The Bushwhacker

Welcome back to The Bushwhacker!

No, that's not me after staying at home for weeks. It is Alfred Waud's drawing of a guerrilla from the Library of Congress.

The Board decided in January – before this pandemic thing started – to begin publishing The Bushwhacker, at least on a trial basis. The idea was to publish an issue in the summer of 2020 to keep us in touch between campaigns. We would then try to publish an issue each quarter to provide some additional material that we don't have the time or ability to do at meetings. You will see some of that here: articles, some family history, and maybe we will add a few things such as notices of new books or events.

The COVID-19 situation has now overtaken that plan by events. We have had to cancel three meetings and postpone elections. The Board will have to meet this summer, hopefully in person, to discuss and decide where we go from here. We have tentatively scheduled our next meeting for Royale Orleans on Wednesday, September 23, but many things can happen before then. For example, we don't know what public health protocols are going to be required then, such as whether there will still be restrictions on the number of persons who can attend meetings. When I wrote the first draft of this newsletter, it seemed that things might be looking up – but now matters have taken another turn for the worse. Who knows what lies ahead?

So, please stay tuned to emails, Facebook and our website. I will try to keep those sites up to date. In the meantime, the National Civil War Roundtable Congress, ably led by Mike Movius in Seattle, continues to make available excellent speakers on a variety of topics that you can access through Zoom, Facebook Live, and YouTube. You can find further information about the lecture series and general Roundtable information of interest here: http://www.cwrtcongress.org/.

I want to thank John Harris and Curt Wittbracht for providing articles for this re-launch of The Bushwhacker. And please, if you have a family history, Civil War-related article, family photographs (I think we can reproduce those here) that you would be willing to share and submit to the tender mercies of our editors, send it to stlcwrt@gmail.com. Thanks, and now on to the fun stuff.

— Jim Erwin —

My Civil War Ancestors
Part I

By John Harris

William Henry Baker II was born in 1827, the oldest of five children of William Henry Baker I and Rhoda Heavin Baker. He married Keziah Arthur, with whom he had five children. William had a farm in Phelps County and served as a justice of the peace there in 1858.

In 1861, Circuit Judge James Haggin McBride of Jackson Township, Texas County, Missouri was appointed Brigadier General of the Seventh Division which stretched south from Dent County to the Arkansas border and west to include Greene County. Missouri State Guard companies had been forming in the Seventh Division. The First Infantry Regiment was formed primarily in Dent and Texas Counties from men mostly from Dent, Phelps, Texas, and Shannon Counties. The Regimental Officers were Colonel Edmund Thomas Wingo, Lieutenant Colonel Bingham F Trigg, and Major William C Kelly. A total of 8 companies were formed as the regimental organization was completed in Texas County in June of 1861.

Of particular interest to me are Companies B & C, as I had six relatives serving in those two companies. Coonard Kitchen, my great-great grandfather,

served as a Private in Company B under Captain William Boyd, a doctor from Dent County. William Henry Baker, also my great-great grandfather, served in Company C under Captain Henry Van Fleet, First Lieutenant William Dority Melton (William Baker's brother-in-law, my great-great grand uncle) and Second Lieutenant Stephen H Darden, along with 2nd Sergeant John Baker (William Baker's brother and my great-great grand uncle), Private William David Arthur (William Baker's brother-in-law and my great-great grand uncle) and Private Charles C. Young (Coonard Kitchen's brother-in-law and my great-great grand uncle).

On July 9, 1861 Wingo's Regiment (mostly from Texas, Dent, Phelps, and Shannon counties) assembled at Camp Jackson on Bay Creek in Oregon County with General McBride and several companies from Oregon County. They were then organized as the Second Infantry Regiment under Colonel John A. Foster. From here they marched to the southwest corner of Oregon County turning west until near the southwest corner of Howell County, crossing the North Fork of the White River at Leverough's Hill, and crossing White River at Talbot's Ferry. Passing through Yellville, Bellefonte, and Berryville, Arkansas they joined General Price's army near Cassville on July 25, 1861. On August 2, 1861, they arrived near Crane Creek where advanced units of the Cavalry were engaged in a skirmish at Dug Springs.

The First Infantry Regiment fought in the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri on August 10, 1861. The Seventh Division was camped the farthest south of the State Guard troops. Consequently, they were deployed on the left of the Confederate line, taking positions armed with their squirrel rifles and shotguns. Finally, General Lyon was fatally wounded, and the Union forces withdrew, retreating initially to Springfield and then to Rolla. Official casualties for the Seventh Division's 645 men (300 in Wingo's Regiment, 305 in Foster's Regiment, and 40 in Campbell's Independent Cavalry Company) were 32 killed and 114 wounded (over 22%). William O. Coleman (First Infantry Adjutant) claimed that General Lyon was killed directly in front of McBride's "Brigade." John Baker was wounded in the side, but William escaped unscathed.

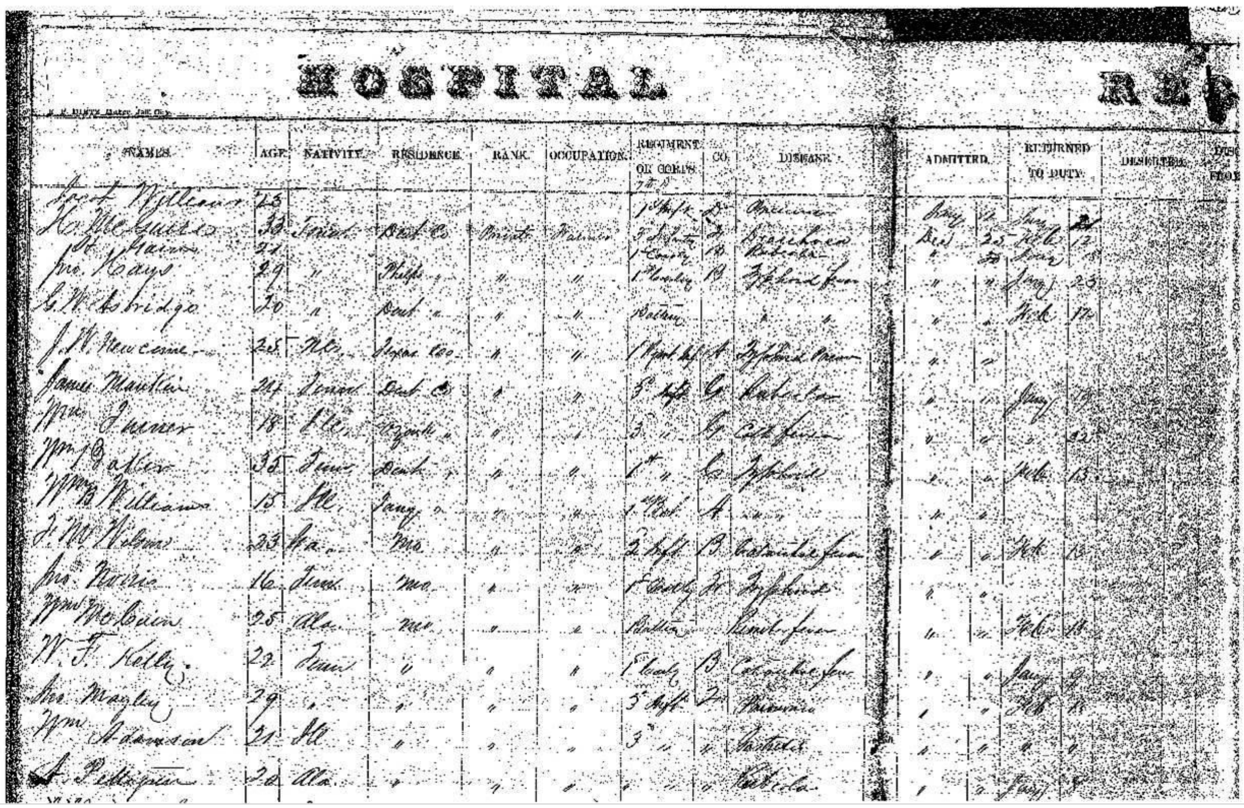
After the Battle of Wilson's Creek Price's army moved north towards the Missouri River. On Drywood Creek, near Deerfield in Vernon County, Missouri, it brushed aside a desultory attack by Kansas cavalry under General Jim Lane in the "Battle of the Mules" – so called because the fight began when Price's men captured 86 mules. The Kansans retreated to their base at Ft. Scott, Kansas, just across the state line, in some panic because they thought Price was now going to invade the state.

Instead, he continued to the Missouri River town of Lexington. There, Price's army surrounded Colonel James A. Mulligan's command of 3,500 Union soldiers. Despite Mulligan's pleas for help to the Department of Missouri's new commander, Gen. John C. Frémont (the "Pathfinder" and former Republican presidential candidate), no help came. The siege was ended when Harris' and McBride's Divisions soaked bales of hemp and used them as mobile breastworks in attacking the Federal lines. The Union forces at Lexington

surrendered. This engagement, known as the "Battle of the Hemp Bales," was the last large clash between the armies in Missouri for two years.

Price's army left Lexington and moved slowly south, arriving in Springfield, Missouri in late December 1861. According to the records of the Missouri State Guard Hospital, William Henry Baker was admitted for treatment of typhoid on December 25, 1861 and was returned to duty on February 13, 1862. U.S. forces under General Samuel R. Curtis entered Springfield on February 13, 1862.

(Stay tuned for the next installment. The war is not over yet for William Henry Baker.)



(Missouri Historical Society)

Myths and Facts about Lincoln
Part I

By Curt Wittbracht

Lincoln in Love

How many loves did Lincoln truly have in his life? Probably only two. However, he seems to have actually proposed marriage to three separate women. Here are the true and not so certain facts about Lincoln's loves.

Lincoln was an extremely awkward man around women. Among the older women, he could be courtly and even affectionate. However, especially among younger women he was awkward and shy, even failing to wait on them in his store in New Salem or not conversing with them at the boarding houses he stayed at.

One young woman did interest him greatly though. Ann Rutledge was the daughter of one of New Salem's founders and the owner of the tavern where Lincoln was then boarding. She was a very pretty girl with fair skin, blue eyes, and auburn hair. Only five foot, three inches tall, she weighed between 120 and 130 pounds, but she was also described as pretty, quick, and domestic and was rumored to have captured Lincoln's heart. However, due to Lincoln's shyness, she had become engaged in the fall of 1832 to one of Lincoln's friends, a New Yorker named John McNeil who owned a farm and was a partner in a New Salem store with Samuel Hill. McNeil at some point confessed to Ann that his real surname was McNamar and that he was using an alias in case he failed in his business endeavor to make his fortune. McNamar also told Ann that now that he had become wealthy, he was returning to New York to bring his family back with him and then would marry Ann. After some time, he still had not returned and his letters to Ann were becoming fewer and far between. Ann could not make any commitments to Lincoln because she was considered engaged to McNamar.

At some point in early 1835, after McNamar had left her, Ann and Lincoln came to an understanding. They would get married after he passed the Bar Exam and became a lawyer. That would give her time to break the engagement with McNamar when he finally returned. However, in the long hot rainy summer of 1835 she contracted what was probably typhoid fever and died on August 25th. Before she died, Lincoln was called to her bedside and spent an hour alone with her in her sickroom. Her eventual death seemed to have shaken Lincoln to the core. He rapidly sank into depression and supposedly could not bear "the thought that snows and rains fell upon her grave [and] filled him with indescribable grief." This was the first incidence of Lincoln's depression or "melancholy" as it was known. Lincoln later was supposed to have said that "I loved the woman dearly and soundly: she was a handsome girl …I did honestly and truly love the girl and think often of her now."

Did the relationship ever exist? No letter from Ann Rutledge is known to exist and in the thousands of pages of Lincoln's correspondence, there is not one mention of her name. But old-time neighbors of Lincoln in New Salem all mentioned it.

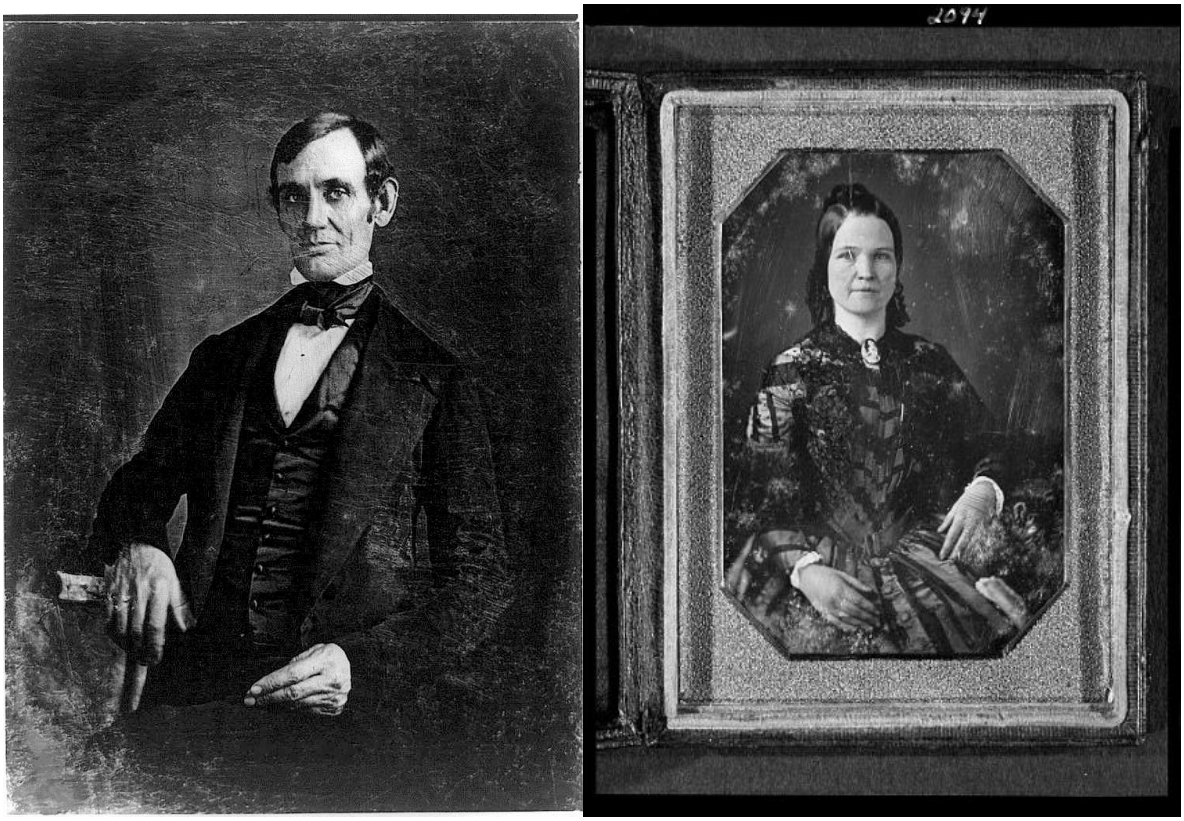
Sometime in 1833 or 1834, Mary Owens spent a month in New Salem with her sister, Mrs. Bennett Abell, who was eager to marry her off to Lincoln. The daughter of a well-to-do Kentucky family, Mary was described as handsome with black hair, dark eyes, fair skin, and magnificent white teeth. She impressed everyone with her gay and lively disposition. Lincoln found her intelligent and agreeable and is said to have boasted to Mrs. Abell that "if ever that girl comes back to New Salem I am going to marry her."

On her second visit to New Salem, about three years later, Lincoln began courting her. At first she reciprocated his interest, then began having second thoughts. Soon she concluded that "Mr. Lincoln was deficient in those little links which make up the chain of a woman's happiness." Lincoln's doubts were more severe. Maybe Mary had been a little too willing to return to New Salem and he began finding defects in her appearance. In a letter to Mrs. Orville Browning, Lincoln described Mary as a fair match for Falstaff, a noted rotund character in some of Shakespeare's plays. He continued that "when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this not from withered features, for her skin was too full of fat to permit it's contracting in to wrinkles; but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head, that *nothing* could have commenced at the size of infancy, and reached her present bulk in less than thirty or forty years; and in short, I was not at all pleased with her." Lincoln was 28 years old at the time.

Still, he felt obligated to propose marriage to her, but did so in such a left-handed way that she rejected his offer, not once but multiple times. While Lincoln's ego was somewhat deflated, he was also relieved. In his letter to Mrs. Browning, Lincoln ends with the conclusion "I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying; and for this reason; I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me."

Lincoln moved to Springfield in April 1837, joined Springfield society, and began to meet eligible young women in the Sunday soirees that Ninian and Elizabeth Edwards had at their luxurious mansion. Nobody in the Edwards circle attracted more attention than Elizabeth's younger sister, Mary Todd, who Lincoln met for the first time in the winter of 1839. Mary soon became the belle of the town, leading young men in a merry dance. Abraham is one of those who danced with her. Mary later said that Lincoln wanted to dance with her in the "worst way, and he certainly did!"

Mary at age 22 was a small, pretty young woman with beautiful fair skin, light chestnut hair, and remarkably vivid blue eyes. She was witty, cultured, educated, and spoke fluent French. She was just the opposite of the shy, awkward, uneducated, and backward Lincoln. But they seemed to have hit it off. Mary led the conversations and Lincoln gazed on her as if drawn by some superior power.



Although Mary had many suitors, including Stephen A. Douglas, she saw something in Lincoln. Although he lacked the social graces, he was honest, considerate, and courteous. And they shared many interests. She was also a Whig and a neighbor in Lexington, Kentucky to Henry Clay, the patron saint of the Whig Party. Elizabeth and Ninian Edwards encouraged the match and in the winter of 1840 Mary and Abraham became engaged.

Lincoln's best friend and roommate, James Speed, decided to return to Kentucky and sold his interest in the general store where he and Lincoln had been living on the floor above the store. Lincoln not only had to move but he also lost his closest friend and confident. His nerves snapped and he lost confidence in himself and broke off the engagement with Mary on January 1, 1841. When he told Mary that he did not love her, she broke into tears. However, instead of being relieved, Lincoln was further devastated and became despondent. Some of his friends feared he would commit suicide and removed any razors and knives from his room. He took to his bed for a week, unwilling to see anyone but a trusted few friends.

By the end of January, he was finally able to resume his normal activities as he tried to bring his life back into control. In August, he decided to visit James Speed in Kentucky and his time there was therapeutic. Speed himself later became engaged but also got cold feet. Lincoln encouraged him through it.

When Speed later reported on his happiness with his marriage, Lincoln was encouraged and clandestinely became re-engaged to Mary.

On November 4th, 1842 Lincoln and Mary informed her sister, Elizabeth Edwards, that they were getting married at the Edward's mansion that evening. Elizabeth had only a few hours to put things together. Lincoln asked James H. Matheny to act as his best man. As Lincoln was blacking his boots in preparation, his landlord's son asked where he was going. Lincoln replied, "I guess I am going to hell." But the wedding went off without incident. The Episcopal Minister Charles Dresser presided. Lincoln gave his bride a wedding ring inscribed "Love is Eternal."

Did Lincoln truly love Mary? There are some who say it was a marriage of convenience and that Lincoln was forced into the marriage. There are some who said Lincoln was seduced and forced to marry Mary Todd. Is this a myth or a fact? We do know that the marriage was not a happy one!

(Curt has more on Lincoln to be shared in future issues.)

Call for Articles and Information

If you have interesting stories to tell of your ancestors in the Civil War or other information you would be willing to share with the membership, please send it to stlcwrt@gmail.com. Thanks!