

William Garrigues Bentley, Private, Co. G, 104 OH US

- 1843 July 26: Bentley was born to Quakers Granville and Elizabeth Garrigues Bentley in Highland County, OH.
- 1850 November 28: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Columbiana County, OH showed Seven-year-old William living with his parents and younger brother. His father, Granville, was a farmer.
- 1860 August 2: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Columbiana County, OH showed 17-year-old William living with his parents and siblings. His father was listed as a farmer.
- 1862 August 9: Enlisted in the U.S. Army and mustered into Co. G 104th OH Infantry, US.
- 1864 November 30: Fought at the Battle of Franklin.

December 3: Letter he wrote from Nashville, following the Battle of Franklin.

Nashville, Tenn
Dec 3rd, 1864

There is a mail going out in a few minutes and I must write a few lines to tell you of my safety. You have heard of the fight at Franklin day before yesterday and will be anxious to hear particulars.

I was sent with several others of the Co. after rations about an hour before the charge was made and the fight was almost over before we could get to our works. Tho we started immediately, I tell you, it was a hard battle but our boys stood their ground like heroes, tho a part of the 4th Corps left their works which almost lost the day for us. Our Corps has now, at last, a name which we may be proud of. The enemy's loss was awful, you can have no idea of it unless you could see the field. The nearest fighting in our Brigade line was directly in front of our Co. We were the left center Co., next to the Colors, and they seemed determined to capture them, but our boys stuck to them. The rebels came up on to our works, some of them jumping clear over them. The ditch in front was piled with dead and wounded and for rods in front, a man could hardly put his foot down without stepping on them. Our loss was comparatively slight, 5 wounded in our Co. .¹

We don't fear the enemy here. We are well fixed.

¹ Burning Rails as We Pleased": The Civil War Letters of of William Garrigues Bentley, 104th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. McFarland, 2011.

December 7: Letter.

*Dec. 7th, 1864
[Nashville]*

Dear Bro,

I wrote . . . the other day after we reached this place but I was hurried so that I couldn't write as much as I would have liked . . .

I suppose you have heard the particulars of the Franklin fight by this time, as the papers of this place are full of it — but maybe you would like to hear the part that our Regiment took in it, so I will try to explain it. Tho I wasn't in our works during the heaviest of the fight, as I stated before. I was sent back to draw rations but I saw it and I'm not particularly anxious to see such another battle, tho it was a great victory for us.

Gen Reilly's Brigade was in position on the left of the Cumberland pike, our Regiment being 2nd in line on the right. We joined Gen Cooper's 2nd Division, 23rd A.C. They connected with the 4th A.C. Col. Casement's Brigade of our Division on our left. The enemy charged with 2 Divisions, Gen Cleburne of Hardee's old Corps in our immediate front on the left of the pike. I forgot the name of the other General on the right, our skirmish line was about 1/4 mile in advance of the works, supported by Wagner's Brigade of the 4th Co. The enemy advanced in two oblique lines, their left in our front — almost resting on our works, their right extended along the road joining on the right — which was formed in the same manner except that on this side, their right was nearest our lines . . . They came up in splendid style, our artillery from across the river, throwing shell into their ranks without checking them in the least. The Brigade of the 4th Corps were overpowered in a moment and came rushing back in the wildest confusion over our line — almost breaking it. The rebels kept close . . . on them, so that our men couldn't fire until they were within a few yards. When they did open on them, mowing them down by scores, we had several pieces of artillery in the line which poured grape and cannister into their ranks. At last, finding it too hot for them, they fell back one hundred yards, into a ravine, which they reformed and came up again. This time as steady as clock works. They charged right up to our ditch, many of them jumping over the boys heads. Some were shot while standing on the headlogs. Our Co. was the left-center of the Regiment and next to our colors and here the fighting was hottest. The line to our right was, at one time, driven back and the rebels came pouring over the works. I am proud to say, that not a man in Co. G flinched, tho every Co. to the right fell back. Gen.s Reilly, Cox and Schofield were in the most exposed places, trying to rally the men who had fallen back from a misunderstanding of orders. Up they went again, taking their old position and capturing many prisoners. Off to the right, the enemy held our line for sometime but after a desperate struggle, everything was retaken and the enemy fell back a short distance but still keeping up a heavy fire. It was now dark and we expected another attack would be made but they had evidently had enough of it. After the firing had slackened the boys went out in front of the works to help any of our boys who were lying outside. Very few were wounded outside of the works, but you can't imagine the appearance of the field. The ditch was literally piled with dead and wounded and for rods you could scarcely walk without stepping on a body. They laid in every position imaginable. Some were in the act of loading, some drawing the trigger. Our fire had been very effective, nearly all were struck below the

breast. Several officers rode their horses right onto the works and horses & riders fell back into the ditch.

You can imagine how desperate the struggle was in front of our colors when 5 (stando of colors were captured in front of them, the color bearers were all killed. One of them planted his standing in our works and snatched at our colors which were floating there, but our color Sergeant was too quick for him, he pulled them off the works and the reb fell back dead. An officer, said to be Gen. Cleburne was killed in front of our Co. The rebels came over our works by scores, throwing down their guns, they were sent back to the rear and as men couldn't well be spared just then to guard them, I suppose 1/2 of them made their escape as it was. We kept 1,700 of them, you may judge that they were terribly cut-up when after the fight was over several men came over the works with ammuniton, expecting to find their men in possession, as they said, they didn't meet any going back except a few stragglers. Officers, who were over the field after the fight estimate their loss in killed and wounded at from 500 to 600, which is a moderate estimate I think. It has been said by men who have witnessed some of the hardest fought battles of the war, that they never saw a more desperate fight. Cleburne's Division we have always heard spoken of, as the flower of the Southern Army, and they boasted that they have never before been whipped. I don't believe that braver men live than they were, but now there are but few left to tell the tale who will ever charge a Yankee line again.

About midnight we evacuated the place and fell back to this place. We had to leave some of our wounded in their hands as it was so dark that we couldn't find them. Our loss was comparatively slight, about 700 in all, the 104th lost 62 mostly wounded. We had six of our best men wounded, none killed which is very fortunate . . .

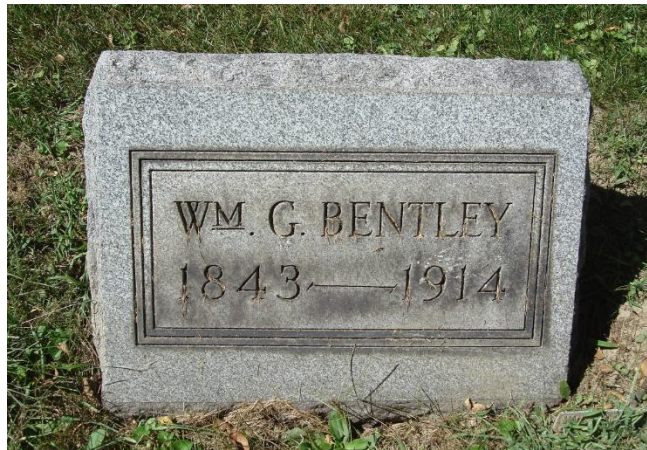
I will enclose a little shred of our old flag which the Color Sergeant handed me the day after the fight. It is so ragged that it will scarcely hold together but we will prize it all the more for that. We will never dishonor it, the little piece of red is part of a rebel flag we captured.

- 1865 June 17: Mustered out of the U.S. Army.
- 1875 Married Ledora Eva Bean.
- 1880 June 23: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Columbiana County, OH showed William G., the county treasurer, and Dora living with their children.
- 1900 June 2: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Columbiana County, OH showed William G., a farmer, and Dora living with their grown children.
- 1910 April 27: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Columbiana County, OH showed William, a farmer, living with his wife and children.

ave to J. M. DeRholes of South Bend, Ind.
W. G. Bentley and P. F. Heacock are at-
tending the forty-fifth annuau reunion of the
104th O.V.I. at Akron.

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1914 January 8: Bentley died in Salem, OH. He was buried at Hope Cemetery.



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² The Salem News, Salem, OH, Friday 25 August 1950, pg 4

³ Photo from findagrave/userPatriciaZeis