



George S. Lea, Private, Co. C 7 MS Infantry, C.S.

- 1836 June 20: George Sylvester Lea was born in Amite County, MS to Hampton and Mariah Gordon Lea.
- 1850 December 12: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Amite County, MS showed 14- year-old “Sylvester” living with his parents and siblings. The Lea family owned fifteen slaves.
- 1855 August 20: George’s father Hampton was politically active, he and neighbor/family friend C.F. Fielder were delegates at the Mississippi Democratic Senatorial Convention.²
- 1860 June 9: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Amite County, MS showed a grown George living with his parents and siblings. He and his father were both listed as Planters. His father owned \$3,000 in real estate and George owned \$2,500.
- 1861 April 29: George and neighbor Nick Travis enlisted in the Amite Rifles to serve the state of Mississippi. His father’s slave Kemp went to war with George as a body servant. This is also the date that George wrote a will, as indicated later on in this document.

August 15 to October 31: Company Muster Rolls. Present.

¹ Lea family collection.

² Semi-Weekly Mississippian, Jackson, MS, Fri, 31 Aug 1855, pg. 2 (accessed newspapers.com)

George wrote many letters throughout the war home. I will include snippets that detail and highlight the human experiences of his journey.

September 20: George wrote a letter home from Bay St. Louis, he mentioned they had been transferred to the “Confederacy” for the term of twelve months.³

September 27: George mustered into the C.S. Army as a private to Co. C. 7 MS Infantry.

September 30: George wrote a letter home expressing frustration on how slowly the war is going and how unhappy some soldiers were being forced out of their state militia units into the Confederate Army. *“Another thing which created much dissatisfaction was the effort which was made to transfer the Brigade into the Confederate Service. A majority have refused to be mustered....I consider it so far a camp of expense instead of a army of defense. Everything is progressing very slow...measles are raging in camp...there have been six deaths..”* In the same letter, George wrote the life of a soldier is uncomfortable and *“..worse than a slaves at best.”*⁴ That line is too interesting not to note, as George chose to be a soldier, Kemp did not choose to be a slave.

George signed his letters “Your boy, George.”

October 10: George wrote a letter to his Uncle, James E. Lea, *“You stated in your letter that you wished for us boys to be as moral as circumstances would admit. We do try to do so as far as we are able. We only get drunk once a day. That is considered quite moral in camp.”*⁵

October 22: In a letter from a neighbor, Charles F. Fielder, *“You must all take care of yourselves and try and return home safe and sound, especially on the girls acct for this is a sad time for them all the boys gone to war...”*⁶

December 25: The first Christmas of the war came and went...George wrote a letter to his sister *“The most of the boys have spent a Merry Christmas here dancing and frolicking about.”*⁷

1862 May to October: Company Muster Rolls. Present.

³ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 20 Sep 1861, from Bay St. Louis

⁴ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 30 Sep 1861, from Camp Clark, Near Shieldsboro, MS

⁵ George S. Lea to James Lea, 10 Oct 1861, from Camp Clark, Near Shieldsboro, MS

⁶ C.F.Fielder to George S. Lea, 22 Oct 1861

⁷ George S. Lea to Sister, 28 Dec 1861, from Camp Mayson, Pass Christian, MS

October 29: George wrote his father asking for some supplies *“Tell mother to send me two suits, 2 pr drawers, 3 prs socks, 1 pr gloves knit them whole fingers but not longer than my fingers but have them roomy, 1 comfort to be round my neck have it about four feet long. Send the over coat. You may send two pr pants for Kemp, 1 vest. I forgot to mention above, 1 for Kemp also. I want my undershirts and drawers of something that is not too heavy but the over shirts of heavy gray flannel.”*⁸

November 15: In a letter home answering questions his father had about Kemp *“You wish me to say something about Kemp. He is in good health and fat. You wished him sent home if there was any danger of the Yanks getting him there is no danger of that. I don’t think for their is a great many others in the army. He has faired much better than I have for the last three months and I am glad of it he is of great use to me now and gets plenty to eat and I don’t reckon he would do much at home if he was there. We are living out of doors by log heat fires has snowed twice in the month but being here at the beginning of winter will make it better for us.”*⁹

November 26: George in a letter home *“I have become careless about everything we are so closely confined. I care for nothing. It will soon be the close of another year, one that I have spent but little of my time at home and I fear it will be some time yet before I can see home. I would give more to be at home a short while than any thing else. I dreamed of being at home last night and getting plenty to eat and nothing pleased me better, but when I waked it was all false.”*¹⁰

December 31: At Murfreesboro, TN, George received a severe wound *“In 1st charge 300 yards in from breast works.”*

November & December: Company Muster Roll. Absent. Remarks *“Wounded at Murfreesboro, Tenn. Dec. 31. 1862. Sent to Hospital by order Surgeon.”*

1863 January 8: From a hospital in Rome, GA, George wrote a letter home letting his parents know he was wounded, but doing better. *“I drop you a few lines...letting you know that I am doing very well altho i am wounded in the right arm just about the wrist and the small bone broken. The surgeon says that he will give me furlough in a few days.”*¹¹

⁸ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 29 Oct 1862, from camp near Knoxville, TN

⁹ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 15 Nov 1862, from Camp Moore, Near Tullahoma, TN

¹⁰ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 26 Nov 1862, camp near Murfreesboro, TN,

¹¹ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 8 Jan 1863, Rome Georgia

January 27: Another letter penned from hospital “Gen’l Bragg has put a stop to all furloughs...I have Kemp here with me.”¹²

January to April: Company Muster Roll. Absent. Remarks: “Wounded at Murfreesboro Dec. 31. 1862 and sent to Rome, GA by order Surgeon.”

May: George appeared on a Hospital Muster Roll in Lumpkin Hospital, Rome, GA. He was employed as a Nurse starting on March 12. July to December: Company Muster Roll. Present.

December 5: After George heard that some of his family’s slaves attempted to run away he wrote a letter home telling his father he should punish the slaves set an example: *“I heard of the difficulty you and Uncle Jim had with your Negroes. I heard no names of any one, only Uncle Jims’ Buck Smith and that yours was a woman. I know it was Fair carried off by Wade. If you and him would make an example of one you would not have any more trouble soon I think..”*¹³

1864 January and February: Company Muster Roll. Present.

August 12: George’s last letter was written from Atlanta, in line of battle. *“I would like to be at home now to eat peaches & watermelons but I know I can’t come...Kemp is alright Maj Carruth has him for the present”*¹⁴

November 30: George was killed at the Battle of Franklin. He was buried in a battlefield grave. The next year his former slave Kemp and his friend Nick Travis, who was in his regiment, led George’s father Hampton to where they had buried George. His body was taken home to Amite County, MS and he was buried in the family cemetery.



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¹² George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 27 Jan 1863, Lumpkin Hospital Ward #2, Rome, GA

¹³ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 5 Dec 1863, from Camp near Dalton, GA

¹⁴ George S. Lea to Hampton Lea, 12 Aug 1864, from In line of battle west side of Atlanta

¹⁵ findagrave.com

1865 George Lea's will that he wrote the day he enlisted in the army was probated. He left his entire estate to his father, Hampton Lea.

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The Last Will and Testament of George S Lea

In the name of God Amen:

I George S Lea of Amite County in the State of Mississippi do make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament—revoaking any and all testamentary dispositions by me heretofore made I devise and bequeath to my Father Hampton M. Lea all my Estate both real and Personal of every kind and description: I nominate and appoint Hampton M. Lea Executor of this my Last Will and Testament and of him I require no security In witness whereof I hereunto set my name and Seal this 29th day of April A.D. 1861

Geo S Lea

Signed Sealed and published by the Testator as and for his last Will and Testament in our presence at his request and in the presence of each other and so by us witnessed on the day of the date thereof

J. M. Knight
G. S. Lea
Winchester Covett

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To read Kemp Washington's story click here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/575ad69260b5e91314f0c856/t/63efdb7953c28672a79d1c2f/1676663678150/Washington%2C+Kemp.pdf>

¹⁶ Lea, George S., Mississippi, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1780-1982