

5. Elijah Shipley Grisham, Texas Frontier Cavalry

Elijah Shipley Grisham was born on May 2, 1840 in Washington County, Tennessee, probably in an area known as Buffalo Ridge near Johnson City. His parents, John Fuller and Mary Shipley Grisham (or Gresham),¹ were also born in Washington County. It is reported in "The History of Wise County, a Link with the Past" that the Grishams moved to Texas in 1853 but it is not clear whether this is referring only to John's brother, George or if John and family also moved. By 1860, John and Mary were living in Arkansas and there is no record of their living in Texas. Elijah and his older brother, Nathan, definitely went to Texas; Elijah was there during the first part of the 1860s and Nathan was there at least from 1861 to the end of his life.

In 1860, Elijah lived with his cousin, Nathan Billingsley, and Nathan's wife Nancy and worked as a laborer near Alvarado, Johnson County, Texas which is south of Fort Worth. Elijah's and Nathan's mothers were sisters.

Elijah and his brother, Nathan, enlisted as privates in the Texas Frontier Cavalry Regiment on Mar. 11, 1862 at Fort Belknap. It is unlikely that they knew it – or that they would have cared if they did – but the Commander in Chief of the Union Army, President Lincoln, was their fourth cousin, once removed. They all descended from Adam Shipley who emigrated from England in 1668 and settled in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The "History of Wise County," records that their uncle, George Grisham, also enlisted. George was a minister in the Christian church and was sixty-seven years old at the time. He fought in the War of 1812 and in the Battle of New Orleans. George was not found on any of the enlistment rolls so it's likely that he volunteered at Fort Belknap as a civilian.

The Frontier Regiment was established on December 21, 1861, by the Texas legislature, to replace the (Confederate) First Regiment, Texas Mounted Riflemen. On January 29, 1862, Governor Francis R. Lubbock appointed the ranking officers of the regiment: Col. James M. Norris, Lt. Col. Alfred T. Obenchain and Maj. James E.

¹ There were a couple of generations that spelled their name with an "i" instead of an "e". It is not clear when or why the change was made. . Changes in spelling also occurred in other branches of the Gresham family. It seemed to happen when they moved south, but that may just be a coincidence. One source suggests that Elijah's great-great grandfather, Thomas, adopted the "i" to distinguish himself from the non-Whig members of the family. Elijah's children changed the name back to Gresham. Elijah's cousin, Peter (son of George Hale Grisham), used the "e" – including when referring to and addressing Elijah. Both spellings show up in other places in reference to the same individuals. Since Elijah is referred to as both "Gresham" and "Grisham" in different documents it is not even clear which he preferred. The differences may be more a matter of literacy or penmanship than preference. Ancestors of author, John Grisham, kept the "i". (He and I descend from Edward Gresham who lived in England from 1590 to 1626.) "Grisham" is used in this narrative as this is consistent with all the war records and seems to be the dominant spelling while the family was in Texas.

McCord. Obenchain was killed shortly after the organization and McCord succeeded him as Lieutenant Colonel.



Important Places for Elijah Shipley Grisham

The new law directed that the companies of the Frontier Regiment be divided into detachments of at least twenty-five men each, stationed twenty-five miles apart and just west of the line of settlements from the Red River to the Rio Grande. Between March 17 and April 7, 1862, Norris and his officers rode along the proposed line and established sixteen camps to be occupied by the regiment: Rio Grande Station and camps Cureton, Belknap, Breckenridge, Salmon, Pecan, Collier, McMillan, San Saba, Llano, Davis, Verde, Montel, Dix, Nueces, and Rabb. Eventually, only nine companies of the regiment entered the service, as a Confederate regiment under John S. (Rip) Ford occupied the line from Fort Brown to Fort Bliss. In its first six months on duty the regiment, 1,050 men strong, established patrols from each adjacent camp at two-day intervals; each patrol usually consisted of five privates and one officer. The Indians soon discovered the weakness of a patrol system so familiar in routine and during the winter of 1862-63 began to make more numerous and bolder raids.

On January 17, 1862, the Confederate Congress authorized the secretary of war to receive the Frontier Regiment into Confederate service for the protection of the Indian frontier of Texas. Five days later, however, President Jefferson Davis vetoed the bill because it withheld the control of the executive of the Confederate States over the troops. Texas wished to absolve itself of the expense of maintaining the regiment but insisted that the regiment be kept under state control to ensure the best possible protection for the frontier.

In early 1863 Governor Lubbock attempted once more to transfer the regiment to Confederate service. To meet Confederate Army regulations he disbanded the regiment and reorganized it into a full complement of ten companies with the new title of Mounted Regiment, Texas State Troops, although Texans continued to call it by its original name. At the reorganization McCord was elected colonel and James Buckner Barry lieutenant colonel and it eventually became known as "McCord's Frontier Regiment." Elijah and Nathan Grisham were discharged from their initial enlistment and reenlisted on January 2, 1863 for a three-year term under the command of Colonel McCord. Once more President Davis refused to accept the regiment if hampered by the condition that it remain under Texas control; it remained on the frontier, still funded by Texas authorities.

Detachments of the regiment now occupied a number of other posts in addition to the original sixteen camps, including previously abandoned United States Army forts. Colonel McCord, with evidence before him that the patrol system was breaking down, ordered it discontinued; instead larger numbers of rangers swept to the west and northwest of their camps. With these changes, the regiment's effectiveness increased in late 1863 a new frontier defense system was initiated.

Finally, state authorities transferred the regiment to Confederate control, but only after the legislature approved the establishment of the Frontier Organization as the 46th Texas Cavalry to ensure protection of the frontier. The transfer took place officially on March 1, 1864. At the same time the ten companies were reduced in number to only eighty men each so that two additional companies could be formed. Two months later the six southern companies moved to the interior to replace troops stripped from the coast. With the immediate threat of Union invasion from Louisiana and Arkansas, a portion of the 46th, with McCord leading, was sent to East Texas defenses

In August 1864 Barry received orders to transfer his four companies from the Fort Belknap region to Harrisburg, near Houston, leaving only a two company battalion at Camp Colorado on the frontier. Barry's men returned to the northwest frontier in October, but the six southern companies remained for the rest of the war chiefly in the central sub-district.

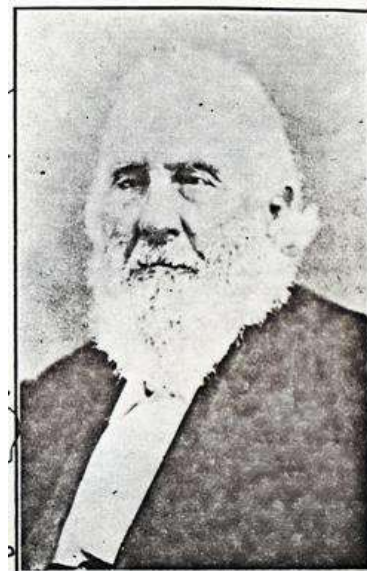
The Frontier Regiment's six companies were joined by two other organizations to cover the northwestern settlement line. Capt. Henry S. Fossett's two companies at Camp Colorado patrolled south of that point; Barry's four-company battalion covered the region between Camp Colorado and Fort Belknap; Col. James G. Bourland's Border Regiment protected the region from the Red River to Fort Arbuckle in Indian Territory, and companies of the Frontier Organization covered gaps among the other units. During the last eighteen months of the war the Frontier Regiment found that the Indian menace on the frontier was often overshadowed by use of the frontier units to enforce Confederate conscription laws, arrest deserters, and track down renegades and outlaws. When the Frontier Cavalry Regiment was formed in 1864, there were 1240 men in the unit and by April 1865, there were only 102. The few remaining men disbanded prior to the surrender in 1865. Colonel McCord returned to civilian life as a Texas farmer and rancher, eventually becoming a bank president.

According to his widow's pension application, Nathan continued to serve until the end of the war, except for a period of time when he was recovering from a wound. He was discharged in 1865. Nathan continued to live in Texas in the Paradise and Veal Station areas until his death in 1899.

George returned to Washington County, Tennessee and died at the age of 83. More information about George is provided in Chapter 11.

Galveston Weekly News,
July 20, 1864, p1c5 .

. " ... The line of defense as established by the State under the direction of Colonel McCord, that has been so remarkably successful — no important Indian bands in this section ever having penetrated or passed through it — has been strengthened north of Belknap by twenty-five hundred [2,500 Confederate] cavalymen, the substance of the families of absent soldiers has been consumed by useless soldiery and their service needed elsewhere. Not an Indian has been seen in the country this year. Major Quayle's command organized under the direction of the State authorities numbers fifteen hundred and seventeen [1,517] men and Colonel Bourland's near one thousand [1,000] and other troops are near at hand; this is besides the Frontier regiment. ..."



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REV. GEORGE GRESHAM.



Elijah Shipley Grisham

No record of Elijah's discharge has been located. His grand-daughter, Bernice Gresham Roberts, speculated that he deserted but there is no record to support that idea either. He may have been among the last men in the unit with McCord that disbanded near the end of the war, he might have stayed with Barry at Fort Belknap or he may have left the unit sooner. That may never be known. Whether the troopers who left the unit near the end of war were deserters is debatable as their situation and what orders they received from McCord are unknown and their status in the Confederate Army was always somewhat tenuous.

We do know that Elijah moved to Arkansas and married Harriet Frances Jones in 1866. They had eleven children and lived in Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and perhaps other places. Elijah died at the home of his daughter, Mary, in Iowa in 1901.

References

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5. "Texas Frontier Regiment," <http://freepages.family.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~bowen/txfrontierregiment.html>
6. "J. E. McCord," from B. B. Paddock, *History and Biographical Record of North and West Texas* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1906), Vol. I, pp. 129-130. <http://www.genealogymagazine.com/jemccord.html>
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9. *Frontier Regiment, Texas Cavalry (46th Regiment Cavalry)*, National Park Service, *The Civil War*, http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment_id=CTXFRONRC
10. *An Interview with Bernice [Gresham] Roberts regarding Elijah Shipley Gresham (her grandfather)*, October 18, 1997 by Bob Gresham (Elijah's Great-Great-Grandson)