

Case 24 Henry J. Austin, born 29 December 1844 at Michigan and died 15 May 1924 in Pierce County, Washington.

Battle Mountain Sanatorium Register # 2885

Military Record

Henry J. Austin is found on Register #2885 of the Battle Mountain Sanatorium at Hot Springs, Fall River County, South Dakota. It was a Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. His military history shows that Henry served as a Private in Company C of the First Regiment of Michigan Engineers and Mechanics, during the Civil War. He enlisted 21 Dec 1863 at Lowell, Michigan near Grand Rapids, and was discharged on 22 Sep 1865 at Nashville, TN, one year and nine months later. This was at the end of the War. Henry's disabilities as noted in 1913 were chronic gastric indigestion, constipation and cystitis.

Domestic History

Although the 1900 Census lists Henry's birth date as December 1844, and his gravestone has a complete date of 29 December, the Register is different. The personal details listed in the domestic history for Henry J. Austin in 1913, are: Age 78; born in Michigan; five feet and eleven inches tall; of a light complexion; blue eyes; gray hair. He was a Protestant by religion. He could read and write. He was a married man, and a farmer. His residence after his discharge was at Tekamah, Burt County, Nebraska. His nearest relative listed was his wife, Lucy O. Austin who was living at Tekamah, Nebraska in 1913. Lucy's death certificate in Orting, Washington shows her birth date as 1849 and her death date as 13 Aug 1929. Lucy's parents were Abraham Henry and Malala Southward.

Remarks

The Battle Mountain Sanatorium admitted Henry J. Austin on the sixth of May, 1913 and discharged him on the twenty-first of August that same year on his own recognizance. He only stayed in the Home for about four months. His U. S. Army Pension was #442589. The amount was twenty-four dollars per month.

The Michigan Engineers and Mechanics

This regiment was formed for the purpose of constructing bridges, pontoons, boats, forts, blockhouses, and saw mills for the Union Army in what was called the Western Theater. In Tennessee and Georgia many of the Southern railroads and structures were destroyed. The soldiers built new bridges for the Union on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad all the way to Decatur, Alabama. That was before Henry Austin joined Company C. at the end of 1863.

During the early months of 1864, the First Regiment was engaged in the construction of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad from Nashville to Chattanooga, and also built storehouse and ordnance buildings in Tennessee and Alabama. In June 1864, Company C was at Chattanooga, and did not take part in the line of March with General Sherman to Atlanta. Many of the Engineers of the First Regiment continued with their work constructing defenses until 22nd of September when Henry and the rest of his unit were mustered out. Then they returned to Michigan, were paid and disbanded.

After the surrenders, the regiment went to Washington, D. C. and took part in the parade, that was called "The Grand Review," on 24 May 1865. Henry might have been in the photos that were published of the parade. It should be noted that Henry's brother George M. Austin (1835-1905) was also in Company C of the First Regiment Michigan Engineers and Mechanics. Another brother, Martin V. Austin (1839-1916) was a Private in Company L of the 6th Michigan Cavalry.

Family History

Carol R. Austin is the database compiler on the AFAOA website for Northern Unplaced Austins. Included in that database were the parents of Henry J. Austin. They were: Jonathan Austin who was born 15 Jun 1800 in New York State and died 12 Sep 1873 in Burt County, Nebraska; mother, Rebecca Hunt Austin born 5 Mar 1809 in Vermont and died 27 Mar 1883 in Nebraska. The couple must have removed from New York after the birth of Calvin, their first son, but before the birth of George their second on 16 Sep 1835 in Michigan. Other children were: (3) Martin V. Austin born 28 Jan 1839; (4) Harrison Austin born 24 Jul 1842; (5) Henry J. Austin born 29 Dec 1844 (the subject of this story); (6) Mathias Austin born 18 Dec 1848; and (7) Mary Jane born 3 Mar 1850 (Mrs. D. M. Lydeck). All the children, except Calvin were born in Michigan in Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and Barry Counties not far from the town of Grand Rapids.

My additional research of records included census, birth, death, burial and military records. I found that most of the children of Jonathan and Rebecca left Michigan and traveled about seven hundred miles to Tekamah, Burt County, Nebraska. That location is near the Missouri River. Some of the family were farmers, other found jobs in the vicinity. Only a few years after their migration to Tekamah, father Jonathan died and was buried in Arizona

Cemetery, Burt County, Nebraska. Other family members are buried at Tekamah Cemetery, as were Henry J. Austin and his widow Lucy O. Austin.

After the Civil War

Henry did return to Michigan with the Engineers unit and was with his family for their move to Nebraska. When he arrived there, he married on 1 May 1870 in Burt County to his lifetime partner, wife Lucy O. Henry (23 Oct 1848 MI - 13 Aug 1929 WA). She was a daughter of Kalamazoo farmers, Abraham Henry and Mahala Southward who were originally from New York.

When Lucy was only fifteen years old, on 24 Sep 1861, she married George H. Taylor who was a nineteen year old farmhand who was working on her father's farm. That marriage did not last long. George Taylor died on 9 Apr 1863 at Camp Chase Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, during the Civil War. Lucy went with the Austin family to Nebraska and there married Henry J. Austin.

Only two records were found of children born to Henry and Lucy Austin. An infant, Ward Austin (30 Apr 1875 - 2 Apr 1877) who died young and was buried at Tekamah Cemetery. A daughter, Margaret M. Austin called Maggie, was born much later on 28 Oct 1894 in Tekamah, Burt, Nebraska. Maggie did live to maturity and had a long life, living until April of 1974.

On June 9, 1900 Henry and Lucy were prosperous and owned their own house in Tekamah. Henry had his own income and said he was a "capitalist." Lucy's widowed mother, Mahala Henry, age eighty-three was living with them. About 1911 Margaret graduated from high school.

After his short stay at The Battle Mountain Sanatorium in South Dakota in the summer of 1913, Henry J. Austin, Lucy and their nineteen-year-old daughter Margaret, moved some 1,700 miles all the way to Orting, Pierce County, Washington State, a small town near Spokane. There, Margaret Austin married Joseph Thomas Buell, who was a merchant in a general store.

In 1920 Henry and Lucy had a nice frame house on Calistoga Street in the center of town. Their daughter, Margaret Buell and husband lived next door with their baby, Margaret Lucy Buell, born 8 Jun 1919 in Pierce County.

His last years in Orting, Pierce, Washington

It is good to know that Henry and Lucy had a comfortable life in their last years when they lived in Orting. Henry received his U. S. Army pension in 1920. He died there on the 15th of May 1924 in Pierce County, Washington in that beautiful mountain valley in the shadows of Mt. Rainier.

Lucy O. Austin received a widow's pension on 9 May, 1923 and continued to live in Pierce County

until she died the next year on 15 May 1924. Both Henry, and Lucy's remains were shipped back to the Tekamah Cemetery in Nebraska where they were interred near other Austin family members.

Descendants of Henry J. Austin

Although Henry did not have any sons to continue his Austin family line, his daughter Margaret, and his granddaughter, Margaret Lucy Buell did continue the family. Margaret Austin Buell and her husband Joseph removed to Puyallup in Pierce County before 1940. This was after the Great Depression and jobs with the U. S. Government for the WPA were available. Joseph was a WPA laborer at Puyallup, where they lived well. By that time, the daughter of "Maggie" and Joseph, Margaret Lucy had finished high school and married about 1938 to Bruce D. Rowell (born 21 Dec 1914 in California) in Puyallup. He was a social worker for The Community Chest, a local charity. Bruce and Margaret Lucy had a son named Bruce Douglas Rowell, Jr., born 8 Mar 1939 in Puyallup. Nothing has been found about the details of his life, such as career, marriage or children. At the time of his death, on 22 Jun 2005, Bruce D. Powell, Jr. was living on Cedar Street in Tacoma, Pierce, Washington.

Sources:

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