



# KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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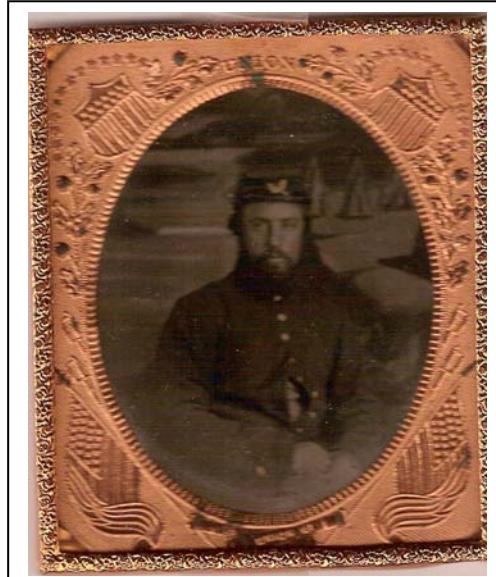
ISSUE 5

## TO COMMEMORATE OUR CIVIL WAR UNCLE MILTON W. FREE

Our family did have a soldier who fought for the Union in the Civil War. He wasn't great. He wasn't famous, and he is the only ancestor in the war on record. In fact this tintype of a soldier was a complete enigma until I met a second cousin, Geraldine McKone who had sent for all of his military information and passed it on to me. From that I learned that Milton W. Free enlisted May 25, 1861 and was assigned to F Company in the 14th Regiment of Illinois Infantry. In the Muster and Descriptive Roll of Company F it gave us more of a picture of him. He was born on a farm in Stark County, Ohio in 1837, making him 23 years old. He was single, 5 feet 8 inches tall with auburn hair, blue eyes, and a light complexion. His occupation was listed as farmer. When he applied for a pension he couldn't get a copy of his birth certificate because all the records of his family were in the possession of his older brother John and were destroyed by fire in November 1876.

Therefore his proof to be as he said he was depended on an affidavit by Wm. H. Elson, not the famous one, but one that I believe was a brother of our Mary Elizabeth Elson.

However, when Milton was in the battles of Shiloh in 1862 and Vicksburg in 1863 he contracted several injuries which necessitated his being hospitalized with fever and other disabilities. It seems his feet were so bad he could hardly march with Sherman's Army when it was advancing on Atlanta. Somewhere along the line he lost his hearing in one ear, and one eye, and contracted mumps. All in all, his service was one fraught with nothing but physical disabilities. I would imagine that he suffered as much as many others who fought in those battles. I have his records of all the correspondence regarding his efforts to secure a disability pension. They are lengthy and detailed and do not paint a pretty picture. He had to prove much and it wasn't easy. Some thought his injuries were too minor. There are pages and pages.

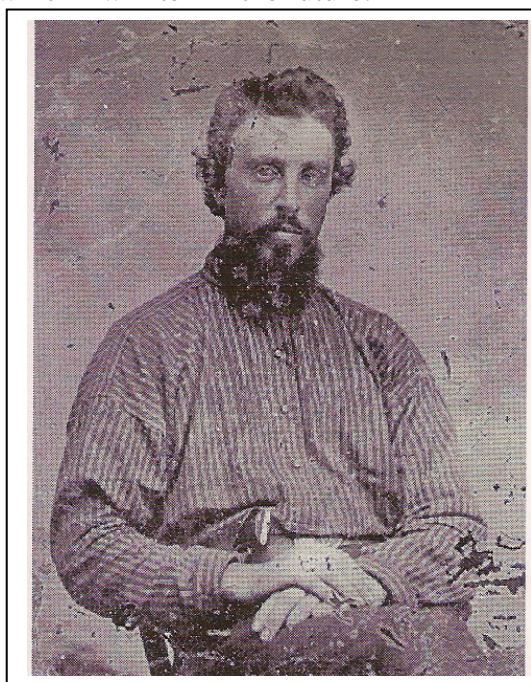


In spite of his difficulty in proving his disabilities, he was honorably discharged June 1864 as a corporal. Then after much correspondence he finally did receive a pension of \$15 a month which had been raised to \$30 a month when he died.

In 1865 I can find him with his father farming in Phill's Creek, Jersey County, Illinois. The whole family moved to Flora shortly afterwards and I have a record of his marriage to Susanna Peake on the 12th of October, 1870 at the Methodist Church in Flora.

He continued farming with his father, and a son William Edwin was born here but the only record I have for him is that he was killed March 16, 1896 in the St. Louis cyclone. Another son, Charles, was born in Flora in 1873. Hattie E. Free was born May 26, 1877. Unfortunately Susanna Peake died October 15, 1877 and Milton never married again.

Milton must have decided to go out west. The Oklahoma Land Rush had begun and I think that Milton wanted to be a part of it. In Beaver, Oklahoma in 1900 I was able to find the family of Milton with his daughter Hattie, his son Charles, and also his sisters Elisabeth and Mary. Mary is listed as a school teacher, but so is Hattie who would have been 23 at the time. It doesn't show that Milton had acquired any land but his occupation was stock growing, and under the heading it showed that he owned it free with no mortgage. The stock free or the land free? One would need to research the deed to answer that question. Nevertheless, I do have more on his family which went back to Jersey County after Milton died to be with their brother John. John has quite a story also, which I will tell in the future.



The announcement of his death was in his obituary January 6, 1916 in Flora, Illinois. His death occurred on December 27, 1915 and in her notification to the DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR Mary, his sister, said he had been failing for a long time but the end came suddenly. He was 78 years old.

The funeral was held at the residence of James Youngs Durland with interment in Elmwood cemetery, Flora, Illinois.

That is the story of our Civil War ancestor. He enlisted under General Grant in the Union army and he suffered. He was just an ordinary soldier but he obviously believed in the causes of the North, and I'm sure he was aware of how hard Lincoln wanted to save the United States. At that time family lore was handed down through the

generations and the Free family and Elson family had long histories in the making of this nation.

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