

"TOTALLY IN REBELDOM" - Part 2

A Franklin County Family's Account of the Summer of 1863

By Paul J. Stouffer

Our story from the journals of Jacob and Eliza Stouffer continues from the last newsletter...

On a rainy June 26, "Gen. (Jubal) Early's division came and camped in mine and Shetter's Woods - quite over run by Rebels." Abraham Shetter was Jacob's first cousin and neighbor. "They want everything - butter, milk, eggs, chickens, cheese, bread, etc." That evening Jacob wrote, the invaders brought him a sick soldier "with orders that we must house him and give him good care or they would burn down our house." The soldier was put up in Stouffer's Mill but the care was transferred back to his company. Later that evening, an infantry Captain returned to Jacob "with orders that I must run the mill, grind out the wheat for their use, and that he would hold me and the property responsible for the execution of said orders." Although not mentioned in the diary, June 26 was his son Benjamin's 19th birthday. It was not a good day.

The following day's journal entry began with an update on the sick soldier. "The Rebel in the mill is dead and they buried him in the N. W. corner of our burying ground (the Stoufferstown Cemetery)." And it was another busy day with troop movements. "Early's...started off toward Shippensburg. Soon (General) A. P. Hill's division of infantry... passed by toward Gettysburg." Then the leader showed up - Jacob's first mention of the Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. "Gen. Robert E. Lee fixed his headquarters in A. Shetter's Woods," wrote Jacob and referencing the popular gathering place on his cousin's land. After more entries regarding troop movements, Jacob closed with the entry that they were "overrun with Rebels everywhere."

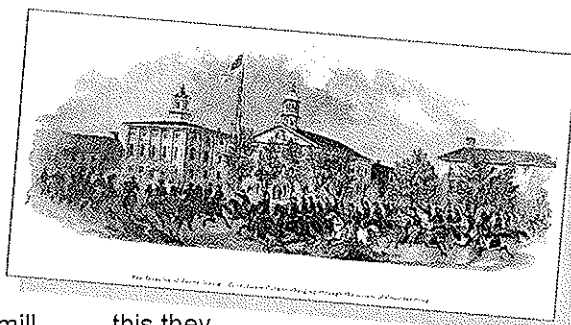
*Private Edward Ripley, Company H, 57th North Carolina Regiment. It is unknown if he remains buried in the Stoufferstown Cemetery.

On June 28, the Rebels "ransacked my barn, mill and yard. The mill yard full of Rebel wagons nearly all day." He estimated "they took near 600 bu. oats and 124 bu. corn" out of the mill. "I was paid at the quartermaster's headquarters in the field this evening," wrote Jacob, "in Confederate States money." History shows that on that same evening nearby in Shetter's Woods, the decision was made by Lee to abandon his attack on Harrisburg and instead focus his efforts on meeting the newly appointed General of the Army of the Potomac, George Meade who was on the move north.

The following day the Stouffer's observed the Rebels preparing to move as well. "Many are over the yard for something to eat. I went over to the General's Headquarters for his printed orders and around my woods to see after the fences etc." June 30 was an even bigger day. "They are moving off toward Gettysburg," Jacob observed. "This continued from about 9 o'clock till evening." Taking inventory of the movement, Jacob noted "some 676 wagons, big and little, passed; 21 pieces of artillery; 40,000 infantry; a goodly number of beef cattle; a large cavalry force, with many negroes and horses not mounted. Gen. Lee passed in the A.M. with his staff. That night some 12 cavalry men were lodged." The infantry division of Major General George Pickett remained in the Chambersburg area with orders to protect the rear and the army trains.

On July 1, Jacob wrote that twelve cavalry men from Gen. Richard H. "Fightin' Dick" Anderson's Battalion "left the (Stouffer) mill this A.M. following Gen. Lee." He also noted "heavy fighting around Gettysburg."

On July 2 Jacob wrote more than any other day in his journal. "Rebels passing in force towards Gettysburg early this A.M. By 10 the cavalry came thick and strong." General John D. Imboden's brigade visited the yard and mill and "took or stole" everything the other Rebel visitors had left. "For



this they offered not one cent." "They were hungry and troublesome." (Note- Jacob's detailed post-war damage claims amounted to nearly \$5000, a substantial sum at the time. Though he had written promises from Union officers, he was never reimbursed.)

Better news came from his cousin John Metz' place, "9 Union cavalrymen who came through a by-road" surprised 34 Rebel Cavalrymen "and took 30 of them prisoners." Now the cry was "the Yankees are coming!" which stirred up the Rebel cavalrymen under the command of General B. H. Robertson and General William E. Jones who had settled in and around the Stouffer Mill. While this was going on, Jacob was tasked by Robertson's quartermaster, a Major G. W. Melton, with taking care of another sick soldier. "We fixed him in a bed in the mill, gave him tea, etc." Major Melton, Jacob noted, had a guard positioned at the door.

On July 3, the mood around the mill changed. "This A.M. all is quiet - the Rebels were evidently uneasy and had struck tents and were off soon after midnight," Jacob wrote. "We hope the Rebels all are passed." Unbeknownst to him and his neighbors, the great battle to the east had concluded that day, just hours after General Pickett's division was routed in the ill-fated charge that afternoon.

The following day Jacob noted that Abraham's 20-year old son "Absalom Shetter hanged himself," one week after General Lee had headquartered in Shetter's Woods. Jacob's 21-year old son Amos wrote in his journal that Absalom "had been in trouble for a good while. The rebels took all his horses and told him when they came back they would take all the crops along. His wife found him. He was not quite dead yet, but soon died."