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and articles about people,
places, history and natural
resources of Frederick
County.*

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MONOCACY NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD
FOUNDATION
PRESERVE • PROTECT • ENHANCE

The Dispatch



A Quarterly Newsletter of the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation

Who Was the “Comrade under the Pike Bridge”?

By David M. Hall

In the late afternoon of July 9, 1864, the Union defense of the bridges across the Monocacy River was unraveling under a concerted Confederate onslaught. The main US forces on the east side of the river broke and fled north toward the Railroad, leaving behind seventy skirmishers detached from the 10th Vermont, who had fought all day at Monocacy Junction on the west side of the river. They had been given up as lost by Major General Lew Wallace, commander of the Union force. Nevertheless, by their courage, pluck, and the leadership of 1st Lt. George E. Davis most of them escaped by famously retreating across the ties of the B&O Railroad Bridge under fire from the Confederates overrunning their position.

One of the skirmishers, Private Daniel B. Freeman, barely escaped and recalled: “I looked back along the R.R. and saw a comrade under the [Georgetown] Pike Bridge, fighting a dozen of the enemy charging down on him. He was riddled with lead...”

In Freeman’s 1897 reminiscence in *The National Tribune* entitled “A Day’s Skirmish” - appended to Glenn E. Worthington’s history Fighting For Time - he wrote: “As I look back...I can but think my



escape a miracle, and of the heroic comrade covering my retreat...[who] sacrificed his life there under the Pike Bridge that I and others might be spared.”

So who was the “Comrade under the Pike Bridge”? Freeman did not know and to this day this anonymous hero is a poignant character in the lore of the Monocacy Battlefield.

In an 1892 article for the Vermont publication *Bradford Opinion*, Lt. Thomas Hibbard White of the 10th Vermont identified the man as “Morgan of Co. B”. However, reviewing the 10th’s muster records, the man White referred to was likely Pvt. James Morgan of Company D, who did not die under the Pike Bridge during the retreat but fell forty feet from the Railroad Bridge into the river and was taken prisoner.

¹ In A History of the Tenth Regiment, Vt. Vols., Second Edition by the 10th’s Chaplain Edwin Mortimer Haynes, published in 1894, there were only five soldiers of the 10th listed as killed in the Monocacy fight. Through muster, pension, and other public source records and secondary histories, it is possible to account for four of the five; none of whose deaths match the circumstances of the Comrade under the Pike Bridge that Freeman described. Only one of the five is not accounted for: Private William W. Dutton of Company I. There is no burial record for this soldier nor personal effects returned to his parents. He may have been one of the unknown Union soldiers interred at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Frederick and later moved to Antietam National Cemetery in Sharpsburg, Maryland.

Private Dutton is, most likely, the “Comrade under the Pike Bridge” but not certainly unless some evidence can be found that places him on the west bank of the Monocacy River on July 9, 1864 as one of Davis’ skirmishers.

David M. Hall is an independent Civil War researcher

¹ Walter F. Beyer, Oscar F. Keydel, Deeds of Valor: How America’s Heroes Won the Medal of Honor (Detroit: Perrien-Keydel, 1901-1902) 376.

What’s New in the Park?

Ranger Georgia Etter Honored with Award

The Freeman Tilden Award is the highest award presented to an individual National Park Service (NPS) interpreter. This year’s recipient for our region was Ranger Georgia Etter of the Monocacy National Battlefield. Since 1981, the award is presented annually and recognizes outstanding contributions to the practice of interpretation and education by an NPS employee. The award was created to stimulate and reward creative thinking



that results in positive impacts upon the preservation of the parks and the visiting public. The award was named for Freeman Tilden, who has inspired generations of interpreters across the world and whose Interpreting our Heritage

continues to be a definitive text for the discipline.

New Biological Technician Joins Park Staff

The award was based on a nomination that listed the following contributions that Ranger Etter has made to the Battlefield. At a time of growing pandemic concerns, she expanded opportunities for visitor engagement at the park. She presented program proposals for regular visitation, spearheaded a large National Public Lands Day event with local Girl Scouts, designed new interpretive signage, and developed large-scale projects, such as the Native Plant Garden. In particular, the Native Plant Garden project entailed planting gardens and wildflowers around the visitor center with the help of volunteers and using the gardens as a teaching space to discuss and learn about native and invasive plants. Not only did this project enhance the natural landscape, but it also provided more ways for visitors with diverse interests to engage with the park. As a result of Ranger Etter's project, there has been an expansion of outdoor programming, volunteer participation, and interpretation of natural history at Monocacy National Battlefield. **Congratulations to Ranger Etter!**

Allison Radin (Allie) is the new Biological Technician at Monocacy National Battlefield. She is a 2022 graduate of the State University of New York at Binghamton with a degree in biology and German studies. She spent the summer after graduation working with the US Geological Survey on a pollinator survey at Antietam, Manassas, Monocacy, and the C&O Canal national parks. After working through the fall at an environmental education camp in the Massachusetts Berkshire Mountains, she started her job here at Monocacy. She will be with the Battlefield for about a year in the Natural Resources Department working to protect and conserve the natural areas around the park. **Welcome Allie!**



New Member of Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation Board of Directors

Charles W. Mitchell

Charles Mitchell is both an author and an editor. He has published widely on Civil War era politics and slavery in Maryland, and much of his research has centered on the impact of the Civil War on civilians. He is the author or editor of three books: The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered, coedited with Jean H. Baker; Maryland Voices of the Civil War (winner of the Founders Award from the American Civil War Museum); and Travels Through American History in the Mid-Atlantic: A Guide for All Ages, winner of a Lowell Thomas Gold Award from the Society of American Travel Writers. With degrees from Pennsylvania State University and the University of Maryland, he has served various publishing houses as both editor and administrator. His last position was Director of Alumni Relations at The Saint Paul's Schools in Brooklandville, Maryland. He chairs the Publications Committee at the Maryland Center for History and Culture where he serves as a trustee, and he is also a member of the Advisory Council of the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Navy Commemorates The Battle of Monocacy

By Ken Plantz

The U.S. Navy has a long history of naming its ships after battles fought both at sea and on land. Ships that have borne the names of well-known battles of the Civil War are USS Gettysburg, USS Shiloh, USS Vicksburg, USS Antietam, and USS Chancellorsville. The Battle of Monocacy was not forgotten by the US Navy. On 14 December 1864, only six months after the battle, the USS Monocacy was built in Baltimore by A. & W. Denmead & Son. She was completed in 1865 and put in service in 1866.

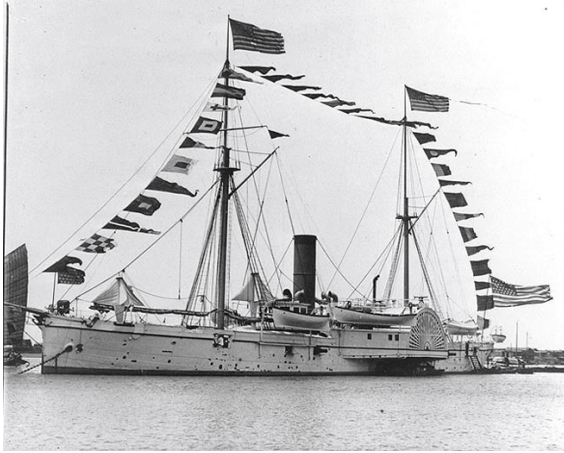


Figure 1 USS Monocacy 1902³

USS Monocacy, a 1370-ton Mohongo class "doubleender" gunboat, was sent to the Far East, and she served there for nearly four decades, becoming by far the longest lived of the nearly four dozen "double-enders" the Navy built during the Civil War era.¹ While in the waters surrounding China and Korea she spent time charting the third largest river in the world, the Yangtze. She also participated in a five-ship survey expedition to the Salee River in Korea and, while there, attempted contact with representatives of the then closed Kingdom of Korea.

In 1871, after Korean shore batteries attacked the screw tug USS Palos near Chemulpo on 10 June, a landing party of 576 sailors and 110 Marines stormed a series of ports along the Salee River. Three men were killed and seven were wounded. The expedition retired in July.² In September, the gunboat resumed her navigation of the Yangtze before returning to Shanghai 4 February 1872. In 1900 the Monocacy was involved in the Boxer Rebellion. On 22 June 1903 she ended a 37 year career in the US Navy when she was sold to the Japanese firm of Hashimoto and Son in Nagasaki, Japan.

Ken Plantz is a Research Volunteer at Monocacy National Battlefield.

¹ Monocacy I (Sidewheel Gunboat), Naval and Historical and Heritage Command. <<http://www.hist.navy.mil/>>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

George Calvin Wilcher: Was He a Rebel or a Yank?

By Alan Duke

George Calvin Wilcher had a novel Civil War military career in both the Confederate and the Union Armies. He was born on 25 July 1836 in Middletown, Virginia. His father Joseph was 38 and his mother Isabella Salyards Wilcher was 35, and they were both born in Virginia. He married Frances Webb on 8 April 1858 and they had two children. She died in May of 1863 at the age of 21.¹

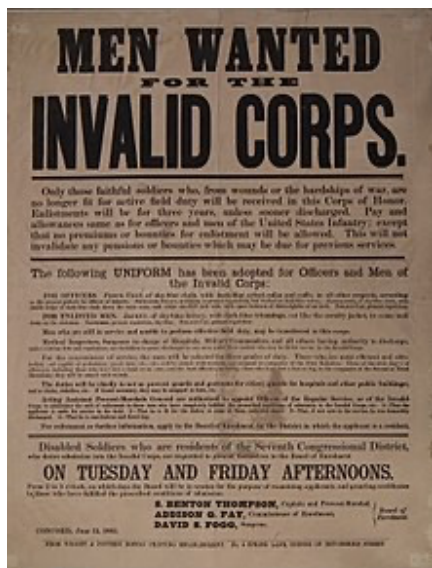
When the Civil War broke out he enlisted in the 33rd Virginia Infantry. He fought and was wounded at First Manassas (21 July 1861) and endured a lengthy recovery. Returning to his unit he was later hospitalized for a foot ulcer, and the record also indicates he may have been wounded a second time at an unstated



battle. However, on 20 November 1863 he deserted.²

He is next seen, in the military records, on 25 March 1864, enlisting in Co. A of the 3rd Potomac Home Brigade (3 PHB), a Union regiment, as a member of the Cumberland contingent, mustering in on 31 March 1864. He deserted a second time, from his adopted unit, on 9 July 1864 when they were part of the Battle of Monocacy, and all the company musters from then until December 1864 show him as a deserter.³

The Patterson Park US General Hospital (GH) admitted him, along with a group of others from Frederick City, MD, on August 2, 1864. A note from USA GH Patterson Park dated 3 February 1865 to the commanding officer Co A, 3 PHB, notes "Private Wilcher was admitted to this hospital Aug 2 1864 ... from Frederick MD and was detained in hospital by verbal authority of the Medical Director Middle Department 8th Army Corps." Thereafter Co. A musters show him on detached duty at Patterson Park General Hospital.⁴



The 4th Veteran's Reserve Corps (VRC), Co. E, to which he was attached in Baltimore, notes that he mustered for pay at US General Hospital Baltimore, Maryland – (Patterson Park) for the months July, Aug, Sep, Oct 1864. At some point in 1865 he was

transferred to Camp Reno, Wisconsin. He requested that the hospital contact his regiment/company to let the Captain know that he was now a nurse at the hospital and was being transferred to the Northwest Frontier.⁵ According to Camp Reno Adjutant J. Dutton Cole, Camp Reno was for Southerners who refused to fight against their Northern brothers. They were formed into companies to patrol and fight on the Northwest

Frontier. The camp was guarded by units of the VRC.⁶

His muster out from the 3rd Maryland PHB was dated 13 September 1865 and shows he mustered out on 29 May 1865. This muster out notes that "This man was transferred to serve in the NW frontiers. This man was a good and faithful soldier."⁷

After the war he returned to Middletown, Virginia, and married Josephine Venable Baker in 1868. They had a number of children who were born there. By 1880 he had moved to Braddock, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and was employed as a policeman. He died of apoplexy on 11 July 1910 and is buried in Braddock Cemetery.⁸

Clearly George Wilcher was a man of solid and strong character. One can only assume that wisdom and prudence were also part of his character. On July 7, 1864, he no doubt stood in line of battle west of Frederick. And when the main event began on July 9, 1864, he considered that Early's army was made up of a considerable number of Virginia Regiments, including the 33rd. Knowing the certain result were he to be captured, he surely decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and left the scene, showing up at some point at hospital in Frederick and being transferred to Patterson Park at the beginning of August. He devoted the rest of his military career to serving the wounded and sick in Patterson Park and Camp Reno Hospitals.

Al Duke is a Research Volunteer at Monocacy National Battlefield and is a former President of the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation

¹ Ancestry.com (Family Tree of Chad Wilcher)

² Fold3.com (33rd VA Infantry musters and records)

³ Fold3.com (3 MD PHB musters and records)

⁴ Fold3.com (3 MD PHB, Patterson Park Hospital musters and records)

⁵ Fold3.com (3 MDS PHB, Fort Snelling MN musters and records)

⁶ <<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/>> ("Tells of Camp Reno: Reminiscences of J. Dutton Cole", pub. 5/12/1900)

⁷ Fold3.com (3 MD PHB musters and records)

⁸ Ancestry.com (1900 Census, 1910 Census, PA Death Certificates 1906-1964, Family Tree of Chad Wilcher)