

## Today in Columbus History:

On November 25, 1874, a story appeared in the Daily Columbus Enquirer entitled "The Remains Found Over the River." The story was the third in recent days to describe the discovery in the riverbank of the remains of a Confederate soldier. They were said to be Washington Kirkland, who died during the Battle of Columbus, the last major military engagement of the Civil War, on April 16, 1865.

Washington Kirkland was the son of William T. Kirkland of Henry county, Alabama. He married Martha Murphy Stokes there in March 1857. The couple appears in the 1860 census of Henry County, Alabama with two daughters, Sarah and Clotilda. A son, William was born during the war while Kirkland served in Co. A of the 6<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiment.

After the war, Martha raised the children without remarrying. William married Laura Matthews and became the mayor of Ozark, in Dale County, Alabama. He died in 1906. The rest of family stayed in Henry County. Martha died in 1912. Sarah married Thomas Holland and lived until 1920, Clotilda married Elijah Willis and lived until 1931. Every family member appears on FindAGrave except Washington. Did no one claim his remains?

Often, battlefield casualties were left exposed or only hastily buried. The collection and distribution of remains went on for several years following the Civil War. The Ladies Memorial Association of Winchester, Virginia organized for the purpose of creating a cemetery to house the remains of soldiers who were turning up in local farmers' fields. In 1866, the Georgia legislature created the Memorial Association of Georgia and named founding member of the Ladies' Memorial Association of Columbus, Mrs. Charles J. Williams as trustee. The Association was tasked with completing a cemetery at Resaca and interring the Confederate dead of Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge and the line of Sherman's March.

Local examples of this practice abound. In March 1866, the remains of Col. Peyton Colquitt, Capt. Alexander Cooper and Lt. Charles Bize were retrieved from North Georgia and brought to Linwood for reburial. In June of 1866, the body of Colonel C. A. L. Lamar, another casualty of the Battle of Columbus, was moved from Linwood Cemetery to Savannah. In October 1866, twenty-seven Union soldiers buried in Linwood Cemetery were relocated to the National Cemetery at Andersonville. Perhaps the best-known of these local reinterments was General Paul J. Semmes. The Columbus resident was mortally wounded at Gettysburg and died in Martinsburg, West Virginia in 1863. His remains were returned in April 1868, just prior to the third annual observance of Memorial Day.

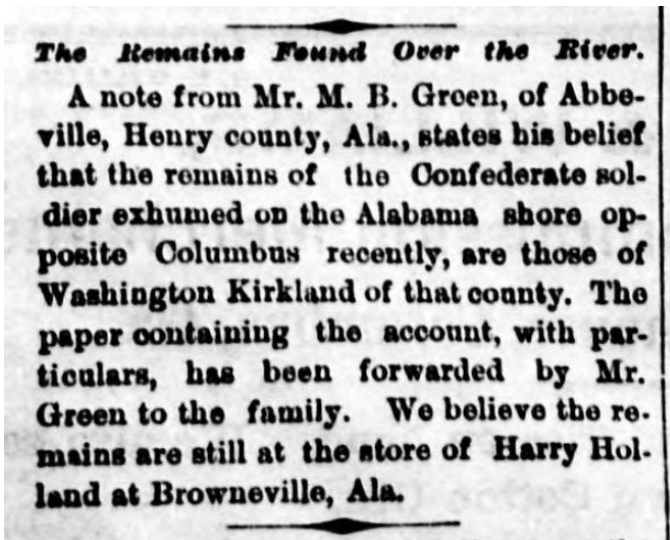
Interestingly, the local papers discussed Kirkland's burial place several years before. Two stories appeared in the Columbus Enquirer in on April 23 and 24, 1870 giving the location of his grave as "near the road leading by Mr. Geo. Golden's residence" to allow the ladies to decorate it for Memorial Day. This may explain the family's seeming indifference to the pleas coming in 1874. If they were convinced that Kirkland's body was the one near the road, then he could not be the one found in the riverbank.

I would like to thank Jane Brady of Linwood Cemetery for uncovering the earlier references to Kirkland and Whitney Gaines of the Columbus Public Library for finding the actual 1870 articles on microfilm that were not available from the Digital Library of Georgia. These details provide some insight into the lack of attention to the second set of remains found in 1874, but unfortunately, not who it might be.

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Daniel A. Bellware

*Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.*



The third in a series of stories on the discovery of the remains of Washington Kirkland. Columbus Daily Enquirer, November 25, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>



William W. Kirkland, Mayor of Ozark, AL and son of Washington Kirkland, taken at about the same age as Washington Kirkland at his death. Ozark Tribune, Sept 13, 1904



Often, battlefield casualties were left exposed or only hastily buried. The collection and disbursement of remains went on for several years following the Civil War. This iconic photograph "A Burial Party on the Battlefield at Cold Harbor" was taken in April 1865, ten months after the battle. (from the Library of Congress)

***Remains of a Confederate Soldier Exhumed.***

The hands under Mr. Pearce, employed by the Eagle and Phenix Company to cut away the bank on the opposite side of the river for the purpose of strengthening their dam and preventing future caving, Saturday exhumed the remains of a Confederate soldier, believed to be the body of a Mr. Kirkland, killed during the battle of Ingersoll's Hill, April 16, 1865, and interred near the river bank. The blanket in which the soldier was buried, nearly ten years ago, was found in a good state of preservation, though nothing remained of the once gallant hero but the bones, which were gathered up, boxed, and will be taken care of by Holland & Baker to await the demand of relatives or friends. Frequent enquiries have been made as to the fate of a Mr. Kirkland, of Southwestern Georgia, who perished on that memorable night, and Mrs. Clark, who resided on the premises, believes the remains found are his.

Papers throughout the country will doubtless confer a favor on bereaved friends by calling attention to the subject matter of this notice.

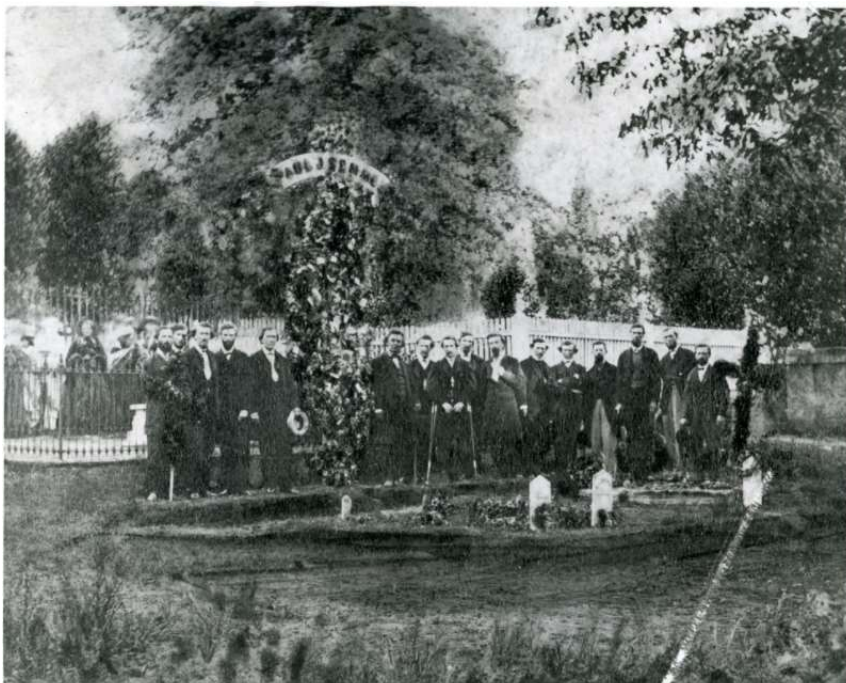
The first of three stories on the discovery of remains thought to be Kirkland's. Columbus Daily Enquirer, November 10, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>

***Notice to Relatives.***

Mr. A. D. Williams, of Girard, informs us that Wm. Kirkland, whose remains we mentioned as having been exhumed the other day at the far end of the factory dam, belonged to Company A, Ordinance Battalion; that he was about 29 years of age, and resided in Henry county, Ala., where it is presumed his wife and father still live; that he was killed on the night of the 16th of April, 1865, in a cowardly manner by some Federal soldiers, while under John Smith's house, where he had taken refuge.

Will the Eufaula paper please mention this, so as to convey information to Kirkland's relatives in Henry.

Second of three stories on the discovery of what was thought to be Kirkland's body. Columbus Daily Enquirer, November 14, 1874, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>



Reburial of General Paul J. Semmes at Linwood Cemetery, April 25, 1868. Courtesy of the Columbus State University Archives

<https://digitalarchives.columbusstate.edu/files/original/327d1c4502c9ad62871f81fbc919a305.jpg>

*Confederate Graves in Girard.*—There are only two. One contains the remains of John D. McCay, a member of the City Light Guards, and the other those of a stranger killed at the time of Wilson's raid on the Baptist Church hill. We have been requested by an old citizen to call the attention of the Girard ladies to these graves on Memorial Day, as, owing to some cause, that of Mr. McCay has heretofore been overlooked. The stranger is buried near the road leading by Mr. Geo. Golden's residence.

Columbus Enquirer April 23, 1870 (courtesy of the Columbus Public Library)

COLUMBUS, April 23.

*Mr. Local:*—Sir: Noticing your paragraph of this morning referring to the graves of the two Confederate dead in Girard, I beg to give you some information of him you have classified as a stranger. His name was Washington Kirkland, a gallant soldier, who, owing to his having been badly wounded in Virginia, was detailed for duty at the Columbus Laboratory. His home was somewhere in the neighborhood of Eufaula; and after the Confederates were overpowered by Wilson, endeavored to escape down the river to his home.

Respectfully, &c., N. J. FOGARTY.

Columbus Enquirer April 24, 1870 (courtesy of the Columbus Public Library)