

Finding Family – October 2018

Who was Grampa Allen?

By Ruth Jenkins-McIntire

When my husband's mother, Sybil, first told me about her Great Grandpa Allen, she said he lived up in the hills on a farm. She was raised in the small towns of Waldron and Mansfield, Arkansas and her grandpa lived near Mena, a few miles south. She said he had a wooden leg and had lost his leg fighting in the battle of Pea Ridge during the Civil War. She remembered that he kept a bottle of what he called "his medicine" in the hollow part of his leg.

Sybil did not know the first name of her great grandpa, so I tried finding a family in 1880 with the children that we knew they had. The family was there, but he was listed only under his first initial, C. Allen. Since he was a veteran, I thought he would be listed in books of veterans. Nothing I found matched. There was one family of Carr Allen that almost matched, but not quite.

One day when I was quizzing Sybil again about Great Grampa Allen, she mentioned that he was married a second time. I wrote a query with as much information about them as I knew and put it on the Scott County, Arkansas site of USGenWeb.org. A genealogy angel wrote back and told me that the family I was describing was that of Carr Allen. Census takers in that area were very inaccurate at times. She sent a quote from *The Goodspeed Biographical & Historical Memoir of Western Arkansas*. Carr was born in 1845, the son of Beverly Allen from Kentucky and Mary from Arkansas. He served nine months in the Army during the Civil War, homesteaded land in Scott County, Arkansas and died at the age of 87 in 1932.

In 1997, we took a trip back to Arkansas to see what more we could find. On-site research sometimes turns up unexpected surprises. We decided to go to Mena and search the library. It didn't take long to find a couple of huge books on Confederate soldiers, so we looked for Carr Allen. He wasn't there! This really puzzled me. Then I noticed a very thin small book entitled *Damn Yankees* and in that book Carr Allen was listed. He had enlisted at the age of 17 as a Bugler in Company E, 3rd Arkansas Cavalry, so he was a Private in the Union Army.

The next day, we visited the Duncan cemetery in Waldron and found Great Grandpa Allen's marked gravesite. The cemetery had a small hill in it and since we knew that older graves were usually at the top of hills, we drove up and found it. His gravestone had a marker for his Civil War service.

On this same trip, we traveled to Northern Arkansas to the battlefield of Pea Ridge, which is now a National Park. We visited there on the weekend of July 4th and there were Reenactment groups doing demonstrations. One demonstration was in a house that was used as a hospital during the battle. Different instruments that would have been used by medics to treat the wounded were displayed on a table. We were told that with so few doctors and trained help available, many times arms and legs were just cut off, even when the wounds were from gunshots. We imagined Great Grandpa Allen as a 17 year old boy, having his leg cut off for something that could have been treated. Instead, he lived with a wooden leg for 70 years after the war.

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If you are interested in genealogical research, stop by the Napa Valley Genealogical Society's library, 1701 Menlo Ave. Friendly library volunteers are available to help you begin your search for your roots. Check www.napavalleygenealogy.org or call 252-2252 for library hours.