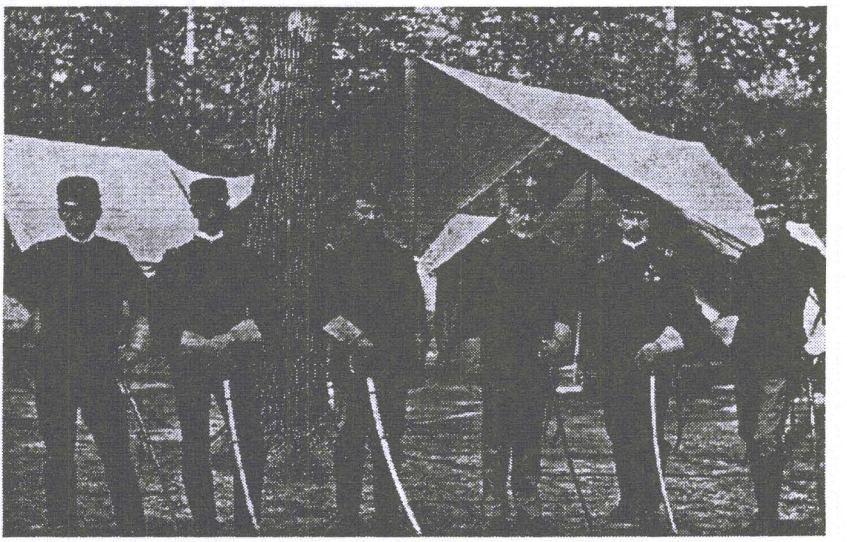
COLONEL MELVIN GRIGSBY AND FAMILY

By LUTHA GRIGSBY

Can you guess which one is the Grigsby in this photograph? I'll tell you later, but I feel sure the majority of you won't have any trouble guessing correctly. This Grigsby would blend right in at many of our present day reunions!



The photograph includes Colonel Melvin Grigsby, politician, author, and military man. Born in Potosi, Grant County, Wisconsin, the son of William Etchison and Rhoda (Thomas) Grigsby, he served in the Civil War and in the Spanish American War. During the Civil War he was imprisoned in Andersonville and later wrote about his experiences in the book, *The Smoked Yank.*

For the Spanish American War he raised a regiment of Westerners called Grigsby Cowboys. The Cowboys were forerunners of Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Melvin and Roosevelt were friends, and Melvin was often entertained at the White House.

Melvin's grandfather was John Grigsby who married Phoebe Paxton. Motivated by their opposition to slavery, John and Phoebe left Rockbridge County, Virginia, and moved to Glasgow, Kentucky. While there, their daughter and a daughter of Daniel Boone are said to have been kidnapped by Indians, but later released. About 1830 John moved to Lewis County, Missouri. At the time of the gold rush he led wagon trains to Oregon and California. He and his sons, William, Quincy and Henry Clay went through Donner Pass. For about two years they mined up and down the Sacramento River. During this time Quincy died of typhoid fever, and Henry Clay returned home by way of Panama. Upon his return to California, this time traveling across the plains by ox cart, he brought with him his stepmother Dicey (Lewis) Thomas Grigsby, and his half-sisters Belle and Martha, along with his half-brother, Lafayette. They settled in Marysville, California.

William Etchison Grigsby did not stay in California, but returned to his

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MELVIN GRIGSBY (CONT.)

wife and family in Wisconsin where they had lived since 1838. William lived to be one hundred and two or three years old. His children, including six girls and one son, Melvin, were born and raised in Wisconsin.

Melvin moved with his bride, Fannie Kingsbury, to what is now Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where their first child, Sioux Kingsbury Grigsby was born in 1873. A second child, George Barnes Grigsby was born a year later. Jack Thomas Grigsby followed in 1880 and Fannie Lou in 1888. Melvin served as Lt. Governor and Attorney General of the state; his law partner was Senator Tom Pettigrew. President Roosevelt appointed Melvin Attorney General of the Territory of Alaska, but after one winter in Alaska Melvin persuaded the President to name his son, George Grigsby, to the post. Melvin and Fannie are both buried in Sioux Falls.

The children of Melvin and Fannie were talented and colorful. Sioux wrote an opera and toured with a Gilbert and Sullivan-like opera company. Later in his life he served as Asst. Attorney General for South Dakota, state representative, and senator. He was Lt. Governor in 1944 and 1946 and was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1952. He finally closed his law office when he was 92 and died a few years later.

George Barnes Grigsby, who married Elizabeth A. Chapman and later Patricia Crowley, was Attorney General of Alaska, representative from the Territory of Alaska, Mayor of Nome and a foremost criminal lawyer. He was a billiards champion of Alaska. The Grigsby home had a billiards and pool room on the third floor instead of the more traditional ball room. His niece, Suzanne Russell, wrote NGFS to say she was in the house many times before it was torn down. George died at 89.

John Thomas "Jack" Grigsby, who married Helen Langston, was appointed Lt. Governor of South Dakota from May 1929 to January 1931. He was also Asst. Attorney General of the U.S. and the prosecutor of the A & P monopoly case, among others. John, who was also a violin virtuoso died at age 89.

Fannie Lou Grigsby, wife of George Edwin Robinson, was a professional pianist and accompanist. She won two diamond medals at the Chicago Musical College and played with a symphony there. She taught at Wheaton College and accompanied the Chicago Opera Company in rehearsals. Fannie Lou died after the age of 90.

The source for much of this article was Memorabilia I, pp. 154-161, as well as information sent to NGFS by Suzanne Russell, daughter of Sioux Grigsby. I'd also like to thank Mr. Melvin Lill of Portland, Michigan, for the photograph featured in this article. Melvin had an excellent replica of the original photograph made for NGFS' files. The uniforms shown in this photograph were typical Army uniforms worn near the time of the Spanish American War. The dark blue military uniforms were replaced by the olive green uniforms adopted by the Army in 1902. In 1957 the color was modified again and became known as Army green.

One final footnote—you guessed it! Col. Melvin Grigsby is the gray bearded gentleman, third from the right at the Headquarters of the 1st Calvary Brigade of the 1st Army Corps. He and the others in the photograph were identified, from left to right, as Second Lt. James E. Reud, 1st Illinois Volunteer Calvary, Aide-de-camp; O. W. McMichael, Brigade Commissary; R. W. Parlimain, Brigade Quartermaster; Col. Melvin Grigsby, Brigade Commander; Otto L. Sues, Adjutant General; 1st Lt. W. D. Forsyth, 1st Ohio Volunteer Calvary, Aide-de-camp.

CHARLES GRIGSBY AWARDED PATENT

Charles O. Grigsby, Jr., a long time member of the National Grigsby Family Society, has been awarded a patent for an apparatus for preparing chemical compounds to be mixed for reaction. Granted July 25, 1995, this patent was the result of years of research and development.

Charles is the author of *The History of the Blandsville, Illinois Grigsbys* published in 1989. This book traces the history of the descendants of Charlotte Gollihue and James Grigsby

Date
July 25, 1995
Patent Number
5,433,709
Charles O. Grigsby
INVENTOR
APPARATUS FOR PREPARING CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS TO BE MIXED FOR REACTION
United States Patent