

"Death of Edward Reaver"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The Centennial of America's "Splendid Little War" came and went without great notice in 1998. The Spanish-American War brought new possessions, including the Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, as well as new challenges for America as an emerging world power. Unfortunately, America quickly became involved in a war with former allies the Filipino insurgents led by Aguinaldo.

Several local men served in the Philippine Insurrection and at least one, Pvt. Edward Reaver, formerly of Hampstead, was killed in action at Fonda on 23 February 1899. The Historical Society's manuscript collection contains a letter from Lt. Ferdinand W. Kobbé, Co. G, 23rd Infantry Regiment, to Miss Alice Reaver:

"Edward Reaver, a member of my company was killed in battle on the morning of Febry. 23rd. His body was buried in the National Cemetery here: Grave number 58. I think it is the intention of the War Department in Washington to bring home the bodies of all men buried here. You can write to the Adjutant [General] Washington, D. C. and he will give you the necessary information."

Pvt. Reaver's remains were eventually returned and funeral arrangements were described in the March 24, 1900 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper:

"The remains of Edward Reaver, formerly of this country, who was killed in the battle at Fonda Philippine Islands, on the 23rd of February, 1899, have been sent to this city, and are now in charge Undertaker James M. Stoner. The body arrived from San Francisco, Cal., by express Sunday, and will be interred at Mt. Union Church, in Hampstead district, near the road leading from Brummel to Hampstead, to-morrow, Sunday afternoon. A delegation of Burns Post, G.A.R., of this city will accompany the remains to the burial place as a guard of honor and will inter the deceased soldier with the honors of war. Young Reaver was a son of Mr. Henry T. Reaver, of Freedom District, and a nephew of Mr. O.D. Gilbert, of this city. He was residing in Illinois when the war with Spain began, and enlisted in the Twenty Third U.S. Infantry, at Joliet, in that State. His regiment was sent to the Philippines and he gave his life offering on the altar of patriotism. The funeral cortege which will accompany his remains to the place of interment will start from Undertaker Stoner's at 12 o'clock, M., to-morrow. The Carroll County Military Company of Frizellburg, Capt. John F. Auer, will also form part of the cortege, which will be under the immediate command of Capt. Auer, and the company will unite with the G.A.R. in the military honors at the grave."

An article in the March 31, 1900 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper described his funeral:

"The funeral of young Edward Reaver, who was killed in battle at Fonda, Philippine Islands, as related to the SENTINEL last week, took place at Mt. Union U.B. Church, near the road leading from Brummel to Hampstead, on Saturday afternoon. The body, which was in charge of the undertaker, James M. Stoner, of this city, was conveyed tot he front of the residence of Mr. O.D. Gilbert, uncle of the deceased soldier, on East Main Street, where the funeral cortege was formed, a detachment of Burns Post G. A. R. of this city, and the Carroll County Military Company of Frizellburg, under command of Capt. John F. Auer, acting as guard of honor to the remains. The casket in which the body was enclosed was draped in the national flag, as was the hearse also.

The funeral cortege left the residence of Mr. Gilbert about 1 o'clock. A number of citizens other than the relatives of the deceased young soldier joined the cortege and drove to the place of burial, where a great throng had gathered to witness the last honors paid to the remains. More than a thousand people were present- the largest assemblage ever seen in the neighborhood. Religious services were held and a funeral discourse delivered by Rev. S.A. Diehl, pastor of Salem Charge, Lutheran Church. The detachment of the G. A. R. also conducted a brief service of the order, and the military company concluded the burial by firing the volleys over the grave. Among the relatives present were Mrs. Sarah Colestock of New Chester Pa., and Mr. J. McClain Gilbert, of New Oxford, Pa., aunt and uncle of the deceased. Young Reaver was 23 years, 4 days old when he fell in the battle of Fonda" America eventually made peace with the Insurgents and gradually formed an alliance with the Philippine people. A later generation of Americans under Douglass MacArthur would fight along side Filipinos against Japanese forces in World War II.

Photo caption: Pvt. Edward Reaver's funeral cortege formed in front of the E. Main St., Westminster, home of his uncle Oscar D. Gilbert. Historical Society of Carroll County copy photograph collection.