

ETCHED IN STONE: One by One – James J. Vannice



By Karen Zach, Around the County

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This week's soldier's family was super easy to find, from here going back to Mercer County, Kentucky then Somerset, New Jersey, then Kings County, New York and finally to Friesland in the Netherlands back to the early 1500s. However, the soldier was a whole different story. He was born the 5th day of April in 1832, joining brother David and sisters Mary, Martha and Margaret, children of Cornelius and Ann Adams Vannice.

James J. Vannice grew-up in Mercer County and attended the Mud Chapel church and school. His parents and grandparents on both sides are all buried right there. The Vannice children spread to Kansas, White County, Indiana, and Montgomery. Evidently after their parents' deaths (he in June of 1846 and momma in December of the 1850 census year) they scattered out, his sister closest to him, Martha Jane Milligan coming to Montgomery County in the year 1854.

After the 1850 census JJ was not found by this researcher anyway. Possible reasons include he was easy to mix-up with James I. Vannice who was born a few days different and also a Civil War Soldier, and from Indiana (although buried in DesMoines Iowa), plus the spelling of the name got super crazy including Venice; VanNuys; Vanice; Vannice; Vanause; VanNice and Vanhoos.

His first marriage was to Wilmoth Medaris whom he married toward the end of the Civil War, on May 10th, 1864 in McDonough County, Illinois. They lived in Gardner, Kansas by the 1870 census. Although they were the parents of three sons, two died in infancy and Elmer at age 19. His second marriage was on the 1st day of January in 1889 to Martha Hollar. Martha's maiden name was also Vannice and her first husband, John Hollar died at Andersonville Prison in 1864. Whether Martha and James were cousins, that I haven't deciphered. She did receive a widow's pension almost immediately upon James' death and eventually passed away in the Lafayette soldier's home in August of 1912.

James died at his home on Cross Street in Waveland where he had settled to be near his sister. At some point, he was in Missouri, as he served with Co. C (and later in Co B) of the 1st Missouri Engineers and resided in Bushnell, Illinois when he enlisted 12 August 1862 at age 30 as an artificer (builder basically). His name was found as James S and James T as well as the correct James J. Spending some time on the sick list, he owed the government \$40 for equipment upon his discharge, and was declared an invalid on June 6, 1872. It is known that in 1890 (May 11th) he joined the Methodist Church in Crawfordsville with Martha, although the Vannice family is mainly Presbyterians. In the 1900 census, he and Martha lived on Cross Street in Waveland and owned their home. She was ten years younger than he. He died at their home September 29th in 1905 after having been in poor health for several months with chronic bronchitis and catarrh. The informant on his death record was his nephew, John Vannice Milligan.

This week I want to thank not only Kim Hancock and Suzy Petrey but Steve Middleton (who heads-up putting flags on the veteran's graves in the area) and also Bob Howell, another volunteer who helped Kim put four stones out the day James J. Vannice's was placed. Thus, James and his comrades can rest in peace, now Etched In Stone!!



Over the coming weeks and months I will write these columns highlighting each new stone. Karen Zach is the editor of Montgomery Memories, our monthly magazine all about Montgomery County. And she writes Around the County, which appears each Thursday in The Paper of Montgomery County. One by One: Etched in Stone is her latest offering and will appear periodically on Mondays in The Paper.