

Sandra White Hinton

### That Story and Dear John

Lyman Abbott White, my grandfather, was well known around Salemburg and Roseboro as a great storyteller. When I was a little girl, he would set me on his knee and tell me about Br'er Rabbit and Br'er Fox. I loved my grandfather's stories, except one, and I never forgot it. The story goes that toward the end of the Civil War his family had been warned that the Yankees were coming, so they rounded up all their valuables, put them in a trunk and sunk it in Little Coharie Creek. When the Yankees arrived, they hanged his father, Frank, by his thumbs to make him tell where the family's silver was hidden, but he didn't tell. I think I was five when I first heard it, and I was horrified. All my life I doubted that that story was true.

Lyman Abbot White was born in a manor house in Salemburg, NC on Oct. 20, 1889. His father, Franklin Mallett White, owned about 300 acres at that time. Lyman died Sept. 26, 1969 on his share of that land. During WWI, Lyman served in the 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 30<sup>th</sup> Division, Company H. As a sergeant, he received the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary bravery in Bellicourt, France Sept. 29, 1918. He married Irene Catherine Tart, fathered six children, and farmed the land, living a life far removed from the privileges of his youth.

Franklin McArthur White was born on Sept. 3, 1925 in Salemburg. He was the first son of Lyman and Irene and my father. He joined the Navy shortly after Pearl Harbor at age 16, already a high school graduate. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross while serving in the Pacific theater. He graduated from the University of North Carolina's Air Force ROTC program and became an F86 fighter pilot. Later he flew the KC135. A life far removed from the deprivations of his youth. He was a Mason for 50 years. Soon after retirement he moved home to Salemburg. He died on my son's birthday, Dec. 17, 2010, in the Alzheimer's unit of the N. C. State Veterans' Nursing Home in Fayetteville. I have two younger brothers, and for many reasons, Dad was our hero. My father was placed in the VA nursing home in Sept. 2005 after a stroke on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. I fought hard, even going to court to get custody and move him to Moore County, where I now live. All I accomplished was to earn the resentment of his brother and sisters.

Unable to help my father and feeling guilty, I made a drastic lifestyle change and went to work for an adult home health care agency in Southern Pines. I loved it so much I took the Certified Nurse Aide course at Sandhills Community College. In 2008, I was assigned to John Bowler and his dear wife, residents of Belle Meade, an upscale retirement community in Southern Pines. They were living independently in their own apartment. John had progressive dementia. A brilliant, former corporate attorney, John could no longer manage the remote for the TV. He was a slight man and lifelong athlete. My job was to accompany him while swimming (they call this a job?) and take him out to relieve his wife and help them with their daily needs. The three of us became very close.

John Edward Bowler was born Aug. 6, 1919 in Rhode Island. His grandfather, Samuel Bowler, was an English immigrant who built a homestead in Minnesota and served during the Civil War. Sam's medal for bravery at Chickamauga was framed and hung on the wall. John was obsessed

with the Civil War. He would ask me questions about the South, which I could not answer, sparking my curiosity about my father's family and "that story."

John and I had many adventures. We went to Fayetteville several times. One trip included a docent-led tour of the Museum of the Cape Fear, the old Confederate arsenal, and a reenactment with men dressed in Confederate and Union uniforms. He thought the soldiers were real. I took his picture with them and hung it on the wall. He talked incessantly about it to everyone who came to visit, much to the exasperation of his wife. We also visited old cemeteries and looked for graves of old soldiers. He was enthralled by the canon at the Revolutionary War battle reenactment at the House in the Horseshoe. Mrs. Bowler accompanied us to the Bryant House living history festival. She thoroughly enjoyed the bluegrass music and vendors. Another excursion was to the Rufus Barringer Civil War Round Table in Southern Pines. After the meeting it was dark, and John casually took my hand until we found the car.

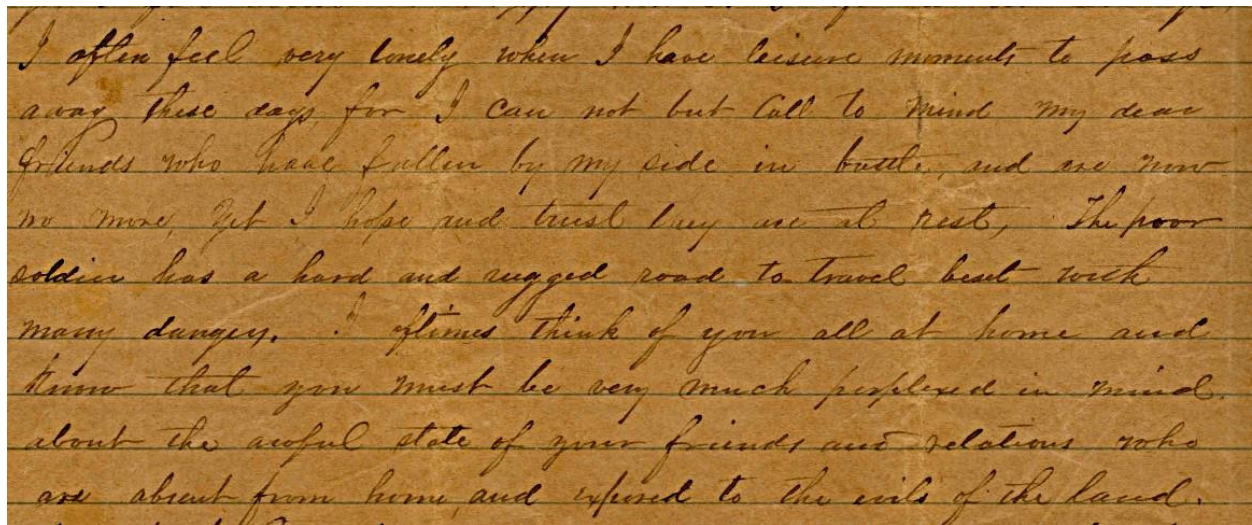
Eventually, the decision was made to move John to the memory-care unit at Belle Meade as he began to wander the grounds. The transition was surprisingly smooth. Mrs. Bowler and I would visit John every day. John and his wife would sit on the couch, hold hands, and he would tell her how much he loved her and then regale us with stories. He turned 90 that August and a party was held in the Belle Meade club house. He frequently wore hats, so I gave him a good quality Yankee kepi with colonel's gold braid. In the meantime, I purchased an account at Ancestry.com and started a family tree. After visits with my father at the veterans' home, I went to the Local and State History Room at Headquarters Library in downtown Fayetteville. In researching Samuel Bowler, I met a distant cousin of John's who had built a well-documented Bowler family tree on Ancestry. She has many pictures of Sam and his family including John's father as a young man as well as Sam's Army service record. By the time I learned that John's grandfather had been in Fayetteville, it was too late. His dementia had progressed to a point that he could neither understand nor converse very well. I get goose bumps to this day when I think of how our ancestors were in the same place at the same time in history, and we were there 143 years later.

Alexander McArthur, my 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather, owned a small cotton plantation in the Rockfish Creek area. His brother Neil McArthur built the famous cotton factory that was destroyed by Sherman. There are accounts of the prominent men of Fayetteville being strung up by Union troops to force them to reveal the hiding place of their valuables. How this was done, I don't know.

The following excerpts are from "A Drummer-Boy's Diary: Comprising Four Years of Service with The Second Regiment Minnesota Veteran Volunteers, 1861 to 1865" by William Bircher, an 1865 entry in the diary of Col. Oscar L. Jackson, 63<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Volunteers, published after his death as "The Colonel's Diary", and letters written by Lt. Lalister Mallett White, brother of my great-great grandfather, Murdock, during his service with the Confederacy. Copied and pasted from original works:

"March 17 ... Passed through the small village of Owensville. I saw today a very eccentric old lady who had had her burial clothes prepared. For safety she had hid them out of doors and the soldiers finding them, some scoundrel had carried them off, as I regretted to hear. She told me it had cost her great labor and hard saving to get

the silk dress she had lost and she did not think she would ever be able to get another. She seemed very much grieved about it. She was very old. I observed here today quite a number of old people from eighty to ninety years of age. I take it North Carolina is a healthy place but the mass of the people are very poor, as well as the soil.” – **An 1865 entry in the diary of Col. Oscar L. Jackson, 63rd Ohio Volunteers, published after his death as *The Colonel's Diary*.**



I often feel very lonely when I have leisure moments to pass away these days for I can not but call to mind my dear friends who have fallen by my side in battle, and are now no more. Yet I hope and trust they are at rest. The poor soldier has a hard and rugged road to travel beset with many dangers. I oftentimes think of you all at home and know that you must be very much perplexed in mind about the awful state of your friends and relations who are absent from home and exposed to the evils of the land.

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L. M. White, Army of Northern Virginia, Morton's Ford, November 22, 1863

March 11: Marched thirteen miles to Fayetteville, N. C., where we found an abundance of flour, meal, bacon, molasses, coffee, and tobacco, and lived on the best the country afforded.

Sabbath, March 12: Lay in camp. Everything was quiet. The tug-boat "Donaldson" arrived at Fayetteville from Wilmington with news from Generals Terry and Schofield and returned the same day with despatches from Sherman.

March 13 and 14 were passed by us in Fayetteville. The arsenal and the machinery, which had formerly belonged to the Harper's Ferry arsenal, were completely destroyed. Every building was knocked down and burned, and every piece of machinery broken up and utterly ruined.

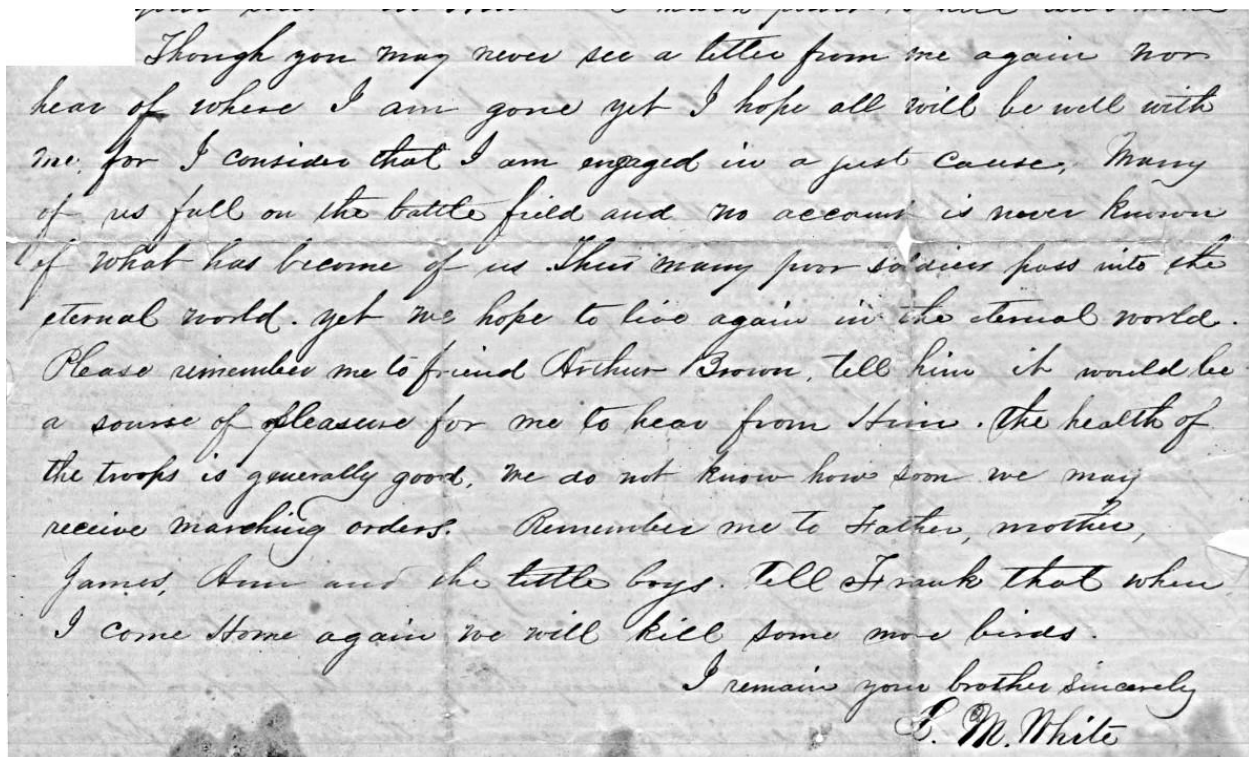
Sherman's army crossed the Cape Fear River and camped in Sampson County; divisions also went on to Goldsboro via Bentonville. It was the 17<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, led by Gen. Francis Preston Blair, that encamped on the plantation of James White, my 3<sup>rd</sup> great-grandfather, and used his house, known as the Gov. Holmes mansion, as his headquarters in Owenville. The heirs of Gov. Gabriel Holmes sold about 2000 acres of land, which included the house and a mill, to James White in 1829 for \$500 (Sampson County Deed Book 24 Page 105). It was a stagecoach stop on the route from Raleigh to Wilmington. A survey records from 1901 show the land belonging to Oliver Perry White, a former Confederate officer. It consisted of more than 3000 acres stretching south from Salemburg all the way across NC Highway 24 into Roseboro.

As for what was said in “that story,” according to my cousin, Murdock and James White Jr. were conscripted in late 1864 and away from home, leaving my great-great grandmother Ann with her children—Frank, Willie, and Varena—at home with her aged in-laws and the many slaves on 2000 acres mid-way between Clinton and Fayetteville. Ann White had already lost her only brother, Pvt. George Brown, at Sharpsburg on Sept 17, 1862 and a brother-in-law at Spotsylvania Court House. According to her, the Yankees put a gun to her head and told her they would shoot her if she didn't tell where the silver was hidden. The diminutive Ann is said to have replied, “I guess you'll have to shoot me.” Whether they strung up the then-nine-year-old Frank by his thumbs, I'll never know. My grandfather Lyman told me that they did. The Yankees weren't above such treatment. There was no silver in either Murdock's or James White's estate records. It may still be in the creek. Murdock White died in 1879, and there is a Masonic emblem on his headstone. Ann Eliza Brown White lived until 1927, spending her last 12 years in Fayetteville with her daughter Mary Lou and son-in-law, Dr. Jacob Franklin Highsmith. Murdock's land bordered his father's and is now occupied by Lakewood High School. The “mansion” burned down in 1929. In 1965, an heir sold 2100 acres to a timber company, which sold it to the state of NC in 2005. A rare plant called the “pondberry” grows there and one other place in the state. The property known for over 100 years as the “White Woods” is now the “Pondberry Preserve.”

The state project manager told me that there were people still living in two of the former slave cabins as late as 1965. The timber company evicted the residents and bulldozed the cabins, the remains of which can still be seen. The James White cemetery is in fair condition surrounded by an iron fence. The bricks of the foundation of the old Gov. Holmes mansion are visible if you know where to look. The slave cemetery has been found and cleaned up. Descendants of the slaves still live in the area and have been using the cemetery all this time. In March 2014 the state gave a guided tour of the property and explained their intentions to return the land to its original condition. A Civil War historian gave a talk about the Holmes family. It is not open to the public.

The last place John and I visited was the Malcolm Blue Festival in Aberdeen. The festival is about the history of the Sandhills near a 19<sup>th</sup> century house and outbuildings and including historically authentic craft and sheep herding demonstrations, vendors, wagon rides, food, and an encampment with people in period dress. John wore his Yankee kepi. We were fortunate to meet local businessman Darrell Howard in his Confederate uniform. He was so kind to John, explaining what they were doing, showing him the armaments and introducing him to his comrades. John loved to talk, especially to fellow soldiers. He was a captain in WWII, stationed at one time at Iwo Jima. We stayed a long time and my dear friend had a grand day. John Edward Bowler departed this life on September 14, 2013. His family gave me permission to include him in my story.

I am forever grateful to John Bowler and proud to say that I am the great granddaughter, granddaughter, daughter, daughter-in-law, sister and mother of the troops, a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, John Blue Chapter in Aberdeen, Daughters of the American Revolution, Temperance Smith Alston Chapter in Pinehurst, Eastern Star 259 and Secretary of the Sampson County Historical Society in Clinton. My official title in home care is Caregiver and “As you give so shall you receive.”



Though you may never see a letter from me again nor hear of where I am gone yet I hope all will be well with me for I consider that I am engaged in a just cause. Many of us fall on the battle field and no account is never known of what has become of us. Thus many poor soldiers pass into the eternal world. Yet we hope to live again in the eternal world. Please remember me to friend Arthur Brown, tell him it would be a source of pleasure for me to hear from Him. The health of the troops is generally good, we do not know how soon we may receive marching orders. Remember me to Father, mother, James, Ann and the little boys. Tell Frank that when I come Home again we will kill some more birds.

I remain your brother sincerely  
L. M. White

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#### CIVIL WAR DEAD

Transcribed by Myrtle Bridges from the Fayetteville Observer 1861-1865

Lt. Lalister M. White of Sampson Co., NC, was an intelligent, cultivated young man; modest, gentle, unobtrusive. He entered the army as a private and for a long time persisted in refusing to hold offices which his comrades wished to confer upon him. At last they induced him to accept a Lieutenantancy and he was first Lieutenant at the time he was killed. He had passed through many hard fights and was killed on the bloody field of Spotsylvania, May 12, 1864. No doubt this young man, like many others who have fallen during this dreadful war, would have been largely useful if he had lived, but his sudden death reminds us of the uncertainty of our future in the world and admonishes us to prepare for the next. Lt. White had not made any public profession of religion. A few days before he was killed, I approached him and told him I had been praying for him some time. With a good deal of emotion, he thanked me for the interest I had felt in his and told me he was interested for his own soul. The pasture in which his comrades found him three days after he fell (his hand under his head) led them to think that he may not have died

instantly. The veteran soldier long accustomed to the sound of musketry and artillery may have collected his thoughts and prayed, and calmly and trustingly given up his spirit to Him who said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Among the many friends that I have lost by this cruel war, few were dearer to me than Lal White.

A. D. Betts, Chaplain 30th N. C. T.

Lalister Mallett White enlisted in Company A of the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry (North Carolina), CSA on April 20, 1861.

Oliver Perry White enlisted on March 10, 1862 and mustered out at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. He served in Company I of the 46<sup>th</sup> Infantry (North Carolina).