

Firsts of York County Men in the Civil War

June 7 1910

At a Jefferson Davis dinner held in June 1910, Captain John D. McConnell raised a question that intrigued the guests. He asked, "Who was the first York County soldier killed in the war?" Answering his own question, the Captain, recalled several "firsts" that involved York County men.

The first death that occurred in camp was that of George Washington Mason. Mason was born in 1825 and died 30 May 1861 of disease in Columbia before he put into action. He served as a Private in the Eighteenth South Carolina Volunteer Infantry, Company H of the Catawba Light Infantry. George was probably the most financially secure of the men in this article. In 1850 he had more than \$2,500 in Real Estate and his mother, Nancy owned more than \$1,300.

The first recorded death of a York County man in battle was Citadel graduate Lt. Richard A. Palmer who was born in 1833, the son of Thomas and Eleanor Hare Palmer. He was killed at the battle of Stone Bridge on 21 July 1861; but was serving in a Mississippi regiment.

The first York County men wounded in the war were James Mason, Felix Mullinax, W. F. Davidson and Robert N. McElwee--all at the battle of First Manassas on 21 July 1861--all in the infantry and all members of the Turkey Creek Grays; a company made up of men from the southwest quadrant of the county. James Mason was born in 1827 and at age 23 he was boarding and working as a clerk for Yorkville Merchant, George Steele. James enrolled at Yorkville on 13 April 1861 and mustered in at Orangeburg on 4 June of the same year. As a First Sergeant, he was a member of the Fifth Regiment of the South Carolina Volunteers, Company I. He was reported wounded 31 August 1861, having been shot in the right shoulder. He was sent home to convalesce by the surgeon and when he was unable to return to active duty he was discharged 11 October 1861. Mullinax lost his forefinger on the left hand; Davidson was shot through the right arm above the elbow and McElwee was shot through the write and lost his arm.