



Lucinda Hardage – from the files at Kennesaw Mountain NBP

Edited by Kimberlye M. Cole, 2013

Miss Lucinda Hardage, symbol of America, she saw it all – How war came to the land she knew for ninety-two years, saw boys in gray entrench upon her father’s farm in face of an advancing wave of blue. She lived to see those entrenchments become a part of a national park dedicated to perpetuate for America the memory of those stirring days of 1864, when soldiers and civilians, north and south, demonstrated that courageous hold characteristically American.

To historians and other park officials, Miss Lucinda Hardage gave a wealth of first-hand information about the battle of Kennesaw Mountain, details and anecdotes available from no other source. She was a symbol of an era, the last direct link with a historic past. When she died July 14, 1940, seventy six years after the battle of Kennesaw, that personal link was broken.

Miss Lucinda was born January 14, 1848, the daughter of George Washington and Mary Ann Cook Hardage. Her birthplace was a log cabin of one room, south of the Burnt Hickory Road, close to the base of Little Kennesaw Mountain. From Hall County, Georgia, her father had moved to Cobb County and built a cabin in Indian country. Miss Lucinda recalled that he cleared the land by day and improved the house after dark, with her mother’s assistance. Miss Lucinda was one of fourteen children. Two of her sisters who died in infancy are buried at the foot of the large cedar tree (now gone) near the trailside exhibit at Little Kennesaw.

Soon after Miss Lucinda’s birth, the family moved into a house a little west of the original log cabin. When she was five she moved again, this time to a home on the north side of Burnt Hickory Road about a mile from the base of the Little Kennesaw home where they were living in 1864. In her recollections she stated “several of the family suffering from malaria and the doctor told my father that it would be necessary to move. He exchanged homes with his brother. I held an umbrella over my brother, sick with malaria.”

The new home was a two-story, six-room house with a veranda. There was a low ceiling to the second story where the boys liked to sleep. When there was company or after the father retired,

the children played in the kitchen. The house was originally a two-room log one; one room was added later on the front, three on the back. Those additional rooms were frame.

In 1853, Mr. Hardage built a saw mill on Noyes Creek. He bought the land around it for \$18.00 per acre, paying for it with lumber he sawed. Miss Lucinda remembered riding out over the water on the lumber carriage at the mill.

When the war began, while Miss Lucinda was only thirteen, two brothers joined the Confederate forces. In September 1863, the Hardage family went to the Kennesaw Station on the Western and Atlantic railroad to see her brothers in the 7th Georgia who were on the train with Longstreet's corps en route to Chattanooga. The family had little hope that it would be possible for the boys to go home, but wanted to see them and give them some provisions to supplement the army issue of food.

When the troop train stopped, the brother who was a private was not on the train. Returning home from the station, they found him there. He had jumped from the train at Marietta despite guards posted because so many boys were close to home. As he jumped, he narrowly escaped hitting a pole. He told the family he knew he could stop over and still arrive in time for the battle. This was the younger brother, in Phillips Legion. The older brother was a captain in the 7th Georgia and had the younger transferred to his command. Next day, the youngest brother, laden with provisions, was on his way to Chickamauga.

While Miss Lucinda was at the station, a splinter of wood in which there was a bit of paper fell at her feet. Her father saw her as she retrieved it. He read it and saw that it was an invitation to correspond with a Confederate soldier. He advised her not to do so, but she always believed that it would have proven most interesting.

When Sherman's army invaded Cobb County in June 1864, Miss Lucinda's mother and two of the youngest members of the family refugeed, but the rest of the family remained at home and were soon in the midst of the grey and hosts to Confederate Generals.

These were the days Miss Lucinda never forgot. Just sixteen, she met many Confederate officers, among whom were Joseph E. Johnston, Leonidas Polk, Hood, and of the handsome cavalry leader, Kelly, she formed impressions she never changed. Johnston, she said, was short

and bald headed and the best leader of the Confederate Army. Hood, a bull-dog, a big talker, crippled, and was about average size. Polk was corpulent, very religious, and quiet.

General Kelly was the first officer to have headquarters in the Hardage home. He commanded a cavalry division of over 2,000 and camped with his staff in a grove east of the house. General Leonidas Polk, whose corps formed the Confederate center until June 20, next availed himself of the Hardage hospitality. Although living on the battlefield, Miss Hardage heard but one oath uttered, even when whole divisions passed her home each day. At the time she heard that one General Polk was sitting on the front porch when he heard the oath. He arose and reprimanded the soldier, seated on a horse at the gate, “the soldier turned his horse and literally flew from the gate,” she said.

The family was ordered to move, but stayed on despite Polk’s warning that heavy fighting would take place. One day, she and her sister were picking butterbeans in the garden with the bullets singing around them. An orderly shouted, “Ladies, for God’s sake, get out of there! I’ll pick your beans for you.” She shyly remarked that he did not pick them. Those of the family who were still at home refuged east of Atlanta to Stone Mountain just after the death of General Polk on June 14. By that time the federal artillery was within range of the Hardage garden. As Miss Lucinda left, she could see Confederate ambulances just ahead on their way to the New Salem Church in use as a hospital. Her last memory of the Burnt Hickory Road that day in June was of those Confederate ambulances.

When the Hardages returned after the battle, they found that the home of their neighbors to the east, the Yorks, had been burned. Confederates fired it within earshot to escape annoyance from Federal sharpshooters who occupied it. Near the York house, two Federal brigades formed for the Federal attack on Little Kennesaw, June 27. The house stood on the north side of the Burnt Hickory Road about 600 yards from the base of Little Kennesaw. Miss Lucinda had a clear recollection of playing there and swinging in the York swing until she grew so giddy she never wanted to swing again.

After the battle, a Federal told her that a Yankee officer had stopped to read a newspaper on the hilltop, near the York house. After he dismounted, a sharpshooter on the mountain shot his horse. When the officer ran to examine his horse, he in turn was shot.

South and east of the Hardage home on the ridge which crosses the Burnt Hickory Road was the New Salem Church. It is no longer there, however the cemetery of many unmarked, sunken graves remain. Speaking of it, Miss Lucinda said, among other things, "I have an uncle John Hardage, buried on the side of the road leading to our mill. Three Yankees shot his dog at his feet, and he told them, if I had the power of thunder, I wouldn't lightning until I sent you to the bottomless pit of hell." The New Salem preacher was a boxcar refugee at Stone Mountain and a neighbor there of the Hardages, whose temporary quarters were also in a boxcar. While a rich man from Van Wert (Rockmart) was grading a railroad toward Marietta, typhoid got into his camp and killed a number of slaves. Those were buried in the rear of the New Salem cemetery. Miss Lucinda had an interesting neighbor, the widow Cass, a mysterious, evidently wealthy woman who lived north from New Salem Church across the Burnt Hickory Road. Instead, she and her daughter listened to the sermons there while sitting outside on the horseblock.

Until her death Miss Lucinda possessed an alert mind and body, and interest in current day affairs. She enjoyed recalling the chivalry of Southern leaders and their troops during the war. She attended all major patriotic gatherings, and especially enjoyed the anniversary program on the battle of Kennesaw Mountain, on that occasion she usually was an honored guest. She died quietly within a few hundred yards of her birthplace near the mountain, leaving only Big Kennesaw as lone and silent witness of the stirring scenes she remembered so well for three quarters of a century.