

Michael's Civil War Duty

Both Michael and John were Privates in the 166th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Infantry. Michael was in Company C and John Company G.

The 166th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Infantry was a drafted militia that was activated for a nine month service. ¹ “This muster-in roll of Drafted Militia was made on the form intended for Volunteers.” According to Michael’s Civil War Co. C Muster Roll cards, Michael was 29 years old when he joined for duty and enrolled as a private on November 9, 1862 in York Pennsylvania. Michael mustered-in at York on November 11, 1862; and then mustered-out in Harrisburg Pennsylvania on July 28, 1863. His last pay was made on March 1, 1863; and he was given \$34.48 for clothing in kind or money advanced.

ⁱ The 166th Service in 1863

- Between October 24th and December 8th 1862, the regiment organized at Camp Franklin, near York City, York County Pennsylvania.
- Between December 8th and 17th the regiment moved to Washington, D. C. then to Newport News and Suffolk Virginia - The regiment had duty in Suffolk VA until June 1863.
- Attached to Foster's Brigade. Division at Suffolk, Va., 7th Corps, Dept. of Virginia, to April, 1863
- 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, 7th Corps, Department of Virginia to July 1863.

From the muster roll call cards, Michael was present in the following locations:

- January 8 to 10: Expedition toward Blackwater
- January 30: Deserted House
- April 4: Leesville
- April 11 to May 4: Siege of Suffolk VA
- April 12 to 13: Edenton, Providence Church and Somerton Roads
- April 15 and 20: Somerton Road April 24: Edenton Road
- May 12 to 26: Operations on Seaboard & Roanoke Railroad
- May 15 to 16: Holland House, Carrsville
- June 27 to July 7: Dix's Peninsula Campaign
- July 1 to 7: Expedition from White House to South Anna River
- July 4: South Anna Bridge
- July 8: Moved to Washington, D. C
- July 28: Mustered out July 28, 1863

ⁱⁱ During the regiment’s service, they lost 6 men who were killed and mortally wounded and 11 men by disease. To a total of 17 men lost. At the siege of Suffolk, Fort Huger and Hill’s Point was know as Longstreet’s Tidewater Operations, which lasted from February to May 1863. The regiments actual siege dates were from April 11th to May 4th 1863. The principle commanders of the campaign were: Union Army - Brig. Gen. John Peck; Confederate Army - Lt. Gen. James Longstreet. A total of 45000 men were engaged in this campaign. A total of 1,160 solders were killed or died at the Suffolk siege. A brief description of the Suffolk siege follows: On April 19, a Union infantry force landed on Hill’s Point at the confluence of the forks of the Nansemond River. This amphibious force assaulted Fort Huger from the rear, quickly capturing its garrison, thus reopening the river to Union shipping. On April 24, Brig. Gen. Michael Corcoran’s Union division mounted a reconnaissance-in-force from Fort Dix against Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett’s extreme right flank. The Federals approached cautiously and were easily repulsed. On April 29, Gen. Robert E. Lee directed Longstreet to disengage from Suffolk and rejoin the Army of Northern Virginia at Fredericksburg. By May 4, the last of Longstreet’s command had crossed the Blackwater River en route to Richmond.

¹ Company C, 166th Regiment Pennsylvania Drafted Military Infantry, Muster-In Roll cards; 22320500, 22320593, 22320694, 22320793, 22320892, 22320984, and 22321072

After Michael mustered out of the 166th, he lived with Caleb and Elizabeth Underwood, and later he met and married Eliza in Lewisberry, they then lived in the Siddonsburg area of Monaghan Township York County PA. In 1870 Michael was a laborer who worked in a nursery. He is 45 and Elizabeth is 31 years old, and they have five children, all under the age of 5 year sold. By 1880, Frank age 8, Edwin age 5, Irwin 1 year old, and Morris 3 months old are born. Ulysses age 14 and Ira age 12 are still living with the family. Charles who should be about 10 years old and Millian E who should be about 11 years old is not listed with the family.

In 1890 Michael and Eliza lived in Upper Allen Township, post office Shepherdstown.ⁱⁱⁱ It is 1890 we learn that Michael filed an application for a pension for his service with the 166th Pennsylvania Regiment during the American Civil War. **Invalid Pension Application Number: 886595 and Certificate Number 623659** filed with the Pittsburg Pennsylvania Claims office. In this claim, Michael indicates;² “That he is physically unable to earn a support by reason of chronic rheumatism and nervousness, which keeps me from work a great portion of my time – sometimes 2 weeks – at a stretch, and suffer pain all the time.” On a March 31, 1891 affidavit, Michael claims the following: ³“I contacted rheumatism on July 1863 at Suffolk by lying out in the cold and sometimes laid in the water and became nervous from exposure.”

The Physician’s Affidavit, **Dr. Robert P. Long** of Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, states: ⁴ “That I have this day examined Mr. Michael Wrightstone – private in Co. C 166th Regiment, drafted member, and found him suffering from shaking Palsy and rheumatism and find that his disability is of a permanent character. The disease has not been caused by any vicious (habit or battle?) that the applicant is disabled to the extent of $\frac{3}{4}$ (from?) manual labor.” The supporting Neighbors Affidavits were for two men: 1.) **C. B. Underwood**, age 69 from Mechanicsburg; and 2.) **Washington Williams**, age 60 of Upper Allen Township, Post Office Shepherdstown. C. B. is for Caleb Underwood, who witnesses a number of affidavits, and is discuss later with his brother John. Washington Williams is part of the family where Michaels’s wife, Eliza Kline, lived with in 1860 within Monroe Township Cumberland County.

In the affidavit, both men testified how Michael worked for them, ⁵ “...and while working he worked with ease, but has been getting worse, and at times the work appears to go hard for him, and is at this time very nervous, which in our opinion is the result of several diseases, and do not think that he is not able to do more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of manual labor...”

The neighbors’ affidavit is from **C. B. Underwood**, age 69, and living in Mechanicsburg, and Washington **Williams**, age 60, living in Upper Allen Township, Post Office Shepherdstown. Both knew Michael prior to him having problems. The affidavit was dated Dec 12, 1890, making C. B. Underwood’s birth circa 1821, and Washington William’s birth circa 1830.

In 1891 Michael, while still living in Shepherdstown, Upper Allen Township, Cumberland County PA applied for an increase in his pension. In this application, Michael stated that his original pension of six dollars (\$6.00) per month is for Rheumatism, and that he suffers from the following disabilities which he does not draw a pension. ⁶ “...I have not got the use of my arms. I am not able to put them up to my head.” Again **C. B. Underwood** witnesses the claim and **H. S. Mohler (Harry S. Mohler)** both residing in Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA. Michael’s Claimant Affidavit is again unreadable.

In all of the documents thus far Michael is not writing his name, but is making his mark with an “X”. The name is most likely being written by a witness or the Justice of the Peace. In all census records where the question is asked; can read or write, Michael is listed as “No” for both. Michael could not read or write.

² Application, Declaration For Invalid Pension, Cumberland County Pennsylvania, July 21 1890

³ Michael Wrightstone, Claimant’s Affidavit, March 31 1891, Cumberland County Pennsylvania

⁴ Physician Affidavit, Proof Of Physical Or Mental Disability, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, December 13 1890

⁵ Neighbors Affidavit, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Joseph Leas, December 12 1890

⁶ Application For an Increase of Invalid Pension, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Joseph Leas, August 6 1891

In 1892 Michael is again seen by a Physician. He is 67 years old, 5 feet 7 inches tall, and weighed 154 pounds. Michael's pulse rate was 108, respiration 20, and his temperature was 98 3/5. The paper did not identify the physician, but it can be assumed it is **Dr. Robert P. Long** from Mechanicsburg. Much of the document is technical and hard to decipher, but here is what could be translated. ⁷ "...Rheumatism is getting worse. He had to wear glasses for 2 years. Has been somewhat nervous for several years...Rheumatism, heart size and sounds are normal, but its action is rapid...slight exercise brought pulse to 120...marked antiepileptic motion in shoulders and knees...no other physical signs of rheumatism were present...Claimant is well nourished, muscles are firm and hands are callous. No evidence of any nervousness was present except a slight tremor of hands common to one's age..."

The issue with nervousness may have been Essential Tremors, which is a progressive neurological disorder. Symptoms include a tremor of the arms or hands that is apparent during voluntary movements such as eating and writing. The tremor can also spread to the head (neck), jaw and voice as well as other body regions.

On May 20, 1896 Michael now 67 is living in Mechanicsburg, and he again filed another request for the increase of Invalid Pension with the local Justice of the Peace. In this affidavit **Certificate Number 623659** is cited.

⁸"...Application is also made for further additional pension on account of the following disabilities for which he has not heretofore been pensioned: nervousness to such an extent that he is unable to cloth himself or to feed himself on account of it...his age. He believes himself entitled to a higher rating." A **Dr. George Fulmer** provided an affidavit. ⁹"I have this day carefully examined Mr. Michael Wrightstone, having been a private in Co C 166 Pa Volunteer Militia. I find him suffering from chronic rheumatism and exceedingly nervous. That it is with great difficulty that he can put a glass of water to his lips without turning it on himself. And at this time he is incapacitated from performing any hard manual labor by which he can support himself and wife. And that his disabilities are not due to any vicious habits."

On a surgeon's certificate dated July 22 1896 for **Certificate Number 623659**, the examining physician, **Robert N. Short**, reaffirms previous physician's diagnosis. One exception is the physician's description of Michael's nervousness, which the physician diagnosed as being caused by; nervousness partial paralysis Agitans. This is the first time we correlate the nervousness to what we call today as Parkinson disease. Michael's final diagnosis is Rheumatism and Paralysis Agitans.

Michael died on November 5th 1903. ^{iv} Michael and Eliza lived in the vicinity of Graham's School house in Upper Allen Township. He was prostrated by a stroke of paralysis. He lingered until Thursday evening at 6:30 o'clock, when the death summons came, and he passed beyond, at age 78 years. ("The deceased lived in this neighborhood for many years, and was always recognized as a man of the straightest integrity.") He was a member in good standing of Post 415 G. A. R. of Mechanicsburg. The funeral was held Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, with services in Filey's church by Reverend A. M. Strauss of Mechanicsburg. The remains will be interred in the grave yard adjoining the church.

On November 13th 1903 Michael's wife Eliza Jane applied for Michael's pension as his widow. The remaining series of documents that were filed in support of this application provided details on Elizabeth's and Michael's life. **Application Number 794772 and Certificate Number 567603**

Eliza lived near Mechanicsburg Cumberland County, and she was 64 years old when she applied for the pension. Here Eliza states her and Michael married on September 27th 1864 at Lewisberry York County, and that her maiden name was Eliza Jane Kline. The application also states that he and Eliza had never previously been married, and that; ¹⁰"She has no income from any source, and unable to work, and is dependent upon others for her support." Eliza signed the application using her own handwriting. The application also list two people attesting to Eliza being the widow of Michael; **Armstrong Hershman and Samuel A. Miller** both of Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA. Both stated that they knew the family; they were present at Michael's funeral; that they were two of Michael's Pal-Bearers, and that Michael was buried November 8th 1903.

⁷ Physician Report, Claim Number 623659, November 2 1892

⁸ Application, Declaration For The Increase of Invalid Pension, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler May 20, 1896.

⁹ General Affidavit, Dr. George Fulmer, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler May 20, 1896.

¹⁰ Application For Accursed Pension (Widow), Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler November 13, 1903.

Mary J. Mumper, age 53, and residing in Mechanicsburg in November 1903, testified that she knew both Eliza and Michael before they married. She also recalled when they did get married and returned to the Underwood homestead, where Mary lived.

Mary J. Underwood would have been born circa 1850, and would have married a Mumper. In this same affidavit a **Ms. Eliza M. Peterman**, age 75, and living in Dillsburg in November 1905, also recalled Eliza and Michael when they were very young people.

Eliza Wrightstone, age 65, residing in Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA stated: ¹¹ “There is neither public nor church record of my marriage to Michael Wrightstone. The minister who performed the ceremony has died. Years ago the minister’s wife and daughter were present at marriage, but his wife is dead and his daughter I am told lives in California – were married at the ministers residence in Lewisberry York County PA. All the property I got in this world is my furniture which is old and out of date – Might sell for \$50 at a public sale. I sent certificate from Commissioners Office showing that neither I nor my husband owned any real property. I have no interest in any bonds, stocks or any other securities or investments. I have no one to depend on for a living except my children and they are kept busy to earn enough for their own support. My husband did not have any life insurance. I never had any real estate to disperse of or since November 16, 1903.” Eliza signed the application using her own handwriting.

Elizabeth J. Underwood, age 73, residing in Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA stated: ¹² “The claimant and her husband Michael Wrightstone I have know for many years. They both worked for us on our farm when young people before the Civil War. I distinctly remember when they went from our farm to Lewisberry to get married and remember that they returned. I do not remember the date however. There is no question that neither have been married before they married each other. They were married during the fall of 1864, and the following spring went to housekeeping. And from my personal knowledge have kept house and lived together as man and wife up to her husband’s death which occurred November 5, 1903. They raised a family and 9 children and were regarded by all who knew them to be kind and respectable folks.” This Elizabeth is the wife of **Caleb B. Underwood** who in 1860 lived in Carroll Township, Dillsburg area. In 1870 they lived in Monaghan Township Siddonsburg York County PA, which was not far from Michael and Elizabeth. Elizabeth J. Underwood would have been born circa 1830.

John M. Underwood; age 67, and **George H. Buffington**; age 65, both residing in Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA made a statement: ¹³ “We knew both claimant and her husband Michael Wrightstone for years. The claimant has not remarried since her husband’s death, which occurred last month (November). We never knew of them owning any real property.” The Cumberland County Commissioners Office Clerk, W.A. Lepperd, made a written statement attesting that Michael or Elizabeth were not assessed property tax within Upper Allen Township.

Daniel Morrett age 65 both residing in Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA made a statement: ¹⁴ “That the claimant and I went to the same school together. I and the claimant’s husband works together. Michael Wrightstone and I were intimate and while I do not remember – date of their marriage, I do know that neither were married before they married each other, and I do know that they lived as man and wife up to date of his death, and they never were divorced from each other. I have never known them to owe any Real-Estate, but were poor people earning their living by manual labor, and raised a large family of children who also are poor and earning their support by manual labor.”

Around November 1903 we know that Ida May, Michael’s and Eliza’s youngest child would still be living with her parents. In a few more months, on Feb 02, 1904, Ida would marry Jonathan I. May in Mechanicsburg PA.

N. A, Dick, age 54, residing in Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA made a statement, but there is nothing significant to duplicate here. He did state that he too attended Michael’s funeral at Filey’s church, about seven miles south of Mechanicsburg.

¹¹ General Affidavit, No 794.772, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler November 13, 1903.

¹² General Affidavit, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler November 13, 1903.

¹³ General Affidavit, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler November 13, 1903.

¹⁴ General Affidavit, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler November 13, 1903.

Charles Williams, age 54, resided in Dillsburg York County PA made a statement:¹⁵ “That he was intimately acquainted with the claimant and her late husband Michael Wrightstone when young people, and are positive that neither had been married before they married each other. Knowing them as well as I did neither could have been married before they married each other without me knowing it., and I have lived within 5 miles from them all the time I know that they lived together as man and wife up to date of his death, and were never divorced from each other during their married life.” J. M. Bailey and D. W. Beitzel were both witnesses to the statement.

In the June 13th, 1900 census Michael was listed as a farmer, Elizabeth kept house, and the children were either listed as farm or day laborers. They had been married 36 years, and had nine children and eight were still living.

On further research this suggest that Millian had died sometime between 1870 and 1880. By 1900 Edwin age 25, was still living with his parents on their Upper Allen Township Cumberland County Pennsylvania farm. There is a Millan family living near the Underwoods in 1800.

End Notes

ⁱ Dyer, Frederick H. A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion Compiled and Arranged from Official Records of the Federal and Confederate Armies, Reports of the Adjutant Generals of the Several States, the Army Registers, and Other Reliable Documents and Sources Des Moines, Iowa: The Dyer Publishing Company, 1908

ⁱⁱ History of Pennsylvania volunteers, 1861-5; prepared in compliance with acts of the legislature, by Samuel P. Bates, (Samuel Penniman), 1827-1902

ⁱⁱⁱ Michael Wrightstone, Department of Interior, Bureau Application for Accrued Pensions and Declaration for Invalid Pension, Neighbors Affidavits, Physicians Affidavits, General Affidavits, The National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Pennsylvania Scrap Book Necrology, Volume 76, p. 082, Microfilmed scrapbooks of obituaries clipped from Pennsylvania newspapers from 16 October 1891 to 3 March 1904, State Library of Pennsylvania Date1903 Source PHAK 929.3748 P384mi

Rolling Green Burial Card Catalogue, 1811 Carlisle Road, Camp Hill PA

York County Grantee Deed Index, 1749-1912, York County Archives, York County Pennsylvania

^v Pennsylvania Scrap Book Necrology, Volume 76, p. 078, Microfilmed scrapbooks of obituaries clipped from Pennsylvania newspapers from 16 October 1891 to 3 March 1904, State Library of Pennsylvania Date1903 Source PHAK 929.3748 P384mi

¹⁵ General Affidavit, Mechanicsburg Cumberland County PA, Justice of the Peace, Harry J. Mohler November 13, 1903.