

Battle of Perryville

By Carolyn B. Leonard

The 150th Anniversary of the American Civil War will be ongoing throughout the United States during the next five years. Almost 150 years ago, most of our ancestors in Mercer County were involved in an important Civil War battle, either as a Union soldier or Confederate soldier or citizen victim. The Battle of Perryville was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War and the largest battle fought in the state of Kentucky.

A reenactment of that battle will be going on during our Dutch Cousins Gathering. There is also a very good Museum of the battle open that weekend. Curator [Joan Parks House said, The Perryville Battle museum will be open from 9 - 5. You can check out \[www.perryvillebattlefield.org\]\(http://www.perryvillebattlefield.org\); they should have a tentative schedule up this week for the reenactment.](#)

Several of our group have ancestors who were in the Battle of Perryville - just 10 miles from Harrodsburg. (If you know you have an ancestor in that battle, please e-me the info. I saw several Dutch names on the website.)

*For example, **William G. "Will" Cozine age 34 and his nephew Meredith Cozine, age 14, are both listed in the battle** serving with the 9th Kentucky Cavalry, Corp I, under Maj. Gen Buell in the Army of the Ohio. Will, a private, survived the battle but was killed a couple months later on duty near Columbia, KY. He left a widow and five children, the youngest born after his death. His widow, Rebecca Jan Barnes married Martin Moore a few years later in Anderson County. Tamara Fulkerson and Vivian Stewart are descendants who may be attending this year.*

Meredith, born in 1848 and initiated to the horrors of battle at such a young age, survived to marry twice and have at least ten children, be an old man and die in his bed at age 74. He is buried in Lexington Cemetery and was honored with a newspaper story about him a couple years ago. His grandson, Robert Merideth Cozine b. 1920, was an aviation cadet in the Army Air corps WWII, and became an officer of United McGill Corp of Columbus, OH.

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kymercer/CivilWar/Union/9cav/>

COZINE, MEREDITH	Corp	I	9th Ky. Cavalry, Capt Harvey J. Burns
COZINE, WILLIAM G.	Pvt	K	9th Ky. Cavalry, Capt William Edwards

During the Battle of Perryville Oct. 8, 1862, the 9th Ky. the Cozines acted as scouts and were engaged in skirmishing actions at Lawrenceburg, Chesser's Store, and Dog Walk, and moved to capture Harrodsburg.

Before that day was over nearly 2,500 men lay dead and another 5,000 wounded men filled every barn, church and house in the area. The struggle that occurred that day was a Confederate victory; however, Union forces greatly outnumbered the Southerners, which forced Bragg's rebel Army to retreat from Perryville and eventually withdraw into Tennessee.

However, The armies left Perryville's homes and farms in gory shambles. Every resident within range of the guns suffered losses during the battle.

Nearly every church, barn, and home was converted into a hospital. Local citizens were left to bury the dead and to care for the living.

Most Confederate casualties remained on the field unburied for a week after the fight. Angry at the Rebels for robbing their dead the night of the battle, Perryville's garrison summarily refused to bury them. Working with too few picks and shovels, burial parties also faced a difficult task breaking hard and rocky soil baked by the summer's drought. Eventually, they gave up and carved out only shallow trenches, temporarily covering the dead with a thin blanket of earth in vain hope of deterring the hogs.

Two months later, after the 121st Ohio marched away, Squire Bottom who owned the battlefield site - his farm, along with other Perryville residents, and a group of students from Danville's Kentucky School for the Deaf exhume those Confederates and bury 347 of them in a compact mass grave located on Bottom's land. Using personal effects, he managed to identify a few, notably some Mississippians, but the identity of most remained, and remains, unknown.

Called from retirement by these circumstances, Dr. Polk helped scores of the wounded. At his home and office in downtown Perryville, several of the injured recovered from their horrific wounds. Shortly after the battle, Polk was appointed surgeon to a makeshift hospital. This "hospital", which was actually a barn containing 40 wounded troops, was owned by a farmer who served as Polk's surgical assistant. The farmer gave the wounded whiskey to dull their pain, and when Polk would operate, the farmer-turned-nurse would sit and play his fiddle.

This eyewitness account is given on the Perryville website: On our arrival we learned that we were the first to bring relief where help was needed more than tongue can tell. Instead of 700, as first reported, at least 2,500 Union and rebel soldiers were at that time lying in great suffering and destitution about Perryville and Harrodsburg. In addition to these, many had already been removed, and we had met numbers of those whose wounds were less severe walking and begging their way to Louisville, 85 miles distant. Here were, at this time, some 1,800 wounded in and about Perryville. They were all very dirty, few had straw or other bedding, some were without blankets, others had no shirts, and even now, five days after the battle, some were being brought in from temporary places of shelter whose wounds had not yet been dressed. Every house was a hospital, all crowded, with very little to eat.

During the late fall of 1862 the 9th Kentucky Cavalry operated against the guerrilla raider, Champ Ferguson. In December 1862, when Will was killed, the 9th had pursued Morgan on his Christmas Raid across Kentucky with actions at Bacon Creek Bridge, Elizabethtown, Muldraugh's Hill and Rolling Fork.