

More Copperhead Politics

The election in the autumn of 1863 created problems in the ranks.

Clement Vallandigham of Ohio sided with the South. Vallandigham was a part of the Copperhead group within the Democrat party and served in the House of Representatives from Ohio.

Vallandigham lost the election for Ohio governor for which he was running *in absentia* from Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

On 13 Sep 1863, Stephen Reider wrote a very racist letter to Willson Hutchison, a Wayne county soldier in Company E of the 120th. The letter was republished in the Wooster Republican on 5 Nov 1863, page 2. Reider was supporting Vallandigham and wanted Hutchison to vote for him rather than to vote for the "War Democrat" candidate, John Brough. Brough won the election. Hutchison remained in the war until he was mustered out 14 Oct 1865. Stephen Reider would have been about 17 in 1863. He was living in Wooster Twp, Wayne Co OH in 1860.

Hutchison responded.

Published in Wooster Republican, Thursday, November 5, 1863, page 1, available at GenealogyBank] From the 120th, A Copperhead Letter!! A Last Appeal to the Soldier Boy He "can't see it."

Headquarters 120th Regiment, O.V.I., Berwick, La., Oct. 2d, 1863

Mr. E. Foreman [Editor] –Dear Sir: Please find enclosed a letter which was sent to a member of this Regiment, by a citizen of your county. The letter is altogether too ridiculous and contemptibly illiterate to influence the mind even of the most unintelligent of our Soldiers. I send the letter to you to make whatever use of it you see proper, as also to show you a little of the doctrine which some of the Northern Copperheads are trying to instil into the minds of true Soldiers, as well as a specimen of the intelligence that characterizes his supporters. The boys who read it, say "bully for the Pugh family," for the "girls in red white and blue," and for the "Big Hickory Strip of Wood!" I can assure the Butternuts of the North, that all their efforts to convert Soldiers to their *Traitorous Faith*, will prove futile, as our boys have seen enough of "rebellion" to convince them that our only safety, as a nation, lies in a vigorous prosecution of this war, and a united support of the Administration, and whether they will get a free pass over the Railroad or not, matters not to them so that a man is elected who is a Union man, and not a low, cowardly, sneaking *TRAITOR*.

Yours truly, W.

Another letter written by a Copperhead and a response from a loyal soldier. 1st Lieut Joseph E. Roseborough joined Company E 120th OVI on 15 Aug 1862 and resigned 24 Mar 1863. Private William M. McKEE, age 21, joined Co E 120th OVI on 23 Sept 1862 and remained in the service until the end of the war.

Wooster Republican, 10 Sep 1863, page 1, available at GenealogyBank.

From the 120th Ohio - Views of a Talented Young Democrat - His Noble Answer to a Copperhead. Letter from William McKee.

[Editor's remarks] There is a well Known Copperhead in Congress Tp., who carries the title of 'Lieut.' or 'Capt.' Roseborough, once having been a member of the 120th regiment. He was Captain Eason's 1st Lieut. and when the former resigned and abandoned his company, the latter only remained long enough to be dubbed Captain, and then turned his back upon his brave boys and 'followed his worthy predecessor.' - *Both* had used all their influence and powers (under the pressure of an approaching draft,) to persuade, frighten, and almost force young men, brothers and fathers into their company, promising and pledging themselves *to stand by and never forsake* those whom they thus *enticed, or, as it were, forced from their families and all the endearments of home. Scarcely, however, had these pretended patriots smelt gunpowder, before they resign their posts, leave their men in the presence of a powerful and threatening enemy, under a scorching Southern sun and amid the malarious swamps of the Mississippi, and return home to - to do what? To join the ranks of the enemy in the rear - to aid in elevating to the highest office in the State*

the great conspirator, rebel, and traitor of the North - the miserable wretch, who boasts that he ' has never given by his vote one dollar or one man, either to the army or navy.' Accordingly we find Eason and Roseborough making Copperhead speeches, defending this traitor and his votes in Congress, by which he would starve our brave soldiers while in front of the enemy or compel them to a disgraceful retreat, or to some base compromise with armed rebels threatening the existence of the Government. - Not only does this Roseborough abuse, vilify and slander the Administration and every Democrat who supports the Government, but he writes disloyal and insulting letters to soldiers in the army, charging them with a desertion of *party* and a *lack of patriotism*, because, forsooth, these soldiers refuse to countenance the disloyal conduct of Copperheads in Ohio. Some time since this Roseborough wrote to the brave and patriotic young Democrat, WILLIAM McKEE, of the 120th Ohio, and son of *Thomas McKee*, of Congress township, a life-long and widely known Democrat. Young McKee answered Roseborough in proper terms - in the manner of a true soldier, boldly and patriotically defining *his position as a Democrat* - and suspecting that his letter would either be suppressed or misrepresented, he took the precaution to preserve a copy, which he forwarded to a friend to be used, if necessary, to make known his political views to his friends and the public. Roseborough, true to his rebel sympathies, *has been* misrepresenting the position of young McKee, and even stating that his letter showed that he *would support the traitor Valandigham!* Hence the publication of the following pointed, terse, and truly noble letter from young McKee, the original of which was sent to Roseborough. Read the letter, friends of your country, whatever may be your party predilections, and take advice from a true hearted, patriotic and brave soldier, who has no selfish ends to promote, and only desires that all good citizens should be patriots:

[William McKee's response to J E Roseborough.]

Friend. JE. Rosenborough [sic] - Sir -

Yours is received, and as you requested me I shall now try and give you my views politically.

When this rebellion first broke out, I was a staunch Democrat - that is, I adhered to its doctrines and supported its candidates. But at this juncture, our country was endangered, and our liberties were in peril. Then our leaders, both Democratic and Republican, passed from village to village, exhorting us to lay aside party distinctions, and to fly to the rescue. They wished us *to bury the partizun [sic] in the patriot*, and rally for one common cause - *our country and our country's flag*.

Being actuated by a sense of duty, I obeyed their mandates, and bade adieu to scenes of home and home associations, and joined the ranks of the brave and noble, to give battle to my country's foes. Then Douglas and *all loyal Democrats* were in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war.

Democrats and Republicans buckled on their armor and went forth shoulder to shoulder, *all claiming that their cause was just*, and that our flag should be maintained, though at the cost of blood and treasure. - These were my sentiments then and this is my solemn determination now.

But how is it with the Democratic party? They, for some supposed irregularity of the President, have changed their landmarks, and have untied their powers to thwart and defeat the designs of the Administration, in its efforts for the suppression of the most wicked and infamous rebellion. -- And they have chosen as their standard bearer one who can boast that *he has never given by his vote one dollar or one man either to the army or the navy*, and one too, who has said that if the Northern hordes should attempt [sic] to pass through his district to coerce the South, they would have to pass over his dead body. -- On every war question his vote stands recorded with *those of Breckinridge [Senate, John BRECKINRIDGE, D KY], Reid [HR, John REID, D MO], Bennett [HR, Hiram BENNETT R CO], Norton [HR, Elijah NORTON, D MO] and Wood [HR, Benjamin WOOD, D NY]*, and where are *they* to-day? Breckinridge, Reid and Bennett have joined the rebel service, and Wood has cropped out in the riot in New York. And whenever a Democrat *proves himself to be a hero, a patriot*, by baring his boom to the darts of the dastard rebels, *you discard and denounce him*. -- Rosecrans, Burnside, Butler, and Andrew Johnston, were simon-pure Democrats. Yet, because they exerted their energies for the overthrow of an aristocratic despotism, and **for the maintainance [sic] of the best Government ever instituted**, *you discard them, denounce them, and maliciously falsify their actions and intentions*, and yet you say you are the soldier's friend - *as well claim the wolf to be friend of the lamb*.

You say the terms 'Butternuts,' 'Copperheads,' 'Traitors,' &c., are applied to the whole

Democratic party. I apply them to all who shall *give their support to C. L. Vallandigham* - as we in the army regard him as *worse than the Southern rebels*. You admit in yours that some radical Democrats might have merited those epithets. I clam that all who support that fool-hardy fanatic justly merit those appellations.

I am a Democrat - A WAR DEMOCRAT - and you need not mistake my position. I am willing to support the Administration in all its efforts to suppress riot or insurrection or rebellion, either in the North or South. I am for MY COUNTRY and for MY COUNTRY'S FLAG - and I am *opposed to the foes of either*.

WILLIAM McKEE

Research by Susie Holderfield, 2001-2018

120researcher@gmail.com

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