

CHAPTER I

FALL IN

On April 12, 1861, 4:30 AM, the first shell fired in anger shrieked over the water, bursting over Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. The Civil War had begun. This event would have serious effects on the little community of Bowdon located in the very western part of the state of Georgia in Carroll County.

This small hamlet only a few years ago was home to the Creek Indians who, as late as 1835, still occupied the eastern part of Alabama which is approximately three miles to the west. Carroll County, Georgia itself was created in 1826, only 35 years before this shot, heard around the world, was fired and the Alabama counties were not ceded from the Creeks until 1832.

In 1853 Nathaniel Shelnett along with several other men of the area decided that the town should be located at its present location where the two main roads cross. The village was originally named Cerro Gordo honoring the Mexican War battle that 18 Bowdon area men fought in and were victorious as a part of Captain William Wofford's, of Cassville, cavalry company. The town name was quickly changed from Cerro Gordo to Bowdon. This was only about eight years or so before this 1861 bombardment. Mr. Shelnett's son Bryan would become an original member of Company B and unfortunately one of the many who would not survive the war.

There were already a couple of stores located at the crossroads where the town would be laid out and probably three or four hundred people lived within a mile or two of the location.

By 1855 Bowdon would be proud of its three churches, one of which was the Baptist, located about two miles south of the crossroads, and which was founded in 1835. The two others were the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Protestant, the latter being located about a half mile or so west of the crossroads and which would figure prominently in the founding of an educational institution nearby.

One of the persons responsible for the founding of the Baptist Church at Eden, the name of the community south of town where the Church was located, was the Reverend James Barrow. James came to Carroll County to live on land drawn in the land lottery by "orphans of Moses Barrow", a Revolutionary War soldier from North Carolina who had moved to Washington County, Georgia in the late 1700's and died there on December 28, 1801 when the future Reverend James was only three days old. James became a mechanic by trade; however, because of what was known as rheumatism in those days, was unable to perform heavy physical work and therefore took up preaching the gospel full time. His hands were badly crippled and he had to walk with the aid of crutches. He had to be helped on and off his horse that he rode on his rounds around his circuit through the backwoods of Alabama.

The two land lots that the orphans drew were located in the present Smithfield and Jake communities north of Bowdon. Either by a trade or purchase, the Reverend James also obtained a lot in the future town of Bowdon which lay about midway between the crossroads and the Methodist Protestant Church. A portion of this land remains in the Barrow family today.

James was a part-time preacher even before he became physically incapacitated and well before 1861, he was a full-time circuit-riding Missionary Baptist gospel spreader. His circuit took him many miles into Alabama. In fact, we have one newspaper article announcing that he would preach in Tuskegee, Alabama which is approximately 150 miles from Bowdon.

The Reverend James and his wife "Lucy" had three sons and four daughters and in 1861 the two youngest children, 19-year-old William and 16-year-old James R., Jr., were living at home. His oldest son, John, had married a daughter of Gabriel Smith who lived near the Smithfield land that had been drawn by the orphans

while two of his daughters had married sons of Gabriel. John, wife Martha and two small children lived on the Smithfield property.

The house in which the Reverend James and Lucy lived was about where the present "Barrow House" in Bowdon stands and I believe that it must have been he who planted the oak trees on the lot, one of which survives today.

The area around Bowdon was populated in most part by small farmers with there being very few slaveholders. Some reports state that there were less than 1,000 slaves, many of these being children, belonging to around 350 slave owners in the entire county and most of these were on the larger farms or plantations near the Chattahoochee River in the southeastern part of the county where the land was more fertile and the farms larger. The population also included 13 free blacks, all mulattoes, with two listed living in Bowdon, with most of them living around the county seat of Carrollton which is about 10 miles to the east. Less than 15% of the population of Carroll County was black. We know that the Reverend James did not own slaves; however, two of his sons, John who was married and who was farming the Smithfield land and 19 year old William who was living at home are each listed in the 1860 Census, Schedule II, as owning one slave each. Why William would be listed as the owner of a slave we do not know. Possibly these two were inherited by the Rev. James as his father, Moses, was a large land holder in Washington County, Ga. owning a number of slaves and these two could have remained in the family over the years and ownership was passed on to his sons? To further confuse the issue, the 1860 census of Bowdon Village does not show a servant living in the James Barrow household. For a listing of the members of Company B or their families who owned slaves see Appendix C.

These early settlers of Carroll County and northwest Georgia were Unionists or, at least, they were against dissolving the Union. Most small backwoods farmers in north Georgia were of this leaning. In fact, Carroll County's three delegates to the Secession Convention in Milledgeville, Georgia on January 19, 1861 each cast their vote not to secede. These delegates later voted for secession in order to make Georgia's decision to leave the Union unanimous. Once the fat was in the fire, the people of Bowdon and Carroll County were fiercely pro-secession and backed this decision with their sons and husbands plus what little worldly goods they possessed.

The Bowdon area supplied at least three companies, or partial companies, to the Confederate armies and Carroll County supplied at least nine more companies plus several partial companies. Many Bowdon area men served in units other than these three companies and many Carroll County men served in other numerous organizations.

Around 1854, an educational facility known as the "Bowdon Academy" was established in Bowdon and Charles A. McDaniel would come there in 1855 to be an instructor as well as pastor of the nearby Methodist Protestant Church where two of his older brothers, George and John, were members. He was 25 years of age and was an honor graduate of Oxford College which would become Emory University. He was an outstanding student and a devout Christian.(1) Soon after he finished his studies at Emory where he concentrated on the classics and theology, he accepted a teaching position at the Perry, Georgia high school where he remained for a year. At the end of the year he married Victoria Hines whom he had met while a junior at Oxford. When Professor Fitts, who had founded the academy in a small two-room building located "near the spring", left to enter medical school in 1856, McDaniel was left to run the school alone. While he was teaching at Perry he had made a good friend, fellow teacher John Manley Richardson. Richardson had attended the South Carolina Military Institute (The Citadel) where he made a good record. He then attended the University of Virginia where he was an outstanding engineering student. McDaniel convinced Richardson to join him at the Bowdon Academy and was successful in doing so in May, 1856.(2)

These two men turned the Academy, or Seminary as it was sometimes called, into "The Bowdon Collegiate Institute" for young men alone, its state charter being issued in 1857. Classes were held in two new large

one-room buildings located near the old building at the spring. The school evidently was almost an immediate success for in 1859 there were 77 students enrolled. This spring was, and still exists on land which was later owned by my grandfather, J. W. Barrow, a grandson of the Reverend James. After this original two-room building was no longer used as a school, it, or the remains of it, was converted into a tenant house where cooks and housekeepers for my grandmother, "Miss Ellen", of "The Barrow House" lived. This old building was still standing during World War II when I left Bowdon to join the navy. When I was young, we boys used the branch below the spring for our "wash hole". After my grandfather's death, the land was sold and a fine house is now located on the original Institute site near the old spring.

A new building was completed in 1859 which was located a short distance "up the hill" from the first buildings and on the site of the present Bowdon High School. The two old "new" buildings were sold and moved off the property and converted into houses. This building was replaced by a "modern" two-story brick building in 1901 and became Bowdon College. When the college closed in 1936, this building became Bowdon High School from which my wife and I graduated in 1943.

McDaniel taught religion, history and the classical subjects while Richardson taught mathematics, science and engineering and both men were staunch Masons. Richardson's military training at The Citadel prompted him to desire to train the "cadets" at the school in military drills. In 1857, he asked the State Legislature to allow him to instruct the students in military drill and tactics. The State agreed and furnished him with 100 muskets and 100 light cavalry swords.(3) With this type of training and drilling the school became the first in the state to offer what we today would call ROTC although there were several strictly military schools located in the state. It would be only a short time before the students would be putting what they had learned from Professor Richardson to very good use.

The 1860 Census shows the Village of Bowdon with a population of 304 residents of 50 families. There were some boarding students included in the count. The village boasted ten stores, two livery stables, two tan yards and two blacksmith shops. Unfortunately during 1860 about three fourths of the stores were destroyed by a fire.

Some accounts state that in May, 1861 there were 140 "cadets" enrolled. Although military training was not a requirement, all the students, by some reports, were enrolled in it. I am sure that great many of those attending the school were too young for military service; however, a large number of the students would become a soldier for the South. Quite a number were boarding students from areas outside Bowdon and would serve with units recruited closer to their homes.

With the shot fired over Fort Sumter in April, of course tremendous excitement was experienced in Bowdon as it was throughout Dixie. Men from the community began to "sign up" and leave with various units.

Professor Richardson had left Bowdon in 1860 to accept a professorship in a North Carolina military academy. He volunteered immediately after Fort Sumter and was assigned to the 11th North Carolina Infantry serving at First Manassas and was later disabled by disease and was discharged. In 1864, he reentered the service and was seriously wounded, losing a leg at Winchester during General Early's Washington Campaign of 1864.(4)

Professor McDaniel remained at the college and in the years that he had been in Bowdon, had become the father of three children, a girl and two boys, George and Charles II, and evidently had become quite prosperous as he is listed as owning about 450 acres of land and the two slaves, probably house servants or help for the academy.(5)

It was decided to move up graduation at the Bowdon Collegiate Institute from July, 1861 to May in order that the students could enlist. I am sure that a great many of those attending the school were too young for military service; however, a large number of the students would become a soldier for the South.

After graduation, during June and July, Professor McDaniel drilled the cadets, including James Barrow and other local men and boys, having formed a company of infantry. He had requested Governor Brown to accept this company into the Confederate service and to furnish them with uniforms and arms but unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, so many Georgia units were being formed and sent off to Virginia that there was not room for these Bowdon boys and they would have to wait their turn.

At the same time, the Reverend James' oldest son, John, and one of his Smith brothers-in-law had left together and joined another Georgia unit. Soon, two more of the daughters' husbands were signed up and gone. The Reverend James and "Lucy" would have all three of their sons and three of their sons-in-law in the Confederate army before the end of the year. One son and two sons-in-law would never return from the war.

I have read numerous accounts that Company B of Cobb's Legion was made up entirely of cadets from the Bowdon Collegiate Institute and that all of the students volunteered for this unit.(6) This is not the case as, for instance, only one of the seven graduating seniors, William Walker McDaniel, who was a nephew of Charles A. McDaniel and whose home was in Texasville, Alabama, became a member of what was to become Company B, The Bowdon Volunteers. Many other cadets were too young to serve or joined other units. Students were accepted at 14 years of age so most of those enrolled were younger boys with few upper classmen.

A company during the Civil War was ideally 100 men and officers. I have found at least 96 original members of the company and there could possibly be more. A total of 141-144 men would eventually serve in Company B between July, 1861 at Bowdon and a day in April, 1865 at a little town in Virginia, Appomattox Court House.

I am sure there were a number of students such as Jimmy Barrow, Bryan Shelnett, Young A. Cole, William McDaniel and Edward H. Hines, who was the brother of Charles McDaniel's wife, Victoria, on the muster roll as many of the casualties listed "no wife or child" indicating young, unmarried men. Death claims were often filed by fathers; however, many claims were filed by wives. Many of the men were older, married men; for instance, farmer John Miles had married in 1851 and was 30 years old with several children including twin boys, Robert Slowman was a 36-year-old farmer who had been married for 12 years and had four children ages one through nine years and William Hatfield was a 36 year old miller with four children when they signed up with the original company in July, 1861. John King, a 26-year-old carpenter was married in 1859, R. H. Hand was a 36-year-old carpenter with 6 children and many more of the men had children. Other than students, there were numerous occupations represented; for instance, Joseph Barnett was a blacksmith, Sam Loveless was a shoemaker, Patrick Spencer was a wagon maker, William Barrow was a mechanic, William Morris was a carpenter and James Spruill was a teamster. William Stephenson; George, James and William Morris; Thomas Rice; Joseph Parker; the three Thornton boys and the majority of the other recruits were farmers. In addition to Charles McDaniel, there were at least two other preachers in the company; Moses Westbrook and James Brown. There probably was at least one father-son combination as we believe that 36-year-old R.H. Hand was the father of 17-year-old William H. (A.?) Hand and there were numerous same last names listed. For instance, there were six men with the last name of Morris who served in Company B at one time or another. We do know for a fact that there were several brother combinations such as James R. and William Barrow; Joshua and Thomas McBurnett; Semour and Tom Beck; James, John and William Eason; George, John and James Thornton and others. The mystery is why would older men such as Slowman, Hand, Hatfield, Westbrook and Miles enlist at this early stage of the war leaving families behind to suffer the hardships of the war at home? These men certainly did not have to go and probably some, such as Hatfield as a miller, would have never been drafted. Young boys such as Jimmy Barrow with no family responsibilities were understandably anxious to get away from home to see the world and fight the Yankees but how could these older men with families and established occupations justify going and leaving their families?