

Douglas A. Andrews: 1853 – Unknown DOD

by John Andrews

The year Douglas A. Andrews was born, 1853, was full of notable events. In 1853, the transcontinental railroad survey was authorized by congress; Harriet Tubman began her underground railroad which helped slaves escape; the first railroad disaster which killed 46 people occurred in Norwalk, Connecticut; Gail Borden patented her process for condensed milk; the first World's Fair opened in the Crystal Palace in New York; the first electric telegraph was used between Merchants Exchange and Pt. Lobos; and finally, John Morrissey won a boxing title when Yankee Sullivan left the ring after the 36th round to slug Morrissey's fans.

The 1850 census shows Douglas' parents living in Sharon Township, Franklin County, Ohio. Ray, a farmer, was 25 years old, and Mary, his wife, was 19 years old. Three other Andrews' families lived in the same township. Douglas was born three years after that census, in September of 1853. He was born in Illinois, and was the second of three children born to Ray W. Andrews and Mary Wiswell Andrews. His older sister was Ella Andrews, born about 1851 in Ohio, and his younger brother was Colonel C. Andrews, born about 1858 in Illinois.

The first official record found containing Douglas' name was the 1860 census. Douglas, age 7, was living with his parents, his sister Ella, 9, and his brother Colonel, age 3, in the town of Onarga, Iroquois County, Illinois. Sometime between 1852 and 1855, Ray and Mary moved their family to Onarga from Sharon Township, Ohio. Ray was a prosperous farmer owning real estate valued at \$8,000, and possessing personal property worth \$600. In addition to farming, Ray was part owner in the local newspaper and he served as an elected member of the Iroquois County Board of Supervisors from 1856 to 1861.

According to the 1860 census, Mary Wiswell Andrews' brother, D. F. Wiswell and his wife Colista Wiswell were also living in Onarga, Illinois. Sometime between 1859 and 1860, D. F. and Colista had moved to Illinois from Texas to avoid living in a Confederate State. They returned to Texas at the conclusion of the Civil War.

Two major events must have had an impact on Douglas' young life. The first event was the Civil War. In June of 1861, Douglas' father, Ray, left home and enlisted in the Union Army for a term of three years. He was given the rank of Captain in the 25th Regiment of the Illinois Volunteers. Military records confirm that he was injured twice during his short tour of duty. He suffered an injury to his leg while wrestling with a fellow soldier in an Army camp. His leg was further injured in the Battle of Pea Ridge. Those injuries led to his discharge from the Infantry on November 21, 1862.

The second event affecting Douglas was the separation of his parents. It's unknown when that separation occurred. However, one land transaction, recorded on December 6, 1865 in the Iroquois County records indicate that Ray was living in the Montana Territory. He may have moved to Montana after his discharge from the Union Army. The census of 1870 lists Mary Andrews living in Onarga, Illinois, with her daughter, Ella, and sons Douglass (sic) and Colonel. She owns real estate valued at \$3,000 and has personal property valued at \$400. Ray is not listed in that census. It appears that

Ray and Mary have separated or they have divorced and Mary has custody of the children. Such an event was unusual for that time in history and the family must have suffered economically, socially, and personally as a result.

Sometime in the mid 1870's, after moving to Kansas, Douglas married Emma L. Gans. Emma was the daughter of William and Anna M. Gans. That union produced three children:

Frank Andrews, born about 1876 in Kansas, Jesse Johnson Andrews, born July 15, 1878, in Olathe, Kansas, and Howard Andrews, born in Kansas in March of 1883.

According to the 1880 census, many members of the Andrews family had moved to Kansas and were living in or near Olathe. Douglas, age 26, his wife, Emma, age 23, and sons, Frank, age 4 and Jess(i)e, age 1 ½ are living in the Burns and Oak Trees Addition near Olathe. Ray W. Andrews, age 55, is living in the Hays Addition, in Olathe, Kansas. Five households from Ray's home, his son, Colonel C. Andrews, age 22, is living with his mother Mary, age 47.

It should be noted that Douglas A. Andrews' son Jesse married in 1900. He and his wife had a son who they named Colonel Douglas Andrews. That grandson was probably named "Colonel" after Douglas A. Andrews' brother, Colonel C. Andrews.

On February 16, 1887, Douglas received homestead land worth \$200 from the U. S. Government in Kearny County, Kansas. Douglas and Emma took a mortgage for \$525 from the Jarvis Conklin Mortgage and Trust Company on January 1, 1887 and from D. W. and Ann M. Gans for \$1 on February 23, 1887. The homestead was located on the NE ¼ of Sec.10, Twp 22, Range 36 and the NW ¼ of Sec 11, Two 11, Range 36. He never proved up on that homestead land.



This is an undated photo of Douglas Andrews' print shop. The location is unknown, possibly in Olathe. Douglas is fourth from the left.

Douglas worked as a printer and he served from 1889 to 1893 as the Register of Deeds in Kearny County. He was the second person to hold that position after it was created.

According to an article titled, “*The Reddington Affair*”, which appears in the Kearny County History book, Emma had an affair with a Mr. George Reddington. Mr. Reddington was a neighboring homesteader in Kearny County, Kansas. He faked his death in order to get out of the affair; however a few months after his fake death and disappearance, Emma gave birth to a son, Harry Andrews. It appears that Harry had been fathered by George.

In the year 1900, Douglas, age 46, is listed in the census as a printer. He, his son Jesse, his brother, Howard, and a Benjamin Franklin Robinson are all living with “Uncle Curn” on Cherry Street in Kansas City, Kansas. Douglas’ marital status is listed as widowed. In a letter written between 1899 and 1900, Douglas’ son, Jesse wrote his fiancée, Nora Wiswell, that his parents were getting a divorce and that his mother, Emma was living in Topeka, Kansas. Earlier, when Nora asked Jesse if he thought his mother would like her (Nora), he answered that he didn’t know because he hadn’t seen her since he was a child.

A collection of letters between Jesse and Nora is contained in a bound edition titled, “*Distant Devotions*”. In those letters Jesse makes no mention of a brother named Harry, and he never refers to his mother except in response to questions from Nora. Apparently Douglas and Emma were separated following her affair with George Reddington.

Benjamin Robinson came to the Andrews family through Emma Gans and he lived with various family members through a number of generations until his death at the age of 104 in 1934. Uncle Ben, as he came to be known, was a slave prior to the Civil War. During the civil war he was somehow able to enlist in the Union Army. After the war ended, family history says he came to the Gans home asking to work for food. He was given work to do, fed and allowed to spend the night. The next day we did some more work and on that went until eventually he became a member of the family. The 1870 census shows Benj F. Robinson, age 20, black, born in Missouri, as a domestic servant in the Gans household. It is probable that Uncle Ben came to Kansas to help raise Jesse and Howard after Douglas and Emma separated. Uncle Ben later becomes part of Jesse’s family, traveling with them to homestead in Roswell, New Mexico. He continued to live with Jesse until he died in Brighton, Colorado, in 1934.

Douglas’s love for his Uncle Ben is evident in numerous letters and post cards he wrote. In those letters he would urge his grandchildren to give his love to Uncle Ben, and he often expressed concern for Uncle Ben’s health. He even sent Ben a post card in October of 1911 urging Ben to get false teeth. Douglas wrote that he had 18 teeth pulled out at one setting with no serious pain and he was looking forward to his new false teeth.

Several letters written to his family and preserved in “**Distant Devotions**”, provide some insights into Douglas’ life. In 1899, he and his sons traveled far and wide to find work. A letter written August 25, 1899, to his future daughter-in-law, Nora, tells of their experiences in Gainsville, Texas. They had planned to spend time in Gainsville but they found that the town was all “*Union and Jesse or Howard could not get in anywhere on*

account of not being Union Men”. Their living conditions were crude. “We are camped on the banks of the Trinity river”, he wrote. And, Doug considered himself a Gypsy, writing: “Kiss Osha, Lillie, and all the children for me and throw in a big hug for their Gipsy cousin ...”

By October of 1899, Douglas had located in Kansas City, Missouri. He felt so positive about the opportunities there that he wrote:

“Dear Boys and Ben,

Yours rec’d about 10 min ago and hasten to answer. Glad to hear you were all well and in good shape. I am still a dude and having a good time. You wouldn’t know me if you were to meet me in the road. Don’t buy anything but a pair of shoes and I will meet you at the train and take you to the barber and clothier and hatter.

This is a hell of good city and think if we do not all find work here it can not be found on earth. You will find your Uncle Willie in Guthrie or Winfield and he will help you sell out but don’t let him touch you for a cent. Guard your money and get here with every cent possible. We will yet win. Keep a stiff upper lip and the camp life will soon end. Lots of love and hope of a safe trip to me.

Father”

Three months later Douglas wasn’t as positive about his situation. In another letter to Nora, he wrote in part:

“...I am still very much dissatisfied with city life and long for the day I can bid farewell to white shirts, stand-up-collars and stiff hats. No dude for me!! But I’m here and shall make the best of it until such time as I can see my way clear to start in a small way amoung you all in Texas. It was happy days for me while there and if I live to return will stay, you bet.

...I have been traveling for a Little Rock grain man but owing to scarcity of grain in the territory assigned to me was called in until such time as he could place me in other territory which I hope will be soon as I do not like to be idle.”

He signed that letter “Gypsy Doug”.

On December 2 of 1900 Doug and Jesse were again traveling in search of work. A letter to Nora told of their travels to San Antonio, Texas, by way of Waco, Texas. By the 13th of December they were in Temple, Texas, and still hadn’t found any employment.

The next preserved correspondence consists of a series of postcards Douglas sent to Jesse’s children along with several cards to Ben, Jesse and Nora. The first of those post cards was postmarked Albany, New York, 1907. On that post card Douglas wrote Jesse “they” had visited Washington, D.C., Coney Island and New York City. The rest of the post cards were written between 1910 and 1912 with California postmarks.

By 1909, Douglas had moved to California. He met and married Ella McGammon that year. Like Douglas, Ella had been previously married and she had two living children. She was born about 1860 in Iowa. Her father's first name is unknown, but her mother's married name was Ellen McGammon.



D. A. Andrews and Ella

The 1910 census shows Douglas and Ella living at 1136 Pico (?) Drive, Los Angeles, California. As of April 15, 1910, they had been married one year. Others in the household were Earl T. Allen, son-in-law, age 18, and Ellen McGammon, mother-in-law, age 73, and a roomer, Gay Bingham, age 19. Douglas' occupation was listed as nursery. In a letter dated 1911, Douglas talks about having worked in an orchard. And, in a post card written to his grandson, Fred, in October of 1911, Douglas wrote: "I think of you every day while pruning orange and lemon trees."

Douglas and Ella moved from Los Angeles to San Diego early in 1911. They lived at different addresses including: 2148 E. Street, 1022 C. Street, and 1329 H Street at the Seattle Rooming House. A post card dated 1912 contained a note that Douglas was selling "Allen Portable Baths". His last known occupation was manager of a rooming house. He probably was manager at the Seattle Rooming House.

Douglas' date of death and the location of his burial are unknown.