

CHAPTER II

WALSER AND THE MILITARY

In 1861 the United States of America was plunged into a horrible War. The World Almanac estimates the number of battle deaths at 498,000. The American People's Encyclopedia places the figure at 618,000. There were from 26,000 to 31,000 Confederate troops who died in Union prison camps. The Civil War was America's most costly war regarding the loss of American lives.

Here are some events immediately preceding the outbreak of war, and Walser's subsequent enlistment in the Union Army.

On March 9, 1861 the Confederate Convention at Montgomery authorized the organization of an army.

On April 20, 1861 Colonel Robert E. Lee resigned his U.S. Army commission, and two days later took command of the Virginia troops as a major general.

On May 20, 1861, North Carolina became the 11th state to succeed and the Confederate capital was moved from Montgomery to Richmond, Virginia.

Here is the account J.P. Moore gives of Walser's military service. As I have said before, it is not accurate:

"He entered the Union army on the first call of President Lincoln for three-months' volunteers, and reenlisted for three years. He attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of the 20th Illinois volunteers. Basing this statement on the understanding of a very close relative, and as related to this writer in a letter: When the war was over, Mr. Walser felt the purpose for which he had gone to war was accomplished, disliked to serve in the occupation of the South, had no grievance against those people, had plans of his own for life, so simply got on his horse and left the army. He had wished to be released and was probably tired of waiting on technicalities. This action, of course, was against regulations, and probably involved him considerably with the

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army; but he evidently won his point and no punitive measure was applied. He was a purposeful man and must have had his own ideas, then as well as later on." (The Strange Town, p. 151)

George H. Walser did enlist in the Union Army. He was "mustered in" on June 13, 1861. The next day, June 14, 1861, he received a commission as Captain of Co. I, 20 Reg't Illinois Infantry.

He was only in the service for a few months, but this was not because he was a "three months' volunteer." It was because he was sick and apparently couldn't get along with his fellow officers. The following information is taken from military records:

He was on the sick list from September 1, 1861, to October 11, 1861. On October 16, 1861 he applied for a "leave of absence" because of "remittent fever," and "diarrhea."

Also in October 1861, Capt. Walser was "placed in arrest by order C.C. Marsh for refusing to leave his Co. and return to Cape Girardeau just before the battle of Fredrickstown, ordered into arrest Oct. 19."

On November 3, 1861, he tendered his resignation because of "ill health, to take effect immediately."

On November 4, 1861, he changed his mind, and wrote to Col. C.C. Marsh: "I do hereby remand the resignation sent in by me on yesterday. I have every hope of a speedy recovery of my health and do not wish to leave the service ..."

His commanding officer sent an accompanying letter with his attempt to remand his resignation. He wrote: "I inclose the withdrawal of resignation of Capt. G. H. Walser of the 20th Reg. Ill. Vol. I beg leave to state that I deem that the best interests of the regiment require that his resignation be approved and accepted and would respectfully request that his withdrawal thereof be disapproved." Capt. Walser was not allowed back into the service at this time.

REENLISTED - 1864

On October 10, 1864, G.H. Walser was mustered back into the military as a

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Captain. This time he was serving with Co. I, 43 Reg't Missouri Infantry.

On November 25, 1864 he was assigned as Asst. Provost Marshal for the District of North Missouri.

On May 4, 1865 he was dishonorably dismissed. The dismissal letter read:

"By direction of the President on the recommendation of the Commanding General Department of Missouri, Captain George H. Walser, 43d Missouri Volunteers is hereby dishonorably dismissed from the service of the United States for malfeasance in office while Provost Marshal at St. Joseph, Missouri.

By order of the Secretary of War
W. A. NICHOLS
Assistant Adjutant General"

Please note that G.H. Walser began, and ended, his military career as a Captain, and not as a Lieutenant Colonel. I am told it is quite common for men to lie about their military exploits. These fabrications are commonly called "war stories." In this regard, it seems that Capt. Walser was quite common.

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