheal diseases, such as typhoid, raged. Smallpox was rampant, as it was in the armies in general. Scurvy was common because some of the camp commanders withheld vegetables from the prisoners just as a matter of vindictiveness. The prisoners from Fort Donelson, having been captured within months of the war's beginning, were imprisoned longer than most. Specific records were not kept of the Virginia State Line Regiment that survived to make it home. Oral traditions of imprisoned relatives at Camp Douglas still abound among the people of far Southwestern Virginia. The author has yet to hear of a single incidence of survival. Surely, there must have been some who made it home. But, again, he has not heard of a single one. Camp Douglas is burned into the local psyche more deeply and more painfully that that of Antietam or of Gettysburg.(18)

THE END OF THE STATE LINE

Thoroughly disgusted with General Floyd, angered at the desertions, infuriated at the Galvanized Yankees, upset at the unresponsiveness of the State Liners to come out of their mountain vastness and to fight with the Confederate armies to defend their homeland, and humiliated by the savagery of their fighting the Confederate government rescinded its policy of exempting the bushwhackers from the draft. This happened later in the summer of 1862, but before Antietam. Modern histories speak of the State Line's 'disbandment', as if there were some sort of order or command to do so. That is disingenuous. No such order has been found. The night after this ruling became known, the men just got up and left. Many did join the Confederate army, thus the confusing number of outfit designations that exist today. Others continued to 'scout out' until the war's end. Many, like the gingham dog and the calico cat, killed each other off before the war's end.

THE 64TH MOUNTED INFANTRY

In the summer and fall of 1862 the Confederate forces along the Appalachian region of Southwestern Virginia and Eastern Kentucky underwent a time of reorganization. The fall of Fort Donelson had sucked up massive numbers of Confederate troops from this area. The Battle of Antietam Sept. 17th killed shocking numbers of other Virginians. The Confederate government's lifting the ban on drafting men engaged within the informal blanket designation of the Virginia State Line created a large number of men who were suddenly available for the draft. There seems to have been no official process to integrate these men into the Confederate Army. It seems that sometimes entire small units of the State Line would join a unit of the Confederate Army unit of their choice, and sometimes it seems that individual men did so. One cannot discern a pattern. Indeed, whole units suddenly appear in the records, with no listings of the organizers nor of the commanding officers. There are two units in Wise and Lee Counties that may have been the beneficiaries of this sudden availability of men. First we need to lay the background of three significant families in the area.

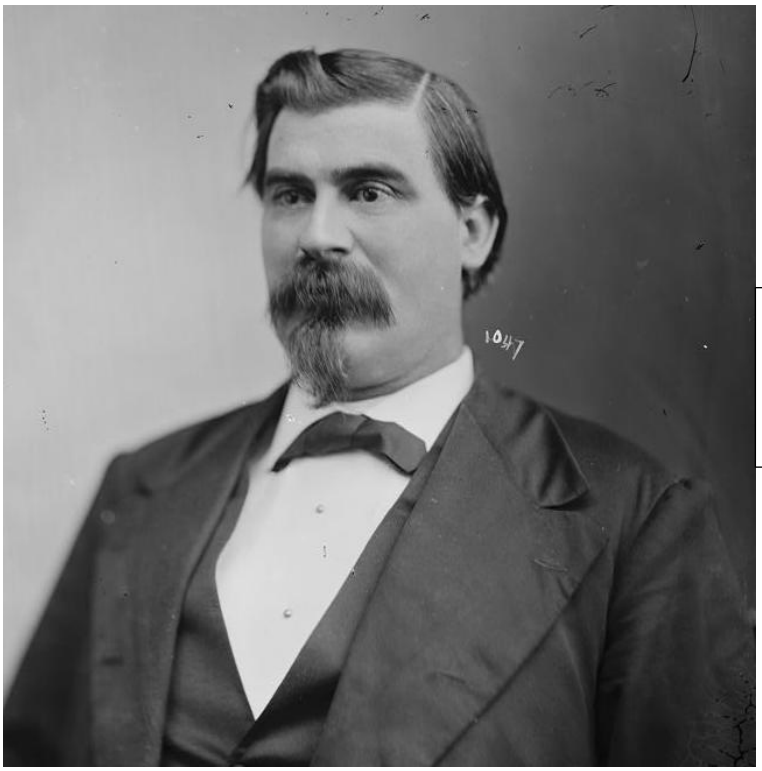


COL. CAMPBELL BASCOM SLEMP

Two families of future significance settled next to each other on the northern slopes of Mt. Rogers. Both built iron smelters. They were the Reasors and the Slemps. Sebastian Slemp married Margaret Reasor. Their families accumulated enough money so that the couple, along with Reasor relatives, were able to buy some of the best farm land in Lee County within the Turkey Cove community.(19) Their son, Campbell Bascom Slemp, was 22 when the war broke out. He and Major John B. Thompson organized the 21st Virginia Infantry Battalion (also called Pound Gap or Special Service Battalion), with Slemp becoming its Lt. Col. This unit saw action at the First Battle of Pound Gap March 16, 1862.(20)

Auburn Pridemore was born on Purchase Ridge, Scott Co. Virginia 1837. As an adult he practiced law in Jonesville. In August 1861 he raised a company of men who joined the 21st(1, 21) and he became a captain, later promoted to Major, and then to Lt. Col. On Sept 9th the 21st took part in John Hunt Morgan's invasion of Kentucky via Pound Gap that penetrated as far as Lexington. Nov. 27th (some say Dec. 14th) the 21st "merged" with unknown units to become the 64th Virginia Mounted Infantry Regiment(23). (some cite the 29th Battalion as the unit of merger(26), but this unit is documented to have functioned elsewhere during the reminder of the War(25). This 'birth' is surrounded by significant confusion. There is a statement in a Dec. 14,

1862 letter from General Humphrey Marshall to Adjutant and Inspector General Samuel Cooper stating that 64th was formed by combining the remnants of the 21st with an unspecified battalion "organized in Lee and Scott Counties by Mr. Samuel Salyers".(26). This would have been Samuel Salyers, Jr. of Copper Creek.(29). This man was the father of Col. Logan N. H. Salyers of Wise Co., who on June 3, 1861 organized the 50th Regiment of Infantry CSA, Floyd's Brigade. Somehow this group avoided Fort Donelson and Camp Douglas, but instead fought in many of the famous battles with the Army of Northern Virginia.(1). Some sources identify the 64th at this point as an infantry regiment, and some as a cavalry one, and others as one of mixed cavalry and of infantry. The point of confusion is not understanding the distinctions of the time. An infantry unit marched on foot, and fought on foot. Their weapon was the rifled musket. Cavalry rode and fought on horseback, with their weapons being pistols and sabers. Mounted infantry rode to battle on horseback, but once at the site of battle they dismounted and fought on foot with rifled muskets. The mounted infantry was a regional specialty, with the Holston Militia having fought and won the Battle of Kings' Mountain during the Revolutionary War organized as such. One third of the men in the 64th were from Kentucky.



COL. AUBURN L. PRIDEMORE

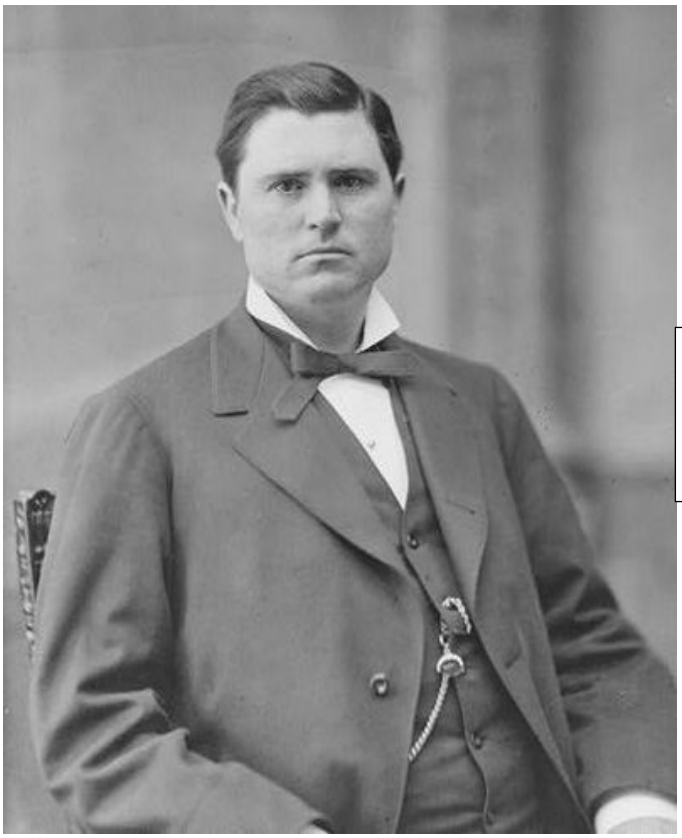
SAMUEL SALYERS, JR.

The Slemp / Reasor / Pridemore families were intermarried at least once, with Susan Slemp having married Hiram D. Pridemore(23)

The third family of importance to this story is that of the Richmond family, also of Turkey Cove. With relatives in Scott County at two different historic frontier sites, Hunter's Ford

(Osborne's Ford or Dungannon) and at Carter's Fort at Rye Cove the family had excellent and deep roots in the area preceding those of the Reasor and Slemp families. Jonathan Richmond was elderly and his role in the War was as General of the Militia. His brother, William Richmond (Flitter Bill) had a shriveled leg, and owned and ran a salt peter extraction operation at Wild Cat Salt Peter Cave near Big Stone Gap for the Confederate government. James and his three brothers, sons of Jonathan, joined the Confederate Army, at least two of them in the 64th. James became Lt. Col. of the 64th under Col. Pridemore. James's son married the daughter of an officer of the 64th.

The intricate interrelationships of these three families, all with deep roots in the 64th, will heavily influence the post war development of the regional coal industry.(26, 27)



LT. COL. JAMES BUCHANAN RICHMOND

The Federal policy of cutting the Confederacy into segments, and to then deal with each segment individually continued after the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863. Georgia and Tennessee especially supported Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia with munitions and food. The primary transportation artery that performed this task was the railroad that ran from Atlanta to Knoxville to Bristol, to Wytheville, Va. and on to Richmond. The segment between Knoxville and Bristol was especially vulnerable to Union attack. The Union army under Major General Ambrose Burnside made a two pronged attack on this umbilical cord of the Confederacy; one directly at Knoxville and another at Cumberland Gap. If the Union were to capture Cumberland Gap they would have been in position to interdict the railroad between Knoxville and Bristol. Confederate General John W. Frazier was tasked with the defense of Cumberland Gap "at all hazards".(30) Among the forces of Gen. Frazier at Cumberland Gap were the 64th Virginia Mounted Infantry, the 62nd North Carolina Regiment, and the 55th Georgia Regiment.(1)

The defense of Cumberland Gap presented some problems not immediately obvious to a person not familiar with the details. Topographically it might seem to be impregnable. Technically it is not a 'gap' at all, but a high pass in a precipice lined mountain. Cumberland Mountain is a karst landscape hundreds of feet thick. All the surface water drains down through voids in this limestone to exit the mountain in a stream coming out of a cave on its Virginia side. This means that there is no surface water up in the pass, or gap. That is an absolute – no springs,

no creeks – no puddles. Another problem was that the local populace was heavily proUnion. We will see how these two factors played out in the pending Battle of Cumberland Gap.

Frazier placed his defenses high on the Kentucky side of the mountain, with cannon commanding the approach up from the Kentucky side. It was not unlike a bowling alley – a straight cannon shot from the top all the way to the bottom. No matter how brave or committed the Union soldier under future President James A. Garfield may have been, the simple fact was that he was not going to make it to the top to do battle with the Confederate defenders. But there was that practical issue of the water. There were 1700 troops and at least 300 horses on top of that mountain. Each horse required 40 gallons of water a day. Leaving out any water needed in bathing, that comes out to an estimated 14,000 gallons per day. Without it the Confederate troops could not defend Cumberland Gap. The solution was to tie kegs to the sides of horses, and to haul water up from the cave mouth at the base of the gap. It was a major effort, but the horses needed to be fed. The local population was so prounion that they hid all their forage and hay. The horses began to weaken, and could not haul the water. They had to be sent to Russell County before they could obtain any reliable Confederate grazing. It took a time before they could recover. In the meantime the artillerymen found that their cannon could not be depressed enough to cover those Union troops' approach should they attempt it.(1)

General Frazier was himself a problem. Though a West Point graduate, and a career US army officer, he had twice resigned his position in the Confederate Army in order to gain higher rank. At Cumberland Gap he had not bothered to reconnoiter his position. In fact, there was a pass to the west of Cumberland Gap that he never took the trouble to either learn about, or to put out a force to guard. One day a local prounion man from the eastern side of Cumberland Mountain walked that pass, found it undefended, and went all the way to the Union camp on the Kentucky side, and told Garfield about it. That night he took a Union force back through that westerly pass, and the next morning the thirsty Confederates discovered that they were surrounded by Union troops, and were cut off from their water. Negotiations proceeded. There is no written record of those negotiations, but what unfolded next serves as an excellent testimony of what was agreed to. The commander of the Union pickets, Col. De Courcy, drew them in for the night, thus opening up all avenues for escape by the Confederate forces. Slemp gained permission from Frazier to take his men out. There are estimates of the men who elected to go as having numbered between 100 and 700. Likely all had horses. They were sequenced in groups of seven, and they traversed the trail along the ridge of Cumberland Mountain to the east. The party came off the mountain into Kentucky. They just as easily could have come down into Virginia. The official surrender occurred September 9th, 1863. No troops other than part of the 64th left during the night before. All the troops from North Carolina and Georgia, as well as significant numbers of the 64th elected to stay. The only explanation is that they viewed life as Union prisoners-of-war as being preferable to escaping only to fight on for the Confederacy again. It seems likely that the news about Fort Donelson and Camp Douglas was fresh in the minds of most of the 64th, and not at all in the reckonings of the troops from Georgia and North Carolina. Little did they know. Slemp's escape with most of the 64th is part of the oral legends of the area. It has numerous romantic embellishments, and has been written about several times. Slemp made himself a local hero in the process. General Frazier was sent to a cushy prison for high

ranking Confederate officers, and his men were sent to hell in Camp Douglas. The 64th regrouped, and fought out the war as part of the Confederate army. Indeed, they were in the last campaigns of the war, the Battles of Saltville and of Stoneman's Raids. When the War ended, they were still defending Cumberland Gap.(29, 1, 25)

The capture of Cumberland Gap was not pursued by the Union, as they had captured Knoxville September 2nd. The Confederate government was angry over the surrender without a shot having been fired. The problem clearly lay with Frazier, but he was beyond their reach, safe in a cushy prison camp. They took their frustration out on Slemp. As he had requested permission to evacuate from his commanding officer, there was nothing they could do with him over that point. They court marshalled him over some incident over wagons. The situation is too murky to understand in any light other than as meanspiritedness. His command of the 64th was taken from him and given to Pridemore, who strongly defended Slemp. A swell of political support from the adoring people of the area saved Slemp from further harm.

THE COAL INDUSTRY

GENERAL JOHN DANIEL IMBODEN

The year was 1871. The Federal Government was attempting to ease up on Reconstruction in Virginia, and had allowed former Confederates to run for office and to vote. Among those elected to the General Assembly were General John Daniel Imboden, who had commanded local troops at the Battle of Piedmont, and Col. Slemp and Pridemore. But the Carpetbagger government would not vacate as had been promised. The names of the persons doing the wheeling and dealing in Washington, doubtlessly in the proverbial smoke filled room, have never been publicly identified. Someone told the waiting newly elected Assemblymen to stay in Richmond until the standoff could be 'fixed'. Time dragged on. People were getting restless. The Richmond Chamber of Commerce came up with a solution. All the newly elected Delegates would go to a meeting hall downtown, and each in turn would give a speech on his ideas for the economic recovery of Virginia. The Commonwealth of Kentucky had been proactive in this process within its own borders, and for years after the war had been inventorying the geologic assets of that State. A very thorough and professional evaluation of the coal deposits in what was then called the Cumberland Plateau, now known as the Appalachian Plateau, which lies between the Blue Grass and the Virginia State line, was conducted. Not only were there copious quantities of some of the best coal in the

world, but also massive stands of virgin hardwood forests. "The Shaler Geologic Survey of Kentucky 1873-1880" was not to have been published for two years yet, but someone from Kentucky was in possession of the preliminary report, and provided Col. Pridemore with it(31). One suspects a former member of the 64th. It is important to know that this same geologic formation extends under the State line into Virginia. Pridemore took this preliminary report and put his name and title on it, and presented it to the group.(31, 1)
{The original source of this information was a newspaper article in the "Staunton Spectator" of August 3, 1887. Staunton was Imboden's home town. A copy of the newspaper clipping was among the heirloom possessions of Mary Ruth Cooper, a granddaughter of Col. Pridemore, who provided it to the author.}

Imboden had inherited a plantation near Staunton, and had lost it all during the War. He expressed his attitudes on this subject in a letter to Major G. Marshall McCue after the War. "I don't care a damn about the truth or falsehood of history so far as that War was concerned – I know that it ruined me financially – and nobody thanks me for my efforts in a common cause then, and never will unless I get rich"(32). Imboden was transfixed by Pridemore's talk. He saw the opportunity to salvage both his ego and his fortune. He took Shaler's / Pridemore's work, retitled it as "Coal and Iron Resources of Virginia" and in 1872 republished it under his own name, and moved to Philadelphia where many of the wealthy coal barons of the Union's Civil War military-industrial complex lived. Most were anthracite miners, which is 'hard coal', and was thrown directly into iron and steel blast furnaces. The anthracite deposits were nearly exhausted, but the Confederates had learned how to make coke from bituminous coal (soft coal), which worked just as well as anthracite.(32)

The industrial age after the Civil War fueled an insatiable need for iron. The area around Big Stone Gap, Va. had the three major ingredients for making iron – iron ore, limestone, and excellent coking coal. What it lacked were railroads and capital. Imboden, who seemed to have a gift for promotion, sought to bring all these ingredients together. He, himself, saw his future as being tied to the construction of a railroad from the central core of North Carolina, the Yadkin Valley, to the Ohio Valley. He believed that a program of harvesting the timber, iron, and coal along the way would pay for that railroad as it went. To make it work, he needed a core of local Confederate leaders to serve as intermediaries with the local population who owned the land and its resources. In short, he needed Slemp, Pridemore, and the Richmond family. He needed local capital before he could have any hope of recruiting Northern capital. General Imboden's brother, Frank, was married to the sister of the richest man in the South, George Washington Palmer. Palmer had turned the Salt Works at Saltville into a massive fortune during the War. Several lawyers were successfully riding the crest of the wave of economic development, and had some money to invest. These were Rufus Ayers of Scott County, who was Attorney General of Virginia; Col. Pridemore; Col. Slemp, and his son of the same name, distinguished by being referred to as C. Bascom Slemp; and a very special case – Patrick Hagan, who in addition to being a fine land title lawyer, but who also owned a massive boundary of timber and coal land, the 'Hagan Survey'; and James Richmond. With the commitment of this local capital Imboden started his railroad that was designed to run from Bristol, Virginia to the northern end on the gap in Stone Mountain, at current Appalachia, which provided the necessary penetration into the Cumberland

Plateau. The project ran out of money at the Holston River just south of present Mendota. However, using this project as a demonstration of earnestness, Imboden again went North and successfully recruited anthracite capitalists. They were interested in coal and iron, and not railroads. Add to this mix Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston, a Kentucky capitalist; George Lafayette Carter, an iron specialist from the New River Valley of Virginia, who was an unprejudiced capitalist, not caring whether he made his money in railroads, timber, iron, or in coal. Into this mix of characters were drawn a former Tennessee Confederate turned New York capitalist – John Inman; and the Leisenring – Wentz families of Pennsylvanian anthracite industrialists. After a number of false starts and bankruptcies, what emerged were the Virginia and Southwestern Railroad; the Virginia Iron and Coal Company; the Virginia Coal and Iron Company; the Kentucky Coal Company; the Imboden Coke and Coal Company; the Carolina, Cincinnati, and Ohio Railroad; and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. When the coal industry reached its peak during World War II, and the following years what presented itself to the world were the Norfolk-Southern Railroad, the CSX Railroad, Penn-Virginia Corporation, the Virginia Iron and Coal Corporation; and the Kentucky River Coal Corporation. United States Steel Corporation and International Harvester Corporation had large captive coal operations on the North side of Black Mountain in Kentucky. The local iron industry was put out of business by the Mesabi Range iron discoveries in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

CONGRESS-MAN C. BASCOM SLEMP

The best documented example of how this process worked is that of the 'Olinger Survey' on the Virginia side of Black Mountain. In the late frontier days this land had been bought by land speculators, who never paid their real estate taxes, and then dropped out of sight. In 1836 Lee County decided to collect its back taxes. The 49,200 acres sold to John C. Olinger II (Lee DB 7-322) for the taxes alone, or for a sum of $4.92. This remarkable purchase price calculates out to having been a tenth of a cent per acre! John farmed, had a grist and saw mill, was a blacksmith, and had a tannery. John 2nd died on Dec. 12, 1871.

John 2nd had seven children, one of whom was John C. Olinger 3rd (commonly called 'Jackall'), born in 1832 and died in 1917. John 2nd acquired much more land during his life besides

the Black Mountain Tract, and the other six children inherited this other land, leaving this tract to John III. This 'other land' likely had been bought by the Slemps, for the Olingers and the Slemps were neighbors. Jackall became a Lieutenant in the 64th. After the War General Imboden had persuaded the Leisenring and related families of Pennsylvania to form the Tinsalia Coal and Iron Company and its successors, with Imboden being the manager in charge of acquiring coal land in Wise, Scott, and Lee Counties, Virginia. In compensation Imboden received a fifth of the company's stock. The Tinsalia Coal, and Iron Co., the forerunner of the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, which itself was the forerunner of the current Penn-Virginia Corporation. Hyndman was president of Tinsalia, and of the South Atlantic and Ohio Railroad, which was built from Bristol, Virginia to Appalachia, Virginia. Other investors in the SA&O were George L. Carter, George Washington Palmer, the Imboden brothers, Rufus Ayers, and the Richmond family. The operating company of Penn-Virginia was Westmoreland Coal Co., the largest independent coal company in the world.

In setting all this up, C. Bascom Slemp served as intermediary between Olinger and Rufus Ayers, who was legal representative of the Tinsalia Company. He took on the position of also being the representative of Olinger in the sale of the 42,000 acre Black Mountain tract to Tinsalia, which was sold at 35 cents an acre. The Leisenring family bought Tinsalia, acquired the Kentucky side of Black Mountain, and sold that to U. S. Steel and to International Harvester for money the Leisenrings used to develop the Virginia side. The Slemps became leaders of the Readjustor wing of the Virginia Democratic Party, and later became Republicans.(31-33, 1, 2)

C. Bascom Slemp, trading on his father's name, about the same time as the developments on the Virginia side of Black Mountain were progressing, began to acquire land in the eastern Kentucky portion of the Cumberland Plateau. There were no large tracts of land here, but numerous small mountain holdings. There is no consolidated record of these transactions, but traditionally loyalty to the son of the commander of the 64th played a great role. Slemp rolled these purchases into the Kentucky Coal Land Company, which rolled over into the Slemp Coal Company. Other similar companies were doing the same thing, especially up and down the length of the Kentucky River, running from Payne Gap between Jenkins and Whitesburg to Berea, Kentucky. These companies consolidated in 1914 into the Kentucky River Coal Company, owing 143,000 acres of timber and coal land. It remains today as a holding company, leasing its coal to various operating companies, such as the Blue Diamond Coal Co. Kentucky River set up another subsidiary, Kentucky River Properties. Later these companies bought coal land in the Midwest. The total current acreage owned by them is approximately 367,000.(34)

Col. Auburn Lorenzo Pridemore read law under Patrick Hagan. Pridemore named one of his sons 'Hagan'. He was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates and then to the State Senate, and then to the National House of Representatives. He married three times, his first two wives dying prematurely. His first wife was Sarah Jane (Sally) Richmond of the Rye Cove Branch of that family. Pridemore remained a lifelong Democrat, but associated with a group of progressive Republicans, such as Theodore Roosevelt. When Roosevelt was running for President he attracted the support of many Confederate Democrats, Pridemore being one of them. When Roosevelt made a train tour of the South in 1908 he made a highly photographed speech at

Natural Tunnel, and then spend that night in Big Stone Gap with Flitter Bill Richmond. The next night he spent with Auburn Pridemore, and the next night with Auburn's brother Capt. Hiram D. Pridemore at Purchase. Pridemore was intensely involved with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, and helped them select its route through Lee County. Doubtlessly he was involved in the procurement of rights-of way for the railroad. He was rewarded with being given the privilege of naming the depot closest to his home, which was named 'Ben Hur' after the hero of the novel by the same name that had been written by his good friend, Union General Lew Wallace. That depot was equipped with a bedroom complete with a fire place and mantel that was reserved for Pridemore's use when he was catching a train from his home four miles away. Pridemore is known to have made significant money in the coal business, but direct evidence of the specifics is lacking. He was closely allied with Patrick Hagan, C. Bascom Slemp, and with the Richmond family. The L&N owners were closely allied with the Kentucky River Coal Company. All these connections provided ample opportunity for his investing in the coal business.(35, 36, 37)

General Jonathan Richmond died shortly after the Civil War. His son, James Buchanan Richmond, He and his brother, William, were both in the 64th, with James having become a Lt. Col., and his brother a Captain. He was an attorney, a member of the House of Delegates, and defeated Col. Pridemore for the House of Representatives. He became judge of Scott County, and chief council for the SA&O RR, and was a political ally of Gov. Henry Carter Stuart, who ran against C. Bascom Slemp for the House of Representatives.(26). He and his brothers sat on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Iron and Coal Company along with Carter and Hagan.(2)

This odd assortment of local lawyers turned coal barons were also intensely involved in politics, but seemed to be more interested in being sure that the group maintained political control in the legislatures for the industrialists than for any party goals. For instance, Slemp and Ayers ran against each other, as did Richmond and Slemp. They were more interested that someone from the group held a political position than that their party held it. They often represented opposing clients in significant court cases, and put on very dramatic shows in the court rooms for consumption by their clients. The following anecdote is illustrative. Pridemore and James Richmond were representing opposing clients in court. Richmond, calling attention to Pridemore's relative lack of a formal education, challenged Pridemore to name two letters of the Greek alphabet. Whereupon Pridemore rejoined by reciting a poem in Greek. In another suit pitting Pridemore against another well known local lawyer, Henry S. Kane, the two got so carried away with themselves that the judge placed them both under a $500 peace bond. Patrick Hagan went Pridemore's bond, and Col. James Richmond went Kane's. One can well imagine the lot of them sitting in Heaven telling stories about all of this, and laughing the entire time.(36)

What significant vestiges of all this remain in today's world? Patrick Hagan's land is now largely Jefferson National Forest. Rufus Ayer's mansion in Big Stone Gap houses C. Bascom Slemp's private collections in the Southwest Virginia Museum and Historical State Park, which is also partially supported financially by the Slemp Foundation. Penn – Virginia Corporation and its associated companies still own much of Black Mountain, and Kentucky River Properties owns much of the Appalachian Plateau in eastern Kentucky. The railroads still run, but have been consolidated out of recognition. Little else remains. It seems to have been such a short time ago.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1 – Fleenor, Lawrence J. – The Bear Grass, a History

2 – Fleenor, Lawrence J. – Black Mountain, Mother of Today

3 – Fleenor, Lawrence J. – "The Berber and the Spanish Armada …"
http://bigstonegappublishing.net/THE_BERBER.pdf

4 – Cole, Scott – 34th Battalion Virginia Cavalry

5 – Barrett, Theodosia Wells – Russell County, a Confederate Breadbasket

6 – Sutherland, Elihu Jasper – Pioneer Recollections of Southwest Virginia
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/2nd_Regiment,_Virginia_State_Line_(Cavalry)_(Confederate)

7 – Davis, William C. – The Orphan Brigade

8 – Wright, William T. – Devil John Wright

9 – Phillips, V. N. – Coming Down Cumberland

10 – Osborne, Randall – Marauder, The Life and Times of Nathaniel McClure Menefee – a review
https://cwba.blogspot.com/2015/01/osborne-marauder-life-and-times-of.html

11 – John B. Floyd – Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_B._Floyd

12 – Family Search Wiki – quoting William C. Pendleton in History of Tazewell County
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/5th_Regiment,_Virginia_State_Line_(Cavalry,_Artillery,_and_Infantry)_(Confederate)

13 – Family Search Wiki – concerning the 4th Virginia Regiment of Capt. John P. Chase
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/4th_Regiment,_Virginia_State_Line_(Cavalry_and_Infantry)_(Confederate)

14 – 36th Virginia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/36th_Virginia_Infantry

15 – 3rd Regiment Virginia State Line -
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/3rd_Regiment,_Virginia_State_Line_(Cavalry_and_Infantry)_(Confederate)

16 – 2nd Regiment of the Virginia State Line – Wikipedia
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/2nd_Regiment,_Virginia_State_Line_(Cavalry)_(Confederate)

17 - Battle of Fort Donelson – Wikipedia
https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=ALeKk004RT24Uyp41K40ekQiskyHOpVJMA%3A1599136263326&source=hp&ei=B-JQX-jREeSb5wLEuLu4AQ&q=Battle+of+Fort+Donelson&oq=Battle+of+Fort+Donelson&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQAzICCAAyAggAMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIIADoECCMQJzoECC4QJzoLCC4QsQMQxwEQowI6CAguEMcBEKMCOgUILhCxAzoFCAAQsQM6CAguEMcBEK8BOggIABCxAxCDAToOCC4QsQMQgwEQxwEQrwE6DggueLEDEIsDEKgDEJkDOgIIIlDsFFjiRGDsR2gAcAB4AIABiAKIAc4QkgEGMjAuMi4xmAEAoAEBqgEHZ3dzLXdpergBAg&sclient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwio8a7n_szrAhXkzVkKHUTcDhcQ4dUDCAw&uact=5

18 – Camp Douglas - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Douglas_(Chicago)

19 – Fleenor, Lawrence J. Fleenor – “Kerr’s Creek” -
http://bigstonegappublishing.net/THE%20KERR%20CREEK%20MASSACRES.pdf

20 – 21st Virginia Battalion - https://ehistory.osu.edu/books/official-records/010/0033

21 – Summers, Lewis Preston – A History of Southwest Virginia and of Washington Co.

22 – 21st Virginia Infantry Battalion - https://civilwarintheeast.com/confederate-regiments/virginia/21st-virginia-infantry-regiment/

23 – Slemp / Pridemore marriage - https://www.geni.com/people/Susan-Pridemore/6000000012208373098

24 – 29th Battalion - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/29th_Virginia_Infantry

25 – ditto –
Weaver, Jeffrey -
https://books.google.com/books/about/64th_Virginia_Infantry.html?id=SsAdAQAAMAAJ

26 – genealogy General Jonathan Richmond – Geni.com
https://www.geni.com/people/Jonathan-Richmond/6000000036677256766

27 – James Buchanan Richmond -] Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Buchanan_Richmond

28 – Samuel Salyer, Jr.
https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/72946730/samuel-salyer

29 – General John W. Frazier – Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_W._Frazer

30 – The Shaler Geologic Survey of Kentucky 1873-1880
https://exploreuk.uky.edu/catalog/xt7sj38kdq4p#page/19/mode/1up

A similar story to above -
http://sites.rootsweb.com/~vahsswv/historicalsketches/pridemoreauburnl.html

31 – "General John Daniel Imboden"
Fleenor, Lawrence J. - "Appalachian Quarterly" June 2001

32 – Fleenor, Lawrence J. – "Coke" – Big Stone Gap Publishing –
http://bigstonegappublishing.net/otherwritings.html

33 – Fleenor, Lawrence J. – "The Kane Family …." -
http://bigstonegappublishing.net/THE%20KANE%20FAMILY.pdf

34 – Kentucky River Properties – https://www.krpky.com/about/history

35 - Louisville and Nashville Railroad – penetration up the Kentucky River Coal fields, and to Norton, Virginia - http://www.lnrr.org/History.aspx

36 - Auburn Lorenzo Pridemore – Historical Society of Southwest Virginia-
http://sites.rootsweb.com/~vahsswv/historicalsketches/pridemoreauburnl.html

37 - Sarah Jane (Sally) Richmond, born to the Rye Cove Richmonds, who had an unknown relationship to the Richmonds of Lee and Wise Counties, was Col. Auburn Pridemore's third wife - https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/sallie-jane-richmond-24-38kjz8

Graphics sources

All photos except Salyers (Ancestry.com) were from Google Images