

Jefferson County Last Soldier Project

by Walt Busch



At present, the best candidate is **Green (Greenbriar) McGuire** (1835 or 1841-3 Mar 1936) born in Kentucky to Gabriel McGuire and Margaret Trout. Green enlisted in Co. E, 32nd Enrolled Missouri Militia, on 5 Apr 1862 in Potosi and served for 90 days. He was transferred to Co. E, 8th Provisional Enrolled Missouri Militia, on 1 May 1863. His muster card reports 184 days of actual service and surviving muster rolls state that he was at Mineral Point on 4 May 1863 and 2 Apr 1863 at Potosi. His unit was relieved from duty 8 Nov. 1863, per Special Order No. 74, HQ Dist. South East Missouri. Green worked as a farmer around DeSoto in Valle township. He is buried in the City Cemetery in DeSoto.

However, many men did live into their nineties by that time and someone in Jefferson County may have lived into the 1940s. I suspect that to be the case. Unfortunately, two men are listed as being veterans and living into the 1940s and their stories are not confirmable. The issues they have are presented below. Henry Roe is really not being considered for last soldier so right now it is between McGuire and Keller. Because of this, no last soldier marker will be issued to Jefferson County without further research.

Below are two short articles (I actually feel like I can start a thesis on the frauds of Jefferson County) of two men who claim to have been in the Civil War and as such would be entitled to be considered as outliving all other Civil War veterans in the county, but their stories cannot be proven. Indeed, one claims to have been a spy and not a soldier so he wasn't entitled to getting a pension. Still, after hearing the heartbreaking story, the Governor of Missouri went into action to get him a pension.

Give me a break!

I was never a soldier. A police officer with 33 years of service, yes, but never a soldier. I do not like people who claim to be something they are not. I am proud of my poor old dirt farmer great-great grandfather who got permission to leave Germany because the mayor of the town begged the duke of Baden to allow him to go so he wouldn't be a drain on society. I don't like it when people claim to be something they are not and to me there is just something dirty about claiming to have served your county deserving the praise of your fellow citizens when you deserve no such thing.

Now, I am not saying that both of these people fall into that category. I make mistakes. Yet, with modern technology, I feel very certain that both are fakers. Most of the Civil War Confederates who lived into the 1950s are all fakers. About the last 12 dying in the 1950s all were. Making such claims in the 1950s was easier to conceal. The internet and instant checking didn't exist then. So

before anyone can claim to be the Last Soldier of Jefferson County instead of Green McGuire, questions presented below need to be answered.

Why Edward Keller Is Not Considered The Last Soldier of Jefferson County!

An article written by Tracey Bruce of Leader Publications published 20 Apr 2017 introduced me to Edward Keller. Edward quite possibly is the last soldier of Jefferson County; only these issues need to be overcome. Bruce's article is used for most quotes and statements about Keller.

Unlike a lot of fakers who lived to 105-110 years old claiming to be Civil War veterans, Edward was indeed born in 1844 and was 101 when he died. This is proven out by all the census records I can find on him. He doesn't deviate from 1844 as being his birth year. Fakers often changed it on censuses as they began needing to show proof of age for the service they were claiming. So he definitely was born in 1844 in Dessenheim, Alsace-Lorraine and was of age during the Civil War.

Census records can be tricky, however. The 1910 census seems to record 1883 as the year he entered the county, but that is obviously wrong as children were born to him and his wife, Rosanna, before 1880 and they met in Missouri. But the 1883 date is scribbled sufficiently that it could be 1863. But, then we run into the 1900 Census records and they claim he arrived on these shores in 1870. There is no mistake...It says 1870! He was most likely in this county around 1873 otherwise he could not have married Rosanna Cooper in 1873.



So 1870 or 1863? Is he a Civil War Veteran or perhaps a citizen of the Alsace escaping the coming Franco-Prussian War? This is where issues start popping up. Bruce's article specifically says that Keller arrived in Jefferson County in 1868. Why doesn't he show up then on the 1870 Census record? Bruce also reports that he and two other men started romancing Rosanna and two of her sisters. All the men arrived then around 1868, so it took him 5 years to marry Rosanna. If he would have started courting her in 1868, she was 13 years old. While dating a 13 year old is not improbable, it seems unlikely that he would have done that and waited 5 years to marry her considering the fact that people on

average died at younger ages then.

1863 or 1870? It's time to look at military records. Unfortunately, I have yet to find one for him. Bruce's article states that he arrived in 1863 and "on his second morning in the U.S., he headed straight to the recruiting office..." "Keller was part of the 7th Company of Connecticut under General Alfred Terry, who led troops to victory in the second Battle of Fort Fisher in North

Carolina, according to Ruth Fitch Hopson, who wrote an article about Keller in 1939.” “He mustered out in 1865.”

So, how does a person coming off the boat in the north (and we have to assume that because there probably were not many Union recruiting offices in Charleston, SC), get to the 7th Connecticut Infantry which is somewhere between Fernandia, FL; Hilton Head, SC; St. Helena Island, SC; Morris Island, SC; or St. Augustine, FL? Most likely, he doesn't. If he arrived in 1863, he would have been recruited into some other unit. In short, Hopson's research done in the 1930s was not real research otherwise it would not have said "7th Company of Connecticut." Companies go by letters and regiments go by numbers. Here we must assume she meant 7th Connecticut Infantry. Possibly, Hopson might not even have spoken with Keller as there is no story connected to military service that he tells listed in the article by Bruce. Why mention the battle of Fort Fisher as being a battle fought by General Terry and not as being one in which Keller served?

A check of Ancestry.com and Fold3.com along with other national websites do not indicate any military service. There is also a book called *History of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteer Infantry* compiled by Stephen Walkley. Edward Keller or any name similar does not appear in this book. Scanning other Connecticut Infantry Regiments, I didn't come across the name either. The only references to his military service are family histories apparently developed for the internet and most likely based on Hopson's research. I want to say at this point that he obviously didn't serve in the Civil War, but there is still room for doubt.

Going back to the 1900 Census and the claim that he arrived in 1870, I looked finally to his death certificate. It shows that he died 27 Oct 1945. The new death certificates had been in use by then for about 4 years. The new forms have a place to indicate military service. It is blank. The record also shows that Edward was a member of the community for 77 years. That figures out to 1868. The informant on the certificate is Junius, his son.

So we can be certain of little in Edward Keller's background, but we can speculate that he arrived in Jefferson County between 1868 and 1870. There are no online records showing any immigration

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One additional note on this. Keller does not appear to have attempted to profit from these claims about his military service either. He doesn't show a pension record in fold3.com. He did not get a government tombstone (no tombstone currently existed on his grave). He appears to just have been an old man telling stories. Our next person though wants to get on the government dole and get some fame out of his service. It's time to see what Henry Roe did in the Civil War.

Why Henry Roe Is Not Considered The Last Soldier in Jefferson County!

Roe, Henry M. (R?) (25 Mar 1848 - 18 Apr 1949) of Valle Township, Desoto, MO. claims to have been a messenger and spy for President Lincoln. If you read his entire story, it is, to say the least, an interesting read. His reason for being a messenger is utterly ridiculous. If evidence can be shown that he actually served in a unit or actually was a spy, he could be restored to "last soldier" status. Is his story a true one? A fake? Was Henry a liar or a story teller whose story got out of hand? Was he asked one too many times in old age if he was in the Civil War and got tired of saying he wasn't. Other men born in 1848 served in units, some lying about their age, so why didn't Henry? Was he even born in 1848 in Philadelphia as claimed?

Checking through available on-line census records a definite lack of evidence exists for Roe being born in 1848 in Philadelphia. Henry M. Row is present on the Missouri census records in 1910 and 1940. In both records his birth year is 1848. It's possible that he shows up in the 1920 Missouri census as H.M. Roe but with a birth date of 1864. Henry doesn't seem to appear on the 1900 or 1930 Missouri census using either birth date or under variations of his name. However, misspellings and staying one step ahead of the rent collector might keep anyone off of the census rolls.

The interesting thing about being born in Philadelphia, as Henry reports to be, is that the city of brotherly love kept pretty good birth records especially starting in the 1860s. So, isn't it curious that a Henry Roe is born in Philadelphia on 26 Mar 1864 and our Henry claims a birth date just one day off that day in 1848? Two Henry Roes, both born in Philly, exactly 14 years and one day apart? It seems improbable that of the potentially 4 Henry Roes born in Pennsylvania between 1848 and 1864 (two being born between 1855 and 1857), that two of the four share such a close birthday. Three of the four would be much too young for service even as a spy. So was the man who claimed to be 101 in 1949, really only 89? The one birth date definitely matches the 1920 census while no Henry Roe birth records match the 1910 or 1940 censuses. So the comment made in some of the news articles that he seemed young for his age is probably well founded.

The next issue has to address the messenger/spy part of the story. President Lincoln is one of our most respected presidents and men in U.S. history. He had to give orders that sent thousands of young adult men to their deaths. Would he really tell a 14 year old in 1862 to be a spy for him? Would the President of the United States deliberately place a 14 year old in harm's way just to find out why "so many Northern boys were joining the Johnny Rebs?" While certainly some did go south, the reverse was also true and some went north. Roe's story is the first statement known to the author that the President of the United States considered this a rampant problem that needed to be stopped. So, why would the President risk the life of a 14 year old boy to attempt to turn a few misguided northerners back to the embrace of the Union? The answer must be that President Lincoln did not recruit a 14 year old as a spy, forcing him to risk life and limb. If he did, his ethics and decision making truly need to come into question.

Roe apparently showed a picture of President Lincoln with a boy from time to time. There was no verification he was the boy. In the 1930s after complaining to the governor of Missouri, he applied for a Civil War pension, and got it. The reasoning behind the pension seems more political than fact based. Most soldiers of the war had to go through a lot of paperwork to get their pensions at the turn of century. The government wasn't just giving them to everyone who claimed they were a soldier or soldier's wife. To prove the death of her non-solider husband so that she could get her soldier husband's pension, one Illinois woman to whom the author is related had to find the church records of his death and get statements from the hearse driver and grave digger. However, by the 1930s the requirements had significantly lessened and some old men began claiming that they were either a Union or Confederate soldier, or Jesse James and found people to believe them.

On the Confederate side, out of 13 "last Confederate soldiers" nationwide, 12 either are debunked by people such as author William Marvel or there is a total lack of evidence to support their claims. That means that the last United Confederate Veterans convention in 1949 had a bunch of fakes standing around and swapping lies. On the Union side, the last know verified veteran is Albert Woolson who was born in 1849 (a year later than Roe claims) and died 2 Aug 1956. He served as a drummer boy. For more info on him: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Woolson . The last known verified Confederate veteran was Pleasant Crump who died 31 Dec 1951. For more info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_surviving_Confederate_veterans

PHOTO: LIFE MAGAZINE 1-24-1949 Page 9

From the *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC, April 20, 1949

Death Takes 101 Year Old Man As He Dances Jig

New York, April 19. (UP): Henry R. Roe, 101-year-old Missouri handyman, danced a jig to show how young he felt and died of a heart attack before he got to tell the nation about being Abe Lincoln's private spy.

Today was to have been a great day for Roe, who survived five wives and lived alone eight miles from De Soto, Mo., as caretaker for some summer homes.

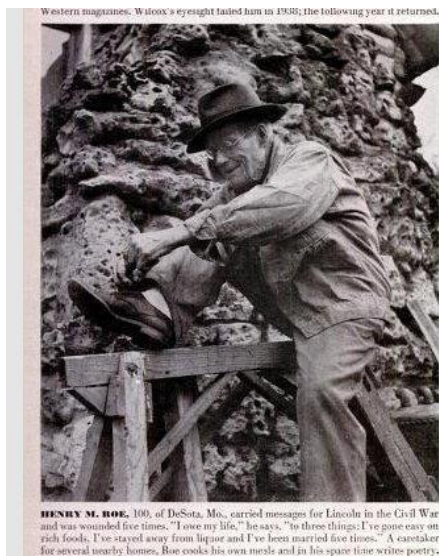
The chipper old man wearing rimless spectacles, a hat with the brim turned up all around and a gay necktie tied in a large knot in a collar that hung loose around his gaunt neck, boarded a plane for New York last Sunday to tell his story on a nationwide radio program.

"He was a great kidder," said Joan Devlin, the hostess on

Henry Roe's first, and last, plane ride.

Roe said that he credited long life to "work and moderation." His one regret, he said, was that he never got to fight in a war. He too young for the Civil War was rejected for the Spanish-American war and was declared too old for World Wars I and II.

"Imagine me, old," he said.



He besieged President Roosevelt with letters in World War II asking to play some part. Manpower Director Paul McNutt intervened and the Liaster-Kaufmann Glider company in St Louis gave him a job as a plant messenger. He held it for a year and a half.

“My mother lived to be 100,” he said.

The National Association of Manufacturers brought him to New York during the war and honored him with a dinner. He always wanted to come back.

Then he got his chance. Monday he went to the radio station to rehearse. Yesterday he went to the radio station to rehearse his story.

This is what he had planned to say tonight:

“Abe wanted to know why so many Northern boys were joining the Johnny Rebs, and he asked me to find out for him. I was only 14, but I spied for old Abe for a couple of years and I was wounded five times.

“I stopped lots of them from joining the South. Abe told me. ‘you have done your country a great service my boy, now look to your own health.’

“I said, ‘Sir, I’m not afraid to die.’ ‘

“He said, I’d rather have you live for it.”

Roe did a few steps of a jig and left the studio. He slumped in the hall on his way to an elevator and died.

END OF ARTICLE

Is Roe a true hero? An old man who told good stories? Or someone who might now days be considered as *stealing valor*? Was he 101 when he died or 89? A detailed pension record would be nice as some proof. Unfortunately, at this time, it appears he was born during the Civil War and cannot possibly have been the spy who suffered 5 wounds. Keller likewise appears to have not entered the US until after the war. So, at this time, we honor Green McGuire as the last soldier of Jefferson County.

NOTES:

Besides the above article and on-line research, some information provided about Roe is in HOAR, Jay S. *The North’s Last Boys in Blue Vol. 2*, Salem, MA: Higginson Book Co. 2007, page 758-759.