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Search For Grave Finally Pa

By Rosamond B. Hanson

The following is the story of how two papers, The Manassas Gazette and the Charleston (S. C.) News and Courier, a poem and the perseverance of three generations of the survivors of a Confederate colonel mortally wounded on August 29, 1862, during the Second Battle of Manassas, all contributed, over a period of many years, to the locating and marking of the colonel's grave on a farm near Catharpin. The grave is that of Col. Daniel Alexander Ledbetter, Gregg's Brigade, Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill's Second (Light) Division of (Stonewall) Jackson's Corps.

Soon after Col. Ledbetter was

wounded a courier was dispatched to Townville (near Pendleton) S. C. to notify his wife, then about 26 years old according to a grandson who enters into the story later. She left immediately in her carriage for the Manassas battlefield, only to discover on her arrival that her husband had died of his wounds. But no one could tell her where he was buried so she returned sadly to Townville where she lived until her death in 1916.

Early one Sunday afternoon in June, 1953, our doorbell announced callers on a challenging quest—a Mr. Joseph B. Ledbetter of Nashville, Tenn., accompanied by a Washington friend.

Mr. Ledbetter asked if I could

direct them to the "Frazier Farm," where according to family tradition, there was a monument marking the grave of his grandfather, the Col. Ledbetter mentioned above. I told him that the only Frazier Farm I had ever heard or read of in connection with the Civil War, 1861-65, figured in the Seven Days Battles around Richmond and was located in that part of Virginia, not near Manassas. I had been over those battlefields numerous times with my husband, Maj. Joseph Mills Hanson.

So I suggested that Mr. Ledbetter consult my husband (who at the moment was tending his chickens) about his quest. Maj. Hanson was frankly baffled by the inquiry, corroborating my information regarding the Frazier Farm. In his reconnaissances and studies of the battlegrounds of Second Manassas he had never seen nor heard of such a grave and monument which Mr. Ledbetter said was enclosed by a wrought iron picket fence.

It soon developed that the Manassas Gazette, a predecessor of the Journal-Messenger, played an important part in this story. The Gazette had printed a poem by a local man based on his memory of an event which took place after the Second Battle of Manassas when he was a nine-year-old boy on his father's farm—namely the burial of two Confederate officers who died of wounds received during one of the engagements of that battle.

About 1880 or 81, according to Mr. Ledbetter, a copy of that issue of the Gazette found its way to the Charleston News and Courier in which the poem was reprinted due to the fact that it mentioned the name of South Carolina's Col. D. A. Ledbetter. Credit was given to the Manassas Gazette. The author of the poem was identified merely by the initials "W. A. B."

Seeing the poem, a son of the colonel got in touch with the Manassas paper to ascertain the actual name of the poet and location of the graves mentioned, the whereabouts of which had never been learned by the family over the period of almost 20 years which had elapsed since the Second Battle. Eventually the son came to Manassas and with the help of the Gazette met the poet, located the grave of his father and, with hard-earned savings, had the monument and fence erected at the gravesite on what he supposed was the Frazier Farm. Before the grave was marked it was excavated. The colonel's sword with his name on it was found and has been preserved by his family.

The second grave mentioned



AUTHOR VIEWS GRAVE — W. A. Buckley, author of the poem "Two Rebels Wearing Gray," pensively views the graves of Col. D. A. Ledbetter and another Confederate Officer, marked by monument, enclosed in an iron fence and featured in the memorable poem. Original photo loaned by the author's son, Norman Buckley of Arlington, Va.

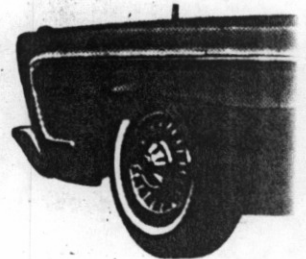
Buckley's Poem



lowing one fence line and Maj. Hanson and I another, and struck out for the cornfield. I was wearing my "Sunday shoes"—patent leather rosette-trimmed pumps which were never the same again after that jaunt through weeds, bushes and mudholes!

After what seemed hours of picking our way toward the cornfield Mr. Ledbetter called to us from a distance that he had spied the monument through the corn. He and his companion reached the gravesite ahead of us. It had been hidden from us by bushes and trees which edged the field.

The second search in 91 years for the grave of Col. D. A. Ledbetter had ended. As far as we knew it was the first time in 38 years that any of the colonel's family had found his grave. Five



of the poem "Two Rebels Wearing Gray," pensively views the graves of Col. D. A. Ledbetter and another Confederate Officer, marked by monument, enclosed in an iron fence and featured in the memorable poem. Original photo loaned by the author's son, Norman Buckley of Arlington, Va.

Buckley's Poem

Follows the poem by W. A. Buckley of Bushy Park farm, first published about 1880 or 81 in the Manassas Gazette, which twice led to the finding of the grave of Col. D. A. Ledbetter of Townville, S. C.

TWO REBELS WEARING GRAY

When Bull Run's furious battle cloud
Swept o'er these homes of ours,
When all the Southern voices "loud,"
Protested tyrants' powers,

When women shrieked and brave men cried,
To see their homes so rent,
And every true heart truly tried,
With every effort bent,

To drive the intruder from the soil,
Their quiet homes restore;
Let war and turbulence recoil,
And peace reign evermore,

'Twas then that those who donned the gray,
Strong in their country's cause,
Deserted hearthstone, sought the fray,
For "justice," not applause.

Among the brave who dared to do,
And in the carnage bled,
Before my vision there rise two
Who fell where Jackson led.

From thence were brought for safety's sake,
Beyond the battle's range;
They knew not who would vict'ry take,
Or what might be the change.

One was a parent, aged and gray,
Whose son fought by his side;
The father fell that fatal day,
The following he died.

A loving son's devoted care
Soothed his last dying breath;
One lonely watcher by the bier,
The sepulchre of death.

Beside the corpse I watched alone
(Nine summers then was I);
Requested by the son who'd gone
His dripping limbs to dry.

Beside him in that last long sleep,
D. A. Ledbetter lies,
Far from the home; the friends that keep
Our deepest memories.

They rest beneath a lone tree's shade,
(Not on the field of gore),
Where war her wildest havoc played;
For them the war was o'er.

Beneath the same tree's fragrant bloom,
In idle childish pleasure
"Not dreaming here would mark a tomb,"
I've often roamed at leisure.

There sleep beneath this quiet tree,
The same both night and day,
Two hearts as brave as hearts could be,
Two rebels wearing gray.

They've served their country, just and true,
They've fought the fight of faith,
They've done as all true men should do,
And now they rest in death.

There side by side the vigils keep
Watch o'er those forms of clay,
While there in honor's fame they sleep.
Two rebels wearing gray.

W. A. B.
(W. A. Buckley)

poet, located the grave of his father and, with hard-earned savings, had the monument and fence erected at the gravesite on what he supposed was the Frazier Farm. Before the grave was marked it was excavated. The colonel's sword with his name on it was found and has been preserved by his family.

The second grave mentioned in the poem has never been marked. Recently members of the Ledbetter family informed the writer that they had been told it was the resting place of a Capt. Norton but could give no further details concerning him.

A quick search of the records while Col. Ledbetter's grandson was here disclosed the fact that the colonel, earlier in the summer of 1862, prior to the Second Battle of Manassas, had been placed in command of four companies of the First S. C. Rifles at the Battle of Frazier's Farm which accounted for our visitor's confusion as to locale.

The records also gave accounts of Col. Ledbetter's death as a result of a wound sustained on the battlefield of Second Manassas, praising his ability as an officer, saying that he had "survived for two or three days in great suffering," but offering no clues as to where or by whom he was cared for, where he died or where he was buried.

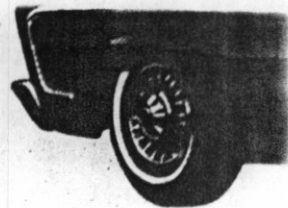
We could go no further, it seemed, without knowing the identity of "W. A. B.," the author of the poem. Mr. Ledbetter picked up our phone and called various members of his family from Florida to the Carolinas to no avail until he reached a sister whose scrapbook yielded the name "W. A. Buckley." The name Buckley rang a bell with both my husband and me.

About 18 years before, while Maj. Hanson was Coordinating Superintendent (Nat'l Park Service) at Jamestown Island, one of the engineers on the project was a Norman Buckley. On learning of my husband's work on the Manassas battlefields Mr. Buckley had disclosed the fact that he had been brought up in Prince William County on his father's farm near Catharpin.

It took merely a phone call to our good friend Jack Alvey Sr., at Catharpin to obtain the information that the Ledbetter grave, monument, iron fence and all were located in an obscure spot in a cornfield on the former Buckley farm, "Bushy Park," to which Mr. Alvey later directed us.

"Bushy Park" proved to be well-named. When we got there the owner at the time, E. B. Ussury, a Washington attorney, and his family were not at home but we decided to go on with our search anyway as it was getting late in the day. Some distance beyond the house and rough, uncultivated marshy ground we could see the cornfield but no monument!

We split up our party, Mr. Ledbetter and his friend fol-



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