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*Biography of Francis Garner Moffett*

Francis Garner Moffett died long before I was born, but he changed the direction of my life. As a 4th grader my son Christopher was asked to write about an interesting person on his family tree. Christopher did not enjoy writing but he loved reading about the Civil War. In the hope of stimulating his interest in the school project I retrieved from my parent's home the small regimental history that Francis Garner Moffett had inscribed to his son Robert, and which Robert in turn had passed to his son, my father. The booklet had gathered dust for years. As I read the history with my son I found that it was I who became fascinated with the story that unfolded. Suddenly I wanted to know more about Francis, about who he was and what his life was like. And so my journey began. I treasure that small booklet and with it the words my young son penned. Now it is my turn to tell the story of my great grandfather, Francis Garner Moffett.

**Genealogical Summary:**

**Francis Garner Moffett**, son of Abraham [Abram or A.G.] and Sarah (Davis) Moffett, was born on 25 December 1844 in Carroll County, Illinois,<sup>1</sup> and died on 1 August 1921 at Berkeley, Alameda County, California.<sup>2</sup> He married first **Mary E. Rea** on 9 October 1872 in Carroll County.<sup>3</sup> She was born 7 February 1849 in Chester County, Pennsylvania,<sup>4</sup> the daughter of G. and Anna (?) Rea,<sup>5</sup> and died on 4 August 1874 in Carroll County.<sup>6</sup> Francis married second **Clara Louisa Heffelfinger** on 17 November 1875 in Grundy County, Iowa.<sup>7</sup> She was born on 9 July 1850 in Chester County, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Lewis Heffelfinger and Mary Miles,<sup>8</sup> and died on 18 September 1936 in Oakland, Alameda County, California.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records, 1790-1903, *The Holy Bible* (Pittsburg: J. L. Read and Son publishers; also Philadelphia: Samuel Loag printer, 1873); privately held by Barbara McClure [address for private use,] Santa Barbara, California. 2007. All entries in the Bible (excepting the death date of Abraham Moffett) are in the handwriting of Clara Louisa (Heffelfinger) Moffett (1850-1936). The Bible passed from Clara to her son Robert, then to his son Frank and then to Frank's daughter Barbara.

<sup>2</sup> Alameda County, California, death certificate no. 359 (1921), Francis Garner Moffett; Office of the County Recorder, Oakland.

<sup>3</sup> Francis G. Moffett (Sgt. Co. D., Consolidated 34th IA Inf., Civil War), widow Clara, WC906,333, Case Files of Approved Pension Applications..., 1861-1934; Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives, Washington DC.

<sup>4</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records.

<sup>5</sup> Oak Hill Cemetery (Mt. Carroll, Carroll County, Illinois), Mary E. Moffett marker, section A, row 12; personally read, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records. Oak Hill Cemetery (Mt. Carroll, IL), Mary E. Moffett marker.

<sup>7</sup> Grundy County, Iowa, Register of Marriage Licenses 1856-1881: entry 480, F.G. Moffett and Clara L. Heffelfinger, 1875; Clerk of the District Court, Grundy Center.

<sup>8</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records.

<sup>9</sup> Alameda County, California, death certificate no. 2667 (1936), Clara L. Moffett; Office of the County Recorder, Oakland.

## **The Life of Francis Garner Moffett:**

Abraham Moffett and Sarah Davis married in Smyth County, Virginia, on 28 January 1841,<sup>10</sup> then loaded a wagon and headed north. They stopped briefly in Washington County, Maryland before continuing west,<sup>11</sup> probably following the rutted road known as the National Highway. Their destination was Carroll County, Illinois. As the youngest child in a family of eight, Abraham may have felt his chances of inheriting family land in Virginia were small. Abraham's brother Garner Moffett and his wife Mary Jane Davis (a cousin of Sarah Davis) were already settled in Carroll County when Abraham and Sarah arrived.<sup>12</sup> Francis Garner, born on Christmas Day in 1844, was Abraham and Sarah's 2nd son and third child.<sup>13</sup> He was no doubt at least partially named for his father's older brother.

Francis spent his childhood surrounded by siblings and cousins. The 1850 census recorded Abraham and Sarah farming in Cherry Grove Township, along with 9 year old Isabel, 8 year old John, 6 year old Francis, 4 year old Mary and 2 year old Thomas.<sup>14</sup> Garner and Mary Jane Moffett lived in adjacent Freedom Township with 5 children.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hawk, a brother-in-law, also lived in Freedom Township with his second wife and 4 children.<sup>16</sup> And another Moffett brother, Thomas, lived with his family in nearby Salem Township.<sup>17</sup> Thomas had married Ann Elizabeth Davis, also a cousin of Sarah (Davis) Moffett.<sup>18</sup>

The various families were active participants in the growing Carroll County community. Abraham and Sarah's farm included 200 acres under cultivation and 400 acres of unimproved land, all of which was valued at \$4,000 in 1850. Francis no doubt helped with the farming chores, as the family grew wheat, Indian corn, oats and Irish potatoes. He probably rode one of the

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<sup>10</sup> Smyth County, Virginia, marriage license (1841), Abraham Moffett-Sarah Davis; County Clerk's Office, Marion.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Hostetter, editor, *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Carroll County*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Munsell Pub, 1913), 2: 703.

<sup>12</sup> Garner Moffitt household, 1840 U.S. census, Carroll County, Illinois, no township, page 19 (stamped on right hand page); National Archives micropublication M-704, roll 56, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>13</sup> Francis G. Moffett, submitter, "Abraham Moffett Family Data"; Clan Moffat in America Project; 1900-1910; original documents held in 2001 by the Provincial Archives, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, accession no 84.177/37, section I.

<sup>14</sup> Abram Moffett household, 1850 U.S. census, Carroll County, Illinois, population schedule, Cherry Grove township, page 342 (stamped), dwelling 6, family 6; National Archives micropublication M 432, roll 99, viewed online at Ancestry.com, Nov. 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Garner Moffett household, 1850 U.S. census, Carroll County, Illinois, population schedule, Freedom township, page 28 (original script), dwelling 7, family 7 (each page restarts dwelling and family count); National Archives micropublication M 432, roll 99, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>16</sup> William H. Hawk household, 1850 census, Carroll Co., IL, pop. sched., Freedom Twp., p. 351 (stamped), dwelling 5, family 5.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Moffett household, 1850 U.S. census, Carroll County, Illinois, population schedule, Salem Township, following page 374 (stamped), dwelling 7, family 7 (each page restarts dwelling and family count); National Archives micropublication M 432, roll 99, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>18</sup> F.G. Moffett, "Abraham Moffett Family Data", Clan Moffat in America Project.

families 4 horses across the expansive prairie.<sup>19</sup> And he would have joined his parents and cousins when they worshiped at the Lanark Christian Church, which his father helped establish in 1843.<sup>20</sup>

Francis's uncle Garner Moffett most likely played a role in his nephew's early years. Garner served as the county Superintendent of Schools and was a member of the second Constitutional Convention for the state.<sup>21</sup> While Francis and his siblings grew up in the small log cabin their father built in 1841, Garner built a large brick home on a rise on the open prairie.<sup>22</sup> He worked the farm during the week, and preached on Sunday, sometimes traveling twenty or thirty miles on horseback to do so.<sup>23</sup>

However, the peaceful days of Francis's early childhood did not last. In late 1850 his mother Sarah gave birth to a still born infant. Sarah fell ill and was not expected to live. Like many neighbors and relatives, Francis's father contemplated selling his land that winter and moving to Oregon in the spring.<sup>24</sup> However when spring came Sarah was still ill with "bleeding lungs" and the family did not move.<sup>25</sup>

Despite her illness Francis's mother added another child to the family in October of 1851.<sup>26</sup> The following month Francis's older brother John died from a fever at 8 years of age.<sup>27</sup> One additional child was born in 1853.<sup>28</sup> Then, on 16 September 1855 Sarah died and was laid to rest in a neighbor's field next to John.<sup>29</sup> Sarah was 34. Abraham, at age 38, was suddenly a widower with 7 young children, including 10 year old Francis. A year later Abraham married the widow Caroline Sterne Tidd and Francis found himself with a stepmother.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> 1850 U.S. Census, Carroll County, Illinois, agricultural schedule, Cherry Grove Township; Abram Moffett; NARA microfilm publication T1133, Roll 1.

<sup>20</sup> *The History of Carroll County, Illinois Containing A History Of the County - It's Cities, Towns, Etc.* (Chicago: H.F. Kett & Co., 1878), 374.

<sup>21</sup> *The History of Carroll County, Illinois* (Chicago: H.F. Kett & Co., 1878), 480.

<sup>22</sup> Amanda M.F. Hallett (Mt. Carroll, IL) to "Dear Sister" [Julia A. Laird], letter, 17 June 1849; Laird Family Letters, 1849-1864, privately held by Mary (Laird) Larson, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 2000. Copies of the original letters are in possession of the Carroll County, Illinois Genealogical Society. They were written to Peter and Julia Adaline (Lindsay) Laird (of Missouri and California) by family members and friends residing in Carroll County.

<sup>23</sup> "Obituary of John Moffett", Clan Moffat in America Project. John Moffett was the son of Garner Moffett. The obituary, from an unnamed and undated newspaper, was filed among the Clan's holdings on this family line.

<sup>24</sup> Eliza F. Pierce (Mt. Carroll, IL) to Julia A. Laird, letter, 17 Nov. 1850; Laird Family Letters.

<sup>25</sup> Eliza F. Pierce (Mt. Carroll, IL) to "Dear Sister" [Julia A. Laird], letter, 1 Apr. 1851; Laird Family Letters.

<sup>26</sup> F.G. Moffett, "Abraham Moffett Family Data", Clan Moffat in America Project.

<sup>27</sup> E. F. Pierce (Mt. Carroll, IL) to "Dear Sister" [Julia A. Laird], letter, 28 Dec. 1851; Laird Family Letters. F.G. Moffett, "Abraham Moffett Family Data", Clan Moffat in America Project.

<sup>28</sup> F.G. Moffett, "Abraham Moffett Family Data", Clan Moffat in America Project.

<sup>29</sup> Wolfe Cemetery (Freedom Township, Carroll County, Illinois; located on E. Georgetown in the northeast quarter of Section, 25, Township 25N, Range 5E), Sarah Ann Moffett stone, personally photographed in Sept. 2000.

<sup>30</sup> F.G. Moffett, "Abraham Moffett Family Data", Clan Moffat in America Project.

I do not know if Francis lived at home in the years following his mother's death. He was not enumerated with his father and stepmother in Carroll County on the 1860 census.<sup>31</sup> He may have been away at school; possibly in Iowa. I also do not know what type of relationship he had with his stepmother. It would appear that as an adult Francis reminisced about the mother who died when he was a child. Many years later, following Francis's death, his widow Clara wrote a clause in her will remembering the mother-in-law she never knew.<sup>32</sup>

As the Civil War erupted Francis enlisted, not in a Carroll County unit, but as a private in Company I of the 34th Iowa Infantry.<sup>33</sup> This unit consisted of volunteers who joined at Decatur, Iowa. Francis was employed as a teacher at the time but the location was not recorded. Neither was the name of the guardian who on August 15th, 1862 signed a written consent for the 18 year old boy.<sup>34</sup> At the time Francis stood 5' 5" tall, had hazel eyes, light hair, and a fair complexion.<sup>35</sup>

Francis grew up in a family environment that honored the military service of its forefathers. Contributing to a Moffett surname organization around 1907 he wrote:

"My father, Abram Gobble Moffett, has often told me of my great grandfather William having been killed by the Indians in the French and Indian War prior to the war of the Revolution, which occurred near the present site of Pittsburg, Penna. His death occurred in the early morning, he being picked off by sharpshooters, I think he was under the command of Lord Dunsmore of Maryland, but belonging to a body of Virginia troops. My father would go into all the details as he had heard them and firmly believed all his statements to be actual facts."<sup>36</sup> [Note: William was killed during the Battle of Pt. Pleasant in 1774]

Francis served the entire 3 year term of his enlistment despite great hardship and misery. The regiment participated in the assaults on Chickasaw Bluff in December, 1862 and in the siege and capture of the fort at Arkansas Post on January 10th and 11th, 1863. The regiment was then put in charge of the prisoners taken during the engagement and ordered to accompany them by boat to Chicago. Over 5,000 men were crowded into 3 undersized boats and amid those conditions smallpox soon broke out.<sup>37</sup>

The regiment's historian, writing in the late 1880s, stated: "The state rooms were filled with the sick. The floors of the cabin were covered with the sick of our own regiment, and also with sick rebels, all lying closely together, some with fevers, some with pneumonia, some with measles, some with small pox, all with chronic diarrhea. There were not enough well men to properly guard the prisoners and care for the sick."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> An extensive search for Francis on the 1860 census has been unsuccessful to date.

<sup>32</sup> Clara L. Moffett will, Alameda Co. Will Book 1936: entry 64636, Alameda County Clerk's Office, Oakland, California. Clara requested that a memorial marker be placed in Sarah's memory at a family owned plot in Lanark, Illinois.

<sup>33</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>34</sup> Compiled Service Record; Francis G. Moffett, Sgt, Co. D, Consolidated 34th Iowa Inf.; Carded Records, Volunteer Organizations, Civil War; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>35</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington

<sup>36</sup> F.G. Moffett, "Abraham Moffett Family Data", Clan Moffat in America Project.

<sup>37</sup> J.S. Clark, historian, *Thirty-Fourth Iowa - Brief History* (Des Moines, Iowa: Watters-Talbot, 1892), 9-12.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

The regiment was in complete disarray, having buried its dead at every island in the Mississippi as it journeyed north. The sick and dying were left in any hospital accommodation that could be found along the river.<sup>39</sup> Francis survived the trip to Chicago but when the regiment departed on February 5th, 1863, Francis, suffering from bilious fever,<sup>40</sup> was left behind in a Chicago hospital.<sup>41</sup>

On March 3, 1863 Francis was able to rejoin the regiment. He was paid 2 cents a mile or \$5.62 for transportation from Chicago to St. Louis, following which he was assigned to guard a group of prisoners heading to Virginia. Apparently beginning to show some leadership skills, he was promoted to Corporal on May 1st while the regiment was stationed at Pilot Knob, Missouri.<sup>42</sup>

In early June the regiment, whose numbers had shrunk from 953 to about 400 largely due to illness, left to serve with Grant at Vicksburg.<sup>43</sup> Later that summer they spent time outside New Orleans, and then in the fall traveled by steamer to Brazos de Santiago, Texas.<sup>44</sup> The regiment remained in Texas for several months, during which time Francis was promoted to 1st sergeant.<sup>45</sup> In early 1864 the men returned to Louisiana where they participated in General Bank's unsuccessful campaign on the Red River. This was followed by the siege against Ft. Morgan in August where the regiment distinguished itself and was awarded the honor of receiving the prisoners when the Confederate soldiers surrendered the fort.<sup>46</sup>

On September 12, 1864, the 34th and the 38th Iowa Regiments were consolidated, again creating a full regiment of about a thousand men.<sup>47</sup> Francis was assigned to company D of the consolidated regiment.<sup>48</sup> On the 9th of April 1865, after spending days building fortified trenches, Francis and his comrades took part in the siege of Mobile, Alabama. Charging from their trenches in the fading sunlight, bayonets in hand, the men advanced on the fortified city. Though they were ultimately victorious, it came at some cost of life and with a good deal of irony, as 2 hours before the charge, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.<sup>49</sup> Francis remained with the regiment until it was mustered out on August 15, 1865 at Houston, Texas.<sup>50</sup> Although he was promoted to lieutenant in July he was not officially "mustered" at that rank.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>41</sup> Compiled military service record, Francis G. Moffett, Sgt. Co. D, Consol. 34th IA Inf, Civil War, RG 94, NA-Washington.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> William John Peterson, *The Story of Iowa: the Progress of An American State*, 4 volumes (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1952), 1: 479-80.

<sup>44</sup> Clark, *Thirty-Fourth Iowa - Brief History*, 17-18.

<sup>45</sup> Compiled military service record, Francis G. Moffett, Sgt. Co. D, Consol. 34th IA Inf, Civil War, RG 94, NA-Washington.

<sup>46</sup> Clark, *Thirty-Fourth Iowa - Brief History*, 20-24.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, *Thirty-Fourth Iowa - Brief History*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>49</sup> Clark, *Thirty-Fourth Iowa - Brief History*, 27-31.

<sup>50</sup> Compiled military service record, Francis G. Moffett, Sgt. Co. D, Consol. 34th IA Inf, Civil War, RG 94, NA-Washington.

<sup>51</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

Following the war, Francis enlisted in Oskaloosa College [the forerunner of Drake University] in Oskaloosa, Iowa. He was listed in the student directory published in 1866.<sup>52</sup> Upon finishing his term at college, Francis returned to Carroll County, where on November 13th 1866 he was appointed deputy clerk of the county court. Francis signed a statement swearing to support the constitution of the United States and stating, among other things, that he had never fought in a duel or accepted a challenge to do so.<sup>53</sup> The appointment was made by Robert M.A. Hawk, Clerk of the Court, who was also Francis's cousin.

Besides serving as the Carroll County Deputy Clerk, Francis appears to have studied law. In August 1870 the Carroll County court issued him the necessary certificate of good moral character required for admission as an attorney and counselor at law.<sup>54</sup> That summer he was also enumerated on the 1870 census for Carroll County, but not in the home of his father and stepmother. Rather he was living in the home of Benjamin Strickler in Mt. Carroll, the county seat. Francis's occupation was noted as "clerk"; he owned personal property worth \$1,000.<sup>55</sup>

The 1870 census captured Francis at a transition point in his life. In September, the month following the enumerator's visit, he moved 150 miles west across the Mississippi to Grundy County, Iowa.<sup>56</sup> There he and another Carroll County lawyer, J.M. Rea, purchased the Grundy County Atlas, the first newspaper published in that county. They ran the paper for 6 or 7 years.<sup>57</sup> Regardless of Francis's newfound interest in Iowa, he maintained his ties to Illinois, where on Oct. 9, 1872 he married Mary Rea in Carroll County.<sup>58</sup> She was the sister of Francis's partner in the Grundy County newspaper enterprise.<sup>59</sup> Mary died less than 2 years later, on August 4th, 1874 and was buried in Mt. Carroll.<sup>60</sup>

Following Mary's death Francis appears to have focused his attention in Iowa. On Nov. 17th 1875 in Grundy County he married Miss Clara Heffelfinger.<sup>61</sup> He also became an active participant in

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<sup>52</sup> Fourth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Oskaloosa College 1866-1867 (Oskaloosa, Iowa: Herald Book and Job Office, 1866), 6.

<sup>53</sup> Carroll County, Illinois, Loose Papers, Box 18, no. 442, appointment of Francis G. Moffett as Deputy Clerk of the County Court, filed Nov. 13, 1866; County Clerk's Office, Mt. Carroll. Also noted as recorded 8 Dec. 1866 in Probate Record "C", p. 263.

<sup>54</sup> Carroll County, Illinois, Loose Papers, Box 18, no. 453, application of F.G. Moffett for License to practice law; order of court for certificate of good moral character, filed 5 August 1870; County Clerk's Office, Mt. Carroll.

<sup>55</sup> Benjamin Strickler household, 1870 U.S. census, Carroll County, Illinois, population schedule, Mt. Carroll, page 165 (stamped), dwelling 105, family 105; National Archives micropublication M593, roll 191, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>56</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>57</sup> Robert M. Finlayson (1844-1935), "Pioneer's Recollections - The Roots of Grundy Center," historical letters, *Grundy Register (Grundy Center, Iowa)*, 7 July, 1977.

<sup>58</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>59</sup> "Former Businessman Buried Here Sunday," obituary, *Grundy County (Iowa) Dispatch*, 10 Aug. 1921.

<sup>60</sup> Oak Hill Cemetery (Mt. Carroll, Carroll County, Illinois), Mary E. Moffett marker.

<sup>61</sup> Grundy County, Iowa, Register of Marriage Licenses 1856-1881: entry 480, F.G. Moffett and Clara L. Heffelfinger, 1875; Clerk of the District Court, Grundy Center.

the young community's growth. He served as the county clerk for 8 years,<sup>62</sup> and along with his younger brother, Thomas, opened a drug store on Main Street in Grundy Center.<sup>63</sup> In June 1875 he was a founding member of Emerald Lodge when it received its charter from the Grand Masonic Lodge of Iowa, and he served as Master of the Lodge in 1881.<sup>64</sup> Proud of his service during the Civil War, Francis was also a charter member of the Grundy Post of the Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>65</sup>

However, as was so typical of frontier life in those days, sadness and failure often appeared hand in hand with happiness and success. Francis and Clara's first born child, a daughter they named Ethel Miles, died in December 1879 at 21 months of age.<sup>66</sup> She most likely died from diphtheria as an epidemic swept through the community during the winter of 1879 to 1880, leaving few families with young children untouched. During this same period Francis and several other business men invested \$42,000 to build a flour mill for the local wheat crop. However just as they finished construction freight rates jumped and the farmers turned to other crops. The mill was dismantled, and Francis lost the bulk of his investment.<sup>67</sup>

Francis bought and sold various parcels of land during his years in Grundy County. One transaction in particular is of interest. In Nov. 1879 Francis purchased the southeast quarter of section number 3 in Palermo Township from his widowed mother-in-law Mary (Miles) Heffelfinger for \$300.<sup>68</sup> Mary had purchased the land for \$800 in June 1867.<sup>69</sup> By the time Francis bought the land in 1879 it was heavily mortgaged. Francis and Clara held the land for only 2 years, and then sold it for \$4,000.<sup>70</sup> One mortgage remained on the property at that time and was assumed by the buyer. I do not know the reason behind the manner in which these transactions took place. Possibly Mary was in danger of losing the land and Francis purchased it at a sizeable discount but assumed responsibility for the mortgages and other expenses. Or perhaps the transaction was related to Francis's losses from the mill investment. Other land transactions involving Francis and members of the Heffelfinger family were recorded over the years; a detailed analysis might shed light on these questions. Since Francis and Clara provided a

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<sup>62</sup> "Former Businessman Buried Here Sunday," *Grundy Center Dispatch*, 10 Aug. 1921.

<sup>63</sup> Finlayson, "Pioneer's Recollections - The Roots of Grundy Center," *Grundy Register*, (July 7, 1977).

<sup>64</sup> Community Improvement Program Committee of the Federated Women's Club of Grundy Center, compilers, *History of Grundy Center and Surrounding Territory* (Grundy Center, Iowa: privately printed, 1967), 16.

<sup>65</sup> "Former Businessman Buried Here Sunday," *Grundy Center Dispatch*, 10 Aug. 1921.

<sup>66</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records.

<sup>67</sup> Finlayson, "Pioneer's Recollections - The Roots of Grundy Center," *Grundy Register*, (July 7, 1977).

<sup>68</sup> Grundy County, Iowa, Deeds 47: 433, Mary Heffelfinger to F.G. Moffett, 3 November 1879, County Recorder's Office, Grundy Center.

<sup>69</sup> Grundy County, Iowa, Deeds M: 42, Sylvia Newhouse to Mary Heffelfinger, 27 May 1867, County Recorder's Office, Grundy Center.

<sup>70</sup> Grundy County, Iowa, Deeds 67: 187, Francis G. Moffett and wife to Clara T. Kerr, 26 May 1881.

home for Mary and 3 of Clara's brothers during this same period,<sup>71</sup> it is likely the land sales were mutually beneficial.

On 30 May 1881 Clara gave birth to a son whom the couple named Robert Hawk Moffett,<sup>72</sup> after Francis's cousin and mentor from Carroll County who had gone on to serve in the United States House of Representatives. Robert's birth was followed 4 years later by the birth of a daughter, Edna Davis Moffett.<sup>73</sup> However, like her older sister, Edna died in early childhood. Her exact date of death remains something of a mystery. Her headstone in the Grundy Center Cemetery simply carries the years 1885-1889, but the stone appears newer than the surrounding markers and may not have been placed at the time of her death.<sup>74</sup> Francis later reported birth and death dates for Edna in his pension application but stated that she died on 6 March 1888.<sup>75</sup> Francis and Clara did not record Edna's death in their family bible.

Whether in response to this second tragedy, or for other reasons, Francis and Clara left Grundy Center in 1891. They settled in Des Moines where Francis was employed as a clerk in the U.S. Pension Agency. Francis, a Republican, served in this capacity from March 1891 to the end of 1894 when he was requested to resign upon the reelection of Grover Cleveland, a Democrat. In 1887, upon the return of a Republican administration, Francis began a letter writing campaign to regain his job at the pension bureau. Various letters written in support of his claim described him as an "old soldier", a man of "excellent character", and as sober and industrious.<sup>76</sup>

While pursuing his efforts to regain his job at the pension agency Francis worked as the deputy auditor for Polk County. He and Clara lived in Des Moines with their son Robert, and also continued to provide a home for Clara's mother.<sup>77</sup> Their address during these years was 710 18th Street.<sup>78</sup> Eventually Francis's persistence paid off and in April 1903 he was reinstated as a clerk in the pension office. In 1909 he earned \$1,200 in that position; by 1912 he was appointed chief clerk.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> F.G. Moffett household, 1880 U.S. census, Grundy County, Iowa, population schedule, Grundy Center, Enumeration District (ED) 235, page 459A (stamped), dwelling 36, family 36; National Archives micropublication T-9, roll 341, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>72</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Fairview Cemetery (Grundy Center, Grundy County, Iowa), Edna Moffett marker, lot 244; personally read 1997.

<sup>75</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>76</sup> Francis G. Moffett, clerk, personnel records (1897-1920); Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions; United States Office of Personnel Management; St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>77</sup> Francis G. Moffett household, 1900 U.S. Census, Polk County, Iowa, population schedule, Des Moines, Enumeration District (ED) 66, sheet 11A (p. 93 stamped), dwelling 194, family 203; National Archives micropublication T623, roll 453, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>78</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., compiler, *Des Moines, Iowa, City Directory 1897*, digital image, *Distant Cousin.com* (<http://distantcousin.com/directories/ia/desmoines/1897/>; accessed Nov. 2007). Francis G. Moffett household, 1900 U.S. Census, Polk Co., IA, pop. sch., ED 66, sheet 11A (p. 93 stamped), dwelling 194, family 203.

<sup>79</sup> Francis G. Moffett, clerk, personnel records (1897-1920); Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions; United States Office of Personnel Management; St. Louis, Missouri.



Besides being employed by the pension agency Francis himself received a federal pension based on his service in the Union Army. The Pension Act of June 27th 1890 broadly increased the circumstances under which a veteran might apply. In fact it may have been the large increase in pension applications that first provided Francis employment with the pension agency in 1891.

Francis applied for a Civil War pension in December 1891 and underwent a physical exam the following February. At 5' 5" tall, Francis weighed almost 200 pounds. His heart was enlarged although the physician noted that this was partly due to the excess adiposity [fat] he carried around his abdomen. The examiner concurred that these problems affected Francis's ability to perform manual labor and he was awarded a partial pension of \$8 per month. By 1900 Francis's weight had increased to 210 and he was suffering from, rheumatism, heart disease, bladder problems and other infirmities. His pension was increased to \$10 per month. Later changes in the pension laws resulted in increases in his monthly payment.<sup>80</sup>

In late 1912 the regional pension agencies were abolished and the office was consolidated in Washington DC. Francis applied for and was granted a position in the new department. A letter in his personnel file indicates that on Feb. 1, 1913, Francis G. Moffett, Chief Clerk in the U.S. Pension Agency at Des Moines, who was at that time paid a salary of \$2,000 per year, was transferred to the Dept. of the Interior Washington D.C. Pension Office as a clerk in the Office of the Disbursing Clerk for the Payment of Pensions.<sup>81</sup>

So, at the age of 68, Francis and Clara packed up their belongings and left Iowa where they had spent their entire married lives. They settled first at 231 B Street, NE and later at 1719 Lincoln Rd. N.E., both in Washington D.C.<sup>82</sup> They lived at the latter address in January 1920 when the federal census was recorded. It indicated that the couple rented rather than owned their home. In addition to Francis (age 75) and Clara (age 69), the household included 6 other unrelated individuals with varying surnames,<sup>83</sup> suggesting Francis and Clara rented rooms to augment their income.

On May 22, 1920 Congress passed a law designating 70 as the mandatory retirement age for government employees. The following month Francis received a letter stating that since he was past retirement age his employment would cease at the end of the day on Aug 20, 1920. Francis requested a 2 year continuation but was denied. The Bureau of Pensions granted him an annuity of \$504 per annum.<sup>84</sup>

Francis and Clara again gathered their belongings, this time boarding a train heading west. Their final destination was the city of Oakland where Robert, their only surviving child, resided with his family. A quiet, reserved man, Robert worked as an assayer at the U.S. Mint in San

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<sup>80</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>81</sup> Francis G. Moffett, clerk, personnel records (1897-1920); Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions; United States Office of Personnel Management; St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Francis G. Moffett, 1930 U.S. census, District of Columbia, population schedule, Washington City, Enumeration District (ED) 215, sheet 7A (p. 74 stamped), dwelling 107, family 133; National Archives micropublication T 626, roll 297, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

<sup>84</sup> Francis G. Moffett, clerk, personnel records (1897-1920); Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions; United States Office of Personnel Management; St. Louis, Missouri.

Francisco. Francis and Clara spent 2 months along the way visiting with old friends and family in Grundy Center and Des Moines before they reached Oakland.<sup>85</sup> There they settled at the Raymond Apartments at 1461 Alice Street.<sup>86</sup>

Whatever the condition of Francis's health when he left Washington DC, he was not a well man by the time he reached California. By early April 1921 he was bedridden, suffering from a large kidney tumor which necessitated frequent blood transfusions due to the resulting anemia.<sup>87</sup> In May 1921 he wrote his will in which he left 1/3 of his personal property to his son Robert with the remainder to be held in trust for the care of his wife Clara.<sup>88</sup>

Francis Garner Moffett died on Monday, August 1st, 1921 at 2026 Berkeley Way in Berkeley, California, where he and Clara had moved just 30 days prior.<sup>89</sup> He had been a resident of California for only 9 months and had enjoyed less than a year of retirement. His body, accompanied by Clara and Robert, was carried on the Great Western train back to Grundy Center for burial. Francis was laid to rest on Sunday, August, 7th, at Grundy Center Cemetery, near the graves of his two young daughters.<sup>90</sup> When Clara died in 1936 she was buried by his side.<sup>91</sup>

Francis's funeral services were held at the First Baptist Church in Grundy Center, where he was eulogized by his son Robert as a man of high ideals who lived a life of service to his fellow man and who held a higher regard for his good name than for personal advancement.<sup>92</sup> Representatives of various organizations paid their respects including the Masons and members of the Grand Army of the Republic. The local newspaper, *The Grundy Republican*, noted that Francis had been influential in the building of the town and community from the time of its incorporation a half century earlier.<sup>93</sup>

Francis Garner Moffett witnessed the movement of American life beyond the confines of a primarily agrarian economy. Although his father, grandfather, great grandfather and great great grandfather had all tilled the soil in pursuit of the American dream, Francis never displayed any interest in that way of life. He was raised to value hard work and education, but put those tools to work in the energizing environment of a small, but growing Midwestern community. He tried his hand at several business endeavors but ultimately forged a life in government service, first as a county clerk and later in the U.S. pension department. Francis left but one child and 2 grandchildren to honor his memory. Beyond calling him a "fine old gentleman" they left no recorded sentiments. It has been left to the next generation to complete the story.

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<sup>85</sup> "Former Businessman Buried Here Sunday," *Grundy Center Dispatch*, 10 Aug. 1921.

<sup>86</sup> Francis G. Moffett, widow Clara Civil War pension file WC906,333, R.G. 15, NA-Washington.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> F. G. Moffett will, Alameda Co. Will Book 1921: entry 30063, Alameda County Clerk's Office, Oakland, California.

<sup>89</sup> Alameda County, California, death certificate 359 (1921), Francis Garner Moffett; Office of the County Recorder, Oakland.

<sup>90</sup> "F.G. Moffett's Services Held Here Last Sunday," *Grundy Republican*, 11 Aug. 1921.

<sup>91</sup> Fairview Cemetery(Grundy Center, Grundy County, Iowa), Clara Moffett marker, lot 244.

<sup>92</sup> "Former Businessman Buried Here Sunday," *Grundy Center Dispatch*, 10 Aug. 1921.

<sup>93</sup> "F.G. Moffett's Services Held Here Last Sunday," *Grundy Republican*, 11 Aug. 1921.

## Children

The children of Francis Garner Moffett and Clara (Heffelfinger) Moffett are as follows:

- i. Ethel Miles Moffett, born 1 March 1878 in Grundy Center, Grundy County, Iowa; died 12 December 1879 in Grundy Center.<sup>94</sup>
- ii. Robert Hawk Moffett, born 30 May 1881 in Grundy Center; died 3 March 1957, Sacramento, California.<sup>95</sup> He married on 12 February 1908, at Oakland, Alameda County, California, Clara Dewitt,<sup>96</sup> daughter of James DeWitt and Clara Kingsbury.<sup>97</sup> She was born in March 1878 in California<sup>98</sup> and died 27 July 1958 in Oakland.<sup>99</sup>
- iii. Edna Davis Moffett, born 21 Feb. 1884 in Grundy Center;<sup>100</sup> died 6 March 1888 or 1889, Grundy Center.<sup>101</sup>

## Addendum:

Although my extended family is fortunate to hold a few items that originally belonged to Francis and Clara (most specifically his regimental history and Clara's family Bible) we do not have in our possession any family photographs. I searched newspapers, Masonic records, school records, etc., hoping to find a face to add to my research. The best I could find was a grainy image from an old newspaper.

Then in May 2000 I received email notice of a Rootsweb message posted by a researcher looking for information on Abraham Moffett. The researcher's husband was descended from a young girl adopted by Abraham and his second wife around 1867. Although I knew of her, I had not researched her in the manner in which I had researched the rest of Francis's siblings.

After several days of correspondence with the researcher, who lived in Oklahoma, I received an email from her with a subject line that read: "!!!!!!" She had just visited her husband's

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<sup>94</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records.

<sup>95</sup> California State Board of Health, death certificate 59-022617 (1959), Robert H. Moffett; Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Sacramento.

<sup>96</sup> Alameda County, California, marriage certificate (certified copy provided by county recorder, license number not visible), (1908), Moffett-DeWitt, Alameda County Recorder's Office, Oakland.

<sup>97</sup> Alameda County, California, death certificate 6015-4042 (1958), Clara DeWitt Moffett; Office of the County Recorder, Oakland.

<sup>98</sup> Ralph Hoag household, 1900 U.S. census, Salt Lake County, Utah, population schedule, Salt Lake City, Enumeration District (ED) 44, sheet 5B, dwelling 102, family 109; National Archives micropublication T623, roll 1684, viewed online at Ancestry.com.

During her married lifetime Clara reported her date of birth as 6 March 1880. Her sons provided this date for her death certificate and engraved it on her headstone. However, Clara was enumerated in her parent's household as a 2 year old child in 1880. The 1900 census recorded her age as 22 and her date of birth as March 1878. A few years later she met and married Robert H. Moffett who was born in 1881. Clara "adjusted" her age and date of birth from that time forward.

<sup>99</sup> Alameda County, California, death certificate 6015-4042 (1958), Clara DeWitt Moffett.

<sup>100</sup> Clara Louisa Moffett Family Bible Records.

<sup>101</sup> See body of text for discussion of Edna's year of death.

grandmother who had retrieved an old tin marked "Moffett". Tucked inside were many old photographs, most of which were not labeled.



Abraham, Robert H. and Francis G. Moffett

However, to my delight, one photo, undated but taken in Des Moines, featured a group portrait of Abraham Moffett, Francis Moffett, and Francis's son Robert, with each family member labeled. It appears to date from about 1891. I can now put not only Francis's face to his story but to my great delight the face of his father as well. My family remains deeply indebted to Misty Morse and her family, most especially to her husband's grandmother, Irene Morse.