

# Confederate Veteran.

November/December 2006



**William R. Clark**

*First Confederate Soldier Killed in the War*



PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY IN  
THE INTEREST OF CONFEDERATE  
ASSOCIATIONS AND KINDRED TOPICS

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The *Confederate Veteran* is published six times per year by the Sons of Confederate Veterans as a service to our members. Nonmembers may subscribe to the journal for \$26.00 per annum. Send all subscriptions to the *Confederate Veteran*, PO Box 59, Columbia, TN 38402-0059. The articles, photographs, or content of the *Confederate Veteran* may not be reproduced without the consent of the editor-in-chief. The opinions expressed by the authors of signed articles reflect the personal views of the writers and are not necessarily a statement of SCV policy. Services or products advertised do not carry SCV endorsement unless otherwise specified. The *Confederate Veteran* reserves the right to accept or reject content of advertisements.

Delivery problems and changes of address should be directed to General Headquarters since all mailing records are kept by the adjutant-in-chief.

Sons of Confederate  
Veterans  
PO Box 59  
Columbia, TN 38402-0059

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Volume 64, No. 6

S. A. Cunningham

November/December 2006

Refer all copy to:  
Editor-in-Chief  
9701 Fonville Road  
Wake Forest, NC 27587



Official Journal of the  
Sons of Confederate Veterans

*Though men deserve, they may not win, success;  
The brave will honor the brave, vanquished none the less.*

**General William Mahone ...15**



**Beauvoir  
is Coming Back .....16**

**William R. Clark.....20**



***The Angel of Marye's  
Heights .....43***

**Confederate Christmas  
Tree.....56**



**Major Arthur W. John  
*Real Son in Australia .....58***



## DEPARTMENTS

From the Editor .....	3	Books in Print .....	25
Commander-in-Chief .....	4	Hallowed Ground .....	26
Dispatches from the Front .....	6	Camp News .....	28-39
Lt. Commander-in-Chief.....	8	New Members .....	40-42
Forward the Colors .....	10	Carry Me Back .....	44
Chaplain's Comments .....	12	Notices .....	48
The Last Roll .....	14	The Drummer Boy .....	51
Confederate Images .....	15	Confederate Classifieds.....	54

ON THE COVER — William R. Clark, first Confederate soldier killed in the War Between the States. Photo by Maryland Civil War Trails, Historic Graphics, LLC.



# *The first Confederate soldier killed in the War Between the States*

# William R. Clark

by Robert E. Reyes

**W**ho was the first Confederate soldier killed in the War Between the States? Startling new evidence for the first time points to William R. Clark of Baltimore as the first Confederate enlisted man killed in this 145th Anniversary year of the War.

It has always been known that the first five Federal volunteers were killed in Baltimore in the riot of April 19, 1861. The following article explains how the very first and, until now, overlooked Confederate Regular Army volunteer was also killed on that fateful day.

On March 23, 1861, Louis Trezevant Wigfall withdrew from the US Senate after supporting the Texas Secession Ordinance. He did not return to his home state immediately to form his later famed Texas Brigade. He decided to stay in Washington, DC, and mastermind a plan to enlist and recruit new volunteers for the Confederate Army in nearby Baltimore, Maryland.

The City of Baltimore had always been a hotbed of Southern

and Northern factions. Southern patriots in Baltimore were known as the National Volunteers, while the Union patriots were known as the Minute Men. In the November 1860 Presidential election, Abraham Lincoln received fewer than 2,300 votes statewide in Baltimore and in Maryland.



*Louis T. Wigfall*

On February 22, 1861, President-elect Lincoln would pass through the city under the cover of darkness to avoid what later became known as the Baltimore Plot. Wigfall knew that Baltimore Mayor George W. Brown, Police Marshal George P. Kane, and others in the city government were sympathetic to the South. A Confederate Recruiting Station listed in the Baltimore Directory was set up openly on Market Place in March 1861. Captain William Dorsey Pender was summoned to Washington to meet with Wigfall on his recruiting assignment in Baltimore. Pender arrived March 24 in Baltimore. He wrote to his wife on March 26: "I am sending men south to be enlisted in the Southern Army. I merely inspect and ship them. I do nothing that the law could take hold of if they wished to trouble me, but Baltimore is strong for secession, and I am backed up by sympathy of the first men here...Do not fear for me whatever you may see in the papers, for rest assured that in the first place I shall be prudent and in the second I am well





*A period sketch of the Baltimore Massacre.*

backed. I do not want my official capacity to be known except by a few who are with us."

On April 3, Pender wrote "As to danger, I am not in the least, for not only are the best and larger number of people with us, but the police are all right. They have been at the boat each time I have sent off men. I sent sixty one in less than a week. Sixty four had been sent a few days before I arrived."

Between March 6 and April 11, Maryland Confederate Regulars, as they became known, accepted bounties, signed three-year enlistment papers, and were shipped from the port of Baltimore to Charleston, South Carolina. Most of the Maryland Regulars were kept together as a unit and were eventually placed under the command of Colonel John Lucas, Company C, 15th South Carolina Heavy Artillery.

Company C was constantly rotated in and out of batteries around Charleston harbor. They relieved the 1st SC Artillery in August a month after the famous charge of the 54th Massachusetts on July 18, 1863. Company C was posted at Battery Wagner from August 20-26, 1863, to fend off a battering from Federal Army siege lines and ironclads from their continued assault.

The Maryland Regulars stayed together as a unit until 1864, at which time they were conscripted into service and placed under house arrest after their 3-year enlistments ran out. George Kane went to Charleston to try to have them transferred to the Maryland Line, which Colonel Bradley T. Johnson was at that time trying to replenish. Kane estimated 500-600 men had been shipped from Baltimore to Charleston. On April 29, Kane

succeeded in having 42 men transferred from Company C to the Maryland Line. Only seven Maryland men of Company C were left when Generals Hardee and Joseph Johnston surrendered the Army of Tennessee at the end of the war.

Suddenly on April 11, 1861, Pender was ordered to close the recruiting station in Baltimore and to report back to Montgomery, Alabama, immediately for reassignment. On a steamer out of Washington, DC, and down the Potomac, he learned of the planned next morning's attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. After the attack on Fort Sumter, Charleston harbor was blockaded by the Federal Navy. Sea transportation from Baltimore to Charleston for Confederate enlistees previously arranged by Pender was no longer an option.



As with other recent Baltimore recruits, Volunteer William Clark was now waiting for transportation arrangements to Charleston. On April 19, 1861, the Anaconda Plan proposed by the chief Union commander, the aging Lt. General Winfield Scott, was announced in the *Washington Evening Star* and enacted as the first Federal Act of War.

The same day, April 19, a train full of Massachusetts Volunteers arrived in Baltimore at the President Street Station. In those days, because of safety and fire hazards, draught horses were used to pull the railroad cars across cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia. Although this arrangement seemed odd in other large cities like Chicago, where there was no horse-towed railroad arrangement, pedestrians were constantly run over on the windy city streets by trains. Seven towed railroad cars of the Massachusetts Volunteers passed and made it across the city. Passage of the eighth car and remaining cars was blocked by obstructions on the tracks placed by pro-Southerners. A number of negroes employed as sailors upon schooners hailing from the South came ashore from their vessels and rendered every assistance in their power, hauling up the immense anchors to the center of the railroad track, with cheers for the "Souf" and "Massa Jeff Davis." By their assistance, some eight of the anchors were piled upon the track. The eighth railroad car returned to President Street Station. There the 6th Massachusetts Volunteers in the remaining cars were ordered to detrain, and march to the B&O's



William Dorsey Pender

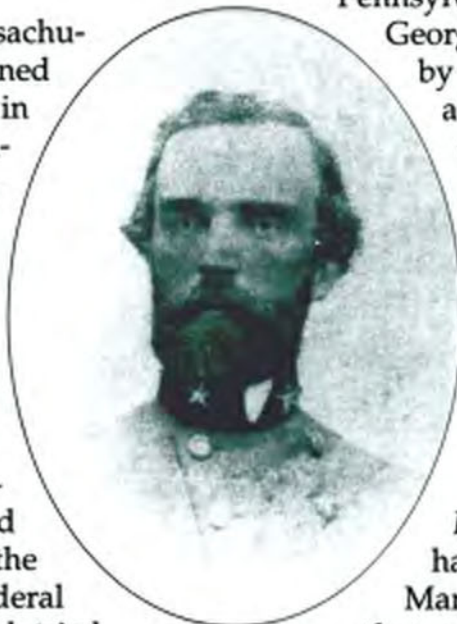
Camden Station, about 1½ miles away. The soldiers were met outside the train cars by a large crowd with shouts for Jefferson Davis and the South. As the soldiers' column made their way up President Street, the crowd closed in and a Secessionist flag — the Palmetto flag of South Carolina — was paraded in their front by a group of Southern patriots. The soldiers were hooted, jeered, and hissed at as black republicans.

As the Massachusetts soldiers turned onto Pratt Street in the Baltimore Inner Harbor area, they were surrounded and began to be attacked by flying missiles of all sorts. Francis Xavier Ward of the 53rd Regiment Maryland Guard charged the center of the Federal column first and tried to grab the 6th Mas-

sachusetts state color flag. He was shot immediately through the hip. Baltimorean James Ryder Randall, a Georgetown Law School colleague of Ward's, teaching at the time in Point Coupee, Louisiana, would read about the accounts of Ward's mortal wounding in the Delta newspaper of New Orleans. He immediately penned the poem, *My Maryland*. The poem was later set to the music of *O Tannenbaum* by the same Baltimore sisters who sewed the first Be-auregard Pattern Battle Flags: Hetty and Jenny Cary. The song became the third most popular Southern anthem after *Dixie's Land* and the *Bonnie Blue Flag*. In 1939, *Maryland My Maryland* became the official state song of the State of Maryland.

Between Gay and Light Streets in the Baltimore Inner Harbor, four 6th Massachusetts Soldiers were killed — Luther Ladd, Addison Whitney, Charles Taylor, and Sumner Needham. A fifth Union soldier, from the Pennsylvania Volunteers, George Leisering, died by a knife wound in a second attack later that day at the President Street Station.

George Wilson Booth, an eyewitness to the April 19, 1861, riot and later the author of *A Maryland Boy in Lee's Army* had just gotten off Maryland Guard duty that morning. He was approaching Pratt Street



John J. Lucas



from Gay Street as the column of 6th Massachusetts troops was passing and reports "the events had drawn to Pratt Street a large number of people who lined the sidewalks and followed the movement of the troops. I was standing at the corner of Commerce Street and the troops were at that moment passing that point when a soldier struck by a stone fell almost at my feet, and as he fell dropped his musket which was immediately seized by a Port Customs Officer [Edward Beatty] who raised it to his shoulder and fired the first shot into the column. As he fired he turned to the crowd and asked if anyone had a cartridge. I gave him one or two and showed him how to reload, then betook myself to the protection of the first doorway thus escaping the bullets that were sweeping the street. The rear files faced about and delivered a volley in to the crowd, who responded with pistol shots, stones, clubs, and other missiles. A perfect fusillade for the next few blocks was kept up between the troops and the outraged mob."

*The Patriot & Union* newspaper, Harrisburg, PA, Monday, April 22, 1861, listed "At the corner of South and Pratt streets a man fired a pistol in to the ranks of the military, when those in the rear ranks immediately wheeled and fired upon their assailants and several were wounded." Pratt and South streets' corner is where William R. Clark was found dead.

The *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* — Saturday, April 20, 1861, listed "William Clark — age 20 years was instantly killed at the corner of

Pratt and South Streets by a Minnie ball which entered on the right side of the eye and passing through the head came out the other side. He had recently enlisted in the Southern Confederate Army and expected to have left in a few days. His body was removed to the Middle District (Central) Police Station (Holiday & Saratoga Streets). After the inquest, he was taken to his late boarding house at the corner of Frederick & Baltimore Streets."

*The South* newspaper — Monday evening, April 22, 1861 listed "William R. Clark — driver of No. 1 truck Fire Department Killed."

A query on William R. Clark as being officially in the Confederate States Army Regular, killed, was taken to the US Army Center of Military History at Fort McNair in Washington, DC.

The same query was taken to the Museum of the Confederacy Library in Richmond, VA.

Both institutions came to the same conclusion that they will not deny the facts that he was in the Confederate States of America Regular Army. William R. Clark had been recruited in Baltimore by Artillery Captain William Dorsey Pender, CSA, and that he had signed enlistment papers and accepted a bounty and was awaiting transportation. He was signed, sealed, and waiting to be delivered. The Baltimore Riot of April 19 led to the occupation of the city by Ben "the Beast" Butler on May 13. Dur-

ing the occupation records were seized and arrests were made of anyone pro-Confederate. It was not until after Baltimore was occupied in May that other Marylanders like George Wilson Booth slipped across the Potomac to join the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate States Provisional Army.

William R. Clark was the very first soldier to die as a Maryland Volunteer recruited in the Confederate Regular Army. William Clark may also be the last Confederate soldier to be remembered 145 years later.

Richard P. Weinert, Jr., a US Army historian, National Archives researcher, and author of *The Confederate Regular Army* (1991) noted "that the Maryland Regulars was probably as good as that of any unit in the Confederate Army."

Other suggested readings are *History of Baltimore City and County* by J. Thomas Scharf (1881); *A Maryland Boy in Lee's Army: Personal Reminiscences of a Maryland Soldier in the War between the States, 1861-1865* by George Wilson Booth (1898, re-published 2000); *Maryland's Blue & Gray: A Border State's Union and Confederate Junior Officer Corps* by Kevin Conley Ruffner (1997); *General William Dorsey Pender: A Biography* by Edward G. Longacre (2001) and *Louis T. Wigfall: Southern Fire-eater* by Alvy L. King (1970). ☒



George Wilson Booth