

The Bushwhacker



Abram Songer

As we wrap up another campaign, I would like to give shout out to two of our members who have had published or who helped to have published items in national forums.

Drew Klein had a letter to the editor published in *The Civil War Monitor* about “The False Cause Fraud, Fabrication and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory” by Adam H. Domby. Drew reviewed the book for us in the Fall 2020 issue.

Curt Wittbracht provided a copy of Abram Songer’s diary (Curt has the original) to our February speaker, David Dixon. David published an article about it in the *Emerging Civil War* blog, which you can read here:

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2021/03/23/a-hidden-gem-of-a-civil-war-diary/>. For another journal from a soldier of the same regiment, see:

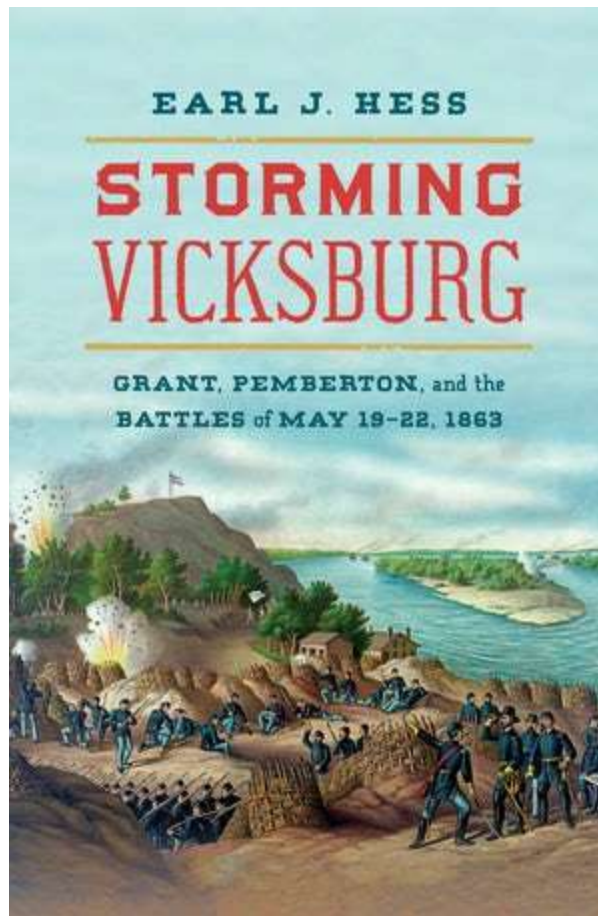
<https://momarion.genealogyvillage.com/records/military/revelations-of-a-soldiers-life.html>.

This issue has additional contributions from both Drew and Curt.

A couple of years ago, I went on a tour of Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery led by Bill Winter, an opportunity not to be missed if he offers it again. In the course of that tour we came across an oddity: the grave of a Union officer in the “Confederate” section of the cemetery, and not just a Union officer, but an officer in the United States Colored Troops. It was a rabbit-hole of research that I couldn’t resist jumping into. The results of that research are presented here.

As always, if you have a family history, Civil War-related article, family photographs you would be willing to share, or a book review or just anything you think the Roundtable might be interested in reading about, please send it to stlcwrt@gmail.com. Thanks.

— Jim Erwin —



**Storming Vicksburg:
Grant, Pemberton, and the Battles of May 19-22, 1863**

By Earl J. Hess

This book was cited by several historians writing in “Civil War Times” as one of the best books of 2020. The book provides vivid details of the three days

when Grant tried to storm Vicksburg after crushing victories over Pemberton at Champion Hill and Big Black River. The book is exhaustively researched. Professor Hess reviewed over 500,000 of originally sourced documents in the Vicksburg National Battlefield Archives.

Hess' writing style is smooth and authoritative but eminently readable to the non-academic. The numerous maps are skillfully drawn and easy to follow as Hess describes the action. He describes in detail the attacks of three Union Corps on May 22 at the regimental, and sometimes company level.

I was intrigued by his description of the "volunteer" special advance unit consisting of two officers and 50 men from each brigade of Major General Blair's division and inexplicably named "Forlorn Hope." I am sure that moniker inspired confidence in the men! Parts of the Forlorn Hope made it to the ramparts and remained there pinned down and sniping all day.

The Confederate operations are also richly described including the defensive works, redans, lunettes, forts, and redoubts and how Pemberton skillfully managed his reserve force to keep the works strongly held. In the book's conclusion, Professor Hess describes a phenomenon that I had not considered previously: "... the insistence by common soldiers that they had a right to decide how far they could be pushed into the cauldron. [This] is a phenomenon only barely recognized by military historians." All-in-all this is great read for any Civil war enthusiast.

(Reviewed by Drew Klein)

Monroe County and the Civil War

By Curt Wittbracht

Monroe County was populated primarily by Germans due to its proximity to the Mississippi River and available cheap farming ground. Germans largely opposed slavery because they had come to America as the land of Freedom and had witnessed the neo-slavery of serfdom and did not want it carried into their new homeland. To Germans, owning another human being was morally wrong.

When President Lincoln called for volunteers to suppress the rebellion of the Southern states, the Germans of Monroe County wanted to prove their support for their adopted country. In Waterloo, IL alone some 360 men enlisted. Another 87 enlisted from Columbia, IL and 67 from Monroe County at large. Even tiny Burksville had three men enlist.

But what about the common man from Monroe County who enlisted?

Julius Just was a farmer from Waterloo, IL. He was 20 years old, just one inch short of 6 feet tall with light hair and gray eyes. He signed up with the 49th Illinois as a Private in Company H on September 16th, 1861 for a period of three years. He was finally mustered into service on October 23, 1861 at Camp Butler. When his three years were up in 1864, he and most of his

company re-enlisted. He was finally discharged on September 9, 1865 at Paducah, KY as a corporal.

During Just's enlistment, his regiment fought at Fort Donelson, KY where 14 were killed and 37 wounded, then on to Shiloh, TN where the regiment lost 17 killed and 99 wounded. Just then served in the Red River campaign. Next his regiment pursued Price in Missouri and finally took part in the Battle for Nashville before being mustered out.

William Cogan enlisted as a Private in Company H, 49th Illinois Infantry on September 5, 1861 listing Columbia, IL as his residence. He was old for a recruit at 29 years of age and of average height with brown hair and hazel eyes. He was a native of Ireland, married and his occupation was a miller.

Cogan was subsequently appointed as a Sergeant Major, re-enlisted on March 6, 1863 in Memphis, TN and finally mustered out of service on September 9, 1865 in Paducah, KY. Presumably, he saw the same action as Julius Just.

Robert Barker of Monroe County, IL was not as lucky. He enlisted as a musician in Company B, 49th Illinois at the young age of 18. He was short at 5 foot 6 inches, had fair hair and blue eyes. He is listed as a single farmer and was mustered in at Camp Butler on December 31, 1861.

As a musician, Barker did not have to serve on the front lines but would have served as a stretcher bearer during any fighting. However, nowhere is safe on the battlefield and he was killed in action on November 24th, 1862 at Henderson, TN.

Per Janet Flynn, there are 298 Civil War soldiers buried in the various cemeteries of Monroe County.

The Mystery of George Cutter (Or Cutler)

By James W. Erwin

Amidst over 1,000 graves in which the remains of Confederate soldiers, guerrillas and civilians lie in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery (St. Louis County, Missouri) is the grave of a lone Union soldier. And not only a Union soldier, but one who served in the United States Colored Troops. The inscription on the headstone is "Geo. Cutter, Lieut. USCT."



Photo by author

Who was George Cutter and why was he buried here instead of with his fellow Union soldiers? There was no officer named Cutter in the United States Colored Troops, but there was a George *Cutler* who was a lieutenant in the United States Colored Troops who died in St. Louis in 1864.

According to his military records, George Cutler was a carpenter. He had red hair and stood 5-11¼. He was born in Buffalo, New York in 1831. At some point he moved to St. Louis and in 1860 he lived in a boarding house in the Fourth Ward on or near Chouteau Avenue with 40 other skilled artisans, such

as carpenters, bricklayers, molders, paper hangers, stone cutters, barkeepers and one who described his occupation to the census taker as “speculation.”¹

Cutler enlisted for a three-month term of service on April 22 or 23, 1861, at the St. Louis Arsenal in the 1st Missouri Volunteer Infantry (US Reserve Corps) – the regiment initially commanded by Frank P. Blair. Cutler likely participated in the capture of Camp Jackson and its bloody aftermath on the streets of St. Louis. He declined to re-enlist for three years in June and was transferred, at least briefly, to Company A, 5th Missouri Volunteer Infantry (US Reserve Corps). He may have participated in the Battles of Carthage and Wilson’s Creek serving under General Franz Sigel.²

Cutler next enlisted at Franklin (now Pacific) on October 31 and was mustered in Company B, Telegraph Corps on September 4. Possibly he utilized his skill as a carpenter to build and maintain telegraph lines. In any event, he was appointed as a sergeant. Cutler was discharged from this regiment on December 3, 1861.³

Cutler joined Company E, 30th Missouri Infantry September 25, 1862.⁴ He must have exhibited leadership qualities for he was promoted to sergeant on August 10, 1862. His military career, however, was a checkered one, probably due to excessive drinking (as will become apparent below). Cutler was reduced to the ranks on October 10 and promoted to sergeant again on November 10, 1862. He was promoted to first sergeant on April 8, 1863, in time for the Vicksburg Campaign, but he was reported as a “deserter” on July 8. Cutler returned on July 14 and was busted to second sergeant on August 1.⁵ Most likely Cutler got drunk and disappeared from camp. He missed the action at Jackson after the capture of Vicksburg, which probably led to the charge of desertion. That he was only reduced to second sergeant and not to private or

¹ *Eighth Decennial United States Census 1860, Missouri, 4th Ward, City of St. Louis*, 93; George Cutler, *Compiled Military Service Record (CMSR)*, M405, RG 94, Roll 0790. Julius C. Bliss, another New Yorker, was a carpenter and one of Cutler’s fellow boarders, perhaps even his roommate. Bliss joined the 8th Missouri Infantry and rose to the rank of corporal in Company B. He was wounded during the assault on the 27th Louisiana Lunette and Stockade Redan on May 19, 1863. He died May 24. Julius Bliss, *CMSR*, M405, Roll 0448. His commander, Captain William Hill, said of Bliss “[N]o soldier ever did his duty better.” *Civil War “Widow’s Pensions,”* Luna Bliss (Mother) WC 103527.

² Robert J. Rombauer, *The Union Cause in St. Louis in 1861: An Historical Sketch* (n.p., 1909), 365 (available at Missouri Digital Heritage); George Cutler, *CMSR*, M405, RG 94, Roll 0422.

³ George Cutler, *CMSR*, M405, RG 94, Roll 065.

⁴ George Cutler, *CMSR*, M405, RG 94, Roll 0607.

⁵ *Id.*; George Cutler, *CMSR*, M405, RG 94, Roll 0790.

court-martialed suggests that his superiors recognized that he did not intend to desert.

The 30th Missouri saw extensive campaign duty in Arkansas and Mississippi but little direct combat. It was part of General William T. Sherman's Yazoo Expedition in late 1862, where its role was limited to supporting artillery batteries while other regiments took part in the disastrous assaults at Chickasaw Bluffs. It was in reserve during the capture of Arkansas Post in January 1863. The 30th Missouri played a minor role in the May 19 assault against Confederate lines at Vicksburg. After the capture of Vicksburg, the regiment participated in the siege of Jackson, Mississippi. It finally went to a relatively quiet garrison duty at the post of Vidalia, Louisiana on August 15.⁶

There, the regiment's nominal commander, Colonel Bernard G. Farrar, was given the opportunity to raise and command a regiment of colored troops to be recruited from former slaves in the vicinity. Farrar had been on detached service as provost marshal for the District of Missouri and then as commander of the First Brigade of Frederick Steele's First Division of the XV Corps, commanded by General William T. Sherman.

Farrar, along with several officers and noncommissioned officers of the 30th Missouri, organized the 2d Mississippi Colored Heavy Artillery in September 1863. The heavy artillery units were supposed to garrison the forts along the Mississippi River. To the extent they received training, they were supposed to learn to handle the fort's artillery and to act as infantry when needed. One of the men accompanying Farrar to become an officer of the newly created regiment was George Cutler, appointed First Lieutenant and commander of Company D.⁷ Despite whatever peccadilloes led to Cutler's promotions and demotions in the 30th Missouri, he must have displayed strong leadership qualities for his superior officers in his former regiment to approve his appointment as a company commander in his new one. It is difficult to believe that they would want a man once accused of desertion as an officer unless they recognized his underlying merit, whatever his problems with alcoholism.

Alas, after being relieved of command of Company D on October 31, Cutler was reported as absent without leave on December 2, 1863. Most likely, he went on a drunken bender. Sometime in January or February 1864, Cutler was

⁶ Edwin Cole Bearss, *The Vicksburg Campaign: Vicksburg Is the Key, vol. I* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, Inc. 1985), 197, 369, 375; Bearss, *The Vicksburg Campaign: Unvexed to the Sea, vol. III* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, Inc. 1986), 769, 774. For the newest histories of the May assaults on Vicksburg, see Timothy B. Smith, *The Union Assaults at Vicksburg: Grant Attacks Pemberton, May 19-22, 1863* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020) and Earl J. Hess, *Storming Vicksburg: Grant, Pemberton, and the Battles of May 19-22, 1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

⁷ George Cutler, *CMSR-USCT*, M1818, RG 94, Roll 0113.

arrested and confined to await court-martial. In the meantime, as part of a reorganization of the African American troops in the Union Army, the 2d Mississippi was re-designated the 5th United States Colored Heavy Artillery on March 11, 1864.⁸ Cutler was released from jail on March 19. But his Compiled Military Service Record states that he was dismissed from the service on March 25, 1863 on the recommendation of his commanding officer.⁹

At this point, the historical record becomes ambiguous. Cutler returned to St. Louis, possibly to serve a sentence in one of the military prisons there. Both the Gratiot Street Prison (formerly the McDowell Medical College) the Myrtle Street Prison (formerly the Lynch Slave Pen) housed Confederate prisoners of war, guerrillas, civilians accused or convicted of assisting the Confederacy, and the occasional Union soldier convicted of some sort of misconduct.

Cutler was admitted to the U.S. General Prison Hospital in St. Louis on July 7, 1864 suffering from what was diagnosed as *delirium tremens*, a condition experienced by heavy drinkers after withdrawal from alcohol. It is characterized by shaking, shivering, sweating, irregular heartbeat, hallucinations, very high body temperature and seizures. It often occurs three days into withdrawal and lasts for three days. And sure enough, George Cutler died on Sunday, July 10, 1864.¹⁰

The Confederate prisoners who died were usually buried in Christ Church Cemetery (on Chouteau near Grand Avenue) or in the Wesleyan Cemetery (on

⁸ The 5th USCHA was re-designated yet again on April 26, 1864 as the 6th USCHA. The original 6th USCHA was one of the African American regiments that suffered heavily in the Fort Pillow Massacre on April 12, 1864. Its survivors were incorporated into the 11th United States Colored Infantry. John Cimprich, *Fort Pillow: A Civil War Massacre and Public Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

⁹ George Cutler, *CMSR-USCT*, M1818, RG 94, Roll 0113.

¹⁰ *Semi-Monthly Report of Prisoners Who Have Died*, M317, RG 109, Roll 0094; Joanne Chiles Eakin, *Missouri Prisoners of War: Gratiot Street Prison & Myrtle Street Prison, St. Louis, Mo. and Alton Prison, Alton, Illinois, Including Citizens, Confederates, Bushwhackers and Guerrillas* (Independence, Missouri, n.p., 1995), [no page numbers]. The modern medical term is acute alcohol withdrawal, see <https://www.healthline.com/health/alcoholism/delirium-tremens#causes>. According to the *St. Louis City Directory 1864*, there was another George Cutler living in town. This Cutler owned a saloon and boarding house at 204 South Fourth Street. A George Cutler – almost certainly the saloonkeeper – was arrested by a Union patrol on September 16, 1864 for being in possession of 24 blankets he bought from Union soldiers. He was paroled the next day. *Provost Marshal Files, Union Citizens Files*, M345, RG 109, Roll 0065 (at Fold3.com). If he was related to George Cutler (the soldier), it may explain the latter's ability to get alcohol in prison during his brief stay in St. Louis before his death.

Grand Avenue near Lindell).¹¹ Cutler was listed in the prison hospital records as a civilian – which technically he was, even if he was serving a sentence for desertion or some other military crime. He was likely buried with the other civilian prisoners along with deceased Confederate soldiers and guerrillas.

In 1867, the remains of the Confederate soldiers, guerrillas and civilians who were buried at Christ Church and Wesleyan Cemeteries were disinterred and re-buried in two sections of the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. Cutler's remains were no doubt included in this re-burial process and thus ended up in the "Confederate Section" of the cemetery. In 1906, the Federal government authorized the placement of distinctive headstones for the Confederate dead with a pointed top at national cemeteries. And in 1908, those headstones were erected at Jefferson Barracks.¹² Someone must have checked the records on George Cutler for his headstone – alone among those in the Sections 20 and 21 – has the rounded top used for Union veterans. Unfortunately, whoever authorized the headstone got his name wrong and it is misspelled as "Cutter."

The misspelling of Cutler's name is just one example of many such errors found in the handwritten records of the time. The 1860 census taker drew a line through the "t" and the "l" in his last name, making it appear as "Cutter," not "Cutler." Some of his military records show the same error. Indeed, an examination of the records of other men named Cutler or Cutter demonstrate that this was a frequent mistake. Unfortunately, the last mistake the military made for this George Cutler was permanently engraved on his tombstone.¹³

¹¹ See <https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?=124972>. The location of the cemeteries may be found in the *St. Louis City Directory 1864* (available at Fold3.com).

¹² See <https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?=124972>; Kelley Merrifield, "From Necessity to Honor," https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/development.html.

¹³ Cutler's mother filed an application for a dependent's pension on September 2, 1875. The Pension Index indicates that she (or more likely the pension agent handling the matter) claimed the pension based upon his service in Company E, 30th Missouri Infantry. *Pension Index*, Roll 263, 2 September 1875, #222534 (available on Fold3.com). He left that unit honorably, but he was, of course, dismissed from the Union Army in 1864 for some unspecified crime, possibly desertion or unfitness as an officer. Apparently, the Pension Office sniffed out an attempt to avoid Cutler's disqualifying service in the United States Colored Heavy Artillery, for no certificate awarding the pension was issued.