

THE BUSHART FAMILY IN THE CIVIL WAR: THREE CHEERS FOR THE UNION

This article, based on the research of James S. Bushart, will continue the Bushart Civil War story by exploring the stories of the Busharts who served in Union regiments.

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.

The grandsons of John Bushart's brothers joined northern regiments to defend the nation that their grandfathers' generation had begun building for them. Four Busharts fought for the Union in most of the major battles stretching from Virginia to the Mississippi River. Three of them lost their lives.

Chris Bushart was the first in his extended family to answer the call to defend his nation. He mustered into the Sixty-fifth Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the late fall of 1861. Shortly thereafter, Jacob Bushart enlisted as a private in the Seventy-fourth Ohio. During the early stages of the War, Chris and Jacob fought in close proximity in the campaigns and battles of the Army of the Ohio under Don Carlos Buell.

While Chris and Jacob faced off with their Confederate cousins in Kentucky, William Bushart mustered into the service with the Seventy-sixth New York Infantry in January 1862. He and his comrades guarded the nation's capitol through May of 1862. During that time, the Army of the Ohio, including Chris and Jacob, moved into Tennessee after the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson in February of that year and then came to the aid of Grant's Army of the Tennessee at Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862. In an interesting twist of fate, one of their cousins, William C. Bushart was killed at Shiloh fighting with the Fifth Tennessee Infantry, CSA.

During the summer of 1862, the Army of the Ohio plodded to Corinth and then began an agonizingly slow advance towards Chattanooga. In the east, William and the Seventy-sixth New York became part of General Pope's ill-starred Army of Northern Virginia. William and his comrades were out-marched and out-fought by the Confederates in the campaign culminating in the Second Battle of Manassas (August 28-30, 1862).

As the summer of 1862 turned to fall, all of the Busharts were caught up in Union efforts to stop two aggressive invasions of the north. First, General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia moved into Maryland. In the Western Theater, Generals Braxton Bragg and Kirby Smith marched their columns into Kentucky. The battles of Antietam in Maryland and Perryville in Kentucky ended the Confederate offensives, but with a demoralizing cost. Antietam was destined to be the bloodiest day in American history, and both Union armies seemed unable or unwilling to seize the initiative after thwarting their enemies.

While the first three Bushart Unionists struggled against Confederate invasions, a fourth Bushart, also named William, entered Union service in September 1862 with the One Hundred Sixteenth Illinois Infantry. He saw his first action under General William T. Sherman at Chickasaw Bayou, Mississippi in late December.

While William and the One Hundred Sixteenth Illinois struggled in the swamps north of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the Ohio Busharts were approaching the middle Tennessee town of

Murfreesboro with their army now under the command of General William S. Rosecrans. From December 31, 1862 through January 2, 1863, the renamed Union Army of the Cumberland and the Confederate Army of Tennessee bloodied each other in the fields and forests west of the town. When it was over, each side had lost nearly one-third of their men. Among the dead was Jacob Bushart who now lies in Stones River National Cemetery.

1863 proved to be relatively good year for the surviving northern Busharts and the Union. Although there were setbacks, all three of them participated in some of the most decisive events of the war. Chris Bushart and the Army of the Cumberland launched the Tullahoma Campaign and maneuvered the Confederates into north Georgia. After a bloody setback at the Battle of Chickamauga (September 18-20, 1863), they pushed the Army of Tennessee back during the Battle of Missionary Ridge in November. William Bushart of the One Hundred Sixteenth Illinois might have been at Chattanooga fighting alongside his cousin if he had not been killed during Grant's successful campaign to take Vicksburg. In the east William Bushart of the Seventy-sixth New York tasted defeat at Chancellorsville (May 2-5, 1863) and then the sweet nectar of victory at Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863).

In 1864, Union forces took the offensive and carried the remaining Busharts into some of the most brutal and destructive fighting of the war. William Bushart was killed in the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864), the opening act of Grant's Overland Campaign.

Chris Bushart remained with the Army of the Cumberland as it moved towards Atlanta during the summer of 1864. He somehow survived more than 120 days of campaigning under fire as well as battles at Resaca, Adairsville, New Hope Church, Kennesaw Mountain and Peachtree Creek. After taking Atlanta, Chris and his regiment moved north into Tennessee. On November 30, 1864, he helped repulse the Confederate charges at Franklin. Once again the Bushart cousins shared the field of battle on opposing sides. There were Busharts in the Third Kentucky Mounted Infantry and the Twentieth Tennessee Cavalry (Russel's) riding with General Nathan Bedford Forrest against Chris and his comrades. Amazingly none of the Busharts were killed or wounded during that horrible five hours of fighting. After reaching Nashville, Chris and his regiment fought their last major engagement, crushing the Army of Tennessee on December 15-16, 1864.

In 1865, Chris Bushart and the Sixty-fifth Ohio saw duty in Alabama, East Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas. Chris continued his service to the nation until he and his regiment were mustered out at San Antonio, Texas on November 30, 1865. Like his Confederate cousins, Chris returned home to continue his life in the nation that their ancestors had built and that he and his cousins had helped save.

POSTSCRIPT

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>