

A0

..... 11th Reg't ~~Cav~~ ~~S~~ ~~M~~ Vols. Inf.

Welsh or
Welsh, George W. Age 18

Rank Corp. Co. A

Captain McMahan

Enlisted Dec. 10, 186. 3

Where Vicksburg, Miss.

Mustered in Dec. 10, 186. 3

Where Vicksburg, Miss.

Tr. fr. 7 Mo Inf. Dec. 14, 1864. (Co F)
Remarks Prom Corp. Jan 26, 1865.

~~xxx~~ Deserted July 19, 1865, Demopolis, Ala.
MR Dec. 64 to February 65, deserted
February, 8, 1865

Mustered out 186.....

Where.....

Form No. 242 1/2, A. G. O., Mo., 6-26-22-6M.

OVER

WELCH, GEORGE W.

- Rank and organization: Private, Company A, 11th Missouri Infantry
- Place and date: At Nashville, Tenn., 16 December 1864
- Entered service at: Keokuk, Lee County, Iowa
- Date of issue: 24 February 1865
- Burial location unknown

Citation: Captured the flag of the 13th Alabama Infantry (C.S.A.).

Medal of Honor Recipient Controversy

By Walter E. Busch

Believe me, it was not my intention to stir up any controversy when I started doing some research on our Medal of Honor (MOH) Recipients buried in Missouri or serving in Missouri units, but that's what I got. I was merely trying to get photographs of as many of Missouri's MOH soldiers as I could when I came across soldier George W. Welch (Welsh). Welsh served in Co. A, 11th Missouri Infantry and received his Medal of Honor for capturing a rebel flag.

The mystery starts with some basic information in the Medal of Honor records about him. They record him as coming from Brown County, Iowa. Brown County doesn't exist. So far this is the kind of stuff that is inconsequential, but still a royal pain, when doing genealogy. Genealogists routinely come across misspellings and confusion. Brown County, IA, might have been written down, but Brown County, Indiana (IN), been the

correct information. However, Welsh's mystery is not that simple as transcription error. Welsh is a Medal of Honor recipient, who according to Missouri records deserted after the big battle and after receiving a promotion to corporal.

Welsh was 18 years old when he enlisted in Co. F, 7th Missouri Infantry Volunteers at Keokuk, IA on 1 June 1861. Twenty-eight days later, he mustered in at St. Louis, MO. His 7th Mo. Inf. muster card doesn't have any more information other than in December, 1863 he is listed as a veteran volunteer.

On 14 Dec 1864, he was transferred to Co. A, 11th Missouri Infantry. Two days later, during the Battle of Nashville, Welsh captured the flag of "13th Alabama Infantry". That statement becomes an issue in itself, for the 13th Alabama Infantry was with General Lee at the time of the battle of Nashville! There was a 13th Arkansas near where his Missouri unit was fighting (according to some researchers on the web), but the 13th Arkansas apparently had their flag captured by another soldier. Hm-m-m! As troublesome as this may seem, according to researchers, such citations listing what Confederate flag was captured are often mixed up. The point is that he captured a rebel flag.

He quickly was awarded his medal with Congress approving it on 24 February 1865. It is after this time that he disappears. No after war information located so far; no burial site found; no pictures. No George Welsh or Welch! He is a mystery.

So, there seemed to be several issues with George Welsh and I was hoping that maybe the Missouri on-line records through the Secretary of State's Office might clear it up. Often there are comments on these cards regarding deserting, reinstatement, or punishment followed by reinstatement and eventual mustering out. Unfortunately, when I checked the web site I was only able to pull up a copy

GEORGE W. WELCH

Award of the MEDAL OF HONOR at
Nashville, Tenn. 16 Dec 1864. Born
in Brown County, Iowa. Issued 24
Feb 1865.

CITATION:
Capture of flag

5'6

hair brown

eyes blue

Comp dark

single

farmer

Native of Ripley, Brown Co

Iowa

Resided in Keokuk Lee Co,
Iowa at time of enl.

of a one page muster card (above) showing that he deserted. But all was not lost yet.

There was a notation at the bottom of the card that is seldom seen. The word “over” was there. Usually, when this happens there is a second page to the digitized record. This time there wasn't a page 2. I then contacted the state archives and

asked them if they could provide me with page two. They did so quickly and is shown on the right. Again, no luck. It doesn't mention anything about his desertion, but gives the reason for his Medal of Honor and also a general description of Welsh. Notice that the citation for the medal states that a flag was captured and does not specify which unit's flag.

So, we have several mysteries with Corporal Welsh. What unit's flag did he capture? Why did he desert? Was he reinstated after deserting, but it not noted on his muster card? Where did he go to after the war? There are two Welshes who are buried in Ripley, IA, but from judging their ages, they would at best be his granddaughters. One thing that might be cleared up, as time permits, by checking the muster rolls of the 11th, but maybe not. Hopefully, in time there will be some evidence to clear this stain on the record of one who was cited for such bravery.

There is a stain on Welsh's record. However, unlike the 19th century, after the experiences of shell shock in World War I, battle fatigue in World War II and post-traumatic stress since Vietnam, his 'desertion' should not be looked upon with disdain until all the facts are known. And even then, on 16 Dec 1864 in one of the hardest fought battles of the Civil War, George W. Welsh, in a moment of bravery, captured a rebel flag.