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### History of the Confederate General Hospital Located at Farmville Va. 1862-65

James L. White

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#### Recommended Citation

White, James L., "History of the Confederate General Hospital Located at Farmville Va. 1862-65" (1916). *Prince Edward Histories*. 1.  
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*Mrs. J. E. Wadswold*

**HISTORY**

**OF THE**

**Confederate General**

**Hospital**

**LOCATED AT**

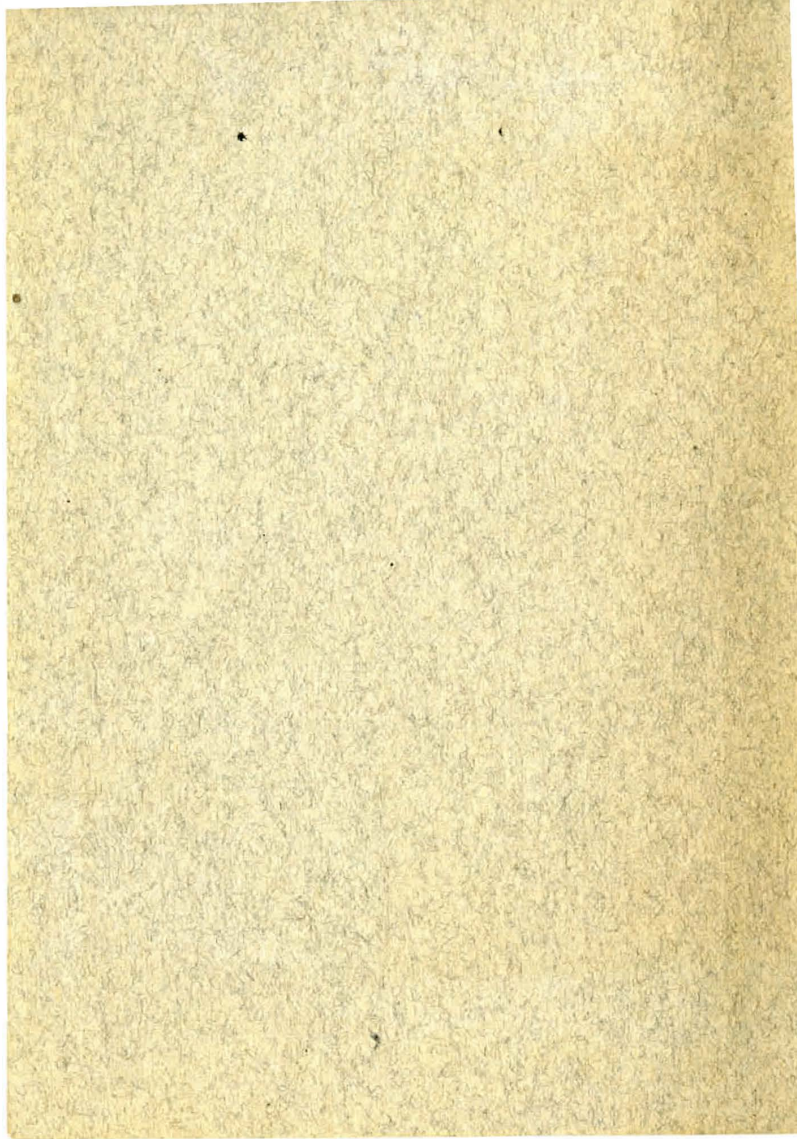
**FARMVILLE**

**V A.**

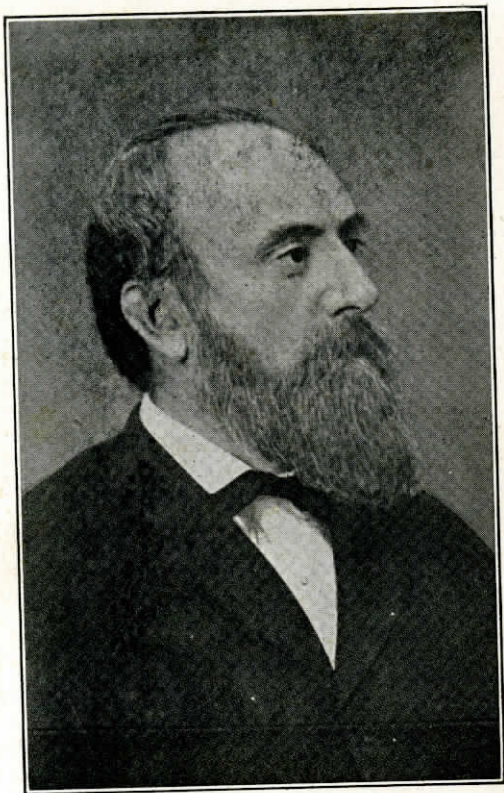
**1862-65**

**By**

**DR. JAS. L. WHITE**



**Published**  
**by the**  
**FARMVILLE CHAPTER**  
**U. D. C.,**  
**April 7th, 1916**  
**Mrs. Emmett Wall,**  
**Historian.**



**JAS. L. WHITE, M. D.**



## **Confederate General Hospital.**

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To the Daughters of the Confederacy,  
Pickett Thornton Camp,

### Chapter 16:

At the solicitation of some of the members of your organization, and after reading the recent letter from Prof. T. J. Garden addressed to you, it has occurred to me that I might, from my personal recollection, add some items of interest and information to the history of the Confederate General Hospital, located at Farmville, during the late war.

After participating as surgeon in the celebrated campaign in the Valley of Virginia in 1862, I was ordered to report for duty to the surgeon in charge of the General Hospital at Farmville, and did so about the middle of December of that year. I remained on duty at the General Hospital at Farmville until January, '64, when I was transferred to field service and ordered to report to General Longstreet, whose corps was then occupying the eastern portion of Tennessee. In the latter part of the spring of that year, Longstreet's Corps was ordered to return again to Virginia, and I served as Brigade Surgeon to Wyant's Brigade of Kershaw's Division, in the campaign of 1864, from the battle of the Wilder-

ness to the front of Petersburg. I remained with Longstreet's Corps until the early fall of 1864, when I was again transferred to hospital duty at Lynchburg and served as surgeon in charge of one of the divisions of the General Hospital until February, 1865, when I was again transferred to Farmville and took charge of my old division in the General Hospital and served in that capacity till the termination of the war.

Pardon me for alluding to this much of my war history. It is only referred to, because to some extent it is connected with the history of the General Hospital at Farmville.

The General Hospital at Farmville was organized in the year 1862 under the supervision of the late Dr. H. D. Taliaferro, who was surgeon in charge from its organization to the termination of the war. Its capacity was about 1,200 or 1,500 beds, which were occupied chiefly by cases of chronic diseases and convalescents from the hospitals in the cities and others near the field of active operations. The buildings used for hospital purposes were the several tobacco factories and warehouses in the town, which constituted the 1st and 2d Divisions, together with ten or twelve new wards, erected and located to the west of the corporate

limits and directly on the line of the N. & W. Railroad, which constituted the 3d Division of the General Hospital. Drs. Walton and Tuft were in charge, respectively, of the 1st and 2d Divisions, and I was assigned to duty in charge of the new wards of the 3d Division. Those wards, became the property of the United States at the surrender, and after having been occupied as hospitals and depots of distribution of rations and other supplies to our indigent colored friends of this and adjacent counties, under the auspices of the Freedman's Bureau for several years, were sold in 1870, or at the time this department was discontinued at Farmville. Soon thereafter they were all torn down and removed, with the single exception of the extreme western ward, which is even now, at this writing, partly intact and occupied as a dwelling. The office of the surgeon in charge of the 3d Division and the Dispensary (which was in charge of the late Mr. L. W. Williamson, a very competent druggist, who died a few years ago and is buried in the Farmville Cemetery), together with the bakery and commissary department of that Division, are still standing and now occupied as dwellings. They are the buildings in rear of the residence and garden of our worthy fellow citizen, ex-Gov. McKinney, on the south



side of the N. & W. R. R., and were opposite the wards which were located on the north side with their gables and main entrance fronting the road, and extending back in their length from 100 to 150 feet towards the river.

Dr. H. D. Taliaferro had been, previous to the war, a surgeon in the United States Navy. He was a good organizer, a splendid executive officer, well up in his profession, an affable and kind-hearted gentleman, and well qualified for the position of surgeon in charge of the General Hospital at Farmville, to which he was assigned. After the close of the war he returned to his former home in Orange, Va., and after a few years went thence to Richmond and finally returned to Farmville, where he resided and practiced his profession until his death, which occurred in January, 1891. He was buried in the Farmville Cemetery.

The other surgeons in charge of Divisions were Drs. R. H. Walton and Dr. Tuft, respectively, of the 1st and 3d Divisions. Each of the Division surgeons had under their direction a number of assistant surgeons who had charge of the several wards in the respective divisions. Among those associated with me in the 3d Division were Drs. Boatwright, Chandler, Mathews, Garden, Ladd, Grayson, &c. In the other Di-

visions as ward surgeons were Drs. Carter, Boykin, Russell, Hancock, Tatum and others whose names I cannot now recall. Revs. Osborn, Langhorn and McIlwain were chaplains. The Quarter-Master and Commissary Departments were in charge of Major R. B. Marye, with several assistants. It was a pleasant military family and every branch was in harmony and satisfactory to the citizens and refugees, of whom there were a great many temporarily residing in Farmville at that time. There was none among us who at that time entertained any other idea than that the independence of the Confederacy would be ultimately established; but as time lengthened into years, we became more and more convinced that our cause was slowly but surely waning in its strength and resources and that we had jeopardized our all, save honor and love of tradition and section, in the uncertain balances of war, which would end ere long in disaster to our homes and loved ones. We were not therefore, altogether surprised at the news which reached us on the 3d of April, 1865, that the overwhelming Federal forces, which had been besieging Petersburg for nearly a year, had at last succeeded in breaking through the attenuated lines of our half-clad and half-fed Confederate heroes, driving them

from their strong and fortified position in front of that city and necessitating the evacuation of Richmond, which was the seat of the Confederate Government. Then began that sad, but stubborn and celebrated retreat of the Confederate forces which terminated in the surrender on the 9th of April at Appomattox Courthouse. The sad and terrible scenes witnessed during that short week of the retreat of the Confederates, and those which followed for many days and weeks thereafter, will long be remembered by the citizens of Farmville. Especially will be remembered the days of the 6th and 7th of April—for those were the days and nights our famished soldiers reached our town. All day and all night long, the worn and weary column dragged its slow length through our streets; all day and all night did our generous people, with open doors distribute such provisions of food and comfort as they possessed to this almost famished and heart-broken army. Early in the morning of the 7th, I think it was, General Lee, weary and worn with loss of sleep and the great responsibility of his position entered our town and ascertaining the whereabouts of Generals Breckenridge, Lawton, and St. Johns, respectively, the Secretary of War, Quartermaster General and Commissary General, who had spent the

night, but not in sleep, at the residence of Mr. P. H. Jackson, held an interview with them. He remained but a short while and after taking a Confederate cup of coffee, which was sent to his room, parted from those gentlemen at the yard gate. This perhaps was the last meeting or official consultation held between General Lee and any of the cabinet officers of the Confederate Government. Generals Breckenridge and Lawton turned their course towards Danville, to join President Davis and the other members of his cabinet who had gone by rail directly from Richmond to Danville, and General Lee in the opposite direction, crossing the bridge over the Appomattox river at this place, joined the Confederate column in Cumberland, which had been drawn up in line of battle extending from the point of woods near the railroad bridge—crossing the hill near the Lithia Springs, thence across the old plank road near the toll house and beyond the dwelling on the Bizarre Plantation. The Federal column occupied the hills to the south and east of town. At one time, early in the day, it was thought that a general engagement would take place and the citizens were ordered to leave the town. Many of them, especially the ladies and children did so, but there was nothing more than an ex-

change of a few artillery shots between the two opposing lines of battle which resulted in no damage, though some of the houses within the corporate limits were struck and the marks of the shot may be seen on them even at this day. Later in the afternoon, that portion of the Confederate forces which had been engaged at the High Bridge, crossed the north side of the river at that point and after uniting with the main body opposite the town, took up again their weary march. In the meantime, the Federals, so soon as the Confederate forces began their March, threw a pontoon bridge across the river (the wooden bridge having been burned by the Confederates early in the day) and crossing to the Cumberland side of the river, made an attack. They were repulsed and made no further advance till near sunset. The night of that day our citizens were again kept from sleeping, and in an anxious and alarmed state, by the continuous passing of the Federal forces through the streets. None but those who were present can imagine the horrors of that miserable night to our people, closed doors were but little protection from the swarms of the Federal host that crowded our yards and streets and none at all from the horde of lawless thieves and "boomers" who followed in the wake of



the victorious army. We were indeed in a pitiable condition. Martial law, however, was established the following day, and guards of protection were given those who applied for them and though we were prisoners in our own homes, still we felt less alarm and made ourselves more comfortable.

We knew nothing of events transpiring at the front. Hopeful we were but ignorant as to whether our people had succeeded in reaching and uniting with others of our Confederates at Lynchburg or had encountered irreparable disaster. Sunday morning, however, the various church bells and others in the town began ringing and we were told it was to announce to all the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox Court House. Thus ended with us, the active movements of the war; but for days and weeks and months we had to submit to military government in our town and vicinity. A Provost Marshal with a military company to assist him, held us in submission for eighteen months or two years and we had no liberty or freedom of action until the last Blue Coat of our conquerors disappeared from among us.

This much of the local history of our town during the last days of the Confederacy I have thought would be of interest to you.

None but those who witnessed them can ever realize how terrible was our every day life—our domestic living and home rule underwent a sudden and deplorable change—with no financial resources and our provisions all exhausted, many of our citizens were compelled to accept the generous bounty of dry Cod-fish and hard-tack from our agressors.

A year or two after the close of the war, some of our kind-hearted ladies, assisted by their patriotic devotion to the memory of the lost cause and the gratitude they felt to those who had given up their lives in the struggle, determined to give evidence to that devotion and gratitude by enclosing the cemetery, marking the graves and otherwise perpetuating the memory of our dead heroes, who had died from wounds and disease in the Farmville Hospital during and just after the war and were buried in our midst.

The soldiers cemetery, as it is known to the most of our people, is located in Cumberland county about one-half mile from our corporate limits, on the western slope and near the summit of the hill almost directly east of our now famous Lithia Springs. It is a beautiful location, commands a fine view of the town of Farmville, the valley of the Appomattox river for several miles, the crest of the Blue Ridge in the far west, Willis mountain

to the northwest and Leigh's mountain to the southwest—with an intervening landscape dotted here and there with cleared lands and farm houses. These patriotic ladies and gentlemen in order to obtain means to carry out their purpose conceived the idea of holding a series of entertainments and appeal through them for aid to the citizens of the town and vicinity.

Money was very scarce with many of us during those days and it was with great difficulty we could meet our daily expenses. If I remember correctly, these entertainments consisting of tableaux, etc., were held in the fall of 1867, under the auspices of Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Lockett, Mrs. Thackston, Mrs. White, Mrs. McIlwain, the Misses DuPuy, Miss Dalby, Miss Lyle, Miss Gertie Venable and others. This was before the removal of the Court House to Farmville or the erection of our town hall. There were no vacant halls or factories or warehouses, but the officials of the N. & W. R. R. kindly tendered the use of its freight depot and the entertainment was held in that building.

In spite of the impoverished condition of our people the result was quite successful and several hundred dollars were realized—sufficient to defray all of the expenses attending the removal of bodies from different locations to

the cemetery, marking the graves and enclosing the grounds with a good but plain plank fence. To Col. N. Cobb Captains Morrisette and Blanton and myself was assigned the duty of superintending the work. During the war there had been between 300 and 400 Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery, but the register of the hospital had been destroyed or carried off by the Federal officials at the time of the surrender, and we found it very difficult even at that early period to decipher the names on the head-boards which had been placed by the hospital authorities. The bridge across the Appomattox river at this place had also been destroyed during the Confederate retreat, and in consequence a temporary burying ground had been located about where the F. & P. R. R. (T. & W. R. R.) depot now stands, and those who died in the hospital after the retreat were buried in it. These bodies together with others buried in the vicinity were removed and interred in the cemetery—thus making an aggregate of near 500 in the cemetery—some of these have been removed since by their relations or friends—but I think there must be at least 350 or 400 bodies still in the cemetery.

We made a plat of the grounds, erected head-boards to each grave and enclosed the grounds with a substan-

tial fence. I find among my papers a list of those removed from the temporary graveyard, but cannot find the plat or register of any of the other graves. I enclose a copy of that list, which gives the name, regiment, company and date of death of about 100 bodies removed and location of their graves in the cemetery. I regret the information is so meager, but trust it may be of some assistance to you in your efforts, but am afraid you will find it impossible to define any particular grave. So many years have passed since this work was done that the head-boards have all disappeared, the plat has grown up in pine and broom sage and not a vestige, except a few depressions indicating where the posts were planted remains of the enclosure.

Time has wrought many changes since those days, not only at the cemetery but also in our town and among our citizens. Many of the residents who were prominent citizens of our town at that time have entered into rest and are buried in our town cemetery, which was so beautifully located by some of them, while living. Their places in our midst are filled by their descendents, or strangers who have since come amongst us and have been welcomed as citizens. Of those former citizens we recall the familiar names of Daniel, Ely, Read, Jackson, White,



Warren, Elam, T. B. Rice, the Eramberts, W. S. Berry, Hillard, Wright, Robinson, Walker and Drs. Dillon, Lyle, Spencer and Peters and meet upon our streets only a few of their contemporaries, W. T. and E. T. Rice, John Doyne, R. S. Paulett, W. G. Venable, W. F. Farrer, J. S. Hart, W. E. Meador, C. Zimmerman, Dr. Thackston and perhaps a few others, who have been prominent among us during these long years.

Our town has also undergone a great change during this time. It has grown in limits and increased its population. Many new residences have been built and now adorn and beautify our streets and replace the red hills and ravines of those days. New streets have been added, electric lights have taken the place of coal oil lamps, and water works have been introduced. Altogether the improvements are such as to indicate that we may yet become a city—some time during the next century.

The citizens of our town and county are pleased to know that you have organized a chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy and that you have declared your intention to erect a memorial and otherwise perpetuate the memory of the Confederate heroes whose graves are left as a legacy to us—and that ere long you also intend

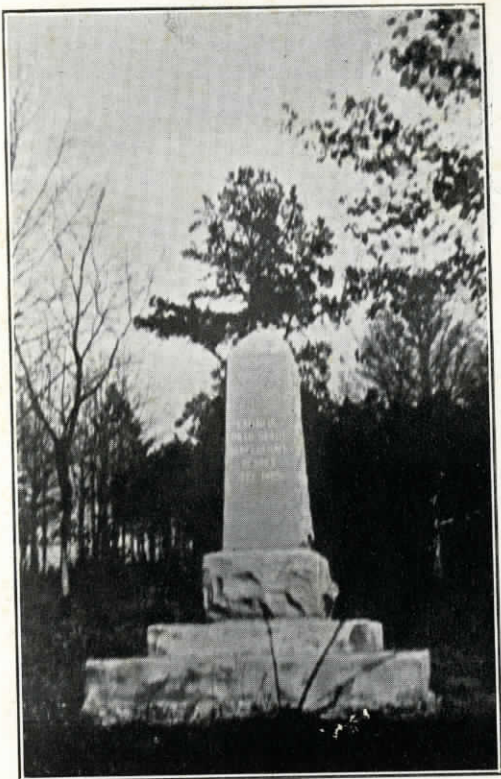
to erect a monument to those, both the living and dead, who went so patriotically from your own county of Prince Edward and were willing to sacrifice their lives and fortunes in defence of their homes and native State. We bid you Godspeed in your efforts and trust in a few years that these monuments may be erected with appropriate inscriptions and that they may endure for long years to come to inspire the youth of our country to emulate the courage—patriotism and devotion to principle of those who participated in the lost cause.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) JAS. L. WHITE.

June 10, 1897.





**Monument at Confederate Cemetery**

**Inscription :**

**Faithful until Death  
Confederate Heroes  
1861-1865**

