

Citadel Grads Journeyed From Yorkville To Civil War

By LOUISE PETTUS

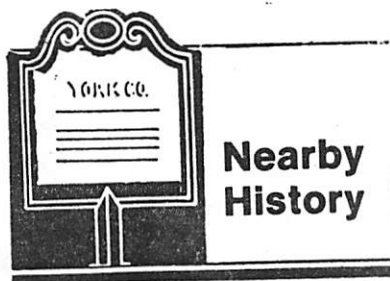
Micah Jenkins and Asbury Coward were 19-year-old honor graduates of The Citadel when they arrived in Yorkville in 1855. They came to set up a military academy to serve as a preparatory school for The Citadel.

Their school, established as Yorkville Preparatory School with an initial enrollment of 12 boys, expanded with local support.

In 1857, Coward and Jenkins opened the immensely successful Kings Mountain Military Academy. In 1861, the Civil War broke out, and the two young officers closed their school to report for duty. Jenkins became commander of the Carolina Sharpshooters and, was advanced to the rank of brigadier general before he reached age 25.

In 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness, Micah Jenkins was mistakenly shot by one of his own men. The way Yorkville learned of Jenkins's death is vividly described in "We the People," a booklet the York Bicentennial Committee published in 1976:

"Poignant indeed was Colonel Coward's description of the last hours of his beloved friend. The train coming up from Chester usually announced the news by blasts of its whistle. Short, rapid toots from the whistle meant good news and long, doleful ones indicated that the news was bad. On one particular day, the train whistle wailed the entire trip up from Chester and by the time it pulled into the Yorkville Station the town's entire population was waiting anxiously to hear the news. General Jenkins's young wife and her children were there in their carriage when the news was announced that he was killed."



In language typical of the time, the Yorkville Enquirer obituary of May 11, 1864, expressed the loss of Jenkins in this manner: "The gallant Jenkins has fallen in the prime of manhood, amid the clash of victorious arms; in the midst of battle, like Henry Navarre, his plume was still to be seen, but alas, the fatal shaft was sped, and the brave soldier fell, another sacrifice on the altar of his country."

Jenkins, a native of Charleston District, was buried at Summer-ville.

Many of the men who were members of Jenkins's 5th Regiment, S.C. Volunteers, were native of York District. Company F, also known as the Kings Mountain Guards, was largely composed of Clover men. In 1902, the Yorkville Enquirer published a list of 117 men who had served in Company F. The list showed the names of 38 who lost their lives in the war at such places as Bull Run, Frazier's Farm, Gaines' Mill, Seven Pines, the Wilderness, in Virginia, at Sharpsburg in Maryland and at Raccoon Mountain, Tenn.

In Company A of Jenkins's Brigade was young J.J. "Jeff" Hagins, who later became Rock Hill's first

optician. When he was 91 years old, Hagins was interviewed by the Evening Herald about his war experiences.

Hagins remembered marching through Hagerstown, Md., on a Sunday morning and seeing the people going to church as if nothing unusual was happening. Hagins said he had gone into the war "for the fun of it," but it was not long before he decided differently. One of his buddies tried to talk him into joining him in "allowing the Yankees to capture them." That was too much for Hagins, who decided to stick it out. The buddy died in battle the next day.

Hagins was wounded in the hand at Lookout Mountain and was out of action for three or four months. He returned to his company and was captured at the battle of Gaines' Mill in a strange way. He thought the Confederates were winning and when a detachment of northern troops came around the side of a hill and the commander called out "Come over here," Hagins thought they were planning to surrender.

Jeff Hagins and a man named Powell went over and, "upon reaching the northern outfit, they were disarmed and made prisoners." Hagins was held prisoner for a time in New York and Delaware, but was later exchanged. The next time he went north was in 1897 when he went to New York for a course in fitting glasses.