**Cube Lyle/Steele and Mary Eliza Steele**

In 1840, Charles Steele and Sallie Lyle had a son that they named Cube. Both parents were slaves. Charles belonged to Squire John Steele who lived on the South Side about 6 or 7 miles from Clarksville. Sallie belonged to Margaret M. Lyle, a widow with two daughters, who also lived on the South Side of the Cumberland near Antioch Camp Ground about 4 miles from Clarksville. Cube was born on the Lyle farm. The law at that time stated that children born to slave women were born slaves and belonged to whomever owned the mother. Cube had a sister Melvina who moved to Kansas after the Civil War.

On February 8, 1864, Cube went to the recruitment station near Ft. Defiance (then Ft. Bruce) and enlisted in Company I, 16th USCT. He was present with his unit for the rest of the war except for the following hospital stays: June 1, 1864 pneumonia, June 27 – 30, 1864 helminthiases (the condition of having worms anywhere in the body although usually affecting the intestines), November 4, 1864 diarrhea, and January 4 – 6, 1866 constipation.

Cube was 18 years old when he enlisted and was describes as being 5 foot 5 ½ inches tall with black complexion, hair, and eyes. Later he described a scar on his right leg and stated that he was missing half of the second and third fingers of his right hand probably due to the fact that he worked in a saw mill after the war. He also had Phthisis (a wasting away or atrophy of the body or a part of the body) of his left eye due to being struck in the eye by a splinter.

The 16th USCT was stationed in Chattanooga, Tennessee for all of its existence except for being called to Nashville in response to Hood’s attack on that city. The 16th did not participate in the battle because they were part of the reserve force. They initially were part of the force that chased Hood when he withdrew but were sent back to Chattanooga early in the march. Cube was there for the battle and initial pursuit because in his application for a pension he stated that on the march from Nashville to Columbia Tennessee, he incurred severe cold that affected his lungs and back. These two complaints affected him the rest of his life. Also, he suffered an injury to his left elbow working on Nashville’s battlements. A piece of timber fell on his arm causing the injury. Cube also complained of suffering from varices (swollen, twisted, and distorted lengths of veins anywhere in the body) in his left calf and thigh starting in December 1865.

Cube was mustered out on April 30, 1866 in Nashville. He owed the government $5.11 on his clothing account. He returned to Clarksville right after being mustered out because on December 15, 1867 he married Mary Eliza Crittle.

Mary Eliza Crittle was born in 1847 to Margaret Norfleet. No record currently has been found that identifies her father. She was born into slavery and prior to the war lived with Jasper Bradley. This relationship ended when Jasper Bradley joined the 16th USCT. There is no indication that Cube knew either Mary or Jasper before the war. Jasper seems to have died in Memphis of Cholera around 1866. This relationship would cause Mary some problems when she applied for a widow’s pension. She swore, and produced witnesses to the fact that she had no relationship with Jasper after the war and that they had never been legally married.

At the time of Cube’s marriage to Mary, he worked as a laborer at Kellogg’s Saw Mill in Clarksville. This is where he received the injury to his eye and probably lost part of two fingers. He suffered a partial loss of sight in the damaged eye. It was also probably about this time that he dropped the last name of Lyle and adopted his father’s name of Steele.

The 1880 Census is the first census that the Steele family appears in. Cube was 35 years old and working at a flour mill. Mary was 35 and was keeping house. Mary’s mother Margaret Norfleet Manley, aged 60, was living with them and was working as a wash woman. Three children were listed: Sam, age 9; Maggie, age 4; and Charlese, age 2. In his pension application, Cube reported that he and Mary had thirteen children. Eleven of these children were dead by 1915. Sam died in 1911 at age 40. Maggie and Charlese survived both their parents and were twins.

In 1890, Cube applied for an invalid pension with R. D. Newton as his lawyer. He based his application on affliction of the right arm and partial blindness of his left eye. They granted him a pension of $6 per month which was raised to $12 in 1907 when he achieved an age over 60 years. In 1912 his pension was raised to $17. When he died, Cube was receiving $23 per month.

On February 14, 1894, Cube applied for a minor’s pension on behalf of Shelby Clark’s three children that were below the age of 16 when Shelby died. In the 1900 census, Cube was working as a teamster and Clarence Clark, age 18, was listed in his household as his nephew. Clarence was working as a laborer in a tobacco factory. Cube’s two daughters were married by this time, but Maggie, the 21-year-old widow of Albert Carnel, was living in her father’s house with her son Maurice, age 3. Samuel was still living with his parents and working as a mail carrier. Charlese was now the wife of Odie Harris with a house of her own. The Steele family was living at 14 Paradise Street which Cube owned.

By 1910, Cube and Mary’s children had all left the nest. George M. Carnel, age 14, was listed as a grandson and was living with them. They had two boarders living with them as well. Cube was still working as a teamster. Mary does not have an occupation listed but in the 1911 Clarksville City Directory she is listed as a laundress. In the 1912 directory, Cube’s occupation is listed as a common laborer.

Cube Steele died on November 7, 1916 from hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body) of the left side. Mary Steele applied for a widow’s pension in December 1916. By 1918, Mary was living at 524 Front Street and had her U.S. Representative, Joseph Byrns inquiring about the status of her pension for her.

Mary was granted a pension and when she died, she was receiving $30 per month. She died of a stroke on October 15, 1922. Both Mary and Cube are buried in Mt. Olive Cemetery. It is currently unknown where Sam and Charlese are buried. Maggie is buried in Evergreen Cemetery. Currently no headstone for either Cube or Mary has been found in Mt. Olive Cemetery. There is no record that the government ever issued a USCT headstone for Cube.