

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 30

CIVIL WAR: The Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia- fought September 18, 1863-September 20, 1863. On August 16, 1863, Gen. Rosecrans started a movement on Chattanooga with 5 Corps and a Brigade of Cavalry. The Reserve Corps, which contained Co. A 40th O.V. I. followed the main army as close as possible. On September 9, Bragg evacuated Chattanooga. Rosecrans then forced Bragg to retreat farther and established a base at Bridgeport, Alabama. Bragg received reinforcements and counter-attacks. The two armies met at Chickamauga Creek, 12 miles below Chattanooga. Dr. Beach's narrated that on the way to Bridgeport, they marched all day and the next night. On the 14th they passed over the nose of Lookout Mountain and saw a fine view of Chattanooga then went into camp at Rossville, Georgia 5 miles south of Chattanooga.

On the 18th Gen. Granger and the Reserve Corps were at Rossville, Ga., Rosecrans then dispatched two Corps to keep Bragg from seizing the roads leading to Chattanooga. By 11 p.m. Bragg had crossed Chickamauga Creek. The Confederates were met by Gen. Granger and Gen. Steedman's Reserve Corps, containing Co. A. the battle took all afternoon. The ammunition of the Union Troops was almost exhausted and the Confederate's final charge was met with bayonets. Gen. Thomas' stand was made possible by Granger's relief which he had enacted on his own without order to do so, this had bought time for the rest of the army. The Confederates finally took up a position on Missionary Ridge. The Union had suffered 1,700 killed and 10,000 wounded. The Confederates, 2,000 killed and 13,000 wounded. Daniel Lilly of Jefferson Township, from Co. A, was killed in this battle. Your writer has a relation buried at the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

Dr. Beach describes the battle: "The heaviest fighting of the 19th was on our center and left. At 11 a.m. on the 20th, Gen. Granger came up, and although ordered to hold the roads back to Chattanooga, there is no enemy in front of us, and the sound of their guns seemed so much like an appeal for help, Gen Granger determined to respond. We march toward this sound, the position of our army at this time was critical in the extreme. During the morning the right of our army had been broken and retreated towards Chattanooga. Gen. Thomas being unaware of this was still fighting stoutly. Thankfully the enemy was also ignorant of this. Thomas was just about to be overrun when our two brigades, led by Gen. Steedman (Co. A) charged the advancing foe. In twenty minutes we had checked the whole advance and for half an hour there was a lull in the fighting. At 4 o'clock, we again were charged by their eight divisions against our less than 20,000 men. We succeeded in repelling them. We withdrew to Rossville. At midnight we arrived, worn out, the men dropped down and slept by the side of the wounded men who had drifted back. Without Gen. Granger's two brigades at the critical moment, the utter rout, if not annihilation of Gen. Thomas' force was absolutely certain. In our brigade of fewer than 4,000 men, we lost 1,732 killed and wounded between 2 p.m. and sundown. This was over 45% of our entire force. On September 21, we fell back to Chattanooga. In the battle, we lost two valuable officers, one being Capt. Benj. Snodgrass of Co. A." during the battle the 40th O. V. I. was part of the 2nd Brigade, Gen. W. C. Whittaker commanding; 1st Division, Col. Charles Cruft commanding' 4th Corps, Gen. Granger commanding; all part of the Army of the Cumberland, Gen. George H. Thomas commanding.