

Veteran of Mexican, Civil wars is buried at Rose Hill

They were beginning to slip away, one at a time. By the turn of the century the members of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) were in the 60s and dying. Their obituaries can be found in the Bloomington newspapers.

Major James B. Mulky was twice a veteran, or, rather, a veteran of two wars. The native Hoosier died Nov. 28, 1903. His death was reported in the *Bloomington Courier* of Dec. 1.

Born on Oct. 4 in a year unspecified by the newspaper, Mulky was the second son and fifth child of James and Elizabeth (Wyman) who were natives of Kentucky and married in 1815. They had moved to Crawford County (Indiana) before moving once again to Washington Township in Monroe County.

Mulky's obituary notes that "The father's death occurred in September, 1851; the mother died in June, 1867." Their son, James, went to subscription schools and then transferred to a school at Milltown ("to learn English grammar").

Thereafter began a career odyssey for Mulky that included teaching which was sandwiched in between stints in the army. The first time he served began when he was teaching in Georgetown. Explained the *Couri-*



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

er, "He then enlisted in Company A, Second Regiment, Spencer Grays of New Albany, for the Mexican War, and served one year."

Free again to pursue a career, Mulky taught for three months in Monroe County and then moved on to Spencer. There he was a teacher in the "old County Seminary" for six months.

Something drew him to Iowa in May of 1848. Perhaps it was the availability of land. The obituary notes that he "entered 100 acres of land near Knoxville, Marion County" and then returned to Spencer.

It may have been his father's death that brought him back to Monroe County. After taking over the family farm, Mulky alternated between farming and working in the "drug business." But he wanted more education and enrolled in the Law Department of Indiana University, graduating in 1859.

It seemed that he had at last found his profession, and he became a partner of the Honorable James Hughes. The partnership was to last a year, interrupted by Hughes' appointment as a judge in Washington, D.C. For another year Mulky worked with Professor John Young.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Mulky first took a rank that was called "Colonel of the Indiana Legion." That was in July of 1861. The following year he was a major in the Fifty-fifth Indiana Volunteers. By February of 1865 he had been appointed provost marshal of the Third Indiana District.

Back in 1853, Mulky had married Mary J. Coffey. They had six children, three of whom were still living when their father died.

At the turn of the century, it was customary to have funerals in private homes. In Mulky's case that custom had to be set aside, because his grandson had "a light case of variloid" and the house had been quarantined. (According to a Webster's dictionary, variloid was a mild case of smallpox which sometimes developed after vaccination.)

In spite of the fact that there was no home funeral, Mulky did not go unaccompanied to Rose Hill. Explained the *Courier* of Dec. 4, a

graveside service was conducted by the Masonic Lodge with the Reverend Brant assisting. The remaining local members of the G.A.R. marched behind the casket to the cemetery.

Members of the Monroe County Bar contributed a tribute, which was printed in the newspaper. The testimony of Mulky's colleagues suggested that the turning of the century had been an important milestone in the history of the local bar. It said "The death of Major Mulky severs the last link connecting the present bar of this court with that galaxy of men which adorned the profession and reflected honor on the state. He was one of that great company to which we of late years rejoice to succeed and delight to honor."

The writers of the bar tribute revealed that Mulky had known all of the greats of Indiana history during his time and attended all of the Republican Party conventions until several years before his death. He was buried in a plot next to his wife, who had died "several years earlier."

What did Mulky die of? The *Courier* reported that although he had been suffering from dropsy, the actual cause of death was heart failure.

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