

War, Railroads, and the West: The Lost Story of J.R. Scupham

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The Scupham family currently spread across Indiana and Illinois is fairly well established and confident in its past. From the earliest familial records – dating only to the Civil War – a lone figure emerged: William C. Scupham, private in the Union Army, 1st Illinois Light Artillery. However, in looking through the regimental roll for the 1st Illinois, one finds, somewhat shockingly, another soldier with the same last name: John R. or J.R. Scupham. William's story is well known – his stay at Andersonville prison is well documented – but who was this shadowy J.R.? Even more compelling is that his name was scrawled across the entire country. From Chicago to Missouri and Vicksburg to California, J.R. flashes out from military rolls, court cases, land holdings, and newspaper clippings. The rediscovery of John R. Scupham tells a story that could have only have happened in the exciting, tumultuous decades of the late 19th-century. It is a story of immigration, war, railroads, mining, and the American West; a truly American story that helps one to understand how individual men and women were able to shape this country by their own remarkable actions.

Information about the Author:

William Scupham is a junior history and political science double major with a penchant for military history. He is currently involved in any number of historical pursuits. He hopes to continue exploring the realities of war and how they impact personal lives. He also loves uncovering any sort of historical mystery and working with historical newspapers, two factors that influenced the writing of this paper.

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