

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

William Haines Lytle: Soldier Poet

A member of one of Cincinnati's oldest and most prominent families, William Haines Lytle was born in 1826. Raised at the family mansion on land that includes current day Lytle Park, he was fond of verse and wrote his first known poem at age 14. Lytle attended college, studied law, and passed the bar exam when he was 21. He then served in the Mexican War (1846-48) as a captain. Upon returning to Ohio, he resumed practicing law and became involved in politics. A representative in Ohio's state legislature, he sought higher office (Lieutenant Governor) but was unsuccessful. He was a widely known American poet, and his works reflected martial themes as well as the values of gallantry and chivalry. His poems were syndicated in newspapers and memorized by children for decades.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Lytle was Colonel of the volunteer Tenth Ohio Infantry. The regiment was mustered in at Camp Harrison and marched from there to Camp Dennison – 17 miles – in less than four hours. Under General Joshua Bates, the all-Cincinnati brigade, which included the Fifth, Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth Ohio Infantries, camped, trained, and drilled on the bottomlands beside the Little Miami River at the military camp. By the end of the war, all these volunteer regiments had the names of many battles in gilded letters on their regimental colors.

The Tenth went to western Virginia (now West Virginia) in the early stages of the war where they were instrumental in removing Confederates from that part of the state. During the Battle of Carnifax, Lytle was injured. A fellow soldier wrote "the gallant colonel was mounted on the black charger Fallaballaugh when hit by the ball... The rider fell to the ground, and snatching a musket, began to fire at the foe." He stated, "I want to be where Lytle is; that is where the fighting will be."

After recovering from the wound in his calf, Lytle went south with a new division. In 1862, he was again wounded and taken prisoner at the Battle of Perryville, sometimes called the Battle for Kentucky (because Union forces maintained control of the state for the remainder of the war). After a prisoner exchange, he rejoined Union forces. Soon thereafter he was promoted to Brigadier General. He was reassigned to the Third Division of the Army of the Cumberland. The troops idolized him. Only 5'6" tall, with gray eyes, Lytle had a daring nature. He often dismounted and joined his men on foot on long marches. He shared in their labor and endured the same dangers as his men. One time Lytle and his troops together felled 1500 trees to build a pontoon bridge across the Tennessee River. Officers of the Tenth OVI – which was composed mostly of Irish troops – admired him so much that they presented him with a medal – a jeweled Maltese Cross in August 1863.

The next month, he led his men at the Battle of Chickamauga, rallying them to the attack by saying, "All right men, we can die but once. This is our time and place." This was Lytle's time and place. He was struck by a bullet through his head. Within minutes he died on the battlefield. It has since been renamed Lytle Hill in Chickamauga National Military Park in Georgia. When he was shot, he had a half-finished poem in his pocket. Because of his courage and renown, Confederate soldiers stood guard over his body until it was returned to the North.

Cincinnati went into mourning when the news of Lytle's death came. Windows of stores were draped in black; businesses and schools were closed; and bells were tolled. The funeral cortege proceeded down 4th Street with Fallaballaugh at the front, riderless, with the General's boots turned backwards in his stirrups. The coffin was taken from Christ Church to Spring Grove Cemetery, where the soldier poet was laid to rest. Lytle had two sisters but never married and left no direct descendants. His poetry was his legacy. A Civil War hero, William Haines



**William H. Lytle Monument is
Spring Grove Cemetery**

Lytle was a most accomplished gentleman, master of verse, and a gallant soldier with immense patriotic ardor.



William Haines Lytle