

THE BUSHART FAMILY IN THE CIVIL WAR

John Bushart and his three brothers, Germanic immigrants, were present for the birth of the United States of America. They spread across the growing nation seeking their share of the American dream. John went south while his brothers settled in the north. In 1861, the nation was wracked by the most serious threat to its existence since its birth, the Civil War.

As the drums of war beat, the grandsons of John Bushart and his brothers left their families behind to fight for their respective causes. Twenty-one of them answered the call of their states to fight for the Confederacy. Six more Busharts would join Union regiments to defend the nation that their grandfathers' generation had begun building for them. By war's end five of John Bushart's great-grandson's would be buried on the battlefields where they sacrificed their lives for country and comrades.

This article, based on the research of James S. Bushart, will focus primarily on the Busharts of Kentucky and Tennessee. James Bushart is the direct descendant of James S. Bushart who was born in 1854 and watched as three of his brothers went off to fight.

The main problem for Kentuckians like the Busharts who had decidedly confederate sympathies was that the majority of people in their state preferred to stay in the Union. Although Kentucky officially declared a policy of neutrality, it became evident with the establishment of a large, well-armed, Unionist Home Guard that the state had strong leanings towards the Federal cause. Confederate Kentuckians were forced to head south to fight for the cause they believed in.

Wiley J. Bushart, John B. Bushart and Robert N. Bushart made their way to Jackson, Tennessee to become part of the Twelfth Tennessee Infantry. Company E of this regiment was made up entirely of Kentuckians. Along Generals Leonidas Polk and Gideon J. Pillow, the Twelfth crossed back into Kentucky to seize the heights of Columbus overlooking the Mississippi River. On November 7, 1861 they fought the Battle of Belmont against men commanded by a little known general by the name Ulysses S. Grant. Grant won the fight

Meanwhile at Camp Boone outside of Clarksville, Tennessee, the Third Kentucky Infantry along with two other Kentucky regiments (the Second and Fourth Kentucky Infantry Regiments) formed the initial nucleus of the famed Orphan Brigade. They returned to Bowling Green Kentucky for a brief stay, adding the Fifth (later Ninth) and Sixth Kentucky Infantry regiments to their First Kentucky Brigade under the command of General John C. Breckinridge. The Busharts would later join the Third Kentucky Infantry and the famed Orphan Brigade later in the war.

The Busharts of Henry County, Tennessee also rushed to join regiments to defend their state against invasion. William C. and Newton J. Bushart joined the Fifth Tennessee Infantry. Their Cousin, James F. Bushart, mustered in with the Twentieth Tennessee Cavalry (Russel's) later in the war in 1864.

In February 1862, the Confederate Bushart's were all forced to retreat after the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson. The Federals now controlled the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and General Albert Sidney Johnston ordered all of the troops under his command to concentrate at

Corinth, Mississippi. For the Kentucky Bushart's and the rest of the First Kentucky Brigade, this retreat marked the beginning of a separation from their homes and families that would last the duration of the war.

The Fifth Tennessee Busharts fought to defend New Madrid and Island No. 10 from John Pope's Army of the Mississippi as they retreated south then joined their cousins at Corinth. In April, Johnston's Confederates moved north to strike General Grant's Army of the Tennessee before they could unite with Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee.

On April 6, 1863, the Busharts of Kentucky and Tennessee plunged into the Battle of Shiloh. The Busharts of the Fifth Tennessee were in A.P. Stewart's Brigade in General Leonidas Polk's Corps and made the supporting attacks that caved in the Union right. The Kentucky Busharts in the Twelfth Tennessee were right alongside their cousins in Russell's Brigade. When the fighting died down that evening, William C. Bushart lay dead on the field a grim testimonial to the fierce fighting that raged in their sector of the battlefield.

The Twelfth Tennessee also suffered horrendous losses, but the Bushart boys survived. Each death was even more damaging to the Kentucky units than others in the army. The regiments from Confederate states could recruit replacements while the Kentuckians were forced to watch as their numbers dwindled without hope of replenishment.

The Confederates retreated back to Corinth and then the great army split as they abandoned the town. Company E of the Twelfth Tennessee was transferred to the Third Kentucky Infantry to bolster their dwindling ranks. The remaining men of the Twelfth were merged with the Twenty-second Tennessee Infantry to bring their own numbers up to battle strength. During this time of reorganization, Newton Bushart of the Fifth Tennessee Infantry was killed in a train accident at Rienzi, Mississippi.

General Braxton Bragg would take the lion's share of the men to Chattanooga, Tennessee. They would form the heart of the Army of Tennessee. Breckinridge's Kentuckians stayed in Mississippi to defend their stronghold at Vicksburg. In August, the division moved against Baton Rouge, Louisiana and fought in vain to take that town on August 5, 1862. The Kentuckians carried the heaviest load in that fight, but the Busharts again managed to survive.

At the end of the month, the Bushart boys and the rest their Kentucky brethren were ecstatic to learn that General Bragg had called for them to join his campaign into Kentucky. Bragg wanted Breckinridge and his Kentucky Brigade for their fighting abilities and to help bring more Kentuckians into the Confederate ranks.

When the Orphans left nearly a month later on their long trek through Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, the Third Kentucky Infantry was left behind. They were essentially orphaned from the Orphan Brigade. Perhaps it was for the best. The Bushart boys were probably upset at the separation, but they were spared the terrible disappointment of their fellow Kentuckians who received word that the Bragg's forces were retreating from Kentucky just as they were preparing to cross the border.

While the Orphan Brigade continued to serve with the Army of Tennessee, the Third Kentucky stayed in the Vicksburg area. Had they stayed with the Orphans, the Third Kentucky Busharts would have found themselves in the devastating charge of the last day of the Battle of Stones River. The Orphans lost about one-quarter of their men in less than an hour on January 2, 1863. Ironically they would have also been on the same battlefield where another cousin, Jacob Bushart, was killed serving with the Seventy-fifth Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

After the fall of the Confederacy's Gibraltar on the Mississippi, the Busharts in the Third Kentucky would begin a new chapter in their service as mounted infantry. By March of 1864, the Third Kentucky had so few men that they were no longer able to fill their primary role as an infantry regiment. Proposals had been circulating throughout the Confederate army to mount the remaining Kentuckians and send them back home to harry the Union supply system and recruit thousands of their friends, families and neighbors to the cause. The Third Kentucky joined General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry corps and followed his horsemen on foot through west Tennessee into Kentucky where they acquired mounts.

Their Henry County, Tennessee cousin, James F. Bushart, and the recently formed Twentieth Tennessee Cavalry (Russel's) joined the Kentucky Busharts in Forrest's Corps. The Busharts remained with Forrest and fought beside him at Brice's Crossroads, Franklin and through the final days of the war. At war's end, like the rest of their fellow Kentuckians, the orphaned Busharts were able to return to their homes and families and rebuild their lives.

POSTSCRIPT

Anyone who has delved into their family history understands the daunting task of weaving together the fragile skeins of so many lives together to find the truth. Mr. James S. Bushart has done an excellent job of piecing together his family's history from their arrival on these shores to the present. I thank him for allowing me to use his research to tell the Bushart's story.

For more information about the Busharts, you can go to the following website:

Bushart Family Branches and History - <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~reburke/bushart/family/index.html>