This paper included appendix material (such as photocopies of letters, diary entries, photos, or legal documents) that were not digitized. Researchers are welcome to visit the Lane Library Special Collections division to read such appendix material on site.

WILLIAM PHILIP SCHIRM
1836 - 1896

BY:
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HISTORY 500
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NOVEMBER 16, 1988

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Abstract of the Life of William Philip Schirm

William Philip Schirm was born on December 10, 1836 in Nassau a/d Lahn, Germany and he died on May 31, 1896. Brave soldier, father of five, devoted husband, and dedicated business man. William P. Schirm immigrated to America in 1857 from Nassau, Germany and settled in Georgia. His early days in America are not well documented but on December 13, 1864 while helping to defend Fort McAllister, his Commanding Officer had this to say about Lt. Schirm: "Lt. Schirm fought until the enemy entered the fort, and notwithstanding a wound in the head, gallantly remained at his post, discharging his duties with coolness and efficiency worthy of commendation." The Savannah Benevolent Association wrote upon his death that "the life has been active, correct, exemplary, and consistent, and the service well-timed, practical, and useful." William P. Schirm was a man of honor, dedication, and trust.
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>December 13, 1864</td>
<td>William Philip Schirm, 1st Lieutenant is introduced to his reading in his finest hour. During the Battle for Fort McAllister, Lt. Schirm distinguished himself by his conspicuous valor and dedication to duty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10, 1836</td>
<td>William P. Schirm born in Nassau a/d Lahn, near Berlin, Germany. His early life in Germany is not well documented.</td>
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<td>1857</td>
<td>William P. Schirm's arrival in America. His early life in Georgia is not well documented however some leads were discovered.</td>
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<td>1862 - 1865</td>
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<td>November 3, 1869</td>
<td>His marriage to Mary Helen Williams and the story of her illness and of her death while visiting Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20, 1876</td>
<td>His marriage to Ellen M. Lovell. They had four children and the oldest, Willie, died when he was only 21 months old. The remaining three children lived and died in Savannah.</td>
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A little history of the Edward Lovell family.

His professional career with the firm of
Willcox and Gibbs Guano Company. His
association with Camp No. 756 Confederate
Veterans and the Savannah Benevolent
Association. His professional association
with the Chatham Real Estate & Improvement
Company.

May 31, 1896

William Philip Schirm's death and his legacy.
It may be a bit unorthodox, but I will begin the story, or as much of it what is known to me, of the life of William P. Schirm, at approximately the mid-point of his life. Fort McAllister was an important position to the Confederate forces because it helped to protect the city and the Port of Savannah. During 1863, several unsuccessful attempts had been made to capture Fort McAllister. However, McAllister was not again molested for almost twenty-one months. Late in 1864, it came back into the spotlight, when General Sherman's army of 60,000 men reached the area. Fort McAllister was important to the union forces in the siege of Savannah; as long as the fort dominated the Ogeechee River, Sherman's troops were unable to obtain supplies from the union vessels waiting offshore.

On the morning of December 13, 1864, final preparations were made to assault Fort McAllister. The assault force chosen wash Sherman's old 2nd Division of the XV Corps, now commanded by General William B. Hazen. These veterans fought with Sherman at Shiloh and Vicksburg, and his confidence in them was complete.1 Because of the difficult terrain, it took several hours to deploy nine regiments that General Hazen used to assault the fort later than afternoon.

Inside this besieged fort, we find 1st Lieutenant William P. Schirm going about his duties and preparing his men for the assault that will be coming soon. Like any soldier in war, Lieutenant Schirm has those feelings in his stomach of fear, anxiety, valor, and apprehension, as he awaits the assault. Just across the Ogeechee River, from the top of Cheves' rice
mill, General Sherman was watching and waiting for the final assault. The sun was now fast going down behind a grove of water-oaks, and as his last rays gilded the earth, all eyes once more turned to the rebel fort. Suddenly, white puffs of smoke shot out from the thick woods surrounding Fort McAllister. General Hazen was closing in, ready for the final rush of his columns directly upon the fort. A warning answer came from the fort in the rear of heavy artillery, and so the battle opened.2

After a fierce assault, lasting about fifteen minutes, McAllister fell. Desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place within the fort. The garrison of 230 men, commanded by Major George W. Anderson was overpowered; but it never surrendered. Major Anderson said of Lieutenant Schirm in his official report:

"Lieutenant William P. Schirm fought until the enemy entered the fort, and not withstanding a wound in the head, gallantly remained at his post, discharging his duties with a coolness and efficiency worthy of all commendation."3

General Hazen, in his official report of the capture of Fort McAllister, had this to say:

"We fought the garrison through the fort to their bombproofs, from which they still fought, and only succumbed as each man was individually overpowered."4

During my research, the first mention of William P. Schirm came from a record found at the Georgia Historical Society, which was a muster and payroll of 3rd Georgia Battalion, Cavalary
(Wayne Rangers). In this document, the following information
pertaining to William P. Schirm was recorded:

NAME: William P. Schirm
UNIT: Company C, Cavalary
RANK: 1st Sergeant
COMPANY COMMANDER: Captain J. S. HIGGINS
BATTALION COMMANDER: LTC Duncan L. Clinch
ENLISTED: Feb. 27, 1862
BY WHOM: T. S. Hopkins
PERIOD FOR: War
PAY: $20.00 per month

The rank of 1st Sergeant may be a mistake, but the more
plausible explanation is that he was promoted to Lieutenant
after he was assigned to Troop H, Georgia Cavalary, Clinch Light
Battery.

Lieutenant Schirm was taken prisoner on December 13, 1864,
and was in prison at Hilton Head and Washington, and was released
on June 6, 1865, at the close of the hostilities. I was not
able to find any documents pertaining to the period of his
captivity, and the above information was obtained from a
secondary source.

I would now like to take you back in time to the early
life of William P. Schirm. I was able to obtain copies of some
letters from William P. Schirm's living relative, that gave
me some insight into his early life.

William Philip Schirm, the son of Karl and Rebecca Schirm,
was born on December 10, 1836, in Nassau a/d Lahn. After his
father died, year unknown to this researcher, his mother sold her property in Hessen Nassau, and went to live with her daughter Katherina's family in Obernhof. William Schirm came to America in 1857. A search of the passenger and immigration lists was conducted in order to try and discover which ship William P. Schirm came to America in, and which port he arrived at in America. My search revealed three Schirm's as arriving in Philadelphia, and they were Johan Heinrich, Johann Foglin, and Johann Heinrich, but no William Philips. I am sure the record of William P. Schirm's arrival is out there somewhere, but I was unable to find it during my limited research for this project. The second letter in the collection cited above, written by Mrs. N. S. Orr (Nellie Schirm), to Evola (Bo) Schirm, also provides some insight into the early life of William P. Schirm in America. This letter indicates that William Schirm first married a lady named Smith (first name not given), a teacher. It indicates that Mr. Schirm also first taught in Beaufort on first coming to America. This Miss Smith was the mother of Katrina A. Schirm (sister Katie), it appears from this letter, that the Smith lady (William P., wife, and Katrina, mother) died a short time after their marriage and the birth of Katrina. I was not able to find any further information on the Smith lady, Katrina, nor records of William P. Schirm as a school teacher. The secondary source that I mentioned earlier states, that William was a young man of excellent education and had served in the German Army. It further states that his occupation was that of teacher, and he was identified
with a private institution in north Georgia of some repute, where he was known as an educator of exceptional ability. Some well known citizens of Savannah and other Georgia cities were his pupils in those early days. 9

The next sequence of William P. Schirm's life that I will discuss will be his marriage to Mary Helen Williams on November 3, 1869. It appears from the letter written by Mrs. N. S. Orr (Nellie Schirm) to Evola (Bo) Schirm that Mr. Schirm and his daughter Katrina (little Katie) came to live with the Thomas F. Williams family in Savannah sometime before his marriage to Mary Helen Williams. In a research paper by Peter L. Scardino, M. D., published in January 1979, I was able to obtain information about Mary Helen and William P. Schirm. From the time Mary was 18, she had experience dull pains in the area of her left kidney. By the age of 24 she suffered six to eight hours of renal colic every five to six weeks. She wed William P. Schirm on November 3, 1869. During the first twenty-four months of her marriage, she became pregnant at least twice, but each was interrupted during renal colic attacks. Because of her failing health, her husband and her family arranged a trip to the "old country", Germany to "build her up". The trip to Germany was made possible because William Schirm was employed by the Savannah firm of Wilcox-Gibbs, whose shipping business included merchandise to and from Germany. During her stay in Obernhof, Mary Helen had a severe episode and the Schirm family decided to place her in the hands of Doctor Gustov Simon of the University of Heidelberg. On August 2, 1871, Doctor Simon
first saw Mary Helen as a patient. After carefully examining
her, Simon decided to perform a Nephrectomy on Mary Helen on
August 8, 1871. Since this was to be only the first nephrectomy
for kidney stones, a large audience of students, physicians,
and professors gathered in the surgical amphitheater in
Heidelberg University to watch the historic event. Twenty-one
days after the operation, Mary Helen began to experience chills
and fever. After ten days of nausea, chills, fever, and rapid
pulse, Mary Helen died on September 7th, at 8:00 a.m., thirty-one
days after her historic surgery. William came back to Germany
and brought little Katie back to Savannah. Mary Helen Williams
Schirm is buried on German soil in the village of Obernhof.

On January 20, 1876, William Schirm married Ellen M. Lovell.
Her parents were Edward and Mary (Bates) Lovell. Edward Lovell
came to Savannah in the fall of 1835 and worked at his trade
as a gun-maker. From this modest beginning, Edward Lovell built
a business that extended throughout the states of South Carolina,
Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Edward Lovell owned numerous
properties in Savannah and was considered a man of considerable
wealth. At the time of his death Edward Lovell's estate was
valued at sixty thousand dollars (value of real estate and his
personal estate).

William and Ellen lived at 172 Jones Street. William
was a bookkeeper for the firm of Willcox and Gibbes Guano
Company. In 1889, the family moved to 87 Bolton Street. It
was at this location where William died on the evening of
31 May 1896 of a heart attack. The Schirm's had four children.
Willie was born in April 1879 but died on February 18, 1881. I was not able to find the cause of his early death. Edward Lovell was his oldest son and was born on 27 June 1877 and died on November 30, 1940. Robert Francis was born on October 4, 1883 and died on March 25, 1934. Elizabeth (Nellie Mary) was born July 14, 1880 and died July 29, 1954. In the Last Will and Testament of William Philip Schirm he left a life insurance policy in the Manhattan Life Insurance Company of New York in the amount of $825.00 to his three children. There was also interest on this policy of $625.00. William who left bonds in the value of $1,250.00. His wife, Ellen M. Schirm, was appointed guardian of the estate for the minor children. At the time of his death, William was a director in the Chatham Real Estate and Improvement Company and a director of the Savannah Benevolent Association. He was also a member of the Confederate Veterans Association; the Savannah Cadets; and the German Volunteers. He was a prominent member and a deacon of the First Presbyterian Church. Upon his death this is what the Savannah Benevolent Association had to say about William Philip Schirm:

"The life he led and the service he performed are all legacies he could bequeath to us who remain,....that the life has been active, correct, exemplary, and consistent, and the service well-timed, practical, and useful, we.... worth."

William P. Schirm was a man who had many friends, a man who loved his family and who fought for his adopted country
during a critical period of our nations history. He will always be remembered as a man who asked "not what you can do for me, but what can I do for you"

William Philip Schirm is buried in Bonaventure Cemetery, Lot 48, Section A, Savannah, Georgia. Also buried in this family plot are his wife Ellen Lovell (1849-1947) under the same marker as William. His four children from his marriage to Ellen and two-grandchildren are also buried in this same family plot.

EPILOGUE

In order to assist any other researcher who may want to conduct additional research into the life of William Philip Schirm I will attempt to reconstruct my research procedure and steps. Most of my research was conducted at the Georgia Historical Society.

My first step was to make a personal visit to Port McAllister, so that I could actually walk the ground and get a feel for the battle that took place there on December 13, 1864. After this there were trips to the Chatham County Court to research the Probate Court Records and the Superior Court. Also several trips to the Savannah Public Library where Census records were checked. The following documents, in addition to those found in my Bibliography and End Notes, were also researched. Some had limited information but most had nothing I could use for my research project. Those documents are as follows:

(1) Chatham County Deed Books - Chatham County Superior Court (3rd Floor) Savannah, Georgia.
(2) City Directories - City of Savannah Georgia, 1867 through 1897. These directories are located at the Savannah Historical Society.

(3) Georgia Census - Chatham County for the years 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1890, located at the Georgia Historical Society and Savannah Public Library.

(4) Savannah Newspaper Digest and other Savannah newspaper files for selected dates covering the years 1850 through 1900. These are located at the Savannah Historical Society.

(5) The South Georgia Rebels, Alton J. Murray, P. O. Box 643, St. Marys, Georgia 31558 (located SHS).

(6) True wartime experiences of the 26th Regiment Georgia Volunteer Infantry (Lawton - Gordon - Evans Brigade) located SHS.

(7) History of Savannah and South Georgia, William Harden, Cherokee Publishing Company, Atlanta (Located SHS).

(8) Social Directory (1902), 1st Edition, Margaret Stilea and Emma Hamilton Bulloch, Morning News Print, Savannah, Georgia (located Lane Library, ASC).

(9) Historical Record of the City of Savannah F.O. Lee and J.L. Agnes, J.H. Estill, Savannah 1869 (Located SHS).

(10) Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, Volume 3 (O-Z), Editor William Filby, Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan, Located at GHS.

APPENDIX A:

This copy was provided by a living relative of William P. Schirm.

The following is taken from genealogy of the Lovell family. Bess Stanley did the research many years ago.

William Philip Schirm was born in Schwenkfehn, Prussia, on Dec. 10, 1830, d. Savannah, Ga., May 31st, 1891.

After his father died his mother sold her property in Hauen-Nassau and went to live with her daughter Katharina's family in Brunhofs. There she and her two daughters Caroline and Catharina died. Catharina's husband and two daughters still lived there in 1912.

In 1912 Karl Lotz, the son of Catharina, was school master in Wiesbaden. W.P. Schirm came to America in 1857. His relatives live in Brunhofs, Leipzig, Bad (Hanna Schirm, Leipzig May 10th, 1923) (Lotz) Karl Heinrich Stratt 110.

The above gives Mr. Schirm's involvement in the Confederacy.
APPENDIX B:

This copy was provided by a living relative of William P. Schirm.

The following is an excerpt from letter written by Mrs. N. S. Orr (Nellie Schirm), to Evola (Bo) Schirm several years ago.

9/30/77

Mr. J. Sherr first married, I Smith, a teacher. (He had first taught in Brooklyn on coming to this country) She was a sister to Mr. Sherr. She died after a short time. He was married by the form of Widow & Father in-law.

He William's & Smith's were married. Mrs. J. Sherr & Prittie Sherr, and Mrs. J. Sherr was married (we all lived with Mrs. Williams) with all his children. Mary & Ruta. He married daughter to Mary & Ruta. He married Mary to his first wife. He married his second wife. He died at your house and is buried in Germany. Sister he went over and brought Sister back home to Norway as you know we all lived there. That is all I know.
END NOTES


3. History of Savannah, Georgia, Charles C. Jones, Jr., Syracuse, New York, 1890.

4. An address delivered before the Confederate Survivor's Association in Augusta, Georgia at its fifth Annual Meeting on Memorial Day, April 26, 1883 by Colonel Charles C. Jones, Jr., President of the Association.

5. Pioneers of Wiregrass, Georgia, number 0169, box 12, item 3228.


7. See Appendix A.


9. See Appendix B.

10. City Directory, Savannah City Directory for 1876.


12. Record number File 704, Chatham County Probate Court, Chatham County Court House, Savannah, Georgia.

13. Record Number File 704, Book 625, Folio 562, Chatham County Probate Court, Chatham County Court House, Savannah, Georgia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Historical Record of the City of Savannah, F. D. Lee and J. L. Agnes, J. H. Estill, Savannah, Georgia 1869.

2. History of Savannah and south Georgia, William Harden, Cherokee Publishing Company, Atlanta, Georgia.

