

Gale Balmer
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ORIGINAL IN RDB

Elizabeth C. Cook
Park Ranger
Stones River National Battlefield
3501 Old Nashville Hwy.
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

28 September 1999



Dear Elizabeth:

I am writing to set the record straight on Lieutenant Frank Baldwin, Company 1 44th Indiana Regiment. He was born December 10, 1844 and was killed on December 31st 1862, at Stones River.

Further local research on my part has revealed that Lieutenant Baldwin's body was exhumed from the battlefield and brought back to Elkhart, Indiana for interment in the family mausoleum in Grace Lawn cemetery in the spring of 1863.

Enclosed is a xerox copy of an article about Lieutenant Baldwin. I was erroneous in my assumption that he lie buried among the unknown at the national cemetery.

I am a docent at the Elkhart County Historical Society museum at the Rush Memorial Center, in Bristol, Indiana. The enclosed information is from their files.

Once again thank you for all the information you forwarded to me, it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gale R. Balmer

Mr. Gale R. Balmer

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The rest of the story —

Elkhart Soldier's and Sailor's Monument

By GREG LAWSON, MSW
Guest Feature Writer

(EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following information is the first of a two part series.*)

It was New Year's Eve Day 1862. The time: the Civil War. Stone's River, near Murfreesboro, Tenn., was the stage, and on this New Year's Eve Day of Dec. 31, 1862, the first days' battle of Stone's River would take the life of an Elkhart boy while his family, friends and the city of Elkhart gathered in celebration of the holidays.

The death of young Frank J. Baldwin starts the true history behind the towering Soldier's and Sailor's Monument that now graces the entrance to Rice Cemetery at 300 James Street in Elkhart.

Believe, for a moment, that it's

the summer of 1861. The Civil War is only a few months old, having started on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces fired on Ft. Sumter, Charleston, S.C.

Frank, the great-grandson of an American Revolutionary War soldier and only son of prominent Elkhartans Silas (a Blackhawk War veteran) and Jane (Gephart) Baldwin, is only 16 years old. The topic of the day is obviously the Civil War, and one can only surmise that Frank is an adventurous boy who listened with excitement and enthusiasm.

It may have been the quest for adventure and excitement, coupled with an enthusiasm to go to the aid of his country, that incited 16-year-old Frank Baldwin to embark on his military excursion in the summer of 1861; one that would eventually lead to his death, a brokenhearted father and the building of the Soldier's and Sailor's Monument that

stands today.

Frank's military career first started in the summer of 1861 when he left home with a George Keeley and "joined Col. Mulligan's Irish Brigade," more colorfully known as "Mulligan's Guard." Mulligan's Guard was involved in the Battle of Lexington, and Frank was taken prisoner, paroled shortly thereafter and sent home. Keep in mind that Frank was born Dec. 10, 1844, and would not be 17 until Dec. 10, 1861.

Frank started back to school in November 1861, but the desire to return to the military burned fiercely within him, and his attention was focused on nothing else. Newspaper accounts (all quotes in this article are from *The Elkhart Daily Review*, Aug. 23, 1889, pp. 2-3) show that "About the first of January 1862, he, together with C.W. Green and Norman H. Strong, heard that the

48th (Indiana) regiment was to leave Goshen for the scene of war on that day."

The three boys, all under 18, hurried to the schoolhouse to say goodbye to their classmates. They then proceeded to the old blacksmith shop near the Lakeshore Railroad Roundhouse and hid. When the troop train came by they jumped on board and mingled among the Union's 48th regiment soldiers. Frank had kept his plans secret as he was going against the wishes of his parents.

The 48th landed in Paduca, Ky., about two days later, and the next morning Gen. Grant's fleet came along on its way to Ft. Donaldson." The three boys went down to the river, boarded one of the boats and were surprised to find the 44th (Indiana) regiment with a number of Elkhart men on board.

Once on board, they met Capt.

Heath, who informed them that the 44th was on its way to Ft. Donaldson for a battle. Baldwin, Green and Strong wanted to enlist on the spot, but Heath refused, telling them to observe the battle and he would send them home afterwards.

The three argued that they had come to fight, and were going to fight in spite of Heath's protest. The trio argued their case so convincingly that "Capt. Heath finally called the colonel of the regiment, Hugh B. Reed, and they were mustered into Company I, 44th Indiana Volunteers." Frank Baldwin would serve his country in this regiment until the day he died.

From the day Frank was mustered into the 44th, he would go on to face the "battles of Ft. Donaldson, Ft. Henry, Pittsburg Landing (Shiloh), Corinth, Perryville — and Stone's River. Frank would die "in the forenoon of the first day's fight, December 31, 1862, aged eighteen years."

From National Archive military records and newspaper accounts, one finds that the conduct of Frank Baldwin was such that in the fall of 1862, he was commissioned a lieutenant at the age of 17.

The personal accounts "From Lt. Cullen W. Green, who was the constant companion of Lt. Baldwin from the time he left home until he was killed; who slept with him, ate with him; marched with him, fought with him and who was the last man to see him alive, who spoke the last words to him and who buried him, we are indebted for our information about his military career and his last fight and death."

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The final hours in the life of Lt. Baldwin are well recorded in history by Lt. Green.

Early on the morning of New Year's Eve Day, "The 44th Indiana Regiment had been ordered forward into some woods." They found that they had advanced too far, and were soon surrounded by Confederate troops. Baldwin and Green were standing behind a tree when the order came to fall back. They started back, and as they were crossing the adjoining field with the rest of the regiment, they encountered an intense and devastating crossfire from the Confederates.

Baldwin and Green were together as they approached a fence, and "Green cried out 'throw your gun over the fence,' pitching his own over and following it." Green kept falling back with his regiment and never saw Baldwin alive again.

Baldwin's death came on Wednesday, and the Battle of Stone's River lasted until the following Friday night. The next morning, Green and six men found Baldwin's body just on the opposite side of the fence from where they last spoke.

Lt. Baldwin "had been struck by a musket ball which entered just below the right shoulder, passed through his heart and exited the body on the left side. Green placed the body of Lt. Baldwin in a (crude) coffin, transported it to a hospital cemetery" and buried his boyhood friend.

Lt. Green marked Baldwin's grave, and for two months Lt. Baldwin lay at rest. Then, Col. Davis from Goshen came with Green and a detail of soldiers, exhumed Lt. Baldwin and brought him back to Elkhart for burial in Gracelawn Cemetery.

Thus ends the life of Lt. Frank J. Baldwin and starts the birth of the Soldier's and Sailor's Monument that was yet to come.

This week's guest feature writer, Greg Lawson, is associated with Michiana Historical Collectors and Researchers, Edwardsburg, Mich.