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### Benjamin Kemp, Corporal, Co. E, 84th IN Infantry, US

1839 May 24: Born to Robert and Elizabeth Caples Kemp in Richland County, OH.

1860 July 4 Married Maria Malvina "Viney" Allen in Randolph County, IN.

1862 August 14: Enlisted in the U.S. Army and mustered into Co. E, 84th IN Infantry.

1863 During the spring of 1863 the 84th IN Infantry was garrisoned in Franklin, TN. They and the other regiments present were repairing the bridge across the Harpeth River, and building Fort Granger.

March 27: Kemp wrote a letter to his mother.

*Headquarters, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, Franklin, Tennessee. I received your letter in one week after it was written. It was brought to me on picket. I sat down and read it with great pleasure. This is Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 7 o'clock in the*

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<sup>1</sup> Photo retrieved from [ancestry.com/user/sterlim](https://www.ancestry.com/user/sterlim)

morning. I am well and fit as a hog. I with the rest of the regiment just came in off of picket. We were out south of camp. I would have answered your sweet letter sooner but the Rebs tore up the railroad bridge and part of the track. They done it Tuesday night and took 200 of our men prisoners. Thank fortune 150 got away and got back. The mail has not been in nor out since Monday last. I am anxious for the mail to come in....When you hear such news about the 84<sup>th</sup>, just say it is not so. We have some hard times, that is so, but we have never been fired on yet. They fought day before yesterday a little. Our men fetched in 60 prisoners as we went and came through town from picketing. They looked through the windows as wishful as young pups. The bridge they tore up was between here and Nashville. If the Rebs undertake to take Franklin, they will smell powder for we have a nice fort here almost finished. There are two big siege pieces in it and we have 42 pieces of cannon besides. The generals talk here with signals every day, some 2 or 3 miles apart. The Rebs are scouting all around us. They are getting all the provision there is in the country and then I think they will leave. We will not get any furloughs until this little stink is settled one way or the other.....You talk of mud. My shoes have not been wet but once for two weeks. I am barefooted today....It would please you to see how stout and full breasted I have got to be. No rheumatism about me. I want you to save all the letters I send home. I want to peruse them. I will have to close by sending you my best love and respect. Write often. From Benjamin F. Kemp to you all. Good by.

March 28: Kemp to his wife:

*Franklin, Tennessee*

*Headquarters, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, Camp near Franklin, Tennessee situated between the pike and railroad on the bank of the railroad. A little soon in the morning and a wet morning it is. It rained last night for all that was out and part that was in. I must go to guard mount. I am on patrol tonight. I have been on duty 6 times in 8 days. Our corporals are most all sick but me and I am so fat that I wobble as I go. My titties are most as large as yours. You read Ma's letter I sent her yesterday and you will know some little about our fighting yesterday evening. There were five other regiments came in I think. They came from Murfreesboro. Two regiments went yesterday to guard the bridge the Rebels tore up. They were the 96<sup>th</sup> and 92<sup>nd</sup> Illinois. When our regiment was on picket Thursday, I saw the Negroes shelling cotton seed off. When our men brought the prisoners into Franklin, the women cried like everything and yet they are very sorry. Some of them try to get in and out through our pickets but they are not sharp enough for that trick. ... I remain your Benny yet. From B. F. Kemp to M. M. Kemp and company.*

April 18: Kemp to his wife.

*M. M. Kemp. This is April the 28<sup>th</sup>, A.D. 1863 and a little cloudy. This morning finds me well and on picket, sitting by a large elm stump about 1 1/2 mile from camp. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> day for me right along. The whole regiment was*

out Sunday. We have to be in line of battle every morning at 4 o'clock. Yesterday morning at 3 o'clock the cavalry passed us going south to make an attack. They said as they passed us they loved to catch them napping. Sure enough they did. When they were close enough to see their fires, the old Colonel told the boys to go easy. They slipped up and surrounded them. Some were getting breakfast, some washing, some in bed, some saddling their horses. The Colonel stepped up to their colonel's tent and says Colonel, Colonel, wake up, wake up. Sign this. The old fellow straightened up, rubbing his eyes and says you are ahead of me this time. They gave up immediately. We never lost a man. Our cavalry killed two of them before they could make them stop. They burned their tents, guns, wagons as quick as they could to get away before their force came up. They brought in 132 altogether. They got several horses and mules. They brought their books, payrolls, mail, some of their cooking utensils. They would have been paid off tomorrow. As we came in from picket, we met our whole brigade, artillery and all, coming out to reinforce us, but the Rebs never came. We stopped in town and marched the prisoners all past. Some had not anything but their shirt and pants and some had no pants on. They looked miserable. I could not tell an officer from a private. I said to one as they passed, Ah, old fellow, they caught you napping, did they? Yes, he says, the damned rascals would not let us stay for breakfast. Another spoke up and says Never mind. We will catch you napping yet. Yes, says I, you caught the 40<sup>th</sup> asleep the other day. We got 16 camp officers out of 132 men. Some of them got away. Those that had their horses saddled. There were but 2 guns fired, two of ours and one of them. One that our boys killed out of the 2 had a chunk of cornbread in his mouth. This was just an outpost. Their force is at Springhill 12 miles off. They don't stand picket like we do. They are fortifying at Springhill. There is another brigade on its road here. Then I think their fortifications will be tried and we stay to see how solid they are. No more about this at present. Over you go to page 3. This is morning, the 29<sup>th</sup>, and we picketed almost all night. I never slept a wink all night. I am still well. I received your letter Monday the 27<sup>th</sup>. It made me think of the old days again and of hours that are passed and gone. I often think of things that passed while we lived there. You are right about the tent. Vine, while on picket Sabbath about 5 o'clock in the evening I finished reading the blessed old Bible through. I read it from end to end, every word of it. I saw last night what I never saw before just about midnight. It had been raining. It slacked up. The moon shone out a little and there a nice rainbow made its appearance in the north. This is a fact. Our regiment is on fatigue today so the guard said that was to come. J. E. is better. I got two letters from home for him. I sent Pap \$10.00 more by Uriah Pierce. I would have sent my likeness by him if J. E. had been here to get it, alone \$2.50, double \$4.00, but I do not care for that nor I made \$5.00 in one day last week on coffee. I have spent over \$25.00 since I left home foolishly but I must quit it. I will send you \$5.00 in my next letter. I will tell you the price of some things here. Salt \$50.00, flour \$20.00, potatoes \$6.00, bush stogy shoes \$6.00, boots \$25.00, sugar 40 cents. They say in town they barely knew what coffee looked like before we came here. I will finish at camp. Back to camp safe and sound. My bed fellow is gone and I will have to sleep alone until J. E. comes. I must

*next write to M. E. if you please. I have nothing more to write. I have taken to writing so fast I do not expect you can hardly read it. One of our teams were turned over yesterday. You must all write as often as you can. I truly hope you are all well and doing well. These few lines from B. F. Kemp to all who wish to read and Mrs. Vine Kemp*

May 11: Kemp to his wife.

*Another beautiful Sabbath morning, Franklin, Tennessee, May the 11<sup>th</sup>, 1863. Dearest of all, that B. F. K. owns I ask forgiveness for not answering your letter sooner. I had first written to you before I received yours and had nothing to write. We are both well. When we wrote to our folks last, I was not very well. I have just blacked my boots for inspection. We have general inspection again this morning. This is what we have to do of a Sunday morning instead of getting ready to go to church. We have meeting once a week on Wednesday evening. We still have to be in line of battle every morning at day break and stay one hour. Then the bugle sounds and we return to camp. Last Friday morning at 2 o'clock (we were up) to catch some more Rebs. They got eight only. They from the forts have shelled the west woods some three days hence running. There is a large stir in camp among the officers. The line officers got up a petition and all of them signed it but a Captain Orr. This petition was for Lieutenant Colonel Orr to resign. Captain M. B. Miller, Captain Tailor, Captain Melldives were the three that handed in the resignation. They were all three put under arrest yesterday. I expect it will go pretty hard with them. The sun is pretty hot here now in daytime but the nights are very cool. I sleep under two blankets of a night on the soft side of a plank. They won't leave us to sleep on hay or anything but a plank or the ground. I would like to write more, but I have to go on inspection and the mail will go out before we get in, so no more at present. Write as often as you can, all of you. I sent Duck a letter yesterday. I only got to write him a half letter. This from Benjamin Franklin Kemp to Miss I have forgotten who.*

1864 November 28: Kemp wrote to his family, once again from Franklin, TN. He was in Franklin ahead of his brigade, traveling with the wagons. He described the journey of the army from Pulaski to Franklin.

*Franklin, Tennessee, November 28, 1864*

*I am sitting all alone in Lieut. Fox's office in Franklin, Tenn. He is a lieutenant of the 84<sup>th</sup> Regt. Knowing ever dear friends you are anxious to hear from us, I pen you these few lines. It is now eight o'clock at night. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> we got orders to march. At one o'clock we marched down off the hill into or close to Pulaski. There our regiment laid in line of battle until eleven at night. We got orders to move down on the pike. The other troops were all gone on toward Columbia. I started back as soon as the regiment got on the pike and I have not seen it since. We got to Columbia the 24<sup>th</sup>, a distance of 84 miles and was very tired. The troops had to build works yet that night. We had some*

*skirmishing on the road. November 25<sup>th</sup> we laid in line all day. I was not at the regiment but I heard from it. I was with the regimental team. At dark our brigade moved to the right. Sharp skirmishes all day. Lost several men. Our boys all well. Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> did not hear from the regiment today. Some pretty sharp fighting. Our corps train moved back about 4 miles out of reach of the shells. Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>. The whole train moved back to Franklin today and just as we got here, orders came to go right back where we started from that morning. They parked the train and did not go back until daylight this morning. The report here tonight is that our forces are all on this side of the river and have burned the RR bridge and the pontoons, burned the large guns we had there in the fort and spiked them and the cavalry say the train will be back here tonight some time and they say there is hard fighting going on continually. I got out of one hard march by not going back with the train this morning. I think our forces will all be here by tomorrow night. There were two men of our division killed as we came along yesterday. The reason why I am here is my breast is too sore to carry a gun and does not get much better fast. I do not want to be away from the company. I am not able to say whether the boys are all well or not but I truly hope they are. I feel uneasy about Jimmy but I hope your prayers will still be answered and we will both get through safe and alive. It has been raining off and on ever since we started from Pulaski. We burned a part of the town and a large amount of government rations.....It is now getting late and I must lie down and rest my bones. I truly hope you are all well and in good spirits. Write as often as you can. I think when you hear from us again, we will be close to Nashville, Tenn. You can hear more about Sherman than I can tell you, for we do not know anything about where he is. I still remain as ever yours, Benjamin F. Kemp. To loved ones at home. Fare you well.*

November 30: It is unclear if Kemp actively participated in the Battle of Franklin. He was already across the Harpeth River, at Fort Granger when the U.S. Army arrived on the morning of November 30th. His regiment was definitely engaged in Gross' Brigade, Kimball's Division.

1864 December 2: Kemp wrote to his family from Nashville.

*December 2, 1864, near Nashville, Tennessee (on a page torn out from a regiment enlistment registry):*

*In line of Battle near Nashville, Tenn. December 2, 1864. Dear friends, one and all, at last I attempt to pen you a few lines to inform you that I am all right and right end up with care. I suppose you will be surprised to learn we are at Nashville. But it is the case and more than that, we had to come in a hurry to boot. Although we gave the Johnnies a good gnashing at Franklin, they charged our works in one place some 15 times but failed to take them. It would be useless for me to tell you we have been marching and fighting day and night*

*for two months. Some of the hardest times of our service. We just slept as we walked along the road....J. E. Kemp, Co E, 84<sup>th</sup> Indiana.<sup>2</sup>*

- 1865 June 14: Mustered out of the U.S. Army.
- 1870 July 12: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Randolph County, IN showed Ben, a farmer, and Maria living with their four children.
- 1880 June 26: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Randolph County, IN showed Benjamin, a farmer, living with Maria and their seven children. Also living in home is a seventeen-year-old servant/farm laborer by the name of James Andus.
- 1900 June 2: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated Wabash County, IN showed B.F., a preacher, and Maria living with three of their children. One of their son lives next door with his wife.
- 1910 April 18: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Wabash County, IN showed B.F., a minister, living with his wife Maria.
- 1920 January 3: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Wabash County, IN showed a retired Benjamin F, and Malvina living on their own.

May: Kemp celebrated his 81st birthday!

WINCHESTER, Ind.—In honor of the 81st birthday of the Rev. B. F. Kemp of Union City, Tuesday, one of the oldest pioneer citizens, his children, relatives and friends, completely surprised both he and his wife, by preparing a dinner. Rev. Kemp came to Union City, when it was a complete wilderness. A saw-mill stood where the First Methodist church now stands. The couple were married 60 years ago, and Rev. Kemp is the oldest ordained minister in Randolph County, having been ordained 63 years ago. He is a member of the old New Light Christian Church, and for 54 years lived on his farm, near this city. A short time ago however, he gave up farm work and moved to this city.

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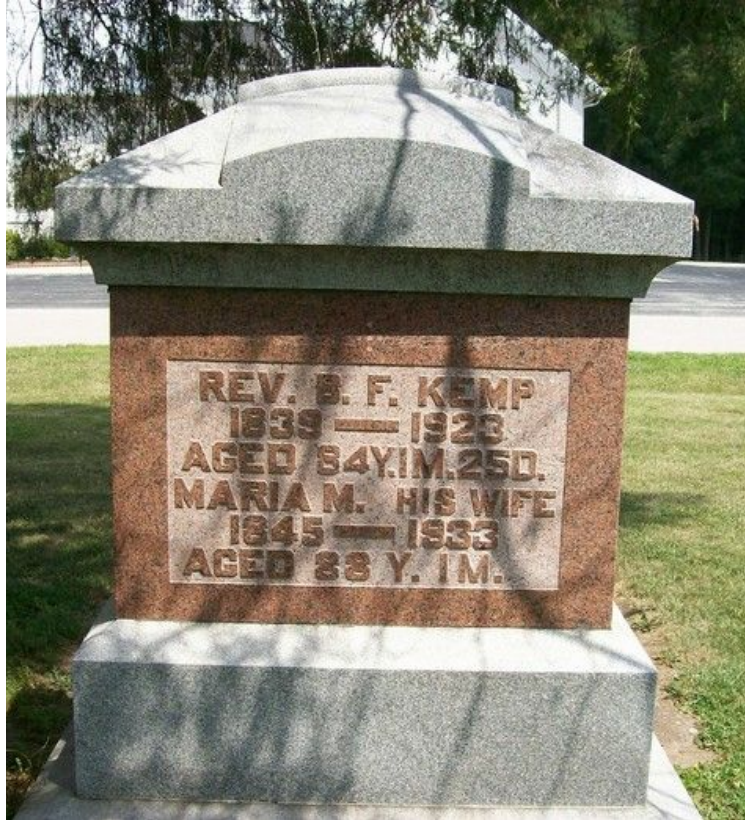
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<sup>2</sup> All Letters from the personal collection of Kemp family.

<sup>3</sup> Palladium-Item, Richmond, IN, Monday, 31 May 1920, pg. 6 (accessed newspapers.com)

1923 July 28: Reverend Benjamin Franklin Kemp died. He was buried at Pleasant Hill Cemetery.





REV. B. F. KEMP  
1839 — 1923  
AGED 84 Y. 1 M. 25 D.  
MARIA M. HIS WIFE  
1845 — 1933  
AGED 88 Y. 1 M.

## VETERAN, MINISTER IS DEAD AT UNION CITY

(Special to The Item)

UNION CITY, July 18—Rev. Benjamin F. Kemp, 84, retired minister, and veteran of the Civil War, died here this morning after a short illness. He was ordained when he was 21 years old and has had charge of churches in several cities, including Union City, Dayton, Pleasant Hill, Middletown and Hamilton. He leaves seven daughters, two sons and his widow.

Funeral services will be held tomorrow morning at 10:30 o'clock in his late residence. Burial will be in Pleasant Hill cemetery.

<sup>4</sup> findagrave.com/user/JoanShoffner

<sup>5</sup> The Richmond Item, Richmond, IN, Thursday, 19 Jul 1923, pg. 2 (accessed newspapers.com)



# REV. B. F. KEMP IS DEAD AT 84

Union City Pastor Was  
Father of Troy Min-  
ister.

TROY, July 19. — Rev. B. F. Kemp, a retired Christian minister and father of Dr. A. E. Kemp, died at 4 o'clock yesterday at his home in Union City, after an illness of three weeks due to the infirmities of age. Dr. Kemp has been at his father's bedside since last Sunday.

Rev. Kemp was born near Union City 84 years ago. He entered the ministry when a young man and filed different charges for 55 years, having retired 15 years ago.

Fourth of July was the 63rd anniversary of the marriage of Rev. Kemp and Melvina Allen Kemp and he is survived by the widow and nine children. Rev. Kemp was a veteran of the Civil War.

The funeral arrangements have not been announced.

<sup>6</sup> Dayton Daily News, Dayton, OH, Thursday 19 Jul 1823, pg. 3 (accessed newspapers.com)