

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER REMEMBERED WITH TRIBUTE, STONE

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COOKEVILLE -- He died in January 146 years ago shortly after his Confederate Army regiment lost the Battle of Logans Crossroads in Kentucky.

And while it's not clear whether the 22-year-old farmer from Putnam County died from battle wounds or suffered a fatal illness before the company made it back home to the Upper Cumberland area, other facts of **Benjamin Jarrett Shipley's** short life are known because his descendants do not want him forgotten.

On Saturday, they gathered at the Bullington Cemetery off Shipley Church Road here to honor him by erecting a new marker at his grave.

There they also talked about his life and his death, including the story of how his young widow in that cold winter so long ago agreed to knit a pair of socks for a hired hand as payment for a trip to bring her husband's body home.



The exact circumstances and place of his death are not known, but the Shipley descendants do know some facts about his life, much of it learned through **research by Janet Anderson of Michigan, his great-great granddaughter, and by Dr. William Shipley of Cookeville, whose great grandfather, William Milburn Shipley, was that young soldier's brother.**

Benjamin Shipley's life began on Feb. 18, 1839, in Hawkins County in East Tennessee. When he was still just a boy, **his parents, Eli and Mahalia Felts Shipley**, moved the family to the Upper Cumberland area, settling in a part of Jackson County that later became a part of Putnam County, known as the Shipley community.

Eli Shipley was a storekeeper and a postmaster in the community and also farmed. By the time of the U.S. Census in 1850, Benjamin was 10 years old and had a sister and two brothers, as well as two deceased sisters.

Around 1858, **Benjamin married Sarah Jane Bullington** of the Shipley community, and they began their family with the birth a year or so later of **their daughter, Malinda**, who grew up in the area and who is also buried in the Bullington Cemetery.

The 1860 census shows **Benjamin Shipley** as having \$400 in "personal estate," and he is listed as a farmer.

By 1861, the couple had a son, who was named **Eli Wilson Shipley**. Less than two months after that baby's birth, Benjamin Shipley was mustered into the Confederate Army and went off to train for battle in the Civil War.

He became a third sergeant in a unit made up of men from Putnam, Jackson, Wilson, Cumberland, Overton, Smith and White counties. The regiment drilled at Camp Zollicoffer and Camp Myers in Overton County.

Like many other Confederate units, this one was not well-equipped. Diaries of the time talk of squirrel rifles and an occasional pistol, though most of the soldiers did have large butcher knives. When they did get flintlock muskets, the guns were rusty from use in previous battles, one diarist wrote.

Benjamin's unit marched to Mill Springs, Ky., in January of 1862, and along with thousands of other Confederate soldiers, came under the command of Major General George B. Crittenden.

At the Battle of Fishing Creek, they did not fare well. Poorly equipped to fight and in great danger, they began to retreat after several hours of violent battle on a dark, rainy morning.

They made their way back to the Cumberland River and slipped across it on three boats in the dark of night, leaving their artillery and other equipment behind. When the pursuing enemy reached their camp, the Confederates were safely across the river.

But many were wounded, and all were tired and hungry as they began the long march home. Some died along the way.

Just where and how young **Benjamin Shipley** died is not clear in the sketchy records of the time. Among family lore is one story claiming that his body was left at some home along the way back, stored in a smoke house there because the ground was frozen too hard for burial.

Another family story says that **Sarah Jane Bullington Shipley** paid a hired hand with a pair of knitted socks to go get the body for burial where he lies today, in the Bullington Cemetery here in Putnam County.

"Benjamin had many descendants," his great-great granddaughter said. "We don't know for sure how many children his daughter had, but **his son, Eli, who is buried at the West Cemetery in Cookeville**, had a large family of both sons and daughters. My grandfather was one of them. And my grandfather alone had six children and 21 grandchildren."

His many descendants certainly are thankful that he lived, and they are proud to honor him and preserve local and family history, she said.

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Among the descendants of Benjamin Jarrett Shipley gathered at Bullington Cemetery to honor their ancestor, who died in the Civil War, are, from left, Janet Anderson, great-great-granddaughter; Charles Shipley, great-great-grandson; Dr. William Shipley, great-great-nephew; and Rick Shipley, great-great-grandson.

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