

The Wemple Brothers of Emerald Grove

By John Dewey

Two years ago the 33rd Wisconsin paid to have three old, moldy marble grave markers in Emerald Grove Cemetery sanded clean. Two of them are headstones of the small, rectangular type commonly used even today. The third is a much larger obelisk that stood next to the others.

These markers are dedicated to the Wemple brothers, Captain Adam Zeily Wemple and Lieutenant David Duane Wemple from the little unincorporated hamlet of Emerald Grove in Rock County. They were the sons of the locally prominent Peter Douw and Eliza Davis Wemple who also contributed two other sons to the war effort.

Adam Zeily Wemple was born on June 1, 1834 in Montgomery County, New York. He migrated to Wisconsin with his parents sometime after that. After the war broke out he enlisted in the 33rd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry on September 3, 1863 and was commissioned Captain of Company F. Unfortunately, during the regiment's stay in Memphis, Tennessee, he contracted pneumonia and died on March 9, 1864 before seeing any action. He was 28 years old.

His death is described in William DeLoss Love's 1866 work Wisconsin in the War of Rebellion. The regiment remained at Moscow (Tennessee), guarding the railroad and building fortifications until March 9th, when they started on foot to go to Memphis, through rain and deep mud. On the day they left, Captain A. Z. Wemple, of Company F, died in Memphis. Resolutions of respect for him were adopted by his fellow officers; the members of the company, with affectionate interest, contributed a sum to place a broken shaft—emblematic

of his unfinished career—over his grave at Emerald Grove, Wisconsin. His mother reached him the day before he died."



David Duane Wemple was born on June 21, 1843 in Steuben County, New York. When the war broke out, he joined the United States Navy and was commissioned a Lieutenant. He was killed December 24, 1864 during the battle for Fort Fisher, North Carolina. He was only 21. His death is described in Rod Gragg's book Confederate Goliath, The Battle of Fort Fisher.

"Ironically, the navy's worst casualties on the first day of battle were not caused by the fort's fire, but instead by a series of deadly accidents. Aboard the USS *Juanita*, Lieutenant David D. Wemple commanded a starboard battery that pounded the fort with a huge 100-pounder Parrott. The Parrott had a bad reputation—it would sometimes explode in



action. A popular young officer, Wemple stood behind the massive weapon as the gun crew sponged, swabbed, reloaded and fired again. Suddenly the gun exploded in a deafening blast of flame and smoke, spraying jagged pieces of broken gun tube in all directions. Wemple's head, chest and legs were crushed—killing him instantly. The blast also killed Marine Second Lieutenant Jonas Pile, whose mangled body was blown through a gunport into the ocean. Seaman Henry Payne, disemboweled, quickly died of shock. Fireman Thomas

Abos bled to death, and James Ennels, a young powder monkey, was so badly mangled that the best efforts of the ship's surgeon could not save him. The exploding Parrott killed five and wounded eight, including

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Seaman Thomas Mahoney, who survived the blast to discover an odd silence cloaking the frantic rescue attempts that followed: he had been deafened by the explosion.

"The *Juanita* lurched out of formation, retiring from the line. Admiral (David Dixon) Porter spotted the retreating warship and ordered the *Malvern* alongside, plucking Marine Pile's broken body from the sea en route. "My 100-pounder has exploded!" shouted the *Juanita's* commander. "Then why in hell don't you go back and use your other guns?" Porter shouted back. Obediently, the *Juanita's* commander took the ship back to its battle station."

In a letter dated December 14, 1864, David wrote to his parents.

"Dear Father and Mother, we are on our way to Wilmington where we will most likely have a fight and perhaps a bad one. Of course all of us must

stand our chances to fight, of being killed or wounded, and consequently I will, should the fortunes of war deprive me of this life I would simply say that I will go willingly for the dear, dear flag that protects me. I should prefer living to see this rebellion put down and our dear country once more enjoying peace and quiet, but if it is necessary I am willing to go now and beg you all to give me up willingly for our country and mourn not my loss, but rather rejoice that I died in a glorious cause—Our Country! Let not my loss decrease your patriotism but let it increase it and willingly sacrifice all for our country and flag."



Images of the cleansed tombstones can be seen at www.findagrave.com along with Lt. Wemple's moving letter. Better yet, visit the graves in person. Emerald Grove is located between Delevan and Janesville on High-

way 14. The cemetery is on the right side of the highway about eight miles heading East from

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