

DANIEL H. HILL

York County has produced numerous military heroes. Among the most decorated is one who has no statue or plaque in the county to mark his achievements. Few are aware that the Civil War general, D. H. Hill, was born and raised in this county.

Daniel Harvey Hill (16 July 1821-24 September 1889) was the grandson of Col. William "Billy" Hill whose Iron Works on Allison Creek played such a large role in the upcountry resistance during the Revolutionary War.

Daniel Harvey Hill's parents were Solomon Hill and Nancy Cabeen, both of the Presbyterian faith. Solomon Hill died in 1825 leaving his widow with five small children. Daniel was four years old.

Nancy Cabeen Hill was known for her "piety, culture, and common sense." Each morning the boys knew not to come to breakfast unless they had prepared to read a selection from the bible.

Young Daniel Harvey Hill managed to get an appointment to West Point in 1838. His health was frail and under today's standards he would surely have been rejected. His West Point class was famed for producing a dozen generals for the Civil War.

Hill, like most of his classmates, participated in the War with Mexico. He acquitted himself with honor. After the battle of Churubusco, Hill was advanced to captain; after Chapultepec he became a major. A grateful legislature awarded three South Carolina officers an ornate sword with a hilt of gold and silver inlaid with valuable stones. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston said that Hill was the bravest of all the army in Mexico.

After the Mexican war ended, Hill decided not to make a permanent career of the military. He resigned on February 28, 1849 to take a position as professor of mathematics at Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. The college was later renamed Washington and Lee in honor of Robert E. Lee who served as president of the college after the Civil War.

In 1852 Hill married Isabella Morrison, the daughter of a former president of Davidson College. Two years later D. H. Hill was teaching mathematics at Davidson. In 1857, Hill's textbook, *Elements of Algebra* was published. Hill stayed at the small Mecklenburg County Presbyterian college until 1859 when he decided to set up a military school of his own.

With some financial support from interested patrons, Hill set up his school in Charlotte and named it the North Carolina Military Institute. The school had hardly begun its operation when the Civil War broke out.

Hill immediately volunteered his services to the state of North Carolina. Using his military cadets as drillmasters, Hill organized the first boot camp in North Carolina at Charlotte. Hill was given the rank of colonel of the First North Carolina Regiment.

During the Civil War Hill's school property became a Confederate hospital. Later the building came into the hands of the Charlotte public schools and was named D. H. Hill Elementary School.

Hill spent most of the war in Virginia. After the battle of Big Bethel he was promoted to the rank of brigadier-general. He became something of a hero in the battle of Seven Pines and was highly praised by General Lee for his role in the Seven Days Battle. Hill's forces were also involved in the last desperate defense of the Confederate capital of Richmond.

When the war was over Hill cast about for something to do. Instead of trying to reestablish his military school, Hill established a magazine instead. The magazine was

titled, "The Land We Love." Three years later, Hill inaugurated a weekly newspaper he called "The Southern Home."

An examination of the content of Hill's publications show that he was a very early proponent of what has become known as the "New South" movement, with the hope that industrial training and scientific agriculture would raise the south out of its economic malaise. The writings attracted enough attention for Hill to be invited to serve as president of the University of Arkansas, a post he held from 1877 through 1884.

Daniel Harvey Hill died in Charlotte in 1889 and is buried at Davidson.

By Louise Pettus, printed in "Nearby History" column of "York" section of The Charlotte Observer, Feb. 2, 1986.

Dan Morrill, a history professor at Davidson College, wrote this:

Daniel Harvey Hill was born in the York District of South Carolina on July 12, 1821.[40] The youngest of eleven children, he was reared by his mother, Nancy Hill, because his father, Solomon, died when Daniel or "Harvey" was only four years old, leaving the family deeply in debt. It was on a small farm in this hilly region of upper South Carolina, just below the North Carolina line, that the future Confederate officer imbibed from his mother the unquestioning Calvinistic faith that molded his character and guided his actions throughout life. "I had always a strong perception of right and wrong," Hill remembered.[41] Images of a young boy laboring under a blistering, relentless South Carolina sun come readily to mind. He routinely joined his mother and his brothers and sisters to read Bible verses aloud before going into the fields to plow the thin topsoil of the Piedmont. On Sundays he traveled with his family to Bethel Presbyterian Church, where Nancy Hill, a stern but compassionate disciplinarian, made certain that all her children sat quietly in straight-backed pews while the preacher held sway. Adding drama to the scene were black slaves, compelled by their owners to attend the white man's church, peering down from the balcony. Hill "accepted the institution of Negro slavery" as part of Southern civilization, states Hal Bridges.[42]

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