

Case Study #1

Thomas McKinney

Thomas McKinney was born in Ireland in 1832. From this pension file, little is known about his life before he enlists in the 3rd West Virginia Volunteer Infantry, Company B. His regiment saw combat at the Battle of Bull Pasture Mountain, May 8, 1862 near McDowell, Virginia. In the official record, Brigadier General R.H. Milroy writes of McKinney's regiment "*The Third West Virginia in their endurance of the most severe fire of the enemy...*" McKinney was injured by a gunshot wound to his right hand. The injury crippled McKinney's right hand. McKinney's first sergeant states "*The bullet struck the gun on the place he held it with his hand and knocked a piece off...*" Other members of McKinney's regiment were less helpful. Captain Shuttleworth replied "*He had forgotten about Thomas McKinney, and that Captain Weinger is dead...*" McKinney's pension attorney writes to the Commissioner of Pensions "*He (McKinney) is now working all he can with his crippled hand on the railroad. He fought for his adopted country and has not one single relative in this country...*" One year later an item in the local newspaper "*Thomas Kinney age 55, a section hand on the Dayton and Ironton Railroads... got on a drunk and was wandering around in the vicinity of the C. and M.V. Railroad. He must have been lying down or sitting on the track near the Paint Creek Bridge when the 8 O' Clock east-bound express train struck him... He died in great misery. Deceased was a native of Ireland, and had no relatives living here. He was a member of the Catholic Church.*" Thomas McKinney or Kinney story shows the sacrifices and struggles some immigrant Union veterans dealt with following the war.

SOURCES:

- Thomas McKinney's pension file #337785 National Archives and Records Administration.
- Official Records of the Civil War Series I – volume 15 (Battle of Bull Pasture Mountain)
- Fayette Republican: 10/14/1887 (Death of Veteran)