

**Frederick C. Wiswell
Company G 61st New York Volunteer Infantry
April 1, 1843-March 2, 1908
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I was a young museum professional and Civil War enthusiast sometime around 1985/86 when I purchased a "Easel Monument" lithograph at an auction near Lincoln, Delaware. It was for Frederick C. Wiswell of New York. His Civil War service was nicely written in calligraphy in India ink and it is 21 5/8 inches wide by 30 inches tall. I knew most people there didn't realize just what this was and I thought it should be "saved". I wondered who Frederick Wiswell was and what his story was and was there a Delaware connection?

Frederick was born in Valonia Springs Chenango County New York. He was the son of Leonard G. Wiswell a native of Massachusetts and Harriet Poyer Wiswell a native of Chenango County. The family first appears in the 1855 New York State Census with the Post Office address of North Norwich, Chenango County New York. Leonard is a farmer who owns his own farm and is listed as living at this address for three years. The census lists three children; Isabella, Frederick and Ruth, a one year old boarder who is likely a nephew and three servants.

By the 1860 Federal Census the family is at the same address and Leonard is listed as a farmer who owns real estate valued at \$3,000.00 and personal estate valued at \$1,100.00 so the family was fairly prosperous. In this Census Isabella is a nineteen year old "School Teacher", Frederick is a seventeen year old "Farm Laborer", Ruth is now fifteen and a new sibling "Marinda" age two is listed. Jonah Poyer a seventy year old native of New Jersey with the occupation of "Gentleman" is living with the family and he has a personal estate valued at \$6,000.00. He must have been Harriet's father or relative.

The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter and its surrender on April 13, 1861 galvanized the north. On October 16, 1861 Frederick C. Wiswell enlisted in Company G 61st New York Infantry at Camp Harris on Staten Island. He was described as 5'6" tall with a light complexion, dark eyes and brown hair with an occupation of farmer. Why he and apparently others from Chenango County went all the way to Staten Island to enlist in the 61st is unknown. The 61st New York fought as part of the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac during its Civil War service.

During the Civil War and particularly early in the war men used the slang phrase "seeing the elephant" to describe experiencing combat. Frederick Wiswell and his regiment would see far more of the elephant than they probably wanted.

They saw heavy fighting at the Battle of Fair Oaks in May 1862; they charged the Sunken Lane at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862 and fought in the Wheatfield at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863 as part of their extensive combat experience. Frederick had been promoted to 5th Sergeant on June 25, 1863 about a week before the Battle of Gettysburg.

All of this combat did not discourage Frederick who reenlisted as a Veteran Volunteer in December 1863. He was promoted to 3rd Sergeant on December 29, 1863 and apparently shortly thereafter he was promoted to 1st Sergeant.

Frederick's luck started to run out during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House (May 8-18, 1864) where the regiment fought at the 'Bloody Angle' and as the memorial states "...he was wounded by piece of shell on left knee remained with the regiment."

The regiment fought through the remainder of the brutal Overland Campaign and crossed the James River with the Army of the Potomac. On June 17, 1864 near Petersburg, Virginia the memorial states "... he received a gunshot wound in the head on the on the left side of the head, about half way from his ear to the crown of his head, fracturing the skull... lost about two inches of the skull bone..."

In 1900 William H. Brookins age 59 from North Norwich, New York testified to the Pension Office that he had "...known him from a Boy..." and served with him in Company G. I "...was with him when he was shot & skull (sic) fractured. I assisted him back to the field Hospital. He often had to sit down on the way being faint." It is not clear if there was a hospital behind the lines other than the field hospital but he was sent to City Point Hospital near Petersburg on the James River. He was then sent to Carver Hospital in Washington D.C. and then on to Mowers Hospital in Philadelphia.

On the same day in 1900 Daniel S. Gibbs age 65 of Norwich, New York testified to the Pension Office that he also served in Company G with Frederick. He noted that "...Some Pises (sic) of Scull (sic) that was removed from the wound in his head was handed to me by the Hospital Steward of our regiment." Gibbs kept the pieces until he returned to North Norwich from the hospital on leave and gave them to Frederick's father.

Daniel Gibbs also testified that when he was in the Lincoln Hospital in Washington D.C. Frederick was in a hospital nearby (Carver Hospital) and "...We used to visit each other. He used to come to see me early in the morning as the Heat of the Sun in the middle of the day made him faint & dizzy." He went on to note that Frederick "... was one of the most hardy healthy men of our Regiment always on duty untill (sic) he was wounded. After that he was never the same man".

In testimony to the Pension Office Frederick noted that from the hospital "... I received a furlough to go home, and while at my home in Norwich, New York, a relative of mine, (Dr. Bellows) operated on my head and removed a piece of splinter of bone from my skull". He referred to the surgery as a trepanning.

Frederick's leave was extended another thirty days "...on account of a Physicians Certificate of disability to travel." He returned to Mowers Hospital "... for a short time..." and then was sent to Clifford Barracks in Washington D.C. "...with a squad of men..." where he joined the Veterans Reserve Corps but remained unassigned until he was discharged July 14, 1865 due to the end of the war.

Frederick appears living in his parents' household with his three sisters and two servants in the 1865 New York State Census. Ancestry.com has the 1866 U.S. Tax Assessment for New York and Frederick appears as a "Retail Lq(?) Dealer which suggests he was selling liquor for a living.

On February 15, 1867 Harriet Wiswell of North Norwich Chenango County New York paid Thomas and Elizabeth Watson of Philadelphia \$3,000.00 for seventy five acres of land in Cedar Creek Hundred in Sussex

County Delaware. The farm was just to the east of where Herring Creek enters the Mispillion River. That river is the boundary between Sussex County and Kent County to its north. The farm is very close to the town of Milford which straddles the Mispillion.

Seven months later on September 14, 1867 Frederick listed as being of Cedar Creek Hundred in Sussex County paid \$1,700.00 for "one half part" of seventy acres of upland and cripple from Jesse and Louisa Watson of the Village of Fulton, Oswego County New York. The land was subject to a mortgage of \$1,760.00 dollars dated July 21, 1866. Seventeen days later on October 1, 1867 Frederick sells the same land to Levi Harris noted as being from Milford, Delaware for \$2,200.00. This was a straw deed transaction to help establish the land title and Frederick made a profit of \$500.00 which was a nice sum of money during those times.

The answer to the question of why did the Wiswells move the area near Milford, Delaware can be found in a real estate publication entitled Delaware: The Garden State of the Union (1868) written and published by Henry T. Williams. Page 32 has a section "Correspondence from Milford Delaware" it noted that the advantages that Delaware "has to offer to emigrants" were "Low land prices, productive soil, mild climate and closer to Eastern markets than the West...". On page 58 it notes a lot of people from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New England were moving to Delaware and then stated "... yet a greater number come from New York than from any other state. Their chief object seems to be to escape the rigor of a northern climate." Page 66 which was the last page of the publication was a full page ad by the "Delaware Railroad Line" offering "New Settlers" "... a drawback of one third on usual passage and freight rates the first year." That would help reduce moving costs and possibly enhance the profit on the first crop. The Railroad was counting on the additional farmers paying shipping for crops and supplies would enhance their business in the long run.

The 1868 Cedar Creek tax assessment shows the family well established with the farm listed under Leonard even though Harriet paid for the farm. They are taxed for 75 acres at \$20.00 per acre, 2 horses at \$200.00 total, 1 cow at \$20 and 12 ounces of silver plate at \$13 and Leonard and Frederick are each charged the \$150.00 personal tax.

The 1870's were very eventful for the Wiswell family. Frederick's younger sister Ruth died in November 1870 at about the age of 25 of Epilepsy according to the U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules Index 1850-1880(Ancestry.com). She had never married and had no children.

On October 15, 1871 Isabella, Frederick's older sister, married William H. Harris. He was listed in the 1865 New York State Census as being from New Berlin, Chenango County. He was the son of Guman and Mary C. Harris and his youngest brother was Levi Harris who purchased land from Frederick in 1867 in Cedar Creek Hundred. William testified for Frederick's pension in 1891 and claimed he was the real estate agent in the February 1867 sale of the farm to the Wiswell family. He also testified at that time that Frederick "... became an assistant in other businesses. "

The 1872 Cedar Creek Hundred tax assessment had the note under Leonard G. Wiswell "deduct Person (dead)". Leonard's grave site is unknown.

In 1873 Willie H. Harris son of William H. and Isabella Wiswell Harris was buried in the Union Cemetery in Milford, Delaware with the dates 1872-1873 engraved on the tombstone.

On September 1, 1875 Frederick applied for a Civil War pension. He cited that "...said wound totally disables him for any manual labor causing violent headaches and sometimes spasms, his whole nervous system being shattered." His application appears to have been approved. This was at a time that the Pensions were difficult to get and were kept at a very low rate of cash benefits.

1876 is the only date engraved on the tombstone of Maggie E. Harris last child of William H. and Isabella Wiswell Harris. She was buried in the Union Cemetery in Milford, Delaware.

The 1880 Federal Census for Cedar Creek Hundred in Sussex County Delaware lists Frederick as the thirty seven year old head of household with the occupation of farmer, his mother Harriet is listed as fifty eight years old and "Keeps House" and his sister Maranda is a thirty two year old teacher at a public school. The same Census lists Frederick's sister, Isabella W. Harris, living with her husband William H. Harris, "Fruit Dealer" in Milford Hundred in Kent County Delaware.

Miranda Poyer Wiswell is listed as an 1880 graduate of Delaware College, now the University of Delaware, with a Bachelor's Degree in the U.S. College Student Lists, 1763-1924 on Ancestry.com. This was a significant achievement at that time particularly for a woman. She was an exceptionally educated public school teacher.

The 1880 arrival in Milford of twenty five year old Dr. John G. Dawson a native of Kent County Delaware was to be significant for Frederick. Dr. Dawson had a Homeopathic medical practice and was an 1880 graduate of the Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital in Chicago. He would treat Frederick from June 1880 to February 1894 when Doctor Dawson moved to Matteawan, Dutchess County New York.

Dr. Dawson testified twice to the Federal Pension Bureau on Frederick's behalf and the testimony reveals the seriously debilitated life that Frederick endured after his head wound on June 17, 1864.

On June 20, 1898 he wrote: ""...He has excitrical adhesions of the membranes covering the Brain... caused by wound (gunshot) leaving brain & membranes without protection other than scalp. Have treated him in attacks of sunstroke on more than one occasion. No doubt due to the lack of protection in this particular locality." He meant that area of Frederick's head. "From the attacks of sunstroke he has developed a well-defined case of Heart Disease of nervous type. Saw him in one attack of Angina Pictoris (sic) in 1890."

On August 28, 1900 Dr. Dawson wrote: "... His Condition being such that exposure to the sun's rays, violent exercise, or under excitement would over tax nerve action of the heart to such an extent that he was often bordering on syncope." Syncope is passing out due to lack of blood flow to the brain often due to drop in blood pressure.

"After such attacks he would be invariably suffer with such violent headaches that he would be entirely incapacitated from labor for weeks at a time. He is incapacitated from Manual labor fully... two thirds of the time. During heated times he is unfit for labor at all."

In 1891 and 1898 several people testified to Frederick dealing with swelling of ankles, feet and hands and having "fainting" or "... frequent giddy spells...". William H. Harris noted that Frederick "... often complains of Sudden blindness after quick exertion." This seems to support Dr. Dawson's statement about near syncope.

In March 1898 on a Federal Pension Bureau form Frederick testified that he had never married and had no children.

On December 1, 1899 Plat Titus who had a Post Office address of Plasterville, Chenango County New York testified to the Federal Pension Bureau that he had known Frederick since "... he came out of the army in 1865." He and Frederick were neighbors in North Norwich, New York and Milford Delaware for eleven years. He noted that Frederick often complained of heart trouble and when working had "... to stop and go & sit down under the shade. I know that he could not stand heat, cold to any extent." He noted that Frederick had been healthy before the war but not after. Plat Titus was the former Captain of Company C of the 114th New York Infantry Regiment.

I have to wonder if watching Dr. Dawson trying to treat her brother's suffering provided extra motivation to Miranda Wiswell going to the University of Michigan Homeopathic Medical School and graduating as a doctor in 1889 as listed in the U.S. College Student Lists, 1763-1924 in Ancestry.com. This was yet another remarkable accomplishment for a woman during those times.

Against this background of debility life continued for Frederick. His mother, Harriet P. Wiswell, died on October 20, 1884 and the grave site is unknown. Miranda was willed thirty acres of the family farm and she got "...all household & Kitchen furniture..." from where Harriet "... now lives". The word "furniture referred to everything in the kitchen from implements to actual furniture.

Frederick inherited "... all the residue of my farm whereon he now lives... together with kitchen furniture in his house." That last phrase tells us that while Frederick lived on the family farm he was living in a separate house from where his mother and sister lived.

Apparently after graduating from medical school Miranda Wiswell did not return to Milford. We next find her in Ancestry.com U.S. City Directories 1822-1925. She is in the 1893 City Directory of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania under "Wiswell & Davis Physicians/ Miranda Wiswell & Sarah M. Davis with her home being at 103 Market Street.

On November 16, 1894 Miranda Wiswell of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania sells the thirty acres she inherited from her mother to her sister Isabella "Belle" Harris for \$800.00. The land was noted as "near a branch" (Herring Creek) & "Brickyard & Wm. Marshall's land."

William H. Harris (born August 31, 1841) the husband of Isabella Wiswell died on February 10, 1895. He was buried in the Union Cemetery in Milford, Delaware next to their two children. He had served as a Lieutenant in Company E 89th New York Infantry and was mustered out in 1864. He then served as Captain of Company K 193rd New York Infantry. William chose to have the rank and service in the 193rd Infantry engraved on his tombstone.

On January 1, 1899 Frederick sold the forty four acres he inherited from his mother of the family farm to Adam Bredemeier of Delaware City, Delaware for \$1,050.00. He finally gave up the struggle to run a farm. Frederick was still in Cedar Creek Hundred in Sussex County Delaware on February 27, 1901 when he sent a notarized statement to the Pension Office that described him as "...aged 57 years, a citizen and resident of the town of Milford Sussex County State of Delaware...". Did he continue to live in his house on the old family farm after he had sold it two years before?

On June 16, 1900 Isabella "Belle" Harris, Frederick's older sister died and was buried in the Union Cemetery next to her husband and two children. She willed her share of the family farm back to Miranda Wiswell.

The 1900 Federal Census has Miranda Wiswell living in Philadelphia with the occupation of Physician who is forty three years old. She is a boarder in the household of Sarah A. Stillman and Sarah's two daughters, a niece and two other boarders and the Philadelphia City Directory confirms the address as 623 N. 15th Street and the occupation of Physician. This meant that Frederick was now alone in the Milford area.

Ancestry U.S. Wills and Probate Records 1659-1999 noted that on January 31, 1900 Mary A. Smith "...late of Norwich, Chenango County New York", a maternal Aunt to Isabell, Frederick and Miranda died. She left them \$8,000.00 to be divided between them. They were three of a total of eighteen beneficiaries awarded a total of \$32, 00.00. In addition a Codicil dated 1890 awarded \$666.00 each to Isabella, Frederick and Miranda. Ancestry also listed a will and probate of Mary A. Smith in Iowa in which Isabella, Frederick and Miranda were three of nine beneficiaries listed but no other details were included. The death of Isabella in June would have concentrated the assets on Frederick and Miranda. They were now far better off financially.

On November 21, 1902 Miranda P. Wiswell of Philadelphia sold 37.5 acres of land in Cedar Creek Hundred Sussex County Delaware for \$1500.00 to James H. Watson of Milford. The land was described as "...on the public road...from the Dike to the Daniel School House...". "The Dike" was the local name for the area where Herring Creek entered the Mispillion River.

From the deed description it appears that a dividing running northwest to southeast would have had Frederick's portion on the western side and Maranda's on the eastern side of the dividing line close to "... land of the late William Marshall and Mill property...".

For some reason Frederick filed a "Declaration For Pension" on September 7, 1907. In it he noted that since he left the army he had lived in North Norwich, New York, Milford, Delaware, Philadelphia and Ocean Grove, New Jersey. His Post Office Address was noted as "Hotel Queen Ocean Grove Monmouth County New Jersey". Two witnesses from Ocean Grove noted that they had known him from 1902 and 1904 respectively. This seems to indicate that Frederick moved from Milford to Philadelphia likely to be with his sister and then on to Ocean Grove, New Jersey after Miranda sold her part of the family farm.

Ancestry.com has an Asbury Park City Directory entry for 1906 in which Miranda Wiswell is listed as the Proprietor of "The Queen 1 Ocean Pathway Ocean Grove." After Miranda's death a New Jersey probate listed by Ancestry.com includes an inventory of linens etc. but notes that there was no real estate involved in the estate. That implies that she leased rather than owned the Queen Hotel. It is not clear if Frederick was merely a resident at the hotel, helped manage it or just helped keep an eye on the property for his sister.

Frederick C. Wiswell died of a heart attack on March 2, 1908 at Maranda's address of 623 N. 15th Street in Philadelphia. He was less than a month short of his sixty fifth birthday. The Pension Office file notes that he was last paid his \$10.00 monthly pension payment on December 4, 1907.

Maranda P. Wiswell died four months and twenty four days later at the same address in Philadelphia of breast cancer. They are both buried under the same tombstone in the Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwood, Pennsylvania.

Frederick C. Wiswell's life story was a sad one of suffering substantial and frequently devastating debilitation and health issues for almost forty four years after being wounded on June 17, 1864 near Petersburg, Virginia. There was a definite Delaware connection with Wiswell and his family living just southeast of Milford for approximately thirty five years.

The Easel Monument Association noted on the "Easel Monument" lithograph below the calligraphy account of his Civil War service had the note: "This picture was presented by F.C. Wiswell June 15, 1897 to ..." with no name entered. It is interesting that it dates two days short of Frederick being wounded thirty three years earlier.

The reason for it not being presented to anybody is that by then there were no direct descendants of his immediate family to give it. It is possible that there could have been more distant family who moved to the Milford area or somewhere else in Delaware but I did not find any reference to them. It is possible that Frederick held the lithograph for as little as five years to about 1902 when he moved to Philadelphia and then Ocean Grove, New Jersey and the lithograph was given to a friend or a neighbor. Over eighty years later it ended up in an auction near Lincoln, Delaware which is about four miles south of Milford.

The Easel Monument lithographs were given to veterans who donated to the Easel Monument Association's fund raising campaign for a national monument. On the web there is a site "Vermont in the Civil War" that addresses "The Easel Monument Project". It was a fund raising program for a national monument to honor the Grand Army of the Republic, the national union veterans association, "... and Kindred Societies...". It was to recognize those organizations work "...toward keeping alive the flame of patriotism which brought victory to the Union Army during that memorable struggle for the preservation of our Union." The plan was for the monument to be "temporarily" built in Bridgeport, Connecticut in October 1898. The final site was to be determined by which State had the largest percentage of Easel Monument "Souvenir sales" ... compared with its (each State) Grand Army membership, in good standing according to the statistics of 1893. According to several other sites several representatives of the Easel Monument Association were convicted of misrepresenting themselves as Pension agents. The monument was never built and apparently what happened to funds raised is unknown. It is certainly fodder for future study, articles and possibly a book.

After holding this lithograph for about thirty six years I realized it is time to find it a permanent home and I can't think of a better and more appropriate place than the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. I like to think my donation is a small way to bring Frederick C. Wiswell back home.

