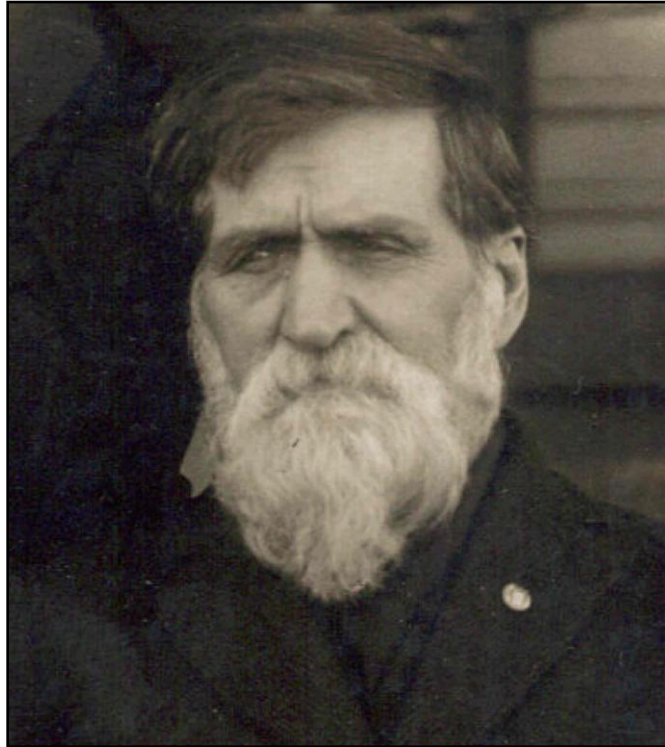


Corporal John Nelson Mays

6th West Virginia Cavalry (Formerly 3rd Infantry) – Companies A & F

Photos provided by Dan Cowgill.



John Nelson Mays enrolled at Morgantown on 7 June 1861 to serve with Company "A" 3rd (W) Virginia Infantry (Foot Volunteers) for three years. He mustered in 25 June 25, 1861 at Clarksburg. In January 1864, the 3rd Infantry Regiment was designated the 6th West Virginia Cavalry, and Mays was in Company "F." He mustered out on 1 Feb 1864 and re-enlisted as a Veteran Volunteer on 5 Feb in Company "F." He was appointed Corporal on 15 Oct 1864, and served beyond the duration of the Civil War. His service details are described in the biography below.

The History of West Virginia, Old and New. Published 1923, The American Historical Society, Inc., Chicago and New York, Volume III, pg. 409

W. J. MAYS is the present efficient sheriff of Taylor County, was for a number of years in the police and mechanical service of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and has been a resident of Taylor County since he was two years old. He represents one of the pioneer families of West Virginia.

His pioneer ancestor was William Mays, who served with Virginia troops in the Mexican war, and spent his last years in Monongalia County, being buried in the family graveyard near Fannie Furnace in that county. His son, Frederick Mays, was born in Monongalia County, and married Eleanor Snider, a native of Preston County and daughter of John Snider. They had a large family of children, including three sets of twins: Jacob, Lewis S., James M., Mary E., who married George Boylan; Sarah E., who married William LaRue; John N.; Margaret A., who married Jake Ecoff; Sophia D., who married Wesley Hartman; Kate, who married John Smith; Richard C.; and Martha A., who became the wife of William Grimes.

John Nelson Mays, father of Sheriff Mays, is a retired farmer at Thornton in Taylor County. He was born in Marion County, February 4, 1843, but grew up near Independence, Preston County, where he acquired a subscription school education and a practical knowledge of farming. He has one of the most notable war records of the surviving soldiers of the Union. He was eighteen when in May, 1861, he joined at Morgantown, Company A of the Third Infantry, under Capt. J. J. Thompson and Col. David T. Hughes. After a period of training at Clarksburg the company was assigned to guard duty on the Parkersburg branch of the Baltimore & Ohio. After six months the regiment was put on scout duty with the Mountain Department of West Virginia, and after about two years the regiment was mounted and became the Fifth Infantry. While in service in the Valley of Virginia it participated in the battles of McDowell, Cloyd Mountain, Cross Keys, Port Republic and Culpeper, and fourteen days of fighting along the Rappahanock River. It was on patrol duty in Washington when Lincoln was assassinated and during the closing scenes of the war, including the Grand Review. In the meantime the regiment had been organized as the Sixth West Virginia Cavalry. After the war the Sixth Regiment was ordered to duty on the western plains, Mr. Mays in the meantime having re-enlisted. They proceeded by rail to Fort Leavenworth, and thence across the plains to Fort Laramie, Wyoming, to open the mail route closed by Indian hostilities. A year later Mr. Mays was returned to Fort Leavenworth, where he was discharged in June, 1866. In the first years of his army experience he was twice taken prisoner, first near Morefield Gap by General Rosser and Green's Confederate command, and later by the same forces at New Creek, now Keyser, West Virginia. Both times he made his escape from his captors. Later, in Nebraska, he was with a force guarding an ox-train carrying Government supplies. One evening he and a comrade were about a mile from camp looking for game. By some strange premonition he sensed danger, though there were no Indians in sight, and when his companion refused to leave off hunting he rode to the corral. He never saw his fellow hunter again, since he was hardly in camp when a band of 400 warriors came by, capturing his comrade and stampeding some cattle in another wagon train camped nearby.

John N. Mays had three brothers in the Union Army, Jacob, Lewis S. and Frederick G. After his discharge at Port Leavenworth John N. Mays was returned to Wheeling, where he was mustered out, and he soon resumed the routine of civil life as a farmer in Preston County, and later moved to Taylor County. He has always been a republican, never active in politics, held a commission for some years as notary public, and is a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His first wife was Miss Phoebe Griffith, a native of Preston County and daughter of Ebenezer Griffith. She died three years after their marriage, as the result of an overdose of

morphine administered by a physician. One of her two children died in infancy and the other is W. J. Mays. On March 10, 1875, John N. Mays married Miss Emma Hardinger in Taylor County, where she was born, August 10, 1861, daughter of Moses and Julia N. (Rose) Hardinger, natives of Pennsylvania and farmers in Taylor County. Emma was one of a family of five sons and four daughters, and three others are still living. The children of John N. Mays by his second marriage are: Ola, wife of Allen DeMoss, of Thornton; Alonzo, of Detroit, Michigan; Grace, who married Robert Travis, of Thornton; Ira E., of Detroit; Chauncey, of Richmond, Virginia; and Pearl, wife of Edward Haines, of Cumberland, Maryland.



John N. & Emma (Hardinger) Mays

