

# Following the Footsteps of a Soldier

*Put. Samuel S. Churchill  
20th Ohio Veteran Volunteer  
Infantry*

**David L. Mowery**

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## **Introduction**

When National Park Service *historian-emeritus* Edwin C. Bearss was asked why the need to preserve battlefields exists when all one has to do is to read a book, the former U.S. Marine, recalling his many years of experience as a battlefield guide, answered gruffly, “The only way you can get the feel of the action, realize what the brave men in Blue and Gray saw and experienced is to follow in their steps.”<sup>i</sup>

“To follow in their steps” -- these words ring true for any place where history has made its special mark, but it is especially true for those locations where an ancestor, family member, friend, relative, or even oneself has played a role in making that place memorable. To relive history by walking the same streets that ancestors strolled upon, by visiting the same houses that relatives lived in, or by tramping the fields on which past family members and friends gave their blood, sweat, and tears, all give a deeper meaning to one’s identity and one’s life. History is essentially reborn through one’s senses having been touched by the places preserved by generations come and gone.

Before September 1993, the recorded life of Samuel S. Churchill was nothing more than a couple of dates, a few relatives’ names, and a scattering of oral stories that had been passed down through the years. Other than knowing that Samuel Churchill was my ancestor, though his relationship to me was yet uncertain, little was known about the man except for the sketchy stories that my father would tell of Samuel being a soldier in the Civil War and living in Lima, Ohio, after the war. However, the stories were enough to spark an interest in learning more, and so my family and I endeavored to search for information about this old soldier of the past; little did we know that what had started as a matter of curiosity became more of an insatiable ambition to find anything and everything about a man who seemed so simple to those who had lived with him, yet appeared so great to all who have come to know him through the history he has left behind.

Ninety percent of all men in the Civil War were literate, yet most of the letters and diaries of Civil War soldiers have been lost to the ages.<sup>ii</sup> A great many of the papers that have survived no longer belong to the soldier’s descendants. Even more remain undiscovered as they lie in dusty attics, unmarked boxes, or antique shops. The personal belongings of Samuel Churchill are no exception. Though several years have been spent in searching through the collections of living descendants and through the archives of many institutions, no letters or diaries from Samuel Churchill have surfaced. Yet the wealth of information available to the public concerning the personal and military lives of these Civil War soldiers has allowed for the author to paint a detailed picture of Samuel through the eyes of those who had lived around him. With this research in hand, it became possible for the author and his family to travel to the places where Churchill had grown, lived, worked, marched, fought, and died. Consequently, a greater understanding of this man naturally came to life.

## **Life in the Midwest**

Samuel S. Churchill was born on December 19, 1842, in a clapboard house located near the center of the village of Parsippany, New Jersey. The house had been built around 1770, and had been purchased by Samuel's grandfather, William Churchill, around 1815.<sup>iii</sup>

Samuel was the first child of Charles and Harriet (Van Ness) Churchill. Harriet had come from a prominent New Jersey family. Her great-grandfather, Jacob Van Ness, had been wealthy enough to own slaves in the days when New Jersey had been a British colony. As a child, Samuel may have been told the stories of how his great-great grandfathers, Captain Thomas Doremus and Militiaman Joel Halsey, had fought for New Jersey during the American Revolution. Also in the household lived his grandfather, William, his step-grandmother, Sarah, his step-uncle David, and his two aunts, Mary and Elizabeth. Samuel's arrival had caused the home to become overcrowded, so William sold the house one-month later and moved his family to a large farm west of town.<sup>iv</sup>

When Charles and Harriet bore another child, Anna, in 1844, William Churchill sold the farm, packed up his family and their belongings, and migrated west to Ohio. The rich farmlands of Ohio's Miami Valley attracted him to a pleasant 82-acre farm about two and one-half miles west of Sidney, Ohio. One year later, Samuel's father, Charles, took his young wife and two small children and headed for Union County, Indiana. In 1845 Charles purchased a small plot of land in the village of Billingsville, Indiana. A year later, Samuel's younger brother, William N. Churchill, was born.<sup>v</sup>

Charles taught Samuel the ways of Indiana farm life, but Charles could not prepare his son for the tragedies that life brought to people of those times. When he was 10 years old, his mother passed away on February 22, 1853. Charles buried his wife in a cemetery a few miles west of Billingsville.<sup>vi</sup>

In 1856, three years after Harriet's death, Charles married Ellen Howard, a resident of Billingsville. That same year, Charles and his new wife moved their family back to the farm of Samuel's aging grandfather in Sidney, Ohio. Samuel was able to help his father and grandfather tend to the farm, all the while growing into a young man during a time of increasing political turbulence.<sup>vii</sup>

## **From Farmer to Soldier**

The bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, sealed the fate of Samuel's young nation as it sent a shock wave throughout the North and South. Thousands of volunteers flocked to both sides as the country became embroiled in a deadly Civil War. Though most Northerners thought that the war would end quickly in 1861, the reality of the Northern army's bloody defeat at First Bull Run on July 21, 1861, forced President Abraham Lincoln to call for 75,000 volunteers to fight for the Union cause.<sup>viii</sup>

As the winds of war blew over the fertile, quiet countryside near Sidney, Ohio, the thoughts of duty, devotion to country, community, and honor motivated the common farm-hands of Shelby County to join in the fight for their cause -- that of preserving the Union that their forefathers had established, and maintaining the lives and homes they had built for themselves. Whether it was out of love for the country that his ancestors had helped to form through the American Revolution, or whether it was from the pressure to do his duty as a citizen of Sidney to protect his land, his family, and his lifestyle, one may never know, but Samuel Churchill 'knew the time had come for action.'<sup>ix</sup>

When local newspapers such as the *Lima Weekly Gazette* and the *Sidney Journal* advertised that Company F, 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, would be recruiting in their region, the men of Shelby County responded to the call with vigor. On September 16, 1861, recruiting officers for the 20th Ohio Infantry visited Sidney to sign up volunteers to fill the regiment's ranks. On that same summer day 18-year old Samuel Churchill made the decision to leave the tranquil farm life behind him to take on the glory of becoming a soldier. Along with Samuel came his brother-in-law, John C. Stipp, who owned a farm nearby. They traveled the two and one-half miles of dirt roads into town, there to partake in the "momentous act of signing the list."<sup>x</sup>

A crowd had gathered in Sidney's public square. Men and boys waited in line at the Shelby County Courthouse to sign the muster roll for three-years' service with the 20th Ohio Infantry. Captain W. W. Updegraff, the commander of Company F, 20th Ohio, when it had been a three-months regiment, urged the men of Shelby County to sign up and do their part to help put down the rebellion. Upon reaching the town square, John and Samuel met up with many men they had known since childhood. Among those young hearts anxious to join the cause that day was Edmund E. Nutt, a native of Sidney. Born on October 20, 1837, to Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Nutt in a small cabin located one mile north of Sidney, Ohio, Edmund had grown up tending to his father's farm. After teaching at the Pemberton, Ohio, schoolhouse for four years, he had enrolled at Ohio Wesleyan College in Delaware, Ohio, in the fall of 1860. E. E. Nutt had responded to the first call for volunteers in April 1861 by joining for three-months' service with the 15th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. The regiment saw no action before its men were discharged on Aug 28, 1861, at Wapakoneta, Ohio. Edmund had returned to his father's farm north of Sidney and had resumed teaching, but after being a citizen for only two weeks, he resigned his post to rejoin the army. Now he stood as a veteran among the throng of bright-eyed raw recruits at the Shelby County Courthouse.<sup>xi</sup>

Samuel Churchill enlisted as a private, signing his name upon the muster roll and changing his life forever. John C. Stipp signed up with the rank of corporal in the same company. A brass band and a multitude of people escorted the new recruits to the depot. Boarding a train for Camp Chase, Ohio, the 20th's designated rendezvous point, Samuel, John, Edmund, and other Shelby County men departed from their families and friends. Samuel left behind his father Charles, his aunt Mary, his grandfather William, his brother Willie, and his sister Anna. For Anna, the day was certainly an emotional one, since she not only had to say goodbye to her brother, but also had to wish farewell to her husband, John Stipp. That day no one knew how long the war would last, and no one knew for certain if they would see each other again. As the train pulled out of the station, many of the recruits realized with "hearts down in their boots and a cold sweat" that they were soldiers, "no longer free to follow their own will."<sup>xii</sup>

As the train pulled into the station at Columbus, Ohio, the men of Shelby County were greeted by more cheers from boys and men gathered about the depot. The recruits were hauled by wagon to Camp Chase, a large Federal military installation located four miles west of Columbus. The camp consisted of wooden huts lined up in rows upon open fields. Several other regiments besides the 20th Ohio Infantry were also rendezvousing at the time Samuel Churchill arrived. "The soldiers turned out to see the new recruits come by carriage, and offered us their salutations in the form of comments on our personal appearance that were not too flattering," recalled Private Henry Otis Dwight of Company D, 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. "Our quarters were dismal enough -- bare shanties, with rough board platforms on which we might lie down and sleep. The delights of martial life were once and forever driven from our visions as we found ourselves huddled together between the bare walls with absolutely nothing that we could call our own save our carpetbags." The first meal served at Uncle Sam's expense "had the merit of frugality," so the soldiers were quick to head for the sutler's tent to buy something more to eat. Afterwards, the recruits filed into their quarters for the evening; for many of these men, the first night at Camp Chase was a sleepless one.<sup>xiii</sup>

Among those sleeping near Churchill that night was 18-year old Private Henry Otis Dwight of Company D, 20th Ohio Infantry. Born on June 3, 1843, in Constantinople, Henry was the son of a prominent Congregationalist minister and author. The family immigrated to the United States just after the bombardment of Fort Sumter and settled in New Jersey. Shortly thereafter Henry Dwight moved to Delaware, Ohio, to live with relatives, and he enrolled at Ohio Wesleyan College. There he joined a local militia group called the "Lenape Greys" commanded by Captain McElroy, a local lawyer. When the call came for volunteers in the wake of the Battle of First Manassas, Dwight and Captain McElroy left the militia in order to join up with the 20th Ohio Infantry on September 10, 1861. Dwight's reminiscences of his war experiences would become an important source in depicting the service of not only his regiment, the 20th Ohio Infantry, but also of the common soldier who fought the Civil War.<sup>xiv</sup>

For the next few days Samuel Churchill and his new comrades became acquainted while the Camp Chase officials placed the chores of being a soldier upon them. One of those chores included the camp surgeons examining the recruits to determine their physical soundness. Samuel was described by his attending surgeon as being 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighing about 130 pounds; he had light (sandy-blonde) hair, gray eyes, and a dark complexion. Samuel had a

partially-hared upper lip and cleft palate that he had been marked with since childbirth. This deformity caused his speech to sound nasal and imperfect. His lower jaw was also “somewhat deformed, having very little depth to the chin.” Though Samuel was scarred by facial birthmarks, his physical prowess allowed him to pass the examination. On September 22, 1861, he and his comrades were officially mustered in as Company F of the 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. At that time each man was presented with a suit of dark blue clothes, a hat, a pair of shoes, a pair of stockings, underclothing, and a cap. Since some of the clothing did not fit properly, the men bartered with each other to get the correct sizes. Every soldier also received a knapsack, haversack, and blanket.<sup>xv</sup>

During their stay at Camp Chase, the new recruits of the 20th began forming friendships that would stand the test of time, though at first the men had some minor diversities to overcome. By the time the organization of the 20th Ohio had completed, nine different counties in Ohio would be represented among the regiment’s ranks. The men were, by trade, lawyers, merchants, farmers, mechanics, and physicians. Though coming from many hometowns scattered throughout Ohio, and having occupations that varied widely, the soldiers of the 20th did not allow these differences to overshadow their common goal. Lieutenant-Colonel Manning Force, the regiment’s most beloved commander during the war, stated that his soldiers’ “enthusiasm and fire came from the feeling that like the crusaders of old, they were engaged in a sacred cause.” This “cause” would ultimately bind them together when faced with difficult, and often perilous, situations in the field.<sup>xvi</sup>

On October 16, 1861, the 20th Ohio Infantry, only seven companies strong, left Camp Chase and traveled by rail to Camp Dennison, Ohio, located 16 miles northeast of Cincinnati. Staying there only two days, the men were marched across the Ohio River to the City Barracks, also known as Newport Barracks, where the men “lived in high style as becomes dwellers in a city,” remarked Henry Otis Dwight of Company D. While quartered at Newport Barracks, Samuel Churchill and his comrades were engaged in guarding the barracks, the U.S. Marine Hospital, and the battery atop Observatory Hill in Cincinnati.<sup>xvii</sup>

On October 21 the understrength regiment was ordered to occupy Camp King, a small camp of instruction located two miles south of Covington, Kentucky, near the present-day intersection of Lincoln Avenue and 32nd Street. It was at Camp King that Churchill learned the art of a soldier. Samuel and his fellow soldiers of the 20th were taught military discipline through constant drill. Their routine, first established at Camp King but performed throughout the war, except when on the march, consisted of the following duties:

- \* 6:00am -- The drums beat Reveille to awaken the men from their tents. Soldiers buttoned up the last buttons on their coats while en route to form in line for roll call.
- \* 6:30am -- The company divided into groups of five or six men to conduct squad drill.
- \* 7:30am -- Breakfast was served. Meals throughout the day consisted of bean soup, boiled pork, and coffee.
- \* 8:00am -- The regiment answered to sick call, at which time any ill man would go to the surgeon for treatment.
- \* 8:30am -- The officers detailed camp guards, an act called “guard mounting,” and those men remaining in camp would clean their respective company quarters and streets.

- \* 9:00am - 11:00am -- Company drill was performed.
- \* Noon -- Roll was called again, following which the soldiers were served dinner.
- \* 1:00pm - 3:00pm -- Regimental, or battalion, drill was conducted. The regiment also spent some of this time engaged in skirmish drill.
- \* 4:30pm -- The regiment marched in a dress parade, and afterwards another roll was called.
- \* 6:00pm -- Supper was served.
- \* 9:00pm -- “Tattoo,” or the last roll call, was made before the men bedded down for the night.
- \* 9:30pm -- “Lights out” was sounded by three taps of a bass drum, after which time a soldier was not permitted talk to comrades or leave his lamp burning. However, if a soldier had the “excitement” of evening guard duty, they had the work of staying awake and alert until relieved by sentry details the next morning.

Sergeant Henry Otis Dwight, having been promoted on October 9th because of his previous experience at drilling the “Lenape Greys,” subsequently became one of the drill-masters of the regiment. He commented that while the 20th Ohio trained at Camp King, “it was quite fashionable for the ladies from Cincinnati to drive out in the afternoon to see their Parade or their Drill.”<sup>xviii</sup>

In addition to becoming experts at drilling to Hardee’s tactics, Churchill and his comrades became skilled handlers of the Harper’s Ferry rifle-muskets that had been issued to them just after their arrival at Camp King. They used these guns for drill, guard duty, or target practice. The men, nevertheless, were anxious to use their new rifles against an enemy that many had never seen. Private Osborn H. Oldroyd of Company E, 20th Ohio Infantry, wrote of his own anticipation for battle: “...While camped in the rear of Covington, Kentucky, we thought that the war would be over and our names not be spread upon our banners as the victors in a battle.” However, in time, the 20th Ohio would receive the opportunity to experience the real purpose for its weapons.<sup>xix</sup>

The first commander of the 20th Ohio, Colonel Charles Whittlesey, would eventually give the regiment its first chance to see the Rebels, but not right away. Though Churchill and the rest of the men declared Whittlesey as the “Father of the regiment,” during most of the time they were stationed at Camp King, Colonel Whittlesey was not to be found among them. Brigadier-General Ormsby Mitchel had appointed Whittlesey to his staff as Chief Engineer in September 1861, about the same time that the regiment had been mustered in at Camp Chase. Whittlesey was then assigned to engineer and manage the construction of the fortifications to protect Cincinnati. Though the Colonel sometimes drew soldiers from the 20th Ohio to help build the entrenchments south of Covington and Newport, Kentucky, his men hardly ever saw him. Sergeant Henry Dwight of Company D remarked, “Colonel Whittlesey was a fine old man whom we all respected, but whom we had seen but little as he was on staff duty most of the time when we were learning the soldier’s art.” Another member of Company D, Private David Harrison Thomas, said only that “Colonel Whittelsy [*sic*] ... was a brave looking old feller.”<sup>xx</sup>

Charles Whittlesey had originally been reluctant about becoming a colonel of volunteer troops, since he much preferred the duty of the military engineer, being that it was more closely related

to his occupation before the war. Whittlesey had been born in the town of Southington, Connecticut, in 1808, and five years later he and his family had moved to Talmadge, Ohio. He had been raised as a farmer, but he had attended school regularly since the age of four. In 1827 Charles Whittlesey had been appointed a cadet to West Point Military Academy, where he had made friends with a fellow cadet named Ormsby Mitchel, who had saved Whittlesey's life during a prison break incident at the academy. Whittlesey had graduated from West Point in 1831 and had been given the position of Brevet Second Lieutenant in the 5th US Infantry, as a member of which he had served in the Black Hawk War in 1832. Shortly after the war, he had resigned his commission and had been appointed to the geological survey of Ohio in 1837, which had lasted two years. The results of his work had revealed the locations of vast mineral deposits throughout northeastern Ohio. This discovery had led to the rapid growth of industry in that part of the state. In 1847 Whittlesey had been appointed to conduct similar geological surveys of the Lake Superior basin and the upper Mississippi River valley. In 1858 the State of Wisconsin had employed him to perform a geological survey of Wisconsin, which Whittlesey had successfully completed by 1861. Five days after the fall of Fort Sumter in April 1861, at the age of 52, Whittlesey had joined the Governor of Ohio's staff as an assistant quartermaster general for three-month's service. He had been sent to West Virginia as a Military Engineer and had seen action in the Battle of Scary Creek, West Virginia, on July 17, 1861, where he had displayed "great gallantry under fire." In September 1861 he had been appointed colonel of the 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, but having been trained as an engineer, Whittlesey was detailed by his old friend Brigadier-General Ormsby M. Mitchel to be Chief Engineer in Department of the Ohio. Whittlesey left the responsibility of training and disciplining the new recruits to the Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment, Manning F. Force.<sup>xxi</sup>

Many of Samuel Churchill's commanding officers were learning to be soldiers for the first time besides learning to become leaders. Lieutenant-Colonel Manning Ferguson Force was no exception. The 20th Ohio's chaplain, John Alderman, remarked, "All men have to learn to be soldiers; when they come into the army they are like children and have to be watched and looked after just as you do with children at home." For Manning Force, this was his first experience at being a soldier, and yet he had been assigned to prepare other men for war. Since Colonel Whittlesey had been detached to oversee the construction of the Cincinnati defenses, Lieutenant-Colonel Force had been left as acting commander of 20th Ohio. Force would now have to overcome his own lack of military knowledge in order to properly teach his men to survive in battle.<sup>xxii</sup>

Manning Force had been a successful Ohio lawyer before the war began. Born in 1824, Force had been raised in Washington, D.C. He had graduated with a law degree from Harvard Law School, and soon thereafter he had moved to Ohio to set up his practice. When the war came, he joined as major of the 20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in August 1861, and in September of the same year he was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment. Being the acting field commander for the men of the 20th Ohio, it was his duty to lead the men in drills and parades.<sup>xxiii</sup> One of Samuel Churchill's comrades, Henry Otis Dwight, spoke for the rest of the men in the regiment when he described their Lieutenant-Colonel:

A spare grave man with an eye that penetrated to the spine of a culprit, was in the habit of appearing on the drill ground and caused no small discomfort to both drill-masters and men by so doing, for he was always critical, and when he spoke he made every one feel that his day of



reckoning had come. He took the deepest interest in our welfare, and so was very strict with our follies. We all respected him for his justice and manliness, and before long we had learned to love him like a father.<sup>xxiv</sup>

When not drilling and marching, Samuel Churchill helped to guard three or four of Colonel Whittlesey's forts that covered the main roads leading to Covington and Cincinnati from the south. Among those fortifications that the 20th Ohio manned from the autumn of 1861 through the winter of 1861-62 was the Tunnel Battery. Overlooking Camp King, the Tunnel Battery was a key point in the defenses of Cincinnati, since it protected the strategic Louisville & Nashville Railroad as it passed under a hill two miles south of Covington. The battery also covered the road that followed the west bank of the Licking River. Men from the 20th Ohio were often sent to guard Fort Mitchel, named in honor of Ormsby M. Mitchel. This strong set of earthworks located two and one-half miles southwest of Covington protected the direct road to Louisville, Kentucky. A detachment from the regiment was sent every week to guard each of these places. During the long, dull hours in the forts, the men often engaged in target practice to keep themselves amused. Along the route between the forts and Camp King lay a grog shop which enticed many a man to slip from camp to get a drink of whiskey. When one of the soldiers had been caught attempting to do so, and was subsequently punished in front of the whole regiment, the trips to the grog shop abruptly ended. "The freeborn American has much ado to learn subordination to military command," Sergeant Henry Dwight later wrote.<sup>xxv</sup>

Samuel Churchill lay many hours in camp surrounded by the hills of Northern Kentucky. Camp King was designed with tents arranged in regular rows, with each company occupying two sides of a "street." Each company of the 20th Ohio took pride in keeping their respective "streets" clean. During the day the regiment often engaged in bayonet exercise, which became popular as a gymnastic sport among the men. In the evenings they spent their free time singing songs, telling tales, and playing cards. Gambling, of course, was strictly prohibited. When the drum sounded "lights out," Samuel would lie down for the night, having the ground for his bed, and being cramped together with 13 of his comrades in the same tent.<sup>xxvi</sup>

As the approach of winter came in late 1861, the regiment received its compliment of soldiers to make it full strength. Company H marched into Camp King in November, and Companies I and K filled the ranks with their arrivals in January and early February, 1862. The weather turned cold in November, which made camp life at bit miserable for the men. Private David Harrison Thomas of Company D summed up the experience in a sentence from his diary: "Camp King, Nov. 28, 1861: ... We had a little snow hear last Sunday and then it rained. It is very muddy hear [*sic*] now, we are gitting [*sic*] a little up to soulders [*sic*] living." The morale among the 20th Ohio was also declining, as David Thomas commented in his diary on December 11, 1861, "We are gitting [*sic*] tired a garding [*sic*] these batteries ... I would rather go to Columbus Kentucky and have a strugel [*sic*] with the rebbles [*sic*]." <sup>xxvii</sup>

Some of the men in the 20th Ohio received their wish to have a chance to engage the enemy. On December 26, 1861, Colonel Whittlesey, with Companies A and B, embarked from Camp King on an expedition to Owen and Gallatin Counties in Kentucky, located 35 miles southwest of Cincinnati. Companies D and G followed two days day later. Their mission, as arranged by Brigadier-General Melancthon Smith Wade, was to present a show of force in the region around Warsaw, a town known to be of pro-Southern persuasion. They were also ordered to repress any

rebellious movement in that area. Though they broke up a Confederate recruiting station, arrested 10 citizens, and took possession of a 6-pound cannon and small quantities of arms, the four companies never had the satisfaction of “seeing the elephant.” Two companies, having accomplished their objective, returned to Camp King in early January. Colonel Whittlesey and the rest of his expeditionary force arrived back on February 10, 1862. Although it had been a change of pace from the daily routines of camp life, the march to Warsaw, Kentucky, did not quench the men’s thirst for a fight.<sup>xxviii</sup>

For Samuel Churchill and Company F, who had not been given the benefit of participating in the expedition to Warsaw, Kentucky, life in camp continued as usual. On January 12, 1862, the six companies of the 20th Ohio that had remained at Camp King were moved to Newport Barracks, Kentucky, for winter quarters. The barracks had been built several decades before at the mouth of the Licking River, directly across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, in present-day General Taylor Park. The uncleanliness of the soldiers’ quarters made many of the men wish that they were back at Camp King. Private David Harrison Thomas wrote in his diary on January 18th, “We are now in Cincinnati Barracks. The most of the Boys don’t like it hear [*sic*]. I would rather be in our tents in camp. It is much better to be in camp a Sleeping [*sic*] on the ground then it is hear [*sic*].”<sup>xxix</sup>

During its stay at Newport Barracks, the regiment continued to guard the batteries and fortifications around Covington and Newport. Samuel and his comrades were detailed for guard duty at the U.S. Marine Hospital in Cincinnati, the site of which today lies within the Interstate-71 median just north of the 6th Street overpass. Detachments from the 20th Ohio were also sent twice a week to man the Observatory Hill Battery, which stood at what is presently 1109 Carney Street in Cincinnati’s Mount Adams neighborhood. This battery offered excellent views of the Ohio River and of Northern Kentucky. Private David Thomas of Company D related the procedure of guard duty in Cincinnati: “We still gard [*sic*] the Batteries and forts. One company will go and gard [*sic*] them for three days and then another company will releave [*sic*] them. We cross the Ohio river and go through Covington.”<sup>xxx</sup>

At last the day came that many men in the 20th had longed for -- the regiment was to join with Major-General Ulysses S. Grant’s army heading for the front. On February 11, 1862, the regiment, now 10 companies strong, boarded the steamers *Emma Duncan* and *Doctor Kane*, their destination unknown. Since it had not been told to them where they were going, the soldiers thought of terrible things that might lie ahead, but most likely would not come to pass. It took 26 wagons two trips to haul all of the regiment’s belongings from Camp King to the riverfront. By the end of the war, the 20th Ohio would manage to place everything they needed into one wagon! A large crowd gathered along both banks of the Ohio River to see the 20th O.V.I. off. Scattered amongst the cheers from the people could be heard a few spectators on the Kentucky side yelling “Hurrah for Jeff Davis” whenever they had the chance to get within shouting distance of Samuel Churchill and the other men. The transports pulled away from shore and steamed down the Ohio. It would be the last time that Samuel would see Northern soil for two years.<sup>xxxi</sup>

## **The First Sight of War**

Two days later the boats arrived at Paducah, Kentucky, under a constantly-changing mix of flurries, rain, and sleet which froze the men's clothes to the decks of the transports. The steamboats were so crowded that most of the enlisted men were forced to sleep out on the decks with no shelter from the bad weather. Soldiers stood by the smokestacks to get warm. The steamers turned up the Cumberland River and headed southward.<sup>xxxii</sup>

At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon of February 14, 1862, the transports carrying the 20th Ohio neared a bend in the Cumberland River about five miles downstream of Dover, Tennessee. Sergeant Henry Dwight recalled what happened next: "Every heart beat quicker as we heard plainly enough the faint distant boom of cannon! We gathered in little groups and talked in low excited tones. We were for the first time within hearing distance of a battle!" The steamers were tied on the west bank of the river about two miles downstream from Fort Donelson. Peering in the direction of the sounds from farther upstream, Samuel Churchill saw the Union flotilla bombarding Fort Donelson and contesting the Confederate water batteries. "The fleet was there under our eyes bombarding the fort," wrote Sergeant Dwight. "The rebels were just beyond! We were at the front at last!" Soon the remnants of the lost naval battle made their way in the river past the regiment's steamers. Broken timbers, mattresses, and a mangled corpse floated by to quickly remind the soldiers of the 20th Ohio that this was not play.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

The regiment was ordered to stay for the night on board the steamboats, which remained moored to the shore below Fort Donelson. "To our no small amazement and horror [the cooks] were allowed to take fuel from the nearest fence. This act established the standard of [behavior] for an enemy's country!" recalled Henry Dwight. In preparation for whatever the next day would bring, each man received 40 cartridges. "At last we were soldiers, for hitherto our cartridges had been empty, but now they contained the emblems and instruments of our calling. No man in the Regiment failed to stand an inch higher in his boots on receiving this part of his equipment," remembered Dwight. Samuel Churchill would have to take about 50 pounds of equipment into battle. The standard infantryman carried upon his back a 30-pound knapsack, a 4-pound haversack, a 1-pound canteen, and 4 pounds of other accouterments, while he slung a 10-pound rifle-musket over his shoulder. The expected march on February 15th would not be an easy task for many of the men in the 20th Ohio.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

At daybreak the regiment disembarked and formed into columns of fours. Major-General Lew Wallace, commander of the division to which the 20th Ohio had been assigned, led the brigade along a cart path leading from the riverbank. Colonel Charles Whittlesey rode at the head of the

20th as it marched along the path and went deep into the woods. A thin layer of snow covered the ground. Samuel and his comrades marched 10 miles in three and one-half hours, and “all came in tired and hot,” since part of the time they had double-quickened.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Along the way the regiment passed by Major-General Ulysses S. Grant, who was riding toward the river to consult with Commodore Foote. He appeared as if he did not seem to know at the time that a battle was taking place on the army’s right flank. Sergeant Dwight of Company D described Grant as “a very ordinary looking man, dressed in old clothes and without a sign of rank about him.” Private Osborn Oldroyd of Company E wrote that Grant carried a “stern and care-worn, but determined,” face. Due to the effects of acoustic shadow, the men in the 20th were unaware that a battle had been raging for over an hour until they heard distant volleys and small popping noises nearby. Just after 9 o’clock that morning, the regiment began seeing “strange-looking men” who called themselves sharpshooters and who enjoyed telling the passing troops tales of the rebels they had “popped over.” “We wondered if it was a necessary part of the sharpshooter’s duty to be loafing around the woods most distant from the scene of hostilities,” Henry Dwight quipped. As the 20th Ohio marched onward, tramping along dirt roads twisting among the thickly wooded hills south of Fort Donelson, no one in the regiment knew where they were or where they were going. The volume of the battle increased as they pressed forward.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

They suddenly came to an open wood on a hill where several regiments were lying at rest along the Wynns Ferry Road. Farther down the road, Churchill heard a “most deafening sound of musketry” emanating from a deep valley, heavily forested. Every man became nervous at the first sight of the smoke-enshrouded valley. Sergeant Dwight recalled the scene:

It is the unknown that terrifies and our feeling our way into this battle in the way that we did was to all of us one of the most trying experiences of the whole war. Where we were, what we were going to do, what the bearing upon our army or the rebels of the tremendous roar of sound in our front -- all these problems were constantly coming before our minds and as constantly being referred to the future for an answer.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The order came for the regiment to halt and remove knapsacks. Samuel Churchill laid his knapsack into a pile guarded by one of the soldiers in the regiment. He then returned to his place in line, and the regiment moved forward to a position in reserve behind the 8th Missouri Infantry. Sergeant Dwight recalled the moment when the men discovered for the first time that they were under fire. “The air was full of objects that flew like birds, and seemed to whisper softly as they went. When once or twice we heard these flying objects hit trees with a sharp crack, it occurred to us that they were bullets from rebel guns.” Then out from the sky came a sound that Samuel had not heard before. “There was a rushing swish through the air and an explosion behind us, and we knew that we had encountered our first shell from the enemy,” wrote Sergeant Dwight.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Wounded men, bleeding and broken, poured into the 20th Ohio from all directions. They came walking on their own, or carried by comrades, or lying on stretchers. Accompanying the wounded were stragglers who hurriedly tried to get as far away from the fighting as possible. Disconcerted refugees passed by the regiment yelling, “Boys, it is no use, they are driving us all the time.” Another said, “The 31st Indiana is no more a regiment, only 50 men are left,” and yet another cried, “The 18th Illinois is all hacked to pieces.” Staff officers dashed about to find

regiments they had been sent to look for. Then, all of a sudden, Colonel Whittlesey ordered his regiment out of the Wynns Ferry Road just as the Chicago Board of Trade Battery came galloping up in great haste. The artillery horses nearly trampled over some of the men in the 20th Ohio before they could move to allow the battery to rush to the front. Moments later a raging staff officer led another regiment forward, and with a rousing cheer, it moved past the 20th Ohio and disappeared into the woods.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Samuel Churchill and the other soldiers of the 20th stood firmly in line throughout this trying ordeal. Not a man left the ranks. Major-General Lew Wallace went up to the regiment and spoke a few words of encouragement to them, and the 20th Ohio replied with a hearty cheer. The word was passed that the regiment could build fires and make coffee, while Colonel Whittlesey began to calmly eat his lunch. "It was then that the ice was broken," recalled Henry Dwight, "and we all fell to: Hard tack and fat pork never tasted so delicious, and soon even a buzz of conversation and hearty laughter mingled with the noise of the fight." Soon the musketry and cannon fire died away, and the tweeting of birds and the calm of the forest returned. The strange lull in the fighting was unsettling to the soldiers, however, as the question lingered in their minds whether or not the battle was over for the day.<sup>xl</sup>

The question was answered about 3:30pm when the sounds of battle came round again. The firing steadily intensified in the direction of the heavily-wooded valley. Colonel Whittlesey ordered the men to their feet, and they stood up with excitement, formed in line of battle, and loaded weapons. The regiment moved forward as a reserve for the regiments directly in front of them. As the bullets whizzed by and the shells screamed overhead, the troops in their front fired, cheered wildly, and then pushed farther into the woods. "All that we had done was to follow on breathless, like a parcel of small boys after a brass band," remembered Sergeant Dwight. "The sound of the musketry and the cheering and the sharp hiss of the bullets or their pattering among the trees was all that distinguished our march through the thickets from one of the old-time battalion drills of Camp King." As the regiment continued steadily forward, Samuel Churchill noticed a few dead men scattered upon the forest floor.<sup>xli</sup>

Colonel Whittlesey ordered the regiment to march off to the right and camp for the night on the frozen battlefield. Throughout the night men from other regiments scampered about the 20th's camp searching for their commands. Samuel and his comrades were full of emotion as they huddled around campfires and recounted their first sight of war. Osborn Oldroyd, Company E, remarked that "it is quite common to hear soldiers who have never seen the first fight say they are afraid they will never get any of the glories of this war. They never 'spoil' for the second fight, but get glory enough in the first to last them."<sup>xlii</sup>

The next morning, February 16, the 20th Ohio readied itself to march at daylight as the advance regiment in the attack column. However, the orders to move never came. Suddenly, a wave of cheers drifted toward the regiment. The 20th cheered in order, and the triumph was passed on to the regiments in the rear. This cheering occurred several times before Samuel and his comrades finally heard what it was all about -- the garrison of Fort Donelson had surrendered!<sup>xliii</sup>

Major-General Grant detailed the 20th Ohio to escort about half of the 12,000 Confederate soldiers captured at Fort Donelson to various prison camps in the North. The regiment marched

to the Dover Landing where a large contingent of unarmed Confederates awaited its arrival. This was the first time that Samuel Churchill and many of his fellow soldiers had seen the “rebels” up close. Sergeant Henry Dwight remembered the scene: “The rebels were a very rough looking lot, their long uncombed hair and their butternut colored homespun clothes giving them a dirty appearance which we deemed evidence of inferior qualities. Yet there is no doubt of their pluck in the fight.” One company of the regiment was assigned to guard three Confederate regiments, totaling about 1,600 men, who were placed upon a steamer. Rebel officers were forced to give up their side arms until arriving at their point of destination in the North. The number of Confederate officers alone outnumbered the 20th Ohio regiment. The flotilla of steamboats bearing the regiment and their 6,000 prisoners left from Dover, Tennessee, on February 17.<sup>xiv</sup>

As the steamers passed the river town of Eddyville, Kentucky, the captain and crew of one of the boats, being Southern sympathizers themselves, turned their transport toward the shore in an attempt to let their human cargo escape. In the midst of this event a crowd of citizens along the bank cheered for Jeff Davis and cursed the Yankees. Some of the Confederates on board, members of the 8th Kentucky (CSA) Infantry, had come from Eddyville or the surrounding region. The Rebel prisoners’ shouts of joy to friends and family on the shore soon turned to sad farewells after Captain McElroy of Company D placed a pistol to the head of the boat pilot, which persuaded the crew to put the boat back on course.<sup>xv</sup>

The 20th Ohio companies were scattered in taking their prisoners to various prison camps throughout the North, including ones at Boston, Cairo, Saint Louis, and Cincinnati. Company F dropped off its prisoners at Alton, Illinois. By late February 1862, Companies A, F, and I had relinquished their prisoners to their overseers and were encamped in East Saint Louis, Missouri, “awaiting orders in an unhealthy campground.” Meanwhile, the rest of the regiment was split amongst such places as Columbus, Ohio, Camp Douglas, Illinois, Boston, Massachusetts, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Cairo, Illinois. Confederate generals Simon Bolivar Buckner and Lloyd Tilghman were escorted to Boston by a detachment of the 20th Ohio.<sup>xvi</sup>

## **Soldiering in Tennessee**

On March 4, 1862, Companies A, F, and I took the steamer *Continental* from East Saint Louis to Cairo, Illinois, where it stopped briefly to let on more of the regiment. The steamer then proceeded up the Tennessee River. Major-General William Tecumseh Sherman was a passenger on the *Continental* at the same time the 20th Ohio was on board. “The impression was widely circulated at that time that he was crazy,” Henry Dwight commented in his memoirs. “We watched him askance, seeing in all of his quick and nervous motions signs that the Government had made a mistake in trusting him in the field.” Sherman told the men of the 20th that they were a “bunch of dandies” while he criticized the manners and customs of the regiment. The feelings conveyed between Sherman and the 20th Ohio would change dramatically for the better through the course of the war.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Some 75 other steamboats chugged alongside the *Continental* as they bore troops into the heart of the South. In the evenings bands on board would play tunes from home, or once in a while they would render a version of “Dixie Land.” At times the whole flotilla would break out in a cheering session as the men on board “shouted from sheer joy at the indescribable sense of power which belongs to the sight of masses of troops in a time of triumphant progress.” They arrived at Savannah, Tennessee, on March 12. Lieutenant-Colonel Manning Force later recalled, “Continual traveling on boats and cars had so affected the health of the men, that while we lay at Savannah, on the Tennessee, the 20th went by the name of ‘the sick regiment.’ But when the sick regiment went out to drill, the rest stopped to look on.” After a brief excursion in the direction of Eastport, the regiment’s boat landed at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, where the 20th Ohio disembarked. It was here that Colonel Charles Whittlesey took charge of the 3rd Brigade of Lew Wallace’s Division, leaving command of the 20th Ohio upon Lieutenant-Colonel Force. The 20th Ohio was officially banded with another Ohio regiment that would accompany it throughout the rest of the war -- the 78th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, led by Colonel Mortimer Leggett. Manning Force wrote after the war that the “20th and 78th were wedded during the war” and that Mortimer Leggett became the “father-in-law” of the 20th Ohio boys. These two regiments would be engaged in many a battle and campaign together.<sup>xlviii</sup>

On March 23 Samuel Churchill and the men of the 20th, along with the rest of the 3rd Brigade, marched from Pittsburg Landing to Crump’s Landing to guard the flank and rear of Grant’s army. The movement from Crump’s Landing to Purdy on March 30 was a “mere pleasure trip, for we saw no rebels and found many good things to see in the country,” wrote Sergeant Dwight.

They camped in the fields near Purdy, Tennessee, and then returned the next day to Adamsville, Tennessee, a village located about five miles from Crump's Landing.

On Sunday morning, April 6, firing was heard in the direction of Shiloh Church, which lay at least six miles away from their camp at Adamsville. Sergeant Henry Dwight recalled, "It was easy to see that a great battle had begun.... All eyes were turned in the direction of the ominous sounds." After morning inspection, the regiment was ordered to prepare itself to move out at a moment's notice. But the long hours passed as the men anxiously awaited the final order to march. It finally came around 3:00pm, and the 3rd Brigade broke camp at Adamsville, leaving all baggage and tents behind, and marched toward the sound of the guns in the distance. The 20th Ohio found itself the rear regiment of Lew Wallace's Division, soon to be known as the "Lost Division."<sup>xlix</sup>

They marched to within a mile of Grant's main camps when a staff officer rode up and told them that they were heading straight into Confederate-held territory. Being under orders to join on Grant's right, the whole division about-faced and took another road leading to Pittsburg Landing.

Having marched and countermarched along muddy roads most of the afternoon, it was not until 8 o'clock that night when the 20th Ohio crossed the Snake Creek Bridge and marched to support Grant's extreme right flank. A driving rain soaked Churchill and his comrades as they fell into line near the abandoned camp of the 81st Ohio. Dead men littered the campsite, and the enemy was so close that fires were prohibited. "It was an awful night," recalled Henry Otis Dwight.<sup>l</sup>

At dawn on April 7, Colonel Whittlesey formed the brigade into line and pushed forward through the tall rushes of Tilghman Branch creek. Bullets from Confederate pickets clipped the leaves from trees above Samuel's head. Alongside the 20th Ohio were the men of the 78th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, led by Colonel Mortimer Leggett., who would accompany the 20th through most every battle and campaign for the duration of the war.<sup>li</sup>

The 3rd Brigade passed through Glover Field and continued into the woods on the other side. Just north of Jones Field, while lying behind a crest of a hill in the woods, the men were shelled by a Confederate battery positioned about 800 yards away. The 20th Ohio took its first battle casualty here when a man in Company K was wounded. Whittlesey ordered the men to fix bayonets. Moving forward, the regiment arrived at the northwest corner of Jones Field around 11:00am. There Samuel Churchill saw thousands of Union and Confederate troops arrayed in opposing battle lines within the smoke-filled field. Shouts, cheers, yells, and cries mingled with the crash of musketry and the roar of cannon that presented, as Dwight wrote, "a vast medley of ear-splitting sounds, a swift whirling tempest of mad action, beyond imagination and indescribable."<sup>lii</sup>

At noon Manning Force led the 20th pass the Crescent Field, where three men and one officer were wounded by a storm of Confederate bullets that had overshot their intended targets. Undaunted, the regiment proceeded in columns of fours up a narrow, windy road farther to the right, into a piece of woods. "The rebels caught sight of the glint of our guns among the trees, and they gave us shrapnel and then canister," recalled Sergeant Dwight. Most of the shot passed over Samuel's head. "Bowing gracefully to the enemy" as the famed Washington Artillery of



Louisiana spewed more canister at them, the men moved steadily forward until they reached a rail fence bordering the north side of Ben Howell's Field. At this point, the Confederate battery opened with a well-directed fire upon Samuel and his comrades, who lay behind the fence on their bellies. Muskets were bent and swords were snapped in half. One man in Company B was killed -- the first death in battle incurred by the regiment -- and ten others were wounded. Samuel could see the Rebel battery on the other end of the field as puffs of smoke emanated from the cannon. After firing about ten rounds at the 20th Ohio, the enemy artillery, having no infantry support, limbered up and retreated.<sup>liii</sup>

The battle sputtered out around 4:00pm, and the 20th Ohio advanced to the opposite end of Ben Howell's Field and encamped at its southwest corner. Later the men scavenged the field for better weapons to replace their cumbersome Harper's Ferry rifle-muskets. The search was not in vain, because the soldiers found many good Confederate Enfield rifles lying on the ground. Two weeks later all of the men in the regiment would have the prized Enfield Rifles.<sup>liv</sup>

For the next two months the 20th Ohio camped at Pittsburg Landing, where the regiment guarded the military stores and roads in the area. Colonel Whittlesey resigned from the army on April 19 due to health problems, and Manning Force was promoted to Colonel of the regiment. The campground at Pittsburg Landing was very poor and unhealthy. The stench of rotting horses and half-buried soldiers pervaded the forest, and the unclean water added to the general filthiness of the place. Sickness ran rampant among the men, and at one point during the regiment's stay, only 80 men answered roll call. However, Samuel Churchill remained healthy up to the time the 20th Ohio left on June 2, 1862.<sup>lv</sup>

On June 6 Samuel and his comrades arrived at Bolivar, Tennessee, and set up camp. The surroundings here were much different from those they had experienced at Pittsburg Landing. "Imagine a most graceful curve of a narrow deep river, bordered by grand old trees ... and surrounding a green sward thick with daisies and buttercups and dotted with white tents, and you have our camp at Bolivar," remembered Sergeant Henry Otis Dwight.<sup>lvi</sup>

The regiment spent the summer of 1862 performing guard duty in the region around Bolivar. On June 27, Samuel Churchill reported sick to the hospital at Bolivar, and was left behind when his regiment marched off to the village of Grand Junction, Tennessee, the next day. Samuel recovered quickly, however, since he was able to rejoin Company F at Grand Junction, where they spent several weeks guarding a mountain of hardtack and salt pork to be used by Grant's army.<sup>lvii</sup>

In August the regiment returned to the camp at Bolivar, and it was there that Samuel Churchill met Richard Mitchell, a former slave who had managed to become a servant to Captain Rodgers of Company E while the 20th Ohio occupied Bolivar. In early 1863 Richard would be reassigned as Major John C. Fry's hostler. Samuel and Richard formed a strong friendship during the summer of 1862 that would last for the duration of Churchill's life.<sup>lviii</sup>

On the night of August 29, the mounted pickets of the 20th Ohio, nicknamed the "Jackass Cavalry," ran into the vanguard of Brigadier-General Frank C. Armstrong's Confederate cavalry approaching Middleburg, Tennessee. Early next morning, the pickets developed the enemy, who

formed in line of battle two miles south of the intersection of the Middleburg and Van Buren roads. The rest of 20th Ohio was ordered out from Bolivar at 10:00am to support the skirmishers.<sup>lix</sup>

Company F was placed on the left flank along the Van Buren Road, where they engaged portions of Nathan Bedford Forrest's, Wirt Adams's, and William H. Jackson's cavalry at long range. Samuel Churchill fought in this position for nearly 5 hours, when the Company was ordered to march secretly to the right flank in support of the 9th Indiana Battery and the 78th Ohio. There, in a position near the road intersection on the north side of an open field, Samuel Churchill and the soldiers of his company helped to turn back repeated charges made by Armstrong's cavalry. The Confederate forces retreated, though they had outnumbered the Union forces on the field by over 3 to 1.<sup>lx</sup>

On September 15 the 20th left Bolivar, Tennessee, by rail to connect with the rest of Grant's army concentrating at Corinth, Mississippi. The 20th Ohio formed the advance guard of Ross's Division of E.O.C Ord's Left Wing at Burnsville, Mississippi. On September 18, as Samuel Churchill and the rest of the regiment waded through swamps east of Burnsville, they ran into Wirt Adams's Confederate cavalry, which quickly fell back after firing a few shots. The 20th Ohio deployed as skirmishers, but were recalled to a hill east of Burnsville and were ordered to make camp. On the morning of September 20, Manning Force led the 20th Ohio down the road into Iuka, expecting to see the enemy. However, due to the failure of Ord to move the previous day, the Union army had allowed Sterling Price's army to escape Grant's trap. The regiment returned to their camp at Bolivar.<sup>lxi</sup>

On October 5, 1862, Samuel and his regiment were marched to the region around Pcochontas, Tennessee, but found no Rebels to fight. They returned to Bolivar.<sup>lxii</sup>

On November 4, the 20th Ohio moved to LaGrange, Tennessee, where they stayed for nearly a month until Grant's Central Mississippi Campaign began. During this time the army was reorganized, and the 20th Ohio was assigned to Leggett's 2nd Brigade of John A. Logan's Division. On November 28, the regiment left LaGrange and headed southward.<sup>lxiii</sup>

On December 6, 1862, while the regiment lay in camp at Waterford, Mississippi, Samuel Churchill became sick and went to the hospital with a high fever. His condition quickly worsened, and he was transferred to the military hospital in Holly Springs, Mississippi, around December 18. Diagnosed as suffering from typhoid fever, Samuel was placed in an old church in town. Today, an insurance agency's parking lot occupies the site of the church.<sup>lxiv</sup>

A horrible incident occurred in Holly Springs on December 20. While Churchill lay as a patient in the hospital one block from the square, Earl Van Dorn's Rebel cavalry stormed into town and captured the entire Union garrison. Surgeon Horace Wirtz, U.S. Army, reported that a Rebel officer rounded up 150 of the sick and wounded so that they could be marched away as prisoners. The soldiers, many of whom were sick from typhoid and diarrhea, fell down in the street from weakness, but they rose again for fear of being shot. Wirtz's pleading with the officer ended the inhumane event, and the sick men were allowed to return to the hospitals. The sick

soldiers were left behind when the Confederates evacuated Holly Springs at the approach of Grant's army.<sup>lxv</sup>

Samuel Churchill, whose condition had stabilized at Holly Springs, was transferred to the large tent hospital at Woodlawn mansion in LaGrange, Tennessee. Here he recovered from his bout with typhoid, and he often feasted upon vegetables and buttermilk donated by the local Southern folks. While Samuel convalesced, the 20th Ohio returned to LaGrange from its expedition into northern Mississippi, and Samuel's friend, Richard, visited him to see how he was getting along. Samuel still felt the effects of his near-death experience, since the typhoid had partially damaged his lungs and had left him in a weakened state. Any hard labor would leave Samuel short of breath to the point of complete exhaustion. However, Churchill recovered enough of his strength to be able to rejoin the regiment at its winter camp in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 28, 1863.<sup>lxvi</sup>

### **Advance into Mississippi**

Though hindered by his damaged health, Churchill performed regular duty with the 20th Ohio until the start of the Vicksburg Campaign in late April of 1863. At Memphis, the men did very little work besides normal drill. Many walked about the city or had their photos taken. The regiment also recruited a brass band to call its own, and they played fine music for their comrades and commanders alike. Samuel and the regiment left Memphis aboard the steamer *City of Louisiana* on February 22, 1863, and headed south on the Mississippi River.<sup>lxvii</sup>

The 20th Ohio arrived at Lake Providence on February 24, 1863, to help in the construction of a canal connecting Lake Providence to the Mississippi River. Here the regiment set up camp in a large cotton field near the shore of the lake. The men took advantage of their "beautiful camp" by using their free time for rowing, fishing, and swimming during the day and for listening to the 20th Ohio's brass band and glee club at night.<sup>lxviii</sup>

On March 4, the regiment left for Berry's Landing, Louisiana, where they made camp for a month, and then proceeded to Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, on April 17. It was about this time that Churchill's health condition forced him to look for alternate duty, and so his captain assigned him to the position of cook for Company F. The regiment was assigned to clear a road through the swamps south of Milliken's Bend from April 20 - 24, 1863, during which time the men saw their first alligators. They often complained about the clouds of gnats that would swarm about them when dusk arrived, and how difficult it was for the men to eat and sleep with these insects flying into their eyes and mouths.<sup>lxix</sup>

From Milliken's Bend, the 2nd Brigade was ordered to move to Hard Times Landing, Louisiana, where the 20th Ohio arrived on April 29 after a grueling four-day march over muddy roads. On May 1, 1863, Samuel and his fellow soldiers boarded steamboats and crossed the mighty Mississippi River to Bruinsburg, Mississippi. Being late in the afternoon before they reached the opposite shore, the men of the 2nd Brigade were too late to participate in the Battle of Port Gibson.<sup>lxx</sup>

On May 3, Colonel Dennis placed the 20th Ohio at the head of the brigade as it forced-marched toward Hankinson's Ferry on the Big Black River. Samuel and the regiment camped at the ferry for the next three days, during which time they were often harassed by enemy sniper and long-range artillery fire.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The regiment marched toward Jackson, Mississippi, and on May 12 it arrived in the vicinity of the village of Raymond. A soldier in the 20th Ohio described what occurred next:

After a while, as we were marching quietly along, we heard two gentle pops, which we were able to recognize as gunshots, far on in front. 'Hello, somebody is shooting squirrels,' said one of the boys. 'Pop, pop, pop,' came three more shots in quick succession, but a little nearer. 'The squirrels are shooting back,' growled a burly Irishman, 'and sure it's meself that don't approve of that kind of squirrel shooting, not a bit of it.'<sup>lxxii</sup>

Being the lead regiment of McPherson's Corps, the 20th Ohio deployed as skirmishers and halted. Just after they had begun setting up camp, they were fired upon by a Confederate force hidden in the woods on the opposite side of Fourteen-Mile Creek. Sergeant Osborn Oldroyd of Company E recalled that some of the cooks in the 20th broke for the rear, carrying their utensils with them.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

The 20th Ohio formed in line of battle on the right side of the road and charged into the creek, where they lay down on their bellies, using the opposite bank as a natural fortification. Their foe happened to be the famed 7th Texas Infantry, commanded by Colonel Hiram B. Granbury. This regiment had boasted before that day that they had never given way in a battle. "The firing was very hot and close," wrote Colonel Manning Force. Granbury himself later reported that the bitter fight between his 7th Texas and the 20th Ohio was "uninterrupted and terrific." After three hours of intense close-quarters fighting, the 7th Texas retreated from the field. The victorious soldiers of the 20th Ohio won three hearty cheers from the 81st Illinois in recognition of their fine work that day. Samuel lost 10 of his comrades killed and 56 wounded. Captain Harrison Wilson, who had posed for a photograph with this friend, William D. Neal, of Company K, was awarded the 17th Corps Silver Medal of Honor for gallantry at Raymond.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Continuing its march to Jackson, the 17th Corps aided in capturing the city on May 9, but the 20th O.V.I. remained in reserve.<sup>lxxv</sup>

On the morning of May 16, Brigadier-General Leggett returned to the command of his 2nd Brigade just as Logan deployed it in line of battle in a field north of Champion Hill. As the men in the 20th Ohio hugged the ground, Confederate bullets flew thickly overhead, while DeGolyer's 8th Michigan Battery unlimbered behind them and opened up a vigorous fire upon the enemy position. Logan ordered the division to charge the wooded hill, and the 20th Ohio did so successfully. Reaching the other side of Champion Hill, the 20th was suddenly attacked by a large mass of Confederate troops. Though caught in a vicious crossfire, the regiment stood its ground. The enemy abandoned the field at 4:00pm, and the 20th Ohio moved out of the woods and set off on the road to Vicksburg.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

When they arrived east of the city, Churchill and his comrades could see the spires of the churches and the Confederate flag flying over the courthouse in Vicksburg. At 10:00am on May 22, the 20th Ohio received orders to assault the Confederate fort known as the 3rd Louisiana Redan, or “Fort Hill,” located along the Jackson Road. Osborn Oldroyd recalled what occurred with Samuel Churchill and the other company cooks:

The boys were expecting the order and were busy divesting themselves of watches, rings, pictures and other keepsakes, which were being placed in the custody of the cooks, who were not expected to go into action. I never saw such a scene before, nor do I ever want to see it again. The instructions left with the keepsakes were varied. For instance, ‘This watch I want you to send to my father if I never return’ -- ‘I am going to Vicksburg, and if I do not get back just send these little trifles home, will you?’ -- proper addresses for the sending of the articles being left with them.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The 2nd Brigade charged the Redan, but the attack fell apart quickly. The 20th Ohio managed to get to a point 500 feet from the main parapet, the farthest advance of any regiment in the brigade that day. Pinned the whole day behind the north embankment of the Jackson Road, the men of the 20th Ohio did not move from their position for fear of being shot down if they were to retreat. As sunset came, Samuel and the other cooks were ordered to bring coffee out to the soldiers lying flat against the embankment. Colonel Force recalled that the cooks “succeeded in running the gauntlet, and the garrison could hear the jingling of tin cups and shouts of laughter as the cramped men ate their supper.” The regiment was pulled out of the road at nightfall.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

The 20th Ohio made camp on a steep wooded hillside along the Jackson Road not far behind the Union siege lines. Here they remained under fire daily until the night of May 26, when the regiment marched east on an expedition to find General Joseph E. Johnston’s Confederate forces. Moving northward into the Yazoo Valley, the 20th Ohio reached Mechanicsburg, Mississippi, on May 29, and encamped. Seeing no signs of Joe Johnston besides some scattered cavalry detachments, the expedition returned to the trenches at Vicksburg on May 31.<sup>lxxix</sup>

Sergeant Osborn Oldroyd, 20th Ohio, summed up life in the trenches at Vicksburg with one line in his diary: “It is shoot, shoot, dodge, dodge, from morning to night, without cessation, except when we are asleep.” Bullets and shells fell around Samuel Churchill throughout each day in the month of June. Samuel carried coffee to the men in Company F as they dug saps and rifle pits for Logan’s approach to the 3rd Louisiana Redan. He witnessed the construction of a Union sharpshooter’s perch known as the “Coonskin” Tower just in front of the 20th Ohio’s camp and siege lines. He watched as a soldier in Company C used wooden mortars to lob grenades into the Confederate earthworks. He also remembered the joy that he and his comrades experienced when they received letters, newspapers, and foods from home. And he saw comrades, like David Harrison Thomas of Company D, killed by stray Rebel bullets.<sup>lxxx</sup>

For 21 days the 20th Ohio lay in siege of Vicksburg along the Jackson Road until, on June 22, the men were again ordered to march east to look for the expected arrival of Joe Johnston’s Confederate forces that would come to rescue Pemberton’s bottled-up army. The men of the 20th were sorely disappointed. On July 4, 1863, Pemberton surrendered his army to Ulysses S. Grant while Churchill and the regiment lay quietly in camp along the Big Black River near Bovina Station.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

Since Manning Force had been promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General in the midst of the Vicksburg siege, the command of the 2nd Brigade divulged upon him when Mortimer Leggett took command of the 1st Brigade of Logan's Division. For the 20th Ohio, Captain Francis Shaklee led the regiment during part of the Vicksburg siege and for some months after.<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Since most soldiers considered the assignment of a cook as a "bombproof job" that often drew contempt from comrades, Samuel Churchill most likely wished that he could return to regular duty again. Military records state that he tried to do just that: Samuel Churchill resigned his role as a cook in Company F just after the fall of Vicksburg. Having regained enough strength to perform the regular duty of a foot soldier, Samuel would see how the upcoming campaign to Jackson, Mississippi, would agree with his health.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Samuel marched among his comrades as the 20th Ohio left from Bovina Station, Mississippi, on July 12, 1863, as part of Brigadier-General John McArthur's Provisional Division. Acting as rear guard to Major-General William T. Sherman's forces besieging Joe Johnston's army at Jackson, the regiment reached the old May 14th battleground on July 15 and encamped there. The next day, Joe Johnston abandoned the Mississippi capitol, and the 20th returned to Vicksburg on July 25.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

The regiment performed garrison duty along the Jackson Road in Vicksburg for the rest of the summer, except for a reconnaissance made to Monroe, Louisiana, in the last week of August. On the second Tuesday of October, while at Vicksburg, Samuel Churchill participated in the Election of 1863 as Elector Number 31 of 40 in Company F. In this election, 39 men in Company F cast their votes for John Brough as Governor of Ohio. With one vote abstained, Clement Vallandigham received zero votes from Samuel and his comrades.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Having gone through two expeditions as a regular soldier, Samuel accepted the fact that his diseased lungs would hinder him in a rigorous campaign. Before the start of the Canton Expedition, Lieutenant-Colonel John C. Fry, the 20th Ohio's new commander, detailed Samuel Churchill as headquarters cook for the officers' mess. In this new position, Samuel would be able to work close to his good friend, Richard Mitchell, who was then a hostler for Lieutenant-Colonel Fry. Churchill even had an assistant assigned to him to perform the harder manual chores. Although the job was still contemptible in the eyes of the fighting men in his regiment, Samuel may have realized that the headquarters cook was at least a position of honor compared to the company cook! He would remain in this assignment for the rest of the war.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

The 20th Ohio was ordered to march out on the Jackson Road on October 14, 1863, in what would become known as the Canton Expedition. Traveling with the headquarters wagon, Samuel Churchill followed along with his regiment as they reached Bogue Chitto Creek east of Brownsville, Mississippi, on October 16. On the next day, Churchill watched as the 20th Ohio advanced in line of battle and drove William Jackson's Rebel cavalry from a ridge. After feinting toward Canton, Mississippi, the Union force fell back to the safety of the west bank of the Big Black River.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

From October 15, 1863, until February 3, 1864, the 20th Ohio spent the winter as part of the garrison performing guard duty at Vicksburg, Mississippi. When re-enlistment time arrived in January of 1864, Samuel Churchill, along with two-thirds of the regiment, volunteered for another three years of service. At the age of 21, Samuel Churchill signed his name to this enlistment document for Company F, 20th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry. Captain Harry Wilson, the officer who had distinguished himself at Raymond, witnessed the signing. Under General Orders 191, Churchill became a “veteran volunteer,” which allowed him the privilege of a 30-day furlough and a bounty of \$30 per month.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

Samuel’s brother-in-law, Corporal John C. Stipp, did not re-enlist with Company F. John’s wife, Anna, who was also Samuel’s sister, had been suffering to keep the Stipp farm going back in Sidney. Although the Shelby County Board for Relief for Destitute Families of Volunteer Soldiers provided aid to Anna in the form of \$2.00 a month, it was not enough for her to live on. John most likely felt he needed to return to his wife to take care of her.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

On February 3, 1864, Samuel Churchill crossed the Big Black River with his regiment to begin Sherman’s Meridian Expedition into central Mississippi. Two days later near Bolton, the 20th Ohio engaged William H. Jackson’s cavalry in a long-range firefight and artillery duel. The Confederates were driven back, and pursuing the enemy rapidly to Clinton, Mississippi, the regiment met Jackson’s cavalry arrayed for battle upon a high ridge two miles east of town. Samuel most likely saw his comrades as they charged the ridge and pushed the Confederates back toward Jackson, Mississippi. During the campaign, Samuel traveled over 350 miles in 31 days, during which time the 20th Ohio helped to destroy 24 miles of track, 52 railroad bridges, 4,000 feet of trestle work, 10 train cars, and 3 steam mills.<sup>xc</sup>

### **A Changed Man in Georgia**

Twelve days after the conclusion of the Meridian Campaign, Samuel Churchill was sent home on furlough on March 16, 1864. Having been away from his family and his hometown for almost two and one-half years, Samuel returned to Ohio a veteran and a changed man. The 20th Ohio arrived in Sidney on March 28, where Jacob S. Conklin, Esquire, gave an informal speech of appreciation while the men stood at attention in front of Carey's Hall on the square.<sup>xcii</sup>

After spending a month on his grandfather William's farm, talking over his war experiences, Samuel Churchill boarded the 2 o'clock train bound for Camp Dennison on April 27, 1864. As a crowd waved good-bye, many of the soldiers carried with them the "sweet memory" of their days of furlough.<sup>xciii</sup>

The 20th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry rendezvoused at Camp Dennison, Ohio, on April 29, and traveling via railroad and steamer, the regiment reached Clifton, Tennessee, on May 14. From there it was forced-marched 304 miles until it arrived at Acworth, Georgia, on June 8, as Sherman's armies faced Joe Johnston's entrenchments on Pine Mountain and Brush Mountain. Two days later, the 20th Ohio, as a member of Colonel Robert K. Scott's Brigade in Leggett's Division of the 17th Corps, moved to Sherman's extreme left flank. From June 11 - 17, the regiment engaged in constant skirmishing in front of the Confederate earthworks on Busbee Ridge, a spur of Brush Mountain located southeast of Big Shanty, Georgia. Similar to the Vicksburg siege, Samuel Churchill came under fire daily, and he often had to "run the gauntlet" to provide food for the officers.<sup>xciiii</sup>

As the Confederate army fell back to the Kennesaw Mountain line, Sherman's army stretched further to the east near Marietta, Georgia. On June 26, while on the skirmish line with Company K near Kennesaw Mountain, Captain William D. Neal of Sidney, Ohio, was killed by a



Confederate sharpshooter's bullet. Neal became the highest-ranking officer from the 20th Ohio to be killed during the war. Samuel had served Neal many times before in the officers' mess; now, he mourned with the rest of the regiment in the loss of one their beloved leaders. William Neal's close friends, Harry Wilson and John C. Fry, wrote eulogies for their comrade as the citizens of Sidney remembered its fallen hero.<sup>xciiv</sup>

On June 27 the 20th Ohio unsuccessfully assaulted the Confederate earthworks along the Bell's Ferry Road north of Marietta. Skirmishing continued here until July 2, when McPherson's Army of the Tennessee marched south through Marietta and Smyrna to the Chattahoochee River. Positioning themselves on the enemy's extreme left flank, the 20th Ohio skirmished daily from July 5 - 9 with Confederate pickets spread out along the southern bank of the Chattahoochee River. Samuel's camp here was shelled by enemy artillery every day until July 16, when McPherson moved the Army of the Tennessee northeast to cross the Chattahoochee River.<sup>xciv</sup>

After marching from Decatur, Georgia, the 20th Ohio encamped at Bald Hill, a dominating eminence two miles east of Atlanta. On the morning of July 22, 1864, Samuel Churchill was in camp with his regiment about 300 yards south of the hill. The morning had been unusually calm, and there were unconfirmed reports coming in that John Bell Hood's Rebel army was abandoning Atlanta. By 10:00am the men finished building their earthworks 10 yards west of and parallel to the Atlanta-McDonough Road. At around 12:30pm, while Samuel and his comrades rested and ate their lunch in the woods to the rear of their fortifications, a shot suddenly rang out from the southeast. The firing became louder and more general as it seemed to approach ominously closer to their camp.<sup>xciiv</sup>

"Fall in! Fall in!" yelled the officers, and the men took up their Enfield rifles and formed in line behind the trenches. Samuel Churchill most likely remained in the woods near the regimental headquarters, but he would not stay there long. Less than twenty minutes later, a flock of stragglers, mostly Iowa troops, came running pell-mell out of the woods from the south, and the Confederates were close at their heels! Colonel John C. Fry tried in vain to rally the Iowans, but they would not stop for anything. The Johnnies were coming through the woods like a storm," recalled Captain Edmund E. Nutt of Company A. Texas troops from Pat Cleburne's Confederate division had enveloped the 4th Division of the Union 17th Corps and had managed to move directly into the left flank and rear of the 20th Ohio's line. With a rebel yell, the enemy line struck, "literally walking over our left companies," remembered Nutt.<sup>xciiv</sup>

All at once, the men in the 20th Ohio jumped over from the east side of their trenches to the west side to meet the threat in their rear. Letting the Texans get to within 10 yards of them, the 20th Ohio let loose a volley, and the "magnificent line of the enemy was gone." The enemy quickly renewed the attack from the west side, or front, of the trenches. The 20th Ohio jumped back over the parapet and fired a volley that tore the second Confederate assault to pieces. After a 20-minute lull, Cleburne again attacked the 20th Ohio's rear from the east, and after jumping over to the west side of their earthworks, the regiment again repulsed the Confederates. Colonel Fry was wounded. The Rebel line came from the west in another charge, forcing the 20th Ohio to climb over the entrenchments for a fourth time and, for the fourth time, repulsed the enemy, whose dead lay in heaps upon the ground. Lieutenant Henry Otis Dwight said that the men "looked for

all the word like a long line of these toy-monkeys you see which jump over the end of a stick.”<sup>xcviii</sup>

When the third Confederate assault wave came, the brave men in the 20th Ohio found themselves nearly out of ammunition. Three soldiers volunteered to run the gauntlet to get the ammunition boxes lying in the woods near regimental headquarters; two men made it back, the third was captured. The Rebel line rushed into their rear, and the Union soldiers jumped over their parapet and fought the enemy with bayonets, clubbed rifles, swords, and fists. As the Confederates climbed over the fortifications, men on either side of the parapet would be pulled over by the hair or by the arms and made prisoner. A Confederate colonel was shot just as he grabbed the flag of the 20th Ohio, and a desperate fight for the colors of the 78th Ohio ensued. The two Elliott brothers of Company F died in succession as they tried to bring the 78th Ohio banner to safety. Charley Stevenson of Company F dodged the bullets, grabbed the flag, ran back to the trenches, and planted it into the parapet, yelling, “There 78th, there are your colors, now protect them!”<sup>xcix</sup>

At 5 o’clock, the Confederates brought a captured cannon to bear and placed it fifty yards from the 20th’s flank. As the cannon opened up with canister, the men in blue reeled, but held. However, when the 78th Ohio retreated north, the 20th Ohio became surrounded, and had to fight its way out of the Confederate trap. The regiment retreated to Bald Hill, where it formed a defensive line perpendicular to Force’s 1st Brigade. Exhausted from their five-hour fight, some men fell asleep amidst the battle on Bald Hill, soon to be renamed Leggett’s Hill. The 20th Ohio stubbornly held their second position on Bald Hill until nightfall brought an end to the fighting.<sup>c</sup>

The 20th Ohio tallied its losses -- 33 killed, 49 wounded, and 56 missing (138 total out of 325 engaged), the largest loss in Scott’s 2nd Brigade. On the other side, Leggett’s burial details counted 900 dead Rebels in front of the division’s position at Bald Hill and nearly 1,000 dead Confederates lying in the area where the first five hours of fighting had occurred. The toll in officers in Leggett’s Division was equally telling: Brigadier-General Robert Scott was captured, Brigadier-General Manning Force was seriously wounded, and Colonel John Fry was wounded. Most of all, the army, especially the men of the 17th Corps, mourned the death of Major-General James McPherson, who had been killed less than half a mile in the rear of the 20th’s camp. Lieutenant-Colonel Greenbury F. Wiles took command of the 2nd Brigade, while Major Francis Shaklee filled in as commander of the 20th Ohio.<sup>ci</sup>

On July 26 the regiment marched around to the west of Atlanta, and following the Battle of Ezra Church on July 28, it settled into the Siege of Atlanta. For 29 days and nights, Samuel Churchill remained under fire as the 20th Ohio engaged the enemy in trench warfare. Churchill supplied coffee to the officers three times a day while the men lay in their earthworks.<sup>cii</sup>

Major-General O. O. Howard, the commander of the Army of the Tennessee, ordered his troops to march west toward Sandtown, Georgia, on the night of August 26, 1864. Arriving at Sandtown on August 28, the 20th Ohio guarded the wagon trains and helped destroy the track of the Atlanta & West Point Railroad. Moving south toward Jonesboro, Georgia, the regiment formed in reserve to Bryant’s 1st Brigade during the Battle of Jonesboro on August 31, during which time the men were exposed to the enemy’s heavy artillery fire. Hood’s army abandoned

Atlanta that night. The next day Samuel and his comrades moved southeast toward Lovejoy's Station, Georgia, where they found Hood's army entrenched upon the hills a mile north of town. After capturing a hill from Confederate pickets, the 20th Ohio skirmished daily until the 2nd Brigade was relieved on September 5. The Atlanta Campaign was over.<sup>ciii</sup>

Two days later the regiment marched north and encamped at Atlanta for a month. Corporal John C. Stipp of Company F bid farewell to his brother-in-law Samuel Churchill on October 2 when John's term of enlistment expired. Having no relatives close by, Samuel was now completely on his own.<sup>civ</sup>

On the next day, the 20th Ohio joined in the chase of Hood's army to Gaylesville, Alabama, where Sherman stopped the army and turned back for Atlanta. The 20th returned to Smyrna on November 5, 1864, and made camp. While at Smyrna Camp Ground, Samuel and his companions voted in the 1864 Presidential Election.<sup>cv</sup>

Before the beginning of the March to the Sea, Sherman ordered all of the surgeons to conduct physical examinations of every man with a history of illness. Any man unable to bear a long march would be sent north and reassigned. Churchill must have survived this examination, as he was allowed to stay with his beloved 20th Ohio for the March to the Sea. The new leader of the regiment, Captain Harrison Wilson, soon to be Colonel, retained Samuel as headquarters cook for the officers' mess.<sup>cvi</sup>

Samuel Churchill witnessed the burning of Atlanta on the night of November 15, 1864, and listened to the glorious music of the regimental bands playing "John's Brown's Body" as the army marched southeast on what was "probably the most gigantic pleasure expedition ever planned," remarked a soldier in Howard's ranks.<sup>cvi</sup>

Reaching McDonough, Georgia, on November 17, the regiment moved southeast, destroying the railroad from Station #14 to Irwin's Crossroads. Samuel saw his comrades become experts at making "Sherman's Hairpins" from the rails and ties of the Milledgeville & Savannah Railroad. The 20th Ohio arrived in the village of Riddleville, Georgia, on November 28, where they camped for two days. They continued the march to Millen, Georgia, where on December 3, the 20th Ohio was personally directed by General Sherman to destroy the train depot, hotel, and tracks in the town. In an official order from Sherman, it ordered the 20th Ohio to destroy the tracks in Millen in a way "more devilish than can be dreamed of," perhaps in retribution for the privations that had been suffered by Union prisoners at Camp Lawton. Pressing on through Scarboro and Cameron, on December 10 the regiment stopped in front of the Confederate entrenchments along the Augusta Road about three and one-half miles from Savannah, Georgia. Here they skirmished with the enemy for most of the day before being relieved by the 20th Corps.<sup>cvi</sup>

On December 11, Samuel Churchill and the regiment marched 2 miles south and dug in along the north side of the Darien Road. They skirmished from December 13 -18 with the Georgia Militia, who held the formidable Piney Point Battery in front of the 20th Ohio. During a heavy bombardment on December 13, Churchill witnessed the mortal wounding of Sergeant Ohio Brown, Co. I, and Private John Shaw, Co. F, from shells that fell into their camp along the

Darien Road. On the 19th the regiment left the siege lines on detached duty to build pontoon bridges and wharves at King's Bridge on the Ogeechee River. While engaged in this task, the Confederates abandoned Savannah on December 21, ending the March to the Sea.<sup>cix</sup>

Samuel and his comrades-in-arms were placed into camp near Fort Number 3, located 4 miles west of Savannah and just north of the Augusta Road. In this camp the 20th Ohio remained until January 4, 1865. Some of the men wrote in their diaries about how beautiful and large the city of Savannah was, and how warm the weather seemed at the time.<sup>cx</sup>

### **Into the Carolinas**

On January 5, 1865, the 20th Ohio took the steamer *Fanny* on the Atlantic Ocean, the first time Samuel had seen the ocean. The steamer landed at Beaufort, South Carolina, and the regiment marched off toward Pocotaligo, South Carolina. On January 14, the 20th Ohio charged through swamps and captured two separate Confederate defensive lines in rapid succession. Samuel camped at Pocotaligo for 13 days, during which time the regiment received 76 draftees. Mortimer Leggett resigned at Pocotaligo, and Manning Force took command of the 3rd Division, 17th Corps.<sup>cxii</sup>

The regiment started on the Campaign through the Carolinas from Pocotaligo on January 20, 1865. Marching to Whippy Swamp, on February 2 the regiment helped to capture Barker's Mills and the bridge over Jackson Branch. That night, Force's Division joined the rest of the Corps encamped at Rivers' Bridge. The one and one-half mile long causeway over the Big Salkehatchie River was heavily defended by Evander McClaws's Confederate forces entrenched on the north side of the river. The 20th Ohio remained in reserve as the Battle of Rivers' Bridge (February 3) raged, but after the Confederates retreated, the regiment crossed over the causeway on February 5.<sup>cxiii</sup>

The 20th reached the south bank of the North Edisto River near Orangeburg, South Carolina, on February 11. The 20th Ohio soldiers distinguished themselves in a gallant charge that saved the bridge at Orangeburg from destruction. After the capture of Orangeburg, Samuel and the 20th moved toward Columbia, South Carolina, and arrived there on February 17, 1865. Meeting no resistance, the regiment marched freely into Columbia. This was after the flames had destroyed two-thirds of the city. The regiment encamped north of the city in what is currently a park.<sup>cxiii</sup>

Marching and tearing up track along the way, the 20th Ohio continued through Cheraw and Bennettsville, South Carolina. Almost continual rains caused the march to become slow and agonizing as the muddy roads bogged down wagons and artillery. Passing through Fayetteville, North Carolina, on March 13, the regiment encamped at Mt. Olive, North Carolina, on March 19.<sup>cxiv</sup>

That night, word reached the regiment that Joe Johnston had attacked Slocum's Left Wing at Bentonville, North Carolina. The regiment marched to the battlefield on March 20, arriving at about 4:30pm, and made camp. The next morning, the 20th Ohio advanced to the east side of the Sam Howell Branch ravine and entrenched just south of what is today SR1199. Samuel Churchill and his comrades were under fire throughout the day.<sup>cxv</sup>

The regiment proceeded to Goldsboro, North Carolina, and encamped there from March 24 through April 9. General Sherman reviewed the army in Goldsboro before it headed west on April 10, 1865, the day after Lee's surrender to Grant.<sup>cxvi</sup>

The men in the 20th Ohio corduroyed roads near Pine Level, North Carolina on April 11. Due to heavy rains, Howard's Right Wing did not reach Raleigh until April 14. As they marched past the state capitol building, Sherman reviewed the troops. The 20th Ohio encamped on the west side of the city.<sup>cxvii</sup>

While at Raleigh during the month of April, the men received the terrible news of Lincoln's assassination. They spent that day in their tents "silent in the gloom of grief and brooding wrath upon the tidings of the death of Lincoln." On April 25, Sherman's army moved out of Raleigh to attack Joe Johnston's forces. The next day, Joe Johnston surrendered to Sherman. When the men in the 20th Ohio heard of the surrender, "the men seemed crazy with joy; they shouted, laughed, flung their hats in the air, threw their knapsacks at each other, hugged each other, stood on their heads in the mud, and were fairly mad with delight." The war was over!<sup>cxviii</sup>

After participating in the Grand Review in Washington on May 24, the regiment was sent by rail to Louisville, Kentucky, where it remained in camp until July 9. On Independence Day, Sherman wished farewell to the old 2nd Brigade. The regiment had marched a total of 3,216 miles and had traveled 4,137 miles by rail or by steamer. It had fought in 32 battles and skirmishes, losing a total of 2 officers and 60 men killed in battle and 218 men died of wounds or disease, for a total of 360. It had been a long, hard road.<sup>cxix</sup>

Samuel and his comrades were sent to Camp Chase, Ohio, on July 16, and were officially mustered out of the army there on July 18, 1865. For Samuel, soldiering was at an end.<sup>cxx</sup>

## **Coming Home**

Returning home to Sidney, Samuel found that his family had changed just as much as he had. His brother, Willie, had joined the ranks of the 134th Ohio Infantry in 1864 and had come home a veteran. Samuel's father Charles had married a 20-year old woman named Caroline Kain in February 1865, and she was pregnant with Charles's next child. Samuel's new step-mom was younger than he.<sup>cxix</sup>

In 1866, Samuel met Mary Ann Wateman of Port Jefferson, Ohio, and married her on August 27 of that year. She bore him his first child, a son named George, on November 20, 1867. In order to support his family, Samuel had to find work that would not test the endurance of his damaged lungs. Since Samuel's close friend from the war, Richard Mitchell, owned the Sidney Buss [sic] Line and Mail Carrier in Sidney, it is believed that Samuel took a position as a mail carrier and deliveryman. Samuel's experience with driving the headquarters wagon during the war had paid off in his civilian life!<sup>cxix</sup>

In August of 1869, Mary Ann gave birth to an infant who died soon after. One month later, on September 20, 1869, Samuel's wife died. She was buried in Port Jefferson. Distraught at the loss, and unable care for his child, Samuel left his baby son George with his brother-in-law, William Wateman, who adopted George into the Wateman family.<sup>cxix</sup>

On December 14, 1875, 33-year old Samuel Churchill married Caroline Shaw of Lima, Ohio. Samuel's father gave them a parcel of the Sidney farm. Unfortunately, Caroline Shaw had to care for her mother in Lima, so Samuel sold his parcel of land and left Sidney with his new bride.<sup>cxix</sup>

As a resident of Lima, Ohio, Samuel Churchill continued his work as a teamster. On May 26, 1876, Samuel and Caroline were blessed with a baby girl they named Rosanna. The Churchill's would have four more children in their lifetime: Ella May Churchill, born in 1878; Charles Edward Churchill, born in 1880; Rollie Nelson Churchill, born in 1883; and David William Churchill, born in 1887.<sup>cxxv</sup>

### **An Old Soldier Dies**

In 1889 Samuel and Caroline lived with their children in a house at 1106 East High Street in Lima, Ohio. It is unknown whether or not Samuel attended the 20th Ohio Reunions that often were held in Sidney and Lima, but he did join the Union Veteran Union organization in Lima sometime in the late 1880's. The U.V.U., a G.A.R. spin-off, only accepted members who had served in the Union army for no less than six months. In April 1889, Samuel filed for a military service pension on account of his lung disability. He gathered signed affidavits from his friends and neighbors, including one from his former messmate, Richard Mitchell. As Samuel waited for the pension to be approved, tragedy struck in his life once more when his little son Rollie died at the age of six on December 9, 1889.<sup>cxxvi</sup>

Samuel's frequent attacks of lung fever, which caused him to have violent coughing fits in the mornings and nights, took their toll on his health. Samuel was granted his military pension in early 1891, and he received his first money from it on March 4th. Four days later, at the age of 48 years and 3 months, Samuel S. Churchill died of consumption at his home in Lima. Civil War comrades attended his funeral. He was buried in the Old Lima City Cemetery on March 9. The same day, Samuel's death made the front page of the *Lima Daily Times*.<sup>cxxvii</sup>

One can only wonder at what Samuel Churchill's life would have been like had the Civil War not been a part of it. The conflict certainly had changed him, and eventually it killed him, but Samuel must have felt a special pride for the regiment in which he had served. Long after the war had ended, Manning Force addressed the survivors of the regiment with these words: "The 20th Ohio was never taken by surprise, was never thrown into confusion, never gave back under fire; it took every point it was ordered to take, and held every position it was ordered to hold...."

Bless the survivors of that gallant band. It is worth more than pensions or money to be able to say: 'and I too belonged to the Twentieth Ohio.'"<sup>cxviii</sup>



- i Edwin C. Bearss, "Why I Lead Battlefield Tours," *Civil War Landscape* 5 (Fall 1997), p. 5.
- ii James M. McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades* (New York, 1997), p. 11.
- iii Rosanna (Churchill) Hall's Date Book; Map Pttl-13: Premises in Vicinity of Cobbs Corner, Parsippany-Troy Hills Township, Morris County, New Jersey (1795-1902); Map of Morris County, New Jersey (from Original Surveys), 1853; State of New Jersey, *Morris County Deed Books B-4, C-4, D-4, F-2, G-3, L-2, and W-2*.
- iv State of New Jersey, *Wills, Morris County, New Jersey: Jacob Van Ness*; Harriet Stryker-Rodda, *Some Early Records of Morris County, New Jersey, 1740-1799* (Morristown, New Jersey); United States Census Bureau, *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Morris County, New Jersey*; State of New Jersey, *Morris County Deed Books G-3, L-2, and W-2*.
- v United States Census Bureau, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Clinton Township, Shelby County, Ohio*; C. O. Titus, *Titus' Atlas of Shelby County, Ohio* (Philadelphia, 1875); State of Indiana, *Union County Deed Books L, M, and O*; Union County, Indiana, *1884 Atlas of Union County, Indiana*; Rosanna (Churchill) Hall's Date Book.
- vi Cemetery Records of New Hope Cemetery, Union County, Indiana.
- vii Ruth Slevin, *Union County, Indiana, Marriages 1821-1859*; State of Indiana, *Union County Deed Book O*; United States Census Bureau, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Clinton Township, Shelby County, Ohio*.
- viii Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 5.
- ix *For Cause & Comrades*, p. 5; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 5.
- x *Lima Weekly Gazette*, August 7, 1861; Military Service Records of Samuel S. Churchill; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion -- 1861-1866*, Vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), p. 704; C.O. Titus, *Titus' Atlas of Shelby County, Ohio* (Philadelphia, 1875); Henry Otis Dwight Papers, pp. 5-7.
- xi Information from the Shelby County Historical Society; *Sidney Journal*, June 18, 1909.
- xii Military Service Records of Samuel S. Churchill; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion -- 1861-1866*, Vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), p. 704; A.B.C. Hitchcock, *History of Shelby County, Ohio, and Representative Citizens* (Chicago, 1973), p. 278; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, pp. 5-7.
- xiii Henry Otis Dwight Papers, pp. 7-8.
- xiv Albert Castel, "The War Album of Henry Dwight, Part I," *Civil War Times, Illustrated* 18 (February 1980), p. 12.
- xv Henry Otis Dwight Papers, pp. 7-8; Samuel S. Churchill's 1864 Volunteer Enlistment; Pension Records of Samuel S. Churchill; Military Service Records of Samuel S. Churchill.
- xvi D.W. Wood, *History of the 20th O.V.V.I. Regiment, and Proceedings of the First Reunion at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, April 6th, 1876* (Columbus, Ohio, 1876), p. 39; Manning F. Force, *Personal Recollections of the Vicksburg Campaign* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1885), p. 12.
- xvii OR, I, 51, Supplement, pp. 504-505; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 9.
- xviii David Harrison Thomas Papers, "Camp King, Nov. 28, 1861"; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, pp. 7, 9-11.
- xix Ibid., pp. 9-11; Osborn H. Oldroyd, *A Soldier's Story of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Springfield, Illinois, 1885), p. 5.
- xx D.W. Wood, *History of the 20th O.V.V.I. Regiment, and Proceedings of the First Reunion at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, April 6th, 1876* (Columbus, Ohio, 1876), pp. 5, 15, 40; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 17; David Harrison Thomas Papers, "Camp King, Dec. 11, 1861."
- xxi D.W. Wood, *History of the 20th O.V.V.I. Regiment, and Proceedings of the First Reunion at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, April 6th, 1876* (Columbus, Ohio, 1876), p. 38; Charles Whittlesey, *War Memoranda: Cheat River to the Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1884), pp. 1-4.

xxii *Sidney Journal*, February 27, 1863; Stewart Sifakis, *Who Was Who in the Civil War* (New York, 1988), p. 223.

xxiii *Ibid.*, p. 223.

xxiv Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 9.

xxv *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

xxvi *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

xxvii OR, I, 51, Supplement, pp. 506-507; David Harrison Thomas Papers, "Camp King, Nov. 28, 1861"; *Ibid.*, "Camp King, Dec. 11, 1861."

xxviii OR, I, 51, Supplement, pp. 506, 512.

xxix *Ibid.*, p. 505; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 10; David Harrison Thomas Papers, "Cincinnati Barracks, Jan. 18, 1862."

xxx OR, I, 51, Supplement, p. 505; C.O. Titus, *Titus' Atlas of Hamilton County, Ohio* (Philadelphia, 1869); Geoffrey R. Walden, "The General's Tour: Panic on the Ohio! Confederates March on Cincinnati, September 1862, Part IV: Defenses of Cincinnati," *Blue & Gray* 3 (April-May, 1986); David Harrison Thomas Papers, "Cincinnati Barracks, Jan. 18, 1862."

xxxi A.B.C. Hitchcock, *History of Shelby County, Ohio, and Representative Citizens* (Chicago, 1973), p. 272; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 11.

xxxii *Ibid.*, p. 11.

xxxiii *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

xxxiv *Ibid.*, p. 13.

xxxv *Ibid.*, p. 13.

xxxvi *Ibid.*, p. 13, 28; Osborn H. Oldroyd, *A Soldier's Story of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Springfield, Illinois, 1885), p. 15; Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 13.

xxxvii *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

xxxviii *Ibid.*, p. 14.

xxxix *Ibid.*, p. 14; D.W. Wood, *History of the 20th O.V.V.I. Regiment, and Proceedings of the First Reunion at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, April 6th, 1876* (Columbus, Ohio, 1876), p. 42.

xl Henry Otis Dwight Papers, pp. 14-15.

xli *Ibid.*, p. 15.

xlii *Ibid.*, p. 15; Osborn H. Oldroyd, *A Soldier's Story of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Springfield, Illinois, 1885), p. 5.

xliii Henry Otis Dwight Papers, p. 15.

xliv *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16; OR, I, 51, Supplement, p. 506.

xlv *Ibid.*, p. 16.

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