

28th Ohio Volunteer Infantry
Delivered at Spring Grove Cemetery,
Cincinnati, Ohio, June 15, 2002.

By David L. Mowery
Copyright ©2002 David Mowery & Cincinnati Civil War Round Table

On April 15, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to fight for the Union. Within months, hundreds of volunteer regiments formed throughout the United States as young men dutifully became soldiers in the defense of their cause. These men often joined a regiment as a part of a communal movement; sometimes the male population of a whole household, town, or ethnic community would enlist in the same unit. In Cincinnati, this sense of community was very strong among the men of German descent. In April 1861, the 1st German Regiment formed under the guidance of the Turner Society of Cincinnati. Except for its colonel, Robert L. McCook, the regiment was composed entirely of men and officers of German or Dutch ancestry. The 1st German Regiment was later designated the 9th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a unit which would serve with great distinction in the western theater of the war. (1)

Because of the overwhelming response from the German community to provide men for the preservation of the Union, the formation of a subsequent all-German unit was announced on May 12, 1861. Initially named the 2nd German Regiment, this next group of volunteers was recruited from the German meeting halls located throughout the city of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. A scattering of recruits came from other parts of Ohio, but the vast majority of the soldiers of the 2nd German Regiment were from Hamilton County. On June 10th, the regiment was formally organized as the 28th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Augustus Moor, an owner of a Cincinnati beer garden and a veteran of the Second Seminole War and the Mexican War, was elected its colonel. (2)

On July 6, 1861, the men of the 28th Ohio Infantry were mustered into 3 years service. They trained at Camp Dennison, Ohio, until called to active duty on July 27th when orders were received for them to depart for western Virginia. But the soldiers were not the only persons heading for the front. An article in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* related the following story:

Col. Moor of the Second German Regiment (28th O.V.I.), thought it would be good for the men to have clean shirts once in a while, so accordingly when he left Cincinnati, he took with him ten stalwart Teutonic maidens – one for each company – whom he commissioned as laundresses. When the regiment arrived in Western Virginia, General Rosecrans objected to the innovation in army practice, and ordered the return of the patriotic females. They started home as soon as possible, and arrived [in Cincinnati] ... in charge of the chaplain of the regiment. (3)

Moor's Ohioans arrived opposite Point Pleasant, (West) Virginia, on July 31, 1861. As they crossed the Ohio River to reach the (West) Virginia shore the following day, 8 soldiers accidentally drowned. Perhaps it was an ill omen of what was to come for the men

of the 28th Ohio, since most of the lives lost throughout the regiment's service would occur on western Virginia soil. (4)

The regiment's first assignment was to lift the siege upon the Union-held town of Spencer Court House, (West) Virginia. On August 14, 1861, the Ohioans successfully dispersed the Confederate forces and relieved the garrison, losing one man wounded. The 28th Ohio continued their march to Buckhannon, where they joined with the army under Brigadier-General William S. Rosecrans. Fittingly, the 28th was assigned to the brigade under Colonel Robert L. McCook, the Cincinnati who had been elected commander of the 1st German Regiment. (5)

Rosecrans planned to attack a Confederate force camped near Carnifex Ferry, a strategic crossing on the Gauley River. On September 10th, Rosecrans's force assaulted the Rebel works above Carnifex Ferry. Colonel August Moor's 28th Ohio suffered its first battle casualties as it went into action behind Schneider's battery near the center of the Union line. At 5pm, Rosecrans personally ordered Colonel August Moor to lead his regiment toward the Confederate right flank. Accompanying them were detachments of the 13th Ohio and 23rd Ohio infantry, who were ordered to take position on the extreme left of the Federal line. After a difficult trek over steep, rocky ground, McCook's brigade reached their destination after nightfall. Due to the men's exhaustion and the pitch darkness of the night, the 28th Ohio was ordered to settle in for the evening in front of the enemy works. As Moor's men fell back to an unexposed position, they suddenly received rifle fire from their front left flank, killing and wounding several in their ranks. The 28th responded instantly with a volley that lit up the dense thicket. The Germans kept up a constant fire for several minutes until the enemy fire was silenced. To his surprise and disgust, Moor discovered that their targets had not been Confederates, but instead had been soldiers of the 13th and 23rd Ohio regiments. Moor reported that the friendly fire had struck down many of the 2 killed and 29 wounded that his 28th had suffered in their first battle of the war. To add to the debacle, Colonel Moor and his second-in-command, Lieutenant-Colonel Gottfried Becker, a veteran of the German Revolution of 1848, had fallen off a rock ledge and had injured themselves so badly that command of the regiment fell upon a captain. In its first two months of service, the 28th Ohio had lost more men to accidents than it had lost to the enemy. (6)

The regiment continued its duty in the New River valley of (West) Virginia. They spent a month at Camp Anderson, then set up winter quarters at Gauley Bridge, located at the forks of the Kanawha River. During the next five months, Col. August Moor thoroughly instructed and drilled his men in the art of war. (7)

On May 2, 1862, the 28th Ohio marched to Fayetteville, (West) Virginia, where the unit was formed into the 2nd brigade of Brigadier-General Jacob D. Cox's 9th Kanawha Division. Colonel Augustus Moor was assigned to command the brigade, and, thus, Lieutenant-Colonel Becker became the acting commander of the 28th Ohio Infantry for the rest of the war. During Cox's expedition against the Tennessee & Virginia Railroad, the regiment figured prominently in the Battle of Princeton, (West) Virginia. An unsuccessful flank attack against the Confederate right cost the 28th Ohio 5 men killed, 10

wounded, and 12 captured or missing. However, the Cincinnati Germans performed admirably in the face of heavy enemy fire. General Cox later reported, "The conduct of my command has been everything I could desire." (8)

Returning to Flat Top Mountain, the 28th Ohio spent the summer exposed to guerrilla warfare in the pro-Southern valley of the Blue Stone River. During their service in the mountainous backcountry of West Virginia, the Ohioans often fought against bushwhackers and irregulars (including the famous McCoy's of the Hatfield & McCoy feud). Before their terms of enlistment were complete, the men of the 28th Ohio would be known for their skill in the art of guerrilla tactics. (9)

On August 25, 1862, Moor's men were ordered to Washington, D.C., as part of Major-General George McClellan's Army of the Potomac. During the Sept. 14th Battle of South Mountain, Maryland, the 28th Ohio lost 3 killed and 12 wounded while pinned down in J. Mertz's cornfield at Fox's Gap. In the ensuing Battle of Antietam, the regiment suffered 22 casualties when it became the first regiment of the IX Corps to ford Antietam Creek above the infamous Burnside's Bridge. (10)

On October 14th, the 28th Ohio was sent back to (West) Virginia. For the next 12 months, the Ohioans put their guerrilla tactics to good use, conducting frequent foraging and peace-keeping expeditions into the central and northern regions of the state. The men also constructed a fort at Beverly, West Virginia, to protect against Rebel raiders. Hard marches over difficult Appalachian terrain, frequent skirmishes with Confederate home guard, and weeks of boredom in camp became the standard of life for the Germans. Not until November of 1863 did the men of the 28th return to heavy combat. As part of Brigadier-General William Averell's expedition into eastern West Virginia, Lieutenant-Colonel Gottfried Becker skillfully led the 28th Ohio in the crucial Battle of Droop Mountain on November 6, 1863. The soldiers of the 28th displayed great gallantry under fire at the "Bloody Angle," where they helped to roll up the Confederate left flank and forced the enemy to flee from the field. In this battle, the Ohioans lost 3 killed and 28 wounded, the second largest loss in Averell's army. Colonel Moor's brigade returned to Beverly, West Virginia, where the 28th Ohio spent the winter of 1863-64. (11)

After returning from furlough, on April 25, 1864, the 28th Ohio Infantry was formed into Colonel Moor's brigade of Major-General Franz Sigel's Army of the Shenandoah. Five days later, Sigel marched his army up the Shenandoah Valley from Martinsburg, West Virginia. Brigadier-General Jeremiah Sullivan, the division commander, ordered the 28th Ohio to guard the wagon trains positioned near Strasburg, Virginia. On May 15th, as the Battle of New Market raged to the south, Confederate cavalry attacked 5 companies of the 28th Ohio at Strasburg. After a vicious fight, the 28th successfully drove off the Rebels, but not before losing 2 men killed and 10 captured. Meanwhile, the other 5 companies of the regiment aided in the army's retreat from the New Market battlefield. (12)

Following the disaster at New Market, Major-General David Hunter took command of the Army of the Shenandoah. At the end of May, the army was on the move again up the

Valley. In a sad twist of fate, only eight days before most of the enlistments within the 28th Ohio were to expire, the regiment was engaged in its bloodiest fight of the war. On June 5, 1864, the 28th Ohio distinguished itself in its final glory at the Battle of Piedmont, Virginia. As part of Colonel August Moor's brigade holding the Union right, the Cincinnati Germans made two desperate charges against strongly defended Confederate works. Their attacks were turned back with great loss, losing 5 color-bearers in quick succession. A Confederate counterattack followed, and all of Moor's regiments retreated except for the 28th Ohio, which was left alone to fight 6 Confederate regiments. With the help of Union artillery fire, Becker's Germans single-handedly turned back the Rebel attack. Hunter ordered a third charge, and the soldiers of the 28th Ohio went bravely forward with their brigade. This time, the Confederate line crumbled, and victory fell upon the Ohioans. However, it came at a great price: the 28th lost 2 officers and 26 men killed, and 110 men were wounded. It was the largest number killed of any unit in Hunter's army. Later, some curious men counted the bullet and shrapnel holes in the regimental flag – they found 72. (13)

On June 9th, with enlistments expiring, the war-weary soldiers of the 28th Ohio were sent home. Receiving a hero's welcome upon their return to Cincinnati, most of the men were officially mustered out of the army at Camp Dennison, Ohio, on July 23, 1864. Just over 220 men of the regiment re-enlisted into the 28th Ohio Infantry Battalion and would serve out the rest of the war performing guard duty in Wheeling, West Virginia. (14)

Throughout its three years of service, the 28th O.V.I. lost 2 officers and 66 men killed or mortally wounded. An additional 66 men died of disease. Among those of the 28th who died during the war, seven are known to be buried within the circles at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati. Their names are listed below:
(15)

- Peter Leindecker, Private, Co. C. This Prussian immigrant enlisted into the 28th O.V.I. on June 13, 1861. He died of dysentery at the Marine Hospital in Cincinnati on July 31, 1861. He was 32 years old. Leindecker has the unique distinction of not only being the first soldier of the 28th O.V.I. to perish in the war, but also being the first burial in the Spring Grove Cemetery circles. Grave #: A13.
- George Walter, Private, Co. I. He enlisted into the 28th O.V.I. on July 10, 1861. He died in the hospital at Cincinnati on July 5, 1862, as a result of accidental wounds received at Gauley Bridge, (West) Virginia, on May 2, 1862. He was 24 years old. Grave #: B378.
- Charles Thiel, Private, Co. G. He joined the 28th O.V.I. on July 24, 1861. Sent to one of the hospitals in Covington, Kentucky, he succumbed to small pox on January 23, 1864. He was 27 years old. Records show that Thiel was originally buried in a cemetery in Covington, and then was re-interred in the Spring Grove circles on February 17, 1864. Grave #: B584.
- August George Benzinger, Private, Co. F. He signed up with the 28th O.V.I. on July 24, 1861. He died in Cincinnati on May 16, 1864. Grave #: B637.
- John Fischer, Private, Co. B. This German joined the 28th O.V.I. on July 29, 1861. He was mortally wounded in the Battle of Piedmont and died June 22, 1864, in Staunton, Virginia. He was 42 years old. His body was removed from Virginia to Spring Grove Cemetery in late July 1864. Grave #: C826.
- Bernard Duerr, Private, Co. D. He enlisted into the 28th O.V.I. on August 27, 1862. In 1864, this veteran re-enlisted into Co. A, 28th Ohio Infantry Battalion. He reported sick on July 15, 1864. On August 13, 1864, Duerr died at the age of 33 in a hospital at Cincinnati. Grave #: C1011.
- George Bauer, Private, Co. B. He entered Co. G, 28th O.V.I., on June 13, 1861. He was wounded in the Battle of Piedmont, but recovered in a hospital at Martinsburg, West Virginia. He re-enlisted as a veteran into Co. B, 28th Ohio Infantry Battalion, and survived through the end of the war. While still on

military duty, Bauer died in a Cincinnati hospital on Christmas Eve, 1865. He was 28 years old. Bauer has the distinction of being the last recorded death of a 28th O.V.I. soldier still engaged in military service from the Civil War. Grave #: C729.



“Headquarters – 28th Ohio Vol. – Gauley Bridge, W. Va.” This rare photograph, likely taken in 1861 or 1862, is the only known view of the 28th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the field. The officer standing directly in front of the flagbearer is Col. Augustus Moor, the 28th Ohio’s first colonel. The other men in this view are probably members of Moor’s staff. [From Charles Bracken, Charleton Heights, WV. Published in Terry Lowry’s *Last Sleep: The Battle of Droop Mountain November 6, 1863* (Charleston, WV, 1996), p. 28.]

Footnotes:

- (1) Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 1 (Secaucus, New Jersey, 1887), p. 3; James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men fought in the Civil War* (New York, 1997), pp. 85-90, 96-98, 113-114; Robert J. Wimberg, *Cincinnati and the Civil War: Off to Battle* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1992), pp. 13-17.
- (2) *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 101; Robert J. Wimberg, *Cincinnati and the Civil War: Under Attack* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1992), p. 76; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-303; Robert J. Wimberg, *Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine – A Historical Guide to 19th Century Buildings and Their Residents* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987), p. 60; Henry A. Ford and Kate Ford, *History of Cincinnati, Ohio* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1881), p. 138; C.S. Williams, *Williams' Cincinnati Directory, City Guide & Business Mirror* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1861), p. 253; Roger D. Hunt and Jack R. Brown, *Brevet Brigadier Generals in Blue* (Gaithersburg, Maryland, 1990).
- (3) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 194; Robert J. Wimberg, *Cincinnati and the Civil War: Off to Battle* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1992), pp. 129, 135.
- (4) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 194; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350.
- (5) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 194; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350; United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (OR), I, vol. 5, pt. 1, pp.142-144.
- (6) *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144; Wolfgang Hochbruch, *“Forty-Eighters” in the Union Armies: A Preliminary Checklist* (Germany, 2001); Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350.
- (7) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 194.
- (8) *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195; Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 1 (Secaucus, New Jersey, 1887), p. 397; OR, I, vol. 15, pt. 1, pp. 504-510.
- (9) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 195; OR, I, vol. 12, pt. 3, p. 480, 545-546; OR, I, vol. 29, pt. 1, p. 512; Terry Lowry, *Last Sleep: The Battle of Droop Mountain November 6, 1863* (Charleston, West Virginia, 1996), p. 26.
- (10) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 195; John Michael Priest, *Before Antietam: The Battle for South Mountain* (Oxford, 1992), p. 186; John Michael Priest, *Antietam: The Soldiers' Battle* (Oxford, 1989), p. 242; OR, I, vol. 19, pt. 1, pp. 187, 198.
- (11) Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), pp. 195-196; OR, I, vol. 21, pt. 1, pp. 964, 976-977; OR, I, vol. 25, pt. 1, pp. 11-12, 96-97; *Ibid.*, pt. 2, pp. 145, 164; Terry Lowry, *Last Sleep: The Battle of Droop Mountain*

- November 6, 1863* (Charleston, West Virginia, 1996), pp. 62, 101-102, 104, 125, 128-129, 136-143, 209, 260; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350.
- (12) OR, I, vol. 33, pt. 1, p. 791; Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 196; William C. Davis, *The Battle of New Market* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1975), pp. 24-25, 98-99, 152-156; OR, I, vol. 37, pt. 1, pp. 79-81; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350.
- (13) Francis H. Kennedy, *The Civil War Battlefield Guide*, 2nd Edition (New York, 1998), pp. 301-303; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350; Gary C. Walker, *Hunter's Fiery Raid Through Virginia Valleys* (Roanoke, Virginia, 1989), pp. 64-137, 156; Scott C. Patchan, *Forgotten Fury: The Battle of Piedmont, Va.* (Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1995); Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 196; William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (1861-1865)* (Albany, New York, 1889), p. 450.
- (14) Gary C. Walker, *Hunter's Fiery Raid Through Virginia Valleys* (Roanoke, Virginia, 1989), p. 156; Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868), p. 196; Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), p. 301; OR, I, vol. 46, pt. 1, p. 508; *Ibid.*, pt. 2, p. 761; *Ibid.*, pt. 3, p. 1046; OR, I, vol. 43, pt. 1, p. 854.
- (15) Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, vol. 3 (New York, 1959), p. 1509; Spring Grove Cemetery Office, *Records of Burials in Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001); United States Quartermaster's Department, *Roll of Honor: Names of Soldiers Who Died in the Defense of the American Union Interred in the National Cemeteries* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1995); Roster Commission of Ohio, *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion – 1861-1866*, vol. 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888), pp. 301-350.

Bibliography

28th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

Official Publications

- Roster Commission of Ohio. *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion -- 1861-1866*. Vol. 3. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1888.
- Spring Grove Cemetery Office. *Records of Burials in Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio*. Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001.
- United States Census Bureau. *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio*.
_____. *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio*.
_____. *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio*.
_____. *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio*.
- United States War Department. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 vols. Washington, D.C., 1880-1901.

Books and Maps

- Davis, Major George B. and Perry, Leslie J. *The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*. New York, 1983.
- Davis, William C. *The Battle of New Market*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1975.
- Dyer, Frederick H. *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*. Vol. 3. New York, 1959.
- Ford, Henry A. and Ford, Kate. *History of Cincinnati, Ohio*. Cleveland, Ohio, 1881.
_____. *History of Hamilton County, Ohio*. Cleveland, Ohio, 1881.
- Fox, William F. *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (1861-1865)*. Albany, New York, 1889.
- Hunt, Roger D and Brown, Jack R. *Brevet Brigadier Generals in Blue*. Gaithersburg, Maryland, 1990.
- Johnson, Robert U. and Buel, Clarence C. *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*. 4 Vols. Secaucus, New Jersey, 1887.
- Kennedy, Francis H. *The Civil War Battlefield Guide*. 2nd Edition. New York, 1998.
- Lowry, Terry. *Last Sleep: The Battle of Droop Mountain November 6, 1863*. Charleston, West Virginia, 1996.
- Patchan, Scott C. *Forgotten Fury: The Battle of Piedmont, Va*. Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1995.
- Priest, John Michael. *Before Antietam: The Battle for South Mountain*. Oxford, 1992.
- Reid, Whitelaw. *Ohio in the War*. 2 Vols. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1868.
- Walker, Gary C. *Hunter's Fiery Raid Through Virginia Valleys*. Roanoke, Virginia,

- 1989.
- Warner, Ezra J. *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1992.
- _____. *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1987.
- Williams, C.S. *Williams' Cincinnati Directory, City Guide & Business Mirror*. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1861.
- Wimberg, Robert J. *Cincinnati and the Civil War: Off to Battle*. Cincinnati, 1992.
- _____. *Cincinnati and the Civil War: Under Attack*. Cincinnati, 1992.
- _____. *Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine – A Historical Guide to 19th Century Buildings and Their Residents*. Cincinnati, 1987.