

WILLIAM NELSON WHITLOCK (1833-)

Brian Devine recently contacted me about some Civil War documents he had that are signed by Lt. W. N. Whitlock. Brian's ancestor Lecil DeVine (Pvt 31 Alabama CSA) was a Confederate POW in 1864 who enlisted with the 3rd US Volunteers at Rock Island Barracks. Brian mentions that Lecil served under the Union Lt. Whitlock and was deployed to Ft. Leavenworth in Kansas and later to Ft. Kearney in Nebraska.

The march from Ft. Leavenworth to Ft. Kearney occurred in March 1865 and Lecil and his company encountered bitter cold, high winds, and heavy snow falls. Firewood was scarce and they had great difficulty keeping warm, resulting in Lecil contracting rheumatic fever and a spinal inflammation.

Family stories indicate that if it had not been for the grace and kindness of Lt. Whitlock, Lecil may not have survived his term of service in Nebraska. Brian's father and the sole uncle (now 89) talk of the "oneness" that developed between these former enemies of the Blue and Grey to become "galvanized" as they were called. Lt. Whitlock was a "Yankee Officer" and had every reason to treat Lecil with great disdain. Yet, he chose to do the opposite and assisted him in every way he could.

Lecil's family were non-slave holding dirt farmers who had moved from South Carolina to Alabama in the 1840's. His service in the Confederate Army was a result of the Conscription Act of 1862 when he was given the option of "joining" or abandoning his land and moving north across the Federal Line.

Brian's goal was to let the Whitlocks know how tremendously grateful his family was for Lecil's treatment by Lt. Whitlock during a time when it would have been so easy to have acted quite differently.

In 1894 Lecil DeVine was applying for a pension and Lt. Whitlock completed affidavits that detail some of the events that occurred 30 years earlier.

In his affidavit Lt. Whitlock states: "in the month of March 1865 while on the march from Ft. Leavenworth Kas to Ft. Kearney, Neb. The above named soldier was disabled while in the line of duty by great exposure from excessive cold, & stormy weather, causing Rhumatism, lung to spinal trouble. He was unfit for duty most of the time during the rest of his term of service, & when we started back to Leavenworth in Nov. to muster out of service he was not able to stand the march & had to be taken in one of the Co- wagons.

He was a sober, quiet man, a good soldier & always ready & willing to do all he was able.

I was with the command the last 60 miles of the above march & was in Command of Co. A. until muster out."

From his home in Beatrice, Gage Co., Nebraska, In a second document dated April 11, 1894 Lt. Whitlock states:

"Sir:

In reply to your request I have to state that Lecil Devine was a Private of Co. A. 3rd US Inf. Vols. of which I had command from about the middle of March 1865 to the 29th of Nov. 1865 (the time of muster out), The march from Ft. Leavenworth, Kas. To Ft. Kearney, Neb. Was made in the latter part of Feb. & for part of March 1865 during very inclement weather in fact almost a continuous blizzard. Devine was

suffering from Rhumatism on arrival at Ft. Kearney & was excused from duty for some time. In May my Co. were detailed as a guard at the stations of the Overland Stage Co. Devine was stationed at one of the Posts & did duty most of the time during the summer & fall but complained a good of his back.

On the march to Leavenworth for muster out he gave out & had to be hauled in one of the wagons.

Very respectfully

W.N. Whitlock

Late 1st Lieut Comdg Co. A. 3rd US Vol.”

William Nelson Whitlock was born in Vermont, November 21, 1833, the son of John Albert Whitlock and Laura Sanford. This family is detailed on our WHITLOCK09 chart. He was married to Elizabeth W. (??) Lawrence. In 1880 the family is living in Columbus Junction, Louisa Co., Iowa. With them is a daughter Mary E. Whitlock age 2 plus a step-son George Lawrence age 21. In 1900 they are in Beatrice, Gage Co., Nebraska. George Lawrence, now 40 is still living in the same household.

Our thanks to Brian Devine for sharing these documents with us.

SOURCES: X0624/396; X6978; R3023