

## Colonel Melvin Grigsby, 1845—1917

The NGFS has acquired a couple of books concerning Colonel Melvin Grigsby. The first was a book written by Clifford P. Westermeier titled "Who Rush to Glory". This book is concerned about the three men who led the First, Second, and Third Volunteer Cavalry Regiments during the Spanish-American War. These regiments, called the Cowboy Regiments is best known for the First Cavalry Regiment led by Theodore Roosevelt. The other two were led by Jay L. Torrey and Melvin Grigsby. This particular copy happens to have an inscription and signature of Melvin Grigsby's oldest son, Sioux Grigsby. The inscription reads as follows: "*To my daughter Suzanne G. Woolley Merry Christmas Dec 25 - 1958 Sioux K. Grigsby*".

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1, Colonel Melvin Grigsby)

The second book is a second edition of "The Smoked Yank" written by Colonel Melvin Grigsby originally in 1888. The book is signed by the author and inscribed as: "*James Dorwin Tyler Compliments of the Author Melvin Grigsby*". This book concerns Melvin Grigsby's years in the Civil War and his experiences in the Andersonville prison including his three escapes.

From reading *The Smoked Yank*, I have found the accounting given by Colonel Grigsby to be very fascinating and containing a lot of genealogical information. For this reason, we will be including chapters from this book in this and the following issues of the *Grigsby Gazette*.

As each chapter is published in this newsletter, I will be listing the genealogical data that can be found in it and subsequent paths to follow to determine the accuracy and the follow-up investigations to make. I will be using it as a teaching tool for those who wish to learn how to better evaluate books and articles that are found during research of a specific person. The finding of a book about an individual does not happen very often as most of you know. The finding of a book that can be considered a primary source, as this autobiography is, is even more of a rarity and provides many opportunities for all of us to learn and grow in our research abilities.

I have tried to keep the reprint of *The Smoked Yank* as close to the original as possible.



The above picture is of the officers of the 3rd Volunteer Cavalry Regiment and shows Colonel Melvin Grigsby in the middle seat. This picture was found, along with a reprint of an article dated May 29, 1898 that was published in the *Worthington Herald* from Worthington, Minnesota. The link for this reprint is <http://www.spanamwar.com/Southdakotacav.htm> .

***The Smoked Yank***

**Revised Edition**



**By**

**Melvin Grigsby**  
**Late Colonel 3d U.S. Vol. Cav.,**  
**known as Grigsby's Cowboys**  
(Spanish American War)

Inscription of NGFS copy:

James Dorwin Tyler  
Compliments of the Author,  
Melvin Grigsby

*Copyright, 1888, by Melvin Grigsby*

*Dedication.*

*To the Real Chivalry of the South,  
the old "Aunties" and "Uncles" and Valorous Young Men,  
who so generously and bravely,  
at the risk of Cruel Punishment and sometimes of Life,  
Fed and Warmed and Hid and Guided  
Escaped Union Prisoners,  
As a Token of Gratitude this Little Volume  
is Tenderly Dedicated*

*By the Author.*



## PUBLISHER'S NOTICE.

Not long ago the publisher of this book and several others met in the office of Mr. Grigsby. The subject of our conversation was the reviving interest in war stories and reminiscences, evidenced by the prominence given to that class of literature by all the leading magazines of the day. Incidentally, Mr. Grigsby remarked that he had, in manuscript, a book written several years ago, narrating, what his sons called, his "Adventures in the War," which he designed, sometime, to have published in pamphlet form for distribution among his relatives and friends.

Having previously heard that his experiences as a soldier were of an unusually varied and interesting character, my curiosity was aroused, and, yielding to my solicitations, Mr. Grigsby finally permitted me to see his manuscript. A careful reading convinced me that were it published in book form it would meet with a favorable reception, not only by the relatives and personal friends of the author, but also by thousands of veterans and sons of veterans, by all, in fact, who take an interest in the stirring incidents of our civil war.

Frankly believing this, I persuaded Mr. Grigsby to have the book published under the title of the "Smoked Yank," and agreed to be responsible for the success of the enterprise. Whether or not my judgment was well-founded is for the public to determine.

To my request for a preface, the author replied: "You have assumed responsibility, and if you deem that explanations or apologies are due the reader, make them yourself." The publisher has none to offer.

Sam T. Clover.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The real preface to this book is contained in the first chapter. This Second Edition, with Illustrations, goes out because the first was received with favor by the public, and the Author is daily in receipt of orders which he cannot fill.

The Author.

## PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION.

The original edition of the Smoked Yank was published more for the purpose of distribution among friends and relatives than for the purpose of sale. One thousand copies were published and nearly all of these were given away to relatives, acquaintances and old soldier friends. Subsequently an illustrated edition was published because of repeated inquiry for the book after the first edition was exhausted. Several thousand of these were used in the common school circulating libraries, but the Smoked Yank was never regularly on sale. Although the original edition was and purported to be a narration of actual facts, the author was often asked, by those who read the book, why he did not write more books, clearly indicating the belief that the Smoked Yank was a work of fiction, similar to Corporal Si Klegg. In the Carnegie Library in my home town I noticed that the Smoked Yank was listed among works of fiction. In the appendix to this revised edition there is sufficient additional matter and evidence so that the reader will have considerable proof, besides the word of the author, that the Smoked Yank, as originally written, was a description of actual occurrences and experience and as nearly correct as it was possible to describe them from memory.

## ***CONTENTS.***

### **CHAPTER I.**

Tells how this Book came to be Written,

### **CHAPTER II.**

I Rebel in order to Fight Rebellion – “The Girl I Left Behind Me,”

### **CHAPTER III.**

Camp Washburn – I get my Name in Print – Privates eat Sandwiches in the Rain while Officers have Champagne under Shelter – Benton Barracks – On the March – I make a rash Promise,

### **CHAPTER IV.**

Helena – A Slave Owner in a bad fix – “Forninst the Government” – Plantation Records – Memphis – Prohibition in the Army – Helping a Friend to Beat the Quartermaster,

### **CHAPTER V.**

Vicksburg – Another Case of Beating U.S. – A Runaway Horse carries me into Close Quarters – Jackson and Canton – Have Trouble with Uncle Tommy and leave the Regiment,

### **CHAPTER VI.**

I get a Leave of Absence and have some Fun with the Boys – Helping Planters to Market Cotton – “An Atheist’s Laugh a Poor Exchange for Deity Offended,” – Captured by Guerillas,

### **CHAPTER VII.**

Samples of Chivalry – Joking with a Johnny – Helping to fill up the Sets – A wearisome March without Food, except for Reflection – Too angry to eat,

### **CHAPTER VIII.**

“To the Victors belong the Spoils” – I lose my Suspenders – A jolly Rebel Rascal – A Captain of the Horse Marines,

### **CHAPTER IX.**

Moved to Cahaba, Alabama – A little Leaven for the Loaf – I Borrow Books, write Notes, and become Sentimental – A promising Romance nipped in the Bud,

### **CHAPTER X.**

Cahaba Revisted in 1884 – A Delightful Ride – The Freedmen of the South – A Deserted Village – An old Mansion – Mrs. Gardner, “the Friend of the Unfortunate,”

### **CHAPTER XI.**

We leave Cahaba – A Song Battle – “Let the Damn Yanks Starve” – We enter Andersonville – Walking Mummies and Smoked Skeletons – Discouraging Prospects,

### **CHAPTER XII.**

“Answer at Roll-Call, draw Rations and fight Lice” – Scenes at the Dead-Line,

### CHAPTER XIII.

Extra Rations – Flanking-Out – Cooked Rations – The Huckster’s Cry and the Peddler’s Call – The Plymouth Pilgrims – Dead Yankees become Articles of Merchandise – I buy a Corpse and taste pure Air – Repeating,

### CHAPTER XIV.

The Raiders – “Limber Jim” – The Regulators – Execution of the Raiders,

### CHAPTER XV.

Escapes – Blood-Hounds – Tortures – Digging Tunnels – A Benedict Arnold – Shooting a Cripple – The Hospital – Sick-Call – A Small-Pox Scare,

### CHAPTER XVI.

Condition of the Prison in July and August – Rebel Statistics – Why we were not Exchanged – Andersonville Revenged – This a Republic!

### CHAPTER XVII.

Outlines of a Picture.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

How I Manage to Live – My Bunk-Mate goes to the Hospital – I secure a Corner Lot and get into Trade – Sherman’s Fine-Tooth Combs and Scissors – Removal to Florence, South Carolina,

### CHAPTER XIX.

I go for Water and Escape – A Faithful People – A Novel Character – A Comical Hero,

### CHAPTER XX

“Hell Hath no Fury like a Woman Scorned” – A Badly Scared Negro – Captured by a Fourteen-year-old Boy – In a Felon’s Cell,

### CHAPTER XXI.

Another Stockade – A Meaner Man than Wirz – Out on Parole – The Smuggled Steer – Notes from a Diary,

### CHAPTER XXII.

Parole of Honor Played Out – A Scheme for Escape – All is fair in Love and War – Bribing a Yankee with a Rebel’s Money – I go after Shakes and do not Return,

### CHAPTER XXIII.

Blood-Hounds in Sight – Wake up the Wrong Family – Gentlemen (very little) of Color – I play that I am a Slave Owner and talk with Rebel Soldiers,

### CHAPTER XXIV.

A Pressing Invitation – I Paddle a Canoe – Am caught in a “Niggah Qua’tah” – A Chivalrous Lady pleads my Cause – A Night in a Swamp,

### CHAPTER XXV.

I steal Mules and take a Ride – A well laid Scheme “Gang Aft Aglee” Some Dangerous Places – Crossing the Salka-hatchie,

### CHAPTER XXVI.

“The Girl I Left Behind Me” – The grand old Flag and the Boys in Blue – I am Dubbed *The Smoked Yank*,

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Kit and Betty, old friends of my boyhood.

Escape of General Pillow.

A slave-owner in a bad fix.

The charge of a runaway horse.

"What in hell are you pointing your gun at this Yank for? He is my prisoner."

The captain of the "Sea Horse Calvary" loses his boots.

We enter Andersonville.

Shot at the dead line.

Dead Yankees become articles of merchandise.

"If you 'uns thought dah' was Yanks in dis wagon I could jus' dance juba on you 'uns coat tails."

Captured by a fourteen-year-old boy.

Bloodhounds in sight.

"Eager for a glimpse of the damsel."

"Say, dah, young massa! Can you paddle a canoe?"

Guided through a swamp by runaway slaves.

"There, with colors flying and band playing, go the boys in blue."



# The Smoked Yank

## Chapter I.

### Tells How This Book Came To Be Written.

For nearly twenty years I have been about to write this book. I came home from the war in 1865, a boy of only twenty years, but with a discharge that showed almost four years' service in the army. How vividly I recall this scene – getting off the stage at my native village I started to my country home on foot. Ascending a hill, I saw over the top a team coming towards me, Kit and Betty, old friends of my boyhood. My first rides were on their backs. But who is driving? Can it be father? He looks too old to be father. I stopped in the road. The bowed head was raised. Who could paint the changes that came over his face as he came toward me? He has told me since that he was thinking of me and wondering if he would ever hear of me again, when, raising his head to try and drive away his sorrowful thoughts, he saw me standing in the road. His lost boy. More than a year of anxious watching and waiting since those lines had been received saying, "Your son has been taken prisoner," and in all that time not another word, and then when trying to resolve to give me up, to raise his eyes and see me standing in the road, it was indeed a surprise.

My sons, never keep back glad tidings from anxious parents to give them a greater surprise. I ought to have sent them word of my safety at the earliest possible moment after reaching the Union lines. That was twenty years ago, and your grandfather looks as young to-day as he did then – he had been worrying. Coming home from the war and escaped prisoner – supposed to have died in Andersonville, I told my story very willingly to willing ears for awhile, and then it got to be tedious, even to me.

For several weeks I was the hero of that neighborhood. Visitors thronged my father's house to see the escaped prisoner and to hear of Andersonville and other rebel prison pens, and of my escape. To each new party, I told the story until to me it grew old and stale, and, to avoid continuous repetition, I declared my intention of writing it up for publication. When I tried to do so, I found that to hold a little audience of friends and relatives in rapt attention, was vastly easier than to write a connected and readable narrative of the same incidents. I often began, but never advanced to the end of a satisfactory beginning, and finally postponed the work until I should acquire through reading and education a better command of language.

Thus I became a veritable procrastinator – though continually postponed, the purpose of writing my experience in the war and publishing the narrative in book form was always present – I was always about to begin. To new friends and acquaintances of my school life, I would occasionally relate some incident of prison life or escape and seldom found unwilling ears to listen, or lack of encouragement when I mentioned by intention of writing a book. Whether they were, many of them, bored by my monopolizing the conversation and making myself the big ego, and thought the readiest way to escape further infliction was to advise and encourage the book plan, has often since been a question in my mind, especially when I have realized how easy I find it to be thoroughly bored in a similar way.

Nevertheless, that self-appointed task was never more than postponed. It has continued to be both my waking dream and the cause of much self-condemnation for not having performed the work earlier.

At first the fancied distinction to be acquired was probably my strongest inducement to write. Later the idea of great gain by means of such a book was not absent. But now as I begin, I trust for the last time, to carry out the long-cherished and often abandoned scheme, neither the desire for notoriety nor the hope of gain, is the moving cause.

Other hopes and dreams and plans of those twenty years that have gone have not been fruitless – my home is not now my father's house – there has been a cradle in my own, babies on my knee, and, now two boys, one nine and one ten, with the life of Alexander, of Hannibal, of Caesar fresh in mind, are ever teasing me to tell them of my life as a soldier.

"Papa, did you have any adventures when you were in the war?" says Sioux. "O, yes, I had a good many, such as they were." "Tell them to us," says George, "we would rather hear about yours than read those in the books." And when I tell them some and then speak of time for bed, I know from the look of keen interest in their bright eyes, and the reluctance with which they go, that they have not been bored. And I tell them I will begin at once and write my adven-

tures, as they call them, all out, and have a little book printed for them to read.

“Oh, won’t that be jolly,” says George, “to have a book all about Papa.” “And I guess mamma and grandpa, too, and lots of other folks will want to read it,” says Sioux.

They go to bed and I begin. If I do not finish before these boys are too old, or too wise to care for so plain a tale in such crude fashion told, then perhaps boys of theirs may come and prize the book grandfather wrote, and perhaps some old soldier, worn with toil and weary of the present days, may let it lead him back to the old camp ground, or prison pen, and thus beguile a pleasant hour.



*Kit and Billy, old friends of my boy-hood.*

## **Chapter II.**

### **I Rebel In Order To Fight Rebellion. – “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”**

As it is easier to describe the actions of me than it is to set forth the thoughts, feelings and motives that moved them to action, so I expect to find much less difficulty in narrating all that I did, or saw, worthy of mention while a soldier, than in telling why I became one.

I had not passed my sixteenth birthday when the war began. I was a farmer’s boy. Had been brought up on a farm near the village of Potosi, in Grant county, Wisconsin. A few winters at school in the old log school house of our district and two or three terms at the school in the village, had been my opportunities for education. You, boys, have already read more books than I had at that time. Such books for boys as Abbott’s Series of Histories had not then been written, and probably would not have found their way to many log farm houses if they had been. But I had read the History of the American Revolution, had spoken at school the famous speech of Patrick Henry, and I loved the soul-stirring strains of the Star Spangled Banner. My grandfather was a soldier of the war of 1812. His grandfather, who was known as “Revolutionary John,” fought in the war of the Revolution. Many of the leading incidents of the history of the country,

especially of the wars and of the early settlements in Virginia and Kentucky has been handed down from father to son in stories and traditions, and to these I have always been an eager listener.

I was well posted too, on the political questions that had for a long time agitated the country, for I had been a constant reader of Horace Greeley's New York Weekly Tribune. I can remember well the drubbings I used to get at the village school when the boys divided for snow-balling, into Fremonters and Buchananites. The Fremonters, to which I belonged, were largely in the minority. I can remember, too, the woes of "bleeding Kansas," and how I used to urge my father to take me with him out to Kansas so that we might help to put down the "border ruffians" from Missouri.

The firing on Fort Sumter was quickly followed by Lincoln's proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand volunteers. These were to serve for three months. A company was at once formed at Potosi. I wanted to go. The men who had so long been threatening to dissolve the Union because they could not have political matters their own way, had at last fired on the national flag – on the Stars and Stripes.

As I saw in imagination the bombardment of Fort Sumter, and the hauling down of the dear old flag, it seemed to me that I could see, too, the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers; the "starving time" of the Jamestown settlement; the Indian massacres; the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill and Brandywine; Washington crossing the Delaware; the awful winters at Valley Forge; the heroic deeds of Marion, and Sumter, and Jasper, and Newton; the glorious victories of our navy in the War of 1812; every scene of hardship and of heroism that had helped to win for us and to preserve for us our proud position among the nations of the earth, of which that dear old flag was the emblem, came trooping up in memory. "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave" had indeed been "touched" but not "by the better angels of our nature."

Such were the thoughts and feelings that impelled me with an almost irresistible impulse to volunteer as a soldier and help to chastise the traitors who had insulted the flag. Such, at least, are the thoughts and feelings that I would have described had I then attempted to explain why I wanted to be a soldier.

There was another reason which I would not have given then, and I cannot even now without a blush; I was desperately in love. If there was any doubt about my desire to do battle for my country from purely patriotic motives, there was certainly none about my readiness to go to the wars, or to engage in any other affair of the knight-errantry that might win smiles of approval from the girl I loved.

But I could not go. I was the second in a family of eight children, all girls, except myself and the youngest. My father had gone to Pike's Peak, in the spring of 1860. In the fall of that year he had started to cross the mountains and we had not since heard from him – I could not leave my mother with the management of the farm and the support of the family on her hands. I saw that company formed in line, dressed in their stylish new uniforms of gray, heard the farewell speeches, saw flags and swords presented, saw them receive the warmest of kisses from all the lovely maidens for goodbye, and I turned away with a heavy heart, with tears of sore regret, and went back to my dull farm-work.

That was my last summer's work on a farm, and I have always been proud of the record I made. Besides putting in and tending the crops on all the ploughed land, I had twelve acres of land grubbed and broken, on which there was a heavy growth of saplings and underbrush. We raised an excellent crop.

I did not neglect the farm, although my heart was not in the work. No boy of adventurous disposition, who has an inherited love for dog, and horse, and gun, will ever be content on a farm while there is war in his own country. I had owned a dog and gun, and had been a hunter from the time I was eight years old, and I could ride like an Arab. My leisure hours during that spring and summer were devoted to such exercise as I thought would best fit me for cavalry service. I took lessons in sword exercise from a man in the village, kept a young horse for my exclusive use and practiced him jumping over fences and ditches, riding down steep hills at full gallop, and shooting from his back.

The harvesting was all done and the grain ready for stacking when father got home. He had been snowed up all winter in the mountains of Colorado. My first thought was, "Now I can go to the war." My cousin, James F. Ayars, had enlisted in the 7<sup>th</sup> Wis. Infantry, and I tried to persuade my father to let me go in the same company. He thought I was too young – said that if I went into the army and survived the war, my opportunity for securing an education would be gone. He did not believe a boy would retain a desire for education through the years of soldier life. He offered to send me away to school, and as the academy to which he proposed sending me was at Lancaster, the county seat, where the object of my boyish affections was then living, I concluded to follow his advice, and accept his offer.

Early in September I was dully installed as one of the pupils at the Academy, but I could not shake of the desire to take part in the war. In the latter part of November, C. C. Washburn, afterward General, came to Lancaster and made arrangements to have a company of calvary recruited in that country. I went at once to the recruiting office. Was told that I would not be taken without the consent of my father. How was this to be obtained? I sat in school that afternoon with a book open before me thinking over the situation. Classes to which I belonged were called, but I was so deeply engaged in meditation that I took no heed. All at once the thought came to my mind that thousands of the young men who were at the front had left schools and offices and clerkships and, by serving their country, were losing opportunities for education and for professional and business advancement – that the country would have but few defenders if only those who could do so without sacrifice were to volunteer – these thoughts flashed into my mind, as sunshine sometimes flashes through a rift in the clouds, and seemed to make the path of duty plain. I gathered up my books and without so much as “by your leave,” to the professor or any one else, I walked out of the schoolroom.

In the twinkling of an eye an obedient son, who never before had dreamed of willfully disobeying his father’s command, had been transformed into an uncompromising rebel.

Out of doors a cold sleeting rain was falling, and the wind blowing, but what would a soldier amount to who cared for a driving wind with sleet and rain? To procure a horse and gallop him over the twelve mile to my father’s house was but an hour of sport.

The family were at supper when I entered dripping with water and splashed with mud. “Why, what in the world?” said mother. “What brought you home through such a storm?” “Soldiers don’t care for storms, mother,” I replied, and as I spoke my father looked into my eyes. He saw that I had crossed the Rubicon.

That night we talked it over. I told him that I had resolved to be a soldier, and that if he did not give his consent, so that I could go in the company from our own county, it would only cause me to find some other place where I could enlist without any consent. He gave his consent but with great reluctance.

Boys, I was wrong, but I did not even think so – no argument nor persuasion could at that time have created a doubt in my mind. “Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,” has a different meaning to me now. I can see now that if I had remained at school in obedience to my parents’ wishes, although they might have erred in requiring me so to do, the responsibility would have been theirs, no mine.

“But what became of the girl?” says one of my boys after listening to this point. So that’s the way the wind blows already is it? You would rather have a love story than a war story, would you?

Well, boys, there isn’t much to tell in the love story line. I shouldn’t have mentioned the little there is were it not to let you see how nearly related love of country, which we call patriotism, is to all the other noble passions. No boy can truly love a chaste and modest maiden without having all the better qualities of his nature quickened and developed. He no sooner feels the tender passion than he wants to look better, and do better, and be better. The fires of ambition are usually kindled by love of woman. One of the most refined and intellectual mothers that I have ever knew used often to say that she never had any anxiety whatever about her boys when they were in love. She said there was no danger then of their forming any loaferish, or ungentlemanly habits.

If she was right, and I believe she was, I had little opportunity for bad habits when I was a boy, for I was almost always in love. My affection for Helen began when we were but children; I was but thirteen and she a half year older in years, but many years older in manners and in the knowledge of social etiquette. I was an awkward country jake, she a village belle, admired by all the village beaux. It was not her handsome face, nor her graceful, slender form, nor her bright and laughing eyes that took my fancy, but all of these combined with a daring and venturesome disposition. I taught her to ride on horseback, to fish, and to shoot, these were the sports that we both loved best. We ran races, swam our horses across rivers, shot wild pigeons, and even stole apples and water melons out of pure devilment, for we had an abundance of them at home. Yet I never went to see her openly, or avowedly as a lover, I was too bashful, too green, perhaps, for that.

She and my older sister were chums, and I tried hard to chum with her youngest brother. I used to often walk two miles to town after a hard day’s work for no other purpose than to meet her, if possible, by chance. Have often hid behind a bunch of lilac bushes and thrown gravel stones at her chamber window, striving thus to catch even a glimpse of her face. If you should ever visit your grandfather’s old homestead, go down into the pasture, and there, beside an old road you will see an oak tree with twenty-one scars, one above the other. Each of the represents a blow of my axe

and a word of vow made to Helen.

These are pleasant memories. Your Aunt Alice could perhaps tell you more. After I had enlisted and just before my company started for the war, she arranged that never-to-be-forgotten visit that I made to the dear old home with "another, not a sister." Ask your aunt to show you two pictures that she has in one case. One of your father taken when he was sixteen, the other taken on the same day, of "the girl I left behind me."

## ***Analysis of the Smoked Yank***

*By Matthew Beard*

List of genealogical related facts found in these chapters:

Chapter 1:

- home from war in 1865
- only 20 years old when came home
- discharge from army – almost 4 years service
- started to my country home
- father alive when came home
- parents received letter saying son (author) taken prisoner; no information since then
- author has sons
- safe after reaching Union lines
- several references of this occurring 20 years previous of book writing
- tells sons that their grandfather looks as young today as he did when author returned home
- author was escaped prisoner
- supposed to have died in Andersonville
- author has two boys at time of writing – ages 9 and 10
- one son is named Sioux
- other son is named George
- Sioux talks about his mamma, grandpa, and other folks who will want to read the book

Chapter 2:

- War began before his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Lived on a farm near village of Potosi, Grant County, Wisconsin
- School was in an old log school house for the district (a few winters) and at the school in the village (2 or 3 terms)
- Grandfather was a soldier in the War of 1812
- Grandfather's grandfather was known as "Revolutionary John" and fought in the war of the Revolution
- Constant reader of Horace Greeley's New York Weekly Tribune
- In love with a girl
- The author was 2<sup>nd</sup> of eight children, all girls, except himself and the youngest
- His father had went to Pike's Peak in the spring of 1860
- Last heard of his father was when he started to cross the mountains in the fall of 1860
- Worked on farm while father was gone

*(Continued on page 18)*

*(Continued from page 17, Analysis of the Smoked Yank)*

- Had been a hunter since he was 8 years old
- Ride like an Arab
- Took lessons in sword exercise from a man in the village
- Practiced jumping and riding his horse
- Wanted to join the calvary
- Father came home after harvest was completed; had been snowed up all winter in Colorado.
- Cousin, James F. Ayars, enlisted in the 7<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry
- Lancaster is the county seat
- Lancaster was where the girl he loved lived at that time
- Went to academy in Lancaster in September of that year (1861?)
- General C.C. Washburn came to Lancaster to recruit a company of calvary
- He was too young to enlist without approval of his father
- It was 12 miles from Lancaster to his father's house; made the distance in an hour at a gallop
- Girls name was Helen
- He feel in love with her when he was 13 years old
- Helen was a half a year older than he was
- He taught Helen to ride, fish, shoot
- Helen was chums of his older sister
- The author tried to be chums with Helen's youngest brother
- He used to walk 2 miles to town just to catch a glimpse of her
- He hid in a bunch of lilac bushes and threw gravel at her window to get her to look out and glimpse her
- He cut twenty-one blows of an axe in an old oak tree on his father's old homestead as vows made to Helen
- The boys had an Aunt Alice
- Picture made of the author when he was 16 years old
- Picture was made the same day of Helen

Analysis of the genealogical information can provided quite a few hints about a person and where to look for additional information.

From the first chapter, we can determine that since Melvin was home from the war in 1865 and only 20 years old, then he was born about 1845. He served for 4 years which would mean he joined in 1861. He felt safe when he reached Union lines, so that provides information to search in the Union army records from 1861 to 1865 for his records. He states that he returned to his country home, so his father, who was alive when he returned, was probably a farmer. He talks about being taken prisoner, people believing he died in Andersonville, and escaping from prison. This provides reason to search Andersonville records for any information that can be found there. Melvin also states that the events occurred about 20 years before the book was written and that he has two sons at the time of writing, Sioux and George, who are aged 10 and 9 years. The reference of Sioux saying his mother and grandfather will want to read the book also provides indication that Melvin's father and wife are still alive 20 years after 1865 which means around this was around 1885.

Chapter 2 provides information that confirms data from chapter 1 and provides further possibilities. The war began before Melvin's 16th birthday. Since the battle at Ft. Sumter is considered by most historians as the start of the Civil War, then you can make the assumption that he was born after April 12, 1861 which means his birthday would be somewhere between April 13 to December 31, 1861. You find out that they lived on a farm near Potosi, Grant County, Wisconsin and that Melvin was the 2nd child of eight and one of only two boys in the family; the other was the youngest child. Melvin liked to read Horace Greeley's New York Weekly Tribune and attended a school in the district and in the village. Later on, he places his family's house at 12 miles from Lancaster and that it took an

*(Continued on page 19)*

hour to ride at a gallop to that town. You also find out that Melvin worked as a farmer while his father was gone on a trip to Pike's Peak in the spring of 1860 and that he (the father) had to cross the mountains in the fall of 1860. Why did his father go to Pike's Peak and was there any records of this trip? He returns home after the harvest of 1861 was complete, so that means that Melvin did not join the military until at least August or September of 1861.

You find out from reading that Melvin's grandfather was a soldier in the War of 1812, so that provides opportunity of finding out more of the grandfather. He also states that his grandfather's grandfather was known as "Revolutionary John" and fought in the War of the Revolution. Now you have a link from Melvin though Melvin's great-great grandfather that can possibly be proven through military and pension records. May even include a generation past the Revolution if a pension was made.

Personal information about Melvin includes that he starting hunting at age 8, could ride like an "Arab", practiced riding and jumping his horse, and took lessons in swordsmanship from a local in the village. This was all due to his desire to join the calvary and participate in the war. You also find out that his father thought he was too young. You also find out that Melvin believed he was in love with a girl named Helen and had been since he was 13 years old. She lived in Lancaster (the county seat), was a half year older than he was, was friends with one of his older sisters (Alice), and had a younger brother that Melvin hung around with so he could see Helen. He and Helen both had individual pictures made the same day in 1861 as 16 year olds.

The NGFS database provides the following information for Melvin Grigsby and the other individuals mentioned in the first two chapters. Melvin Grigsby (#353) was born on June 8, 1845 in Potosi, Grant County, Wisconsin to William Etchison Grigsby (#343) and Rhoda Thomas (#351). He married Fannie L. Kingsbury (#359) in March of 1873 in Delavan, Wisconsin. They had four children of which included the before-mentioned Sioux Kingsbury Grigsby (#1565) born December 25, 1873 in Sioux Falls, Miniheha County, South Dakota and George Barnes Grigsby (#1976) born December 2, 1874 also in Sioux Falls. The sister mentioned by Melvin was the oldest child of William and Rhoda named Alice (#352) who married Henry McCartney (#358) on March 1, 1862. The grandfather that fought in the War of 1812 was John Grigsby (#175) who was born circa 1793 in Rockbridge, Virginia. John's grandfather, the one named Revolutionary John in the book, is the person that the society calls "Soldier John" - John Grigsby (#37) born circa 1720 in Stafford, Virginia as the fourth child of Charles Grigsby (#6) and Sarah Wilkerson (#33).

Further chapters will be carried in the next newsletter with continuing analysis demonstrated on the genealogical facts gleaned from it. In one of the upcoming issues, I will be showing the death certificate of Melvin Grigsby and what it took to find where his death occurred in an unexpected location.