

SOME HELPFUL TIPS ON HOW TO DO

CIVIL WAR RESEARCH

By J. B. King

With the publication of my book *The Tilley Treasure* which is based mainly on the Civil War Era in Pulaski County I began to receive a number of questions about Civil War research.

The most frequent question was simple. Just how do you do Civil War research? The answer is also simple, you just start with the so called Bible of the Civil War—a book series known as the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. This series of books is usually referred to as the *OR*. The print dates range from 1880 to 1902. There are four series and seventy some volumes in this set.

The *OR* is almost required reading when you start Civil War research. As a general statement if what you are looking for could be described as an "official" record you will find the information in these books. The *OR* is a great place to start.

But, there are a few problems with the *OR*. First you have to find a library which has a complete set of the *OR*. Since the first printing was in a series from 1880-1902 the books are scarce. You can find a set at

the Main Springfield Library, The State Historical Society at Columbia, and The Missouri National Guard Archives in Jefferson City. Those locations are complete collections. However, each book has literally been handled by thousands of people. The books are in poor condition, and no, you cannot check them out. I will not go so far as to say the libraries will post an armed guard over you while you have one of the *OR* in your possession—but you almost get the idea they would like to employ a guard.

The Springfield library keeps their collection behind a locked screen. Other locations where you might find the *OR* are the Missouri State Library in Jefferson City, and The Main Public Library in St. Louis and Kansas City.

The next problem in working with the *OR* concerns the book numbering system. The original authors used Roman Numbers to list the books. Thus if you do not know CXLII means you better brush up on your knowledge of Roman Numerals.

The outside of each book will also list the topics in-

cluded such as "Operations in Virginia and Tennessee July 1, 1861 to Dec 31, 1861! If you are interested in Missouri history don't bother to look for Missouri. Instead look for the heading "Operations in the Trans-Mississippi State".

Once you locate the "Trans-Mississippi" books you can work on Missouri history. Just turn to the index and look up Waynesville. Surprise, Waynesville is seldom listed! If you want local information you must look in the index under the name of the man who wrote the report. In other words you almost have to know that Capt. C.B. Maus of, Co. E, 5th Missouri State Militia was stationed here in 1864 and look under his name in the book which covers 1864.

So, you almost have to know the complete officer roster for each year the Union Army post existed at Waynesville. If you would rather do your research the easy way, just read each of the 500 pages in each book to make sure you do not miss any local history.

If you are really serious about Civil War research the *OR* series has recently been reprinted in 128 volumes and

can be purchased for about \$3,000. If you want to buy your own set contact me for the address of the company.

Another location for Missouri History is the Missouri National Guard Archives in Jefferson City. These Archives maintain a listing on cards in (A-B-C) order on all Missouri men who enlisted in the union controlled Missouri State Militia. These cards will frequently show a special entry such as killed or wounded in a fight. They may also give a date the man was promoted or deserted.

If you are looking for an ancestor who served during the Civil War you may get a copy of his complete record from The National Archives, Washington, D.C. Their fee is \$5.00 per man and they will answer usually within 45 days.

However for the National Archives to be of any help you must supply his complete name and unit as a minimum. Additional information such as birth date or place of enlistment will also help.

How do you handle an ancestor who served in the war but you do not know the unit? The answer is you are



in trouble. But here is one trick you might try. If you know which state and County the man lived in during the year 1890 check the Federal Census Records for that year. As part of the 1890 Census a special survey of Civil War Veterans was also obtained. This survey frequently lists the mans unit.

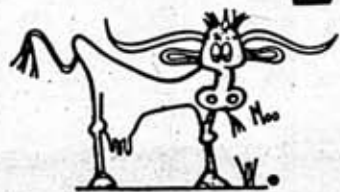
If he died prior to 1890 all you can do is check with the National Guard Records

Center in the state where he lived or where he probably enlisted. If you fail there, all you can do is continue to check other members of your family and hope you can get additional information.

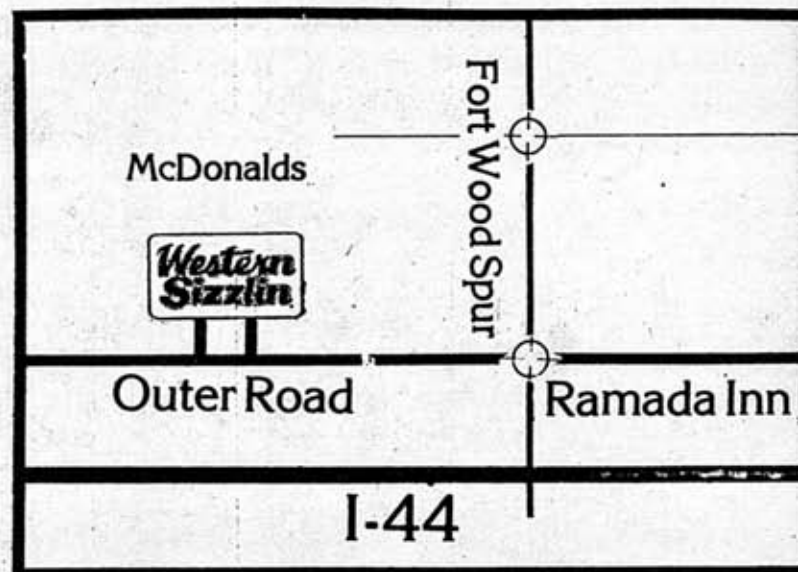
So now you know how to do Civil War Research. It's almost as easy as building an atomic bomb all by yourself. If you're not crazy when you start, you will be when you are done.

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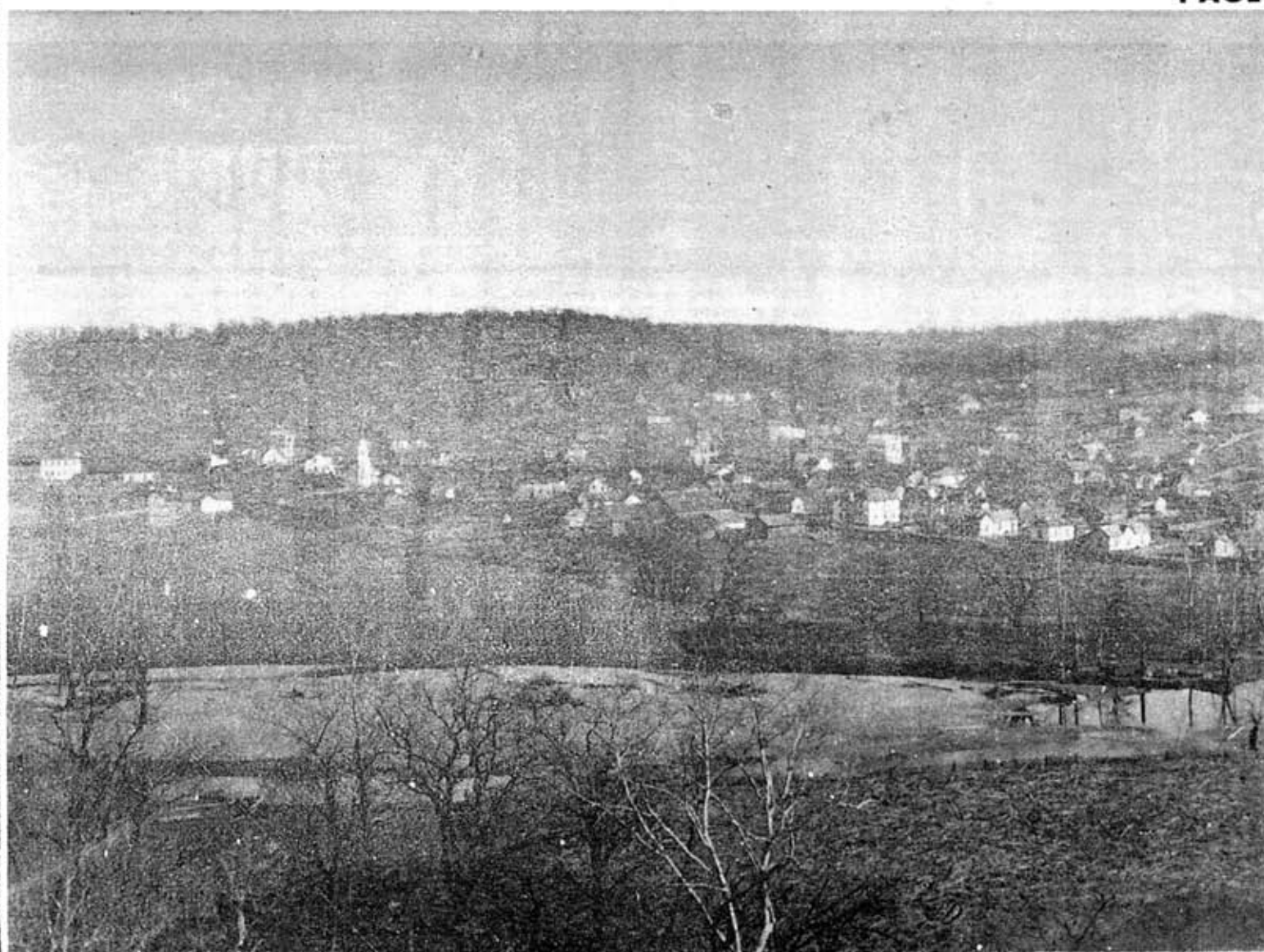
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