

The Boys from Calhoun

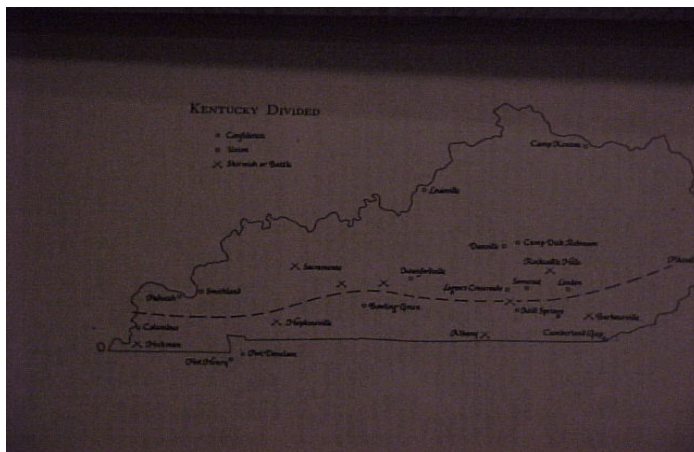
The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

The new year of 1861 arrived under a dark cloud of anger, fear, and uncertainties. Few could have envisioned the war that would soon erupt nor the role that Camp Calhoun would play in that tragedy. The Revolutionary War that had created this new nation had faded into history but the new Constitution, ratified in 1789, had left many issues unsettled. At the top of any list of contentions was the question, “Where lies the seat of power?” The South insisted that final authority should rest with State Governments while the Northern States believed that final authority should rest within the Federal Government. While some will argue to the contrary, the driving force behind the conflict between the North and South was the “rights” to maintain a slave-based economy and social culture. Kentucky, being a border state, was divided in its sympathies at every level, economically, geographically, socially, legislatively, and had led the fight for moderation of both laws and tempers behind the efforts of Congressmen John C. Breckenridge, John J. Crittenden and Henry Clay.

Legislatively, the Kentucky Legislature tended to support the Northern position by a small majority but the Governor was sympathetic for States Rights. Governor Magoffin, always trying to be fair, urged for the issue to be placed on a ballot and the decision to support secession or oppose secession to be made by the citizenry. The Legislature refused to support the proposal and Governor Magoffin resigned.



Our Geography encouraged compromise. Large plantations were practical in flat land. Hill country was more likely to contain small farms. Small farms would have only a few slaves, if any, and they were like an extension of the family, often working along beside the family members, whereas, larger

Fig 1: The New Madrid Fault Line geographically separated Northern and Southern sympathies

The Boys from Calhoun

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plantations might have several hundred slaves under the supervision of overseers who were answerable only to an absentee owner. In Kentucky the New Madrid Fault Line separates hill country from flat land with the exceptions of Union, Henderson, and Daviess Counties which are flat because they occupy the Ohio River flood plain. Flat country, with the large plantations, supported slavery; hill country usually did not.

Socially and economically our people were just as divided. Why would Kentucky boys go to war to protect a system that was completely foreign to them and from which they were not likely to benefit? When we ask that question we must look for some answer far removed from slavery. Letters from the soldiers, both Yanks and Rebs, indicate they had a strong sense of God's Will, a sense that this Nation, or State, was our Promised Land, a gift from God, and thus it was worth fighting for. Even the Churches split but that is an issue for another day.

With all of the divisions within the state it is little wonder that Governor Magoffin and the legislature refused to take sides and insisted on neutrality. Even when Fort Sumter was attacked in April of that year, Kentucky still managed to maintain a neutral status for over four months. Even when Confederate forces threatened to overrun Washington, D. C. in July of that year in the first battle at Bull Run Creek, Kentucky was still adamant. The first Union forces in Kentucky were not Kentucky troops but the Ninth Cavalry from Pennsylvania and the first Confederate troops came from Tennessee to Texas.

Both President Lincoln and President Davis recognized the importance of Kentucky in any future conflict. Lincoln stated, "We need God on our side but we must have Kentucky." Kentucky and Tennessee both lie horizontally on the map and separate Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and all points north from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and other points south. Tennessee was committing to the Confederacy and that left Kentucky to be the buffer zone in the Western Campaign. And, right in the middle of Kentucky, lying in an east - west position is Green River. Each President knew that invading Kentucky would create even more hostilities and possibly push Kentucky into the opponent's camp, and they were right.

The Boys from Calhoun

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The Confederate General John Polk occupied Columbus, Kentucky on September 3, 1861; the Union General, U. S. Grant would invade Paducah only 3 days later and the neutrality no longer existed.

THIS IS WHERE CAMP CALHOUN ENTERS THE PICTURE. The citizens of Kentucky had been divided about 50-50 in their sympathies but when General Polk invaded Columbus, overlooking the Mississippi River, he created enough hostilities that about 75% of the volunteers traveled to the Union camps. The State Guard, yesterday's version of the National Guard, although under the command of the Governor and sworn to uphold the laws of Kentucky, abandoned their posts and left for Tennessee to join the rebellion, taking their equipment with them. Local communities, with the sanctions of State Government, began to form groups of Home Guards in an attempt to protect their own well-being. One such group was formed at Owensboro in Daviess County. After inducting all they could in that community they left for Hartford where they incorporated the Cromwell Home Guard and others and eventually they would travel on to Camp Calhoun where recruiting would continue. They would arrive in Calhoun in September of 1861. These would become the 11th Kentucky Infantry, the 17th Kentucky Infantry, and the 25th Kentucky Infantry. Camp Calhoun had suddenly become one of the first military bases in the State and in the following weeks would become arguably the most important installation in the State.

How does one supply food and water for this army? Where do you get guns, horses, wagons, tents, uniforms, ammunition, and the myriad of other things an army requires? Fortunately the farmers of the Green River area were known for their fat cattle and hogs, fine horses, and ample hay crops. Early in the War the locals were paid for their goods but as the War continued these goods were simply taken. River boats could berth at the bottom of the hill and deliver supplies as they became available.

Local doctors often signed on to do what they could for the sick and injured but were soon overwhelmed. Young men who, in most cases, had never been more than ten miles from home were now exposed to every germ

The Boys from Calhoun

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By Don Wilson

February 2008

within a 200 mile circle. The most elementary explanation for disease was still 20 years away and medications were ineffective. Without vaccines or antibiotics, this combination of exposures would be catastrophic. The camp mud did not help and neither did the lack of knowledge about disease transmission methods and the need for camp hygiene. Measles, typhoid, pneumonia, influenza, tetanus, and other diseases that could be easily treated today were often deadly to these men. The courthouse, located where the Calhoun Holiness Church now sits overlooking West First Street, and the Methodist Church, then located at 4th and Branch, were used as hospitals. Other houses in Calhoun were assuredly used as hospitals but only the Griffith-Franklin house at Second and Poplar Streets has been documented. Since the final stage of many of these diseases was chronic and severe diarrhea we might better understand why at least the courthouse and Methodist Church were soon torn down and built elsewhere.

Housing was another problem. The men were probably housed in 8 feet by 8 feet log structures with four men to the hut. The most likely scenario would be logs notched and stacked 2 feet high with a tent placed on top. A blanket would serve as a door and straw became the floor. Since supplies were not easily accessible early in the war, tents might not have been available. If so, the huts would have been logs all the way up. An official study of the site a few years ago uncovered old brick. The pattern of the brick suggests that four or five huts would be built in a circle with a fire pit in the center. Ditches would be dug from the pit to each hut and lined with brick to create heat ducts into each cabin. This writer has never seen a photo nor read an account of such an arrangement at any other encampment. Streets between the huts would have been miry mud or frozen obstacle courses and the streets of the town would have fared no better. The encampment occupied the city property around Sandefur Manor and the Riggs' farm and, before spring, probably extended to Everett Cherry Road near High 136.

To further complicate matters, troops from Indiana began to arrive. On or about September 25, 1861, the 31st Indiana Infantry, the 42nd Indiana Infantry, the 43rd Indiana Infantry, and the 44th Indiana Infantry arrived along with the 6th Indiana Independent Battery Light Artillery and at least one Company of the 4th Indiana Cavalry. Each group contained from 700 to

The Boys from Calhoun

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1500 men plus horses and other supplies. At least one group was transported to Evansville by train while others walked to the nearest navigable river where boats could ferry them the rest of the way. According to memoirs, at least some of these men had walked from Fort Wayne or Terre Haute to a river. This could have been the Wabash but more likely was the Ohio. From Fort Wayne to the Ohio River is 250 miles. We now have between 5000 and 7000 tired and hungry men, with many already sick, sharing a town with maybe 500 very disconcerted private citizens.

This mass of humanity now had to be organized. Since the War with Mexico had ended before these young men were born, few if any knew anything about military procedures. Once selected, the officers would be provided with handbooks. To select the officers they divided into small groups and selected their lower ranking officers, then into larger groups where they selected the next higher ranking officers. The highest ranking officers would be provided by the Federal Government. The only requirement for the lower ranking officers seems to have been the ability to read and write and maybe be a likable person. For the higher positions attendance at West Point helped but was not a requirement. Political appointments, even at the top levels, created havoc for the duration of the war. Calhoun and the surrounding communities, especially Livermore, supplied their share of Captain and Lieutenants. General Thomas L. Crittenden, son of Senator John J. Crittenden, was assigned as the Camp's commanding officer. The Griffith-Franklin house at 390 West Second Street was confiscated and became the Commander's Headquarters.

In 1861, battle tactics were little different from those used by the ancient Romans. You advanced with a wide front while trying to attack the enemy in their flank or you hit a thin part of the line with your overpowering force. Feints were common practices. Of course the enemy was trying to do the same. Being skilled in positioning your troops to counter the positioning of the enemy could decide the outcome of the conflict. This required marching, teamwork, obedience, and promptness. Marching in columns must be learned. Following orders without question must be learned. Teamwork must be learned. And marching they did, through the camp, through the town, and up and down the nearby roads. The roads turned into quagmire but the marching continued. Officers were often

The Boys from Calhoun

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By Don Wilson

February 2008

criticized and even despised but they were trying to understand the drills from a handbook even as they taught the drills. An Indiana officer criticized a Kentucky officer for his demanding drill routines. Little did they know how critical these drills would become in only a few weeks.

As the marching continued some attention had to be diverted to creating a defensive capability. Some of the men had brought their horses with them. They were paid extra if they had done so. Cannon emplacements were dug into the curvature of the hill with at least two emplacements overlooking the river just behind the Fort Vienna marker on First Street and at least three emplacements near a barn at the end of Archie Wilson Street which faced Long Fall Creek. Still others might have existed around the curvature of the hill but have not been identified. An access road from the farmhouse to this barn was likely the access road to the cannon emplacements. A road was built across the creek, across the muddy bottomlands to Poverty, then to the Mount Vernon Church and on to High Banks, where it connected to Ashbysburg in Hopkins County by way of a pontoon bridge, a bridge supported by confiscated coal barges. Trees trunks were laid across the muddy road to create a "corduroy road". Portions of this road are known as Highway 256 and logs were recently recovered from the road bed. The cannons were never known to be fired in combat but a cannonball was found in Rumsey and is now on display in the McLean County Genealogical and Historical Museum.

The impact of this military intrusion upon a small community of maybe 500 citizens can only be imagined. Calhoun and Rumsey together had been powerhouse communities with international recognition. Grist mills, woolen mills, tobacco factories, manufacturers of farm tools, even a distillery, provided employment opportunities. Cheap land covered with oak trees drew the investors. Others were not afraid to invest in hotels, drug stores, dry goods stores, grocery stores, implement dealers, banks, livery stables, and even a ship yard complete with a dry dock that built river boats and barges. Riverboat Captains called Calhoun and Rumsey home as they plied the rivers all the way to New Orleans. Several State Legislators called this home. THEN THE WAR CAME.

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

The merchants flourished for a time, especially if they were selling booze or medicines, but when the boys left town this would collapse. The river economy, which had been competitive with Evansville, Paducah, or Louisville, was devastated when the Federal Government took control of Green River and impounded all the riverboats. Supplying the needs of the citizenry became secondary to supplying the needs of the military. Miners and loggers were out of business unless they could sell to the military. Cattle and hogs, even tobacco, could not be shipped to distant markets. Many families lost their primary wage earners and protectors as husbands and sons went off to war, many never to return. Rural families lived in constant fear as armies scouted the countryside looking for recruits, horses, guns, money, or anything else that could be useful. We have seen the dramatic scenes in the movie "Gone With The Wind" but we have not identified those scenes nor those emotions with our own family farms and our own great-grand-mothers. Kentucky mothers endured similar tribulations.

After only 3 or 4 weeks of encampment and with the little "basic training" they could receive between the other chores, the "Boys of Calhoun" received their first assignment. Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and Kirby Smith had been working hard to establish Central Kentucky as Confederate territory but had faced two major obstacles. First, they had to contend with the 9th Pennsylvania Cavalry that spent some time operating out of Camp Calhoun and second, they had not received the support and adulation they had hoped for from the citizenry. John Hunt Morgan was making a name for himself and had riding with him such names as Clark Quantrill, Jerome Clarke, Jake Bennett, and Frank and Jesse James.

Adam "Stovepipe" Johnson almost single-handedly brought Indiana into the war when he and a small group confiscated a barge and occupied Newburgh, Indiana for several hours. When they left town they took with them tons of supplies including enough pistols and rifles to supply a lot of rebels. On another occasion he slipped into Henderson with two men and in the darkness opened fire on a hotel full of Union soldiers, then left. The soldiers spent the rest of the night shooting blindly into the dark wounding only one big sow. Official reports showed the soldiers being attacked by up

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

to 1500 rebel forces. He continued to terrorize the Henderson-Madisonville-Owensboro area for months.

Nathan Bedford Forrest did much of the same thing while working out of Bowling Green and Russellville. Two of his officers signed a Union requisition form one day with the name of General Crittenden and delivered it to the Union Commander in Owensboro. They left town with a large number of Union horses before the trick was discovered. That same stunt was successful at Calhoun and even included a free meal. All of these men were excellent horsemen and specialized in doing the unexpected.

In early October the confederates were working along Green River trying to sabotage the river locks. This would have kept large quantities of coal, timber, and food out of the hands of the Union if they had been successful. In Mid-October, 1861, a large group was reported in the vicinity of Woodbury on the upper Green River. The Calhoun Boys were called on to respond. They left camp along that "corduroy road" to Ashbysburg, then up the south side of the river to Woodbury, near Morgantown. There they would meet with other troops and prepare to meet the enemy. The main body of Confederates was never found but small skirmishes resulted in the death of Private Granville Allen, believed to be the first Union soldier killed on Kentucky soil. He had been hiding in a hollow tree and stepped out at the wrong time. All 15000 troops returned to their respective camps.

In December, Colonel Forrest was leading a scouting patrol from Hopkinsville toward Rumsey in an attempt to gather intelligence on developments at Camp Calhoun. A Union patrol had left Camp Calhoun enroute to the Greenville area for a similar purpose when Forrest surprised the Calhoun troops near a watering hole on the Garst farm near Sacramento, thanks to being alerted by a young lady named Mollie Morehead. Several Union casualties were left on the battlefield with minimal damage to Forrest's troops as the running skirmish continued back toward Calhoun. Reenactments of that conflict have placed the Battle of Sacramento on the national tourist circuit and led to its permanent recognition as an important Civil War site and a key element in the Vicksburg Campaign. This was the first recorded engagement for Forrest but would not be the last as he soon became one of the Confederate's most distinguished Generals. He would

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

continue using tactics similar to what he first used on the hills around Sacramento.

By this time Lincoln and his advisors had developed a three-pronged attack plan. The Eastern or Virginia Campaign would advance along the eastern seaboard through Virginia to Richmond. The Western Campaign would advance through Kentucky into Tennessee and on into its southern neighbors. The Trans-Mississippi Campaign would be responsible for the territory west of the Mississippi River. The “Boys of Calhoun” would soon become key players in both the Western Campaign and the Trans-Mississippi Campaign.

The 17th Kentucky Infantry was “mustered in” or officially accepted into the military, December 13, 1861, at Calhoun. They were assigned to the Army of the Cumberland under the command of General Don Carlos Buell. The 25th Kentucky Infantry went into battle but was not mustered in until several weeks later in Nashville. The mission of the Army of the Cumberland was now expanded to include the entire region between Kentucky Lake and the Ohio River north of Louisville.

In late February, 1862, the Boys from Calhoun departed for the invasion of Tennessee. They would split and go three different ways. The 43rd Indiana went to the area of New Madrid, Missouri where they participated in the capture of New Madrid, Fort Pillow, Memphis, and an island fortress in the Mississippi River called Island No. 10. They then went into Arkansas and served the rest of their campaign there. The 11th Kentucky, 12th Kentucky, and the 42nd Indiana, (and probably the Kentucky 26th) started toward Bowling Green then on to the Nashville area. The 3rd Kentucky Cavalry and the Light Artillery group left for the Somerset area where they took part in the battle at Mill Springs then on to Louisville. After some activity there with John Hunt Morgan’s men they met up with their friends in Nashville. The Kentucky 17th, the Kentucky 25th, the Indiana 31st, and the Indiana 44th started toward Fort Henry on the Tennessee River at the Tennessee-Kentucky border where they would meet up with other forces coming down the Ohio River. (This writer does not have the agenda for the 26th Kentucky at this time.)

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

What a sight it must have been to watch the troops depart. Hundreds of soldiers with all of their supplies, including horses, loading onto riverboat after riverboat and waving madly as the boats disappeared down the Green. Some would march to Owensboro to board riverboats there. Thousands more were forming their marching columns with mounted troops to guard the flanks. Hundreds of wagons carrying food, mobile hospitals, pontoon bridges, blacksmith supplies, cannonry, ammunition, and all the other supplies necessary to support an army on the move, snaked down that hill, across those muddy bottoms, and down that corduroy road; a road which many would never see again as they marched toward their rendezvous with madness.

Before the river-transported troops arrived at Fort Henry on the Tennessee River the fort surrendered to other Union troops. Forts Henry, Heiman, and Donelson had all been built in a rush and were still only partially complete. They had also been built on low land and, this being February, they were plagued by high water. Fort Heiman had already been abandoned and when the bombardment from the warships began, the officers at Fort Henry soon followed suit. Before the Union forces could surround and capture the Confederates they retreated to Fort Donelson which, although on the Cumberland River, was only 12 miles away. Now all Union troops were rerouted to Fort Donelson.

The battle was already in progress and the results very much in doubt when the Calhoun Boys arrived. Artillery on the high bluffs was playing havoc with the attacking gunboats causing their retreat. After a long night lying on the cold muddy ground with a piece of oilcloth for a bed and a blanket for cover, the ground troops shook off the snow and sleet and began to maneuver into position. The 25th Kentucky, present but not yet mustered in, and in their first big maneuver, led the attack in their sector. The Indiana 31st, the Kentucky 17th, and the Indiana 44th following closely behind. The 17th and 44th were still in a valley as the 25th and then the 31st disappeared from view over the crest of a hill and were quite surprised when, moments later, several hundred soldiers came running back over the crest of that hill toward them. The 25th had walked into an open area before they realized they were surrounded on three sides by Confederate soldiers. They survived to fight another day only because the rebels were waiting for someone to

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

give the order to FIRE. The amateurish nature of the totally unprepared armies immediately became evident, but by the end of the day both armies had received their Baptism by Fire and were seasoned veterans. The final assault on Fort Donelson would feature these same four regiments, among others. The battlefield was littered with 4000 casualties and another 14,000 Confederate soldiers had been taken prisoner. All three of these battlefields lie at the southern end of the land Between the Lakes and at least some of the battlefields lie beneath the waters of Kentucky Lake and Barkley Lake.

These armies were poorly prepared to do battle but they were even more unprepared to take care of thousands of prisoners, many of whom were injured. The prisoners were moved to make-shift prisons in empty warehouses, hospitals, or other large buildings in Indiana and Ohio. After several months they were paroled. They signed a release statement promising to go home and fight no more. Some did exactly that. However, some were back in their old outfits, or with other outfits, and fighting within days. One small group refused to do either. Clark Quantrill, the James Brothers, Cole Younger. "Bloody Bill" Anderson, and Jerome Clarke were among the ones who took up the life of the outlaw or bushwhacker and wreaked havoc wherever they went. In fact, they were ruthless killers and didn't care if their victims were Feds or "secesh". With most able bodied men doing battle in Tennessee or further south, Green River country was a haven for men such as these. Banks were robbed, courthouses were burned, valuables stolen, and entire towns terrorized. Since they seldom identified themselves and often costumed themselves in Yankee blue or Confederate butternut, or even as ladies in peril, it is difficult to say with accuracy who committed which atrocities.

On August 9, 1862, Calhoun was occupied by unidentified forces as were many towns across the region. Camp Calhoun was now unoccupied and the town was vulnerable. The courthouse was invaded, citizens were terrorized, and merchandise was taken along with anything else that caught their eye. They then crossed the river and repeated their vandalism in Rumsey. Within hours they were gone and the locals were greatly relieved. No deaths or injuries were recorded.

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

Many towns had banks robbed, courthouses burned, and citizens massacred, especially if the buildings were being used to house the black people or if the community tried to resist or had done something in the past to anger one of the raiders. The local Home Guards did what they could but were often surprised and usually outgunned. Finally in 1864, the 35th Kentucky Infantry was organized in Calhoun and assigned the task of ridding the area of the Raiders and this would include the activities of General Lyon. The 48th Kentucky Infantry was organized in South-Central Kentucky and came to Calhoun to join in that effort. When these two units pursued Lyon into South-Western Kentucky a company of Capital Guards from Frankfort came to Camp Calhoun. Their assignment was to protect the locks and dams in the absence of the larger armies. After a few weeks these Guards were assigned elsewhere and were replaced by the Green River Battalion. Now with a strong military presence in Kentucky and the war grinding slowly toward an end, some of the outlaws were captured and subjected to instant justice. Others disappeared back into the civilian population while still others went west and continued the life of the outlaw. With all appearing to be calm at last the Capital Guards left for Cloverport on the Ohio River and remained there until the end of the war.

Historians give credit for the Battle of Donelson being one of the three or four most important engagements in the entire war because it opened the door for further invasions into the underbelly of the Confederacy. Others say it was THE most important engagement because it was the first battle the Confederacy had lost and showed the Confederates could be vulnerable. If you drew a line to represent the line of battle and placed an X on one side of that line but near the center and a Y directly across on the other side of the battle line, the X could represent the Boys from Calhoun and the Y could be the location of their brothers, cousins and neighbors back home.

The Kentucky boys that went south were organized into the First and Second Kentucky Infantries, CSA, with associated Cavalry and Artillery. Those that served under General Breckenridge would earn the nickname "the Orphan Brigade" following a particularly bloody battle. Eventually the nickname would be applied to all Confederates from Kentucky due to their not being supported by their state but technically it was given by Breckenridge to his troops. From Donelson until the end of the war the

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

Boys from Calhoun would face off against their kindred in the “Orphan Brigade” in nearly every battle they fought.

After the activities at Fort Donelson, the Calhoun Boys moved toward Shiloh where they were in the center of the travesty that occurred on the first day. They were the ones that tried to alert the officers of enemy troops. They were the ones that absorbed the first attack and fought all the way back to Pittsburg Landing. During the night they were joined by their former camp mates from Nashville who had walked a “forced march” through the mud and arrived in time to rescue Grant’s defeated army. These were the boys at the infamous “Hornet’s Nest” and “Bloody Pond.” Following the battle at Shiloh they had suffered so many casualties they had to combine Regiments just to be able to present a fighting force. Entire Companies no longer existed. From Shiloh they went on to play key roles in every major battle south of the Ohio River and from Richmond, Virginia to Tyler, Texas. They were at McMinnville, and Stone River near Murfreesboro. They were at Atlanta, Chattanooga, Chickamauga, and Atlanta.

When Bragg and Smith threatened to capture Louisville and Lexington, the Calhoun Boys were in the group that walked from Central Tennessee to Northern Kentucky to affect the rescue. When the Confederates were installing their version of a Kentucky Governor and Congress, it was General Buell and the Boys from Calhoun firing the cannonry that interrupted the ceremony and forced a rapid recess. These were the boys that walked north from Chattanooga, through the mountains, often without shoes and in the snow, to Knoxville to rescue Union troops that were under siege and starving. Their late arrival guaranteed a Union victory at Perryville. At Chickamauga, they were the troops that were ordered out of their position, a move that caused the collapse of the Union line but when General George H. Thomas refused to retreat any further but stood up and said, “Gather around me, boys”, it was the 17th Kentucky that first gathered ‘round and held the ground while permitting thousands of fellow troops to escape certain death or capture.

When Sherman made his sweep through Georgia and on to Savannah, he chose the Calhoun Boys to go with him. The first man on top of Missionary Ridge was arguably a soldier from Calhoun. William Mackey

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

from Beech Grove and Sebastian Troutman from Buel went up Lookout Mountain to help break the siege of Chattanooga. Mackey often spoke of washing the blood from his hands in pools of water that had collected on the rocks at a point that must have been Rock City. William Hillard from Livermore wasn't as lucky. He died at Andersonville Prison from starvation and scurvy.

When Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Calhoun Boys were standing at attention along that dusty road and shared their food with the desperate and starving Rebs. When General Joe Johnson sat in a lowly log farmhouse in North Carolina and surrendered the Army of Tennessee to General Sherman, Calhoun Boys were standing in the yard. When the Trans-Mississippi army called it quits it was facing the Boys from Calhoun, and other Calhoun Boys were waiting patiently in a jail in Texas.

We often speak of the war that divided families and pitted brother against brother. Most of us would find this in our own families if we knew who our relatives were. All of us have at least 8 and probably 16 direct male ancestors, and a multitude of indirect relatives, that could have been there. My great-grandfather, Samuel A. Sandefur, joined the 17th and brought his father, Samuel H. Sandefur, with him. Of course, Dad got the horse and entered the 17th Mounted. At Fort Donelson, Samuel A. found himself in the center of the firing line with Dad behind him doing whatever mounted soldiers do. Directly across in the opposing line were his two brothers. Claiborne and Alexander had joined the Confederacy and were members of the "Orphan Brigade". We do not know if they ever saw or heard each other but maps now tell us that all three brothers and their dad were only yards away from each other on that fateful day.

After the war ended, those who had survived went back to their homes and tried to resume normal lives. Many had lung damage from pneumonia, damage from bullet wounds that often included amputations, parasitic worm infections from eating raw meat or drinking from ponds or ditches, and psychological trauma that only another soldier could understand. When Gus Beasley returned home his wife did not recognize him. These men were coming home to children that had grown up, homes that had been burned, overgrown fields, no livestock including work horses, their wives had their

The Boys from Calhoun

The story of Camp Calhoun and its contribution to the Civil War

By Don Wilson

February 2008

own horror stories, and their neighbors had fought for the other side. Many of the Confederate soldiers were afraid to return home and fled to Mexico, South America, Canada, and even Europe. Jep Johnson did not return to his home in Glenville but did take a chance on coming to Calhoun and built a new house at 375 West Second Street. He was soon elected to the state legislature and helped write the new Kentucky Constitution that he had fought so hard to prevent. Others never came home and their descendants still live in those far away places.

Governments were bankrupt. Bridges had been burned. Factories had gone up in smoke. Rivers were full of drift wood and sunken ships. Locks and dams had been sabotaged. The government contracted with a private company to upgrade and repair the Green River and open it to traffic. This resulted in the river being under the complete control of a monopoly. Competition was stifled, and the economy suffered even more.

Six hundred thousand husbands and sons never came home. They were resting in shallow graves all over this great land. Some of those who came to Camp Calhoun so long ago are still here. They are buried in unmarked graves in an unmarked cemetery. They came from far and wide to help us in our hour of peril but never lived long enough to see battle. An effort is currently underway to provide them with markers and some degree of dignity but why did it take so long?

This writer grew up in the shadows of Camp Calhoun but did not know these things. He attended church on the same site where hundreds had suffered and many had died but he did not know. The Boys from Calhoun should have been remembered as national heroes. Generations have passed without us knowing what they endured or what they accomplished. We didn't even know their names.

But now we know. And now that we know, do we have an obligation to right a wrong and tell their story? I believe we do. Camp Calhoun is currently listed with the National Park Service due to its supporting role in the Union effort and is included as one site in the historic Vicksburg Campaign Trail.