

Ferdinand Hoover (1835-1863) of Darke County, Ohio Union Soldier in the Civil War

Killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863

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Battle of Chickamauga; Lithograph by Kurz and Allison, 1890 (PD)

On October 7, 1861, Ferdinand Hoover of Greenville Township in Darke County, Ohio joined the Union Army. The twenty-six year old emigrant from Germany enlisted as a corporal in Company G, 40th Infantry Regiment of Ohio. He spent nearly two years with the regiment. On September 20, 1863, he died in the fierce fighting at Chickamauga, Georgia.

The Battle of Chickamauga, fought September 18-20, 1863 was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. Chickamauga, Georgia is located about fifteen miles south of Chattanooga, Tennessee. At stake was Chattanooga's railway center, which provided a gateway to the Confederate South. Fifty-eight thousand Union soldiers, under the direction of General William Rosecrans, clashed with the Confederate army of General Braxton Bragg, numbering 66,000 troops. On September 18, 1863, General Bragg ordered his troops to set up a defensive position at Chickamauga Creek in an effort to thwart the Union army's drive to control Chattanooga. Combat began in the early hours of September 19 at Jay's Mill and spread south for four miles. Fighting was brutal, often involving hand-to-hand combat. Fighting continued through September 20 when at the end of two days of battle, Federal troops were forced to retreat.

Counting both sides, there were some 34,000 dead or wounded, making it one of the more costly battles of the war. It was a short-lived victory for the Confederates. By the end of November, 1863, reinforced Union troops were able to break through Confederate lines to control Chattanooga and nearly all of Tennessee. In the spring of 1864, General Sherman used Chattanooga as his base and starting point for his famous march to Atlanta and to the Atlantic Ocean. The Chickamauga Battlefield was the scene of the last major Confederate victory of the Civil War. In 1890, the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park was created to preserve and commemorate these battlefields. This was the nation's first military park.

Little is known about the short life of Ferdinand Hoover. He was born in 1835 in Württemberg, Germany and immigrated to the United States about 1845. In the 1850 census for Darke County, Ohio, Ferdinand is listed as a 15-year-old "manufacturer" living in the household of the Akins family in Greenville Township. On May 1, 1856, Ferdinand married Mary Cole Wintermute. The couple settled on a farm and had three children, two of whom died in infancy. After his death, Mary C. Hoover was entitled to receive a widow's pension of \$8 per month. She forfeited the pension when she married John C. Hoover (not related to Ferdinand), who had also served with Company G, 40th Infantry Regiment and had been wounded at the Battle of Chickamauga. William A. Hoover, born on January 7, 1861 and the only child of Ferdinand to survive, married Laura Ellen Howver in Mansfield, IL in 1888. She was the daughter of George Howver, a Confederate soldier from Singers Glen, Virginia, who had moved north with his family after the war.

Sources of information for Ferdinand Hoover: *Roster of Ohio Troops, Fortieth Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (p154); US Census records of 1850 and 1860 for Greenville Township, Darke Co, OH; Marriage record, Darke Co Courthouse; Pension application and obituary for Mary Cole Wintermute (Ferdinand's wife); Passport application for William Hoover (Ferdinand's son).

Sources for the Battle of Chickamauga: *The American Civil War*. Web. 10 July 2007; Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. National Park Service Web. 10 July 2007.