

Tom's Tombstone Travels: Clay Beauford

The number of Confederate soldiers that joined the Union Army after the war and then awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor is not known to the author. But I would guess that the club would be very small and Clay Beauford might be the only member.

Beauford was born Welford Chapman Bridwell on September 27, 1846, in Washington, County, Maryland. At a young age he moved with his family to a nearby residence in Virginia. When the Civil War broke out he was 14 years-old and ran away from home to join the Confederate Army. He knew the family would attempt to find him and return him to his home so he joined Robert E. **Lee's Army of Northern Virginia** as a drummer boy under the name Clay Beauford.

Within a year he became a regular infantryman and in July of 1863 he was in the Battle of Gettysburg. He was one of the 4500 men to participate in the ill-fated **Pickett's Charge**. **He survived the war but** was wounded by gunshot in three other battles, once in the kneecap, once in the left hand and one shot that penetrated his stomach.

What he did following the war is unknown to me, but in 1869 he was living in Nashville, Tennessee, when he enlisted in Company B, 5th Cavalry and was sent to the west to fight in the Indian Wars in Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming. In 1872 he was posted to Arizona where he **would participate in General Crook's famous Winter Campaign of 1872-1873**. He was quickly promoted to First Sergeant and on November 26, 1872, he was given official praise by Captain Robert H. Montgomery for a battle in the Red Rock area near Sedona, Arizona.



He was discharged in 1873 and continued his service as a civilian scout until 1875. In 1875 he was awarded the Medal of Honor for outstanding services performed in 1873. It must be remembered that the criteria for the medal at that time was much less stringent than the present day requirements. He asserted in his later years that the final year with Crook was the hardest physically of his life. He was constantly on the scout in some of the toughest terrain in the United States and against one of the toughest enemy ever, the Apaches. During one of his expeditions he captured Toga-da-chuz and his son. The son would grow up to be the Apache Kid, one of the great scouts of the Army and friend of Al Sieber. After a drunken spree, the Kid's arrest and an accidental shooting of Sieber, the Kid became one of the most dangerous and deadly renegades in Arizona history and was never captured after he made a daring escape.

In 1874 John Clum became the Indian Agent on the San Carlos Indian Reservation and he hired Beauford as chief of reservation police **upon Beauford's retirement in 1875**. Shortly thereafter a disgruntled Tonto Apache chief named Disalin decided to assassinate Clum. When his attempt was foiled by the unexpected arrival of the janitor and the reservation doctor, Disalin made an attempt to assassinate Beauford. **Fortunately, Disalin's brother was one of the reservation policemen** and he shot and killed Disalin. The brother was to become Chief Talkalai and longtime Chief of Police on the reservation.

In 1877 he played a critical role when Clum and the reservation police marched over 400 miles on foot to Ojo Caliente, New Mexico, and captured Geronimo without a shot being fired, the only time Geronimo was ever captured. Also taken into captivity was another famous Apache, chief Victorio. They were marched back to the San Carlos Reservation.

On July 1, 1877, Clum resigned his position as Indian Agent and moved to Tombstone where he would become the first mayor and publisher of the famed *Tombstone Epitaph*. Beauford would resign two months later on September 1st. By this time he had trained the reservation police force, over 100 strong, to the point they were considered one of the finest police departments in the American Southwest.

"In this connection I desire to mention that Mr. Clay Beauford has rendered most able services as a guide and scout with the Indian police. He is brave and energetic, a thorough Indian fighter, and when once he strikes a trail he never stops until he is victor in the renegade camp." (John Philip Clum, U.S. Indian Agent for the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation.)

In 1879 he had his name officially changed back to Bridwell by the 10th Territorial Legislative Assembly. In 1885 he was elected to the upper house of the 13th Assembly as the representative from Safford, Graham County.

During his term, he was drinking in a Prescott saloon when a Frenchman by the name of Arnold hurled an insult at him for denying his French heritage. Known for his quick and violent temper, Bridwell knocked the man to the floor and was challenged to a duel. Bridwell **chose Colt's revolvers, while the Frenchman insisted on French sabers**, fully knowing none could be found for hundreds of miles around. The resulting stalemate caused the duel to be called off; the boys settled for drinks instead.

Also in 1879, he met and married a young woman by the name of Cedonia Alexander from Indianapolis, Indiana.

Bridwell **was one of Arizona's** most famous pioneers. After his term in the legislature he ranched and mined in the Aravaipa Canyon

area of Arizona in Graham County. He developed the Arizona Mine which he later sold for a good profit. In 1895 he moved his family to Los Angeles where they raised two young children. Walter, his only son, died in early manhood. His daughter Nina married an eminent physician. Bridwell died in Los Angeles on February 1, 1905, at age 58, and is interred in Angelus-Rosedale Memorial Park alongside Cedonia, who survived him until 1946.



Sources: Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography, Volume One, by Dan L. Thrapp
Emails received from Marshall Trimble, Official Historian of Arizona