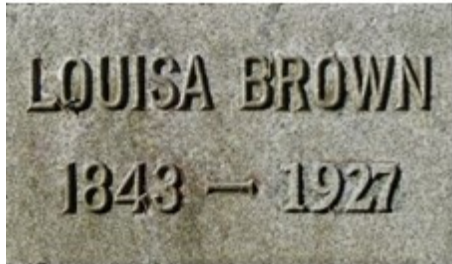


Levi Brown

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Levi Brown was a Union Army Veteran who lived on Lower Arch Street and worked for James White for many years as a teamster at the Butler Coal and Lumber Company.

He was born in Wanaque, New Jersey on June 20, 1844, the son of Abram Brown and Sarah Lines. Levi worked on his father's farm in the summer and attended school in the winter. On September 1, 1863, at the age of 18, he enlisted in the Union Army and three days later, he was mustered into Company D of the 33rd Regiment NJ Infantry. He received a \$100 bounty, \$25 up front and the balance at the end of his three-year enlistment, minus expenses.

The 33rd NJ was a Veteran Regiment; 85 percent of its men had seen prior service in the war. About half of them came from Newark and the other half from Passaic, Morris, Essex, and Hudson counties. Levi was one of a minority of "bounty men," draftees, and substitutes. Over the course of the war President Lincoln requested a quota of 78,000 men from New Jersey; more than 80,000 men served.

Sympathy for the South was so strong in New Jersey that one newspaper referred to it as "the northernmost Southern State." Fueled by anti-war editorials calling for NJ boys to "step up and be butchered," riots erupted in Newark in the summer of 1863 when Lincoln called for a draft of "able-bodied men." When Levi and the volunteers of the 33rd left Camp Frelinghuysen for Washington D.C. on September 8, 1863, guards had to escort them to the train to protect them from protesters and to prevent desertions. Thirty-nine officers and 901 non-commissioned officers and privates were assigned to the First Brigade, Second Division of the Eleventh Army Corps.

Nineteen-year old colonel George Mindil outfitted his new regiment in fancy blue "Zouave" uniforms that copied the famous Algerian soldiers that fought for the French Army in the Crimean War. The uniforms proved impractical under battlefield conditions, however, and were soon replaced by standard issue uniforms. After leading the 33rd over 2,500 miles, 1,700 on foot, and through twelve major battles, at the age of twenty-two, Mindil became one of the youngest

generals in the Union Army. By the end of the war, the 33rd had the well-earned reputation of being one of New Jersey's most outstanding regiments.

On November 23, 1863, Levi and the 33rd saw their first major action in the attack on the important railroad center of Chattanooga, TN. In December, he contracted dysentery and in January, came down with a severe cold that was later diagnosed as typhoid fever. He was sent to the hospital at Lookout Valley, TN, where he spent the next six weeks, much of the time unconscious. Once recovered, he returned to his regiment just in time to participate in the fighting around Dallas, GA on May 25, 1864. The Confederates were prepared to defend the city of Atlanta with everything they had. At the Battle of New Hope Church, Levi and the rest of the 33rd were ordered to attack a well-dug-in rebel artillery emplacement. When the smoke cleared, sixteen hundred Union soldiers had fallen. Levi had the tip of his right index finger blown off by grape shot. Considering the slaughter, he probably considered himself lucky to have escaped with his life. He was sent back to the hospital at Lookout Valley and remained there for the next nine weeks recovering from his wound.

On October 28, 1864 Levi was temporarily assigned to Company A, Second Battalion Convalescent Troops at Fort Rosecrans outside Murfreesboro, TN. He was present for roll call back with the 33rd during March and April of 1865, which means he may have seen action at the battles of Averasboro and Bentonville, in North Carolina. Word of General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox reached the 33rd while they were camped at Smithfield, NC. After a "jubilant" celebration, they were reminded that the war wasn't over because they were engaged in a fight with retreating rebel cavalry for the rest of the afternoon. On April 26th they started their long march home. They marched through the nearly destroyed confederate capital of Richmond, VA and arrived in Washington DC. in time to participate in the "Grand Review of the Army" down Pennsylvania Avenue. They remained in camp at Alexandria, VA until the regiment was mustered out of service on July 17, 1865.

In less than two years, the 33rd fought in twelve major battles and an equal number of skirmishes. The regiment was twice filled with replacements and in the campaign from Chattanooga to Atlanta, lost 300 men. Twenty-one-year-old Levi returned to his father's farm in Pompton, but many of his friends and relatives never returned. Sixty-three hundred New Jersey men died in the war from wounds and disease.

It's not clear how much of the remaining \$75 bounty money he received. A number of times he spent \$4 buying goods from sutters. It may have come from his bounty money or it may have come from his \$13 a month soldier's pay. The war was over and as a wounded veteran, Levi qualified for a pension of \$8 a month.

Shortly after his discharge, he took a job as a foreman on a farm near Rockaway at Powerville, NJ. About a year later he was working on a farm in Pompton Plains. He lived there for two years and for a while worked "cutting turf with a square knife." Levi probably worked for the Lewis Elsberg Company. They ran a mule-drawn railroad that carried peat from the Bog Fly Meadows to their processing works in Beavertown (Lincoln Park) on the north side of the Morris Canal, where it was dried, pressed, and sold as fuel.



On August 18, 1868, Levi married Louisa Riley. Louisa's father James worked at the forge in Ringwood. Her mother, Mary Rogers, also came from a family of Ringwood ironworkers. The new family moved to Newark where Levi worked on a "horse car railroad." For two years he was a driver but was forced to give it up because of poor health. He then worked as a "night starter." His job was to blow a whistle to start the trolleys and keep them running on time. Their first child, Louis A. Brown, was born on June 20, 1873 and two years later, a second son, Harry W. Brown, was born. It was a family tragedy when five-year-old Harry died in 1880. After five years in Newark, Levi returned to Pompton, first doing light work on a farm in Bloomingdale, then, for about eight months, he worked in a rubber mill tending a pair of rollers.

Because of his deteriorating health, on April 4, 1879, at the age of 35, Levi applied for a veteran's invalid pension. He traveled to Newark and underwent a physical examination to determine the extent of his disability. He brought with him an affidavit from his doctor, William A. Smith M.D., who attested to treating Levi for disease of the heart and lungs due to the typhoid fever he contracted while in the army.

During the time that Dr. Smith treated him, Levi was "unable to perform any manual labor requiring great exertion." Friends and relatives like Martin Cook, Peter Decker, John Baldwin, and Isaiah Riley all signed sworn statements that, like Isaiah said, "Levi was a sound young man when he left for the war, but he returned a broken man not able to make a full living." The pension board ruled that Levi was entitled to 2/18th pension for the loss of the tip of his finger and 6/18th pension for the damage to his heart and lungs. That makes a total of 8/18th or a little less than half a full invalid pension.

The 1900 Federal Census lists Levi's son, Louis, as a telegraph operator and Levi as a team driver. We know he was working for the Butler Coal and Lumber Company because he is named as a company teamster in the May 12, 1905 issue of the Butler Argus. On June 3, 1912, Levi was receiving a pension of \$16.50 a month, which was increased to \$21.50 in 1914, and to \$27.00 in 1919. On May 1, 1920, Congress increased a full veteran invalid pension to \$72.00; Levi got \$50.00. On November 20, 1926, he applied for a pension increase to \$90.00 a month, but two weeks later, on December 5, 1926, Levi passed away at his home on Arch Street at the age of 82. He is buried in the Historic Manning Cemetery with his wife, Louisa, and their son, Harry.

There is a great turn of the century photograph of the original members of the John E. Beam Post 92 of the Grand Army of the Republic posing in front of the GAR Hall on Main Street Bloomingdale. We know he was a member and even though we can't be certain because their names aren't listed, Levi is probably there, looking back at us.



Sources: *The Historic Manning Avenue Cemetery*, by Tom Riley

National Archives Military Records