

PAGE 10 -- SHELBY COUNTY HERALD -- Shelbyville, MO -- October 8, 2014
**150 Years: Remembering Worst Civil War
Battle on Missouri Soil**

Over the next few weeks, the Shelby County Herald will be remembering the horrific Centralia Battle in which many Shelby County men lost their lives. On September 13 and 14, there was a reenactment of the battle in Centralia. More information can be found at www.centraliabattlefield.com/#reenactment or at the Shelby County Historical Society.

By Corby Cochenour
Herald Reporter

Charlotte Hamilton Tannehill

When tragedy strikes, people handle it in many different ways. Sometimes tragedy happens again and again in that person's life and one has to wonder how they have the resolve to move forward. Charlotte Hamilton Tannehill faced many tragedies in her life, but the good Lord must have given her great strength and resolve, because in the midst of tragedy, she lived a happy life until the age of 100.

She was born in Ohio on February 20, 1840. When she was seventeen she married the hazel eyed, dark haired William T. Smith. When Smith was 30 he enlisted in the 39 Reg't Missouri Infantry and was mustered in on September 8, 1864. He was killed on September 27, 1864 during the Centralia Battle.

After he passed away, Charlotte was left a young widow with three small children. She worked as a school teacher in the rural schools of Knox and Shelby County. Dealing with her husband's death was taxing enough, but then she lost all three of her young children, within a week, to an epidemic, spotted fever.

The pain of losing her husband and all three of her children in a very short period of time had to be gut wrenching, but she continued on and in 1869, found happiness again with George Tannehill. They were blessed with three sons and two daughters, but at the time of her death in 1940, she had lost two of those children.

Charlotte also lost her second husband unexpectedly in 1895. *The Shelby County Herald* from that year had this to say about his death: The sudden death of Geo. W. Tannehill in this city last Sunday morning at 11:05

o'clock was a great shock to our people. He was up town Saturday and appeared to be in his usual health. Sunday morning he ate his breakfast at 7 o'clock, went out to assist the boys in feeding and at 7:45 he was assisting his wife in watering the flowers when he was suddenly attacked by a severe pain in the right temple. He called for camphor, which his wife rubbed on his head. He then called for hot water and while his wife went after the water, Mr. Tannehill fell from the chair to the floor.

Charlotte continued to persevere and enjoy her children. According to articles in the *Shelby County Herald*, over the years, she enjoyed reading and was the oldest person to attend the Old Settlers Reunion for several years. She also enjoyed visiting with her friends.

On February 21, 1940, the *Shelby County Herald* was dedicated to her as she celebrated her 100th birthday. In the paper were many birthday greetings letters she had received from President Roosevelt, Senator Harry S. Truman and many more White House staff. It appears, even with the tragedy that she suffered, that she was happy and well liked in the community. She passed away in June of that year.

Major AVE Johnston

Major Andrew Vern Emen Johnston, was not from Shelby County, but he had an impact on several Shelby County families. He was called AVE by his men and he was in charge of volunteer detachments of Union Army Companies A, G and H, of the newly formed 38th Missouri mounted Infantry Regiment.

Under his command, the regiment left Paris in the late evening of September 26, 1864 and on the next morning, after riding all night, they came upon a trail that they thought was that

of "Bloody" Bill Anderson and his guerrillas.

According to ancestry.com, when they were at Centralia, Johnston ordered his men to dismount and form a line of battle. Anderson's mounted forces charged them, carrying Colt revolvers. Johnston's men, carrying Enfield muskets, which was a heavy, muzzle loading single shot rifle, were defenseless, after one shot each, having no time to reload.

It was reported over time, from Frank James, that his younger brother, Jesse James, fired the shot that killed Major Johnston. Reports also stated that he was stripped, scalped and his nose broken. His remains were sent to his home near Huntington (Ralls County but near Marion County). Later his father's remains and his remains were moved to St. Jude's Cemetery in Monroe City. Other family members are also buried at the cemetery.

Johnston was not just the major who lead the Union soldiers to the Centralia battle, but he also left family members behind who grieved his death.

He was the fourth of 12 children born to Robert Johnston and Rebecca Vaneman Johnston. Rebecca's father and Johnston's grandfather, Andrew Vaneman, fought in the Revolutionary War.

According to the 1860 census, Johnston and his brother Robert were both listed as County School teachers. At the time, there was a Ralls County School at Huntington.

Johnston's younger brother, Robert was a private in Co A for six months and Fagg's 5th Regiment Militia Union for six months. Joseph Johnston served as a private in Company B, 53rd Regiment E. M.M., Union.

Some people probably called Johnston brave and chivalrous for his actions, while others may have thought he made very poor decisions leading to the massacre in Centralia. But, Johnston brutally lost his life in the battle along with the men he led to battle. It was a time of war and tough decisions were made that ultimately cost loss of life and left family members at home picking up the pieces of their shattered lives.