

Photo Has Stellar Role In War Tale Aids In Identifying Soldier From Portville

By MARIAN REYNOLDS
GETTYSBURG, Pa.—Clutched in the hand of the dead soldier was a picture of his three children. It was almost sworn testimony that the young hero had died with the names of his children on his lips.

He had died at his post, on guard duty. His identification was lost. He was an unknown.

The Battle of Gettysburg had just become history. It was July 5, 1863.

The four days of battle had ground to an end. Thousands of dead—almost as many in blue as in grey—were being identified and buried. The body of the ser-

name became known. As a result, a war orphan's home was founded, his widow became its first matron, and their children grew up there.

A Philadelphia man saw a double use for the picture of the three children. Dr. John Bourne caused thousands of copies of the ambrotype to be printed, together with a little story about their father and a plea for information. The pictures were sold all over the northern part of the United States. Proceeds were used to establish the National Soldiers Orphan Homestead in the Gettysburg building which the soldier had died defending.

Ninety-five years later it is impossible to say under what circumstances Mrs. Amos Hummiston first saw a copy of the picture. We can only surmise, her feelings when she beheld the photograph she knew her husband had carried. She must have been shocked to learn so unexpectedly, after years of uncertainty, how and when her husband had died.

PORTRAIT SITTING

Thilinda (or Phylinda, in another record) Hummiston tended her children with loving care. We see careful grooming in their photograph, posed so solemnly in the fashion of the day. It was a momentous event in 1862 for the children to sit for a portrait. One became tired with sitting still for the long exposure. And when the picture was being taken for Dad-



geant in blue was but one of many whose names were not known.

It seemed that the three children in the picture—and their mother—might never know the exact fate of their father and husband.

CHAIN REACTION

Unlikely as circumstances made identification, the soldier's

dy to take with him to war, one could hardly smile.

Little Fred, three years old, was perched in a small chair elevated to bring him even with Franklin, his seven-year-old brother. On his other side was their sister, Alice, halfway between them in age.

Franklin and Alice wore shirt

Census Records

Portville, N. Y.
FEDERAL, 1860
Amos Hummiston, 30, Harness Maker
Thilinda, 29
Franklin, 5
Alice, 3
Fred, 1
George Lillie, 32, Harness Maker, living with family.
All born in New York State.

STATE, 1865
Phylinda Hummiston, 34, born in Chemung Co., widow
Frank, 10, born in Tioga Co.
A. C., female, 8, born in Tioga Co.

Fred, 6, born in Cattaraugus Co.
Note: We are indebted to Miss Julia Pierce, Allegany, Cattaraugus County historian, for data on census and enlistment material regarding Amos Hummiston, and to Cliff Arquette for permission to use a copy of the children's photograph. Miss Pierce theorized that the "George Lillie" might be Mrs. Hummiston's brother.

and dress lovingly hand-fashioned by their mother from the same bolt of gingham. Perhaps Thilinda had stayed late beside her candle sewing Fred's little suit from one of his father's and applying the white lace to the neck.

At any rate, the picture was done, and Daddy Amos Hummiston carried it off to war. He died a sergeant in Company C, 134th New York Volunteer Infantry.

DECISION IS HARD

Amos had been a harness maker. He and his family had not lived long in Portville, where he had enlisted. His parents had come from Connecticut; he was born in Oswego, N. Y., and Thilinda in Chemung County. Their children were born at two year intervals in Tioga, Steuben and Cattaraugus counties.

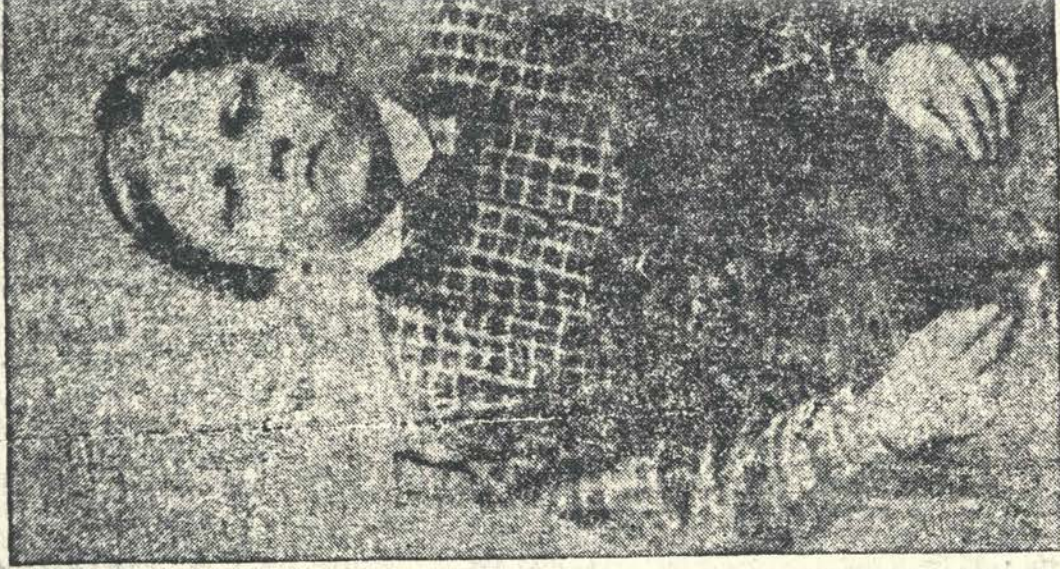
The young head of his family had enlisted reluctantly. He must have pondered long whether his responsibility to his family outweighed his responsibility to his country.

Finally, his minister, the Rev. Isaac C. Ogden, of the Presbyterian Church, reassured him that his family would be cared for in his absence.

AMOS, THE FAMILY MAN

The minister wrote: "He was a man of noble impulses, a quiet citizen, a kind neighbor, and devotedly attached to his family."

"When the Rebellion first took the form of open war upon the country, he was anxious to enlist; but his duty to his family seemed then to be paramount to his duty to his country. But after



Franklin, Fred and Alice

the disastrous Peninsula campaign, when there was a call for 300,000 volunteers, and when he received assurance from responsible citizens that his family should be cared for during his absence, then, without the prospect of a large bounty, he enlisted as a private in the 154th New York State Volunteers.

Amos enlisted July 26, 1862, at the age of 32, in the Town of Portville, to serve three years. He was mustered in as a corporal, and Sept. 24, 1862, was promoted to sergeant. He was listed as killed in action, July 1, 1863, at Gettysburg.

HOME'S FIRST MATRON

Thilinda (Phylinda, if you will) Hummiston became the first matron of the children's home in Gettysburg. The orphanage stood just north of Cemetery Hill, a site of intense fighting throughout the four day battle. Her children went to Gettysburg with her, and presumably grew up among the orphans who had a home indirectly because of their picture.

When the home was no longer needed as an orphanage it was closed. Later it was purchased by Cliff Arquette, the "Charlie Weaver" of television. Mr. Arquette has established a Civil War Museum in the building, and displays his hand-carved models of central figures of Civil War times there.

No relatives or descendants of the Hummiston family have been found here. Perhaps recirculation of the Hummiston children's picture and their story will cause history to repeat itself—and locate again descendants of Amos Hummiston.