

Richard F. Wagner (1857 – 16 Apr 1940)

Wagner, Richard F. On Tuesday, April 16, 1940 at his residence, 5104 Fulton st. nw., Richard F. Wagner, beloved husband of the late Emma M. Wagner (nee Frengs), father of Mrs. Leona W Utz, Mrs. Marge M. Darne, Miss Crystal V. Wagner, Mrs. Olga S. Havell, John Wagner and Thomas F. Wagner. Remains resting at the Lee funeral home, 4th st. and Mass. Ave. n.e., where services will be held on Friday, April 19 at 2 p.m. Relatives and friends invited. Interment Congressional Cemetery.

The Evening Star, April 18, 1940, p. A12

R.F. Wagner, Member of Union Army at 8, Dies at Age of 83 Served With Grant As Bandsman in Richmond Campaign

Richard F. Wagner, who, at the age of 8, was enlisted in the Union Army for Civil War duty, died Tuesday at his home, 5104 Fulton street N.W., at the age of 83.

According to his family, Mr. Wagner was with Gen. Grant's army at Richmond as a bandsman who could blow a cornet better than many a grown man. He had falsified his age for enlistment, they said. In the possession of a daughter, Miss Crystal V. Wagner 225 Thirty-fourth street NE., is a gold-plated sword, presented to her father by Gen Grant's color bearer.

The lad's father was John Wagner, band leader, who is said to hve composed and conducted the funeral marc played at Abraham Lincoln's funeral. Richard Wagner was there too, playing his cornet.

After his war service in the South, the boy fought against Sioux warriors in the Dakotas, the family recalled.

In later life Mr. Wagner played in many of the older musical organizations, including the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He was violinist in a number of theaters here.

Mr. Wagner had been ill more than a year. Surviving are two sons, John and Thomas F. Warner; four daughters, Miss Wagner, Mrs. Leona Utz, Mrs. Olga S. Havell and Mrs. Marge M. Darne; 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m., tomorrow in Lee's funeral home, with burial following in Congressional Cemetery.

The Washington Post, April 18, 1940, p. 7

R.F. Wagner, Who Fought In Civil War at 8, Dies at 83 Union Veteran Later Fought Indians In Dakota Campaign

Richard F. Wagner, at 8 a Union bandsman with Grant at Richmond, and at 11 an Indian fighter in the Dakota Territories, died Tuesday at his home 5104 Fulton street northwest, at the age of 83.

The son of John Wagner, musician who organized bands for the Northern forces, Wagner stated his age as 12, minimum for enlistment, to go with the Union band to the Confederate capital, according to his son, John Wagner, of McLean, Va.

Sword Is War Memento

A gold-plated sword later present him by Gen. Grant's color bearer, is a memento of his service in the Union forces. The sword is now in possession of a daughter, Miss Crystal V. Wagner, of 225 Thirty-fourth street northeast.

Three years after Appomattox, Wagner was again in the service of his country, both as bandsman and active in combat duty against Indians at Fort Rice, in the Dakota Territories.

Yellowed discharge papers under the seal of the United States, bear this evidence: "Richard Wagner . . . A private of the band company of the Seventeenth Regiment of Infantry who was enlisted the Sixteenth Day of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty eight . . . To serve three years is hereby discharged."

The paper, dated January 16, 1871, and signed Col. T.L. Crittenden, U.S.A., describes him as "4 feet 5 inches high," and gives his age as 15 (His age actually wa 14 at this time according to the family).

Served 21 Years More

Other discharge papers reveal that he immediately reenlisted with the Dakota troop, but was discharged 21 months later "in consequence of a special order 258."

This discharge was arranged with expiration of the enlistment of his father, John Wagner, band leader, who was with his son at Fort Rice. The father was reluctant to return to Washington without his son, relatives recalled last night.

One of his daughters, Mrs. Leona Utz, with whom he lived at the Fulton street address, told of a stirring bit of action in which Wagner was involved.

When the fort was attacked by Sioux warriors, and the infantry hard pressed in its defense, young Wagner, now a corporal, manned a Gatling gun to help repulse the Indians.

Prior to his enlistment with the Western troops. Wagner took part in another historic event. Still with the Civil War band at Lincoln's assassination, he played in the funeral cortege. It was his father who led the band and wrote the funeral march.

In relating this, the leader's grandson, John Wagner, declared he had talked with Robert Todd Lincoln, the martyred President's eldest son, before the latter's death in 1926. Robert Lincoln then expressed the wish to talk with Richard Wagner but the meeting was never arranged.

Returning here from his Dakota service, Wagner continued his interrupted schooling. Later organizing his own orchestra he played in several Washington and Baltimore theaters.

Wagner's death came after a year's illness. Asthma that he contracted in the Indian campaigns contributed to his failing health.

Surviving, besides Mrs. Utz, Miss Wagner and John Wagner, are a son, Thomas F. Wagner, and two daughters, Mrs. Olga S. Havell and Mrs. Marge M. Darne. There are 11 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were yesterday at Lee's funeral home. Burial was in Congressional Cemetery.