

Bragg's invasion of Kentucky. In the fall of 1862 he took part in the siege of Cumberland Gap while part of General Bragg's Army of East Tennessee and spent the fall and winter of 1862-63 in Kentucky and east Tennessee where he became a Sergeant. He next saw service in Tennessee at the battles of Chickamauga (August and September 1863), Knoxville (November 1863) and Bean Station (December 1863).

In August 1864, before the Georgia Campaign, he was ordered to Virginia and to Captain John Howard's Company in the 2nd Engineer Regiment of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Here he saw action at Strawberry Plains (also called Virginia. Here he saw action at Strawberry Plains (also called Deep Bottom Run) during the Battle of Petersburg, Virginia, in August 1864. He was paroled at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9, 1865, on the occasion of Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender of Confederate forces to General U.S. Grant and returned home on May 17, 1865.

John F. Vardaman was the sole survivor of three brothers, sons of Edwy L. Vardaman of Tallapoosa County, who served in the C.S.A. One brother, William Sanford Vardaman, who enlisted Sept. 5, 1861, died early in the war, on May 5, 1862, during the Battle of Williamsburg (Virginia). He was not yet 22 years old. The younger brother, James Mathis Vardaman, who also enlisted in Captain Slaughter's Cavalry Company, died at age 23 while on picket duty during the siege of Petersburg (Virginia) on March 30, 1865. His death came only 10 days before the surrender at Appomattox Court House and the end of the war. It is presumed that both brothers are buried in military cemeteries in the areas of Virginia where they died.

John F. Vardaman brought home many war documents, among them a copy, in his own handwriting, of General Robert E. Lee's farewell address (General Order N. 9) to his troops. This copy is preserved in the Coosa County Museum at Rockford. Since Vardaman often worked as a Scribe, he may have been one of those who made copies of the Order for troop distribution at Appomattox.

He is pictured wearing a homemade plaid shirt. Over his left shoulder he wears a wide-strap leather satchel. Over his right shoulder is a saber strap which was used to counterbalance the weight of the sword. A canteen strap is also over his right shoulder. His sword resembles a U.S. Model 1840 artillery saber.

The Bible he holds in his left hand was still in the family as late as 1986.

Information on his father, Edwy L. Vardaman, can be found in *The Heritage of Clay County, Alabama*. Submitted by: Jesse H. Vardaman, III, 4629 Northview Rd., Kennesaw, GA. 30144. Sources: From an original record by James B. Gwin in the Coosa County Museum at Rockford, Alabama; family records; and the Memorial Record of Alabama, Vol. D.

James Madison Wood

and The Peace Society in the Confederacy

In an article entitled *The Peace Society in the Confederacy, Particularly in Randolph County, Alabama* by Thomas J. Freeman, in *The Heritage of Randolph County, Alabama*, Freeman cites excerpts from a report written by Col. Jefferson Falkner, CSA. This report regarding the "Peace Societies" was enclosed in a subsequent report, dated May 8, 1864, to General Braxton Bragg.

Mr. Freeman's article implies that the persons named in Col. Falkner's report, particularly a Mr. James Wood, were Randolph Countians. This is incorrect. James Wood, Thomas Lambert and (William) C. Brown, Jr., were citizens of Coosa County, not Randolph County, at the time of the Civil War.

Col. Falkner's report states that "James Wood had been captured by the Confederate cavalry and hung". James Madison Wood

lived in the Stewartville area. He was born in August 1811 in Georgia and married Sarah Coker, November 11, 1841, in Tallapoosa County. He died October 24, 1863, and is buried in the Rehoboth/Jennings Cemetery located near Stewartville. This cemetery is located on private property and cannot be seen from the road and is overgrown and not easily surveyed. His tombstone is the tallest stone in the Cemetery and contains a succinct and intriguing inscription, as follows:

"Here rests the remains of James M. Wood who was murdered near Sylacauga in Talladega Co., AL by a band of midnight assassins on the night of 24 Oct 1863."

Continuing, the inscription contains the following curse on Wood's killers:

"Rest, Father, rest in thy narrow home,
For o'er thy head thy foes may tread,
But mark this dreadful end,
Rest peaceful in this mound of clay,
Thy blood shall be avenged.

Retributive conscience will harass the perpetrators with the memory of their crime and haunt them with the phantom of guilt born of fear."

Mrs. Betty Lessley of Sylacauga relates that local folklore says that all of the persons involved in the above assassination met violent deaths over the course of their lives.

On page 99 of his *History of Coosa County, Alabama*, Rev. George E. Brewer, states:

"Mr. Wood was a citizen here for years and was killed by a mob during the war because of his Union sentiments, though he was known as a good citizen otherwise. This unjustifiable killing had much to do in making some adopt the Republican party who perhaps would not have done so otherwise."

Family folklore states that Mr. Wood had gone to town to obtain supplies for his and neighboring families whose menfolk were off at war and was returning home when the above incident occurred.

Captain John H. Porter, CSA, of Coosa County was, indeed, a son-in-law of James M. Wood having married Mr. Wood's daughter, Frances A. Wood, October 20, 1860, in Coosa County. He is incorrectly identified as John H. "Paster" in Col. Falkner's report and also, incorrectly, as Capt. "A.J. Porter" on page 99 of Brewer's *History of Coosa County*.

The James Wood family is distantly connected to the Vardaman family through his daughter Frances who married Capt. John H. Porter. Their daughter, Alice Itonia, married John Thomas Vardaman, son of Peter Vardaman of the Mt. Olive community. Peter Vardaman's daughter-in-law, Alice Porter, was a grand daughter of James M. Wood.

The "Parton Vardenon" mentioned in Col. Falkner's report as having gone to Virginia to introduce the "thing" (Peace Society) to the Army there, is, in all likelihood, Porter R. Vardaman of the Fayetteville area of Talladega County, brother of Charles W. If this should be the case, Thomas would have been William Francis Lambert's uncle.

Thomas Jefferson Vardaman, brother of Peter L. Vardaman, was a prominent citizen of Mt. Olive. He died July 16, 1864, age 41, while serving in the Confederate Army and is buried at Mt. Olive Cemetery with his wife, Nancy, who lived for another 35 years after his death. At the time of his death he was serving in Co. B of the 60th Alabama Regiment, CSA, and was stationed in Talladega County.

Family folklore relates that, as a soldier, he was working in a cannonball factory near Sylacauga when, one day, a group of soldiers came and took him away and he was never seen alive again. It could mean that he was executed, the same as James M. Wood, by a unit of the notorious and out-of-control "Home Guard" contingent of the Army. This adds credence for the "Peace Society" stories and the fact that the Vardaman family was somehow linked to .

Notwithstanding possible links to the "Peace Society", the Vardaman family contributed more than its share of men and fatalities to the Confederate cause. Porter R. Vardaman of the Fayetteville Community sent all three of his sons to the war, only one of whom returned, the other two dying in combat. Submitted by: Jesse H. (Jack) Vardaman
Sources: From family history and legend.



Sgt. John F. Vardaman Co. E, 2nd Engineer Regt. CSA