

#### **IBC#4 Patriotic Instruction – The Five Julys of the Civil War - August 2019 – Brother Ross Schwalm**

July is the middle of traditional “campaign” season in the history of warfare and is also the case with the Civil War. As I survey the five Julys from 1861 – 1865, I uncover that I need to remember the contributions of my extended family during these specific months of the war.

July 1861 is the month of the First Battle of Manassas. It was supposed to be a quick battle with a Union victory which turned out completely different. Many Union officers experienced their first taste of combat and went on to become leaders of units mustered to answer President Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers. One such officer was Benjamin Christ. He served in the 5<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, a unit called into service for 90 days. As the month ended, Christ was sent home to his home in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania to recruit volunteers and organize the 50<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment. My 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Uncle Samuel Schwalm answered the call in August and became a Sgt in Company A, 50<sup>th</sup> PA. Three of my Thompson ancestors joined the 96<sup>th</sup> PA and my Great Grandfather John P. Kessler joined 48<sup>th</sup> PA. My distant cousin John Hoffa joined the 58<sup>th</sup> PA in Philadelphia as a Private and served the whole war ending with the final rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt mustering out in January 1866.

July 1862 found war already taking a toll on my family. 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Uncle George Thompson 96<sup>th</sup> PA fought the Peninsula Campaign and was discharged on Surgeon’s Certificate on July 25, 1862. His brother David Thompson and cousin William Wallace Thompson moved from the campaign during July to fight at 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas, Chantilly, South Mountain and Antietam. David was wounded at South Mountain and was discharged in Dec 1862. William tended to his cousin in the hospital but died of disease and is buried at Antietam National Cemetery. My 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Uncle Robert Bruce Thompson joined the 48<sup>th</sup> PA in Jan 1862. He and John Kessler moved from North Carolina to the Virginia theater during July in time to fight at 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas. Robert was wounded near the Unfinished Railroad. Samuel Schwalm started July in Beaufort, South Carolina and told his wife in a letter that he was going to “Virginy” to help General “McLLeond” during July. He, too, fought 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas. John Hoffa was conducting occupation duty in Norfolk and Portsmouth in July 1862.

July 1863 was the high-water mark of the whole war. My relatives were scattered far and wide in support of operations in multiple theaters. 9<sup>th</sup> Corps including the 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> PA were in Kentucky in the spring conducting partisan chasing operations. Robert Thompson recovered from his wounds to rejoin the 48<sup>th</sup> PA but John Kessler was discharged on Surgeon’s Certificate in April. The 50<sup>th</sup> PA was moved to Vicksburg to add forces to the siege of Vicksburg in June arriving to close the trap on the Confederates. During this trip west by train and riverboat, Samuel Schwalm likely got malaria but recovered to participate in the siege. After the surrender, the 50<sup>th</sup> PA moved with General Sherman to remove Confederate forces from Jackson, MS. John Hoffa moved to North Carolina and was conducting occupation duties during July.

July 1863 also included the Gettysburg Campaign. My wife’s distant relative, George Clark, 56<sup>th</sup> PA, commanded a company at Gettysburg and my photo of the 56<sup>th</sup> Monument there is a big hit on Google. Samuel Schwalm’s older brother Frederick was serving in the 171<sup>st</sup> PA and participated in the pursuit of General Lee after the Gettysburg battle. Samuel’s brother in law, Israel Klinger, was serving in the 173<sup>rd</sup> PA and participated in the pursuit. My Thompson family was called into service in Company H, 39<sup>th</sup> PA Militia, to help thwart the Confederate invasion. These units were funded by the federal government and performed duties in defense of Harrisburg. The unit served one month from July 4 – August 3. David was appointed as 1<sup>st</sup> Lt due to his previous service and his older brother George was

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appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Their younger brother and my Great Grandfather William Wallace Thompson served in the same company with his brothers.

July 1864 only had three of my family still under arms with another in the hospital. Robert Thompson was wounded at Petersburg on June 17 and evacuated to U. S. Grant General Hospital. Samuel Schwalm was manning the entrenchments in Petersburg and did fight on the Union left flank of the Crater. John Hoffa was with 18<sup>th</sup> Corps in July. My 3<sup>rd</sup> Great Uncle, Henry Lebo, after serving in the 127<sup>th</sup> PA and discharged as a Corporal, joined the 20<sup>th</sup> PA Cavalry as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. He was conducting operations in West Virginia with 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Division. He was killed in action on April 1, 1865 at Five Forks.

July 1865 was the final chapter for many in the war. The 50<sup>th</sup> PA was selected as the Honor Guard Unit for the Gettysburg Remembrance and were mustered out shortly thereafter. Samuel Schwalm had already been home for nearly a year having been discharged in Sep 1864. John Hoffa and John Kessler were still serving. John returned via an enlistment into the 200<sup>th</sup> PA and was assigned back to his original 48<sup>th</sup> PA. The Veteran Census of 1890 shows his return to 48<sup>th</sup> PA from Aug 1864 to discharge in Jan 1866. He was collecting a pension due to his service and was blind when he died in 1919.

This concludes my Five Julys Review. It was a labor of love to honor my many Civil War veterans. I encourage you to pick a month and see where your own ancestors or any soldier for that matter was serving. Your report will honor them.