

AARON JONES FLETCHER RECOUNTS THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK

Narrator: The enlistment for members of the Massachusetts 26th expired October 18, 1864. The following day, Union forces were overwhelmed; discharged soldiers fought alongside enlisted men and repelled the Rebel forces, with some of the discharged men losing their lives. This conflict, which became known as the Battle of Cedar Creek, was described by Aaron Jones Fletcher in a letter.

Aaron Jones Fletcher: My Dear Cousin,

I am in my glory, just having given Mr. Rebs one of Phil Sheridan's Sympathy Pills.

We have fought, and won, another Victory that will send a thrill of patriotic emotion through every loyal heart in the north.

Thousands of slumbering men woke for the last time by the deadly missiles from an immoral foe. Rebs in Union uniforms managed to relieve our pickets on the left, surprised the reserves on picket without alarm, and this gave them free ingress to our lines.

Rebel General Early massed his force on our left and about five A.M. they poured among the shelter tents a volley of musketry, then they charged, capturing many of our men, killing and wounding many more. So sudden was the attack, that in one short hour all the strong-works were captured by a flank movement. Think of ten thousand sheep leaping across an open space one mile in extent and you have something of an idea of what followed their charge, but this was a mixture of Horses Mules & men all for his own welfare. At this moment – a perfect- rain of shot shells and bullets were falling around us.

This state of affairs did not last long for our Maj. Gen Emery brought the 18th Corp into line and sent home a few Compliments to Mr. Johnny Rebs This relished well with our boys. Emery got his columns well formed and charged and drove Mr. Rebs back. Gen Sheridan was at Winchester, and on hearing of the engagement, came into the field in a short time, everyone seemed to be inspired with new life. Renewed courage filled every bosom and when he gave the word to advance it was truly terrible. Back went the rebs, pell-mell reversing the morning skedaddle, with more velocity. We recaptured our works and captured 74 cannon, 148 ambulances and wagons, 4,000 prisoners & any amount of camp & garrison equipage. Thus defeat was turned into a most Glorious Victory.

Aaron Jones Fletcher,

October 28, 1864