

**WWII Veterans continues with the "W" letter of the alphabet**

By David Kusel

I continue to lay out information I have for the various WWII Veterans and show what I do have and what I don't have for each one.

One of the unique aspects of the Manning Veterans' book will be the generational connections made for families so the reader will know if and how Veterans with the same last name are connected.

Last week I forgot to mention one of those family connections...at least I'm fairly sure there is a connection. The example was with the Witcher family. Ruel Witcher served during WWII. I don't have any pictures for him and just a few Monitor articles and his obituary. As I started this week's page it hit me there was a Witcher who served during the Civil War. So I went to my Civil War web page database and sure enough, Selden Witcher served in both the Civil War and also the Indian War.

His obituary listed his children and showed other Manning family connections where some of his daughters married into other Manning families such as Klindt and Babcock.

This is where I'm having a hard time convincing people why it is important to submit not only your Veteran's military history but also family pictures and history that are connected to Manning. This way I can connect our "Manning Family" history and preserve it in the Manning historical database.

In Selden's obituary it states how his life and military service was celebrated and honored at the funeral service in Gonzales, California, where he had moved during his later years in life, but his stomping grounds were in Manning. For eleven years, Selden was the commander of the local Manning G.A.R., McPherson Post #33.

Today, most people including our local Veterans are not aware of this post which has mostly been lost through time. The only image of the building I have is from the back and was taken off the Manning Water tower in the early 1900s. I asked Tom MacDonald-Williams to use his artistic abilities to give an impression of what the front of the building would look like.

This wooden building once stood where what some remember as the Louck's Apartments block building that still stands on the east side of Main Street on the corner of Second Street.



McPherson Post #33 artistic rendition by Tom MacDonald-Williams that once stood on the corner of Main & Second Streets.

As I continue to look for Manning historical items and memorabilia, I was ecstatic when I found a McPherson Post #33 ribbon listed on E-bay. I had absolutely no clue of such a historical item and I made sure to bid high enough to get that ribbon. It was badly damaged with part of the layer missing. So I contacted the same fellow in Michigan who had the Manning ribbon to see if he had any other ribbons from the same time period...fortunately he did so I purchased a California Ribbon from him. Once I received that ribbon I scanned it and digitally edited it over the scan of the damaged Manning ribbon. Below you can see the before and after. While I have not changed anything with the original ribbon, I can show what it once looked like through digital enhancement.

This is also another example of why people need to send me their old pictures and Manning historical items so I can make high resolution digital scans of them now, so when their original items fall to pieces and return to dust, my digital scans will still be around to show and/or print new images of them.

Please realize this all costs me money and takes a lot of my time - which I'm very happy to do to preserve our Manning history...the only reason why I mention this is to make it clear to those skeptics who think I only want to make money off of their pictures and history. I not only do NOT make money off preserving Manning's history it has cost me tens of thousands of dollars over the last 40 years of my quest to preserve our history.



Original ribbon on the left with digitally repaired ribbon on right.

I always like to find corroborating information for historical facts. This is another reason why when people don't get their old pictures and information to me, while their family may preserve it for several more generations, they are doing a disservice to themselves and their family history. While they have their family history they won't have all of the other types of information I have that will either corroborate their facts or maybe prove that they have some erroneous information.

While working on the two previous Manning history books, a number of die-hard family genealogists discovered errors

they had through more research or from the information I had in my database.

This is why when more people share with me and add their information my database, we all benefit...especially when my database is being properly backed up and archived.

Recently, I spent the whole day with my six-month and annual backups and archiving that are stored in my safes and also a bank safe deposit box. I also have daily backups between 3 networked computers. This is what I'm referring to when I write about "proper" backups that will survive time.

Eventually all of this data will be copied/preserved in the Des Moines state museum and other local libraries/museums.

Database information shown below from the History of Manning 1898 book I have that confirms Selden Witcher's obituary which shows he was the commander of the Manning post and other facts...Not that his obituary was in question but I have found lots of contradictory "facts" over the years and many times it is hard to determine what is the "whole truth."

**McPHERSON POST, NO. 33, G.A.R.**, was mustered in, March 17, 1881, by Major, A. Cully at Center School House, Jefferson Township, Audubon County. The Charter officers and members of this Post are Commander, Selden E. Witcher; Senior Vice Commander, Henry Ferrall; Junior Vice Commander, H.C. Williams; O.D., B.H. Lathrop; Quarter Master, J.L. Hall; Chaplain, Francis Leonard; Members -- M. Hanchett, W.J. Blair, B.J. Jenkins, C.J. Hawkins, Harvey Stocker, Joseph Moore and J.I. Halford.

The Post was transferred to Manning in December of this year. In September, 1882, Cook Hall was completed and was leased by the Post, and the dedicatory services took place October 6, following.

The G.A.R. and W.R.C. Hall was purchased in December 1884, by those two lodges, and since then, has been remodeled and fitted up, making a comfortable and attractive home for these worthy institutions. The present membership of this Post is 14. The object of the Order is fraternity and benevolence toward the soldiers, and orphans and widows of soldiers of the Civil War, and it is earnestly desired by the Post that all persons eligible join the Order and have their names enrolled on the Roll of Honor -- to honor through life and be honored in death among that innumerable band of our Grand Army of the Dead. The present (1898) officers of the Post are: Com., J.G. Beal; S.V., C.F. Leonard; J.V.C. Ad'j't., J.L. Hall; Q.M., A.W. Blakeslee; Q.M.S., D.W. Sutherland; O.D., W.H. McVey.

As of this point in time I have not run into any information that shows how active the Manning W.R.C. (Woman's Relief Corps) was or who the members were but it is interesting that Manning had a W.R.C. by the time of its inception.

*Note, from the Internet: The National Woman's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic, Inc., is a patriotic organization whose express purpose is to perpetuate the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic, as their auxiliary organized at their request on July 25 and 26, 1883 in Denver, Colorado, and incorporated by Public Act of the 87th Congress on September 7, 1962.*

Now we return to featuring more Manning WWII Veterans. This first name is another example of my struggle to find pictures and information for each Veteran. It is so sad that a lot of our Manning Veterans will ONLY have their name listed in the book. I realize that many of the Veterans' families have long since disappeared from the Manning scene years ago, but there are still quite a few Veterans from WWII who have at least some descendants or distant relatives who still live in the Manning area or are aware of the Manning Veterans' project. This 1st name came from the Manning Memorial Day program.

**#590 Lawrence Wolterman (no pictures or information)**

**#591 Merle Warren Wood (no pictures, 1 Monitor article)**  
**1943 Merle Wood In Navy - Farragut, Idaho** A member of the Manning, Iowa, community recently reported for duty with the Navy at the U.S. Naval Training Station, Farragut, Idaho. He is Merle Warren Wood, son of Mrs. Ida Wood of Manning.

After several weeks of training and physical drill, he will be assigned to a Navy Service School to learn a specialized trade or will be transferred to sea duty with the, growing U.S. fleet.

**#592 Robert A. Wood (no pictures, 1 Monitor article)**

Serial Number 19185256; Enlisted San Francisco, California, November 3, 1942; Private, Air Corps, Army of the United States

**Manning Monitor 1943 Pvt. Robert Wood at Las Vegas**  
 Pvt. Robert Wood writes from Las Vegas, Nevada, where he is stationed at Las Vegas Army Air Field. He states he is getting the Monitor and likes to read what the rest of the service men are doing. He also sends his thanks to the Legion and Monitor. It is quite hot at the air field but he is getting along fine.

**#592 Winston Wulf (no pictures or information)**

There were several Wulf families in the Manning area but I have no information as to connections to Winston.

His name is on the Manning Memorial Day program, but that is all I have that indicates he was a WWII Veteran.

**#593 Keith H. Wunder (no military pictures, 2 Monitor articles)**

All I have are some civilian pictures of Keith and some brief military information from his obituary. It is better than nothing but I hope a family member reads this article and will contact me so we can get pictures and more details about Keith's life and military service.



A picture of Keith from the funeral home website.



A picture of Keith from the Joy (Moore) Doyle collection.

**#594 Willys E. Wunder (2 military pictures, 1 Monitor article, brief write-up)**



Willys E. Wunder, son of Edwin and Ida (Koester) Wunder, attended school at Iowa Township District No. 2, graduated from Manning High School in 1943, and Iowa State College.

He entered the Army April 19, 1945, and took his training at Camp Maxey, Texas, and Fort Benning, Georgia. He served in the European Theater with E. Troop, 53rd Squadron, for nine months, from April, 1946, to January, 1947, and was awarded the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. He left the service in March 1947.

In 1949 he joined the Iowa National Guard, 34th Division. He was trained at Waco, Texas, and Liaison Pilot Class at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was commissioned 1st Lieutenant. He remained in the Reserves until 1960.

At the time of printing of the 1982 Aspinwall Centennial book he was living in Anaheim, California, and worked for O'Connor Mercury-Lincoln Dealers.

**Manning Monitor article 1945 Willys Wunder Now Second Lieutenant FORT BENNING, GA.**, Willys Edwin Wunder of Manning was commissioned a second lieutenant in the army of the United States upon successful completion of the officer candidate course at the infantry school here this week. He is a son of Ida Wunder, route 1, Manning.

The new lieutenant was inducted into the army April 20, 1945 and served with the 108 infantry training battalion at Camp Maxey, Tex., before taking the course here. He held the rank of private before being commissioned.

Lieutenant Wunder is a graduate of Manning high school and was a member of the football team and FFA club.



Willys Wunder and Kenneth Jensen 1947

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