

Courtesy of the Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society
Original files are housed in the John Marshall Stone Research Library

Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum
203 East Quitman Street
Iuka, MS 38852
Phone: 662-423-3500
E-mail: tcarchives@nadata.net
URL: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~mstchgs/>

TCHGS COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In keeping with our policy of providing free information on the Internet, materials may be freely used by non-commercial entities, as long as this message remains on all copied material, AND permission is obtained from the contributor of the file.

These electronic pages may NOT be reproduced in any format for profit or presentation by other organizations. Persons or organizations desiring to use this material for non-commercial purposes MUST obtain the written consent of the contributor OR the legal representative of the submitter and contact the listed Tishomingo County Archives & Historical Society (TCHGS) with proof of this consent.

COLONEL A. E. REYNOLDS

Tishomingo County never claimed a citizen of more genuine manliness or universal popularity than Colonel A. E. Reynolds. His influence was great, and was always thrown with movements for the good of the people. The story of his life is the old story of grit, determination and perseverance. He resided in Tishomingo County for thirty years and in Alcorn County for fourteen years, during which time he was loved by his friends, respected by his enemies, and held in the highest esteem by the entire people. Arthur Reynolds, like every human being, had his faults; and the greatest of these was beneficence. During the latter years of his life, when all that remained of his once large landed interests was a modest home in Corinth, and when sickness had secured a giant's hold on his former rugged constitution, he was never known to refuse aid to a friend in need, but ever shared his last dollar with the needy; and at times to the discomfiture of his family. "Charity begins at home" is an old and trite saying, but Arthur Reynolds made no distinction between home and friends.

Arthur Exum Reynolds was born in Smith County, Tennessee, on the 29th day of November, 1817. His parents were not wealthy, but were able to give him a finished education and thus prepare him for the brilliant career to follow. Arthur Reynolds was always proud of his ancestry, and when fortune and renown reached their highest point, surrounded by the wealthy and influential personages of his day, he always upheld the dignity of honest labor and referred with pride to the fact that his father was a blacksmith. At the age of twenty he went to Lawrence County, Alabama, where he continued to study law and was admitted to the bar, and married Miss Minerva Driver on the 24th of April, 1838, at once moving to Jacinto, the county seat of Tishomingo County, where he commenced to practice his profession, being one of the first lawyers to locate in the new county. His success was rapid and complete. He had much to do with the early history of the county, and many measures resulting beneficially to the interests of the pioneers were the fruits of his advanced and practical mind. As a lawyer he was known far and wide, and between 1838 and the beginning of the civil war either the plaintiff or defendant in every important case tried before the courts of the county was represented by Mr. Reynolds. He was unusually successful as a practitioner. Being a man of

commanding presence, great forensic ability and an orator of unusual power, he was in most instances able to convince the jury of the justness of his cause, and thus secure a verdict at times not in keeping with the evidence. Arthur E. Reynolds and Benjamin N. Kinyan were associated in the practice of law in Jacinto for several years, and in 1859 Mr. Reynolds formed a law partnership with B. B. Boone and L. P. Reynolds, the style of the firm being Reynolds, Boone & Reynolds, which association was continued until 1870 when both A. E. Reynolds and B. B. Boone were appointed as judges of the chancery and circuit courts respectively.

As a politician Arthur Reynolds ranked among the leaders of his time. He never aspired to a county position, but represented the "State of Tishomingo" for eight years in the State Senate with distinguished ability. He was an ardent Whig in politics, and although his party was hopelessly in the minority in the county, he easily defeated the Democratic nominee in 1849 and again in 1853. In November, 1860, when the Mississippi secession convention was called to meet at the State capital on the 7th of the following January, and an election ordered to be held on the 20th of December for the selection of the delegates thereto, Mr. Reynolds declared in opposition to the State leaving the Federal Union until such a time as all the southern states should decided on some concerted plan of action, and was nominated, together with four others, at a mass meeting of the opponents of unconditional secession as a delegate to the Jackson convention. A ticket was placed in the field by those favoring immediate and unconditional secession, and after one of the most bitter and acrimonious campaigns ever witnessed in the county, the entire anti-secession ticket was elected by a majority of over one thousand, and Mr. Reynolds, receiving the highest number of votes cast for any one individual. He was made chairman of the Tishomingo County delegation, and cast the vote of the county against secession, but when the secession ordinance was adopted by a majority vote, the entire Tishomingo delegation affixed their signatures to the action of the convention.

After war had been declared the first call for troops was most noble responded to, and almost every male citizen of Tishomingo County within the age limits who could arm and equip himself volunteered for service. In July, 1861, Mr. Reynolds visited Richmond, Va., and asked permission of President Davis to raise an additional regiment

of infantry in Tishomingo County. He was granted authority upon condition that he would arm and equip the men, it being explained that the Confederate government was at that time unable to supply additional war equipage. Mr. Reynolds at once returned home, and calling to his aid Francis Marion Boone, a prominent planter and ex-member of the legislature from the county, proceeded with the work of organizing a regiment of men in a county from which over 2,000 thousand soldiers had already gone to the front. In a remarkable short time the required number of men had been signed, and Mr. Reynolds procured from those able to contribute sufficient funds to arm a majority of the new recruits with a cap and ball rifle, flint-lock muskets, and Hall rifles, the remainder being supplied with squirrel rifles and shotguns. After ten companies had been raised, armed and officers elected, they met at Iuka and were mustered into the service of the Confederate government as the Twenty-sixth Mississippi Regiment of Infantry, and Arthur E. Reynolds was elected colonel, Francis Marion Boone, lieutenant colonel, and W. P. Curlee, adjutant. The first battle participated in by the Twenty-sixth was that at Fort Donelson, where Tishomingo's brave and noble sons, led by Col Reynolds, opened the fight, and for the first time faced the bullets of the Yankees. Had there ever existed any doubt in the minds of the commanding officers as to how their men would act in the face of the enemy, that doubt now melted away as mist before the refulgent rays of a noonday sun, for they stood like veterans and calmly awaited the onslaught of the opposing forces. The charge of the Federal army was terrific, but like a mountain of rock stood the gallant Twenty-sixth, and although Reynolds, Boone, and Curlee had their horses killed from under them, and a number of their followers fell to rise no more, with a yell that for hours echoed and reverberated through the rugged defiles and along the classic banks of the old Tennessee, that unconquerable band rushed gallantly and irresistibly upon the enemy and in a short time turned the right flank of Grant's army, and had sufficient reinforcements been at hand history would record a far different ending to the battle of Fort Donelson. In this wild and successful charge the Twenty-sixth was led by that illustrious soldier, Lieutenant Colonel Boone, Colonel Reynolds, after being unhorsed, was unable to keep pace with the regiment, owing to his extreme corpulency, he weighting at that time over three hundred pounds. After the surrender of Fort Donelson the Twenty-sixth was sent to Northern prisons and exchanged about a year

later, when almost the entire membership met at Jackson, Miss. and was reorganized, Arthur E. Reynolds being again elected colonel by a unanimous vote. The regiment participated in the Vicksburg campaign, being attached to the brigade of Gen. Joe Davis. At the battle of Champion Hill, Gen. Davis being absent, the brigade was commanded by Col. Reynolds, and W. W. Loring, major general commanding, thus referred to Col. Reynolds in his official report:

“Of Generals Featherstone and Buford and Colonel A. E. Reynolds, commanding brigades, too much cannot be said in commendation. The rapidity and skill with which they executed their orders, and the boldness with which their gallant command met and successfully repulsed the powerful attacks of the enemy, delaying the Yankee army and securing a safe retreat to that of ours across the ford, entitles them to the highest praise; and finally in lending themselves a sacrifice, enveloped as they were on three sides (front, right flank and rear), undismayed with a proud consciousness of having done their whole duty, they withdrew in good order, from under fire, in the face of the enemy, and thus we were enabled to make the dangerous but successful movement to the left.”

Col. Reynolds was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in March, 1865, but General Lee surrendered before a command was assigned him. It is doubtful whether he would have accepted any change that would have separated him from the Twenty-sixth regiment, as he loved the members of his regiment and they worshipped him, and any change in existing relations would have been highly distasteful to all parties. After the surrender Col. Reynolds, as he preferred to be called, returned to the practice of his profession at Jacinto, and in 1868 moved to Corinth. He formed a law partnership with his nephew, Mr. G. W. Reynolds, in ---4, the co-partnership continuing until the day of his death in 1882. At the first election after the surrender, Colonel Reynolds was elected to the lower house of the United States Congress, but was refused a seat owing to the contention of the Federal government that Mississippi was not a member of the Union of States. Although Colonel Reynolds has slept the sleep of the just for twenty-one years, his memory is held in the fondest remembrance by the survivors of the gallant Twenty-sixth regiment, and no occasion is ever lost by any one of them to speak words of praise and endearment of their noble and illustrious leader.

Arthur E. Reynolds was the first of his family to settle in old Tishomingo County, but later four brothers, Messrs. J. J., Clinton, Bluford and Guilford, moved to the county; and after the death of their father, which occurred in Smith County, Tenn., Mrs. Reynolds spent the remainder of her life among her children. Four children of Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Reynolds are living—Miss Tishie Reynolds and Mrs. Maggie Dortch, of Gallatin, Tenn.; and Messrs. A. B. and J. T. Reynolds, of Alcorn County, Mississippi, and like their father they hold in most profound reverence the memory of their ancestors.