

Cattaraugus Republican, November 22, 1901

A VERY STRANGE STORY

TRUTH IN THIS INSTANCE STRANGER THAN FICTION

An Application For a Pension Brings to Light the Story of a Soldier of the Civil War Who Served a Year and Never Saw the Regiment or Company in Which He Enlisted.

The Jamestown Journal says Pension Attorney A. H. Stafford of that city meets with some strange stories of civil war times, but one that came to light recently capped the climax. It is of a man who served over a year during the Rebellion and in that time never saw his company or even his regiment.

A short time ago Thomas Drayton of Ackley Station wrote to Mr. Stafford asking that the latter aid in securing a pension. He stated that he served in the 154th New York volunteer infantry, so Mr. Stafford wrote to the adjutant general's office in Albany and received the following reply:

Albany, Feb. 25, 1901

Mr. A. H. Stafford:

Sir--I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of yours, without date, requesting record of Thos. Drayton, as of the 154th New York volunteers, and beg to inform you in reply that the name of Thomas Drayton has not been found on the rolls of the 154th New York volunteers on file in this office.

Respectfully,

FRED PHISTERER

Mr. Stafford wrote to Mr. Drayton requesting that he come to Jamestown and call at the pension attorney's office. This Mr. Drayton did and on being shown the letter from the adjutant general's office, told, in substance, the following story:

"In 1864 myself and friend Harry Hoyt lived at Olean and worked at Allegany, and about June of that year were drafted into the United States army. According to instructions we reported to the provost marshal at Dunkirk, but as by some error we had been drafted at both Olean and Allegany, he refused to accept us. He informed us, however, that if we would enlist we would go as volunteers instead of drafted men. We did this and as I had a brother in the 154th New York I asked that we might be assigned to that regiment. This was arranged and we were sent to Elmira where we remained two weeks, after which we were advanced to Washington, and shortly after to Arlington Heights, where we were assigned to guard duty. At this time the 154th was supposed to be at Chattanooga, and at the end of three months we were ordered to join the regiment. We arrived at Louisville about Nov. 1 and here I had an attack of jaundice which lasted two weeks. When I recovered I found that Hoyt was doing guard duty at the barracks. We were soon detailed as train guards on recruit trains running between Louisville and Nashville, and served in that capacity until May, 1865, having never seen our company or regiment, and never receiving one cent of

pay, as our descriptions had been forwarded to the regiment. About the middle of May we were sent to Elmira to be discharged with our regiment, but on the way I was taken sick, and as the hospitals at Elmira were crowded I was sent to my home in Olean. The 154th had not yet arrived at Elmira and the surgeon promised to inform me when they arrived that I might, if able, go there and secure my discharge. I never was aware of the fact that the regiment had arrived until my brother came home. So I did not, even at the mustering out, see my company or regiment."

To ascertain the truth of this story caused Mr. Stafford a great amount of work, but he succeeded at last in proving that every word of it was true. By corresponding with various people at Olean Drayton's friend Hoyt was located in Pennsylvania where he was working in a mine. His affidavit was secured, and then it became necessary to secure the affidavits of persons that knew him at the time of the war, in order to prove that this was the right Mr. Hoyt. The affidavits of a man at Olean and of one at Warren were secured and with Hoyt's were sent to Washington. In this department, however, the charge of desertion was held against Drayton, as he was not accounted for on the day the regiment was discharged. On looking up the records of the officers in charge at the various places where Hoyt and Drayton served it was found that their story was true, as the following letter shows:

Washington, D.C., Nov. 9, 1901

Mr. A. H. Stafford:

Sir--Referring to the application for removal of the charge of desertion and for an honorable discharge in the case of Thomas Drayton, as of the 154th regiment, new York infantry, I am directed by the secretary of war to inform you that, in accordance with the provisions the act of congress approved March 2, 1899, the charge of desertion of May 25, 1865, standing against this soldier has been removed. A discharge certificate as of the date he left the service (May 25, 1865) is herewith enclosed.

Very respectfully,

F. T. RUSSELL,

Chief, Record and Pension Office.