

## MIDDLEBROOKS CEMETERY CLEAN-UP

By 2nd Lt. Cmdr. J. H. Underwood

(Editor's note: This article is from the April 2010 Gen. Joe's Dispatch, a newsletter distributed by The Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863, Sons of Confederate Veterans, located in Conyers, Georgia.)

On Saturday, March 13, 2010, seven members of this camp began cleaning up Middlebrooks Cemetery, clearing away briars, vines, and debris. By the end of the day, about three-fourths of the cemetery had been cleared. This was only a start. The remaining fourth of the cemetery has yet to be cleared, and there are many stones that have been broken or turned over.

As the men were working, one of the overturned stones was turned up and leaned against its base. It was the stone of Zere Pendergrass Middlebrooks, who was the 2nd Sergeant of Company E, 42nd Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry, C.S.A., Newton County, Georgia, Harper Guards. With the help of Camp historian Dan Bass, here is a little of the history of Sergeant Middlebrooks's Company.

Company E, 42nd Regiment of the Georgia Volunteer Infantry, Newton County Harper Guards was mustered into service on March 4, 1862. Its officers were: Captain Thomas J. Mercer; 1st Lieutenant Joseph Heard; 2nd Lieutenant James. D. Walker; and Jr. 2nd Lieutenant Lazarus Osborne. Its non-commissioned officers were: 1st Sergeant William H. Nolen; 2nd Sergeant Zere Pendergrass Middlebrooks; 3rd Sergeant James P. Cowan; 4th Sergeant John W. Ivey; and 5th Sergeant Drewry Jefferson Brewer. There were four Corporals: Thomas A. Boyd, James M. Mercer, Seth K. Huff, and James J. Elliott. One hundred and seventeen privates joined the Company on March 4. Sergeant Middlebrooks unfortunately took ill with the measles and died in Loudon, Tennessee, on July 3, 1862.

His outfit went on to Vicksburg, Mississippi. They left Vicksburg on May 1, 1863, and marched to Warrenton, Mississippi. They left there May 2 and marched two miles below Big Black River, toward Port Gibson, Mississippi, and then to Baker's Creek, Mississippi, where they engaged the enemy. On May 16, 1863, they retreated and covered the retreat of the entire army all the way to Big Black River. They marched back to Vicksburg on May 17, 1863, and went into "Rifle Pits" that same night, remaining there until their surrender on July 4, 1863.

The company left Vicksburg on July 12, 1863, and marched to Enterprise, Alabama, by the 20th of July, a distance of one hundred and sixty-five miles, with four days' rations. They left Enterprise on July 22 and marched to Mobile, where they were furloughed for thirty days, then exchanged and reorganized at Decatur, Georgia. They drew arms on October 1, 1863, then took the field again in East Tennessee.

To the best of our knowledge, Sergeant Zere P. Middlebrooks was the first Middlebrooks to be buried in the Middlebrooks Cemetery. His father, Zere Middlebrooks Sr., is also buried in this cemetery. Zere Sr. was born on July 4, 1782, just six years to the day after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and died on April 14, 1869, outliving his son by seven years.

The 1860 census of Newton County, Georgia, shows Zere at age 77 as a farmer living in the Oak Hill district, having real estate valued at \$7,100 and his personal property valued at \$31,000, making him a very prominent citizen of Newton County.

Another Confederate soldier that is buried in the Middlebrooks Cemetery is James E. Christian, member of Company G, 2nd Georgia State Troops, C.S.A., who was the brother-in-law of Zere Middlebrooks, having married Zere's older sister, Marie Ann, on November 26, 1846. James did not survive the war, but no details of his death have been found. Marie then married Milton Waldrop on February 25, 1869. She is buried in the Middlebrooks Cemetery with her second husband.

(In a footnote to his article, Lt. Cmdr. Underwood stated that, as he and others were clearing the cemetery, "a nice lady from the neighborhood stopped to thank us for our efforts. She was Sue Fanning, aunt of actress Dakota Fanning, and about a half hour later she returned with her nephew Peyton Fanning and her niece Nikki Loggins, all armed with tools." They helped Underwood and his crew for several hours. He also stated that three of the crew returned to the cemetery on March 27 to do more clean-up. Lt. Cmdr. Underwood added, "For those who are interested, I do have a list of the names of the 117 privates, and the history of what happened to most of them, including the officers." If you want to know more, he can most likely be reached at The Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863, Conyers, Georgia.)

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