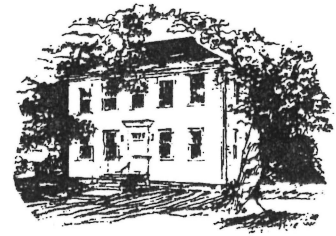


IMAGES

. . . then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

A Civil War Tale of the DeMar Brothers

Jane and James DeMar, pioneer settlers of the 1830's, had 10 children, though only seven lived past age two. The family built and lived in a log cabin on Miami Road. At the outbreak of the Civil War, their oldest son, William, had 5 children of his own (he eventually fathered 17), and therefore he did not enlist. Brothers James (Jim), Isaac (Ike), and John volunteered to fight for the Union. Patriotism and the desire to crush the rebellion made young men eager to join the army. Local businesses offered bounties to enlisted companies, and the general notion was that the war would be over rapidly. The three DeMars, ages 28, 25, and 23, walked from their homestead through "Section Woods" (the forest between Drake Rd. and current Route 126) to Camp Dennison where they joined the 83rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry.



Along with other recruits, the brothers lived in 100-man wooden barracks. They bathed in the Little Miami River, learned drills and formations on adjacent fields, held dress parades for visitors on Sundays, and may have relieved the monotony of camp life by playing cards purchased from the sutler's store. One member of the 83rd O.V. I. wrote there were "frequent visits of friends, laden with hampers of luxuries and supplies...soldiering at Camp Dennison was very much of a picnic as compared with later experiences." Armed with Belgian rifles and marching orders, the regiment was sent to Covington on September 3, 1862, to participate in the defense of Cincinnati.

Over the next few years, the 83rd campaigned in Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Alabama. During the siege of Vicksburg (a turning point in the war) the youngest DeMar, John, was mortally wounded. He returned home, where he died and was buried behind Armstrong Chapel. In a bitter and prolonged war, both Yankee and Confederate blood soaked many states. It finally ended with the surrender of Lee to Grant on April 9, 1865, but those in the Southern theater were not immediately aware of the cessation of fighting. Attempts to take Mobile, Alabama, said to be the most

heavily fortified city in the Confederacy, had begun in late March; and the 83rd was ordered to attack Ft. Blakely, and its nine earthen redoubts on the outskirts of the city.

On April 9, James DeMar wrote his parents that he expected the marching to begin that day. The DeMar brothers' regiment led the charge that began at 5:00 p.m. The Yankees took Ft. Blakely and captured over 1000 prisoners, 5 pieces of heavy artillery, and many smaller arms. Harpers Weekly reported, "Probably the last charge of this war, it was as gallant as any on record."

Though gallant, it was costly to the DeMar family. On April 11, Jim again wrote his parents, "While I rejoice over the victory, it is my very painful duty to inform you that Ike, poor boy, sacrificed his life in assisting to obtain it." Though Jim "did not see him fall" a fellow soldier told him that his brother was shot through the head and died "like a true soldier." Jim sent a lock of Ike's hair to his parents as a keepsake, and he told them the grave was marked, so that in the future the remains could be taken home.

In a later letter to his older brother, Jim acknowledged that he was sorely grieved at the loss of Ike. Recognizing his mother's melancholy, he wrote, "You must all cheer up, he has only died nobly, bravely, in a glorious cause, a short time in advance of us." Still, "it is hard that one in the prime of his manhood should fall..." Making the loss more difficult to bear was the fact that the Battle of Ft. Blakely occurred 6 hours after Lee's surrender. While the DeMar family mourned, the rest of the nation joyfully held spontaneous celebrations. There is no record that Ike's remains were moved back to Ohio, but Captain Jim (as he was known after the war) returned, married, and raised his family in his home located at the current site of the Madeira-Indian Hill Library. As Memorial Day 2000 approaches, it is fitting to remember the sacrifices of the DeMar family for the preservation of the Union more than a century ago.

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