

Excerpt from a newspaper article about the history of the 42nd Indiana written by Spillard F. Horrall who was a Captain of the regiment and later the editor of the "Democrat" published in Washington, Indiana:

ON TO MURFREESBORO

The out-posts of the enemy were first encountered at Laveryne and driven in. Advancing in front of the enemy's lines, which were along Stone River stretching for more than two miles, General George H. Thomas' corps, to which the 42nd belonged, was assigned to the center, McCook the right and Crittenden the left. The morning of the second day, McCook on our right was driven and about noon General Beatty's brigade was ordered to hold the enemy in check until new lines were fixed. In that pine woods January 2nd, 1863, company G, Lieutenant McCormick commanding, and the 42nd suffered severe loss, but held out with the brigade against heavy odds until in the afternoon when Gen. Hazan's brigade of regular troops came to the assistance, and about an hour before sunset all were ordered out. Several of our company's bravest men fell in that pine woods, two of whom Nicholas Wallace and Francis M. Walker were never found, or at least never heard from. The next day our regiment and company were not in action except a little skirmishing, but at nightfall were placed on the front line in the center and near the railroad. A few hours before day the enemy opened on the regiment a terrific and most galling fire of cannon and small arms. It was there Corporal Richard McGehee and many others of the company fell or were taken prisoner. This proved to be only the rear guard of the enemy, for at daylight, January 4th there were none to oppose us in the march into the town.

The fight of the 42nd on the morning of the 4th of January with the rear guard of Bragg's forces was an exciting one both to those who looked on and those engaged on both sides. On the part of the enemy, artillery was used, while the 42nd had no material assistance from that quarter or source. Major James M. Shanklin was taken prisoner that morning, and spent a period in Libby prison, where through the rough and inhumane treatment of the prisoners by rebel authorities and exposure, he contracted disease that proved fatal in a brief time after his arrival home in Evansville. He was freely censured by the officers and men for not having, on his own, ordered a retreat; but the writer of this is personally cognizant of the fact that he was in no way to blame. Shortly after midnight he sent a report to Colonel John Beatty commanding the brigade, that the enemy were planting a battery immediately in his front and an attack was momentarily expected, and asking for reinforcements and ammunition. The ammunition was promptly furnished by an officer from company G, who, through the pitchy darkness carried a box on horseback, together with orders from Major General Thomas to Major Shanklin to remain at his post of duty. Twice after that did he ask for reinforcements and the third time receiving the brief but imperative order "Hold the point at all hazards." The fighting was but of short duration, although picket firing had been kept all night. Consequently, when the critical moment arrived for re-enforcements to have been of real service—as it was evidently intended to send them—in case of emergency, the clash was over and those not able to escape to the rear were taken prisoner, those having been wounded being left on the field. What was regarded by the noise heard in front as the enemy planting a battery of artillery proved to be preparations on their part for an abandonment of the post, but this Major Shanklin could not know. And true soldier, it was his duty to obey orders—that and nothing more—and that he did do, though eventually it cost him his life. These facts, it is repeated, are stated from personal knowledge of the writer of this who received from Major General Thomas' headquarters the orders and delivered the last one not to exceed ten minutes before the fierce firing began. In this three days engagement the 42nd regiment lost

in killed, wounded and missing 130 officers and men.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Some days were occupied after the battle collecting small arms from the scene of action and burying the dead. Near the railroad and pike the killed of General Hazen's and Colonel Beatty's brigades were buried. In one long, wide grave those of the 42nd were laid to rest. The muffled drum and the last tattoo had been heard by them. With their "martial cloaks around them" they were laid to rest.

"On Heaven's eternal camping ground
The bivouac of the dead"

Let the memory of the brave men be, ever hallowed and honored, who thus gave their lives for their county's defence. Of them it may be truly said:

"Rest, There is no prouder grave,
Even in this proud clime."

At points on the line in the pine woods of which mention has been made, especially in front of the thirty pieces of masked artillery in the right center, the killed of the enemy lay so thick that you might walk for rods and step on a dead man, each taken.