

## John Norris Epps Narrative

Background Information on John and Lawrence Epps

They both joined the 8th Tennessee Infantry Regiment in Lincoln Co. Tennessee. John Norris Epps was wounded slightly and his brother Lawrence Epps was wounded severely at the Battle of Stones River. Lawrence was captured after the Battle of Stones River and transported by rail through Kentucky to a Union prison at Fort McHenry, Baltimore before being traded for a Union prisoner and returned to duty in Georgia. Lawrence carried a mini [sic] ball for 11 months before a surgeon removed it in Newton Georgia. He was with Hood on his long and freezing retreat from Atlanta to try once again to free Nashville from Union control. Later he ran a mill near Christiana. Lawrence and his wife Mary Elizabeth (Smith) Epps are buried in the old Miller Cemetery, Christiana, Tenn.

His brother John was severely wounded at the Battle in front of Atlanta. Both brothers applied for a state pension to disabled veterans in their old age but only John was granted a pension. John lived at the end of Epps Hollow Rd near Belleville, Lincoln Co., Tennessee. He and his wife Florence (Cole) Epps are buried in the old Unity Cemetery near Howell, Tenn.

State of Tennessee Interview with John Norris Epps

The following is an interview with John Norris Epps in 1922 at age 81 about his civil war memories. The interview was part of a Tennessee state project to record some of their old veteran's before they were all gone. The words are in the style, spelling, and grammar in which he was recorded by the interviewer:

1. STATE YOUR FULL NAME AND PRESENT POST OFFICE ADDRESS John Norris Epps, Fayetteville Tennessee, Rt 5
2. STATE YOUR AGE NOW 81 Interview given 1922 My record show he was born 1841 so his age would be right.
3. IN WHAT STATE AND COUNTY WHERE YOU BORN? Tennessee, Lincoln County.
4. IN WHAT STATE AND COUNTY WHERE YOU LIVING WHEN YOU ENLISTED IN THE SERVICE OF THE CONFEDERACY OR THE FED GOVT Tennessee, Lincoln County.
5. WHAT WAS YOUR OCCUPATION IN THE WAR? Farming
6. WHAT WAS THE OCCUPATION OF YOUR FATHER? Farming
7. IF YOU OWNED LAND OR OTHER PROPERTY AT THE OPENING OF THE WAR, STATE WHAT KIND OF PROPERTY AND THE VALUE OF YOUR PROPERTY AS NEAR AS YOU CAN. Nothing
8. DID YOU OR YOUR PARENTS OWN SLAVES? IF SO, HOW MANY? I owned a boy 13 he was about 18 when he enlisted. My mother owned 13, including 5 children under age 12.
9. IF YOU PARENTS OWNED LAND, HOW MANY ACRES? None

10. STATE AS NEAR AS YOU CAN THE VALUE OF ALL PROPERTY OWNED BY YOUR PARENTS, INCLUDING LAND, WHEN THE WAR OPENED. About ten thousands dollars slaves and other personal property
11. WHAT KIND OF HOUSE DID YOUR PARENTS OCCUPY? STATE WHETHER IT WAS A LOG HOUSE OR BUILT OF OTHER MATERIALS, AND STATE THE NUMBER OF ROOMS. Seven room house ordinary comfortable for that day
12. AS A BOY AND YOUNG MAN, STATE WHAT KIND OF WORK YOU DID. IF YOU WORKED ON A FARM, STATE TO WHAT EXTENT YOU PLOWED, WORKED WITH A HOE, AND DID OTHER KIND OF SIMILAR WORK. All kinds of farm work.
13. STATE CLEARLY WHAT KIND OF WORK YOUR FATHER DID AND WHAT THE DUTIES OF YOUR MOTHER WERE. STATE ALL THE KINDS OF WORK DONE IN THE HOUSE AS WELL AS YOU CAN REMEMBER-THAT IS, COOKING, SPINNING, WEAVING, ETC. My father did farm work. Mother did house work, cooking, spinning, weaving, making clothes for black and white
14. DID YOUR PARENTS KEEP ANY SERVANTS? IF SO, HOW MANY? Very few
15. HOW WAS HONEST TOIL—AS PLOWING HAULING AND OTHER SORTS OF HONEST WORK OF THIS CLASS REGARDED IN YOUR COMMUNITY? WAS SUCH WORK CONSIDERED RESPECTABLE AND HONORABLE? Honorable [sic]
16. DID THE WHITE MEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY GENERALLY ENGAGE IN SUCH WORK? Yes they did they did unless they owned a number of slaves
17. TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THERE WHITE MEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY LEADING LIVES OF IDLENESS AND HAVING OTHERS DO THEIR WORK FOR THEM? Very few
18. DID THE MEN WHO OWNED SLAVES MINGLE FREELY WITH THOSE WHO DID NOT OWN SLAVES OR DID SLAVE HOLDERS IN ANY WAY SHOW BY THEIR ACTIONS THAT THEY FELT THEMSELVES BETTER THAN RESPECTABLE HONORABLE MEN WHO DID NOT OWN SLAVES? Yes they did
19. AT THE CHURCHES, AT THE SCHOOLS, AT PUBLIC GATHERINGS IN GENERAL, DID SLAVEHOLDERS AND NONSLAVEHOLDERS MINGLE ON FOOTING OF EQUALITY? no
20. WAS THERE A FRIENDLY FEELING BETWEEN SLAVEHOLDERS AND NON SLAVEHOLDERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY, OR WERE THEY ANTAGONISTIC TO EACH OTHER? Not very much friendship
21. IN A POLITICAL CONTEST IN WHICH ONE CANDIDATE OWNED SLAVES AND ANOTHER DID NOT, DID THE FACT THAT ONE CANDIDATE OWNED SLAVES HELP HIM TO WIN THE CONTEST? I think not as there was so much more of non-slave house holders
22. WERE THE OPPORTUNITIES GOOD IN YOUR COMMUNITY FOR A POOR YOUNG MAN-HONEST AND AMBITIOUS-TO SAVE UP ENOUGH TO BUY A SMALL FARM OR TO GO INTO BUSINESS FOR HIMSELF? No
23. WERE POOR HONEST INDUSTRIOUS YOUNG MEN WHO WERE AMBITIOUS TO MAKE SOMETHING OF THEMSELVES ENCOURAGED OR DISCOURAGED BY SLAVEHOLDERS? Discouraged

24. WHAT KIND OF SCHOOLS DID YOU ATTEND? Subscription in late winter and early spring. Free school in late summer and early fall
25. ABOUT HOW LONG DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL ALTOGETHER? 3 or 4 months in the year.
26. HOW FAR WAS THE NEAREST SCHOOL? 2 1/2 to 3 miles.
27. WHAT SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS WERE IN OPERATION IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD? just neighborhood schools with an academy now and then 6 to 10 miles apart
28. WAS THE SCHOOL IN YOUR COMMUNITY PRIVATE OR PUBLIC? some public some private
29. ABOUT HOW MANY MONTHS DID IT RUN? 3 to 5 months
30. DID THE BOYS AND GIRLS IN YOUR COMMUNITY ATTEND SCHOOL PRETTY REGULARLY? Some did others did not.
31. WAS THE TEACHER OF THE SCHOOL YOU ATTENDED A MAN OR A WOMAN? sometimes one and then the other
32. IN WHAT YEAR AND MONTH AND AT WHAT PLACE DID YOU ENLIST IN THE CONFEDERATE OR THE FED GOVT? May 1861 in Confederate service at Norris Creek
33. STATE THE NAME OF YOUR REGIMENT AND STATE THE NAMES OF AS MANY MEMBERS OF YOUR COMPANY AS YOU REMEMBER? Company D 8th Tennessee: Captian [sic] G. W. Higgins, First Leut. [sic] E. S. N. Bobo, 2nd Leut. [sic] W.C. Growell, 3rd David Sullivan, Privates Jack Corigan, Rice Corigan, Tom Crenshaw, [missing] Curtis, Harvey Dobs, Jim Bell, P.G. Epps, Milton Dollins, Jackson Dollins, Bob Small, Gorge Small, Wilson Smith, Tom Smith, Ben Thomas, Tobe Ashby, Elisha Ashby, Jim Sullivan, John Cunningham, Billy and Ben Thompson, P. O. Groce, John D. Yant, and others.
34. AFTER ENLISTMENT, WHERE WAS YOUR COMPANY FIRST SENT? To Alisona and sworn into service.
35. HOW LONG AFTER YOUR ENLISTMENT BEFORE YOUR COMPANY ENGAGED IN BATTLE? About six months.
36. WHAT WAS THE FIRST BATTLE YOU ENGAGED IN Near [missing]eutersville West, Virginian
- 36 STATE IN YOUR OWN WAY YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE WAR FROM THIS TIME ON UNTIL THE CLOSE. STATE WHERE YOU WENT AFTER THE 1ST BATTLE WHAT YOU DID AND WHAT OTHER BATTLES YOU ENGAGED IN, HOW LONG THEY LASTED, WHAT THE RESULTS WHERE; STATE HOW YOU LIVED IN CAMP, HOW YOU WERE CLOTHED, AND HOW YOU SLEPT, WHAT YOU HAD TO EAT AND HOW YOU WERE EXPOSED TO THE COLD HUNGER AND DISEASE. IF YOU WERE IN THE HOSPITAL OR IN PRISON, STATE YOUR EXPERIENCE. About this time we were cut off in the mountains of West Virginia, and wandered around hardly knowing where we went for seven days with food finally cut out and came to Valley mountain we were ordered to Dublin Depot thence to South Carolina on the seacoast for the winter fought one small engagement at

Buford's Island. there went to Corinth thence to Chatanooga [sic] leaving there went to Kentucky fought a battle at Perryville. After leaving Perrville [sic] got slightly wounded came through Cumberland gap to Knoxville thence back to Murfreesboro Tennessee and fought the battle of Murfreesboro was shot through the foot after recovery went back to the Army at Chatanooga [sic] fought a battle their [sic] on at Chicamauga [sic] went Rockyface Mountain also at Resaca Ga. Thence to Atlanta Ga. where on the 28 day of July 1864 was shot through the right hip and was unable for service anymore I was [missing](farming) [mising] sent to hospital Macon Ga. staying there until I was able to walk on crutches at this time they gave me a furlough to luca [sic] Mississippi and from there I hopped home on my crutches one hundred miles to Fayetteville co. site about the best I could to was [missing] 6 or 7 miles a day my right foot never touched the ground on the trip nor for months afterwards and I am a bad cripple to this day stiff in the knee and the hip.

37. WHEN AND WHERE WERE YOU DISCHARGED? sent to hospital Macon Ga. staying there until I was able to walk on crutches at this time they gave a furlough to luca [sic] Mississippi
38. TELL SOMETHING OF YOUR TRIP HOME. and from there I hopped home on my crutches one hundred miles to Fayetteville co. site about the best I could to was [missing] 6 or 7 miles a day my right foot never touched the ground on the trip nor for months afterwards and I am a bad cripple to this day stiff in the knee and the hip.
39. WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOU TAKE UP WHEN YOU CAME BACK HOME. farming
40. GIVE A SKETCH OF YOUR LIFE SINCE THE CLOSE OF THE CIVIL WAR, STATING WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS YOU HAVE ENGAGED IN, WHERE YOU HAVE LIVED, YOUR CHURCH RELATIONS, ETC. IF YOU HAVE HELD ANY OFFICE, STATE WHAT IT WAS. YOU MAY STATE HERE ANY OTHER FACTS CONNECTED WITH YOUR LIFE AND EXPERIENCE WHICH HAS NOT BEEN BROUGHT OUT BY THE QUESTIONS.
41. GIVE THE FULL NAME OF YOUR FATHER BORN AT IN THE COUNTY OF STATE OF HE LIVED AT GIVE ANY PARTICULARS CONCERNING HIM AS OFFICIAL POSITION, WAR SERVICE, ETC, BOOKS WRITTEN BY, ETC. Craten, Epps, Fayetteville, Lincoln Co. Tenn [sic]
42. MAIDEN NAME OF YOUR MOTHER WHAT WAS THE DUAGHTER OF AND HIS WIFE WHO LIVED AT Nancy Norris, daughter of John Norris, Elizabeth Forrest, Murfreesborough Tenn.
44. [sic] REMARKS ON ANCESTRY My grandmother Elizabeth Forest [sic] was related to General N. B. Forest [sic] of the Civil War
45. GIVE NAMES OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF YOUR COMPANY YOU CAN REMEMBER
46. GIVE THE NAME AND POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF LIVING VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR WHETHER MEMBERS OF YOUR COMPANY OR NOT.

## SUMMARY OF JOHN NORRIS EPPS CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCES

By Lawrence W. Epps

This narrative is based on a 1922 interview preserved in the Tenn. Archives about John's war experiences, his pension application, and published war records of the 8th Infantry Regiment.

John Norris Epps joined the "Norris Creek Guards" which was composed of 78 men from Lincoln Co. in May of 1861. The "Norris Creek Guards" became D company of 8th Tennessee Infantry Regiment commanded by Capt. G. W. Higgins. They traveled from the train depot at Fayetteville to Allisona in Franklin Co where they were sworn in at Camp Harris, which was named for Isham Harris the Governor. On the 24th of May he was quartered at Camp Trousdale in Sumner Co. for training and was armed with a percussion musket.

John's regiment arrived in Huntersville in what is now Pocahontas Co. West Virginia on July 21, 1861 and became part of General Daniel S. Donelson's brigade. His first battle experience occurred in December of 1861 in the Allegheny Mountains. He was part of the Confederate effort to defend the advance of the Union into western Virginia along the Parkersville-Staunton Pike. This winter mountain campaign was in miserable conditions. John commented on his first civil war action by saying, "This battle was near Huntersville West, Virginia. About this time we were cut off in the mountains of West Virginia, and wandered around hardly knowing where we went for seven days with food finally cut out and came to Valley Mountain. Valley Mountain was where Gen. Lee in his first assignment of the war in August 1861 set up camp. Then we were ordered to Dublin Depot thence to South Carolina on the seacoast for the winter."

Dublin Depot in southwest Virginia was a major Confederate headquarters. It was strategic because of the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, a number of important bridges, and nearby lead and salt mines. From Dublin John travel [sic] to the coast of South Carolina to go into winter camp at Pocotaligo about 16 miles north of the Union occupied city of Beaufort. On Jan. 1, 1862 he marched to join South Carolina troops engaging the enemy in the Battle of Port Royal, but his unit arrived too late to be involved in the conflict.

On April 10, 1862, his unit was ordered west and fought around Corinth, Mississippi an important Confederate rail center that was under Union pressure. After this unsuccessful effort John withdrew to Tupelo, Mississippi.

His brigade left Tupelo July 11, 1862, via Mobile, Montgomery, and Atlanta for Chattanooga. After only a brief pause, it left Chattanooga on August 19 for General Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, reaching Harrodsburg, Kentucky, October 6. On Oct. 8 near Perryville the 8th crossed the Chaplin River and attacked the approximately 22,000

men of Gen. McCook who were situated on the bluffs above the river. Federal artillery and infantry hit the men of the 8th under Gen. Donelson hard. One Confederate infantryman later recalled the Southern assault:

“Such obstinate fighting I never had seen before or since,” he wrote. “The guns were discharged so rapidly that it seemed the earth itself was in a volcanic uproar. The iron storm passed through our ranks, mangling and tearing men to pieces.”

A Federal cavalryman also described the horrific post-battle scene:

“We found that the Rebels had left during the night,” he wrote. “We marched over the battlefield. It was a horrible sign. For four miles the fields are strewn with the dead of both parties, some are torn to pieces and some in the dying agonies of death.”

John Epps was slightly wounded, but his regiment suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of Perryville. The name Perryville was proudly added to the flag of the 8th regiment.

Leaving Kentucky he journeyed through the Cumberland Gap to Knoxville with Bragg’s army then by rail to Chattanooga and to Murfreesboro where on Dec 31, 1862 he engaged in the fierce battle of Stones River with his older brother Lawrence, who had joined the 8th the previous month. During this battle John was shot in the foot and Lawrence being severely wounded was captured in the hospital at Murfreesboro and sent to prison at Fort McHenry, Baltimore for later prisoner exchange. Lawrence did not recover enough to rejoin the 8th until 1864. John recovered and rejoined his unit in Chattanooga.

On September 8, 1863 Bragg learned that he had been flanked to the southwest by Gen. Rosecrans’s [sic] main army and John’s unit abandoned Chattanooga. Deciding to retake Chattanooga John’s unit turned north with Gen. Bragg’s army to fight Gen. Rosecrans [sic] in the battle of Chickamauga on September 18-20. Both armies sustained heavy casualties.

After this battle, as the army slowly retreated southward along the rail road to Atlanta, John indicated he fought at the battle of Rocky Face and Resaca in mid May of 1863. John was part of the Confederate defenses of Atlanta for the remainder of his career. On July 28, 1864 he was severely wounded on the defensive lines north of Atlanta. After this he was no longer fit for military service.

His own words testify to this time. “I was sent to a hospital in Macon Ga. staying there until I was able to walk on crutches. At this time they gave me a furlough to Luca [sic] Mississippi and from there I hopped home on my crutches one hundred miles to Fayetteville Co (authors note: he meant Fayetteville in Lincoln Co.). About the best I could do was 6 or 7 miles a day. My right foot never touched the ground on the trip nor for months afterwards and I am a bad cripple to this day stiff in the knee and the hip.” John later received a pension in his old age as a result of this wound. After the war he was a farmer and raised a family on his land near Belleville, Lincoln Co. Tennessee up

Epps Hollow Road. He is buried with his wife Florence Cole and some of his family in Unity Cemetery near Howell, Lincoln Co.