



# The Harriet Lane



The Official Newsletter of

Lt. Commander Edward Lea, USN, Camp No. 2 – Houston, Texas

SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

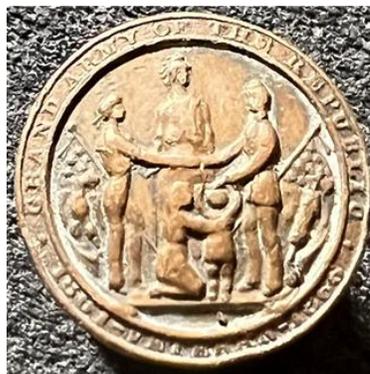
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Volume 31

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Graveside Memorial  
Houston, Texas  
Page 3



The Little Bronze Button  
Houston, Texas  
Page 10



Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran  
Corpus Christi, Texas  
Page 11

## **Features**

- 3        **Graveside Memorial - Capt. Mahlon E. Davis** - The *Lea Camp* conducted a formal memorial ceremony at Glenwood Cemetery in Houston. ... by *Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC*
- 6        **Pre-Veterans Day - 2025** - Ceremony and musket salute at historic Crown Hill Cemetery in Pasadena, Texas. ... by *Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC*
- 7        **Veterans Day - 2025** - Formal Veterans Day ceremonies at Houston City Hall and downtown parade. ... by *Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC*
- 7        **Veterans Day – 2025** - A special Department-wide Zoom session to honor our family Veterans. ... by *John C. Vander Meulen, DSV/C/PCC*
- 10       **The Little Bonze Button** - A poem composed by the Civil War ancestor of Jana Marsh. ... by *Jana L. Marsh, Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1 of Houston, Texas*
- 10       **The Little Bonze Button** - A description of the highly respected symbol of G.A.R. membership. ... by *Camp Cmdr. Daniel B. Pourreau*
- 11       **Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran - Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer** - A veteran of the *Second Battle of Bull Run* develops asthma during his service and eventually migrates to Texas for relief - only to encounter devastating hurricanes. ... by *Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC*
- 18       **Soldier Aliases and Civil War Pensions** - A closer look at some details.

## **Departments**

- 8        **Patriotic Instructor Minute - *Courage and Sacrifice*** - Virtues that define Americans.
- 9        **From the Chaplain's Desk** - Christmas recollections of a veteran of the Irish Brigade.
- 17       **Glimpse of the Past** - Hanging is preferable to an uncomfortable jail, and a popular mule.
- 19       **In Memoriam - Marjorie Sue Lenex** - Sister of *Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1* passes
- 20       **In Memoriam - Jeffrey Rudolph Julio Schurwon** - Son of *Auxiliary* Sister passes.
- 20       **In Memoriam - Robert Lowell Vandegrift** - Father of *Auxiliary* Sister passes.
- 21       **Civil War Medal of Honor Recipients** - Recognizing U.S. Navy Civil War heroes (*part 39*).
- 23       **Trivia: Canteens** - An indispensable item of the soldier.
- 23       **Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lea Camp #2** - 2025 officers, staff, and social media links.
- 24       **Signature Photo** - Additional photo from the Mahlon Davis memorial ceremony.
- 24       **Quote by President Abraham Lincoln** - On the cost of war.

**Cover Image - "From Hampton Roads to Spithead"** - "In an unprecedented international display of U.S. ironclad power, the monitor *USS Miantonomoh* fires one of her mighty 15-inch guns for British dignitaries onboard." - art by *Patrick O'Brien*,

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**Sons of Union Veterans Of the Civil War, Houston, Texas**

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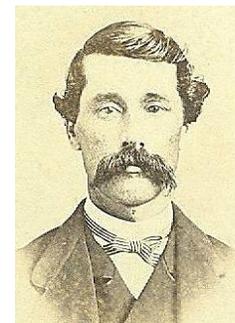
To view previous issues, visit: <https://www.camplea.org/camp-newsletter/>

## Graveside Memorial – Capt. Mahlon E. Davis

**Saturday, November 1, 2025 – Houston, Texas**

Eleven members of *Lt. Edward Lea Camp 2* assembled at the gravesite of Capt. Mahlon E. Davis, a Union army veteran, at Glenwood Cemetery in Houston. They conducted a formal memorial and dedication ceremony for the Civil War veteran who had served as Captain of *Company A, 21<sup>st</sup> U.S.C.T. Infantry*.

Right: **Mahlon E. Davis**



The *Lea Camp* had facilitated the recent installation of a new grave marker for Davis. While an older family grave marker was already in place at the grave, the new marker featured the veterans military service, and was positioned at the foot of the grave.



**Herbert W. Powers placing the Tools of the Soldier at the grave.**



**John C. Vander Meulen approaching to place a small U.S. flag at the grave.**

The *Lea Camp* members were graciously supported by Sisters from *Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1 (Aux.)* and *Sarah Emma Edmonds Detached Tent #4, DUVCW*. Susan Barry (*DUVCW*) read aloud the poem: *When the Boys in Blue Are Gone*, Rebecca Feaster (*DUVCW*) laid an evergreen wreath at the grave, and Lisa Riley (*Aux.*) laid a white rose at the grave.

The following Camp members also participated in ceremonial roles:

- John Vander Meulen served as Master of Ceremonies;
- ‘Steve’ Brock led the *Pledge of Allegiance* and tolled the ceremonial bell as Patriotic Instructor;
- Stephen Schulze performed the Chaplain’s roles;
- Herbert Powers placed the ‘Tools of the Soldier’ at the grave and stood as Grave Guard;
- Robert Riley laid a grapevine wreath at the grave and operated the video recording;
- Drummer William D. Myers set the cadences for the marching and musket salute;
- John Schneider, Jr. served as photographer and music director;
- The 4-man musket firing party: Daniel Poureau, Michael Lance, Cody Holcomb, and Michael Rappe.

The ceremony honoring Capt. Davis was conducted well by all involved.

*... continued on next page*

## Graveside Memorial – Capt. Mahlon E. Davis (continued)



Left: John Vander Meulen, Herbert Powers and Daniel Pourreau listen as Susan Barry, DUVCW, reads the poem: *When the Boys in Blue Are Gone*.

Right: Herbert W. Powers placing the Tools of the Soldier at the grave of Capt. Mahlon Davis.



Right: John C. Vander Meulen advances to place a small U.S. flag at the grave of Capt. Mahlon Davis. Herbert W. Powers posted as armed Grave Guard.

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**Graveside Memorial – Capt. Mahlon E. Davis (continued)**



**\*\* Honor Guard \*\***

**L-R: Herbert W. Powers, Daniel B. Pourreau, Michael L. Lance,  
Michael D. Rappe, Cody N. Holcomb**



**Brothers of Lt. Edward Lea Camp #2, SUVCW and Sisters of the Auxiliary and DUVCW**

**Rest in Peace, comrade Davis!**

*By Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC*

*Photos by Robert G. Riley*

*Additional photo on page 24*

## Pre-Veterans Day - 2025

**Saturday, November 8, 2025 – Pasadena, Texas**

On November 8, 2025, the *Crown Hill Cemetery Association* hosted a pre-Veterans Day ceremony at the historic Crown Hill Cemetery in Pasadena, Texas. The *Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War* was represented at the well-attended event by four members from *Edward Lea Camp #2* of Houston: Camp Commander Daniel B. Pourreau; Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC; Robert G. Riley; and Richard J. Carson, Jr.

After a few memorial speeches and a rifle salute by a 3-man unit from *American Legion Post 521*, the event attendees ceremoniously placed flowers at 18 veteran gravesites scattered around the cemetery. The veterans thus honored had served in five different wars, plus one who had served during peacetime. Two of the five Civil War gravesites were of Union veterans, Milton H. Lakin and Horace G. Plumb. These two Union graves were the focus of the *Lea Camp* contingent. Brother Riley rendered honors at the Plumb headstone by laying flowers and saluting (*below right*), and Cmdr. Pourreau did likewise at the Lakin headstone (*below left*). Following a biographical reading by Bobby Dover of the *Association* about veteran Lakin, a 3-volley musket salute was offered by Michael Lance (*below center*).



By Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC

Photos by Richard J. Carson

## Veterans Day - 2025

### Saturday, Nov 11, 2025 – Houston, Texas

The annual Veterans Day ceremony at City Hall in downtown Houston was once again punctuated by a thunderous salute by a combined unit of blue-clad musketeers. The squad was commanded by Tommy Attaway of the *Texas Rifles*. Cody N. Holcomb and Michael L. Lance of *Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lea Camp #2* formed up with Howard Rose and Roy Eanes of *Co. A, 13<sup>th</sup> Reg't U.S. Infantry* to provide 3 musket volleys near the end of the formal Veterans Day program.

After the program on the steps and plaza just outside City Hall concluded, Holcomb and Lance stowed their muskets in order to carry flags as the Honor Guard transformed into a Color Guard for the downtown parade. Although the unit was small, it marched the route with precision and class. The flag-waving crowds lining the streets cheered as the Union Color Guard marched by. The images below were captured by local news networks.



... by Michael L. Lance, PDC/PCC

### Tuesday, Nov 11, 2025 – Veterans Day in Texas

In an effort to celebrate and remember the veterans in our collective families, Dept. Sr. Vice-Commander and two-term past *Lea Camp* Commander John Vander Meulen hosted a special Zoom session for any and all Brothers of the Department who are veterans or have family members who are, or were, military veterans. About a dozen Brothers attended the virtual meeting.

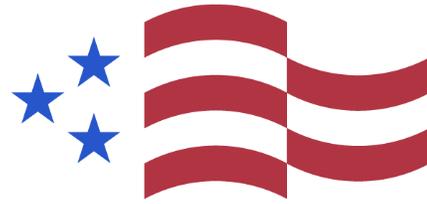
Most of the attendees had previously submitted images of themselves in uniform, or of their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or Civil War Union ancestors. Brother Vander Meulen then created a special video montage with those photographs, and presented the memorial compilation during the session, much to the delight of those in attendance. Each Brother was then given a few minutes to tell the story of their veteran family member and then interact with each other through questions and comments.

... by John C. Vander Meulen, Dept. SVC



## Patriotic Instructor Minute

**Courage and Sacrifice** – I’ve talked on a few occasions about courage and sacrifice, but I believe it’s something we must be reminded of from time to time. The dictionary defines courage as ‘*The mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty*’, or as John Wayne would say, “*Courage is being afraid, but saddling up anyway.*”



## COURAGE & SACRIFICE

Aristotle said courage is the ‘*Ultimate virtue*’. Without it there are no other virtues. If people aren’t courageous, you don’t have honesty, justice, wonder, or beauty. I’ve heard it said courage is doing the right thing when you don’t know how it’s going to work out. It’s committing yourself to the right course of action regardless of the costs associated with it.

We usually associate courage with battlefield exploits. But that’s not necessarily the case. It took courage to tame the West, when people travelled in covered wagons across vast plains and prairies, not knowing what lay ahead of them. Or it’s Apollo astronauts sitting atop a Saturn V rocket knowing it could explode on takeoff. It took courage for our Civil War ancestors to leave their farms, homes, and families to fight for a righteous cause, not knowing what the outcome would be.

Fast forward from the Civil War to World War II and you have countless stories of courageous young men and women. People who are students of history are well aware of the exploits of a young Audie Murphy (*near right*) in Europe, and John Basilone (*far right*) in the Pacific; just to name two individuals who displayed unbelievable courage under fire.



On June 6, 1944, courage and sacrifice took on a whole new meaning. Thirty-four men from the small town of Bedford, Virginia, population 3,200, landed on Omaha Beach. They were part of Company A, 116<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and were in the first wave to hit the beach that day. Nineteen boys from this rural town died during the first few bloody minutes of D-Day. Later in the Normandy Campaign, three more of these boys would die from gunshot wounds. A total of twenty-two young men out of thirty-four from this small community paid the ultimate sacrifice. Their story is told in the book ‘*The Bedford Boys*’. The book is not only the story of those courageous young men, but also about the friends and families they left behind. It’s the story of one small American town that went to war and died on Omaha Beach.

Courage and sacrifice are virtues that have helped define us as Americans. Today I see young men and women who are standing up for good and right against great adversity.... and that gives me great hope for the future of our country!



... by Ronald ‘Steve’ Brock, Camp Patriotic Instructor

## From the Chaplain's Desk

Christmas was not established as a national holiday in the U.S. until after the Civil War. It was celebrated widely in the Confederacy but was avoided by many of the descendants of the Puritan and Lutheran churches at the time. One group which did celebrate were the Roman Catholic troops and we can get an idea of how that looked through the eyes of David Conyngham, a member of the *Irish Brigade*.

*"Near one of the huge fires a kind of arbor was nicely constructed of the branches of trees, which were so interwoven on one another as to form a kind of wall. Inside this, some were seated on logs, some reclining in true Turkish style. Seated near the fire was Johnny Flaherty, discoursing sweet music from his violin. Johnny hailed from Boston; was a musical genius, in his way, and though only fourteen years of age, could play on the bagpipes, piano, and Heaven knows how many other instruments; beside him sat his father, fingering the chanter of a bagpipe in elegant style. It is no wonder that most of the regiment were gathered around there, for it was Christmas Eve, and home-thoughts and home-longings were crowding on them; and old scenes and fancies would arise with sad and loving memories, until the heart grew weary, and even the truest and tenderest longed for home associations this blessed Christmas Eve."*

This was Christmas Eve in Camp California, Virginia for the regiments of the *Irish Brigade*: the 63<sup>rd</sup>, 69<sup>th</sup>, and 88<sup>th</sup> NYSV. David Conyngham recorded this in his history of the regiment. It is the only mention of bagpipes with the brigades history, and these were played by the father of a member of the brigade and were most likely Irish Uilleann pipes rather than the great Highland bagpipes of Scotland. This was the "innocent" Christmas before the complete horror of the war descended on the soldiers of the regiment - and the entire country.

*"No wonder if, amidst such scenes, the soldier's thought fled back to his home, to his loved wife, to the kisses of his darling child, to the fond Christmas greetings of his parents, brothers, sisters, friends, until his eyes were dimmed with the dews of the heart. The exile feels a longing desire, particularly at Christmas times, for the pleasant, genial firesides and loving hearts of home. How many of that group will, ere another Christmas comes round, sleep in a bloody and nameless grave! Generous and kind hands may smooth the dying soldier's couch; or he may linger for days, tortured by thirst and pain, his festering wounds creeping with maggots, his tongue swollen, and a fierce fever festering up his body as he lies out on that dreary battle-field; or, perhaps, he has dragged himself beneath the shade of some pine to die by inches, where no eye but God's and his pitying angels' shall see him, where no human aid can succor him. Years afterwards, some wayfarer may discover a skeleton with the remains of a knapsack under the skull. This is too often the end of the soldier's dreams of glory, and all "The pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war." It is but a short transition from love, and hope, and life, to sorrow and death. Another Christmas, and many a New England cottage, and many a home along the Rhine and the Shannon, will be steeped in affliction for the loving friends who have laid their bones on the battle-fields of Virginia."*



Like all of the other soldiers and sailors in the war, the Irish Brigade would suffer greatly, and the subsequent Christmases would be far less joyous and filled with longing for home and for comrades lost to the terrors of war. But even then, the glimmer of hope brought by the joyous season would arise wishing "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."



... by Rt. Rev. Stephen F. Duncan, Camp Chaplain

## The Little Bronze Button

While many of our comrades have gone to their home, And lay peacefully under the sod;  
A remnant is left yet under the dome, Still spared by the mercies of God.

We love and we greet each other with smiles, As we think of our former great cares;  
When we think of our marches of hundred of miles, When we think of the battlefield there.

'Tis years since we stood in the Union ranks, And bared our breast to the rebel shot;  
And earned a nation's grateful thanks, On battlefields and conflicts hot.

After the lapse of all these years, Since we left the Union ranks;  
Whether we meet in smiles or tears, We can't help thinking of our boyish pranks.

When we fought in the ranks for our country's life, And shed our blood for liberty cause;  
And faithfully stood in the front of the strife, To honor our nation and preserve its laws.

We earned the right neath the flag we bore, As we heard the small shot and cannon roar;  
And the thousands of bullet that fly in the air, And our comrades fell like grass by the mower.

This little bronze button what memories old, Comes up when we see its face;  
How battles and sieges and charges bold, And faces of comrades will interlace.

How the eye will brighten of a comrade dear, When this little bronze button he sees;  
We know that a friend we have met here, At home, on land, or on sea.

... This poem was composed by Pvt. William Reynolds of Company F, 16<sup>th</sup> Indiana Mounted Infantry (Aug 1862-Jun 1865) - great-great-grandfather of Jana Marsh of Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1, Houston, Texas.

The Little Brown (Bronze) Button (*image at right*) was worn by members of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) in their lapel button holes after 1884. The 1902 *Grand Army Blue Book (Rules and Regs, pg. 235)* states:

"117<sup>6</sup> *The Grand Army Button.* – The following resolution was adopted by the Encampment at Minneapolis. (See page 139, *Journal, 1884*):

"Resolved, That the Council of Administration shall ask for designs for a small pin or button, that may be worn and acknowledged as a mark of membership, and when a design is offered that meets its approval, the same shall be promulgated in orders, and become a recognized badge under such regulations as may be deemed advisable by the Commander-in-Chief and Council of Administration.

"In accordance therewith the Council adopted the design for a button... to be worn in the upper button-hole on left lapel of coat."



If you burnish a G.A.R. bronze button as bright as you can, then take a magnifying glass, you may read around the upper edge these words, "Grand Army of the Republic." On the lower edge you can find, "1861 – Veteran – 1866". Within this border there stands the Goddess of Liberty. In front, at her right and left, there are a soldier and a sailor joining hands. On the ground between them, there is a kneeling slave mother with her child pleading with them, in the name of the Goddess, to protect them in their newly found liberty. Back of the group, at your left, is a flag and the eagle, Liberty Bird, and at your right, another flag.

... submitted by Camp Cmdr. Daniel B. Pourreau

## Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran – Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer

Edward J. Kilmer was born November 26, 1843 in Carlisle township, Schoharie County, New York. He was the eldest of seven children born to New York natives, farmer Jeremiah C. Kilmer and Catherine Vrooman. Edward later related that, as a boy, he had his share of “hoeing, haying and hickory.”

In 1859, at age 15, Edward traveled west about 320 miles to Fredonia in far western New York to live with his widowed aunt, Mrs. Emma Kilmer-Pond. He attended school there and remained with his aunt in Fredonia for a little more than a year.

By July 1860, Edward was 16 years old and had returned southward to live again with his parents. The Kilmer family had relocated to Greenfield township on the Monongahela River in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania – about five miles southeast of Pittsburg. Edward continued his schooling.

On April 21, 1862, after the Civil War had been raging for a year, Edward traveled nearly 300 miles east to enlist with the Union Army at Honesdale, Pennsylvania. He served as a Private with *Company G, 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry*. In July 1862, Edward was with Gen. George B. McClellan’s forces at the grueling *Harrison’s Landing* encampment in Virginia. He also participated in the *Second Battle of Bull Run* the following month.

Edward was reportedly wounded at the *Second Battle of Bull Run* and also suffered a bout of pneumonia. As a side effect of the pneumonia, he developed asthma. This combination of ailments effectively ended Edward’s military career. He “became very ill and was sent to *Finlay Hospital at Washington*. Soon after was transferred to the hospital at *Point Lookout, Maryland*, where the physicians pronounced him unable to perform further army service and he was discharged in January, 1863.” No information has been found to verify his supposed battle wound.

A few years after returning home, Edward “learned the carpenter and stair- builders’ trade”, which he would continue for most of his life. In August 1867, Edward began his own family by marrying Frances Ann Smith of Auburn, Pennsylvania. They eventually became the parents of four children, namely: William Arthur Kilmer, Effie Blanche Kilmer, Elsie May Kilmer, and Susie Ellen Kilmer.



Edward and Frances settled in the East-central Pennsylvania town of Wilkes-Barre in Luzerne County. Their first child, William, was born there in 1869. In June 1870, Edward was 26 years old and employed as a carpenter and, according to the 1870 federal census, Frances was 23 years old. Baby William was a 1-year-old toddler.

*Left: Faded photo of Edward J. Kilmer*

On October 17, 1872, Edward and Frances celebrated the birth of their first daughter, Effie Blanche Kilmer. She was also born in Wilkes-Barre and later married William Clinton Barton. That marriage resulted in the birth of at least one child, Frances Emily Barton, who was born in 1893.

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## Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran – Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer *(continued)*

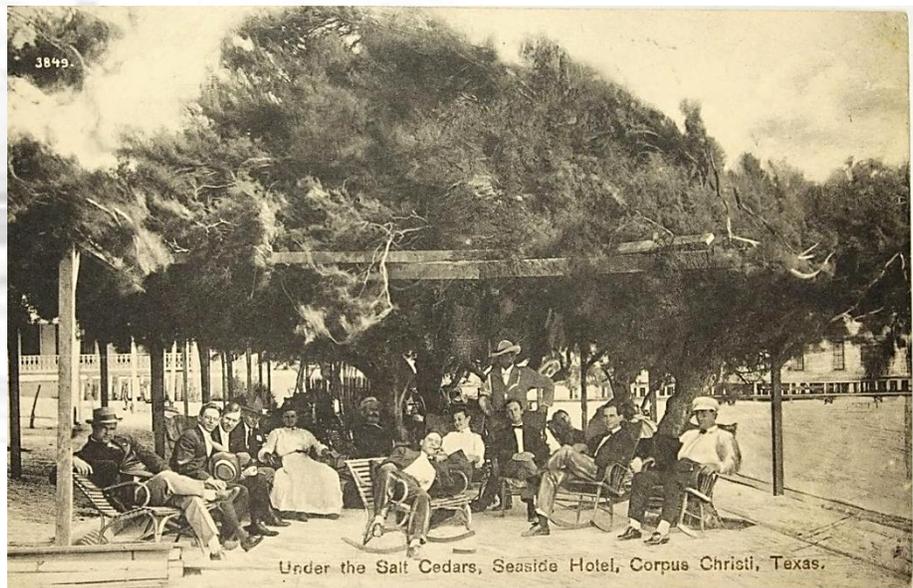
The *Wilkes-Barre City Directory* for 1873 lists Edward as a “*carpenter and stairbuilder*”, who lived at “*Sherman and Market*” streets. His parents and four younger siblings were still farming on the Kilmer homestead in Greenfield township in Luzerne County - roughly 50 miles to the north.

The June 1880 federal census indicates the Edward Kilmer family still lived in Wilkes-Barre, but had moved to 220 South Main St. They probably needed larger lodgings because they had added another youngster to the family. Baby ‘Elsie’ Kilmer was listed as 4 months old [*sic*] and had been born in January. Edward was 37 years old and, according to the census, was affiliated somehow with a candy store. Two of Edward’s unmarried siblings had also joined the household, Ben Kilmer, a 20-year-old painter, and 17-year-old ‘Susey’ Kilmer, a white goods seamstress. Baby Elsie May Kilmer would survive to adulthood and later marry John L. Hull. At least three children resulted from that union.

In 1881, after being advised to find a warmer climate due to health issues, Edward and Frances decided to move south. They chose the city of Corpus Christi on the Texas Gulf Coast – a bold move indeed! Once in Texas, Edward continued working as a master carpenter and “*built fine furniture, cabinets, and many early Corpus Christi homes.*”

For his own family, Edward “*built a fine home on the water near Palo Alto Street, a block north of the Pier Pavilion. It was on piers for storm protection. He planted salt Cedars along the shoreline. The shady grove beside the Bayshore Hotel was one of the favorite resting places for tourists. Kilmer improved the area into a park, and his own yard was a popular gathering spot for domino players.*”

Daughter Susie Ellen Kilmer was born the following year, on November 14, 1882. She would also reach adulthood and marry Edward H. Johnson in 1906, becoming the mother of at least four children.



**Postcard with the caption,  
“Under the Salt Cedars, Seaside Hotel, Corpus Christi, Texas”  
July 1910**

During the 1880’s, railroad construction in Texas was at its apex. Edward recognized an opportunity and decided to try his hand at this line of work. He utilized his engineering skills to participate in the expansion of the *International-Great Northern Railroad*, which eventually built a line linking Corpus Christi to the border of Mexico

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## Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran – Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer *(continued)*

at Laredo. Around 1890, Edward and his son, William, traveled to northeastern Mexico to work on the Mexican railroad system. Unfortunately, 21-year-old William took ill and died of smallpox in Saltillo, Mexico on April 20, 1890. A Mexican death record indicates William's remains were taken to Saint Esteban cemetery in Saltillo. Edward returned home to Corpus Christi, ending his railroading career.

On November 23, 1891, Edward filed for a military pension from Texas based on his Civil War service with *Co. G, 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry*. He successfully obtained a pension under Certificate No. 798792.

In 1892, Union army veterans living in and around Corpus Christi organized a local Post of the *Grand Army of the Republic [G.A.R.]*. The Post was named in honor of Brig. Gen. Edmund Jackson Davis, who was a Union army officer and later served as the 14<sup>th</sup> governor of Texas (1870-1874). Edward was very likely a Charter member of that local Post since he attended the annual Encampment of the *Department of Texas* at El Paso as a Delegate representing *Davis Post 54* of Corpus Christi in March 1892.

*Right: Brig. Gen. Edmund Jackson Davis*



As an army veteran and a member of the *Grand Army of the Republic*, Edward was apparently compelled to order military headstones for several U.S. veterans buried in Corpus Christi. During the week of May 20, 1893, Edward supervised the installation of fourteen headstones for soldiers who had died between 1856 and 1891.

In November 1893, the *Corpus Christi Weekly Caller* newspaper reported, in part....

*“Through the instrumentality of Mr. E. J. Kilmer... fourteen tombstones have arrived in Corpus Christi, to be placed at the head of the graves of the United States soldiers buried in the cemeteries of this city. These stones are each 3 feet high, 4 inches thick, and 10 inches wide....”*

*Right: One of the 14 military headstones ordered and installed by Edward J. Kilmore in 1893, this one at Holy Cross Cemetery in Corpus Christi.*



Edward must have been esteemed by the members of *Davis Post 54*, because in 1894, they again elected him as a voting Delegate to represent them at the next annual encampment of the *Department of Texas*. The 1894 meeting was held in Dublin, Texas, but Edward was unable to attend.

Edward also continued to improve his Texas homestead. One major project likely created another source of income for him, augmenting his military pension and carpentry earnings. He *“built a pier out from his house and put a cottage on it. He used it for a workshop for a while, then lived there and rented out the big house.”*

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## Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran – Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer *(continued)*

During the presidential campaign of 1896, one of the major debates of the day was: would the country be better off with a 'Free Silver' currency system (favored by the Democrats) or with the 'Gold Standard' system (favored



by the Republicans)? Edward delved into the hot debate by crafting "an admirable treatise on the currency question wherein he covered debated points cleverly and clearly, demonstrating himself an attentive student of the subject. It was very favorably commented on by the local press, and was worthy of a wide circulation." With the election of President William McKinley, a Republican, in 1896, the 'Gold Standard' prevailed for the time being.

When the federal census was taken in June 1900, Edward was 56 years old and still working as a carpenter. He and Frances had been married thirty-three years and owned their home on Water Street in Corpus Christi free and clear. Of their four children, only their son William had passed away. Daughters Elsie and Susie were still living at home, and Effie had married and moved away.

As years passed, Edward continued to be active with the *G.A.R. Post* in Corpus Christi. The *Corpus Christi Weekly Caller* newspaper noted that he was one of 6 men from *Davis Post 54* that conducted *Memorial Day* activities in May 1901. He was also appointed as Post Aide-de-Camp that year.

Then, in 1902, his comrades thought enough of his leadership abilities to elect him as Commander of *Davis Post 54*. He would serve in that capacity for several terms, being elected year after year. Under his leadership, *Davis Post 54* of Corpus Christi continued to thrive, surviving long after many of the other local Texas *G.A.R.* Posts dissolved and faded away.

In 1904, Edward moved into the ranks of the *G.A.R.* Department leadership by being appointed to the important post of Assistant Inspector-General.

In April 1910, the federal census enumerator noted that Edward was then 66 years old and still employed as a home-building contract carpenter. He and Frances were living at 1420 Water Street in Corpus Christi. Their surviving children had all married and moved on. Edward was identified as a U. A. (Union Army) veteran.

As a hobby, Edward apparently enjoyed writing poetry. He "frequently wrote business letters in humorous rhyme. He was a distant cousin of Joyce Kilmer, author of *Trees*. During World War I, he entered a national poetry competition in answer to John McCrae's *In Flanders Field*. He didn't win, but his poem was widely printed." The last verse states:

*The poppies grow, their flowers bloom,  
Where'er there's soil their roots find room;  
Their leaves grow green, their flowers bloom red,  
The soil enriched by blood you shed;  
Colors that bloom above your head  
Proclaim the graves of honored dead  
In Flanders field.*

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## Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran – Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer *(continued)*

In April 1916, during the 31<sup>st</sup> annual Encampment of the *Department of Texas, G.A.R.* at San Antonio, Edward was elected by his peers to the 5-man Department Council of Administration. He was 72 years old. This was a position of great honor, reserved for the most highly respected and competent members of the Department. The *General Order* that announced his election noted that he was living at 1404 Water Street in Corpus Christi. However, a few months later, Edward would be distracted from his G.A.R. duties by a major weather event.

In August 1916, a Category 4 hurricane made landfall near Corpus Christi. It severely damaged some of Edward's property. The *"storm destroyed his pier and cottage, but the house was left undamaged."* The storm widely destroyed docks, toppled telegraph poles, and claimed at least twenty lives. But even though Edward had passed his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday, he *"repaired the damage done to his private park."*

The 1916 hurricane also washed away many of the salt cedars growing along the coastline, many of which were likely planted by Edward. Those trees were supposedly *"the pride of Corpus Christi,"* providing shade and a peaceful ambiance to the area, but *"maybe that was for the best, since salt cedars are an invasive species in Texas"*

In early September 1919, Edward traveled to his old hometown of Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania for a visit with his younger brother, Benjamin Kilmer, who lived at 65 Carey Ave. His unmarried sister, Carrie Kilmer, was also living in the household, so it turned out to be a mini-family reunion. It is not known if Edward's wife, Frances, accompanied him to Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, while Edward was in Pennsylvania, another powerful storm was brewing off the coast of Florida. It also soon developed into a Category 4 hurricane, crossed the Florida Keys, and headed across the Gulf of Mexico directly towards the Texas Gulf Coast. By the time the storm reached Corpus Christi on September 14, it had increased in size, but its intensity had decreased to Category 3, with sustained winds of 115 mph.

The greatest threat from that hurricane was the devastating storm surge it produced. The roiling waters rose 16 feet in places as it swept ashore at Corpus Christi. It was the highest storm surge on record in the area at the time. Hundreds of people were swept out into Nueces Bay after their homes were demolished. The exact death toll is believed to be over 500, with many victims unidentifiable, and thus not included in the final count.



**Corpus Christi, Texas – After the Storm, 1919.**

*... continued on next page*

## Spotlight on a G.A.R. Veteran – Pvt. Edward J. Kilmer *(continued)*

Edward's property was once again badly battered by a hurricane. Fortunately, he had not yet returned from his sojourn to Pennsylvania. Reports of the devastation did reach him, but he *"could not conceive of such damage and refused to believe it. When he returned home and looked at the desolation, he took to his bed. There was no longer any poetry in his heart. Three weeks later, he was dead."*

Edward died in Corpus Christi at 8:00 p.m. on December 20, 1919. His final illness was due to his lingering asthma affliction, aggravated by bronchopneumonia – and some say *"of a broken heart."* He was 76 years and 24 days old, and was laid to rest three days later in Rose Hill Memorial Park Cemetery in Corpus Christi.

Not long after his death, Frances, now a 72-year-old widow, moved in with her married daughter, Elsie Kilmer-Hull and family, at 1702 Howard St. in Corpus Christi.

On January 13, 1920, Frances filed for a Widow's pension based on her late husband's military service. She successfully secured a pension under Certificate No. 888273. Her move into her daughter's home must have kept her well occupied. The January 1920 federal census indicates both her daughter and her daughter's husband, John Hull, were employed outside the home. Elsie worked as a 'grocery store merchant' and John was a 'city laundry inspector.' That left Frances at home to manage five Hull grandchildren - as well as Elsie's 86-year-old mother-in-law, Bridget Hull!

Widow Frances Kilmer survived many years following Edward's death. She passed away in 1938 at age 89 and was laid to rest beside him in Rose Hill Memorial Park in Corpus Christi.

Daughter Elsie May Kilmer-Hull eventually moved from Corpus Christi to live in Kerrville, Texas. She died in Kerrville in 1963 at age 83. Her remains were returned to Corpus Christi to be buried next to her parents in Rose Hill Memorial Park.

Daughter, Susie Ella Kilmer-Johnson, also lived a long life. She died in 1964 at age 81, and was also buried in the Kilmer plot in Rose Hill Memorial Park. Daughter Effie Blanche Kilmer-Barton passed away in 1956 in San Antonio, Texas at age 83. She was laid to rest at San Fernando Cemetery #3 in San Antonio.

### ***Rest in Peace, Private Edward J. Kilmer – You Are Remembered!***

**Note:** Another man with a similar name, Edward J. Killmer, also lived in Corpus Christi. He should not be confused with the subject of this biographical sketch. Edward J. Killmer was born in Texas in 1850, married Ellen Adams in 1877, and died in 1929 in Alice, Texas of heart failure at age 78.

By contrast, our subject, Edward J. Kilmer, was born in New York in 1843, married Francis Ann Smith in 1867, and died in 1919 in Corpus Christi, Texas of asthma and bronchopneumonia at age 74.



Written by Michael L. Lance, PDC  
Dept./Lea Camp #2 Historian

Research by Terry T. Sutton  
Dept./Lea Camp #2 Graves Regis. Officer



## Glimpse of the Past – Hangings and Mules

The following excerpts are based on accounts in 'True Stories of Old Houston and Houstonians: Historical and Personal Sketches', assembled by Dr. S. O. Young of Houston, Texas, pgs. 7 and 15, which are viewable online at ['The Portal to Texas History'](#).

**Early Hangings in Houston** - It is an historical fact that at the first session of court held in Harrisburg County, as Harris County was then called, two men were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. It is stated that those two men were hanged immediately because the jail was uncomfortably cold and the kind-hearted judge did not want the prisoners to suffer unduly.



The court sentence is true, no doubt, but the story about the jail being too uncomfortable must be taken with a large pinch of salt, since there was no jail to be uncomfortable. The first jail was not built for at least two years after the date of that incident. By the way, that first jail was a curiosity. It had neither windows or doors. It was simply a one-story log house with a flat roof. On its top was a trap door. This door was raised, a ladder was lowered down inside, and the prisoner climbed down into the jail. Then the ladder was withdrawn, the trap closed, and the prisoner was left to meditate on his sins.

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**Hood's Brigade's Mascot** – During the winter of 1869, I was sitting in the reading room of the old St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans, when I saw in a stray copy of the *Houston Telegraph* the following startling headline: "DEATH OF JAMES LONGSTREET." Naturally, I supposed that General James Longstreet, the great Confederate general and the loved and admired leader of the Texas brigade in Virginia was the Longstreet referred to. I read the article eagerly and was relieved to find that it was the death of a famous mule rather than that of the famous general that was chronicled. That mule was famous indeed, for it had the distinction of being the 'mascot' of Hood's Texas Brigade in the army of Northern Virginia.

Just where Jim Longstreet came from I never knew. All I know is that Major W. D. Denney, who was commissary of the brigade, owned him as early as 1862 and that Jim was a conspicuous object around the commissary wagons during the four years of the war. Major Denney was killed at Elthams Landing the first time the brigade was under fire, on May 7, 1862, and was succeeded by Major Robert Burns, who fell heir to the mule and also to a big gray horse owned by Major Denney. I mention these facts so as to get Jim Longstreet's war record straight. He shared in the glory of the first battle, though from a safe distance, and laid down his ears at Appomattox. Jim was a beautiful animal. He was about the size of a small Shetland pony, perfectly formed, graceful, quick in his movements and, though by no means lazy, he never did a lick of work in his life. He was a camp follower in the strictest sense of the word, and before the war had continued very long, he was considered the very best authority on the nearness of a fight. At the sound of the first gun Jim would break for the rear and remain there until the trouble was over. He was a great forager and would go off alone on private expeditions, but at the sound of a cannon, he would duck his head and make a bee line for the wagons. His track was about the size of a silver dollar and was easily recognized, so that it frequently served as a guide for the two-legged foragers to find camp. Jim shared in all the hardships through which the army passed, but they seemed to do him good instead of harm, for he was always fat and sassy. He was with the brigade when it went to help Bragg out at Chickamauga and in Tennessee. He followed Lee to Gettysburg and finally, as already remarked, laid down his ears at Appomattox.

## Soldier Aliases and Civil War Pensions

**Why did some soldiers have aliases?** - There is a long list of possible answers. The soldier may have been running from something (like the law, a slave master, or a spouse/family) and didn't want to be found. Or he may have been underage and lied about his age and enlisted without the permission of his parents. Many years later at the prospect of receiving money for his service in the form of a pension, he might 'fess up. Or he may have been a bounty jumper – one who would enlist in a regiment, receive a monetary bounty for enlistment, desert his unit, and enlist again somewhere else (maybe even with the enemy) under a different name.

There were even several hundred women who concealed their identity and enlisted with a man's name – typically in order to stay close to her husband, father, or brother. But the most common reason for aliases wasn't quite so devious. A very large percentage of the enlisted soldiers were illiterate. They didn't know how to spell their name so an adjutant or clerk would guess at the spelling based on its sound. This was complicated by the fact that many of the soldiers were immigrants and may have had a thick accent or spoke only broken English. Their names may have been translated or Anglicized by the soldier or the clerk.

Keep in mind that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, spelling was just not the priority that we think of it today. Many people would spell their name in different ways over the course of their lifetime – or sometimes even within the same document! When it came to qualifying for a pension, however, they would be highly-motivated to resolve any such inconsistencies in army documents. A pension file for someone who used an alias, therefore, usually includes an explanation and often testimonials from other parties about the various names by which the soldier was known.

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**Civil War Pension Language** - an 'Invalid Pension Application' does NOT mean that the application was "not valid." Instead, the word is used as a noun referring to a disabled veteran, i.e., an invalid. But even that definition is misleading, because some veterans who received pensions were not disabled in any way. Before 1900, the terms "soldier," "survivor," "veteran," and "invalid" were used interchangeably.

"Application" vs. "Certificate" – Any person could apply for a Civil War pension - and more than two million did. Upon the receipt of an application, the Federal government assigned it a unique Application Number (*sometimes known as the "Original" number*). If the application was approved and a pension was granted, it was assigned a unique 'Certificate' Number. Both types of numbers were assigned sequentially, but the numbering systems were independent and overlapped – so 'App. #519021' is very different than 'Cert. #519021.'

A four- or five-digit Application Number was issued very early - probably indicating that the veteran's service ended before the end of the war. Conversely, a seven-digit Application Number likely means that the veteran applied around the turn of the century (*some 40 years after the war*) or later. Other informational clues can be found in the pension certificate numbers, including:

A pension certificate number with an 'R' (i.e. R-20379) was for a civilian government employee (e.g., a civilian teamster), who retired before 1934. A certificate number beginning with an 'A' (i.e. A-7-24-30) reflects an approval date for an applicant who lived beyond 1934. A number with a 'C' indicates a veteran's pension file that was administered by the VA after 1934. An 'XC' refers to a widow/dependent's pension file that was administered by the Veteran's Administration after 1934, and the 'X' indicates the veteran had died.

Some pension index cards will reflect cross-references to other files. For instance, if a soldier's widow has received his pension but then she remarries another veteran, there may be a second relevant pension file and the two files should cross-reference each other.

The bottom line is, there are many clues that can be found on a simple pension index card – without even pulling the full pension file.

Source: <https://gopherrecords.com>

## In Memoriam – Marjorie Sue Lenes

Marjorie Sue Lenes, loving wife of *Lea Camp* member, John ‘Pete’ Lenes, passed away quietly on Nov 20, 2025. A native Texan, Sue, as she preferred to be called, was born in Goose Creek in eastern Harris County in Nov 1936. She was active in several organizations, including the *Military Wives Club Auxiliary*, *Daughters of the American Revolution* (George Washington Chapter of Galveston), and was a Sister of *Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1* of the *Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War*. As a member of the *SUVCW Auxiliary*, Sue attended many *Lea Camp* monthly meetings and cheerfully provided support and assistance during other *Lea Camp* activities.

A beautiful memorial service was held for Sister Sue on Dec 13, 2025 at Crowder Funeral Home in Dickinson, Texas. The service was attended by many friends and family, including members of *Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1* and *Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lea Camp #2*. Brothers Daniel Pourreau, John Vander Meulen, and Michael Lance were present to honor Sister Sue and to lend support to *Auxiliary* Sisters Vali Reyes, Jana Marsh, Norma Pollard, and Mary Gillaspia. Even though Sister Sue is no longer with us, she will always be remembered for the always cheerful and exuberant person she was.... *and will be greatly missed.*



**10<sup>th</sup> Annual Auxiliary**

President's Tea  
Apr 22, 2017

**Edward Lea Camp #2 Meetings**

Feb 14 2017

Apr 11, 2017

Jul 11, 2017

**Auxiliary meeting**

Mar 4, 2019

**Pete and Sue Lenes**

Dec 13, 2016



**R.I.P Sister Sue!**

## In Memoriam – Jeffrey Rudolph Julio “Jeff” Schurwon



It is with deep sadness that I announce the passing of my son, Jeffrey Rudolph Julio “Jeff” Schurwon, who entered eternal rest on Aug 18, 2025. Jeffrey was born May 12, 1975, in Texas City, Texas

### Jeffrey Rudolph Julio ‘Jeff’ Schurwon

Jeff built a career in restaurant management, where his dedication and hard work left a lasting impact. He spent many years with Gaido’s, served 14 years with The Spot, and most recently worked at Buffalo Wild Wings. Known for his infectious laugh and a smile that could light up any room, Jeff brought joy to all who knew him. He was an avid music lover, a movie enthusiast, and a passionate sports fan. He especially

loved cheering on the Houston Astros, Dallas Cowboys, and Chicago Cubs. Golf was another favorite pastime, and he enjoyed playing in many work-related tournaments. He was also a fabulous cook.

Jeff was preceded in death by his father, Rudy T. Schurwon, Jr., and is survived by his sisters, Terri Spencer and Annette Cordova; his beloved aunts and uncles, Mary and Glenn Gillaspia and Julie and Ahmad Sinainejad, as well as nieces, nephews, cousins, and many treasured lifelong friends.



A visitation was held Aug 21, 2025 at Crowder Funeral Home in Dickinson, followed by an evening rosary. A graveside service took place Aug 22, 2025 at Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Dickinson.

... by Vali Reyes, President, Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary 1, Houston, Texas

## In Memoriam – Robert Lowell Vandegrift

Robert Lowell Vandegrift passed away Nov 14, 2025, at home in Bountiful, Utah at nearly 97 years old. He was born Nov 27, 1928, in Grand Island, Nebraska. In 1952, at age 23, he married Nancy Lee Willard and they eventually became the parents of seven children, including Jana Lin Vandegrift-Marsh, a long-time member of

*Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary #1* of Houston. Robert’s wife, Nancy, had passed away in 2014.



### Robert and Nancy Vandegrift

As a boy, Robert had lived through the Great Depression and the 1934 Dust Bowl in Nebraska. His family then moved to Salt Lake City where he graduated from West High School. He took on a few jobs, and then enlisted in the Air Force. His first military assignment was at Eglin AFB in Florida. From there he went back to Utah and then up to Alaska. He served almost 4 years in the Air Force in Alaska, Wyoming, and Florida. After moving back to Utah, he joined the Utah Air National Guard and soon established and ran the Utah Air National Guard base theater for many years.

Robert’s hobbies included poetry, lyric-writing, bookbinding, tennis, ping-pong, bowling, writing, and coaching Bountiful Bonnet Ball - which he helped establish in 1975. He also loved family road trips. Robert spent 50-plus years doing genealogy, and had published many personal family histories. He also wrote and produced radio shows and newsletters. He gave to charities because giving always felt necessary to him. Funeral services were held for Robert at Russon Mortuary in Bountiful on Nov 24, 2025, with burial at Camp Williams beside his wife, Nancy.



... by daughter Jana L. Vandegrift-Marsh – Sarah Emma Seelye Auxiliary 1, Houston, Texas

## Civil War Medal of Honor Recipients – U.S. Navy (Part 39)

The *Medal of Honor* is the highest military honor awarded by the United States for personal acts of valor above and beyond the call of duty. It was first awarded during the Civil War after President Lincoln signed a bill on December 21, 1861, containing a provision for the medal for the Navy. It was "to be bestowed upon such petty officers, seamen, landsmen, and Marines as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry and other seamanlike qualities during the present war."

Right: **Navy Version of the original Medal of Honor (1862)**



*Editor's note: With this issue of the Harriet Lane, in honor of Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lea, USN - the namesake of our Camp, I am continuing to present a review of the recipients of the Medal of Honor who served in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War.*

➤ **William Nichols - Quartermaster** – William 'Barzilla' Nichols was born in 1837 in New York City. He was still living in New York when he joined the U.S. Navy. During the Civil War he served as a Quartermaster on the *USS Brooklyn*. During the *Battle of Mobile Bay* on August 5, 1864, he "fought his gun with skill and courage" despite heavy fire. For this action, he was awarded the *Medal of Honor*. After his discharge from the Navy, Nichols re-enlisted with the U.S. Army, serving with *Company E, 10<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry* at Fort Fetterman in Wyoming Territory from 1865 to 1868.

In March 1876, Nichols married Carrie Albacksno in Douglas Co., Minnesota. They settled in Alexandria, Minnesota where he worked as a carpenter. Nichols died in Nov 1891 in Alexandria at age 54 and was buried at Kinkhead Cemetery in Alexandria.

Right: **Faded image of Willim 'Barzilla' Nichols**



In April 2025, Col. William Covill Camp 55, Department of Wisconsin, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War conducted a graveside dedication ceremony for Nichols at Kinkead Cemetery.

Nichol's *Medal of Honor* citation states:

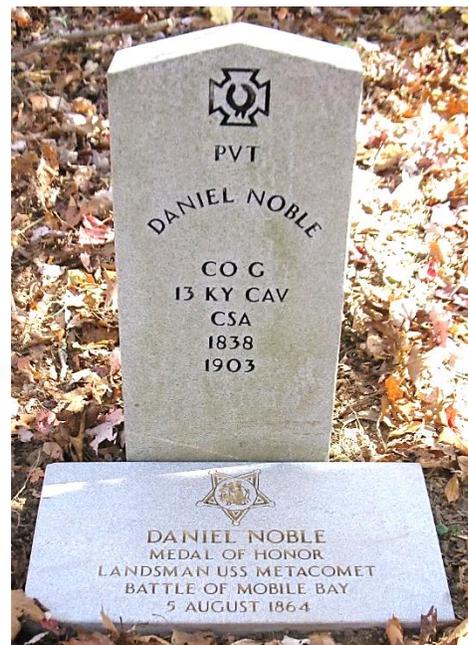
*The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Quartermaster William Nichols, United States Navy, for extraordinary heroism in action while serving on board the U.S.S. Brooklyn during successful attacks against Fort Morgan, rebel gunboats and the ram Tennessee, in Mobile Bay, Alabama, on 5 August 1864. Despite severe damage to his ship and the loss of several men on board as enemy fire raked her decks from stem to stern, Quartermaster Nichols fought his gun with skill and courage throughout the furious battle which resulted in the surrender of the prize rebel ram Tennessee, and in the damaging and destruction of batteries at Fort Morgan.*



... continued on next page

## Civil War Medal of Honor Recipients – U.S. Navy (Part 39 continued)

- **Daniel Noble - Landsman** – Daniel Noble was born in 1838 in Breathitt County, Kentucky. In Sep 1862, he enlisted as a Private in the Confederate Army in Breathitt County. He served in *Company G, 13<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Cavalry*, which later became the *10<sup>th</sup> Regiment Kentucky Infantry*. In July 1863, Noble was captured at Gladeville, Virginia and was sent to Camp Douglas, Illinois as a POW. A few months later, in Dec 1863, he enlisted with the Union Navy. He served as a landsman on the *USS Metacomet*. At the *Battle of Mobile Bay* in Aug 1864, Noble was among the crew of a small boat sent from *Metacomet* to rescue survivors of the *USS Tecumseh*, which had been sunk by a naval mine. He was discharged from the Navy near the end of the war, on Apr 15, 1865. Noble died in 1903 in Wolfe County, Kentucky and was buried in Childers Cemetery in that county. His citation states:



*The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Landsman Daniel Noble, United States Navy, for extraordinary heroism in action while serving as Landsman on board the U.S.S. Metacomet. Landsman Noble served among the boat's crew which went to the rescue of the U.S. Monitor Tecumseh when that vessel was struck by a torpedo in passing enemy forts in Mobile Bay, Alabama, 5 August 1864. Landsman Noble braved the enemy fire which was said by the admiral to be "one of the most galling" he had ever seen and aided in rescuing from death ten of the crew of the Tecumseh, thereby eliciting the admiration of both friend and foe.*

- **Oliver O'Brien - Coxswain** – Oliver Albert O'Brien was born about 1839 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was still living in that city when he joined the U.S. Navy. He served during the Civil War as a Coxswain on the 28-gun wooden 3-masted sailing sloop-of-war, *USS John Adams*. On Nov 28, 1864, O'Brien was involved in the capture of the blockade runner *Beatrice* off Sullivan's Island in Charleston Harbor. He commanded one of the launches which approached and boarded the enemy ship despite heavy fire from Confederate Fort Moultrie. *Beatrice's* equipment was then confiscated and the ship set afire. For these actions, O'Brien was awarded the *Medal of Honor*. He died in 1894 in Gloucester, Massachusetts at age 54-55, and was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Gloucester. His *Medal of Honor* citation states:



*The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Coxswain Oliver Albert O'Brien, United States Navy, for extraordinary heroism in action while serving as Coxswain on board the U.S. Sloop John Adams, Sullivan's Island Channel, South Carolina, 28 November 1864. Taking part in the boarding of the blockade runner Beatrice while under heavy enemy fire from Fort Moultrie, Coxswain O'Brien, who was in charge of one of the boarding launches, carried out his duties with prompt and energetic conduct. This action resulted in the firing of the Beatrice and the capture of a quantity of supplies from her.*

*Additional Navy Medal of Honor recipients will be portrayed in the next issue with Part 40*

## Trivia - Canteens

During the Civil War, canteens were among the most indispensable items carried by Union soldiers. They were issued to nearly every enlisted man. They were designed to provide a portable supply of water, coffee, or other liquids during long marches and active combat, because access to clean water was often uncertain or dangerous.

Most Union canteens were made of tin, though some were constructed from wood staves bound with metal hoops. To reduce noise and glare, they were commonly covered with gray or blue cloth. While standardized by the federal government, variations in shape and construction existed, especially early in the war, reflecting rapid wartime production and supply shortages.

The importance of the canteen cannot be overstated. Dehydration was a constant threat, particularly during summer campaigns such as those in Virginia or the Deep South. Soldiers frequently filled their canteens at rivers, wells, or rain barrels, sometimes adding coffee grounds or whiskey to mask unpleasant tastes. Despite these efforts, contaminated water commonly contributed to widespread illness.

Union soldiers often personalized their canteens by carving their names, dates, or unit designations into the metal or wooden surfaces. These markings transformed utilitarian objects into personal artifacts. After the war, many veterans preserved their canteens as mementos, symbols of endurance and shared sacrifice.

Today, Union Civil War canteens serve as valuable historical artifacts. They offer insight into daily soldier life, military supply systems, and the physical demands placed on those who fought. Simple in design yet vital in function, the Union canteen stands as a powerful reminder that survival in war often depended on the most basic necessities.

## 2025 Camp Officers, Staff, and Social Media Links

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Camp Council	<b>Thomas F. Coughlin</b>		
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Historian	<b>Michael L. Lance</b>	Color Bearer/Drummer	<b>William D. Myers</b>
Guide	<b>Michael L. Lance</b>	MOLLUS Coordinator	<b>Harrison G. Moore IV</b>
Signals Officer	<b>John C. Vander Meulen</b>	JROTC Coordinator	<b>Daniel B. Poureau</b>
Scout Coord.	<b>Ben C. Bonnett</b>	Graves Regis. Officer	<b>Terry T. Sutton</b>
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Webmaster	<b>Robert G. Riley</b>	G.A.R. Records Officer	<b>Herbert W. Powers</b>
Guard	<b>Robert G. Riley</b>		
Website	<a href="#">Houston Camp</a>	Website	<a href="#">Department of Texas &amp; Louisiana</a>
Facebook	<a href="#">Houston Camp</a>	Facebook	<a href="#">Department of Texas &amp; Louisiana</a>

**Signature Photo** (continued from page 5)



**Graveside Memorial for Capt. Mahlon E. Davis  
Glenwood Cemetery, Houston, Texas**

*Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lea Camp #2*

**L-R: Ronald 'Steve' Brock, Stephen D. Schulze, William D. 'Bill' Myers, John E. Schneider, Jr.,  
Cody N. Holcomb, Michael D. Rappe, Robert G. Riley, Daniel B. Pourreau,  
John C. Vander Meulen, Michael L. Lance, and Herbert W. Powers.**

**"Fondly do we hope—ferently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war  
may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth  
piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil  
shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall  
be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three  
thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments  
of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"**

**President Abraham Lincoln**  
Excerpt from his Second Inaugural Address (1865)