Walnut Grove Cemetery

Missouri’s Civil War

The Walnut Grove Cemetery was founded in 1852 when 4 acres were set aside in a grove of walnut trees. During the Civil War graves of battle casualties were added to the cemetery, and over the years, so were graves of many veterans. Private histories mention Walnut Grove as a hiding place and watch for approaching enemy on the old Rocheport Road.

There are important Civil War figures buried in Walnut Grove. First and foremost is Confederate Gen. Robert McCulloch, whose biography appears in the right column. Also buried here is Dr. William Montgomery Quarles, a Boonville physician who fought for the Missouri State Guard at the First Battle of Boonville, June 17, 1861. The State Guard was a body of men organized under the authority of the state that fought alongside Confederate forces in 1861. Dr. Quarles, 30 year old, was killed in action at the battle, five miles east of here. John A. Hayn served as adjutant to a company of the Boonville Home Guard (Union), which in 1860 fortified the old state fairgrounds on East Morgan Street. At the Second Battle of Boonville, on September 13, 1861 at the fairgrounds, Hayn was one of two men on the Union side killed in action. He was shot in the head when he stood up behind the Union breastworks, and he died instantly.

Charles E. Leonard was a member of a prominent unison family that founded Cooper County’s Ravenswood Farm in the 1840s. In 1862, Charles Leonard enlisted a company of infantry for the 52nd Regiment, Missouri Enrolled Militia (Union). In October, 1863, he fought with the 7th Missouri State Militia Cavalry at Tipton, Missouri, during Shelby’s 1863 Raid. A graduate of Kemper Military Academy in Boonville and the University of Missouri, Charles died in 1916 and was interred here. Colonel David Wear, originally from Ottawilla in southern Cooper County, was Colonel of the 52nd Regiment, and later a captain in the 9th Regiment, Provisional Enrolled Missouri Militia. In this capacity he fought for the Union during Shelby’s Raid, in actions at Boonville, Jonesborough and Marshall, October 11-13, 1863. After the Civil War, David Wear became an attorney in Boonville and St. Louis, and in the latter place was active in the dry goods business of his brother James Hutchinson Wear. Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush are direct descendants of James Wear, who also served in Boonville’s 52nd Missouri Enrolled Militia.

Other notable burials include: J. F. Gmelich, a veteran of the Missouri State Guard who fought at the Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, William and John became the first brothers in America’s history to be so ennobly honored.

The 1843 home of the Thomas Nelson family, “Forest Hill”, stands just north of here on Locust Street. It was here that Boonville mayor James O’Brian officially surrendered the City to Union General Nathaniel Lyon after the first battle of Boonville.

Sources: Sickles, John, (2006 Mar/Apr), The Second Missouri Cavalry, Civil War News Magazine; McVicker, Maryellen, “Reflections of CSA, Making History: The Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, William and John became the first brothers in America’s history to be so ennobly honored.

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