“Mr. Scott Cornell, the irrepressible prospect of this place, struck it big this last week... Mr. Cornell lost his left leg during the civil war, and it is hoped he has found a bonanza.”

Yerington (Nevada) Times, December 17, 1910

FEBRUARY 23, 2022

GEORGE EDMONDSON, who was enslaved in Rockbridge County, escaped to West Virginia with a Union wagon train after the occupation of Lexington by Gen. David Hunter’s troops in June 1864. While he enlisted in the 45th USCT in Wheeling, he was quickly transferred to a Pennsylvania regiment, the 127th, whose battle flag is pictured here. The flag bears the motto “We will prove ourselves men.”

“Lifestyle” column.

“Lifestyle” column.

“Lifestyle” column.

“Lifestyle” column.

“Lifestyle” column.
Soldiers

Peter Fleming

Peter Fleming served in Company K of the 55th Massachusetts, rising to the rank of first sergeant. He was mustered out at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1864. Fleming was mustered out at Charleston in August 1865.

An 1868 article in the Lexington Gazette, reprinted in earlier reports, stated that Peter Fleming had returned to Lexington to collect a "small legacy" due him by McKinley's estate. After emancipation Fleming "had returned to Ohio, and by his industry and enterprise succeeded in making some money." Learning that McKinley's grave "was unmarked by a stone," Fleming ordered two marble slabs from "our townsman, J. J. Hileman." Fleming registered her family as "Free Negroes" in 1841. They soon after registered her six children had been emancipated before the Civil War, had education records in the National Archives.

Deprived of an education himself, he made sure to remove to the west coast of Africa. Tropically, he, his wife, and a young son died from malaria fever in their first week in Liberia. The Colberts' older children remained in slavery in Rockbridge County. After James McDowell's death in 1851, George Edmondson was sold to Jacob M. Ruff, Lexington hatter and, in 1853, mayor. When he cast for flat with the U.S. soldiers in 1864, Edmondson was a householder and the father of two young children. He married Maria Watson, enslaved in Brownsburg by Preston Trotter, in 1860. Although his family never heard him speak about his service in the 127th U.S.C.T., it was careful to preserve all the papers of his promotion to corporal and his honorable discharge. His participation in the glorious ages of Richmond and Petersburg, a wounding at an engagement near Deep Bottom, his hospitalization in the far reaches of the Texans-Mexico border - all such experiences were discoverd by his great-grandson Bill Webb only when he visited Brownsville.

In order to obtain his freedom, Colbert, described as "a pious man & first rate blacksmith," agreed to retrieve his family and take them to Parkersburg, West Virginia. There he worked in a glass works and factory in Parkersburg. He was "further" at the station-house. A soul finding for a former first sergeant of the 55th Massachusetts.

Ohio State University

CARNAL, John Jordan, James McDowell, and Jacob M. Ruff. All of these prominent men held members of the Colbert-Edmondson family in slavery. Twenty-eight-year-old George Edmondson was one of the Rockbridge men who made their way to a Union recruiting station in June 1864 by occupying with Gen. David Hunter's army, after his occupation of Lexington.

Edmondson was born in Lexington in 1836, the son of Samuel and Matilda Cohens Edmondson, who were held in slavery by two different men. His mother was the property of James McDowell, Virginia governor and congressman, so that George Edmondson and his siblings grew up at Cole Alto in the edge of town. He was a direct descendant of Elizabeth (Betsy) Edmondson, matron of the well-known Flemming family of Monticello. His grandfather, Brown Colbert, a Monticello mail rider until 1860, was purchased by Lexington's enterprising resident John Jordan.

In order to obtain his freedom, Colbert, described as "a pious man & first rate blacksmith," agreed

CARNAL (1843-1917), whose tombstone, featured in its brochure, is the first monument on the left when entering the cemetery from Main Street. The inscription at the bottom reads "Erected by Peter Fleming his former Slave." This is the volunteer enlistment form of 44-year-old Uriah Tuck, who signed his name, one of three known ROCKBRIDGE soldiers who were literate. He served in the 16th USCT Infantry and for a time was posted at Chattanooga. Tucker was a veteran, who along with six children had been emancipated before the Civil War, had neighbors in his family as "Free Negroes" in 1841. They soon after left Rockbridge for southern Ohio. He died in 1891 and is buried in Columbus, Ohio.

Soldiers

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