Voices From The Stone – Samuel And Levi Millington

INTRODUCTION

It has been 160 years since the end of the fighting in the Civil War, but 164 years since Julia Ward Howe wrote the "**Battle Hymn of the Republic**" in November 1861. When she wrote these lyrics, the war was only seven months old. At the time, there was a suspension in the action, as both sides built up their forces for the upcoming campaign season. Both still believed the war would be over soon, with few dead and wounded. Their confidence would soon be shattered by the carnage of the battles of 1862, beginning with the fight at Shiloh, also known as Pittsburg Landing. The year 1862 would begin a new and more violent phase of the war for Billy Yank and Johnny Reb.

To honor and remember those whose names are engraved on the monument, we now present our 'Voices from the Stone'. Representing the voices of the men on the memorial, some of whom made the ultimate sacrifice; and some who were prisoners of war, and in tribute to the men of Union County that died during the Civil War, this afternoon we honor two brothers from that war, who died together at Shiloh. Today, our "Voices From the Stone" are Samuel and Levi Millington, 46th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

SAMUEL AND LEVI MILLINGTON

Samuel and Levi were the oldest sons of Otis and Angeline Millington. They had an older sister, Juliet, and five younger brothers and sisters: Austin, Otis junior, Arthur, Susan and Margaret. Otis senior was born in Ohio, but as a hired farmhand, he moved about as a young man, living also in Indiana, where he married Angeline and Juliet was born; and Illinois, where Samuel was born. But by 1843, when Levi was born, the family was living back in Ohio. In 1850 they were living in Franklin County, and by 1860 the family was living in Darby Township.

When the war broke out, neither Otis, Samuel nor Levi enlisted right away. Most likely they felt the war would be over soon, as did most Americans both north and south. As the war dragged on into the fall and winter, perhaps in an effort to escape the monotony of their farmwork, and to experience some excitement, the decision was made to enlist in the Union Army. In October 1861 a new regiment, the 46th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, began forming in the town of Worthington. In November, Levi, at the age of 18, enlisted in Company G. He was soon followed by his 45 year old father Otis on December 13th, and finally Samuel, age 21, joined on December 31, 1861. In less than four months, Samuel and Levi would be dead.

In February the regiment reported to General William Tecumseh Sherman's newly formed Fifth Division, then headquartered at Paducah, Kentucky. The Fifth Division was informally known as "The Buckeye Division", as nine of its 13 regiments were from Ohio. However, eight of these regiments were so new that they had only received their weapons within the two weeks of reporting to the division. Sherman had been ordered to join General Ulysses Grant's Army of the Tennessee near the Forts Henry and Donelson, captured by the Army in early February. In early March Grant's Army, numbering almost 50,000 men, began moving south with the Fifth Division in the lead.

The Union Army objective was an obscure steamboat stop called Pittsburg Landing. It was about 20 miles from Corinth, Mississippi, an important railroad junction. Nearby was a small log church called "Shiloh" by the locals. Grant's army was to encamp there and wait for the Army of the Ohio, under command of General Don Carlos Buell, to join him before attacking Corinth.

At the same time, the Confederate Army, led by General Albert Sidney Johnston and Pierre Beauregard as second in command, had abandoned Bowling Green Kentucky and retreated south from Nashville after Forts Henry and Donelson fell. In preparation for an attempt to recapture Tennessee, the rebel army concentrated at the town of Corinth. By April 1, 1862, they numbered 40,000 men, and prepared to attack the Yankee army.

As the early days of April passed by, there were ominous rumblings of the coming storm; but the Union camps did not form a defensive line, and no entrenchments were made because nobody expected a fight at that location. General Grant did not think the Confederates would attack. He believed they would wait inside their fortifications around Corinth. By the evening of Saturday, April fifth, five of Grant's six divisions were camped in the area between the Shiloh church and the landing. The inexperienced divisions of Sherman and General Benjamin Prentiss were the most forward of the Army. Sherman's division was the first to occupy the area, and set up camps centered on the church, and formed the right wing of the Federal army. To Sherman's left was Prentiss' division.

On the night before the battle, the sound of splashing streams from a recent rain; and the joking and talk of thousands of soldiers were heard by Otis, Levi, Samuel, the other men of the 46th and the rest of the Army of the Tennessee. Only a few pickets were in place—despite a small skirmish taking place on April 4. That was one of the few signs warning of the impending Confederate attack.

However, after hearing about the sightings of Confederate soldiers in the area, a concerned commander from Prentiss's division sent out a patrol. Around midnight on April 5, he ordered five companies on a reconnaissance mission to where the sightings had been made. The patrol advanced from their camp down a farm road.

The Confederates were southwest of the patrol. Their commander had sent forward 280 skirmishers. Most of the Rebels were in the southeast corner of a cotton field, while two sets of pickets were positioned closer to the Union camps. Around 5:00 a.m., the Confederate pickets fired at the Yankees before returning to the battalion. When the Union troops advanced to within 200 yards of Confederate main force, the rebels opened fire. The battle began with these two small forces fighting for over an hour.

When General Johnston heard the shooting, he ordered a general attack, and the battle began in earnest around 5:30 a.m. On the Union side, the patrol commander sent a

message to the Brigade that he was being driven back by an enemy force of several thousand. Hearing the action, Prentiss soon learned that the patrol had been sent out without his authorization, and he accused the commander of provoking a major engagement in violation of Grant's orders. He quickly realized that he was facing a large Confederate force and sent reinforcements.

This patrol partially ruined the planned Confederate surprise attack and gave Union soldiers time, although brief, to prepare for battle. And although the patrol had alerted the Union army, some leaders still didn't believe they were under attack. Sherman was not convinced until he was slightly wounded and one of his orderlies shot dead, after a 7:00 a.m. ride to investigate the commotion.

After Johnston's order for the attack, it took an hour before all Confederate troops were ready. Another hour was lost skirmishing the advanced Union troops. The Confederate army alignment also reduced the attack's effectiveness. The attack went forward as a frontal assault. Their divisions were in one line that was nearly 3 miles wide. Johnston and Beauregard did not put more strength on their right flank, which meant they did not focus on their objective of turning the Union left. Then at about 7:30 a.m. two more corps were ordered forward on the left and right of the line, which only extended the line and diluted the effect of the additional attacking units. All this reduced the rebel advantage from the unexpected attack.

As the battle began, the First Brigade, Fifth Division. to which the 46th Ohio was assigned, was bivouacked with its right flank anchored on Owl Creek. The commander was Colonel John McDowell. The 46th was in the center of the line. At the first alarm, each regiment formed up on its colors, and at around 8 a.m. the brigade advanced to a hill overlooking the Shiloh Branch creek. After a brief skirmish the brigade was ordered to retire around 10 a.m. to a position on the Purdy road and link up with the Division's Fourth Brigade. As the brigade made this move it was discovered that the Confederates occupied the road between the two Union units. McDowell ordered his men forward and

they engaged the enemy and drove them back. They joined the Fourth Brigade, then about 11:30 a.m. they made contact with General John McClernand's First Division. The 46th Ohio was slightly to the rear of the new position and on the extreme right of the line.

By this time the Union Army had been pushed back about a mile from their original positions. So far, the 46th and the rest of the Brigade had not been heavily engaged. That was about to change. About noon, they launched a counterattack into the Confederate lines and at first were drove the rebels back. But the Confederates had more men available, and soon the Union troops had to fall back. This action lasted from about 12 o'clock until 1:30 p.m. The 46th Ohio suffered 246 casualties, including Samuel and Levi Millington.

According to the Union County newspaper of April 30, 1862: 'Two brothers named Samuel and Levi Millington, both from Union County, were killed at the battle of Pittsburg Landing. They were members of the 46th Ohio Regiment, and fell together within six feet of each other. The father of the two boys was in the same company and saw them fighting by his side. He narrowly escaped with his life." Samuel was shot through the heart, and Levi was shot in the head, falling dead across Samuel's body. Otis was wounded in the fight.

While the battle still raged, around 2:30 p.m. the brigade was relieved and fell back closer to Pittsburg Landing. They held a position in the final defensive line, but took no further part in the fighting. While the 46th was fighting on the Union right, part of Prentiss' division held a wooded area on the Union left for over five hours before being forced to surrender. The determination and fierceness which Prentiss' men exhibited in holding this area caused it to be called "The Hornet's Nest."

By evening the Union Army had been forced back almost three and a half miles from their original lines. But General Grant had arrived on the battlefield and helped organize a solid defensive position. The Confederate Army was disorganized by its success and could not continue the advance, and General Johnston had been killed.

However, General Beauregard and the Rebels thought they could continue the attack in the morning and capture Grant's army. But Grant was not one to give up, and he had fresh troops from General Buell's army arriving all night.

When his chief engineer, Colonel James McPherson, had asked if preparations for a retreat should be started, Grant replied, "Retreat? No! I propose to attack at daylight and whip them." That night, about midnight, General Sherman found Grant and said, "Well Grant, we've had the devil's own day, haven't we?" Grant replied, "Yes. Lick 'em tomorrow though."

As darkness fell a terrible night began. Through the night the moans and cries of the wounded could be heard across the battlefield. About 10 p.m. a rain began, then a thunderstorm. The flashes of lightning revealed a gruesome sight. Among the dead and wounded, hogs were eating the bodies. One Confederate soldier stated, "This night of horrors will haunt me to my grave."

On the 7th, Beauregard attempted to renew the rebel attack. But his army was too disorganized and battered to do much. General Grant, on the other hand, had fresh troops from the Army of the Ohio, along with his own Army of the Tennessee. Grant launched his attack just after daybreak.

The battle raged most of the day, with the Confederates holding their own despite losses from the previous day's fighting. Early in the afternoon, General Beauregard felt he was losing the battle, and that it would be wise to withdraw. The retreat was so skillfully done the Union Army did not realize it was happening for some time. As the Confederates slipped away, the Federals were too exhausted to pursue. On April 8, Beauregard led his troops on the muddy road back towards Corinth.

The news of the two terrible days of battle at Shiloh shocked the people of both the Union and Confederacy. Grant and Buell's armies totaled almost 67,000 men, and the Confederate forces had almost 45,000. On the Union side, 13,000 troops were casualties, with just under 1,800 killed outright, and another 8,400 wounded. This was about 20%

of the men involved. The southern casualty figures are at least 10,700, and possibly closer to 12,000. Of their troops 1,700 were killed, and another 8,000 wounded. The Confederate casualties totaled over 25%. Of the wounded, many would die later from infection.

There had never been any battle in America like it, and very few in the world. At Shiloh, over 23,000 men were either killed, wounded or captured. Compared to Shiloh, the first major battle of the war at Manassas was a mere skirmish. The first **four** major battles in the war had only resulted in a **combined** 12,000 casualties. The high number of casualties, and the fact that two relatively untried armies would stand toe to toe and slaughter each other convinced many, especially in the North, that their optimism the war would be over soon was not realistic.

The Union dead at Shiloh were buried near where they fell. Samuel and Levi were buried together with the rest of the dead from their company and regiment near the Shiloh church. Later, the men would be disinterred and moved to the Union cemetery of the Shiloh Military Park. For some reason, likely a typical Army SNAFU, Otis name was given to the body of Samuel. Currently at the cemetery grave 1614 is Levi Millington, and grave 1615 has the name Otis Millington. However, records are quite clear that, after his discharge, Otis lived in Union County. He passed away in December, 1885, and was buried in the Mount Herman cemetery in Dover Township.

Otis fought with the 46th Ohio through the siege and capture of Corinth. Once this had taken place, the regiment was sent to Memphis for garrison duty. Otis was discharged from the regiment in July, 1862, probably because of his age, and possibly suffering from post-traumatic stress, brought on by the horror of the battle of Shiloh and witnessing his two boys die within minutes of each other. Despite what had happened to Levi, Samuel and Otis, in January of 1864, the next son, Austin, enlisted in the 45th Ohio at the age of 16. He would have seen some brutal combat throughout Sherman's campaign to capture Atlanta, then in the battles of Franklin and Nashville in late 1864.

To finish his service, he was transferred to the 51st Ohio and mustered out in October 1865. He survived and returned to Union County after the war.

In January 1885, the Grand Army of the Republic, a post-Civil War organization for Union Veterans similar to the VFW, chartered the Millington Post, Number 506, named for the two brothers. Otis and Austin were charter members.

The Millington brothers, many of their comrades, and especially those whose names are on the monument from Union County, died in the war to preserve the Union, and in doing so, end the evil of slavery. Their deaths came early in the war, when the final outcome was still very much on doubt. But by their valor and sacrifice, and that of their fellow "Yankees", the Union prevailed and continued. We remember them, through these "Voices From the Stone."