

NOTES ON ITS HISTORY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The following historical notes on the history of the Civil War activities of St. Joseph's Parish were contributed by Prof. W. Anthony Wilibrand, Professor of Modern Languages, University of Oklahoma.

The writer approaches the task of preparing these notes on the Civil War of the parish with the feeling that they must turn out very inadequate because too little documentary material has thus far become available. The source material which he has found is predominantly of a military nature and therefore yields little information on the non-military aspects of community life during a period of great national tension. Military activities are always well documented, largely in the form of orders and reports issued by commanding officers. But how the individual community reacted to these various military activities, how its social, spiritual and economic life was influenced by them, to what extent it was stirred to patriotic, cooperative action by great national issues—all of this information, if it still exists at all, lies buried in old letters, memoirs, diaries, newspapers. Much material of historical value has been burned by descendants of the original possessors. Communities would do well to have all that can still be obtained in village museums—inexpensive projects which could easily

be started by county relief administrations. The writer finds that even army papers have been lost and destroyed, which means that a complete military history of Westphalia parish can perhaps never be written.

In the following paragraphs an attempt is made to present tentatively the more important aspects of Westphalia's military record during the Civil War. Much of the information has been gathered from pleasant conversations with older members of the Westphalia parish and from documents which have been graciously loaned for comparative study. Authoritative works and compilations in libraries have been consulted. Locally available information continues to turn up and before long it may be possible to submit an historical sketch that will be more satisfactory than these disconnected notes.

Missouri was saved for the Union by the Germans of St. Louis, when they marched out under General Lyon and took Camp Jackson. Strong Unionist sentiment spread rapidly to the German communities west of St. Louis and before long Missouri

could boast of a greater percentage of Germans in the Union army than any other state. Westphalians volunteered in comparatively large numbers, the 26th Missouri Infantry and the 10th Missouri Cavalry drawing more of them than any other regiment. It was the 26th Missouri which helped Grant drive the Confederates back behind the fortifications of Vicksburg at the battle of Champion Hills, where the Westphalians were among the killed and wounded. It would seem that the following members of this regiment of Missouri Volunteers belonged to the once extensive Westphalia parish: Fred, Bernard and Frank Berhorst, Joseph Borgmeyer, Herman Bose, Bernard Buescher, George W. Castrop, Henry Heiman, Joseph Jurgensmeyer, Joseph F. Luecke, Henry Luebbert, Anton Plassmeyer, Joseph Plassmeyer, Bernard Scheppers, Henry Schulte, Martin Schulte, F. W. Steinmann, Bernard Weber, Joseph H. Wieggers, Otto Winkelman.

The 10th Regiment of Cavalry Missouri Volunteers enrolled the following Westphalians: Stephen Boeckman, Henry Engelmayer, Frank Goeller, Henry Hilkemeyer, Diedrich Holtmeyer, Bernard Kottwinkel, Joseph Morfeld Peter Radmacher, Theodore Schauwecker.

If this assignment of names is free from errors there were eleven Westphalians in the 10th Missouri Cavalry and twenty-one in the 26th Missouri Infantry.

But the Westphalians were not exceedingly clannish in their

military enlistment. They volunteered for service in other organizations as follows:

32nd Mo. Infantry, Joseph Adrian.

15th Mo. Infantry, Philip Bode.

49th Ill. Infantry, Peter Heckman.

4th Vet. Reserve Corps, Stephen Huchtemeyer.

2nd Mo. Infantry, Julius Jurgensmeyer.

1st Mo. Artillery, William Kempker.

24th Vol (?) Henry Nacke.

33rd Mo. Infantry, Benj. Schwartz.

11th Mo. Infantry, Christ Stuckenschneider.

Reserve Corpse (?), Henry Tweehaus.

Other Westphalia volunteers were the following: William Herber, Frank Schoenen, August Boeckman, John Plassmeyer, Herman Nacke, Ferdinand Utrecht, Joseph Brooker, Anton Eisterholz, John Babler, Herman Crede, George Luetkebomke, Herman Hillen.

Five Westphalia volunteers never returned to their native parish. Joseph Borgmeyer was killed at the battle of Champion Hill, May 6, 1863. Herman Bose died at Corinth, Miss., 1862. Corporal Anton Plassmeyer was captured by the enemy at Look-out Mountain and died in the Andersonville prison. Martin Schulte died on the Etawah River, near Kingston, Ga., in 1864. Christ Stuckenschneider fell in the terrible slaughter at Vicksburg in May, 1863. Color-bearer George W. Castrop lost an arm at the battle of Cham-

pion Hills.

Thus far very little source material has been found on Westphalia's Enrolled Militia organizations and their membership. A special order from the Adjutant General's Office in St. Louis dated June 1, 1863, contains this paragraph:

"Company G, Captain Stephen Borgmeyer, and Diercks Battalion Co., Captain John H. Diercks, are hereby consolidated into one company by attaching the last named company to the first named company to be commanded by Captain Borgmeyer. The offices of Diercks Battalion Company, both commissioned and non-commissioned, are hereby vacated."

A copy of this order was turned over to 2nd Lieutenant Anton Willibrand of the former Diercks Company. It also lists the names of George Levering, F. Wieberg, and M. Stieffermann as Captains respectively of Companies F, G, H, of the 28th Regiment, Enrolled Missouri Militia. If similar documents could be found in family archives at Westphalia it might be possible to ascertain the entire membership of the Militia organizations and the previously existing Home Guards in this part of Osage County. Some results are expected of inquiry recently made at the Adjutant General's office in Jefferson City. C. J. Vaughan, compiler of the Osage County Directory and Statistical Compendium, gives the name of a Westphalian, August Kleinsorge, as adjutant in the Militia command of the county.

When the raiding expedition of General Sterling Price reached this part of Missouri the Westphalia community had the most exciting days of its Civil War experience. Price's command passed through Osage County, October 4, 5, and 6, 1864. Apparently these three days seemed like a long time to the fear-stricken inhabitants who had expected outrages of a far worse nature than the plundering indulged in by the undisciplined Confederate soldiers. A belt some 20 miles wide along the route of invasion was pillaged rather thoroughly for such provisions, horses, mules, and equipment as the army could use. On October 4, Gen. Joseph O. Shelby's division reached Linn from the east and captured prisoners, arms, horses and provisions. Hearing of a Militia encampment at Westphalia he marched upon that place October 5, but met with no resistance. The following night he ordered Colonel Shanks' brigade to destroy Osage bridge. This was done early the next morning and the small group of Federals captured at the blockhouse at the east end of the bridge was taken to Westphalia and there paroled. Colonel Shanks worked fast. He rejoined Shelby and participated "in forcing the passage of the Osage, six miles below Castle Rock, early in the day of the sixth," according to the report of his division commander. Meanwhile, to distract the Federals who were guarding fords along the river, Shelby ordered "a vigorous demonstration at Castle Rock." This tended to lessen

the resistance at the point of passage six miles below. At Castle Rock a Federal scout of 30 men was eliminated through drowning, slaughter and capture. Six miles down-stream Shelby swept the opposite bank with "a terrible fire of infantry and artillery" and dashed across the stream. One sentence in the General's report is typical of his unrestrained, poetic style: "The swift and beautiful water was torn into foam-flakes that hurried and danced away to the sea, while the ringing shout of a thousand voices told that the ford was won." Shelby's frequently eloquent remarks are saturated with emotion. Having crossed the Osage he ordered Shanks to the attack. "He . . . led it with his hat off and the light of battle on his face. That charge was glorious. The enemy, though outnumbering him, fled rapidly, and pressing on far ahead of his best and bravest he fell in the arms of victory—a bullet through and through his dauntless breast." (The words again are of Gen. Joseph O. Shelby. That he was a popular general in spite of his grandiloquence is evidenced by a catchy soldier song composed in his honor in Arkansas before Price's column entered Missouri.)

The temptation to quote a few more lines from Shelby's unique report is strong. The following lines refer to his mortally wounded friend, Colonel Shanks: "I cannot refrain from laying aside a moment the cold and formal language of a report and paying a just tribute to the absent and wounded hero. Brave, chival-

orous, devoted friend to all who needed a friend; a lion in battle, fleetfoot on the corral; sage counsel in council; the Murat of command. When he left us a star went out, a giant was gone. Whether upon the march or in bivouac, the cold and weary advance or the dark and pitiless retreat, where death is fleet as the wave of its sable banner, he was always the same heroic soldier, ready at all times and under all circumstances."

"The scythe of the reaper

Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory."

The Confederate detachment of Castle Rock also forced a passage after severe skirmishing and started out on the road towards Jefferson City. Under the command of Colonel Gordon it engaged and defeated a Federal troop at Dixon's plantation. The next day, October 7, there were skirmishes at the Moreau and around Jefferson City. But the State Capitol was safe. Price's decision to abandon his plans for capturing it was influenced by the fact that Generals McNeil and Sanborn had marched to its rescue from Rolla and Cuba October 5. They had crossed the Osage river almost 24 hours ahead of Shelby's division. In reporting on his two-day march of seventy miles from Rolla to Jefferson City General McNeil says: "I had saved the capital of the State from pollution of rebel occupation, and thwarted the enemy in his fondest scheme of establishing a Con-

federate government and issuing from the Capital an order for the election of a Confederate legislature."

Has tradition tended to exaggerate the outrages and depredations committed by Price's army? Probably not. In April, 1865, a Confederate Court of Inquiry convened at Washington, Arkansas, "to investigate the facts and circumstances connected with the Missouri expedition. . ." Price himself had requested this investigation. There was remarkable agreement among the witnesses questioned about the pillages and disorder of Price's troops. One witness testified that two-thirds of the invading army were deserters from commands south of the Arkansas River, and that subordinate Generals were lax in enforcing discipline. The outrages were "generally committed by soldiers who left the column, some straggling and some under the permission of their immediate commanders. The captains of companies, regimental, brigade, and division commanders all gave permission to scout, and by such parties many depredations were committed." General Price, himself a popular politician and former Governor of Missouri, gave stringent orders against the plundering of private property by his soldiers. In one instance he expressed the desire to promote a colonel of Marmaduke's division for having shot down some soldiers whom the latter had caught robbing. A large number of unarmed men in Price's command "seemed to think that they were not amenable to orders." One witness

said that "there seemed to be a desire upon the part of the troops not to molest persons of Southern proclivities, but whenever persons disposed to be favorable to the Federal cause were found their property was taken." It was Price's mission to damage the Union by destroying bridges and communications, to take strategic points and thus force Missouri into the Confederacy. He attempted his assignment in soldierly fashion and can hardly be blamed for the unmilitary conduct of the pillaging hordes placed at his disposal.

There is as yet no absolute certainty that the names of all volunteers from Westphalia have been found. There is a possibility, too, that writers and compilers have been wrong about assigning certain names to Westphalia.

It has been impossible thus far to secure the membership rolls of Westphalia militia companies. Several visits to State archives have produced no important results in this regard but the writer is still hopeful.

↓ In April, 1907, the "Volksblatt" carried the Civil War memoirs of Mr. William Bode. Mr. Bode was captured by Confederates of Price's command and released after the division had crossed the Osage River. Upon his return home he found that most of his valuable live stock and personal property had been taken by the invading army. The Confederates had left some worn-out horses and mules in the Osage bottom and Mr. Bode took his choice of these so that he might continue his work on the farm. Mr. Joseph

F. Luecke writes down these memoirs. They constitute a document that is well worth preserving.

A considerable number of Westphalians went to Medora (St. Aubert) Osage County, in December, 1861, where they were assigned to Company D, 26th Infantry Regiment, Missouri Volunteers. They became vexed over being detained in the small, desolate, uninteresting place and there was the beginning of a revolt. Peace was

eventually restored when the officers promised that there would soon be abundant opportunity for active military participation in the great conflict. On January 1, 1862, the newly-formed company marched to its beloved Westphalia. In military attire and with glistening guns and bayonets it entered the village on the morning of January 2. The belles of the countryside appeared and for two weeks Westphalia made merry and entertained its boys in blue.