

Volume I, Issue 3 – March 2024

BRASS BUGLE



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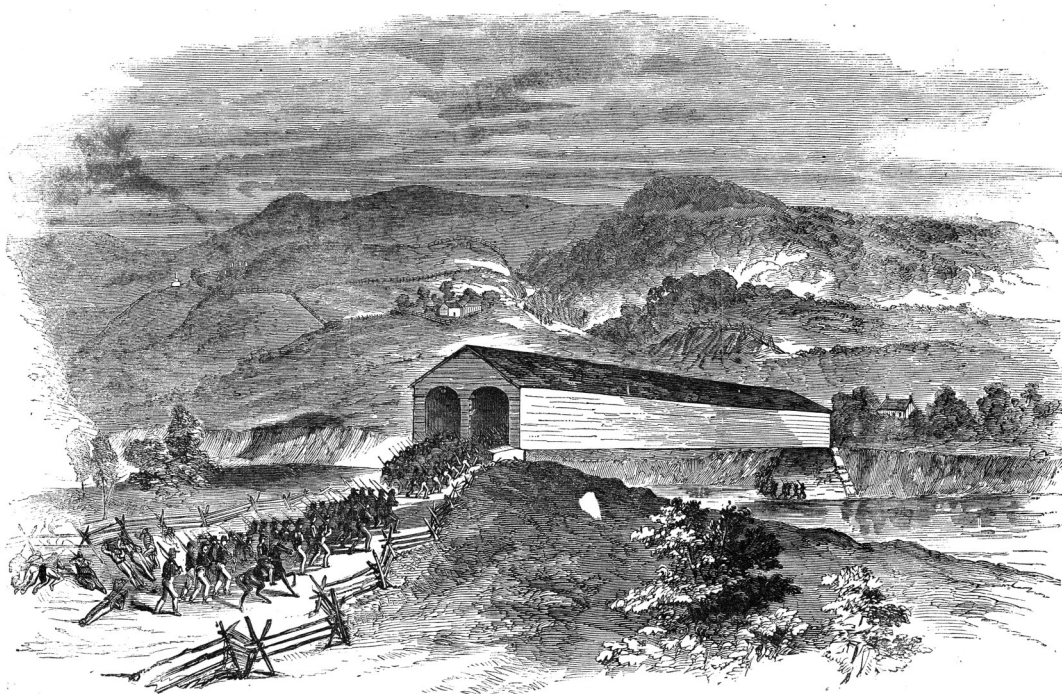


Illustration of the Skirmish at Romney. *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. 5 Issue 236, July 6, 1861

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THE DISPATCH

M.A. Kleen, Editor

There's something thrilling about making a historical discovery. Looking through dusty books and reading about an event you've never heard of before. Soon, one discovery leads to another and a picture starts to emerge.

That's how I felt earlier this month when I stumbled on an account of a June 1861 skirmish at Buckhannon in what is today West Virginia. It practically jumped from the page. "Huh? Why haven't I read about this anywhere else?"

My journey to verify the story led me to an old history of Upshur County, and finally, contacting the Upshur County Historical Society, which, by the way, has a great selection of published items for sale on its website, www.upshurcountyhistoricalsociety.com.

There are two diaries describing the events in Upshur County in June and July 1861, one written by a militia commander named Henry F. Westfall, which lacks detail

but talks about some of the important events, and the other by Marcia L. Phillips, wife of Sylvester B. Phillips, who would become captain of Company E, 3rd (West) Virginia Infantry Regiment.

It is fascinating to read their accounts and confirm, at least partially, what others wrote in subsequent history books. Of course, over the years details get changed and exaggerated, but the fact that a skirmish occurred is indisputable based on these primary sources.

AND most importantly, I was able to find the Confederate commander's report of what happened printed in a newspaper. In the *Official Records*, in a letter to Brig. Gen. Garnett, he mentions "a report of which you have." But the report was lost and not printed. Well, I found it reprinted in the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 9 July 1861. It is the most detailed account of what transpired.

This brings us one step closer to reconstructing this critical moment in U.S. history. Who knows what else might be out there? ❖

ENCYCLOPEDIA UPDATES IN FEBRUARY

Blog posts are only a small piece of what goes into our online Civil War encyclopedia, but new articles and updates may not be readily apparent. Here is just a small part of how Spirit61.info has grown over the past month:

- ◆ Added personality pages for Benjamin F. Kelley and William L. Jackson.
- ◆ Posted an explanation of Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck's expedition to Buckhannon and added a battle page for the Skirmish at Buckhannon.
- ◆ Added unit pages for 10th Ohio Infantry and 1st Virginia Infantry (U.S.) and added Units to the main menu. While most of these are just stub pages, you can now browse McClellan's Army of the West.
- ◆ Published an article exploring how Virginia's governor and ex-governors aligned on the secession question.
- ◆ Updated our Timeline page to include all engagements and battles through July 18, 1861.
- ◆ Scanned and added issue 237 of *Harper's Weekly* and 296 of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* to our Artifacts page.

WHAT THE HECK?

DECODING LT. COL. JONATHAN HECK'S EXPEDITION TO BUCKHANNON IN JUNE 1861

If you search for any mention of a Civil War skirmish in Buckhannon, West Virginia in 1861 in the usual sources, you won't find it. In fact, any information about Buckhannon prior to George McClellan's occupation on June 30-July 1st is in short supply. There are a few references to a brief Confederate expedition to Buckhannon, but again, without many details.

There is an account of a skirmish in Buckhannon in June 1861 in William Bernard Cutright's *History of Upshur County, West Virginia* (1907), a story repeated by historian Fritz Heselberger in *Yanks from the South!* (1987). It speaks of the brave defense of Buckhannon by unionist home guard against a rebel incursion led by someone named "Col. Turk". This colorful tale undoubtedly contains a grain of truth, but how much?

Towards the end of May 1861, Col. George A. Porterfield sent Lt. Col. Jonathan McGee Heck (1831-1894), an attorney from Marion County, (West) Virginia, to Rich-

mond to explain, in person, the dire situation Confederates faced in Northwestern Virginia. When Heck returned to the Northwest, Confederate forces had a new commander in the form of Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett. Garnett placed Heck in command of the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment and ordered him to fortify Rich Mountain.

Supplying an army in the Allegheny Mountains was a logistical nightmare. The Confederate supply line stretched 100 miles from Staunton to Beverly. That was roughly a week's journey over the mountains by wagon. Since "an army marches on its stomach", the Confederates resorted to foraging to fill in the gaps.

So, in late June, Lt. Col. Heck took his men and wagons and marched toward Buckhannon, looking for supplies. Buckhannon, population 427 in 1860, is the seat of Upshur County. It is located along the Buckhannon River and Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. The Turnpike was a vital transportation route from the Shenan-

doah Valley to the Ohio River. Buckhannon, approximately 23 miles east of the Confederate camp on Rich Mountain, became a kind of no man's land between Confederate forces and Union forces camped at Philippi and Clarksburg.

In his regimental history of the 25th Virginia, Richard L. Armstrong, wrote:

"On June 26 Colonel Heck and about 300 men of the 25th Infantry left Camp Garnett (as the camp on Rich Mountain was now being called) and marched for Buckhannon. Colonel Heck and his command occupied the count[y] seat of Upshur County on the following day without incident. After remaining there until the morning of June 28, Colonel Heck returned with his command to their camp on Rich Mountain. The purpose of the occupation of Buckhannon is not known." -Armstrong, Pg. 12

Actually, the purpose of Heck's occupation is known, because Heck himself mentioned it in his post-parole report on his activities in the Northwest, published in *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. II.

Unfortunately, the report Heck mentions does not appear in the Official Records, but it does appear elsewhere. At least two let-

“On June — I was ordered by General Garnett to take part of my regiment and all the wagons under my command and go to Buckhannon on a foraging expedition, a report of which you have. The day after we left Buckhannon, June –, the enemy, under General Rosecrans, about 5,000 strong, occupied the place and was very soon largely re-enforced.” - O.R., Pg. 255

ters from Heck made their way into the *Staunton Spectator* and *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, both on July 9, 1861.

According to Heck, he left camp on June 26th with 20 wagons and 300 men, including the Churchville Cavalry commanded by Capt. Franklin F. Sterrett. The cavalry rode out ahead, and as they approached a mill on the outskirts of town, they were fired on by 25 men concealed in ambush in a thick wood. Heck named the Union commander as Col. Henry F. Westfall. This confirms key details from William Cutright’s story in History of Upshur County. Cutright also

named Henry F. Westfall as the Union commander and stated that the skirmish was “at the Ridgeway grist mill.”

Another key element Heck confirmed was the taking of two prisoners: Arthur G. Kiddy and James L. Jennings. Cutright wrote that the men were captured on the Clarksburg and Buckhannon turnpike and taken to Staunton in chains. Although Heck doesn’t name them, he did write “We arrested two men.”

So who was the “Col. Turk” that Cutright spoke of? He may have been referring to Rudolph Turk (1817-1890), sheriff of Augusta County, Virginia, and a militia colonel before the war. In May 1861, Turk helped organize volunteer companies in Staunton, then went to Philippi to assist Porterfield as an ordinance officer. In his post-parole report, Heck mentions “On the 25th [of May] Colonel Porterfield received a re-enforcement of six or seven raw recruits, infantry and cavalry, under Col. R. Turk.”

Turk was later made a captain in the Confederate Army and reported to Staunton as a quartermaster overseeing wagons, artillery caissons, and ambulances.

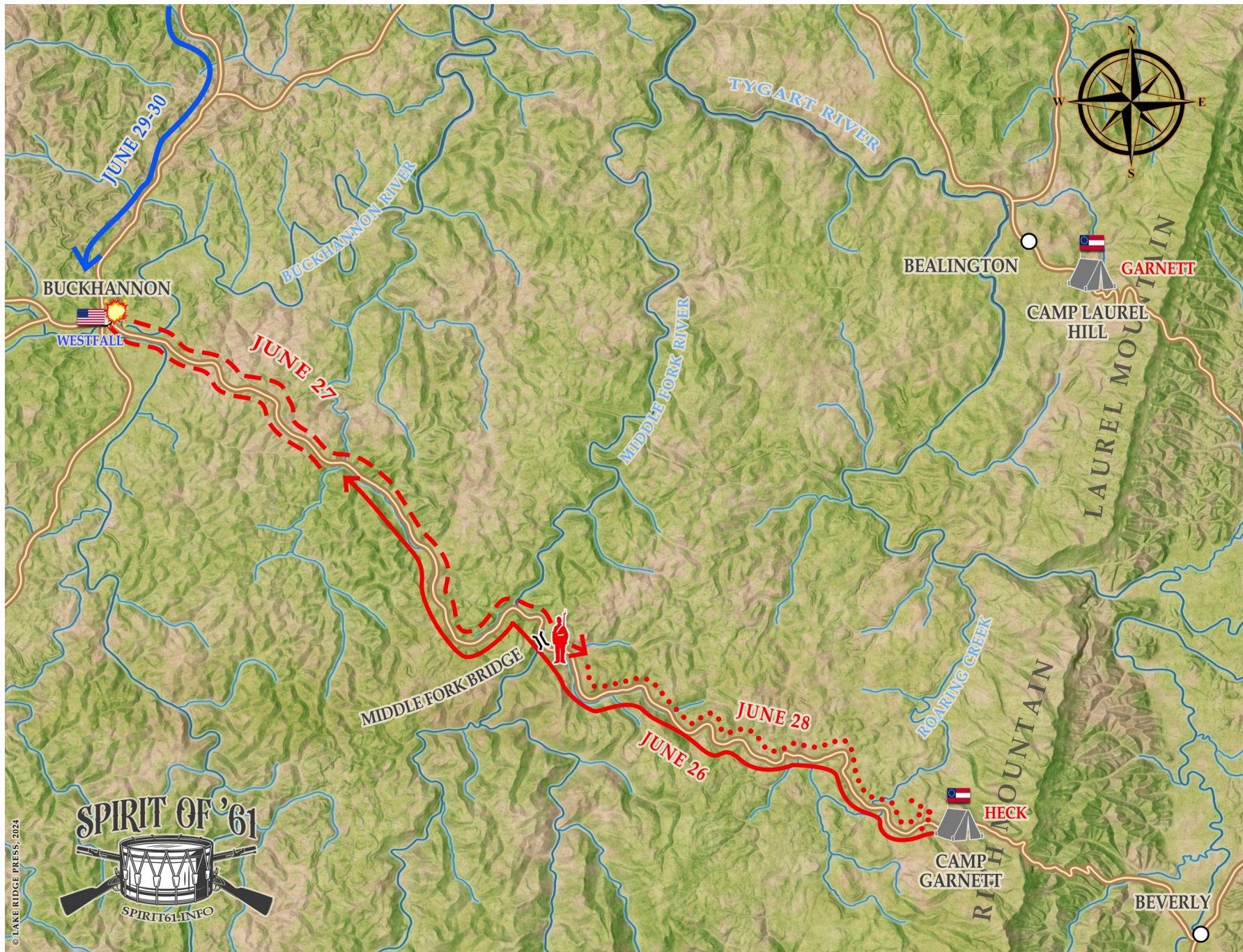
It’s possible Rudolph Turk accompanied Lt. Col. Heck on his trip from Staunton to Rich Mountain. As a quartermaster, Turk could have supervised the acquisition of supplies at Buckhannon and accompanied the wagon train back to Beverly, where the captured provisions would be doled out in the coming weeks. Unfortunately, Heck never mentioned Turk in any of his reports.

Half-remembered stories from aging Civil War veterans aren’t the most reliable sources, but it would be quite a coincidence if Capt. Turk wasn’t involved with the expedition. I found an article in the *Cleveland Morning Leader* that gave an exaggerated account of the Confederate withdrawal from Buckhannon, stating that 30-40 rebels were killed, including “their Captain (named Turk)”.

Though a minor event in the grand scheme of things, determining exactly what happened on Heck’s expedition to Buckhannon fills in a gap in our knowledge of the Tygart Valley/Rich Mountain Campaign. It helps us better understand the supply issues Confederates faced, and the role of Unionist home guard units in Northwestern Virginia in 1861. ♦



MAP DEPICTING LT. COL. JONATHAN M. HECK'S EXPEDITION TO BUCKHANNON, JUNE 26, 1861—JUNE 28, 1861



ARTIFACT: TOPOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE BATTLE OF BETHEL, JUNE 10TH 1861

The Battle of Big Bethel was fought on Monday, June 10, 1861 between Union forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Ebenezer Peirce and Confederate forces commanded by Col. John B. Magruder and Col. Daniel Harvey Hill in Hampton, Virginia. It was among the American Civil War's first pitched battles.

Massachusetts Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler was assigned to command the troops at Fort Monroe. Butler was an aggressive commander and sought to expand his foothold on the Virginia Peninsula. Confederate forces commanded by Col. John B. Magruder dug a mile long set of entrenchments north of Marsh Creek near the churches of Big and Little Bethel.

Throughout the day, multiple Union attacks on the Confederate earthworks failed. The Union forces were tired, inexperienced, and demoralized from a friendly-fire incident, and D. H. Hill's men were in a strong defensive position.

Until the Battle of Big Bethel, Confederate forces in Virginia had been on the retreat. Finally, they inflicted a clear loss on the Yankee "invaders". ❖



"Topographical Sketch of the Battle of Bethel, June 10th 1861. Virginia: s.n. 1861," *University of Virginia Library Online Exhibits*, https://search.lib.virginia.edu/sources/uva_library/items/u2402603

JOHN B. MAGRUDER

With his upturned mustache, large mutton chops, and plumed hat, “Prince John” Bankhead Magruder (1807-1871) cut a dashing figure. He was a veteran of the Mexican War and amateur actor with unconventional views on warfare. On April 21, 1861, four days after the Virginia Secession Convention formally adopted articles of secession, Magruder resigned his commission in the U.S. Army and became a colonel in the Confederate Army.

Virginia Governor John Letcher placed him in command of the Army of the Peninsula and tasked him with bottling up Union forces in Fort Monroe. Magruder ordered his men to paint logs to look like cannon and march in circles, beating drums and making a racket to deceive the enemy into thinking he had a much larger force. He also employed Brig. Gen. Gabriel Rains’ expertise in “land torpedoes,” an early form of IED–buried or hidden artillery shells designed to explode when encountered. He won the Battle of Big Bethel on June 10, 1861.

After a poor showing during the 1862



Peninsula Campaign, he was sent to command troops out west where he did not surrender until June 2, 1865. Following the war, he moved to Mexico and later lectured throughout the United States until his death in 1871.❖

Casdorff, Paul D. *Prince John Magruder: His Life and Campaigns*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2008.

Cobb, J. Michael. *Battle of Big Bethel: Crucial Clash*

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!



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in Early Civil War Virginia. El Dorado Hills: Savas Beatie, 2013.

Quarstein, John V. and J. Michael Moore. *Yorktown's Civil War Siege: Drums Along the Warwick*. Charleston: The History Press, 2012.

UNIT: POCAHONTAS RESCUES — CAPT. DANIEL A. STOFER, COMMANDING

The Pocahontas Rescues was a Confederate company raised in May 1861 in what is today Pocahontas County, West Virginia. “Count” Daniel A. Stofer (1821-1891), a boisterous attorney, organized the unit. Fifty-seven men mustered in at Huntersville, a village east of the Greenbrier River, for a period of one year on May 18, 1861. New recruits later brought that number to 64.

Capt. Daniel Stofer, a Mexican War veteran, was a heavyset man who enjoyed liquor and giving bellicose speeches. At the Barbour County Courthouse in Philippi he reportedly said, “I could take a peach tree switch and whip all of Lincoln’s 75,000 Yankees if they invade Virginia.” (or “I can chase Mr. Lincoln’s invaders off the soil of Virginia with the limb of a peach tree.”)

John Henry Cammack, a private in the 31st Virginia, later observed, “I might say here that the Capt. was not cut out for a military man.”

Stofer was officer of the day the night of June 2, 1861 when Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Morris and 3,000 Union troops were de-

scending on the Confederates camped at Philippi. Fortunately for the Confederates, two civilians gave prior warning of the approaching force. Unfortunately for Stofer, he was reportedly drunk on duty and did not comport himself in a military manner.

The Pocahontas Rescues were involved in the Action at Philippi on June 3, 1861. Captain Stofer, perhaps suffering from a hangover from the night before, deserted his unit and ran ahead of them on the road wearing only his britches. When asked where his men were, he replied they were “coming up behind me.”

After the disaster at Philippi, the company became Company D, 9th Battalion, Virginia Infantry (Hansbrough’s) in the Army of the Northwest. It was in Leedsville during the battles of Laurel Hill and Rich Mountain, and joined Brig. Gen. Robert S. Garnett’s retreat to Corrick’s Ford. Approximately seven men, including Captain Stofer, were captured during the retreat.

Jedediah Hotchkiss, famed Confederate cartographer, was leading a group away from Rich Mountain after that battle and

encountered Capt. Stofer sitting on the hotel porch in Beverly, watching on as civilians looted their abandoned military stores. Stofer likely stayed in Beverly, where he was captured.

As part of Hansbrough’s Battalion, The Pocahontas Rescues fought at Cheat Mountain on September 12, 1861, and Camp Bartow on October 3rd. In 1862, it joined the 25th Virginia Infantry Regiment as its 2nd Company I.

Armstrong, Richard L. *25th Virginia Infantry and 9th Battalion Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1990.

Cammack, John Henry. *Personal Recollections of Private John Henry Cammack: A Soldier of the Confederacy, 1861-1865*. Huntington: Paragon Ptg. & Pub. Co., 1920.

Carnes, Eva Margaret. *The Tygarts Valley Line June-July 1861*. Philippi: First Land Battle of the Civil War Centennial Commemoration, Inc., 1961. Reprint, Parsons: Barbour County Historical Society, 2003.

Haselberger, Fritz. *Yanks from the South! The First Land Campaign of the Civil War*. Baltimore: Past Glories, 1987.

Price, William T. *Historical Sketches of Pocahontas County, West Virginia*. Marlinton, WV: Price Brothers, 1901.



POCAHONTAS RESCUES 1861 ROSTER

NAME	RANK	MUSTER DATE	NOTES
Akers, James M.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Alderman, Andrew C.	Cpl.	5/18/1861	
Angus, Temmolion	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Boon, Beverly B.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Post war rosters only
Burr, Frederick	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Burr, George	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Carpenter, William H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Post war rosters only
Cash, George S.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Surrendered in Beverly 7/13/1861
Cole, William	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Corbett, Mustoe H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Eagan, Charles	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Ervine, William H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Friel, Montgomery A.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Gammon, Cyrus S.	2nd Lt.	5/18/1861	
Gammon, William T.	1st Lt.	5/18/1861	
Grandfield (Granfield), John	Pvt.	5/18/1861	

NAME	RANK	MUSTER DATE	NOTES
Griffin, Mathias P.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Grimes, Peter H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Captured at Red House 7/14/1861
Haines, Isaac B.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Hamilton, Adam G.	Sgt.	5/18/1861	
Hannah, Joseph	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Hannah, Robert A.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Helmick, George A.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Deserted 11/15/1861
Henson, William H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Herold, Benjamin F.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Herold, Charles B.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Hogsett, William R.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Johnson, Joseph T.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Jourdan, Joseph D.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Captured at Rich Mountain July 1861
Lyons, Enos	Cpl.	5/18/1861	
Maher, Patrick	Sgt.	5/18/1861	
McGlaughlin, Hugh P.	Cpl.	5/18/1861	
McLaughlin, James H.	1st Lt.	5/18/1861	1st man to enlist from Randolph County



NAME	RANK	MUSTER DATE	NOTES
Mitchell, Sylvester	2nd Lt.	5/18/1861	
Moore, Levi	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Moore, Michael C.	Sgt.	5/18/1861	Post war rosters only. Died of disease 1861?
Morarty (Moriarty), Patrick	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Pence, John H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Captured July 1861
Piles, John	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Captured at Red House 7/14/1861
Piles, William L.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	Captured at Red House 7/14/1861
Roby, Walter A.	Musician	5/18/1861	
Seebert, Lancelot "Lanty" L.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Shannon, James	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Shannon, Michael	Sgt.	5/18/1861	
Sharp, Martin B.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Sively, Cane H.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Slanker (Slarker), D.W.C.	Sgt.	5/18/1861	Post war rosters only
Slaven, William W.	Sgt.	5/18/1861	
Smith, Lewis	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Stofer, Daniel A.	Capt.	5/18/1861	

NAME	RANK	MUSTER DATE	NOTES
Swadley, James	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Varner, David A.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Waugh, Levi	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Weaver, Charles W.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Weaver, Robert L.	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Willihan, Michael	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Willihan, Patrick	Pvt.	5/18/1861	
Matthews, Jacob W.	Pvt.	5/21/1861	
Simmons, Chesley A.	Pvt.	5/21/1861	
Ware, Benonia (Benjamin) T.	Pvt.	5/21/1861	
Ware, Eugenious M.	Pvt.	5/21/1861	
Ware, George R.	1st Sgt.	5/21/1861	
Ware, William T.	Pvt.	5/21/1861	
Tire, John M.	Pvt.	5/23/1861	

Armstrong, Richard L. *25th Virginia Infantry and 9th Battalion Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1990.

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *Virginia Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865*, Vol. III-IV. Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1998.