

Rocky Springs & the Civil War

“Our cavalry skirmished with the rebel cavalry during the day (Friday, July 8th), along Catoctin Mountain, near Rocky Springs School House, and the artillery stationed near the city limits on the north side of the road had a spirited fight with a rebel battery on Hagan's Hill, about a mile west of the city, on the south side of the Hagerstown road,...killing a number of their men and horses, with a loss on our side of one officer and one man killed and seven men wounded.”

– *E. Y. Goldsborough, First Lieutenant and Aid-de-Camp on General E.B. Tyler's staff, and Past Commander, Department of Maryland, G.A.R. Frederick, Md*

“On Friday morning, the 8th, the enemy having disappeared from our front, General Tyler...gave Colonel Clendennin orders to send his cavalry out and ascertain the position of the enemy...Colonel Clendennin had sent Captain Morris, of Company M, out on another road to the right of Major Waite, and during the forenoon the rebels massed a battalion of cavalry in the timber and suddenly charged upon Captain Morris. The Captain and his company fought gallantly and with desperation, but were forced back by superior numbers, and Captain Morris was killed, having received a shot in his hip, from which he died in about an hour and a half. He remained conscious to the last, and died without a murmur, as he had fought without fear.”

*-Abner Hard, M.D., Surgeon
8th Illinois Cavalry Regiment*

“Crossed the Potomac and marched to Frederick City, Maryland, the regiment leading the advance. On July 8th we found the 8th Illinois Cavalry drawn up in line of battle. Formed for a charge when the Illinois regiment left the field. We followed them, their battery shelling us, our regiment losing 14 men and several horses by an explosion of a shell in our ranks. Among the number was Harvey Wilson who was a conscientious Christian soldier from our county, and as gallant a man as ever drew a saber.”

*-James D. Sedinger, 2nd Lieutenant, Company E
8th Virginia Cavalry Regiment*

As a prelude to the Battle of Monocacy, on July 8, 1864, Union Brigadier General Erastus B. Tyler's 8th Illinois Cavalry, under command of Lieutenant Colonel David R. Clendenin, and the 8th Virginia Cavalry, under command of Frederick native Brigadier General Bradley T. Johnson of the Confederate States Army, skirmished near Rocky Springs School House killing and wounding several men and horses. Documentation of the skirmish to include two maps depicting the Rocky Springs School House are in the 1898 book *"Early's Great Raid, He Advances Through Maryland, Battle of Monocacy,"* by Frederick native E. Y. Goldsborough, First Lieutenant and Aid-de-Camp on General E.B. Tyler's staff, and Past Commander, Department of Maryland, G.A.R. Frederick, Md. The first map depicting the Rocky Springs School House is captioned *"Monocacy Battlefield and Vicinity."* The second map is captioned *"Showing Federal and Rebel Lines of Battle July 8, 1864."* The fighting in the Rocky Springs vicinity just west of the City of Frederick was so intense during the two days leading up to the Battle of Monocacy, it caused General Lew Wallace to report to his superiors *“Think I had the best little battle of the war.”*

As a proud partner of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA), which includes portions of

Washington, Frederick and Carroll Counties, HRSC will assist the HCWHA in fulfilling its goals of enhanced stewardship of historical structures and objects and accurate storytelling and interpretation of the areas Civil War resources. The Maryland Heritage Areas Program is governed by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) and administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. MHAA provides targeted financial and technical assistance within 13 locally designated Heritage Areas, each of which has a distinct focus or theme that represents a unique aspect of Maryland's character. Together, MHAA, the Heritage Areas and local partners like HRSC, support the economic well-being of Maryland's communities by promoting, sustaining and creating place-based experiences for visitors and residents alike.

Once restored and opened to the public as a center for historical interpretation and research, Rocky Springs School House will be thematically linked with other heritage resources in the HCWHA. HRSC interpretative themes will support those of the HCWHA through projects that relate to the social, economic and political aspect of the war years, the period immediately following the war, Maryland's unique location on the Mason-Dixon Line and its status as a boarder state. Using Soldiers' diaries, memoirs, regimental histories, official military reports, historical newspaper accounts, accounts written by local citizens and archaeological exploration, HRSC will conduct research on these topics to include troop movements and skirmishes in the Rocky Springs area. HRSC will then use multiple vehicles to share the results of its research with the public to include educational exhibits, books and other publications, curriculum materials and use of its 2-acre property to display outdoor interpretative signage and present living history programs.

For example, HRSC will interpret the skirmish that occurred on July 8, 1864, near Rocky Springs School House as a prelude to the Battle of Monocacy as part of the Civil War Valley Campaigns of 1864, as well as the military engagement that occurred in the Rocky Springs vicinity beginning in the early morning hours of September 13, 1862, involving the 3rd Indiana Cavalry, 8th Illinois Cavalry, Jeff Davis Legion and the Washington (South Carolina) Artillery as a prelude to the Battle of South Mountain, as part of The Maryland Campaign of 1862 (Antietam Campaign). One of the ways HRSC is already supporting HCWHA interpretative themes is through the establishment of its Brigadier General Bradley Tyler Johnson Heritage Society, which is described in detail in a separate section of the HRSC website.