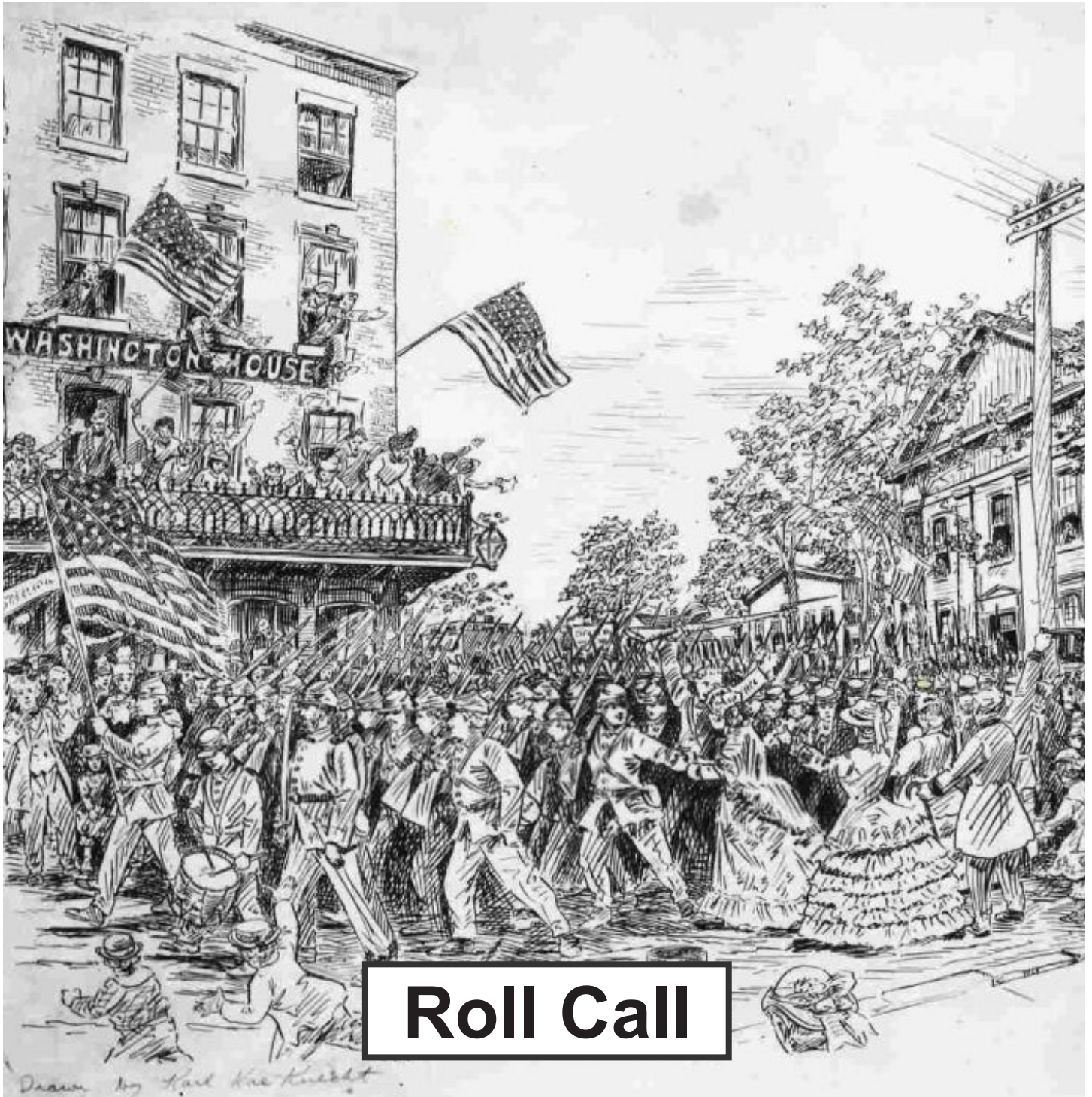


# The Civil War

in

## Evansville, Indiana



# The Civil War in Evansville

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## Roll Call: the Military Aspect of Evansville in the Civil War

Published in 2011 by the Vanderburgh County Historical Society

to commemorate the 150 Anniversary of the Civil War

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Front Cover: "Civil War" by Karl Kae Knecht

Center Two-Page Spread "Evansville 1856"

Page 15 -- "Civil War" by Karl Kae Knecht

Back Cover: "Transports Awaiting the Union Army"

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## Rallying to the Cause

With the firing on Fort Sumter April 12, 1861, the same war fever swept Evansville as was sweeping all across the country, North and South. When President Lincoln called for the first 75,000 volunteers, Evansville as well as all of Indiana answered the call. Evansville's location on the Ohio River gave it a special place in Indiana's Civil War logistics.

An article in the *Evansville Daily Journal* explains "Evansville is the natural rendezvous for troops raised in Southern Indiana, being on the river and accessible by railroad, and nearer the seat of war for the Western Division, than any other point." (7/9/61)

By April 19th, the *Evansville Daily Journal* reports that Evansville would soon have five or six military companies, one and perhaps two armed with Sharp's rifles. Most were armed with musket and minie ball, and an artillery company was also forming. Much of the attention of forming early units was as home guard units to protect the city, a city considered vulnerable because of its geographical location in the Southern part of the state. However, Evansville also recognized that it would be sending a company to join forces being sent out of state.

On April 20th a company of 200 organized at a meeting at Crescent Hall. They elected officers in-

cluding James Blythe, Captain, and James Shanklin, First Lieutenant.

German-Americans in Evansville were also forming a company, and George Wolfig, a sheriff elect was forming a company in Lamasco. On April 21st The Evansville Home Guards was meeting at Marble Hall to elect officers.

Also on the 20th of April Dr. N. S. Thompson, who had military experience from the Mexican War, asked Indianapolis if it would accept a company from Evansville. When Lew Wallace answered, "yes, come immediately," Thompson began enrolling volunteers, a company soon known as the Crescent City Guards. The Crescent City Guards filled its roll with 118 names in four hours. As was the custom in this stage of the Civil War, companies elected their officers. Thompson was elected captain on April 20th. The Guards went into camp at the Fair Grounds, awaiting their orders to move to Indianapolis. By April 27th, the *Journal* is reporting that the "Guards" have named their camp Camp Baker in honor of the mayor of the city of Evansville.

All across the city units were advertising in the paper for volunteers, meeting to form and elect officers, choosing uniforms and arms, and calling upon the citizens of the city to support their cause. An April 26th article in the *Journal* asks the community to "comfortably equip, clothe, and provision" the troops forming in the area. [The

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troops] "need flannel shirts, more blankets, comforts, and other materials.

An April 30th notice to Patriotic Ladies states that the money has been raised to supply the men at Camp Baker with a couple of flannel shirts apiece. "Everyone who is willing to aid the good cause, will please call at the Mayor's residence and take some of the shirts home to make. Let us all join together to make the boys comfortable." One patriotic lady remarked that "her sex rendered it impossible for her to join [one of the new units formed for home protection], but she would buy a rifle for someone to carry."

Regular journal entries attributed to "K" run in the *Daily Journal*. Camp Baker was a happy camp, well supplied and treated well by the citizens of the community, many of whom visited the camp. The Crescent City Guards numbered seventy five "rank and file, all in good spirits and a braver or better looking company of young men will be remarkably hard to find." K's May 1st journal entries notes an unspecified "tempest in a teapot" based upon idle talk. Apparently this "tempest" resulted in the need to once again affirm the company's faith in its officers.

Meanwhile, at noon the company "received a full car load of excellent red flannel shirts, one hundred and fifteen in number -- from the ladies of the city. At 1 o'clock, there was not a

man in the campground, except the Captain, but what had his shirt on, and even the Captain would have had his on, but for the reason he is the only man in the company who is fortunate enough to have soldier clothes."

At 2:00 that same day carriages filled with the ladies and gentlemen of the city appeared at the camp. The men paraded their new red flannel shirts, the ladies sang the "Star Spangled Banner," the children were frightened by the company formation's firing several blank cartridges, and Mayor Baker made a patriotic speech."

The news in the early days of May 1861 is about the arrival of Colonel Lew Wallace's 11th Regiment of Indiana Zouaves who "passed down Main Street in platoons of 16 men, and the regular, swaying motion of the vast mass, surmounting by the glittering bayonets, when viewed from a short distance, was splendid."

The "Maid of the Mist" made hourly trips taking visitors to the new camp, Camp Wallace. [{where was this camp?}](#)

The May 22nd *Journal* publishes the schedule of activities at Camp Wallace so that visitors may arrive to see "the prominent drills and parades of the day." One sour not about life in Camp Wallace was that "there has been some dissatisfaction ... at the bread which has been brought into camp by the bakers. Three companies refuse

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to eat the stuff and draw their rations in flour and bake their own bread." Despite the disgruntlement about bread, the general sentiment in the area was still enthusiastic for the war.

## 'Spiling' for a Fight

A July entry in the *Daily Journal* states, "A correspondent of the *Memphis Avalanche* ... [states] the Southern army is actually 'spiling' for a fight. ... [T]hey will go home utterly heartbroken if peace should be declared without their having a chance to make the detested Yankees 'smell Southern gunpowder and feel Southern steel.' ... No wonder that the people of the North have grown restless under the delay, when an insulting foe is ready to measure swords with the Grand Army." (7/10/61)

Many of the early units enlisted for the war were short term enlistments. Lincoln's initial call was for 75,000 volunteers for three months. Later calls were for three year regiments. The Evansville papers express Indiana's resentment at being short-changed by the first calls for three year regiments. "We see by the *Cincinnati Commercial* ... that Ohio has received the privilege of furnishing twenty one regiments for three years service. Indiana has been allowed but four. ... Why is it that Indiana, with more than half the population of Ohio, is permitted to furnish not quite one-fifth as many regiments?"

We have large numbers of men in this State who threw up good situations because they thought their country needed their services. They are now out of employment and are told they are not needed in the army." (5/27/61)

It did not take long before "employment" opportunities in the Union Army abounded. While units continued passing into Evansville (Captain Walker of Warrick County brought 60 mounted troops on July 8, 1861 to bivouac at the Salt Wells.), the paper announced on July 9th that the Adjutant General of Indiana announced the formation of a new regiment composed of the river counties of Vanderburgh, Warrick, Posey, Gibson, Spencer, and Crawford. This new regiment was to form at Camp Baker on the Fair Grounds. By the 9th of July the first company under Captain Rheinlander was already at the camp, training. By the 10th of July companies from Posey, Spencer, and Warrick counties had arrived at Camp Baker to join the companies from Evansville. [Is this to become the 25th?](#)

Meanwhile, Colonel Conrad Baker had a company of 180 men in his cavalry unit at the Salt Wells.

The July 30th *Daily Journal* lists additional Vanderburgh County companies serving the Union. One regiment was in the 14th under Captain Thompson. At Camp Knox two companies served under Captains Con-

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nett and Grill. Camp Vanderburgh held three companies under Captains Rheinlander, Hastings, and Sullivan.

Camp Gavitt had a cavalry company under Captain Browe. Camp Steuben housed one artillery company filling with 150 men. Vanderburgh County also furnished more than 50 men to the 11th Regiment of Colonel Wallace, including many three year volunteers.

The paper says Vanderburgh County had raised eight companies and provided men enough for one more company. In addition the city had five companies organized as Home Guards, including the Evansville Rifles. Evansville and Vanderburgh County had spent over \$25,000 for arms. Vanderburgh County also prided itself with providing, along with Posey County, the Regimental Band of the 15th Regiment, "the best band in the regiments of Indiana." (7/30/1861)

An August 17th announcement in the *Daily Journal* seeks recruits interested in the 19th Indiana to attend a meeting at the Washington House Hotel. It is not known what, if any success occurred. The 19th Indiana was destined to hard service in the Army of the Potomac fighting Robert E. Lee. The 19th Indiana suffered devastating losses at the Battle of Gettysburg.

## Camp Scott, Not Gavitt

A July 29th report from Camp Scott states that at a regular meeting of the of-

ficers of the cavalry regiment there, the Indiana 1st Cavalry Regiment, voted to name the camp Camp Gavitt after Major John Gavitt who declined the honor, suggesting instead Camp Scott after the US General in Chief. (*Daily Journal*)

This 1st Cavalry Regiment had been organized as a three year unit under the command of Colonel Conrad Baker on June 10, 1861.

On June 24th the Indiana 25th Regiment mustered at Evansville. On August 5th the First Battery Artillery mustered at Evansville. September 5th saw the organizing of the 42nd Indiana Regiment of three year volunteers. The *Journal* reports that the 42nd pitched their tents near the Marine Hospital. On September 7th, the Sixth Battery Artillery three year volunteers organized at Evansville.

Also on September 5th the gunboat *Conestoga*, with 50 new recruits, left Evansville, bound for Cairo, Illinois. (Indiana Civil War Centennial Commission) Although fifty recruits may seem like a success, the call published in the *Journal* was for 100 men. "Pay is \$18 per month. Navy rations, together with one hundred dollars bounty at the end of the war, with usual land grants." The *Journal* for September 9th does state that the *Conestoga* might have gotten fifty more recruits, but it had to leave early because of the rapidly fall-

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ing river levels. (8/22/1861; 9/3/1861)

True to predictions, Evansville became a natural staging area for regiments as they moved into their more permanent assignments. By June 17th the 12th Indiana Regiment had moved into Camp Wallace near Evansville. On November 13th the 42nd Indiana left Evansville for Henderson, Kentucky and duty at the front. On November 30th, the 43rd Indiana left Evansville for the Kentucky front, this after having received a regimental flag on the 28th, presented by the ladies of Terre Haute. On December 17th, the 58th Indiana departed Evansville for Kentucky. (Commission)

Probably the most interesting unit departing Evansville were the eight companies of 1st Indiana Cavalry under the command of Colonel Conrad Baker. This cavalry unit left Camp Scott on August 21, 1861 and traveled by rail to St. Louis to join Major General Fremont's command in Missouri. This is the same unit in which Major Gavitt had declined the honor of having the camp named after him. The 1st Indiana Cavalry unit was to see action in Missouri, most notably at the battle of Fredericktown, Missouri on October 25, 1861.

## All Gone

### Evansville Daily Journal

August 22, 1861

"The eight companies of Cavalry, Col Conrad Baker commanding ,

left for St. Louis yesterday morning., on four trains. Seventy-five cars were necessary to transport the men and horses. The troops were embarked without confusion, and in a comparatively short time. The friends and relatives of the boys were crowding around the cars, and many tearful faces were seen as friends, brothers, and husbands were taking leave of their families and homes. The majority of the men were in excellent spirits, and were glad to be off. The first train went at six o'clock and last about nine. By the time of the departure of the mail train, the Cavalry Regiment had left us 'for three years of war.' May they return speedily and safely."

A September 9th entry titled "Army Correspondence" continues the journal entries tracking the life of the 1st Indiana Cavalry. They arrived at their quarters at the St. Louis Fair Grounds, "a beautiful grove, admirably laid out, and well suited for a cavalry encampment," but they arrived tired, dirty, "almost without saddle or bridle ... without any camp equipage, no tents at all, and only about two hundred blankets for six hundred thirty or forty men. Hungry and tired, we partook of hard bread and boiled shoulder and then slept all around about as beat as we could."

Nothing much improved for them for the next several days,



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"... the powers that be were anxious to get us here but did not know what to do with us after our arrival."

The reason for the haste was the need to strengthen the Lincoln administration's efforts to install and maintain a government in Missouri friendly to the Union.

For the 1st Indiana Cavalry, a crucial engagement was the battle of Fredericktown, Missouri on October 25, 1861. A Union force of 3,000 men was sent to stop the advance of a 1,500 Confederate force of Missouri State Guards. As the battle appeared to be a Union victory, the 1st Indiana Cavalry attempted to pursue the Confederate Colonel Lowes's force.

An later account published in 1971 by R. C. Arnett, who lived at Fredericktown, tells the story.

... a west flank by the brave Major John Smith Gavitt who came near capturing the whole of Col. Lowe's regiment, killed him and about 20 confederates as they retreated to the woods, and just over the hill at old Grandpa Johnson' Casey's place, the Marble City Guard stopped in a thicket of brush on either side of the road, and as Major Gavitt at the head of his command, following up the retreat, came rushing in, the Confederates cross-fired and killed both Major Gavitt and Capt. Hine-man (Highman), both falling against

the same pannel of fence, and whose blood marked the spot on the fence for many years after the battle.

## The Reality of War Comes Home

On October 28, 1861, the *Evansville Dailey Journal* published Capt McLain's "sincere thanks to the many friends, who, since the death of his son [Charles McLain, also killed at Fredericktown], have called upon his family." The *Journal* on the 29th tells the stories of the funerals of Major John Gavitt and Private Charles McLain of Evansville and of Captain John K. Highman of Posey County. The following accounts of the funerals of these three men tell of a time when a soldier's death was new to Evansville.

### The Funeral of Major Gavitt and Private Charles McLain

Last Sunday was a memorable day in the history of the this city. The remains of two citizens who had fallen upon the battle field were upon that day followed to the grave by many thousands of their countrymen assembled in honor of the dead. The arrival of the remains of John S. Gavitt and Charles McLain from Missouri was announced in Saturday's *Journal* and the intelligence that they were to be interred on Sunday, spread far and wide by Saturday's trains and packets. It was expected

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that a large crowd would be present, but our anticipations were more than realized in the throngs which poured into the city on last Sunday morning. It was understood that a grand military display would be made on the occasion of the funeral, and this fact drew to the city thousands from the country. The funeral was advertised to take place at 2 P. M., but no public announcement was made as to where the procession would form, whence it would march, and when. Many of the military officers seemed to be as oblivious concerning these points as the spectators themselves; at an early hour, however, the people lined the streets, along which it was supposed the procession would pass. Anxious spectators filled the windows and balconies of the buildings, and every standing place along Main Street was occupied. While the people waited along the route, the funeral addresses were being delivered at the respective homes of the deceased. Rev. Messrs. White and Sterritt officiated at the residence of Mrs. Gavitt, and Rev. Mr. McCarer at Capt. John McLain's [father of Charles McLain] dwelling on First Street. The crowd at both places was very large, and only a portion of those addressed could hear the discourses. At 2:00 PM the body of Major Gavitt was taken from his res-

idence on Clark Street, escorted by the 2d regiment of the Indiana Legion with reversed arms, under the command of Lieut. Col Denby of the 42nd Regiment. [\(missing section\)](#) ... The soldiers and citizens hastily left the cemetery and only entered the city as night came on. There were many unavoidable blunders made Sunday by the officers in charge, arising from the fact that proper preparations had not been made in advance and partly because the streets of the city, where the procession was to pass, were in many instances blocked with carriages and horses. It would be difficult to estimate the number of persons who were out last Sunday as spectators and participants in the ceremonies of the day. We should think that the number was not less than 10,000. Others estimate it as high as thirteen thousand. Certain is it, that no such funeral cortege ever moved through the streets of a city in Indiana, and it is not probable that we shall ever "look upon the likes again" in Evansville. The friends of the Sabbath, who advocated the postponement of the funeral until yesterday, were right in their assertions that the day would be given up entirely to the obsequies. From morning until night, the whole population of the city with the exceptions of the few hundreds,

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who attended the morning services, turned out as for a holiday and it was scarcely remembered by any that it was the Sabbath day. It was proper that the funeral should take place on Sunday, and after it was so decided, we should have been pleased to have all the details of a military burial. The absence of minute guns marred the effect of the whole affair. The Artillery company were not ordered to fire the customary salute "on account of the day." This was "straining at a knat (sic) and swallowing a camel" sure enough. Otherwise, everything passed off in a highly creditable manner to all concerned, and the day will be long remembered by all who had the good fortune to witness the imposing pageant, which followed the remains of Major Gavitt and Charles McLain to their narrow houses. (10/29/61)

## **Burial of Capt. Highman -- New Harmony, Oct 28, 1861**

Editors Journal. -- Sunday was a most lovely, but very sad and sorrowful day here; as it witnessed the committal to earth of one of our best and bravest citizens. -- The mortal remains of Capt. [John] Highman, who fell on Monday last in the charge of the 1st Indiana Cavalry, at Fredericktown, Mo., received the last tribute of earthly respect. On Sunday the body was interred at

New Harmony with military honors. Captain Highman was a member of the Society of Odd Fellows, and as soon as intelligence was received of his death, the Society made arrangements for the burial. Accordingly John [Hugo \(?\)](#) was dispatched to accure the body, who, in company with Lieut. Owen, brought back the body of the deceased on Saturday at 11 o'clock. Mr. Highman was a man who was widely known throughout Posey county, and the announcement that he would be buried with military honors was the means of collecting an immense concourse of people. As early as eight o'clock in the morning crowds of people from every direction began to congregate at the residence of the deceased (which is 4 miles from New Harmony) and at 11 o'clock an immense multitude has assembled, completely lining the road. At 2 o'clock the procession started .... (10/29/61)

## **The War Progresses**

As the war progressed through 1861, notices in the paper reflect this new hard reality of war brought home by the death of three of the area's citizens. The November 12th *Journal* contains four articles on the same page. The first is a plea for articles wanted. "Blankets, Quilts of cheap material, about seven feet long by fifty inches wide;

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Wool or Cotton Flannel Bed-Gowns, Wrappers, Undershirts and Drawers, ... Feather Pillows and Cushions for wounded limbs, Knit Woolen Socks ...," all for shipment at reduced cost to various Sanitary Commission locations.

The second article states the Union Light Artillery of Evansville needs "about 27 able bodied men." They are offering "One hundred dollars Bounty -- one hundred and sixty acres of land and pay from \$15 a month and upward."

Another article on the same page tells of "ladies intent to appropriate a portion of the receipts from tonight's supper for the benefit of the sick soldiers on the wharf boat.

The fourth article indicates that the Crescent City Guards were now in Virginia. Captain Willard was in town and "wants ten men to fill up his company." The November 18th *Journal* expresses Captain Cochran's success at recruiting an artillery company. "It was thought our city and county had contributed so liberally to swell the ranks of the Union army that it would be impossible to organize another company" Captain Cochran had already recruited fifty men with the prospect that he would soon fill out the company. Part of his success is attributed to the fact that "the artillery service is preferable in many respects to any other..."

Local recruiting continued with a November 22nd report that Capt

Tom D. Smyth had recruited fifty men in a company for the 61st Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, 2d Irish Brigade. Units continued passing through Evansville. The 41st Regiment was expected on the 15th of November; the 44th Regiment arrived on November 28th.

On November 30th, quarters were being prepared for the 60th Regiment under Colonel Owen. They would be staying at a large building at Locust and Water Street owned by Mr. John Shanklin. By December 10th, the 60th had about 100 men in Evansville with another 200 out on furlough. Unfortunately for the 60th, they were not to remain long at the building owned by Mr. Shanklin. The January 6, 1862 edition of the *Daily Journal* says, "The 60th Regiment is preparing to vacate the barracks now occupied by them, and have pitched their tents on the river bank above Cherry street. They are provide with the Sibley tent, with sufficient warming apparatus, and the 'boys' will doubtless be as comfortable, and more healthy in their new quarters, than they have been in the barracks."

About 300 men were in Camp Vanderburgh filling up the ranks of the Second Guards Regiment, a German regiment under Col. Mansfield. Also the "Locust Street engine house had been temporarily fitted up as a hospital, and the sick soldiers of the 44th Regiment had been moved there.

On the home front "ladies of

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the various soldiers' relief societies sent ...166 pairs of socks to the 42nd. The ladies continued to make drawers, flannel shirts, gloves, mittens, and bandages, and they sent books and other articles for camp life.

## Young Bunnell

In stark contrast to the throngs who met the bodies of Major Gavitt, Captain Highman, and Private McLain, the December 6, 1861 reports of C. R. Scudder's unsuccessful attempt to bring home from West Virginia's Cheat Mountain "the remains of Young Bunnell, of White County, a youth of seventeen who went with one of the regiments of this State, and died of typhoid fever at Cheat Mountain. Mr. Scudder was unable to execute his mission, owing to the wretched condition of the roads and the difficulty of obtaining transportation. The road between Webster and Huttonville, sixty-two miles, is lined with the wreck of government wagons and dead horses. ... The snow is fifteen inches deep on Cheat Mountain." Thus, 1861 closed with the remains of Young Bunnell still in West Virginia, Evansville encamping regiments in preparation for movement in the spring, ladies making supplies for war and four more years of bloodshed ahead.



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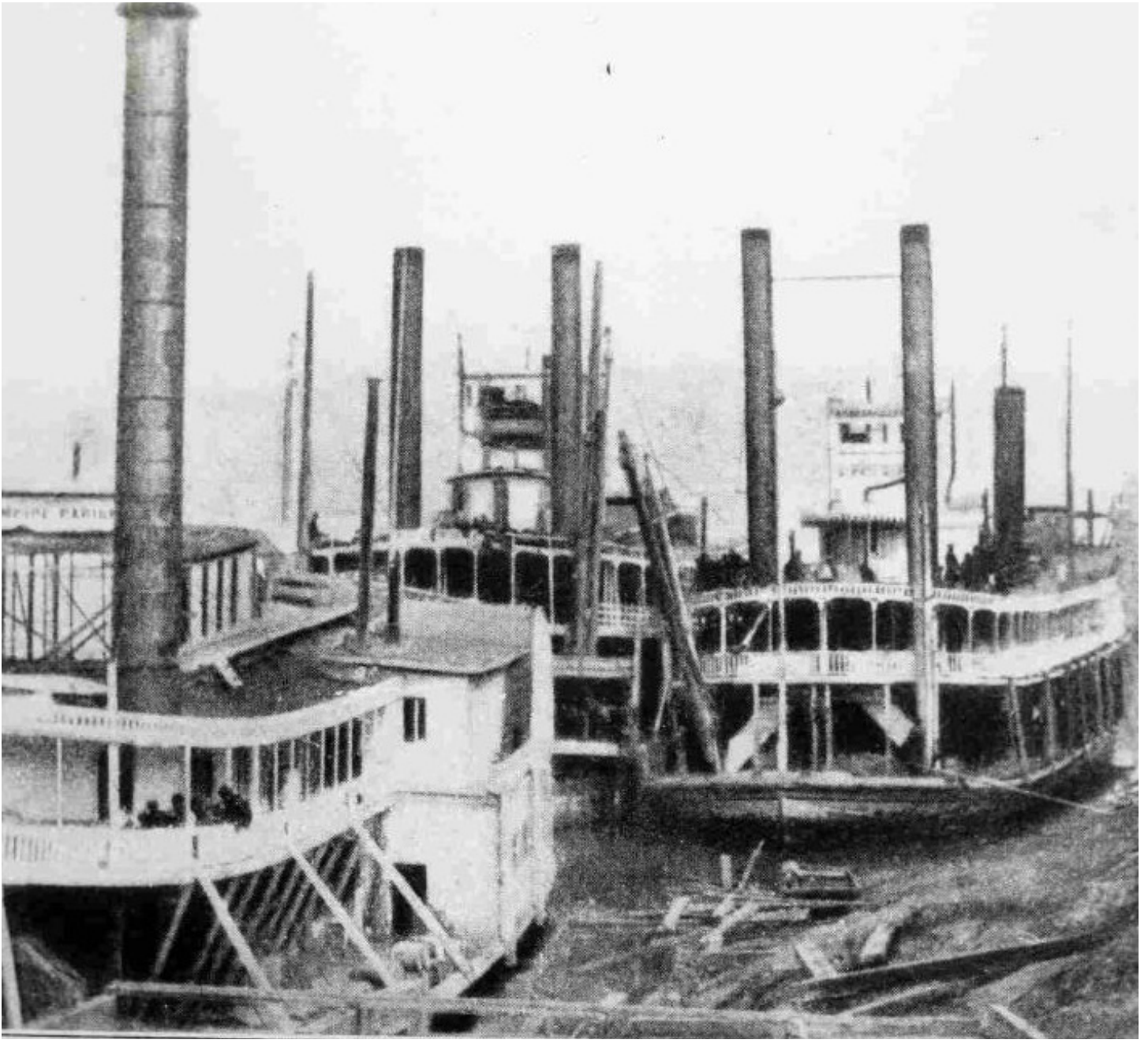
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Transports Awaiting the Union Army