

Julius Cone
26th Wisconsin V.

John Meyer
26th Wisconsin V.



Christopher Martin,
City of Fairfax

The Writing on the Walls

Badger Graffiti in Civil War Virginia

By James S. Pula

In October 1997 a small group of neighbors met at the Blenheim Estate in the city of Fairfax, a northern Virginia community that borders the District of Columbia. The owner of the aging brick building had invited this group to view some curious old writing on the home's attic walls. "I was awestruck by this visit," Andrea Loewenwarter recalled, "never realizing what an amazing historical document existed just up the street from my house." The sight that inspired her? Scores of signatures, drawings, and other graffiti in both English and German, all of which were clearly quite old. They were not simply curiosities. Inscriptions such as "29th NY" and "75th Pa Vols" link the markings to America's most trying hour, as countrymen battled each other in civil war to determine whether the nation would survive.

Propelled by the discovery to form a preservation coalition for the Blenheim Estate, the neighbors' efforts resulted in the city's purchase of the home and an additional 11.8 acres of land in January 1999.¹ It was during this time that the Citizen Coalition for the Preservation of Blenheim began to play the role of caretaker to an important piece of Wisconsin Civil War history. Among the many names on the walls of

Left: All of the men pictured here served in the Sigel regiment and all were living in Milwaukee when they volunteered. From left, they are Jacob Stauff, George P. Träumer, John Koege, John Orth, and Philip Walldorf. Koege, a Milwaukee merchant, was one of the men to sign the wall at Blenheim. His signature appears as the third line from the top.



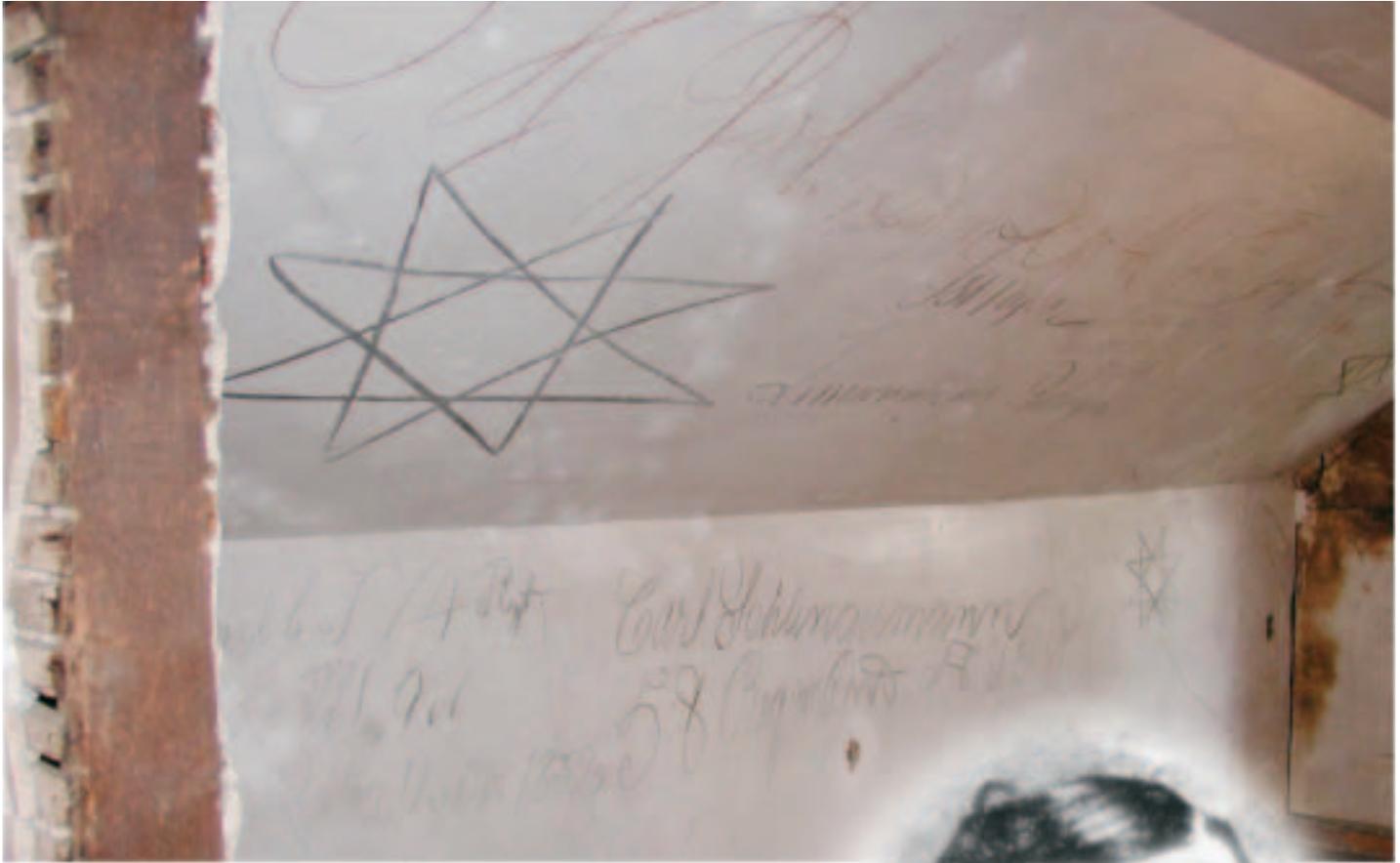
Courtesy of the author

The Blenheim Estate (pictured today) served as a hospital for wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Located in northern Virginia, Blenheim sat in the heart of the war raging between the northern and southern capitals. The "Willcoxon Place," as it was commonly known, was requisitioned by the Eleventh Corp of the Army of the Potomac and served as a Reserve Hospital for the sick and wounded.

Blenheim's attic were some with a common attribute. In one form or another, they were identified with the "26 R Wisc V"—the 26th Regiment Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Nicknamed "the Sigel Regiment" in honor of Franz Sigel, the German revolutionary leader of 1848 who was then a popular leader of the national German American community, the men who served in the 26th Regiment in its earliest days were primarily native Germans or first-generation German Americans. By the time the conservators had care-

fully peeled away layers of wallpaper from the attic walls of the stately Virginia home, a total of nine names had emerged that can be traced to the Sigel Regiment: Schlosser, Scholz, Van Eweyk, Reifenstuhl, Froelich, Rook, Fernekas, Hoene, and Koege. Like so many stories of the Civil War, the tale of how these names came to be inscribed there has roots in both the bustling streets of a nineteenth-century Wisconsin city and the once-bucolic lanes of northern Virginia.

Passed down within the same family for five generations, Blenheim was once part of more than one thousand acres owned by Rezin Willcoxon, identified as one of the earliest and most prominent settlers of what would later become Fairfax Court House, Virginia. In 1854 he either sold or leased a portion of his land to his son Albert, who farmed a total of 367 acres. Albert's house burned in March 1855, but he completed construction of a new brick federal and Greek revival structure by the end of 1859. By 1860 the Willcoxon proper-



Christopher Martin, City of Fairfax

Above: Signatures came in all sizes on the walls of Blenheim, and the men did not stop at writing their names but added drawings of stars, cannons, and ships to the attic's walls. *Right:* Julius Froeblich and eight other members of the 26th Wisconsin left signatures on the walls of Blenheim. A clerk in Milwaukee before the war, Froeblich served in Company B of the 26th Wisconsin until discharged due to disability on December 20, 1862.

ty, located about one mile northeast of the courthouse building, included a number of outbuildings suitable to a farm; a family cemetery; two slave quarters; livestock; and fields of wheat, oats, hay, and Indian corn. But the Willcoxons' quiet, pastoral life was about to be interrupted as events of national significance unfolded.²

By the summer of 1862 the ravages of war had already cast their shadow over northern Virginia. Federal troops occupied the countryside around the Willcoxon home, while others were preparing to march to Virginia's as yet unknown battlefields. Among these was a group of Wisconsin soldiers whose military service on American soil began that autumn. As casualties mounted beyond what anyone had imagined the year before, President Lincoln called in August 1862 for an additional 300,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion. Responding to the president's call for more men to save the Union, Milwaukee's German community determined to raise a regiment to meet the crisis.



Courtesy of the author

In 1860 Milwaukee was a city of 45,000 people, and more than half its inhabitants were immigrants. Of those immigrants, two-thirds were German. By 1862 the city and its surrounding communities had embraced much of German culture. There was not one but three German-language newspapers. Dotted throughout the city were the *Musikverein* (Music Society), the *Turnverein* (Gymnastic Society), *Die Freie Gemeinde* (the Free Commune), and dozens of other intellectual, political, and social clubs. These societies reflected Milwaukee's embrace of fellowship and sociality. Lincoln's

call fell upon the ears of those who, having socialized together, would also serve together. These political, intellectual, and business leaders came forward to act as recruiting agents, and their rallies attracted enthusiastic crowds. The editor of the Milwaukee German newspaper *Atlas* closed shop and enlisted with all of his employees, and the Milwaukee *Turnverein* announced that any members of military age who did not volunteer for service would forfeit their membership in the organization.

In surrounding towns the reaction was the same. The editor of the West Bend *Post* enlisted, leaving his wife to manage the newspaper in his absence. In Manitowoc, the local *Sangerbund* (Singing Society) sent its members off to war. Rallies and recruiting offices spread throughout Kenosha, Racine, Greenfield, Fond du Lac, and other areas of German settlement.³ The 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry gathered in Milwaukee to receive its initial training in the art of war. The Sigel Regiment was led by thirty-year-old William Jacobs, a native of Braunschweig, Germany, a successful Milwaukee banker and fine tenor in the city's *Sangerbund*. Recruits came from rival singing societies and gymnastics organizations, from theatre companies and competing saloons. They were Catholics, Lutherans, freethinkers, and a myriad of other faiths and ideologies. Nearly 40 percent of the recruits were farmers; 11 percent were laborers; and the balance reflected a cross-section of society. Although the 26th was a new regiment, thirteen of the officers had seen prior military service, along with approximately half of the noncommissioned officers and 20 percent of the privates. The result was a unique mixture of mature men who had learned their discipline in the Old Country with younger men, often the sons of

those early immigrants, who were new to the demands of war but added youthful zeal and energy to the steadied discipline of their seniors. Affectionately known locally as "*unser deutsches regiment*" (our German regiment), the 26th Wisconsin embodied the spirit, patriotism, and hopes of Wisconsin's large German population.⁴

Of the nearly one thousand men who came forward to make up the Sigel Regiment, nine names from the 26th Wisconsin appear on the attic walls of Virginia's Blenheim Estate. The group makes an interesting cross-section of the soldiers who would travel so many miles to serve their new land. All of them were foreign born, and, with one exception, all were from the various regions that constitute modern Germany. Phillip J. Schlosser, a Milwaukee merchant, was born in Hesse in 1835. He came to America in 1854 and to Milwaukee three years later. There he obtained a position in the Second Ward Savings Bank but listed his occupation at the time of his enlistment in September 1862 as "merchant." W. Josef Scholz was a butcher in civilian life when he enlisted as a private. Henry Van Eweyk, who was born in the Netherlands in 1840, came in 1854 to the United States, where he earned a living as a painter in the hamlet of Farm-

ers, Wisconsin. Friedrich Reifentuhl was a Milwaukee tailor at the time of his enlistment. Julius Froehlich, a clerk in Milwaukee, enlisted as a private in Company B, the "German Americans." Peter Rook, a Kenosha painter, was a widower when he enlisted in Company C, the "Milwaukee Guards." Also in Company C was Sergeant Peter Fernekes, a Milwaukee tinsmith. Private Julius William Franz Hoene, a Milwaukee turner, enlisted in Company I. John Koege, a Milwaukee merchant originally from Sandhof, Germany, rounds out the



WHI 2157

Many Wisconsin Germans responded to Lincoln's call for 300,000 additional troops in 1862, some of whom were inspired by Union General Franz Sigel, a revolutionary leader in his native Germany. This recruitment poster, printed in German, aimed to recruit men for the 26th Wisconsin, which was often called unser deutsches regiment, "our German regiment."

list of men whose names appear on Blenheim's walls. Not one man was older than thirty at the time they marked their names on Blenheim's walls. All would serve. One would die. Two would desert. The others would return to celebrate, year after year, the call that brought them together and the sense of identity that came with being one of *unser deutsches regiment*.

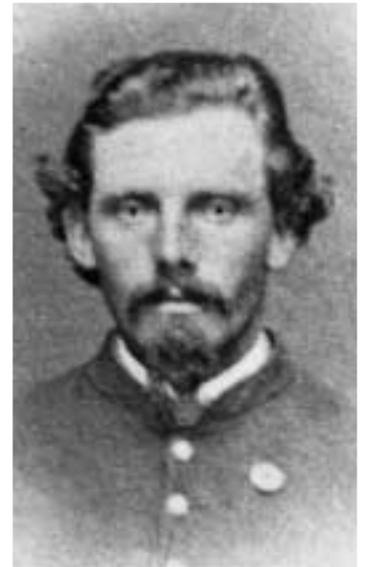
The Sigel Regiment mustered into service on September 17, 1862, leaving Milwaukee for Washington, D.C., on October 6 with 988 officers and men. Initially assigned to the Eleventh Corps in the Army of the Potomac, the regiment went by train to Washington, D.C., where it crossed the Long Bridge into Virginia. The group then marched across the rolling countryside to its assigned camp in the vicinity of Fairfax Court House, Virginia. There it spent its first weeks in the field. A correspondent from Madison's *Daily Wisconsin* who visited the camp reported:

The whole country between that point and Washington is a scene of devastation. . . . Two years ago all was peace and established prosperity. Comfortable farmhouses sheltered happy inmates. Along the roads were smiling fields [under] the husbandman's care, and gardens and orchards dotted the wayside. The little hamlets nestled about the cross-roads, in the valleys, were the scenes of quiet industry or rural gossip. [Now] the houses are tenantless in most instances. There is scarcely a vestige to be seen anywhere. Many of the orchard trees have been cut down, their bark gnawed by famished horses. The fields know no tillage but the pressure of the soldier's foot or the hoof of the cavalry horse. Batteries frown from every commanding eminence. . . . Dead horses and mules that have succumbed to overwork and starvation putrefy by the wayside and load the air with stench. The whole country swarms with the blue-coated soldiers of the Union. One is hardly ever out of sight of an

*encampment of Federal soldiers all the way to Fairfax Court House, which is seventeen miles. At intervals, the progress of the traveler is arrested by guards. Such is the state of things which old Virginia has brought upon this section of her domain.*⁵

Exposed for the first time to the dampness, cold, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions of military camps in the field, the Badger soldiers contracted the predictable spate of illnesses. Some of those in need of medical treatment were sent to the "Willcoxon Place," which had been requisitioned to serve as an Eleventh Corps Reserve Hospital. Research in the existing military service records, pension files, and hospital registers by Charles K. Gailey III, Patricia A. Gallagher, and Andrea Loewenwarter, members of the Blenheim Research Group, uncovered the names of seventy-seven Sigel Regiment soldiers who were patients in the Eleventh Corps Reserve Hospital system. As a part of that system, Blenheim housed soldiers recuperating from the effects of typhoid fever, rheumatism, dysentery, asthma, chronic bronchitis, dyspepsia, diarrhea, and other debilitating illnesses.⁶ Whiling away the hours of their recuperation, the men who were able found activities to pass the time. Playing chess or cards, reading, and carving pipes, chess figures, or rings from the abundant local sweetbriar wood were only a few of the amusements they found.⁷ Some invested time inscribing their names and regiments

Sergeant W. Joseph Scholz was a butcher in Milwaukee before the war. Scholz enlisted as a private in the "Flying Rangers" of Company A. After the war Scholz helped found the Twenty-Sixth Regimental Association.



Milwaukee County Historical Society

W. Joseph Scholz
26 May

on the estate's walls, leaving evidence of their presence for later generations.

The weeks rolled by, and in November the 26th Wisconsin left the area. The Badgers saw their first action at Chancellorsville in May 1863, where they were on the receiving end of Stonewall Jackson's massive flank attack. Outnumbered and attacked simultaneously from front and flank, the rookie regiment stuck doggedly to the position it was assigned on the far northern flank of the Union position. Had it failed, Confederates would have been able to rush in behind the surprised Eleventh Corps, cutting off its only avenue of retreat. The Sigel Regiment was outnumbered by more than four to one, and the unequal battle could not last long, but the Badgers stuck to the deadly work, firing as fast as they could load. Losses were staggering, but still they stayed in position, repelling every Confederate effort to dislodge them

until twice ordered to retreat by their brigade commander. Their heroic stand helped save the federal artillery and provided time for others to escape the trap. Commended by their brigade and division commanders for their gallantry, the Germans earned their praise the hard way, suffering 204 casualties, the fifth highest percentage of any regiment involved in the battle.⁸

From Chancellorsville the Union Army marched north in pursuit of Robert E. Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania. There, at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, the regiment was again thrown into battle against heavy odds in an attempt to save the Union position in open fields north of town. Fighting for their lives in a crossfire of Confederate artillery and musketry, the men of the Sigel Regiment once again held their ground on the exposed federal right flank until ordered to retreat, but they did so at a terrible cost. Every member of the color guard was either killed or wounded, thirteen of seventeen officers became casualties, and the regiment suf-



Courtesy of the author

The 26th Wisconsin's tattered flag, imprinted with the name of battles in which the regiment took part. The 26th carried this flag for the first time in the Battle of Peach Tree Creek, Georgia.

fered a total loss of 252 men, 55 percent of the strength it took into the battle.⁹

From Gettysburg the regiment moved west as part of an emergency reinforcement sent to Tennessee to relieve the Confederate siege of Chattanooga. There the regiment suffered great hardships and privation while participating in the Battles of Wauhatchie and Missionary Ridge, which saved the city and sent the rebel forces retreating southward. In the spring of 1864 the 26th Wisconsin was assigned to General William Tecumseh Sherman's army for the drive on Atlanta. During these campaigns it gained repeated praise for its good conduct and steadfast service, serving with honor on bloody fields whose very names would be enshrined in the nation's collective memory. At lesser-known battles like Resaca, the regiment moved into a threatened portion of the line, stabilized it, and then participated in a successful assault on the Confederate lines.¹⁰ Twice it captured valued enemy

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in der
TURN HALLE!

PROGRAMM.

I THEIL.

1. Märlied,	Männerchor.	von Kubben
2. Fantasie aus Mignon für Klavier,	Frl. Mayer.	von Kefferer
3. Ob sie wohl kommen mag. (Bass Arie),	Herr Wagner.	von Heeger
4. Tragedie, (Quartett),	Frl's Fischer und Zehster, und Herren Baus und Schellbl.	von Hradischka
5. Harbar Lied,	Männerchor.	von Zimmermann

II THEIL.

1. Der Nuchende Grenadier, [Bass Arie],	Herr Wagner.	von Adolph-Weiß
2. Concerto für Flöte und Klavier,	Herr und Frl. Masing.	von Frenschick
3. Der Kaiser und die Bäuer.	Männerchor.	von Tietl
4. Bellinelli, Fantasie für Klavier,	Frl. Mayer.	von J. Garcia
5. Champagne Lied.	Männerchor.	von Schreier

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WHS Archives, 3-3642

colors, including the regimental flag of the 33rd Mississippi Infantry at Peach Tree Creek, Georgia, in what Colonel James Wood, its brigade commander, labeled “a brilliant feat of arms.” In his official report the colonel concluded that the regiment’s conduct “could not be excelled by the troops in this or any other army, and is worthy of the highest commendation and praise.”¹¹

Following the capture of Atlanta, the Sigel Regiment participated in Sherman’s famous March to the Sea, then turned north under his command to march through the Carolinas. In this final campaign, the regiment served with distinction during the two major engagements at Averasboro and Bentonville, North Carolina. From beginning to end, the regiment’s wartime service spanned thirty-three months during which the men participated in some of the war’s bloodiest engagements. Its battle honors read like a history of the war itself: Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wauhatchie, Missionary Ridge, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kennesaw Mountain, Kolb’s Farm, Golgotha Church, Peach Tree Creek, Averasboro, Bentonville, and a score of other fields of conflict. In the end, the regiment

Left: Soldiers of the 26th often belonged to fraternal organizations like the Mannerchor, or male choir. They brought the same camaraderie to their service in the Union Army as they did to their Milwaukee clubs. Below: The Saengerfest Hall, located at the corner of Milwaukee’s Fourth and Cedar Streets, hosted events like this gathering of the Northwest Saengerbund, or singing society. These societies were centers of German culture before and after the Civil War.



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Milwaukee County Historical Society

The 26th Wisconsin got its first taste of military life at Camp Sigel in Milwaukee. Many hours of drills were necessary to transform civilians into soldiers.

had 55.7 percent casualties, including 17.2 percent killed in action¹² Few regiments fought harder, sacrificed more, or contributed as much to the North's victory as the 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry.

But what of those innocents who affixed their names to Blenheim's walls during those first weeks of their military service? What became of the people who left their "calling card" in charcoal and plaster? The names of the Sigel Regiment soldiers thus far uncovered at Blenheim illustrate the human nature, the frailties, and the sacrifices of those who went off to war as volunteers in support of their principles. Lieutenant Phillip J. Schlosser, the regimental adjutant who had been a merchant in Milwaukee, scrawled his name in large, fluid script across the ceiling in the attic. A later generation would locate an electric light socket in the middle of his name, but his signature remains boldly legible despite the

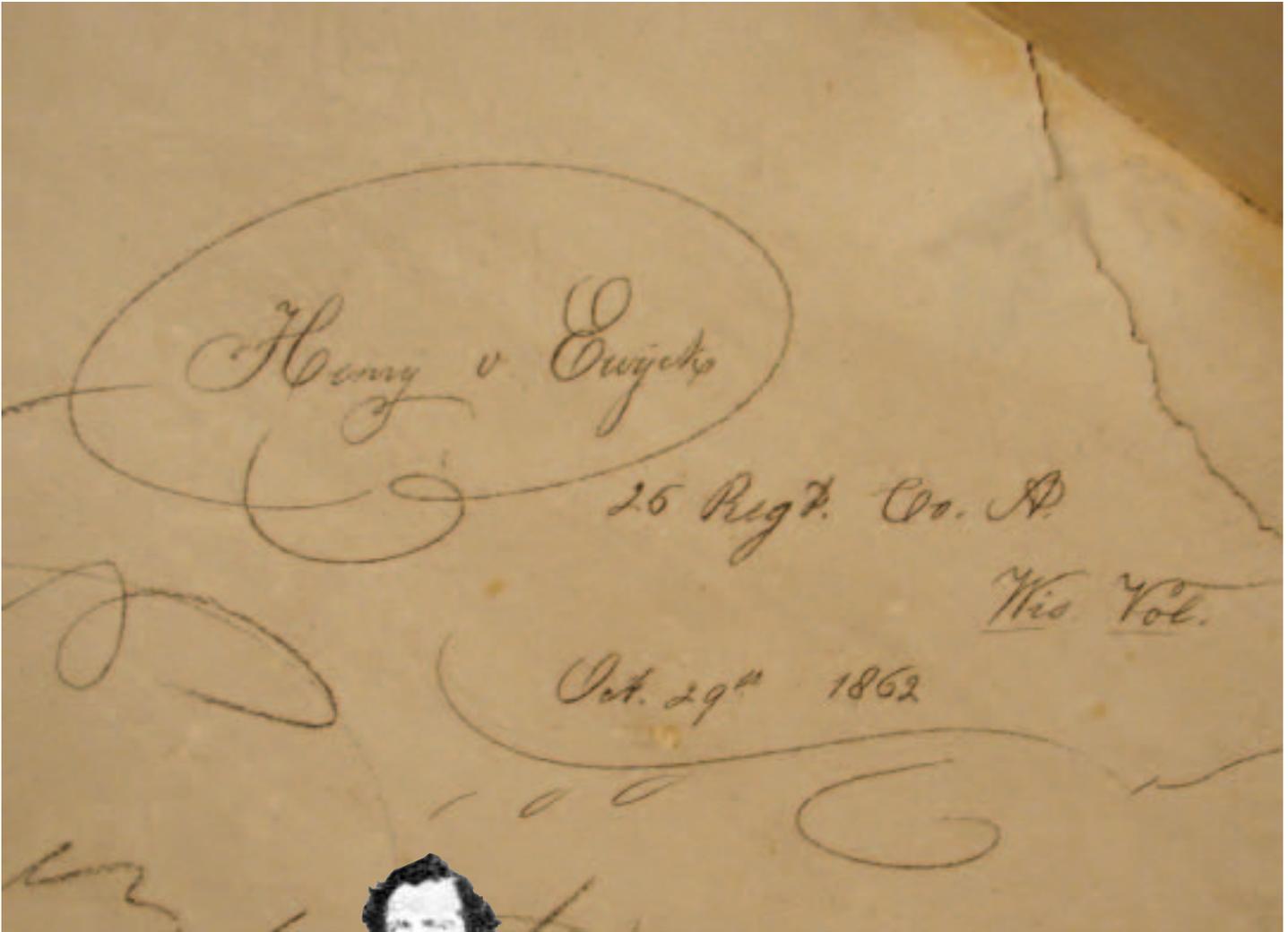


Harper's Weekly,
April 9, 1864

A trip to the hospital was often fatal for Civil War soldiers. Primitive medical technology and poor sanitation created opportunities for infection and disease. Seventy-seven members of the 26th Wisconsin would spend time in the Eleventh Corps Reserve Hospital System.

modern interruption. After writing his name on the ceiling, Schlosser marched south to a rendezvous at Chancellorsville. There, amid the turmoil of battle, his horse was shot from under him. Credited with saving the life of one of his soldiers during the retreat that followed, Schlosser proved his bravery but was forced to resign his commission four months later due to recurring illness and disability. Following his return home he became a banker, an officer in the Knights of Pythias, an active member of Robert Chivas Post No. 2 of the Grand Army of the Republic, and a founding member of the Twenty-Sixth Regimental Association. Active in veterans and civic affairs, he was

an officer in the regimental association, served on various reunion committees, and accompanied twenty-five of his surviving comrades-in-arms on a sentimental journey to Gettysburg to participate in the dedication of their monument on



Christopher Martin, City of Fairfax

Left: Henry Van Eweyck was the only non-German in the 26th Wisconsin. This did not keep him from joining the Liedertafel singing society after the war. He also was active in veterans' affairs and witnessed the unveiling of the monument to the 26th Wisconsin at Gettysburg in 1888, just three years before his death.

Above: Henry Van Eweyck's signature.

July 1, 1888. He passed away in 1906.¹³

Sergeant W. Josef Scholz, Corporal Heinrich Van Eweyk, and Private Friedrich Reifenstuhl represented Company A, the "Flying Rangers" from Milwaukee, on Blenheim's walls. Scholz was a butcher when he enlisted as a private; he quickly rose to corporal and then sergeant. He fought at Chancellorsville before being captured by the Confederates at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. Exchanged, he rejoined the regiment and participated in all of its campaigns through Georgia and the Carolinas before mustering out with the regiment on June 13, 1865. Following the war he was a founding member of the Twenty-Sixth Regimental Association and a member of its executive committee. He, too, made the trip to Gettysburg to see the monument erected on the scene of the regiment's greatest loss.¹⁴



Photo courtesy of the author

The regimental muster rolls indicate that Henry Van Eweyk, the regiment's lone non-German, was left sick at Fairfax Court House when the regiment left the area in November 1862, but his name does not appear on the existing hospital ledgers. On November 4 he was apparently transferred to a hospital in Washington, D.C., but through some unknown circumstance was not admitted when he arrived to report. Later that fall, when he did not arrive back with the regiment, he was listed as having deserted from the hospital on November 4. All was apparently made right, however, because he rejoined the regiment at Stafford Court House, Virginia, in April 1863. Van Eweyk saw action at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, suffered through the privation of the campaign to relieve the siege of Chattanooga, and fought through Sherman's Atlanta campaign until wounded

in action at Peach Tree Creek on July 20, 1864. Following his recuperation he resigned to accept a commission as captain in the 45th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. After the war's end he became a founding member of the Twenty-Sixth Regimental Association. Active in veterans' affairs, the Liedertafel singing society, and other civic and social organizations, he too attended the unveiling of the regiment's monument at Gettysburg. He died in 1891.¹⁵

Friedrich Reifenstuhl, the Milwaukee tailor, was apparently plagued by recurrent illness throughout his enlistment until he was finally discharged for disability at Stafford Court House, Virginia, on March 27, 1863. Following his discharge he returned to Milwaukee, where he resumed working

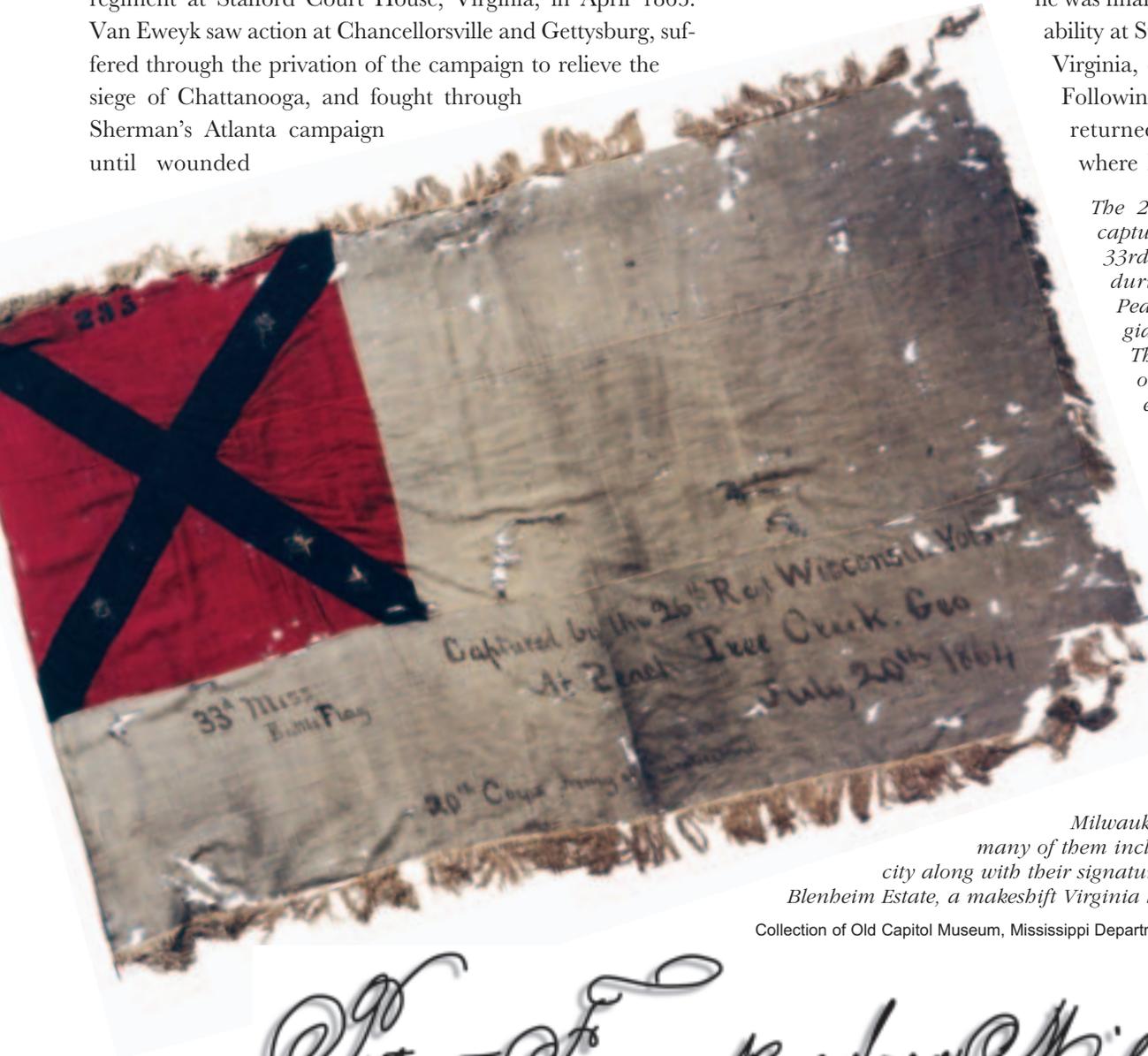
The 26th Wisconsin twice captured the flag of the 33rd Mississippi Infantry during the Battle of Peach Tree Creek, Georgia, on July 20, 1864.

The Union victory occurred during General William T. Sherman's campaign for Atlanta, but Sherman would not capture that city until early October 1864.

Below: Although most of the members of the Milwaukee-based "Sigel Regiment," the 26th Wisconsin, were born in Germany, their sense

of connection to Milwaukee was so strong that many of them included the name of the city along with their signatures on the walls of the Blenheim Estate, a makeshift Virginia hospital.

Collection of Old Capitol Museum, Mississippi Department of Archives and History



*Peter Fenner from Milwaukee
26th Regt*



Milwaukee County Historical Society

Veterans of the 26th Wisconsin gathered at Gettysburg in 1888 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the deadliest battle of the Civil War. A monument to the 26th Wisconsin was dedicated there on July 1, 1888, celebrating the regiment's service and sacrifice.

as a tailor. He married twice, fathering eight children by his first wife. He died in Milwaukee in 1895.¹⁶

Not much is known about Julius Froehlich. The clerk from Milwaukee had enlisted as a private and had been promoted to corporal. He was discharged due to disability while in a hospital in Washington, D.C., on December 20, 1862.¹⁷

Sergeant Peter Rook, the painter from Kenosha, was promoted to first sergeant and in June 1863 transferred to Company F to accept a commission as second lieutenant. Before he could be officially mustered in his new rank, he led his men as an acting lieutenant into the bloody fields of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. There, during the hailstorm of fire north of town, Acting Lieutenant Rook was killed in action. Back home in Wisconsin, his orphaned daughter was placed in the care of her maternal grandparents.¹⁸

Sergeant Peter Fernekes, the Milwaukee tinsmith, was elevated to regimental sergeant major in October 1862 and was promoted again the following month to the rank of second lieutenant in Company I, the "Wenze Guard." As illness and disability forced some officers to resign, he gained another promotion to first lieutenant of Company E, the "Fond du Lac Turners," on March 15, 1863. He fought at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg where, as captain of Company E, he was one of only four officers in the regiment to escape uninjured from the

killing fields north of town. That fall he moved west with the regiment to Tennessee, where he fought at Wauhatchie and Missionary Ridge during the relief of Chattanooga before resigning for reasons of ill health on April 19, 1864.¹⁹

Once mustered in, Private Julius William Franz Hoene, the turner from Milwaukee, served Company I as a teamster, hospital cook, and nurse. It was probably during his service as a hospital cook and nurse that he inscribed his name on the wall at Blenheim. After surviving the maelstrom of Chancellorsville, he is listed on the muster rolls as having deserted at Brooks Station, Virginia, on June 5, 1863, shortly before the regiment marched northward to its rendezvous at Gettysburg. He was eventually dropped from the rolls as a deserter in the spring of 1864; there is no record of his whereabouts thereafter.²⁰

A ninth name identified with the notation "26 R Wisc V" was shrouded in mystery until recently. The signature appeared to read John "Megl" or "Mege," but no one by that name exists on the muster roll of the 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Since the name appears directly under Hoene's name on the wall, and in somewhat similar handwriting, one hand may have inscribed both signatures, indicating that the two men may have been friends. A review of the muster roll of Hoene's Company I reveals a John Koege, who is also listed as having been in the hospital at Fairfax

Court House.²¹ Given the sometimes lax spelling of the day and combine it with the mixture of German and English stylization many of the soldiers used, the result is a difficult piece of writing to read. Staff members at the Wisconsin Historical Society familiar with this style of German writing reviewed an image of the signature, and confirmed, with confidence, that the mysterious signature does indeed belong to John Koege, one of the merchants from Milwaukee who was later wounded in action at Chancellorsville.

Yet the final signature holds a mystery that is a very fitting piece in this historical mosaic. Koege's and Hoene's signatures look so similar that it is possible that one man signed for both. But the two men had one other important similarity: they both disappeared from the ranks of the Sigel Regiment, Hoene in June 1863, and Koege after a long absence in a Washington hospital that began in May 1863. They were certainly not the only two deserters among the Union Army ranks. But that these two men, who likely knew each other in Milwaukee and who appeared to be friends during the war, might have chosen to walk away together from the chaos that is war is understandable. In deserting their regiment, they also deserted their community of Milwaukee, and—lacking the ability to ever go home—perhaps chose to have at least one friend with whom to begin life anew.

All the boys in blue are gone now. But the graffiti they left behind at the Blenheim Estate in Fairfax Court House, now the city of Fairfax, remains. Despite their Confederate sympathies, following the war the Willcoxon family consciously preserved the etchings of their Union “guests” for four generations. Today Blenheim is owned by the city of Fairfax, and through the dedicated work of the city's Department of Historic Resources, the Badger graffiti will be preserved to remind us that the men who affixed their signatures to the walls were not just names or numbers. Those who took instrument in hand to inscribe their names, to mark their presence if only for a fleeting moment, were living human beings: they volunteered to save the Union; they became sick; they whiled away the hours at the improvised hospital in very human pursuits. Some went on to long lives and postwar careers; some did not. But for each, the very human

The Author



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behavior they displayed at Blenheim reminds us that it is the individual triumphs and tragedies of everyday people that shape our history. ❧

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Andrea Loewenwarter, Christopher Martin, Patricia A. Gallagher, and Charles K. Gailey, III, for their invaluable assistance in preparing this article and their dedicated devotion to the preservation of Blenheim and the historical artifacts it contains. Without them this article would not have been possible, and more importantly a piece

of history would have been lost.

¹ Andrea J. Loewenwarter, “A Brief History of Blenheim: A Civil War Historic Site in the City of Fairfax, Virginia,” unpublished ms. dated May 1999, courtesy of Ms. Loewenwarter; Suzannah Foster and Andrea J. Loewenwarter, “An Historical Overview of Blenheim, City of Fairfax, Virginia,” unpublished ms. dated May 2000, courtesy of Ms. Loewenwarter.

² Loewenwarter, “A Brief History of Blenheim”; Foster and Loewenwarter, “An Historical Overview.”

³ Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin, Volume 2: The Civil War Era, 1848–1873* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976) 78–79; James S. Pula, *The Sigel Regiment: A History of the 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, 1862–1865* (Campbell, CA: Savas Publishing, Company, 1998), chapter 1.

⁴ Pula, chapter 1; Regimental Papers, Muster Rolls and Descriptive Books, 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, National Archives, Washington, D.C. [hereafter Regimental Papers]; Karl Doerflinger, “Familiar History of the Twenty-Sixth Regiment Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, March 18, 1911,” unpublished ms. in the Wisconsin Historical Society (written by an officer in the regiment).

⁵ *Daily Wisconsin*, October 15, 1862.

⁶ Regimental Papers; Eleventh Corps Reserve Hospital records, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁷ Franz Lackner diary, October 17, 1862, Milwaukee County Historical Society; *Pionier*, November 1, 1862; Frederick C. Winkler, *Letters of Frederick C. Winkler 1862 to 1865* (Milwaukee: William K. Winkler, 1963), 9.

⁸ Pula, chapter 5.

⁹ Pula, chapter 7.

¹⁰ Pula, *passim*.

¹¹ Pula, 256–265; quotes from *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1891), series I, volume XXXVIII, part II, 443.

¹² Pula, 334–335; Regimental Papers; William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War 1861–1865* (Albany: Albany Publishing Company, 1898), 8, 14.

¹³ Pula, 358; Regimental Papers; “Personal War Sketches,” Robert Chivas Post No. 2, Grand Army of the Republic, Milwaukee County Historical Society [hereafter “Personal War Sketches”]; Descriptive Book, Robert Chivas Post No. 2, Grand Army of the Republic, Milwaukee County Historical Society [hereafter “Chivas Descriptive Book”]; 26th Wisconsin Infantry Reunion Minutes, mss. 257, Urban Archives, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee [hereafter “Reunion Minutes”]; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 26, 1913.

¹⁴ Pula, 366; Regimental Papers; “Personal War Sketches”; “Chivas Descriptive Book”; “Reunion Minutes”; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 26, 1913.

¹⁵ Pula, 367; Regimental Papers; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 4, 1887, and June 26, 1913; “Reunion Minutes.”

¹⁶ Pula, 365; Regimental Papers; 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Web site, www.russcott.com/~rscott/26thwis, accessed December 11, 2002.

¹⁷ Pula, 369; Regimental Papers.

¹⁸ Pula, 378; Regimental Papers; 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Web site, www.russcott.com/~rscott/26thwis, accessed December 11, 2002.

¹⁹ Pula, 388; Regimental Papers.

²⁰ Pula, 418; Regimental Papers.

²¹ Pula, 418; Regimental Papers.