

THE NORTHERN MICHIGAN RESORTER

~ July 10, 1952 ~

Emmet's Part In The Civil War

Editor's Note: This article, written by the late Judge Charles J. Pailthorp, is the result of his painstaking research and personal experience covering many years. All statements made in the article were checked by the author, through records kept in the Adjutant General's office at Lansing and other sources.

EMMET COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR

From 1855 to 1875, which, of course, included the entire period of the Civil War, Emmet County was an Indian Reservation and its inhabitants consisted, almost exclusively, of that race. These Indians were divided into four bands residing in as many different localities in the county.

What was known as the Cross Village band resided at Cross Village; the Middle Village band at Middle Village (now Good Hart); the L'Arbre Croche band at Little Traverse (now the City of Harbor Springs); and the Bear River band at Bear River (now the City of Petoskey). Many of these adult Indians were educated and lived in comfortable log or frame residences.

All of the balance of the county, not occupied by these Indians, was an unbroken wilderness, the title to which was vested in the national government and held by it in trust for these Indians and other Indians who were parties to the treaty of 1855, to which these Indians and the government were parties. Until the completion of what was formerly known as the Grand Rapids and Indiana (now Pennsylvania) railroad the nearest railroad was at Grand Rapids.

Cut Off During Winter

All of the central portion of the state lying north of Big Rapids and south of the Straits of Mackinac was practically an unbroken wilderness. Thus, it will be seen, Emmet County, while accessible by water during the season of navigation, was

practically inaccessible during the winter season. During the latter season of the year only an occasional mail reached Emmet County, and that was hauled by dogs attached to sleighs.

These were the conditions in Emmet County in July, 1863, when 23 Indians, residents of Emmet County, under the leadership of Lieutenant Garrett Graveraet, enlisted at Little Traverse (now Harbor Springs) in Company K of the first regiment of Michigan Sharpshooters. This company had the distinction, with the exception of its captain and first lieutenant, of being composed entirely of Indians.

Shortly after enlistment these 23 Indians accompanied by Henry Graveraet, the father of Garrett Graveraet, who at that time was holding the office of Judge of Probate of Emmet County, went by boat from Little Traverse to Detroit for the purpose of joining their company and regiment, which at that time was stationed at Dearborn, pending its organization.

Henry Graveraet Joins

Upon arriving at Dearborn, Henry Graveraet, who had not previously enlisted, enlisted in his son's company and became a member thereof. After the regiment had completed its organization, and after a short term of service in Ohio aiding in the capture of Raider Morgan and his associates, it was ordered to Chicago for the purpose of guarding confederate prisoners confined at Camp Douglas.

The following spring this regiment joined the Army of the Potomac, and from that time to the discharge of its survivors in July, 1865, it was constantly engaged in active service, participating in that time in 22 engagements, many of them of major importance.

In these engagements three of these Emmet County Indians were instantly killed in action, nine were wounded (four mortally, two died in Con-

federate prisons, and one while in the service was killed in a railroad accident. From what has been said it will be seen that these 24 Indians who entered the service of their country in its hour of need, 15 of them either lost their lives or were wounded in that service.

Description Of Battle

This record, I submit is ample proof not only of the loyalty of these men to their country, but of their bravery as well. However as further proof of their bravery, let me quote from a somewhat graphic description of the battle of Spotsylvania Court House, and the part these Emmet County Indians took in that battle.

“On the right stood the 27th fighting with unparalleled coolness and bravery; everything on the left of the sharpshooters had been swept away, and the attack on their front and flank, with both infantry and artillery, pouring in shot and shell, was terrific; but they gallantly held their ground.

“On the left of the sharpshooters were a company of civilized Indians, in command of the late and lamented Graveraet, an educated half-breed, as brave a band of warriors as ever struck a war path; they suffered dreadfully, but never faltered nor moved, sounding the war whoop with every volley, and their unerring aim quickly taught the rebels that they were upon very dangerous ground.” End of quotation, *Michigan in the Civil War*, page 372.

Graveraet Took Charge

This battle, it will be recalled, took place May 12, 1864. Shortly prior to this battle, both the captain and first lieutenant were discharged for physical disability, and as a result the command of the company fell upon the shoulders, and none could be more worthy, of Lieutenant Garrett Graveraet, and that command was retained until he fell mortally wounded in the severe fighting before Petersburg, July 10, 1864.

It was in the battle of Spotsylvania Court House that three of these Indians, including Henry Graveraet, were instantly killed, and found unknown soldier's graves upon the battlefield.

At the close of the war, and until her death, Mrs. Graveraet, the mother of Garrett Graveraet and the wife of Henry Graveraet continued to reside in Little Traverse (now Harbor Springs) and could be seen almost daily upon the streets of that village, as bowed down with grief she wended her way to and from the Catholic Church, of which she was a devout member.

Wright Was Descendant

It may be of interest to the reader who was honored with the acquaintance during his lifetime of the late and lamented John C. Wright, the author of Indian legends and poems, to know that Mrs. Graveraet was John's grandmother, and that Garratt Graveraet was his uncle, and Henry Graveraet his grandfather.

At the close of the war, and in 1865, the few survivors of this company of Indians were discharged, and those who were residents of Emmet county at the time of their enlistment, returned to their homes in the county. All of the survivors of these 24 loyal and brave residents of Emmet County have long since passed away, and are now quietly sleeping in some of the many cemeteries of the county.

In taking that departure they left behind them a record of loyalty to country, bravery and sacrifice in its defense well worthy of any race or people.

State Honors Service

The State of Michigan, in appreciation of the services rendered by the regiment of which these 24 Indians were members, has preserved in its records a history of that service, and it is from that record that the quotation, above referred to was taken.

In addition, and as a further evidence of that appreciation, the state has erected a monument upon its Capitol grounds at Lansing in memory of that regiment; upon the base of that monument appears the names of those officers of the regiment who lost their lives in the defense of their country, and among those names appears that of Lieutenant Garrett Graveraet of Emmet County.