



# TARRANT COUNTY

## TXGENWEB

Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

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## Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

### Peter Elkanah Potter

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Peter E. Potter was a Union veteran of a Tennessee cavalry regiment. He lived for a few years around 1880 in northeast Tarrant County's Precinct 3, south of Big Bear Creek. He was a survivor of the United States' worst maritime disaster in history. He eventually left Texas and died in Oklahoma.

Mr. Potter was born in Tennessee on March 27, 1841 to two Tennesseans. His wife, Elizabeth R. Hinkle, was born in May 1845, in Tennessee, as were both her parents. They were married about 1865.

Mr. Potter served the Union as a private in Co. K, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tennessee Cavalry. He was enrolled September 16, 1862 at Lexington, Kentucky for three years. He was captured at Athens, Alabama on September 25, 1864 by General Nathan B. Forrest's men. After being released from military prison, he was aboard the *Sultana* when it exploded on the Mississippi River on April 27, 1865. He was reported dead on the Mississippi river on the day the *Sultana* exploded, but was later found alive.

He was named in the records as a paroled prisoner sent from Indianapolis to Camp Chase, Ohio on May 23, 1865. He was discharged June 10, 1865, and was mustered out July 6, 1865 at Nashville, Tennessee. When discharged, he was twenty years old, five feet eight inches tall, had a fair complexion, blue eyes, dark hair, and was a farmer from Cocke County, Tennessee.

In brief, the explosion of the *Sultana*, a steam-powered paddle-wheel Mississippi riverboat, took place on April 27, 1865. It remains the worst maritime disaster in United States history. The ship was critically overcrowded by Union soldiers trying to get home, many of them recently-freed prisoners of war. Four of the ship's boilers exploded, killing about three-fourths of the 2,400 passengers on board. It sank a few miles north of Memphis, Tennessee. It would be better

remembered but for the fact that it took place so soon after the assassination of President Lincoln. Several books, articles, a museum, and at least one website are devoted to it.

The census taker in 1870 found the Potters living in District 1 of Cocke County, Tennessee, in the area served by the Big Creek Depot post office. Mr. and Mrs. Potter had two children with them: Margaret C. (born about 1866), and Alfred W. (born about 1869). There were two other persons living with the family whose names are not legible in the census microfilm. Peter and his family moved from Tennessee to Texas about 1876.

The Potters appear in the 1880 census of Tarrant County, Texas, and were living south of Big Bear Creek. In that year they had five children with them: Margaret (born about 1868), Alfred W. (born about 1869), William M. (born about 1872), Lulie P. (born about 1874), and Charles F. (born about 1878). The 1880 tax list does not show Mr. Potter as the owner of any real estate. Judging from the birthplaces shown in the 1900 census, the Potters must have moved from Texas to the Indian Territory about 1882.

In 1900 Mr. Potter filed his first application for a Union veterans' pension. In 1907, when new legislation broadened the benefits, he reapplied. Mrs. Potter applied for widows' benefits in 1916. Both their application papers would add new information to this biography, and any descendant who has copies is asked to share them with this compiler.

In 1900, the family is found in the census of the Chickasaw Nation in the Indian Territory, in Township 2 North, Range 8 East. Mrs. Potter said she had given birth to eight children, five of whom were still alive. Three of the children were still with them: William (born in May 1873), Charles F. (born in July 1878), and Dollie M. (born in May 1884). Their next-door neighbors were the family of Alfred W. Potter, who was born in July 1868. All the Potters were farming and living on rented land.

By 1910 Mr. and Mrs. Potter had moved to Stuart Township, Hughes County, Oklahoma. They had their sons William and Charles with them, both single men. Peter and Elizabeth both said they had been married only once.

Mr. Potter has a headstone in Pryor Cemetery in Stuart, Oklahoma. It gives his dates of birth and death as March 27, 1941 and January 30, 1916. Mrs. Potter's stone gives her name as Elizabeth R. Hinkle, wife of P. E. Potter, but has no dates of birth or death. The cemetery is actually in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, just across SH131A, which is the dividing line between Hughes County and Pittsburg County in that area. A notation on his pension index card in the National Archives says his death took place on January 20.

The Potters' children included Margaret Potter, Alfred Whitfield Potter, William M. Potter, Lulie P. Potter, Charles F. Potter, and Dollie M. Potter. There were two other children who were apparently born and died inside the census cycles. One of those named here was dead by 1900.

Margaret C. Potter was born about 1867. She was alive with her parents as late as 1880.

Alfred Whitfield Potter was born July 30, 1868. He married Mary Francis Anderson in LeFlore County, Oklahoma on December 6, 1891. He died in Tulsa, Oklahoma on August 1, 1939.

William M Potter was born in May 1873. He was a single man living with his parents as late as 1910.

Lulie P. Potter was born about 1874. Charles F. Potter was born about 1878.

Dollie M. Potter was born in May, 1884 in the Indian Territory. She was still living with her parents in 1900, but was not with them in 1910.

