

I would like to say that Charles N. Horton was born on a certain day of a certain month in a certain year but I can't. Not with any degree of certainty, that is. Many different sources were consulted in the attempt to find out his date of birth (DOB). However, none of them seemed to agree on what it was. So, the best that could be done was to share what the records state.

One source said that Charles was born the second day of January in 1847 in Sudbury, Vermont. ^[1] The 1850 Federal Census listed him as being age four when it was taken. That would make Charles' DOB about 1846. ^[2] Ten years later, the 1860 Federal Census noted he was born circa 1845 and he was fifteen at the time. ^[3] I thought perhaps his enlistment papers would shed some light on his birthday. It didn't. Charles said he was eighteen (actually eighteen and one month) when he signed up on December 21, 1863. In that case, he would have been born in 1845 and would have been of lawful age to enlist without parental consent. Yet his father, John, filled out and signed the "Consent In Case Of Minor" form on the enlistment papers. ^[4] Now, if we weren't confused enough, the 1880 Federal Census taker recorded that Charles was thirty-three years old which, if accurate, would put his birthday in 1847. ^[5] Record keeping in the nineteenth century was very informal, especially in the civilian sector. The military was much better at it. It was meticulously done by hand when done at all. And it was usually done by people who were semi-literate. It was not unusual to see creative variations in spelling and accuracy of details (or even lack thereof). So, there are other facts about Charles' life that are not so much in dispute.

Whatever month, day and year he was born, his birthplace was Sudbury, Vermont. His father was John Horton and his mother was Sarah Horton. He had two siblings: Eugene and Harriet. His father worked as a marble polisher, maybe at Proctor, Vermont. That might explain why there were six male laborers and one fifty year old woman living in the Horton home in 1850. ^[6] By 1860, the Sudbury family only included the original Horton clan. John was now farming with the help of his twenty-one year old son, Eugene. Sarah kept house and her eighteen year old daughter, Harriet, was at home, presumably helping her mother with household chores. Fifteen year old Charles was attending school.

And there was one more household member - an eighty-one year old grandma who was noted as being worth \$1000!^[7]

Being of lawful age or not apparently made no difference to the self-proclaimed eighteen year old when it came to joining up in the Union Army. Standing five feet seven inches in height, with hazel eyes, dark hair and light complexion, Charles signed his enrollment papers at Rutland on December 21, 1863 for a term of three years.^[8] He was assigned to the Fifth Regiment Vermont Inf., Co. H. A bounty of \$302 was due him. On signing, he received \$25 of it. In January, 1864, Charles received a second installment of \$35 leaving him a balance due of \$242.^[9] That might have been one of the last positive moments in young Charles' life in uniform.

Ten months after enlisting, Charles and the Fifth Vermont found themselves embroiled in the Battle of Cedar Creek, Virginia. This was not the Fifth's first combat experience. They had been involved in a smaller event on June 5, 1863. The Union Corps of Engineers had been ordered to lay a pontoon bridge at Franklin's Crossing on the Rappahannock River two miles downriver from Fredericksburg. The crossing was within range of a heavily defended Confederate redoubt. Even though Union batteries blanketed the area of the enemy fortification with artillery fire, it did not prevent Confederate riflemen from hitting their targets in blue as the engineers tried to complete the bridge. The Fifth Vermont and the Twenty-sixth New Jersey were ordered to cross the river in pontoon boats and silence the enemy sharpshooters. They executed their amphibious landing and pushed the Confederates back far enough for the engineers to complete their pontoon bridge.^[10]

The October 19, 1863 Battle of Cedar Creek was a much larger affair. It involved some 40,000 Union troops opposed to 17,000 Confederates.^[11] In size and severity, this engagement was compared to Third Winchester. It was the last major battle of General Sherman's Valley Campaign. The surprise Confederate attack at Cedar Creek was considered one of the most daring of its kind. The early morning action caught the Federal troops completely by surprise, so much so that it sent the drowsy Yanks fleeing

from their camps with very little resistance. If the hungry and poorly clothed Rebels had not stopped to plunder the Union camps, they might have won a complete and decisive victory. As it was, their halt to feed and cloth themselves (and collect souvenirs) gave General Sheridan time to gather and rally his men. They organized and carried out a counter attack that successfully drove the Confederates back to the position they had started from. The back and forth action caused substantial casualties - Union/ 5,655 in killed-wounded-missing and Confederate/ 2,910 in killed-wounded-missing. ^[12] The Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Vermont Infantry and the Eleventh Heavy Artillery made up the Second Brigade, Second Division of the VI Corps at Cedar Creek. Its losses amounted to: Killed - 34; Wounded - 209; Missing - 41 totaling 284 casualties. ^[13]

Among the 209 wounded was Charles N. Horton. He had received a severe arm wound which put him into the South Street USA General Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was admitted October 24, 1864, five days after the action at Cedar Creek. ^[14] Most likely, it was during those five days that a surgeon amputated the lower third of Charles' left arm. In fact, the records show that it was most likely done by Surg. E. Phillips of the Sixth Vermont in the field hospital at Cedar Creek. ^[15] I doubt he was cheered up much by the \$120 bounty money he received in February of 1865 or by the fact that he was still owed \$180. ^[16] Charles remained at the General Hospital in Philadelphia until May 26, 1865 when he was discharged "...by reason of amputation of left arm necessitated by a gunshot wound rec'd in action at Cedar Creek, Va. Oct. 19 '64. Disability one half..." ^[17] On Charles' "Certificate of Disability For Discharge", it states he "...Is fit to re-enlist in VR Corps...." ^[18] There is no evidence that Charles even ever considered re-enlisting. He obviously qualified for a disability pension which he applied for on June 29, 1865. Later, his widow, Ione, also applied to the Government for a pension which was granted May 12, 1898. ^[19]

There was little information about where Charles went and what he did for a living immediately after he was discharged. He didn't resurface, in the public records at least, until September 6, 1875 when he married for the first time at the age of twenty-eight. His bride

was Ione E. Johnson from Leicester. Charles was making a living as a painter. ^[20] In 1880, he and Ione are living in Leicester with their two children - John, age two and Horton, age one month. The Federal Census noted that he had lost his left arm. It also does not state what he did to support himself and his family. ^[21] By the time of his death on April 22, 1898, Charles was living in Bennington at the Soldiers' Home even though he was still married and Ione, his wife, was still alive. According to his Death Certificate, he died of Bright's Disease, an inflammation of the kidneys. ^[22]

NOTES

1. Vermont In The Civil War.org/Cemetery/Leicester/Brookside Cemetery/Individual Record/Vitals.
2. Ancestry.com, 1850 United States Federal Census under Charles Horton.
3. Ibid, 1860 United States Federal Census under Chas M. Horton.
4. Op cit, 1880 United States Federal Census under Charles N. Horton.
5. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 25, image 311410742. Herein referred to as Compiled Service Records....
6. Ancestry.com, 1850 United States Federal Census under Charles Horton.
7. Ibid, 1860 United States Federal Census under Chas M. Horton.
8. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 3, image 311410720.
9. Ibid, Compiled Service Records..., pp. 4-5, images 311410721 and 311410722.
10. Civil War Times, October 2016, "One Last River To Cross" by Steven Trent Smith, p. 40.
11. Angelfire.com/VAS/valley war/battle/cedar creek.
12. Ibid, The Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley, "Battle of Cedar Creek (19 October 1864).
13. Op cit, "Order of Battle for the Battle of Cedar Creek".
14. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 11, image 311410728.
15. Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion, 1861-65, Vol. II, Section IV, p. 743.
16. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 12, image 311410729.
17. Ibid, Compiled Service Records..., pp. 19-20, images 311410736 and 311410737.
18. Op cit, Compiled Service Records..., p. 22, image 311410739.
19. Ancestry.com, U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Charles N. Horton.
20. Ibid, Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908.
21. Op cit, 1880 United States Federal Census under Charles N. Horton.
22. Op cit, Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908.