

## INTRODUCTION



Robert Campbell penned an introduction to his handwritten reminiscence. It does the job well. Campbell, however, was writing for an audience who knew him. For those of us whom he foresaw picking up his story, the “others than those whom I love,” an introduction to the man and the setting may be appropriate.

We do not know very much about Robert Campbell. Even the ancestor who owns the manuscript cannot tell us about him. We do know his father was also named Robert—Robert C. Campbell. The elder Campbell was born in Maryland, had lived in Mississippi and Kentucky, and then moved to Texas during the early days of its statehood.<sup>1</sup> He was one of many immigrants, both foreign born and U.S. citizens, who began a new life in the wide-open state. Robert C. Campbell settled in Houston, where he raised a family and practiced law. He went on to own a plantation along the Brazos River and to become a judge in Huntsville, Texas, before the Civil War. His family had at least four sons, his namesake being the eldest. There were also at least two daughters. Another child is identified by Campbell simply as “the baby.”

The younger Robert Campbell was born during the time his family was in Houston, about 1844. At the start of the war, he was a student in Louisiana. He describes himself as “unaccustomed to any kind of work—raised in all the comforts and luxuries of a happy and comfortable home.” Campbell seems to have been a well-respected young man, for his peers selected him to be captain of the volunteer company they raised to go to war. The school faculty aborted that mission before it started. Campbell then tried to enlist on his own, and his father denied that effort.

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By early 1862, though, the South had come to realize that it was not in a ninety-day war. The younger Campbell, now eighteen, again sought to enlist, and the elder Campbell let him go. Military documents describe the new recruit as five foot, eight inches tall, with dark eyes and hair and a dark complexion.<sup>2</sup>

The unit Campbell enlisted with was Company A, 5th Texas Infantry Regiment. The company had its origins in a prewar militia unit known as the Bayou City Guards. It was made up of young men from the Houston area and was one of ten companies in a regiment of men from eastern Texas. The regiment was one of three from Texas that formed the core of the Texas Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>3</sup> Except for the recent recruits, the Texans had been in Virginia since the fall of the previous year. Campbell joined them just in time for their first major combat action at Eltham's Landing, Virginia.

There is information indicating Campbell carried the newly sewn 5th Texas battle flag from Texas to the regiment in Virginia when he joined the unit.<sup>4</sup> The details of the flag's story from a variety of sources are sketchy and confusing. Most accounts of the banner's manufacture and delivery indicate it was sent to the unit in May, 1862, and presented to the regiment in June.<sup>5</sup> Those dates, if correct, are too late for Robert Campbell to have taken the flag with him, for he arrived in Virginia in April of that year. But a letter to the editor of a Houston newspaper from "One of the Fifth," written in Houston on March 5, 1865 (presumably by a member of the command home on furlough, tempting one at least to wonder if Campbell, who was home on furlough at the time, had taken up the pen), solicits the manufacture of a battle flag to replace the battle-scarred banner recently returned to its maker in Houston.<sup>6</sup> The author of this letter describes the original flag as having been sent to the unit "over three years ago," which would place it en route at least a week before Campbell enlisted.

Aside from the reunion articles, the accounts of the 5th Texas battle flag offer no details on how it made the trip from Texas to Virginia. That Campbell did not write anything of carrying the flag to the unit seems strange if he did indeed do it. But he makes no mention of a flag-presentation ceremony known to have oc-



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curred in June, 1862, an event important enough that Campbell might have been expected to describe it. He clearly did not attempt to chronicle everything that happened, so his silence on the flag does not assure us that he was not involved.

It was mid-April, 1862, by the time Robert Campbell got to Virginia and early May by the time of the fight at Eltham's Landing.<sup>7</sup> Campbell would march with the 5th Texas back toward Richmond, fight some more, and then march to Manassas. At the Second Battle of Manassas, on August 30, 1862, he was wounded, shot twice in the same leg, and put out of action for a time.

Campbell was hospitalized in Virginia for a while and then furloughed back to Texas; it is his experiences to this point that he writes about. By the time it was done, Campbell's furlough had lasted approximately one year. He returned to his unit in time to leave Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and go west to fight in another major battle at Chickamauga, Georgia. Campbell was again wounded, this time in the leg and arm. Hospitalized once more, Campbell was furloughed in Virginia and then Selma, Alabama.

When Campbell returned to service in December, 1863, he rejoined his company, now in Tennessee. Fairly incapacitated by his wounds but feeling duty bound to remain in the service of his country, Robert Campbell sought reassignment out of the infantry. A family friend wrote a letter to Jefferson Davis recommending that the Texan be appointed to a staff position.<sup>8</sup> A notation written on the outside of the letter reads: "Richmond, Jan. 23, 1864. I know him to be a gallant & good soldier. J. B. Hood, Maj. Genl."

Campbell did obtain an appointment as a courier at brigade headquarters in February, 1864. His scrapbook contains evidence that while on this assignment, he was a witness close at hand to one of the most famous moments of the Civil War—Robert E. Lee's attempt to personally lead the Texas Brigade into battle at the Wilderness. Pasted in the scrapbook are two clippings from newspapers that mention the "Lee at the Wilderness" incident. Beneath one, an undated letter written by E. C. Wharton of *The Orleanian*, Campbell penned a note that the account was "in the main correct, but there are two or three errors that for my own



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pleasure I shall here proceed to correct.” The other clipping, by Campbell himself, is a letter to the editor of a newspaper identified as the *Times-Democrat* dated October 3, 1887. He wrote the letter to make a point about the high casualty rate of the Texas Brigade at the Wilderness. In doing so, Campbell states that the Lee incident occurred during the brigade’s advance. By the time the brigade was ordered back, he was the only courier remaining at Brig. Gen. John Gregg’s disposal out of ten or more who had started the battle, the others having been killed or wounded except for two who had been sent back to have ordnance brought up. There is clear, though circumstantial, evidence that Robert Campbell wrote the often quoted first-hand account of the “Lee to the Rear” incident first printed in the late-nineteenth-century veterans’ publication *The Land We Love*. The account was written by an author identified only as “R.C.” (It is included in the letters section of this work with an explanation of the case for Robert Campbell being “R.C.”)

Campbell supplied his own horse for his role as a courier, and on September 29, 1864, his mount was killed in action at the Battle of Fort Harrison. For that loss, Campbell sought and, after a letter-writing campaign, was successful in receiving \$1,000 compensation.

A week after losing his mount in action, Campbell received his most serious injuries of the war at Darbytown Road, Virginia, on October 7, 1864. There he was struck in the head, knee, and body. Furloughed once again, Campbell returned to Texas, evidently with more than the war on his mind. In a letter that Campbell was going to carry back to Texas, another soldier in the regiment wrote: “I want to predict that Bob Campbell is on his knees to Miss Semmons in less than no time after his arrival home. He is ready to fall in love with her at first sight.”<sup>9</sup>

Campbell was assigned to recruiting duty in Houston after he recovered from his wounds. In early April, 1865, as the war was ending in the East, he finally wrote a letter seeking permission to retire due to his wounds; the letter is pasted in the ledger book. Although a medical examining board in Texas agreed that Campbell should be relieved from infantry duty, at the end of the



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war, he was listed on the last muster roll of the 5th Texas Infantry as being on furlough. In the scrapbook is a letter to Campbell from a Confederate command in San Antonio, Texas, which authorized Campbell to raise a mounted unit, but it was too late to bring the young veteran back into service.

Campbell did not stay in Texas long following the end of the war. By 1867, he had taken up residence in Yazoo City, Mississippi, the area from which his father had emigrated. Campbell led an active and admired life in Yazoo City. On November 14, 1867, he married Pauline Wilson. The couple went on to have at least five children. Scrapbook clippings indicate that at least two died in infancy and that the old soldier was survived by five children. In a margin note in the scrapbook, Campbell writes that he was living in Owensboro, Kentucky, and owned a newspaper there in 1875. Clippings and steamer passes in the scrapbook show that in 1876 he was still with the newspaper in Owensboro. Other passes dated that same year identify him as editor of the newspaper in Yazoo City, and it is in the latter town that Campbell lived out his life.

As a member of the community in Yazoo City, Robert Campbell attained a reputation as a leader and a fighter for the rights of the local citizenry in the reconstructed South. He was a member of the Episcopal church, a fireman, a Knight of Pythias, and a county clerk. He worked as editor of the *Yazoo Valley Democrat*, and he was an officer and active member of the county camp of Confederate veterans.

A respected leader of the community, Robert Campbell was called upon occasionally to speak to the populace. On October 19, 1892, he was doing just that, at a concert honoring the first anniversary of the Yazoo City Concert Band. Finishing his remarks, which were, as always, well received, Campbell began to feel faint. Friends at the hall assisted him to his home one block away. There he told his wife he felt tired and admonished his daughter that she “must be a good girl.” With that said, Robert Campbell quietly passed away.<sup>10</sup>

The military organization Campbell belonged to was one of the most renowned in all the world. Robert E. Lee’s Army of



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Northern Virginia fought for three years against a succession of Union generals leading a much larger and much better-supplied force. Elite among this elite army was the Texas Brigade, identified most often with its third and most famous commander, John Bell Hood.

Texans were marching to war in the East before there was a Texas Brigade. As hostilities began to look inevitable, citizens in Texas prepared for war. The state answered a call for troops in April, 1861. While concerned about protecting her own borders, both from the new threat of the United States and the continuing danger from hostile Indians, the proud Texans also wanted to show their fellow Confederates that Texans could fight. Several companies of troops began to make their way to Virginia. The first few to arrive were rushed to Manassas in July, 1861, for the first major battle of the war but arrived after the fighting was over. Nevertheless, these first arrivals would become the 1st Texas Infantry Regiment.

Additional volunteers enlisted in Texas following a call for troops on June 30, 1861. Approximately two thousand of these new soldiers also made their way to Virginia during the late summer and fall of that year. On September 30 they became the 4th and 5th Texas Infantry Regiments. The three regiments provided the Texas component of the Texas Brigade in the Virginia army. They were commanded by Louis T. Wigfall. He gave way to James J. Archer, who in a matter of days gave way to John Bell Hood.

In November, 1861, the 18th Georgia Infantry Regiment was assigned to Hood's brigade. It and the three Texas regiments formed the brigade when Campbell joined it. He had been recruited in March, 1862, by a detail sent back home from the brigade to gather more men. Campbell enlisted on March 14, 1862.

On June 1, 1862, the infantry portion of Hampton's South Carolina Legion was assigned to the brigade. A battery of North Carolina artillery was also attached to the brigade during the summer of 1862. Thus composed, the brigade fought in the battles around Richmond and at Manassas and then marched into Maryland, an invasion that culminated in the battle at Sharpsburg (Antietam) in September. By then Hood had been promoted to command the division that the Texas Brigade belonged to. Even so, he had



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been so well liked by the men that they continued to refer to themselves as “Hood’s Brigade.” His successor commanding the brigade was William T. Wofford of the 18th Georgia.

Lee reorganized his army in November, 1862, assigning regiments from the same state together. The Georgia and South Carolina troops were reassigned. But since there were no other Texas troops in Lee’s army, the lone Arkansas regiment in the army, the 3d Arkansas, was assigned to the Texas Brigade. Command of the brigade was given to Jerome B. Robertson of the 5th Texas.

The Texans were not very heavily involved in the battle at Fredericksburg in December, 1862. In April, 1863, the brigade was sent with the rest of James Longstreet’s command to the Suffolk, Virginia, area, where they were to keep Federal troops in the area checked and to forage for badly needed supplies for Lee’s army. Longstreet’s troops rejoined Lee just after the Battle of Chancellorsville. In June they began marching north once again. As was often the case, the Texas Brigade was assigned the vital and dangerous task of providing the rear guard for the marching column. This invasion ended with the July battle at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which was also the last battle in which Reilly’s North Carolina Artillery fought with the brigade.<sup>11</sup>

Following the army’s return to Virginia, the Texas Brigade once again was detailed away from the army as part of Longstreet’s command. They helped defeat the Federals at Chickamauga, then unsuccessfully laid siege to Union forces at Knoxville. Following an unusually hard winter, which magnified the poor condition of their uniforms and supplies, the brigade returned to Virginia and Lee’s army. Robertson was transferred out of the command in February, 1864, and replaced by another Texan, John Gregg. During the spring and summer of 1864, the Texans participated in all the battles between Lee and Grant. They fought fiercely and played particularly critical roles at both the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. Later in the year the brigade took to the trenches with the rest of the army in the Richmond-Petersburg area.

On October 7, 1864, Gregg was killed at Darbytown Road—the same battle at which Campbell received his last wounds of the war. Frederick S. Bass took command of the brigade. He later relinquished command to a senior colonel, Robert M. Powell, a

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recently returned prisoner of war who had commanded the 5th Texas at Gettysburg, where he was captured. Powell led the brigade for the remainder of the war.<sup>12</sup> When Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House in April, 1865, there were only some six hundred men left out of the more than five thousand who had served in the four regiments making up the final roster of Hood's Texas Brigade.