



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

Barbara Knox and Rob Yoder, County Coordinators

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

John Michael Westenhover

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John Michael Westenhover

John Michael Westenhover came to America from Germany in 1860, and volunteered in a New York infantry regiment soon after the War began. After service in the regular army in the late 1860's in Texas, he remained here for the rest of his life. He lived at Smithfield in 1900. He died at Merkel in Taylor County, Texas. His name is found spelled a number of different ways in the surviving records. The "Westenhover" spelling shown here is that shown on his headstone and on the veterans memorial stone at Bedford.

Happily for us, one of Mr. Westenhover's grandsons lives at Weatherford, Texas. He and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Westenhover, have graciously shared their records and photographs with us. They have visited John M. Westenhover's birthplace in Germany.

Mr. Westenhover was born Michael Augustine Wuestenhofer on August 8, 1837 in Hausen, near Aschaffenburg, Bavaria. He was a son of Johann Laurenz Wuestenhofer and Magdalena (Link) Wuestenhofer. His last name is spelled thirteen different ways in his pension file. After coming to America he used Westenhoefer and later Westenhofer. By 1876 two of his brothers and one sister had also come to the United States, but family members are not sure John M. Westenhover ever became aware of it. In 1876 all three were living in New York City: Johann Ernst Westenhoefer, Otto Westenhoefer, and Ernestina (Westenhoefer) Spinnler. John M. Westenhover's father's estate records indicate that John Michael was living in America, but the rest of the family did not know where.

This branch of the family began using the Westenhover spelling at the insistence of a school teacher who had one of John M. Westenhover's sons as his student about 1900. John Michael left the port of Bremen in Germany, having booked passage on a ship named the Herzogin von Brabant. They arrived at New York City on October 30, 1860. Passage across the Atlantic in those days generally took between forty and fifty days.

Mr. Westenhover served in three different Union regiments: first in Co. B, 10th New York Infantry, second in Co. D, 17th U. S. Infantry, and finally in Co. D, 35th U.S. Infantry. His pension file is extensive and quite interesting.

Although he did not mention it when he applied for his pension many years later, it appears that Mr. Westenhover may have first enlisted in the Union army in New York City on August 8, 1861. He became a private in Co. E, 68th New York Infantry, also known as the Cameron Rifles. He enlisted for a term of three years. He was twenty-three years old, five feet three inches tall, with a fair complexion, gray eyes, and light hair. He was a cigar maker by trade. The records suggest he may have deserted the army at Fairfax Court House on October 8, 1862.

Mr. Westenhover's file in Washington, D. C. contains an original signed enlistment certificate, dated May 2, 1864, at which time he became part of the 10th New York Infantry. He was described as being five feet four inches tall, with blue eyes, light hair, and a fair complexion. He enlisted at New York City for a term of three years. In another place this document is shown to have been made at Hart Island, NYH. He received an advance payment of thirty-eight dollars.

On May 7, 1865 he was admitted to the Emory Hospital at Washington, D. C. for treatment of an ulcer on his right leg produced from the fall of a tree. He was sent from City Point, Virginia to the hospital.

One letter (in Westenhover's pension file) from the War Department, dated November 5, 1902, says he enlisted on January 9, 1866 in Co. D, 3rd Batt., 17th U. S. Infantry. It changed its designation in November or December of 1866 and became Co. D, 35th U.S. Infantry. He was discharged January 9, 1869 at San Antonio, Texas. In a statement Westenhover made that year, he said he believed his service in the 10th New York lasted from five to eight months.

On September 29, 1911, at Merkel, Texas, Mr. Westenhover made an affidavit in which he said, "*...I am the claimant John M. Westenhofer. I was born in Germany on either Aug 7 or 8, 1837. I had a cousin born at same time and which of us was born on the 7 of Aug I cannot tell, but there was but a day in our births. I came to America one month before Lincoln was elected landed in New York City did not know a word of English. I was a segar maker and had the small pox was in a hospital and could get no work so I enlisted in the winter of 1863 in Co. B 19 U. S. Inf and joined the regiment at City Point. I am not certain of that. Was at Fort Stephens in front of Petersburg on S Side R.R. I was present at the time of the mine explosion was a picket. I was in the 2nd Corps. I was at Rheims Station in August 1864 and the James got the best of us. I was detailed to carry a wounded adjutant to the rear. I was in Hancock's Corps Humphrey's Div. B Brigade. I was present when Petersburg fell and followed Gen Lee but did not reach Appomattox Station. We had a 3rd sergeant of my company named Murphy. I cannot recall the names of my officers as our Co. was*

nearly all Irish and I was the only German. I was discharged in Washington D.C. from Emery Hospital on account of a slight wound. Was discharged in May 1865. The same year I enlisted in Co. D, 17th U.S. Inf afterwards consolidated and became the 35 U.S. Inf Col. Hopkins this was in New York City. We went by ship to Galveston, Tex then to Fort Mason. I enlisted for three years. Staid on the frontier in Texas until discharge at fort in Texas. I cannot recall any of my officers except the Col. I was baker for the company. That was my last service and I was honorably discharged of both regiments. My discharges were destroyed in a fire while I was a watchman at a gin in Parker Co Texas...I am a widower.... I was born a Catholic..."

Mr. Westenhovner and his wife, Julia Arnold, were married at Elm Creek in Bell County, Texas on December 30, 1875. In one place in his pension application he says they were married December 28, 1874 at Belton, Texas. In another place in his pension application he says they were married at Waxahachie, Texas. She was born December 27, 1858 in Alabama, probably in Lowndes County. Her parents were John M. Arnold (1826-1882), who was a Confederate veteran and who died in Mansfield, Tarrant County, Texas; and his first wife, Mary Ann Stough, who died about 1867 in Crenshaw County, Alabama.

The Westenhovner family is found in the 1880 census of Precinct 2 in Parker County, Texas. Mr. and Mrs. Westenhovner had two children with them: a daughter whose initials were M. J., born about 1877, and a male whose initials were G.E., born about 1879. Both the children were born in Texas. Mr. Westenhovner made a statement in connection with his pension, saying he had worked as a watchman at a gin in Parker County.

Julia (Arnold) Westenhovner died at or near Mansfield, in southeast Tarrant County, Texas, on August 7, 1894. She was buried in St. Paul's Cemetery, 5.1 miles southeast of Mansfield on Highway 287 in Ellis County, Texas. Her father and other relatives also lie buried there. Mr. Westenhovner married Mrs. Addie Foster on July 7, 1895, but the marriage lasted only a few months.

By the time the 1900 census was taken, Mr. Westenhovner was living at Smithfield with a German family named Gurth. By 1902 he had moved to Dallas, and later still to Merkel, Taylor County, Texas.

Mr. Westenhovner's veterans records show that he died at Merkel, Taylor County, Texas on January 17, 1920. He was buried there in Rose Hill Cemetery.

In 1988, one of Mr. Westenhovner's granddaughters, Helen Westenhovner Grimes, recalled a few details about her grandfather's life: "...Helen recalled her Grandpa Westenhovner staying at one time in a convent working for the Sisters there...caring for the lawn, etc. Helen remembered Grandpa coming to Shreveport to stay with George and Irene when they lived on E. Columbia. Every afternoon he enjoyed walking across the street and buying him a small bucket of beer for twenty five cents, then coming back home and drinking it. His daughter Josey came to visit from Merkel and demanded that he go back home with her since she did not approve of his drinking his beer every afternoon. Helen said Grandpa loved her mother Irene whom he called "Evalina." Irene thought he was a good sweet old man..."

John M. and Julia Westenhovner had six children: Mary Josephine, George Alexander, William Warren, Laura Winn, John Murphy, and Clifford Westenhovner. All lived to be grown except Laura.

Mary Josephine Westenhovner was born March 3, 1877 (in Tarrant County, according to her death certificate, at Belton, Texas according to other family sources). The certificate says she was a daughter of John Michael Westenhovner and Julia Arnold. She married James H. McDonald (1871-1931) on May 23, 1895. She died March 21, 1953 at her home in Merkel, Taylor County, Texas, and was buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Merkel, Taylor County, Texas.

George Alexander Westenhovner was born February 22, 1878. Family sources say he was born at Belton, Texas. He married Irene Frost in December, 1908 in Macon, Georgia. He died March 3, 1959 in Shreveport, Louisiana and lies buried in Centuries Park Cemetery.

William Warren Westenhovner was born August 7, 1881. Family sources say he was born at Waxahachie in Ellis County, Texas. He married Robbie Hannah at Merkel, Texas about 1906. His second wife's name was Edith C. Her dates of birth and death were January 27, 1878 and February 24, 1950. He died December 30, 1955 at Shreveport, Louisiana and was buried there in Greenwood Cemetery.

Laura Winn Westenhovner was born in Tarrant County, Texas on February 28, 1887. She died of diphtheria about 1889.

John Murphy Westenhovner was born in Texas August 19, 1889 near Mansfield, Texas. He was never married, and was living with his sister, Mary J. McDonald, at Merkel in 1900. His headstone in Rose Hill Cemetery in Merkel says he died November 20, 1968. He died at the West Texas Medical Center in Abilene, Texas. He served as a mechanic in the U.S. Army during the first World War.

Clifford E. Westenhovner was born January 29, 1892 five miles east of Mansfield, Texas near Britton. He married Flora Hendrix Reese on February 17, 1927 at Merkel, Texas. He died May 25, 1974 at Campbell Memorial Hospital in Weatherford, Texas, and lies buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Merkel. He was a single man living with his sister, Mary J. McDonald, at Merkel in 1900.





Portraits courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Westenhovner of Weatherford, Texas.
Photographer was F.C.Hoffman of New Braunfels, Texas.