

Godfrey Bisher

Born December 1, 1818, Atlantic Ocean

Died September 7, 1897, Davidson County, North Carolina

Godfrey was born on the voyage from Amsterdam to Charleston that brought his parents, Conrad and Margaretha, to America. He married Loucinda Loflin, who bore seven children, two of them twins (William and John).

Private Godfrey Bischerer



Company F, 7th Regiment, North Carolina State Troops

Private Godfrey Bischerer was the oldest private in the most outstanding company of one of the most illustrious Confederate regiments in the Civil War. He participated in several of the greatest battles of the war including Manassas, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg, and in the lesser known, but fierce battles of New Bern, Hanover Court House, Cedar Mountain, Ox Hill, and Shepherdstown. He followed the great generals Stonewall Jackson and A.P. Hill into combat, marched hundreds of miles through North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, crossed back and forth over the Potomac River probably half a dozen times, helped destroy a portion of the B&O Railroad, and, in one of the most dramatic episodes in American history, charged across the killing grounds at Gettysburg in the main wave of the assault that has been memorialized as "Pickett's Charge." He spent nearly a year in a prisoner-of-war camp known for brutality, where guards sometimes took target practice with the unsuspecting inmates. If not a hero, Godfrey Bischerer was certainly a tenacious survivor.

Private Bischerer and The Civil War

August 21, 1861 - Camp Mason, Alamance Co., NC - 7th Regt. NC State Troops organized near Graham.

February 22, 1862 - Davidson Co., NC - Godfrey Bischerer enlisted in Co. F of 7th Regt.

February 25, 1862 - Camp Graham, Shepherdsville, NC - Co. F returns to winter quarters from 1 - month of guard duty of RR bridge over Slocumb's Creek.

March 6, 1862 - New Bern, Fair Grounds, NC - Regt. moved by rail from Camp Graham to New Bern. Encamped at Fair Grounds for 1 week.

March 13, 1862 - Ft. Thompson, NC - In the morning, moved 5 miles downriver to join defenses right of Ft. Thompson. with the 35th NC Regt., some Militia, and 2 artillery batteries.

Battle of New Bern

March 14, 1862 - Ft. Thompson, NC - Battle began early morning when a Parrott gun dispersed a group of yankee horsemen probing the woods. Right after, about 7:20, firing became general along the line. The Militia panicked and fled. The 35th Regt. was ordered to charge with bayonets, but "left in confusion" instead, leaving an artillery section to be overrun by yankees.

Only the 7th Regt. and remaining artillery stayed to fight alone. The 7th Regt. left their breastworks and charged with bayonets upon an advancing yankee column. The enemy "was driven over the breastwork with great slaughter," and the 7th retook the captured artillery battery.

Shortly 6 or 8 yankee regts. appeared and massed to attack, and the 7th had to fall back under very heavy fire. New Bern was lost. The 7th lost 6 killed, 15 wounded, & 30 missing.

March 16 - May 4, 1862 - Kinston, NC - 7th Regt. retired here from New Bern. March 23 - April 1 encamped at Falling Creek, returned to Kinston. April 29 - May 1 performed a scouting mission to Trenton and back.

May 4 - 6, 1862 - Goldsboro, NC to Gordonsville, VA - Ordered to Gordonsville to bolster Virginia defenses against yankees moving up James R. and down Shenandoah Valley. Moved by train to Goldsboro on May 4. Marched on through Weldon, Petersburg, Richmond to Gordonsville.

May 16, 1862 - Blue Ridge foothills, VA to Gordonsville, VA to Hanover Court Hse., VA - Marched from Gordonsville to the "foothills of the Blue Ridge," then ordered back to Gordonsville and on to Hanover Court House to do picket duty watching Gen. Geo. McClellan's army.

Battle of Hanover Court House

May 27, 1862 - Hanover Court Hse., VA - 7th Regt. was in reserve during the battle, but served as Gen. L. Branch's brigade rearguard as it withdrew to Ashland. The Regt. lost 2 killed, 4 wounded, and 2 missing, one of the latter being Pvt. Bischerer, who was captured.

June - July, 1862 - Fort Monroe, VA - Godfrey Bischerer confined here by the Federals.

August 5, 1862 - Aiken's Landing, Jas. R., VA - Godfrey Bischerer exchanged.

Battle of Cedar Mountain

August 7 - 9, 1862 - Gordonsville to Cedar Mtn., VA - After 22 weeks waiting to meet Federal Gen. John Pope's advance at Gordonsville, Gen. A.P. Hill's division joins Jackson's in an offensive against Pope, whom they engage at Cedar Mtn. 7th Regt. falls behind the rest of Branch's Brigade in the advance, but rushes in at a "double - quick" to support Gen. Taliaferro's

division by attacking a yankee force in a corn field. After the 7th fired several volleys, the enemy broke and ran, and the 7th chased them a half-mile, capturing 30, including 2 officers.

August 11 - 25, 1862 - Gordonsville, VA - Waited for orders from Stonewall Jackson.

August 26, 1862 - Manassas Junction, VA - Moved here with Jackson's army and remained until the night of the 27th, when withdrawn to Groveton.

2nd Battle of Manassas

August 28 - 30, 1862 - Manassas, VA - Branch's Bde., Stonewall Jackson's Army

Branch's Brigade was situated on the left of Jackson's defensive line along the unfinished branch of the Manassas Gap RR. On the 29th, the Feds concentrated a general attack against Jackson's left. Branch's Bde. drove the Federal advance back across the RR cut, then withdrew back into the cut to assume the defensive. The Feds launched another attack and Branch's lines held. On the 30th, the Bde. held its position under heavy artillery fire till Gen. Longstreet's attack and darkness put an end to the battle

Battle of Ox Hill

September 1, 1862 - Ox Hill, VA - Branch's Bde., Stonewall Jackson's Army

The Feds retired toward Washington from Manassas and Stonewall Jackson's army pursued them. Branch's Bde. was ordered forward to attack them in the afternoon during a "blinding rainstorm" but the Blue rear guard held on till dark. The Regt. lost 8 killed, 17 wounded.

September 2 - 9, 1862 - Leesburg, VA to Frederick, MD - Branch's Bde. moved through Leesburg, crossed the Potomac on the 5th and encamped at Frederick.

Battle of Harper's Ferry

September 10 - 14, 1862 - Advance & Attack on Harper's Ferry, VA -

Branch's Bde., A.P. Hill's Div.

Crossed back over Potomac R. near Williamsport the 11th; entered Martinsburg the 12th, then came in sight of the heavily defended Bolivar Hts. the 13th. Confederates surrounded Harper's Ferry. The 7th Regt. led the advance the evening of the 14th down the Winchester & Harpers Ferry RR line, "driving the enemies' sharpshooters from their high positions" above.

September 15, 1862 - Harper's Ferry, VA - The Federal garrison surrendered to Gen. Hill.

Battle of Sharpsburg (Antietam)

September 17 - 18, 1862 - Sharpsburg - Left Harper's Ferry at 7:30 a.m. the 17th on a "very rapid & fatiguing march," recrossed the Potomac, joined the fight at Sharpsburg, driving back "3 separate & distinct enemy columns." Gen. Branch was killed today. Spent the night behind a stone fence & held against sharpshooters till withdrawn the night of the 18th. Bde. was rear guard as army crossed back over the Potomac.

September 20, 1862 - Shepherdstown/Bunker Hill - Moved to this river crossing in the morning to drive the Feds back across the Potomac. Received heavy artillery fire. Destroyed a portion of the B&O RR. Encamped near Bunker Hill.

September - November 22, 1862 - Shenandoah Valley, VA - Remained in Shenandoah Valley till late November, when ordered to Orange Court Hse. About Nov. 26th, ordered to Fredericksburg.

Battle of Hamilton's Crossing

December 11 - 13, 1862 - Fredericksburg, VA - Lane's Bde. Little activity until morning of 13th, when 7th Regt. ordered beyond RR to protect artillery. All skirmishers except Co. F forced back. 7th moved to crest of hill to better defend artillery but suffered from Fed artillery and sharpshooters. 2 hrs. later the Yanks launched a massive, fast - moving assault against the brigade which persisted for some time. The 7th fell back "in perfect order," and later chased back another Federal push. The Bde. spent nearly 48 hrs. on duty in combat. On the 15th they constructed a breastwork of logs, brush & dirt to rest behind until the morning of the 16th, when they realized the enemy had withdrawn.

December 17, 1862 - April 30, 1863 - Moss Neck, VA - Winter quarters and picket duty.

Battle of Chancellorsville - Day 1

May 1, 1863 - Chancellorsville, VA - Lane's Bde., A.P. Hill's Div., Jackson's Corps

Lane's Bde. marched down Orange & Fredericksburg Plank Rd. to Chancellorsville, driving Yanks back to their positions on the way. Formed in line of battle in late evening of 1st.

Battle of Chancellorsville - Day 2

May 2, 1863 - Chancellorsville, VA -

Began a hard march early morning of the 2nd to a point 4 miles from Chancellorsville. The Bde. made a night assault and took a line of breastworks where, a short time later, 250 Yankees surrendered to the 7th Regt. after a brief furious exchange.

Battle of Chancellorsville - Day 3

May 3, 1863 - Chancellorsville, VA - Soon after sunrise on the 3rd, the 7th charged forward through the woods under a galling fire, shouting, driving the enemy before them. Gen. Lane wrote, "the gallant old 7th eclipsed all of its former glories." Along with the 37th Regt., they

overran a prominent enemy fortification, before falling back under a "murderous fire of shell, grape and canister," and a fresh column of infantry. Lt. Col. Junius Hill was killed leading the attack.

"As soon as the rest of the Bde. was reformed and replenished with ammunition, they were taken back into the woods... to the support of Gen. Colquitt's command, which was then nearly out of ammunition. The woods... were on fire; the heat was excessive; smoke arising from burning blankets, oilcloths, etc. The dead and dying of the enemy could be seen on all sides enveloped in flames, and the ground on which we formed was so hot... Remained under arms again the whole of Sun. night in the front line." The battle was won. The Regt. lost 37 killed, 127 wounded.

May 7, 1863 - Moss Neck, VA - Regt. returned "to its old camp" at Moss Neck. Since death of Stonewall Jackson at Chancellorsville, now assigned to Gen. Wm. Pender's div. of Gen. A.P. Hill's corps.

June 15, 1863 - Fredericksburg, VA - The march on the North begins.

June 25, 1863 - Shepherdstown, VA - Gen. Hill's corps crosses the Potomac.

June 27, 1863 - Fayetteville, PA - Gen. Hill's corps invades the Union; enters Fayetteville in the afternoon.

July 1, 1863 - So. Mtn. to Cashtown to Gettysburg, PA -

Battle of Gettysburg - Day 1

Hill's corps marched toward Gettysburg in the a.m. & supported Gen. Harry Heth's div. in ascertaining Yankee strength and, after a hard fight, driving the enemy from the field.

The 7th Regt. "moved across this open field [alongside the turnpike] at quick time until a body of the enemy's cavalry and a few infantry opened upon us from the woods..., when the men gave a yell, and rushed forward at a double - quick, the whole of the enemy's force beating a hasty retreat to Cemetery Hill." The Regt. came under fire from artillery on Cemetery Hill and spent the night huddled behind "the stone fence."

Battle of Gettysburg - Day 2

July 2, 1863 - Gettysburg, PA - A little skirmishing and artillery bombardment but, according to Gen. Lane, "nothing of interest occurred" today. Gen. Pender was wounded, so the 7th Regt. was assigned to Gen. Isaac Trimble's div.

Battle of Gettysburg - Day 3

July 3, 1863 - Gettysburg, PA - The 7th Regt. and Lane's Bde. play a central role in the attack on Cemetery Ridge that becomes known as "Pickett's Charge." Lane's Bde. emerged from the woods into a huge open field "under a murderous artillery and infantry fire." In Lane's words,

"As soon as Pettigrew's command gave back, Lowrance's brigade and my own... took position on the left of the troops which were still contesting the ground with the enemy. My command never moved forward more handsomely. The men reserved their fire, in accordance with orders, until within good range of the enemy, and then opened with telling effect, repeatedly driving the cannoneers from their pieces, completely silencing the guns in our immediate front, and breaking the line of infantry which was formed on the crest of the hill. We advanced to within a few yards of the stone wall, exposed all the while to a heavy raking artillery fire from the right. My left was here very much exposed, and a column of the enemy's infantry was thrown forward in that direction, which enfiladed my whole line. This forced me to withdraw my brigade, the troops on my right having already done so. We fell back as well as could be expected..."



Above - Godfrey Bischerer and Lane's Brigade emerged from the thick woods in the distance, and heroically marched across the open yellow field (from left to right), the target of horrendous artillery and rifle fire, towards Cemetery Hill and destiny...

Maj. John Turner, Co. F's former commander, was wounded in the abdomen and captured during or after the charge. Pvt. Godfrey Bischerer was also captured. The regimental flag was captured by Union soldiers during the assault on Cemetery Hill but was returned after the war and now resides with the North Carolina Office of Archives and History.

Prisoner of War in Yankee Camps

July, 1863 - Ft. Mifflin, PA & Ft. McHenry, MD - Pvt. Bischerer confined here until transfer to Ft. Delaware. From Fort Mifflin, the Gettysburg prisoners were carried by train to Baltimore, then marched through the streets of the city to Fort McHenry, where they awaited ships to Fort Delaware.

November 17, 1863 - October 30, 1864 - Ft. Delaware, DE - Pvt. Bischerer is a POW here. Maj. John Turner was confined here also from June - Sept., 1864. The prison sits on an isolated mosquito and tick-infested island in the middle of the Delaware River, exposed to the worst extremes of winter's deathly chill and summer's relentless heat. Prisoners fought over rat meat to augment their near-starvation diet. Pvt. Bischerer was paroled Oct. 30. Ironically, his son, William, was a guard at the Salisbury, NC POW camp for yankees.

November 15, 1864 - Venus Point, Savannah River, GA - Pvt. Bischerer received for exchange here.

June 3, 1865 - Salisbury, NC - Pvt. Bischerer took Oath of Allegiance.



Above - Fort Delaware POW camp (U.S. Bonds, Rev. Isaac Handy)

Godfrey was fortunate to return home to his farm and family. He had a reputation as a hard worker, which led to a story. One Sunday, a preacher caught Godfrey plowing his field. After that, a few people considered Godfrey to be a dreadful sinner for working on the "day of rest." Years after his death on September 7, 1897, people in Jackson Hill still used the phrase "Great Godfrey Bischer" to express shock and surprise. He is buried at Siloam United Methodist Church near Denton, North Carolina.

SOURCE: <http://www.geocities.ws/jetlag78/godfrey>.