

## Adair County

*Note: There is an on going debate as to whether or not EMM (Enrolled Missouri Militia) service counted as Civil War service. The War Department said no (mainly because they didn't want to pay them), but several of these units did actual service in combat situations. The local GAR post in Kirksville had members who were from the 50<sup>th</sup> EMM, so based on their decision, Pinkston (although not a GAR member) appears to qualify for Civil War veteran status.*

**Pinkston, Peter** (4 Jan 1844 – 22 Nov 1940) .  
Braesher, MO resident “all his life”. Served in  
the 50<sup>th</sup> EMM., Buried Mt. Tabor Cemetery.

**Smith, George Wall** (6 Oct 1845 – 8 Apr 1939)  
Drummer Boy, Co I, 18<sup>th</sup> Mo Inf. , wounded at  
Shiloh. Member of the Corporal Dix Post 22  
GAR. Lived at 301 East Jefferson, Kirksville,  
MO and worked as a general contractor. Buried  
at Forrest-Llewellyn Cemetery, Kirksville, MO.



## **OBITUARY:**

### **GEORGE WALL SMITH DIES; 93 YEARS OLD**

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County's Last Civil War Veteran and Oldest Native Citizen Succumbs to Infirmities of Age.

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George Wall Smith, 93, Adair County's last Civil War soldier and oldest

native-born citizen, died at his home at 301 South High Street Saturday morning at 2:30 o'clock.

He had been confined to his house since Jan. 10 with illness, which was described as general infirmities of age. He had been able to sit up frequently but not in the past several days., experiencing a chill Thursday after which he

gradually lost strength. He was conscious almost until the end, however, and spent Friday evening reading his daily newspapers.

The funeral is to be held Monday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock at the Christian Church, conducted by the Rev. L.V. Freeman, pastor of the Church. Military burial rites will be conducted in the Llewellyn Cemetery. The body is to lie in state at the Davis Funeral Home until time for the funeral, at which time the casket will be closed and draped with an American flag.

### **Business Pause for Funeral**

Recognizing Mr. Smith as a distinguished citizen here, as well as a symbol of a vital epoch in America's development, the business district is to close its doors in tribute during the hours of the funeral. Mayor Lee J. Patton yesterday issued a proclamation calling for all city offices to close and requesting other business places to observe the period of mourning.

Mr. Smith was the drummer boy who sounded the call for Union troops to engage Southern forces at the Battle of Shiloh and was wounded three times

during the Civil War. A pioneer in Kirksville's development, having worked here as a contractor many years, three streets, George, Wall and Smith, are named after him.

He was born at Sloan's Point, Adair County, Missouri. Oct. 6, 1845, a son of John B. Smith, who was born in Germany in 1806, and Ann Burgundy Smith, born at Berne, Switzerland in 1812. His parents came to America in 1829 and settled at Sloan's Point in 1838, three years before Adair County was organized.

### **To War at 16**

He lived in this county continuously throughout his 93 years of life, except for two brief periods, during one of which the family lived at Laclede, Mo., where he enlisted in the Union Army, Co. I, 18<sup>th</sup> Missouri Infantry, on his sixteenth birthday, Oct. 6, 1861.

Exactly six months after enlistment, he got his first taste of battle. And it was a bitter one. Serving as drummer boy in Gen. Grant's force of 33,000 men, under Brigadier General B.M. Prentiss, he was in the outpost which saw Confederates under General

Johnston moving across the prairie to launch the bloody battle of Shiloh. George Wall Smith's part in the battle was related by him in a recent interview [here](#).

“On the night of April 5,” Mr. Smith recalled, “we could see flashes of gun-fire indicating skirmishes between Union pickets and Confederates.”

### **First to Defense**

“I was in the Prentiss brigade but my company was commanded by Capt. Madison Miller. We didn't expect a general attack but next morning we saw the Confederate army under General Johnston moving across the prairie two or three miles out. We were the first Union troops in the line of attack.

“Capt. Miller rushed in search of drummer boys, I happened to be the first he saw.

“Sound long roll, he cried. That was a signal for the troops to form in line.

“I began beating the long roll – the first signal for Union troops to engage in the Battle of Shiloh. I have a letter which Capt. Miller wrote, giving me some backing for that claim.

“Soon other drummer boys appeared. Prentiss’ brigade formed and marched out to meet the Confederates. The drummers weren’t allowed in the fight. We didn’t have weapons.

“I tried to go along but my lieutenant sent me back. I went to a soldier who had to stay in camp because of sickness and borrowed his gun. I started out after the troops. The men in camp all cheered me and I felt mighty proud.

“When I got up to the battle line, however, the Lieutenant ordered me back again. Capt. Miller said, ‘Aw, let him stay.’ So I got in the battle.”

## **Wounded in Retreat**

The Confederates attacked fiercely, Prentiss fell back. Along about 4 o’clock in the afternoon, while the fighting raged – through the wooded hills near the river, George Wall Smith fell with his left shin bone shattered by a bullet.

“I was in a place called the Hornet’s Nest, he related. “A deep cut in a hill made by an old road. There were other wounded men around – both confederates and our men. I was the only one able

to crawl, so I made trips to a stream some yards away to fill my canteen. I gave drinks to a wounded Confederate whose name also was Smith.

“Atop the cut made by Hornet’s Nest lay another Southerner. He asked for a drink. But I couldn’t climb the embankment.

“He started calling me names. I shook my canteen at him and teased him about a drink.

“I lay there for two days and two nights. The Union was badly whipped the first day but during the night reinforcements came up and drove the Confederates back. It was a day after the battle, however, before the wounded were picked up.

“During all the first evening and night I quarreled with that Confederate up above the Hornet’s Nest.

### **Enemy Soldier Saved Life**

“Finally some more Confederates came up and I could hear them talking with the wounded fellow I had tantalized.

“They rushed over to me and one of them drew a saber.

“Now, you little ----- ----- -----,” he yelled.  
‘We’ll finish you.’

“I was scared and started crying.

“But the Confederate Smith I had befriended raised his hand and demanded that they clear out and leave me alone. And they did.”

Young George Wall Smith was sent back to St. Louis, where he recovered from his wound. A few weeks later he suffered a bullet wound in one side at the Battle of Iuka. Still later, at Meridan, Miss., a bomb fragment caught him in one hip.

Most embarrassing moment of his war service, he recalled as follows:

“Retreating from Tupelo I had a woman take me prisoner,” he related. My horse got shot and I went to a barn to get a fresh mount. The stable was one of those old-fashioned log structures with a bar securing the door outside. I went in to look over the horses and while there a woman came running out and locked me in. She had me , too. I yelled for help but the army passing along the road could

not hear. When the rear guard came up I yelled again and they came to my aid.”

Discharged at Benton Barracks in 1864 he was handicapped by paralysis in one side, resulting from his wounds.

“A doctor finally told me to take up smoking,” Mr. Smith said. “He said the nicotine would help rid my system of poisons.

“I tried chewing but it made me sick. So I took up smoking --- and I’ve been hitting it hard and heavy ever since.”

Up until his recent illness, Mr. Smith smoked an average of twenty cigars daily.

## **Fervor In Patriotism**

Although the Civil War became a thing of history books to younger generations, it remained a vital experience in his life until the end. The patriotism which impelled him to become a soldier while still a child was expressed on each patriotic holiday in his display of American flags about his home here. When Memorial Day and Independence Day both were passed up here in 1937 without any form of

patriotic observance, the alert old soldier protested. "Ain't it awful?" he declared. "These young people don't think of anything any more." Memorial Day services were resumed last year in his honor. He was the only Civil War veteran to attend.

He became a revered character here, making daily visits uptown to chat with friends until the first of this year. He had his favorite stopping points – to Rinehart's for cigars and magazines and papers, to Herboth's, to Underhills, the Clark Hardware stores, to M.P. Thompson's, and then to the courthouse. He usually carried a sack of candy with him and every small child he met got some of it.

Years ago Mr. Smith was inspector for a scale firm in this vicinity, driving a horse over a wide area. The horse got so it pulled in at the driveways of certain homes along the route – knowing that he always stopped there to offer candy to the children.

### **Vigor In Advanced Age**

His remarkable constitution was reflected in outdoor activity until the last few years. He spent much time at a cabin on the Chariton River, which he made

headquarters for fishing expeditions, often accompanied by his grandson, G.W. Smith, former Teachers College football star, now coach at Liberty, Mo., High School athletics teams.

When he was 84 years old he underwent a major operation at a hospital here. A few days after the surgeon worked on him, he had his pants hidden under his bed and when nurses weren't watching, he dressed and went home.

He took regular swims after becoming a nonagenarian

Mr. Smith was married here July 3, 1871 to Mollie Dodson, eldest daughter of Issam B. Dodson, a Civil War major. Six children were born, three of whom, Pauline, Forest and Bentley, as well as his wife preceded him in death.

Surviving are two daughters, Miss Georgia Smith, with home he made his home here; Mrs. Don Gaines, Springfield, Mo., a son, Clarence Smith, at Springfield; one grandson, G.W. Smith, Liberty, and five granddaughters.

He was the last among a family that embraced 14 children, six brothers and seven sisters.

**Last Civil War  
Veteran Here Dies**



Mr. Smith was a member of the Christian Church for many years, a commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, Corporal Dix Post here and an Elk for many years. He and his daughter, Georgia, attended the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of the Union and Confederate soldiers at Gettysburg, Pa., last summer, where the aged Kirksville man was made one of the eight aides-de-cap to the national commander of the G.A.R.

*Caption: George Wall Smith, 93, drummer boy*

*who sounded the call for Union troops to enter the Civil War Battle of Shiloh, died at his home here Saturday morning. A Kirksville pioneer, three streets here are named after him.*