



A Walk Through History

The Westerville Public Library
Local History Resource Center Newsletter
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The Civil War

In the 1860s the Civil War was waged between the North and South. Brothers fought brothers, classmates fought classmates. Over 3 million Americans fought in over 10,000 battles. Farm fields became battlefields; homes became hospitals. More than 620,000 soldiers died of disease and wounds.

H. Warren Phelps, a recruiting sergeant from Blendon Township, tells of the adventures of a group of 27 men from our community who joined the 95th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in August 1862. On Monday, August 11th the town gathered at the corner of State and College to watch and cheer as the two wagons carrying the recruits started down the plank road to Columbus. Some recruits were Otterbein students who left their studies. Others were farmers who left their fields. Of these 27 men, six were killed in battle, two died of disease, six were wounded and four were prisoners of war.



Civil War Soldier Unknown

Eleven days after joining the Union Army in Columbus, the 95th regiment with 1,015 men fought a battle and lost two local men – A. W. Stonestreet, an Otterbein student, and August Riddell, a farm boy.

A. W. Stonestreet, described as “big-hearted, noble-faced, clean, ambitious student and fearless soldier,” was killed with the last shot in that first battle.

Phelps tells of soldiers who suffered as they marched from battle to battle. He estimates that this group marched 12,000 miles through eight states. He writes of the effects of one march on James Studson. “He endured the rain, the snow, which fell sixteen inches in depth ... camping that night with wet frozen clothing on; then for 12 days marching in snow, slush and deep mud, wading the Gascomade and other rivers.” He continues, “We arrived at St. Louis on November 15, having marched 281 miles in 14 days. Did we have tents to sleep under? No, not for four months while marching and fighting through Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas.”

After the war, George Funkhouser, one of the Otterbein recruits stated “Otterbein Boys in Blue, dead, of them who can adequately speak? They deserve more than the fragrant flowers strewn upon their graves every Memorial Day, more than bronzed tablets in college and memorial halls, more than marble shafts high enough to pierce the clouds, more than the undying love of the living, more— ‘That from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion: that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.’”

Baseball and the Civil War



Baseball has become a major part of the American culture. It was played only in large communities before the Civil War. It achieved widespread popularity after the Civil War. The rise in baseball's popularity in part was because of the mass concentration of young men in army camps and prisoner of war camps where baseball was played. Baseball was converted from a "gentleman's game" into a recreational sport which could be enjoyed by people from all backgrounds. Officers and enlisted men played baseball alongside each other. Positions on teams were obtained based on athletic talent. Both Union and Confederate officers endorsed baseball as a much needed morale builder and creator of team spirit. Many of the soldiers wrote home about the baseball games which were more pleasant to write about than their experiences on the battlefields.

Private Alpheris B Parker of the 10th Massachusetts wrote:

The parade ground has been a busy place for a week or so past, ball-playing having become a mania in camp. Officers and men forget, for a time, the differences in rank and indulge in the invigorating sport with a schoolboy's ardor.

Baseball Rules

Baseball played during the war was very different from the game we watch today. The batter then was called a "striker." The pitcher threw all balls underhand. The players could not lead off the bag. Base stealing was not allowed and there were no foul lines. Outfielders or "scouts" did not use gloves and the baseball was softer. Team members were identified by badges or ribbon worn on their shirt or jacket. The game was called "townball."



Abraham Bowman Kohr's Diary

At the age of 20, Abraham Bowman Kohr enlisted in the Union Army. He spent nearly three years in the service of his country, leaving the service March 25, 1865 when he was wounded in the foot during a battle. During those years he faithfully kept a journal of his experiences.

Abraham Kohr received a bonus of \$25 after training and \$2 for enlisting. During the next three years when he was paid he would send money back to his father. He always noted when he received mail from friends and family members.

Much of Kohr's time was spent marching from place to place with his fellow soldiers. On July 20, 1864 Kohr writes, "We moved out at noon, forded the river at Snickers Ferry and marched about 2 miles out the pike towards Winchester. It rained a shower. We lay in the woods until 10 pm. Then we went back and recrossed the river and marched back towards Washington. We marched all night."



Meals for the soldiers when they were on the move could be sparse. Kohr described one dinner as consisting of coffee, crackers, and dewberries. At times his company was told to prepare rations for the next five days because they might be engaged in battle and not be able to find food. He talks about hunting, stealing chickens, and finding food at homes that had been abandoned by families fleeing the pending battles.

Staying healthy was a struggle for Abraham Kohr. He writes, "Dec 6th. Saturday. The snow was about 2 inches deep in the morning. Very hard snowstorm in the morning. Cold and blustery all day. I got a sore neck and throat. Still excused by the physician." Drinking poor quality water and being in close quarters with other soldiers who became ill was a real danger for the troops. Kohr writes of many soldiers becoming ill and dying of disease. In one stretch of time he lost over 20 pounds while ill.

When writing about skirmishes he shares "the men had to keep their heads low." Movement during the battles was slow going. He says, "Our line was advanced some 50 or 75 yds. There was a regular engagement in the forefront of the day." As his company loses soldiers he records their deaths and wounds in his diary, until finally it is own wound he is recording.

After the war Abraham Kohr attended Otterbein College. Because of his wound he was not able to farm, but instead became an educator and businessman. He died in 1896 at the age of 54 and is buried in Otterbein Cemetery.

A copy of his diary is in the Local History Center at the Westerville Public Library.

The Homefront

Eunice Maria Lewis Brown shared her memories of the war. “In 1861 another war came on. Nearly all of my relatives, except my aged father who was 70 years old, were in it; three brothers Harry, Kingsley and Thomas.” Eunice lost two of these brothers in the war.

Eunice’s husband marched off to war also. The children and Eunice had to do his work. Daughter Sarah, 12 years old, chopped all the fire wood for the stove. The children held down the sheep while Eunice cut off their fluffy wool. By 1865 food and resources were scarce, so the family dried as many apples as they could to take to the store in exchange for potatoes, pork and flour. When Eunice’s husband came home he was very weak and could not shave himself, hold a cup of water or even walk alone. Her responsibilities increased as she cared for him and ran their farm.



Sarah Goldsmith and children

The Goldsmiths were another family that suffered during the war. Sarah Goldsmith’s husband John enlisted and left her at home with a young daughter and baby boy. She struggled to keep the farm running that they had purchased together. Upon his death from disease while serving in the army she did not have the money to pay the taxes on her farm and lost their home. She had to move in with her parents and raise her two children in their home.

The Civil War was a time of hardship for the soldiers and also for the families they left behind.

The Schrocks

Schrock brothers Henry T. and William H and their cousin George W. all fought in the Civil War. Henry and William Schrock were captured after a “retreating fight for two nights and two days, 1864, with rain, mud and hot weather.” Taken as prisoners to Andersonville, they were “after 8 months of starvation life” exchanged and returned to their regiment to fight again. The harsh prison treatment took a toll on their health when they returned to Westerville and their family.

The Schrock brothers’ cousin George was wounded in the closing hours of the Civil War and died 17 days later in a New Orleans hospital. H. W. Phelps writes, “The fourteen days siege at Spanish Fort off Mobile Bay, closing on the night of the 8th of April 1865, was another terrible place to be in. It was there that the loyal and true soldier George W. Schrock was mortally wounded while on advance picket duty after a service of 32 months. As he was carried back through the trenches, he talked with his comrades urging them to fight on to victory.” That night the Confederate forces abandoned the fort and the next day General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant ending the conflict. George W. Schrock was buried in New Orleans.

History Exhumed – Saturday, October 28th

Westerville will travel back in time to the last week of the Civil War on Saturday, October 28th. Cannons will roar, soldiers will march, and the Hanby House will be draped as a house of mourning. The history of April 1865 will come alive through presentations on the Lincoln assassination and Civil War medicine, and demonstrations of cooking over an open camp fire. Special activities for students will include a Civil War storytime presented by the Westerville Public Library and games and activities of the era including candle-dipping directed by Westerville Parks and Recreation Department. The events will take place in Alum Creek Park and the Hanby House on Main Street. At 4:30 the soldiers will march to the Otterbein Cemetery for a program honoring two Civil War veterans – Levi Williams and Reason T. Myers. Reason T. Myers, a young soldier from Westerville, died of disease in April 1865, just as the war was ending.

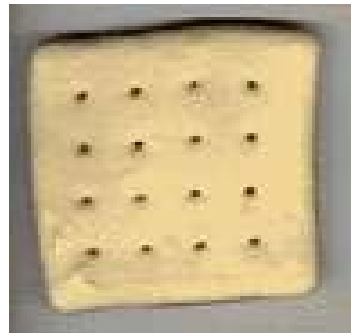
For more information on the day's events and a calendar of events contact Beth Weinhardt at 882-7277 ext. 160 or bweinhar@westervillelibrary.org.

Homemade Hardtack

Adult supervision is recommended

What you need:

Oven
2 cups flour
Mixing bowl
½ cup water
Wooden spoon
Rolling pin
Knife
Cookie sheet
Oven mitts



Preheat oven to 250 F. Place flour in the bowl. Add water and stir with a wooden spoon until ingredients are well mixed. Knead with your hands for 30 seconds. Roll out the dough to ¼ inch thickness and cut into 3-inch squares. With the skewer, make eight holes in each square. Place on a cookie sheet and bake 20-25 minutes. Remove from oven using oven mitts and let cool. This recipe makes 18 crackers.



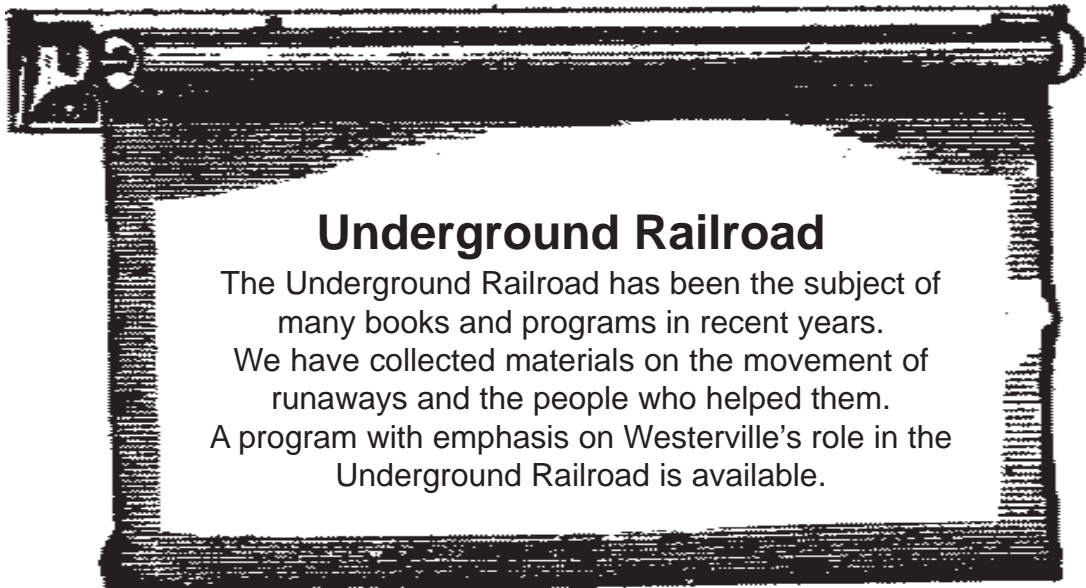
This recipe is in the book *The Civil War for kids: a history with 21 activities* by Janis Herbert. The Westerville Public Library has a copy of this book which can be checked out.



Fall Walking Tours available.



Students will make a loop through Uptown stopping to hear stories about the buildings and people who worked and lived here.



Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad has been the subject of many books and programs in recent years. We have collected materials on the movement of runaways and the people who helped them. A program with emphasis on Westerville's role in the Underground Railroad is available.



Schedule a local history program for your classroom

We will share the early history of Westerville with stories of the first settlers and Native Americans in the area. Your students will hear about the milestones of transportation in our community and see old photographs from our collection.



Any of the above programs can be scheduled by contacting Beth Weinhardt, coordinator of local history, at the Westerville Public Library at 882-7277 ext. 160 or by e-mail at bweinhar@westervillelibrary.org.