

From Slave to Soldier to the Last Man Standing: The Life of Wesley Broadway

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Wesley Broadway, also known as William Wesley Broadway, was born in the mid to late 1840s as a slave. However, by the time of his death in 1931, Broadway had become a free man known for his contributions to the United States as a veteran of the Civil War. Though he left little behind to explain himself and what he did, his accomplishments and experiences can shed light on who the man was. Broadway led an eventful life; not all of his experiences were unique, but they did not have to be. His story reveals interesting transformations: a slave becoming a soldier, a black veteran becoming an active community member in postwar life, and, his ultimate change, going from being regarded as nothing more than a piece of property to being the respected last of his kind, all in one narrative.

Broadway was born a slave in Queen Anne's County, Maryland, around the year 1847, in the area of the county known as Spaniard Neck. His owner was a man named William Emory, who owned several other slaves as well.¹ Upon William Emory's death in 1860, Broadway was inherited by Stewart R. Emory, his son.² Throughout his life, Broadway makes no mention of his parents, and it is possible that they died when he was very young or that he never knew them. He worked as a farmer for the Emory family, remaining a slave until he joined the United States Army in 1863. As was common practice, Emory was compensated \$100 for Broadway, which he received after his service had ended in 1867.³

¹ COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY (Bounty Rolls) Slaves and owners, by USCT Regiment, MSA S629-1, MdHR 3814, 15; SPECIAL COLLECTIONS (U.S. Colored Troops Pension File Collection) Wesley Broadway, MSA 4126, 21.

² Family Tree of the Emory Family, Prof. Goodheart's document.

³ "Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served With the United States Colored Troops, 2nd through 7th Colored Infantry," NARA M1820, from fold3.com, 3, 4; *Eleventh Census of the United States: Special Schedule. Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows, etc.*, Chestertown, Kent, Maryland, 1890, by W. Thomas Gosler, from ancestry.com, 2; COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY (Bounty Rolls) Roll of the 7th Regiment United States Slave Colored Troops, MSA 4438-0325, 148.

The military career of Wesley Broadway was an eventful one. He enlisted in the Seventh United States Colored Troops (USCT) on September 26, 1863, the first day of its existence. A member of the regiment's A Company, he was uniformed by October 8 of the same year and armed ten days later. It is possible that he was recruited for service, an activity he soon participated in. He did not enlist alone; another of Emory's slaves, a man named William Moody, enlisted the same day and into the same company as Broadway.⁴ The members of the Seventh spent their first few months drilling daily, spending over four hours on drills each day.⁵ Colonel William Birney, the man in charge of Maryland recruitment at the time, was sending men out in the western portion of the state to gather slaves away from their owners and to the Union cause. Broadway became one of these men, and he first traveled to St. Mary's County to aid in the recruitment of slaves. He was stationed there until the end of October.⁶

After his stay in St. Mary's, Broadway was sent as a guard to Benedict, Maryland the following January. While there, Companies A, B, C, and D worked to build what would become Birney's recruiting headquarters, later named Camp Stanton.⁷ The need for guards was due to the large amount of opposition to the work of Birney and the recruiters, for many slave-owners in the area were not very willing to let the men they owned go. A recruiting officer was murdered by one such owner and his son, the Sathertons, when he attempted to recruit their slaves; the two fled to Richmond and eventually returned for trial, but were acquitted due to

⁴ COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY (Bounty Rolls), 1864-1868, "Roll of the 7th Reg. Colored Troops, Slave," Comptroller's Index to MSA S629-1, 156.

⁵ Joseph Mark Califf, *Record of the Services of the Seventh Regiment, U. S. Colored Troops* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, 1971), 7.

⁶ *Eleventh Census*, 2; "Compiled Military Service Records," 4.

⁷ Califf, *Record*, 15; "U.S., Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1861-1865: 7th USCT," recorded by R.N. Bayles, from ancestry.com, 220; "Slave Enlistments in Maryland: Letter from Gen. Birney," in the *Annapolis Gazette*, Annapolis, MD, January 28, 1864, 2; "Legislative," in the *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, January 16, 1864, 2.

lack of witnesses.⁸ With such high tension existing in the state over the subject, guards were more of a necessity than a precaution.

The time spent at Benedict was unpleasant for additional reasons than just the resentment from the slave-owners. Disease permeated the camp for the winter that the regiment spent there, with measles affecting the most of the men.⁹ Living conditions and geography were also less than ideal. There was a tragedy that likely affected Broadway; William Moody, the fellow slave of Emory's that he had enlisted with, died in the camp in January.¹⁰ There were some bright moments, however; the regiment received their first payment on January 16, 1864, with each man earning seven dollars.¹¹ While this was the many of the men's first-ever paycheck, it may not have been what they were expecting, for this rate of pay was considerably less than what white soldiers were given at \$10 a month. Also during this time a majority of the men in the regiment learned to read and write, due in large part to the work of Col. Shaw, who was put in charge of the regiment the previous November, for he distributed school books throughout their ranks.¹² Broadway apparently did not take advantage of this opportunity, for he remained illiterate until his death.

The regiment left Benedict in March, leaving the camp burning behind them.¹³ Their next stop was Jacksonville, Florida, which they reached after a brief stop in South Carolina.

⁸ Different spellings of the name are given in each source; "Murder of a Lieutenant by a Slaveholder," in the *Cleveland Morning Leader*, Cleveland, October 22, 1863, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035143/1863-10-22/ed-1/seq-3/>, 3; Califf, *Records*, 11-12.

⁹ Califf, *Records*, 19-20.

¹⁰ "Seventh Regiment Infantry, U. S. C. T., MD. VOL.—Company A. 161" from *Archives of Maryland Online*, the *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-6, Volume 2*, aomol.net/0000001/000366/html/am266-161.html, vol 366 page 161.

¹¹ Califf, *Records*, 20.

¹² Califf, *Records*, 16, 18-19.

¹³ Califf, *Records*, 20.

Conditions in Jacksonville camp were less than ideal, and Broadway would later list them and the poor quality of the food and water he received while there as causes of his dyspepsia.¹⁴ The environment at the camp must have been an interesting one, for there were multiple colored and white regiments stationed there at the same time.¹⁵ Broadway and the rest of the Seventh USCT impressed their commanding officers on multiple occasions while in Florida. In building the camp, the men felled and cleared large trees with a swiftness such as they had never seen before. On a day in April, Col. Shaw was impressed to report that he had no stragglers after taking men on a twenty-mile march.¹⁶

Private Broadway was likely to have seen his first instances of combat while in the Jacksonville area; the events were merely skirmishes, but they were certain to have left an impact on the young soldier. One such incident occurred in late May, where the members of the Seventh fought against Confederates over a railway station and later a bridge to the camp. The evening after this skirmish, each soldier in the regiment was given the only ration of whiskey they would receive during their service.¹⁷

Before leaving Jacksonville, the regiment was inspected by Col. Morgan, Inspector-General of the Department of the South. He was very impressed by the regiment, and another man, General Gordon, stated that they were the best of the colored regiments in the Union Army. With these good reports on their records, the men left Jacksonville and headed to Hilton Head, South Carolina, though a good number were too sick to make the trip right away.¹⁸

¹⁴ MSA 4126, 22.

¹⁵ Califf, *Records*, 23.

¹⁶ Califf, *Records*, 23-24.

¹⁷ Califf, *Records*, 26.

¹⁸ Califf, *Records*, 28.

Though his experience had not been encouraging to this point, Broadway and the Seventh would soon see their most influential action in the war.

Arriving in South Carolina in late June of 1864, Broadway and the other men were quickly involved in skirmishes and expeditions. Their first true battle experience came on July 8 after arriving at Johns Island. After marching to the position of the Ninth USCT and making camp, their position was attacked by Confederates. "It was a position to have tried veterans," Observed Joseph Mark Califf, a lieutenant in the regiment, "but our men, for the first time under the fire of a line of battle, moved steadily forward. . . in perfect order and without firing a shot until the order was given."¹⁹ The rest of July was uneventful for Broadway's regiment, and they eventually sailed to Fortress Monroe in Virginia.

The Seventh USCT saw some significant action while stationed in Virginia during the late summer of 1864. On the 16 of August, the regiment became involved in the Second Battle of Deep Bottom Creek, where the black troops were reported to have performed very bravely.²⁰ In the battle, the Union forces successfully captured the Confederate line but were forced to give it back after their opponent received reinforcements and repositioned.²¹ Broadway was one of the eight to ten wounded men from the regiment, for he was shot through his right thigh during the events.²² It is possible that he was shot during a charge on the enemy that the regiment carried out, but there is also another possibility; due to some confusion, a white

¹⁹ Califf, *Records*, 30.

²⁰ "Second Dispatch," in the *Cleveland Morning Leader*, (Cleveland, Ohio), August 18, 1864, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035143/1864-08-18/ed-1/seq-1/#date1=1864&index=0&rows=20&words=Bottom+Deep&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1864&proxtext=%22Deep+Bottom%22&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1, 1>.

²¹ Califf, *Records*, 36; "Second Dispatch," *Cleveland Morning Leader*, 1.

²² MSA 4126, 22, 37.

regiment from New Hampshire fired on the Seventh USCT at the same time that they were engaged with a number of Confederates.²³ This makes it a possibility that Broadway's wound, the only one he received in battle, was caused by a fellow soldier of the Union Army.

Another important battle for the regiment came at Fort Gilmer on September 29, 1864. In this battle, Birney sent four companies of the Seventh USCT as a skirmish line to take the fort from the Confederates; a force far too small for the task. The companies made a brave charge on the fort, but were stopped in a ditch by one wall. After attempting to loft men over the wall unsuccessfully, the soldiers realized they were stuck in a muddy trench with little means for defense. The Confederates called for the men to surrender, to which members of the Seventh USCT reportedly responded, "we'll show you how to surrender!"²⁴ Despite this attitude, they were eventually forced to surrender themselves to the men in the fort. Lt. Califf's report of the events describes them simply and honestly; "Four companies annihilated, 70 killed, 110 wounded and 129 missing tells the story of Fort Gilmer."²⁵ These numbers came not only from the men who were injured and killed, but also those taken prisoner.

Interestingly, the Confederates took many of the African-American soldiers along with their white officers as prisoners of war; this was something that they had declared they would not do when it became known that the Union Army would recruit them. The treatment they were given was below that of the standard for prisoners, and they were put to labor digging ditches. This led to Gen. Benjamin Butler decrying their methods, and he responded by having

²³ "An Unfortunate Occurrence in Grant's Army," in the *Daily Ohio Statesman*, (Columbus, Ohio), September 7, 1864, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028645/1864-09-07/ed-1/seq-1/>, 1.

²⁴ Califf, *Records*, 42-44.

²⁵ Califf, *Records*, 45.

some of his Confederate prisoners begin to dig a ditch within view of the rebel line. The desired result was achieved, for the men were removed from their slave-like duties.²⁶

Although Broadway's company was not one of the ones to make the charge on the fort, they were involved in the fight, and he likely knew and had become close with many of the men who died, were injured, or were taken in the bloody struggle. It is impossible to say how the sight of these men being shot down in the mud affected him, but it likely stayed in his memory long after the war ended. Later in their service, the men would celebrate the anniversary of the charge on the fort in remembrance of their fallen comrades.²⁷

Effects of the black soldiers' actions in this battle were far-reaching. A number of men, Union and Confederate alike, had been doubtful about whether or not the black soldiers could fight, or even if they would. "Fort Gilmer, the other day, showed they would fight," wrote an unnamed distinguished officer to the *Nashville Daily Union* of Nashville, Tennessee. The editors of the paper were so struck by the way the men fought that, in the same article as quoted this officer, they called for conscription of slaves into the Confederate Army.²⁸ It was becoming hard to ignore the impact that the men, and black troops in general, were having on the war.

The day after the events at Fort Gilmer, September 30, 1864, the men were moved a mile away to Fort Harrison. Shortly thereafter, the Confederates attacked the fort with the

²⁶ Benjamin F. Butler, "To Hon. Robert F. Ould, Commissioner of Exchange, Richmond, VA," in the *Daily National Republican*, Washington, D. C., October 15, 1864, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053570/1864-10-15/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1864&index=3&rows=20&words=Fort+Gilmer&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1864&proxtext=Fort+Gilmer&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1, 1>.

²⁷ Califf, *Records*, 75.

²⁸ "The Conscription of the Slaves—The Rebel Official Organ Strongly in Favor of It," in *The Nashville Daily Union*, Nashville, November 9, 1864, *Chronicling America: America's Historical Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025718/1864-11-09/ed-1/seq-3/#date1=1864&index=0&rows=20&words=Fort+Gilmer&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1864&proxtext=fort+gilmer&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1, 1>.

Seventh USCT inside. Broadway and his fellow soldiers fought them off and repelled the attack, and, perhaps remembering what had happened to their comrades just hours prior, dealt the attackers heavy losses.²⁹ The regiment saw little action for the rest of the fall, but one event caused more celebration than any of their successes had before.

On November 1, 1864, the news was delivered to the men of the Seventh USCT that Maryland had adopted a new Constitution; this document abolished slavery throughout the state of Maryland and made free any and all slaves in the state.³⁰ This is one event that Broadways' reaction to can be known, for the feeling in the soldiers was unanimous. "This paper," wrote Califf, "which conveyed to the men the knowledge that their wives and children were no longer slaves, produced an effect more easily imagined than described."³¹ Though Broadway did not have a wife or children at this time, he had been born a slave and worked as one for his entire life before joining the Seventh USCT. He had not known true freedom from the institution until this moment.

Broadway and the regiment remained in Virginia for the winter, without seeing much action. Interestingly, they were camped a mere four miles from Appomattox Courthouse when Confederate General Lee surrendered to Union General Grant on April 9, 1865.³² This was another cause for celebration, for the men knew they had played their own part in the victory. Unfortunately, their celebrations came to an abrupt halt after news of President Lincoln's assassination spread. In Califf's words, "The news fell upon us like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. Our exaltation was turned into mourning. Everyone seemed to feel that it was a personal

²⁹ Califf, *Records*, 46.

³⁰ Califf, *Records*, 49.

³¹ Califf, *Records*, 49.

³² Califf, *Records*, 70.

as well as a national misfortune.”³³ These men, who had never met the President and likely knew little about him, felt the loss as though he was one of their own.

Broadway’s service did not end when the war did; he was stationed in Texas until October of 1866. Retaining colored troops was a common practice after the end of the war because most of the soldiers still had time left of their three-year enlistment, while whites were discharged in much greater numbers.³⁴ Texas was an ideal place to send them, for the United States wanted to ensure that the Confederates could not re-establish themselves in its vast territory and also wanted to ensure that France would remove its forces from the state. Other regiments were used as occupying forces in the states of the newly-defeated South, with varying results.³⁵

Arriving at Indianola, Texas in June of 1865, the men of the Seventh USCT were struck by the desolate nature of the place and the poor condition of the town. Broadway’s company, Company A, was made the provost-guard and set themselves up in the courthouse while the rest of the regiment set up a camp in the town. Company A stayed in the town, but other companies were sent around the area to a less-than-warm welcome from the Texans.³⁶ After being paid on February 3, 1866, Company A donated \$3,356 to the Christian Commission, almost twenty percent of the total donation made.³⁷ This organization was devoted to supplying soldiers with religious materials and services, and it made sure to offer these services

³³ Califf, *Records*, 70-71.

³⁴ Donald R. Schaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 23.

³⁵ Schaffer, *After the Glory*, 26, 23.

³⁶ Califf, *Records*, 73.

³⁷ Califf, *Records*, 76.

to African-American soldiers.³⁸ Although many of these men were soon to return to Maryland with only what money they had earned from their service, they still thought it right to donate what they had earned to a cause they supported.

The rest of 1866 did not go very well for the Seventh USCT. In early June, the assistant surgeon to the regiment and the man who had treated Broadway's gunshot wound, Dr. Joel Morse, was killed by Mexicans in Brownsville, Texas.³⁹ Later in the summer and early fall, an outbreak of cholera struck the men. The first wave killed approximately five of the soldiers.⁴⁰ An announcement was made in late September that the men were to be soon mustered out, quelling a rising rebellion due to the fact that the men's three-year commission had expired. However, before the men could be moved, the disease struck again, with more dying as a result.⁴¹ As written by Califf, "These days in Texas were indeed sad ones. It was hard to see men who had safely passed through the dangers of three years active service, and were on the eve of returning to their homes and friends, stricken down without a moment's warning, and dying in a few hours."⁴²

On the 13th of October, Broadway received his honorable discharge from the Army in Indianola, Texas, but he remained with the Seventh USCT until their return to Maryland in November. Upon the regiment's arrival, it was discovered that the men would not receive the \$100 bounty owed to them because they had been slaves prior to their enlistment; the money would instead be given to their former owners. Col. Shaw was outraged, and rode ahead to

³⁸ Ben Miller, "Onward Christian Soldiers," *New York Times*, December 22, 2011, accessed May 8, 2013, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/22/onward-christian-soldiers/>.

³⁹ Califf, *Records*, 77.

⁴⁰ Califf, *Records*, 79.

⁴¹ Califf, *Records*, 79-80.

⁴² Califf, *Records*, 80.

protest. His work was rewarded, and the men learned that they would receive their money.⁴³

With their pockets filled and final discharge received, the men went their separate ways. “A little before midnight it was over,” observed Califf, “and the Seventh U. S. C. T. ceased to exist. Two hours later the men were scattered and the fort deserted.”⁴⁴

Wesley Broadway received his honorable discharge and returned to the Eastern Shore of Maryland.⁴⁵ He was not quick to forget about his military experiences, however; he soon joined Kent County’s Charles Sumner Post as a member of the Grand Army of the Republic, and was its commanding officer in 1897 and 1898.⁴⁶ During this time he also lived near several other USCT veterans, for several were renting houses close by each other on Cannon Street in 1900.⁴⁷ Assimilation to the culture of Kent County, Maryland was unlikely an easy accomplishment, but the support he received from and gave to fellow veterans helped to ease the task.

Some of the greatest struggles that returning veterans faced were finding work and a place to live. By 1870, there were ninety-one African-American property owners in Chestertown, a town only a few miles from Broadway’s former home on Spaniard Neck and where he and many other veterans settled after their discharges, but only about a third of that number owned property worth \$1,000 or more. Also at this time, the total value of all of the

⁴³ Stewart R. Emory, Broadway’s former owner, still received a \$100 bounty, however. Califf, *Records*, 84-85; NARA M1820, 3.

⁴⁴ Califf, *Records*, 85.

⁴⁵ *Eleventh Census*, Chestertown, 1890, 2; MSA 4126, 21.

⁴⁶ Barbara Gannon, notes on *Roster of the G.A.R., Department of Maryland, 1882-1929*, Library of Congress, compiled 2000, Kent County Arts Council; “The Boys in Blue Answer Role Call in Mighty Force: Grand Army Men from the Atlantic to the Pacific Meet Again to Revive Old Comradeship,” in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, September 5, 1899, in the *America’s Historical Newspapers* database, 7.

⁴⁷ *Twelfth Census of the United States: Schedule No. 1—Population, 1900*, Chestertown, Kent, Maryland, by Fred S. Russell, from ancestry.com, 18.

property owned was far below that of whites; African-Americans owned around \$80,000 worth, while the value of all white-owned property was about five and a quarter million dollars.⁴⁸

Broadway himself never owned his own property, but he was involved in land acquisition for the Charles Sumner Post. Work was also much harder to find in Chestertown for blacks than for their white counterparts; often African-Americans were stuck in low-paying jobs like farm labor and house-servants and were employed by whites.⁴⁹ The injuries that Broadway received in service would hinder his ability to work in his later life, as was common for veterans.

Broadway eventually settled down into a civilian lifestyle, and he was married for the first time to a woman named Martha Woodland around the year 1869.⁵⁰ They remained married until at least 1880, but at some point between then and the mid-1890s he and Martha agreed to separate. He remained where they had been living, in Chestertown, while she moved to Wilmington, Delaware for work. She died there a short time later, in 1896.⁵¹

Like many other veterans, this was not the only time that he would be married. In 1900 he was living with a woman named Annie who claimed to be his wife of three years, but, if she was, Broadway neglected to mention her when recounting his marriages.⁵² Whether they were married or not, he was no longer with her in 1910 and was remarried on December 10, 1915, to a woman named Mary Berryman.⁵³ Mary had been married at least once previously and had

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Clay, "Constructing a Community: The African American Community in Kent County, Maryland from Reconstruction to the Present" (Senior Thesis, Washington College, 2008), 24.

⁴⁹ Clay, "Constructing a Community," 23.

⁵⁰ *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population Schedule*, Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census, Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland, by John C. Davis, from ancestry.com, 6. It is possible that they were married later, for the 1870 Census lists Broadway living with two white families without her.

⁵¹ MSA 4126, 13.

⁵² *Twelfth Census*, 1900, Chestertown, 18; MSA 4126, 13.

⁵³ *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 Population*, Department of Commerce and Labor Bureau of the Census, Chestertown, Kent, Maryland, by Foster Cannan, from ancestry.com, 17; Kent County Circuit Court (Marriage Record) Wesley Broadway marrying Mary Berryman, 1915, MSA CM 664-3, CR 5952-2.

two children with her former husband, John Berryman; there was a daughter, Blondine, born in 1903, and a son, John, born in 1907. They had all moved in together in a rented house at 228 South Queen Street of Chestertown by 1920.⁵⁴

Throughout these years, Broadway worked at an array of jobs. Though he had worked on a farm before the war, he never returned to the profession once he was a free man. The first occupation he was known to have had after the war was that of a hostler; he took care of the horses of two white families, the Denningses and the Bartholews, while living with them in Chestertown in 1870.⁵⁵ He did not hold the job for long, for he began working as a laborer and presumably stayed with that job until his war injuries prevented him from doing so.⁵⁶ His last known job was as a servant for a private family.⁵⁷ While it is unknown what family he worked for, he held this job before the death of James Alfred Pearce of Chestertown, and, upon Pearce's death, Broadway was granted \$25 from his estate.⁵⁸ Though not conclusive evidence, this could indicate that it was Pearce who Broadway worked as a servant for. By the time of Broadway's death, however, he could no longer work at all.

Broadway and Mary had no children together; in fact, he had no children with any of his wives, and there is no record of him ever having fathered a child at all. His relationship with his step-children is not clear, but eventually Mary's children grew up and moved away. Blondine moved to Philadelphia with her husband, Oscar Homely, and Mary would follow them there

⁵⁴ Kent County Circuit Court (Marriage Record) John Berryman marrying Mary Tilghman, Nov. 29. 1900, SFG Liber 1 page 156, MSA CM 664-3, CR 6952-2; *Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920—Population*, Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census, Chestertown, Kent, Maryland, by John E. Barnes, from ancestry.com, 18.

⁵⁵ U.S. Census Bureau (Census Record) 1870, Chestertown, 4th Election District, Kent County, Maryland, by Fred S. Russell, 18.

⁵⁶ *Tenth Census of the United States: 1880*, Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland, by Henry M. Thomas, 122; *Thirteenth Census, 1910*, Chestertown, 17.

⁵⁷ *Fourteenth Census, 1920*, Chestertown, 18.

⁵⁸ Kent County Circuit Court (Land Records), Releases and Receipts 1921-1925, Liber RHH Folio 175.

once Wesley died.⁵⁹ He lived a long life despite claiming that his gunshot wound and other ailments caused by his service in the Seventh USCT, such as chronic rheumatism, limited him so much so that he was only half as strong as he should have been; he died on March 17, 1931, around the age of eighty-five.⁶⁰

Despite not having an extended family, it is doubtful that Broadway often felt lonely or in need of companionship. He made a point to stay involved with other former soldiers, and the members of the Sumner Post likely took care of each other as a sort of adoptive family.

Broadway was more than just a member; he was commanding officer for multiple years, and he signed as a trustee for the Post when buying land for its use, despite never being a property owner himself and dying with no valued estate.⁶¹ These men were there for each other when they were in need, as shown by the fact that they would testify for one another to help verify their service for pensions; sometimes this was all the money they could earn, as was the case with Broadway once his injuries forced him to stop working.⁶² A blood-related family did not always supply the closest companionship these veterans had once the war was over and they returned to civilian life.

His love for the Sumner Post and his fellow soldiers did not always result in happy circumstances, however. It was a custom in the town for the members of the Grand Army of the Republic at the Post to celebrate Decoration Day, now Memorial Day, with a march from the town to the cemetery to decorate the graves of the veterans who had died.⁶³ In 1909, while

⁵⁹ MSA 4126, 10.

⁶⁰ MSA 4126, 30-38, 10.

⁶¹ Gannon, notes on *Roster*, Kent County Arts Council; Kent County Circuit Court (Land Records), JTD Liber 3 Folio 216, March 10, 1900, Peter G. Miller and wife to Perry H. Landen et al. Trustees; MSA 4126, 17.

⁶² MSA 4126, 38, 48, 50.

⁶³ "Decoration Day," *Kent County News*, June 4, 1887, from the folder of newspaper articles on reserve.

Broadway was leading the procession to the cemetery, a white man attempted to pass them on his horse. Broadway grabbed the horse and told him he could not, but other members of the procession told him to go ahead. The man, Mr. DeFord, immediately went to town to bring charges against Broadway.⁶⁴ Despite the prestige and respect he had earned, he was still subject to punishment for standing up to a white member of the community.

A much different experience altogether was certain to be had by Broadway when he visited Philadelphia in 1899 for a parade and great gathering of Grand Army men in the city. It was probably unlike anything he had ever seen, with hundreds of electric lights illuminating the streets and thousands of veterans, both black and white, coming together and camping like soldiers.⁶⁵ There was no comparison with his daily life in Chestertown and rural Kent County. The feeling of comradeship that enveloped the town was on a scale he had not experienced since the war, and perhaps was even greater than it had been then. This event doubtlessly had an effect on the former soldier, but he returned to his civilian life and his duties at the Sumner Post without much incident. Perhaps the feeling of pride he obtained from the Philadelphia spectacle made him too proud to allow a man such as DeFord to disrespect his procession a few years later, but it cannot be known for sure.

Broadway was buried in Jane's Cemetery in Chestertown, in a grave paid for by his wife Mary through funds requested from the Veteran's Bureau. He was buried with an American flag, earned by his service in the Civil War.⁶⁶ The plot was shared by her former husband's grave, and Mary herself would be buried there after her death in 1932. Eventually, Blondine

⁶⁴ "A Daring Hold-Up: An Incident of a Decoration Day Parade," *Chestertown Transcript*, June 1, 1909, from the folder of newspaper articles on reserve.

⁶⁵ "Boys in Blue," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1, 7, 10.

⁶⁶ MSA 4126, 11, 12.

was added to the site upon her death in 1984, and her father-in-law, Clarence Homely, also appears on the headstone, suggesting that her husband Oscar returned from Philadelphia to bury her there with her parents and his own father.⁶⁷ The final resting place of Wesley Broadway does little to commemorate the life he lived, but no gravestone could do his story the justice it deserves.

When Broadway died, the Charles Sumner Post lost its last veteran. It, like his legacy, fell somewhat out of memory; though some still cared for the building, there was no longer anyone to operate it. Today, the Post is undergoing renovations and has plans for future use. Likewise, the story of Wesley Broadway has finally resurfaced and can be retold, and hopefully will not be forgotten again. The man was an emblem for the transformation of a race, starting from the lowest station of society, that of a slave, to being a soldier for freedom in the Union Army and eventually a prominent community member. His story shows the real experiences of the men who went through this struggle, and the success he had makes it a story worth knowing.

⁶⁷ Gravestone of Wesley Broadway, Jane's Cemetery, Chestertown, Maryland.

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