

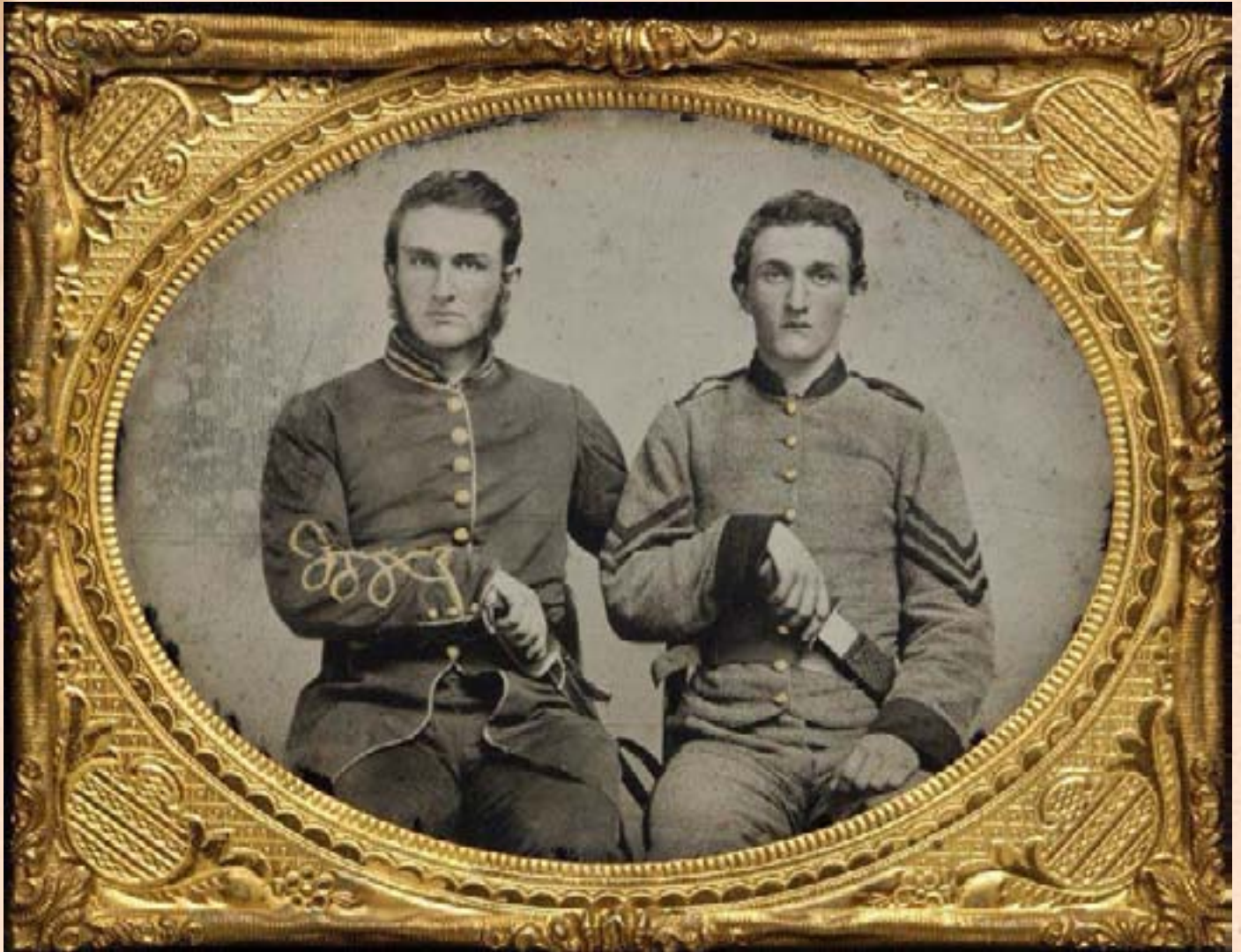


"BOYS, THEY HAVE
KILLED ME,
BUT GO ON."

By D.R. Donohue

The Death of
Charles A. Hawkins
38th Georgia Infantry

"BOYS, THEY HAVE KILLED ME, BUT GO ON."



Charles [left] and his younger brother, Sgt. John Milner Hawkins, are shown in this ¼ plate Ambrotype early in the war looking defiant for the camera. Charles is wearing a single breasted frock coat with Lieutenant's braid and John an enlisted mans jacket with Sergeant stripes. John would surrender at Appomattox and live a long life dying in 1929. Courtesy David Wynn Vaughan.

It would be an easy victory. For once, the Confederate forces outnumbered the foe and the battlefield was a familiar one, Kernstown. They had marched on that June Saturday to a little north of the town when they encountered the first sign of the Federals, sporadic gunfire in their front and a Union battery throwing

shells from Prichard's Hill, these would have to be cleared before the plan would work, clearing the Shenandoah Valley of Yankees and the capture of the Union army garrisoning Winchester Virginia. A bold plan in an even more audacious one, the invasion of Pennsylvania. Yes, General Lee would try again to bring the war to the

people of the North, but first Winchester and General Milroy would need to be resolved.

In Gordon's Georgia Brigade that day rode a young officer from Oglethorpe County. His men called him Charlie, Charlie Hawkins. Brave to a fault, young, handsome and daring, he had already been wounded three times since the 38th Georgia came to Virginia a little more than a year ago. The blondish, tall Captain had been recently married to a Georgia belle back home and never shirking duty, immediately returned to the theater of war.



Charles' double breasted frock coat is beautifully tailored and all hand sewn. It has the typical light blue wool facings on the collar and cuffs that are the same material as the pants [not shown]. The belt and holster are added for effect and did not come with the grouping.

The plan was simple, Gordon's men would attack on the left of the Valley Pike along Sandy Ridge a little west of Kernstown. It had been



This faded photo of Charles' wife, Hortense Mclester Hawkins, was supposedly in Charles' pocket when he was fatally wounded. The couple married while he was on furlough after the Battle of Sharpsburg. Their honeymoon was brief, only 2 weeks before Charles had to return to the front. The young bride never saw him again but remained faithful to his memory never remarrying. History of Chattahoochee County, N.K. Rogers.

here that the mighty Stonewall had met his first defeat last year and with his recent death, many of the men felt uneasy that afternoon without him leading the Corps. This was the first test for their new Corps commander General Ewell, but he was leading the finest infantry force that had ever marched in North America, the great Jackson's old command.

By 3pm the skirmishing in front had started with earnest and Charlie was given command of the regiments right. Charles was a natural leader, fearless and brave but above all, loved by his men in the Tom Cobb Infantry, Co. E, all Ogletho-

Hillman's Toll Gate, where Sheridan's Army was halted and made to pay toll by a woman, near Winchester, Va.



Much of the fighting done on the 13th by Gordon's Georgians occurred west of the Hillman's Toll Gate on the road to Winchester.



Hortense kept his uniform preserved until her death, "tis as bright and beautiful as it was when first worn." After her death it was returned to Charles's brother John. Obituary, Columbus Enquirer 8/11/99.



The uniform and other Hawkins mementoes were displayed in a shop window in Griffin Georgia in 1949. Anyone with information on the whereabouts of the original photo or the other items displayed should contact the author through this site.



In 1866 the Winchester Memorial Society reburied all the Confederates who had died in the area of Winchester. Over 2500 soldiers were reinterred in what would become the Stonewall Cemetery. Charles's body was recovered and reburied in plot 58 of the Georgia section. Photo courtesy Bryan Richards.

rpe boys from home. They were known as the TCI's, fierce fighters that never shirked duty, they would do what was asked by Charlie. The resistance was stubborn that day, and as the afternoon wore on the Georgian casualties mounted. The Yankees in their front were tough mountaineers from the new state of West Virginia, and although green and untested, they were not giving up the ground without a fight. The 12th West Virginia would fire and drop back a few yards and fire again until finally, at their last position they made a stand behind a stone wall. Its shelter was the perfect foil for the advancing rebels, but one more determined charge should take the position and the day would be won. Charlie was leading his men the final seventy five yards to the wall when a final volley from the mountaineers would find a target in the young captain. The minnie ball entered his left side and easily passed through his slender body. Immediately, men from the TCI's gathered around



After his wounding, Captain Hawkins was taken to Kernstown where he would linger for 24 hours before expiring. The exact location of his death is only speculative but could have been at "Grandma Kerns" or Rebecca Hoovers home where many of the wounded Georgians were taken.

their captain offering what comfort and succor they could. Charlie, realizing the wound would be fatal gave his last command to the men, "Boys they have killed me, but go on." The last orders of their dear captain were promptly obeyed by the Oglethorpe boys and the position was taken. And they would go on, through Gettysburg, The Wilderness, Petersburg, and finally Appomatox. The old veterans of so many a hard fought campaign would never forget Charlie and his last words "Go on." *Finis*

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