

James E. Harrison

(17 Apr 1829 – 4 Nov 1867)

Harrison. On the 4th November, Brevet Lt. Col. James E. Harrison, Captain 5th Cavalry, aged 38 years.

Military Records of Officers, p. 358-361

20. JAMES E. HARRISON was born in Virginia in 1832. He was a second lieutenant in the United States Revenue Service, 1853-56,* and participated, as a volunteer, in an Indian campaign in Washington Territory, October-December 1855, and was engaged in combats on White and Green rivers on the 4th and 5th of November, and was on duty near Lieutenant Slaughter when that officer was killed on the night of December 4, 1855. He conducted the remaining men (fifty-one) of Slaughter's command to Fort Steilacoom, and was specially commended in orders for conspicuous gallantry during the campaign. The Secretary of the Treasury was officially informed, by a letter dated December 23, 1855, that Lieutenant Harrison had acted with great coolness and bravery in two encounters with the enemy, and that his conduct was deserving of high praise.



He was appointed, from the District of Columbia, as a reward for gallant and valuable services in Washington Territory, a second lieutenant in the Fifth (old Second) Cavalry, to date from June 27, 1856, and joined at Camp Cooper, Texas, in December, where he had station until June, 1858, when he was transferred to Fort Belknap, and thence to Camp Radziminski for service with the Wichita expedition in 1858, and participated in the brilliant action at Wichita Village on the 1st of October, where he killed two warriors in hand-to-hand conflicts, and was commended in orders from the headquarters of the army for conspicuous gallantry. He participated in the brilliant action at Small Creek, a tributary of the Nescutunga, near Fort Atkinson, May 13, 1859, and won a mention in the official report for conspicuous gallantry, and was complimented in orders by General Scott.

He was on a leave of absence from June, 1859, to February, 1860, when he rejoined his company at Eagle Pass, where he had station until September, when he availed himself of another leave of absence and rejoined at Ringgold Barracks in January, 1861, and was commanding his company at Camp Cooper when Texas was surrendered to the insurgents. He marched from that station to Indianola, where he embarked with the first detachment of the regiment on the steamship Coatzacoalcos and sailed for New York Harbor, and proceeded thence to Washington, where he arrived on the 17th of April, 1861.

He was offered many inducements, in the way of promotion and rapid advancement, to resign his commission and join the rebellion against the United States, but he never for one moment hesitated concerning the line of conduct which duty and patriotism alike enjoined upon him.

He was promoted a first lieutenant February 27, 1861, and a captain May 30, 1861, and served in the defenses of Washington and at Fall's Church, Va., until about the 1st of July, when he participated in the Manassas campaign, and was engaged in the battle of Bull Run, where he won the commendation of his brigade commander for daring intrepidity and gallantry in action and for valuable services during the retreat of the National army. He served in the defenses of Washington during the winter of 1861-62,

and participated in the Manassas, Virginia Peninsular, and Maryland campaigns, and was engaged in the skirmish at Cedar Run, the siege of Yorktown, the battle of Williamsburg, and in almost daily skirmishes with the enemy during the advance towards Richmond; the battle of Hanover Court-House, where he captured two companies of Confederate infantry and won a special mention in the report of General McClellan for gallant conduct; the reconnaissance towards Ashland and the White House (commanding five companies); the skirmish near St. Mary's Church (commanding); with the regiment as a part of the rear-guard of the Army of the Potomac during the evacuation of the Peninsula, and in the battles of South Mountain and Antietam.

He commanded the regiment from the 19th of September to the 28th of November, 1862; from the 28th of December, 1862, to the 19th of March 1863; and from the 1st of April to the 13th of June, 1863, and was engaged in the skirmish near Shepherdstown, Markham's Station, Barbee's Cross-Roads, and Amissville, and Stoneman's raid towards Richmond, April-May, 1863, during the capture of the regiment at Fleming's Cross-Roads; and in the battle of Beverly Ford, where he was distinguished for gallantry.

His successful career during these operations gave promise of a brilliant future, but the exposures of field-service, and a sunstroke received just after the battle of Beverly Ford, from which he never fully recovered, proved too severe for his constitution, and he was compelled to accept less active service at Portland, Maine, where he had station until December, 1863, and commanded, as a volunteer, the troops on board the gunboat *Agawam*, which was dispatched in pursuit of the steamer *Chesapeake*, captured by pirates on the 9th of December. His services were recognized as very valuable in every way, and more particularly because of the many difficulties which were encountered and his promptness and energy in overcoming them. He served in the Cavalry Bureau at Washington from January to July 1864, when he was appointed a special inspector of cavalry and employed in the Department of Arkansas until January, 1865. He was then transferred to the Military Division of West Mississippi, where he served until June, 1867, when rapidly failing health compelled him to return to his home in Washington, D.C., where he died of consumption on the 4th of November, 1867.

He was made a brevet major, to date from May 27, 1862, for gallant and meritorious services at the battle of Hanover Court House, and a brevet lieutenant-colonel, to date from September 17, 1862, for gallant and meritorious services at the battle of Antietam.

He was offered positions early in the war in two volunteer regiments – one from New York, the other from Pennsylvania – either of which he would have accepted but for the influence of the chief of cavalry, who opposed an acceptance on the ground that his services were more urgently required with his regiment, because so few officers were serving with the regular cavalry. Later in the war he would have gladly accepted a volunteer commission, but these were then bestowed by the governors upon the citizens of their States, while he, claiming a home in the District of Columbia, had no State influence and knew nothing of the intricacies of political methods.