

Albert Byron Clark, Biography

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Ed. Note: The battle chronology in the following biographical sketch is not correct for Albert B. Clark's brother Charles Clark nor his brother-in-law Francis H. Rasey.

Meade's Assaults, or the Second Battle of Petersburg, aka the Assault on Petersburg took place June 15-18, 1864. Charles and Francis were wounded in this Second Battle of Petersburg on June 17, 1864. Francis died within hours. Charles died one month later, July 17, 1864, at the military hospital, Chester, Pennsylvania.

The explosion of the mine and subsequent Battle of the Crater took place almost six weeks later, on July 30, 1864. It is likely that Albert B. Clark participated with the 37th Wis Inf. in the assault on the Crater on July 30. But Francis Rasey and Charles Clark had already died from their June 17th wounds. —Reed Perkins, August, 2020

ALBERT BYRON CLARK, of Oshkosh, Wis., member of G. A. R. Post No. 10, was born in Potosi, Grant Co., Wis., March 29, 1842. He became a soldier about the beginning of the third year of the war, enlisting a few days before he had reached his 22nd birthday. On March 24, 1864, he enrolled as a private in Company C, the color Company of the 37th Wisconsin Infantry, and entered the military service of his country for a term of three years. He went from his native soil, the recruiting officer being stationed at Mineral Point, Lafayette Co., Wis. He received honorable discharge at Madison, Wis., July 26, 1865, at the close of the war.

At the time Mr. Clark enlisted, the army officials were clamoring for men to take the place of those whose terms of enlistment were expiring, in order that they might not be compelled to substitute inexperienced and undisciplined troops for skilled and trained soldiers, and men were also in immediate requisition to aid in holding the advantages that had been gained. Consequently, those who enlisted at this

period did so with a full understanding that the situation was filled with the mishaps of war. In this particular, the records of our soldiers eclipse those of any body of military men on history's pages. The 37th Wisconsin was hurried to the seat of war before its companies were filled, proceeding direct to Washington. May 30, it went to White House, Va., then the base of supplies. At that point it was placed as guard for rebel prisoners and to protect the line of the Richmond Railroad. June 10th the command guarded a supply train to Cold Harbor and, at that time, received its army assignment to the First Brigade, General Hartranft, Third Division, General Wilcox, and Ninth Army Corps, General Burnside. On the 12th of June, the regiment took place in the line, the crossing of the James River was accomplished and the 9th Corps commenced its record in the terrible experiences in front of Petersburg. June 16th it successfully supported a charge on the rebel works and assisted in the capture of three redans. *[The following chronology is not correct. See Ed. Note, above.]* On the two days following, it was in the dreadful exposure in the "crater" after the explosion of the mine, where it had that most cruel experience, eight hours exposure to the direct fire of the foe without support. But the dangers of the situation were such, and the demoralization resulting from changes at the last moment in the plans of the commanders of the white and colored brigades was so decided, that support was simply impossible without risks that, it may be surmised, commanders did not feel like incurring, by issuing what might have been fruitless orders. The fact that our soldiers were acting intelligently in their fighting had an influence on officials that has never been candidly estimated. The conduct of the command was such that General Grant personally complimented its soldiers for their pluck and gallantry. The loss was 160 killed and wounded. The regiment returned to its former position. (The current number of the Century magazine, September, 1887, has a characteristic article on the "Tragedy of the Crater," which, in a remarkable manner displays the event and the performances of officials, with no mention whatever of the 37th Wisconsin). Among the wounded June 17, were the brother and brother-in-law of Mr. Clark. Charles Clark held the position of Corporal of Company C and was injured in the explosion of the mine. He died July 17th at Chester Hospital, Pa. Francis Rasey, the brother of Mrs. Clark, was shot through the

bowels and survived but four hours. The next heavy action in which the regiment participated was at Poplar Grove Church, or Pegram's [*sic*, should be Peeble's] Farm, where Mr. Clark was slightly wounded, September 30th. In passing, it may be related that the regimental flag had been saved by the merest chance three times. The first time the Color Sergeant, Wm. Green, severely wounded, brought it off the field in his teeth, July 30, when the crater blew up. In the third instance, the flagstaff was shot away and the Adjutant made a sally for it at the risk of his life; it was sent to Governor Lewis, who placed it in the capitol at Madison. The last action in which the 37th was in active fighting, was at Fort Mahone, which they reduced, and, immediately after, they were rejoiced by the intelligence of the fall of the Confederacy. The command made a part of the Grand Review at Washington and on the 26th of July [1865] was mustered out of the service of the United States at Madison. Mr. Clark rejoined his family at Oshkosh on the termination of the war and resumed his former occupation. He is at present carrying on the business of a builder and contractor, and is conducting the construction of the elegant church building of the Episcopal Society of Oshkosh. He was married to Miss Carrie M. Rasey, April 27, 1861, a few days after the attack on the fort in Charleston Harbor. Mr Clark is the son of Cyrus Clark, a native of Massachusetts. His mother, previous to marriage, was Miss Sarah A. Strickland. On the maternal side he is a descendant of a sea captain of Beverly, Mass., the mother being also of New England extraction and a member of an influential family.