

The Seven Sons of Orange

By Gary E. White
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Little did Andrew Judson and his wife, Margaret McGregor Judson suspect when they married on November 12, 1831 at Montgomery, Orange County, New York that some thirty years later they would watch as all seven of their sons marched off to war. They were fortunate enough to see six of them return at the end of the conflict.

The eldest son, 30 year old Grandson, already married for eight years to the former Laura Jane Powlis and the father of three young children, was mustered into Company H of the 124th New York Volunteer Infantry, the "Orange Blossoms" on September 5, 1862 as a Private along with one of his younger brothers, 18 year old Chester, the sixth son. The next day the regiment departed for the front in Virginia. Within two months, and continuing over the course of the next four years the regiment, serving first as a part of the 3rd Corps and after March of 1864 as part of the 2nd Corps saw combat.

At Chancellorsville, Grandson was wounded in the thigh and barely a month later wounded again by a shell fragment at Bristoe Station. VA. If that were not enough, on the night of September 18, 1863 he retired after serving on the picket line only to have a supply wagon roll over him in his sleep, leaving him with a broken collarbone and a separated shoulder. He recovered from all of his injuries in time to take his place in the front rank of his company at Gettysburg where he and the regiment fought the 1st Texas Infantry at the Triangle Field near Devils Den on July 2nd. Ninety of his fellow "Orange Blossoms", including Colonel Augustus Van Horn Ellis, the Commanding Officer of the regiment, were either killed or wounded during the battle.

Chester, during this period, escaped injury but was confined to a hospital in Washington from September, 1862 until April 24, 1863 critically ill. He rejoined the regiment just in time for the Gettysburg Campaign. After Gettysburg, the regiment saw service in the Mine Run Campaign, suffered considerable casualties in the Wilderness, both at Spotsylvania Courthouse and the North Anna and was engaged at Cold Harbor. But the saddest day for Grandson was September 14th, 1864 before Petersburg. At about noon that day, younger brother Chester, now a Corporal, was shot in the head and killed instantly by a Confederate sharpshooter while on picket duty. Sadder still was the fact that, because of the continued presence of sharpshooters, his body was left in the hot sun for the remainder of the day until it could be retrieved after night fell. Chester was buried at Petersburg and is now interred at Poplar Grove National Cemetery in Petersburg. The Chester Judson Post 536, GAR, in Montgomery, New York was named in his honor. Grandson continued service with the 124th until February 1, 1865 when he was transferred to the 9th Veteran Reserve Corps due to his previous injuries. He was discharged, still ranked as a Private, at Washington D.C on June 26, 1865. After the war, he returned to Orange County where he rejoined his wife and children. Grandson died March 29, 1908 and is buried in Montgomery. Orange County, New York.

The second oldest son, born in 1836, was my great grandfather William. He mustered into Captain Conklin's Cavalry Company, part of the 56th New York Volunteer Infantry regiment or the "Tenth Legion" on September 17, 1861 as a Private. The two cavalry companies, after enlargement to battalion strength and then to a full regiment, were transformed into the 1st New York Mounted Rifles in late summer, 1862. By this time William had been promoted, first to Corporal in March of 1862 and later to Sergeant and finally Commissary Sergeant of Company D. He would serve in this capacity until discharged for expiration of his enlistment on September 17th, 1864 at City Point, Virginia.

The regiment, attached first to the 7th and 4th Corps, Department of Virginia and later in the 18th Corps and then the 10th Corps, Army of the James, would see action mostly in southern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. Their most costly engagements included Zuni, Virginia in October of 1862, at Scott's Mill, Virginia on October 17, 1863 and in operations during the Siege of Petersburg, primarily at Drewry's Bluff in May of 1864. While the regiment acquitted itself well during it's' service, it had the ill fortune to be attached to General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James for most of the conflict.

In September on 1865, the regiment was re-designated the 4th Provisional Regiment, New York Volunteer Cavalry and finally mustered out of service in November, 1865. After his discharge, William went home to Montgomery where he cared for his parents until the end of the war while all of his brothers remained in uniform. William married Bertha DeHart in Paterson, New Jersey in 1870 and they had six children, of which our lived to adulthood. During the post war years William, Bertha and the children moved to Goshen, Orange County, New York. While he made his livelihood as a master carpenter, he maintained his ties to his service as Post Commander of the Francis Cummins Post 176, GAR. in Goshen for many years. William died July 16, 1911 and is buried in Slate Hill Cemetery at Goshen.

(Continued on next page)

The third son, Calvin, born in October, 1837 was mustered into Company C, 56th New York Infantry on September 16th, 1861, joining his younger brothers, Albert, born Christmas day in 1839 and fourth in family order and John, the fifth son, who had joined Company C in August of 1861. Unlike brother William whose regiment, an off-shoot of the 56th, stayed mainly in southern Virginia, the 56th N.Y. Infantry was transferred from Naglee's Brigade, 18th Corps near Yorktown, Virginia to Howells Brigade, Ferry's Division, 18th Corps in late 1862 and would remain stationed in South Carolina with the 18th Corps for the remainder of the war. The unit, with all three brothers mustered present saw action but no casualties in the Siege of Yorktown, at Williamsburg and other engagements of the Peninsula Campaign and would suffer their heaviest loss, 71 killed or wounded, during the Seven Days Battle in Virginia.

Calvin would remain with Company C until discharged as a Corporal in September, 1864 at Hilton Head, South Carolina for the expiration of his enlistment. After his discharge he returned to Montgomery where he married Rachel (Comfort) McIntyre, a divorcee' in 1869 and fathered six children. In 1907, at the age of 70, Calvin sought to have his meager pension raised. Failing to do so by conventional means, he requested intervention by his Congressman. On February 6, 1907 Private Act No. 745 passed both the U S House of Representatives and the U S Senate authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to raise Calvin's pension to thirty dollars per month. Unfortunately, Calvin's newfound wealth was short lived. He died on August 1st of that year and is buried in Montgomery.

Albert, like his brothers John and a month later, Calvin, joined Company C of the 56th New York Infantry. Unlike both of them, Albert saw additional service in Company I, 168th New York Infantry and as Corporal, later Sergeant, Company M, 2nd New York Veteran Cavalry. Due to illness contracted in June of 1862, Albert spent two months confined to a Baltimore hospital before being released on a medical discharge. He was sufficiently recovered to re-enlist with Company I in December of 1862 and serve until the unit was mustered out at the end of October 1863. At the time he remained a private.

A short three weeks later, on November 23, 1863, Albert and his youngest brother, Theodore, born in 1844 and now nineteen, joined Company M of the 2nd New York Veteran Cavalry, the recently re-organized 30th New York Infantry Regiment which was first known as the "Empire Light Cavalry" The regiment served first at Washington D.C. in the 22nd Corps, moving to the 19th Corps, Department of the Gulf in February of 1864 and assigned to varying brigades within that Corps until early 1865 when they became part of the 1st Brigade, Cavalry Division, Army of the Gulf. They were first engaged in the Red River Campaign in Louisiana in March of 1864 losing 77 members of the regiment killed, wounded or missing, mostly during the battles at Campti, Pleasant Hill and Bayou Salina. Albert, now a Sergeant, was unscathed during the battle at Pleasant Hill, but received a head wound at Chattie River in July. He sustained additional injuries in falls from horses at both Fall River, Louisiana and at Mobile, Alabama. Fortunately, they were not of a serious nature. Twenty-two of his regiment were not so lucky. After the regiment mustered out, those members confined to the U S General Hospital at New Orleans were placed aboard the steamer "North America" for transportation back to New York. As the ship cruised northward off the coast of Florida on December 22, 1865, it was caught in a storm and sunk. The loss from drowning was over two hundred, mostly invalid soldiers from eleven New York units, the 2nd Veteran Cavalry among them.

Albert had already mustered out with the regiment in November, 1865 at Talladega, Alabama. After his return to Orange County, Albert married Sarah A. Powlis in May 1867 and fathered 12 children. He was killed in an accident June 12, 1898 in Middletown, New York and is buried at Montgomery.

John, born in December 1841, mustered into Company C, 56th New York joining Albert and Calvin. But while Calvin mustered out in September of 1864 and Albert left the unit in August of 1862, John not only remained until discharged in February of '64, he re-enlisted the next day in the same unit. John saw action similar to that of Calvin in the early days of the war. He was also present, having been promoted to Sergeant, during the operations of the regiment, part of the 1st Brigade, Coast Division in and around Honeyhill, Coosawhatchie and Deveaux Neck, South Carolina where in the ten days between November 30 and December 9, 1864 the unit suffered 33 killed, 113 wounded and 4 missing.

John and the regiment mustered out at Charleston on October 17, 1865. John traveled back to Orange County after his discharge and remained there until 1868 when he moved to Missouri where he would meet his future wife, Ida McKilip. They married in Leavenworth, Kansas in August of 1879 but had no children. After Ida died in 1897, he moved several times to Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Texas, and Washington and finally to St. Cloud, Florida where, in 1920 he was joined by his brother Theodore. John died there on November 29, 1925 in is buried in the Mt. Peace Cemetery (now St. Cloud Cemetery) in St. Cloud, Florida.

Theodore, the youngest of the seven, waited until shortly after his nineteenth birthday to join his brothers in the Union Army. He, with brother Albert, enrolled November 23rd, 1863 in Company M, 2nd New York Veteran Cavalry as a private. His service was not that different from that of Albert, although Theodore was wounded twice during the battle at Pleasant Hill, Louisiana, once in the head and again with a through and through wound to the lower right leg. After treatment and a brief stay at the field hospital in Morganza, Louisiana, Theodore returned to the regiment and remained there until discharged, again with brother Albert on November 8, 1865 at Talladega, Alabama.

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Theodore also missed the disaster of the sinking of the "North America". He returned home to Montgomery and two years later married Catherine Briggs in Bloomingburg, New York. Catherine died in 1900 in Montgomery. Theodore moved for a time to New Jersey and in 1920 moved to St. Cloud, Florida to join his only surviving brother, John. Theodore died March 21 1932 in St. Cloud and is buried next to John in St. Cloud Cemetery.

Over the course of the war, all seven of the Judson brothers demonstrated dedication, courage and loyalty to their families, their units and their country. Given the nature and duration of the conflict, the fact that six made it home safely is remarkable. I am proud that my eligibility for membership was based on the service of my great grandfather, William Judson.
