

Monroe County Civil War Roundtable

THE SENTINEL

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THE CIVIL WAR IN THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

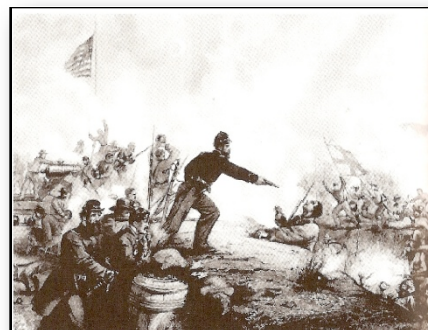
A SHOW OF HANDS BEFORE THE BEGINNING of the January program proved that, like many Americans in general, the majority of those present had been to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in East Tennessee at least once in their travels. This park is the most visited national park in the U.S., by double, in fact, over Yellowstone, at about 9-10 million visitors per year. While GSMNP appears to be a pristine wilderness and a hiker's paradise, that was not always the case. Before the establishment of the park in 1934, almost the entire half-million acres was farmed, logged, or in some way used rather than left to nature. Like every other part of our country in the mid-nineteenth century, this part of the mid-south was caught up in the maelstrom of the Civil War, but in a manner unlike most other parts of the country.

East Tennessee, the area the Great Smoky Mountains is in, was very different from the middle and western sections of that state. While the economy of the latter two sections depended heavily on the slave labor market, East Tennessee was comprised, principally, of Scots-Irish and Germanic immigrants who had spent the previous 50 to 100 years scraping out a subsistence, living by farming small plots and being relatively self-sufficient. Slave labor was simply not practical, nor affordable, for these groups of people. When Lincoln was elected in 1860, the cry

from the other sections was that the state would have to secede rather than be subject to the Republican Party principles of abolition and being subordinate to the Federal government. East Tennessee was not terribly concerned about these ideas, since they did not go counter to what the population had been doing for years anyway. When a call for a secession convention was made in late 1860, the vote to have such a gathering was heavily approved in the middle and western parts of the state, but not in the east. In the three counties, Cocke, Sevier and Blount, comprising what is today the gateway to the Smokies, the vote was overwhelmingly *against* such a convention — exemplified by Sevier County's tally of almost 1300 against even having such an event to only about 70 in favor. After Fort Sumter, when a convention was finally called, the votes to secede in East Tennessee were equally lopsided against such an act, but the middle and western portions of the state finally succeeded in making Tennessee the last state to join the Confederacy on June 8, 1861.



This disagreement did not bode well for the residents in the east to be able to “get along” with the rest of the state, with some folks even suggesting they secede from Tennessee to remain with the Union. In the end, the Civil War in this part of the state became a contentious struggle to simply get along with one's neighbors—with old, old friends suddenly at odds, sometimes even to the point of killing each other. Some men became “outliers,” attempting to avoid any service for either side by hiding out. Others became “bushwhackers” using the excuse of the war to pillage and murder for personal gain or power. Yet others joined Home Guards, quasi-militia units who represented both the North and the South. More men, before the war was over over 50,000, joined the Union army during the conflict than all other Southern states combined.



Action at the Battle of Ft. Sanders

There was very little actual fighting in the area, with the largest single battle being that at Fort

Sanders, near Knoxville, on November 29, 1863, when CSA General James Longstreet attempted to retake the city from Union forces of Ambrose Burnside, who had taken Knoxville for the Union in September. The Confederates suffered nearly 800 casualties in a futile assault, and the area remained in Union hands for the remainder of the war. Even today, a discussion of the war among the population of East Tennessee will bring strong disagreement and supports the wartime sentiment that, while the war is still “not over” for many in the South, Confederate sympathy never really got a good foothold in East Tennessee. It was then, and remains to this day, a bastion of Unionist feeling. For further reading see Noel Fisher’s book, *The Civil War in the Smokies*, published by the Great Smoky Mountains Association, www.SmokiesStore.org.

A PLEA FOR...WHAT ELSE?...MONEY!

WHILE OUR ROUNDTABLE IS NOT HUGE, it still requires a bit of cash to make things happen. Refreshments, presenters’ gifts, mailings—all these things cost a bit to produce. If you have not given a basic \$15 membership fee, please consider doing so as soon as you can, in order that we may continue to give you the best possible service from the administrative end. If you have not already done so, and if you are able, bring a check (or cash!) to the next meeting or mail it (checks only, please...no cash this way) to our Treasurer, Carol Wise, P.O. Box 153, Smithville, IN, 47458. Checks should be made payable to the Monroe County Civil War Roundtable.

ONE NEW CIVIL WAR PRIMARY SOURCE...

Troubled State- The Civil War Journals of Franklin Archibald Dick, by Gari Carter (Truman State University Press, January, 2008) is a recently discovered Civil War primary resource written by Franklin Archibald Dick, Missouri Provost Marshal General, and advisor to the Lincoln, Lyon, the Blair families, among others. Franklin Dick's firsthand accounts add new details to the true turbulence of Missouri and the country during the Civil War. He describes the secret meetings in his office leading up to the Camp Jackson incident, and how he served as Captain Nathaniel Lyon's Assistant Adjutant General. His perspective and emotions about the Rebellion changed as he practiced law in the divided city of St. Louis. For more details go to www.garicarter.com.

...AND ANOTHER

Ship Island, Mississippi: Rosters and History of the Civil War Prison, published by McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers. This book details the history of the island from 1699-to present day, with a main focus of the island being utilized as a Federal prison during the Civil War. The extensive roster includes personal and military information, when known, on each soldier who was imprisoned and/or died on the island. The Union roster includes soldiers from the following states: Indiana, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Wisconsin, the USCT, US Navy and the Regulars. The Confederate Roster includes soldiers from: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, the Confederate Navy, Regulars and Citizens. It is available for purchase through on-line book retailers such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc., and should be available through most book stores, or directly through the publisher at 1-800-253-2187.

DO YOU HAVE ITEMS TO SHARE?

IF YOU HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT, a good book you have read, an artifact to sell or any information whatsoever that you would like placed in *The Sentinel* to share with our membership, send it to President Steve Rolfe, srolfe@indiana.edu, so it can be included in the next newsletter.

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETING, Tuesday, February 11, at 7:00 p.m. and hear former presenter and board member John Crosby speak on the “Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in the Great Rebellion.” Hear how rail travel revolutionized warfare and the impact this particular line had on the waging of the war in the east.



John Crosby

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