

Fourth in a Series—Biographies of our Ancestors

The Union Ancestor of Richard Holmes



Above: Richard Holmes at a recent Camp Mess meeting.

Jeremiah Carter (Cotter) was born about 1840 in Skull, County Cork, Ireland. He emigrated to the United States in the late 1850s first through New York and then on to Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1860, he moved to Memphis, Tennessee, most likely following opportunities for work. After the war broke out, he went back to Cincinnati and enlisted in the United States Cavalry. Through this enlistment, his name was probably changed from “Cotter” to “Carter”. Jeremiah was illiterate, so when he enlisted in his Irish accent, it would sound like “Carter” to the ears of the American who signed him up. He was then sent to Carlisle, Pennsylvania for cavalry training. In Carlisle, he was transferred to the artillery. Jeremiah was assigned to Battery D, 2nd U.S. Artillery.

At the First Battle of Bull Run, Jeremiah was thrown from his horse when it stumbled and busted his hip. He only missed one campaign throughout the war due to this injury and he suffered with its lasting effects the rest of his life. When President Lincoln gave the army an extended leave if they re-enlisted for the duration of the war, Jeremiah went back to Cincinnati and got married on Saint Patrick's Day 1864 to Catherine Kenney. Jeremiah's enlistment ended in 1866.

Jeremiah started his family in Cincinnati and worked as a cellar digger. His wife Catherine died in 1897 of a cerebral hemorrhage. Jeremiah took his two remaining children (his other children had died of disease) to the Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphanage Home in Xenia, Ohio. Because Jeremiah had to show his enlistment papers to the orphanage, and they had him as “Carter”, our family name has been “Carter” ever since.

One child was my Great Grandfather, Ralph Peter Carter. Jeremiah spent his older years in veterans' homes. He died in the one in Washington where he is buried. I am hoping one day to travel to Skull, Ireland to find his baptism record so I can get his actual birthday. I would also like to get him a new military marker with his correct name. Hoorah for the Grand Army of the Republic.!