

## John Bringier Trist's Death Reports

[image: picture of Julian Bringier Trist with the dates 1836-1862]

[image: enlargement of P.G.T. Beauregard's signature]

Overview of the story and documents

### The story

In 1862, at the battle of Stones River (Murphreesboro) a Union soldier (George Kent) came upon a wounded Confederate officer (Julian Bringier Trist). Kent gave the Confederate officer water and tended to him. The Confederate officer, in gratitude, gave him his sword. Kent sent a very interesting letter home shortly after this where he told about the battle and mentions this event and gives instructions for care of the sword.

Twenty years later, Kent sent out word through various veteran organizations that he wanted to find the relatives of the Confederate Officer and return the sword to them. The following documents are all part of this process.

Letter Kent wrote home

Murphreesboro [sic] Jan. 7 1863

My dear wife:

I am again spared to write to you again. I wrote a few lines on the back of a letter Theodore wrote me from the hospital. I have seen him since he is very comfortable and in very good spirits. His wound is not serious but it was a narrow escape. He was at my side when he was hit and the bullets flying very thick. He stood fire very well indeed although he was a boy and it was his first battle. I suppose he is in Nashville now. He says he is well taken care of. Wm. Blunk is with him. His hand is very sore but will not lame him much. The rebels Dr. treated him very well. All that could walk were taken to Murphreesboro [sic] and sent to Vicksburg and to be exchanged. Those who could not walk were on the spot. The 24th Wisconsin who were supporting us when the battle commenced, run and we fell back to a fence. Then 42nd Ill. and 21st Michigan run mistook their Cols. orders for our own and went with them and drove the rebels back ½ mile and on my way back to find my own Regiment I saw a rebel officer dying. He reached out his hand to me and asked for water. I gave him some, raised his head on a blanket and made him as comfortable as I could. He gave me his sword, which I promised him I would keep. I have sent it to you by Express. Take care of it Never let it go out of your possession on any account whatever. If I never come back let it be given to one of the boys to be kept and given to their children. The rest of the Gridley boys are well and safe. We lost 140 men killed wounded and missing. Our Co. lost 2 killed 2

:

wounded and 2 missing. Co. B killed one rebel General. The loss on both sides was very severe. Both sides lost very heavily [sic]. They have left and gone. We suppose don't know what we will do. I send you some leaves of the holly tree. It is a very handsome tree indeed. It remains green all winter. The heat in my pocket has turned them a little yellow. Those small leaves are off of the mistletoe. It grows in bunches on walnut, elm and some other trees. That remains green also all winter. It is very much in England at Christmas festivals. It looks beautiful on the trees after their leaves have fallen off. The weather is very pleasant. No frost in the ground yet. we can sleep out of doors very comfortable. It rains here instead of snow as with us. It is a beautiful climate but the country looks very desolate from the affects [sic] of this terrible war. I hope it will soon be ended in some way so this killing of men may be stopped.

Yours ever

Geo. W. Kent

Sent to Nashville as usual

(John and Francis Nauese and Willey Taylor are safe, although they were in the hottest of the fight)

Newspaper Clipping regarding Kent wishing to locate relatives of Trist

#### THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

The Benevolent Association of the Army of Northern Virginia met last night, Col. Louis Prados in the chair, and a large representation present.

The treasurer's report showed a very favorable condition of affairs.

Several names were recommended for membership and several applications were read.

The finance committee reported progress.

The following were elected members of the association: Thomas Higgins of Company B, Second Louisiana Regiment: P. Schlessinger, Company K, Fourteenth Louisiana Regiment: Henry Otty, Company A, Wheat's battalion, afterward Louisiana Guard Battery: J.G. Campbell, entered sergeant Company E, Sixth Louisiana Regiment, afterward promoted to brigade commander: T. A. Faries, second lieutenant junior, Company B, First Battalion Louisiana Infantry, afterward commander in succession of several battalions of artillery.

A communication was read from George W. Kent, late first Lieutenant Company B, 88th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, stating that he now had in his possession a sword which had been given to him by Lieut. T.B. Frish [sic], killed at the battle of Stone [sic] River. The

:

evident object of the letter was to offer the sword to any of the relatives of Lieut. Fish [sic] who may desire it. Lieut. Keen's [sic] address is Gridley, Ill. It was ordered that this communication be turned over to the Army of Tennessee.

The meeting then adjourned.

Letter to Kent from Trist's brother  
New Orleans Sept 20 '83

Geo. W. Kent Esq.

Dear Sir

The President of "Association of the Army of Tennessee" has sent me a letter from you in which you state that you have the sword of my brother, Leut. [sic] J.B. Trist who was killed at the battle of Stones River or Murfreesboro as we call it.

Presuming that your letter is but a first step towards the return of the sword, I take the liberty of placing myself in communication with you. with my heartfelt thanks for the good services you rendered my dying brother,

I remain

Yours truly

N. [sic] B. Trist

No. 6 Carondelet St.

N. Orleans

New Orleans, Dec. 14th 1863

Geo. W. Kent Esq.

Dear Sir:

My absence from this city, as also that of some of the parties whose attestation, I desired to secure to the required Certificate of authentication, has been the cause of the delay in forwarding same to you. The certificate which I enclose, will I hope, prove satisfactory, as I have procured unexceptionable attestation to it. Among these prominent names, you will perceive that of Gen. Beauregard of Confederate force, now Adjutant Gen'l. [sic] of La.

:

I assure you that I fully appreciate the generous feeling that has prompted you to return my brothers [sic] sword to his relative, and that I will hold in grateful remembrance [sic] your kind offices to him in his hour of need.

Yours very truly

N.B. Trist

Please forward the box by express to me, No. 6 Carondelet St., N. Orleans.

Letter verifying N.B. Trist as J.B. Trist's brother

We, the undersigned, do hereby certify that N.B. Trist of the City of New Orleans and State of Louisiana, and a Notary Public in said City, is the brother of Lieutenant Julien [sic] Bonigrir [sic] Trist, of the First Louisiana Regiment, killed at the battle of Murfreesboro, on Stone [sic] River on the 31st day of December, 1862.

New Orleans, November 5, 1883.

FRANCIS T. NICHOLS

Ex Gov. of Louisiana

DOUGLAS WEST

late Major 1st La. Inftry. [sic] Cfa. [sic]

I.A. CHATAROU

Pres. of Asstn. [sic] Army of Tennessee

G.T. BEAUREGARD

Adj. Gen. - State of La.

N. Orleans, Jan'y. [sic] 15, '84

Dear Sir:

The sword came to hand all right, as you will perceive by the Notice in the N.O. Times Democrat, a copy of which I forward to you by today's mail.

The editor made a mistake about my brother being killed in the Breckenridge charge. That took place I believe on Jan'y. [sic] 2. '63.

My Brother was well known here and a great favorite with all his acquaintances, and the Editor of the T.D. who knew him well, but expresses the general feeling of the community, in regard to your handsome conduct in the whole matter. Be assured that I will never forget it.

:

Yours very truly

N.B. Trist

Bloomington Pantagraph Regarding Sword  
The Story of a Sword.

On the 31st day of December, 1862, at the battle of Stone [sic] river, when the union forces were making a charge on the confederates, G.W. Kent, who was then an orderly in the 88th Illinois volunteer infantry, came across Lieutenant J.B. Frish [sic], of the 1st Louisiana infantry, who was mortally wounded, and asked Mr. Kent for a drink of water. After getting the water and being made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, he gave Mr. Kent his sword, with a request that he would keep it. Last fall Mr. Kent incidentally heard of a man in New Orleans by the name of Frish [sic] and thinking that he might be a relative of the original owner of the sword, wrote to him, and received an answer that he was a brother of Lieutenant Frish [sic]. Mr. Kent offered to give him his brother's sword if he could send proper identity. Last week Mr. Kent received a document with satisfactory reference. Among the names given was that of General Beauregard, and Mr. Kent had the satisfaction of returning to the brother of the dead lieutenant his sword after having kept it for twenty-two years.

Chicago Tribune Article

#### LIEUT. TRIST'S SWORD

New Orleans Times-Democrat: In that desperate battle of Murfreesboro, or, as some call it, Stone [sic] River, the 31st of December, 1862, a gallant and daring charge was made by Breckinridge's brigade on the masked batteries of Gen. Rosecrans, so placed as to do fearful work. The charge was one of the most desperate of the War, and among the foremost in it was the First Louisiana Regiment. In this regiment a brave soldier and intrepid officer was Lieut. J.B. Trist, of this city. Manfully he went forth to the terrible ordeal, and while leading his men was struck down, mortally wounded. It was impossible to withstand such a rain-storm of missiles, and, decimated and torn, Breckinridge's brigade was forced back. The Federals swept over the field, which was covered with the dead and dying, and while the bloody work was still going on, one of their number, Sergt. [sic] George W. Kent, who was afterward First-Lieutenant of Company B, Eighty-eighth Illinois Volunteers, saw poor Trist, fast sinking from his wounds, lying on the field. Sergt. [sic] Kent went to the side of the dying Southern Lieutenant and gave his parched throat a refreshing draught of water from his canteen, and then to protect him from the cold carefully wrapped him up in some blankets picked up on the battlefield. In such a bloody hour such brotherly attention met with a grateful response in the heart of the dying man, and taking off his sword he presented it in almost his last words to the succoring Kent.

:

The War went on, and Sergt. [sic] Kent became Lieutenant. He treasured the sword dearly, and when the contest ended he had Lieut. Trist's name, date of battle, etc., engraved on the scabbard, intending to preserve it as a souvenir of the War. Some months ago, thinking that relatives of the dead lieutenant might desire to recover the sacred relic, Lieut. Kent wrote to the Association of the Army of the Tennessee, and the family was put in communication with him. A few days ago the sword reached this city, and the brother of the gallant dead officer, Mr. N.B. Trist, received it, twenty-one years after the battle. Lieut. Kent, of Gridley, Ill., will ever be remembered here with sentiments of the warmest regard.

[image: George Kent and his wife]