

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CONFEDERATES: the Laughter Family of Hendersonville, NC.

The Laughter family of Henderson Co, NC, provided the Confederacy with nine men, two brothers and seven cousins, to fight for Southern independence. They were all farmers.

Many of the cousins were in their teens and enlisted together in Ransom's Brigade, the 25th Reg. NC, Co. A, Edney's Grays in Hendersonville, NC on May 15, 1861, thinking the war would be short, and would get them off their hardscrabble farms for a great adventure.

The two brothers were Samuel Carson Laughter and Bailous Edney Laughter, who enlisted in the 64th Reg. NC, Co. B after the Conscription Law of April 16, 1862 was issued, possibly because they had no choice. These men were in their twenties and already had wives and children. Samuel deserted on Dec. 8, 1862 and is said to have hidden in caves along Sugarloaf Mountain and Chimney Rock in western NC.

Bailous deserted sometime later, but unfortunately was most likely present for the massacre at Shelton Laurel, Madison County NC, which took place January 18, 1863. Thirteen Union sympathizers were executed by firing squad in retaliation for the ransacking and salt raid that took place in the neighboring town of Marshall. Gov. Zebulon Vance was outraged over this execution, which was preceded by the torture of relatives of the captured. This story was published in numerous northern newspapers and as far away as Europe. No one was ever prosecuted for this action.

Bailous later enlisted in the 16th NC Reg. Desertions and re-enlistments were not atypical and reflect the tumultuous times of the beleaguered population in NC's western counties. We must remember that Confederate soldiers left their families and homes at a much higher risk than Union soldiers.

The 25th NC served in The Seven Days War, specifically at Malvern Hill where they were under heavy fire; at Antietam where they assaulted through the West Woods; in Fredericksburg; and in the trenches at Petersburg. In the movie "Gods and Generals", when Lee gives the order to "bring up the North Carolinians," he is speaking of Ransoms' Brigade that were held in reserve.

Bird A. Laughter and his brother Isaiah enlisted in the 25th Regiment NC and served until Feb. 18, 1864, when they deserted together. Hampton Laughter was wounded on the last day of the Seven Days Campaign at Malvern Hill July 1, 1862, and did not return to duty. Shadrack L Laughter served only 60 days and was discharged for reasons of disability.

John R. Laughter, age 21, was captured at the Battle of Five Forks that was fought on April 1, 1865, southwest of Petersburg. John was confined at Point Lookout Prison, Maryland, the largest Union prison camp in the North and also one of the worst during the war. John died on June 10, 1865 of chronic dysentery and is buried in the prisoner of war graveyard at Point Lookout.

As a special note of interest, the book and movie “Cold Harbor” portrays William P. Inman, a member of the 25th NC, as the male protagonist of the story. He was wounded at the Battle of the Crater, hospitalized and sent to Raleigh, where he deserted in 1864. The story of “Cold Mountain” as told by the author Charles Frazier is exceedingly factual

By Jack Travis