

Biography of George Cantley

By Debora Kerr

George Cantley was born about 1830, probably in Logan County, Virginia.¹ He was the son of Alexander Cantley.²

George stood 5' 10" tall, had a fair complexion, hazel eyes, and dark hair.³ He married Drucilla Clay, daughter of Charles Clay on March 28, 1853, in Raleigh County, Virginia.⁴ George and Drucilla made their home in Raleigh County where they worked on their farm and began to raise a family. They had four children before the outbreak of the Civil War: Polina Jane (b. 1854), Greene Ballard (b. 1857), Amanda Matilda (b. 1858) and James Henry (b. 1860).⁵

On December 9, 1862, George enlisted in the Union army and was assigned to Company H of the 7th West Virginia Cavalry.⁶ During the war, he was involved in the battle of Cross Keys and was later injured during a skirmish at Cotton Hill, Fayette County, West Virginia, where he was thrown from his horse.⁷ George deserted the army for a time during the course of the national conflict. He was noted absent on December 8, 1863, and marked "present, awaiting Court Martial" April 1864.⁸ It is likely he returned to his home during this period, as a son George, Jr., was born to Drucilla on October 22, 1864.⁹ He was reinstated to the troops in August 1864 after accepting punishment from his commanding officer.¹⁰ He was discharged from the service on August 1, 1865, and he returned to his farm.¹¹

George and Drucilla had eight more children after his return from the war: Lucinda (b. 1866), Rebecca (b. 1867), twins Arretta and Ona (b. 1869), John Willis (b. 1870), Ambrose Edward (b. 1872), Mary (b. 1874) and Ellen (b. 1875).¹² Being a veteran, George applied for an Invalid Pension in 1887. The injury he sustained at Cotton Hill had become more incapacitating with age and severely interfered with his work as a farmer. After a long battle with the government, George was finally awarded a pension in 1891.¹³ George died at home on January 20, 1898.¹⁴

END NOTES

1. Alexander Cantley household, 1830 U.S. Census, population schedule, Virginia, Logan Co., page 273, line 9, National Archives Microfilm Publication M19, roll 191.

2. Alexander Cantley household, 1850 U.S. Census, population schedule, Virginia, Raleigh Co., 57 District, page 19, dwelling 260, family 260, National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, roll 972.

3. Invalid Claim for Pension, George Cantley and Drucilla Cantley, widow, Civil War Pension Application File SO 632,287, SC 672,706, WO 672,034, WC 495,408; Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

4. Affidavit of James M. Clay. Ibid

5. George Cantley household, 1860 U.S. Census, population schedule, Virginia, Raleigh Co., The Neighborhood of Sand Lick and Marsh Fork, Coal River Marshes, page 41, dwelling 295, family 271, National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, roll 1373.
6. Duty Report for George Cantley, George Cantley and Drucilla Cantley, widow, Civil War Pension Application.
7. Invalid Claim for Pension. Ibid.
8. Duty Report for George Cantley. Ibid.
9. George Cantley household, 1870 U.S. Census, population schedule, West Virginia, Raleigh Co., Marsh Fork, page 11, dwelling 176, family 75, National Archives Microfilm Publication M593, roll 1698.
10. Duty Report for George Cantley, George Cantley and Drucilla Cantley, widow, Civil War Pension Application. Ibid.
11. *ibid.*
12. George Cantley household, 1880 U.S. Census, population schedule, West Virginia, Raleigh Co., Marsh Fork, E.D. 127, page 15, dwelling 132, family 135, National Archives Microfilm Publication T9, roll 1412.
13. Invalid Pension, George Cantley and Drucilla Cantley, widow, Civil War Pension Application. Ibid.
14. Application for Accrued Pension (Widows). Ibid.