

Book Notice: *Perryville Under Fire: The Aftermath of Kentucky's Largest Civil War Battle*. Stuart W. Sanders. Columbia SC: The History Press, Civil War Sesquicentennial Series, 2012. 156 pages, paperback. \$19.99, <http://historypress.net/>. Reviewed by Dan Reigle, originally written for the *Ohio Civil War Genealogy Journal*, www.ogs.org.

There have been very few attempts to describe the aftermath of a major Civil War battle, so Stuart Sanders' account of the aftermath at Perryville fills an important gap in our understanding. It will be of value both to those interested in Perryville specifically, and also to anyone attempting to understand what happened to wounded soldiers when they fell, how did they get medical attention (if they were fortunate enough to be treated), how were field aid stations and hospitals organized, where were the dead buried and by whom, and what was the impact on local residents and their communities. Researchers interested in these types of questions will find this book of value regardless of where their relatives served.

Perryville had only 300 residents at the time of the battle, and it is difficult to imagine the overwhelming challenges of coping with the 7500 battle casualties that occurred on the farmland just outside town. More than 1400 of those casualties were immediate deaths, compounded in the coming days by many hundreds more, and all had to be buried quickly. Both armies left the Perryville area within days after the battle, and although the Union army left some units and personnel behind to help care for the wounded, the heaviest burden would fall on the local civilians and relief organizations such as the US Sanitary Commission. The small size of Perryville was exacerbated by the severe drought in the area, causing more suffering for the wounded and illnesses from a lack of clean water for sanitation and drinking. The lack of preparation by either army for casualties on this large scale also caused suffering and death. (See the article on Peter Harris, 121st OVI, for the issues caused by General Buell's decisions on medical preparation and logistics.) The towns of Danville and Harrodsburg were overwhelmed with 1700 wounded Confederate casualties left in Harrodsburg and 2500-3500 patients at Danville, many from illness rather than wounds. This continued for six months after the battle, and even after the last hospital in Perryville closed in March 1863.

Author Sanders introduces some of the fascinating people who were deeply involved in the aftermath. Henry Bottom, on whose land much of the battle was fought, was instrumental in immediate efforts to bury the dead and suffered financial ruin. Ethel Moore, a young woman who traveled with Confederate General Cheatham's division for much of the war, spent the entire night of October 8th as a "first responder" gathering up the wounded of Cheatham's division and getting them to the Confederate aid stations and hospital at the Goodnight house. Dr. Jefferson Polk was a 60-year-old Perryville physician already retired due to poor health, but he served as a surgeon in one of the Union hospitals and housed casualties in his own home for several months. Danville resident Elizabeth Moore initially went to Perryville to provide care, then returned home to work for months in the hospital at Centre College and cared for additional patients in her own home. Charles Orcutt, 87th Indiana, worked as a nurse in the hospital at Centre College until he died of "neuralgia of the heart." Centre College president, Lewis Warner Green, contracted and died from an illness while nursing wounded soldiers at the college.

The author makes us aware of many valuable sources for further study. Indiana artilleryman Ormond Hupp survived a torturous eight days with almost no food or sleep before reaching a hospital in New Albany IN; Hupp's published diary includes an unusually detailed account of what happened to a wounded soldier in the hours, days, and weeks after the wound. Dr. Polk's autobiography was published in 1867, covering the period of months in which "hundreds of the wounded died every week." There are many citations of holdings in the files at the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site, compiled over many years by Site Manager Kurt Holman.

Adding to the value of this book are the author's insights gained from his nearly ten years as executive director of the Perryville Battlefield Preservation Association. For example, his statement that "Perryville's terrain, which consists of closely packed, consecutive ridges, put the troops fighting from ridge to ridge in proximity to one another, drastically increasing the number of casualties" will ring true to anyone who has tried to understand this battle before actually seeing and walking the terrain. In addition, Sanders reports that there were unusually large numbers of civilians who visited Perryville after the battle, hoping to find and care for relatives who may have been wounded or ill, or perhaps to locate the remains of someone who had died and return them home for burial. "As Kentucky was a border state, the proximity of Perryville to states that supplied men to both armies allowed relatives of casualties to visit the field to find their dead and wounded family members. ... civilian visitation to the battlefield played a major role in the aftermath. ... No other Western Theater battlefield had this impact, for no other massive

fight was held in such proximity to the homes of soldiers both North and South.”

As we approach the 150th anniversary of the battle at Perryville, this book, along with Christopher Kolakowski’s *The Civil War at Perryville: Battling for the Bluegrass*, will be an excellent resource for descendants of the participants, Civil War students, local residents, re-enactors, and others among us who will gather at Perryville on 6-7 October 2012 to commemorate the Sesquicentennial.

Editor’s note: Watch this video to see Main Street Perryville Chairman Robbie Mays talk about the effort to save Dr. J. J. Polk’s House and Office: <http://www.betterindanville.com/Downtown-Perryville.aspx> Main Street Perryville, PO Box 133, Perryville KY 40468. Readers may also want to consult Stuart Sanders’ major article “The 1862 Kentucky Campaign and The Battle of Perryville,” in *Blue & Gray Magazine*, Volume XXII, Issue 5, 2005, pages 6-24, 44-65, with “The General’s Tour,” photographs and maps. <http://www.bluegraymagazine.com/>