

Carroll History Journal

The Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland, Inc.


SOME WENT SOUTH: CARROLL COUNTY CONFEDERATES

BY MARY ANN ASHCRAFT

Although the Civil War ended more than 150 years ago, stories associated with it still resonate with readers, especially those from a border state like Maryland that sent her sons to fight on both sides of the conflict. Over three-quarters of Carroll County's men who participated in the war fought for the Union, but a significant number also "went South." The three young men whose experiences are chronicled here left no record of why they cast their lot with the Confederacy, but each left blood or health on the battlefield, and no one can question their commitment to the Southern cause.

Intense political feelings prevailed across Maryland and the nation leading up to the 1860 presidential election. In Carroll County, newspapers were filled with notices of political meetings held by supporters of John C. Breckinridge (Southern Democrat), John Bell (Constitutional Union), and Stephen A. Douglas (Democrat). Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln garnered only 59 votes out of almost 4,500 cast county-wide. Bell received 2,294 votes, Breckinridge 1,799, and Douglas 334.

Military ardor ran high. The United States had a long history of supporting militia units dating back to pre-Revolutionary times, but the enthusiasm for forming new ones, for obtaining arms, uniforms, and locations for drilling was unprecedented as the year 1860 progressed. Locally the Carroll Guards and the Smallwood Infantry, both functioning by early summer, began drilling twice a week.



ATTENTION, CARROLL GUARDS!

EVERY member of Carroll Guards is requested to be punctual in his attendance at the meeting for drill purposes, to be held in the Odd Fellows' Hall, on to morrow, *Saturday Evening*, 30th inst., at 8½ o'clock. The final arrangements for the purchase of Uniforms, together with other business of importance will be submitted to the meeting. Persons wishing to join the Company are invited to attend.

By order,
WM. A. McKELLIP,
Secretary.

June 29.

Formed before the Civil War, the Carroll Guards militia group advertised meetings in Westminster newspapers. Only after the war began was its Union support certain. (*American Sentinel*)

Taneytown established a militia group of its own, and by November a "Troop of Horse" had organized in Westminster. Whether the militias supported the Union was unclear in the beginning. No political alignment appeared in their advertisements although members surely must have expressed their opinions at meetings. William A. McKellip, who was instrumental in forming the Carroll Guards, later raised a company for the Sixth Maryland Infantry (U.S.A.) and became an officer in that regiment, while W. Scott Roberts, an officer in the Smallwood Infantry, was a known Southern sympathizer.

South Carolina seceded immediately following Lincoln's election, even before his inauguration. By March 1861, the secessionist stance of Joseph Shaw, editor of Westminster's *Carroll County Democrat*, was clear. He argued that a true union upheld a state's constitutional rights and that any other form of governance was tyranny. The May 23 issue of his paper announced the arrival in Richmond, Virginia, of young men from prominent Baltimore families who were joining Confederate military units. Between numerous political meetings held throughout Carroll County and abundant newspaper coverage, few citizens could ignore the gathering storm. Judging by the dates on which local men began crossing the Potomac to join the Southern cause, it is obvious many had made up their minds by late spring or summer 1861.

D. Scott Boyle – Confederate Surgeon

Daniel Scott Boyle, eldest son of the wealthy and influential John Brooke Boyle and his wife, Elizabeth Maynadier Scott, was born April 3, 1833, in Taneytown. In 1848 he applied for admission to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, then "declined accepting" according to Academy records. One newspaper later referred to him as D. Scott Boyle, Esq., so perhaps he studied law.

In December 1854 Boyle accompanied Maryland Judge Samuel D. LeCompte to Kansas Territory when LeCompte was appointed Chief Justice there. The two men became part of the endeavor to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state and counteract abolitionists like militant John Brown. Young Boyle's feelings undoubtedly reflected his family's position back in Maryland where his father owned slaves and later became an elector on the secessionist ticket of Breckinridge.

Boyle returned from Kansas to study medicine, graduating from the University of Maryland School of Medicine in 1860. The census that year showed him as a 27-year-old physician living near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When the Civil War broke out, he cast his lot with the South and entered Confederate service as surgeon, a rank given to doctors assigned to regiments.

Information regarding the date and place of Boyle's enlistment remains elusive. In mid-September 1862 he arrived in Maryland as part of General Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North. At the same time his father, by then living in Westminster, played host to Thomas Rosser, colonel of the Fifth Virginia Cavalry that seized the town on September 11 and placed a cannon on Main Street. The next day Mrs. Boyle invited some of her secessionist friends to meet Rosser and other officers. Included on her guest list was Rose Neal, wife of a Westminster attorney and mother of two sons who soon joined the Confederate cavalry. Westminster's Union supporters "laid low" while the Confederates ransacked the headquarters of the Union-supporting Carroll Guards.

No. 40.

SPECIAL REQUISITION

Stationed at *Chimborazo Hospital #2 Richmond Va*

For 5000 lbs Straw

Total required,	
On hand to be deducted,	
Quantity required,	

I certify that the above Requisition is correct, and that the articles specified are absolutely requisite for the public service, rendered so by the following circumstances, viz: *for filling beds*

D. S. Boyle
will issue the articles specified in the above Requisition.

Commanding

RECEIVED at *Richmond* the *27* day of *Aug* 1862, of *J. B. Maynard*
Assistant Quartermaster, *five thousand pounds of Straw*

in full of the above Requisition.

D. S. Boyle
Asst Surg. Major

Requisition for purchase of 5,000 pounds of straw to fill hospital mattresses, signed by D. S. Boyle, assistant surgeon, Chimborazo Hospital #2, Richmond (National Archives and Records Administration)

During the Battle of Antietam on September 17 Boyle was captured, but as a surgeon when thousands of wounded men from both sides lay on the battlefield and in hospitals, his medical expertise was sorely needed. While a prisoner of war he served beside a Union surgeon as an assistant surgeon in General Hospital #7 in Frederick. That small facility in the center of town had about 16 beds and functioned from September through November 1862. It was funded entirely by private donations and treated only Confederate wounded. The surgeons relied upon a steward, two male nurses, and a cook, although volunteers likely provided additional care because Frederick was home to many Southern sympathizers.

On November 28, 1862, Boyle's name appeared on a list of paroled prisoners, and by December he was in Richmond, first working in General Hospital #17, then on the medical staff of the city's Chimborazo Hospital, one of the largest and best-organized military hospitals in the South, which cared for thousands of convalescing soldiers over the course of the war. In October 1863 he left the comparative safety of hospital work to accompany an infantry unit in Lee's Third Corps. For the remainder of the war he worked as an assistant surgeon in field hospitals associated with battles such as Cold Harbor and Petersburg. A month after Lee's surrender in April 1865, Boyle took the oath of allegiance to the U.S. government, and returned home.

The 1870 census showed him living with his family in Westminster at 216 East Main Street, the Historical Society property now known as Cockey's. He was 37, unmarried, and employed as a "clerk." Ten years later he still lived in the family home; his occupation was "physician," but he was listed as "insane." By 1900 he was an inmate at Mt. Hope Retreat, a Baltimore facility for the mentally ill. He died in 1901.

Mystery surrounds many details of Boyle's later life. Only a brief mention in his obituary in the *American Sentinel* on February 9, 1901, offers some insight. "In early life Dr. Boyle gave great promise of attaining eminence in his profession, but a sunstroke, received while acting as a surgeon in the Confederate army, incapacitated him for



216 East Main Street, home of John Brooke Boyle and family, including son D. Scott Boyle (HSCC photograph)

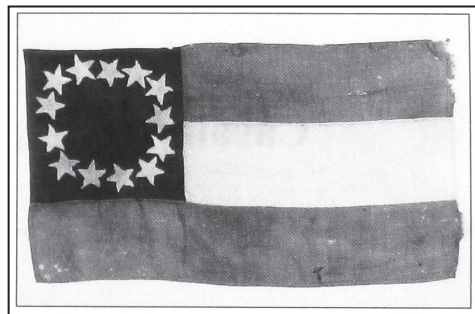
business and professional pursuits." Although he supported the South throughout the war, two former Union officers, Colonels William A. McKellip and Samuel K. Herr, served as pallbearers at his funeral.

William H. B. "Dare Devil Billy" Dorsey – Confederate Cavalryman

William Henry Bussard Dorsey was born at the family home, Willow Dale, near Mt. Airy on August 23, 1841. His father, Gustavus W. Dorsey, owned several slaves. His mother, Sophia Bussard, came from a slave-owning family. Until young Dorsey enlisted as a private in Company A, First Maryland Infantry, Confederate States of America (C.S.A.), at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, on May 21, 1861, he apparently worked on his father's and grandfather's farms. Whether he had difficulty avoiding capture as he crossed the Potomac to enlist isn't recorded, but Union troops patrolled the river in 1861 to prevent the likes of Dorsey from "going South." His nickname "Dare Devil Billy" and his enlistment date suggest he early became an ardent supporter of the Confederate cause.

Between May 1861 and June 1862, Dorsey rose to the rank of 2nd lieutenant in his infantry company. He resigned, however, to enlist as a 1st lieutenant in Captain Warner Welsh's Company D, First Maryland Cavalry, C.S.A., at Winchester, Virginia, on September 20, 1862. Dashing about on horseback may have suited his personality better than marching with a pack on his back. Company D was not at Antietam in mid-September because the First Maryland Cavalry was adding new companies

and Welsh's unit was still being organized. Even as early as the fall of 1862, the South was having difficulty equipping military units. Although cavalymen were expected to provide their own horses, a full-scale military campaign required more than just mounts.



Guidon carried during battle and military reviews by the First Maryland Cavalry, C.S.A.
(Museum of the Confederacy)

Dorsey was present during the winter of 1862/63 when Company D operated in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and farther west. One member described the activities while the men were in winter quarters – daily drills, playing cards, and staging horse races on an improvised race track. When on the move, conditions were very rough: “marching day and night, crossing the mountains. Many men were frost-bitten...the suffering of the men was intense.” On January 31, 1863, the four companies of the First Maryland Cavalry consisted of 14 officers and 241 men.

Late in February Dorsey and others set out to capture a Federal picket post near Winchester. Dorsey had 20 men under him, and another officer had 40. The mission took about 24 hours, resulting in the capture of seven Union prisoners and nine horses. A member of the group later wrote, “We were in no condition to fight after a gallop of nearly eighty-seven miles.”

The First Maryland Cavalry campaigned in far western Maryland and western parts of Virginia in the spring of 1863, seizing cattle and horses, damaging the railroads, and interrupting oil production and distribution in the area. Their bounty included about 1,000 cattle and 1,200 horses. For the 22-year-old Dorsey, who had grown up on a Carroll County farm, these must have been exhilarating times. A sentence from his obituary in Frederick's *Republican Citizen* of December 5, 1879, offers insight into that life. “His comrades...

will remember his many hair-breadth escapes as well as his daring deeds when he was serving as First Lieutenant of his old Company.”

When Lee's Army of Northern Virginia began its second invasion of the North in June 1863, the First Maryland Cavalry played many roles. As they swept across Maryland and Pennsylvania before the Battle of



“Dare Devil Billy” Dorsey, Company D, First Maryland Cavalry, C.S.A.
(HSCC photograph)

Gettysburg, they seized horses and cattle from farmers. On July 1, cavalymen Lieutenant William Dorsey, Captain Warner Welsh, and Major Harry Gilmor were in the midst of action occurring just north of the town. Gilmor described their maneuvers:

We dashed in among them, and had no difficulty in stopping just as many as we pleased. But few shots were fired at us, and those by the Feds, too much fluttered to take aim. Near the edge of town was a regiment, apparently in a very disorganized condition, but still holding on to their colors. In we dashed among them, slashing right and left. Most of them gave up, or, rather threw down their arms, and continued on. A small squad of ten or more gathered around the colors. We dashed at them; two fired upon us, but so wildly that neither horse nor man was struck. They presented their bayonets, but, after knocking these aside and cutting down two or three of them, the rest surrendered.

Sometime during the Gettysburg campaign or immediately thereafter, Dorsey received the serious wounds mentioned in several of his obituaries – “shot through the breast, in the arm and head, and while lying on his horse...a sabre cut across the forehead.” Those may have occurred during Lee’s retreat from Gettysburg, although no record of his hospitalization was found. Confederate cavalry guarded the wagon trains of wounded soldiers and supplies heading back toward the Potomac. Over the course of several days there were fierce fights with Union cavalry along the route from Monterey Pass near Fairfield, Pennsylvania, to Hagerstown and Williamsport, Maryland. At one point about 50 men of the First Maryland Cavalry held off several thousand Union troops for several hours. Confederate General William “Grumble” Jones wrote, “This brave little band of heroes was encouraged with the hope of speedy reinforcements, reminded of the importance of their trust, and exhorted to fight to the bitter end rather than yield.” Companies B and D of the First Maryland were decimated during that action.

It appears Dorsey was quickly back in the saddle, but his unit continued to suffer from loss of men and mounts as the war dragged on. Neither was easily replaced. Some cavalymen traveled as far as North Carolina to buy serviceable horses if they could not capture any. By September 1864, Company D was reduced to two officers and 46 men with 30 horses, four mules, and two oxen. When Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, a number of First Maryland men gave up their arms, but Dorsey and others rode away, prepared to join General Joe Johnston’s troops still fighting in North Carolina. On April 28, however, they learned Johnston had also surrendered so turned their horses homeward.

Dorsey took the oath of allegiance in Frederick on September 18, 1865, but he still had fight left in him as evidenced by a drunken altercation with a former Union soldier on the streets of Frederick in November. Dorsey and William McLanahan, also from Company D, were arrested for assault. Dorsey landed in jail when it was discovered he had stolen cattle in 1863, presumably during a raid across the Potomac.

Two years later he married Fannie Ebert, daughter of a well-known Southern sympathizer from Frederick, and the couple settled on his farm, Chestnut Hill, near Mt. Airy. He eventually left farming to become a full-time dry goods merchant. William H. B. Dorsey died December 2, 1879, at age 38, possibly of a heart attack, leaving behind Fannie and two young daughters. His body was taken by train from Mt. Airy to Frederick where it was met “by a Committee of the Confederate Memorial Association and a large number of his old comrades in arms.”

He was laid to rest in St. John’s Catholic Cemetery, Frederick, where a metal marker beside his headstone notes his Confederate service.



Metal marker beside gravestone of Wm. H. B. Dorsey, St. John’s Catholic Cemetery, Frederick, Maryland (Mary Ann Ashcraft photograph)

William Lewis Ritter – Confederate Cannoneer

What motivated a young man born in southern Pennsylvania to throw in his lot with Jefferson Davis and the Southern cause? That is what William Ritter did, perhaps because many generations of his family had come from Anne Arundel County, home to a large number of Southern sympathizers. William’s parents, Jacob and Elizabeth, were living near Chambersburg when he was born August 11, 1835. In 1847, Jacob moved the family to Maryland, settling first near Finksburg, then relocating to the Eldersburg area. Near the end of his life, William recalled traveling with his father on the Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike in a Conestoga wagon hauling 20 barrels of flour to sell in the city. According to the 1850 Carroll County census, 14-year-old William lived on the family farm. Ten years later he appeared as a clerk living in Baltimore County.

In October 1861 Ritter journeyed to Richmond where he enlisted in the Third Maryland Artillery, C.S.A. along with John Brown Rowan of Cecil County. He served throughout the war and later wrote the history of his unit for W.W. Goldsborough's *The Maryland Line In The Confederate Army*. The Third Maryland was the only Confederate unit from Maryland that served in the Western Theater of action, traveling across the South from Kentucky and Tennessee to Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi between the time it was mustered into service on January 14, 1862, until it surrendered on May 4, 1865, in Meridian, Mississippi.

Recruited chiefly from Maryland and Washington, D.C., the Third Maryland began with 92 men, excluding commissioned officers. Ritter served as an orderly sergeant and his friend Rowan as junior first lieutenant. Accompanying the unit were a surgeon, blacksmith, farrier, bugler, and two artificers (men who kept all equipment in working order). Initially the battery consisted of "two six-pounder smooth bores, two twelve-pounder howitzers and two three-inch iron rifle pieces," but over the course of the war, the men fired a wide range of guns including 32-pound siege pieces during their defense of Atlanta.* Many of their guns were captured, then replaced; 20 men were killed including Rowan; 34 were wounded including Ritter (three times); and some members of the company who surrendered during battles were paroled and eventually found their way back into service.

Ritter's history details a unit constantly on the move, reporting to new commanders, crisscrossing the South, and participating in battles that people familiar with Civil War history will recognize: the siege of Vicksburg, Missionary Ridge near Chattanooga, the defense of Atlanta, and the battles of Franklin and Nashville, Tennessee. Not a single one of those was a Confederate victory, but somehow Ritter survived, was never captured, and

* Note: The descriptions six-pounder, twelve-pounder, and 32-pound refer to the weight of the shell being fired by that artillery piece. The three-inch iron rifle fired eight pound shells with a three-inch diameter.



Movements of the Third Maryland Artillery, C.S.A., between January 1862 and May 1865—from Richmond to Knoxville, to northern Kentucky, back to Knoxville, to Vicksburg, to Chattanooga, to Atlanta, to Nashville, to Mobile, to surrender at Meridian, Mississippi (Mary Ann Ashcraft map)

was serving as captain when the Third Maryland surrendered. The accompanying map shows the territory covered by the unit during its 40 months of fighting.

While most of the men and artillery pieces of the Third Maryland were captured when Vicksburg fell on July 4, 1863, Ritter and several guns were located north of the city near Greenville and avoided capture. They had been there nearly two months, firing on Union gunboats and troop transports going up and down the Mississippi as Ulysses Grant moved his Union army into position to lay siege to Vicksburg. On May 4 Ritter's group spotted a Union transport heavily laden with stores coming down the river. He recorded:

Here was sport!...On the vessel came, rapidly and quietly, anticipating no danger. The Confederates were ordered to their positions, the guns were loaded, and as the boat came within their range the order "Fire!" was given.

The stillness of the calm summer morning must have seemed to the crew rudely broken, when in quick succession the shrill report of the rifle piece and the loud roar of the twelve-pound howitzer broke upon their ears. The first or second shot cut the tiller rope, and another broke a piston rod of one of the engines. The crew, despairing of escape, hoisted a white flag of surrender, and brought the boat ashore. Major Bridges and Lieutenant Ritter were the first to board the prize, which was found to be the Minnesota. The crew met them at the head of the saloon steps, and politely requested their captors, in true Western style, to "take a drink!" This was as politely declined, but a revolver which one of them wore at his waist was accepted instead – an article of which Lieutenant Ritter was in special need at that time.

The prisoners – seventeen in number – were ordered ashore, and the Confederates took possession. The boat was found to be heavily laden with sutlers' stores – flour, bacon, potatoes, pickles of all sorts, sugar, coffee, rice, ginger syrup, cheese, butter, oranges, lemons, almonds, preserves, canned oysters, whisky, wines, mosquito nets, clothing, stationery, smokers' articles, etc. To impoverished Confederates no greater mass of wealth could have seemed conceivable. They sat down to a luxurious dinner, which was in preparation at the time of their attack, and relished it, perhaps, more than those for whom it had been intended. Part of the festivities consisted in breaking a bottle of wine over Black Bess, Lieutenant Ritter's iron twelve-pounder, to a shot from which Major Bridges attributed the speedy surrender of the Minnesota. She had long been familiarly known in the battery by this name, but only now at length on this happy occasion received her formal christening.

On December 16, 1864, during a battle outside Nashville, Tennessee, Ritter's captain and war-

time friend, John Brown Rowan, was killed instantly by a piece of shell. He left behind a wife and two young children in Elkton, Maryland. Ritter described the aftermath of that battle: "The [Confederate] retreat continued through pelting rains, and snows, and high water, flooding the country through which the army had to pass. Many of the men were without shoes, and were but poorly clad, though the weather was so intensely cold as to benumb those who were better provided." About a month later Ritter was promoted to captain in Columbus, Mississippi. Following an attempt to defend Mobile, Alabama, in early April 1865, the Third Maryland Artillery surrendered on May 4 in Meridian.

After the war Ritter returned to Maryland and in November 1867 married Sarah Howard Rowan, his captain's widow. They settled in Baltimore and had a son to add to the son and daughter she brought to the marriage.

A February 26, 1911, article in the *Baltimore Sun* said,

"... few of his chance acquaintances would believe that the soft-voiced man, so neat and careful in his dress and so polished in his manner, was the same Ritter who was known as one of the hardest fighters

FOR MEMORIAL AT VICKSBURG

Appropriation May Be Asked For Monument To Marylanders.

It is likely that an effort will be made to have the next Legislature make an appropriation for a memorial to the Third Maryland (Confederate) Battery of Artillery in the Vicksburg National Park.

The Third Maryland Battery was the only command from this State that saw service in the Confederate armies in the West. It was organized in January, 1862, in Richmond, most of its members being young men who had run the blockade from Maryland. Its first captain was Henry B. Latrobe, of this city, a relative of ex-Mayor Ferdinand C. Latrobe, and its last commander was Capt. William L. Ritter, now a resident of this city. At other times it was commanded by Capt. Ferd. O. Claiborne and Capt. John B. Rowan, who was killed at Nashville in the disastrous repulse of Hood's army.

The battery served under Gen. E. Kirby Smith in the Kentucky and Tennessee campaign and under General Sterenson during the siege of Vicksburg, where it performed distinguished services. A section of the battery manned the ram Queen of the West, which captured the Federal ironclad *Indianola* in the Mississippi. Another detachment, under Captain Ritter, assisted in the capture of a Federal transport. The battery was mustered out at Meridian, Miss., in May, 1865, a month after General Lee's surrender.

Newspaper article detailing some of the engagements of the Third Maryland Artillery, C.S.A., during its Western Theater campaigns (*Baltimore Sun*, December 30, 1909)

in the West.” At the time of his 90th birthday in 1925, he lived in Reisterstown, a proud survivor of the thousands of Marylanders who joined the Confederate army. He passed away in December 1927 and was buried in the Ritter family plot at Wesley Freedom Methodist Church in Eldersburg.

Some of Carroll’s Confederate soldiers elected never to return after the war; others were discouraged from doing so. They put down roots in other parts of the state or even headed west. What kind of welcome awaited those who did return? Their gravestones in local cemeteries may offer an explanation. They rarely reveal the Civil War service of the men buried beneath them.

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