

The Sentinel



- Andersonville: A Personal Tragedy

We all know something about Andersonville, the infamous Confederate prisoner-of-war camp in Georgia. It was a vile and despicable place, where sub-human treatment became the norm. But few of us have a personal attachment to this horrible chapter in the history of the war or, indeed, to human strife and heartache in general. But MCCWR member Allan Sather certainly does and related how this piece of Civil War history has a very intimate relationship to him and his family. His ancestor, Jacob Mann, of Co. A, 16th Iowa, was captured and sent to Andersonville, or, more properly, Fort Sumter, in 1864,



Andersonville Prison, Georgia. August 17, 1864. Courtesy Library of Congress

Next Month! Perryville Program and Trip – Don't Forget!

Join your fellow buffs on Tuesday, April 13, 7:00 p.m. at the Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th St. in Bloomington, for author Michael Willever's talk "An Explanation of the Events Leading to the Battle of Perryville," based on the speaker's novel *A Dark and Bloody Ground*. Not only should this be an interesting talk, but it will set the stage for the MCCWR Road Trip to Perryville, which happens the next weekend. If you are interested in joining others to visit this Kentucky Civil War site, along with some good food and fellowship, contact anyone on the list at the end of this newsletter.

where he suffered like all the rest and, in the end, perished, as did over 13,000 of his fellow inmates.

Jacob Mann was born in Germany in 1824 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1849, settling originally in Philadelphia but eventually moving on to Iowa in 1855. Here he plied his trade as a shoemaker and general merchant, getting settled into the Midwest life with his wife, the former Elizabeth Becker, whom he had wed shortly before moving west from Pennsylvania. They eventually had six children and became established as good members of the community. To defend the life he felt he had been blessed with, Jacob enlisted in 1864, at the age of 40, and reported for training to Clifton, Tennessee. After finishing, the 16th Iowa, on May 3, 1864, was sent south to Huntsville, Alabama. The unit went quickly into battle, fighting at Resaca on May 13, Adairsville on the 17th, New Hope Church on the 25th, Kennesaw Mountain on June 22, and Peachtree Creek on July 20, the day after CSA General Johnston was "fired" by Jefferson Davis and replaced by one of the most enigmatic

A Personal Tragedy . . .

figures to come out of the Southern command, John Bell Hood.

Only two days later the 16th participated in the Battle of Bald Hill (Atlanta) and did not fare well. Sixty-five men in the 16th died in the fight and Jacob Mann was captured, along with 700 others from his regiment. In a bizarre back and forth “surrender competition” the Iowans surrendered to the Arkansas troops, “un-surrendered” when they found they outnumbered their captors, only to have to cede once again when two Texas brigades arrived on the scene.

The captives were sent first to Macon, Georgia, then on to the new prison called Fort Sumter at Andersonville Station, Georgia, near present day Plains. Andersonville, as it lives on in history’s annals, had been opened in February of 1864 to relieve the pressure on overcrowded prisons in Richmond (and because that city’s future was simply not secure). By June, there were 20,000 men penned in a sixteen-acre space designed for, maybe half that many. This number swelled to a staggering 33,000 by August. No roofs over their heads, meager rations, total lack of sanitation—it was a hell on Earth. Some managed to get by from scraping together the makings of their own rude shelter, called a “shebang,” and by begging, borrowing or stealing the food that they needed to survive. Sweetwater Branch, the stream that bisected the camp, was polluted, and probably caused more suffering than any water it provided.

The monotony of prison life was unbearable. The vile conditions of the camp may have best been exposed in *Andersonville*, the Pulitzer prize winning novel of 1956 by MacKinlay Kantor. While fiction, Kantor’s descriptions of the suffering were precise and heart-wrenching.

Not a young man when he entered service, Jacob Mann was quickly overcome by the horrid conditions at the camp, and died from what has been described as a combination of starvation and scurvy on September 23, 1864, less than two months after arriving. He is buried today in the cemetery at the site in grave #9585 along with many of the 214 men of Iowa who eventually succumbed at the prison.

Fortunately, Dorence Atwater, a prisoner who had been released, returned to assist at the camp. He kept a very detailed list of those who died at Andersonville and retained it when the war ended. While the War Department was at first opposed to the effort, the Atwater list helped many families identify their loved-ones after the war, and it significantly aided the efforts of Clara Barton to lobby for the establishment of a National Cemetery at Andersonville.

Today, the cemetery is part of the National Park Service system and is still active—expanded to embrace the memory of Prisoners of War from all the conflicts in which the United States has participated. Thus maintained, the cemetery is a fitting tribute to all POWs, but especially it is a memorial to the suffering and death of those many, many soldiers who first had the unfortunate fate of being sent to a place that has become an icon of American and Civil War history.



Allan Sather & Steve Rolfe discuss Allan’s presentation at the March meeting.

Get Ready for the Civil War Sesquicentennial!

In conjunction with our parent organization, the Monroe County History Center, and to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, the Roundtable has committed to hosting one of the center’s Third Thursday programs in the spring of 2011. The topic will be “Monroe County in the American Civil War”. It might be fun to make this a “tag team” event and have several members involved in at least the research if not the actual presentation. Much of the material can be gleaned from the archives held at the History Center’s Genealogy Library, but anything we can come up with from any source will work. Contact any member of the executive board for more on this. If you don’t know what the Monroe County History Center is all about, just visit <http://www.monroehistory.org/>. It’s a great host and a great place to spend some time!

Gettysburg Battlefield Continues Updates

The Gettysburg Foundation, the non-profit partner of Gettysburg National Military Park, has raised the funds necessary to remove some modern intrusions at Devil’s Den. The old stone restroom building and intrusive utility lines will be removed in spring 2010. These had not been noticeable until recent work to remove non-historic vegetation had exposed them. The Foundation will also bury intrusive overhead utility lines in several areas in the southern part of the battlefield near the historic Althoff, Slyder and Trostle farms. For more details on this and other projects at this most famous of all CW sites, go to http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org/devils_den_battlefield_rehabilitation.htm. Perhaps these changes can be enjoyed on the second annual MCCWR Road Trip in 2011???

The Cincinnati Freedom Museum: A Member Travelogue

MCCWR Secretary Steve Rolfe recently took a weekend trip to the relatively new Freedom Museum of the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati, located somewhat oddly on the riverfront between Paul Brown Stadium, the home of the football Bengals, and Great American Ballpark, the home of the baseball Reds. Opened in 2004, the museum is dedicated to telling the story of African-Americans throughout American history and especially the role the Underground Railroad played in winning freedom for all African-Americans from its inception just after the beginning of the 19th century until its dissolution at the end of the Civil War.

Steve says:

If you haven't been, put it on your list of "definite to-dos," This place was incredibly more sophisticated than I expected and told its story through all the means a modern museum can muster—visual displays, audio-video, re-creations, artifacts—in ways that were both engaging and informative. The message is powerful and, having been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., it was impossible for me not to make comparisons because of the, in many ways comparable, stories of the attempted annihilation of one culture and the total enslavement of another and the similar ways the two museums use in telling their tales. There were several highlights. The orientation film, *Suite for Freedom*, is unlike any other you have ever seen and is a short but intense triad of animated pieces that qualifies as exquisite art as well as providing information. Hearing the story of and actually entering a genuine pre-war slave pen, reconstructed inside the museum, is both moving and disturbing. A film introduced by Oprah Winfrey that tells the story of the escaping slaves' plight at getting across the Ohio River at Ripley, Ohio, is as good a first-person retelling as anything that Hollywood could produce. This facility is a must-see for anyone even remotely interested in African-American and/or Civil War history. And Cincinnati has many other worthy diversions if you want to make a weekend trip of it like my wife and I did.

For more information, go to: <http://www.freedomcenter.org/>. If you have a travel tale on anything Civil War related, send a couple of paragraphs to srolfe@indiana.edu, and we will try to include them in future newsletters.

And Don't Forget the New Blog!

The new Monroe County Civil War Roundtable blog is up and running. This is a great way to exchange questions, ideas, information and even to argue over Civil War history (was Lee a traitor?). If you are not familiar with blogging, just go to the site and cruise around for a bit to see what it's all about, then make it your home page, or at least a desktop icon, and visit frequently. For more information and to get on the site, go to <http://www.mccwrt-in.org/wordpress/>. For info on how to use it, contact Rick Watson, the MCCWR tech guru at rawatson@indiana.edu, or Steve Rolfe, MCCWR secretary, at srolfe@indiana.edu.

Civil War Times Index Available

Many of us have subscribed to and kept many years of back issues of *Civil War Times (Illustrated)*, one of the earliest regular periodicals on the Civil War. If you did not know, there is an on-line index that can be accessed free of charge at www.american-history-magazine.com/cwt.asp. You can also, from the same link, get to an index for *American History (Illustrated)* if you took that one, too. [Yes, Virginia, there is history besides the Civil War!] So grab all those piles of old magazines and organize them. This would be a good time, for instance, to search for any references to the Battle of Perryville now that the first annual MCCWR road trip is coming up next month.

Clarksville, Tenn., Roundtable to Highlight Indiana's Gen. Lew Wallace

It may be a bit much for most to travel too, but it's nice to know that one of our sister roundtables in Clarksville, Tennessee, will be having a program in October on Indiana Civil War icon "General Lew Wallace," from Crawfordsville, Indiana, who found Grant's wrath at Shiloh but ended up as the hero of Monocacy and as the post war author of the novel *Ben-Hur*. The program will be presented by author Gail Stephens, and will be based on her upcoming book. You may remember the amazing program that Clarksville CWRT member Gregg Biggs did in October of last year. If you are interested in details or just want to read their informative newsletter, go to www.clarkvillecivilwar.wordpress.com.

Roundtable Contacts

David Wiley, President
Steve Rolfe, Secretary
Kevin Shiflet, Treasurer

337-0649
336-0757
361-7491

davidwwiley@sbcglobal.net
srolfe@indiana.edu
keshift@aol.com

Executive Committee

Ray Beeker, Deborah Cronin, John Crosby, Allan Sather, Rick Watson, Carol Wise
On the web at <http://www.mccwrt-in.org> Webmaster, Rick Watson.

Sentinel staff: Editor, Steve Rolfe. Design, layout, and line editing by WileyGraphics
Mailing address: MCCWR, c/o Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th St. Bloomington, IN 47408