

CIVIL WAR HERO HAS PASSED AWAY

Col. S. A. Urquhart Died This Morning

HIS EVENTFUL CAREER

Few men Underwent Greater Hardship Than He During the Civil War, He Having Been Twice Captured by the Confederate and Having Been Confined in Southern Prisons for Twenty Months—Man of Sterling Character and Companionable Disposition.

D. Colonel Samuel A. Urquhart, who was for 24 years a resident of West Pittston, remaining there until a few months ago, and this morning at 7 o'clock at the home of his son, Millbourne C. Urquhart, 174 Academy street, Wilkesbarre. The immediate cause of death was hardening of the arteries. For several years past Col. Urquhart's health had been failing, his cardiac starchy physique having given way under the strain of the untold hardships that he underwent during the Civil War. Some years ago he was obliged to give up his occupation as a locomotive engineer and take up lighter employment, and condition since last October had been gradually becoming more serious.

Announcement of the death of Col. Urquhart was received with much sorrow among his home friends in West Pittston, for though he had moved from the town, he was still considered a West Pittstonian. During the many years of his residence here he had gained a wide acquaintance among people of all classes, and he was a man whom to know was to esteem. Steady in character, his every action was honorable, while his personality was of that winning sort that drew to him people of all classes and ages. His varied life experiences made him a most interesting one to meet and converse with, and his record as a veteran of the Civil War, and as a prisoner of war was known far and wide. Besides he had an agreeable and honorable part in civil affairs, and in general was esteemed a fair and good citizen and neighbor. His death will be widely mourned.

Samuel A. Urquhart was born in Trenton, N. J., July 2, 1839. His father lived another month he would have been 70 years of age. His parents were John and Elizabeth Urquhart, who came from the Netherlands of Scotland, having been descendants of Sir Thomas Urquhart. His boyhood days, up to his 15th year, were passed on a farm at Nanticoke, in Luzerne county. Then the family moved to Wilkesbarre, and the subject of this sketch attended the academy there for several years. He then began his military career in the most eventful period of his entire life. Little did he dream of all that he was to pass through ere he should again return to civil life. His military career is briefly sketched in his own words as follows: "When Col. Sturtevant entered the army in 1861 I went with him as clerk. In the autumn of 1862 I was commissioned as First Lieutenant of Cavalry and assigned to General Sherman. In October, 1862, I was commissioned as Captain and Commissary of Subsistence on the staff of General Hartlett. I was on duty about 15 days and on Oct. 18, 1862, was taken prisoner by Col. John S. Mosby near Fairfax. I remained in Libby Prison, Richmond, until May, 1863, and was then exchanged with a half dozen other officers. I once more entered the army, this time on the staff of General Sherman, near Richmond. When I was ordered to Gen. Meade's camp in the Shenandoah, and on Oct. 15, 1862, was again taken prisoner, this time by Gen. Imboden. Under sentence of death, I was sent to Libby Prison. I passed through the tunnel with 100 others on Feb. 4, 1864, my number having been 81, but was soon mistaken and spent a hard life in the following prisons: Sulisbury, N. C.; Green Castle, N. C.; Danville, Va., and Libby. I was exchanged for 200 men in 1864, having spent all that time in military prisons. When Col. Urquhart was mustered out of the service in 1864 he was a Lieutenant Colonel by brevet.

Col. Urquhart's war and prison experiences were so remarkable that he was frequently imported to relate them for the benefit of his friends and family. He drafted a lecture embodying his war record, especially that portion of it dealing with the famous Libby Prison tunnel, and he delivered it on numerous occasions, always to interested audiences. The story has many of the elements of fiction, but it is absolutely true, being captured by the records. His first capture by the Confederates was while he was on his way to Wilkesbarre after having secured a leave of absence to attend the wedding of his sister. When, within what he supposed to be the Union lines, he was surrounded by Confederate horsemen and marched off to prison. The scene and time a year later, he was leaving the army on official business and met a party of horsemen in a ravine. They had all the appearance of Union soldiers, but proved to be Confederates in disguise, and he rode directly into an ambush. He received the startling intelligence that he was just the man they wanted to be shot for the murder of Confederate officers, an order having been issued that the first Union officer captured must pay the penalty. The following morning he was taken to the prison. At an old Virginia mansion, where the party stopped, a young woman from whom he hoped to secure the release of his wife, he followed to receive elsewhere, shocked him to receive the routing of the officer in command as to which one they were to contain had paid the ransom. Captain Urquhart's life was saved, though he was not apprised of the fact until he had suffered torture during the night.

Instead of being shot, he went to Libby Prison. Col. Urquhart had the details of the famous Libby Prison tunnel well in mind, with many documents relating to the event. These documents were made by prisoners of war to escape by means of a tunnel. The first two tunnels that were started led into rivers, and they had to be abandoned. The third led to the street and was successful. 100 prisoners escaped. Of these Col. Urquhart was one. The tunnel was started in what was known to the prisoners as "red hall" cellar. A large hinge and a part of a butcher knife were the implements and a saw from the cart that carried the iron to the street was used to cut the hole. 15 men were in the secret until the time for escape, when 100 were chosen by lot. Col. Urquhart was chosen by lot. On Tuesday, Feb. 4, 1864, at 4 a. m., he crawled out of the hole in the ground, watched his chance while the guard was walking away from him, got around in the shadow of the building and finally crawled into the street. His escape, which was due to the bluntness occasioned by the discovery of his plans, and after a few hours later a gun barrel was poked into the hole, and he was told to come out. He did so without a second hesitation, and with the other captured prisoners who had been captured in the tunnel. This was a most successful examination. This was most successful. Urquhart was sent him in chains to jail. Finally a young officer brought down and told the truth. The commander drove a colored boy through the tunnel before he would be convinced of its existence, and then returned, filled with rage to the prison. The hussar guard was released and the sentence against Col. Urquhart was "send him to the dungeon and let him stay there till he dies." And to the dungeon he went. This was a coal hole 8 x 10 feet, as deep as a pitch, the walls covered with slime. Here he passed 25 days, though it seemed a lifetime, so awful was his condition. The rats were his only companions, and in anger he kicked some to death, the patrifaction of their remains making things worse. He heard no human voice but his own, and thought he would go crazy. He determined not to die, though he firmly believed he was sent there never to come out alive. Finally one day the door opened and the guard called "Come." He blindly obeyed and discovered that he was actually blind, while the rats that served him as servants were green with mould. After a long time, his sight gradually returned.

He, with three others, was now sent to Sulisbury, N. C., to the State Prison, as hostages. Here he told his story to a kind old gentleman, who secured him a place in the hospital, giving him directions for escaping. He followed instructions, made himself generally useful as a convalescent, and one day walked out of the hospital gate with the garb of a steward's assistant as the passport. He was still in a wretched condition, and his friends were literally bawled by walking to the immediate front of the prison. He wrapped rags about them and staggered off in an inviting farm house. A kind old woman received him with great consideration, bathed his wounds, read and sent him on his way before day. A few days later, however, Southern soldiers rode up, seized the woman, and made him prisoner. Among the company was his woman friend of a few hours before, now suffering in her captivity.

Colonel Urquhart was now returned to Richmond. Arriving there in a wretched condition, he was kept in a stockade for several days, and totally discouraged in spirit—he, with others, was turned loose at the station. Desperately he made his way to the prison of Libby Prison, voluntarily gave himself up. The guard refused him admission, but Dick Turner, commander, recognized him, and he was returned to the prison. Finally exchange came, all he managed to hobble into line, but fell in the street, and was carried to the exchange boat by comrades, to be brought to Wilkesbarre on a stretcher. For many months he lay hovering between life and death, but finally recovered health and strength.

A few years after the close of the war, Col. Urquhart was united in marriage in Wilkesbarre to Miss Fannie Loomis, daughter of former Mayor W. W. Loomis of that city. He and Mrs. Urquhart came to West Pittston some 10 years ago, where they resided until late in April, when, at the request of the town, they went to Wilkesbarre to make their home with their son.

During his residence on the West Side, Col. Urquhart received substantial proof of the regard in which he was held by his neighbors. For two years of three years each he served very acceptably as a member of the West Pittston School Board. In later years, when failing health made it impossible for him to continue his occupation as a locomotive engineer, he was raised to the position of town commissioner by the town council, which he held for several years. He was also a faithful member of the West Pittston Methodist Church, where for a number of years he was very active as a member in the Sunday school. The surviving members of his family are his wife and one son, Millbourne C.

The funeral services will be held at the home of Millbourne Urquhart, 174 Academy street, Wilkesbarre, Friday afternoon at three o'clock. Interment will be made in North cemetery.

WILKESBARRE MAN MANGLED BY SARE

George Wallace, a Negro, Fell Under Coal Cars Standing on Switch and Was Killed.

George Wallace, aged 60 years, of Wilkesbarre, a negro, met death in a terrible manner this morning. Apparently Wallace made his bed last night under some coal cars that stood on a Delaware and Hudson track near Walnut street, Wilkesbarre. As an early hour this morning the cars were pulled away, and afterward the mangled remains of Wallace were found lying on the track. The body was literally cut to pieces, and it was necessary to gather the remains in a base. They were taken to St. Mary's morgue. Wallace was a veteran of the Civil War. Of late he had been employed in caring for the gardens of Wilkesbarre people. He is survived by his wife and several daughters.

DECISION RENDERED IN COAL RATE CASE

Judge Fuller Reversed by the Supreme Court, and the Rate in Luzerne Will be 867.

According to the decision handed down by the Supreme court in the matter of the Luzerne coal assessment cases the indications are that the people have won a gratifying victory. The decision states that the decree of the local court has been reversed. The decree was that of Judge Fuller, which reduced the valuation from 87 per cent acre, as fixed by the county commissioners, to approximately 85.

Exceptions were filed to this and Judges Lynch and Halsey both filed the stay that the entire proceedings were wrong, as the case presented was without jurisdiction.

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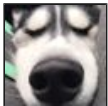
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