

Mason Monroe Cummings, CSA (1835-1880)

M.M. Cummings was 26 years old when he joined Company I, 11th Mississippi Volunteers. He had just begun his Law practice in Aberdeen, MS. Mason M. Cummings and Amelia Watkins Cummings are my great-great grandparents on my mother's side of the family ---- Rick Featherston

Excerpts from the Diary of Mason Monroe Cummings on his Civil War Experience and how he met his wife, Elizabeth Amelia Watkins (1844-1879), just prior to leaving for the battle fields of Mississippi and Tennessee. Also included is an excerpt from Miss Watkins' Diary on her version of their meeting!

"After every effort to defeat the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency on an avowed platform of hostility to the slavery institution, the Southern States in 1861 determined to dissolve their own connection with the United States, and form a Confederation of their own. After certain states had decided, a General Provisional Government was formed at Montgomery, Alabama with Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as President and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia as Vice President. It being early seen that a peaceable secession would not be permitted by the United States Government, preparation at once began to be made for war. In December 1860, a company of infantry was raised in Aberdeen, and organized on the 20th of the month, of which William H. Moore was elected Captain. To this company I attached myself as a member. The name given to the company was "Monroe Light Infantry", but changed before being mustered into the service to "Van Dorn Reserve" in honor of Major (afterwards General) Earl Van Dorn. On the 26th day of April, 1861, we were mustered into the War service and on the 30th left for Corinth, Mississippi. The company was handsomely uniformed and well armed with new Colt Repeating Rifles. The citizens subscribed very liberally to the company – more than \$7,500 having been raised for uniforming and equipping the men, who numbered about ninety-five.

"The occasion of our departure from Aberdeen was one of much interest. A farewell address was delivered to us at the Methodist Church by Bishop Robert Paine before a large audience. Many tearful eyes attested to the solemnity of the occasion. Well do I recollect the feelings of my heart on that day!

"I had closed up my office, leaving my books and other effects in the custody of locks and keys, and found myself with gun and cartridge-box, going off to fight the battles of my country --- bidding adieu to friends and loved ones whom I knew not that I should ever see again --- and giving up a practice which was just beginning to afford me a livelihood. But what affected me most, was the thought of being separated from one whom I had met for the first time (as an acquaintance) on the preceding New Year's Day, and who had been presented to me as a "New Year's Gift". Having met with her frequently since my introduction to her, a warm and ardent attachment had grown between us, and she had plighted me her heart and hand! The following June had been partially agreed upon as the time for consummating our bright anticipations, if I should not be sooner called away. The occasion of my departure was at hand and our hopes in this respect were disappointed. That fair one was present, my betrothed! (Note: this was **Elizabeth Amelia Watkins**). I well remember how charming, yet pensive, she looked. In that thronged assembly there was none who surpassed her in beauty and loveliness.

"Richly arrayed, and blooming in beauty, with an elegant and becoming turban gracing her head, it is not strange that I felt a peculiar fluttering sensation in my bosom, as we filed past her on leaving the church. She was standing in the vestibule as we marched out. Although it was unmilitary, I turned my eyes towards her --- got one farewell view --- and that was the last for a long time!" ----- Mason M. Cummings

From Amelia Watkins' Diary:

Months passed. Letters fraught with the tender words of love came to me and I was as true as he desired me to be. I now spent much of my time with my old friend, Sue. We participated much in screams of mirth. Others talked to me of love, but their words fell upon listless ears for my heart was another's. A year had flown! T'was a bright evening in the month of June. I sat upon the door steps as the last rays of the glorious sun lingered upon the earth. The summer breeze softly kissed my brow while my imagination drew a picture far brighter than the surrounding scene. My eyes were lifted from the ground and beheld the manly form of my long absent lover. The raptures of that meeting are better imagined than described. He told me he had participated in the battles of his country and had escaped its changes and had come to claim his promised bride. Yes, cried he as he pressed my hand "one moment in which to call thee mine will compensate for an age of absence". I yielded to his request. If the reader will imagine five bright-eyed girls standing in a group each bearing upon the arm of gallant gentleman, a picture of myself and attendants will be drawn. I was a modest girl of eighteen arrayed in pure white. My hair was arranged and decked with flowers according to the task of my bridesmaids to complete the picture. I will say I was a good form, had blue eyes, fair skin and blushing cheeks, and the dark eyed soldier that had lately been made my husband told me I was handsome. I was truly happy, yet not long was permitted to taste the sweet waters on connubial bliss till my "Liege Lord" had to return to the scene of war.

"I accompanied him as far as the railroad and when he clasped me to his bosom and told me "good bye" I thought that fate was very cruel. But he was gone! I was parted from a husband that was far dearer than a lover." ~ June 1862

