

Jonathan W. Upshaw

(c1840–18 Jul 1862)

Son of Richard Upshaw Sr. & Rebecca Elder

by Timothy Dean Hudson

Jonathan W. Upshaw was born about 1840 in Georgia, the youngest known child of Richard Upshaw and Rebecca Elder. His father died when he was a child. In 1850, he lived with his widowed mother and siblings in Butler County, Alabama [1]. About 1856 or early 1857, Jonathan and his mother followed his brothers to Spearsville, in northwestern Union Parish, Louisiana. He had apparently joined a Baptist church as a teenager while living in Butler County, Alabama, for at a protracted meeting of the Spearsville Baptist Church lasting from the September 6–17, 1857, Jonathan W. Upshaw joined the church “*by Letter*,” indicating that he had a letter of dismissal from another Baptist Church [2].

On 8 April 1859, Elisha's older brother, Alexander Wilson Upshaw, purchased a 320-acre tract of land that adjoined Wilson's own farm for \$533 [3]. The following year, on 20 August 1860, Wilson sold this new tract to his brothers, William Elisha and Jonathan W. Upshaw, for \$500 [4]. In 1860, William Elisha Upshaw lived on their new farm with his mother and younger brother, Jonathan [5]. On the same day, several households away, Elisha, Rebecca, and Jonathan were enumerated again, this time in the household that adjoined his older brother, Edmond. Their older sister, Mary Upshaw, lived with them [6].

When war broke out in 1861, Jonathan and William Elisha Upshaw joined a company of Union Parish men under Larkin Cleveland Callaway. Although the unit went south to Camp Moore for induction into the Confederate Army, disagreement over the length of their enlistment caused the men to disband and return home. Jonathan and William Elisha Upshaw then joined the “*Carroll Rebels*,” a group of men from Carroll Parish, Louisiana. The battalion organized in July 1861 in Richmond, Virginia, and the Upshaws' unit became Co. D, 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry [7].

The 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry acted as the bodyguard for President Jefferson Davis and as guards at Libby Prison until the fall. After reorganization on September 19th, the battalion moved into what is now West Virginia, where they served in the Kanawha Valley. The men skirmished with the Union Army at Cotton Hill between November 1-10 before returning to Richmond in December. Shortly afterwards, the men received orders to board a train bound for South Carolina, where they were assigned to occupy Skidway Island, located on the Georgia coast

south of Savannah. On 17 March 1862, they moved to the Isle of Hope, and on April 21, they moved to Camp Mercer near Savannah.

On June 4, the 4th Battalion moved to Charleston, South Carolina and was assigned to duty on James Island. They fought in a skirmish there on June 10. At the Battle of Secessionville on June 16, they arrived on the field in time to repulse the second Yankee attack, and in the action, the battalion had six men killed and twenty-two wounded [8].

Jonathan W. Upshaw participated with his battalion in the action at the Battle of Secessionville, during which he suffered a severe wound to his leg. Surgeons amputated the leg, and he never recovered. He died at a Charleston hospital on 18 July 1862.

"*The Christian Index*," a newspaper published at Macon, Georgia, published Jonathan's obituary eleven days after his death [9]:

Died in the _____ Hospital, Charleston, S.C., July the 18th in the 22nd year of his age, John W. Upshaw, of Union Parish Louisiana.

The subject of this sketch was a native of Georgia, but was removed in his youth and attained to mature years in the first named State. He was a soldier in the Confederate service for a year prior to his death, he having volunteered at the commencement of the war, serving a short period at Camp Moore, near New Orleans, Louisiana, in a company subsequently disbanded, and then joining Company D, 4th Louisiana Battalion.

This Battalion, after their campaign in Western Virginia, having been ordered to the coast of this State, were sent to aid in the defence [sic] of Charleston. In the engagement which ensued on James Island, the subject of our notice was so severely wounded in one of his legs as to render amputation necessary - this he never survived, but lingered to the above date when he expired. He professed religion some years ago, and united himself to a Baptist church. His prospects for the future, in view of his approaching end, may be seen from an extract taken from a letter, communicating his death to the writer of this notice:

"I am sorry to announce to you the death of our beloved brother Upshaw, who departed this life, in hope of a better, on the night of the 18th, in Charleston, S.C. He sent word for us to do better, and prepare to meet him in glory. I trust these words will be stamped on our hearts, and that our memories will bear in mind our friend, who, without doubt, now seeth not as through a glass darkly, but enjoys the presence of the Lord, face to face, where he can join in praise with those who have gone before. Physically, brother Upshaw was strong and active. Mentally, those who knew him thought he possessed intelligence superior to his advantages. What he was as a Christian, we who do not see the heart do not wholly know.

He is now before the Great Judge of all - far above the mists and doubts which obscure the judgment of men. But this we know, that even if he had some infirmities, he evinced a disposition to serve his Maker, and was seldom indifferent to the subject of religion. In view of these considerations, those who survive him have "hope in his death."

*T. L. Cunningham,
General Hospital, Macon,
Georgia.*

Following his demise, Jonathan W. Upshaw was buried in an unknown grave in Charleston, South Carolina. In 2006, descendants of his brothers in Union Parish, Louisiana erected a memorial marker for him in the Spearsville Cemetery, beside the graves of Alexander Wilson and William Elisha Upshaw.



Notes

1. 1850 Butler County AL Federal Census, Township Seven, p. 246b, Dwelling #39: Rebeca Upshaw. 1860 Union Parish LA Federal Census, P.O. Spearsville, 21 July 1860, p. 615, Dwelling #703, line #21: M. E. Upshaw (26, male, Farmer, real estate: \$1000; personal estate: \$155) [recording mistake; should be "*W. E. Upshaw*"; line #22: R. Upshaw (51, female, "*House Keeper*"; line #23: J. Upshaw (age 20, male). No primary source document lists the children of Richard Upshaw Sr., but these census records provide strong circumstantial evidence that William Elisha Upshaw was a son of Rebecca Elder Upshaw. She married Richard Upshaw on 27 February 1820 [Elbert County GA Will Book L (1816-1821), p. 475; Marriages Box M1 (1818-1821), Images #436-437 (Richard Upshaw to Miss Rebecca Elder, 27 February 1820).] They lived in Walton County, Georgia between 1822 and the mid-1830s, and then moved to Butler County, Alabama in the 1840s. Richard Upshaw is believed to have died there soon after their arrival. See also 1830 Walton County GA Federal Census, p. 158, line #6: Richard Upshaw; line #7: Edmund Elder.
2. Spearsville Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana, church conferences of September 6–17, 1857, and August 1858. A transcription of the original minutes is available at <http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/union/churches/spearsville-bc-minutes.txt>
3. Union Parish LA Conveyance Book J, p. 316 (Thomas P. Lawrence to Alexander W. Upshaw, 8 April 1859). Upshaw bought the W½ of Section 16, Township 22 North, Range 2 West.
4. Union Parish LA Conveyance Book J, pp. 327–328 (Alexander Wilson Upshaw to William Elisha Upshaw and Jonathan Upshaw, 21 August 1860). Wilson Upshaw sold his brothers the W½ of Section 16, Township 22 North, Range 2 West.
5. 1860 Union Parish LA Federal Census, P.O. Spearsville, 21 July 1860, p. 615, Dwelling #703, line #21: M. E. Upshaw (26, male, Farmer, real estate: \$1000; personal estate: \$155) [recording mistake; should be "*W. E. Upshaw*"; line #22: R. Upshaw (51, female, "*House Keeper*"; line #23: J. Upshaw (age 20, male).
6. 1860 Union Parish LA Federal Census, P.O. Spearsville, 21 July 1860, p. 612, Dwelling #684, line #23: Ed Upshaw (29, male, Farmer, personal estate: \$150); line #24: M. E. Upshaw (23, female, "*House Keeper*"; Dwelling #685, line #25: Rebecca Upshaw (60, female); line #26: Mary Upshaw (55, female); line #27: Elisha Upshaw (28, male, Farmer, personal estate: \$150); line #28: Jonathan Upshaw (20, male, Farmer).
7. Compiled Military Service Records, W. E. Upshaw and J. W. Upshaw, Co. D, 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry.
8. Bergeron, Arthur W. Jr. *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861–1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989, pp. 157–158.
9. "*The Christian Index*" (Macon, GA), 29 July 1862, Tuesday, p. 3, column 6.

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