

James B. Bird was brother to Elijah W. Bird. See Elijah's biographical sketch for detailed information on family background. His sketch will begin with 1850 when he was about fourteen years old.

You probably have heard the expression, "a rolling stone gathers no moss". That saying pretty much described the life of James B. Bird. He kept moving from place to place doing this and that his whole life. He never stayed in one location very long. I think he may have had the same bug as Daniel Boone; always wanting to see what was over the next hill.

As far as could be determined for sure, James B. Bird was born in Michigan; maybe Plainfield or maybe Redland. The year was also in some doubt: somewhere between 1835 and 1837, so about 1836 settled upon, plus or minus one year. It was clear who his parents were. Like Elijah, they were not contested. His father was Canfield Bird (1803-1870) and his mother was Elizabeth Washburn (1807-1881). <sup>[1]</sup> In 1850, James, his mother and father, who were then in their early to late forties, respectively, and all six of his brothers and sisters lived in New Haven, Vermont. Canfield was a native Vermont farmer. Elizabeth, James' mother, was from New Hampshire. <sup>[2]</sup> Siblings Julia, Amos and Ellen were all born in Vermont. James, as we said, was born in Michigan after his parents were advised to "go west" by someone. After returning from their expedition to the mid-west of America, they migrated back to New Haven where the family was rounded out by the addition of Elijah, Emma and Mary. <sup>[3]</sup> James was a teenage farm boy in 1850, but by the end of the decade, he would be a husband.

His future bride was Sarah E. Hinman. She was eighteen and living in Champlain, New York in 1850 with strangers named Melancton and Maria Burdick. Melancton was a laborer there. It was possible that Maria was Sarah's sister or some other female relative, but no verification of that was found. Somehow, she and James got together even though Lake Champlain lay between them. Sarah had been born in New York state about 1832. Her biological father was Alvah Hinman and her mother was Mary. When she married James, the ceremony was held in Vergennes since, by then, she was a resident of New

Haven. They were married on October 18, 1859 by the Reverend H.F. Leavitt. The bride was twenty-seven and the groom was about twenty-three. <sup>[5]</sup>

Two years later, in April, the long time boiling pot of secessionism finally burst over the rim on containment and America's Civil War had begun. Just like his younger brother, Elijah, would do, James forsook his new wife to become an active participant in the fracas. It seemed that the Selectmen of New Haven also may have assisted James in his volunteering effort. In 1860, after marrying in Vergennes, the newlyweds had returned to Champlain, New York to live. They stayed at the home of Daniel Moore and his wife, Elizabeth. He was an eighty-three year old farmer and she was a seventy-eight year old housewife. They did have a hired man working for them. His name was William Hinman, Sarah's brother. Daniel had a son, Nelson, twenty-two, who also worked his father's farm. James, too, was listed as a farmer on the census, so there was plenty of manpower to operate the farm in Champlain. And it needed five grown men to run Daniel's enterprise. It was no small operation. The value of the farm was placed at \$6,00.00 in 1860 (about \$105,660.00 today). Daniel's personal property amounted to another \$2,00.00. Nelson, Daniel's son, was off to a good financial start of his own. His net worth was estimated to be \$1,000.00. <sup>[6]</sup> Perhaps all this financial prosperity also had something to do with James' motivation to take up the sword.

Regardless of whether he was pushed or pulled into enlisting, he took the leap on August 2, 1862 in New Haven, Vermont. The twenty-five year old, six feet one and one quarter inch farmer from Michigan joined the Fifth Vermont Infantry. The fair faced recruit with dark eyes and black hair was mustered-in as a member of Company F, Fifth Vermont on September 15, 1862 at Burlington with the rest of the volunteers by a Major Austin. When he was enrolled in August, he received his \$25 bounty installment, a \$4 premium and a new suit of clothes the same color and cut as all the other three years men. <sup>[7]</sup>

The Fifth was organized in St. Albans, Vermont. Its companies were raised in various towns throughout the State. Company B, for example, was comprised of only men from Middlebury; Company E was from Manchester; Company H, from Brandon; Company F,

from Cornwall; and so on. The Regiment was mustered-in on September 16, 1861 at St. Albans. It was immediately sent to Washington, D.C. and joined the other Vermont troops already at Camp Advance (Griffin) near the Chain Bridge in Virginia where it was assigned to the Vermont Brigade with which it served during the rest of the war. Throughout the fall of 1861, and the first few months of 1862, it was on duty in the defenses surrounding Washington.

March 10, 1862 the Fifth moved to Alexandria, Virginia. Two weeks later, the Regiment boarded transport ships for the Virginia Peninsula landing at Fort Monroe and moving to New Port News on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of March, 1862. By April 16, 1862, the Regiment was at Lee's Mills with the Vermont Brigade. On June 29, the Fifth brought four hundred men to the action at Savage's Station. In one half hour of fighting, it lost one hundred eighty-eight of them on the field. Company E of Manchester suffered the heaviest losses of any company from Vermont. Company E went into the engagement with fifty-nine muskets. In that one half hour of fierce conflict, it lost forty-four of the fifty-nine; twenty-five were killed and nineteen were wounded. Five Cummings brothers and one cousin from the company were among those killed or wounded. Only one of the six recovered from his wounds. The Regiment as a whole suffered the heaviest loss in killed and wounded at the Battle of Savage's Station, Virginia on June 29, 1862 of any Union regiment in a single action of the entire war. In the following few days, the Fifth along with the rest of the Vermont Brigade, went on to be involved in more fighting at White Oak Swamp and Malvern Hill as the Federals retreated from General Lee towards Harrison's Landing.

On August 16 - 24, 1862, the Regiment returned to Fort Monroe and reached the Bull Run battlefield by August 30, just missing the fighting there. During the Maryland Campaign of 1862, the Fifth took part in Crampton's Gap (South Mountain) and Antietam. It ended 1862 engaged in the Battle of Fredericksburg. In January (23-24) of 1863, it joined Burnside's "Mud March" on its way to Marye's Heights and Salem Church. It celebrated the Fourth of July at Gettysburg. The Fifth took a break August 14 through September 16, 1863 and relaxed in New York during the draft riots there. The Regiment

rejoined the Army of the Potomac at Culpeper Court House in Virginia on September 23. It went into winter quarters at Brandy Station where the veterans of the Regiment re-enlisted on December 15, 1863 and was the first Regiment granted a veteran's furlough for a month's duration.

On its return from furlough in Vermont, the Fifth continued as a veteran organization and participated in the bloody month with the Army of the Potomac from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor, and took an active part in the siege of Petersburg. The Regiment began the campaign with five hundred men. In one month, it lost three hundred forty-nine killed, wounded and missing, including thirteen officers. September 15, 1864, the term of service for original members who had not re-enlisted expired. They were mustered-out leaving present for duty one assistant surgeon, a quartermaster, three first lieutenants and three hundred enlisted personnel. After the October 19 Battle of Cedar Creek, the Fifth moved to the Siege of Petersburg again and went into winter camp at Squirrel Level Road in December, 1864.

When Petersburg finally fell in April of 1865, the Fifth Vermont was the first Regiment to plant its colors on the Confederate defensive works. The unit was present at Appomattox Court House for the surrender of Robert E. Lee and his army. June 8, 1865 the Fifth marched in the Corps Review held at Washington, D.C. On June 29, the veterans were mustered-out. At its discharge, there were only twenty-four officers and two hundred eighty-eight men on its rolls - three hundred twelve total out of an original strength of 1,618 . For the last ten months of its service, the highest ranking officer in the Fifth present for duty was a captain; for more than three months of those last ten, the highest ranking officer present for duty was a lieutenant. Every officer present for the Grand Review went out as a private. <sup>[8]</sup>

James joined the Regiment October 25, 1862 as a recruit. <sup>[9]</sup> He had spent almost the whole month of October hanging out in Hagerstown, Pennsylvania. <sup>[10]</sup> From November, 1862 to June, 1863, it was the Fifth Vermont's business as usual that occupied Private Bird's time. Unlike his younger brother, Elijah, Private James did not apparently enjoy

the pleasure of his superior officers as much. He was not promoted to any higher rank. Even though Private Bird of the Fifth Vermont got passed over for promotion, he did get passed around. July 18, he became sick and was admitted to the Division No 1 USA General Hospital in Annapolis, Maryland on July 20, 1863. Private Bird only spent ten days at Annapolis before he was transferred to Brattleboro, Vermont for further treatment on July 30, 1863. <sup>[11]</sup>He was still sick at the Governor Smith Hospital in Brattleboro from August through November of 1863. <sup>[12]</sup>He was apparently well enough, but not fully recovered. He was sent to a convalescent camp in Virginia sometime between November, 1863 and February, 1864. <sup>[13]</sup>On February 15, 1864, Private Bird was transferred to the Invalid Corps. At his transfer, he suffered a slight financial loss. He owed the Government for lost ordinance and equipment (\$2.86 & \$2.75 = \$5.61). <sup>[14]</sup>He was assigned to Company A, 24th Veteran Reserve Corp. to serve out his term of service. <sup>[15]</sup>A few months later, June 29, 1865, Private Bird was discharged from the United States Armed Forces and sent back to the civilian world from which he had come. <sup>[16]</sup>

Details about his life between 1865 and 1880 were sketchy. Only tid-bits of mostly unverified information could be found. Some sources (mostly Ancestry.com Family Trees) claimed that James had a daughter, Lizzie M., born in 1862 in New York state. That was the year he enlisted in the Army. No birth records confirming that claim were located. The same source said that there was a son born in Michigan to James and Sarah in 1864. His name was William A. James was in the Invalid Corp serving out his term of service at that time. The last known residence of James and Sarah was in Champlain, New York in 1860. A third child, another daughter named Emma B., was born in 1866 in Vermont. That was possible since James had been discharged in June of 1865 and might have gone back to Vermont by then to live. <sup>[17]</sup>But the next time James surfaced for sure in the public records was in the 1880 Federal Census.

When it was taken, it placed him, Sarah, Lizzie, Emma and William in Mishawaka, Indiana. James was forty-three and Sarah was forty-eight. The children ranged in age from eighteen to fourteen, all at two year intervals. Their ages and the intervals between them matched the dates given in the family trees from Ancestry. Why he was in Indiana

only James knew. He had a furniture shop there. Living in the household was a forty-five year old apprentice from Connecticut named Ferdinand Pettis. <sup>[18]</sup>While still living in Indiana, Sarah died. She passed away from unknown causes on July 29, 1888 in Mishawaka. She was buried in that city's cemetery. <sup>[19]</sup>

Since the 1890 U.S. Federal Census was mostly destroyed by a fire, there was no information on James and his family that survived. Fortunately, however, the Federal Government conducted a special survey in that census year for veterans of America's wars including the Civil War. James showed up on that schedule for 1890. He was living in Hinesburg, Vermont then. He had served as a private in Company F of the Fifth Vermont from August, 1862 to June, 1865, a period of two years and ten months. He had a disability listed as "...chronic diarrhea and piles". <sup>[20]</sup>Just prior to the Veterans Schedules being done, James married for the second time. His new wife was Josephine Degree Parent of New Haven. She was fifty-two and James was sixty-four (or so). They were married on February 22, 1890 in Hinesburg. It was the second marriage for both of them. Josephine's father was Joseph Degree and her mother was Isabelle. Reverend W.B. Hague performed the ceremony. Josephine's first husband was Frank Parent, a farmer in New Haven in 1880. He was a native of Canada. He and Josephine had a daughter, Mabel, born about 1872. She died December 27, 1881 and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven. Her father, Frank Parent, joined her there in 1888. <sup>[21]</sup>Mabel may have had a brother, J.C. Freeman (1856-1862), but that remained unconfirmed. James and Josephine lost their respective spouses in the same year (1888). And since they lived in Addison County town's that were near each other, it was not surprising that they met and finally wedded.

Although their marriage took place in New Haven, the town of residence for the bride at the time, they did not continue their married lives in that community. When the 1900 Federal Census was done, they both were living in Hinesburg where James painted houses for a living. He and Josephine rented a house there. <sup>[22]</sup>During their marriage, James and Josephine did not have children.

Throughout the next ten years, James and his wife worked hard to improve their finances so they could buy a home in Hinesburg. By the 1910 Federal Census, James had paid off any mortgage on their home if he had ever had one. He owned his home in 1910. James was retired, living off his government pension he received from his military service. <sup>[23]</sup>He had applied for and was granted an invalid pension (because of his chronic diarrhea and piles) back in August of 1888 - one month after Sarah had died. <sup>[24]</sup>Whenever he was allowed by law, James applied for an increase in his benefits. The last request was on March 3, 1909. His monthly payment was increased from \$17 per month to \$30 per month due to a Special Act passed by Congress. <sup>[25]</sup>James designated Josephine as his beneficiary for his pension benefits. When he died on November 24, 1910, three months short of his seventy-fourth birthday, of "septicemia, pulmonary tuberculosis and cancer of the rectum" in Hinesburg, she became eligible for widow's benefits. <sup>[26]</sup>She formally applied for the pension on December 27, 1910. <sup>[27]</sup>Josephine did not collect her benefits for very long. She remained living in Hinesburg after James' death until her own time came on June 2, 1912. <sup>[28]</sup>She was interred in Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven along with her two husbands.

## NOTES

1. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), Memorial #40786878; [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Vermont, p. 3, image 311469025; [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908, Marriage for James B. Bird; *Ibid.*, Marker and Grandma Ida's Family Tree for James Booth Bird.
2. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), 1850 U.S. Federal Census for Elijah Bird.
3. *Ibid.*, Yahrmarkt Family Tree for Canfield Bird.
4. *Ibid.*, 1850 U.S. Federal Census for Sarah Hinman.
5. *Ibid.*, Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908, Marriage for Hinman, Sarah E.
6. *Ibid.*, 1860 U.S. Federal Census for James Bird.
7. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Vermont, pp. 3-4, images 311469025 and ...026. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Records.
8. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), U.S., American Civil War Regiments, 1861-1866; Vermont in the Civil War/Units/1st Brigade/Fifth Vermont Infantry; [http://civilwarintheeast.com/us\\_regiments\\_batteries\\_vermont/5th\\_vermont](http://civilwarintheeast.com/us_regiments_batteries_vermont/5th_vermont).
9. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Compiled Service Records, p. 5, image 311469027.
10. *Ibid.*, Compiled Service Records, p. 17, image 311469039.
11. *Ibid.*, Compiled Service Records, p. 11, image 311469033.

12. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 17, image 311469039.
13. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 15, image 311469037.
14. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 16, image 311469038.
15. [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), General Index: Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Bird, James B.
16. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Compiled Service Records, p. 18, image 311469040.
17. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), Marker and Grandma Ida's Family Tree for James Booth Bird.
18. Ibid., 1880 U.S. Federal Census for James B. Bird.
19. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), Memorial #99209563; [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), Indiana, WPA Death Index, 1882-1920 for Sarah E. Bird.
20. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), 1890 Veterans Schedules for James B. Bird.
21. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), Memorial #94855273 for Josephine L. Degree Parent; [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908, Marriage for Parent, Josephine (Degree); Ibid., 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Josephine Parent.
22. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), 1900 U.S. Federal Census for James B. Bird.
23. Ibid., 1910 U.S. Federal Census for James B. Bird.
24. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Pension Files, image 19656250.
25. [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), Pension Files, film #004691553 "Army Invalid".
26. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), Vermont, Vital Records, 1909-2008, Death for James Booth Bird.
27. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Pension Files, image 19656250.
28. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), Memorial #94855273 for Josephine L. Degree Parent.