

A Civil War Pensioner Remembers

Corinne T. Gregory

The years now number six score since the end of the War Between The States, the bloodiest and most divisive our country has known; and there are those who reminisce and retell old stories, and our lives are richer for it.

When the fifth grade teacher of Audubon Elementary School in Jefferson County told the class that they would soon begin the study of the Civil War, an auburn-haired boy with gray eyes and a friendly smile raised his hand and said proudly, "My grandmother received a Civil War pension when she was a little girl." Bryce Martin Dyer said later that the other boys and girls were not impressed by his announcement, but the teacher "seemed a little surprised."

However, she recognized the value of a "source speaker" and asked Bryce if his grandmother would be interested in talking to the class. Mrs. Samuels may have been even more surprised when a retired teacher, youthful in appearance, arrived in her small white car bearing mementos of her father's military record.

"It is true," said Mary Martin Klusmeier, "I received a Civil War pension when my father, John William Martin, died in 1921. My younger sister, Ruth, and I received the pension until we were 16. It was small—I did not think much about it. Mother was our guardian and she took care of it for us. She also received a small pension until her death in 1965 at the age of 94.

"John William Martin joined the Union army at Woodbury in Butler County but was inducted at Calhoun, Kentucky—probably traveling by boat down the Green River. He was sixteen and large for his age, and volunteered because his friends and neighbors were signing up. Bill Cardwell and Frank Flener enlisted at the same time, and the three stayed together all through the war. Dad always said that had he lived 10 miles farther south he would have probably joined the Confederate cause. He was an infantryman, a foot soldier, and never felt like complaining about the food, but said that Frank Flener was frequently very hungry and would often 'cuss' Abraham Lincoln. "Private Martin fought in the bat-

les of Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chickamauga. All were bloody and costly conflicts, but Martin escaped injury as did Cardwell and Flener."

John Blackburn of Ohio County has written extensively of the Civil War and was especially interested in the Eleventh Regiment and its role in that conflict. He knew members of the Martin family well, and John William Martin's name is woven throughout Blackburn's writings of *The Eleventh*.

The Eleventh Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, U.S.A., was one of the best units that fought for "Old Abe Lincoln." They served well, meeting every test they were called upon to meet, and when the final roll call was made in that December of 1864, the count showed they had suffered their share of the losses that come about when men go to battle.



Bryce Martin Dyer, great-grandson of John Martin, a veteran of the Civil War.

John William Martin would say that the Eleventh was the best of the great regiments of both arm-



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ies and perhaps it was. Yet, most other boys of other regiments would say theirs was the best, and perhaps they would also be right.

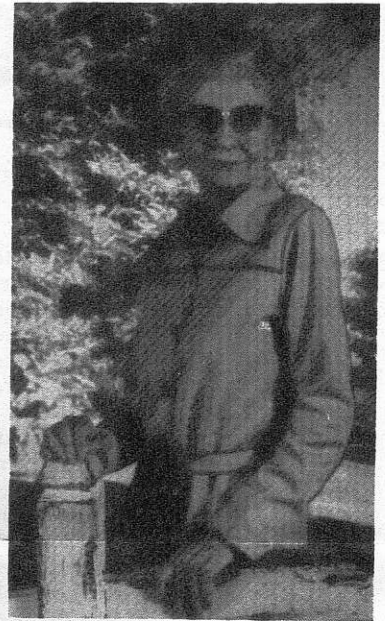
It was years later that John Wesley Martin, in remembering his father, said, 'He fought from Shiloh to Atlanta in the Eleventh Kentucky Regiment Company, C . . . and I am proud.'

Blackburn continues: Sherman's drive began in May, but he did not take Atlanta until September. The Confederates con-

stantly blocked his path but they were never able to hold him back.

John Martin and his friends of the Eleventh Kentucky were in the great Battle of Atlanta. This fight has been called "The Siege of Atlanta." Many boys from Kentucky, including Butler Countians, lost their lives there. Many of these boys are buried in the area and some of them are simply marked "unknown."

After the capture of Atlanta by Sherman, the Eleventh encamped at Decatur, Georgia un-



Mary Martin Klusmeier today. She received a Civil War pension until she was 16.

til General J. B. Hood of the Confederates made his northward move. The Eleventh was a part of the force chasing Hood, and they marched from point to point during the entire month of October 1864. At this time Colonel Love was Brigade Commander and Major W. H. Houchin was commanding the Regiment.

John Martin served through the entire war and when discharged went back to his home in Butler County. There he found that his sister had been left with small children and he stayed for several years, helping her on the farm. Meanwhile he took up rafting on the Green—taking lumber to New Orleans and bringing back molasses and other goods. It was during those lonely nights on the river, watching the changing scenery and the shadows in the moonlight that his thoughts turned to God and religion. He had not given the subject much thought before, but he said it was on a quiet raft that he was converted to Christianity and became a believer and later a member of the Salem Baptist Church.

Martin was not married until the age of 50. His bride was Ethie Hereld, a popular lady and piano teacher in her native Butler County. She was 27. By this time her husband had acquired extensive land holdings in the Big Bend community. He operated Borah's Ferry and a general store on Green River between Morgantown and Cromwell. And he was

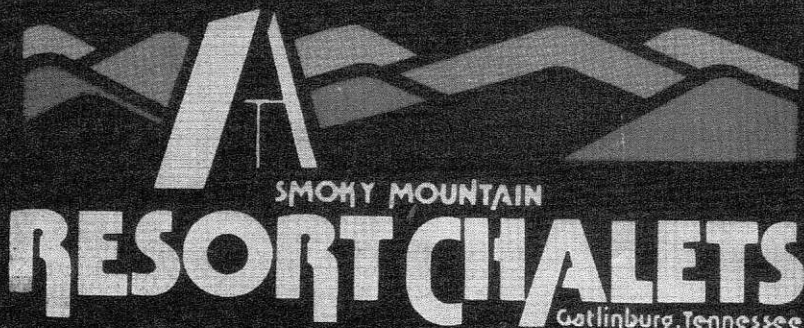


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elected as state senator and served in Frankfort. Now his friends called him Senator Martin, but Miss Ethie always referred to her husband as "Mr. Martin."

Eight children were born to this couple: Sallye, William, Templeton, Grace, John Wesley, Mary and Ruth. A son George died in infancy.

Mary talked more about her father one day as she stood in the Wilson cemetery in northern Butler County. He had requested that he be buried there. The funeral was on a very cold November 20, 1921. The procession crossed the river at the Annis Ferry and moved up the winding road toward the cemetery. Bob Wilson's farm was nearby, and he met the family at the fork of the road saying 'Bring John into my house. We will have the funeral here.' Mary recalls that they crowded into the parlor and someone played the organ. The service was conducted by the Reverend R. B. Neal.

In tracing her "roots," Mary Martin Klusmeier found that her great-grandfather John Martin was born in Galway County, Ireland in 1785. He was a sailor by trade and was forced (shanghaied) to work on an English ship. He sailed many places but while docked in Philadelphia (the exact date is not known) he jumped ship. It was October 9, 1802, that he applied for United States citizenship. This original document is now in the possession of his descendant John Thomas Martin, Edmonds, Washington.

The same John Martin and a Mr. Read operated a China store in Philadelphia on South Street for a while. John Martin went on a fellow-mason's note and had to pay off the indebtedness. As a result he went broke. He was married to Mary Graham, born December 25, 1778. He and his wife moved from Philadelphia to Culpeper County, Virginia, and from there to Mercer County, Kentucky.

In 1805, John and Mary Graham Martin moved to Butler County, settling first on Indian Camp creek, and then to a farm near the site of the present Green River Baptist Church property. He reared his family and died on that farm. Both John and Mary are buried in the Wilson Cemetery in northern Butler County, near the Ohio County line.

Their son, William Henry Martin, was born in Philadelphia in 1812. He was married to America Phegley, and it is from this line that John William Martin of the Salem commu-



The Martin family—John and Ethie with their children (from left) Grace, John, William, Sallie, baby Mary and Temp.

nity descended. John William was born in 1845 and died at the age of 76.


The years rolled by; Borah's Ferry was closed and traffic moved over the new bridge at Aberdeen. The one-room school of Salem became a community center, and the little post-office was removed from the Thomas General Store. Salem Baptist Church is yet active, and the store still serves the people who come and go. On Martin property across the road is the neat and well-kept cemetery where the Martin family is buried. John William's body was removed from the Wilson cemetery and was brought back to rest near his home. And just down the road is the old homeplace—there is a fresh coat of paint on the house, and the long porch is the same. Members of the Martin family own the property. It is just that they answer to different names of a new generation. A few of the sturdy old trees still stand in the front yard, as does the tiny well frame over the old well that long served the family's needs as well as refreshed passers-by.

Today, Mary Martin Klusmeier is a living legacy of her proud Kentucky heritage. I watched as she wept bitterly at the grave of her nephew, Herrel Martin, the young pilot who was killed in the Vietnam conflict. Yet later in her own home, she displayed with pride the honors and mementoes Herrel had won in his country's service.

A graduate of Western Kentucky University and the University of Louisville, she returned to a teaching career at the death of her husband in 1939

when their daughter was four. Her husband was Dr. William F. Klusmeier, a dentist, whose family owned and operated the well-known Klusmeier laboratories for many years.

Mary has lived in beautiful old Audubon Park of Louisville since the early days of her marriage. During her long teaching career she always found time for her family and friends as well as civic affairs. She is a charter member of the Audubon Baptist Church and a staunch Republican. She has served as a teacher for an adult women's Sunday School class for 23 years, a book reviewer for the Crescent Hill Woman's Club as well as a member of the Book Discussion Group. For these and many other accomplishments, the Governor of our Commonwealth commissioned her as a Kentucky Citizen. Now in retirement, Mary recently remarked with her characteristic chuckle, "I simply think of myself as a survivor."



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