

BUGLE CALL ECHOES



Vol. 9 No. 3, March 2001

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

Knowing in part may make a fine tale, but wisdom comes from seeing the whole.

March Program

Dr. Rebecca Steine received both her bachelor's degree and her master's degree from California State University, Fresno. She also holds a Juris Doctorate from the San Joaquin College of Law. For the past five years she has taught both world and American history at CSUF. She has also taught in the Women's Studies Department, plus classes in political science and government at the State Center Community College. Her historical interests are often from a female perspective. March is Women's History Month and Dr. Steine's talk on Mary Todd Lincoln and Varina Davis should prove appropriate.

Dr. Steine has lived in Fresno for 30 years. Her husband is a successful local businessman.

President's Corner

Fellow board member Tom Carr has made me aware of an offer of interest I would like to pass along to the membership. "The Teaching Company" is a group which puts together lecture programs via audio cassettes or videos on various subjects. These lectures are delivered by highly qualified people in their respective fields.

The offer Tom has brought to my attention is the American Civil War presented by Gary W. Gallagher. The course curriculum is delivered in four parts consisting of six hours of lectures in each part. Mr. Gallagher takes his subscribers from "Prelude to War" through "Remembering the War."

During the journey he touches on "The Diplomatic Front", "African Americans in Wartime", "Women at War", and of course Mr. Gallagher visits all the important battlefields. This appears to be a very comprehensive lecture series.

The program series retails for \$249.95; however if you order before April 4th, the audio selection can be purchased for \$99.95. "The Teaching Company" can be contacted at 1-800-832-2412 or by the internet at www.teachco.com. Perhaps some of you will choose to take advantage of the offer.

Mike Carter

March 2001 Meeting

The meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table will be held on Thursday, March 29, at the Ramada Inn, Shaw Avenue and Highway 41 in Fresno.

A no-host social hour will begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7 p.m.

Please send your check for \$15 (\$10 for students under 25) to cover the cost of the meal to Gloria Carter, PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755, or call 559/322-9474 to advise her you will be attending the meeting.

John B. Bannon: Chaplain, Soldier and Diplomat

by James M. Gallen

Rev. John B. Bannon was one of the most prominent and respected chaplains to serve in the Civil War. General Sterling Price, whose men he served, remarked: "I have no hesitancy in saying that the greatest soldier I ever saw was Father Bannon." Father Bannon's service to the Confederacy as chaplain, soldier and diplomat makes his story one worth telling.

Like so many of the troops who fought in the Civil War, Father Bannon's story did not begin in America. He was born on December 29, 1829, in Roosky, Ireland. He was ordained into the priesthood at Maynooth, County Kildare, in May, 1853. He volunteered to follow so many of his countrymen who had fled famine and sought a new life in America. He chose to serve the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri whose Archbishop, Peter Kenrick, was also a son of Ireland.

Father Bannon was soon recognized as one of the leading clergymen in St. Louis, and in 1858, was assigned as pastor of the new parish of St. John the Apostle on the then west end of the city. While there he supervised the building of the church building.

In the St. Louis area, which Father Bannon served, he became a prominent leader of the Irish community, many of whom joined him when he went to war. The coming of the war found St. Louis a deeply divided community. Archbishop Kenrick attempted to guide his divided flock by adopting a policy of neutrality toward the war which surrounded him. In support of this policy Kenrick discouraged his priests from serving as chaplains for either army. Father Bannon, however, could not be dissuaded.

Father Bannon's military career commenced in November 1860 when he joined Captain Kelly's Washington Blues as a chaplain in response to a call for militia troops to defend western Missouri from raiders from "Bloody Kansas." The campaign was short and Father Bannon was back in St. Louis by the first Sunday of December 1860.

After the firing on Fort Sumter, St. Louis began to polarize into two armed camps. In early May, Bannon remained close to Captain Kelly's troops at Camp Jackson on the western edge of the city. After the surrender of Camp Jackson its troops, including Bannon, became prisoners of the Federal forces until release on May 11, 1861. Bannon returned to St. John's, where he remained until December 15, 1861. At the time of his departure Bannon was targeted for arrest by Federal authorities due to the views which he had expressed from the pulpit. On the night of the 15th, Bannon snuck out of the back door in a disguise and a false beard, while Federal officials entered the front door. He then continued his clandestine journey across Missouri to Springfield, where he became a member of the "Patriot Army of Missouri," under the command of General Sterling Price. He commenced his service as a chaplain, initially voluntary, to the First Missouri Confederate Brigade.

Bannon remained with the First Missouri Confederate Brigade until the brigade was taken prisoner at the fall of Vicksburg. Although not officially paroled, Bannon was released and went to Mobile and then on to Richmond.

Although his main service was to the Irish Catholic members of the First Missouri, some of whom had been parishioners at St. John's, Bannon was widely respected in the army. He quickly earned the title of "the Catholic priest who always went into battle." In accord with instructions to remain in the rear, it was the practice of many Confederate chaplains to pray with their men before battle and then remain in the rear to comfort the wounded. Bannon, however, believed that the chaplains who shared their men's hardships and dangers "were much respected by all the men, whether Catholics or not; for they saw that (I) did not shrink from danger or labor to assist them." In his view the practice of many chaplains caused them to become "frequently objects of derision, always disappearing on the eve of an action, when they would stay behind in some farm house till all was quiet."

At the battle of Pea Ridge in Arkansas, Bannon was in the thick of the action. As firing continued, Father Bannon was seen blessing, standing or kneeling with soldiers, and administering the last rites to the dying. His service during this battle led General Price to comment: "The greatest soldier I ever saw was Father Bannon. In the midst of the fray he would step in and take up a fallen soldier. If he were a Catholic, he would give him the rites of the Church; if a Protestant, and if he desired, he would baptize him." Toward the end of the battle Bannon met General Van Dorn, who ordered him to the rear.

Bannon refused an order to move to the field hospitals, even under threat of arrest, responding, "I can attend there later. I must attend now to those who are not able to be removed from the field." Bannon explained his understanding of his duty when he wrote, "I am doing God's work, and He has no use for cowards or skulkers. A Catholic priest must do his duty and never consider the time or place. If I am killed, I am not afraid to meet my fate. I am in God's keeping. His holy will be done."

The nights before a battle were busy ones for Bannon. Throughout the night he "would go up to a watch fire, and waking one of the men, called him aside, hear his confession, and send him to summon another. The whole night would be spent thus in going from campfire to campfire. The men were always willing to come, generally too glad of the opportunity; some would even be watching for me."

When the night was over and the hour for the battle had arrived, Father Bannon had to substitute group for individual service. "When the time came for advancing, I made a sign for them all to kneel, and gave them absolution (and) I then went to the second line, or the reserve, till it was their turn also to advance." It was reported that "no men fight more bravely than Catholics who approach the Sacraments before battle." Bannon only reported one soldier who evaded his service. An Irish Catholic artillery gunner declined because "he had been long from the Sacraments and was afraid of confession." Father Bannon tried to win him over with the assurance, "Come, man, I know what a soldier's confession is." Unfortunately the soldier refused reconciliation and was killed the next day.

Father Bannon's support of the Confederate cause was based on deeply felt principles. His feelings derived from three influences--ethnic, religious and a general observation of the state of America in his day.

Among many Irish-Americans of his day, a parallel was seen between the British desire to impose its culture and will on Ireland and the efforts of the North to impose its standards on the South. This identification of the North as the oppressor led many Irish-Americans to support the Confederacy.

The circumstances prevalent in St. Louis led some Catholics to identify abolitionism with anti-Catholicism. Many Germans who had participated in the revolutions in Europe in 1848 had immigrated to St. Louis. In their struggles in Europe for freedom and the unification of Germany, their main enemy had been the Austrian Empire, which was identified with Catholicism. The hostility of the German community toward the Irish and its prominence in the Union cause in St. Louis drove many Irish Catholics, including Father Bannon, into the Confederate camp.

His observation of Northern and Southern society also led Bannon to his decision to support the Confederacy. In Bannon's view the issue could be defined in terms of good versus evil and the forces of light against the darkness. His view of the struggle was revealed in his sermons. The Southerners were God's chosen people while the Unionists were the Egyptians or philistines. He preached that the struggle was on between "the

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cross and the crescent, for which the last, the Yankee substitutes the dollar; a war between materialism and infidelity of the North, and the remnant of Christian civilization yet dominant in the South."

The clash between an industrial and an agrarian culture, again reminiscent of the struggle between Britain and Ireland, was on over the future development of North America. Bannon clearly shared the Southern vision. Father Bannon's service to the Confederacy did not end when he left the First Missouri Brigade. At the time of his visit to Richmond, one of the main military problems facing the Confederacy was the growing imbalance in military strength due in part to the influx of immigrants, many of them Irish, into the Union Army. On August 30, 1863, Bannon was surprised to receive a request from President Jefferson Davis to meet him at the President's house. During the visit President Davis asked Bannon to undertake a secret diplomatic mission to Ireland to discourage Irish immigrants from enlisting in the Union Army. In further conversation with Davis and Secretary of War Judah Benjamin, Bannon suggested that his mission be expanded to include an attempt to persuade the Papal States to extend recognition to the Confederacy. It was hoped that recognition by one European state would induce others to follow.

Bannon left America on October 3, 1863, aboard the Robert E. Lee. After arriving in Liverpool, England, Bannon headed for Italy. While in the Vatican he was accorded several long audiences with Pope Pius IX, during which he argued the Confederate cause. Although formal recognition was not obtained, the Pope did speak warmly of the Confederacy. In early December, Pope Pius sent a letter addressed "to the Illustrious and Honorable Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America." This was taken as a defacto recognition by many and generated widespread outrage in the North. It would also be helpful in Bannon's mission in Ireland.

After the conclusion of the Vatican effort, Bannon returned to his native isle in October 1863. His first duty was to write long letters to the families of fifty or sixty Irish natives who had died while fighting for the First Missouri. Bannon then approached his diplomatic mission with zeal. He found that his mission to the Vatican increased his acceptance among the Irish clergy to circulate handbills at the

major ports of departure. The handbill reported that the Irish immigrant would be cajoled to join the Union Army and be sent to be slaughtered in a "fight for a People that has the greatest antipathy to his birth and creed."

Besides the handbills, Bannon employed a series of large posters which were nailed up in major ports and on the Churches of Dublin. The most effective poster, employed in 1864, contained the exchange of letters between Pope Pius IX and President Davis and a letter from Bannon. After he had won over the upper and middle classes, Bannon made an effort to reach the common people, who provided the recruits. To do this he sent a copy of his poster to every parish priest in Ireland. The poster was entitled, "remnant of Christian civilization was yet dominant in the South." He concluded his statement with the assertion: "As a priest of the Catholic Church, I am anxious to see the desires of the Holy Father realized speedily, and therefore have taken this means to lay before you the expression of his sentiments on the subject of the American War, knowing that no Catholic will persevere in the advocacy of an aggression condemned by his Holiness."

The campaign by Bannon was highly effective. It is estimated the Irish recruits for the Union Army dropped two-thirds between December 1863 and May 1864. On May 28, 1864, Bannon reported to Secretary of State Benjamin that his money was exhausted and his mission complete. Benjamin expressed his gratitude for the services provided by Bannon.

Bannon never returned to America. After the war he was prohibited by law from preaching at St. John's Church. He joined the Jesuit order, of which he was one of its most distinguished Irish members until his death on July 14, 1913. Although he is little remembered in America, his legacy lives on in St. John's Church, which continues to serve the people of downtown St. Louis.

For more information of Father Bannon see:

The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain, Father John B. Bannon, by Phillip Thomas Tucker, University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 1992.

The Fourth Career of John B. Bannon, by William B. Faherty, S.J., C&D Publishing, Portland, 1994.

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BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed for H-CivWar by Richard B. Lewis, Pamplin Historical Park, Petersburg, Va.

Mention the name Alan Nolan in a crowd of Civil War buffs, and you are likely to hear both praise

and damnation. Since the publication of his "Lee Considered: Gen. Robert E. Lee and Civil War History" (1991), Nolan is thought of by many as a trailblazing revisionist prophet, while others can think of him in no terms other than as the anti-Christ of Civil War historians.

So just who is this man who both provokes and provokes thought? A fine glimpse of Alan T. Nolan is found within the 320 pages of "Rally, Once Again!: Selected Civil War Writings of Alan T. Nolan". The book is a compilation of essays, articles, reviews, and excerpts from larger works covering forty years of scholarship.

Among the selections are articles written for historical periodicals (among them "Civil War Times", "Gettysburg Magazine", and the defunct "Columbiad") and legal publications ("Harvard Law School Bulletin"), book reviews from a variety of sources, introductions to other books, essays from other compilations, and excerpts from his earlier books.

All of the selections in this book are admirable not only for scholarly thought but also for elegance of presentation. Nolan is one of those rare people who not only is a fine historian but also a talented writer. His presentation is direct. You know what Nolan is trying to tell you.

From these pages emerges a man who must be considered (there's that word) one of today's outstanding Civil War historians, whether or not one agrees with his conclusions. Alan Nolan has contributed to the great body of Civil War history not only through his own work but also by the influence he has had on other historians. Even when he is wrong, Nolan is scholarly -- which is more than can be said for some other "revisionists."

So, who then is Alan Nolan? Perhaps it can be said that he is the H. L. Mencken of Civil War historians: a brilliant journalist and a man with serious anti-South passions. To be fair, Nolan is probably not anti-South, at least not to the degree of Mencken, but he is certainly anti-Confederate. Let the author himself lay out his feelings, which he does in the book's preface. After labeling the

Alan T. Nolan, "Rally Once Again!: Selected Civil War Writings of Alan T. Nolan".
Madison, Wisc.:
Madison House, 2000.
xii + 308 pp. \$29.95
(cloth), ISBN 0-945612-71-0.

"contentions of the Southern myth of the Lost Cause" as "offensive," he states, "I find almost nothing in the Confederate culture or tradition to admire or celebrate."

There you have it, in classic Nolan fashion, clear and to the point. His statement should not be a revelation to anyone familiar with his catalog. As this book demonstrates, Nolan is almost consistently hostile to anything Confederate (as well as to historians who dare portray Confederates favorably) and adulatory of anything Federal.

Chief among Nolan's targets is, of course, Robert E. Lee. Nolan was right to ask us to "consider" the general and man. Much of the body of work on Lee tends to deify him and to raise him to the status of infallible saint. Much of "Rally, Once Again!" is devoted to Nolan's writings on Lee. In most of them, Nolan calls into question Lee's military judgement as well as personal character. Some of his conclusions seem reasonable, but others are preposterous. It seems that Nolan views Lee as the embodiment of the "Lost Cause" he so despises and, because of this bent, seeks literary assassination of the "Hero of the South." Perhaps this is not true, but the tone and vigor of Nolan's prosecution of Lee certainly suggest an author "out to get" his quarry.

Part of the problem with Nolan's case against Lee is in the selectivity of evidence he presents, introducing only those things that support his argument and ignoring or discounting facts which do not.

In "Considering 'Lee Considered'," Nolan asserts that Lee hated the North, citing Lee's own statements referring to the Federals as "vandals" who were filled with "malice and revenge." What indeed was Lee to think of the behavior of Federal troops under Pope, Hunter, and Sheridan? Were the destroyers of the private homes and property and harassers of defenseless noncombatants noble warriors?

Not included in Nolan's argument is this quotation attributed to Lee: "I have fought against the people of the North because I believe they were seeking to wrest from the South its dearest rights. But I have never seen the day when I did not pray for them." That statement has its own incriminations, but clearly this is not the language of a man filled with hatred.

Nolan also states that Lee was not a postwar conciliator. Among his citations is a statement Lee made to William Preston Johnston in which he referred to the "vindictiveness and malignity of the Yankees." Again, was Lee supposed to embrace and applaud the often harsh

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and often corrupt practices of the occupying Federal garrisons in the South during Reconstruction?

Typical of the great body of evidence to the contrary not presented by Nolan was Lee's reply to a venom-filled letter from a Confederate widow: "Madam, do not train up your children in hostility to the government of the United States. Remember we are all one country now. Put aside all sectional feeling and bring them up to be Americans."

Nolan takes to task the historians who, to him, have sought to raise Lee to sainthood. To a considerable degree, Nolan is right, though he is again selective in his presentation. He singles out Charles Bracelen Flood for referring to Lee as a "Confederate Santa Claus" in Flood's book "Lee: The Last Years". Flood used that term when describing Lee at Christmas on horseback with a sack of gifts for young neighboring children. What other term would have been more appropriate for Flood to use?

Nolan dismisses the writings of Col. Charles Marshall, Lee's aide and one of his closest associates during the war. Nolan also wholly embraces the views of Maj. Gen. J. F. C. Fuller, the British military historian who was highly critical of Lee. We are asked, therefore, to believe that Fuller, a man writing a continent and several decades away, more fully understood Lee and his campaigns than did a man who often shared Lee's very tent.

In "General Lee - A Different View" (essay from "The Color Bearers", American Blue and Gray Association, 1995), Nolan argues that, while sound and even brilliant as a tactician and operational strategist, Lee's great failure as a commander was in "grand strategy." In this, Lee "did not understand the war." Because Lee embraced an aggressive strategy of conducting offensive operations against the Union armies, he decimated his forces in a series of costly battles, incurring losses he could not replace. In doing so, Lee rendered his army vulnerable to the immobility imposed on it by Appomattox.

Nolan contends that Lee should have pursued a defensive war, husbanding his limited resources, and keeping at bay a superior force. In the course of this strategy, Lee might have inflicted sufficient casualties on his opponent and prolonged the conflict to a point at which northern popular support for the war effort diminished.

The author's argument is well conceived, admirably presented, and not at all without merit, though it ignores the question of whether Lincoln and his generals would have played along. Nolan uses the Battle of Fredericksburg as an example of how Lee should have fought his battles. Lee himself might have wished for that

opportunity every time out. Unfortunately for Lee, he faced Ambrose Burnside only once.

Whether we think Alan Nolan right or wrong on Lee, these writings illustrate his greatest virtues as a historian: he presents his subject clearly. His thoughts are organized and well delivered. His writing is succinct, clear, and to the point. It is devoid of superfluous prose. Alan Nolan is not out to impress anyone with his ability to craft word pictures. He is simply a good writer. Actually, he is a great writer.

That talent manifests itself throughout the selections of "Rally, Once Again!" In "R. E. Lee and July 1 at Gettysburg" (from the Gary Gallagher-edited "First Day at Gettysburg," UNC Press, 1995), Nolan's writing conveys his understanding of who his audience is. The reader of that book is probably a dedicated student of military history, one already quite familiar with the history of the battle. Nolan therefore wastes no space in describing the entire fight but rather sticks closely to his own theme.

Nolan first came to prominence in 1961 with his classic unit study "The Iron Brigade", chosen by "Civil War Times Illustrated" as one of the one hundred best Civil War books. An entire section of "Rally, Once Again!" is devoted to his writings on the fabled fighting unit. Through these, Nolan creates stirring battle narrative and also brings the reader into personal contact with some of the brigade leaders. For casual history buffs as well as serious students, can this be considered anything other than great reading? It is compelling stuff, brought to life by a man who cares about both his subject and readers.

That Alan Nolan is comfortable in a variety of styles and subjects is clear. From technical battle analysis to character study to legal cases, Nolan writes with clarity, exhibiting an unyielding respect to his reader. "Confederate Leadership at Fredericksburg" is as accessible to the lay reader as is "Ex Parte Milligan: A Curb of Executive Military Power." For this reviewer, some of the best works in the book are Nolan's assessment of Lincoln as a lawyer (and how that training manifested itself during his presidency) as well as the author's analysis of some key legal cases. If Nolan can make a legal case both palatable and interesting for the masses, his is a unique talent.

Alan Nolan is also a veteran reviewer of books. He states humorously (and correctly) that one of the benefits of being a reviewer is that "you get a free book." Because of his own apparent breadth of interests, Nolan is an accomplished reviewer. He does again exhibit his antipathy toward historians who favorably portray

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Confederates (the highly respected James I. "Bud" Robertson is condemned, for example) and admiration for those who chronicle Union military units and leaders.

"Rally, Once Again!" reinforces Alan Nolan's status as a historian of importance and influence. This reviewer obviously disagrees with his contentions about Lee, but we "need" a historian like Alan Nolan who causes us to reevaluate and to question. Often we are led to a greater understanding of a person or issue--or at least to understand better those who adopt a differing opinion from ours. That is the importance of Alan Nolan among contemporary historians.

Nolan mentions in the book a letter written to the editor of the "Civil War News" urging the public not to buy "Lee Considered", or to burn it if they had already bought it. You should buy "Lee Considered", and you should buy "Rally, Once Again!" Don't burn them. Read them. Learn from them. If you agree or disagree with Alan Nolan, ask yourself why, and then embark on your own quest to "consider" Civil War history.

McHenry Museum

The McHenry Museum in Modesto, CA, in conjunction with the Stanislaus Civil War Round Table, will mount a Civil War exhibit from July 1 through August 13, 2001. The Modesto-based round table is looking for Civil War artifacts to be exhibited during that time. This will be a professional exhibit and all items loaned will be catalogued, insured, properly handled and displayed. If you have any items to display, contact Chuck Gardali, 209/527-3705.

In addition to the artifact exhibit, there will be live entertainment throughout the month, including Robert Snowden appearing as Frederick Douglass and Civil War music by the band which performed at the West Coast Civil War Conference in Sacramento last November.



McHenry Museum
1402 I Street, Modesto, CA 95354
(209) 577-5366

Civil War-Related Books on Television

C-Span's Booknotes program will feature William Cooper Jr. being interviewed about his book, "Jefferson Davis, American" on April 8. Booknotes airs Sunday evenings at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

On March 19, C-Span began a series entitled American Writers, which will run for 38 weeks. The program airs on Mondays at 6 a.m. PT and repeats on Fridays at 5 p.m. PT. The following writers connected with the Civil War will be featured:

Frederick Douglass and the Abolitionist Writers

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

May 28

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Uncle Tom's Cabin

June 4

Mary Chestnut

A Diary from Dixie

June 11

Abraham Lincoln

The Gettysburg Address

June 18

More information about the American Writer series can be found at www.americanwriters.org.

Mill Springs, Kentucky

Early in 1862 the hills and ravines of southwestern Pulaski County, Kentucky, were the scene of the first decisive Federal victory of the Civil War and the beginning of a long line of Confederate setbacks in the West. Both North and South recognized the importance of holding Kentucky. Both sides moved into the state in the late summer and fall of 1861.

The western part of the Confederate defense line across Kentucky was anchored in Bowling Green, and in October Brigadier General Felix K. Zollicoffer left Knoxville, Tennessee, and moved up through Cumberland Gap, Barbourville and London. His advance was stopped north of London at Camp Wildcat in the Rockcastle hills, where Federals under Brigadier General Albin Schoepf repulsed the attack.

Zollicoffer moved his forces back into Tennessee and tried a new route into Kentucky, moving up through Monticello to reach Mill Springs on the south bank of the Cumberland River in late November. Here he set up camp and fortified his position. Having decided that the

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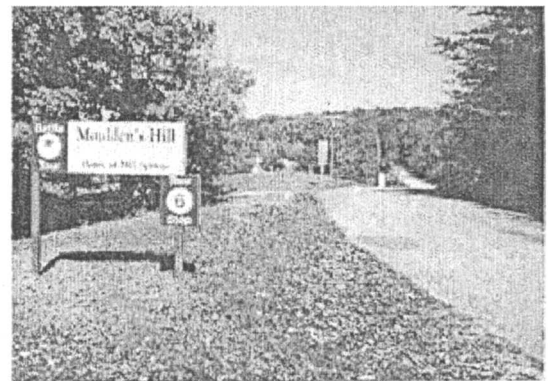
north bank of the river was a better position, Zollicoffer moved his forces across the river to Beech Grove in early December, putting his regiments into winter camp and digging a line of entrenchments to guard the camp from the north.

In early January of 1862, Major General George Bibb Crittenden arrived to take command of the forces at Beech Grove, which were strengthened with additional troops, bringing the Confederate strength in the area to about 4,000 men.

Meanwhile the Federals were concentrating under General Schoepf at Somerset and Brigadier General George H. Thomas at Lebanon, Kentucky. Thomas' superiors feared that Crittenden's forces would attack and overwhelm Schoepf, so they ordered the Federals to concentrate west of Somerset near Fishing Creek. Poor weather and bad roads kept Thomas from reaching the area until January 17th, at which time his forces camped at Logan's Crossroads, now called Nancy, Kentucky. The crossroads was a key intersection nine miles west of Somerset and about nine miles north of the Confederate camp at Beech Grove.

Although Confederates thought that heavy rains would make Fishing Creek impassable, keeping Schoepf from joining Thomas at Logan's Crossroads, Schoepf was able to send three regiments of infantry and an artillery battery to Thomas, giving the Federals a force of some 4,000 men, roughly equal to the Confederate force at Beech Grove.

Unaware of this reinforcement and wishing to attack the Federals before they could concentrate their strength, Crittenden ordered an advance of the Confederate army at midnight January 18, 1862. The stage was set for the Battle of Mill Springs.



Mill Springs Battlefield
Photo by Gary Tindle

Battle on a Sabbath Morn

After marching for six hours through a cold rain that turned the road into a sea of mud, the vanguard of the Confederate forces arrived near Logan's Crossroads about 6:30 a.m. on January 19, 1862. Near a small creek called Timmy's Branch a mile and a half from Logan's Crossroads, the advance Confederate cavalry met a strong Federal picket force made up of Thomas' 1st Kentucky Cavalry and the 10th Indiana Infantry regiments. Far from being surprised, the Federals were on watch and this picket force stubbornly resisted the Confederate advance toward Logan's Crossroads and the Federal camps.

After being slowly pushed back, the Federal pickets were reinforced by the rest of the 10th Indiana about a mile south of the Federal Camps, near present-day Zollicoffer Confederate Cemetery. The Federal force stood its ground against the advancing Confederates.

Crittenden advanced with Zollicoffer's own brigade in front. Zollicoffer placed the 15th Mississippi in line of battle advancing up the road, with the 19th and 20th Tennessee regiments on either side of the road a little behind the Mississippi soldiers. Zollicoffer's other regiments followed in support of this line and his force was sufficient to drive the 1st Kentucky Cavalry and 10th Indiana back to a ridge just north and west of the Zollicoffer Cemetery. However, the dawn was dark and misty, and the Confederates advanced slowly.

After fighting for almost an hour on their own, the 10th Indiana and 1st Kentucky Cavalry were running low on ammunition and in danger of being flanked by the advancing Confederates. Just as the Federal line was wavering and about to give way it was reinforced by the 4th Kentucky Infantry. These fresh troops stabilized the Federal line and halted the Confederate advance.

Unable to push this force back, the Confederates moved to the right, under cover of a deep wooded ravine. From here, the Confederates could approach the Federal line before engaging them at close range. This infuriated the commander of the 4th Kentucky, Colonel Speed S. Fry. Fry climbed upon the rail fence his regiment had taken cover behind and demanded that the enemy come out and fight like men.

The Confederates made little headway in the woods west of the road. Most of the soldiers had never been in a battle before, and the dark and rainy morning coupled with the smoke and the din of the battle, produced quite a bit of confusion.

General Zollicoffer, unaware of the arrival of the Federal reinforcements, became convinced that his men were

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firing on another Confederate regiment. He ordered his troops to cease fire and rode forward down the road to correct the error. On the road he met Colonel Fry, who had ridden down the road to get a better look at the Confederate position. In the smoke and confusion neither man recognized the other, and Zollicoffer ordered Fry to cease fire, telling Fry he was firing on friendly troops.

Thinking Zollicoffer was a superior Federal officer, Fry began to ride back to his regiment and give the order, but as he turned to ride back a Confederate staff officer rode out of the woods, shouting, "General, it is the enemy!" and firing his pistol at Fry. Colonel Fry and the Federal soldiers nearby opened fire on Zollicoffer and his aide, and both fell dead in the road.

Zollicoffer's death demoralized his troops on that part of the field and the Confederates made no more efforts to advance. However, the 15th Mississippi and the 20th Tennessee launched a series of furious attacks on Fry's position, some of them even reaching the rail fence, where they fought the Federal soldiers hand to hand. The Confederate regiments moved ever toward their right, threatening to turn the Federal left flank. Then a section of Federal artillery appeared and threw shells into the advancing Confederates and the 2nd Minnesota and 9th Ohio regiments arrived to bolster the Federal line.

For over an hour, the 15th Mississippi and 20th Tennessee battled the Federals almost alone. Rutledge's Confederate battery fired a few rounds, but Crittenden was never able to bring up the rest of his infantry and bring all his forces to bear. The Confederates were further demoralized by the failure of many of their weapons. Most were obsolete flintlocks and were not firing in the pouring rain. As the 1st and 2nd Tennessee and 12th Kentucky US regiments arrived on the Federal left, outflanking the hard fighting 15th Mississippi and 20th Tennessee, the 9th Ohio made a bayonet charge on the west side of the road and the Confederate line crumbled. Most of the men simply turned and ran.

The entire Federal line advanced, forcing what was left of the Confederate army back to the top of the hill from which they had attacked. Here the 16th Alabama and the 17th and 29th Tennessee regiments made a last stand and held the advancing Federals until the shattered Confederate units could retreat down the road toward their camp. These units retreated in disorder and the battle was over.

Aftermath

The beaten Confederates fled back down the road, many of them discarding their weapons and accouterments along the way. They rallied at their Beech Grove

entrenchments, but General Thomas arrived with his forces in the afternoon and promptly opened a bombardment on the Confederate camp and the steamboat at the ferry landing.

Recognizing that his men were badly beaten and his position was untenable, Crittenden ordered a withdrawal across the river that night. Throughout the night the steamboat Noble Ellis ferried almost 4,000 Confederate soldiers across the river. The last Confederate reached the safety of the south bank at daylight on January 20th.

In order to get the soldiers across the river, everything else had to be left behind: all artillery, horses, wagons and most of the camp equipment. When the Federals assaulted the Confederate camps on the morning of January 20th, they found the camps abandoned and the Confederate army safely across the river.

BUGLE CALL ECHOES

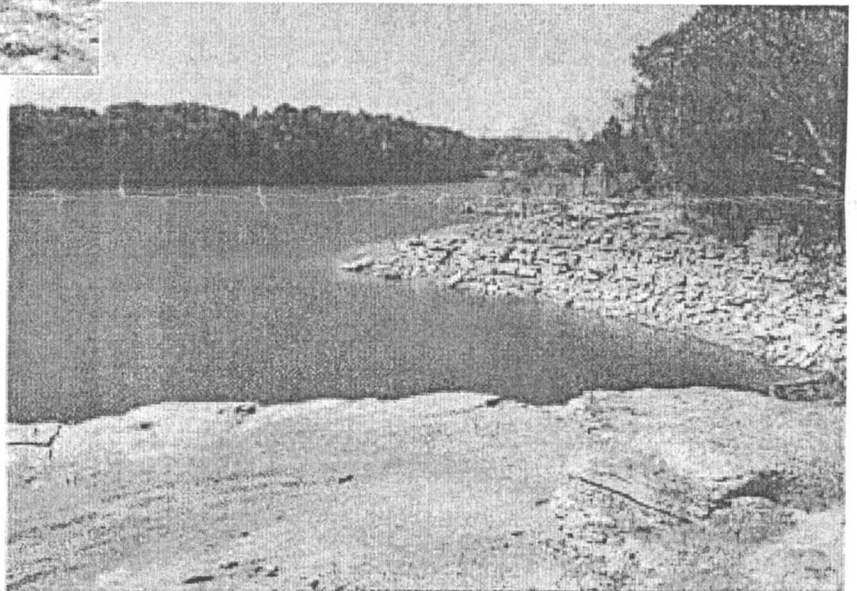
The Federals suffered 246 casualties in the battle; of these 55 were killed or mortally wounded. The Confederates suffered 533 casualties, including 150 killed or mortally wounded. These were left on the field to be buried in a mass grave near the site of Zollicoffer's death.

This Federal victory broke the Confederate defense line across Kentucky and placed pro-Union eastern Kentucky into Federal hands and also opened pro-Union eastern Tennessee for Federal invasion. The Confederate defeat coupled with the subsequent loss of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson ultimately led to the Battle of Shiloh in April of 1862.

The above description of the battle at Mill Springs was taken from the Mill Springs Battlefield Association guide. For more information about the battlefield or to join the association, which is dedicated to preserving the battlefield, contact them at PO Box 814, Somerset, KY 42502, 606-679-1859. Dues are \$15 a year.



Ferry Landing at Mill Springs Battlefield
Photos by Gary Tindle



10
PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR 2001

BUGLE CALL ECHOES

Date	Speaker	Topic
January 25, 2001	Membership	<i>Share and Tell</i>
February 22, 2001	Don McCue	<i>Forced Into Glory: Lincoln's White Dream</i>
March 29, 2001	Dr. Rebecca Steine	<i>Varina Davis and Mary Todd Lincoln</i>
April 26, 2001	Lee Merideth	<i>Civil War Railroads</i>
May 31, 2001	Panel Discussion: Carter, O'Neal, Ritchey	<i>Causes of War</i>
June 30, 2001 (note date change: Saturday picnic)	Rick Kubiak	<i>The Common Soldier</i>
July 26, 2001	Evan Jones	<i>TBA</i>
August 30, 2001	Elaine Herman	<i>Yeoman in Farragut's Fleet</i>
September 27, 2001	Bill Head	<i>Civil War Fiction</i>
October 25, 2001	Annual Fund Raiser: Jim Stanbery	<i>TBA</i>
November 29, 2001	Chuck Baley	<i>An Evening with Dr. Meux</i>
December 9, 2001	Christmas Get Together	

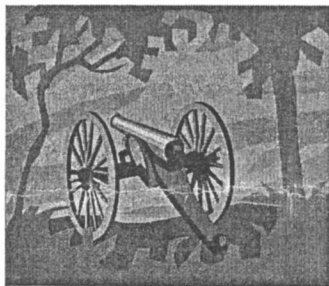
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Please begin/renew my membership in the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table. My membership category is checked below:

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Clip this membership form and send it with your check to the **SJVCWRT, PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755**. The membership year is from January to December. Five dollars of each membership goes towards preservation.