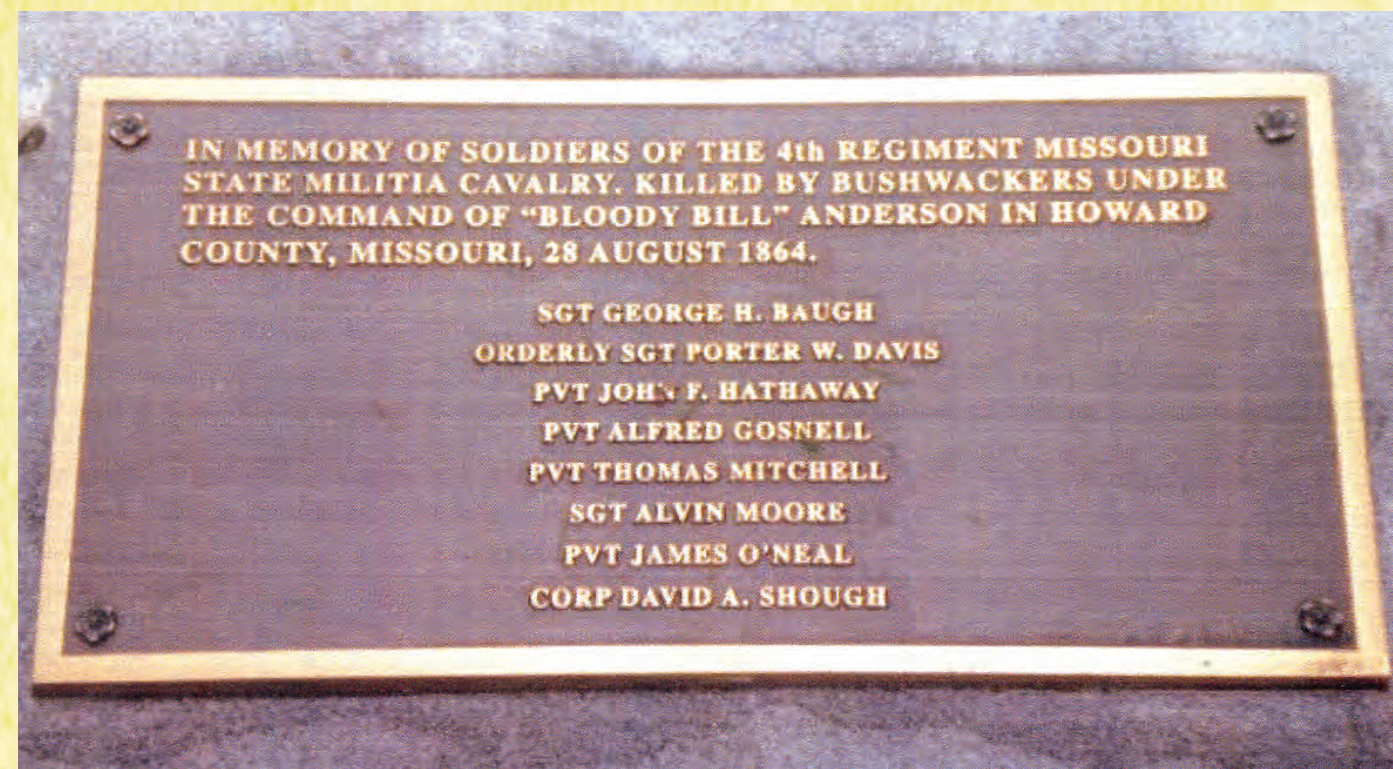# Affair at Rawlings Lane

Missouri's
CIVIL WAR

The Sunset Hills Cemetery

Originally this cemetery was known as the "old Methodist Episcopal Church Burying Ground." The area was possibly used as early as 1818, but certainly several burials had occurred here by 1820.

IN MEMORY OF SOLDIERS OF THE 4th REGIMENT MISSOURI STATE MILITIA CAVALRY, KILLED BY BUSHWACKERS UNDER THE COMMAND OF "BLOODY BILL" ANDERSON IN HOWARD COUNTY, MISSOURI, 28 AUGUST 1864.

SGT. GEORGE H. BAUGH
ORDERLY SGT PORTER W. DAVIS
PVT JOH'S F. HATHAWAY
PVT ALFRED GOSNELL
PVT THOMAS MITCHELL
SGT ALVIN MOORE
PVT JAMES O'NEAL
CORP DAVID A. SHOUGH

Mass Grave

In 1841, prominent local merchant Jacob Wyan began proceedings to turn over the burial ground to the City of Boonville. The ground was accepted by the city, and served as the city cemetery for many years. As you stand facing this plaque, the original Methodist burial ground is the portion of the cemetery that is to the east, across the road. Additions were made going south to the top of the hill, the across the road turning north coming down the hill to this area. The newest additions are the two to the west divided by the road.

The Civil War brought turmoil and tension to this community originally established by Southerners and their slaves, but beginning in the 1830's large numbers of German immigrants were drawn to the area. Differences in the points of view of these groups resulted in a particularly turbulent atmosphere in Boonville and Cooper County that was to prevail throughout the Civil War. This came to a head in the summer of 1864 as Missouri Southern guerrillas fought in and around Boonville, at places like Rawlings Lane in Howard County.

Story continued on right panel.

*Learn more at **www.mocivilwar.org***

The plaque pictured at left has been placed in Sunset Hills Cemetery in remembrance of eight Union cavalry soldiers who died in action and are buried here.

In central Missouri in the summer of 1864, bands of Southern partisan cavalry roamed the country making life difficult for civilians and militiamen alike. In late July, 1864, William "Bloody Bill" Anderson led a raid out of Rocheport (located 10 miles to the east, north of the Missouri River). That raid went far north and east, nearly to Hannibal. Anderson may have been in Boone and Howard counties during August, 1864, but people generally assumed that all of the "bushwhacking" in this area was the work of Anderson and his band.
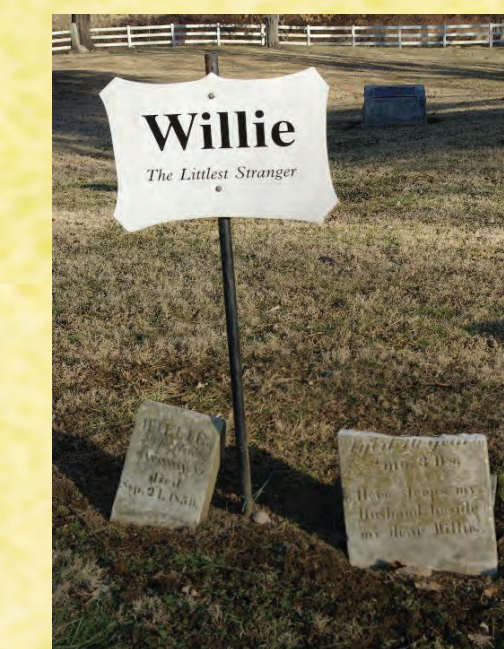
A detachment of the 4th Missouri State Militia Cavalry (Union), under the command of Captain Joseph Parke, was stationed in Boonville at this time. After hearing reports that Anderson and his men were in the vicinity, on August 28th Parke with 44 troopers of the 4th Cavalry crossed into Howard County. Heading east in the direction of Rocheport, Parke's command got caught in ambush at a place called Rawlings Lane, on the old Boonville-Rocheport Road about 3 miles northwest of Rocheport. These were Anderson's men for the most part, but a small group of riders led by Clifton Holtzclaw of Howard County was there as well.

Anderson had placed several horsemen in the lane to the Rawlings farm to serve as decoys, while the bulk of his men lay in wait over a hill, in a line parallel to the farm lane. Parke took the bait, following the decoys as they rode east through Rawlings Lane. Parke charged, and once all of of his men were in the lane the Southern cavalry charged up and over the hill. Parke's detachment was decimated in the attack.

Captain Parke left the scene before the action was finished, and on the road to Fayette he met Major Reeves Leonard and a detachment of Union cavalry moving south in the direction of the fight. Anderson drew his men off, but some continued the fight along the Boonville-Rocheport Road. Survivors from Parke's command fought a rear guard action while retreating to Boonville. Captain Parke was dismissed from the service for his actions at Rawlings Lane.

Men of the 4th Militia Cavalry who were killed in the action at Rawlings Lane were: Sergeants Alvin Moore and George Baugh; Corporal David A. Slough; and Privates John H. Hathaway, Alfred Gosnell, James O'Neal and Thomas Mitchell. The bodies were brought to Thespian Hall, placed in coffins and prepared for burial. The Reverend James Morton conducted a brief service and some men of Parke's command spoke in tribute to their comrades. The coffins were taken to the old cemetery and laid side by side in a common grave. Orderly Sergeant Porter Davis, who was found dead several days later near the scene of the battle, also was buried at Sunset Hills. The story is told that Davis and several of the others had been scalped.
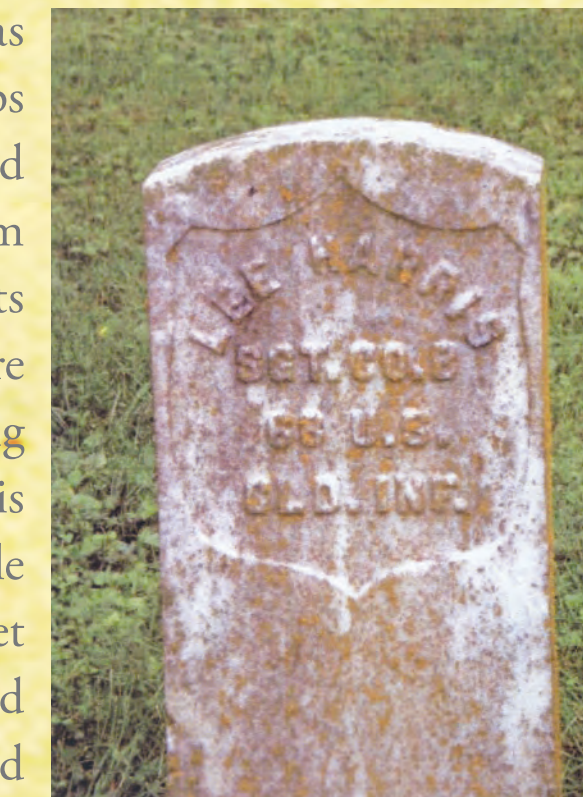

The story of Little Willie is one dear to the hearts of the people of Boonville. Be sure to see the graves of William Colt and his little son Willie. They died in Boonville in 1856 from a fever contracted as they traveled overland from Kansas. The town cared for them in their final days, and laid them to rest, and it cared for a devastated wife and sister who survived to complete the wagon trip home to New York.

Cemetery
(continued)

Earlier in the war, though, Boonville was a jumping off point for Union troops from Illinois and Iowa who were involved in campaigns in Missouri. Men from the 1st and 5th Iowa Infantry regiments were in Boonville in 1861, pausing here as they joined Union campaigns targeting Springfield. Companies of the 37th Illinois Infantry, for example, occupied Boonville during the winter of 1861-1862. Sunset Hills was the burial place of the Illinois and Iowa soldiers of these regiments who died of disease or other causes while stationed here, but the bodies of these men were exhumed and reburied in the Jefferson City National Cemetery after the war.

There were local Union troops who survived the war and remain at rest here. Sergeant Lee Harris enlisted on February 29, 1864, in the 68th Regiment of Infantry, United State Colored Troops (USCT). The 68th regiment served in the defense of Fort Pickering, Tennessee and the siege of Fort Blakely, Alabama, among other engagements. Sgt. Harris mustered out of the army in February, 1866 in Louisiana. Three other African American Civil War veterans are buried in Sunset Hills Cemetery, Charles Collins, James Shipley and Cyrus Wilson of the 62nd and 65th regiments, USCT. Companies "C" and "E" of the 62nd Regiment, to which Collins and Shipley belonged, fought in the last battle of the Civil War, on May 13, 1865 at Palmetto Ranch, Texas. Both men enlisted in Boonville in November, 1863.

Sources: "This Cruel, Unnatural War" by James F. Thomas, 1876 History of Cooper County by Levens and Drake, Boonville, an Illustrated History by Robert L. Dyer; William Lay and Bob Dyer, "Civil War Incidents in Howard County," *Boone's Lick Heritage*, Volume 6, No.1, March 1998.

BOONVILLE MISSOURI TOURISM COMMISSION

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