



*September 30, 2016*

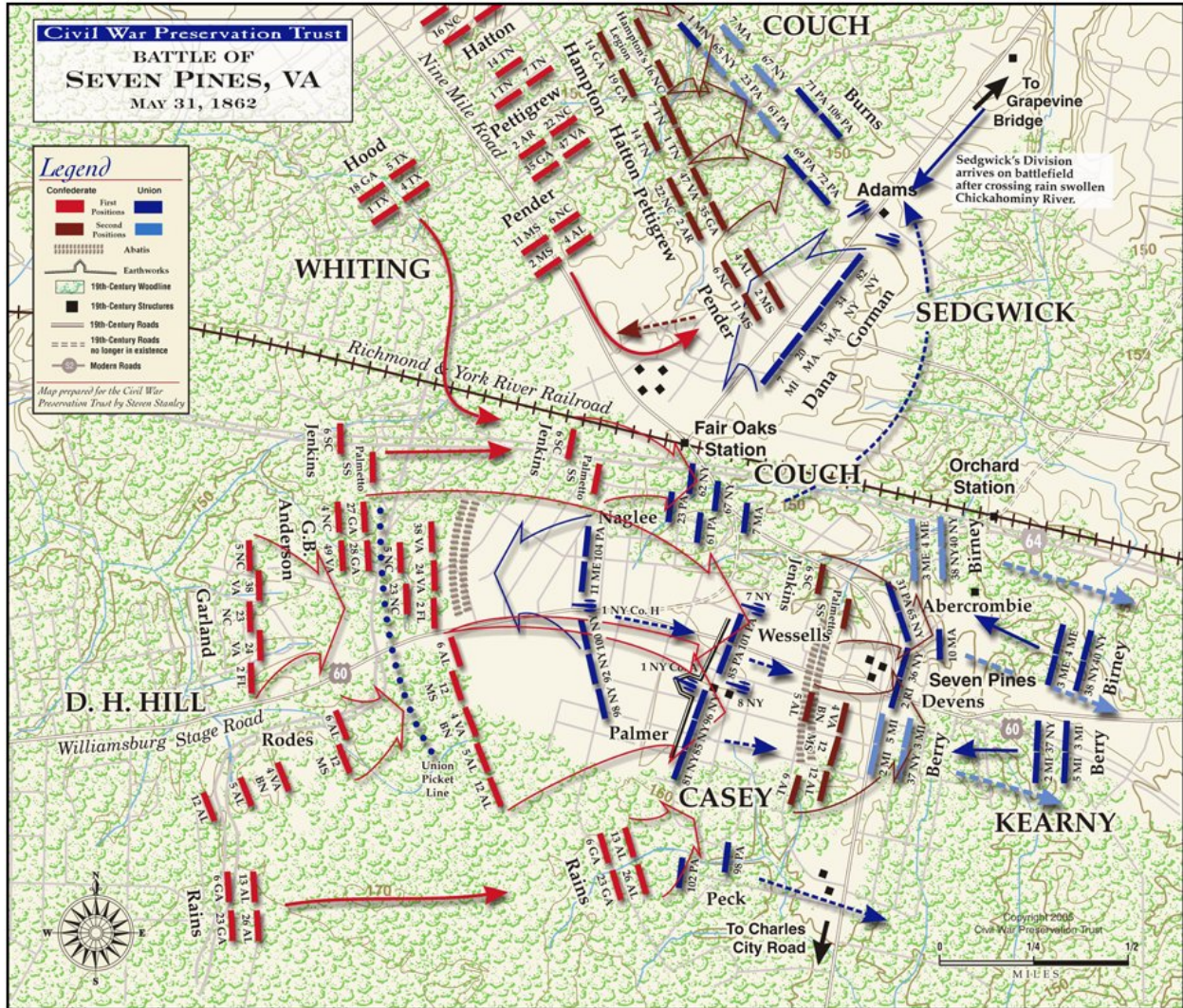
*David Robinson (Great, Great, Grandfather of the Williams brothers)*

*David Robinson was father (Papa) to our Great Grandmother Leona Robinson Jones. Leona lived until the year 1978 and was nearly 99 years of age. We were all young men, older than David would have been when he enlisted in the Civil War, upon Great Grandma's death. We all knew and loved her very much especially the times we spent up at camp listening to her tell us stories of the past out on the screened in porch.*

*David was born on August 01<sup>st</sup>, 1843 in Drumachose Parish, County Derry, Ireland. David immigrated to the United States with his family around the age of 8 years old. Birth records recovered in Ireland indicate David was 18 years old upon enlisting in the Civil War on September 17, 1861 (not 19 years old as recorded in military documents). David volunteered as a private in the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Company I being formed at Monticello, New York. Along with David also enlisting was his cousin William Robinson who was actually only 16 years old (not 19 years old per military record). It was common at this time to exaggerate age upon enlisting in order to avoid exclusion from service and/or to gain rank or standing amongst peers.*

*The men of the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment, NY were soon to be tested in battle in the spring and summer months of 1862 in Virginia. Engagements in Virginia included the Siege of Yorktown, Lee's Mill, Williamsburg, Bottoms and Turkey Island Bridge, Savage Station, Fair Oaks and Seven Days' Battle. In the early years of the war the heaviest losses for the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment were suffered during the battle of Fair*

Oaks in Virginia. David's regiment was part of Naglee's Army located near Fair Oaks Station during this battle. On May 24<sup>th</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup> a group of about 170 men from the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment were sent out scouting the Confederate forces. During these days the 56<sup>th</sup> got within four miles of the city of Richmond, being able to see the steeples of the churches and the formidable earthworks on the outskirts of the city. On May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1862 the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment was sent out on picket about one mile in advance of the Federal camp (between the Federal and Confederate camps). The 56<sup>th</sup> remained on picket until after midday on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May when the battle began. The 56<sup>th</sup> fell back to the left side of the railroad as the Confederate army advanced in force to their left, skirmishing with another group on a frontal assault towards the Union encampment. The 56<sup>th</sup> suffered heavy losses from enemy artillery set up unopposed near the Williamsburg Road.



Historians have said that the fierce fighting during this portion of the "Peninsula Campaign" could have marked the end of the Civil War years earlier had the Union forces pursued General Lee's Confederate force into Richmond, Virginia, the southern capital city at the time. Combined nearly 175,000 men were engaged at the battle of Fair Oaks (also known as Seven Pines). Both sides had suffered greatly with nearly 11-13,000 combined casualties equally split between the North and South. This was the largest battle of the war to date in the "Eastern Theater".

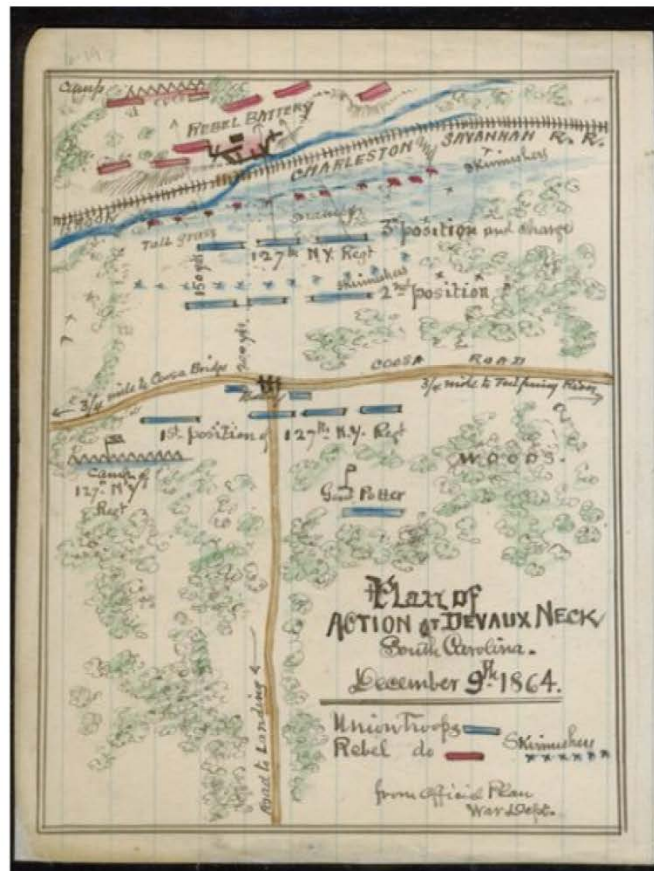




*Both David and William advanced through the ranks rather quickly considering their immigrant standing. By June of 1863 David had risen to the rank of Corporal and William was promoted to Sargent for Company I of the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment, NY (at just 18 years old). The 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment moved to the coast of the Carolinas in 1863 where they would spend the remaining years of the war serving on engagements launched from these islands off the coast of South Carolina. Troops were positioned on these islands as part of a naval blockade that the Federals had put in place to cut off supplies to the Confederate forces and their prized City of Charleston, South Carolina. Military operations launched from these islands during this time in the war were also ordered as demonstrations to confuse the Southern resistance as Union forces approached during "Sherman's March to the Sea." The goal was to cut-off the Savannah and Charleston rail road that was supplying Charleston and enabling the South to move troops as needed to and from Savannah, GA.*

*On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1864 the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment was ordered into battle along with the famed all black 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Massachusetts and others to Honey Hill, South Carolina. The Battle of Honey Hill was considered a loss for the Union forces which totaled 5,500 men, outnumbering their Confederate counter parts nearly 5 to 1 at the start of the engagement. Confederates were later reinforced to total 2,800 men as the fighting subsided. Union forces were delayed from the target location by poor weather while traveling aboard their transport vessels attempting to land at Boyd's Landing in the Broad River and by "inept (or devious)" guides hired to direct the troops to the proper location. During the Battle of Honey Hill cousin William was killed in action while standing side by side with David. On the very same day, David was promoted to Sargent of Company I, replacing William. This battle was later noted as being directed by poor generalship of Brigadier General John P. Hatch in charge of the Union forces in the field.*

Several days later, on December 06<sup>th</sup>, 1864, David Robinson was wounded in action on the first day of the three day battle at Deveau Neck, South Carolina known as the "Battle of Tulifinny Creek". During this first day of fighting at Deveau Neck a Confederate battle flag belonging to the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Georgia was captured by the 56<sup>th</sup> (later to be disputed by the 127<sup>th</sup> Regiment, NY). Even though the Confederate troops were overrun on the first day of fighting the Federals were unsuccessful in severing the Savannah and Charleston rail road at Deveau Neck during this conflict. The fighting did however seriously disrupted the South's ability to utilize this rail line during the action and for the remainder of this year at a critical time as Sherman approached Savannah, Georgia. This battle was also significant as it marked the first time the Federal Marines were used in action during the Civil War and on the opposing side, the only time an entire enrollment of students from a college were to be engaged in battle to defend the South. The students from the Citadel, a military college located near Deveau Neck, were enlisted to support the Confederate cause during this battle. Records indicate that David was not seriously wounded in the forehead and soon returned to the fight. During their stay at Deveau Neck which lasted until the end of the year, 1865 the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment, NY reported seeing large groups of Confederate troops fleeing Sherman's army now in Savannah, GA unwilling to stop to engage Federal troops encamped at Deveau Neck. This was a clear sign that the war's end was in sight as Charleston, SC would be last on the list to be brought under control by the Federals forces.







*In the spring of 1865 (following the surrender of Charleston, SC to Federal forces) David Robinson was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant by Major General John G. Foster and Charles Anderson Dana to the newly formed 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment, US Colored Troops. General Foster was an Engineer from New Hampshire who taught at West Point and was second in command during construction of Fort Sumter shortly before the war broke out. General Foster was an underwater demolition specialist writing many procedures that still maintain value in modern times. Foster played a significant role in trying to settle recently freed slaves as the war drew to a close. Charles Dana became a personnel friend of Ulysses S. Grant for much of the war after being sent by the administration to look after General Grant due to his reputation. Dana was known to President Abraham Lincoln as "the eyes for the administration for the war" after being assigned as the Assistant Secretary of War.*

*The 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment was formed in the spring of 1866 by assembling more than 800 men who were recently freed from slavery to act as a military police force in guarding Federal assets as Union troops transitioned into reconstruction at the end of the war. Records indicate that David may have been one of few white men assigned to this regiment. He was the ranking officer for approximately 80 men in Company K, 104<sup>th</sup> USCT. David did not return north with the other men of the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment, NY in October of 1865 as he stayed on for another 4 months with the 104<sup>th</sup> USCT in South Carolina.*



*As for the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment, NY, they returned north and were mustered out on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1865. In all approximately one third of the regiment did not return home from the war. There were 64 deaths due to combat and related injuries. There were nearly three and one half times this many men from the 56<sup>th</sup> that succumbed to illness and disease due to the deplorable conditions that went along with serving in the Civil War on both sides of the conflict. Once out on maneuvers the men would go for days without food, water and shelter before the logistics could get caught up to re-supply the men with the basics.*

*For David Robinson he would return to New York in 1866 after four and one half years of war, still a young man not yet 23 years of age. David would go on in life to wed three times, experiencing losses of his first two wives. He would welcome Leona Robinson (our Great Grandmother) into the world approximately 13 years after the war ended from what we believe to be his second wife (Eliza M. Whited). Leona was one of twins born by the couple. We know from stories handed down through the family that David did not share many of the details of the war with Leona but he did save and cherish everything possible upon returning from the war (his sword, uniform, medals and official military documents). These items were passed down to his beloved daughter, Leona and have most recently come into my possession. David's uniform did not survive this journey as it eventually turned to dust.*

Prepared by:

**Glen Williams (Great, Great, Grandson of David Robinson)**

1 Grant Street

Derry, NH 03038

(603) 432-3603