

The Sentinel

Legacy Profiles: The Stories of Our Own

The accounts below begin a continuing series of every-so-often programs we are calling "Legacy Profiles." They are prepared and presented by our own members and friends and will highlight ancestors who took part in the Civil War. These tales will not necessarily be of stirring battles or campaigns or brave and brilliant generals, but will more often show the human side of what it meant to serve in the seminal event of our nation's history. The stories need not be lengthy or heavy on scholarly research. We hope the series will also reflect the continuing honor and pride shared by their heirs today in service to their country a century and a half ago.

Charles Thomas Shanner, Co. A, 63rd Indiana Infantry

John Crosby kicked off the new series by presenting his great-great grandfather, Cpl. Shanner. Most of the information came from the diaries written by his ancestor, both during and after the war. But rather than rattle off a military biography of his relative gleaned from these sources, John preferred to



Corporal Shanner

concentrate on what he felt were the four major themes that kept coming forward time and again in them.

The first of these topics was one we have all seen in other biographies, histories and diaries—*boredom*. The life of a soldier was mostly drill, sleep, marching to new bivouacs, more drill, more sleep. The incidences of actual battle, while intense and memorable, were statistically rare for most soldiers. Another topic that Cpl. Shanner could not escape was the constant flow of camp rumors that were passed and re-passed through the ranks. "Jackson is about played out!" or "Lee and his army are nearly upon us." These and hundreds of such unsubstantiated reports were really something that kept the boredom from completely overwhelming the

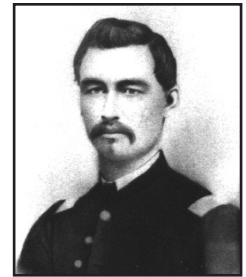
men. A subject that simply seemed to pervade every soldier's letters and diaries was the *health*, or the lack thereof, actually, of himself and his comrades in the field. Most of these men

continues

Ephraim Waterman Wiley, Co. H, 8th Maine Infantry

MCCWR president David Wiley completed the evening by telling about his grandfather, referred to as EWW in the family. Born in Maine in 1837, at nineteen he signed on as a green hand on the whaling ship *Archer* in 1856 for a four-year voyage in the Pacific.

Back home in 1861, EWW enlisted as a corporal in a militia unit and was shortly mustered into federal service in Co. H of the 8th Maine Volunteers. The men were soon sent to South Carolina, witnessing the Battle of Port Royal Sound on November 7, then occupying Hilton Head and Beaufort. In 1862. Some men of the 8th helped build batteries that isolated Fort Pulaski on the Savannah River, while a few others were quickly trained as artilleryists to assist in the reduction of the fort. EWW was promoted to sergeant.



Ephraim W. Wiley

In 1863, the 8th was sent to occupy Jacksonville, Florida, but was called back to Beaufort and leaving Jacksonville burning. Did EWW participate in this heinous act, if it was intentional? Who knows today? Returning to South Carolina in April, the 8th was part of the failure to take Charleston and returns to Beaufort. Later that summer, EWW went back to his home state to collect Conscripts to bring south.

January 1864, the stalwart Mainer re-enlisted as a "Veteran Volunteer" for a 3-year tour. The X Army Corps to which the regiment was assigned is ordered to the Bermuda Hundred area near Richmond, Virginia, in April, participating in several

continues

Roundtable Holiday Dinner December 15!

There will not be a regular meeting in December. We will gather, as we did last year, at the Uptown Café on Kirkwood in downtown Bloomington for an evening of fellowship and merriment. We will sing holiday songs along with exchanging stories, memorabilia or anything that might be of interest to the others there, so please bring something to share. **It will begin at 6:30 p.m., a bit earlier than our normal time.** The evening's fare will be your choice off the regular menu of the Uptown, so the cost is up to you. If you have not signed up and wish to come, please contact Steve Rolfe at 336-0757, srolfe@indiana.edu, or David Wiley at 337-0649, davidwiley@sbcglobal.com. Last year was especially enjoyable, so please plan to attend and bring a spouse, friend or fellow buff. See you there!

Charles Shanner continued

had never been far from home before, had always eaten decent, well-balanced meals, and had never been around many other people for any length of time. Now they were thrust into close quarters with hundreds like themselves day and night, many times in squalid conditions. They were eating substantially less nutritious food and were doing it on the run much of the time. Dysentery, cholera, and even horrendous diseases such as smallpox found new, almost non-resistant victims and took their toll. Perhaps the most surprising and final theme to rise from the pages of Cpl. Shanner's diaries was the seemingly constant talk of *making money*—buying, selling, bartering, swapping, in some cases stealing, so that a soldier could better survive the rigors of camp life, if not send a few dollars home occasionally. Pay was low and often delayed for months. If a soldier wanted to survive, he needed to improve his lot by becoming a shrewd businessman.

Of course, Cpl. Shanner did have a service history that cannot be ignored. Upon entering the service early in the war, he was sent with his regiment to New Haven, Kentucky, to guard a bridge. In the diary, he speaks of being afraid because of the presence in the area of that ever infamous raider, Col. John Hunt Morgan, CSA. This was in January of 1863, months before the raid into Southern Indiana that would make Morgan legend in this area. He also mentions another common theme of his and



John Crosby, timed by his hour glass, makes an important point

many other chroniclers of the war, being sent to hunt deserters, which were an all too common malady for Civil War units, reducing their ranks and destroying morale. In another odd commentary, Shanner tells of his unit riding in on and simply destroying a sutler's business for a somewhat vague reason.

This is, of course, reflective of the difficult nature of this border state that had slavery but did not secede. Kentucky was critical to eventual Union victory, and looking beyond the practice of slavery was difficult for some, but, as Lincoln was supposed to have said, "I would certainly like to have God on my side, but I *must* have Kentucky!"

Shanner mentions slavery once, having seen a "pretty good large woman of about 35" sold on the auction block. As the war moved on, Shanner and his regiment moved to the south and east and rode with Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta, camping near Dalton and then Clay Springs, Georgia. From May 9-14 of 1864, the 63rd actually participated in the battles and skirmishes north of Atlanta with limited casualties. But before he might have "marched to the sea" with the legendary "Cump," Shanner became ill and was sent to Washington, D.C. to recuperate. After a time there, he eventually became a nurse and was promoted to sergeant. To end his service, however, he was strangely demoted to private toward the end of the war, but it may well have been a ploy to make more money.

Ephraim Wiley continued

engagements. In time, the 8th is reassigned to the XVIII Corps and assisted in the attack at Drewry's Bluff on May 16.

The unit was third in line in the disastrous massed attack at Cold Harbor in June 1864, perhaps the nadir of U.S. Grant's generalship during the war. Fortunately, EWW survived that battle. In late July 1864 the 8th was in support at the Battle of the Crater.

EWW was promoted to 2nd Lt. in the same month, but becomes sick and was not actively engaged again until late September at Chaffin's Farm. He was promoted again, this time to 1st Lt., in October.

In November EWW will "get off easy," or may even have been acquitted, in a court martial for neglect of duty for "leaving a picket line while in charge." It should be noted that courts martial were not that uncommon and almost served as something to do between battles. It certainly did not hold EWW back, for he was promoted to Captain in December. In 1865, the unit is active in battles and skirmishes in the Richmond/Petersburg area, including Deep Bottom, Spring Hill, White Oak Road, and participates in the capture of Forts Gregg and Baldwin. But as a coda on the war, the 8th's final duty was part of a forced march in pursuit of Lee, which ended up at Appomattox and was in "advance of all troops on that part of the line" at Lee's surrender to Grant. During this period, EWW and two other company commanders were cited for "the excellent manner in which they have handled their troops."

In January 1866, the 8th is mustered out, and after a short stint with the Freedman's Bureau, EWW returns to Maine to live out a long and peaceful life, fathering eight children. A war-related illness gets him a disability pension, and he passes on quietly sitting by a window in his home.



David Wiley points to a map of the Bermuda Hundred as Kevin Shiflet looks on.

January Program

• • • • •
• After enjoying the holiday dinner next month, join us in January for Jeff Allen's presentation on "Sally of the 11th Pennsylvania and Other Regimental Mascots." Jeff is a local dentist and long-time Roundtable member and supporter, so plan on being there back on our regular schedule on the second Tuesday, January 12, 2010!
• • • • •

New Roundtable Website

The Roundtable now has its *own* website and domain! Many, many thanks to our webmaster Rick Watson. While the old site will remain active for a while, please note that the link to the new site is www.mccwrt-in.org. Everything that was on it before is still there and plans are to add new features as time passes, such as video, a sortable Overlease Library index, photos and more. We are excited about the possibilities of our own spot on the web, so please let us know not only what you think of it, but also any ideas you might have on things to add or improve. This is your website, so make use of it!

Roundtable to Partner for Civil War Research

The Monroe County History Center and the Monroe County Public Library have asked the roundtable to partner with them in seeking a grant to digitize the 400+ documents and artifacts now held at the History Center. As you may remember, there was an attempt to get the roundtable members involved in transcribing letters at the History Center a few years ago, but it did not materialize in the end for technical reasons. This grant, if obtained, would assure that these documents would be transcribed and entered into the center's Past Perfect archive files as well as be available to scholars and others on the web. There could even possibly be enough money to hire someone to do this work. The official grant application goes to the state in January, so keep your fingers crossed!



Civil War Sesquicentennial Bill Introduced

Two U.S. senators have introduced the "Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission Act of 2009" to establish a commission to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War from 2011-2015. The legislation includes authorization for funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities to award grants relating to the sesquicentennial. You can read more on the National Coalition for History website, <http://historycoalition.org/2009/10/28/civil-war-sesquicentennial-commission-bill->

The Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association Hosts First Three-Star Battlefield Tour

The Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association (TCWPA) invites you to its first "Three-Star Civil War Battlefield Tour" at Davis Bridge Battlefield on Saturday, December 12, 2009, 9:30 am – 12:30 p.m.. Join Shiloh National Military Park historians and Tennessee Wars Commission Program Director Fred Prouty for an in-depth tour of the recently protected Davis Bridge Battlefield. The tour is open to the public and there is no charge.

The tour will "go" rain or shine, so appropriate warm and weather-protective clothing, and good walking shoes are recommended. Davis Bridge Battlefield is located near Poca-hontas, Tennessee.

TCWPA will launch its new Three Stars Tour series at a reception the evening before in Corinth, MS at the National Park Service Visitor Center. You are invited to join fellow tour participants and TCWPA board members at the reception Friday evening, December 11, at 6:30 pm. There is no charge.

If you'd like to attend the reception and tour, please **RSVP by email** to Executive Director Mary Ann Peckham, mapeckham@aol.com. If you would like to do **only the tour**, please register online at TCWPA's web site, www.tcwpa.org. (Click on "Events" page). Questions? Contact Mary Ann at mapeckham@aol.com.

TCWPA will have a block of hotel rooms held in the Corinth area for tour participants and will order box lunches for the end of the tour on Saturday at the Battlefield. For those interested in lodging or lunch, we'll let you know the lodging cost and location, and the cost of lunch.

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.

Mailing address: MCCWR, c/o Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th St. Bloomington, IN 47408