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Samuel S. Cottingham & Albert B. Cottingham, 39th Indiana Volunteer Infantry

To: Friends of Stones River National Battlefield, Inc
P.O. Box 4092 Murfreesboro, TN 37133-4092

From: Stephen M Cottingham
8090 East 126th Street
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Date: November 5th, 2002

Subject: Relatives participating in Battle of Stones River:

Viewpoint:

Here's a compilation of info I have gathered on some of my ancestors who participated in the Civil War. This will provide a broader view of the two ancestors who did participate in the battle. My direct ancestor, ggrandfather Stephen Wall Cottingham, did not participate in this battle.

Albert and Samuel Cottingham, brothers of my ggrandfather, did participate in the Battle of Stones River.. Albert lost his life and Samuel lost his freedom for a time as a result of the Battle. We will never know where Albert ended up and I am still investigating to find the final resting place of Samuel.

Family Background:

My gggfather and gggmother died in 1842 leaving 4 young boys to be raised by others. The youngest was less than a year old and the oldest was barely 5 years old. The boys were divided among several families. The boys lived apart until the outbreak of the war in 1861. The boys all mustered into service in the Union Army about the same time. As young men between the ages of 18 and 23, responsible only for themselves, they sought the chance for adventure and service to their country. They did have a heritage of service to their country. Their grandfather and 3 of his brothers had fought under the Maryland flag during the Revolutionary War.

4 Brothers:

Stephen Wall Cottigham , the oldest, joined the 39th Indiana Vol Infantry in Aug 1861. Stephen remained in the 39th until receiving a medical discharge in August 1862. He developed dysentery and became increasingly disabled. Stephen was a foot soldier and participated in campaigns in KY, TN, MS, and AL. He fought in the battles at Shiloh, TN, Cornith, MS and various places in KY. After his discharge, he returned to Hamilton Co IN and the family that had raised him. He married twice and raised families containing over a dozen children before his death at age 85 in 1923.

When I visited Stones River Battlefield the first couple of times, I thought this ancestor had participated in the battle. Several records indicate he was discharged in October 1863, but according to the Records from the National Archives, he was given a medical discharge in August 1862. I believe this discrepancy is due to two things. First, his discharge date may have been extended from August to October as a result of being in a reserve unit for a while in 1863. The second is probably due to mistaking a 2 for a 3 on his discharge papers.

Stephen was not a participant in Battle of Stones River.

John C Cottingahm, was the second oldest. John joined the 12th Indiana Volunteers in April of 1861. He re-enlisted in 1863 and served in the 39th Ind Vol, Infantry/Mounted Infantry that later became the 8th Ind Cavalry. John participated as a foot soldier in several campaigns in the western theater during the first part of the war. During the last part of the war he served as a teamster including participation in Sherman's March to the Sea. He was discharged at the close of the war in July 1865. John became a teamster after developing lung problems and dysentery in 1863. John married twice and had two families resulting in 4 children. Upon his death, John's younger children and their mother went to live at the Home for Orphans of Veterans at Knightstown, IN. John died at age of 40 in Noblesville, Hamilton County, IN.

I also thought this ancestor might have participated. Based on data from the National Archives, I determined his health was too poor to be a foot soldier by this time. He most likely was a teamster transporting supplies between Nashville and Murfreesboro. He may have been in the area, but I have not found any documentation to determine exactly where he was at this time.

John was not a participant in the Battle of Stones River, but he may have been in he wagon trains harassed by Confederate Cavalry north of Murfreesboro.

The third brother was Albert B Cottingham. Albert joined the 39th Ind Vol Infantry in Aug 1861. The best I can determine at this time is he was either a foot soldier killed the first day of battle or was he a teamster killed by Confederate Cavalry. I don't have Albert's military records from the National Archives at this time. Given the position of the 39th Ind Vol Inf on the first day of battle, it is most likely he was killed during the first few hours of battle. Albert's body was not positively identified and his death was not confirmed until several weeks after the battle. He is not listed as being in one of the "unknown" graves at the National Cemetery. His death was noted in the Indiana Regimental Records. His younger brother, Samuel, probably reported his death. Albert B Cottingham was 21 years old when he was killed. The details of his burial are unknown. He may be in an "unknown" grave, a shallow grave somewhere on the battlefield, or his bones may have been trashed in the name of progress.

The youngest brother, Samuel S Cottingham, was 18 years old when he joined the 39th Ind Vol Inf in Aug 1861. He remained with this unit until discharged June 1865. Initially he was a foot soldier but later became a teamster. He participated in campaigns in KY, TN, MS, AL, GA, SC, and NC including Sherman's march to the sea. He was captured and paroled twice.

He was captured Dec 31st, 1862 at or near the Battle of Stones River and again near Fayetteville, NC just before Johnston surrendered to Sherman. Samuel is probably the one who reported the death of his brother Albert. Samuel may have been close enough to his brother during the battle to know for sure if he had been killed. It is not clear whether Samuel was really paroled or just turned loose. If he was a teamster at this time, he may have been told to "get on back to Nashville" by Confederate Cavalry. If he was a foot soldier, he may have just been chased so far it took a couple of weeks to get back to his unit.

Samuel definitely was a teamster when he was captured the second time. Sherman had left his wagon trains exposed resulting in a Confederate Cavalry gathering of prisoners and supplies. Samuel was shipped to Raleigh, NC, then to Richmond, VA where he was paroled and sent to a Union Camp in Maryland.. He was then sent to a Camp in Columbus, Ohio. According to military records he was last seen July 1865 in Indianapolis, IN when he picked up his final pay.

For whatever reasons, Samuel took his pay and headed west. He ended up as a placer miner in Montana, Nevada and California. In his later years he became disabled due to health problems caused by his wartime service. He never married and lived his final years in a Home for Volunteer Soldiers in Los Angeles, California. He died in 1913, age 71.

Monuments\Memorials

There is a large monument in Crown View Cemetery, Hamilton Co, Noblesville, IN honoring all men who served in Hamilton Co Regiments during the Civil War. Stephen W, John C, Albert B, and Samuel S Cottingham are listed on the monument.

There is also a bronze plaque in the Veterans Memorial area of the Hamilton County Courthouse lawn honoring Albert B Cottingham, and all other Hamiltonians who lost there lives in war.

Stephen has a nice tombstone inscribed with his Regiment & Co.

John has a small white military type tombstone turning dark with age.

Albert is like many soldiers whose last resting place is "unknown".

Samuel probably has a military marker like hundreds of others in the National Cemetery where he is buried. I will find him someday!