

1862  
Elsie Caroline Duncan Hurt: Early 1862

Page 29

Comments: [john.mott@mottpr.com](mailto:john.mott@mottpr.com)

Margie came home late and brought a lot of things with her. She looked worried. I knew then that she had some bad news so after supper when she had put the children to bed Mother asked her what she had heard. She said that there were strange boats on the river and there were Yankees camped in the hills. That made us very uneasy. We were afraid that ~~there~~ <sup>they</sup>

were there on the look-out for something. We did not know what it was. Mother said for us to prepare ourselves to meet whatever happens. So we closed and barred all the doors. My father had taken an active part in the coming trouble between the North and the South. He being a public speaker and drilling the boys and men to join the army--encouraging them to be brave,--that it was their duty to protect their homes and find ways and means to protect the women and the children from all harm that may befall them if the enemy

Page 30

invaded our part of the country. There were many tales told of how the women and the children would be mistreated which never happened. The Yankee boys were real American gentlemen as we found out afterward. Still we don't know what they were doing there. The training camp was broken up and the boys had left to go into the army. Mother said we would have to wait and see, and trust in the Lord to take care of us. Margie brought and a cat into the room. She told Mother that we would all stay in there, if the worst came we would die together. Mother prayed and she and Margie sang some songs. Then we all went to bed and left everything to the Lord. Next morning when I waked and saw my mother sitting there by the fire with the baby in her lap it seemed that she was sitting there when we went to bed and still sitting there when we got up. I felt as if she was keeping watch over us while we slept.

Page 31

I always felt safe when I was with my beautiful mother,--with her hazel eyes and black hair, rosy cheeks and lady-like ways. She had the most beautiful white hands I ever saw. As I lay there watching her I firmly believe that God was helping her take care of us. We were so little and helpless. And then I jumped out of bed and said, "oh, Mother what is that noise and with a beating heart I sprang out of bed and rushed to her side. ... she said "they are fighting." I was so

frightened I said, "Oh mother, do you think that Jim, Jae, and Dick are there." She said, "I am afraid they are." Father being a captain he would not be in the battle. When I heard the canons roar and the guns popping and the horses screaming it seemed as if everything was lost. It was terrible heart-rending. It was too much for my poor little heart to stand.

"Jim" is Elsie's brother James K.P. Duncan, b. 1847, & "Jae" is her brother Joseph R. Duncan, b. 1836. "Dick" is Richard Blevins, husband of Milbe Harriet Duncan Blevins, Elsie's half sister, mentioned in the book as "Middie."

Page 32

I hadn't had anything to eat that morning. I went out into the garden. It was a beautiful Sunday morning. The sun was shining. There was a pink rose bush inside of the garden gate in full bloom. The first trees were in bloom. The birds were singing,--the bees and the butterflies were humming and the air was soft and sweet. I sat down under a holly-hock bush which was full of pink blossoms and watched and watched the bees gathering honey. Everything was so very beautiful and peaceful,-- why of why was it that death was stalking so near this lovely garden. When I went back in to the house I saw that my Father had come home. He was bending over the bed and mother was tearing a cloth into strips. I went into the room and saw a rebel soldier boy with his hip all shot up. I gave one look and saw it was one of our neighbor boys. I could not bear to look at him. When they were through with him

Page 33

his folks came and took him home. The fighting began at our gate just past the house. As the battle raged it got further away leaving dead men and horses behind. My father and other older men were behind the lines helping all they could. I went into one house where they had taken wounded and dead men. The floor was covered with blood. Shed not for slavery, but for the south,--for the states that had seceded for peace and prosperity. And God had said, "a country divided against itself can not stand." As I went back into the house I saw a woman screaming and wringing her hands and mother was trying to quiet her. She could not do anything with her. She said that she

two sons in that battle,--one on each side fighting against each other. Mother told her that she would have to bear up that she also had two sons and one son-in-law and that her daughter was down there in the middle of that fighting with her five little children and we can not help her so you see we will have to help each other bear this great sorrow and pray to God to help us.all. There was nothing that we could do to help this suffering mother. She went on toward the firing line. We heard that one was killed in his own backyard. Their father was a preacher,--old and gray--he was an angel helping all he could without a single thought of himself. I felt like God had sent this grand old man to help us. Then a man came running up to the house,--he was wild with grief and sorrow. Mother tried to get him to rest awhile. She gave him a drink of water. He said that he had twin sons in the battle,--one on each side (we heard afterwards they found them locked in each others arms, both dead).

Page 35

Then in a little while a big black Negro came running in saying, "oh Mistress please give me a drink of water. I am going into that battle to find my young Master, he is only seventeen years old and I promised that I would take care of him." Oh, it was pitiful to see that faithful Negro when Mother told him that he would be killed himself if he went into that battle and he said, "oh Mistress don't tell me not to go--my life would not be worth anything to me if I can't find that boy and bring him safely out of that awful battle." Then overcome with fear he rushed off running toward the firing line. I wish I knew what ever became of that faithful Negro. We never knew. Great was his reward if he fell while trying to do his duty to keep his promise to his beloved Master. God bless our faithful old Southern Negroes. The firing got further away as our boys drove the  
36 Yankees toward the river. No one had left their homes. They did not expect the battle to be fought there. Grant was at Savannah ten miles from Pittsburg

landing. He was sitting at the breakfast table Sunday morning when he heard the canons roaring at Pittsburg Landing. Buells' army landed there Sunday night. Grant must have come with them then. I don't think that they were looking for a battle there either. Johnson surprised them (and thus one of the bloodiest battles of the war was fought there.) The women and children were horror stricken when they found themselves caught between the fighting lines. They did not know what to do or where to go. One woman took her daughter and her two little grandchildren down under the bluff with the river almost at their feet. They stayed under there three days and two nights without food or water and came out Tuesday. They came to our house, --they were hungry and cold. My sister and her five children were still in our house about halfway between the Shiloh Church and the river. Her husband was in the battle. She stayed there all day Sunday amid the shots and shells. My father and my young brother brought them out Sunday night in that pouring down rain. The cannon balls and shells from the gun boats tore the roof off of the house Monday. The downstairs was used as a hospital. The floors were red with human blood shed in cruel warfare. The rebels fell back to get under wagons and in houses to keep out of the rain, instead of leaving sentinels on the bluff. That left the way open for Buells' Army to land (I saw a Major Bead when they were fixing to ~~ask~~ take the Shiloh Park. He was in Buells' Army. I asked him if they had seen the gray coats on the

If you know about of civilians' during the battle, please let me know.

Milberry Har Blevins. Her children at the Shiloh. Frank, b. 1856, & William, b. 1859. Sid later married Joe (Joseph Duncan).

Page ~~36~~ 38

bluff and would the Yanks have landed if they had seen them. He said, "certainly they would not have run into a hornets nest." The battle raged all day Monday. The rebel boys fought like the brave heroes of by gone days. They contested every inch of the ground that they were losing. When Gen Wallace came with more men the rebels knew that they wer fighting a losing victory, but they fought on with desperate courage that was in their

hearts, minds, and bodies. When night came on they knew that they could not stand up under such a tremendous majority as the Union Army. They were outnumbered 3 to 1. So they withdrew their men--they marched by our gate in good order waving their hats and giving the rebel yell. One gray coat was singing, "Sunday morning, Sunday morning of the Shiloh battle--The Yankees ran like scared up cattle.

Tuesday the house was full of rebel soldiers.

Harriet Duncan Blevins

Page 39

My mother was on the verge of despair. After the battle was over she started to get through the lines to try to find her young son. I went with her. The sentinels would not let her pass through. Mother was wild with fear, she was afraid that he was dead or wounded. My sister said that she was <sup>going</sup> ~~going~~ in or know the reason why. An older brother was there and her husband was in there. Then mother begged her not to go because if they were killed or wounded we could not help them, and again they may not be dead. Then Middle (?) jumped up, --I caught hold of her dress and we ran over hills and dales as fast as we could go but they would not let us pass either. Just as we got back to the house our older brother came. He was black with gun smoke. His hat and coat was gone--his pants were torn with bullets, but his flesh was not touched. Mother saw him

Page 40

coming and she ran to meet him. He said, "oh mother," and caught her in his arms. Then father and sister came in. Then Jas told us that Jim was left behind sick. Then he said that Middle would find Dick in the hut in the woods. I can see her now as in my mind as she flew through the door. Mother wanted Jas to come into the kitchen and wash his face and get something to eat. He said that he would have to hurry back to join the rest of them. I saw Gen Beauregard Tuesday afternoon. He was very quiet. He was standing in the kitchen with a lot of other men. They had stopped to get water. They did not stay long for soon the house was full of the blue

Do any other sources support the idea that Beauregard & 2 Union generals might have been in the house at different times on Tuesday? (see next pg.)

coats. I saw Gen. Wallace, he was a very fine military looking Gen. much like Gen Stuart, our confederate General. There was another General I did not know what his name was. My father was still there. He asked what he was doing there and told him that he had better get out. We were not looking for the Yankees to come so close on the rebels heels. They did not bother Father, he left right away. Mother went with him and left the baby with Middle. Mother came back the next night and Middle told her that she had better wean the baby. She did and it was a good thing for we did not know from one day to the next what would happen. The Yankees all left the house. Grant stayed long enough to burry their dead. I don't know what they did about the poor Yankees that jumped into the river Sunday. I guessthe gun boats picked them up. The Yankees did not burry the Confederate dead. They threw them into the gullies and ravines and covered them with brush and leaves and left them for the hogs to root up and eat up. This is as I know to be the truth. I could not understand how anyone could be so heartless to leave a human being unburied even if they were rebel,---they were dead.

Page 41

There has been articles written and tales told but none of them ever got down to plain facts as those of us who lived there and went through the incidents that happened to us. After the battle was over everything was fairly peaceful for a short time. While the Union army was in possession General Grant was good and kind to the people that were left on that bullet riddled battle field. He did not allow his men to mistreat anyone or anything that we had left. If they did we had only to report it to him and he would put a stop to it right away. There was one poor rebel that got out of the battls badly wounded that he died. His wife was so overcome with grief and sorrow she died three days later. Mother had to go over there. So she sent for Grant. He came while she was in the kitchen baking light bread.

Any thoughts as to the identity of this general?

She gave him some with butter on it and some

Page 43

milk. He looked at mother and said that it was the best bread he had eaten since his mother had baked bread,--then he added, not that you are as old as my mother. Then they compared ages and found that he and mother were the same age, forty-two. He had Fred with him. He was thirteen years old. General Grant was not tall and military looking as Gen. Wallace. He was snort and squarely built but his uniform was fine. I think that his kindly manner made us like and trust him. When he left he put a guard around the house. Mother gave them the run of the house and gave them books to read and they took care of the children, baby and all. After that we missed the only cow that we had left. Mother reported to Grant and soon a soldier brought it back and said that he found it tied up and the boys were milking her. All of the Yankees did not stay there. General Grant marched away with his army. I think they went to Corinth and on to Memphis. There were lots of Yankees left there. They were

Page 44

camped at Pittsburg and up in the hills. They were camped all around us. Most people would not let their children go around among them. They were afraid that the Yankees would hurt them, but Mother let us go all around them. Those boys were very fond of us and were always glad to have us come. They called me the "little rebel" because I was not afraid of them. We went into a tent and one of the boys gave us a little glass barroll full of sugar. I took it outside and threw it down the hillside. I did not know that he was watching me and he came out of the tent just slapping his hands and laughing. I told him it was not because we did not like him but because some folks thought that the Yankees would poison the children. We did like him because he was friendly and jolly. We made lots of friends among the Yankee boys and they had lots of fun out of us little cecesh.