



By Donald E. Collins

FOREWORD

The lives of too many deserving men and women are lost to history, but cry out to be told. Such is the life of baron William Henry von Eberstein, a man who left the luxury of a prominent family of German and English aristocracy to follow the sea, and ultimately, to meritorious service as a Confederate enlisted man in the American Civil War. Except for a largely forgotten memoir lying in a box in the Manuscripts Department of East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, von Eberstein's life would remain untold and forgotten. To this date, not an essay, article, book chapter, or book has been written to bring his exploits to public view. It is hoped that this essay may bring this amazing life to light. This article will largely treat his career as a Confederate soldier. His life at sea, also worthy of further literary treatment, may be left to others.

An attempt has been made to quote excerpts from the memoirs as the baron himself wrote them. However, editorial changes were necessary due to several factors. Errors in historical fact, caused by faulty recollections made later in life, were corrected where possible. In addition, necessary corrections were made in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure in order to present a smoother reading of the essay. It needs to be

emphasized that the term “Washington,” as used throughout this article, refers solely to the small town of Washington in the state of North Carolina. There are no references to Washington, DC, the capital of the Northern States during the Civil War.

EARLY LIFE

Wilhelm Heinrich Freiherr (baron) von Eberstein was born December 21, 1821, in a stately mansion in Saint Servan, France, where his father served as Vice Consul. His English mother came from an aristocratic family that included the Earl of Clarendon, one of the original eight Lords Proprietor of the Carolina colony. His father traced his ancestry back to the tenth century Count von Eberstein of the Duchy of Swabia, near the present-day town of Baden. At the age of thirteen, young von Eberstein left home to follow the nomadic life of a seafarer, moving from ship to ship and port to port.

Sailing under the flags of England, South Africa, Chile, Brazil, and the United States, he travelled the world from India to Hawaii, from the southern coast of Africa to northern Europe, to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. During those years, he experienced the transport of English prisoners to exile in Australia, the shipment of slaves to Brazil; skirmish with and evasion of a British warship; fighting Indians in South America, shipwreck, whaling, hunting seals; hurricanes, and the normal commerce with distant lands.

In 1846, a chance meeting with a German friend began a series of events that tied von Eberstein to North Carolina and eventual service in the Confederate army. While his ship was docked in New York City, he chanced to meet a German acquaintance who captained a schooner owned by Thomas DeMille out of Washington, North Carolina. (DeMille was the great-uncle of the famed twentieth century film director Cecil B. DeMille.) Out of friendship, he joined his friend for a voyage to that town. He liked the town so much that he returned for a several weeks’ stay. Over time, those visits turned into a permanent residence in the adjacent settlement of Chocowinity.

On April 15, 1852, he married Annis Harding in Chocowinity. From that date on, he was committed to a future life in North Carolina as he had promised her mother that he would never take her daughter from the state if she would approve the marriage. As his family grew during the following decade, Von Eberstein settled into life in the community. He variously purchased and operated a general store, tried his hand at teaching in two area schools, and finally outfitted a schooner in Washington in which he carried on coastal and Caribbean trade. During that decade, he not only took on the life of a typical North Carolinian, he adopted wholeheartedly the region’s politics, and when the Civil War came, he ardently supported the Confederacy.

CIVIL WAR AND DEFENSE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COAST

The War began on April 15, 1861, when Southern forces under General Pierre Beauregard fired on Federal troops stationed in Fort Sumter, in Charleston, South Carolina. U. S. President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops to put down what he viewed as a rebellion, but that Southerners saw as an invasion. The South reacted with further secessions and preparation for war. Although North Carolina would remain in the Union for another month, until May 20, Governor Ellis nevertheless sided with the Confederacy and began to prepare his state for defense against a Northern invasion.

Protection of the coast against invasion was a priority. Forts needed to be constructed and troops recruited to man them. In those early days, when it was believed the war would be of brief duration, men rushed to enlist in newly formed volunteer companies. Von Eberstein, despite being forty years of age and having a growing family at home, enlisted in the Washington Grays (hereafter, the Grays), a heavy artillery company, on the very day that Lincoln made his call for troops. He was elected sergeant, a rank he would hold for the duration of the war. His experience with artillery during his naval career proved useful to his various units.

The Grays were assigned to the Seventh North Carolina Volunteer Regiment, along with ten other companies formed throughout the northeastern section of the state. Over the next two months, those companies were transferred, one at a time, to man the forts guarding the inlets along the Outer Banks, as the sandy barrier islands were, and still are, known.

Von Eberstein played an active roll in the company from the very beginning. After a brief period drilling and training his squad, he was sent as second in command of a ten-man advance party to prepare the way for the company at its new station on Portsmouth Island along the state's Outer Banks. *"I will tell you,"* he wrote, *"we felt very military, for as soon as we left the whorf (sic) at Washington I placed [a] sentry aft and one forward in the bows of the vessel over the stores."*

The party arrived at the village of Portsmouth at night. The U. S. Hospital was seized immediately for use as barracks for the incoming companies. Von Eberstein continued to enforce military discipline, placing sentries at every gate and one at the door of the hospital to keep the men from going out without permission. Once this was done, he led his men in unloading supplies from the schooner. The task was arduous, taking all night and most of the following day, and necessitated carrying stores and wood through waist deep water. With the preliminary work done, the rest of the Washington Grays arrived several days later.

After a few weeks, the Grays were joined on Portsmouth by a company from Greenville (the Tar River Boys) and two units from counties to the north. Von Eberstein trained them in artillery drill, which enabled them to share duty garrisoning Fort Ocracoke on nearby Beacon Island. The fort was positioned to guard against enemy entry into the sounds via Ocracoke Inlet. While not on duty, von Eberstein *"had quite a pleasant time fishing, crabbing, clamming, and oystering."*

In addition to defense, the inlets allowed the small Confederate fleet to capture Northern merchant ships. This was one of the concerns that would later lead to the Federal attacks on Forts Hatteras and Clark at Hatteras Inlet. Food and other useful items taken from the captured ships were often distributed among the troops, and the vessels themselves turned over to Confederate authorities in New Bern. Von Eberstein was ordered to make one such delivery: *"Whilst there we captured a schooner that came off the Barr from the West Indies. Col. [James G.] Martin put me on board and gave me orders to get underway and proceed to Newbern to deliver her up to the authorities there which I accomplished with the crew detailed for that purpose from the sailors which had volunteered in the Washington Grays."*

About the first of August, von Eberstein was placed in charge of the heavy artillery at Fort Ocracoke. As described in his memoir: *"Captain [James L.] Leith, with a company raised in Hyde County, and Captain James Swindell, with a company which was raised in Chocowinity, were ordered to join the Seventh Regiment and report at Portsmouth to Colonel [William F.] Martin ... They were [then] sent to garrison the*

fort on Beacon Island ... As his ordnance officer on Beacon Island, a Lieutenant Brantley, [had] been removed from his office for drunkenness and bad conduct, ... Col. Morris, the Chief Engineer of the Battery, ordered Capt. [Thomas] Sparrow to send me ... to take and occupy Lieut. Brantley's place. I then proceeded to take charge of the heavy guns on the Battery and all Ordnance. I was also [ordered] to instruct Leith and Swindell's company in Artillery service." In that position, a development soon arose that placed von Eberstein in a situation that potentially called for him to fire on his own men.

All had gone well within the Seventh Volunteer Regiment until the overwhelming July 21, 1862, Confederate victory over Union forces at the Battle of Manassas (or Bull Run) created a demand among many in the regiment for combat duty in Virginia. Their enlistment limited them to service within North Carolina. Captain Sparrow, commander of the Grays, was diplomatic and permitted his men to decide for themselves whether to remain in the Seventh or transfer to Confederate service. An election was held, and a hundred from his company voted to transfer to Confederate service and the war beyond North Carolina. Only twelve chose to remain within the state. However, Captain George W. Johnson, commander of the Tar River Boys, refused to allow his men the same privilege. Those wishing to transfer to Confederate service mutinied and voted to overthrow Johnston. The situation grew so serious that troops and artillery were called for to put it down. Von Eberstein described the event in his memoir: "*at the time there was a Confederate Gun boat in the roadstead commanded by Capt. Cook [of the CSS Edwards], a brave Naval Commander. The mutiny got so high that he, Capt. Cook, received orders to train his guns upon the House where that company was quarantined. I also at the Fort received the same order, and I trained two ten-inch Columbiads upon the same House, and waited for the result. Finally volunteers were called for to go and arrest the Mutineers. The Washington Grays volunteered to do it at once. They marched to the quarters of the mutineers and demanded their surrender which they did do and that ended the difficulty.*"

A court martial was called but was interrupted when Union warships appeared off the coast of Hatteras. All available men of the Seventh were sent for the defense of Forts Hatteras and Clark. After a brief, one-sided battle, the forts surrendered. All that remained of the Seventh Volunteer Regiment were two companies on Beacon Island. When Captains Leith and Swindell heard of this, they called a meeting of officers, and included ordnance officer von Eberstein. Swindell and Leith proposed evacuation in order to avoid eventual capture. Von Eberstein argued against such a position when the enemy was nowhere near. "*I told them,*" he later wrote, "*that we could fight anything that the enemy could send against us, as they must attack us with small boats and ... we could be reinforced and reattack (sic) from Newbern.*" He was seconded by Mr. Henry Brown (an engineer), and his brother-in-law Lieutenant Henry Harding of Swindell's company, but was overruled by Swindell and the rest of the officers. Swindell then went to Portsmouth, seized two schooners, brought them to the fort, and, according to von Eberstein, "*commenced the most cowardly evacuation ever known.*"

Von Eberstein refused to join the retreating officers and remained at the fort with four Negro workers. Knowing they could not defend the fort without reinforcements, they proceeded to pile (sic – spike?) the guns and destroy the provisions "*so that nothing but a dismantled battery would fall into the hands of the enemy.*" After the destruction was completed, von Eberstein, engineer Brown, and the four Negroes departed in Brown's small boat during a heavy squall, arriving in New Bern late the

following night. The following morning, Sept 1, 1861, von Eberstein reported Swindell's and Leith's cowardice to General Richard C. Gatlin.

THE FALL OF NEW BERN

He and Lt. Harding then departed for Washington. While there, he was ordered to report to Colonel Robert McMillan, the Confederate commander there, who made him drill officer for his 24th Georgia Infantry Regiment. He did this until the end of November when he was ordered to take charge of the artillery and ordnance at a battery then under construction at Swan Point on the Pamlico River. "*We passed a very monotonous time of it,*" he wrote, "*with the same routine every day.*"

The monotony ended in February 1862, with the Union capture of Roanoke Island in the Pamlico Sound. As a result of the loss at Roanoke, the artillery at Swan Point had to be moved and the battery abandoned. "*Captain Daniel Reid and myself commenced dismantling the heavy Ordnance. We placed it upon a flat (barge) and the Ordnance stores in a small Schooner ... On the 8th of March, I ... received orders ... to proceed up the Tar River ... A steamer was provided me to tow the Schooner and the flat up the river to Tarboro.*" The river was shallow and they had difficulty getting past logs on three occasions. But the mission was accomplished by the 13th of March, with the ordnance and ordnance stores safe in Tarboro.

Immediately upon arrival in Tarboro, von Eberstein was ordered to place the ordnance on board a train for transport to New Bern, which was under attack by Union forces under General Ambrose Burnside. En route, he learned that the city had fallen, and was ordered to report in person to General Branch, who had been in command there. The train was within eight or ten miles of New Bern when it met another train loaded with refugees retreating from the fight. Von Eberstein's train was forced to back up to Kinston, where it met the general and delivered the ordnance.

In the afternoon of March 16, he returned to Tarboro where he found that the Washington Grays had been released from captivity, and were there in the process of reorganization. He rejoined the company and helped Captain Sparrow finish the organization. The company then moved to Greenville, some twenty miles distant.

From Greenville, Sparrow sent von Eberstein to Beaufort County, the unit's original home, to seek out new recruits. While there, he resided at the home of Nathaniel Harding, his father in law. During that time, Federal troops came up to Washington with their gunboats, landed troops, and took possession of the town. As soon as he heard the news, von Eberstein borrowed Harding's pony and rode to the bridge at the river. When he was about a third of the way across, he saw that sentries had already been posted at the draw. He knew "*the jig was up for recruiting,*" and the next morning rode to Greenville to join his company.

GREENVILLE AND THE COW INCIDENT

The company remained in Greenville for some time, during which an embarrassing incident took place. Von Eberstein recorded the event in some detail:

"We staid in Greenville for some time, drilling, etc. Then a company of cavalry under Capt. Walker [probably Clinton M. Andrews, 2nd North Carolina Cavalry Regiment] joined us. The whole was under command

of Major Andrews. One night ... Walker's pickets came in, very much frightened and gave an alarm that the Yankees were advancing in line of battle and in force across a field belonging to Mr. Brown just below the Town of Greenville.

The long roll was beat for the men to fall in to prepare for the attack. Everything was confusion. Walker's cavalry company was all mounted, riding about and making preparations to meet the advancing foe.

We waited for the foe to appear, but some time in the night Major Andrews, becoming frightened, gave the order for the Infantry to retreat across the bridge toward Falkland. This was done in disorder, as it was all we could do to keep up with Major Andrews. He almost double-quickened us to death.

In the mean time the Cavalry formed themselves upon one Hill at Greenville, in line of battle, to give the enemy a hot reception, by giving them a volley from their double-barrel guns. Then they were to retreat and save themselves as best they could.

In the mean time they had sent a squad in advance to give timely warning of the approach of the enemy. They went down as far as Mr. Brown's field, where low and behold they espied the enemy which the pickets had heard advancing in force across the field. The enemy turned out to be a drove of cattle feeding in the field, and the whole thing proved to be a false alarm, having all been in the imagination of the picket's brain, I suppose he having become lonesome."

News of the event spread, and on May 18, 1862, Lucy Cherry Crisp wrote in her diary that "*the story goes that some cows came rushing along and our pickets took it for granted it was the Yankees and ran with all their might ... I greatly fear the Old North State is irretrievably lost. I hope and believe there are some brave ones.*" The flight for von Eberstein and the remnants of the Washington Grays who had managed to remain together, ended in Falkland, about ten miles from Greenville. They took over a house in the small community and spent a week trying "*to get the company together again, for it had gotten considerably scattered about the country.*" As soon as Captain Sparrow had most of the company together, the Grays marched back to Greenville to reoccupy their former quarters. The whole affair "*turned out to be a great laugh upon Major Andrews,*" who lost his command to Captain Sparrow over the incident. They remained in Greenville for some time, doing guard and picket duty.

AN EXCURSION TO UNION-OCCUPIED WASHINGTON

After spending some time in Greenville doing guard and picket duty, the Washington Grays and Captain Walker's cavalry company moved six miles across the river where they encamped at the home of a local doctor. Excursions were made from there toward Pactolus and Union-occupied Washington. Von Eberstein remembered one particular incident in detail and described it in his memoir:

“On one occasion Capt. Walker and his company went down toward Washington. There had been a plan to attack the pickets and capture them, and to enter Washington. Capt. Walker had gone down the day before to get the bearings. The next evening I was sent down with a detail of twenty men from the Washington Grays, of which I took command. My instructions were to go down by forced march and join Captain Walker, to whom I was to report. He was to wait for me, and at daybreak, we were to attack Washington. I started and we marched eight miles from Washington. I had sent Wm. Gaffin, an old Prussian soldier, to keep about forty yards ahead of my squad, as an advance, to give us timely warning, if he saw or heard anything. I do not recall the exact time, but it was some time after 12 o’clock, and very dark. Wm. Gaffin fell back upon us, and cried out, “Horse’s foots! Horse’s foots!”

I halted my squad, which was marching by the flank, and I listened. Sure enough we heard horses’ feet upon the ground, coming at a great speed. I at once put my squad in line of battle and brought them to fixed bayonet, to receive the charge of the enemy if it had been one. But the horse got frightened and turned upon his heels and started back toward Washington.

I kept on advancing with my squad until I arrived at the place where I was to meet Capt. Walker, a distance three miles from Washington. Not seeing anything of him, I remained there with my squad for about two hours, until day began to break.

A horse with his saddle and bridle came galloping up to my squad. Some of my men knew him as belonging to a man in Walker’s company. I gave orders to catch him, and the men did. Then I asked for a volunteer to go on horseback as near Washington as it would be possible, to see if we could get any tidings from Capt. Walker and his squad of cavalry.

A private by the name of Dave Mallison volunteered to do it, he having been raised in Washington, and he knew some of the persons who lived outside of the town. He started at full gallop and in the course of an hour, he came back with the intelligence that Walker in the night had entered Washington after capturing or killing the pickets, and had charged through the streets, and after that he had given the Yankees a great scare, but the Yankees rallied and drove him off. In leaving, Walker lost his hat and plume. The Yankees made a big how-to-you-do about it. The horse we had caught belonged to Walker’s man, who was thrown in the charge. A man named William Gibbs was shot during the charge.

After this information, I hardly knew what to do. By not having waited for me, Capt. Walker had left me in a predicament. There I was with a small squad of men in the Yankee lines. If the Yankees had not been scared, they could have captured every one of us. I gave the order for us to retire to our encampment in order. I cautioned every man to keep his ears and eyes

open, for I was determined that if the Yankees followed us, to sell our lives very dearly.

My instructions ... in writing ... were that if attacked by the enemy, to fight him at all hazards, and not to retire before him. Nevertheless we, after a very arduous march, toward evening arrived at our encampment, broken down and sore of feet."

WILMINGTON

In the summer of 1862, the Washington Grays were transferred to the Tenth North Carolina Heavy Artillery Regiment in Wilmington, North Carolina, where they were ordered to take control of Fort French, a small two-gun battery about two miles from the city. While there, the new company commander received orders from the General [William H. C.] Whiting to send von Eberstein to take charge of building Fort Hill. "*I had a good many Negroes to do the work,*" he wrote, "*they having been pressed for that service.*" The completed fort "*was pronounced by General Hill and General Longstreet to be as good as a fort as was in Virginia.*"

TRANSFER AND PROMOTION

Complaining that he was "*tired of being shut up in a battery so long,*" in August 1862, he requested and received a transfer to the Sixty-first Regiment North Carolina State Infantry Regiment, in General Thomas Clingman's Brigade. Colonel James D. Radcliffe commanded the 61st, while von Eberstein's brother-in-law Major Henry Harding was third in command. Von Eberstein was promoted to the regimental staff as sergeant major on September 5, 1862. For some time after that, he also served as the regiment's acting adjutant.

SOUTH CAROLINA AND THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTON

In early 1863, Clingman's Brigade was ordered to South Carolina to aid in the defense of Charleston, which was undergoing a Federal land and sea assault. The brigade arrived in the city from Wilmington in February. In March, it was ordered to Savannah, Georgia, where the North Carolinians found the people and duty pleasant. However, the sojourn ended abruptly in July due to renewed Federal activity against the fortifications around Charleston.

THE BATTLE OF GRIMBALL'S LANDING

In order to distract Confederate attention from his planned July 10 assault on Battery Wagner, Northern Brigadier General Quincy Gillmore developed a plan that called for a feigned move toward Charleston on James Island in order to divert Confederate attention and troops from reinforcing Battery Wagner. The soon-to-be famous Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Colored Infantry, and two other regiments, were moved to Grimball's Landing on the island on July 8, two days before the first assault on Battery Wagner, which would end in failure. On July 16th, Confederates under Johnson Hagood attacked and defeated the Federals at Grimball's Landing. Von Eberstein described the

battle in his memoir:

“The Brigade ... went to attack the Negro Brigade just as the day dawned, and that they heard the sound of our guns attacking the Sloop-of-war Wabash, Col. Radcliffe having been trusted with that part of the attack.

We marched down in the night, in company with the company of Artillery, which was a South Carolina Battery. We got down there about one hour before day broke. We placed our guns in position and the 61st lied down upon the ground about twenty yards in the rear. Skirmishers were sent out to feel the way and to drive in the Yankee Pickets just as soon as day broke. The time at last arrived. We opened fire upon the sloop of war simultaneous with our Squad of skirmishers that gave the signal and we heard the cheers of our Brigade under Generals Hagood and Clingman charging, driving and slaying the Yankee Negros. We took the Wabash completely unawares, and before they could get to their guns we had riddled through the Hull. We killed one of her officers and wounded several of the crew. She commenced to throw her grape and canister among us. We only had one man wounded in the whole affair. Hagood and Clingman took the Yankees completely unawares. They drove them before them like sheep. They took several prisoners and the balance embarked on board their transports and left.”

Von Eberstein erred on two accounts. The Federal ship was in fact the *Pawnee*, and the Negro troops marched back to Morris Island where two days later [July 18], they led the assault on Battery Wagner, popularized in the motion picture “Glory.” Although unaware of the historical significance of an otherwise unimportant battle, von Eberstein had participated in defeating the famed 54th Massachusetts in its first real combat.

After the battle, the brigade explored the vacated field, picking up stores the Federals had left behind. “*It was then that we had something good to eat,*” von Eberstein wrote, “*we having had nothing but Nassau Port and hard bread. We were used to eating our pork raw. Lieut. [David F.] Redditt ... and I came into camp loaded down with sugar cured Hams, condensed milk, sugar and coffee. We then commenced cooking the ham and making coffee, a thing we were not used to have. When it was ready, we invited. Col. Radcliffe, Maj. Henry Harding, and Capt. [William M.] Stevenson to partake with us.*”

That night they made a makeshift tent from blankets. They tried to sleep as a heavy rain poured water through the cornrows where they lay; occasionally waking to make coffee as best they could.

DUTY AT BATTERY/FORT WAGNER

The next day the weather cleared, and the regiment moved to an encampment on James Island nearer Charleston. While there, Gilmore made his last attempt to storm Battery Wagner. At dusk on July 18, he launched an attack spearheaded by the African American 54th Massachusetts Infantry, backed by two brigades of nine regiments. The 54th scaled the parapet but after brutal hand-to-hand combat were driven out with heavy

casualties. Von Eberstein, although not then at the battery, wrote that *“They were repulsed with very heavy loss by our troops, as soon as we found the attacking forces were Negros. The cry of no quarters was given and I assure you few escaped. There were no prisoners taken. Their loss, as reported by the Yankees, were 700, but I assure they were not less than 800 ... Our loss was very small.”* Federal casualties in fact numbered about 1,515 killed, captured or wounded. The Confederate defenders lost 174.

Von Eberstein probably came to serve at Battery Wagner just after the assault of July 18, while General Johnson Hagood was still in command, and remained until he was wounded on August 16, hospitalized, and returned home to convalesce. He introduced his time at the battery by noting that he *“performed the duty of several of the officers of High Rank upon Genl Hagood’s Staff.”*

“On one occasion I had to show the General’s Ordnance Officer, who was a commissioned first Lieut., how to strap and fuse shell ready for use and many other parts of his duty. At another time a very important gun had been dismantled by the Yankee shot – it was the only one that could be brought to bear upon them. Genl. Hagood’s Chief of Artillery... had reported to the Genl. that it could not be mounted until night [and] that it would take 100 men to mount it and require a gin with a fall. The South Carolina Artillerists were discussing the matter and arguing with the Chief of Artillery. I and several officers and men of our Regt the 61st hearing them, told them that I could mount that gun in twenty minutes, under the heavy fire which we were undergoing. At the time we were quarrelling about it ... Lt Col [William S.] Devane , ... came forward and told them that it could be done for ... if I said it could be done, it was a settled fact ... I told [General Hagood] I would certainly mount it in twenty minutes if he would order me a detail of officers and men ... Gen. Hagood gave me the detail I asked for and in 19 minutes I had the guns mounted, loaded, with canister, and fired upon the Yankees, I pulling the lanyard myself.”

General Hagood went to von Eberstein again for aid when his Chief of Engineers declared himself incompetent to construct an ell on the land-side of Battery Wagner. The baron felt that competing for the task with a commissioned major of engineering placed him in a delicate position. However, he agreed at the urging of Colonel Devane and the encouragement of the Chief of Engineers himself. Von Eberstein asked for and received two details of a hundred men each. The work was carried out while *“The Yankees were firing upon us the whole time. By night I had the work completed and two guns mounted in the Angle ready for use.”* For his efforts, he was recommended for promotion; which did not come because *“Col. Devane did not wish to lose me.”* As a result, he remained regimental sergeant major.

WOUNDED

Following the failed assault on Battery Wagner, the Federal fleet and Gilmore’s land forces poured in a continuous and murderous artillery shelling, while constructing trenches to move closer and closer to the Confederate battery. Von Eberstein described

in detail the difficulties he and the men faced during Wagner's final months in Confederate hands:

"A thing happened that came near being the last of me. I having some leisure ran down to Battery Gregg, distance about one mile from Battery Wagner, to see Capt. Stevenson of Co. B of the 61st. I was sitting under a small tent talking with him and Lt. Redditt when a Yankee shell crashed through the tent and burst just outside and tore off the head of poor Ed Weunt, a private in Stevenson's company.

Another instance was one night when it was our night to relieve a Georgia Regt which was in the Rifle Pits, about one hundred yards in front of the battery, night was the only time we could relieve one another, as we had to be exposed to the U. S. Troops and U.S. Fleet. They knew the time we generally relieved our pickets. They commenced a heavy fusillade with shot and shell. Col. Devane was in command of the Regt. He remarked to me before we sallied out what was the best course to pursue. I remarked to him to order his men to Trail Arms, to stoop double and to double quick by the Flank Wing. We did so and all the shot and shell passed over us.

We had to be very particular as torpedos [land mines] were planted everywhere except in the path we were to tread and the least false step would send us to eternity.

We arrived safely at the rear of the Rifle Pits, which were just over a small ridge of sand, which partially protected us. Lieut. [Julius M.] Chestnut was acting adjutant at that time. I had been carrying orders backward and forwards from Col. Devane to the troops in the rifle pits under a very heavy fire, the shot and shell falling all around me. Capt. Edward Mallet remarked to Col. Devane, "Eberstein is tired, he has been going the whole time. Send Lt. Chestnut, he is acting adjutant." Col. Devane told Lt. Chestnut what to tell the Georgia Captain, [who] was in the right rifle pit. The Yankees had a battery of Mountainers mounted about 30 yards from our right, they could enfilade the whole Rifle Pits and it was dangerous to hold your head above.

Lt. Chestnut refused to go – said he could not go under such a fire. Mallet remarked at once "I know one will," and he called to me. He and Col. Devane remarked to me "Chestnut says he is sick and cannot go and carry the orders to the Pit on the right. Will you go?" I replied [that] I never refused to do duty before an enemy. The Col. gave me the orders and I proceeded at once to the rifle pit on the extreme right although it seemed as if the Yankees had redoubled their fire, the Gun Boats were shelling the Battery behind us also tremendously and the land Batteries were throwing their Mortar shell upon us. It was terrible.

I had knelt down at the rifle pit and was whispering into the Georgia

Captain's ear when the Yankees fired from their Howitzer on our right – one large shot struck me on the hip and had it not been for my sword belt which turned, it would have gone to my Hollow and killed me – another shot struck the Georgia Capt. in the head and splashed his brains all over me. I called out to Mallet that I was wounded, the ambulance corps came and got me and carried me to the rear of the sand ridge where the Col. and the Regt were waiting for a lull so they could relieve the other regiment. I refused to go to the Battery then. I preferred to remain with my regt. Col. Devane sent word to Gen. Hagood that I was wounded badly. He ... sent me his canteen of good corn whiskey to keep up my spirits ... The next morning, August 17th, 1863, I was sent to the hospital in Charleston.”

Confederate forces evacuated Battery Wagner and Morris Island three weeks later, on September 7, 1863.

CONVALESCENT LEAVE

Following his hospital stay, von Eberstein was sent home on a three-week furlough to convalesce. His leave was anything but restful. He found adjacent Washington firmly in enemy hands, and he found that he could not trust his own neighbors. It was widely known at the time that many white North Carolinians had remained loyal to the United States while still living among pro-Confederate neighbors. Such divided loyalties proved hazardous to von Eberstein and significantly altered his stay. His memoir presents a lengthy portrayal of life in Chocowinity during this period.

“I came down to Chocowinity to see my family – the place is five miles from Washington and the Yankees considered it within their lines. Some Buffaloes [Union sympathizers] or other had reported to the Yankees in Washington that I was out at Mr. Nathaniel Harding's house, the father of my wife.

At night I went to bed in a room in the office. I went to sleep. My good mother-in-law and my wife overheard, as they were passing the kitchen, a remark from one of the Negro women, named Phillis, that the Yankees knew that I was there ... That frightened my mother-in-law and my wife. They came to the office, waking me and told me what they had heard. I then said “this is no place for me,” though I had been but one week of my furlough.

I got up and dressed and started. I went off telling no one which way I was going. I shaped my course back of the fence of my father-in-law's farm and went through the woods to Benjamin Tripp's house. He had married a sister of my wife. I knocked to the window of their bedroom. They came to the window. I asked them to open the door and let me come in, and go in their parlor and lie down on the lounge, which I did, though I did not sleep much.

The next day, in the afternoon, the Yankee White Horse Cavalry came out from Washington to look for me. They went to Mrs. Grist's house by mistake and overhauled it looking for me. In the meantime my wife had come down to her sister's to see [if] she could hear anything from me and an old Negro met her on the road and told her the Yankees were out after me and that he had told them that I was gone. His name was Aaron Peed and belonged to Mrs. Susan Grist.

In the meantime I was sitting in Benjamin Tripp's sitting room talking with my wife's sister Martha, when she looked out the window. She cried out "Oh! Brother William the White Horse Cavalry are coming up the avenue." I gave one look and saw the White Horses and the Blue Coats. I at once jumped away to the back door, ran to the garden picket fence and cleared it with one leap. I kept to the woods and hid myself in a thicket and prepared to defend myself and my life as dearly as I could, but they came no further. They got a scare somehow or other. They started back to Washington as fast as their horses could carry them. As soon as they got back to Washington, the Yankee gunboats commenced throwing shell all over into the woods.

I went to the cross roads to Mr. Charles E. Peterson, he being, at one time, an officer in Capt. Swindell's Company, though a Yankee by birth. I said to him Charley, this is no safe place for me. I want to get you to take me to Greenville in the morning as soon as it is day. I wish to start soon. He promised he would do so and would be after me by the break of day. I spent all night at my wife's sister with my wife. When morning came Peterson did not come – 3 o'clock and Peterson still not there. I sent someone for him ... he came and made some excuse or other – I do not remember, nor did I care, by now I had formed my own plan suspecting treachery on his part and on the part of an Episcopal Clergyman, named Sherrod Kennerly, who was a traitor to the south and lived at the cross roads and was constantly in communication with the Yankees in Washington.

I got ready to start. Peterson wished to go down by the cross roads. I remarked "Charlie I am not going that way, if I do go I shall certainly be captured by the Yankees." And sure enough I should have, as the sequel will show. Charlie remarked there is no other way to go. "Yes there is," I said. We can go through the woods and I know the way and we can lift the buggy over the fallen trees we meet on our way. He consented after a good deal of talk, but very reluctantly. We started and got safely through.

As we got into the main Greenville road about one mile from the cross roads to Trinity Chapel who should we meet but old Kennerly and his wife going off in his buggy and as soon as he cast his eyes upon me and saw the direction I came from his feathers fell and he hardly knew what to say or do. He commenced to talk to Peterson of turning back after something he had forgotten. Peterson would not hurry his horses at all.

The Yankee Cavalry were on my track ... was only half a mile behind me. There is no doubt that Kennerly and Peterson had entered into a plan to sell me to the Yankees that morning ... it was to appear that I had been come upon by an accident as I crossed the cross roads. We reached the house of a Mr. Wm. Moyes. There I fell in with some of Whitford's regiment who were on picket. I told them the Yankees were on my trail, I was sure. They went down [and] drove them to Washington by scaring them. The Yankee thought there was a large force behind them or else they would not be so bold. I then arrived at Greenville without any more interruption and was safe. Although my furlough was not up, I returned to Sullivan Island and reported for duty.

I will here relate another [undated] incident – I had been sent down home, which was in Yankee lines to look after deserters which had left from Company B, 61st Regt. I came down at night through the woods to Mr. Harding's House where my wife was staying with him. In the morning I told my wife "I will go off from here this morning. The Yankees know I am here and they will be out after me. I started and was going down to Stephen Harding's when a man by the name of David Godley said he was sent to notify me the Yankees were coming. I was then between the house of Mr. Harding and Stephen Harding's near the ditch.

I at once went to Stephen Harding's and went across his field and then into the middle of Maple Branch. There I sat waiting the result. Eighteen privates and a Sgt. went to Mr. Harding's House. They were met at the porch of the house by my wife, her sister Mrs. Martha Tripp and their sister Julia. They asked where I was, that they had come after me and that they knew I was there. My wife's sister Martha replied that I was not there, that I had gone off that morning. But she reconed (sic) I had gone to my regiment. I remained hid in the branch until I saw them pass on their way back. The Yankees thought for sure they would get me for they had a company of Infantry stationed at the cross roads and a large squad of Cavalry had gone up the Greenville road. After this I went back to the house and remained there for two or three days unmolested."

Although his furlough was not up, he returned to his regiment in South Carolina.

JEFFERSON DAVIS

During his convalescent leave, Morris Island and its batteries fell to Union forces after almost continuous Federal bombardment and ground assaults for what von Eberstein estimated to be 120 days. On the 30th of October the Yankees commenced to shell the city of Charleston furiously from Batteries Wagner and Gregg, which were now in their possession. On his return, von Eberstein found his regiment encamped on Sullivan's Island (on the opposite side of Charleston Harbor) where it remained for some time doing outpost duty. On November 2, 1863, Confederate President Jefferson

Davis visited Charleston and reviewed the troops. Von Eberstein was impressed with the president, and recorded the incident in his memoirs. *“He wished to see the Brigade that had made such a noble defense of Morris Island and the Forts of Wagner and Gregg. He reviewed us upon the beach in full view of the Yankee Iron Clad fleet. I found the President to be very tall and very spare built. He is a much better looking man than I expected to have seen. He had the appearance of a perfect gentleman. His is a splendid horseman, as good a one as I ever saw. He was dressed in black cloth and had a pair of long military gloves. Although he had been in the Mexican War I think he heard that day the heaviest bombardment he ever heard. He congratulated us upon the defense we had made upon Fort Wagner and said by that difference the Government had gained all the time it required to for its plans for the future.”*

BATTLES AROUND PETERSBURG

During September, October, and November, the Sixty-first Regiment remained at Sullivan’s Island. On November 29, it departed by rail for Goldsboro, North Carolina, and twelve days later entrained for Petersburg, Virginia, where it was immediately ordered to Joyner’s Ford on The Blackwater River about two miles south of Zuni. For the next five months, the regiment remained spread out along the river guarding fords, bridges, and roads. Of this period, von Eberstein wrote: *“Clingman was ordered to report to Gen. (George) Pickett, who was then in command at Petersburg. Our Brigade was then ordered to march down ... to attack the Yankees who were making a demonstration. We marched down after throwing out our skirmishers to feel the way and to see if there were Yankees in ambush. As we approached, our skirmishers drove in the Yankee skirmishers and the whole of them fell back towards their lines. We moved in and staid there two or three days,”* after which the Sixty-first returned to Petersburg.

ENCAMPMENT ON THE BLACKWATER RIVER

The regiment had barely settled into its quarters in Petersburg when Colonel Radcliffe accepted General Clingman’s call for a volunteer regiment for duty at Ivor Station near the Blackwater. *“We marched through Petersburg that evening and took the train for our destination,”* von Eberstein wrote. *“We got there sometime during the night and relieved the Virginians belonging to Pickett’s Brigade. The next morning we moved down to the Blackwater ... and made our encampment ... It was very cold whilst we were down there – plenty of snow and ice. While in the Blackwater, we made two demonstrations in company with our Brigade.”*

Not all was duty. Von Eberstein, with another sergeant, managed to obtain an invitation to a party being given by a wealthy planter who lived only a mile and a half from the encampment. They were encouraged when they learned that *“two very beautiful and accomplished daughters”* would be there. The two sergeants invited Colonel Devane and Captain [William S.] Byrd to accompany them. Half an hour after arrival, they were astonished to see Colonel Radcliffe, Major Harding, Captain Mears, and the regimental doctor enter the door.

“The family being a good Baptist family did not have any dancing but we sung and promenaded with the Ladies around the room ... The long table in the dining room was occupied three or four times. The table was

loaded down with cakes all iced over, roast pig, roast turkey, roast chicken, and plenty of boiled ham ... It was quite a surprise to us all as we did not expect such a treat, especially so near the enemy... About midnight the party broke up and we went back to our different camps well satisfied with the enjoyment we had had. We remained at the Blackwater doing picket duty. Some evenings we would have Masonic meetings at night in our tents and sometimes in a house. I was Worshipful Master, our Chaplain was the Sr. Warden, Lieut. Jackson Jr. warden, Maj. Harding was Sr. Deacon, Col. Radcliffe Jr. Deacon – there were seven or eight men belonging to our regiment that belonged to our Lodge, in that manner we passed the long winter evenings.”

WOUNDED AT DRURY'S [DREWRY'S] BLUFF

Von Eberstein's regiment remained generally along the Blackwater until early May 1864, when Richmond and Petersburg were threatened by a Federal army of thirty thousand men under General Benjamin Butler. On May 12, he moved against the Confederate line at Drewry's Bluff, only eight miles south of the Confederate capital of Richmond. On May 16, he was defeated by a Confederate army of eighteen thousand under General Beauregard. Von Eberstein wrote about the encounter in great detail in his memoir:

“We were ... placed in [Robert] Hoke's Division. On May 7, 1864, our division was ordered from Petersburg to Drury's Bluff to occupy the same before the Yankees under Gen. [Benjamin] Butler. We marched parallel with the Yankee Troops. We arrived at the outer works of Drury Bluff when we were told that the Yankees were advancing in Force. We were formed at once in an old field in three lines of battle waiting for an attack. We occupied the center with our Brigade, the Yankees not advancing upon us when they saw we were prepared. Orders were given for us to fall back to the intrenchments, which we did. As soon as we arrived in the trenches our skirmishers were thrown out, and in less time than half an hour our skirmishers were engaged with the Yankee skirmishers. It was hot and hard fighting ... next day the Yankees made an attack on our right which they carried by assault, we not having men enough to man the works. They had flanked us on the right, the skirmishing continued in our front and upon our left.

That night about one o'clock in the morning orders were given to freshen up our fires, to call in our pickets and skirmishers, and to retire with haste and quickly to the inner works around Drury's Bluff. The works did not embrace so much ground and we could better defend them. We retired in order and reached the inner works by a circuitous route. [We] got there by day break and before we had got in good position the Yankee skirmishers were upon us. We threwed out our skirmishers as fast as we could and they kept the Yankees at bay. We continued skirmishing for two days and nights, the skirmishers were equal to do battle – some time the whole of our troops were engaged in front of the

works and it was a continual crack of rifle. The Yankee sharpshooters had gotten up in trees and with their long range telescopes infiladed (sic – enfiladed) our work and were wounding our men severely.

I then proposed to Col. Radcliffe to let me throw up a curtain with earth to protect our men, which he consented to. I commenced to throw one up on our right. In doing so, a man belonging to Co. B of our Regt, by the name of John Cherry, got struck in the side of the head by a spent shot, so it did not kill him. I received several balls through my blanket which I had swung over my shoulders – that curtain protected us so effectually. The skirmishers kept up as heavy as ever – no slack in it at all. It took a Sergt at the time from each Brigade for the Skirmish line and it had to be commanded by a field officer. After skirmishing there for several days, and we expecting an attack from Butler's troops every day and night, on the 16th day of May, as well as I remember, Gen. Beauregard with a company of Cavalry, commanded by Capt. Fred Harding, cut their way through to our entrenchment near Drury's Bluff.

Gen Beauregard then planned our attack, and on the morning of the 16th, just as the day was breaking our forces attacked Butler's Army, General Beauregard forestalling Butler. The attack [was] commanded by Genl Bushrod Johnston, leading in the van. We attacked in Gen. Beauregard's favorite plan, that was in the shape of a "V." As the attack commenced Col. Devane came to me and asked me to go and assist him with his line of skirmishers. He said the line was so long he could not attend to it. I had been ordered to remain, as long as our Regt did not move, ... near a Battery which was protecting and supporting to assist them. Every horse of the battery had been shot down.

An order came from Gen. Beauregard for our Regt to move at a double quick to the assistance of a Georgia Brigade that was getting sorely pressed by the Yankees and were giving way. As we passed Gen. Beauregard, President Jefferson Davis was at his side talking with him. Our regt gave him three Hearty cheers as we passed. [When] we got to the place where the Georgians were, they were totally demoralized. As we came up, they called out "Good Old North Carolina – do not leave us." The shot, and Balls, and the shell were flying like Hail all around us. I saw poor Lieut. [Daniel] Shackelford from our regiment fall along side of me. He was shot through the heart. We having lost Col Radcliffe in the melee, I went to Captain [William T.] Choate of our regiment and told him "Captain give the command forward." He did. He gave the command "Forward North Carolina 61st." and I and he marched off with the regiment charging the Yankees. Captain Choate fell at the same time, he being shot through the head and I through the thigh. The regiment marched right over us and with the other Troops they drove the Yankees before them. Emanuel Edwards, poor fellow was shot and killed in that charge, Capt. Choate was as brave a man as ever was on a Battle field. He came from the Western part of the State."

HOSPITALIZATION AND CONVALESCENT FURLOUGH

“Two of the ambulance Corps took me and carried me to the rear. The shot and shell were falling all around us and I thought we should be killed any time. About one mile in the rear from where I was wounded we found behind a hill the doctor of a Georgia Brigade taking care of his wounded men. I ... asked if he could not do something for me, for I was getting weak from loss of blood. He replied that he could not do much for me as his wounded were coming in so fast, and that the North Carolina doctors were only half a mile down. He looked at my wound, put a bandage around it, and gave me a tin of corn whiskey to drink. The liquor revived me at once and the bandage stopped the expansion of the blood to a great extent, so we proceeded to our doctors quarters – they were near the Buff.

The ambulance men placed me down on the ground in a tent and the doctor, which was a Doctor O’Hagen, gave me another tin cup of corn whiskey to keep me up, as he was cutting off a leg at the time and could not attend to me just then. I had not been lying there long before a Yankee prisoner was brought in wounded through his big toe. He was crying and making a doleful noise, and I was cursing him for being such a white livered and for crying like a baby, and telling him that if [he] had remained home and not come here with the balance to fight us he would not be wounded no more [than] would I.

Just at the time Capt. Frederick Harding ... heard I was wounded, he and Henry Patrick came in search of me. [When they] found me lying down in the tent cursing that Yankee, they could not help laughing. Capt. Harding remarked laughingly, “I should not think you would curse that way being wounded so bad as you are.” He went to Dr. O’Hagen and got him to attend to me at once – he dressed my wound [and] then I was sent down to the Bluff to be put on board a steamer to be carried up to Richmond.

I arrived at Richmond just at night. I was placed under a long shed with a great number of wounded. I remained there sometime complaining to the bystanders of the treatment we wounded soldiers met, being put under a shed like a parcel of dogs. At last one man came along with a horse and buggy. He asked me if I wished to go to the hospital. I told [him] I did. He took me in his buggy and drove me to one of the hospitals in the city. I was taken in, my name taken down – Regt, Brigade and assigned to a bed.

There I laid for few days when one day some Ladies came up to me and asked what regiment I belonged to. I told her 61st N. Carolina. “You are not a Virginian,” she said. I told her no, I was a North Carolinian. She left me and went to look for the Virginians – she gave them her delicacies. After she had gotten through, and having some left, she came

to me and she asked if I should like to have some. I told her “No I thank you,” that I was a North Carolinian and not a Virginian, but I knew that they did not make any difference between the soldiers of the different Southern States, she left me with red cheeks. The next morning I asked the doctor as he came to my bedside to examine my wound that I wished that, as soon as he thought I could be moved, that he would give me a transfer to the North Carolina hospital. I also told him the circumstances. He was utterly astonished and said that it should not happen again there.

In about ten days he transferred me to the North Carolina Hospital ... There I found Dr. Tutin who was an Assistant Surgeon in the Confederate service. I remained at the hospital about a week, then I received a wound furlough for a few weeks to make room for other wounded as they were coming in from the front or Richmond by hundreds.

On my way through Richmond to the Depot I and another [soldier] stepped into the Post Office, I being very weak and faint. When we got inside the entrance I fell down and fainted. My comrade took and placed my knapsack under my head to make me more comfortable. He remained by me. When I revived ... who should I see but the Col. of my regiment standing over me and looking at me. He saw how weak I was. He told me that the regiment was then marching through Richmond on the way to engage the enemy at Chickahominy. He also told me that he would send Major Harding to me, he being my brother-in-law, and that he would also send a carriage to take me to the Depot ... I came home by way of Petersburg and Danville.”

THE BATTLE OF THE CRATER

While von Eberstein was home on furlough, Federal forces attempted to end their siege of Petersburg by digging a tunnel and setting off explosives directly under the Confederate lines. The plan backfired when the attacking soldiers, black and white, became trapped in the resulting crater, losing a total of 3,798 to approximately fifteen hundred Confederates. It was particularly damaging to the black Federals who led the charge.

Von Eberstein heard about the engagement from his brother-in-law, Major Henry Harding, who led the 61st North Carolina Regiment in the engagement. The following comments on the battle undoubtedly came from reports by Harding, his friend and relative. *“Whilst I was at home on my wounded furlough my regiment was engaged around Petersburg. The Yankees had mined under one of the forts. On the 30th of July they sprung their mine and blew up our fort. We lost several men and guns by the blow up. After a short while the Yankees made a heavy charge upon the breach they made. They came on, their Negroes in front and the White Yankees behind, with their bayonets fixed. It was certain death for the Negroes not to advance upon the charge ... When they [the defending Confederates] attacked them in the holes their mines had made, we found they were Negroes. The cry ‘No quarter’ was given. Men clubbed their rifles,*

others drove their bayonets through them. It was a hand to hand fight. The poor Negroes would cry for quarter, but no quarter was received. The whole were killed. It was a heavy slaughter.”

CONVALESCENT FURLOUGH

As his furlough neared its end, and still feeling too weak to resume military duties, von Eberstein applied for a non-combat position that would allow him to remain home in or near Chocowinity. It came to his attention that General Beauregard intended to appoint an ordnance officer for the Plymouth and Washington, two towns that had returned to Confederate control after lengthy Union occupations. He applied for the position based on his experience with ordnance and the location of the post. The application was approved by his relative Major Harding, but failed when his Division Commander General Robert Hoke decided that he could see no necessity for such an appointment. With that refusal, von Eberstein returned to duty at the siege of Petersburg.

THE BATTLES OF CHAFFIN'S FARM AND FORT/BATTERY HARRISON

Von Eberstein returned to his regiment on August 15, after an absence of three months. The Sixty-first, he wrote, remained in the trenches around Petersburg fighting and skirmishing with the Yankees every day. On September 29th, 1864, General Edward O. C. Ord led an army of black and white troops in a fight that successfully captured Fort/Battery Harrison, the strongest point in the Confederate defensive line. On the following day, September 30, General Robert E. Lee personally supervised a Confederate counter-attack to retake the fort, but failed, suffering heavy losses. Von Eberstein described the suffering experienced by his regiment in the failed effort in his memoirs.

“On the 29th of September 1864, our Division had a heavy fight with the Yankee Gens. Ord and Butler. The Yankees got the best of us. They captured a Battery called Battery Harrison, in our line, cutting them in two. It was guarded by Virginia cadets only, but they made a brave defense.

The Yankees occupied the fort in force. The 30th of Sept. we were ordered to charge with our division and retake Battery Harrison. Our Division, under Genl. Hoke, had been lying down in a cornfield near the river, where an ironclad was lying. It was upon Chaffin's farm. Whilst lying there we heard two navy officers remark, one to the other, “What a pity to have such men cut and shot to pieces as they are going to be this evening.” “If,” one said, “the General knew the ground as well as I did, which they had to charge over, he never would order it.” I thought to myself, we are going to catch the devil and many of us will be lost.

The time had arrived. The order was given to march. We marched a circuitous rout [to] a point. We had arrived at the place, down in a valley, at the bottom of a hill where the Battery was. Gens Lee and Hoke

stood upon an eminence in our rear, there to watch the charge and to give the signal.

Our Brigade was in the center. General Hagood on the right, and if I am not mistaken, General Cook's on the left. Genl. [Alfred] Colquit of the Georgia Brigade was to support us. The signal was given. The command to charge was given to us by Col. [Hector] McKethan who was in command of our Brigade.

The whole Division charged simultaneously. I never saw men charge better in my life. We went up the hill and as soon as we got upon the brow of it, we charged toward the fort, but our progress was stopped by stones and briars which we had to charge over and through, under one of the severest cannonading and rifle shooting from thousands of rifles, for the Yankees were in there as thick as blackbirds.

We had to charge through a ravine grown up with briars, close to the Battery. There were few of us who got there. The Yankees had complete control of us. There was no retiring or advancing. It was certain death. The Georgia Brigade failed to support us and consequently we lost nearly all our Brigade. Only 40 of our Brigade came out of the charge safe. All the rest was killed, wounded, or taken prisoner.

Col. McKethan, Capt. White, the AAG of the Brigade and myself came off by crawling and getting as far as we could to the bottom of the hill, and roll over ourselves down. At that time we saw General Colquit crying. He was so mad he told his Brigade, "You have deceived me. You have sacrificed this North Carolina Brigade."

After night we went over the battle ground to see if we could find some of our wounded, and found Lt. Faison, the (illegible) of the Regiment, wounded in the abdomen. I took him on my shoulders and brought him off to our Brigade, which counted only forty after the charge. We were (illegible) with very heavy loss. Genl. Lee cried for the loss of the men. He never saw men go up to a charge better than Clingman's Brigade.

We then fell back to Chaffin's Farm and began to throw up works and connect with our line, throwing out Fort Harrison."

BATTLE OF DARBYTOWN AND NEW MARKET ROADS

A week later, on October 7, 1864, Lee directed an offensive against the Union right flank, first on the Darbytown Road, where he was successful, and the following day against the Union defensive line along New Market Road where his men suffered defeat. Von Eberstein noted only that his division fought a very severe battle at New Market Heights that lasted several days.

Even before the action at New Market Road, von Eberstein had begun to consider resignation from the service. At the time, he was acting as regimental adjutant and felt

that the effects of the wounds he had received at Battery Wagner and Drury's Bluff made him unfit to carry out the duties called for in the bitter battles around Petersburg. He reasoned that his wounds, as well as his failure to secure the non-combat post of ordnance officer in North Carolina, "compelled" him to ask for a discharge. His application, made on October 4, was officially approved on the eighteenth. His discharge noted that he was 45 years and ten months of age, five feet nine inches in height, light complexion, and by occupation a sea captain at the time of enlistment.

In his memoirs, Von Eberstein wrote that his discharge had been given to him three days prior to the officially stated date of October 18. Regardless of the date, he remained with his unit fighting along the Boydton Road until the 18th. As he later recalled, *"I hardly got my consent to leave my comrades in arms behind, the enemy still being in our front along the Boydton road, I remained there with my old Brigade and fought the Yankees for two days and I had my discharge in my pocket."* He left on the evening of the eighteenth after saying farewell to Col. McKethan and the general staff.

Von Eberstein returned home to Chocowinity where he found his wife caring for her elderly wheel-chair bound father. After his death on November 11, 1864, von Eberstein moved his family of four to Marlboro in adjacent Pitt County where he took up harness making and farming. He was living there when news came of the surrender of Lee's Confederate forces to Grant at Appomattox in April 1865. He, nevertheless, saw a victory where there was none. *"There was no cheering on the side of the Yankees, for though Lee had to surrender his small handful of men, it was still a defeat for Grant with his hundred thousand men."* If it was a Northern victory, it was a pyrrhic victory.

He returned to Chocowinity, where he remained until his death at the age of 69 on October 25, 1890 at his country home four miles from Washington. The *Washington Gazette* remembered his last years and wartime record with the following words: *"The past forty years of his life have been spent among the people of Beaufort County. He espoused the cause of the Southern Confederacy, and entered his own body as a bulwark against the invasion of the land which he had adopted as his own, and his war record as a soldier is beyond reproach. When peace came again he quietly turned to his chosen profession – a tiller of the soil – and since thoroughly identified with all measures for promoting the agricultural welfare of his section. The ex-Confederates of North Carolina and their Association never had a warmer or better advocate than Mr. Eberstein, and he was foremost in any movement for their benefit."*

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