

JOHN LAFEVER

CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

Note: Story told by actor Clyde Lafevre, Director, Savage Goodner Camp, S.C.V. at the Edgar Evins State Park, located on the shores of Center Hill Lake. 1630 Edgar Evins State Park Rd., Silver Point, TN on the 20th of October 2007, 2nd History Hayride.

Howdy, folks. My name's John LaFever. I live just up the river a little ways in Bear Holler by the mouth of Mine Lick. I'm here to tell ye how it was being a soldier in the late war (and these are some of my comrades. We stick together).

I was born by the Caney Fork in 1840 and grew up here. My grand daddy came with the family from KY around 1820. My daddy, Eli LaFever, got a land grant at the mouth of Mine Lick, my Uncle Zachariah got a land grant across the river in the Round Bottom and Uncle John LaFever got a farm at the mouth of Falling Water, so there are a bunch of us cousins on the Caney Fork.

Life was good and everybody got along well, but as I grew up we read in the papers about the politics and what the government in Washington D. C. were fighting about and people began taking sides and arguing until finally the Southern states seceded and the war started and Tennessee joined the Confederacy.

Well, when we heard that a Confederate Regiment was being raised, a bunch of us volunteered in Co A, 16th Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment in May 1861 and we were sent to Camp Trousdale for training.

Now the folks on the Caney Fork were somewhat equally divided between Confederate and Union, and there were some who didn't care for either side, but rather hid out and dodged the draft or joined into gangs, some into guerilla bands.

In my own family, we were divided. After the Union Army invaded, my older brother Andrew "Andy" joined the 1st Tennessee Mounted (Union) Infantry and stayed around home patrolling, as they put it "keeping the law and order," after running our elected government off.

Then, an Ohio Cavalry Regt. came through and impressed my brother Lee into their regiment as blacksmith. He never fired a shot, just kept the Yankees' horses shod. Neither of them ever fired a shot at our army.

Now, back to me. When we finished training in July we were sent to Northern Virginia and fought our first battle at Cheat Mountain in September. We remained in Virginia in that winter, then were ordered to South Carolina. In May they ordered us to Corinth Mississippi where we fought hard during May and June with the 16th always in the thick of it. We fell back to Tupelo and rested until in July we were ordered to Chattanooga and from there to Kentucky in September, and in October we fought a hard battle for two days at Perryville with high casualties on both sides. One who fell there was neighbor George James, shot in the head. The 16th lost 205 men in the battle.

After Perryville, we were ordered back to Murfreesboro and at the end of December the Yankees attacked and the battle lasted to January 1st, with the 16th in the middle, when I was wounded in the arm and out of action to recover. The 16th lost 205 men in the battle.

After Murfreesboro we encamped at Tullahoma until July when we were ordered to Chattanooga where we fought a string of battles down to Missionary Ridge and Chickamauga where part of the Regt. was surrounded and out of ammunition and forced to surrender.

The fighting had been hard but life in a Yankee prison was worse.

After assembling us prisoners at Chattanooga, they packed us on trains and sent us to Nashville, and from there north to Louisville, then on north to Chicago on cold, packed, unheated trains. From Chicago we arrived at Rock Island, Illinois the first week of December 1863 and across to the island in the middle of the Mississippi river between Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport, Iowa.

The prison barracks were shells with no insulation, not even paper on the walls. The beds were bare boards with a pile of straw and a blanket, and not enough straw.

By Christmas it was cold and snowing and on New Year Day, 1864 the temperature dropped to twenty below zero. A couple of prisoners had died on the train and on the ninth day at the prison, prisoners began dying, at first from pneumonia, then smallpox, diarrhea and other diseases. Many were shot by guards if they stepped outside their barracks at night.

Our rations were repeatedly cut but there was food available outside and the prison allowed peddlers to come in and sell all kinds of food to those who had money, of which most of us had none.

Two of our comrades, the Bing brothers, James and W. H., of Smithville, died and are buried there, as men died daily though the winter. In all, around 2,000 Confederates died in that prison alone.

The Yankees offered men the opportunity to get out if they would join the Union army or navy, and some took the opportunity, but when the recruiters saw them they rejected most of them as too weak or sick.

Everybody has heard about Andersonville prison in the South, but very few ever heard of Rock Island, Elmira, Camp Douglas or a dozen other Northern prisons where 20,000 Confederates died.

Well, when the war for Southern Independence ended in 1865, we came home and I married Virginia "Jinnie" James, young widow of George W. James who died at Perryville, and we have 7 young ones.

I pray that my grandchildren and great grandchildren will live here on the Caney Farm as I have done.

Thank ye folks. Much obliged for listening to our story.

Actor for John LaFever: Director, Savage Goodner Camp, S.C. V., Clyde LeFevre.

(1860 census, 8th Dist., post office Smithville, DeKalb Co., TN: Dwl: 806 Family: 794 – **Andrew J. Lafever** is head of household, 29 yrs. old, TN md to **Ellen A.**, 18 yrs. old, TN).

(1860 census, 8th Dist., post office Smithville, DeKalb Co., TN: Dwl: 827 Family: 815 – **George W. James** is head of household, 24 yrs. old, TN md to **Virginia**, 17 yrs. old, VA)

(Note: George W. James was killed in the battle at Perryville and his widow Virginia later married John LaFever).

(1860 census, 8th Dist., post office Smithville, DeKalb Co., TN: Dwl: 832 Family: 820 – **Eli Lafever** is head of household, 57 yrs. old, KY md to **Mary**, 57 yrs. old, TN. Children: Lee, 23 yrs. old; Rebecca, 21 yrs. old & **John**, 20 yrs. old; Frances, 18 yrs. old; Sarah, 13 yrs. old; Lewis D., 10 yrs. old. All born in TN. Also in the household, Mary A. Parsley, 2 yrs. old, TN & Matilda Steele, 48 yrs. old, TN (listed idiotic fits).

(1870 census, 8th Dist., post office Smithville, DeKalb Co., TN: Dwl: 59 – **Andrew J. Lafever** is head of household, 40 yrs. old, TN md to **Ellen A.**, 30 yrs. old, TN. Children: Mary E., 9 yrs. old; Martha J., 7 yrs. old; Winnie or Minnie, 5 yrs. old; Ida, 3 yrs. old & Rebecca E. Lafever, 9/12 yrs. old. All born in TN).

(1870 census, 8th Dist., post office Smithville, DeKalb Co., TN: Dwl: 60 – **Eli Lafever** is head of household, 66 yrs. old, KY md to **Mary**, 61 yrs. old, TN. Children: Frances, 25 yrs. old; Sarah, 20 yrs. old; Lewis D. Lafever, 18 yrs. old and Mary A. Parsley, 10 yrs. old, TN).

Census Place: 1880 District 8, De Kalb Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255252 National Archives Film T9-1252 Page 179A

Dwl: 74 Family: 75

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace	
Andrew LAFEVER	Self	M	M	M	W	50	TN
	Occ:	Farming	Fa: KY	Mo: TN			
Allason LAFEVER	Wife	F	M	M	W	40	TN
	Occ:	Keeps House	Fa: NC	Mo: TN			
Mary LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	19	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Martha LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	18	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Winna S. LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	16	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Ida Helen LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	13	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Ether LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	10	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Sarah A. LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	8	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
John LAFEVER	Son	M	S	S	W	4	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Lee G. LAFEVER	Son	M	S	S	W	9M	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN				

Census Place: 1880 District 8, De Kalb Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255252 National Archives Film T9-1252 Page 180C

Dwl: 85 Family: 84

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace	
Eli LAFEVER	Self	M	M	M	W	75	KY
	Occ:	Farming	Fa: PA	Mo: SC			
Mary LAFEVER	Wife	F	M	M	W	68	TN
	Occ:	Keeps House	Fa: TN	Mo: VA			
Francis LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	33	TN
		Fa: KY	Mo: TN				
Sarah LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	28	TN
		Fa: KY	Mo: TN				

Census Place: 1880 District 8, De Kalb Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255252 National Archives Film T9-1252 Page 180C

Dwl: 86 Family: 84

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace	
John LAFEVER	Self	M	M	M	W	40	TN
	Occ:	Farmer	Fa: KY	Mo: TN			
Virginia LAFEVER	Wife	F	M	M	W	38	TN
	Occ:	Keeps House	Fa: VA	Mo: VA			
Laura LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	14	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: VA				
Andrew LAFEVER	Son	M	S	S	W	12	TN
	Occ:	Farm Labor	Fa: TN	Mo: VA			
Sarah F. LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	10	TN
	Occ:	At Home	Fa: TN	Mo: VA			
Louas M. LAFEVER	Son	M	S	S	W	8	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: VA				
Mary F. LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	S	W	5	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: VA				

Robert R. LAFEVER	Son	M	S	W	3	TN
	Fa:	TN	Mo:	VA		
Martha LAFEVER	Dau	F	S	W	1	TN
	Fa:	TN	Mo:	VA		

(1900 census 14th Civil Dist., DeKalb Co., TN: Dwl: 263 – **Andrew J. Lafever** is head of household, 70 yrs. old, b. May 1830, TN md to **Ella**, 61 yrs. old, b. Oct. 1839, TN. Children: Sarah A., 24, b. September 1875; Lee G., 20 yrs. old, b. August 1879; Alma, 3 yrs. old, b. January 1897 & Calitlya Lafever, 3/12 yrs. old, b. February 1900. All born in TN)

Source: DeKalb County Cemeteries Tennessee by Doris Garrison Gilbert - 1989, pg. 123:

Goff Cemetery, DeKalb Co., TN

Information from Ida Goff, great-granddaughter of the Bozarth's. The cemetery is across the road from John H. Bozarth place, built before the Civil War. There are 5 Bozarth children buried here with small concrete markers. This began as a Bozarth family cemetery in 1860. It is in the 8th district of DeKalb County, TN.

JOHN LAFEVER, b. 1840, TN– d. 1889 (CO A 16 REGT. TENN INF CSA (s/o Eli LaFever)

***Andrew J. LaFever, b. 19 May 1830, TN – d. 11 April 1919 (CO H 1st TENN MTD INF (s/o Eli LaFever)**

***Ella A. (James) LaFever, 1840 – d. 1930 (homemade marker, w/o Andrew J. LaFever, d/o Hampton James)**

John A. LaFever, b. 1876 – d. 1961 (son of Andrew J. LaFever)

***Lewis D. LaFever, b. 3 July 1851 – d. 25 July 1911 (s/o Eli LaFever)**

***Martha LaFever, b. 4 December 1854 – d. 24 December 1925 (w/o Lewis D. LaFever)**

1st TENNESSEE MOUNTED INFANTRY REGIMENT - USA

Roster

Mustered in December, 1863-November, 1864; mustered out July 22, 1865.

FIELD OFFICERS

- *Lieutenant Colonel*-Abraham E. Garrett
- *Majors*-Abraham E. Garrett, Francis M. McKee.

CAPTAINS

- Francis M. McKee, William J. Cleveland, Co. "A". Mustered January 21, 1864. Edmond D. Pennington, Co. "B". Enlisted men generally from White County. Mustered January 22, 1864.
- Francis M. Anderson, Wade Jones, Co. "C". Mustered December 3, 1863, at Nashville with 20 men from 2nd, 60 men from 4th Congressional District.
- Rufus Dowdy, Co. "D". Enlisted men from Fentress County. Mustered January 23, 1864.
- James S. Bonham, Co. "E". Enlisted men generally from Macon County. Mustered December 10, 1863.
- Andrew I. Garrison, Co. "G". Enlisted men generally from DeKalb County. Mustered March 21, 1864.

- Prettyman Jones, Co. "H". Mustered at Carthage May 17, 1864. Men from 4th Congressional District.
- George W. Massey, Co. "I". Enrolled at Carthage in fall of 1864. Mustered at Gallatin, January 7, 1865.
- Samuel McCaleb, Co. "K". Mustered November 30, 1864.

Andrew J. Lafever enlisted on Dec 22, 1863 in Company H as a Private. Age 30
Remarks: Height: 5' 9"; Complexion: Dark; Eyes: Blue; Hair: Black; Residence: DeKalb County; Occupation: Farmer

(Source) 1890 Civil War Veterans Census- Tennessee by Byron & Barbara Sistler, 1978, pg. 182:
LAFEVER, ANDREW, Dk-39-3 (1); Pvt H Co 1st TN Mtd Inf; 12-12-63 to 5-23-65; DeKalb PO; hemorrhoids and chronic diarrhea.

<http://www.ajlambert.com>