

CIVIL WAR IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

At Rest in Poolesville

In the 1860s, Poolesville's population swelled from approximately 350 to over 15,000 when Civil War infantry, artillery, and cavalry soldiers were camped in the area. With both Union and Confederate troops maintaining a local presence, battles and skirmishes took place repeatedly over the four years of the war.



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Buried in this small town, with very little recognition, are the remains of at least 31 young Civil War soldiers. The graves are located in the historic Methodist Cemetery at 17605 West Willard Road in Poolesville.

A partial list of the soldiers interred at the site does exist and Heritage Montgomery has begun researching their histories. Of the 31 buried in Poolesville, 14 are from Massachusetts – eleven from the 15th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment and three from the famous 20th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. The 20th Massachusetts was known as the Harvard Brigade because the officers, as well as some of the soldiers, were young Harvard graduates. Among the officers were Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who was injured at the battle of Ball's Bluff in October 1861, and Paul Revere, Jr.



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One young officer in the 20th Massachusetts who died from wounds received at the Battle of Ball's Bluff was William Lowell Putnam, an ardent abolitionist (pictured left). Born in 1840, he was a law student at Harvard College when the war broke out. At the age of 21 he was commissioned Second Lieutenant of Company E, 20th Massachusetts Infantry. Putnam died of a gunshot wound and was buried on October 21, 1861.

Another soldier from the 20th Massachusetts buried at the site is Albert Stackpole. He was from Nantucket and died at the age of 18. The third soldier was Alexander Barber. No records could be found on his service but he was buried on November 21, 1861.

As we started our investigation, our goal was to tell the story of all 31 young soldiers. But the accounts have proven to be so interesting we will need to do more research about these brave young men buried in our county. We hope at sometime in the future to see a permanent reminder of their service at the site.

Other units represented at the cemetery are the 69th Pennsylvania (The Forgotten Irish or "Paddy Owen's Regulars"), 1st Rhode Island, 72nd Pennsylvania, 3rd Wisconsin, 3rd New York, 35th Virginia, 23rd Maine, and 11th New York.

From the 15th Massachusetts:

Sgt. Melvin Howland (Berkshire Co.)

Born: 1838. Died: Aug. 1861, age 23

Occupation: Teacher

Private Edward Franklin Ware (Worcester Co.)

Born: 1835. Died: Sept. 1861, age 26

Occupation: Shoemaker

Cpl. Frank Hildreth (Middlesex Co.)

Born: 1841. Died: Oct. 1861, age 20

Occupation: Harness maker

Patrick Kelley (Worcester Co.)

Born: 1841 or 1842. Died Oct. 1861, age 20 or 21

Occupation: Spinner

Moses James Warren (Yorkshire, England)

Born: 1828. Died Oct. 1861, age 33

Occupation: Weaver

Luther Gray Turner (Middlesex Co.)

Born: 1836 or 1837. Died Nov. 1861, age 24 or 25

Occupation: Blacksmith

Cpl. Andrew W. Cowdrey (Worcester Co.)

Born: 1834. Died: Nov. 1861, age 27

Cpl. Cowdrey was buried in Poolesville but his family later had his body returned to Worcester County for burial at Leominster.

Lt. Henry Northey Hooper (Norfolk Co.)

Born: 1839.

There is some confusion about Lt. Hooper. He is listed as buried in Poolesville but also recorded as a prisoner taken at the Battle of Ball's Bluff. Massachusetts' records show he actually died in 1873.

Alonzo Boardman Belknap (Worcester Co.)

Born: 1826. Died: Oct. 1861, age 35

Occupation: Boot maker

Buried in Poolesville but returned to Massachusetts for burial at the Wilkinsonville Cemetery in Worcester County.

Samuel Sibley (Worcester Co.)

Born: 1820 or 1821. Died: Nov. 1861, age 40 or 41

Occupation: Miller

Samuel Sibley was buried in Poolesville but his family later had his body returned to the Douglas Cemetery in Worcester County.

Lewis Haril

Died: Nov. 1861

He is listed as buried in Poolesville but we have found no record of his service.