

## ACCOUNT OF BATTLE OF MANSFIELD GIVEN

The Shreveport Journal, Thursday April 8, 1937.

An interesting description of the Battle of Mansfield, whose seventy-third anniversary is being observed today, written by the late Mrs. S. G. M. Bannerman, mother of the late Dr. M. M. Bannerman of Grand Cane, and daughter of Henry Moss who owned the plantation on which the famous battle was fought, is given in the following article.

The article was loaned to The Shreveport Journal by Mrs. M. M. Bannerman, widow of the late Dr. Bannerman, who is now a resident of Shreveport.

When the Battle of Mansfield was fought, the author of the story was Miss Sarah Gardner Moss and she had left her father's plantation a short while before the battle. She was in Mansfield at the time. Lieut. C. T. Bannerman was wounded in the Battle of Mansfield and after he recovered from his wounds he and Miss Moss were married. Mrs. Bannerman, who wrote the following article passed away in 1907.

On the morning of April 8, 1864, Walker's division moved from their camp four miles north of town, to meet the enemy who were advancing in heavy force from the direction of Pleasant Hill. Arriving near town General Walker formed his division in line of battle and awaited the advance of the enemy. They remained in this position until 11 a.m. when General Taylor ordered General Walker to advance his division to meet the enemy who were reported about half way between Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, and advancing cautiously, the head of the column soon moved off in the direction of Mansfield, the bands playing the favorite tune of "Dixie."

The inhabitants of Mansfield were astonished when they beheld Walker's division marching proudly back to meet the enemy before whom they had so lately retreated. As the troops marched through the town, the sidewalks were thronged with ladies, misses and matrons who threw their bright garlands at the feet of the brave Texas boys, beseeching them in God's name to drive back the enemy and save their cherished homes, assuring them that they looked for protection.

A young wounded soldier said to me afterward that on hearing these patriotic words he felt that we were thrice armed, and although greatly outnumbered would in the end be victorious. Alas, I was not among the crowd of patriotic girls and women, having driven to the plantation that morning to get butter, eggs, milk and chickens for the hospital.

I met Walker's division about 1 mile from town, just beyond the old McElroy gin house on the Natchitoches Road and drove into the woods to let King George and his armies pass by. How long I sat there watching Walker's division tramp by I have no idea, but as soon as the way was clear, I drove on to the collage. Wounded and sick soldiers had been coming in for several days and that building was vacated by the president's family

and hastily converted into a hospital. I drove up and stopped between the old conservatory and North portico; a crowd of girls and ladies came towards the buggy, one girl, Mary Terrell, exclaiming "Sallie Moss did you know the Yankees are coming and our men are forming a line of battle at your father's (Henry Moss) plantation?" I said "No such thing - I am just from there and there wasn't a soldier on the place that I could see," and she answered, "Well, a courier just came in with the news." I did not think of the time I had lost on the roadside waiting for those men to pass. In those days there were no telegraphs; the news had to be carried from post to post by young boys under 18 years of age - far too young to go into active service, but anxious to serve their country as news carriers, called courtiers, a noble band of boys they.

After Walker's division had marched about three miles from Mansfield on the Pleasant Hill Road, Mouton's division formed in line of battle on the left of the road. Immediately on the approach of Walker's division several batteries of light artillery took position on an eminence at the left of the road in advance of Mouton's division. Waul's brigade in front, then Randall's brigade, and then Scurry's brigade which brought up the rear. The balance of the troops of Walker's division after marching, counter-marching and maneuvering was formed in the line of battle about 2 p.m. behind a rail fence enclosing the Moss Plantation, the left of the division rested on the line of the Pleasant Hill Road, Scurry's brigade on the right, Waul's in the center and Randall's on the left.. After the line of battle was formed the command was given to stack arms, the fence was pulled down and the soldiers remained inactive about an hour, awaiting the approach of the enemy who were reported about one mile in front.

The firing of our cavalry skirmishers became each minute more distinct. The work of destruction had begun. Infantry skirmishers were pushed forward to feel the position of the enemy. News flashed along the line that the division of General Mouton had attacked a superior force of the enemy in a strong position. For half an hour the echo of their guns swelled upon the evening breeze and during that period an awful feeling of intense anxiety and suspense filled the minds of the troops not engaged in the conflict. The conflict ceases, alas! The melancholy tidings that the brave General Mouton was killed just as he had borne the banner of the Stars and Bars to victory.

When the gallant Louisiana soldiers learned of their idolized chieftain's death, it is said that many of these lionhearted men threw themselves in wild grief upon the ground, weeping scalding tears in their sorrow. It is a fearful spectacle to see strong-hearted men thus give way to their feelings. It demonstrated the devotion felt for their gallant chieftain, and showed how deeply he was enshrined in these brave hearts.

Presently General Walker and staff are in their saddles - he orders his brigade commanders to prepare for action, all being in readiness he gives the command. "By the right of companies to the front, forward! March!" Every man moved off quietly, with a confident and determined step. The line of march was through a large field in

front, then through a skirt of timber into another field. Resting a few minutes in the skirt of timber the command was given "By companies into line." After the line was formed orders were given to fix bayonets. In the meantime the enemy continued firing from their batteries. Soon the command was given to "double quick." Our troops commenced advancing toward the enemy who were securely posted behind the rail fence and were greeted with a shower of leaden ball. Our men shouted at the top of their voices at each iron messenger, and it is said indulged in jokes and witticisms such as "This kind of ball music is fine for dancing." "Here comes another iron pill - dodge boys, but don't tremble."

The fire of the enemy increases. It is terrible; shells, canister and bullets are falling around like a hailstorm. Our brigade commanders ride along their lines encouraging them. There is no faltering but wild cheers as on they press - at last the fence is gained, over it our troops go like an avalanche of fire. A loud and profound Texas yell deafens the ear; their cheers rise in one great range of sound over the noise of the battle. Nothing could withstand the impetuosity of that charge - with loud huzzahs they rushed upon the Yankees before they could reload - a discharge of rifle balls was poured into their very bosoms, afterwards bayonets were used, ere they could recover from their astonishment.

Their prostrate column was trampled in the mire - Oh! Now comes the tug of war. The enemy is panic stricken - they abandon their artillery. They cannot stand the bayonet charge and retreat. They sadly feel the loss of their artillery. Cheer after cheer bursts forth from our lines as the enemy is seen fleeing, casting away their knapsacks and arms. Our cavalry now charges down on their flanks, making the very ground quake and the enemy tremble. Urged on by the excitement of victory the confederates pursue the flying foe, killing where they dare resist and capturing them by hundreds. At last their wagon train numbering over 200 wagons, falls into our hands, the flight had become universal. The enemy left on the ground dying and dead, where the battle began, about one half of their forces, and through the woods and along the road our cavalry and artillery completely slaughtered them. Horses and men by hundreds rolled down together - the road was red with their blood. After pursuing them four miles they finally made a stand at a peach orchard where they were reinforced. Entirely unconscious of the arrival of fresh troops, our men passed half way through the field before they heard of re-enforcements - then came the terrible shock - volley after volley and shower after shower of bullets came whizzing down upon them, the very air seemed hot and dark with balls; the thunders of the artillery guns resounded through the heavens and seemed to shake the earth to its very center, and on every side was heard their crushing sound as they struck the swaying mass tearing through flesh, bone and sinew. The position of our line could have been traced by our fallen dead. Within a few short moments many a gallant spirit went to its long home. The sun was now declining.

General Walker with his generals was engaged in encouraging the troops while sharing with them every peril.

Hark! There peals forth the signal gun! A wild shout bursts forth from the Texas ranks as they rushed in full career upon the enemy's lines. The sun went down and the struggle still continued - twilight darkness is over the battlefield, but a blaze of intense light from Confederate bayonets gleamed over the contending hosts.

One by one the stars came out calmly in the sky, and the moon in silent beauty rose serenely in the east and looked down with her mild reproof upon the hideous carnage and still the struggling squadrons with un-intermitted fury dashed against each other; men and horses rapidly fell, the clangor of the strife grew fainter and fainter. Still in the gloom of the night as the eye gazed upon the mass swaying to and fro, it was impossible to judge who had gained the victory.

The spectacle was so sublime, so awful, so sure to be followed by decisive results that each army suspended its fire to await the issue. The roar of musketry and the heavy booming of artillery ceased; the soldiers rested upon their muskets; the exhausted cannoniers leaned upon their guns awaiting daylight to come to renew the battle. The morning of the ninth tinged the eastern horizon with the grayish dawn, when it was discovered there was no enemy in sight. The reason for the withdrawal of the enemy from the battlefield has been furnished by an officer who was seriously wounded and fell into the enemy's hands. He was carried to a log cabin in the rear of their lines, which was used as their hospital. In this cabin or hospital a council of war was held by the federal generals. The attention of General Banks, the commander of the federal forces, was attracted by the heavy moaning of the rebel officer. After questioning him as to the nature of his wounds, he asked the officer the number of confederate forces engaged in the day's battle. The officer replied that he was not aware of our forces, but he knew the main body of our forces was still behind and that only the advance of our army was engaged in today's battle, but on the morrow our entire army would be engaged. General Banks believing the supposed dying officer's words, immediately ordered a retreat of his army to Pleasant Hill.

It is impossible to make individual mention of those who on that day sacrificed their lives upon the alter of our country, but many a once-happy home mourned the loss of some dear one, who on that night slept in death upon the sanguinary battle field of Mansfield.

Our loss in the division amounted to 600 in killed, wounded and missing; while the loss of the enemy amounted to 1500 killed and wounded, 2000 prisoners, 20 pieces of artillery, including Nim's Battery, the veteran battery of 17 engagements, Chicago Mercantile Battery, and the First Indiana Battery, besides 200 wagons and thousands of small arms. A dearly bought victory.