

This month I'm going to cover Scout Fletcher Vilott.

Fletcher is often forgotten as being one of the Scouts from the Saline Valley, as soon after returning from Beecher Island, he left Lincoln County. Fletcher had come to Kansas with his father's family in the mid 1850's from Fayette County, Indiana (near the author's ancestors) and settled in Nemaha County in northeastern Kansas. About 1867 Fletcher moved to the Saline River Valley, settling near present day Beverly, Kansas where he farmed and ranched. Many of the future Forsyth Scouts were among his neighbors.

When Jack Peate was recruiting Scouts, Fletcher was recruited. In Orvel Criqui's "Fifty Fearless Men," it states that Fletcher was putting up hay when Peate found him. He agreed to go, unhitched his team, turned loose the rest of his stock and by evening was at Fort Harker. By 10 p. m. the Scouts were on the train on their way to Fort Hays. (This is when Peate and the other 7 Scouts with him were left behind.)

In the battle, the first day, Fletcher was wounded in the leg, but not immobilized. He was with Scouts Lewis Farley, George B. Clark and Henry Tucker during the first day's battle. Fletcher said that his mare was the last horse to fall. After the Indians had departed, Fletcher and Eli Zigler were out for a walk around camp on September 27, and Fletcher was telling Eli that he had had a dream that something would happen that day, either the Indians would return or relief would arrive. A few minutes later they spotted movement to the south, which proved to be Scouts Jack Peate, John Donovan and the other lead scouts of the relief column.

Sometime after returning from the Beecher Island fight, Fletcher moved back to his father's home in northeastern Kansas where he was enumerated in the 1870 census. Soon after that he moved to Jewell County, Kansas, settling 7 miles southwest of Mankato, where he married, raised his family and lived and farmed until his death.

In 1899, at the first Beecher Island Reunion, on the 31st anniversary of the battle, (Scouts Smith, Tucker and Peate having returned to Colorado to find the Island in 1898 on the 30th anniversary), Fletcher was the first speaker at the first organized reunion. Several clippings excerpted from the Wray Rattler, covering the first reunion, are transcribed farther below.

Fletcher attended at least the first reunion at Beecher Island and possibly a few more. About 1910 he suffered a stroke that left him bedridden the rest of his life. Before Beecher Island, Fletcher may have served as a Scout for the 9th Cavalry, but this is unconfirmed. He had two brothers, Harrison and Sneathen in the Civil War. His brother, Private Harrison Vilott, Company H, 36th Indiana Infantry, was killed June 19, 1864 near Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia. He is buried at Marietta National Cemetery, Marietta, Georgia. Sneathen Vilott, served in the same Company, survived the war and lived near Fletcher in Jewell County, Kansas. Fletcher named his first born son, Harrison, in honor of his deceased brother.

War would not leave the Vilott household in peace. During World War I, Fletcher's youngest son, Fletcher L. Vilott, registered for the draft on June 5, 1917. Soon after he was drafted or enlisted, was sent to Europe and only seven days before the Armistice, was killed, while serving with Company G, 355th Infantry Regiment, 89th Infantry Division.

There were three other Fletcher Vilott's in the family, Fletcher's son, Fletcher L, a nephew, Fletcher B. and a grandson, Fletcher A.

1. **Fletcher James Vilott** was born NOV-03-1832 in Laurel, Franklin County, Indiana, (son of James Vilott and Mary Ann _____) and died FEB-15-1912 near Mankato, Jewell County, Kansas and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

He married Lettie Lucetta Frazier, MAR-08-1873 in Mankato, Jewell County, Kansas. She was born NOV-29-1852 in DeKalb, Saint Lawrence County, New York, (daughter of W. P. Frazier and _____) and died OCT-25-1935 in Mankato, Jewell County, Kansas and is buried, next to Fletcher, in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas. (Lettie was from the same area as Scout John Hurst, I wonder if they were acquainted?)

Children:

- i. Harrison "Harry" Vilott was born JAN-26-1875 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas, died there APR-06-1895 and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.
2. ii. Edith E. Vilott was born SEP-__-1877.
3. iii. Earl Burton Vilott was born OCT-20-1880.
4. iv. Walter Oliver Vilott was born SEP-19-1883.
5. v. Ethel "Alma" Vilott was born MAR-20-1887.
- vi. Millie P. Vilott was born MAY-10-1889 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died there JUN-18-1889 and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.
- vii. Jessie I. Vilott was born AUG-24-1890 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died APR-__-1979 in Hiawatha, Brown County, Kansas and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

She married Harry Arthur Chandler, MAR-14-1923 in Burlington, Kit Carson County, Colorado. He was born MAY-04-1900 in or near Burlington, Kit Carson County, Colorado, (son of Virginius H. Chandler and Elizabeth E. _____) and died NOV-25-1963 in Burr Oak, Jewell County, Kansas and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

6. viii. Fletcher L. Vilott was born SEP-19-1893.

Generation Two

2. **Edith E. Vilott** was born SEP-__-1877 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died __-__-1920 in _____, Jewell County, Kansas and is

buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

She married Charles E. Moyer, SEP-07-1896 in _____, Jewell County, Kansas. He was born OCT-__-1871 in _____, Jasper County, Indiana, (son of John Moyer and Rachel H. Freeland) and died DEC-20-1945 in Burr Oak, Jewell County, Kansas and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

Children:

7. i. Zella Nita Moyer was born DEC-19-1896.
8. ii. Zeta A. Moyer was born AUG-13-1902.
- iii. Marion C. Moyer was born SEP-17-1904 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died of a heart attack during a hunting trip on DEC-06-1975 near Ionia, Jewell County, Kansas and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

He married Eleanor _____. She was born SEP-04-1908 and died OCT-__-1985 and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

9. iv. Cecil W. Moyer was born NOV-18-1909.

3. **Earl Burton Vilott** was born OCT-20-1880 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died ___-__-1944 in Burlington, Kit Carson County, Colorado and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas. He farmed and ranched.

He married (1) Alveretta "Maude" Johnson, NOV-27-1907 in _____, Jewell County, Kansas. She was born NOV-24-1889 in Ebson, Jewell County, Kansas, (daughter of William Albert Johnson and Mary Elnor Hill) and died FEB-26-1922 in Burlington, Kit Carson County, Colorado and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

He married (2) Lyda E. Vine, MAR-24-1927 in _____, Kit Carson County, Colorado. She was born JUN-08-1892 in Kansas and died ___-__-1969 in Burlington, Kit Carson County, Colorado, buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Ellis, Kansas.

Children:

- i. Velma Vilott was born SEP-28-1910 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died there MAY-03-1911 and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.
- ii. Thelma Lavona Vilott was born MAR-26-1912 in Limestone

Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died JUL-__-1968 in Burr Oak, Jewell County.

She married (1) Philip Paddock, JUN-03-1930 in _____, Mesa County, Colorado.

She married (2) Rolland H. Hafer, MAR-19-1932 in _____, Cheyenne County, Colorado.

She married (3) _____ Elledge.

10. iii. Fletcher Amanuel Vilott born APR-11-1920.

4. **Walter Oliver Vilott** was born SEP-19-1883 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died MAY-1_-1967 in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska and is buried in Lincoln Memorial Park, Lincoln, Nebraska. He was a locomotive engineer.

He married Lydia E. Sell, DEC-28-1910 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. She was born OCT-06-1888 in _____, Clay County, Nebraska (daughter of Henry Sell and Katrina _____) and died JUN-24-1976 in Gretna, Sarpy County, Nebraska and is buried in Lincoln Memorial Park, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Child: (Lydia's niece)

- i. Anna Margaret (Sell) Vilott was born APR-09-1922 in Nebraska and died JUL-09-2006 in Gretna, Sarpy County, Nebraska.

She married Robert William Rustermier Jr., DEC-28-1942 in Nebraska. He was born JAN-06-1922 in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska (son of Robert William Rustermier Sr, and Sophia _____) and died JUL-09-1989 in Gretna, Sarpy County, Nebraska.

5. **Ethel "Alma" Vilott** was born MAR-20-1887 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died JAN-02-1918 in Mankato, Jewell County, Kansas and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

She married Gilbert Clayton Jordan, FEB-18-1908 in Jewell County, Kansas. He was born OCT-21-1888 in Buffalo Township, Jewell County, Kansas, (son of James Robert Jordan and Mary "Ersula" Durkee) and died MAR-19-1949 in

Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. He later re-married and had a large family.

Child:

- i. Linden Vilott Jordan was born SEP-09-1909 in Center Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died NOV-25-1984 in Bremerton, Kitsap County, Washington.

6. **Fletcher L. Vilott** was born SEP-19-1893 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and was killed seven days before the Armistice on NOV-04-1918 in France and is buried in Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, Romagne, France.

Shortly before leaving for Europe, he married Flora Moorman, FEB-05-1917 in Burr Oak, Jewell County, Kansas. She was born MAY-23-1895 in Burr Oak, Jewell County, Kansas, (daughter of Zechariah Moorman and Lora Ellen Livingstone) and died ___-__-19__ in _____, _____ County, _____, buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, _____.

Children:

- i. Gloren DeRon Vilott was born AUG-23-1917 in Burr Oak, Jewell County, Kansas and died there SEP-20-1917 in and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Mankato, Kansas.

Generation Three

7. **Zella Nita Moyer** was born DEC-19-1896 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died OCT-__-1982 in Washington, D. C.

She married (1) William L. Fell.

She married (2) J. W. Simms.

Children:

- i. Vivian E. Fell.
- ii. Robert J. Fell.

8. **Zeta A. Moyer** was born AUG-13-1902 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas, died JUL-__-1995 in Washington, D.C.

She married Paul D. Burr.

Child:

11. i. Patricia Burr was born JUL-03-1930.

9. **Cecil W. Moyer** was born NOV-18-1909 in Limestone Township, Jewell County, Kansas and died OCT-07-1983 in St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, Hiawatha, Kansas.

He married Armista Pendergrass.

Children:

They had six children. Living descendants of this branch were recently located.

10. **Fletcher Amanuel Vilott** was born APR-11-1920 in Bethune, Kit Carson, County, Colorado, died AUG-__-1981 in Nevada, Story County, Iowa.

He married (1) Hilda Charlotte Johanna Ratueke. She was born OCT-20-1919 in Hanover, Washington County, Kansas, (daughter of Theodore Carl Dietrich Rateuke and Anna Sophie Dorthea Steffens) and died OCT-06-1957 in a auto accident near Littleton, Arapahoe County, Colorado.

He married (2) Nellie Bly Burchard. She was born JAN-01-1914 in St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri, (daughter of Roy Burchard and Mary E. Bartlett) and died SEP-01-1981 in Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, buried in _____ Cemetery, _____, _____.

Children:

They are believed to have had four children.

Generation Four

11. **Patricia Burr** was born JUL-03-1930 in Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska and died in the 1970's probably in Bloomington, Illinois.

She married Robert E. "Bob" Abbuehl, SEP-19-1951 in Baltimore, Baltimore County, Maryland. He was born MAY-22-1925 in Holton, Jackson County, Kansas, (son of Ross Harry Abbuehl and Lillian H. Volk) and died OCT-18-2005 in Urbana, Champaign County, Illinois, buried in Riverside Cemetery, Champaign, Illinois.

Children:

They are thought to have had twin sons.

THE THIRTY- FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Of the Battle of Col. Forsyth's Company of Brave Scout with the Indians

The Thrilling Story of the Battle and Siege is

Retold by Four of the Survivors

September 17, 1899, was the thirty-first anniversary of the battle of Beecher Island, and a large number of people gathered to hear the recital of the details of the battle and to participate in services appropriate to the occasion, to revive the patriotism and to perpetuate the memory of the brave and valiant men who fought and died on the little island in the Arickaree.

The ceremonies were conducted by the Vernon and Wray G.A.R. posts, lead by T.A. Wilson of Wray post.

On the afternoon of the preceding day a number of comrades of Vernon and Wray posts, together with Maj. Hays and Messrs, Eli Ziegler and Fletcher Vilott, the latter, two of the survivors of the battle, visited the island and marked places on interest and otherwise prepared the battlegrounds for the services of the morrow. Messrs. Chalmers Smith and James Peate joined the party on the grounds during the afternoon, having driven over from Goodland, Kan. The meeting of the comrades was very touching. They had not seen each other for thirty-one years, but, recognition was instantaneous. And as they clasped hands they were overcome with past recollections; their voices trembled, and finally they could do nothing but stand and gaze at one another through tear dimmed eyes. Those who witnessed the meeting say that it was good to be there, that they appreciated their feeling and their hearts went out them in sympathy. And why should they not? They, too, have comrades who fought by their side, who shared their little all. And their hearts long to grasp them by the hand and to

greet and welcome them after so long an absence. After a walk over the grounds the graves of the dead scouts were marked, as also the place where Roman Nose made his charge and where the daring chief fell. In the talk of Messrs. Vilotte and Peate on Sunday afternoon these places and many others were pointed out, which served to make their talk much more interesting. (End of excerpt)

Fletcher Vilott was the first of the survivors to speak. He told practically the same story as written by Colonel Forsyth, which is now running in the paper. As he proceeded with his story he pointed out the various places and gave such a vivid description of the incident connected with it that it was an easy matter to conjure up the actors in the scene and imagine the battle transpiring before the eyes. He was an interesting speaker and he had an interesting subject. Mr. Vilott has been a resident of Mankato, Kas., for some time where he became personally acquainted with two of our townsmen, Messrs. L. M. Butts and J. W. Pickle.

Eli Ziegler (Zigler) was the next speaker. He said that all he had to say was told by his predecessor, which struck his auditors as very peculiar, as he was said to have been the wit of the command and could talk all around the others. He is now a resident of Fort Collins, Colo.

Chalmers Smith came next. He spoke briefly, introducing his friend, James J. Peate, the guide of the relief train. He said that "Peate" would interest his hearers, and he did. Jack Peate was a

member of the company of scouts, but had been detailed on special duty and did not return to Fort Wallace until two days after the departure of Colonel Forsyth's command. On the arrival at the fort of messengers, Donovan and Pliley, he was detailed to guide the relief train under Colonel Carpenter to the island. The story of his fear and anxiety for the safety of his comrades, his hurry to their relief, made a very pretty story and was greatly appreciated. Messrs, Smith and Peate now live in Beverly, Kan. (End of excerpt)

Notes

Fletcher Vilott returned home Tuesday.

A number of relics were found, such as cartridges, shells, bullets, arrowheads, etc.

Chalmers Smith and J. J. Peate drove to Goodland (Kansas) Monday. They took Eli Zeigler with them.

During the entire day crowds surrounded the four survivors, who answered questions constantly.

A brass cavalry spur, which was found on the Island some time ago, was exhibited by F. A. Gr__tsinger.

Wray and Vernon post were fairly well represented, and those of the comrades who participated eviuced a deep interest.

Several loaded shells were dug up in the vicinity of the pit where Wm. Wilson was killed, and it is presumed that they belonged to him. . (End of excerpt)