

Eli Faris told of hunger on battlefield

Elias Newton Faris (1830-1902) was a wagon-maker when the Civil War broke out in the spring of 1861. As his son, J.S.H. Faris, later wrote, there were reasons for his father not to enlist immediately.

Eli had three small children, an invalid wife and a home that wasn't paid for.

A year later, President Jefferson Davis issued a "conscription proclamation," or draft notice. To Eli Faris it would have been a disgrace to be drafted. He hurried to enlist in Co. D, Jenkins' Brigade, Longstreet's Corps. He reached Virginia in time to fight in the Battle of Second Manassas (also called Bull Run).

His first time under fire, a bullet passed through his coat sleeve, another bullet struck the stock of his rifle, and a third bullet barely broke the skin of the arch of his foot as it went through the sole of his shoe.

After Manassas, Eli went

through every battle of his command from Virginia to the Western front and back again all the way to Appomattox without being wounded or captured.

He later told his son he might not have been wounded but that he was often hungry. Once he went four days without a bite of bread.

He confessed to stealing a goose once when he was terribly hungry. He carried the goose back to camp, where he and his fellow soldiers "relieved their hunger in a pleasant manner."

Faris constantly read his Bible, which he carried in his pocket throughout the war. He said the Bible, along with his carefully obeying commands, was what saved him. He contended that Jenkins' Brigade was the best and most disciplined in the whole Confederate Army.

It was composed of York County boys recruited by Micah Jenkins, who before the war had, along with Asbury Coward, headed the Kings Mountain Academy in Yorkville.

Coward and Jenkins, both 19-year-old Citadel graduates, set up the Kings Mountain Academy as a

preparatory school for the Citadel in 1855. Coward survived the war, but Jenkins was killed.

Of all the battles Eli Faris went through, the Battle of the Wilderness was the one he remembered most. There, when he arrived, he observed a great body of pines "as large around as a man's thigh." When the battle ended, the only things standing were a few splintered trunks.

Not long after Eli went off to war, his fourth child, a son, was born. When he returned to the India Hook section, he found that three of his four children had died. His wife, Sarah Ann Garrison, was sick. Sarah, a distant cousin, soon died, and a short time later his remaining child died.

For nine years, Eli lived alone, working his farm until his marriage in 1874 to Cynthia Catherine Choate. They had five children. The family were devout members of Old Concord Methodist church.

The land on which Eli lived was owned originally by Alexander Faris, who had fought under Gen. Thomas Sumter in the American Revolution. Alexander Faris was captured at Fishing Creek with 200

other soldiers and taken to Camden to jail. Young Andrew Jackson was in a group of soldiers who were tied together for the long march.

Alexander Faris had a saber wound before he was captured. The wound bled as he marched — "his clothing were not sufficient to absorb all, so as he walked the blood splashed out of his shoes."

Alexander managed to escape during the second night. He walked all the way to his India Hook home, near present-day Tega Cay. His wife, Jeanette, hid him in the forest near a spring.

Alexander survived, and the story of his trials was very much on the mind of Eli Faris as he withstood the hard times of his own army service.

Eli Faris moved to Rock Hill two years before his death. He died of a third stroke on March 18, 1902, and is buried at Ebenezer Cemetery beside two of his brothers, also veterans of the Civil War.

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