

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

Carroll's Yesteryears  
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Photos document more than faces  
by Jay Graybeal

Several weeks ago I journeyed to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania to visit the U.S. Army Military History Institute. While driving through the rural Adams and Cumberland Counties countryside I recalled a similar trip thirteen years ago when I came to the institute as a college intern. It was first history museum experience and it had a profound influence on my choice to pursue a career in the profession.

My task was to identify and catalog photographs of Civil War soldiers as part of an ambitious ongoing project to collect copies of all surviving images of the war. Researchers from around the world use the photograph collection for publications on military units, battles, uniforms, insignia and equipment.

The purpose of my recent trip was to take the historical society's collection of nineteenth century photographs of local soldiers for copying by the institute's curator. By the end of the day the institute had added copies of sixty images to their research collection. The society will receive a gratis copy for our files. Most of the images in the society's collection are of Union Civil War soldiers but there are also Confederates and later photographs from the Indian and Spanish-American Wars.

Each of these images provides some evidence about the sitter and the conflict in which he served. They also remind us that each man had a personal history, part of which was captured by the photographer. An examination of local and military records can provide a partial biography.

Among the numerous Union soldier photographs in the society's collection is a somewhat haunting image of Union Lt. Thomas Ocker of Co. F., 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Maryland Volunteer Infantry. In 1860 Ocker was a 24-year-old miller living in the Westminster District. He enlisted as a private in Co. C on August 18, 1862. After serving as a sergeant he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Co. F on May 1, 1863.

When Ocker "had his likeness taken" he wore a dark blue wool five-button sack coat with shoulder straps with solid sky blue background. Ocker also wore two badges on his left breast. The smaller shield-shaped badge was probably a silver identification pin likely engraved with Ocker's name and regiment. Many soldiers purchased such pins since the government did not

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supply them. The St. Andrews cross was the corps insignia of the Union Army's Sixth Corps. The Sixth Maryland was transferred to the Second Brigade, Third Division of the Sixth Corps on March 24, 1864. The central section of Ocker's corps badge was colored blue which denoted the Third Division. Because he is wearing this badge Ocker's portrait was taken after March but before November 17, 1864 when he was promoted to First Lieutenant.

Lt. Ocker was promoted to Captain of Co. A on January 23, 1865 and led his company through the Petersburg, Virginia Campaign. Capt. Ocker was made a Brevet-Major for his "gallant and meritorious services" during the capture of Petersburg on April 2, 1865. Unfortunately, he received a mortal wound during the fighting and died on April 18. Capt. Ocker's sword which is also owned by the historical society has some damage, perhaps from the time that he was wounded. A local newspaper carried the account of his death:

It becomes our painful duty today to announce the death of Captain Thomas Ocker of Company A. 6<sup>th</sup> Maryland Regiment. He was wounded in the battle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (sic) of April near Burksville, Va, and was brought to the city point hospital, where he died on Thursday morning last. His remains were brought home on Saturday and interred on Sunday afternoon by the Order of the Sons of Temperance, of which he was an honored and faithful member.

A very appropriate and touching funeral discourse was delivered by Rev. John A. Munroe, and a few feeling remarks made by Rev. Jonathan Munroe when the remains were followed to their final resting place by the largest concourse of people we have seen assembled on a similar occasion for many years. He was a young man of great moral worth, a true soldier, and held in the highest estimation as well by the men under his immediate command as our entire community.

He was among the first to enlist from our place in defense of his country, and truly has he sustained himself to the end, and while we regret that he has been denied the enjoyment of that peace which his efforts aided to bring to our country, we feel a proud consciousness that his life has been sacrificed in a noble and just cause, and that his memory will ever be cherished in good association with the great and good who have also fallen.

Capt. Ocker's photograph serves to document the dress of an officer of the Sixth Maryland during the latter part of the war. It also serves as a reminder of a Carroll Countian who paid the supreme sacrifice.

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To learn more about the Historical Society's collection or about the Military History Institute's efforts to copy early military photographs call the historical society.s

*Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society*

*Photo caption: Lt. Thomas Ocker. Maryland Volunteer Infantry, 1864.*