

Ancestor Profile - Private James C. Welsh (1837-1932)

Company A, 6th Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery
By Brother Scott D. Shuster - 2nd great-grand nephew

James Cunningham Welsh was born October 5, 1837 in Jefferson Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania. He was the first-born son, and oldest child of **Thomas Welsh** and **Mary Cunningham**. Both Thomas and Mary descend from prominent Butler County residents who settled in Butler County in the early 1800's. Thomas Welsh was a prominent farmer who owned an early Butler County sawmill, and owned about 400 acres of prime farmland in Jefferson Township. Nine children were born to Thomas and Mary Cunningham Welsh, including:

- 1) **James Cunningham Welsh**, born October 5, 1837
- 2) **Mary E. Welsh**, born about 1841
- 3) **Bathia Welsh**, born about 1843
- 4) **Loyal Y. Welsh**, born about 1846
- 5) **William J. Welsh**, born about 1848
- 6) **Sarah Jane Welsh**, born August 31, 1849
- 7) **Nancy Welsh**, born about 1851
- 8) **Thomas M. Welsh**, born about 1853
- 9) **Robert A. Welsh**, born about 1856

James received some formal education, as he is reported as having attended school "within the year" on the 1850 census, where he is listed as living at home with his parents and 3 sisters and 2 brothers. By 1860, at age 23, he is the 'man of the house'. His father died in 1858, and James is listed on the 1860 census as "Farmer". All 9 Welsh children are listed on the 1860 census, along with their widowed mother.

James apparently had some time for a social life, as he married **Margaret Belle Drake** in Pittsburgh on November 7, 1861. It is believed they continued to live on the family farm in Butler County. As his oldest younger brother was only about 15, his services were certainly needed on the farm. James and Margaret Belle's first child, **Thomas E. Welsh** was born January 30, 1863.

By August 1864, military service beckoned, and James enlisted as a Private in Captain Hutchinson's Company, 212th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers (Heavy Artillery). This organization subsequently became Company A, 6th Regiment, Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery. The unit served under DeRussy's Division, XXII Corps, Department of Washington. James appears on the muster roll dated Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 15, 1864. He reports that he is a 27 year old, sawyer, having been born in Butler County, Pennsylvania. He is listed as 5 feet 7 ½ inches tall with auburn hair and hazel eyes. He enlisted for one year on August 30, 1864. Interestingly, at the time of his enlistment, Margaret Belle was expecting their second child, **James A. Welsh**, who was born on November 27, 1864.

The regiment was organized in Pittsburgh on September 15, 1864 and moved to Washington D. C. on September 17. By November 1864, Company A was firmly entrenched in the vast network of fortifications protecting Washington, D.C. Records indicate that Company A, along with Company F, were stationed at *Fort Marcy*, overlooking the Potomac River. Portions of *Fort Marcy* are preserved within the National Park Service, and is included in the *Fort Circle Parks System*. A *National Park Service* website provides the following description:

Fort Marcy is perched 275.4 feet above the Potomac River on the south side of the road leading from Chain Bridge to Langley and McLean, Virginia. The perimeter of the fort is 338 feet. When completed the fort mounted 18 guns, a 10-inch mortar and two 24-pounder Coehorn mortars. The fort was not entirely completed until the fall of 1862. It is a relatively undisturbed fort and was named in honor of a native of Massachusetts, the Honorable Randolph B. Marcy, a distinguished soldier and father-in-law and chief of state to General McClellan.

Company A was stationed at *Fort Marcy* through June 13, 1865, when the regiment was mustered out of service at Fort Ethan Allen, Virginia. Captain D. W. Van Horn was the mustering officer. The regiment was then transported from Washington by rail car to *Camp Reynolds* in Pittsburgh, where it was disbanded on June 17, 1865. Following the war, James returned to the family farm in Jefferson Township, Butler County. Between 1867 and 1882, six more children were born to James and Margaret Belle, including:

- **Cora A. Welsh**, born July 22, 1867
- **Charles M. Welsh**, born July 30, 1870
- **Mary J. Welsh**, born March 13, 1874
- **Annie B. Welsh**, born April 13, 1877
- **Nettie F. Welsh**, born October 21, 1878 (married W. H. Say)
- **Mabel Z. Welsh**, born November 26, 1882 (married Phillip Montag)

A mere 9½ years later, in February 1892, James, at age 54, applied for an invalid pension under the Pension Act of June 27, 1890. In his notarized statement, James claims that "he is totally unable to earn a support by manual labor by reason of *Bronchitis and throat trouble*". Whether this particular claim was approved or denied is not clear from the available records. Then, sadly, on June 17, 1897, his beloved Margaret Belle dies. She is buried in the Summit Presbyterian Church Cemetery.

By 1912, at age 75, James' health is apparently deteriorating. In November, he applies for additional pension payments under the Pension Act of May 11, 1912, citing "heart trouble and disease of the respiratory organs – asthma and difficulty breathing". He is subsequently awarded a pension of \$22.50 per month. A similar pension application is filed on his behalf in June 1920. On the 1920 Federal Census, James is listed in the residence of son Charles and his wife Lorinda.

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Private James C. Welsh – (continued from previous page)

By 1928, James is receiving a pension of \$72.00 per month under the provisions of the existing disability act. In July, at age 90, he applies for an increase to \$90.00 per month due to his "total physical disability through age by partial paralysis in lower limbs requiring the services of a daily attendant". The final document in his pension file is dated August 11, 1932 and states simply: "The name of the above-described pensioner who was last paid at the rate of \$100 per month to July 3, 1932, has this day been dropped from the roll because of death July 8, 1932."

The death of James Cunningham Welsh, at age 95, was front page news in Butler County. His obituary appeared in *The Butler Eagle*, July 8, 1932, page 1. It states:

OLDEST RESIDENT OF JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP DIES IN HOME AT 95 James Cunningham Welsh Was Last Survivor of Civil War in District

James Cunningham Welsh, aged 95, oldest resident of Jefferson Township and the last surviving Civil War veteran of that community, died at his home on Butler R.D. 5, Jefferson Center, at midnight last night. He was born in Jefferson Township and was a lifelong resident there, his active years having been devoted to farming.

Mr. Welsh served with Company A, Sixth Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery, during the War Between the States, and was a member of the I.O.O.F. Lodge in Saxonburg and the Thorn Creek Methodist Episcopal Church, Rockdale, Jefferson Township.

Since the death of his wife, Mrs. Margaret Belle Welsh thirty-five years ago, Mr. Welsh had made his home with three of his children on the old homestead.

Surviving him are the following children: James A. Welsh, Miss Cora A. Welsh and Miss Mary J. Welsh, all at the home; Mrs. Phillip Montag and Charles M. Welsh, both of Jefferson Center; Mrs. W. H. Say, Butler R.D. 1, and a brother W. J. Welsh, Jefferson Center. Seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren also survive.

The last Civil War veteran of his township was born October 5, 1837, in Jefferson Township, a son of Thomas and Mary Cunningham Welsh.

Funeral services will be held from the family residence at 2 P.M. Monday, July 11, with the Rev. H. M. Jenkins, pastor of the Thorn Creek Methodist Episcopal Church, officiating. Interment will be made in the Summit Presbyterian cemetery, Butler-Saxonburg Road.

Today, James lies next to his beloved Margaret Belle, with a very ordinary headstone (*photo at right*) that states simply:

James C. Welsh
1837 – 1932
Priv. Co. A 6D PA HVY ART

His simple marker is a fitting tribute to a common citizen who served his country during the dark days of the Civil War.



- Sources: - Military Service Record, National Archives - Card Numbers – 20361965, 20377682, 20377824, 20377968, 20378124, 20378271, 20378419
- Military Pension File, National Archives - Soldier's Certificate Number – 843523
- Samuel Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers*, Vol X, pg 771-772
- Official Records - National Park Service
- Federal Census Records

Note: Private Welsh was the brother of Brother Scott D. Shuster's great-great-grandmother, Sarah Jane (Welsh) Bunting.
