

Civil War Soldier's Widow Appeals for Help

[Helen Amanda (Sampson) Blaisdell, 1843-1927, Moline, Illinois, widow of Captain James M. Blaisdell, 1835-1897, 9th New Hampshire Regiment, wrote the following letter June 3, 1914 — 17 years after her husband's death — to the U.S. Pension Office.]

Dear Sir,

I am the widow of **James Blaisdell**, Co. H, 9th NH Regiment. I will do the best I can and tell you all that I know about his sickness.

Malaria and Swamp Fever in Mississippi

When Mr. Blaisdell went into the Army he was a well, strong man. He was always well until they were ordered down to Mississippi, as the History of the Regiment says on that fatal journey down the Mississippi. They were sent down there in the worst time, in the heat of summer with the heat and malaria and swamp fever. Is it any wonder the most of them were sick? They were at Jackson and Vicksburg.

They may have had as hard times in other places, but the climate was bitter, a terrible place for New Hampshire soldiers to go. Before the Regiment was ordered back, the sick were sent up in Hospital boats, and Mr. Blaisdell came home at that time. I don't think he even got over the hard time he had down in Mississippi.

After his furlough expired he went to Kentucky and reported for duty. His company was two miles from Cynthiana. They were guarding the Kentucky Central Railroad. He was provost guard at Cynthiana while they were in Kentucky.

When they were ordered to go into active service he was still feeling bad. And when in front of Petersburg, wrote me that he had made up his mind to resign, if he saved what health he had. He would leave the Army. And while he was waiting for things to quiet down in front of Petersburg this other trouble came. He did not want to leave; he said he'd rather stay and see the end, but thought best to resign.

Never a Well Man after the War

After he came home in August 1864 he never was able to do anything until the next June. Then we came west. He never was a well man, but always took the best of care of himself.

He never was down sick, and the day he died was up until nine o'clock in the evening, and at ten was dead. He had a stroke and did not live ten minutes after. He always took a resting spell during the day and a nap in the afternoon.

The morning the trouble came he had been up to see **Colonel Titus**, 9th NH, and he said he took two glasses of whisky. And when he came back he met **Major Potter**. They were not good friends and always passed each other as strangers. I guess he had been to visit someone, for he had been taking something stronger than water.

Language Unbecoming an Officer and Gentleman

He made some remark as he passed Mr. Blaisdell, and he told him he was a “damn liar.” Mr. Blaisdell said he if he had not been drinking he would not have said anything, and if I had, I should never have answered him. He was charged with using language unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and [was] dismissed [from] the service.

In 1866 he had a paper sent him that was supposed to remove the disability – and also a check for three hundred fifty dollars – back pay due him when he left the service. I will send you that paper and you can judge for yourself. The 9th NH History speaks of his intention to resign.

Soldiers Buried in a Blanket, Far from Home

The 9th NH Regiment and other regiments that were in Mississippi came up for good. They stopped every night and buried twenty-five or thirty soldiers, buried far from home and friends, among strangers, wrapped only in a blanket. There were only 93 able bodied men that answered the roll call when they came up from Mississippi. Fourteen months before, they left Concord with one thousand soldiers.

As a soldier you can't find anything against his record, and I regret very much that things happened as they did. I am just seventy-one and would be glad if I could get a pension. I feel the need of it in many ways. Yours, Mrs. H. S. Blaisdell, Moline, Illinois

Helen Amanda (Sampson) Blaisdell w/o Captain **JAMES M. BLAISDELL**
From: James Wason Blaisdell, Ebenezer Blaisdell – (6.212)