

ANCESTOR PROFILE — PVT ISRAEL CHESTER LAMBERT

“A horse must be a bit mad to be a good cavalry mount, and its rider must be completely so.”

Company A, 27th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry - 19 Sep 1862 – 3 Jun 1863

Company E, 2nd New Jersey Cavalry – 15 Aug 1863 – 1 Nov 1865

Israel Chester Lambert was born in Hardwick Township, Warren County, New Jersey in 1835, the first child of Alfred Lambert of Minisink, NY, and Jane Vanover of Warren, NJ. Exactly when and where Israel was born, or the history of the Lamberts in Hardwick Township has been lost to the sands of time. What is recorded is that Israel was the great grandson of revolutionary war patriot Samuel H. Lambert of Scotch Plains, NJ. Samuel enlisted in 1777 and fought the British at the battle of Monmouth in 1778 and the battle of Springfield in 1780.



Stories of Israel’s ancestor were probably told in the cabin as he grew up with his four brothers and three sisters. In 1850, a US Census recorder made it to their cabin in Warren County, near the Delaware River, and noted that Alfred was working as a millwright. Ten years later, Israel, now 25, was no longer living with his parents but was still living in Warren County with his 17-year-old wife Sarah and an 8-year-old named Mary Homadieu. His occupation was listed as carpenter.

A year later, Israel had moved south to Blairstown Township with Sarah and his first son John Alfred. Phillip followed on 9 March 1862, the same day Confederate gunboat CSS *Virginia*, and Union gunboats *Monitor*, *Minnesota*, *Congress*, and *Cumberland* engaged in the battle known as Hampton Roads, “the battle of the ironclads.”

Yet, only five months later, Israel left an expecting Sarah and his two sons behind in Blairstown and walked 17 hours to Camp Frelinghuysen in Newark to enlist with Company A of the 27th NJ Volunteer Infantry regiment.



A month later, Israel's regiment was moved to Washington D.C. by train, arriving on October 11th. On December 1, his unit moved to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to join 100,000 other Union soldiers in preparation of the crossing of the Rappahannock river to attack the confederate stronghold of Fredericksburg on the way to Richmond.

The role of the 27th NJ at the battle of Fredericksburg is murky but they were reportedly engaged at Marye’s Heights “terrible Stone wall”

where 3,000 Union soldiers lost their lives. After this costly defeat, Burnside’s Army of the Potomac

took part in the infamous “Mud March” from Jan 20 to 24 1863. The following is a slightly sarcastic letter from a soldier from the 27th NJVI about the march:

“We were warned to be ready to fall in within 10 minutes to start. So, we had no alternative but to tear off our tent covers although it rained and was muddy as it well could, but off we went, we marched about 8 miles & at dark stopped in a pine forest about 2 miles from the river, there we lay on arms as wet as rats & as cold as snow till at daybreak off we again started but soon stopped after going 2 or 3



miles up & towards the river. There we lay 24 hours when we received orders to go on picket, so we repacked our still wet and heavy blankets & tents waded 2 miles in mud to the river arriving at our destination after dark. We found that we were not wanted so we griped our way back about a mile & lay on our arms until morning, then it stopped raining.

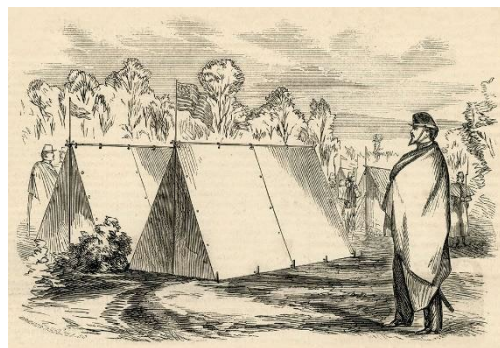
We were in the morning set to work dragging out the mud pontoon wagons artillery & which were being moved back on the retreat to save them from falling into the hands of the rebs. It would have made you laugh to see 50 men take hold of long ropes & run with a heavy pontoon & wagon through the mud some of them up to their knees & soft as porridge.”

Israel’s Captain, Charles F. Fernald, wrote this letter from a camp opposite Fredericksburg, on Jan. 24, 1863, attesting to the truly miserable conditions PVT Lambert and his comrades endured.

“To the friends of Co. A 27th Regt NJVI

I deem it my duty to invite your attention to a subject claiming your early consideration, and will, I trust, receive your prompt action. Seventy-five members of my company are destitute of and are in great need of rubber blankets. For a soldier, at this season of the year, who is expected and moreover required, to be at his post in all kinds of weather, and is often subjected to sleeping on the cold, wet ground for successive nights, no one garment belonging to his wardrobe, in my estimation, is so necessary to his health and comfort as a good rubber blanket. Take for instance, the last severe storm, which continued unabated for thirty-six hours. A portion of the 27th stood on picket for twenty-four hours, unprotected from its fury. I will leave you to imagine the condition those minus a blanket returned to camp in.

Other companies of our regiment have been supplied with them by their friends at home, and I have the best of reasons for believing, judging by the past, that you will not remain long indifferent to the wants of the brave boys composing my company, who have sacrificed all the comforts, and pleasures of home for the sake of the Union and the Constitution.



Noble old Sussex which has always been first and foremost in furnishing men and money to crush the dire rebellion, will not be behind any county in the state in attending to the comfort of her gallant sons. I

appeal to your generosity and liberality in behalf of my company, trusting I will have the pleasure of presenting each of those seventy-five destitute men with a new rubber blanket.

C.F. Fernald, Capt. Comd'g Co. A, 27th Regt N.J.V.I."

Following the "Mud March", the 27 NJVI Regiment was moved to Nicholasville, KY, just south of Lexington. From there, they conducted operations against Confederate General John Pegram's forces until May. The expedition to Monticello April 25-May 8 resulted in tragedy when 33 of Israel's comrades drowned as they forded the Cumberland River near Somerset. The regiment then volunteered their services in Pennsylvania during Lee's invasion of that state, after their term had expired. Company A returned to New Jersey and mustered out on July 2, 1863.



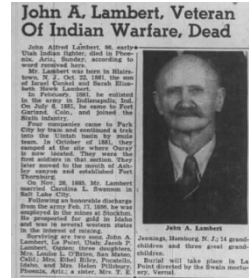
Israel must have kept in touch with Captain Fernald after he returned home, because both reenlisted with the 2nd NJ Cavalry a month and a half later at Camp Parker in Trenton. One can't help but wonder how the slaughter at Fredericksburg and the subsequent misery of the "Mud March" may have influenced them not to reenlist as Infantrymen. One can also imagine Sarah's dread at the thought of Israel leaving her again with their two young sons, both still under two years of age, and a third on the way. But these were the sacrifices our ancestors were prepared to make without a whimper.



Israel's Cavalry regiment left Camp Parker for Washington, D. C., October 5, 1863, attached to Stoneman's Cavalry Division, 22nd Army Corps, until December, 1863. After that, Israel was constantly on the move in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi, providing Cavalry support to various operations. Smith's Expedition to Okolona, MS, in February, Sturgis' Expeditions to Ripley, MS, and Guntown in early May and June. There, on June 10th, 8,500 Union troops were engaged against 2,000 rebel cavalrymen under Major General Nathan B. Forrest. The NJ 2nd Cavalry inflicted heavy casualties on the Confederate forces using their newly issued Spencer repeating rifles. Despite that success in the early skirmish, victory at Brice's Crossroads went to the Confederates. Forrest, although outnumbered two to one, used his more mobile cavalry to threaten both ends of the Union infantry line simultaneously and his artillery to focus on the center, causing the Union Troops to retreat to Memphis.

Throughout the second half of 1864 Israel's Company participated in a dizzying number of raids, expeditions and skirmishes into Mississippi, including Grierson's 1864-1865 raid and the Battle of Egypt Station. They moved to Natchez, MS in January, then on to New Orleans in March, and Mobile, AL, in April. From there, they participated in the battles of Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely near Mobile. The fall of Spanish Fort and Fort Blakely allowed Union troops to enter Mobile unopposed after the Army of Mobile evacuated the city, occupying it on April 12, 1865. Israel was mustered out with his company on the first of November in Vicksburg and returned home to Sarah, his three sons and infant daughter Mary Emma Jane.

Israel and Sarah had four more children, three girls and a boy, before they moved to Washington, Buchanan County, MO, in the spring of 1880. Like many Civil War veterans who had traveled extensively during the war, Israel felt compelled and confident to move his family west. Unfortunately, the move was not kind to the Lamberts as both Israel and two-year-old Electa Ann died in September of unreported causes. Maybe not coincidentally, the Missouri State Board of Health was created in March 1883. Its purpose was to protect citizens against the dreaded diseases of smallpox, typhoid, cholera and other communicable diseases. Israel's death shattered the Lambert's dreams to settle in Missouri.



John Alfred, the oldest of the boys, now 19, left Buchanan County for Indianapolis the following spring to enlist with company H of the 6th US Infantry Regiment. Companies D, F, G and H, under Capt. H. S. Hawkins, formed the infantry battalion with General Mackenzie's Expedition in southwestern Colorado against the Uncompahgre Utes. He eventually settled in Salt Lake City after his discharge at Fort Douglas, raised a family and lived to the ripe old age of 86. Only his baby sister Lizzie Armina outlived him.

Sarah moved back to New Jersey with the rest of the family and remarried in 1886. Mary Emma Jane died in 1892 at the age of 26 leaving three children and a husband behind. She was buried next to her father in Tranquility, Sussex County, NJ.

Submitted by Israel's 2nd great grandson, Camp 2 Brother Robert Riley.