

4th Sergeant John B. Wilkins – Co. C – 32nd Virginia Infantry

John B. Wilkins was born on September 9, 1841, in Gloucester Cty., Virginia. He was the son of Robert Wilkins. By 1850 the family was living in York County where Robert was an overseer on the Dr. R. P. Waller farm near Williamsburg.

John, and his brother William, both enlisted as privates in Co. C of the 32nd Virginia Infantry, in Williamsburg, on April 28, 1861. After the army was reorganized, around May 1, 1862, John was appointed Corporal on May 12th. On January 19, 1863, he was promoted to 4th Sergeant.

Muster rolls show John absent sick in November and December of 1863.

Sometime in late 1863, possibly in December when he was absent sick, John married Harriet A. Williams. She would have been 23 and he would have been 22. Harriet was the daughter of Dudley and Nancy Williams of New Kent County.

The first two muster rolls of 1864 are missing. The 32nd (part of Pickett's Division) was on detached duty in Virginia while the rest of the Division was in North Carolina. The 32nd spent some time near Bottom's Bridge but was mostly near Chaffin's Bluff and Bermuda Hundred. John is shown as having deserted on May 21, 1864, on the May-June muster roll. General Benjamin Butler's records list him as a Confederate deserter on May 21st. Later he was listed as AWOL on the July-August, 1864, muster roll. There are no POW records so he must have taken the Oath of Allegiance. Perhaps he was in New Kent at the Williams farm until the war was over.

There is no further military record.

The 1870 census shows the family living in James City County with a young son named Robert. John is a blacksmith.

In 1880, still blacksmithing, they are living in Isle of Wight County and have added a daughter, also named Harriet, to the family. In 1900 they are living on Ireland Street in Williamsburg and he has a blacksmith shop on Boundary Street where he is a blacksmith and wheelwright and advertises that, "Horseshoeing is my specialty." Harriet passed away in 1912 (age 72). John will die on January 20, 1927, (age 85) at the home of his daughter Harriet.

John is buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery in Williamsburg, Virginia.

(Confederate Gravesites by Fred Boelt, February, 2016, issue of Picket Lines; Compiled Service Records – Confederate, Brewer Library, UDC, Richmond, Virginia, Micro Copy 324, Roll 789)