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The Guardian

Irene Triplett, last person to collect an American civil war pension, dies at 90



Martin Pengelly in New York

June 7, 2020 · 4 min read



Photograph: Alexander Gardner/Getty Images

The last person to receive a US government pension from the American civil war has died.

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Irene Triplett was 90 when she died last Sunday in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. Her father, Mose Triplett, fought for the [Confederacy](#) and the Union in the civil war, which began in 1861 and ended

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The Wall Street Journal, which spoke to Irene Triplett for [a story](#) in 2014, [reported](#) that she died “from complications following surgery for injuries from a fall, according to the nursing home where she lived”.

Dennis St Andrew, a commander of the [North Carolina Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War](#), told the Journal Triplett was “a part of history”.

“You’re talking to somebody whose father was in the civil war,” he said. “Which is mind-bending.”

But to Stephanie McCurry, [a historian of the civil war and Reconstruction era](#) at Columbia University in New York, Triplett’s death acquired a deeper resonance by occurring in the midst of national civil unrest over the killing by Minneapolis police of George Floyd, an African American man.

“Just like the Confederate monuments issue, which is blowing up right now, I think this is a reminder of the long reach of slavery, secession and the civil war,” [she told the Washington Post](#). “It reminds you of the battle over slavery and its legitimacy in the United States.”

Each month, Triplett collected \$73.13 from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (DVA), a total of \$877.56 a year. Her father earned the sum by defecting north in 1863 after missing the battle of Gettysburg, the turning point of the war.

“Pvt Triplett enlisted in the 53rd North Carolina Infantry Regiment in May 1862,” the Journal reported, citing Confederate records which showed he was then 16.

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A deserter, Triplett “made his way to Tennessee and, in 1864, enlisted in ... the 3rd North Carolina Mounted Infantry”, Kirk’s Raiders, which “carried out a campaign of sabotage against Confederate targets”.

Mose Triplett was unsurprisingly not popular in post-war North Carolina but eventually, in 1924, still childless, he married a second time. He was nearly 80. His new wife, Elida Hall, was 34. As the Journal put it, “such an age difference wasn’t rare, especially during the Great Depression when civil war veterans found themselves with both a pension and a growing need for care.”

Triplett and Hall [had five children](#) but only two survived: Irene, who like her mother suffered from mental disabilities, and Everette, a son born when Mose Triplett was 87. As the Journal wrote in 2014, “Irene and Everette Triplett were born in tough country during tough times. The forested hills ran with white lightning from illegal stills. Ms Triplett said she didn’t drink moonshine, but she got hooked on tobacco in first grade.”

“I dipped snuff in school, and I chewed tobacco in school,” Triplett said then. “I raised homemade tobacco. I chewed that, too. I chewed it all.”

In 1938, aged 92, Mose Triplett attended [a reunion at Gettysburg](#). In his [remarks](#), President Franklin Delano Roosevelt referred to the Gettysburg Address, delivered in November 1863: “Lincoln spoke in solace for all who fought upon this field; and the years have laid their balm upon their wounds. Men who wore the blue and men who wore the gray are here together, a fragment spared by time.”

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Housed in the Confederate camp, Triplett reportedly kept quiet about the double service that placed him in rarefied company. The [Victorian journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley](#), for example, also fought for both sides.

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Triplett died shortly afterwards. His gravestone, in Wilkes county, says only: “He was a civil war soldier.”

In 1943, Irene and her mother moved to the Wilkes county poor house. In 1960, they moved to a care home. Elida Hall died in 1967. Everette Triplett died in 1996. Irene lived on, her care paid for by Medicaid and the civil war pension.

The Journal reported that though Irene “saw little of her relatives ... a pair of civil war buffs visited and sent her money to spend on Dr Pepper and chewing tobacco”.

Jamie Phillips, the home’s activities director, [told the Post](#) Triplett liked gospel music, cream cheese cheeseballs and laughing.

“A lot of people were interested in her story,” Phillips said, “but she’d always deflect the conversation to something different going on in the news.”

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E! News

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The Daily Beast

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Michael M Santiago/GettyImagesProsecutors have discovered a tranche of evidence in the basement of a co-conspirator in the Trump Organization tax fraud case, a...

4h ago



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The FBI searched the home of Brian Laundrie's parents as authorities declared the house a crime

The FBI executed a search warrant at the home in North Port, Florida, as part of the ongoing investigation into Gabby Petito's disappearance.

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Yahoo Canada Style

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Washington Examiner

'That's a dude': MMA star 'Suga' blasts transgender fighter

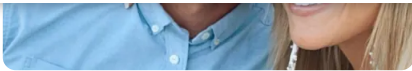
Mixed martial arts rising star "Suga" Sean O'Malley commented critically on transgender fighter Alana McLaughlin's victories over female fighters.

21h ago

Town & Country

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Body thought to be Gabby Petito's was found near where a family of YouTubers tipped off authorities

YouTubers Red White & Bethune noticed a van that looked like Gabby Petito's when in in Grand Teton National Park in August.

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Fort Worth Star-Telegram

The stars came out for Dallas Cowboys win over Chargers, some in Jerry Jones' suite

Charlotte Jones Anderson posted a celebratory selfie on social media featuring Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and two famous fans.

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Kansas City Star

'Dead man's fingers' found clutching fallen log in Ohio forest — but don't call 911

"Glad I didn't find them, I would have called the crime scene investigation."

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INSIDER

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"Thanks for airing my dirty laundry," Kyra Sedgwick said in response to her husband's playful Instagram photo

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INSIDER

A Texas restaurant owner threw out a family wearing masks who were trying to protect their

A masked family at a restaurant was told "this is political and I need you to take your mask off" by their waitress at the behest of a bar owner.

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