

# STORY OF 'TORNADO JIM'

James K. Merrifield, Corporal, Co. C, 88<sup>th</sup> IL Infantry, U.S.

1844 August 20: Merrifield was born to John and Jane Widener Merrifield in Hyde Park, PA.

1850 August 29: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Providence, Luzerne County, PA showed 6-year-old James living with his parents. His father, John, was a merchant.

\*\*\*At some point between 1850 and 1857 Merrifield's mother, Jane, died and his father remarried.\*\*\*

1860 August 25: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Grand Bend, Susquehanna County, PA showed 15-year-old James living with his father, John, a physician and his step mother Charlotte.

1862 August 8: Enlisted in the U.S. Army in Manlius, Bureau County, IL. He was just shy of 18 years old. He mustered into Co. D of the 88<sup>th</sup> IL Infantry.

1864 November 30: Fought at the Battle of Franklin.

*“Our regiment, the 88th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, was in the 1st Brigade (Opdyke’s), 2d Division (Wagner’s), 4th Corps (Stanley’s). Our brigade had been rear guard all day up to Franklin, and we lost some men in the skirmish line. As we arrived at Franklin we filed through the works, formed in line a short distance in the rear, stacked our guns, and were going to make coffee and eat. Our center was the pike between the cotton gin and the Carter house. The first thing to attract our attention was a cannon shot from a Confederate gun. The ball rolled down the pike through our command; then began the rattle of musketry. Our brigade was quickly called to arms. Ahead of us we could see the line broken between the Carter house and cotton gin. We at once moved forward, and after a desperate struggle recaptured the works and all the Confederates inside of them as prisoners. This was the first I ever saw of*

*hand-to-and fighting. Bloody bayonets were frequently seen. Picks, shovels, pistols, and butts of guns were used on both sides to gain the mastery.*

*Then commenced a series of charges by the Confederates, lasting until after nightfall. One act of bravery I shall never forget. The color bearer of General Featherstone's headquarters flag rode a horse as close to the works as he could before the horse was killed, and then the bearer of hte flag ran to the top of the works and pitched forward (I supposed killed) inside, and as he fell I grabbed the flag. I ran out over the works about one hundred feet where I had noticed a flag go down. I picked up the flag, pulled it off the staff, and put it in my pocket. A fine-looking officer lying there covered with dead bodies asked me if I would remove them from his leg, as he was wounded in the knee. I got his leg free. Then he asked me for a drink out of my canteen. I leaned over and told him to drink. While he was drinking he asked me to unbuckle his sword belt, which I did. Just then I heard the wisp of a bullet, and, looking up, I saw another line about three hundred feet distant advancing. I turned and ran to our works, taking the belt and sword with me. The sword was the property of Col. Hugh Garland. I have no doubt but that I was the last person to whom Colonel Garland ever spoke. I have often wondered if any of his relatives were living. If so, I wish I could see them. I was glad to be able to give him a drink of water.--James K. Merrifield<sup>1</sup>*

- 1865 June 9: Mustered out of the US Army in Nashville, Tennessee.
- 1870 June 27: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Great Bend, Susquehanna County, PA showed James' wife Rhoda living with her parents. It is entirely possible he isn't listed as he is a conductor on the railroad and gone.
- 1875 April: The newspaper amusingly noted that "Tornado Jim sports a new hat."<sup>2</sup> "Tornado Jim" was a common and popular character in the society columns, at festivals, visiting friends or with just a friendly anecdote..etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Confederate Veteran, v. 16, pg 554 (accessed on googlebooks.com)

<sup>2</sup> The Weekly Caucasian, Lexington, MO, Saturday, 24 Apr 1875, pg. 3 (accessed newspapers.com)

**"Tornado Jim."**

The *Missouri Review*, has the following pleasant piece of personal gossip regarding James K. Merrifield, nephew of our esteemed townsman, Judge Merrifield of Hyde Park, and formerly connected with the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western railroad:

Mr. James K. Merrifield, late a passenger conductor on the Missouri Pacific, now passes through our city on local freight. Jim is one of the best railroad men that we have ever had the pleasure of meeting, and we predict that, inside of two months he will have gained more friends along the line of the road than any of his professional brethren.

Polite and accommodating to passengers and shippers, attentive to business at all times, and a thoroughbred gentleman in all the walks of life, is it any wonder he is beloved and respected by all?

He was conductor of a train on the Lexington branch, about two years since, that was completely wrecked by a tornado at Houstonia, and from that day to this he has been known by his friends, and especially the press, as "Tornado Jim."

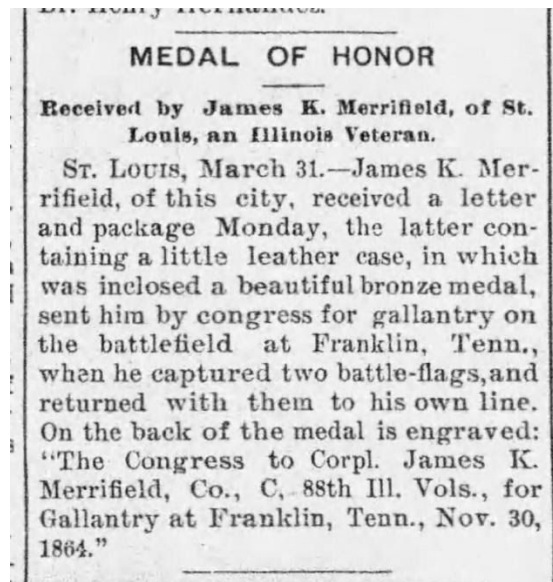
May he always be on time, make every connection, and never go in the ditch, is the earnest wish of the *Review* reporter.

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1880 June 7: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Lexington, Lafayette County, Missouri showed James, a railroad conductor, and Rhoda living with their son.

<sup>3</sup> The Tribune, Scranton, PA, Saturday, 23 Dec 1876, pg. 3 (accessed newspapers.com)  
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1896 April 3: *The Winston County Journal*, Louisville, MS.



April 9: *Chillicothe Gazette*, Chillicothe, OH.

*"A medal of honor has been awarded James K. Merrifield, late corporal, company C, Eighty-eighth Illinois infantry, for gallantry in action at the battle of Franklin, Tenn., November 30, 1864. Mr. Merrifield captured two battle flags from the enemy and returned with them to the union lines."*

1900 April 9: *The Sedalia Democrat*, Sedalia, MO.

*"Thirty years ago yesterday Conductor James K. Merrifield, the veteran of the Missouri Pacific, ran his first train into Sedalia, the division at the time extending from Jefferson City to Holden."*

June 11: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in St. Louis, St Louis County, MO showed James, a railroad conductor, and Rhoda living as boarders with a Winkoop family.

1908 June 17: *Sedalia Weekly Democrat*, Sedalia, MO

*"His real name was James K. Merrifield and he hailed from the coziest little Eden in the state of New York—Hyde Park. He had no need to go railroading, but he took a fancy to the life, just as the writer once took a fancy for the sea, which he followed for many a happy year.*

*He got the name Tornado Jim from no violence of temperament, for a more quiet, gentlemanly man never took up tickets in a car, albeit he had plenty of true course when it came in need. His train on Lexington Branch of the Missouri Pacific railway was completely blown from the track and wrecked in a fearful tornado a number of years ago, and since he has always been known as Tornado Jim."*

## AT THE BATTLE OF FRANKLIN.

A Pretty Little Story of a Great Fight  
in Which a St. Louis Man  
Is Conspicuous.

In a recent number of the Confederate Veteran, Mr. J. K. Merrifield of St. Louis had an article on the battle of Franklin, in which he related his own experiences in that bloody and momentous conflict. "After a charge by Gen. Cookrell's Missouri brigade," wrote Mr. Merrifield, "I ran out over the works about 100 feet where I had noticed a flag go down. I picked up the flag, pulled it off the staff and put it in my pocket. A fine-looking officer lying there covered with dead bodies asked me if I would remove them from his leg, as he was wounded in the knee. I got his leg free. Then he asked me for a drink out of my canteen. I leaned over and told him to drink. While he was drinking he asked me to unbuckle his sword belt, which I did. Just then I heard the wisp of a bullet, and looking up, I saw another line about 300 feet distant advancing. I turned and ran to our works, taking the belt and



James K. Merrifield.

sword with me. There I presented to the Historical society at St. Louis through Gen. Harding of Jefferson City.

"The flag was of the First Missouri infantry, and was destroyed in the big fire in Chicago. The sword was the property of Col. Hugh Garland, commanding the First Missouri regiment in that battle. Col. Garland was undoubtedly killed where he lay after I left him, as he was in the line of the firing. I have no doubt that I was the last person to whom Col. Garland ever spoke. I have often wondered if any of his relatives were living. If so, I wish I could see them. I was glad to be able to give him a drink of water."

A short time after the publication of Mr. Merrifield's article in the Confederate Veteran, he received an interesting letter from an ex-confederate who saw the water incident. The letter is dated at Washington, and says:

Dear Sir: I notice in the Confederate Veteran a very interesting article under the head of "The Other Side at Franklin," which reminds me so forcibly of what I saw and heard myself on that bloody battle field November 30, 1864. I was captain of Company B, Second and Sixth Missouri Infantry, Gen. Cookrell's brigade. In the famous charge made by the Missouri brigade I was seriously wounded in my right leg (which was amputated next day on the field) near the Federal breastworks close to the cotton gin, and not far from the Carter house. My wound was so serious that I could not crawl or get away, and while thus prostrated on the ground I was shot through the forearm, shattering both bones, and a few minutes thereafter I was again shot in my left shoulder. In this awful condition, with my clothes saturated with blood, and with hundreds of dead and wounded confederate soldiers lying almost in a heap about me, I beheld the dead body of Col. Hugh Garland, commanding the First Missouri regiment in this battle, who was killed by a second shot, and while prostrated on the ground, and many other wounded confederates were killed all around me while lying on the ground waltering in their own blood. I was not more than six feet from Col. Garland when a Federal soldier (to me unknown) did give Col. Garland water from his canteen and straighten him out on the ground, relieving him somewhat from the weight of other poor dying comrades. History will state that the battle of Franklin, Tenn., November 30, 1864, was the worst slaughter pen and the most bitterly contested of all of our battles with greater loss of life on the confederate side for the number engaged than any battle of the civil war. Franklin has an interest that no other battle field possesses. With the surrender of Gen. Lee at Appomattox almost in sight the heroism of the confederate soldier at the battle of Franklin has added another star to the shining crown of her achievements. Many confederate soldiers are anxious for the government to erect a monument to the valor of the soldier that wore the blue and to the soldier that wore the gray at the battle of Franklin. Will be pleased to hear from you on this important matter. I am, with greatest respect, J. M. HICKET,  
Captain late Company B and Sixth Infantry, C. S. A.

1910 April 21: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in St. Louis, St. Louis County, MO showed James, a railroad conductor, living with his wife Rhoda.

1916 September 7: James Merrifield died of a cerebral hemorrhage and was buried at Valhalla Cemetery.

September 8: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis, MO.

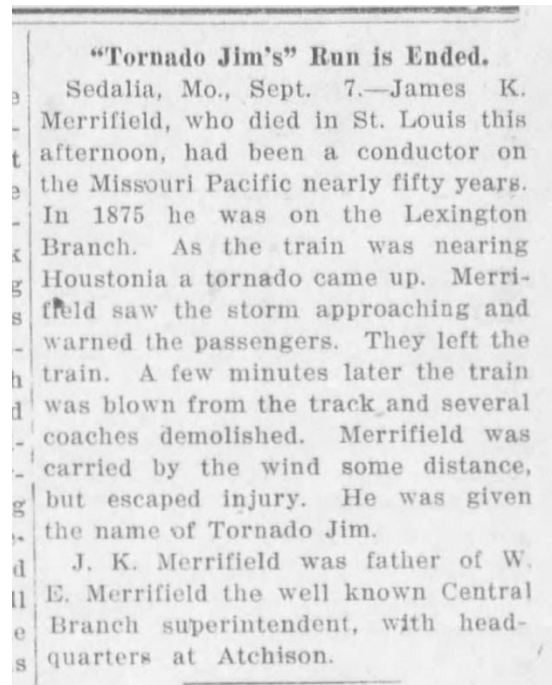
... to New St. Marcus Cemetery. (c)  
**MERRIFIELD** — Entered into rest suddenly, Thursday, Sept. 7, 1916. James K. Merrifield, beloved husband of Mrs. R. Merrifield, and dear father of Walter Merrifield, in his seventy-third year.  
Remains at Ambruster's chapel, 4234 Manchester avenue. Funeral from Ambruster's chapel, 4234 Manchester avenue, Saturday, Sept. 9, at 2:30 p. m. Motor. Deceased was a member of Ransom Post, G. A. R.; Order of Railway Conductors and Lexington Lodge of A. F. and A. M. of Lexington, Mo. (c)  
NEAF. Entered into rest on W...



<sup>5</sup> St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis, MO, Friday, 8 Sep 1916, pg. 16 (accessed newspapers.com)

<sup>6</sup> photo source waymarking.com/waymarks/WM8C3\_Corporal\_James\_K\_Merrifield\_St\_Louis\_MO KF2018

September 9: *The Beloit Daily Call*, Beloit, KS.



A short biographical sketch of James' son Walter, filled with information about James' life.

*"Walter E. Merrifield, superintendent of the Illinois division of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway Company. Mr. Merrifield was born at Great Bend, Pennsylvania, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 1867, and he grew to manhood under the influence of a railroad atmosphere. His father Conductor James K. Merrifield, who runs a Missouri pacific passenger train between St. Louis and Kansas City, has spent forty-two years in the service, beginning at Scranton, Pennsylvania, soon after the close of the war coming to the Mississippi valley country. Conductor Merrifield was born in the old Keystone state of the Union in 1844, and at the outbreak of the Civil war he was in Illinois, where he enlisted as a soldier In the Eighty-eighth Illinois Volunteer Infantry, in La Salle county. He was with Sherman's army that divided the Confederacy with its Atlanta campaign and then returned with Schofield in pursuit of General Hood and fought the battles of Franklin and Nashville, two of the momentous engagements of the war. Returning to his home in Pennsylvania after the close of hostilities, Mr. Merrifield, Sr., entered the field of railroad work, as already stated, and he was married at Great Bend, that state, to Miss Rhoda Crandall. He settled in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, many years ago, and as a Republican made the race in 1890 for railroad*

*commissioner as the nominee of his party. Missouri had not then turned its back upon the Democratic party and the whose ticket met defeat.”<sup>8</sup>*



Merrifield with his captured flag

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, George Washington, *A History of Southern Illinois: A Narrative Account of Its Historical Progress, Its People, and Its Principal Interests*, Volume 3

<sup>9</sup> *Confederate Veteran*, v. 16, pg 554 (accessed on googlebooks.com)  
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