

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Countians fought for both sides in Civil War
By Greg Goodell

Beginning with the Civil War Centennial of 1961-65, the historical society has collected information about countians who served with the Union and Confederate forces.

The goal was to compile a list of service personnel for use by researchers. This summer I developed a computer database for recording information about these men. Presently recorded in the database are files for several hundred local men. During the course of research I reexamined how Carroll County men joined the military.

Like many other border state regions, Carroll County experienced divided loyalties during the Civil War. Men who had been neighbors found themselves opposing each other in great armies. Throughout the course of the war, Carroll countians joined a number of units, hoping to help bring victory to the cause which they supported.

Following the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, volunteer units began to organize throughout the North in defense of the Union. Carroll countians who volunteered for the Union Army in this first year of the war joined among other units the 1st Maryland Infantry, Potomac Home Brigade, organized in the fall of 1861. During the Civil War the common practice was to enlist soldiers together from a locality.

Following President Lincoln's call for additional volunteers in the summer of 1862, several units organized in Carroll County in this manner. Companies A and C of the 6th Maryland Infantry organized at Westminster; Company E, 4th Maryland Infantry enlisted men from Winfield and Company F 7th Maryland Infantry was from Union Bridge. William A. McKellip of Westminster, Captain of Company A, 6th Maryland, rose to Lieutenant Colonel and commander of his regiment.

Countians of African-American descent entered primarily the 4th and 30th Infantry Regiments of the United States Colored Troops (the Army at this time was segregated). These units began forming in late 1863 and early 1864 after the United States Congress authorized the raising of African-American regiments. Several Carroll countians joined the United States Navy and participated in its blockading and river operations.

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At the same time the first Union regiments were forming, several pro-Confederate Marylanders began raising units for the Confederate Army. After the Federal government consolidated its control over Maryland in 1861 to prevent the state's secession, Confederate units were unable to recruit in Maryland. Carroll countians who wished to join the Confederate forces secretly made their way south. Many went to Virginia and joined the Maryland units which organized there. These units included the 1st Maryland Infantry and the 1st and 2nd Batteries, Maryland Artillery.

In the fall of 1862 two new Maryland units formed at Winchester, Virginia, attracting several countians. These were the 2nd Maryland Infantry and the 1st Maryland Cavalry. At least two residents served in the 43rd Battalion, Virginia Partisan Rangers, better known as Mosby's Rangers. Others served in various posts in the Confederate Navy. John W. Bennett of Sykesville became Captain of C.S.S. Nashville, one of the famous Confederate commerce raiders.

By examining the service of Carroll County men, we can gain a better understanding of our county's role in the Civil War.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: Capt. William Dorsey, Co. D, 1st Maryland Cavalry, C.S.A.

Photo caption: Capt. George Webster, Co. C, 6th Maryland Infantry, U.S.A.