

CAPT. J. W. MARSHALL

Capt. J. W. Marshall of Rock Hill once told a strange and interesting tale to William Banks, a reporter for the Charleston News and Courier. Marshall said that the events happened at the close of the Civil War after Richmond had fallen and Sherman's troops destroyed Columbia.

Marshall was captain of Co. I, First South Carolina Calvary when his company received orders to retreat and "take no prisoners." The company was near the courthouse town of Chesterfield, S. C. when they came upon a rampaging Union company burdened with loot. There was immediate combat.

Marshall aimed his pistol at the captain of the Union forces. The pistol failed to fire as Marshall squeezed the trigger again and again. A Confederate sergeant stepped up and fired the shot that killed the Union officer. Banks wrote, "Immediately afterwards Captain Marshall tried his weapon and it fired with further priming. He always thought God's restraining hand was in that moment."

Years later, Marshall, a Charleston native who came to York County until about 1870, was living in the Gold Hill section of Fort Mill township. Marshall loved flowers and had beautiful displays around his farm house. He ordered some flowers from a Michigan nursery. Soon thereafter, a letter came from a Michigan woman who inquired if he were husband, Capt. J. W. Marshall, Company I, First Michigan Cavalry, who had disappeared at Cheraw in the closing days of the Civil War.

The coincidence was striking. The same initials, company, and each in the First Cavalry of their respective states. Marshall did some careful checking and was convinced that the Michigan officer was the one he tried to kill. Marshall wrote the widow and told her he was not her husband but did not tell her how her husband had died.

In the days of Hampton's Red Shirts, Marshall rode again as captain of the Fort Mill company. The Fort Mill men also aided in the "redemption" of Chester and Lancaster.

John Wilson Marshall, son of J. T. and Ruth Sutcliff Marshall, was born in Charleston on July 20, 1841. Both parents were immigrants to the United States. His father was a native of Edinburgh, Scotland and his mother was from Land's End, England.

After attending Charleston public schools, Marshall came to Yorkville as a student at Kings Mountain Academy. He was 19 when he married Mary Ann Clawson, daughter of W. I. Clawson, York County Ordinary (Probate Judge) the day before South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession was signed.

Marshall quit farming in 1892 and moved to Rock Hill. He was a pioneer of the oil business--what was called an "original builder" of Standard Oil (1896) and Gulf (1910) agencies. The present day service station had not evolved.

With his son, J. E. Marshall, who also owned a livery stable and livestock company, the agency ordered gasoline from Baltimore, Md. It arrived in 110 gal. wooden drums, much of it having leaked out before arrival. J. E. Marshall later said that their earliest best customers were Winthrop College and the Rock Hill Steam Laundry.

Marshall was an active leader of the Catawba Camp, a Confederate veteran's organizations. People liked to see him, wearing his old uniform, always ramrod-straight astride his horse leading the frequent parades of his time. A civic leader, he often headed the York County Fair Association.

Capt. J. W. Marshall died in 1932 at the age of 91, the oldest citizen of Rock Hill and one of York County's last veterans. His wife and 5 of his 10 children had preceded him. According to his obituary, Marshall was buried in his gray Confederate uniform--"a life well lived, a southern gentleman".

By Louise Pettus