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THE BORDER STAR

A Publication of the CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE of
WESTERN MISSOURI 1209 Skyline Dr. Liberty, MO 64068

MURDER AND RETRIBUTION IN MISSOURI

by Ed Harris

During Price's raid through Missouri in the fall of 1864, Major James Wilson, Third Cavalry Missouri State Militia, and six of his men were taken prisoner at Pilot Knob. Wilson and his men were turned over to Price's headquarters and ended up in the hands of the guerrilla Tim Reves near Union, in Franklin county. The Saint Louis Republican reported on October 25 that the bodies of Wilson and the six men were found near Washington, Missouri.

The murder of Wilson and his men generated a firestorm of outrage in The Department of the Missouri. Provost-Marshal-General Joseph Darr issued special order #279 on October 28, authorizing the execution of six confederate soldiers in retaliation for the "brutal murders (committed) by this blood stained outlaw." Darr listed the men to be executed; James W. Gates, 3 Mo Cav, John N. Ferguson, Crabtrees Cav, Harvey H. Blackburn, Colemans Cav, John Nichols, 2 Mo Cav, Charles W. Minneken, Crabtrees Cav, and Asa V. Ladd, Burbridges Mo Cav. They were to be "shot to death with musketry within the limits of the city of St. Louis Mo., on Sat., Oct. 29, between 2 & 4 pm."

Colonel John V. Du Bois, chief of staff, ordered a captured Confederate officer to be sent to Darr in St. Louis for execution. Lt. Col. H.M. Matthews, commander of the Third Mo. Cav., wrote to Col. Du Bois, volunteering to supervise the executions.

On October 29, Darr replaced John Ferguson with George F. Bunch, 3 Mo. Cav on the list of those to be executed, explaining "...He never bore arms and was only employed as a teamster." Later that day, the six soldiers were executed.

Darr was anxious to find a suitable Confederate officer, writing Col. Du Bois after the executions on Oct. 29, "I have observed in the evening issue of the Missouri Democrat of this date a statement that we have captured Maj. P.R. Carrington, inspector-general of some rebel brigade. If he can be shot in retaliation for the murder of Major Wilson, please send him here for execution. I notice also the name of Maj. William Cook, of Freeman's staff. I desire to carry out the orders given to me in relation to the murder of Maj. Wilson as soon as possible."

On November 8, Major E.O. Wolf, C.S.A., wrote to General Rosecrans from McDowell prison in St. Louis, "This morning I was called from the prison where the Confederate officers were confined and taken to an anvil and a 12 pound ball and chain riveted to my ankle, and then my sentence was read to me as follows, 'In retaliation for Major Wilson, Major Enoch O. Wolf, of Lieut. Col. B. Ford's Battalion, Col. T.R. Freeman's brigade, Gen. Marmaduke's Division, Gen. Price's army, shall be shot to death with musketry on Friday next between the hours of 9 & 11 o'clock.' Now, general, I have one favor to ask and it is with you to say whether it is fair or not. The favor is this: If this inhuman and unsoldier-like deed was committed will you please ask General Price to deliver the perpetrator of this crime, and if he turned Major Wilson over to this notorious bushwhacking Tim Reves to be executed, he certainly will make satisfaction by delivering up to the authorities the man who committed this inhuman crime, and if he refuses to carry on an honorable warfare I think all those officers in prison will refuse to take up arms if ever exchanged. I think these steps should be taken before you go further. I ask it as a soldier, as I asked it as a gentleman. I asked as an officer. I asked as a member of the Masonic fraternity. Excuse my bad writing."

The plight of Major Wolf came to the attention of President Abraham Lincoln, who wired General Rosecrans on Nov. 10, "Suspend execution of Major Wolf until further order, and meanwhile report to me on the case."

Rosecrans responded the next day to Lincoln's directive, "...I transmit...the case of Major Wolf and of the other rebels who were executed by my orders, for the purpose of teaching the enemy that if the laws of war and humanity are not sufficient to secure our prisoners from murder I will add to their force the motive of personal interest. Your excellency will perceive a case of cold-blooded murder of Major Wilson and five other prisoners of war by the permission or orders of Confederate officers, as well proven as the mind of any

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Intelligent man could require. As to the right, and even duty, of a commander to hold the members of any organized body of men responsible for the actions of their organization, I presume there can be no doubt. War itself proceeds on this ground, to kill men who individually have done no wrong and to destroy the property of those who individually have not harmed the nation who makes it. All other motives having failed to secure my soldiers who have surrendered themselves prisoners of war from cold blooded assassination or official murder by Price's command, I felt bound to appeal to the sense of personal security by declaring to these men that I should hold them individually responsible for the treatment of my troops while prisoners in their hands...

...Last night a woman claiming to be Mrs. Major Wolf arrived in this city, who, on being questioned, informed me that she came from...this side of Pilot Knob, expecting (that) her husband, with Price's command, would winter in Missouri. How were they to live? By robbing our loyal people, innocent of any harm to them except that of trying to live under the Government of their choice, despite the wishes of Price and his invaders. With the foregoing statement, I leave the matter in your hands. It is hardly necessary to say that no man repudiates more absolutely than I the savage principle of doing acts of barbarism because our enemies perpetrate them." Apparently Lincoln relieved Major Wolf and he was sent to City Point, Virginia for exchange on Feb. 24, 1865.

(Source-from Official records of the Rebellion)

During the Fredericksburg campaign in December, 1863, Isaac Taylor, of the First Minnesota Volunteers, wrote in his diary on Christmas morning,

"Upon this 'merry christmas' morn deep fog enshrouds the camp. Thick vapor doth the soldier's vision limit and dim the luster of the rising sun. If once assured this fog would always shroud the hills & valleys with its pale mantle, and shut forever from our view the radiance of yon sun, 'how drear & and desolate the earth.' But no; the fog must 'lift,' the vapory curtain rise, revealing Natures face more beautiful by contrast with the mist that marked its loveliness. Would 'twere as certain that the hellish fog of treason and the ghastly pall of war, red with burning cities and the crimson field, might vanish. May the peerless ray of Freedom's sun dispel the thickening gloom & and bring us peace & and unity."

Another member of the regiment, Mathew Marvin, wrote, *"Christmas but cant see it, no luxuries of any kind to be had."*

(from The Last Full Measure, by Richard Moe)

ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S TRIVIA

- 1) Tom Custer
- 2) Paw Paw Militia
- 3) Nevada and West Virginia
- 4) Tim O'Sullivan

THIS MONTH'S TRIVIA

- 1) What inmate of the prison at Ft. Warren, Massachusetts, was promoted to the rank of major general while he was a Union prisoner of war?
- 2) What member of Lincoln's cabinet was from west of the Mississippi?
- 3) The first ironclad ships for Federal use were built in 65 days by what St. Louis contractor?
- 4) What was the first--and only--military medal awarded in the Confederacy?

President Lincoln:

The last draw of wagons I've just made are very good, but the mules are of inferior stock, scarcely able to haul off the empty wagons; and if you expect me to give your lines any further attention in this quarter, you should furnish better stock, as I've had to burn several valuable wagons before getting them to my lines.

(signed) J.E.B. Stuart

**The Civil War Round
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Total Membership - 80!

Annual Dues

Individual membership --\$15
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the newsletter.

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THE PRESIDENTS CORNER

by Sonny Wells

Having just finished three programs in five days on the Civil War at holiday time, it was very refreshing to sit down with the board and work our way through this month's business agenda.

Listening to our newsletter editor discuss plans for the upcoming edition and going over the usual business is much easier than digging through old papers and texts to find info on pre-victorian Christmases. The task of making decisions to guide the groups' activities is made much easier by the ideas, suggestions, and comments of the board members. They very clearly are interested in our activities and have provided outstanding support and guidance to the officers. I could ask "have you hugged your board member today?", but I fear the spouses might question my reasoning.

If you have an idea for a program or a tour or anything which you feel might be beneficial to the group, please take it up with one of the board members or officers. They are easy to spot at the meetings...their name tags say board member!

Would you believe...a person identifying himself as being with the student newspaper at William Jewell College contacted two historical groups in early November inquiring about what he could do to help save the trenches on campus. Both referred him to me but I have not heard from anyone yet. Where was he three months ago?

Please note that there will be NO monthly meeting at the Truman High School Library in December. The December meeting will be the Christmas party on December 11. (See page 4 for details.)

Don't forget that membership dues are due January 1, 1994. Make checks payable to CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF WESTERN MISSOURI. Send to:

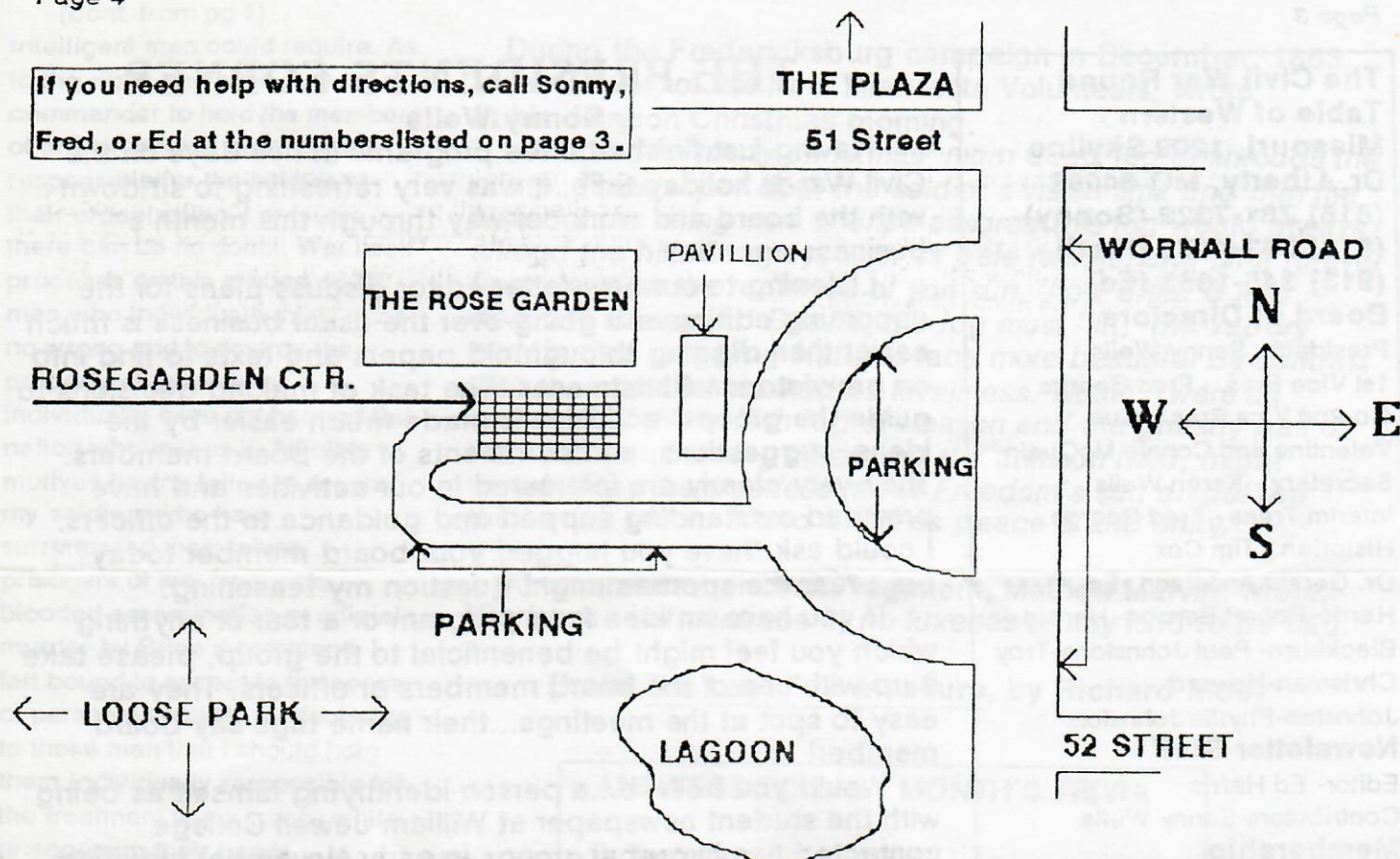
Fred George, 5442 Tracy, KCMO 64110

Elections for officers were held at the November meeting. Sonny Wells was re-elected president. Karen Wells was elected secretary. Tim Cox was elected historian. Howard Johnston and Phyllis Johnston were elected to the board.

Missouri River Press, Inc., has offered our group a discount on the book, **In Deadly Earnest, the Missouri Brigade**, by Phil Gottschalk. The regular price is \$35 ppd. Our price would be about \$24 ppd. Contact Sonny to place your order.

You may have recently received solicitations for a new book and new groups in the mail. Ex members of the CWRTWM have been using our original member list for solicitation. While we have no control over how this list is used, please be assured that our by-laws prohibit such use and the board WILL NOT allow any future list to be used in such a manner without membership approval.

If you need help with directions, call Sonny, Fred, or Ed at the numbers listed on page 3.



CHRISTMAS PARTY

THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE ANNOUNCES OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY, TO BE HELD SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2-5 pm, AT THE ROSE GARDEN CENTER AT THE HISTORIC WESTPORT BATTLEFIELD IN LOOSE PARK. (See map above for directions)

MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO BRING A COVERED DISH, DESSERTS, SNACKS, ETC. FOR AN INFORMAL BUFFET STYLE MEAL. OLD FAMILY RECIPES OR CIVIL WAR ERA RECIPES ARE ENCOURAGED. (NO HARD TACK, PLEASE!)

The Christmas committee will provide coffee, soft drinks, napkins, plates, cups, plastic ware, and tablecloths.

Period dress would be nice but is optional. If you have cassettes or CD's of period music, please bring them as a stereo will be available.

If you have any questions, or wish to contribute, call Fred George, 363-4072 or Bob Benson, 361-4603.

GUESTS AND NON-MEMBERS ARE WELCOME!

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WILL BE THE DECEMBER MEETING!