

How was Capt. Richard Watkins wounded at Tom's Brook?

All information found led us to conclude that Richard had received a saber blow to his left wrist which broke bones and damaged sinews. The discharge report refers to broken carpal bones and damaged sinews. There are no mentions in the service records or medical records of a gunshot wound which is normally noted as 'GS left wrist' or 'GSW left wrist'.

That is where our knowledge had been until late in the afternoon of April 25, 2013. I was transcribing letters in the archive department of the Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. I have been working on their 'Powell Family Papers' for over two years. One of the Powell daughters, Nina, had been a teacher in Prince Edward County and is friends with Lavalette Dupuy. 'Lettie' is the sister-in-law of Richard Watkins. Richard, in November, 1864, is on convalescent leave at the Dupuy farm from the Farmville General Hospital.

The below excerpts are from a letter Lavalette wrote to her friend Nina Powell who is now teaching in Hanover County, Virginia:

"Linden Nov 2nd 1864

My Dearest Nina

. . . What is the matter with Lettie that she does not write? . . . I feel bound to answer.

First, Brother [Capt. Richard Watkins] as perhaps you have heard, was shot through the hand several weeks since and is now at home and requires Sister Mary's [Mary Dupuy Watkins] constant attention at his bedside so the care of the children falls to me & secondly, Mamma [Mrs. Dupuy] and Brother have both been deprived of their overseers, and . . . I have been riding over nearly every day to Brother's to superintend affairs there, so you see I am not entirely without excuse for any tardiness . . .

Brother still suffers most excruciatingly at times and is never entirely free from pain. He says he never before conceived of suffering. He was shot in the lower part of the hand near the wrist, the ball passing entirely through the hand and breaking the bone that connects with the little finger and probably another one. He suffers now as much with his shoulder as his hand . . . Willie Purnall [Dupuy] was slightly wounded in the shoulder in the same fight [Toms Brook] and got a furlough of 40 days. . . ."

Jeff Toalson, editor

'Send Me a Pair of Old Boots & Kiss My Little Girls – The Civil War Letters of Richard & Mary Watkins, 1861-1865'

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