

Bruce Hopkins Writes

A Long Journey Home - Photos from the memorial service



The weather forecast for Central City was for thunderstorms all day, but the service began on time at 3:00 p.m. By the time the service was completed, the rain had stopped and the sun came out.



Bruce Hopkins gives the welcoming remarks at the service of Pvt. William Brackin, 12th Kentucky Cavalry at Mt. Zion Church in Central City, KY.



Rev. Jim Brown, pastor of the Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church, gave the invocation and benediction for the service. He accepted the offer of a Union slouch hat by the SUVCW to wear with his church vestments.



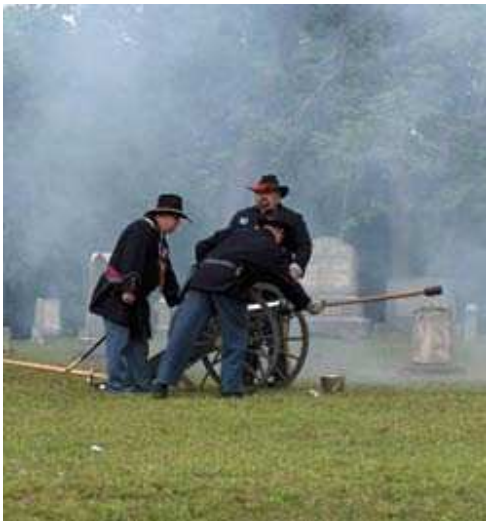
Sarah Elizabeth Whitehead, a noted singer from Louisville, but who originally came from Western Kentucky, sang "Wayfaring Stranger" at the service. It was a common ballad sung at funeral services across Kentucky during the Civil War. Many services held then were for boys who never came home. After Sarah completed her a cappella song, there were few dry eyes in the audience, even though the rain had stopped.



William Brackin's stone is now returned to the cemetery he last saw when he left Muhlenberg County, KY for Pike County in 1919. It is surrounded by flags honoring him on April 30, 2006, the eighty-fifth anniversary of his death.



Six members of the Elijah P. Marrs, Camp # 5, of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War offer a musket salute to Pvt. Brackin. The Department Commander for the Kentucky SUVCW said that his organization tries to find all Union soldiers who never had a military service, but that "so many boys never came home."



The cannon salute was also conducted by the Elijah P. Marrs Camp, using a reconstructed 1848 mountain howitzer.



In 1898, William Brackin buried his wife of thirty-two years and erected a stone for her in the Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church Cemetery. In 1919, he said goodbye again as he left with his family for Eastern Kentucky. As an old man, he probably knew that he might not ever return. One hundred and five years later, he returned to rest beside her.



The stone prepared by the contractors who removed Mr. Brackin's remains from the Old Prater Cemetery brought along the stone he would have used in the relocation cemetery. In spite of the error on the stone for his death date, the stone was placed behind the Federal gravestone Bruce Hopkins's great-great-great uncle secured for the family after his death. It remains a reminder of where he slept for eighty-two years.



Laura Summers, who is married to Brackin's great-great-great grandson, and Dorothea Buchan, Brackin's great-great-great granddaughter, who gave his obituary at the service, pose with Bruce Hopkins behind Brackin's stone. Three separate lines of the Brackin family attended the service. Most of them had never met each other.



Members of the SUVCW pose behind the gravestones of Sarah and William Brackin. This memorial was the farthest the group had traveled away from their post in Lexington, KY over a three-hour drive east. Nevertheless, all the men said they were honored to have been asked to make the trip.



After the service was completed and all the guests had departed, the sun came out on the church and cemetery. The Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church has only about forty current members, but it is one of the oldest churches in Muhlenberg County, dating to 1804. In the 1950's, the original church was raised to construct a basement, but the basic structure has not changed in two hundred years. In the basement, parts of the structure were left uncovered so that the original beams with wooden pegs can be seen.