

Frank Hall Files

Illinois 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment/Thirteenth Ohio

Abilene Weekly Reflector Newspaper Article February 7, 1889

**SOLDIERS DEPARTMENT.**

**STRANGER THAN FICTION.**

**An Old Soldier Finds His Wife After Twenty-Eight Years.**

A real romance, not inclosed [sic] in covers, came to light yesterday, which again proves the wisdom of the saying that truth is stranger than fiction. Frank Hall, a veteran of many battles, who was in the city yesterday, is the hero of the story, and his experience of the past week were such as rarely happen outside the confines of the playhouse or the pages of a novel. [rest is missing]

Darke County Democratic Advocate January 24, 1889

[beginning is missing] continued to send home his pay. One day when the soldiers' mail was handed out there was a letter for Frank Hall which brought sad news. It was from a friend in Wisconsin who, in a scarcely legible hand, wrote to acquaint him of the death of his wife. [rest is missing]

Public Ledger January 19, 1889

[beginning is missing] "Annie, do you know this man?" asked Gaudy.

She shook her head. Hall, who recognized her instantly in spite of her added years, called to her with outstretched arms, asking if she did not know his face. She started at the sound of his voice, but did not seem to place him.

"Don't you know Frank, your husband?" cried Hall. [rest is missing]

Civil War Soldier and Wife Reunite After 28 Years

Life on the American frontier presented unique challenges, and it was not uncommon for loved ones to lose track of one another as they moved from place to place. In 1889, an unbelievable story made headlines when a Civil War soldier who thought his wife was dead learned that she was alive- and they reunited after 28 years.

Frank H. Hall was born in 1837 in the Netherlands. He immigrated to America and settled in Waukesha, Wisconsin, where he got a job in a flour mill. There he met a young woman named Annie Rivers. Frank and Annie fell in love and married in 1860. Shortly after came the Civil War, and Frank was among the first to volunteer for his newly adopted country. He enlisted in the Illinois 42nd Infantry Regiment in 1861.

Annie accompanied Frank to the train station and wept as he boarded the rail car that would take him to his Illinois regiment. At first, Frank and Annie wrote letters regularly. In one letter, Annie informed Frank that she had given birth to their son. The Illinois 42nd fought in several battles including the siege of Corinth, and the battles of Stones River, Chickamauga, and Missionary Ridge. Annie's letters became less frequent, and one day, Frank received a letter from a friend in Wisconsin informing him that Annie died.

Frank continued to serve, and in 1863, received a discharge in Atlanta for disablement. After recuperating, he reenlisted, serving in the Thirteenth Ohio. For an unknown reason, he served under an alias, Benjamin F. Berkley (possible because Berkley paid him a bounty to serve in his place). When the war ended, Frank continued to serve in the Sixth Cavalry in Texas. When he finally left military service in 1869, he moved from Kansas to the Washington Territory, to Michigan, and then later Iowa. Along the way, Frank met and married a second wife named Julia Nelson in 1869. Frank and Julia later divorced.

In 1889, Frank decided to return to Waukesha and visit old friends. He hardly recognized the town, but after searching, he found Annie's brother, Joe. He asked his shocked brother-in-law to take him to Annie's grave. It was then that Frank learned that Annie was alive and living in the poor house. Joe and Frank immediately went to find Annie. Along the way, Frank learned that the letter he received about Annie's death was a mistake. It was Annie's brother who died- not Annie.

When Annie saw Frank for the first time in nearly three decades, she didn't recognize him. Frank called out to her saying, "Don't you know Frank, your husband?" Annie rushed into his arms. Frank told Annie that better times were coming, and the next day he collected her things and they moved to Iowa.

Annie didn't live long after their reunion. She died sometime before Frank remarried for the third time in 1894. Frank spent the last years of his life in the Milwaukee Soldier's Home. He died in 1916 at age 79.