

# Old Auxvasse Cemetery

Missouri's

# CIVIL WAR

## Settlers' and Soldiers' Pathway



Crossing Auxvasse Creek and flanking Old Auxvasse Cemetery from the east is a rare unimproved portion of the Boone's Lick Trail. Part of what became known as the Old St. Charles Road, this was a major east-west thoroughfare during the Civil War for soldiers passing through north-central Missouri.

The Civil War Battle of Moore's Mill occurred on July 28, 1862, two miles due south of this place. Col. Odon Guitar with more than 200 cavalry from Jefferson City and Fulton tried to interdict an aggressive recruiting incursion by Confederate Col. Joseph C. Porter. Guitar just missed Porter's force of about 260 partisan cavalry camped at Brown's Spring 7 1/2 miles west of here. The next day, after Porter's men passed here along Auxvasse Creek, Guitar rendezvoused nearby with about 500 troops under Lt. Col. William F. Shaffer. Now with 733 total troops, Guitar dispatched Shaffer past this place with elements of Merrill's Horse, the 10th Missouri State Militia Cavalry and Rice's Red Rovers — about 464 men — across the creek and southward to engage the enemy.

Story continued on right panel.



Troop movements, July 28, 1862

Old Auxvasse Presbyterian is one of the oldest congregations west of the Mississippi. But this hill on which the congregation first met in 1828 in a log church earlier hosted travelers along the Trail, some of whom likely were buried here before the first noted interments.

There are many Southern as well as Union veterans buried in Old Auxvasse Cemetery, in addition to period leaders of regional significance. When 24-year-old John F. Cowan took over the pastorate, the community had recently interred 21-year-old William Henderson. Accidentally shot and killed at Brown's Spring, the volunteer under Col. Jefferson F. Jones was the only fatality during the standoff between Jones' Southern volunteers and Union militia resulting in the October 1861 non-invasion compromise producing the fabled "Kingdom of Callaway." Also buried here is Alexander Weant, who built an iron-banded oak cannon intended to intimidate the would-be Federal invaders.

One of the community's oldest families is the Maddoxes. Sherwood and America Margaret Maddox moved here from Kentucky in 1830. Their son Jacob became a prominent mule breeder and trader before the war and is perhaps the region's strongest claimant to the title "Father of the Missouri Mule Industry."

A woman of true grit, America Maddox reportedly bluffed a Federal patrol that had come to take her son Irvin from the cabin they shared. Armed with a broom and an axe, she closed up the house and brushed into the fireplace "burning

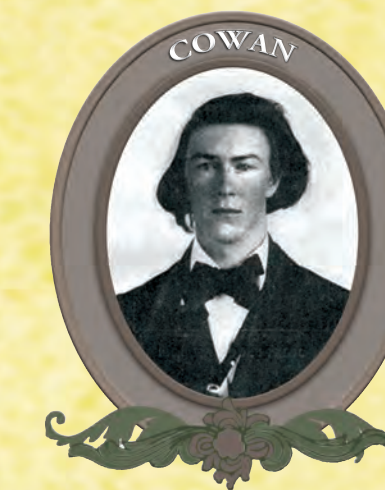
masses" intended to fire the house. Finally, discouraged, the Federals relented.

Louisa Morris Maddox, daughter-in-law of America Maddox, is likely the woman who nursed wounded in her home after the July 28, 1862, battle at Moore's Mill (now Calwood). A Confederate soldier's firsthand account said, "All night long, with a solitary tallow dip, suggestive of spectral shadows, did she pass and repass, giving water to the feverish and rendering what aid she could." He said that she and two young women claimed to be "Union," "but I think such kindness and gentleness could only come from sympathizers and that their statement was made from prudence."

An examination with a metal detector in 2005 of the footprint of the previous church, between the current building and the cemetery, turned up a Civil War period "bitten bullet." Bullets were often used by wounded men in the absence of medication to "bite back" the pain of battlefield surgeries — strongly suggesting that the old church may have been used as a makeshift field hospital.

Another notable burial here is Pvt. Elijah Peter Blankenship of Franklin County, Va. Having served in the brigade of Gen. Lewis Armistead during bloody Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, Private Blankenship surmounted the stone wall at Cemetery Ridge, miraculously surviving four or five wounds to relocate and raise a family. Until his death in 1913, this tough combat veteran was known to neighbors here as "Pleasant" Blankenship.

## Rev. John F. Cowan



Reverend Cowan became pastor of what was then simply Auxvasse Presbyterian Church in November 1861. Finding solace in studying the Bible as well as writing poetry, he shepherded his flock for 53 years, including most of the heartbreaking War Between the States. He was a professor for 23 years at Westminster College, which awarded him a doctorate in 1881. He died of a heart attack April 5, 1915, the morning after preaching his final Sunday service and taking a spring stroll that afternoon. The photo above shows Reverend Cowan in 1861, when he arrived at the Auxvasse Presbyterian Church.

## Settlers' and Soldiers' Pathway

(continued)

Meanwhile, Guitar brought his 9th Missouri State Militia Cavalry, a detachment of the 3rd Iowa Cavalry and a section of the 3rd Indiana artillery battery along the west bank and down the road toward Calwood. Lying in wait, Porter's dismounted cavalrymen ambushed elements of the 3rd Iowa. Soon Guitar's troops were heavily engaged. Hearing of the attack, Shaffer then reinforced Guitar's smaller force and the battle intensified.

To reach the Moore's Mill battlefield, retrace the route you took to get here, to the first intersection. Turn left, cross Interstate 70 and continue driving south to Highway Z. Continue south .7 mile after crossing Z.



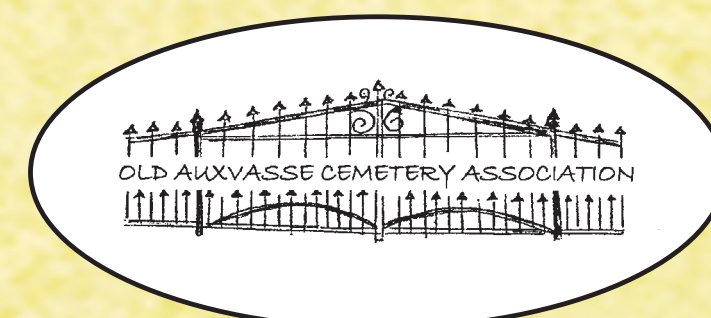
In 1864, during General Sterling Price's expedition into Missouri, guerrillas of Capt. William T. ("Bloody Bill") Anderson's band passed eastward here on the Boone's Lick Trail. Anderson's men rode into Montgomery County on October 14, 1864, burning railway depots at New Florence and High Hill, and nearly destroying the town of Danville.

Sources: Joseph A. Mudd, *With Porter in North Missouri*, National Publishing Co., Washington, D.C., 1909, pp.159-175. *History of Callaway County, Missouri*, National Historical Company, St. Louis, 1884. "Dr. John F. Cowan Dead," *Missouri Telegraph*, April 9, 1915. Missouri Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, n.d. (repr. Morningside House, Dayton, Ohio, 1988), "Mrs. America Martha Maddox" (Mary Harrison Clagett), pp. 125-127.

Image Credits: Gravestone photos courtesy Charles D. (Don) Ernst.

Learn more at [www.mocivilwar.org](http://www.mocivilwar.org)

Copyright © 2010 Missouri's Civil War Heritage Foundation, Inc.



Funded through a donation by the John Payne Harrison Family.