

# The Sentinel

## A Tribute

The new season of our roundtable opened with a sad but proud task, paying tribute and saying a final farewell to our fallen leader, MCCWR President David Wiley, who passed away in July. David had been with the roundtable since its earliest days. He had an immeasurable impact on the success of the group.

David's wife of over 50 years, Anna, joined the gathering and was welcomed by all.



**David Wiley 1928-2010**

She had been his stalwart supporter and even co-presenter at times. She expressed her pride at David's work with and for the group, and added that many people were surprised, but only initially, at his background in theater. In the end, that fact made perfect sense to those of us who knew and had worked with him.

After a short video highlighting David's last Civil War trip with the group to Perryville Battlefield in April, some final remembrances were shared by a few and a celebratory toast was made by friend and fellow member John Crosby:

"To David,  
Our Leader  
Our Commander  
Our Partner  
Our Friend  
Fallen but never forgotten...we shall miss you."

## Doctors in Blue

The opening program of the 2010-11 season was given by veteran presenter and MCCWR member Dick Worsena. Noting that the history of the medical corps of the Union army (and really of the Confederacy, as well) has not been heavily studied or written about, Dick tackled the subject with the thorough precision that his Navy background had taught him. And he made it clear up front that this was not going to be a talk on diseases and conditions he could not pronounce or understand much of the time, but on the organization and performance of the U.S. Medical Services, a subject he could much more readily identify with after his background as a career navy supply officer.

The U.S. Army Medical Corps was not prepared when the Civil War started. It was headed by an 80-year-old colonel, Thomas Lawson, a veteran of the War of 1812. When the war began, the corps had fewer than 100 officers, including not only doctors but also administrative personnel all the way up to the

Surgeon General. But with the entire army being only 16,000 strong, that is, perhaps, not surprising.

A chance encounter on a New York City sidewalk between two influential men led to discussions of the horrors of the Crimean War and what it took to change that. So they, with the support of a New York women's society, pushed for and finally won the approval of Secretary of War Simon Cameron for the creation of the U.S. Sanitary Commission. After a halting start and even a few misgivings expressed by President Lincoln himself, the Commission and the Medical Corps got off the ground. By war's end, the Army alone had over 11,000 doctors organized into 7 district corps.

In the beginning, there was incompetence and abuse of the system, as is probably true of any organization that is created virtually overnight. Doctors were poorly trained (if at all sometimes!), supplies were scarce and medical examinations were often a farce, as is witnessed by the fact that an estimated 400 women were enrolled as soldiers.

The ambulance service was a good example of the growth of the corps. Early in the war, most ambulances were two-wheeled carts that were not well designed and performed horribly under the stress of battle. Drivers were hired civilians who stole supplies and fled under fire. Although it took time, champions of the need for a permanent Ambulance Department kept pushing and that, combined with the public outcry over the inadequacies, led to a constantly improving situation. By Gettysburg, and especially with the support of the famous Dr. Letterman, there were 1,000 ambulances with almost 3,000 drivers and stretcher men.



**Glass plate image of the Washington, D.C. Medical Corps HQ in March, 1865**

Hospitals were another struggle. At the beginning of the war, wounded men were given rudimentary first aid at a primary station, and then were moved to a field hospital, such as it was. By war's end, there were regimental, then brigade, and finally division hospitals. Regimental hospitals could be tents, houses, churches and even barns. (cont. on pg. 2)

Hospitals increased their efficiency and numbers markedly over the course of the war. By the end of the war there were over twice as many *hospitals* (204) as there had been *officers* in the Medical Corps in 1861, boasting almost 137,000 beds. The mortality rate for those who made it to a hospital was only 8% for the four years, substantially better than anything before.

Attendants/nurses, both male and female, were another drastic change during the period 1861-1865. Dorothea Dix, again with experience from the Crimean War, fought to establish a female nursing corps. Females could not even legally *be* nurses until August of 1861. The creation of a female nurse corps was fraught with controversy as many thought women would not be strong enough, would faint at the sight of blood, would have their modesty affronted at the male bodies they would see, etc. Ms. Dix fought constantly and eventually got the corps established and, of course, proved their effectiveness, with perhaps 3,200 serving throughout the conflict.

Male attendants were more readily accepted, of course, but their establishment was problematic as well. At first, line soldiers were used, but they kept getting sent back to their units causing high turnover. Then civilians were hired as units, but stole from patients, sold them morphine and ran off when things got a little too "tight" for them. By war's end, the male corps was better established, being comprised mostly of soldiers who were unfit for duty on the line but were able to work in the hospitals.

This is a very brief overview of Dick's talk and the history of the "Doctors in Blue". If you have further interest, let us know and we will see that you are put in contact with him for a deeper look. And again, "Thanks, Mr. Worsena!"



**Lincoln's  
Funeral in  
Chicago,  
May 1, 1865**

## Lincoln Legacy!

At the meeting Tuesday, member Mary Ann Gudeman shared a tidbit from her past connection to Starke County, IN, history. It seems that just a few years ago a then 90-year-old man in a nursing home, Joseph Origer, told his nurses and visitors a story that made their jaws drop. He was doing some work in 1940 at the home of John Tierney, a life-long resident of San Pierre, IN, southeast of Chicago. John was, himself, at that time, a 90-year-old resident of a nursing home there. Joe told how John, born in 1850, hopped aboard the Lincoln funeral train as it went through San Pierre on its way to Chicago, then Springfield for the final service and burial. Although discovered, he was a quick-witted boy and talked them in to letting him stay on the train. Thus, as of last year anyway, there was a man still living in San Pierre, Indiana, that had actually known someone who had attended Lincoln's funeral. Perhaps it is not as long ago as we thought! Check it out on:

<http://www.starkehistory.com>

## Monroe County Civil War Grant

[The following press release re-emphasizes a request made in person by Corey Burger at the Tuesday meeting.]

**Bloomington, IND (July 20, 2010)**—Monroe County Public Library, in collaboration with the Monroe County History Center, has been awarded a \$19,705 grant from the Indiana State Library to build a digital collection of documents and photographs to tell the story of Monroe County before, during, and after the Civil War. To reconstruct events, this digital history project is asking area residents to bring in original materials from 1855 to 1875—letters, diaries, school records, photos, etc.—to be scanned for inclusion in the collection. Individuals with items from the time period should contact the Monroe County History Center at 812-332-2517 between now and Sept.30.

Much of Monroe County's history would have been available in the local newspaper from the Civil War era, but a fire destroyed the newspaper offices in the late 19th century. For this reason, contributions from the community are vitally important. "The Civil War is a popular and approachable subject for all ages," said Christine Eykholt Friesel, Indiana Room Coordinator and project manager. "We want to know how events shaped Monroe County. People may be holding onto a family document and may not know that it is historically significant to the county's story." This project, "At War and At Home, 1855-1875," will create a digital archive of historically significant documents and photos of the Civil War era, and make them accessible to all Hoosiers through the *Indiana Memory* website of the Indiana State Library. Additionally, an interactive, web-based timeline of events will be created.



**Archaeologists working at Camp Lawton**

## CSA POW Camp Found

Georgia archaeologists have found a Confederate POW camp preserved for nearly 150 years, perhaps by its own obscurity. Camp Lawton, a short-lived Confederate prison camp, began yielding treasures from the Civil War almost as soon as archeologists began searching for it in southeastern Georgia. Camp Lawton imprisoned more than 10,000 Union troops after it opened in October 1864 to replace the infamously hellish war prison at Andersonville. But it lasted barely six weeks before Sherman's army arrived in November and burned it. For details, go to:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/38758352/from/toolbar>



## Perryville Re-enactment Oct. 2-3

For those who went on the First Annual MCCWR Road Trip last spring and for anyone interested, don't forget this major re-enactment coming up. This year the theme is "The Horse Soldiers- Cavalry in the Civil War", in honor of the world equestrian games being held in Kentucky this year. For details, go to:

<http://www.perryvillebattlefield.org/>

## Remaining 2010-2011 Programs

**Oct. 12-** Bob Willey: *Evolution of the Line (School of the Soldier-School of the Company)*

**Nov. 9-** Matt Hoagland: *The Curious History of the Indiana 63<sup>rd</sup> Volunteers.*

**Dec. 14-** Annual Holiday Dinner

**Jan. 11-** Rick Watson: *The Committee On the Conduct of the War*

**Feb. 8-** Steve Rolfe: *Montgomery Cunningham Meigs: The Man Who Won the Civil War*

**March 8-** John Crosby: *Brother vs. Brother (Repeat Program)*

**April 12-** Justin Smith *First Irish (Mr. Smith is a re-enactor.) [also annual election of officers]*

**May 10-** Mark Acres- *Camp Followers*

**June 14-** Donna Schmink : *The 27<sup>th</sup> Indiana Battle Flag and the Flag Preservation Work of the Indiana War Memorial.*

## Events at Jefferson Davis State Historic Site in Fairview, Kentucky – October 9

Located only 20 minutes north of Clarksville, TN, is the Jefferson Davis State Historic Site. This marks the birthplace of the former U.S. Senator, Secretary of War and president of the Confederate States of America. New director Ron Sydnor has plans for a number of programs for the park through the fall and winter and they begin on Saturday, October 9, 2010.

A number of family events are planned beginning at 11 AM and continuing through the day. Noted author Lester V. Horwitz will be speaking at 2 PM that afternoon. He is the author of the book *The Longest Raid of the Civil War* which is about **General John Hunt Morgan's raid through Indiana and Ohio in the summer of 1863**. The day concludes with an evening tour of the Jefferson Davis monument. For more information please call (270)889-6100.

## \$\$ Dues–Time to Talk Money \$\$

Postage, refreshments, speaker honoraria...all of these things cost money. It is that time of year to talk about money once again. The dues structure of the roundtable states that all member dues are to be paid in September for the upcoming year (10 months). They are, we think, minimal: \$15 individual, \$20 family and \$5 student. Please support your roundtable by sending a check to the Monroe County Civil War Roundtable, c/o Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th St. Bloomington, IN 47408, or come see us in November and bring along your contribution to what we feel is the best bargain in town.

## Feedback– Please!

We would love to hear from you. What did you think of the last presenter? What can we do better? What can we do that is new? Heck...what did you do on your summer vacation? We don't care what you say, but it's nice to know someone is out there listening. It would be great to make at least part of our newsletter a forum. Names must be submitted, but will be held private if requested. Just send a note to the address below or an e-mail to the Secretary and newsletter editor, Steve Rolfe, at [srolfe@indiana.edu](mailto:srolfe@indiana.edu).

### Contact Information

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Monroe County Civil War Roundtable  
c/o Monroe County History Center  
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