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Subject: Lillian and George Erickson

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Marc 11, 2009

Hi Chris,

I uncovered something interesting. My dad may be able to add more detail. You make the call. Here goes.

My dad gave me a wood tool chest that my Grandfather, Geo Erickson, had in his possession. My dad said Geo did some work for someone who could not pay him so he was given the tool chest for his work. It has nice inlay on the top and on the drawers inside. (Picture 1-4 attached) The engraving on the top says J.E.A. Inside it also has a metal tag that says J.E. Avery. We have always wondered who made this.

I did a grave search on your site for all of the cemeteries you have. The Riverside Cemetery came up with a James E Avery.

Grave research results

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=avery&GScid=1959645&GRid=22634175&>

In reading the obituary there was something else interesting. It says that James E Avery came to Saugatuck in March of 1891 and engaged in the wagon making business with S.C Reed until the spring of 1897. It then says he left Saugatuck for Ohio and returned to Saugatuck in 1907. It says he was in the hospital from April to December of 1911 when he passed away.

I read my grandpa's obituary. It says Geo apprenticed himself (circa 1910) to a blacksmith (Samuel C. Reed) who operated blacksmith shops in Saugatuck and Douglas.

I thought my grandpa may have known James Avery as both lived in Saugatuck. Both worked for Samuel C Reed so there could be a

connection. There was approximately 2 years of overlap from when my grandpa started working as a blacksmith at SC Reed and J.E Avery's death. James may have done woodworking from his time making wagons. James could have given the chest as payment for services rendered.

I may have solved my own questions when I looked at the metal tag again. It says J.E. Avery, Toledo O. James Avery's obituary said he was in Ohio from 1897 to 1906. I think I have solved the mystery. (Picture 5-6 attached)

The tag has a bird on it. To me the wings look like an eagle but it looks like the bird has a beard so it may be a turkey or something else.

Note about the chest ... my dad said my grandfather forged and added the metal strips around the top for strength and protection as he used the chest. He also added casters so the chest could be moved easily as it is very heavy. There are 8 treys inside. The center has a lid that slides open to reveal a lower compartment. Each tray can slide to the center exposing the tray below. When all treys on one side are moved to the middle there is another compartment for storing larger items. The top treys have locking mechanisms but we have no key.

I still have some tools from my grandfather inside the chest. A couple levels (they say Stanley Rule & Level Co., New Britain, Conn.), wood chisels, and a measuring tool my dad said they used to measure how many board feet a logged tree would produce. I remember being told when Chicago had the bad fires lots of timber used to rebuild came from or through the Saugatuck/Douglas area.

ANYTHING TO ADD OR CHANGE DAD??

Brian

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I found this all fascinating and have passed it along to Jack Sheridan, the local historian.

I wondered in the medal could have been a civil war dog tag, but when I went out and searched the internet for them, the ones I say were round and had unit information on them as well.

Avery had a sister in Saugatuck, who married Waterman G Phelps. They had a son who stayed in the area and died without issue (it seems) in the 1950s.

Chris

From Brian- March 11

The Roster of the 4th Michigan Volunteer Infantry 1861 - 1866

Avery, James E., Lenawee County. Entered service in Company B, Fourth Infantry, at organization, as Second Lieutenant, June 20, 1861, at Adrian, for 3 years, age 28. Height 5'10½". Complexion light. Eyes blue. Hair brown. Carriage maker by trade. Commissioned to date May 16, 1861. Mustered June 20, 1861. Commissioned First Lieutenant January 12, 1862. Admitted to Hospital in April 1862 at Yorktown, Virginia, while washing his face in swamp water, a violent inflammation of the right eye occurred rendering him wholly unfit for duty. Totally blind in right eye and almost blind in the left. Sent to Fortress Monroe, surgeon stated it was an ulceration of the cornea, never improved until he died. Resigned and honorably discharged December 4, 1862 by G. O. No. 20 Surgeon Certificate. Died December 25, 1911, Old Soldiers Home, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Buried Saugatuck Cemetery, Saugatuck, Michigan. Born on October 19, 1832 in Mannville, Jefferson County, New York.

[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.4thmichigan.com/1054g\(trimmed\).jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.4thmichigan.com/4th_michigan_roster.htm&usg=__vfuy-ZJC9BJquY14Kk-t34-xGlc=&h=363&w=825&sz=129&hl=en&start=1&tbnid=KxPKrll2wnp7sM:&tbnh=63&tbnw=144&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmichigan%2Binfantry%2B%2B%2522James%2BE.%2BAvery%2522%26as_st%3Dy%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.4thmichigan.com/1054g(trimmed).jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.4thmichigan.com/4th_michigan_roster.htm&usg=__vfuy-ZJC9BJquY14Kk-t34-xGlc=&h=363&w=825&sz=129&hl=en&start=1&tbnid=KxPKrll2wnp7sM:&tbnh=63&tbnw=144&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmichigan%2Binfantry%2B%2B%2522James%2BE.%2BAvery%2522%26as_st%3Dy%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DG)

BRIAN R. ERICKSON

Hi Chris,

I came across a website called 4th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment, 1861-1864, "Grand Army of the Potomac". <http://www.4thmichigan.com/> I emailed George Wilkinson who manages and does research for the 4th and asked him about the chest and tag from J.E. Avery.

George is in charge of seeking out information and grave plots for about 2000 men that served in the 4th. One of them is James E. Avery. He had medical records and discharge papers with more details on James' medical condition, etc. He had accurate records on where James lived after the war. I emailed him a photo of the tag and one of the chest and asked for his opinion.

He started with the tag and felt it was not civil war but after the civil war. It lacked Regiment information, etc. used for identification that actual Civil war ID disks would have. His records indicated James lived in Toledo from 1867 - 1877 and that would fall in line with the Toledo, OH reference.

George said the tag was well worn indicating lots of use. He thought it was most likely a pocket watch fob. He said it could have been something stamped out at a 4th reunion, gathering, etc. He said it could have come from a flag or cloth and attached through the hole in the tag but that would not explain the wear of the tag so he was more comfortable with it being a watch fob.

I sent him a picture of the unopened chest. George said he had seen them before. He described the inside of the chest to me without having seen the pictures I took of the inside. Military records indicate James was a Carriage maker by trade before he entered the military in 1861. He said in those days a Master Woodworkers first major project was to make there own tool chest. They used them to display their handiwork and carry tools. Based on military medical records and discharge papers James Avery became completely blind in his right eye and could not distinguish people more than 10 feet away with his left eye. George felt James would not be able to do the detail inlay and woodwork present so he thought it was made before he was commissioned (pre 1861). This would have been a very important and personal piece to a master woodworker.

I sent him pictures of the inside that confirmed this. He liked the shields inlay on the inside treys. I told him my grandpa was a blacksmith and put the iron frame on the lid to help protect the box as he used it. He felt that the metal on the corners was something from grandfather. A woodworker would pride himself on strong corner joints and would not use metal reinforcements. I asked if we should re-paint or strip the paint. He said the paint could be original or put on by my

grandpa so he suggested leaving it or at least have someone look at it to verify the originality of the paint.

George said James was discharged on December 4, 1862. A week after his discharge the 4th Michigan fought in Fredericksburg, VA, then Chancellorsville, VA and Gettysburg, PA. There were many casualties, especially at Gettysburg.

I gave George the email for you and Jack. He may reach out to you regarding any other Civil War vets you may have records of from the 4th.

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I thought the tag may be an eagle with an olive branch. George said it was an eagle with a banner. - Brian
