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Absolom Koon

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The following is the text of a speech written by Mary Graham Harrison and read by Edwin Graham at the dedication of a memorial stone for Absalom Koon at Mt. Tabor Cemetery, located west of Columbia County road 245, south of Lake City, Florida.

Absolom Koon was the husband of Lavinia (Viney) Taylor, fifth child of William W. and Elizabeth Taylor. They were married before 1848 and had nine children. Absolom enlisted in the ninth Florida Infantry, CSA, during the civil war. He died 14 Jan 1865 in Richmond, Virginia, after suffering from exposure during a winter action.

ABSALOM KOON

We are here today to memorialize Absalom Koon with this memorial stone. This stone denotes his service to the Confederate States of America. We want to honor him not only for his outstanding service to the Confederacy but also for the man he was. So as to better understand this man, Absalom Koon, we will look at not only his Confederate Army service but also a couple of items that shows the honorable man he was.

Absalom Koon was born about 1825 in South Carolina, the second son of Martin Koon and Eve Margaret Feagle. Absalom married Lavinia Amanda Taylor in late 1847. Their children, Parmellia, William John, James H., George W., Wiley Harrison, and Alice Re were born in South Carolina.

Family and friends in Newberry and Edgefield Districts of South Carolina had or were moving to Florida or Western Tennessee. Absalom must have heard things to his liking about Florida from his brother-in-law, Robert Taylor, because he moved his family to Florida instead of Western Tennessee. Absalom settled his family near Olustee Creek in the Mt. Tabor area where their youngest son, Luther Martin Koon was born in 1859. Absalom's brother, Fredrick Hartwell Koon followed with his family a couple of years later.

The War Between the States began in 1861. By 1863 there was a draft for men ages 37 years of age and younger which were to report for duty. Absalom's wife Lavinia was expecting a child. (It is believed Lavinia had just had a problem pregnancy.) A few days after the draft's given date, Absalom would be 38 and above the draft age. Many friends and also his brother encouraged him not to report but to stay with his family. They did not believe there would be any checking on age.

Absalom Koon was a man of honor and integrity. He reported and enrolled in a State Infantry Unit, September 15, 1863 at Lake City Florida by Major R. B. Thomas, for the duration of the War. Absalom was temporarily assigned to Capt. A. A. Stewart's Company in the 6 Battalion Florida Infantry. The 6 Battalion was formed from seven independent companies. On October 1, 1863, Absalom was transferred to Capt. B. L. Reynolds' Independent Company Infantry. During the month of October 1863 Absalom was on a crew "Cutting a signal line." He was paid October 31st by Major Teasdale. The company muster rolls show the company was stationed at Camp Finaghan, Florida until December 31.

Since Capt. B. L. Reynold's Independent Company Infantry was in the are of their homes, perhaps Absalom was home on November 15, 1863 or soon there after. On November 15, 1863, Lavinia gave birth to a girl whom they named Frances Melissa, but called "Fanny." Hopefully Absalom got to see his family a lot during this time.

Absalom's Confederate records show he was present for duty at all musters from November 1863 to April 1864. But from December 31 the company was stationed at Camp Milton, Florida.

On February 7, 1864, Union troops landed in Jacksonville, Florida with a plan to march to Tallahassee and thus knock Florida out of the Confederacy. By the 9th of February 1864 there were skirmishes near Baldwin, Florida as the Confederate Cavalry slowed the Union Troops. There were also other Union raiding parties sent out to terrify the countryside and gather or destroy supplies., These Union raiding parties ran into resistance and there were skirmishes with the citizens. The Florida citizens, Capt. B. L. Reynold's Independent Company, the 6 Battalion Florida Infantry commanded by Major Picken Bird and other Independent Companies joined with the Confederate troops from Georgia in Lake City and moved to Olustee and began to build breastworks.

On February 20, 1864 at 11 A.M. the Confederate Cavalry was sent out to meet the Union troops. At noon some of the Confederate Infantry was sent out. At 12:30 P.M. some more of the Confederate Infantry was sent out. Capt. B. L. Reynold's Independent Company and the 6 Battalion Florida Infantry was in this group. The fighting starts at the fork of the road. The battle rages though out the afternoon.

At 6 P.M. the 6 Battalion Florida Infantry with Capt. B. L. Reynold's Independent Company Infantry and other Independent Companies were on the side of the battleground firing from the side at the Union troops as some of the Georgia Confederate troops were firing at the troops from the opposite side of the battlefield. The Union troops began a full retreat.

After the Battle of Olustee, the 9th Florida Infantry Regiment of the Confederate States Army was formed from the 6 Battalion Florida Infantry, Capt. B. L. Reynold's Independent Company of Infantry and two other Independent Companies. Also formed were the 10th and 11th Florida Infantry Regiments. In early May 1864, General Joseph Finnegan was put in command of a Brigade made up of Florida Infantry Regiments numbers 9, 10, and 11 in the Confederate Army and ordered to Virginia.

May 25, 1864 Finnegan's Brigade arrived at Richmond, Virginia. May 28 1864 Finnegan's Brigade joined R. H. Anderson's Division, A. F. Hill's Corps at Hanover Junction, Virginia. On June 1st , Perry's Brigade consolidated with Finegan's Brigade and fought in the Battle of Cold Harbor which lasted from June 1st to the 3rd. Finegan's Brigade then marched to Petersburg. Petersburg, Virginia became under siege by Union General Grant. General Lee had to stretch out his army to protect the area from Petersburg to Richmond. Company muster rolls shows station of company as entrenched near Petersburg, Virginia. The following are events that Finnegan's Brigade participated in, we can be sure Absalom Koon was in most if not all of these events. June 23, 1864 the Brigade moved from breastworks under heavy fire and march down Weldon Road 6 miles and drove back the enemy who were tearing up roadway. June 30, 1864, Battle of Reams's Station. August 21, 1864, Battle of Weldon Railroad. There were repeated charges by Florida's Regiment to dislodge the enemy but they failed to dislodge them.

Absalom Koon was present for all muster's until August 31, 1864. On Sept 23, 1864, Absalom Koon appears on a Register of General Hospital, Howard's Grove, Richmond, Virginia. Why he was in the hospital is unknown. Was it a wound or one of the many illness that took the lives of so many in this war? On September 30, 1864 he was furloughed from the hospital. Absalom was present for muster in October 1864. On December 7, 1864 the Brigade began a 50 mile march to Bellfield. On December 9, 1864 the Brigade struck at the enemy at Bellfield but the enemy refused to engage. The Brigade then returned to camp footsore from the march on frozen ground in sleet and snow. Absalom Koon cared much for his family and must have had some forbearance of his fate. Sometime in late 1864 Absalom wrote to his wife, Lavinia, and instructed her on how to provide for his family. On January 9, 1865 Absalom was again admitted to General Hospital, Howard's Grove, Richmond, Virginia*. On January 14, 1865 Absalom Koon's participation in the fight for the southern cause ended with his death.

Absalom Koon's brothers both in Florida and South Carolina, his brothers-in-law in Florida, South Carolina and Western Tennessee and some nephews all served in the Confederate States Army. His widow, Lavinia, would lose not only her husband, but a brother and brother-in-law.

* In 2001 it was learned by this writer, Howard's Grove Hospital, Richmond Virginia was designated as a smallpox only hospital by January 1865. So many were dying of smallpox at the time of Absalom's death, that the bodies were being incinerated.

The dedication of this memorial stone on October 23, 1999 was a most fitting tribute to Absalom Koon since he never received the honor of funeral or burial.