

Major John S. Shropshire



Photo courtesy of Nesbitt Memorial Library, Columbus, Texas

Major John S. Shropshire was commander of Company A, 5th Texas Regiment of Mounted Volunteers. He was a lawyer who moved to Texas in 1854 at age 22. He later acquired, through his father-in-law, about 40 families of slaves. The 1860 Census lists his personal property at \$50,500 and 62 slaves. He resided in Columbus, TX.

During the War, he commanded his company at Apache Canyon and the Battle of Glorietta Pass (3/28/1862) where he was KIA. Because he was a very tall man, several accounts note that his body did not fit into the wooden casket acquired for him and therefore he was wrapped in blankets and buried on the battlefield. From the letter of a comrade who was present at his death, it was reported that he was buried as an individual, not in the mass grave of the other KIA Confederate soldiers.

Major Shropshire was re-buried on August 5, 1990, with military honors at his birthplace in KY alongside his parents. This action was taken at the request of the International Society of Shropshire's.

There is a chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Columbus, TX that is named for Major Shropshire and another Confederate soldier.

The following is an extraction taken from reference 2, regarding Major Shropshire and his company after departing for New Mexico in the fall of 1861.

Shropshire's company, and the rest of Sibley's Brigade, set out for New Mexico in late 1861. Moving up the Rio Grande River, shadowed by U. S. forces, the two armies met at Valverde, where, on February 21, the second and final day of the battle, Shropshire's company suffered 23 casualties, only one of whom was killed on the battlefield. Henderson was burned in the face and neck by a nearby explosion, but continued to carry out his duties. Shropshire, for his efforts, won a promotion to major and was given command of four companies. Wright was elevated from first-lieutenant to captain to take his place. Beckwith and a half dozen other members of the company were transferred to the new Valverde Battery, a unit created to operate the several artillery pieces the army captured at Valverde. Sibley, wisely or not, continued up the Rio Grande, stopping briefly at Socorro to establish a hospital. There, Company A left its men who had been seriously wounded at Valverde, including Lieutenant Hubbard and privates Augustus L. Baker, Robert Carter, Suffield Clapp, John Henry David, A. L. Grow, Manly Knowlton, Albert Gallatin Mitchell, Sanford Putnam, and John Stolts; and two men who were ill, Ashley Carter and Robert Morgan, Jr. Shortly afterward, Hubbard, David, and Putnam would die of their wounds, and, on March 11, Ashley Carter would die of his disease.

The rest of Company A continued with the brigade toward Albuquerque. On March 16, Captain Wright was designated an assistant quartermaster and transferred to regimental headquarters. Wells was elected to replace him as company captain. He must certainly have been disappointed in his first taste of combat as company captain. At a skirmish at Apache Canyon on March 26, he led his command too far forward, then failed to retreat in time. Though none of his men were killed or seriously wounded, a great many, including John O. Allen, Ferd E. Caldwell, William L. David, Thomas F. Goode, George R. Guinn, Joel Thomas Kindred, Eli T. Matthews, William H. Newsom, August Schubert, James Watt Tinkler, Lovard T. Tooke, and John B. Winfree, all of whom had been residents of Colorado County two years earlier, were captured. Tooke was captured in a somewhat comical manner, when he and another man both tried to hide under a rock which was only big enough to conceal one of them. Two days later, in a brutal, bloody encounter with a fresh federal army at Glorieta Pass, Sibley's campaign in New Mexico was brought to its effective end. What remained of Company A sustained four casualties. Three men were wounded, and one, Seaborn Jones, was killed. Wils Bonds, who had been promoted lieutenant, was apparently captured. He would die at Fort Union on April 14. In addition, the company's

original captain, Shropshire, was also killed at Glorietta, shot in the head, reportedly by a Union private named George W. Pierce. Shropshire's slave, who subsequently became known as Bob Shropshire, returned to Company A and stayed until the war's end.

References

- 1.) Yvonne R. Oakes, "The Glorieta Burials: Report to The Board of Regents Museum of New Mexico," Sept 1990.
- 2.) Bill Stein, "Consider the Lilly, The Unguided History of Colorado County Texas," Nesbitt Memorial Library, Columbus, TX.