WATERFORD

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Unionist Stronghold

Historically Quaker and abolitionist Waterford decisively split with Loudoun County's pro-Confederate majority and rejected secession (220 votes to 31) in Virginia's May 1861 referendum. Many residents fled to Maryland as Southern troops occupied the town and its Quaker meeting house to curb "treason."

Capt. Frank M. Myers
Courtesy Rachel Everhart Sawyer

Confederate Capt. Elijah V. White arrived here in January 1862 to recruit his 35th Battalion Virginia Cavalry from the area's secessionists. (His second in command, Waterford farm boy Lt. Frank Myers, later wrote *The Comanches*, a history of the battalion.) White's troopers patrolled the border for runaway slaves and Unionist spies until a Union offensive in March 1862 forced a temporary evacuation. Townspeople welcomed Col. John W. Geary's 28th Pennsylvania Infantry with open arms as liberators, after months of Confederate occupation and threats to burn their "cursed Quaker settlement."

Local Unionists, including Quakers, joined Capt. Samuel C. Means's Independent Loudoun Rangers, the only Federal cavalry raised in Confederate Virginia. Gunfire directed at the Rangers' campsite beside the Baptist Church across the road from the field around the house on your left jolted townspeople awake before dawn on August 27, 1862. When the fight ended several hours later the residents were dismayed to learn that White's cavalry had defeated their protectors. Means's command served until war's end nonetheless, operating nearby in a "brothers' war" with White's and Col. John S. Mosby's partisans.

Capt. Samuel C. Means, from Briscoe Goodhart, *History of the Independent Loudoun Virginia Rangers* (1896)

Waterford and nearby Lovettsville ("North Loudoun") remained firmly Unionist, with reinstated U.S. mail and trading privileges. It joined other areas under the Restored Government of Virginia, based in Alexandria. In 1864, three Quaker girls began publishing the *Waterford News* here, an underground Union newspaper.

"You just aught to have seen how glad [they were] to see us Yankees."
— Cpl. James P. Steward, 28th Pennsylvania Infantry, March 23, 1862

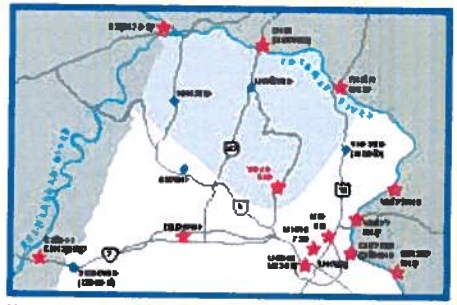
WATERFORD NEWS.

SECOND DAY, 4th Mo. 3d, 1865.

Edited by SARAH, LIZZIE & LIDA.

"THE UNION FOREVER."

Waterford News masthead, Monday, April 3, 1865
Courtesy Waterford Foundation Archives



Northern Loudoun County, showing precinct area that voted against secession shaded light blue

Revised VCWT sign text, Jan 2011

WATERFORD: UNIONIST STRONGHOLD IN CONFEDERATE VIRGINIA

"You just aught to have seen how glad [they were] to see us Yankees." (Cpl., 28th Pa. Inf.)

After months of Confederate occupation and threats to burn their "cursed Quaker settlement," Waterfordians welcomed John Geary's Federal liberators with open arms in March 1862. The town's course had been set when, reflecting Quaker roots and abolitionist leanings, it decisively split from Loudoun's majority and rejected secession (220 votes to 31) in Virginia's May 1861 referendum. Many fled to Maryland to avoid conscription, as Southern troops occupied the town and its Quaker meeting house to curb further "treason."

Elijah White set up headquarters here in January 1862 to recruit his 35th Battalion Va. Cavalry from the area's secessionist minority. (His able second in command, Waterford farm boy Frank Myers, later wrote *The Comanches*, an unapologetic history of his battalion.) Their troopers patrolled the border for runaway slaves and Unionist spies, until Geary's offensive forced an evacuation.

Support for the Union was again evident when many, including Quakers, answered Sam Means's call to form the Independent Loudoun Rangers, the only Federal cavalry raised in Confederate Virginia. These same Unionists were jolted awake before dawn on 27 August 1862 by gunfire (*from cornfield surrounding the house on your left*), directed at the Rangers' campsite beside the Baptist Church across the road. When the bloody fighting ended several hours later the town was dismayed to learn that White's Cavalry (CS) had defeated its protectors (*see plaque across the road*). Despite its disappointing baptism by fire, Capt. Means's command served until war's end, lobbying successfully to remain near home to continue their "brothers' war" with White's and Mosby's partisans.

"North Loudoun" (Waterford and nearby Lovettsville) remained firmly committed to the Union. Already enjoying reinstated U.S. mail and trading privileges, it would join other areas "liberated" by the Federals in Virginia's Restored Government, based in Alexandria. In 1864 three Quaker girls began publishing an underground Union newspaper, *The Waterford News*.