



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

John Steele Wiggins

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John Steele Wiggins was a native Tennessean who served in a Tennessee Union cavalry regiment. By 1880 he had settled near Grapevine and was living next-door to his father-in-law, John P. Phillips, who also a Union veteran. Mr. Wiggins died just after the turn of the century in Cooke County, Texas and lies buried there.

John Steele Wiggins was born in Bedford County, Tennessee on March 18, 1845. He was a son of Benjamin Franklin Wiggins and his wife, Harriett Jane Holt (Greer) Wiggins, both of whom died in Bedford County. John was five years old and was living with his parents and siblings in Civil District 22 of Bedford County, Tennessee when the 1850 census was taken. His father was farming on land he owned worth six hundred dollars. He owned one female slave.

Neither Benjamin Wiggins nor any members of his family are to be found in the 1860 population census of District 22 of Bedford County. It appears that some of the records for that year may be missing. He does appear as the owner of four slaves in the 1860 slave census of Bedford County's District 22. This was apparently one of those instances where allegiances were divided within a single family.

John S. Wiggins enlisted for a three-year term in the Union Army on August 21, 1863 at Shelbyville, Tennessee. He said he was eighteen years old and a native of Bedford County. He had gray eyes, black hair, a fair complexion, and was five feet ten inches tall. A signed copy of his enlistment paper remains in his file in the National Archives in Washington, D. C. His father signed a statement attesting to the fact that John was eighteen years old. He was mustered into the service at Shelbyville on November 25, 1863, and became a private in Co. E, 5th Tennessee [Union] Cavalry. He appears as a first sergeant on a roll ending April 30, 1864. He also served for a time in Company M.

On July 6, 1865 he made a request for a five day leave of absence to go to Bedford County for important personal business. He was mustered out at the rank of quartermaster sergeant at Pulaski,

Tennessee on August 14, 1865. The army still owed him seventy five dollars of the bounty promised him, and he owed the army eight dollars for the cost of some part of his equipment. No other details of his service appear in his compiled military service records file in Washington. A short history of the 5th Tennessee Union Cavalry may be found at <http://www.tngenweb.org/civilwar/usacav/usa5cav.html>

On March 4, 1868 in Bedford County, Tennessee Mr. Wiggins was married to Laura A. Phillips, a daughter of John P. and Sarah Ann Phillips. Family records say she was born December 26, 1848 (her headstone says 1850) in Bedford County, Tennessee. Her parents were John P. Phillips (1824-1891) and his wife, Sarah Phillips (1826-1893). Mr. Phillips was also a Union soldier in the 5th Tennessee Cavalry. Both Mr. and Mrs. Phillips died in Tarrant County, Texas and are buried in Grapevine Cemetery.

The census taker in 1870 found the John S. Wiggins family living in District 22 in Bedford County, in the area served by the post office in Shelbyville. Mr. Wiggins was farming, but he did not own any real estate. He had personal property worth four hundred eighty dollars. He and Mrs. Wiggins had one child, Edna, who was born in April, 1870.

By the time the 1880 census was taken, Mr. Wiggins had moved his family to Tarrant County and settled in Precinct 3 north of Big Bear Creek where he was farming, probably in the area of Southlake or Grapevine. His next-door neighbors were the family of his father-in-law, John P. Phillips. All three of the Wiggins children were with the parents: Edna O., Mary E., and John B. Wiggins.

Mr. Wiggins also appears in the 1880 agricultural census. He owned a farm consisting of thirty-five acres of cultivated land and forty acres of permanent pasture. His farm was valued at one thousand dollars and his farming equipment was worth seventy-five dollars.

His livestock was valued at two hundred dollars. He estimated the value of all his farm productions in 1879 at six hundred dollars. He owned two horses, one milk cow, and two cattle of other classes. Two of his cattle had died or strayed during the past year. He produced one hundred pounds of butter in 1879. He owned eight hogs, forty chickens, and one hundred other barnyard fowl. His chickens had produced two hundred dozen eggs in the past year. He had ten acres of Indian corn which had produced two hundred bushels, and had made seven bales of cotton on his fifteen-acre field. He had a half-acre patch of sweet potatoes from which he had dug twenty bushels. His half-acre peach orchard contained forty trees and had yielded fifty bushels. He estimated the value of all his orchard products produced in 1879 at twenty-five dollars. He had cut several cords of wood on his place, but the number and their worth are not legible in the available microfilm.

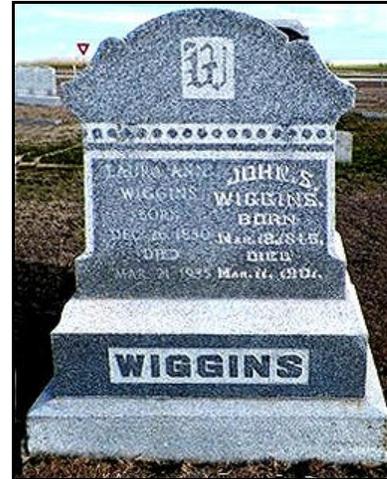
John S. Wiggins appears in the 1890 Union Veterans census of Cooke County. He said he was a veteran of Co. M, 5th Tennessee Cavalry, and was living in Precinct 1 at Early, Texas at the time.

Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins appear in the 1900 census of Cooke County, Texas in Precinct 6. Mr. Wiggins was working as a grocer. Mrs. Wiggins said she had given birth to three children, all of whom were still living. Only one child, John B. Wiggins, was still with them.

John S. Wiggins died March 11, 1901 in Cooke County, Texas. He was buried in Valley View Cemetery in Cooke County.

On November 19, 1901 Mr. Wiggins filed for a Union widow's pension. It was approved. By the time of the 1910 census she had moved to Oklahoma and was living alone there at Wetumka, in Hughes County. By 1920 she had moved into the home of her daughter-in-law, Edna Hemphill. Mrs. Wiggins' pension application was not used in the preparation of this biography due to the high cost of obtaining copies from the National Archives.

When the 1930 census was taken, Mrs. Wiggins lived in Gainesville, Texas with her married daughter, Mary E. Maddox, and her family at 401 Main Street. Family sources say she died at the home of her daughter, Edna Hemphill, in Wetumka, Oklahoma on March 21, 1935. She was buried beside her husband in Valley View Cemetery. Their graves are marked by a large double upright gray granite headstone.



According to two different statements Laura Wiggins made to census takers ten years apart, she had only three children.

Edna Ozella Wiggins was born April 26, 1870. She married Dr. John Albert Hemphill (1864-1940) on September 11, 1890 in Cooke County, Texas. In 1900 they lived in Grayson County, Texas but by 1920 had moved to Wetumka in Hughes County, Oklahoma where she died May 1, 1938. They lie buried in Wetumka Cemetery.

Mary E. Wiggins was born about 1874. She married William J. Maddox (1864-1930) about 1893. In 1930 they lived at 401 Main Street in Gainesville, Texas. Her mother was living with them. Mr. Maddox died June 22, 1930 and was buried in Valley View Cemetery in Cooke County. There is a headstone in the same cemetery for one Mary Maddox who died February 1, 1948. We have been unable to find a death certificate for her in Texas, and her headstone apparently does not contain a birth date. It seems possible that this may be Mary E. (Wiggins) Maddox. Examination of the placement of this stone in the cemetery in relation to Mr. Wiggins' stone might confirm this theory.

John B. Wiggins was born in September 1879. He was living with his parents in Cooke County when the 1900 census was taken. Some family sources say he died in 1900. Mrs. Wiggins told the census taker in 1910 that all three of her children were still living.