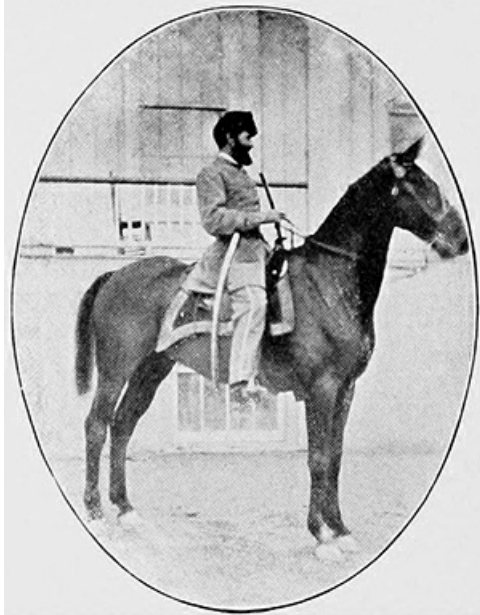


Woodfin, John W. ^[1]

Woodfin, John W.

by Alan C. Downs, 1996

9 Apr. 1818–20 Oct. 1863



Major John W. Woodfin astride his horse, "Prince Hal," from Clark's Regimental Histories. Image from Archive.org.

^[2]John W. Woodfin, lawyer and soldier, was born in the Mills River section of Buncombe County ^[3] that became Henderson County ^[4] in 1838, the son of John and Mary Grady Woodfin. Of his eleven brothers and sisters John was closest to his elder brother Nicholas W. ^[5], who rose to prominence in his own right as a state senator and lawyer.

Woodfin was admitted to the North Carolina bar in 1845 and opened a law office in Asheville. Two of the more notable students who studied under him were Augustus Summerfield Merrimon ^[6] and Zebulon Baird Vance ^[7]. Merrimon reported Woodfin to be on the whole very genial but a master of sarcasm and invective.

With the coming of the Civil War Woodfin left his practice and helped organize the Buncombe Rangers, in Asheville, of which he was elected captain on 16 May 1861. On 1 August his unit was sent to Camp Beauregard in Warren County ^[8] for cavalry drill and instruction. Here it was officially designated Company G, First Regiment, North Carolina Cavalry, with Woodfin as captain.

On 23 Sept. 1861 he was promoted to major and transferred to the field and staff of the Second Regiment of the cavalry. He spent much of the next year with the regiment harassing Major General Ambrose Everett Burnside's raiding parties in eastern North Carolina and picketing the roads around New Bern. On 6 Sept. 1862 Woodfin resigned from the regiment for reasons of poor health and returned to Asheville. There he organized and became major of a battalion composed primarily of conscripts and men who had formerly been exempted from service. This battalion was the basis of what would later become the Fourteenth Battalion, North Carolina Cavalry. Although never transferred to Confederate States service, Woodfin's battalion was mustered into state service and was in position to oppose a Federal force moving on Warm Springs in October 1863. At Warm Springs Woodfin was killed during a skirmish while leading a detachment from his battalion against the advancing Federals.

Surviving him was his widow, Mira McDowell Wood, formerly of Quaker Meadows Burke County ^[9]. She was the daughter of Captain Charles McDowell ^[10] and the sister of Eliza Grace McDowell, who married John's brother Nicholas. John W. Woodfin was buried in Riverside Cemetery, Asheville. In a letter written just before a battle and probated as a will, he left his property to his wife asking her to be generous to "our little niece Mira."

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"John W. Woodfin, Major, on his horse " Prince Hal" from whose back he was killed." Photograph *Histories of the several regiments and battalions from North Carolina, in the great war 1861-'65*: Volume 4. Goldsboro, N.C.: Nash Brothers Book and Job Printers. 1901. 109. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/histories-of-the-several-regiments-and-battalions-from-north-carolina-in-the-great-war-1861-65-vol.-4/3567028?item=3567746> [14] (accessed May 10, 2013).

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