

Gold Bar of Honor Given Mother Whose Son Was Confederate Soldier

[Martha Adeline Alexander, wife of Rev. Marion Zellner, died shortly after this article was published in the Commercial Appeal newspaper, Memphis, Tennessee in 1920]

A beautiful and touching ceremony occurred in Arlington, TN last week when Mrs. Martha A. Zellner was presented with a gold bar of honor in token of the fact that she was the mother of a son who fought in the Confederate army during the dark days in 1861-65. Mrs. Zellner will be 100 years old in October.

Representatives of five generations were present when the bar was pinned upon Mrs. Zellner. It was the gift of the Southern Confederate Memorial Association and Mrs. Charles W. Frazier, state president from Tennessee and Mrs. C.L. Bryan, president of the Memphis association had intended being present and had planned a formal presentation ceremony. However, Mrs. Zellner had been very ill, and it was deemed inadvisable for anyone to be present save members of her family and her family physician, Dr. R.E. Herring.

The box containing the bar of honor was placed in the hand of Mrs. Zellner by her Great-great-grandson, Robert Gragg Wilson, whose picture, taken several months ago, is shown with that of his great-great grandmother. Dr. Herring pinned the bar upon the dress of his patient and at her request led the family in prayer with all of them joining in the Lord's Prayer led by Mrs. Zellner.

Members of the Zellner family present included her daughters, Mrs. Fannie McNeely and Mrs. Joanna Alexander, her grandson and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. S.Y. Wilson, her great grandson and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Robert Wilson and her great-great grandson, little Robert Gragg Wilson.

A gold bar of honor for every living mother of a Confederate veteran was the "happy thought" of Mrs. M. Wilson, present general of the Confederate Southern Memorial Association which was presented at the annual convention of the association in October, at Atlanta. All state presidents were instructed to find the mothers in their states, with name and credentials of their veteran sons, and report same to the president general. Twelve applications had been received up to Feb. 1, from Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Louisiana, ages ranging from 95 to 102.

Mrs. Charles W. Frazier, state president from Tennessee, has had the honor of presenting the bar to the next oldest mother in the person of Mrs. Zellner, who will be 100 years of age on Oct. 31, 1920. Mrs. Zellner is the mother of the late John W. Zellner, Pittman, 13th Tennessee regiment. She is the widow of the late Rev. Marion Zellner who was appointed chaplain in the 12th Tennessee cavalry partisans Rangers, under Col. Richardson. Both father and son served until the end of the war, the latter dying many years afterwards from the effects of wounds he received in service and from which he suffered throughout his life. Mrs. Zellner, as well as her husband, was born in North Carolina; immigrated to Mississippi, was married at Hernando in February 1842, came to Tennessee as a bride and reared a family of four sons and five daughters of whom one son and three daughters now live.

She makes her home with a daughter, Mrs. McNeely, who, widowed in her youth, has devoted her life in the care and comfort of her mother. Mrs. Zellner has 18 grandchildren, 55 great-grandchildren and 7 great-great grandchildren. She takes an active interest in all current events and followed the course of the world war. Her recent formal presentation of her bar but Wednesday in her own room in the presence of her family, it was given to her by Master Robert Gragg Wilson.

To know her is to love her. She is a wonderful character. She gave her heart to God when she was a little girl. When she was a little over 22 years old she gave her life into the care and keeping of a noble young man. They lived together happily until the Civil War took her husband and 17 year old son to fight for their country, leaving her alone with very small children on a big country farm. Everyone who lived through those dark days knows what a struggle this was. She fought on bravely alone, until the close of the war, when God gave her back her husband to live to a ripe old age and to take his grandchildren on his knee and tell them stories of the days of the Confederacy.

Her son, John William Zellner, though wounded five times, came back to his home at the close of the war, and later married and reared a large family of children.

To Mrs. Zellner goes the honor of receiving the first of the bars which will be awarded to all living mothers of former Confederate soldiers.

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