

*Submitted by Glen Haney bud at ncweb.com*

*Excerpted from "The Bellamys of Early Virginia" by Joe David Bellamy.  
This book is available from Borders or Amazon.com*

### **The Civil War Record**

I found mention on the internet that Townley had been a member of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the Kentucky Volunteer Army during the Civil War. That was the Union Army<sup>13</sup>, so I wrote to the National Archives, hoping there might be some more information there.

I received a thick envelope from the National Archives. Townley had petitioned for a pension for his war service, starting in 1890. But he had been listed as a deserter. His petition was denied. He wrote again in 1891. That petition was denied. He wrote in 1894, and that petition was denied. He was still petitioning as late as 1913. All denied.

Here is a sample of the correspondence:

State of Kentucky, County of Carter. February, 1890

Personally appeared before me, a notary public in and for the aforesaid County and State, duly authorized to administer oaths, Landisdale L. Taber, aged 63 years, a resident of Olive Hill, in the County of Carter, and State of Kentucky, who, being duly sworn according to law, states that he is acquainted with T. H. Bellomy, applicant for Invalid Pension, and knows the said T. H. Bellomy to be the identical person of that name who served as a private in Company D, 22nd Regiment of KY Vols, and who was discharged at Grayson on or about the 10 day of Sept, 1863, by reason of general Disability.

That the said T. H. Bellomy, while in the line of duty, at or near Catlett Burg, in the State of KY, did, on or about the 1st day of December, 1861, become disabled in the following manner, viz: "contracted inflammation of the eyes and disease of lungs through exposure and hardships incidental to army life. Also incurred a rupture of left side caused by lifting heavy government wagon from which disabilities he continued to suffer up to the date of his discharge, being unable for duty by reason of same."

That the facts as above stated are personally known to affiant by reason of: "being a member of the same company was with the command when the claimant took sick and was injured [and] observed the weak condition that he was in. He had a bad cough and raised much mucus and phlegm, complained of pains and weakness in the chest and lungs. His eyes looked red and inflamed and sore, causing pain and dimness of sight. He also complained of pains and weakness in groin and left side from rupture. I saw the swollen parts, saw him often, and often heard him complain and saw him in pain as above stated while in the service."

And deponent further states, that he is well acquainted with the claimant, having known him for about 50 years; and further, that his knowledge of the facts above stated was derived from having served as a 1st Lieutenant in Company D of the 22nd Regiment, Ky Volunteers, from 14th day of October, 1861, to the 10th day of December, 1861. And deponent further states, that the claimant was a sound, able-bodied man at enlistment, so far as he knew and could judge, and that he has no interest, direct or indirect, in this claim, and is not concerned in its prosecution.

Landisdale L. Taber  
C. H. Ernest, official signature

Oct. 6, 1891

Dear Sir:

There seems to be a mistake in the record of the late war in regard to my service in the U. S. Services. I will give you a true statement of services rendered by myself, which I am able to prove by as good citizens and soldiers as can be produced in Carter and Lewis counties, state of KY.

First, I entered the 4th day of July, 1861, at Olive Hill, KY, and was sworn by a recruiting officer to report at Grayson the 1st day of August, 1861. Col. Garrett, a U. S. mustering officer, swore thirteen into the U. S. service. We were sent to Cattletburg, KY, to get our uniforms. We got them. I drew from the commissary a suit of blue, cap and overcoat, a blanket, knapsack, cartridge belt, haversack, musket, bayonet, [and] 60 rounds of ammunition. Returning to Grayson, we drilled in Dr. Ellis' company. I received in services in August, thirteen dollars [and] was constantly on the skirmish after John T. Williams and other Rebel bands that was annoying the citizens as well as soldiers. For the month of September I [also] received thirteen dollars.

On the 24th of October, by orders of the Colonel commanding, I was transferred to or adopted by Company D, 22nd Regiment, KY Volunteers, after which I never got no more pay. My service was one of hardship and toil and danger. I was ever ready for duty. I had enlisted in the service of my country in good faith for three years or during the [duration of the] war.

About the first of December, 1861, there came a dispatch for 150 men of our regiment to reenforce Col. Zeigler at Camp Sirredo, WV. I was one who volunteered to go, as Col. Wilson said he wanted volunteers to go—he did not want his men to go who did not have the uniform. We went to West Virginia and then to Guyandott. Then we fell back to Cattletburg. There was some government waggons that was stalled in the street. I and others was ordered by government officers to assist the teams. While I was lifting at a waggon, I ruptured myself in the left groin [and] was taken back to Grayson [and] put in a house belonging to Allen Duncan. I was left with some thirteen others under the treatment of Dr. Wm. H. Jones of Grayson.

About the 6th of December, 1861, our men was ordered to Camp Swigert to consolidate with the men at the above named camp. Col. Wilson had left us in the care of the doctor named about the 15th of December. The doctor furloughed all home as he was called. I was very bad with the rupture, my eyelids had become inflamed very bad. I had a hemorage of the lungs—I was bleeding when I was seized with a fit of coughing.

[Missing connecton here] nothing but justice. The record is certainly wrong in my case. I never deserted as sure as God is in heaven and can prove that I did not. This is all I can do. I know I ought to have something for my services, but if the War Department thinks differently, I cannot help it. It is hard for a man to get injured in the U. S. Service and then be wronged as I have been. The officers of Company D have done a thing that will condemn them in another world by reporting a lie. I can prove what I say.

Give this your special attention, and let me know at your earliest convenience.

Yours with respect,  
T. H. Bellomy  
Vanceburg, KY

Townley tells the same story in a slightly different form in every one of his petitions, and, over the course of many years, he produced several witnesses who testified to the truth of his claims. I have two different photos showing him on crutches late in his life, indicating that he was perhaps still suffering from the injury received in lifting the government wagon. Also, it does not seem unlikely

to me that, given war conditions and the number of transfers he made from troop to troop, that the paper work (if it was done at all) might not have caught up with him. It also seems possible that the doctor who treated him, Dr. William Jones, who was no doubt busy and overworked, might have failed to report the furloughs he made. In spite of the evidence that he was not beyond stretching the truth, I have to say I do believe my gggrandfather in this case. If he was lying, he told the same lies with remarkable persistence over the years, and the lies are surrounded by very convincing details. If he was lying, I think he believed the lies he was telling. I think he suffered more from the fact that he was listed as a deserter and that his Government did not believe him than from the denial of his pension.

## **The Regulators Capture Townley Bellamy**

An article in the *Lewis County Herald* by Dr. William M. Talley entitled "An Era Of Disorder Followed End of Civil War" gave me more information to chew on concerning Townley's life. Dr. Talley describes the conditions in Kentucky that led to the formation of the Regulators. Since Kentucky was a border state between the North and the South during the Civil War, the citizens were quite divided in their loyalties. Not only were counties and towns divided against one another—some standing firmly for allegiance to the Union, others opting for succession and fighting on the side of the Confederacy—but even different members of the same family sometimes chose to support opposite sides in the conflict.<sup>14</sup> As a result, a great deal of hatred and animosity was created that lingered for decades after the war was over. People who had grown accustomed to violence and lawlessness as a way of settling scores during the war found it difficult to change their ways after the war was over, and old grievances for acts committed during the war often festered into full-blown feuds that included gun battles and bush-whackings, house and barn-burnings, beatings, harassment, and murder.

The Regulators were a splinter group of the original Ku Klux Klan, according to Talley, which had been put out of commission by President Grant. Until the Ku Klux Klan was revived, the Regulators reigned in this part of Kentucky and their wrath was directed at anyone—white or black—who they thought needed "regulating." One early case reported in the newspaper was of a man named Jarvis who was beaten and whipped because he had not paid his doctor bills, and the editor reported that the doctor was among those who whipped the man! The

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, as noted earlier, Townley's first cousins who remained in Virginia (which was soon to become West Virginia) fought for the Confederacy. His cousins in Kentucky fought for the Union.

brave editor had gone on to comment: "We hope the business of whipping for refusing to pay doctor bills will stop just where it is, as we don't want it down here."

In May, 1881, the newspaper carried a story about the Regulators whipping several women in the southern part of Lewis County, one of whom was a young woman named Anne Smith who was severely handicapped. Both of her hands had been nearly burned off in a childhood accident. Her mother was also beaten. The crusading editor commented: "We think the Regulators have gone too far in this matter. The idea of a party of stout men whipping old and crippled women is a little too small for those who claim regulating to be essential to the welfare of the moral condition of the country." The Smith family had apparently come under the scrutiny of the Regulators when the father, John Smith, joined a political group called the Greenback Organization, a type of Labor Party that supported farmers and other laborers. Smith was suspected of having revealed some of their secret business. Also, Smith was accused of going "to dances and then refused to confess his sins." Going to dances was apparently considered injurious to the moral fabric.

Soon after the whippings of Mrs. Smith and her crippled daughter Anne, a house and barn belonging to a neighbor burned, and the suspicion for who started the fires fell upon John Smith. A member of the Bloomfield family claimed that while riding by the Smith home they had been fired upon by someone inside the house, and soon after that the barn of Reuben Bloomfield was set afire and burned to the ground. No proof was ever presented, but the Smiths were blamed. A group of Regulators surrounded the Smith home and whenever any member of the Smith family became visible, the crowd would fire upon him or her. One of Smith's sons, age 17, was shot through the leg, just above the knee, and Mrs. Smith was nearly killed.

Constable A. G. Brewer and a posse of deputies left Vanceburg with warrants for the arrest of three of the Regulators and rode to the Smith home. When the constable and posse arrived, the Regulators listened as he read the warrants and then informed him they had better things to do than to be arrested. They told him if he was through with his job he should just go home. In the conversation that followed, the Regulators decided that if the Smiths agreed to leave the area, they would let them go. Constable Brewer negotiated with the Smiths, and they agreed to move to Vanceburg. The constable sent for a doctor to treat Smith's wounded son, but the doctor was afraid to come to the scene. After the Smiths vacated their home, the Regulators burned it to the ground.

Even more appalling was the end of the Smith story, which reveals just how extreme the vindictiveness of some of the Regulators remained and how long it

continued. John Smith and his wife Nancy Jane (Davis) raised their children and lived out their peaceful and productive lives in Vanceburg. Their daughter Anne, whose hands had been burnt off at the wrists except for two or three withered fingers, grew to adulthood and married. She had a reputation as an excellent cook and housekeeper in spite of her crippled condition. One summer day in 1904, nearly twenty-five years after the Smiths had been driven out of their home by the Regulators, Anne's body was found floating in Heath's Hole of Salt Lick Creek near Fly Branch, one crippled hand sticking out of the water. She was still clutching her apron in which she held vegetables she had picked in preparation for dinner. It appeared that she had fallen into the water and drowned, but several years later a man in the neighborhood in his 70s called some of his relatives to his bedside and made a deathbed confession. He and other former Regulators had murdered Anne and thrown her body in the creek. But he would not name any of the others, and no one was ever prosecuted for the crime.

The family of Townley Bellomy was another target of the Regulators. The record is not clear about what my gggrandfather or some member of his family may have done to aggravate them, but it does seem that the Regulators, like most bully groups, enjoyed picking on cripples or people who were too weak to fight back; and after his war injury it seems likely that Townley was either still on crutches or walked with a decided hitch in his gait. It is also possible that some earlier grievance—Townley's fighting for the Union army, for instance, or even something his father might have done—may have been at play.

For whatever reason, in April, 1881, the Regulators captured Townley Bellomy in one of his fields, knocked him down, and standing above him in their hoods, began whipping him with hickory switches. After they had beaten and cursed him for some time, until he was bleeding and exhausted, the story goes that he asked if he could have a drink of water. His torturers agreed to allow him to get up and limp to the nearby creek to get a drink. But after he was a certain distance away, Townley made an attempt to save himself by running as fast as his gimpy legs would carry him. The Regulators drew their guns—which was perhaps their intention all along—and they yelled, "Stop." But when Townley didn't stop, they fired in unison and the bullets spun him around and he fell hard into the corn stubble from last year's harvest, bleeding and unconscious, and at first presumed dead. You will remember that the Vanceburg newspaper reported in May, 1881, that Townley Bellomy had died from his wounds. This was perhaps a rumor that Townley had instigated himself in an effort to save himself from further harassment.

By August of 1881, however, it was clear that Townley was not dead. Perhaps he had been spotted by one of the perpetrators, limping along a back country

road or ducking inside a barn door as someone rode past his house. "That son-of-a-bitch is still alive," they must have said. So they burned down his house! Unfortunately for them, however, Townley was not living there anymore. He had rented the house on Buffalo Creek to a preacher's family named Sizemore, and the Sizemores barely escaped the conflagration with their lives. The incident called attention to the recklessness of the Regulators, and finally the law came down on their heads. A man named McClure, who had boarded with the John Smith family, was able to identify several of them, though he died soon afterwards. (The editor of the Vanceburg newspaper stated that McClure had been living out in the woods from fear of the Regulators, and his health was destroyed by bad weather and exposure.) The Bellomy family filed suit against the Regulators, alleging libel, slander, defamation of character, and a charge that they had started rumors to destroy Townley's business. (Never mind aggravated assault and attempted murder!) Even without McClure to testify, several of the Regulators were sent to the penitentiary, including one who claimed he could not have been guilty of regulating the Bellomys because the same day his wife gave birth and he had not left the house except to fetch the midwife. The jury did not believe him.

Most of the Regulators who were convicted received only one-year sentences, however. One may imagine that some of their colleagues who were still under cover and living in the area were not happy with the Bellomys, and that the ones returning to Lewis County after a year in prison were even less hospitable upon their release.

The record is not clear as to exactly when Townley and his first born son Berry, my great grandfather, left Kentucky for Oklahoma. But in 1881, Berry was twenty-nine, and my grandfather Judge (whose legal name was also Townley Hannah) was already a boy, eight years of age. I do not know whether Berry or Judge were ever involved in old Townley's dispute with the Regulators, but they could have been. Let's put it this way, given the forces marshaled against the Bellomys in that region of Kentucky at that hour of the world, it was a good time to leave.



**Robert and Townley in Oklahoma near the time of Townley's death**



Townley is at far left next to his pony Maud. Valeria is the woman in the dark dress.