

These Aged Mothers, Sisters, Gave Sons To Opposite Causes

William S. Warner has graciously supplied the following article.

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Living near each other amid peaceful Virginia foothills, they recall the deeds of their boys during the Civil War, the one in Gray, the other in Blue.

The mothers who furnished sons to the civil strife of 1861-5 are fast passing away, and in a few years not one of them will be found. The ranks of veterans who shared the "red mist" are likewise growing thinner.

Along the foothills of the Blue Ridge, in Loudoun County Virginia, dwell two sisters, who perhaps, in historic interest, have few equals in the United States. One supplied a son to the Confederate cause, the other a son to the Federal Forces. Having forgotten the bitterness of the past, the sisters live in living harmony near each other.



Mrs. Massie Fulton

They are Mrs. Nassie Fulton, who will be 95 years old on March 12, and who gave to the Confederacy her first born babe, William Franklin Fulton; and Mrs. Lydia Ann Virts, who confidently expects to celebrate her ninety-fourth birthday next November, whose son, Charles W. Virts, was a member of Company A, Loudoun Rangers, commanded by Capt. Sam Means, in the Federal Service.

These sisters are members of a family noted for its longevity. Their father, Israel Warner, died at the age of 91. Their mother, who was Melinda Houser, lived to be 85. There are still living two brothers, Isaac Warner, who is in 83rd year, and Charles E. Warner, who is in his 84th year, both of Hamilton, Va., and one sister, Mrs. Melinda Brown, who is in her 80th year, but looks much younger.

The Warner sisters were attractive young ladies and had many suitors, John Fulton, a prosperous young farmer, who won the heart of Massie, and they were married about 1839. Their first child was a son, born in 1841, which they christened William Franklin. He was a real boy. When the lines were drawn between the North and the South, while only a youngster, he proved the son of his father, a Southern sympathizer, and volunteered his services to the South, enlisting in the famous old Eight

Virginia Regiment, with a company commanded by Capt. Welby Grayson.

He was a daring youth and served the Lost Cause with gallantry. He was killed just prior to the battle of Seven Pines, near Richmond, in the summer of 1862. He had been detailed as a picket and sharpshooter in advance of the Confederate Army, and likewise men had been deployed from the advancing Federal foe.

Young Fulton had lain throughout the night behind a log and while his comrades had fired several shots at shadows, he had seen no target for this rifle save the stars that show above him. Becoming cramped and hungry in his position, and fearing nothing, he crawled to the top of the log to eat the scanty meal from his knapsack. It was his last breakfast. He had hardly seated himself upon the log before an enemy struck him squarely in the forehead, and he fell in the arms of a comrade, dying almost instantly. The knife with which he was eating his still treasured by his sister, Mrs. James Mock, of Hamilton.



William Fulton

Since the death of her husband, which occurred several years ago, Mrs. Fulton has made her home with her children, and is now with her daughter, Mrs. George William James, in Hamilton, Virginia.

Henry Virts, husband of Mrs. Virts, was a Union sympathizer and naturally his son, Charles W. Virts, became a member of the Loudoun Rangers. He was born December 31, 1844, but did not enter the service until about 1863. He still lives and is regarded in his community as a man of great resolution and solidity of character.

After the war Mrs. Virts continued to reside at the old home in Waterford. When her granddaughter married Maurice C. Hough she leased a portion of her home to her son-in-law, but reserved four rooms, in which she kept house, attending to all of the duties of her apartment unassisted until about six weeks ago, when she went to spend her declining years with her daughter, Mrs. Hough Mock, of Waterford.

An interesting, unprinted story connected with the life of Mrs. Virts is related in her recollections of the days of the war.

The Loudoun Rangers, composed of men of Waterford and its wayides, had on the night of August 26, 1862, camped in the old Baptist church of Waterford. A Confederate force, under command of Major E. V. White (later Col. "Lige" White, of Confederate fame), crept under the shadows of night through the picket lines and sheltering behind a cornfield aroused the Virts homestead, which was just across the street from the church, at about 3 o'clock the following morning.

Mrs. Virts and her family were ordered to lie upon the floor, as a battle was pending. The Confederate yell was given, which echoed and re-echoed through the



Lydia Ann Virts

valleys of the old hillside town and brought the Rangers from the brick-walled edifice to the front portico, where they formed in line and were met with a fusillade of bullets from the Confederate rifles. The Rangers retreated to the securer walls and Mrs. Virts, who was prone upon the floor of her dwelling, in obedience to command, yet not frightened, was commissioned by Major White to proceed to the church under a flag of truce and demand the unconditional surrender of the Rangers.

Under command of Lieutenant Sawyer declined the peace offering. The battle was renewed. A second time Mrs. Virts was sent under truce to the besieged garrison, and a second time was peace refused. The men of the Loudoun Rangers were really caught like rats in a trap. Their captain was not with them, but was at home enjoying the comforts and peace of his family. Major White had well planned his attack and Confederate soldiers surrounded the little town of Waterford.

A third charge was made and stubbornly resisted, and a third time was Mrs. Virts sent as the dove of peace. Private Charles Dixon, of the Rangers, had been killed; seven or eight of the 22 men remaining had been wounded. They were without ammunition and there was no alternative open to them but to surrender. Terms were effected through Mrs. Virts that officers be allowed to retain the side arms and that privates be paroled.

After this Mrs. Virts' son became a member of Captain Mean's company. The company played but an insignificant part in the great struggle. History does not show that it took part in any of the notable engagements of the War. It was organized purely for scout and skirmish duty in Loudoun County and no record is made of its operations outside of a narrow territory in Northern Virginia.

Israel Warner, the father of these sisters was a well-know farmer residing two miles northeast of Hamilton, and so far as known was neutral concerning the issues involved in the civil strife. The old homestead is still standing and is still in the Warner family, having passed from generation to generation.



Charles W. Virts