

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 32

MISSIONARY RIDGE: On November 26th, Gen. Granger set out for Rossville pursuing the fleeing enemy. In the meantime, the Confederates moved to Missionary Ridge. The next day Gen. Grant ordered Gen. Sherman to attack at daylight with his Army of the Tennessee and Gen. Hooker with the Army of the Cumberland. Gen. Thomas was to hold the middle until Gen. Hooker reached Missionary Ridge. Gen. Sherman attacked as planned and fought a pitched battle until 3 p.m. but failed to break the line. Grant then ordered Thomas to attack. At 3:30 his attack commenced. They charged at the double with fixed bayonets and almost simultaneously the ridge was carried at six places.

Dr. Beach's narration: On the 25th, we moved out through a fog that surrounded Lookout Mountain. We were ordered to carry Missionary Ridge from the north. At 4 p.m. the heroic charge was made. Gen. Thomas' men were so eager that even servants, cooks, and clerks found guns in some way, and at 3:30 they ran forward heading for the rifle pits at the base of the Ridge. The first Rebel line fell but the Yankees were still exposed to the killing fire from above. Without orders, they leaped from the captured pits and began charging up the steep face of the Ridge. A Northern Lieutenant noted that "Little regard to formation was observed. Each battalion assumed a triangular shape, the colors at the apex, a color bearer dashes ahead of the line and falls, then another picks it up, waves it defiantly and as if bearing a charmed life he advances towards the top." Amid the din of battle the cry "Chickamauga, Chickamauga" could be heard. Grant and Thomas watching from Orchard Knob were incredulous. Gen. Granger confirmed to Grant that the men had charged without orders and added, "When those fellows get started all hell can't stop them." Bragg's men fired desperately, the cannoneers pouring hat full of musket balls into their pieces, shooting them like giant shotguns. Bragg, cursing like a sailor, tried to rally his force but it fled in a hopeless rout as the Army of the Cumberland poured over the crest.

We left our winter quarters at Shellmound on January 16, 1864, and arrived at Blue Springs, 4 miles south of Cleveland, Tennessee on February 6th. On the 22nd of February, we marched toward Dalton, Georgia. We fought at Tunnel Hill, and Rocky Face Valley, losing 4 killed and 25 wounded. We returned to our base at Blue Springs on the 28th. On March 1st, we again marched, this time to Charlestown, 11 miles north of Cleveland, and then returned to camp on March 9th. We remained there until May 3rd.

Next:

For the Atlanta campaign, the 40th O.V. I. was part of the 2nd Brigade Gen. W. C. Whittaker, commanding; 1st Division, Gen. D. S. Stanley commanding; 4th Corps, Gen., O. O. Howard, commanding; and the Army of the Cumberland, Gen. Thomas commanding. All of this was under the command of Gen. William T. Sherman.