

Stephen E. Chandler (1841 – 1919)

Compiled by Kathy Huston, Lake Minnetonka DAR



BIRTH: 20 November 1841 Convis Township, Calhoun County, Michigan

ENTERED SERVICE: 4 May 1861 at Granby, Oswego County, New York

BRANCH: ARMY

CONFLICT: Civil War

DEATH: 1 February 1919

Early Years

Born in late 1841 in Convis Township in Calhoun County, Michigan, Stephen Edwin Chandler is the son of Clark Chandler, a carpenter and farmer, and his wife, Hermona Slafter. He descends from Josiah Chandler of Barre, Massachusetts, a Revolutionary War veteran.¹ He entered the service at the start of the Civil War, one of many men from Oswego County, New York to answer in response to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 soldiers.²

The War Years

Chandler was mustered into Company E, New York 24th Infantry in 1861, into Company A of the 24th New York Cavalry in 1863, was promoted to Quartermaster Sergeant, and then transferred to Company A of the New York First Provisional Cavalry in 1865. He mustered out of the military on 19 July 1865 at Cloud's Mills, Virginia.³ Chandler was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic efforts at Amelia Springs, Virginia.⁴

According to author Bert Dunkerly, the little known engagement on April 5, 1865 illustrates well the chaos and confusion of the Civil War's Appomattox Campaign. A complex six-day campaign, it had many moving parts, as columns from each army used various roads, and at different points, encountered each other. Battles and skirmishes occurred every day. At different times each side had momentary numerical superiority over the other. Seven Union troopers earned the Medal of Honor in the action of this campaign. "As with most Medals of Honor awarded to Union troops, the citations were for the capture of flags. Yet Quartermaster Sergeant Chandler of the 24th New York Cavalry earned it for something else."⁵ His citation states that under severe fire of the enemy and of the troops in retreat, Chandler went between the lines to the

assistance of a wounded and helpless comrade, and rescued him from death or capture.⁶

The fellow soldier, Corporal Eugene VanBuren, claimed he owed his life to Sergeant Chandler:

“On the afternoon of April 5, 1865, General Sheridan, wishing to ascertain the whereabouts of the enemy, ordered a reconnaissance in the direction of Paines Cross Roads. Our brigade was selected for this duty. The route we took led us through a wooded country which was considerably cut up by hills and valleys, and near Amelia Springs, the fashionable summer resort of the south, we saw from the summit of a hill Lee’s wagon-train in the distance. We soon found a cross-road not much wider than a bridle path, which we followed down through a valley, then across a stream and up the hill on the opposite side. Just as we neared the top of the hill we ran into a battery of five new Armstrong guns which we captured before they could fire a shot; and at the summit we found the wagon-train. Flankers were sent out in different directions, while the main body of the brigade ‘went through’ a couple of miles of the train. Judging from appearances the train was at a standstill at the time we struck it, as fires were burning all along the line with skillet and frying pans on them, in which ‘hoe-cake’ and other kinds of food were being cooked by the drivers and train escort.; but all was abandoned in their hurry to escape. Everything in sight was captured. Orders were given to fall back to the point where we captured the battery and we started on the return march, but we were somewhat hampered by our prisoners, a few of our men who had been wounded and by being compelled to drag along the captured guns. Our progress was retarded to such an extent that the enemy’s began to crowd us, and it was found necessary to form a line of battle in an open field near Amelia Springs.

No sooner was the line of battle formed than a rebel cavalry division made its appearance, and when at a distance of forty rods opened fire. In the subsequent fighting quite a number were wounded, among them Lieutenant-Colonel Richards, who commanded our regiment, and I. Sergeant Chandler’s horse was struck in the forehead by a ball, the sergeant himself narrowly escaping death. He removed his personal effects from the saddle and hastened to the assistance of the wounded colonel. I saw him and said, ‘For God’s sake, Chan, help me off the field. I’m wounded and can’t walk.’ He at once came to my aid, and after examining my wound said: ‘Let’s get out of this as quickly as we can and go to some place where we can get help, or you’ll bleed to death.’ He helped me to my feet and we started for the rear. About this time the regiment was ordered to fall back to a new position, leaving Chandler and me between the fires. The bullets flew like hail around us. ‘Chan,’ I said, ‘you will be shot or taken prisoner. I’ve got my death wound anyway. You’d better lay me down and save yourself.’ ‘I’ll never do that,’ his reply was. ‘No, my boy, I’ll stay with you till you are safe or we both go down.’

A cavalry regiment of the enemy attempted to charge our men and were driven to the cover of the woods. Bullets were whistling over our heads and around us from both directions. How we ever escaped being riddled is more than I can tell. However, we struggled along slowly, I being too weak to go any faster. After much difficulty we finally reached the rear, where the regimental surgeon bandaged my wound, which stopped the flow of blood to some extent. Just then our men were compelled to fall back once more. Chandler took me by the arm and helped me along for a short distance, when I became so greatly exhausted that I could walk no farther. I despaired completely. ‘Chan,’ I said again, ‘go on now; save yourself. I can’t hold out any longer.’ I laid down, but Chandler remained and sat down at my side. I pleaded with him to give up all further attempts to save me and think of his own safety. ‘You’ve done enough for me. See how those bullets are flying again. Protect your own life; I can’t live anyway.’

Just then a cavalryman whose horse was played out came along. Chandler asked him to let him have the animal and he complied cheerfully; 'You can have her, certainly. She's played out. I can go faster on foot.' Chandler now helped me on that horse. I laid down over the pommel of the saddle, and thus we started along at a slow gait, Chandler constantly urging the horse forward. Soon after we were joined by Privates John Smith and George Back, of our company, who walked at the horse's side and held on to me, while Chandler led the horse. The enemy, outnumbering our forces, had by this time gotten on our flank and tried to cut us off, keeping up a terrific fire. Chandler found a stretcher, I can't remember where, and I, being then too weak to ride any farther, was placed on it and carried, Chandler keeping up the courage of his comrades by joking about the poor marksmanship of the Johnnies. Passing a farm barn they found an old buggy. Again I was removed and placed in the vehicle, so that I lay flat on my back with my feet dangling down at the rear. They were about to start off with me, hauling the buggy by hand, when Chandler, who was untiring in his efforts for my comfort, obtained a horse from a wounded cavalryman. Securing a collar and a pair of hames from the barn he hitched the animal to the wagon by means of pieces of rope used for traces. By this time the rebels were close upon us. They shouted, 'Halt!' and fired at us, but Chandler set the improvised though none too comfortable ambulance in motion and off we started, over ditches and across fields as fast as the horse could travel, the boys at some places where we were going downhill hanging to the buggy to keep it off the horse's heels. In this manner we soon reached a place of safety, where I found proper medical care and treatment. I certainly owe my life to the courage and persistency of my brave sergeant.⁷

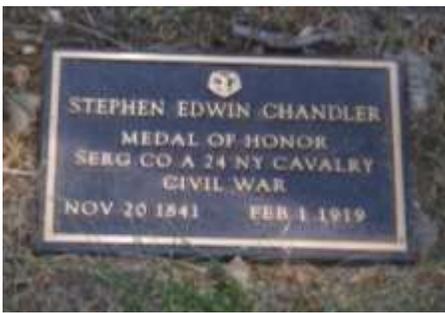
Chandler himself was wounded in 1864 by a Minie ball piercing his left side near his heart. Back in action, he was with the Army of the Potomac at Lee's surrender, April 9, 1865. He carried the colors of the 24th NY, being the last to exchange shots with the enemy.⁸ In later years, Chandler wrote newspaper articles about the extraordinary experiences of the 24th New York.⁹

Post-War Years

Chandler and wife Mary Amelia Valentine Gill were married 16 January 1868¹⁰ and had five children (his first son Edbert dying in infancy in Ohio). They later homesteaded 160 acres near Worthington, Minnesota in the 1870s.¹¹ He married Harriet M. (surname unknown) as his second wife and lived in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He spent his later life working as a carpenter and construction foreman.

Gravestone

Chandler died in 1919 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is buried in Lakewood Cemetery.



Documentation

¹ George Chandler, *"The Family Of William And Annis Chandler; Who Settled In Roxbury, Mass 1637"*; printed for the family on the press of George Hamilton of Worcester, Mass; 311 Main Street, 1883; p. 549, 948, found online at:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=h2JmAAAAAMAAJ&dq=decendents%20of%20annis%20chandler&pg=PA930&ci=293%2C190%2C639%2C257&source=bookclip#v=onepage&q=stephan%20chandler%2F%20mary%20gill&f=false>

² Kent Scriber, *"Three Oswego County Brothers in the Civil War and After: A Review of the Scriber Family and the 24th, 110th, and 184th NYSV Infantry"*; Published by Danby Press, Ithaca, NY, 3 January 2014, p. 19; online at: http://faculty.ithaca.edu/kscriber/docs/Scribers_in_CW.pdf

³ Civil War Research Database, online at:

<http://www.civilwardata.com/active/hdsquery.dll?SoldierHistory?U%3E&1435856>

⁴ US Army Quartermaster Foundation, online at:

[http://www.qmfound.com/moh.html#Sergeant%20Stephen%20E.%20Chandler%A0%20\(Civil%20War\)](http://www.qmfound.com/moh.html#Sergeant%20Stephen%20E.%20Chandler%A0%20(Civil%20War))

⁵ Bert Dunkerly, *"Cavalry Action at Painesville: 150 Years Ago"*, found online at

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2015/04/05/cavalry-action-at-painseville-150-years-ago/>

⁶ National Park Service Civil War website, online at <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-medals-detail.htm?medalOfHonorId=53FC4FA7-5AFD-4971-9EA4-12E3A348BF18>

⁷ Deeds of Valor, p. 524, found online at Civil War Research Database

<http://www.civilwardata.com/active/hdsquery.dll?SoldierHistory?U%3E&1435856>

⁸ Edmund F. Slafter, *"Memorial of John Slafter: with a genealogical account of his descendants, including eight generations"*; Published by H. W. Dutton & Son, Boston, MA, 1869; p. 70; found online at

<https://archive.org/stream/memorialofjohnsl00slaf#page/70/mode/1up>

⁹ Kent Scriber, *"Three Oswego County Brothers in the Civil War and After: A Review of the Scriber Family and the 24th, 110th, and 184th NYSV Infantry"*; Published by Danby Press, Ithaca, NY, 3 January 2014, p.22-23, 185; online at http://faculty.ithaca.edu/kscriber/docs/Scribers_in_CW.pdf

¹⁰ Edmund F. Slafter, *"Memorial of John Slafter: with a genealogical account of his descendants, including eight generations"*; Published by H. W. Dutton & Son, Boston, MA, 1869; p. 70; found online at

<https://archive.org/stream/memorialofjohnsl00slaf#page/70/mode/1up>

¹¹ Homestead Land Office Records, www.ancestry.com

¹² Stephen E. Chandler memorial at findagrave: [http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Chandler&GSfn=Stephen+&GSmn=E&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=7267291&df=all&)

[bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Chandler&GSfn=Stephen+&GSmn=E&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=7267291&df=all&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Chandler&GSfn=Stephen+&GSmn=E&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=7267291&df=all&)

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Both online at:

[http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Chandler&GSfn=Stephen+&GSmn=E&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=7267291&df=all&)

[bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Chandler&GSfn=Stephen+&GSmn=E&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=7267291&df=all&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Chandler&GSfn=Stephen+&GSmn=E&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=7267291&df=all&)